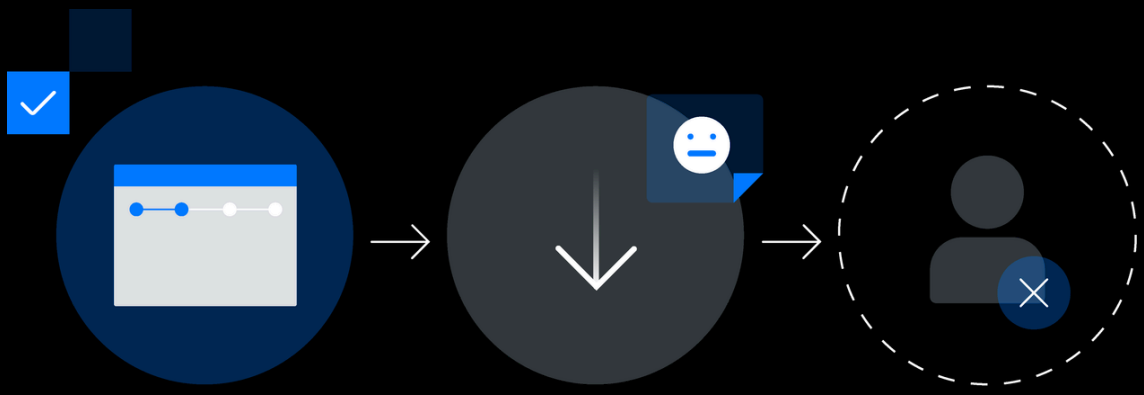
Event Data Lab Report #06

Does Easier Registration Lead to More No-Shows?

Data-backed benchmarks from real-world events



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Executive Summary

This report cross-references registration data from Reports #01 through #04 with check-in data from Report #05 to test whether registration friction predicts attendance. The analysis examines 850+ events with data on both registration completion and onsite check-in.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- At the surface level, easier registration correlates with worse attendance. Events with 90-95% registration completion show ~29% median no-shows, compared to ~17% for events with below-70% completion.

- The relationship is almost entirely explained by pricing. Free events have both higher completion (~96% median) and higher no-shows (~28%). Paid events have lower completion (~86%) and lower no-shows (~18%). The free/paid distinction drives both metrics.

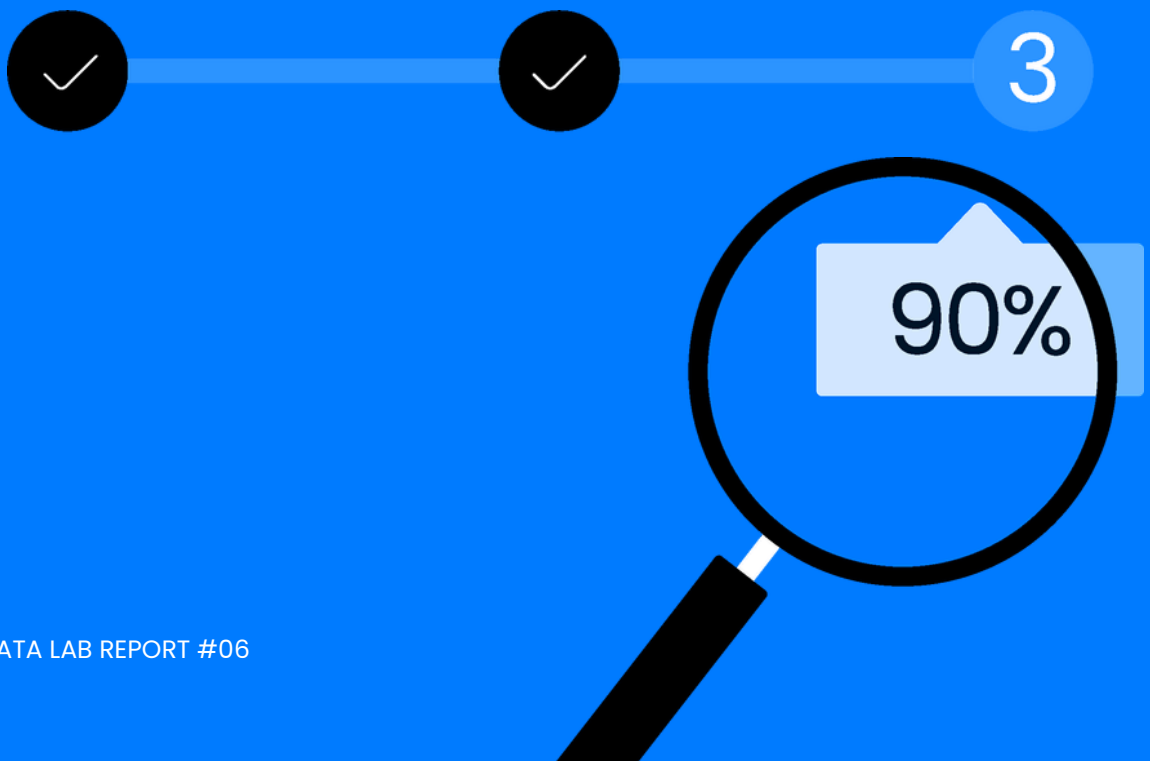
- When controlling for pricing, the relationship disappears. Among paid events only, no-show rates are flat (~16-19%) regardless of registration completion rate. Payment, not registration friction, is the commitment mechanism.

- Event teams should continue optimizing registration for completion. There is no evidence that easier registration increases no-shows for paid events. The registration optimization findings from Reports #02 through #04 remain valid.

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

- **850+ live events** with both registration data and check-in data
- Cross-references the registration dataset from Reports #01-#04 with check-in data from Report #05
- 199 free events and 655 paid events in the joined dataset
- Data aggregated and anonymized across live events

Exclusions

Same exclusion criteria as Reports #01-#05: test events removed, minimum volume thresholds applied, events with check-in rates exceeding 100% excluded.

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

No-show rate is defined as the proportion of expected attendees who did not check in at the event.

No-Show Rate	=	1 - (Check-Ins / Total Expected Attendees)

Total expected attendees includes all individuals associated with the event (registrants, speakers, and other participants). This denominator is broader than completed registrations alone and provides a more complete picture of attendance gaps.

Part 1: The Surface-Level Pattern

Higher Completion Correlates with Higher No-Shows

Across all events, registration completion and no-show rates move in the same direction.

Completion Band	Events	Median No-Show	Median CI Rate	P25 CI Rate
Below 70%	160	18.2%	81.8%	70.3%
70-80%	116	17.3%	82.7%	71.9%
80-90%	161	20.2%	79.8%	61.0%
90-95%	83	28.5%	71.5%	46.8%
95-100%	334	21.0%	79.0%	59.3%

The sharpest spike is in the 90-95% completion band, where no-shows reach 29%. Events with the most registration friction (below 70% completion) have the lowest no-show rates at 18%.

This pattern appears to support the hypothesis that friction filters for commitment: harder registration produces more committed attendees.

Ticket Count Inverts from Liability to Predictor

The same inversion appears with ticket count.

Tickets	Events	Median No-Show	Median CI Rate	P25 CI Rate
0	59	33.5%	66.5%	49.5%
1	199	23.0%	77.0%	57.9%
2-3	86	22.4%	77.6%	55.0%
4-5	85	18.1%	81.9%	68.0%
6-10	136	17.4%	82.6%	65.3%
11+	289	17.5%	82.5%	68.1%

More ticket types are associated with lower no-shows, the exact opposite of their relationship with registration completion (Report #02). Events with no ticket selection lose a third of their expected attendance.

Ticket Count Inverts from Liability to Predictor

Ticket Count: Opposite Effects on Completion and Attendance

More tickets reduce registration completion (left) but predict higher attendance (right).

The explanation: paid events have more tickets. Payment, not tickets, drives attendance.

Left: median registration completion rate (Report #02). Right: median check-in rate. Both from the same dataset.

Part 2: The Confound

Free and Paid Events Have Different Profiles

Before concluding that friction filters for commitment, examine what differs between high-completion and low-completion events.

	Free Events	Paid Events	Gap
Median completion rate	95.9%	85.5%	10.4pp
Median ticket types	1	8	7x
Median no-show rate	28.0%	17.5%	10.5pp

Free events have higher completion because there is no payment step. They have fewer ticket types because pricing tiers are unnecessary. And they have higher no-shows because there is no financial commitment. The same two groups driving the completion-to-no-show correlation are the same two groups defined by pricing model.

Controlling for Pricing: The Relationship Disappears

Among paid events only:

Completion Band	Events	Median No-Show	Median CI Rate
Below 70%	148	18.2%	81.8%
70%-80%	110	16.3%	83.7%
80-90%	132	18.0%	82.0%
90-95%	51	19.3%	80.7%
95-100%	214	16.4%	83.6%

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.

Controlling for Pricing: The Relationship Disappears

Ticket count among paid events:

Tickets	Events	Median No-Show	Median CI Rate
0-1	148	18.2%	81.8%
2-3	110	16.3%	83.7%
4-5	132	18.0%	82.0%
6+	51	19.3%	80.7%

Also flat. Among paid events, ticket count does not predict attendance. The apparent relationship between more tickets and lower no-shows is driven by the fact that paid events have more tickets.

> **Key finding:** Registration friction does not independently predict attendance. The apparent relationship between harder registration and better attendance is driven by the free/paid distinction, not by friction itself. Payment is the commitment mechanism. Among paid events, neither registration completion rate nor ticket count has any observable relationship with no-show rates.

What This Means for the Series

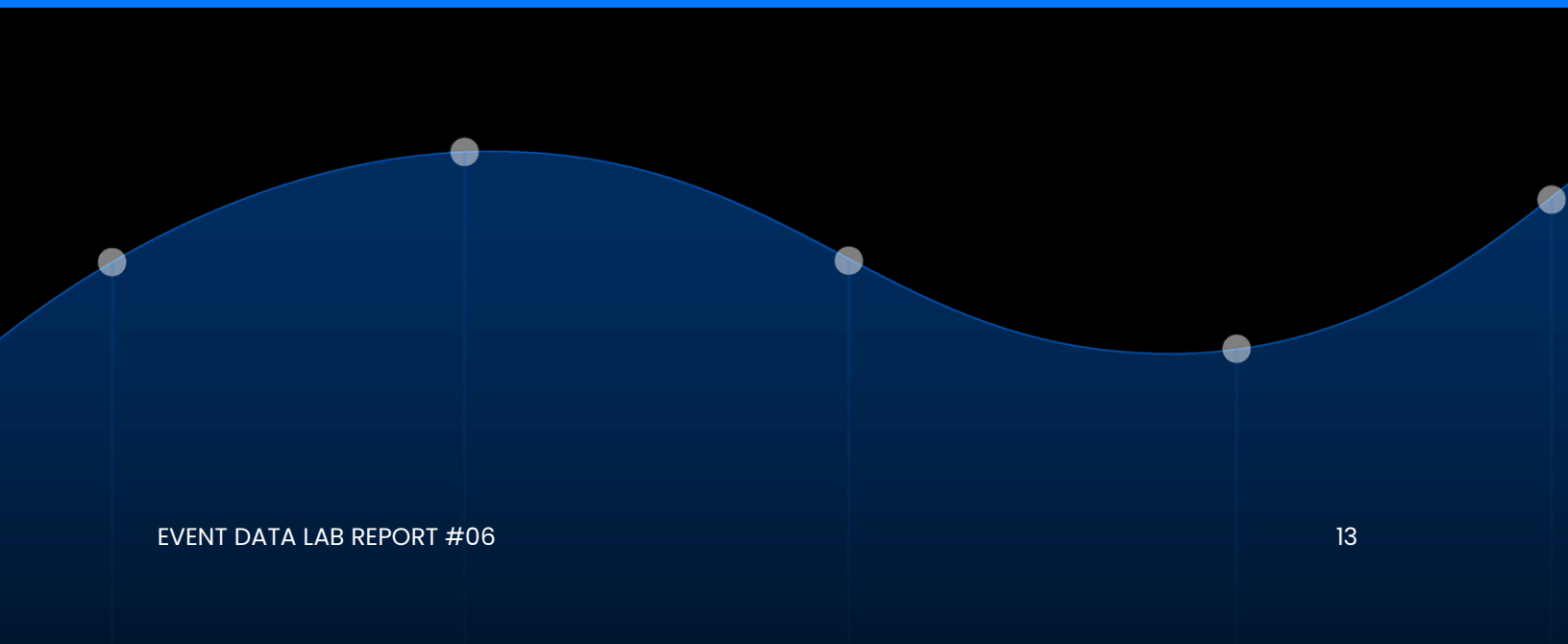
This finding does not invalidate Reports #02 through #04. Optimizing registration completion is still the right goal for the registration flow. What this report adds is a second metric: attendance.

The two metrics respond to different mechanisms:

- **Registration completion** is shaped by choice architecture (ticket count, category structure, form design).
- **Attendance** is shaped primarily by financial commitment (free vs paid).

Optimizing for one does not harm the other, at least among paid events. Teams can simplify registration flows, reduce ticket complexity, and add custom forms without concern that these changes will increase no-shows.

For free events, the picture is less clear. Free events have both high completion and high no-shows, and the available data is not sufficient to determine whether adding friction to free event registration would improve attendance. What is clear is that the absence of payment is the primary driver of no-shows, not the ease of the registration process.



Practical Implications for Event Teams

Continue optimizing registration flows for completion. Among paid events, easier registration does not produce more no-shows. The findings from Reports #02 through #04 remain valid.

No-show rates are driven by pricing model, not registration design. If your event has a no-show problem, the most effective intervention is likely related to pricing or commitment mechanisms, not adding registration friction.

Free event organizers should plan for higher no-show rates regardless of registration flow design. Consider strategies that create commitment without payment: RSVP reconfirmation, calendar integrations, reminder sequences, or nominal pricing.

Do not add friction to registration as an attendance strategy. The data does not support the idea that harder registration produces more committed attendees. Payment does. Registration friction does not.

Track both metrics. Registration completion and attendance rate measure different things and respond to different levers. A complete picture of event performance requires both.

Limitations

- This is an observational analysis. The relationship between registration friction and attendance cannot be tested causally without a controlled experiment where the same event runs different registration flows.
- The free event subsample (N=199) is smaller than the paid event subsample (N=655), limiting the precision of free-event-specific findings.
- The dataset does not capture whether free events offered any non-monetary commitment mechanisms (confirmation requirements, waitlists, etc.) that might affect no-show rates independently of pricing.
- Results may vary based on audience, industry, event format, and operational practices.

Closing

Event Data Lab Report #06 introduces a critical nuance to the series: registration completion and attendance are driven by different mechanisms. The choice architecture framework from Reports #02 through #04 remains the right lens for optimizing registration flows. But attendance is a separate outcome that responds primarily to financial commitment.

The practical implication is reassuring: event teams do not need to choose between easy registration and good attendance. For paid events, both are achievable simultaneously. For free events, the no-show challenge requires commitment strategies that go beyond registration flow design.

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.