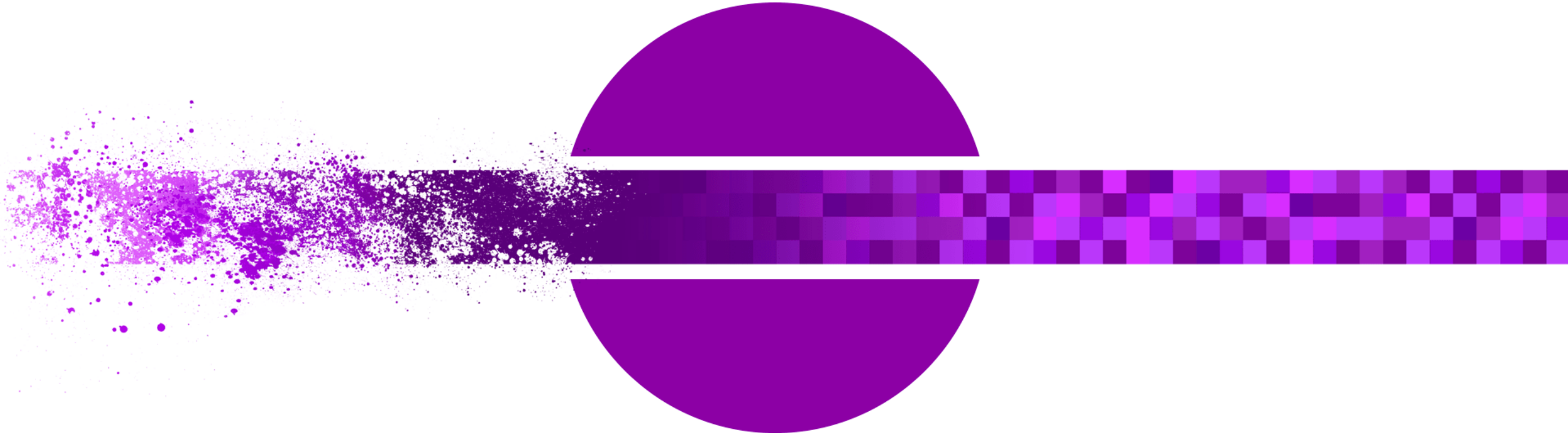


British Society for Phenomenology

Conference 2020 Online – Engaged Phenomenology

with the University of Exeter, co-sponsored by Egenis and

the Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health

Post-conference survey

Version: 29/11/2020 | 1.2

Overview

BRITISH SOCIETY FOR PHENOMENOLOGY ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020 ONLINE
with the University of Exeter, co-sponsored by Egenis and
the Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health

Online: BSP Events Platform
Keynotes: Live on Zoom with managed questions via Zoom chat
Speakers: Pre-recorded papers each with a chat forum for questions and discussions

Live 3 day timetabled event (dual parallel sessions) Thursday 3 – Saturday 5 September
with:
pre-event access from 30 August (build-up week videos)
post-event access open until 13 September (catch-up week)

Call for Papers: February - April 2020

Conference fee:

- **free to BSP members**
- **non-members charged BSP membership fee** (£40 | £20 student / unwaged / emeritus); included: 1 year subscription to the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* with 4 print issues a year, plus access to 50+ years of *JBSP* back issues online.

Speakers: from CfP to presentations

Number of abstracts submitted

102 Number of abstracts | **107** Number of speakers

Number of abstracts accepted (blind review)

67 Number of abstracts | **71** Number of speakers

Number of registrations

64 Number of abstracts | **68** Number of speakers

Number of presentations

58 Number of panel papers | **62** Number of speakers

Some presentations had two speakers

Attendees (speakers and delegates)

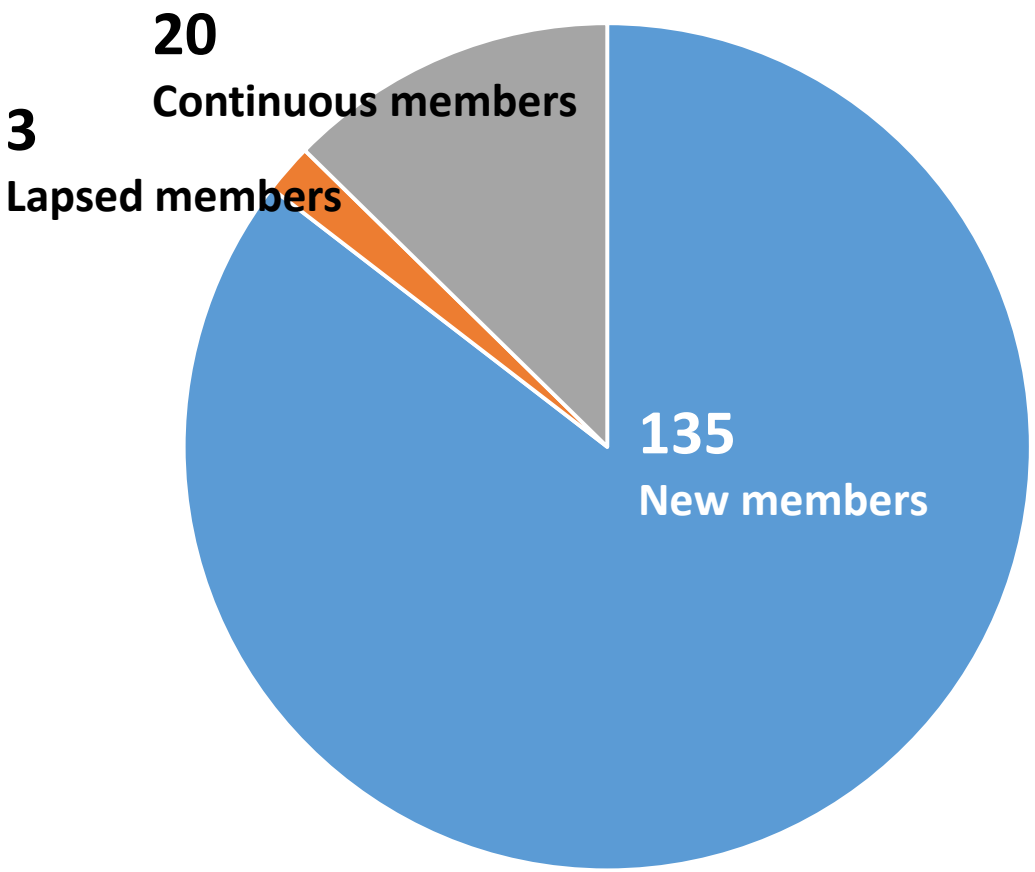
151 | **158**

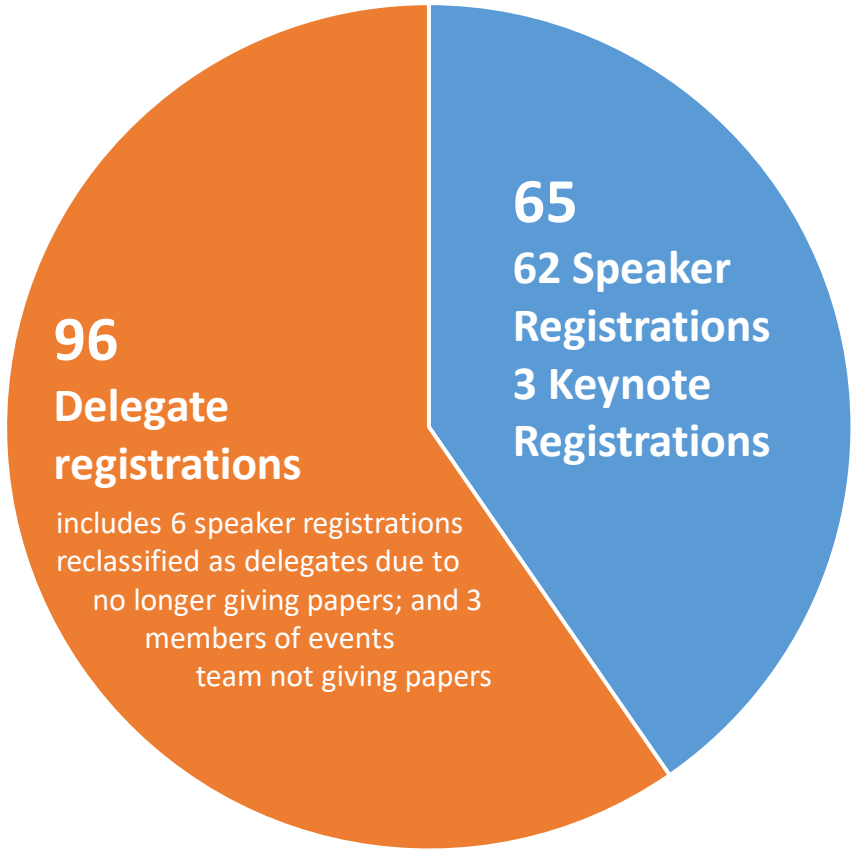
Actual attendees

Membership registrations (keynotes not included)

161

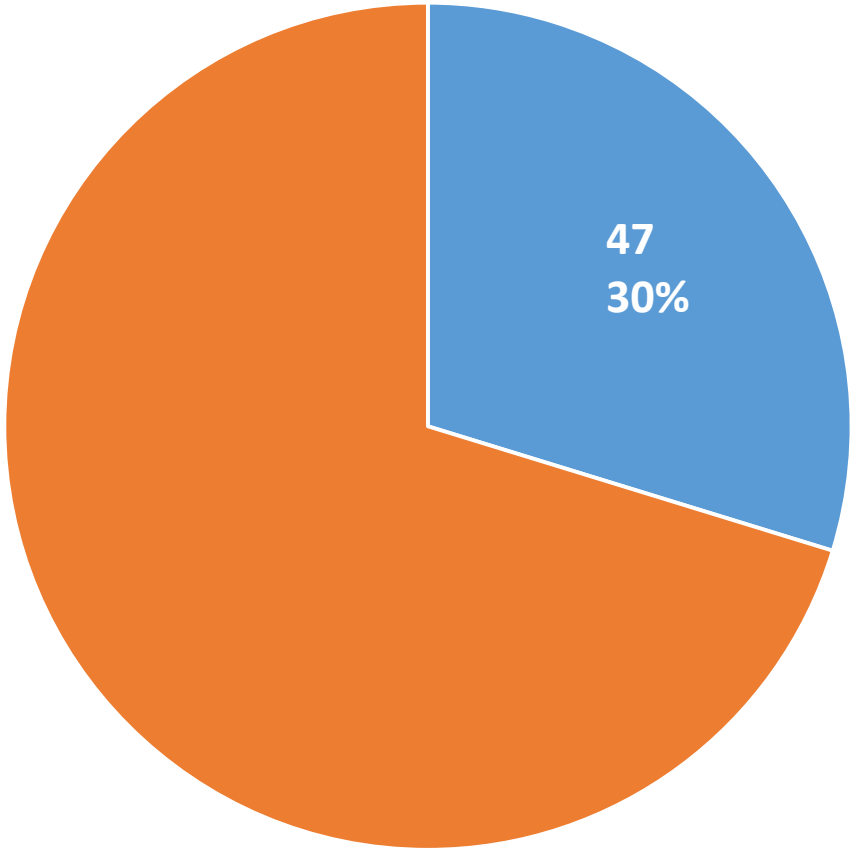
Total registrations





Feedback Survey Response

The survey was sent to the **158** conference registrants. This was everyone who was registered except the keynotes.



2018

The survey was sent to 38 conference panel speakers and delegates whose email addresses were on record (not including keynotes, keynote respondents, BSP ExCo or event committee).

Survey Responders	#
Total invited	38
Total responded	**17**
Responses %age	**45%**

2019

The survey was sent to 34 conference attendees whose email addresses were on record. These did not include keynotes.

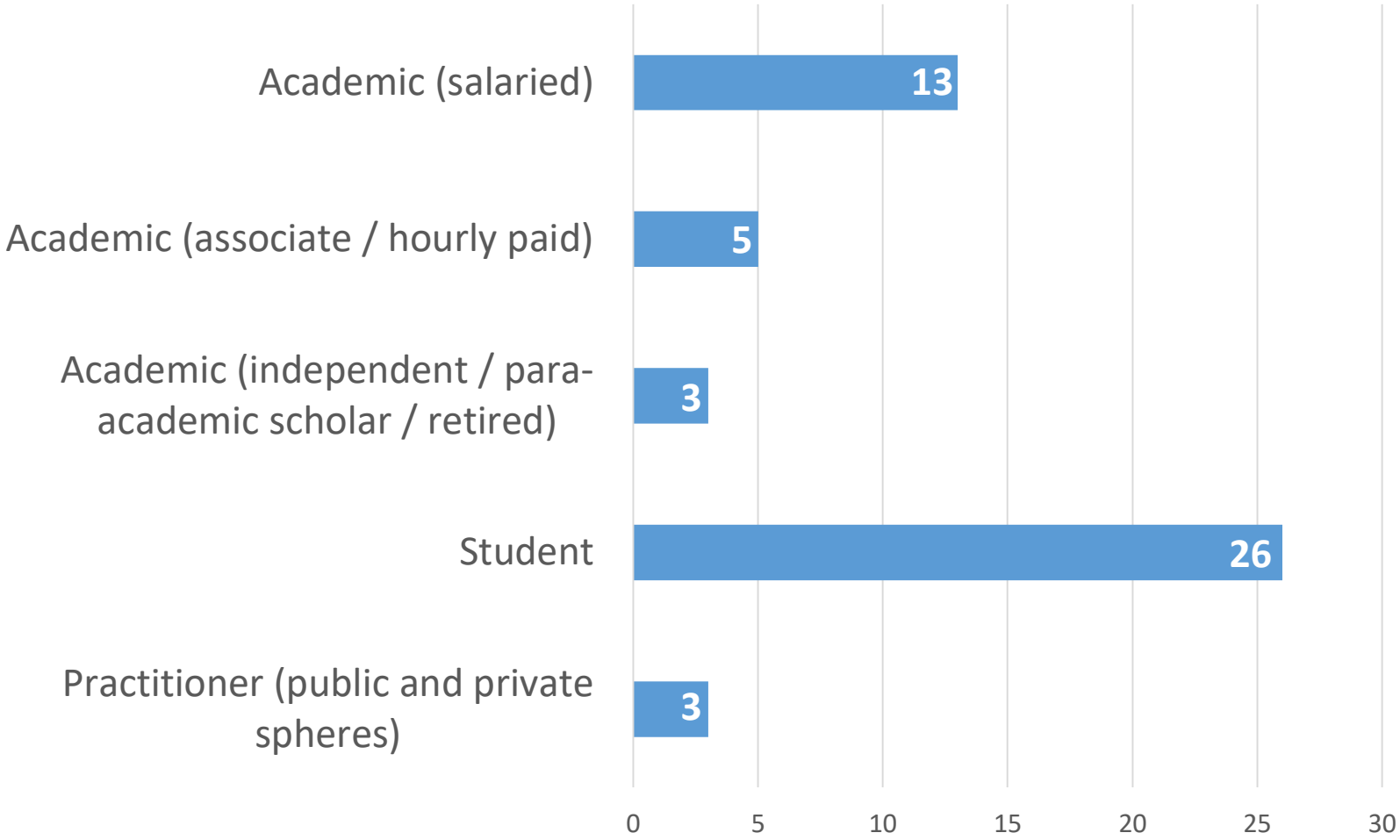
Survey Responders	#
Total invited	34
Total responded	**20**
Responses %age	**60%**

Comparison / Analysis

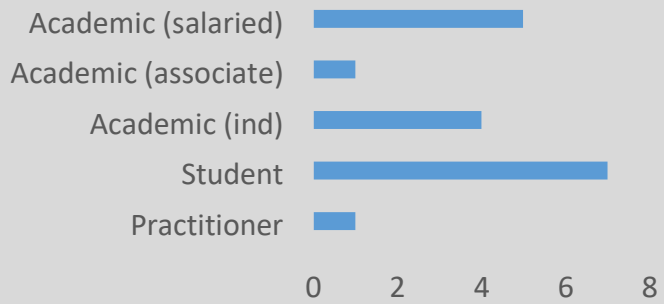
- Great response.
- While response percentage age down on both 2018 and 2019; actual number of responses up significantly on both previous surveys.

Roles

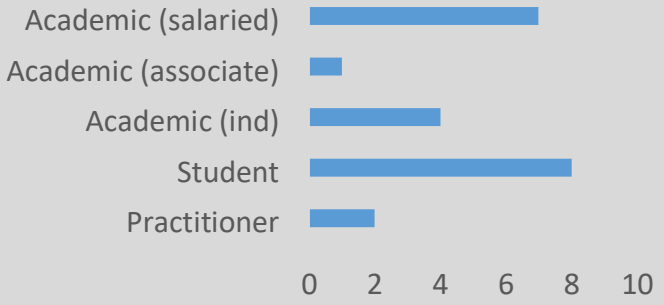
More than one option could be selected



2018



2019

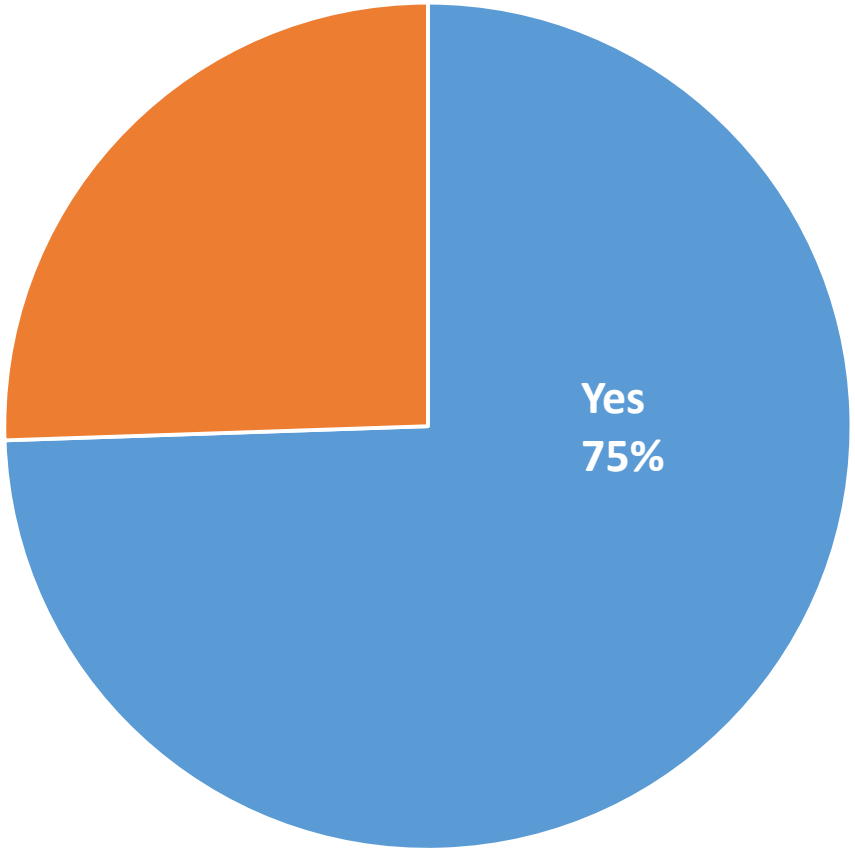


Comparison / Analysis

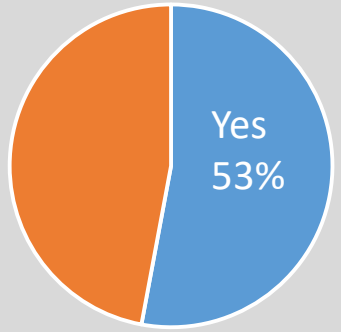
- A good spread of different roles, pretty similar to both previous years except for less independent scholars.
- Poorly represented by practitioner responses, as per previous years, despite more attending than ever.

BSP Conference attendance

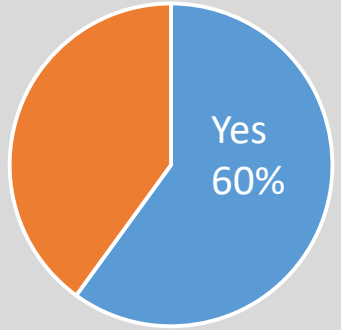
Was this your first time at a BSP conference?



2018



2019

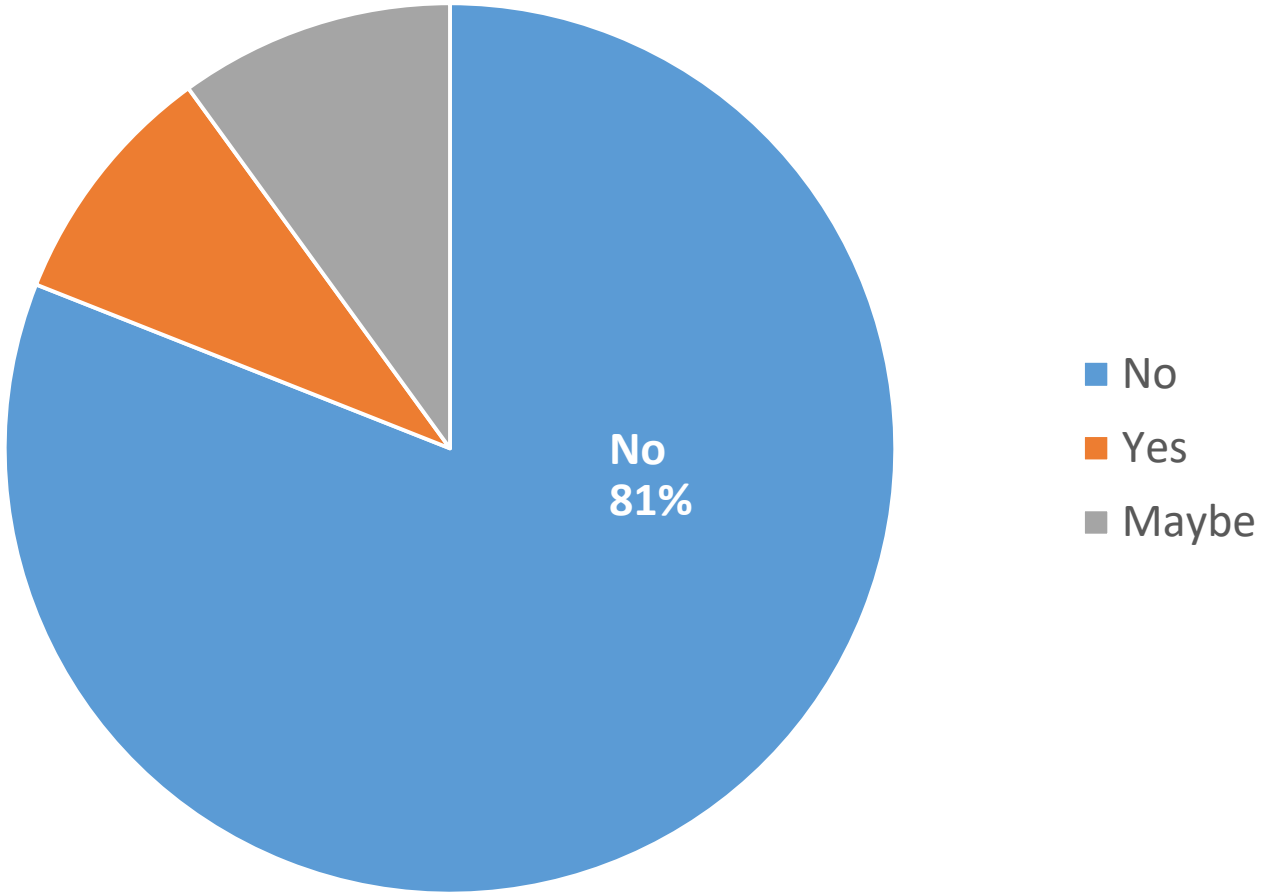


Comparison / Analysis

- Significant increase in new people attending the conference and joining the society.
- This continues and builds upon trend of recent years, welcoming new people into the BSP.

BSP Conference attendance

Was the cancellation of other conferences due to the pandemic a factor in your decision to attend?



2018 / 2019

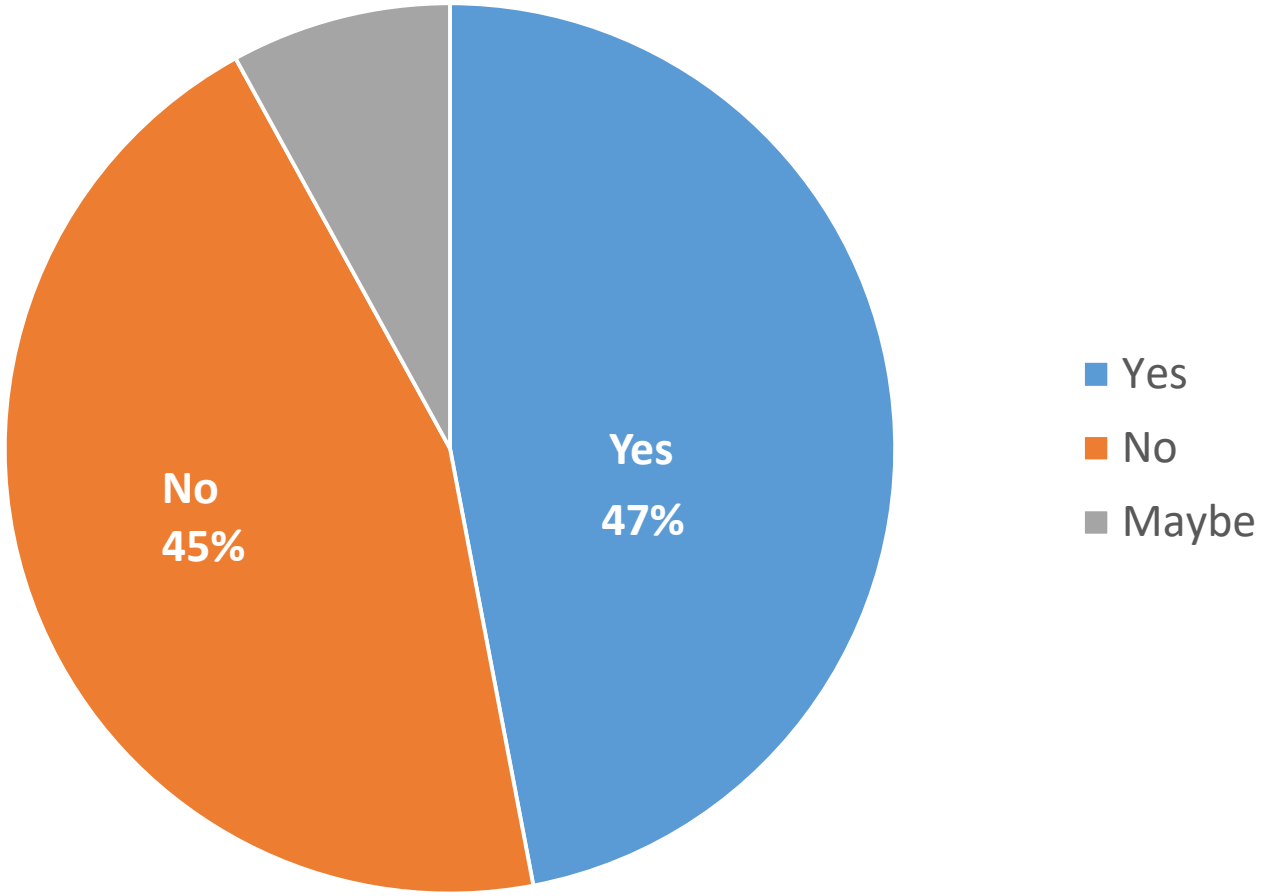
No previous year data as pandemic only emerged early in 2020.

Analysis

- This shows that over 80% of people attended the conference for positive reasons rather than for negative reasons.
- Reflects strength of theme, CfP, keynotes, and comms.

BSP Conference attendance

Were the keynotes a factor in your decision to attend?



2018 / 2019

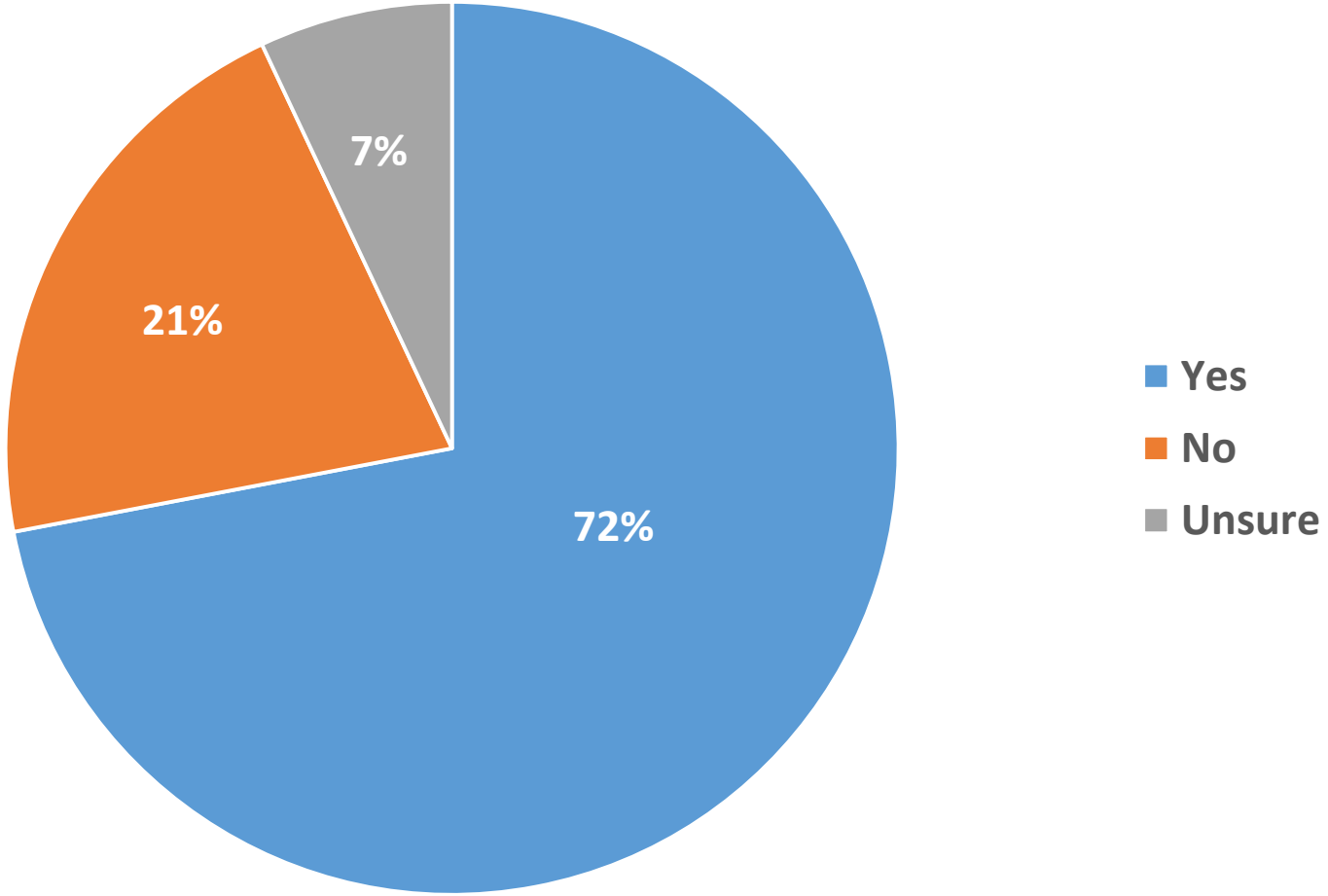
No previous year data as we have not asked this question before

Analysis

- Illustrates the importance of keynote selection.
- Equally, shows factors other than keynotes attract attendees, such as theme, the society, cost, the speakers papers, topics etc.

Registration: no fee except membership

Since the conference took place online this year, membership was the only requirement for registering for the conference and there was no additional participation fee. Did this make you more likely to register for the conference?



2018 / 2019

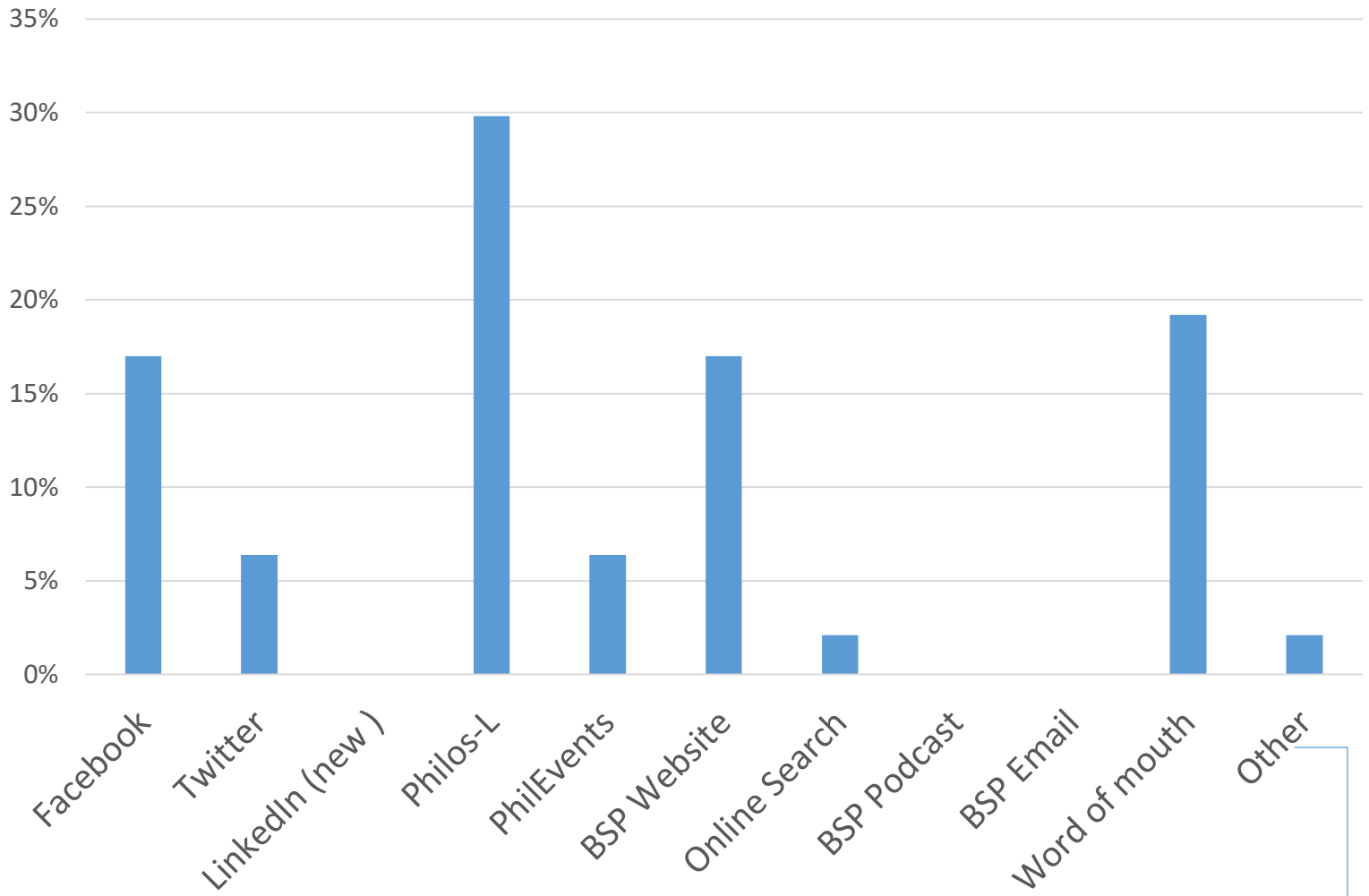
In previous years for face-to-face events there has been a registration fee as well as membership requirement. For 2018 / 2019 this was £80 early bird, with prices increasing as the conference approaches.

Analysis

- The free to members / small fee to become members for non-members was a significant aspect of the success of this online event, maybe the most important factor.

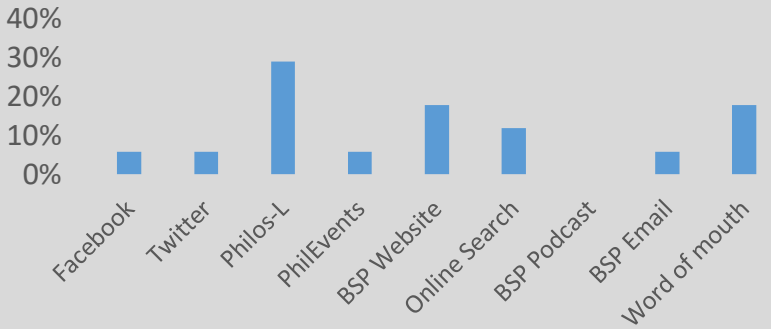
Awareness

How did you first find out about the conference?

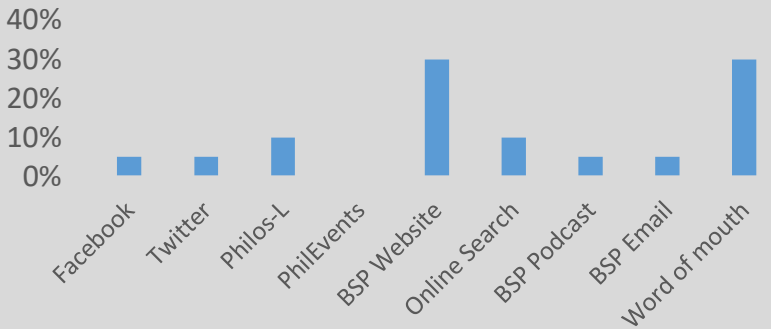


Newsletter of Phenomenology

2018



2019

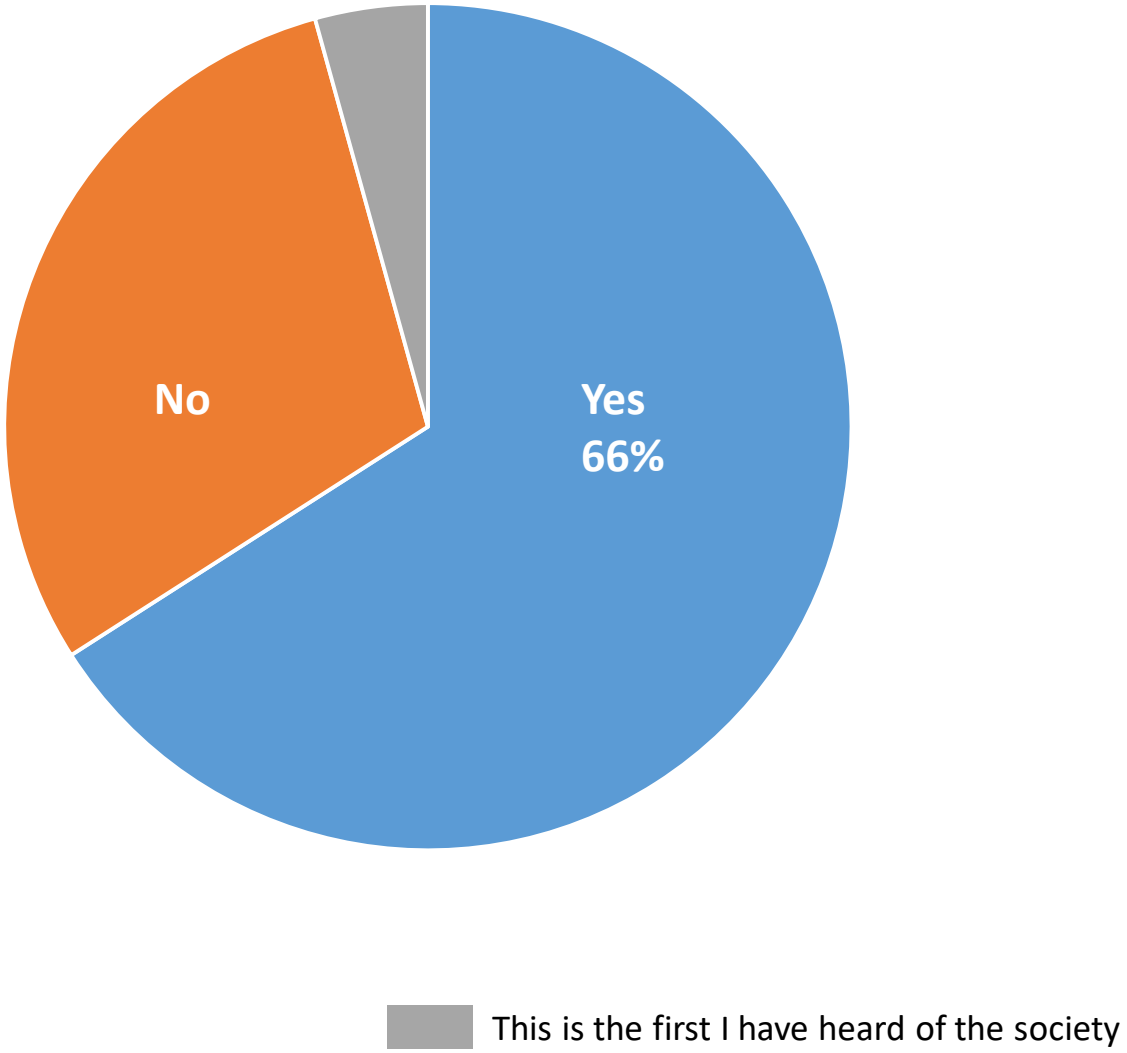


Comparison / Analysis

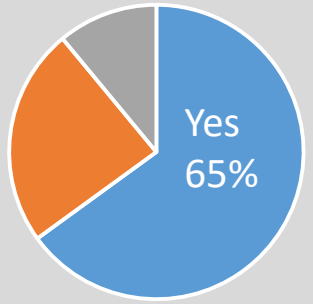
- Social media uptake spiked this year, proves comms activities paid off
- We did more Philos-L due to 2019 results, this shows it is effective
- Word of mouth remains solid
- Clear comms on pandemic may factor

Awareness: Society

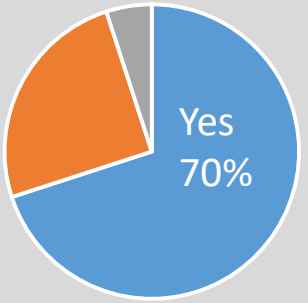
Had you heard of the society before finding out about the conference?



2018



2019

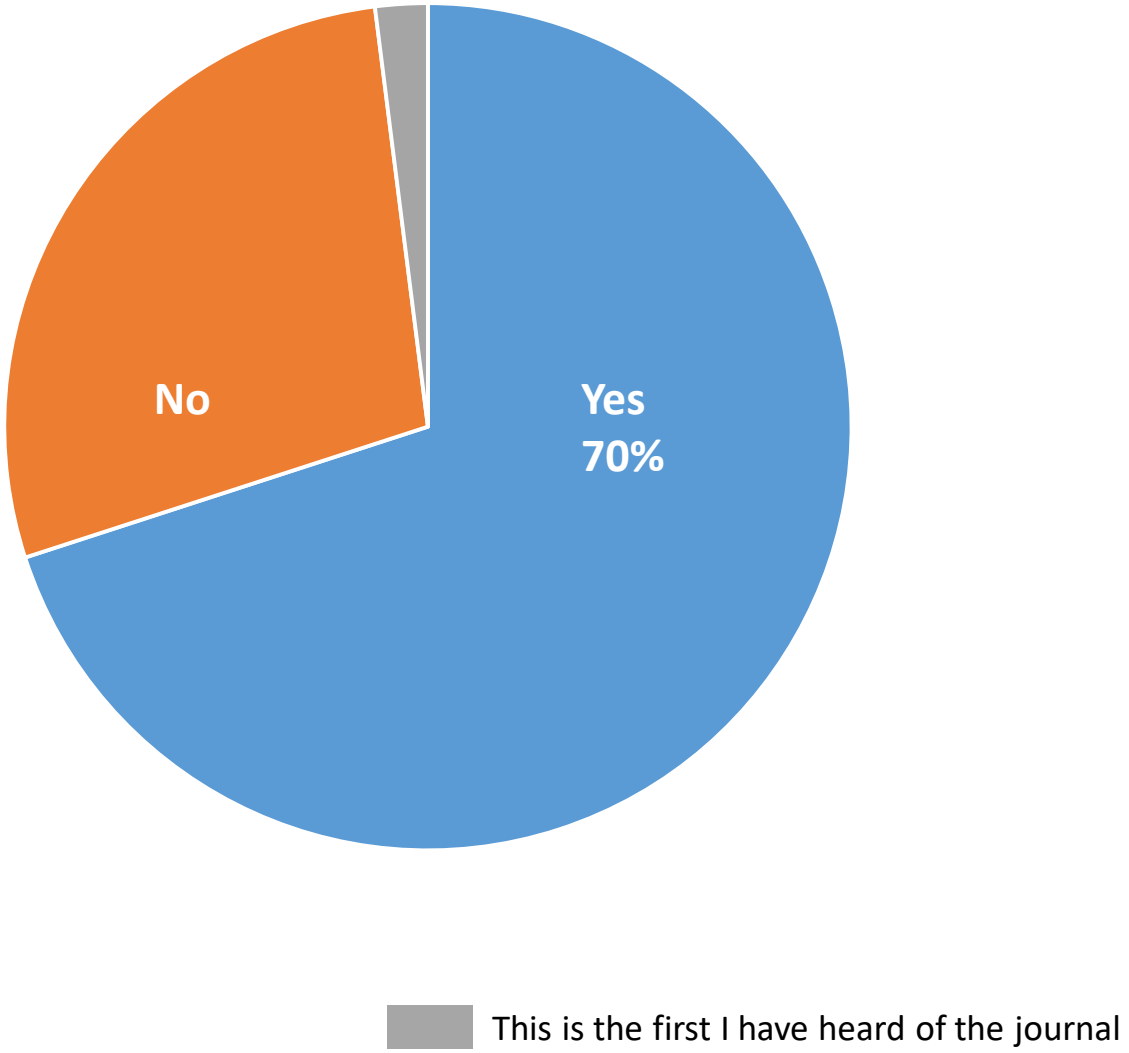


Comparison / Analysis

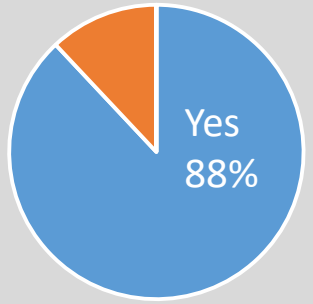
- Pretty much similar to previous years
- Having a high ‘Yes’ score shows visibility of the society; a decent ‘No’ score shows we are continually improving our reach

Awareness: Journal

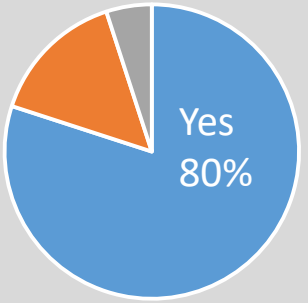
Had you heard of the journal before finding out about this conference?



2018



2019

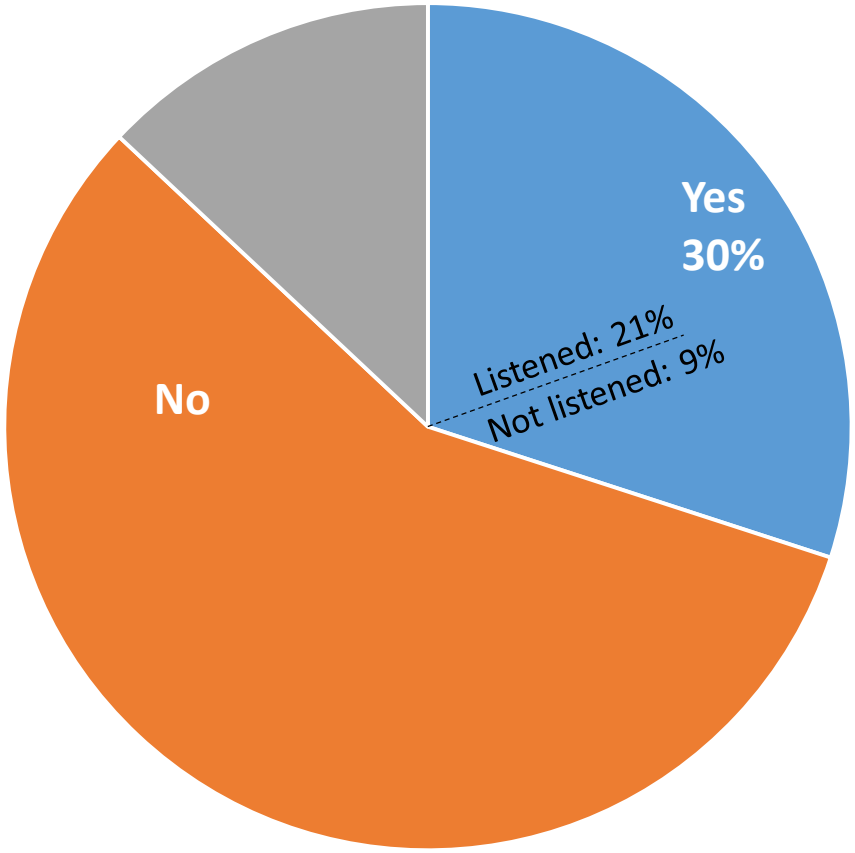


Comparison / Analysis

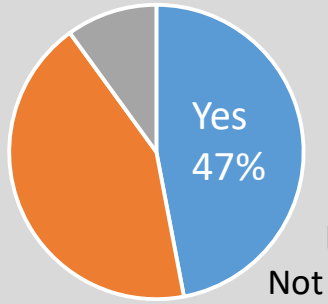
- A high ‘Yes’ score shows visibility; a decent ‘No’ score shows improving reach
- Decrease from previous years shows JBSP improving reach
- JBSP & BSP now approx. same

Awareness: Podcast

Had you heard of the podcast before finding out about this conference?

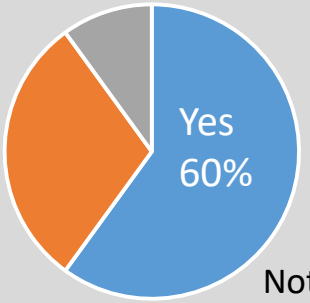


2018



Listened: 35%
Not listened: 12%

2019

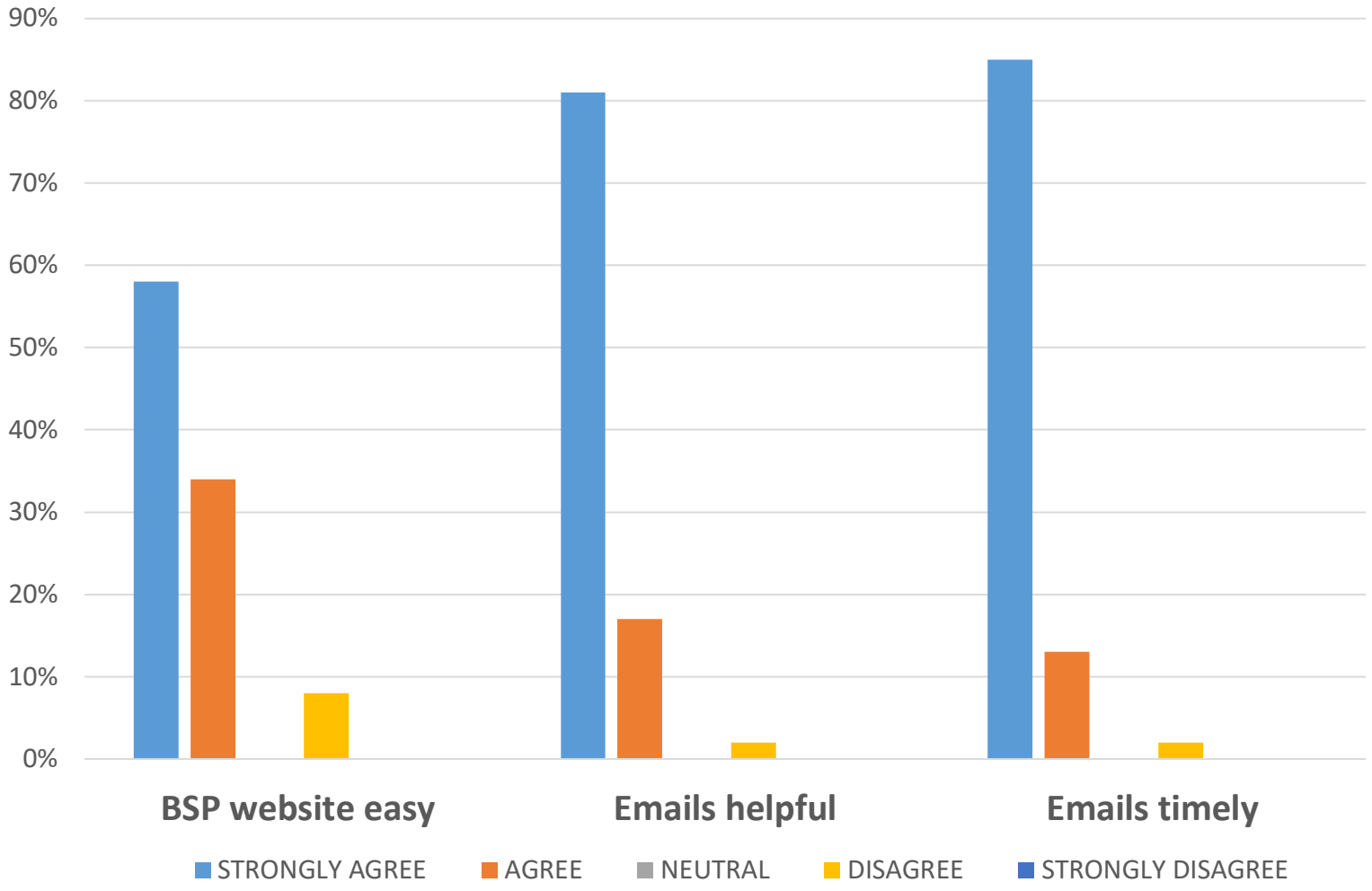


Listened: 30%
Not listened: 30%

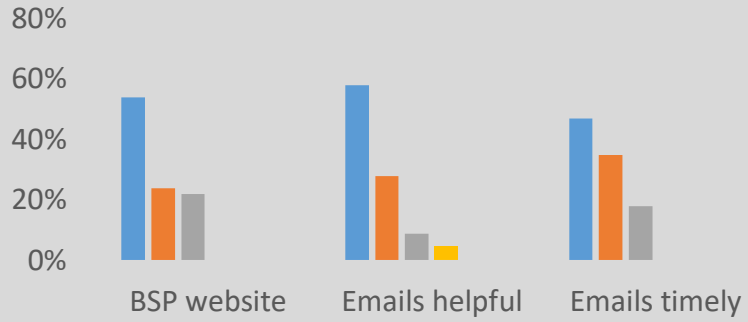
Comparison / Analysis

- The podcast is still a relatively new endeavour, but we have significantly decreased this year.
- On the positive side, we are now promoting podcast to more people; however, work needed to improve profile

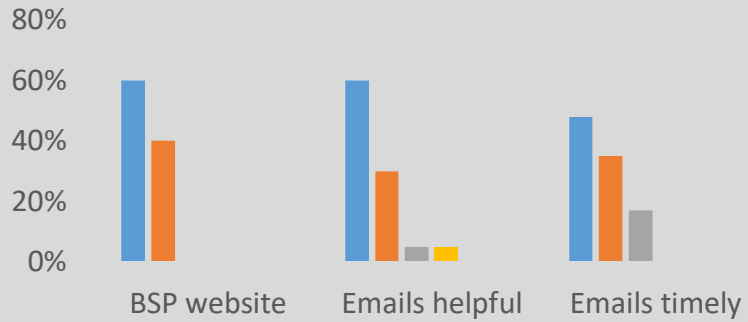
Communications



2018



2019

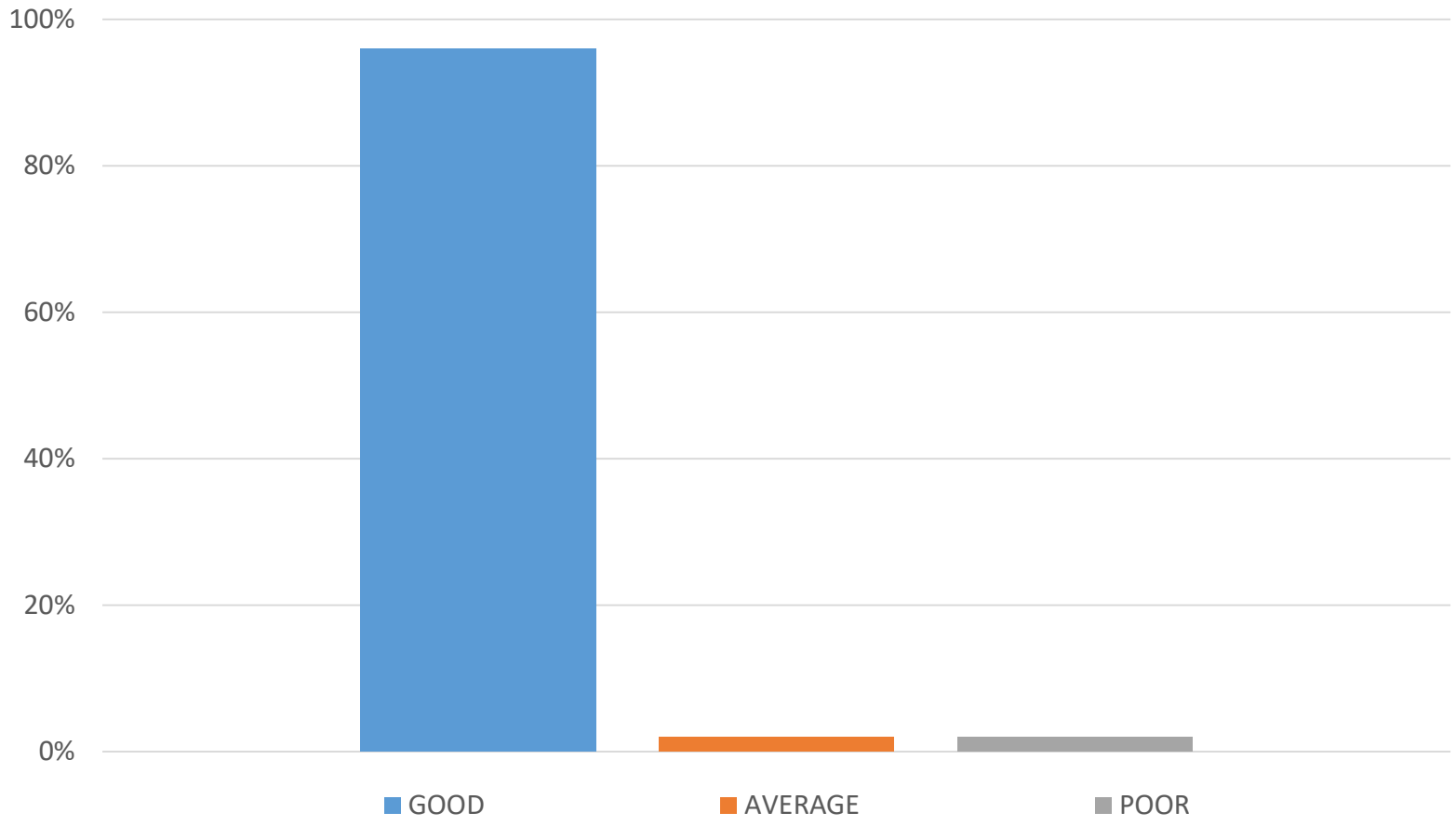


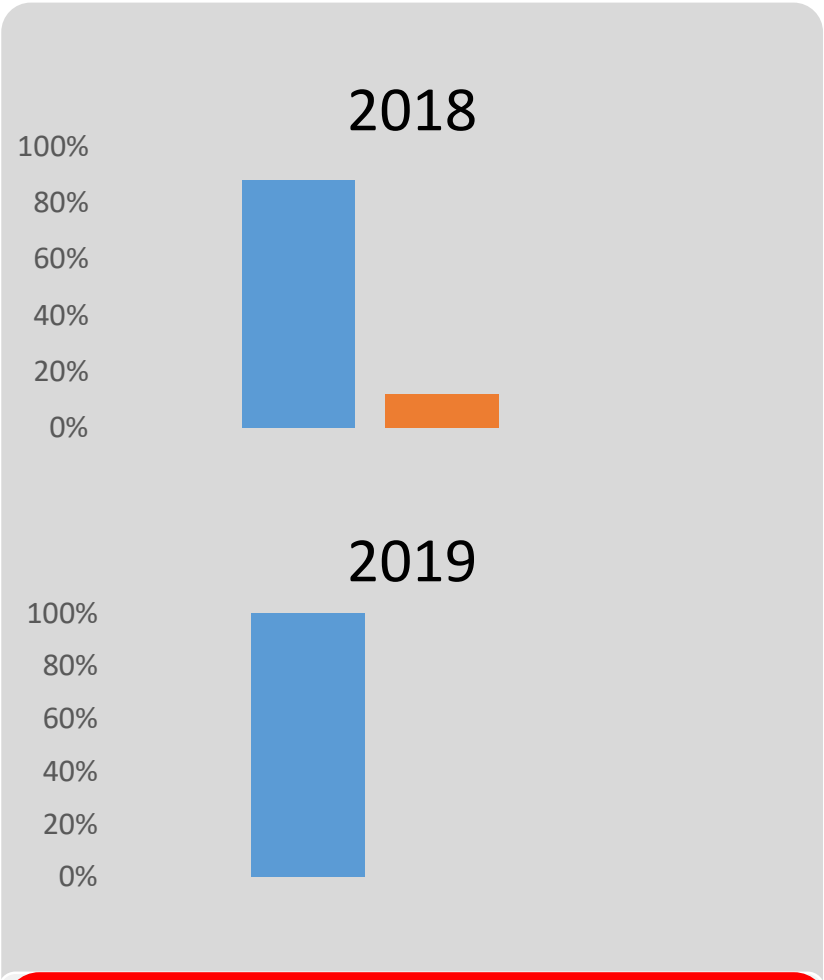
Comparison / Analysis

- Previous years have been good, this year is no exception and trend is of continuous improvement on these specific activities.
- The way we show info on websites is an area that needs focus.

Communications

Overall, I would rate the conference communications as:



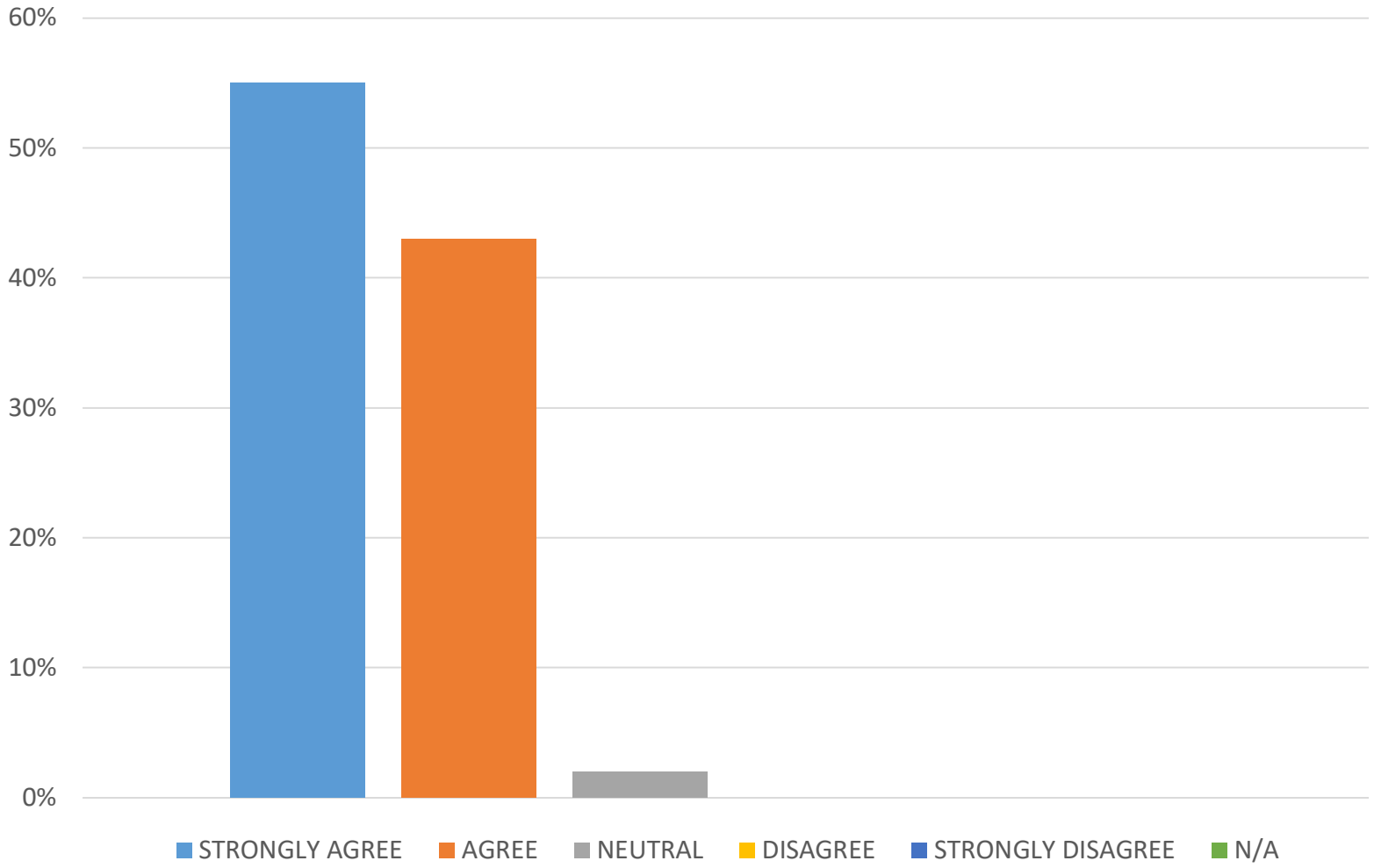


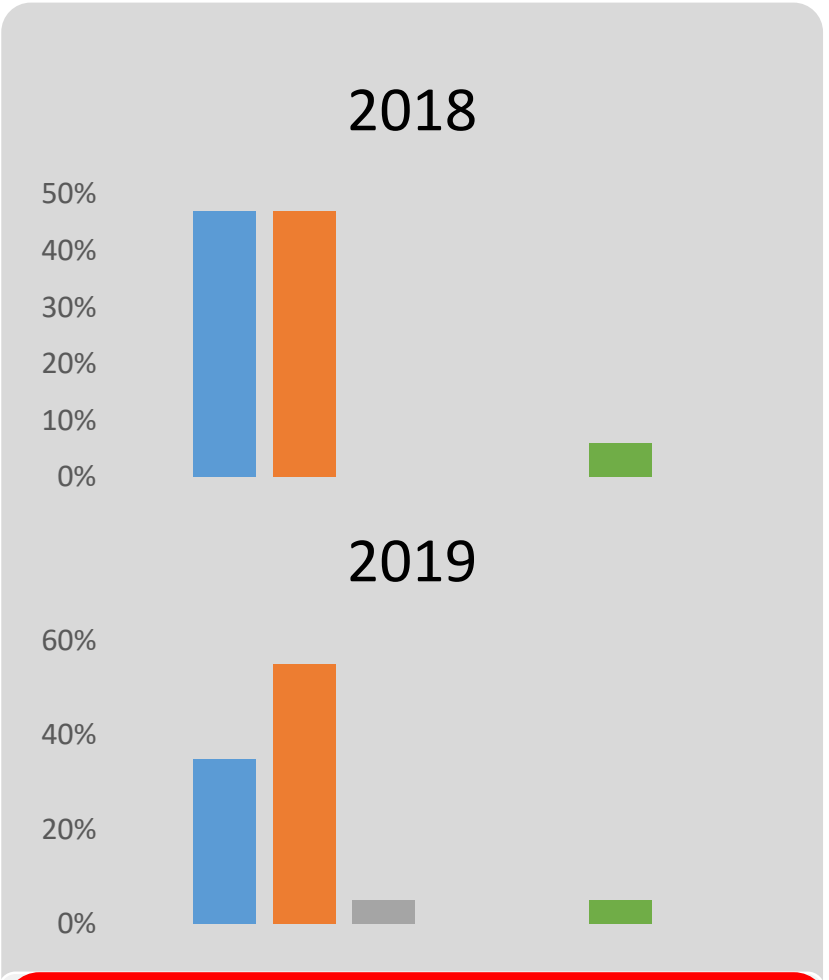
Comparison / Analysis

- While still excellent, later quantitative results and qualitative verbatims shows areas where we have slipped and improvement is needed. This is not so much clarity in emails, but quantity, and also too much info on websites

Registration System

The conference registration system was easy to use



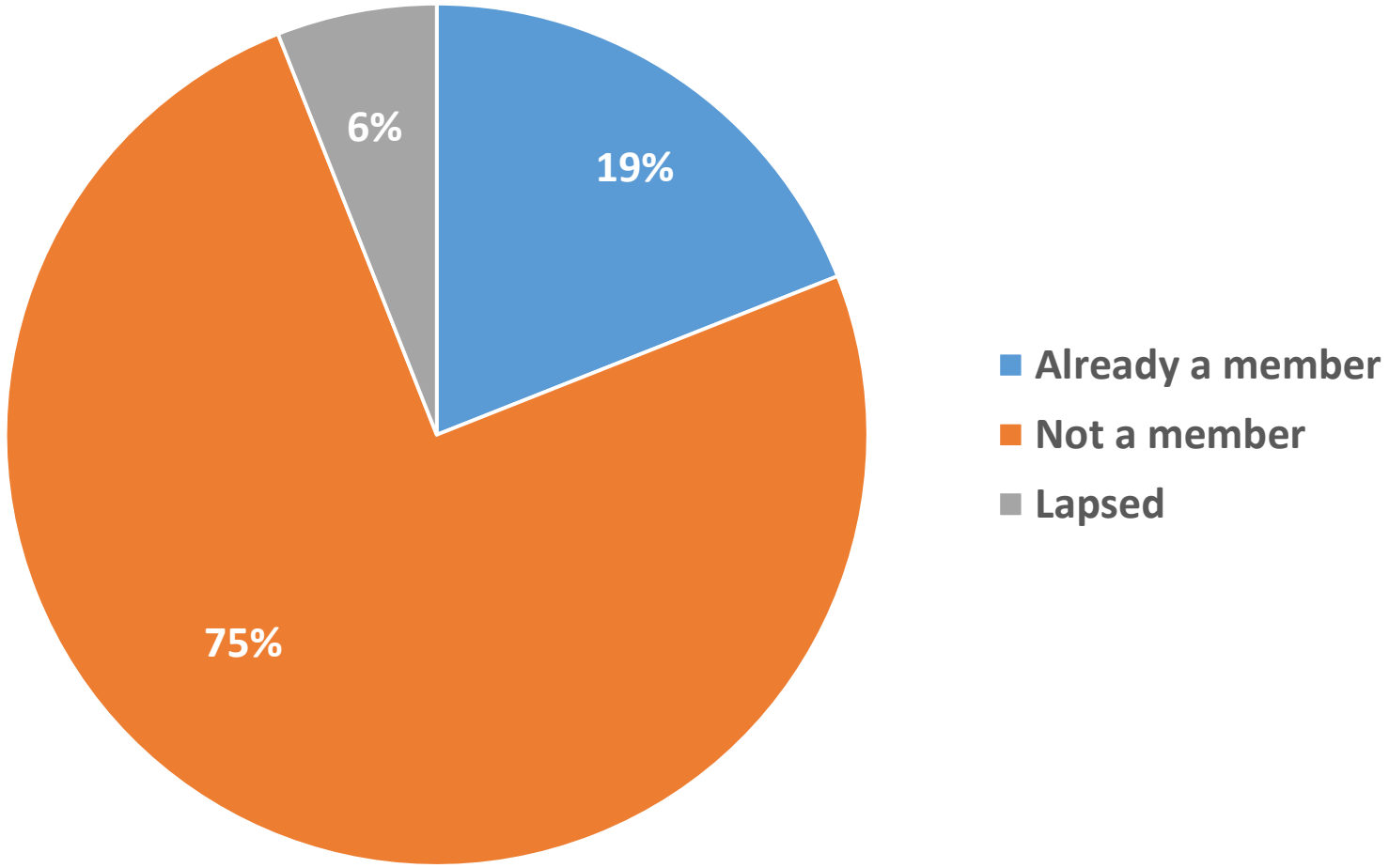


Comparison / Analysis

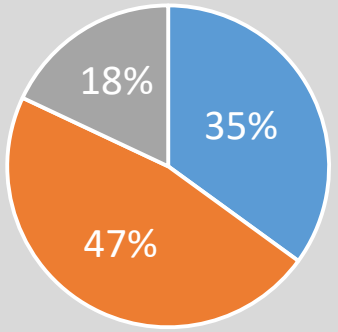
- Registration systems are notoriously difficult for users to negotiate, but given we have zero in the ‘disagree’ area indicates we are doing very well
- System hasn’t changed, so improvement more likely due to comms.

Registration: membership

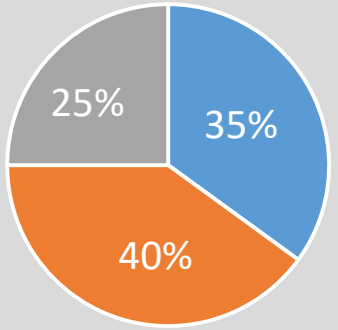
To attend the conference, you needed to be a member of the BSP. Please tell us…



2018



2019

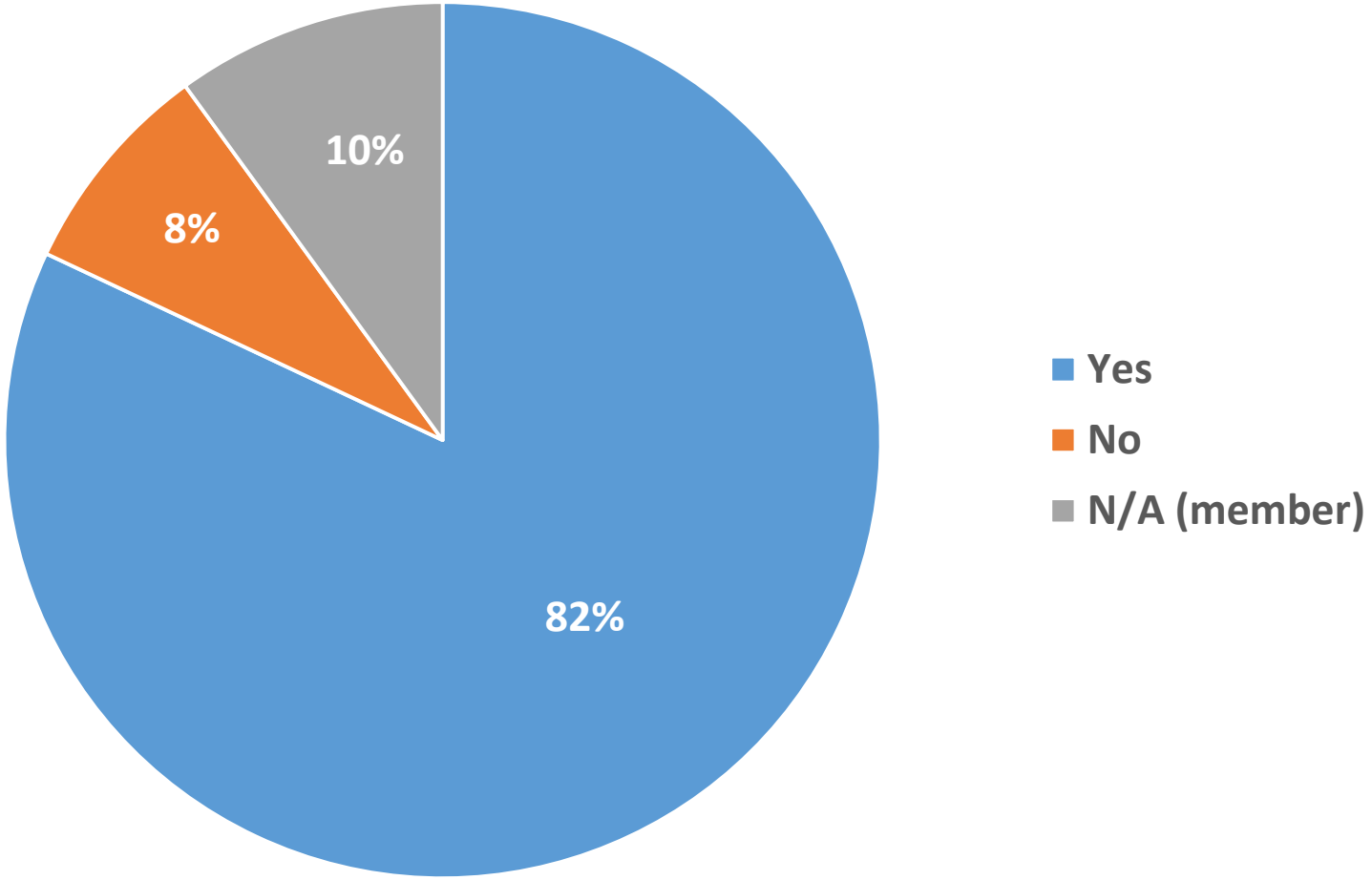


Comparison / Analysis

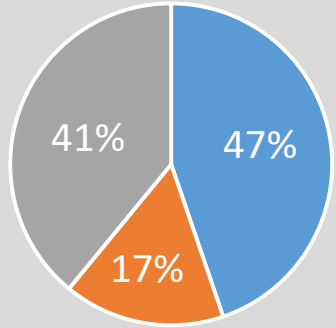
- This year's conference was extremely successful in attracting new people to the BSP, a factor of low cost, theme, keynotes.

Registration: requirement

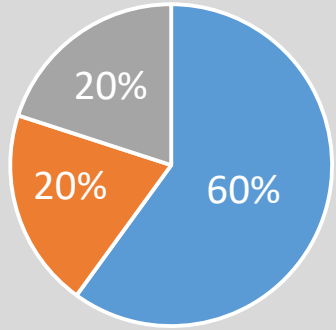
If you weren't a member before registering for the conference, was the site clear as to why this was required?



2018



2019

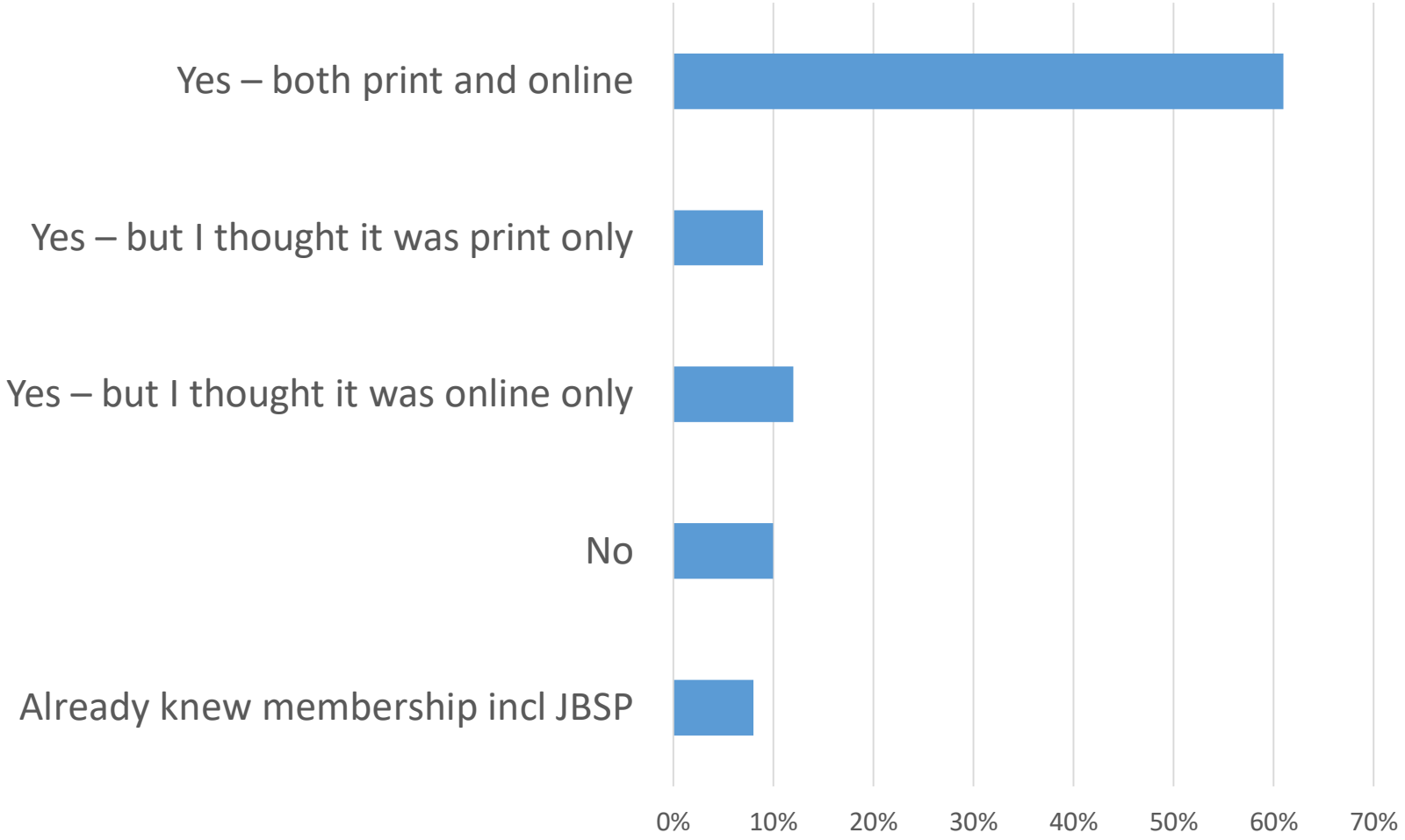


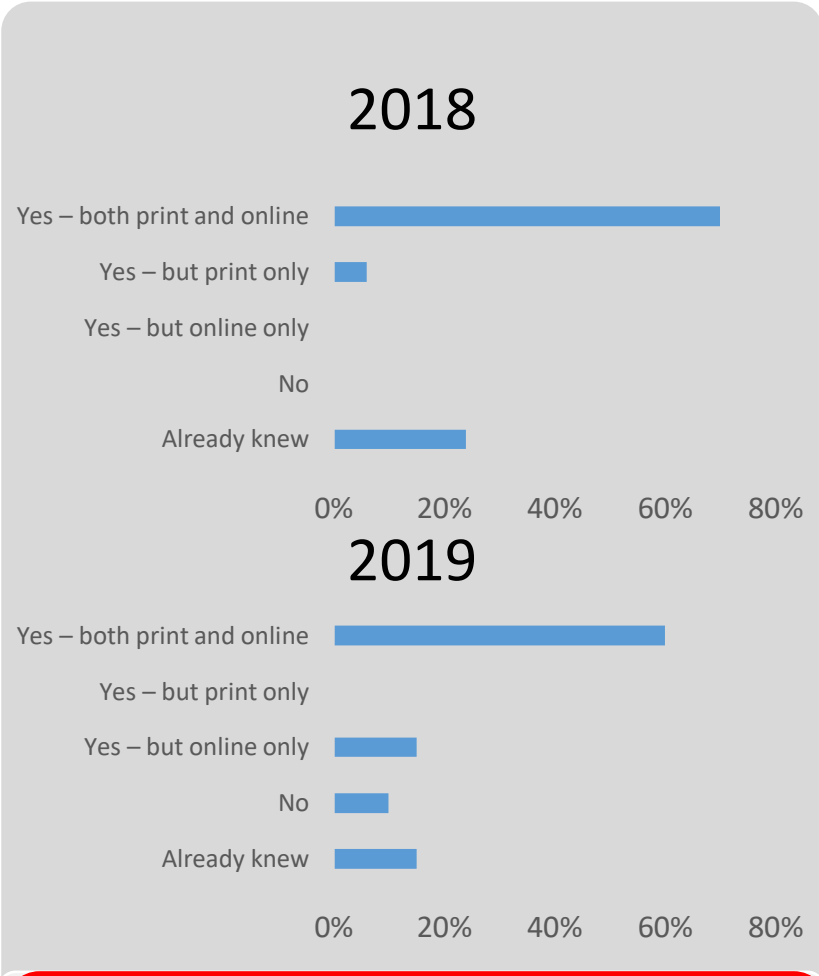
Comparison / Analysis

- Comms on membership much improved this year, however, may simply be a factor of this not being embedded in information about face-to-face conference fees. In other words, a much simpler fee offering overall.

Registration: journal subscription

It was clear to me during the registration process that membership included a year's subscription to the journal (both printed and electronic)

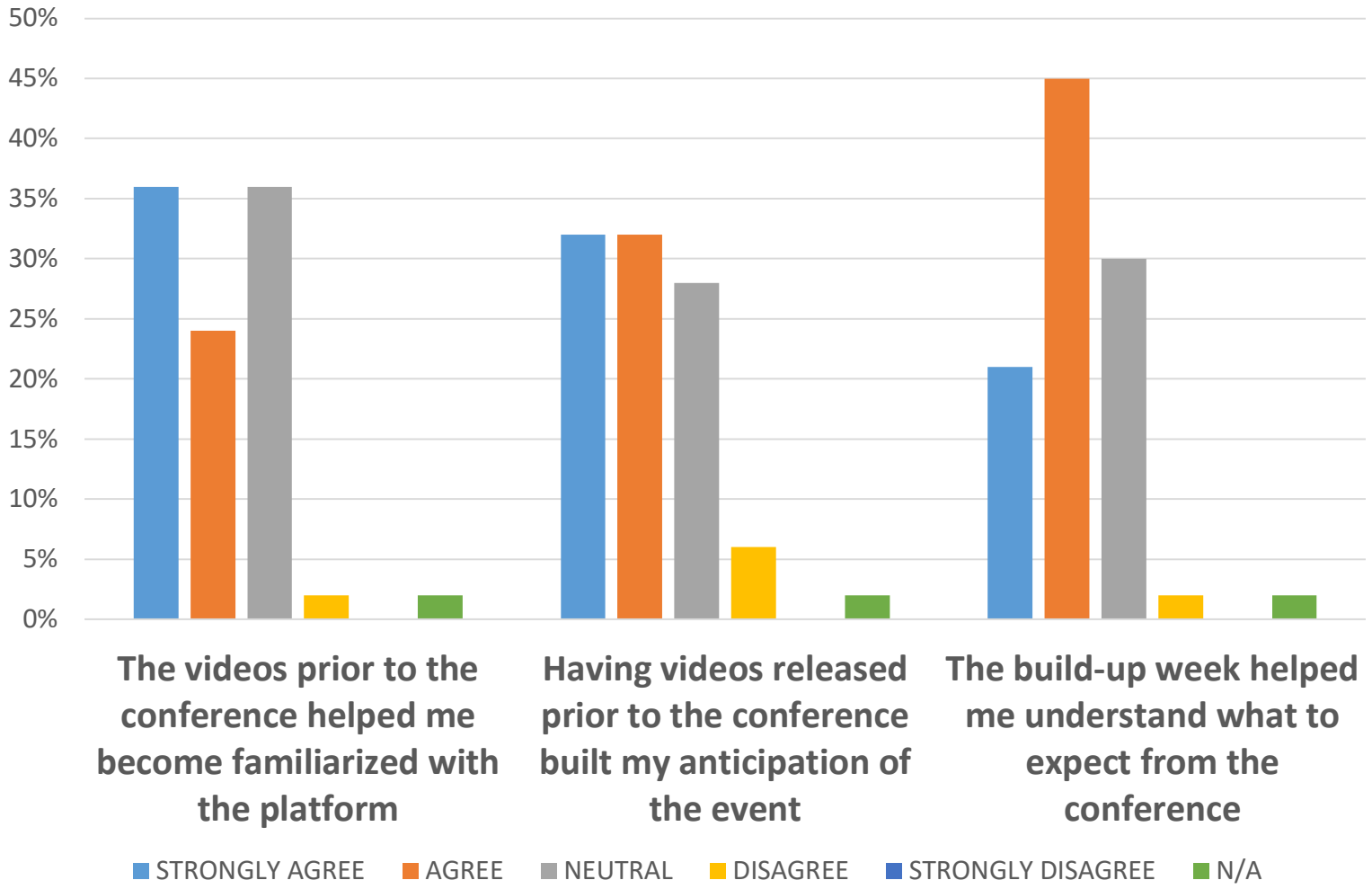




Comparison / Analysis

- No significant change over the three years, it remains an issue that we are unable to make it really clear exactly what membership includes. More focus on this for next year.

Attendee online experience: build-up videos



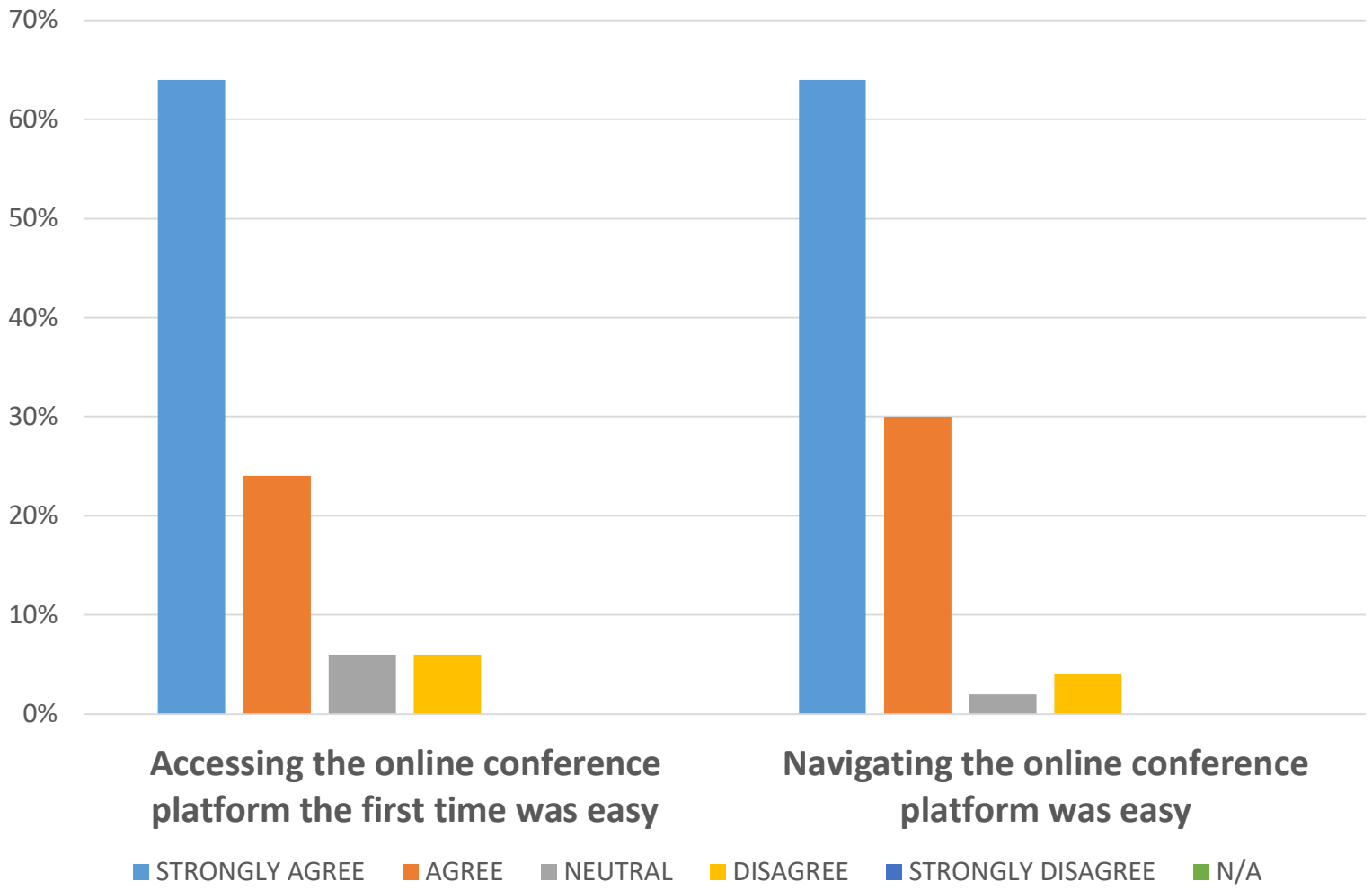
2018 / 2019

This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year data is not available

Analysis

- Build up videos prove useful in all facets, however, much room for improvement. It may be we need more on ‘format’ of conference and ‘on the platform’, plus more scholarly content than reflective content.

Attendee online experience: the platform



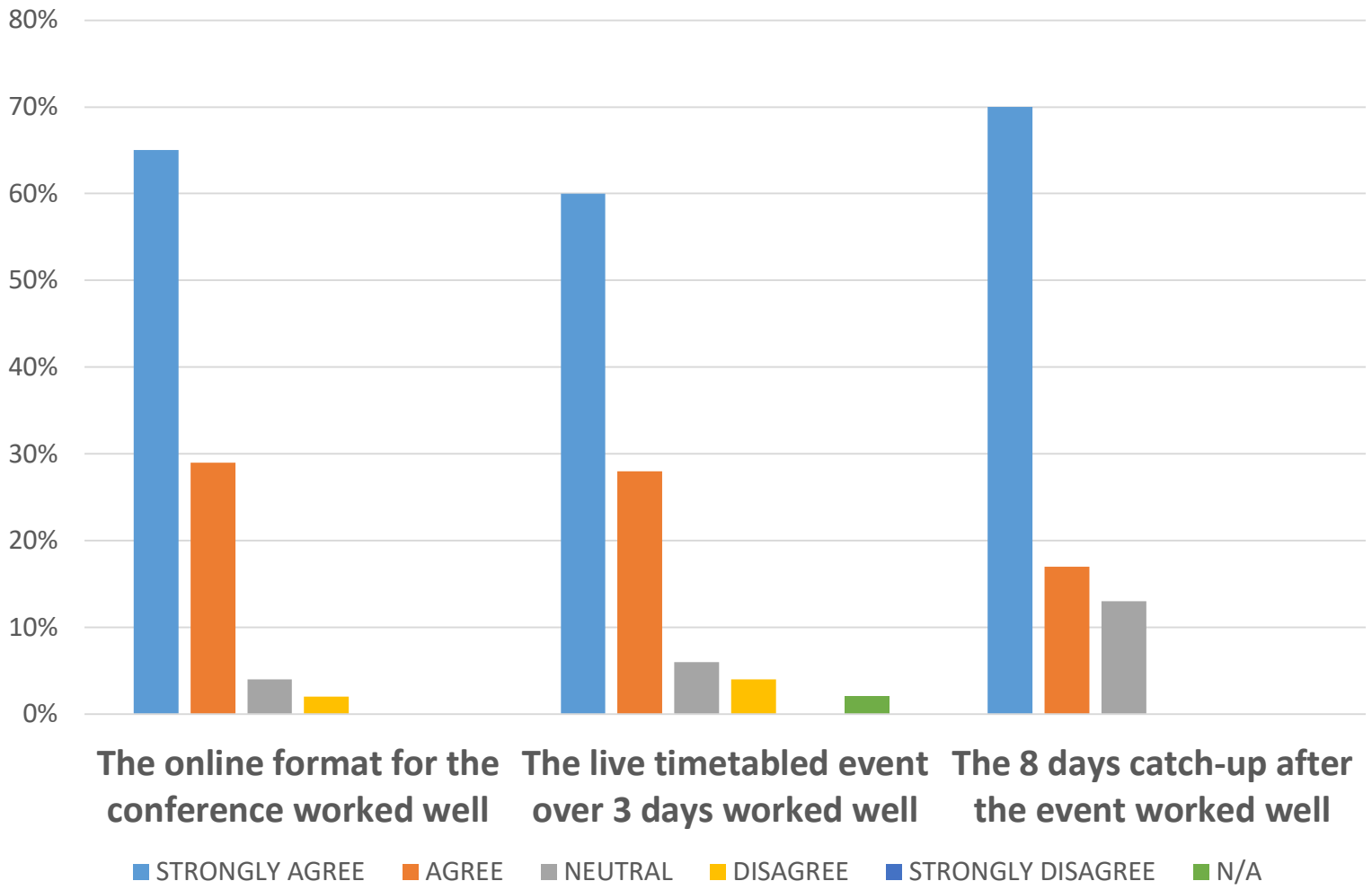
2018 / 2019

This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year data is not available

Analysis

- Exceptionally good results for our first attempt, with a significant tendency to ‘strongly agree’. However, room for improvement. Method of joining platform could be improved, and procedural video on navigation needed.

Attendee online experience: the format



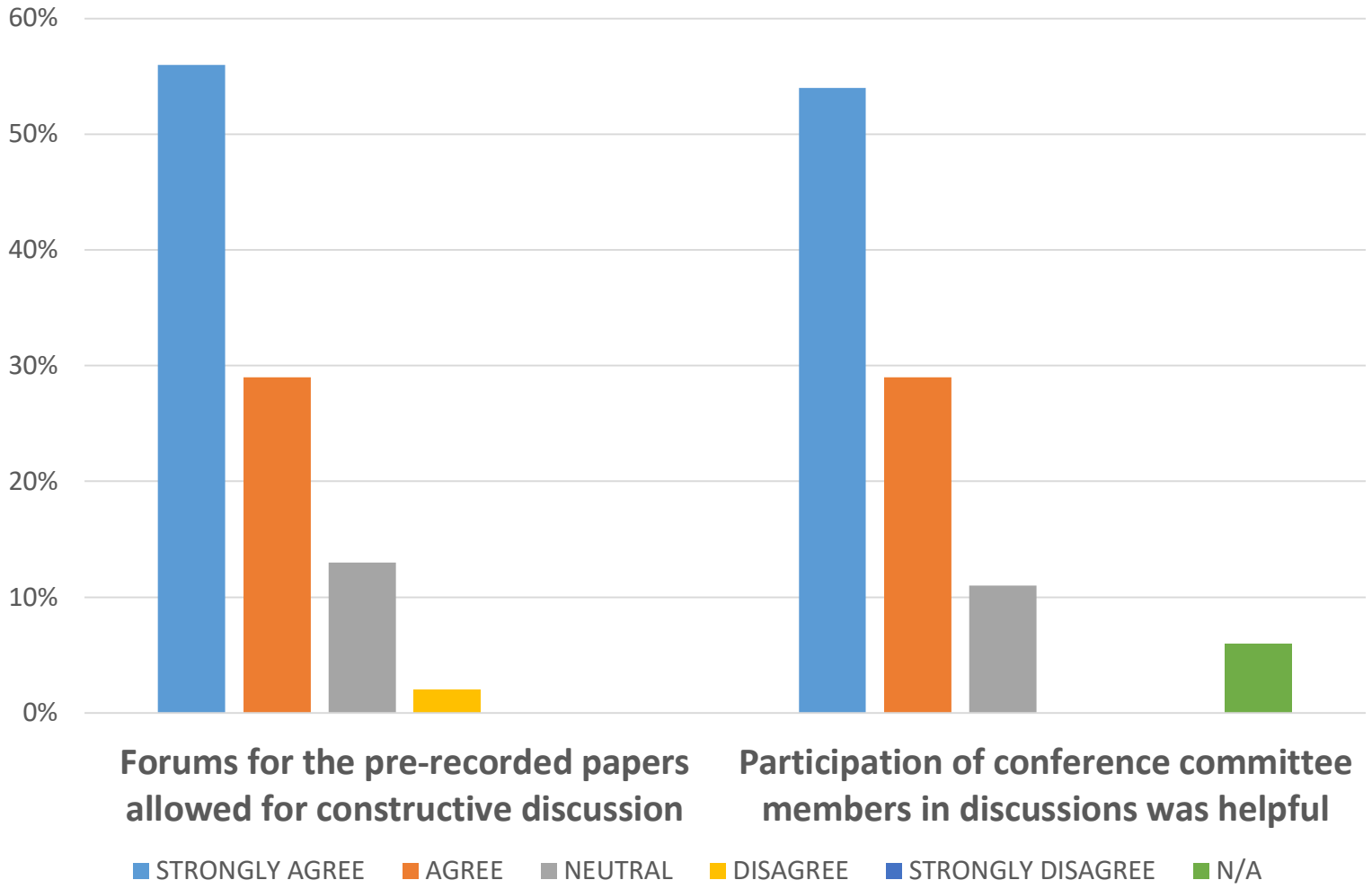
2018 / 2019

This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year data is not available

Analysis

- Again, exceptionally good results for the online format in general, plus keeping the live event feel, but allowing catch-up access for deeper dives/rewatching, and watching missed content.

Attendee online experience: chat forum



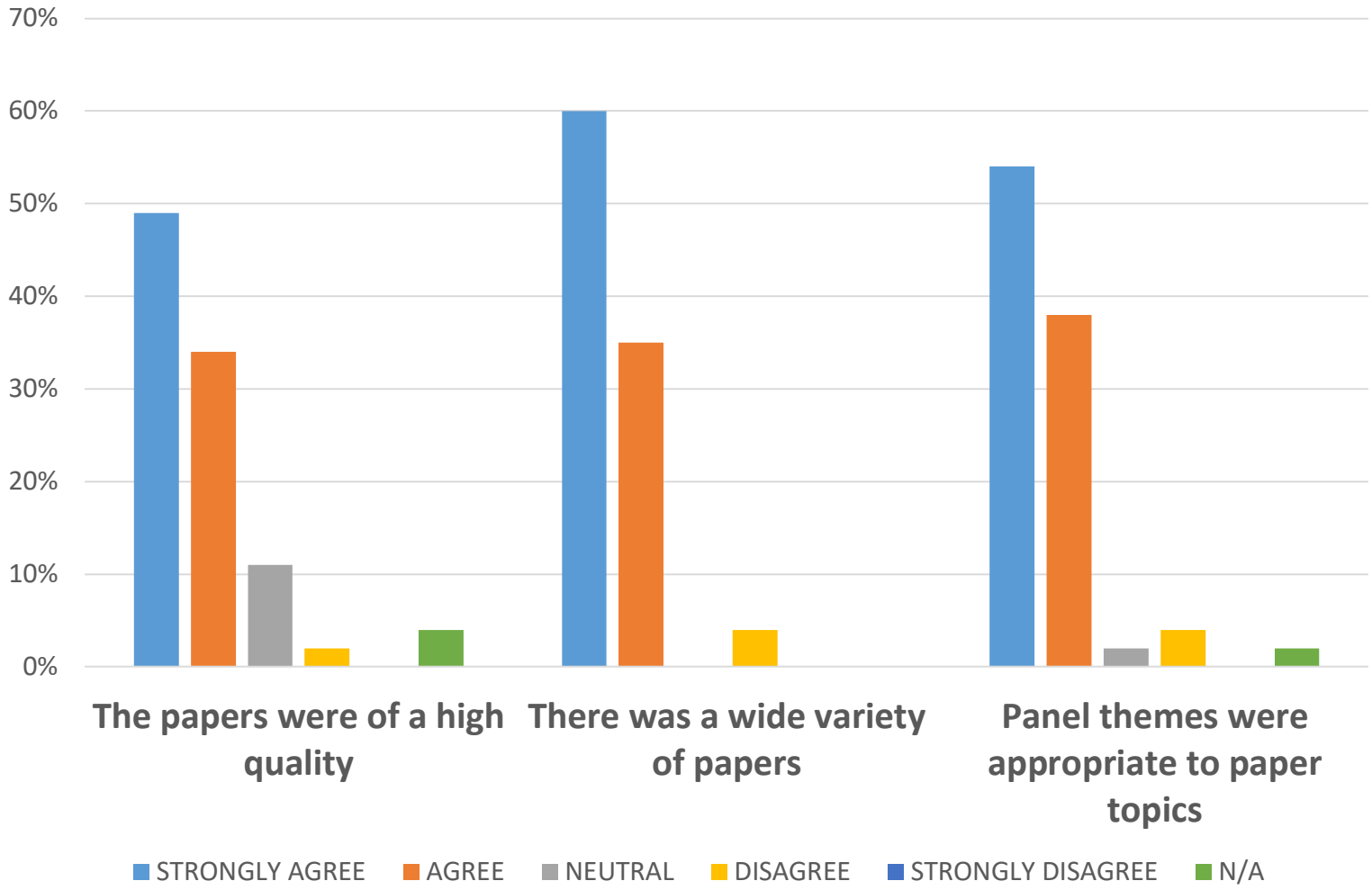
2018 / 2019

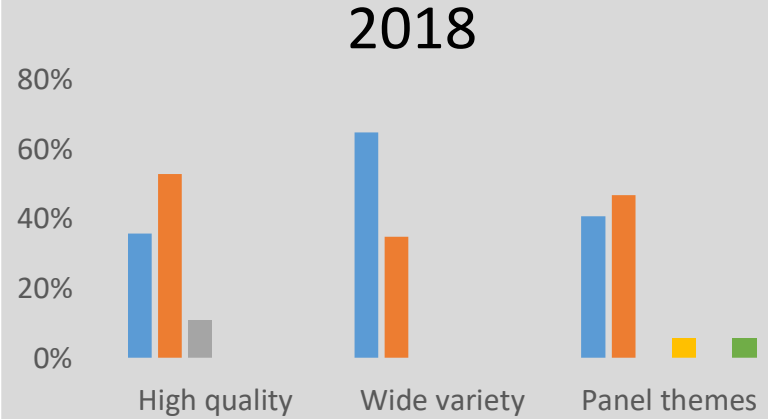
This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year data is not available

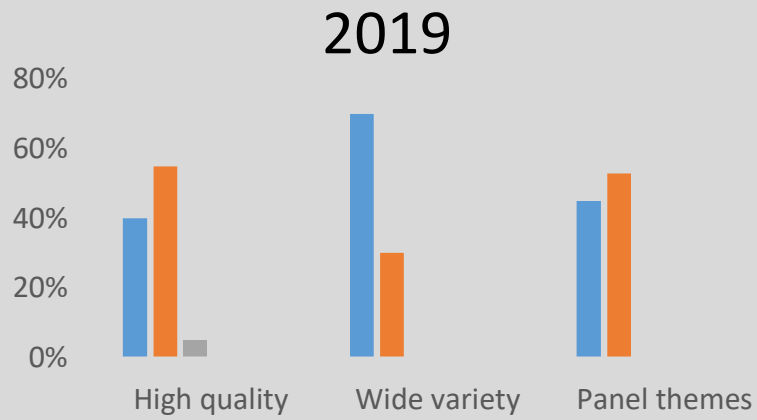
Analysis

- The score for the forum has exceeded our expectations. However, much room for improvement and we need to push improvements here
- Excellent that the conference committee was noticed in active contributions

Attendee experience: papers and panels



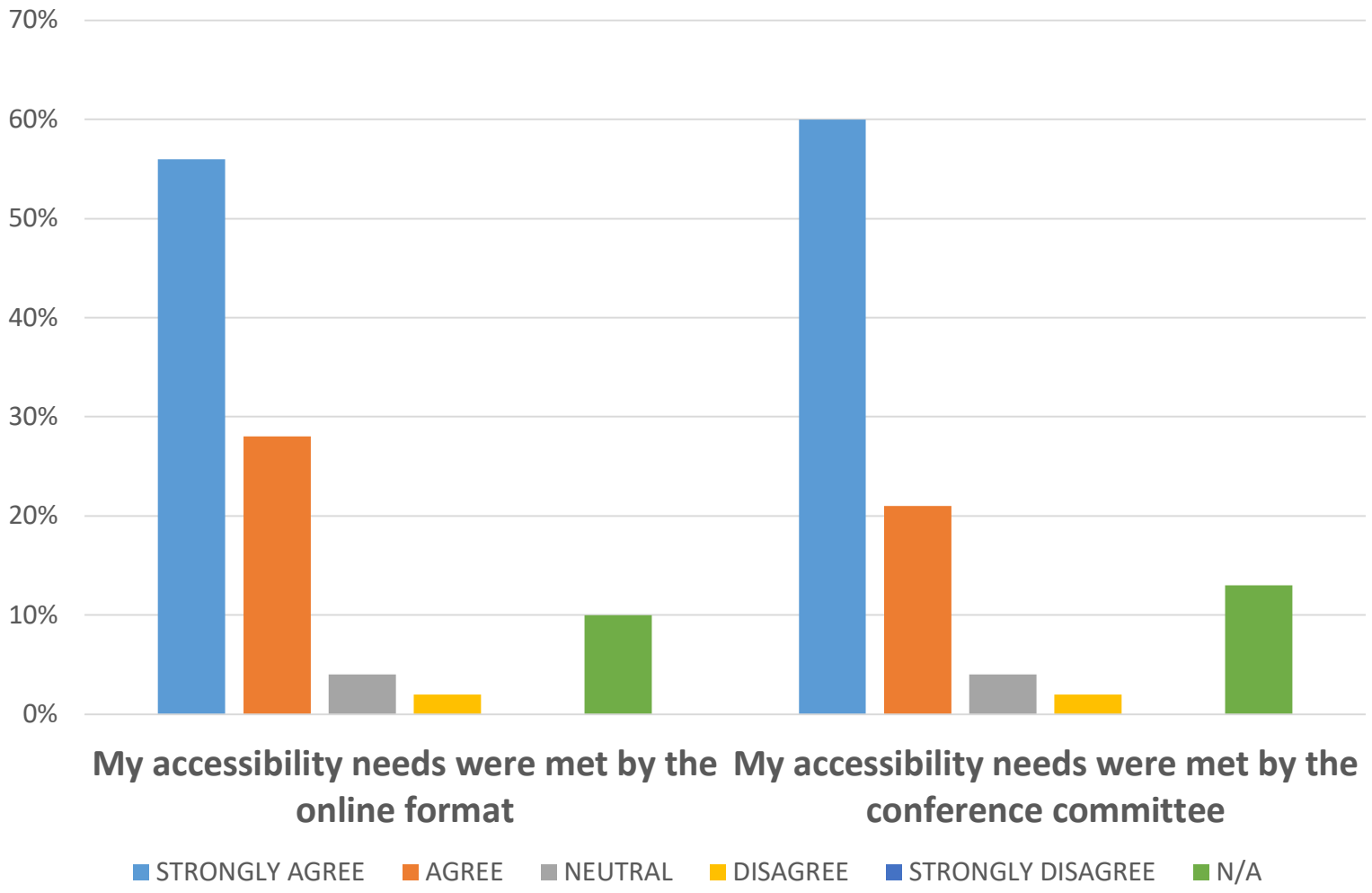




Analysis

- Much improved scores for quality and themes. The quality score is echoed by the selection team
- Wide variety remains consistent with previous years, despite us having double the papers. Improvement needed.

Attendee online experience: accessibility



2018 / 2019

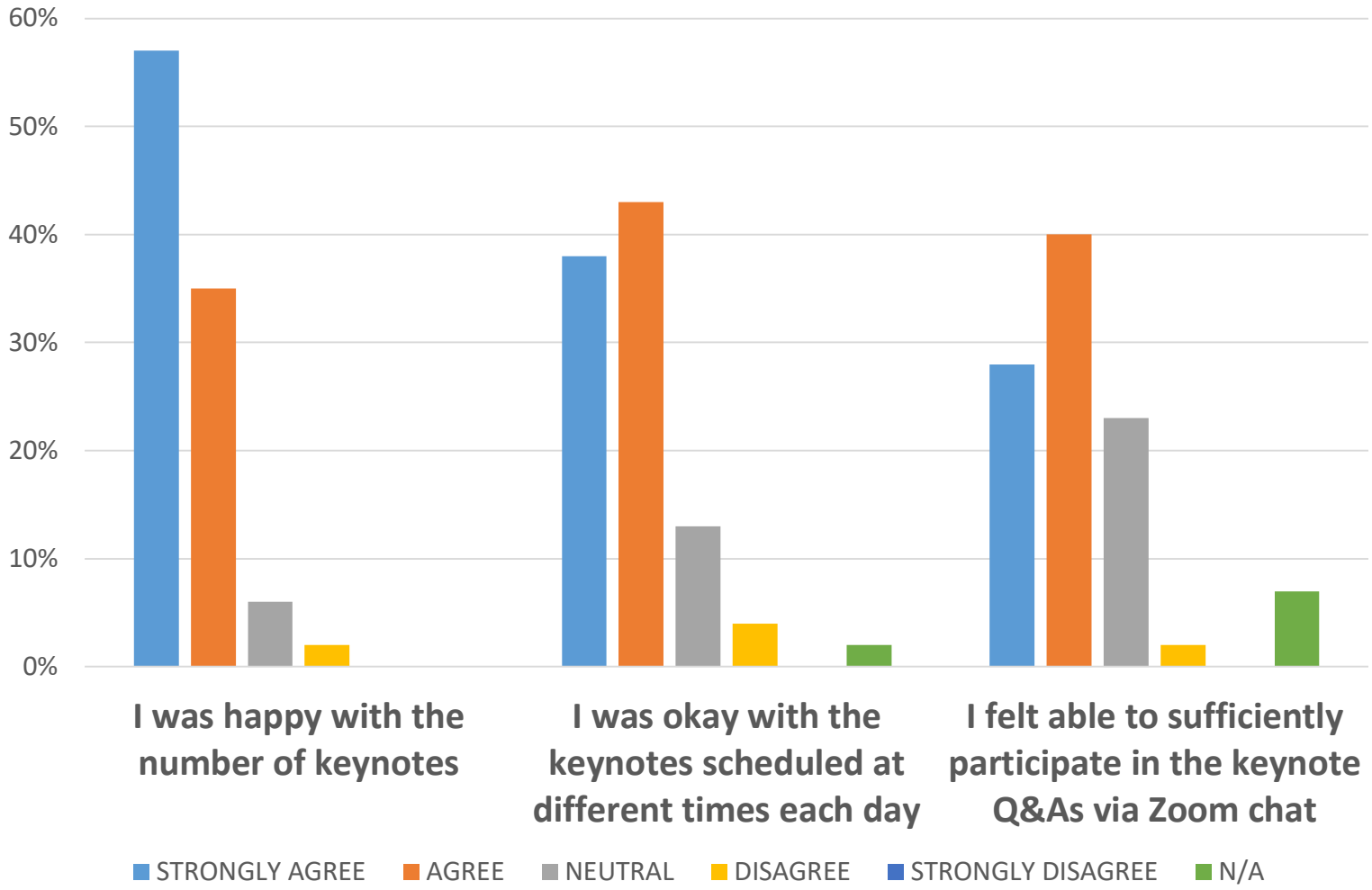
This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year data is not available.

In addition, we had unfortunately not thought to ask questions on accessibly at face-to-face events previous to this.

Analysis

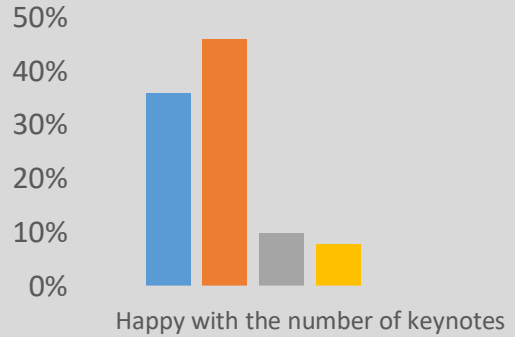
- These are good scores. However, could be greatly improved in this key area. Also, see qualitative verbatims for more information on areas to focus upon.

Attendee experience: keynotes



2018

Similar question from face-to-face



2019

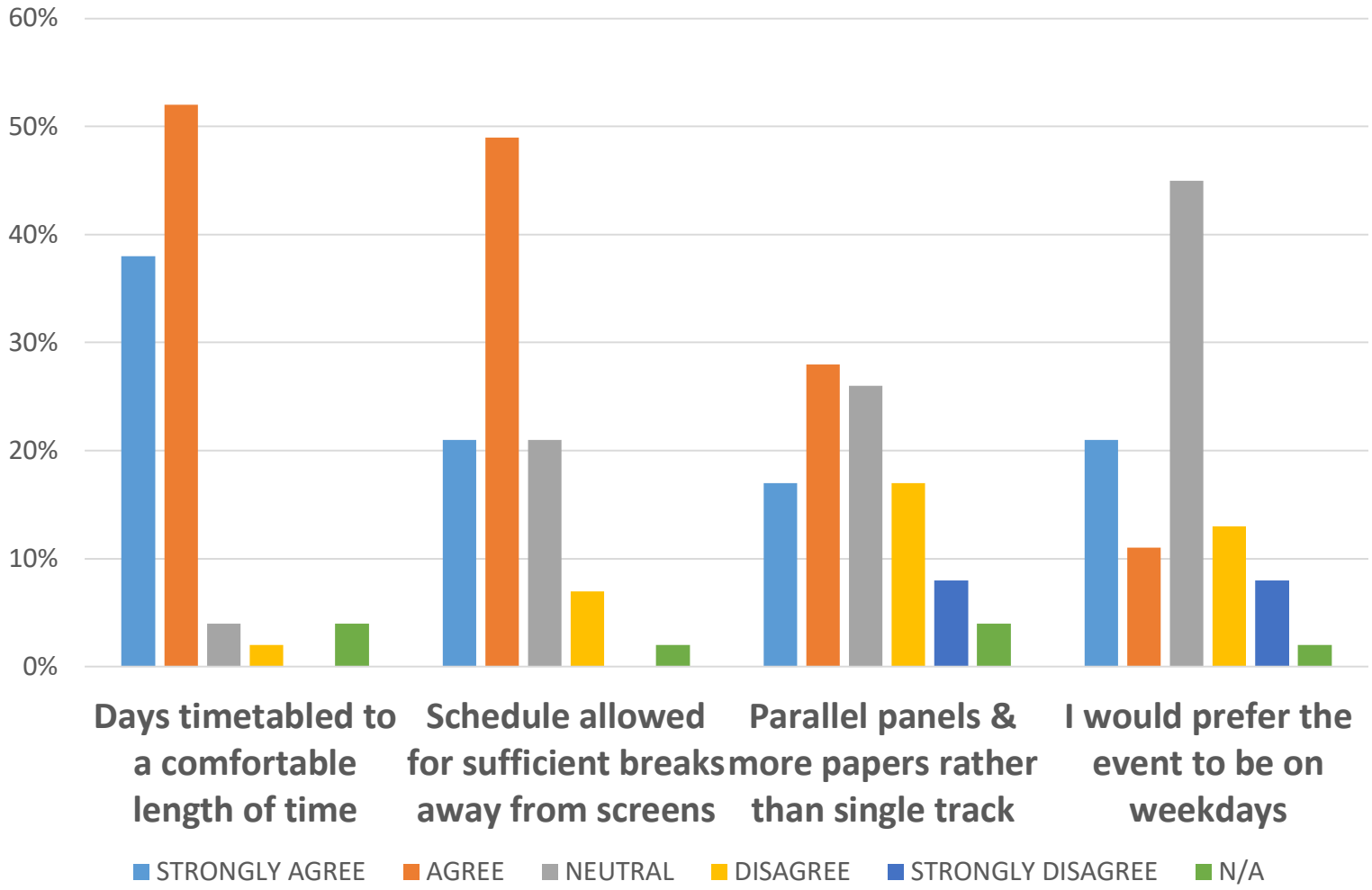
Similar question from face-to-face



Comparison / Analysis

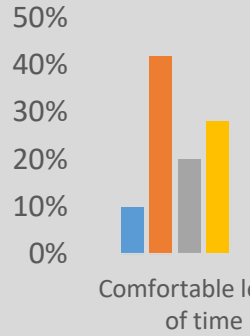
- Keynote numbers score improved (although 3 same as 2019 – 2 in 2018). Possibly up to 4 in future.
- Timetabling of keynotes factor of time zones & availability. But needs improving
- As does Zoom participation

Attendee experience: timetabling



2018

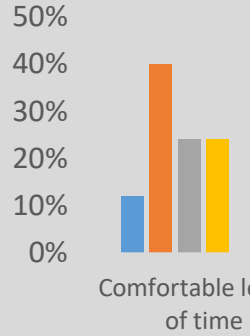
Similar questions from face-to-face



Format	%
3 day single	37
3 day para	45
4 day	18

2019

Similar questions from face-to-face



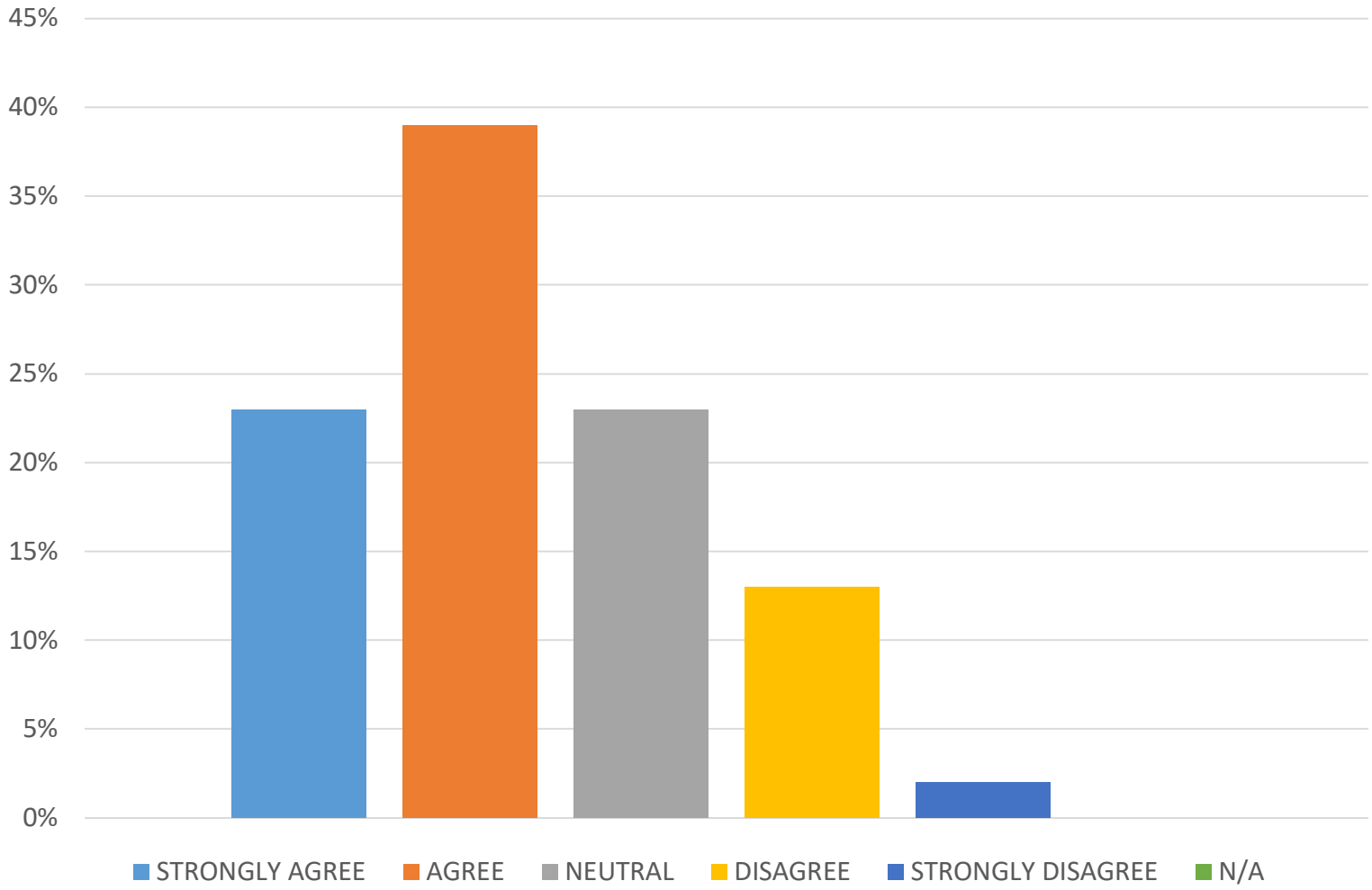
Format	%
3 day single	50
3 day para	20
4 day	30

Comparison / Analysis

- Scheduling for comfort much improved, but more to do.
- Longer breaks needed
- Parallel panels / more papers ambiguous
- Neutral on weekdays / weekends, but with slight tilt to weekdays

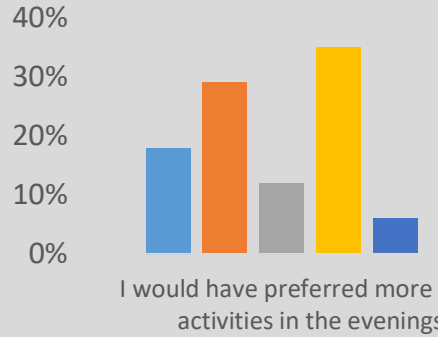
Attendee experience: evening activities

I would have participated in an online evening event if it had been included



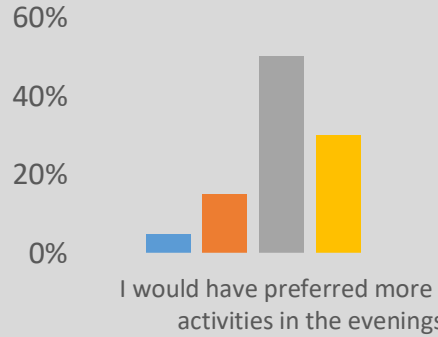
2018

Similar question from face-to-face



2019

Similar question from face-to-face

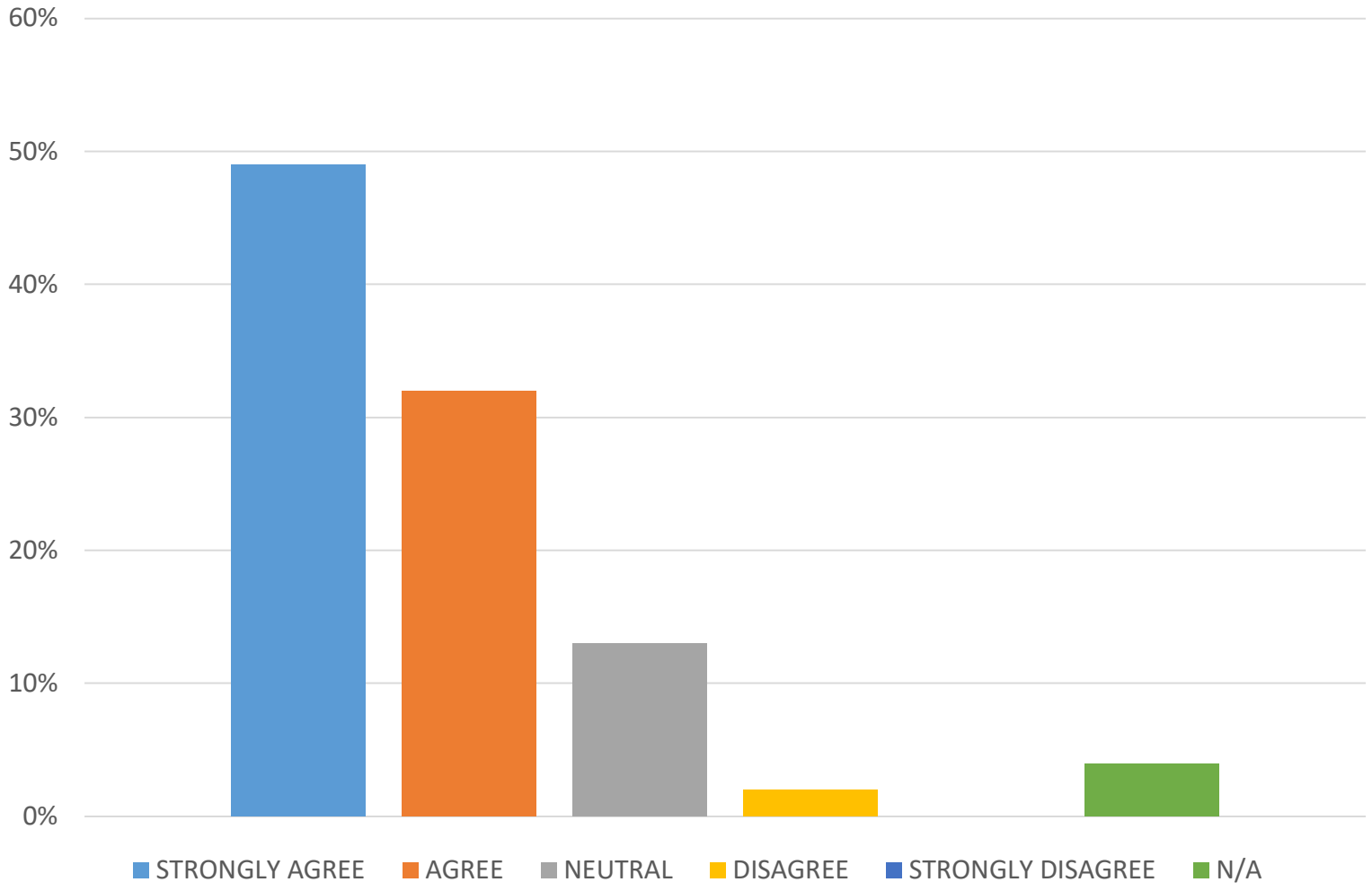


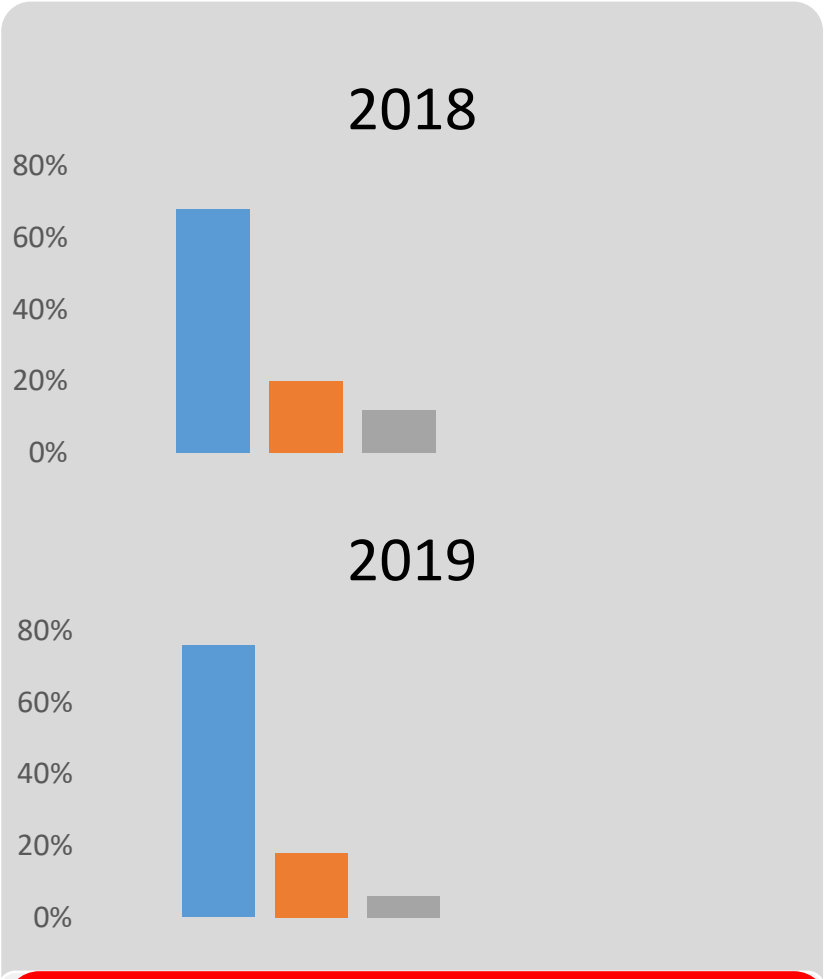
Comparison / Analysis

- No strong feeling about a evening activity
- Equally, this could be a case of leaving people to want more
- There remains the possibility of experimenting here if team has capacity

Attendee experience: conference booklet

The conference booklet contained everything I needed



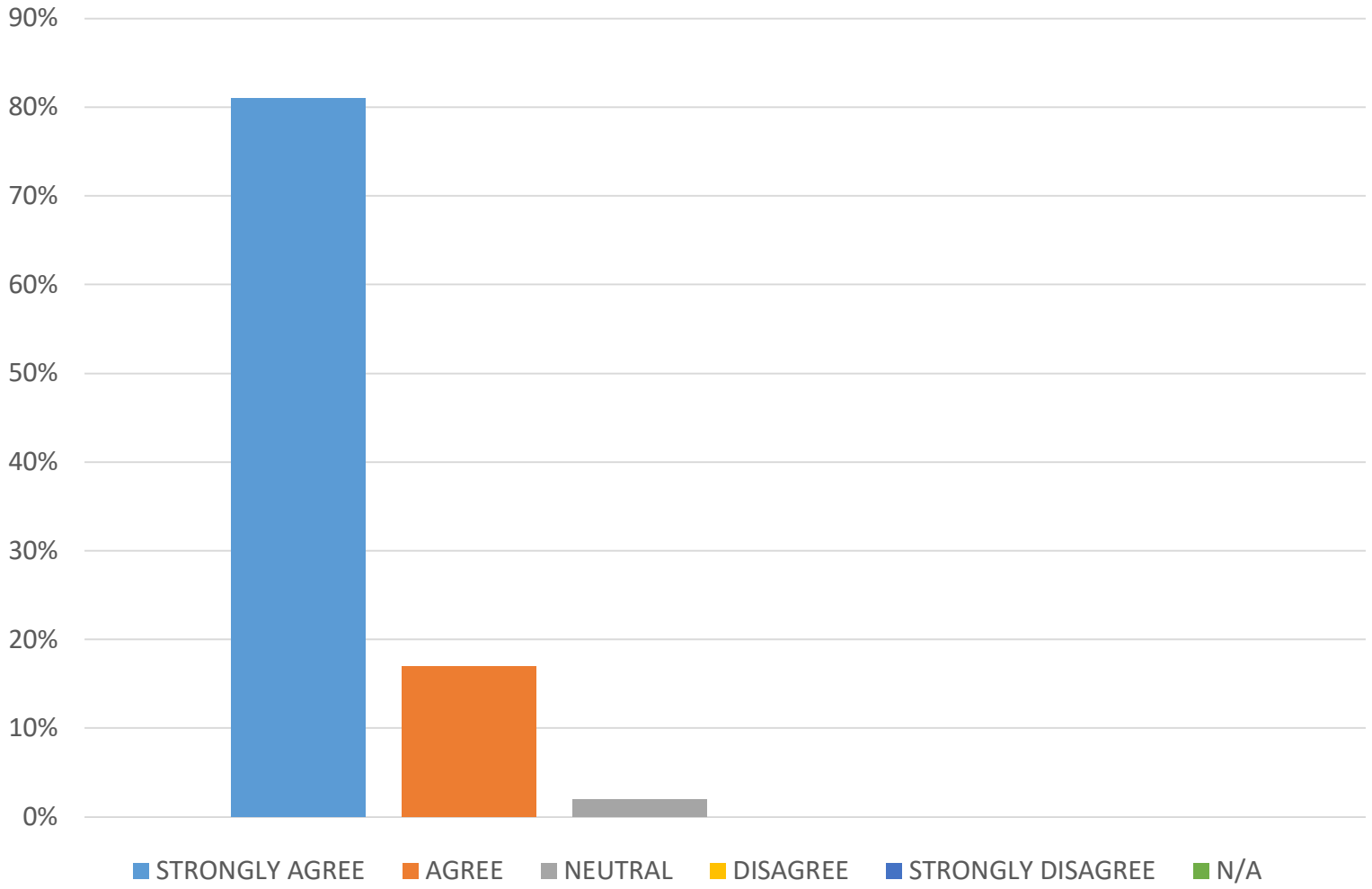


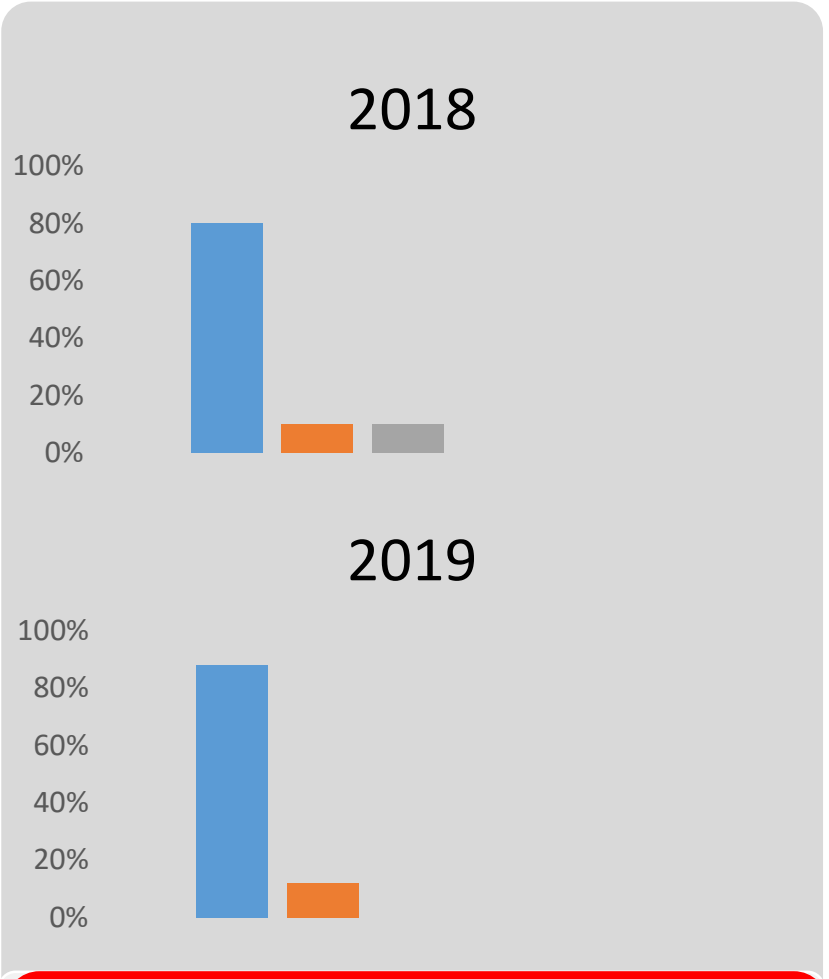
Comparison / Analysis

- This was our most cohesive book ever; however it was a PDF Online. This is not the best for digital access and should be changed to something more appropriate for future online events.

Attendee experience: event team

The conference organisers were helpful



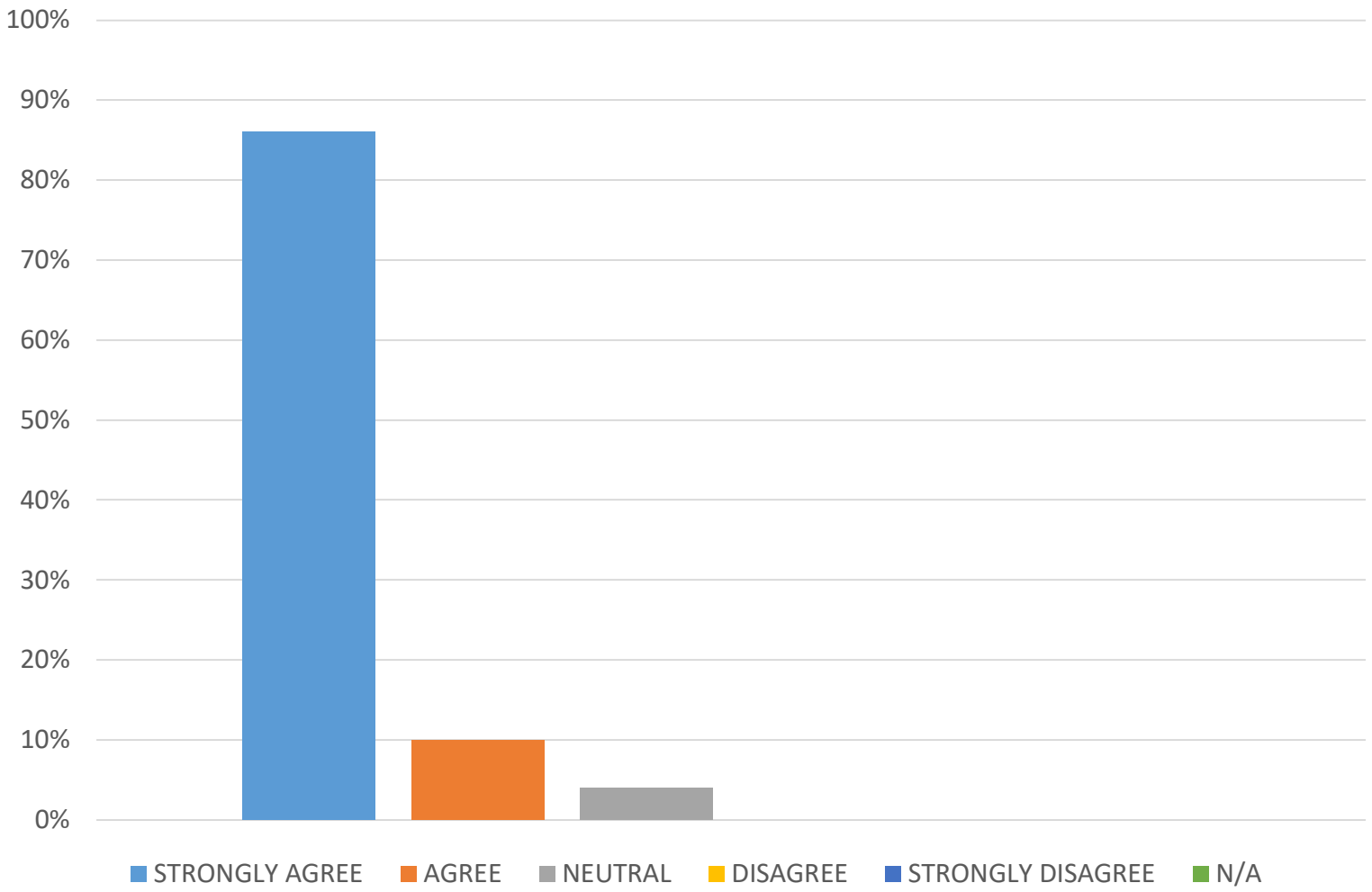


Comparison / Analysis

- Brilliant results, and even if a slight drop-back from 2019, the difference here was the previous year was face-to-face and 2020 online. That an excellent score was maintained should be seen in more impersonal online context.

Attendee experience: respect and kindness

I found the event a respectful and kind place to engage with fellow participants



2018 / 2019

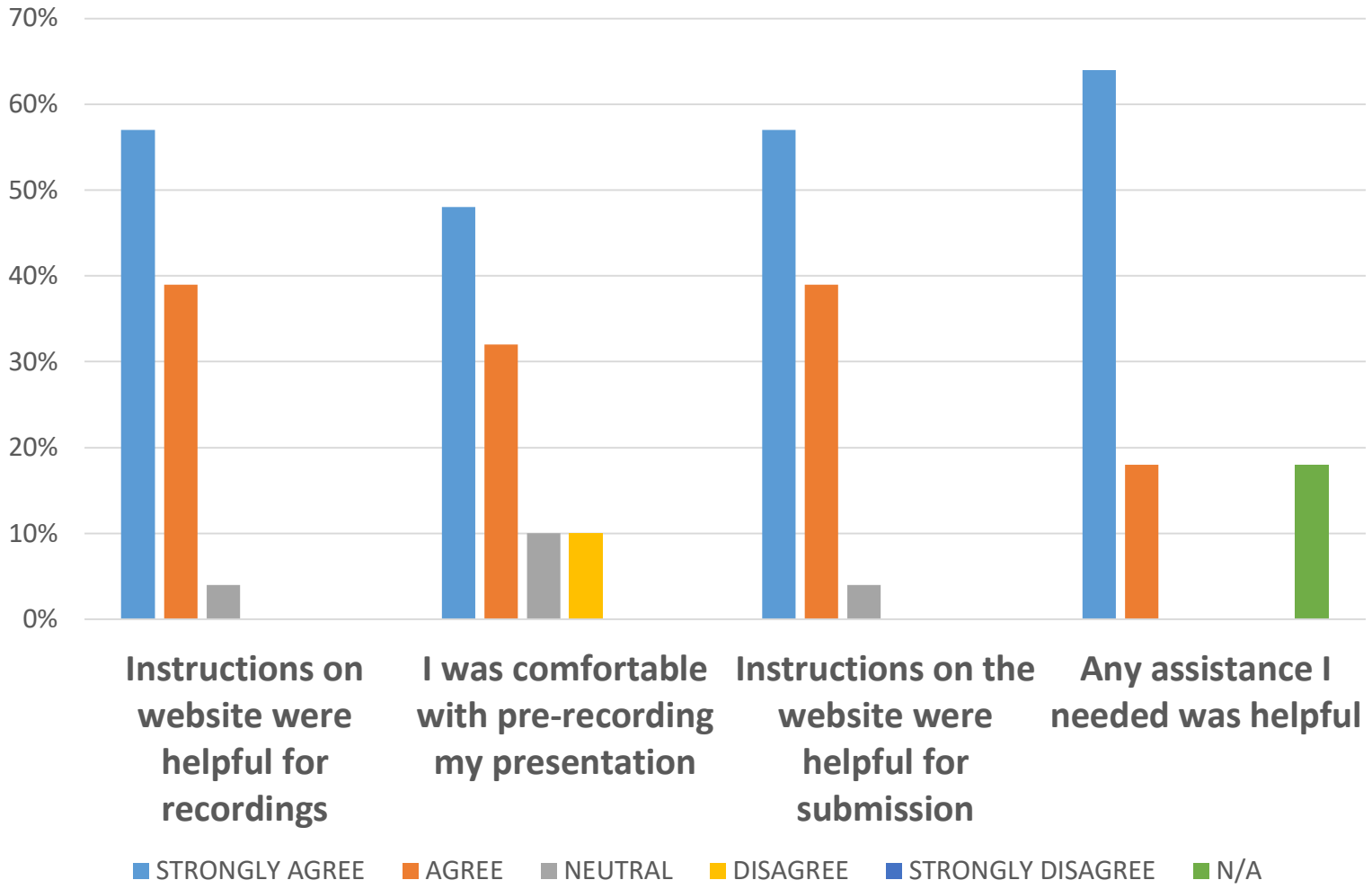
We had unfortunately not thought to ask questions on the conference atmosphere at face-to-face events previous to this.

Analysis

- This is an exceptionally high score, especially given the medium. Qualitative results echo scores here.

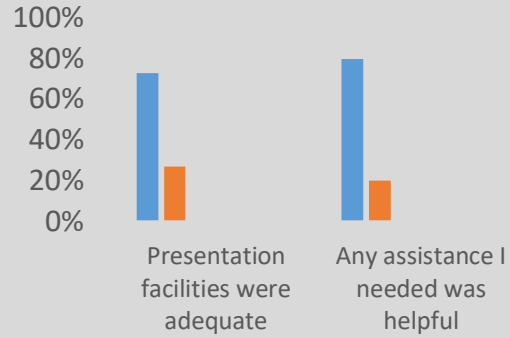
Speaker experience: recording and submitting presentations

Answered by 28 respondents who identified as speakers



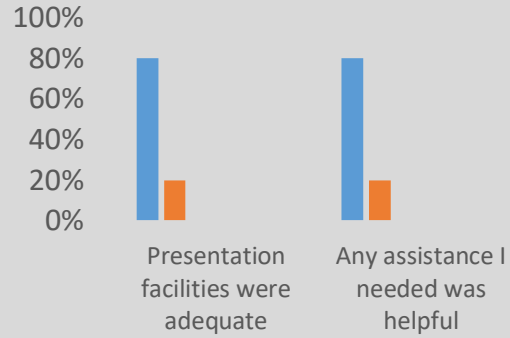
2018

Similar questions from face-to-face



2019

Similar questions from face-to-face

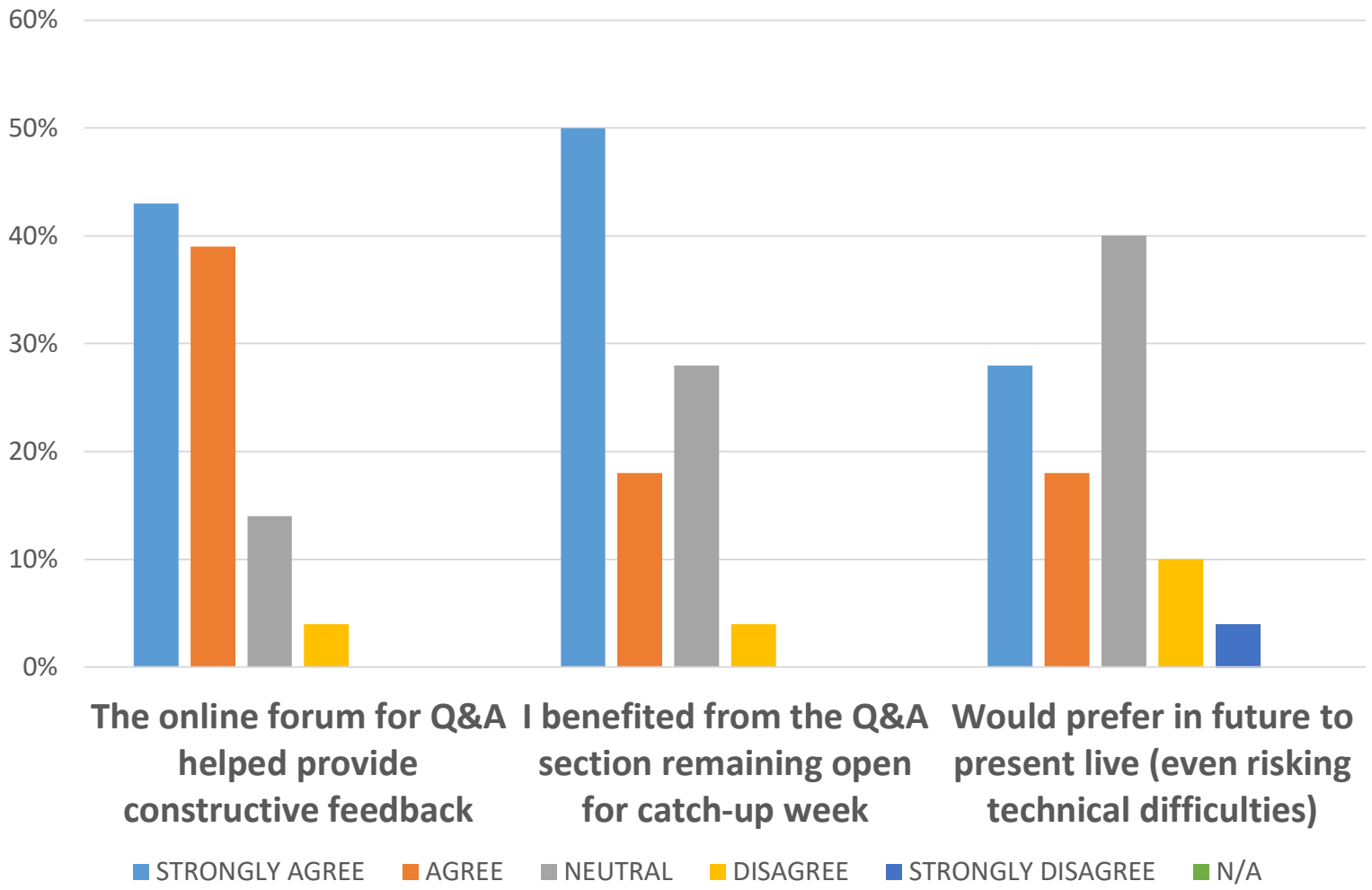


Comparison / Analysis

- All good results given the complex nature of speakers delivering presentations. While all have strong tendency towards strongly agree, there is room for improvement.

Speaker experience: forum and presentation format

Answered by 28 respondents who identified as speakers



2018 / 2019

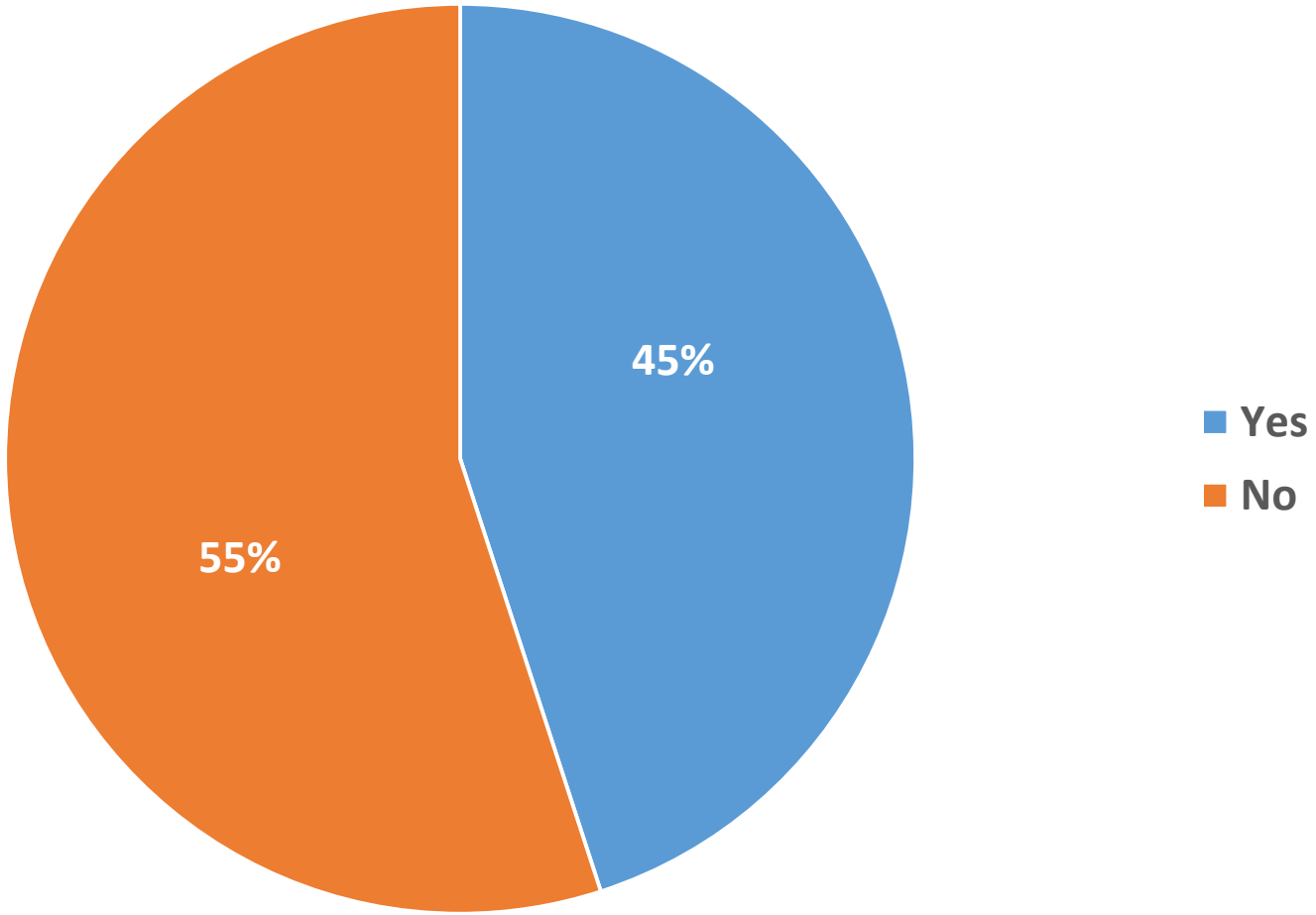
This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year data is not available

Analysis

- While strong results for the forum, this is definitely an area of focus going forwards
- Catch-up week validated again
- Slight preference for speakers doing live papers but we shouldn't underestimate complexity and problems in doing this

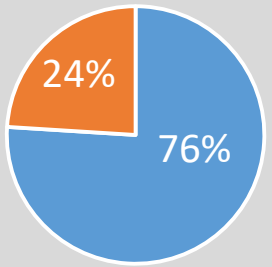
Attendance

Did you attend the ‘live’ timetabled part of the conference on all three days?



2018

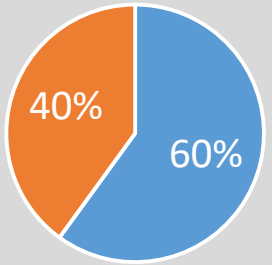
Similar questions from face-to-face



Did you attend the conference on all three days?

2019

Similar questions from face-to-face



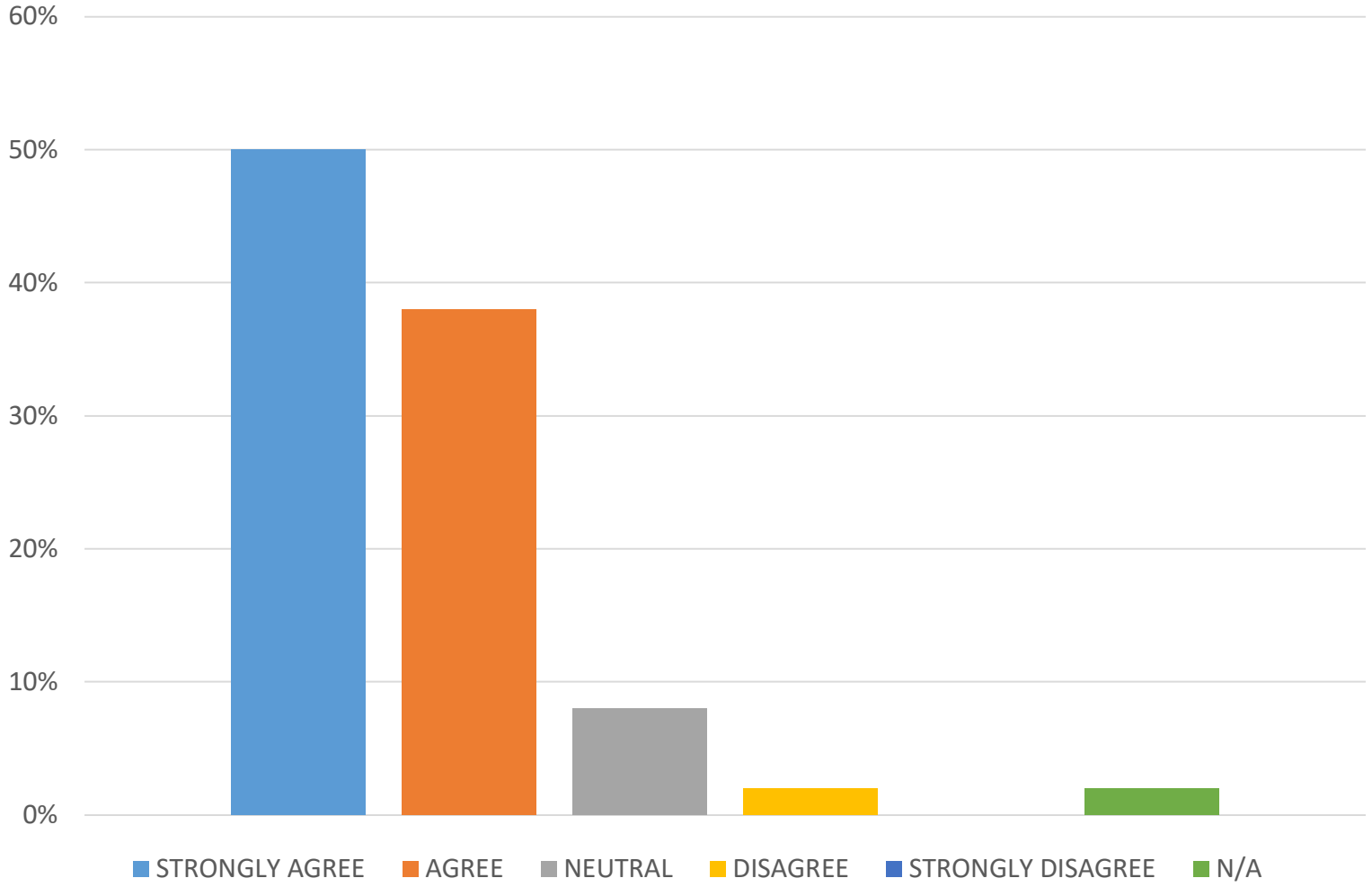
Did you attend the conference on all three days?

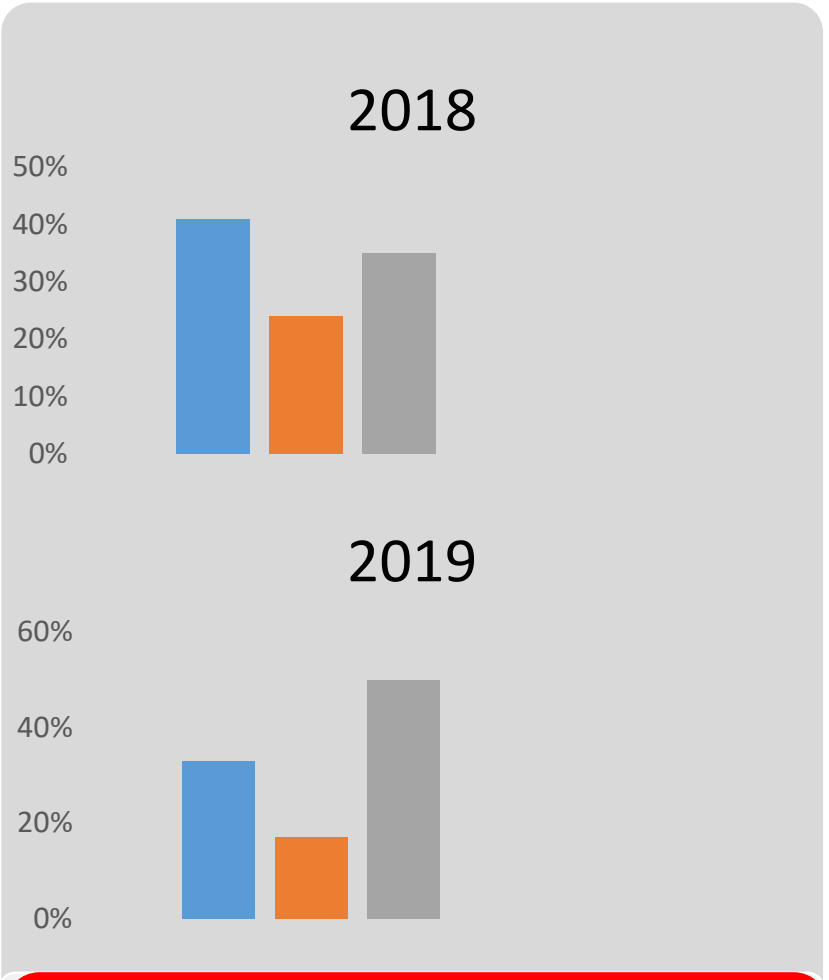
Comparison / Analysis

- Retention over three days is down, again. However, new context here is the nature of online, time zones for live event, availability of papers during catch-up week. We think 50:50 validates the live / catch-up ethos.

Attendance

The panel themes were a factor in my choice of which sessions and days to attend



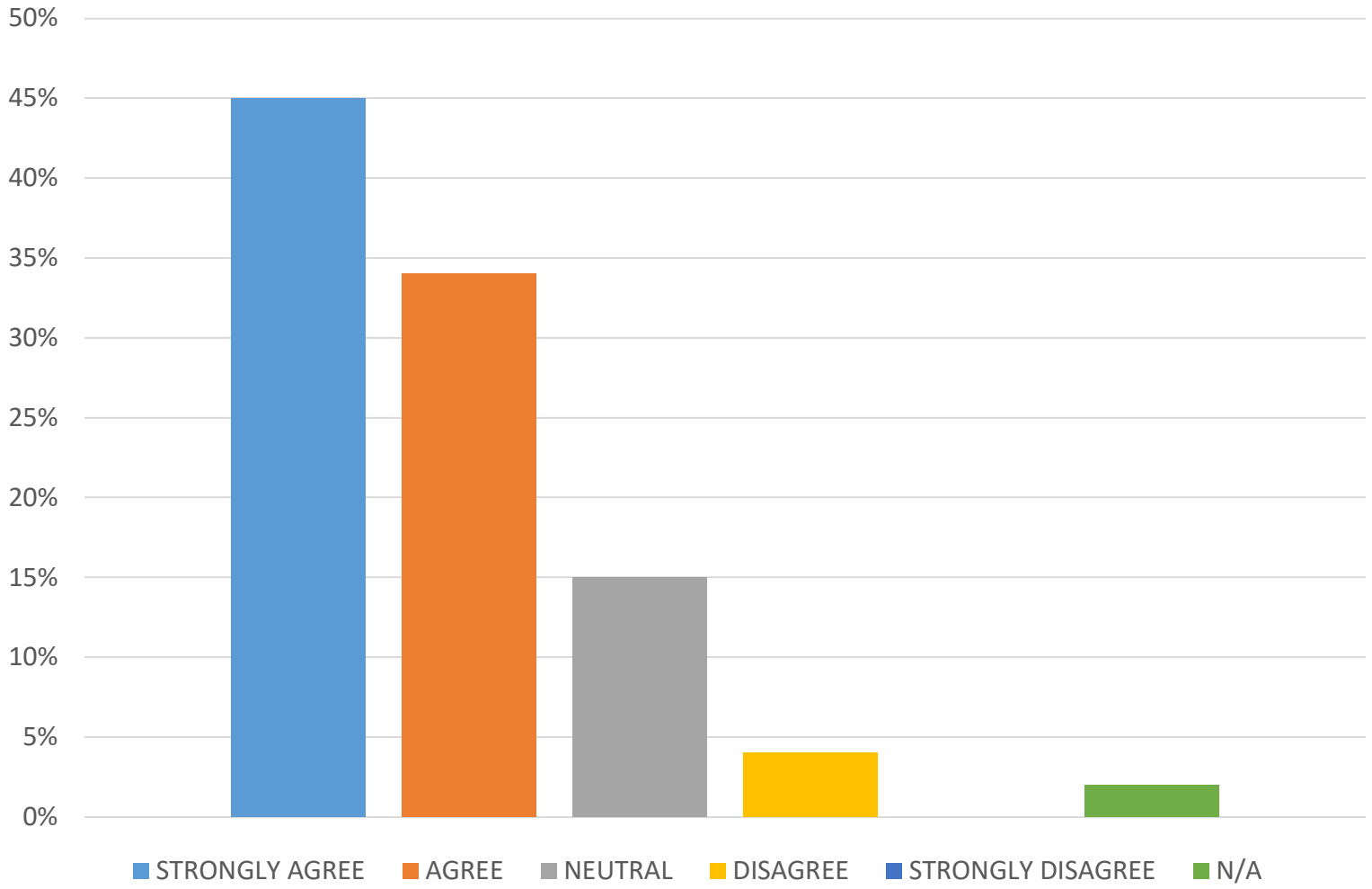


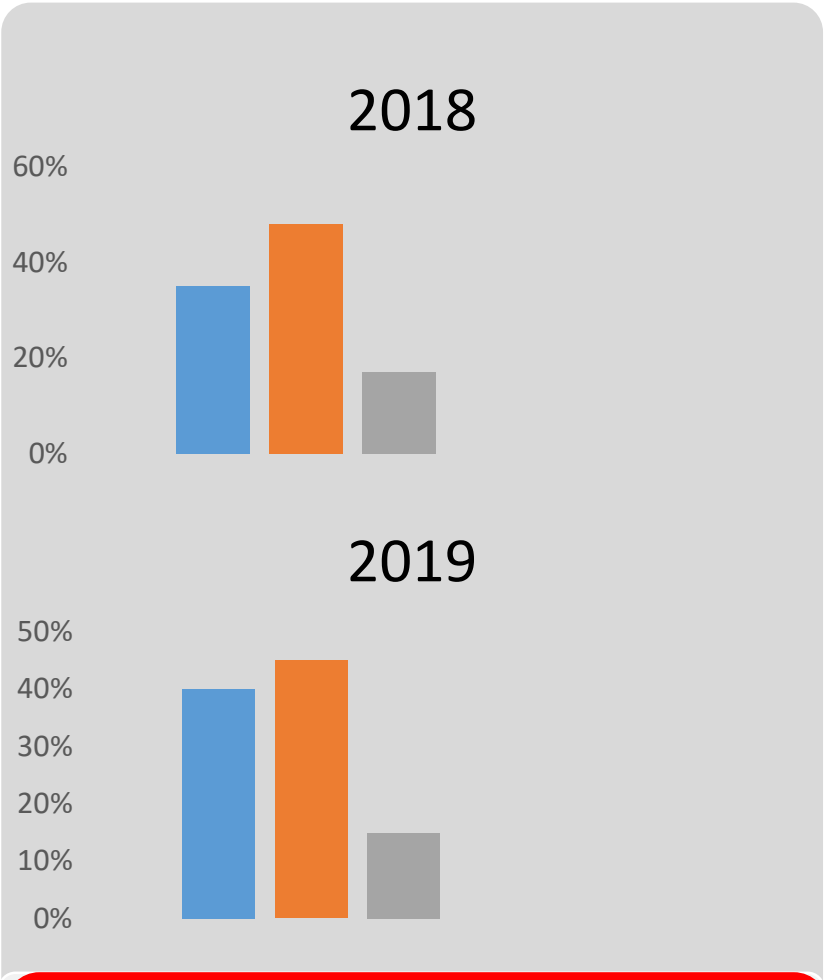
Comparison / Analysis

- An excellent result on panel themes, with nearly 90% in agree / strongly agree with the tilt towards the latter.
- Easier the do more consistent and varied themes with the 50% increase in papers from previous years.

Impact

Attending this conference has or will have a positive impact on my research, practice, or career

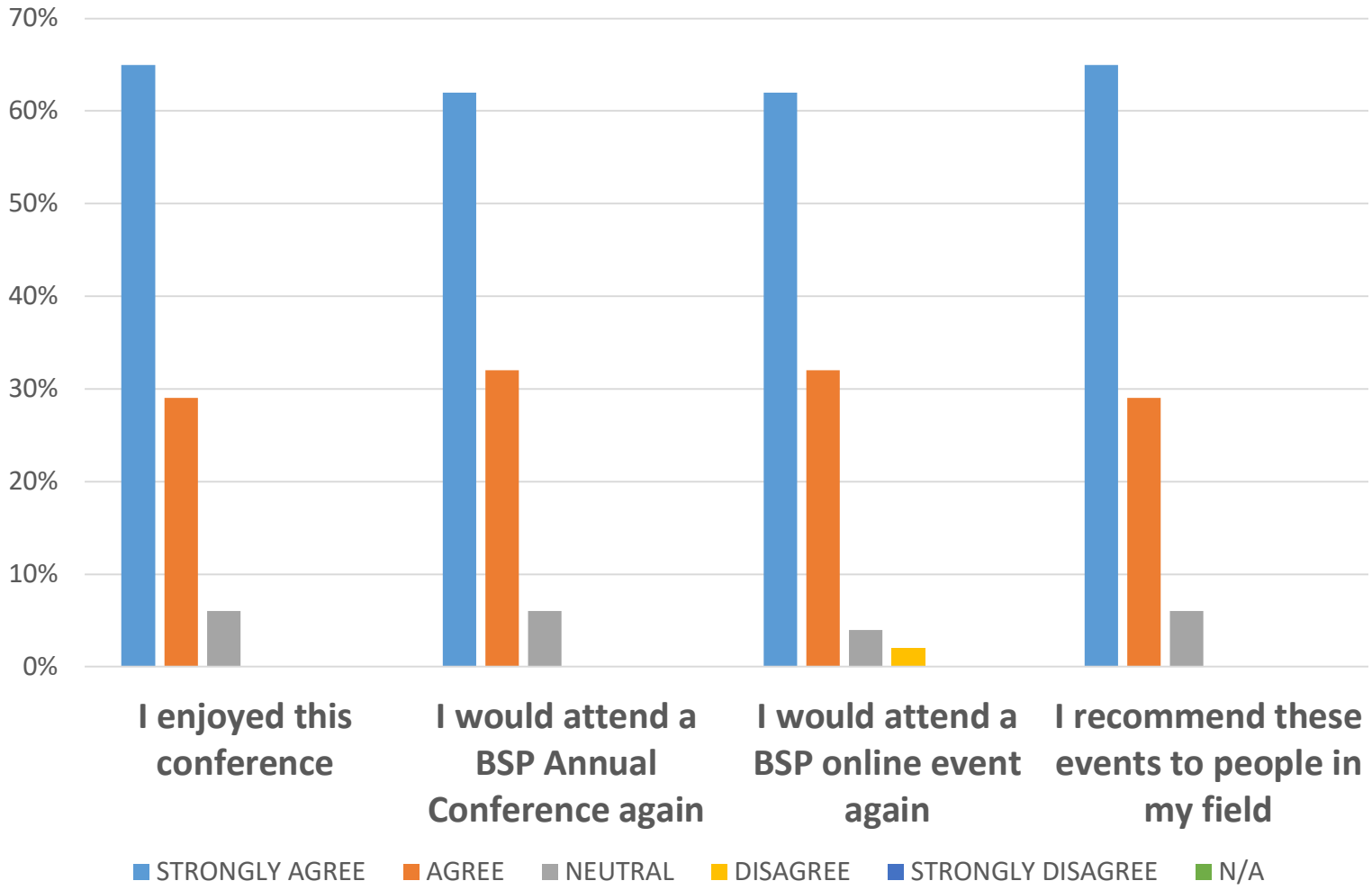




Analysis

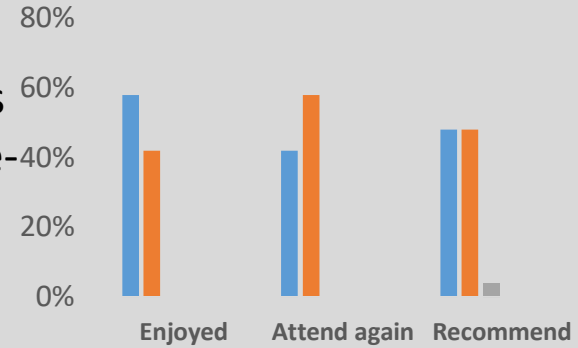
- A wonderful result here, with an increase in and a tilt towards strongly agree.

Enjoyment, future attendance, recommendation



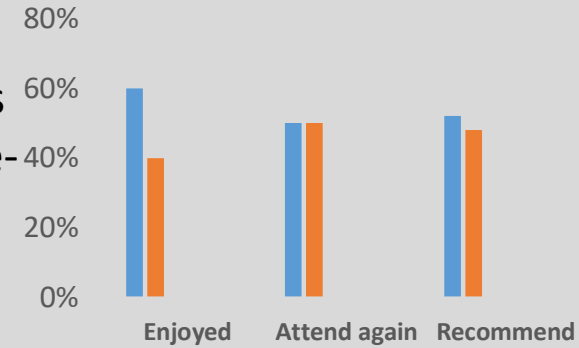
2018

Similar questions from face-to-face



2019

Similar questions from face-to-face

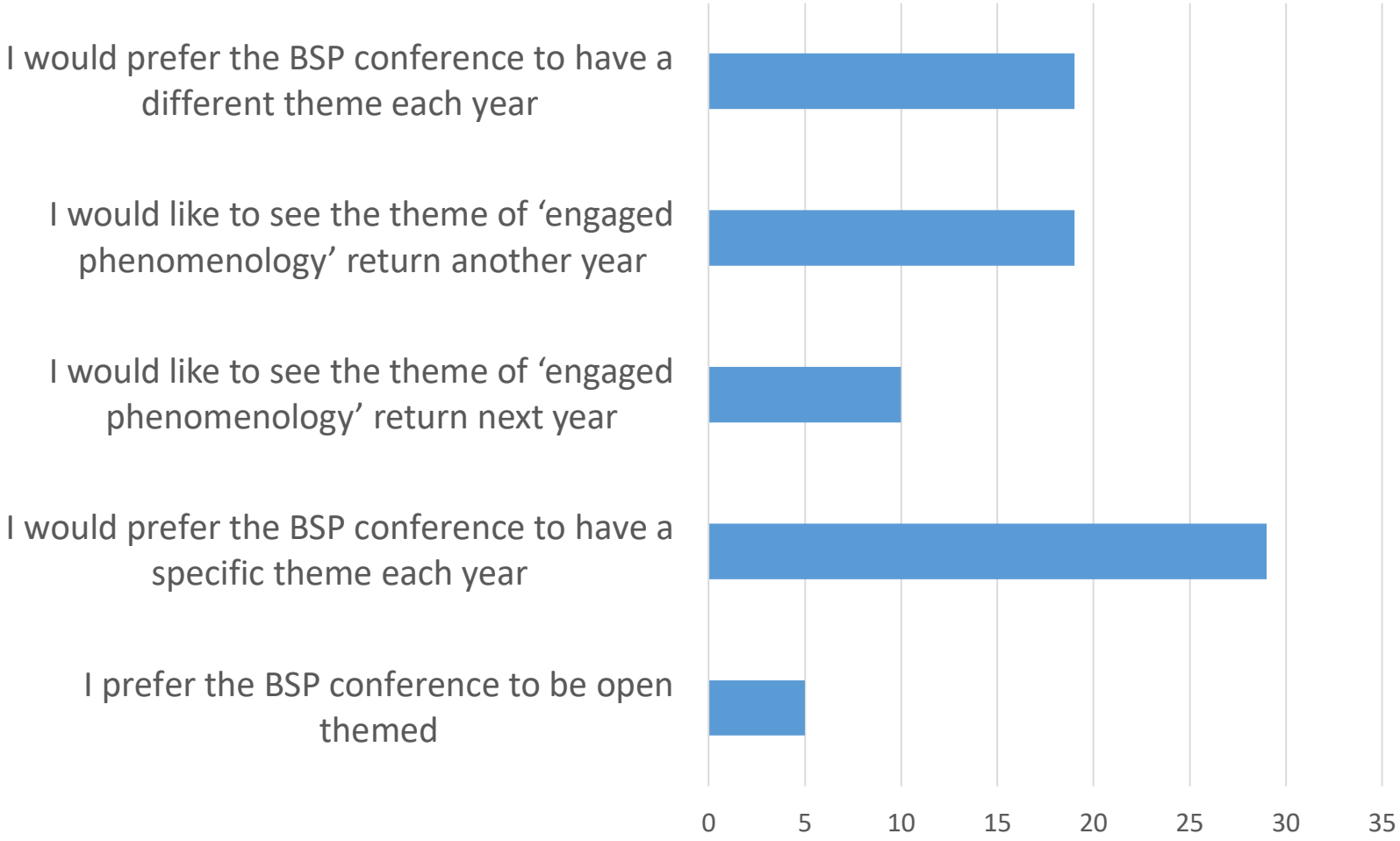


Comparison / Analysis

- Enjoyment score up, as is attend again and recommend. This is a great result.
- In addition, online attend again is pretty much on par with face-to-face, which shows online has a viable future in some format

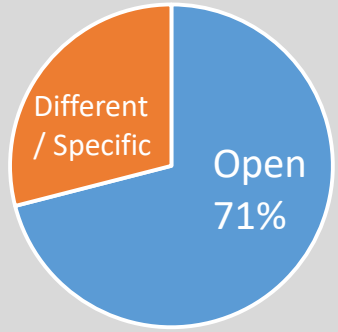
Theme

The BSP Conference had a theme this year – ‘Engaged Phenomenology’.
More than one option could be selected



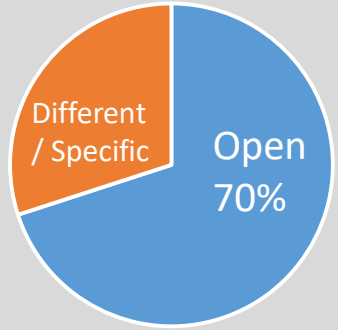
2018

Similar questions from face-to-face



2019

Similar questions from face-to-face



Comparison / Analysis

- Things have flipped here for open / themed since 2018/2019.
- Seems to be a desire for ‘Engaged phenomenology’ theme to return in a future conference in a year or two.

Attendance

Did you attend the ‘live’ timetabled part of the conference on all three days?
22 verbatim responses – reasons for saying ‘No’

- Time zone differences [x3]
- Other work priorities / commitments / obligations / responsibilities [x12]
- Could not clear three full days given the demands of COVID and childcare
- Child care at home over weekend
- Work / life balance over weekend
- Lack of personal time
- Needed to take a break as jam-packed
- Speakers didn't interest me

2018

Did you attend the conference on all three days?
3 verbatim responses

- Other engagements
- I had to go back to my home country [x2]

2019

Did you attend the conference on all three days?
4 verbatim responses

- Nipped out for some sessions as the days were rather long
- Due to professional commitments
- Other academic duties
- I was ill

Presentation subjects missing or under-represented

18 verbatim responses

- No [x7]
- No given the theme [x2]
- Not sure
- Hermeneutic phenomenology
- Arts / Aesthetics [x2]
- Phenomenology of race
- Clinical research on somatic conditions
- I thought the conference was very practice-oriented -- which was good. Yet, I would have also enjoyed more explicitly "theoretical" papers, particularly little read phenomenologists and critical phenomenologists.

2018

- Phenomenology and analytic philosophy
- Literature, cinema, art / arts [x2]
- Phenomenology of perception
- Phenomenology of emotion
- French phenomenology [x2]
- Indigenous phenomenology in the English world
- Phenomenology and hermeneutics]

2019

- No [x2]
- Feminist phenomenology
- Art - books. films, etc
- Phenomenology and the analytic tradition (e.g. Kriegel, Zahavi); analytic philosophy and neuroscience

Low points of the conference

21 verbatim responses

None [x8]

- Needed more time between papers for Q&As [x3]
- Longer breaks [x2]
- Zoom talks: the delay keynotes was jarring, and it would have been nice to see the audience members.
- Online format OK, but no substitute for to face-to-face [x2]
- Displaying video ‘viewed’ numbers higher figures tends to be viewed more and more, drawing attention from others, and causing them lower figures

- “Too much brown nosing in the comments after videos were released”
- “Pre-recording the presentation”
- “Too many presentations: confusing”
- “More variety in the topics needed”
- “The manner of accessing the conference via a link sent via mail was not so convenient. The way the conference info and etc. was displayed on a sidebar of the BSP page was also not so convenient. The organisers' mails were written in a nice tone but too long.”
- “A step-by-step instruction on how to join the conference could be useful. I received multiple links to the website and the program but I wasn't sure how to access the conference itself.”

2018

- No [x2]
- Venue air-conditioning [x4]
- Long days / short breaks [x2]
- Low attendance on Day 3

2019

- No [x4]
- Long days / short breaks [x3]
- Only 10 minutes for discussion per paper
- Skills in English (the language of the conference) sometimes a problem
- I struggled to ‘keep up’ with some papers
- Some sessions were rough, tho still valuable

High points of the conference

24 verbatim responses

- All of it! The organising committee did a good job [x6]
- The friendliness of all the participants [x2]
- Vibrant and engaged community
- Keynotes: Zahavi [x2]; Loidolt; Ortega
- The 3 day live event online was a revelation
- The online discussion boards surpassed expectations [x3]
- The 8 day catch-up period / ability to see missed papers or rewatch [x2]
- Feedback and encouragement [x2]

- “The work of the organizers was impeccable! I so appreciate all the effort that went into organizing an online conference. This was one of the best online conferences I've been a part of.”
- “Peer participation. One of the aspect, if not the aspect I liked most about this year was the possibility of commenting and getting comments with enough time and dedication each presentation needed. The possibility of watching a presentation, and re-watching it to ask questions that were enriching for both parties was definitely the highest point.”
- “My personal highlight was the presentation by Filipa Melo Lopes: ‘”Half Victim, Half Accomplice": Cat Person and Narcissism’.”

2018

- Keynotes [x6]
- The diversity of papers [x3]
- Friendly people and atmosphere [x2]
- “Speaking is a highlight as the reception and feedback is always passionate, critical and supportive. You really do learn a lot about your own research”

2019

- Keynotes [x7]
- The conference as a whole [x5]
- Certain named papers [x3]
- The valuable feedback I got during my Q&A
- Topics [x2]
- Networking
- Inclusivity

Can we make the conference more accessible?

19 verbatim responses

- No [x11]
- "No. It was actually pretty simple and easy to navigate through the presentations and panels."
- "I do not know, but I have no heightened accessibility needs so I probably cannot comment whether it worked well"
- Subtitles for videos (requirement when recording) [x3]
- Or copies of papers in written format made available [x2]
- Live captioning of Zoom talks

2018 / 2019

This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year comments are not available

Can we make the conference more respectful and kindly?

18 verbatim responses

- No [x12]
- "I doubt it, it was beautiful"
- "Not at all. I thought it was a paragon of respect and kindness!"
- "Absolutely not, I think you were very respectful and kind. At least to me"
- "No - I saw no toxic online behavior"
- "The organizing committee was simply wonderful and incredibly helpful"
- "Perhaps it was too respectful/kindly. It would be good to have a questions and replies only rule so the comments section doesn't fill up with pointless compliments and brown-nosing. Honestly this put me off writing sometimes..."

2018 / 2019

This was the first time the BSP organised an online conference, hence previous year comments are not available

Anything else you want to tell us?

- "Thank you" [x7]
- "Thank you for making the event available online"
- "Thanks so much for your terrific work!"
- "Congratulations on pulling off a wonderful and enriching experience"
- "Congratulations on this wonderful conference!"
- "All the work and dedication that was put in organising this conference really showed"
- "I thought it was excellent - very professional, warm and engaging. Thank you“
- “Just to say thanks again for a most enjoyable and stimulating conference experience. The organizing committee should be very happy with the way it turned out”
- "You did a great job!"
- "Keep up the great work!"
- "Great, job! looking forward to your next events and conferences"
- "Well done - looking forward to the next one, be it online or on the ground"
- "Do another one please. Zero cost (except membership) was fantastic too"

Anything else you want to tell us?

- “I think this was an excellent alternative to a face to face conference but I don't think I engaged in the same way I would at a live face to face conference where I would have attended presentations outside of my immediate interests and spoken to colleagues in the downtimes. As an 'embodied' practitioner and academic I missed so much from those other aspects of a conference. However, you did a great job in facilitating this and I am so glad it happened rather than was cancelled. I hope to see you all in person next year. ‘Je suis mon corps’”
- “I have found that the conference website included too many information, it was not easy to find the relevant things, e.g. the programme. Perhaps your emails were also a bit too numerous and too long.”
- The discussion boards were really helpful. A prompt to save the webpage as a pdf would have been valuable, so that we remembered to archive the feedback before the live platform was closed.
- “Less is more. I understand that the BSP would want to offer a broad, open-minded platform for phenomenological philosophy research, but the impact of the conference would have been increased by being more selective about, and focusing the attendees' attention on, the highest-quality papers it received.”

Anything else you want to tell us?

- “As a beginner in the field of phenomenology I found the conference of great interest. I think most of the keynotes and papers to be quite understandable even though some of it were a bit advanced for my level. I think you all did a very good job and I look forward for more presentations and other phenomenological news. For me this is a great way to further my quite newly found interest together with advanced level study of phenomenology at the university […] Thank you!“

- "I think the conference was a great success. It was my first ever online conference. I think the format has lots of potential and wonder whether you could offer some mini gatherings throughout the year relating to some of the discussion that came out of the conference. Dan Zahavi made the point that sometimes researchers using phenomenology who are not primarily philosophers can mix up the concepts or perhaps not understand them properly. Is there way to work with this within the BSP? For example offering to have a research forum for non-philosophers to discuss their work."

Key highlights

- The feedback gives the BSP a resounding affirmation on the viability of an online conference format. While occasioned by the pandemic, this does not mean to say an online event may not have a future given the large global audience made possible by our low membership-only fees (and no conference fee, no travel and accommodation costs, etc).

- Declaring the BSP conference a space of kindness and respect set a really inclusive and friendly tone, as reflected by overwhelming feedback. Kindness and respect does nothing to harm challenging and robust questions and discussions as evidenced in the forums and again in the feedback from speakers on the forums and all attendees on metrics such as impact.

- The theme of the conference – with its focus upon engaged phenomenology – was very popular, and greatly improved uptake from practitioners and academics in applied phenomenology and related fields, areas we have long wished to make more visible through the conference.

- Having a live release schedule meant the event had something of the feel of a face-to-face conference; equally, having the catch-up week meant people in different times zones and those who missed a panel or paper could watch and rewatch again and again. This was excellent for the speakers in increasing the visibility of their work.

- Our significant markers of success – impact, enjoyment, and recommendation – have been climbing year on year and this year was no different with our best results yet.

Future Recommendations

- **BSP Online:** Improvements to conference website needed to bring event information to the forefront, make it more immediate and contain it all on one page. In short, website needs a review and update.

- **BSP Podcast:** Need to build BSP Podcast profile: given the growth of our Philos-L audience, promoting via academic rather than just social channels should be explored.

- **Conference Platform Email:** There were some problems with people identifying their conference platform access email due to it being junked by university servers (10 known cases), and it being lost amongst other communication emails. We need a better way of people accessing the platform in the future.

- **Communications:** While seen as lucid and helpful, we overcompensated for not being face-to-face with too many emails, less will be more here.

- **Build-up:** We attempted to do a number of build-up activities to build anticipation for the event as well as get people onto and familiar with the platform prior to day one hour one. This was a limited success and needs to be improved content-wise, as it was felt that we could have done a lot more around basic information and on the format of the conference.

Future Recommendations

- **Accessibility:** While we did everything we believed we could to make the conference as accessible as possible via one-on-one assistance, this did not go far enough. Online future conferences should be using supporting video functionality such as subtitling, or requiring speakers to make versions of the presentation available as pdfs, etc. This would be for both pre-recorded and for live Zooms. Equally, we need to think about how face-to-face conferences can address such issues as this. This needs to be a priority review for the next conference.

- **Scheduling:** Given the nature of online, we should review expanding the time allocated for questions, and also increase the length of breaks between panels. While the standard 10 mins / 15 mins may work at a face-to-face event, with online it often felt like you couldn't catch a breath.

- **Conference booklet:** This was our most lavishly produced conference booklet yet, however, given it was only available as an online pdf and thus not as simple to flick through, a different approach for online events should be explored. An app? Indeed, perhaps face-to-face events could use this new method too in the future, cutting down on paper usage and printing costs.

- **Forum:** The discussion forums while well received and scored well and above expectations could definitely be improved upon going forwards. Action to BSP systems team to look at new and different kinds of available hosting systems.

Future Recommendations

- **Alternatives to speakers pre-recording papers:** The idea of pre-recording papers meant that we could schedule the conference well enough in advance so that everyone knew who was presenting when, that we didn't get any technical issues (such as running multiple parallel Zooms with problems of connectivity, etc) and didn't have any 'no shows'. However, feedback did show a tendency towards (although a far from overwhelming interest in) live. To be reviewed by the conference and system teams going forward.

- **Presentation subjects missing or under-represented:** make sure these are reflected in future CfPs: critical phenomenology; phenomenology of race, gender, class; under-read texts in the history of phenomenology, particularly female phenomenologists.