

Less for More 2021 Survey: Key Findings

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Background

The University of Basel is committed to reducing CO₂ emissions caused by academic plane travel by at least 30% over the next few years. As part of the project “Less for more” - Air Travel at the University of Basel, the *Sustainability Office*, in collaboration with the *Center for Cognitive and Decision Sciences* (Prof. Dr. Rui Mata, BSc Nina Frings, BSc Sophia Prix, BSc Tamara Lotz), conducted a survey on the travel behavior of researchers and staff at the University of Basel. The goal of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the travel behavior of the University of Basel’s researchers and staff and inform future interventions that do not compromise excellence in science and teaching.

Respondents

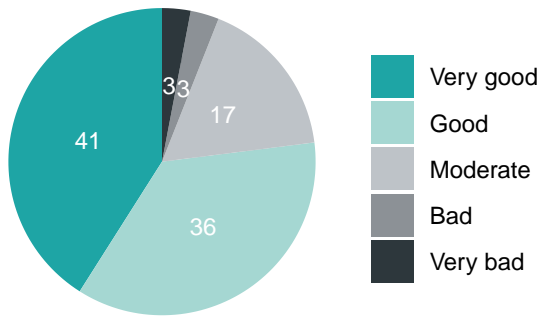
The survey was distributed to members of all faculties and departments of the University Basel through various email channels, starting March 15th, 2021. A total of 992 respondents participated in the survey until March 31st, 2021. After exclusions (e.g., students), the number of respondents was **910**. Below, we report a subset of results from the survey for the full sample or distinguishing between three staff member categories; specifically, 138 professors (i.e., assistant professors, associate professor, full professors), 674 other scientific staff members (e.g., doctoral students, postdocs), and 98 administrative staff members. Additional and more detailed analysis using more specific staff categories are available upon request. The questionnaire is available *online*.

Five Key Findings

In the following section we present **five key findings** from the survey.

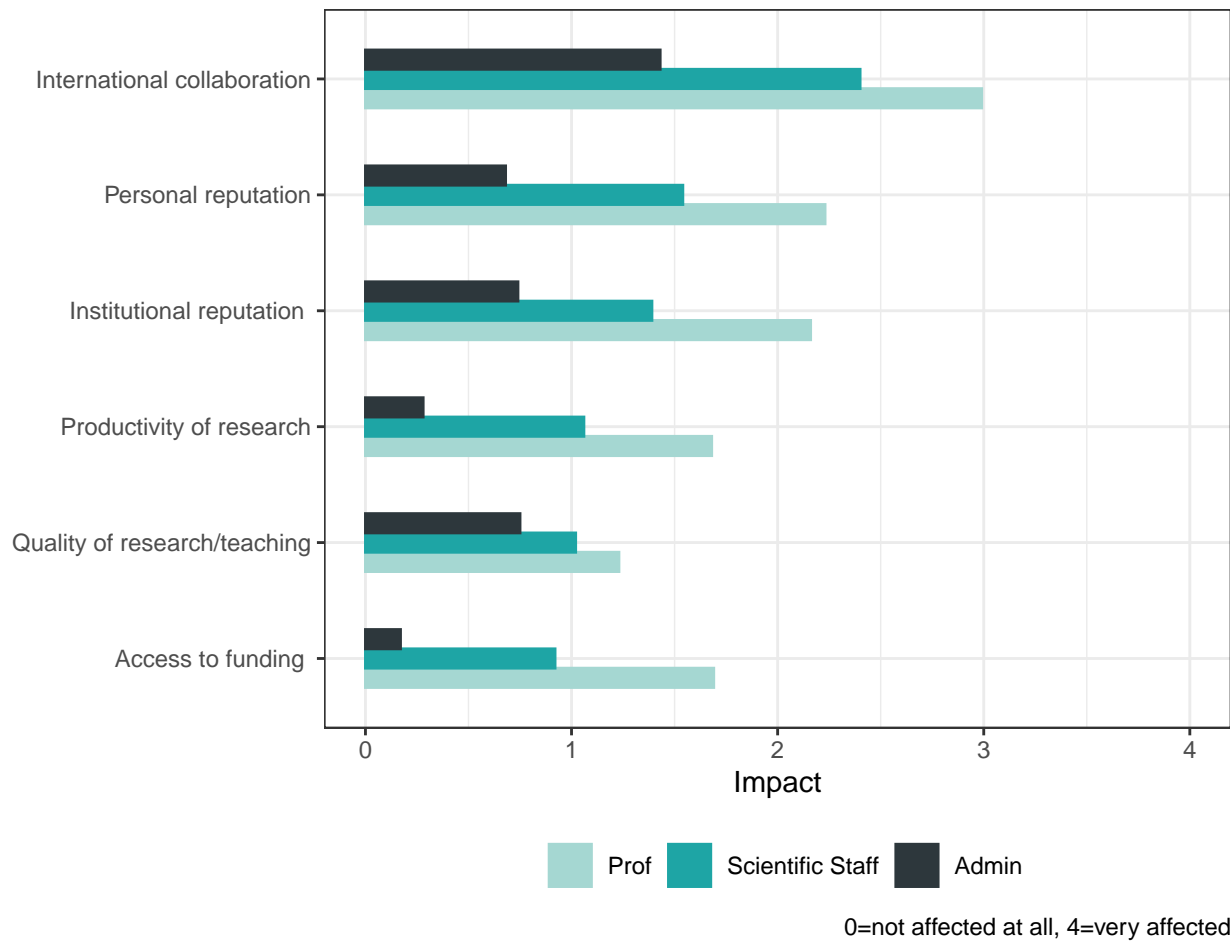
1. Little awareness but strong support for the “Less for More” program

Only 153 (**17%**) of the total of 910 respondents indicated that they were aware of the “Less for More” program of the University of Basel and its goal of a reduction of at least 30% of flight-related carbon emissions. Regardless, the large majority of the participants (**77%**) said that they find the approach of asking faculties and departments to identify measures to implement the 30% reduction “good” or “very good”.



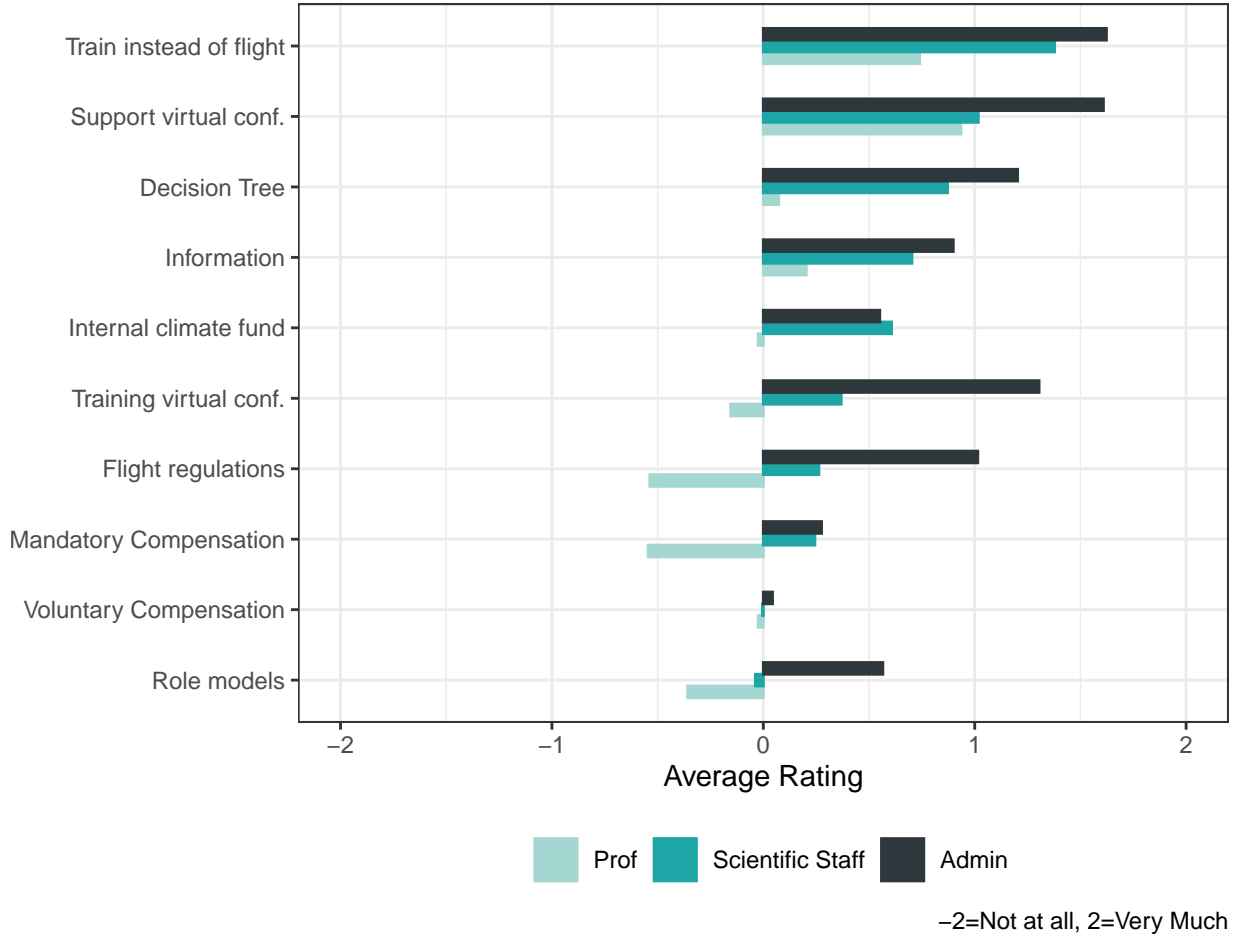
2. Perceived impact of flying less: Quality of research is thought to suffer little relative to international collaboration

When trying to change a behavior in order to reduce CO₂ emissions, it is crucial to keep in mind that flying less can involve negative consequences. Consequently, respondents were asked about the perceived impact of flying less on their work. The aspect that was mentioned most frequently mentioned as being influenced negatively by a reduction of academic flights was **international collaboration**. Personal and institutional reputation were also perceived as being more negatively influenced, albeit to a lesser degree. **Noticeably, professors perceived each of the factors to be more strongly negatively impacted by flying less than other scientific staff members**, suggesting that different staff groups have somewhat diverging opinions about the impact of flying less.



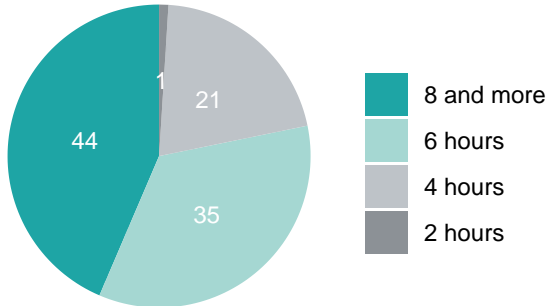
3. Acceptance of measures: “Zug statt Flug” and improving videoconferencing infrastructure receive most support

The general acceptance of the various proposed measures is high for most measures but two stand out: a **restriction rule to prohibit the use of plane for destinations that could also be reached by train (Zug statt Flug)** and **further support, development and improvement of virtual conference equipment and tools**. The train instead of flight rule and improving support for virtual conferencing received 70% and 68% of respondents’ approval, respectively. The results suggest, nevertheless, some diverging views across university members. Overall, the professors seem generally less supportive of the proposed measures; administrative staff members, in contrast, have the most positive attitude towards all measures.



4. Acceptance of the train rule: Over 40% support a >8h train rule

Of the 70% respondents who would be interested in a “train instead of flight” (“Zug statt Flug”) rule, 44% said they would be willing to forego the plane if the train journey was 8 hours or more. A further 35% of respondents stated that they would forego the plane if the destination could be reached within 6 hours.



5. Videoconferencing: Several measures needed to improve videoconferencing

About 70% of respondents welcome additional support, development and improvement of devices and tools to make it easier and more frequent to participate in virtual conferences. All possible implementation ideas were welcomed, with high quality audio and video and the establishment of a support service being the most supported.

