

Impact of Virtual Offerings and COVID-19 Pandemic on Congress Attendance

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- Attendance at most 2023 oncology congresses has recovered since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the help of virtual offerings at larger meetings
- Infectious disease congresses have grown since the start of the 2019 pandemic, regardless of virtual attendance options

Background

- Virtual offerings of congresses include online attendance of live presentations, real-time interaction, and access to on-demand content^{1,3}
- These virtual congresses allow for flexible scheduling, access to content beyond the congress dates, and reduced cost and carbon footprint^{1,3,4}
- We previously reported that larger oncology conferences with virtual or hybrid platforms were more likely to achieve pre-pandemic attendance compared with smaller conferences, suggesting these platforms may encourage attendance/engagement⁵
- Herein, we provide an updated analysis of the oncology congresses previously assessed and include an assessment of infectious disease (ID) congresses

Objective

- To assess attendance and virtual offerings for oncology and ID congresses from 2019 to 2023

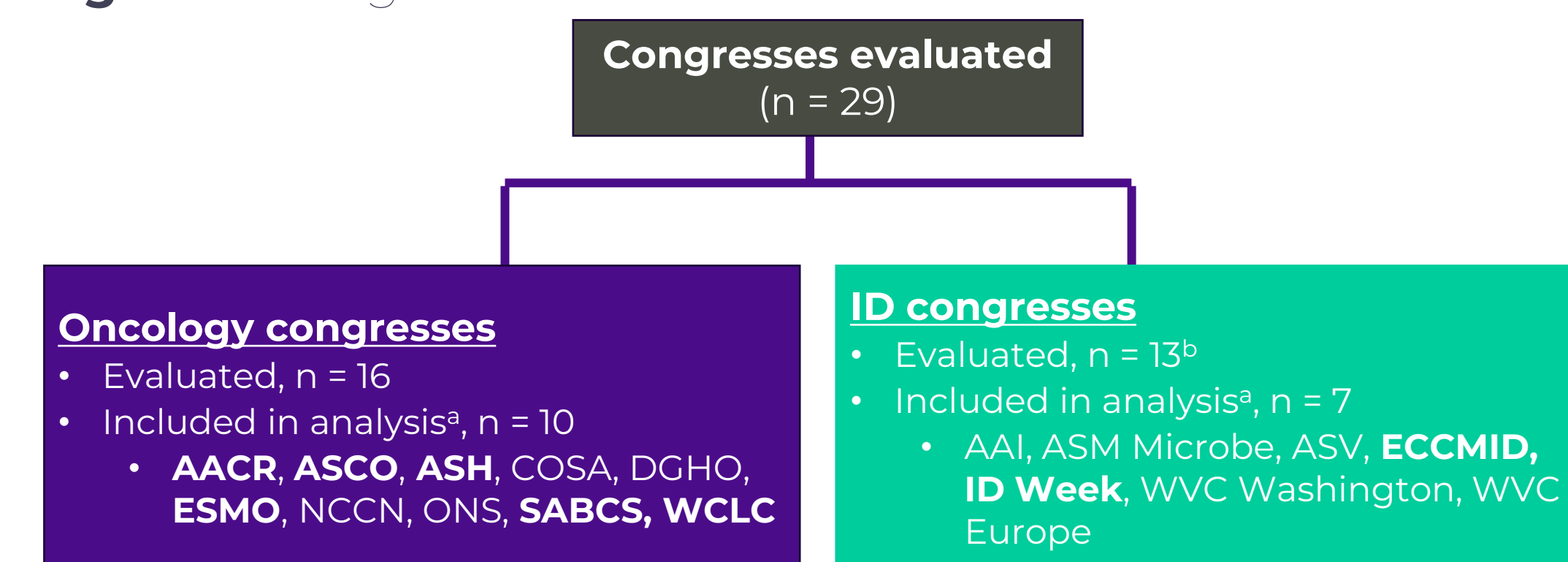
Methods

- We conducted an online search to assess attendance and virtual offerings of oncology and ID congresses from 2019-2023
- The search was limited to a representative sample of principal congresses with ≥1000 in-person attendees in 2019 that transitioned to a virtual format between 2020-2021
- Congresses were emailed directly to request additional information
- Based on our previous analysis of oncology congresses from 2019-2022,⁵ we evaluated small (<8000 attendees in 2019) and large ID congresses (≥8000 attendees in 2019) for trends in attendance and virtual offerings
- Congresses included were those that had publicly available 2023 attendance data

Results

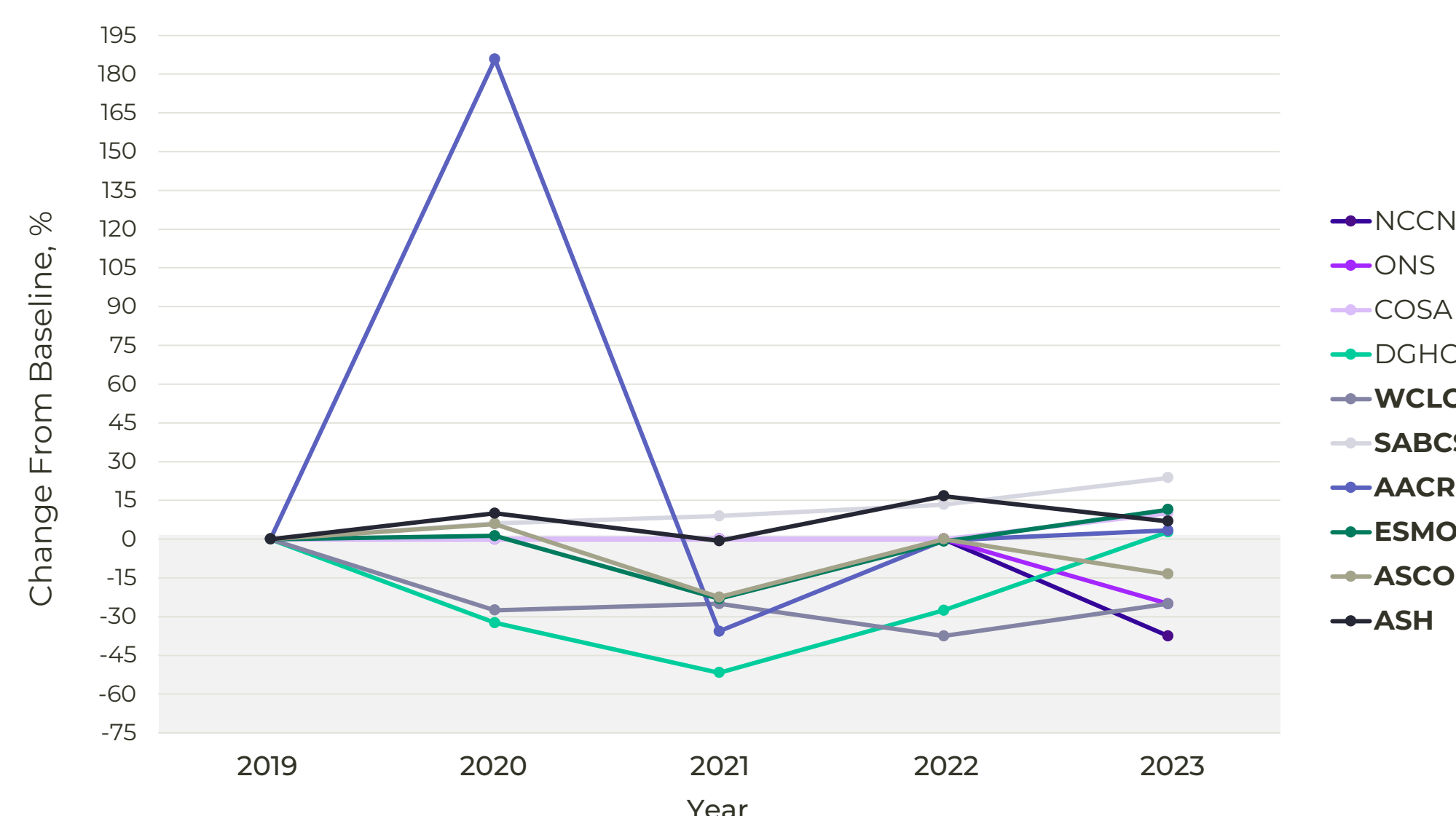
- Of 29 congresses evaluated from North America, Europe, and Asia, 17 were included in this analysis based on availability of 2019 and 2023 attendance data (**Figure 1**)

Figure 1. Congresses Assessed



- Most oncology congresses experienced a reduction in attendance in 2021 and 2022 relative to 2019; however, the majority (60%) had recovered by 2023 (**Figure 2**)

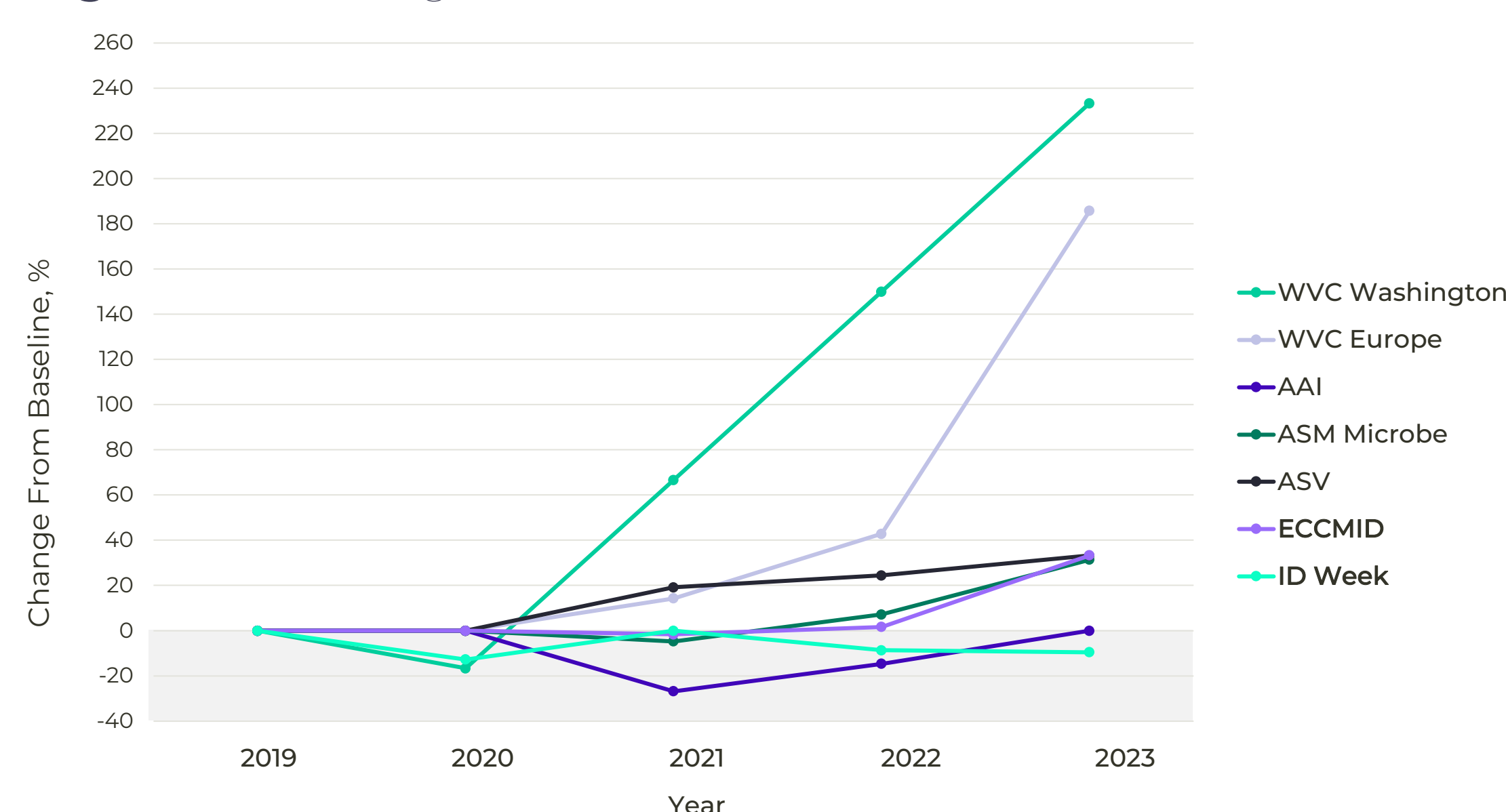
Figure 2. Oncology Congress Attendance Over Time



Bolded congresses were categorized as large (≥8000 attendees in 2019).

- Most ID congresses experienced a notable and sustained increase in attendance since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 6 of 7 achieving or exceeding pre-pandemic attendance levels (**Figure 3**)

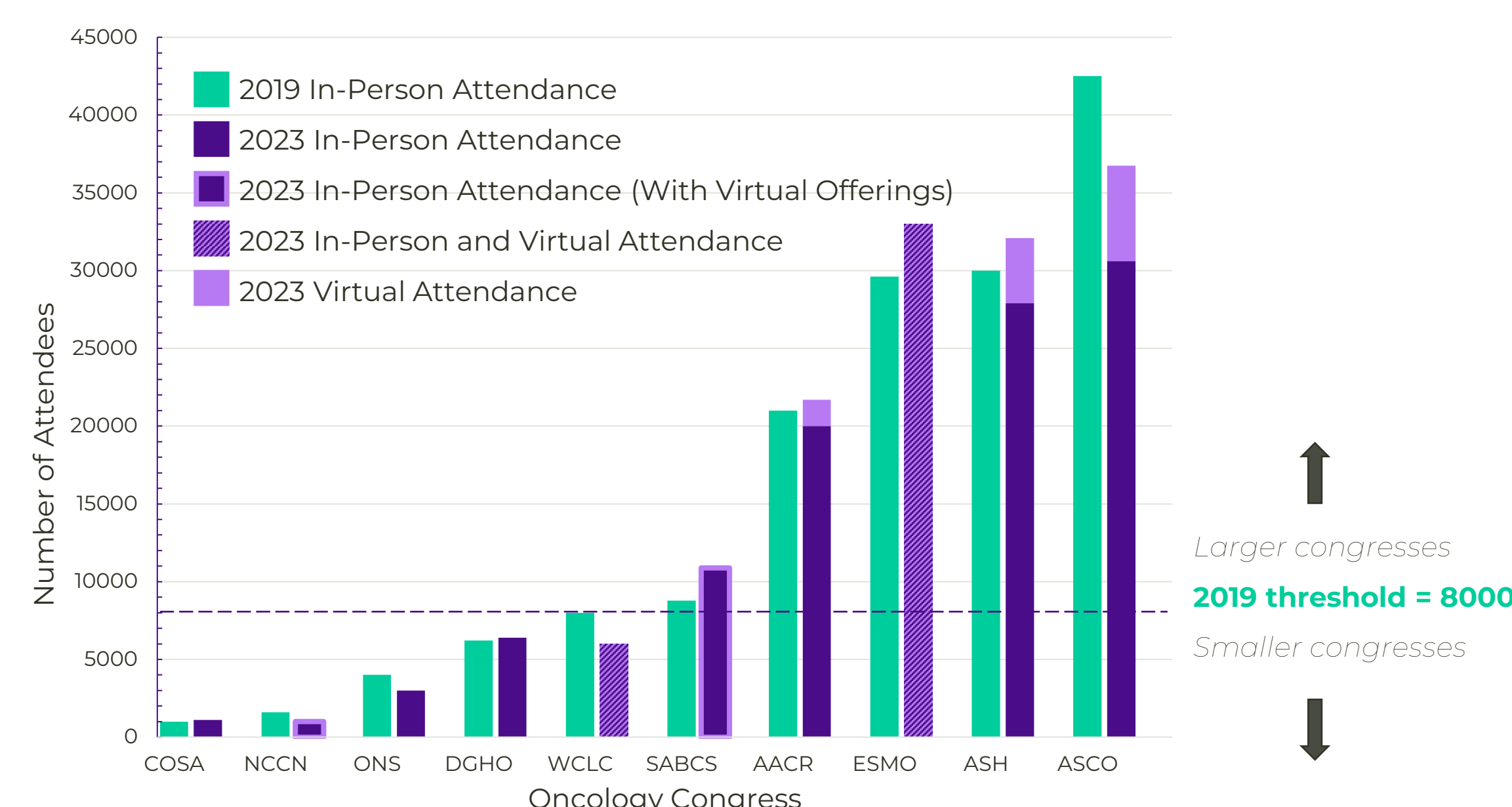
Figure 3. ID Congress Attendance Over Time



Bolded congresses were categorized as large (≥8000 attendees in 2019).

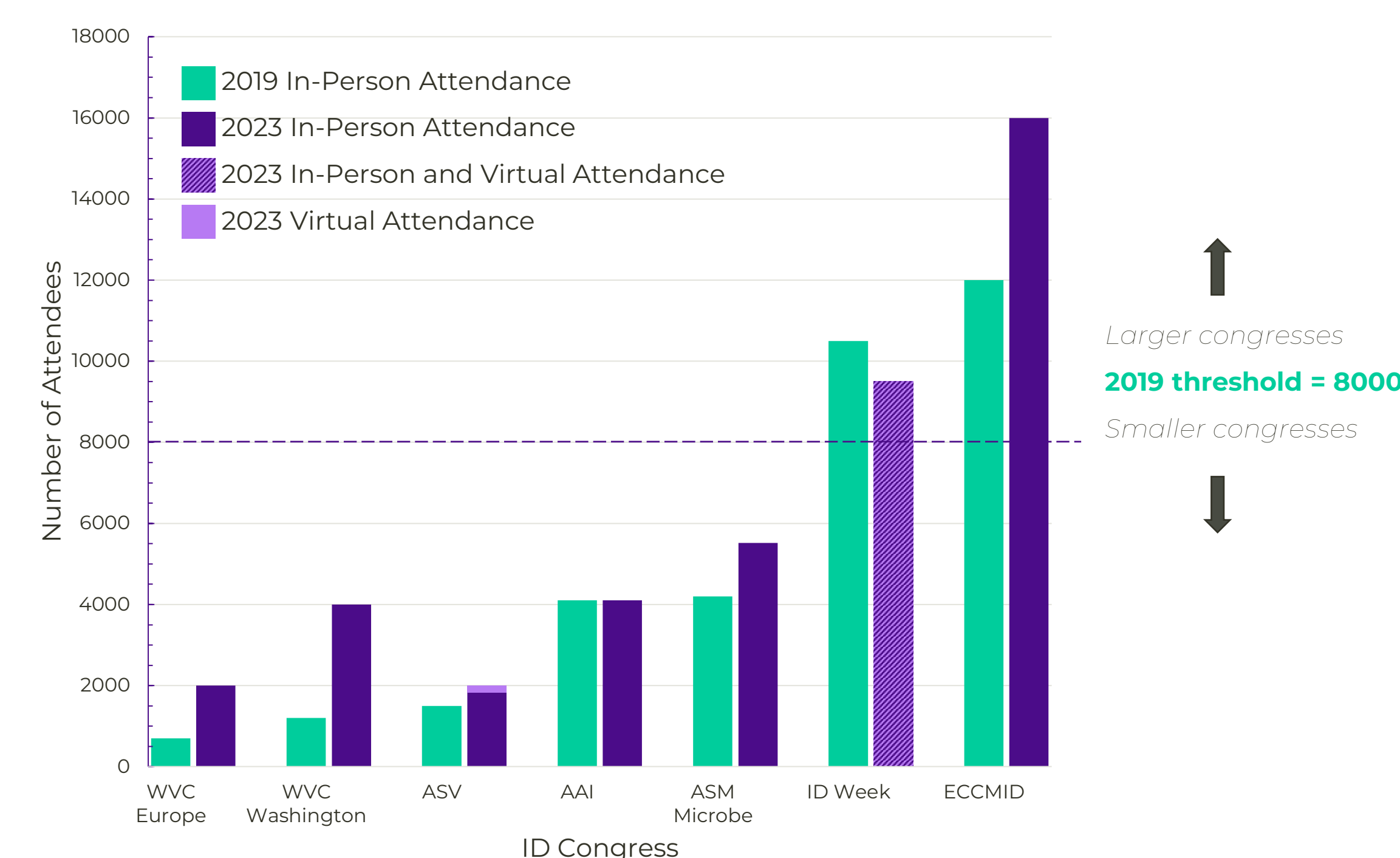
- Among oncology congresses with 2023 attendance data (n=10), 4 of 7 hybrid congresses and 2 of 3 in-person congresses achieved pre-pandemic attendance (**Figure 4**)
- 100% of larger oncology congresses supported virtual attendance in 2023, while among smaller congresses, only NCCN did
- Half of smaller oncology congresses achieved pre-pandemic attendance levels compared with 4 of 6 of the larger oncology congresses

Figure 4. Oncology Congresses: Attendance Recovery



- 2023 in-person attendance at all ID congresses met or exceeded 2019 levels, except for ID Week (**Figure 5**)
- Among ID congresses with 2023 attendance data (n=7), 5 of them have *not* persisted with virtual attendance options
- ID Week—despite providing a virtual platform with live and on-demand streaming, a mobile app, and daily recap videos—reached only 90.5% of 2019 attendance levels at the hybrid 2023 meeting

Figure 5. ID Congresses: Attendance Recovery



Conclusions

- ID congresses grew since 2019, regardless of whether virtual attendance options were maintained in 2023, likely due to the increased urgency in the field following the advent of COVID-19
- In 2023, larger oncology congresses still maintained virtual attendance options, while most ID congresses and smaller oncology congresses did not
- Taken together, these data suggest that the option to virtually attend congresses may not have played a role in achieving pre-pandemic attendance levels across ID and oncology congresses in 2023

References

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

