LICS-ICALP 2020
Questionnaire Evaluation

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1 Background

The *47th International Colloquium on Automata, Languages and Programming (ICALP 2020)* had originally been planned to be held jointly with the *35th Annual ACM/IEEE Symposium on Logic in Computer Science* (LICS 2020) in Beijing (China) in the period July 8-11, 2020. Due to the COVID pandemic, it was first decided to move the conferences to *Saarland Informatics Campus* in Saarbrücken (Germany). Later it was decided to move the entire joint event online at the original dates, with satellite workshops on July 6-7. Registration was made possible for free – except for at least one paid registration per accepted paper.

2 Structure

The conference featured a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous elements using a combination of Zoom, Slack, and YouTube.

YouTube The authors of all accepted papers were invited to prerecord a video presenting their work in about 25 minutes. These videos were aggregated and uploaded to YouTube so that they were available to participants about a week prior to the conference. A separate access channel was arranged for participants from countries where YouTube is blocked. *A Best Video Award* was handed out at the conference opening – to Radoslaw Piórkowski – Congratulations! YouTube was furthermore used as a public streaming outlet for keynotes, invited tutorials, Q&A sessions, and award sessions.

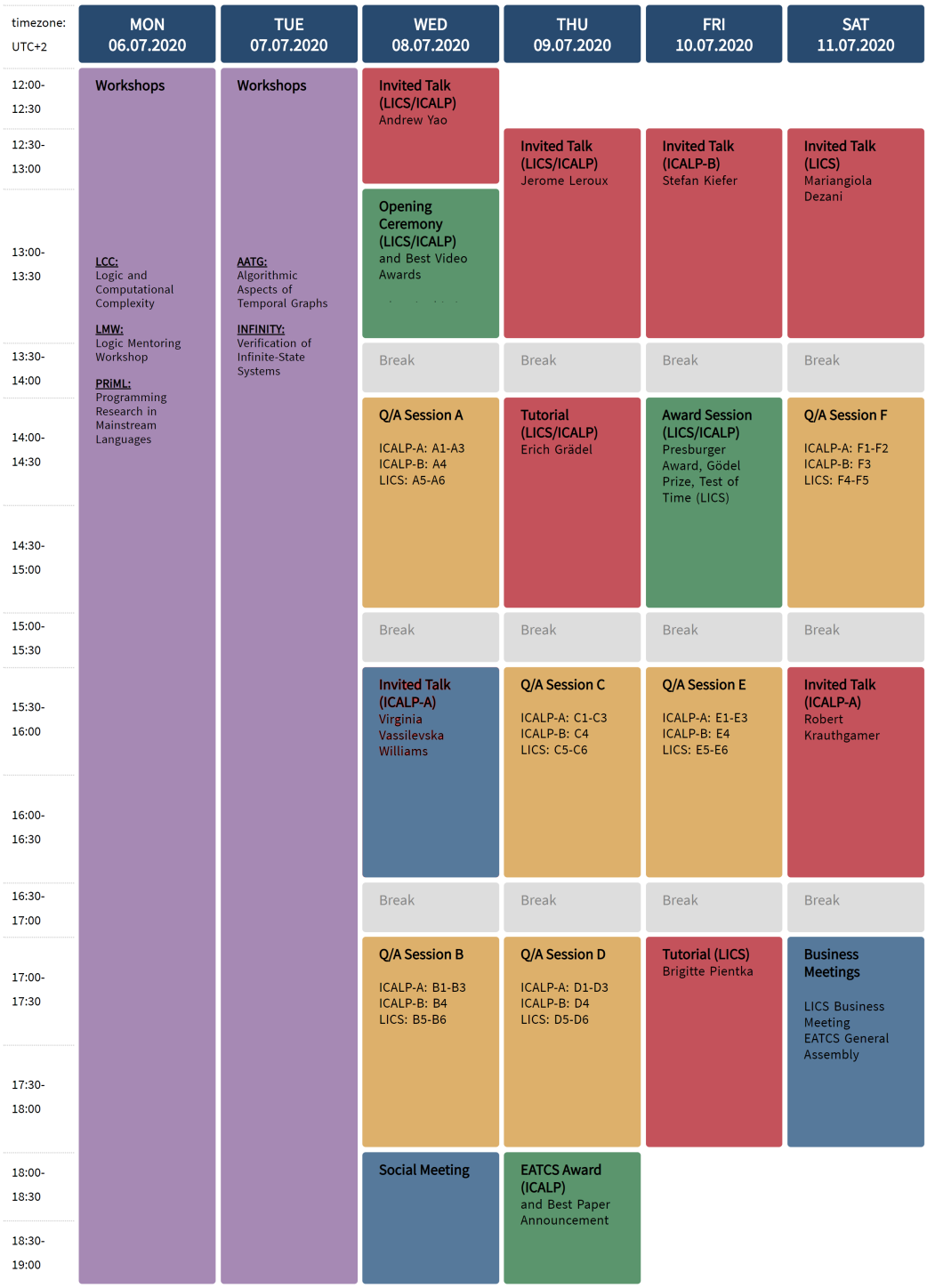


Figure 1: The structure of the programme of LICS-ICALP 2020

Slack A permanently accessible Slack workspace provided the participants with a structured way to connect to each other asynchronously, to look up non-public information (such as Zoom links), and to pose questions on specific papers or events at any time.

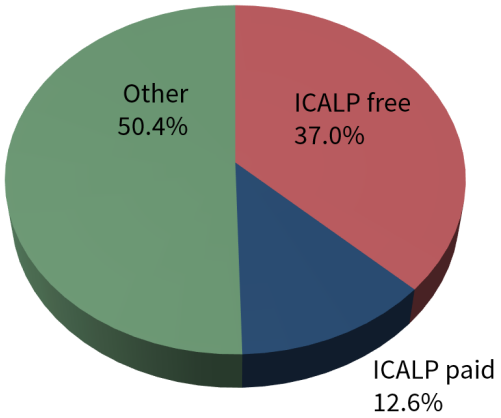
Zoom Plenary sessions and Q&A sessions were held as Zoom meetings and streamed to YouTube. The Q&A sessions ran live in 6-way parallelism. Each such session covered 6 papers and spanned one hour each. In these sessions, live 2-minute presentations of paper summaries were followed by rounds of discussion and question answering with questions either being posed live or asynchronously in Slack.

Owed to the high registration count the organisers felt the need to split the audience of the plenary sessions into a part that was asked to follow the sessions in YouTube, and a part that was invited to participate in Zoom. Preference for Zoom participation was given to paying participants and to participants residing in countries where YouTube is blocked.

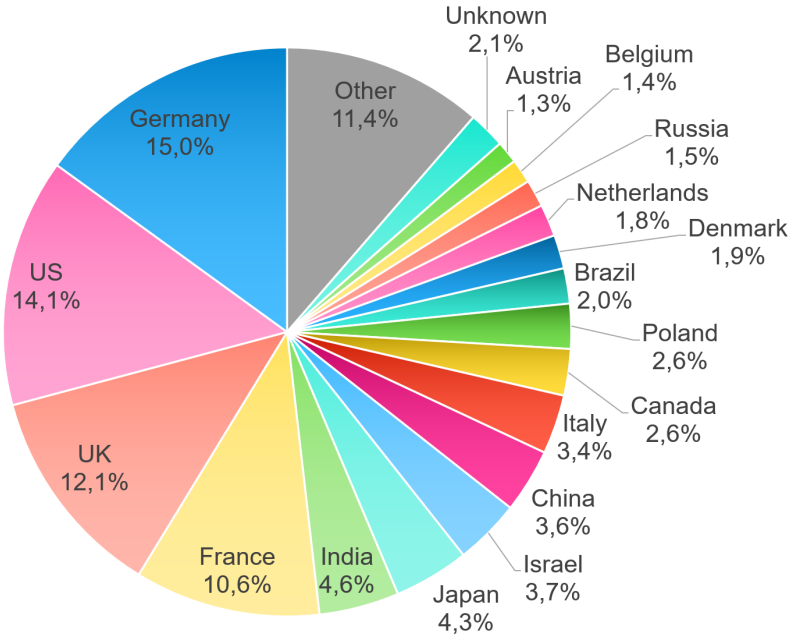
Online events were running over four days from roughly 12:30 to 18:30 in UTC+2, see Figure 1. Care was taken to guard against potential drop outs of internet connectivity, e.g. by defining backup roles for most critical roles in each session.

3 Participation

A total of 1268 registrations were received for the entire event, of which 507 were free registrations to ICALP and 172 were paid ICALP registrations.



The geographic distribution turned out to be quite diverse, with half of the participants coming from three European countries and one American country.

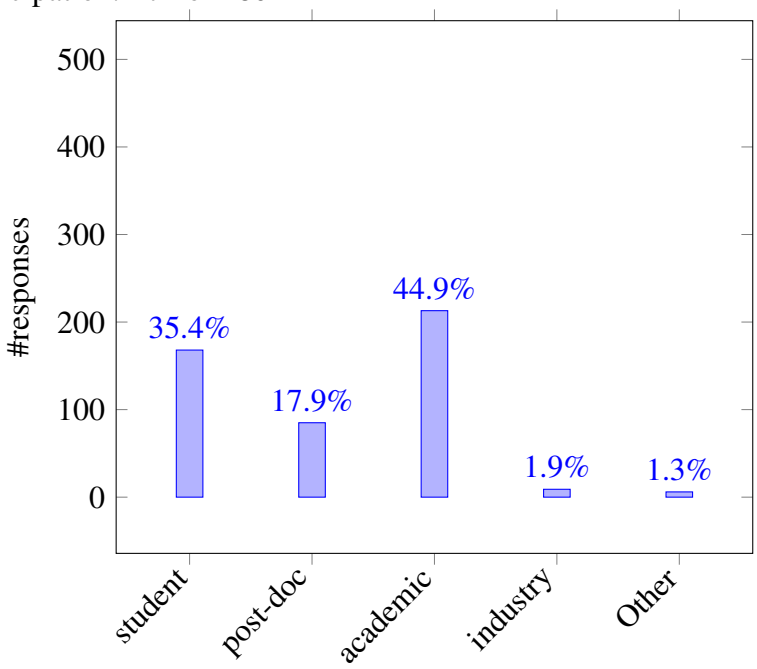


4 Questionnaire Evaluation

Right after the event, an electronic questionnaire was distributed to a total of 1262 registered participants. 480 completed questionnaires were collected. The results of this questionnaire are presented below. A total of 1092 textual comments are omitted here, but the authors of this report are open to sharing these comments upon request.

4.1 What is your current occupation?

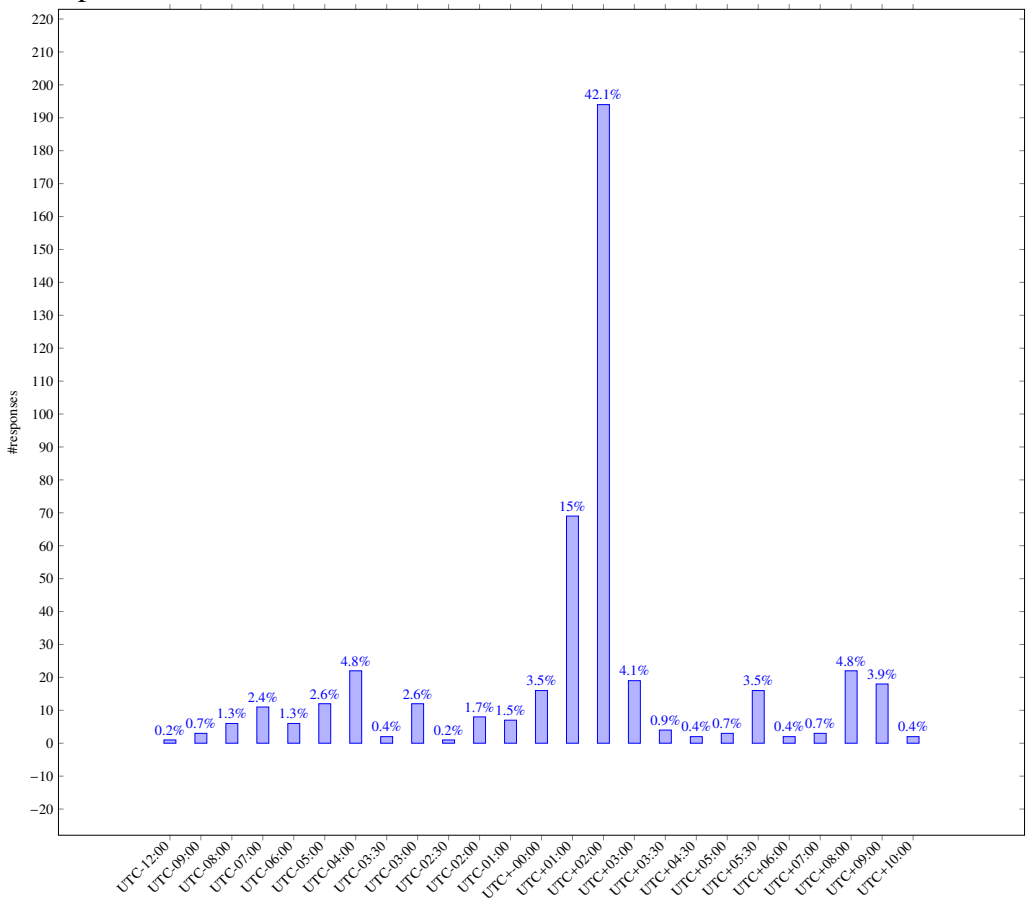
Participation: 474 of 480



Other answers: (text comments omitted)

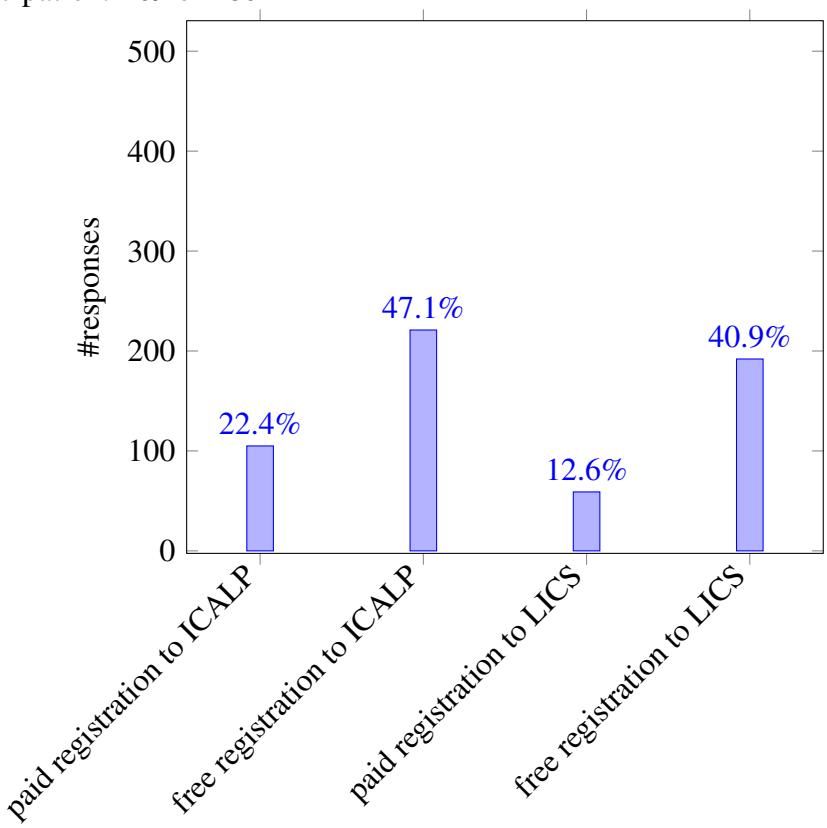
4.2 Which time zone relative to UTC were you in during the conference?

Participation: 461 of 480



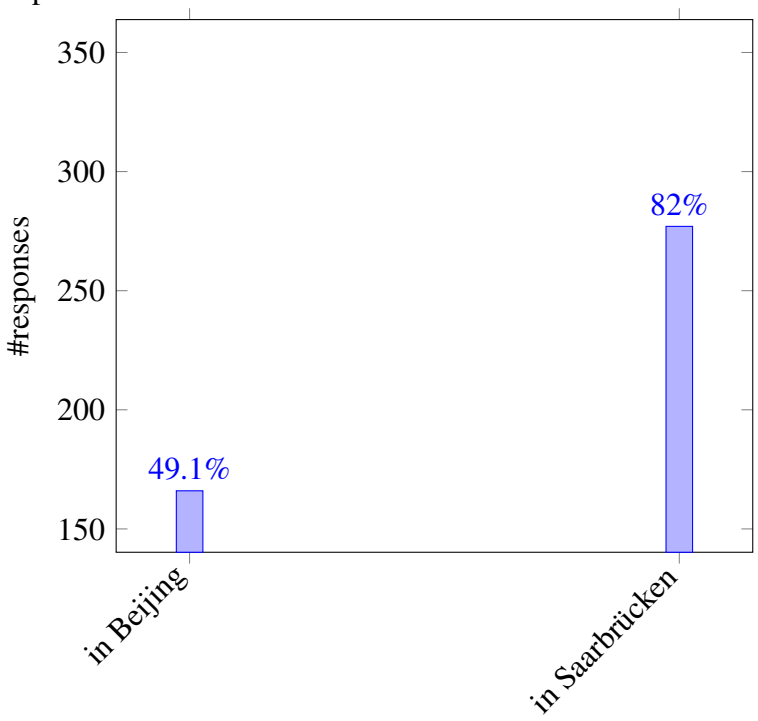
4.3 Which registration did you have?

Participation: 469 of 480



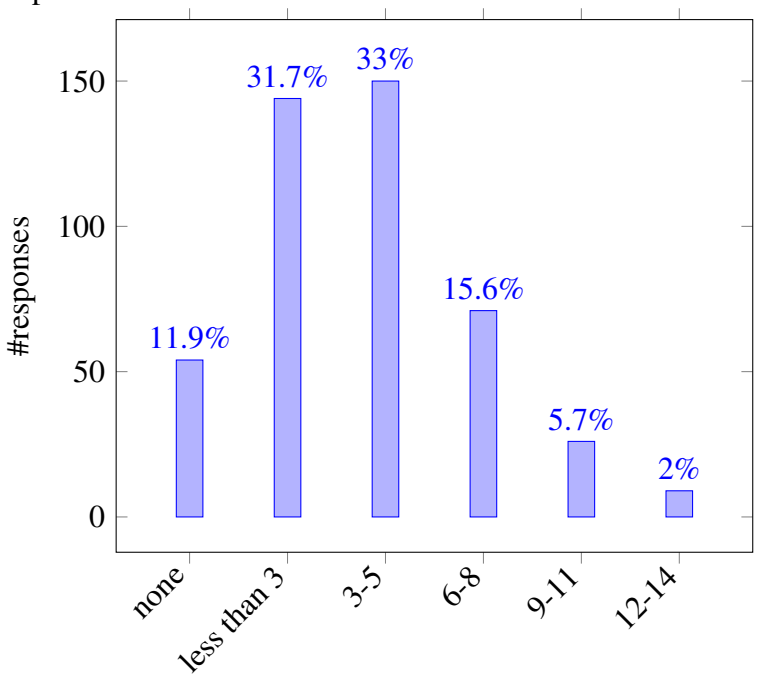
4.4 If the global pandemic did not happen, where would you have attended the conference in person?

Participation: 338 of 480



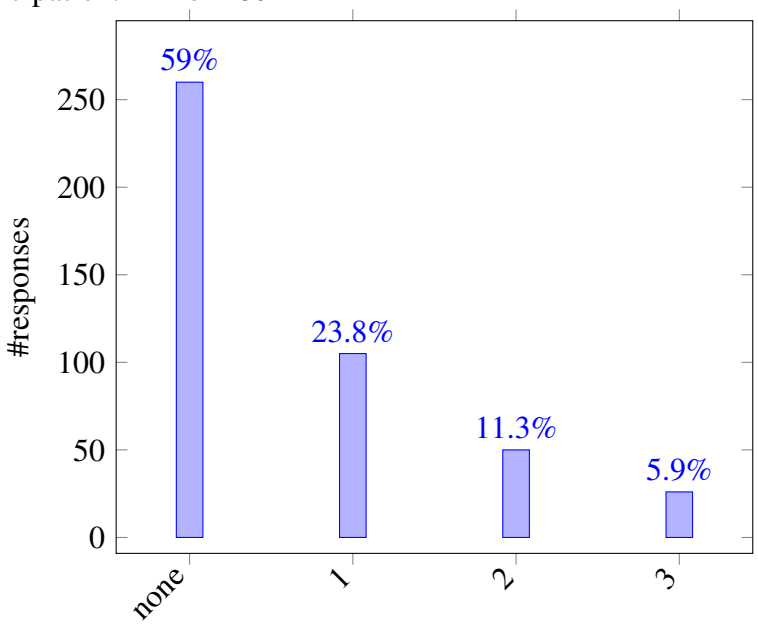
4.5 How many invited talks, tutorials and Q/A session did you attend, excluding workshops, award sessions and social events?

Participation: 454 of 480



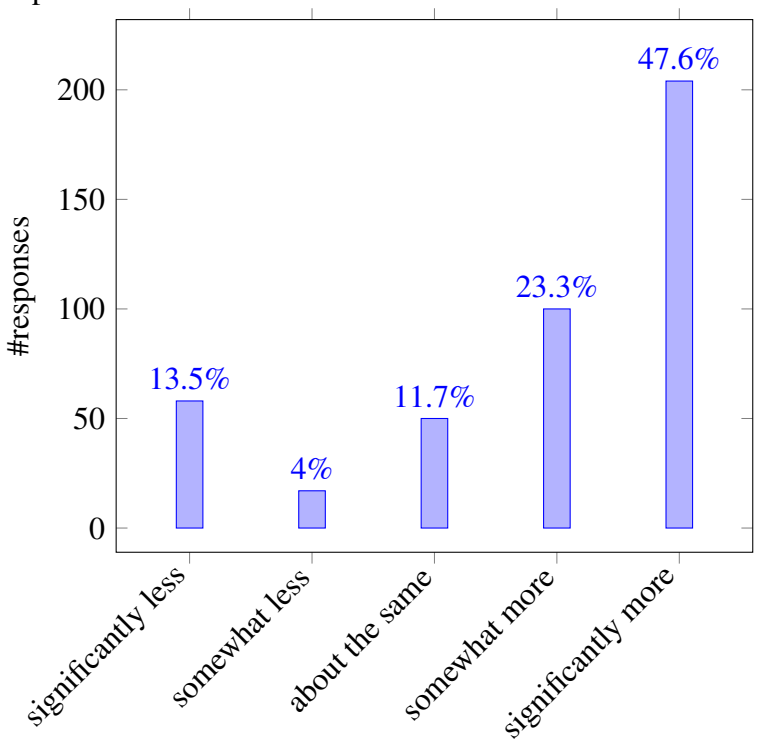
4.6 How many award sessions and social events did you attend?

Participation: 441 of 480



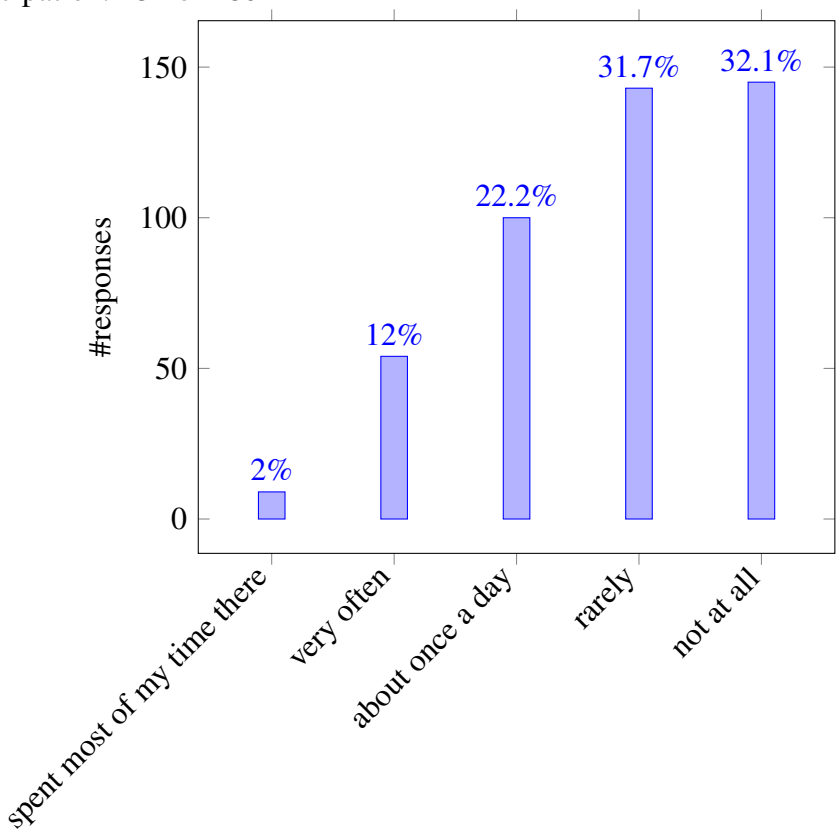
4.7 Compared to how many sessions you attended, how many sessions would you have attended if the conference had been physically located?

Participation: 429 of 480



4.8 How often did you use Slack?

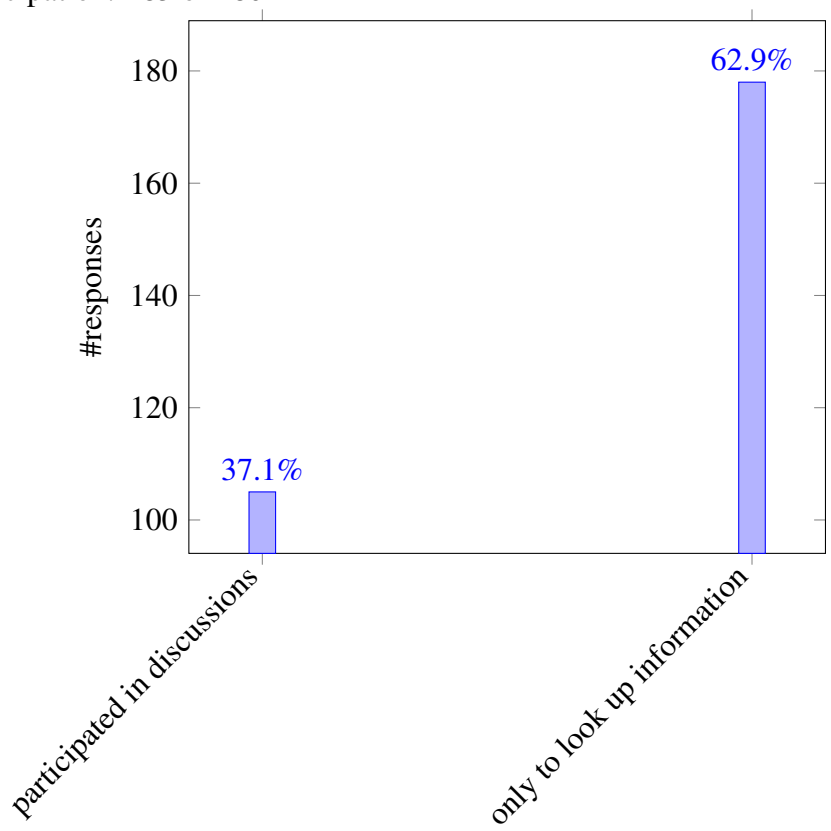
Participation: 451 of 480



Comments: (text comments omitted)

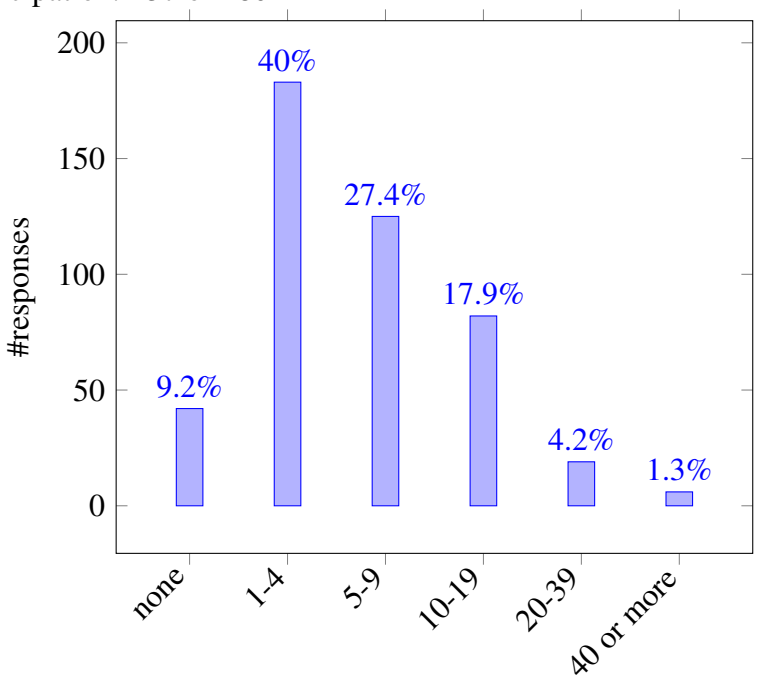
4.9 How did you use Slack?

Participation: 283 of 480



4.10 How many contributed videos did you look into on YouTube?

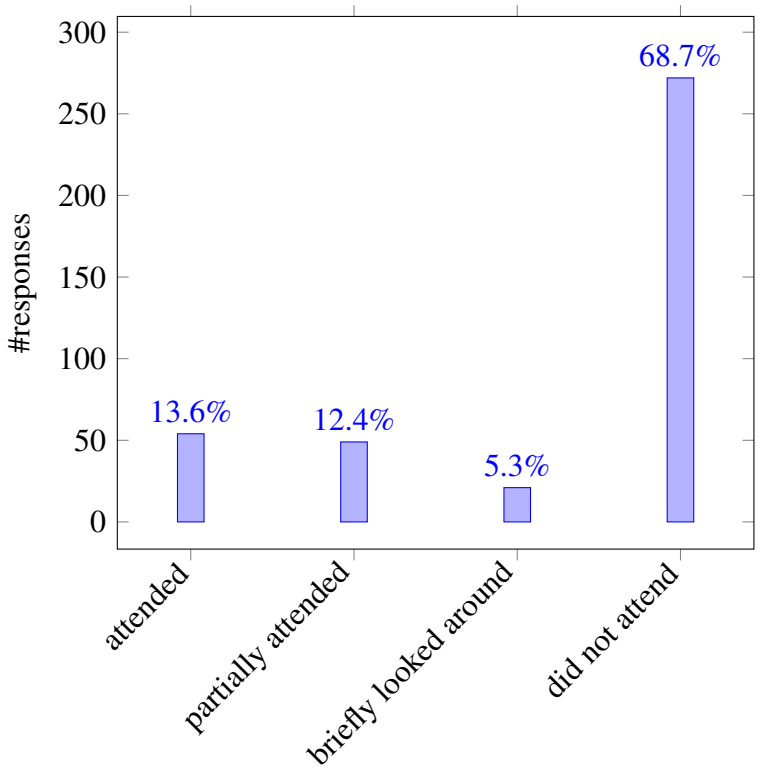
Participation: 457 of 480



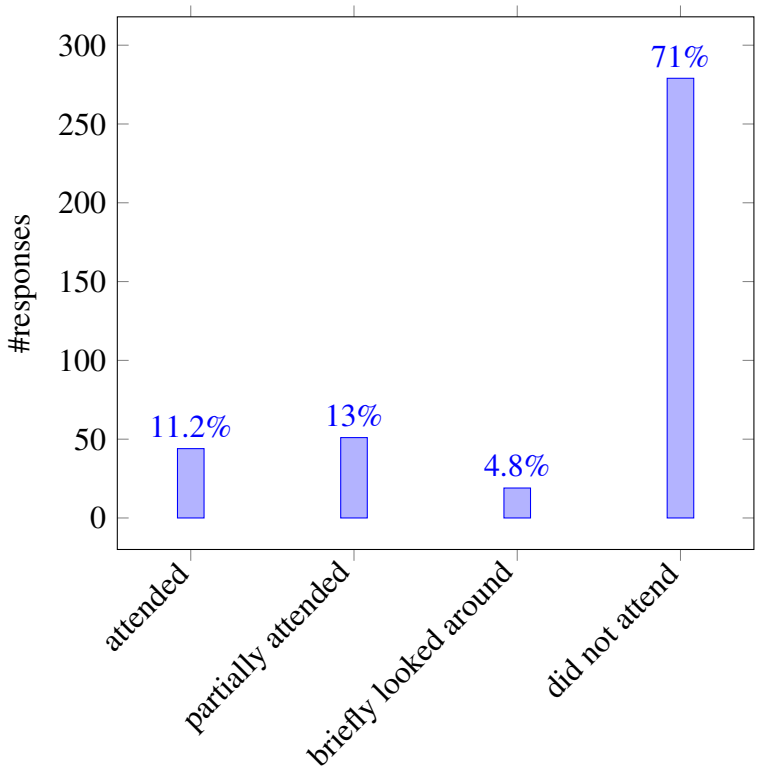
4.11 Did you attend the workshop programme?

Participation: 420 of 480

4.12 Monday (LCC, LMW, PRiML)

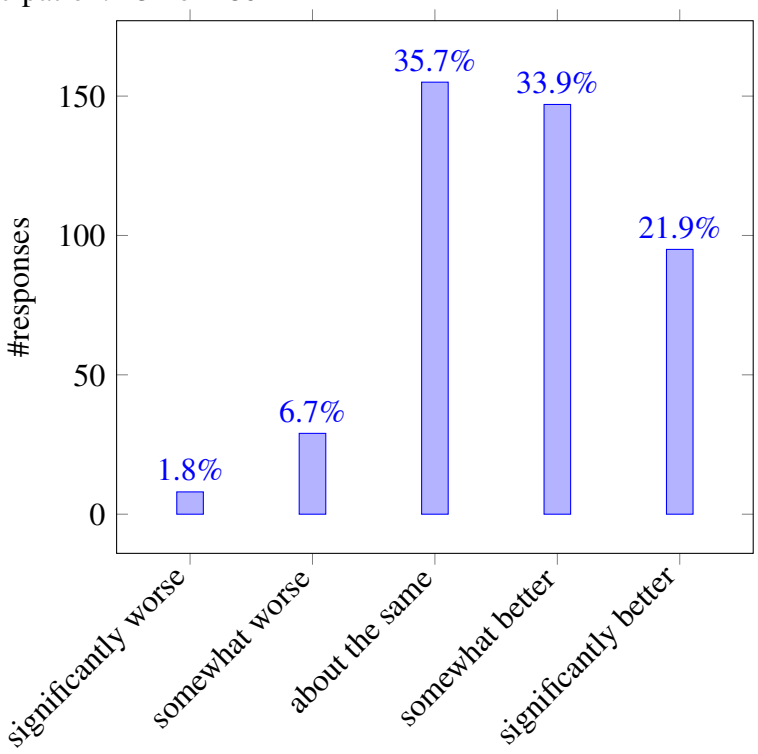


4.13 Tuesday (AATG, INFINITY)



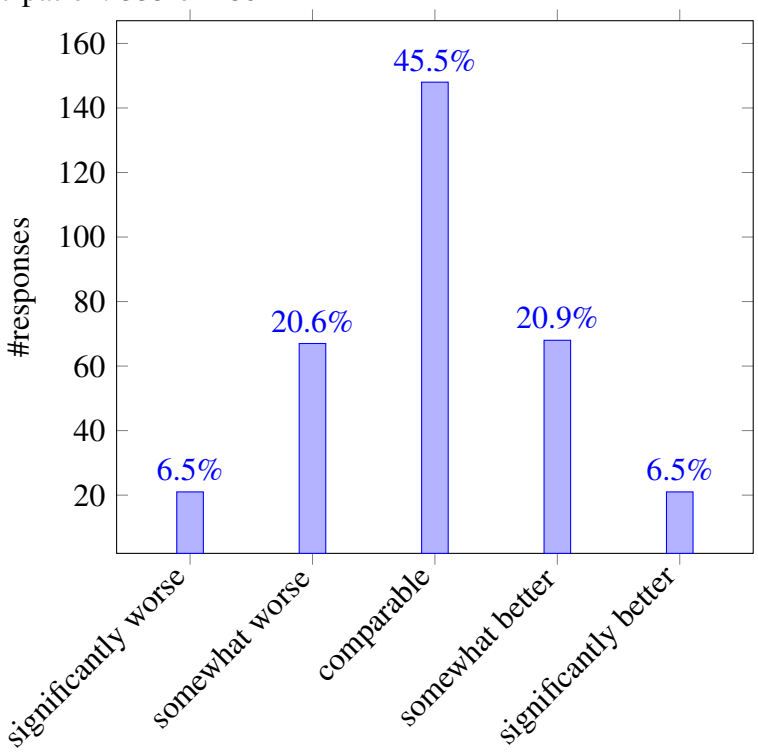
4.14 Overall, how did this online event compare *to your expectations*?

Participation: 434 of 480



4.15 How did the online keynotes, tutorials and award talks compare *to conventional events*?

Participation: 333 of 480



Comments: (text comments omitted)

4.16 Do you have additional comments on the advantages and disadvantages of an online meeting over a physical one?

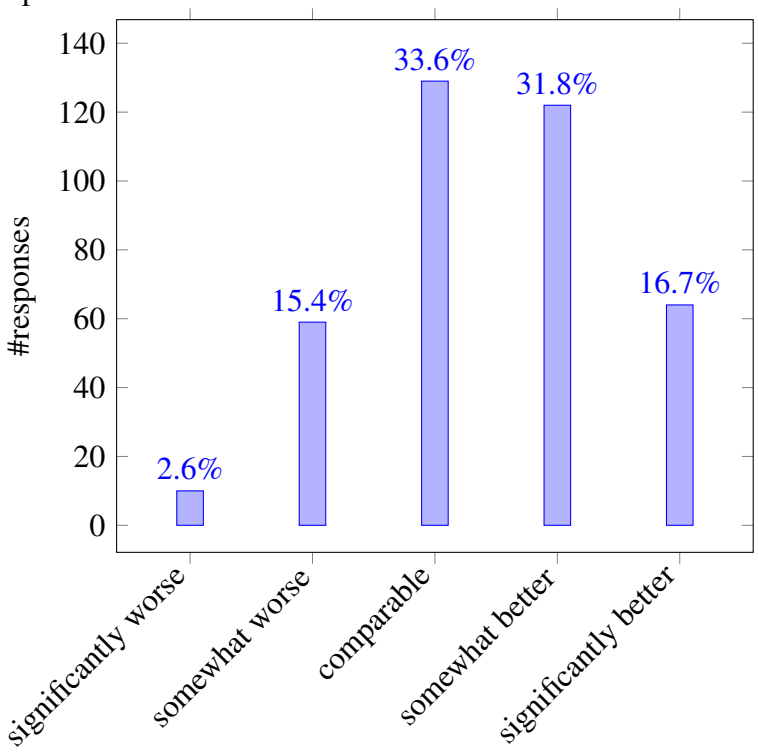
Participation: 161 of 480
(text comments omitted)

4.17 The event was run using a combination of Slack, YouTube and Zoom. How did you perceive that? Please elaborate.

Participation: 168 of 480
(text comments omitted)

4.18 How did the prerecorded video presentations compare to conventional conference talks?

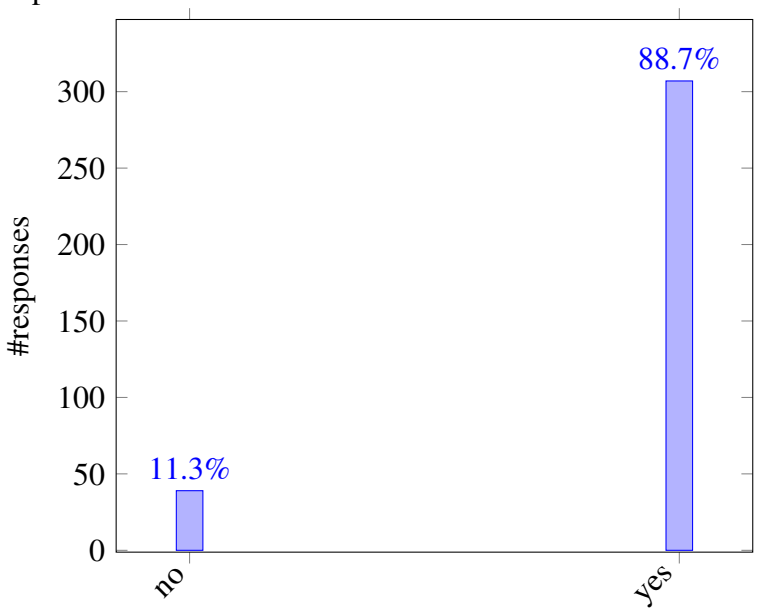
Participation: 393 of 480



Comments: (text comments omitted)

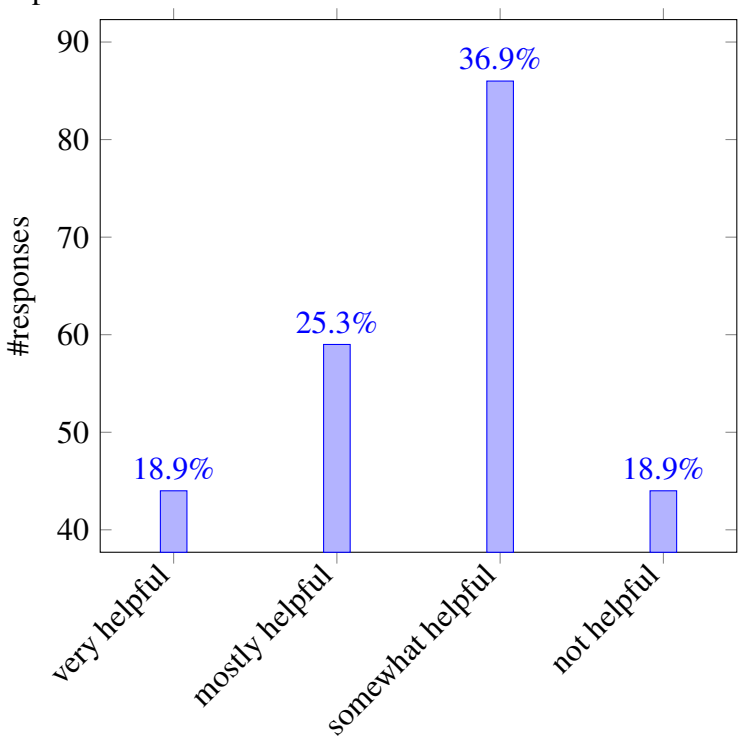
4.19 The authors made substantial efforts when recording their videos. Should long-term archival and individual DOI be arranged for the video presentations?

Participation: 346 of 480



4.20 How helpful did you find the Slack channels for asking questions when the session was not being held?

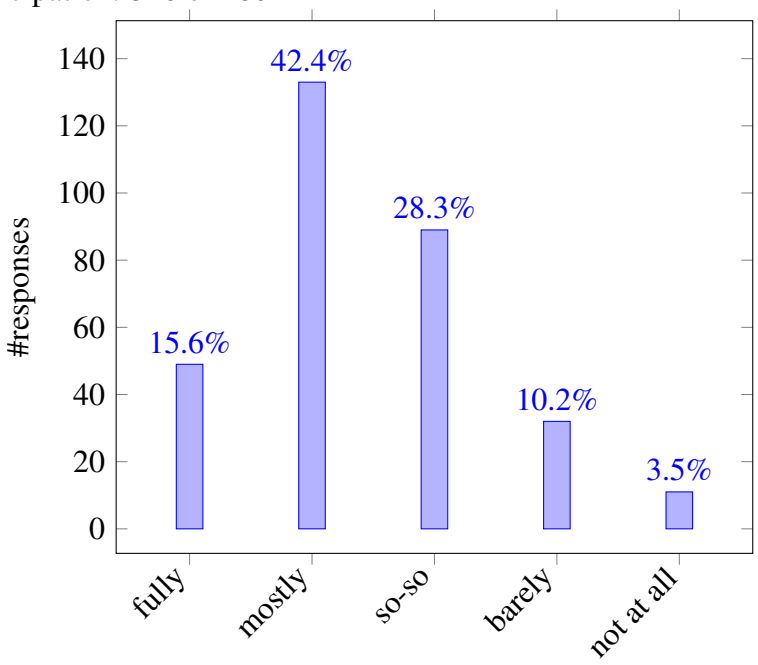
Participation: 246 of 480



Comments: (text comments omitted)

4.21 Did the interactiveness of the Q&A during sessions meet your needs and expectations?

Participation: 316 of 480



Comments: (text comments omitted)

4.22 Do you think the conference had enough options for social interaction? Please explain.

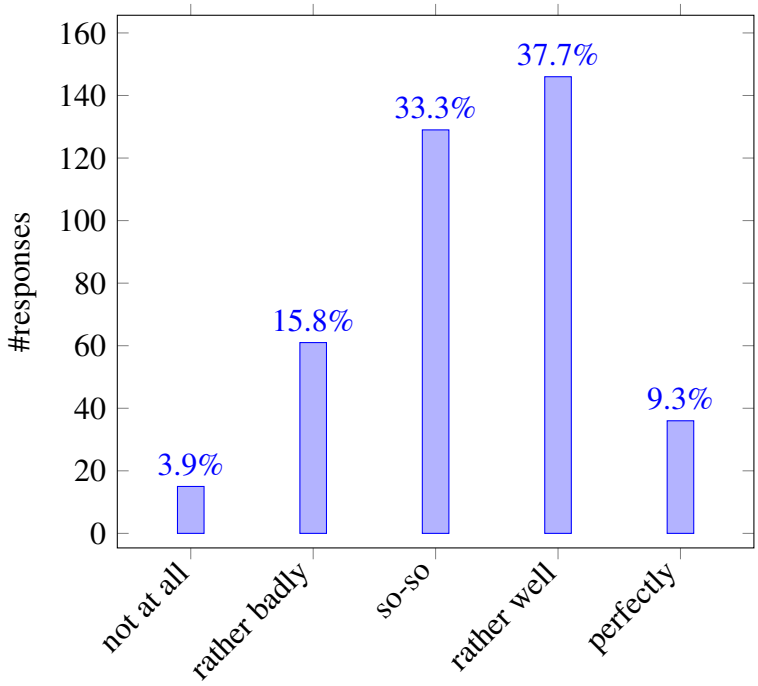
Participation: 110 of 480

(text comments omitted)

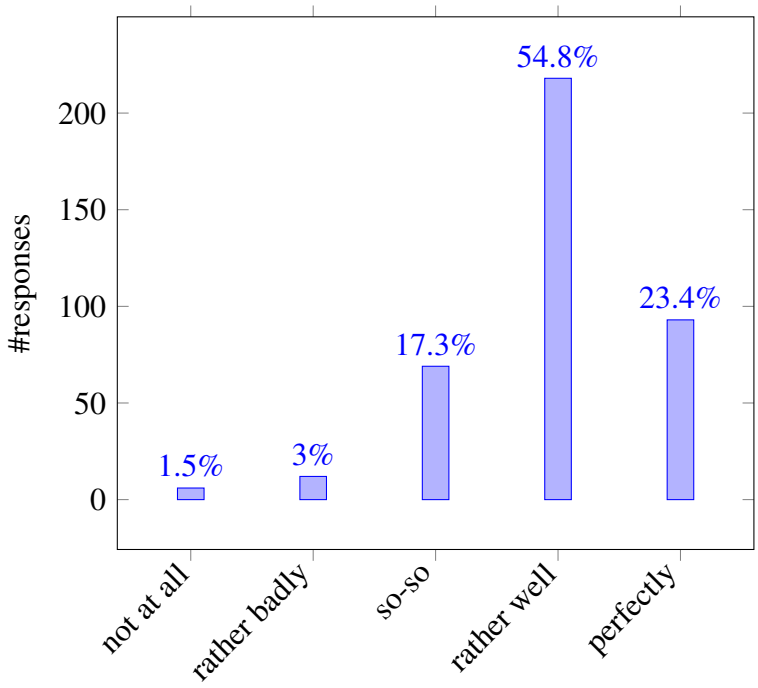
4.23 Online meetings can be fully synchronous (everything happens live), fully asynchronous (authors share prerecorded videos, questions are answered in written form), or use a mixed model (authors share prerecorded videos, discussion happens partly live). Overall, how well do you think these models work?

Participation: 404 of 480

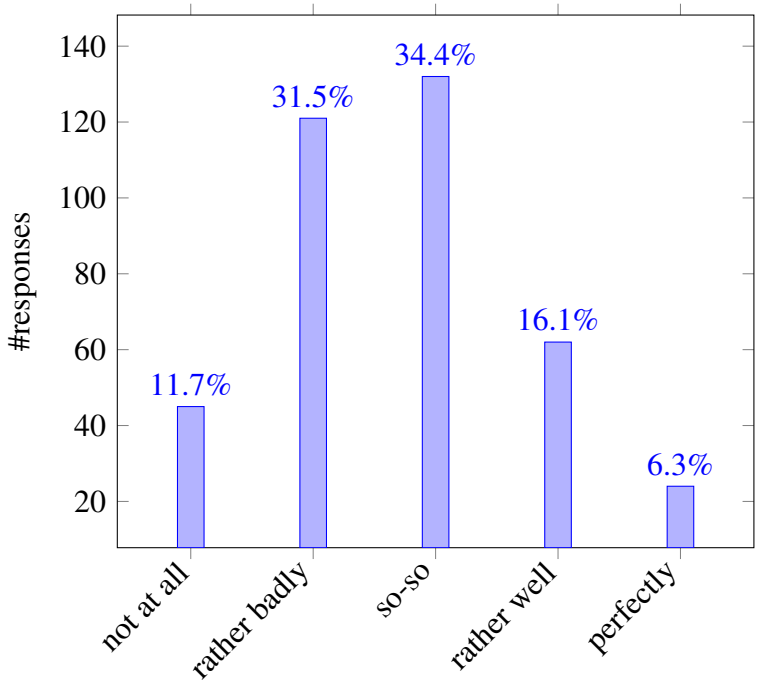
4.24 fully synchronous



4.25 mixed model

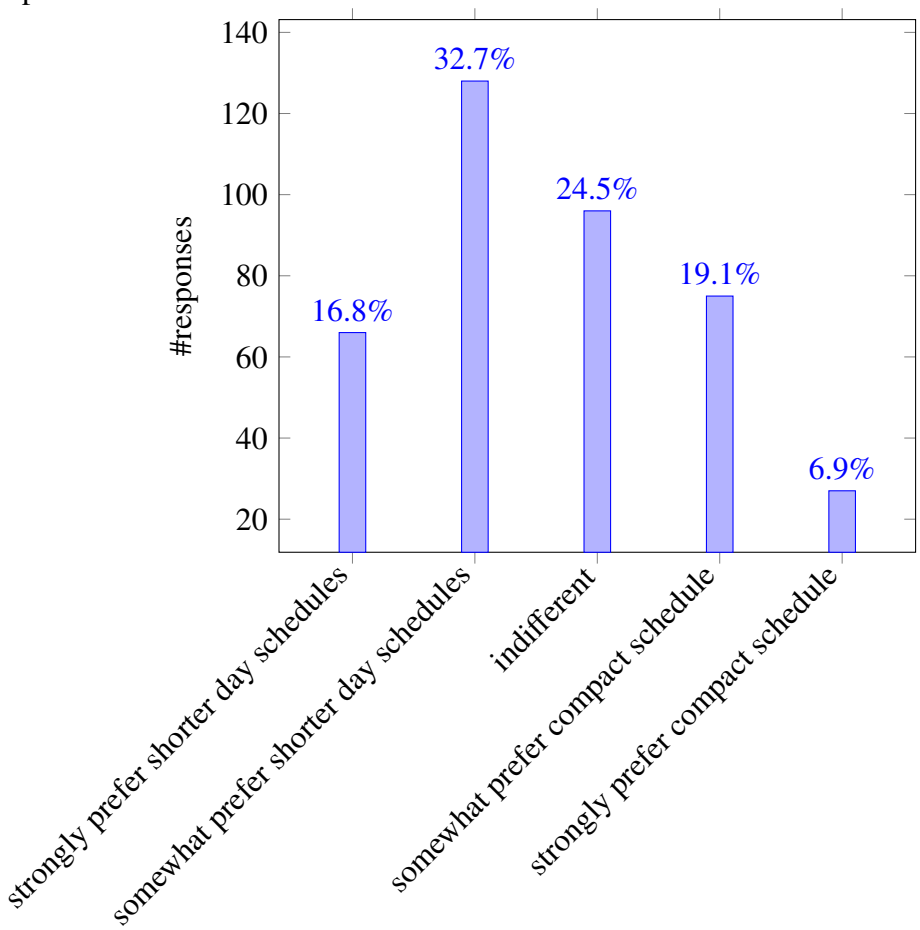


4.26 fully asynchronous



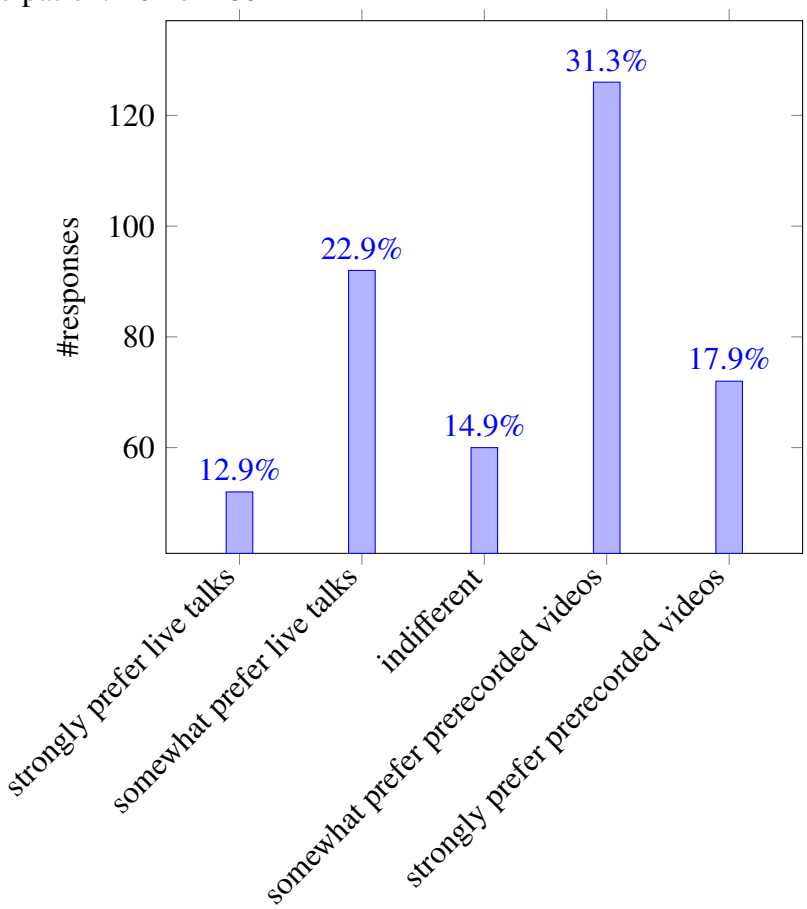
4.27 For an online conference, do you prefer shorter day schedules spread over more days, or a more compact format as we had chosen?

Participation: 392 of 480



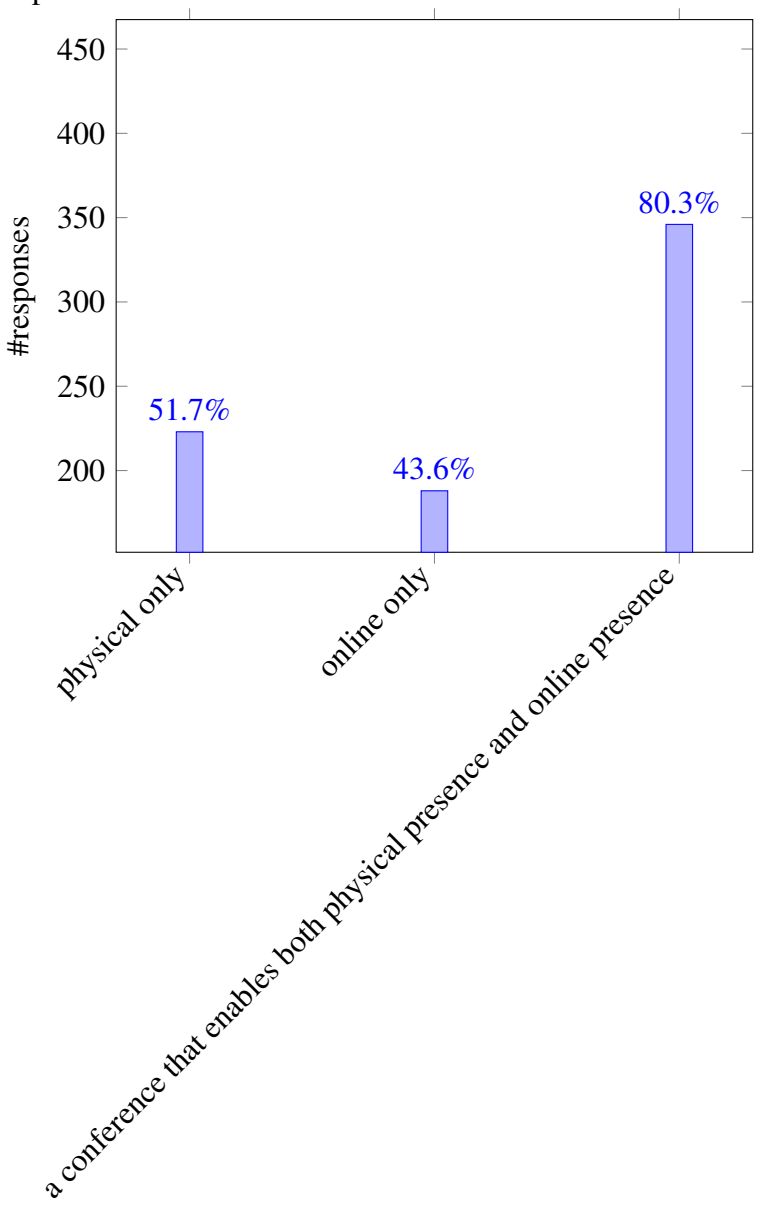
4.28 For online conferences, do you prefer short live online talks or prerecorded videos?

Participation: 402 of 480

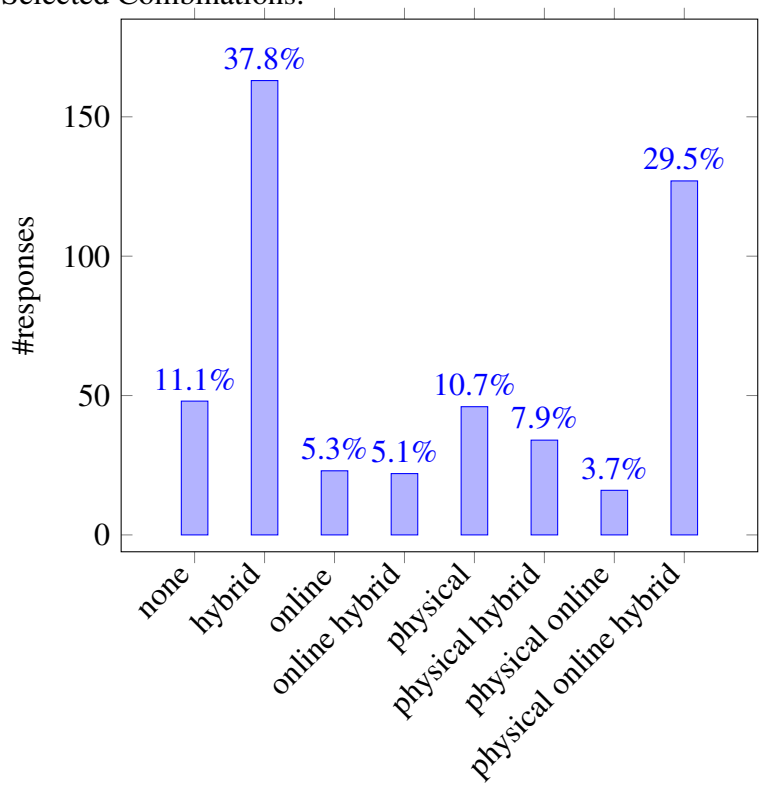


4.29 For future planning, assuming that it is safe to travel, please select all of the options that you would be willing to attend future LICS or ICALP?

Participation: 431 of 480



Selected Combinations:



4.30 When attending a conference that enables both physical presence and online presence, which considerations would go into your choice of how to attend?

Participation: 187 of 480
(text comments omitted)

4.31 Assuming we were in the same situation again, what would be your suggestions for concrete improvements to the setup used for LICS-ICALP 2020?

Participation: 122 of 480
(text comments omitted)

4.32 Do you have any further comments?

Participation: 98 of 480
(text comments omitted)

5 Conclusion

We feel that the 2020 edition of ICALP was a unique event. Its structure had to be ramped up without being able to harvest prior experience with online conferences. We hope that the statistical data presented here is helpful in the community efforts of developing further the conference experience of ICALP, of LICS, and beyond.

The event was hosted by *Saarland Informatics Campus* and would not have been possible without the generous support by Saarland University and by the *Center for Perspicuous Computing*, DFG project number 389792660.