

News Release

Date:	October 27, 2022
Subject:	Computershare: virtual AGMs remain popular globally despite relaxed restrictions but two out of three still held in-person

COMPUTERSHARE: VIRTUAL AGMS REMAIN POPULAR GLOBALLY DESPITE RELAXED RESTRICTIONS BUT TWO OUT OF THREE STILL HELD IN-PERSON

Share of meetings held as hybrids almost triples but format remains uncommon

NEW YORK and LONDON, Oct. 27, 2022 – Fully-virtual shareholder meetings have largely retained their popularity globally among clients during the 2022 AGM season despite the relaxation of restrictions on meeting in person in some jurisdictions, Computershare has revealed.

During the 2022 AGM season, 28.3% of AGMs held around the world by clients of the global issuer services provider have been organized virtually, compared to 30.9% in 2021's, Computershare said.

Nevertheless, in-person meetings remain the most common among Computershare clients, representing around two-thirds of total meetings held in both the 2021 (67.7%) and 2022 (68.3%) AGM seasons.

Computershare said the figures were drawn from meetings held by clients in six areas: the US, Hong Kong, Canada, Continental Europe, Australia and New Zealand as well as the UK, Channel Islands and Ireland.

Shareholder Meetings (proportional share)									
	In-person			Hybrid			Virtual		
	2021	2022	% change	2021	2022	% change	2021	2022	% change
Australia/New Zealand	53.7%	48.4%	-5.3%	3.8%	6.3%	2.5%	42.5%	45.3%	2.8%
Canada	69.3%	63.2%	-6.1%	0.4%	0.8%	0.4%	30.3%	36.0%	5.7%
UK/Ireland/Channel Islands	94.2%	90.2%	-4.0%	0.4%	3.3%	2.9%	5.4%	6.5%	1.1%
Hong Kong	99.9%	92.9%	-7.0%	0.1%	5.7%	5.6%	0.0%	1.4%	1.4%
USA	55.9%	63.0%	7.0%	1.9%	0.0%	-1.9%	42.2%	37.0%	-5.2%
CE	25.2%	43.8%	18.6%	2.5%	4.4%	1.9%	72.3%	51.8%	-20.5%
Total share	67.7%	68.3%	0.6%	1.3%	3.4%	2.0%	30.9%	28.3%	-2.6%

NEWS RELEASE

Hybrid AGMs – which allow shareholders to attend in person or virtually – experienced the biggest proportional change, moving from 1.3% to 3.4% of all meetings held globally.

However, the vast majority of this change was experienced in Hong Kong, where the proportion of AGMs held as hybrids moved from 0.1% to 5.7%, largely as a result of ongoing pandemic-related restrictions.

“Two years ago, Computershare helped issuers around the world pivot towards hosting virtual annual meetings to comply with temporary pandemic-related regulations and safeguard the health and safety of shareholders and stakeholders,” said Naz Sarkar, Global CEO of Computershare Issuer Services.

“Today, our data suggest that companies in countries where Covid restrictions were lifted within the first quarter of the year, such as in the US and Continental Europe, have favored in-person meetings during 2022.”

“Virtual and hybrid meetings were more common among Computershare clients in regions where Covid-related restrictions were lifted later in the year – including UCIA, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand.”

“Notably, we also observed a rising trend of virtual-only meetings amongst recently listed issuers.”

“Virtual, as well as hybrid meetings, can contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which may become a measurable disclosure for a company’s NetZero pledge.”

The US

The US experienced a stronger resurgence of in-person meetings than many other jurisdictions, with the proportion held in a traditional format increasing by 7.0%, the proportion held fully virtually decreasing by 5.2% and hybrids stopping among Computershare clients completely.

“In the US, Computershare issuers pivoted back to in-person meetings, especially when the business could take advantage of an opportunity to showcase its consumer goods or high-cost equipment, such as farming equipment or truck manufacturers,” said Ann Bowering, CEO of Computershare Issuer Services in US.

“The ability to show physical products allows issuers to give shareholders specific insight into the company’s strategic direction.”

Canada

Canada broadly moved in the opposite direction, however, seeing a 6.1% decrease in the proportion of meetings held in person. The market also saw the greatest increase in the proportion held virtually (5.7%) and a 0.4% increase in those that were held as hybrids.

"We saw a distinct growth in virtual meetings in the Canadian market this year, which may indicate a preference for how AGMs are hosted in future years, but it's too soon to tell for sure," said Irfan Motiwala, CEO of Computershare Issuer Services in Canada.

"More companies are beginning to recognize the value of virtual AGMs as they enable a much broader shareholder engagement opportunity regardless of where they are based."

Australia and New Zealand

Amongst the markets, the second highest increase in the proportion of meetings held virtually (2.8%) and as hybrids (2.5%) took place in Australia and New Zealand, where the AGM season is ongoing.

Virtual meetings have accounted for 45.3% of Computershare's 2022 client meetings and hybrid accounted for 6.3%

Nearly half (48.4%) of Computershare client meetings in A&NZ have been held in person: a 5.3% proportional decrease from 2021.

"With the strict border controls and extended lockdowns during the Covid pandemic in Australia and New Zealand, companies quickly pivoted to a virtual AGM format with strong shareholder participation, such as lodging proxy votes," said Marnie Reid, CEO of Computershare Issuer Services in Australia and New Zealand.

"Since restrictions have lifted, some companies have elected to return to in-person meetings, but experienced lower attendance than meetings before the pandemic.

"A significant majority of companies are electing to conduct a hybrid meeting format to encourage broader participation."

The United Kingdom, Ireland and the Channel Islands

There was a further move towards hybrid and virtual meetings in the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Channel Islands, with the proportion being held in person decreasing by 4.0%.

The percentage held as hybrids across the three jurisdictions experienced the largest increase outside of Hong Kong (2.9%), with the proportion held virtually also seeing an increase (1.1%).

"In the UK market, we saw a notable increase in companies adding an element of electronic engagement into their events," said Mark Cleland, CEO of Computershare Issuer Services in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Channel Islands and South Africa.

"The pre-pandemic trend of allowing pre-submitted questions has continued, and we're also seeing shareholders submitting higher volumes of proxy instructions online, which we expect to continue into 2023 and beyond."

“UK companies that want to switch permanently to online environments are finding ways of showing the long-term engagement benefits of online meetings to senior executives to effect cultural change inside organizations.”

Hong Kong

Hong Kong experienced the second-highest decrease in the proportion of AGMs held in person (-7.0%) as well as a 1.4% increase in those held virtually.

Nevertheless, with 92.9% of its meetings being held in person, Hong Kong remains the jurisdiction with the highest proportion of Computershare client AGMs being held in a traditional format.

The jurisdiction also experienced the largest increase in the percentage of AGMs being held as a hybrid – although from a very low original position (0.1% to 5.7%).

“We are pleased that many issuers made use of our virtual and hybrid meeting solutions this year, while others took the ‘wait and see’ approach,” said Richard Houg, CEO of Computershare Issuer Services in Asia.

“Significantly, more clients chose to combine the benefits of both online and traditional, in-person meetings by running hybrid meetings, and their popularity may continue to grow in Hong Kong as they become seen as the ‘new norm’.”

Continental Europe

Continental European countries witnessed the largest increase (18.6%) in the proportion of meetings held in-person, with the largest difference between 2021 and 2022 (25.2% to 43.8%, respectively).

Despite this change, the proportion of meetings held in person by Computershare’s CE clients remained lower than anywhere outside of Australia and New Zealand (43%).

“We saw smaller companies in Continental Europe move to physical meetings, while ‘large cap’ companies typically stayed fully virtual or brought in a virtual element, especially those with an international board,” said Kirsten van Rooijen, CEO of Computershare Issuer Services in Continental Europe.

“A number of companies still opted for virtual meetings, both as a result of emergency legislation remaining in place and the fact that they were able to reach their international shareholder base more easily.”

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Notes

- 1- Please note figures are rounded to the nearest single decimal place and may not always add up to exactly 100%.
- 2- Computershare defines the global 2021 AGM season as occurring between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021, and the global 2022 AGM season between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022.

About Computershare

Computershare (ASX: CPU) is a global market leader in transfer agency and share registration, employee equity plans, mortgage servicing, proxy solicitation and stakeholder communications. We also specialize in corporate trust, bankruptcy, class action and utility administration, and a range of other diversified financial and governance services.

Founded in 1978, Computershare is renowned for its expertise in high integrity data management, high volume transaction processing and reconciliations, payments and stakeholder engagement. Many of the world's leading organizations use us to streamline and maximize the value of relationships with their investors, employees, creditors and customers.

Computershare is represented in all major financial markets and has over 14,000 employees worldwide.

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