



The State of Corporate Offsites **January 2025**

A comprehensive analysis of corporate offsites and
their impact on organizational success.



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Executive summary

Today's most effective corporate offsites bear little resemblance to their predecessors—they're shorter, more social, and are expected to deliver a measurable impact on everything from employee retention to bottom-line results. Our research, based on a recent study of 2,000 U.S. full-time employees, reveals five key trends reshaping how companies approach these events.

TREND #1:

Most companies are increasing their investment in offsites, with 59% reporting budget increases since 2019. Organizations now average 2.6 offsite events annually, reflecting a healthy return to in-person collaboration post-pandemic.

TREND #2:

Company offsites are becoming increasingly social, with companies dedicating 44% of event time to social programming and team building. Traditional work activities now make up only 36% of offsite time, marking a noticeable shift toward more balanced, experience-focused gatherings.

TREND #3:

Business travel preferences are evolving significantly. Nearly half (48%) of employees now fly business class or above, and 43% prioritize airlines offering loyalty points. Inclusion policies for employees who would like to bring their partners along are becoming more generous, with 55% of companies allowing partners to attend non-meeting events.

TREND #4:

Corporate offsites have a significant impact on both company culture and employee finances. While 85% of employees report strengthened organizational connections through offsites, a further 65% face some level of personal financial impact from attending these events.

TREND #5:

While these trends show up across all companies, high-performing organizations demonstrate more distinct patterns to their approach. Companies exceeding their financial targets host more frequent offsites (2.8 vs. 2.4 events annually), noting higher employee engagement as a result—72% of their employees express excitement about these events compared to 49% at underperforming companies.

Our findings reveal a critical balancing act for corporate offsites: while increased investment in premium experiences and social activities are driving higher levels of employee engagement, the associated costs are creating financial strain for nearly two thirds of employees attending these events. Companies who want to maximize their return on investment for organizing engaging and memorable corporate offsites must balance thoughtfully curated programming with intuitive travel and expense management—or risk undermining the very employee experience they aim to build.



Methodology

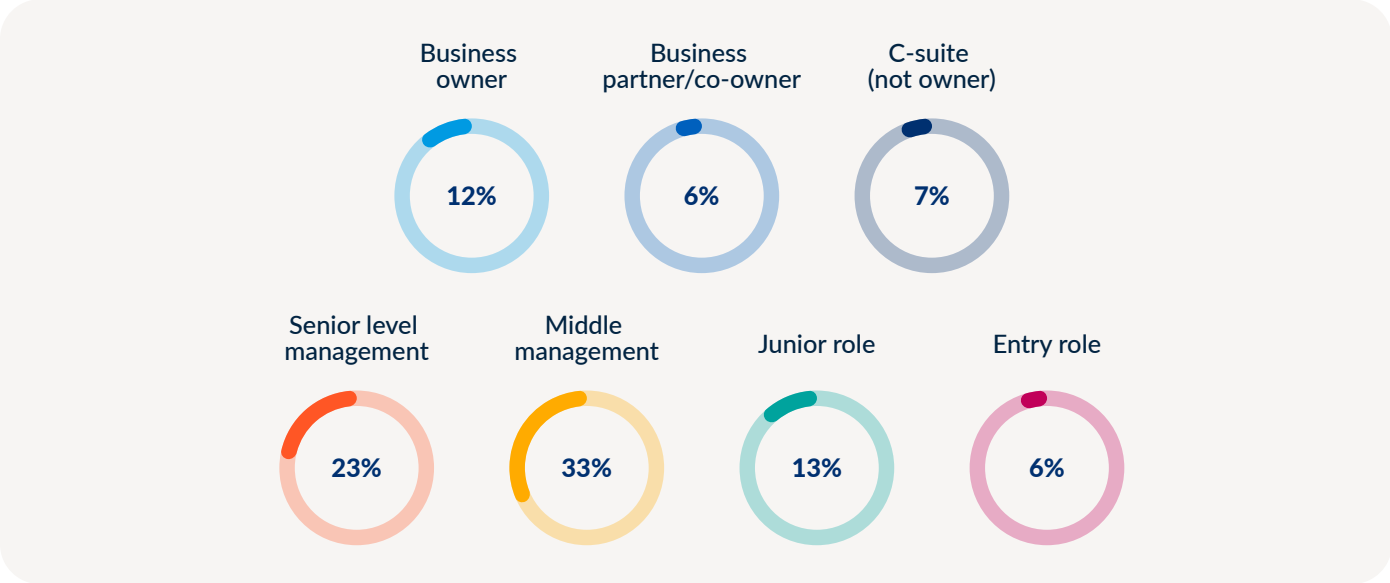
All figures presented in this report are from a comprehensive survey conducted by Talker Research, who are members of the Market Research Society (MRS) and the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR). The research was conducted between November 15-22, 2024.

Total sample size: 2,000 U.S. full-time employees who had attended a corporate offsite retreat in the past 12 months. This random double-opt-in survey captured responses across various company sizes, industries, and geographic locations.

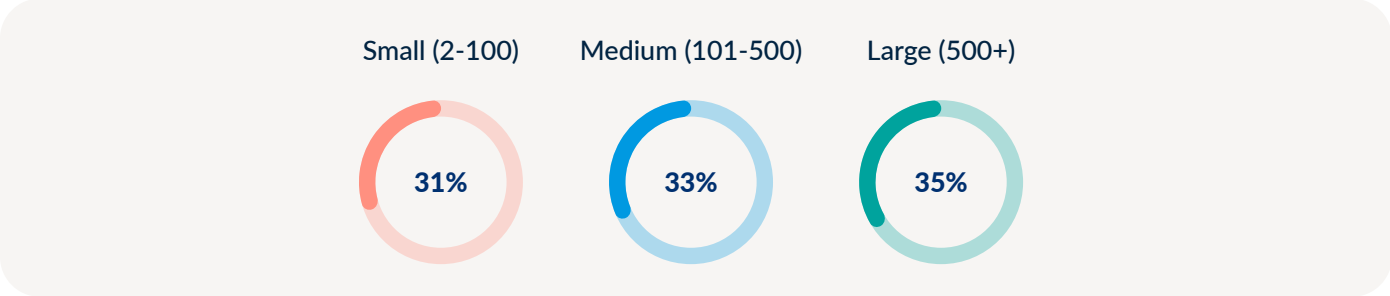


Survey Demographics

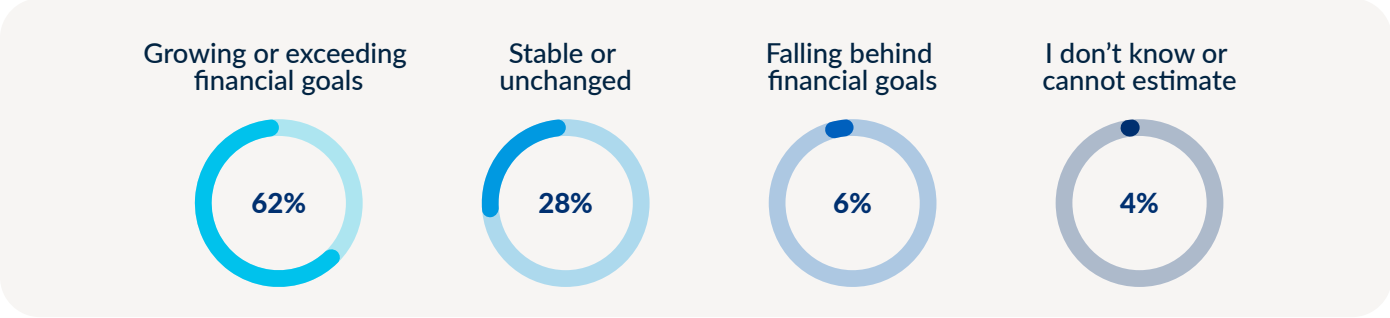
Respondents by job title



Respondents by company size



Respondents by financial performance



Financial performance not based on actual metrics. Respondents were asked to describe their workplace's financial performance in the past 12 months.



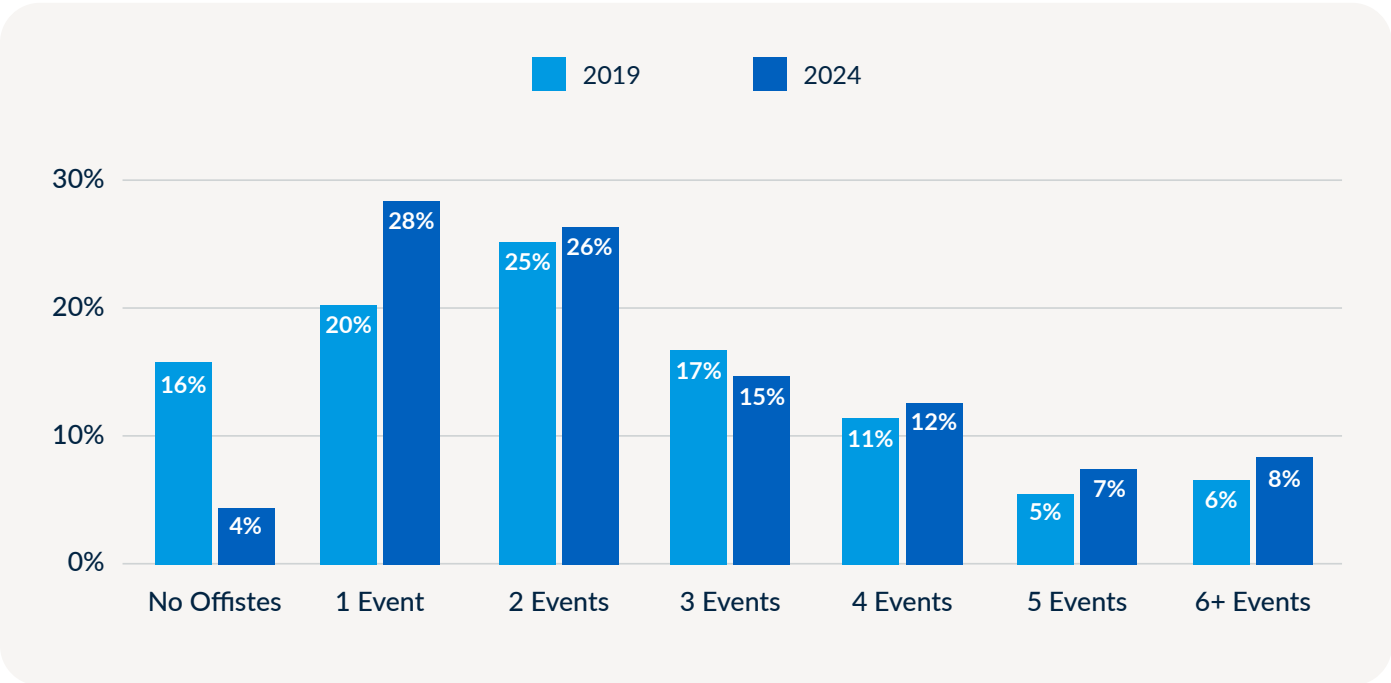
Companies increase spending as corporate offsites make a comeback

Companies average 2.6 annual events in post-pandemic return

Corporate offsites have shown steady growth since 2019, with average annual gatherings increasing from 2.4 to 2.6 events in 2024. The number of companies holding no offsites has dropped from 16% to 4%, marking a clear shift toward these events becoming more commonplace.

Most organizations (54%) now hold 1-2 events annually, up from 45% in 2019. The number of companies organizing frequent programs (6 or more per year) has increased from 6% to 8%. Meanwhile, organizations hosting 3-5 events annually remains stable at 34%.

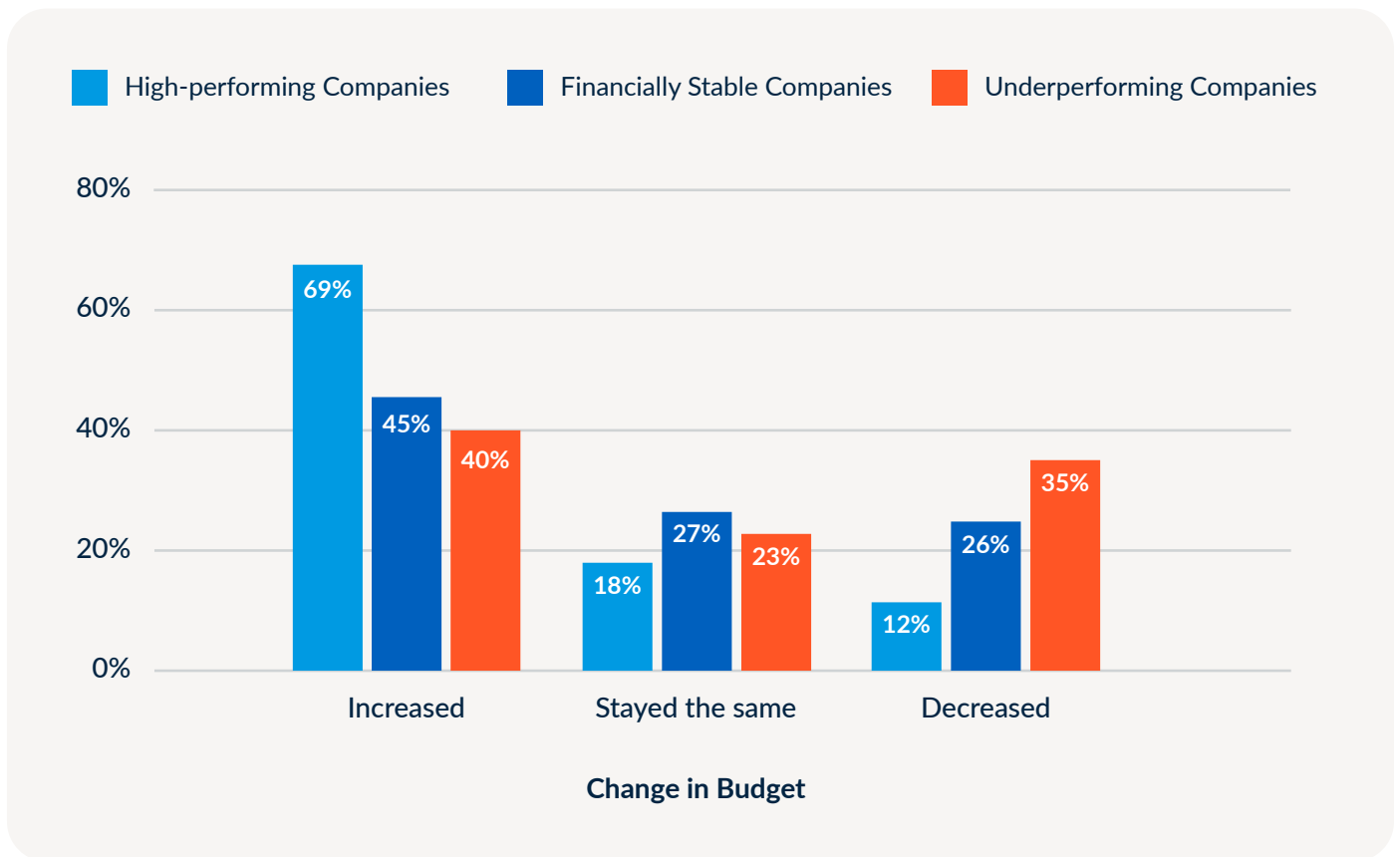
The emerging pattern seems to support the idea that there is a preference for regular, planned gatherings rather than sporadic meetings, pointing to a more strategic approach in how companies are leveraging offsites to accelerate business success.



Investment grows across two thirds of organizations

Since 2019, 69% of high-performing companies have increased their offsite budgets, with 35% reporting significant increases. The primary drivers for bigger budgets include:

- Expanded attendance and inclusivity, with 53% of high-performing companies citing larger participant pools
- Enhanced quality of accommodations and food service (45%)
- Investment in more sophisticated activities and entertainment options (45%)
- Improved merchandise and participant materials (43%)
- Extended duration of events (35%)

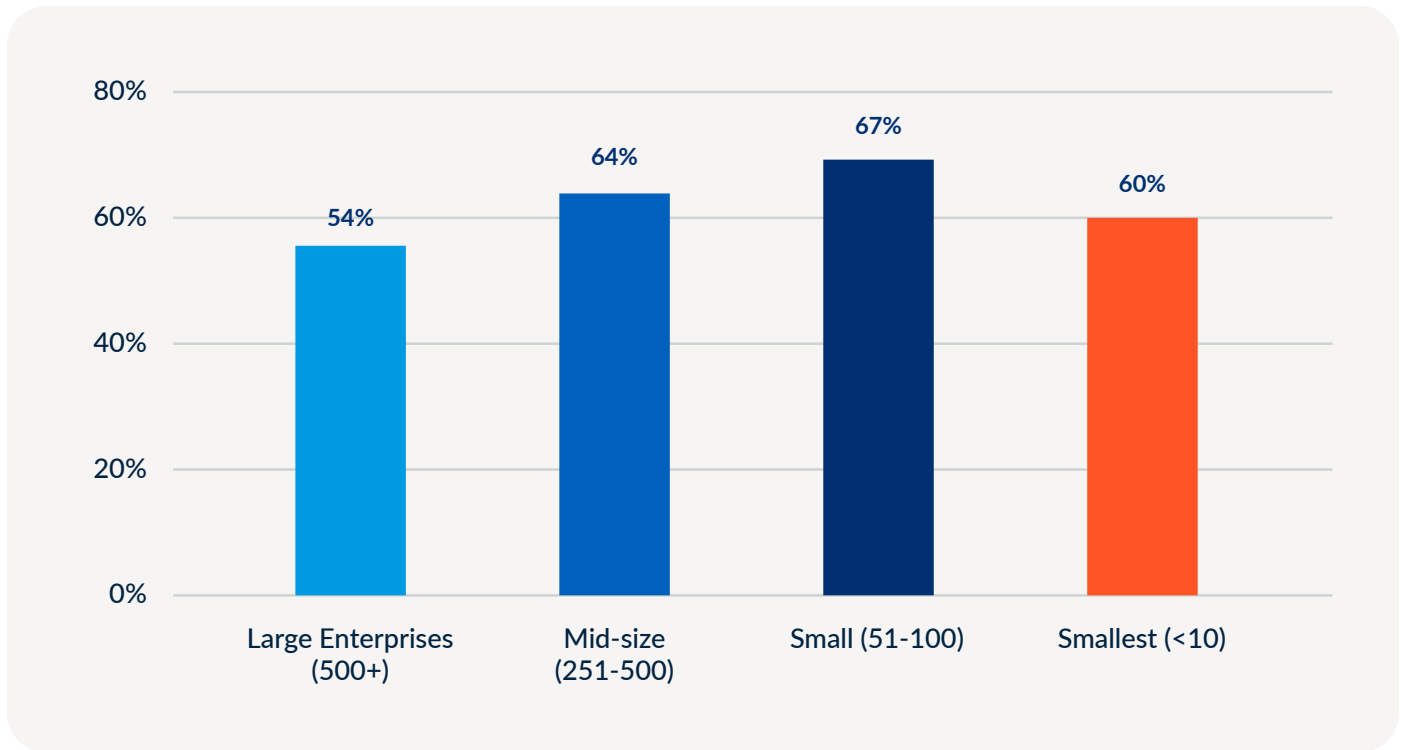


Offsite budget changes since 2019 (% of companies)



Mid-size companies lead offsite spending growth

Small and mid-sized companies are driving the strongest investment growth, with 67% of companies with 51-100 employees reporting increased budgets compared to 2019. Mid-sized organizations (251-500 employees) follow closely at 64%, while large enterprises show more measured but still significant growth at 54%. This suggests that mid-market companies are particularly focused on leveraging offsites for team building and organizational development.



Budget for individual corporate offsites increase by company size (% of companies)

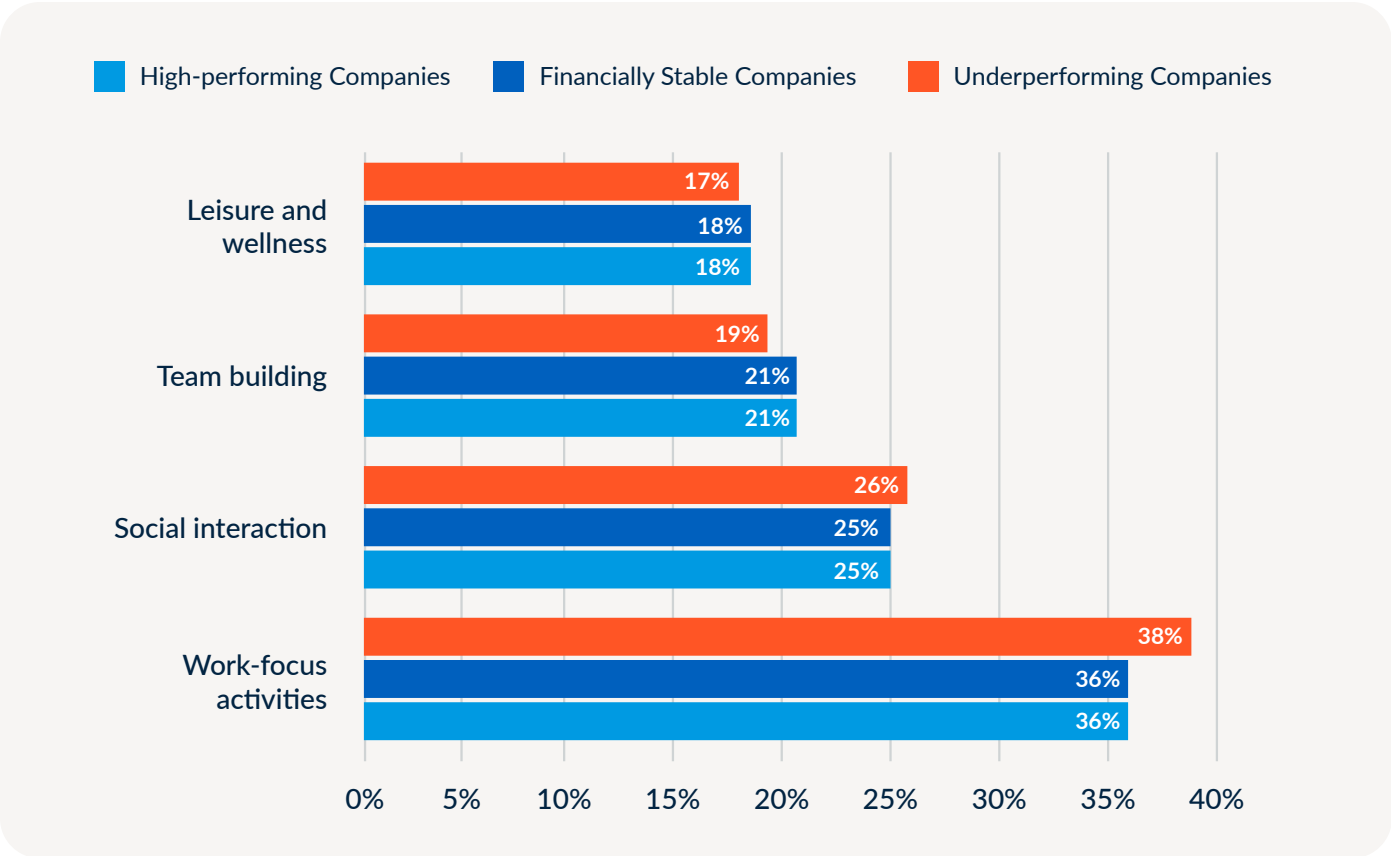


Social activities reshape the modern corporate offsite

Work-related activities comprise 36% of offsite agendas

Modern corporate offsites have evolved beyond traditional meeting formats, with companies now allocating 36% of the time to work-related activities, on average. The remaining 63% is dedicated to team building (21%), socializing (25%), and leisure/relaxation activities (18%). Gone are traditional all-day meeting formats as organizations increasingly recognize the value of varied agendas.

While there are minor variations in how companies allocate time during offsites, the differences are relatively small regardless of their financial performance. This consistency suggests that modern corporate offsites have established a fairly standard format balancing professional and social activities, with the key differences between high-performing and underperforming companies appearing not in how they structure their time but in other aspects of their offsite programs.



The distribution of time during offsites (% of companies)

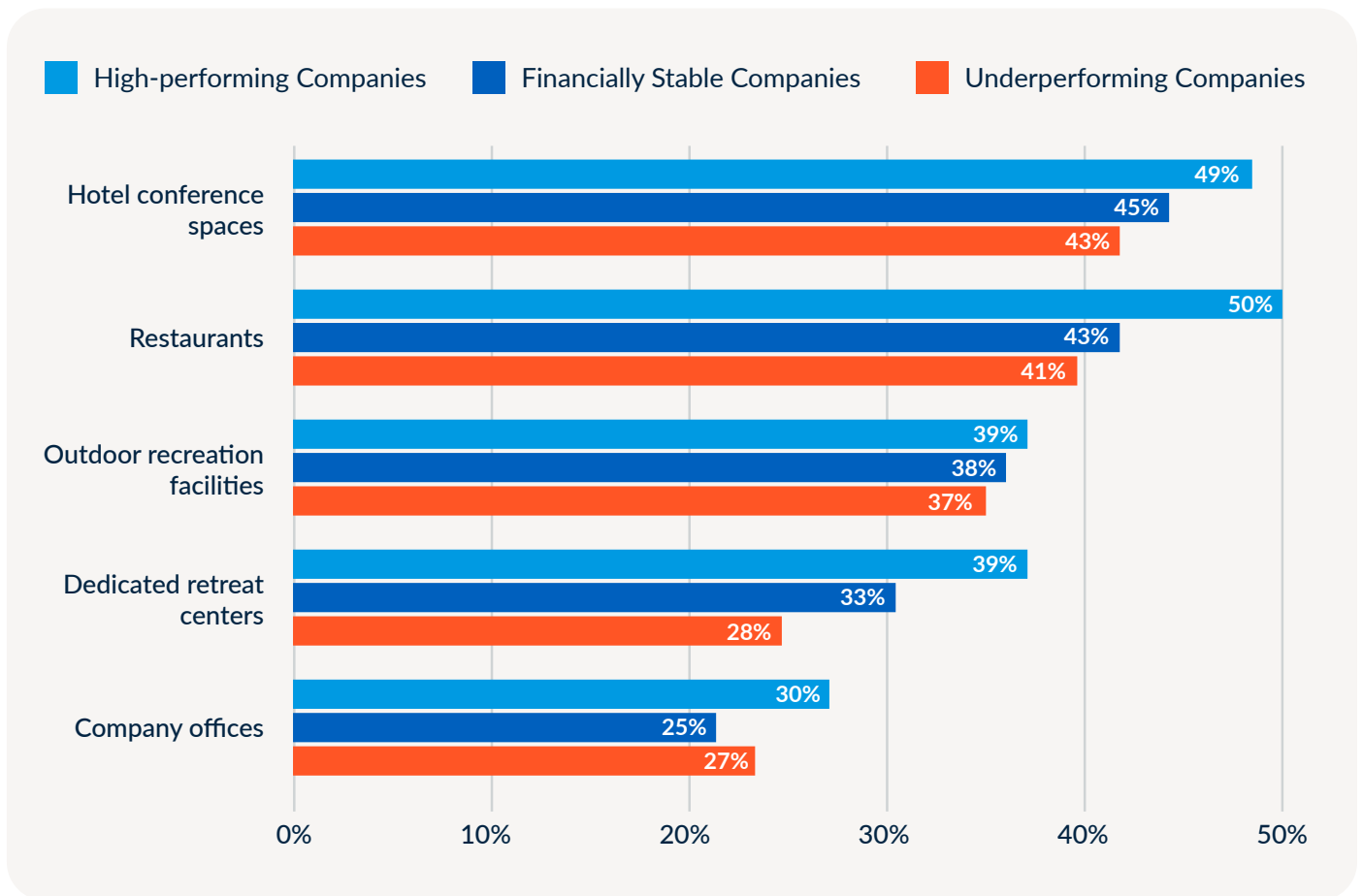


Strategic venue choices boost employee networking

The data reveals a striking link between where companies hold offsites and how well employees connect with each other. Compared to underperforming companies, high-performing companies tend to favor venues that spark natural interaction—50% choose restaurants (vs. 41%) and 39% use retreat centers and outdoor recreation facilities (vs. 28% and 37%, respectively).

Retreat centers, restaurants, and outdoor spaces create natural opportunities for networking and relationship building that simply doesn't happen in more corporate settings like conference rooms.

When employees step out of their usual work environment, they're more likely to have the kind of conversations that build real relationships. A lunch table or hiking trail creates a different dynamic than a boardroom, and forward-thinking companies are leveraging these settings to transform mandatory meetings into organic and genuine opportunities for employees to connect.

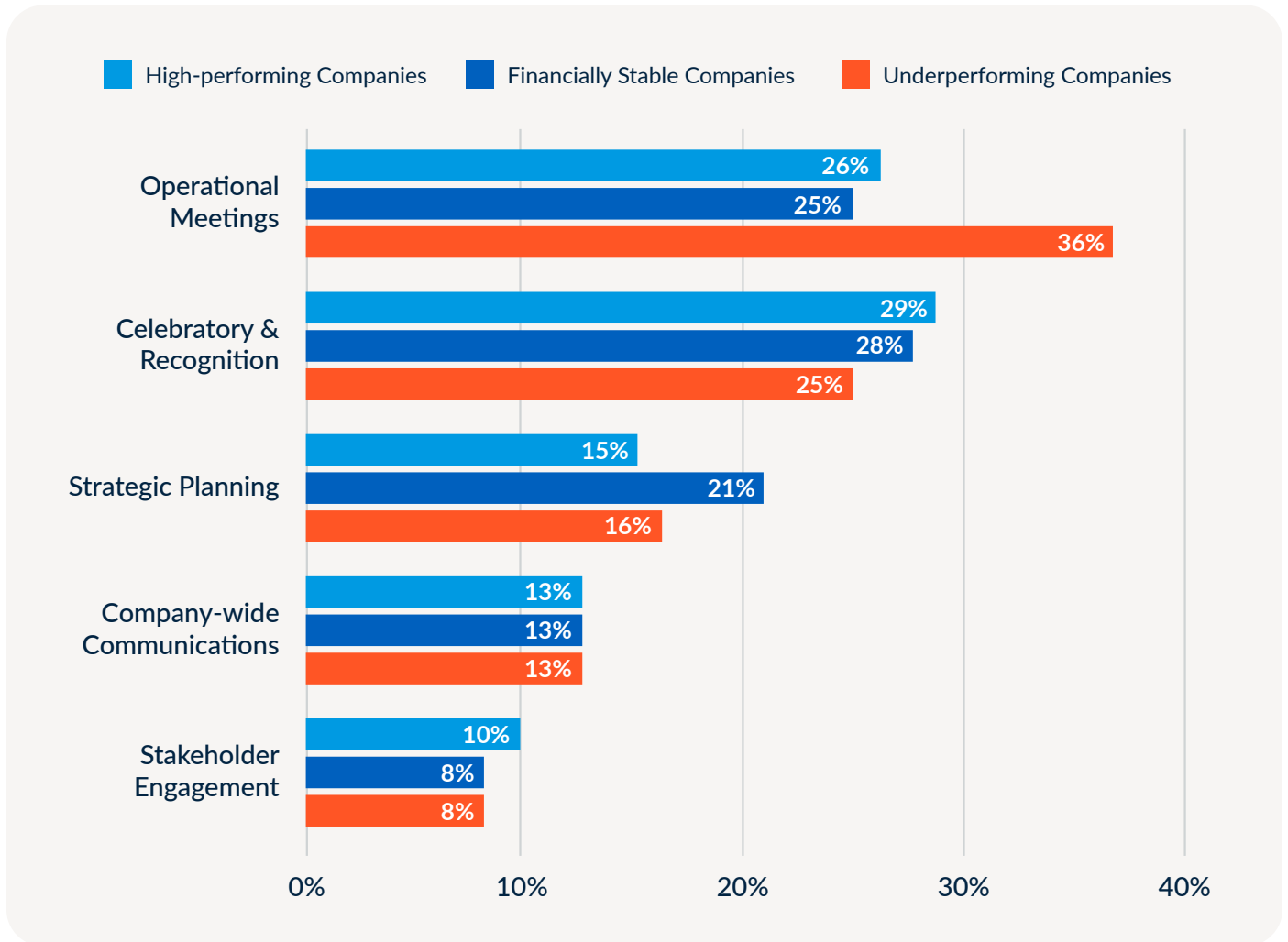


Primary locations for offsites (% of companies)



High performers balance business operations with celebrations

Underperforming companies show a stronger emphasis on operational meetings (leadership, project, and departmental meetings), totaling 36% of the time. Meanwhile, high-performing companies have a more balanced approach that incorporates celebratory events (29%), strategic planning (15%), and operational meetings (26%).



Primary reasons for offsites (% of companies)



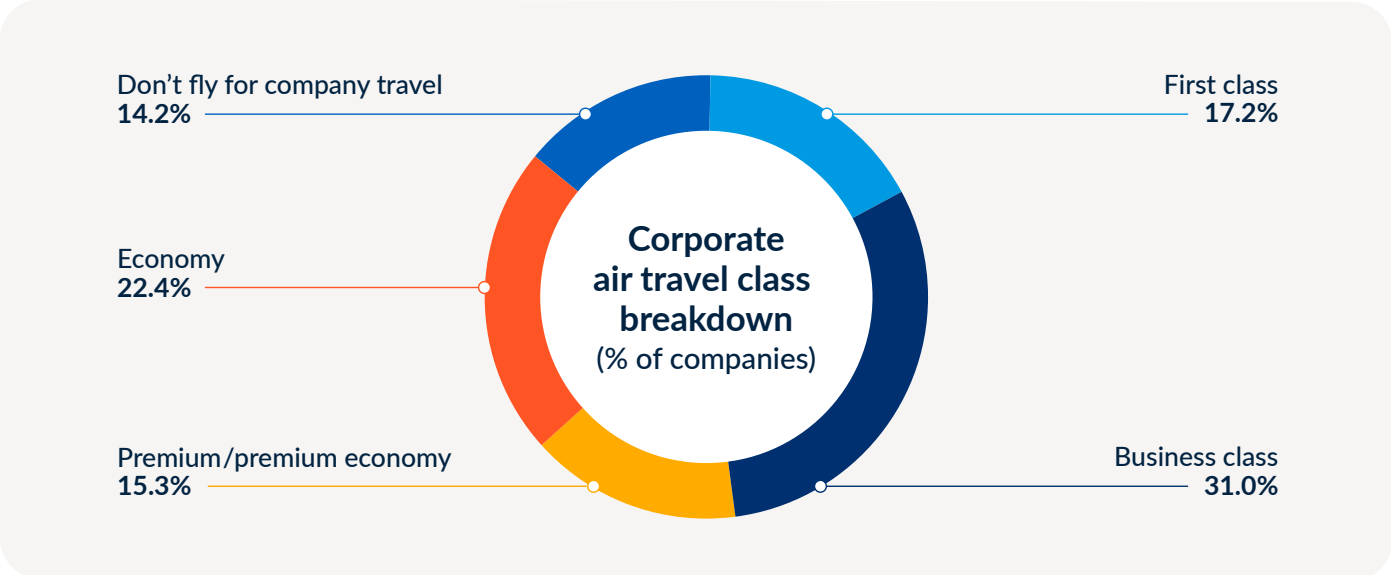


Business travel evolves with premium flights and partner perks

Half of corporate travelers now fly business class

Nearly half (48%) of corporate travelers now fly business class or above— 31% in business and 17% in first class. Only 22% still fly economy, demonstrating a noticeable shift in how companies are prioritizing employee travel comfort.

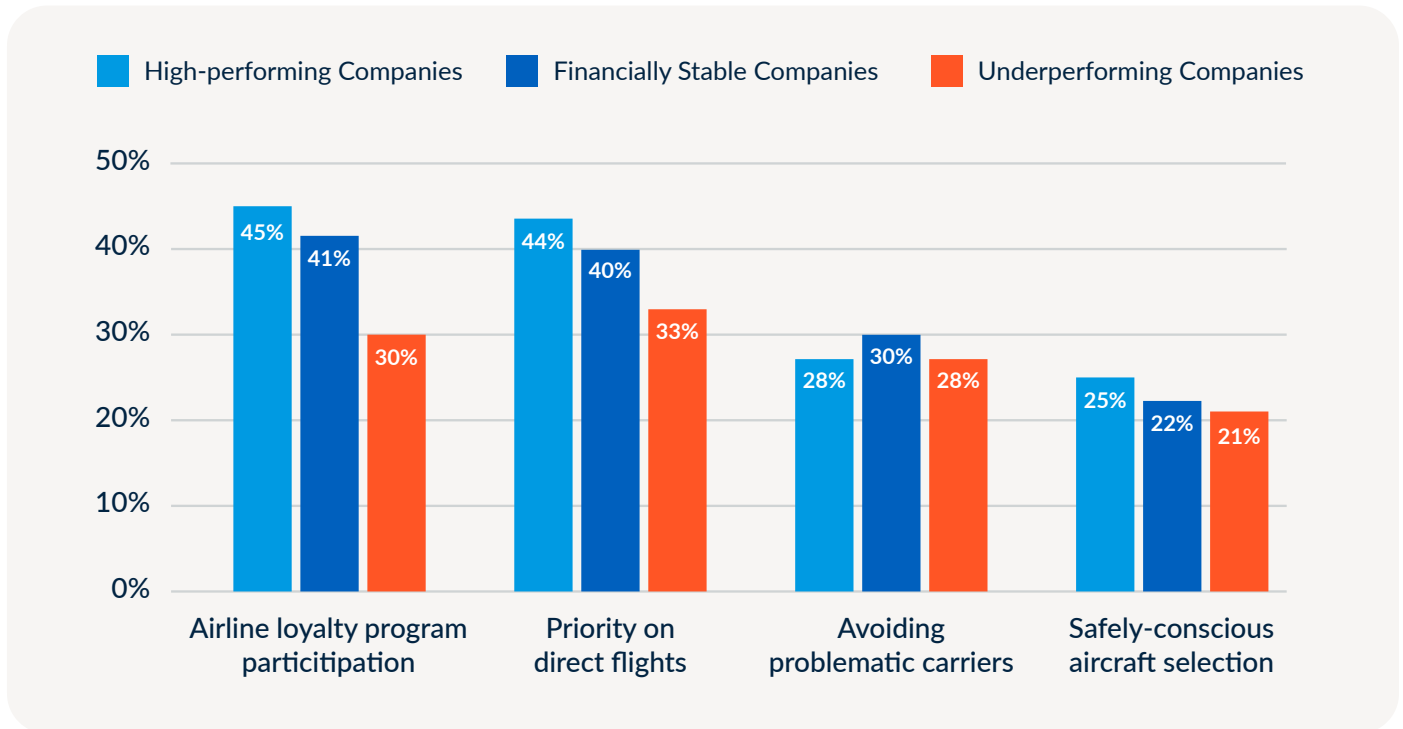
The choice of air travel class also points to a broader trend in corporate travel culture. When employees fly in premium cabins, they're more likely to arrive at corporate events ready to engage. Premium travel adoption is highest among mid-sized companies (58%) and high performing organizations (55%). Even 40% of employees in stable-performing companies fly business class or above. It's clear that these aren't just executive perks anymore.



Companies prioritize loyalty programs and direct flights

When it comes to allowing employees to use their airline loyalty programs, high-performing companies (45%) significantly outpace underperforming ones (30%), pointing to a more strategic approach to travel management that considers long-term benefits including employee personalization and travel preferences. Similarly, the emphasis on direct flights shows an 11% gap between high-performing (44%) and underperforming companies (33%), indicating greater willingness to invest in employee convenience and productivity despite higher upfront costs.

Safety concerns show more uniformity across organizations. All company types show similar preferences when it comes to avoiding airlines where their employees have encountered issues in the past (28%-30%) and for aircraft safety (21%-25%), suggesting these are industry-standard considerations rather than differentiating factors. While basic safety considerations are universal, high-performing companies distinguish themselves by investing in the employee experience and efficiency.



Corporate air travel preferences (% of companies)



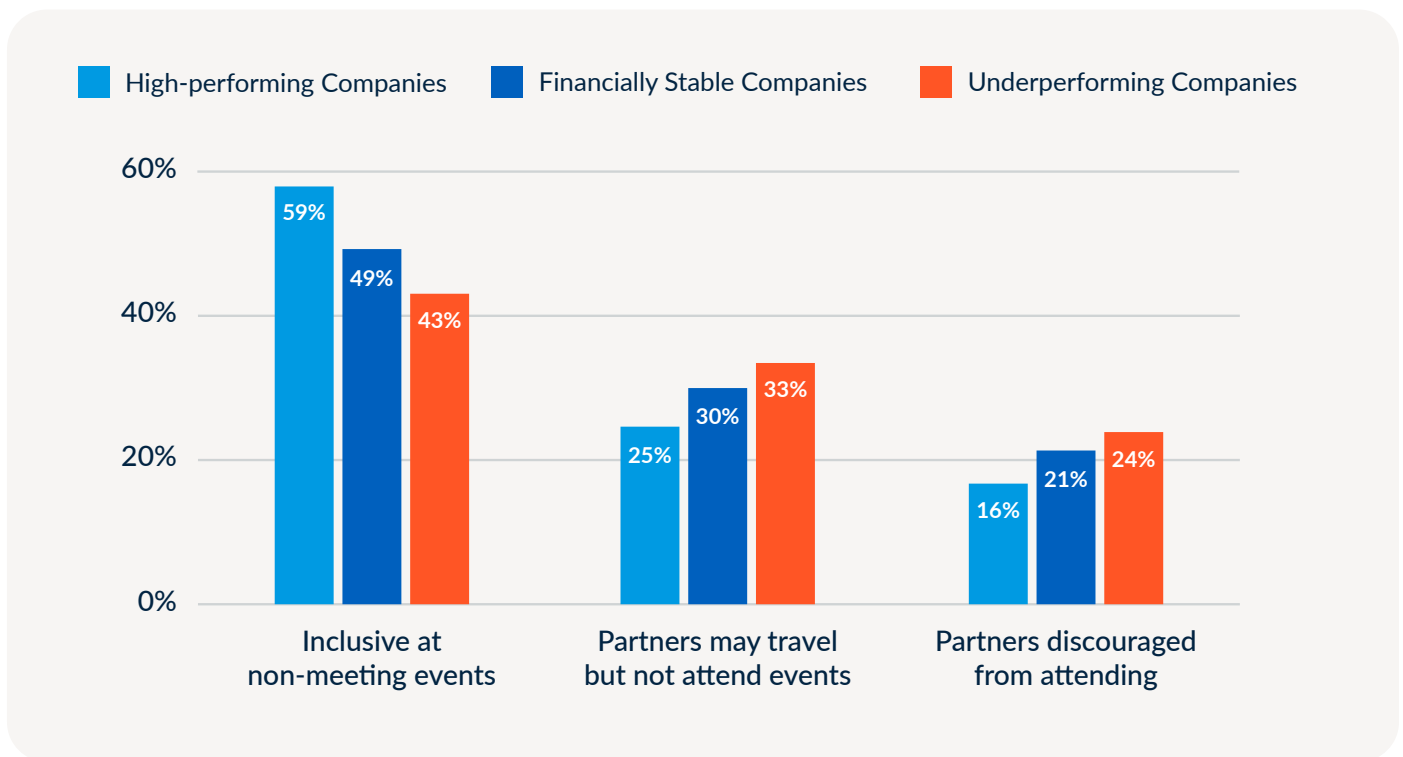
Personal travel options reshape business trips

The rise of bleisure travel represents an interesting development in corporate travel:

- 55% of employees at high-performing companies engage in bleisure travel
- 59% of employees can bring their significant other to non-meeting events, signalling more generous partner inclusion policies

Companies clearly see the benefit of allowing employees to make the most of their time away from home. Compared to underperforming companies, high-performing organizations are 15% more likely to offer bleisure travel and 16% more likely to include partners at non-meeting events. Underperforming companies show more restrictive policies overall, with nearly a quarter (24%) actively discouraging partner participation compared to 16% at high-performing organizations.

Modern workers want to explore new cities, bring their partners along, and turn mandatory business trips into meaningful travel experiences. Smart companies have figured out that it's a win-win: employees get work-life balance, while employers get more engaged people who genuinely look forward to traveling for work.



Partner inclusion at corporate offsites (% of companies)



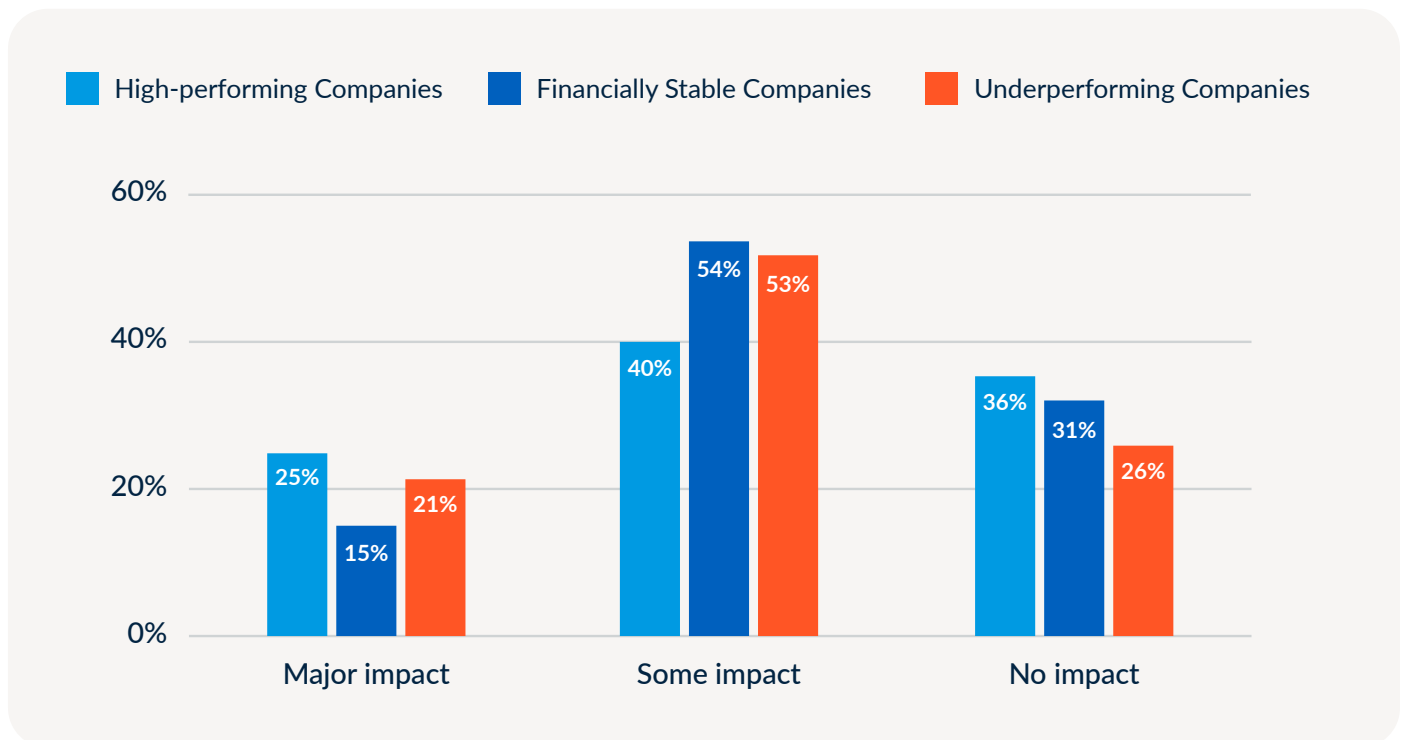
Employees balance personal costs with stronger work connections

Understanding the employee financial burden

Despite leading in comprehensive coverage (with 36% of employees reporting no financial impact) 25% of employees in high-performing companies do face major financial strain when traveling for offsites. It's possible that more frequent travel or high-end events require additional personal expenses.

Interestingly, even with their generally positive view of offsites, employees noted the costs of attendance, such as travel incidentals, childcare and new clothes, exacerbated by delayed reimbursements, created a financial burden, particularly for younger employees: over three-quarters (77%) of Generation Z respondents and 70% of Millennial employees reported a “major” or “some” impact on their personal finances, while the majority (62%) of Baby Boomers reported no financial impact. Employees in Generation X were split nearly in half, with 54% reporting a financial impact.

Underperforming companies show the lowest rate of complete coverage (26%), with the majority of their employees (53%) managing some level of incidental expenses. Stable companies appear to incur the most balanced impact to employee finances, with the lowest percentage of employees reporting major financial strain (15%).



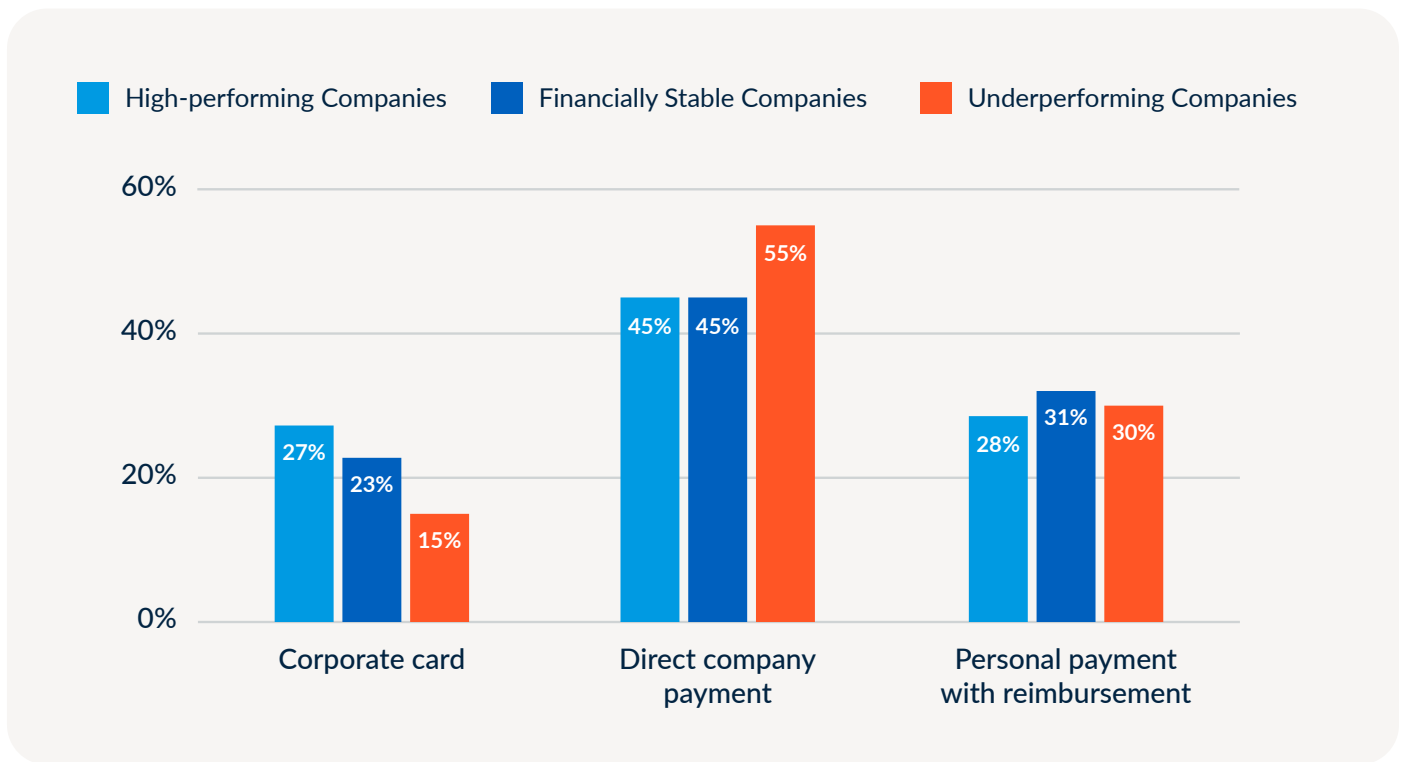
Levels of financial burden on employees (% of companies)



Three approaches to managing travel expenses

Organizations pay for corporate offsites in three ways. Some give employees corporate cards (25%), some have employees pay upfront and then get reimbursed (29%), and some handle all the bookings and payments for employees themselves (46%).

High-performing companies tend to trust employees with corporate cards more often (27%) while underperforming companies prefer to handle all payments directly (55%). This could suggest different approaches to travel and expense management—high performing companies seem more comfortable giving employees spending autonomy, while others want more control by paying for everything for employees upfront. Interestingly, the burden of paying out of pocket and getting reimbursed remains relatively consistent across all company types, affecting roughly 30% of employees.



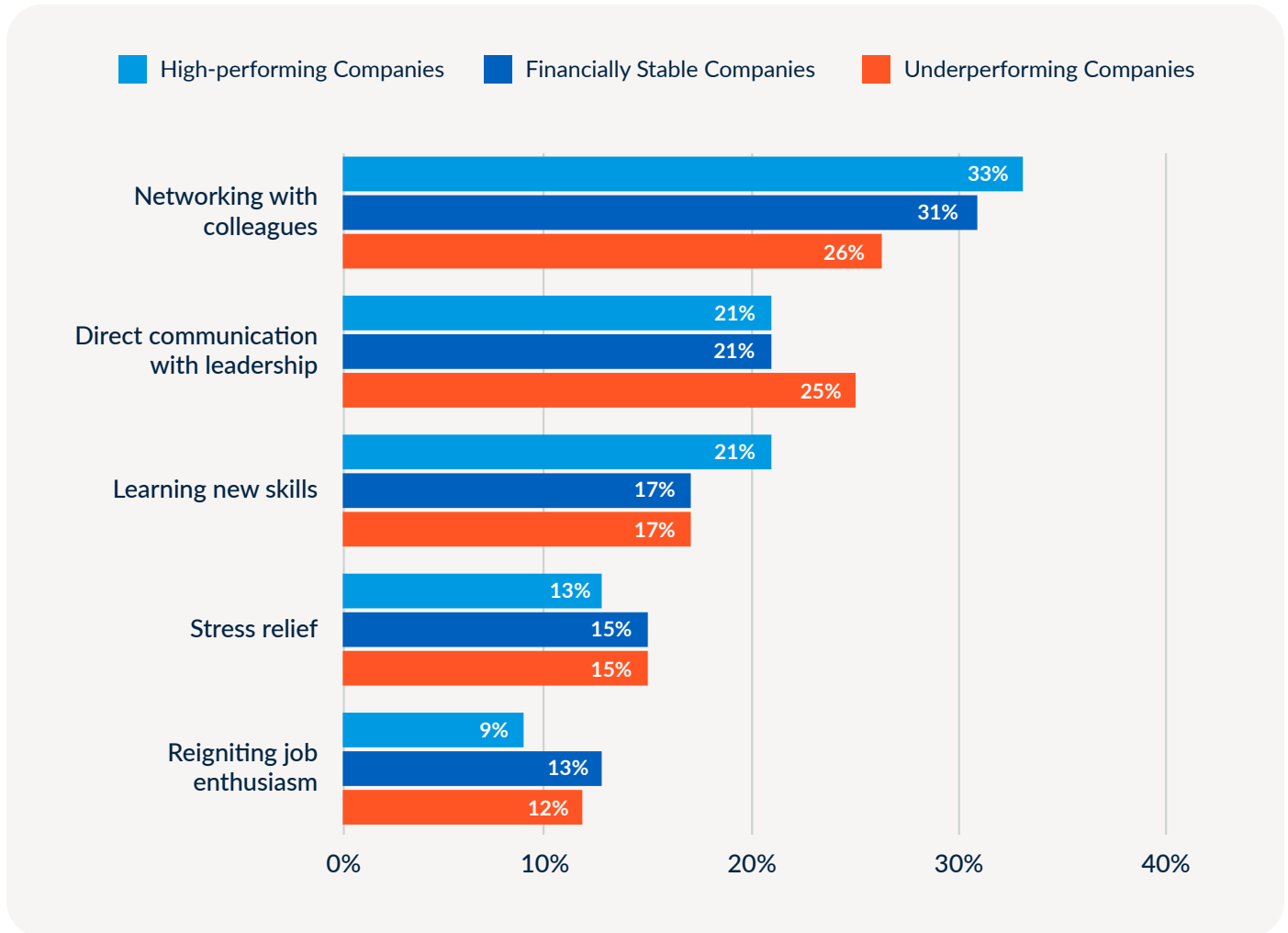
Payment methods and expense management (% of companies)



Employees find value beyond financial considerations

Employees at high-performing companies value networking and skills development, while those at underperforming companies show a stronger need for leadership interaction.

Notably, employees at stable and underperforming companies are more likely to value offsites for reigniting job enthusiasm and providing stress relief, indicating these events may serve a more crucial role in improving employee morale at these organizations.



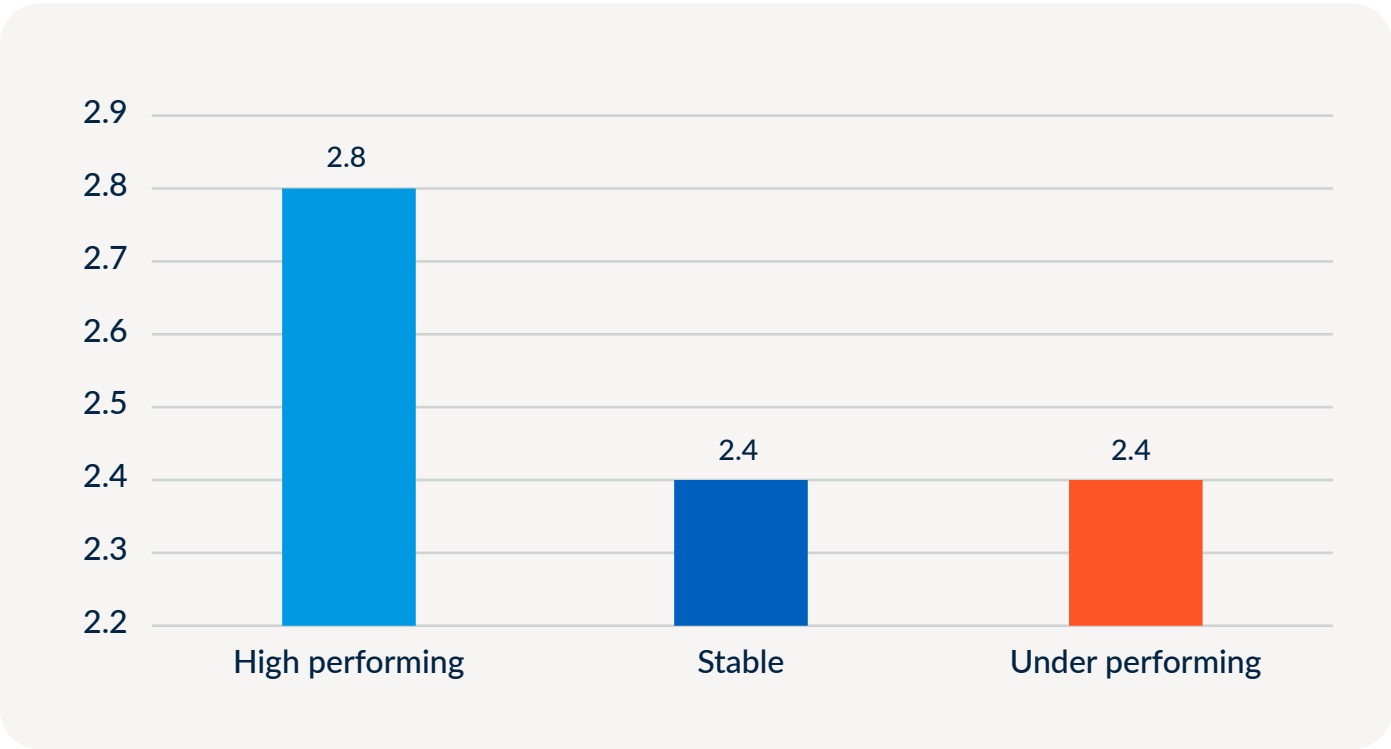
Employee-identified primary benefits from their offsite experiences (% of companies)



High-performing companies set new standards for corporate offsite success

Frequent offsites are associated with higher company performance

Successful companies appear to host more corporate offsites. High-performing companies average 2.8 annual events versus 2.4 for other organizations. The additional investment could translate to stronger business outcomes and higher employee engagement.



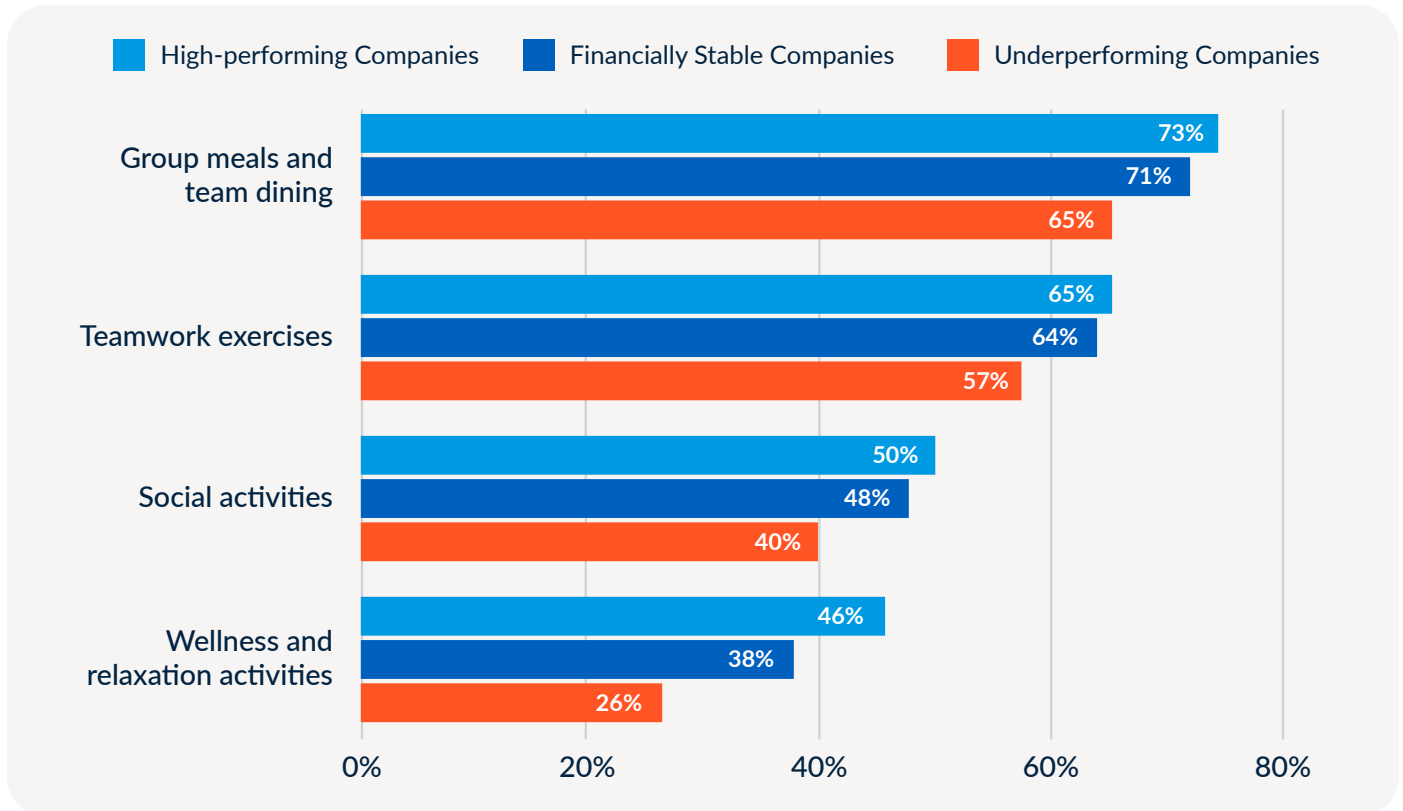
Average number of offsites in 2024 by company performance



Higher engagement marks successful offsite programs

From team dining (73%) to wellness activities (46%), high-performing companies maintain stronger participation rates compared to their underperforming counterparts, who show much lower engagement, particularly in wellness (26%) and social activities (40%).

The largest gap appears in wellness and relaxation activities, with high-performing companies leading by 20%. This gap, combined with consistently higher participation in social activities and teamwork exercises, suggests successful companies are more holistic in their corporate offsite programming.



Corporate offsite activity participation (% of companies)

The contrast in employee attitudes toward offsites is striking between high-performing and underperforming companies:

High-performing companies	Underperforming companies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% of employees express excitement about upcoming offsites 90% report strengthened company connection Only 3% express dread about upcoming offsites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49% show enthusiasm for offsites 71% report some degree of strengthened company connection 7% express dread about upcoming offsites



The future of corporate offsites is here

Our research demonstrates that successful corporate offsites are more than just business meetings—leading companies use them as strategic investments in organizational health and employee engagement. The data indicates that organizations who are excelling take a more comprehensive approach to their corporate offsite programs.

Key recommendations



Strategic planning and investment

Smart offsite budgeting should directly support your company's goals, not just repeat past spending patterns. Focus on programs that blend professional development with team building, and use expense management solutions to measure their effectiveness and help guide future investments.



Optimize the employee experience

Make offsites more inclusive by considering partners and respecting the work-life balance of employees. While maintaining clear guidelines, allow flexibility in travel arrangements to accommodate individual needs. Design activities that bring employees together across all job levels to build genuine connections with each other and the leadership team.



Stronger program management

Establish rules and policies for effectively combining business and leisure travel, including partner participation and compliance requirements. Simplify expenses with digital tools that handle payment processing and group cost-sharing. Regular assessment of both employee satisfaction and business benefits will help refine these programs for maximum impact over time.



Future-proofed considerations

What sets successful companies apart when it comes to corporate offsites? They're invested in bringing people together meaningfully to improve organizational outcomes. It's more than improving event satisfaction scores—these organizations purposefully carve out the time and space for fostering connection, creativity, and a shared commitment to achieving business excellence, together.

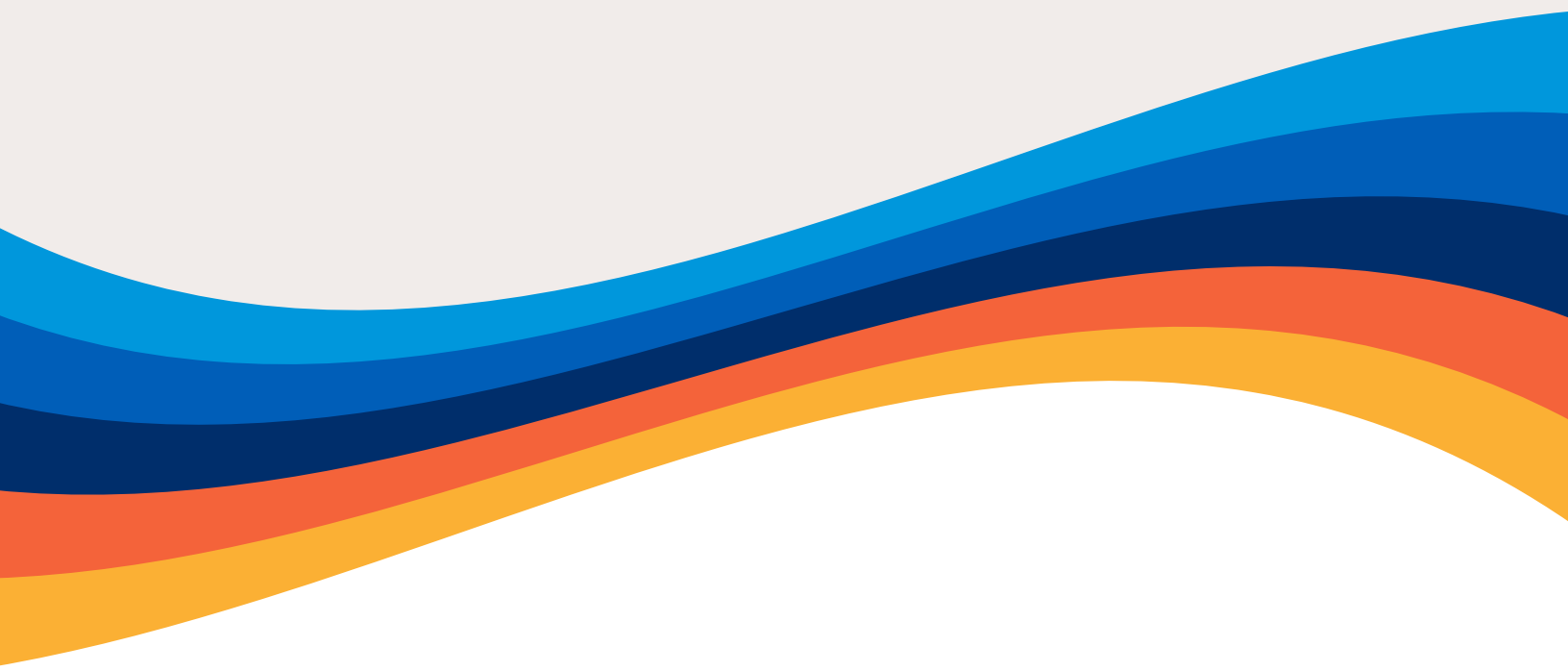
As corporate offsites continue to evolve, organizations should focus on:

- Sustainable programs that align with environmental goals and corporate social responsibility
- Integrating virtual elements to support hybrid work models
- Developing metrics to measure return on experience (ROE), going beyond traditional ROI calculations to capture the full 360-degree value of corporate offsites
- Adapting to evolving employee expectations and business travel preferences



As companies continue to increase their investment in corporate offsites, managing travel logistics and expenses becomes increasingly more complex. Emburse's travel management software helps organizations streamline this critical aspect of their business operations and financial management, offering potential savings of up to 20% on corporate travel programs through automated hotel and flight rebooking, policy compliance, and integrated expense management.

Learn more about Emburse's travel management solutions [here](#).



About Emburse

Emburse delivers innovative end-to-end travel and expense management solutions that solve for what's next for forward-thinking organizations. Our suite of award-winning products are trusted by more than 12 million finance and travel leaders, and business professionals around the world. More than 20,000 organizations in 120 countries, from Global 2000 corporations and small-medium businesses to public sector agencies and nonprofits, count on us to manage business travel and employee expenses with ease.

Our highly automated, mobile-first solutions streamline business travel planning, booking and management, and eliminate manual, time-consuming expense submissions, approval and reconciliation. We deliver efficiency and time savings, increase financial visibility, enhance spend control and compliance, and improve the entire business travel experience. This empowers our customers and their teams to deliver meaningful value for their organizations.

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