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29th Puerto Rico Neuroscience Conference
Neuroscience Research Opportunities
to Increase Diversity (NeuroID)
University of Puerto Rico

Evaluation Report

Attendees of the 29th Puerto Rico Neuroscience completed an evaluation form that assessed their opinions regarding the topics' contribution, their experience in the Conference, and other general aspects of the meeting. This year's circumstances allowed the Staff to open the activity venues to two modalities (in-person and virtual) and two sessions (morning and afternoon).

Conference achievements

Participants used a Likert scale to assess their level of agreement (1-strongly disagree, to 5- strongly agree) regarding the perceived contributions of the lectures to their knowledge and research work.

Morning session

Two lectures were offered during the morning session, "*mRNA-Targeted Therapies for Neurological Disorders*" and "*Social and environmental impacts on the neural mechanisms of substance use disorders*." The virtual attendees' results showed a high agreement with the activity contribution. Likewise, the in-person modality results were between the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories, except the item "sparked new research ideas for me to explore" ($\overline{X}$ =3.97). **All participants strongly agree that the Conference allowed them to learn about the neuroscience research conducted in Puerto Rico and the mainland ($\overline{X}$ virtual=4.50 and $\overline{X}$ in-person=4.24)**. The graphic with specific results is below.

	In-person	Virtual
Increased my interest in seeking or receiving training in Neuroscience areas.	4.18	4.33
Sparked new research ideas for me to explore.	3.97	4.23
Provided me the opportunity to actively and directly interact with senior researchers and other members of the scientific community.	4.17	4.20
Increased my interest in developing my research career in these or a closely related areas.	4.10	4.13
Gave me the opportunity to learn about the neuroscience research conducted in Puerto Rico and in the mainland.	4.24	4.50
Helped me learn concepts that will help advance my research career.	4.21	4.30

Afternoon Session

The Conference offered two lectures in the afternoon session entitled "*Advancements on RNA editing therapeutics*" and "*Novel therapeutic approach for activating antioxidant response in Alzheimer's disease.*" Average results from both modalities indicated high levels of agreement regarding the contribution of the afternoon lectures to the attendees' knowledge and research. Especially for the in-person participants, the item that reads "*helped me learn concepts that will help advance my research career*" scored the highest average ($\bar{X}$ =4.68). Virtual attendees score highest on *"the opportunity to learn about the neuroscience research conducted in Puerto Rico and the mainland"* ($\bar{X}$ =4.50). The graphic below shows the results for the assessed areas.

## Speakers' *presentation relevance*

Participants evaluated the content relevance for each lecture using a five-point scale (1-none at all, to 5- a great deal).

Morning Session

As shown in the figure, attendees indicated that the content discussed during both morning lectures had a *lot* and *a great deal* of relevance. However, results were slightly higher for the virtual *attendees.*

Afternoon Session

4.00   4.37   4.00   4.44

Dr.María Montiel   Dr. Salim Meralis
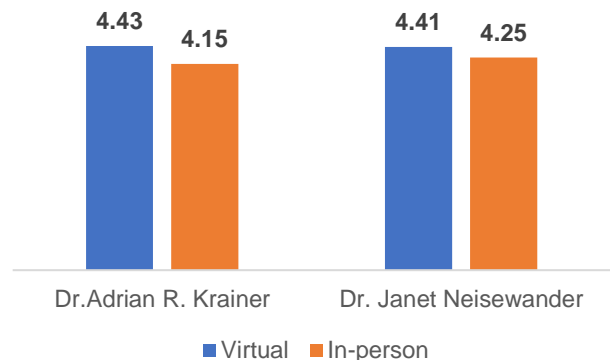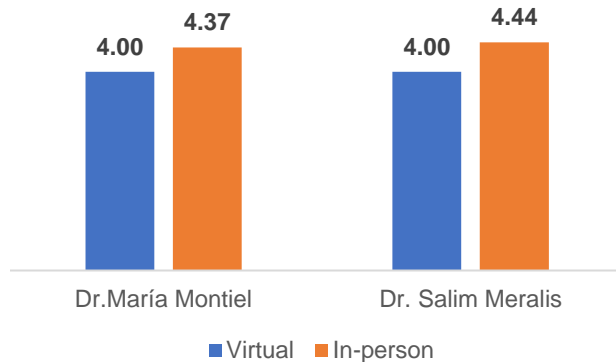
■ Virtual   ■ In-person

Regarding the perceived relevance of the afternoon lectures, virtual attendees indicated that both Dr. María Montiel's and Dr. Salim Meralis's had *a lot of significance to their research* ($\bar{X}$ **=4.00 each**). In comparison, in-person participants assessed the *relevance of both presentations as slightly higher* ($\bar{X}$ **=4.37 and** $\bar{X}$ **=4.44, respectively**). Specific details are in the graphic to the left.

Overall, participants in both modalities assessed all speakers' presentations' as relevant to their research areas.
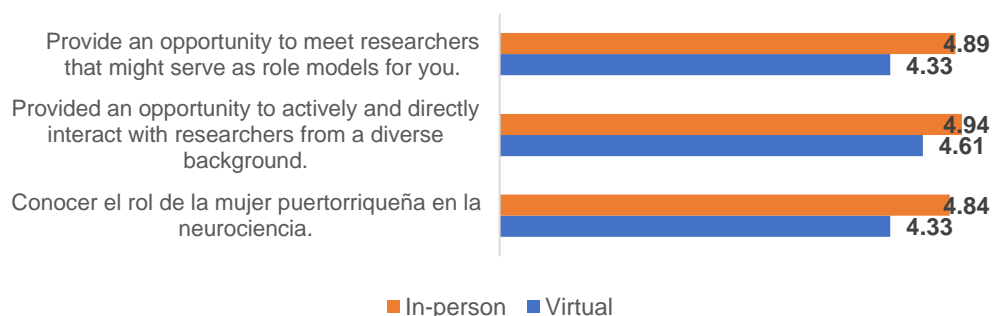
Women in neuroscience

Afternoon session

Likewise, participants were asked to rate "The Women in Neuroscience Panel" relevance using a five-point scale (from 1-none at all to 5- a great deal). Scores for the virtual modality averaged between *a lot* and *a great deal of relevance* ($\bar{X} = 4.33$), while average scores for the in-person attendees were higher ($\bar{X} = 4.84$). **These results supported that the topic addressed during the Panel contributed a lot to the attendees' research area** (see figure to the right).

4.33   4.84

■ Virtual   ■ In-person
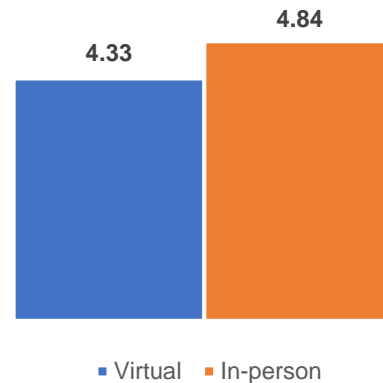
Evaluation results also supported **that the Panel allowed the attendees to interact with researchers from diverse backgrounds and made visible the scientific work of various women in Neuroscience**. Specific results are detailed below.


|	In-person	Virtual
Provide an opportunity to meet researchers that might serve as role models for you.	4.89	4.33
Provided an opportunity to actively and directly interact with researchers from a diverse background.	4.94	4.61
Conocer el rol de la mujer puertorriqueña en la neurociencia.	4.84	4.33

■ In-person   ■ Virtual

Participants evaluated other activities offered by the Staff. Likewise, a five-point scale (1-very poor, 5-very good) allowed participants to assess general organizational aspects of the Conference.

In-person modality (AM & PM)

In-person attendees had the opportunity to participate in **two *Poster Sessions and Mental Health Fair & Outreach Exposition*s.** As shown in the graphic below, participants evaluated both activities as very good, being the average results higher for the afternoon sessions ($\bar{X} = 4.89 \ and \ \bar{X} = 5.00$, respectively).
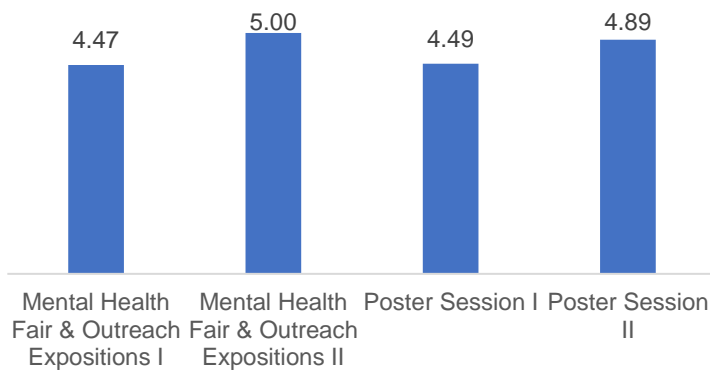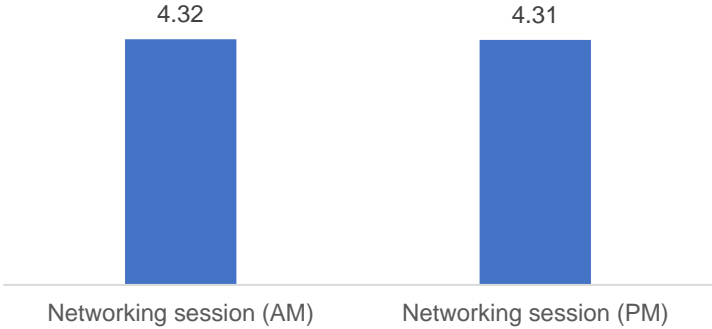

In addition, **attendees assessed the event's overall organization as very good**. Details are included in the graphic below.
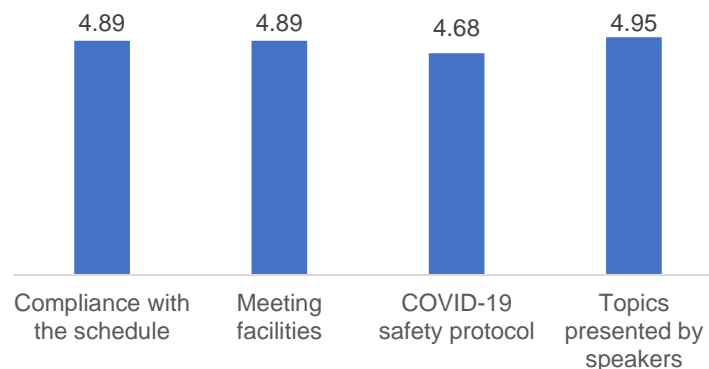
Virtual modality (AM & PM)

On the other hand, virtual attendees could participate in **two Networking sessions. The evaluation results support that both sessions represented a good opportunity for online attendees to foster their** networking (see graph below).

In addition, the results of the event's general evaluation **indicated that virtual attendees assessed the overall organization as good.** However, the online platform had the lowest average score; details are in the graphic below.
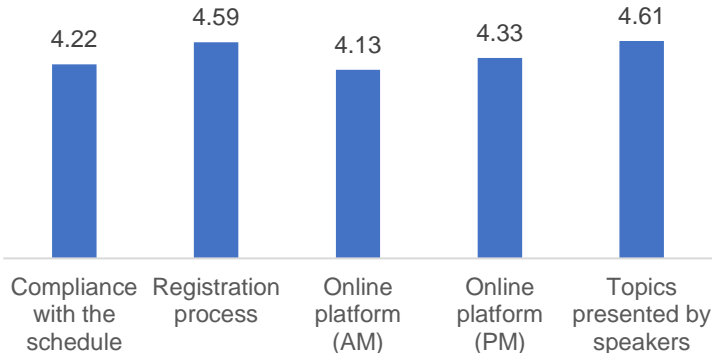

When comparing results from both modalities, in-person attendees tend to assess the event's general organization and other professional activities slightly better. Nonetheless, virtual and in-person attendees rated the event as good and very good.

Finally, the questionnaire included items that collected attendees' demographic information regarding their gender, institution affiliation, and academic level information.
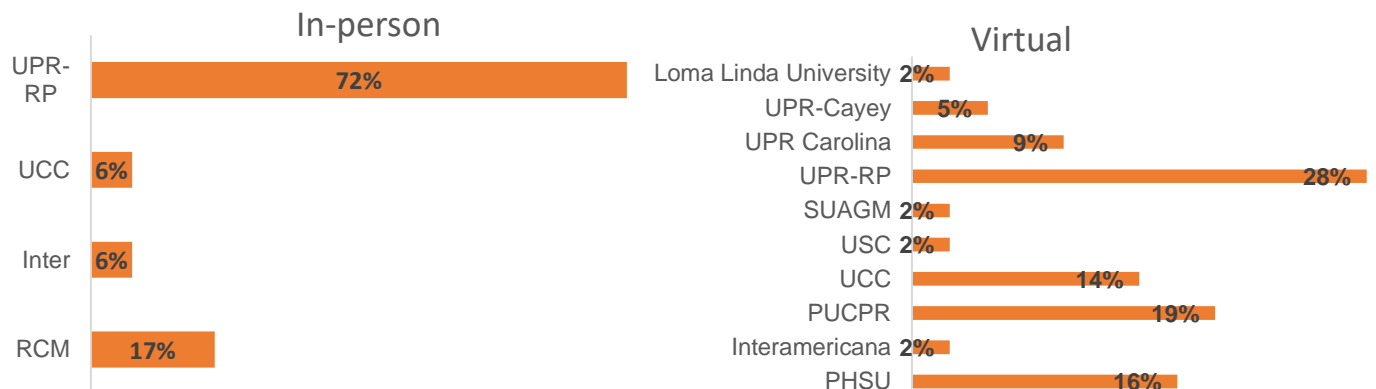
Gender

Concerning the gender variable, the Conference had a balanced representation of men and women in both modalities.

In-person: Male 47%, Female 53%

Virtual: Male 51%, Female 49%
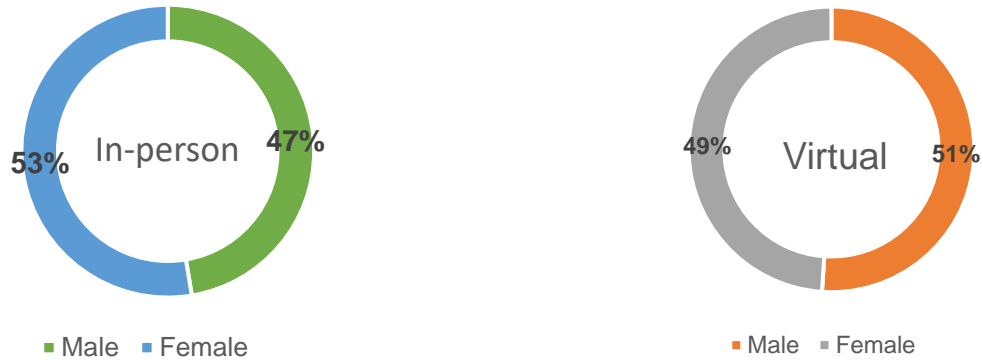
Institution affiliation

Attendees were mainly affiliated with the Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. However, the virtual modality facilitated reaching attendees from various private institutions at the local and national levels—the name of the academic institutions and their percentages of representation is below.

In-person
- UPR-RP: 72%
- UCC: 6%
- Inter: 6%
- RCM: 17%

Virtual
- Loma Linda University: 2%
- UPR-Cayey: 5%
- UPR Carolina: 9%
- UPR-RP: 28%
- SUAGM: 2%
- USC: 2%
- UCC: 14%
- PUCPR: 19%
- Interamericana: 2%
- PHSU: 16%

Professional level

Most of the participants who physically attended the event were undergraduate students (58%), while virtual attendees were primarily graduate students (45%). Specifics are detailed below.
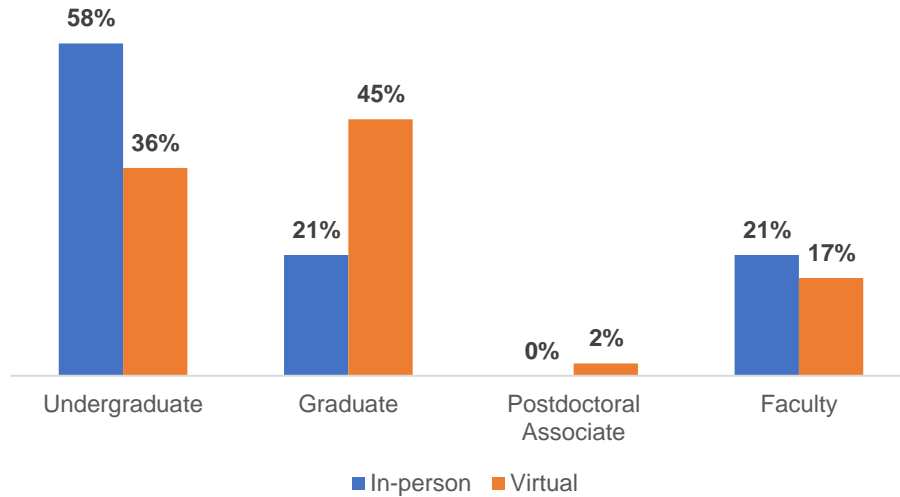
Comments and recommendations

Lastly, participants provided comments about their experience at the Conference and recommendations for future events. Overall, attendees' provided positive statements about their experience, especially those who attended in person. However, several virtual attendees stated that some of the online interactions were pixelated and could not be highly appreciated. Below are specific comments that supported the mentioned above.

In-person modality

"Amazing conferences. I really liked the lunch, it was delicious. Thank you"

"Thanks for this important contribution to PR."

"A+++ ¡Gracias!!!!"

Virtual modality

"1) Have coffee ready before the breaks to avoid long lines.   2) Also, future panels: it would have been great if the presentations were a bit shorter, so there was more time for Q&A.   Congrats on a great meeting!"

Excellent activity & initiative!

The poor evaluation of the online platform experience is due to the low quality of the conferences transmitted online. All of them were too pixelated and could not be appreciated clearly.

In questions 2,3, and four, I answered, "Not at all" because my research is in another area not related to neuro. The quality of the videos in the afternoon session was excellent in morning, I experienced low-quality videos, and they looked somewhat pixelated.

Quizás para el panel de mujeres en el área de las neurociencias hubiese sido buena idea tener preguntas ya redactadas antes de que le toque a la audiencia hacer preguntas. De esta forma se puede romper el hielo en términos de las preguntas hacia el panel