

SHARING SCIENCE WITH THE WIDEST AUDIENCE: MAKING SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES ACCESSIBLE

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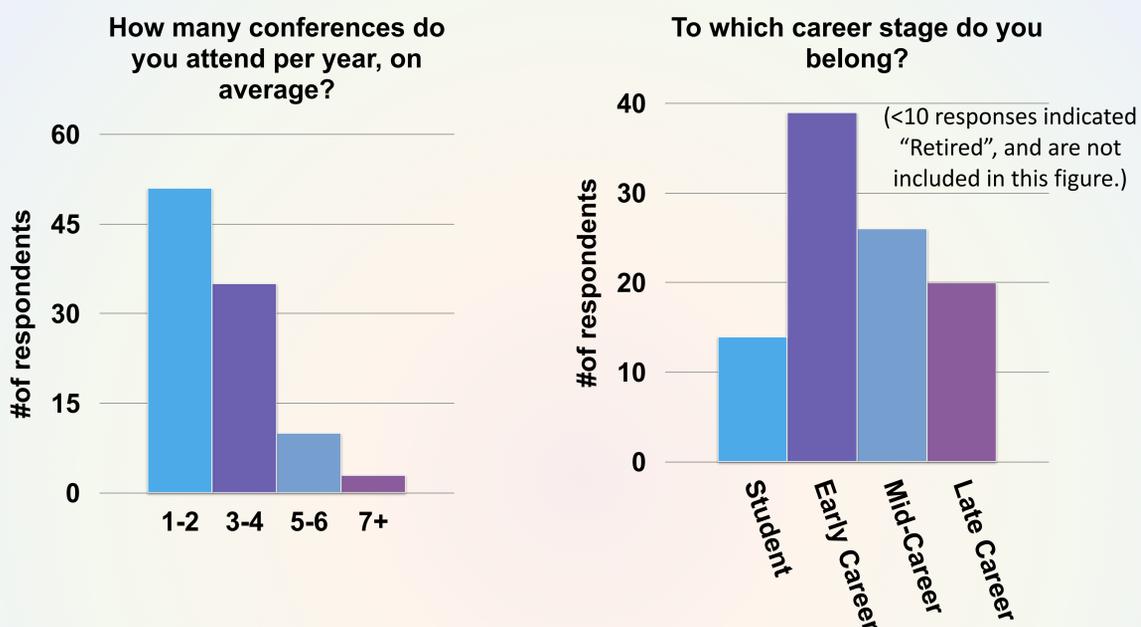
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Introduction

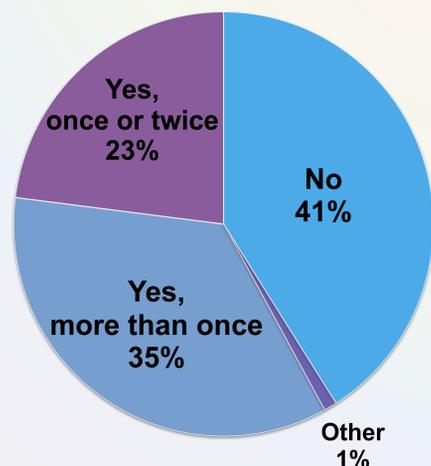
- Conference attendance is a required facet of a scientific career, providing opportunities to network and stay updated on current methods and results
 - Attendance can be difficult for scientists with disabilities, those with children or other dependent family members, or those with limited travel funding.
 - **Meetings that are not accessible to all participants represent a barrier to career advancement.**
- While our survey was informal and likely attracted more attention from those who have difficulty attending meetings than those who do not, the results indicate that there are scientists at all career stages who are limiting their travel and that there is a need to explore strategies to mitigate inaccessible meetings. Half of survey respondents have deliberately skipped or limited their participation in meetings because they felt the event was not accessible.
 - **Assuring that conferences are accessible for all is key for maintaining workforce diversity and presenting an inclusive work environment.**

An Informal Survey of Conference Attendance

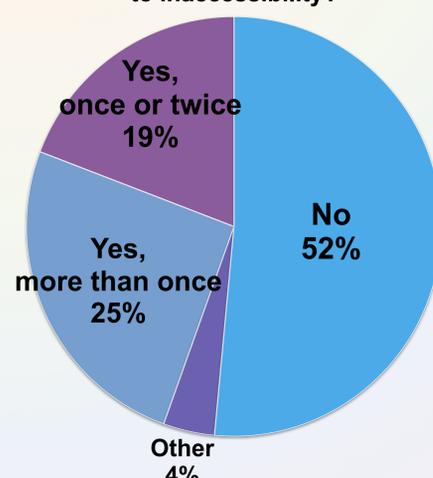
- An anonymous survey was advertised via social media in order to explore the need for accessible conferences
- The survey received 100 responses, representing roughly 5% of the recent attendance at LPSC
- Results from statistical questions are summarized below.



Do you, or have you ever, deliberately chosen not to attend a conference because you felt it would not be accessible?



Have you attended a conference and had to reduce your participation due to inaccessibility?



How are meetings inaccessible?

- 80% of responses indicated they had skipped a meeting because the cost to travel outweighed the potential benefits.
 - Other reasons for skipping meetings included conference that are too big/spread out (40%), lack of available child care (25%), or a conference location that was too far from hotels and/or unsafe (20%).
- 35% of responses indicated that they had limited participation in a conference due to difficulty navigating the conference venue, traveling to the venue from their hotel, or a lack of appropriate food options near the meeting.
- Individual responses indicate additional issues, such as:
 - Expensive meetings and/or a lack of available travel funding
 - No contact for accessibility requests
 - No published schedule that would allow adequate travel planning
 - Lengthy schedules with limited breaks
 - Poor seating, or a lack of seating at events such as poster sessions
 - Presentations difficult to see due to room layout/lighting or poor design
 - Inaudible presentations or questions due to lack of microphones.

Suggestions for Improving Conference Access

- Survey responses also indicated where conferences had been successful accommodating accessibility requests, providing suggestions for improvements:
 - Meeting schedules with frequent breaks and adequate time for meals/rest
 - Options for remote dial-in/virtual participation
 - Child-care options, lactation rooms, quiet rooms, and gender neutral restrooms
 - Designated meeting staff to deal with accommodation requests
 - Smaller meetings in more compact venues
 - A published contact for requesting accommodations, including a way to request anonymously (or not disclosing the reason for the request)
- Resources for meeting planning include a guide from the ADA National Network (<https://adata.org/guide/planning-guide-making-temporary-events-accessible-people-disabilities>) and the SIGACCESS accessible conference guide (<http://www.sigaccess.org/welcome-to-sigaccess/resources/accessible-conference-guide/>).