

Think Globally - Act Locally: Survey Results Show Global Interest in Local Groups

Anna Erickson CEB, Now Gartner; Virginia Whelan, Whelan & Associates; and Corinne Williams, Organisation Solutions

Why do you belong to SIOP? For many of us, it's the community and opportunity to connect that attracts us to and keeps us in the organization. In fact, the 2008 Practitioner's Needs Survey cited "professional networking and sharing best practices" as one of the most highly rated benefits of belonging to SIOP (Silzer, Cober, Erickson, & Robinson, 2008).



Alliant International University

Earn your executive format OD or OB Degree at Alliant!

EXPLORE >

Talent Management Excellence
See our *Burke Learning Agility Inventory™*



Although large professional organizations like SIOP help us forge connections at a national level, many members have reported the desire to build a community at a more local level. Although SIOP does not have a structure that includes local chapters, dozens of grassroots local I-O groups have been created to help professionals network at a local level. To support these efforts, SIOP created the Local Group Relations Committee in 2013. This ad hoc committee, currently led by **Pete Rutigliano**, was formed to help strengthen the connection between SIOP and local I-O groups, and to provide information and support for forming, growing, and maintaining local I-O groups.

More recently the Alliance for Organizational Psychology (AOP) has initiated similar efforts to support local communities around the world. AOP was launched in 2009 to increase the visibility of I-O Psychology and to identify ways to mutually benefit its four member societies: SIOP, the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), the Organizational Psychology Division of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP-Div 1), and the Canadian Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (CSIO). One of AOP's aims is to support the creation and development of local communities of work and organizational psychologists around the world.

So what is a local community? These local communities or **local work and organizational psychology (WOP) groups**, as they are commonly referred to internationally, are formal or informal groups of individuals who meet periodically to discuss the direct or indirect application of psychology to workplaces or organizations. As these WOP groups often form based on very local needs, this umbrella covers a wide variety of different types of organizations.

In order to better understand the nature of the various WOP groups across the world, we conducted a survey in preparation for the EAWOP conference (more on that later). It was sent out to 1,067 non-US based SIOP members, 1,500 EAWOP members, 700 IAAP members, and 222 members of CSIO. In addition, members of the British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology (BPS-DOP) were invited to respond to the survey via social media. A total of 284 responses were returned. Of these, 284 were valid, which we estimated to be a 9%-20% response rate.¹ Although results may not be completely generalizable, the results of the survey do provide our first insights into the landscape of local groups around the world, and add to what we know about local I-O groups in the United States.

Respondent's Membership by AOP Society

The sample of 284 participants represents members across AOP member organizations.

Local WOP Groups Around the World

The sample, representing 48 countries, provide a snapshot of what local groups look like around the world. Results of the survey indicate that 40% of survey respondents currently belong to a local group. Of those who *do not* belong to a local group, 82% say they would like to join one. Of the 40% of respondents who *do* belong to a local group:

- 31% regularly attend meetings
- 31% serve on a committee or hold an officer position
- 49% work in academia
- 44% are practitioners

Respondent AOP Society Membership	Count	Total	Response Rate*
SIOP	134	1067	~12.5%
EAWOP	109	1500	~7.2%
IAAP-Div 1	52	700	~7.4%
CSIO	21	222	~9.5%
BPS - DOP**	14	***	***
Total	284*	3,489	9.5% - 20%

* Response rates are approximate; 34% of all respondents indicated that they belong to more than one of these organizations. Adding respondent counts will result in n>284 because respondents belong to multiple groups

** British Psychological Society - Division of Occupational Psychology

*** BPS-DOP policy did not allow distribution of surveys to their mailing list. Survey distribution to BPS-DOP members was via social media channels, prohibiting our ability to calculate response rate for this group.

Membership Requirements and Demographics

Membership requirements vary from group to group. Although many groups have educational requirements for members (16% of local group members said a doctorate is required and 28% said a master's degree is required), a quarter of respondents who belong to a local group said their local group has no educational requirements. Most common noneducational requirements for local group membership include relevant professional work in field (32%), interest or shared values of applied research to the workplace (26%), membership in a national psychological association (20%), and academic work in the field of work and organizational psychology (18%).

Groups varied with regard to their focus and membership characteristics, with some groups catering mainly to academics, others mainly to practitioners, and others with a mix of members.

Why Do Local Groups Get Together?

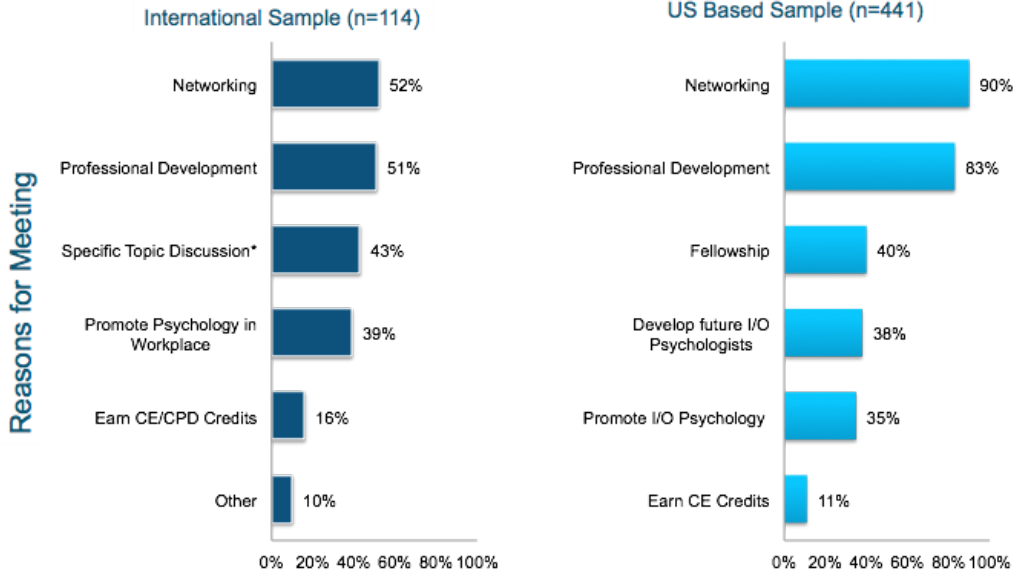
Consistent with a similar survey of SIOP members conducted with in 2015 (Farmer, Shapiro, Sylvan, Zuec, & Whelan, 2015), most international respondents who belong to a local group reported they join to network and develop professionally. Discussing specific topics of interest, such as coaching, testing, or leadership, were also given as

Group Composition



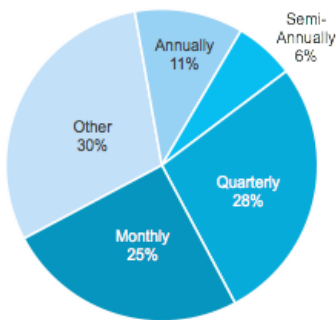
Percentages displayed represent the percent of those responded to the question "What is the composition of your WOP group?" n=75

reasons for joining a local WOP group. Values shown are percent of those responding; multiple responses were allowed. Note that the two surveys did not allow for a full "apple-to-apple" comparison.



*Specific topics may include leadership, women's issues, licensure, etc.

Meeting Frequency



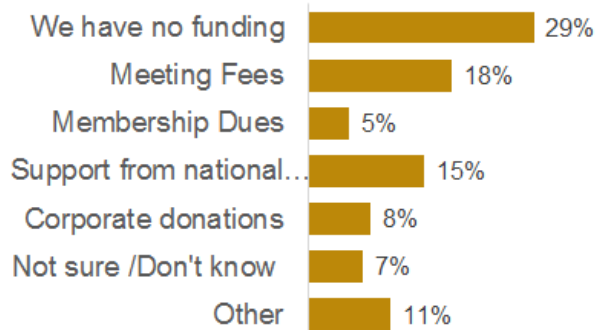
How Often Do Local WOP Groups Meet?

Most respondents who belong to a local group report that their local group meets quarterly (28%) or monthly (25%). Examples of those who chose "other" include meeting weekly, every 6 weeks, intermittently/spontaneously, biannually, or 6 times a year.

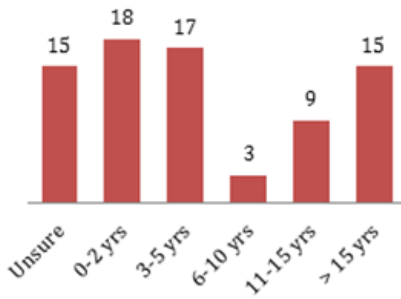
Organizational Funding

When asked how the local group receives

funding, the most common response was that they have no funding. The second most common source was meeting fees, followed by support from a national professional organization or association.



Your group has existed for...



When asked how long local groups had existed, the responses varied widely from those who are just starting to those who have been around more than 15 years. We find that the needs of a group tend to vary based upon the stage of their life cycle. As you can see, many of the groups were fairly new, with about one third of respondents who belong to a local group indicating that their group is less than 5 years old, and the modal response being less than 2 years.



Start Ups

Start up groups can benefit from having models that help them get off the ground and a way to reach out to other professionals in their area. The Local Group Toolkit available on the SIOP website is designed to help these groups get off the ground. (Toolkit for Local I-O Groups: Four Steps to Creating a Local I-O Group. http://www.siop.org/UserFiles/Image/Local-IO/SIOP_2014_Local_IO_Groups_ToolKit.pdf)



New Groups (1-2 years)

New groups are working through the details of membership, meeting formats, and convenient times and meeting locations.



Mature Groups (15+ years)

Interestingly, we can see that there is a lull in the 6 to 10 year range. We believe this may be due to the role of leadership within local groups. Groups are often initiated with the energy of one or two individuals, and when these individuals get burned out or move on, the groups may languish and disband. Creating a strong succession plan may help bridge groups through this risky time period.

Groups lasting 15 years or more have been around long enough to be stable. They have figured out how to maintain and sustain their membership and transfer of leadership. Individuals in these established groups may be interested in helping to promote and support other groups.

Forging Connections

The US and AOP local group committees are reaching out to members through their conference booth events at SIOP, EAWOP, and ICAP 2018; they have helped to launch several new groups and connect many to existing groups through these efforts.

Most recently, the EAWOP planning committee, consisting of Anna Erickson, **Barbara Kożusznik**, Ginger Whelan, and Corinne Williams, organized a local WOP information booth at the 2017 EAWOP Conference in Dublin. The purpose of this booth was to communicate the benefits of local groups, connect individuals to local groups, and provide support for the creation of new local groups around the world. Over 300 EAWOP participants visited the booth and participated by placing a pin representing their home on a map, writing "Get Connected" in their native language, reviewing our survey results, or signing up to join or create a new group in their local community.



Future Focus

The enthusiasm of local WOP group members that we encountered at EAWOP and SIOP conferences is contagious. They fill the gaps that can exist in feeling connected to wider organizations and help to bring a sense of belonging and identity to I-O psychologists (often in remote places). Our survey data supports this by showing the benefits of and appetite for local WOP Groups. Whether it is to meet like-minded souls or to hone your I-O skills, we encourage you to join or form a local WOP group. Please do contact any of us or go to the AOP website (<http://www.allianceorgpsych.org/>) for more information about how to get started. By creating a strong network, we become better able to develop our field and make a difference.

Notes

1 Because of the method of survey distribution, it's difficult to calculate an accurate response rate. For example, 34% of respondents indicated they belong to two or more of these professional organizations. In addition, surveys distributed to BPS-DOP members were done by inviting members to participate via social media.

References

- Farmer, W. L., Shapiro, T., Sylvan, D. L., Zugec, L., Whelan, V. B., (2015). Have you joined a local industrial-organizational psychology group? If not, you may be missing out! *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 53(2), 148-157.
- Kożusznik, B., Erickson, A.R., McCarthy, J., Searle, R, Teichmann, M., Whelan, V., Williams, C., (2017). Alliance Special Session: Local communities of work and organizational psychologists. *Proceedings from the 2017 Congress for the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology*. Dublin, Ireland: EAWOP.
- Silzer, R., Cober, R., Erickson, A.R., & Robinson, G. (2008). *Practitioner Needs Survey: Final survey report*. Bowling Green, OH: Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Retrieved from <http://www.siop.org/Practitioner%20Needs%20Survey.pdf>.

