

THE STATE OF BUSINESS TRAVEL 2020

Presented by

Skift. + **TripActions**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The multi-trillion dollar business travel sector is in the middle of a fundamental transformation. The role that business travel plays for employees and companies is just as important than ever before. But many of the longstanding assumptions that once informed the spending and policy decisions of industry decision-makers are falling by the wayside. In place of these assumptions are new rules: Technology is reshaping how business travelers plan and book their trips, employee habits and expectations are evolving, and new industry competitors are bringing fresh ideas and options to corporate travel buyers.

Sitting at the center of this whirlwind of changes are corporate travel managers, a constituency that holds one of the sector's toughest jobs. On one hand, they must use business travel to satisfy the needs of the executive suite, helping to control costs, boost the company's profits, and keep employees safe. On the other, they must build travel policies that help to put employees at ease, providing convenient, easy-to-use tools that help them complete their trips with minimal hassle.

What do today's business travelers really want, and how does that align with the expectations and priorities of executives? In addition, what can the larger trends in the business travel sector tell us about the spending decisions and business travel tools that travel managers and policy makers should prioritize for their organization in the year to come?

To help better understand these questions, Skift partnered with TripActions, the fastest-growing corporate travel management platform, on a research study analyzing the attitudes and opinions of corporate travel managers and business travelers. The results of that study form the basis of this report, which investigates the attitudes and opinions of these key industry stakeholders as they relate to emerging industry trends and key pain points in the business travel experience.

Among the topics explored were:

- Questions about the importance of business travel to overall company goals
- Which platforms and tools are most preferred by those in the industry
- How problems are handled when they arise on trips
- Priorities for selecting preferred hotels and airlines
- Attitudes towards loyalty programs and business travel perks
- Feelings towards emerging business travel trends including bleisure travel, the sharing economy, and how they purchase trip add-ons (also known as ancillaries)

As we've seen from the results of the survey, there are many areas where the needs of business travelers are already well-aligned with the priorities of those in the executive suite. However, there are also areas for improvement, where decisions about corporate travel policy and the tools provided to travelers could significantly improve the traveler experience. These insights, plus much more, can be found in Skift's "State of Business Travel Report 2020."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	6
The Skift State of Business Travel Survey	10
Key Survey Results	18
Overall Role of Business Travel	19
Preferred Business Travel Solutions	25
Handling Problems and Communication Channels	31
Picking Flights and Hotels	39
Loyalty, Points, and Perks	47
Emerging Business Travel Trends	50
Conclusion	62

EXECUTIVE LETTER

Dear Corporate Travel Leader,

Being there in person is powerful. It enables employees to build relationships, close deals, and drive growth. Face-to-face meetings, whether in the boardroom or at dinner following the meeting, add up to connections that power people, ideas, and businesses forward.

Today more than ever, travelers expect consumer-like instant gratification, convenience, and exceptional customer support when traveling on behalf of their organization.

Travel managers have an opportunity to provide a truly best-in-class experience for their travelers, providing an end-to-end solution that employees love (and want to use). When employees genuinely enjoy their travel platform, they comply willingly with policy and process—which enhances spend visibility and control while enabling the organization to fulfill its duty of care commitment.

With business travel rapidly evolving, our goal in producing this report with Skift is to share what business travel looks like today, so travel managers can gain insights on how to build and manage best-in-class corporate travel programs now and in the future.

At TripActions, we aim to deliver the best experience in business travel for all users—whether the traveler, travel manager, or finance, operations, or HR leader. Coupled with an unmatched global infrastructure that scales with your business, TripActions delivers the ultimate win-win-win. A win for your travelers who get a great experience every time. A win for travel managers and organizations who benefit from high user adoption and the resulting spend visibility, compliance, and savings. And a win for suppliers who appreciate having their inventory offered in a business context.

Travel managers no longer have to choose or compromise between a great user experience and a global infrastructure that scales, with TripActions you get both. We're here to help you and your travelers get from here to there, no matter your destination.

Safe travels,

Ariel Cohen
Co-founder & CEO, TripActions



We make
work travel
work better.

TripActions[®]

Let's go.

Being there in person is powerful.

TripActions is here to get you there.

As the modern business travel platform, TripActions combines AI-driven personalization with unrivaled inventory choice and proactive, global 24/7 365 live travel agent support to delight employees, finance leaders, HR professionals, and travel managers alike -- all while empowering organizations to seize travel as a strategic lever for culture and growth.

TRUSTED BY

AWAY

ancestry

allbirds

lyft

Lime

Sara Lee FROZEN BAKERY

AGLU

box

Get a demo today at www.tripactions.com

INTRODUCTION



Today's corporate travel managers are at a critical crossroads. These industry influencers have one of their sector's most difficult balancing acts. Amidst a time of innovation, transformation, and ever-increasing expectations, travel managers must complete two seemingly contradictory tasks. On one hand, they're responsible for selecting the right business travel platforms and technologies for their organizations, helping minimize costs and maximizing employee compliance. On the other, they must simultaneously deliver a program and tools that satisfy and delight traveling employees, helping to limit their stress while maximizing convenience and enabling productivity.

But figuring out the right business travel solutions and strategies to accomplish these presumed contradictory priorities is challenging: employee needs and habits are constantly evolving, the industry's economic outlook is frequently shifting, and new products, platforms, and tools are coming to market at a rapid pace. What do travelers really want? And what do the larger trends in the business travel sector suggest these decision-makers should do to optimize their policy strategy and program spend for 2020 and beyond?

The good news is that the sector's near-term economic outlook is reinforcing a sense of optimism: Industry news sources suggest recent sector spending is healthy and growing. Consider the Global Business Travel Association's (GBTA) forecast for 2018, the most up-to-date analysis available at the time of publication, which predicted worldwide business travel spending would grow by seven percent between 2018 and 2019, with [overall spending expected to reach \\$1.7 trillion](#) globally by 2022. And a separate forecast by the GBTA that examined sector pricing trends for flights, hotels, and rental cars worldwide (another strong indicator of sector demand) [predicted strong growth in 2019](#).

Nevertheless, uncertainty is a fact of life in business. Two sources of potential stress are political, including a possible U.S.-China trade war and the UK's Brexit negotiations with the European Union. Even travel industry business leaders caution that a certain degree of unpredictability is to be expected. "More people are putting their caution flags up," said Hilton CEO Christopher Nassetta during the company's [Q2 2019 earnings call](#). "It doesn't mean that they're not spending, or hiring, or traveling. It just means they're a little bit more cautious because of what's going on in the broader environment."

At the same time, these global events are unlikely to put much of a dent in company-level decision-making because many long-term business travel commitments have already been made. "I don't think from a company perspective, we're going to push [our travel] down," said David Wieseneck, VP of Finance for letgo, a company that offers an online marketplace for buying and selling second-hand goods. "We make revenue, we have funding from our investors, we're going to continue to grow our business. And if that includes face-to-face travel, then we're going to have to make it so."



Also driving uncertainty are larger shifts in the business travel ecosystem, shifts which are likely to influence corporate travel policy makers' choices regarding travel tools and spending strategies in the year ahead.

One important shift reflects new innovation in the business travel ecosystem for product distribution. New technological advances (such as the airline industry's New Distribution Capability [often abbreviated as NDC]) now provide travel suppliers greater control over how they price, merchandise, and market their products to business travelers. This distribution change is also having a big impact on how business travelers, distributors, and corporate travel buyers make decisions about which "ancillaries" (add-on products and services) are selected for work trips.

TripActions, for instance, is one example of how the business travel ecosystem is integrating these NDC capabilities, opting for [direct connection partnerships with travel suppliers like United Airlines](#) in order to more easily and clearly display different fare and trip options to business travelers. Southwest Airlines is another example, with the airline announcing new [integration partnerships](#) to distribute flights more easily to business travelers. Both of these examples point to the growing importance of, and value in, travel management companies (TMCs) as a key connection node linking together enterprises, suppliers, and business travelers.



Another sector shift involves the growing demand among business travelers for increased “consumerization” of the business travel experience. The term refers to a growing desire among road warriors to use digital booking and trip management tools for their work trips that provide the same level of ease, convenience, and instant gratification as the tools they might use to plan their leisure trips.

The shift toward consumerization is playing out in several different sectors within the corporate travel ecosystem. One example is the sharing economy. Traditional corporate travel players like the rental car industry are [experimenting with new ride-hailing services](#) targeted at business travelers at the same time that rideshare companies like Lyft and Uber continue to be among the [most expensed brands](#) by business travelers. Meanwhile, competition to provide sharing-economy accommodations for corporate travelers is heating up. Sharing economy heavyweights like Airbnb are pushing further into the corporate travel space, [launching new tools and services](#) designed to appeal to corporate travelers and travel managers. In addition, traditional hospitality brands like Marriott are [expanding their inventory to include more property categories](#) like full home rentals that will appeal to business travel groups.

Another example of the demand for easy-to-use tools for work trips is the growing success of traveler-first platforms like TripActions, which offer employees access to the same user-friendly booking tools they’ve come to expect when planning personal trips. “TripActions has designed its platform around the user experience,” said Ariel Cohen, co-founder and CEO of TripActions. “We deliver unrivaled inventory choice, AI-driven personalization, and proactive global 24/7 live travel agent support so that users love the experience so much they have no need to book elsewhere.”

Finally, the increasing demand for easier, more travel-friendly business travel solutions is also evident in the changing booking habits and attitudes of corporate travelers themselves. A [growing body of research](#) confirms that business travelers will simply disregard or ignore their companies’ travel policy rules if they are not designed to maximize convenience and minimize traveler stress. The rise of bleisure travel, referring to business trips that integrate additional travel days for leisure activities, is also growing. One recent study [cited by Skift](#) found that 60 percent of business trips include a leisure component.

THE SKIFT STATE OF BUSINESS TRAVEL SURVEY



Whether it's the growing demand for consumerization, new innovations in corporate travel distribution, or evolving business traveler preferences, it's clear that a variety of economic, political, and industry-specific shifts will have an impact on the corporate travel sector in the year ahead. But what do business travelers really want? And what steps should the executives and policy makers that oversee corporate travel programs take in response to these shifts?

To help answer these questions, Skift partnered with TripActions in summer 2019 on a research study investigating these questions. The survey had three key objectives. First and foremost, Skift and TripActions wanted to understand the role that business travel plays in company decision-making, particularly given it often accounts for as much as ten percent of an organization's annual budget. Second, the survey attempted to understand the wants and needs of business travelers, one of the most important constituencies that travel programs are designed to serve. Third, the survey attempted to gauge the attitudes of industry stakeholders toward new innovations and trends.

The survey was structured around these themes and then shared with two distinct groups of stakeholders in the corporate travel ecosystem:

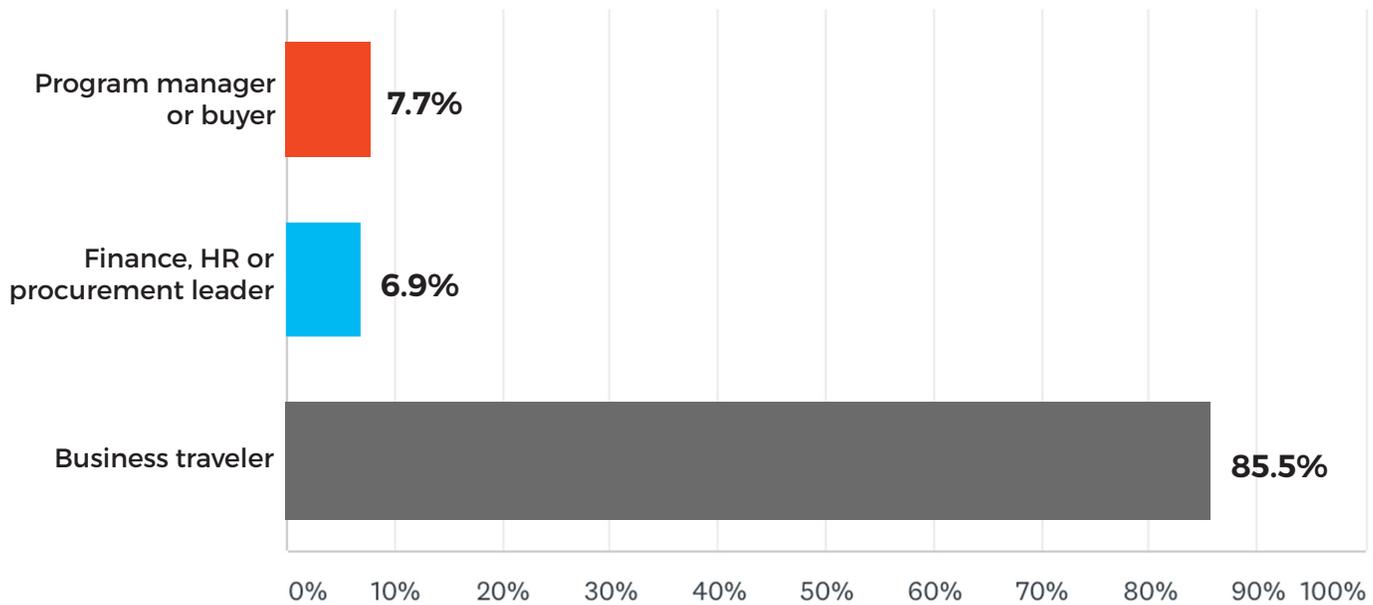
- 1. Business travelers** – The first and largest bucket of survey respondents were business travelers, referring to those whose primary association with corporate travel is taking trips for work on behalf of their company or organization.
- 2. Corporate travel decision-makers** – The second category of respondents were corporate travel decision-makers, more commonly known as corporate travel managers. Those in this group have responsibility for some aspect of designing, managing, or approving their organization's policy related to business travel. This includes a number of job functions such as corporate travel managers, HR policy makers, corporate controllers, those serving in finance roles, and C-level executives at smaller organizations, among others.

The two groups were then asked about a range of topics relevant to the broader shifts now underway in the corporate travel sector. This included their thoughts on the overall business travel experience, opinions of their experience planning and managing trips using their companies' travel booking tools and partners, attitudes toward business travel perks and rewards, and perceptions of emerging sector trends (for instance bleisure travel and consumerization).

The proportion of business travelers who ultimately completed the survey (around 85 percent) was much higher than the number of corporate travel decision makers (around 15 percent). This split is consistent with the typical hierarchy of most organizations, where one individual or a small group oversees policy and budget decisions for a much larger group of traveling employees.

Within this corporate travel decision-maker audience, the participant base was more or less equally split between travel program managers/buyers and those who work in finance, human resources or procurement capacities.

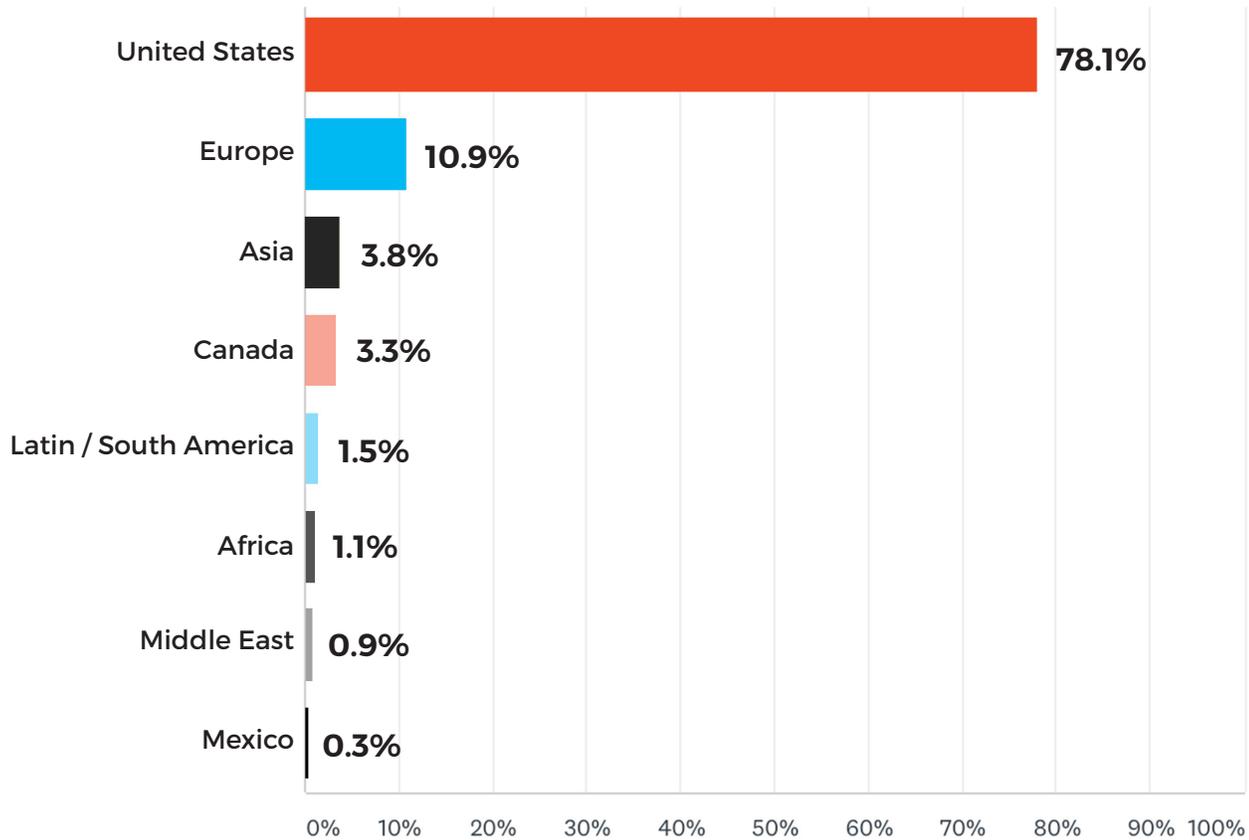
What is your business travel role at your company?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

The geographic home base for most respondents in the Skift and TripActions survey was a reflection of the regions of the world currently home to the largest share of corporate travel trip planning and spending. More than 78 percent of survey respondents were based in the United States, the survey's largest group. Another 10 percent of respondents were based in Europe, while a little more than three percent were from Asia, the third-most popular response.

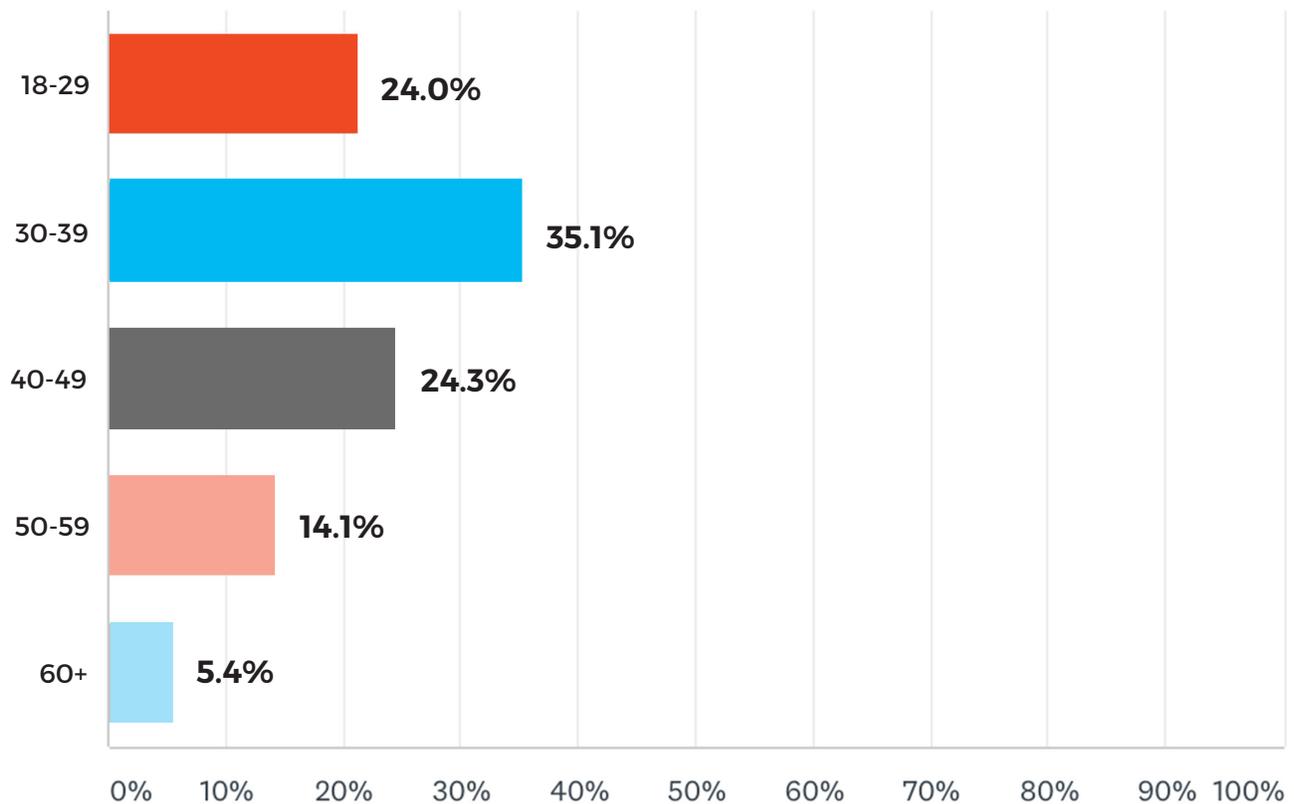
Where are you located?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

When examining the age of survey respondents, the largest group was between the ages of 30-39 (known to many as Millennials), making up more than 35 percent of the survey's total. The second-most popular group was between the ages of 40-49 (often referred to as Generation X), making up another 24 percent.

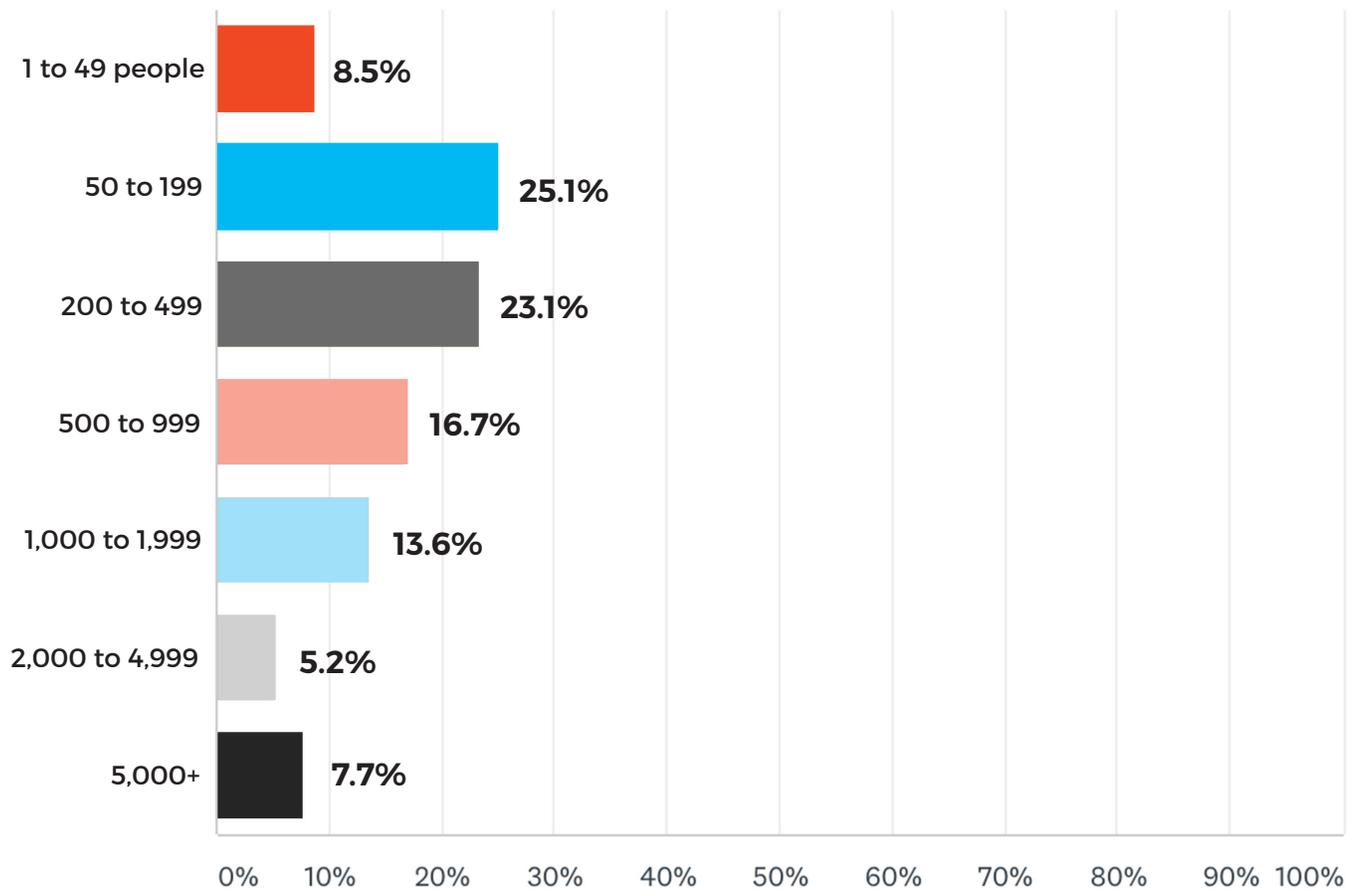
What is your age?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

In terms of the size of the organizations where the survey participants work, the respondents came from companies both large and small. The biggest proportion said they worked at companies of between 50 and 199 individuals, representing around one quarter of respondents. The second-largest group came from those at organizations of between 200 and 499 individuals, accounting for another 23 percent. Both firmly fall within the small- and medium-size enterprise (SME) designation. However, the survey also reached many respondents from larger organizations: More than 30 percent of respondents said they worked at companies of between 500 and 1,999 employees, and more than 10 percent were from organizations of 2,000 employees or more.

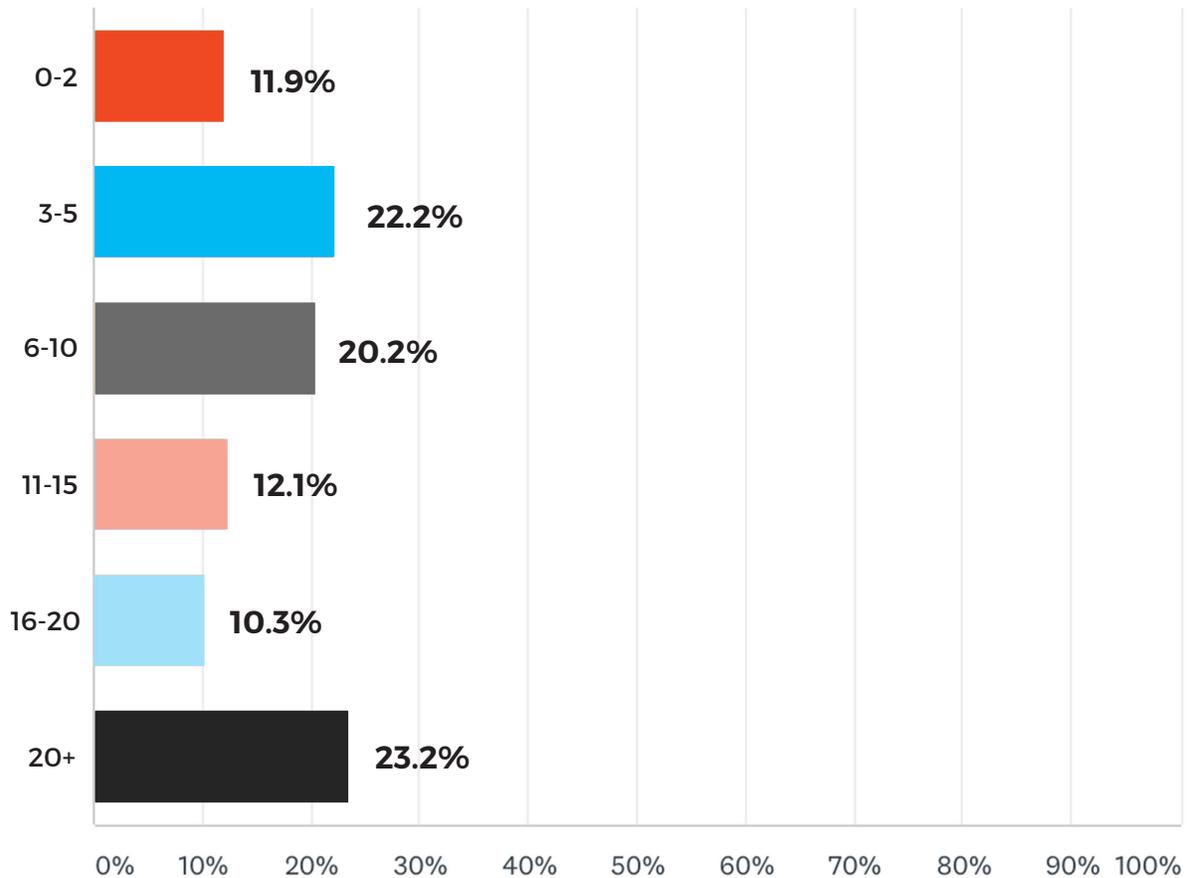
How many employees does the company you work for have?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Those respondents from the business traveler group were also asked to describe the frequency of their travel. Many said they were extremely active travelers, with one-third of respondents mentioning they traveled 16 or more times per year.

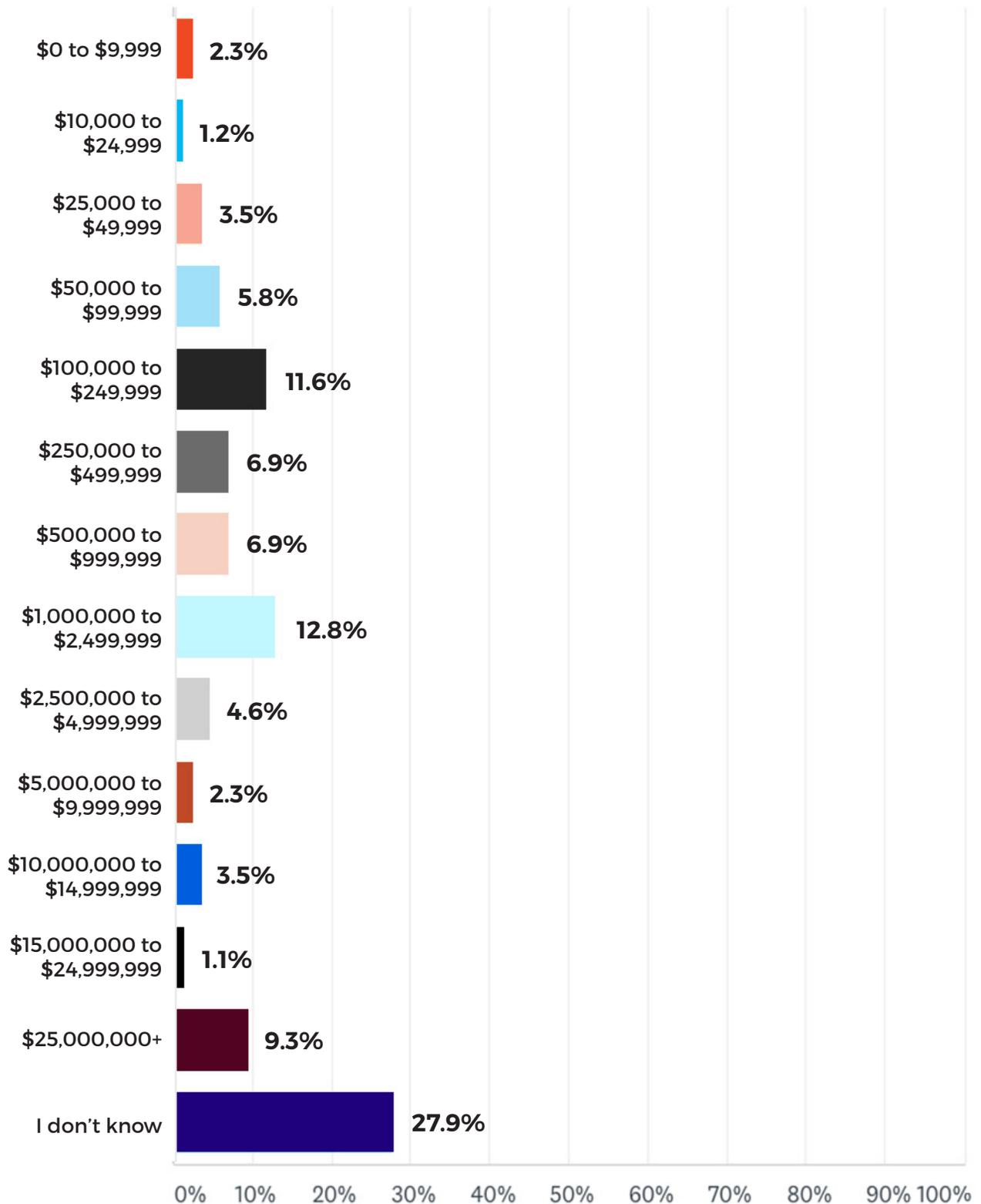
How many trips per year do you typically take for work?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

From the corporate travel manager perspective, the survey also asked for an estimate of annual budgets dedicated to business travel activity. When asking this question of corporate travel decision-makers, a significant portion either chose not to disclose this information for privacy reasons or did not know. But among those that replied, the largest share said their company spent between \$1 million and \$2.5 million annually on business travel, accounting for 12 percent of corporate travel decision-makers who took the survey.

What is your organization's annual travel budget?



KEY SURVEY RESULTS



There are a wide variety of components to the business travel experience: Questions about program policy, favored booking tools, factors in selecting the right hotel or airline, travelers' main sources of frustration during trips, and mechanics for how employees earn and receive rewards for following the rules all play a role in the process. In the sections below, we offer a summary of the survey's main takeaways, organized to align with key aspects of the business travel experience.

OVERALL ROLE OF BUSINESS TRAVEL

It's no surprise to hear that business travel is a critical function for many organizations. But how big of a priority is it? And what are the main reasons employees are traveling?

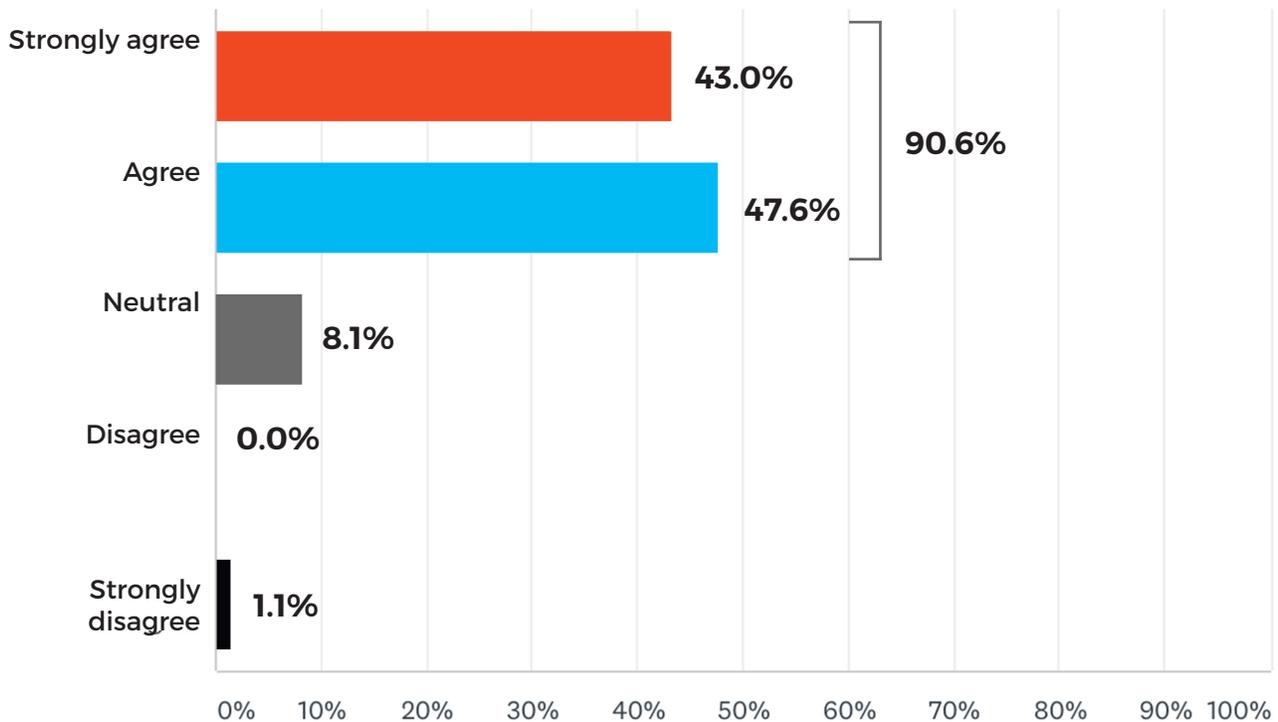
Survey respondents were asked to assess the overall importance of business travel to their company's objectives. Most survey participants indicated that work trips remain an essential component of their company's long-term goals, though the exact reason for traveling can vary significantly depending on the employee's job function and the company's industry sector, size, and stage of maturity.

The vast majority of survey respondents, both from the business traveler and decision-maker audiences, agreed that business travel was a critical component of their company's growth. More than 90 percent of respondents from both stakeholder groups either agreed or strongly agreed that "business travel is important for driving company growth."

Agree or Disagree:

"Business travel is important for driving company growth."

Corporate travel managers

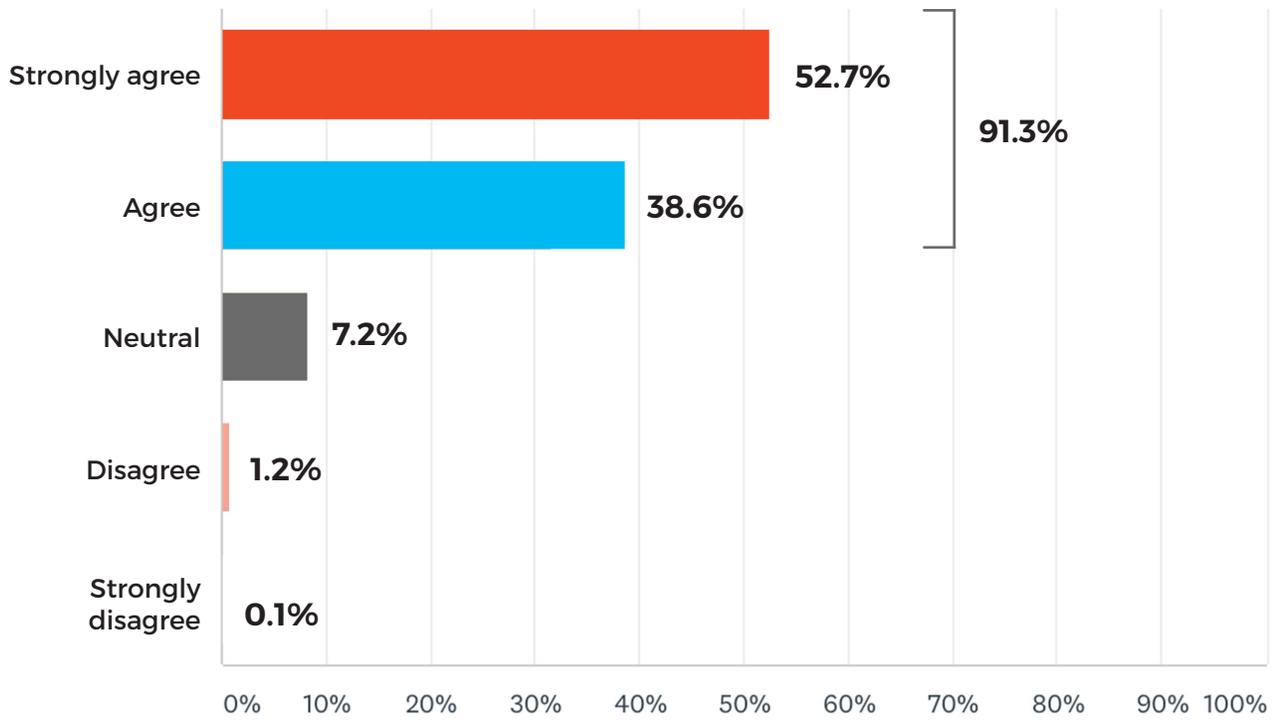


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Agree or Disagree:

“Business travel is important for driving my company’s growth.”

Business travelers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Executives interviewed by Skift concurred with these findings. “[Business] travel is extremely important. I don’t think that we could put a moratorium on travel and still have the same impact or be able to move as quickly as we do,” said letgo’s Wieseneck. “And being a startup, moving quickly, reacting to the market is hugely important.”

Others agreed. “The business travel that we do is a key factor in our growth,” said Melissa Cantrell, manager of travel and logistics for the fast-growing restaurant chain Raising Cane’s.

However, the two core respondent groups diverged in their rationale for why they were traveling for business. Among the corporate travel decision-makers who dictate company policy, the most important reason for business travel was to “close a deal,” mentioned as a “very important reason” by more than half of respondents.

Percent of corporate travel managers who said the following activities were a “very important reason” for business trips:

Close a deal	52.7%
Establish new business relationships	40.5%
Foster established business relationships	24.0%
Attend conferences / events	29.5%
Gather my team in one place	20.5%
Meet with co-workers in other offices	20.8%
Candidate interviews	15.6%

Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

This was not the same level of priority for business travelers, where closing a deal was listed as a “very important reason” by around 28 percent of respondents. The number one reason was “fostering established business relationships,” mentioned as very important by 46 percent of business travelers.

The much lower priority placed on business travel deal-making likely has less to do with the importance of this activity in overall business travel priorities. Instead, the more likely rationale for the survey responses is that they are a reflection of the much wider range of job functions handled by employees in comparison to corporate travel managers. Even though some employees, like sales people for instance, are involved in deal making, many others do not have similar responsibilities while traveling.

Percent of business travelers who said the following activities were a “very important reason” for business trips:

Close a deal	28.0 %
Establish new business relationships	38.7 %
Foster established business relationships	46.6 %
Attend conferences / events	36.1 %
Gather my team in one place	29.7 %
Meet with co-workers in other offices	38.1 %

Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

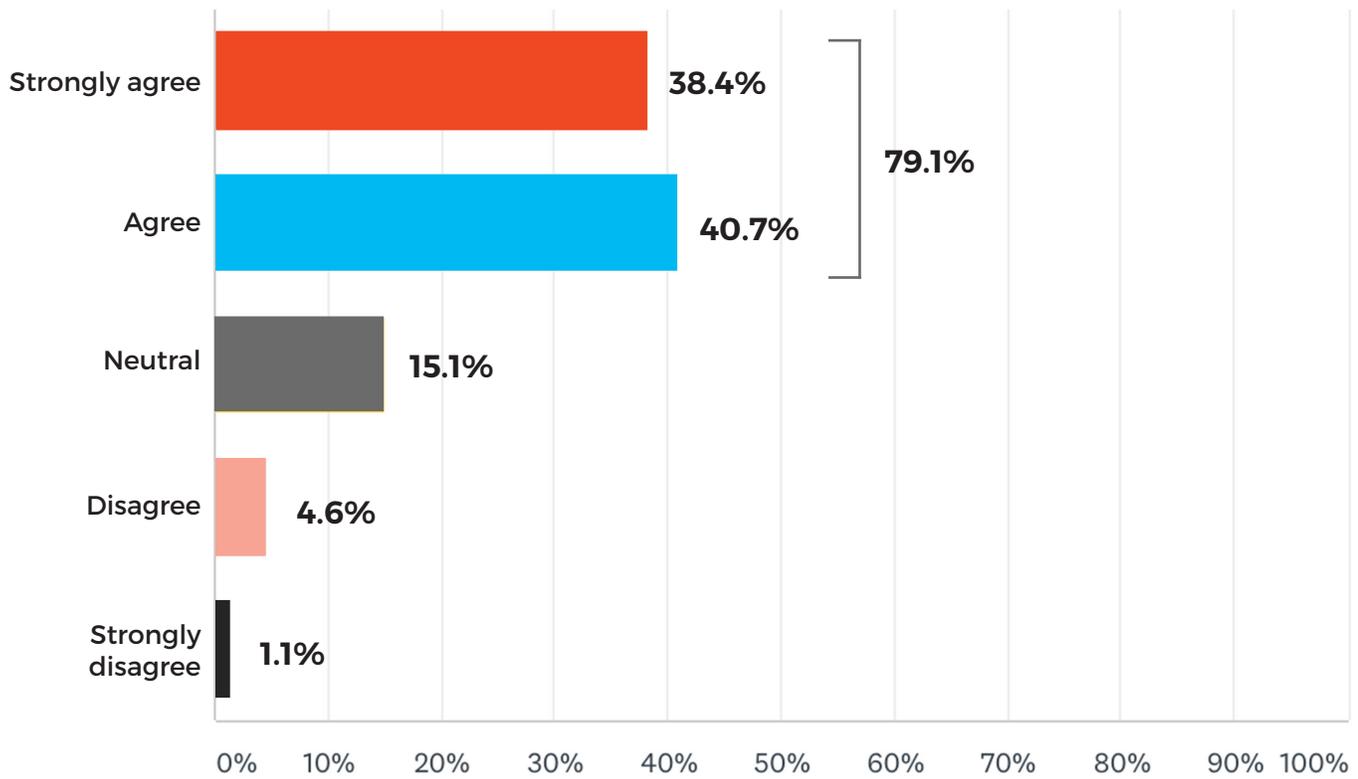
For those employees that work in sales roles, for example, work trips are a critical way to finalize deals. “For my job it’s pretty critical,” said Mike Ramirez, director of enterprise sales for software firm Looker. “Selling into the enterprise space...you’re doing a couple pretty massive deals a year, which really requires face time.”

Business travel also continues to have significant value in an era of increasing digital connectivity. Even as virtual meeting options like video conferencing become more prominent, survey respondents were unanimous in their belief that in-person meetings continue to serve an important purpose. Around 80 percent of corporate travel decision-makers and business travelers either agreed or strongly agreed that “meeting in person is more effective than meeting virtually.”

Agree or Disagree:

“When it comes to getting things done, meeting in person is more effective than meeting virtually.”

Corporate travel managers

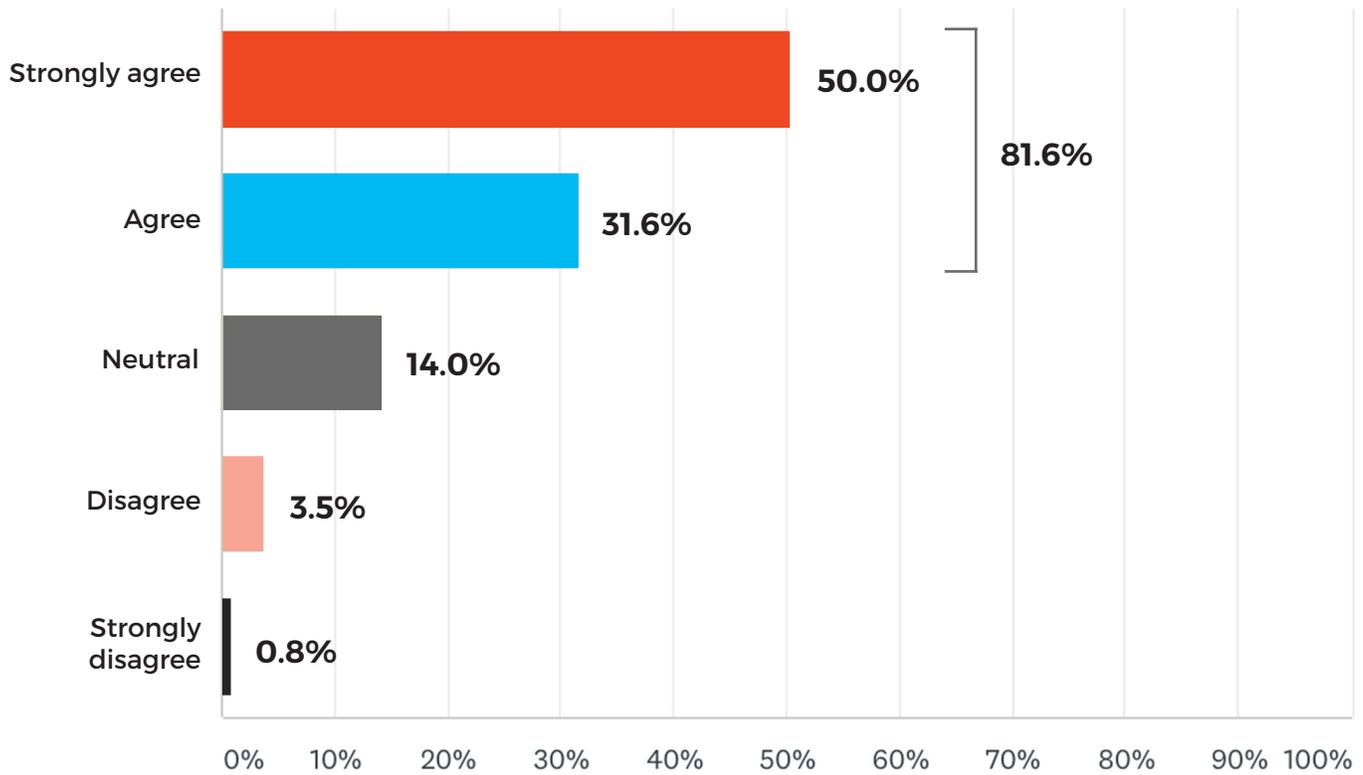


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Agree or Disagree:

“When it comes to getting things done, meeting in person is more effective than meeting virtually.”

Business travelers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

PREFERRED BUSINESS TRAVEL SOLUTIONS



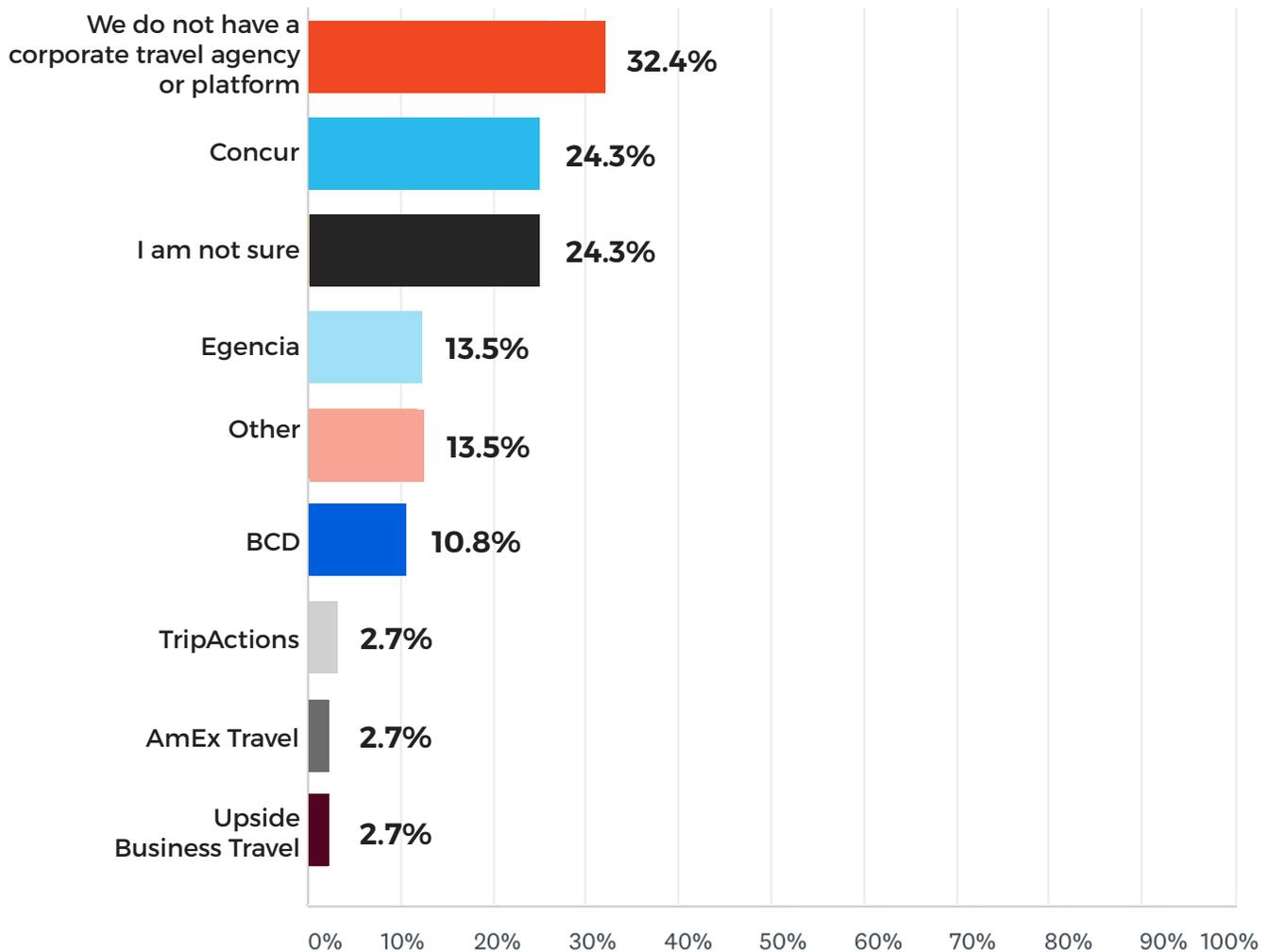
The overall importance of business travel to a wide range of companies tells us a lot about the current state of the sector. But knowing business travel is a key company priority is only part of the story.

The decision about which tools they use to manage, analyze, and purchase corporate travel is an equally important decision. And today, corporate travel decision-makers have a range of options in terms of the agency or self-serve digital platform they select to manage their corporate travel experience. What are the preferred solutions? And what do those in the industry think about the experience of using those tools?

Among business travelers, many said their organization does not currently have a corporate travel agency or booking platform (often described by those in the sector as “unmanaged” business travel), mentioned by more than 35 percent of respondents. For those that said their company did use a business travel tool, Concur was the most frequently mentioned, listed by 30 percent of respondents. TripActions was the third-most popular choice, mentioned by more than seven percent of survey participants. The results are especially impressive in light of the fact that the company has only been selling to the corporate travel market for the past two years.

What corporate travel agency or platform (if any) does your company use to book trips?

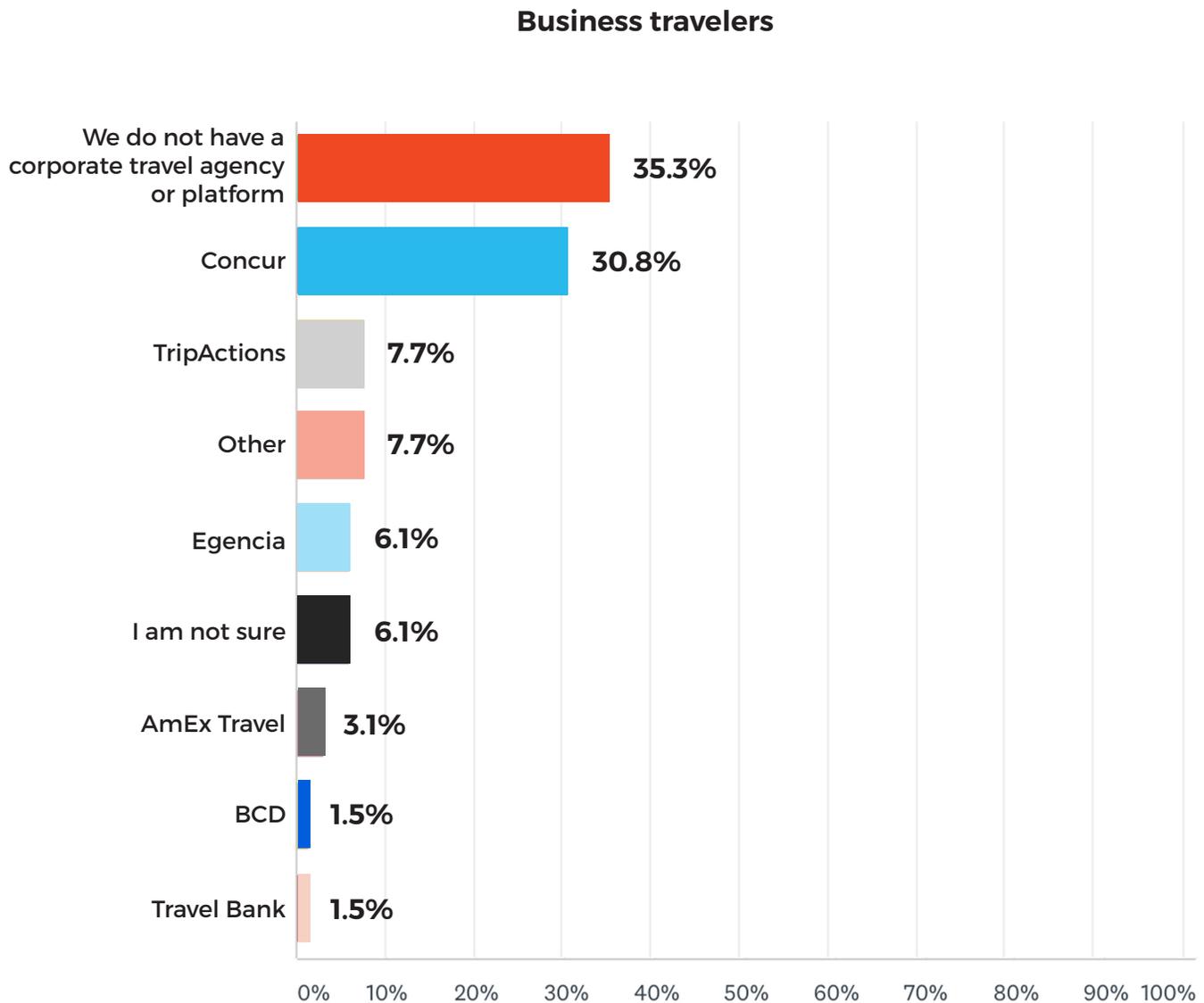
Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

For corporate travel managers, “no tool” was also the most popular choice, mentioned by 32 percent of participants. Concur was the second most popular answer, listed by another 24 percent of respondents. Those who said they were “not sure” was the third-most popular choice, also accounting for 24 percent of respondents. Egencia (13 percent) was fourth.

What corporate travel agency or platform (if any) does your company use to book trips?



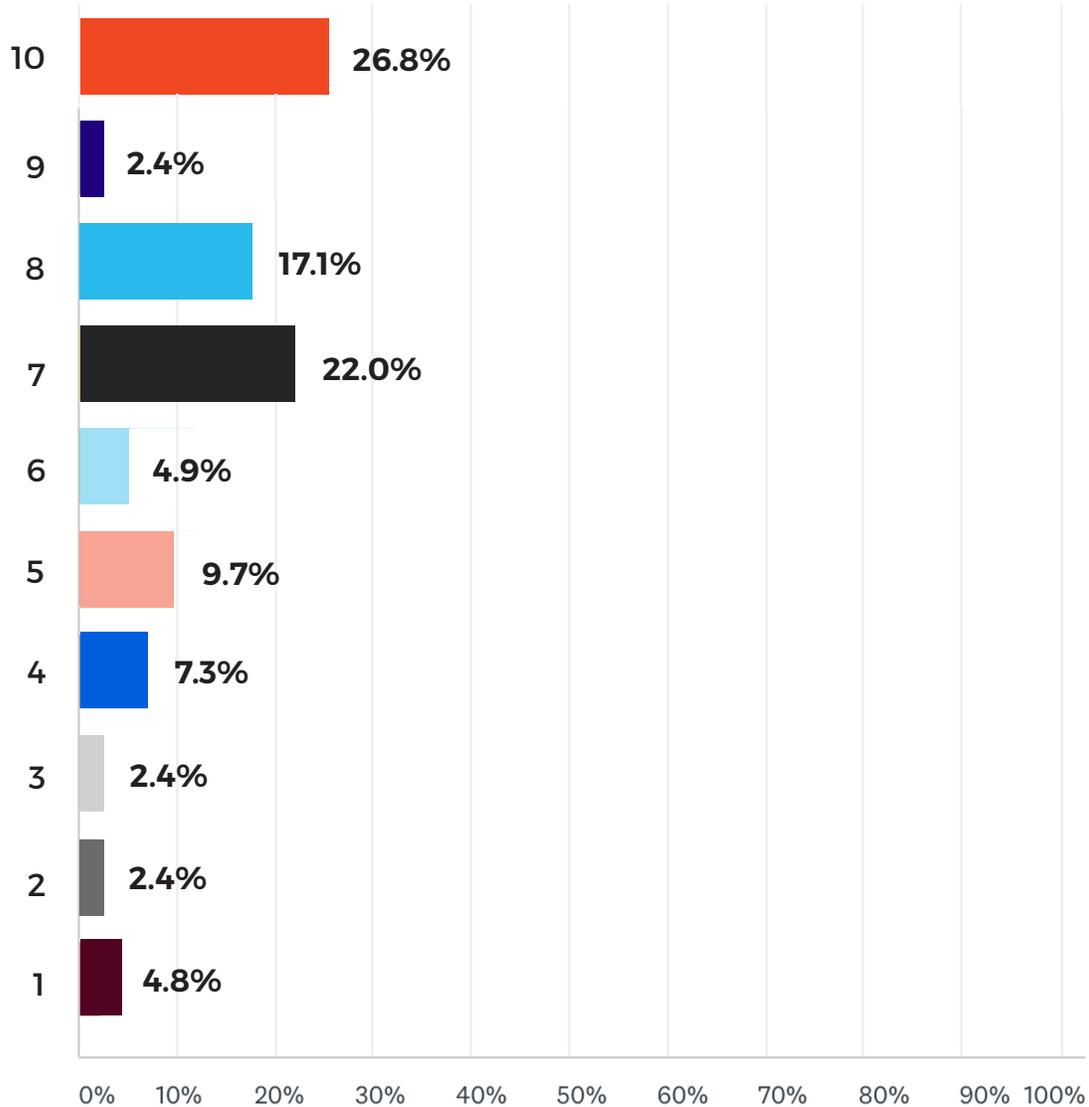
Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

However, the relative popularity of the industry's current corporate booking tool choices doesn't necessarily tell the whole story. When corporate travel managers were asked to rate their satisfaction with their companies' solution, the response was more mixed.

While more than one-quarter of respondents ranked their company's current tool as 10 out of 10 stars, another quarter rated their current tool between one and five stars, suggesting that many of the existing corporate solutions on the market (such as, for instance, having no solution at all) have plenty of room for improvement.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best, please rate your satisfaction with your current corporate travel tool or platform.

Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

On the question of whether or not they felt their “company’s business travel solution was easy to use,” 73 percent of business travelers using TripActions either agreed or strongly agreed. This was in comparison to just 49 percent of business travelers using other business travel solutions, a 24 percentage point gap.

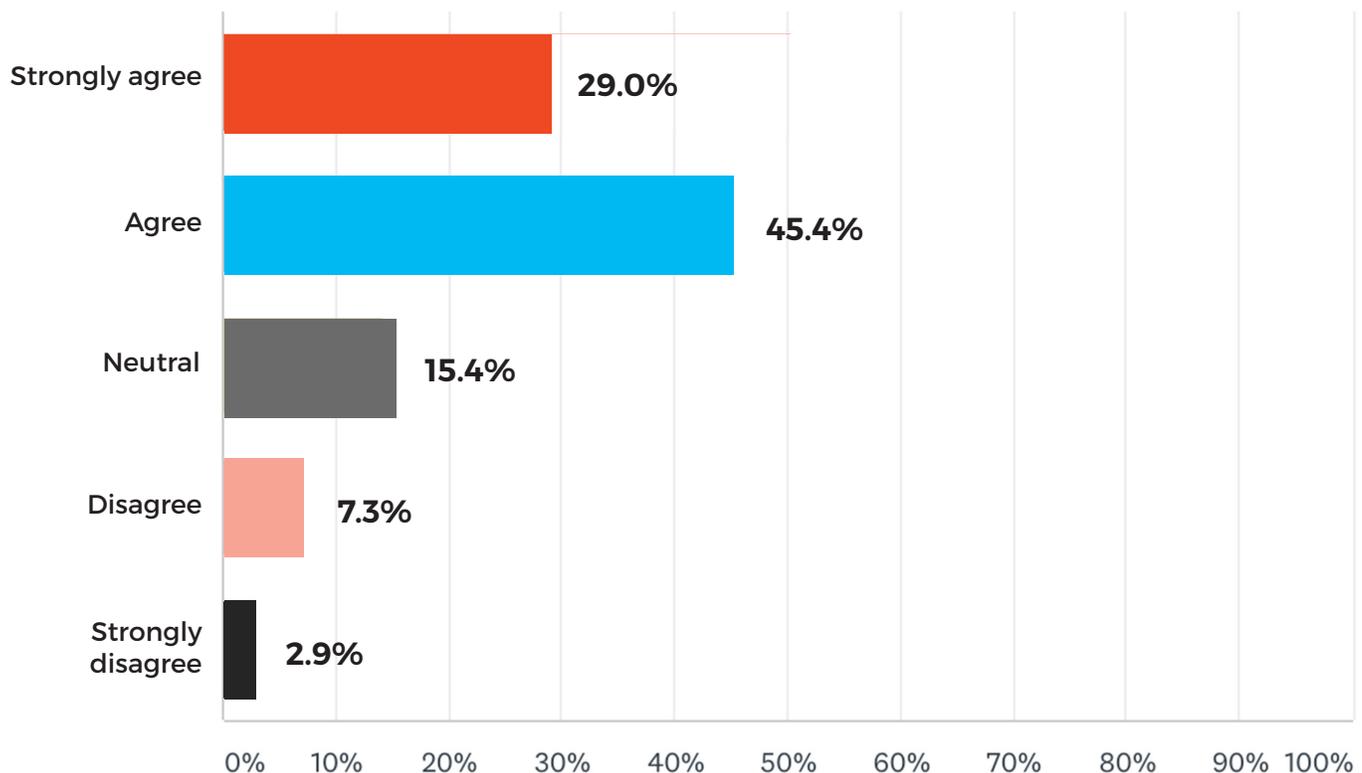
Meanwhile, the relative popularity of “unmanaged” travel policies (referring to companies that have no formal travel tool for employees) is symbolic of the big decisions facing today’s corporate travel managers. On one hand, the decision to select an unstructured travel policy reinforces the importance of program features like convenience and consumerization to traveling employees. And for managers that have decided not to develop a formal travel booking tool for their employees, it’s easy enough to simply maintain the status quo – after all, isn’t that what travelers want?

But when taking a more detailed look at the survey results, it becomes clear that not all business travel solutions are created equal, particularly in the eyes of business travelers. On the question of whether or not they felt their “company’s business travel solution was easy to use,” 73 percent of business travelers using TripActions either agreed or strongly agreed. This was in comparison to just 49 percent of business travelers using other business travel solutions, a 24 percentage point gap.

Agree or Disagree:

“My company’s business travel solution is easy to use.”

Business travelers who use TripActions



As industry trends like consumerization continue to grow in importance, corporate travel managers who choose to continue taking an unmanaged approach will need to take a closer look at whether or not this option truly serves their organizations and the needs of their traveling employees. As the results above suggest, sometimes choosing no solution doesn't necessarily reduce costs, especially if it has a negative impact on overall employee satisfaction.

Travel managers agree that simplicity is an increasingly important factor in selecting their organization's preferred tools. "We tried out several other agencies and tools before landing on TripActions, and it was honestly such a breath of fresh air," said Cantrell of Raising Cane's. "It was one of the first tools that actually looked like it was created in this century, and that's something that's super important to us."

HANDLING PROBLEMS AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



It's a fact of life that something is bound to go wrong while traveling for work. Flights get delayed by weather, plans change, and hotel bookings are sent to the wrong property. But not all hassles are the same in the eyes of travelers. In fact, it's just as important how those issues are handled. Do employees have a simple method of getting in touch with someone when they need help? And do they feel like they have the support that they need?

It is this realm of handling problems where the corporate travel manager's decision about which travel platform to use becomes a critical factor. Pick the right tool, and employees are empowered with the communication tools and support to resolve problems in real-time. But if they decide to use no solution, or a solution with minimal support options, the company itself may end up shouldering much of the burden for excess costs and time spent helping stranded employees. In some cases, the employees are simply left to fend for themselves.

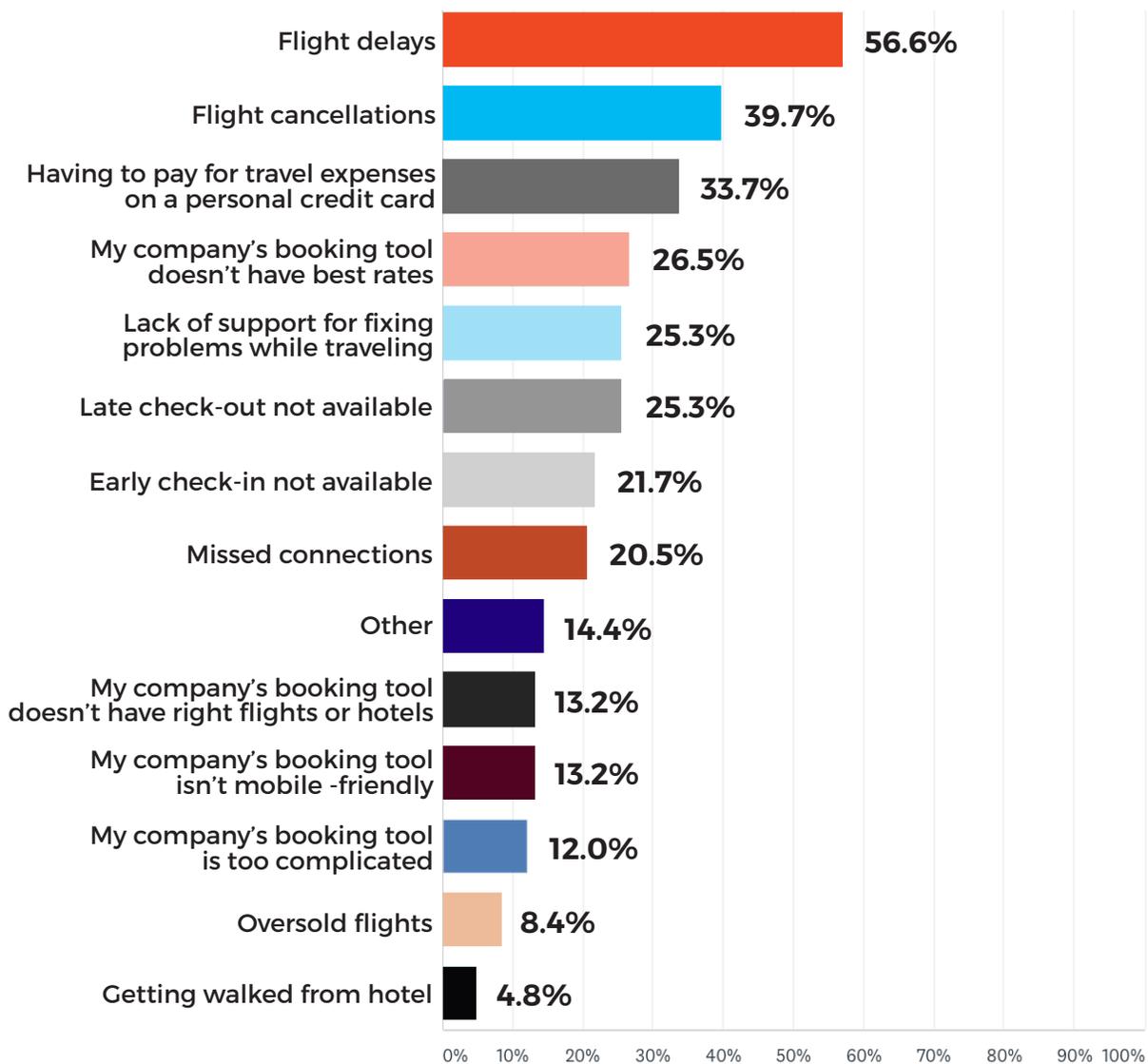
What are the most common issues facing business travelers? The most mentioned source of frustration in business travel is the flight delay. Nearly all respondents listed delays as the number one issue. The biggest issues listed by corporate travel managers were flight delays (57 percent), flight cancellations (40 percent), and employees paying for travel expenses with a personal card (34 percent).

These issues were paralleled in the responses from business travelers. Flight delays were the most common problem for business travelers, mentioned by nearly two-thirds of respondents. The second biggest issue was flight cancellations, mentioned by another third of respondents. Paying for travel expenses on a personal credit card was the third-biggest issue.

Also worth mentioning were issues with company booking tools. The fourth most-popular answer was “My company’s booking tool doesn’t have the best rates or prices,” mentioned by 29 percent of respondents, while “Lack of support for fixing problems while traveling,” (23 percent of respondents) was fifth. Both of these problems reinforce the longstanding narrative that many business travel tools are still not easy enough to use.

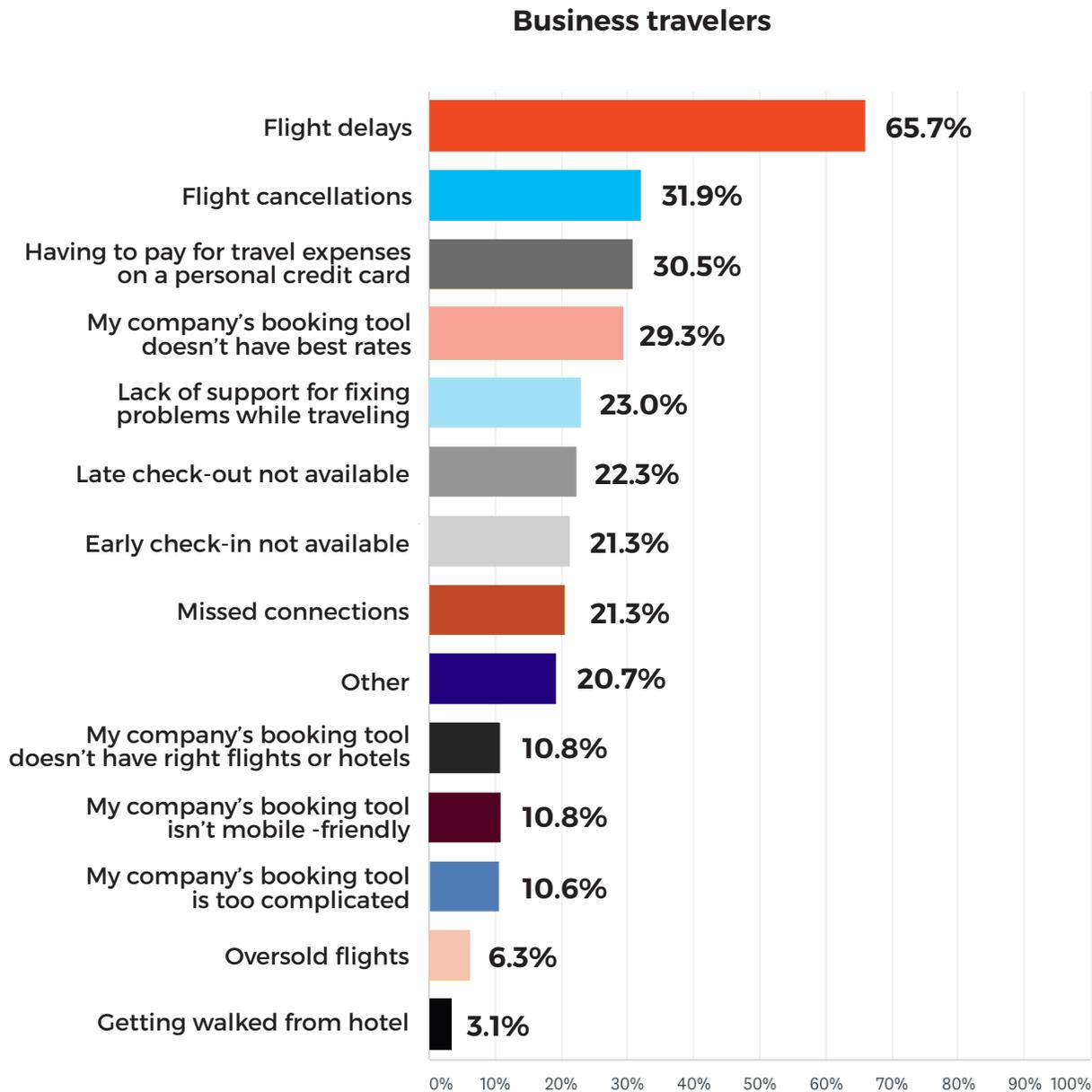
What are the most common problems you or your employees face when traveling for work?

Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

What are the most common problems you face when traveling for work?



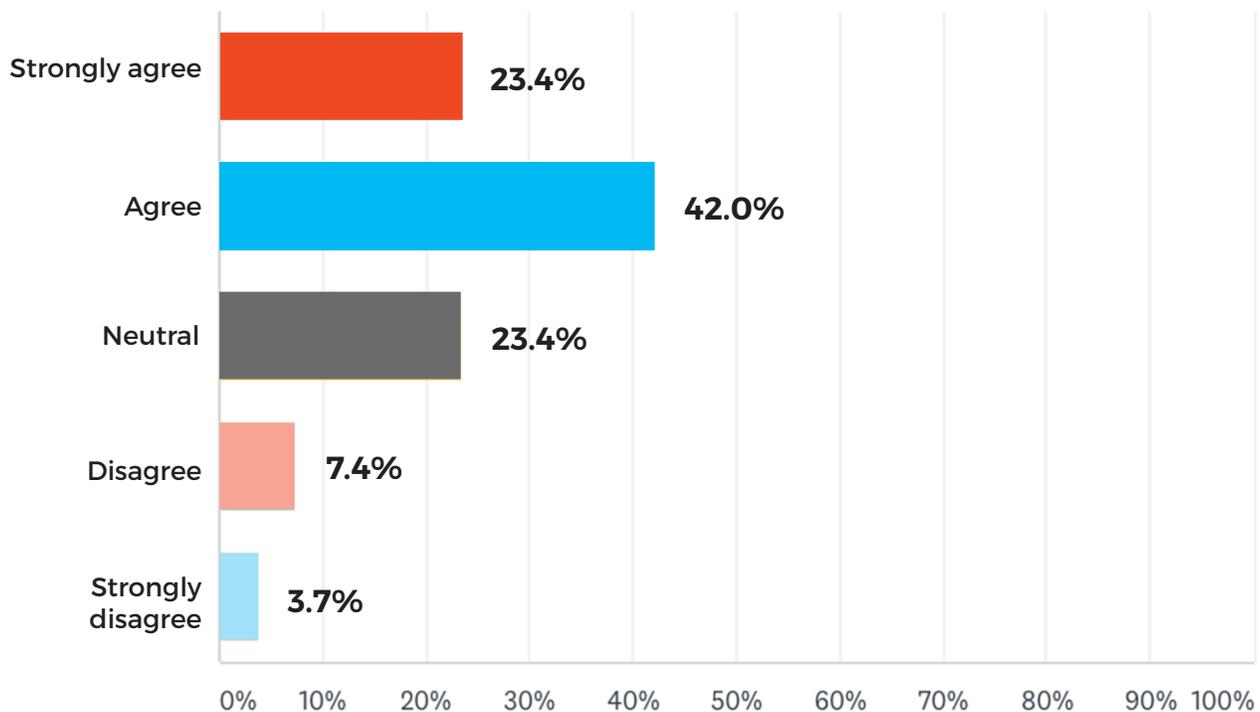
Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

But when these types of problems occur, it's also important that they are handled quickly and appropriately. Otherwise a small hiccup can easily turn into chaos. Thankfully, most business travelers felt like their organizations were doing an adequate job of helping them while they were on the road, even if their existing solution left room for improvement: 56 percent noted that they strongly agreed or agreed that their corporate travel solution did a good job of taking care of them while traveling whereas 65 percent of corporate travel managers strongly agreed or agreed.

Agree or Disagree:

“Our corporate travel platform or agency does a great job taking care of our employees while on a trip.”

Corporate travel managers

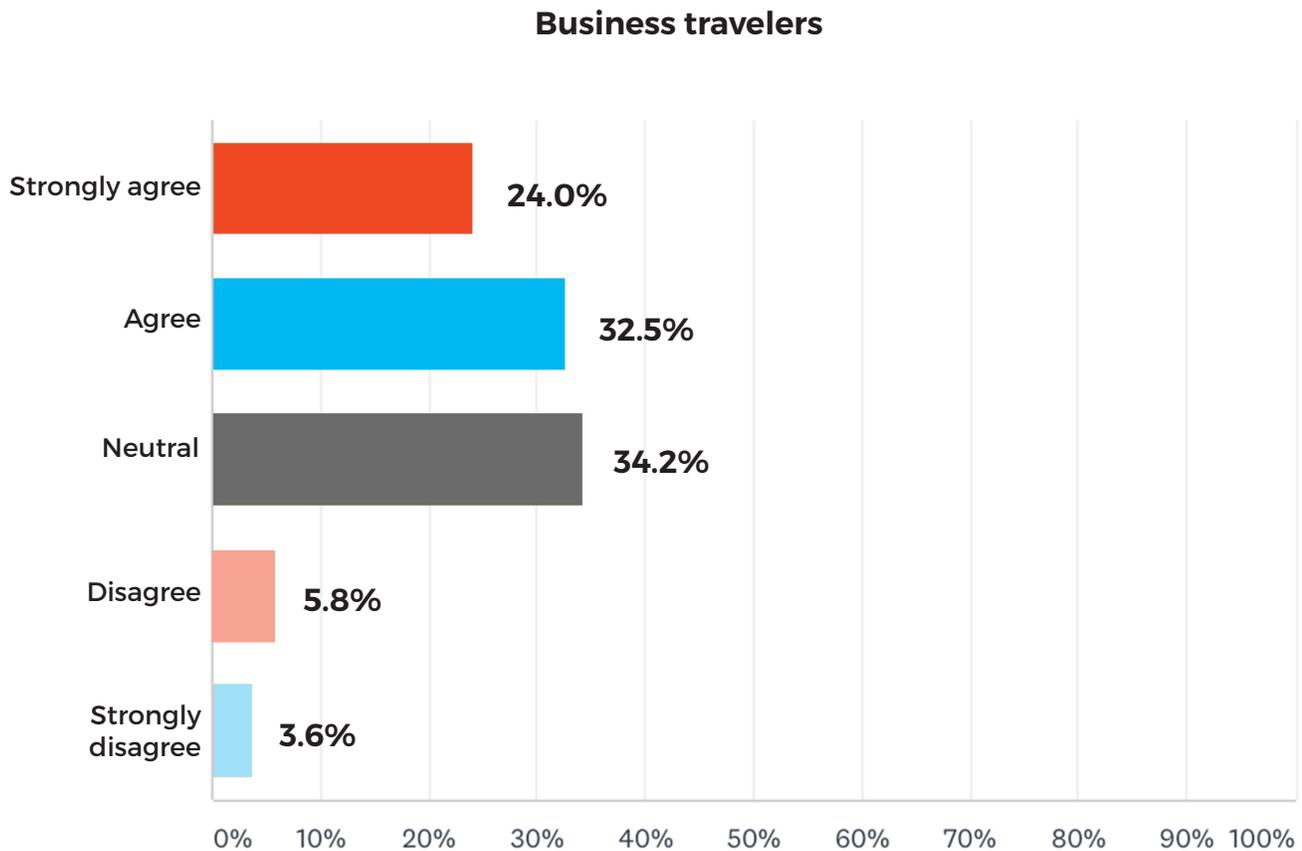


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Sixty percent of business travelers from companies using TripActions either strongly agreed or agreed that their corporate travel solution “does a good job taking care of them while on trip,” versus just 36 percent from the non-TripActions group who felt similarly.

Agree or Disagree:

“Our corporate travel platform or agency does a great job taking care of me while on a trip.”



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

This gap between road warriors and corporate travel managers, while small, suggests an opportunity for travel managers to further dig into how and when their existing tools work to assist travelers when they have a problem, particularly as travel managers may not have direct visibility into the challenges their road warriors have with their existing platform when faced with an issue while traveling. To this end, business travelers using TripActions did indicate they were more satisfied with the support they received than those using other solutions.

When comparing the survey results between business travelers whose company used TripActions versus those whose organization used an alternative business travel tool, most respondents said TripActions did a better job. Sixty percent of business travelers from companies using TripActions either strongly agreed or agreed that their corporate travel solution “does a good job taking care of them while on trip,” versus just 36 percent from the non-TripActions group who felt similarly.

Travel managers that spoke with Skift suggested that switching to TripActions made a noticeable difference in reducing their need to provide frequent employee support. “Before [switching to TripActions], travelers would go to us if they needed to make any type of change,” said Melissa Cantrell of Raising Cane’s. “It’s taken a lot off of our shoulders as far as the travel team and the after hours support that we’re actually having to provide now.”

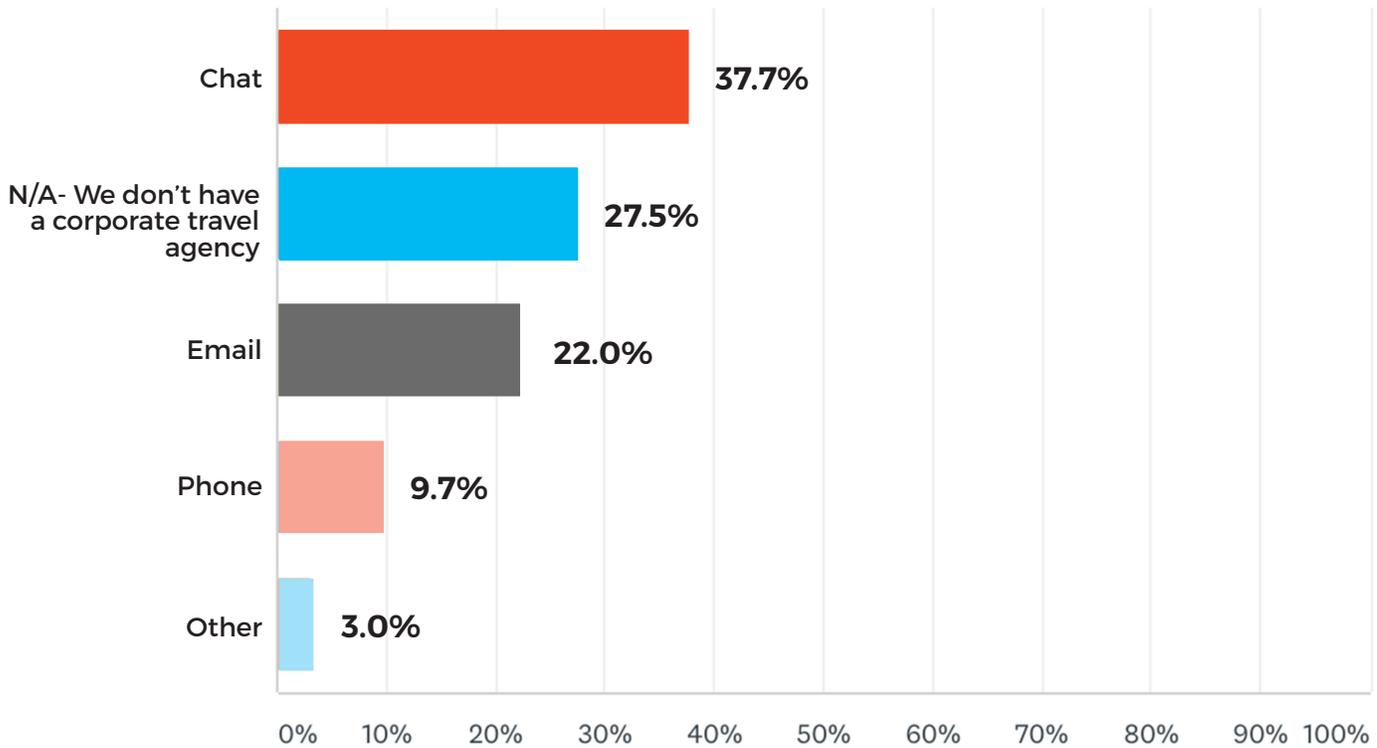
When examining the methods that corporate travel managers and business travelers want to use to communicate with their provider, automated methods of interaction were most popular. Among business travelers, 37 percent said their preferred interaction mode was chat, suggesting an opportunity for businesses to provide more chat and on-the-go tools for traveler transactions and questions. Email, mentioned by another 22 percent, was the second-most popular answer among respondents who had a travel provider.

Corporate travel managers shared similar preferences as business travelers as far as their interaction tools, mentioning email (39 percent) and chat (29 percent) as their top two choices.



If your organization uses a corporate travel agency to book trips, what is your preferred method of interacting with them?

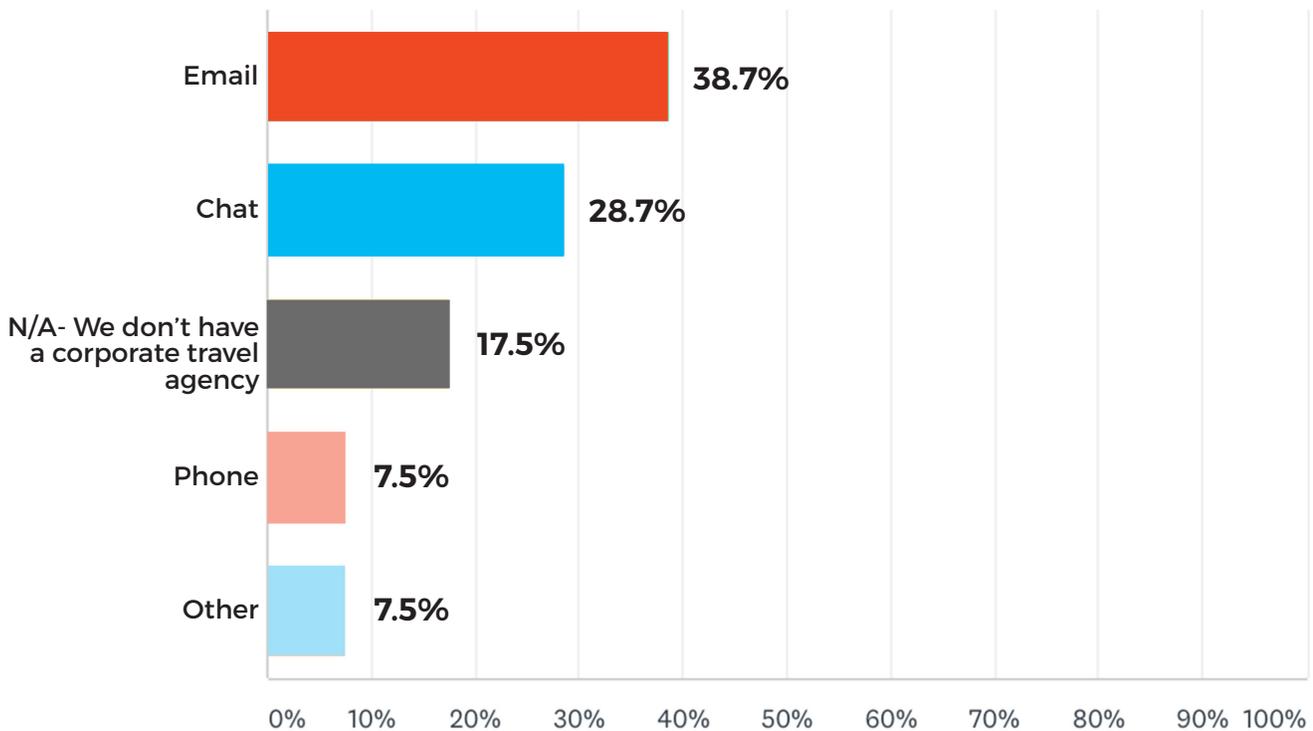
Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

If your organization uses a corporate travel agency to book trips, what is your preferred method of interacting with them?

Business travelers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Business travelers confirm the convenience factor of chat, especially for itinerary change situations. "Normally, I don't have a ton of time to just hop on the phone with the airline and reschedule my flight," said Mike Ramirez of Looker. "I just go in the chat in the TripActions app and say, 'Hey, I need you to help me...I'm in a really important meeting,' and they just do it for me. That piece is awesome."

TripActions recently added [free in-app self-serve flight changes](#) within its app so that customers have the choice of engaging with a live travel agent to make a change, or make the change directly in the app themselves – whichever is more convenient for the traveler at the time.

PICKING FLIGHTS AND HOTELS

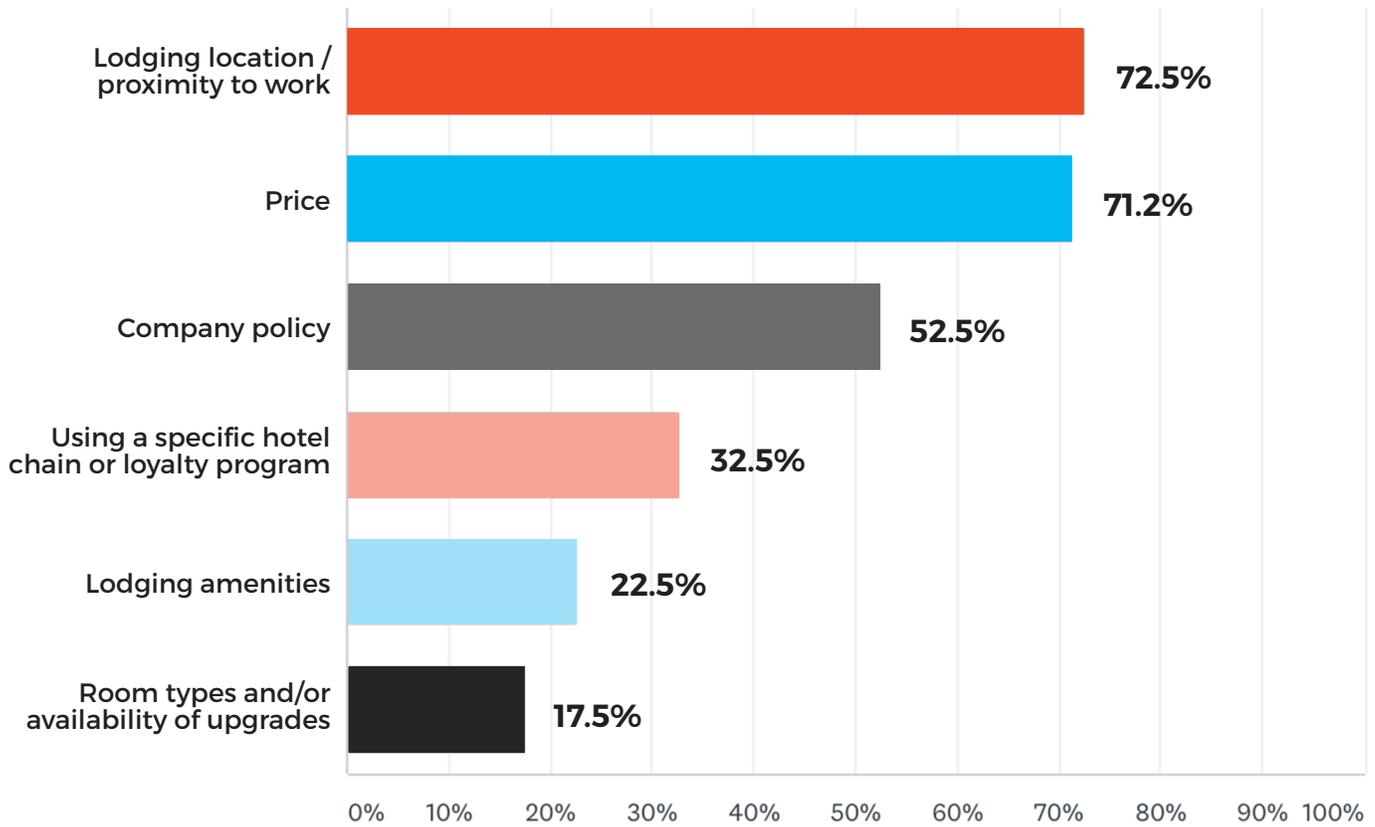


Two of the biggest questions impacting travelers' work trip experience are "Where should I stay?" and "How should I get there?" In fact, picking the right hotel or flight can have a significant impact on travelers' stress levels and productivity. Although travel managers care a great deal about these factors, they must also ensure the trip choices selected by travelers are cost effective and keep travelers safe. Because of this, the decisions about how travelers select flights and hotels are of particular interest – what did survey respondents say was the most important factor?

In terms of how hotels were selected for work trips, it was all about location. Respondents from both the corporate travel manager and business traveler groups listed hotel location as the number one selection criteria influencing the hotel they selected. Price was the second-most important factor, although corporate travel managers cited it more often (71 percent of respondents) than business travelers (65 percent), pointing to the difference in financial fiduciary duties of program managers. Company policy was the third-most popular response for both groups.

“Which of the following factors have the biggest influence over the hotel employees are able to pick for work trips?”

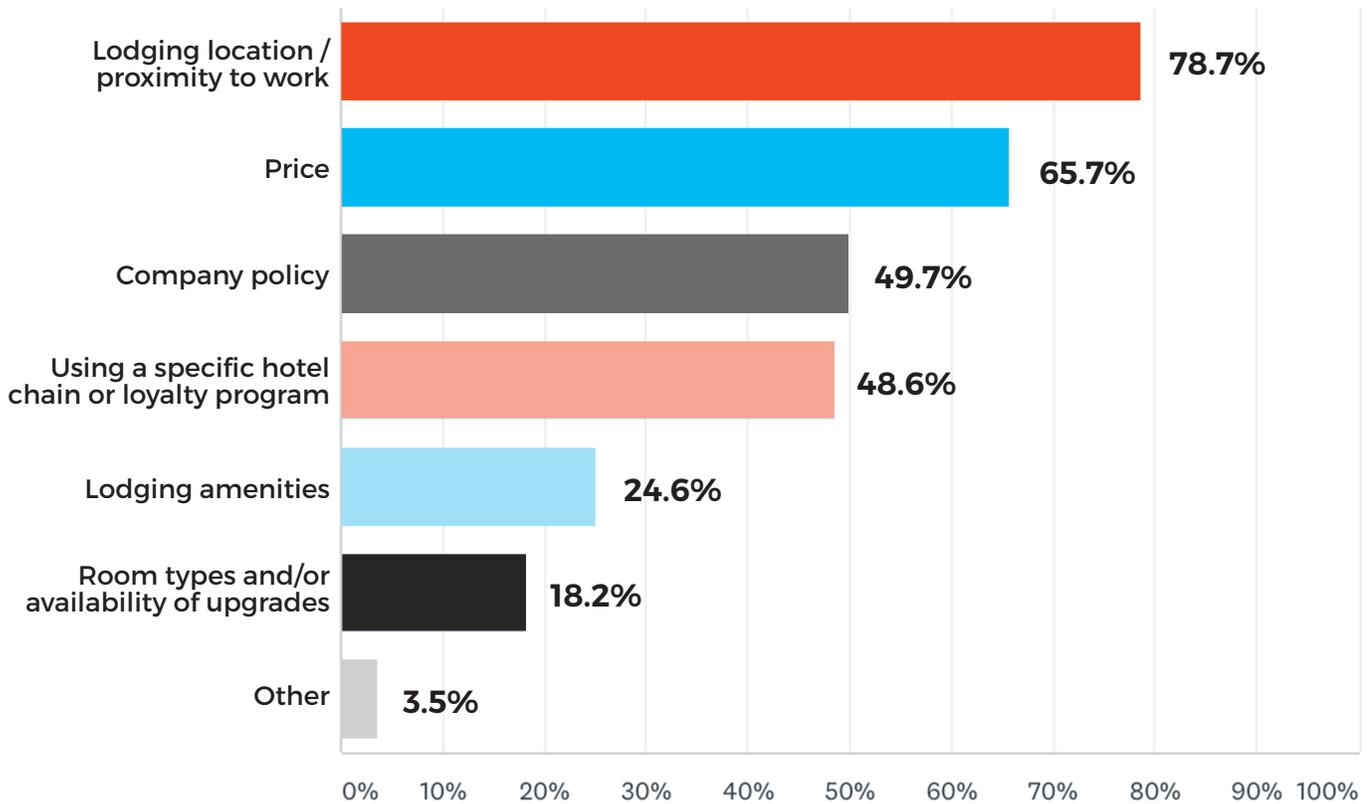
Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

“Which of the following factors have the biggest influence over the hotel you pick for work trips?”

Business Travelers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Travel managers that spoke with Skift confirmed that location is their number one factor in hotel selection. Most organizations agree that it's most convenient to recommend accommodation options close to their local office. "We have contracts with certain hotels, which are within walking distance of the office," said Vik Shah, corporate controller for video-first collaboration company Zoom.

However, what qualifies as convenient can vary a lot depending on the trip. This was especially true regarding the growing popularity of sharing economy services. And even though apartment-style lodging is seeing growing interest by the industry, many Skift survey respondents said they preferred staying in hotels. When asked what type of hospitality property they preferred, more than 90 percent of business travelers selected hotels as the "best" option. Meanwhile, only four percent picked a DIY apartment as the "best" option, while only five percent picked a serviced apartment.

Which of the following lodging options do you prefer employees use for work trips?

Corporate travel managers

Hotel	80.5%
Serviced Apartment / Corporate Housing	8.2%
DIY Apartment Rental	12.3%
Hostel	4.3%

Which of the following lodging options do you most prefer for work trips?

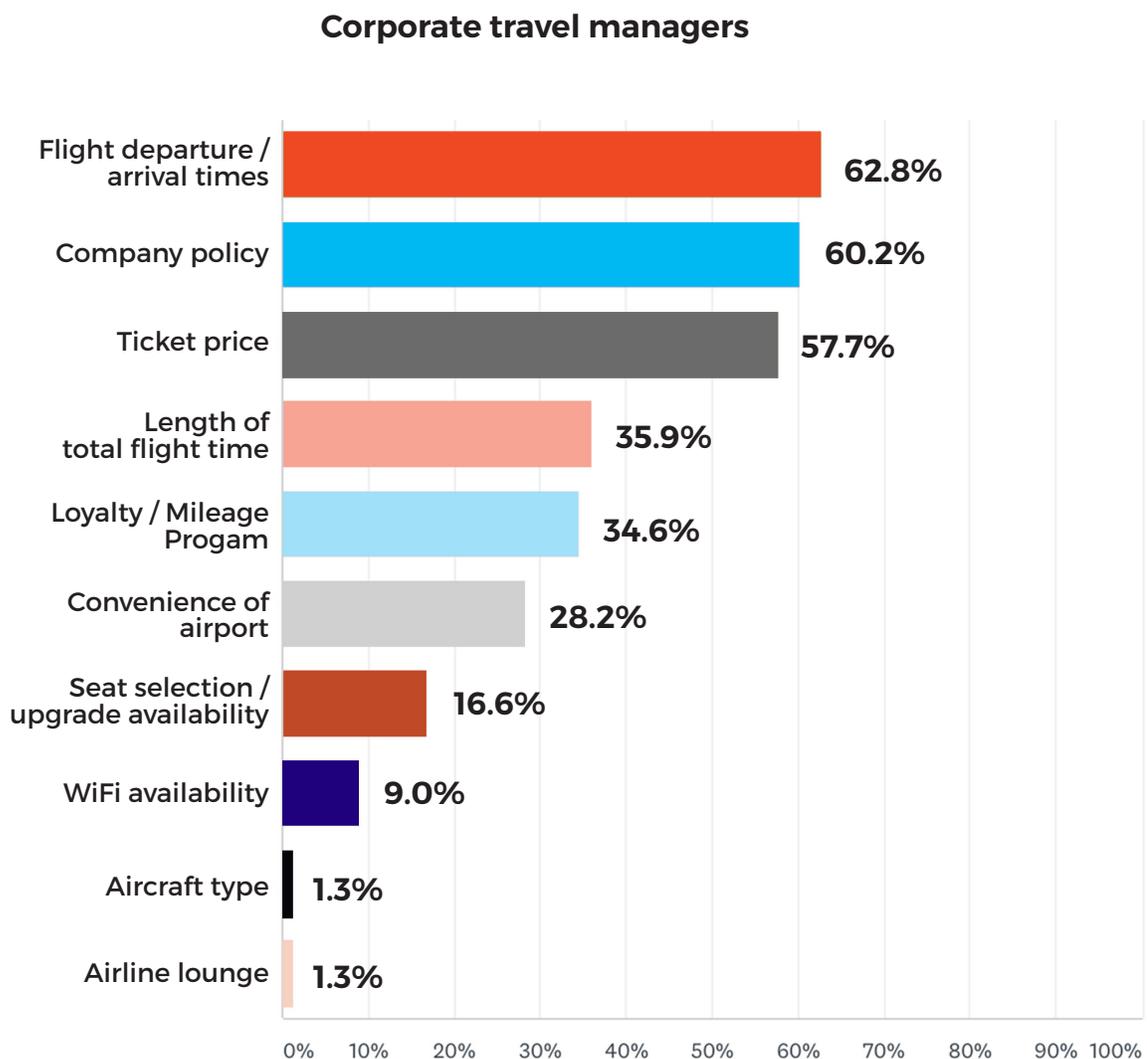
Business travelers

Hotel	91.5%
DIY Apartment Rental	4.5%
Serviced Apartment / Corporate Housing	5.6%
Hostel	0.3%

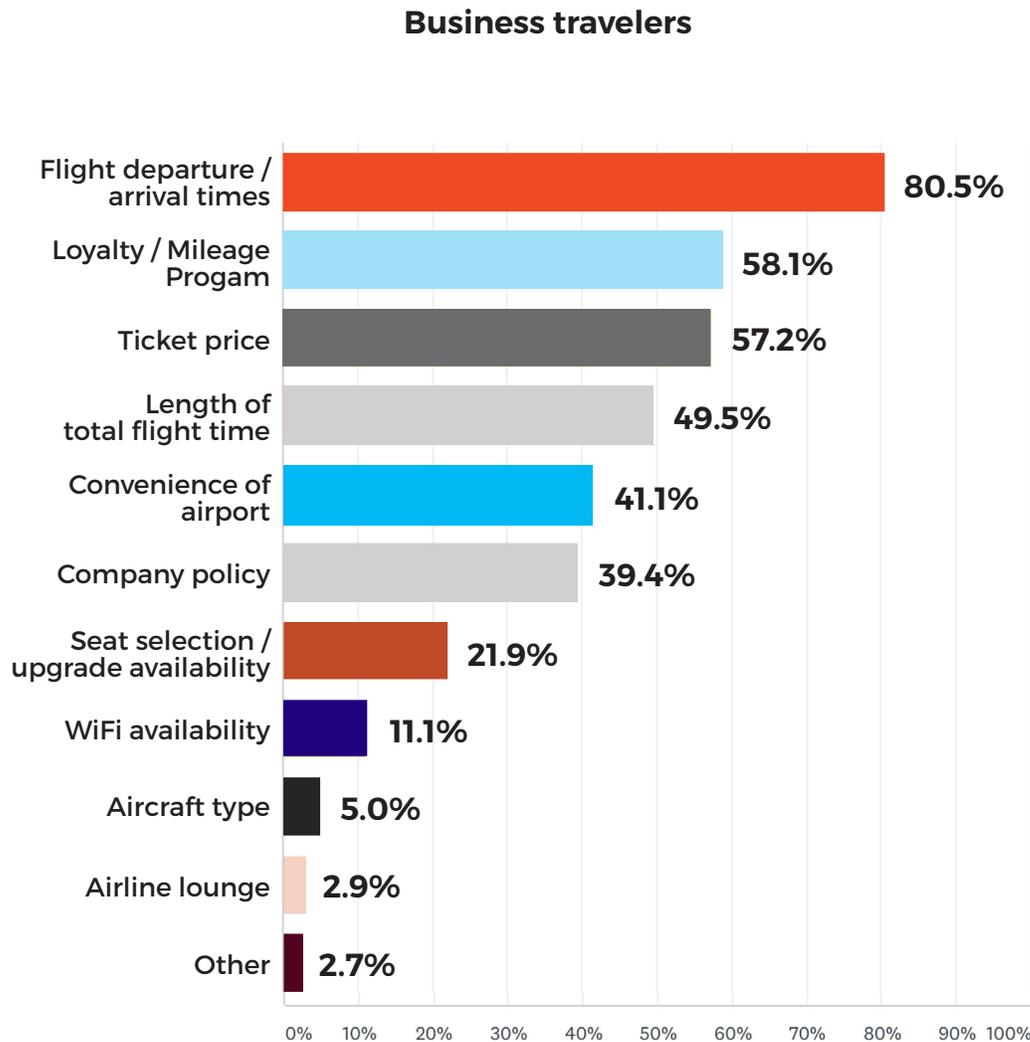
These survey results suggest that travel managers should at the very least make sharing economy options available, even if they're not always utilized.

On the topic of flight selection criteria, departure schedule was the most important factor mentioned for both business travelers (80 percent) and corporate travel managers (63 percent). However, once employees pick the best time to leave and start considering other flight attributes, their priorities frequently diverge with those of company decision-makers. Fifty-eight percent of business travelers picked loyalty as the next-most important factor in the flights they selected. However, for corporate travel managers, loyalty was a much lower priority, mentioned by just one third of respondents in this group. It appears that company business travel policy managers have an opportunity to better align this employee desire for loyalty programs with their program's goals in future policy decisions.

Which of the following factors have the biggest influence over the flights employees are able to pick for work trips?



Which of the following factors have the biggest influence over the flights you pick for work trips?



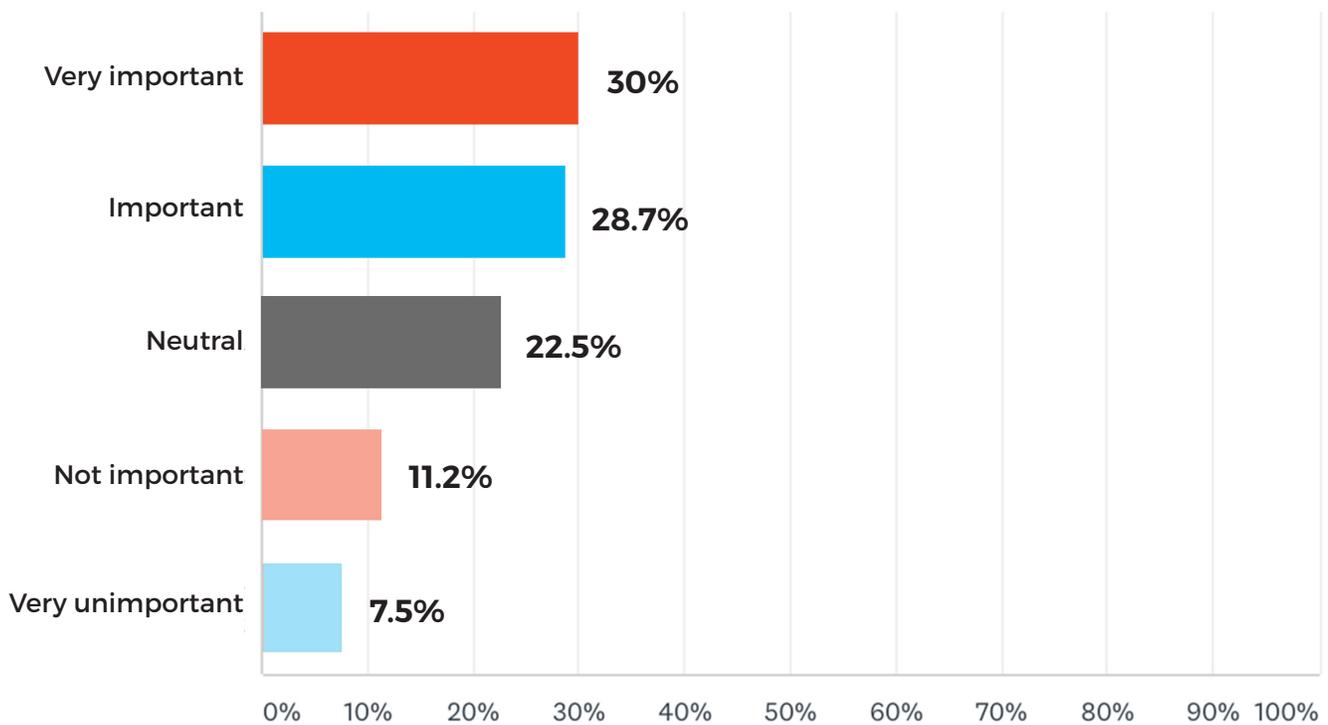
Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Another factor worth noting about flight selection preference is the growing importance of factors like length of flight (mentioned by 49 percent of travelers) and seat selection (22 percent). The good news for those in the business travel sector is that travelers now have access to ever-more detailed information about their flight purchase options to help them to make more informed travel decisions. This is largely due to developments like ATPCO's [Next Generation Storefront initiative](#), a program designed to display additional details about the flight experience beyond ticket price (like cabin class and plane amenities). Today, these details, along with on time arrival stats, show up in searches completed using best-in-class business travel platforms like TripActions.

When asked to rank how important hotel, airline, and rental car loyalty programs were in their supplier selection decisions, 78 percent of business travelers said they were either “very important” or “important.” Meanwhile, only 58 percent of corporate travel managers felt similarly, a more than 20 percentage point gap.

How important are travel industry loyalty programs in your decision about which companies to select for flights, hotels or rental cars?

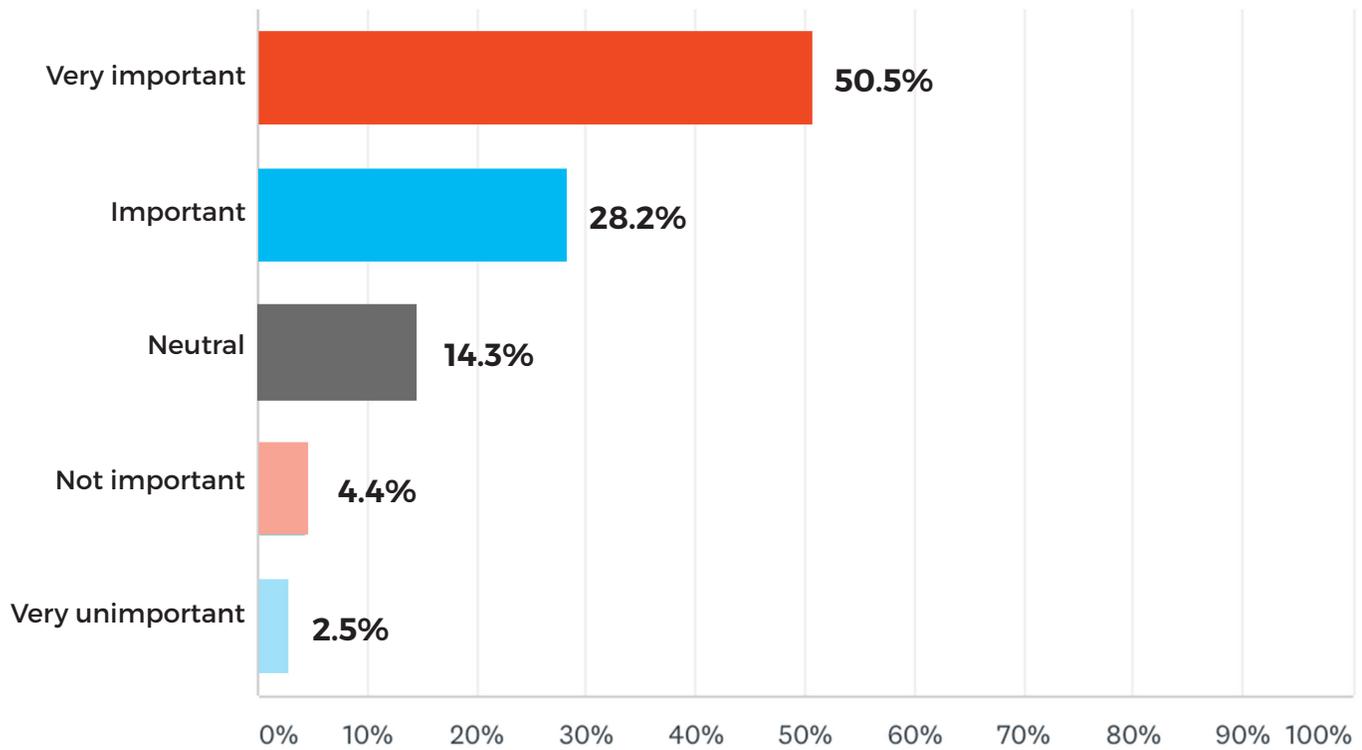
Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

How important are travel industry loyalty programs in your decision about which companies to select for flights, hotels or rental cars?

Business travelers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

LOYALTY, POINTS, AND PERKS



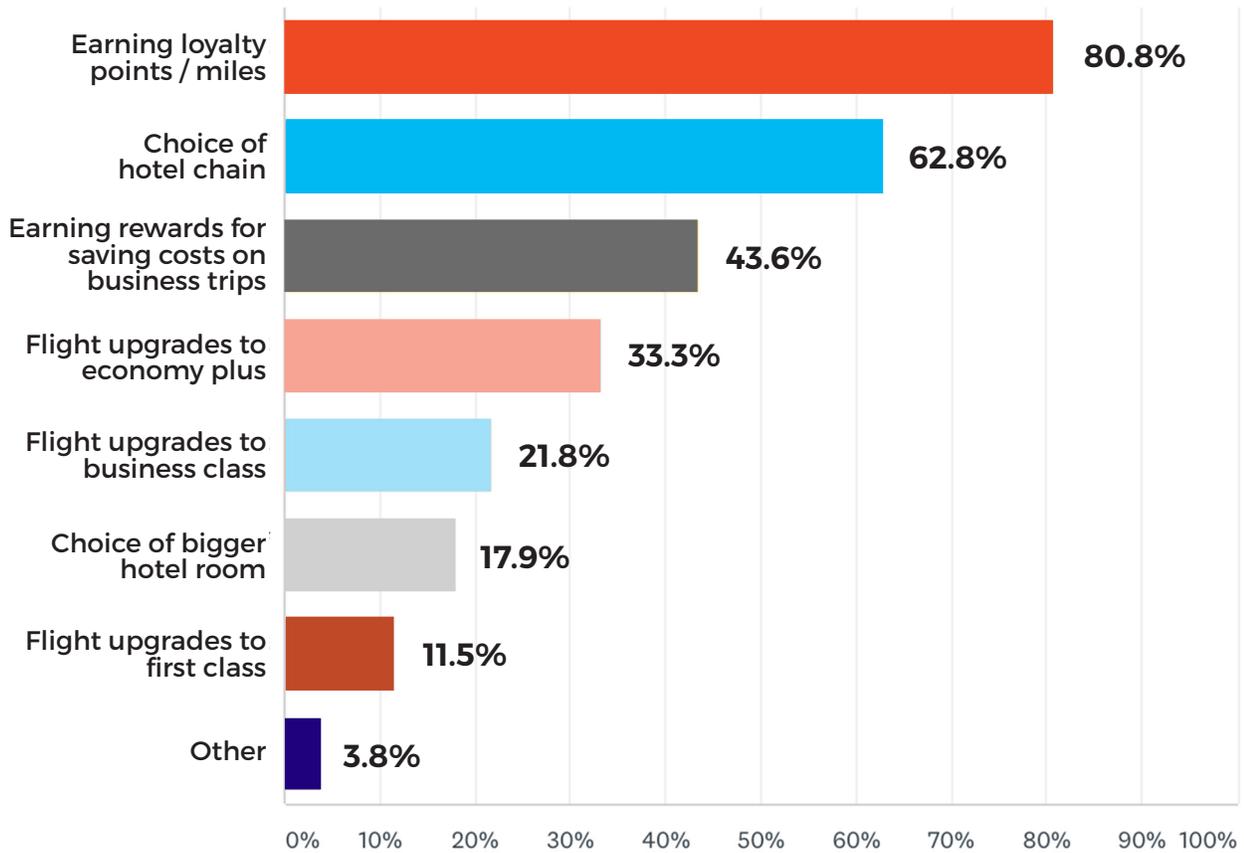
Business travel perks, whether provided in the form of travel loyalty points or gift cards, are another tool that can help travel managers to improve employee satisfaction while encouraging travelers to align with the organization's larger business travel goals. And in the face of growing demands from travelers for more consumer-friendly business travel programs, perks are an easy way to reduce any gap employees may perceive between consumer and business travel solutions. Do business travelers and travel managers see eye-to-eye on this issue? For the most part, yes.

Among corporate travel managers, there was near-universal agreement that travelers should be able to earn and retain their loyalty points as a perk. 80 percent of decision-makers said they let travelers earn loyalty points when booking travel. Another 62 percent said travelers had their choice of various hotel chains, the second-most cited benefit. Earning rewards like gift cards for saving money was the third-most mentioned answer, listed by 43 percent of survey participants.

For business travelers, their perception of corporate travel perks was perfectly aligned with the travel managers who oversee their programs. The group cited the same three top benefits, (earning loyalty points, picking their hotel brand, and gift cards) as the most widely offered travel program benefits.

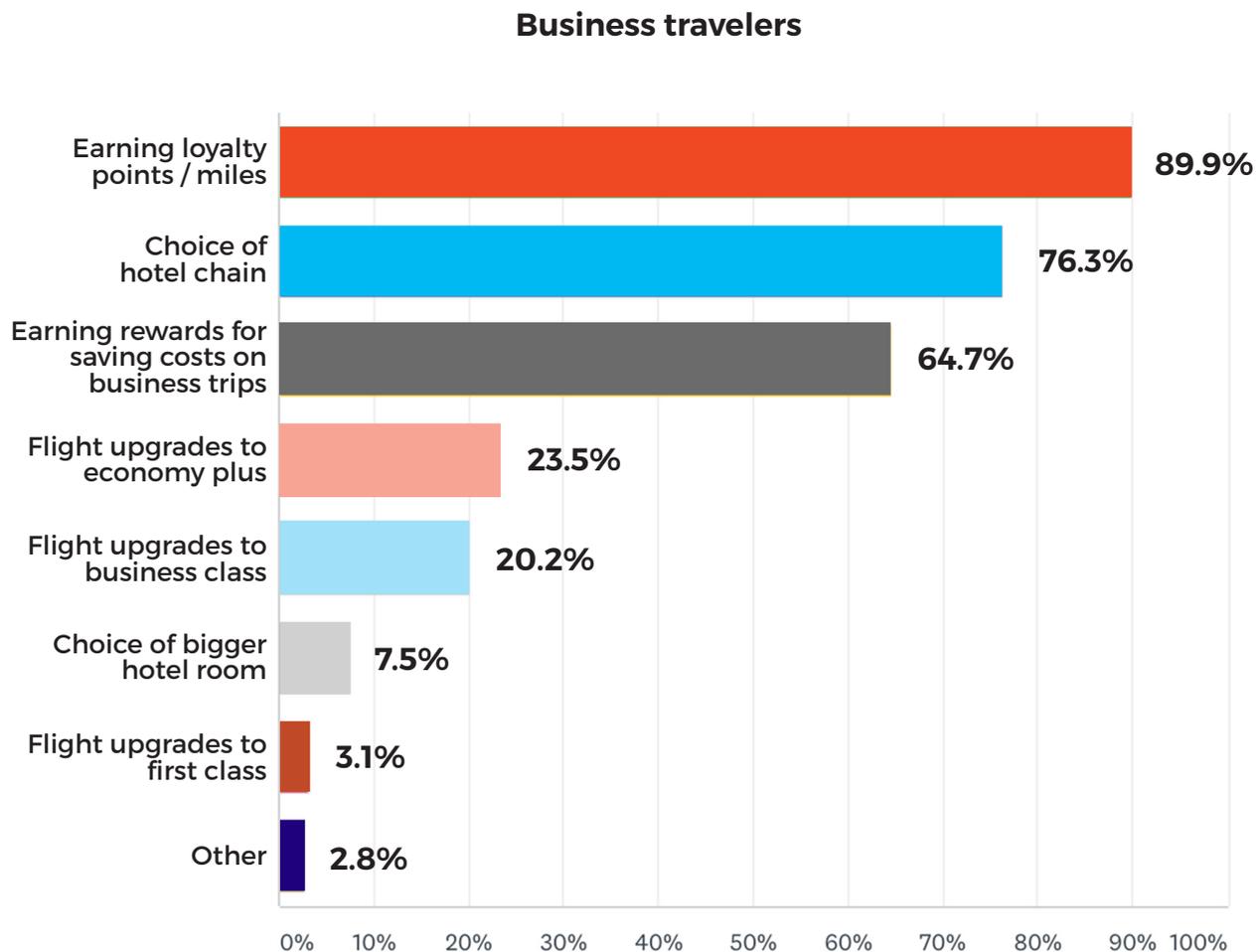
My company allows the following when booking travel:

Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

My company allows the following when booking travel:



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Among the business travelers that spoke with Skift, many said their company's gift card reward program had significant influence on their travel spending decisions. "When you start getting into significant double digits just to stay in a slightly different place and get an Amazon gift card, that adds up," said Looker's Ramirez. "At the end of the year, you get a couple hundred dollars worth of Amazon gift cards and you can go holiday shopping."

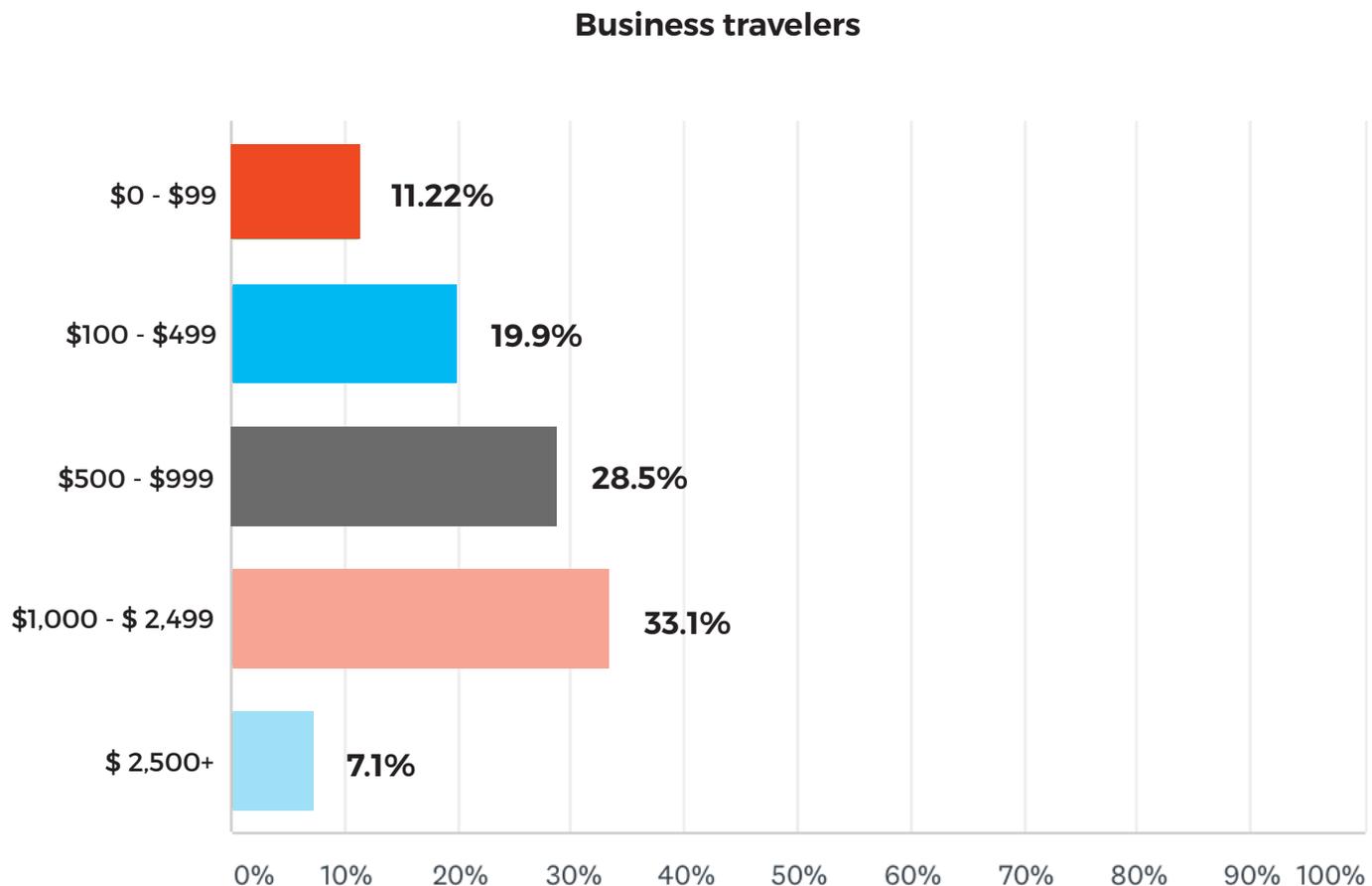
It's clear from these results that a wide variety of organizations already see the benefit of offering perks that reward traveling employees and incentivize them to make good decisions, spending company money as if their own. Still, not enough companies seem to be offering relatively low-cost perks that could dramatically improve employee well-being and increase policy compliance. Fewer than 35 percent of travel managers and 25 percent of employees said their companies allowed upgrades to economy plus seating, a key way to minimize flight stress.

HANDLING EXPENSES

Expense reports may seem like a relatively minor part of the overall trip planning experience, but the truth is that poorly managed expense submission and reporting are two of the biggest challenges facing organizations with traveling employees. If companies create a travel expense submission process that is overly complicated it can lead to a variety of hardships, both for employees and managers alike. This includes financial hardship for employees, as well as inaccurate financial reporting for managers, among other issues. What are the trends in trip spending? And how well did companies and travelers in the survey deal with managing their travel expenses?

According to business travel survey respondents, nearly one-third spent an average of between \$1,000 and \$2,499 US dollars per trip, the most popular response. Another 28 percent spent an average of between \$500 and \$999 dollars per trip, the second-most popular answer.

What is the average USD amount of travel-related expenses incurred on your personal credit card per trip?

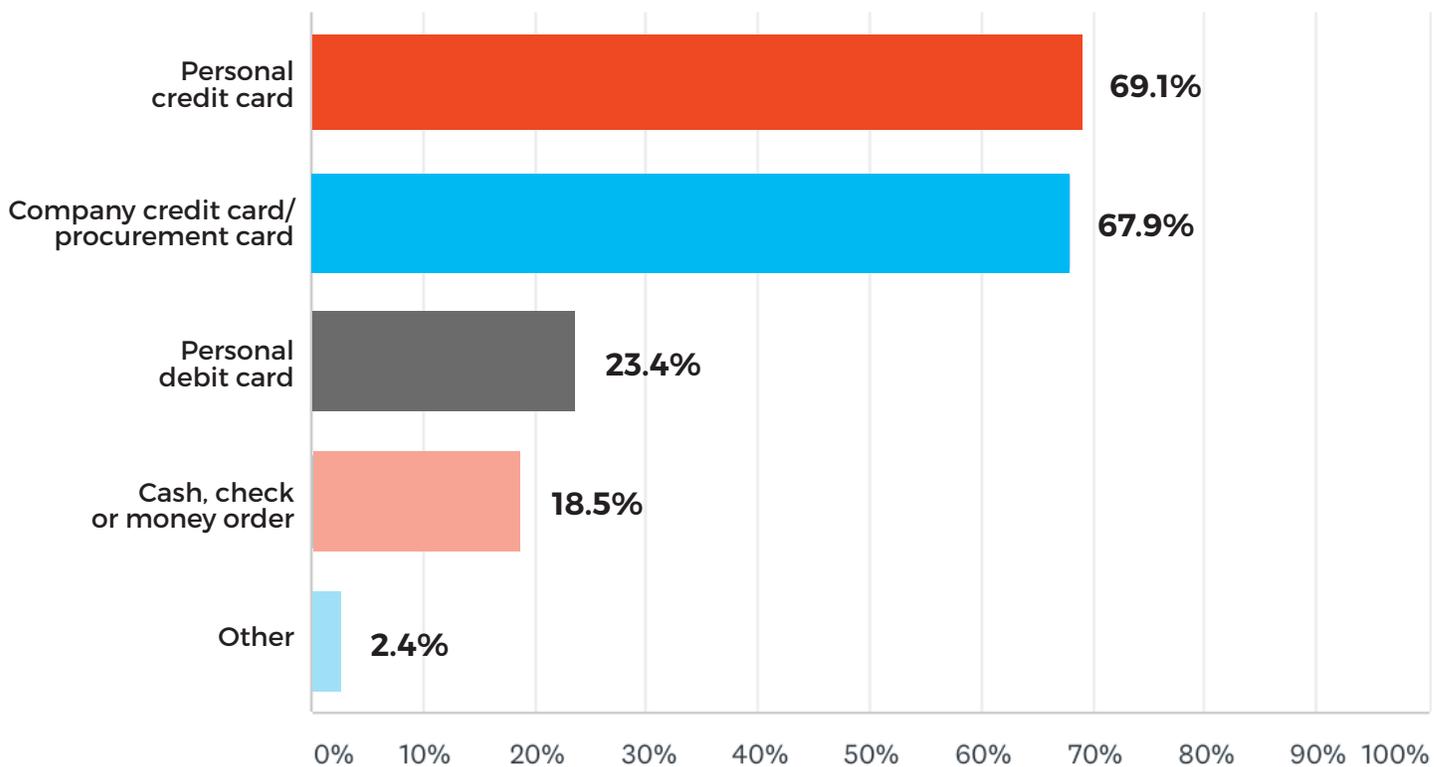


Despite this high dollar amount, many organizations have their employees pay for trips with a personal credit card (rather than a company card). Sixty-nine percent of corporate travel managers said employees paid with personal card, while 67 percent said they also had the option of paying using a corporate card.

Among business travelers, however, 76 percent said they paid for trip expenses with a personal card, while just 41 percent mentioned they had paid with a corporate card. It's true that using a personal card has a number of benefits for travelers, particularly those who are hoping to accumulate credit card rewards while paying for company expenses.

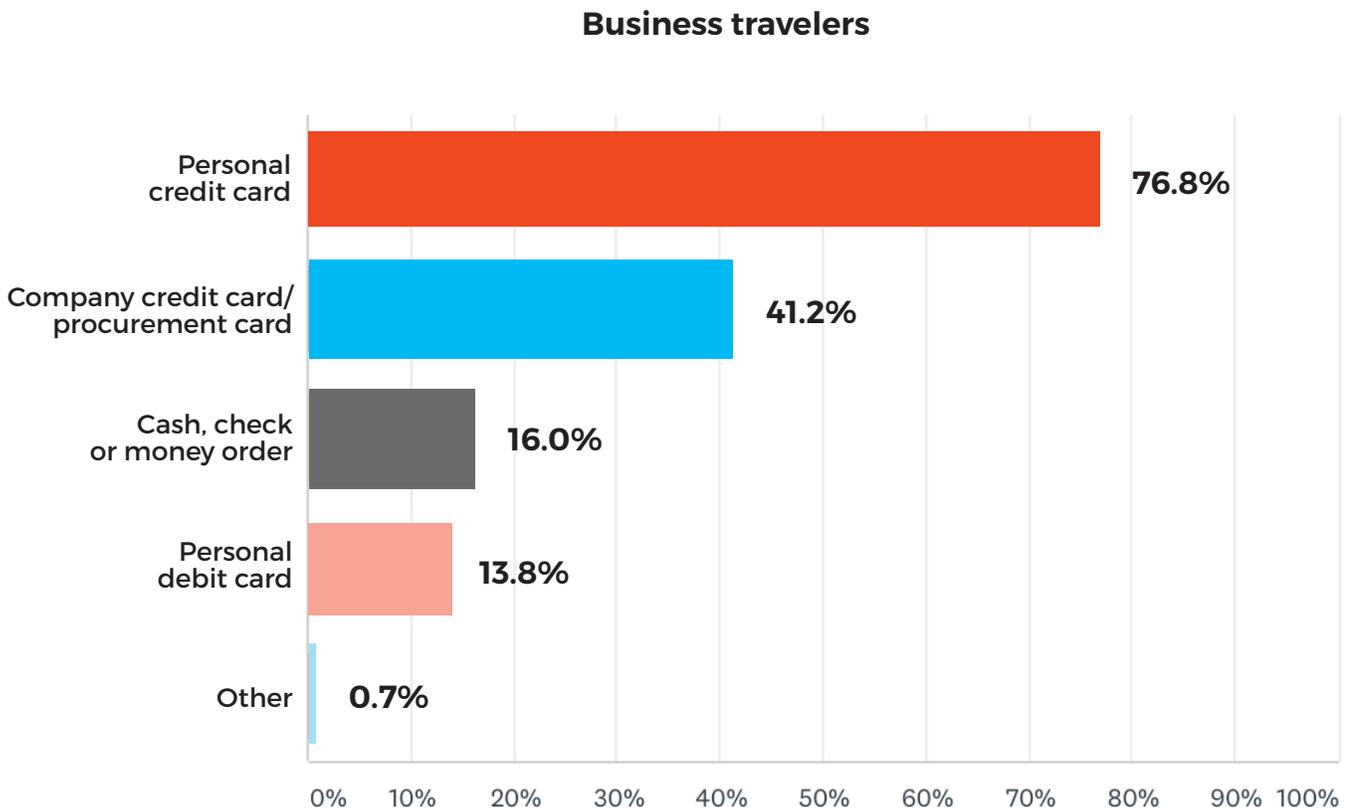
When employees travel for work, they pay for expenses with:

Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

When I travel for work, I pay for expenses with:



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

However, while the topic of payment method may not seem like an issue, it can often lead to unexpected problems. One example is if an employee's spending is not reimbursed and tracked in a timely fashion. Having the right tools in place to ensure visibility into these types of spending situations can make a significant difference for travel managers trying to get a handle on company costs.

Another challenge is when hotels request a personal card at check-in after the company has already provided a company credit card.

"That's one of our biggest complaints is someone checks in with their own personal card, and the hotel says, 'Oh, don't worry, we have the card on file, we just need this for incidentals,'" said letgo's Wieseneck. "And then they check out, or they do a checkout where you just leave the hotel, and they just charge the card on file." The comment echoes data shared earlier in this report on the most common business traveler problems. On that topic, 30 percent of survey respondents suggested that having to pay for company expenses on a personal card was their third-biggest hassle while traveling.

EMERGING BUSINESS TRAVEL TRENDS



It's critical for corporate travel decision-makers to understand how the day-to-day features and functionality of their business travel solution impact their company strategy. But knowing how the program is working at the present moment can only tell us so much. That's because emerging business traveler habits and industry innovations are constantly forcing decision-makers to adapt, figuring out how and why to integrate these shifts into their program offerings and policy.

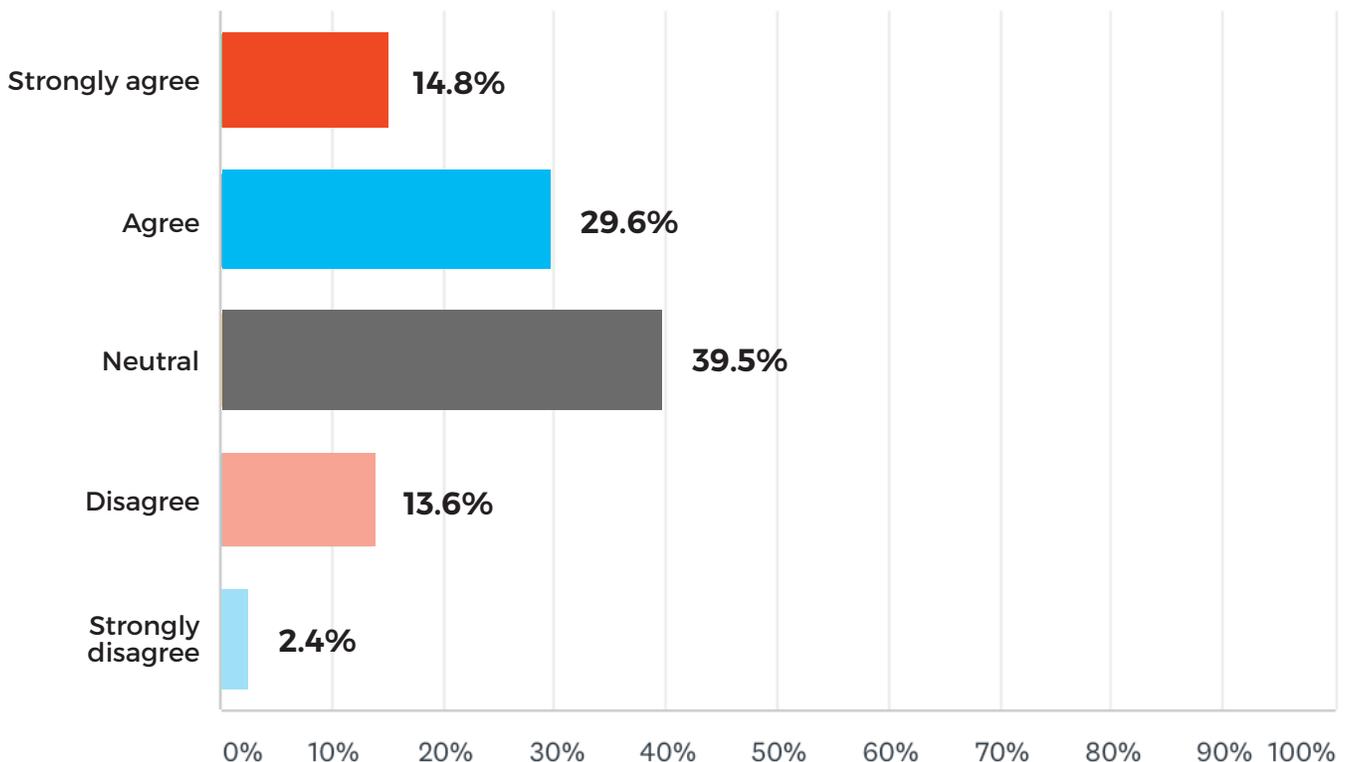
It was with this issue in mind that Skift asked survey respondents about a number of emerging trends in the business travel sector. This included questions about the popularity of “bleisure” trips combining work and personal travel, company attitudes toward “ancillary” add-on products, and attitudes as it related to the use of non-approved travel solutions.

On the topic of bleisure trips, the survey suggests there is strong interest. Fifty-seven percent of business travelers either strongly agreed or agreed that they had combined work and leisure trips in the past 12 months. A relatively significant number of corporate travel managers said they had noticed the bleisure trend as well, with 44 percent noting they strongly agreed or agreed that more employees were participating in bleisure activities. That said, the more than 10 percentage point gap between the two groups indicates that company policy managers could be doing more to design business travel solutions that allow for employees to take advantage of bleisure travel while on work trips.

Agree or Disagree:

“More of our employees are combining work trips with leisure trips in the past 12 months.”

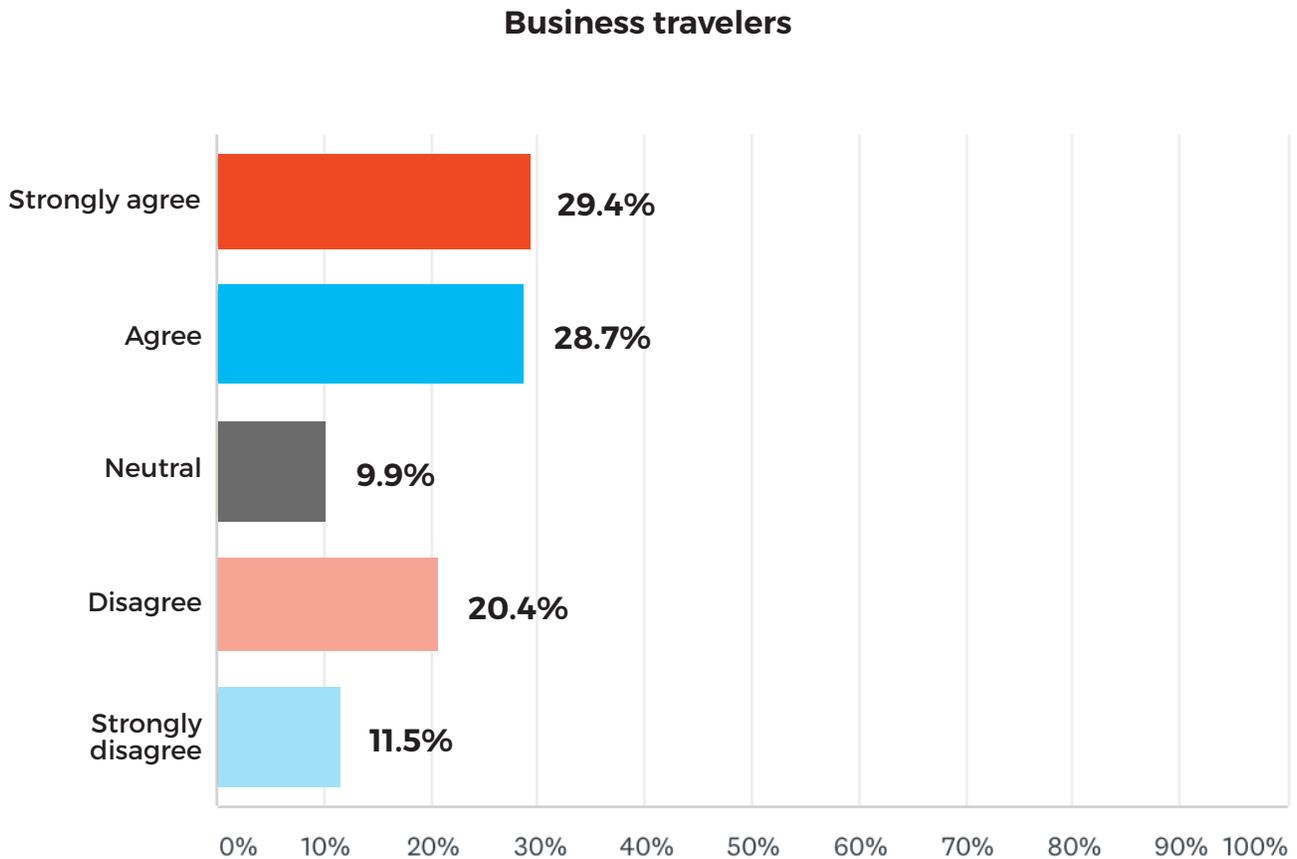
Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Agree or Disagree:

“I have combined a work trip with a leisure trip in the past 12 months.”



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

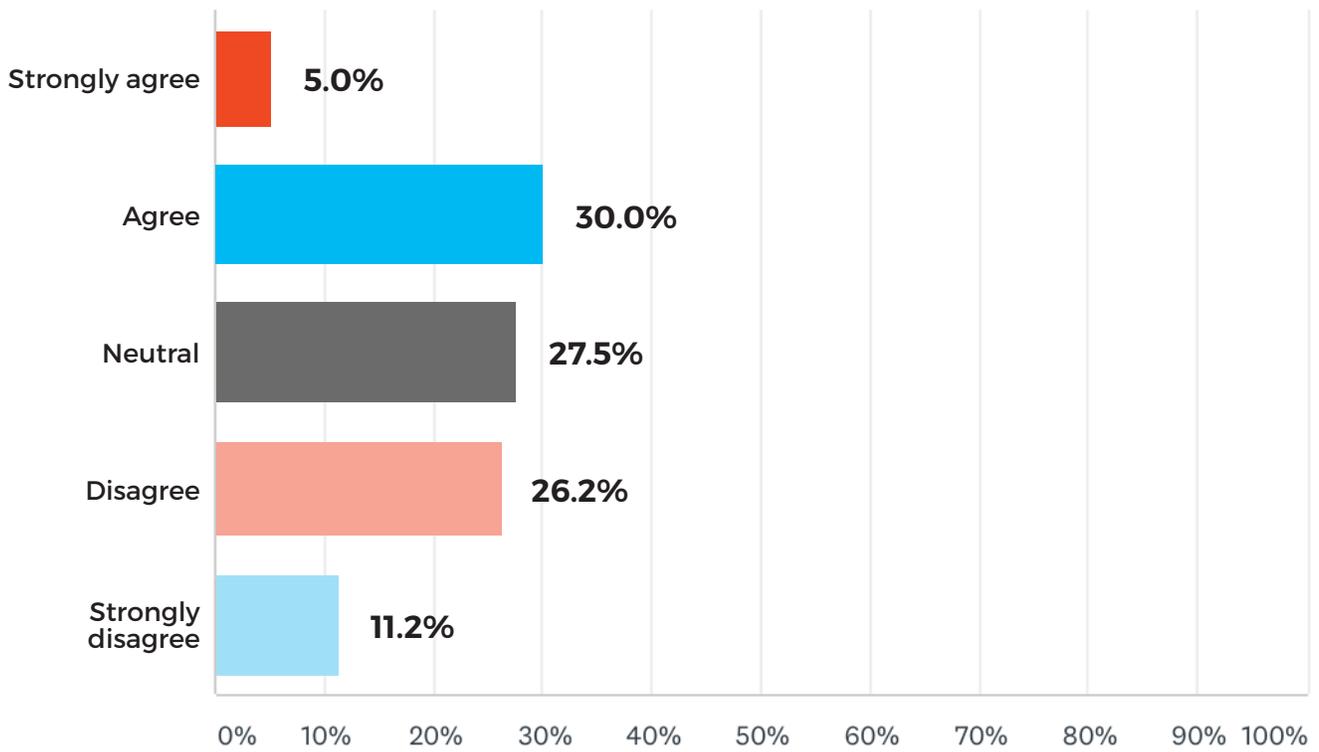
Another emerging topic of debate in the business travel sector has to do with how companies design policy for offering and approving add-on products: travel services like flight upgrades, Wi-Fi access, checked baggage, and the like, which often fall into a grey area as to what is or is not allowed in policy. Have policy-makers and travelers caught up with the industry's emerging innovations in this category?

So far, the answer appears to be: “not so much.” Just over half of corporate travel managers were either neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the notion that their companies “offered a flexible policy that allowed employees to expense trip add-ons.” Meanwhile, 63 percent of business travelers provided a similar answer, indicating they were either neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Agree or Disagree:

“Our company has a flexible policy that allows employees to expense trip ‘add-ons’ like seat upgrades, room upgrades, Wi-Fi, and room service.”

Corporate travel managers

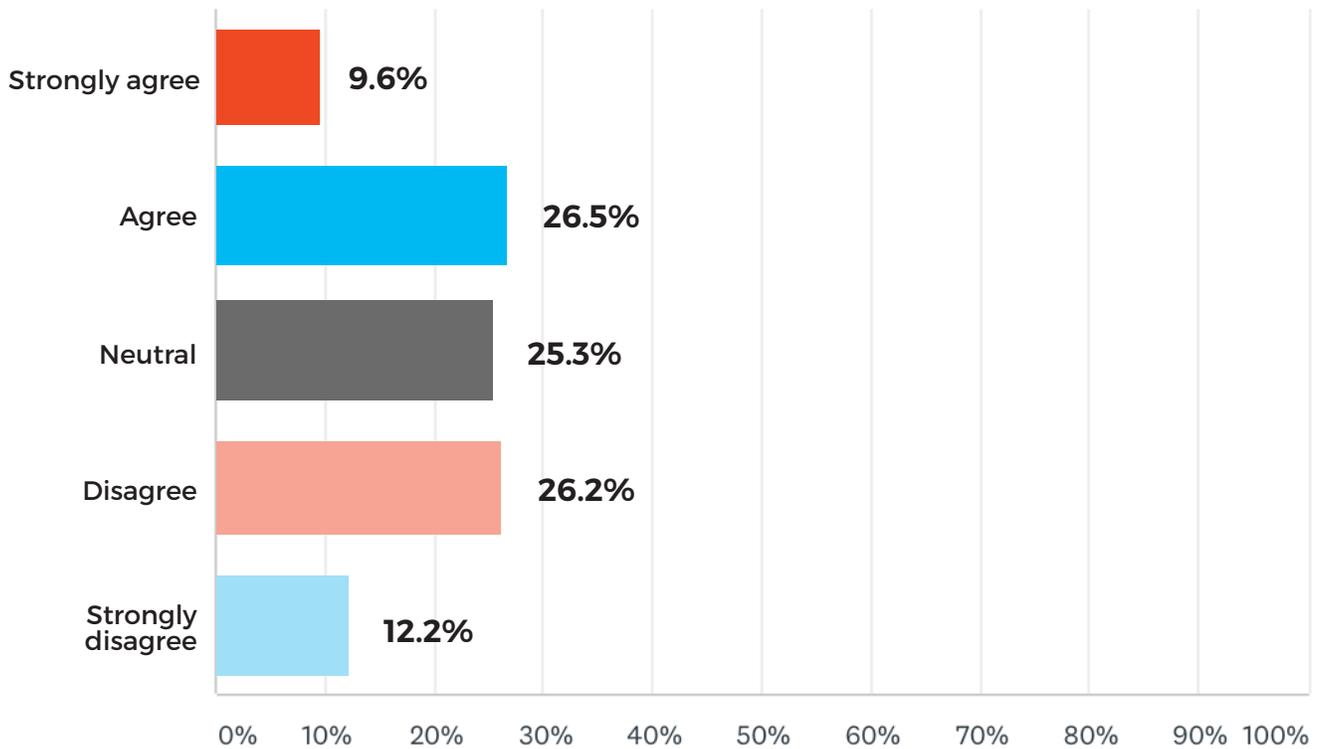


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Agree or Disagree:

“My company has a flexible policy that allows me to expense trip ‘add-ons’ like seat upgrades, room upgrades, Wi-Fi, and room service.”

Business travelers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Generally this flexibility is a good thing for many organizations, as it allows employees to select the trip options that best meet their needs in any given moment. “We totally trust the individual to make the right decision for the company,” said Zoom’s Shah. “So we generally allow [add-ons] like making upgrades to premium economy for long-haul flights, or buying Wi-Fi, or seat selection.”

Nevertheless, the ambiguity in survey respondents’ answers above suggests that the sector’s stakeholders have an opportunity to develop more specific policies around the use of such items. This includes clearer rules about what is and is not allowed, while also enabling better access to these types of services when business travelers are planning trips through their approved company tools. Such an opportunity creates an important business case for the continued proliferation of NDC (New Distribution Capability) offerings within TMC platforms, as led by TripActions.

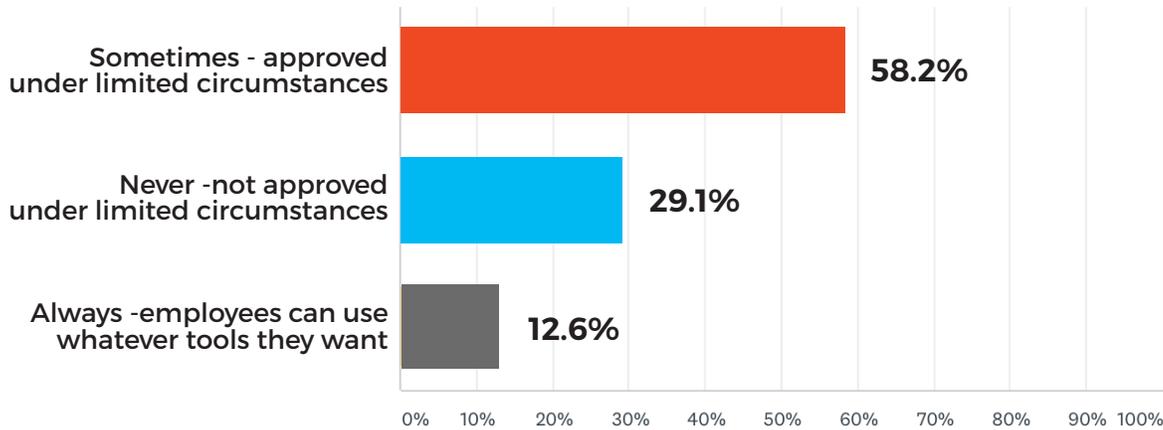
A similar feeling of ambiguity was evident with regard to how organizations and employees felt they should handle the growing trend of “consumerization,” referring to business travelers’ desire to use the most convenient, simple-to-use consumer-like trip planning tools when making work trip arrangements. While both groups agreed that following company business travel policies is important, there was some flexibility in terms how that translated into real-world situations.

When survey respondents were asked about how their organization handles bookings made using “non-approved” tools, 58 percent of corporate travel managers said they were “sometimes” allowed. 63 percent of business travelers said the same: non-approved tools were “sometimes” permissible.



Which of the following best describes your company’s policy regarding employees’ use of “non-approved” tools (apps, websites, travel agencies) to book corporate trips?

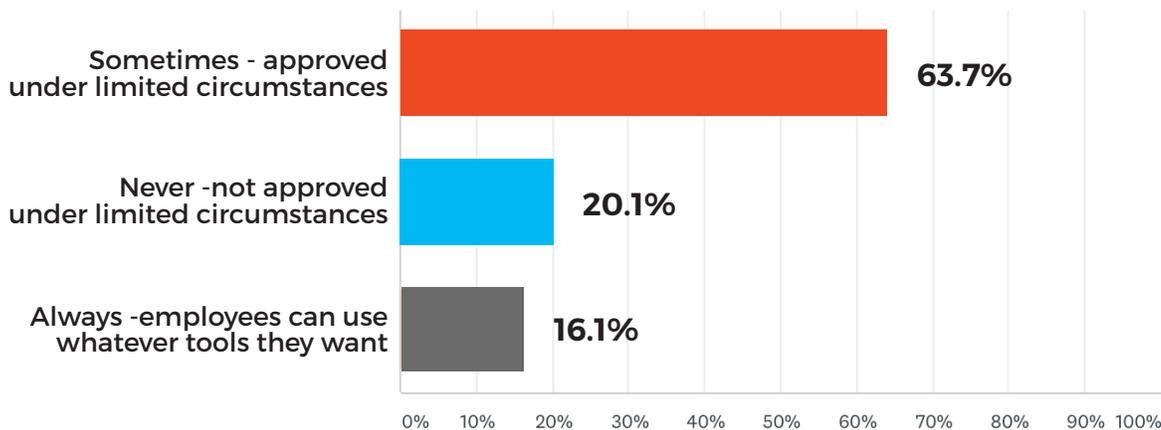
Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Which of the following best describes your company’s policy regarding your use of “non-approved” tools (apps, websites, travel agencies) outside company policy that might be used to book work trips?

Business travelers

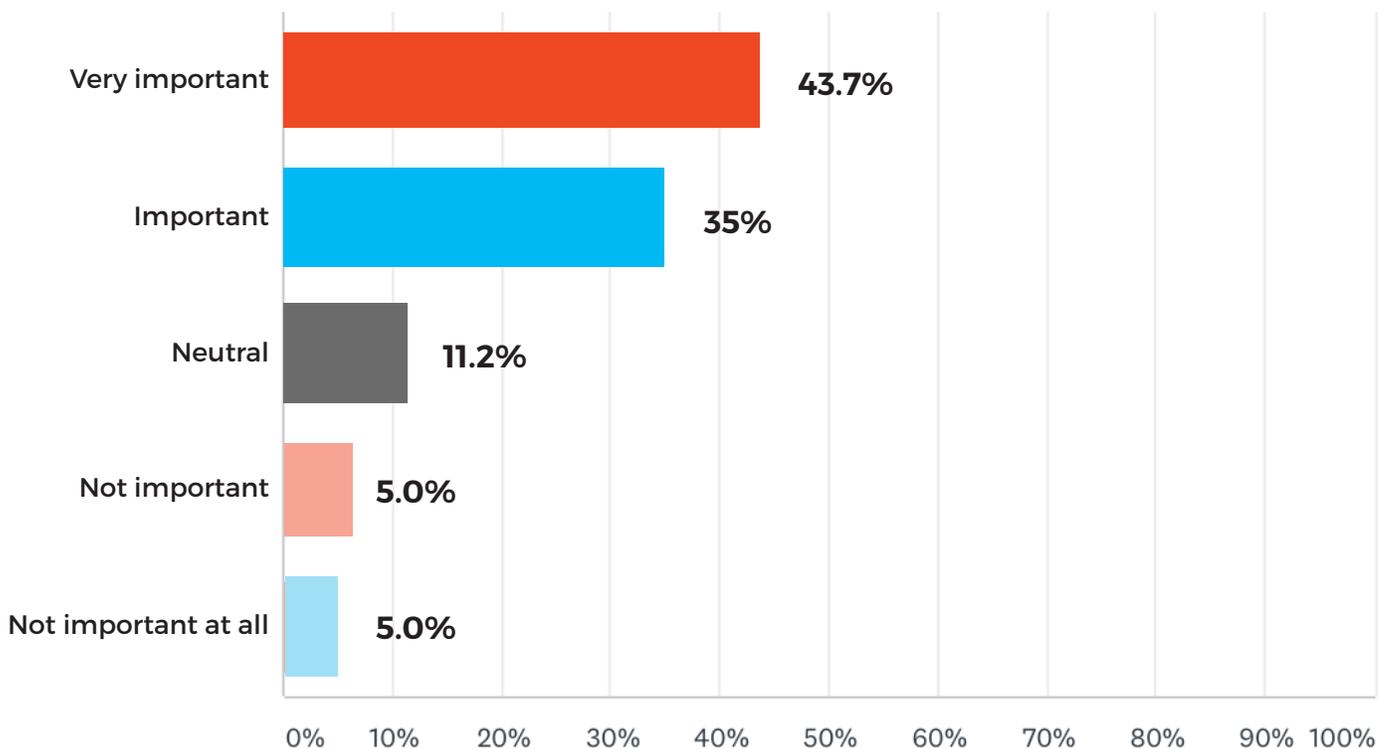


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

But this supposed flexibility doesn't always match up with the official rules set by organizations, creating a gap between expectations and reality. When asked about the "importance" of booking trips using the organization's approved business travel agency or platform, there was near-universal agreement. Seventy-five percent of business travelers said it was "very important" or "important," while 78 percent of corporate travel managers said the same.

How important is that employees use your organization's approved business travel agency or platform when planning their trip?

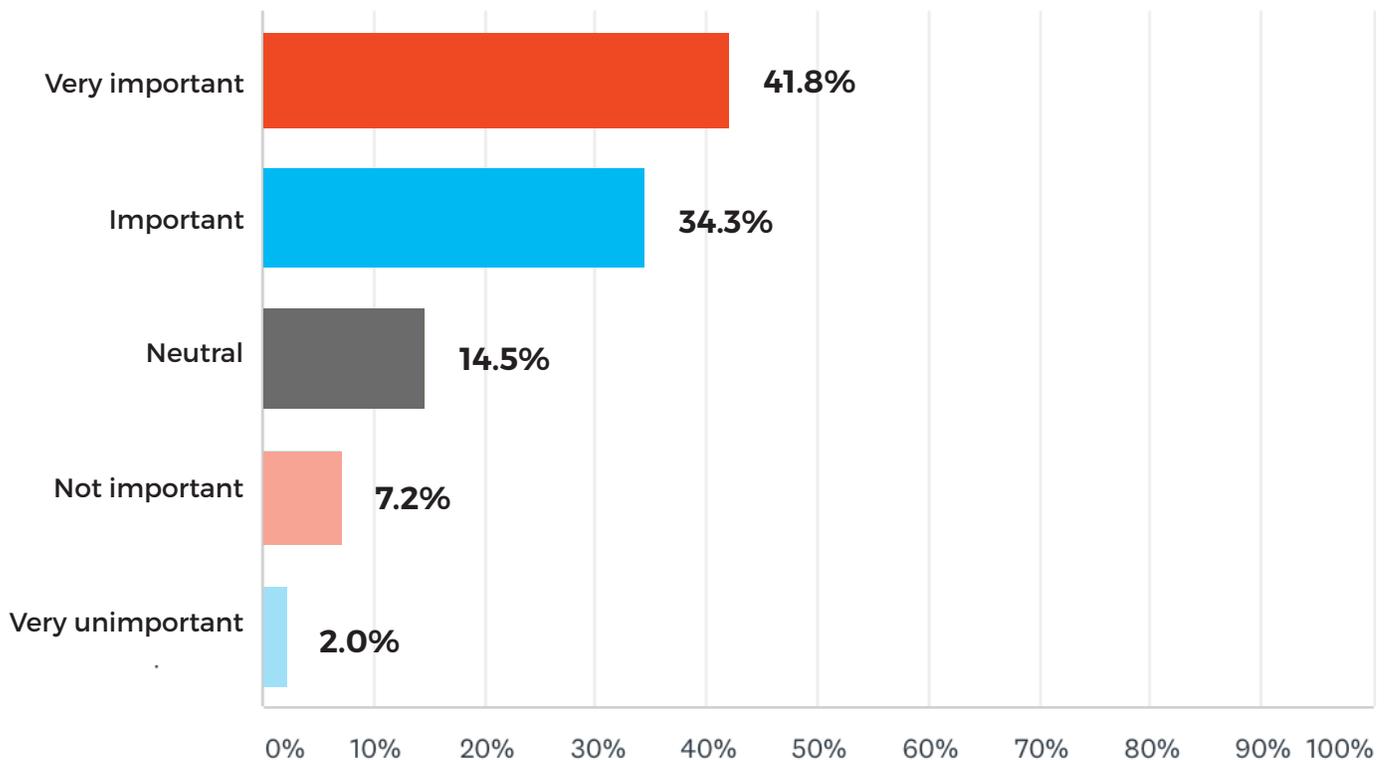
Corporate travel managers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

How important is that you use your organization's approved business travel agency or platform when planning their trip?

Business travelers



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

How organizations figure out how to reconcile this discrepancy between the need for clear policy regulations and the demands for more flexible, human-centric trip options will continue to persist as one of the biggest opportunities in delivering a best-in-class corporate travel program.

CONCLUSION



Today's travel managers face one of business' most difficult balancing acts. Inside their organizations, they must reconcile the often contradictory demands of traveling employees with the cost and policy goals of their company. Meanwhile, the business travel landscape continues to evolve. Economic and political factors continue to shift, technology is driving continued changes in how business travel products are distributed, and business travelers are making increasing demands for convenient, easy-to-use tools that are on the same level as what they use for booking leisure travel.

Faced with these competing demands and a rapidly evolving industry environment, travel managers must ask themselves two crucial questions. First, what do the business travelers (whose needs they must represent) really want and need? And second, what steps should the executives and policy makers that oversee corporate travel programs take in response?

As we've seen from the results of the Skift and TripActions survey, there are many areas where the needs of business travelers already align with the priorities of those in the executive suite. This spirit of collaboration and cooperation is great news for the future of business travel, a critical economic catalyst and leading indicator of business success for companies around the world.

At the same time, there are plenty of areas for improvement. For travel managers, for example, there is a growing need to review their existing travel solutions and policies, making sure they are offering employees the most convenient, hassle-free travel program options and platform. This evaluation process should center on several promising areas for enhancement, starting with what platform will deliver an experience employees truly love while balancing the needs of the organization, including how to handle expensing for trip add-ons, providing reliable payment options, and making sure employees can utilize their preferred loyalty programs when booking. And from the traveler's perspective, providing reliable 24/7 live travel agent support, preferably delivered using the employee's preferred communication channels, will be a key area of focus.

But regardless of whether we're describing the needs of travel managers or business travelers, one truth is abundantly clear: The future of business travel will focus on convenience and choice, putting the needs of travelers first to drive adoption so that companies benefit from the resulting spend visibility, savings, and ability to fulfill their duty of care.

ABOUT TRIPACTIONS



TripActions is the corporate travel management company shaping the future of business travel. Nothing can truly replicate the value of meeting face-to-face — which is why we're on a mission to power the in-person connections that move people, ideas and businesses forward.

Companies deserve a travel solution that takes the pain out of work trips so that their travelers can focus on being there, not getting there. With a vast selection of inventory, a personalized, intuitive user interface, and 24/7 proactive customer support, we make booking travel fast and easy. Companies enjoy complete travel program visibility and seamless integrations with their HR and expense systems.

To support our customers no matter where they are in the world, we have physical footprints in Amsterdam, Chicago, Dallas, London, New York, Palo Alto, San Francisco, Seattle, and Sydney.

With up to 34% savings on lodging alone, companies, their travel managers, and finance leaders love us. With 93% satisfaction, travelers prefer us.

Learn more about why innovative companies like Dropbox, Lyft, Sara Lee Frozen Bakery, Allbirds and the ACLU trust TripActions for their business travel at www.tripactions.com

LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

Skift is the largest intelligence platform in travel, providing Media, Insights & Marketing to key sectors of the industry.

Through daily news, research, podcasts, and Skift Global Forum conferences, Skift deciphers and defines the trends that matter to the marketers, strategists, and technologists shaping the industry.

SkiftX is Skift's in-house content marketing studio, working collaboratively with partners like Mastercard, Hyatt, Adobe, Lyft, Airbnb, and many more on custom projects to engage the world's largest audience of travel influencers and decision makers.

Visit skiftx.com to learn more or email at skiftx@skift.com

Carolyn Kremins
President, Skift
ck@skift.com
212-564-5830