

LASA2015 Survey Report

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As with previous LASA International Congresses, participants were asked to complete an online survey that collected demographic information and respondents' preferences on certain topics and measured the overall experience during the last Congress in Puerto Rico. Seven-hundred and ninety-eight participants responded, representing 16 percent of all LASA2015 participants (an 11 percent increase over 2014).

The three survey categories were demographics, LASA2015, and future Congresses.

Demographics

A little more than half of the respondents were from the United States and Canada, while 39 percent were from Latin America. A majority was involved in research (55 percent) and education (37 percent) or a mix of both. Regarding Congress attendance, 36 percent of the respondents were first timers to the Congress (3 percent higher than last year). Thank you for joining us! On the other hand, 25 percent of the respondents have been to more than five LASA Congresses; thank you for your loyalty! Most participants attended

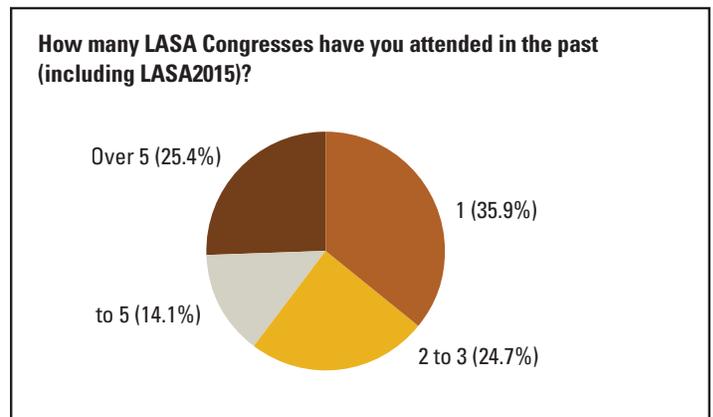
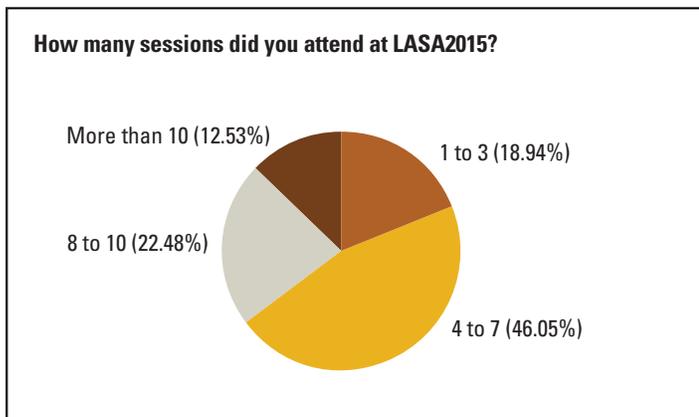
between four and seven sessions during the Congress; this can be due to requiring a lunch break, having an overload of sessions, or being turned away from some very popular sessions due to space, as captured in our feedback. We apologize if this was the case for you. In the spirit of inclusiveness, the hotel opened additional meeting rooms for us (the same as in 2006), but some of these spaces turned out to be not ideal. Thank you for your patience with this, and we will seek to correct this problem in the future. Regarding the number of simultaneous sessions, with the 50th anniversary of LASA around the corner, we may not have a decrease in sessions due to an increasing number of proposals and our desire to allow more participation at LASA Congresses. However, we hope you continue to find the Congresses rewarding regardless of the size.

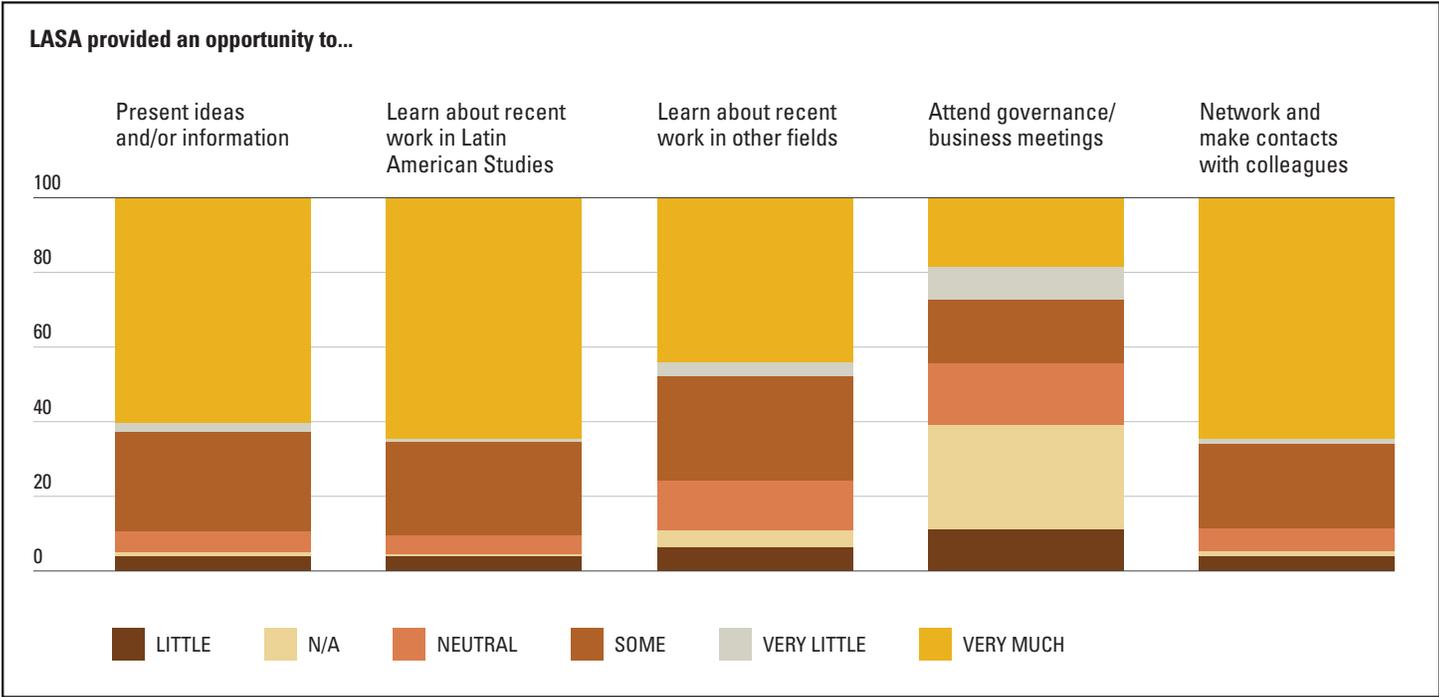
LASA2015

Besides the complications of the small meeting rooms, participants were very satisfied with the Congress's sessions. As in previous years, it was noted that panels on similar topics occurred at the same times. Although a review is completed to

correct overlaps before closing the final schedule, it is nearly impossible to resolve all conflicts, especially with the limited amount of space available. LASA does ensure that there is no overlap in presenters' participations. We will continue to attempt to correct all these issues in LASA2016. We are happy to confirm, based on responses, that LASA's Congresses still provide an opportunity to learn about recent work in Latin America, to present ideas, to learn about recent work in other fields, and to network with colleagues.

Overall, 81 percent of the participants were satisfied with LASA2015, 9 percent were neutral, and 10 percent were dissatisfied. This was an increase of 5 percent over last year's satisfaction rate. This year, like last year, we collected feedback on the registration process and the LASA application; 61 percent of our respondents used the LASA2015 application on their phones/tablets (a 12 percent increase over last year). The most recommended improvement on the application is the need for better maps, which we will work with the hotels to obtain. Regarding registration, we were delighted to see that many members were satisfied with the fast process, and we apologize for the lack of materials at hand. One of the main





challenges we experienced, with the Congress being on an island, was that the boat with our materials went missing. We will continue to seek local materials to avoid this in the future.

We at LASA are very grateful to our faithful sponsors and to the endowment fund, which continue year after year to provide partial travel grants to our participants. We were able to sponsor over 500 participants this year, and we were also happy to see that at least 65 percent of the survey respondents were partly reimbursed by their institutions or other funding to attend the LASA Congress.

Future Congresses

Around 56 percent of the survey respondents are planning to attend LASA2016 in New York, New York. We are definitely excited about our upcoming Congress, themed “LASA at 50.” LASA2016 will be held in the Hilton Midtown Manhattan Hotel, very near Central Park, Times Square, and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). We also consider alliances with local universities (which is the second most popular venue),

in each host city and may be able to secure this alternative for LASA2017.

In response to our request for suggestions, we received 192 comments, which mostly centered on Congress location, high costs, problems with meeting spaces, and absenteeism.

- *Congress location and high costs:* Suggestions were made to alternate between Latin American countries and the United States, and to host the events in a central area where food and hotel options are many and thus more affordable (unlike the Caribe Hilton). The Hilton Midtown Manhattan will provide many alternative food locations nearby, and we continue to negotiate with hotels in the area to keep lodging affordable (considering NYC rates). For 2017 we are finalizing our contract with a Latin American venue and we will post this information as soon as it is available.
- *Discontent with the sessions’ locations and absenteeism.* Some of the meeting rooms in the Caribe Hilton were not ideal for the panels, and for this we apologize. We will continue to ensure that we have enough space of the quality required. Regarding participants not attending the

Congress without cancelling their participation, we have tried to control this by requiring preregistration from everyone attending to ensure their commitment and to avoid sessions being cancelled at the last minute and/or participants being unable to present. We have also encouraged participants who have registered to notify LASA if they are unable to attend the Congress, so that we can accommodate their colleagues in other panels, if possible, to permit them to present. LASA is only as good as the knowledge we have, so we implore everyone to please honor your colleagues with the seriousness of your commitment to the Congress and make sure you do not leave them stranded. Working together we can all make sure that this association continues to provide the opportunities that scholars in the Latin American field need and deserve.

We thank all those who took the time to complete the survey. Your feedback helps us improve by acknowledging situations that we may have not been aware of, and thus allows us to focus on our members and their needs. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or further suggestions. We hope to see you at LASA2016! ■