

2024 Survey of Midwest Political Association Members

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This report summarizes results from a survey of current and past members of the Midwest Political Science Association. The survey had two objectives. First, it was to poll the MPSA membership on their views regarding the format of the annual conference. Second, it inquired about MPSA members' experiences at the conference, specifically whether they have experienced harassment.¹

This report is divided into three parts:

1. Description of the sample
2. Members' views on the format of the MPSA annual meeting
3. Members' experiences (including discrimination) at the annual meeting

There is also an appendix with further detail about the survey.

Sample Description

The 2024 MPSA survey was fielded May 1 to June 12, 2024. A total of 741 clicked to begin the survey; 3 declined to participate, leaving 738 respondents. Item non-response is at about 3-4%.

The plurality of respondents are full professors (27%), followed by associate professors (20%), graduate students (19%), and assistant professors (15%).

The plurality are at universities with a political science PhD program (57%), followed by a university without a political science doctoral program (22%) and a liberal arts college (11%).

A majority of those in academic positions (66%) are at public versus private (34%) institutions.

The gender breakdown is 36% women, 57% men, 1% non-binary, and 5% report that they prefer not to say. Less than 1 percent identify as transgender (0.57%). The majority identify as heterosexual/straight (74%), followed by gay/lesbian (7%) and bisexual (6%).

¹ The survey was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Notre Dame (home institution of both Campbell and Christina Wolbrecht, current MPSA President).

The majority (76%) are US citizens or permanent residents, versus not (23%) or indicate they prefer not to say (1%).

A majority are white (63%), followed by East Asian or Asian American (8%) and then by Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American (6%) and Latino or Hispanic-American (6%). Note that these categories are not mutually-exclusive; respondents could select more than one category.

Format of MPSA Annual Conference

When asked whether they prefer the annual conference to be hybrid (in-person and online) or in-person only, a plurality (48%) selected in-person only, but a substantial percentage (40.5%) would prefer a hybrid format. The remainder, 11.5%, had no opinion.

Respondents indicated that they primarily access the conference program through the online option (46% of all responses) or the app (36% of all responses). Only 18% (of all responses) used a printed program. Note that respondents could select more than one option.

The following table summarizes how they assess various elements of the conference. These questions were coded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with n/a coded as missing. As all of the mean responses are between 3 and 4, it is fair to say that the membership is generally, but not overwhelmingly, positive about these aspects of their conference experience. The one element with a markedly lower score than the rest is the conference app (3.04, compared to an average mean of 3.64 for the other four items). The highest score is for networking opportunities: 3.89.

Table 1. Conference Experiences

	Obs	Mean
The online conference platform was easy to navigate and use	391	3.48
A/V technology in sessions worked well and was easy to use	412	3.53
The conference app worked well and was easy to use	338	3.04
The feedback on my research was helpful	374	3.66
Networking opportunities during the conference were valuable	398	3.89

In addition to the close-ended questions, respondents were given the opportunity to suggest topics for roundtable sessions at future conferences. Relatively few took this opportunity (96 in total) and some of these responses were either non-responses (e.g.,

“None at this time”) or comments about conference logistics. Yet, many did offer substantive suggestions, which we have grouped and summarized below.

Roundtables addressing different ranks

Surviving grad school track

What to do with a politics undergrad degree

Early and mid-career focused roundtables

Post-tenure: slump/mid-career doldrums; retooling one's research agenda

Teaching

How to manage AI in the classroom

Dealing with plagiarism

A space or group for community college professors to share experiences

Teaching American Government for non-Americanists

Teaching Politics of the Middle East

Faculty-led study abroad programs

Navigating a second Trump term in the classroom

Mentoring

Students who trauma dump on faculty

Creating community among student majors

Mentoring graduate and undergraduate students

Publishing

More sessions with journal editors

How to pitch to/decide on book publishers

Other suggestions include current events (e.g. democratic backsliding, Palestine, Critical Race Theory), non-academic jobs, scholarship on emerging topics (gender; race, ethnicity, and politics, environment), and LGBTQ scholars in the profession.

Discrimination at the MPSA Conference

In general, the survey finds that, depending on the specific item, between 3% and 5% of respondents reported some form of discriminatory or harassment behavior.

Did anyone at the meeting do the following to you personally?

Table 2. Negative Experiences at the Conference

	Obs	% Yes
Put you down or was condescending to you?	36	4.9
Made offensive remarks in your presence?	20	2.7
Stared at you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?	21	2.85

Total N =738 (counting all who clicked to consent and began the survey)

Respondents who indicated that they had one (or more) of these negative experiences were then asked whether they felt it was related to their gender; race, ethnicity, and/or national origin; rank in the discipline; sexual identity, or another reason. As shown in Table 3, no single one of these stands out. It is worth noting that no one felt any of these things happened because of their sexual identity.

**Table 3. Sources of Negative Experiences
(cells represent the count, not percentage)**

	Gender	Race	Rank	Sexual Identity	Other
Condescending	5	6	8	0	8
Offensive remarks	4	5	2	0	5
Stared	5	6	3	0	6

Note: not everyone who responded yes to a negative experience answered the follow up, so the total numbers do not necessarily sum to the totals in Table 2.

The survey also asked about sexual harassment. While obviously even one case is too many, the numbers here are even lower than for the more general forms of discriminatory behavior. Of the 738 total participants, 3 (0.4%) reported being “touched in a way that made you feel uncomfortable” (note that 4 responded in the affirmative, but one used a follow-up open-text question to indicate they did not intend to respond in the affirmative and thus they are subtracted out here). None of these respondents reported the unwanted touching to the MPSA, and when asked why, 1 selected “I did not think it would do any good,” and 1 chose “prefer not to say.”

No respondents responded yes when asked if anyone “made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it.”

The survey then asked an open-ended question about “negative experiences related to harassment, discrimination, or other misconduct that you would like to describe.” As with the suggestions for roundtables topics, these responses are grouped and summarized below.

Condescending/lack of inclusion/bullying

Seven respondents reported being put down because of the type of institution at which they are employed, senior faculty acting in a condescending way toward more junior faculty and/or graduate students, and, in one case, a conference attendee speaking patronizingly toward an undergraduate presenting a poster.

Gender-related concerns

Five respondents detailed negative experiences based on their gender. For example, one described a male discussant as “extremely and unnecessarily destructive and cruel to a female grad student, but then full of effusive praise for the full professor man on the panel.” Another referred to the MPSA meeting as a “bro-conference.” Still another reported that two undergraduates presenting posters faced “hostile treatment from their male discussant.”

Race-related concerns

There were two respondents who described negative experiences related to race. One person described how other conference attendees stared at their wife, a Black woman—specifically, at her hair. Another wrote that a tenured professor “bullied a 1st time, 1st generation Latino grad student.”

Other comments

There were a variety of other comments, many of which were not related directly to the prompt. Two objected to what was said during specific panels (one about Israel, another about Hong Kong); one raised a concern about the perception of the lack of ideological diversity within the association. There were also a few complaints about discussants who were unprepared or unhelpful, one about the environmentally unsustainable practices at the conference, and another about the “disturbing behavior” in downtown Chicago. Finally, a few respondents complained about the survey itself and/or the association’s attention to harassment and discrimination when communicating with the membership.

Appendix

What is your primary position?

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Undergraduate (1)	18	2.55	2.55
Graduate student (2)	135	19.09	21.64
Assistant Professor (3)	109	15.42	37.06
Associate Professor (4)	139	19.66	56.72
Full Professor (5)	189	26.73	83.45
Adjunct/Instructor/Lecturer (6)	34	4.81	88.26
Post-doctoral fellow (7)	18	2.55	90.81
Research Position (8)	20	2.83	93.64
Retired (9)	24	3.39	97.03
Other (please specify) (10)	12	1.7	98.73
Prefer not to say (11)	9	1.27	100.00
Total	707	100.00	

If applicable, at what type of academic institution are you currently employed or studying?

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
A two-year/community college (1)	9	1.27	1.27
A liberal arts college (2)	80	11.28	12.55
A university w/o a psci doctoral program (3)	155	21.86	34.41
A university with a psci doctoral program (4)	401	56.56	90.97
A graduate professional school (5)	19	2.68	93.65
No affiliation (6)	17	2.4	96.05
Other (please specify) (7)	23	3.24	99.29
Prefer not to say (8)	5	0.71	100.00
Total	709	100.00	

Is your institution best described as public or private? (asked only of academics)

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Public (1)	433	65.51	65.51
Private (2)	226	34.19	99.70
Other (please specify) (3)	2	0.30	100.00
Total	661	100.00	

Are you a...

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Woman (1)	257	36.20	36.20
Man (2)	408	57.46	93.66
Non-binary (3)	8	1.13	94.79
Prefer not to say (5)	37	5.21	100.00
Total	710	100.00	

Are you transgender?

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Yes (1)	4	0.57	0.57
No (2)	665	94.73	95.30
Prefer not to say (3)	33	4.70	100.00
Total	702	100.00	

Are you...?

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Heterosexual/straight (1)	517	73.96	73.96
Gay/lesbian (2)	50	7.15	81.12
Bisexual (3)	39	5.58	86.70
Another, please specify (4)	12	1.72	88.41
Prefer not to say (5)	81	11.59	100.00
Total	699	100.00	

Are you a citizen or permanent resident of the United States?

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Yes (1)	518	76.06	76.06
No (2)	154	22.61	98.68
Prefer not to say (3)	9	1.32	100.00
Total	681	100.00	

What do you consider your race or ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

	Freq.
Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American	41
East Asian or Asian American	57
Latino or Hispanic-American	43
Middle Eastern or Arab American	21
Native American or Alaskan Native	5
South Asian or Indian-American	24
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0
Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American	462
Other, please specify	33
Prefer not to say	52

Note: 6 of the 33 who chose "other" wrote in Caucasian, Caucasian/white, European White, White, or White Hispanic.

Which of these describes your membership in the MPSA?

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Currently a member (1)	525	76.64	76.64
Was in the past, but not currently (2)	143	20.88	97.52
Do not recall ever being (3)	17	2.48	100.00
Total	685	100.00	

Why have you not renewed your membership in the MPSA? (Check all that apply)

	Freq.
Forgot to renew	18
Membership fee was too expensive	61
Did not plan to attend the conference this year	101
Did not find membership useful for my career	36
Concerns about past leadership of the MPSA	14
Concerns about current leadership of the MPSA	6
The MPSA conference is not welcoming	11
Other, please specify	15