



REVIEW OF MAIN MEETINGS

WORCESTER U3A

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION:

Worcester u3a has run two-weekly presentation Meetings since it was founded 37 years ago in 1985. These Meetings are open to all members and feature a presentation followed by refreshments. As the number of interest groups has increased, attendance has fallen steadily from over 50% to less than 5% of the membership.

In addition to the long-term decline, the Covid pandemic led to a reduction in membership by almost one-quarter and continues to depress attendance at Meetings, possibly by a third. The combination of the long-term trend and the impact of the pandemic has raised questions about how members view the Main Meeting programme.

The study set out to answer some of those questions – why is attendance in decline? To what extent is the ongoing Covid pandemic affecting members? Would changing venues make a difference and encourage more members to join in? What is the place of online Meetings? etc., etc.

The results suggest that factors outside of the control of our u3a are the major reason for the decline and, whilst we can improve the experience of members who attend Meetings, this is unlikely to reverse, but may slow, the long-term trend.

The report on the Main Meetings programme¹ is divided into three parts,

Conclusions & Discussion

Part 1: Historical Analysis 1985-2022

Part 2: Member Survey May 2022

KEY POINTS:

1. (Main) Meetings have been successful as they are, but attendance has fallen to a level where given the cost of the programme, the benefit to members is questionable.
2. There are opportunities to try different things that may make Meetings more enjoyable for members that attend; but there are relatively few things we can do that would reverse the long-term decline.
3. Whilst we have members who have the time and are prepared to organise and run in-person Meetings there is no reason to discontinue them, but they might be scaled back to reflect the size of the audience.
4. The Committee may be able to find ways of using Meetings to support recruitment and retention and they are an ideal opportunity to meet up informally with members.
5. Standalone online Meetings have attracted larger and more diverse audiences than in-person Meetings and there may be opportunities to develop them further, independently of in-person Meetings.

¹ Main Meetings may be known as Monthly, Open or General Meetings in other u3as

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS:

(n.b. unless stated otherwise, comments relate to in-person not online Meetings)

Wider trends:

Attendance at Main Meetings is in decline which can be attributed to a combination of factors, including:

- The pull towards interest groups.
- The development of Worcester u3a away from WR2 membership west of the River Severn into other areas whose members are less likely to attend Meetings.
- More recent members, who are less likely to attend Meetings.
- The negative impact of the Covid pandemic on membership and the unwillingness of some members to mix with larger groups.

Scheduling the programme:

- Attendance at in-person Meetings follows a seasonal pattern, with more members attending during the winter months; attendance is also lower when Meetings coincide with school holidays.
- Finishing time of Meetings may influence attendance, with fewer members going to in-person Meetings when they are held later in the afternoon.

Choice of venue:

- In-person Meetings alternate between the west and east side of the River Severn and this is appreciated by members. However, members from the east side are less willing to cross the River and has contributed to the faster decline in attendance at Meetings held on the west side.
- Members tend to go to Meetings (and also interest groups) that are conveniently located.
- Getting to Meetings can be problematical – car users, who make up 80%+ of the audience, prefer venues with good parking and easy access; members who might consider using public transport are put off by having to change buses and would prefer somewhere central.
- Whilst members comment on the quality of venues (and the surrounding locality) there is no evidence to suggest that this affects the number of members attending Meetings.

Organising and running the Meetings programme:

- There are accessibility issues for all venues – ease of travel, presence/absence of a hearing induction loop, light leakage, etc., and the choice of venue impacts on the equipment required to run in-person Meetings.
- The in-person Main Meetings programme is more costly than an interest group of the same size because of the use of paid speakers. This adds around £2 to the annual subscription fee.
- With pressure on subscription fees due to the expected significant rise of venue hire costs², reducing the frequency of Meetings from two-weekly to monthly would offset some of the increase.
- To set up and run in-person Meetings involves 6-7 members. With the current level of attendance, this has meant the ratio of helpers to attending-members has fallen to 1:3-4. This compares with a typical level of 10 members in an interest group. The current level of attendance does not justify the time and effort required to organise and run in-person Meetings, particularly with their two-weekly frequency.

Communication:

- Most members get their information about the Meetings programme from the monthly Newsletter, and, for online Meetings, an email sent to all members that includes the joining

² Annual rate of inflation August 2022 12.3%, compared with the 15-year average of 2.9% (RPI)
[Consumer price inflation tables - Office for National Statistics](#) (10.10.22)

information. In addition, members would appreciate receiving a printed programme of the Meetings for the year.

- Meetings are an opportunity to welcome new members but the opportunity to use them as a recruitment event has not been fully explored.

Factors influencing attendance:

- In any one year, less than a quarter of members have been to an in-person Meeting.
- Around half of members attending a Meeting are likely to go regularly; other members may go occasionally, perhaps only once or twice in a year.
- Members with no interest groups are far less likely to attend Meetings, whether in-person or online, but far more likely to lapse their membership.
- Members from single-member households are no more likely to attend in-person Meetings than other members.
- Members who do not go to Meetings either have other commitments or are not interested. Only 10% say they are staying away because of Covid and even fewer because of the location.

Making Meetings more enjoyable:

- With a wide range of presentations on different topics and an opportunity for a cup of tea and a chat, members going to Meetings generally enjoy them exactly as they are.
- Some topics are better attended, such as local history; others consistently less well attended, e.g. talks on scientific subjects. Other subjects have been suggested and may attract a different audience from the more tried-and-tested areas.
- Presentations led by a well-known name or by u3a groups boosts attendance but only for that Meeting.
- There is a feeling that Meetings could be made more welcoming, notably for new members.
- There is broad recognition of the social opportunity presented by in-person Meetings.

Online Meetings:

- Online Meetings require less commitment to organise and run and, without the need to hire a venue, less costly. Additionally, online presentations attract a larger audience, particularly amongst members who are not attending in-person Meetings.
- However, whilst the online format is suited to presentations, they are less satisfactory for informal exchanges and cannot offer the same social dimension as in-person events.
- Members support the idea of online Meetings continuing and they will take place monthly in 2022-2023.

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CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND

WORCESTER U3A

Located on either side of the River Severn, Worcester has a population of 103,000 (2019) and around 20,000 individuals over the age of 65.

Before the Covid pandemic Worcester u3a had 1,064 full members. Membership fell by 23% compared with before the start of the pandemic to reach 819 at the time the survey in May 2022 (838 at the year-end on 31 July; 21% fall).¹

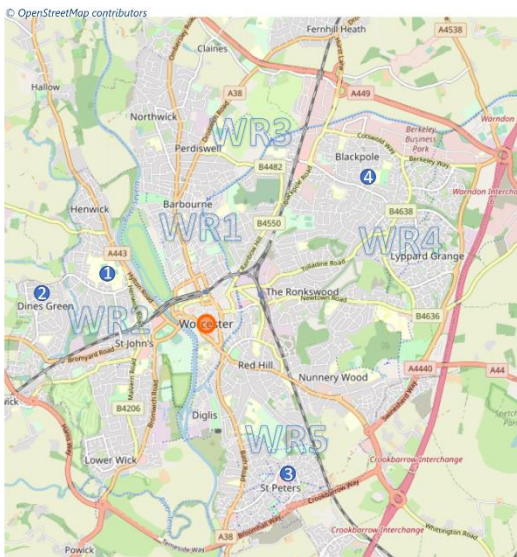
Over the years, attendance at Main Meetings² has been falling, on top of which is the negative impact of the Covid pandemic. This work aimed to get a better understanding of the reasons behind the decline and to help make decisions about the future Main Meetings programme.

MAIN MEETINGS

Main Meetings are presentations of 45-60 minutes duration on a wide range of topics most often with an outside speaker and open to all members without prior enrolment. Refreshments are available following the presentation giving members the opportunity to socialise.

As with many u3as, the Main Meetings programme has developed because of history, geography, and the availability of resources – both volunteers and finance; they have taken place every two weeks on Wednesday afternoons (abbreviated to ‘Meetings’). They typically have run between September, the start of the year’s interest group programme, and early May when many groups take a break for the summer. In 2021-2022 to increase the number of activities available during the summer, the Meetings programme was extended into July.

From 1985 when Worcester u3a was founded, Meetings and groups³ took place at Worcester College of H.E., WR2, on the west side of the River (the College is now University of Worcester). Starting with a regular talk open to all members, as other interest groups started, these meetings became known as the Main group – and then, as now, Main Meetings.



The history of Main Meetings is somewhat convoluted,

- Venues have been changed twice due to increasing venue costs.
- To give wider access to members, Meetings previously held at a single venue west of the River in the WR2 postcode, alternated with a venue located on the east side in WR5.⁴
- Online Meetings started as a response to the Covid pandemic restrictions on meeting in person. Online Meetings have continued post-Covid restrictions, and in 2021-2022 alternated with in-person Meetings (not hybrid Meetings).
- In 2021-2022, Meetings held in WR5 were moved to WR4 due to increases in the cost of venue hire (both on the east side of the River).

1. Worcester College of Higher Education, WR2;
2. Green Centre, WR2;
3. St Peter's Baptist Church, WR5;
4. Warndon Hub, WR4

¹ Worcester u3a has an all-inclusive subscription fee with no per-Meeting or per-session venue charge. The financial year runs from 1 August.

² Main Meetings may be known as Monthly, Open or General Meetings in other u3as.

³ In the first years, groups were short-course study programmes that took place sequentially; only later were more-permanent interest groups established.

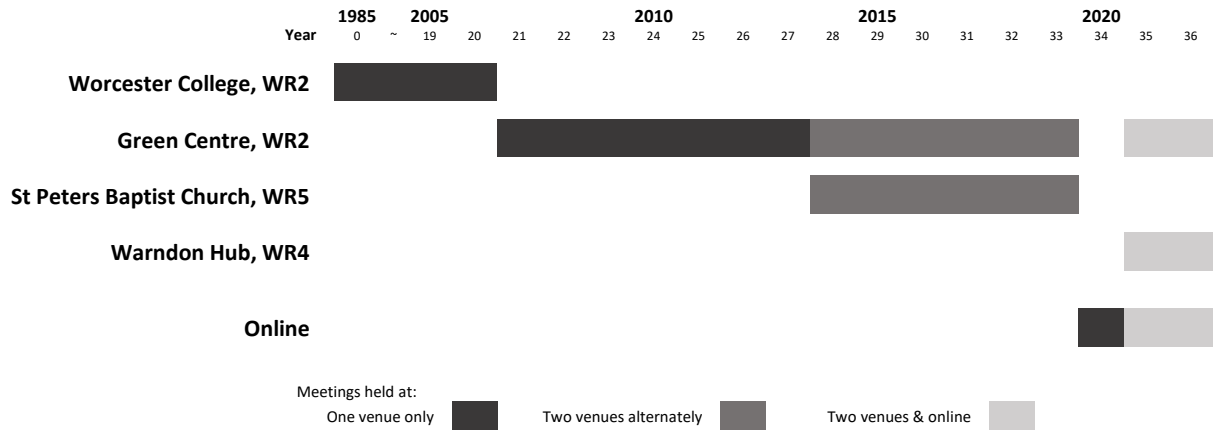
⁴ West of the River postcodes – WR2, WR6; east of the River postcodes – WR1, WR3, WR4, WR5.

In 2021-2022, the Meetings programme had the two-weekly pattern of,

Online – Warndon Hub (east side) – Online – Green Centre (west side) – Online – etc...

(except January and February 2022, when Meetings took place online due to the resurgence in Covid cases)

The following diagram shows where Meetings have taken place,



REPORT OUTLINE

At the beginning of the 2021-2022 year, the Committee undertook to review the Main Meetings programme to see how members have taken to the new venue, Warndon Hub, WR4. However, attendance during 2021-2022 has been particularly poor and the original scope of the survey was broadened to identify the underlying reasons. The review consists of Part 1, an analysis of historical data (1985-2022) and Part 2, a member survey (May 2022).

This summary highlights the key conclusions from these two reports.⁵

⁵ Membership numbers in the report includes only Standard and Additional Hours members (838 at the end of 2021-2022):

- Standard membership allows the member to join any and any number of the Standard interest groups at no additional per-session cost (Standard groups either do not use a paid-for venue or meet for 32 hours or fewer a year).
- Additional Hours groups are those that hire a venue for more than 32 hours per year (in May 2022 this included two Bridge groups that meet weekly and, from 2022-2023, will include Film Appreciation who meet two-weekly but hold longer sessions). Members of Additional Hours groups pay a higher subscription rate (and can also join any of the Standard groups).

Additionally at the end of 2021-2022 there were 21 Guest (reciprocal) members who are members of neighbouring u3as and may join one Standard interest group, and 2 members who are members for insurance purposes. The cost of hiring Meeting and interest group venues is met from annual subscriptions, as is the cost of speakers and refreshments at Main Meetings.

CONCLUSIONS

WIDER TRENDS

The pull towards interest groups:

There has been a close relationship between the size of the membership and the number of interest groups.

Pt 1: slide 3

Attendance at Meetings has fallen from over 50% of the membership in the first years of Worcester u3a to 5% or less today. Attendance at Meetings has fallen in line with the increasing number of groups.

Pt 1: slides 4-6

There has been a similar general decline in attendance at AGMs, although this is more variable year-on-year.

The movement away from WR2 membership:

In the longer term, there has been a decline in the membership away from the original College base of Worcester u3a activities in WR2, to other areas of Worcester and its surrounding areas. Whilst the expansion of the membership is a positive development, WR2 members have been more likely to attend in-person Meetings and the gradual loss of these members has contributed to the decline in attendance at in-person Meetings, particularly on the west side of the River (WR2).

Pt 1: slides 7-8, 16

More recent members are less likely to attend Meetings:

Members who have joined within the past 5-10 years are less likely to attend Meetings than longer-standing members and attend less frequently.

Pt 1: slide 9

The negative impact of the Covid pandemic:

As a result of the pandemic, double the usual number of members did not renew and recruitment was down by 90%, leading to:

Pt 1: slides 10-11

Pt 2: pages 15-16

- An almost 40% reduction in attendance at in-person Meetings. This was due to a 21% fall in membership⁶ and between a quarter and one-third of members who are reluctant to mix with large groups.
- A significant fall in the number of more recent members – members joining in the past five years has fallen by one-third. Typically, these members are most likely to be willing to join the Committee and run interest groups. One sign of this has been the four vacant Committee positions following the March 2022 AGM, including the two roles that organise the Main Meetings programme.⁷

SCHEDULING THE PROGRAMME

Seasonal variation in attendance:

Attendance at in-person Meetings varies in line with the number of daylight hours – the shorter the day, the higher the attendance at Meetings. Weather also has an impact on attendance.⁸

Pt 1: slide 13

⁶ Membership fell by 23% from the end of 2019-2020 to the start of the 2021-2022 year (819 members); membership grew over the year to 838, a 21% fall compared with 2019-2020.

⁷ Since the March 2022 AGM the vacant Committee positions have been filled or covered by changing roles within the Committee (July 2022).

⁸ In February 2020 severe flooding and difficulty crossing the River led to a fall in attendance of two-thirds. Although there were proportionately 41% more local members from the WR5 postcode area at the Meeting, the fall in numbers was much larger suggesting that bad weather is a reason for not attending (Meeting at St Peters Baptist Church, WR5).

Attendance during the Easter school holiday is lower than expected from the seasonal trend (meetings have not coincided with the Christmas or Summer school holidays). Attendance at Meetings coinciding with half-term breaks are not affected to the same extent.

In 2021-2022, the programme of Main Meetings ran through to July, extending the usual September to early May season. Whilst there was only a slight fall in attendance at online Meetings in June and July, attendance at in-person Meetings was lower by one-third and led to the cancellation of the Meeting planned for July.

The Meetings programme has the potential to introduce new members to Worcester u3a. However, extending the in-person programme into the summer months has not proved popular or led to an increase in new members.

Finishing time of Meetings:

Meetings start at 2 p.m. and finish at 3.30 p.m. This clashes with the run to pick up children from school and the associated traffic. Bearing in mind that 80%+ of members arrive by car, this may negatively influence attendance.

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In the past, Meetings held later in the afternoon did not prove popular. However, evening events showcasing interest groups have been successful but unlikely to be supported by members.⁹

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CHOICE OF VENUE

Location:

Members appreciate in-person Meetings being held on either side of the River. This arrangement was introduced partly to make getting to Meetings easier for members living on the east side of the River but also because attendance was outgrowing the capacity of Green Centre (WR2 west side).^{10 11} The result has been a success – more members from the east side of the River attend Meetings held to the east and vice versa, but also a failure (in the best possible way) in that, initially, alternating between the two sides of the River did not reduce the size of audience at either location.

Pt 2: page 14

As with the move from the College to Green Centre in late 2007 (both WR2), there is no evidence to suggest that changes in venue or alternating between venues affects overall attendance once other factors are considered.¹²

Pt 1: slides 16-18

There is a tendency for members to attend Meetings that are more conveniently located to where they live.¹³ This mirrors the experience of interest group enrolment in that groups attract more members who live in the same area, irrespective of the activity.

⁹ [Membership Survey, Furness \(u3aresearch.org.uk\)](#) (2014) – compared with daytime meetings, popularity for meeting late afternoons 57%, evenings 41%, weekends 22%-30%.

¹⁰ '[In 2012 it was] decided to alternate main meetings between St Peters Church and the Green Centre. This seemed a fair solution to members who live on the east side of the River.' – Jane Flynn, Chair, 2009-2012.

¹¹ 'We moved to St Peter's because we were outgrowing the Green Centre – having to bring in extra chairs from other rooms at most meetings held there. It also gave MMs [Main Meetings] a presence each side of the River.' – Val Hibbitt, Chair, 2012-2015.

¹² Other factors include the growth in membership, the number of interest groups, and the topics presented at Meetings.

¹³ e.g. members from WR3 are more likely to go to Meetings at Warndon Hub, WR4, than other Meeting locations as there is a route that avoids having to drive through areas with heavier traffic, but are less likely to attend Meetings at Green Centre, WR2, on the west side of the River as it involves driving into the central part of town to cross the closest bridge.

However, since 2013 when Meetings have been held alternately on either side of the River, there has been a relative fall in the number of members from the west, WR2 area. This is a consequence of:

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- As is typical of the membership, WR2 members tend to go the Meetings that are easily accessible;
- WR2 members have been more regular attendees at Meetings;
- Membership has grown faster on the east side of the River (and the areas close to Worcester).

The result is that attendance at Green Centre, WR2, has declined faster than St Peters Baptist Church, WR5 (east side).

Getting to Meetings:

From the survey results, half of members who attend in-person Meetings go to both venues. This is consistent with historical data showing that around 45% of the audience are more regular-attending members.

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Over 80% of members use a car to travel to in-person Meetings raising issues of parking and traffic congestion. Equally members recognise the benefit of meeting centrally, notably because it avoids the need to catch two buses. Whether, in practice, a central location for Meetings would attract more members is not known.

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Quality of venue:

Around one-quarter of members live in the St Peters, WR5 area and before moving to Warndon Hub, Meetings were held at St Peters Baptist Church, WR5. The St Peters venue received favourable comments for:

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- Ease of access by car.
- Plentiful parking.
- Its general décor and facilities.
- Its location away from housing estates.

However, St Peters is significantly more expensive than either Green Centre, WR2, and Warndon Hub, WR4, and is no longer considered to be affordable by the Committee.

Both Green Centre, WR2, and Warndon Hub, WR4, are community centres. Some members are critical of the location amongst housing estates, venues not being on a direct bus route, and their general state of repair. The impact of these factors on attendance is unknown as there have been an insufficient number of Meetings held at the new venue, Warndon Hub, WR4, to make a fair comparison with attendance at St Peters Baptist Church, WR5.

However, whilst some members are critical of the current venues, others are enthusiastic about both Warndon Hub and Green Centre, particularly those that live close by.

Given the variety of venues used by interest groups – everything from poorly heated village halls to well-appointed conference facilities, the attractiveness of a venue is more likely to be driven by location than its appointment.

ORGANISING AND RUNNING THE MEETINGS PROGRAMME

Accessibility and equipment:

Whilst both Green Centre, WR2, and Warndon Hub, WR4, are accessible from a mobility point of view, they differ in the sound and projection equipment

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available. A complete system must be setup at Green Centre, whereas the basic sound and projection systems are available at Warndon Hub.

Finding affordable and convenient venues of a good size with all the desired facilities is problematical. Comments on our current venues included:

- Green Centre, WR2: A full sound and projection setup is necessary; there is an induction loop system available. Over the years Green Centre has been criticised for the lack of effective window coverings which can make it difficult to see projected images on the screen.¹⁴
- St Peters Baptist Church, WR5, has both projection and sound equipment which must be hired, and an induction loop.
- Warndon Hub, WR4, does not have a hearing loop system; only limited setup is required for sound and projection with basic equipment installed and available for hire.

Cost of the Meetings programme:

Compared with interest groups, with both speaker fees and venue hire, Main Meetings are more costly to finance than the average interest group (£1,609 in 2021-2022 cf £295 p.a. per group); the Meetings programme adds around £2 to the annual subscription fee.¹⁵

Pt 1: slides 22-23

Pressure on subscription fees:

Alongside the disappointing level of interest shown in in-person Main Meetings, venues and speakers have become more costly and at the start of 2021-2022, led to relocating Meetings from St Peters Baptist Church, WR5, to the less expensive Warndon Hub, WR4. Whilst this move has reduced expenditure in the short term, the cost of organising Meetings continues to grow and, in the current economic climate, could increase by 15% or more over 2022-2023.

Pt 1: slide 24

Whilst the impact of inflation is not specific to the Main Meetings programme, since 2019-2020 and the significant fall in membership, there are more interest groups than expected from the historical trend. In the medium term, as membership is unlikely to return quickly to pre-pandemic levels, this will put additional pressure on subscription fees.

Frequency of Meetings and time commitment:

With meetings every two-weeks from September to early May, the organisation of the programme requires a considerable commitment of time and effort. A move to monthly Meetings would ease the demands made on the members involved in organising the programme. The majority of members are in support of this change.

Pt 2: pages 5-6

Setting up in-person Meetings involves a team of 6-7 members. With the much smaller audiences seen in 2021-2022, the ratio of 1:3 or 4 helpers to audience is unacceptably low when compared with interest group attendance (typically 10 members on average for each group).

¹⁴ For example, 'I am in discussion with the manager at the Green Centre about the repair and maintenance of the set of high curtains that don't currently close.' Technical Officer's report, Committee minutes 22.05.2007

¹⁵ Annual Standard and Additional Hours subscriptions for 2022-2023, £35 & £47 respectively. In 2021-2022 each interest group using a paid venue added an average £0.34 to the annual subscription fee (although there is wide variation depending on the venue and number of hours of hire and, in 2021-2022, most groups did not meet in the first weeks of 2022 due to a resurgence in the number of Covid case – full 2021-2022 year estimate £0.37; 2018-2019 the last full pre-pandemic year of normal activity, cost per group per subscription was £0.28, n.b. the sharp increase is mostly due to the 21% fall in membership and increases in venue hire costs).

By contrast, online Meetings are less demanding as they do not require the hire of a venue, setting up on the day, or serving refreshments. They have also been better attended during 2021-2022 than in-person Meetings.

Reducing the frequency of Meetings and holding more Meetings online would ease pressure on subscription fees.

COMMUNICATION

Publicising Meetings:

Members confirm that the newsletters and reminder emails are a satisfactory way of keeping them updated but, in addition, would appreciate the return of a printed programme of the year's Meetings.

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With the decline in attendance, the immediacy and widespread use of email, and a monthly newsletter sent to all members, the importance of Meetings as a channel of communication has diminished.¹⁶

Not all members are aware of the Main Meetings programme or, given the range of interest groups, what purpose it serves. This is becoming a bigger issue as more recent members are joining Worcester u3a to pursue a particular interest and pay less attention to other u3a activities. This is summed up by the comment made by a member, 'I don't know what Main Meetings are'.

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In addition, the title, 'Main Meetings' does not help members to understand what they are or who can attend.

Main Meetings as a recruitment event:

As part of the recruitment plan, this summer we encouraged members to bring a friend to Meetings. This has not seen an increase in the number of guests at Meetings nor to the recruitment of new members. However, there may be other opportunities to use Main Meetings to recruit members and this would benefit from further consideration.

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Meetings are, however, an opportunity to welcome new joiners and introduce them to other members and to the different interest groups that are available. This may be the only occasion other than the annual Groups' Fair where there is an opportunity to meet up with members from across the membership.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTENDANCE

Frequency of attendance:

Only a third of members have attended any Main Meetings since the beginning of 2019-2020, whether this is in-person or online.¹⁷ Those that have been, tend to go to just one or two meetings a year. Additionally, more recent members are less likely to go to Meetings than longer-standing members, contributing to the decline in attendance.

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29*

Members who attend Meetings more regularly also participate more widely in u3a activities and belong to more interest groups, day trips and holidays.

Members who never or rarely attend:

The survey identifies the most common reason for not attending Meetings as having other commitments but also shows that over a quarter of non-attending

Pt 2: pages 17-18

¹⁶ 98% of Worcester u3a members provide an email address.

¹⁷ [Membership Survey, Lancaster \(u3aresearch.org.uk\)](https://www.u3aresearch.org.uk) (2015) – 35% of members attend Monthly Meetings more frequently, 65% occasionally.

members are not interested. Only a small proportion of these members intend to go in future, with the large majority being non-committal.

Location is the least cited reason for not attending (5%); Covid and not knowing other members being other reasons (each is around 10% of non-attenders' responses).

Unfortunately, few members who never or rarely attend say they are likely to go to Meetings in the future.

Members with no interest groups & postal members:

Outside of new joiners, members not enrolled in any interest groups are also far less likely to attend in-person Meetings. In addition, members with no interest group who have been with u3a for longer are far less likely to renew their membership.

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Currently there are less than 3% of members who prefer to receive paper communications. Although the numbers are small, these members are more likely to attend in-person Meetings, notably those living in the WR2 postcode area.

Members from single-member households:

58% of the membership are from single-member households. They do not attend Meetings more or less often than members from two-member households.

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MAKING MEETINGS MORE ENJOYABLE

Topics & presenters:

The Main Meetings programme has included a wide range of topics, and members say they find them enjoyable.

Pt 2: page 8

Topics such as history and presentations of local interest attract more members. Other topics, such as charities talking about their work or Science, Technology & Engineering are less popular.

*Pt 1: slide 31
Pt 2: pages 7-8*

Attendance can also be boosted by 60% or more when there is a well-known speaker (or a particularly interesting topic). Similarly, presentations led by interest groups (but not u3a members) attract a larger audience (presumably because of the presence of the group's members leading or supporting the presentation).

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Whilst there is broad support for the topics that have been covered, there have been a variety of suggestions for improving Meetings, including:

*Pt 2: page 8
Pt 2: Annex*

- More contemporary topics and current issues.
- Better known presenters.
- Meetings led by interest groups.
- A greater level of member participation.
- More social sessions – for example, quizzes.

The social dimension:

Some members, particularly those who attend occasionally, would appreciate more time for meeting up with fellow members and having refreshments available at the start of the Meeting. This was not an issue for most, who are satisfied with the current arrangements.

Pt 2: pages 11-12

Modifying when refreshments are available may be an opportunity to make Meetings more welcoming for new and occasional-attending members.¹⁸

ONLINE MEETINGS

Organising online Meetings:

Without the need for a venue, online Meetings are less costly than their in-person equivalent (around £1 per person per attendance compared with £3+ for in-person Meetings). As there is no setup required or refreshments that must be provided, they are also far less demanding in term of organisation and commitment.

Attendance online:

In 2021-2022, online presentations attracted almost 30% more members than in-person Meetings and around half of those have not been or are not currently going to in-person Meetings.

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Attendance & postcode:

Not everyone enjoys participating online or is able to join in this way and the Meetings draw in a different mix; members from the WR2 and WR5 areas are less likely to participate whilst the opposite is true for members living in the city centre, WR1, or areas adjacent to Worcester.

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Continuing with Online Meetings:

Despite concerns over the sociability and accessibility of online Meetings, members would like to see online Meetings continue, albeit not exclusively. However, there is also a call for simultaneous hybrid Meetings to satisfy both online and in-person audiences but at the cost of increasing the complexity of setting up Meetings.

Pt 2: pages 3-4

Running online Meetings:

Unlike in-person Meetings where members can talk to each other casually, online Meetings require a more disciplined approach and are not so suited to informality.

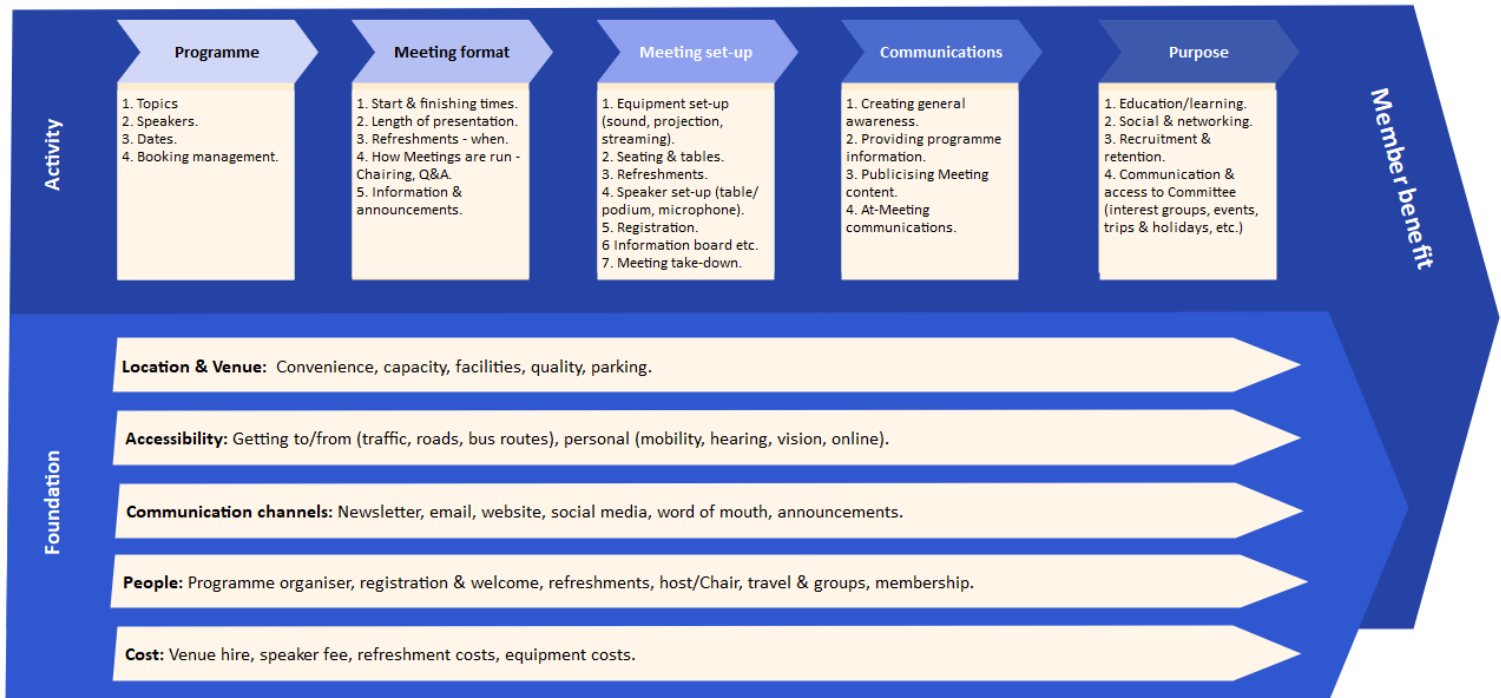
Pt 2: pages 4-5

¹⁸ However, as commented on early in our history, '[The Group Co-ordinator] gave details of the latest study groups and urged more members to participate saying it was the best way to get the most out of membership of U3A and particularly to get to know other members.' AGM 7.02.1990

DISCUSSION

Organising the programme of Main Meetings and tailoring it to the greatest benefit of members is not a trivial task. At one level it's as simple as find a speaker, book a room, and let members know. But beneath the surface there are a myriad of issues – will the topic be of interest, where do we hold the Meetings, can we find a suitable speaker, and so on.

In-person Meetings



On the positive side, members have said that in-person Meetings are satisfactory, some even going as far as to say, *'Perfect as they are'*! However, over the years, attendance at Main Meetings has fallen – a combination of a long-term decline and more recently because of the Covid pandemic. This has resulted in a significant mismatch between the resources required to support the Meetings programme and the size of the audience.

The underlying causes of the long-term decline in audience are unlikely to be reversible. Whilst there may be a rebound should the Covid threat disappear, this is uncertain and the situation presents a fundamental challenge – how to correct the mismatch between the resources required and attendance, i.e.:

- How to decrease the commitment required to organise the programme; and/or,
- Achieve a significant reduction in costs; and,
- How to encourage more members to include Meetings on their list of activities.

One positive development over the past two years has been the take-up of online Meetings. These have been better attended, take less organising, and are less costly than in-person Meetings. They are, however, a relatively new format and whilst they served as a substitute for in-person Meetings during the pandemic lockdowns there may be benefit in treating them as something different and separating them from consideration of the future in-person programme.

Starting up in-person Meetings again after a 2 year (or more) break may be a reason to look at them afresh; within the constraints of cost, and with willing volunteers they continue to offer members a benefit over and above the 90 or so interest groups and activities available within our u3a.

NEXT STEPS:

To guide our discussions:

1. Accept that the in-person Main Meeting programme is broadly satisfactory as it stands but tailor the resources (people and costs) to be more in line with the size of the audience; getting Group Leaders to run the occasional Meeting would help.
2. Consider reducing the length of the programme and the frequency of Meetings from two-weekly to monthly; this would reduce the workload and enable us better to manage the expected increase in costs.
3. Accept that changing venue is not a solution and potentially adds to the work required to restart the programme. If we decide that we can usefully change venue, this can be done once the programme is up and running again.
4. Be aware of seasonality when scheduling the programme, ensuring that Meetings do not clash with school holidays.
5. Review the way we are communicating to members about Main Meetings (and interest groups); reintroduce the annual printed programme.
6. Look at ways Meetings might be made more welcoming for members, including looking at the balance between presentation and social time.
7. See if there are opportunities for the Committee to capitalise on in-person Meetings, e.g. introducing new joiners to other members, as part of recruitment activities, etc.
8. Recognise that online presentations are something different from in-person Meetings. Online Meetings are relatively new, and we still have to work out where they best fit into our activities.
9. Be prepared to try different things and modify the approach in the light of developing circumstances.

WORCESTER U3A: MAIN MEETINGS
HISTORICAL ANALYSIS
1985-2022

Worcester u3a: Main Meetings

Part 1: Historical analysis 1985-2022

*Unless otherwise stated, information in the report refers to in-person Meetings.
Attendance at AGMs has been higher than the regular Meetings, and is excluded from the main analysis.
The Worcester u3a year runs from August to July.*

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research@worcesteru3a.org

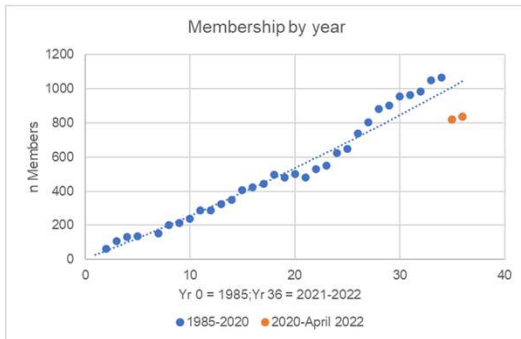
1

1. Wider trends

- Membership & interest groups
- Attendance at Main Meetings (excl. AGMs)
- The decline in Meeting attendance
- Attendance at AGMs
- Trends in membership postcodes
- WR2 & attendance at Meetings
- More recent members
- Members lost since the start of the pandemic
- Pre-Covid attendance & today

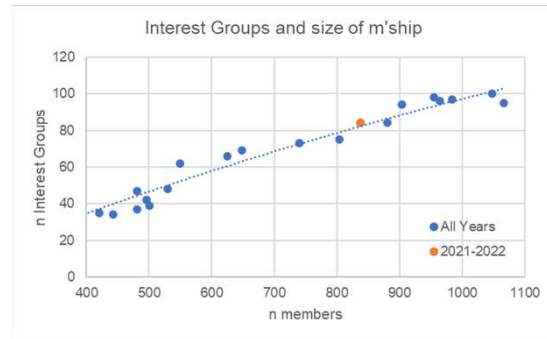
2

Membership & interest groups



Membership at the beginning of 2021-2022 was down 23% compared with 2019-2020

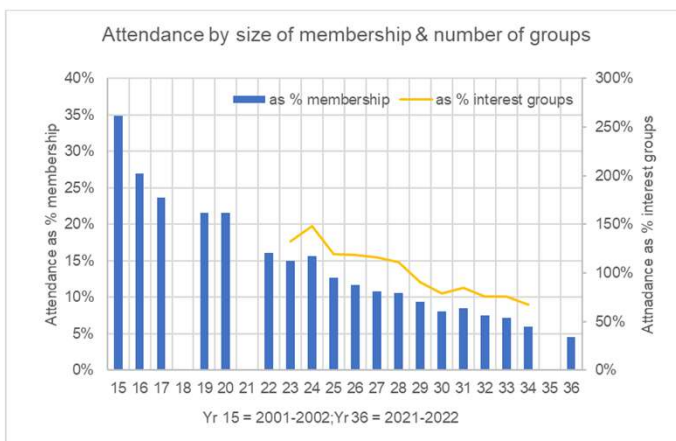
(838 Standard and Additional Hours members at end 2021-2022)



The number of interest groups goes hand-in-hand with the size of the membership (approx. 1 group for every 10 members)

3

Attendance at Main Meetings (excl. AGMs)



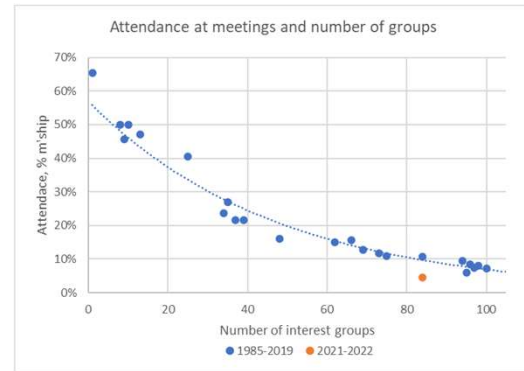
Attendance has fallen as the number of interest groups has increased
 As a % of membership, attendance has fallen from 50%+ in the earliest years to 4% attendance in 2021-2022 (-7% year-on-year)

There is a similar decline in attendance at AGMs

4

The decline in Meeting attendance

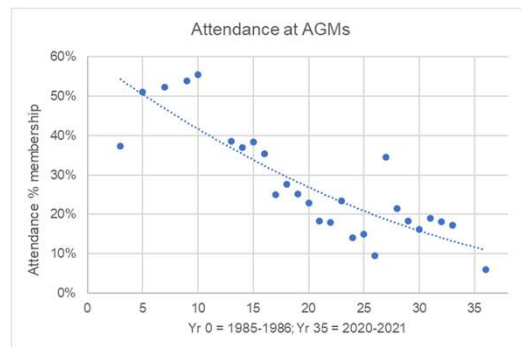
- There is a strong relationship between attendance at in-person Meetings and the number of interest groups available
- In 2021-2022, the number of interest groups is in line with the size of membership, but...
- Attendance at Meetings in 2021-2022 is lower than expected for the number of groups



5

Attendance at AGMs

- Generally there has been a speaker presentation following the AGM; in earlier years, the presentation was given by a u3a member or interest group
- Attendance at AGMs has declined but varies more than at regular Meetings
- Attendance depends both on the level of encouragement given to members to attend and the presentation on offer

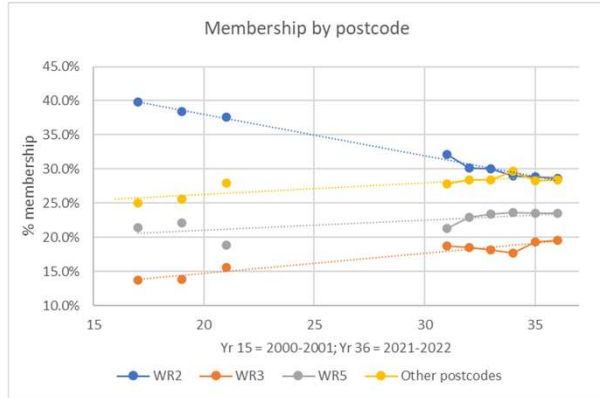
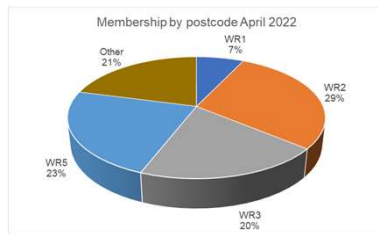


In 2020, Worcester u3a introduced proxy attendance & voting; in-person attendance at the March 2022 AGM (Yr. 36) was similar to non-AGM in-person Main Meetings

6

Trends in membership postcodes

- Membership from the WR2 postcode area has fallen from 40% 20+ years ago to 29% in 2021-2022



Data from Yr. 30 onwards taken from membership records stored in Beacon; earlier years are from paper records (no other records of membership showing postcode are available)
Membership records held on Beacon show when members joined back to 2000 but does not include members who lapsed prior to implementation of the system in 2016-2017

7

WR2 & attendance at Meetings

- There is a positive association between members from WR2 and attendance at in-person Meetings, but not for members from other postcode areas
- On average, WR2 members
 - Have been a u3a member for longer (excluding members joining in 2021-2022, WR2 memberships 9.2yrs on average; other members 8.2yrs)
 - Are more likely to attend in-person Meetings (+28%) and more likely to be at Green Centre Meetings than other members (+41%)
 - Are less likely to join online Meetings (-15%)



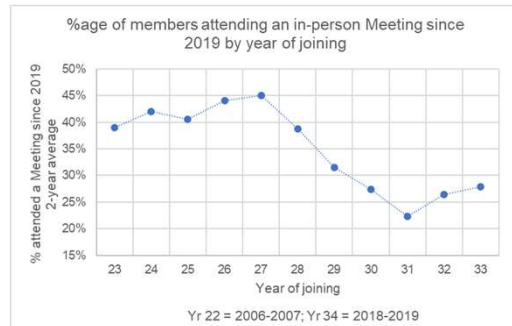
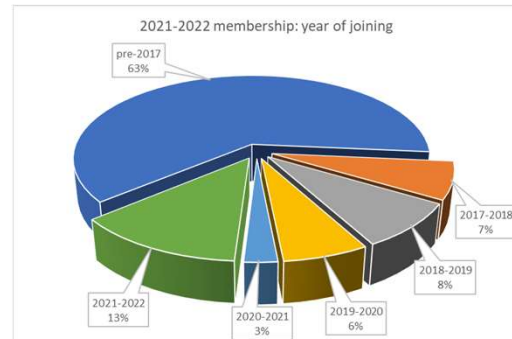
8

More recent members

Over one-third of current members have joined in the past 5 years since September 2017 (37%)

More recent members (excl. members joining in 2021-2022)

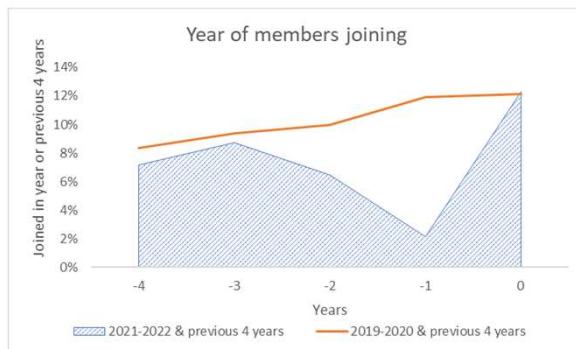
- Members joining in the past 5-10 years are less likely than longer-standing members to have attended a Meeting (a fall of around one-third compared with members who joined 10 years ago)
- Attend Meetings less often (-27%)
- But attend the same number of interest groups (2.3 groups cf. longer-standing members 2.4 groups)



9

Members lost since the start of the pandemic

- The combination of higher lapse rates and lower recruitment since 2019-2020 has resulted in a disproportionate reduction in the number of newer members
- The percentage of members in 2021-2022 who have joined in the past 5 years is lower by one-third (-32%) compared with 2019-2020



10

Pre-Covid attendance & today

(mid-April 2022; in-person Meetings only, excl. AGM)

<i>*excl. members joining in 2021-2022</i>	Pre-Covid 2019-2020	Current 2021-2022	Change
Membership	1,064	838	-21%
Per Meeting attendance	64	39	-39%
Per Meeting as % m'ship	6.0%	4.7%	-22%
Joined before 2021-2022*		734*	
n members attended	281	111*	-45%
% m'ship attending	26%	15%*	-60%

Average attendance at all Meetings including AGM 64 (2019-2020, no AGM because of Covid), 41 (2021-2022)

18% of members who attended in 2019-2020 have not gone to an in-person Meeting in 2021-2022

11

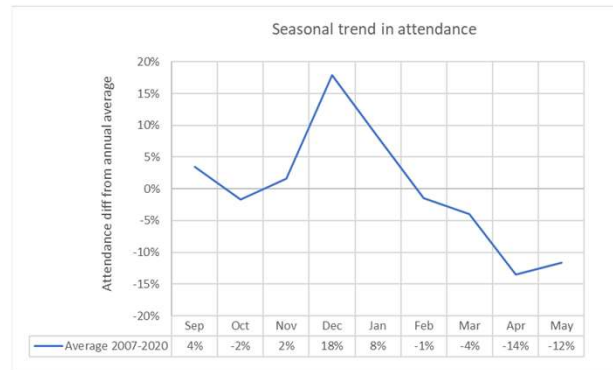
2. Scheduling the programme

- Seasonal trends (in-person Meetings only)
- Frequency & time of Meetings

12

Seasonal trends (in-person Meetings only)

- Attendance at in-person Meetings over the September-May season varies by month by $\pm 20\%$
- On top of the seasonal trend, attendance during April school holidays is lower by $\sim 10\%$ (but not during half-term breaks in October, February, or May)
- Attendance in June 2022, the first year of summer Meetings, was down 31% on the 2021-2022 average (one-quarter lower than expected from the seasonal trend; possibly due to continuing concern about Covid)

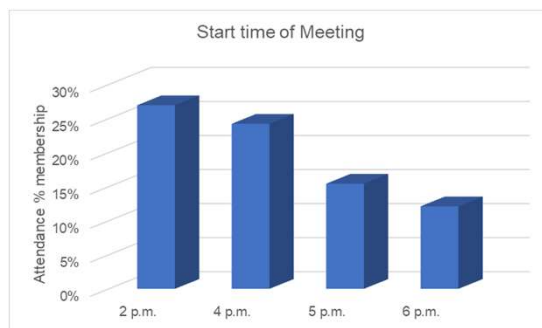


Attendance at Meetings varies inversely with the number of daylight hours.
September attendance is higher than the seasonal trend by almost 15%

13

Frequency & time of Meetings

- Two-weekly or monthly? – no information
- Wednesday or another day? – no information
- a.m. or p.m.? – no information
- Late afternoon? – attendance falls off the later in the afternoon the Meeting starts (but no recent data)



Meetings held at Worcester College 2001-2002
Average attendance 2001-2002 at the usual start time, 2 pm
Only a single example for each of the Meetings at 4 pm and later
In 2010-2011 there was a series of evening events that featured interest groups and attracted up to 100 members (11% membership – a similar level of attendance as the afternoon Main Meetings)

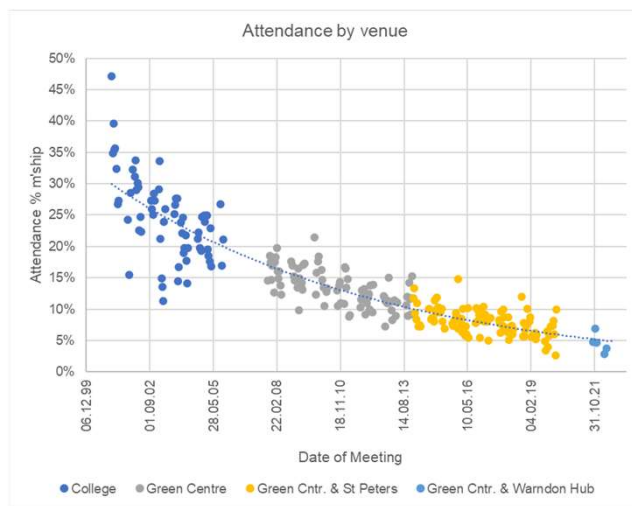
14

3. Choice of venue

- Changing venue
- Attendance & postcode
- Attendance at interest groups
- Movement away from Green Centre

15

Changing venue



The trend line is based on attendance at Meetings from 2001-March 2020

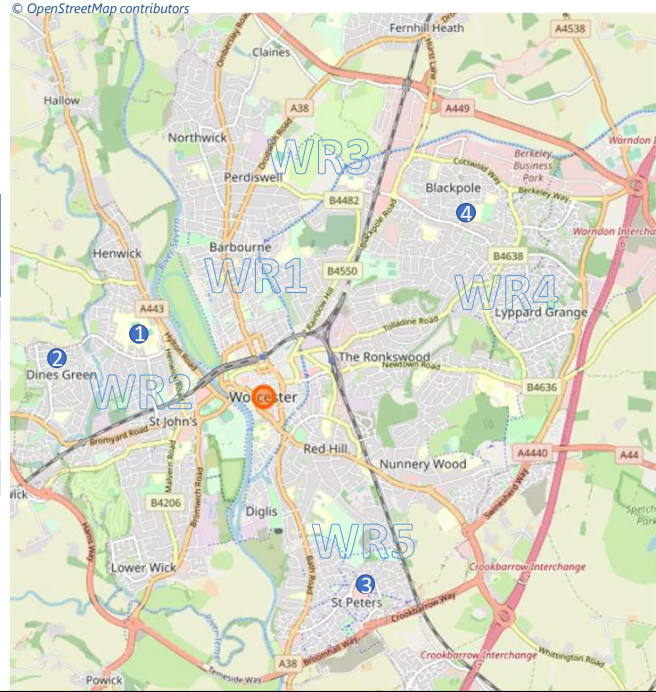
- Attendance varies from Meeting to Meeting but shows a consistent downward trend irrespective of the venue
- But there is no evidence of a significant change in attendance on changing venue

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Attendance & postcode

(in-person Meetings 2019-Apr 2022)

Attendance by postcode relative to m'ship as a whole	St Peters WR5	Green Centre WR2	Warndon Hub WR4
Members' postcode			
WR1	-26%	-65%	-75%
WR2	+14%	+41%	+18%
WR3	-14%	-44%	+2%
WR5	+36%	+11%	-12%



Location of venues:
 1. Worcester College H.E., WR2
 2. Green Centre, WR2
 3. St Peters Bap. Ch., WR5
 4. Warndon Hub, WR4

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Attendance at interest groups

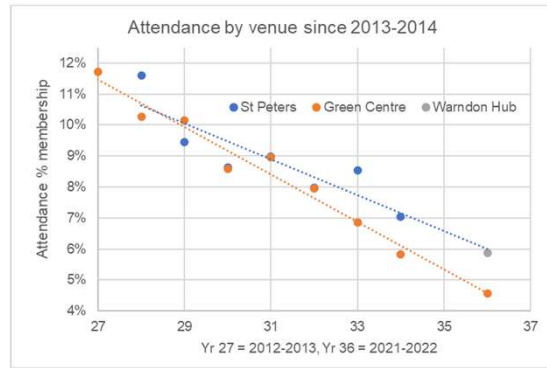
- Consistent with attendance at Meetings, and independently of the interest, members favour groups that are more local
- However, attendance in any postcode or at a particular venue shows wide variation depending on the interest group

Venues	Groups	Postcode	n Members						
			57 WR1	239 WR2	163 WR3	33 WR4	192 WR5	51 WR6	90 Other
6	14	WR1	109%	-22%	0%	-28%	-4%	-33%	25%
9	25	WR2	10%	21%	-34%	-27%	-11%	-9%	37%
6	22	WR3	-12%	-16%	31%	-30%	-11%	-37%	49%
4	7	WR4	-40%	-28%	-2%	143%	19%	-10%	15%
8	13	WR5	-29%	-23%	-11%	-2%	24%	-21%	61%
1	1	WR6	-26%	-6%	-40%	-58%	-64%	229%	133%

18

Movement away from Green Centre

- Attendance in 2021-2022 at Green Centre, WR2, is one-quarter less than expected for St Peters, WR5, and is one-quarter less than the newest venue, Warndon Hub, WR4 (based on 2 Meetings, excluding AGM)
- This trend is most likely due to a decreasing proportion of the membership resident in WR2



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4. Organising and running the Meetings programme

- Accessibility and equipment
- Financial summary: in-person & online
- Cost of Meetings & attendance
- Changes in the cost of Meetings

20

Accessibility and equipment

- At purchase cost, projection and sound equipment used at Main Meetings is estimated to have cost ~£3k (not current cost)
- The equipment required for projection and sound depends on the venue (laptop & cables required at all venues)
 - Green Centre, WR2 – complete setup required
 - St Peters, WR5 – projection & sound equipment has to be hired; no set-up required
 - Warndon Hub, WR4 – charged for use of projection equipment; simple set-up required for sound

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Financial summary: in-person & online

IN-PERSON & ONLINE	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Venue costs (excl. licence costs)	£1,102	£1,308	£0	£505
Speaker costs	£923	£809	£990	£1,155
Total	£2,025	£2,117	£990	£1,660
n Main Meetings (incl. AGM)	15	17	20	22
Avg. cost per Meeting	£135	£132	£50	£75
n Members	1,048	1,066	819	838
Cost per member	£1.93	£1.99	£1.21	£1.98
Avg. Attendance (incl. AGM)	82	64	56	46
Cost per attendance	£1.64	£1.95	£0.89	£1.64

2018-2019 – attendance figures higher than expected due to 2 well-attended Meetings and AGM; average 75 excluding the AGM (attendance 181).

2019-2020 – Main Meetings were halted in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic; costs are based on the original programme.

2020-2021 – online Meetings only; attendance figures not recorded for most Meetings.

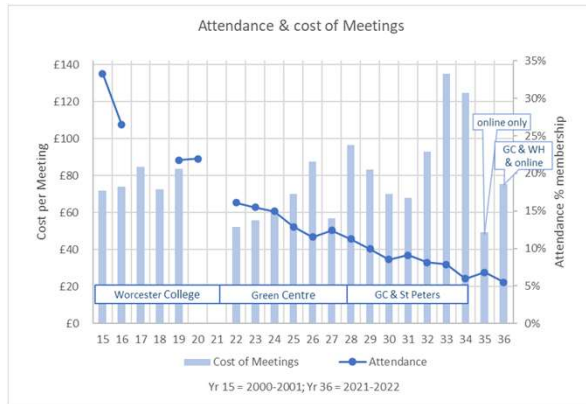
2021-2022 – programme of 9 in-person and 13 online Meetings).

Costs exclude licences for online Meetings and refreshments.

22

Cost of Meetings & attendance

- The significant increase in costs 2017-2020 was due both to increased venue hire costs (+72%) and speaker fees (+65%)
- 2020-2021 online Meetings only
- In 2021-2022, in-person Meetings at St Peters, WR5, were relocated to the less expensive Warndon Hub, WR4
- The cost of in-person Meetings in 2021-2022 is offset by alternating with online Meetings

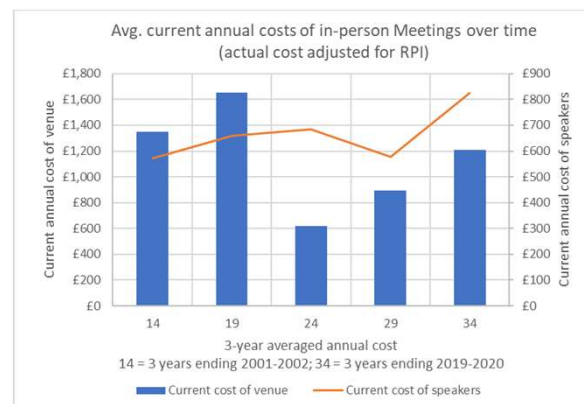


Unlike in previous years, in 2021-2022, in-person (and online) Meetings have been held over the summer months; 22 Meetings cf. the usual 16 Meetings

23

Changes in the cost of Meetings

- Over the past 10 years the current cost of venues has risen by 7% pa (10% including RPI)
- Speaker fees have risen by 5% over the past 10 years (8% including RPI)
- Current inflation Jan-Aug 2022 is averaging 11% and suggests that the cost of Meetings could increase by ~15% over 2022-2023



Meetings moved from Worcester College to Green Centre in Yr. 21 (2006-2007); Meetings alternated between Green Centre & St Peters from December 2013 (Yr 28, 2013-2014)

24

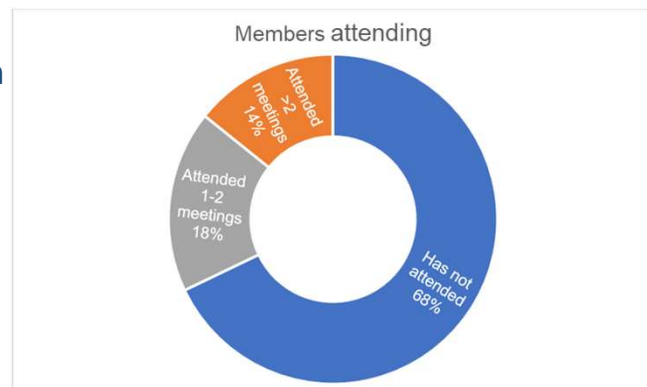
5. Factors influencing attendance

- Members going to in-person Meetings
- Members & interest groups
- Members with no groups & postal members
- Single-member households

25

Members going to in-person Meetings

- In any one year ~20% of members will go to an in-person Meeting (15% in 2021-2022)
- One-third of current members went to one or more of the 20 in-person Meetings between 2019-April 2022 (32%)
- Of those members, over half went to just one or two Meetings (56%)

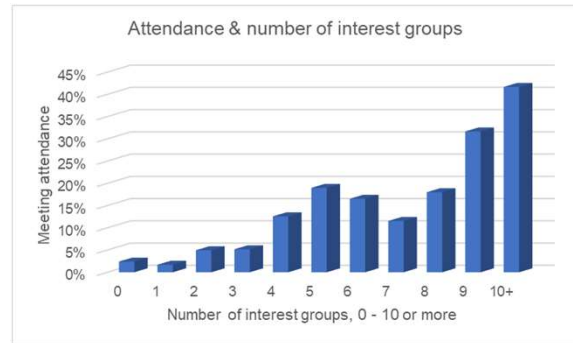


At a typical Meeting, half of the members go to 50%+ Meetings in any one year

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Members & interest groups

- Members who have attended at least one Meeting since 2019 go, on average to 3.1 interest groups (average number of groups for non-attending members, 1.8)
- Members who go to 6 or more interest groups (6% of attendees at Meetings) go to Meetings more often than other members (25% attendance compared with 17% attendance for members registered with less than 6 groups; excluding members who do not attend any groups)



Interest groups excludes summer-only groups (except Croquet)

27

Members with no groups & postal members

Excluding new members in 2021-2022, current members not registered with any interest groups (2018-2019 27%; 2021-2022 9%)

- Are less likely to attend Meetings compared with other members (-60%)
- And those that do attend, go less often (-40%)

Members who do not attend any interest groups are less likely than other members to renew their membership

Postal members requesting correspondence by mail (3% of membership)

- Are more likely to be long-standing members (11 yrs membership cf 7 yrs)
- One-quarter to one-half of postal members have attended at least one Meeting since September 2019 (+45% more than other members, but note there are 11 attending out of 25 postal members)
- Postal members attend no more often than other members but are more likely to live in the WR2 area (55% cf 8% of postal members living in other postcodes)

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Single-member households

- 58% of members are from single-member households
- Members from single-member households are slightly less likely to attend in-person Meetings than members from two-member households (-8%)
- 30% of members from two-member households attend with their co-member
- Members who have been on a day trip or walking holiday are more likely to attend in-person Meetings regularly

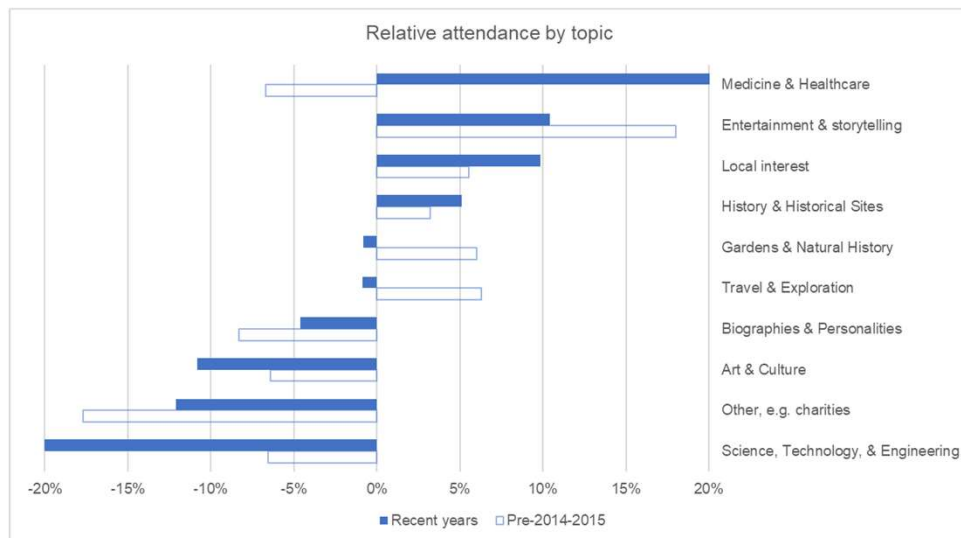
29

6. Making Meetings more enjoyable

- Attendance by topic: pre- & post-2014-2015
- Other factors affecting attendance

30

Attendance by topic: pre- & post-2014-2015



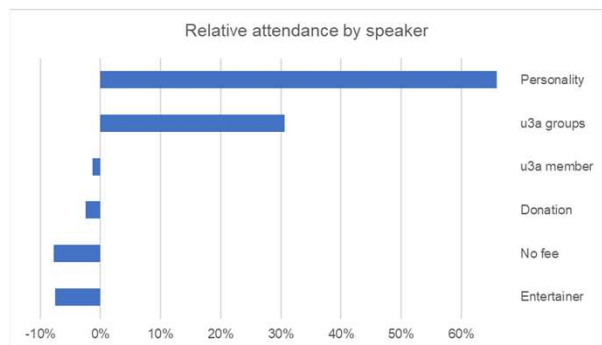
The recent popularity of Medicine & Healthcare is distorted by there being only 4 presentations two of which, both on joint-related topics, were well attended

31

Other factors affecting attendance

There is a higher level of attendance with

- A well-known personality (+66%; sports presenter on regional TV)
- A catchy title – e.g. ‘The Body in the Bag’ (+62%; online Meeting)
- Presentations put on by one or more u3a interest groups (+31%)
- Topics that are of particular relevance to members (e.g. topics relating to joints, +45%)



Personality – only one Meeting
u3a groups – categorised as Entertainment & Storytelling
u3a member – talks given by a u3a member
Donation – includes both charity presentations and speakers who ask for their fee to be donated
No fee – typically presentations from academic institutions, public service organisations, NHS, etc.
Entertainer – paid entertainers and storytellers

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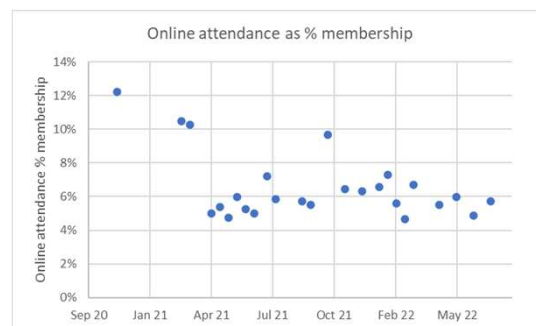
7. Online Meetings

- Attendance at online Meetings
- Are members who go to online Meetings the same as attend in-person Meetings?
- Online attendance & postcode

33

Attendance at online Meetings (since September 2020)

- From September 2020 to April 2021, there were only online Meetings; since September 2021, online Meetings have alternated with in-person Meetings
- Online attendance after March 2021 was one-third higher than at in-person Meetings (6.2% cf 4.7%)
- Presentations on popular culture and on historical topics typically gain a larger audience

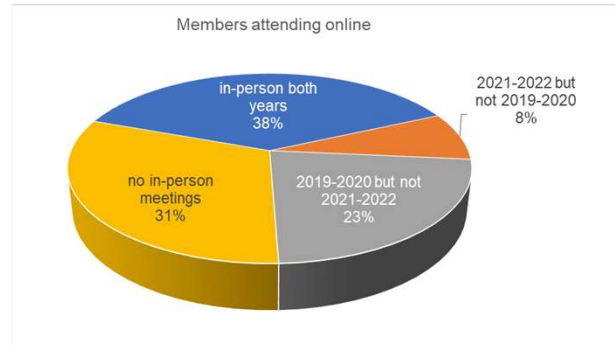


The relaxation of Covid restrictions began in March 2021 with the reopening of schools; participation in online Meetings fell by 44%. The best attended of presentations since March 2021 has been 'The Body in the Bag' - The Mysterious death of MI6 spy and codebreaker Gareth Williams (Oct 2021); 62% above the post-March 2021 attendance

34

Are members who go to online Meetings the same as attend in-person Meetings?

- One-third of online participants (31%) have not been to an in-person Meeting since the beginning of 2019
- A quarter of online attendees went to in-person Meetings in 2019-2020 but none in 2021-2022 (23%)
- Members who have been to an in-person Meeting and join online are more likely to attend in-person Meetings regularly (28% cf 18% of Meetings attended)

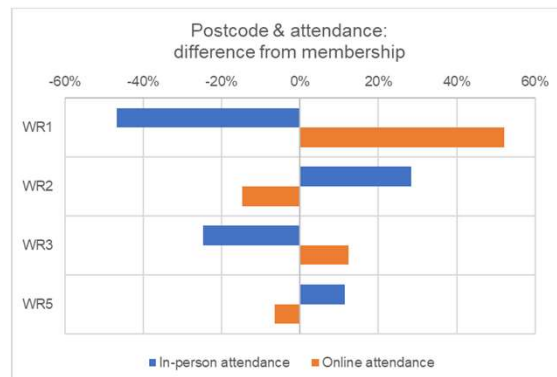


Information from 3 online Meetings May-July 2022

35

Online attendance & postcode

- Compared with the membership in general
 - Members living in the WR1 & WR3 postcodes are more likely to attend online Meetings
 - Members living in the WR2 & WR5 postcodes are more likely to attend in-person Meetings
 - WR1 members are also more likely to join online interest groups than members from WR2 & WR5



	Likelihood of participating online				
	WR1	WR2	WR3	WR5	Other
Online interest groups	14%	-30%	-6%	-28%	131%
Online Meetings	52%	-15%	12%	-7%	98%

28 online interest groups (all but 1 from 2019-2021; 17 with >1 member – not all Group Leaders recorded members attending online groups); total 275 members

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Endnotes:

- Postscript: July 2022
- Acknowledgements
- Source material

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Postscript: July 2022

- Attendance at the in-person Meetings in May and June 2022 was down a further one-third compared with the September-April period (-36%; attendance at May-July online Meetings fell 14%)
- Suspension of the in-person Meetings programme
 - At the AGM in March 2022, we were unable to fill four Committee positions, including the two roles primarily responsible for organising the Main Meetings programme
 - Without anyone in these roles and in the face of poor attendance, the Committee suspended in-person Main Meetings in June 2022, pending a review; online Meetings continue for the time being

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Acknowledgements:

This report would not have been possible without the members and commitment of Committees over the past 37 years since Worcester u3a was founded. They are owed a big thank you!

Special thanks go to George Milton (Secretary 2004-2008), Jane Flynn (Chair 2009-2012), Val Hibbitt (Chair 2012-2015), and Ruth Saunders (Speaker & Social Secretary 2019-2022) for their insights into the past and present organisation of Main Meetings (and making suggestions for their future development), and to Bill Culshaw (Chair, Malvern u3a), Hazel Beale (Secretary, South East London u3a) and Gill Brain (Chair, Swindon u3a) who shared the experience of their u3as.

Fern O'Brien scanned in our archived records making them easily accessible – the report would not have been so complete without this work, and Roger Marston who is 'Keeper of the Register' – a major source of information for the analysis – and looks after our equipment needs at Meetings.

Also Beryl Curtis, Fern O'Brien, Jan Mallam, Jean Robb, and Stephen Thorneycroft who read earlier drafts and provided helpful and detailed comments; Andrew Gagg for his input and the members of the Committee for their support and observations.

LW, October 2022

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Source material:

- Attendance registers going back 21 years to 2001 and covering 259 Meetings and 31 AGMs to July 2022 (attendance from 2006 to October 2007 is missing; not all AGM minutes record attendance)
- Data is supplemented with information from AGM minutes, interest group programmes, and similar
- The data for online Meetings is largely limited to the number of members who joined, although a register was kept for three of the later Meetings
- Data from Warndon Hub is limited to three Meetings, one of which was the March 2022 AGM (new venue for 2021-2022)

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WORCESTER U3A: MAIN MEETINGS
MEMBER SURVEY
MAY 2022

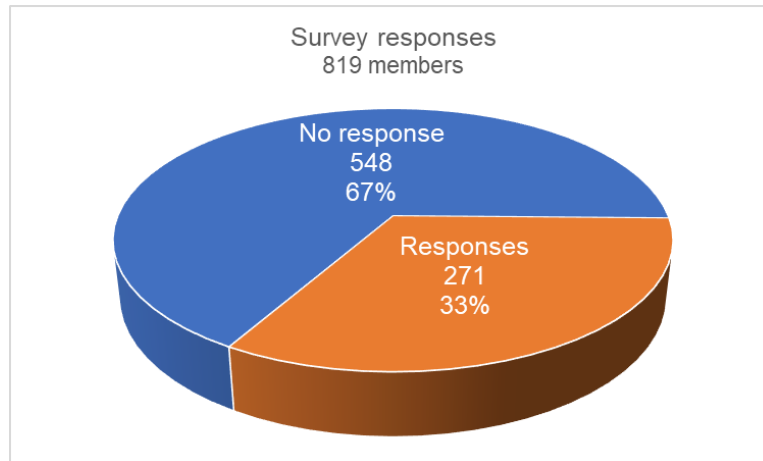
Worcester u3a: Main Meetings

Part 2: Membership Survey May 2022

Membership survey

The questionnaire was sent to all 819 Standard and Additional Hours members.¹ The 24 members who have asked for a printed copy of the newsletter, ‘postal members’, were sent the survey by post along with a stamped addressed envelope for its return. All other members completed the survey online (via Google Forms). A copy of the questionnaire is attached.

The survey was distributed on 1 May 2022 and members asked to complete the questionnaire before 12 May. Two reminders were sent by email to online members.



	Online	Postal	Total
Members	795	24	819
Responses	260	11	271
Response rate	33%	46%	33%

With one-third of members completing the survey, there is a substantial set of data although the level of responses is approximately half that of the Covid-related surveys carried out in July 2020 and June 2021.^{2,3}

Responses from postal members were generally in line with members completing the survey online and have not been analysed separately.

Representative comments made by respondents have been included and are shown inset and in italics. Comments have been selected to reflect the general views being expressed.

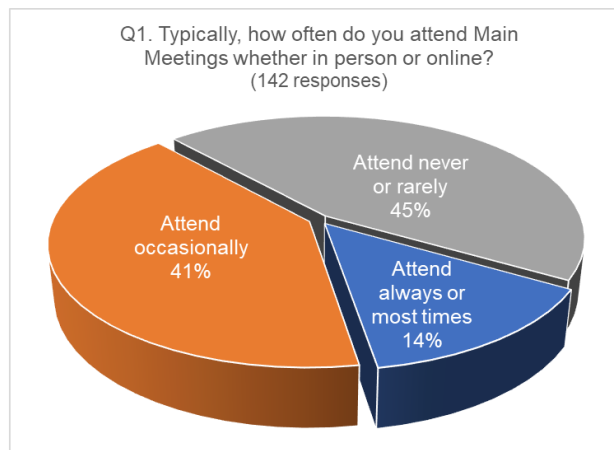
¹ Standard membership allows the member to join any number of the Standard interest groups at no additional per-session cost (Standard groups either do not use a paid-for venue or meet for 32 hours or less a year). Additional Hours groups are those that hire a venue for more than 32 hours per year (in May 2022 this included two Bridge groups that meet weekly and from 2022-2023 will include Film Appreciation who hold longer sessions); these members pay a higher subscription rate. The cost of hiring all venues is met from annual subscriptions

In addition, there are 21 Guest (reciprocal) members who are members of neighbouring u3as and may join one Standard interest group, and 2 members, who are members for insurance purposes.

² [COVID-19: Survey of Worcester U3A members attitudes towards re-starting U3A activities \(2020\)](https://u3aresearch.org.uk) (u3aresearch.org.uk)

³ [COVID-19: Survey of Worcester U3A members attitudes towards re-starting U3A activities \(2021\)](https://u3aresearch.org.uk) (u3aresearch.org.uk)

Q1. Typically, how often do you attend Main Meetings whether in person or online?



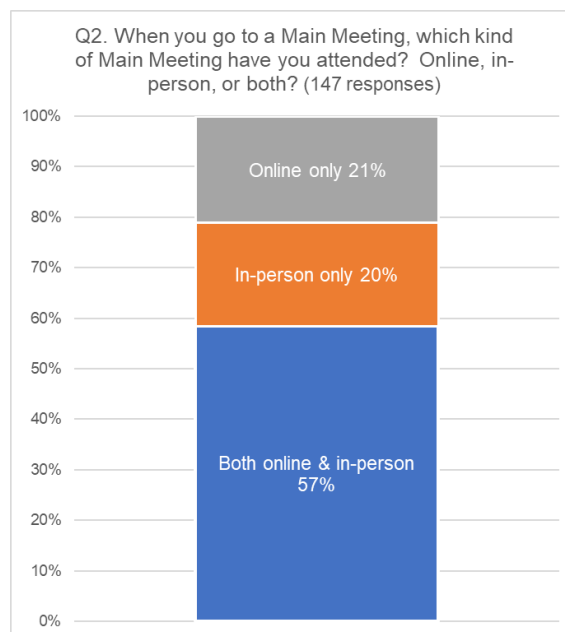
In the online version of the questionnaire, members who answered ‘never or rarely’ to this question were passed directly to questions Q21-24.

From the attendance register, around one-third of members have attended at least one in-person Main Meeting since the start of 2019-2020 and suggests that members who do not attend Main Meetings are underrepresented in the survey. If attendance were reflected in the survey, around two-thirds of responses would have been ‘Attend or rarely attend’ Meetings, i.e. around 50% higher.

Online or in-person

Q2. When you go to a Main Meeting, which kind of Main Meeting have you attended? Online, in-person, or both?

Since September 2021 Meetings have alternated between being held in-person and online.



Plus 5 ‘don’t go to Main Meetings’ 3% of 152 total

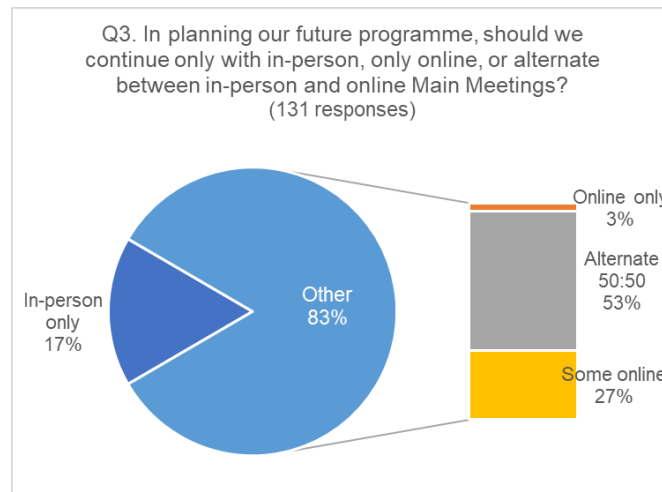
Although the numbers are small, 3 of the 6 postal members attend only in-person Meetings. This result is supported by the attendance registers which show that postal members almost half-a likely again as other members to go to in-person Meetings.

Members point out,

If the Main Meetings were both in person and online it would give a better choice especially in the winter months.

Q3. In planning our future programme, should we continue only with in-person, only online, or alternate between in-person and online Main Meetings?

Well over three-quarters of members who completed the survey online would like to see online Meetings continue. However, very few members suggested Meetings should be held only in one way with, for example, only 1 of the 7 postal members saying the programme should be exclusively in-person.⁴



Plus 19 'no opinion' responses 13% of 150 total

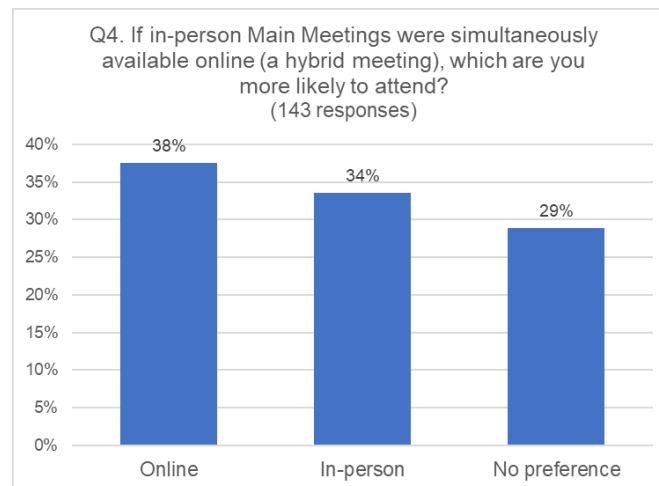
Members draw attention to the fact that not everyone has access to online activities,

I would definitely attend more if I could Zoom in.

Q4. If in-person Main Meetings were simultaneously available online (a hybrid Meeting), which are you more likely to attend?

Broadly, responses are evenly distributed between the three options of attend online, attend in-person, or show no preference (excluding members who 'never or rarely' attend).

⁴ 50% of postal members do not provide an email address; this compares with 98% of members who provide an email address.



Whilst there is a slight preference amongst online respondents to attend online rather than in-person at Meetings, two-thirds of postal respondents say they would prefer to attend in-person rather than attending online (4 of 7 responses).⁵

They suggest,

Could you not offer choice of attending & zoom at all meetings thus pleasing everybody [...]

Q5. Online (Zoom) Main Meeting are run so members can meet informally before the presentation starts. How could we improve these online Main Meetings? (47 responses, excluding 17 'no comment' and similar)

Not everyone appreciates the online experience,

Don't like zoom Meetings

I joined U3A in lockdown, so have not been able to go to a Meeting yet. I do not want to ZOOM

Living alone, the 'benefit' I got from attending a Main Meeting was the opportunity to meet and talk to other people. Zoom does not provide that.

I don't cope well with Zoom meetings and have given up on them.

With one member drawing attention to their TV-like nature,

I am not interested in listening to talks via Zoom - I may as well watch a documentary on the TV.

But members who participate in online Meetings generally are positive about them,

Enjoy them as at present

Like them as they are - you have it right

Online Meetings are open for members to join 30 minutes before the presentation starts giving everyone a chance to say hello! Some members join well before the Meetings starts,

We enjoy them either way and opening the meeting up before that Main presentation, gives us chance to catch up on how everyone is.

Others join shortly before the presentations starts,

Not really bothered about Meeting informally beforehand

⁵ The experience of our neighbouring Malvern u3a is that the audience at a hybrid Meeting splits approximately equally between online and in-person. However, Malvern u3a also commented that managing the technical side of large hybrid meetings can be demanding

I only consider the time necessary for log in

The difficulties of having a near-normal conversation online are well understood,

I don't think online informal "chat" works as people make noises, e.g. coughing & typing that cut out the person you want to hear.

Not sure. On-line can be tricky as usual face-to-face visual clues are absent with so many [members] on-line. Members also need to be aware of microphone usage e.g. talking to each other, dogs barking etc.

And suggest more could be done to know who is speaking,

Make it clear who is speaking. Not all participants have their full name displayed.

Let members introduce themselves when joining.

However, the problem of one or two members 'hogging' the discussion was mentioned several times,

[...] Zoom chatting is not easy and difficult to avoid one person hogging the air space.

Stop the one or two people who hog the discussion, most of us cannot get a word in!

[...] once one person starts speaking no one else can have a conversation.

Noting,

I don't think you can [improve online Meetings]. We can't all talk at once!

Several members take over the pre-Meeting chat which puts me off attending and is not polite for the waiting speaker. Give others time to speak.

The more attend on-line it is difficult to meet informally as some members predominate.

But, maybe,

Better management of questions in Zoom meetings - my question sent to the chair in chat was ignored but it is the only way to ask questions in some zoom meetings I have attended.

The missing social dimension of meeting up online is evident,

Zoom meet ups are always a bit tricky, especially if you don't know many folks, face to face much easier to get to meet new people.

Members hold the view that, on balance, online Meetings are working well given their limitations,

No improvement needed.

I think they are rather good as they are.

They are fine as they are - friendly and informal.

One suggestion is that more members might enjoy the presentations if they were available afterwards,⁶

As long as the link is open for 30 minutes before and after the presentation and the presentation can be accessed afterwards (like BBC iPlayer) there is no problem.

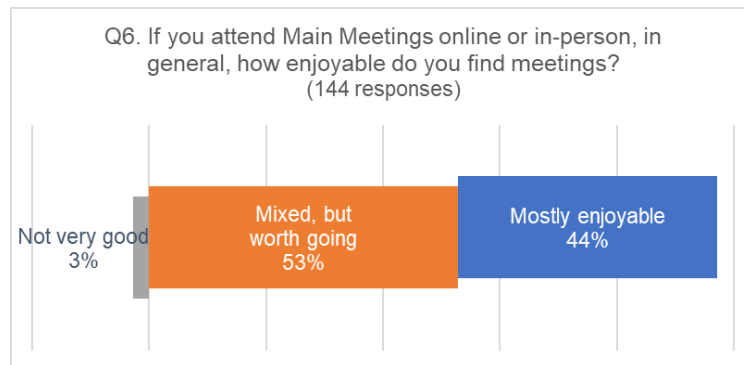
By giving more time before and after Meetings.

⁶ Recording the Meetings raises questions of copyright and, when asked, a number of speakers have declined due to the use of licensed or licensable material in their talks.

About Main Meetings

Q6. If you attend Main Meetings online or in-person, in general, how enjoyable do you find Meetings?

Almost all members who attend Meetings enjoy the experience to a greater or lesser extent.

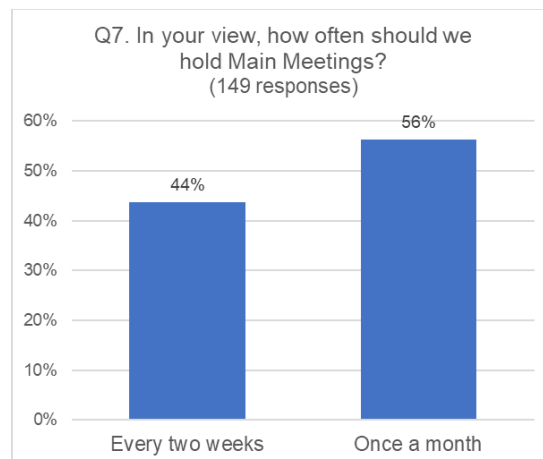


Plus 4 'don't go to Main Meetings' 3% of 148 total

I think they have been very good over the past couple of years. Congratulations to the person organising the meetings.

Keep up the good work!

Q7. In your view, how often should we hold Main Meetings?



Plus 27 'no opinion' responses 18% of 147 total

A majority of members are in favour of holding Main Meetings monthly.⁷

To offer members more activities during the summer in 2021-2022, the Main Meetings programme was extended this year through to July (the Meetings programme usually stops at the beginning of May).⁸

Once a month is enough if you're going to run all year. Our previous model of fortnightly, Sept to May was more successful.

⁷ This is not a new question for members. Two letters from members are on file dated 2006, responding to the same question, one supporting monthly and the other supporting two-weekly Meetings. The Committee decided to stay with two-weekly meetings.

⁸ The intention was to hold in-person Meetings through to the end of July; however, due to poor attendance in May and June, the July in-person Main Meeting was cancelled. The online Meeting in July took place as scheduled – attendance was broadly similar to other online Meetings in 2021-2022.

In view of low attendance at Main Meetings perhaps just one speaker a month would be enough with a quiz or coffee morning on the alternate fortnight

One observation,

It is only very recently that Main Meetings have run all year. Possibly more appreciated when they ran from September to May with a complete break in the summer. Members appreciated getting back together.

And a member suggested that Meetings might start later in the year,

Many members go away in September so a return to a later start to the Worcester u3a year would be better. [...] People always miss sessions in September because of holidays. An October start would be better.

Perhaps changing the day to avoid clashing with members' commitments,

Different day!

I would attend if I was free on Wednesdays.

Wednesday is not convenient for me

Several members suggest changing the time of Meetings,

Could we alternate with mornings (especially when using Zoom) as afternoons can break up the day and with Zoom Meetings in the mornings this would not be an availability issue.

Monthly live Meetings in the afternoon alternating with Zoom in the morning [...]

Maybe start at 1.30pm. The majority always seem to rush off for some reason.

Whilst other members suggest,

Online during the evening - work commitments.

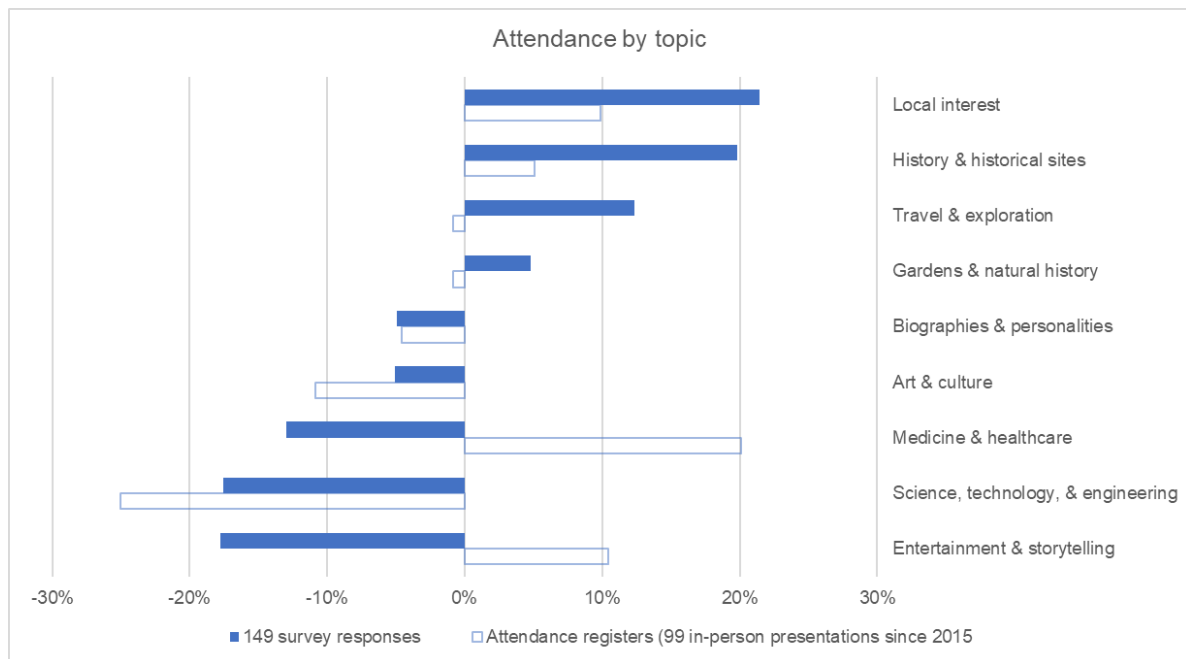
Evenings occasionally (but not always the same evening).

Q8. What type of presentation at Main Meetings do you find most interesting?

Members were asked to say on four-point scale how interesting they found a range of nine topics going from 'very interesting' to 'not interested' (plus 'no opinion'). Some 149 members completed the question returning 1,195 preferences (including 139 'no opinion').

The topic categories used in the survey were the same as used to analyse the attendance registers (Part 2: Historical Analysis) and the survey responses are shown in comparison with historical attendance since 2014-2015.

The results are presented as the combined 'very interesting' and 'sometimes interesting' compared with the average preference. Topic areas that score above 0% are more interesting than average, and topics with a negative value are less interesting than average.



Local interest and History topic are both popular topics and are well attended. This reflects members’ interest as we have as many as six History and Local History groups available to members.

Generally, the views expressed by members and recorded attendance correlate, with two exceptions:

Medicine & Healthcare – there have been just four presentations over the period 2014-2022. Of these, two were well-attended, both on joint-related topics (Looking After Your Joints & Muscles +25%, Joint Pain & Keeping Active +66%). The two well-attended presentations are likely to have distorted the apparent popularity of this topic compared with members’ responses;

Entertainment & Storytelling – whilst this generally attracted less interest in the survey, attendance registers show that five of the eight entertainment-related Meetings were presented by u3a interest groups; these attracted a larger audience than normal. By contrast, Entertainments led by non-u3a presenters showed a slightly below average attendance, more in keeping with members’ views.

Q9. What other topics would you find interesting? (59 responses)

Many members are happy with the list of topics already identified (in Q8),

All right as they are.

Most things seem to be covered!

That's enough!!

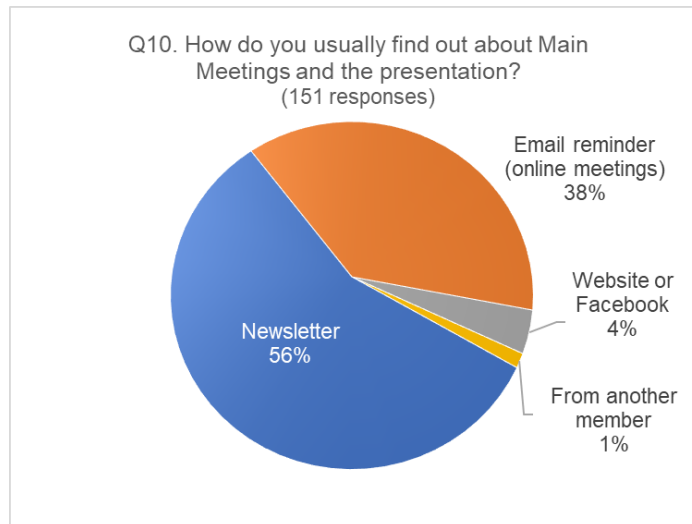
But members also have proposed a wide range of other subjects, including such topics as modern history, lifestyle, and current affairs that weren’t covered in the survey. In summary (by number of mentions),

SUBJECT AREA (Annex 1)

- 7 Local interest
- 6 Lifestyle
- 5 Modern history; Natural history; Politics
- 4 Music; Sport
- 3 Current affairs; People
- 2 Languages; Literature; Science & Technical
- 1 Crafts; Dance; Games; Languages; Pets; Photography; Walks

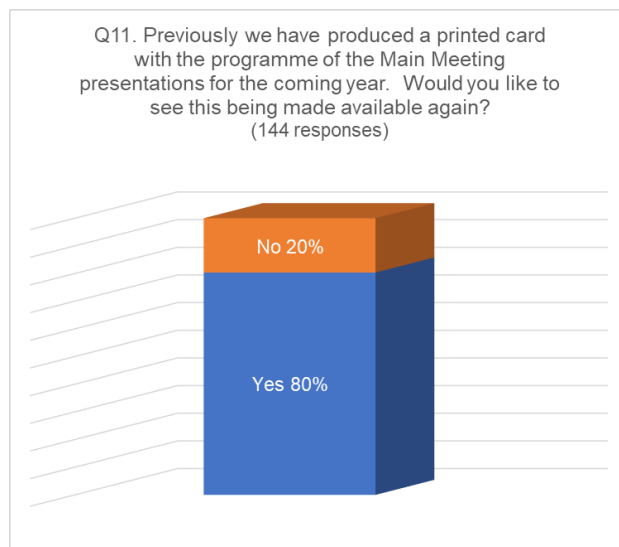
Q10. How do you usually find out about Main Meetings and the presentation?

Most members find out about Meetings from the monthly newsletter or the ‘reminder’ email (the reminder email is sent to members a few days before online Meetings and includes the joining instructions).



Q11. Previously we have produced a printed card with the programme of the Main Meeting presentations for the coming year. Would you like to see this being made available again?

Members are keen to receive a printed programme of the Meetings for the coming membership year.

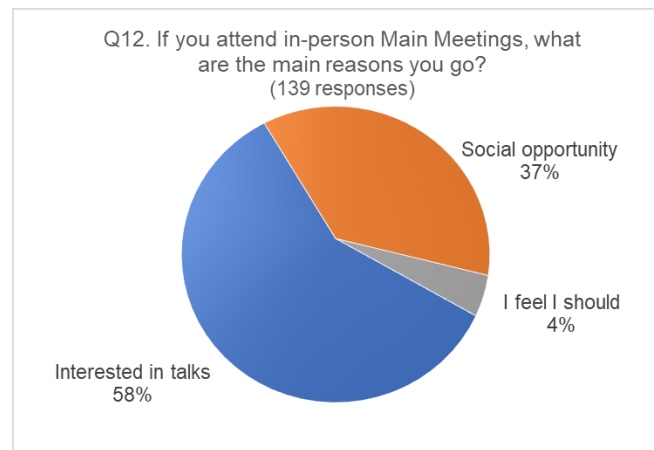


Plus 43 ‘no opinion’ responses 29% of 147 total

Q12. If you attend in-person Main Meetings, what are the main reasons you go?

Members had the opportunity to give multiple responses to this question (see questionnaire). These are grouped into three categories: an interest in talks or topics, the social opportunity offered by in-person Meetings, and those who feel they ‘have’ to attend.

139 members completed the question giving 252 responses, including 1 ‘other’, and show that an interest in the topic and the social opportunity are important reasons for going to Main Meetings.



Q13. Each in-person Main Meeting consists of 45-60 minutes of presentation and questions followed by refreshments. How could we improve these in-person Main Meetings? (57 responses)

Many of the respondents suggest that Main Meetings can stay as they are,

I think the existing format does not need improvement

Time and refreshments are perfect as they are

Noting that,

They [Main Meetings] will improve once we can feel safer having coffee/tea and chat after the Meeting.

Broadly, commenting about three different areas and suggesting what might be considered,

- More interesting topics,
- More u3a involvement,
- Developing the social dimension.

More interesting topics

But there was a feeling amongst members who do not attend Meetings that they could be more interesting. The suggestion is that it is the topic that draws members in,

The talks are not often of interest.

Most of the topics recently have been of little interest to me.

It's good to have the variety of topics that you do, although I only go to those that interest me.

And note that there's a balance between topic and personal interest,

It's a question of subject and level - I'd go to talks related to my personal interests, or to matters of local interest, particularly with some intellectual content. Also, if the talk was given by Worcester member(s) – I'm sure some groups could offer something of general interest.

More technical/scientific topics, although that might also be counterproductive in putting people off! Maybe two contrasting talks per meeting?

Topics that encourage participation outside of u3a might be considered,

Something useful u3a could be involved with.

There are also comments about the quality of speakers,

[...] I have been to some poorly presented Main Meetings that have put me off attending.

The quality of presentation is more important than the topic.

Less paid-for talks but of better quality even if this means less talks overall.

More u3a involvement

Some members would like to see more u3a-led Meetings,

Just max two prestigious outside speakers the rest to be u3a members or free talks as I would prefer our resources to be ploughed into interest group meetings.

Need to involve members more – partly to remind them of the co-operative nature of the organisation and not to rely on outside organisations/people which can be costly.

And have more opportunities to hear about the interest groups,

Introduce one group leader to explain what their group get up to and when.

A Meeting where our groups tell our members what they have been doing over the year.

Perhaps with greater participation by members,

[...] I would like to see more Meeting[s] we can participate in [...]

Demonstrations, interactive, quiz – but not intellectual, more general

Perhaps practical demonstrations. Would be more suitable for online Meetings. (Cooking, craft, art, DIY!!!!). Just a thought.

Develop the social dimension

Respondents who are attending Meetings commented about the social dimension,

[Meetings] provide the chance to meet friends in person.

Well, it is possible to go, listen to the speaker, have tea and go home, having not really made contact with anyone else unless you know them.

Proposing that presentations are kept shorter and perhaps changing the order,

Half an hour of presentation would be sufficient followed by a Q&A

45 minutes should be the maximum time for talks

Allow a little more time for chat & refreshments it always seems to be a rush at the end to be within the 2hr slot.

Members also suggest organising Meetings differently,

We need to encourage a more social aspect which is not there.

Tea and coffee at the beginning of Hall meetings to reduce queues and give more chance for socialising.

[...] move refreshments to the beginning of the Meeting to chat with our friends

Serving refreshments beforehand is good - no further suggestions!

Split the Meeting, rather than the break at the end as is sometimes the case.

Perhaps with the occasional social event,

I go to meetings but I don't know other people unless I am in a group which they go to. It would be nice to have a social event sometimes instead of a talk

Some members suggest not only developing the social side of things but also giving Meetings more of a shakeup,

[...] The Meetings are mostly so mind numbingly boring and have very limited appeal. People in the main want to meet people so more emphasis should be put on making it a social experience. It would be great to see some Meetings held just as social events without any speakers but just to meet other people. [...]

They need to be more of a social event and less of the lecture style which they are at present and have been for the past 20 years.

Making members feel welcome

Respondents suggest that more could be done to make members feel welcome and use the Meetings to provide information about interest groups,

Option of refreshments on arrival to allow socialising beforehand - might be useful for people arriving on their own for first time especially if the new person could be directly introduced to a welcoming individual. Also an information board with info on groups.

Newish members need more attention otherwise it can seem cliquey. Information about groups with vacancies would help, as well as opportunities to discuss committee work (there are vacancies!), so maybe topic spots around the room. Meet and greet should be more than just checking numbers.

A different approach?

Given the smaller attendance at recent Meetings, perhaps a more fundamental change to how they are run?

I think Main Meetings should be redesignated as a group and renamed as Talks Group (or something similar) and run by the group members in the same way that other groups are run.

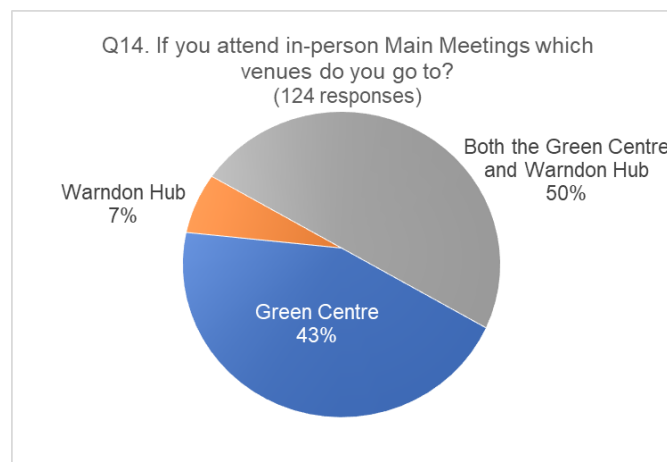
And commenting,

I don't know what function the committee wants main meeting to fulfil so I can't comment on how it should be organised.

Venues

Q14. If you attend in-person Main Meetings which venues do you go to?

Although half of members who attend Main Meetings go to both Green Centre, WR2, and Warndon Hub, WR4, over 40% attend just one – Green Centre.



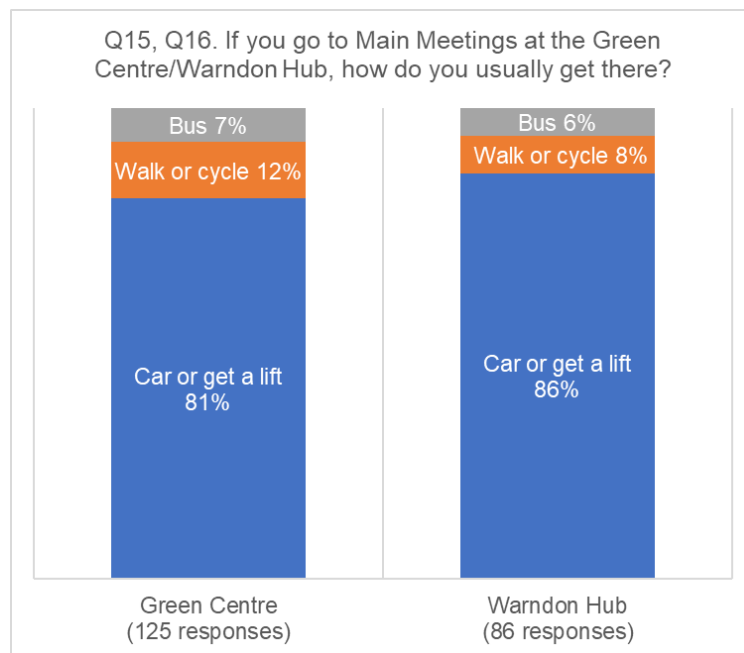
A further 23 (total 147) members attend neither venue

Members have limited experience of Meetings at Warndon Hub, this being a new venue in 2021-2022. At the time of the survey, there had been just three Meetings at this location (one of which was the AGM).

Q15, Q16. If you go to Main Meetings at the Green Centre/Warndon Hub, how do you usually get there?

Most members drive to Meetings. Relatively few go by bus or live close enough to walk.

Years ago I used to get a bus. If I ever got back into Main Meetings again that [is] what I'd do. Same [for Warndon Hub] if I went I'd catch a bus.



Some members are reluctant to travel to Meetings, especially the new Warndon Hub venue,

I have no idea where Warndon Hub is but it's so far away I've no intention of finding out.

With so many members driving to Main Meetings, inevitably there is an issue relating to parking and traffic,

Car Parking can be difficult at both venues.

[...] parking was difficult and driving away after the Meeting was gridlock.

[...] knowing that convenient parking will be available is important to me.

The shortcomings of public transport equally presents a problem,

I was a regular attendee when they were held at St. Peter's Baptist Church but the other venues involve 2 buses each way so are not as accessible.

Going to the Green Centre can mean an hour's journey home across the Bridge and through town so I am less likely to attend the Meetings held there.

Public transport is too difficult to either of these venues. It means two buses for me.

As I don't drive I rely on a lift or public transport. Bus transport where I live is under threat so it will become more difficult in the future so would probably revert to Zoom Meetings; these are OK but you miss out on the social element of the gathering.

Some members suggest Meetings be held in a more central location that's easy to get to by bus,

I think a more central location that is easier for everyone to travel to would encourage more people to attend.

I know it's difficult to find a suitable venue but something more central in the city would be helpful for those who use buses.

It would be useful for all if a city centre location could be used.

Hold them in the city centre, the Guildhall or the Hive [the library]? Public transport would be more available.

Q17. Do you have any comments about the venues used for Main Meetings or their location? (71 responses including 10 'no comment')

Members think it is a good idea to hold in-person Main Meetings alternately either side of the river,

Prefer Green Centre but accept that we need to accommodate members from both sides of the city

Good – one each side of Worcester for access.

[...] it's good to alternate the location.

But comment that finding Green Centre (Dines Green, WR2) and Warndon Hub, WR4, can be troublesome for those who don't know the area,

Warndon too difficult to find or get to.

On occasion speakers have arrived late. Dines Green and Warndon Hub are both tucked away amongst housing estates. Speakers coming for the first time, (without sat nav) would need precise instructions on how to find the venue. New members would/might find location difficult.

Members have mixed views about Meetings at Green Centre,

Prefer the Green Centre.

Green Centre is my preferred venue as it is close to home.

[... can] walk to Dines Green in the morning.

The Green Centre is good for bus: Haven't tried bus to Warndon Hub yet.

[...] live Meetings to be held only at DG [Green Centre, Dines Green] as it is a cheaper venue and has a much more accessible bus service.

The less-than-optimal setup at Green Centre attracted comment,

Better blackout needed for slide shows etc.

And there are mixed views about Warndon Hub,

I prefer the Warndon Hub. Easy to get to.

Have a preference for Warndon as it's my side of town.

Warndon Hub is a much better venue.

Prefer Warndon's Meeting room.

Don't like the Warndon venue at all.

And comments about Warndon Hub feeling too enclosed,

Warndon Hub lacks ventilation, so not good post Covid and winter viruses.

I have only been to Warndon Hub once, it was too small and enclosed [...]

[... Warndon Hub] feels quite claustrophobic.

Members prefer better quality venues,

I find Green Centre very depressing and preferred [St Peters] Baptist Church and don't like the [Warndon] Hub.

*Would prefer a nicer venue e.g, the Swan Theatre, Hive or Henry Sanderson Hall.
[note: all three are centrally located, WR1 venues]*

St Peters Baptist Church, WR5, was used before relocating to Warndon Hub in 2021-2022. Unprompted, members are enthusiastic about St Peters as a venue,

Attended St Peter's. Venues need easy parking or accessibility for easy transport.

Last time I went it was at St Peter's. I don't like the other two venues [Green Centre and Warndon Hub].

St Peters was much better than other venues.

The venue at St Peters was very nice.

Just to say that St Peter's was perfect!

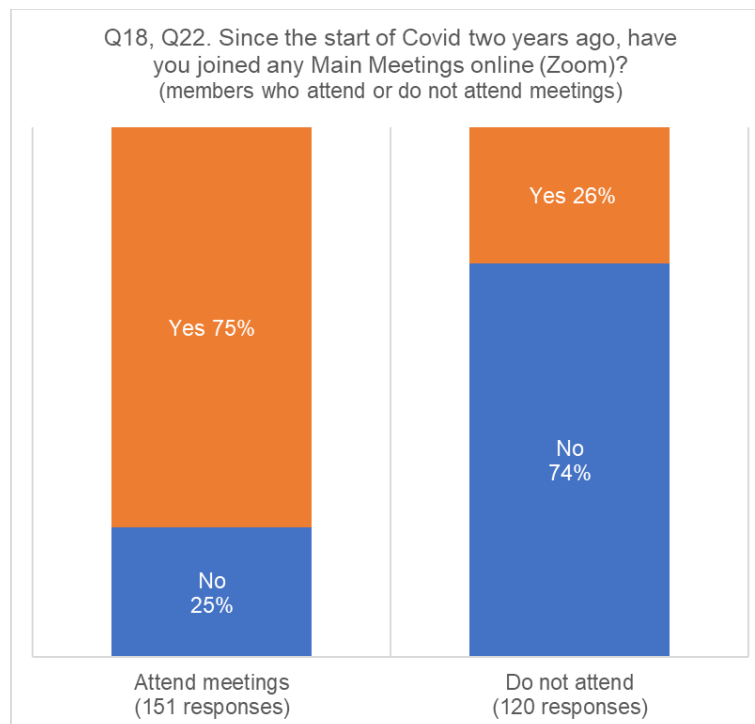
Go back to St Peters Baptist Church, it is a suitable venue, and everyone can park happily and safely, and the room is more superior to the other venues.

COVID

Q18, Q22. Since the start of Covid two years ago, have you joined any Main Meetings online (Zoom)? (Q18 members who responded said they attend Meetings occasionally or more often; Q22 members who responded 'never or rarely' to Q1, i.e. non-attenders)

In June 2021 during the period of national lockdowns, there were 31 online groups compared with 95 indoor groups running in the previous year and, in the 2021 Covid survey, over half of members said they had attended either an online group or an online Main Meeting.⁹

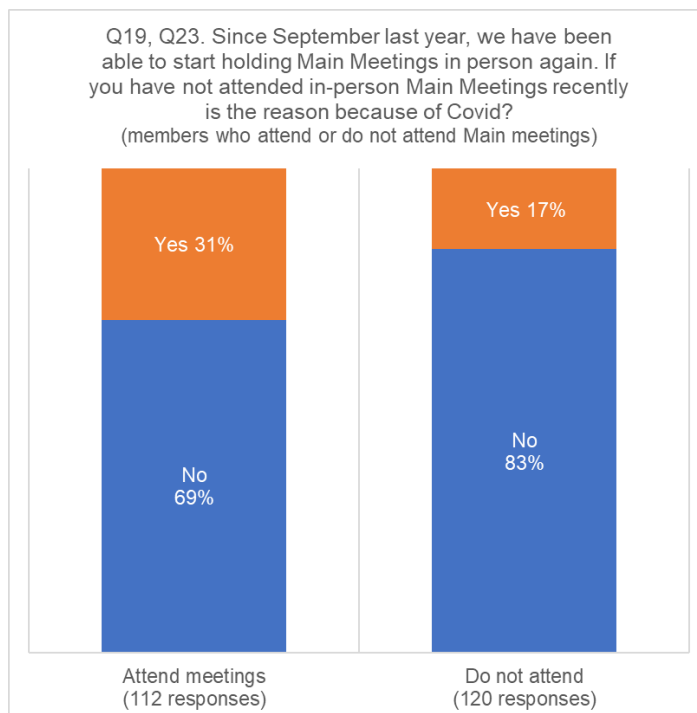
Thank you for organising them – especially during Covid – the talks were something to look forward to.



⁹ [COVID-19: When to Re-start Activities \(June 2021\); Worcester u3a](#)

Since September 2020 when online Meetings were first set up, three-quarters of members who attend Meetings have participated online. By contrast, only one-quarter of respondents who said they do not attend Meetings ('never or rarely' answer to Q1) have joined an online Meeting.

Q19, Q23. Since September last year, we have been able to start holding Main Meetings in person again. If you have not attended in-person Main Meetings recently is the reason because of Covid? (Q19 members who responded they attend Meetings occasionally or more often; Q23 members who responded 'never or rarely' to Q1, i.e. non-attenders)



A further 37 responses in the 'attends' group confirmed the member attends in-person Meetings 25% of 150 total 'never or rarely' respondents were not given the option of 'I attend in-person Meetings'

Almost one-third of members who have attended Main Meetings but have not been to any in-person Meetings report that this is because of concerns surrounding the continuing Covid pandemic. This proportion is lower amongst non-attending members.

Although members may be going to an interest group, mixing in larger groups remains a concern,

Since the pandemic I am cautious of crowds in small rooms.

I stopped going to main Meetings before Covid, since Covid I only go to one group.

Pointing out that,

One of U3A's strengths is helping isolated people so in-person meetings are important but many are vulnerable to Covid so distancing, good ventilation, etc., must be stressed.

Questions for members responding 'never or rarely' to Q1

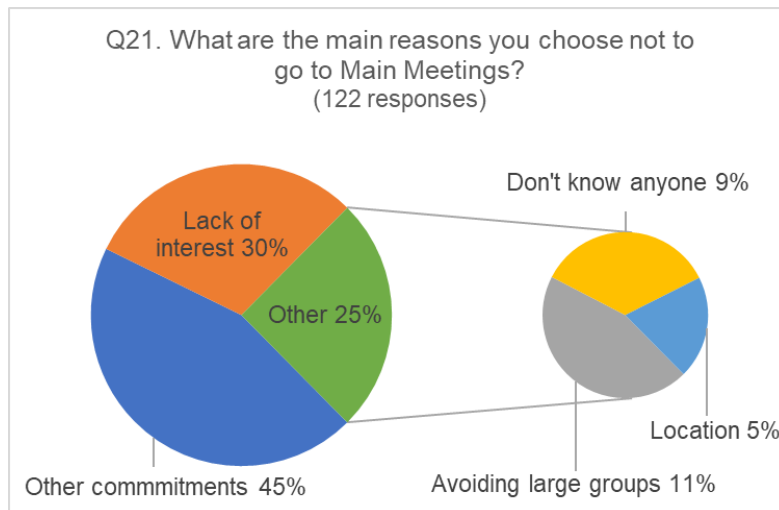
Some members who received a paper copy of the survey and say they attend Meetings chose to complete this section.

Q21. What are the main reasons you choose not to go to Main Meetings?

Members completing this section were given a choice of 10 statements from which to select why they have not attended Main Meetings. There was a total of 1,164 choices made, including 5 'other' which have not been classified.

Choices have been grouped into:

- Having other commitments
- Lack of interest
- Desire to avoid large groups
- Not knowing anyone at the Meetings
- Location



Whilst some members are not able to attend,

Age and mobility difficulties.

Or find there are problems once they arrive,

I have a hearing problem, and cannot make out what speakers are saying.

The talks go on for too long - I need to take 'comfort breaks' fairly frequently and its embarrassing to make an exit whilst the speaker is talking.

But the most frequent reason is having 'Other commitments',

[...] it clashes with other commitments

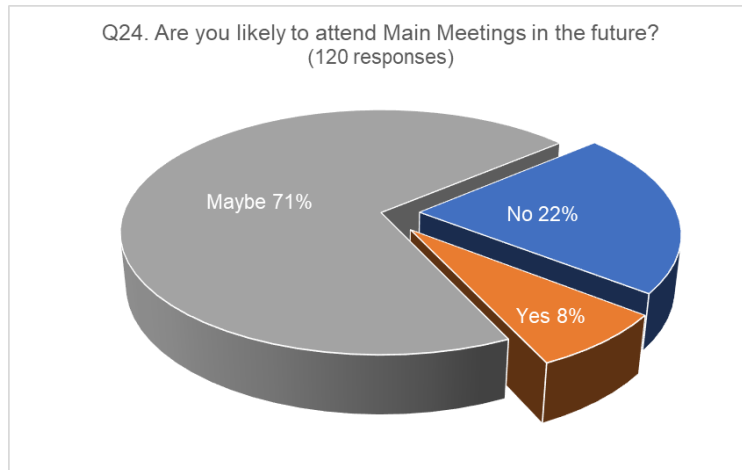
There often seems to be a clash with dates for events I want to get to!

I have other commitments on first and second Wednesdays but that is my choice

Wednesday is currently a babysitting day so unable to attend at present.

By implication, Covid remains a concern, as does not knowing other members, but location does not appear to be a major issue amongst respondents.

Q24. Are you likely to attend Main Meetings in the future?



Members who do not attend Meetings are underrepresented in the survey. Add to that the 22% of respondents who say they are unlikely to attend Meetings in the future, this points to a significant proportion of the membership who have not found a reason to go to Main Meetings.

There are members, and not necessarily new members, who are unaware of Main Meetings, for example,

I don't know what Main Meetings are!

Annex 1: Other suggestions for Meetings

Q9 What other topics would you find interesting? (59 responses)

Local Interest

Local history

Local history, maybe city walks etc., & special local events and buildings

Worcester's development over last 400 years

History & Historical Sites

History of Worcester, Parliamentary history, development of democracy in the UK

Modern UK history (post WW2), Europe post WW2, break up of USSR

Travel & Exploration

Exercise and adventure

Gardens & Natural History

Natural world /The Environment

Nature

The natural world, conservation, etc.

Biographies & Personalities

Author talks

Political personalities in our history

People's careers

Art & Culture

Crafts

Literature

Music (4 responses)

Medicine & healthcare

–

Science, Technology & Engineering

Architecture

Astronomy

Speaker suggestions

Dr Adrian Gregson (current Mayor, Worcester City Council)

Hazel Griffiths (travel and biographies)

Prof Dil Porter (Professor of Sports History & Culture)

Tap into Worcester University for speakers

British inventors/entrepreneurs

Entertainment & Storytelling

–

Topics not included in the questionnaire

Current affairs

Current Affairs (2 responses)

Deeper insight on what is happening in the world today.

What is happening in Worcester – council projects

Left wing politics

Nigel Farage on his life and times

Political matters

Politics and discussion - more interaction and u3a speakers

Sport & interests

Animals – pets care, history, quirks etc.

Football in the development of our society

Sport and Politics [?one or two topics]

Sport in Worcester

Women in football

Lifestyle

Gambling for beginners

How to improve living in old age

How to win at poker

Finance/ investments/ lifestyle

Other

Languages and Philosophy

Like to have illustrated talks

Other suggestions

Presentations by members

More news about local u3a groups and activities

Raffle/plants or produce for sale?

Short quiz?

Suggestions for group presentations:

Have more participation by individual groups presenting - i.e photography, art, dance

A variety of meetings that reflect the interests of the many Worcester u3a groups, e.g.

- *Dance - presentation on the many styles*
- *Photography - presentation on a well-known photographer*
- *Board games - a history and variety of*
- *Walking- walks in or near Worcester*
- *French - presentation of France's most famous cities*
- *Etc.*

Could the main meetings join with different groups to present different ideas [...] it might get more people joining the groups or volunteering to run groups. Travel club might be a good group to start with.

More talks by our own members. Members may be more comfortable giving a talk via Zoom than standing up in front of a crowded hall. Someone who has given a successful talk to a Local History group, for example, may be persuaded to share it with a wider u3a audience.

More talks about gardening and wildlife but with educational content - not just slideshows.

More talks about art and literature but with educational content - not just slideshows.

Some talks should be of local interest. Very few were interested in the Manchester ship canal but the new fish passes on the Severn or one of the local National Trust properties may elicit more interest.

APPENDICES

- Historical data
- Survey questionnaire

MEMBERSHIP & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

Yr.	Members at year-end	AGM				
		date	attendance	% m'ship		
0	1985-1986				First Committee meeting held 17 July 1985 Subscription of £2 collected from Committee members to cover expenses (14 August 1985) <i>Source: memo to the Committee, George Milton, 8.01.2006</i>	
1	1986-1987		15 Oct 1986	14	Year-end 30 September 1986	
2	1987-1988	63	16 Sep 1987	30	48%	Year end 31 August 1987 Affiliation with national U3A
3	1988	107	14 Sep 1988	40	37%	8-month year to 31 August 1988; change of year end to 31 December
4	1988-1989	130	29 Nov 1989			16 months to 31 December 1989 SGM 29 Nov 1989 – agreed to apply for Charity status
5	1990	137	7 Feb 1990	70	51%	Decision taken to limit membership to 130 so as not to exceed capacity at the sole venue, Worcester College HE Worcester u3a registered with the Charity Commission
6	1991		13 Mar 1991	74		
7	1992	153	18 Mar 1992	80	52%	
8	1993	200	17 Mar 1993	70		Waiting list for membership opened; proposer required to join
9	1994	215	16 Mar 1994	116	54%	Waiting list for membership waived at the AGM (45 people on the waiting list)
10	1995	238	15 Mar 1995	132	55%	
11	1996	288	6 Mar 1996	n.r.		
12	1997	286	5 Dec 1997	n.r.		Combined AGM/EGM to change reporting year
13	1998	324	4 Mar 1998	n.r.	39%	Year-end changed from end-Dec 1997 to end-Aug 1998
	1998-1999		14 Oct 1998	125		12-month year + 8-month year
14	1999-2000	351	27 Oct 1999	130	37%	
15	2000-2001	407	25 Oct 2000	156	38%	
16	2001-2002	421	24 Oct 2001	149	35%	
17	2002-2003	443	23 Oct 2002	111	25%	
18	2003-2004	496	22 Oct 2003	137	28%	
19	2004-2005	481	13 Oct 2004	121	25%	Attendance register shows date of AGM as 20 Oct 2004

Yr.	Members at year-end	AGM				
		date	attendance	% m'ship		
20	2005-2006	501	19 Oct 2005	115	23%	
21	2006-2007	481	18 Oct 2006	76	18%	
22	2007-2008	530	17 Oct 2007	86	18%	
23	2008-2009	550	15 Oct 2008	121	23%	
24	2009-2010	625	14 Oct 2009 24 Mar 2010	83 88	13% 14%	Constitution amended moving the AGM to March/April
25	2010-2011	648	23 Mar 2011	95	15%	
26	2011-2012	740	21 Mar 2012	70	9%	
27	2012-2013	804	27 Mar 2013	277	34%	AGM to readopt Constitution Attendance boosted by CAMEO (Come and Meet Each Other) put on by interest groups
28	2013-2014	881	19 Mar 2014	189	21%	
29	2014-2015	904	18 Mar 2015	165	18%	
30	2015-2016	955	16 Mar 2016	154	16%	
31	2016-2017	964	22 Mar 2017	183	19%	
32	2017-2018	984	21 Mar 2018	177	18%	
33	2018-2019	1048	20 Mar 2019	181	17%	
34	2019-2020	1066	cancelled			AGM scheduled for 18 March 2020 cancelled due to Covid pandemic
35	2020-2021	819	17 Mar 2021	40	5%	AGM (SGM) combined incorporating the delayed March 2020 AGM and 2021 AGM held online because of the continuing Covid pandemic Adopted change to the Constitution to introduce proxies on a permanent basis
36	2021-2022	838	23 Mar 2022	50	6%	Membership at 19 April 2022 819

AGM and attendance shown in the year held, not the year reported at the meeting
 Membership numbers include only Standard and Additional Hours members (see note on Interest Groups & Subscriptions table below)
 Membership numbers have been collated from different sources and may include otherwise excluded membership classes

MAIN MEETINGS ATTENDANCE

Yr.	Members at year-end	Meetings	Attendance			
			average	% m'ship		
0	1985-1986				Meetings held 2-weekly at Worcester College HE (now University of Worcester), WR2	
1	1986-1987					
2	1987-1988	63				
3	1988	107		70	65%	
4	1988-1989	130				
5	1990	137		75	51%	75-80 avg. attendance at Main Meetings
6	1991					
7	1992	153		70	46%	
8	1993	200		85	50%	
9	1994	215		100	47%	
10	1995	238		120	50%	
11	1996	288		130	45%	
12	1997	286		114	41%	
13	1998 1998-1999	324		133	41%	
14	1999-2000	351		133	38%	
15	2000-2001	407	9	136	35%	
16	2001-2002	421	14	112	27%	
17	2002-2003	443	13	105	24%	
18	2003-2004	496	15	106		
19	2004-2005	481	15	105	22%	
20	2005-2006	501	4 (incomplete data)	110	22%	Incomplete record; data from only 4 Main Meetings
21	2006-2007	481	no data			No Main Meeting data up to October 2007 Main Meetings relocated to Green Centre, WR2 (?date)
22	2007-2008	530	15	85	16%	

Yr.		Members at year-end	Meetings	Attendance		
				average	% m'ship	
23	2008-2009	550	15	85	15%	
24	2009-2010	625	13	94	16%	
25	2010-2011	648	13	84	13%	
26	2011-2012	740	14	85	12%	
27	2012-2013	804	15	100	11%	
28	2013-2014	881	17	99	11%	At the end of 2013, Meetings began to be alternated between Green Centre,WR2, and St Peters Baptist Church, WR5
29	2014-2015	904	16	90	9%	
30	2015-2016	955	19	81	8%	
31	2016-2017	964	16	88	8%	
32	2017-2018	984	16	80	7%	
33	2018-2019	1048	15	82	7%	
34	2019-2020	1066	11	64	6%	Meetings programme cut short with the appearance of the Covid pandemic in March 2020 Programme was scheduled for 17 in-person Main Meetings in 2019-2020
35	2020-2021	819	12 (online)	68 (online)	8% (online)	No in-person Meetings Limited information on attendance & members for online Meetings
36	2021-2022	838	9 (in-person) 13 (online)	37 (in-person) 46 (online) <i>Sep-May only</i>	4.5% (in-person) 6.4% (online) <i>Sep-May only</i>	January & February 2022 In-person Meetings held online because of a surge in Covid cases End of programme extended from the start of May though to July (to offer more activities over the summer & not related to the pandemic) Meetings alternated between online & in-person; Meetings held previously in St Peters, WR5, moved to Warndon Hub, WR4 Year to 19 April 2022 used for most of the analysis; 6 in-person & 11 online Meetings (membership on 19 April 2022, 819) Se-May attendance used for consistency with prior years; attendance for the full programme Sep-Jul in-person 4.3%, 6.2% online

No detailed information on Main Meetings prior to 2001
Attendance averaged for all Meetings held in that membership year (excluding AGMs)

INTEREST GROUPS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Yr.		Members at year-end	Interest groups	Annual subscription fee			
				Standard	Additional Hours	Guest	
0	1985-1986						
1	1986-1987			£2			Agreed to start Study Groups
2	1987-1988	63		£2			
3	1988	107					Setting up of Study Groups to be explored with 3 groups in the pipeline
4	1988-1989	130		£6			
5	1990	137					
6	1991						Proposal to start Study Groups National U3A affiliation fee quoted as £1 per member
7	1992	153	9				First 2 issues of a Newsletter published, may also be referred to as the Bulletin Subscriptions possibly £7.50 (not confirmed)
8	1993	200	8				
9	1994	215	13				Plus £2 per session for every sequence of classes attended The number of interest groups exceed the availability of accommodation at the College and 2 other venues were used;
10	1995	238	10+	£10			
11	1996	288					
12	1997	286	25				
13	1998 1998-1999	324		£10			Group fees to be temporarily waived
14	1999-2000	351		£10			Group fees to be temporarily waived
15	2000-2001	407		£10			AGM agreed no reintroduction of group fees
16	2001-2002	421	35	£15			
17	2002-2003	443	34				TAT per capita fee increased to £2.50 per member 2002
18	2003-2004	496	42				
19	2004-2005	481	37	£17	£22		

Yr.		Members at year-end	Interest groups	Annual subscription fee			
				Standard	Additional Hours	Guest	
20	2005-2006	501	39				
21	2006-2007	481	47	£20	£25		Registered for Gift Aid
22	2007-2008	530	48	£25	£30		
23	2008-2009	550	62	£26	£31		
24	2009-2010	625	66	£28	£35		
25	2010-2011	648	69	£29	£38		TAT per capita fee increased to £3.50 per member from 1 April 2010
26	2011-2012	740	73	£29	£38		
27	2012-2013	804	75	£29	£38		
28	2013-2014	881	84	£29	£38		
29	2014-2015	904	94	£29	£38		
30	2015-2016	955	87	£29	£38		Staged migration over 2 years of financial & membership records to the Beacon online administration system
31	2016-2017	964	96	£29	£38		
32	2017-2018	984	97	£25	£34		Subscription reduced to release excess funds from General reserve
33	2018-2019	1048	100	£29	£38		
34	2019-2020	1066	95	£32	£41		Number of interest groups prior to March 2020 In-person groups halted from March 2020 due to Covid pandemic; membership year extended to 31 December 2019
35	2020-2021	819	45	£15	£15	£12	Covid pandemic; subscription year from 1 January 2021 online + outdoor groups only TAT per capita fee increased to £4 per member from 1 April 2022
36	2021-2022	838	84	£30	£39	£12	819 members at 19 April 2022

Additional Hours membership (currently 60 members) includes two Bridge groups that meet weekly rather than two-weekly (previously known as Weekly Bridge membership)

Additional Hours membership class extended from the start of 2022-2023 to include any group that meets for more than 32 hours a year in a paid-for venue (funds from the Coxon Legacy left to Worcester u3a in 2017 are made available for groups to meet up to 8 additional hours)

Guest (reciprocal) members: members of other u3as permitted to join one Standard interest group; previously named 'Other' on Beacon, renamed Associate 2020-2022; renamed Guest 2022-2023

Insurance members – includes one non-u3a individual who is Group Leader and our Independent Examiner (to give access to Beacon)

Neither Guest (reciprocal; 15 members) nor Insurance members (2 members) are included in the analysis

Worcester u3a Main Meetings

Main Meetings take place every two weeks and have been held either in-person or online (Zoom). These meetings feature a speaker, often from outside Worcester u3a, and are open to all members. Meetings run every month, except August.

To help shape the future programme, we would appreciate your views on our Main Meetings even if you do not usually go.

The questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes to complete. The survey is anonymous and no personal details are being collected.

If you received the questionnaire by post, a Stamped Addressed Envelope is included for you to return the completed survey.

The closing date is Thursday 12 May 2022. Please allow 2 days for postal delivery.

I. Typically, how often do you attend Main Meetings whether in person or online?

Mark only one oval.

- Always
- Most times
- Occasionally
- Never or rarely

If you answered 'Never or rarely' to Q.1 you can skip to Q.20 on page 7

In-person or online (Zoom)?

The Main Meeting programme this year alternates between being held online (Zoom) and in-person (face-to-face). Mixing between the two gives the opportunity for a wider choice of presentations - some from local speakers (in-person) and others from further away, but who do not have to travel. This allows for more variety in the programme.

2. When you go to a Main Meeting, which kind of Main Meeting have you attended? Online, in-person, or both?

Mark only one oval.

- I go to both online and in-person Main Meetings
- I only go to online (Zoom) Main Meetings
- I only go to in-person Main Meetings
- I don't go to Main Meetings

3. In planning our future programme, should we continue only with in-person, only online, or alternate between in-person and online Main Meetings?

Mark only one oval.

- In-person only
- Alternate 50:50 between in-person and online
- Some online Main Meetings but not as often as now
- Online only
- No opinion

4. If in-person Main Meetings were simultaneously available online (a hybrid meeting), which are you more likely to attend?

Mark only one oval.

- Online
- In-person
- No preference
- Neither

5. Online (Zoom) Main Meeting are run so members can meet informally before the presentation starts. How could we improve these online Main Meetings?

About the programme

6. If you attend Main Meetings online or in-person, in general, how enjoyable do you find meetings?

Mark only one oval.

- Mostly enjoyable
- Mixed, but worth going
- Mediocre or not very good
- I don't attend Main Meetings

7. In your view, how often should we hold Main Meetings?

Mark only one oval.

- Every two weeks
- Once a month
- No opinion
- Other: _____

8. What type of presentation at Main Meetings do you find most interesting?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very interesting	Sometimes interesting	Not very interesting	Not interested	No opinion
History	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medicine & healthcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel & exploration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertainment & storytelling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art & culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Biographies & personalities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Science, technology, & engineering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gardens & Natural History	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <i>(please specify)</i>					

Finding out about Main Meetings

9. How do you usually find out about Main Meetings and the presentation?

Mark only one oval.

- Newsletter sent by email
- Newsletter sent by post
- Website
- Email reminder
- From another member
- Other: _____

10. Previously we have produced a printed card with the programme of the Main Meeting presentations for the coming year. Would you like to see this being made available again?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

In-person Main Meetings

Currently, there are Main Meetings every two weeks, one online and the other in-person (face-to-face). These questions are about in-person Main Meetings.

11. If you attend in-person Main Meetings, what are the main reasons you go?

Tick all that apply.

- It's a good opportunity to get out
- It's a good way to meet other members and meet with friends
- I go when the topic is interesting
- I enjoy going to talks
- I feel I ought to go
- I only attend the Annual General Meeting
- Other: _____

12. Each in-person Main Meeting consists of 45-60 minutes of presentation and questions followed by refreshments. How could we improve these in-person Main Meetings?

Location of in-person Main Meetings

In-person Main Meetings alternate between two venues - the Green Centre (Dines Green) and Warndon Hub (Shap Drive).

13. If you attend in-person Main Meetings which venues do you go to?

Mark only one oval.

- Green Centre
- Warndon Hub
- Both the Green Centre and Warndon Hub
- Neither

14. If you go to Main Meetings at the Green Centre, how do you usually get there?

Mark only one oval.

- I never or rarely go to a Main Meeting at the Green Centre
- I walk or use a mobility scooter
- I cycle
- I use my/our own car or motorcycle
- I get a lift
- I get a taxi
- I catch a bus

15. If you go to Main Meetings at Warndon Hub, how do you usually get there?

Mark only one oval.

- I never or rarely go to a Main Meeting at Warndon Hub
- I walk or use a mobility scooter
- I cycle
- I use my/our own car or motorcycle
- I get a lift
- I get a taxi
- I catch a bus

16. Do you have any comments about the venues used for Main Meetings or their location?

Main Meetings and Covid

17. Since the start of Covid two years ago, have you joined any Main Meetings online (Zoom)?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

18. Since September last year, we have been able to start holding Main Meetings in person again. If you have not attended in-person Main Meetings recently, is the reason because of Covid?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I go to in-person Main Meetings

Comments and suggestions

We always welcome views from members so please feel free to make comments and suggestions about any aspect of Main Meetings. Suggestions for topics or speakers are also appreciated.

If you would like to help with Main Meetings or would like to discuss anything further, please provide your name and contact details.

19. Do you have any comments or suggestions about Main Meetings or the programme?

If you do not attend Main Meetings

If you answered 'Never or rarely' to Q.1, please complete this section

Members will have different views about Main Meetings and may be more or less interested in attending, whether online or in-person. The reasons why you do not attend Main Meetings are important to us.

20. What are the main reasons you choose not to go to Main Meetings?

Tick all that apply.

- It doesn't interest me to sit and listen to a talk
- The topics are not of interest
- I don't know anyone at the Main Meetings
- Main Meetings are too short
- I can't easily get to the venues because of location
- I can't easily get to Main Meetings for reasons unrelated to their location
- I go to a Worcester u3a interest group that clashes with Main Meetings
- I have other commitments that clash with Main Meetings
- At present I'm avoiding mixing with large groups
- I am away a lot
- Other: _____

21. Since the start of Covid two years ago, have you joined any Main Meetings online (Zoom)?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

22. Since September last year, we have been able to start holding Main Meetings in person again. If you don't attend in-person Main Meetings, is the reason because of Covid?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

23. Are you likely to attend Main Meetings in the future?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Maybe

24. Is there anything you can suggest that could make Main Meetings more interesting or accessible to you?

Please return your completed questionnaire to arrive by Thursday 12 May to:

Answerphone:

research@worcesteru3a.org