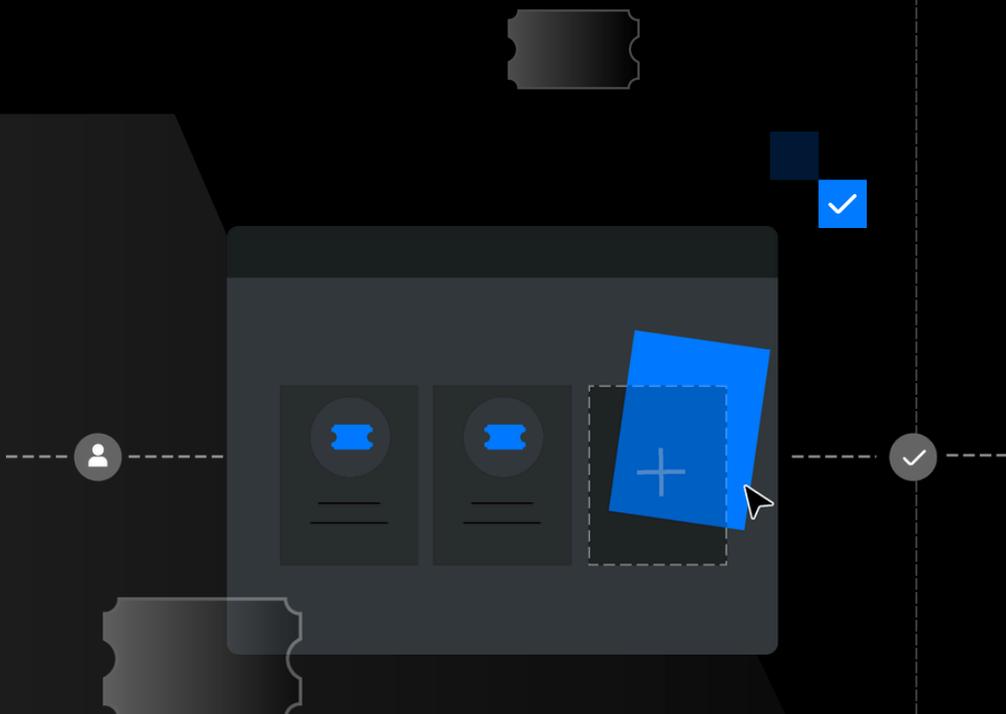# Registration Categories Don't Add Friction. They May Reduce It.

Data-backed benchmarks from real-world events

pheedloop

Executive Summary

This report examines how the number of registration categories relates to registration completion rates, and how categories interact with ticket count. The analysis is based on the same dataset of 3,600+ live events used in Reports #01, #02, and #03.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- Registration category count alone shows no meaningful negative relationship with completion rates. Events with 4-5 categories achieve a ~91% median, comparable to single-category events at ~93%.

- When ticket selection is absent, completion is uniformly high regardless of category count. Events with 0-1 tickets complete at ~96% whether they have 1 category or 6+.

- When ticket complexity is present, more categories are associated with higher completion. Among events with 2-3 ticket types, single-category events complete at ~81% while events with 4-5 categories complete at ~90%, a 9 percentage point difference.


- The likely mechanism is choice filtering: categories narrow the set of tickets a registrant sees at the decision point, reducing perceived choice complexity.

These benchmarks are intended to help event teams evaluate the effectiveness of their registration experience and identify when performance deviates meaningfully from typical patterns.

About the Event Data Lab

The **Event Data Lab** is an ongoing research initiative focused on analyzing real-world event performance using aggregated and anonymized data. Reports published under the Event Data Lab aim to surface empirical benchmarks and operational insights across registration, onsite operations, engagement, and ROI.
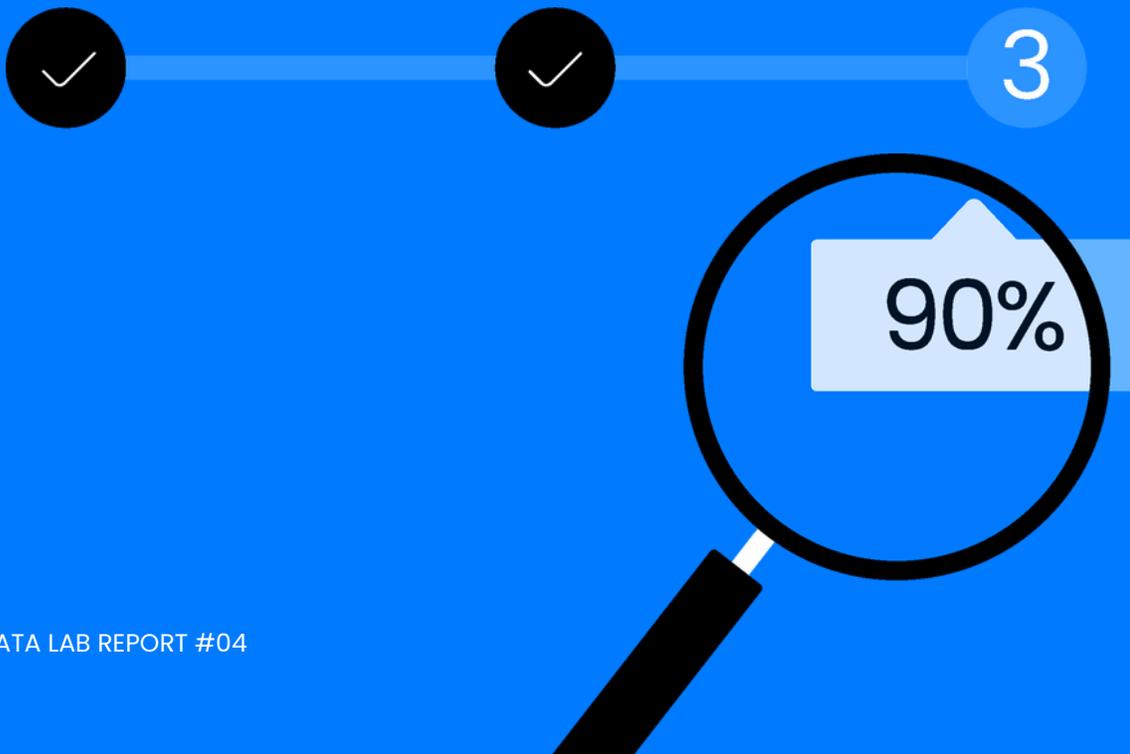
Dataset Overview

Scope

- 3,600+ live events, same dataset as Reports #01, #02, and #03

- Registration categories range from 1 to 11+, with a median of 3 per event

- Category data is drawn from the same event records that include ticket count, enabling direct interaction analysis

- Data aggregated and anonymized across live events

Exclusions

To ensure statistical stability and reduce noise:

- Test, sandbox, and internal events were excluded
- Events with very low registration volume were excluded

Anonymization

All data was aggregated and anonymized prior to analysis. No individual event, organization, or attendee can be identified from this report.
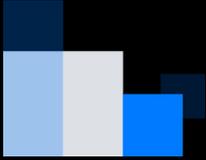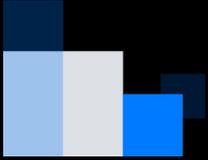
Metric Definitions

Registration completion rate is defined as the percentage of users who completed registration out of all users who initiated the registration process.

$$\text{Registration Completion Rate} = \frac{\text{Completed Registrations}}{\text{Completed Registrations + Incomplete Registrations}}$$

This metric measures conversion **within the registration flow**. It does not account for website traffic, marketing impressions, or users who viewed event pages without beginning registration.

Metric Definitions

A **registration category** is a distinct path through the registration flow (e.g., "Attendee," "Speaker," "Exhibitor," "Student"). Each category may have its own ticket types, pricing, and form fields. Registrants typically select a category early in the flow, which determines the subsequent options they see.

Category count reflects the total number of registration categories configured for a given event, regardless of how many registrants selected each category.
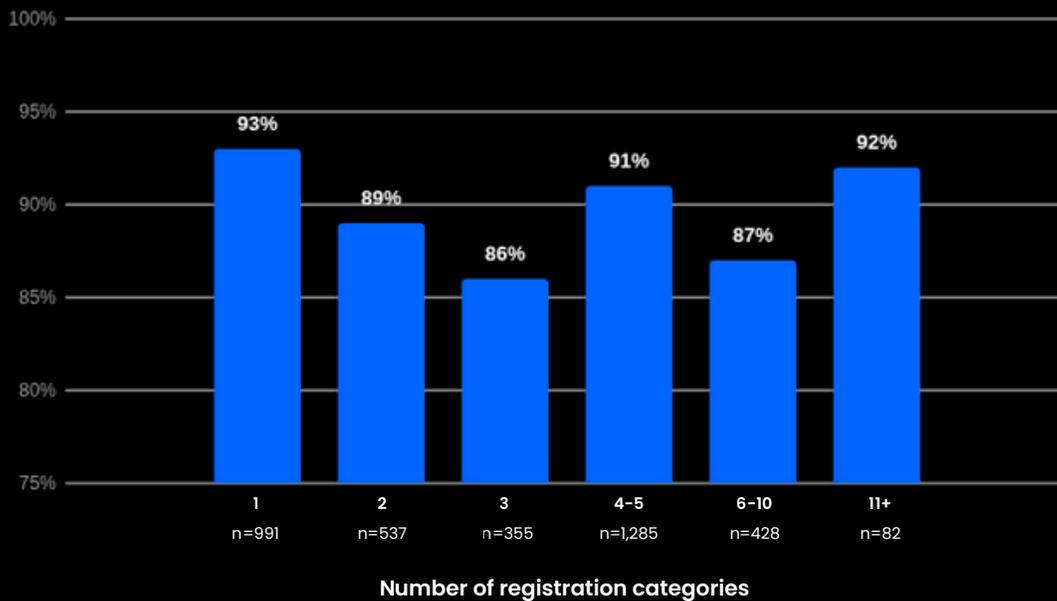
Part 1: Registration Categories and Completion Rates

Category Count Does Not Predict Lower Completion

Across all events, registration completion rates show no consistent decline as category count increases.

Median Registration Completion Rate by Category Count

Across all events regardless of ticket configuration

1	2	3	4-5	6-10	11+
n=991	n=537	n=355	n=1,285	n=428	n=82

Number of registration categories

Median registration completion rate by number of registration categories.
Events with fewer than 10 registrations and test events excluded.

The pattern is noisy rather than directional. Single-category events show a ~93% median, the 2-3 category range dips to 86-89%, events with 4-5 categories recover to ~91%, and events with 11+ categories show ~92%.

This non-monotonic pattern suggests that category count is confounded with other event characteristics rather than independently driving completion. The 4-5 category band is notably large (1,285 events, 35% of the dataset), likely reflecting a platform default or common configuration pattern.

Interpretation: Category count alone is not a useful predictor of registration performance. Events should not avoid creating categories out of concern for completion rates.

Part 2: Categories and Ticket Count Configuration

With No Ticket Selection, Categories Have No Effect

Among events with 0-1 tickets (no meaningful ticket selection), completion rates are uniformly high regardless of how many categories are offered.

Categories	Events	Median	P25	>=90%
1	57	84.6%	68.4%	37%
2-3	157	80.8%	65.0%	30%
4-5	160	91.0%	76.9%	53%
6+	28	93.5%	83.5%	64%

Median completion is 96% across the board. This confirms that categories themselves introduce no measurable friction. When the registration flow involves only selecting a category (with no ticket decision), the process is essentially frictionless.

With Ticket Complexity, Categories Buffer the Effect

The interaction between categories and ticket count reveals the most important finding in this report. When ticket complexity is present, events with more categories show materially higher completion rates.

Events with 2-3 ticket types:

Categories	Events	Median	P25	>=90%
1	181	81.4%	64.0%	31%
2-3	291	89.1%	77.3%	49%
4-5	349	90.0%	77.7%	52%

Single-category events with 2-3 tickets complete at just 81%, with a P25 of 64%. Events distributing those same 2-3 tickets across 4-5 categories complete at 90%, with a P25 of 78%. That is a 9 percentage point recovery at the median and a 14 point recovery at the 25th percentile.

Events with 4-5 ticket types:

Categories	Events	Median	P25	>=90%
1	57	84.6%	68.4%	37%
2-3	157	80.8%	65.0%	30%
4-5	160	91.0%	76.9%	53%
6+	28	93.5%	83.5%	64%

A similar pattern emerges: events with 4-5 categories achieve a 91% median with 4-5 tickets, compared to 81-85% for events with fewer categories. The jump is sharpest when the number of categories is sufficient to segment the ticket options meaningfully.

Events with 6+ ticket types:

Categories	Events	Median	P25	>=90%
1	125	85.4%	64.5%	41%
2-3	251	82.6%	66.7%	38%
4-5	395	83.1%	70.0%	37%
6+	420	84.3%	71.5%	40%

At 6+ tickets, the buffering effect weakens. Median completion ranges from 83-85% regardless of category count, and the P25 values converge. When ticket complexity is very high, category structure alone is not sufficient to offset the friction.

Registration Completion by Categories, at Each Ticket Level

Median completion rate
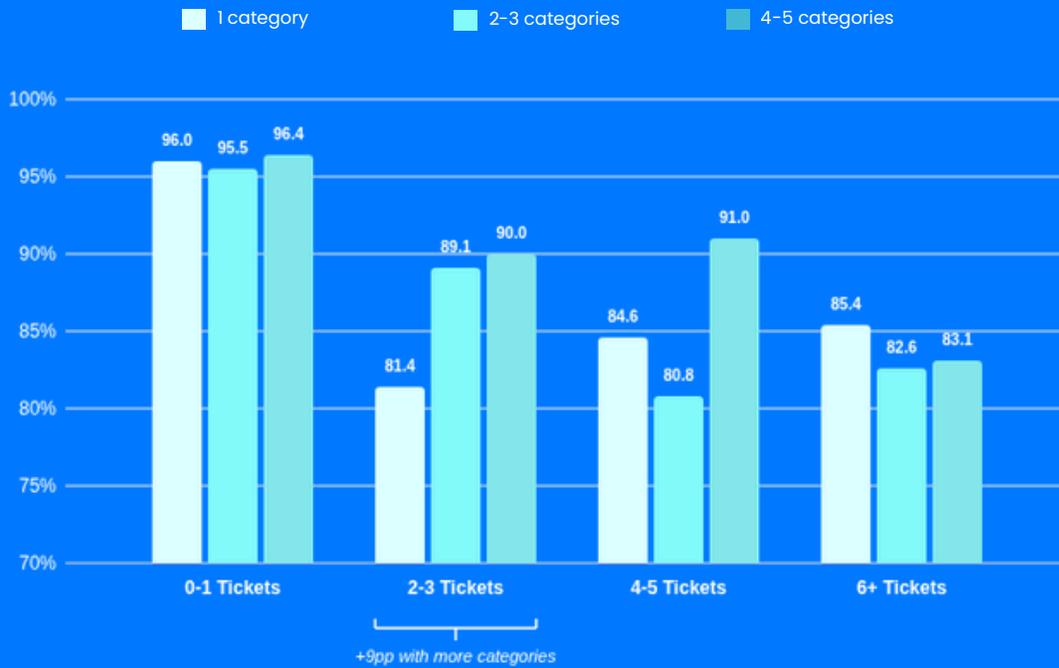
Median registration completion rate by category count and ticket count. Events with fewer than 10 registrations and test events excluded. Some cells have small sample sizes.

Key finding: Registration categories buffer the negative effect of ticket complexity, but only up to a point. The effect is strongest at moderate ticket counts (2-5 tickets) where categories can meaningfully reduce the number of options a registrant evaluates. At very high ticket counts (6+), even well-structured categories cannot fully compensate.

Full Interaction Matrix

The following table shows median completion rates for every combination of category count and ticket count with sufficient sample size (N >= 15).

	0-1 Ticket	2-3 Tickets	4-5 Tickets	6+ Tickets
1 category	96.0% (628)	81.4% (181)	84.6% (57)	85.4% (125)
2-3 categories	95.5% (193)	89.1% (291)	80.8% (157)	82.6% (251)
4-5 categories	96.4% (381)	90.0% (349)	91.0% (160)	83.1% (395)
6+ categories	99.0% (39)	92.8% (23)	93.5% (28)	84.3% (420)

Reading across rows (holding categories constant), ticket count consistently reduces completion. Reading down columns (holding tickets constant), more categories are associated with higher or equivalent completion at every ticket level except 6+, where the effect flattens.

Note: Some cells have small sample sizes (notably 6+ categories with 0-3 tickets). These values should be interpreted directionally.
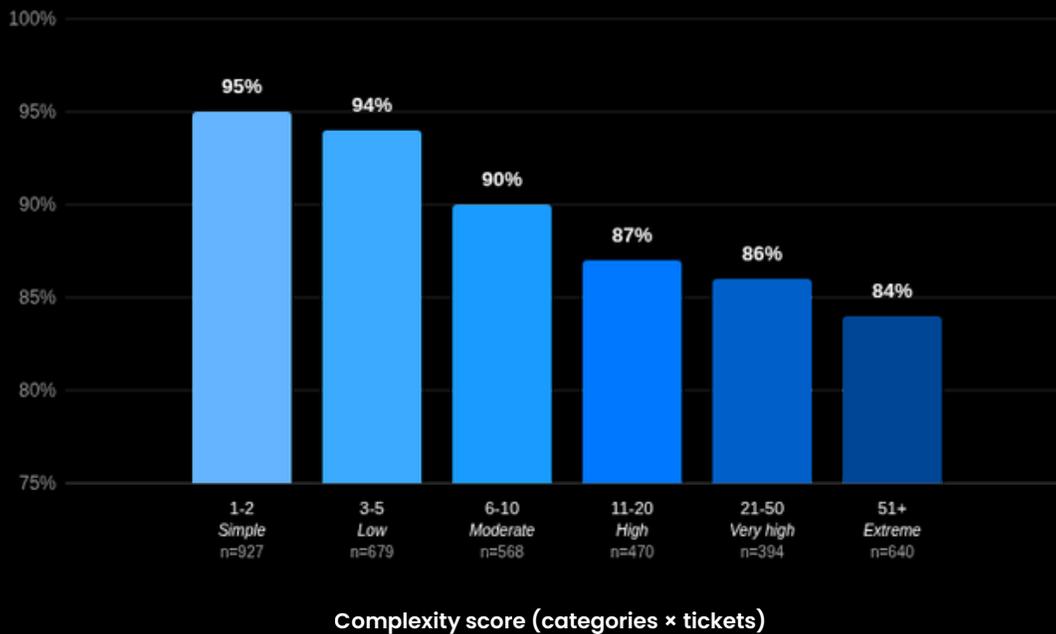
Total Registration Complexity

To assess the combined effect of categories and tickets, we computed a multiplicative complexity score (categories x tickets) for each event.

Registration Completion by Total Registration Complexity

Complexity score = categories × tickets

Complexity score (categories × tickets)

Median registration completion rate by multiplicative complexity score (categories × tickets).
Events with fewer than 10 registrations and test events excluded.

The multiplicative complexity score shows a clear monotonic decline, from 95% at the simplest configurations to 84% at the most complex. This aligns with the overall series finding that total decision complexity, not any single configuration variable, drives registration friction.

Practical Implications for Event Teams

Adding registration categories does not reduce completion rates. Teams that need multiple attendee paths (speaker, exhibitor, student, etc.) should not hesitate to create them. The data shows no penalty for category complexity alone.

For events with multiple ticket types, distributing tickets across categories is associated with materially higher completion. This is the most actionable finding in this report. Rather than presenting all ticket types in a single view, event teams should organize tickets within relevant categories so registrants see fewer options at the decision point.

The buffering effect is strongest at moderate ticket counts (2-5 tickets). This is where the gap between single-category and multi-category events is largest. Events in this range stand to gain the most from category-based ticket organization.

At very high ticket counts (6+), category structure alone is insufficient. Events with complex pricing should consider reducing the total number of ticket types in addition to organizing them within categories

This finding connects directly to Report #02. Report #02 established that ticket count is the strongest observable predictor of completion. This report provides a concrete mitigation strategy: use categories to reduce the visible choice set for each registrant.

In practice, the combination of Reports #02 and #04 suggests a two-part approach to registration optimization: reduce total ticket complexity where possible, and use registration categories to filter what remains.

How to Use These Benchmarks

These benchmarks are most useful as:

- Evidence that adding registration categories will not harm completion rates

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- Justification for restructuring flat ticket lists into category-organized configurations

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- Context for interpreting completion rates on events with varying levels of registration complexity

They should not be interpreted as performance targets or guarantees. Individual event performance will vary based on audience, format, pricing structure, and registration configuration.
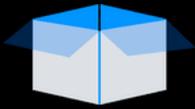
Limitations

- This is an observational analysis. Events with more categories may differ from single-category events in ways not captured by this data (audience type, organizational sophistication, pricing model).

- The buffering effect is interpreted as choice filtering (registrants see fewer tickets per category), but this mechanism cannot be confirmed from the available data. Other explanations, such as selection effects or audience intent differences, may contribute.

- The 4-5 category band contains a disproportionate share of events (35% of the dataset), likely reflecting a platform default. While this does not invalidate the findings, it does mean the 4-5 category benchmark may reflect a broader mix of event types than other bands

- Small sample sizes for some interaction cells (notably 6+ categories with low ticket counts) limit the precision of those estimates.

- Results may vary based on audience, industry, pricing structure, and registration flow design.

Closing

Event Data Lab Report #04 extends the series into its first interaction analysis, examining how two registration configuration variables combine to affect completion. The finding that categories buffer ticket complexity represents the first concrete mitigation strategy identified across the series.

Across the first four reports, a consistent framework has emerged: registration completion is primarily shaped by choice complexity at the decision point. Features that add choices (ticket types) reduce completion. Features that filter choices (categories) can offset that effect. Features that add data collection (custom forms) have no observable impact.

Future reports will expand beyond registration to examine onsite operations, engagement, and attendee behavior.

Appendix

Definitions

- **Registration completion rate:** Completed registrations divided by total registration attempts (completed + incomplete).
- **Registration category:** A distinct path through the registration flow (e.g., Attendee, Speaker, Exhibitor). Each category may have its own tickets, pricing, and form fields.
- **Category count:** Total number of registration categories configured for a given event.
- **Ticket count:** Total number of ticket types configured for a given event, across all categories.
- **Complexity score:** Multiplicative index (categories x tickets) used as a summary measure of registration decision complexity.
- **Median:** The 50th percentile value. Used as the primary central tendency measure because completion rate distributions are left-skewed.
- **P25 / P75:** The 25th and 75th percentile values, defining the interquartile range

Data Exclusions

Events were excluded if they matched common test or internal naming patterns (e.g., containing keywords such as "test," "delete," "sandbox," or "demo") or if they had fewer than 10 registration attempts.

This report is part of the Event Data Lab, an ongoing research initiative analyzing real-world event performance across registration, onsite operations, engagement, and ROI.

Appendix

Notes on the 4-5 Category Band

The 4-5 category band contains 1,285 events (35% of the cleaned dataset), which is disproportionate relative to adjacent bands. This concentration likely reflects a platform default or common configuration template. Analysis was conducted both including and excluding this band, and the core findings (no negative category effect, buffering of ticket complexity) hold in both cases.

Notes on Causality

This report describes associations, not causal relationships. The buffering effect attributed to categories may reflect other differences between events that use multi-category registration and those that do not. Events with more categories may have more sophisticated registration flow design, higher-intent audiences, or more experienced organizers. Readers should interpret these findings as suggestive patterns that warrant further investigation, not as guaranteed outcomes of changing registration configuration.

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