



THE GREAT EXHIBITION ROAD FESTIVAL

Evaluation Report

July 2025

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SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Great Exhibition Road Festival 2025 was, yet again, a highly successful event.

Feedback on the visitor experience is hugely positive.

People come hoping to have fun, to learn and to inspire their children – all expectations that are widely met by the Festival’s extensive and eclectic programme. Visitors – of all ages – are inspired by the interactive and hands-on activities and want to get involved.

Most visitors come knowing that science is at the Festival’s heart but they love that it offers more than this. The fusion of the arts and science – and the opportunity to participate in things like music and dance – can be an unexpected source of joy.

The Festival succeeds in its aim to be universally welcoming. Audiences respond incredibly well to the personal interactions they have with Festival contributors. Many have a chance to participate in two-way conversations and there is an appreciation that the Festival offers an opportunity to talk directly with experts in their field.

KEY STATS		
		2025
Overall Festival Experience	Excellent	56%
	Net POSITIVE	94%
Interactions with Festival exhibitors, workshop leads and/or speakers	Excellent	56%
	Net POSITIVE	87%
It felt welcoming	Strongly agree	65%
	Net POSITIVE	96%
The Festival felt like something special	Strongly agree	52%
	Net POSITIVE	88%
I/We felt encouraged to ask questions about work / research I/we saw	Strongly agree	54%
	Net POSITIVE	88%
I/We had the chance to get hands-on with science	Strongly agree	43%
	Net POSITIVE	78%

The 2025 Festival attracted a broad audience, with most visitors new to the Festival and without a pre-existing relationship with Imperial or other Festival partners.

The Festival continues to be popular with families – most notably amongst those with children aged 12 and under. A growth in the proportion of adult groups is, however, a key aspect of the 2025 visitor profile and the result is an almost equal mix of family and adult groups.

Social media activity was key to reaching those visiting for the first time whilst direct emails from Imperial was the most effective channel amongst repeat visitors. Within this context, a low proportion of visitors coming via promotional activity by Festival partners is noteworthy.

London residents are the majority audience, with representation of Tri-Borough residents evident. Year-on-year comparison suggests that the proportion of these two profiles aligns with levels achieved in 2024.

As in previous years, visitors are highly educated, with the majority qualified to Masters / Doctorate level. This far exceeds the London average.

KEY STATS		
		2025
Visit history	First time visitor	64%
	Repeat visitor	34%
Relationship with Imperial or Festival Partner	No connection with Imperial or other SK university/attraction	63%
Group profile	Family group (with under 18s)	52%
	Adult group (incl. solo visitors)	48%
Educational attainment	Holds higher degree (e.g. PhD, Masters)	52%
Location	London residents	73%
	Tri-Borough residents	14%

The prevalence of three profiles prioritised for audience development – young people aged 13-25, neuro-diverse audiences and those from African and/or Caribbean communities – has remained consistent within the Festival audience.

Nevertheless, feedback indicates that these audiences generally had a positive experience at the Festival.

The friendly and approachable nature of contributors and volunteers was central to the creation of an inclusive vibe.

The hosted visit format rolled out by the community engagement team offered quality engagements for the cohort.

Wider feedback from stakeholders indicates that grassroots engagement is central to building engagement with African and/or Caribbean communities within the Tri-Borough area.

KEY STATS

	2025
% of groups with representation of neurodivergence	16%
% of audience from Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British backgrounds	7%
% of audience aged 13-25	11%

“ We need to see more teenagers because I see more children who are under twelve years old, and less above twelve to eighteen. You see adults, you see little ones, but not enough teenagers. I am sure one of the main aims of this event is yes, to interest the kids, but the ones who need it soon, to make the decision of where they want to go. They're the ones they should be targeting. ”

“

"We liked learning things we never knew, especially in the Adults Only Zone, you get to do interactive stuff not aimed at kids."

"We've just been in the Dyson School. Even though it said 13-25, it felt more like 13-16, and even younger. So, I think just on that one, we thought it would be a bit more teenage. The subject matter is maybe 16 but the activities were probably a little bit younger."

”

The size of the Festival can exceed expectations – but the thematic and age-specific zones support prioritisation and ease of navigation.

The introduction of Adults Only and Nextgen, alongside Family Fun, catered well for the broad festival audience.

Those visiting without children, in particularly, valued their dedicated space, responding well to the calmer atmosphere and dedicated interactive activities. A larger space would be welcomed at future Festivals.

Whilst Nextgen was widely enjoyed, some felt the content was aimed at the younger end of the 13-25 age spectrum. Further segmentation within the age group was therefore suggested.

Visitors were widely positive about contributors' ability to have audience age-appropriate conversations.

GERF creates significant place impacts for South Kensington.

Intentional visits to the Festival dominate, demonstrating the Festival’s value in generating footfall. It provides a compelling reason to visit South Kensington, an area that can be perceived to be ‘posh’, ‘touristy’ and ‘unrelatable’.

Most visitors felt they were exposed to new places within South Kensington and a growing proportion encountered new organisations.

The vast majority of visitors feel that their experience at the Festival will make them more likely to visit South Kensington in future – a strong indicator that GERF’s value goes beyond the Festival weekend, creating legacy benefits for the area.

KEY STATS	
	2025
% coming especially for the Festival	81%
% more likely to visit South Kensington because of experience at the Festival	71%
% experiencing new places in the area	69%
% coming across new organisations at the Festival	45%

“ Look at the buildings. Come on. It's posh! But when we have events like these, and the museums are open to the public, it creates the impression that this area is not only for people who can afford it. It means that this is an area just like any other community in London, and it creates this feeling of possibility. ”

Volunteering at the Festival is fun and rewarding. The opportunity to engage with the public can be the most enjoyable – yet most daunting – part of the experience.

Volunteers are typically Imperial students, volunteering for the first time. They are enticed by the Festival's vibrant vibe, but can also want to get more involved in university life, to enhance their CV and to meet new people.

On the whole, volunteers have a highly positive experience.

Feedback on the zone supervisors demonstrates their pivotal role in positive volunteering experiences. Ensuring that volunteers situated in the busiest Festival locations have the necessary skills to support crowd control and respond to visitor frustrations is also important.

On the whole, volunteers feel sufficiently valued and rewarded. Developing ways to help students evidence their role in their CVs and providing an opportunity to celebrate their contribution are new incentives to consider.

“

“Talking to the public - it develops my personal skills massively as well as allowing me to interact with a wide range of ages and people, providing me with huge people skills.”

“I had to think on my feet a lot and interact with members of the public – I’m not used to this, so it will be useful.”

”

Contributors highly value the opportunity GERP offers to take their work beyond the usual academic and or corporate audiences. They are inspired by the visiting public's enthusiasm and interest levels.

Whilst highly enjoyable, the contributor experience is busy and intense. It requires planning and preparation, as well as a team with a shared understanding and willingness to give their time.

Similar to volunteers, some contributors felt unprepared for the extensive footfall.

On the whole, contributors feel well supported before and during the Festival. This process could be enhanced by providing more practical information and support around stand / content development.

Streamlining information provided, and creating briefing packs specifically for external partners, could also improve perceived relevance and engagement.

“

I was not quite ready for the size of the crowds and wasn't fully expecting the number of families with young children who would want to engage with our VR demos.

”

**The community engagement programme was highly praised.
It enabled and delivered high impact experiences for participants.**

Group leaders felt supported at all stages in their visit. The pre-Festival support to develop a tailored programme and the dedicated volunteer during the visit were of significant value.

Participants were enthused by their time at the Festival. It showed them a different side to the science they are taught in school.

All groups felt welcome – a result of the ‘genuine commitment’ shown by community engagement staff to support inclusion, along with the friendliness of contributors and volunteers.

Low awareness and a lack of perceived relevance is felt to underpin lower engagement within their wider communities. Grassroots community work is recommended, to build trust and understanding.

Lower levels of educational attainment and higher rates of English as a second language are felt to be of significance for future communications and engagement strategies.

“This was a great opportunity to take a youth group already involved in STEM.... ...The opportunity to really focus on a targeted group was really beneficial because it's less people but a higher impact.”

“Within the GEF team, Sevinc, I think she's been very genuine about reaching out, getting to know people, building relationships and making people feel comfortable and welcome. And that makes all the difference.”

”

The current Festival model is a strong format. No major changes are required for the 2026 Festival, although the following are suggested discussion points based on key evaluation themes.

Format

- The chance to take part in science is a USP – how can overdemand for interactive activities, a stress point in the visitor experience, be managed?

Zones

- The growing proportion of adult visitors validates this year's investment in the Adults Only Zone. Expansion of the area in 2026 would be welcome – is this feasible?
- Nextgen was a positive addition to the Festival, but the 13-25 age band was too broad. What scope is there to split this zone into two?

Audience Development

- Children are typically aged 12 and under – what can be done differently to attract a more teenage audience?
- The audience skews towards those with high educational attainment. How important is it to appeal to a more representative audience and how can this be achieved?

Communications

- Festival website can overwhelm, due to its layout and the amount of information it contains – how can information be streamlined, to encourage people to visit and also to support planning?
- There has been a fall in the proportion of first-time visitors – is more external comms investment, or a change in promotional approach, needed to reach new audiences?
- Representation flagged as important when seeking to engage people of Black ethnicity – how well is this being delivered in existing advertising and communications?
- Can partner organisations provide more promotional support via their customer databases?

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

The Great Exhibition Road Festival is a free annual celebration of science and the arts. Led by Imperial College London, in collaboration with institutions on and around Exhibition Road, it offers a diverse and vibrant programme of creative workshops, hands-on demonstrations, live experiments, live music and artistic performances – all with the intention of engaging new audiences, building relationships and inspiring action.

This report outlines the findings from the evaluation of the 2025 Festival, undertaken by Bluegrass Research. The experiences of visitors, volunteers, contributors and community programme participants are considered. Comparisons are made to data collected in previous evaluations when relevant.

2025 is the first time that Bluegrass has been involved in the evaluation of the Festival.

CORE
FESTIVAL
AIMS:

- To create a unique Festival that connects some of the world's most iconic institutions in an inspirational fusion of the arts and sciences.
- To deliver a dynamic range of participatory visitor experiences that generate curiosity and a pioneering spirit among audiences and institutions.
- To engage 50,000+ people through events taking place on Exhibition Road and across partner institutions over the Festival weekend.
- To engage communities and audiences who do not usually access our institutions through co-created projects that are part of the Festival weekend.
- To celebrate diversity – the diversity of our communities, and that within art and science.

DATE: Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th June 2025

With Festival visitors: a mixed methodology, comprising of qualitative and quantitative methods, and on- and off-site activity.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS

To profile the Festival audience and to obtain data that can be used to assess the Festival's role in shaping and shifting knowledge, understanding, perceptions and behaviours.

Face-to-Face Survey

- A total of 8 shifts, 4 each day.
- Undertaken by trained market research interviewers.
- ‘Quick-fire’ questionnaire used – a shorter version of the online survey, to maximise strike rates.
- Additional support offered by Festival volunteers – 2 volunteers interviewed each day.
- Interviewing conducted in areas of high footfall and within specific Festival zones.
- **363 interviews achieved**

Online Survey

- Promoted during the Festival via posters and QR codes.
- Distributed post-Festival to registered visitors.
- ‘Full’ questionnaire used – as per the ‘quick-fire’ survey, plus additional KPI questions.
- **473 interviews achieved**

Total Sample: 836 interviews

QUALITATIVE METHODS

To deep dive into the Festival experience, exploring response, understanding and reaction.

In-depth Interviews

- Programme of 25 interviews, each lasting approximately 20 minutes.
- Undertaken at the Festival, all with priority audiences:
 - Young people aged 16-25
 - People from Black / African / Caribbean / Black British ethnicities
 - People with a disability / long-term health condition or neurodiversity

Observation and Intercept Depths

- Observation undertaken to consider how visitors naturally experience the Festival.
- Short intercept depth interviews undertaken with a random selection of visitors. All within priority zones.
- 49 intercept depths achieved.

With Festival volunteers and contributors: a dedicated online survey, distributed by Imperial following the event. Supported by 2 case-studies per audience, to provide additional understanding about the experience of participation and the personal impacts

VOLUNTEERS

To profile the volunteer audience and to gain insights around the volunteering experience, motivations and impacts.

- Questionnaire based on 2024 version, to support year-on-year comparison. Included a mix of structured and open questions, to obtain statistical data as well as depth of insight.
- Sample of 71 surveys achieved
- 2 case-studies

CONTRIBUTORS

To profile the contributor audience and to gain insights around the contributor experience, motivations and impacts.

- Questionnaire based on 2024 version, to support year-on-year comparison. Included a mix of structured and open questions, to obtain statistical data as well as depth of insight.
- In total, 64 contributors completed the survey – 7 partially and 57 in full.
- 2 case-studies

• For both evaluation surveys, analysis is undertaken at an overall level and by audience profiles – relationship with Imperial for example. Caution is needed when considering data by audience profiles, due to smaller base sizes.

With Community Programme participants: consultation during and after the Festival. Targeted specifically at groups representing people from African and or Caribbean communities, to align with audience development objectives.

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS

To explore motivations and expectations, and response to the Festival experience.

To obtain insights to address underrepresentation of people from African and or Caribbean communities at the Festival, exploring perceived barriers and enablers.

- Insights based on 3 in-depth interviews, post Festival [out of a potential sample of 5 organisations]

COMMUNITY GROUP PARTICIPANTS

To explore response to the Festival, exploring highlights, areas for development and impacts.

- Short discussion groups / interviews with participants. Undertaken at the Festival, whilst participants were in the dedicated community space.
- Participants from 4 organisations consulted

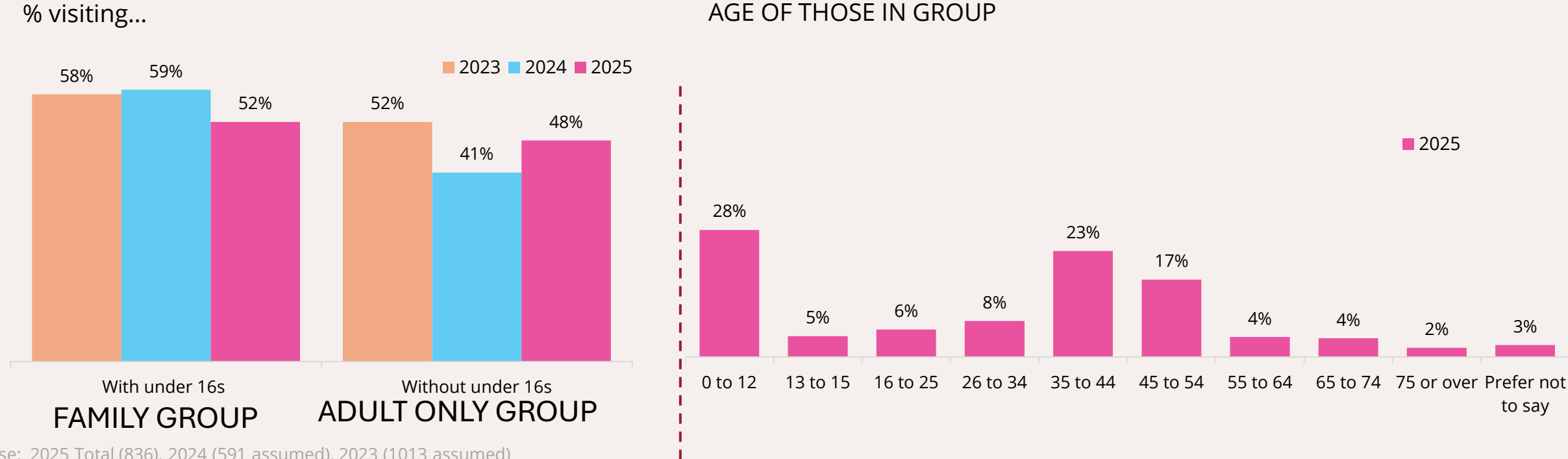
VISITORS

**Visitor Profile
Festival Experience
Impact on Knowledge and Perceptions**

The 2025 Festival attracted a relatively even mix of families and adult only groups.

- Year-on-year comparison shows a growth in the proportion in adult only groups after a fall in 2024 – 48% in 2025, up from 41%.
- 19% visited alone, equating to 40% of adult only groups
- Visitor from minority ethnicities more likely to be visiting in a family group (60%).
- Children are most likely to be aged 12 and under – and represent 28% of the audience.
- 6% of the audience were aged 16 to 25.

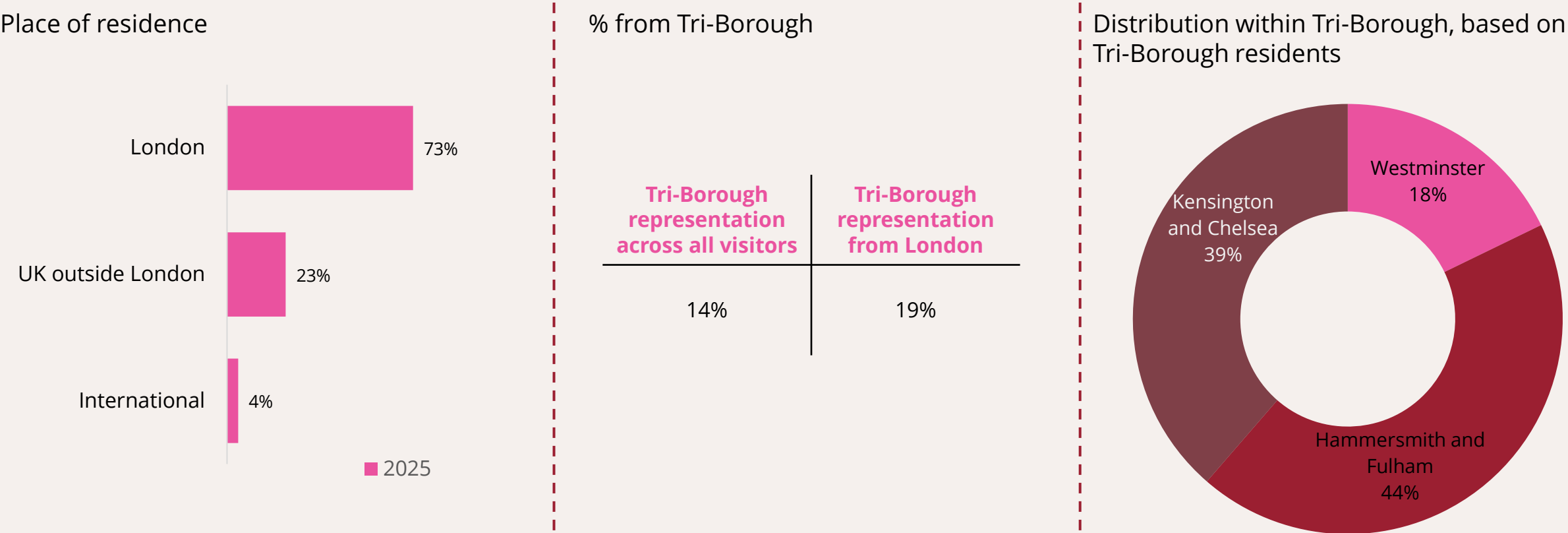
Derived from group age information provided. Methodology used changed in 2025.



London residents predominate in the Festival audience, making up 73% of visitors.

- Approximately 1 in 7 visitors from the Tri-Borough: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; Westminster; Hammersmith and Fulham.
- Geographical profile similar to 2024 [71% of visitors from London; 15% from Tri-Borough].

Derived from postcode / country of residence information provided.

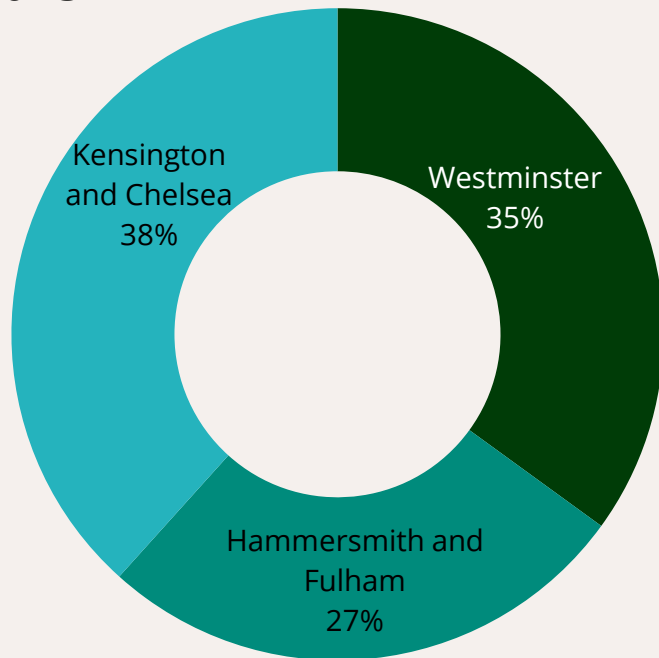


Base: Total visitors that gave locations (763), Total locations within Triborough (105), Total locations to specific Triborough (101)

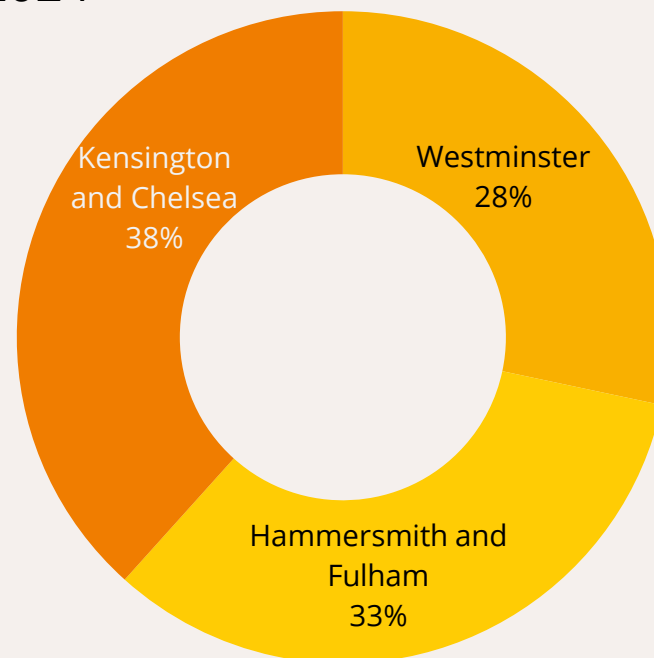
In 2025, 14% of all visitors to the Festival were from the London boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, and Hammersmith and Fulham.

- Within the cohort, comparison to previous years indicates a growth in the proportion of visitors from Hammersmith and Fulham in 2025, yet a decline in the proportion from Westminster.
- Representation of visitors from Kensington and Chelsea has remained constant between 2023 to 2025.

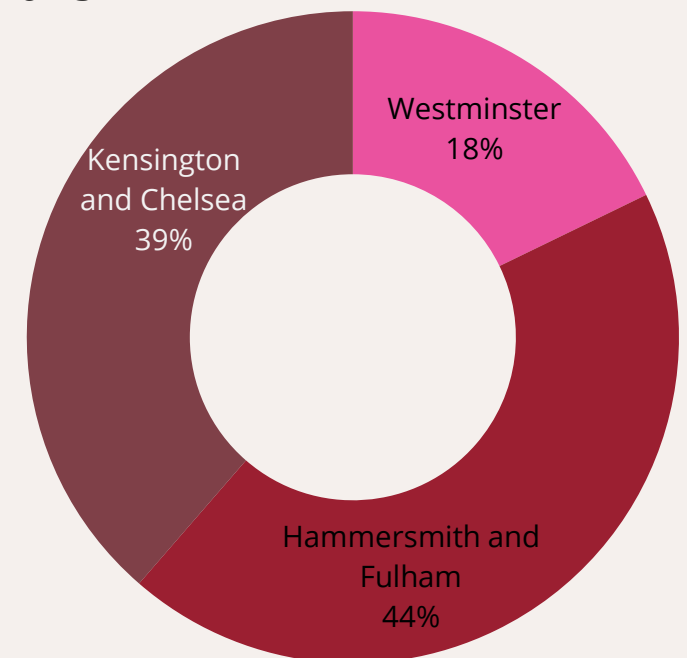
2023

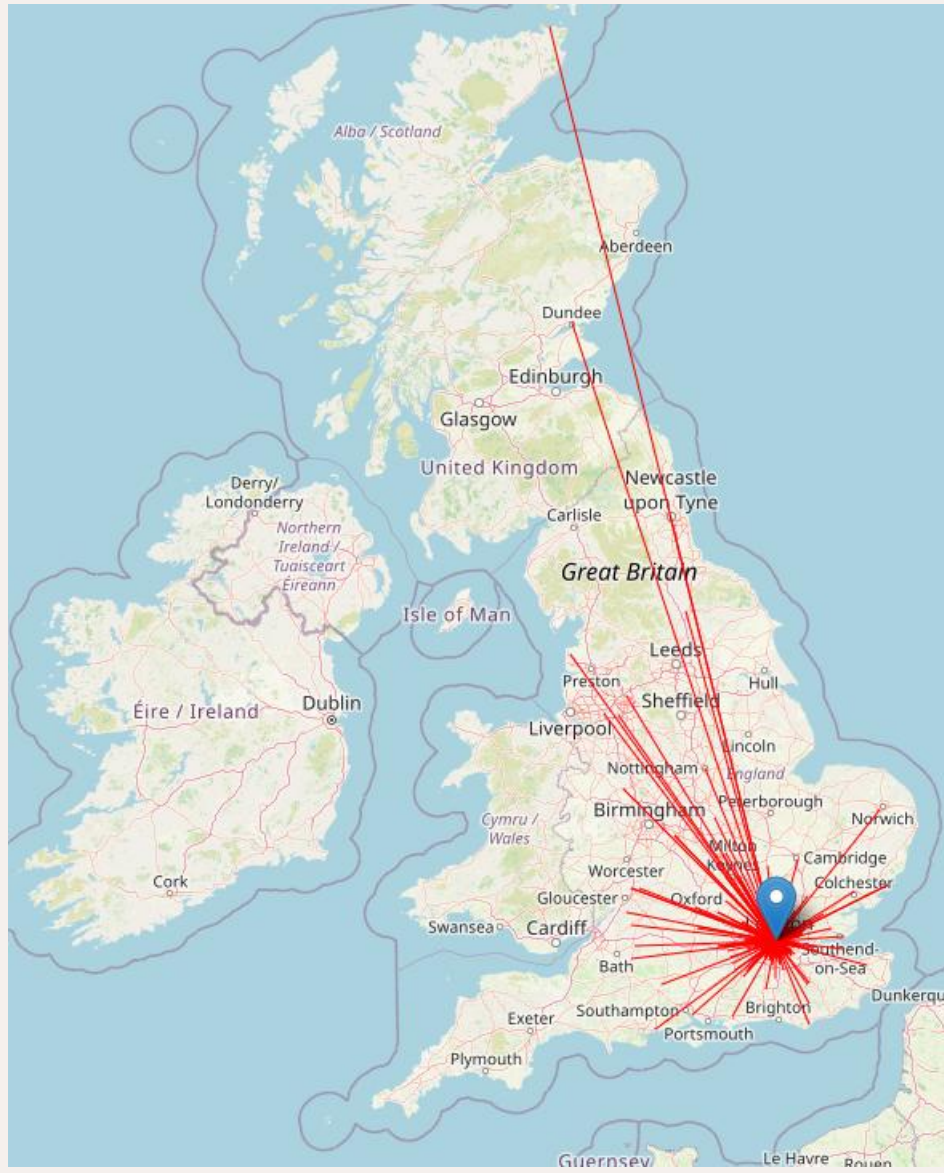


2024



2025





Distance from Imperial College London 2025 (SW7 2AZ)

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION: KEY FACTS

- Furthest UK distance = Thurso, Scotland
- Distance as the Crow Flies: 508.77 miles
- Distance by Land Transport: 685.81 miles
- Mean distance = 16.45 miles
 - 2024 = 13.8 miles / 2023 = 14.5 miles
- Median distance = 7.39 miles
 - (2024 = 7.9 miles / 2023 = 7.3 miles)
- 25 out of 518 full processable postcodes are more than 70 miles away from Imperial
 - (2024 = 13 / 2023 = 11)

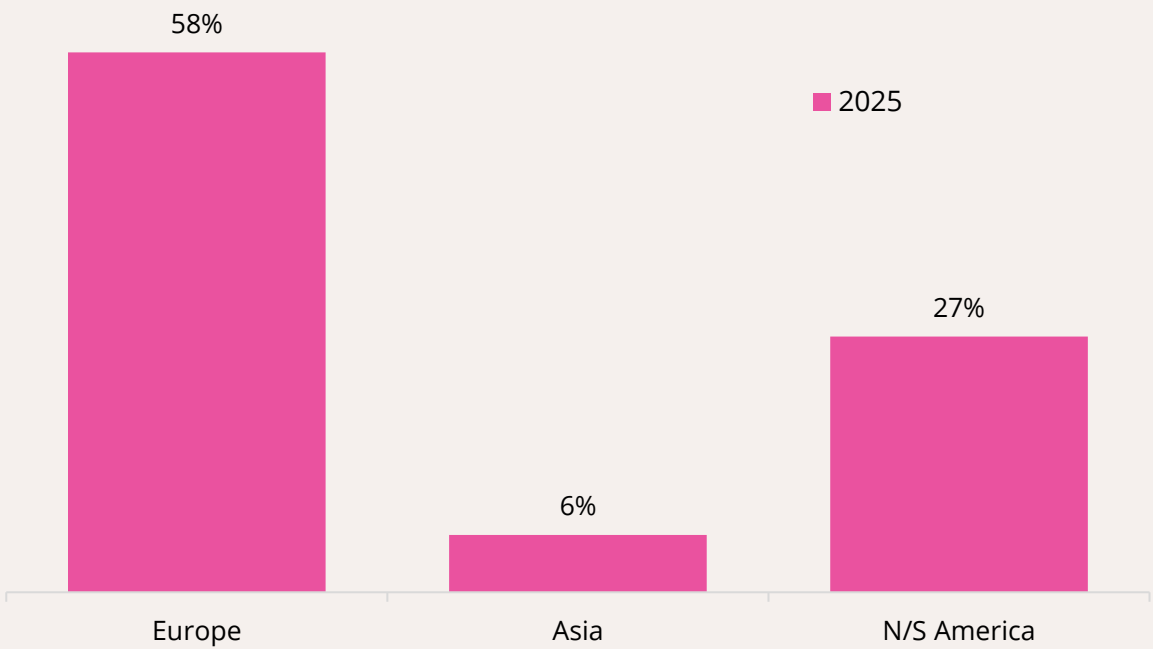
In 2025, 4% of the Festival visitors were from outside the UK, with the highest proportion from Europe.

- Year-on-year comparison not shown due to comparable data not being available at time of reporting.

Place of international residence

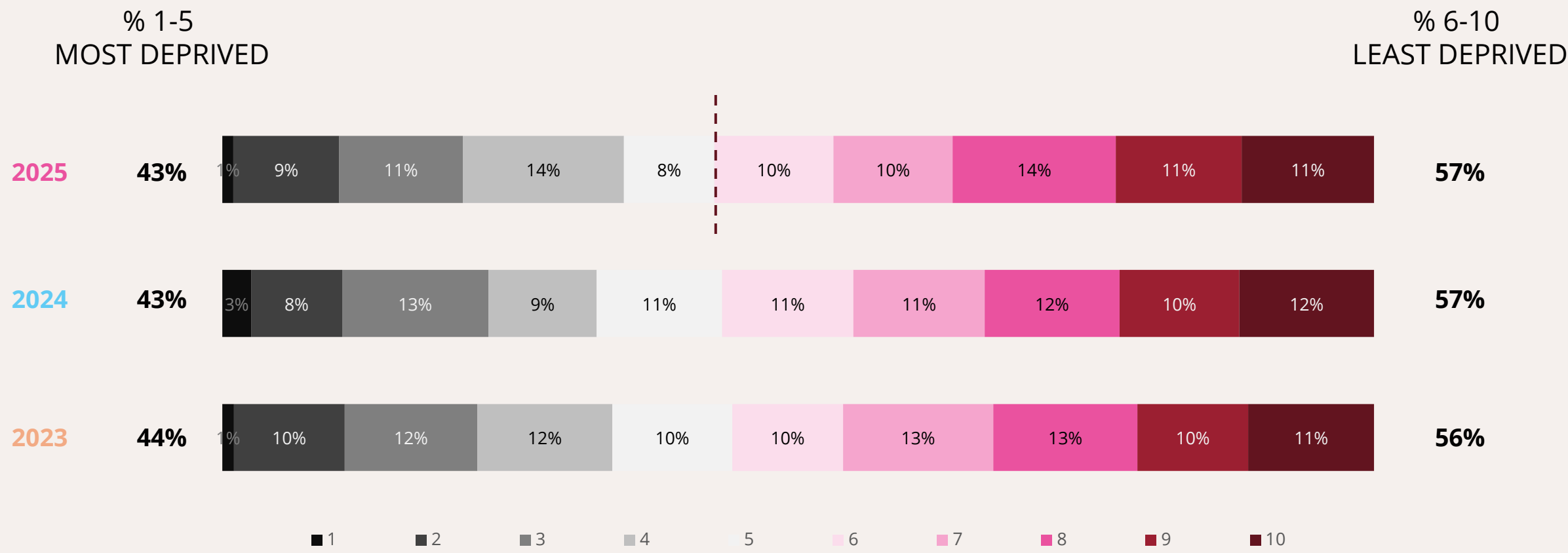


Distribution amongst international visitors



Base: 2025 Total locations given outside of UK (33*) small base

INDICES OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION BASED ON POSTCODE



It was more common for visitors to live in the least deprived postcodes – 11% live within the 10th least deprived decile and 57% within the top 5.

More deprived areas, however, are also represented, with 2 in 5 living in the lower 5 IMD deciles.

- This is hugely consistent with the past 2 years’ deprivation data

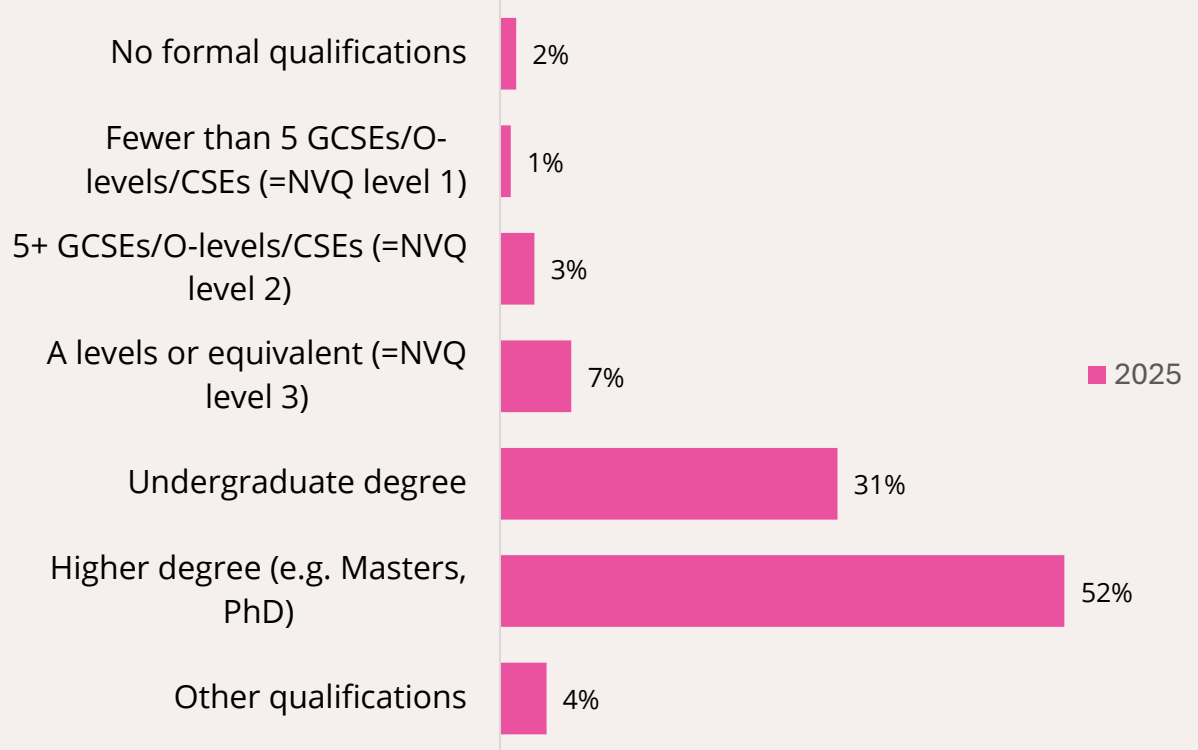
Base: 2025 Total who provided a full correct postcode (522), 2024 (394), 2023 (384)

The 2025 Festival continued to attract a highly educated audience, with 1 in 2 qualified to Masters or PhD level.

- Year-on-year comparison shows the rise in the proportion of visitors reporting a higher educational level qualification (undergraduate degree and above) in 2024 has been maintained.
- Holding a higher degree was more prevalent in family groups (57%), whilst lower amongst visitors of Black / African / Caribbean / Black British backgrounds (36%).

Base: 2025 Total excluding 'prefer not to say' (807), 2024 (591 assumed), 2023 (1013 assumed)

What is the highest educational or professional qualification that you have obtained to date, if any?



NB. 4% prefer not to say – removed from data to support comparison against Census

% reporting a higher educational level qualification [Level 4 or above]

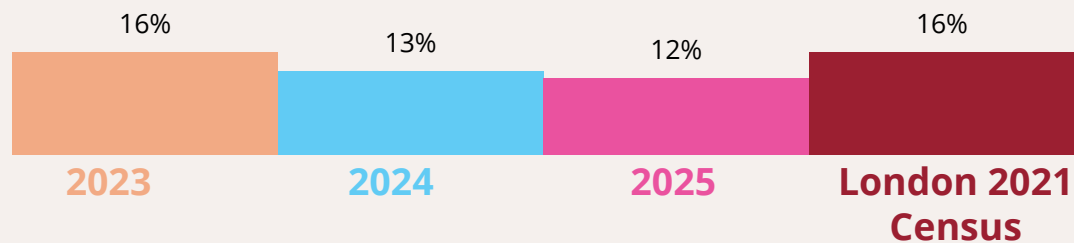
2023	2024	2025	London 2021 Census
77%	86%	83%	47%

In 2025, approximately 1 in 8 groups included someone with a disability or long-term health condition. 1 in 6 groups included someone with neurodiversity.

- Disability and neurodiversity profiles are broadly consistent with 2024.
- People with a disability or long-term health condition are, however, underrepresented in the audience, in the context of the Greater London population profile.
- Incidence of neurodiversity is higher amongst families (21%) and repeat visitors (24%). Incidence of a disability / long-term health condition is also higher amongst repeat visitors (16%).

For you or those you came to the Festival with, to the best of your knowledge, are day-to-day activities limited because of a health condition or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

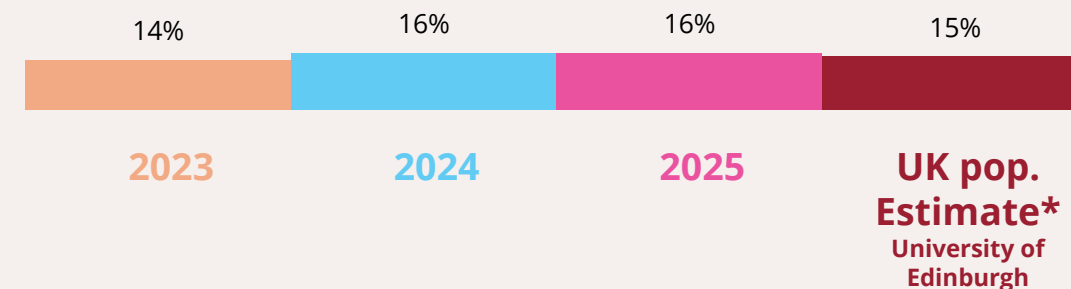
% YES NB. 6% prefer not to say – removed from data to support comparison against Census



Base: 2025 Total excluding 'prefer not to say' A) (784), B) (797), 2024 (591 assumed), 2023 (1013 assumed)

To the best of your knowledge, is anyone in the group you came to the Festival with neurodivergent?

NB. 5% prefer not to say – removed from data to support comparison against UK pop, estimate

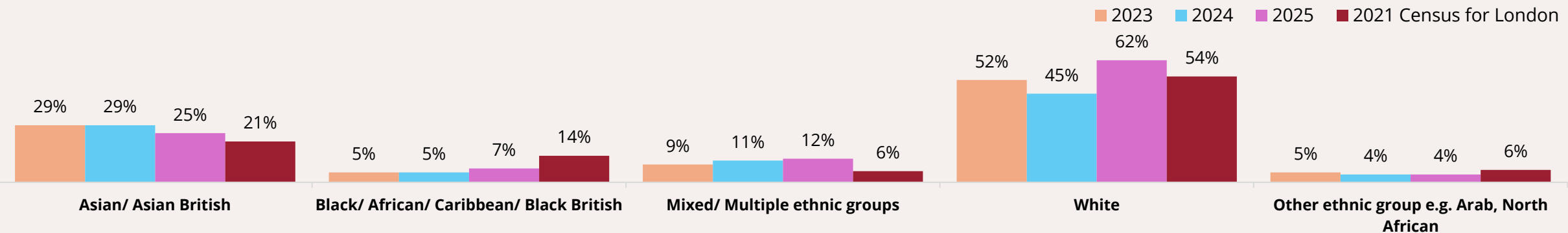


**UK pop.
Estimate***
University of
Edinburgh

The ethnicity profile of visitors continues to differ from that of the Greater London population profile.

- Indication that people from people from Asian / Asian British and White ethnicities are overrepresented in the audience.
- People from Black / African / Caribbean / Black British backgrounds continue to be underrepresented, although there is an indication of a positive increase amongst this visitor demographic (not statistically significant).
- No change in the proportion of people of mixed / multiple ethnic heritage between 2024 and 2025, resulting in this audience being marginally overrepresented.

Which ethnic groups were represented in the group you came to the Festival with?
Multiple response possible.



As in previous years, women are most prevalent within the overall evaluation sample.

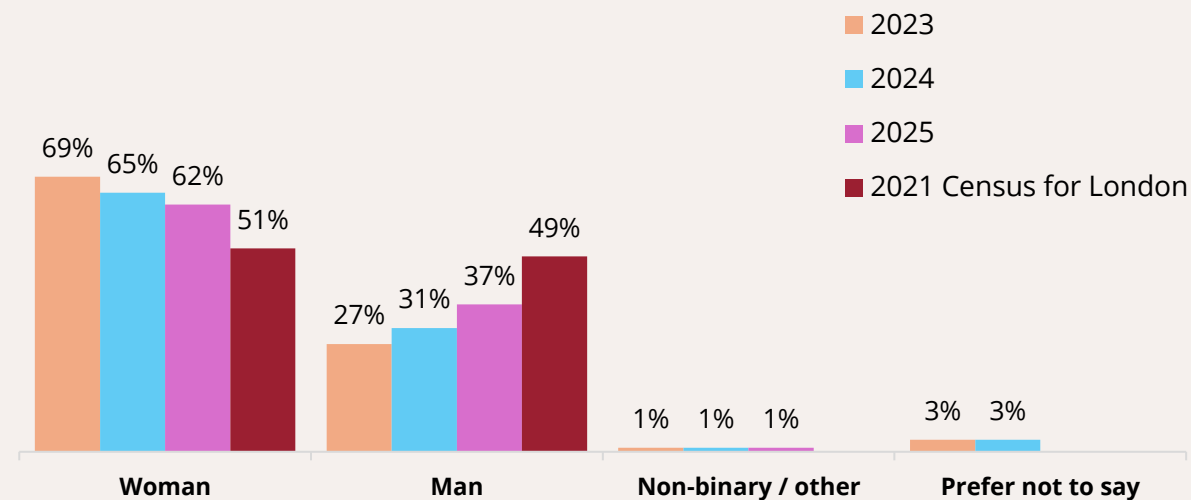
- However, on-site fieldwork suggests a more balanced gender profile was present - 49% of those surveyed face-to-face identified as female and 48% identified as male.

In 2025, 6% of the audience were a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.

- Consistent with 2024 levels, yet lower than 2023.
- 2025 level marginally higher than London population profile.
- Proportion of LGBTQIA+ members higher in adult only groups (9%) and those with a disability / long-term health condition (11%).

Base: 2025 Total excluding 'prefer not to say' A (811) B (775), 2024 (591 assumed), 2023 (1013 assumed)

Please select the gender which best aligns with your identity:



NB. 3% prefer not to say – removed from data to support comparison against Census

Do you consider yourself a member of the LGBTQIA+ Community?

% YES

2023	2024	2025	London 2021 Census
9%	6%	6%	4%

NB. 7% prefer not to say – removed from data to support comparison against Census

In 2025, approximately 2 in 3 visitors were attending for the first time.

- Year-on-year comparison indicates an increase in the proportion of repeat visitors.
- Incidence of repeat visits higher amongst:
 - Those visiting in a group where a member has a disability or long-term health condition (45%) or neurodiversity (47%).

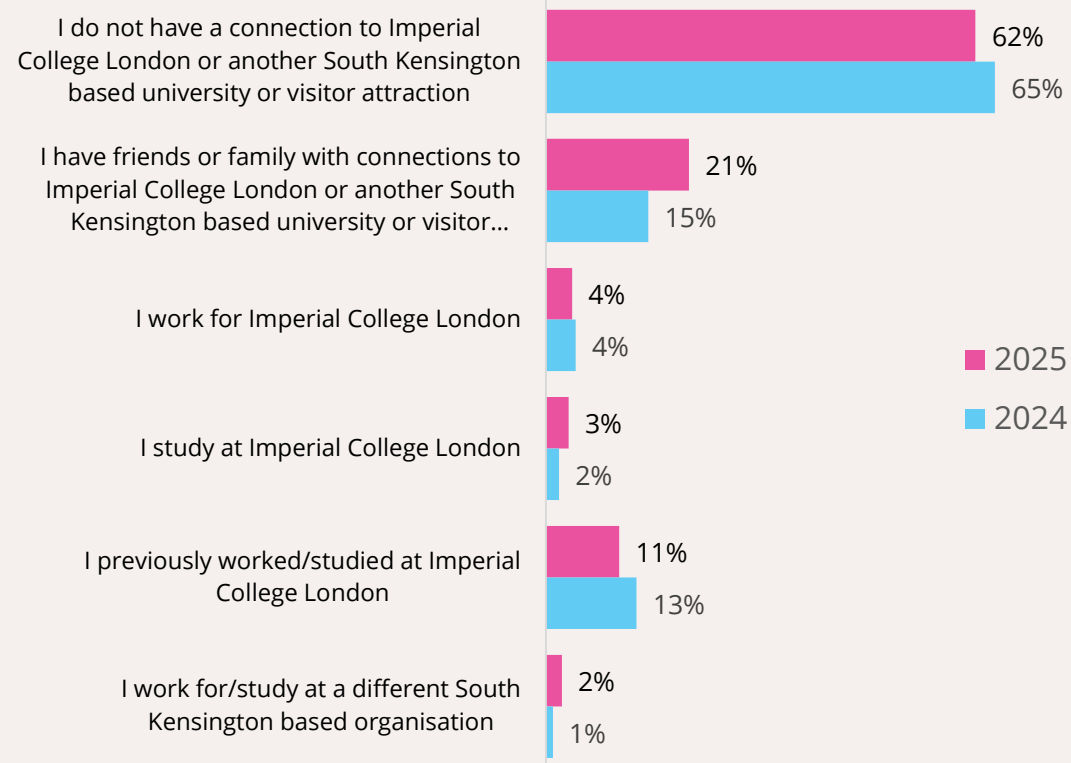
In keeping with last year, the majority of Festival visitors – approximately 3 in 5 – did not have a connection with Imperial or with another South Kensington based university or visitor attraction.

- At 67%, the proportion of families without a connection to Imperial or another South Kensington organisation was higher (57% adult only groups).
- 28% of visitors aged 16-25 were Imperial students.

% Attending GEF previously

2023	2024	2025
24%	29%	34%

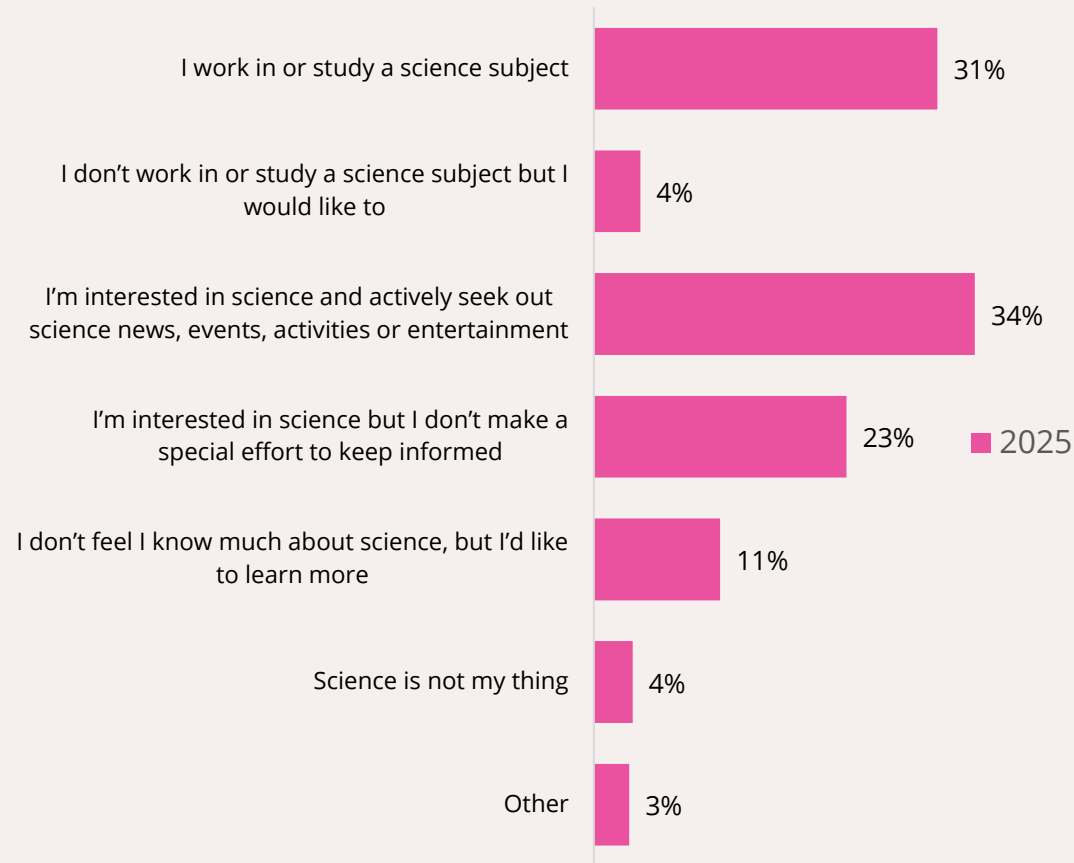
Which one of the following best describes you?



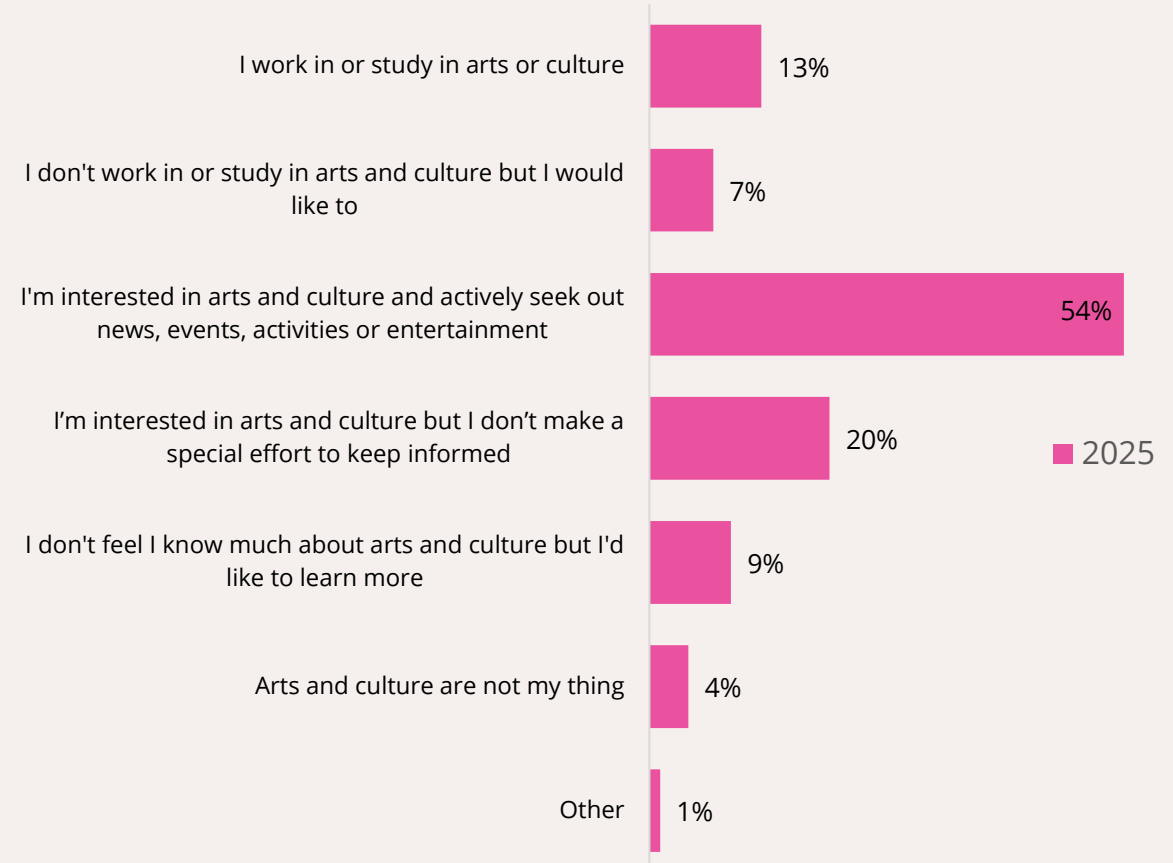
In 2025, the majority of visitors had a professional or personal interest in science, arts and culture.

- Year-on-year comparison not shown due to changes in question format

Which of these statements best describes your relationship with science?



Which of these statements best describes your relationship with art and culture?



Overall, 83% of those aware of the Festival registered online.

- This equates to 73% of the total sample, although pre-registration was significantly lower amongst those surveyed face-to-face – 55% vs 87% surveyed online*.
- Incidence of pre-registration is higher amongst:
 - Families: 80% (compared to 65% of adult groups)
 - Repeat visitors: 80% (compared to 69% of first-time visitors)

* The survey methodology, which involved distributing the online survey to the database of registered visitors will be a factor here

% Aware of Festival and registered online

2023	2024	2025
88%	85%	83%

% Aware of Festival and registered online – F2F interviewed

2023	2024	2025
63%	61%	68%

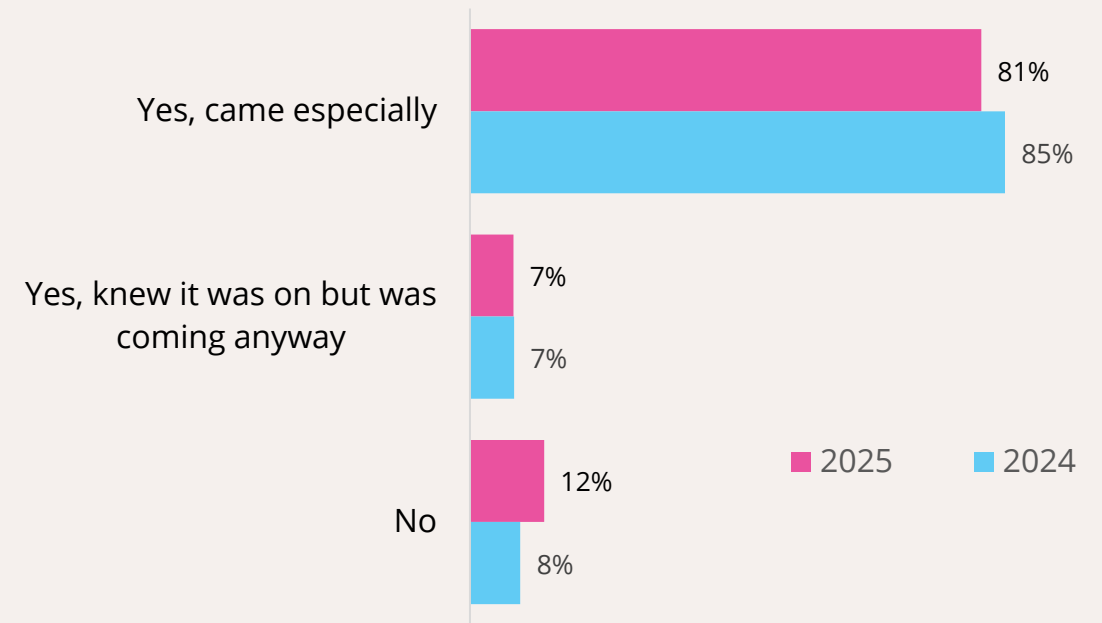
"We're going to the booked shows and then we're going to double back and look at the crafts afterwards. To me, those things are going to be always there, but the ticketed events that I chose specifically for her, I want her and myself to have that experience."

Depth: 45-54, family group

In 2025, 4 in 5 visitors made a purposeful visit to the Festival.

- Year-on-year comparison indicates a rise in the proportion of speculative visitors – 12% were unaware that the Festival was happening before their visit, up from 8% in 2024.
- Pre-planned visits were most likely amongst:
 - Families (89% vs 73% for adult only groups)
 - Repeat visitors (90% vs 77% for first time visitors)

Before your visit, were you aware that the Festival was happening?



QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Positive experiences at past Festivals underpin high level of intentional visits amongst repeat visitors.
- Those who just happen upon the Festival get drawn in and are keen to explore.

"We bumped into it without even knowing that the fair was there, and instead, we've been here an hour and a half now. It's a nice surprise. Anybody that comes down here without even knowing will spend time just looking around, because it seems interesting."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

"We've been coming here for several years. The kids love it!"

Intercept: Family Zone

Social media activity and direct emails from Imperial, along with word of mouth, leads promotional channels for the 2025 Festival.

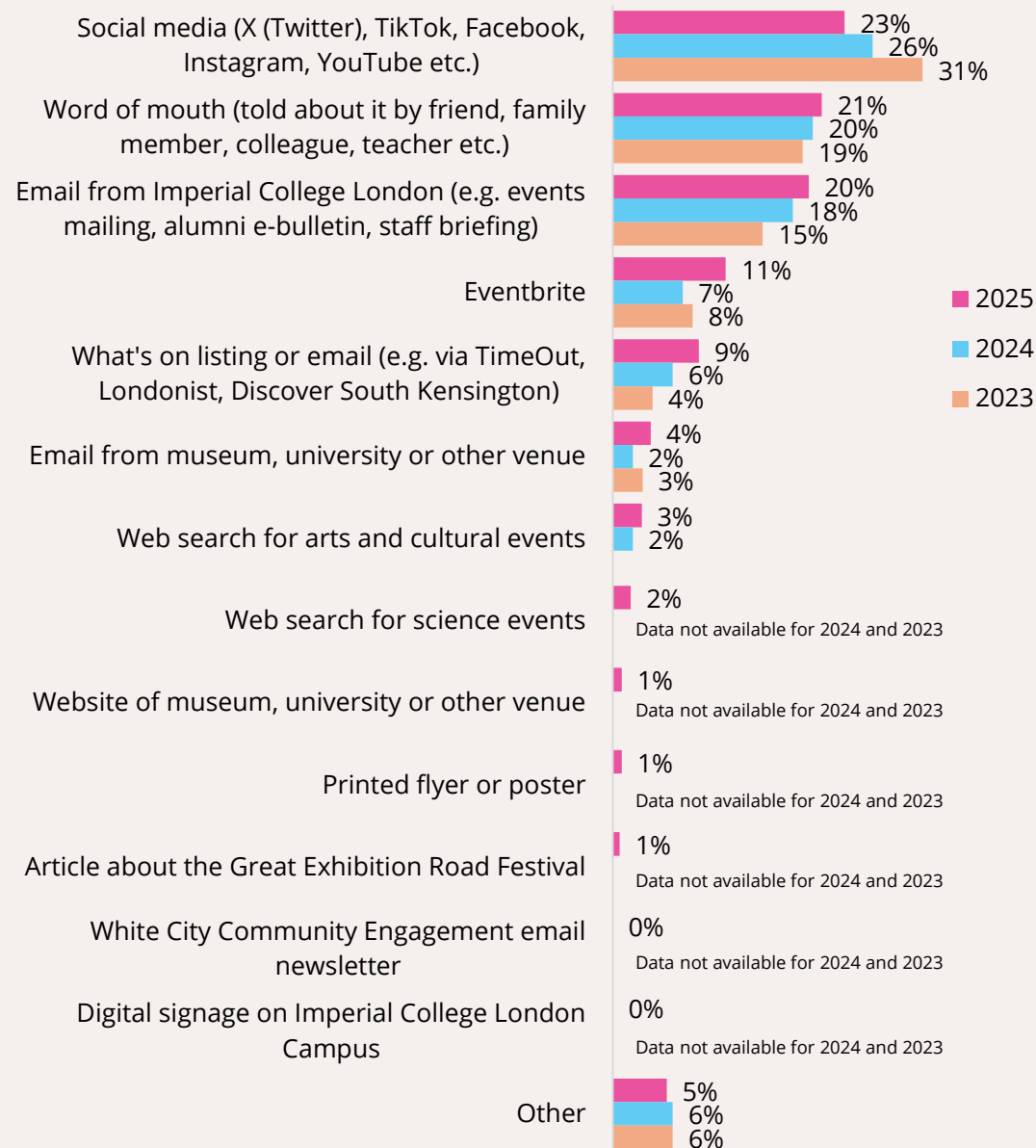
- Findings broadly consistent with 2024, although small increase in the proportion finding out about the Festival via Eventbrite in 2025.
- Indication that social media is becoming less influential. This is offset by an increase in the proportion of visitors recalling direct emails from Imperial.
- Some variation by visit history:
 - Social media was the leading source of awareness amongst first time visitors (28% vs 15% for repeat visitors)
 - Direct emails from Imperial was the most effective channel amongst repeat visitors (30% vs 13% for first time visitors)
- Social media activity also key to reaching families (35% vs 10% for adults only groups).

"I can't remember whether it was The i Paper or the Metro yesterday, that's how I heard about it, as I hadn't heard of it before."

Intercept: Be a Scientist Zone

Base: 2025 Online Survey – All aware of Festival before visit (444), 2024 (543 assumed)

How did you first hear about the Festival?



QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Most visitors arrive with an understanding that the Festival has a science focus. They come wanting to enjoy themselves, but can be surprised by just how much fun they have.

"I knew that it was sciencey, given it being next to Imperial but then, yeah, I had no idea that it would be this relatable and this much fun to everyone."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, neurodiverse, adult only group

"It feels a lot more fun, much more exciting. I can see why so many people want to come here. It's not really a hidden gem but it's a gem nonetheless."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, neurodiverse, adult only group

- Visitors like that it is more than a science festival. The mix of arts and music create a more holistic experience.

"I was thinking it was gonna be, like, a lot of science, but I'm really happy that it isn't. It's nice to have a change. And, the band is so lovely. And yeah, there's so much going on, like, food. I'm excited to look around more."

Depth: 16-25, neurodiverse, adult only group

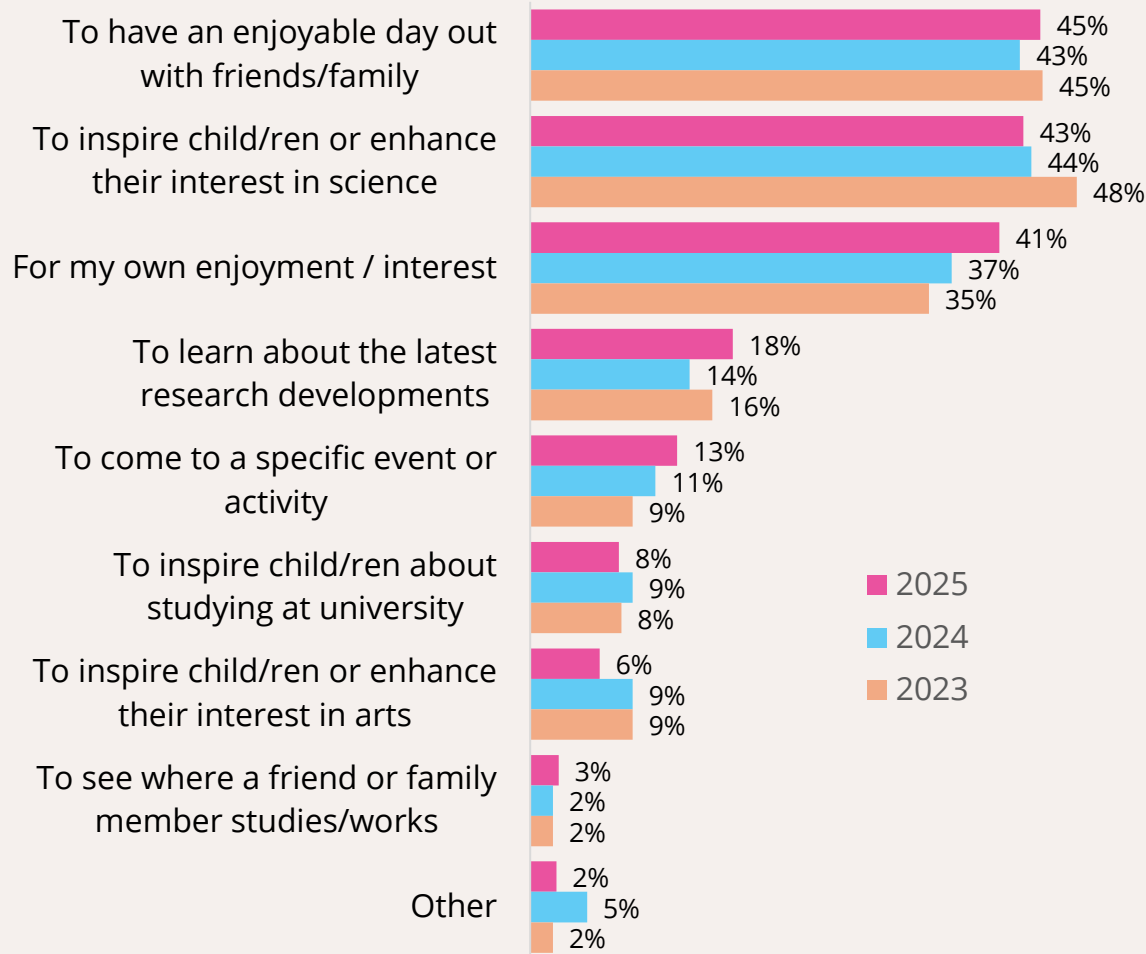
- The science dominant theme of the Festival isn't immediately obvious from the Festival's title.

"When we walked here, we're like, what does the Great Exhibition Road Festival mean? What is that? And then again, because the stands were so niche, and people talking about their PhDs or their research, and it was super scientific, what's going on at first. And then you start probing a little bit more, stopping at times, asking questions."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

Visitors came to the Festival primarily for enjoyment / fun.

What were your main reasons for visiting? (choose up to 2)



Base: 2025 Online Survey Total (473), 2024 (591 assumed), 2023 (1013 assumed)

- Findings broadly consistent with 2024.

Group profile influences motivations:

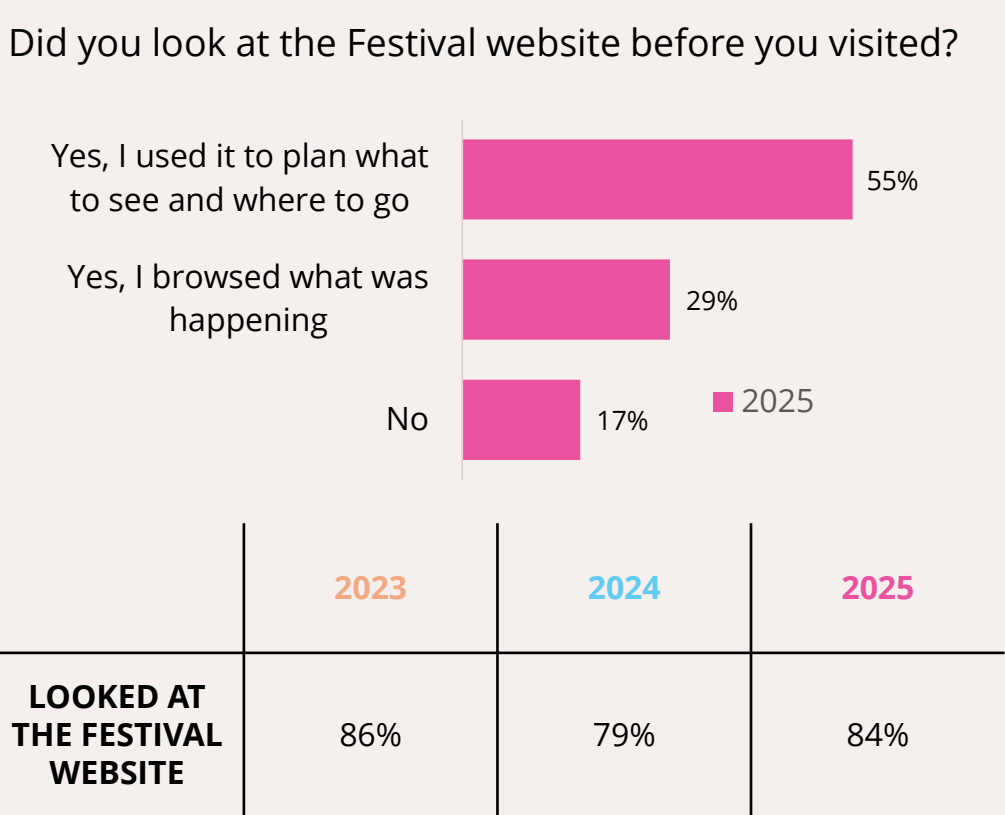
- To inspire children or enhance their interest in science was the primary motivation of those visiting in a family group (80%).
- Adult only groups were more likely to be motivated to attend for their own enjoyment (69%), to learn about the latest research developments (30%) and to come to a specific event or activity (23%).

"It seemed wholesome about science and things. We often come to the museums so it just sounded interesting, something different."

Intercept: Family Zone

In 2025, 84% of visitors used the Festival website, either for specific planning or more general browsing.

- Website usage up from 79% in 2024
- Level of usage broadly comparable by visitor profile



Base: 2025 Online Survey Total (473)



QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Mixed response to website format and content. Some felt it was 'very informative' and 'well organised'; others found it 'overwhelming' and 'a bit difficult to navigate'.
- Accessing information about event registration and the registration process are a common theme in feedback.
- Suggested improvements include:
 - Making the map more accessible from the home screen
 - A schedule page with click-through sign-up links
 - Better signposting to ticketed events

"The map should be more prominent on the website and the timetable of events should be clearer, as well as where to get tickets for things. The website seemed a little old fashioned."

"In planning my days, it would have been helpful to have a full timetable in date/time order, like the full programme schedule that was on display around the festival. That timetable wasn't on the maps either."

"Not sure what I was registering for, I didn't know how to register for a particular event e.g. Dyson workshop, quantum disco etc."

The large majority of visitors were positive about their Festival experience.

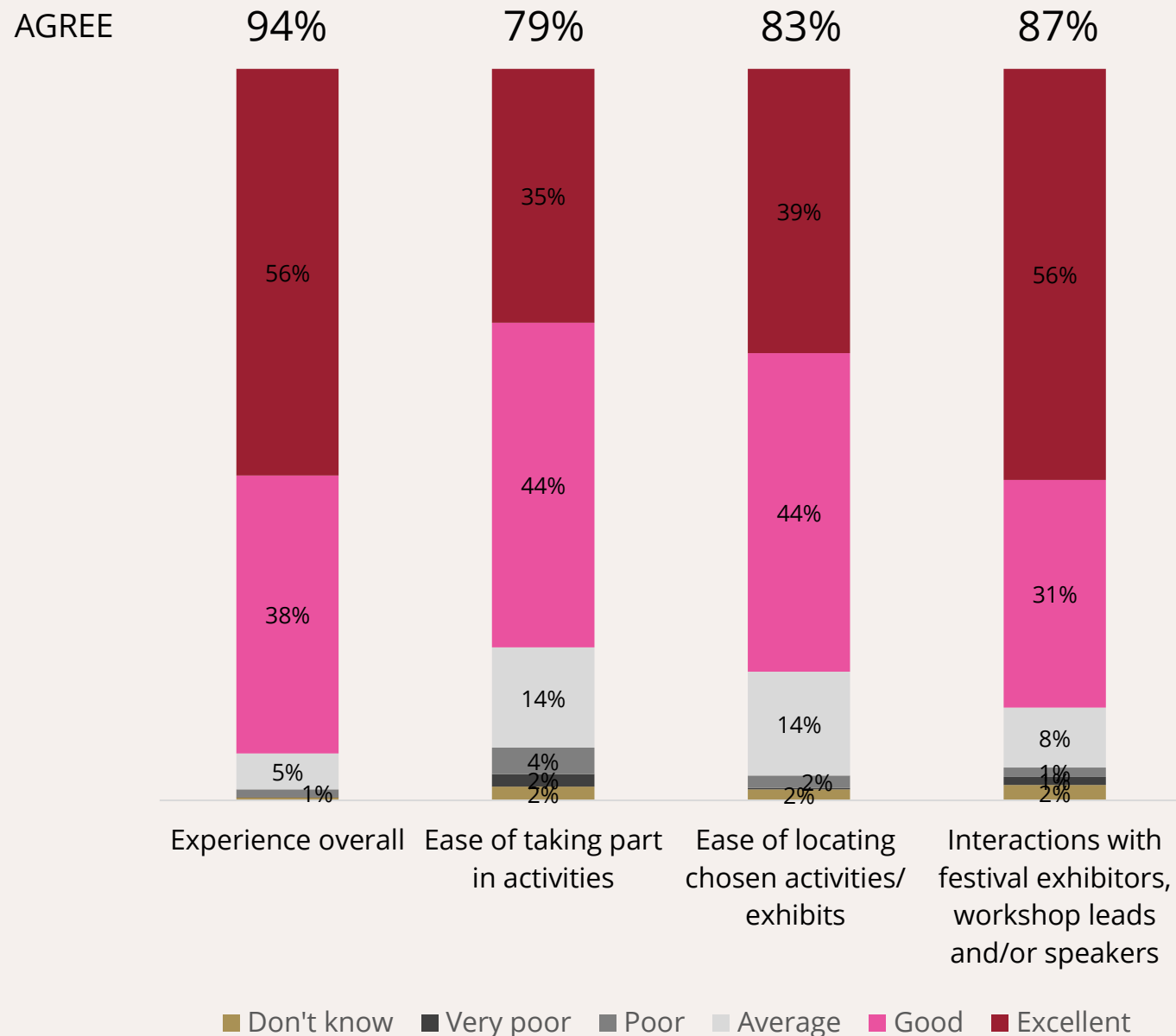
- Personal interactions are where the Festival shines, with over half saying these are excellent.
- Ratings for finding activities and getting involved show no cause for concern – most are positive.
- Ease of taking part has most scope for strengthening of positivity, however.
 - Families stand out as the least satisfied in this regard, with a 30% 'excellent' rating.

Over 9 in 10 visitors rate their overall experience at the Festival positively, with a majority opting to rate it a 'excellent'.

- Visitor profiles more likely to rate their experience as 'excellent':
 - Repeat visitors (61%)
 - Visitors from Asian / Asian British backgrounds (64%)

Base: 2025 Total (836)

How would you rate the following aspects of the Festival?



How would you rate the following aspects of the Festival?

Experience Overall

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	89%	90%	94%

Ease of taking part in activities

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	77%	77%	79%

Interactions with festival exhibitors, workshop leads and/or speakers

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	86%	91%	87%

- Positive rating of the overall experience shows consistency with previous years, with continuation of a slight upwards trend.

- Ease of taking part in activities has seen a small increase in positivity since last year.

- Ratings for interactions have stayed fairly consistent, but a 3 year high in *excellent* has been achieved this year (56%).

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Visitors perceive and appreciate the extensive and eclectic programme. They like that they get a chance to see and do new things – eat mealworms, ceilidh dance etc.
- Some come with a pre-planned idea of what they want to do and see. Others are content to simply explore on the day - but this can lead to disappointment when ticketed activities are already booked up.
- The busyness of the Festival and the requirement to queue can derail planned activities - which can be a source of frustration.

"Science and nature was a hit; the music stands here by the Queen's Gate; the new music was good. We couldn't get into Chemistry because it got really popular and queuing up was a bit difficult. Technology, robots, they enjoyed that as well. So, anything that's visual, anything that's animated, the kids enjoyed it."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, family group

"Actually, what I like the best was, I mean it's got nothing to do with science, but it was the choir over there. It's really good. The choir was exceptional. I personally, really enjoyed it."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

"This morning I asked my older son to look at the website and decide where to go. So, he designed an overall kind of schedule but we've been kind of stuck here, at the first activity... ...I understand you want it open to everyone and that's why it's free, but then it's hard for adults with kids to plan in advance where you come back in twenty-five minutes. With entering the Science Museum, you can have a timeslot but free tickets. I think that would help a lot."

Depth: Neurodiversity, family group

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Feedback around the relevance / appropriate pitch of science content supports the strategy to have age-specific zones.
- On the whole, contributors / volunteers were felt to get it 'just right' for their audience, but a few were felt to miss the mark.

"I think from what we've participated in and even when we've been waiting, from my perspective I would say that they have explained it [the science] very well. And looking at some various different age groups, I've really seen that the people have been explaining it at appropriate levels. So, not talking down to them, but explaining it to them in plain English. Like, 'let's do this. This is why this happens,' and then the kids are asking them questions, as opposed to just, 'I do this and then I move on.'"

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

"One station we went to had too much talking. Especially with young kids. We stayed because we didn't want to be rude, but it was too much information. All he did was talk and then you get some freebies. But in terms of understanding, it was a lecture, a PhD lecture with two kids."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

- Further zoning could improve the visitor experience, particularly for the 13-25 age group.
- Some felt that the activities in the Next Gen zone were geared towards the younger end of the age group, whilst others felt they had to let younger participants take the lead.

"We've just been in the Dyson School. Even though it said 13-25, it felt more like 13-16, and even younger. So, I think just on that one, we thought it would be a bit more teenage. The subject matter is maybe 16 but the activities were probably a little bit younger."

Depth: Neurodiverse, family group

"I've done a couple of things [in the Next Gen Zone]. But I'm willing to take more of a step back, because obviously there's younger kids, so I think some of the things are more angled towards them."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- No major issues raised about wayfinding and signage, although the map was necessary.
- The combination of colour zoning, banners, signs and volunteers supported movement around the Festival.
- Thematic zoning also felt to help visitors focus in on topics of interest – important in the context of the size of the Festival.

"I didn't have the thing that you've given me now [the map], because I went to the lady and she said she didn't have any more. So, it was a bit difficult to then navigate where you actually want to go. But I think if you've got that, it's easier to navigate where you want to go, what time you want to go to see certain things."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, family group

"I think it's quite easy to read [the map], because the colours make it obvious to tell where you're going. You can tell which road's which and where everything is. The map's quite good, and are situated in very opportune places."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

"It's very clear what's going on. You know, there's lots of banners. And it's humongous, so many things. It's well sectioned as well. They've broken it down very clearly, the different areas of the fair. They've got a massive map over there. Everything's very interactive."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- The addition of the Adults Only Zone was widely welcomed by those visiting without children.
- Users liked that they were able to take part in dedicated interactive activities – they come to the Festival to have fun and get involved but can feel the need to take a step back in areas where children are present.
- The zone was felt to have a calmer atmosphere because it was childfree – an often-appreciated contrast.

"We liked learning things we never knew, especially in the Adults Only Zone, you get to do interactive stuff not aimed at kids."

"We actually came across the Children's Zone first but couldn't learn with all the children there, so we much prefer the Adults Zone as we are interested in the quantum things and we wanted to see more on the health side."

"It's really nice to have an Adults Only Zone, away from the screaming children, it's definitely quieter."

"We liked the planets, sun thing that was really good, the age thing looks really good as well. We like that you can take part in things."

All Intercepts: Adults Only Zone

- In other Festival zones, contributors were widely commended for their ability to tailor their engagements and take part in age-appropriate conversations.

"The presenters are very good at answering questions that the adults have that are maybe higher level."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

"I think they make it in a way that adults can be involved, and then also kids can be involved. So they have stuff like those, the person who we went to for the brains, they had stuff for the kids to kind of like draw on the brains. She's explained to us about the studies they're doing and the work they're doing and all that stuff. And they kind of had, a back and forth conversation about that. It's engaging for whichever age."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, family group

- More adult specific content would be welcomed.

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Some visitors made accurate observations about the Festival's visitor profile. Underrepresentation of visitors from specific age groups, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds was acknowledged.

"I wouldn't say that it is [inclusive], because look around you, at most of the people here, their socioeconomic background and their ethnicity. It makes me ask the question, how many people from my demographic were exposed to this, to have even considered that this is potentially something they could have exposed their children to, to make them aware that this is a possibility for them?"

"We need to see more teenagers because I see more children who are under twelve years old, and less above twelve to eighteen. You see adults, you see little ones, but not enough teenagers. I am sure one of the main aims of this event is yes, to interest the kids, but the ones who need it soon, to make the decision of where they want to go. They're the ones they should be targeting."

Both: Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

- An increased representation of people from Black ethnicities – in the audience, and amongst contributors and volunteers - was, however, felt by one family who had visited the Festival previously.

"For me, from a very personal point of view, it's been really nice to see a lot more Black families here. I'm pleased about that because I think typically, there are certain groups that are here which are always here, which are always into these kinds of things."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

- The approachable nature of contributors and volunteers is felt to support an inclusive vibe.

"I think everyone's welcome. Everyone seems very approachable as well. The staff and people presenting are very approachable. So I think that helps in the inclusivity aspect."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

A visitor talking from the perspective of their ethnicity:

“

I haven't had any experience that made me feel like I don't belong or this isn't for me or my group. It was good, so I'd say yes. And for each area that we went to, people were really happy to talk, they were inviting us in, and we had very good conversations. Some about the event, some about the reason why they are involved in that - because I questioned them about why they're in the field and what it is about the research that makes them feel that it's necessary for them to continue with it up to a PhD, for example. I said I need to understand why they're so passionate about it to the point where they would actually take part and volunteer for an event like this. I got some really good answers.

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

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QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

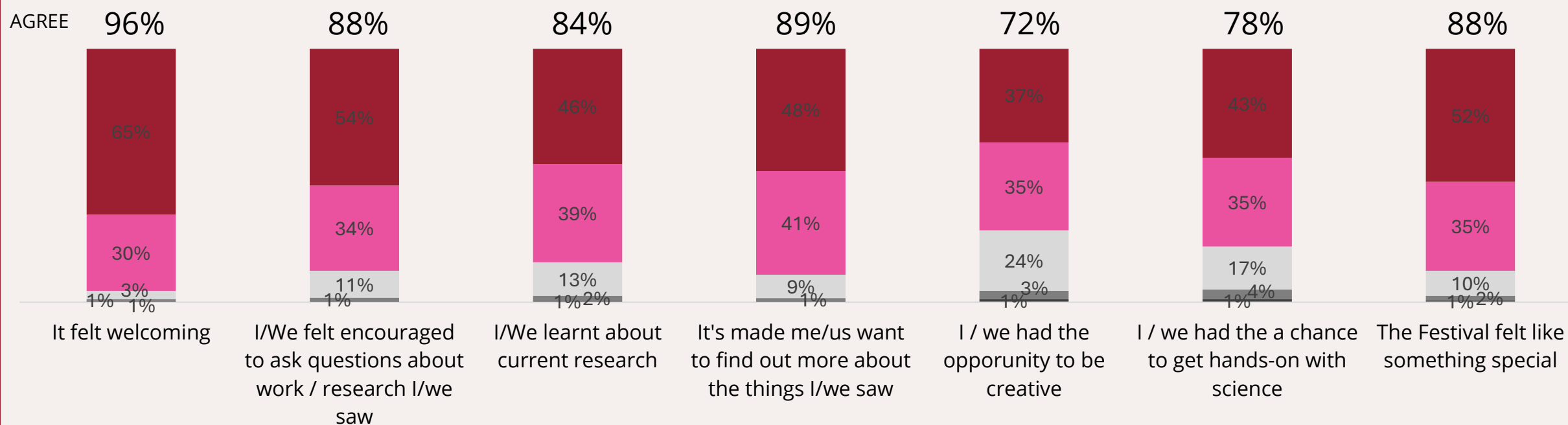
- The provision of dedicated calm spaces was acknowledged and appreciated, as well as the variety offered in activities at the Festival:

“ “I think with the calm space, that was an improvement because I talked about how the space last year had a silent disco and arts and crafts in the same room as the calm space. I felt like there was a lot going on. This time it was just an arts and crafts and calm space which I think was definitely an improvement.” ”

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, adult only group

The Festival stands out as having a unique and engaging atmosphere. Well over 9 in 10 visitors felt welcome and 7 in 8 visitors saw it as offering a special experience.

- A majority positive response is evident across all evaluation areas, although opinion is most variable on the extent to which the Festival offered an opportunity to be creative:
 - Families stand out as more likely to have had a creative experience (84% vs 59% adult only groups).
- The opportunity to get hands-on with science also received a comparatively lower score, although was still rated positively by over 3 in 4:
 - Again, group profile influences response, with a positive rating of 86% from families and 70% from adult only groups.



QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- The interactive and hands-on nature of many of the Festival exhibits was a clear highlight, particularly for families.

"When we looked into the colonoscopy robots, that was really amazing. You got to actually control it and see how it would work."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

- But they could also be a source of tension, due to them being oversubscribed and the resulting waiting time.

"Any hands-on activities tend to be quite popular and quite busy, so we're having to wait. The kids get irritated and agitated and they think, 'why are those kids doing it and I'm not doing it?' So, that's been a bit difficult because activities are popular and kids want to do things. They don't just want to see someone else doing it. They want to get engaged as well and do it for themselves."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

"There was one stall that my older one was really interested in, but it was too crowded. So, even though they're interested and they know they want to get a little bit of a deep dive into a certain subject, it's too busy."

Depth: Neurodiverse, family group

- The mix of learning and fun is perceived to boost the learning outcomes for children, whilst keeping them thoroughly engaged.

"I think this is great. It's a good combination of entertaining them while meanwhile they learn. I'm sure they can't learn as effectively as adults where you sit there for an hour just doing maths, but I think they learn from all sorts of activities."

Depth: Neurodiverse, family group

"You can tell how interested they are. Just look at the little kids coming out of the events. They don't look sleepy and tired. They're still bubbly."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

- The variety of activities on offer also supports the accessibility of the Festival.

"I think really good. I think it's nice there's a range of activities. Because I'm neurodivergent, I have dyslexia, so I think it's really nice that it's not just like reading or like writing. It's nice to see a lot of different activities going on, like speakers. So it's accessible for everyone."

Depth: 16-25, neurodiverse, adult only group

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

The value of interactive learning:

“

I think I'm so amazed by the Next Gen Zone because they kind of force you to interact with everything. So, even things I didn't think I would be interested in, especially a lot of the physics stuff, I still had to go and have conversations about it in order to complete the quest. That was actually really fun. I had to exit my comfort zone but in a good way, and I learnt things that interested me a lot.

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, adult only group

”

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Visitors feel that they have been exposed to a wide range of topics. They appreciate that the Festival offers a chance to talk to experts in their field.

"You're actually speaking to the people doing this research as well, which is phenomenal. It's really interesting to be able to talk to the people who know their stuff. It's something they clearly have a passion for. They've been doing it for years. Even talking to one of them, he gets excited whenever he spots just even one mosquito that has this gene like and it's genuinely seeing the people presenting it have a passion for it helps pass that excitement on to those who are attending as well."

Depth: 16-25, adult only group

- A visitor, aged 16-25, talking from the perspective of their career choices:

“It has inspired stuff but it's hard to pinpoint one thing. I think all of the science I was exposed to, more the biological aspects - gene therapy, biochemistry. I'm definitely exploring my choices for the future. It was nice to see people who already work in the field who are so passionate about what they were talking about. It really makes an impact if someone is talking to you and you can clearly tell that they love what they're talking about.”

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, adult only group

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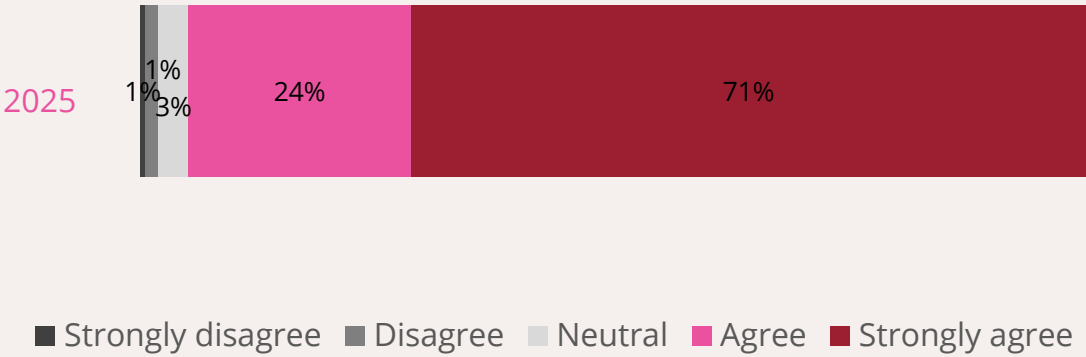
Visitors show strong intention to return – only 1 in 20 think they might not, and most are sure they will.

- This continues a steady upwards trend, with a marked increase in strength of opinion this year.
- Intention to return greater amongst:
 - Families (76% strongly agree)
 - Repeat visitors (77% strongly agree)

“I would [come back]. One of the reasons why I really love this - I am seeing at tables, things, interactive activities, that used to be done in a classroom as part of a lesson, and a lot of that is not happening in classrooms anymore because there's so much content to be delivered. An event like this gives them the opportunity and the space to do that, to spark that interest again.”

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

I would visit again

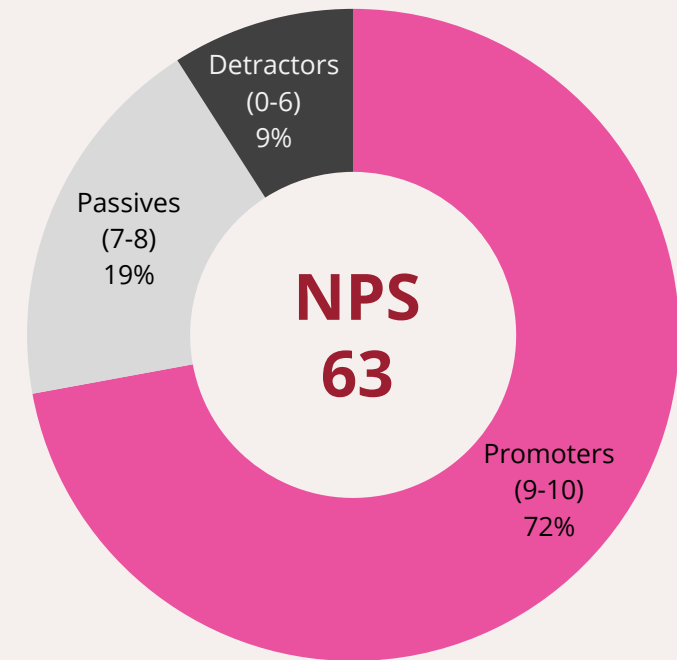


	2023	2024	2025
AGREE	88%	91%	95%

In keeping with high satisfaction with the event experience, most visitors are confident in recommending the Festival to others, with a net promotor score of 63.

- Adult only groups less likely than families to select 10, the top rating (53% vs 64%). This is influenced by lower scores amongst the 16-34 age group (39% selected 10).

On a scale of 0-10 where 0 is not at all and 10 is extremely, how likely would you be to recommend the Great Exhibition Road Festival to friends or family?



“

I'll tell people about this. Because I feel like people don't really, at least in our community, you never really hear.

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, family group

”

A significant minority (45%) encountered new organisations while at the Festival.

A third mention the Royal Commission and the Goethe-Institut, a quarter the Ismaili Centre and over a fifth, Imperial itself.

- Increase in the proportion of visitors being exposed to new organisations in 2025 (although slight change in question wording in 2025 should be noted).
- Incidence broadly consistent by visitor profile.

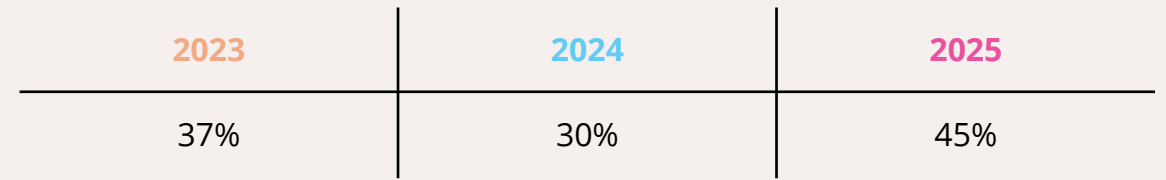
“I was able to join the Goethe Library as a member on the day.”

“Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 representatives approached people to introduce the organisation and share information, which is how I got a brochure and found out a lot of interesting facts.”

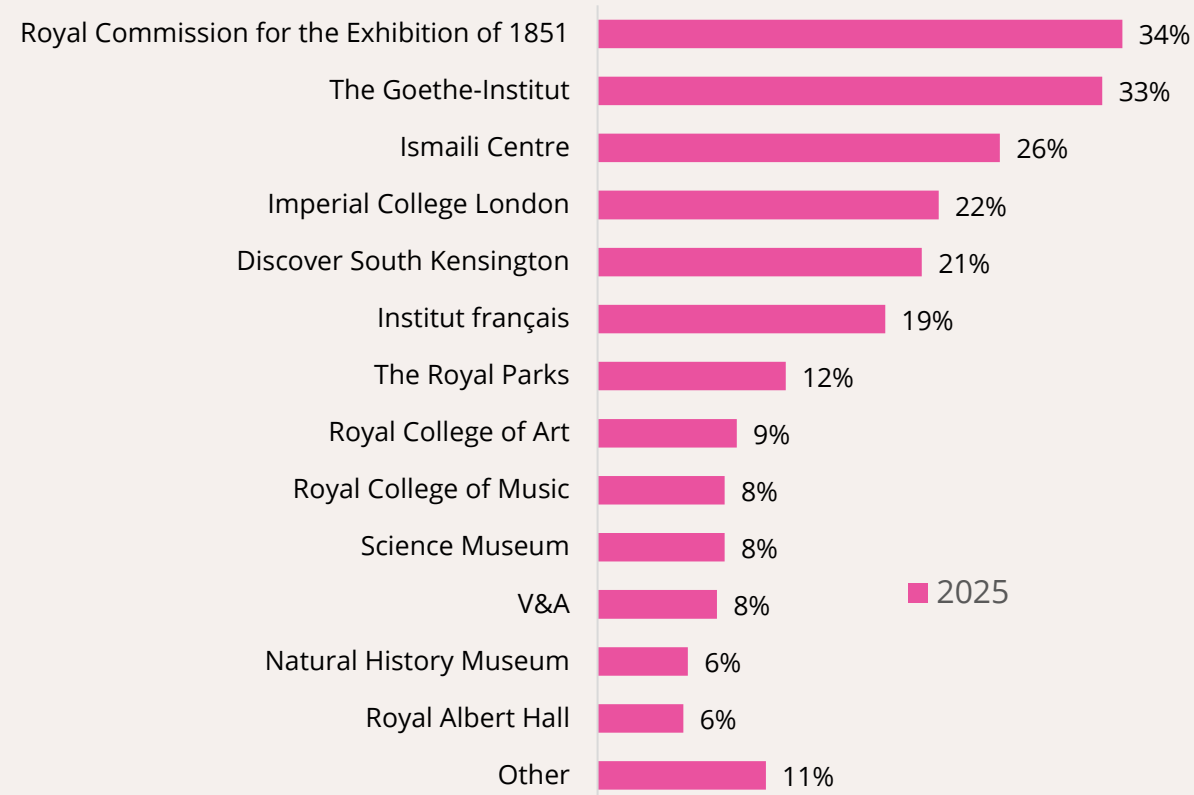
“The ladies in the Discover South Kensington tent were fabulous, friendly, informative and encouraging. It is the first time we have been into ICL, there was so much to see and do and everyone was so welcoming and encouraging.”

Online survey comments

% coming across new organisations whilst at the Festival

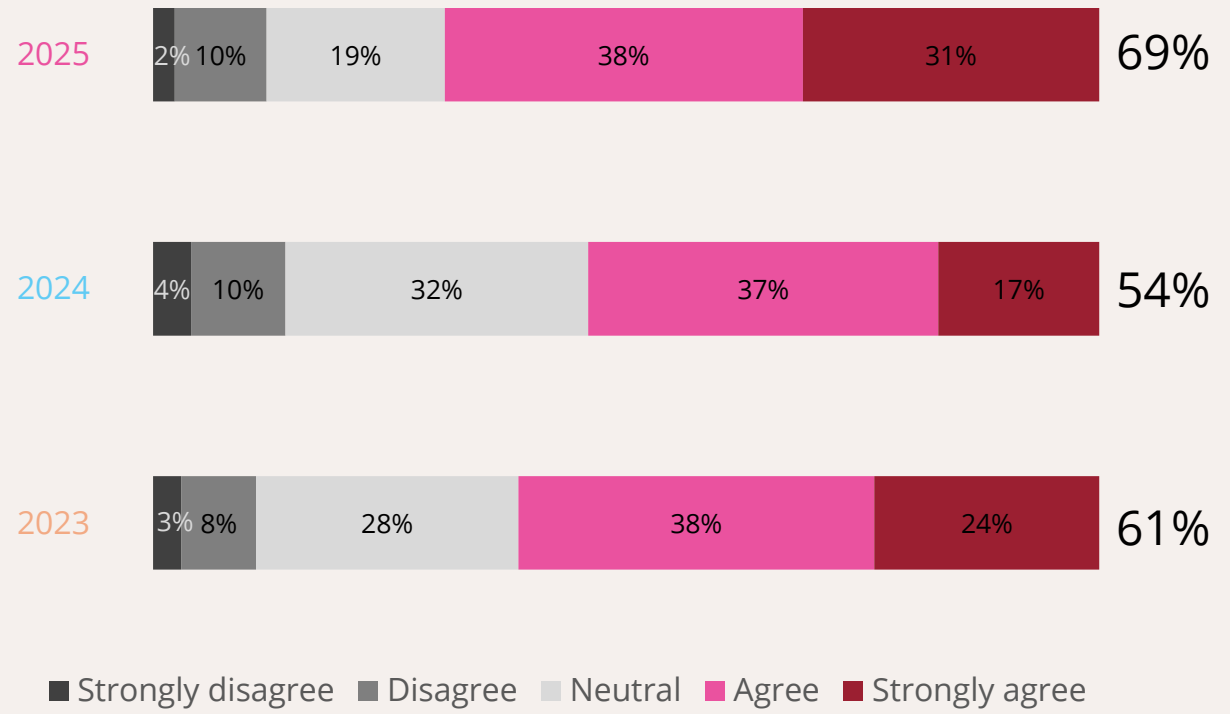


Did you come across any organisations that were new to you whilst at the Festival?



Base: 2025 Total (836), Those who said yes (373)

Visiting the festival did make me experience/visit places I had not visited before AGREE



My / our experience at the Festival has made me / us more likely to visit South Kensington again in future

	2023	2024	2025
AGREE	65%	63%	71%

The majority of visitors felt that they had encountered new places because of the Festival.

Additionally, 71% attributed an increased likeliness of visiting South Kensington again to their experience at GEF.

- Year-on-year comparison sees a return to (and slight surpassing of) levels of agreement in 2023, after a dip last year.
- Whilst levels of intended return to South Kensington are broadly consistent by visitor profile:
 - those visiting the Festival for the first time (74%) and those from Asian / Asian British backgrounds (82%) are more likely to agree that, by visiting the Festival, they have visited new places.
 - 62% of those from Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British strongly agree that they will return to South Kensington because of their experience at the Festival (small base, 29).

Base: 2025 Total online only (473), 2024 (591 assumed), 2023 (1013 assumed)

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- South Kensington is widely perceived to be a 'posh' and 'touristy' part of London. Whilst a positive in the sense that it is 'safe' and 'easy to get to', it can lack relatability.

"I guess maybe I'm a bit too common for this posh area. Unless I have something specific to do, it's not an area I would just venture to. I know it's got the park, but it's not really an area I'd venture to. I'm trying to explore more of London, so this is my way of doing it. And I wanted to go to the Victoria and Albert Museum which is not too far. I'll have to pick another day to do that."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, family group

"I think people think Kensington is very prestigious and they don't belong here, just with the area and the museums themselves. We wouldn't have come; it's just because we know the Science Museum, we know Imperial because of our family connections with those things."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

- The Festival has a clear role in overcoming place barriers and generating visits to South Kensington. The experience of visiting can also broaden people's perceptions of the area and of the people who visit.

"It's made me more likely to come down here probably more often. I'm from south London and usually I try to stay around there if I can, find things close by. But this is worth venturing further afield for really."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, family group

"No, I probably wouldn't. It's a bit of travel for me, so I don't know if I'd come here if there wasn't something drawing me in."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, neurodiverse, adult only group

"I think it's more diverse than I thought it would be. It's just ordinary people."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, 16-25, family group

- Building links with audiences who might not usually visit South Kensington suggested as a way of overcoming barriers to visiting.

"I think for us because of our connection, it feels quite different. It makes it easier. But I think if you've not got a connection, you might think, 'why am I going?' It's expensive, it's this, it's that. But we haven't spent that much money."

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

A visitor's perspective on the value of the Festival to local communities:

“

Look at the buildings. Come on. It's posh! But when we have events like these, and the museums are open to the public, it creates the impression that this area is not only for people who can afford it. It means that this is an area just like any other community in London, and it creates this feeling of possibility. Because sometimes when you visit an area, the things that you see and the vibe that you get of the place inspires you to think, this provides me with an idea of what more I can do to uplift or elevate myself from the station that I'm in.

Because sometimes we feel like we are at the bottom rung, and some of the times it's only based on your mindset, the way you feel. And if you remain in a certain bubble, that mindset doesn't change. When you come out of that bubble and realise just next door to where you live - I'm not saying you're aiming to become rich, but when you come to an area like this and you engage in activities that sparks an interest or makes you see something that gives you ideas of even an initiative that you could think of just from the experiences you've had, it elevates you from the station you're in and makes you think your life has possibilities.

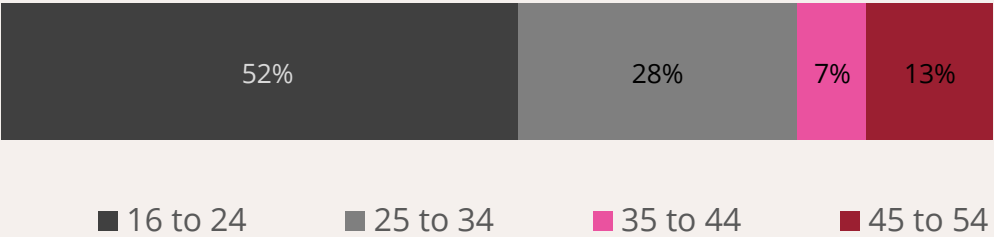
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Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

VOLUNTEERS

**Profile
Experience
Impacts**

What is your age?

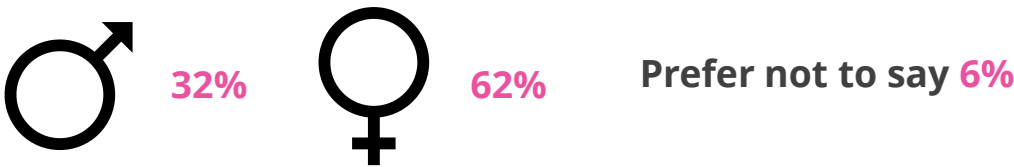


Over half of the volunteers within the sample were aged 16-24, although age profiles up to 54 were included.

Around a third of those responding to the survey were men, 3 in 5 women and 6% preferred not to disclose gender.

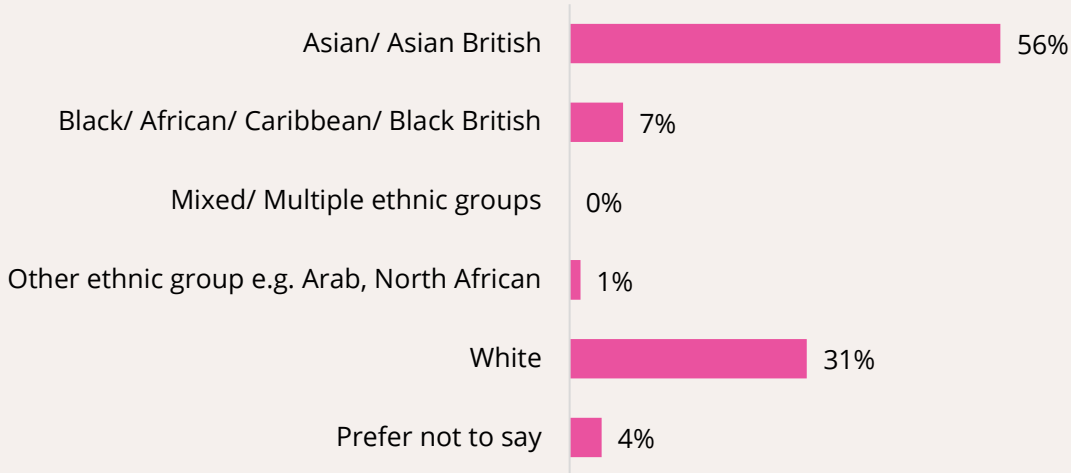
Ethnicity was skewed towards Asian / Asian British. 7% were from Black ethnicities.

Please select the gender which best aligns with your identity



Representation from LGBTQIA+, disabled and neurodivergent volunteers was achieved.

Which ethnic group best describes you?



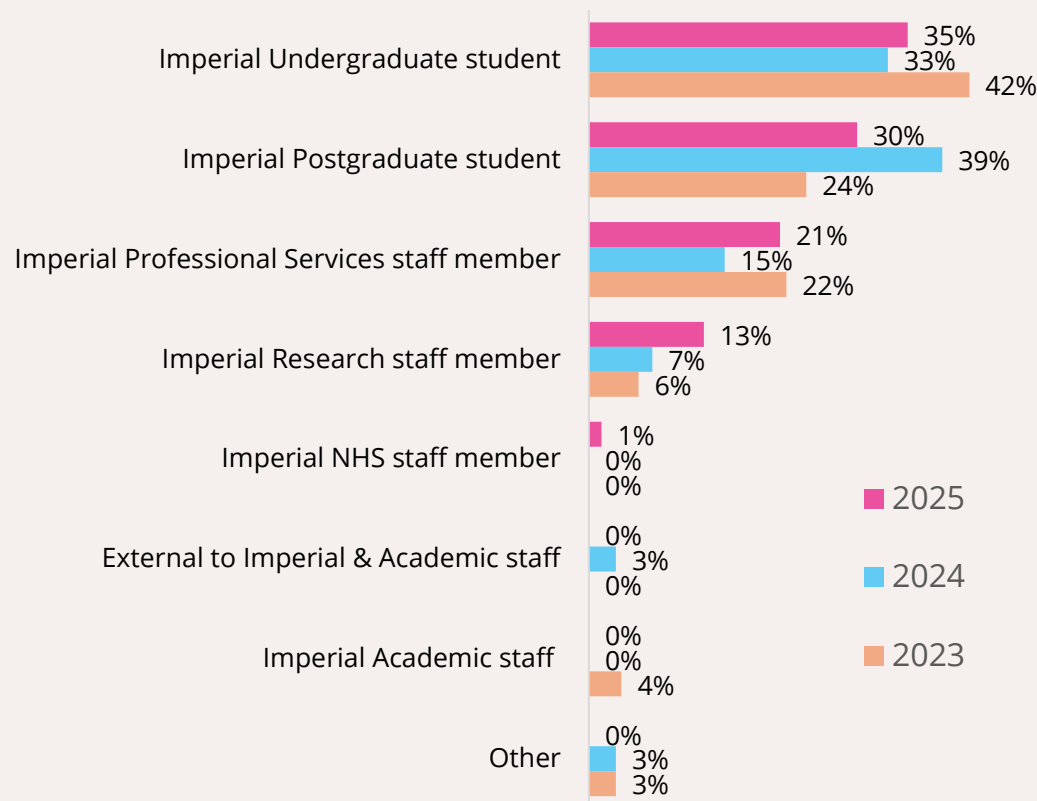
Do you consider yourself a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?	10%
Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health condition or disability?	6%
Are you neurodivergent?	7%

A fairly even mix of under and post-graduate students made up the majority of volunteers within the sample. 1 in 5 were Professional Services staff and 1 in 8 were Research staff.

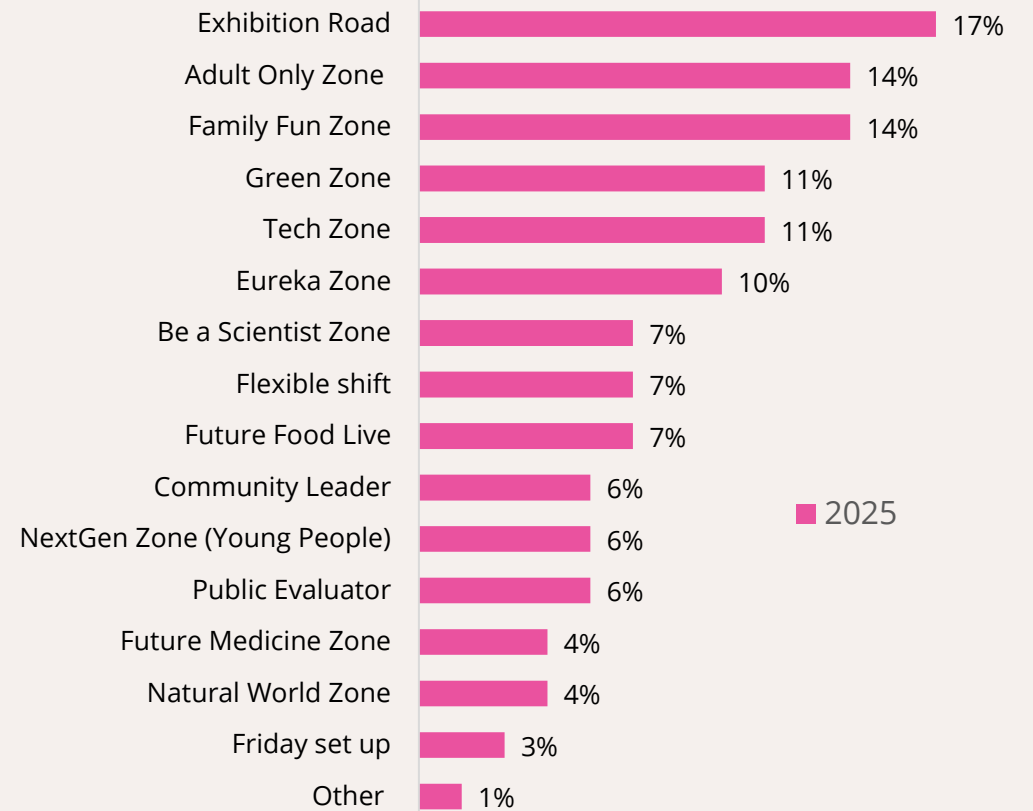
- 2025 had the highest proportion of Research staff within the volunteer sample.

A broad range of volunteer roles were represented amongst those responding to the survey.

Which of the following best describes you?



What volunteer role(s) did you do at the Festival this year?

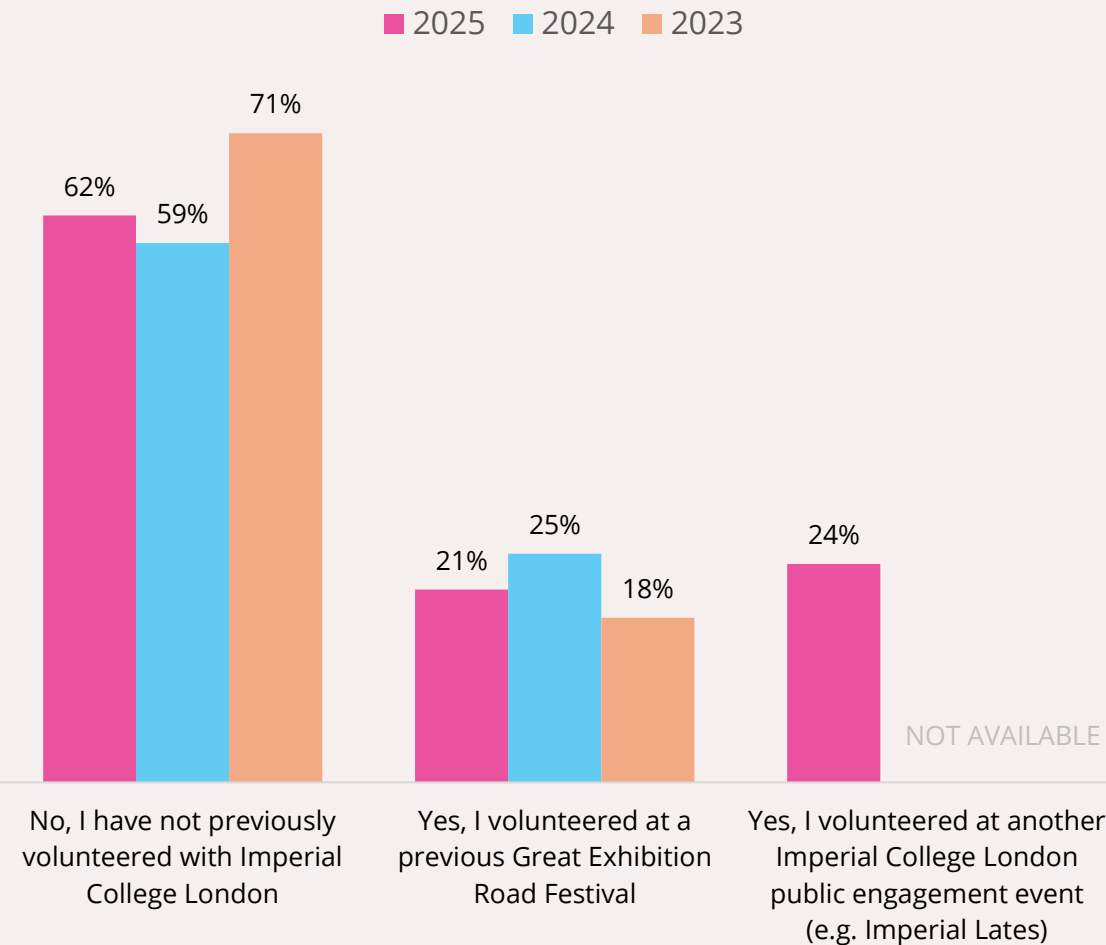


Most had not volunteered for Imperial before.

38% did have previous experience of volunteering for Imperial - 1 in 5 at GEF and 1 in 4 at another Imperial public event.

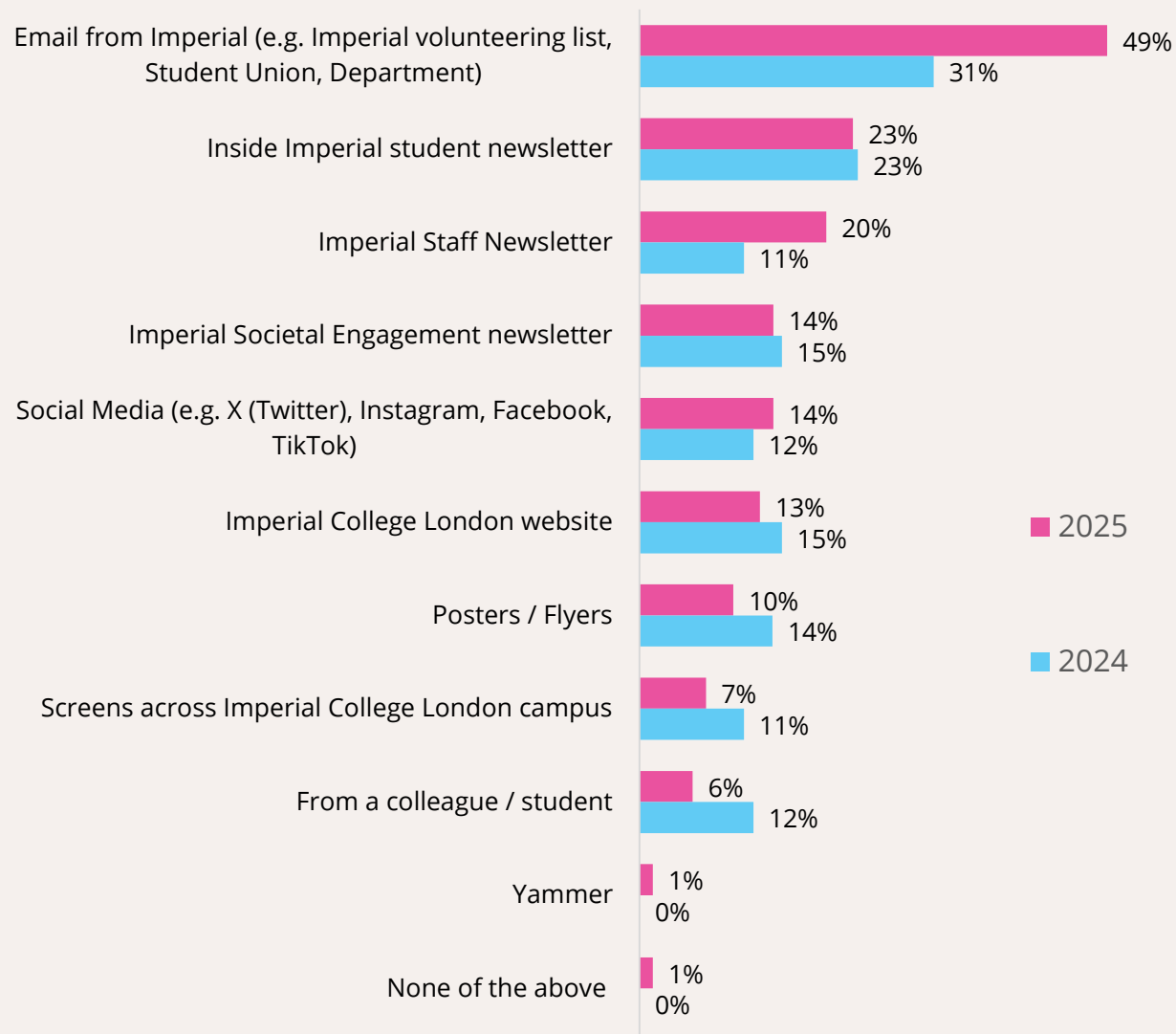
- Year-on-year findings are broadly consistent following a drop in those volunteering for the first time between 2023 and 2024.

Have you previously volunteered at any of the following events?



Base: 2025 Total (71), 2024 (72 assumed), 2023 (60 assumed)

How did you hear about the opportunity to volunteer at the Festival?



Base: 2025 Total (71), 2024 (72 assumed); Those receiving email (35); those saying social media (10)

Almost half of the volunteers in 2025 found out about the opportunity through an email from Imperial.

- Emails from Imperial are still most common, but have seen an increase in importance vs. 2024.
- Word of mouth, however, has halved as a channel of communication.
- Those who have volunteered at GERF before are more likely to have say an email from Imperial (87%) than 1st timers (39%).

EMAILS FROM IMPERIAL:

- 40% Directly from the Festival (higher for repeat volunteers – 69%)
- 11% Departmental email
- 6% Student Union
- 3% Student newsletter
- 40% can't remember

SOCIAL MEDIA:

- 100% Instagram

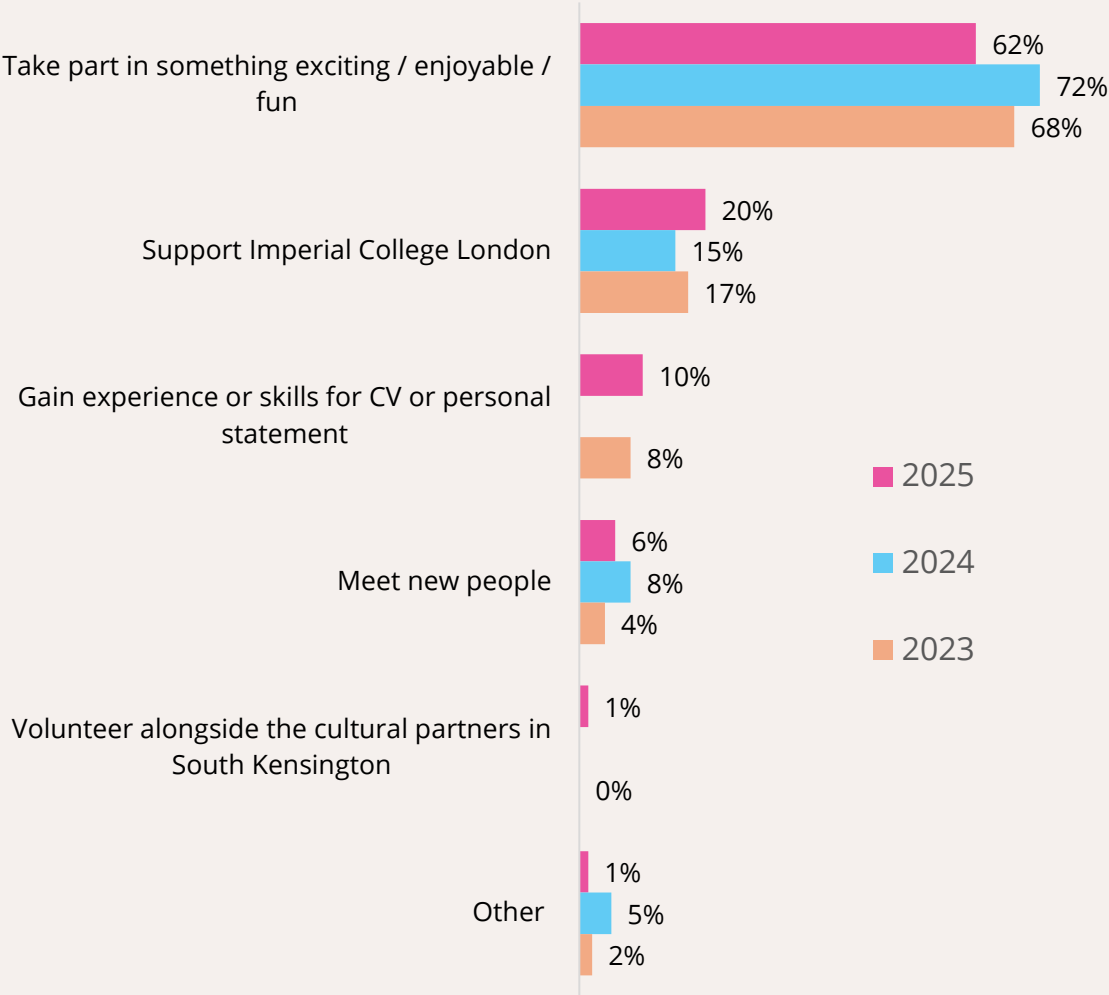
Over 3 in 5 volunteered because they thought it would be fun and exciting – by far the most common motivation.

Supporting Imperial was a reason for 1 in 5.

- Findings are consistent year-on-year.
- Being motivated to volunteer in order to support Imperial was more common amongst staff (36%) than for student volunteers (11%).



What was your main reason for volunteering at the Festival?



Base: 2025 Total (71), 2024 (72 assumed), 2023 (60 assumed)

Almost all volunteers rate their experience positively.

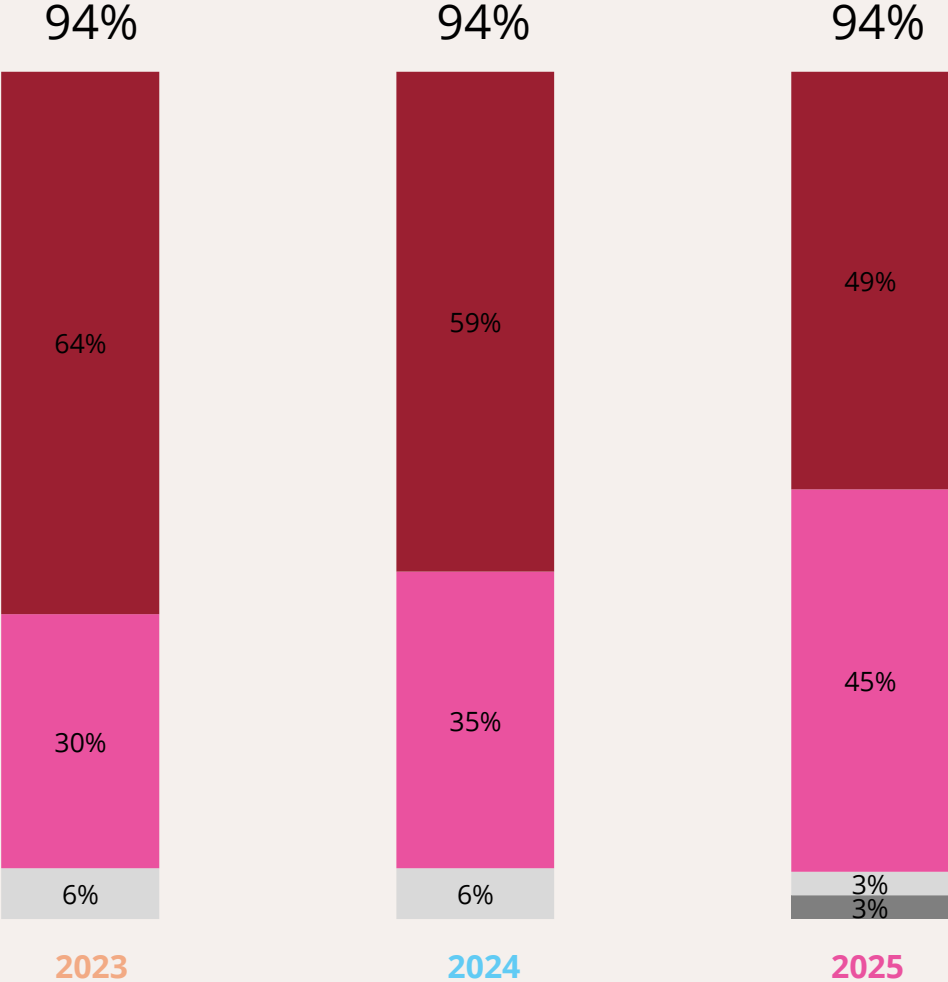
- Half give volunteering an excellent rating overall.
- Year-on-year, it should be noted that whilst still overwhelmingly positive, 2025 has the first 'poor' ratings in 3 years.
- There has also been a slight decline in strength of positivity each year since 2023.

Base: 2025 Total (71), 2024 (72 assumed), 2023 (60 assumed)



How would you rate the experience overall?

POSITIVE



Very poor Poor Average Good Excellent

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Volunteers speak widely about the interactions with the public being the most enjoyable part of the experience – particularly talking to children and finding out what they had been doing at the Festival.

“Having a child come up to me to share his excitement and all the fun he had at a previous activity was wonderful to see and be a part of uplifting his achievement and self-confidence.”

Imperial Research staff member, first-time volunteer

“I also loved meeting some very nice visitors. And there was chocolate at the end of the day. What more could one ask for?”

Imperial Professional Services staff member, repeat volunteer

“Chatting with children and their families was another great part of the experience.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

- A sense of ‘giving back’ to the community and seeing people engaged in science and research was also a highlight.

“The best part for me was at the peak of the day when the area got very busy and lots of families were visiting the zone. It was so encouraging to see so many engaging with the activities and having a good time! It was also the part of the day when communication and support for each other within the volunteering team were most crucial.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

“The wonder, curiosity and joyful atmosphere.”

Imperial Professional Services staff member, repeat volunteer

To be supported throughout the Festival, which is giving back to the community and ensure a safe space where children and adults can engage in fun and learning that I can embed in my own career and research work to connect with the public.

Imperial Research staff member, first-time volunteer

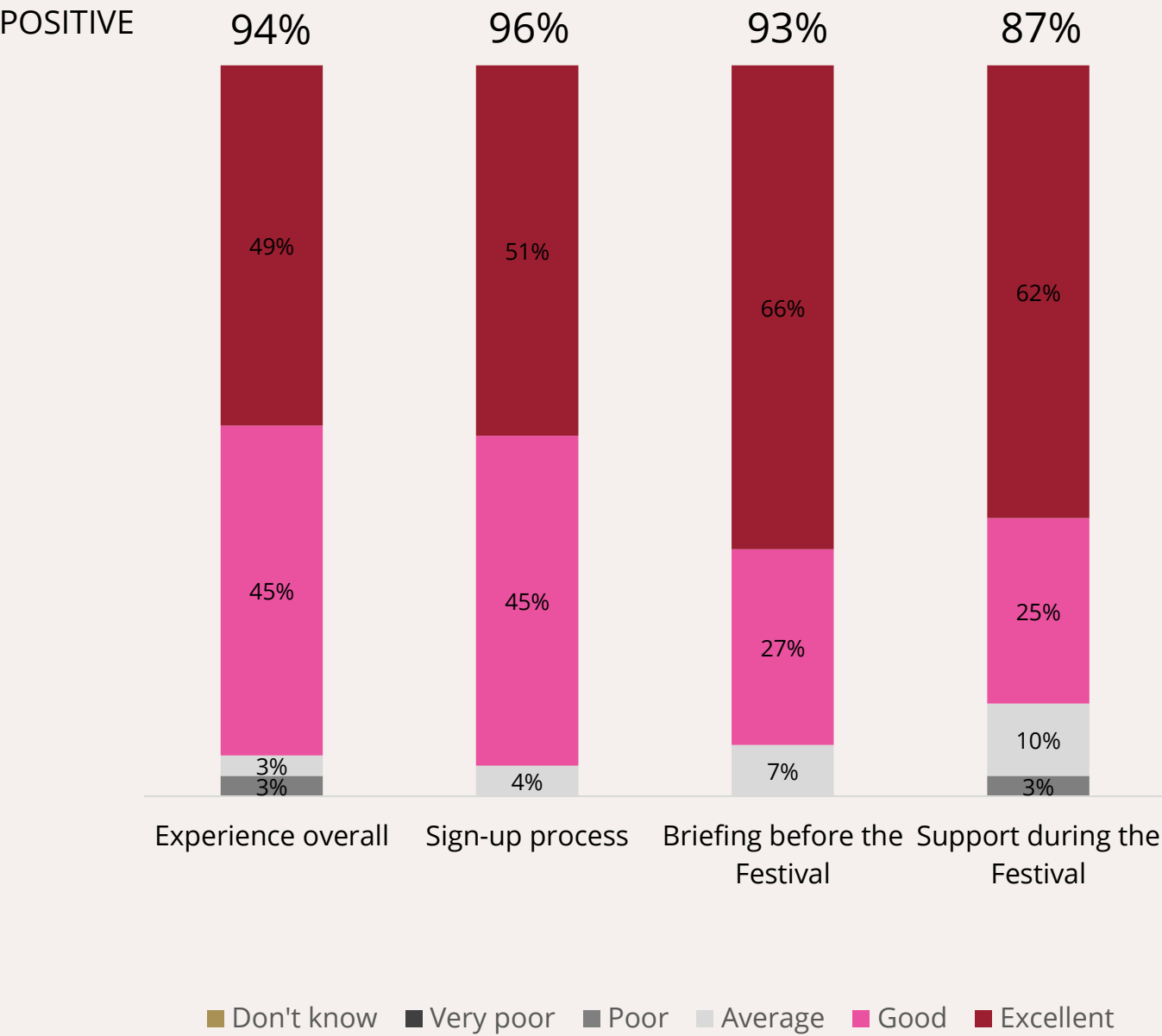
Whilst all aspects of the volunteering process are highly praised, support during the event itself is the only area to receive negative feedback.

- The sign-up process has most scope to strengthen positivity, with half rating it as good or average.
- 2 in 3 found the pre-festival briefing to be excellent.

QUALITATIVE SUGGESTION:

Are 'half shifts' possible to have a shorted day, or to try two locations and experience more variety?

How would you rate the following aspects of the Festival?



QUALITATIVE INSIGHT



- Volunteers praise the supportive atmosphere, flexibility when required and accommodation of food requirements.
 “Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience as a volunteer, and felt that I was well-supported (with breaks, 'check ins' from my zone supervisor and fellow volunteers, etc.) The information given in the lead up to the festival was also very helpful and made me feel more prepared as a first-time volunteer.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer



- The role and availability of the zone supervisor was, however, vital in ensuring a good volunteer experience – this is evidenced through both positive and negative examples of the impact of their support:

POSITIVE EXAMPLES:

“Having a really organised zone supervisor who had planned roles with time slots was the best part of my day. I always knew where I needed to be next and got to do a variety of different things.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

“My zone supervisors gave a great briefing before the event start, were extremely approachable, and the activities themselves felt well-organised. I can't think of anything to improve honestly.”

Imperial Research staff member, volunteered at another Imperial PE event

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES:

“There was fairly limited direction and presence from the volunteer supervisor - I can appreciate that it was a very busy day and lots happening on the street, but at times I didn't know what I should be doing and felt like I wasn't really needed.”

Imperial Professional Services staff member, first-time volunteer

“There was no clear communication around taking breaks/lunch beyond that you should let the supervisor know- but finding them was difficult.”

Imperial post-graduate student, first-time volunteer

SUGGESTION: SUPERVISORS TO HAVE MORE IDENTIFIABLE, EASILY VISIBLE UNIFORM

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

A volunteer's perspective on challenges during the event:

“

It was incredibly overwhelming since the queue for the butterfly wing workshop was so long. We had several parents very upset and kids in tears when they couldn't get in/get the wings that they wanted and a lot of this was unfairly directed at us.

I felt unable to take a break. There was also confusion when the main leaders of the workshop went to lead the parade and we were not sure how to deal with such a huge influx of people.

While I would like to volunteer again, I really hope that my next experience will be calmer.

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

”

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Most think that the lunch and chocolate is a nice gesture and an appropriate thank you.

"I think having free lunch and getting the chocolate bar after was perfect."

Imperial Research staff member, volunteered at another Imperial PE event

- Other suggestions for showing appreciation were:
- **Imperial / GERP merchandise – tote bag, pen etc**
- **Time off in lieu during the following week**
- **Taste Imperial vouchers**
- **Discounted entry to special exhibitions at partner venues**
- **A designated hour during the day or after the close for volunteers to visit the exhibits**

"Allowing volunteers to try out things at the exhibitions after 6pm would be great, such as VR headsets at the Be a Scientist zone. We were not explicitly forbidden from it, there just wasn't enough time."

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

- Several volunteers commented that a more tangible record of their contribution would be helpful for CVs and employment – for example a 'certificate', thank you letter or LinkedIn post.
- Sharing of positive feedback, photos etc from the event is also appreciated to understand if they have contributed to a successful and enjoyable event.

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

A volunteer's perspective on how to reward their contribution:

“ A great way to reward volunteers is through a combination of practical perks, heartfelt appreciation, and public recognition.

Providing food coupons is a fantastic, immediate benefit; after long hours on their feet, a complimentary meal or snack from on-site vendors (or nearby businesses) is a tangible thank you that saves them personal expense and directly addresses their needs.

Equally important is genuine appreciation, which can range from personalised thank-you notes from event organisers to supervisors verbally acknowledging their specific contributions and positive impact. This direct feedback makes volunteers feel seen and valued beyond just their hours.

Finally, social network posts offer valuable public recognition. Featuring volunteers in a "spotlight" on the festival's official channels, perhaps with a photo and a brief highlight of their role or a quote about their experience, not only boosts individual morale but also showcases the positive volunteer experience to a wider audience, potentially inspiring future participation.

”

How would you rate the following aspects of the Festival?

Sign-up process

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	89%	94%	96%

- The sign-up process has steadily increased in positive feedback levels.

Briefing before the Festival

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	88%	92%	93%

- Briefing before the Festival has retained the level of positive feedback received in 2024.

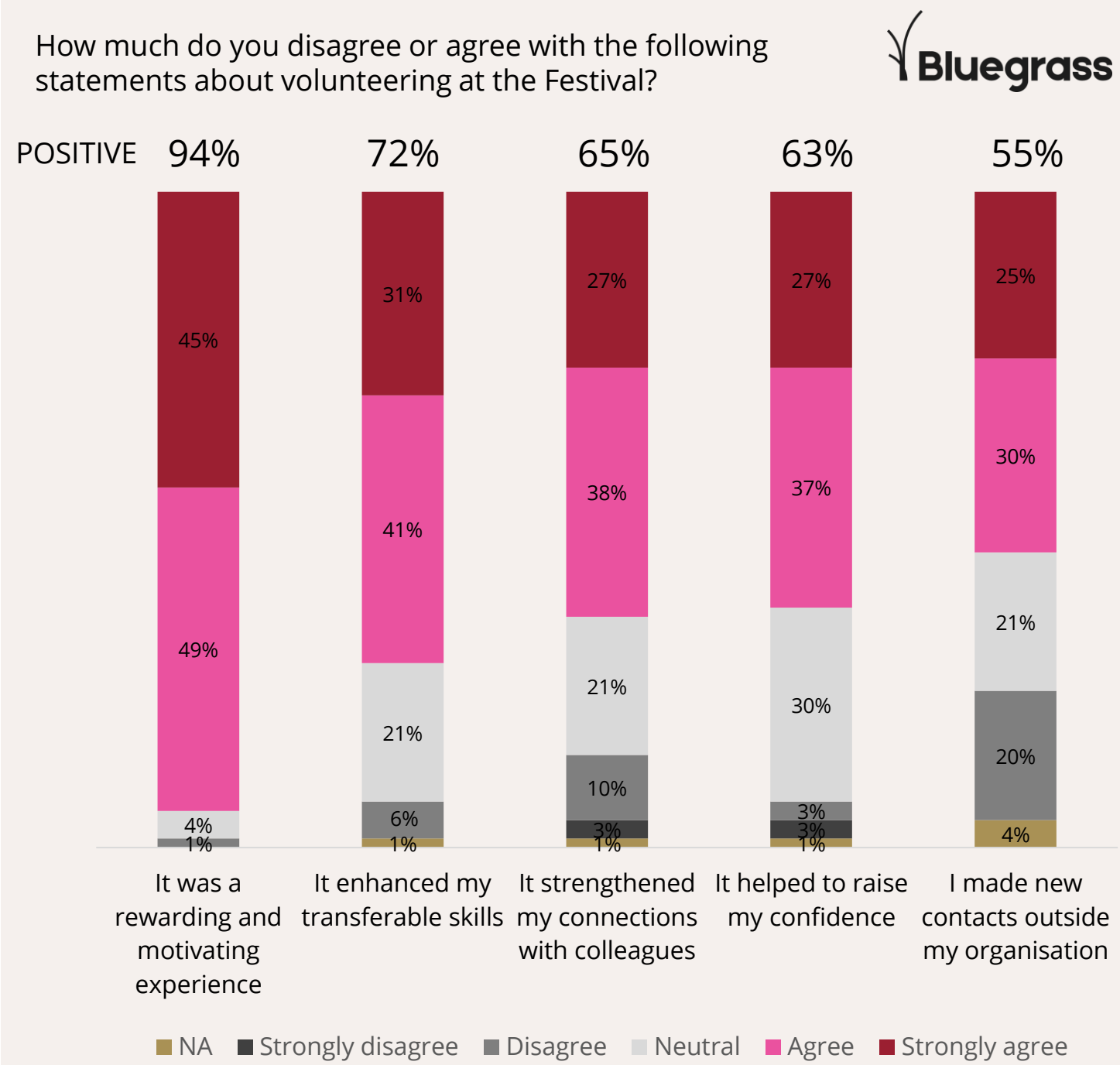
Support during the Festival

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	83%	89%	87%

- Support during the Festival, whilst not returning to 2023 levels, remains the weakest rated element each year.

The extent to which volunteers felt the opportunity had delivered certain outcomes varied – although over half in each case did agree they had been achieved.

- Volunteers widely agreed that it was a rewarding and motivating experience.
- Approaching 3 in 4 felt it had enhanced transferable skills and almost 2 in 3 said it had raised their confidence (although only a quarter felt this way strongly).
- Strengthening existing connections and making new contacts could be more impactful – 1 in 3 didn’t agree the former had happened and over 2 in 5 the latter.
- Positive impacts on transferable skills was more likely for students (87%) than staff (44%) volunteers, as was raised confidence (78% vs 36% respectively).



QUALITATIVE INSIGHT



- Witnessing the work contributors are doing and how they explain their research to the public is often inspiring to volunteers – some spoke about the motivation it gave them to share their own ideas and work in the future.

“Watching other people communicate their research to the public made me value the ability to communicate information from your field to a variety of audiences, with or without a scientific background, in a way that is understood and engaging.”

Imperial post-graduate student, first-time volunteer

“Seeing the public excited about ideas and new innovations. It was pretty motivating. Would probably do more public engagement as a result.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

- The confidence boost that taking part gave many volunteers comes through clearly within the qualitative feedback. Having the opportunity to speak to so many members of the public is a new challenge for many and something they believe will be directly beneficial in their wider life.
- Other transferable skills mentioned are organisation, problem solving and being approachable.

“Dealing with the public is always the most fun, though talking to students from other departments is always good too. In general, this benefits people, it certainly has benefited me over the years, it gives you confidence in speaking to people, dealing with conflict, communicating with different audiences etc.”

Imperial Professional Services staff member, first-time volunteer

“Talking to the public - it develops my personal skills massively as well as allowing me to interact with a wide range of ages and people, providing me with huge people skills.”

Imperial undergraduate student, repeat volunteer

“I had to think on my feet a lot and interact with members of the public – I’m not used to this, so it will be useful.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Meeting and bonding with the other volunteers is an important and valued part of the experience.

“Getting to know the other volunteers and working together as part of a team. These impacts - particularly working within a diverse team of volunteers- are likely to be useful for future volunteering roles and even employment.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

“Interacting with the public and fellow volunteers - we really managed to bond after the day together, and I was able to make new connections.”

Imperial undergraduate student, first-time volunteer

- Ways in which this could be encouraged are suggested:
- **A group photo to keep**
- **A ‘volunteer party’ at the end of the weekend as a thank you**

- A debrief session to share learnings was also felt to be a potentially beneficial and motivating addition.

“It would have been nice to have a catch up at the end too or a briefing of how the day went but again the team were left to find their own way.”

Imperial Professional Services staff member, first-time volunteer

“

I would love to have had a volunteer session at the end of the second day just to share and listen to everyone's experience. I know everyone's tired by the end of the day, but having a volunteer meetup for an hour would make the volunteer team feel more unified and one.

Imperial post-graduate student, first-time volunteer

”

How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements about volunteering at the Festival?

It was a rewarding and motivating experience

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	86%	89%	94%

It enhanced my transferable skills (e.g. communication or organisation skills)

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	72%	83%	72%

It helped to raise my confidence

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	77%	76%	63%

- This year’s event was particularly rewarding for volunteers, with a continuation rating increase since 2023.
- Enhancing transferable skills returns to 2023 levels.
- The extent to which confidence is improved by volunteering has declined.

How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements about volunteering at the Festival?

It strengthened my connections with colleagues

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	72%	72%	65%

I made new contacts outside my organisation

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	54%	57%	55%

- There has been in drop in the proportion agreeing that the volunteering experience strengthened connections with their colleagues following consistent results in 2024 and 2023.
- The proportion of volunteers feeling that the opportunity help them make new contacts is broadly consist with the last 2 years.

Volunteering at GERF has a widely positive impact on perception of Imperial.

- Only 1 in 6 didn't feel that the experience made them more positive about the University.
- The portion who agree is up on 2024, but yet to return to 2023 levels of positivity.

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT:

"It increased my appreciation for the University to see them engage with members of the public and invite them in. Giving people, especially kids a window of possibilities in STEM and even some elements of the Arts is something I was proud of and proud to be associated with. It has changed my outlook on societal engagement, given me ideas on how this can be applied in other sectors, and provided insights on how to shape people's perception in a way that inspires hope, curiosity and excitement about the future."

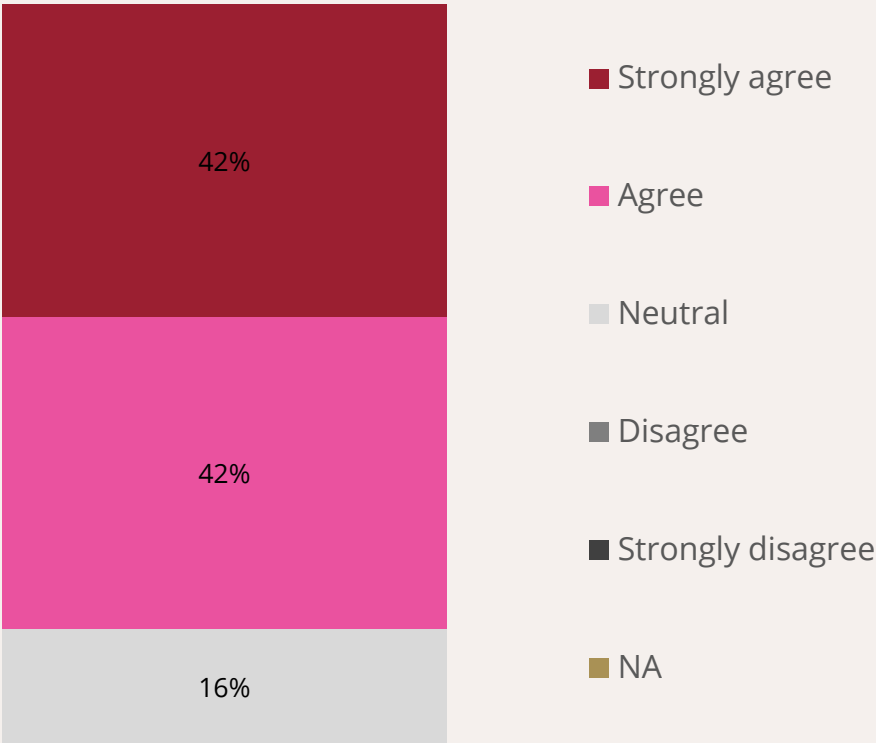
Imperial Professional Services staff member, first-time volunteer

"I've learned more about the campus and research that goes on at Imperial from the walking tour and one day volunteering than I have working here for several years!"

Imperial Professional Services staff member, first-time volunteer

Base: 2025 Total (71), 2024 (72 assumed), 2023 (60 assumed)

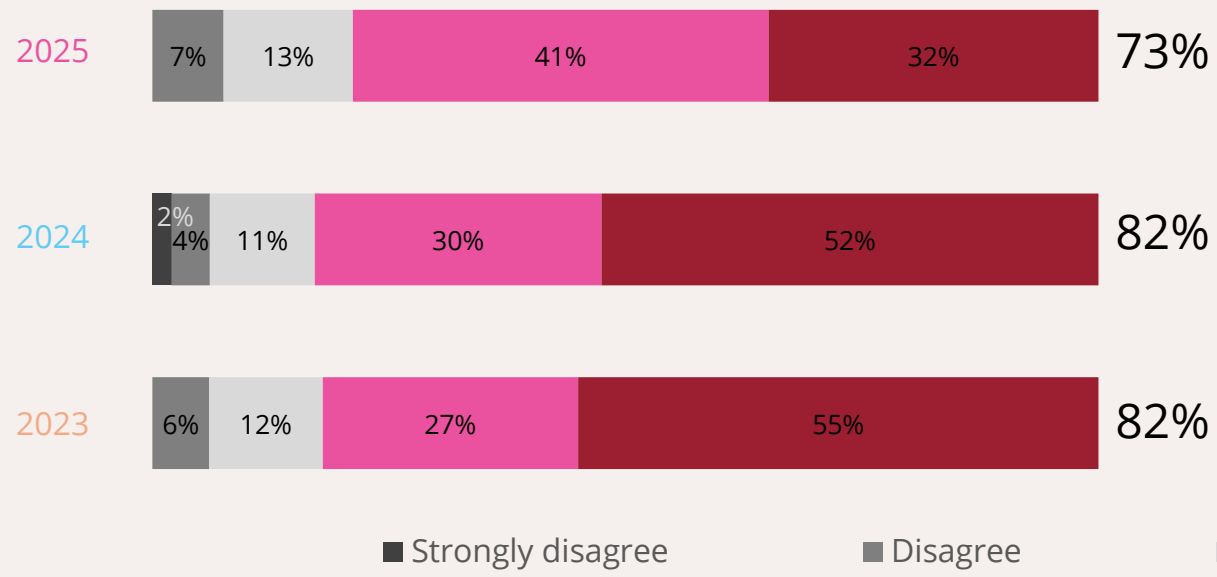
It made me feel more positive about Imperial College London



	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	90%	82%	85%

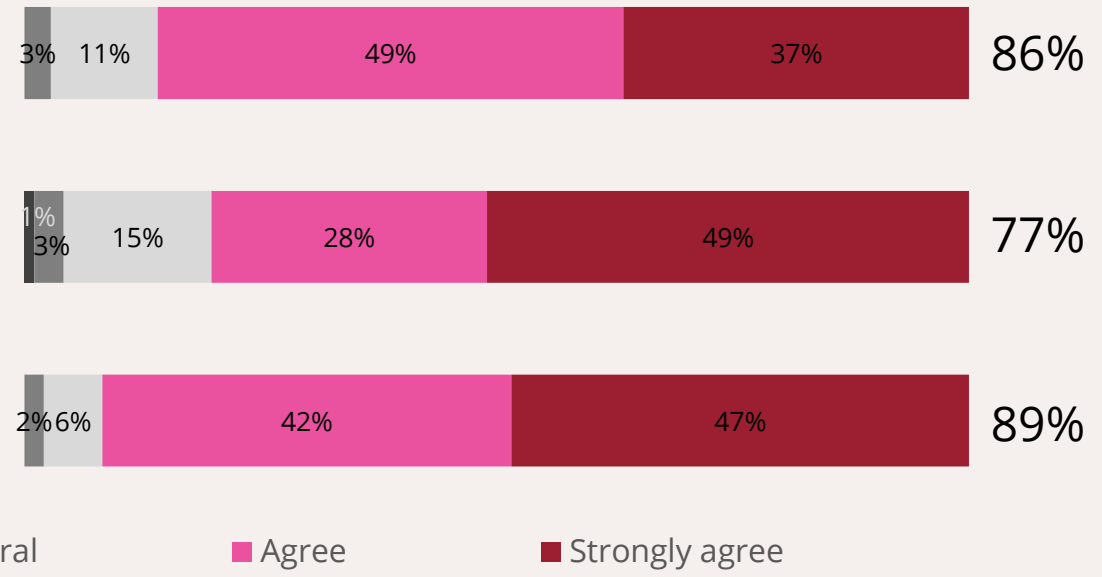
I would now consider participating in the Festival in other ways in the future (e.g. participating on a stand)

AGREE



I feel more motivated to volunteer at other events in the future

AGREE

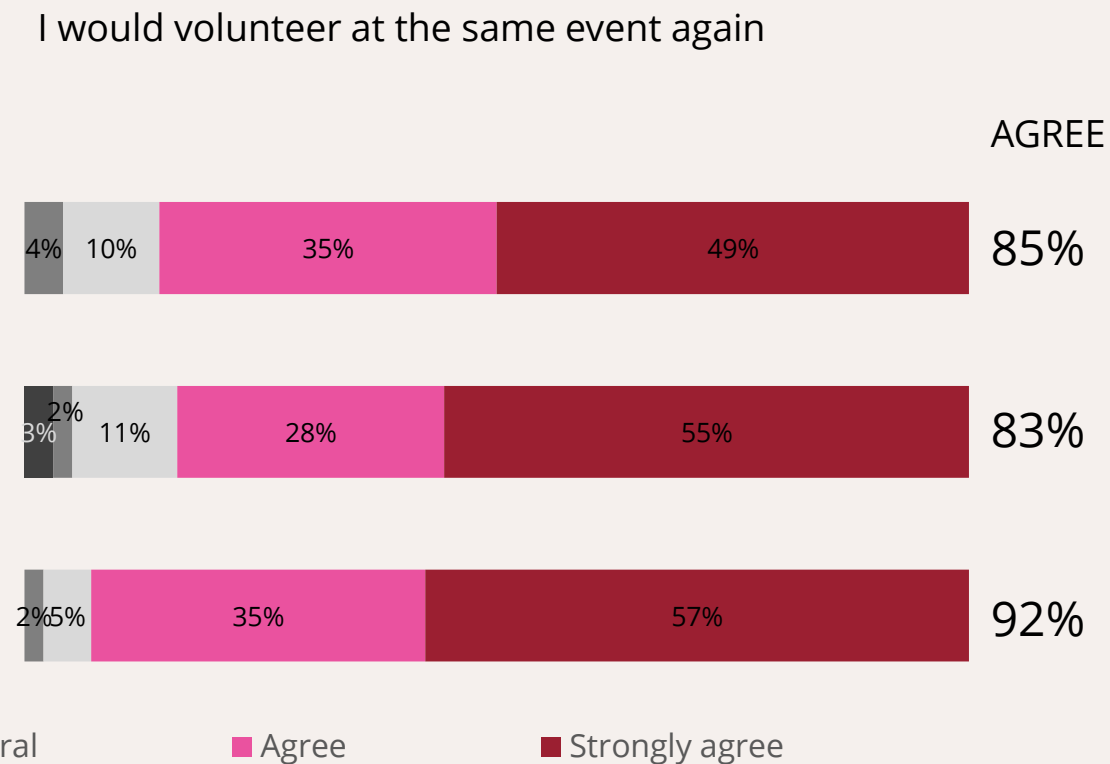
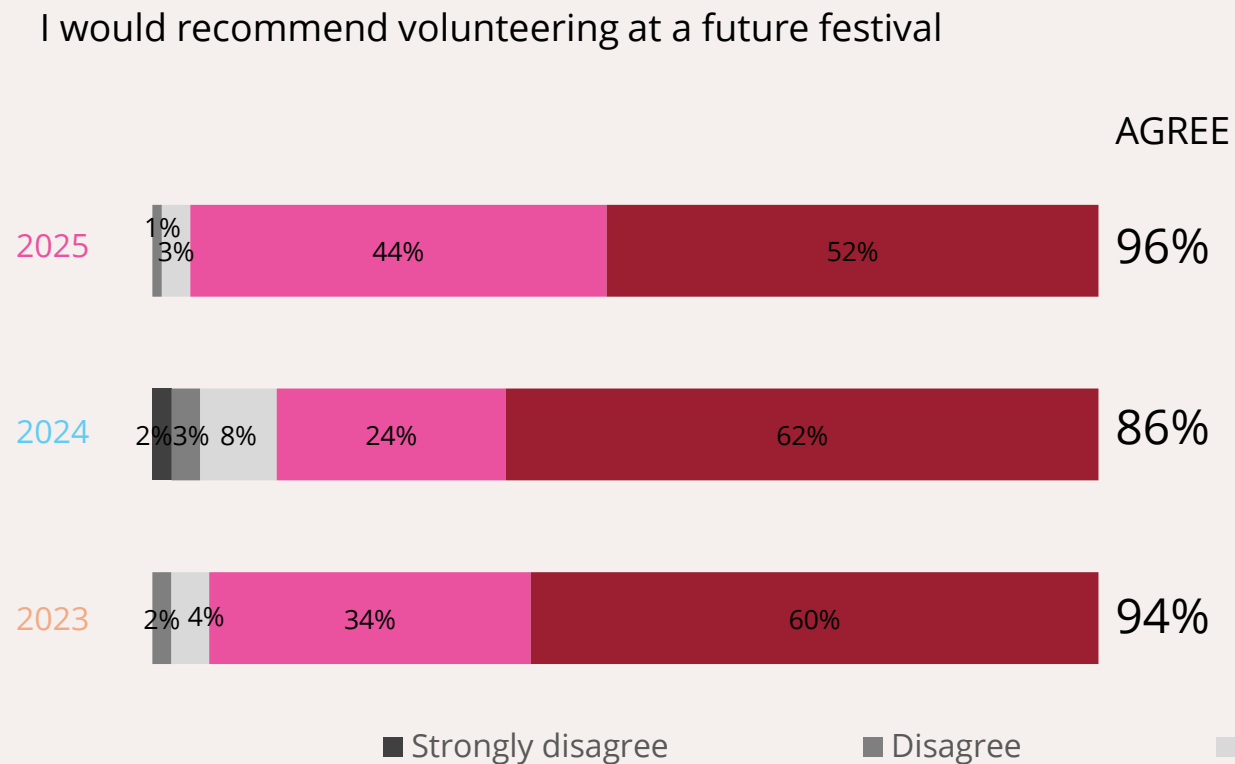


Volunteers this year widely agree that they would consider different ways of getting involved in future GERFs.

- It should be noted, however that this is a drop in both overall agreement and strength of opinion year-on-year.
- This outcome was more likely for 1st time volunteers at GERF (84%) than those who had done it before (33%).

Motivating those taking part to volunteer at other events is a successful outcome, with most feeling at least to some extent that they would.

- This is a return to near the level seen in 2023, although the proportion who strongly agree is still noticeably lower.



Almost all would recommend the volunteering experience to others – over half strongly so.

- This is a positive increase on 2024 findings, although the percentage who strongly agree is lower than the previous two years.

The majority would volunteer at GERF again, but 1 in 10 aren't sure and a third who agree don't do so strongly.

- Whilst the portion who agree is consistent with 2024 there is a downwards trend year-on-year in the strength of agreement.

VOLUNTEERS

2 in-depth interviews undertaken with volunteers, to obtain more detailed insights around motivations and the experience of volunteering

VOLUNTEERS: CASE STUDY 1 (1 of 4)

BACKGROUND

This volunteer is a post-graduate exchange student at Imperial College London. They have been in London for 1 year.

They volunteered across two zones - Future Food Live and Future Medicine.

MOTIVATIONS FOR TAKING PART

A desire to meet new people, outside of their degree, was a key reason that this volunteer got involved in GEF.

They spoke openly about feeling isolated during their time in London and how this had led them to explore volunteering opportunities at the College.

Whilst they had no prior knowledge of GEF, this volunteer chose to get involved as they liked that it would offer them a chance to talk to members of the public about science subjects that they were passionate about. They watched the film of the 2024 festival and was excited by the chance to be involved in such a happy and vibrant event.

“

It was so isolating before. I kind of developed that hatred towards, you know, I don't want to be here anymore. But then the festival really opened me to the different kind of people that are here and the different opportunities that are here.

”

VOLUNTEERS: CASE STUDY 1 (2 of 4)

PRE-FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE

Initially, the prospect of volunteering at the Festival felt quite daunting for this volunteer.

They were unsure about what the experience would be like or whether they would feel like they would belong.

The opportunity to take part in pre-Festival training helped them to overcome these nerves.



“I'm generally very anxious. So I kind of always think about, what if I don't fit here. But I met quite lot of volunteers and I felt that it's somewhere probably I belong and it would be a nice experience.”

VOLUNTEERS: CASE STUDY 1 (3 of 4)

EXPERIENCE OF VOLUNTEERING

This volunteer hoped that they would be able to inspire Festival visitors to learn about science.

They hadn't, however, anticipated that they would be able to talk with such a diverse audience or with so many children. From this, they got a strong sense of satisfaction.

"I never in my mind thought that there would be such young kids who were so interested in science. And it really made me happy."

During the Festival weekend, on the whole, this volunteer felt well supported by other staff and supervisors. They did, however, suggest that more pre-training for the Future Foods Zone could have been beneficial, due to feeling unprepared for the high level of visitor interaction the zone required.

"You could have maybe a session before. Instead of on that day, probably a day before, to kind of give them a brief and streamline what would be".



“I got to know that my supervisor is actually a collaborator of them, so I had a nice chat with them.

“I kind of knew the bigger picture of what the lab does. So that was quite interesting.”

THE IMPACT

This volunteer feels that they had a highly positive experience as a volunteer at GERN. They valued the small interactions they had with both visitors and other volunteers.

They also feel they fulfilled their goals of meeting different people, feeling more involved in Imperial and getting more out of their time in London – all things that they are incredibly proud to have achieved.

An unexpected but wonderful bonus of the weekend was the opportunity to meet scientists researching the same disease that their Masters' is focused on.

Overall, the volunteer believes the Festival is a fantastic opportunity to teach science in a fun and meaningful way. They are excited to be involved again in future.

VOLUNTEERS: CASE STUDY 2 (1 of 4)

MOTIVATIONS FOR TAKING PART

This volunteer works at Imperial as a research assistant and became aware of GERNI for the first time through an internal newsletter. They'd had previous experience working as a volunteer for other organisations and thought it sounded like a fun event with a unique concept in mixing art and science.

"Sometimes when you're introducing or trying to pull people into science and you're just giving them the 'boring report' version of science, you know, it doesn't engage them the same way."

Having only moved to the area this year, this volunteer was keen to get involved with public engagement and to connect with the local community.

They also feel passionate about connecting children to science and particularly showcasing the opportunities within science to young girls and felt the event would be a great opportunity to support this aim.



“Their goal is not only to reach out to kids but also adults and like the greater community and to bring them into science and the mix (with the arts).”

VOLUNTEERS: CASE STUDY 2 (2 of 4)

EVENT ORGANISATION

“It was actually really fun to see adults get excited about science...

...some of those fun activities, people came out and were talking about how much they had really enjoyed it, which was definitely a highlight.”



This volunteer felt well prepared going into the event having completed the online orientation and referencing the handbook. They had high praise for the organisation and those in charge on the day they volunteered (Sunday), meaning the whole session ran smoothly.

“It was really organised. Like I got there, and they already had a schedule of different places that they had wanted to put people throughout the day.”

This volunteer worked within the Adult Only zone which they described as a relaxing and calm area. They had a mix of duties that included lots of public interaction, signposting and giving general advice about the activities on offer. Although they didn't get to interact with many children due to location, they were pleasantly surprised to see how engaged the adult visitors were.

VOLUNTEERS: CASE STUDY 2 (3 of 4)

THE IMPACT

This volunteer feels that not only is it important to have local events for families to go to, but it is an accessible and relevant way to engage the community in what Imperial is all about.

“Within the South Kensington community, I feel like it's a great way to display what a lot of researchers are doing. I think it's easy to walk past the university and just be like, ‘oh yeah, we don't know what they're doing’. You just know they're doing science or they're doing engineering or whatever...it makes the community feel more invested.”

They felt that the festival had an ‘open to all’ atmosphere and that all visitors could find something for them, whether they came with a special interest or just stumbled across the event.

Despite providing good opportunities to meet with and chat to other volunteers, this volunteer didn't feel that they had a chance to engage with many of the contributors outside of their zone or get an overall understanding of the different partner institutions involved.

“

I think that's what really surprised me - just the way that you could be really into science and enjoy a lot of these activities, but also you could just be walking around South Kensington and happen to see it and go.

”

VOLUNTEERS: CASE STUDY 2 (4 of 4)

FUTURE EVENTS

Based on their experience this year, this volunteer would definitely take part in the event again.

They would like to try being based in a family focused area, to have the opportunity to interact and engage with children.

The creative ways that activities were showcasing scientific research has also been food for thought. This volunteer feels inspired to consider how their team might be able to engage the public in the future - perhaps as contributors at GEF.

They felt valued for their time as a volunteer (particularly by the zone leads, who expressed thanks to the team throughout the day) and that the provision of lunch was enough of a 'reward'.

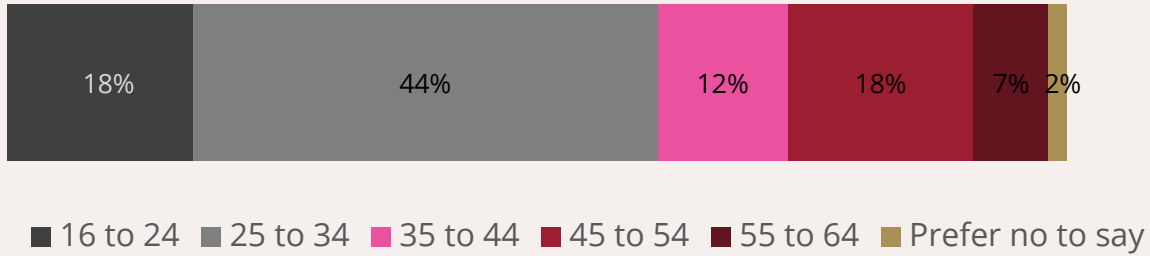
They noticed direct mentions and 'shout outs' to the volunteers within newsletters and social media relating to the event, which was appreciated.

“ I was very surprised with how creative people were...the team that I'm on, in the past they've done a couple of outreach things but a long time ago, so it did get me thinking if there's a way that we as a team can pick that back up. ”

CONTRIBUTORS

**Profile
Experience
Impacts**

What is your age?



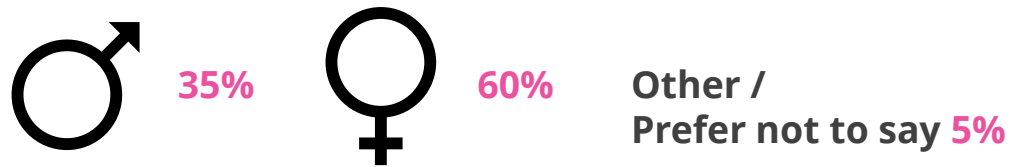
Approaching 1 in 5 of the contributors within the sample were under 25, with the most prevalent age profile being 25-34 (44%).

There was a female bias amongst the contributor cohort – around a third were men. This was driven by women dominating the external partner sample (93%), with staff and student contributors having more even gender splits.

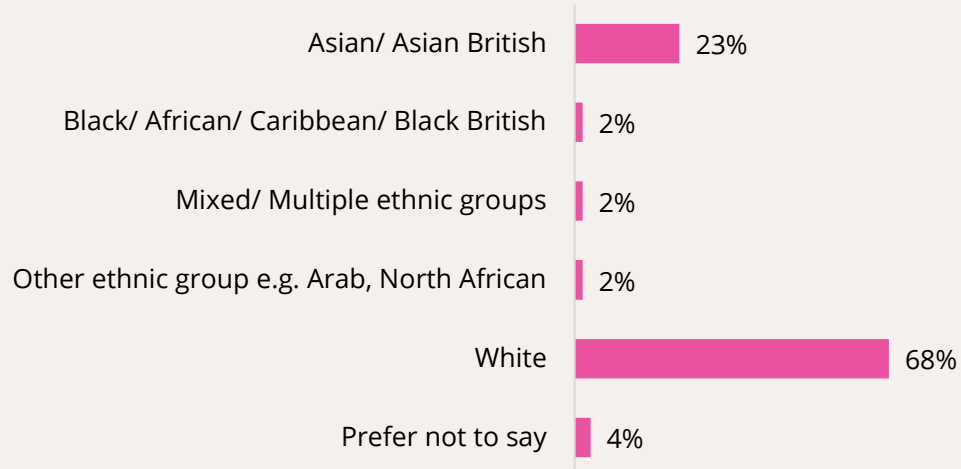
The majority of the sample came from a white ethnic background, with Asian / Asian British being the next most common at just under a quarter. Very few came from other ethnicities.

- Some differences in profile were apparent amongst the staff and student contributor groups:
 - 86% of the external partner sample were from a white ethnicity, compared to 44% of student contributors.

Please select the gender which best aligns with your identity



Which ethnic group best describes you?



Do you consider yourself a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?	25%
Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health condition or disability?	18%
Are you neurodivergent?	21%

The contributor sample was diverse, with 1 in 4 identifying as LGBTQIA+, approaching 1 in 5 having a disability and over a fifth describing themselves as neurodivergent.

- LGBTQIA+ representation was highest amongst students (44%).
- Disability was also most prevalent within the student contributor sample – 38% identify as disabled compared to only 4% of staff contributors within the sample.

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT:

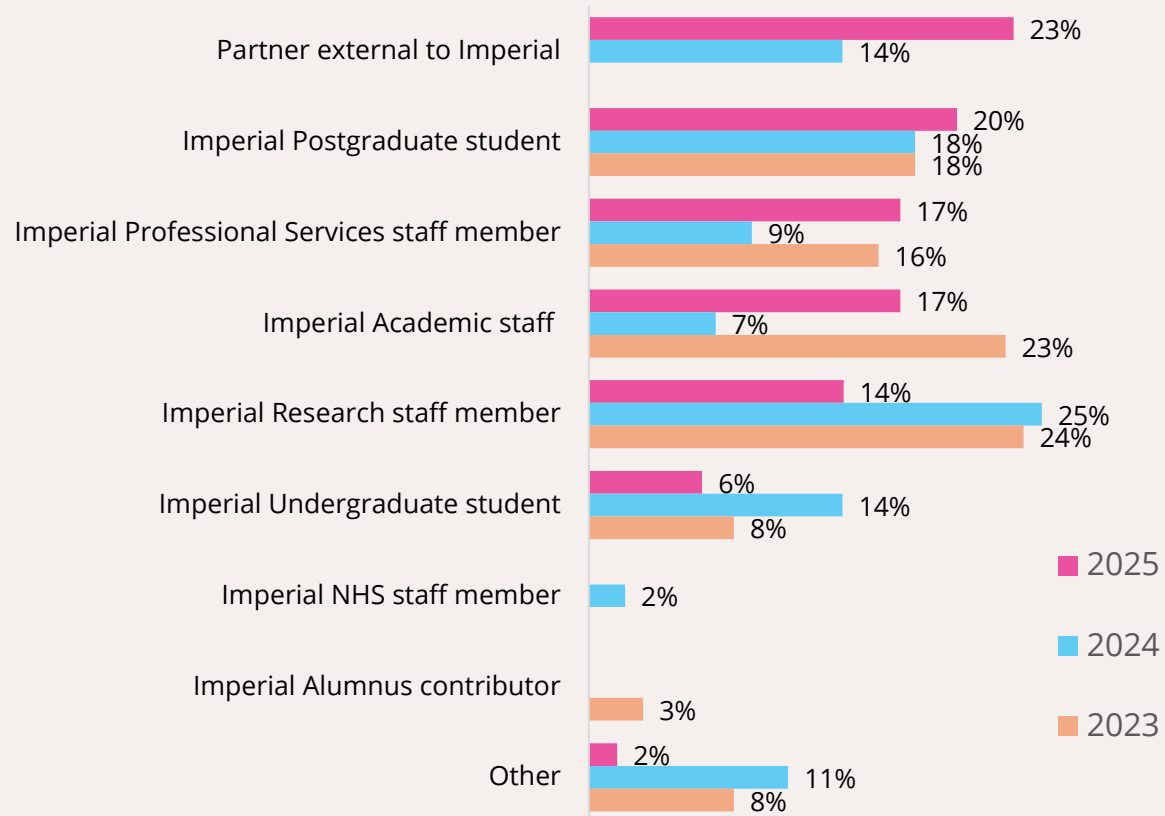
“Even the people on the stands, it was so nice. It was downstairs, about future medicines, it was nice to see people like me there talking and being the experts in the room. Because that's not what you would usually, typically, expect to see.”

Depth: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, neurodiverse, family group

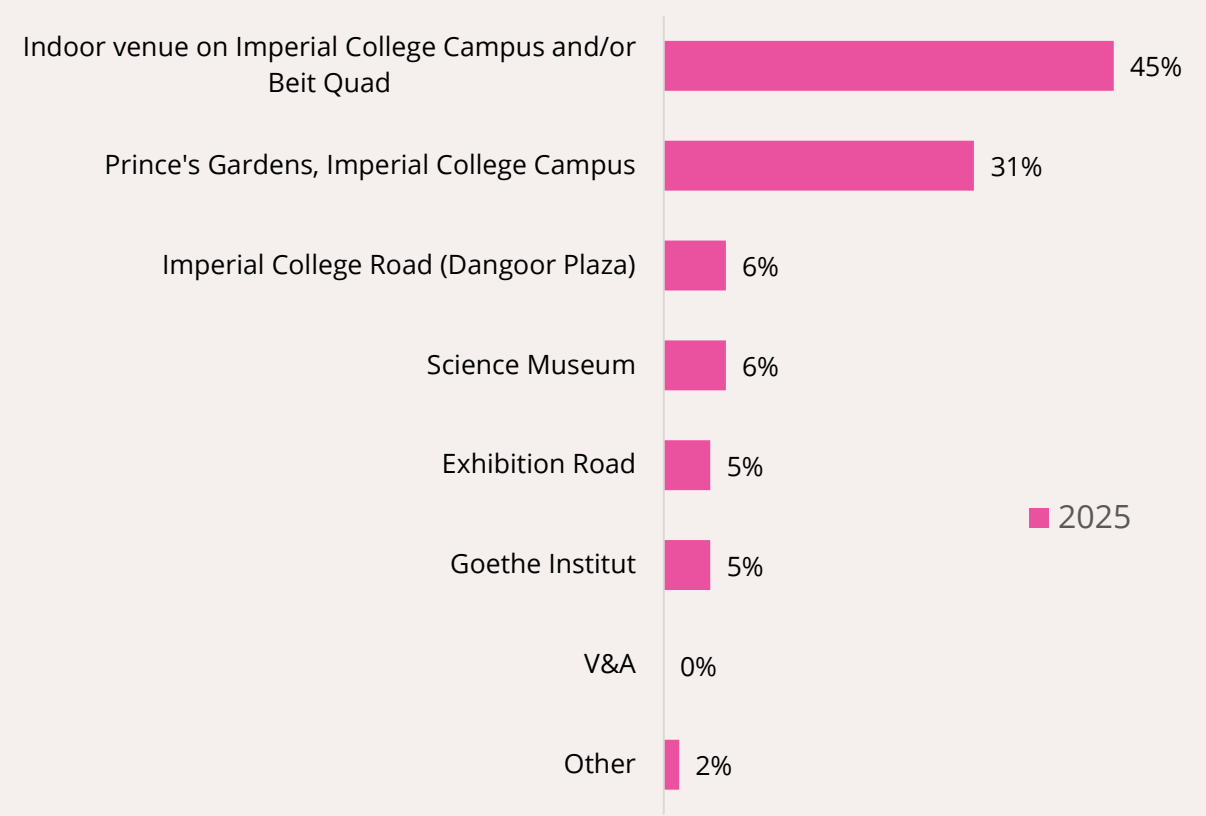
A mix of staff (48%), students (27%) and external partners (23%) was included amongst the sample who responded. Within the student contributor sample, most came from post-graduate study.

- This is in contrast with 2024, where external partners and academic staff were less prevalent.

Which of the following best describes you?



Where were you based for the majority of your time at the Festival?



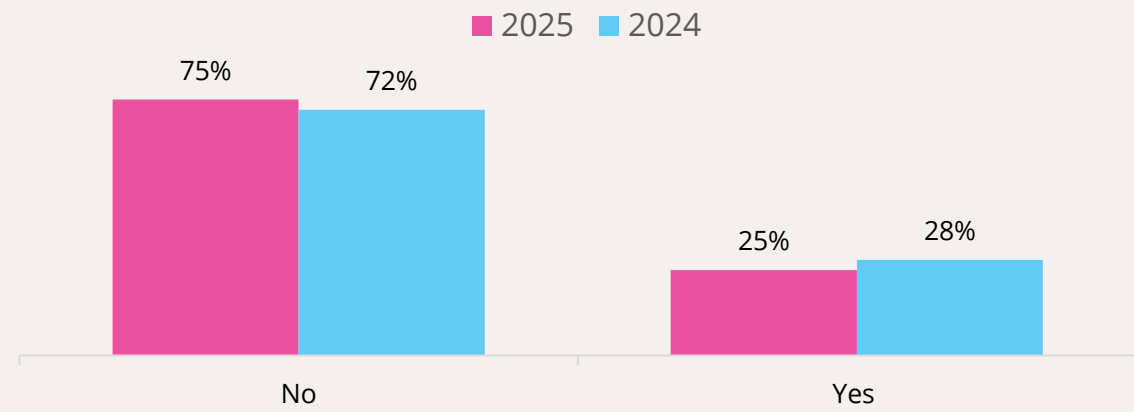
Most had taken part in some kind of public / community / outreach event before (1 in 4 had not).

For just over half, it was their first time contributing to GERF.

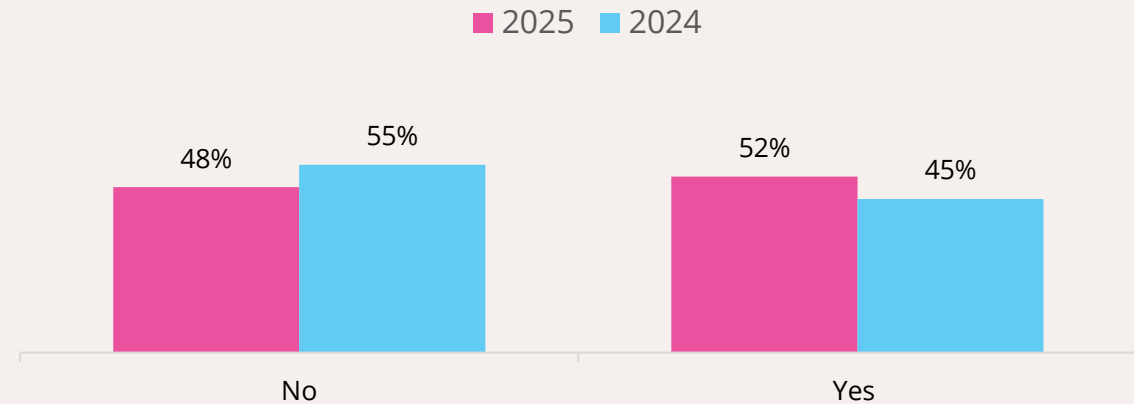
- Findings were broadly consistent with 2024 (question not comparable with 2023).
- Students (47%) were more likely than staff (16%) to be participating in a public event for the first time.



Was this your first time participating in a public, community engagement or outreach event (such as Imperial Lates, a public talk, community engagement event or school workshop)



Was this your first time participating in the Festival?



Base: 2025 Total (64), 2024 (68 assumed)

Contributors had lots of reasons for wanting to take part, but some recurring themes included the opportunity to engage with and inspire the public, improving their public interaction skills and to encourage others.

- Many were excited to showcase their research to a wide audience and felt the Festival and its location held prestige.

What was your main reason for volunteering at the Festival?

Good previous experience or recommendation from others

To practice engaging the public and to receive their feedback

To inspire the next generation

To share their research with the public

Something fun and rewarding

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT:

"I couldn't miss an opportunity to pay back and share my knowledge. Also, I know that this is good for my research team for the future grant application, and it was fantastic way to introduce the new Hub at Imperial both to the public and for other groups."

Imperial Professional Services staff member, first-time contributor

"I wanted to share what we do with the general public and also receive feedback from them as this helps me reconnect with the importance of our research and the impact it has on real people."

Imperial Research staff member, repeat contributor

"Someone recommended it to me! I was looking to speak with the public across a range of ages to understand how the perspective on scientific innovation differs."

Partner external to Imperial , first time contributor

The Festival experience exceeded expectations for many, with over a quarter saying it delivered a lot more than they had expected.

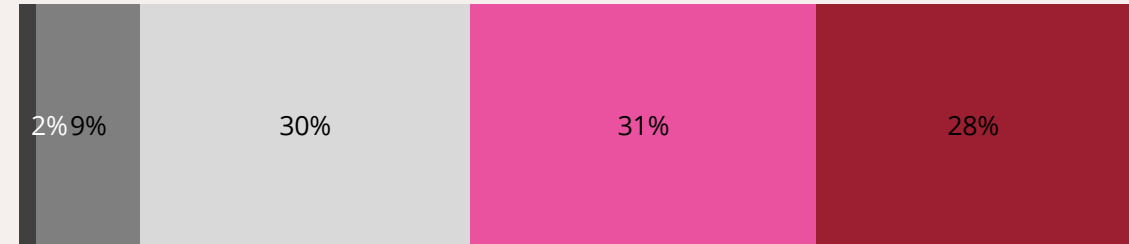
1 in 10 didn't feel that it had lived up to their hoped-for experience.

- Year-on-year there has been an increase in the proportion who felt the Festival didn't meet expectations, and who said it was 'as expected'

"I wondered whether people would find us in Prince's gardens or if people would care, but they were highly enthused, both adults and kids, and the guardians seemed so happy to bring their kids to a world that they are excited about and interested in on a day-to-day basis."

Imperial Postgraduate student, first-time contributor

Did the Festival meet your expectations (versus their reasons for taking part)?



- A lot less than expected
- A little less than expected
- As expected
- A little more than expected
- A lot more than expected

	2023	2024	2025
EXCEEDED A LITTLE / LOT	72%	74%	59%

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Those who said the Festival didn't meet expectations focused on footfall – either too much, or too little.

“Way too busy for equal access for everyone.”

Partner external to Imperial, repeat contributor

“We expected to see more people. The Biet Quad seemed to get less traffic than the rest of the Festival.”

Imperial Academic staff member, first-time contributor

“Seemed very sparse, occupying lots of space unnecessarily. Some areas around Dangoor plaza were very commercial and of poor quality.”

Imperial Academic staff member, repeat contributor

- For others, the flow / control of visitors and scale of the event were the very reason that they were impressed.
- The level of engagement and interest that the public showed were also cited as reasons for the Festival having exceeded expectations.

“I was not quite ready for the size of the crowds and wasn't fully expecting the number of families with young children who would want to engage with our VR demos.”

Imperial Academic staff member, first-time contributor

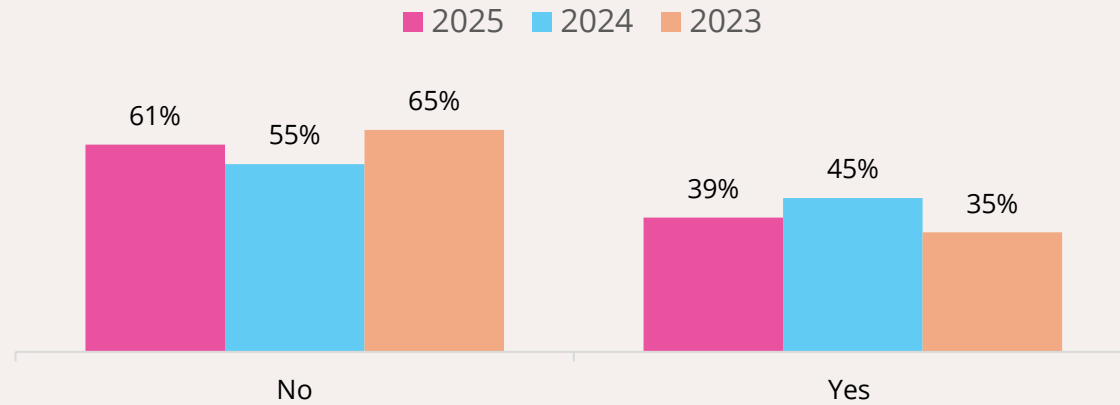
“The Public Engagement team were fantastic as always and at the Festival , the other zone supervisors surrounding my zone were super friendly and supportive and made the experience even more enjoyable.”

Imperial Professional Services staff member, repeat contributor

“It was so well organised and structured, it never felt too overwhelming or over capacity. The flow of people seemed controlled and there were lots of staff on standby.”

Partner external to Imperial, first-time contributor

Did you attend any of the Great Exhibition Road Festival engagement training sessions in April and May?

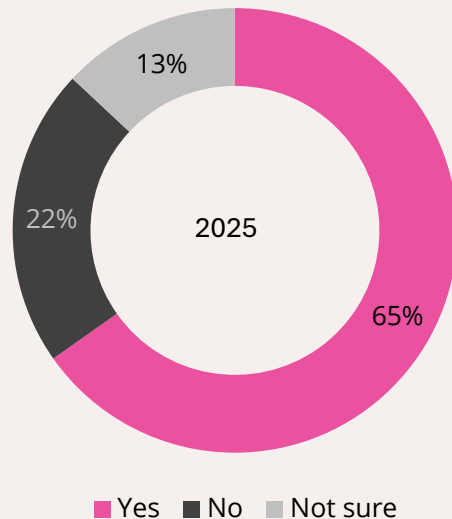


2 in 5 attended a training session before the event.

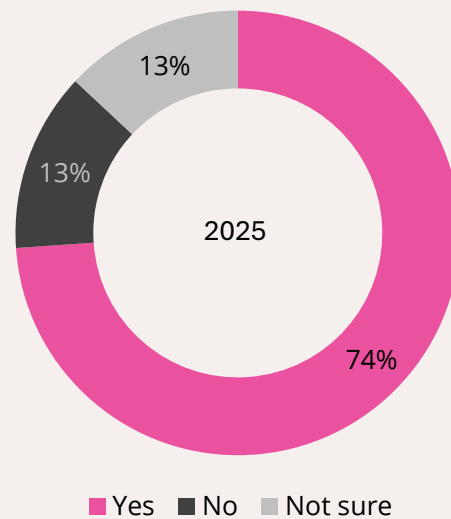
Of those attending, 2 in 3 shared what they received with others and 3 in 4 felt that they had utilised the learnings over the Festival weekend.

- The proportion attending had slightly decreased versus 2024.
- Staff (85%) were far more likely than students (29%) to share learnings or materials from the training with others.

Did you share any of the learning, materials or resources from these sessions with members of your team?



Did you or any of your team use any of the tools or techniques (shared at the training) at the Festival?



QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

- Feedback on the training and support received from a contributor

“

I think the training you offer is great - I have done it before. The slides are useful - though a bit long... a shorter version could help.

There are many deadlines and demands and I feel more help with drawing layouts, risk assessments etc helps as often the person arranging the stalls is doing this on top of a high workload. I think the equipment order deadline are quite inflexible bearing in mind teams might not have fully developed ideas when the deadlines are set for. Some deadlines are in school holidays or clash with Lates deadlines which is not good.

Personally, I think it would be great if there were more zone managers eg two per zone so they have more dedicated hours per project so the person arranging the stall is given more support on arranging games/ leaflets, rotas, etc.

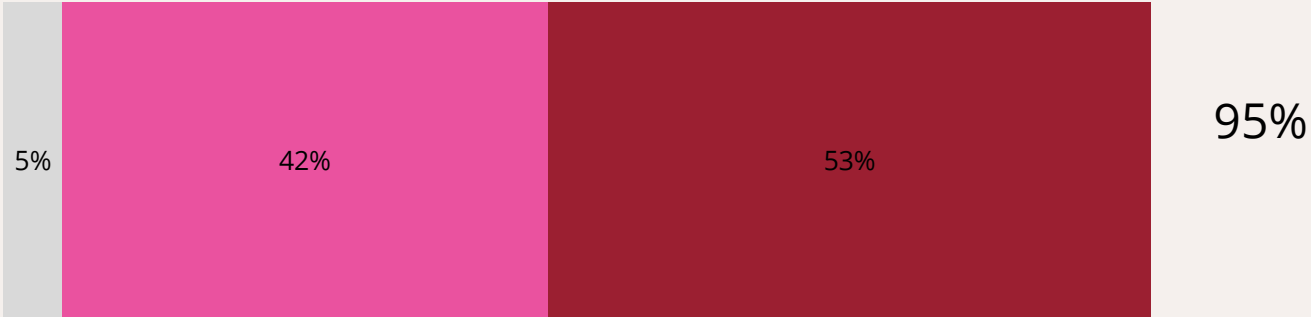
Imperial Professional Services staff member, repeat contributor

”

The overall experience of contributing to the Festival received no negative feedback.

- 1 in 20 rated it as average, 2 in 5 as good and over half 'excellent'.
- After an increase in overall positivity between 2023 and 2024, the proportion rating the event as good or excellent has remained consistent.

How would you rate the experience overall? POSITIVE



Very poor
 Poor
 Average
 Good
 Excellent

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	92%	96%	95%

Very little negative feedback was received on security or support pre or during the Festival.

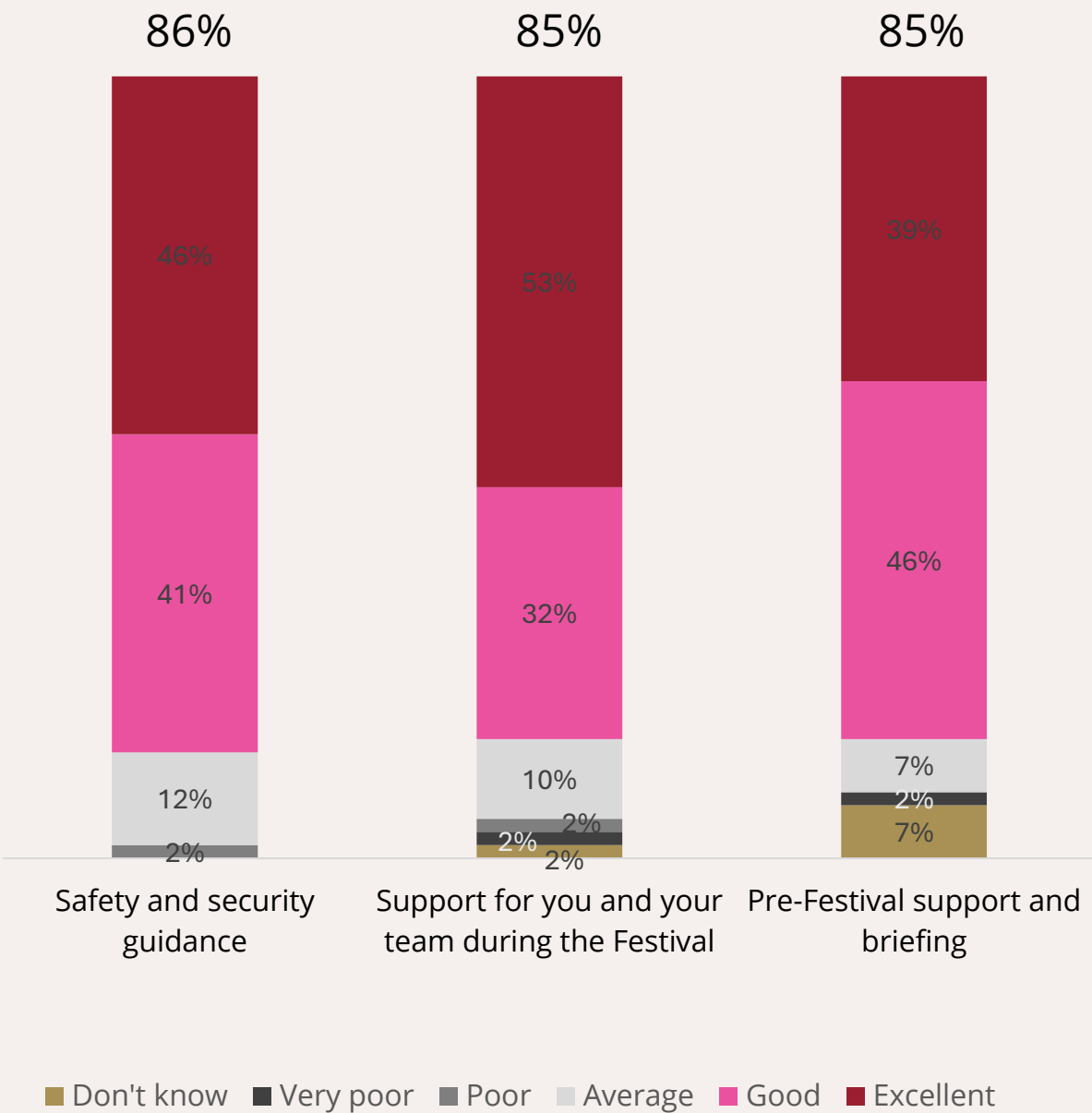
Each element received positive ratings from over 4 in 5 contributors.

- Support during the Festival had the highest proportion rating it as excellent – over half did so.
- Staff were far more likely to rate the safety and security as excellent than external contributors (59% vs. 14% respectively), indicating a need for a more tailored approach depending on relationship with Imperial.

How would you rate the following aspects of the Festival?



POSITIVE



How would you rate the following aspects of the Festival?

Safety and security guidance

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	80%	83%	86%

- Positive ratings for safety and security have increased year-on-year since 2023.

Support for you and your team during the Festival

	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	78%	94%	85%

- Following a large jump in positivity in 2024 regarding the support during the event, findings have dipped slightly but not returned to 2023 levels.

Pre-Festival support and briefing

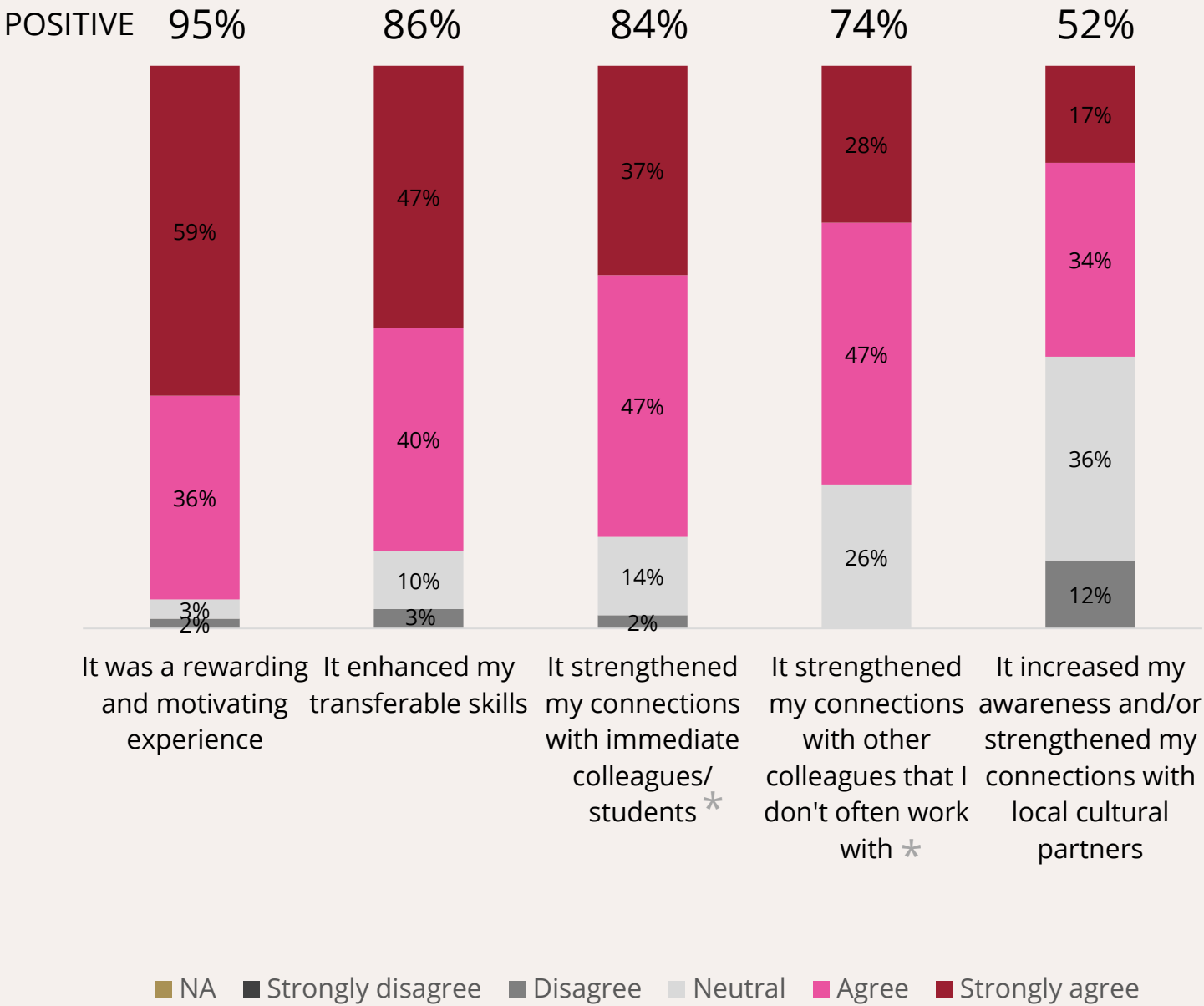
	2023	2024	2025
EXCELLENT / GOOD	80%	89%	85%

- Pre-Festival support shows generally consistent results each year.

Personal impacts are largely positive for contributors.

- This is particularly the case for finding the experience to be rewarding.
- Many strongly believe it enhances transferable skills – a key motivator.
- Looking only at those from Imperial, there were a minority who felt connections with colleagues weren’t positively impacted, although this was more often the case when talking about those from outside of their direct team.
- There is scope to increase the extent to which connections with local partners are made / strengthened.
- 100% of students felt contributing to the event had a positive impact on transferable skills, whereas 64% of external contributors agreed.
- Strong agreement that connections with cultural partners had been increased was more likely for students (31%) than staff (4%).

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Festival's potential outcomes for you?



Base: 2025 Total (58); *Excluding external partners (43)

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Festival's potential outcomes for you?

It was a rewarding and motivating experience

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	96%	94%	95%

It enhanced my transferable skills

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	84%	85%	86%

- Findings relating to the event being rewarding and motivating have been very consistent since 2023.
- The same can be said of the proportion agreeing that contributing to the event enhances transferable skills.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Festival's potential outcomes for you?

It strengthened my connections with immediate colleagues/ students

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	78%	76%	72%

It strengthened my connections with other colleagues that I don't often work with
**2023 'with other colleagues'*

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	60%	65%	71%

It increased my awareness and/or strengthened my connections with local cultural partners

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	43%	60%	52%

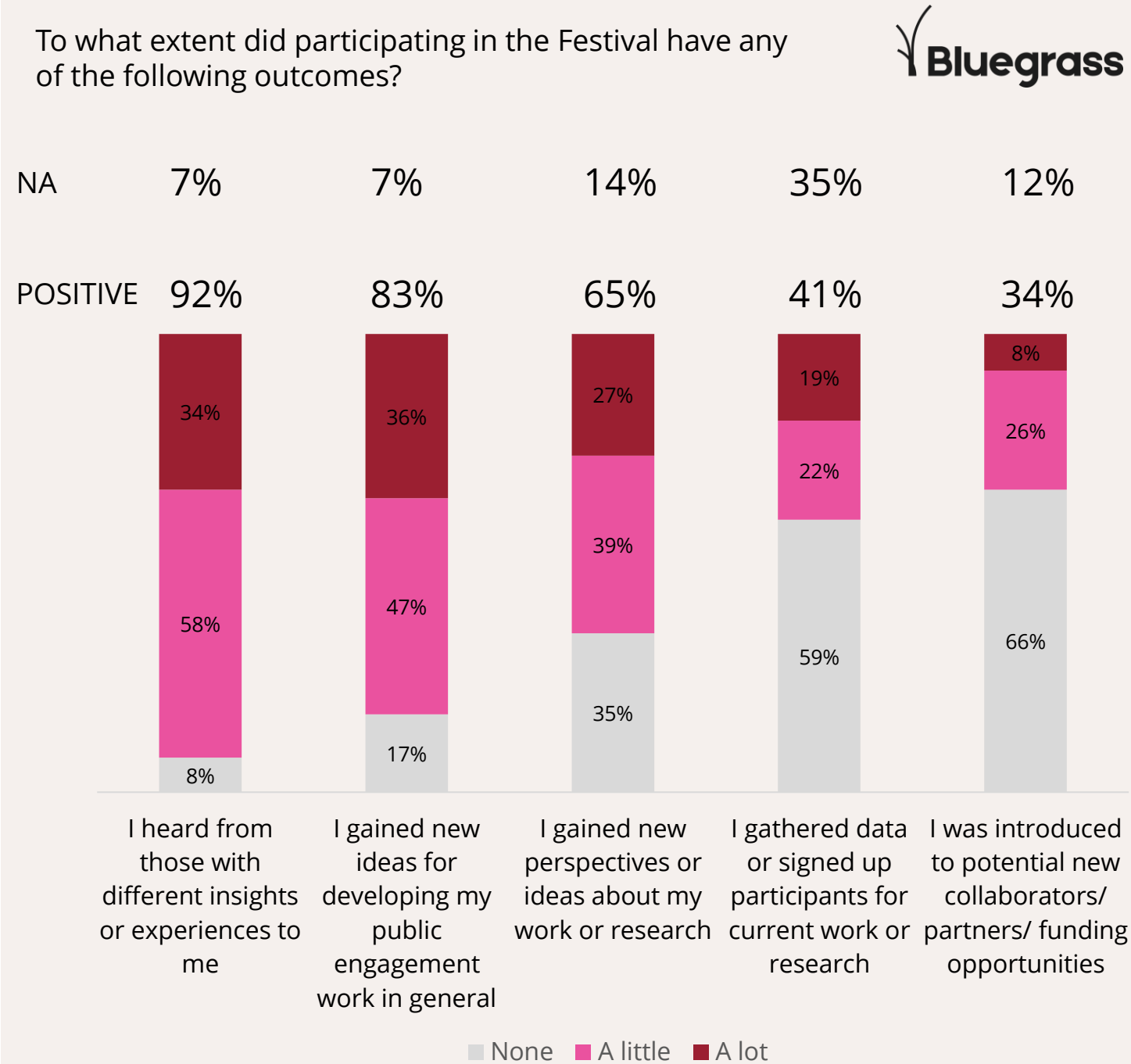
- When looking across the whole sample (including external partners), there is a continuation of a slight decline in the proportion agreeing the event strengthen connections with colleagues.
- Looking across the whole sample (including external partners), there has been a continued increase in the proportion who feel the experience strengthens connections with colleagues outside of their direct team.
- Increased awareness of cultural partners has fallen compared to 2024 but still sits above 2023 findings.

When looking at impacts on research / contributors' work, the extent to which the event has had a positive impact varies.

Amongst those who said it applied to them...

- The large majority felt they had shared views with those with different insights, however a third didn't feel they gained any relevant new perspectives.
- Over 4 in 5 developed ideas for public engagement.
- Most didn't gather any data or participants for research (2 in 5 did) and only 1 in 3 felt they had made potentially useful new connections.

Base: 2025 Total (57); total minus not applicable (37-53)



To what extent did participating in the Festival have any of the following outcomes?

I heard from those with different insights or experiences to me

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	80%	87%	92%

I gained new ideas for developing my public engagement work in general

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	82%	92%	83%

I gained new perspectives or ideas about my work or research

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	56%	73%	65%

- This year’s event was the most successful in terms of contributors interacting with those with different insights and experiences.
- Following a rise in the proportion who felt they had gained new public engagement ideas, this has returned to 2023 levels.
- The extent to which contributors feel they have gained new perspectives on their work has fluctuated, with 2025 sitting at an average.

To what extent did participating in the Festival have any of the following outcomes?

I gathered data or signed up participants for current work or research

	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	24%	37%	41%

I was introduced to potential new collaborators/ partners/ funding opportunities

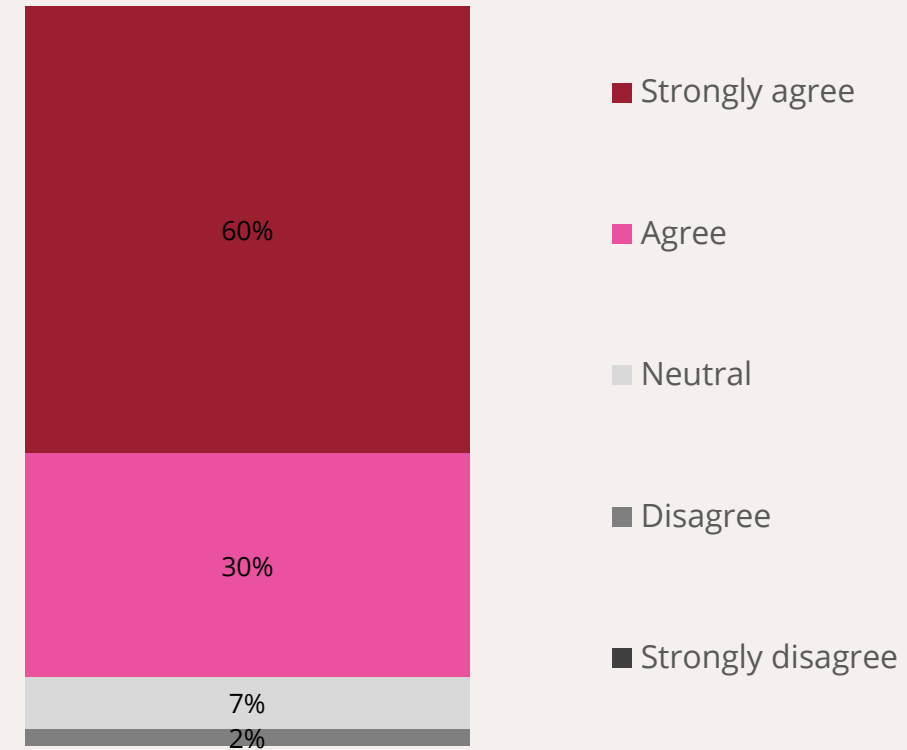
	2023	2024	2025
STRONGLY AGREE / AGREE	24%	44%	34%

- Whilst remaining one of the lower rated outcomes of taking part in the Festival, 2025 has continued the upwards trend in the proportion who gathered data / participants for research.
- The results for making connections with potential partners dropped versus 2024, but remains significantly higher than in 2023.

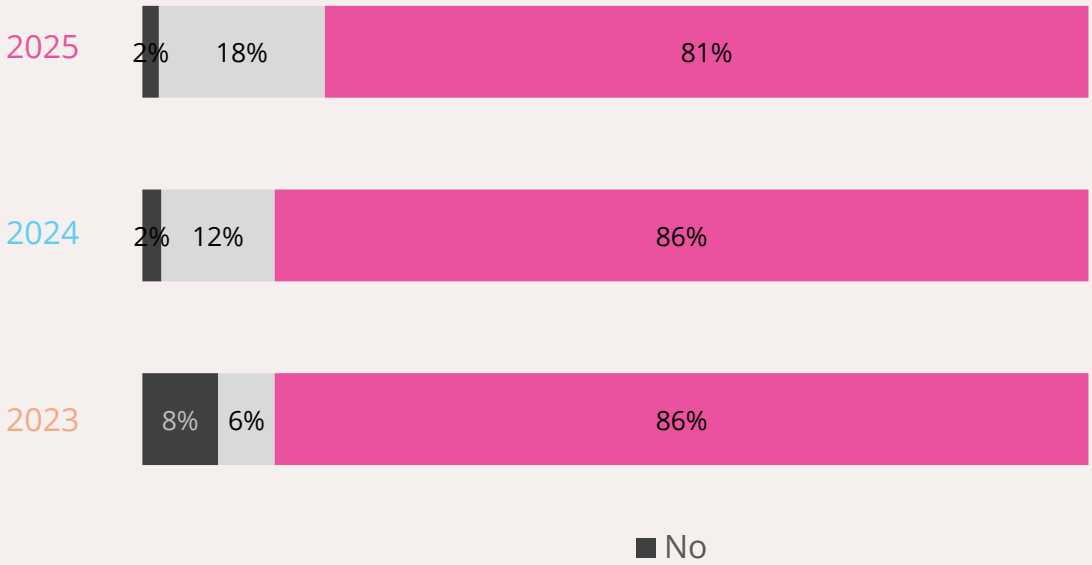
91% of those who work or study at Imperial said that the Festival gave them a sense of pride at their association with the institution.

- For 3 in 5 this was strongly the case.

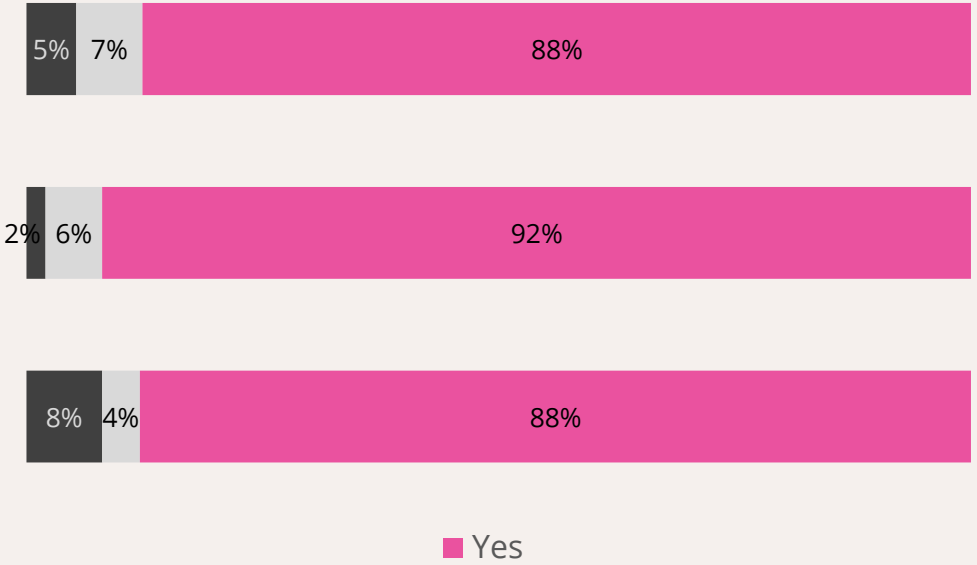
It made me feel proud to be associated with Imperial College London



Would you take part in a future Festival?



Would you recommend taking part in a similar festival to a colleague / peer?



Over 4 in 5 who contributed this year can see themselves doing so again.

- This broadly reflects previous years.

The large majority of contributors would recommend the experience to others.

- Only 1 in 20 don't think they would.
- Findings have remained consistent for the past 3 years.

CONTRIBUTORS

2 in-depth interviews undertaken with contributors, to obtain more detailed insights around their motivations and experience with the Festival.

CONTRIBUTORS: CASE STUDY 1 (1 of 4)

MOTIVATIONS FOR TAKING PART

This contributor wasn't aware of GERNI before taking part this year – it was mentioned by a colleague who felt it was a good opportunity to proactively raise awareness of their institute and funding partners, as well as to take part in 'a wonderful outreach event'.

The hope was to make his area of science accessible and engaging – something that he feels was achieved after an initial slight tweaking of the activities once they had a chance to see how they worked with large volumes of visitors.

He was pleased that kids, and adults, went away having learnt some fun facts.



One of this contributor's key reasons for taking part was to practice public speaking and engagement – an opportunity that doesn't present itself very often and that he feels is a 'necessity for a scientist's toolkit'.

"It's a skill they're going to need in grant writing, project writing and project discussion opportunities in their careers. So, not only is it a necessary skill, but I think this was a really good opportunity as a general practice and also to practice with a complete range of ages and ability levels."

EVENT ORGANISATION

“It was a lot bigger and a lot more accessible than I expected. I was really impressed.

I didn't realise quite how much of the campus was covered in the variety of events and tailored events to specific age ranges or ability levels.”



The pre-event training was seen as 'necessary' but was perceived to mainly focus on health and safety. Providing more practical information to support the development of the stand content and activities was a suggested improvement.

Over the weekend itself, this contributor was very impressed by the scale and organisation of the Festival, which surpassed his expectations. He found the event team very supportive and communicative.

“I would have benefited from some more case studies or examples of previous events, or examples of previous stands and tools and activities.”

CONTRIBUTORS: CASE STUDY 1 (3 of 4)

PERCEPTIONS OF ACCESSIBILITY

This contributor also spoke highly of the accessible nature of the Festival – for young people, but also those from diverse backgrounds and communities. The dedicated hours for those with disabilities and / or neurodiversity and the presence of translators was a highlight - it is an aspect of the event that he would like to see continue to grow and develop.

“I find that any event that has secluded hours for people that have needs of XYZ, it's vital in today's days, and I think that the Festival did those hours really well. I got to have some wonderful conversations. Also, English not as first language not being a barrier. Shout out the accessibility teams and the ideas that they put in - that was really well done and really necessary.”



“It's very easy for us as scientists to get into room with other scientists and network, but there aren't frequent opportunities to have public networking events that are truly accessible. So, I really enjoy opportunities to have public outreach.

I think not only is a skill that a scientist should continuously develop, but it's also a wonderful opportunity, both ways, to engage with the community nearby.



THE IMPACT

The experience of being a contributor at GEF has been hugely positive – he describes feeling ‘reinvigorated’ by the Festival and says little touches such as shout outs on the Festival social media are a perk to feel valued.

He achieved his goals to share his research on a wider scale, raise awareness of the subject matter, and practice engaging with the public.

There were also opportunities to meet other contributors and learn more about what is going on across the University.

“A lot of the team, when they finished the one of their blocks, or before they started one, they did a lap of the whole Festival and met all sorts of people.”

The experience as a whole makes Imperial stand out for him and he feels proud to be associated with the institute and event.

“It's easy to get bogged down in research. It's a very hard, long hours job. Events like this really reinvigorate me to love the companies that I work for. I really do appreciate Imperial for doing this. At previous institutions that I worked for, I have not had access to this kind of event.”

CONTRIBUTORS: CASE STUDY 2

Undertaken with Royal Parks – currently with respondent for approval.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Motivations
Experience & Response
Developing Audiences**

All community groups saw the Festival as an opportunity to support the education and well-being of their members.

Supporting access and broadening outlook was a key motivation for the groups representing young people.

Social inclusion was a motivation for the organisation supporting community elders. The participatory nature of the programme appealed – making it a chance for members to simply enjoy themselves and be around new and different people.

“

It's really important to us because we want to make those kinds of institutions, those kind of careers, that kind of interest, accessible to our young people and challenge some of the preconceptions around representation that they might see in areas of science technology.

Group Leader

”

“

It's an opportunity for the young kids to see what is out there. That there are so many opportunities they can grab.

Group Leader

”

Participating in the Community Engagement Programme was perceived by one community partner as a way of offering a superior experience to a small group of children already showing an interest in STEM.

Having previously attended the Festival, the partner saw an opportunity to access a more structured and in-depth – and therefore more beneficial – experience than if they were to simply visit as part of the general public.

They were driven by a desire for their young people to consolidate and build upon existing learnings.

“

This was a great opportunity to take a youth group already involved in STEM.... ...The opportunity to really focus on a targeted group was really beneficial because it's less people but a higher impact.

We made the offer to young people who had shown an interest in STEM, or who are taking maths or science classes after school during the week.

So we really aimed it at those young people who we felt would or already had an interest and would benefit the most.

Group Leader

”

The hosted visit format was universally praised. It motivated and enabled visits to the Festival, whilst also helping to ensure a positive on-site experience.

All partners consulted spoke highly of the pre-Festival support they received.

With references made to feeling 'overwhelmed' by the extensive Festival programme, the recommendations around what to see and do at the Festival, along with the provision of a tailored programme, were invaluable.

Talking about a member of the GERP community engagement team

"She explained what she thought would be interesting for the age group we were taking, which was a big help. It was a little overwhelming for me, just because I didn't know which ones would be best for the kids. But she did a really good job of telling me what she thought would be good and we built a plan from that."

Group Leader

The time and care taken to ensure that access needs – particularly those of the community elders - were accommodated was also a high point.

Being assigned a dedicated volunteer during the visit was highly valued.

Similar to the pre-planning, having someone dedicated to helping them move as a group around the Festival site was felt to make the prospect of visiting less daunting.

"It was such a huge Festival. I think it would have been quite overwhelming if we didn't have the volunteer to help us."

Group Leader

The volunteers were commended for their patience and kindness.

"She [the volunteer] was so patient. Like when the kids were going up and down. She was patient with us, waiting for us, guiding us and each department that we went, she was patiently waiting for us."

Group Leader

A community group leader's perspective on the value of the hosted visit format.

“

When you have someone break it down for you and say, oh, this will be interesting for your age group of kids and then, so let's do this, this and this.

And then, even better, on the day you'll have a volunteer who will take you and not just kind of like wander and not find places, but you have someone that's gonna basically hold your hand and take you to where you need to go. I think that that's just a big selling point and really appealing.

Group Leader

”

SPOTLIGHT ON PEPPER POT

The phased activity programme with Pepper Pot – which involved them attending a session at Imperial in the lead up to the Festival - supported engagement across the group.

The content of the pre-session - with references to the Caribbean and the carnival theme - was perceived to be ‘very well thought out and very considered’.

The thematic link between the two sessions – specifically the chance to make the butterfly wings and then wear them at the carnival parade - was particularly engaging.

“

We started off with a research talk of butterflies. It was absolutely fantastic, especially because they mentioned different types of butterflies in the Caribbean , which was great for our members. And then after that, they designed the wings, their butterfly wings.

”

The opportunity to see and try on costumes from the Notting Hill Carnival was also widely enjoyed and felt to be perfect for the Pepper Pot group.

“

It [the phased engagement programme] offered a real sense of familiarity, but then not familiar at the same time because it was something different.

”

Feeling welcome at the Festival is a strong theme amongst participants.

Being asked to be part of the community engagement programme in itself sets a positive tone – and can go some way to address the pre-visit apprehensiveness that some participants feel.

The friendliness of contributors and volunteers – and the extensive use of humour – put participants at ease.

Leaders also talk highly of the ‘genuine commitment’ shown by the GERF community team to develop relationships and to support engagement.

"I was feeling really delighted - by the thought that we had been invited."

Participant

Talking of the Chemistry Show

"It was a warm environment but a bit scary going into the lecture at the same time."

Participant

Within the GERF team, Sevinc, I think she's been very genuine about reaching out, getting to know people, building relationships and making people feel comfortable and welcome. And that makes all the difference.

Group Leader

The community space format enhanced the experience for all groups, also contributing to the general sense of welcome they felt whilst at the Festival.

It offered a space for all groups to relax and rest, away from the busyness of the Festival.

It was essential in enabling Pepper Pot to participate, due to the age-related needs of the group.

The complimentary snacks weren't always anticipated – but a definite bonus.

“

“Sometimes because of their age, members need a bit of a quiet space and somewhere where they can recoup. So, yeah, I think it would be difficult without it.”

Group Leader

”

“

“It's a bonus. I wasn't expecting that”

[the food and snacks]

Participant

”

Participants were enthused by their time at the Festival. It showed them a different side to science – one that is fun and experimental.

Experience of science in school is often the initial reference point – one which the Festival challenges.

"It was done in a funny way, school is very, like, straightforward."

"I thought it would feel like science at school, not fun."

The humour and spectacle of the Super-Cool Chemistry Show, and the quirkiness of activities like the Quantum Disco, drew in the participants – even those claiming to not usually enjoy science.

"I thought it was not gonna be much fun. And now that I've experienced it, it's much better."

“ The best bit was the amazing chemistry show. I like Chemistry, I like that there is a lot of fun things that you can do. I like the explosions.

Participant

”

The mix of hands-on science and creative opportunities was really well received.

Some young people would have liked more time for the creative / art-based activities – such as the butterfly wings.

Seeing how their young people responded to the mix of science and arts was a learning outcome for one of the group leaders.

“We didn't know that some of the children are more into art.. ... they were given paper, pencils and things to do some art – and they were all interested. This is something I never knew before.”

Group Leader

Creating more tailored programmes, based on lead interest, was suggested as a way of helping young people get the most out of their visit.

“For next one we will probably divide the children by their preference. If somebody is more into art and he has no interest or she has no interest in science, then there's no point wasting time taking them into science areas. It's better to use that time to do more art related things.”

Group Leader

Some young people, with prior experience of the Festival, would have liked more hands-on, technology-based activities.

“Last year was a lot better. This year, it was mostly just explaining and there could be more interactive activities. Like last year there were a lot of games on computers and stuff... ...most kids would enjoy that a lot more like, it's much more fun than just listening to someone talk about diffraction or something.”

Participant

Leaders, however, were supportive of this year's programme – and actively endorse a programme that 'gently pushes the comfort zone'.

“They enjoyed some things more than others, but I also think it's important to take those risks with programming... ... it's meeting the balance between being entertained and engaged, and learning outcomes where you hit that level of something that's quite inspiring. And I genuinely think it hit the right balance for our young people.”

Group Leader

Many of the young people spoke about what they had learned - their enthusiasm and explanations demonstrating their learnings.

"I've learned lots of things. They were talking about molecules and how much are in a glass of water. There are, like 2300 quadrillion molecules in a glass of water."

Participant

"We went to the Next Gen area. I learned a bunch of interesting facts, for example, I learned about mosquitos and malaria, and I also learned about sickle cell disease."

Participant

"We did learn a lot. I learnt that flour is flammable, I didn't know that."

Participant

"I actually learnt a lot of stuff about popcorn. The energy heats up the popcorn and the liquid in it pops."

Participant

"We also learn about a disease (sickle cell) and it's about people and they have misshapen blood source."

Participant

The Escape Room supported 'people skills' development, by getting the young people to work collaboratively.

"We had to unlock two suitcases, and we had to find the hidden clue. We had to work as a team to find out everything."

Participant

"We would work together even though most of us don't know each other."

Participant

The social nature of the Escape Room activity was a source of enjoyment for the participants – which extended into more general perceptions of the festival experience.

"It was very social [the Festival], especially in the escape room, because you had to talk to people to find out things."

Participant

Grassroot work, to build relationships and relevance, felt to be central to engaging underrepresented audiences in communities local to the Festival.

Whilst partners are motivated to promote inclusion and to overcome participation barriers, they acknowledged they sometimes lack parental and community support.

Family and work commitments can be a factor, but wider issues are felt to contribute. This includes assumptions made about opportunities being 'not for people like us' and a distrust for institutions which could be regarded as part of the 'establishment'.

Media coverage about discrimination in cultural spaces because of race can perpetuate a perceived lack of relevance.

- At the time of interview, the national media were reporting of an incident where teenagers were racially profiled during a school trip to a London Museum.

Schools, day-care centres and community support organisations cited as potential channels to build understanding and trust at a community level.

- Westway Trust and Nova offered as examples

“

It's based on early relationships with the community centres, daycare centres or the local schools or the local events which, you know, put on stuff for the community and then it will feel more like them.

Group Leader

”

“

With organisations that do all these amazing events and invite us to things, but we don't have a relationship with them - or our families don't have a relationship with them - it never really feels the same. People never really feel included.

So the things that have worked best are where there's been a lot of individual engagement, personal engagement and engagement over time, building relationships over time.

Group Leader

”

Implementing an organisation wide approach to access and inclusion also felt to be important, to demonstrate genuine commitment and to ensure that it delivered throughout the customer experience.

This extends up to the overarching senior management, and down to all operational personnel – so that ‘everyone is aware of what you are trying to achieve’ and that it’s not undercut by ‘an individual having a bad day’.

“ What you don't want to happen is that it makes people feel like it's a box ticking exercise. Yeah. You only want us here for that particular day, so you can get your funding and then you want us to go. That type of thing.

Group Leader

”

Grassroots advertising – which simplifies the Festival and clearly explains what it is about – also recommended.

Parents are usually the main decision maker and tailoring communications to this audience is recommended.

Higher levels of English as a second language and lower educational attainment flagged as key issues – and suggestion that the current website may make the Festival feel inaccessible.

The adoption of Plain English principles suggested, along with the use of ‘very simple pictograms and graphics that really tell a story as much as text’.

‘Amplifying Black voices and experiences’ in advertising also recommended.

“

Sometimes the online stuff can get a bit confusing or you just don't know exactly what it is... ...some people would just see the information and not understand it so well and understand its benefits.

Group Leader

”

“

With many of the families that we work with, there's a very high proportion English as a second language. And there tends not to be as high degree of educational achievement for the parents and carers. So rather than just looking at the maps and promotion as being youth friendly, it's also important to consider whether it's adult friendly across the families that you're going to be aiming at.

Group Leader

”

Representation of people from Black ethnicities amongst Festival contributors and volunteers is important to support an inclusive experience and to inspire.

Group leaders generally felt that representation was achieved within the community programme, with references to the sickle cell stand.

There was an acknowledgement, however, that they were experiencing a tailored programme, developed with representation in mind. This prompted a question around representation in the wider Festival.

- Profiling data indicates that people from Black ethnicities were underrepresented amongst contributors and volunteers

“

It's really important that people can see other people that they relate to - in literature, on pictures and actually in terms of the people who are there. It should be representative. It should also have the people who were the best people in that role. It doesn't necessarily need to be calculated as much as it needs to show that, particularly for something that's focused on inspiring young people, that they can see that adults like them who have relatable experiences can actually achieve in those areas the subjects.

Group Leader

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