TRAVEL BUYER SURVEY:

THE ROLE OF A TRAVEL MANAGER

BY BCD TRAVEL RESEARCH & INTELLIGENCE

November 2024

About the survey

In this survey, we explored the profile and responsibilities of travel managers, their interactions with company stakeholders, as well as the changes currently impacting their roles.

The findings are based on an online survey of 187 travel buyers worldwide, conducted between Aug. 5 and Sept.11, 2024.

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Respondent profile

Travel program

57%
Global

32%
Regional

11%
Local

Geography

38% North America

42% Europe

8% Asia Pacific

12% Latin America

Top three industries

18% Manufacturing

14% Life sciences

11% Financial services

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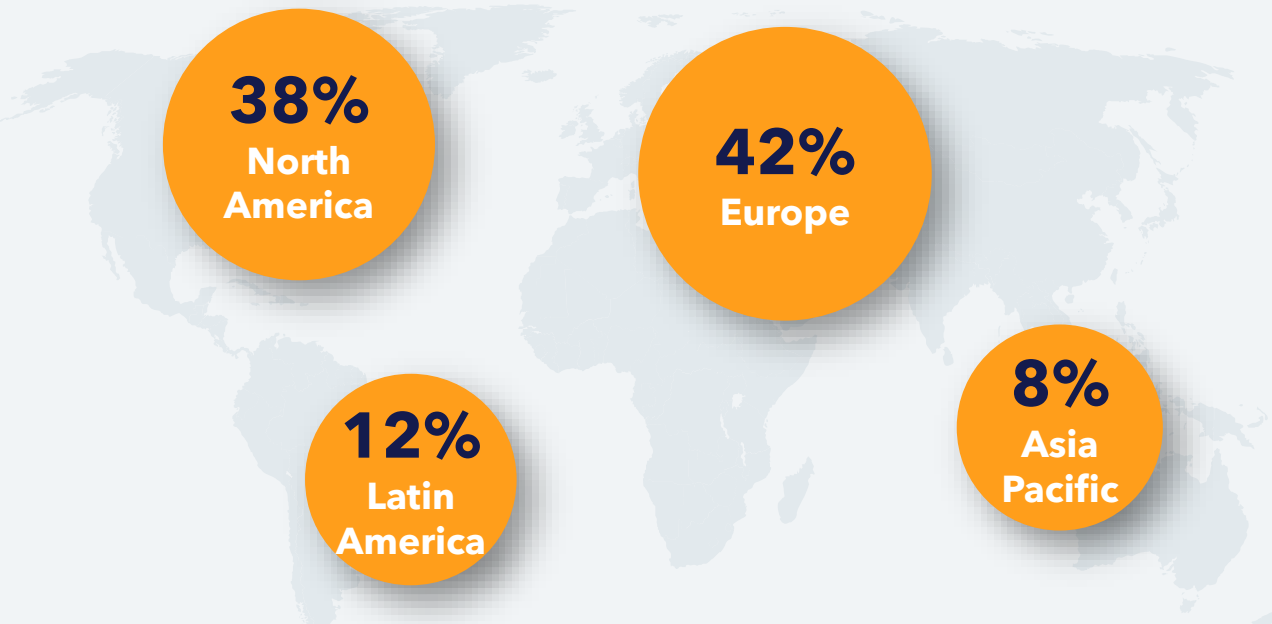
Respondent profile

Company size

10,000 or more	9,999 - 5,000	4,999 - 1,000	Fewer than 1,000	Don't know
69%	11%	13%	6%	1%

Travel spend

$100.1M and more	$100M - $50.1M	$50M - $25.1M	$25M - $10.1M	$10M - $5.1M	Up to $5M	Don't know
25%	10%	15%	14%	10%	5%	22%
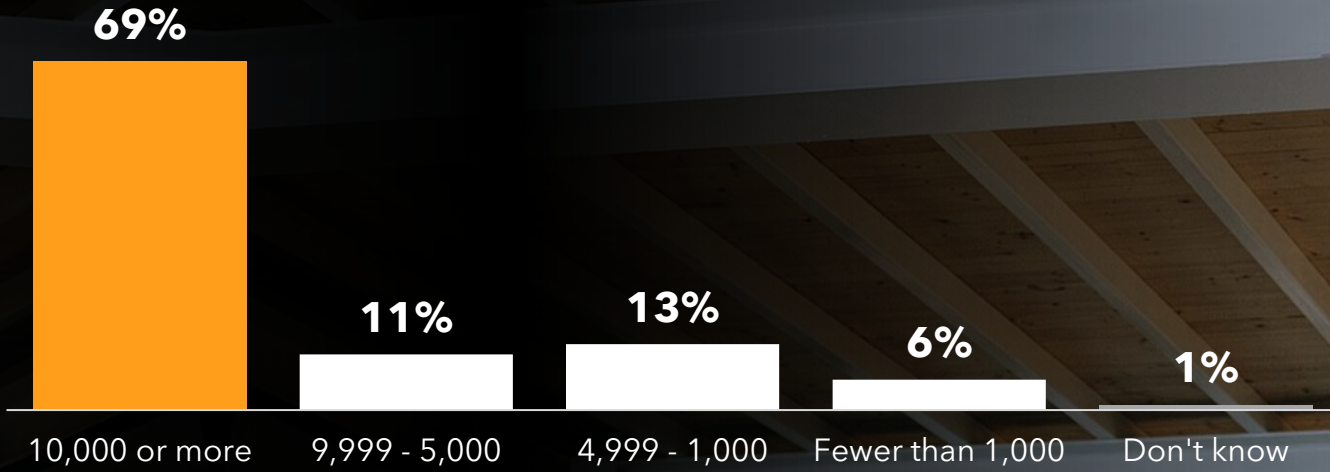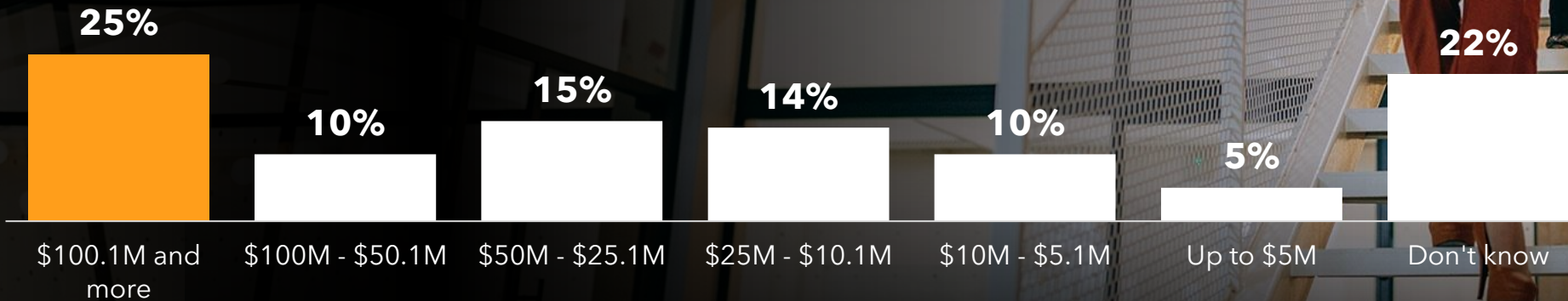
Travel teams

Reporting line

Size

External consultants

Stakeholder interaction

Cross-department projects

Reporting line

Most travel teams report to Procurement (39%) or Finance (19%).
One-tenth report to Human Resources.

Procurement	**39%**
Finance	**19%**
Human Resources / Talent management	**11%**
Corporate services	**7%**
Other	**7%**
Operations	**5%**
Administration	**5%**
Management Board / CEO	**4%**
Mobility	**2%**
Strategy / Compliance	**1%**
Security / Risk	**1%**

Q: In your company, what department does the travel team report to?

Size of the travel team

One-third of travel teams have between four and six members globally. A quarter operate with fewer than three team members, and a similar share have more than 10 persons.

1	2-3	4-6	7-9	10 or more	Don't know
2%	23%	34%	13%	23%	5%
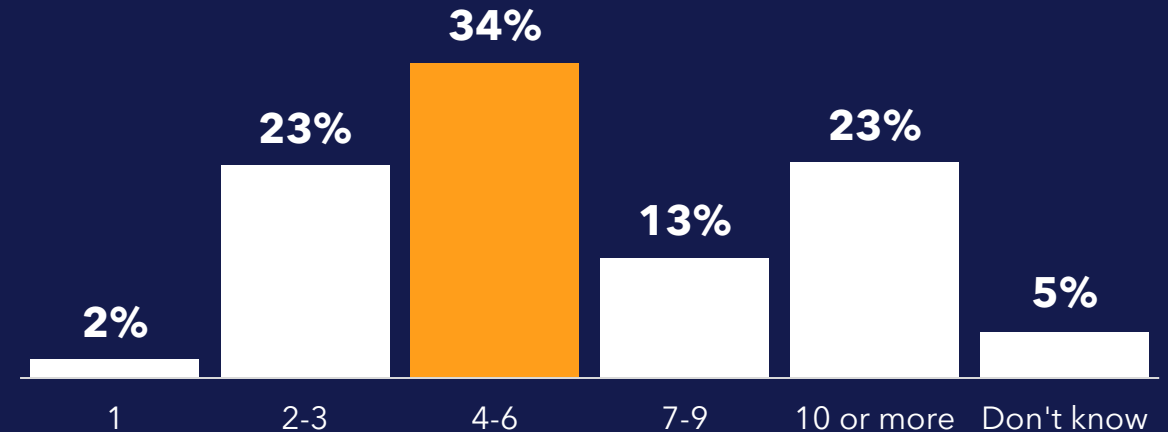
Q: How many people are on your company's travel team globally?

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External consultants

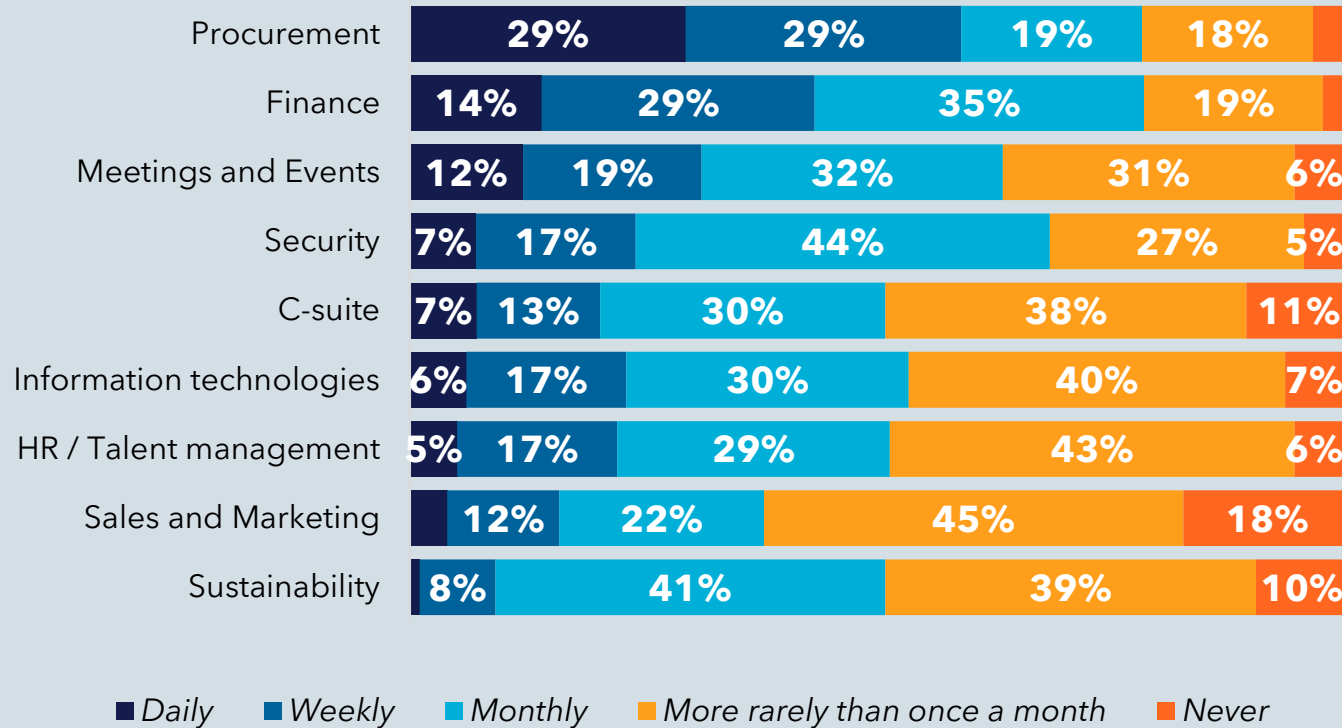Nearly half of travel managers use the assistance of external consultants.

54%
No

46%
Yes
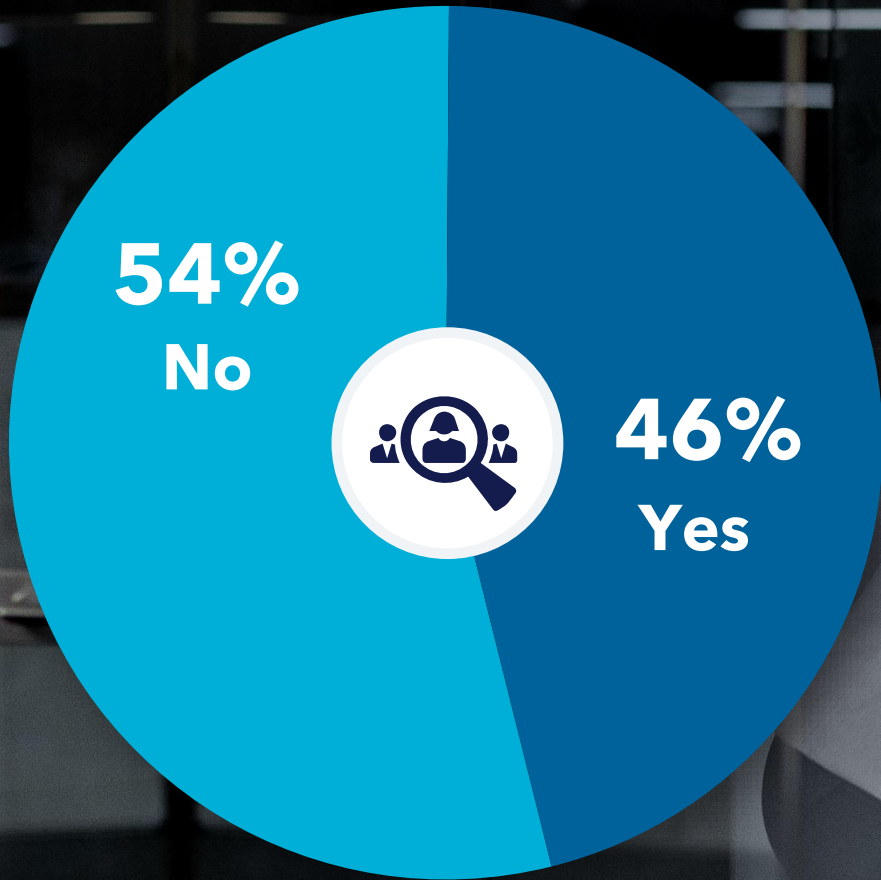
Q: Do you use the services of external consultants to help manage your travel program?
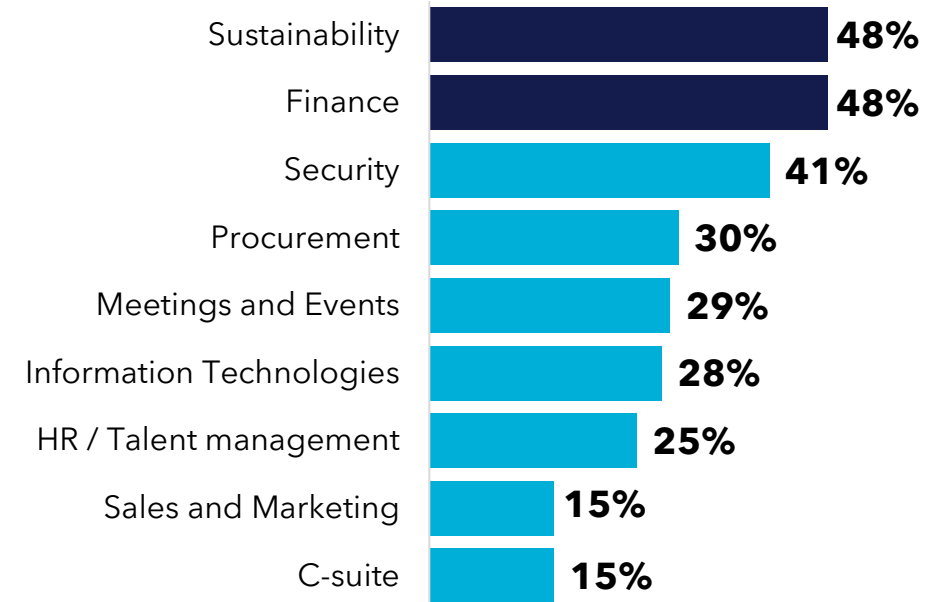
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Stakeholder interaction

Frequency
Travel teams engage most frequently with Finance and Procurement. Nearly half interact with these departments daily or weekly.

Department	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	More rarely than once a month	Never
Procurement	29%	29%	19%	18%	
Finance	14%	29%	35%	19%	
Meetings and Events	12%	19%	32%	31%	6%
Security	7%	17%	44%	27%	5%
C-suite	7%	13%	30%	38%	11%
Information technologies	6%	17%	30%	40%	7%
HR / Talent management	5%	17%	29%	43%	6%
Sales and Marketing	12%	22%		45%	18%
Sustainability	8%	41%		39%	10%

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ More rarely than once a month ■ Never

Increase
Travel managers' interaction with the Sustainability and Finance teams has increased considerably in recent years.

Department	%
Sustainability	48%
Finance	48%
Security	41%
Procurement	30%
Meetings and Events	29%
Information Technologies	28%
HR / Talent management	25%
Sales and Marketing	15%
C-suite	15%

Q: How often do you interact on travel topics with the following departments?

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Cross-department project involvement

Seven travel managers out of 10 participate in cross-department projects, working on finance, security, sustainability and other matters.

29%
No

71%
Yes
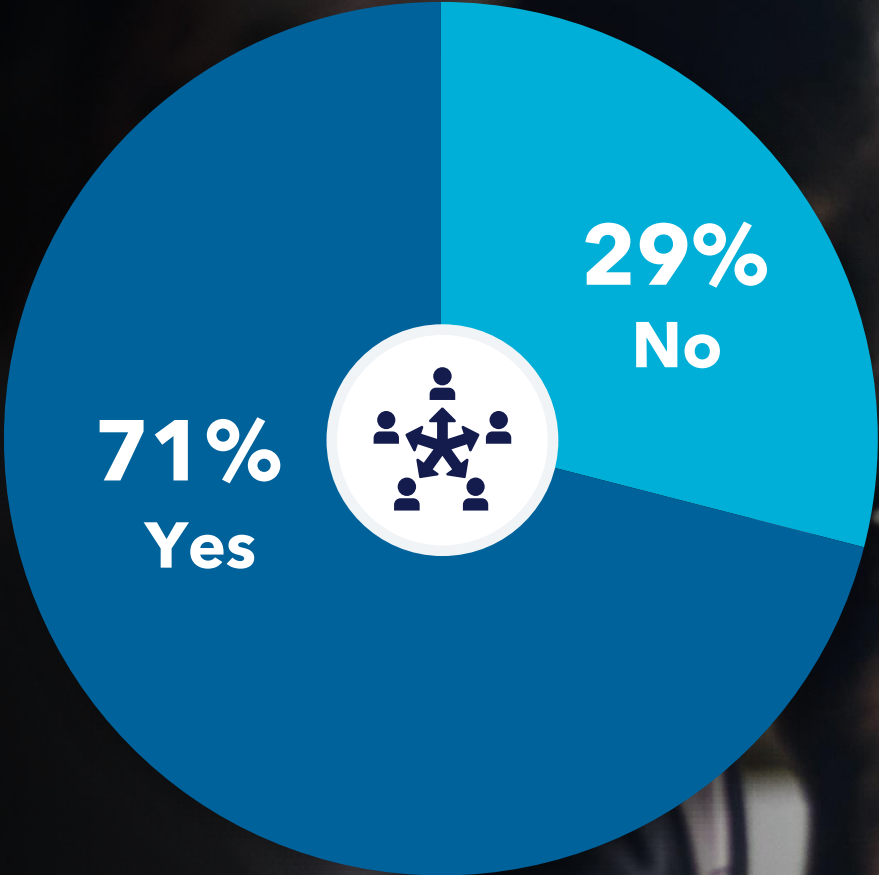
Q: Does your travel team get involved in any cross-department company projects?

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Responsibilities of a travel manager

Scope of responsibilities

Main tasks

Challenges

Change in responsibilities

Value of travel program
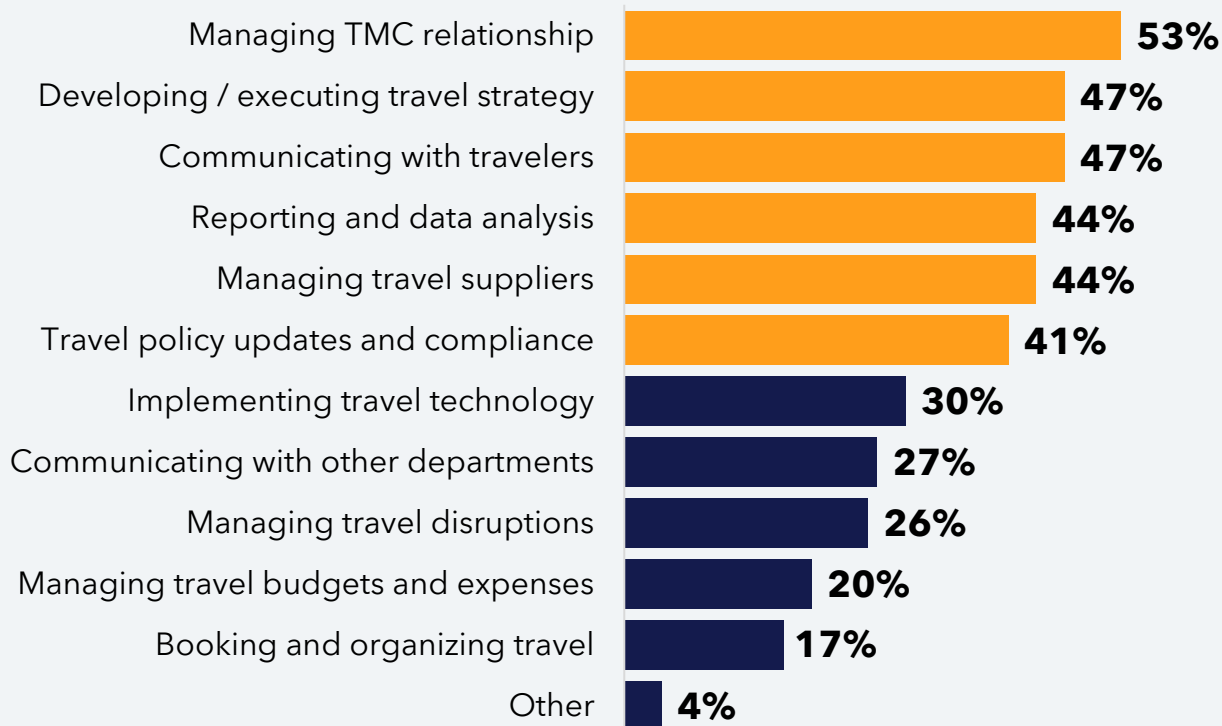
Scope of responsibilities

In addition to managing travel, most travel managers are responsible for travel sourcing. Half are involved in payment and expense management and over 40% manage meetings and events. About a quarter handle procurement or management responsibilities outside of travel.

93%	68%	51%	43%	28%	26%	18%	4%
Travel management	Travel category sourcing	Card, payment and expense management	Meetings and events management	Security and risk management	Procurement or management of any category other than travel	Fleet management	Other

Q: What is the scope of your responsibilities? Select all the apply.

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Tasks

Travel managers dedicate most of their time to managing relationships with their Travel Management Company (TMC), developing travel program strategies and communicating with travelers.

Task	%
Managing TMC relationship	53%
Developing / executing travel strategy	47%
Communicating with travelers	47%
Reporting and data analysis	44%
Managing travel suppliers	44%
Travel policy updates and compliance	41%
Implementing travel technology	30%
Communicating with other departments	27%
Managing travel disruptions	26%
Managing travel budgets and expenses	20%
Booking and organizing travel	17%
Other	4%

Q: To which tasks do you dedicate most of your time? Select the top three.

Challenges

Their biggest challenges include meeting the needs of stakeholders from various business units, keeping up with industry changes and addressing traveler needs.

Challenge	%
Satisfying company stakeholders	54%
Keeping up with industry changes	50%
Meeting the needs of travelers	44%
Budgetary constraints	37%
Understaffed travel team	34%
Lack of executive support	23%
Gaps in travel team expertise	19%
None	5%
Other	5%

Q: What challenges do you face in your daily job as a travel manager? Select all that apply.

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Change in responsibilities

Change of scope
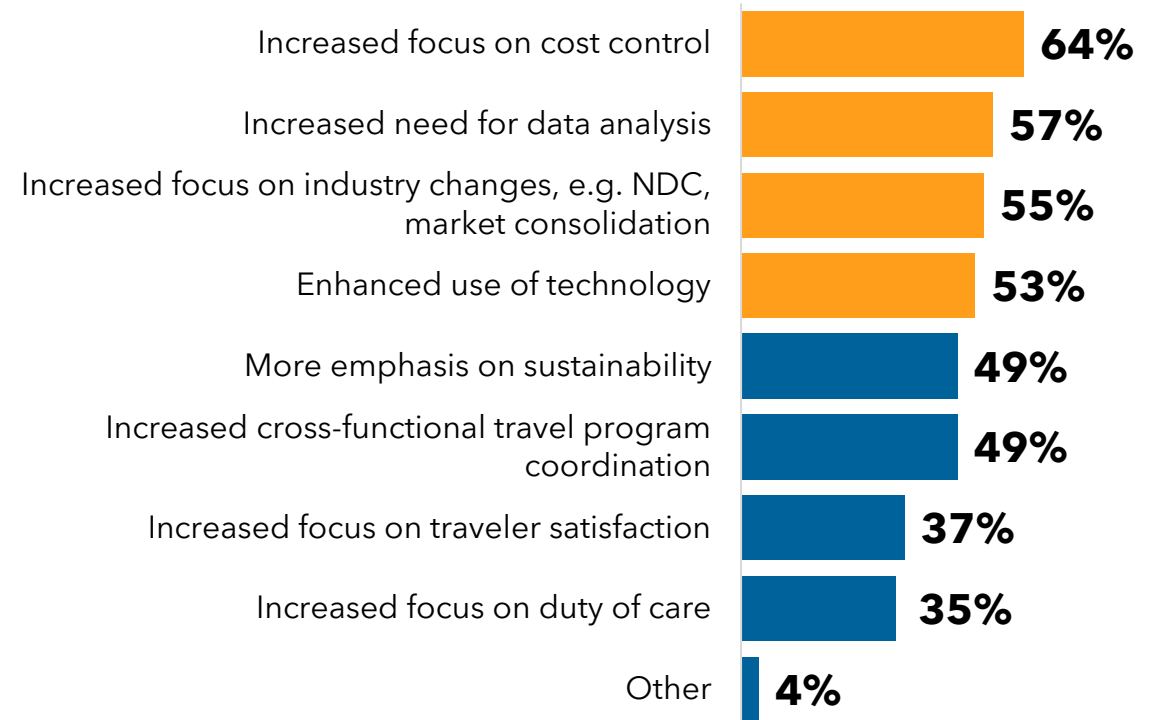In recent years, the scope of travel managers' responsibilities has expanded.

79% Became wider

19% Stayed the same

2% Became narrower
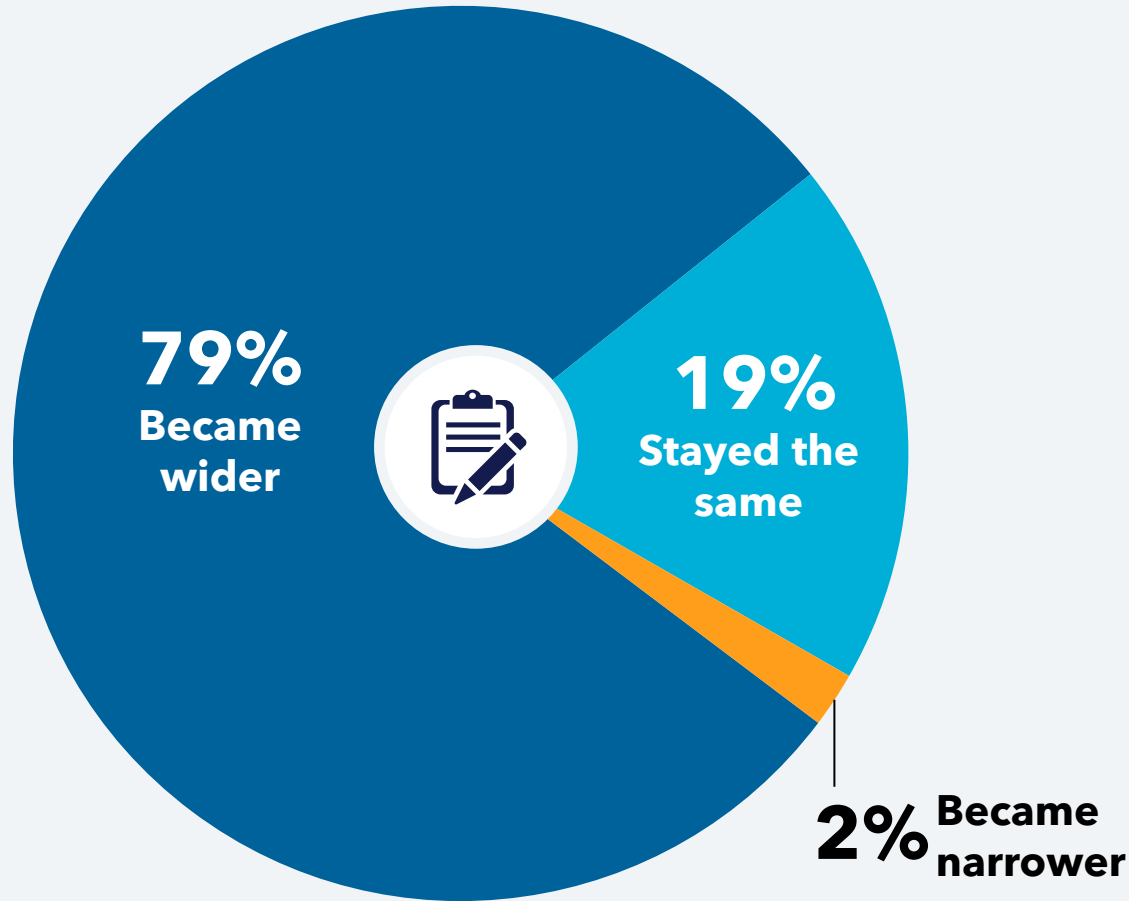
Change of focus
Travel managers' focus on cost management has increased more than any other area.

Increased focus on cost control	**64%**
Increased need for data analysis	**57%**
Increased focus on industry changes, e.g. NDC, market consolidation	**55%**
Enhanced use of technology	**53%**
More emphasis on sustainability	**49%**
Increased cross-functional travel program coordination	**49%**
Increased focus on traveler satisfaction	**37%**
Increased focus on duty of care	**35%**
Other	**4%**

Q: In recent years, the scope of your responsibilities...

Q: How have your responsibilities changed? Select all that apply.

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Value of travel program

Most travel managers must prove the value of their travel program to the C-suite and other company stakeholders. Their top actions include measuring savings, aligning the travel program with the company's overall strategy and sharing key performance indicators (KPIs) and updates with stakeholders.

Quantifying savings from the managed travel program	**62%**
Adjusting travel program strategy to align with overall corporate strategy	**53%**
Regularly sharing updates and KPIs with business stakeholders	**52%**
Ensuring Travelers / Duty of care visibility	**39%**
Collecting traveler feedback	**37%**
Quantifying the ROI of business travel	**19%**
None - I don't need to prove the value of travel program	**7%**
Other	**2%**

Q: How do you prove the value of your travel program to company stakeholders, e.g. C-suite? Select all that apply.
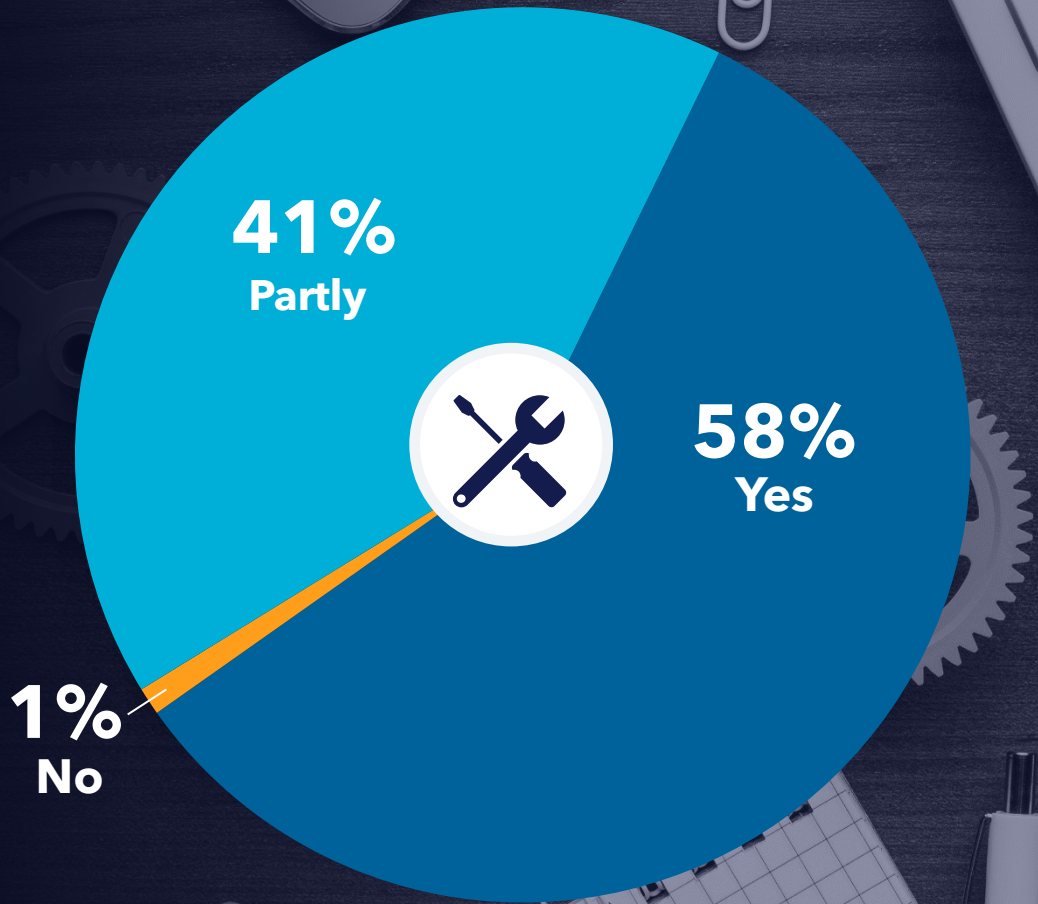
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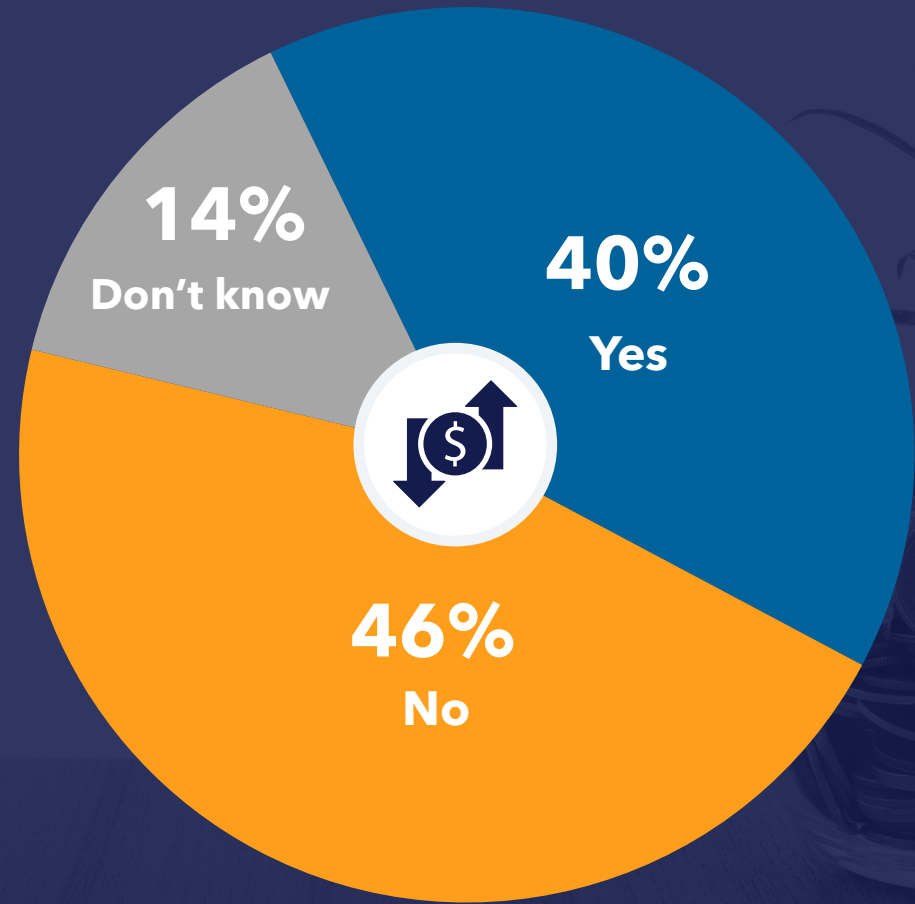
Resources

Tools

Budget

Information channels

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Tools

Nearly 60% of travel managers have the necessary tools to effectively perform their roles.

41%
Partly

58%
Yes

1%
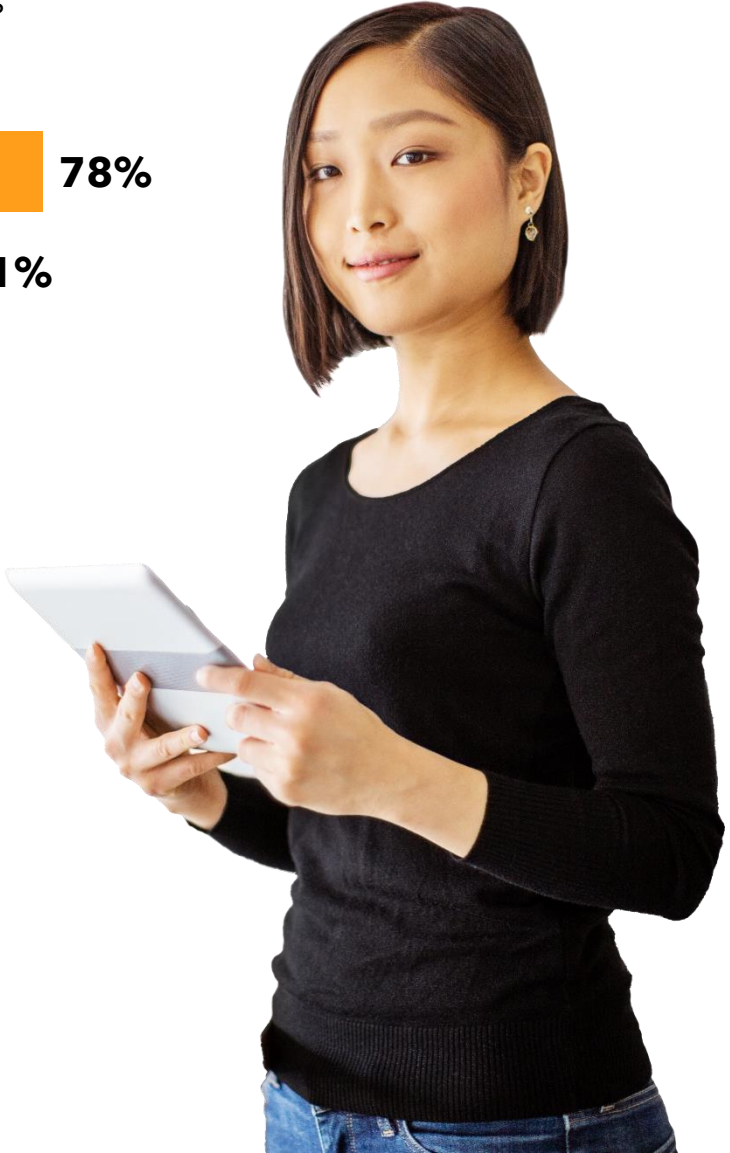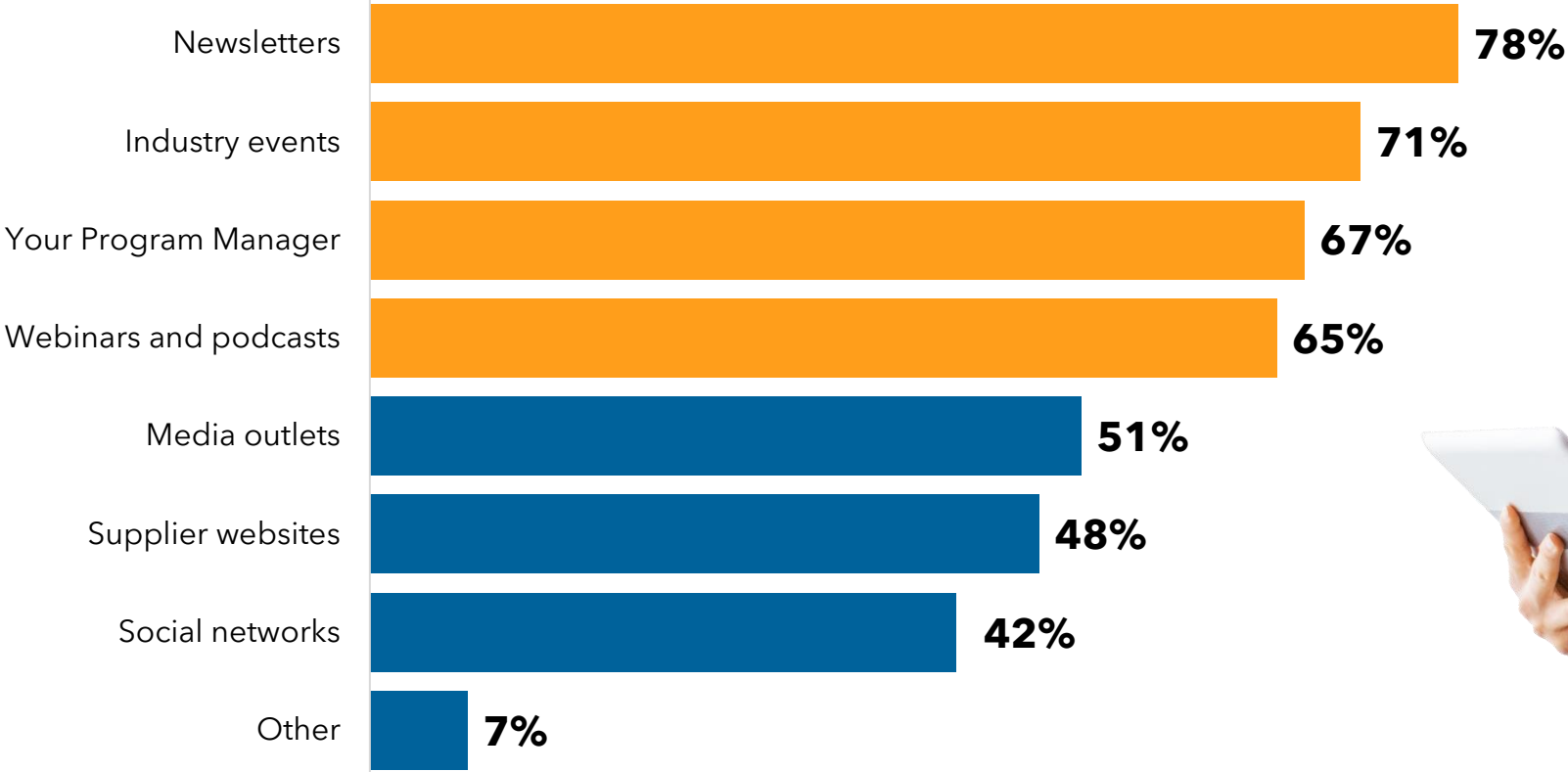**No**

Q: Do you have the necessary tools to do your job?

Budget

While 40% have a dedicated budget for travel technology and services, nearly half do not receive an assigned budget for these needs.

14%
Don't know

40%
Yes

46%
No

Q: Does your travel department have a budget to spend on travel technology and services?

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Information channels

Primary sources of information for travel managers include newsletters, events, webinars and the material received from their program managers.

Channel	%
Newsletters	78%
Industry events	71%
Your Program Manager	67%
Webinars and podcasts	65%
Media outlets	51%
Supplier websites	48%
Social networks	42%
Other	7%

Q: What information channels do you use to keep up with the travel management trends? Select all that apply.
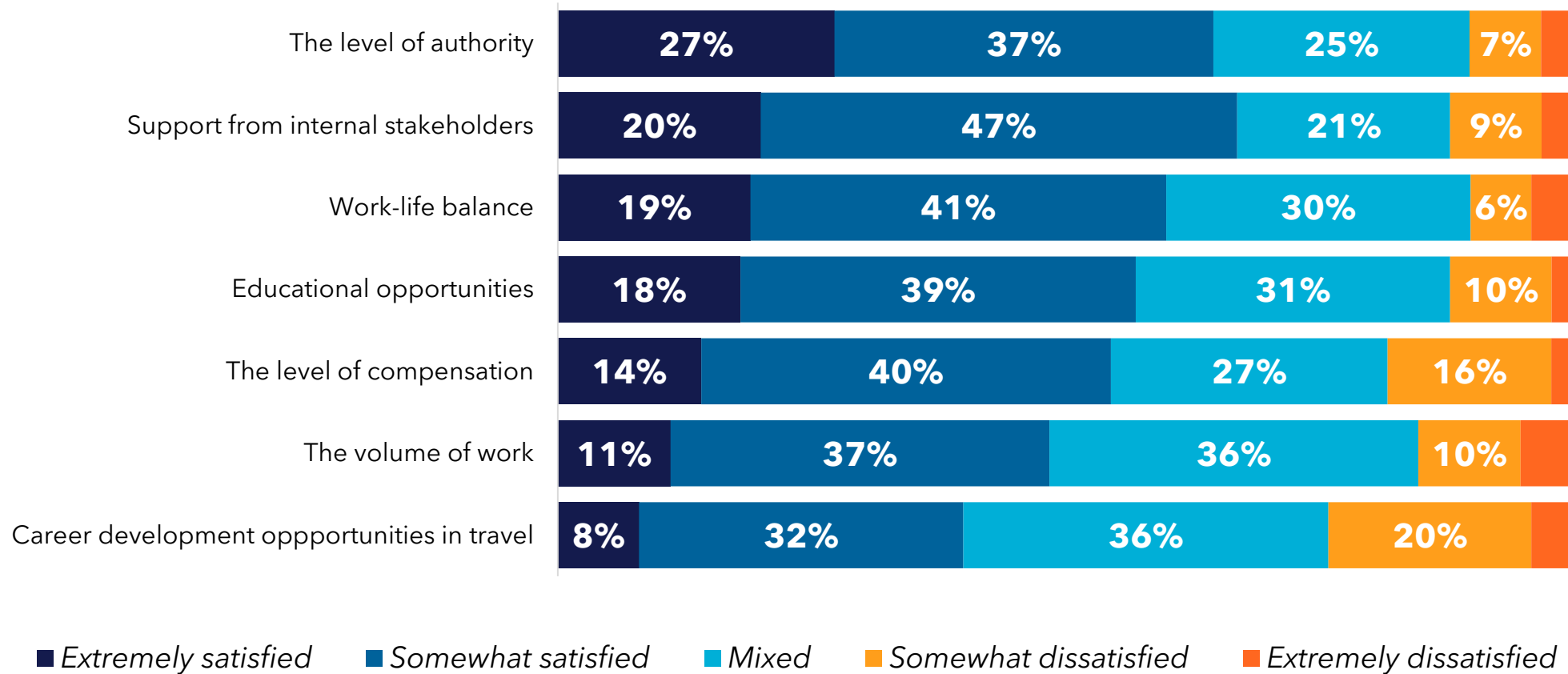
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Satisfaction

Job satisfaction

Desired changes

Job satisfaction

Travel managers report their lowest satisfaction with career development opportunities, workload and compensation, with about one in five feeling dissatisfied.

	Extremely satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Mixed	Somewhat dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
The level of authority	27%	37%	25%	7%	
Support from internal stakeholders	20%	47%	21%	9%	
Work-life balance	19%	41%	30%	6%	
Educational opportunities	18%	39%	31%	10%	
The level of compensation	14%	40%	27%	16%	
The volume of work	11%	37%	36%	10%	
Career development oppportunities in travel	8%	32%	36%	20%	

- ■ Extremely satisfied
- ■ Somewhat satisfied
- ■ Mixed
- ■ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ■ Extremely dissatisfied

Q: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job? Select one.

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If you could change one thing about the role of a travel manager…

Consistent travel manager's profile in terms of expertise and training

Improved process efficiency

More / better tools and technology

Lower volume of work

Shift towards sustainability

Support of internal stakeholders, more authority and independence

Improved wellbeing of travel managers

Change the reporting line/level

Bigger team

Own or amplify the budget

Q: If you could change one thing about the role of a travel manager, what would it be?

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