

## Organisation Report

*This report captures experiences and lessons learned from SCAR 2020 Online ([www.scar2020.org](http://www.scar2020.org)), held virtually from 3-7 August 2020. The report is based on the first-hand experiences of the SCAR2020 Online organisers, and individual feedback from chairs and attendees.*

*Also included are the results of a Participant's Feedback Survey, for which the SCAR Secretariat invited 1210 registered participants between 1-31 October 2020. The survey was run using SurveyMonkey and took around 10 minutes. Overall, 430 participants responded, which accounts for a healthy response rate of 35,5%.*

### Background

Since 2004, SCAR has held a biennial [Open Science Conference](#), followed by a meeting of the SCAR Delegates, to decide on business and strategy for the next two years. It is one of the main opportunities for the SCAR community to come together, with SCAR subsidiary groups also taking the opportunity to hold business meetings and workshops around the conference dates.

The SCAR 2020 Open Science Conference and Business Meetings were due to be held in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia from 31 July to 11 August, with the conference scheduled for 3-7 August. With cases of COVID-19 increasing worldwide throughout February and early March, it became increasingly clear that the in-person meeting could not go ahead and, on 19 March, the Local Organising Committee announced its cancellation.

Following the cancellation, plans were made to move the highlights of the SCAR Open Science Conference online. The result was **SCAR 2020 Online** ([www.scar2020.org](http://www.scar2020.org)), held on the originally scheduled dates of 3-7 August 2020. The SCAR Delegates Meeting was also moved online and has been postponed to March 2021.

## Organisation

SCAR 2020 Online built upon the tremendous efforts that were dedicated to the organisation of the cancelled physical OSC meeting in Hobart hosted by the Australian Antarctic Division, the Tasmanian State Government and the Australian Academy of Science. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the International Science Organising Committee and the Local Organising Committee for the Hobart meeting.

<i>Local Organising Committee / Steering Committee for Hobart</i>	<i>International Scientific Organising Committee (ISOC)</i>
Dr Gwen Fenton Dr Rob Wooding Rhonda Bartley Prof Steven Chown Karen Rees Helene Stewart Dr Tas van Ommen Charlton Clark Sachie Yasuda Yeutha May Dr Aleks Terauds Dr Donna Roberts Allison Turner Robyn Goyen	Dr Catherine Ritz Prof Steven Chown Dr Chandrika Nath Dr Jesús Galindo-Zaldivar Dr Yan Ropert-Coudert Prof David H Bromwich Prof Elizabeth Leane Rhonda Bartley Dr Hanne Nielsen Dr Tas van Ommen Dr Dana Bergstrom Prof Irene Schloss A/Prof Jan Strugnell Dr Laura de Santis Dr Pippa Whitehouse Dr Tom Bracegirdle Dr Aleks Terauds A/Prof Eduardo Secchi
<i>SCAR Secretariat</i>	<i>Event Management Team</i>
Dr Chandrika Nath Dr Eoghan Griffin Johanna Grabow Rosemary Nash	Helene Stewart Brittany Lee Angela Cooper

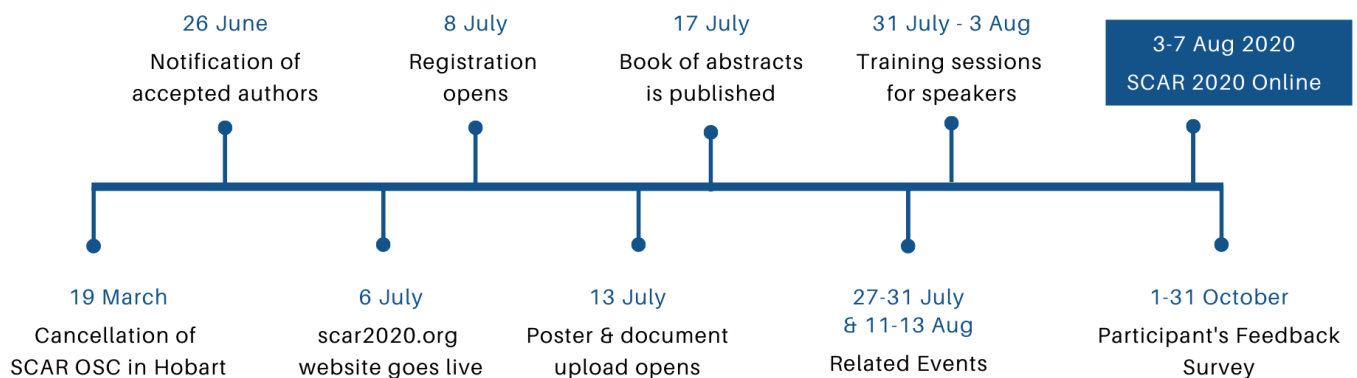
## Moving SCAR 2020 Online

Following the cancellation of the in-person meetings, plans were made to move many aspects of the conference online. The following actions were taken:

- An events management team, Leishman Associates, was hired to help move the conference online.
- Decision to run the conference via OnAir (an events management platform), based on Zoom.
- Set up of website (scar2020.org), an online registration system, a Slack account and a YouTube channel.
- Re-confirmed and invited speakers to a range of plenary sessions, workshops and symposia.
- A book of abstracts was produced of all accepted abstracts that were submitted to the cancelled Hobart OSC.
- Authors of accepted abstracts for the cancelled Hobart OSC were invited to share material for view and comment before and after the meeting, as well as to present in an online poster session.
- Chairs of the parallel sessions were given the option to run a self-organised virtual session in the week before or after the conference, or a text-based chat session during the conference.
- Session chairs, coordinators, moderators and technical assistants were identified for key events.
- Running of training sessions with invited speakers to familiarise them with the online interface.

## SCAR 2020 Online

### Timeline

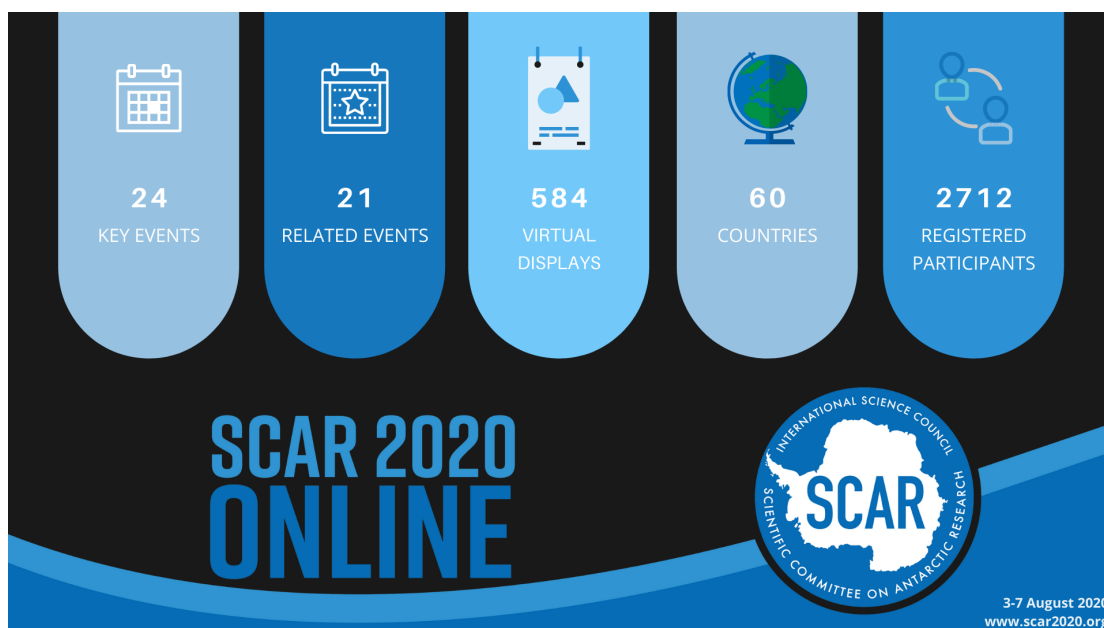


## Programme

SCAR 2020 Online consisted of plenary presentations, mini-symposia, workshops, discussion forums, two poster sessions and interactive opportunities. Related events, including many sessions from the planned physical conference, were held during the weeks before and after the main conference.

- 24 key events

- 21 related events
- 2 poster events
- 6 text-based discussion forums
- 584 virtual displays



Most activities took place via the OnAir event portal, an event management platform. Registration for the conference and access to the platform was free and open to all. In total, 24 key events – an opening ceremony, four plenary events, one panel discussion, three mini-symposia (with a repeat slot for two), four workshops (one repeat event) and a closing ceremony – were run on the platform between 3-7 August.

Each session consisted of presenters, a chair, a moderator and an invisible technical host. A session coordinator was responsible for communication with the presenters and chairs in the run-up to the event. Attendees were encouraged to use the chat and Q&A section of the platform during the sessions.

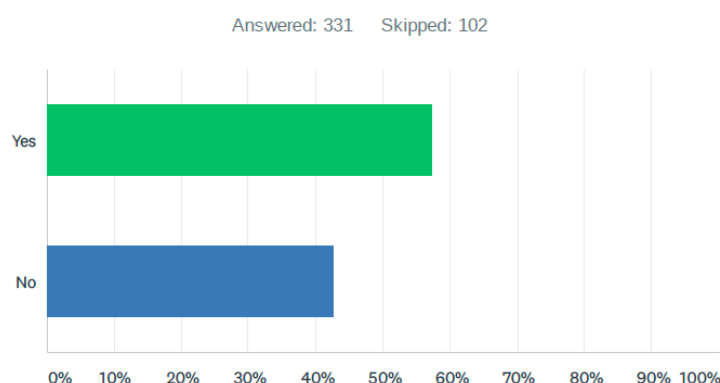
Presentations were spread across different time zones to account for an international audience. Afterwards, 48.2% of survey participants stated the timing of the events worked well for them, and only 3.9% of participants remarked the timing was extremely poor.

The events on OnAir were based on Zoom, with an additional livestream on YouTube. Recordings of the events were later made available on both platforms. 54.2% of the respondents made use of the OnAir portal to watch recorded events afterwards. 45.1% used the YouTube channel to watch live presentations and 60% to watch recorded presentations.

Another feature of the OnAir Portal was the Contributing Author Gallery. Accepted authors were invited to upload materials, so-called virtual displays, to this gallery. A separate page was created for each author, featuring their abstract as well as additional materials (presentation, videos, or images). The gallery could be viewed by all registered participants and included a comment function. 82.5% of survey participants

made use of the Contributing Author Gallery. Authors were also invited to two online poster sessions to present and discuss their material.

### Q29 Did you use the OnAIR portal to take part in the poster sessions?



Several authors noted technical difficulties navigating the online poster sessions or lack of engagement during these poster sessions in the participant's survey. OnAIR did not prove to be the best solution for this feature.

The OnAIR Platform also featured a "Meeting Hub", which allowed participants to connect with each other, set up 1:1 meetings and exchange messages. Only 15.7% of survey participants stated that they made use of the Meeting Hub function. A different format, such as an informal break room, could work better in future online conferences.

A total of six text-based discussion forums in three time slots was run using the chat programme Slack. Each session had their own Slack channel. Participants were redirected to these channels via the OnAIR platform. These sessions worked very well and received extremely positive feedback from the attendees.

A number of convenors of the parallel session self-organised virtual events for their online session, with a total of 21 events. These side events were run using Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft teams. The sessions were scheduled to take place in the week before the conference (27-31st July) or the week after (11-13 August) to avoid clashes. Recordings of these meetings were later made available on the SCAR2020 Online website and via YouTube.

Overall, registered participants noted that they were satisfied (51.5%) or very satisfied (34.5%) with the quality of presentations held during the conference. Participants were also satisfied (50.2%) or very satisfied (17.4%) with the discussions around the presentations.

## Communication

The main channels of communications with attendees for SCAR2020 Online were the website ([www.scar2020.org](http://www.scar2020.org)) and email. SCAR's social media channels (Facebook page, Facebook group and Twitter) were also used to amplify news about the conferences and set up a bespoke SCAR 2020 YouTube channel.

Website(s):

[www.scar2020.org](http://www.scar2020.org) was used as the main website. The website was tied to the OnAir portal and gave an overview of the programme, details about the different sessions, a FAQ section and the downloadable book of abstracts. Links and thumbnails for the recorded events were also included afterwards. Additionally, the conference was featured on the [www.scar.org](http://www.scar.org) website (landing page, events section and as featured news items). For the originally planned event in Hobart, a joint SCAR COMNAP conference website ([www.scarcomnap2020.org](http://www.scarcomnap2020.org)) was set up by the Local Events Organisers.

#### Email / Mailchimp:

Both the main SCAR email address (for mails to individual presenters and attendees) and Mailchimp (for larger groups) were used. Additionally, the Local Events Organisers sent mailouts and the Participant's Feedback Survey via their database. A bespoke conference email address was featured on the website and used for outstanding questions from the attendees.

#### Social Media:

The existing SCAR social media channels were used extensively before, during and after the conference. A daily programme, with details of times and speakers, was posted every day via the Facebook group, Facebook page and Twitter account. Every event was also covered on Twitter with dedicated tweets, quotes and screenshots. Participants were encouraged to post their experience using the hashtag #SCAR2020. The SCAR social media channels saw a marked increase in tweet impressions, followers and engagement rate in August and the posts were widely shared.



*(Screenshot: Twitter Analytics 18/07/2020-14/08/2020)*

#### Youtube:

A dedicated SCAR 2020 Online YouTube channel was set up and split into ten different playlists to offer content in a structured way. Presenters with accepted abstracts were encouraged to upload additional material such as their recorded presentation and short videos. A total of 89 videos from authors were uploaded on the YouTube channel. The key events of the conference were live-streamed on YouTube and afterwards made available as a recording. The chairs of related events were also invited to send us their recorded videos. Additionally, the channel featured three videos on how to use the OnAir event platform and upload material.

## **Participants**

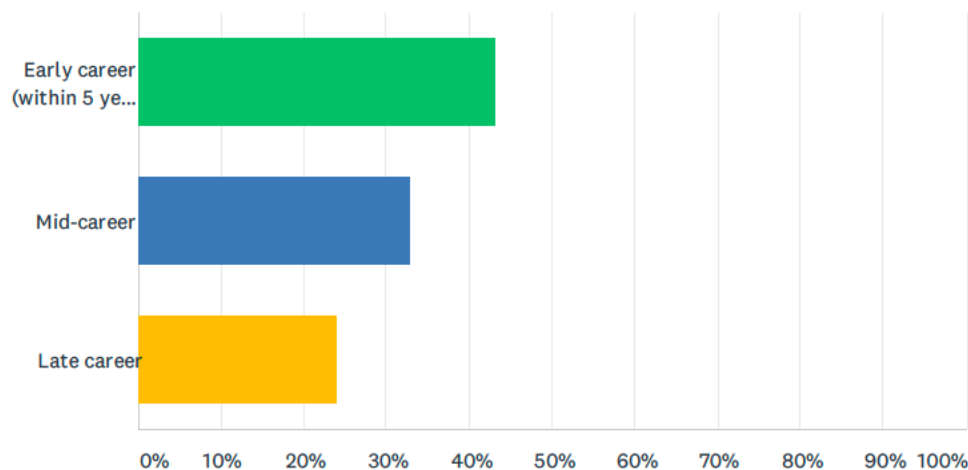
A total of 2712 participants registered for SCAR 2020 Online on the website. Out of these, 853 participants logged on to the OnAir Event Portal.

Based on the Participant's Feedback Survey, the following picture emerged:

- 20.65% of respondents were currently a PhD student.
- 43.1% respondents described themselves as early career researchers, 32.8% as mid-career researchers and 24.1% as late career.
- The majority of participants worked in Antarctic Research or a related discipline (77.7%), out of which 53.1% worked in an Earth Sciences discipline 41.7% in Life Sciences, 17.8% in Physical Sciences and 11% in a Humanities and Social Sciences discipline.
- We were also pleased to see that educators (20%), government/policy stakeholders (6.6%) and interested laypeople (2.4%) attended the conference.

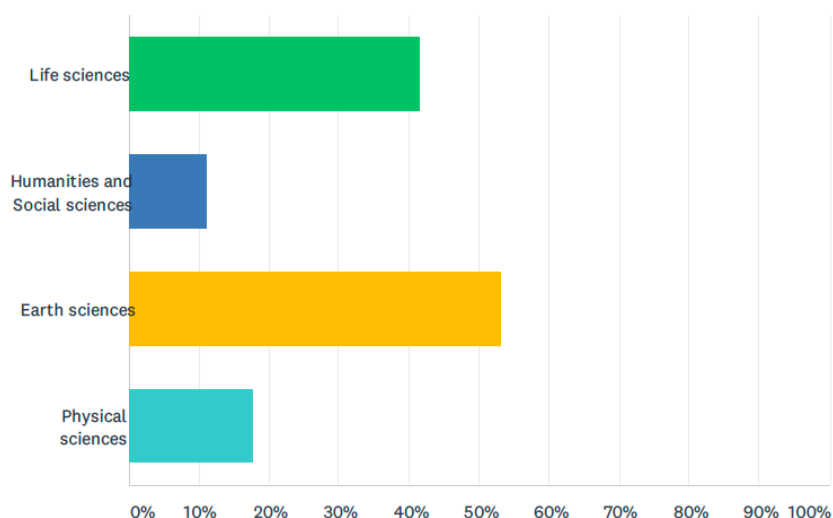
### Q10 What is your career stage?

Answered: 311 Skipped: 122



### Q11 How would you best describe your discipline? Tick all that apply.

Answered: 326 Skipped: 107



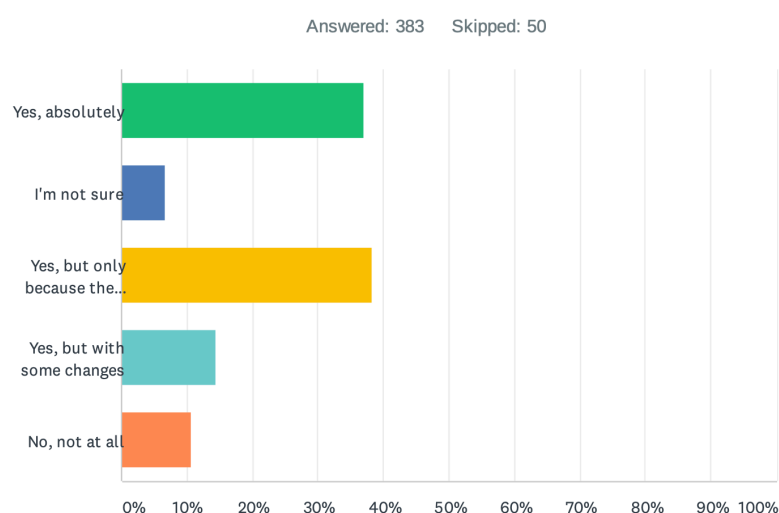
Overall, the online format was well perceived. Participants mainly remarked on problems related to navigating the event portal, connectivity issues or accessing the online poster session.

SCAR 2020 was free and open to all. This was also noted by the participants, out of which 77.8% stated they found it extremely useful to participate free of charge. 61.5% of participants stated that they had no prior involvement in SCAR, highlighting the importance of Open Science Conferences to continue to raise the profile of SCAR within the research community.

## Summary and Recommendations

Moving SCAR 2020 Online was a major undertaking, but also a very positive experience for the Antarctic Science Community and the organisers. 67% of respondent had planned to attend the Open Science Conference in Hobart. Given the circumstances created by COVID-19, participants noted that the online format was an acceptable alternative.

### Q39 Would you say the online conference was an acceptable alternative to an in-person conference?



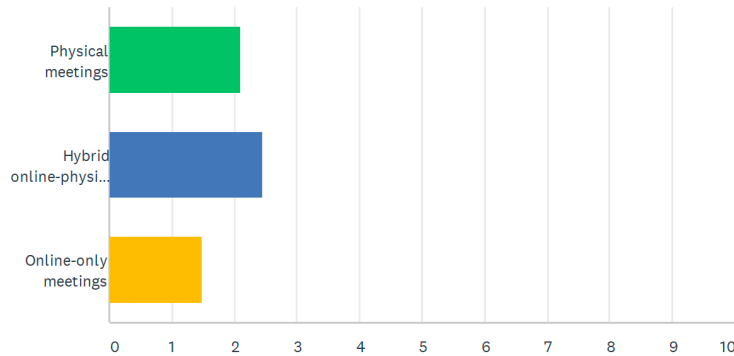
However, the general feeling was that an online format could not fully replace an in-person Open Science Conference. 59.7% of participants noted that they engaged less than they would have done at a physical event, whilst 25% engaged differently.

The move towards hybrid meetings (with online and in-person components) was seen as an important step for the future of conferences.



Q40 What kinds of events is it most important for SCAR to organise in future? Please rank in order of importance (1=most important and 3=least important).

Answered: 366 Skipped: 67



	1	2	3	TOTAL	SCORE
Physical meetings	34.40% 118	41.69% 143	23.91% 82	343	2.10
Hybrid online-physical meetings	54.49% 194	35.39% 126	10.11% 36	356	2.44
Online-only meetings	13.18% 46	22.35% 78	64.47% 225	349	1.49

Based on our experience running a major online conference, we would like to make some **final suggestions**:

- Running an online conference is a lot of work; technical help and additional support is therefore important.
- Internet connections can be unstable; having a contingency plan in case of dropouts or other fallouts is therefore useful.
- An overview sheet listing a detailed running order, scheduled breaks, involved people and other information helps to keep track.
- Training sessions with chairs, presenters and moderators give the chance to familiarise with the system, test out equipment and address any outstanding questions.
- Spreading out the programme across different time zones helps to make the conference inclusive; repeat sessions also give the chance for participants to engage live.
- Sitting in front of a screen can be exhausting. Breaks are important, both within a session (e.g. a 5-minute break after 60 minutes) and between the sessions.
- Clear communication via selected channels is important.
- Based on the feedback from the participants, some formats (live sessions, text-based forums) worked better than others (online poster session, meeting hub).
- Enjoy the experience!

*This report was compiled by the SCAR Secretariat,  
For further information, specific questions or to request document templates, please  
contact [info@scar.org](mailto:info@scar.org).*

## Statistics

Total number of registrations	2712
Total number that logged onto the Event Portal	853
Total number of YouTube live stream views	807
Total YouTube views (as of 13 August)	7827
<b>Plenaries:</b>	
Opening Ceremony and presentation by Valérie Masson-Delmotte	
- Live on Events Portal	224
- Live streamed on YouTube	93
- Total YouTube views	513
Presentation by Nerilie Abram	
- Live on Events Portal	179
- Live streamed on YouTube	31
- Total YouTube views	197
Presentation by Juliana Viana	
- Live on Events Portal	124
Presentation by Daniela Liggett	
- Live on Events Portal	122
- Live streamed on YouTube	52
- Total YouTube views	280
Close of Meeting and Award of SCAR Medals	
- Live on Events Portal	75
- Live streamed on YouTube	25
- Total YouTube views	214
<b>Mini-Symposia:</b>	
Highlights of SCAR's current Scientific Research Programmes	
- Live on Events Portal	235
- Live streamed on YouTube	95
- Total YouTube views	419
Repeat	
- Live on Events Portal	44
- Live streamed on YouTube	34
- Total YouTube views	150
SCAR's future Scientific Research Programmes	
- Live on Events Portal	167
- Live streamed on YouTube	57
- Total YouTube views	233
Repeat	

- Live on Events Portal	188
- Live streamed on YouTube	60
- Total YouTube views	139
Antarctica in a Warming World	
- Live on Events Portal	141
- Live streamed on YouTube	58
- Total YouTube views	443
<b>Workshops:</b>	
Inclusive Collaborations in Antarctic Research	
- Live on Events Portal	138
- Live streamed on YouTube	92
- Total YouTube views	249
Improving the FAIRness of Antarctic Data	
- Live on Events Portal	125
- Live streamed on YouTube	58
- Total YouTube views	155
SCAR Capacity Building Workshop	
- Live on Events Portal	57
- Live streamed on YouTube	46
- Total YouTube views	132
Repeat	
- Live streamed on YouTube	22
- Total YouTube views	72
Accessing the Biogeochemical Argo Network for Southern Ocean Research	
- Live on Events Portal	32
- Live streamed on YouTube	25
- Total YouTube views	100
<b>Panel Discussion:</b>	
Impact of COVID-19 on Antarctic Research – joint SCAR/COMNAP	
- Live on Events Portal	131
- Live streamed on YouTube	49
- Total YouTube views	260
<b>Text-based Discussion Sessions:</b>	
Number of sessions / Slack channels	6
Total Slack members	197
Total messages posted	2133

<b>SCAR Involvement</b>	
Total number of registrations	2712
- National Committee Member	116
- Delegate	43
- SCAR Group Leader	53
- SCAR Group Member	318
- SCAR Award Recipient	40
- Partner Organisation	61
- Other	172
Career Descriptions	
- PhD Student	792
- ECR	579
- Working in Antarctic research or related discipline	1832
- Educator	384
- NGO	73
- Government/policy stakeholder	270
- Industry stakeholder	66
- Media	48
- Interested layperson	114
- Other	122