

Simpler Meetings

Trustees and Treasurers Conference

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Simpler Meetings

- Find ways to reduce the administrative burdens on key role holders, mainly:
 - AM trustees, AM treasurers and AM clerks.
- To liberate Quakers for spiritual nurture, community building, outreach and witness.

4 elements of the project

- Find and share ways that work for Friends
- Focused work with a few AMs on significant changes
- Develop model policies and templates for AMs
- Promote a culture of simplicity in the support offered by BYM

3 year project: 1 worker + small budget

Not national structures etc.

A response to

- A relatively small group, often 70+
- Overburdened and not sustainable.
- Declining membership and attendance
- Ageing society Joining later
- Modern lives Single Quaker households
- Complex regulation Register small charities by March 2021

Listening and asking

- Quaker role holders and interested Friends
- Woodbrooke tutors & associate tutors
- Quaker Stewardship Committee
- BYM staff
- Groups in AMs:
 - Devon, North Wales, Scotland,
 - Lincolnshire, London, Norfolk +

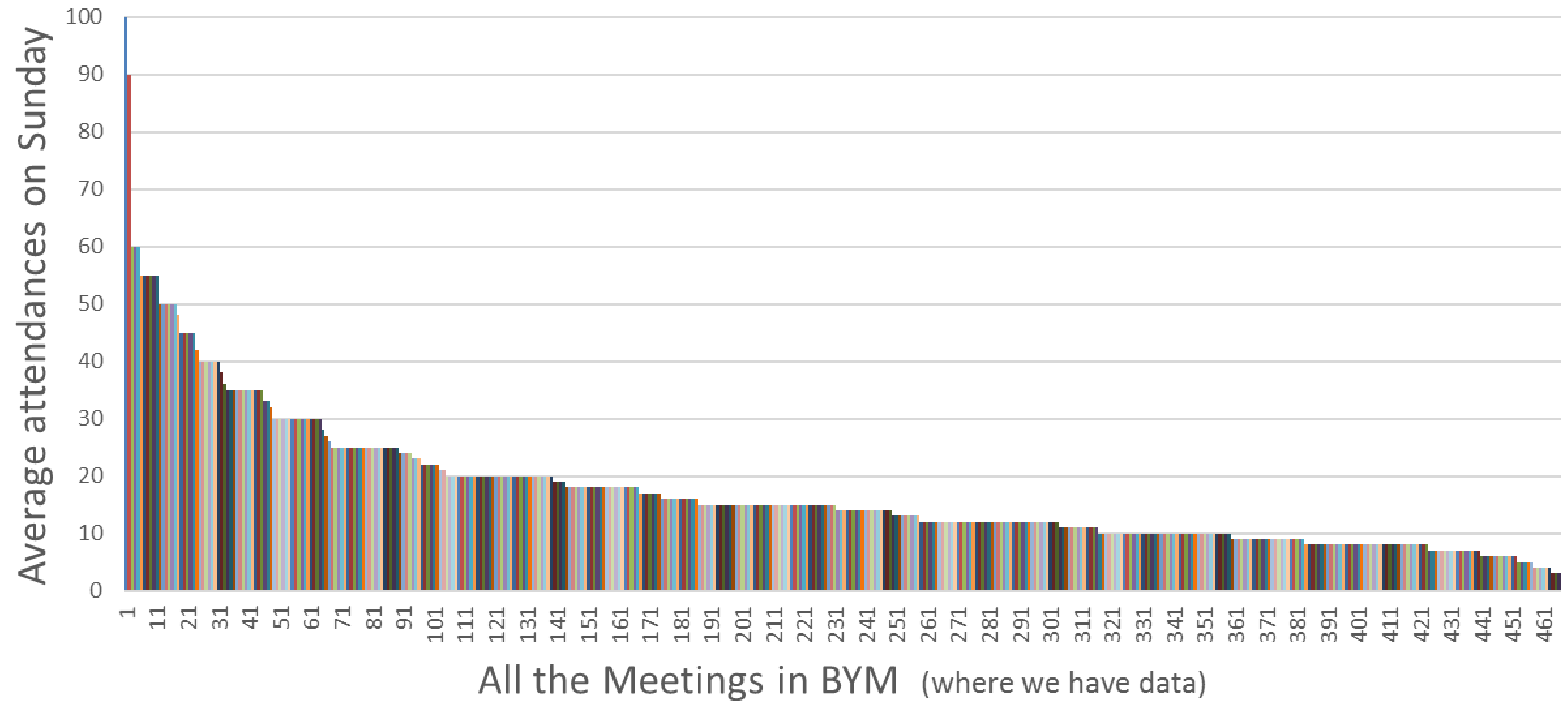
Variation

- Geography of AMs
- Number & size of local meetings
- History, identity, activities
- Meeting Houses - age, not having one
- How AMs are organised
- Individuals

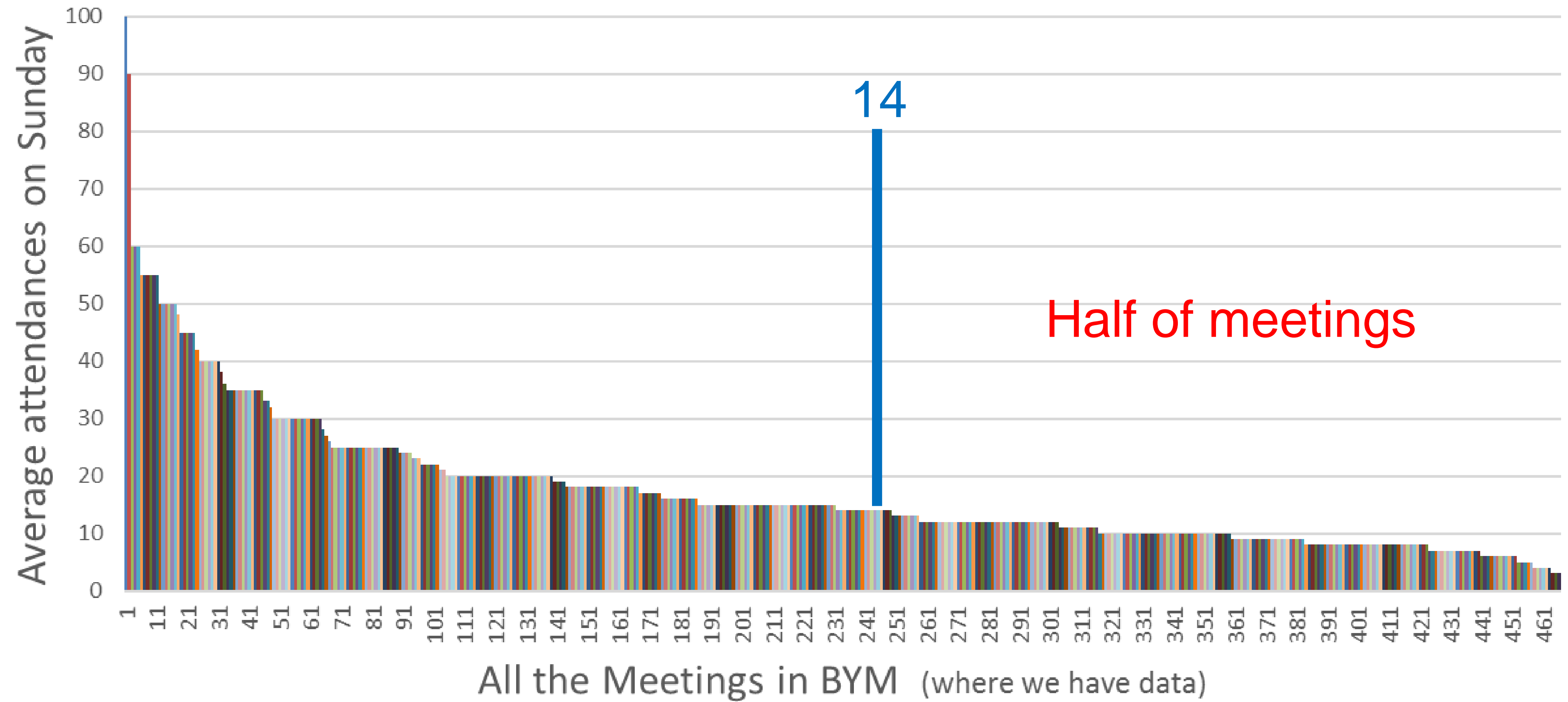
Not one size fits all

- Lots of good new ways of doing things
- Multiple possibilities
- Permission
- Menu of choices

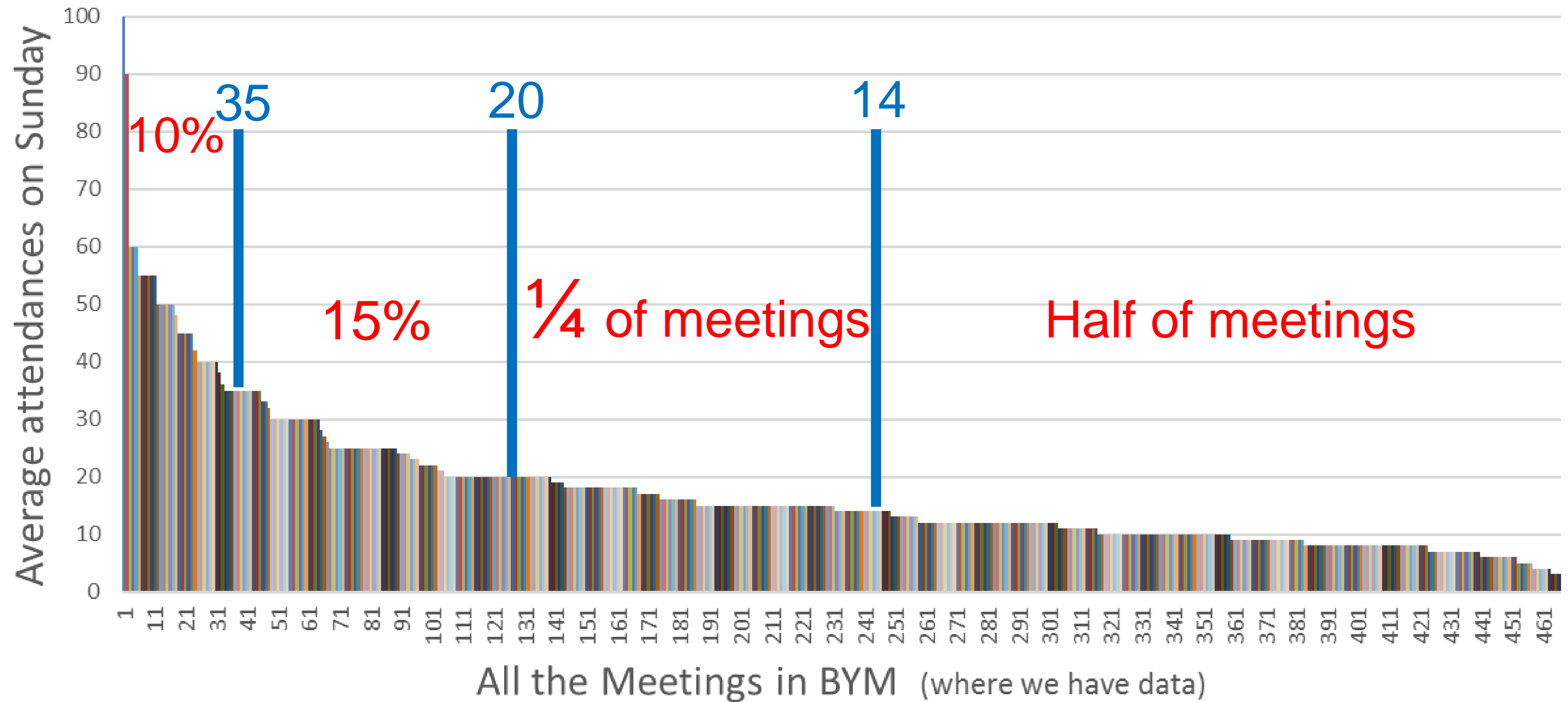
Average attendances at Meeting on a Sunday in BYM 2017



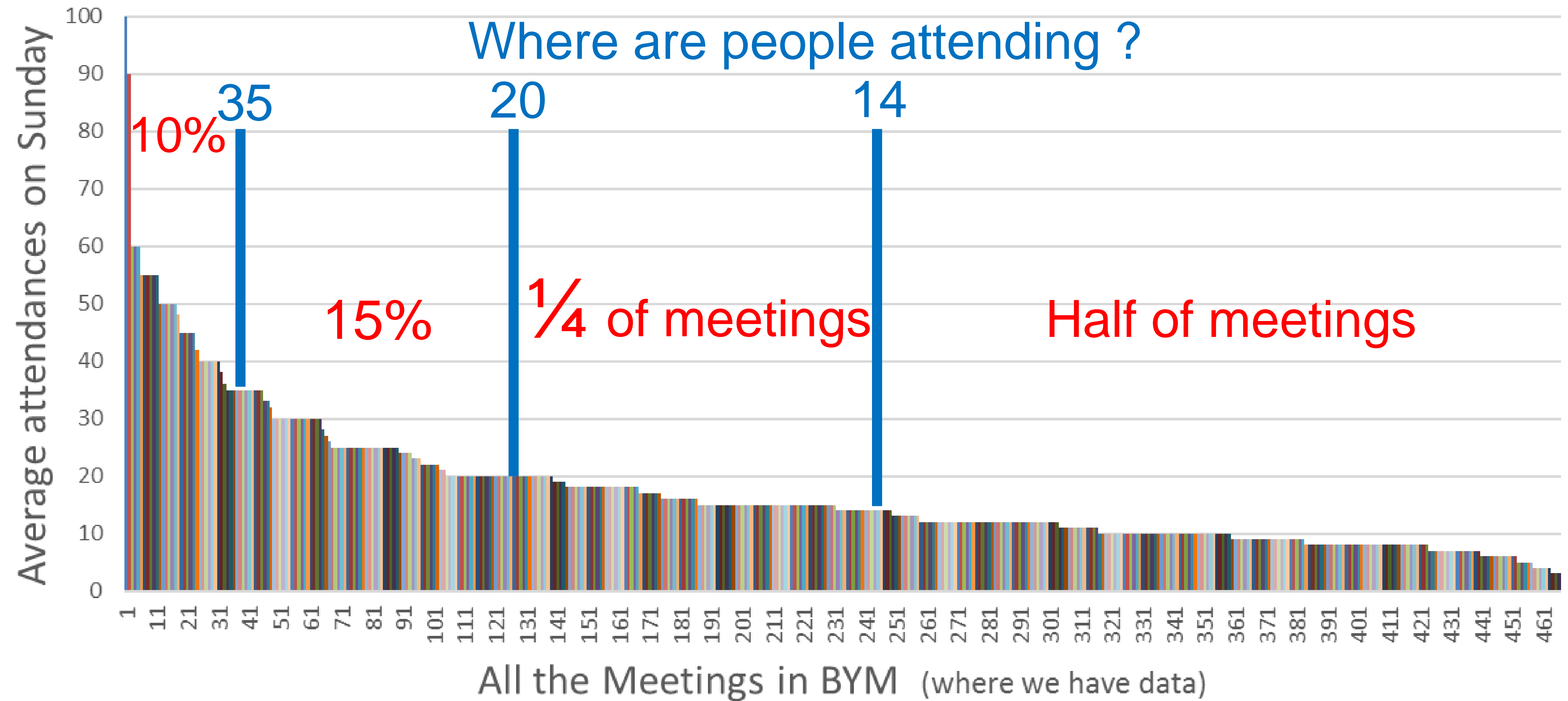
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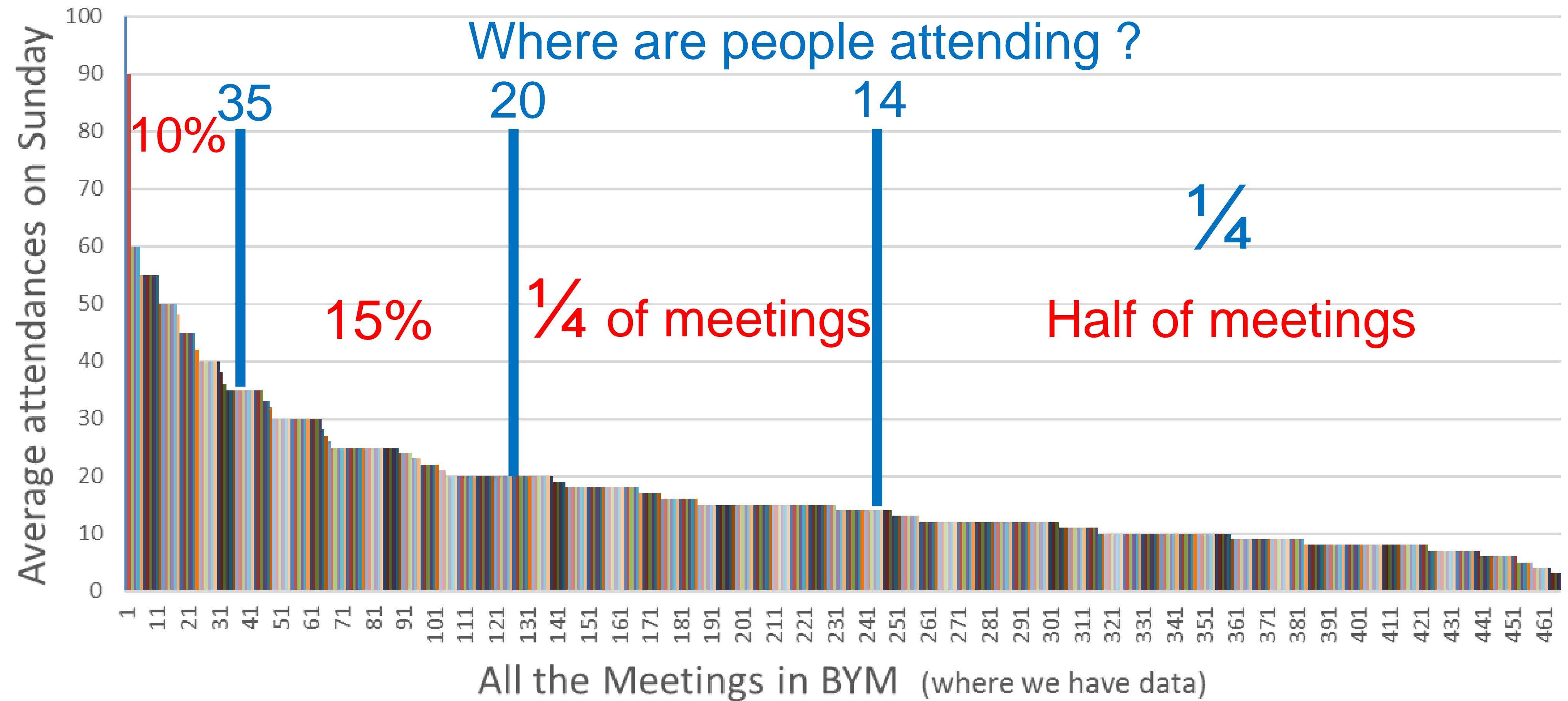
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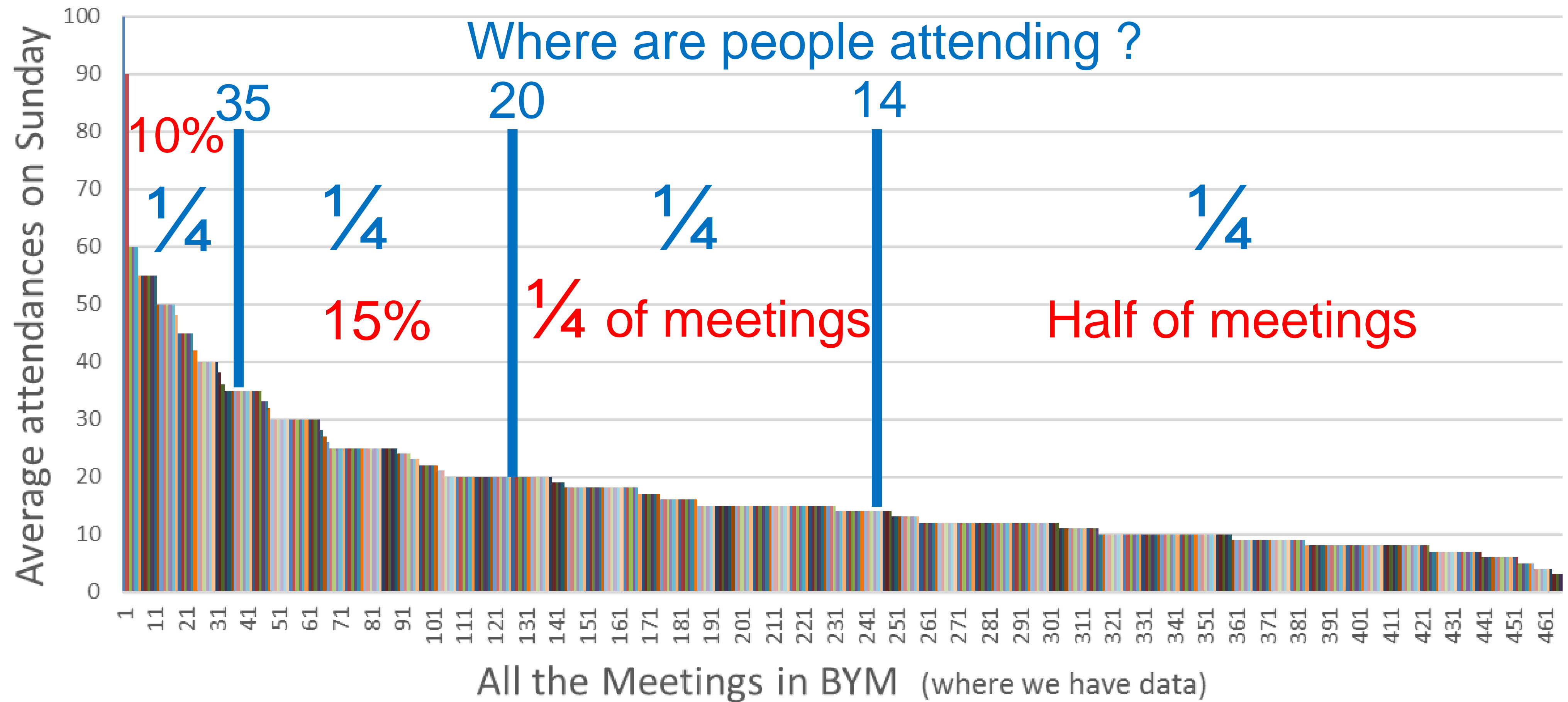
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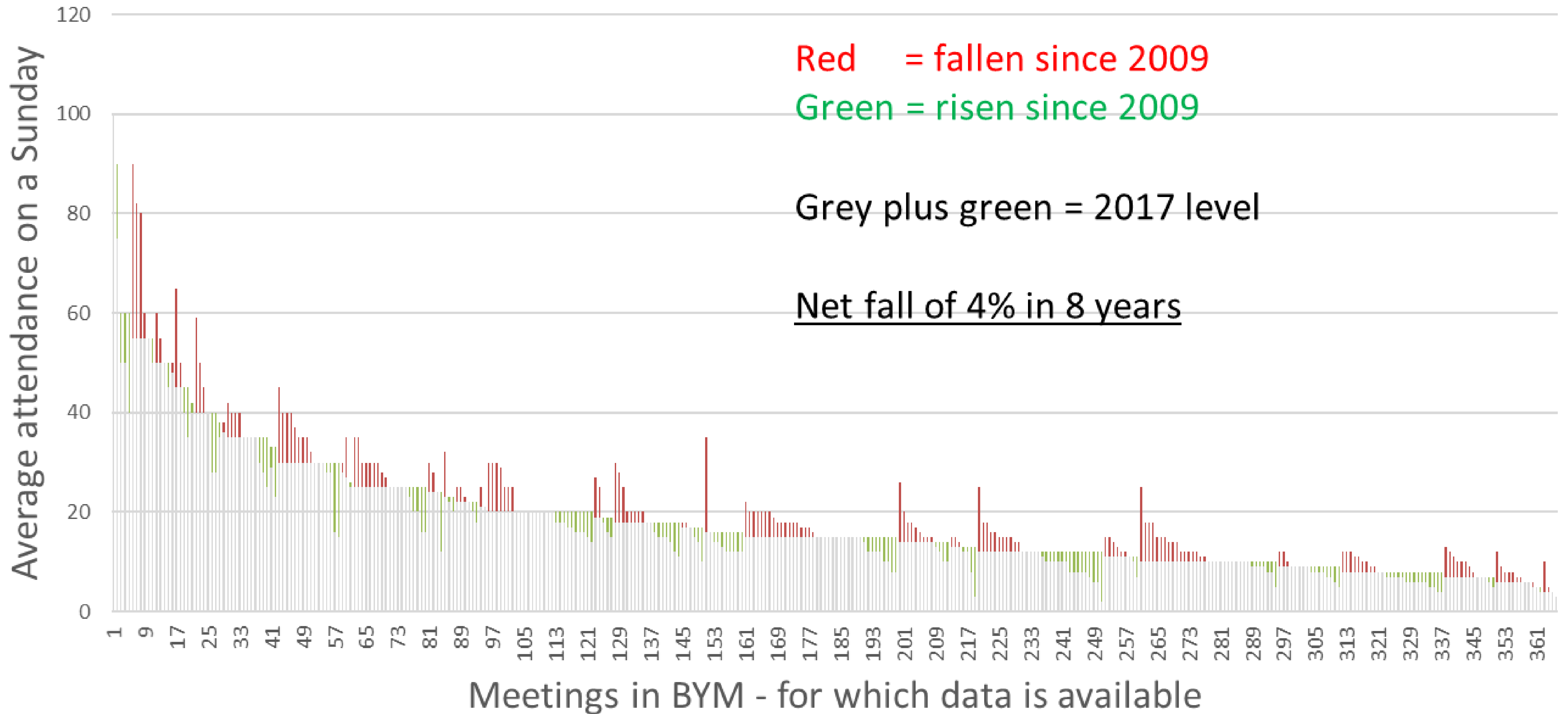
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Average attendances at Meeting on a Sunday in BYM 2017



Changes in average attendance on Sunday 2009 to 2017



For any roleholder 1

- Is the role clear?
- ? Divide or combine roles: using skills and time.
Delegating.
- Support person – admin, IT, technical
- Flexibility
- Fitting people into roles, or fitting tasks to people's skills?

For any roleholder 2

- Handover and induction
- Support from a buddy, former roleholders, other AMs, BYM
- Get together to share ideas and support – area and wider
- Training – large and small
- National resources – in print and on BYM website

Area Meetings & role holders

- Review key roles: AM Clerk, Treasurer, Clerk of Trustees
- Review other roles
 - Do we really need them all? Trying to cover too much?
- Could share some roles with other AMs?
 - Safeguarding, Registering Officer etc
- Relationships and interactions?

For trustees

- Role clarity
- Relationship with Area Meeting – decisions & duplication
- Prioritise
- Use sub-groups ? Include non-trustees on sub-groups ?
- Work with neighbouring Areas Meetings ?
- Adapt and adopt model policies – instead of re-inventing wheels

Model Policies

- Already :
 - Employment: Disciplinary, Grievance, Sickness, Annual Leave, Employee data protection,
 - Whistleblowing, Data Protection
- Next few months:
 - Safeguarding Bullying & Harassment
 - Risk Equal Opportunities
 - Health & Safety Complaints
- More to follow...

Employees

- Employees could work for more than one AM
- One AM could act as employer for others
- Some are using contractors for some roles, rather than employees - to reduce employment risks

For Treasurers

- Sharing and dividing role
- Meet, talk, share
- Common systems – one treasurer can cover another
- Electronic banking – including dual authorisation
- Bookkeepers – carries load, reduces issues
- Online accounts packages – all is clear and entered once
 - And there's one more ...

Managing property

- Combining small property trusts, or use same trustees?
- Work with other AMs – sharing systems, suppliers?
- A property trust serving several area meetings?
 - Major finances, Major projects
 - Managing buildings
 - Maintenance, utilities, lettings, employment...
- Comprehensive property management service ?
- Focus on increasing income to pay for support ?

Meeting Houses

Meetings are doing these:

- Move to a more useful place
- Use for a social purpose
- Meet in another room, re-use the space
- Sell and then rent a meeting room
- Meet in people's homes (or in a barn!)

**26% of local meetings
in Britain
do not have a meeting house

= 126**

Area Meeting occasions

- AM is a decision making meeting and a community
- Worship, community, concerns, appointments, decisions, learning, overlaps with trustees
- Frequency, time/day, location, length, style, eldership/discipline, inclusion, food !
- ? A group doing preparation + ? some business between AMs
- Could we do some things with another AM?

More Radical

There's a lot more

Permission

to do things differently than you might think

Could we group Meetings differently?

- Small local meetings do not have to do everything !
- What about:
 - Clusters of meetings and worshipping groups
 - Pairing a large and small meeting
 - Several small LMs become a single LM with several meetings and worshipping groups

Do we really need 70+ charities?

Some options:

- Dissolve, and LMs join other AMs.
- Single group of trustees for 2 AMs
- Merge some AMs completely
- Merge AM charities and trustees, continuing to meet as AMs for worship, community, appointments, concerns etc

Is it so bad to pay people?

- Bookkeeper
- Managing lettings
- Property maintenance service
- Administrator (eg for AM clerk, membership)

- Local development worker - Vibrancy
- Youth worker...

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Are we called to be:

**The Religious Society of Community
Centres and Historic Buildings**

?

- Is this meeting house doing God's work / doing good?
- Is it an asset, or a liability?
- What else could Quakers do with these assets? £ and time
- What would George Fox make of all these historic buildings?
- Where would Jesus be?

- Where would it be good for us to meet, Friends?

Digital

- The “Information Age” started 25 years ago
- Paper !!
- Video conferencing – committees
- Video conferencing – so people can join Worship

Afterwards

- Let me know
 - What works in your AM
 - Your reflections

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