



mia

meetings industry association

UK Agent & Planner Research

March 2021

 **AIEA**
Alliance of Independent Events Agencies

 **EDGE**
venues

HeadBrix

venue
DIRECTORY .com

 **ABPCO**
Association of
British Professional
Conference Organisers

BACKGROUND

For over 30 years the [Meetings Industry Association](#) (mia) has been representing business meeting, seminar, conference and events venues alongside specialist sector-specific audio-visual suppliers, production houses and agencies, professional event organisers and equipment hire providers.

Our rapidly growing membership features 800+ venues including residential and non-residential conference centres, hotels with events space, large national exhibition spaces, sporting and academic venues, independents as well as corporate groups featuring a number of properties.

This latest report has been compiled in collaboration with [ABPCO](#) – the association of British professional conference organisers; the [AIEA](#) – an alliance of independent and privately owned event agencies working in the sector; [Edge Venues](#) – a global venue sourcing solution supporting agents, corporates and associations; [Headbox](#) – an online marketplace for creative and inspiring event spaces and [Venue Directory](#) – a data centre of venue information for the UK MICE industry and many others.

We are grateful for their support in helping to extend the reach of respondents among the target audience, which was 238 including corporate, association and charity planners alongside booking agents and event management companies.

The findings have been shared with both the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Events and the government's Department for Digital Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) as we continue our ongoing dialogue calling for a tailored package of business support to aid the sector as it recovers from the devastating impact of COVID-19.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business meetings and events budgets are not expected to return to pre-COVID levels until at least 2023.

Compared to pre-COVID levels, planners are forecasting average event budgets to be down 32% by the end of this year and will remain in a 12.5% deficit from 2023. A similar picture is being reported by booking agents who expect to see a reduction of 42% this year and a 17% reduction by 2023.

The main factors affecting confidence is the uncertainty around future restrictions and their impact on capacities, alongside COVID-Secure protocols having a detrimental effect on the delegate experience as well as financial risks and the lack of insurance.

However, the UK's current successful roll out of the vaccine programme could aid a faster recovery as it was highlighted by both planners and agents as the leading assisting factor followed by the lifting of capacity restrictions and social distancing measures.

Currently, just over a third (37%) of both agents and planners have events scheduled to take place in Q2 2021. 84% of agents and 42% of planners have events scheduled to take place in Q3 and/or Q4 of 2021 with both reporting 50% of these are due to take place in a hybrid format.

Of enquiries that event agents are receiving, they are predominantly being made by organisations within the pharmaceutical and education and financial sectors, while conferences and forums, training events, corporate events, and teambuilding lead the way in terms of the type of events that are garnering the most interest. Average lead times have also currently extended from 5 months in pre-COVID times to currently 11 months – demonstrating the logistical challenges presented by the ongoing restrictions.

While there is light at the end of the tunnel, the expected recovery times clearly demonstrates to the government that the business meetings and events sector will not immediately bounce back to pre-COVID levels.

As it slowly rebuilds, the sector will need dedicated government support beyond the potential initial reopening date for events to a maximum of 1,000 on 17 May and larger-scale events from 21 June, which is why we are calling for tailored intervention including business rate relief packages, the introduction of a government-backed insurance scheme and an extension in the VAT reduction.

Meanwhile we are continuing with our collaborative work with government to demonstrate that physical live events can take place safely and securely.



This report is available exclusively to mia Members.

If you wish to discuss our membership options, please
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