

## UFI Global Barometer provides updates on COVID-19 impact and 2022 perspectives for the exhibition industry

- Industry recovery is accelerating, and global exhibition revenues are expected to reach 71% of 2019 levels, this year
- Globally, the industry expects two-thirds of markets to operate at normal levels in the second quarter, and one-quarter of the global market to operate at reduced activity levels
- “Internal management” ranks within the top three industry issues
- One in four companies is already on track to achieve Net Zero Greenhouse Gas emissions before 2050
- The complete Barometer includes dedicated profiles for 29 markets and regions

Paris – 24 February: UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, has released the latest edition of its flagship Global Barometer research, which takes the pulse of the industry.

The results highlight the quickening pace of the industry’s recovery in 2022, after the continuing impact of COVID-19 throughout 2021. There is a strong belief that the sector, primarily driven by physical exhibitions and business events, will bounce back quickly.

In terms of operations, the proportion of companies declaring “normal activity” has increased from less than two in ten, in July 2021, to around four in ten, between October 2021 and February 2022. And this looks set to increase to around six in ten companies expecting normal activity levels from March 2022. Subsequently, the proportion of companies expecting “no activity” dropped from 34% to 16% during the second half of 2021, and only 4-5% of companies expect no activity from March 2022.

The results vary depending on location, and are primarily driven by confirmed or expected “reopening dates” for exhibitions.

When asked what elements would most help towards the “bounce-back” of exhibitions, seven in ten companies selected “Lifting of current travel restrictions”, while five in ten selected “Readiness of exhibiting companies and visitors to participate again”, “Mid-term visibility in terms of public policies, including travel restrictions” and “Lifting of current public policies that apply locally to exhibitions”.

Overall, 53% of companies received no public financial support, and for the majority of those who did, financial public aid represented less than 10% of their overall costs.

In line with results from the previous edition of the Barometer, released in the summer of 2021, “Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business” remains the most pressing business issue – although this has dropped to 19% of respondents, from 29%, six months ago. There has also been a shift in the second and third most pressing issues, with “Internal management challenges” (19% of respondents, compared to 9%, six months ago) and “Impact of digitalisation” (16%, compared to 10%, six months ago) forming the top three. “Competition with other media” is now the fourth most pressing issue (14%, compared to 5%, six months ago) while “State of the economy in home market” drops to fifth spot (12%), from being the second most pressing issue just six months ago (19% of respondents).

The three components of “Internal management challenges” are all almost equally represented within the responses: “Human resources” (56% of respondents), “Business model adjustments” (54%) and “Finance” (48%).

In relation to future exhibition formats, the global results indicate that 80% of respondents (up from 78%, six months ago, and 64%, 12 months ago) agree that “COVID-19 confirms the value of face-to-face events”, and anticipate the sector to bounce back quickly (with 38% stating “Yes, for sure” and 42% stating “Most probably”). Meanwhile, 13% of respondents are unsure.

“The sun is finally rising at the end of a long, dark pandemic,” says Kai Hattendorf, Managing Director and CEO at UFI. “The perspectives for 2022 are brighter and continue to improve quickly. As the industry bounces back, the key issues now facing companies are around internal management issues and the impact of digitisation. As the value of physical events is constantly reinforced, we are well on track to achieve pre-pandemic levels of activity.”

### Size and scope

This latest edition of UFI’s bi-annual industry survey was concluded in January 2022 and includes data from 401 companies in 53 countries and regions.

The study also includes outlooks and analysis for 24 focus countries and regions – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, the UAE, the UK and the US – as well as an additional five aggregated regional zones.

### Operations – reopening exhibitions

Detailed results indicate that:

- In North America, the proportion of companies declaring a normal level of activity is growing steadily, from less than one in ten, in July 2021, to at least six in ten, from February 2022
- In several major markets across Central and South America, most companies saw normal activity levels between September and November 2021, and more than eight in ten expect normal activity levels from February 2022.
- In Europe, most companies saw normal activity levels between October and November 2021, and expect the same from March 2022, onwards. However, the picture changes across different countries, with for example a majority of companies seeing normal activity on a larger period in Russia, Spain and, to some extent, Turkey, while in Germany, this is not expected until May 2022.
- The situation is also very different across countries in the Asia-Pacific and Middle East and Africa, where Japan and UAE appeared to be less severely hit than other countries during the second half of 2021, and only Australia, India and Malaysia are also expecting to return to normal activity levels during the first half of 2022.

### Turnover – operating profits – public financial support

Globally, and on average, companies saw a 2021 turnover of just 41% of 2019 levels, and project that this will increase to 71%, of the same baseline, in 2022. Still, many countries are performing well above average, including:

- For 2021 revenues, France (62% of 2019 levels), Russia (61%), China (60%), Japan (55%), South Korea (54%), UAE (53%) and Spain (50%)
- For projected 2022 revenues, USA (84% of 2019 levels), Brazil and France (79%), Spain (78%), Colombia, China and Japan (77%), and Thailand and UK (76%).

In terms of operating profit for 2021, 27% of companies globally reported a loss, and 26% reported a reduction of more than 50%, compared to 2019 levels. All regions include countries with a higher than average proportion of companies declaring a loss in 2021:

- Mexico (33% of companies) in North America
- Argentina (50%), Brazil (44%), Chile (38%) and Colombia (42%) in Central and South America
- Germany (44%) in Europe
- South Africa (36%) in the Middle East and Africa
- Australia (30%), India (29%), Malaysia (38%), Singapore (40%) and Thailand (38%) in the Asia-Pacific.

In terms of proportion of companies who've received no public financial support, the Asia-Pacific matches the global average of 53%. In Europe, this proportion is lower than the global average (33%), but is higher in the Middle East and Africa (78%), North America (73%) and Central and South America (68%).

### Key business issues

"Internal management challenges" represents the key business issue across Australia, Argentina and Mexico (22% of respondents), Spain (21%), Colombia (20%), Thailand (19%) and South Africa (18%).

In Germany, "Impact of digitalisation" is matched with "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business" as the most pressing issue (20% of respondents).

The picture is different depending on the activity type of respondents. For organisers and venues, "Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the business" is the top issue (20% and 19% of respondents respectively), followed closely by "Internal management challenges" (18% for both categories) and "Impact of digitalisation" (17% and 14%).

Service providers, however, rank "Internal management challenges" (21% of respondents) ahead of "Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the business", "Impact of digitalisation" and "Competition with other media" (16% of respondents for each).

### Future exhibition formats – physical and digital events

In addition to the 80% of companies who are confident that "COVID-19 confirms the value of face-to-face events":

- 44% (compared to 46%, six months ago, and 63%, 12 months ago) believe there will be "Less international 'physical' exhibitions, and, overall, less participants" (with 6% stating "Yes, for sure" and 38% stating "Most probably"), while 30% are unsure.
- 73% (compared to 76%, six months ago, and 80%, 12 months ago) believe there is "A push towards hybrid events, more digital elements at events" (with 24% stating "Yes, for sure" and 49% stating "Most probably"), while 15% are unsure.
- 10% (compared to 11%, six months ago, and 14%, 12 months ago) agree that "Virtual events are replacing physical events" (with 2% stating "Yes, for sure" and 9% stating "Most probably"), while 18% are unsure and 54% state "Definitely not".

The results show no significant differences across different regions.

### Climate change and Net Zero Carbon Events

In the context of the recently launched "Net Zero Carbon Events initiative", the Barometer surveyed the perception and engagement of the industry on this issue. Global results indicate that:

- 66% of respondents are confident that "This initiative is of key relevance to secure the future of the industry", just weeks after it was launched
- 91% of companies agree that "It is important that the event industry works together to reduce the environmental impact of the components it controls (production of the event)"
- 89% of companies believe that "It is important that the event industry works with its clients (participants) and other stakeholders (destinations, transport and accommodation) to reduce the environmental impact of the other components attributed to events".

Regarding the deadline for companies to achieve Net Zero Greenhouse Gas emissions:

- 23% of respondents are sure "My company will achieve Net Zero Greenhouse Gas emissions before 2050", while 31% believe this is "Most probably" the case and 33% are unsure.

- 69% of respondents are confident that “My company will achieve Net Zero Greenhouse Gas emissions by 2050” (with 41% stating “Yes, for sure” and 28% stating “Most probably”), while 24% are unsure.

## Background

The 28<sup>th</sup> Global Barometer survey, concluded in January 2022, provides insights from 401 companies, across 53 countries and regions. It was conducted in collaboration with 21 UFI member associations:

AAXO (The Association of African Exhibition Organisers) and EXSA (Exhibition and Event Association of Southern Africa) in South Africa, AEO (Association of Event Organisers) in the UK, AFE (Spanish Trade Fairs Association) in Spain, AFEP (Asociación de Ferias del Perú) in Peru, AFIDA (Asociación Internacional de Ferias de América) in Central and South America, AKEI (Association of Korean Exhibition Industry) in South Korea, AMPROFEC (Asociación Mexicana de Profesionales en Ferias, Exposiciones, Congresos y Convenciones) in Mexico, AOCA (Asociación Argentina de Organizadores y Proveedores de Exposiciones, Congresos, Eventos y de Burós de Convenciones) in Argentina, IECA/ASPERAPI (Indonesia Exhibition Companies Association) in Indonesia, EEAA (Exhibition & Event Association of Australasia) in Australia, IEIA (Indian Exhibition Industry Association) in India, JEXA (Japan Exhibition Association) in Japan, MFTA (Macau Fair & Trade Association) in Macau, MACEOS (Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers) in Malaysia, RUEF (Russian Union of Exhibitions and Fairs) in Russia, SECB (Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau) in Singapore, SISO (Society of Independent Show Organizers) in the US, TEA (Thai Exhibition Association) in Thailand, UBRAFE (União Brasileira dos Promotores Feiras) in Brazil and UNIMEV (French Meeting Industry Council) in France.

In line with UFI’s objective to provide vital data and best practices to the entire exhibition industry, the full results can be downloaded at [www.ufi.org/research](http://www.ufi.org/research)

The next UFI Global Barometer survey will be conducted in June 2022.

Attachments:

- [Cover of the 28<sup>th</sup> edition of the UFI Global Barometer report](#)
- [“Expected developments 2021-2022” infographic](#)

**About UFI – The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry:** UFI is the global trade association of the world’s tradeshow organisers and exhibition centre operators, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations, and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI’s main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry. UFI directly represents more than 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally, and also works closely with its 60 national and regional association members. More than 780 member organisations in 83 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Over 900 international trade fairs proudly bear the UFI approved label, a quality guarantee for visitors and exhibitors alike. UFI members continue to provide the international business community with a unique marketing media aimed at developing outstanding face-to-face business opportunities.

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