

IAP2 AUSTRALASIA
Community Survey
Summary

2018





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I think IAP2 is an amazing organisation that I like to call the “mothership” of the engagement and consultation world. There are many members with a lot to offer in experience and knowledge.”

Acknowledgements

Thanks goes to the IAP2 Australasia Community Survey Working Group who designed the survey and undertook analysis of results to produce this report for the IAP2 Australasia Community.

We would like to extend a very big thank you to these members in particular for all of their hard work, time and commitment to this project.

- Helen Christensen (Chair)
- Michelle Caruso (IAP2)
- Dr Robyn Cochrane
- Dr Jennifer Lees-Marshment
- Dr Robyn Mitchell
- Stu Reeve
- Jamie Swann
- Nivek Thompson
- Nicola Wass

In October 2018, the IAP2 Australasia Research Working Group (RWG) was formed. Their first undertaking was to design the annual member survey.

A Community Survey Working Group was formed from RWG members and they developed the survey on the basis that it was short, produced informative information as well as encouraged participation from the IAP Community.

The purpose of the member survey was to:

- track member satisfaction and the strategic performance of the organisation and;
- ensure IAP2 Australasia understands the needs of its members.

The key objectives were to:

- identify what is working well and areas for improvement;
- receive input from members on the challenges and opportunities facing them to ensure IAP2's understanding of its membership is up to date;
- generate a detailed findings report that informs and influences Management/ Board decision making;
- produce a summary findings report to share with members.

Eleven qualitative and quantitative questions were developed and focussed on obtaining data from our community, to meet the purpose and objectives criteria. The decision was made to send the survey to the whole IAP2 Australasia community database including both members and non-members to truly gauge market sentiment and feedback. The survey was launched in December 2018, the results are now in and the report is ready to share with the IAP2 Australasia community.

Response Rate

The survey was emailed to 9,966 IAP2 Australasia community members on 3 December 2018. This consisted of:

- 5,783 Corporate members including their employees
- 290 Small business members including their employees
- 879 Individual members
- 84 Student members
- 2,929 Non-members on the mailing list

Of the 9,966 emails, 2342 (23.5%) were opened, which resulted in 547 responses (23.4% of total opened).

IAP2 Australasia is in good health. The likelihood of recommending IAP2 Australasia products, services and events to others was very high, with 72% selecting a rating of 7-10. Respondents reported a positive Net Promoter Score of +7, suggesting a high organisation to member relationship. The core area for future action being to improve areas currently less well developed. Indicating, IAP2 Australasia are heading in the right direction however there are some areas for future development.



IAP2 is an international member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community and stakeholder engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest throughout the world. IAP2 is the leading public participation Association in Australasia and IAP2 Australasia is the largest IAP2 affiliate in the world.

The international body, originally the International Association of Public Participation Practitioners (IAP3), was founded in 1990 with the Australasian body commencing operations in 1998.

The Australasian organisation has grown considerably since this time and in its 2017/2018 Annual Report, IAP2 had 6,249 members, 25 ambassadors and had trained 5,819 people in the 2018 financial year.

In 2017/2018 the Board endorsed a new Strategy Plan to 30 June 2020. The plan is centred around three pillars:

- advocating for engagement
- strengthening engagement networks
- advancing professional development.

In order to ensure IAP2 Australasia is relevant and responsive to the needs of its' members it regularly conducts member surveys. The first was conducted in 2010, a subsequent one in 2012 and another in 2015.

While the previous surveys have provided the organisation with invaluable data at those points in time, there has been considerable variation in the questions asked in each survey, which means that it is difficult to form a picture of changes and trends over time.

As a result of discussions with the Board, Executive and the Research Working Group, it was decided that a survey instrument would be developed that:

- would run annually
- was relatively short to ensure responses
- is open to the wider IAP2 Australasia community (not just members)
- carefully crafts questions that can be asked year after year
- allows some flexibility for additional questions to be asked that are relevant at particular points in time

This report provides a summary of this first version of the “new” survey.



“

IAP2 is vital for the community engagement sector and you do a wonderful job!!”

Understanding the IAP2 Australasia community

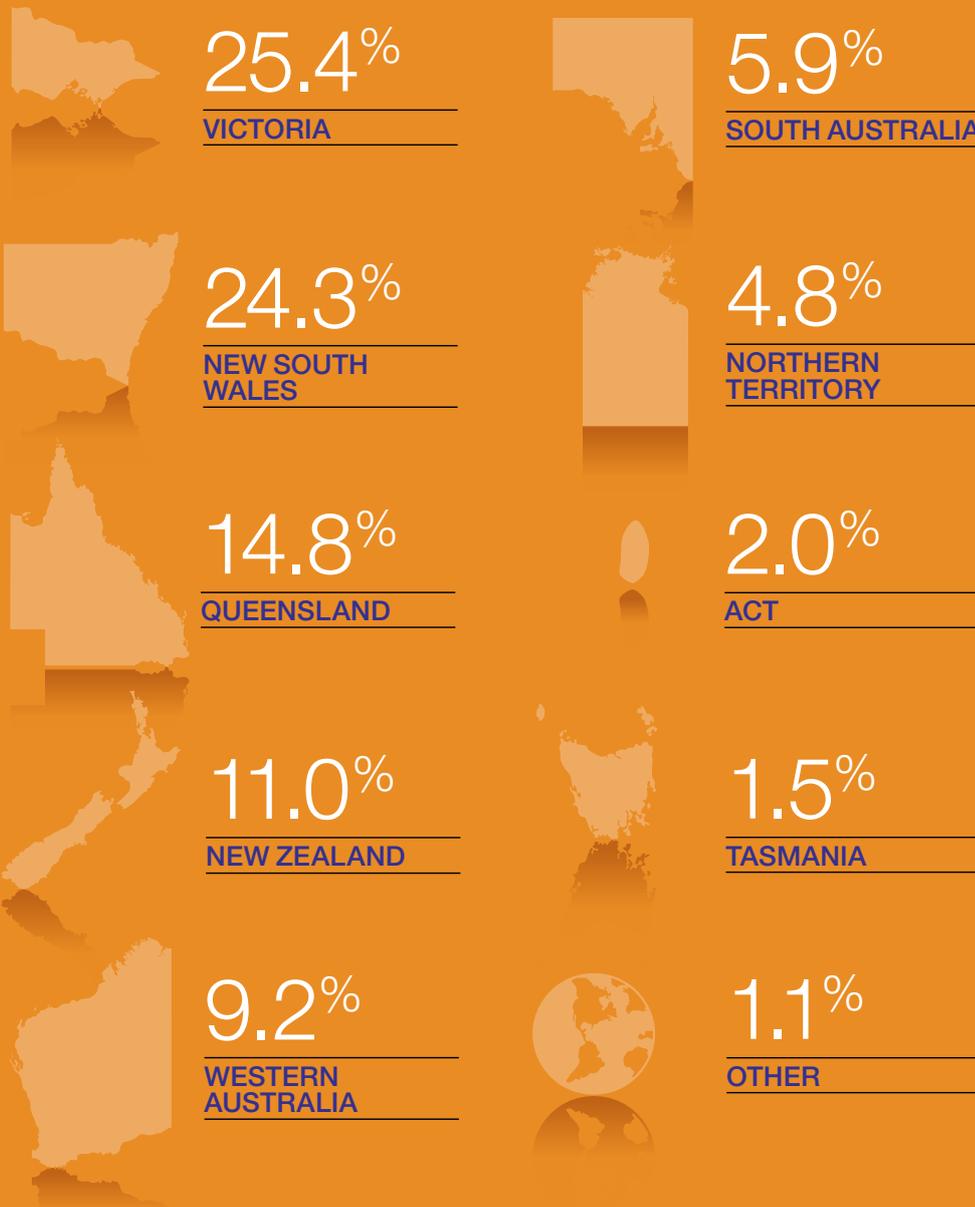
Location of Respondents

Just under half of all respondents to the survey came from Victoria (25.4%) or New South Wales (24.3%). A further 14.8% of respondents lived in Queensland.

Just over one in ten respondents (11%) lived in New Zealand. Less than one per cent of respondents (0.7%) chose 'other'. These respondents lived in Nigeria, South Africa, Italy and Malaysia.

The remaining 23.4% were made or respondents from other Australian states and territories. Two respondents (0.4%) chose not to disclose their location.

Figure 1, n=544

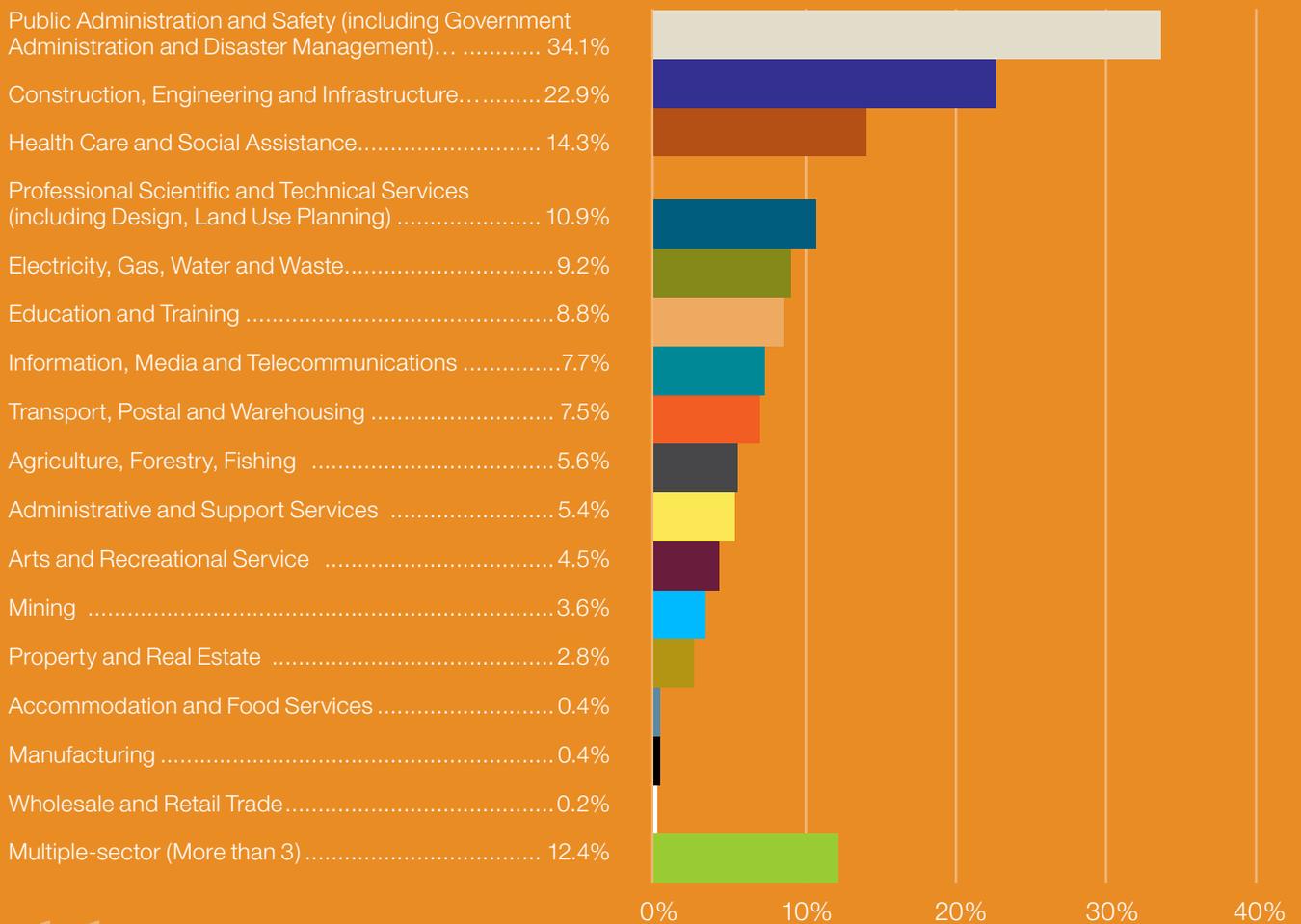


Understanding

Sectors the IAP2 Australasia community work in and employment situation

Respondents were asked to identify their work sector or sectors. More than one-third of respondents (34.1%) work in the Public Administration and Safety (including Government Administration and Disaster Management). A further 22.9% worked in Construction, Engineering and Infrastructure, with 14.3% working in Health Care and Social Assistance. One in eight respondents (12.4%) stated they worked in more than three work sectors.

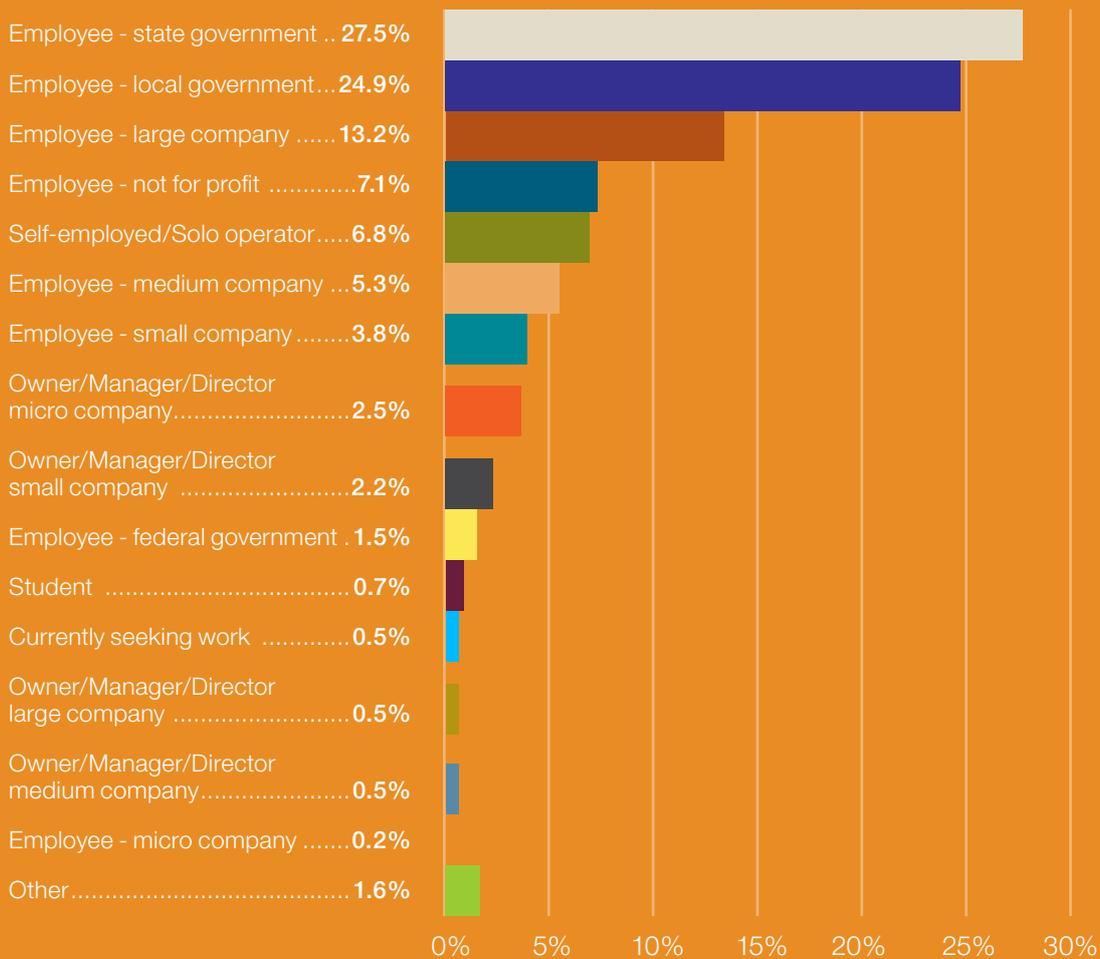
Figure 2, n=533



IAP2 is has been a huge boost for my career. I cannot say enough praise. I have enjoyed the training sessions and networking opportunities and I even found my current role through a vacancy posting in the newsletter. My goal is to one day attend a conference and truly embed myself in the engagement community. I know I am in the right place for my career. Thank you for everything you do for our industry.”

More than half of respondents are employed by state (27.5%) or local (24.9%) governments. The next most frequent employers were: large companies (13.2%), not for profits (7.1%) and self employed (6.8%)

Figure 3, n=546



Length of time working in participation

Nearly a quarter of respondents have worked for a significant time in the practice – 24.2% over 15 years, 21.2% between 5 and 10 years and 20% 10 to 15 years.

However 32.9% are relatively new to the area, having less than 5 years' experience with 15.5% less than 2 years' experience and 17.4% between 2-5 years' experience.

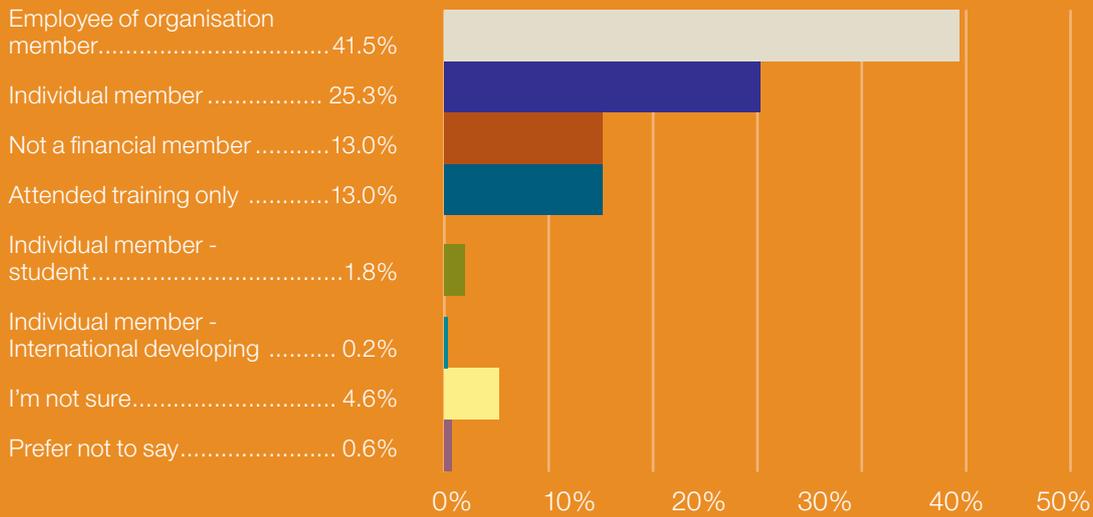
Figure 4, n=546



Type of membership/connection to IAP2 Australasia

When asked what their connection to IAP2A was, 41.5% reported they were employees of organisational members, 25.3% were individual members and the remainder were not members, training participants or student members.

Figure 5, n=545



understanding



Satisfaction with IAP2 Australasia

Overall satisfaction

Overall, 62% of respondents stated that they are satisfied with their membership of IAP2 Australasia rating overall satisfaction 7-10. Mean satisfaction ratings just using very satisfied and satisfied suggest over 70% satisfaction with the leadership of the organisation and that IAP2 Australasia understands the strategic issues facing participation practice.

In terms of those who were moderately satisfied, satisfied or very satisfied:

- > 86% are satisfied that IAP2 Australasia understand the strategic issues facing the practice
- > 77% that IAP2 Australasia effectively advocates on behalf of the practice
- > 78% with the opportunities that IAP2 Australasia provides to members to engage with the organisation
- > 82% that IAP2 Australasia keeps them up to date with developments in the field
- > 70% with the leadership of IAP2 Australasia
- > 63% with local networks and events
- > 76% with the professional development opportunities IAP2 Australasia offers
- > 69% with the resources IAP2 Australasia offers
- > 81% with the training services IAP2 Australasia offers

Strengths – high satisfaction areas

In terms of high levels of satisfaction ('very satisfied') the top four strongest areas were that IAP2 Australasia understand strategic issues facing the practice (12%), followed by the IAP2 Australasia keeps members up to date with developments in the field (10%), the opportunities that IAP2 Australasia provides to members to engage with the organisation and leadership of the organisation (both 9%).

This is reinforced by answers to question 11 asking for final comments or suggestions including comments on positive changes and improvements in IAP2 Australasia in the last 1-2 years. Mean satisfaction ratings just using very satisfied and satisfied suggest professional development, training, resources and local networks. Local networks, however, is the only one under 50% satisfaction.

Likelihood to recommend

The likelihood of recommending IAP2 Australasia products, services and events to others was very high, with 72% selecting a rating of 7-10. Local government employees and those who have worked in stakeholder and community engagement for 2-5 years were more likely to recommend IAP2 Australasia products, services and events to others.

Net Promoter Score

Respondents reported a positive Net Promoter Score of +7. This is an improvement from the 2015 score of -3.

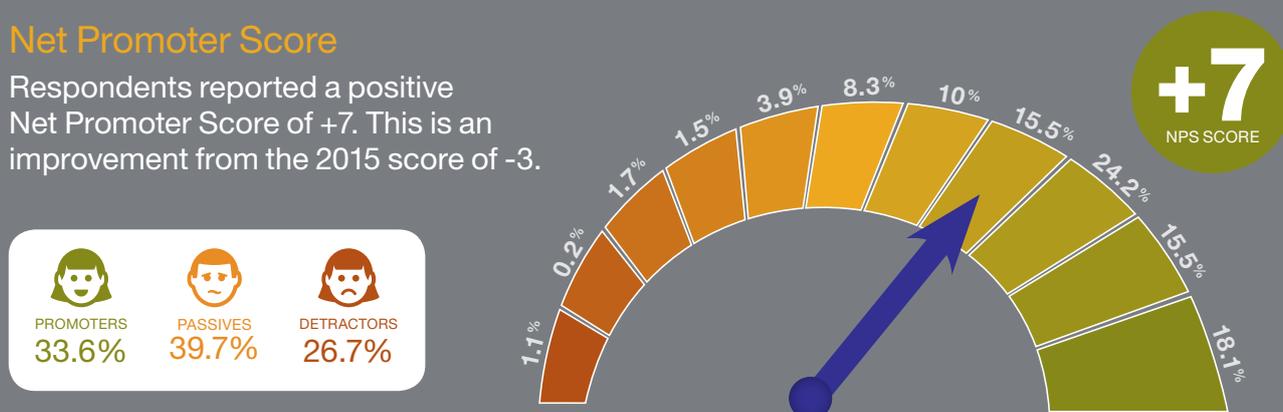


Figure 6 -Likelihood to Recommend n=436 Scale 10 = Very Satisfied

What we learned and can do better

Whilst respondents indicated they valued and were very satisfied or satisfied with local area networks, training and events, in terms of improvement, lower levels of satisfaction were with access to local networks and events and resources. Other comments or suggestions where training was the most commonly discussed were around IAP2 creating opportunities for peer/informal learning, more training locations and desire for a recognised tertiary qualification.

Digging Deeper into Improvement

Open-ended follow up questions to those who expressed dissatisfaction suggested that the causes mostly relate to lack of events and training in non-capital cities or outside Eastern Australia as well as suggesting the training generally needs updating and diversifying for more experienced practitioners. This was reinforced by demographic data on members which suggests a concentration of members in Victoria and New South Wales, NZ (11%) with many less coming from Queensland (15%), Western Australia (9%) and South Australia (6%). In short, IAP2A needs to find a way to provide access to services across all of Australia.



Recommendations for future action

IAP2 Australasia has a very positive standing with its members, who have also seen positive changes and improvements in the last 1-2 years. There are strengths that should be maintained and there are areas for development that need attention to retain this positive standing.

Recommendations include:

1. Maintain a strong understanding of issues facing participation practitioners, keeping members up to date with developments in the field and keeping members engaged with the organisation.
2. Explore ways to improve greater access to local networks and events, develop more resources and training/professional development such as segmenting the market in terms of experience level and develop new professional development opportunities, particularly for more experienced practitioners.
3. Explore the potential and demand to diversify IAP2 Australasia services geographically, such as providing more events/training in non-capital cities. For example, exploring other means to provide engagement with more geographically remote members such as online-forums, webinars, web-based training.
4. Continue to expand relationships with state level government and local government practitioners.

In other words, members like and value IAP2 Australasia, but they want to see us do more in certain areas.

Challenges facing the profession/practice

Participants were asked “In your view, what are the top three challenges currently facing our profession/ practice/ field? Please describe in priority order”. A total of 369 respondents reported one or more challenge.

Top Challenges: lack of appreciation of high quality public participation

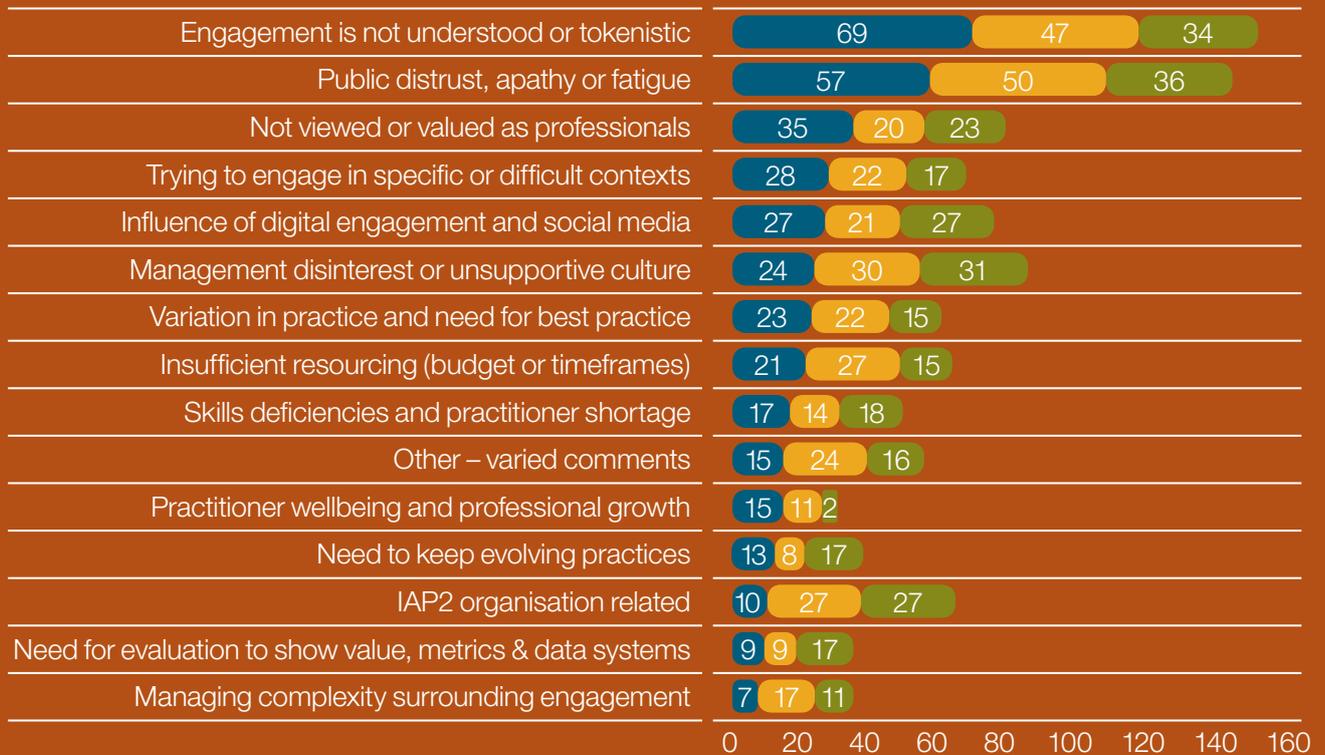
1. Engagement is not understood or tokenistic.
2. Public Distrust, Apathy or Fatigue

Overall, of the top three challenges, the two top themes were engagement is not understood or tokenistic (15%) and public distrust, apathy or fatigue (14%). This suggests there is work to be done on advocating for the value of high quality participation. This is reinforced by respondents statements that organisational issues such as ‘management disinterest or unsupportive culture’ and ‘not viewed or valued as professionals’ being 3rd and 4th themes in their top three challenges. Combined, the top 4 most common challenges, or 45% of those mentioned, all point to a lack of appreciation for high quality public participation.

Top 3 challenges in priority order

When asked to name the number one challenge, similarly, 69 respondents said that engagement is not understood or tokenistic with 57 saying public distrust, apathy or fatigue, and 35 that they were not viewed or valued as professionals.

Figure 7 - Top 3 challenges currently facing our profession/practice/field, described in priority order (with reference counts)



Number 1 Challenge

Engagement is not understood or tokenistic

Respondents referred to challenges associated with the role of engagement not being understood by management, colleagues or clients and “engagement” not being clearly delineated from communications, marketing and public relations. There were several references to challenges relating to the pressure to engage, tokenistic engagement and moving beyond inform to meaningful conversations.

Number 2 Challenge

Public distrust, apathy or fatigue

Respondents referred to challenges associated with public and stakeholders who are often the recipients of engagement. Many challenges relating to human behaviors were mentioned including distrust, apathy and outrage. There were several references to challenges relating to consultation fatigue, maintaining interest/engagement and managing community and stakeholder expectations.

Number 3 Challenge

Not viewed or valued as professionals

Respondents referred to challenges associated with not being recognised, treated or valued as a professional who is delivering a legitimate or specialist role. There were several references to challenges relating to the lack of recognition of community engagement as a profession or specialist field and absence of an accreditation or licensing process.

“

We’re at one of the most exciting times in our profession... but we have to manage our evolution carefully if we’re to avoid the ‘engagement arms race’, match new technologies with tried and tested approaches, and remain ‘Outside In and Always On’ in a manner that meets our emerging stakeholders’ expectations.”

Next Level Challenges

Digital and Difficult Engagement

Additional concerns were the influence of digital engagement and social media and trying to engage in specific or difficult contexts. Respondents referred to challenges associated with embracing and balancing the use of new technologies and digital advancements in engagement as well as managing social media interactions and activism. Respondents referred to challenges associated with engaging specific groups of people (harder to reach communities, Indigenous communities, the silent majority, those who are vulnerable, CALD audiences and rural communities) as well as engaging in difficult contexts, such as in emergencies, crisis and on emerging topics.

Engagement Delivery Barriers

Engagement delivery barriers for best practice included management disinterest or reactivity, lack of management or leadership buy-in and dealing with an organisational culture that is generally unsupportive.

Challenges associated with having insufficient resourcing in terms of an inadequate budget for staffing and expenses as well as limited timeframes for effective delivery, managing the complexity surrounding engagement environments that may involve intra-organisation collaboration, partnerships, risks and uncertainty, complex problems, change management, power and politics. There were also challenges associated with information management systems; measuring or quantifying value-add, effective evaluation and metrics; managing and analyzing data to inform decision making.

Engagement Practitioner Skills and Well-being

Respondents referred to challenges associated with engagement practitioners included the variation in the quality of practitioner practices and the need for consistency, rigor and better practice standards. There were also challenges associated with new and other practitioners having limited skills or capacity and a general shortage of a skilled and highly skilled talent pool in a strong marketplace. Additionally, there were comments around challenges associated with having to continually evolve engagement practices to stay relevant and be adaptable as well as concern about maintaining currency and relevance, practitioner mental health and burnout, and lack of time or access to further training and professional development.



Recommendations for future action

There is clearly significant concern about a lack of appreciation for high quality public participation. IAP2A needs to make a concerted effort to move into the advocacy space – not just for public participation but high quality, impactful public participation, with a brand name and an endorsed Quality Standard, such as a ‘Gold Standard Participation’.

Reflect on existing activity in the areas of digital engagement and engagement in difficult contexts and consider developing additional or new offerings in these areas.



Engagement becoming more accepted, mainstream and embedded - becoming business as usual - challenge is getting beyond compliance based approaches to ensure meaningful and effective process and outcomes.”



“

The online engagement space is huge and creates more inclusive opportunities for engagement.”

“Some interesting developments in technology that will enable information to be shared more widely and in more detail (eg: Augmented Reality to demonstrate design concepts).”

Opportunities for the profession/practice

This question asked participants, “What new trends and opportunities are you seeing emerge?” Of the 547 participants, 285 provided a response (52.1%). A total of 405 trends and opportunities were listed by the 285 respondents, an average of 1.4 each. Five responses were excluded as they were unable to be interpreted.

Biggest Opportunity - online and digital methods of participation

The biggest opportunity was for online and digital methods of participation, described as online engagement, digital engagement, new technology, social media, gamification, animation, virtual reality and augmented reality.

However concerns were also expressed that online engagement may be used to replace face to face, without maintaining high quality participation, for example online will just be used to impact information rather than actually engage.

Other topics

Several other topics were raised, but individually rather than multiple times. These suggest trends to keep an eye out for, for long-term rather than short term planning:

- > repeated, connected engagement instead of a one-off;
- > behaviour change engagement on issues such as climate change;
- > increased reporting;
- > increased desire for deliberative processes;
- > co-design;
- > increased use of data/big data to understand stakeholder behaviour.

Increased profile amongst organisations and communities

Further comments from respondents suggested the profile and awareness of community engagement is increasing within organisations, different sectors and professions and in communities themselves. Respondents felt there was increased expectations from communities to be involved in decision making. Whilst sometimes this can favour basic level engagement, there is also demand for high quality participation: “*The citizen has had enough of the name calling and token approach taken to “consultation” and public participation. They are starting to demand the public authorities listen and respond in a meaningful manner.*” This can also come in relation to specific communities such as Indigenous and First Nations groups.



Recommendations for future action

1. IAP2 Australasia needs to explore development of provisions in the area of online and digital methods of public participation. This came up as both a challenge and opportunity. Address concerns that online may be used as a cheaper alternative and results in a reduction in overall quality of engagement.
2. Keep eye on potential future opportunities in the long-term for example repeated, connected engagement instead of a one-off and behaviour change; engagement on issues such as climate change; use of big data; and increased desire for co-design and deliberative processes.
3. Discuss ways in which IAP2 Australasia might harvest the growth in acceptance and expectation that the public will participate and be engaged in decision making. This is a big cultural change and suggests opportunities for future development. This may also relate to specific cultural groups such as First Nations.



I'm very supportive of the Strategic Plan and while I think its ambitious I think its a great initiative and I encourage IAP2 to maintain open communication with the membership base to provide regular updates on the progress against the plan and associated initiatives. Thank you IAP2!





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