

Summary Report

Planning a Munch: An International Survey of BDSM Event Organizers

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Acknowledgements

There are many people who helped to make this survey happen, and we would like to thank them. The most critical people that we would like to thank are the Caretakers of FetLife. Without their permission and assistance, we would not have had easy access to so many people in the BDSM community.

In addition, there were many people on FetLife who assisted us in many different ways. Some suggested improvements to the survey so that future research would be done better. Most importantly, we are grateful for all the respondents to the survey, as without them, there would be no data to analyze. We are also very grateful to the many people in the community who educated us about the lifestyle so that we could ask more intelligent questions than we otherwise would have.

There are a number of colleagues who were helpful and supportive through the process, even when the topic seemed a bit far removed from what people expected research on Event Management to be. As a result of all the support from colleagues here at Ball State University, FetLife, and those in the BDSM lifestyle/community, we were able to gather data in this first international survey of the munch as a social institution from the perspective of the organizer. We hope that this will lead to more research on this important social institution.

Crumbs to all of you who were of assistance in this.

Executive Summary

- In terms of the demographic of 238 munch organizers:
 - Most of them are over 35 years old.
 - The plurality of organizers are married.
 - The plurality of organizers have children.
 - The plurality are male (around 49 percent of respondents).
 - Most of the respondents are highly educated. Near 30 percent of them have a bachelor's degree, and 19 percent of them hold a master's degree, and 6 percent of the people hold a doctoral degree.
- The major findings include:
 - The most critical aspect of a venue valued for having a munch is a setup that enables the ability to hold private conversations.
 - The leading medium for the dissemination of information with regards to munches is FetLife, although word of mouth is a close runner-up.
 - The plurality of organizers feel that the people working at the venue believe the meetups are for kinksters.
 - Strong majorities of munch organizers get no incentives from venues to hold their munches at specific venues.
 - Organizers rate munch events highly in terms of the importance in their own involvement in the lifestyle as well as its importance for the community.
 - A strong majority of respondents report that they have seen visible symbols such as collars and tattoos of the lifestyle at munches. The collar is the most frequently mentioned symbol, followed by tattoos and bracelets.

Methods

The data presented in this paper are part of a data set investigating the organizers of munches and similar events globally. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Ball State University and by FetLife which was used to disseminate the survey. Data on the importance of munch and similar events were gathered using a short, online survey created by the researcher and disseminated on the leading BDSM social media internet site, FetLife. The survey was designed to be as short as possible in order to ensure a high completion rate and only disseminated in English, despite being an international survey of the institution. The data presented in this summary report were collected from December 2016 to March 2017. Using an online survey program (Qualtrics), a survey was formed with a link to access it. Via a profile that was created using the true identity of the researcher, permission was sought to post the survey invitation and link within groups on the social media site that indicated they were involved in organizing munches in their local area. The researcher also posted the survey invitation and link on pages of individuals within the community that indicated they had attended a sloss or munch, or planned on attending one. Before participants began the survey, informed consent was obtained. Through these methods, 238 completed survey responses were received from many different countries. Below are the data showing the results of each of the questions asked in the survey.

Results

Figure 1: Have you ever organized or helped organize a munch or similar (slosh, kinky drinkies, liquid munch, etc.) non-play event?

Figure 1 reveals the number of respondents who organized or help organize sloshes and munches. Of the 235 respondents to this question, 94.47% of respondents said that they had organized or helped organize a slosh or munch once a month or more. This can be compared to 5.53% who say they have never organized or helped organize a slosh or munch. In general, the data show that a majority of people who responded to the survey had some experience with BDSM event planning.

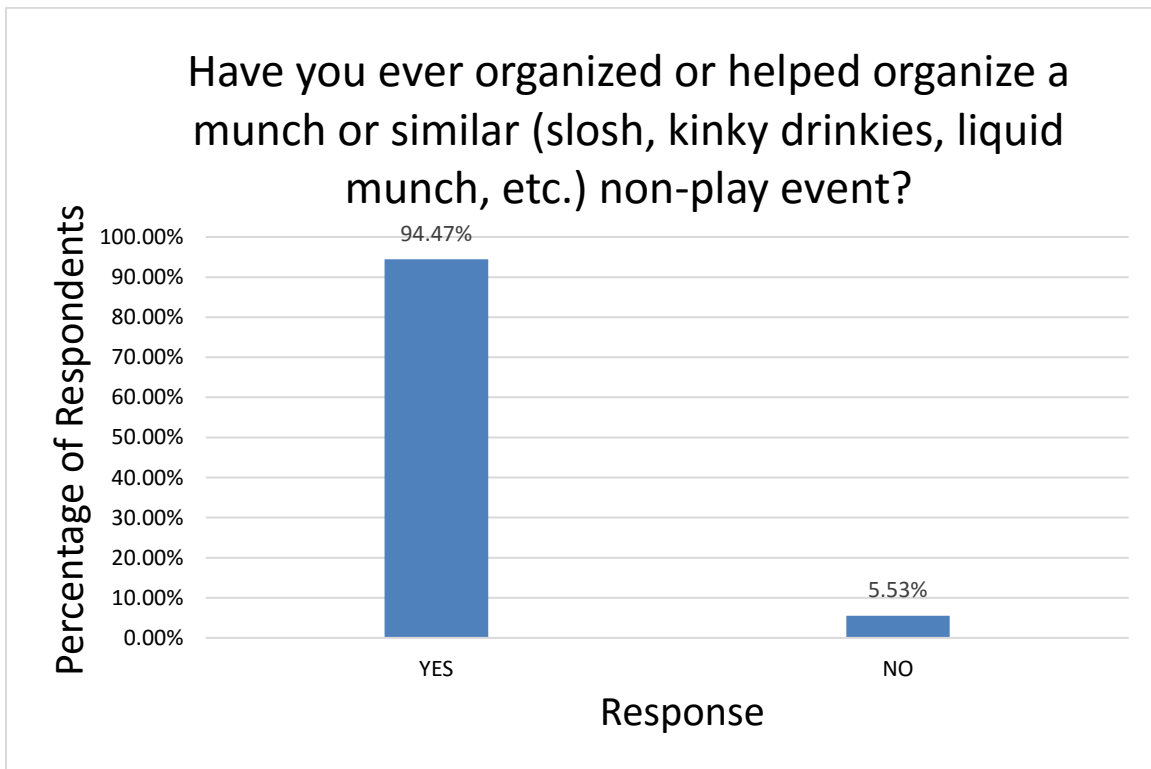


Figure 2: About how many munches or similar events have you helped to organize?

Figure 2 illustrates the number of BDSM events that respondents have planned. Of the 221 respondents to this question, over half (58.82%) of respondents reported organizing twenty or more events. In comparison, 11.31% said they had planned between eleven to nineteen events, 11.76% said they had planned between six to ten events, 14.93% said they had planned between two to five events, and 3.17% of the sample said they had planned only one event.

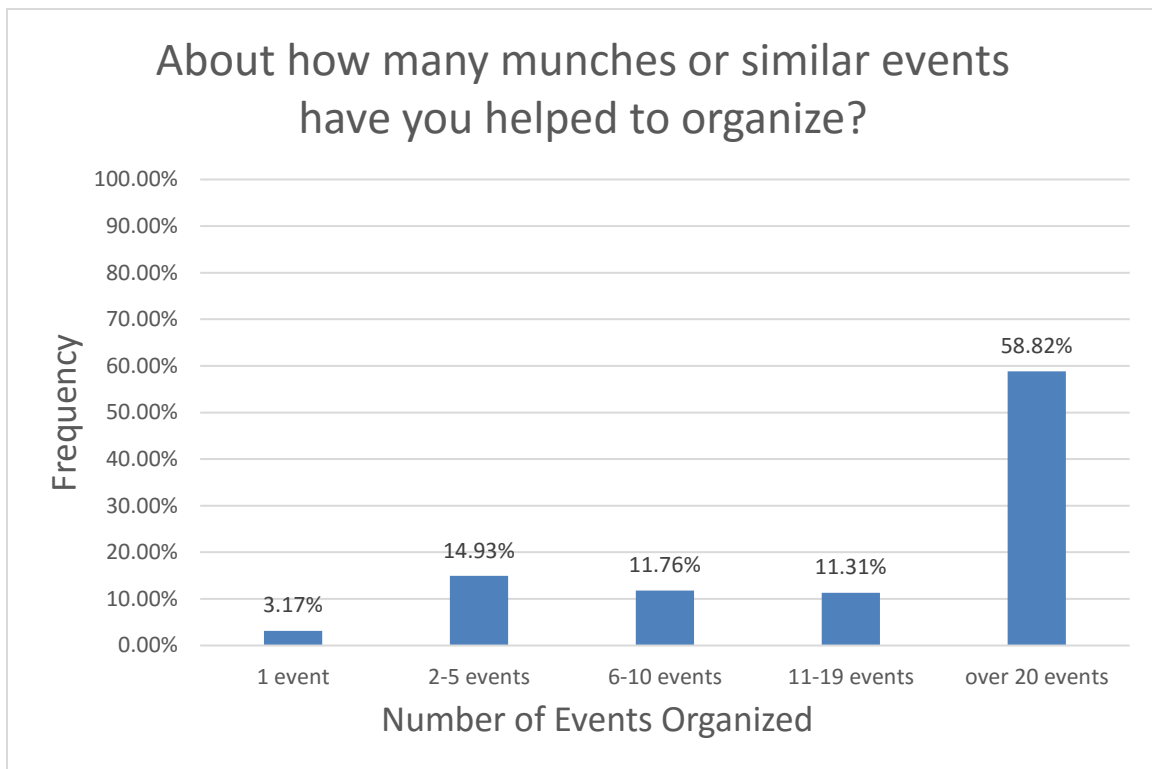


Table 1: How important are the following general aspects of the venue (restaurant or bar) for the munches or similar events?

Table 1 shows how important respondents regard various aspects of a venue they select to host a BDSM event. Statements were scored from very unimportant (1) to very important (5). A mean closer to five indicates greater importance. Respondents felt that the most important aspect of a venue is that it allows for private conversations (M = 4.24), closely followed by the location (M = 4.20), and cost of the food/drinks available (M = 4.15). They believed the least important aspect of a venue is who owns the establishment, with chained owned being least important (M = 1.68), followed by the venue being locally owned (M = 2.62). These results showed that there are many important aspects of a venue to take into consideration when planning a slosch or munch.

Table 1a. Indicate how important are the following general aspects of the venue (restaurant or bar) for the munches or similar events?		
Aspect	Mean (SD)	N
Setup in venue allows for more private conversations	4.24 (.95)	215
Location of venue	4.20 (.80)	215
Size of venue	4.10 (.83)	216
Operating hours of venue	3.99 (.89)	215
General ambiance of venue	3.93 (.90)	215
Venue has kink-friendly staff and managers	3.75 (1.03)	216
Operating hours of venue	3.99 (.89)	215
Parking at venue	3.66 (1.08)	214
Venue is accessible via public transportation	3.62 (1.22)	214
Type of music played at venue	2.69 (1.17)	215
Venue is locally owned	2.62 (1.24)	215

Table 1b. Indicate how important are the food aspects of the venue (restaurant or bar) for the munches or similar events?		
Aspect	Mean (SD)	N
Vegetarian/vegan options at venue	3.35 (1.10)	214
Alcoholic beverages served at venue	3.05 (1.18)	215
Cost of food/drinks at venue	4.15 (.81)	215
General quality of food/drinks at venue	4.07 (.85)	215

Figure 3: How do you and others typically publicize your munches or similar events?

Figure 3 shows that FetLife is a central part of the BDSM lifestyle. 34.69 percent of respondents said they use FetLife to promote their sloshees and munches. Additionally, 27.36% said they use word-of-mouth to publicize their sloshees and munches. Other means of publicizing events that participants mentioned were through other BDSM/related websites (10.59%) and websites with chat features like Yahoo! Groups (1.3%) and Google Hangout, or Google Calendars (0.3%). Without FetLife many of the respondents would have to find other means to learn about sloshees and munches.



Figure 4: Do you believe the people at the venue know that the munches or similar events you help organize are meetups for kinksters?

Figure 4 indicates that 45.12% of the 215 responding believe that people at the venue's they host events at know that the events are meetups for kinksters. In contrast, only 17.21% believe that people at venue's do not know the purpose of the event, and 37.67% responded maybe.

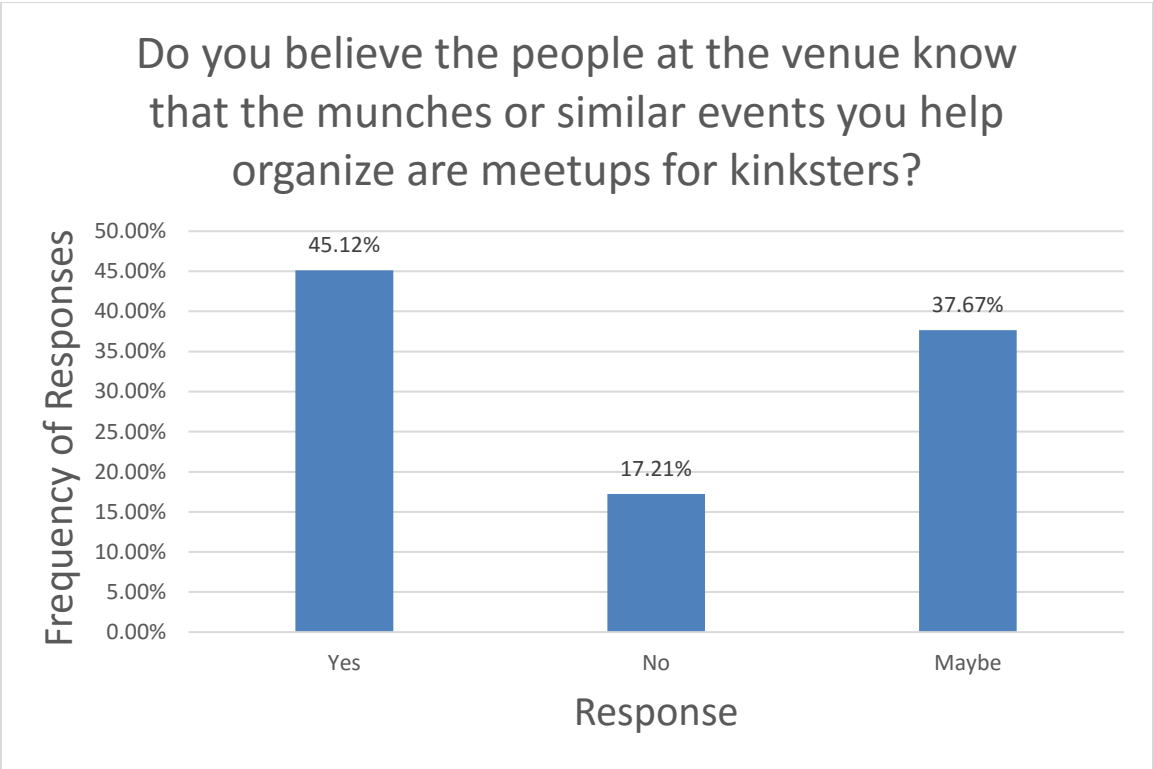


Figure 5: Have you informed managers or staff that your munches or similar events are meet-ups for kinksters?

According to Figure 5, 53.05% of the 213 organizers have informed managers or staff at event venues that the meet-ups are for kinksters. In comparison, 46.95% said they have not told managers or staff at BDSM events the purpose of the event.



Figure 6: Have you ever been asked by managers or staff at the venue if the munches or similar events are kinkster meet-ups?

According to Figure 6, 24.77% of the 214 organizers have been asked by managers or staff at event venues if the meet-ups are for kinksters. A majority (75.23%) said they have not been asked by managers or staff if it was a BDSM event.

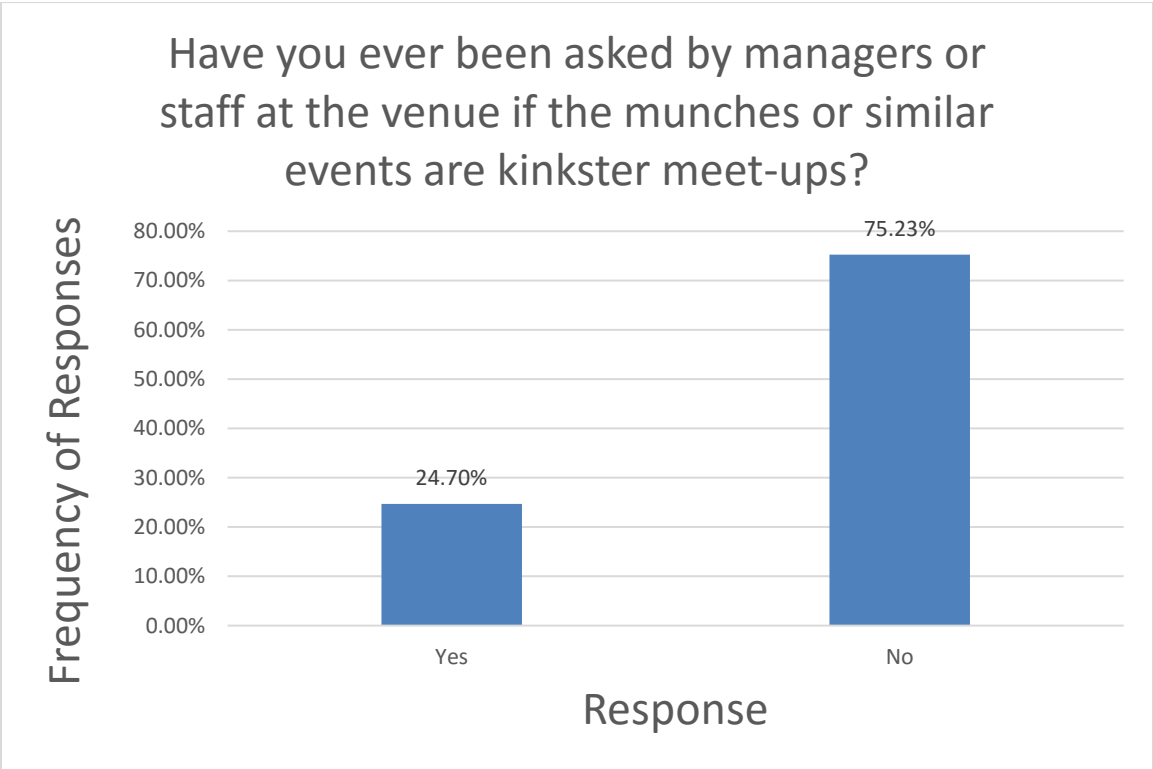


Figure 7: Have you ever received incentives or rewards from venues?

Figure 7 illustrates that most (81.78%) of the 214 respondents reported not receiving any incentives or rewards from venues. In contrast, only 18.2% said they have received incentives or bonuses from venues. This suggests that venues are not using marketing strategies to target the members of these events.

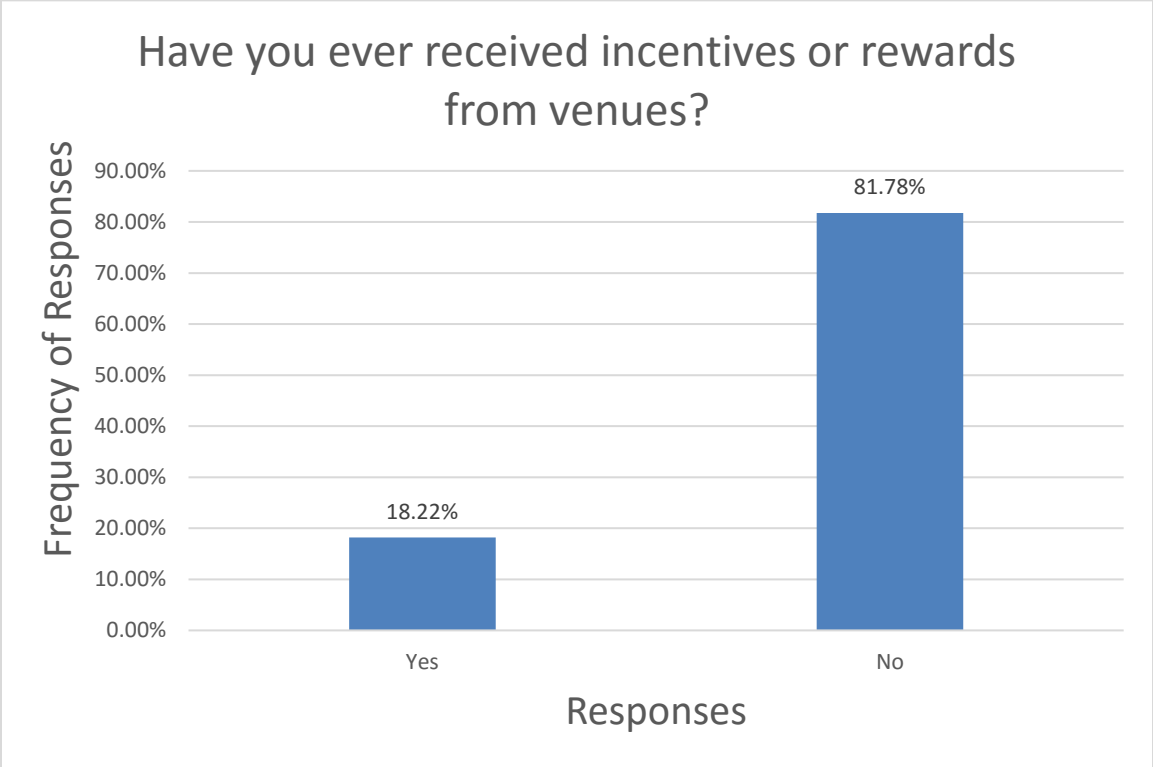


Figure 8: What kind of incentives or rewards have you received from venues?

Figure 8 represents the types of incentives or rewards received by the 3.92% of respondents who had reported that they had received incentives or rewards from venues. The figure illustrates that the leading types of incentives participants have received fall into the “other” category (37.25%). The incentives included things such as discounts and gift certificates. Following this, 31.37% of respondents reported receiving free drinks and 27.45% reported receiving free food.

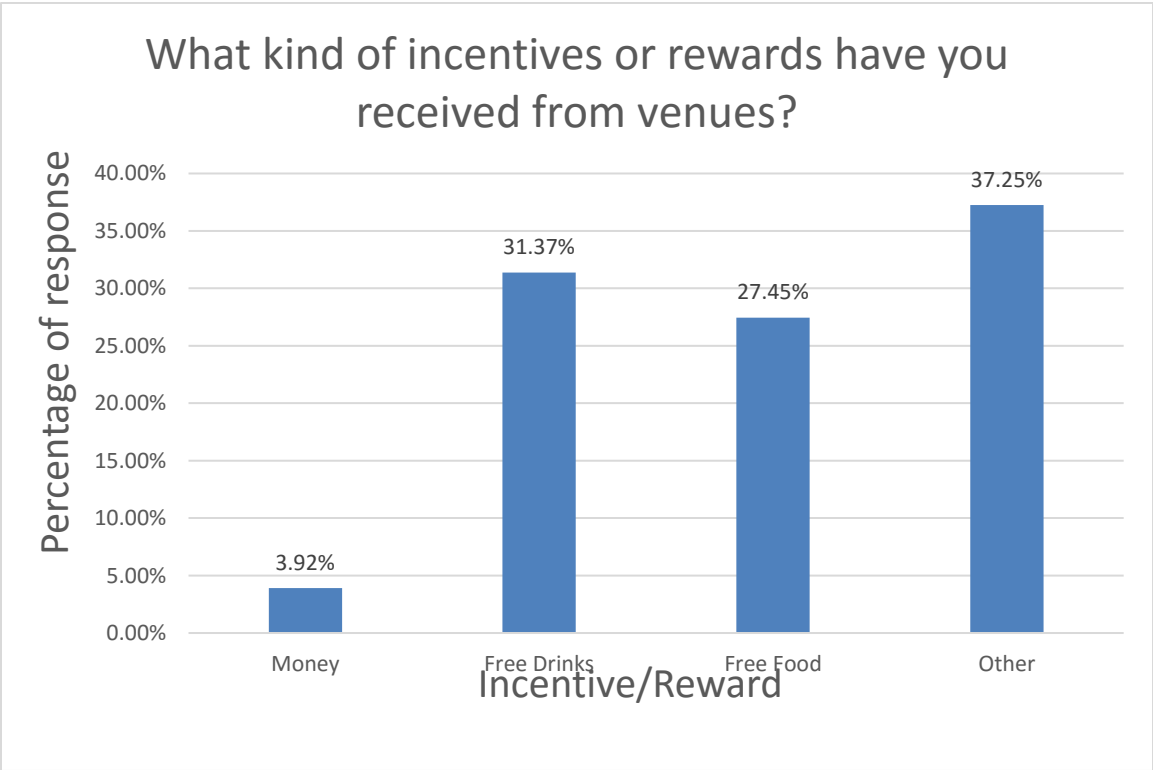


Table 2: What are major concerns or problems you face when helping to organize munches or similar non-play events?

Table 2 illustrates that the most common of 205 total problems identified by respondents were finding a venue that met privacy needs (23.9%), managing event attendance (16.1%), and finding a date/time for the event (13.66%). This open-ended question reveals that privacy is a leading concern for organizers.

Table 2: What are major concerns or problems you face when helping to organize munches or similar non-play events?		
Concern	Frequency	%
Managing event attendance (over or under)	33	16.1
Obtaining/keeping a venue	11	5.37
Privacy of the venue	49	23.9
Attendee's engagement at the event	14	6.83
Finding a venue that is discreet	24	11.71
Participant behavior	14	6.83
Finding a venue that is the right size	19	9.27
Finding a date/time for the event	28	13.66
Other	13	6.34

Table 3. What advice would you give to someone organizing their first munches or similar events?

Table 3 demonstrates that of 197 total pieces of advice given by respondents for someone organizing their first BDSM event, suggestions to make the event comfortable for attendees (14.21%) and to be consistent (15.74%) were most common. Other frequently mentioned advice was to find the right venue (12.18%).

Table 3. What advice would you give to someone organizing their first munches or similar events?		
Advice	Frequency	%
Make the event comfortable for attendees	28	14.21
Be patient	20	10.15
Having things planned for the event	14	7.11
Be honest with the venue	16	8.12
Be consistent	31	15.74
Set rules/guidelines for the event	14	7.11
Advertise properly	8	4.06
Keeping it simple	13	6.6
Finding a right venue	24	12.18
Other	29	14.72

Figure 9. How important are the munches and similar, non-play events for the kinkster community?

Figure 9 shows how important respondents regard munches and other BDSM-related events for the kinkster community. Statements were scored from very unimportant (1) to very important (5). A mean closer to five indicates greater importance to the community. On average, participants reported that these events were important (13.08%) of 214 responses, and 181 people (84.58%) believed that these events were very important. These results show that the munch, slesh, and other kinkster event(s) are vital to the community.

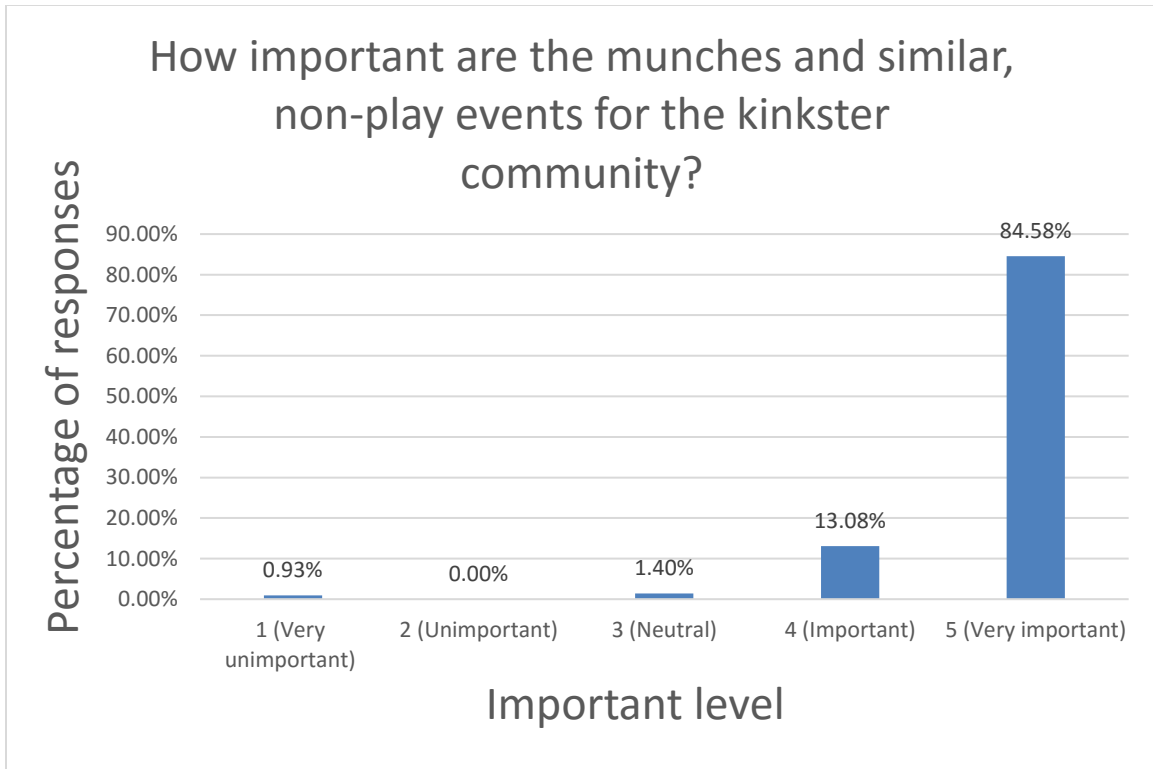


Figure 10. How important are the munches and similar, non-play events for your involvement in the lifestyle?

Figure 10 shows how important respondents regard munches and other BDSM-related events for the organizers. Statements were scored from very unimportant (1) to very important (5). Most participants reported that these events were very important (50.23%). In 213 responses, 107 people (50.23%) believed that these events were very important for their life styles. These results show that the munch, slosh, and other event(s) have significance for the organizer’s lifestyles.

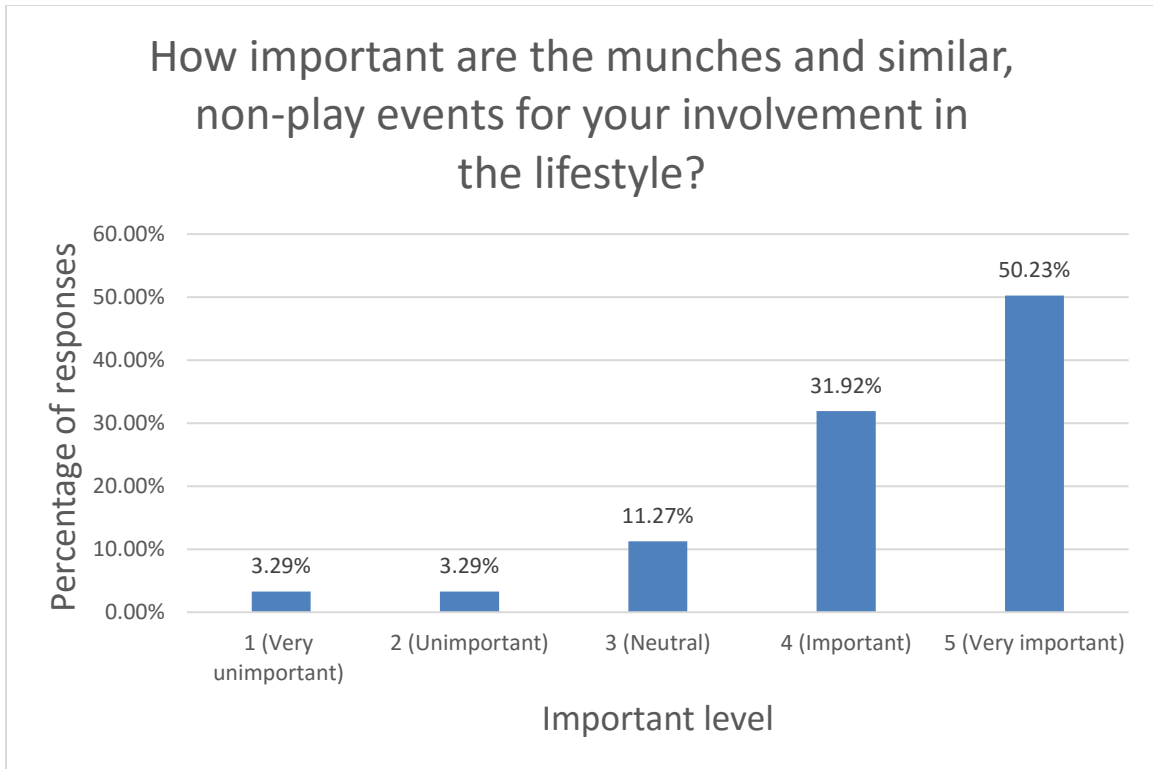


Figure 11: How often do you attend munches or other similar events?

Figure 11 represents how often the 213 organizers reported attending munches or similar BDSM events. Most participants (58.69%) reported attending a BDSM event more than once a month, while less attended once per month (30.52%), several times per year (9.86%), or just a few times per year (0.94%). Of the 238 organizers, 25 people declined to answer this question. This figure demonstrates that these events are a staple in many organizers lives.

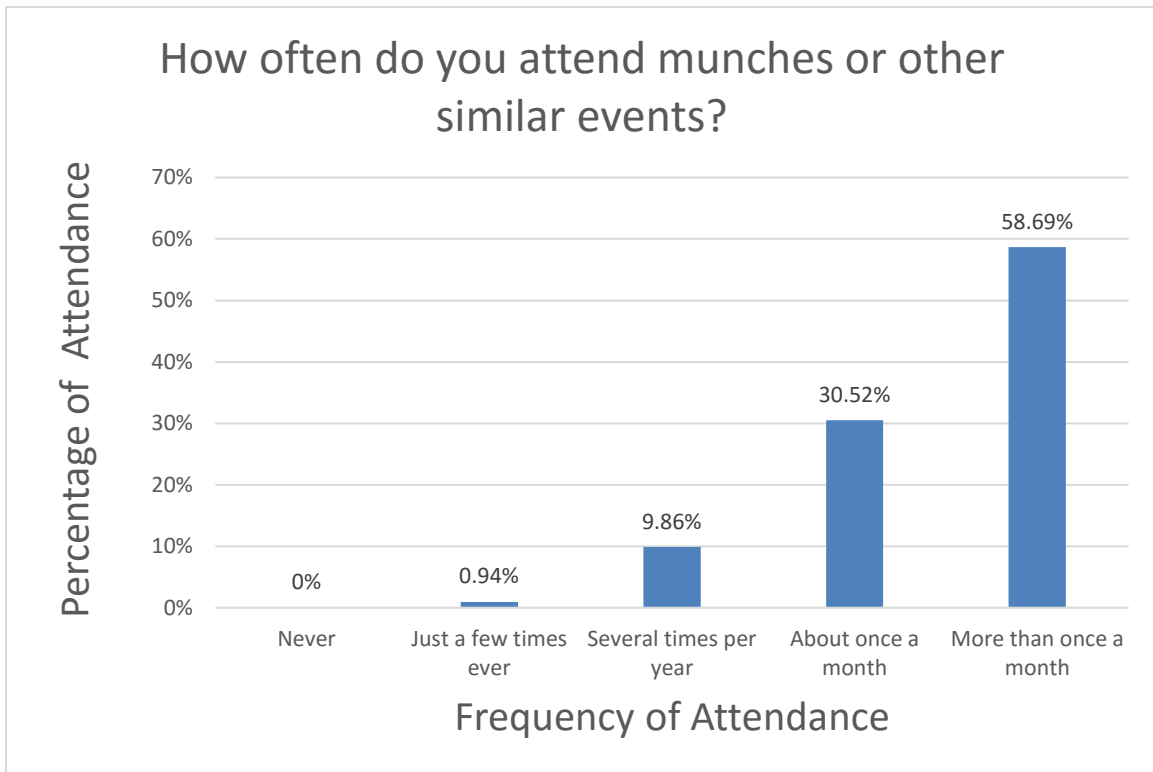


Figure 12: Have you experienced any problematic participant behavior at a munch or other similar events?

Figure 12 indicates that an overwhelming 74.77% of organizers reported experiencing problems with participants during BDSM events. In this case, not having problems with participants at some point appears to be the minority response (25.23%). This figure is important, as it opens up suggestions for possible solutions.

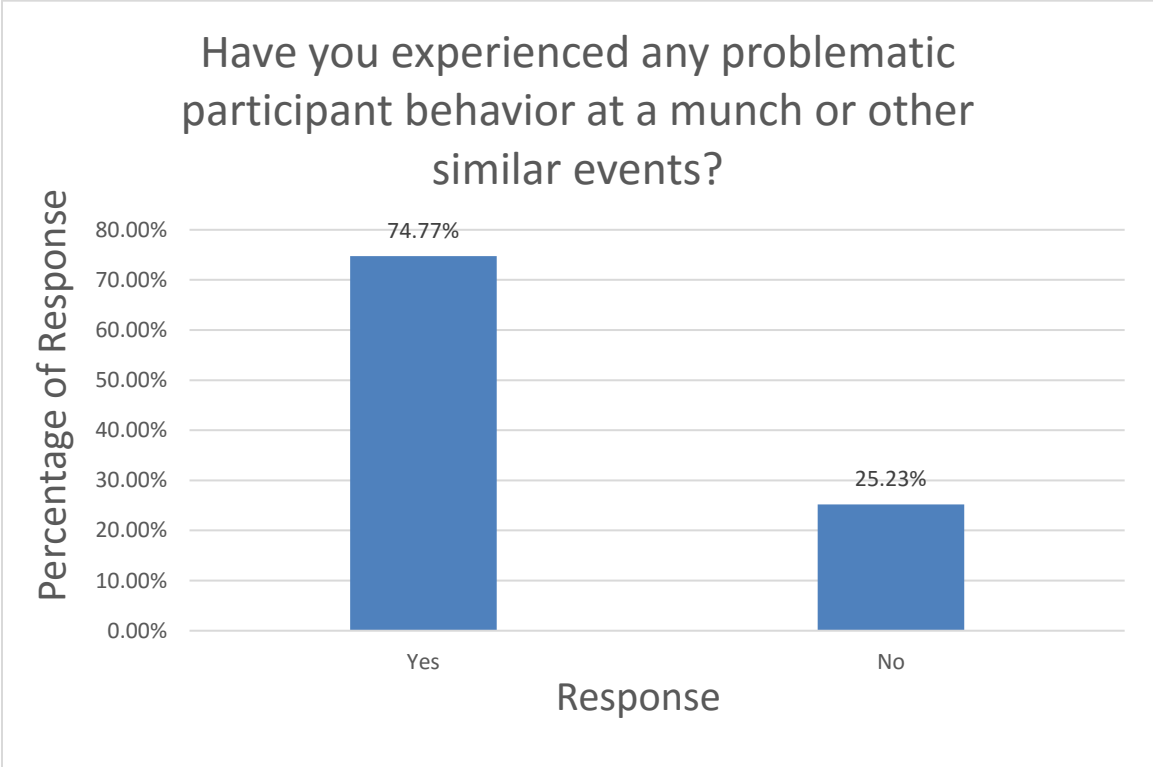


Table 4: Explain any problematic participant behavior you've experienced at a munches or similar events.

Table 4. shows that about 25.64% of organizers have had problems with attendees breaking rules set for BDSM events, as expressed in an open-ended question. This included things such as wearing non-discreet clothing, bringing toys, etc. Surprisingly, the second most endorsed problematic behavior was attendees engaging in inappropriate/unwanted sexual behavior with other attendees (19.87%). In sum, this Table shows there are a variety of problems that organizers may face when hosting BDSM events.

156 TOTAL PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Table 4. Explain any problematic participant behavior you've experienced at a munches or similar events.		
	Frequency	%
Attendees breaking the event rules	40	25.64%
Attendees engaging in inappropriate/unwanted sexual behavior towards other attendees	31	19.87%
Attendees behaving aggressively	23	14.74%
Attendees drinking too much alcohol	15	9.61%
Attendees there for the wrong reason(s)	14	8.97%
Attendees engaging in consensual sexual behavior	12	7.69%
Attendees engaging in inappropriate sexual behavior towards event staff	12	7.69%
Attendees forming cliques during event	6	3.85%
Other	3	1.92%

Table 5: How did organizers deal with it (problems)? (Explain)

The most common solution employed by organizers to handle problems during BDSM events was to discuss the concern they had with the attendee (37.1%), as expressed in responses to an open-ended question. In contrast, the least commonly used solution was to require an apology from the attendee (1.8%).

Table 5. How did organizers deal with it (problems)? (Explain)		
	Frequency	%
Explained concerns to attendee(s)	53	34.87%
Asked the attendee(s) to leave the event	38	25%
Told attendee(s) involved not to return	22	14.47%
Educated attendee(s) about the rules	13	8.55%
Posted about what happened in an online group	11	7.24%
Moved venues	8	5.26%
Ignored it	5	3.29%
Required an apology from attendee(s)	2	1.32%

152 TOTAL SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED

Figure 13: About how many years have you been in the lifestyle?

Figure 13 shows long the respondents had been in the BDSM lifestyle. The most common length of time that respondents have been in the lifestyle for somewhere between 11-20 years (30.84%), followed by 6-10 years (23.83%), and 0-5 years (21.03%). Very few (2.34%) have been in the lifestyle for 40 or more years.

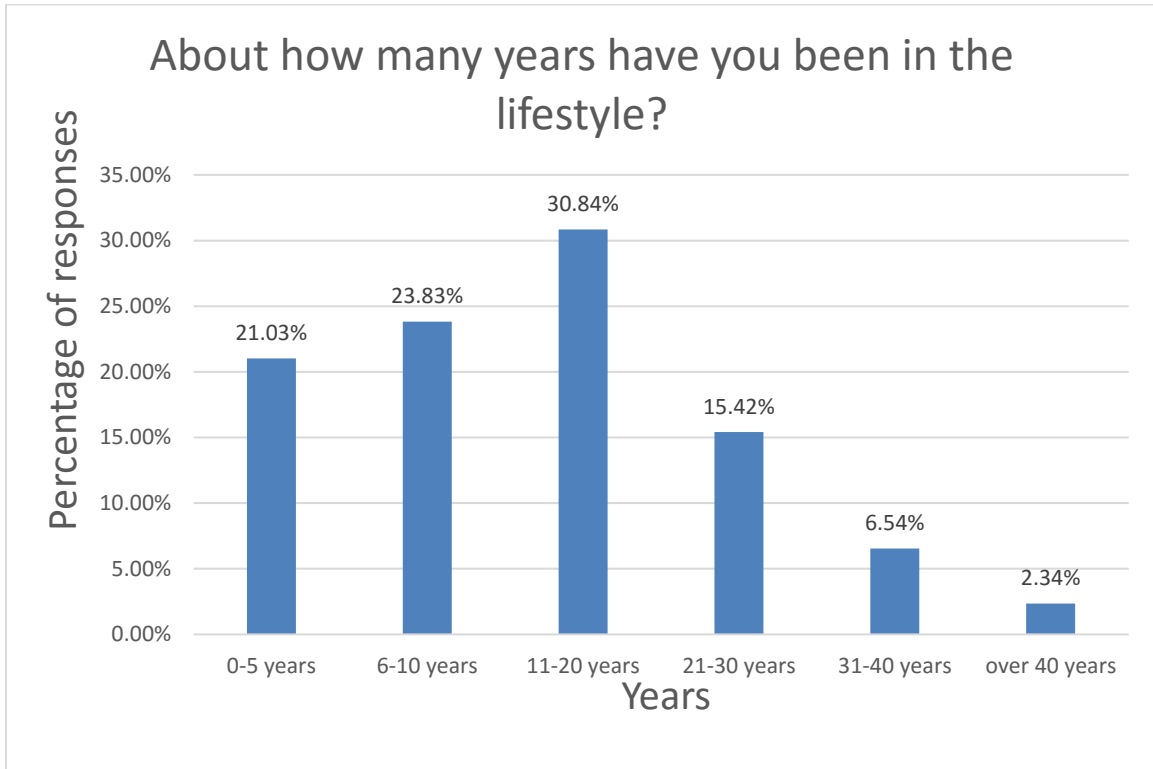


Table 6: How did you become involved in organizing munches or other non-play events?

For all 145 answers, most of the participants said that the reason they became in organizing events was to find the local community to meet people (24.1%). The second significant reason is just helping with others (20%).

Table 6: How did you become involved in organizing munches or other non-play events? (Explain)		
Answers	Frequency	%
Local community to meet people	35	24.1%
I was just helping for others	29	20%
Invited by friends or families	22	15.17%
I am the owner or starter of the organization	17	11.72%
The lifestyle is attractive	13	8.96%
I am volunteered	9	6.2%
Find a safe place	7	4.82%
Just for fun	7	4.82%
Others	6	4.14%

Figure 14: Were you asked or did you volunteer yourself to help organize such events?

According to the data in Figure 14, a majority (64.15%) of the 212 organizers volunteered to organize BDSM events. In contrast, 28.77% of organizers were asked by someone else, 7.08% were not sure how they came into the position of organizing events. This suggests the individuals organizing these events are doing so because they wanted to, and not because of outside pressures within the community.



Figure 15: At munches or other non-play events, have you seen participants with any visible symbols of the lifestyle?

90% of the 210 who responded to this question reported seeing individuals at BDSM events wearing visible symbols of the lifestyle. In contrast, very few people (10%) had not seen symbols of the lifestyle at events.

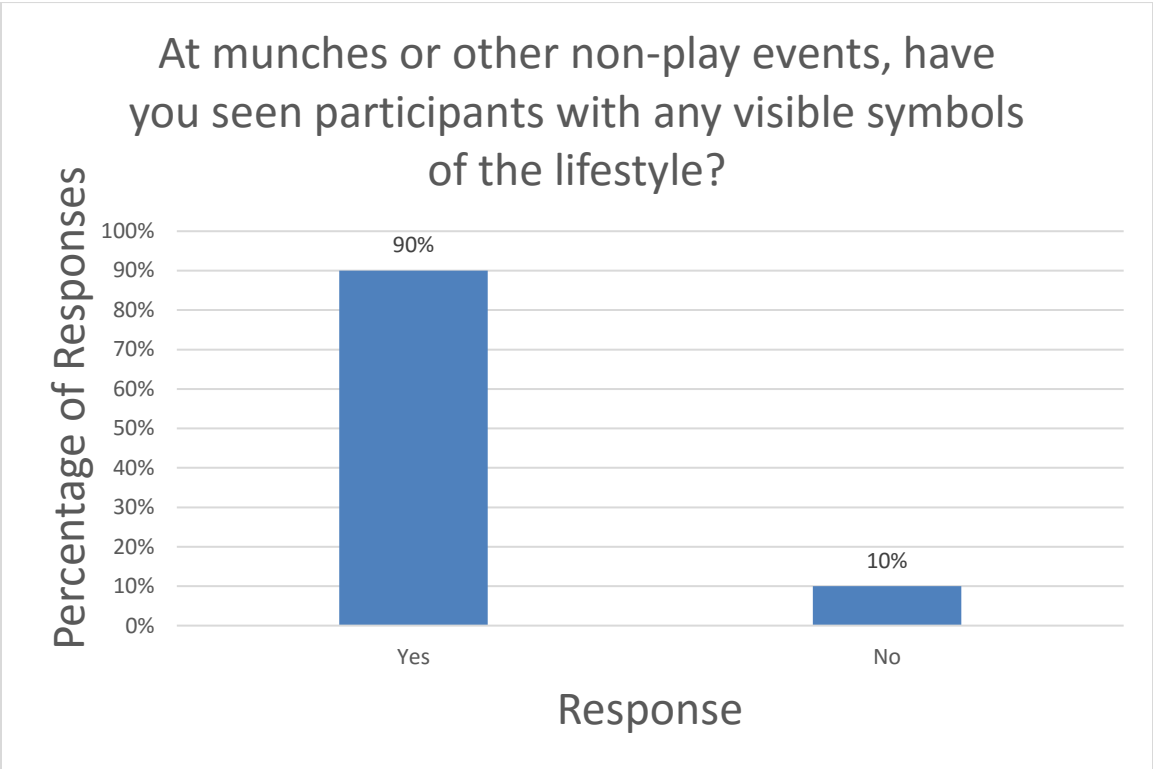


Figure 16: What kinds of visible symbols of the lifestyle have you seen?

Figure 16 shows that keys were reported as the least common type of symbol organizers see (8.8%), and collars (24%) was the most common symbol. Padlocks (11.33%), anklets (11.73%), tattoos (16.8%) and bracelets (15.87%) were also reported as being common. Additional symbols that participants reported were other forms of jewelry (11.47%). This suggests that there are many ways that members of the BDSM community communicate their status as a member to others.

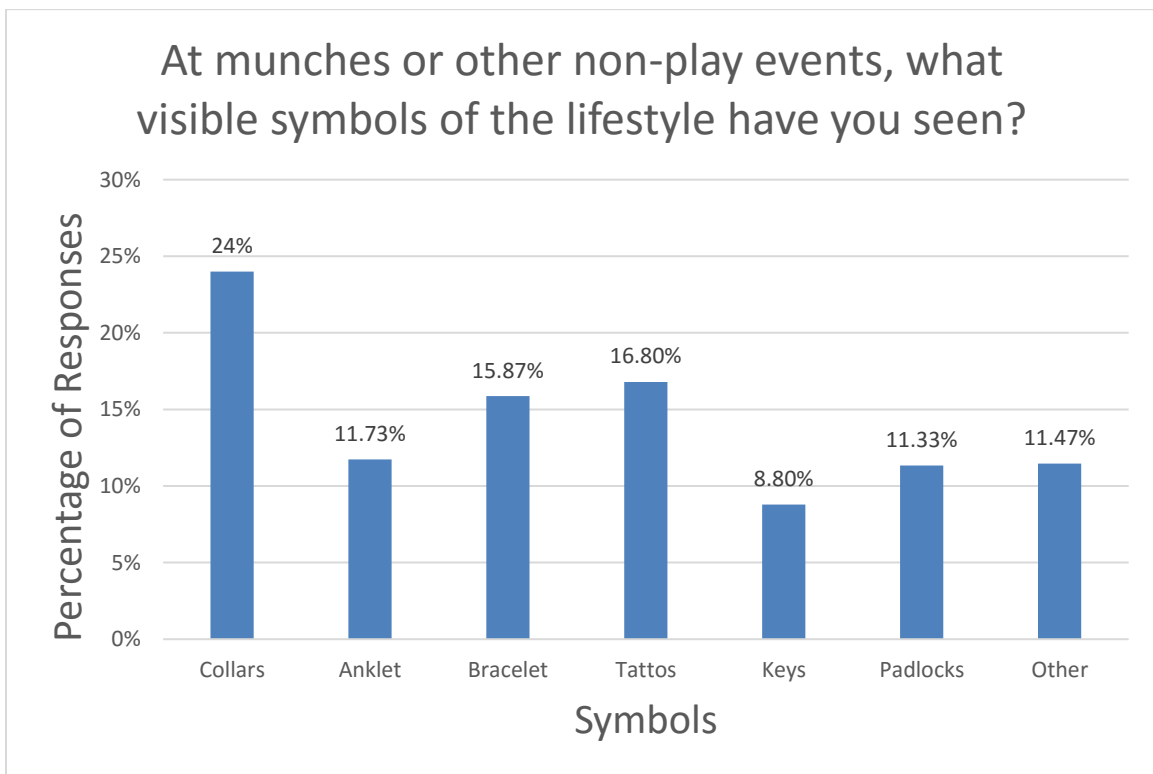


Figure 17: What is your orientation on the dominant/submissive scale?

Figure 17 represents the orientations of the 210 organizers. Nearly half of the organizers identified as dominant (48.1%), while only 27.14% identified as switch, 23.33% identified as submissive, and 1.43% reported not knowing their orientation. Overall, this data suggest that organizers tend to be dominant or have some preference towards being a dominant (i.e., those who are switches).

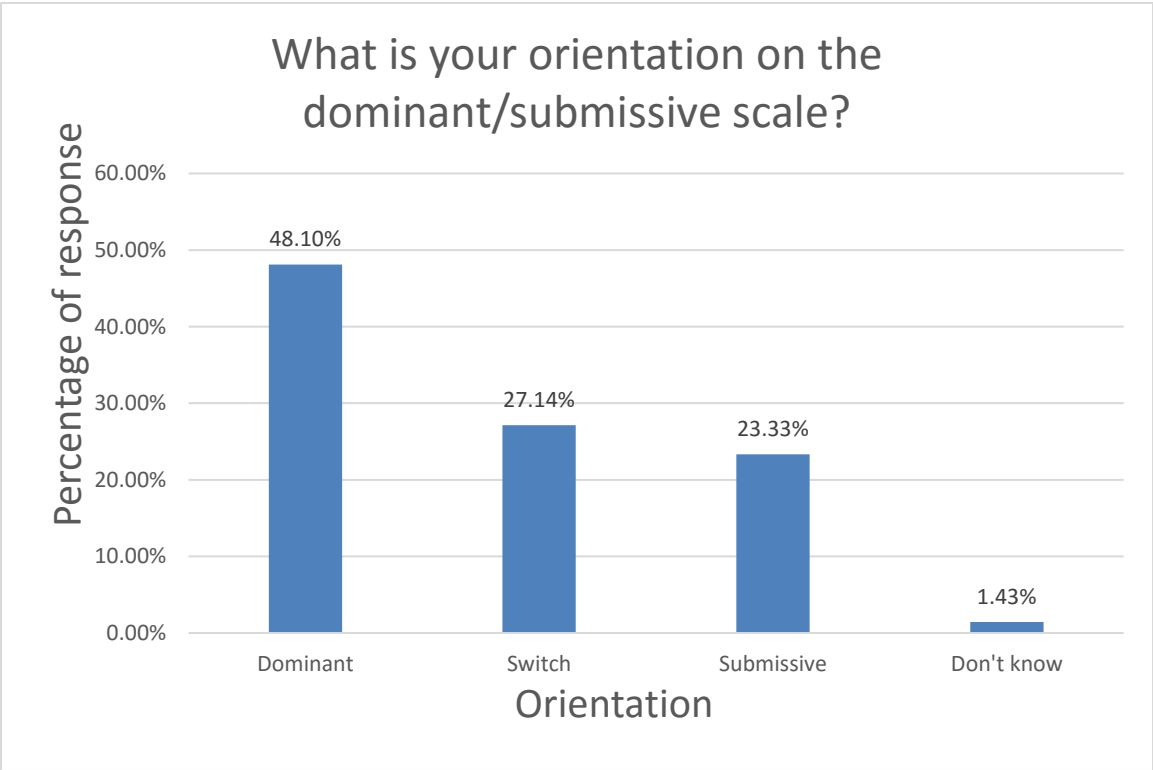


Table 7: What are your roles in helping organize munches or similar events?

Table 7 displays organizer’s roles in organizing events. Organizers written responses were coded, resulting in 49 total responses relating to roles in organizing events. The most commonly reported roles were acting as the primary organizer (24%), followed by organizing venue details (18.67%), and greeting attendees at meetings (12%). Overall, the data show there are a wide range of duties that organizers fulfil when hosting events.

Table 7. What are your roles in helping organize munches or similar events?		
	Frequency	%
Primary organizer	13	26.53%
Organize venue details	10	20.4%
Greet attendees	8	16.33%
Organize the attendees	5	10.2%
Posts the meetings	4	8.16%
Organize discussion topics	4	8.16%
Make announcements	2	4.08%
Advertise for events	2	4.08%
Answer questions	1	2.04%

Figure 18: Were you asked by someone else to help organize?

In figure 18, there were total 49 people answered the question. Most of the respondents said that they were not asked by someone else to help the organization (53.05%). The rest of the group (46.94%) said that they were asked by someone else.

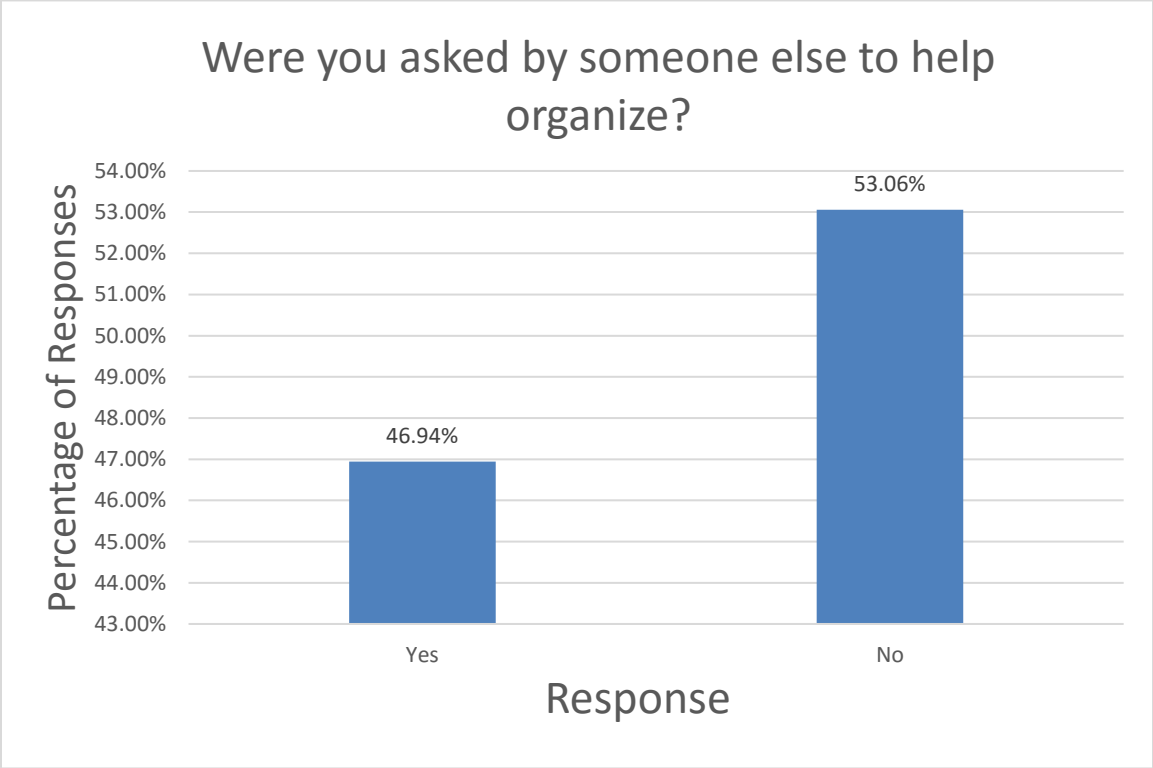


Figure 19: Do you currently have a submissive(s) or a slave(s)?

Figure 19 shows that many organizers reported that they have submissive(s) (48.57%) or slaves (18.29%). In contrast, of the 175 organizers, 33.14% said they did not have submissive or slaves. This is interesting, given that a dominant orientation is common among organizers.

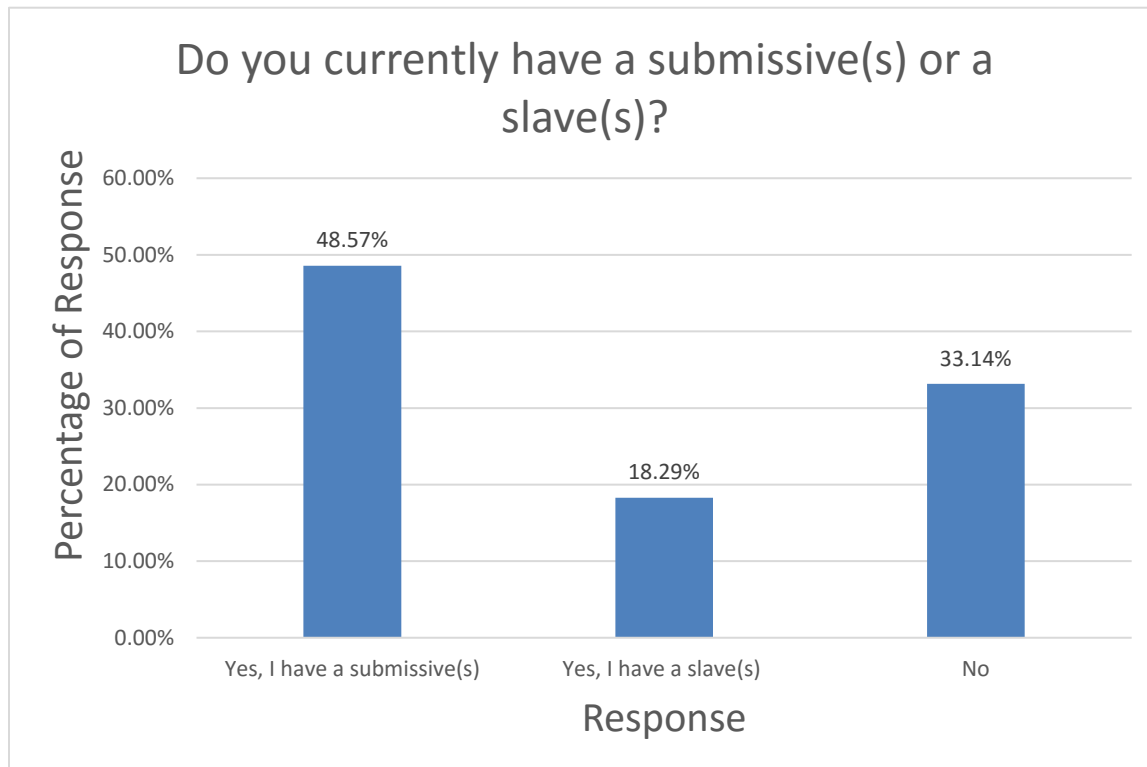


Figure 20: Does your slave assist in organizing or arranging munches or other similar events?

Of the 32 respondents who said they had a slave, 34.38% said that their slave(s) always assist in organizing BDSM events, and 46.88% said they sometimes have their slave(s) assist in organizing BDSM events. In contrast, only 18.75% said they did not have their slave help.

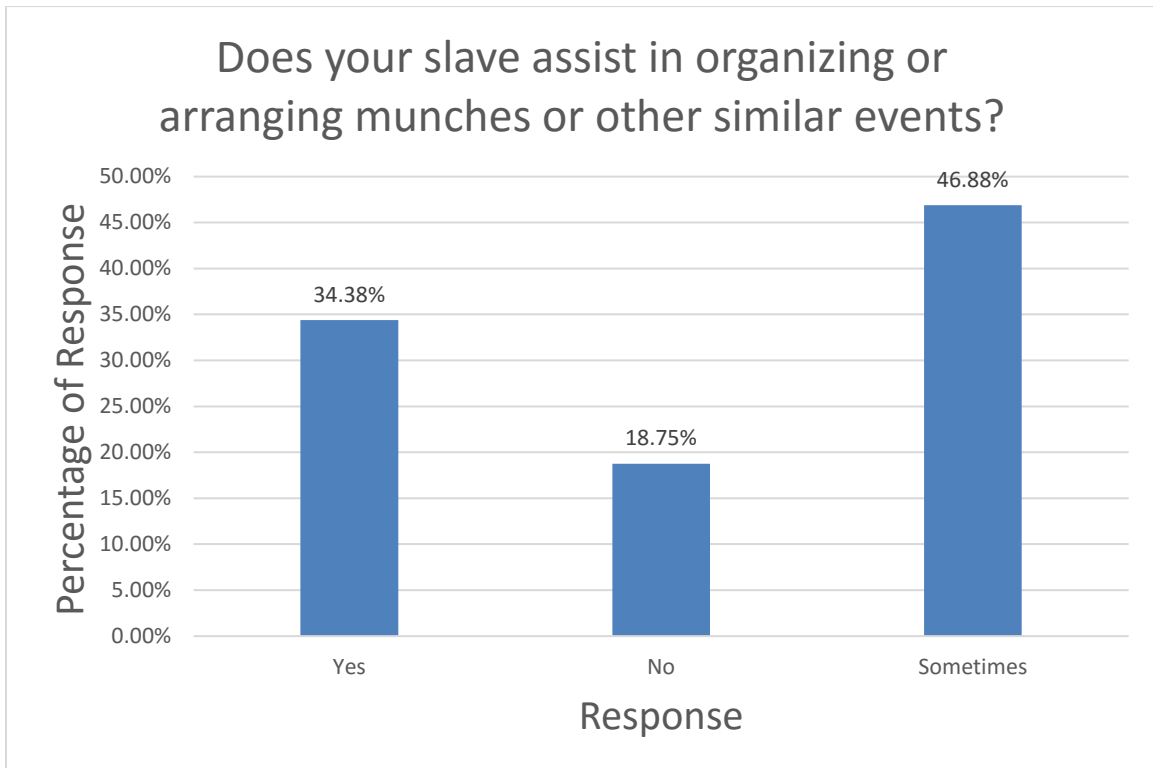


Figure 21: Does your submissive assist in organizing or arranging munches or other similar events?

Of the 85 respondents who said they had a submissive, 41.18% said that their submissive(s) always assist in organizing BDSM events, and 24.7% said they sometimes have their submissive(s) assist in organizing BDSM events. 34.12% said they did not have their submissive(s) help.

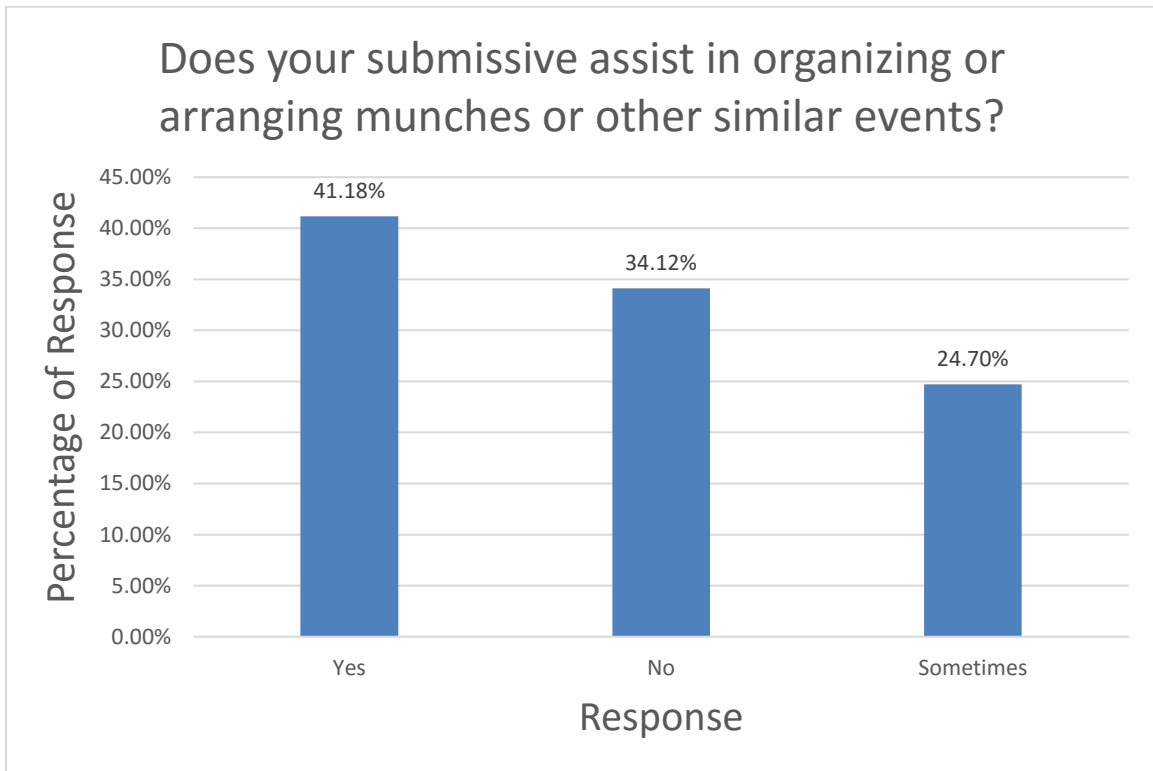


Figure 22: What is your age?

This survey was an inclusive survey that reached several different age groups. A large proportion of respondents were between the ages of 46-60 (36.19%), while only 7.62% were between the ages of 18-25. This suggests that most organizers are somewhere between the ages of 26-60 years old.

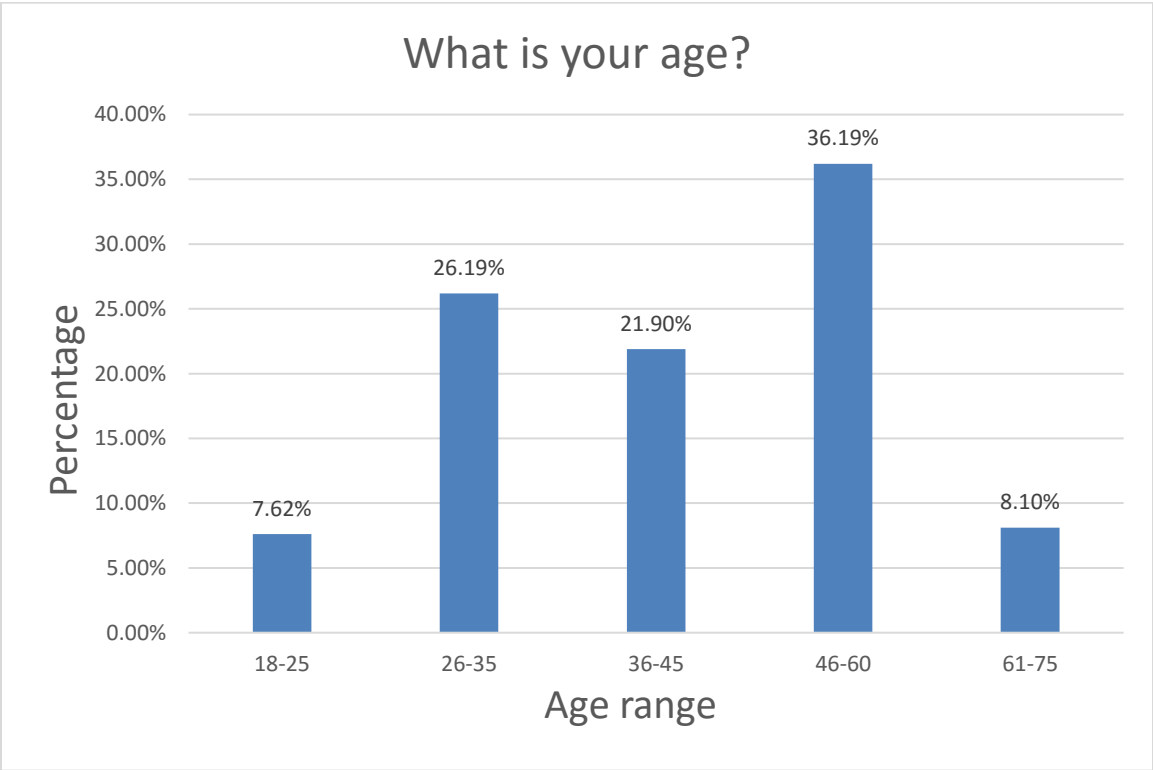


Figure 23: What is your biological sex?

Figure 23 shows that 50.95% of the respondents are males, and 45.71% of the respondents are females. Only 3.33% percent of the respondents reports others (transgenders). The result suggests males are more than females in this research.

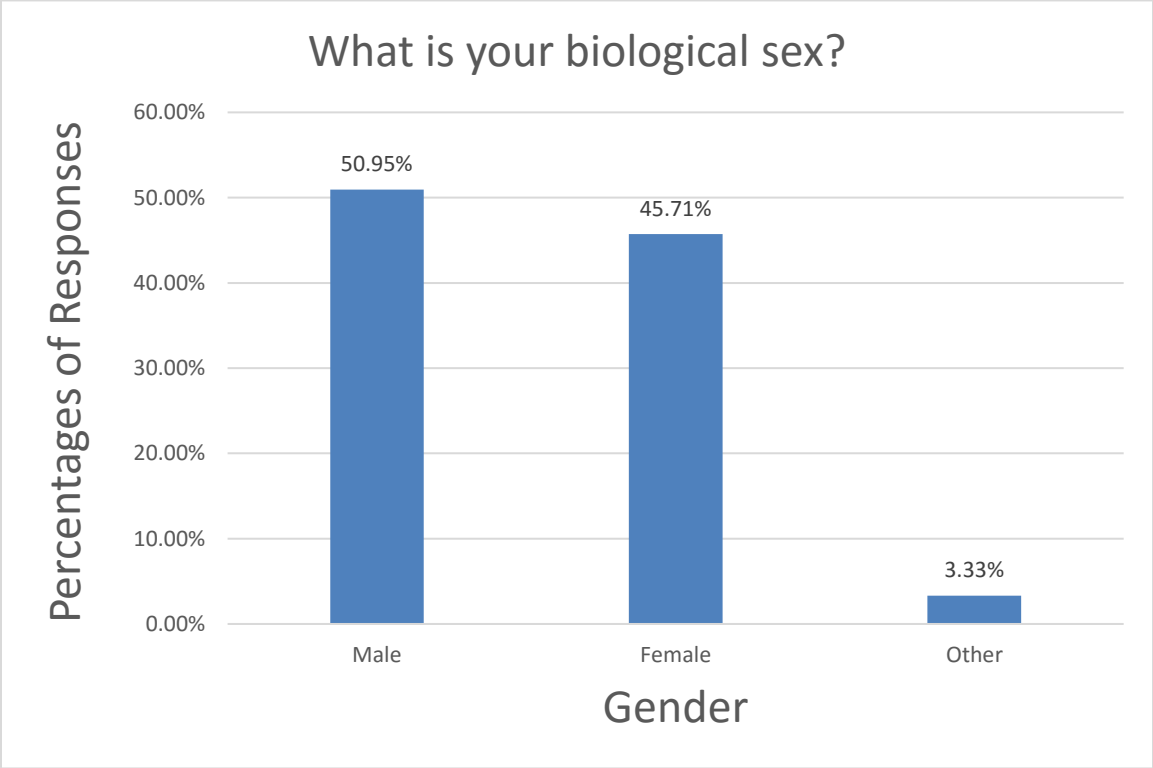


Figure 24: What is your gender?

The survey collected a similar number of responses from men (48.57%) and women (45.24%). 6.19% of individuals identified as other (e.g., gender queer, gender fluid). This suggests that BDSM event organizers samples are representative of the population.

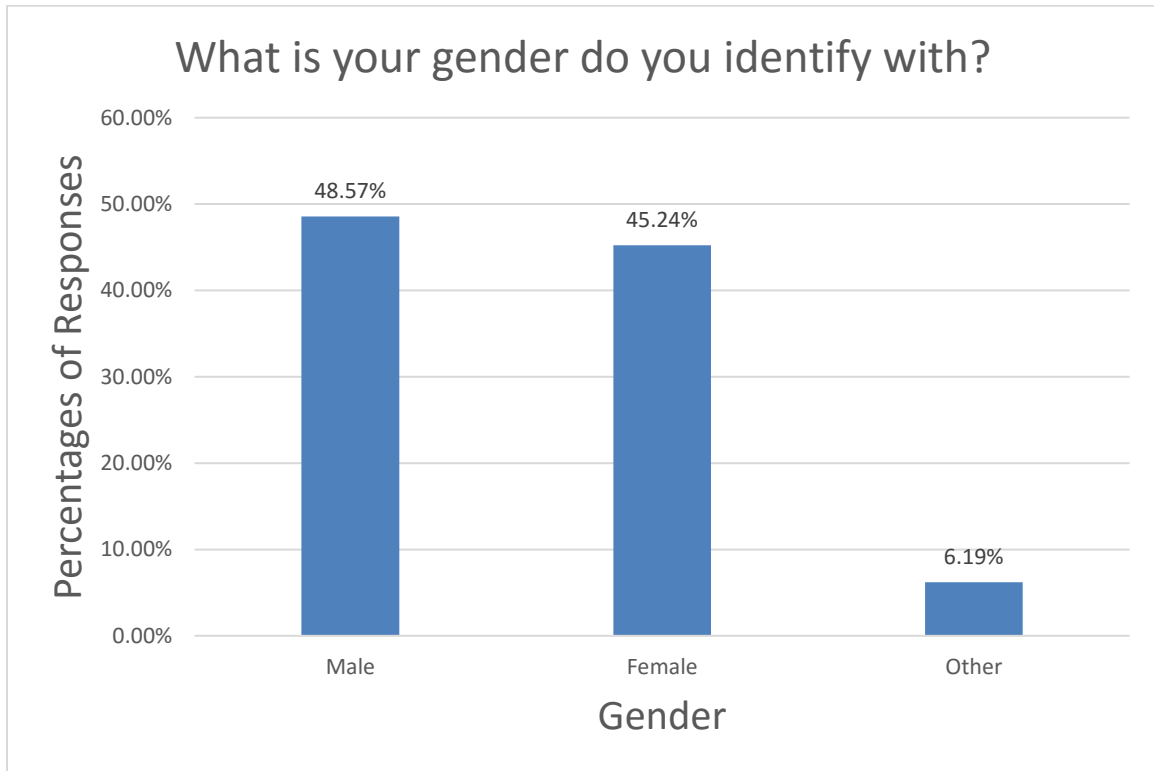


Figure 25: How many children do you have?

Figure 25 suggests that about half of the organizers do not have children (46.2%). This is interesting, given that most of the organizers were older than 26 years old.

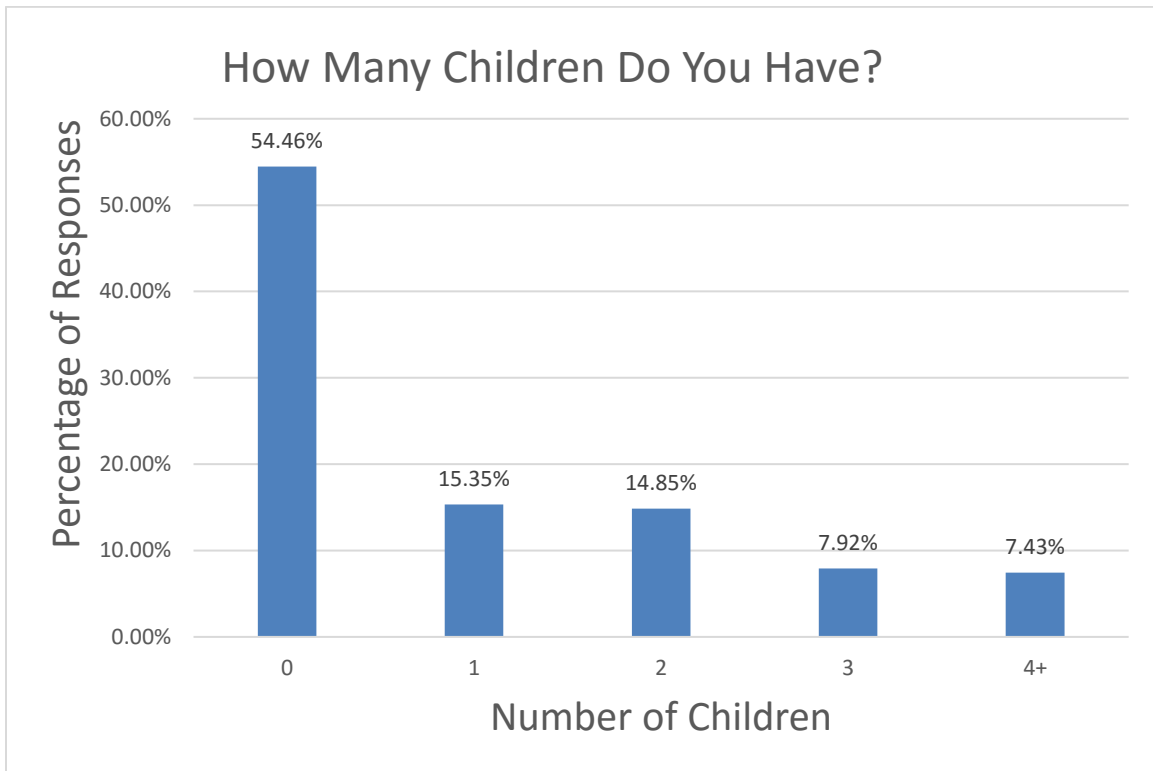


Figure 26: What is your marital status?

Figure 26 shows that 35.3% of respondents were married or in a civil union, 30.3% were never married, 16.4% were divorced, 2.5% were separated, and 1.3% were widowed. 14.3% of the 238 organizers declined to respond.

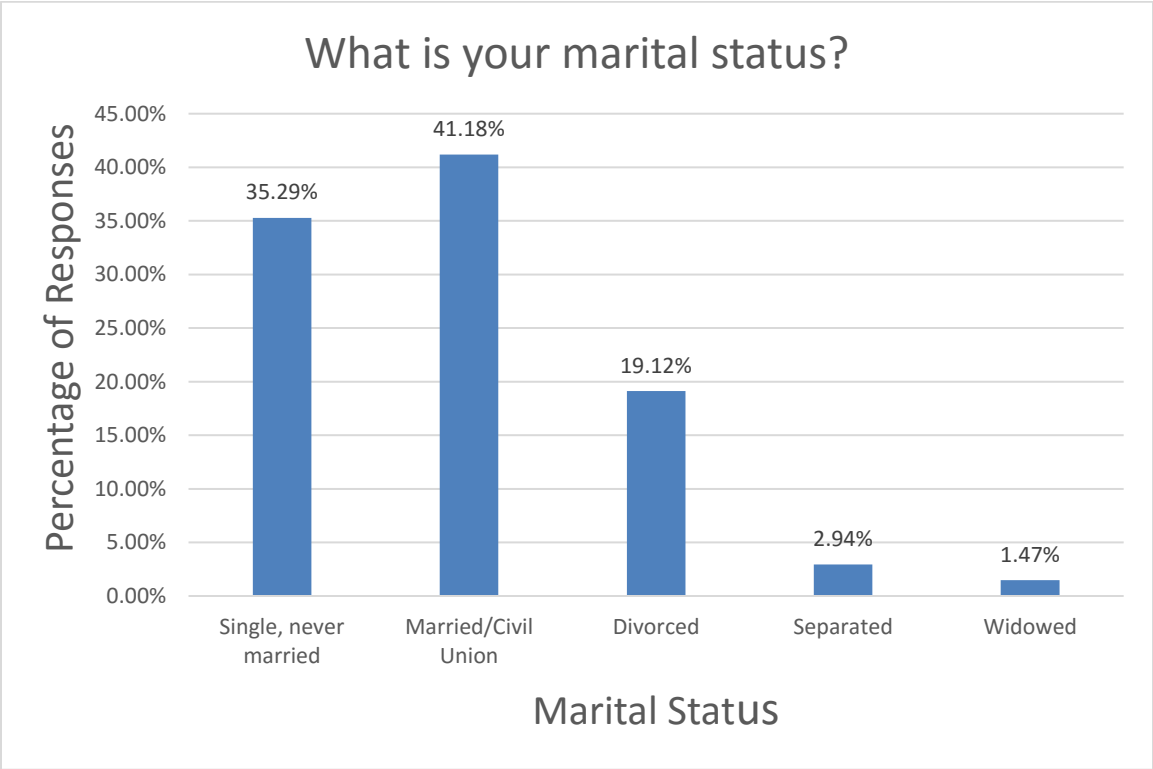


Figure 27: What is your highest level of education completed?

Figure 27 shows that most organizers had completed some college or more. Specifically, 38.94% said they had taken completed some of the requirements for a degree in either college or trade/technical school, 29.81% had completed a Bachelor’s degree, 18.75% said they had completed a Master’s degree, and 6.25% said they had completed a doctorate degree. This suggests that the organizers sampled were a highly-educated group.

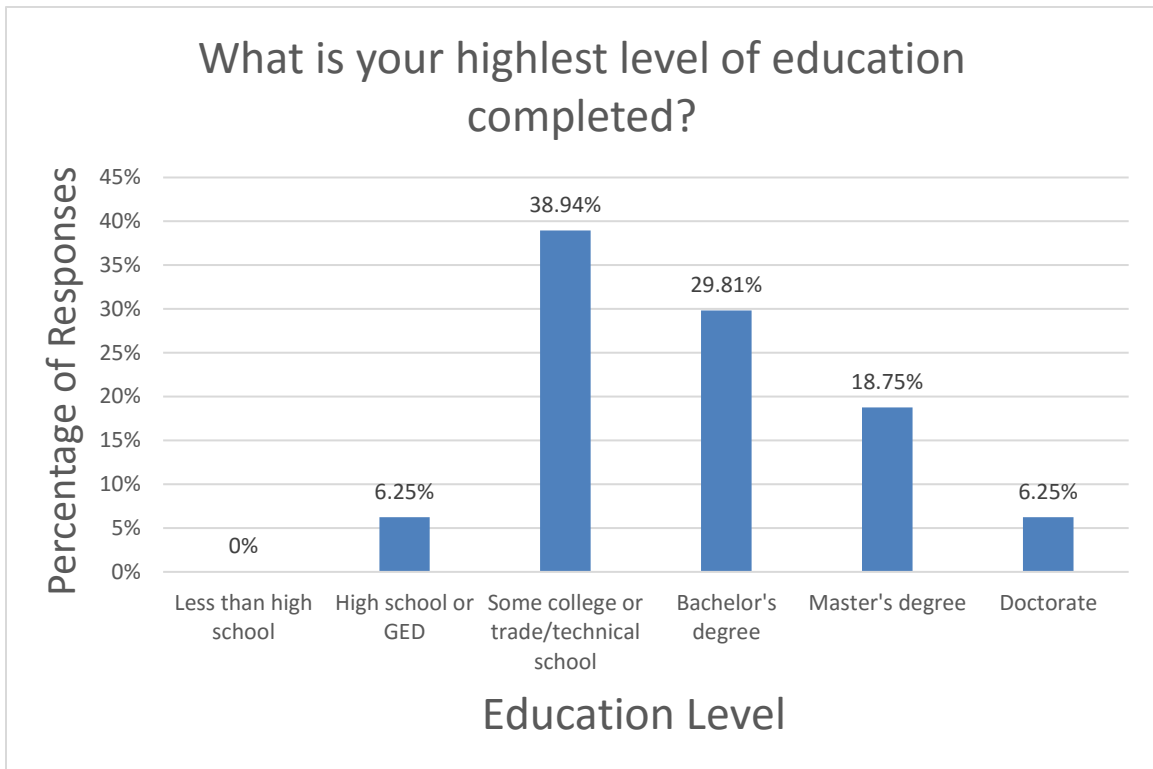


Table 8: In what country do you currently reside?

This survey was a global survey that reached several different countries and the 208 respondents who responded to this reflect this. The majority of respondents are from the United States (52.4%), followed Canada (9.62%), and the United Kingdom (7.21%).

Table 8: In what country do you currently reside?		
	Frequency	%
United States of America	109	52.4%
Canada	20	9.62%
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	15	7.21%
Germany	12	5.77%
Australia	7	3.37%
France	5	2.4%
United Arab Emirates	4	1.92%
Netherlands	4	1.92%
Austria	4	1.92%
Czech Republic	3	1.44%
Iceland	3	1.44%
Israel	3	1.44%
Japan	3	1.44%
Romania	3	1.44%
South Africa	3	1.44%
Switzerland	2	.96%
Denmark	2	.96%
Belgium	1	.48%
Brazil	1	.48%
Bulgaria	1	.48%
Hong Kong (S.A.R.)	1	.48%
India	1	.48%
Thailand	1	.48%