

# COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard

Survey conducted by Curt Wagner

Original design by Point Five

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Analysis by Michelle Russell

The 242 planners and 140 suppliers who took our latest COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard Survey, Dec. 7-14, seem to be taking the latest variant somewhat in stride. With Omicron fresh on the scene at the time of the survey, respondents said they were in wait-and-see mode for their next in-person event — and were a more hopeful bunch than respondents who took the last Dashboard survey in September while navigating the Delta variant. Around half of planners and 43 percent of suppliers said they were feeling hopeful in December, versus 33 percent and 34 percent, respectively, in September.

When we asked whether Omicron or a rise in COVID cases was prompting planners to change their event plans for next few months, only 7 percent said yes — 5 percent said they were canceling their in-person events and hosting them exclusively online and 2 percent said they were canceling without offering a digital version. This is significantly less than the 26 percent of planners who said in September that the Delta variant had caused them to cancel plans for their in-person events.

Nearly half of planners surveyed in December said they were going ahead with their in-person and hybrid events. Three out of 10 planners said they were biding their time, closely monitoring the COVID situation in their host destination before making a decision. “We’re watching closely,” said one respondent. “Delaying contracts until the last possible moment, and pivoting to virtual about two months before the event if face to face doesn’t look advisable.”

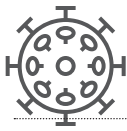
That planner’s comment is somewhat out of step with the trend we see when comparing planners’

decision timeframes in the September and December surveys. Twenty-three percent in December said they were making go/no-go decisions within two months of their in-person or hybrid event date in contrast to 44 percent who were working under such a tight timeline in September.

As to where planners are focusing their reskilling efforts, 62 percent said they are working on designing live experiences in physical environments with more stringent hygiene standards; 56 percent are designing hybrid event experiences.

That focus on creating safe in-person experiences may also factor into another major change between the two surveys. Planners are far more inclined to require proof of vaccination for their in-person events — around 60 percent said they are mandating vaccinations compared to just 40 percent who said the same in September. Of those imposing a vaccine mandate, 31 percent said they also would require proof of a booster if appropriate.

Switching the tables, we asked planners and suppliers about their own plans to attend business event



PCMA CONVENE

# COVID-19 SURVEY

**SURVEY DATES: DECEMBER 7-14, 2021**

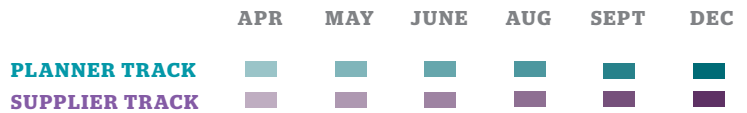
industry events in the coming months.

Sixty-four percent of suppliers said yes; 19 percent said no; and 16 percent were unsure. Half of those who aren't attending cited financial reasons such as reduced business travel budgets, but 23 percent said they remain concerned about the risk of COVID. And 32 percent said they could not justify their ROI for attending an in-person event.

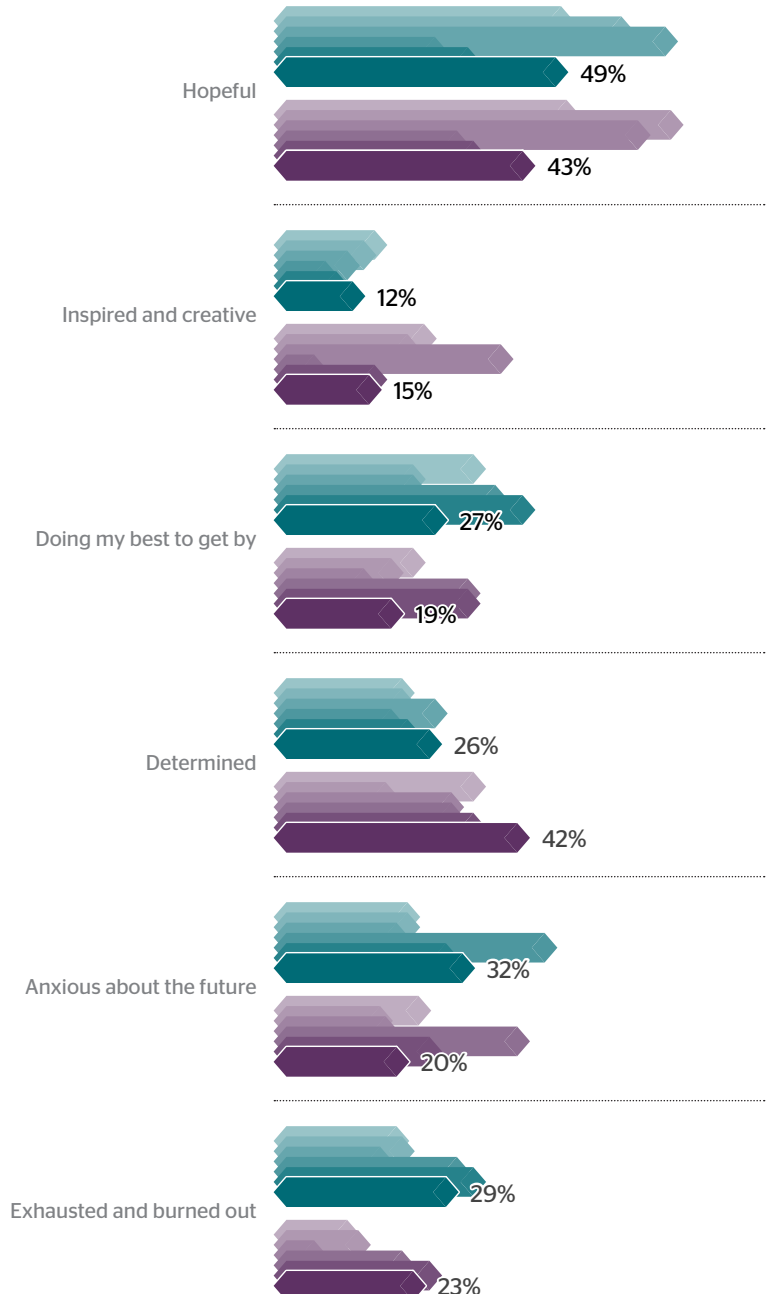
Only one-third of planner respondents plan to attend business events in the next few months, 46 percent said they have no such plans, and 21 percent are unsure. Planners were less impacted by travel budget constraints — 24 percent (vs. 50 percent of suppliers) said financial reasons prevented them from attending. Slightly more planners (27 percent) than suppliers said concerns about COVID would keep them from traveling, and around one quarter (vs. 32 percent of suppliers) said they couldn't justify their ROI for attending an in-person event.

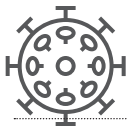
One supplier gave another reason for the inability to attend that speaks to yet another challenge the business events ecosystem faces: smaller staffs. "If I'm out of the office," this supplier wrote, "there isn't anyone to cover for me. We're too short staffed at this time." But another supplier's reason — "We are busy with 2022 business and can't take time off" — offered a more hopeful note.

Curt Wagner is an associate editor at *Convene*. Kayla Feldstein is a digital marketing associate at PCMA. Michelle Russell is *Convene's* editor in chief.

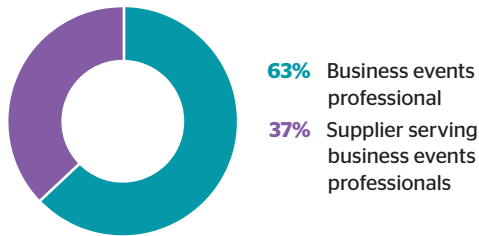


We appreciate your input in this survey. We'd like to check in with you first. What best describes how you're feeling right now? (Choose all that apply.)

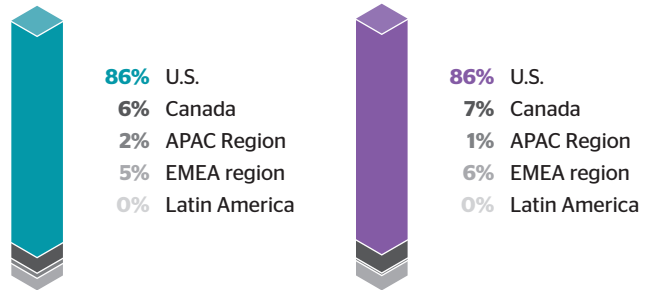




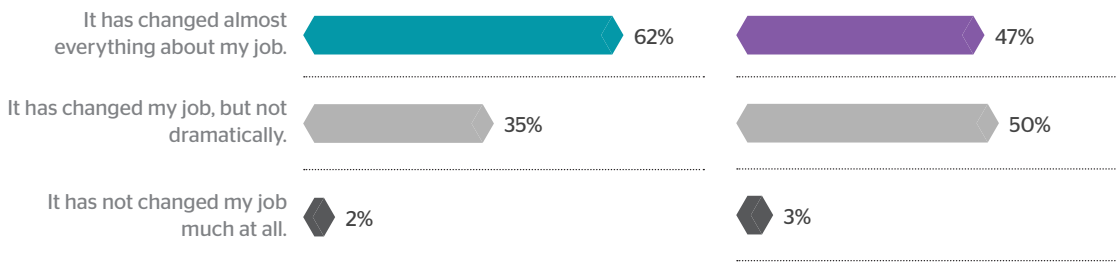
What best describes your role in the business events industry?



What region best represents where you do the majority of your business?



Which of these statements most closely matches your experience since the pandemic started?



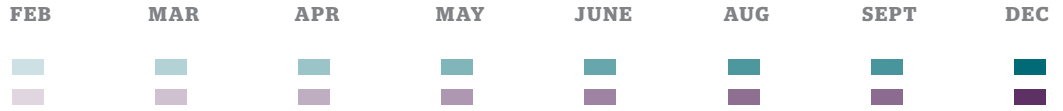
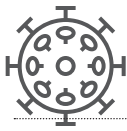
What do you consider your biggest achievement during the last six months?

### PLANNERS SPEAK

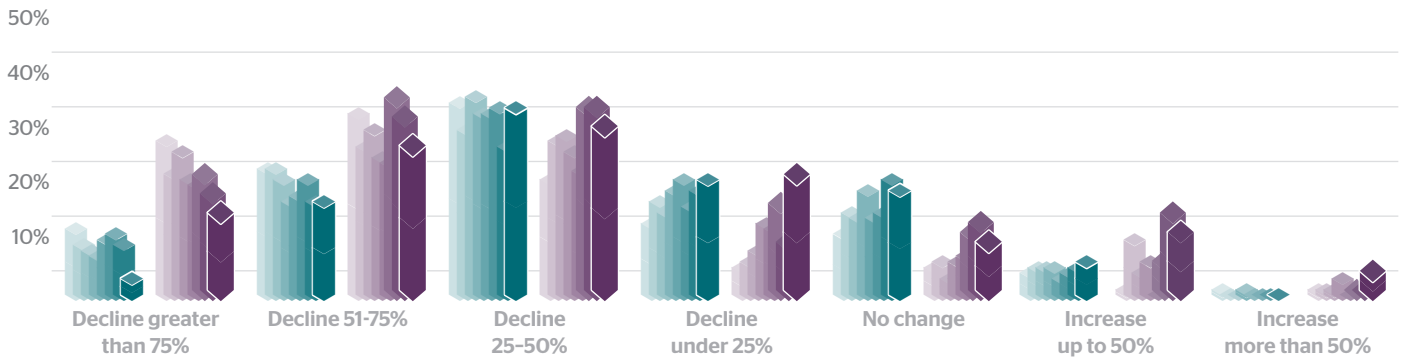
- “Learning how to put on a hybrid event.”*
- “Planning, navigating, and executing a successful and SAFE in-person annual conference for 2,700 attendees and a digital event for 1,200 attendees.”*
- “We have an increase in membership due to the new virtual benefits we created.”*
- “Hosting two live events and four virtual with success.”*
- “Obtaining a PPP loan and 100-percent forgiveness for my organization.”*
- “Researching how to produce economical and successful hybrid conferences.”*

### SUPPLIERS SPEAK

- “Not catching COVID and starting a new job.”*
- “Being able to execute safe events.”*
- “Coming to work every day, selling events, keeping people working.”*
- “Keeping my team together through creative use of furloughs – and actually accomplishing a lot by focusing on the ‘silver linings.’”*
- “Redeployment of sales efforts and DEI within the team.”*
- “Keeping my team together and servicing our groups during this time of labor shortages.”*



What do you believe will be the overall revenue impact of COVID-19 on your events-related business for 2021?



### PLANNER TRACK

### SUPPLIER TRACK

Will you require attendees, staff, and visitors to show proof of vaccination in order to participate in your face-to-face or hybrid event?



**59%** Yes  
**30%** If you're not requiring proof of vaccination, why?  
**11%** N/A



**38%** Yes  
**19%** If you're not requiring proof of vaccination, why?  
**43%** N/A

### PLANNERS SPEAK

*"Unless it's required by the state, we're not planning to require. Vaccination is a contentious issue in our industry."*

### SUPPLIERS SPEAK

*"Not our call — it's up to the event organizers. We currently have no state mandates, therefore we can't require proof of vaccination to enter our building."*

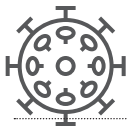
If requiring proof of vaccination, will you also be checking for booster status?



**31%** Yes  
**59%** No  
**10%** N/A

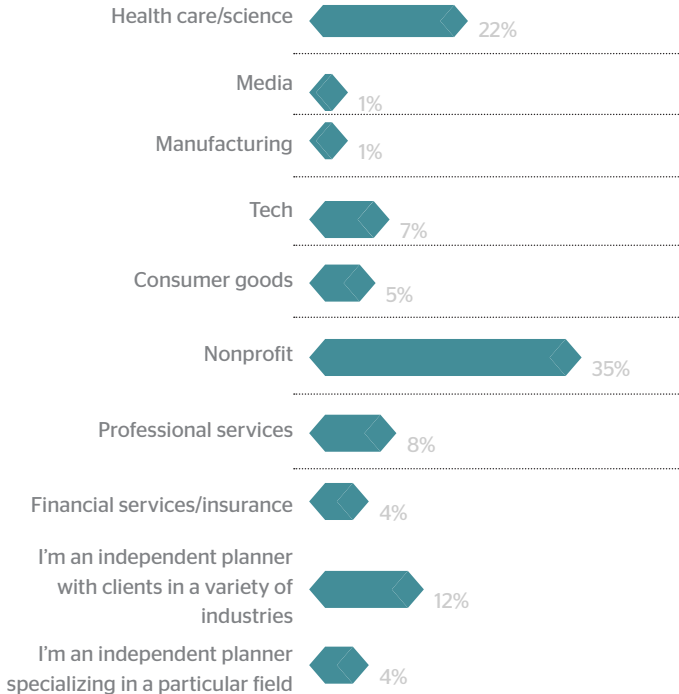


**42%** Yes  
**47%** No  
**11%** N/A



## PLANNER TRACK

What best describes the industry you represent?

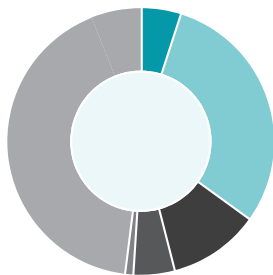


Has the identification of the Omicron variant – or rising COVID cases – changed your plans for in-person and hybrid events scheduled in the coming months?



- 5%** Yes, we are canceling our in-person event for digital only.
- 2%** Yes, we are canceling our in-person event with no digital version offered.
- 24%** No, we are moving forward with our in-person event.
- 24%** No, we are moving forward with our in-person/hybrid event.
- 30%** We're taking a wait-and-see approach and closely monitoring the situation in our host destination.
- 5%** We're regularly polling our potential registrants to gauge their in-person attendance comfort level before making a decision.
- 10%** Other (See some responses below.)

What kind of overall registration numbers are you expecting for your planned 2022 in-person-only event vs. 2019 (or pre-pandemic 2020)?

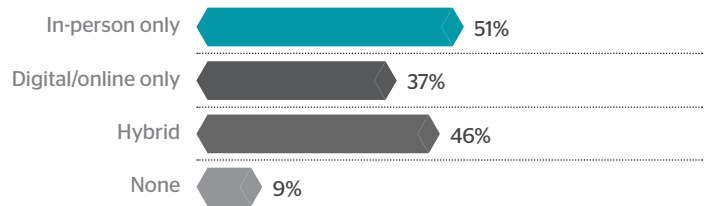


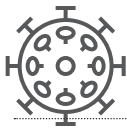
- 5%** Decline greater than 50%
- 30%** Decline up to 50%
- 11%** Same
- 5%** Increase up to 50%
- 1%** Increase of more than 50%
- 44%** Unable to estimate until we get closer to the scheduled event date due to a fluid COVID environment
- 6%** N/A

### PLANNERS SPEAK

*"We're watching closely. Delaying contracts until the last possible moment and pivoting to virtual about two months before the event if face to face doesn't look advisable, to keep everything running smoothly."*

What type of event are you planning in Q1-2 2022? (Choose all that apply)





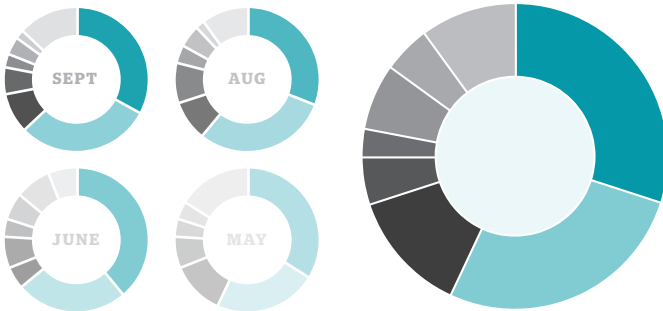
## PLANNER TRACK

What is your planning window for in-person or hybrid events in Q4 2021 and Q1-2 2022?



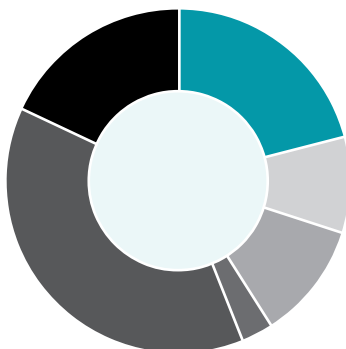
- 18%** We are making a go/no-go decision within four months of event date.
- 15%** We are making a go/no-go decision within three months of event date.
- 23%** We are making a go/no-go decision within two months of event date.
- 24%** Not applicable
- 20%** Other

What is your biggest financial challenge with regard to planning a business event in Q1-Q2 2022?  
(Please choose one.)

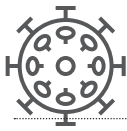


- 30%** Budgeting/pricing for a hybrid (in-person + digital) events
- 27%** How to budget in terms of face-to-face attendance expectations
- 13%** Expenses related to enhanced hygiene and sanitary standards at a face-to-face event
- 5%** Navigating registration timelines/deadlines to budget for a hybrid event
- 3%** What to charge digital participants
- 0%** What to charge digital event exhibitors/sponsors
- 7%** Expenses related to event marketing and communications in a post COVID-19 world
- 5%** Deciding on registration pricing for face-to-face participants
- 11%** Other

If you are planning a hybrid event, how do you foresee it taking shape?

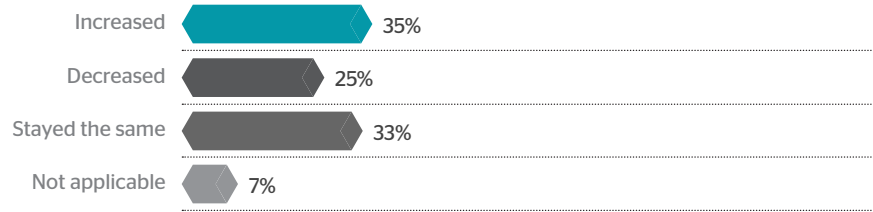


- 21%** Simultaneous, small in-person event with streaming video and separate online program for virtual audience, with ability for both audiences to interact via the event platform
- 9%** Simultaneous, small in-person event with streaming video and separate online program for virtual audience, without ability for both audiences to interact via the event platform
- 11%** Simultaneous, small in-person event with streaming video for virtual audience; no separate online content for digital participants
- 3%** Hub-and-spoke model: small regional in-person events held simultaneously with separate content for digital audience
- 38%** N/A
- 18%** Other



## PLANNER TRACK

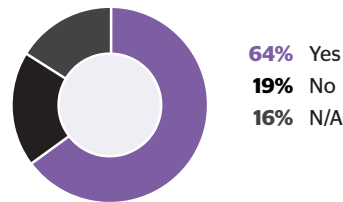
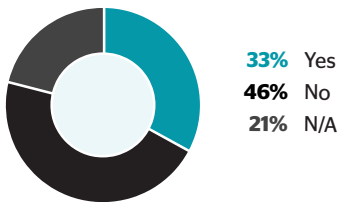
When planning for upcoming in-person or hybrid events, compared with 2019, has your budget:



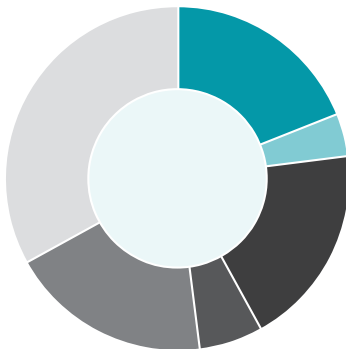
## PLANNER TRACK

## SUPPLIER TRACK

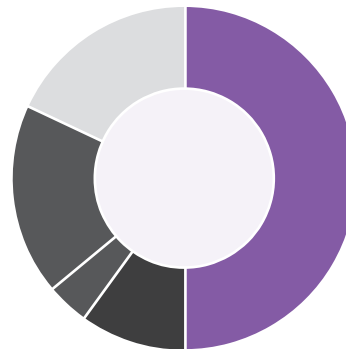
Are you planning to attend any business events industry events in Q1 2022 in person?



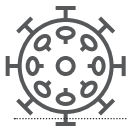
Which of the following reasons factor into your decision not to attend in person? (Choose all that apply.)



- 24%** My business/organization/sector has been negatively financially impacted by the pandemic and there are reduced or no monies in the budget for travel to business events
- 9%** I'm a planner/supplier who cannot attend events unless I am a hosted buyer
- 27%** I remain concerned about the COVID risk
- 12%** Attending digitally is my lifestyle preference for the coming year
- 24%** I cannot justify my ROI for attending an in-person event
- 36%** Other



- 50%** My business/organization/sector has been negatively financially impacted by the pandemic and there are reduced or no monies in the budget for travel to business events
- 0%** I'm a planner/supplier who cannot attend events unless I am a hosted buyer
- 23%** I remain concerned about the COVID risk
- 14%** Attending digitally is my lifestyle preference for the coming year
- 32%** I cannot justify my ROI for attending an in-person event
- 32%** Other



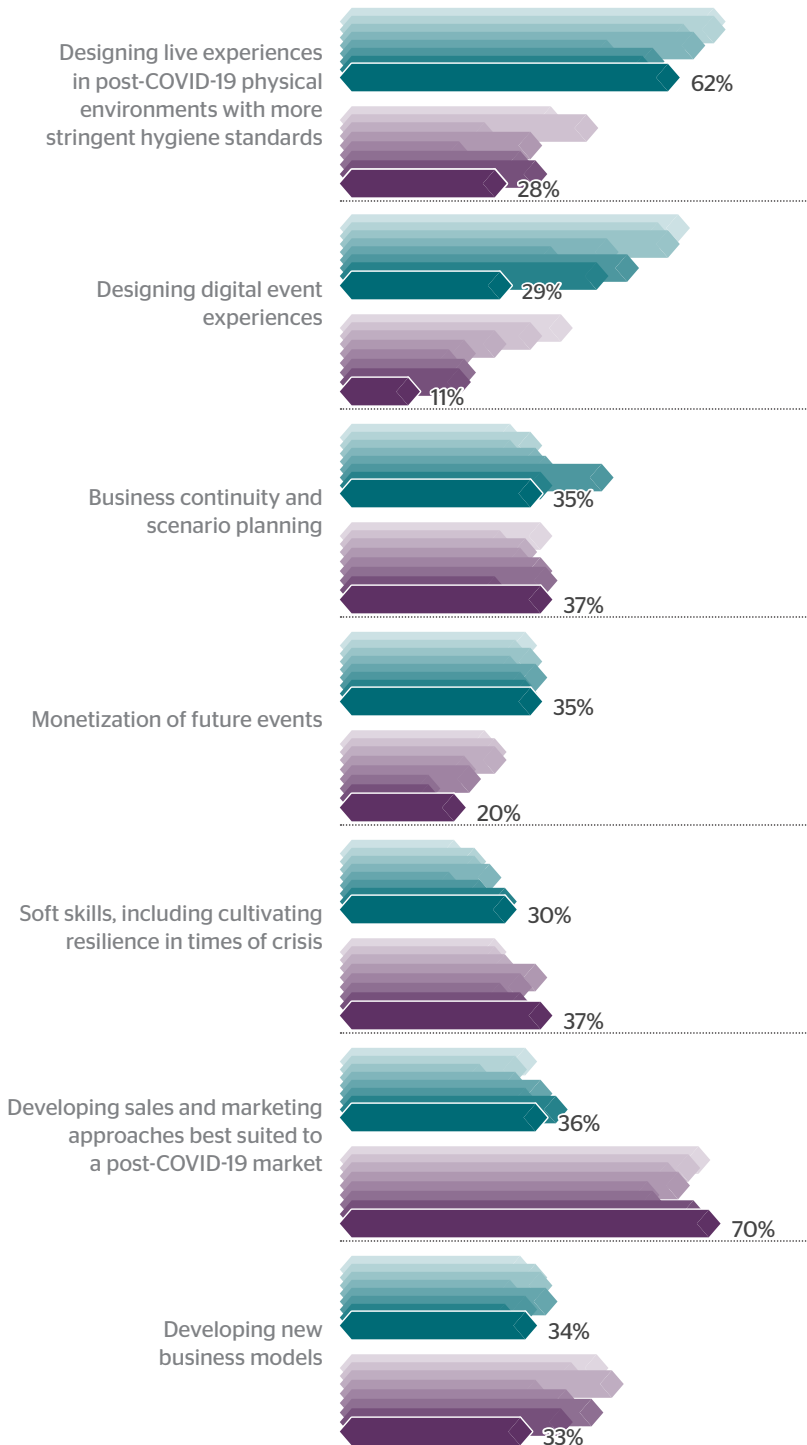
PCMA CONVENE

# COVID-19 SURVEY

**SURVEY DATES: DECEMBER 7-14, 2021**



In order to prepare professionally for success in the business events industry during the recovery, which new skills do you think you need to pursue/develop? (Choose all that apply.)



# 56%

of planners are focusing their skills on designing hybrid event experiences.

### PLANNERS SPEAK

*“Identifying new event seating and room setups.”*

*“How to design exhibit halls with COVID in mind.”*

*“Continuing to be aware of and learning how to best contractually address staffing (or lack thereof), security, and safety.”*

*“Duty of care in the ever-changing COVID environment.”*

### SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE

*“Diversify business model and offerings.”*