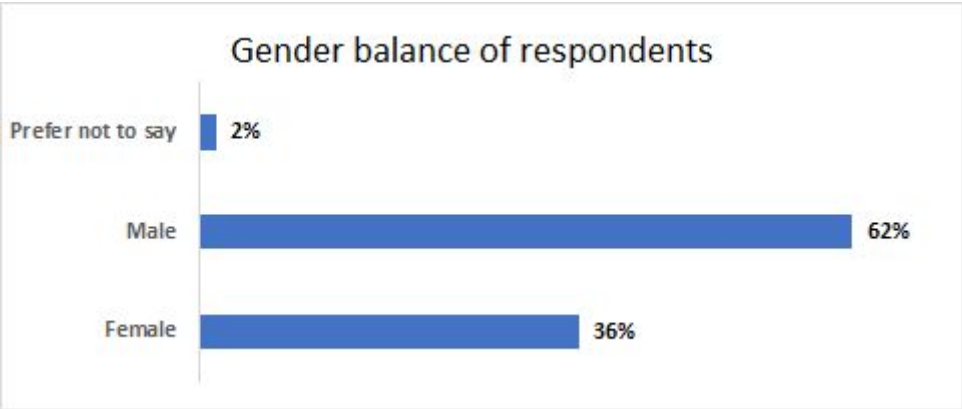
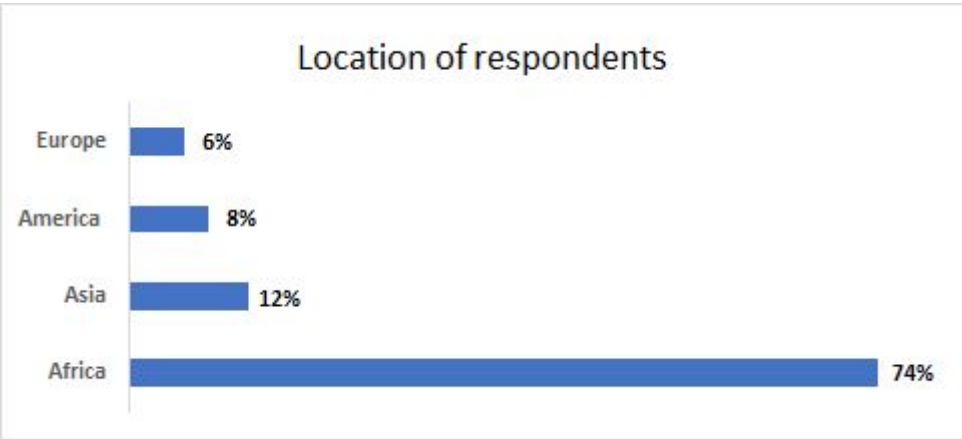
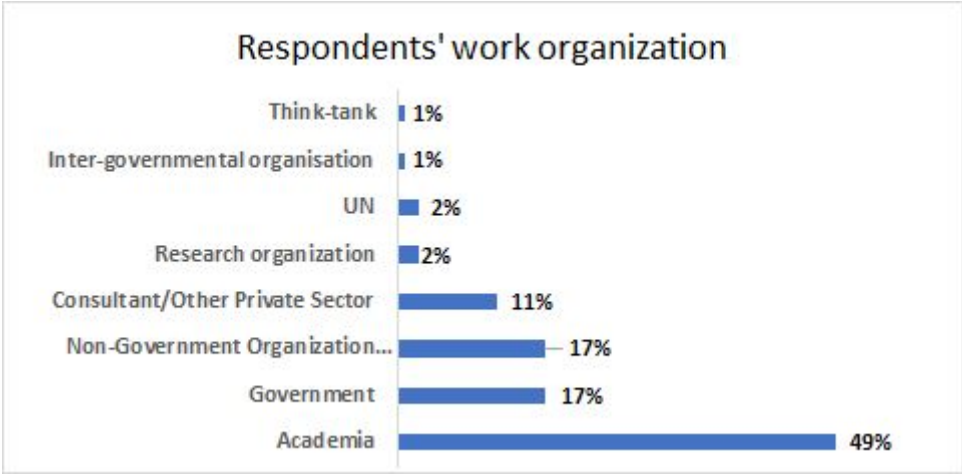
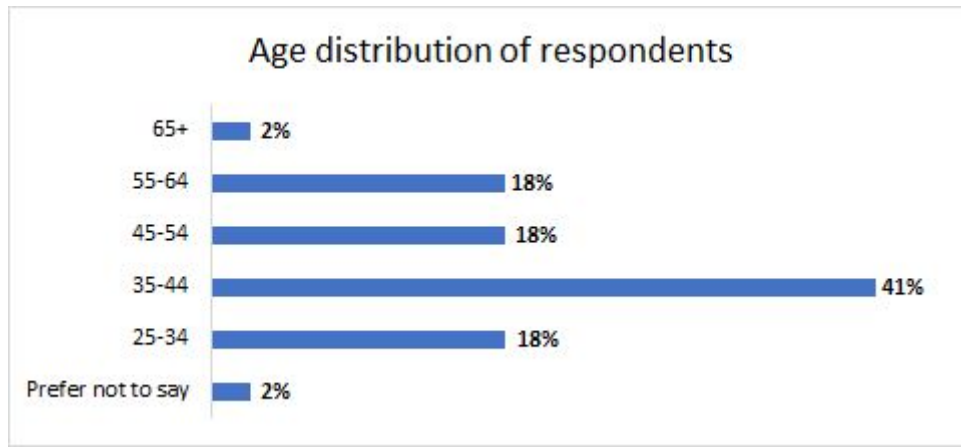


Composition of survey respondents

Respondents were largely from Africa, had a strong basis in academia and in the mid-career range and there were one-third more male than female.





SURVEY RESULTS

1. Major impacts of COVID-19 on your ability to carry out work

a. Are you experiencing a reduced scope for project proposals, project implementation, or their outright cancellation because of COVID-19?

Eighty percent of respondents experienced disturbance in the planning and implementation of their projects, with 56 percent of the affected respondents unable to carry out their scheduled activities due to the prohibition on travel and in-person meetings. Projects moved slowly, communication with partners was difficult, and collaboration in proposal writing was difficult as people were not able to have in-person meetings. To address these disruptions, respondents moved on online platforms and largely worked from home. However, these alternatives presented some drawbacks related to:

Limitations in online work: Online meetings were helpful but sessions were either too long or too short and not convenient for individuals with poor networks; moreover, staff had to buy extra data to remain online and their offices were not providing compensation for this extra expense.

Work from home limits: Working from home presented limitations related to access to office equipment, low internet access, a productive environment free of distraction, absence of socialization with colleagues, and difficulties with maintaining a communication flow with partners. Work-life balance was affected particularly for women who have to look after children and homeschooling, which impacted the amount of time spent on research activities.

2. Role of technology for coping under COVID-19

a. Which aspects of your work can you do remotely with no problems?

Respondents from academia were able to carry on online lecturing, student supervision, capacity development (webinar & online training), as well as write articles, journal, reports, editing manuscripts and student theses, and data analysis. Project managers focused on

research and outreach, project supervision, research funding calls, providing training, reading, writing and developing online collaborating projects (virtual meeting, workshops, discussion).

b. What modifications have been needed to help you maintain communication with project teams, partners and communities?

More than 50 per cent of the organizations developed adaptive measures such as reducing staff at the office, purchasing new laptops and online communication programs, relying more on free social media, providing financial allocations to agents to buy internet bundles, and urging staff to pay attention to time zones when setting up meetings. Nonetheless, this situation brought extra cost to some staff who had to purchase equipment in order to be able to remain online. For organizations already used to work remotely, they developed some specific communication protocols and "teaming" requirements including a "digital tea-time, virtual coffee, and social meeting" to maintain social cohesion within their team.

c. Which aspects of your work are difficult or impossible to carry out remotely? How are you dealing with, or plan to deal with, these aspects?

Activities difficult or impossible to implement remotely were those involving physical contacts or proximity such as field surveys (interview and focus group discussion), sensitization, visits to project sites, M&E activities, lab work, meetings with supervisors, practical courses, thesis defense, educational trips, physical classes and examinations, capacity building, stakeholder engagements, workshops, and meetings. Most of them were cancelled and/or postponed because of the lockdown. In general, solutions taken by organizations to address these difficulties included using digital tools, phones and online platforms to carry out interviews but it was difficult to reach unlearned and non-covered areas.

3. Effect of changing working conditions on your sense of professional community

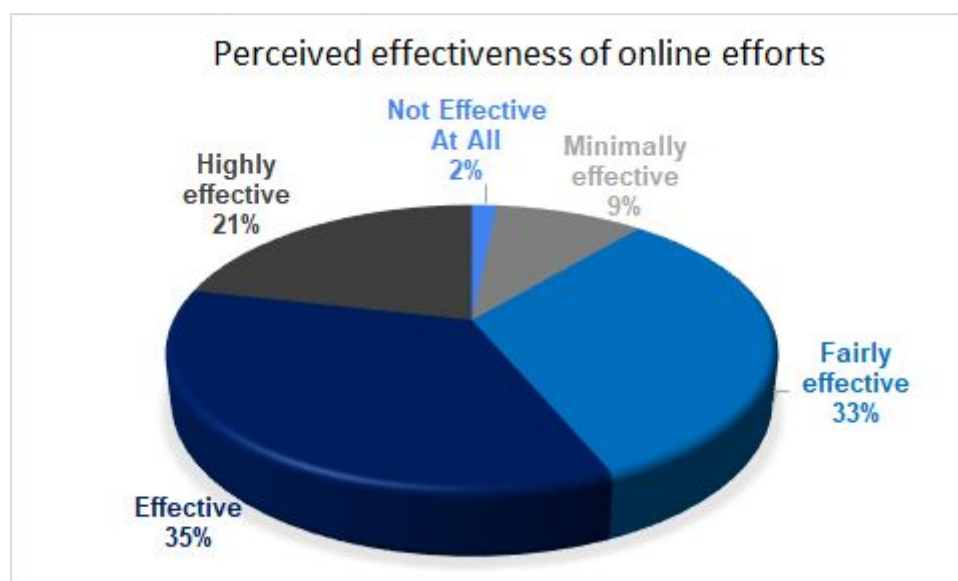
a. In what ways are you trying to maintain a sense of professional community?

More than half of respondents used virtual platforms like skype, zoom, slack, google docs, etc. and they attended as many virtual events as reasonably possible (webinars, meetings, seminars and workshops, conference, virtual networking) to maintain a sense of professional communication flow with peers. Some opted for posting of content on social media platforms, writing blogs, sending out regular communication, updating online presence (e.g. Academia, LinkedIn, Research gate). Moreover, during video conferencing some organizers encouraged participants to turn on their video partially if not all the time during virtual meetings in order to improve socialization and relationship building.

b. How effective have online efforts been in maintaining your sense of a professional community?

c. What have you personally 'lost' as a result of changing work conditions, even if the work process and outputs are maintained or maintainable?

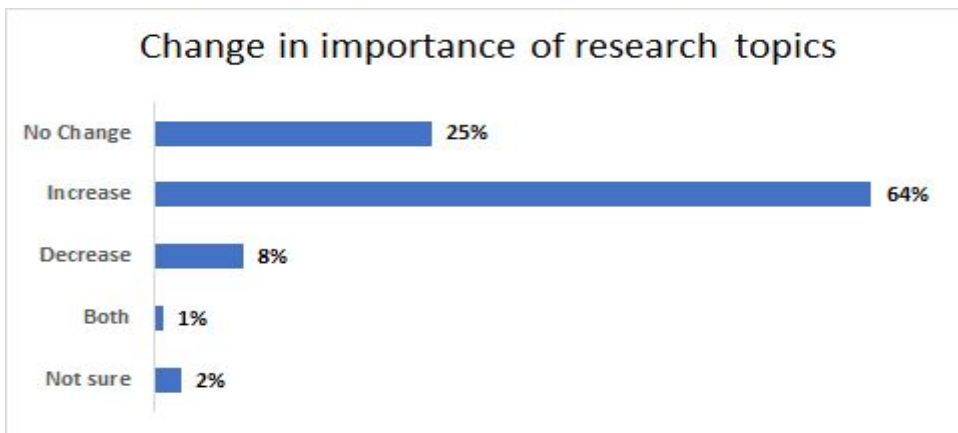
Online efforts to maintain a professional community helped, as indicated in the figure below. However, with the at-home work reality, respondents have lost a degree of social interaction with colleagues and partners, particularly the informal interactions and short meeting brainstorms associated with a physical workspace. Respondents noted the lack of in-person communication with stakeholders and local communities that has resulted in undermining a sense of team spirit, participatory engagement and trust building, as well as loss of temporary work for technicians who work with local communities. Private sector individuals also experienced a reduction of their incomes (revenue flow stalled) because of lost travel consultancy opportunities.



4. Priorities in the post-COVID period

a. Do you believe that the topics and issues that you currently work on will increase, decrease or have no change in importance in the post-COVID-19 period?

A quarter of the respondents (see figure below) replied that Covid-19 will not affect the topics they are working on, given the lack of connection with the disease. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents replied that their topics will gain in importance in the post-Covid period due to the possible linkage of human pandemics with climate change, biodiversity loss, development pressures, etc. Furthermore, respondents noted that the concept of *build back better* has the potential to create opportunities for scientists to focus more on nature-based solutions and to strengthen efforts on health, climate change, land use/land cover change, biodiversity conservation, agriculture and food systems, water and sanitation, energy access and related global change challenges.



b. Do you think that research funding for your work will be easier or more difficult in the post COVID-19 period?

While a large share of respondents believed that their work will gain in importance, only 16 percent of respondents believe that funding for their area of interest will become easier, while 58 percent believed that it will become more difficult to obtain funding for their research topics (See figure below). One of the main reasons given for this seeming contradiction between importance (item 4a, above) and levels of support was the economic downturn that may impact how the funding community will allocate resources, such as potentially focusing more on addressing health challenges.

