

Festival Report



#ESRCFestival

THE 2022 FESTIVAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

22 October - 13 November 2022



Economic and Social Research Council



#ESRCFestival

www.festivalofsocalscience.com





ESRC FESTIVAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

- 20th anniversary year
- Annual celebration of the social sciences
- UK-wide festival
- 34 partner research institutions



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Our partners



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Festival aims

- Bringing social science research to new audiences
- At least 80% of events targeted at public and youth audiences
- No more than 20% of events for professional, non-academic audiences
- 'My local area' theme¹ – at least 25% of events to be on the Festival theme



¹'My local area' theme – a celebration of any aspects of social science research that relate to the area in which partner research institutions are based. The theme links to the place-based agenda, a priority area for ESRC and UKRI.

Data gathering

- Self-completed post-event questionnaires
- Completed by event attendees and those involved in organising or leading events
- Registrations and attendance counted by event organisers

Survey responses received from:

2,020
Attendees

50 Event Leaders

50 Collaborating Partner Organisations

24 Partner Research Institutions



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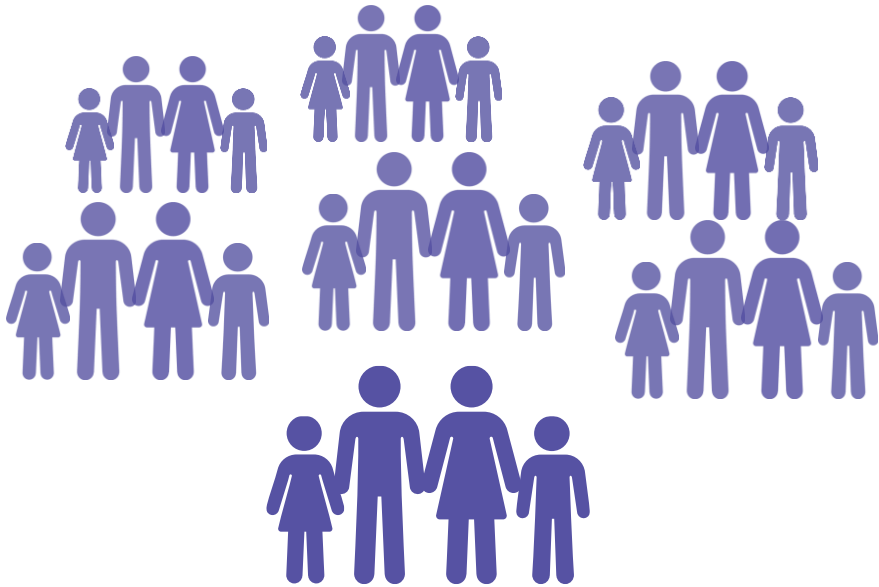


Economic and Social Research Council

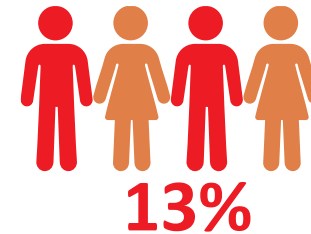
Headline facts and figures

Festival attendees

14,250
Attendees



87%
Young people and adults



13%
Children under 16

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Headline facts and figures

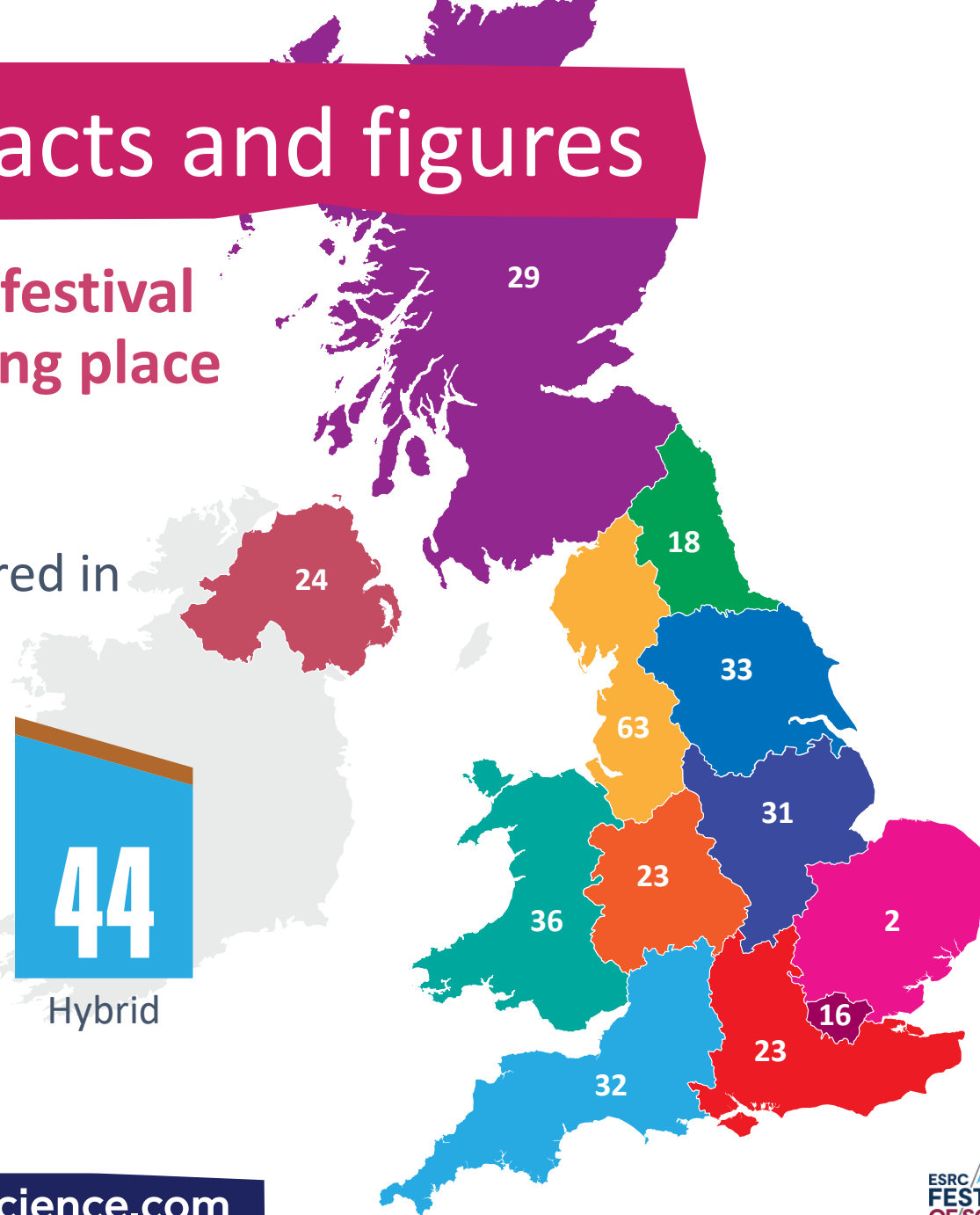
A truly national festival with events taking place UK-wide

Events were delivered in different formats



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Partner research institutions



Festival events



The events

Across the national Festival there were 330 events

Popular topics



'My local area' theme



Health and wellbeing topic



Environment topic

Targeted audience



Targeted at a public audience

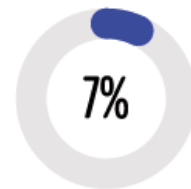


Targeted at a professional non-academic audience

Open or closed



Open to anyone to attend

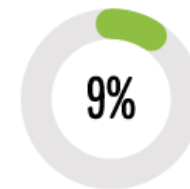


For an invited audience a specific school or professional group

Spread of events across event types



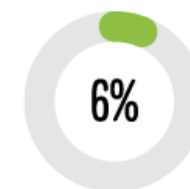
Participatory interactive event



Exhibition



Talk or panel discussion



Other types of events



Workshop or training



Performance

Links to Festival aims: "For at least 25% of events across the Festival as a whole to be on the 'My local area' theme" and "at least 80% of events to be targeted at public and/or youth audiences, with up to 20% targeted at other non-academic groups".

How were the events publicised?

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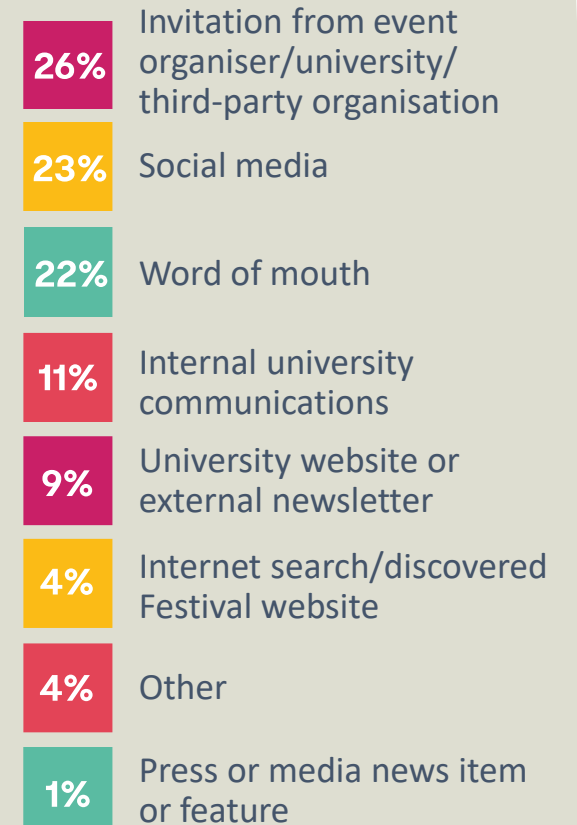
- All events were featured on the Festival website
- Traffic was driven to the website by comms and social media activity from partner research institutions and UKRI



Top referring websites



How did you hear about the Festival?

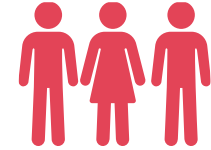
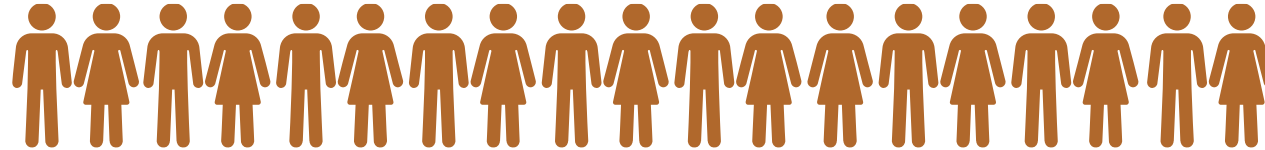


Links to Festival aims: "For a strong web and social media presence highlighting ESRC's and economic and social science insights".

*Evaluation responses from 2,020 attendees **Period September-November (pre- and during the Festival)

Who attended Festival events?

The majority of adults attending events were of working age

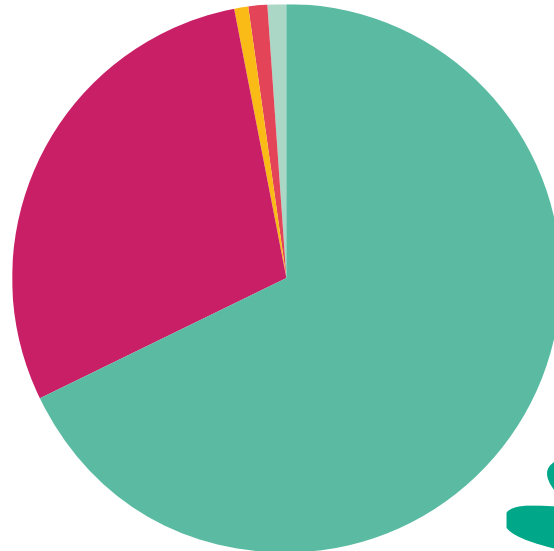


3% Young people 16-17

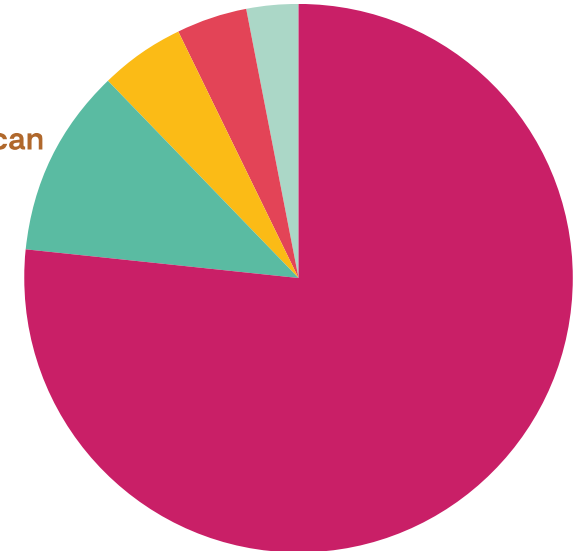
89% Working age 18-64

9% Over 65

- 68% Female
- 29% Male
- 1% Non-binary
- 1% Prefer not to say
- <1% All other gender identities



- 76% White
- 11% Asian or Asian British
- 5% Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- 4% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- 3% Other ethnic groups



Links to Festival aims: “For the 2022 Festival to increase its reach with public and youth audiences”, “enable the public to engage with social science research” and “engage with teachers and young people and to raise their awareness of the social sciences”.

*Evaluation responses from 2,020 attendees



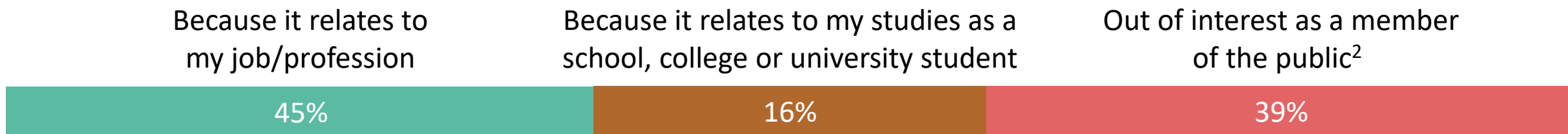
How often do attendees engage with research and why did they attend an event?

Frequency of attending events that relate to academic research



¹Relative to 2021, the reach to less engaged groups **has extended** to 33% compared to 18%

Reason for attending event?



²Relative to 2021, attendance as a member of the public has **increased**, with 39% compared to 30% stating they attended 'out of interest as a member of the public'.

Links to Festival aims: “For the 2022 Festival to increase its reach with public and youth audiences”, “enable the public to engage with social science research” and “engage with teachers and young people and to raise their awareness of the social sciences”.

*Evaluation responses from 2,020 attendees



What did attendees think of the events?

96%

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

4% Neither agree nor disagree

51%

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

15% Not sure

33%

Disagreed

87%

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

8% Not sure

4%

Disagreed

55%

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

23%

Not sure

22%

Disagreed

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

*Evaluation responses from 2,020 attendees

Who collaborated on Festival events?

Over 200 organisations collaborated on events from a variety of sectors



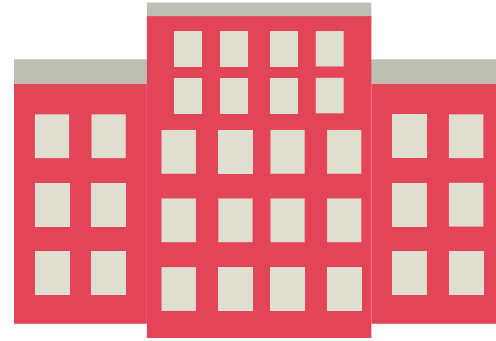
14%

Arts, cultural or heritage organisation



36%

Charity, social enterprise or not-for-profit organisation



23%

Educational institution or training provider



17%

Other*



5%

Other private sector business



5%

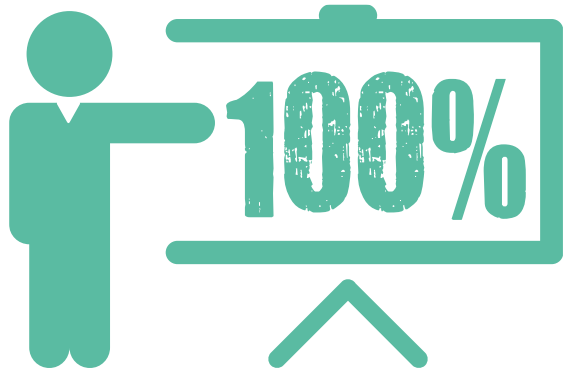
Youth organisation

Links to Festival aims: “For the 2022 Festival to increase its reach with public and youth audiences”, “enable the public to engage with social science research” and “engage with teachers and young people and to raise their awareness of the social sciences”.

*Includes Health or social care provider; Local or national government; Other public body; Professional body or membership organisation; Social care government sponsored body; University.

**Evaluation responses from 50 collaborating organisations

What did teachers think of the events they attended?



of teachers agreed that events were useful for their students and that the students felt events they attended were good. They also recognised the benefits to them in building relationships that will be useful in future.

FROM FIELD TO PLATE

Where does my dinner come from?

“The children loved it!

They have spent most of their school life tied to school or at home in lock down.

Opportunities to move to a new normal and be able to engage in activities in places like the University campus are really important.

It opens up the children's view of where their education might take them in future too!”

Primary school teacher feedback on University of Plymouth event.



Heart of the heart?

“Gave students the opportunity to express their subject knowledge in ways they don't usually - creative writing/creating models/using science knowledge as a base for their creative work.

Interestingly it gave me a whole new perspective on the abilities/confidence of some of my students.”

Secondary school teacher feedback
University of Warwick event



Links to Festival aims: “For the 2022 Festival to increase its reach with public and youth audiences”, “enable the public to engage with social science research” and “engage with teachers and young people and to raise their awareness of the social sciences”.

*Evaluation responses from 13 teachers

What did partner organisations think of the events?

94%

of collaborating partner organisations agreed their stakeholders valued events, and these had been useful to them as an organisation.

96%

agreed that partnering on the event has helped them to build relationships that will be useful to them in future.

What's Missing?

Dancing with Parkinson's research in Northern Ireland

"It was great to bring people together - people with Parkinson's, researchers and healthcare professionals – to hear what people want and need from Parkinson's research and research communications. It will help strengthen our community building work going forward. It also helped raise the profile of Parkinson's UK in Northern Ireland, and great to see connections being made."

Queen's University Belfast event

Feedback from charity, social enterprise or not-for-profit organisation partner

Links to Festival aims: "For the 2022 Festival to increase its reach with public and youth audiences", "enable the public to engage with social science research" and "engage with teachers and young people and to raise their awareness of the social sciences".

*Evaluation responses from 50 collaborating partner organisations



What were researchers' experiences of participating in the Festival?

89%

of researchers agreed that leading an event had helped them reach new audiences and that participating in the Festival had helped them or colleagues develop their public engagement skills.

94%

would recommend participating to other researchers.

"It's an excellent way of reaching new audiences and thinking about your research in a manner that can be accessible to anyone - which in turn assists with pathways to impact".

Researcher leading
'Demystifying NFTs'
Bournemouth University

"This was a really great opportunity to discuss citizen engagement with the climate crisis with a much wider range of participants than is otherwise the case through teaching and research. It was stimulating for us and it was a great way to get the kind of discussions we have in the university out into the community".

Researcher leading 'Are we doing enough to combat the climate crisis?', University of Bristol

"In partnering with a local organisation for the events I've made links that I would not have otherwise, I've also learned about what the public finds interesting/relevant and how to communicate research publicly. Taking part in the festival has also given me ideas for developing further events or incorporating public engagement in to my research/teaching in future".

Researcher leading 'Criminology goes to the Movies: Film Season', University of Leicester

Links to Festival aims: "To encourage, support and create opportunities for social science researchers to engage with public and young people audiences", "promote and increase awareness of the social sciences and ESRC-funded research", "promote and increase awareness of the contribution social science makes to the wellbeing and the economy of society in the UK", and "enable the public to engage with social science research".

*Evaluation responses from 24 research partner institutions



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

88%

of partner institutions hosting festival events agreed they had reached audiences they wouldn't have otherwise reached.

"Members of the public, particularly some hard to reach including homeless, at some of our 'drop in' events with a health theme was really exciting to have engagement with around health inequalities."

Lancaster University

"Marginalised groups of people (e.g. sex workers, young ex-offenders or young people at criminal risk), various community groups... new stakeholders who attended as members of the general public..."

University of Nottingham

100%

agreed participating in the festival has helped in developing their researchers' public engagements skills.

"The focus on public audiences and young people means they have to focus on skills for these audiences... It takes them out of their 'academic' comfort zone."

Lancaster University

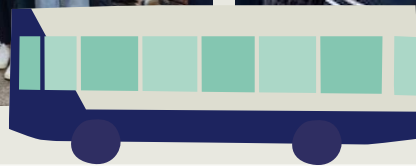
"...particularly helpful to researchers who have limited public engagement experience - it's a supported method of engaging with the public that has the infrastructure to facilitate delivery and promotion."

University of Sheffield

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