

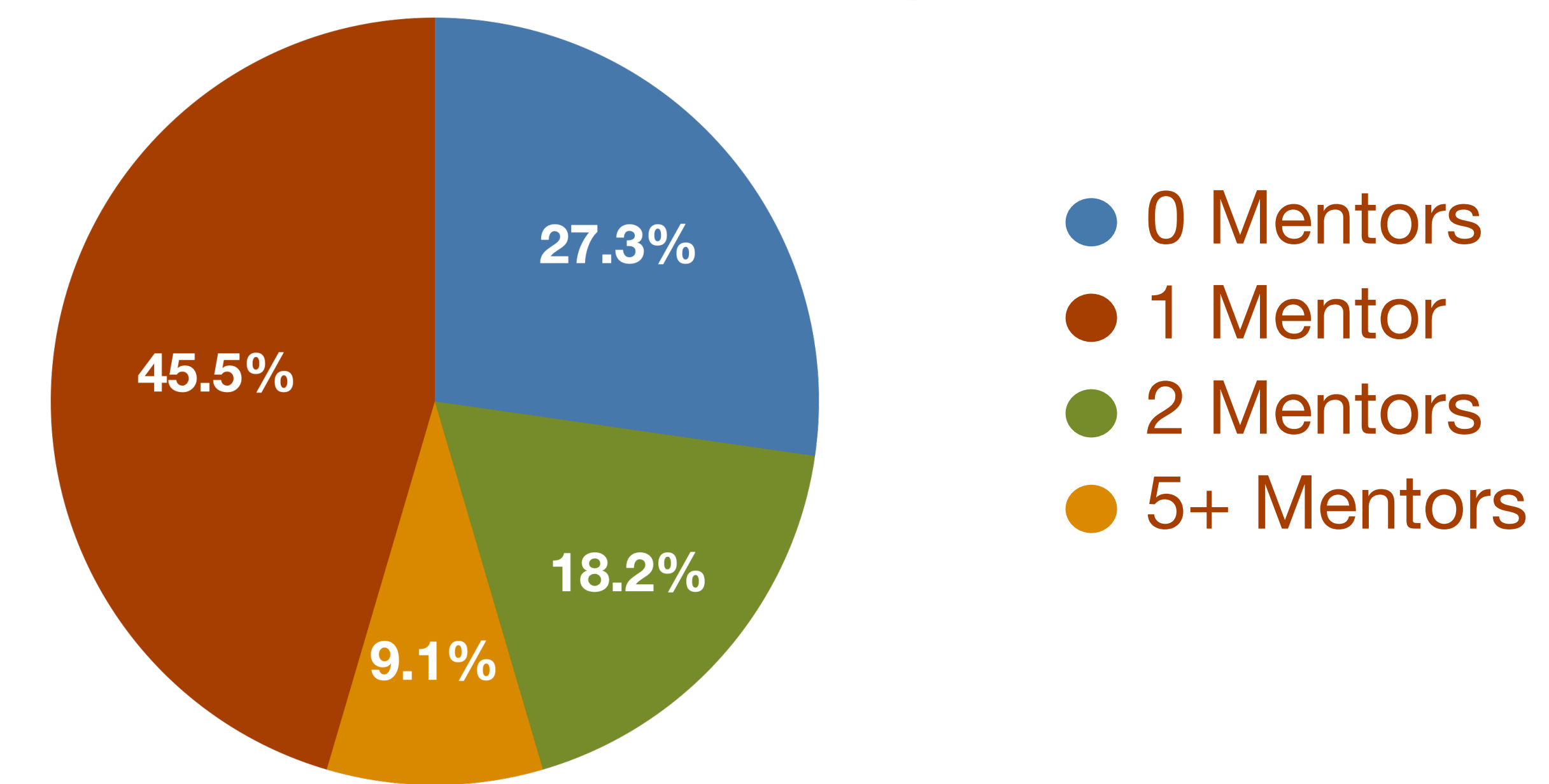
Building Solid Ground:

A Pilot Survey of the Challenges and Strategies of Networking as an Online MLIS Graduate Student.

By Robin Daniels, the iSchool at Syracuse University

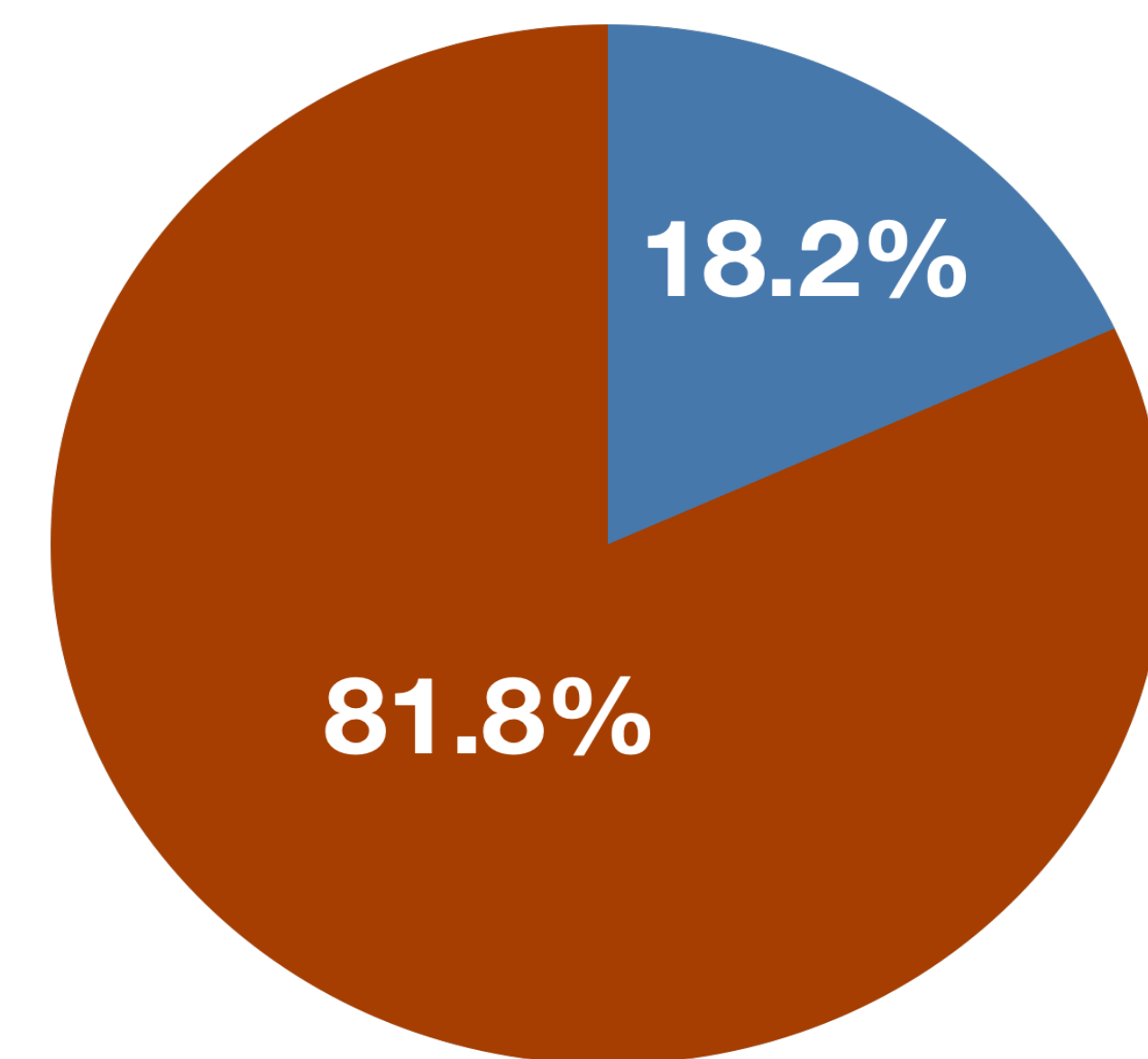
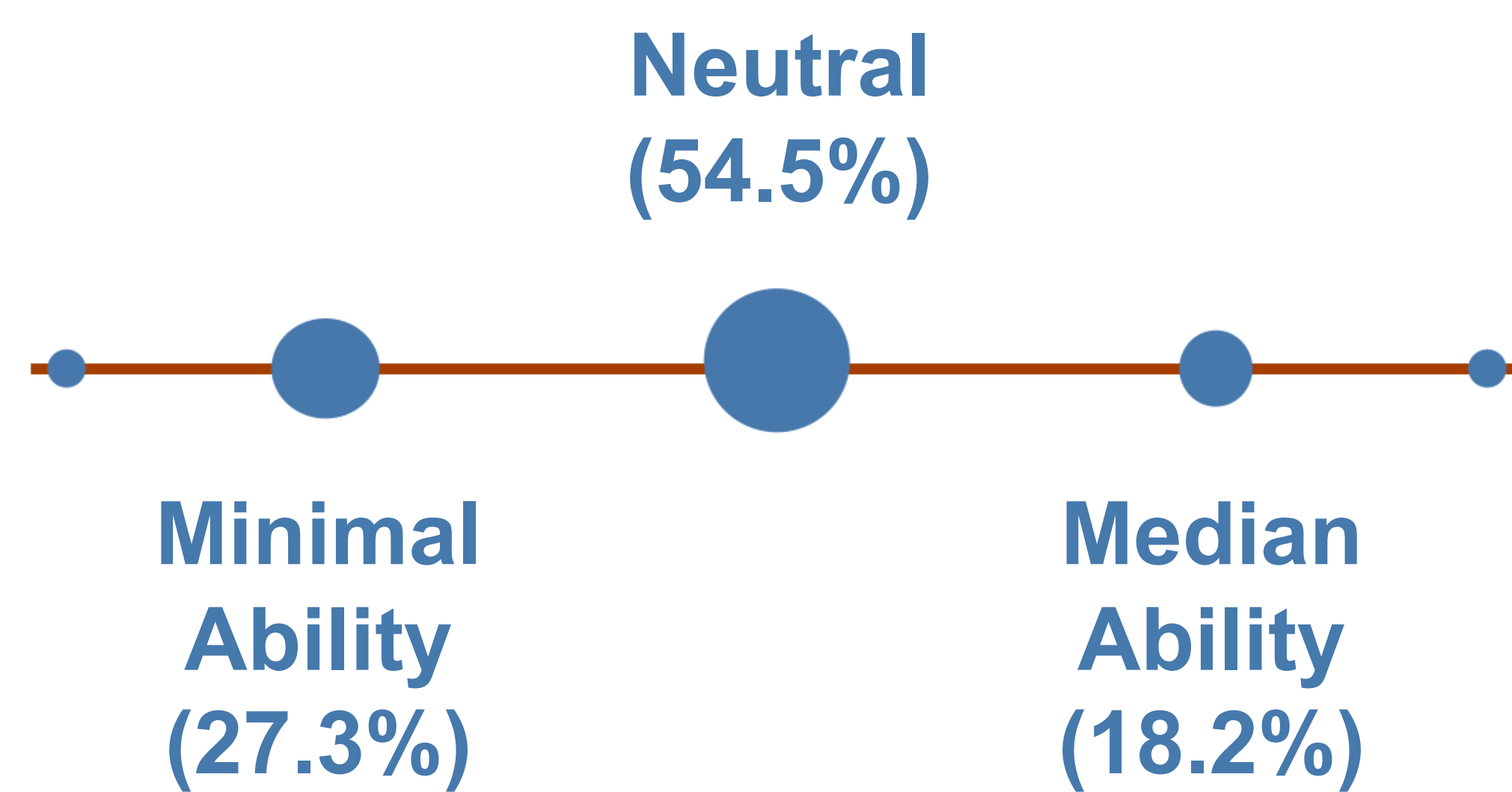
The proliferation of online Masters in Library and Information Science (MLIS) programs make it possible for more students to pursue degrees in information and library science that would have otherwise been impeded by factors such as distance, cost, and scheduling. These entirely online programs also pose unique challenges for students seeking to establish themselves in the field. **This poster will report the results of a survey regarding successful strategies for overcoming these professional development barriers. Participants comprised of 11 current online MLIS students at Syracuse University.**

Online students are trying to reach out to create professional networks. 63.6% have made proactive efforts outside of program requirements.

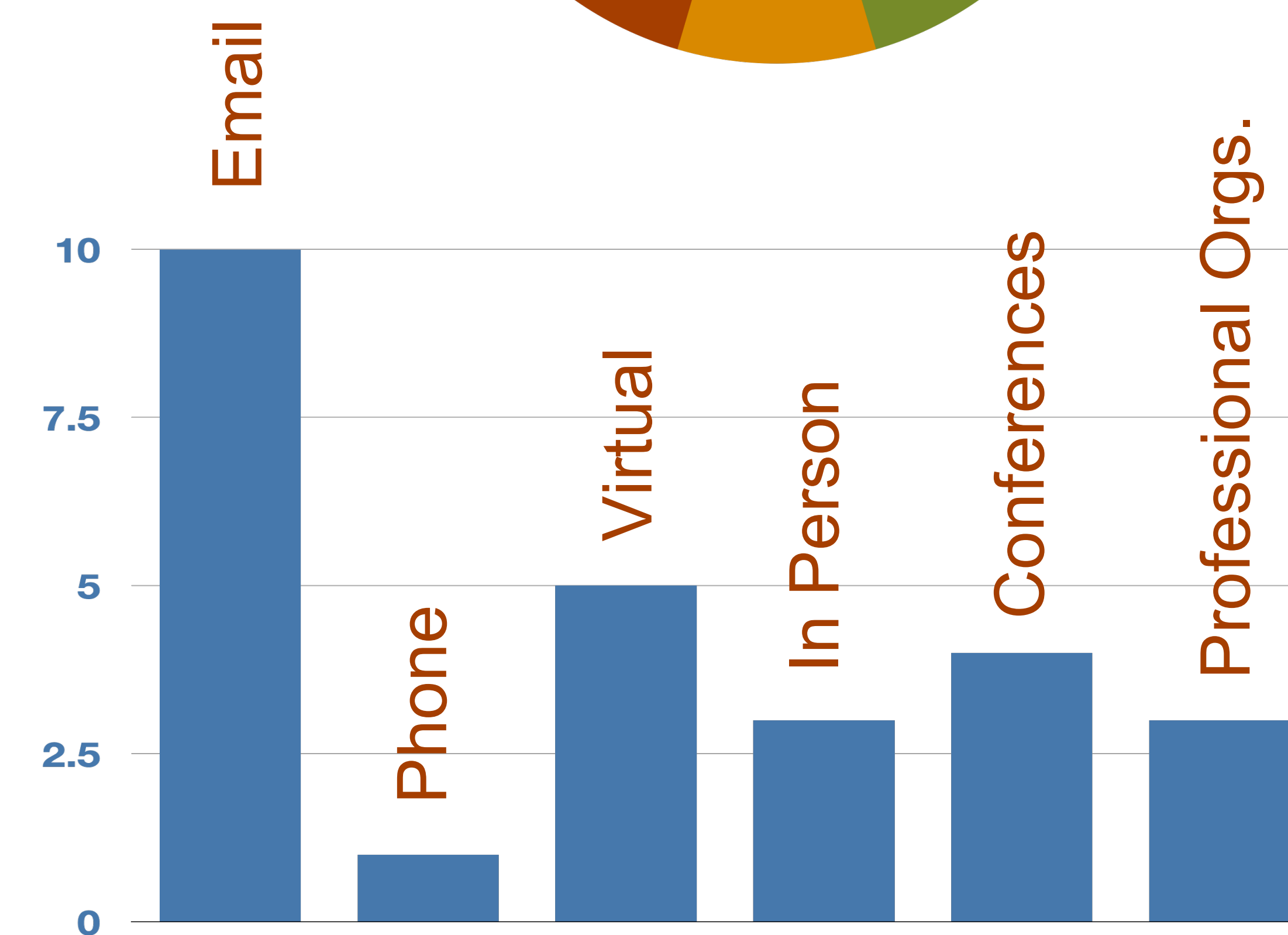


Professional networks are essential to career building, but the majority of online students are not very confident in the strength of their current professional networks.

The **majority** of online students felt at best, "neutral", about their networking opportunities.



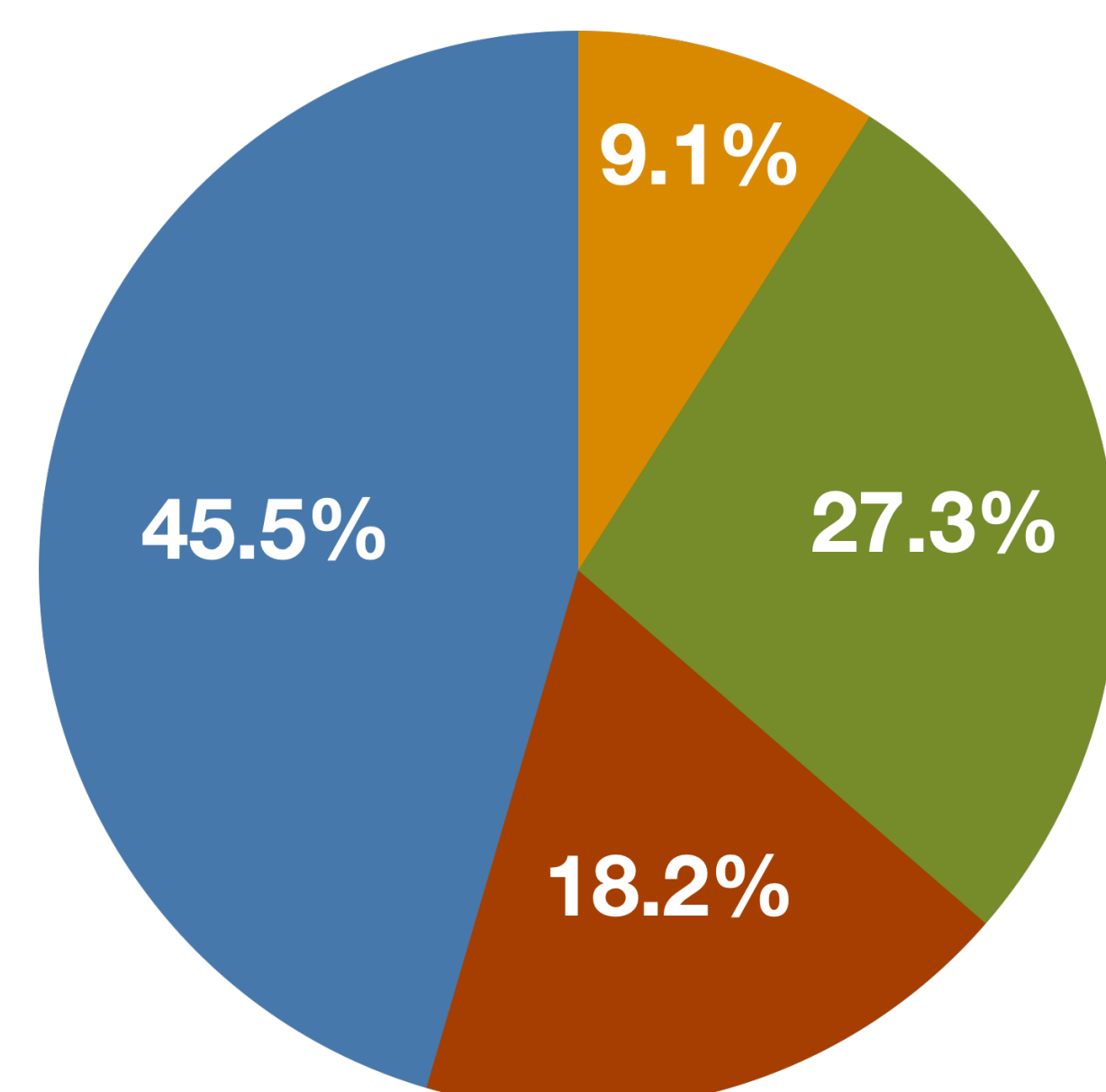
81.8 % of Online MSLIS Students feel networking is harder as a result of their online status.



Online students found **email outreach, virtual meetings, and attending professional conferences** to be the most effective ways of growing their professional network.

The majority of online students felt **slightly connected (36.4 %)** or **neutral (27.3%)** about their connection to the field of librarianship as a profession.

When asked about the strength of their professional networks in terms of helping their entrance to the job field, online students reported:



- 9.1 %** have "no professional network"
- 45.5%** felt "somewhat confident"
- 18.2%** felt "confident"
- 27.3%** felt "very confident"
- 0%** felt professional networks are irrelevant to the job search.

Limitations:

- Limited sample size.
- Response bias caused by limited range of diversity.
- Strength of survey questions.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

Online MLIS students are eager to network. When asked, **100%** of respondents said they would take part in a mentorship program if available. Despite this, most feel only somewhat confident that they have a professional network strong enough to help them secure long term-positions in the library field. **81.8%** of online students indicated they would utilize mentors for professional advice, if available. **Zero** students indicated they thought professional networks were irrelevant to finding a position in the library field.

Online students indicated a readiness to network with current professionals through memberships in professional organizations and attendance at library or information science conferences. Despite this, **54.5%** of online MLIS students reported they were not members of any professional organizations, and **72.7%** had not attended a professional conference.