

Tracking How the Pandemic is Affecting the Practice and Profession of Impact Assessment

Second COVID-19 and Impact Assessment Survey

INTRODUCTION

This report provides key results from the second “Impact of COVID-19 on Impact Assessment” survey conducted from 29 July to 6 August, 2020, with responses from over 700 individuals across the globe. The [International Association for Impact Assessment \(IAIA\)](#) sponsored the survey. IAIA’s first survey on this issue was conducted in June 2020, and the results are available [here](#).

This summary of key results focuses on emerging themes on the interaction of the pandemic and the policy and practice of impact assessment immediately evident from the second survey. Due to changes in the content and presentation of some questions and the way responses were collected, a statistical comparison of results between the first and second survey is not possible at this time. IAIA will release additional analysis of the second survey results and comparison with the first survey over the coming months.

For this second survey conducted in July/August, 42% of the respondents were female, 62% were 54 and younger, and 63% were involved in environmental impact assessment. Additional demographics are available at the end of this report.

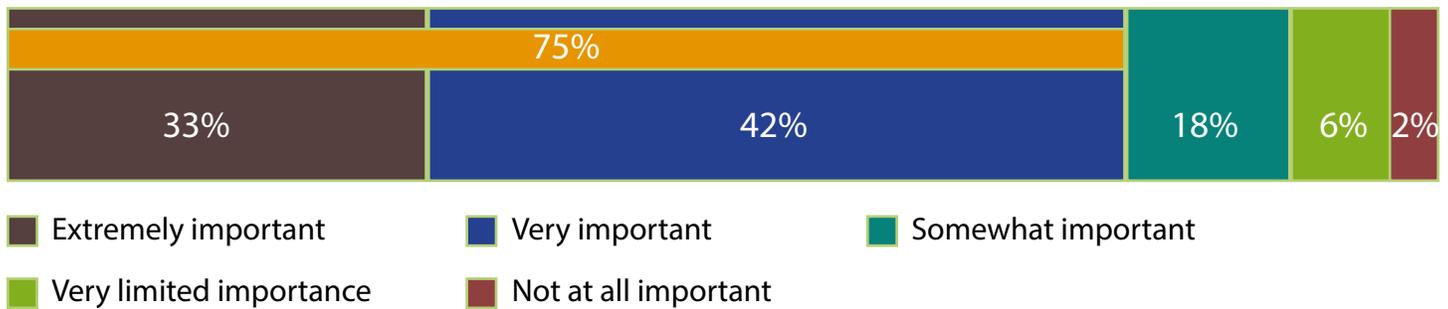
IAIA defines impact assessment as identifying the future consequences of a current or proposed action. It is a practical tool to help meet today’s needs without compromising the opportunities of future generations. Assessment of the environmental, social, economic, cultural, and health implications for proposals is a critical contribution to sound decision making processes, and to equitable and sustainable development.

COVID-19 AND THE USE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The second survey highlighted **pressure to bypass impact assessment rules and regulations**, but it also highlights expectations that impact assessment can support efforts to help countries recover from the economic and social effects of COVID-19.

Of those responding to the second survey, **75% considered it very or extremely important** to use the impact assessment processes to evaluate and provide oversight of proposed COVID-19 recovery programs and projects.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE USE OF IA PROCESSES IN EVALUATION AND OVERSIGHT OF PROPOSED COVID-19 RECOVERY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS?



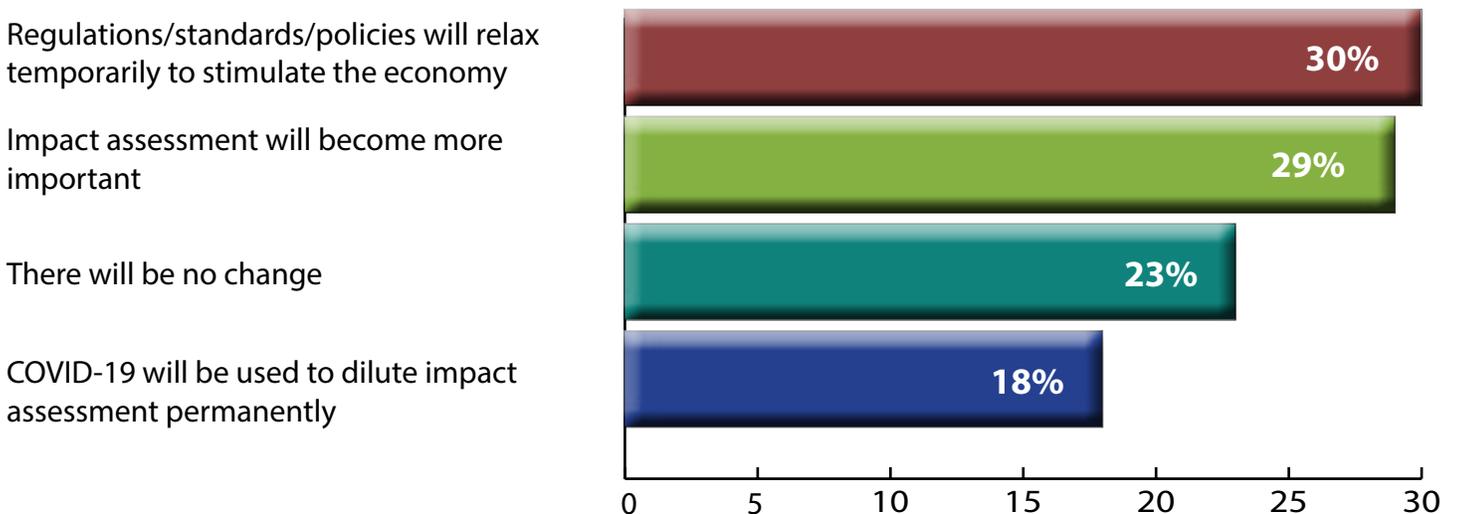
Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that, as a result of COVID-19, **impact assessment laws and regulations have been or are proposed to be relaxed.**

HOW HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL RULES AND REGULATIONS IN THE COUNTRY WHERE YOU WORK CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC?

The Government has...		
Formally bypassed or proposes to bypass environmental rules and regulations based on the pandemic, but these changes are being legally contested.	8%	} 45%
Formally bypassed environmental rules and regulations based on the pandemic.	16%	
Proposed, but not enacted, changes to environmental rules and regulations based on the pandemic.	21%	
Enacted/proposed no changes to existing environmental rules and regulations in response to the pandemic.	56%	

Close to 25% of respondents in the second survey expected there would be **no change in impact assessment procedures**, while close to **30% indicated that impact assessment would become more important.**

HOW DO YOU BELIEVE THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES WILL CHANGE - OR HAVE ALREADY CHANGED - AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



A plurality of respondents indicated that promoting integrated impact assessment was the most important way that impact assessment could reduce future disease outbreaks.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU SEE AS MOST IMPORTANT IN HOW IMPACT ASSESSMENT CAN REDUCE THE RISK OF FUTURE DISEASE OUTBREAKS?

Possible Responses	2 ND SURVEY
Promote integrated impact assessment, interdisciplinary assessment, and cumulative effects, taking a holistic approach and using systemic thinking with a focus on social-environment interactions.	34%
Expand environmental impact assessment to encompass risk assessment, risk adaptation, risk preparedness and prevention, preparedness and response plans.	17%
Conduct health impact assessments or expand health impact assessment within normal environmental impact assessments.	13%
Provide training, capacity building, shared experiences, awareness, and information dissemination on impact assessment and disease.	12%
Improve social impact assessment to better include health issues.	9%
Expand environmental impact assessment to include early warning systems and use predictive models as part of an anticipatory and preventive approach.	4%
Work with health professionals on assessing health impacts.	3%
Focus on resilient infrastructure and communities.	5%
Advocate and otherwise engage in reducing disease risks and influence policy.	2%

THE PANDEMIC AND THE WORK OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The pandemic **continues to affect impact assessment work**. Various ongoing **adjustments to work to address the limitations imposed by the pandemic** were also reported.

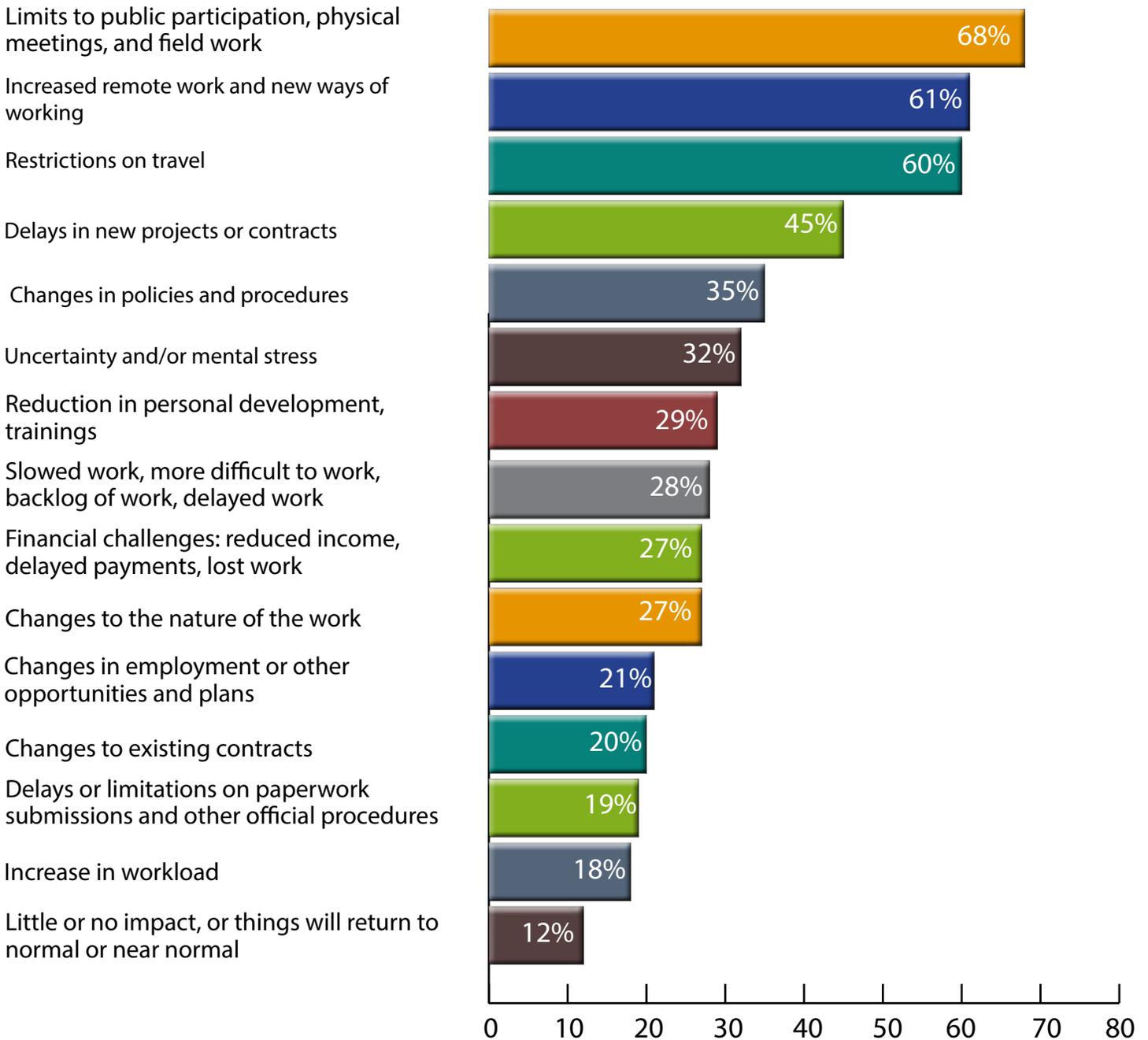
Forty-nine percent of respondents in the second survey reported they were still away from their normal work site. **Twenty-two percent reported to have returned to work after earlier having left work sites.**

Remote work remains important: Of the 410 respondents who were employers, 60% of them reported having employees working remotely.

In the second survey, respondents reported that **COVID-19 continued to impose limitations on travel and on-site meetings.**

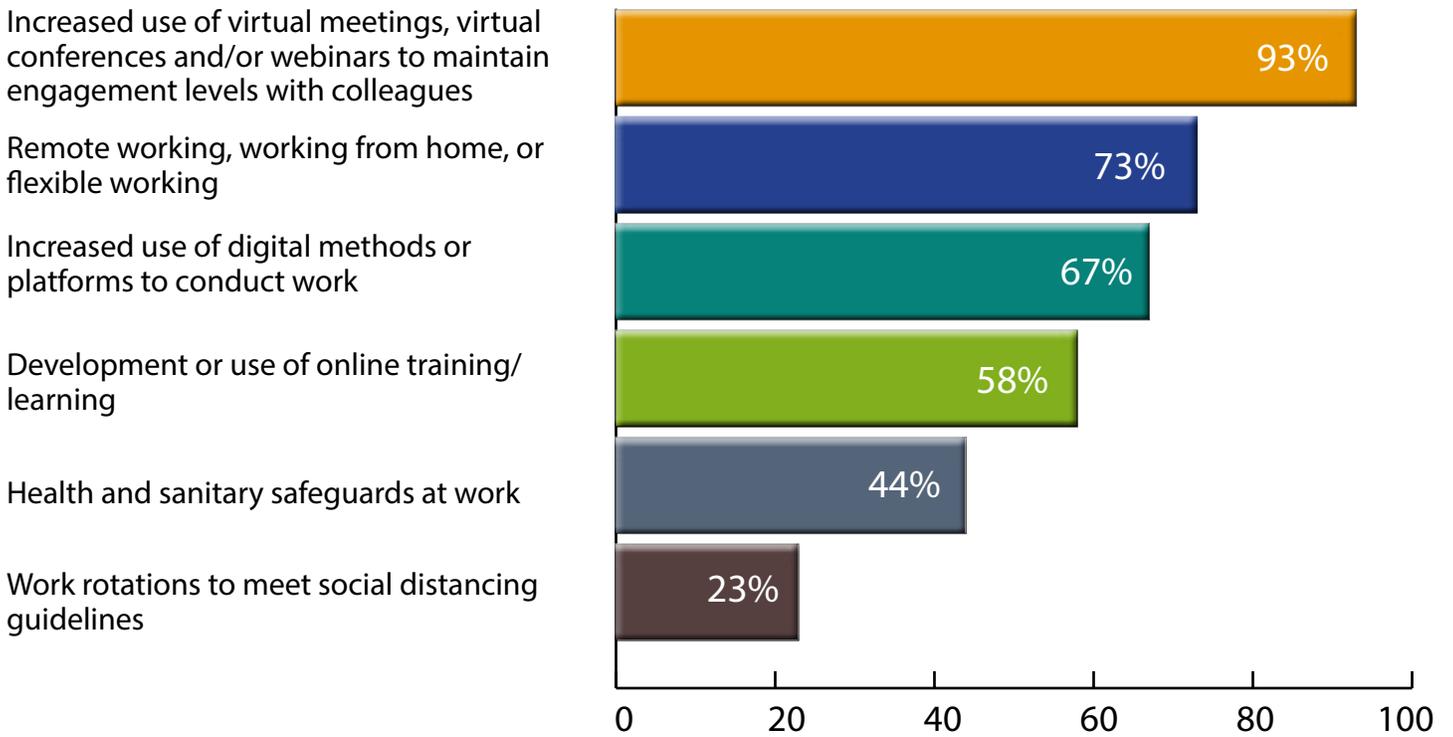
HOW DO YOU EXPECT THE PANDEMIC TO AFFECT YOUR WORK OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS?¹

Please note: response options for this question were presented as a list where respondents could select more than one. This differs from the first survey where it was an open-ended question, and thus, results on this question are not comparable between the first and second surveys.



¹ Respondents were able to select more than one response.

WHAT ARE YOUR NEW WAYS OF WORKING DUE TO THE PANDEMIC?²



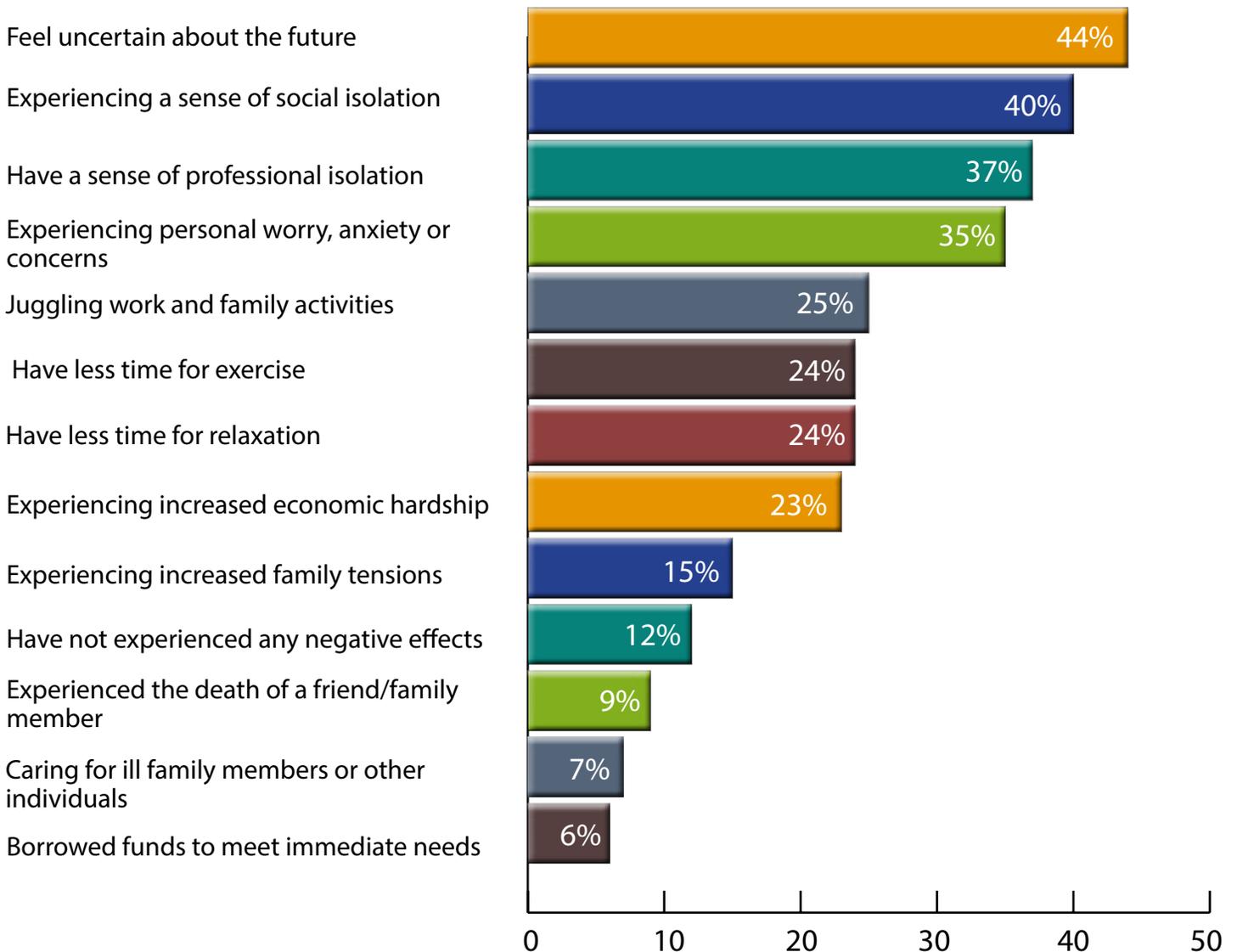
² Respondents were able to select more than one response.

THE PANDEMIC AND PERSONAL LIFE

Based on the second survey responses, **more than a third of respondents expressed various indicators of pandemic-related stress:**

- Concerns about the future (44% of respondents)
- Sense of social isolation (40% of respondents)
- Sense of professional isolation (37% of respondents)
- Worry and anxiety (35% of respondents)

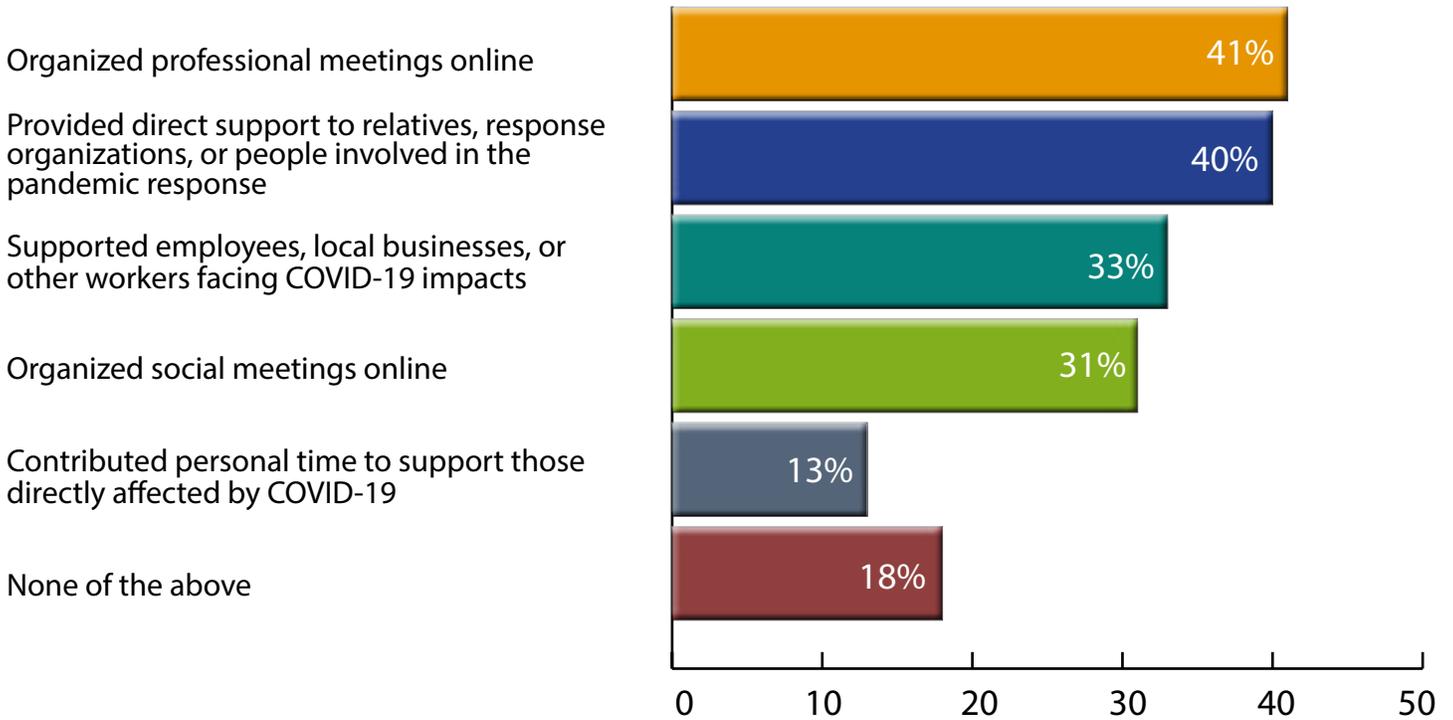
WHAT HAS BEEN THE PERSONAL IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC? ³



³ Respondents were able to select more than one response.

Respondents reported being active in supporting those affected by the pandemic (e.g., 40% providing aid to those affected) **and using online platforms to engage professionally and socially** (41% and 31% of respondents, respectively).

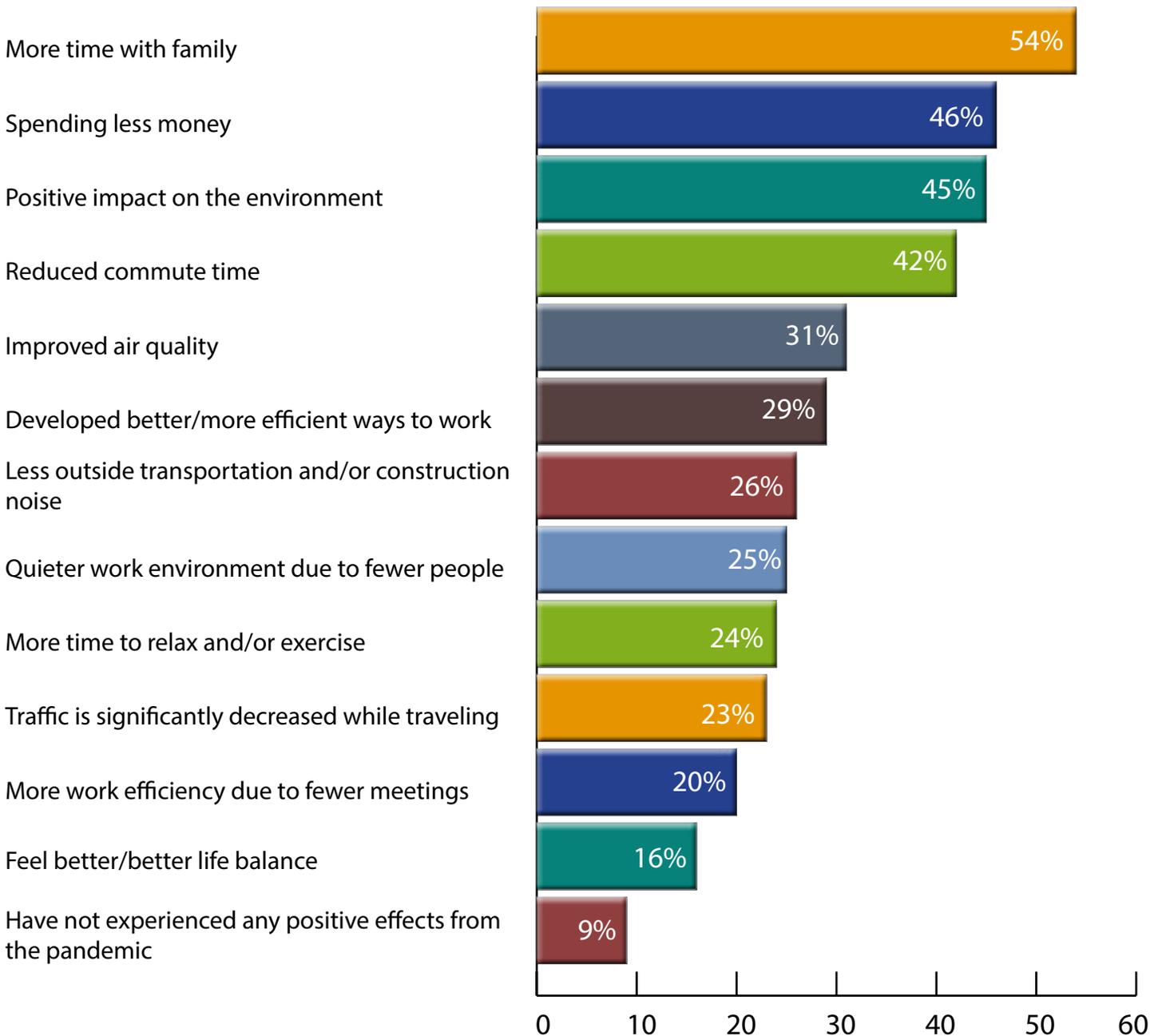
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN HELPING TO RESPOND TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?⁴



⁴ Respondents were able to select more than one response.

Respondents noted a range of **positive impacts as a result of the pandemic**, both socially (e.g., 54% reported having more time to spend with family) and environmentally (e.g., 45% reporting a positive impact on the environment).

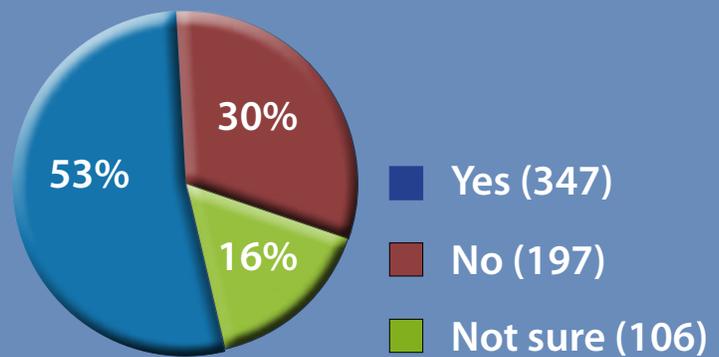
WHAT HAVE BEEN THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC?⁵



⁵ Respondents were able to select more than one response.

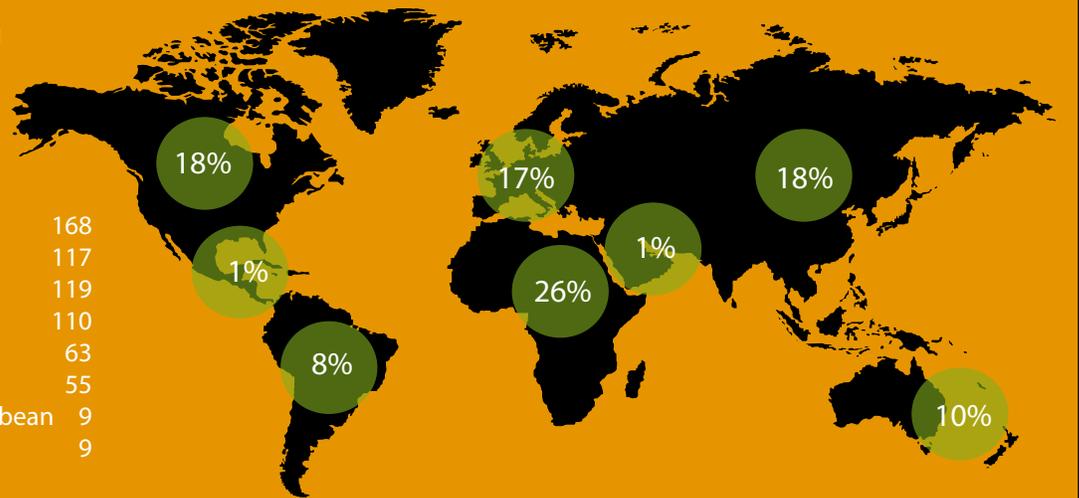
2nd IAIA COVID-19 Survey Demographics

Are you currently a member of IAIA?

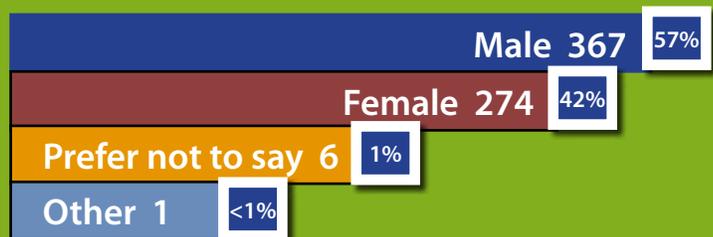


In what region do you live?

Africa	168
Asia	117
North America	119
Europe	110
Australia and Oceania	63
South America	55
Central America and the Caribbean	9
Middle East	9



What is your self-identified gender?



What is your age group?

