

International Meetings Statistics Report

61st Edition – July 2020

Comparative tables on the international
meetings of international organizations

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Introduction

This is the 61st edition of this report.

Late 2019 and 2020 brought significant change to the way in which UIA's editors maintain the descriptions in the Yearbook of International Organizations and the International Congress Calendar. After thirty-five years the UIA moved its data to a new editorial platform. As one might imagine, this change brought both much-needed improvements and modernity to our process and also some growing pains. Thankfully the former significantly outweigh the latter and we are excited to explore the new tools available to us as we move into a world now struggling with a pandemic and a much hoped for recovery. The UIA is already making changes to better reflect association meetings which have been postponed and those which have gone fully or partially "virtual".

We have adjusted the order of tables in the report, in light of reader comments, and some of the comparisons which were featured in the previous edition have been removed.

Related to this Report, the UIA is again surveying international associations on their meeting habits and this report will be released on 12 November 2020 (<https://uia.org/publications/meetings-survey>).

We can say with confidence that the data included in this report can be found nowhere else! UIA's broad definition of what constitutes an international meeting (that it can be non-governmental and intergovernmental, can include any number of participants, and takes no account of frequency or rotation) means that a wide range of meetings and of organizations is included. This report takes 465,381 meetings into account, organized in 254 countries, in 11,468 cities, by 25,709 international organizations.

We have more ideas for future editions of this report! We appreciate your comments and suggestions.

The UIA Editorial Team

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Chapter 1

Research methodology

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1.1 General methodology

This report is extracted from the Union of International Associations (UIA) database, which is the source of UIA's flagship publications: the *International Congress Calendar* and the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

It should be noted that UIA's criteria for the collection and inclusion of data in this report have not changed since the first edition in 1960; only the presentation has changed.

Since its founding in 1907 the UIA has collected information on international organizations and their international meetings; a first statistical review was published in its *Revue internationale des congrès* in 1910. Since 1960 the UIA has prepared statistics on the international meetings that have taken place worldwide in the preceding year. This work is based on routine research and surveys undertaken by the UIA for the compilation of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (published since 1950) and the *International Congress Calendar* (published since 1960).

The prime source of information is international organizations. The UIA editors work continuously throughout the year on the meetings database, adding and modifying event records using information acquired from international organizations and secondary sources, whether for meetings planned for future years or for meetings which took place in years (long) past. The data in this report are extracted every year anew. The most current edition of the report is therefore the most up to date and comprehensive set of data available.

Because the UIA's meetings database is always changing, data extracted from the database today differ from those extracted and published previously, whether they refer to the future or to the past. Changes may arise from the re-scheduling or relocation of meetings and from the addition of supplementary information on recorded meetings or the addition of previously unrecorded meetings. As data are modified, more meetings are added to the database than are removed.

While never claiming to be a complete survey of all international meetings, the merit of the UIA statistics is that they have been compiled over several decades from the same sources and using consistent methods and criteria.

The editors note that there have been initiatives to determine a standard and generally accepted and applied definition of the term "meeting". While the editors see the need for such an agreement, they point out that the chief merit of the UIA statistics is that they have been compiled over several decades from the same sources and using consistent methods and criteria.

Reminder

In previous editions, in order to be counted in this report a meeting had to have at least 50 participants, or the number of participants be unknown. As of last year's edition, meetings with under 50 participants are also included.

Territorial entities are listed on their own (for example: Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are *not* grouped under China)

New organization descriptions are created year-round. The editors have always examined information received on international meetings which have no clear link to an international association included in the UIA database, the source of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. In some cases, this examination leads to the creation of new association profiles in the database, and thus to Type A meetings; in other cases, the meetings are considered for Type B or Type C. In past years, this examination often took place after the publication of this report. For this edition, extra effort was made to ensure that all information was evaluated before production of the report. This has resulted in an increase in the proportion of meetings classified as Type A and a reduction in the proportion of meetings classified as Type B or Type C. (See “What meetings are counted in this report?” for more information on Types.)

A correction to our tabulation of the data means that the count of total cities in the report is a smaller number than in previous years. There is no change to the locations included, this was a processing error which has been corrected.

1.2 What meetings are counted in this report?

This report is extracted from the Union of International Associations (UIA) database, which is the source of UIA’s flagship publications: the *International Congress Calendar* and the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. At the time of producing this edition there were 504,822 meetings in the UIA meetings database of which 465,381 meet the criteria for inclusion in this report. Of these 465,381 meetings, 448,035 took place in 2018 or earlier, 12,472 took place in 2019, and 4,874 are scheduled for 2020 or later. Some events take place in more than one city and are counted in this report for each city separately.

Meetings included in this report are divided into three types. The types are indicated by letters: type A, type B and type C. These letters have, in themselves, no significance in relation to the meetings they group and are used merely for convenience.

Type A: Meetings of international associations

Type A meetings conform to all the following criteria:

- The meeting must have a clear link to an international association included in the UIA database, the source of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. (See also below “What is an ‘international organization’”.)
- The meeting can be linked to either an international non-governmental organization (INGO) or an intergovernmental organization (IGO).
- The meeting is eligible for inclusion regardless of its frequency. A meeting can be a one-off event, part of a regular series, or part of an irregular series.
- The meeting is eligible for inclusion regardless of its location. A meeting series can be held always in the same location, or rotate according to a pattern between locations, or change locations randomly.
- The meeting is eligible for inclusion regardless of its participant numbers.

Included in this report are 12,472 Type A meetings for 2019. Type A meetings are included in all tables in this report.

Types “B” and “C”: Other international meetings

Type B meetings conform to all the following criteria:	Type C meetings conform to all the following criteria:
The meeting does not qualify for Type A but is nonetheless considered to be of significant international associative character.	
The meeting lasts at least 3 days.	The meeting lasts at least 2 days.
The meeting has <u>either</u> a concurrent exhibition <u>or</u> at least 300 participants.	The meeting has <u>either</u> a concurrent exhibition <u>or</u> at least 250 participants.
At least 40 percent of the meeting’s participants are from countries other than the host country <u>and</u> at least 5 nationalities are represented.	
Included in this report are 558 Type B meetings for 2019.	Included in this report are 920 Type C meetings for 2019.
Logically, all meetings counted as Type B are also counted as Type C.	Logically, meetings counted as Type C are not all counted as Type B.
These meetings are included only in some tables in this report.	

1.3 What is an “international organization”?

The UIA database, the source of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, profiles “non-profit” “international” “organizations” according to broad criteria. It therefore includes many bodies that may be perceived, according to narrower definitions, as not being fully international, or as not being organizations as such, or as not being of sufficient significance to merit inclusion. Such bodies are nevertheless included so as to enable users to make their own evaluation in the light of their own criteria.

“Organization”: There are forms of social organization that may substitute for more formal or conventional forms, such as a conference series with no continuing committee, virtual organizations, networks, cartels, secret societies, religious sects, and bodies with no formal structure or fixed address. Due to the sometimes-vague structure of such bodies, they may be under-reported.

“Non-profit”: The definition of “profit-making”, and the extent to which any “non-profit organization” may incidentally or deliberately make a profit as defined by particular tax regimes, cannot be unambiguously resolved. This grey area is treated with flexibility, though bodies that are unambiguously constituted as “for profit” or with solely commercial aims are excluded.

“International”: The editors look for the involvement of at least three countries on a more or less equal footing, to the possible exclusion of bi-lateral international bodies and those in which a particular country is dominant. Indications of “internationality” include distribution of board members, location of meetings, rotation of secretariat, source of finance, and membership. Bodies that are focused on, or derive from, a single country are likely to be excluded, which may lead to under-reporting of, for example, aid and missionary societies, or language and cultural activities.

The number and variety of organizations in the UIA database are indicators of the problems of information collection. Documenting organizations and their meetings is challenging for reasons such as the following:

- News of the creation, existence or dissolution of an organization may only be received some time after the fact. Information on an organization's activities may take time to be received and registered by the editors.
- Some organizations are reluctant to publicize their activities. They may not respond to questionnaires or may omit significant information from their replies. Some may not perceive themselves as sufficiently formalized to be mentioned in the same context as those that are legally established.
- Some organizations are ephemeral creations or are only "activated" for infrequent meetings, events or projects.
- Some organizations have frequent changes of secretariat, making continuing contact problematic.

Approximately 60% of UIA's profiles of currently active organizations include information on meetings activity. These data form the basis of this report. Some tables in this report also draw on the secretariat and membership information contained in the profiles. In these cases, a selection has been made using UIA's hierarchical typology, counting only those organizations classified under one of 10 selected types:

- A = federations of international organizations
- B = universal membership organizations
- C = intercontinental membership organizations
- D = limited or regionally defined membership organizations
- E = organizations emanating from places, persons or other bodies
- F = organizations having a special form, including foundations, funds
- G = internationally-oriented national organizations
- K = subsidiary and internal bodies
- N = national organizations
- R = religious orders, fraternities and secular institutes

More information on UIA's hierarchical typology can be found on the UIA website in the article "[Types of organization](#)".

1.4 Caveat

The UIA editors work continuously throughout the year on the meetings database, adding and modifying event records using information acquired from international organizations and secondary sources, whether for meetings planned for future years or for meetings which took place in years (long) past. The data in this report are extracted every year anew. The most current edition of the report is therefore the most up to date and comprehensive set of data available. Readers are reminded that data, especially for recent years, are therefore provisional: data will change as research continues and the database is updated.

The number of meetings in the database for the year just past will, on average, increase:

- **by about 11% over the next year**
- **by about 34% over the following five years, and**
- **by about 37% over the following seven years.**

1.5 Geographical names

It is not the intention of the editors to take a position with regard to the political or diplomatic implications of geographical names or continental groupings used. The country, city, and continental names used in this publication are chosen for the sake of brevity and common usage in English. Within the limits of standardization required for statistical purposes, the geographical names used by the organizer of the meeting are respected. This may sometimes lead to territories and dependencies being listed separately, which then affects the totals per country.

The editors are aware there may be inconsistencies in spelling or usage of city names and would welcome being given the information necessary to correct these. Some apparent inconsistencies, however, may be due to the preferences of the organizer (for example, indicating a meeting is held in a suburb or distinct district of a major city rather than in the city itself), or to the exigencies of postal agreements.

1.6 Other resources

Custom research reports based on these and more data from the UIA database are available on request. Contact us for more information.

Readers wishing to study the overall association meetings market may also find it useful to consult the statistics reports produced by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA). This complementary resource can be used alongside UIA statistics to create a more complete understanding, rather than an alternative or competing view, of the same market segment.

The UIA and ICCA statistics differ, in the first place, because they are based on differing definitions of what constitutes an “international not-for-profit organization”. (See above “What is an international organization”.) All three of these terms – “international”, “not-for-profit”, and “organization” – are large enough, and vague enough, to be interpreted differently. In a matching exercise carried out by UIA and ICCA together, it was found that about four-fifths of the international organizations in the ICCA database also qualify for inclusion in the UIA database; the remaining one-fifth does not meet UIA’s criteria for “international not-for-profit organizations”.

UIA’s association database has many organizations not included in ICCA’s database because UIA has a broader definition of “international not-for-profit organization”, and because UIA’s criteria are not restricted to organizations holding regular, rotating meetings. ICCA’s focus on the meetings activities of international associations, and its definition of “international association meeting”, further refine its selection of the international organizations behind those meetings, while UIA’s broader definitions allow a wider range of meetings and of organizations. For example, UIA’s database also includes organizations which have no (known) meetings activity at all.

Secondly, the UIA and ICCA statistics differ because they are based on differing definitions of what constitutes an “international association meeting”.

- Both include only events organized by international not-for-profit associations, but, as described above, their interpretations of those terms differ.
- ICCA includes only the meetings of non-governmental organizations; UIA includes meetings of both non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations (and acknowledges the grey zone in between).
- ICCA includes only events which occur regularly; UIA includes meetings regardless of their frequency, including one-off events.
- ICCA includes only events which rotate between at least three countries; UIA includes meetings regardless of their location, including events held always in the same location.
- ICCA includes only events which attract at least 50 participants; UIA includes meetings regardless of their participant numbers.

Finally, ICCA and UIA differ in their focus. ICCA collects the information from its members – “specialists in organising, transporting and accommodating international meetings and events” – and also from international associations. UIA derives its information chiefly by direct and regular contact with international associations, and, in the second place, from national, regional, and civic tourist authorities.

Chapter 2

General overview of international association meetings

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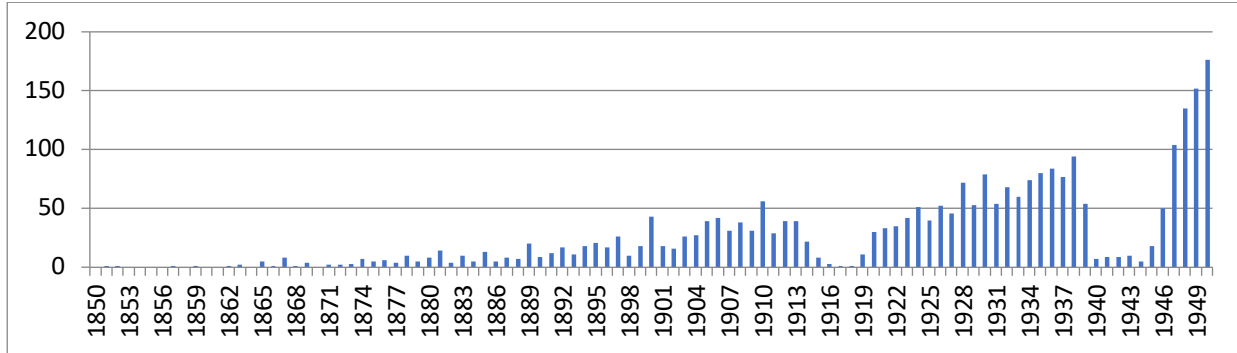
2.1 Comparison with previous report

	61st edition published in 2020	60th edition published in 2019
Total number of meetings in the UIA database	504,822	494,711
Number of meetings included in this report	465,381	453,139
Number of meetings taking place prior to the reporting year (2018 or earlier)	448,035	436,847
Number of meetings taking place in the reporting year (2019)	12,472	11,240
Number of meetings scheduled to take place after the reporting year (2020 or later)	4,874	5,052
Number of countries represented for all years	254	250
Number of cities represented for all years (<i>data correction</i>)	11,468	12,682
Number of countries represented for the reporting year (2019)	161	167
Number of cities represented for the reporting year (2019)	1,251	1,197
Number of active international organizations	41,534	40,119
Number of active international organizations known to have meetings activity	25,709	23,625

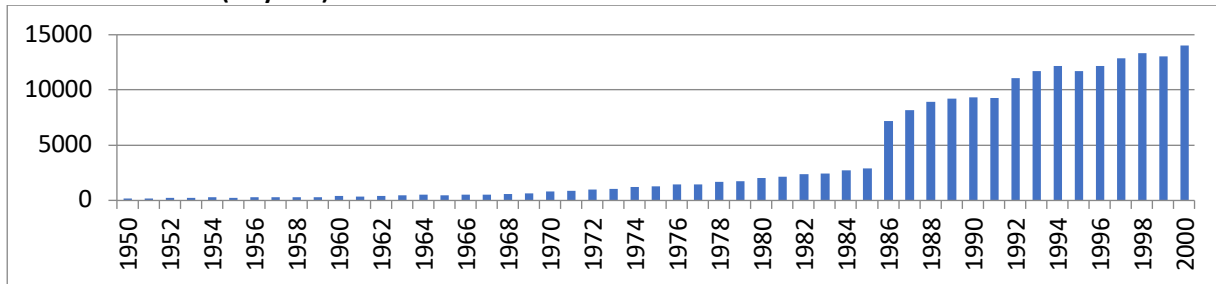
2.2 Number of international association meetings over 150+ years

These charts show the number of international association meetings of Type A from 1850 to 2019.*

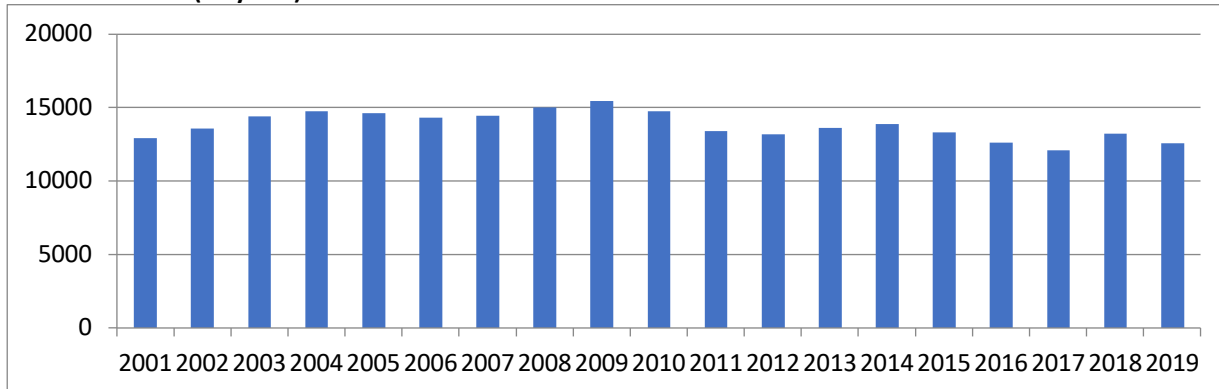
From 1850 to 1950 (100 years)



From 1950 to 2000 (50 years)



From 2001-2019 (18 years)



* The data in this report are drawn from the UIA database, the source of the *International Congress Calendar* and the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

Note that each chart has a different **scale on the Y axis**: number of meetings.

The significant change in the mid-1980s is due to **digitalization** enabling more comprehensive collection of data. UIA still holds a significant paper archive of earlier years.

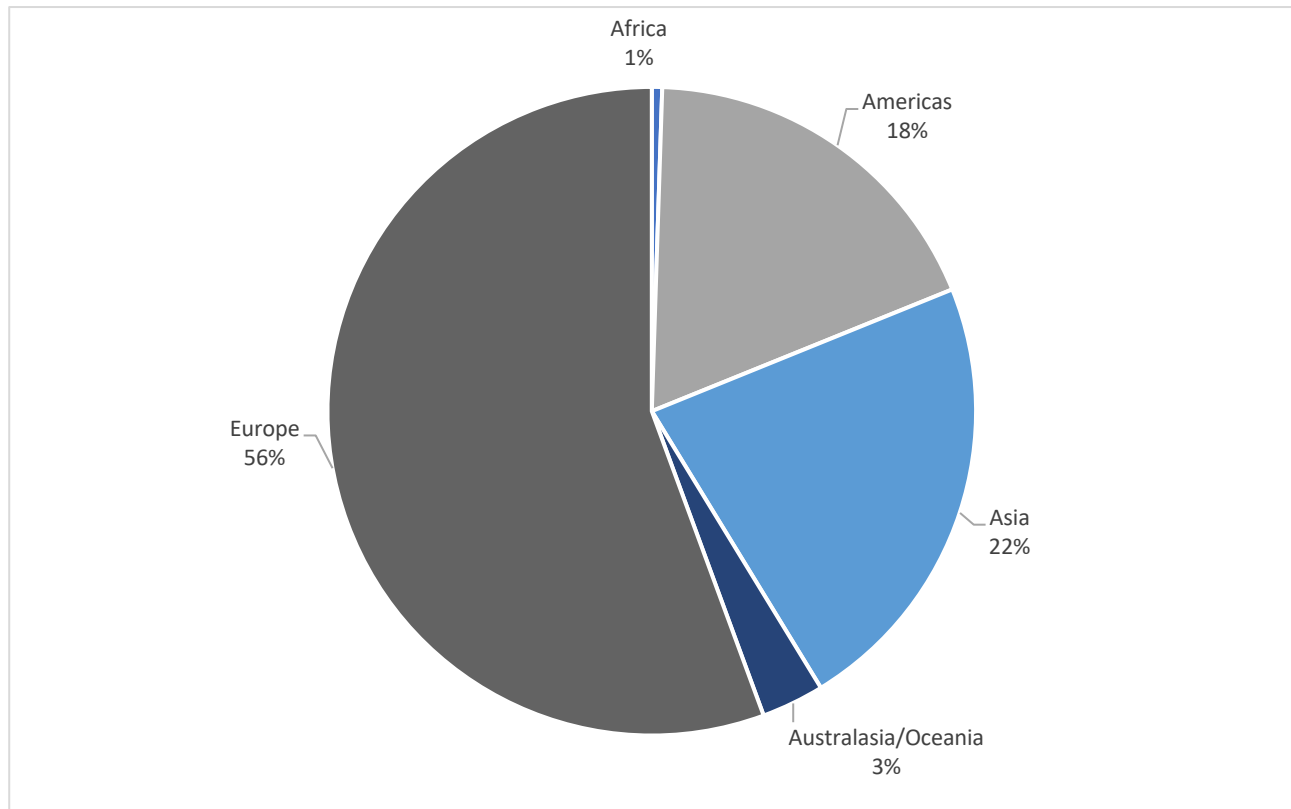
Caveat: The number of meetings in the database for the year just past will, on average, increase by about 11% over the next year, by about 34% over the following five years, and by about 37% over the following seven years.

Definitions of meetings of Type A, of Type B, and of Type C can be found in "Research methodology" (section 1.1, page 5).

2.3 Meetings by continent

2.3.1 Continental division in the past 20 years

This chart shows how the international association meetings of Type A held from 2000 to 2019 are spread over the continents.*



* The data in this report are drawn from the UIA database, the source of the *International Congress Calendar* and the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

Caveat: The number of meetings in the database for the year just past will, on average, increase by about 11% over the next year, by about 34% over the following five years, and by about 37% over the following seven years.

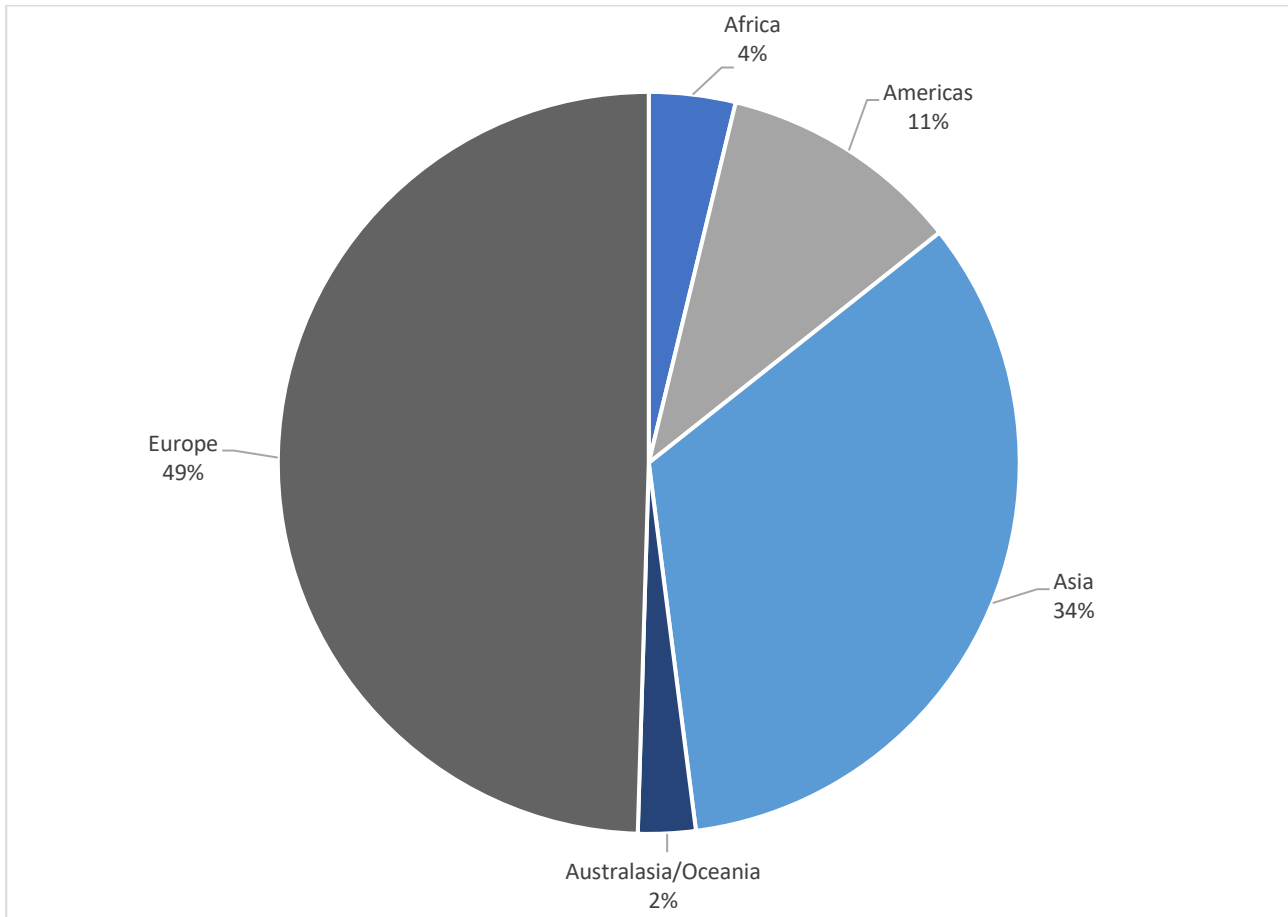
Definitions of meetings of Type A, of Type B, and of Type C can be found in "Research methodology" (section 1.1, page 5).

Countries and cities: see "Research Methodology" regarding geographical names.

Continental divisions follow UIA's standard practice.

2.3.2 Continental division in 2019

This chart shows how the international association meetings of Type A held in 2019 are spread over the continents.*



* The data in this report are drawn from the UIA database, the source of the *International Congress Calendar* and the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

Caveat: The number of meetings in the database for the year just past will, on average, increase by about 11% over the next year, by about 34% over the following five years, and by about 37% over the following seven years.

Definitions of meetings of Type A, of Type B, and of Type C can be found in "Research methodology" (section 1.1, page 5).

Countries and cities: see "Research Methodology" regarding geographical names.

Continental divisions follow UIA's standard practice.

2.4 Meeting size

2.4.1 Meeting size over 20 years

This table shows the total number of international association meetings of Type A for each category of participant numbers from 2000 to 2019.*

Number of meetings by category of participant numbers at Type A meetings in 2000-2019			
Participants	Total meetings 2000-2019	Average meetings per year	% of total meetings 2000-2019
≤ 100	20,406	1020.3	27.3%
101 to 500	35,995	1799.8	48.3%
501 to 1000	9,044	452.2	12.1%
1001 to 3000	6,188	309.4	8.3%
3001 to 5000	1,430	71.5	1.9%
5001 to 7000	516	25.8	0.7%
> 7000	948	47.4	1.3%

* The data in this report are drawn from the UIA database, the source of the *International Congress Calendar* and the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

Caveat: The number of meetings in the database for the year just past will, on average, increase by about 11% over the next year, by about 34% over the following five years, and by about 37% over the following seven years.

Definitions of meetings of Type A, of Type B, and of Type C can be found in "Research methodology" (section 1.1, page 5). Only meetings with a known number of **participants** are included in this table.

2.5 Meeting duration

2.5.1 Meeting duration for 20 years

This table shows the total number of international association meetings of Type A of different durations from 2000 to 2019.*

Number of Type A meetings by duration in 2000-2019			
Days	Total meetings 2000-2019	Average meetings / year	% of total meetings 2000-2019
1 day	27,243	1,362.2	12.3%
2 days	41,463	2,073.2	18.6%
3 days	58,584	2,929.2	26.3%
4 days	44,158	2,207.9	19.8%
5 days	30,838	1,541.9	13.8%
> 5 days	20,602	1,030.1	9.2%

* The data in this report are drawn from the UIA database, the source of the *International Congress Calendar* and the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

Caveat: The number of meetings in the database for the year just past will, on average, increase by about 11% over the next year, by about 34% over the following five years, and by about 37% over the following seven years.

Definitions of meetings of Type A, of Type B, and of Type C can be found in "Research methodology" (section 1.1, page 5).

The *International Meetings Statistics Report* is produced for the use of the Associate Members of the Union of International Associations. The Report is available for their exclusive use the first three months following publication.

Custom research reports based on these and more data from the UIA database are available on request.

Associated and complementary information is available in the *Yearbook of International Organizations, Volume 5: Statistics, Visualizations and Patterns*.

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