Inaugural AEA CSQIEP Queer PhD Student Mentoring Conference Post-Conference Survey Results and Report to CSQIEP Board and Conference Organizers

Public Version – Comments Have Been Redacted

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1. Introduction

The Inaugural AEA CSQIEP Queer PhD Student Mentoring Conference was held in June 2023 in Berkeley, CA. This conference hosted 61 mentees and 23 mentors from around the U.S. (and a few from Canada) for two days of programming centering the concerns of queer PhD students in the latter years of their PhD programs. The conference focused heavily on addressing the queer experience, job market preparation, LGBTQ+ job market concerns, and building mentoring and community networks.

The conference had three specific goals:

1. Address mentoring disparities facing queer students.
2. Provide strategies for queer students to deal with the challenges, discrimination, and barriers that they face.
3. Create meaningful and sustainable queer spaces and networks.

This conference was sponsored by the CSQIEP, the American Economic Association, the National Science Foundation; the Sloan Foundation, UC Berkeley, the Vanderbilt LGBTQ+ Policy Lab, and UC Santa Cruz.

At the conclusion of the conference, attendees were offered the chance to provide feedback to the organizers through an anonymous survey. This post-conference survey report details the answers attendees provided in order to aid in the planning and development of future conferences and programming.

2. Executive Summary and Key Constructive Feedback

Mentee Background

- **Institutions**. There was good diversity of institution and program type and while there was good coverage of all regions of the US (and a few Canadians), those from California, especially the bay area, were overrepresented.
- **Race and ethnicity.** Most mentees reporting being White (alone or in combination - about 48%) or Asian (about 40%), with only about 10% reporting Hispanic/Latinx, and 6% reporting something else (one each of Black or African American, North African, and Arab). While low, the representation of Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous economics students is similar to the demographics of PhD economics students overall, as documented in Table 1 of CSMGEP's 2022 annual report that reports economics degrees awarded by race and ethnicity.
- **Gender.** 60% of mentees identified as male, 30% as female, and 10% as a non-binary identity. The female-male ratio closely matches the average for 1st year PhD students, according to Figure 1 from the CSWEP's annual report.
- **LGBTQ+ status.** Out of all the identities reported, "Gay" or "Lesbian" was the most common (about 46%) followed by "Queer" (21%), "Bisexual or Pansexual" (14%), "Non-Binary" (5%), "Transgender" (5%), and "Polyamorous" (5%). One mentee reported an asexual identity, and one reported "Questioning".
- **First language.** 41% reported not speaking English as a first language.
- **First-generation students.** 29% reported being first-gen.

Did the Conference Achieve Its Goals?

- Mentees and mentors generally viewed the conference favorably and thought it achieved its goals. Many thought it was transformative.
- At least 95% mentors and mentees agreed that the conference met all three goals, with the exception of only 85% of mentors agreeing that the conference met the goal of providing strategies for queer students to deal with discrimination and challenges.

Common Comments and Constructive Feedback, by Topic

Dates and Location (City)

- Mentees viewed location of the conference as less important than funding and conference dates, while mentors saw it was more important than funding, but less important than conference dates. There was also a broad theme that the conference could have been longer, felt rushed, and that breaks were too short.

Food, Conference Venue, and Hotel

- There were few comments about the conference venue and hotel, and they were mostly positive.

- Vegan options were undersupplied, especially on Day 1.
- Coffee was undersupplied, especially in the afternoons.
- Having two food/coffee lines would speed up traffic.

Funding and Reimbursement

- The most consistent feedback in the entire survey was that funding was the only reason most mentees could make it, and that funding was otherwise still a barrier.

Length, Scheduling, and Breaks

- Most mentees and mentors (about 74%) conference was the right length (two days) while 26% reported it being too short.
- Most mentees and mentors (about 75%) thought there were enough breaks.
- Mentees were more likely to report that the duration of breaks was "about right" (86%) compared to mentors (76%).
- Despite the frequency and duration of breaks being seen positively, a written comment that came up frequently among mentees and mentors was the need for more breaks or similar discussion time.

Small Mentor-Mentee Groups

- The small mentor-mentee groups were generally viewed favorably by both mentors and mentees across all metrics.
- A common critique among both mentors and mentees was some frustration that the groups felt mismatched such as there being no mentors of a certain type (e.g., theory), or those key mentors being in the wrong group, or all mentors in a group being white cis gay men while the mentees all have a different LGBTQ+ background.
- Mentor suggested that improving the mentor-mentee matching process could help by, for example, matching mentors to mentees based on submitted abstracts rather than self-selected fields or JEL codes.

Feedback on Conference Sessions

- Overall, sessions were viewed positively, with a majority of those surveyed agreeing with all the questions relating the session goals and impacts. However, some sessions received significant critical feedback and much lower scores.
- Table 8.1 provides a useful ranking of sessions based on mentee feedback.
- The worst sessions according to mentees were, from worst to less worse, Session 2.2 (Self-Care), Session 1.6B (PhD Advisor), and Session 1.5A (How to do Research). Session 2.4A (Navigating Homo/Transphobic Environments).
- The best sessions according to mentees were harder to rank, since the quantitative and qualitative feedback was more varied, but included Session 1.4A (Job Market Preparation), Session 2.4C (Teaching), Session 2.1 (Egg Timer Presentations), and Session 2.3 (Chat with Mary Daly)

- Session 1.6A (Parenting) was seen as the best session by the mentors, with mentees seeing this session positively as well, although there was significant variance given that the session was either strongly relevant or entirely irrelevant.

Conference Sessions that were "Missing"

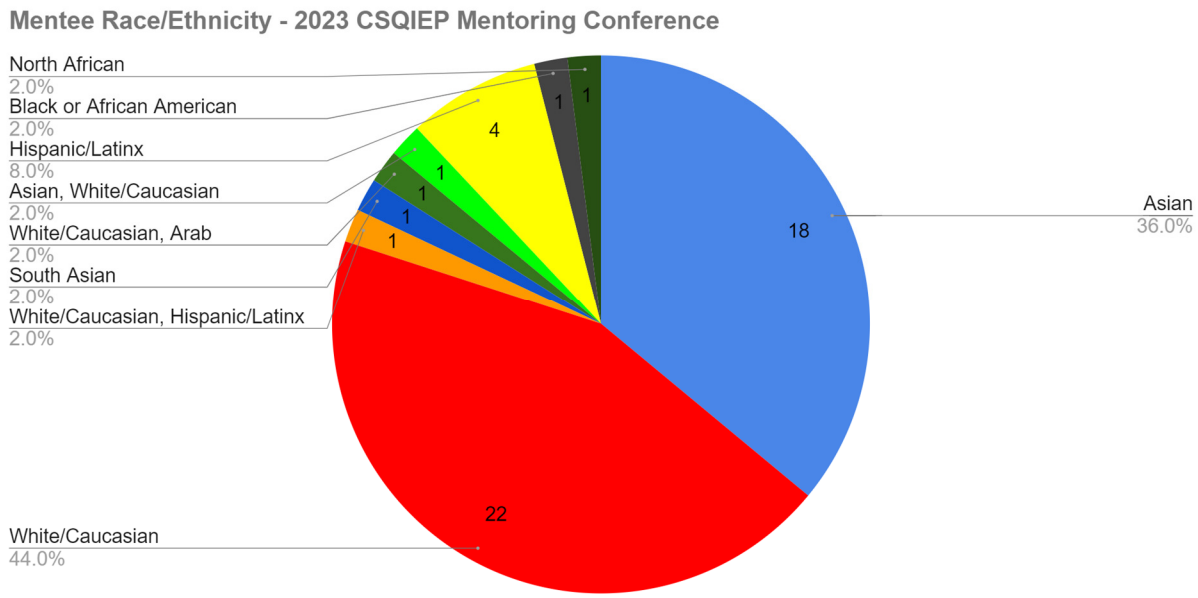
- For sessions that attendees thought could have been added, the most popular suggestion, especially among mentees, was for more social and networking time. There was more support for this to be more about networking, so activities like icebreakers, "speed dating", or small group discussions, but there was notable support for social or entertainment events such as a happy hour or drag show. The second most common suggestion, especially by the mentees, was for more time to discuss mentee research. This is not surprising given that the Egg Timer sessions were seen as one of the best. Relatedly, mentees also noted that they wanted more time for mentor-mentee group discussions. Suggestions by mentors for missing sessions were more varied, but there was more support for some content on professional conduct and additional content on job market preparation, which aligns with mentee feedback that the job market preparation session was one of the best.

Feedback from Mentors on Running Better Sessions

- Having some pre-written / submitted questions was or would have been helpful to improve time management and ensure that key questions were not missed.
- Leaving ample time for audience questions and minimizing panelist talking (fewer panelists respond to each question, shorter answers) was / would have been helpful.
- Some organization beforehand would improve time management, such as determining which panelists will speak about which questions that would certainly / likely come up.
- Having a moderator for panels was very helpful at managing time.
- Having additional viewpoints on panels was helpful / would have been helpful. For example, we were missing more mentors from industry, more mentors that could speak to non US jobs or visa issues, or mentors that could better address regions that might not be as LGBTQ-affirming.

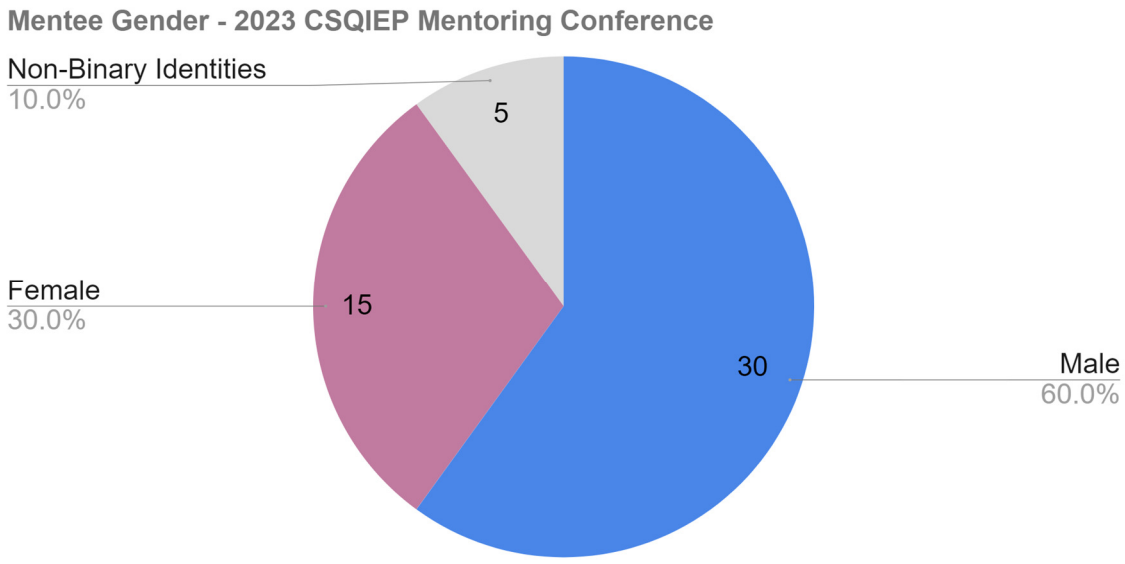
3. Mentee Demographic, Educational, Socio-Economic Background

Figure 3.1: Mentee Race and Ethnicity



Notes: Respondents could select any number of listed options and could also write in their own under "other". Those who selected "White/Caucasian", for example, only selected that one option.

Figure 3.2: Mentee Gender



Notes: Non-binary identities was phrased as "Non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, bi-gender, agender, demi(fe)male, two-spirit, and other related non-binary identities.". An "other" write in options was also available, but no respondent used it.

Figure 3.3: Mentee LGBTQ+ Statuses

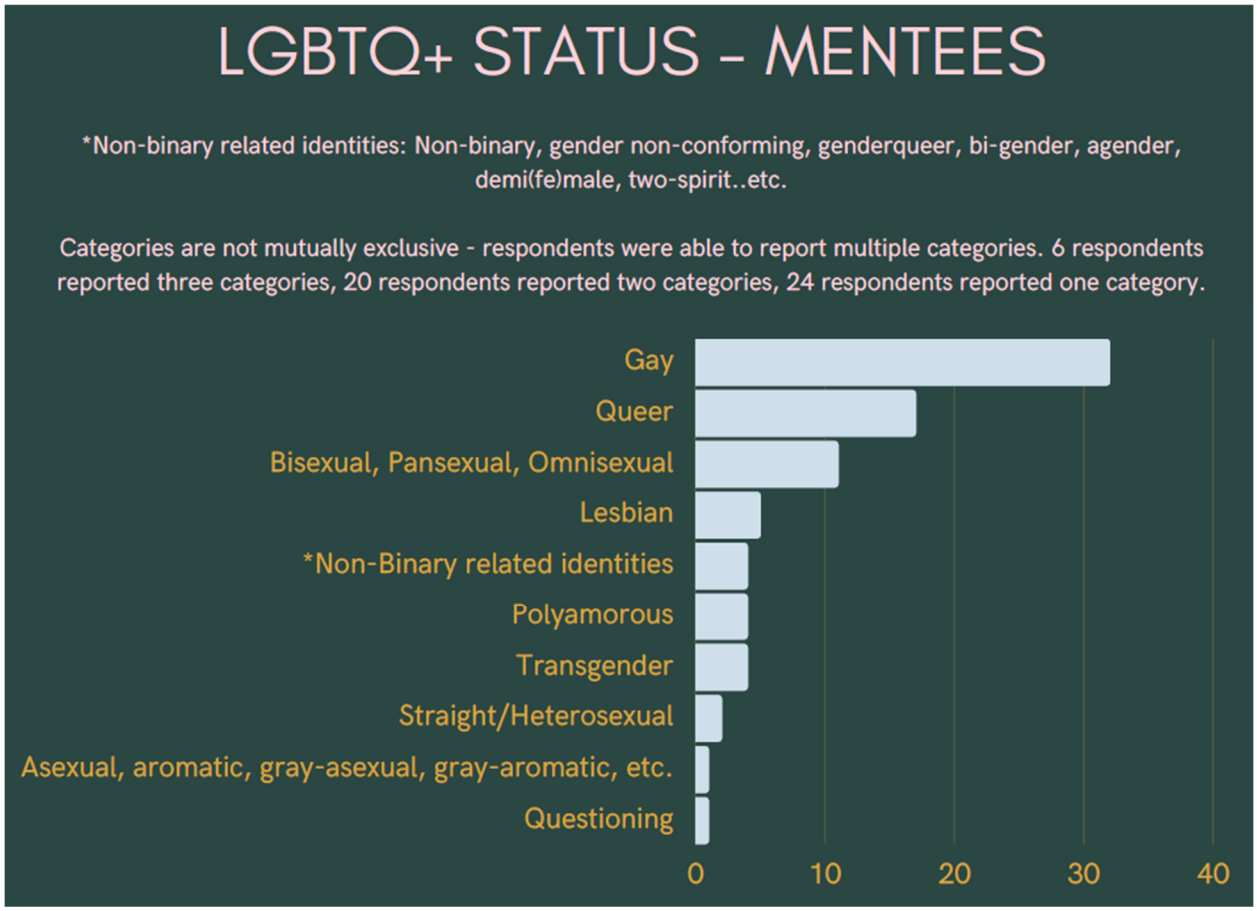


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Figure 3.4: Mentee First Language Status

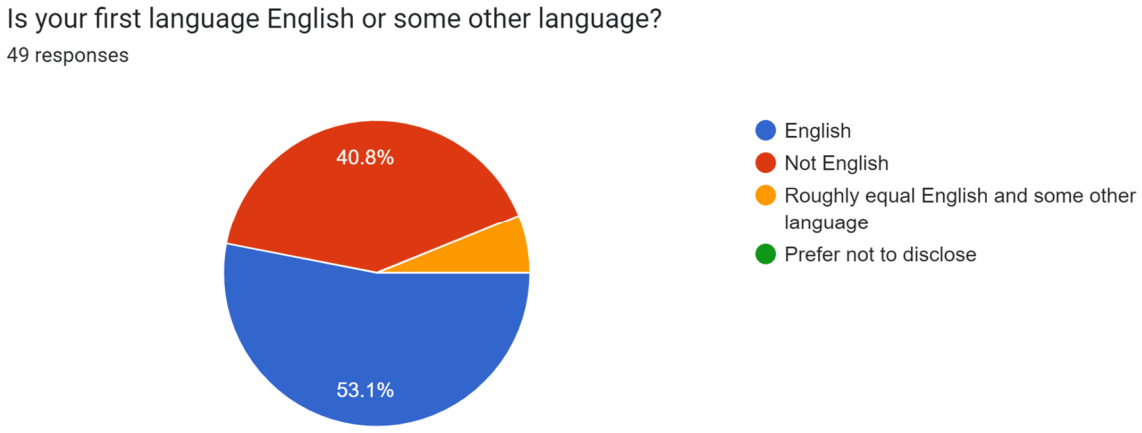
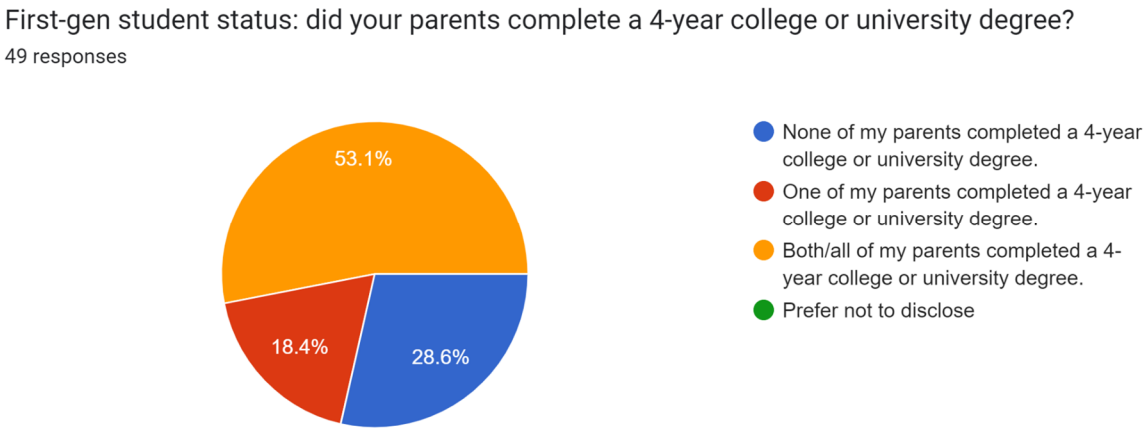


Figure 3.5: Mentee First-Generation College Student Status



4. Mentee Feedback on the Conference Overall

This section presents data from Likert-scale questions ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree") and similar multiple-choice questions posed to the mentees about the overall conference.

4.1 Summary of feedback

Mentees generally viewed the conference favorably and thought it achieved its goals. Many thought it was transformative. While feedback was still very much positive on nearly every aspect, scores were lower for questions relating to the conference providing strategies to handle discrimination or LGBTQ+ concerns.

One of the most consistent pieces of feedback was that funding was the only reason most mentees could make it, and that otherwise funding was still a barrier. Mentees view location of the conference as the least important factor. There was also a broad theme that the conference could have been longer, felt rushed, and that breaks were too short.

Vegan options (and to some extent, gluten free) were undersupplied, especially on Day 1 and coffee was undersupplied, especially in the afternoons.

4.2 Figures

Figure 4.1: Mentee Assessment of Conference Goals
"To what extent do you agree that the conference met its goal of…"

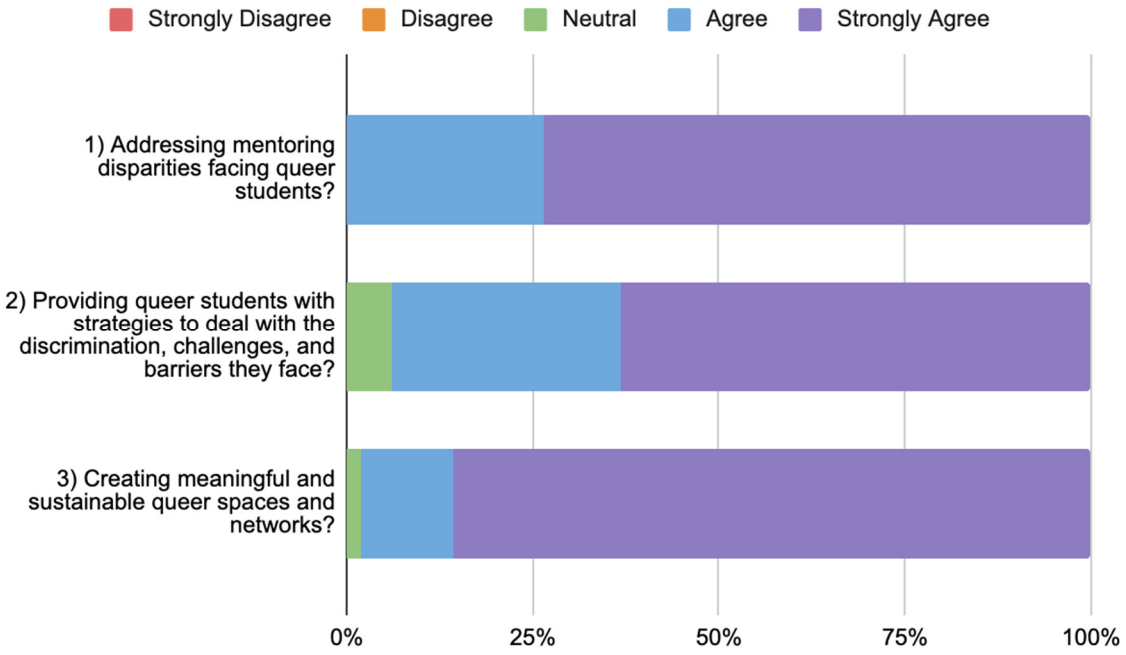


Figure 4.2A: Mentee Responses on Questions about the Conference Overall

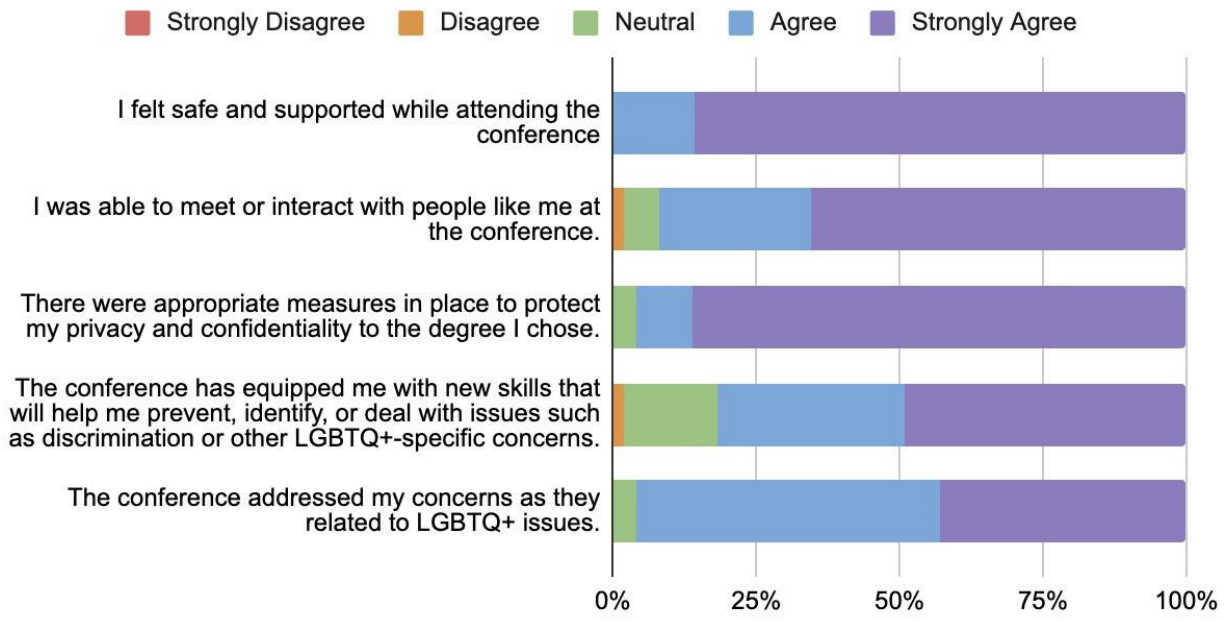


Figure 4.2B: Mentee Responses on Questions about the Conference Overall (Cont'd)

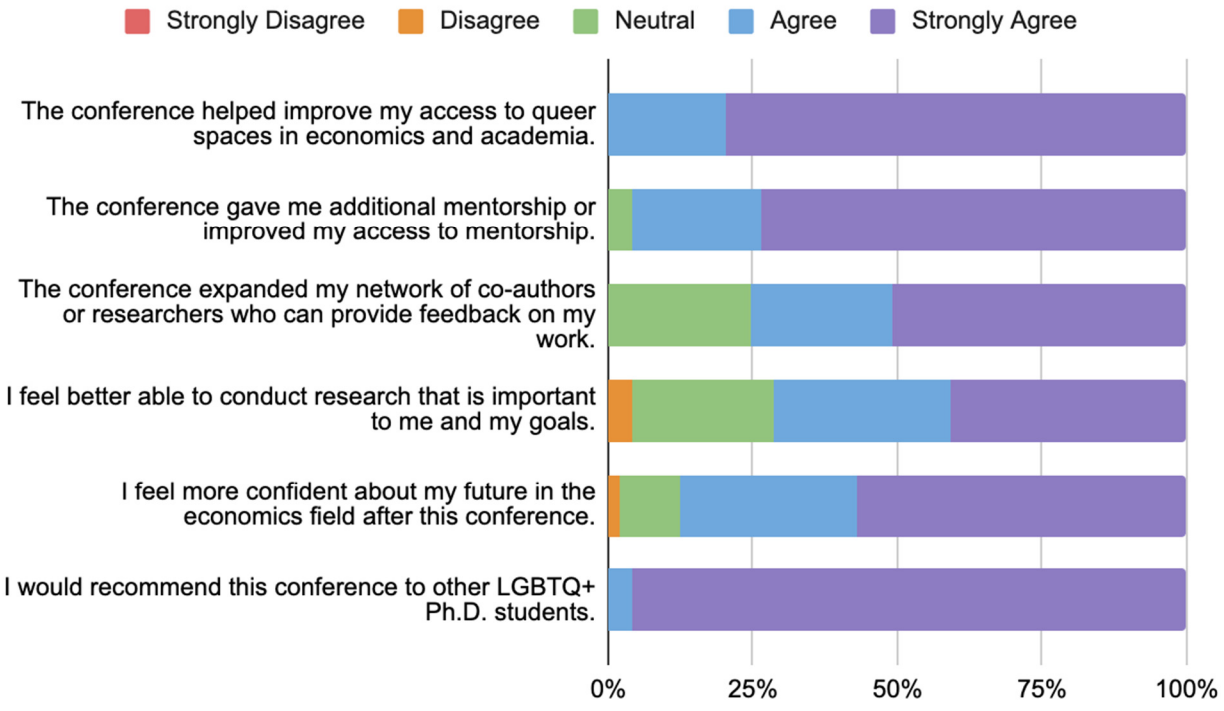


Figure 4.3: Mentee Assessment of Conference Communication, Administration, Accommodations, Venue, and Food

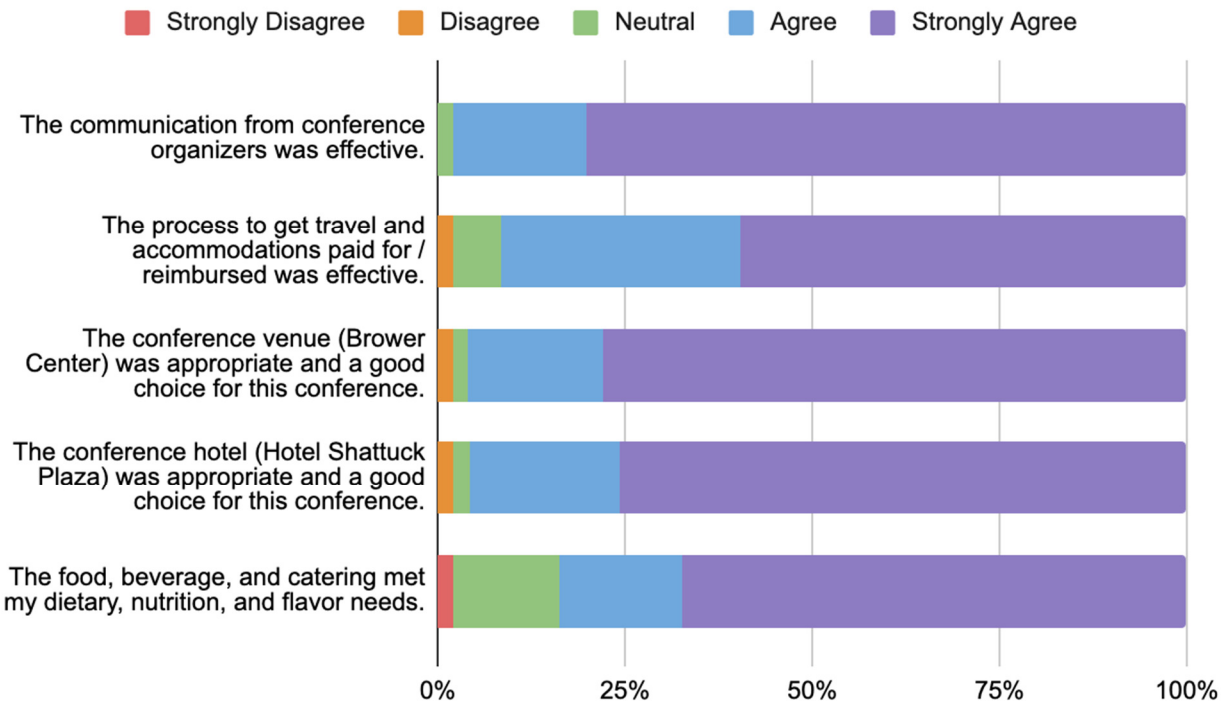


Figure 4.4: Mentee Relative Importance of Funding, Dates, and Location

"Please rank the following in order of importance by how influential they were on your decision to attend the conference (please select 1 for most important, and 3 for least)."

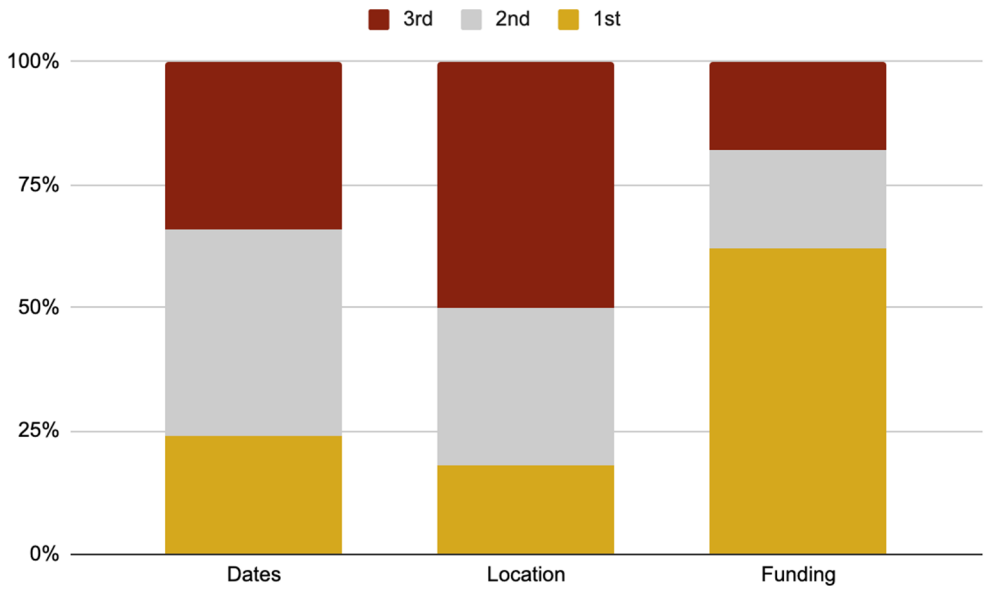


Figure 4.5A: Mentee Assessment of Timing of the Conference

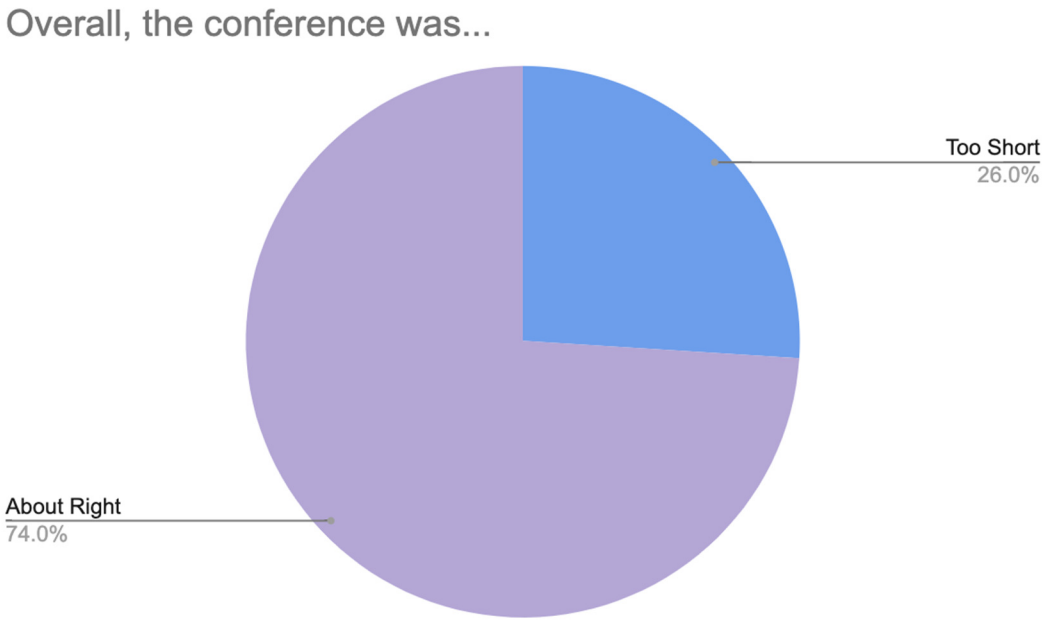


Figure 4.5B: Mentee Assessment of the Number of Breaks during the Conference

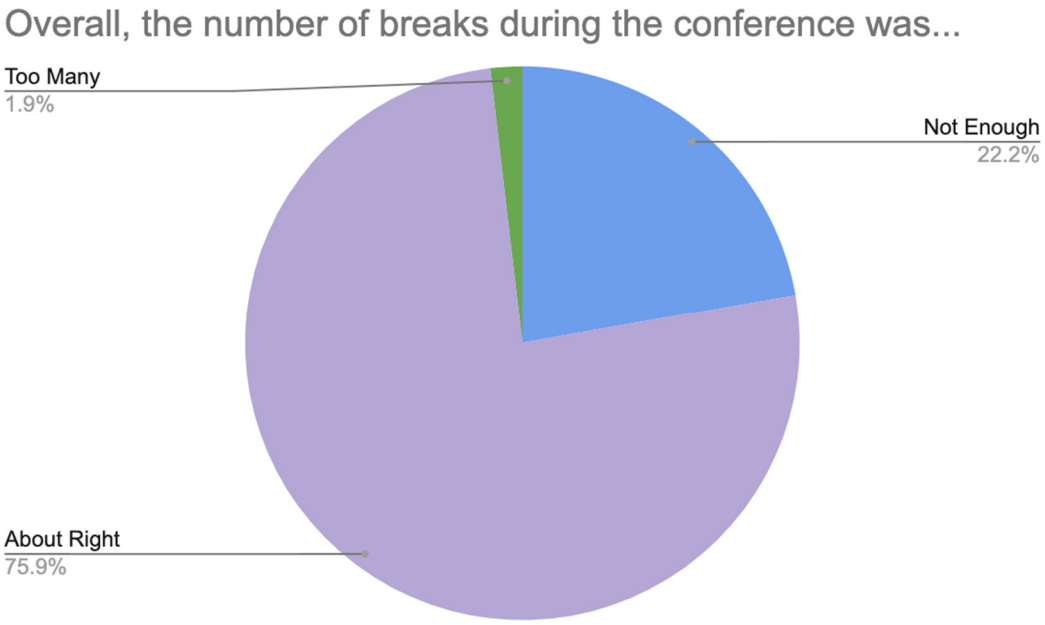
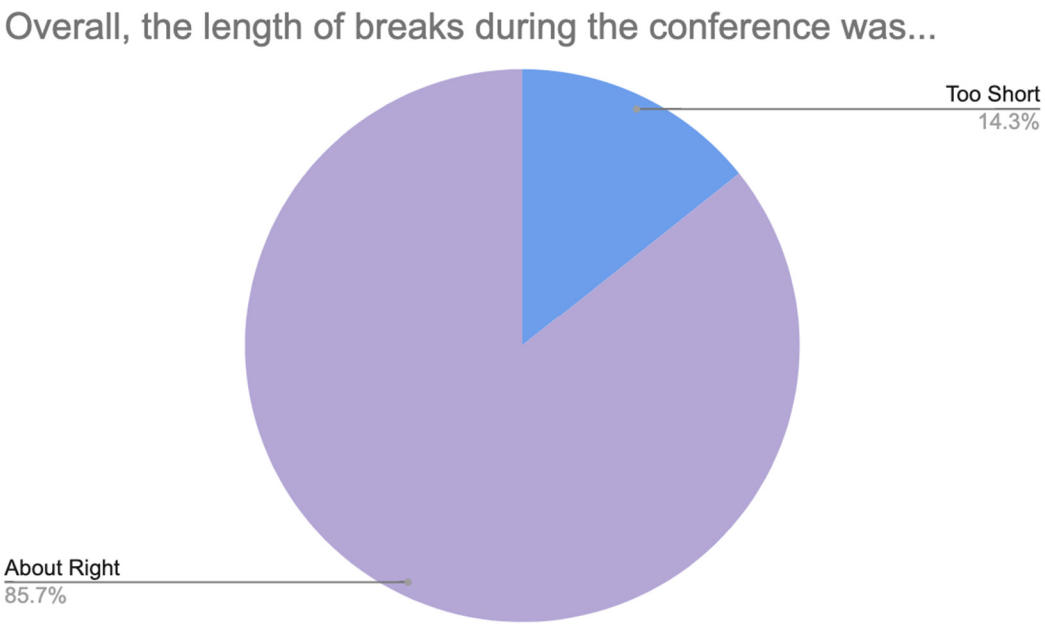


Figure 4.5C: Mentee Assessment of the Length of Breaks during the Conference



4.3. Mentee Responses to Free-Response Questions

Below are the responses to each free-response question posed to the mentees about the conference in general, except the questions about "best session", "worst session", and "missing session", where are covered in section 8. Any changes made to the answers, such as removing sensitive information, is indicated through the use of brackets (e.g., [REDACTED]).

4.3.1. Did you face any barriers to attending the conference or while in attendance that you would like to share?

Main Take-Aways: The most common barrier was cost-related (4 mentions) - often mentioning that had there been less funding, they could not have attended. The second more common barrier (2 mentions) was related to the conference involving significant social interaction, which was difficult for those with (social) anxiety or just very draining. All other comments are individual-specific.

4.3.2. Would you like to elaborate on any of your answers above?

Main Take-Aways: No clear trends in comments other than lots of praise. Some recommendations brought up by individuals (e.g., more structured meeting opportunities)

4.3.3. Do you have any additional feedback about your overall experience at the conference?

Main Take-Aways: General positive and appreciative feedback. Lots of comments about this being along the lines of "transformative". Some thoughtful comments mentioning feeling underrepresented or certain communities not being adequately addressed (e.g., most commonly that there were few "in my field").

4.3.4. Do you have any additional comments about conference communication? (e.g., what was helpful, what we could have done better?)

Main Take-Aways: Few responses here, and most are supportive of the communication. Emails were helpful, clear, and affirming. Could introduce Slack and use it at the start and could better communicate scheduling changes.

4.3.5. Do you have any additional comments about reimbursement or expenses?

Main Take-Aways: Funding was critical to attending. While the funding was appreciated, it was not enough for some and they had to make the difficult decision to pay out of pocket. Those who were not able to get their flights paid for via WorldTravel and had to wait for reimbursement expressed that this was difficult, while those that had their flight (in whole or part) paid for via WorldTravel/Tulane expressed that this was very helpful. A few suggested making the funding/reimbursement cap a function of distance from the venue.

4.3.6. Do you have any additional comments about the conference venue, hotel, food/beverage, or catering?

Main Take-Aways: Almost no comments on venue or hotel. Generally positive comments about the food, but several noted that it did not meet their dietary needs (not enough vegan, celiac, and diabetic options). Food sometimes ran out Day 1 but this was fixed Day 2. Coffee was undersupplied and was noted to be insufficient in the afternoons.

4.3.7. Do you have any additional comments about conference length, agenda, and scheduling?

Main Take-Aways: Few comments here, but of the comments most are that the conference was too crammed and exhausting, namely Day 1. Mentioned more than once not to remove/reduce breaks or add more unstructured time.

4.3.8. How important was funding on your decision to attend the conference?

Main Take-Aways: Near-unanimous that funding was critical, and often the most important thing. Attendees rarely had alternative funding sources, or these sources were scarce. Funding was the reason many could attend. This was brought up often elsewhere and is one of the more common and consistent pieces of feedback.

6. Mentor Feedback on the Conference Overall

This section summarizes feedback from the mentors on the overall conference. Mentors were asked many of the same "overall" questions as the mentees.

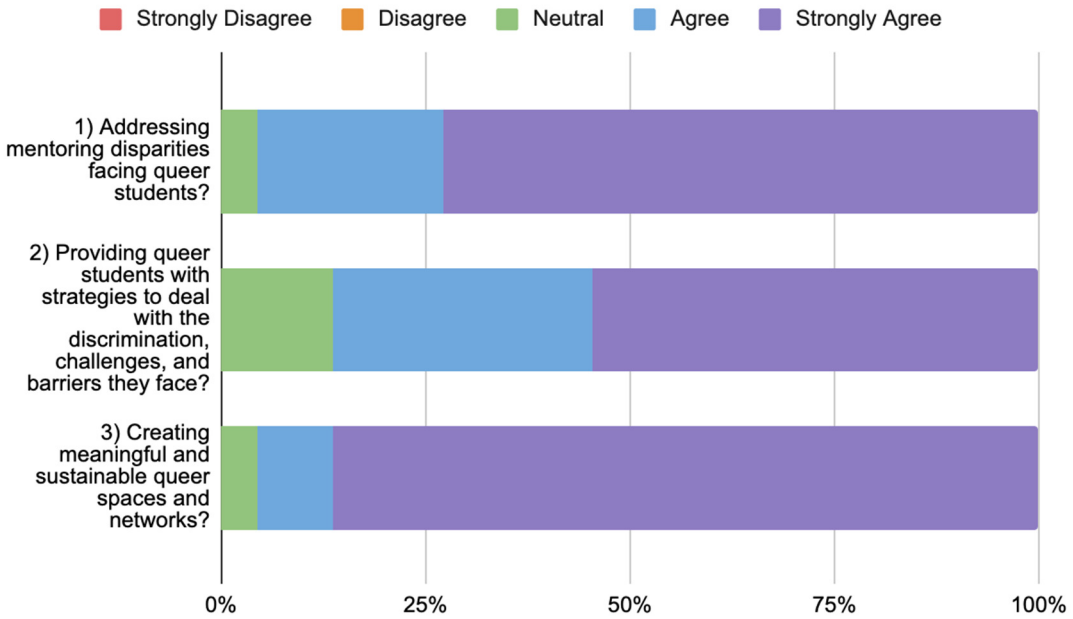
6.1 Summary of feedback

Overall, mentors viewed the conference positively as well but had more critical feedback. Mentors were a bit more likely to view the conference as too short, with breaks that were sometimes too short or infrequent. Mentors had a lot of varied suggestions for ways to improve the conference, with several comments about how to improve the egg timers sessions or that there could be more parallel sessions.

The largest difference is that, compared to the mentees, the mentors viewed dates as the most important factor affecting if they can attend the conference, with funding being the least important. This is the exact opposite as for the mentees, although it is important to note that the mentor pool is somewhat selected since it includes mostly those who were able to pay their own way.

6.2 Figures

Figure 6.1: Mentor Assessment of Conference Goals
"To what extent do you agree that the conference met its goal of…"



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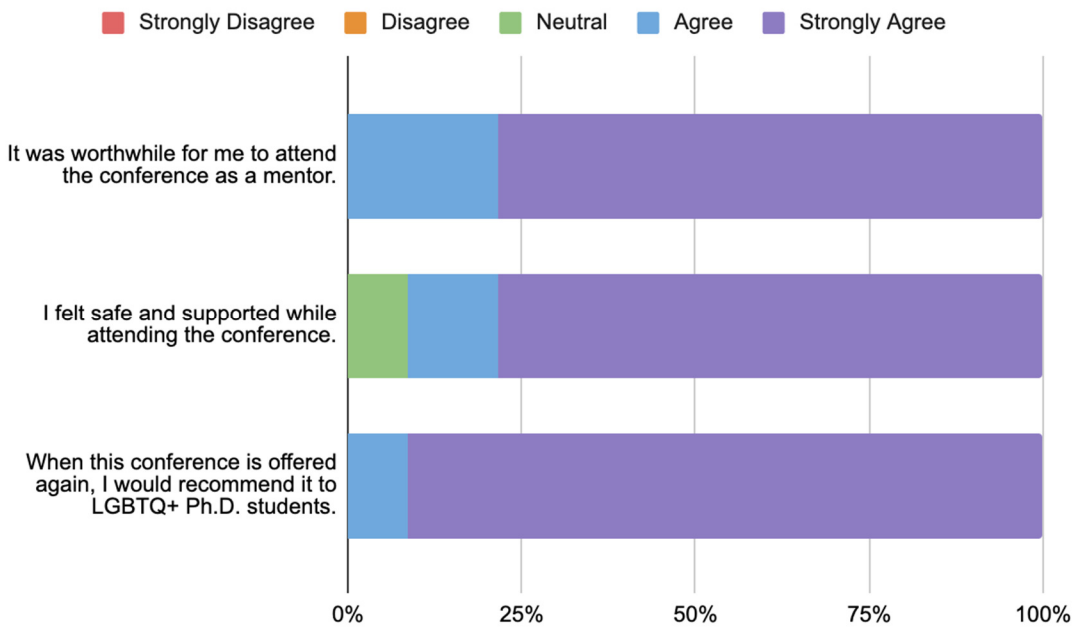


Figure 6.3: Mentor Assessment of Conference Communication, Administration, Accommodations, Venue, and Food

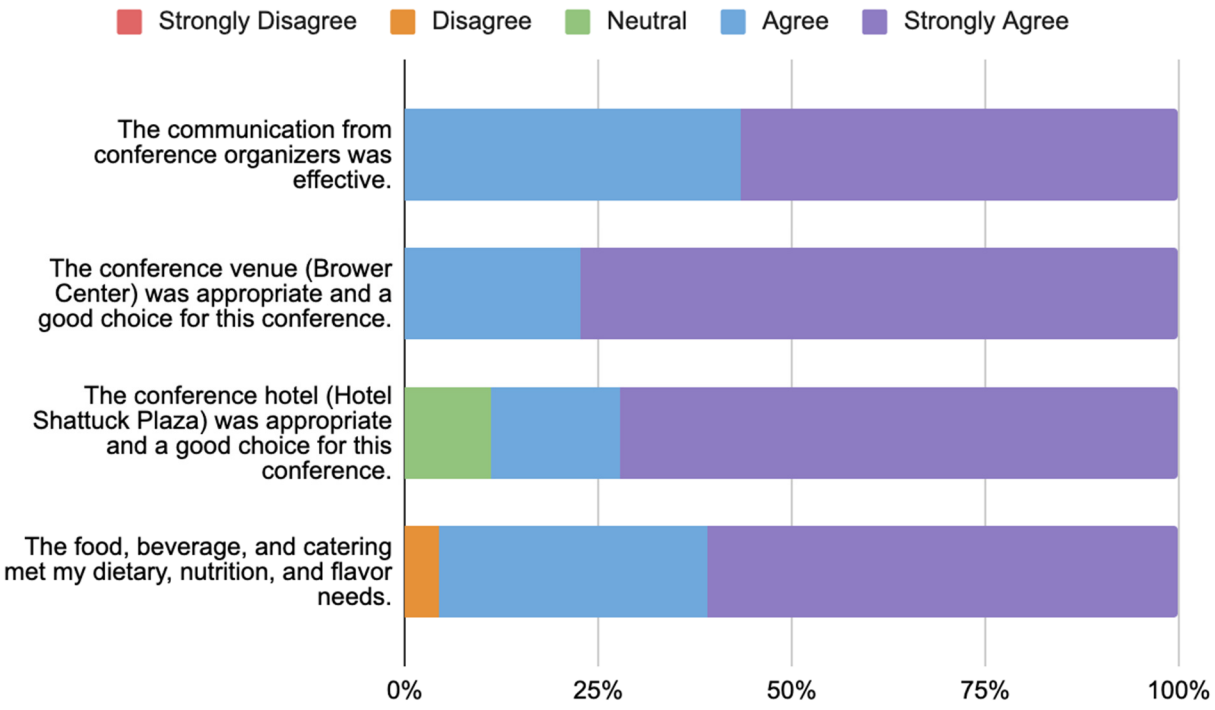


Figure 6.4: Mentor Relative Importance of Funding, Dates, and Location

"Please rank the following in order of importance by how influential they were on your decision to attend the conference (please select 1 for most important, and 3 for least)."

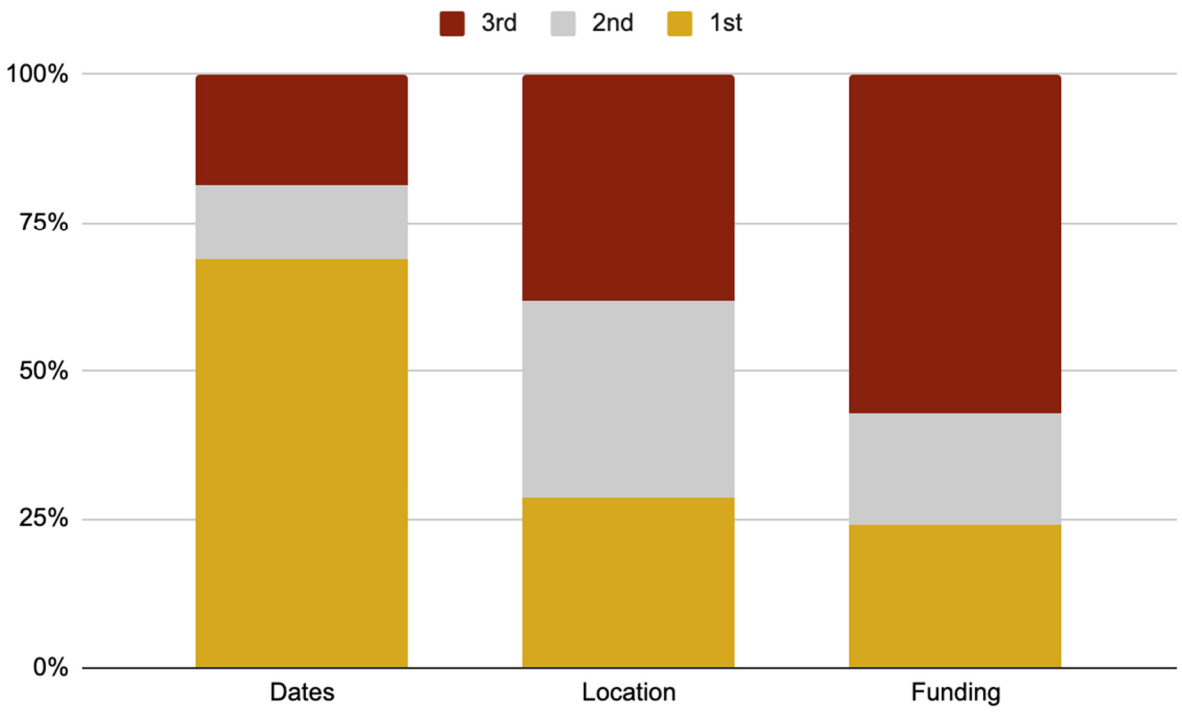


Figure 6.5A: Mentor Assessment of Timing of the Conference

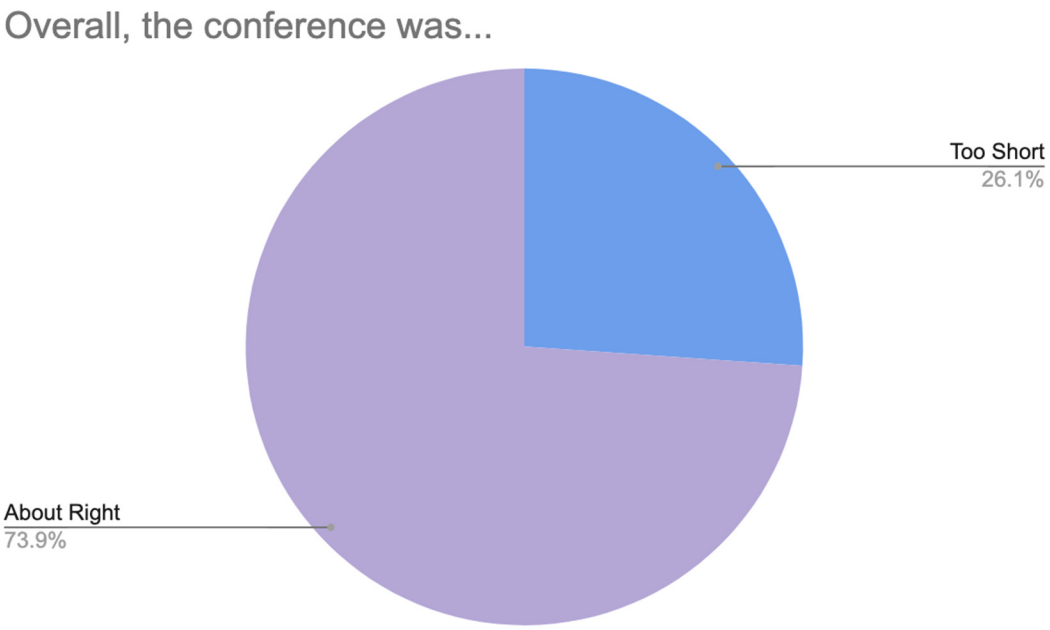


Figure 6.5B: Mentor Assessment of the Number of Breaks during the Conference

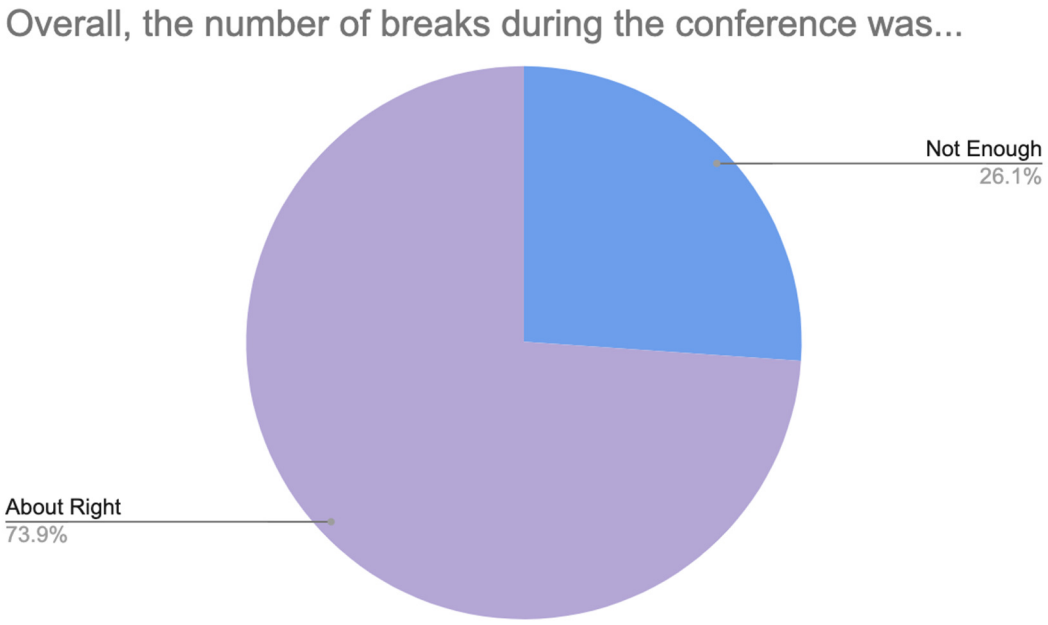
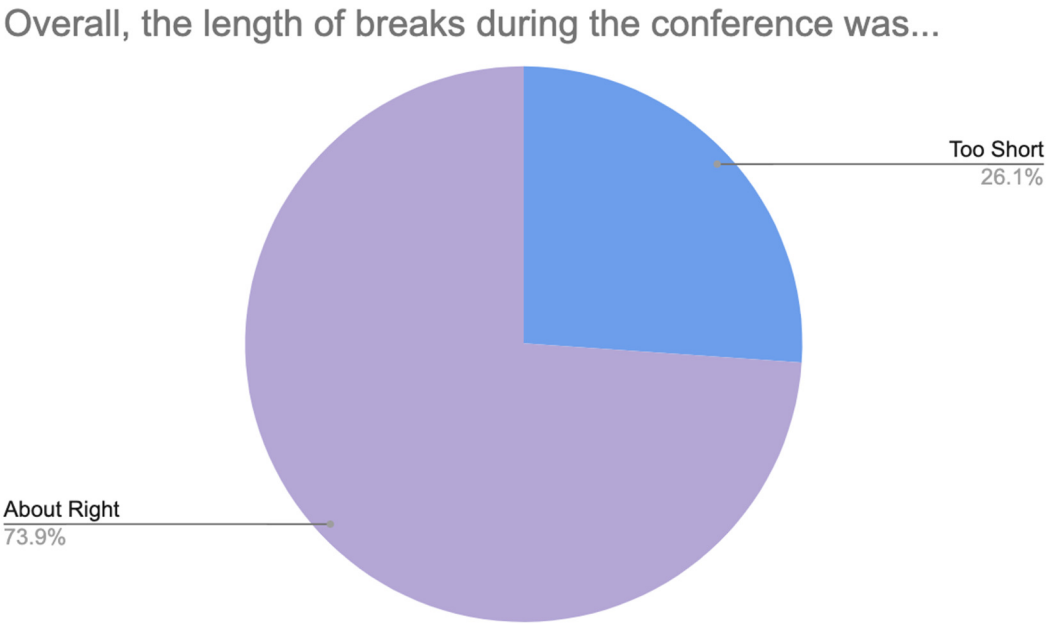


Figure 6.5C: Mentor Assessment of the Length of Breaks during the Conference



7. Feedback on the Small Mentor-Mentee Groups

This section provides all the feedback related to the small mentor-mentee groups, including both selection question and free-response question feedback, and feedback from both mentors and mentees.

7.1. Summary of Feedback

The small mentor-mentee groups were generally viewed favorably, but both mentors and mentees often expressed some frustration that the groups felt mismatched, such as there being no mentors of a certain type (e.g., theory), or those key mentors being in the wrong group, or all mentors in a group being white cis gay men while the mentees all have a different background.

7.2. Figures

Figure 7.1: Mentee Assessment of Groups

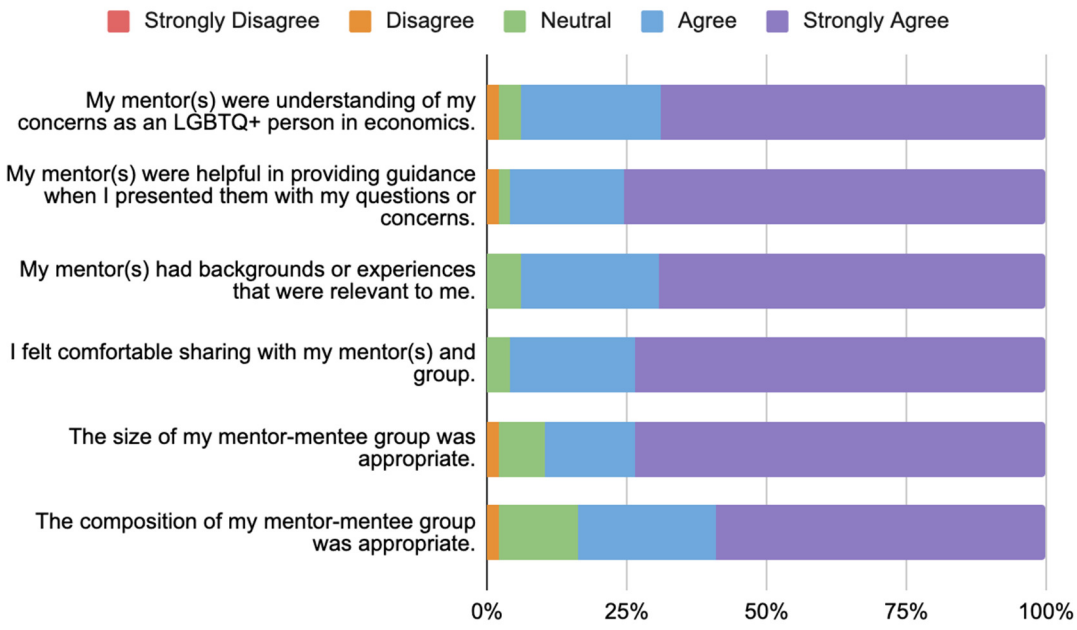
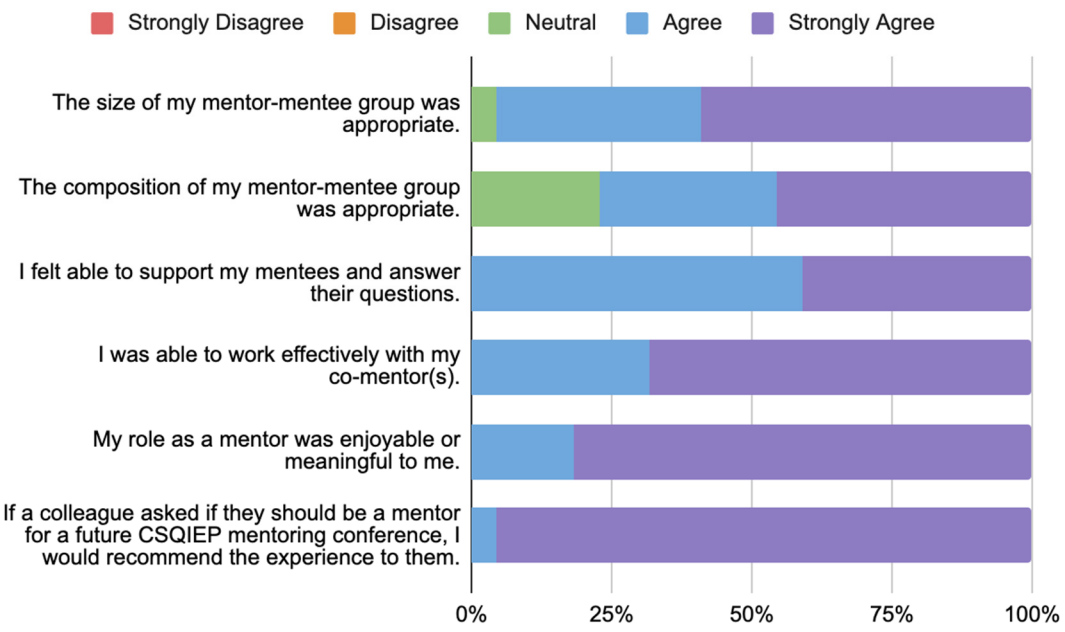


Figure 7.2: Mentor Assessment of Groups



8. Feedback on Each Conference Session

This section provides mentee feedback for each individual session, both from selection questions (e.g., "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree") and free-response questions. In addition, this section presents and summarizes free-response feedback from mentors and mentees about which sessions were the best, worse and "missing".

8.1. Comparing Sessions and Overall Summary

Overall, sessions were viewed positively. Table 8.1 ranks sessions based on mentee feedback.

The worst sessions seem to mirror those stated as the worst from the free-response question (see 8.2 below): Session 2.2 (**Self-Care**), Session 1.6B (**PhD Advisor**), and Session 1.5A (**How to do Research**). Session 2.4A (**Navigating Homo/Transphobic Environments**) had the lowest and second lowest scores for relevance and accomplishing goals, although everyone reported learning something from the session (perhaps just not what was intended). There was no consensus from the mentors about which sessions were the worst, although there is less data available from them.

The best sessions are a bit harder to determine, since the quantitative and qualitative (free response, see section 8.4) data from mentees do not overlap as much. However, for both types of data, Session 1.4A (**Job Market Preparation**) and Session 2.4C (**Teaching**) were one viewed as among the best. While Session 2.1 (**Egg Timer Presentations**) and Session 2.3 (**Chat with Mary Daly**) only got about above-average quantitative scores, they were by far the most mentioned as the best sessions in the free response question. Session 1.6A (**Parenting**) was seen as the best session by the mentors, with

mentees seeing this session positively as well, although there was significant variance given that the session was either strongly relevant or entirely irrelevant.

For **missing sessions** that could have been added, the most popular suggestion, especially among mentees, was for **more social and networking time**. There was more support for this to be more about networking, so activities like icebreakers, “speed dating”, or small group discussions, but there was notable support for social or entertainment events such as a happy hour or drag show. The second most common suggestion, especially by the mentees, was for **more time to discuss mentee research**. This is not surprising given that the Egg Timer sessions were seen as one of the best. Relatedly, mentees also noted that they wanted **more time for mentor-mentee group discussions**. Suggestions by mentors for missing sessions were more varied, but there was more support for some **content on professional conduct** and **additional content on job market preparation**, which aligns with mentee feedback that the job market preparation session was one of the best.

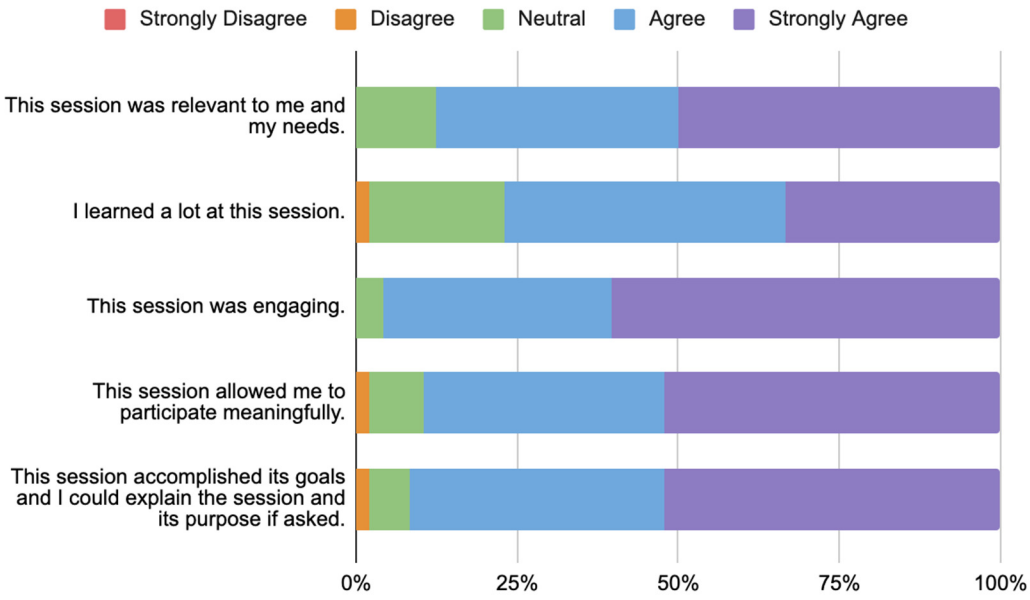
Table 8.1: Mentee Ranking of Sessions

	This session was relevant to me and my needs.		I learned a lot at this session.		This session accomplished its goals and I could explain the session and its purpose.	
Rank	Session	% Agree	Session	% Agree	Session	% Agree
1st	1.3 - Day in the Life	95.9%	2.4A - Phobic enviros	100%	1.4A - Job Market	100%
2nd	2.3 - Mary Daly	95.8%	1.4A - Job Market	95.6%	1.4B - Post-PhD	100%
3rd	2.4C - Teaching	94.7%	2.4C - Teaching	94.7%	1.5B - Market Tales	100%
4th	1.4A - Job Market	91.5%	1.6A - Parenting	94.4%	1.6A - Parenting	100%
5th	1.4B - Post-PhD	90.0%	2.3 - Mary Daly	93.8%	2.4C - Teaching	100%
6th	2.4B - LGBTQ Res.	90.0%	2.1 - Egg Timer	91.8%	2.1 - Egg Timer	98.0%
7th	2.1 - Egg Timer	89.8%	2.4B - LGBTQ Res.	90.0%	2.3 - Mary Daly	97.9%
8th	2.5 - Trans Allies	89.6%	1.3 - Day in the Life	89.8%	2.4B - LGBTQ Res.	95.0%
9th	2.6 - Closing	89.6%	2.5 - Trans Allies	87.5%	1.3 - Day in the Life	93.9%
10th	1.6A - Parenting	88.3%	2.6 - Closing	85.4%	2.6 - Trans Allies	93.8%
11th	1.1/1.2 - Welcome	87.5%	1.7 - Poster / HHour	83.7%	1.1/1.2 - Welcome	91.7%
12th	1.7 - Poster / HHour	85.7%	1.4B - Post-PhD	80%	1.7 - Poster/HHour	87.8%
13th	1.5A - How to research	84.6%	1.5B - Market Tales	77.3%	2.5 - Closing	87.5%
14th	1.5B - Market Tales	81.8%	1.1/1.2 - Welcome	77.1%	1.5A -How2research	84.6%
15th	2.2 - Self-care	72.9%	1.5A - How2research	73.1%	1.6B - PhD Advisor	82.1%
16th	1.6B - PhD Advisor	67.9%	1.6B - PhD Advisor	64.3%	2.4A - Phobic envir.	80.0%
17th	2.4A - Phobic enviros	60.0%	2.2 - Self-care	52.1%	2.2 - Self-care	77.1%

Notes: % Agree is the proportion of survey respondents who reported “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”.

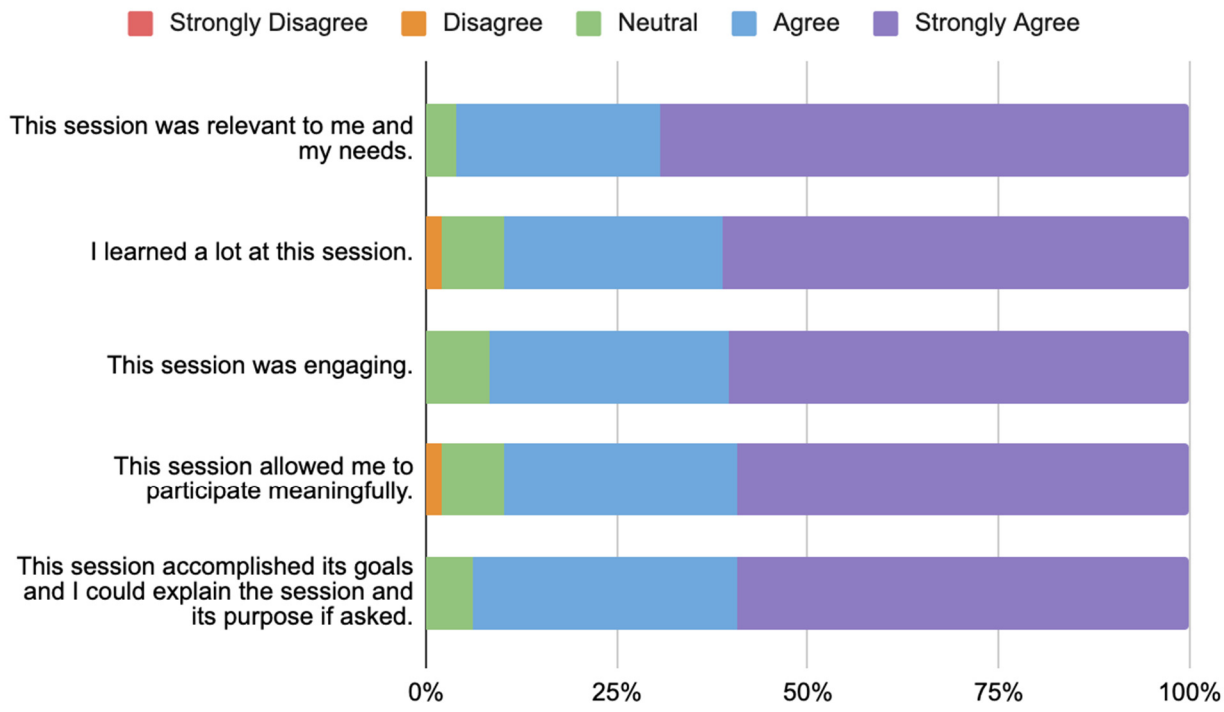
8.4. Feedback on Session 1.1/1.2: Welcome, AEA Presidential Address, and Introductions

Figure 8.1: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.1/1/2



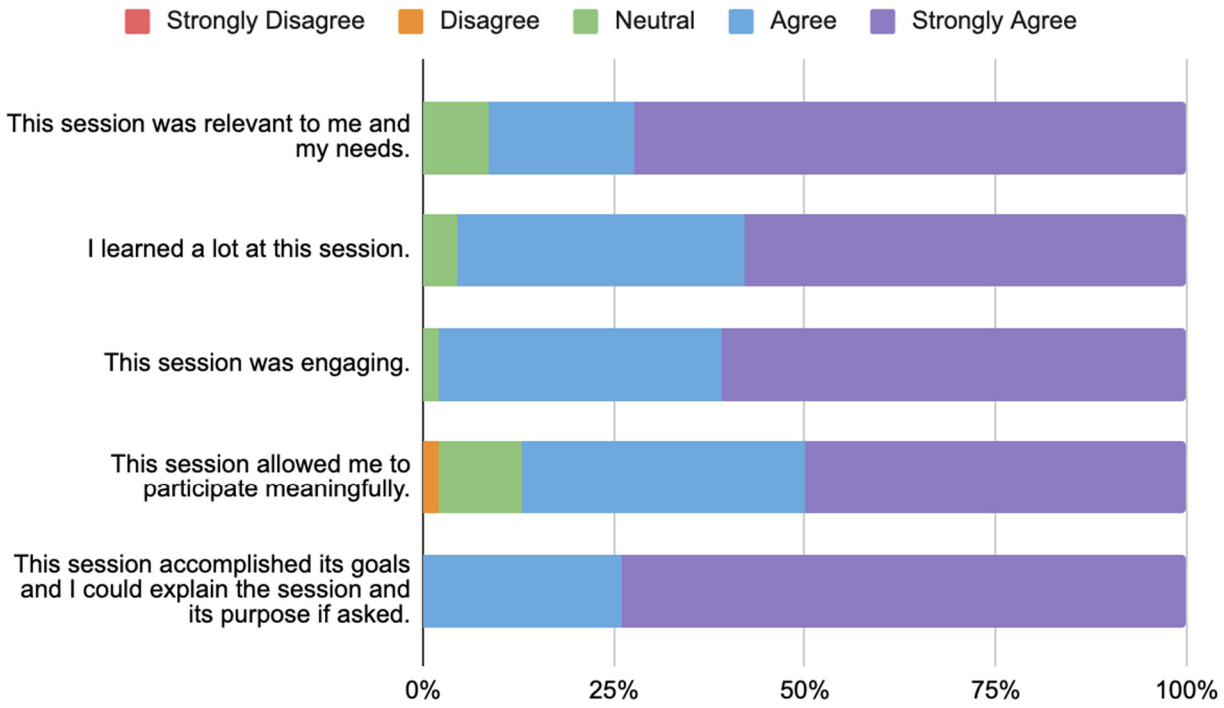
8.5. Feedback on Session 1.3: Where do you want to be? What's a day in the life like?

Figure 8.2: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.3



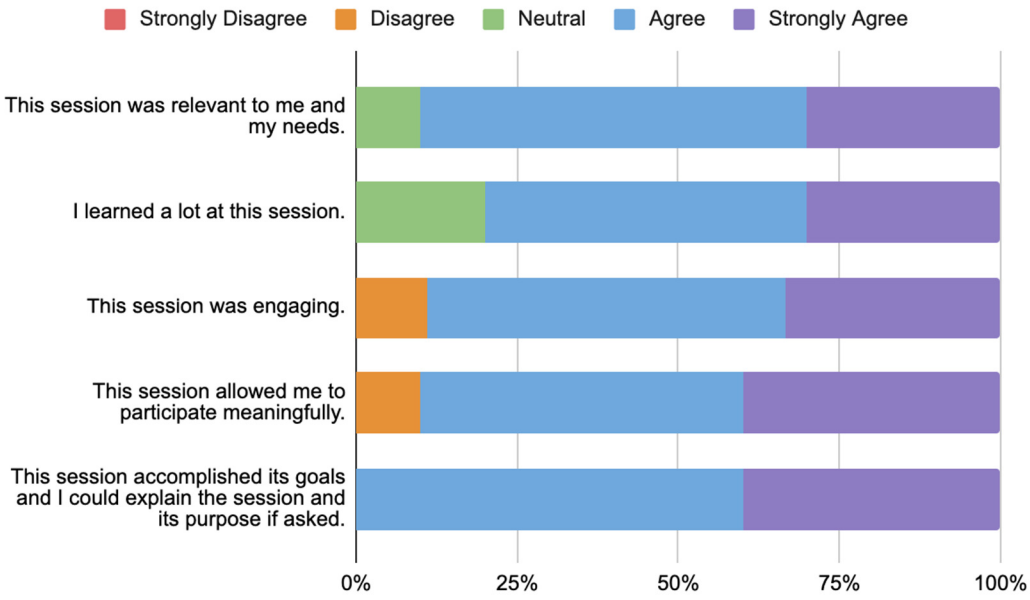
8.6. Feedback on Session 1.4A: Job Market Preparation - Timeline and Resources

Figure 8.3: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.4A



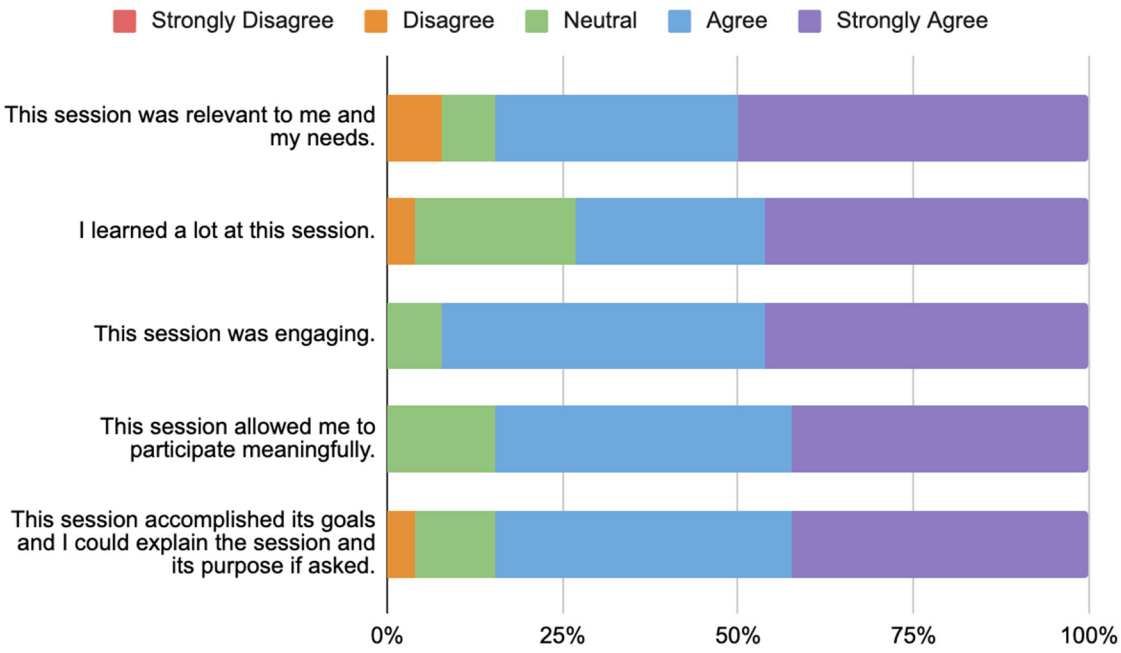
8.7. Feedback on Session 1.4B: My First Year or Two Post-PhD (Junior Mentors Session)

Figure 8.4: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.4B



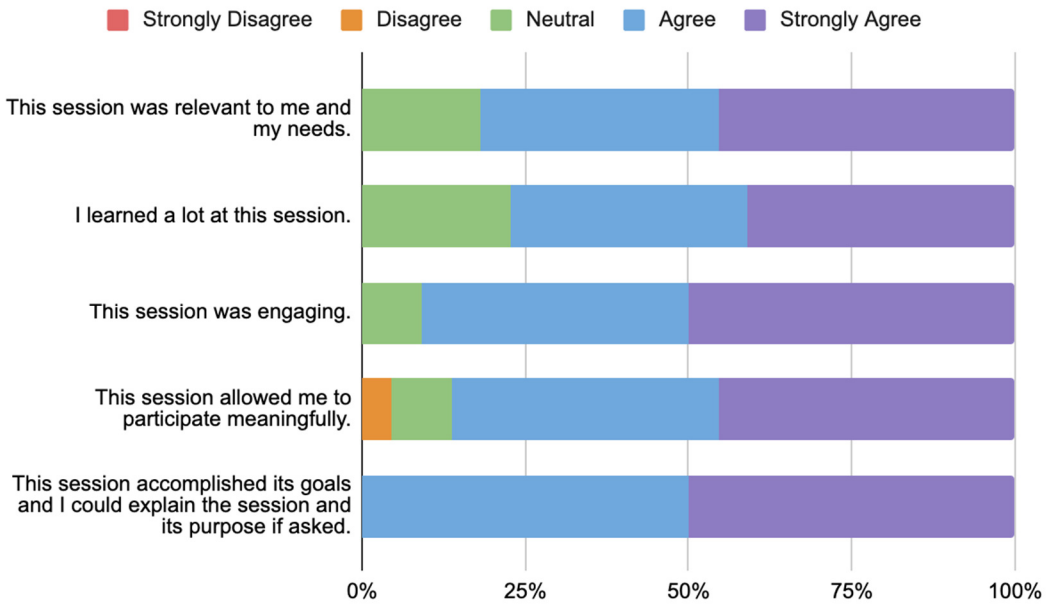
8.8. Feedback on Session 1.5A: How Do You "Do" Research?

Figure 8.5: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.5A



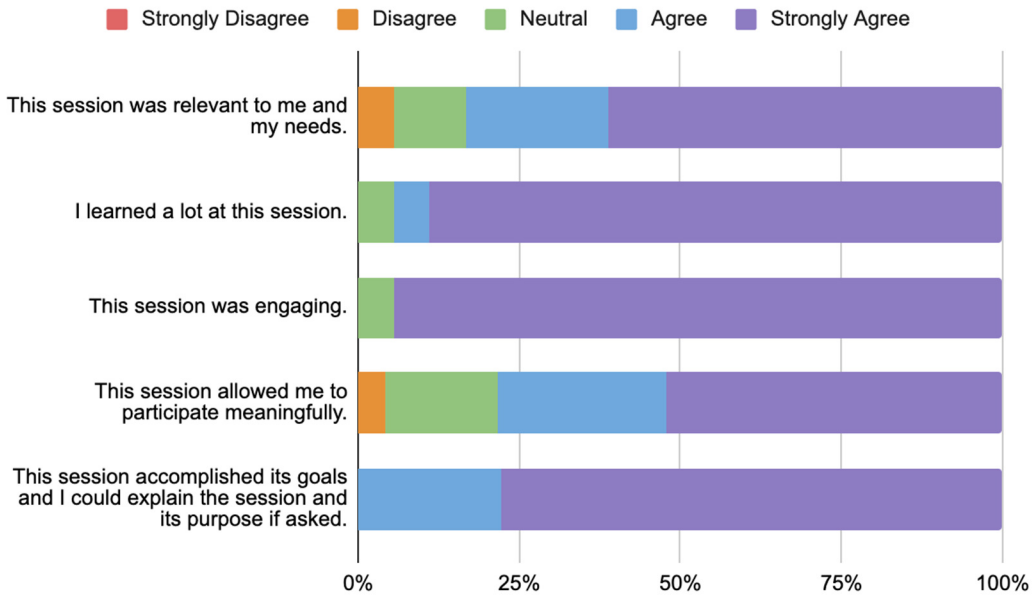
8.9. Feedback on Session 1.5B: Recent Job Market Tales

Figure 8.6: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.5B



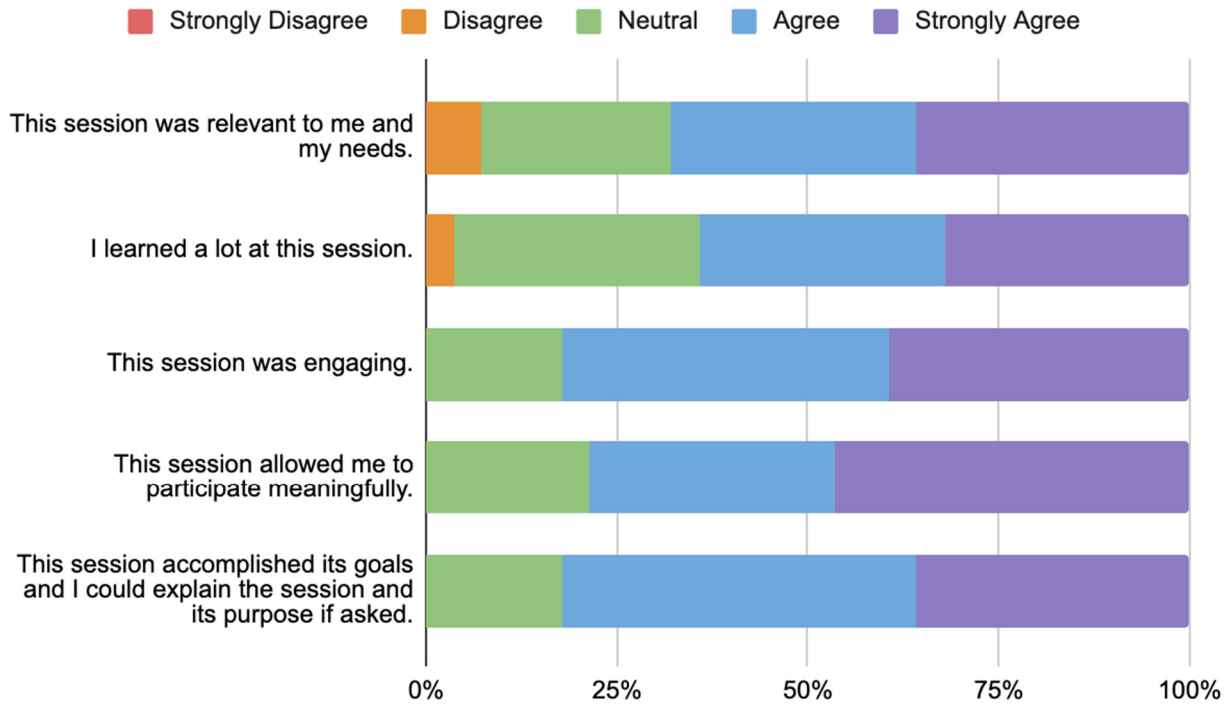
8.10. Feedback on Session 1.6A: Parenting and More

Figure 8.7: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.6A



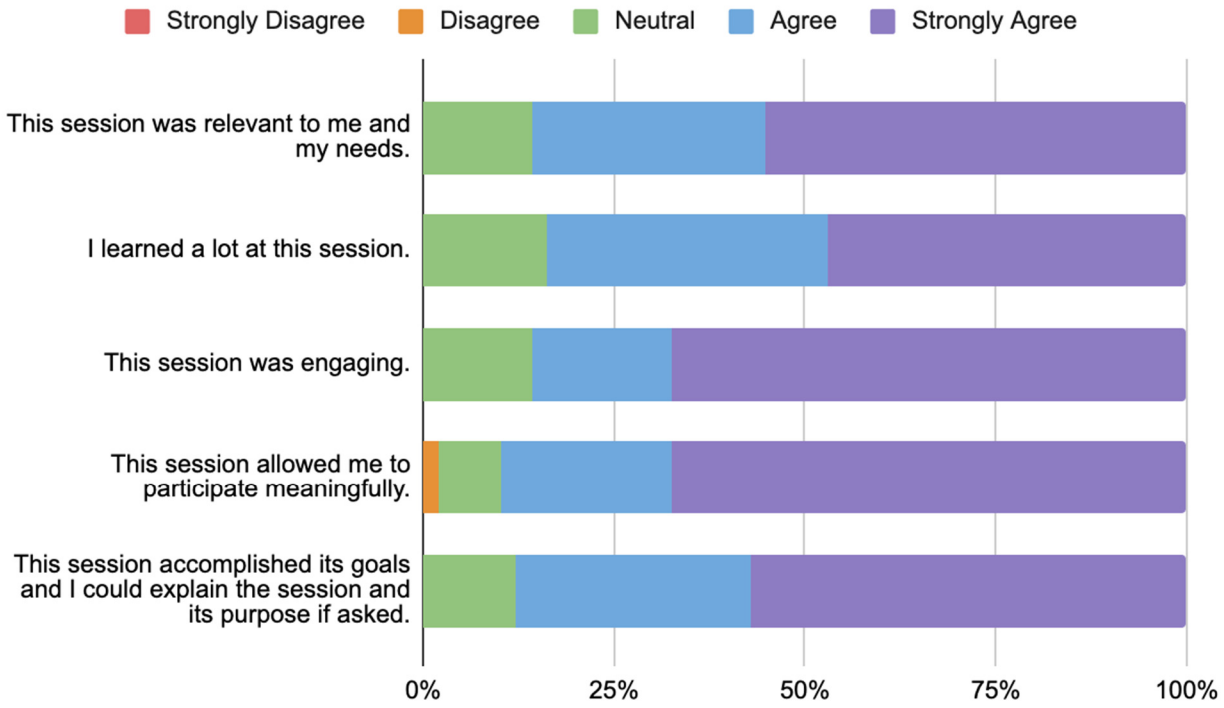
8.11. Feedback on Session 1.6B: Your PhD Advisor

Figure 8.8: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.6B



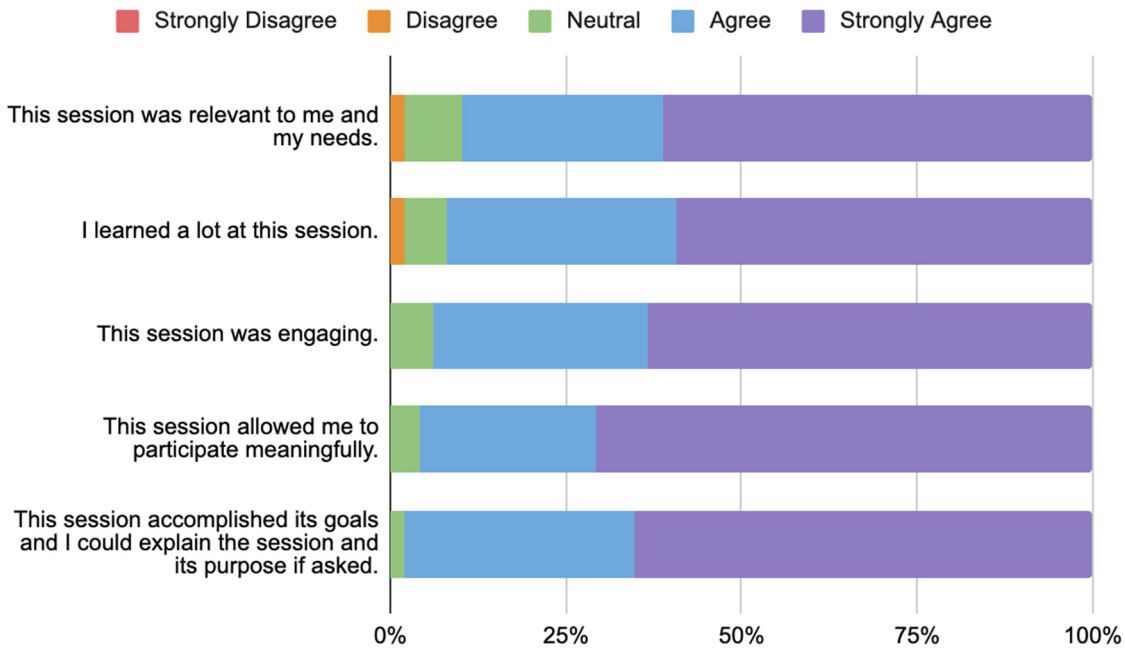
8.12. Feedback on Session 1.7: Happy Hour and Poster Session

Figure 8.9: Mentee Assessment of Session 1.7



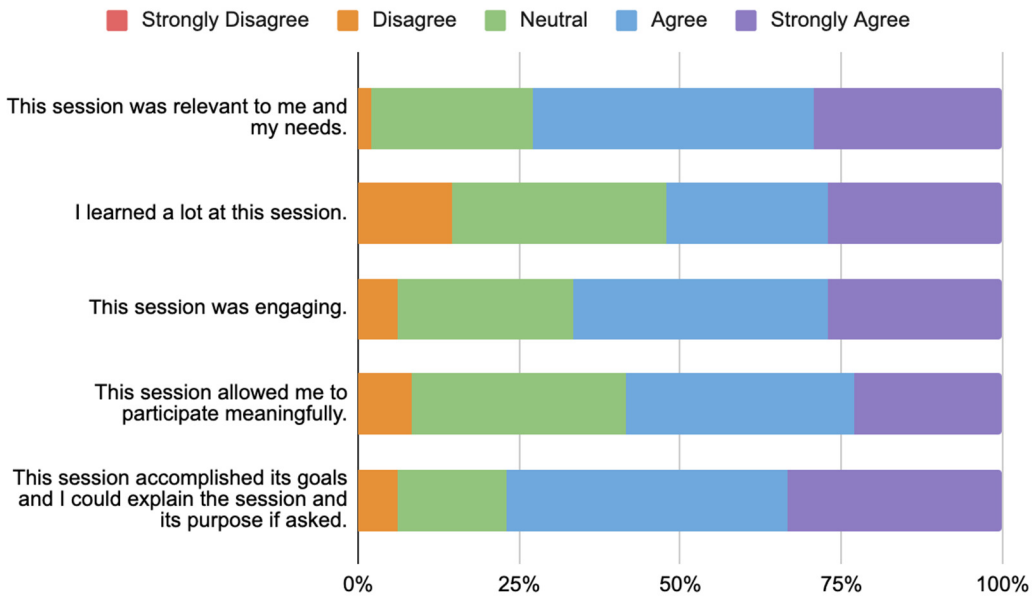
8.13. Feedback on Session 2.1: Egg Timer Research Presentations

Figure 8.10: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.1



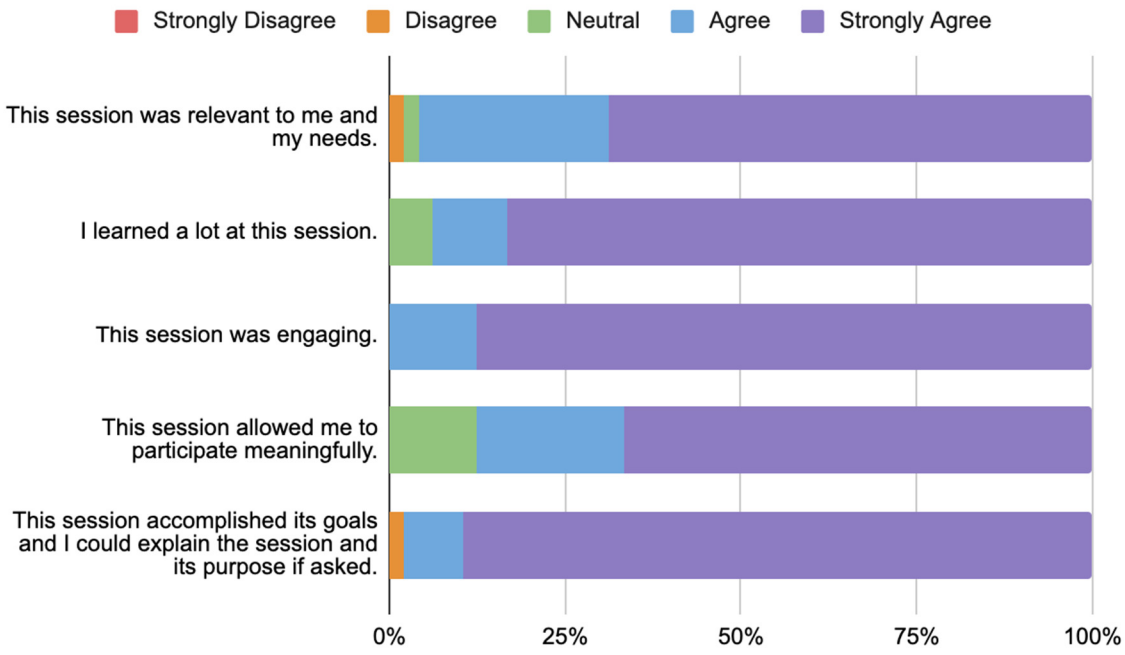
8.14. Feedback on Session 2.2: Back into the Real World: Self-Care, Balancing Multiple Priorities, and Dealing with Rejection

Figure 8.11: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.2



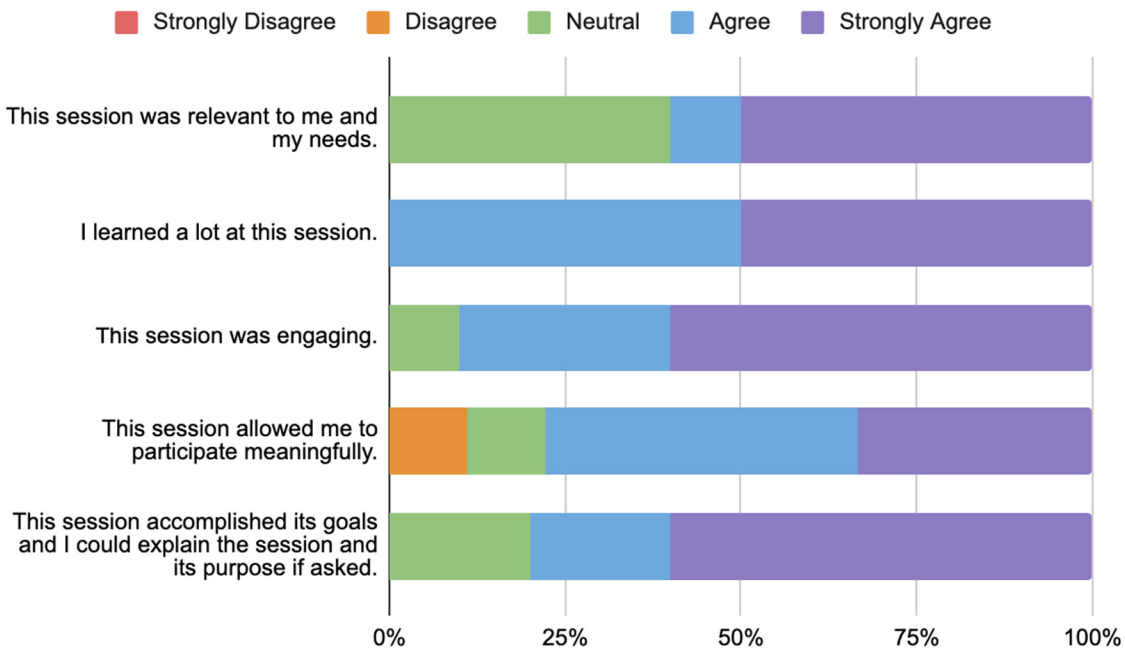
8.15. Feedback on Session 2.3: “Fireside Chat with Mary C. Daly, CEO and President of SF Fed

Figure 8.12: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.3



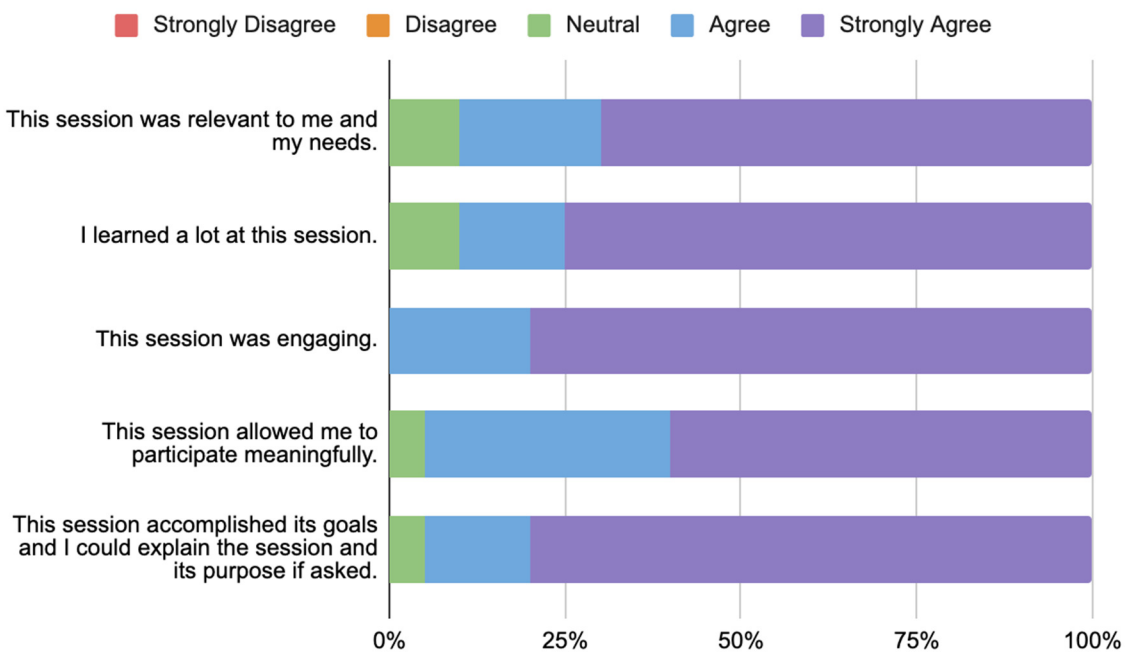
8.16. Feedback on Session 2.4A: Navigating Difficult Homophobic and/or Transphobic Environments

Figure 8.13: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.4A



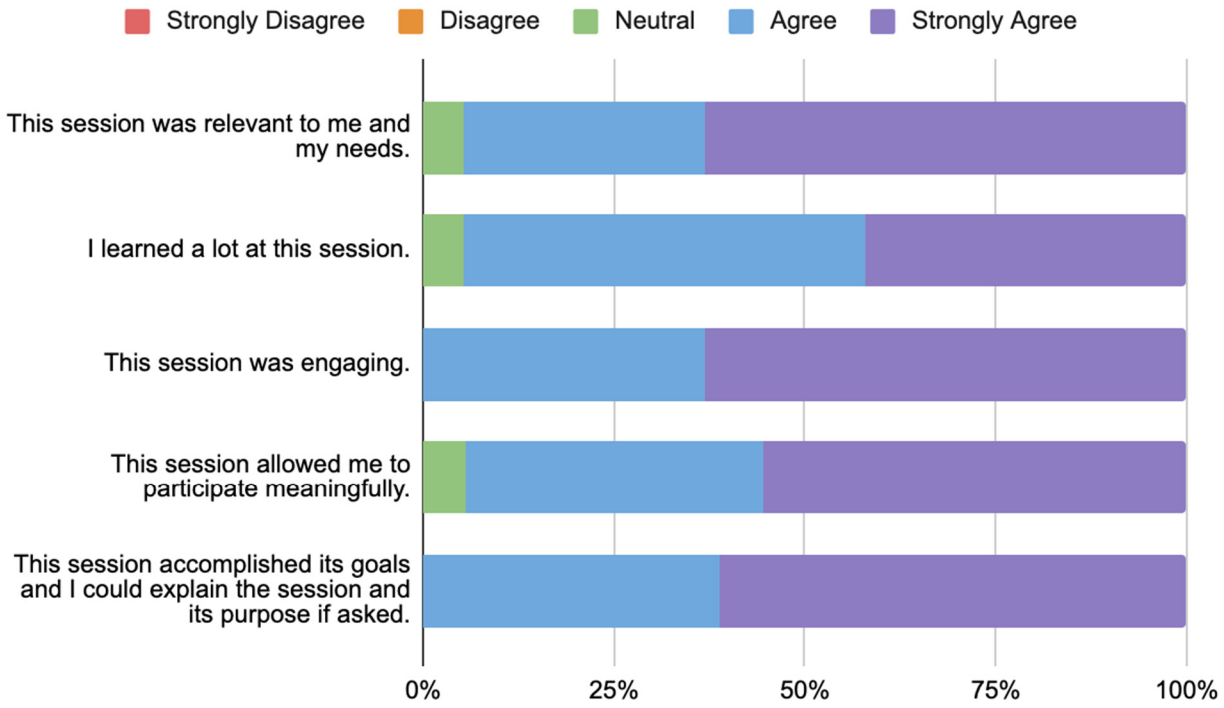
8.17. Feedback on Session 2.4B: LGBTQ+ Research

Figure 8.14: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.4B



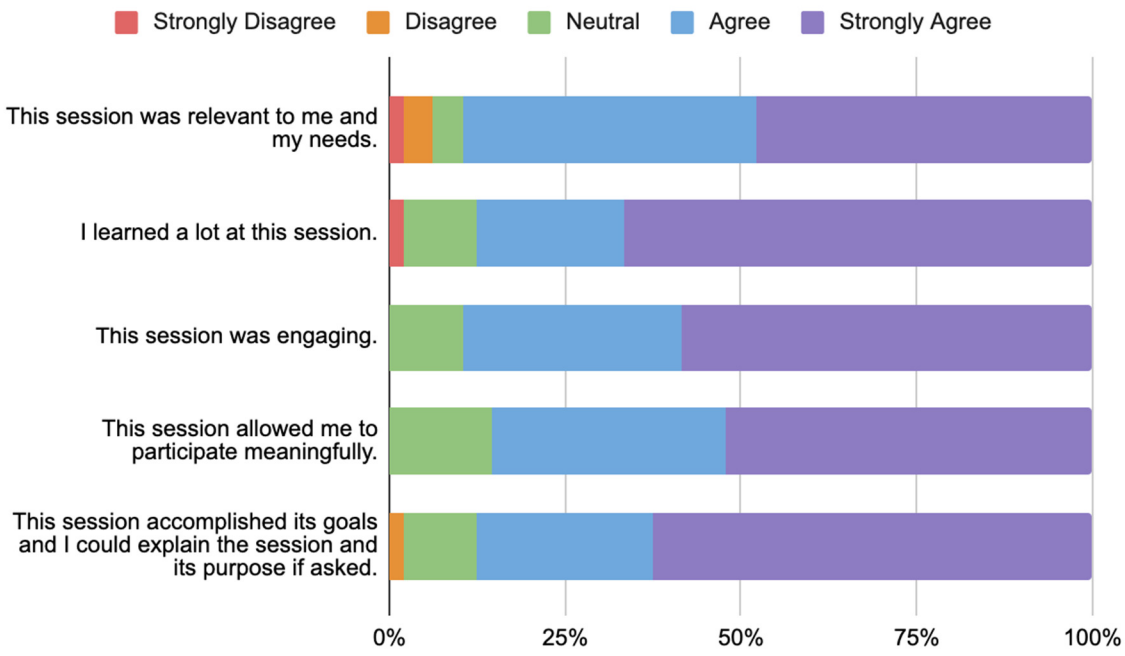
8.18. Feedback on Session 2.4C: Teaching Pop-Up Session

Figure 8.15: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.4C



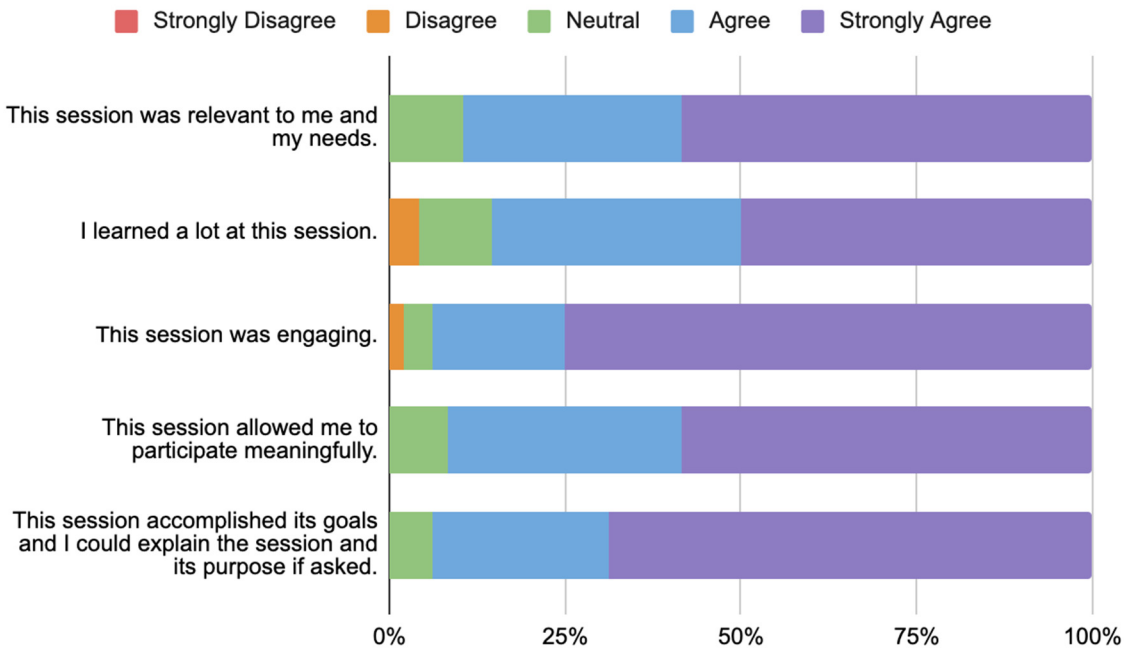
8.19. Feedback on Session 2.5: Trans Allies in this Moment

Figure 8.16: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.5



8.20. Feedback Session 2.6: Closing / “Where Do We Go From Here?”

Figure 8.17: Mentee Assessment of Session 2.6



8.21. What Session Was Missing? Mentee Free-Response Feedback

Question: "What is a session (or sessions) you would have liked to see that was not offered?"

Main Take-Aways: Most common responses (grouped) in decreasing order:

1. More social/networking time (6 Mentions)
    a. E.g., icebreakers, one-on-one, small group, "speed dating", happy hour
2. More time to discuss mentee research (4 Mentions)
    a. Longer egg timers, grouping by field, or other opportunities.
3. More mentor-mentee group discussion time (4 Mentions)
    a. More semi-structured time, mentors share more personal stories, more time to discuss mentee research, additional time in general.

8.23. Mentor Feedback on Running Sessions

Below is feedback from mentors on the sessions that they ran or participated in, organized by "what went well" and "what could be improved".

Main Take-Aways: The most common feedback about what went well or could have been improved related to:

- Having some pre-written / submitted questions was or would have been helpful to improve time management and ensure that key questions were not missed.
- Leaving ample time for audience questions and minimizing panelist talking (fewer panelists respond to each question, shorter answers) was / would have been helpful.
- Some organization beforehand would improve time management, such as determining which panelists will speak about which questions that would certainly / likely come up.
- Having a moderator for panels was very helpful at managing time.
- Having additional viewpoints on panels was helpful / would have been helpful. For example, we were missing more mentors from industry, more mentors that could speak to non US jobs or visa issues, or mentors that could better address regions that might not be as LGBTQ-affirming.