

# LITA Close to Home: Developing Local Support Networks

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## Goal

To explore how to create more localized conversations and engagement opportunities for LITA members.

## Project Components

- Review of existing local group models
- Survey of identified local group leaders and parent organizations
- Survey of LITA membership
- Recommendations and best practices
- Timeline for pilot/test implementation

## Building Insight Through Model Research

To initiate the LITA Close to Home project we began by conducting research on the existing structures used for local groups associated with library and technology focused organizations. Through this information gathering initiative we surveyed local group structures, their successes and failures, and their alignment with LITA's goals in starting local peer-networking groups. The analyzed results were then used to outline current local group models and inform our final recommendations to LITA, which included best practices for initiating and running local groups.

Groups surveyed fit into three models:

### Model 1: Groups who are part of a parent organization

This model is characterized by groups that exist as part of a larger organization. Examples of this model include GLA NMRT, YALSA, itsMF, ARLIS-NA and ELUNA.

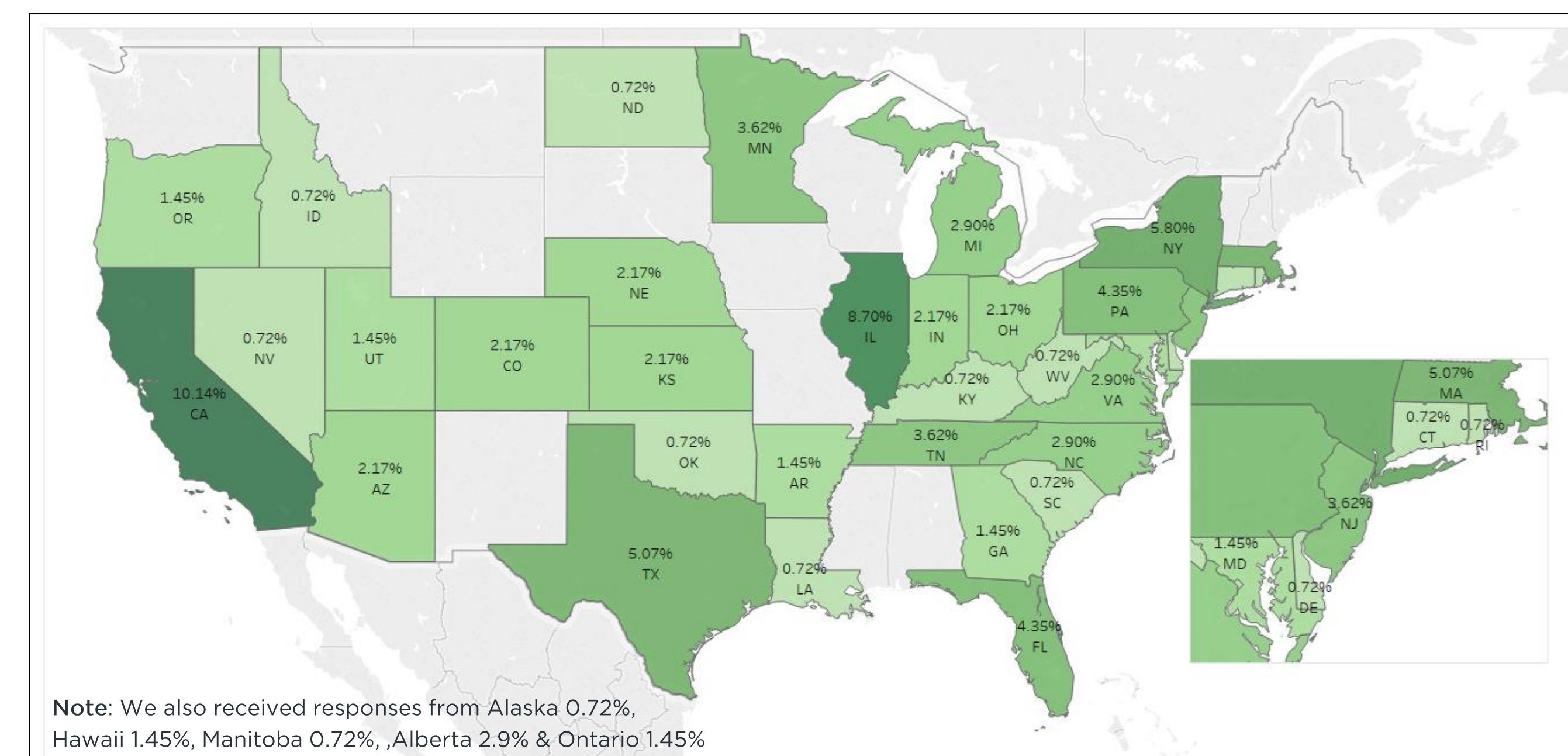
### Model 2: Groups through affiliation

This model is characterized by independent organizations which are affiliated with the parent organization through some formal process. Examples of this model include ACRL and ALCTS.

### Model 3: Informal groups

This model is characterized by groups with an informal structure and organization. Examples of this model include the Carpentries and Code4Lib.

## Surveying LITA Membership



### Number of Respondents:

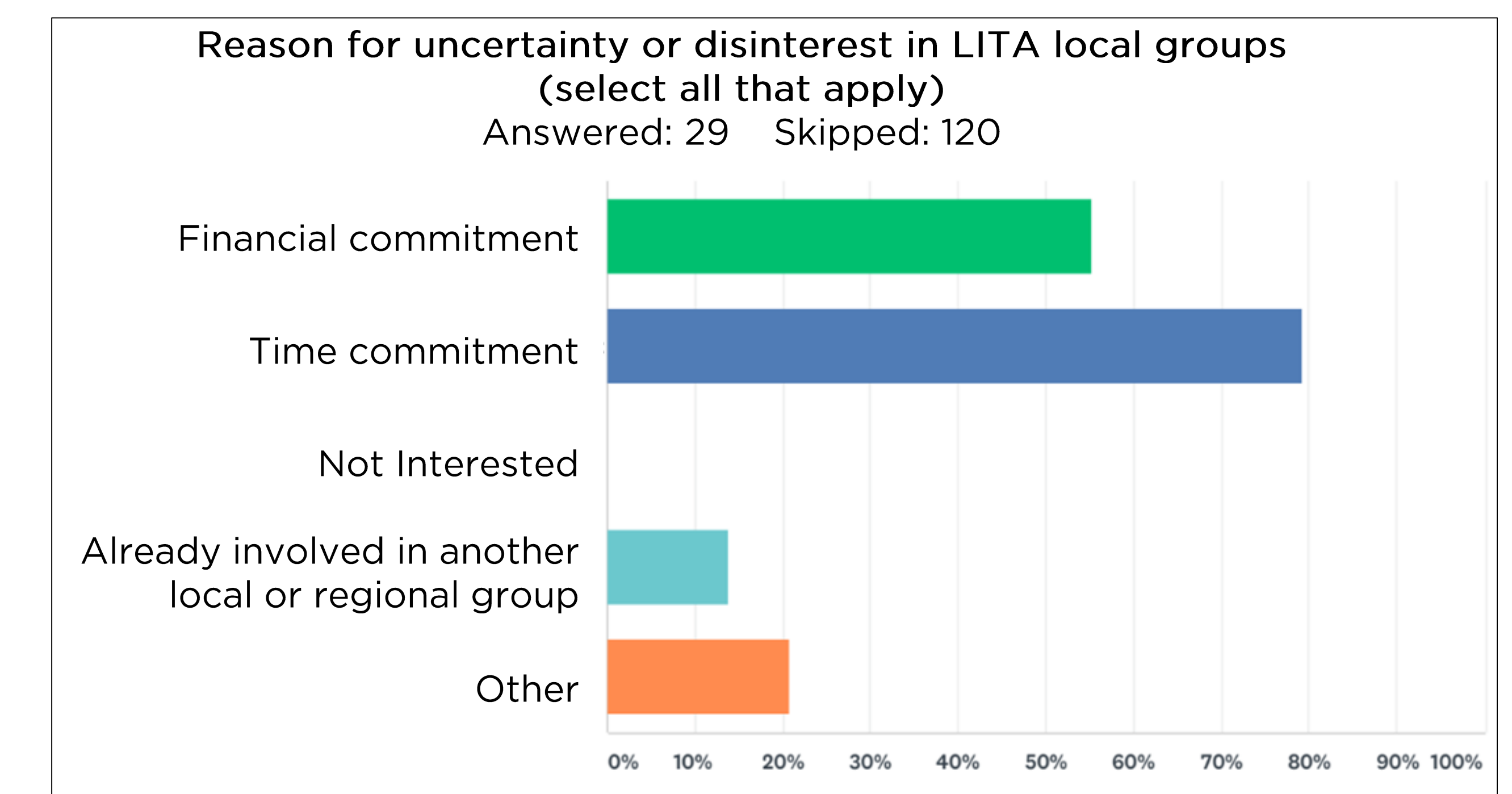
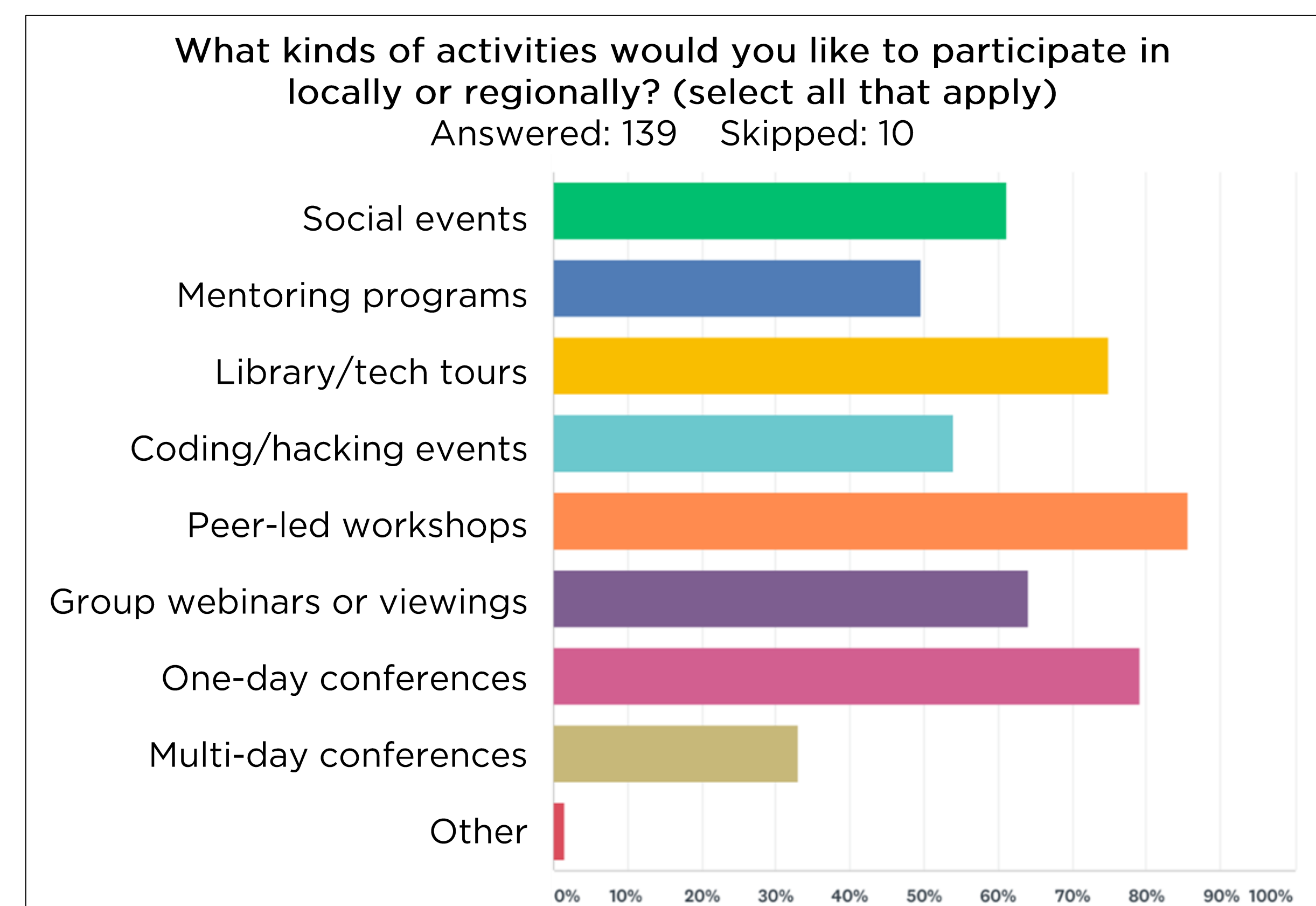
149 total, 78% are interested in participating in local or regional groups, 21% are not sure, and 1% are not interested.

### Key Findings:

- There is interest in local groups
- Yearly or quarterly meetings are preferable
- Most would only like to travel 1-3 hours one way
- Region identified for test group: Midwest, based out of Chicago
  - Based on survey respondent location and indicated interest to serve in local leadership

### Potential Barriers Identified:

- Time commitments
- Financial commitments
- Employer support
- Lack of invested local leadership



## Member Comments

"Smaller local meetings that focus on education would be very helpful to me, and much more possible to attend than large national conferences."

"I love the thought of more accessible, affordable, and local ways of connecting with peers, but travel costs can be prohibitive when my employer is unable to assist with those costs."

"I've always wondered who else in the state participated in LITA so this will be most welcome."

"I'm glad to see you're looking into this as an option. I connect informally with folks in my regional area but since we typically have slightly different responsibilities we don't typically see each other at annual conferences."

"Would love to see more local LITA. Though I enjoy being a part of LITA nationally, my local group memberships have given me the most learning and networking value."

## Recommendations and Best Practices

These recommendations and best practices most closely align with Model 1 (groups who are part of a parent organization) as outlined in our model research. However, the guidelines below also borrow from the successes of other models.

The following is a highlight of our final recommendations:

### Initiation

- Start small, ideally with a test group in one local area
- Make EDI a deliberate priority from the beginning

### Governance

- Set up governing documents suited to LITA, such as local group charters, by-laws, and a Code of Conduct
- Encourage local leaders to work out a sustainable structure that will carry the group forward in the future
- Allow local leaders autonomy while also providing support

### Funding and Resources

- Establish a funding structure but also encourage the use of low or no cost local resources to supplement funding

### Buy-In

- Identify geographical areas where invested leadership and member interest is strong
- Keep in mind that different areas may have very different needs and goals for the local group will reflect that

### Communication Structure

- At the point that multiple local groups become active, create a position in LITA that is devoted to communication with those local groups

### Activities

- Determine the needs of your local groups first and then build activities and programming to meet those needs
- LITA members showed the most interest in the following activities: peer-led workshops, one-day conferences, and library/tech tours