

An Initial Analysis of a Hybrid Attendance Conference

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Background

- ↯ COVID accelerated a shift to virtual communication, introducing technologies to the mainstream.
- ↯ Now that covid is becoming less of a problem people are rushing back to in-person.
- ↯ Should we ditch virtual conferences so quickly?
- ↯ Virtual communications are more accessible, more eco friendly, and more convenient. So perhaps they deserve some investment to overcome the flaws.

What is CAP2022

- ↯ Communicating Astronomy with the Public.
- ↯ Held at Macquarie University from 12th-16th September 2022.
- ↯ The world's largest astronomy conference.
- ↯ Accommodated professionals from science communication, informal education, science centres, professional and amateur astronomers, journalists, and creative personalities.
- ↯ Included a range of talks from speakers in-person, online, some pre-recorded, and interactive workshops.

Our Methods

- ↻ To collect insight into the perspectives of people regarding online versus in-person, we surveyed attendees at the CAP2022 conference taking place at macquarie university.
- ↻ This survey was produced in cooperation with members of CSIRO (Namely Robert Hollow and Vanessa Moss) in connection with TFOM¹ to allow for cross comparison of results and to facilitate informative responses.

1. <https://thefutureofmeetings.wordpress.com>

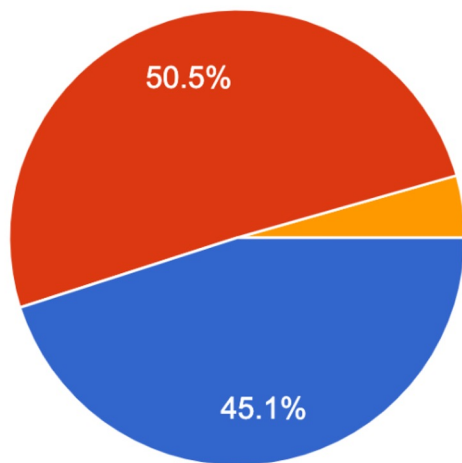
Our Methods

- ↻ An online survey was created to be sent via email to all who attended the conference (physical copies made available, but unused).
- ↻ The survey used Google forms to receive submissions.
- ↻ We utilised these data and graphs to inform our analysis of the perceptions of in-person vs virtual meetings.
- ↻ Ethics approval was obtained from CSIRO in order to be able to share and publish results publicly.

Seeing the Results

Did you attend this event in-person, online, or a combination of both?

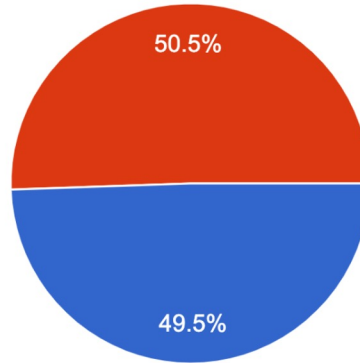
91 responses



- I attended in-person
- I attended online
- I attended a combination of both

Have you attended previous CAP events?

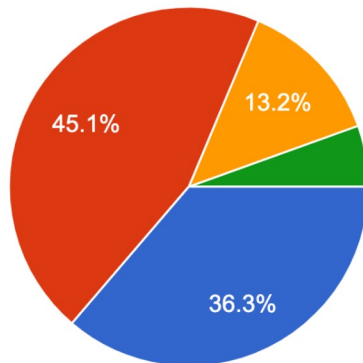
91 responses



- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

How do you rate your experience of CAP2022?

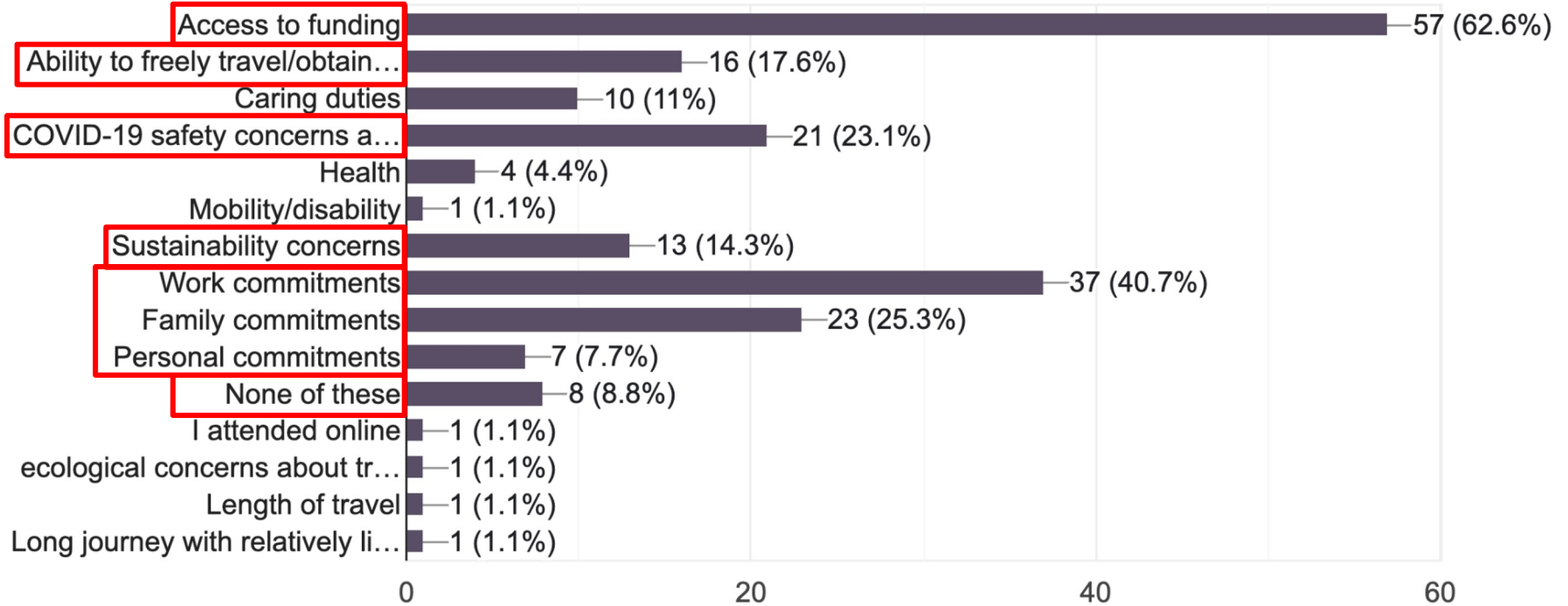
91 responses



- Very good
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very poor

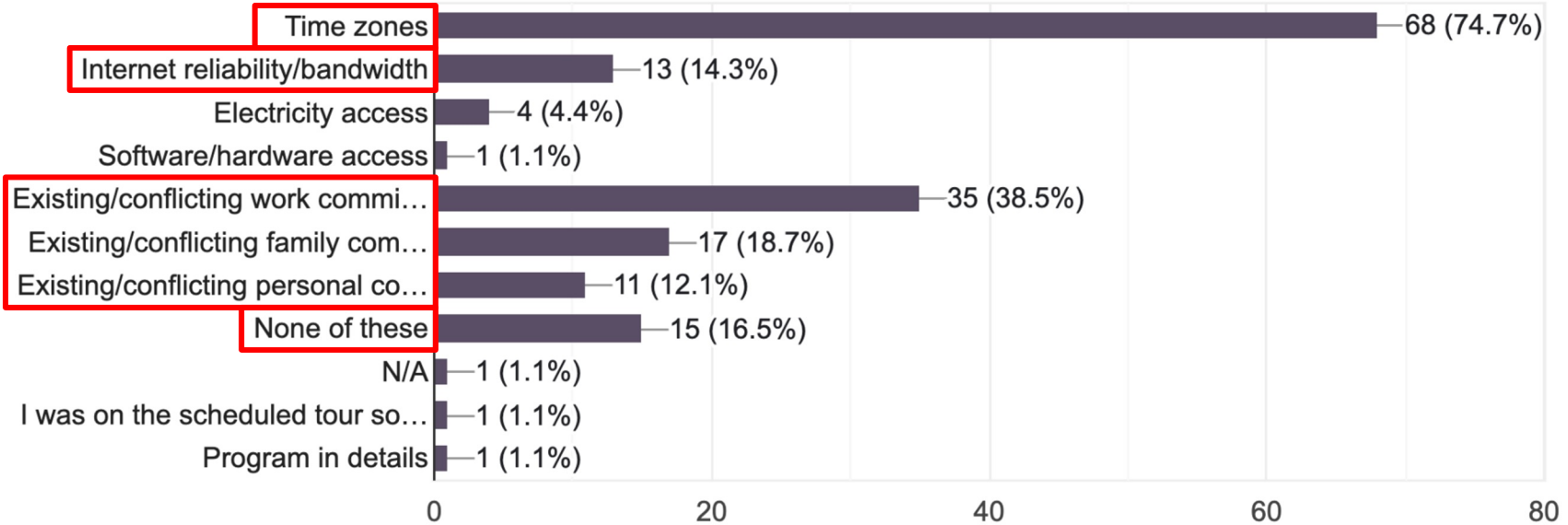
Which of the following (if any) impact your ability to attend in-person modes of events?

91 responses



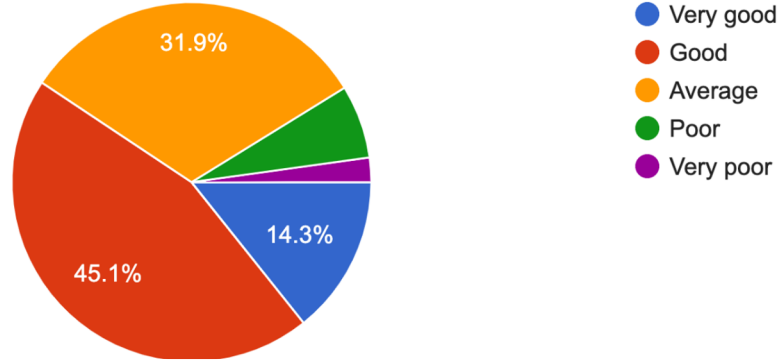
Which of the following (if any) impact your ability to attend online modes of events?

91 responses



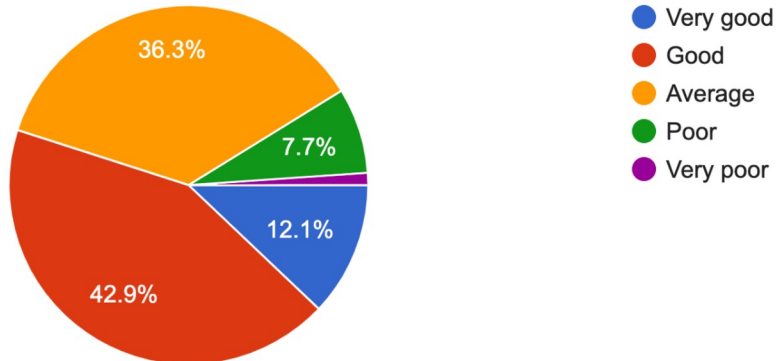
How do you rate the incorporation of online platforms and resources into the conference?

91 responses



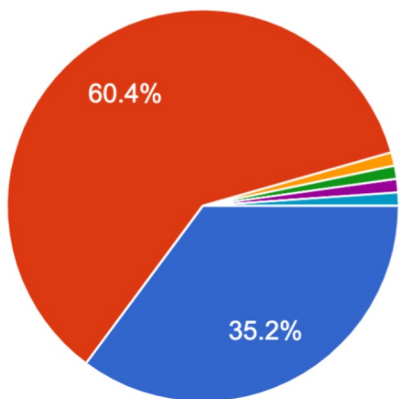
How do you rate the effectiveness of the online platforms and resources used?

91 responses



Did you experience any technical issues which impacted your ability to participate in the event?

91 responses

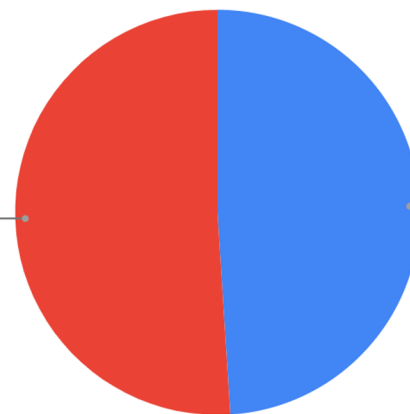


- Yes
- No
- I didn't use online component but no one joined online for my session.
- I gave my talk in person, but there was an issue connecting to the right Zoom...
- I did not attend virtually, but there were technical issues with the two main the...
- My laptop constantly said the WiFi certificate had expired.

'Did you experience any technical issues which impacted your ability to participate in the event?' For online and combination attendees

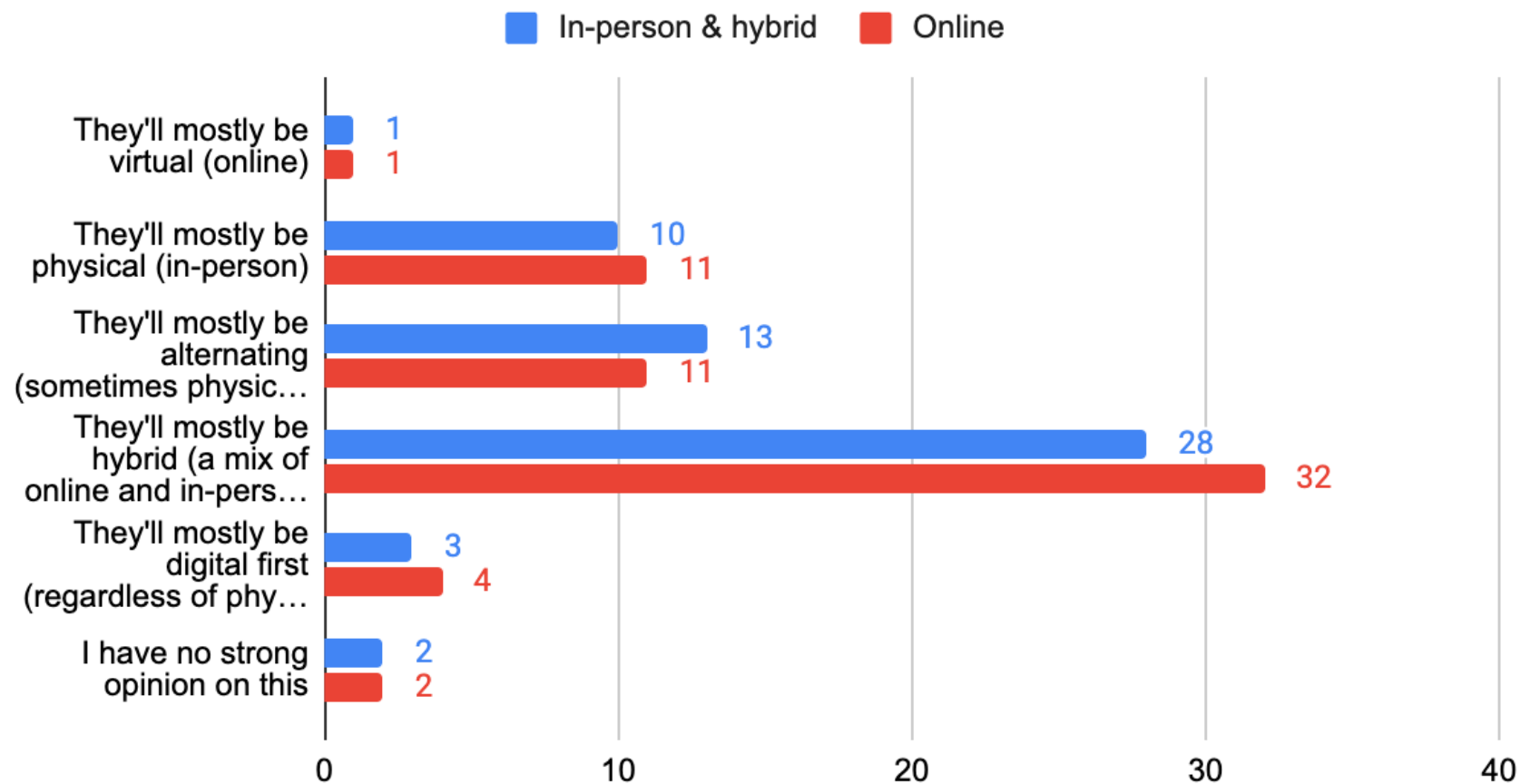
49 Responses

No
51.0%

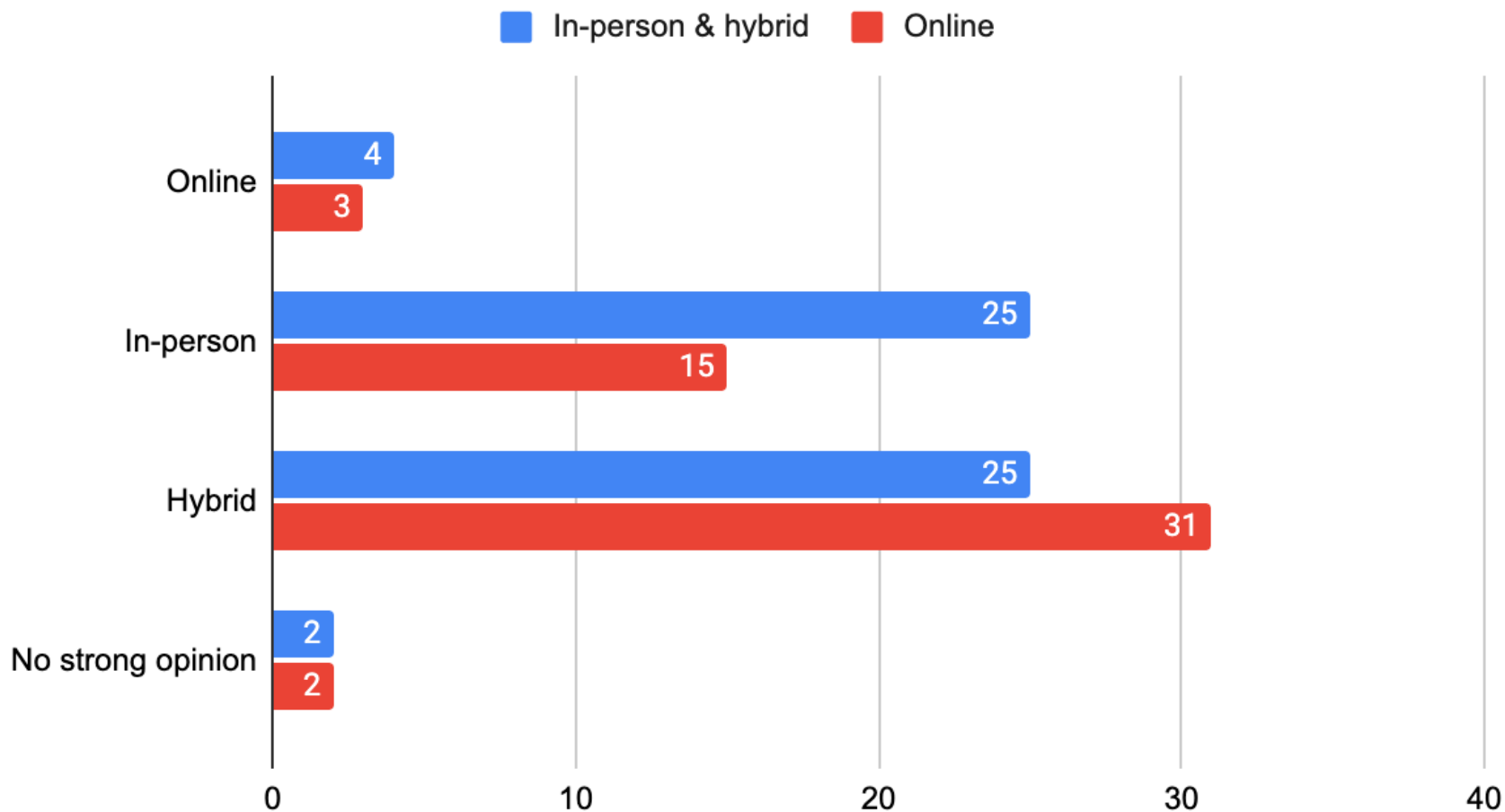


Yes
49.0%

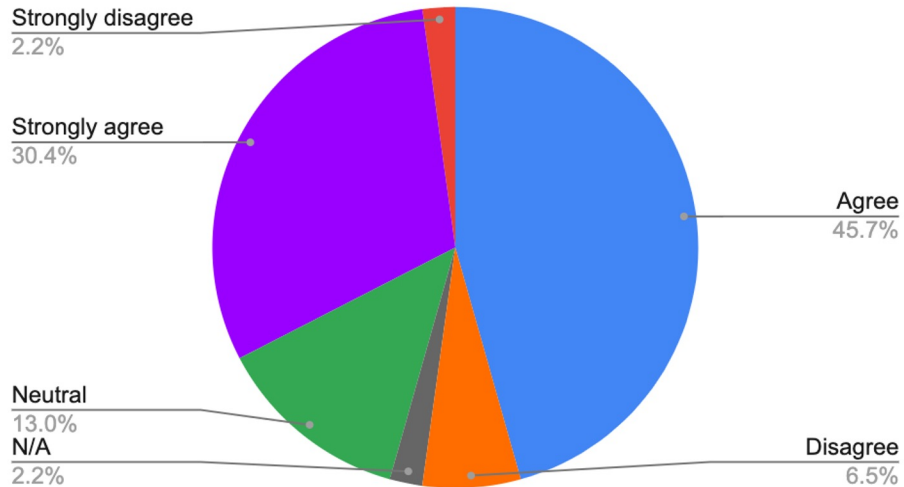
How, if at all, has this event affected your views about the future format of events and conferences?



Which format would you personally prefer for future events and conferences?

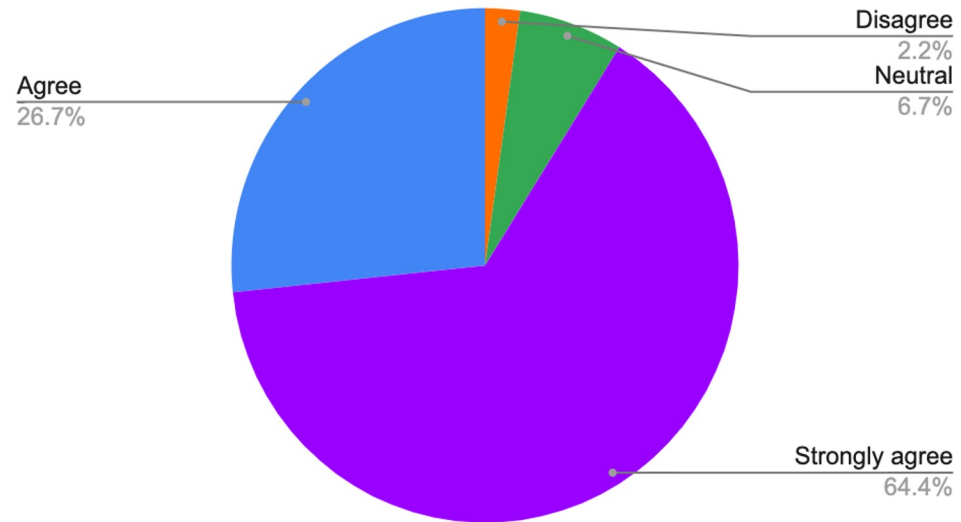


Online attendee responses to "I felt connected to a global community"

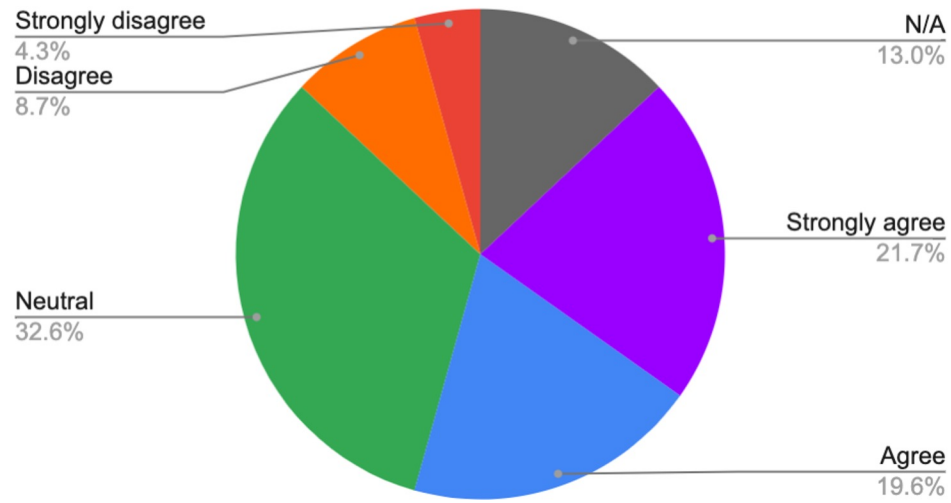


In-person includes attendees who attended both modes

In-person attendee responses to "I felt connected to a global community"

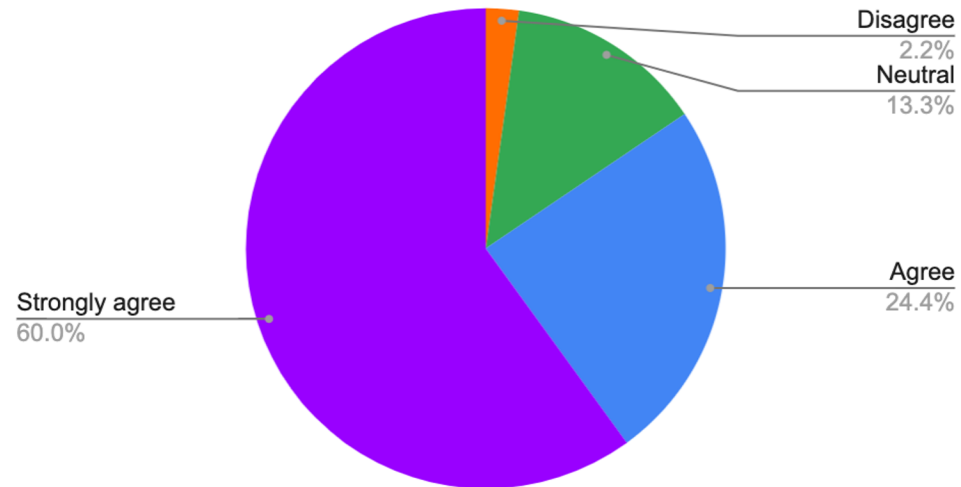


Online response to "I participated in an activity that helped me feel socially connected to others at the event"

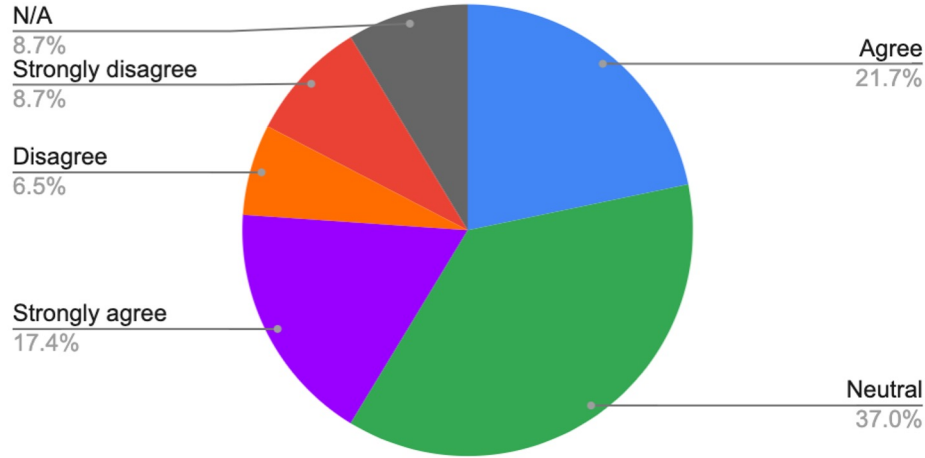


In-person includes attendees who attended both modes

In-person response to "I participated in an activity that helped me feel socially connected to others at the event"

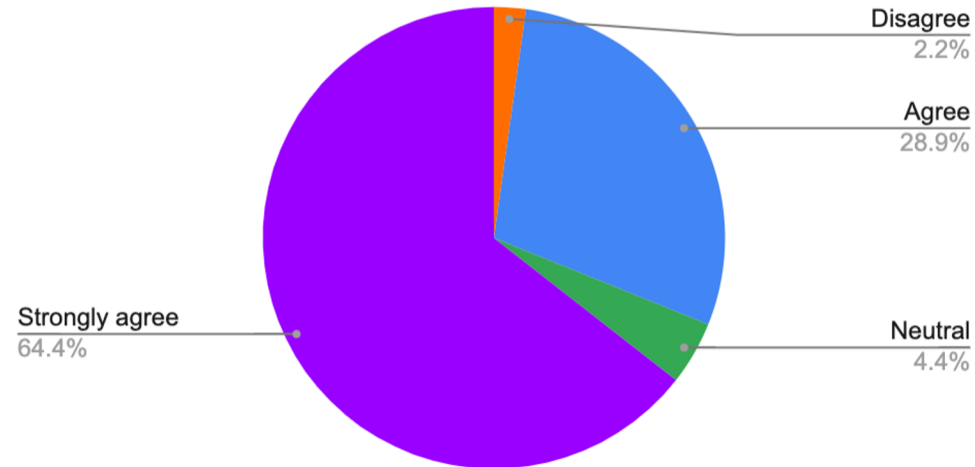


Online response to "I made some useful new contacts"



In-person includes attendees who attended both modes

In-person response to "I made some useful new contacts"



The Benefit of Networking

- ↯ Opportunities for networking in-person currently overshadow online.
 - ↯ Lunch, break times, dinners
 - ↯ Tours and excursions
 - ↯ Events
- ↯ Online networking is limited due to the platforms used.
 - ↯ Echo cutting talks short, or freezing
 - ↯ Kumospace being unintuitive
 - ↯ Lack of extracurricular activities
 - ↯ Lack of planning or designing for online activities past Kumospace
- ↯ Many written responses acknowledged the value of networking and connections as a result of the in-person aspect.
- ↯ Online often suffers due to lack of innovative implementation of technologies.

Implications for the Future

- ↯ The current survey evidence suggests that there is still a general perspective that in-person far outweighs virtual.
- ↯ Even those who think virtual and hybrid attendance is valuable still have a preference for in-person.
- ↯ There will thus still be a great push for future conferences and communications to be in-person.
- ↯ We must then aim to improve online interactions to be as valued as in person.
- ↯ Improving online communication is therefore the step toward developing a more sustainably and accessibly connected world.

Implications for the Future

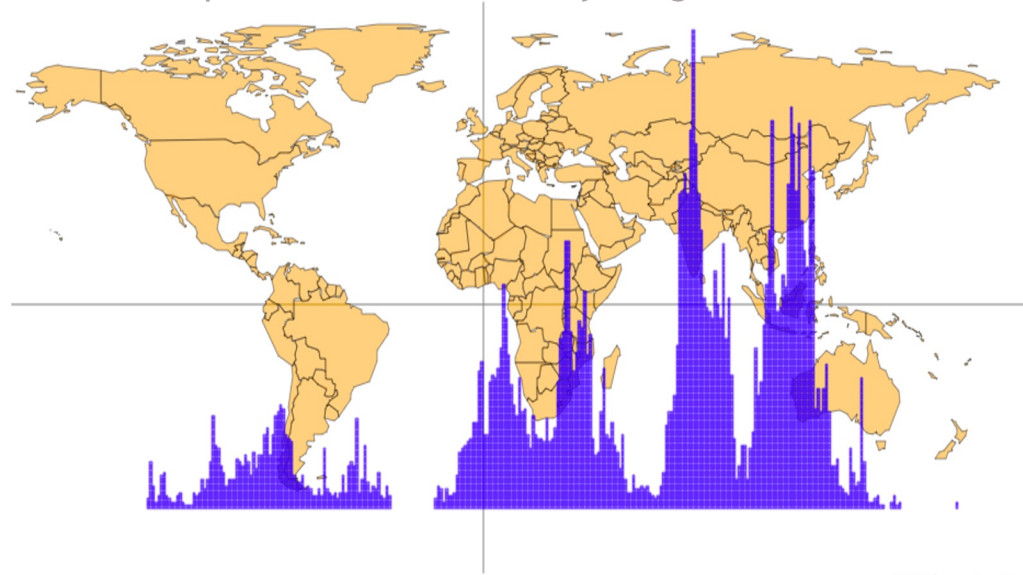
- ↻ We must further develop technologies and design ways to bridge the gap between perceived effectiveness of virtual and in-person
 - ↻ Tech such as VR and AR
- ↻ Without this push for improvement it seems unlikely that there will be a whole hearted acceptance of virtual communications in the same way as in-person.
- ↻ Also from experience volunteering at CAP2022, hybrid attendance needs to develop established methods of running to ensure smoothness and functionality.
- ↻ It is imperative that hybrid events take a digital-first approach, and innovatively incorporate virtual attendance, as discussed by Moss et al²

2. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-022-01806-9>

Implications for the Future

- ↻ Large scale events can never be 100% inclusive.
 - ↻ Must strive for as inclusive as possible
- People have responsibilities and commitments.
- Time zones or travel are difficult to circumvent.
- Where should they be held?
- When should they be held?
 - Should they be held in Asia to achieve maximum population in a time zone?

World Population Distribution by Longitude



Our Experience at CSIRO

- ↻ Great experience to work amongst scientists and gain some insight into how science communication can be done.
- ↻ Incredibly valuable experience in developing a study and the things that come with that (e.g. ethics approval).
- ↻ Useful contacts made which will prove valuable in future careers.
- ↻ Helped inform potential career choices by broadening our scope of what is available to us.
- ↻ Given us the chance to write a peer reviewed article.
- ↻ Thanks Rob, Vanessa, and CSIRO!