

THE 2023 FESTIVAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

21 October – 17 November



#ESRCFestival

Festival Report 2023



- Annual celebration of the social sciences
- UK-wide festival
- Taking place over 3 weeks
- 42 partner research institutions
- 2023's theme was Lifelong Wellbeing



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Our partner institutions



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Festival aims

Bringing **social science** research to **new audiences**

At least 80% of events targeted **at public and youth audiences** and no more than 20% of events for non-academic professionals

At least 25% of events are on the 2023 festival theme of ***Lifelong Wellbeing***, which links to the lifelong wellbeing agenda, a priority area for ESRC and UKRI

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Data gathering

Feedback was collected from event attendees and those involved in organising and leading events

Registrations and attendance were counted by event organisers

Feedback received from:

41 partner institutions

2803 attendees

30 schools

181 non-academic collaborators

286 event leaders

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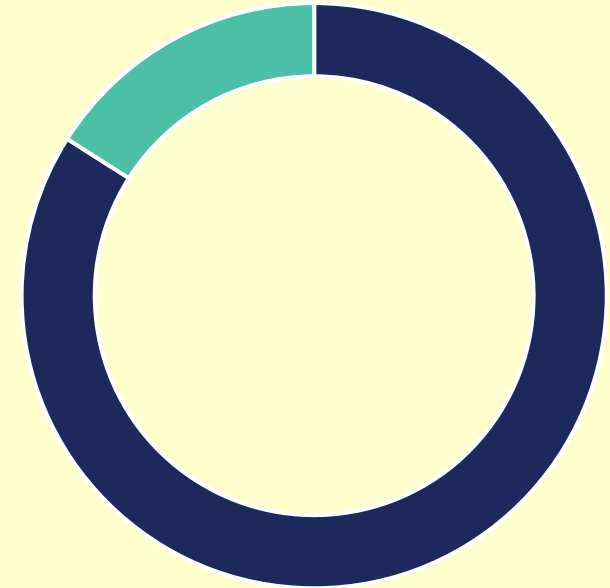
Headline facts and figures

Festival attendees

44,194
Attendees

This represents a significant increase from the 14,250 attendees reported in 2022. However, some of this increase is the result of open exhibitions which counted very high footfall. Notably a single event recorded 15,000 visitors and another recorded 5,000.

16%
Children under 16



84%
Young people and adults

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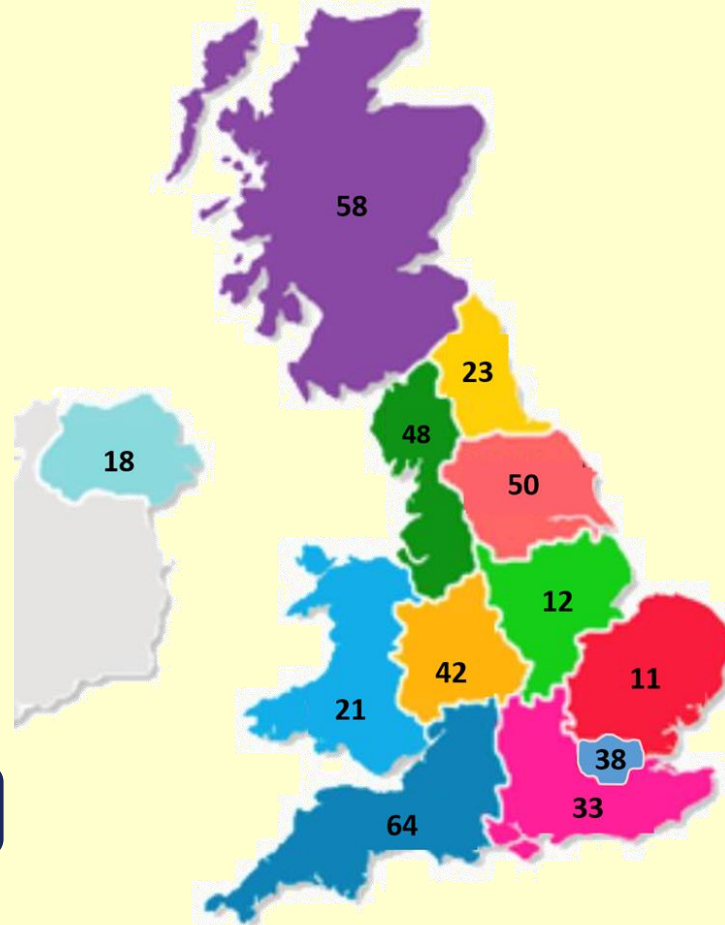
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Headline facts and figures

A truly national festival with events taking place **UK-wide** in different formats



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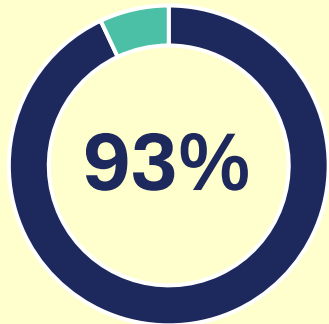
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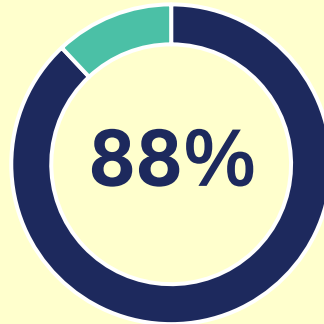
The events

Across the national festival there were 383 events

Open events*



Targeting a public audience



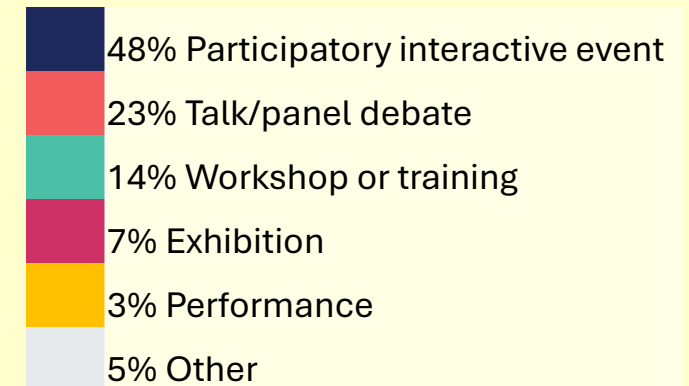
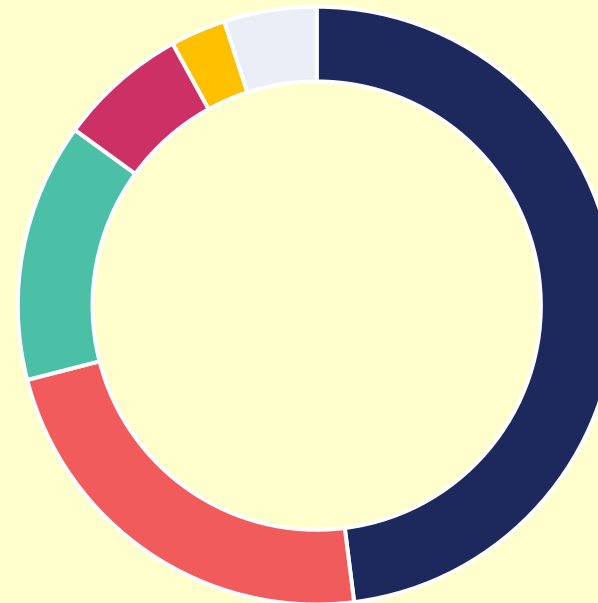
*Open events are those that were publicly advertised, rather than invite-only.

Popular topics

Lifelong wellbeing (237 events)

Education and employment (87 events)

Identity (67 events)



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How attendees found out about events

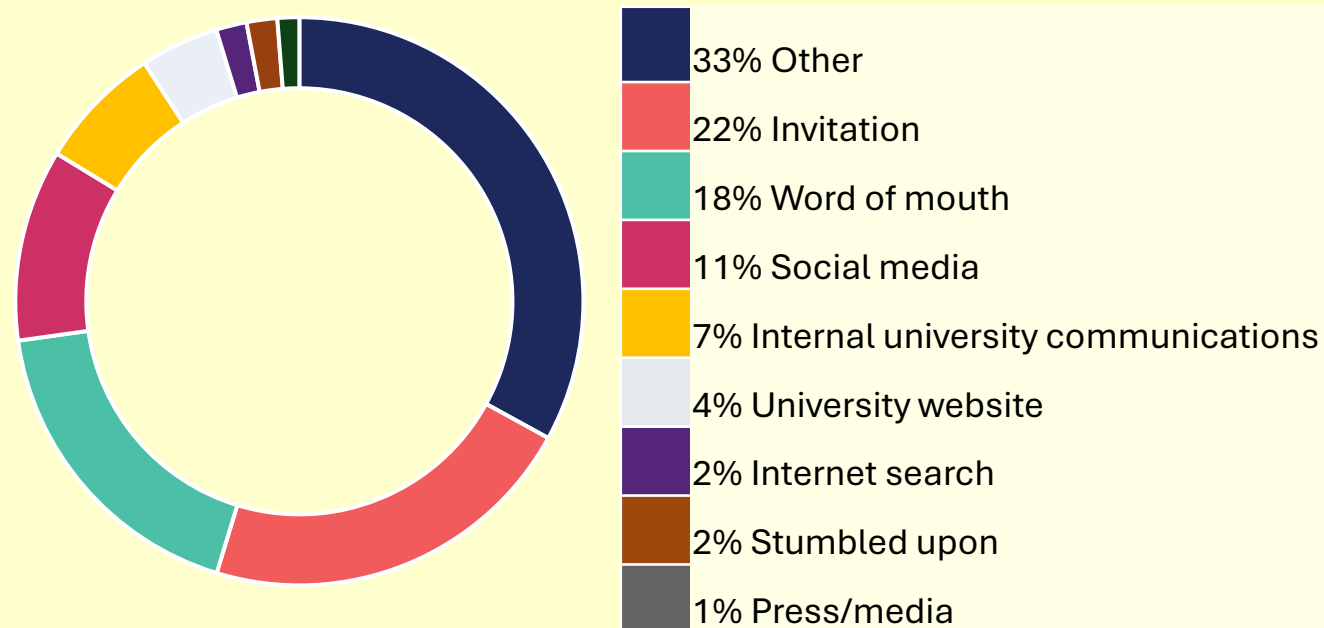
Web traffic

	2022	2023	% Increase
Unique visitors	25,688	34,429	34%
Number of visits	42,484	56,445	33%
Page views	218,950	289,560	32%

Top referring websites

Website URL	Total number of referrals
http://facebook.com (Facebook)	3,519
https://t.co (Twitter)	2,818
https://www.ukri.org	1,960
https://www.birmingham.ac.uk	1,547

*The University of Birmingham referred as many visitors as most other universities combined



*Based on feedback from 2179 attendees. May not reflect attendees as a whole given that means of hearing about an event may connect to likelihood of giving feedback. "Other" included many attendees who attended as a school group.

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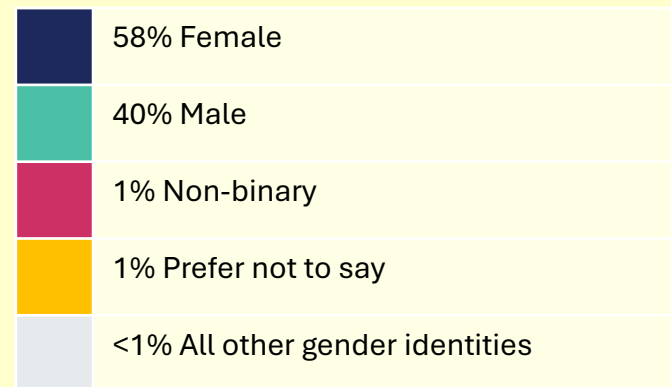
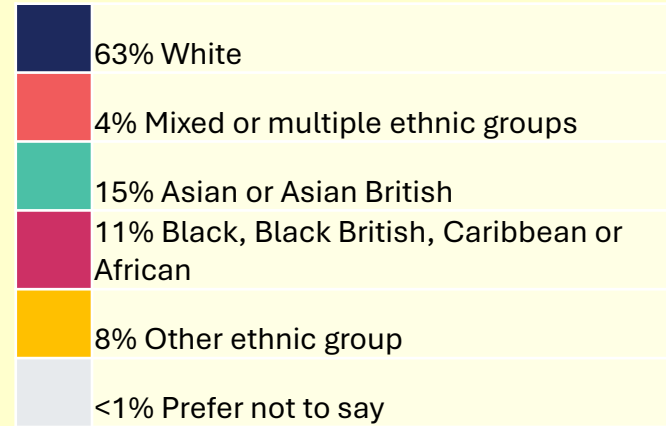
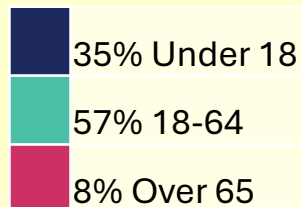
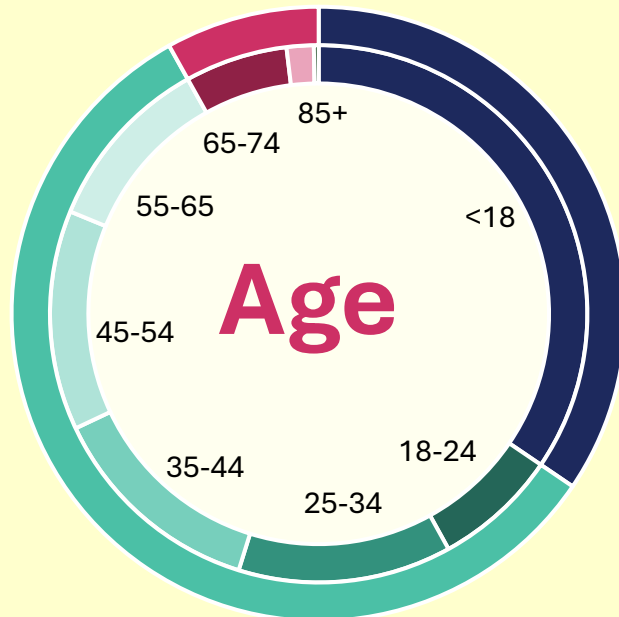


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Who attended festival events?

Increase in BAME representation since 2022 (23% to 37%)

Increase in male-identifying attendees since 2022

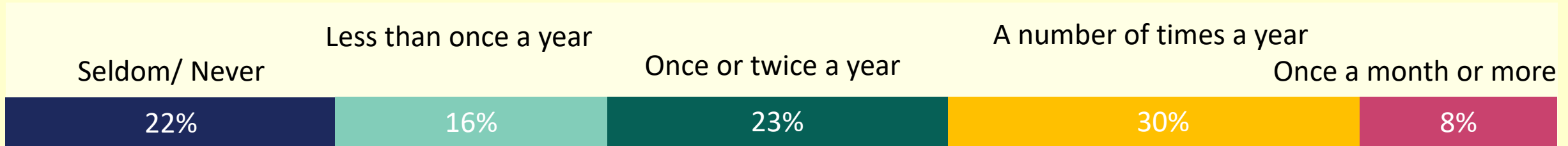


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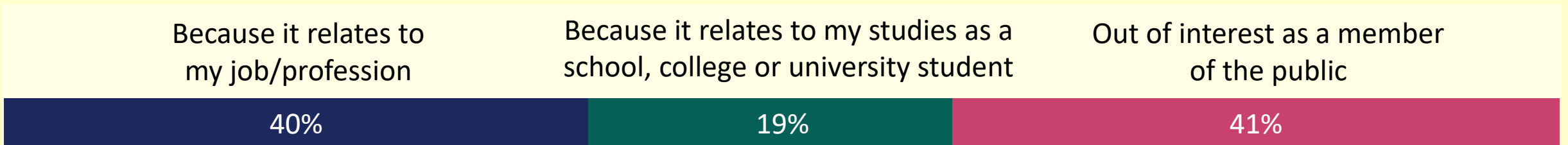
How often do attendees engage with research and why did they attend an event?

Frequency of attending events that relate to academic research



Since 2021, the festival has seen year on year growth in its reach to less engaged groups. 18% in 2021; 33% in 2022; 38% in 2023

Reason for attending event



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What did attendees think of the events?

98%

of attendees felt that the event was worth the time and effort of attending

2% Neither agree nor disagree

57%

of attendees agreed that their feelings and/or opinion on the topic in question have changed

23% Not sure

20% Disagreed

91%

of attendees said they plan to share what they've learned with others

5% Not sure

4% Disagreed

62%

of attendees said they plan to make a change or do something that they wouldn't otherwise have done

26% Not sure

12% Disagreed

Links to festival aims: "To ensure that events listed as being for these audiences are genuinely tailored to them and engaging for attendees".

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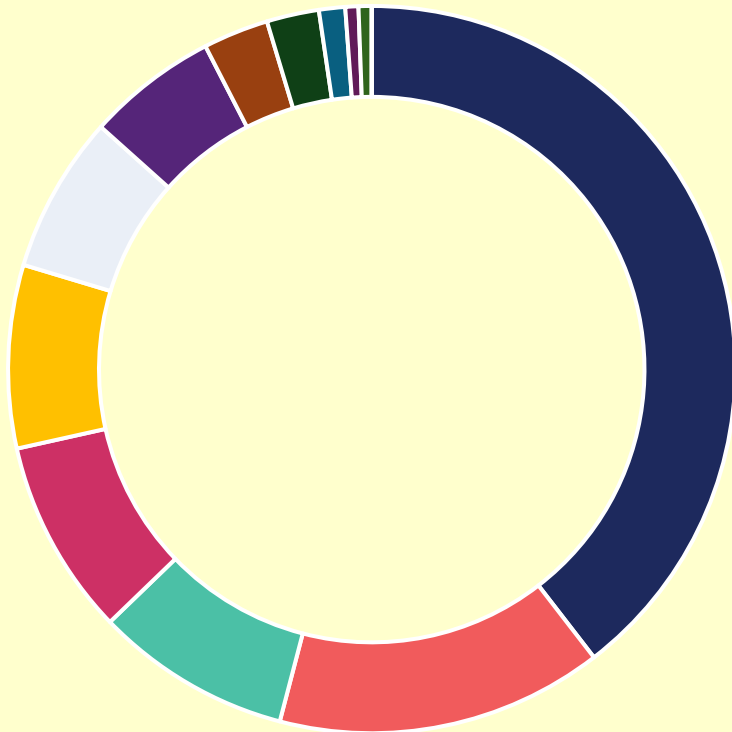
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Who collaborated on festival events?

Over 200 organisations collaborated on events from a variety of sectors



40%	Charity, social enterprise or not-for-profit organisation
15%	Other (not a private sector business or public body)
9%	Arts, cultural or heritage organisation
9%	Local or national government
8%	Other private sector business
7%	Community group
6%	Health or social care provider
3%	Educational institution/training provider (except schools and HEIs)
2%	Other public body
1%	Youth organisation
<1%	Professional body or membership organisation
<1%	Trade union

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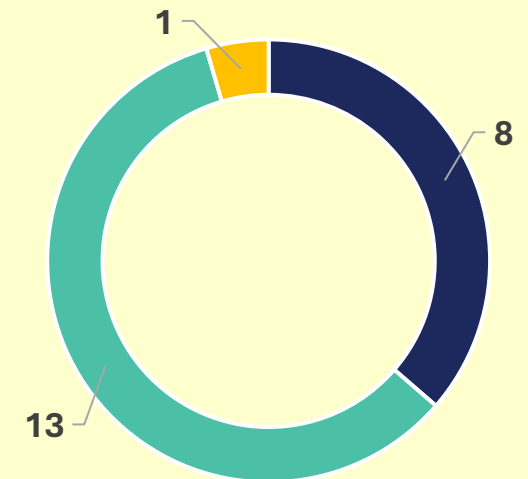
What did teachers think of the events they attended?

Strongly Agree	Agree	
53%	41%	Helped the school to achieve an educational aim and/or comply with a statutory duty
62%	38%	School would be interested in partnering on a similar event in future
41%	59%	My students thought it was a good event
44%	48%	Helped our school to build or improve an external relationship that will be useful to us in future
61%	35%	Has been useful for our students

Which types of schools engaged?

100% of the teachers engaged were from state-funded schools*

Teachers were predominantly from secondary schools*



■ Primary ■ Secondary ■ FE college

*Based on teacher feedback forms

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What did teachers think of the events they attended?

“It gave the students invaluable access to their subject but **engaged** them on a higher level and showed the possibilities and **connection** for their in-school learning.”

However, there were some **concerns** raised by teachers:

A small minority of events appeared to have not been designed in **consultation with schools**, resulting in them being poorly suited to the needs – and attention spans – of children.

“**Student voice** is a key area of our school development plan and it gave pupils the opportunity to develop their ability to converse with others regarding their needs, wants and aims for themselves and **their future**.”

“The event was fantastic! I think many schools could benefit doing these events in the future to **inspire future generations** of social scientist.”

Some teachers also voiced concerns that: “Initial information was quite vague in terms of **target audience**,” and expressed a desire for more clarity from event leaders.

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What did non-academic collaborators think of the events?

Strongly Agree	Agree	
53%	41%	The event helped our organisation to build or improve a useful external relationship
62%	37%	Would recommend partnering on a Festival of Social Science event to others
59%	40%	Our organisation would be interested in partnering on a similar event in future
62%	37%	The event has been valued by our internal and/or external stakeholders who attended
58%	40%	This event has been useful to us as an organisation

Why did collaborators work with event leaders?

Many charities, social enterprises, and non-profits aimed to reach new audiences and build relationships.*

Some other organisations utilised the festival for consultation and networking purposes.*

*Based on amalgamation of responses from non-academic collaborators

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What did non-academic collaborators think of the events?

"Our charity is a small organisation with reliance on volunteers. Therefore, opportunities like this are **hugely important and significant**. This provided us with the chance to identify new partner arrangements, network, and **foster key relationships**."

-Collaborator (charity/not-for-profit)

"There is a **real opportunity** to build on this and work together further."

-Collaborator (health/social care provider)

"We massively valued the opportunity to share our project and expertise in this context. We found the support to be of an **above and beyond extremely high standard**. We would love to return to the festival next year with further sessions."

-Collaborator (charity/not-for-profit)

"The **ESRC grant enabled us to provide this event free of charge to our service users**. We are determined to find a way to re-create this event and keep this support going for our families. **Thank you so much to ESRC**."

-Collaborator (charity/not-for-profit)

"The festival event provided an invaluable opportunity to **network** with other orgs and activists to **spark new projects** and campaigns."

-Collaborator (education/training provider)

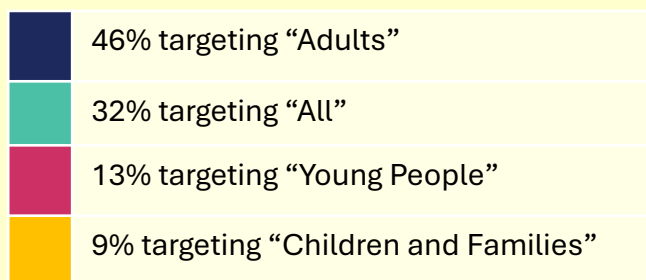
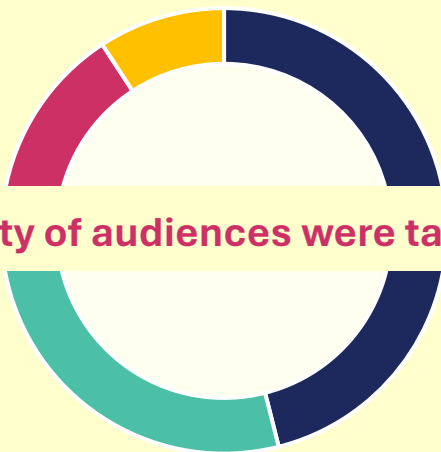
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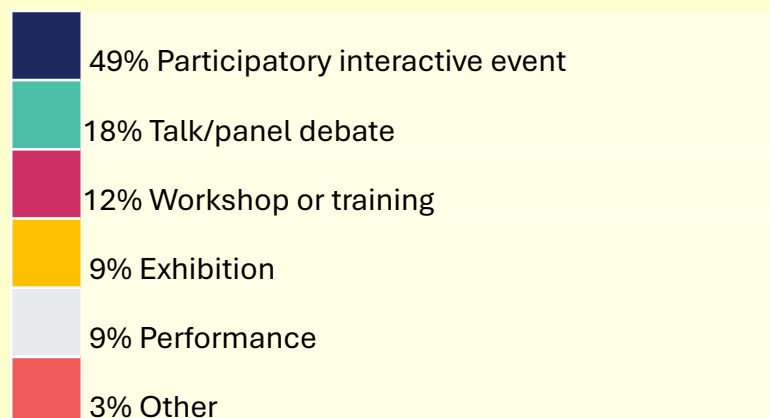
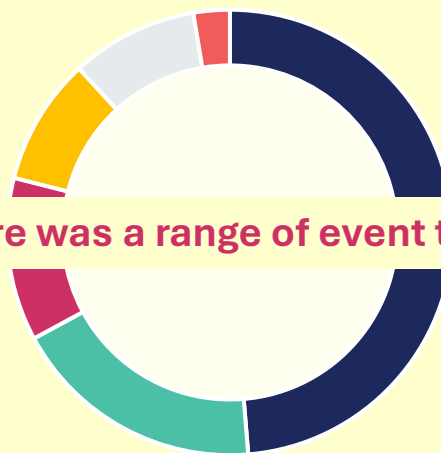


What events did non-academic collaborators support?

A variety of audiences were targeted



There was a range of event types



Most events were in-person



Data is drawn from non-academic collaborator feedback

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What were researchers' experiences of participating in the festival?

Strongly Agree	Agree	
34%	50%	Leading an event had helped them reach a new and broader audience
54%	39%	Would recommend partnering on a Festival of Social Science event
39%	43%	Participating has helped develop public engagement skills

“I believe that public engagement in research is really important to raise awareness and **dispel myths about research/researchers** (e.g. that researchers sit in an ivory tower).”
- Researcher

“It was great to run the event as the audience was really **interactive** and willing to participate, discuss, think about the topic and **engage**.”
- Researcher

“It was a chance to **see and feel impact**. And to meet and interact informally with the group of people we conduct research with.”
- Researcher

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What were partner institutions' experiences of participating in the festival?

Strongly Agree	Agree	
16%	59%	Partner institutions hosting festival events agreed they had reached audiences they wouldn't have otherwise reached
38%	50%	Agreed participating in the festival has helped in developing their researchers' public engagements skills
22%	44%	Participating in the Festival has increased enthusiasm for public engagement in social science/economics at our institution
42%	26%	Participating in the Festival has given our IAA/Festival team and non-IAA partners the opportunity to work with researchers with whom we hadn't worked before

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What were partner institutions' experiences of participating in the festival?

"The festival provides our researchers with an **opportunity to engage with the public** with the support and advice of the ESRC team, which is essential."

"We have strong public engagement focus at the University and **the Festival is one of the key events.**"

"We have seen **steady annual growth** and good engagement with researchers across the institution."

"I love working on the ESRC festival, and I am always amazed at how great our researchers are when it comes to public engagement."

"A good experience, the training we got from Jamie was **spot on** and really useful and it was great to get funding."

"It helps us to think about how we communicate our overall research programme, rather than just one study, to a **wider audience.**"

"**Over the past four years FOSS has shifted institutional interest and awareness of public engagement across all disciplines.** It increased awareness of social sciences public engagement activity, and we have seen this move into arts/humanities activity as a result."

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What is the Festival of Social Science? Video produced by the University of Glasgow



What kinds of events are academics leading? Video produced by the University of Southampton



Join us as communities across the UK
celebrate 'lifelong wellbeing'



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