CATCS Connections Survey

Background

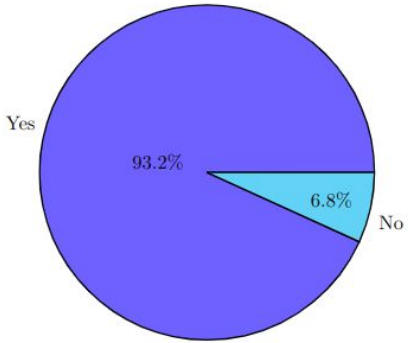
- In Fall 2020, a SIGACT CATCS task force released a survey to the community

- Goal: investigate possible approaches to modifying our publishing culture, and other community practices, to enhance connections with other areas of CS and be as welcoming as possible to a broad range of contributions within theory

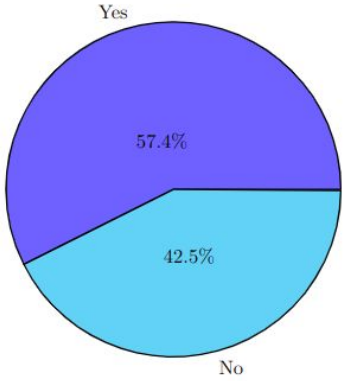
- Survey received 338 responses

Question/response highlights

- Do you consider yourself a member of the TCS community (broadly construed)?

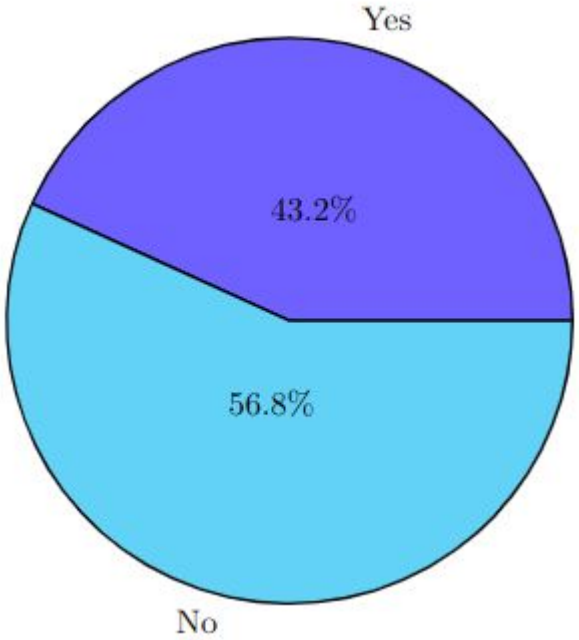


- Do you regularly submit papers to FOCS or STOC?



- Most common reasons for not regularly submitting:
  - subfield not appreciated (30)
  - low accept rate (9)
  - my work is too applied (6)

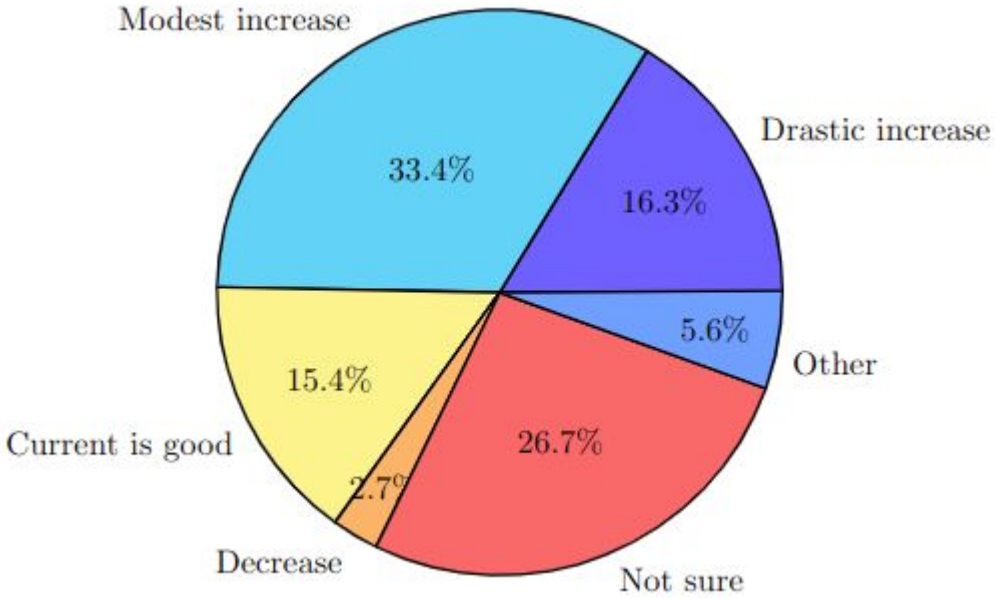
Q: Do you regularly attend STOC/FOCS?



Popular reasons for “No”:

- Too much travel / climate change impact (40)
- I don’t have a paper in the conference (36)
- Too expensive (34)
- Too few papers of interest to me (28)
- Difficult to find colleagues to socialize with in area (11)
- Family constraints (8)
- Prefer to attend more specialized conference (6)

Q: Do you think the # of accepted paper at FOCS/STOC should increase?



Note: at the time of the survey, the most recent FOCS/STOC conferences had the following numbers of papers…

FOCS
2020: 127
2019: 92
2018: 87

STOC
2020: 113
2019: 113
2018: 113

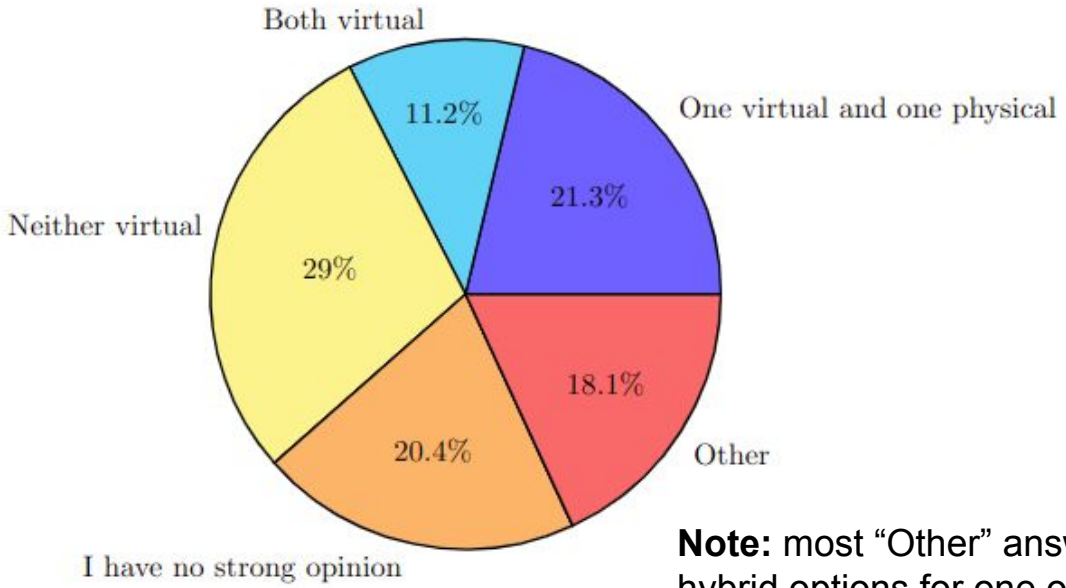
This year's STOC has 155 papers!
(last two years were 134 and 151)

Q: Suppose it was decided that the number of papers at FOCS/STOC would be increased. In what way would you be supportive of doing that? (select all that apply)

Top answers selected by poll takers:

- Add more parallel tracks and keep talk lengths the same (56.4%)
- Expand conference to 4 days (55.2%)
- Eliminate all talks at conference; pre-record talks and use conference for other activities, such as plenaries, workshops, etc. (41.2%)
- ML conference style: some talks get longer slots than others (e.g. “spotlight” and “oral”) (33.9%)
- Keep # parallel tracks the same but shrink all talk lengths (16.7%)

Q: Do you think FOCS/STOC should switch to a virtual format?



Note: most “Other” answers suggested hybrid options for one or both conferences

There were also several write-in suggestions separate from the survey questions. Popular suggestions:

- Increase number of papers, and area diversity of PCs and accepted papers
- Broaden the PC / make it bigger
- Don’t repeat the same people on PCs so much
- More virtual options to minimize travel / environmental impact
- More parallel tracks and/or make conference longer
- Double blind reviewing

Task Force Members

- Erin Chambers (St. Louis University)
- Ken Clarkson (IBM Research)
- Sandy Irani (UC Irvine)
- Bobby Kleinberg (Cornell)
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