Whitepaper

THE 2025 VENUE TREND REPORT

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Mash Media

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ABOUT THIS WHITEPAPER

Since the pandemic, the events landscape has undergone significant transformation, prompting a fundamental reassessment of how the industry plans.

At the centre of this evolution are venues, the cornerstone of every event, now facing greater pressure than ever to adapt to shifting organiser demands, rapid technological change, and economic uncertainty.

To better understand how venues are responding to these dynamics, we conducted a comprehensive survey of 57 venues across a range of formats, sizes, and locations. The survey explored key trends in sustainability, technology investment, economic resilience, organiser behaviour, and operational challenges, all critical to understanding how venues are evolving in 2025 and beyond.

Venues are not just four walls and a space in between. They have a character that dictates in part, the experience of the event. Venues provide the foundation for hosting, for building communities, and for serving the wider industry.

This whitepaper is designed for venue professionals, event organisers, industry suppliers, and decision-makers looking to better understand the evolving needs and expectations shaping the venue landscape.

If you are an organiser asking yourself how you can work with venues better, this whitepaper will give you insight into what venues are doing, struggling with, and thinking.

If you are another venue, this will show you the bigger picture what other venues are asking for, what events they host, and provide insight into what your venue may need to start doing that perhaps you haven't thought about yet.

If you are a supplier, this too should offer insight into what venues are thinking and what they want from their suppliers or where there may be a gap.

This whitepaper offers valuable insight to all the players in the events industry, all of us who come together to work as a team and make events extraordinary and to understand how we, as an industry, can move forward and create unforgettable experiences.

Kristyna O'Connell
UK Venues & Destinations Correspondent

BEHIND THE DATA: WHO WE SPOKE TO

Type of Event Space

Types of locations

Our in-depth research into the venue trends shaping the industry in 2025 drew insights from 57 venues across the UK and internationally. These ranged from heritage landmarks and academic institutions to forest retreats and cutting-edge convention centres.

The venues that contributed to this whitepaper span a wide spectrum, from urban locations such as Olympia Events, The National Gallery, and the House of Commons, to innovative leisure-led venues like Swingers Crazy Golf and the unique woodland settings of Center Parcs Conferences & Events.

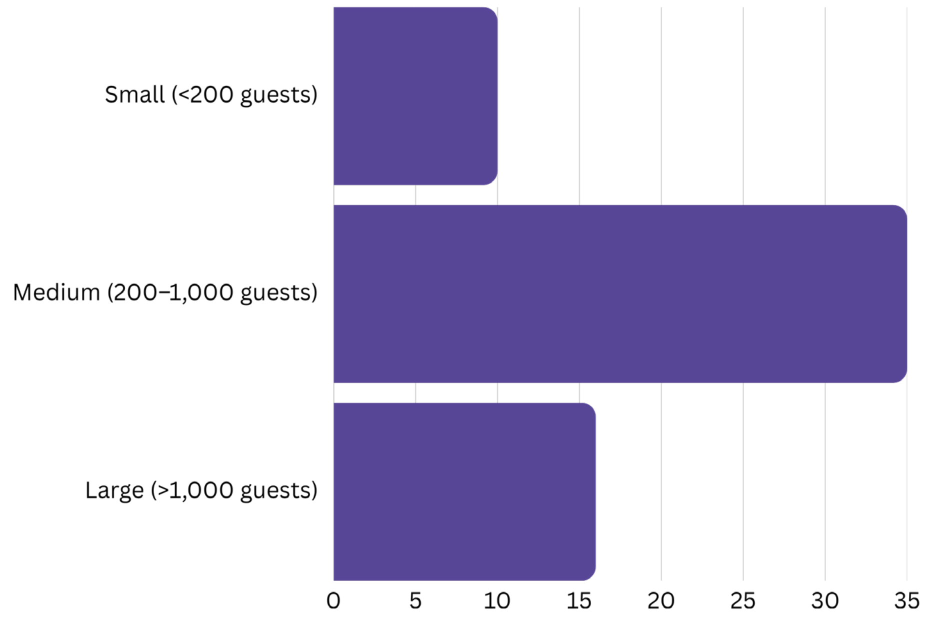
Also included in the survey were racecourses like Aintree, Newmarket, Haydock Park, and Sandown Park, alongside academic institutions such as Regent's University London and the University of Aberdeen.

Prestigious hotels and hospitality-driven venues also featured The Grand Hotel Birmingham, Pullman Liverpool, Holiday Inn Liverpool City Centre, DoubleTree by Hilton London Kingston, and the Maldron Hotel Liverpool.

Other venues included cultural institutions like National Museums Liverpool, Aberdeen Performing Arts, and Smith Square Hall, to historic spaces like Ashridge House, 116 Pall Mall, and One Birdcage Walk.

Other contributors include:
Albert Hall Manchester, The Mermaid London, Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel, Grand Station, {10-11} Carlton House Terrace, 1 Wimpole Street, 20 Cavendish Square, Lifehouse Spa & Hotel, Royal Air Force Club, Mercure London Earls Court Hotel, The BDRC Venue Verdict Broadway House, Farnborough International Exhibition & Conference Centre, QEII Centre, The Honourable Artillery Company (HAC), Vue Entertainment, The Racquet Club Hotel, Radisson Blu Liverpool, Aloft Liverpool, Chapel House Estate, Thainstone Events, 60 Great Queen Street, Union Kirk, The Aberdeen Altens Hotel, and the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

Maximum capacity



THE TRUTH ABOUT VENUES

*Photo credit: Olympia

A venue is an active collaborator in delivering event experiences. Our survey responses reveal that venues across the UK are investing in adaptability, improving infrastructure, and refining their value propositions to meet the evolving expectations of event organisers.

For example, Albert Hall Manchester, a Grade II-listed heritage venue, which caters to premium corporate gatherings with cabaret capacity for 288 and banqueting for up to 362 and is well-equipped with professional AV, lighting rigs, and on-site technicians, a combination that reflects how historic venues are modernising for high-end corporate use.

On the other end of the spectrum, Swingers Crazy Golf Club on Oxford Street represents the rise of experiential venues, offering up to 900 standing capacities for informal, entertainment-led events, particularly popular with lifestyle and brand clients.

Grand Station in Wolverhampton, with its maximum capacity of 1,000 guests is one of several venues hosting exhibitions, weddings, parties, and banquets.

These multi-purpose venues are increasingly expected to provide flexible layouts, in-house services, and scalable infrastructure for both B2B and B2C formats.

Similarly, Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel offers extensive indoor and outdoor capacity, including 600+ theatre-style seating and festival-style outdoor space for over 1,000 attendees, making it ideal for both formal and community-driven events.

Blank canvas venues are also proving popular. OXO2, with its minimalist aesthetic and river views, is routinely selected for product launches, press days, and awards dinners. These venues exemplify a growing trend towards modular, customisable spaces that allow organisers to shape the environment around their brand or message.

Across all venue types, in-person events remain dominant. Every surveyed venue identified face-to-face formats as the most in-demand, though several including Kings Place and Excel London are maintaining hybrid infrastructure in anticipation of demand resurgences. However, hybrid is now more commonly seen as a supporting feature rather than a default format.

Multiple respondents noted a growing request for flexible configurations, such as cabaret-style seating, theatre set-ups, and multi-room flows that accommodate both content delivery and networking simultaneously.

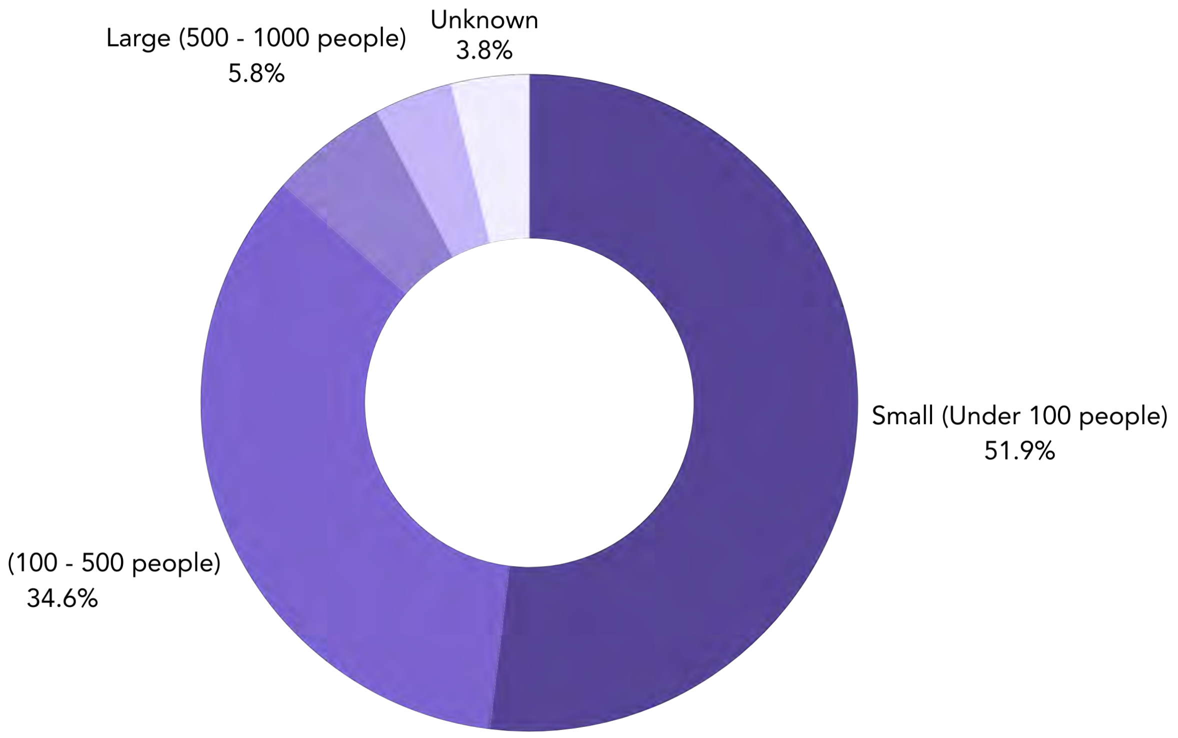
Technology offerings are steadily improving across the board. Some venues include AV, lighting, and live-streaming capabilities as standard, while others like the Royal College of Physicians offer advanced hybrid setups and studio-style recording environments. The uptake of event apps, wayfinding tools, and sustainability tracking platforms is growing, though not yet universal.

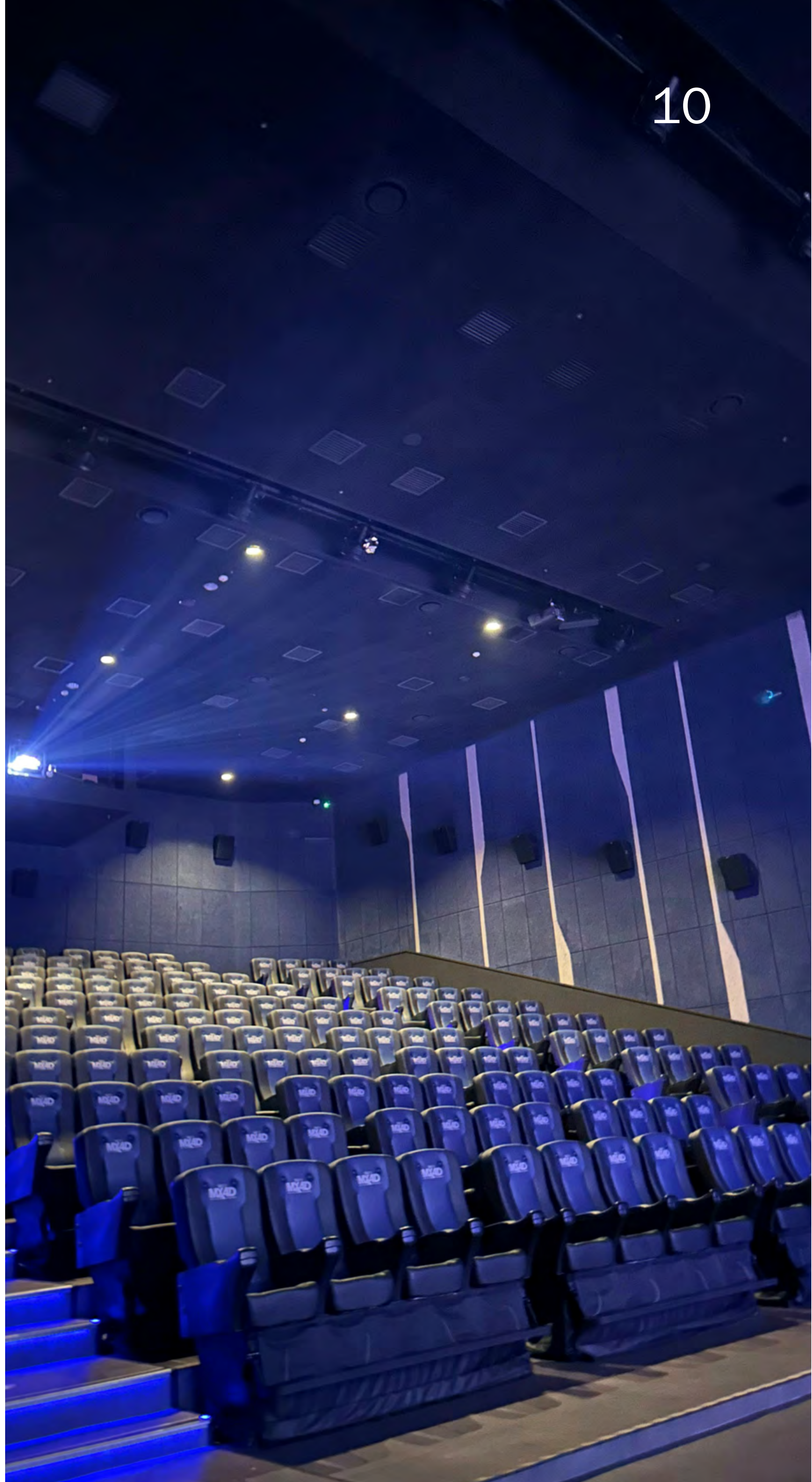
The survey also captured a sharp increase in requests for sustainability features. Venues such as The Brewery and BMA House referenced Green Key or MIA accreditation, reusable service ware, and supplier partnerships aligned with green initiatives. Still, not all venues have formal certifications though many report they are working towards them due to client pressure.

From pricing structures and booking lead times to carbon footprint tracking and immersive technology, venues are now expected to deliver space, service, and strategy. They are under pressure to remain competitive, future-ready, and aligned with organiser expectations not only to secure bookings, but to help shape the broader direction of the events industry.

Common event sizes

The event sizes hosted at the 57 venues we surveyed varied: 27 venues hosted small events (under 100 attendees), 18 hosted medium-sized events (100–500), 3 hosted large events (500–1,000), and 2 venues hosted very large events (over 1,000).





FINDINGS: THE TRENDS

TREND 1
TECHNOLOGY & AI

Technology in standard packages

Audio-visual setup plays a pivotal role in the overall success of an event, as it can make or break an event. AV setups are common across all venues as a bare minimum. From our findings 20 venues offer hybrid/live streaming support, while only a few venues provide in-house technicians, high-end cinema projection, or dedicated digital branding opportunities (e.g. Vue, Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre).

Demand for immersive tech

Immersive events are more and more popular. Delegates no longer want to attend a boring event. They want to be immersed in something, to be fully connected to the event that they are attending. With this, the demand for immersive tech, too, needs to be incorporated into the venues' offering, especially from 2025 onwards. When asked, 39 venues (75%) said that the demand for immersive tech hasn't changed, while 12 venues (23.1%) said it has increased slightly and 1 venue said it has significantly increased. Delegates want immersive events. Organisers want to create those for their delegates. Venues need to understand this and ensure their offering aligns with the demand.

Tech budget

When asked whether the tech budget has increased, decreased, or stayed the same at their venues, 38 responses (73.1%) said the budget has stayed the same as in previous years. Twelve responses (23.1%) said it had risen compared to previous years, suggesting that tech has become a bigger priority for venues, and 2 (3.8%) venues said their tech budget was lower this year. What does this tell us? Moving forward, especially post-Covid technology is a priority and shouldn't be overlooked. Venues need to adjust their budgets, making sure they prioritise the things organisers are asking for.

Use of AI

AI has been on the radar as of late, with many fearing how it might take over the world we live in, replacing jobs and creating more problems than benefits. Yet, 17 venues said that they use AI (32.7%) while 35 venues (67.3%) said that they do not use AI. According to the data, most venues have yet to give in to the use of AI in their roles. It may be because of the fear of what AI could do, or perhaps it is due to a lack of understanding of how AI can be used in the events sector. When it comes to AI, there is still more education to be had, and we should be investing more in learning how it can be used effectively and safely.

Prediction

By 2026, technology will be a core component of standard venue packages, with hybrid/live streaming capabilities becoming a baseline expectation and immersive tech moving from niche to norm as demand for engaging experiences grows. While most venues currently report static tech budgets, strategic reallocations and tech partnerships are likely to emerge as organisers prioritise digital enhancements. AI adoption, though still limited, is set to rise steadily, particularly in areas like delegate support, scheduling, and content automation. Venues that adapt by integrating reliable AV, immersive environments, and smart tech solutions will stand out in a competitive events landscape.

TREND 2
CATERING & PARTNERS

Catering shapes the overall delegate experience and supports the flow of the day. Beyond simply providing food, it fosters networking, reflects the event's values, and can leave a lasting impression on attendees. From our findings, most venues cater to small and medium-sized events, with 47.4% hosting events for under 100 attendees and 31.6% accommodating between 100 and 500 guests.

How venues deliver

For example, 20 Cavendish Square, a Grade II-listed venue in central London, uses a contract caterer from Seasoned Venues, combining the reliability of an in-house arrangement with the quality of a premium partner. Similarly, Regent's University London outsources catering through a long-term contract with Houston and Hawkes, ensuring consistency for both academic and corporate functions.

At the larger end of the spectrum, Aintree Racecourse and Haydock Park, both part of the Jockey Club portfolio, partner with Jockey Club Catering – Compass Group, a nationally recognised operation experienced in delivering food service at scale. These partnerships enable racecourses to serve banquets, exhibitions, and conferences without compromising on efficiency or capacity.

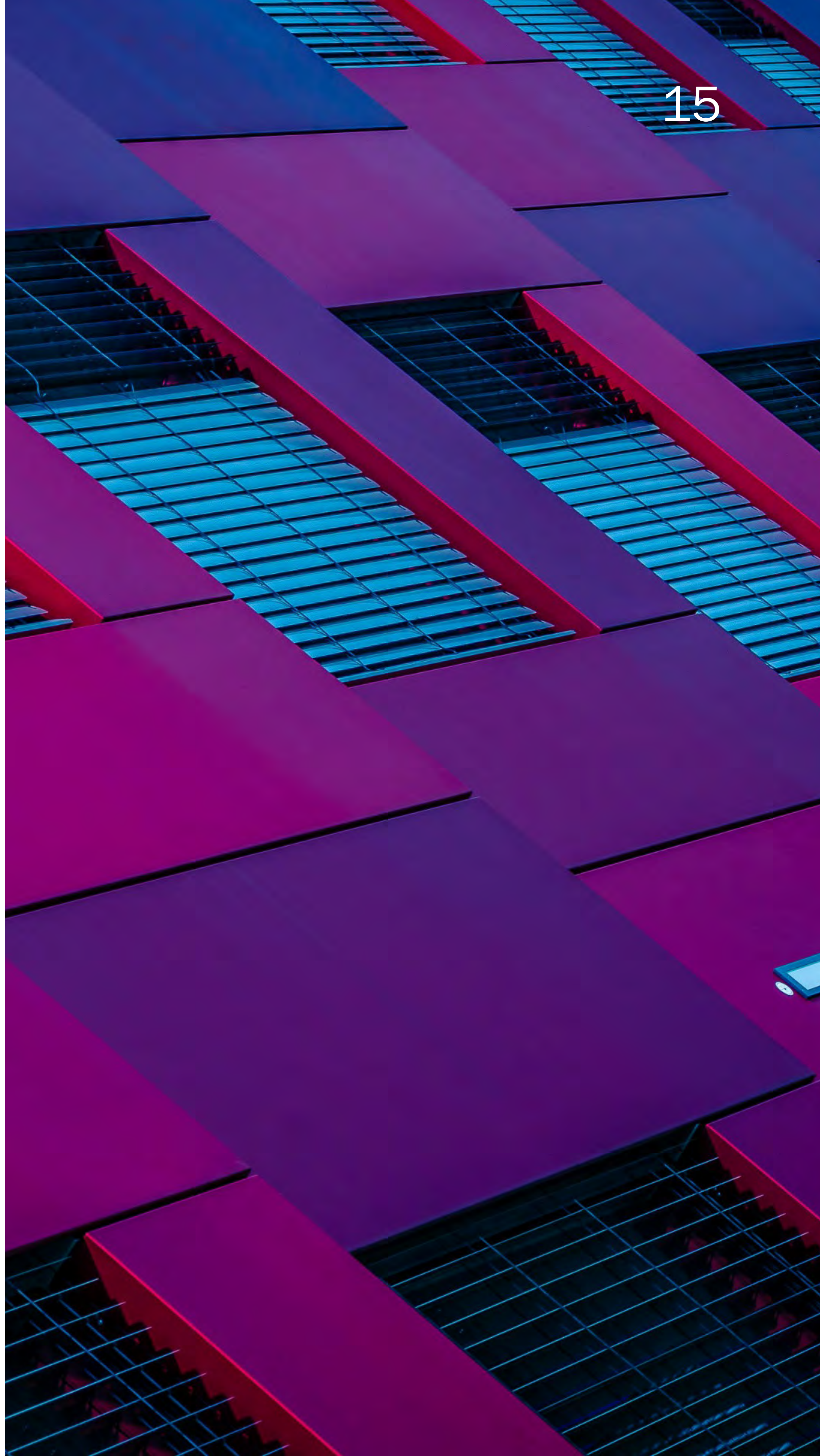
Flexibility through preferred partners

In contrast, OXO2, a riverside venue popular for product launches and awards dinners, offers a preferred list of external caterers. This gives organisers more flexibility to choose a culinary partner aligned with their brand or guest expectations – a model mirrored by other blank canvas venues targeting creative industries.

Evolving expectations

Even among venues that offer fully in-house catering, there's a clear trend towards greater menu personalisation, dietary adaptability, and an emphasis on sustainably sourced ingredients. This aligns with broader client expectations and reflects a growing pressure on venues to differentiate through service, not just space.

Across all models – in-house, contracted, or partner-led – the goal remains the same: to offer seamless, high-quality food experiences that complement the event and strengthen the overall value proposition of the venue.



The data behind the catering models

This likely influences the widespread use of in-house catering, which is offered by 42 out of 57 venues, as it allows for greater control over quality, cost, and logistics – particularly well-suited to smaller-scale functions.

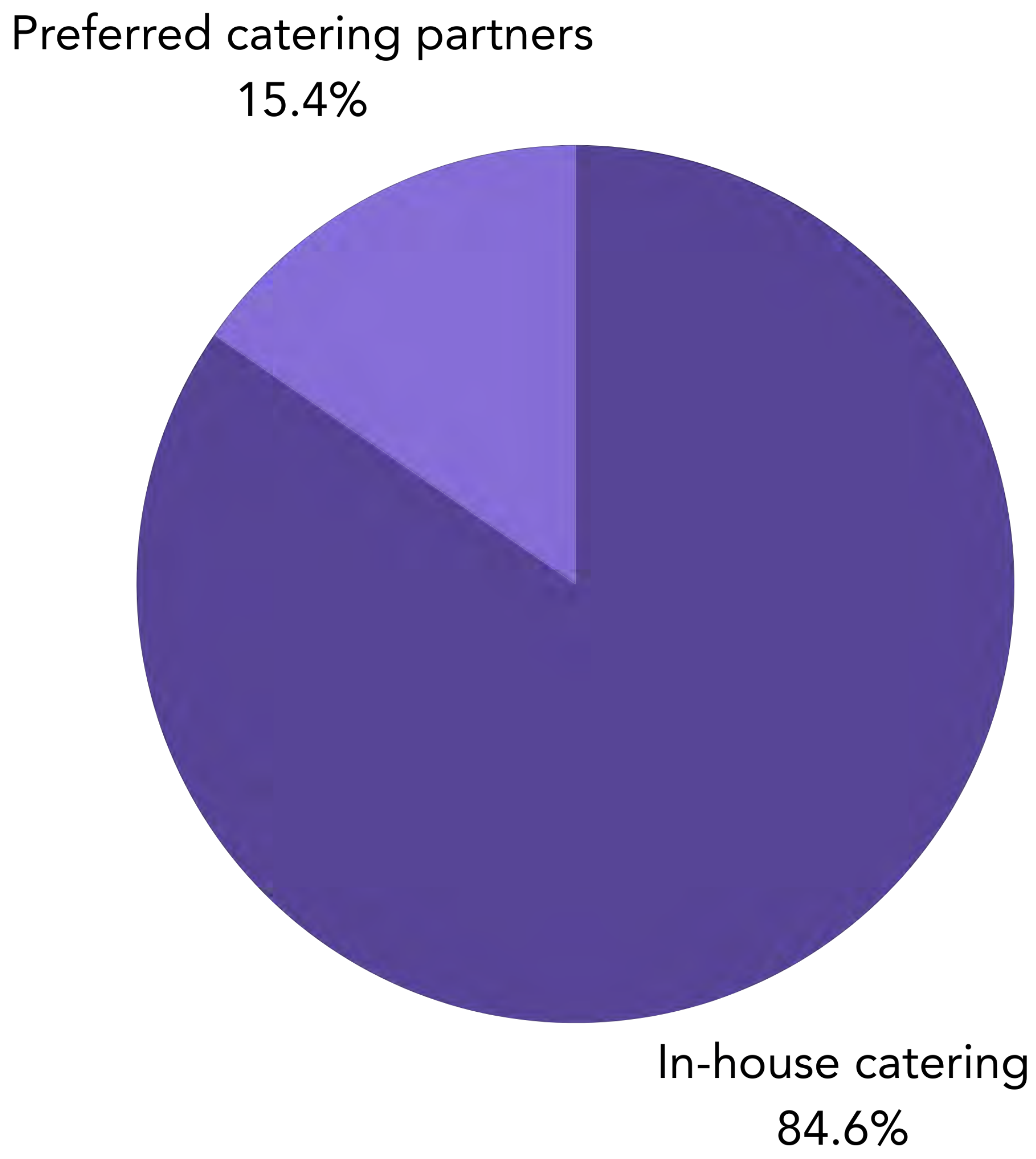
In contrast, the 10 venues that use preferred catering partners may be doing so to support more complex or premium event experiences, such as bespoke menus or large-scale catering requirements.

With so few venues hosting events for over 500 delegates, there is limited demand for large-scale functions that would necessitate external catering solutions.

Top catering partners named

Preferred caters include:

- Seasoned
- Searcy's
- Moving Venue
- Jockey Club Catering
- Alexander & Bjorck



Prediction

By 2026, the dominance of small and medium-sized events will likely continue, reinforcing the preference for in-house catering models that offer control and efficiency. However, as some venues aim to attract higher-end or larger-scale events, the use of preferred catering partners may gradually increase to meet growing expectations for bespoke menus and elevated service. While large-capacity catering will remain a niche, venues seeking to diversify their event portfolio may begin investing in more flexible catering options to appeal to a broader client base.

TREND 3
BOOKING TRENDS & COSTS

Understanding booking trends and cost pressures is essential for everyone in the events industry. From organisers and venues to delegates. For organisers, insights into lead times, event sizes, and sector demand help shape more strategic planning, ensuring availability, appropriate budgeting, and alignment with audience expectations.

For venues, tracking these trends supports pricing strategy and marketing focus. As event costs continue to rise across the board, both organisers and venues must work more collaboratively to balance expectations with deliverables. For delegates, these dynamics impact the overall experience from the format and scale of the event to the quality of production and sustainability of delivery.

Repeat business vs new clients

When we asked 57 venues about repeat business and new clients, 22 venues (42.3%) said they have experience more repeat business in 2025 while 7 venues (13.5%) said that they experienced new clients, with 23 venues (44.2) said that they experienced both equally.

Flexibility through preferred partners

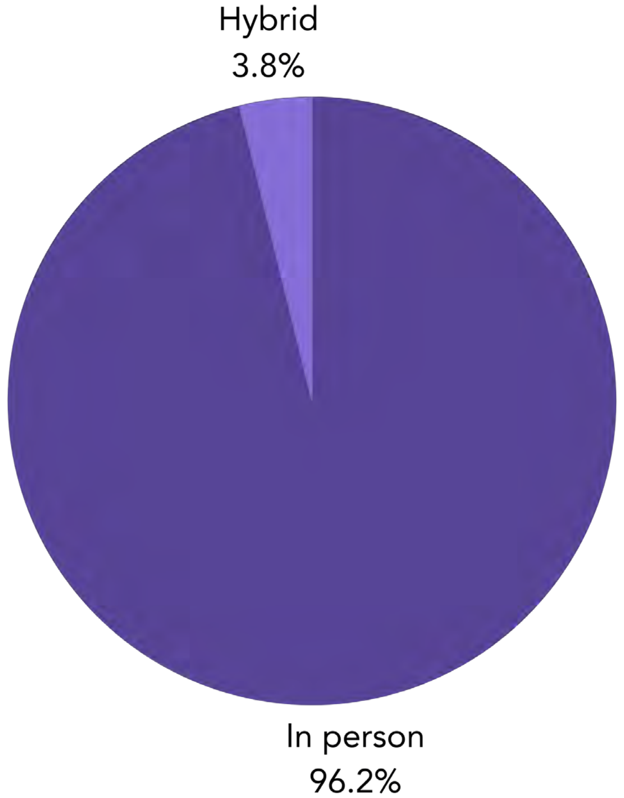
In contrast, OXO2, a riverside venue popular for product launches and awards dinners, offers a preferred list of external caterers. This gives organisers more flexibility to choose a culinary partner aligned with their brand or guest expectations – a model mirrored by other blank canvas venues targeting creative industries.

Event costs trend

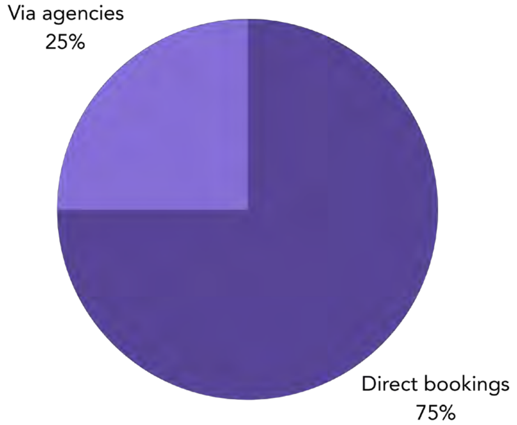
In 2025, everything is more expensive, and the cost of events is not immune. Our data shows that 49 venues (94.2%) have said that the cost of events is rising. This is a very high number and an indicator of how venues have been hit post-covid and amid the cost-of-living crisis. Only 3 venues (5.8%) answered that the costs are staying the same.

Most in-demand event formats

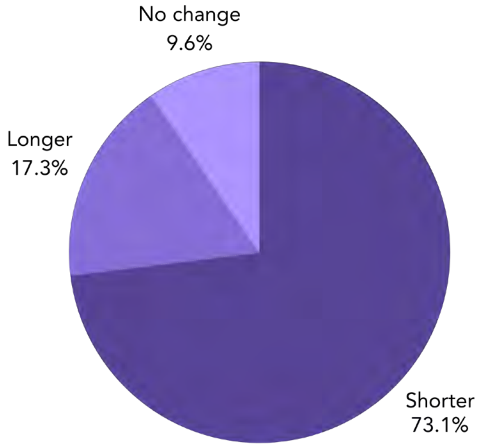
In-person events are overwhelmingly dominant (50 out of 52 venues).



Booking source



Booking lead time changes



Prediction

In 2026, shorter booking lead times will become standard, with in-person events continuing to dominate and hybrid remaining a niche option. Repeat business will be the primary revenue driver, supported by a focus on direct bookings.

TREND 4
SUSTAINABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Sustainability is now a universal consideration across the events industry. Regardless of role or preference, it is an integral part of the operational landscape.

Most venues are actively contributing to this shift, with over 40 reporting dedicated sustainability initiatives. In recent years, the adoption of sustainable practices has moved from a forward-thinking option to a standard expectation.

Today, sustainability holds equal importance to core event elements such as catering, AV, and marketing. It is no longer a value-added extra it is embedded in the very foundation of modern venues and events.

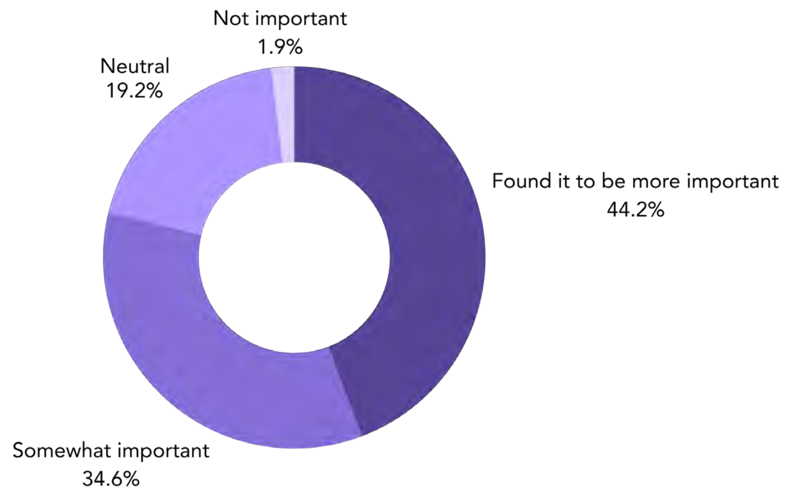
From the data, venues reported a variety of recognised sustainability certifications, with some holding multiple accreditations. Common mentions included Green Key, Greengage ECOsmart and Green Dragon Level 4, as well as industry memberships such as Isla, BEAM, KICC, and the Green Arts Initiative.

Several venues highlighted prestigious building and environmental standards, including ISO14001, BREEAM (with an outstanding rating in progress), and LEED Gold Certification (with a Platinum goal). Additional accolades included the MIA Accreditation, Venue Verdict BVA BDRC Certification and AA Confident. A smaller number mentioned working towards EarthCheck Accreditation or expanding existing green initiatives through corporate sustainability pledges and operational policies.

Additionally, several venues such as Olympia Events and Farnborough International mentioned their bespoke sustainability programmes, The Grand Plan at Olympia and Destination Zero at Farnborough.

The standout initiatives that have been taken on by venues are recycling, zero landfill, local sourcing, EV chargers, and solar panels.

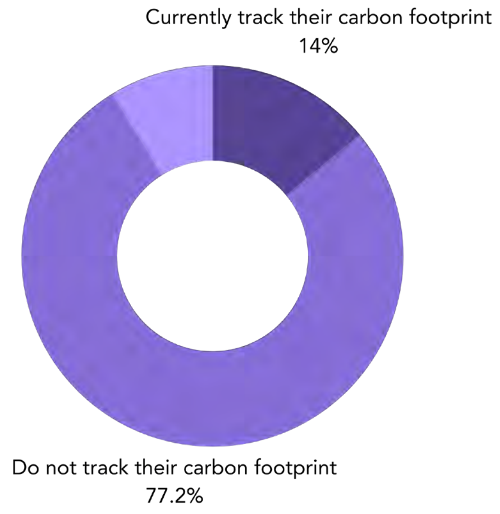
How important is sustainability to venues?



Tracking carbon footprint

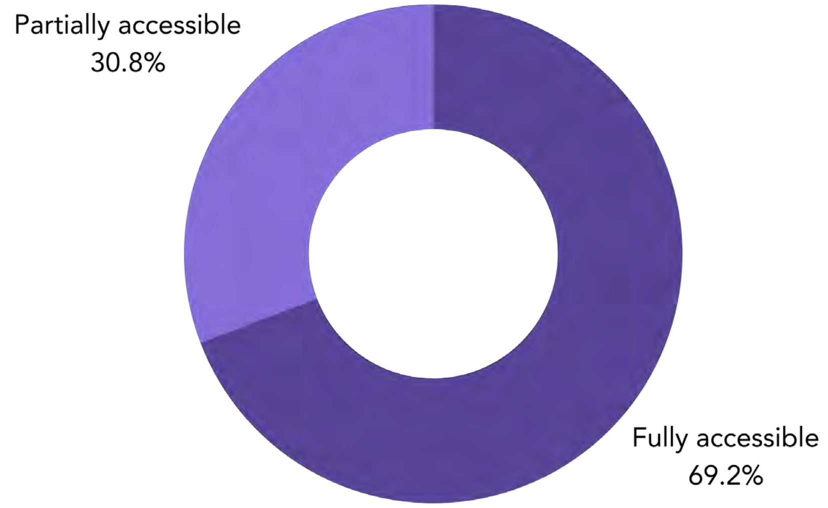
Tracking carbon footprints has moved from a niche initiative to an emerging standard especially among forward-thinking venues. This involves measuring the greenhouse gas emissions associated with hosting an event, including energy usage, catering, transport, waste, and material consumption.

Event organisers are under increasing pressure from stakeholders, sponsors, and attendees to demonstrate environmental responsibility. Venues that can provide transparent data on carbon impact are better positioned to win business from brands with strong Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals.



Accessibility

Accessibility has become an increasingly prominent focus in the events industry in recent years, with venues making significant strides in improving their facilities and services. Out of the 57 venues surveyed, 36 venues (69.2%) are fully accessible, and 16 venues (30.8%) are partially accessible, (with 5 venues unknown). This shows us that more than half of the respondents prioritise accessibility at their venues.



Prediction

Sustainability credentials will shift from a competitive advantage to a client expectation, prompting more venues to invest in recognised certifications and measurable green initiatives. More venues will follow the lead of Olympia Events and Farnborough International by developing their own dedicated sustainability programmes. Accessibility, too, will become a core consideration in every venue’s approach to development, refurbishment, and the overall event hosting process.

CONCLUSION

Venues are an integral part of the event sector. From heritage sites to hybrid-ready conference centres, venues are actively adapting to a changing industry, but there is room for improvement.

The data paints a picture of an industry that is increasingly resilient, yet still catching up in certain areas such as sustainability measurement, AI adoption, and immersive tech integration.

In-person events remain dominant, with 96.2% of venues identifying them as the most in-demand format. Hybrid is still present but largely viewed as a secondary feature rather than a core offering.

Booking trends show shorter lead times, with 73.1% of venues reporting a shift towards last-minute planning. Meanwhile, repeat business remains strong, but there's a nearly equal split between returning clients and new business.

Technology is increasingly seen as critical, yet most venues (73.1%) report their tech budgets have stayed the same. Only 23.1% said their budget had increased, suggesting a gap between ambition and investment. Immersive tech is growing in interest, though 75% of venues report no significant shift in demand, a potential blind spot.

AI adoption is still emerging, with only 32.7% of venues currently using it in operations. There is strong potential here, but clear education and practical implementation guidance are still needed.

Sustainability is now mainstream, with more than 40 venues reporting active initiatives, ranging from zero-landfill targets and EV chargers to solar panels and responsible sourcing. However, only 15.4% of venues currently track their carbon footprint, highlighting a major opportunity for growth and standardisation in carbon accountability.

Accessibility is increasingly prioritised, with 69.2% of venues reporting full accessibility and a further 30.8% partially accessible. This shows meaningful progress but signals room for continued improvement and investment.

As organisers look for more tailored, tech-enabled, and ethically responsible spaces, venues must continue to evolve.

The strongest performers in 2025 and beyond will be those that balance reliability with innovation, scale with flexibility, and vision with action.

Prediction

By building strong partnerships with their suppliers and organisers, venues will continue delivering high-end events the industry loves, with shared support and unity driving future success — and I'll be there to report on it.

On behalf of Mash Media, I would like to thank all the venues who generously shared their insights and expertise in shaping this report. Your contributions have been invaluable in highlighting the trends that will define 2025.

Additionally, I would like to thank the wider events industry, whose commitment and sense of community continue to inspire and drive progress across the sector.

Kristyna O'Connell
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