



**Switzerland.**

# Market situation North America.

Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau (SCIB).

[MySwitzerland.com/meetings](http://MySwitzerland.com/meetings)





# 1 MARKET SITUATION AND OUTLOOK.

## 1.1 Economic situation

### 1.1.1. United States

2024 is set up to be a very interesting year in the U.S. On the economic front, it is a bit of a mixed bag. While many Americans say they do not feel optimistic about the economy, several major economic indicators, such as unemployment and inflation, are stable. The much-predicted recession of 2023 did not materialize. GDP increased a solid 2.5% in 2023, fueled by stronger-than-expected consumer spending, and the stock market has already hit record territory multiple times this year.

There are some undeniable headwinds on the horizon. All of this is happening while the U.S. manages several significant geo-political challenges with Ukraine-Russia, Israel-Gaza, Haiti, China and, of course, the upcoming U.S. congressional and Presidential elections.

The ongoing effects of high mortgage rates mean buying homes is more expensive. The low availability of affordable housing options affects most Americans and may contribute to many not feeling the country's growth personally. Most Americans' wealth is held in the homes they own.

Experts anticipate a slight increase in the unemployment rate to 4.2% by the end of the year, up from its current 3.7%. Many companies in the tech, media, finance, and retail industries made significant cuts to staff in 2023, and 2024 promises more, with companies like Amazon, BlackRock, Nike, Intel, and Citigroup having already announced plans for cuts this year.

The most important thing to note is that everything that happens in America and perhaps the world this year will be impacted by its elections. The political climate has already been very contentious, and the policy agendas are quite divergent. As a result, there could be dramatic policy changes that could cause a lot of economic volatility.

The United States was one of the primary recovery drivers for the Swiss Tourism industry in 2023. There was a 20% increase in overnights compared to the record year of 2019. The potential concern for our industry is that, in many surveys, Americans have a very poor image of the economy. Worries about inflation persist despite evidence to the contrary.

Generally, Americans are not – 'not spending'. In fact, their spending is one reason for the unexpected success of the U.S. economy – the issue is that they're saying they don't feel the good economy. That may be the biggest risk because if people start making decisions based on an unsubstantiated view of the economic outlook, that behavior may trigger a recession that could spiral globally. Once the Elections are over, some of these uncertainties may abate – but if the elections are contentious and contested yet again, the economy will likely falter.

### 1.1.2. Canada



On the surface, the economy appears relatively stable. Economic growth in the fourth quarter of 2023 was better than expected. However, a closer look at many essential economic indicators showed slowing demand and weakness compared to forecasts.

Unlike the U.S., the Canadian job market is weaker. Net losses in jobs are being forecasted in the second half of 2024. This would increase the unemployment rate to 6.7% by the end of this year. It's a bit of a double-edged sword as a more balanced job market and slowing wage growth may also assist in cooling inflation.

Like the U.S. Fed, The Bank of Canada raised interest rates several times and has not yet begun to cut due to inflationary concerns. This is an added pressure on the economy and is likely why many Canadians feel little consolation when hearing about a "soft landing."

There are some glimmers of positivity for Canada. There are signs that housing demand is slowly returning. So far, the first quarter of 2024 shows some positive signs in consumer spending, with growth boosted by auto sales. There is hope that as inflationary risks continue dissipating, there will be corresponding cuts in interest and mortgage rates.

The Canadian Business investment is also looking a little brighter in 2024. According to Statistics Canada's Capital Expenditure survey, stronger-than-expected investments are planned for the year ahead, led by significant new investments supporting the clean energy transition. This should help Canada's growth return to its trend pace by the end of 2025.

## 1.2 The Situation of the Meeting Industry & Trends.

Overall, the meeting industry celebrated a year of incredible growth in 2023, and now it has cast its gaze in 2024 with an optimistic take on the future.

The demands of a changing business and workforce dynamic and economic and political uncertainty increase the demand for incentive professionals to transform incentive programs with new rewards and experiences to boost engagement. The incentive business market has become increasingly challenging and competitive, especially since the pandemic. There are fewer business travelers; remote and hybrid office structures have also changed the frequency and method of travel and the desired experiences. As a result, everyone in the industry competes for a dwindling pool of premium clients demanding more dynamic and diverse experiences, often on a strict budget.

IRF's (Incentive Research Foundation) 2024 Trend Report discusses the following topics:

- The increasing importance of incentives to motivate today's workforce.
- Inflation continues, and budgets are hit hard.
- The workforce is getting younger, and priorities are shifting.
- Tension between planners and suppliers.
- Increased desire for new incentive travel destinations and unique experiences.
- Gift cards remain a top reward.
- Shifts in the use of merchandise rewards.
- Artificial Intelligence is increasing efficiency and impact.

*Download the complete study [here](#)*



Northstar Meetings Group, a premier online platform for event organizers, planners and incentive program professionals across many sectors, conducts regular PULSE surveys. Here is a summary of their January survey of 438 planners:

- Optimism levels have declined since January 2023, but the general sentiment in the industry has remained positive. Only 15% of planners report they are less optimistic than six weeks ago.
- The active business pipeline remains robust: 68% are either actively booking or sourcing currently, while only 4% are not sourcing new, live events.
- Booking timelines have normalized, with fewer near-term meetings (less than 6 months) needing to be placed. 58% report they're seeking to book new business more than one year out, up from 37% in June.
- The pace of year-over-year meetings volume growth has slowed, but it's still very high: 58% report they will plan more meetings in 2024 than in 2023.
- Higher costs remain the big pain point; addressable concerns (like staffing) are less of an issue. Nevertheless, supplier satisfaction levels have sagged again.
- More than half of all planners believe their events are perceived as more valuable to their stakeholders now than pre-Covid. Only 10% believe their events are perceived as less valuable.
- International events are seeing strong demand; demand for Europe has grown, and long-haul destinations are also benefitting.
- Only 22% of planners report factoring in elections to their meeting planning.

*The complete survey can be downloaded [here](#).*

Lastly, Skift Meetings has also published its 2024 megatrends, delving into an array of fresh trends redefining the fabric of the industry:

- Remote work leaves a lasting impact on Business Events.
- Creativity shines through in a sea of bland AI-powered event marketing.
- The climate crisis disrupts more and more events.
- Organizers are held accountable for event sustainability.
- New normal in a world of polarizing politics.
- Event cost reaches a tipping point.
- Data-driven event planning has become the norm.
- Hybrid events thrive in new formats.
- Events focus on being safe spaces for all.
- Glamour cautiously returns to incentive travel.

*For the complete survey, please check [snet.ch](https://snet.ch).*

### **1.3 2024 RFP situation in North America.**

53 RFPs received from 1 January – 20 March 2024, with a total of 56,707 overnights.

- 3 RFPs carried out in CH, with a total of 429 overnights.
- 2 RFPs confirmed, with a total of 878 overnights.
- 39 RFPs pending, with a total of 56,707 overnights.
- 6 RFPs canceled, with a total of 1,144 overnights.
- 4 RFPs carried out foreign, with a total of 766 overnights.



- 0 RPFs postponed

## 2 TARGETS.

### 2.1 Qualitative.

- Maintain our strong market presence and alignment with market/partner needs within the business events industry.
- Continue to adapt and incorporate new trends and technologies such as AI where and when appropriate & possible.
- Elevate SCIB NA's digital presence to promote the brand & find platforms to communicate better and stay connected to clients.
- Proactively seek out new initiatives & strategic partnerships, such as looking out for new potential third-party events and ad-hoc activities for partners.
- Identify, inform and assist clients to address the evolving market better and respond to changing client dynamics and staff shortages in the industry.
- Continue to promote bleisure travel and sustainability in Switzerland on different NA platforms.
- Remain a trusted local market expert resource. Make necessary updates to the database and the client's history.
- Research, qualify & (re)connect with associations and Destination Wedding planners in conjunction with HQ.
- Continue to exchange with industry experts, peers and clients, always with the aim to convert RFIs and RFPs into overnights and consistent ROI.

### 2.2 Quantitative Goals

- Number of qualified contacts in the database: 7,000
- Qualified client contacts: 1,700
- Number of days with customers: 70
- Number of requests: 210
- Number of conferences, meetings and incentives in Switzerland: 65
- Number of directly influenced overnights: 35,000
- Web visits on meetings/incentives: 15,000
- Web visits destination weddings: 10,000



### 3 CURRENT DATABASE FIGURES.

Type	Contacts March 2024	Contacts August 2023 (last outlook update)
Agencies	3,710	3,564
Corporates	1,863	1,854
Media	123	121
Associations	1,050	1,039
Wedding Planners	211	92
Others	29	23
<b>TOTAL Qualified Contacts</b>	<b>6,986</b>	<b>6,693</b>
Inactive	<b>1,732</b>	<b>1,676</b>

SCIB continues to qualify the database and monitor the changes regularly.

### 4 DETAILED MARKETING ACTIVITIES.

Further details of past, present, and future marketing activities can be found on [www.stnet.ch](http://www.stnet.ch), accessed using your username and password.