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Butterworth Hall/Warwick Conferences

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Business Events Delegate Survey

May 2025

STRATEGIC RESEARCH & INSIGHT

VISIT BRITAIN

Credit:
VisitBritain/Tom Weightman

Contents


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1. Two Minute Summary

Seven years on from the previous delegate spend survey for VisitBritain, average trip spend (excluding registration fee) has increased 75% from £359 in 2017 to £629 in 2024.

Average spend per day/night (£183) has also increased significantly (+29%) since 2017 (£142), but this increase is not nearly to the same extent as overall trip spend increase.

Overseas delegates outspend UK delegates by nearly 4:1. They are much more likely to stay overnight and stay for longer.

Much higher average trip spend than in 2017.

Origin of delegate	Average spend per trip (£)	Av. spend per day/night[1] (£)
UK	328	152
Europe (outside UK)	872	173
Outside Europe	1,824	246
Overall (excl. registration fee)	**629**	**183**

How are the increases explained?

The 29% increase in average spend per day/night is more or less in line with inflation. According to Bank of England data, inflation amounts to around a 30% increase in UK prices between 2017 and 2024.

However, the average spend per trip when adjusted for inflation has still increased significantly – by 37% in real terms. There are two main reasons for this:

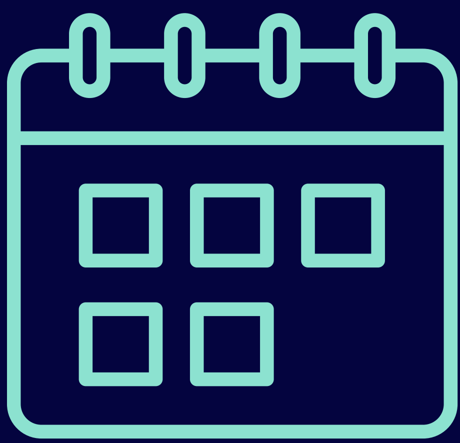
- More delegates are now staying overnight (73% vs 62% in 2017)
- Average length of stay among delegates staying overnight has increased from 3.0 nights to 4.3

The above changes in overnight stays and length of stay are not because of any change in delegate origin, as the profile of UK / European / outside Europe delegates this time is very similar to the 2017 sample.

Extension more than doubles spend

Delegates who extend their trip for leisure and/or business spend £1,760 on average. Without the extension, the same delegates would have spent £714 on average – so extending increases spend by a factor of 2.5.

During the extended part of the trip, visitors have far more time to spend money on entertainment, visits to attractions and shopping compared to their stay during the event days.



[1] Spend averages in each table include columns for 'Av. spend per day/night'. The reason for combining day and overnight delegates within the same average is that it is much easier to apply the average when making the case for business events if the proportions of delegates who stay overnight / just visit for the day are not known or can't easily be estimated. This is how partners generally preferred to apply the averages from the 2017 data and so we are keeping a consistent approach.

Spend by event type

Event type	Average spend per trip (£)			Av. spend per day/night (£)		
	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates
Association	854	1,354	451	193	214	158
Corporate	651	964	468	180	179	181
B2B trade show / exhibition	326	1,146	180	161	213	127
Overall	**629**	**1,251**	**328**	**183**	**209**	**152**

Average trip spend for association events (£854) is significantly higher than for corporate events (£651), and both types are higher than exhibitions (£326).

The reasons for the significant differences are the length of the events and the origin of delegates attracted (see section 5 for more details).

High intentions to return

62% of event delegates say they 'definitely' hope to return to the city / region for leisure, 60% say 'definitely' to attend another business event and 47% say 'definitely' to invest or grow business relationships.

Sustainable practices

53% of UK delegates travel to the event city by train – much higher than the proportion (26%) using their own vehicle. 40% of all delegates feel that the event venue & organisers have done 'very well' in making the event as sustainable as possible, and 39% feel they have done 'fairly well'.

Incentive trips: more than £2,000 per delegate

Origin of delegate	Av. spend per delegate (£)	Av. spend per delegate per night (£)
Europe	1,026	334
North America	2,849	453
Rest of the world	1,576	271
Overall	**2,113**	**422**

Average spend (within the UK) for incentive trips is £2,113 per delegate.

The average is higher than in 2017 (£1,893), but only by 12%, which is much less than the impact of inflation between 2017 and 2024.

The sources of data this year are comparable to the 2017 research, but the make-up of trips has gained in European profile, whereas in 2017, the very high-spending North Americans contributed to more of the sample. Nevertheless, incentive trips hold considerable value for the UK economy.

Credit:
The Celtic Manor Resort Limited

2. How and why has this research been conducted?

Importance of measuring economic return from business events

Business events contribute to the UK economy in many ways, one of which is through the money that delegates spend during their trip to attend the event. Some of this money is spent whilst the event is taking place, and some delegates opt to extend their trip before or after the event to have extra time for leisure, family visits or business matters.

In 2017, VisitBritain commissioned Strategic Research and Insight (SRI), an independent Cardiff-based research agency, to measure delegate spend by conducting face-to-face interviews at business events across Britain. The average spend figures generated by delegate origin, event type and region have been used extensively since by destination management organisations and city convention bureaux to make the business case for attracting events.

Spend averages needed updating

In 2024, VisitBritain commissioned SRI to repeat the 2017 survey in order to gather up-to-date spend averages, as well as capture further useful feedback on pertinent topics such as delegate profile, travel, reasons for attending events, sustainability, accessibility needs and likelihood of returning.

Face-to-face interviews at events

The method once again used to conduct this research is face-to-face interviews with delegates at business events.

We have conducted 1,184 interviews at 80 events across Britain between April and November 2024. The focus is more on events which attract a substantial number of overseas delegates to fit with VisitBritain's wider remit of attracting international visitors to Britain. City convention bureaux partners and DMOs have helped to identify relevant events.

The final sample balance of UK delegates to overseas delegates (two thirds / one third) is the same as in the 2017 survey.

Type of event	No. of events	No. of interviews
Association conferences	34	571
Corporate conferences	15	181
B2B trade shows / exhibitions	31	432
Total	**80**	**1,184**

Location of events

The breakdown of events and interviews around Britain is shown below. This broadly reflects the key towns and cities in the industry, while ensuring adequate sample sizes of interviews in and outside of London, and in England, Scotland and Wales.

Town / city	No. of events	No. of interviews
London	25	232
Edinburgh	8	197
Glasgow	6	136
Newcastle-Gateshead	6	88
Brighton	3	68
Aberdeen	3	64
Liverpool	3	53
Sheffield	3	45
Birmingham	3	38
Leeds	3	35
Llandudno	3	32
Bristol	3	25
Manchester	2	42
Cambridge	2	27
Harrogate	2	21
Newport	1	25
Coventry	1	25
Southampton	1	17
Oxford	1	10
Bath	1	4
Total	**80**	**1,184**

Incentive trips

Incentive trips are a very different type of business event, and the delegates themselves would not know how much has been spent on them. We have gathered spend data by telephone and online through DMCs and incentive agencies covering 143 trips and 8,441 delegates.

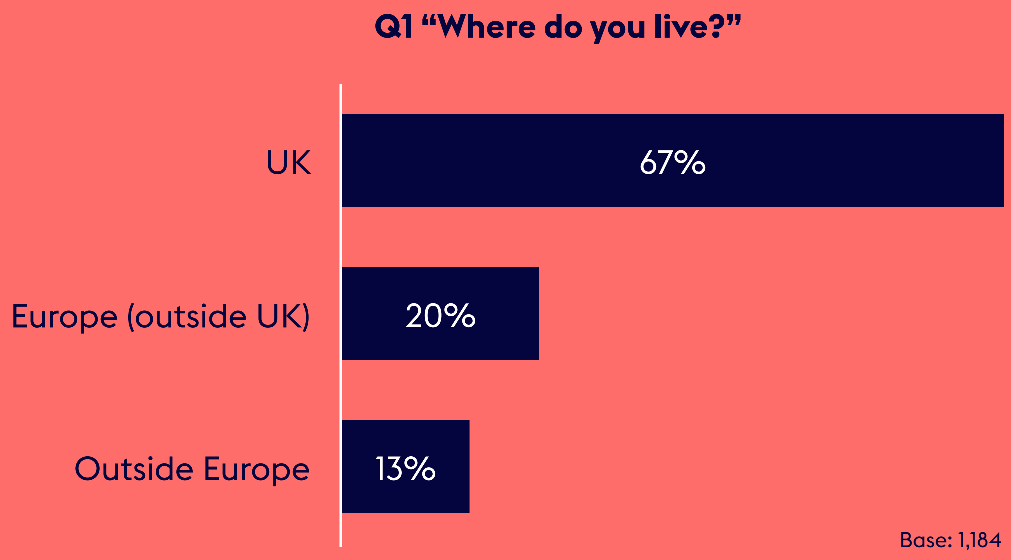
We report incentive trips separately to the data for all other events in section 6.

Credit:
VisitBritain/Scott Salt

Credit:
National Memorial Arboretum

3. Delegate Profile

Origin of delegates



Variations by event type

3.1 The profile of delegates in the sample is split two thirds UK / one third overseas. The most frequent origins of overseas delegates are Germany (5% of total delegates), USA (4%), France, Netherlands and Australia (2% each).

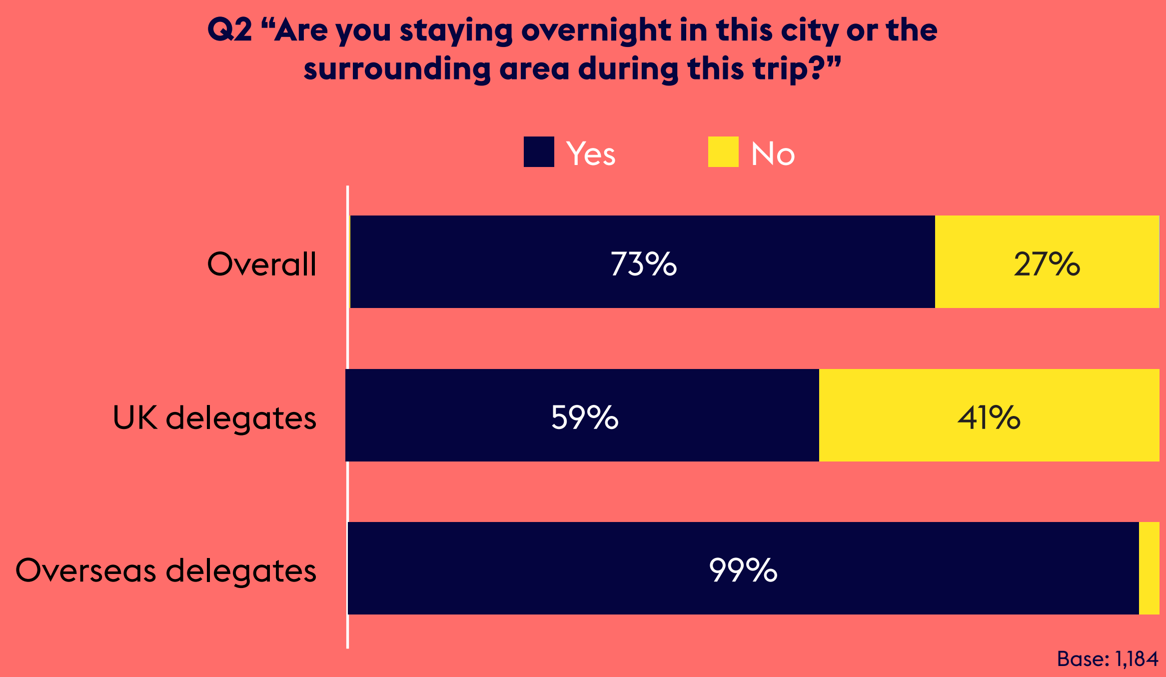
3.2 The balance of delegate origins varies significantly by event type. Association events have the greatest reach, with close to half (45%) of their delegates coming from overseas (25% of the total from Europe / 20% from outside Europe).

3.3 The make-up of corporate events is 63% UK delegates / 25% Europe / 12% outside Europe. Exhibitions have the largest slant towards UK delegates (85%).

3.4 These differences in delegate profile by event type have implications for average spend breakdowns, discussed in section 5.

Credit:
Getty Images

Staying overnight



Importance of attracting overnight stays

3.5 Accommodation makes up a significant part of delegate spend (discussed in section 5), and so attracting overnight stays is important for maximising the value of business events.

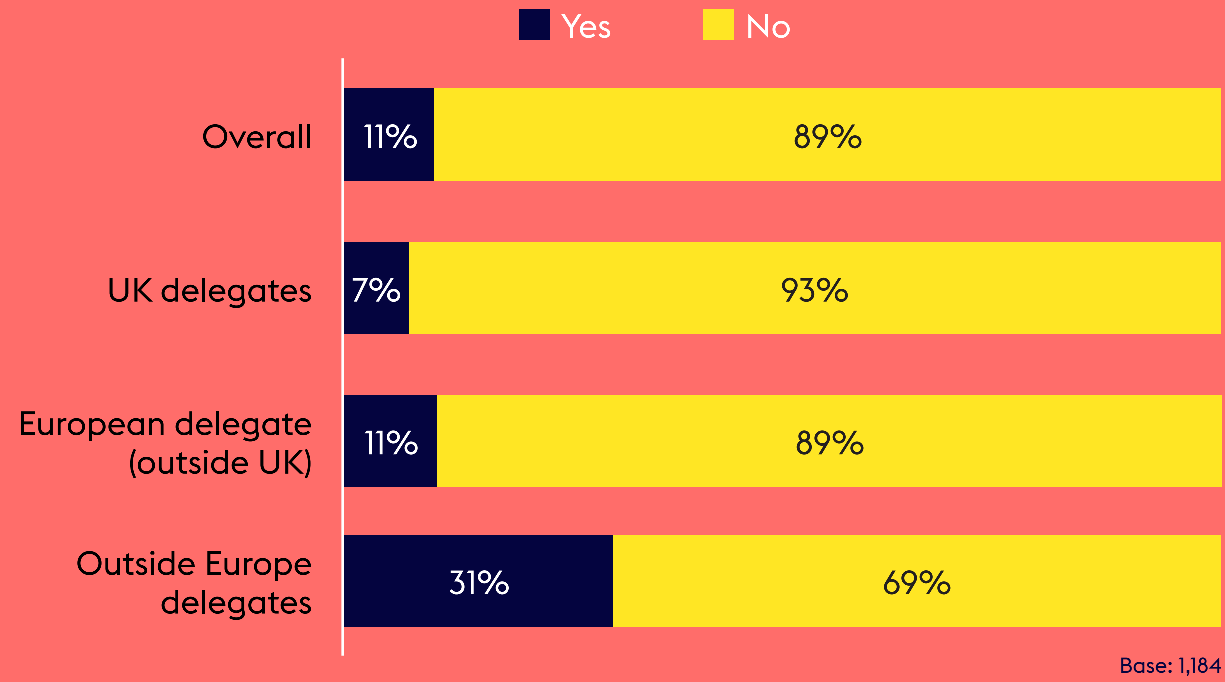
3.6 Almost all (99%) overseas delegates stay overnight in the city or surrounding area, whereas the balance between overnight and day trips among UK delegates is mixed.

3.7 Linked to delegate origin, most (89%) delegates at association events stay overnight, as do 80% of delegates at corporate events. By comparison, the balance of overnight to day delegates at exhibitions is around 50/50.

Credit:
West Midlands Growth Company

Accompanying delegates on the trip

Q3 “Is anyone accompanying you on this trip who is not attending the event...?”



Accompanied trips are quite common from other continents

3.8 Sometimes event delegates are accompanied by a spouse, partner, relative or friend, who comes on the trip but does not have an interest in the event. About a third (31%) of delegates from outside Europe are accompanied.

3.9 Accompanied visits are more common for association events (whereby 16% of delegates are accompanied) due to the wider geographical reach (more overseas delegates, especially from outside Europe). Also, the longer typical event duration means that the delegate is likely to be away from home for longer. Some associations even organise ‘spousal programmes’ specifically for the benefit of the accompanying partner.

“The company paid the hotel bill for me and my good lady”

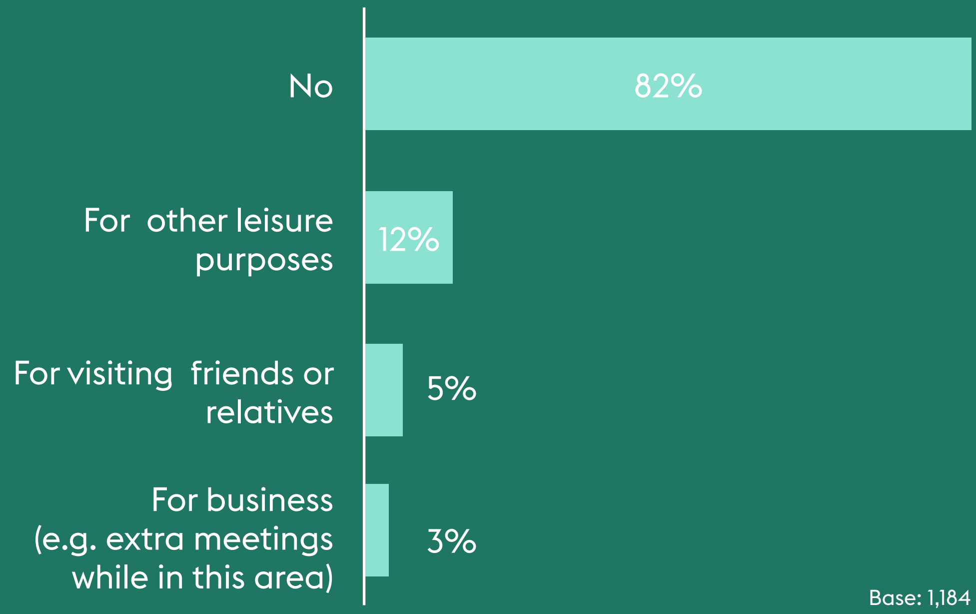
US delegate, Edinburgh

Credit:
VisitBritain/Rod Edwards

4. Trip Extensions

Extending the trip for different purposes

Q3/2 "Are you extending this business trip to have extra nights...?"



Respondents could give more than one answer

Trip extensions are common for overseas delegates

4.1 Some delegates to business events take the opportunity to extend their trip beyond just attending the event. Reasons can include to visit friends & relatives, enjoy some leisure time or tag on extra business meetings before or after the event.

4.2 Extensions are much more common among overseas delegates than UK delegates. A third (33%) of European delegates and 56% of delegates from outside Europe extend their trip.

4.3 Extending the trip is also more common for association events (27% of all delegates do so, compared to 10% across other event types). This is due to the wider geographical profile of the delegates at association events.

4.4 We covered the subject of trip extensions extensively as part of the 2017 research, including what destinations can do to encourage them.

"I'm staying with friends in Manchester for extra nights"

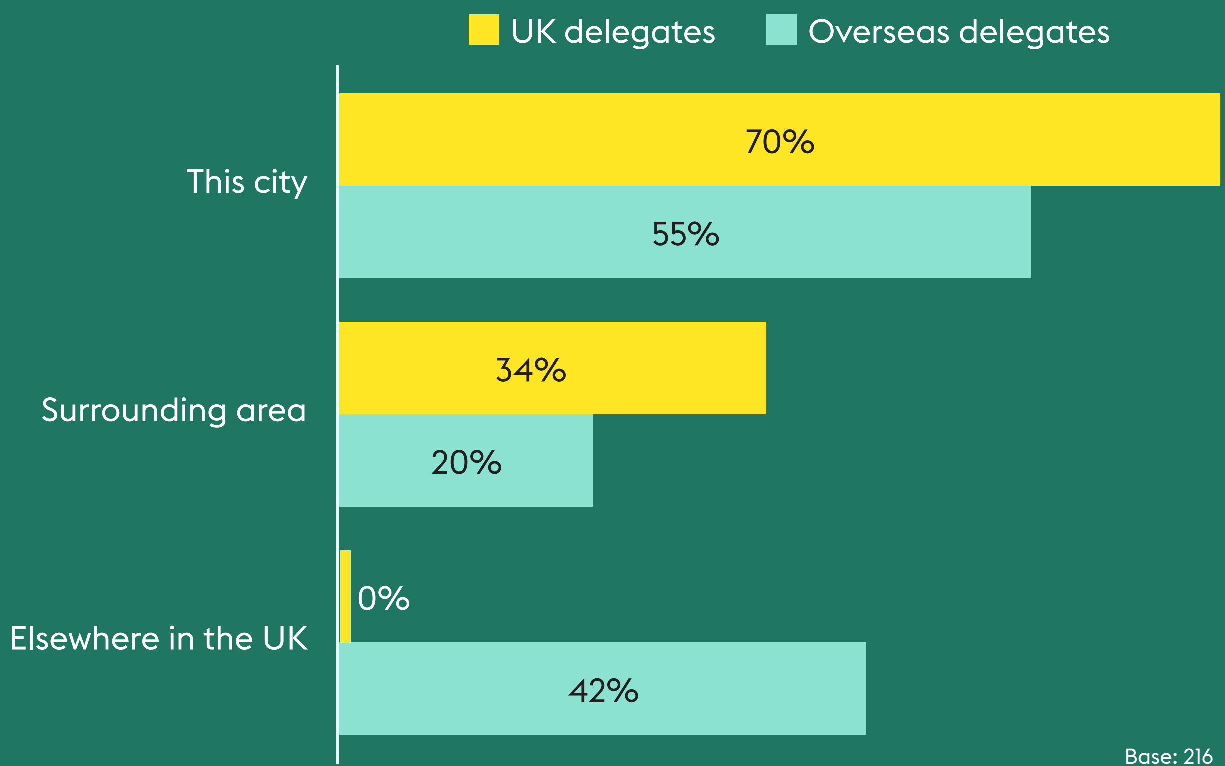
Dutch delegate, Liverpool

"Work pays for 5 nights and then I'll move to another hotel for leisure"

US delegate, Edinburgh

Location of extra nights

Q4 "Are you spending extra nights in...:"



Base: 216

Wider geographical scope among overseas delegates

4.5 Whilst the majority (70%) of UK delegates who extend their trip spend their extra nights in the event city, overseas delegates may well move further afield, possibly outside of the area altogether. Some have friends or family in different parts of the UK.

4.6 Scotland 'hangs on' to its extenders well – 71% remain in the event city and 33% spend extra nights in the surrounding area (they can do both). By comparison, 47% of extenders at events in England & Wales outside London remain in the city and 16% stay in the surrounding area, but 46% spend extra nights in another part of the UK.

> **"I'm staying first in Edinburgh and then away to the Oban area"**
>
> US delegate, Edinburgh

Credit:
VisitBritain/Sam Barker

5. Delegate Spend Association & Corporate Conferences and Exhibitions

Notes on method

5.1 In this section we discuss the average delegate spend at conferences and exhibitions by different types of delegate, event and region of Britain. This is based on the 1,184 face-to-face interviews at 80 events.

5.2 The method used for incentive trip spend is different and so we discuss this in section 6.

5.3 The method used for capturing spend is consistent with that used in the previous delegate spend survey in 2017.

5.4 We have asked delegates to estimate their trip spend by different categories for ease of recall. Where they knew they had spent / would spend nothing in a category, interviewers have recorded this as a zero and this counts towards the average.

5.5 Where they knew they had spent / would spend something in a category but could not give a reasonable estimate, this has been left blank and is not included in the averages. Examples of this include the company paying certain elements without the delegate knowing the amount.

5.6 A relatively small number of delegates have given us a package spend figure, which usually covers registration and accommodation. For ease of analysis, we have broken down package figures into individual spend elements based on typical registration fees and accommodation prices paid by other delegates at the same event.

5.7 All spend on travel from home to the event (e.g. air fares) is excluded.

5.8 Some delegates have extended their trip for leisure. The spend relating to the extension is included in the average spend figures. When discussing trip extenders later in this section, we show the value of the extension separated out from total spend.

5.9 All averages exclude registration fees, unless stated otherwise. This is because we cannot always guarantee the payment of these fees directly impacts the UK economy as the fee will go to the country where the event organiser is based rather than the UK event city. In the 2017 report, the averages included registration fees. When making comparisons in this report with 2017, all comparisons are like-for-like.

5.10 Spend averages in each table include columns for 'Av. spend per day/ night'. The reason for combining day and overnight delegates within the same average is that it is much easier to apply the average when making the case for business events if the proportions of delegates who stay overnight / just visit for the day are not known or can't easily be estimated. This is how partners generally preferred to apply the averages from the 2017 data and so we are keeping a consistent approach.

Average spend by event type

Event type	Average spend per trip (£)			Av. spend per day/night (£)		
	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates
Association	854	1,354	451	193	214	158
Corporate	651	964	468	180	179	181
B2B trade show / exhibition	326	1,146	180	161	213	127
Overall	**629**	**1,251**	**328**	**183**	**209**	**152**

As a reminder from paragraph 5.8, any spend relating to trip extensions is included in the averages

Association events attract the highest spend

5.11 Average trip spend for association events (£854) is significantly higher than for corporate events (£651), and both types are higher than exhibitions (£326).

5.12 The reasons for the significant differences are the length of the events and the origin of delegates attracted – both of which directly influence the length of stay and therefore spend on accommodation and food & drink.

5.13 Association events in the sample have lasted longer (3.6 days on average) than corporate events (3.1 days) and exhibitions (2.6 days). Exhibitions are also of a more 'drop in & out' nature, meaning that they attract many one-day only delegates (around half).

5.14 Association events have the greatest geographical reach, with 25% of delegates coming from Europe (outside UK) and 20% from outside Europe. As discussed, the further delegates travel, the higher the spend.

Credit:
The Riverside Inn Aymestrey

Average spend by origin of delegate

Origin of delegate	Average spend per trip (£)	Av. spend per day/night[1] (£)
UK	328	152
Europe (outside UK)	872	173
Outside Europe	1,824	246
Overall (excl. registration fee)	**629**	**183**

Spend correlates very strongly with distance from the UK

5.15 Delegates from outside Europe spend more than twice as much on average as overseas delegates from within Europe, who in turn spend about two and a half times as much as UK delegates.

5.16 Length of stay correlates strongly with distance from the event, but this in itself does not explain why delegates from outside Europe also have a much higher per day/night spend than European delegates. Delegates from outside Europe are much more likely to extend their stay for leisure, and this is when the highest part of spending occurs (discussed later in this section under 'average spend by extender / non-extender').

Credit: VisitBritain/Pinzutu

Average spend by region of Britain

Event region	Average spend per trip (£)			Av. spend per day/night (£)		
	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates
Scotland	906	1,417	504	216	237	182
London*	295	1,427	150	189	335	124
England & Wales outside London	573	1,073	325	157	171	140
Overall	**629**	**1,251**	**328**	**183**	**209**	**152**

** Please see below for an explanation of why London's average trip spend looks lower*

Considerably higher average spend in Scotland again

5.17 Delegates attending events in Scotland spend nearly twice as much as delegates in the rest of Britain. This is similar to the 2017 findings.

5.18 One of the reasons for the difference is the make-up of the event sample in Scotland, which leans more towards association events and less towards exhibitions, which as discussed, makes a significant difference to spend as association events attract a larger proportion of overseas delegates.

5.19 However, even when event type is controlled for, average spend is still much higher in Scotland than in the rest of Britain.

5.20 For association events specifically, Scotland attracts 27% of the delegates from outside Europe, compared to 13% for association events elsewhere in Britain (the 2017 survey showed a similar split in results). This impacts significantly on length of stay and spend.

Why does London's trip spend look lower than the rest of England?

5.21 London's much lower spend per trip (£295) compared to the rest of England & Wales (£573) is mostly explained by the make-up of its events sample – nearly all corporate events and exhibitions rather than association events. Challenges in gaining permission to interview at London events has played a part in the sample make-up.

5.22 However, whilst trip spend has come out lower in London as a result of less than ideal sample composition, the per day/night spend compared to the rest of England & Wales is in line with expectations and can be applied reliably when estimating the impact of events.

5.23 The per day/night spend in London (£189) is 20% higher than in the rest of England & Wales (£157). Specifically among overseas delegates, it is twice as high in London (£335, compared to £171 in the rest of England & Wales). Among delegates of all origins who stay overnight, the spend per night in London is £280, compared to £165 in the rest of England & Wales.

5.24 London's overall trip spend is weighed down by large proportions of UK delegates visiting only for the day, especially to exhibitions.

Average spend by category

Spend category	Average spend per trip (£)			Av. spend per day/night (£)		
	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates	All delegates	Overseas delegates	UK delegates
Registration fee	462	502	435	135	84	202
Accomodation	399	755	222	116	126	103
Local travel & parking	22	48	10	6	8	5
Food & drink	135	274	70	39	46	32
Entertainment	17	44	5	5	7	2
Attractions	12	34	1	4	6	1
Shopping	40	93	15	12	15	7
Anything Else	4	3	5	1	1	2
Overall excl. registration fee	**629**	**1,251**	**328**	**183**	**209**	**152**

The bottom line excludes registration fees because we cannot always guarantee the payment of these fees directly impacts the UK economy as the fee will go to the country where the event organiser is based rather than the UK event city

Much higher average trip spend than in 2017

5.25 Seven years on from the previous delegate spend survey for VisitBritain, average trip spend (excluding registration fee) has increased 75% from £359 in 2017 to £629 in 2024.

5.26 Average spend per day/night (£183) has also increased significantly (+29%) since 2017 (£142), but this increase is not nearly to the same extent as overall trip spend increase.

How are the increases explained?

5.27 The 29% increase in average spend per day/night is more or less in line with inflation. According to Bank of England data, inflation amounts to around a 30% increase in UK prices between 2017 and 2024.

5.28 However, the average spend per trip when adjusted for inflation has still increased significantly – by 37% in real terms. There are two main reasons for this:

- More delegates are now staying overnight (73% vs 62% in 2017)
- Average length of stay among delegates staying overnight has increased from 3.0 nights to 4.3.

5.29 The above changes in overnight stays and length of stay are not because of any change in delegate origin, as the profile of UK / European / outside Europe delegates this time is very similar to the 2017 sample.

Overseas delegates outspend UK delegates by nearly 4:1

5.30 When applying spend averages to estimate economic impact, it is important to know or at least be able to predict what proportion of the delegates are or will come from overseas, as their average spend (£1,251 per trip) is nearly four times higher than that of the average UK delegate (£328).

5.31 Overseas delegates almost always (99%) stay overnight (compared to 59% of domestic delegates), and among those who do stay overnight, their average length of stay is twice as long (6.0 nights, compared to 2.9 nights for UK delegates). Trip extensions, especially for leisure, play a key part in this (discussed later in this section).

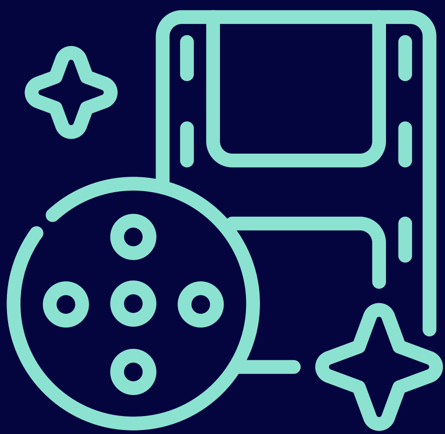
Average spend by extender / non-extender

Extender type	Average spend per trip (£)			Av. spend per day/night (£)		
	Total	For event	For extension	Total	For event	For extension
Extender	1,760	714	1,046	238	97	141
Non-extender	472	427	N/A	168	168	N/A
Overall	**629**	**480**	**149**	**183**	**140**	**43**

Extension more than doubles spend

5.32 Delegates who extend their trip for leisure and/or business spend £1,760 on average. Without the extension, the same delegates would have spent £714 on average – so extending increases spend by a factor of 2.5.

5.33 Accommodation spend per night decreases slightly in the extended part of the trip as some extenders go to stay with friends or family, or may seek different accommodation when paying out of their own pocket. However, spend across all other categories increases considerably as extenders have the whole day to fill with entertainment, shopping and need to pay much more for travel to get to where they want to visit.




Credit:
West Midlands Growth Company

6. Delegate Spend Incentive Trips

6.1 In this Section we discuss the average spend per delegate on incentive trips to Britain. This is based on data provided by DMCs and incentive agencies covering 143 trips and 8,441 delegates. The delegates have travelled from North America (52 trips), the Far East (41 trips), Europe (41 trips) and other countries in different continents.

6.2 The average spend data discussed below does not include anything that the delegates might spend personally, as attempting to gather this data is seen as too intrusive. In any case, this should not significantly affect the results because agencies say that personal spend on most types of trip is likely to be fairly insignificant compared to that spent by the organiser.

6.3 All spend excludes travel to and from Britain, e.g. air fares.

Average spend by origin of delegates

Origin of delegates	Average spend per delegate (£)	Av. spend per night[1] (£)
Europe	1,026	334
North America	2,849	453
Rest of the world	1,576	271
Overall	**2,113**	**422**

Credit:
Alamy Stock Photo/John Rochester

More than £2,000 per delegate

6.4 Incentive trips continue to hold considerable value for the UK economy when attracted, with the average spend in the UK exceeding £2,000 per delegate.

6.5 The average is higher than in 2017 (£1,893), but only by 12% in nominal terms, while 13% lower in real terms when accounting for inflation.

6.6 The sources of data this year are comparable to the 2017 research, but the make-up of trips has gained in European profile, whereas in 2017, the very high-spending North Americans contributed to more of the sample. The result is that the lower-spending European markets have limited the growth in the overall spend average.

6.7 The average spend for North American delegates (£2,849) is 23% higher than in 2017 (£2,311) – but when accounting for inflation, this is 4% lower in real terms. North Americans stay an average of 6.3 nights, and many of them enjoy staying in very high-end luxury accommodation in London or Scotland.

6.8 The average spend for European delegates (£1,026) is 22% lower than in 2017 (£1,316). When accounting for inflation, it is 39% lower in real terms. Their average length of stay (3.1 nights) is very similar to before, but the average spend per night (£334) is well down on 2017 (£454).

Credit: VisitBritain/Pinzutu

Average spend by region of Britain

Region	Average spend per delegate (£)	Av. spend per night[1] (£)
Scotland	1,966	525
London	2,102	402
Rest of England*	1,042	280
Overall	**2,113**	**422**

**These figures are for the Rest of England. We have not identified any incentive trips taking place in Wales.*

Considerable differences by region

6.9 Scotland tops spending for incentive trips at nearly £3,000 per delegate. The difference from the rest of Britain is partly explained by the high average length of stay (5.7 nights) in Scotland. However, average spend per night (£525) is also high, and this is largely due to a number of very high-spending trips for North American delegates staying in luxury accommodation.

6.10 London also continues to attract some of the high-end North American trips, but compared to Scotland, its overall average spend is weighed down by a larger volume of trips from other markets. London also has a slightly shorter average length of stay (5.2 nights) compared to Scotland (5.7 nights).

6.11 Trips to the rest of England have a much lower average trip spend per delegate (£1,042) and spend per night (£280). The average length of stay (3.7 nights) is shorter, and accommodation is less expensive.

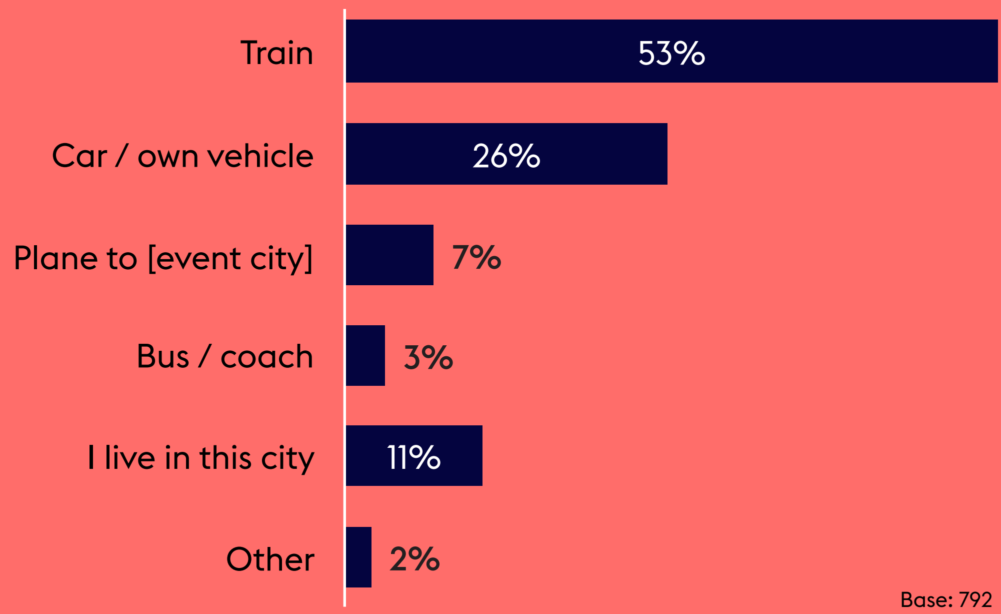
Credit: VisitBritain/Julia Cassini

7. Travel, Sustainability and Further Findings

7.1 This section features further feedback from face-to-face delegate interviews at business events (not incentive trips). Topics include travel, accommodation, reasons for attending the event, sustainability, accessibility and intentions to return.

Travel to the city (UK delegates)

Q14 (UK delegates) "How did you travel from your home to [event city]?"



Respondents could give more than one answer to Q14

Travel choices vary by event region

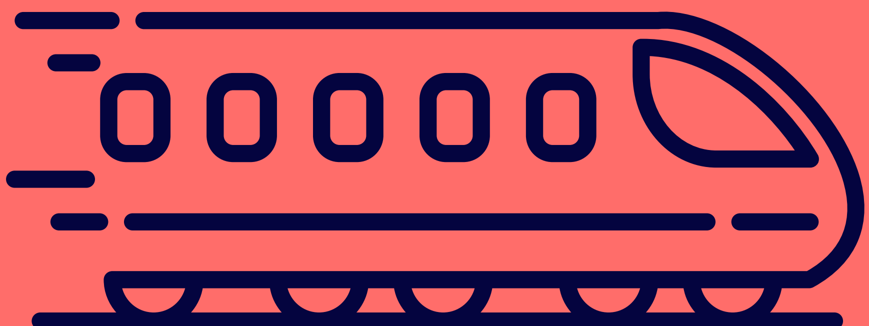
7.2 About half (53%) of UK delegates travel to the event city by train – much higher than the proportion (26%) travelling by car / own vehicle. There is variation by event region however.

7.3 To reach the event city in Scotland, the most common form of travel for UK delegates is train (58%), but some (22%) opt to fly.

7.4 For events in London, the train is the dominant form of travel to the city (70% of UK delegates), and a further 24% say they live in London.

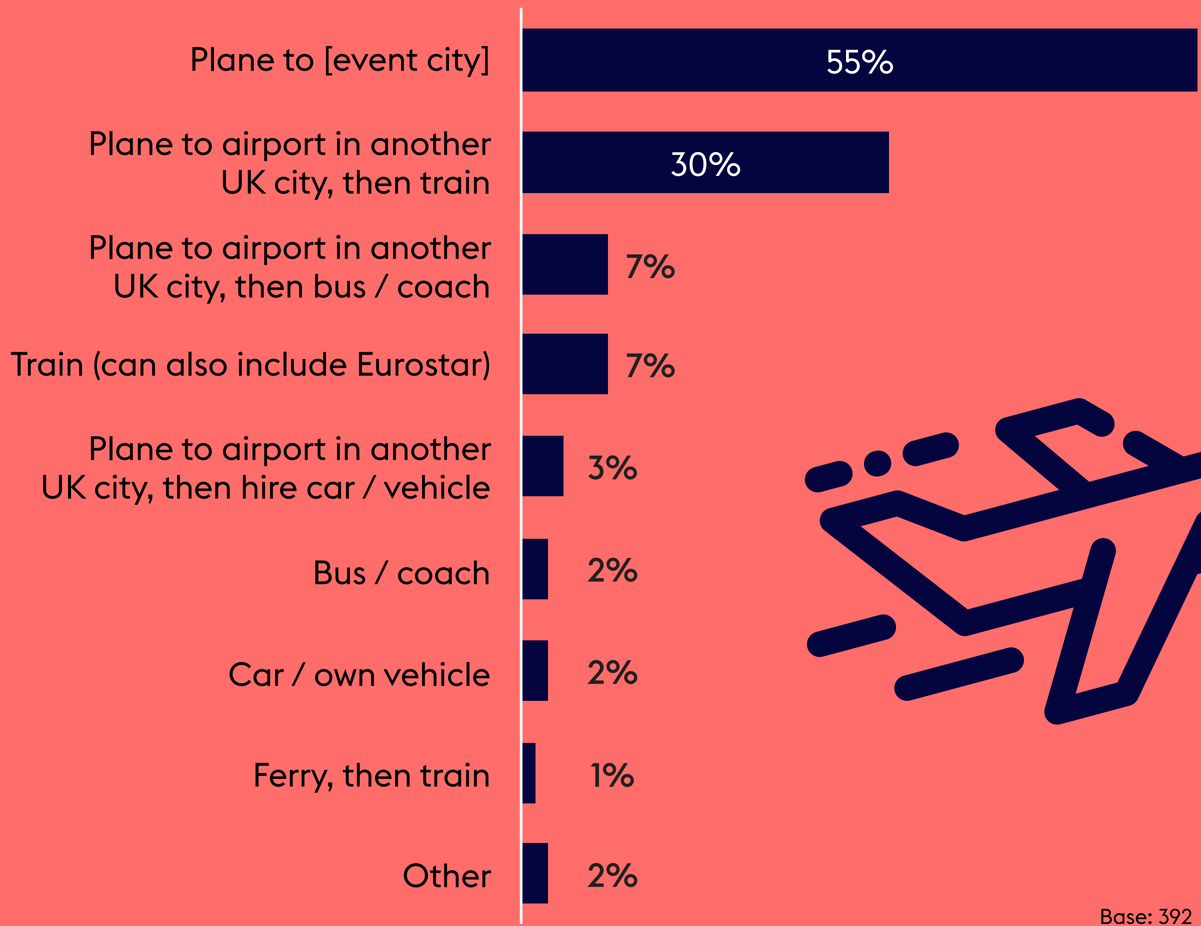
7.5 For events elsewhere in England & Wales, travel choices are split fairly evenly between own vehicle (45%) and train (40%).

> **"Connectivity is where London wins"**
>
> UK delegate, London



Travel to the city (overseas delegates)

Q14 (Overseas delegates) "How did you travel from your home to [event city]?"



Base: 392

Respondents could give more than one answer to Q14

Credit:
Getty Images/James Ennis

Plane travel for overseas delegates

- The question is where to and what next

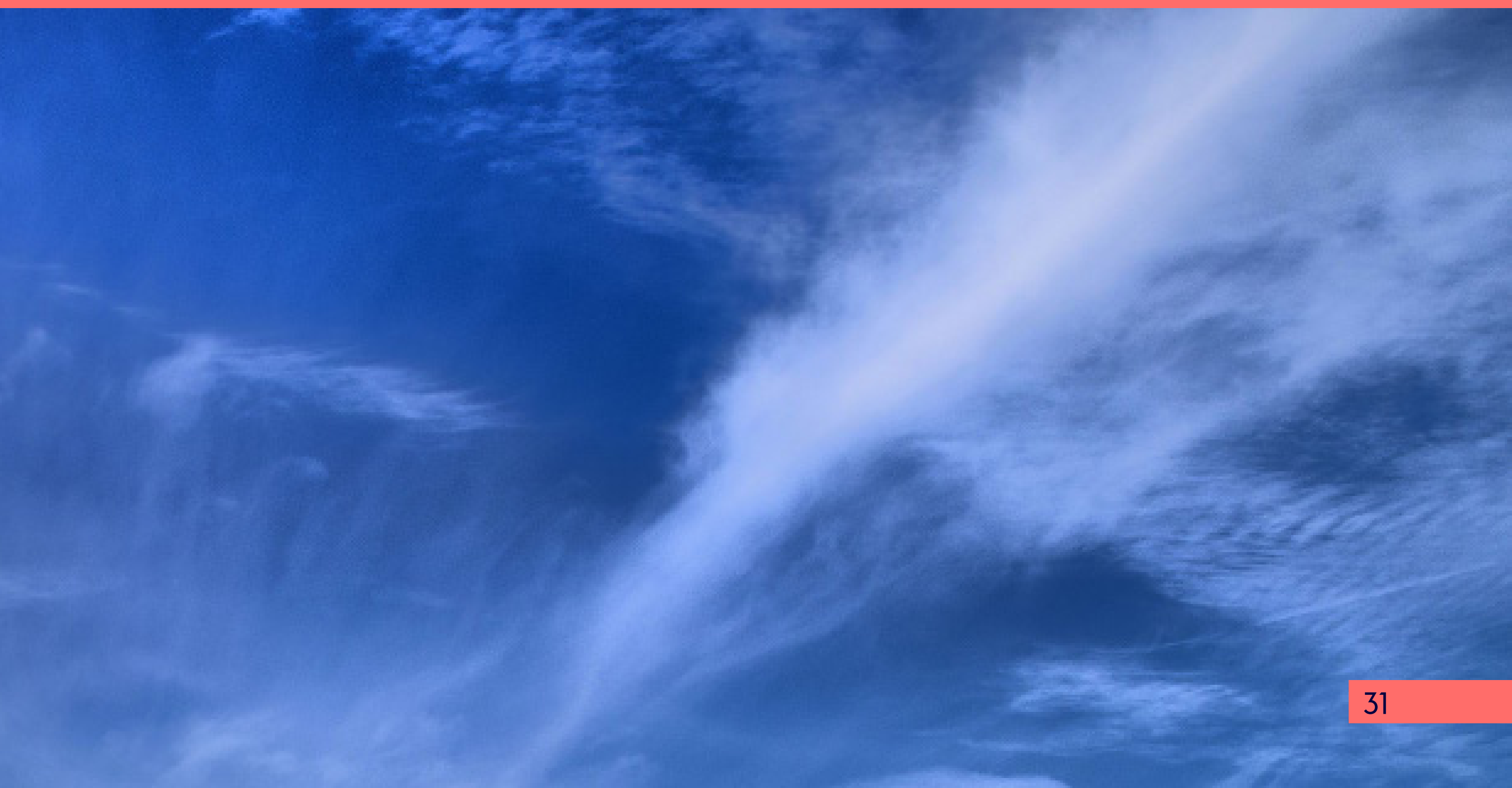
7.6 Nearly all (95%) overseas delegates travel by plane as their primary means of reaching the event city or somewhere close to it. Many (40%) fly to another UK city and then find another means of reaching the event city, usually the train. This is particularly true for events in England & Wales outside London (63% of overseas delegates fly to a different city).

7.7 Delegates to events in Scotland and London are much more likely to fly to the event city (78% and 70% respectively). About one in five (19%) overseas delegates travelling to London take the train (Eurostar).

7.8 Some overseas delegates comment that they would have preferred a direct flight to the event city.

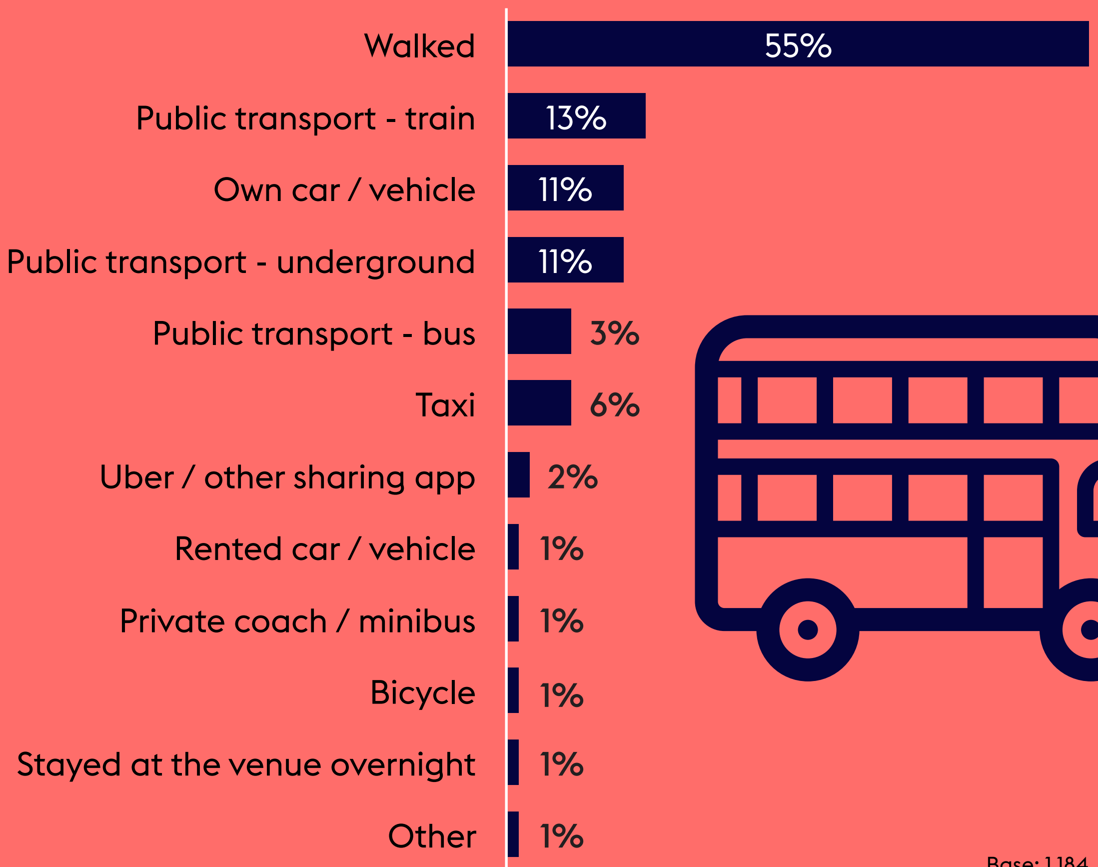
> **"Liverpool is a bit difficult to reach – not many direct flights"**
>
> Italian delegate, Liverpool

> **"I would prefer direct flights from Madrid to Liverpool"**
>
> Spanish delegate, Liverpool



Travel to the venue on the day

Q15 "How did you travel to the event venue today?"



Base: 1,184

Respondents could give more than one answer to Q15

Many walk to the venue

7.9 On the day, many (55%) delegates choose to walk to the venue. This includes 71% of overseas delegates and 47% of UK delegates.

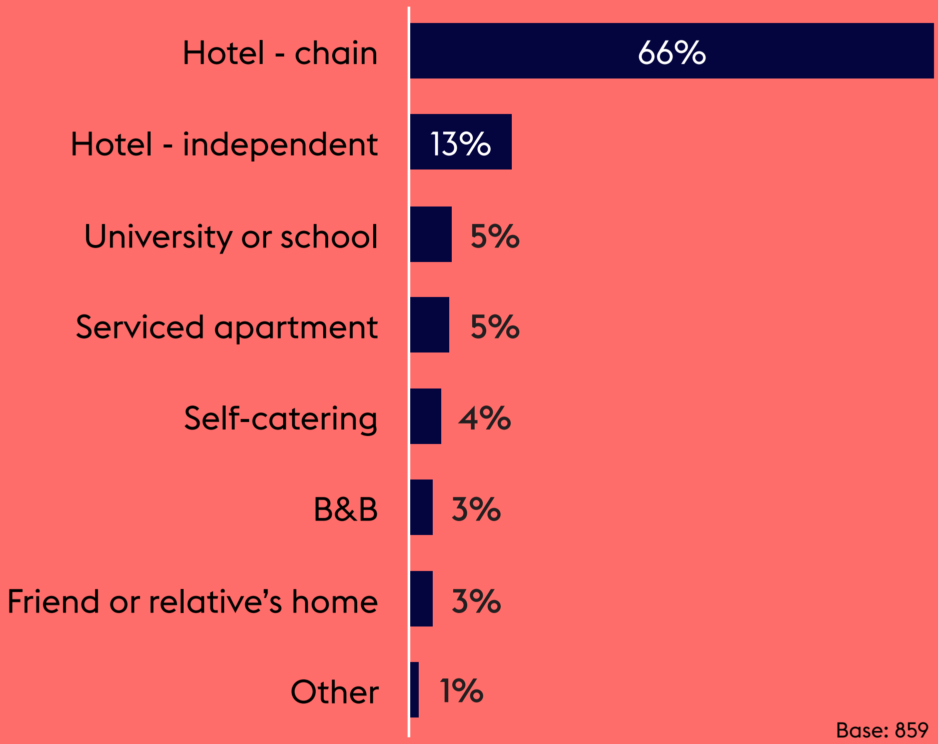
7.10 UK delegates have a wider means of reaching the venue on the day because for some, if it is the first or only day they are attending the event, they travel from home to the venue. 35% of UK delegates reach the venue by public transport (usually train or underground) and 16% use their own vehicle. The accessibility of the venue by road or public transport often determines the choice:

> "Quite easy to get to [Coventry Building Society Arena] by car – just off the motorway"
>
> UK delegate, Coventry

> "Not many buses go out this way – limited public transport"
>
> UK delegate, Coventry

Accomodation

Q16 "What type of accomodation are you staying in to attend the event?"

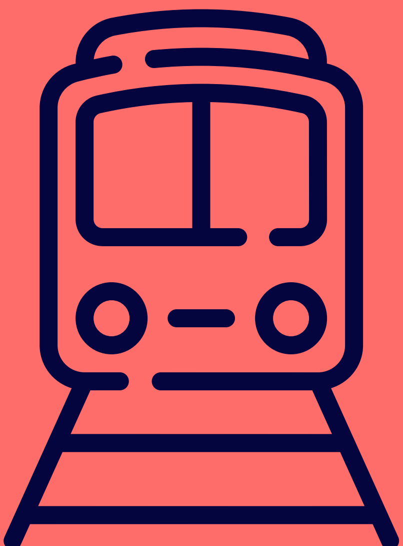


Q16 has been asked to delegates staying overnight

Hotels Dominate

7.11 Most (79%) overnight delegates stay in a hotel, typically a chain. Sometimes organisers have partnerships with local accommodation which delegates can book, and this is more likely to be a chain hotel.

7.12 Each of the other accommodation options is only chosen by a small minority of delegates. Answers do not vary significantly by delegate origin or event region.



Reasons for attending the event

Numerous reasons to attend business events

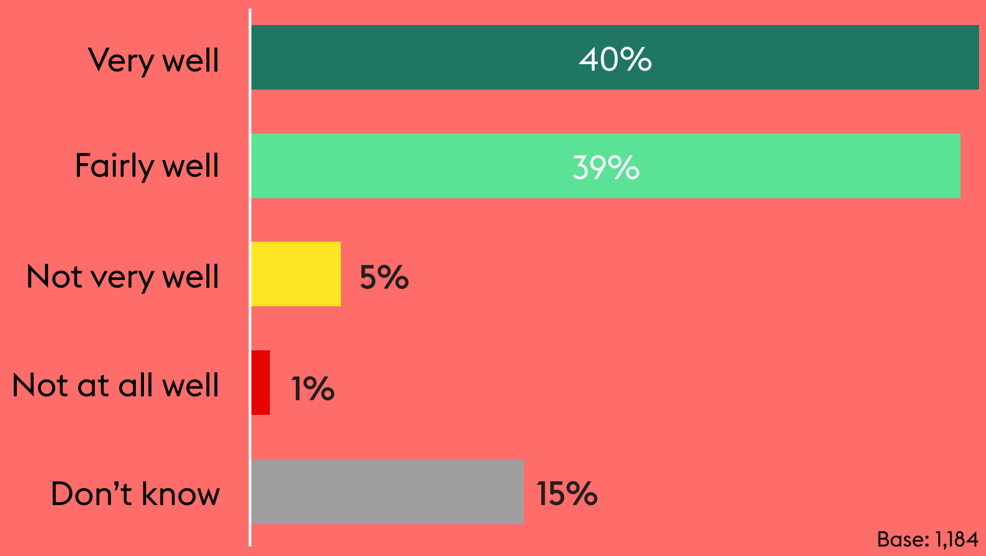
7.13 Delegates have given a range of motives to attend the event. Top of the list is 'networking / collaboration' – a feature of events which was sorely missed during the pandemic years when events temporarily moved online and networking wasn't the same as in person. It is the top reason for attending corporate events and exhibitions. For association events, networking (58%) is similar in importance to learning (60%).

> "London is the place to network and for business opportunities"
>
> UK delegate, London

> "It is a dream to come here and participate – such a memorable subject [discontinuities and singularities in nonlinear evolution partial differential equations]"
>
> Chinese delegate, Oxford

Sustainability – overall views

Q19 "How well do you think the venue and the organisers have done in trying to make this event as sustainable as reasonably possible…?"



Increasingly important subject

7.14 Minimising negative impacts on the environment is becoming increasingly important for business events as more probing questions are asked by funders and decision-makers.

7.15 Most (79%) delegates feel that the organisers did a good job of making the event sustainable, with perhaps some room for improvement, discussed below under Q20.

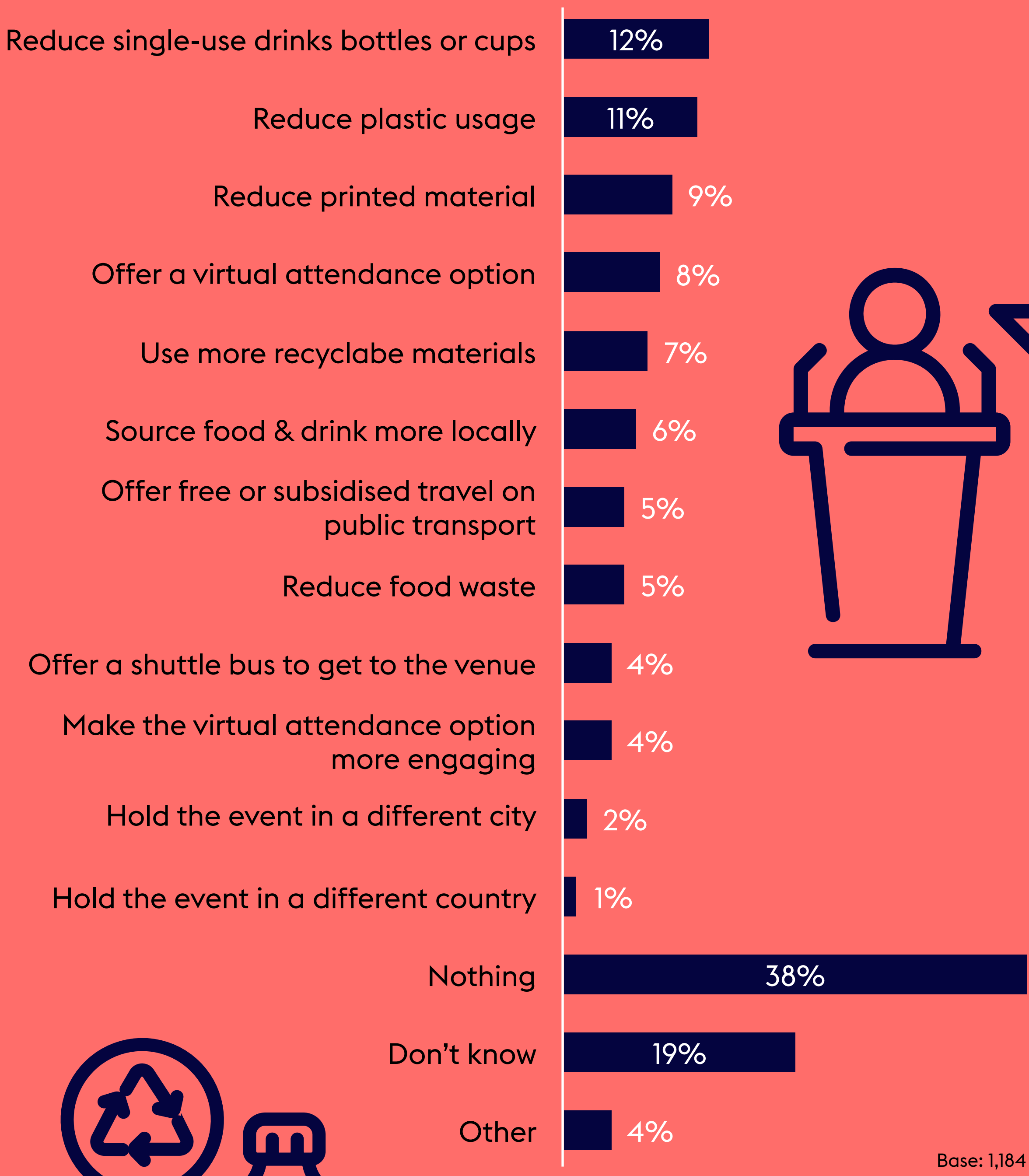
7.16 The proportion answering 'very well' is higher among overseas delegates (47%) than UK delegates (36%). Differences by event region are not significant.

> "Regarding sustainability, I haven't seen anything but I'm sure the organisers are doing their best. It must be very difficult with an event this size."
>
> UK delegate, Newport

> "Conference organisers describe it as a green city. It's accessible by train from London and Manchester."
>
> US delegate, Sheffield

Being more sustainable

Q20 “Is there anything you think the venue or the organisers could have done to make this event more sustainable?” (unprompted)



A number of ideas to consider

7.17 There is no single measure which stands out particularly in terms of what venues and organisers could have done better, but there are numerous ideas to consider if not already implemented.

7.18 Some delegates say they turned up with their own drinks bottle, only to find water refill machines not working or non-existent.

> "Water stations. They had one in the foyer but it's not working."
>
> UK delegate, Newport

Credit:
Tottenham Hotspur/Dare Skywalk Edge

7.19 Many events now have a conference app instead of printed material. At academic (association) events in particular, this cuts down on a considerable amount of paperwork in printing abstracts. Some delegates still feel though that there is unnecessary printed material and bags of giveaways, which until recent years used to be a common feature of business events.

> **“A lot of plastic waste with giveaways”**
>
> UK delegate, London

> **“At this event there’s just too much plastic and not enough recyclable product”**
>
> UK delegate, Birmingham

> **“Sponsored free plastic sunglasses were very wasteful!”**
>
> UK delegate, Brighton

7.20 Some delegates are posing questions about the menu, and whether it should be vegetarian or even vegan:

> **“They could change the food at the venue to all plant-based”**
>
> UK delegate, Glasgow

> **“Use vegan food”**
>
> Belgian delegate, Glasgow

7.21 More assistance with shuttle buses or public transport could help some delegates avoid using their cars to reach venues which are outside of the city.

> **"Regarding sustainability, I think that the organisers could have organised a shuttle bus to bring people to the event, possibly from Newport, so public transport could have been an option. It's difficult to get here without driving."**
>
> UK delegate, Newport

7.22 Some delegates comment there needed to be more recycling bins at the venue.

> **"No recycling bins here in the venue"**
>
> UK delegate, Coventry

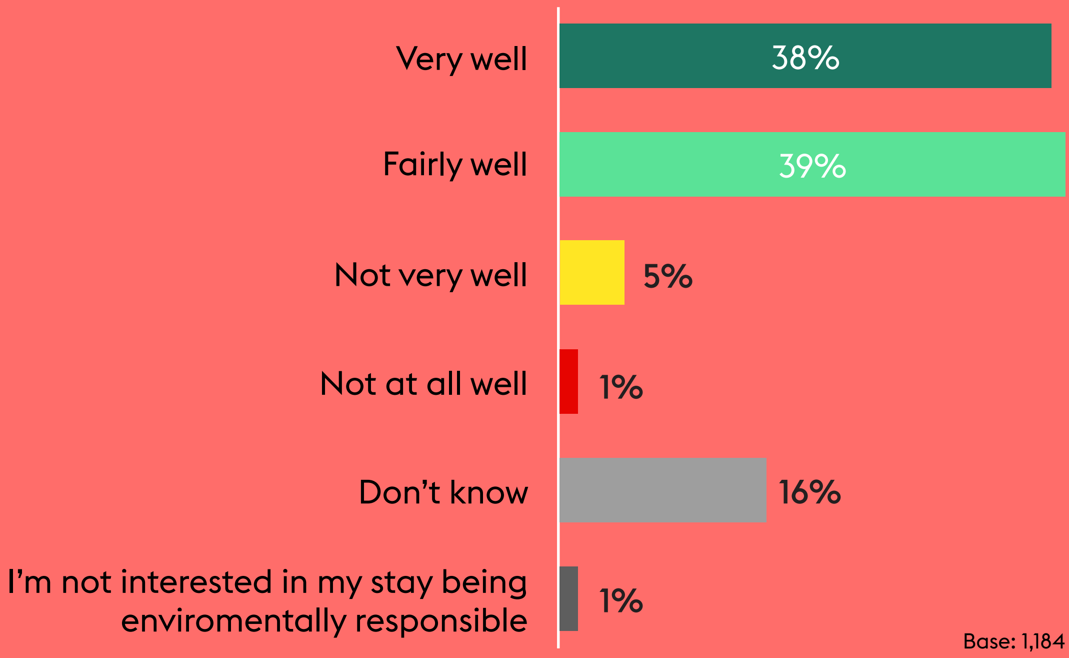
> **"Bins show general waste and recycling sections, but there is no partition in the bin itself, so everything becomes mixed"**
>
> UK delegate, Edinburgh

7.23 Some feel that carpets at exhibitions can be a waste if they don't get reused.

> **"Brand new carpet was unrolled for this event ... I hope it's used again"**
>
> UK delegate, Coventry

Views on city sustainability

Q21 "And how well do you think the [event city] has supported you to have an enviromentally responsible stay...?"



Similar feedback to Q19 on venues & organisers

7.24 Views on how well the event city has supported delegates to have an environmentally responsible stay is similar to feedback on venues & organisers in Q19 – mostly positive, with some room for improvement. 45% of overseas delegates have answered 'very well', which is higher than among UK delegates (35%).

> **"Could have better transport links"**
> UK delegate, Aberdeen

7.25 Results by individual event cities mostly do not differ significantly from each other due to low sample sizes, but the following cities seem to stand out with the proportion of delegates answering 'very well':

- Brighton (62%)
- Glasgow (52%)

7.26 Ideas for improved city sustainability include better public transport links to the venue and more recycling bins.

> **"I noticed there are not many recycling bins"**
> Dutch delegate, Sheffield

Accessibility needs

7.27 29 delegates (3%) say they have accessibility requirements relevant to the event. This includes 20 UK delegates and 9 overseas delegates.

7.28 18 of these 29 delegates say they informed the venue or the organisers about their accessibility requirements before the event – the other 11 did not.

Q24 "How satisfied do you feel that the event organisers and the venue have met your accessibility requirements?"

Results are shown as numbers of respondents rather than percents due to low base

Satisfaction correlates with informing before the event

7.29 Satisfaction with accessibility needs being met is positive on balance, but some delegates have been left feeling dissatisfied. To some extent, this seems to depend on whether the delegate informed the venue or organisers beforehand. Among the 18 who did, 11 have answered 'very satisfied' and 5 have answered 'fairly satisfied'. Among the 11 who did not, only 6 have been satisfied, with the other 5 being dissatisfied.

"There's no-one doing sign language"

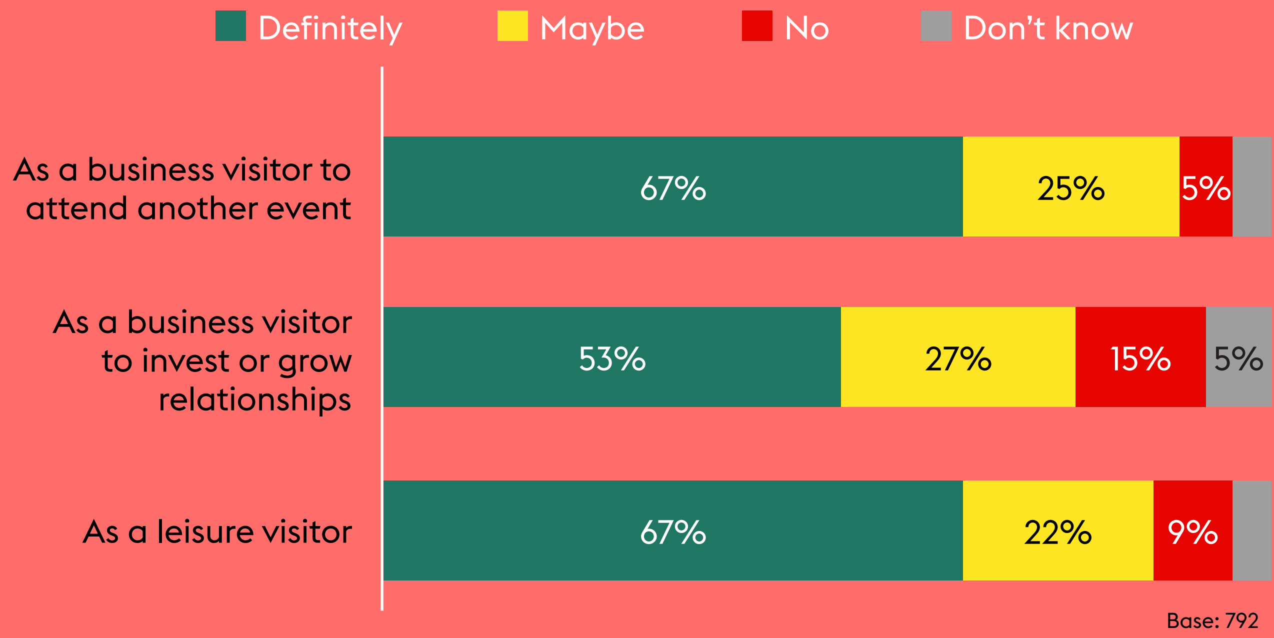
UK delegate, Edinburgh

"Lack of facilities for people in wheelchairs. No ramps, wide doorways."

UK, delegate, Llandudno

Intentions to return (UK delegates)

Q25 (UK delegates) "Having attended an event in this city and region, do you hope to return...?"



Credit: VisitBritain

Many hopes for returning

7.30 Among UK delegates, the majority say they hope to return to the event city / region either for business or leisure.

7.31 Results by individual event cities mostly do not differ significantly from each other due to low sample sizes, but the following cities seem to stand out with the proportion of delegates answering 'definitely' for another event:

- Newport (Celtic Manor) (100%)
- Edinburgh (87%)
- Birmingham (83%)

7.32 Edinburgh also stands out as a city for investing or growing relationships, with 80% of UK delegates answering 'definitely'.

7.33 Bristol scores highly for leisure returns (20 out of 21 UK delegates have answered 'definitely'), as does Edinburgh (85%).

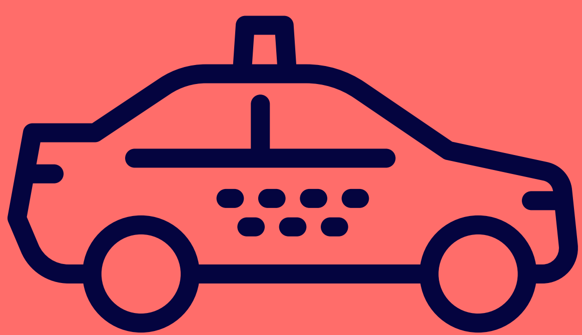
7.34 Manchester scores highly on all three aspects, but its UK delegate sample is small (16) and so this finding is indicative only.

> "An amazing place for business and leisure. I love it here."
>
> UK delegate, London

> "Good opportunity to invest here"
>
> UK delegate, Newcastle Gateshead

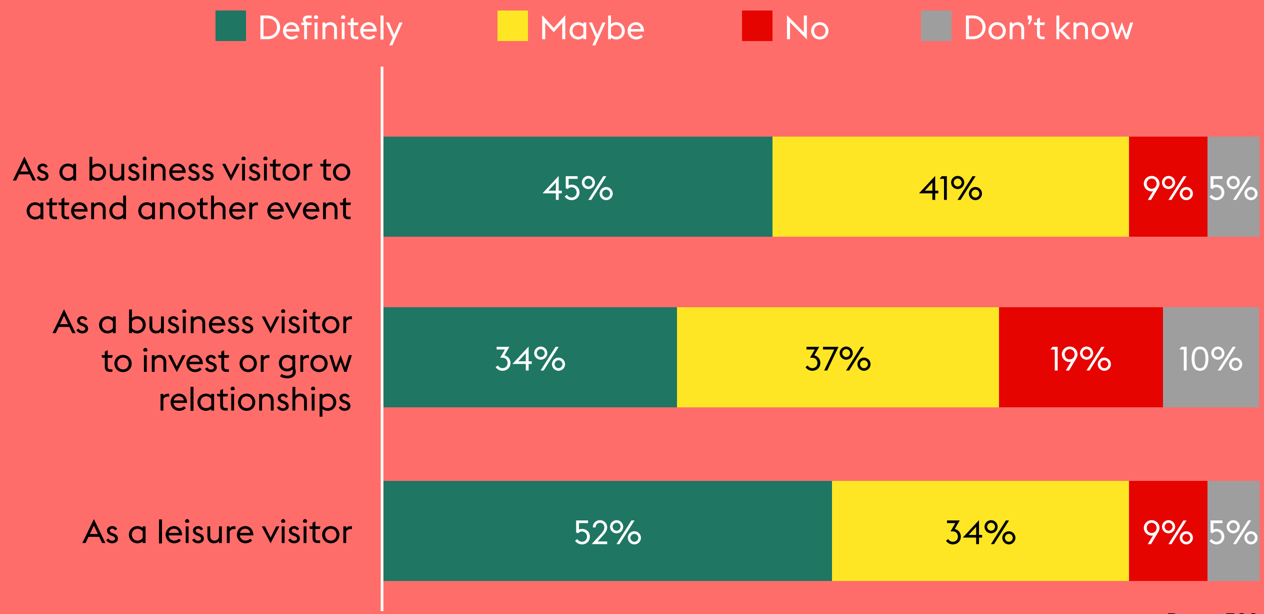
> "I love Oxford and will come again privately"
>
> UK delegate, Oxford

> "It is a good destination for both business and leisure as it has got everything for both purposes"
>
> UK delegate, Edinburgh



Intentions to return (overseas delegates)

Q25 (Overseas delegates) "Having attended an event in this city and region, do you hope to return...?"



Base: 392

Some positive intentions

7.35 Intentions among overseas delegates are lower than among UK delegates because of the practicalities of seeing those intentions through, but nevertheless, UK event cities are leaving good impressions on many.

> **"I enjoyed my stay. I need more time to see the city. Maybe I'll come again in July or August."**
>
> Japanese delegate, Newcastle Gateshead

> **"It's a nice place to visit to start touring Scotland"**
>
> Dutch delegate, Glasgow

7.36 Sample sizes of overseas delegates when split by individual cities are mostly very small, but Edinburgh stands out for leisure, with 81% of its overseas delegates hoping to return for this purpose.

> **"It's a very nice destination and I wish I had more time to visit"**
>
> German delegate, Edinburgh

7.37 Nearly all feedback on UK cities from overseas delegates is very positive. Many comments have been made about the friendliness of the people, the beautiful architecture, history and green spaces in cities, which some say cities in their own country lack.

> **"I'm deeply impressed with the city … a fascinating history"**
>
> German delegate, Glasgow

> **"It's scenic – different from US cities – it's green"**
>
> US delegate, Liverpool

> **"Beautiful city and lovely people"**
>
> New Zealand delegate, Cambridge

> **"Best place in world – other than the USA!"**
>
> US delegate, London

Credit:
VisitBritain/Quintin Lake/Andy Edwards

Credit:
VisitBritain/Peter Hughes

8. Implications for VisitBritain and Partners

Even stronger business case for attracting events	Average delegate spend at business events in the UK has risen well above inflation since 2017 due to longer stays. The business case for attracting events to the UK is now even stronger than before.
Invest resources in attracting trip extensions	Extending the trip increases spend by a factor of 2.5. It therefore makes sense for organisations with an interest in the economic return from hosting events in a destination to commit resources to encouraging extensions. In the previous 2017 research, we conducted depth interviews with trip extenders to understand more about motivations and what can be done to encourage extensions. This research showed that the practicality of extending rather than the appeal of the destination is the most influential factor on whether or not to extend. Delegates need to see that they can get around the destination very efficiently and make the most of the limited time they have.
Don't overlook incentive trips	The field of 'business events' often gets stakeholders thinking of conferences and delegates dressed in suits, but incentive trips are highly valuable, generating spend per delegate which is more than three times higher than for conferences & exhibitions. The 2017 research included interviews with organisers and this showed that there is more scope for influencing the destination choice than for conferences. These are good reasons why investing in attracting incentive trips could prove very fruitful.
Strong seasonal opportunity	The opportunity to attract conferences & exhibitions (with or without extensions) and incentive trips is strong during spring and autumn when leisure tourism traditionally drops off outside of the peak summer season. Business visitors fill some bed spaces that may otherwise remain empty, making investment in business tourism a vital complement to leisure tourism.
Many delegates intend to return	The majority of delegates say they hope to return to the city / region for leisure and/or business. It is hard to know how many of these intentions actually get followed through after delegates return home and resume their daily work, but it is a good start that the intentions are at least there. This adds to the value of attracting business events to the UK – economic return from delegates is likely not limited to the spend measured in this survey.

Credit:
VisitBritain/Michael Matti

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