

LASA2020 Congress Report

América Ladina: vinculando mundos y saberes, tejiendo esperanzas

The XXXVIII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) was held virtually, for the first time in its history, from May 13 to 16, 2020. This Congress demonstrated the great support of its members for the Association. For this, we would like to start this report by thanking all participants for their willingness to adapt to the new virtual format and their motivation to be with us.

In terms of participation, we had a rewarding and enriching Congress. LASA2020 attracted 3,564 registered participants: 1,838 (51.6%) were presenters or had another role during the Congress, and 1,726 (48.4%) attended as spectators and session auditors. Out of the total registered participants, 32% were students and 68% were nonstudents.

LASA2020 Facts

Total Participants	3,564
Total Presenters	1,838
Total Sessions and Events	623
Films and Documentaries	35
Book Exhibitors	17
LASA Grantees	260
Book Presentations	20
Sponsors, Contributors, and Institutional Partners	43

Satisfaction Rates

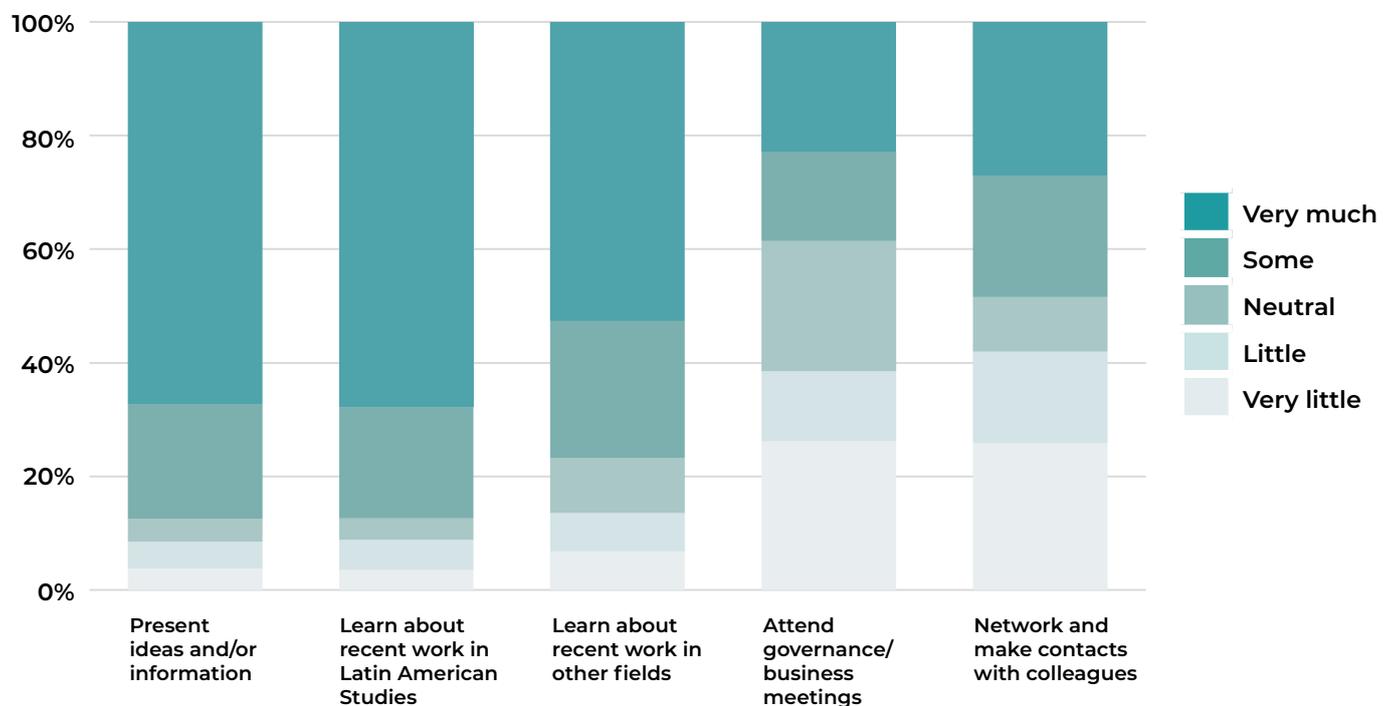
In order to measure the experience of our most important constituents, our members, the LASA yearly survey to collect Congress demographic information and respondents' feedback was carried out during June and July 2020. Considering that 34% of the respondents were attending a LASA Congress for the first time, and 27% have attended five or more, their combined responses are relevant to help us improve for future Congresses. We thank the 456 people who participated in this year's survey, who represent 13% of all of the LASA2020 registered participants.

The LASA International Congress, in its virtual version, continued to be the main global forum for expert debate on Latin America and the Caribbean, according to participants and attendees, who had the opportunity to choose among more than 600 sessions and events. In general terms, the Congress was described by the membership as a success as it managed to meet the needs of the panelists, who were able to present their research and generate intellectual discussion with fellow experts in a virtual environment. Overall, 81% of respondents were satisfied with the Congress, and 79% expressed satisfaction with its theme, *América Ladina: vinculando mundos y saberes, tejiendo esperanzas*.

This year respondents said LASA2020 provided very good opportunities to learn about recent work in Latin American Studies (68%), to present ideas and information (67%), and to learn about recent work in other fields (53%). These were the top-rated opportunities that LASA2020 provided, according to respondents.

In contrast, the opportunities that LASA2020 provided to attend business/governance meetings and network with colleagues received the least approval. Only 23% felt very satisfied with the Congress as an opportunity to attend governance/business meetings, and 27% were very satisfied with opportunities to network and make contacts with colleagues. We know that networking must improve in virtual environments. Therefore, new activities and events to ensure informal interaction between registrants are being planned for LASA2021, the second virtual Congress of the Association.

Figure 1. LASA2020 provided an opportunity to:



The online space of LASA2020 Congress was a website where all participants could enjoy the traditional events of a LASA Congress with two clicks. The Presidential Sessions, the Welcome Ceremony, the Book Exhibit, the Film Festival, and the Gran Baile were accessible from that website, which was greatly appreciated by 82% of the respondents, who rated it positively. Another 9% rated the website neutral, and the remaining 9% negatively.

An essential part of the virtual Congress was the collaboration of LASA-designated hosts, whose main tasks were to start the sessions on time, welcome the panelists and other participants in the virtual environment, and remain connected during the session in order to help all participants with any technical issue they might encounter. We are very proud to report that 70% of the survey respondents were very satisfied with the work of the LASA hosts. Similarly, 72% of the respondents were very pleased with LASA's technical support.

Regarding the LASA2020 Congress mobile app, 45% of respondents downloaded the app and almost all who downloaded the app used it (92%).

The majority of those surveyed also liked the organized panels, the presidential panels, and the Film Festival, which presented 35 films, among other elements of the Congress. To the question “to what extent were you satisfied with the following academic elements of the LASA2020 virtual Congress,” the majority answered they were somewhat or very satisfied with:

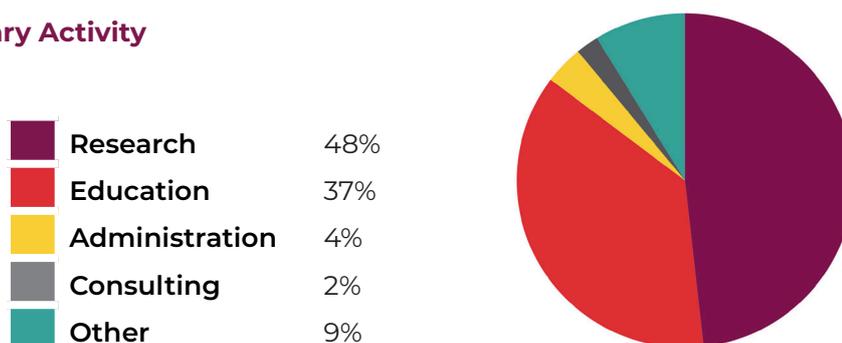
- Organized Panels (86%)
- Section Panels (79%)
- Invited Panels (76%)
- Presidential Panels (69%)
- Film Festival (66%)
- Program Book (63%)
- Welcome and Awards Ceremony (60%)

Demographics

Fifty-five percent of the respondents to this year’s survey were Latin American residents, 36% were residents of the United States or Canada, 8% were from Europe, and 1% from Asia. The above represent an increase in Latin-America-based scholars (44% in 2019).

Similar to previous years, the majority of respondents work primarily in research (48%) and education (37%). However, compared to last year, there was a slight decrease in participants focused on research (54% in 2019) and a slight increase in those focused on education (33% in 2019).

Figure 2. Primary Activity



As in every Congress, LASA is very grateful to our faithful sponsors and foundations and to the Endowment Fund, which continue year after year to provide partial grants to our participants. This year LASA was able to offer 260 grants to participate in the LASA2020 virtual Congress.

Additionally, on this occasion, and to encourage the participation of indigenous and Afro-descendant students in this Congress, LASA and the Kellogg Foundation awarded twenty scholarships with gender parity. These scholarships consisted of US\$500 and covered the cost of registration to the virtual Congress.

Although at this moment the format of future LASA Congresses is uncertain, it is important to mention the great receptivity of those surveyed towards a Congress that allows virtual participation as well in-person participation, as 85% of respondents said they would be interested in a hybrid Congress.

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. As always, please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or further suggestions.

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