

# What is the student attendance at the LSE Public Lecture Programme and how do we improve it?

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## Background

This Change Makers project looks at student participation in the LSE Public Lecture Programme. The public lectures are put together by the LSE Events team and research centres, and are open both to members of the LSE and to the general public. This research came about as a result of an initiative by the Phelan US Centre to find ways of increasing student engagement with the LSE Public Lecture Programme. Current School-wide statistics show that students make up on average approximately 15% of the audience at LSE Public Events.

## Methodology

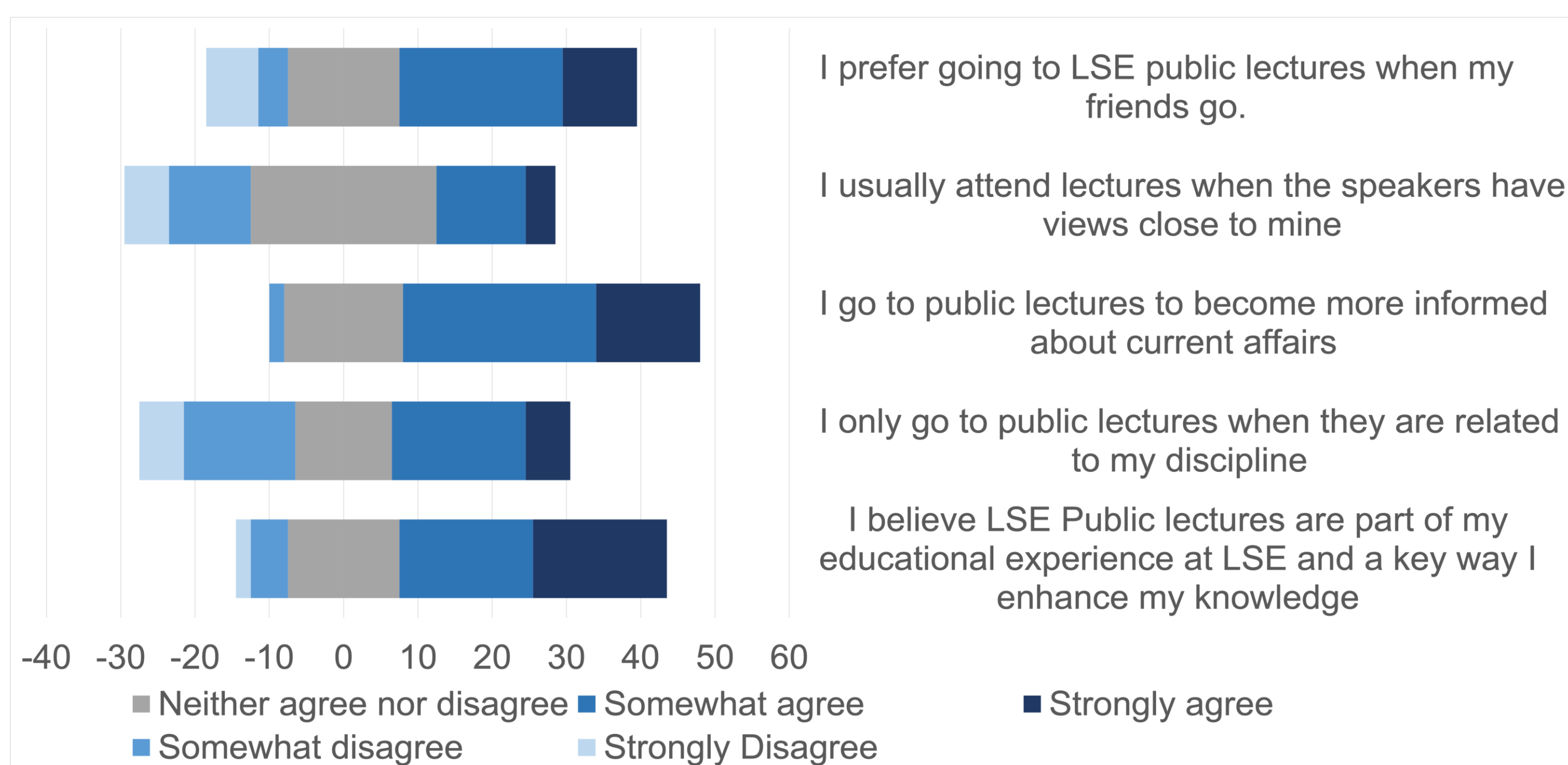
The research for this project took place in two phases. The first was a survey, conducted using Qualtrics. In the survey I asked questions that ranged across whether participants knew what the Public Lecture Programme was, and whether they had seen the lectures advertised; if they had attended any of the lectures; why they would choose to go to certain events; and what they thought of the events they went to. Most questions were in multiple choice form, including the use of some Likert questions, but there was also a free text box question to find out what participants would like to change about the programme.

I recruited participants from the survey to take part in interviews. I conducted 6 interviews to get more in-depth answers as to what could be done to increase student participation in the Public Lecture Programme.

## Findings

From the 58 responses to the survey, 62% of participants knew about the Public Lecture Programme, with 50% of respondents having attended a public lecture in the 2022-23 academic year.

Some of the questions in the survey focused on why students choose the events they go to. Their responses are detailed below:



What we can see from this data is that a **main motivation for students going to the public lectures** is to become more informed about current events generally and the majority see the public lectures as part of the LSE educational experience. Some of those interviewed stressed the importance of events that are closely related to their own studies:

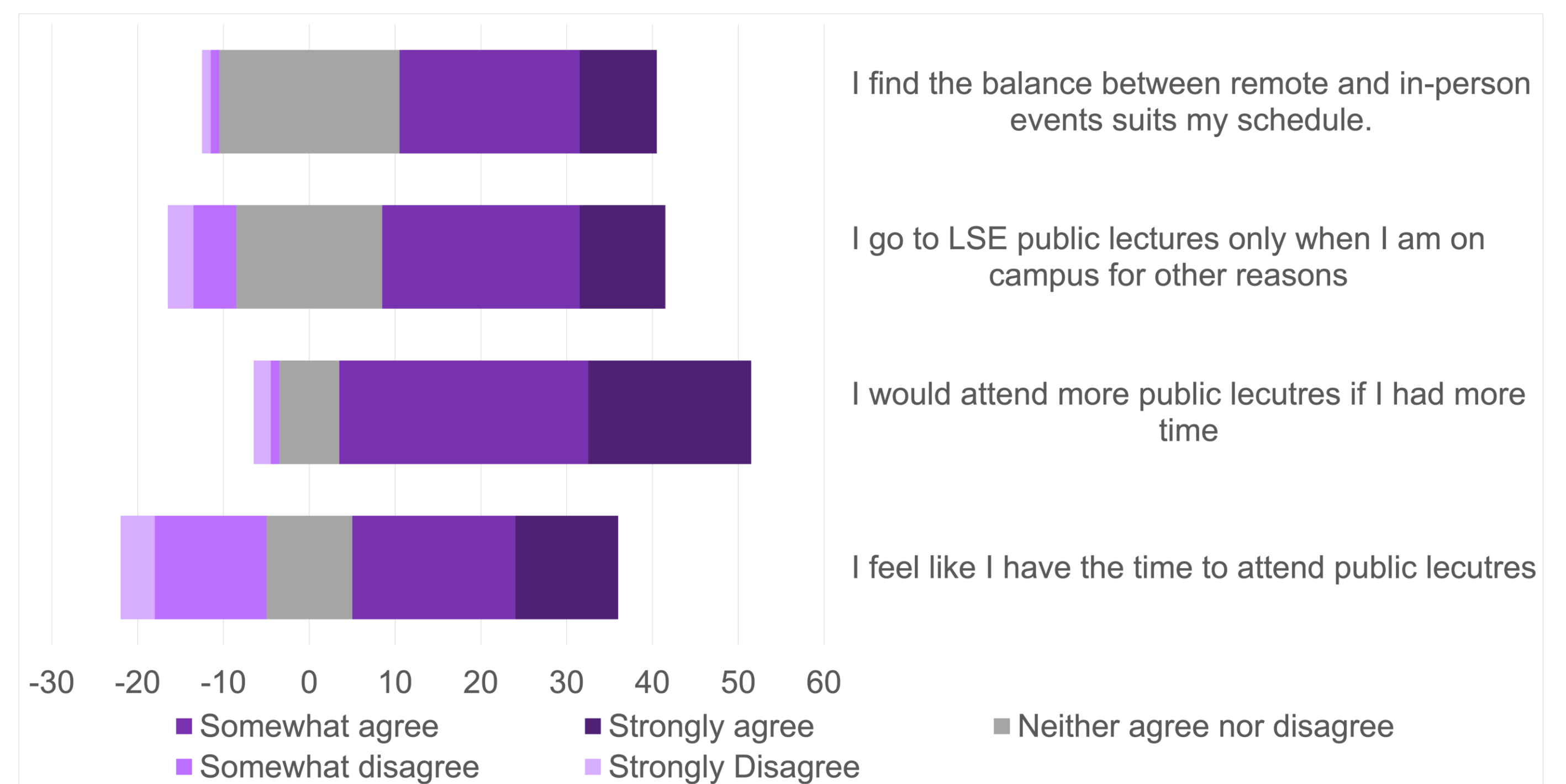
*“When my research has been really closely aligned to these (guests), I really made a point to put that on my calendar and be intentional about it.”*

In terms of the content of the lectures and the guests invited, over 62% of respondents to the survey said they agree that **LSE has a diverse range of speakers** - in interviews people indicated that they wanted guests to remain broadly academic and policy focused as that is what helps enrich their degree.

In terms of the organization of the lectures themselves, several interviewees suggested that the Q&A section of the events would sometimes go off course and so it would be better to have a **more organized way to ask questions**.

## Findings (Cont.)

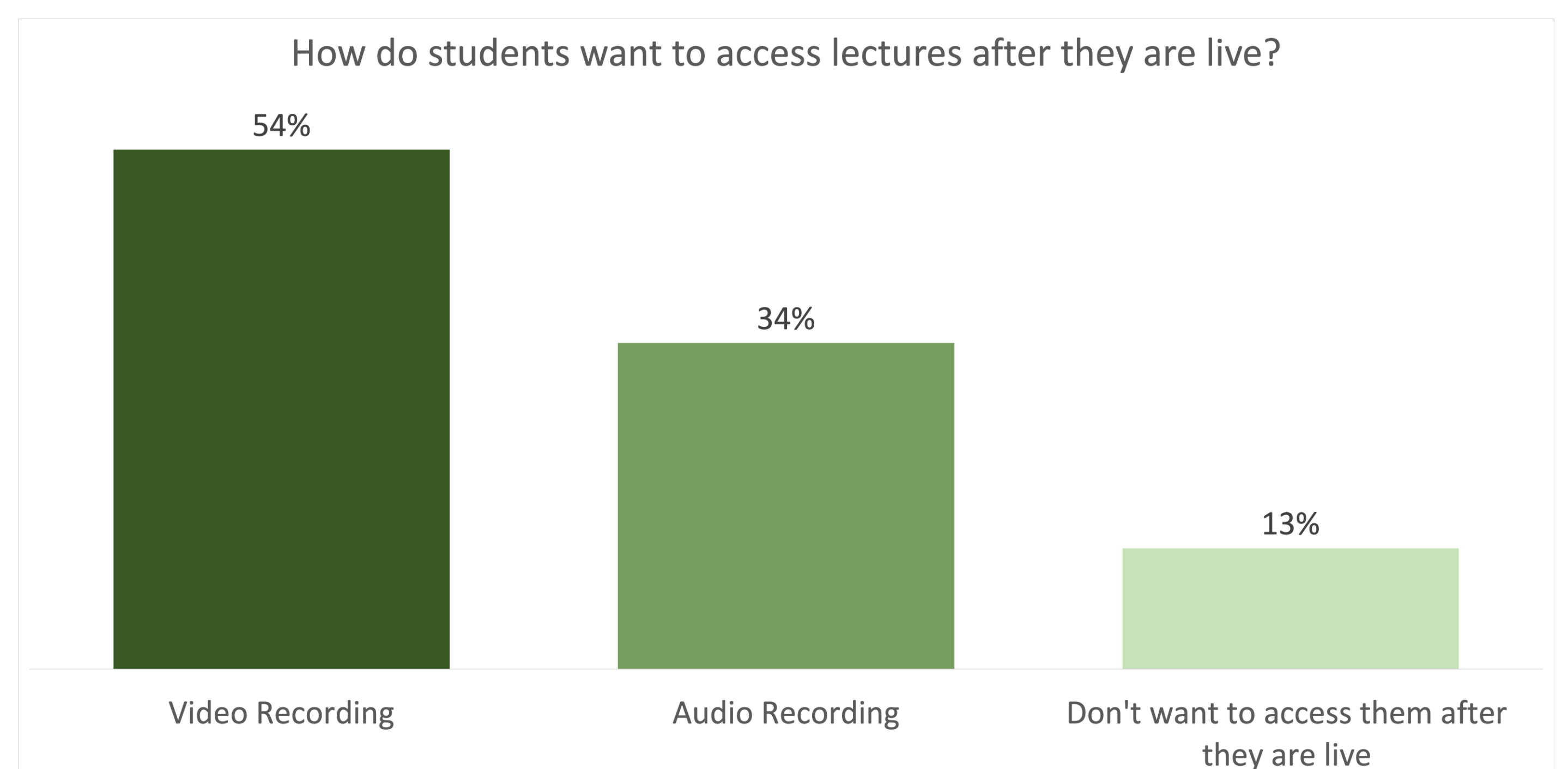
The results from the survey indicated that 49% of students do feel like the balance between remote and in-person public lectures fits their schedule, and the same percentage are more likely to go to public lectures when they are already on campus for other things:



When it comes to **advertising**, the survey indicated that 65% see advertisements for events either on the events page itself or on social media. In the interviews particularly, many participants indicated that they would want to be reminded more frequently about the events.

*“I think that regular reminders of the events on social media would be best”*

One other finding from the project was the **interest in accessing public lectures after they are live**. As shown below, 54% of respondents would like to access video recordings of the lectures after they are live, and 34% would like to access audio recordings. However, several interviewees mentioned that the recordings had to be specifically sought out as they are not advertised as much as the live events.



## Recommendations

- A **dedicated Public Lecture Programme Instagram page**, would allow for multiple advertisements including on the day, including using Instagram's reminder feature.
- A **wider range of timings for public lectures**, possibly including more frequent day time lectures.
- More **advertisement for both video uploads on YouTube and audio recordings**.
- A **QR code system for questions at the events** – would allow moderators to get a better thematic idea of questions and might encourage questions from people who are less confident in speaking.

## Acknowledgments

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