



# ENCOUNTER



# FESTIVAL PRESTON

# 2024 EVALUATION REPORT





# THANK YOU!

## Encounter Festival would like to thank...

All of the artists, performers, volunteers, Preston's creatives, funders, Council works team, and all those that made Encounter Festival 2024 a huge success!

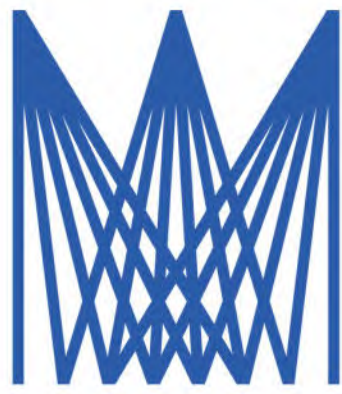
Thank you to Preston Photographic Society and Daniel McCullough who provided pictures of the event.

And thank you to all contributors to this report for their time and valued input to the evaluation: visitors, artists and performers, support services, partners and event contributors.

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Encounter Festival's funders help the Encounter Festival event take centre stage and are here to support thousands of performers, arts organisations and venues, enabling them to realise their creative potential. Encounter Festival is proud to be working in partnership with the below funders.





# CONTENTS

Conclusion .....	03
Executive summary .....	05
Introduction .....	11
Visitors .....	15
Attendance .....	24
Performances .....	28
<i>Case study with Blaze Arts</i>	
<i>Case study with WILD</i>	
<i>Case study with Preston City Mela</i>	
Marketing and promotion .....	44
Reach and engagement .....	49
Annex 1: Occupation of visitors .....	53
Annex 2: Postcode of visitors .....	55
Annex 3: Press links .....	56
Annex 4: Analysis .....	56



# CONCLUSION



**Celebrating the breadth of the County's diverse cultural offer, Encounter Festival provides an authentic voice for Lancashire and the North West in showcasing a unique collection of high quality arts, performances, spectacles and entertainment. Nine years since the festival was first piloted in Preston, Encounter Festival has delivered five full festivals, two brief festivals and a post pandemic festival; 2024 is the ninth production since the initial pilot in 2015.**

It is felt that 2023 saw the festival "come of age". Having stepped out of the post pandemic environment, and the subsequent impact of the sad death of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022, the event has generated momentum and support, whilst also developing structure, presence and focus through the appointment of the dedicated Executive Producer.

Growing from around 20,000 visitors at the pilot in 2015, 2023 generated a landmark 50,000 visitors. Whilst the locations, range of events and timescale limit visitor numbers to some extent, 2024 experienced in the region of 47,000 visitors.



The plan is for the festival to keep developing, growing and showcasing local talent; and 2025 will generate a significant opportunity to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the event. The aim of Encounter 2024 was for visitors to discover new experiences, find inspiration and have fun.

The evaluation this year again highlights the success and impact of Encounter Festival. The views of visitors, performers and supporters promote its uniqueness; creating a dynamic, colourful, vibrant and invigorating event that promotes and encourages participation.

The visitor profile in 2024 has seen an increase in ethnic identity representation and visitors attending from outside of Preston City.

Illustrating Encounter Festival's capability for extending arts and culture experiences to people; for around one in five visitors, this was the first time they had participated in an arts and culture experience and for around three in five visitors, this was the first time they had attended this/an NTO event.



The feedback from performers working with Encounter Festival is highly positive and enthusiastic. The event provides acts with opportunities for developing their work and skills, showcasing their abilities, promoting their skills and contribution to the community, representing their cultural background, working with new audiences, taking the arts to people who might not otherwise have access and performing in a new location.

The support, process, communication, openness and freedom for performance development provided by Encounter Festival support their effective development and delivery. Encounter Festival contributes to the performances and the performances in turn contribute to Encounter Festival.





# CONCLUSION

Performers are keen to be involved in 2025, with the opportunity to develop their relationship with Encounter Festival and the community and to develop the performances they contribute.

Encounter Festival has the potential to further its community involvement and to integrate with more and wider community groups. Going out to communities throughout the year, building relationships and letting groups know how they can be involved with Encounter Festival can support this development.

Encounter Festival also has the potential to support local young people, including those where barriers exist to working in the arts, to gain experience and develop skills in the industry. Visiting schools, colleges and universities, providing open days of practical hands on experience and providing work experience, traineeships and internships are all ways in which the skills and knowledge involved in producing Encounter Festival over the year can be passed onto young people.

The marketing reach for Encounter Festival in 2024 exceeded the 1 million figure, at 1.29 million. Four fifths of this reach was generated by the Central Radio Campaign, with Facebook posts generating over one in ten of the total number. Around three in four visitors had seen or heard about Encounter before the event, with Facebook and word of mouth proving significantly the two main sources.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Encounter Festival 2024

2024 saw the rebranding of the festival, along with a concentration of delivery to cover the two full days of Saturday and Sunday, omitting the previous Friday evening delivery. The aim to commission two new performances was achieved in the production of the Same but Different silent disco and Imitating the dog's Ribble of Dreams installations comprising magical story boxes.

As for each year of the festival, Saturday night's procession formed the centre piece of the two days, followed by the Firework Finale lighting up Preston City Centre. A further development this year was integrating the centre stage Torchlight Procession with the afternoon's events through providing music and refreshments. This ensured the momentum of the event was continued into the evening and encouraged visitors to stay in the area.

Other performances, workshops and activities over the two days saw locations such as the Flag Market, Guildhall, Fishergate and Winckley Square host 18 different acts over 30 performances. These extravaganzas included professional acts, community performances and visitor participation, covering such a range as; The Invisible Man, Bollywood Dance, Ribble of Dreams Installations, Encounter Voices and the Silent Disco.



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## Inclusion

The two thirds of visitors surveyed describing their gender identity as woman, one third as man and 1% as non-binary is reflected in the proportion of visitors stating their sex to be female, male and in another way. 1% of visitors surveyed state their gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. With 95% of visitors describing their sexual orientation as heterosexual/straight, 5% of visitors described themselves as bisexual, queer, gay man or other.

Around half of visitors surveyed are aged 35-54 years old, with around one quarter aged younger, at 16-34 years old, and around one quarter aged 55 years or older. Both 2023 and 2024 have seen the inclusion of a higher proportion of visitors aged 35+ years old than in previous years.

Visitors surveyed in 2024 represented 16 of the 17 ethnic identities. This compares to 2023 when visitors surveyed represented 11 of the 17 ethnic identities. 85% of visitors surveyed in 2024 are of a White ethnicity, 6% of an Asian ethnicity, 4% of a Mixed ethnicity, 3% of a Black ethnicity and 1% of an Other ethnicity.

There has been an increase in the proportion of visitors surveyed who are not of a White/White British – White British ethnicity; from 14% in 2023 to 25% in 2024.







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 experienced an increase in the proportion of visitors surveyed who identify as having a disability. With 10% of visitors in 2024 identifying as having a disability, this remains higher than in 2022. 6% of visitors surveyed in 2024 identify as neurodivergent.

Two thirds of visitors surveyed in 2024 are employed, with around one tenth of visitors each unemployed/not working, retired or in full-time education. The main type of occupation is of the category modern professional & traditional occupations, accounting for one third of all visitors.

All visitors surveyed in 2024 live in the UK. Just over half of visitors live in Preston (PR1, PR2 or PR3), just over one quarter live in another PR postcode and just under one fifth live in a postcode other than a PR postcode.

There has been a significant increase in 2024 in the proportion of visitors from outside of Preston, increasing from 35% of visitors in 2023 who lived outside of PR1, PR2 or PR3 to 46% of visitors in 2024.



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## Visitor mix and activity

The increase in the proportion of visitors attending with someone else, which had been experienced in 2023 when this had reverted back to the height of 2018, has not be maintained in 2024. The 71% of visitors surveyed in 2024 attending with someone else has reverted to the levels experienced in 2021 and 2022.

Just over half of accompanying visitors (51%) were aged 16+ years old, 32% were aged 5-11 years old, 12% aged 0-4 years old and 4% were aged 12-15 years old. The average size of visitor groups (including the respondent) was 2.8 per visitor group.

For nearly one fifth of visitors surveyed in 2024, Encounter Festival was their first participation in an arts and culture experience. For around three fifths of visitors, they attend or participate in at least two arts and cultures experiences a year.

With just over two fifths of visitors having attended this/an NTO event previously, nearly three fifths of visitors surveyed in 2024 had not attended this/an NTO event previously.

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## Working with Encounter Festival

### Performances at Encounter Festival

The feedback from performers working with Encounter Festival is highly positive and enthusiastic. Providing the acts with opportunities for developing their work and skills, showcasing their abilities, promoting their skills and contribution to the community, representing their cultural background, working with new audiences, taking the arts to people who might not otherwise have access and performing in a new location are all factors encouraging the acts to take part. The significant scale and scope of Encounter Festival further encourages involvement with the event.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



*Amazing that a festival of that scale is in Preston; to be part of that was an amazing opportunity*

*One of the greatest things about performing our work outdoors is how accessible it is to audiences. They're able to watch performances without having to buy a ticket*

The artists were effectively supported throughout the process by Encounter Festival. Provision of timely and relevant information, flexibility, an open approach and freedom in the development of the performances all contributed to the smooth running of the process.

*It was what the young people wanted to do (a silent disco), they had complete freedom, and it was brilliant that Esther really opened it up and let them decide what they wanted to organise & produce*

*The whole Encounter team was really supportive and organised throughout*

The process, communication and support provided by Encounter Festival contributed to the successful delivery of the performances. It was noted that 2024 was in some way special – that all elements had positively integrated – that it had a silver lining. Encounter Festival contributed positively to the performances.

*Just really supportive, provided everything we needed... They liaised with us about what we needed to deliver. It was a really good process*

*This time Encounter Festival had a silver lining. The laser lights outside The Harris were beautiful, the build up to the event the day before and the day after were quite interesting*







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Contribution

Encounter Festival provided the opportunity for the performances to contribute. Showcasing the positivity and skills of young disabled people, promoting opportunities for inclusion, engaging with the community, providing quality performances, bringing new experiences and inspiration to people and performing to people who might not otherwise experience the arts; as well as providing enjoyable, engaging and fun performances for visitors to enjoy and join in with.

*Mela brings a rich, diverse aspect of Preston to Encounter, it also brings very high quality talented performers who exist in Preston to highlight their existence... and also to showcase how entertaining and how enriching these artforms can be...*

*I hope it inspired people to start dancing or attend dance performances in the future*

*Just something that was youth lead and what I really loved to see being there on the day was the range of ages that came and took part in the silent disco and just the joy that everyone seemed to be experiencing, it was lovely to see*

On a practical level, the skills and self-confidence of the young people in Blaze had been developed through their involvement with the festival's production.

*Confidence and increasing their sense of value... You could really see a change in their confidence, it gave them something to build on, a real confidence boost*

## Going forwards with Encounter

All three performances are keen to be a part of Encounter Festival 2025. The event provides a significant platform from which to perform, showcase and engage. Participation also provides the opportunity to benefit from longer term relationships and to develop the performance within the event. Precise involvement can depend on funding availability.

*We would love to do that, that is one thing that is always there in our annual agenda, we always discuss Encounter, to be able to participate with Encounter*

*Definitely, it would be brilliant. I always think longer term partnerships are much better and it gives us that chance to build on it and improve, once we've done it once*

*Encounter Festival is a great platform, it's a fantastic festival in Lancashire and we would love to return in the future. We have a wide repertoire of shows and it's always great to revisit festivals and engage with their audiences over the years*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Encounter going forwards

There were no significant ways in which Encounter Festival could work better. One act needed a great deal of flexibility, which Encounter Festival had worked to provide, the route for the procession could be slightly more practical for the use of props, and widening its geography are the suggestions made.

It is felt that Encounter Festival has significant potential to engage further with the community and young people; to provide and support a unique range of experiences, skills and development.

There is the potential for Encounter Festival to extend its community reach and integration. Visiting local community performances and activities over the year could provide the opportunity to raise awareness, engage with new community groups, promote ways in which they can be involved with the festival and initiate processes to develop this involvement.

Early involvement and communication with a range of community groups would support such integration.

*We have a lot of small communities which exist in Preston. I think a quick meeting with them well before the event to involve and include Encounter Festival in their agendas as well and to spread the word among their groups*

Motionhouse dancers have also delivered inspiring Curtain Raiser projects with young people at festivals in the past, which have proved to be a fantastic way of further engaging the community.

There is the potential for Encounter Festival to support young people who are interested in the arts as a career. A traineeship, internship, work experience, talking at colleges and universities and holding day sessions where young people can experience the production activity behind the scenes can all contribute to this; with such knowledge and experience providing young people with information and practical experience. This could also support young people from backgrounds which historically have been excluded from the arts or who face barriers to getting involved.

Encounter Festival has the potential to be a significant learning resource and stepping stone for young people.

*From our point of view it's how cultural events provide an opportunity for young people to pursue pathways into the industry, not just disabled young people, it's a very difficult sector for young people to get into*

*It's an amazing opportunity in Preston and it would be a shame if more young people in Preston couldn't learn from it and use it as a stepping stone*





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Marketing

Meeting Preston City Council's aim of encouraging inclusion and community involvement with arts events, Encounter Festival is one of their arts festivals. Preston City Council provide the marketing support for the event.

Year round marketing activity is undertaken using social media and the website to generate engagement, build brand awareness and promote the date of the festival; aiming to generate and maintain awareness over the year. Further work is undertaken in designing the programme and supporting billboards and banners to make the festival known in the City. The rebranding of Encounter Festival was also undertaken in 2024.

The development of the event's footfall and geographical reach is approached through using Preston's transport links, with the aim to extend the reach of the festival.

The event's evaluation strongly informs the following year's marketing activities; with this insight influencing the direction and focus of the marketing activity to support the growth strategy and identify where to best apply resource and budget.

Illustrating the level of pre-event marketing and communication is that just under three quarters of visitors had seen or heard about Encounter Festival prior to the event.

Facebook is the one main source of awareness prior to the event, identified as a source of awareness by virtually half of visitors who had seen or heard about Encounter. Word of mouth is the only other form of communication mentioned to any significant extent, highlighting the importance of these two forms of communication.

The total reach achieved for Encounter Festival in 2024 was 1.29 million, with the Central Radio Campaign generating four fifths of this reach. Further supporting the effectiveness of Facebook, is that the Facebook posts generated significantly the highest reach and engagement of all the other forms of online and website activity.





# INTRODUCTION



## Context

An authentic voice for Lancashire and the North West, Encounter Festival celebrates the breadth of the County's diverse cultural offer. Showcasing high quality and high profile arts, Encounter Festival sees the City of Preston buzzing with life and alight with creativity amongst an array of spectacular performances, inspiring arts and impressive music. The City of Preston, the Lancashire County and those further afield are brought together by Encounter Festival, with bustling streets and opportunities for involvement, creating a memorable and vibrant weekend.

The first Encounter Festival was staged by Preston City Council as a pilot in 2015. Showcasing the work of artists from across the Lancashire County and community activities, the pilot weekend drew in 20,000 attendees. With the event's potential to grow and impact the communities, artists and arts organisations of Lancashire, as well as attract visitors into the County, Encounter Festival has since continued to develop:



- 2015 pilot
- Following the pilot, the first full scale Encounter Festival was hosted in 2016
- Brief Encounter was held in September 2017 to maintain the momentum, keep the spirit alive and launch the following year's festival
- The second full scale festival was held in September 2018
- Brief Encounter was held in September 2019
- The first post pandemic Encounter was held over a number of days in September and October 2021
- Full Encounter Festival was held in September 2022
- Full Encounter Festival was held in September 2023
- Full Encounter Festival was held in September 2024

Typically, the full Encounter Festival was run for the Friday evening, Saturday daytime and evening and Sunday daytime. For 2024, the format changed to cover the daytime and evening of Saturday 21st September and the daytime of Sunday 22nd September.



Encounter Festival is part of Without Walls, a network of organisations bringing innovative outdoor arts to towns and cities across England.

Encounter Festival returned in 2024 with a fresh new look and with the Torchlight Procession and firework spectacle once again taking centre stage. Saturday involved such activities as playing on the giant marble run, getting involved in the chilled silent disco and enjoying epic shows across the Bus Station and the Flag Market. Choirs and Qawwali performances were held on the Community and Traditions Stage to showcase all of the groups that perform in Preston throughout the year.

The 2024 Encounter Festival follows the coming of age of the event in 2023; a year where the full programme was run, was supported by fair weather and which attracted 50,000 visitors. The two day arts and cultural extravaganza in 2024 again transformed the heart of Preston into a vibrant hub of creativity, unity and celebration, through its diverse line up of performances, workshops and activities.





# INTRODUCTION

*The aim of Encounter Festival 2024 was for visitors to discover new experiences, find inspiration and have fun.*

## The evaluation

The evaluation of Encounter Festival has been undertaken for the pilot and for each of the full Encounter Festivals; providing significant insight on the success and impact of the events through encompassing the views of visitors, partners and artists.

Providing insight into the performance of the wide range of Encounter Festival activities and scope, the evaluations support the development of Encounter Festival and other Preston City Council events.

For 2023 and 2024, the main focus of the primary evaluation changed. Using Audience Agency questions, visitor profile data now forms the basis for the primary research. To illustrate the recorded success of the delivery of the range of activities over the previous years, the evaluation data prior to 2023 was contained within the annex of the 2023 evaluation report.

The scope of the evaluation activity for 2024 comprises:

- Visitor survey conducted face-to-face using Audience Agency questions (173 interviews)

- Feedback from performers and partner case studies

- Media data and other supporting data

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Details of the range of visitor survey analysis undertaken is detailed in Annex 4.



## The 2024 programme

### Saturday 21st September

The activities at The Flag Market on the Saturday ranged from watching fabulous, joyful shows, taking part in a Bollywood Dance workshop, to learning to play a new instrument in the Petting Zoo.

At The Bus Station, the iconic space hosted incredible sights, great sounds and family festival favourites and Magical Story Jars, where visitors could create their own jars with their creative craft activities. Let's Grow Preston also joined in the activities this year with a harvest of wonder.

Outside The Guild Hall featured Preston People's Choir, Hussnain Hanif and The Nasheed Choir, the return of Urooj Qawwal and the Song of Life project led by Stef Portersmith and involving many other Lancashire singing groups.





# INTRODUCTION



There was a total of 13 different acts delivered over 18 performances on the Saturday, running from 11.45am through to the culmination of the Torchlight Procession which started at 7.15pm and fireworks beginning at 9.00pm.

The singing programme, Encounter Voices has run since 2018. This year, the event collaborated with Lancashire's yearlong celebration of grassroots singing, County of Song. "Lights That Lead Us There" welcomed in the autumn with songs of love, longing and light. This included both familiar favourites and new works by composer and choir leader, Loz Kaye. People could take part by joining workshops at The Guildhall in August and September, and with the finale at the festival itself on 21st September.

One of the two new commissions for 2024 was Same But Different; an accessible silent disco DJ'd by The Fat Britney and Matthew Beautyman. It was produced by Blaze Arts Access All Areas producers, a group of young disabled artists led by local theatre maker, Helena Ascough. Same But Different ran from 2.05pm to 3.50pm at The Bus Station on Saturday.

The other new commission for 2024 was accessible all day, both on Saturday and Sunday, where visitors had the opportunity to experience Imitating the dog's Ribble of Dreams installations. Being able to follow a range of wonderful stories around the shop fronts surrounding the Flag Market, this comprised magical story boxes for visitors to peer into for an extraordinary journey through the city.

In the lead up to the procession on Saturday, from 6.30pm, visitors could have a drink and a dance on the Flag Market to DJs Soulhouse Avenue and Buddha, playing soul, reggae and popular music or experience Preston City Centre's pubs and restaurants.

The Saturday night Torchlight Procession and Firework Finale included stilt walkers, drummers and Morris Dancers as the procession made its way into the city centre from Deepdale Road down Church Street and finishing at the Flag Market. Leading the procession was newly commissioned brass band, BRAZEN, which celebrates women brass players. Event organisers had been working with a talented female arranger and a highly experienced female composer to create new music for the group and to share with visitors for the first time.

Torchlight Procession performers also included:

- The Lumens, a stilt duo covered in colour changing fibre optic lights and mirrored suits to reflect and enhance the lights and their surroundings
- Preston City Mela who brought their usual celebration of South Asian arts
- The Caribbean Carnival who brought sounds and wonderful brightly coloured costumes
- Hellfyre Magpie, the fire border morris team
- Rivington North West Morris Dancers
- New for 2024, the procession had some of the best Carnival Morris troupes
- Local dance schools and bands including, among many more; Jenisha Patel's Bollywood Dance School, Worldwide Samba, Jazz Swing Dance, Bay Beat and Cacophony Arkestra





# INTRODUCTION

## Sunday 22nd September

On Sunday, the event was focused in Winckley Square with family shows, a range of food stalls, games and craft activities to fill the day. Including the Invisible Man walking down Fishergate, good music, family games, face painting and henna artists all contributed to the activities. Magical Story Jars were at the event again for the second day for visitors to make their own Preston Lamb.

Starting at 11am, Sunday saw 6 different acts over 12 performances running from 11am into the afternoon.

Formerly 'Best of Preston', 'Best of Lancashire' has been part of Encounter since 2022. Showcasing live, original music from around the county, artists clamour to play under the Victorian Preston Market canopy which provides perfect cover for an outdoor music event. This year, four original bands and four singer-songwriters entertained local music fans at this free event which ran from 1pm-6pm.







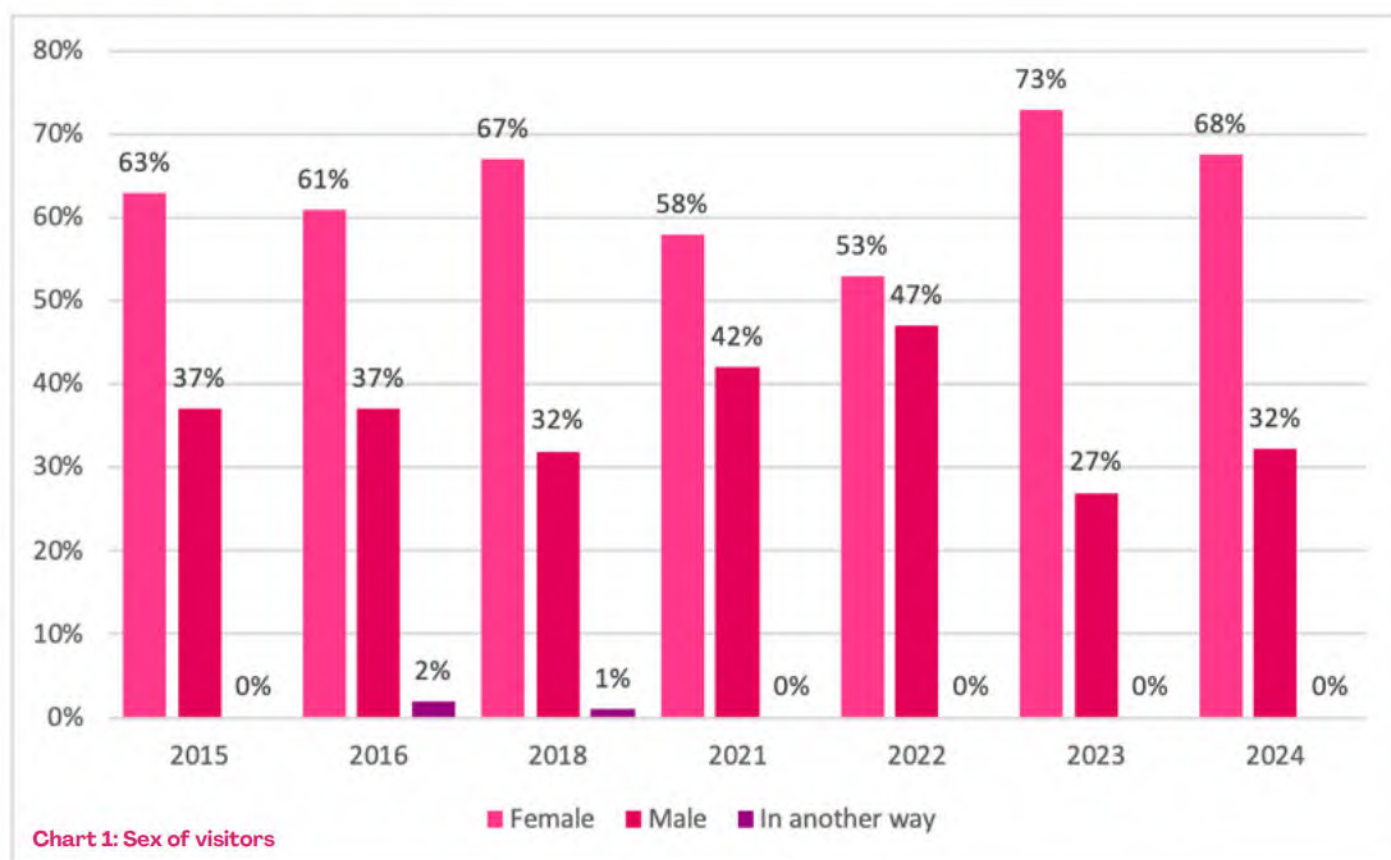
## Introduction

The visitor evaluation in 2024, as for 2023, focused strongly on establishing details relating to visitor profile. The opportunity for comparison with previous years' evaluations is therefore limited.

The sample base of visitors in 2024 was 173 completed interviews, with 113 being completed on Saturday 21st September and 60 interviews completed on Sunday 22nd September. The vast majority of interviews were conducted 11am-2pm (89 interviews) and 2pm-6pm (77 interviews). 6 interviews were conducted 6am-11am and 1 interview was conducted 6pm-11pm.

## Engagement

### Visitor sex and gender identity



Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; 2015 = 125 visitors, 2016 = 359 visitors, 2018 = 337 visitors, 2021 = 149 visitors, 2022 = 166 visitors, 2023 = 199 visitors, 2024 = 170 visitors; 2021, 2022, 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England; NB – Question pre-2023 was asked regarding “What is your Gender Identity” in 2023 and 2024, the question was “What is your sex”

In 2024, 68% of visitors interviewed describe themselves as female, 32% describe themselves as male and 0% describe themselves in another way.

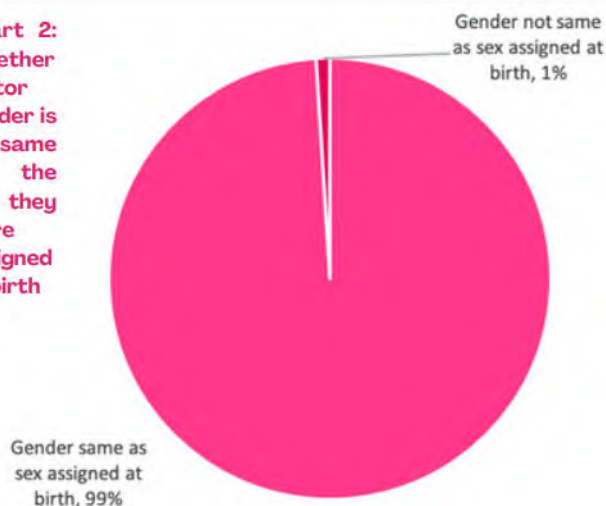
The move after 2022 away from the increase in the balancing of the sex of visitors interviewed has remained in 2024.





# VISITORS

**Chart 2:**  
Whether  
visitor  
gender is  
the same  
as the  
sex they  
were  
assigned  
at birth

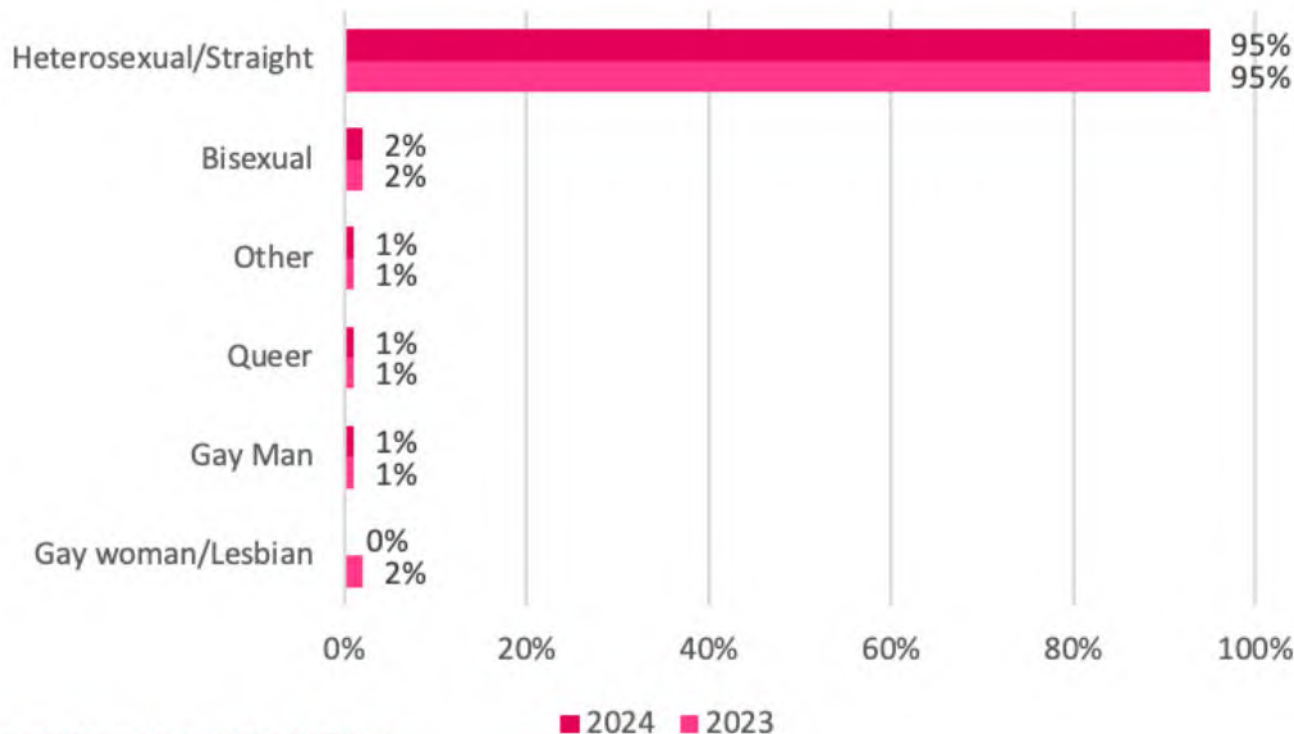


The increase in the proportion of visitors describing themselves as female in 2023 at 73% had followed a previous increase in the proportion of visitors identifying themselves as male, from 32% in 2018 to 47% in 2022.

99% of the 170 visitors who provided a response in 2024 stated that their gender is the same sex as that which had been assigned to them at birth and 1% stated their gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. This is not significantly different to the 100% of visitors in 2023 who stated that their gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response, 2024 = 170

In 2024, 95% of visitors interviewed described their sexual orientation as Heterosexual/Straight. 2% of visitors described their sexual orientation as Bisexual, 1% as Gay Man, 1% of visitors described their sexual orientation as Queer and 1% as Other.



**Chart 3: Sexual orientation of visitors**

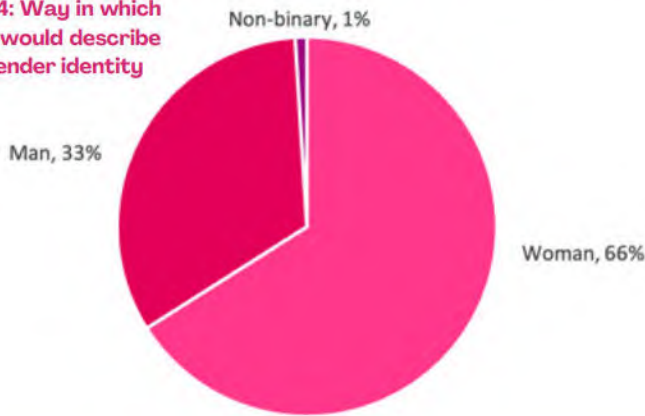
Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; 2023 = 192 visitors, 2024 = 169 visitors; 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England



# VISITORS



**Chart 4: Way in which visitor would describe their gender identity**

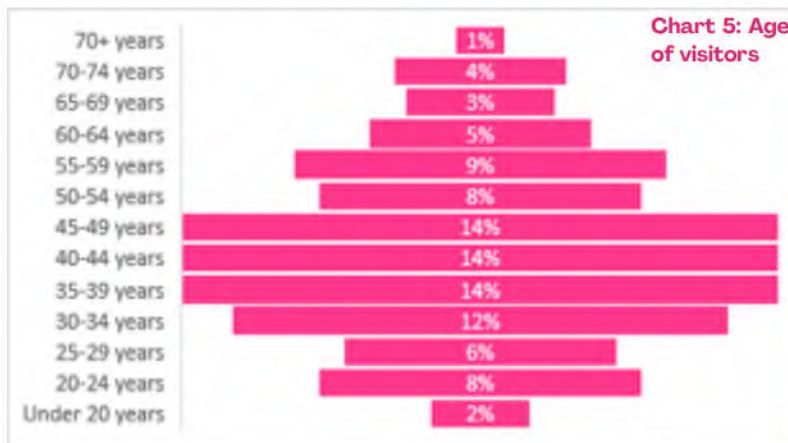


Two thirds of visitors surveyed in 2024 (66%) describe their gender identity as woman, 33% describe their gender identity as man and 1% of visitors describe their gender identity as non-binary.

Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response, 2024 = 171

## Age

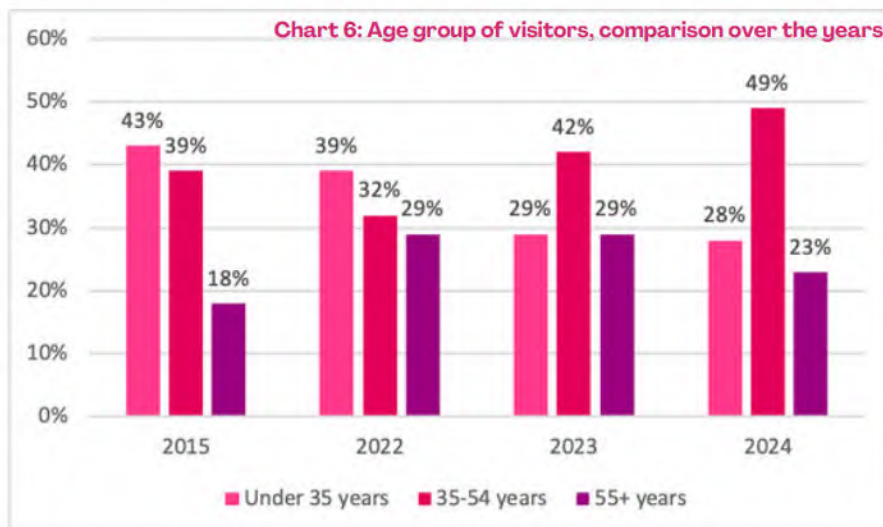
Over one quarter of visitors surveyed in 2024 (28%) were aged 16-24 years of age. Virtually half of visitors (49%) were aged 35-54 years old and just under one quarter of visitors (23%) were aged over 54 years of age.



**Chart 5: Age of visitors**



Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response, 2024 = 172



**Chart 6: Age group of visitors, comparison over the years**



Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; Data for 2022, 2023 and 2024 have been based on combined percentages to match groupings for analysis purposes; 2015 = 127 visitors, 2022 = 166 visitors, 2023 = 201 visitors, 2024 = 172 visitors; 2022, 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England





# VISITORS

Year on year analysis, as detailed in Chart 6, illustrates the move to a higher inclusion of visitors aged 35 years and older. From 57% in 2015 and 61% in 2022, in comparison both 2023 (71%) and 2024 (72%) have experienced a higher proportion of visitors aged 35+ years old.

## Ethnicity

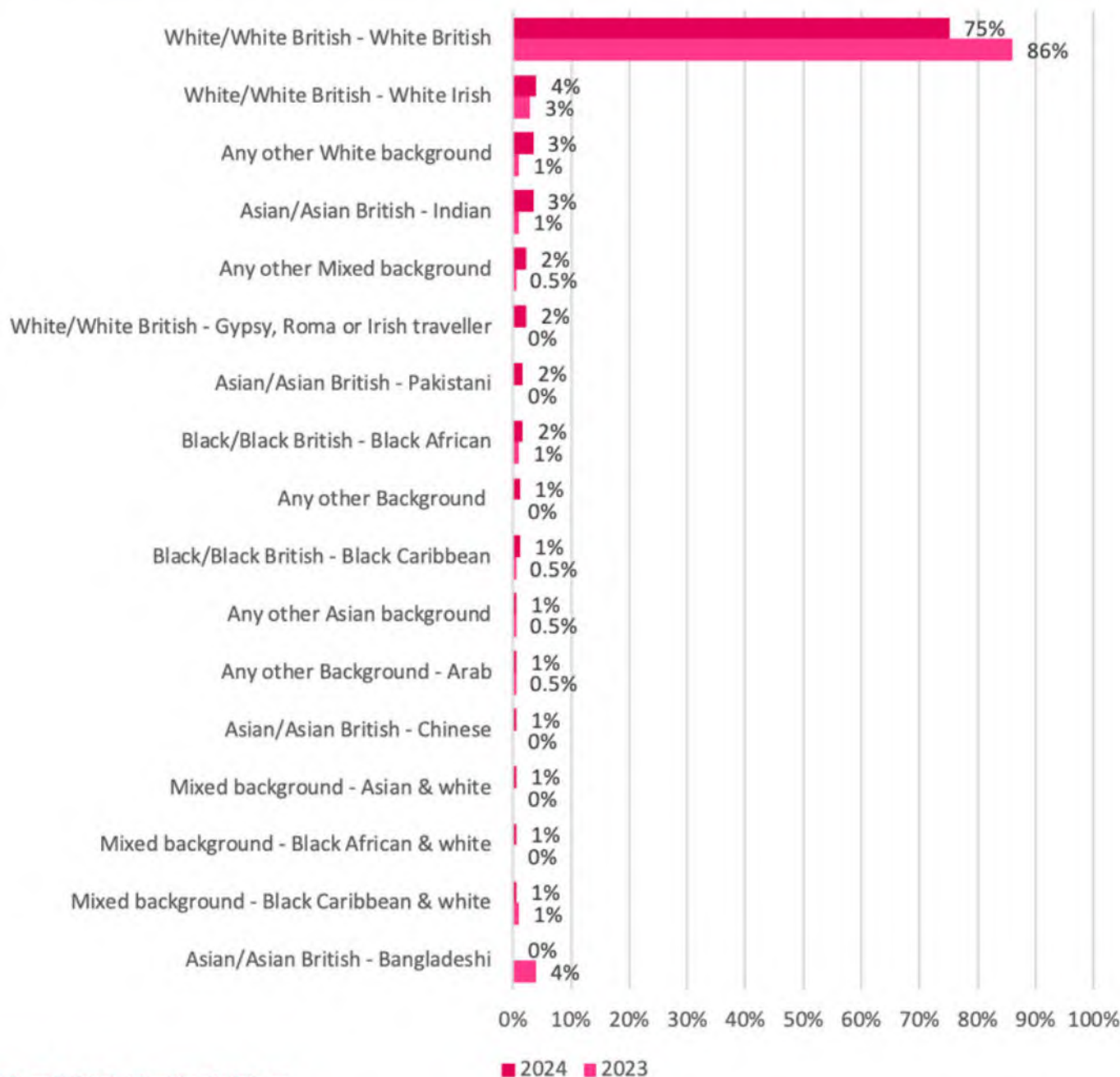


Chart 7: Ethnic identity of visitors

Samples base = single response, all visitors, 2023 = 202 visitors, 2024 = 173 visitors; 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England

In 2024, visitors interviewed represented 16 of the 17 ethnic identities which compares to 2023 when visitors represented 11 of the 17 ethnic identities. There has been a decline in the proportion of visitors surveyed of a White/White British – White British ethnicity, from 86% in 2023 to 75% in 2024.

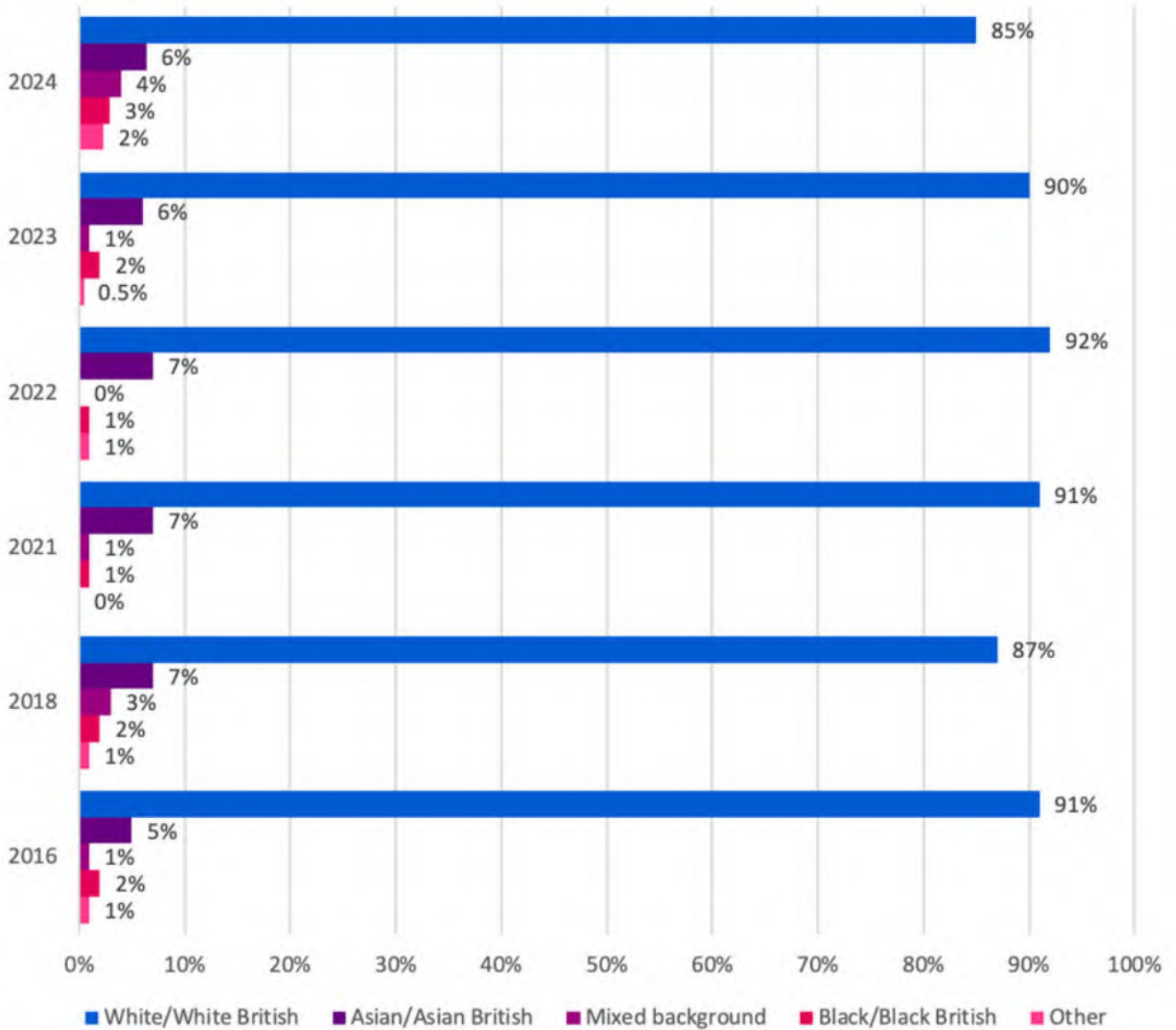


# VISITORS



85% of visitors in 2024 identify their ethnicity as being of a White ethnicity, 6% of an Asian ethnicity, 4% of a Mixed ethnicity, 3% of a Black ethnicity, and 1% of an Other ethnicity.

**Chart 8: Ethnic identity grouping of visitors, comparison over the years**



Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; Data for 2018 and 2023 have been based on combined percentages to match groupings for analysis purposes; 2016 = 363 visitors, 2018 = 337 visitors, 2021 = 150 visitors, 2022 = 165 visitors, 2023 = 202 visitors, 2024 = 173 visitors; 2021, 2022, 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England





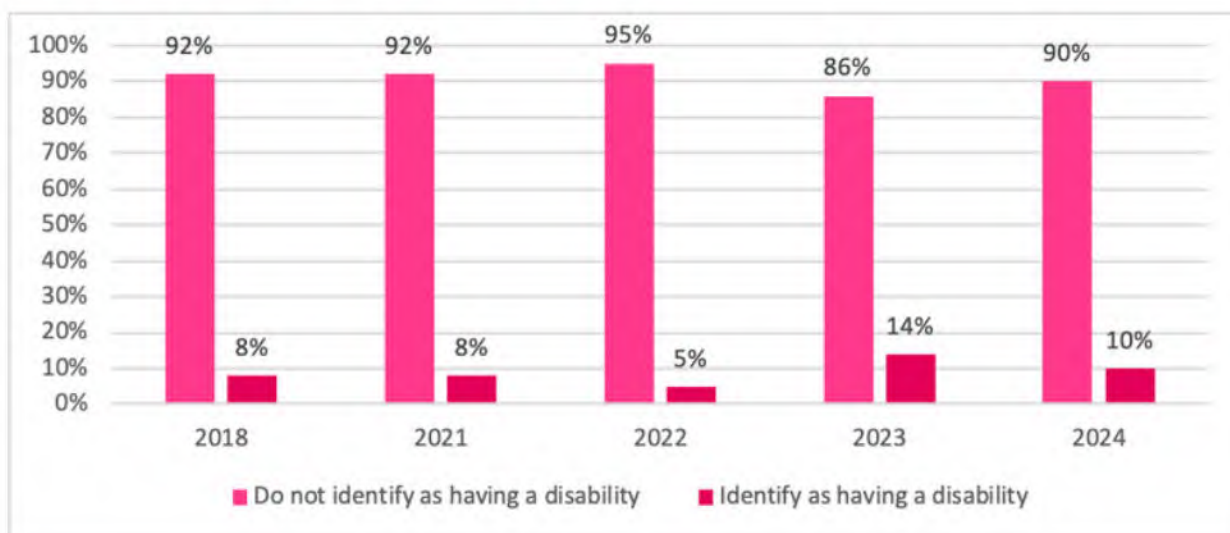


# VISITORS

## Disability identity

Visitors were asked whether they identify themselves as a D/deaf and/or Disabled person, or as having a long term health condition. 10% of visitors in 2024 and 14% of visitors in 2023 identified themselves as a D/deaf and/or disabled person. These proportions are both significantly higher than the proportion of visitors identifying themselves in this way in 2022 (5%).

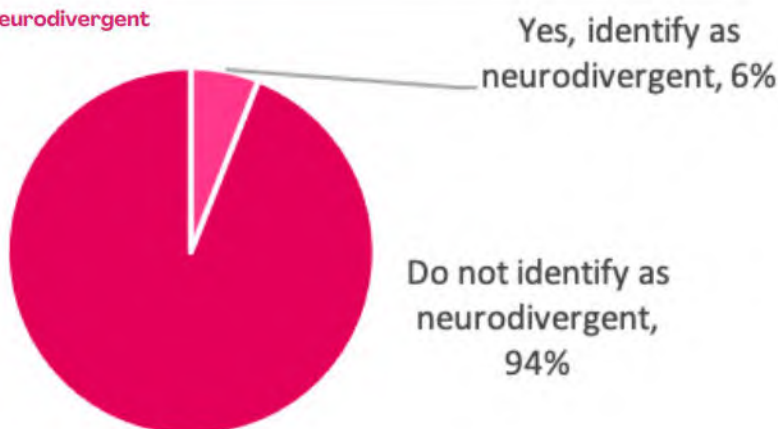
Chart 9: Whether visitors identify with having a disability



Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; 2018 = 331 visitors, 2021 = 151 visitors, 2022 = 166 visitors, 2023 = 195 visitors, 2024 = 171 visitors; 2021, 2022, 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England; Data for 2018 has been based on combined percentages to match groupings for analysis purposes (wording was: Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability – yes limited a lot, yes limited a little and no not limited)

6% of visitors in 2024 identify as neurodivergent, with 94% of visitors not identifying as neurodivergent.

Chart 10: Whether visitor identifies as neurodivergent



Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response, 2024 = 171 visitors

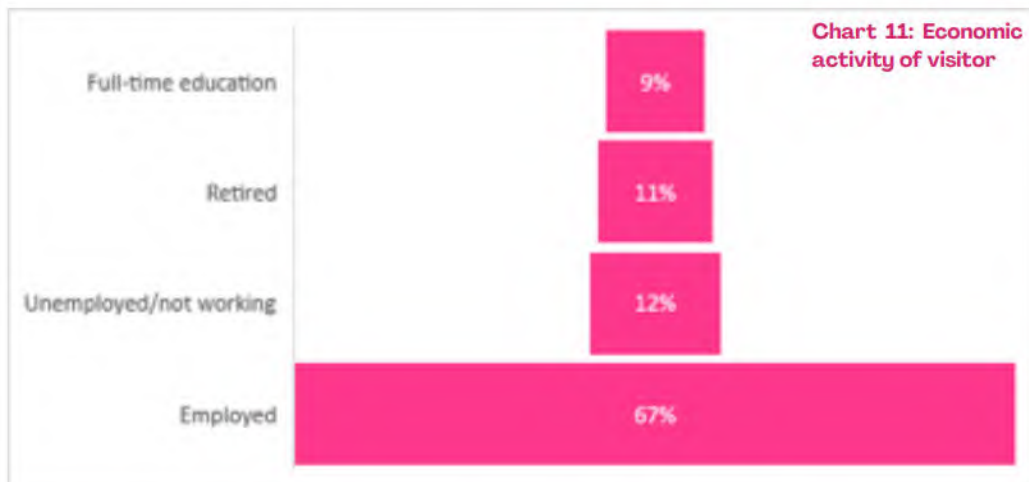


# VISITORS



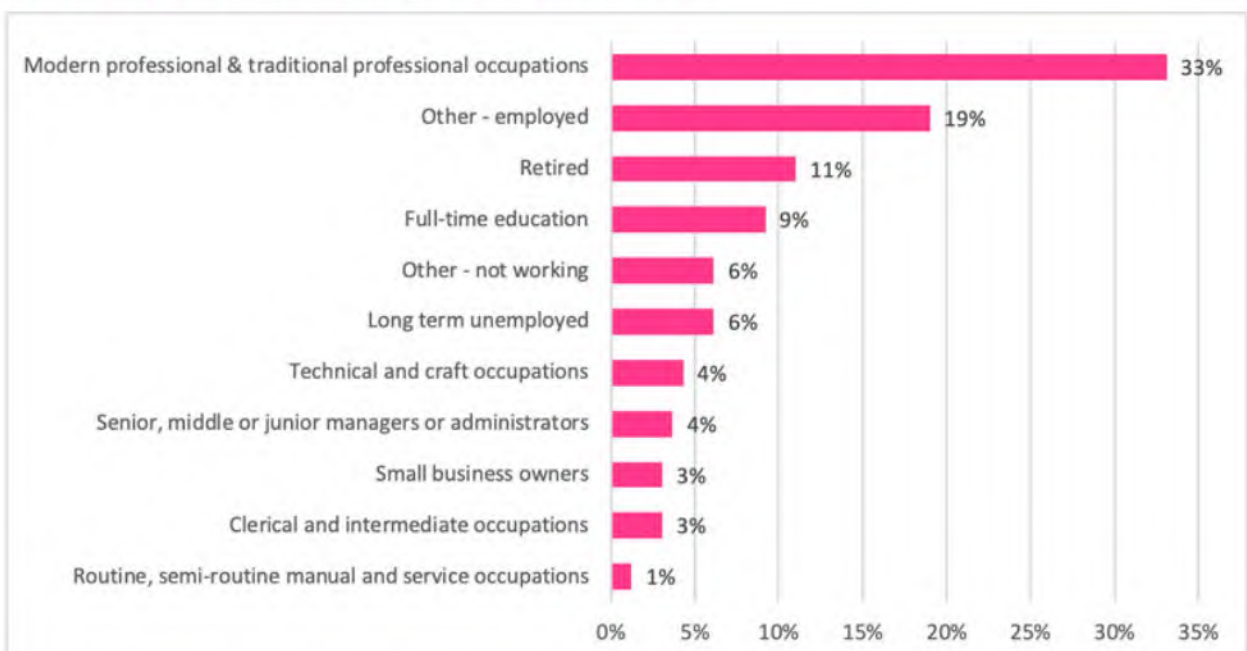
## Economic activity

67% of visitors interviewed are employed, 12% are unemployed/not working, 11% are retired and 9% are in full-time education. 162 visitors provided further detail of their occupation or most recent occupation, with a total of 101 different activities and occupations specified (detailed in Annex 1).



Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response for coding, 2024 = 163 visitors

## Chart 12: Best description of current or most recent occupation of visitor



Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response for coding, 2024 = 163 visitors



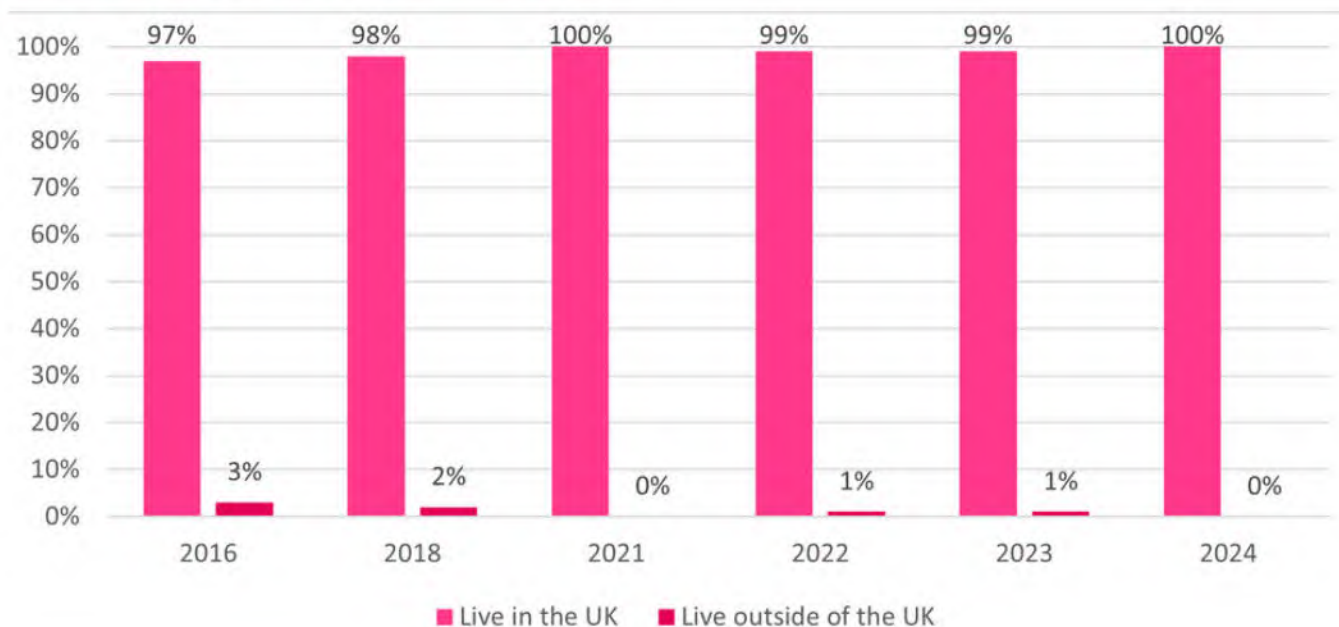


# VISITORS

## Visitors from outside the UK

All (100%) of visitors to Encounter Festival in 2024 reside within the UK and 0% reside outside of the UK. This representation of visitors from outside of the UK to Encounter Festival is in line with the overall representation of previous years' visitors.

Chart 13: Residency of visitors within and outside of the UK



Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; 2016 = 335 visitors, 2018 = 340 visitors, 2021 = 151 visitors, 2022 = 180 visitors, 2023 = 192 visitors; 2024 = 173 visitors; 2021, 2022, 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England

## Place of residency

Just over half of visitors in 2024 (54%) live in Preston (defined as living in the postcodes of PR1, PR2 or PR3) with 35% living in PR1, 13% living in PR2 and 5% living in PR3.

Just under half of visitors (46%) are from outside of Preston in 2024, with 28% from another PR postcode and 18% from a postcode other than PR.

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of visitors to Encounter Festival from outside of Preston. In 2024, 46% of visitors were from outside the postcodes of PR1, PR2 and PR3 which compares to 35% of visitors in 2023.

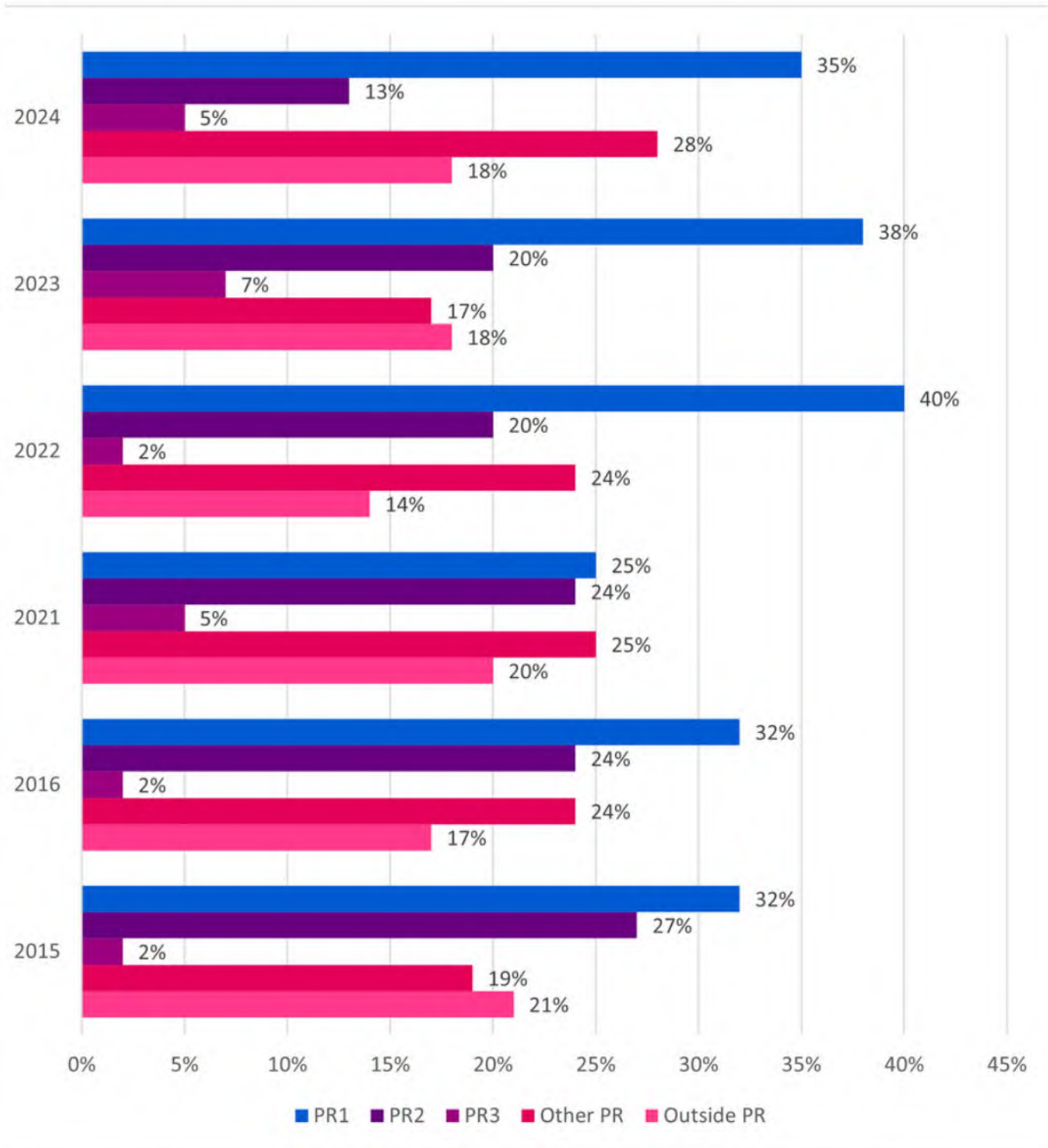
This increase in the main is represented by the increase in the proportion of visitors from a PR postcode other than PR1, PR2 or PR3, which has increased from 17% in 2023 to 28% in 2024. The proportion of visitors from a postcode other than PR has remained the same at 18% of visitors in 2024 and 18% of visitors in 2023. Further postcode details are provided in Annex 2.



# VISITORS



Chart 14: First part of home postcode of visitor



Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; 2015 = 124 visitors, 2016 = 335 visitors, 2021 = 150 visitors, 2022 = 179 Visitors, 2023 = 191 visitors, 2024 = 171 visitors; NB – Data used for the above analysis is all of the provided postcodes (in comparison, data used for The Arts Council Audience Report in 2022 is based on the sample of 148 postcodes which could be used for postal sector analysis)





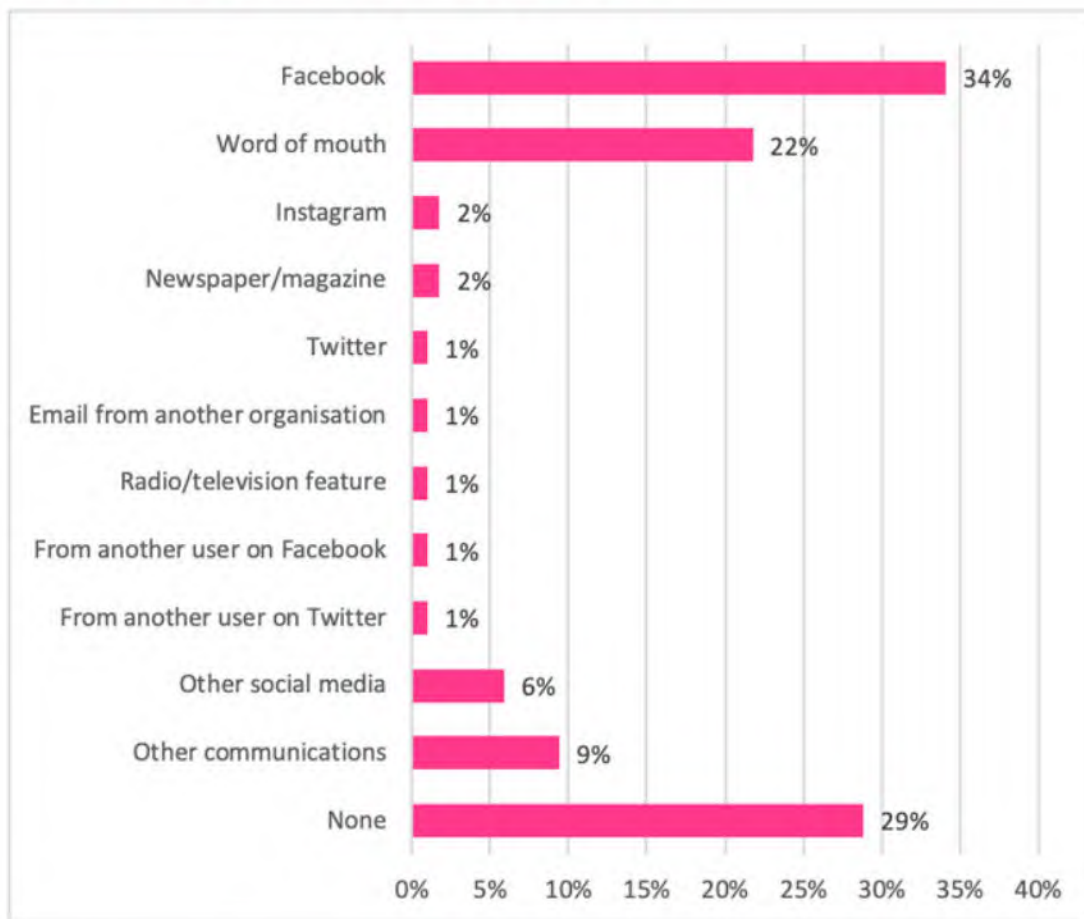
# ATTENDANCE

## Source of awareness

71% of visitors surveyed had seen or heard about Encounter Festival prior to their visit.

Facebook is significantly the main source, with just over one third of visitors (34%) stating they had seen or heard about Encounter Festival on Facebook prior to their visit. Word of mouth (22%) is the second main source of awareness prior to the event. All other pre-coded individual sources were identified by 1% or 2% of visitors.

Chart 15: Where visitor had seen or heard about the event prior to their visit



Sample base = multiple response, all visitors who provided a response, 2024 = 170 visitors





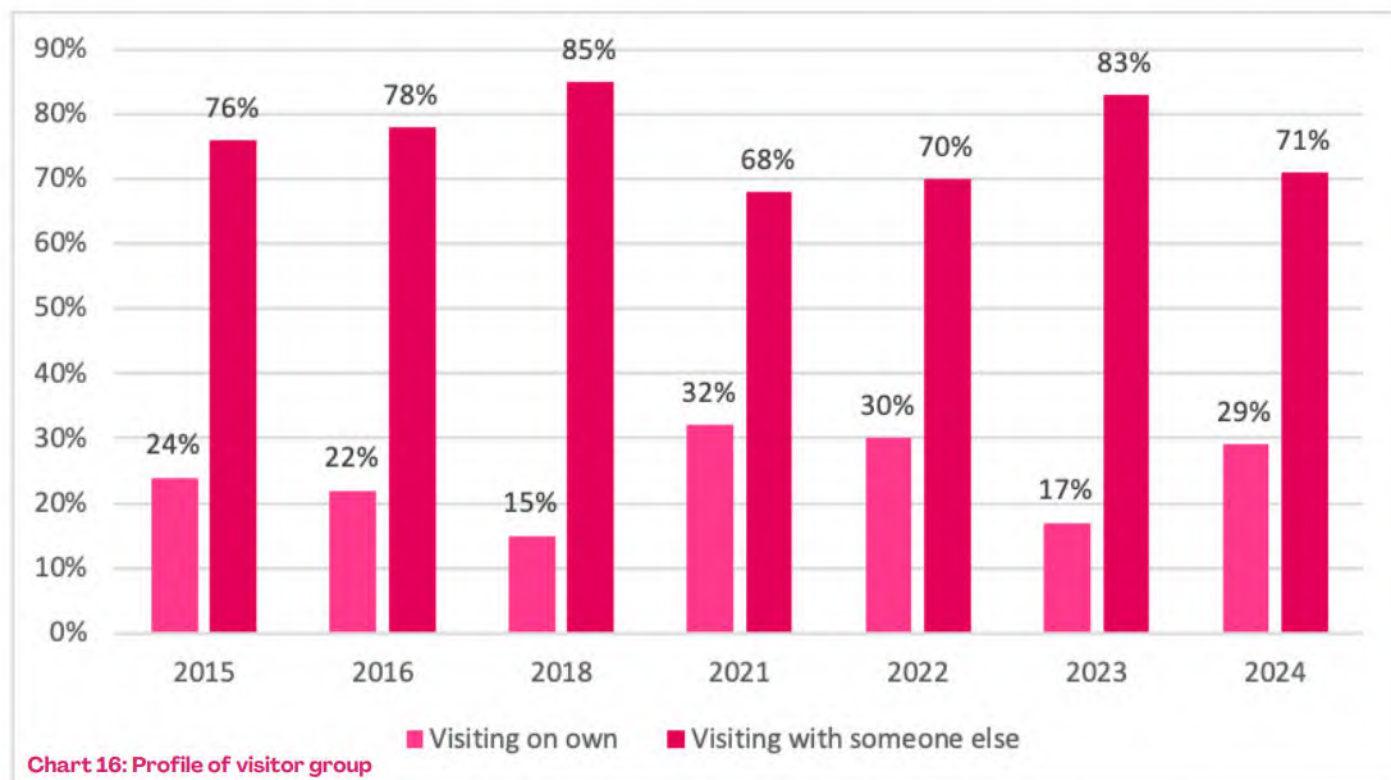
# ATTENDANCE



## Profile of visitor group

71% of visitors in 2024 attended Encounter Festival with someone else, with 29% attending on their own.

Visitors in 2023 (83%) are more likely to have visited with someone else than visitors this year in 2024 (71%) and visitors in both 2022 (70%) and 2021 (68%).



Sample bases = single response for each year, all visitors who provided a response; 2015 = 123 visitors, 2016 = 359 visitors, 2018 = 340 visitors, 2021 = 148 visitors, 2022 = 180 visitors, 2023 = 201 visitors, 2024 = 173 visitors; 2021, 2022, 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England

Of the 172 visitors who provided further details of their visitor groups, 121 visitors attended with someone else and 51 visitors attended on their own.

A total of 306 visitors attended with respondents.

Including the respondent, the groups of the visitors surveyed totalled 478 people, an average of 2.8 people per visitor group. Regarding the average number of visitors per age range for each visitor group:

- 0.2 visitors aged 0-4 years per visitor group
- 0.6 visitors aged 5-11 years per visitor group
- 0.1 visitor aged 12-15 years per visitor group
- 1.9 visitors aged 16+ per visitor group



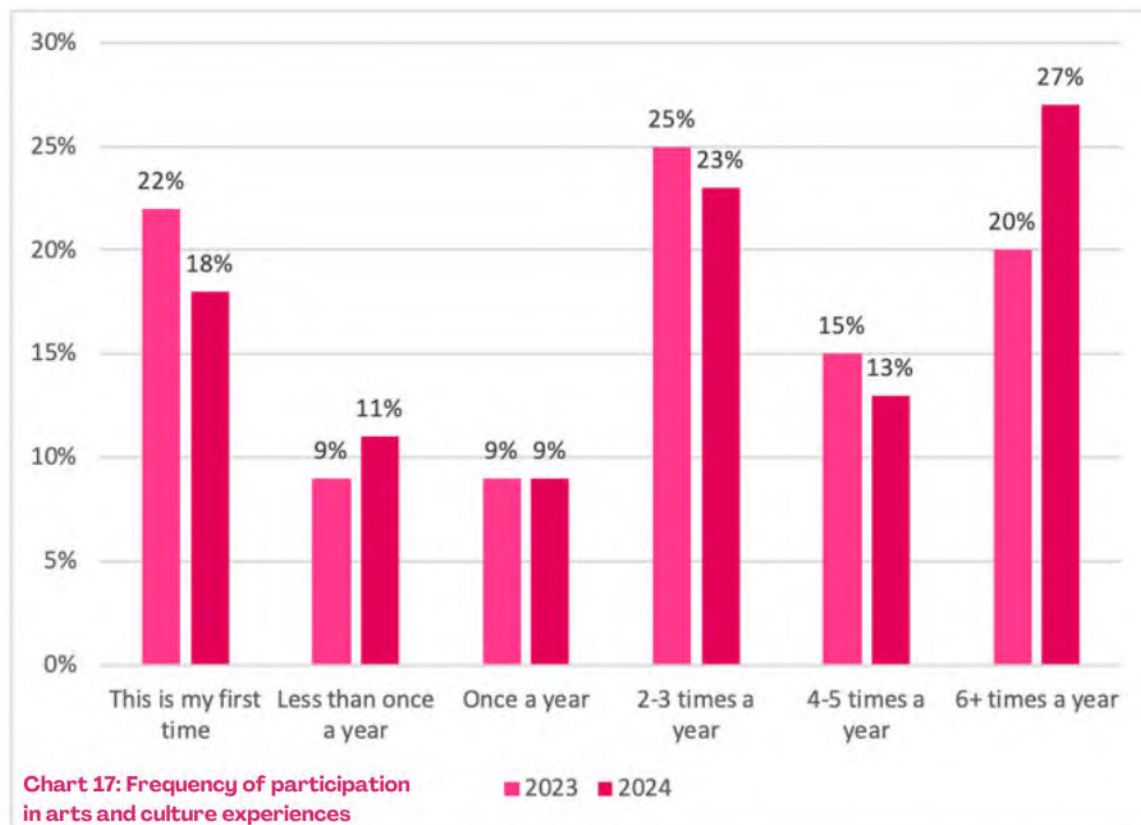


# ATTENDANCE

Number of accompanying visitors within profiles / respondents	Yes - accompany respondent	No - not accompany respondent	Total no. accompany respondent	Respondent no.	Total visitor numbers
No one	51	121	0	51	51
Aged 0 - 4 years	25	147	38	0	38
Aged 5 - 11 years	40	132	98	0	98
Aged 12 - 15 years	13	159	13	0	13
Aged 16+ years	95	77	157	172	329
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>478</b>

Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response, 2024 = 172 visitors who provided visitor group details

## Frequency of participation in arts and culture experiences



Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response; 2023 = 197 visitors, 2024 = 173 visitors; 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England

Visitors in 2023 and 2024 were asked how often they attend or participate in arts and culture experiences. By this, it was explained, are online or in-person activities produced by arts organisations, museums and/or libraries, such as exhibitions, performances, literature events, gigs, festivals, creative participation, etc.



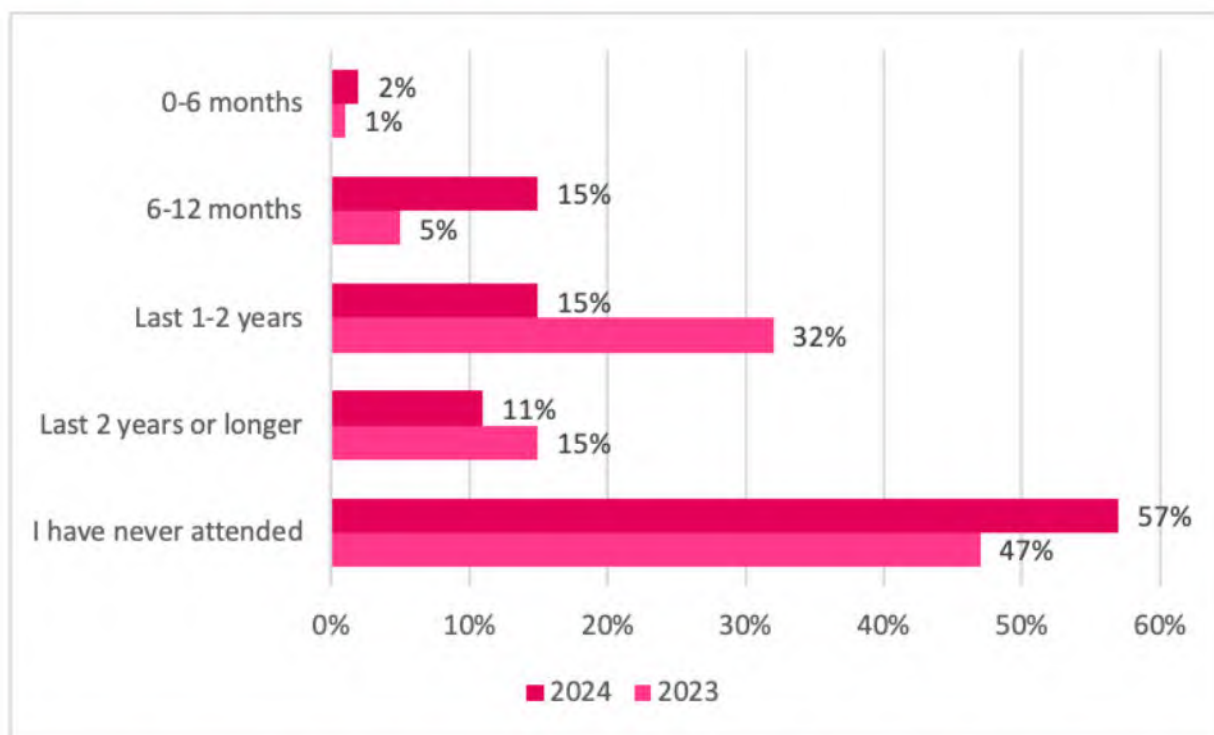
# ATTENDANCE



82% of visitors have participated in previous arts and culture experiences in 2024, and for 18% of visitors surveyed in 2024, Encounter Festival was their first experience.

62% of visitors in 2024 attend or participate in at least two arts and cultures experiences a year, with 23% participating 2-3 times a year, 13% attending or participating 4-5 times a year and 27% of visitors participating 6 or more times per year.

**Chart 18: Time since visitor last attended this/an NTO event**



Sample base = single response, all visitors who provided a response; 2023 = 76 visitors, 2024 = 169 visitors; 2023 Analysis: Arts Council England; NB: 2023 category = Last 2-3 years; 2024 category = Last 2 years or longer

In 2024, 57% of visitors surveyed had never attended this/an NTO event previously. This compares to 47% of visitors surveyed in 2023.

43% of visitors surveyed in 2024 had visited this/an NTO previously. 17% of visitors have attended in the last 12 months, 15% within the past 1-2 years and 11% have attended 2 years or longer ago.







# PERFORMANCES

## Case study with Helen Thackray, Director, Blaze Arts



### Background to involvement with Encounter

Blaze provides young people with the opportunity to lead creative projects, and from this benefitting from gaining confidence, developing their creativity and learning transferable skills. Activities cover a varied range of art forms, and Blaze has always been involved with festivals. Blaze works alongside local communities and partners.

*Blaze is a youth led arts organisation, we work across Lancashire and our priority is giving young people the chance to lead creative projects, the benefits of that is for them to develop their confidence, their creativity, and those transferable skills that come from taking responsibility, having to manage a project and taking something through from an idea to it happening. Our projects are really varied and we try as much to respond to people's interests, things they want to do, all different art forms. We work in lots of different communities and with different partners, so Blaze doesn't have a venue, but is rooted in the community*

*Blaze does have a history of having young people getting involved in festivals. The first Blaze project back in 2012 was a youth led festival in Preston where the whole event was organised by young people. Over the years, Blaze has done a number of festival programmes and I think festivals provide a great opportunity for young people to learn about production of events*



# PERFORMANCES



## Motivation for involvement

Blaze had delivered the first phase of the production of Access all Areas in 2023. This had had a significant impact on the young people involved, and they were keen to have the opportunity to take the work forwards. Blaze were approached by Esther, and this generated both the opportunity to move forwards with the work from 2023, and the opportunity for young disabled people to produce part of the Encounter Festival in 2024.

*I knew about Encounter Festival, I'd worked with Esther in the past. We'd done a project the previous year called Access all Areas which was young adults who all identified as disabled and we started by doing some workshops with them, bringing them together and a chance to explore their shared interests. We took them on some trips, we took them to a museum to see an exhibition about disabled people's rights and the history of campaigning for disability rights. That group decided they wanted to produce an exhibition in Preston which happened last year. At the end of that we had some amazing feedback from the young people about the impact that project had had on them, and they were eager to do more and take the next step*

*It was around that time that Esther then approached me about Encounter Festival and whether there might be an opportunity for Blaze to work with them, and that's when we said it would be really nice if we could build on the work we'd done with Access all Areas and give young disabled people the opportunity to produce part of the festival*

## Activity

The idea of the silent disco was initiated by young people themselves who had freedom over the activity they wanted to organise and produce. With their priority being access and inclusion, much discussion had been held around music events, which can generate a range of barriers to inclusion. Producing an inclusive music event addressed the accessibility and inclusivity focus; championing access. It was an event that would attract different ages and bring different people together to enjoy music, and showcase the capabilities of the young people.

*Amazing that a festival of that scale is in Preston, to be part of that was an amazing opportunity*

*It was what the young people wanted to do (a silent disco), they had complete freedom, and it was brilliant that Esther really opened it up and let them decide what they wanted to organise, produce. Before Encounter Festival we took them on a research trip to the Festival of Making in Blackburn, somewhere where there was a similar festival that had different activities and different parts, different age groups, lots of diverse programming. They went along to that to see what festivals looked like and to get some ideas*





# PERFORMANCES

*For the group, their priority is about access and inclusion, and the group had talked about in the earlier project, music events and often how they can be very challenging or not accessible for disabled people, whether that's venues not being wheelchair accessible, or for people who are neurodiverse, can be overwhelmed by the noise and lighting at music events. That was something they talked a lot about and the idea of this event grew; that we put on a silent disco that can be a more inclusive and accessible music event. They also thought it was something that would work for different age ranges and could bring lots of different people together to enjoy music as part of the festival*

The development of the young people's production skills was supported by a research trip to Blackburn's Festival of Making, the Encounter Festival Producer attending sessions with the young people to talk about how she goes about producing the event and a session with an Access Consultant.

*Young people getting the chance to develop their production skills, event organising skills, project management, all of those things. They got that through Esther coming in and talking to the group. She did a few sessions about how she goes about producing the festival*

*They wanted to champion access in the arts more and so we introduced them to an Access Consultant who did a session for them to explain their career and how they work with organisations to improve their access*

*They talk a lot about wanting to champion people's rights, but also to challenge perceptions of disabled young people, they want to show what they are able to do and what they can contribute. Doing that gives them a real confidence boost and it connects them, as often these young people can feel quite isolated*

## What worked well for 2024

The freedom for young people to decide on their own production was significant in the process and activity. Support was provided in the form of communication of the process and its requirements, and in providing what was needed by the performance.

*Esther's openness was really beneficial, the fact that she was really open to the young people deciding what they wanted to programme; that was brilliant. They did set out clear deadlines of when things needed to be organised in terms of marketing and things like that. Just really supportive, provided everything we needed, in that they had the right key ready and everything. They liaised with us about what we needed to deliver. It was a really good process*



# PERFORMANCES



## What could be improved for 2025

The main challenge which Blaze faces in working with any production is balancing the need for structure from the perspective of the production and the flexibility required in working with the young people. Partner organisations being aware of the difficulty in achieving this balance, along with any potential to allow for flexibility, helps support working towards this balance.

*It's the same challenge that we face on all of our projects because of the nature of them and that is obviously when you're producing a huge event like Encounter Festival there has to be a lot of structure and strict deadlines, things have to happen at certain times. When you're working with a group of young people, all young people can be quite inconsistent at times, particularly with a group of disabled young children who are often, because of health reasons and other factors, may not be able to get to sessions or can't be there at those deadlines, there can be a bit of a challenge in how to bring those together*

*You're working as part of this big process which can't be flexible and with a group that really needs a lot of flexibility and being able to navigate that is always a challenge on all of our projects*

*Some of those crucial points, there might not have been as many young people in the sessions as we would have liked, then you have to try to keep them up to speed and speak to them outside of the sessions to ensure they know what is happening*

*I think it's just awareness, just being as flexible as possible and I do think Esther was good, and we did have that conversation early on, I predicted it as I know it is always the case. Every organisation we work with, I try and stress it at the start but the earlier we can know key dates and if there is any wiggle room is good to know; but Esther was really good and the Encounter Team were great in working with us*

## Blaze contribution

Blaze brought a new and engaging experience to the festival. The silent disco brought in 143 visitors of all ages, ranging from those who wanted to enjoy the music to those intrigued by how the technology worked. The event generated joy for those who took part in this unique event.

The silent disco achieved its aim in showcasing access and inclusion through its engagement. It also promoted the "same but different" theme.

The performance also promoted a positive side of young people. The young people had taken the time and effort to produce and deliver an event to be enjoyed by everyone which was held next to the bus station, a venue traditionally associated with antisocial behaviour.





# PERFORMANCES

*Just something that was youth led and what I really loved to see being there on the day was the range of ages that came and took part in the silent disco and just the joy that everyone seemed to be experiencing, it was lovely to see. Everybody coming into the tent and seeing these young people doing this positive thing and creating this thing that everyone else could enjoy*

*It's interesting that our marquee was just outside the bus station in Preston which a lot of people talk about the bus station and talk about antisocial behaviour and young people. This is something that is on the rise at the moment around young people and town centres and negative perceptions and experiences; so to see a group of young people outside the bus station; they've organised this event for other people to enjoy it, I think that's what they brought to the festival*

*Also introducing people to new experiences, a lot of people who came into the tent said; "I don't know what a silent disco is", and had never experienced one and were quite fascinated. We had some people who came in who were really interested in the technology and how it worked and others who loved the music and just wanted to dance*

*There were other activities going on in the tent as well, so we had some artwork on display and the young people had come up with this strapline which was; "Same but Different" and wanted everyone to think about that we might be all different, but at heart we're all human and have the same experiences. The very simple way they communicated that was a big canvas and asking everyone to put their handprints on, and that again was a good opportunity for people to engage*

*Just having these positive interactions with a group of disabled young people*

## Encounter contribution

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Encounter provided both the practical contribution of developing skills and learning in event production and also the contribution of increasing young people's self-confidence in being part of the activity itself and the opportunity to engage with a wide audience.

*Confidence and increasing their sense of value and purpose, young people can be very isolated. You could really see a change in their confidence, it gave them something to build on, a real confidence boost*



# PERFORMANCES



*To be part of something with that profile just really gives them such a confidence boost, and they learnt so much more about putting on art events in a different setting of that scale and things they need to think about. They learnt about interacting with different ages, engagement and activity*

*In terms of Blaze, we get from it what the young people get from it, as an organisation it's all about that. We always focus on the impact on the young people than the final outcome of the project*

## Going forwards with Encounter

Blaze and the young people are keen to continue their involvement with Encounter Festival and to be part of the event again in 2025. The development of longer term relationships allows for the young people's productions to grow and develop.

Encounter Festival is an amazing opportunity in Preston and could benefit young people with an interest in the arts.

*Definitely, it would be brilliant (to be involved again with Encounter Festival). I always think longer term partnerships are much better and it gives us that chance to build on it and improve, once we've done it once*

*I know the young people are really keen, they'd like to do a lot more around accessibility and inclusion, and for them to learn more about how festivals of that scale are put together and how access is considered and how can it go even further and what else can be done. They'd love the opportunities to get involved in those conversations*

The precise involvement would be fund dependent and the activity dependent upon what the young people would like to work on. It is felt they would like to move forward and try something different; to enjoy the process of developing a new idea.

*For us it's always funding dependent, we got grant funding alongside the Encounter Festival and so we would have to source funding for us to be able to work in partnership*

*It would depend if we were working with the same young people, I think it would have to be a conversation with them on whether it would be a silent disco again or whether they want to do something else. I've a feeling they would probably want to do something else, to try something else, they enjoy that process of having a new idea and developing that*





# PERFORMANCES

## Encounter going forwards

There is the potential for Encounter Festival to support young people who are interested in the arts as a career. This could be activity such as providing a traineeship, work experience, talking at colleges and universities or holding day sessions where young people can see the production activity behind the scenes. The knowledge and experience which Encounter Festival could impart would provide information and practical experience for young people.

*From our point of view it's how cultural events provide an opportunity for young people to pursue pathways into the industry, not just disabled young people, it is a very difficult sector for young people to get into, and how to start and build up that experience, particularly for young people from backgrounds who have historically been excluded from the arts or face barriers to getting involved; so I'd love to see a more intensive trainee programme or internship. Even if it was just for one young adult who could be part of the process from the beginning and learn and develop their experience. It might be a graduate or might be someone at college, who is really interested in this as a career and who would have that opportunity to get that training, get that experience*

*I know lots of areas are doing similar programmes and there is a lot of success. Anything Encounter can do, whether it's a whole big traineeship or some one-off events working with colleges and universities, whether it's a talk or a day session where they can come and see behind the scenes and understand as to how production works or get some work experience. Anything like that could be woven in. Not just with Blaze but other youth partners and education partners in the area*

*It's an amazing opportunity in Preston and it would a shame if more young people in Preston couldn't learn from it and use it as a stepping stone*





# PERFORMANCES



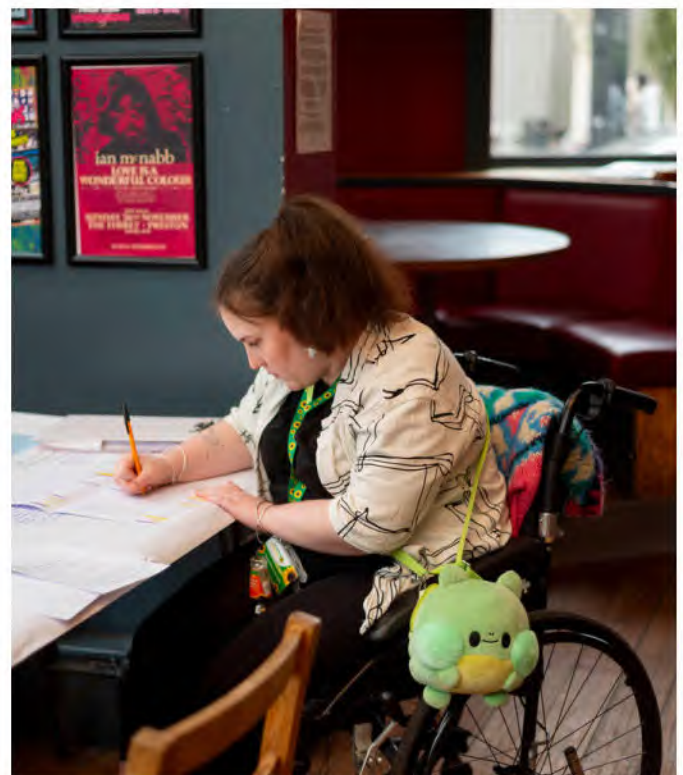
## Community

Whilst being unaware of the range of community involvement which Encounter Festival currently undertakes, early involvement and communication with a range of community groups support community involvement with such events.

*I don't know enough about what is done. I know a lot is done that isn't visible, it's hard to say what could be done more, as they've engaged with us as a community group, a partner, and I know the procession they have lots of community groups and things. I imagine, it's the same with all cultural events, the earlier the better you can engage in dialogue with community groups and start by talking and listening and finding out what might be of interest to them; how they might like to get involved, and whether that can lead to diversifying the programme further or giving community groups the opportunity to co-create elements of it; the way we've done*

*It was a really positive experience and I think it's an important event in Lancashire, particularly in the South and East area of Lancashire, I think it's really important that it happens every year and I hope we can work with them again*

<https://blazearts.co.uk/>







# PERFORMANCES

## Case study with Victoria Collins, Programme Producer, Motionhouse



### Background to involvement with Encounter

This was the company's second visit to Encounter Festival, having previously performed their show *Captive* in 2019.

Pioneers of outdoor dance, Motionhouse are one of the UK's busiest touring companies and perform their repertoire of outdoor shows across the globe. The company's distinctive, highly physical style integrates elements of circus and acrobatics with breath-taking dance to surprise and delight audiences.

This summer, Motionhouse brought their flagship outdoor show, *WILD*, to Encounter Festival. Using the powerful physicality distinctive to Motionhouse, *WILD* creates an urban forest in the everyday of the city. Performers use dynamic choreography, acrobatic movement and hand-to-hand partnering to move through a forest of tall poles, which forms the striking set for *WILD*. From the top of the pole, life in the canopy looks down onto the forest floor – a dangerous world of unknown meetings.

### Motivation for involvement

Motionhouse creates and tours a wide repertoire of inspiring and powerful dance-circus productions to theatres and festivals in the UK and internationally. The company engages and inspires as many people as possible with its touring. Working with Encounter Festival they reached audiences in Preston, which is in a region of the UK where they do not regularly have the opportunity to tour to.

***One of the greatest things about performing our work outdoors is how accessible it is to audiences. They're able to watch performances without having to buy a ticket. As there's no cost to watch the show, it breaks down barriers to engagement and so we can reach far more people, including people who may not usually engage with the arts. At Encounter Festival we performed at Preston Bus Station; there was so much footfall and people who might not have originally intended to watch a performance had a fantastic opportunity to experience world-class dance for free, right on their doorstep, in the heart of the community***



# PERFORMANCES



## Activity

Motionhouse performed their acclaimed show, WILD, twice on Saturday 21st September to a fantastic response from audiences. After each performance, the dancers met audience members, and other members of the company handed out feedback cards to find out what audiences thought of the show:

- 'Exceptional piece of outdoor theatre. No words.'
- 'I loved it! Beautiful movement and great storytelling. STRONG PEOPLE'
- 'Excellent - I've seen you before and the physicality is amazing. Good to see you in Preston'
- 'Clever ideas, amazing physicality, clever use of audio and dare I say a moral message. Fantastic!'
- 'Was mesmerising to watch, amazing upper body strength. I could watch 1,000 times over.'
- 'I just watched it, and it was amazing. The whole group's trust is wonderful. The Acro and everything else were genuinely moving; you could feel the emotion of each move. The stunts were also outstanding. Well done to the whole group.'
- 'Excellent! Really enjoyed it. It was exciting, gripping and fun.'
- 'Astounding strength and grace. What a brilliant performance.'
- 'Amazing... unpredictable. Tremendous spectacle.'
- 'Absolutely bloody fantastic. Best show ever been to in years + FREE'
- 'It was terrifyingly brilliant. Loved it.'
- 'By far the best show of the day/night. You guys are crazy'
- 'Incredible, very engaging. Great at keeping the audience involved and interested'
- 'Incredible! So exciting, graceful and captivating. Your skills are amazing and I look forward to seeing you again.'
- 'It was great. I was immersed in the performance. I liked the music and acrobatics'

## What worked well for 2024

From Encounter Festival booking the show through to the performances, the whole process was smooth and supportive.

*It went really smoothly from start to finish. I really appreciated that Esther from the Encounter Festival team kept me updated while she was programming the festival. I appreciated her openness during our conversations, and it was really useful to know from the start that we would be performing at Preston Bus Station plaza. It's a perfect location for WILD, and it's always exciting to be able to visualise where we're going to perform. The whole Encounter team was really supportive and organised throughout*

The response from audiences is testament to the success of the shows. Audiences were captivated and immersed in the performance.

## What could be improved for 2025

Motionhouse had no suggestions for improvement and emphasised how much they enjoyed performing at Encounter Festival and working with the festival team.

## The contribution of WILD to the festival

Audiences were immersed in WILD and the performance engaged with people who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience live performance free of charge near to where they live.

The benefit to the audience can be seen in the amazing feedback the company received both in their in-person conversations and in the feedback cards distributed after the show.





# PERFORMANCES

*I'd like to think WILD showed people something they hadn't seen before. Perhaps it introduced them to a new artform. I hope it inspired people to start dancing or attend dance performances in the future*

## How Encounter supported Motionhouse's goals

Encounter enabled Motionhouse to engage with an audience in a part of the country where they often do not have the opportunity to tour and offered an inspiring location for the performances of WILD to take place.

## Encounter going forwards

*Encounter Festival is a great platform, it's a fantastic festival in Lancashire and we would love to return in the future. We have a wide repertoire of shows and it's always great to revisit festivals and engage with their audiences over the years*

The company have a wide range of outdoor shows touring each year and would like to return to Encounter Festival in the future. In addition to their performances, the company have an excellent reputation for delivering workshops, residencies and projects, and their team work with people of all ages and abilities. The company would love to explore delivering workshops alongside performances at Encounter Festival in the future.

Motionhouse dancers have also delivered inspiring Curtain Raiser projects with young people at festivals in the past, which have proved to be a fantastic way of further engaging the community. These Curtain Raisers have involved Motionhouse working intensively with a local group to create a short performance, which happens immediately before Motionhouse's own show. The group have the incredible opportunity to perform in front of the same audience as the professional Motionhouse company. This is something the company would also be interested in exploring with the Encounter Festival team in the future to further develop their engagement with audiences in Preston.



[www.motionhouse.co.uk](http://www.motionhouse.co.uk)



# PERFORMANCES



## Case study with Abhinandana Mk, Torchlight Procession Participant, Preston City Mela



### Background to involvement with Encounter

Preston City Mela is a South Asian organisation which produces an annual Mela in Preston. Encounter provides the opportunity for local artists to come together and Preston City Mela has been part of Encounter for eight years.

*Preston City Mela has been involved with Encounter for eight years, it is a South Asian organisation which organises a Mela every year for 2-3000 people. It's like a fair where we have daylong performances, organisations which come to display what they have on offer for the South Asian community, and it also integrates the other communities in Preston, like the Chinese Confucius, Worldwide Samba Drummers, and we have celebrity artists performing who are touring the UK. We're getting bigger and better and just in July we had our Mela on Moor Park*

*Straight after we got to know the date of the event [Encounter] I contacted my organisation as a team, it's a beautiful opportunity for a lot of artists to come together. After that we contact a few artists, vibrantly visually performance wise, and community wise all come together to perform their work*





# PERFORMANCES

## Motivation for involvement

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Preston City Mela's prime motivation for involvement with Encounter is the opportunity to represent the South Asian community through illustrating the cultural, social and wider contribution the community brings to Preston.

*The most important aspect is representation, representing the South Asian community which is quite a prominent community in Preston; to put ourselves forward and show the contribution we are making culturally and society wise as well to the bigger picture of Preston. When you see the procession, this is quite a diverse group and you can also make out that it's very different to how the others dress and present themselves; it is a unique presentation. Mainly it's to represent the South Asian community*

## Activity

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Preston City Mela brings a range of different contributors to be involved in the Encounter Torchlight Procession. Many local artists, including Bhangra dancers, folk dancers, Bollywood children dancers and the South Asian Choir Group, were involved in this year's Torchlight Procession.

*This year we had about 50 offers for participating and presenting different art forms through the procession. We try and include the local artists who are not very well known but who are very good with their art; they all came together and we had a procession*

*We had the Bhangra dancers with their instruments leading the procession, followed by a ladies' group who did folk dancing; stick dancing and we used light up sticks to match the torchlight theme. We had close to about 25 children who are very well known in Preston, they do Bollywood dancing and they danced throughout the procession. We had the South Asian Choir Group who participated. So we had traditional dance groups, modern dance groups and the music group as well. We had a lot of parents supporting us in the procession, holding a lot of unique artifacts with the fairy lights and lamps and with a boom box showing what South Asian music is like, throughout the procession*

## What worked well for 2024

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It was felt that Encounter 2024 was in some way special – that it had a silver lining. The social media was vibrant and drove the event well. The coverage of the festival on social media, Facebook and Blog Preston was an encouragement for the parade's participants.



# PERFORMANCES



The visual elements of The Harris, the laser show and fireworks made an impact, with the event supported by good weather.

From a participant's perspective, Preston City Mela was kept well informed in the run up to the event.

*This year's Encounter was somehow special, it was really good. I think the social media side of it was vibrant, the whole light up, the fireworks were good, the laser show after the procession was amazing and I kept looking at all that was happening on social media, and I think the way it was driven on social media was really good*

*This time Encounter festival had a silver lining. The laser lights outside The Harris were beautiful, the build up to the event the day before and the day after were quite interesting. We always look forward to the photographs that come just after the event on social media, on Facebook and Blog Preston, and it is very encouraging for the participants to see themselves represent their community*

*The weather was amazing this year which made such a huge difference, we had dry and beautiful weather*

*Working up to the event, all the information given to us was very useful. We knew what was going to happen through the past experience and also through the communication through the co-ordinator and Esther herself; she's very good at letting us know what is going to happen and how we can present ourselves*

## What could be improved for 2025

It was felt that there was very little to improve on, with the only mention being the logistics of performers being dropped off at Moor Park rather than closer to the event.

*We have to get dropped off at the beginning of Moor Park and we had plenty of huge sticks with lanterns we could have off loaded and used them, but because the cars had to stop at the entrance we didn't get to use as many as we would have liked. It's a very minor thing but I think it could be worked around. There's nothing else, it's all very well managed, and we are used to how it runs*





# PERFORMANCES

## Contribution

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Preston City Mela brings high quality local performers to Encounter; entertainers from a range of different communities who showcase the contributions they make to art and performance. In turn, Encounter provides Preston City Mela with the opportunity to represent the South Asian community through integrating with mainstream performance.

*Mela brings a rich, diverse aspect of Preston to Encounter, it also brings very high quality talented performers who exist in Preston, to highlight their existence in Preston and also to showcase how entertaining and how enriching these artforms can be, and how well they can integrate as the performers were going into the audience, talking to them, making them dance and involving them, it was very vibrant*

*Mela does a lot of outreach sessions, performances in the community but being integrated in the mainstream is a wonderful opportunity which Encounter provides to the South Asian community. Being able to be a part of the mainstream performance team or a procession representing the community is a wonderful opportunity*

## Encounter going forwards

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Encounter is part of Preston City Mela's annual agenda and they will be participating again in 2025. If it would be possible to cover a wider geographical area with some of the performances, this would help to bring the event to a larger area.

*We would love to do that, that is one thing that is always there in our annual agenda, we always discuss Encounter, to be able to participate with Encounter*

*Most of the performances and acts have been towards the town centre; there is a bit of a silence on the Fulwood side, if you are able to take a few performances out to maybe Penwortham, Hutton and Fulwood; it is a little more widespread and the audiences from that side of the City are also aware of how beautiful this event is*

There is the opportunity for Encounter to undertake more outreach activity by visiting communities over the year to promote Encounter and to let communities know how they can be involved and take part. More active engagement, such as with the Preston Gujarat Hindu Society, would both increase the exposure of Encounter and provide more opportunity to engage and involve other communities.



# PERFORMANCES



*We have a lot of small communities which exist in Preston, I think a quick meeting with them well before the event to involve and include Encounter festival in their agenda as well and to spread the word among their groups. WhatsApp groups are so prevalent, so popular, and let them know about what is going on and let them know how they can get involved in Encounter and giving them a few options. For example, I work at the Preston Gujarat Hindu Society and we have three to four main major events which attract close to a thousand people so that could be an occasion where you could speak about Encounter, spread leaflets or information, and how we can involve people*

[www.facebook.com/prestoncitymela/](https://www.facebook.com/prestoncitymela/)







# MARKETING & PROMOTION

## Case study with Eleanor Ghebache, Marketing Officer, Preston City Council



### Background to involvement with Encounter

Preston City Council works with Encounter on a continual basis; once one year's festival has finished the City Council start working on the following year. The evaluation from the previous year plays a significant role in informing the marketing and communications activity.

*We work all year round to promote engagement and all the brilliant acts and community groups that are involved in the festival. We have started planning for next year, which will be Year 10 of Encounter Festival*

### Motivation for involvement

Encounter is one of Preston City Council's art festivals. It meets the Council's aim of encouraging inclusion and community involvement with arts events; engaging with groups and individuals who might not normally be involved with the arts. Encounter supports Preston City Council's aim for communicating and integrating with communities and individuals.

*Each year, Encounter is Preston's large scale outdoors art festival, and we work all year round in trying to encourage engagement and promote all of the acts involved*



# MARKETING & PROMOTION



*Encounter provides a really good opportunity to display free arts and culture to the people of Preston; it really does help to reach the different audience groups, especially those from a lower socio-economic background, to provide an introduction to live performance, arts, culture and music. Positioning it slap bang in the City Centre is really good for that outreach engagement as well*

## Activity

Year round marketing activity is undertaken using social media and the website to generate engagement, build brand awareness and promote the date of the festival. The ongoing marketing aims to both generate and maintain awareness over the year. Marketing activity for 2024 supported the rebranding of the festival.

*We work all year round; managing the Encounter social media channels and website, so throughout the year before the festival dates in September, we build brand awareness and engagement on those channels to keep the message of Encounter in people's minds*

*Also, this year we went through a rebranding process, so we've got all the new branding in place, bringing further brand awareness for this year, including more out of home campaigns, visual ads and other marketing campaigns*

Further marketing activity in the form of designing the programme and supporting billboard and banners is undertaken to support the festival itself; making the festival's presence known in the City.

*It's a whole range of activity, as we get closer to the festival dates we have the programme, then we design, print and distribute, begin our large-scale marketing campaigns, create billboard ads, and this year we've had street banners in key footfall areas, to enhance the festival presence in the City as we get closer to the festival dates*

## What worked well for 2024

Preston's good transport links were used as a mechanism to promote the festival further afield. Ambitions are both to increase footfall and extend the reach of the festival, with the findings from the evaluation informing the following year's marketing activity to support this.

*Preston has excellent transport links, we've got the bus station and the train station, we've already gathered evaluation feedback from attendees who've come from Burnley and further afield. Each year one of our main ambitions is to drive more footfall and I think this year, with learning from the evaluation from the year before, it's really put us in a good position to grow the festival year on year*





# MARKETING & PROMOTION

The Torchlight Procession worked very well in 2024. There was a conscious move to integrate the evening's procession into the daytime activity; to provide an ongoing flow of activity. In previous years, there was a gap between the two which created a lull before the Torchlight Procession. Providing entertainment in the form of DJs and bars outside of The Harris between the daytime activities and Torchlight Procession provided a continuation and focus of activity. Previously this has been experienced on the Sunday in Winckley Square and was something which has been proactively and successfully addressed this year for Saturday.

*What worked particularly well was the Torchlight Procession. Usually there is a bit of a gap between the programmes in the day and the Torchlight, as it doesn't start until the evening, but this year, The Flag Market outside The Harris, right in the centre of town, had DJs playing and hosted a couple of bars. The area had a bit more of a nightlife feel to it, there were floodlights and lasers. The gap between programming was filled quite nicely, for people to go and have something to eat in the city centre or stay around and wait for the procession to come through. I think the year before it felt like there was too much of a gap, but this year everyone was there and ready for the procession and fireworks – it created a good atmosphere*

## What could be improved for 2025

The evaluation from the previous year's festival strongly influences the direction and focus of the following year's marketing activity. The growth strategy and decisions on where to most effectively focus resource and budget is decided in January following consideration of the evaluation findings.

*A key improvement we incorporate year on year would be analysing the evaluation from the previous year and trying to identify where people have heard about the festival and then putting more resources into that venture next year. Our growth strategy begins at the start of the year in January having taken on board the evaluation and where best to spend the budget and put the resource*

Further engagement with, and involvement from, the community would further support the focus of the festival. Increasing involvement with other community events over the year could help to develop awareness and involvement. Increasing involvement, especially with participation in the Torchlight Procession, could be supported through Encounter's attendance and presence at other events over the year; making it a two way involvement.

*A key strand is the community work which goes on year-round. It would be good, where possible, if there was the resource for some more popup events throughout the year so the activity wasn't so concentrated on the festival dates. Perhaps have a presence at other community fairs and festivals throughout the year and then hopefully that would help from a marketing point of view to get the community engaged early so we can capitalise on word-of-mouth marketing*



# MARKETING & PROMOTION



*There are other events throughout the year, but it would be good to maybe increase that. Especially because a lot of the Preston community groups are present in the Torchlight Procession, such as the Caribbean Carnival and Preston City Mela, who each have their own festival, so it would be good to be involved*

## Contribution

Preston City Council contributes to Encounter in the form of personnel resource, funding, process support and marketing.

*It's funding, Preston City Council's Cultural Services Team, the Executive Producer and the Admin Assistant, and all of us working together to cover the whole range of the festival; marketing, operations, business development, health & safety, programming, it all comes together*

Encounter directly supports Preston City Council with its aim of community involvement and empowerment. The festival directly reaches and engages with community groups, providing access to arts and culture.

*Encounter is a really good example of the Council's aims, such as community empowerment, platforming artists, bringing free arts and culture to the City, building an opportunity for Civic Pride, and also sharing ownership of the key events, such as the Torchlight Procession, with the community getting involved*

## Encounter going forwards

2025 will see the tenth Encounter. As their event, Preston City Council will be involved and envisage the tenth year being an ambitious event.

*It's the tenth year next year, so it will be a big year for the festival, Encounter Festival was brought in to bridge the gap between Preston Guilds as they're once every twenty years and provide an arts and culture offer in between. Each year we are trying to grow the ambition*

Further developing the reach and engagement of the festival is an ongoing aim; to increase audience numbers. Learning from the evaluation is a key contributor to future activity.





# MARKETING & PROMOTION

*From our perspective, building on the reach and engagement from this year's festival to increase the growth in terms of audience figures and online presence for next year. Learn from the evaluation, build on the reach and then drive more engagement on the run up to the festival are the three key areas I'll be focussing on for the next Encounter Festival*

Encounter could be more involved in community activity over the year, such as having a presence at other community events. This could be a key way to further engage with the community and hard to reach audiences.

*I just think being a direct part of the other communities' festivals, perhaps having a stall with information and a chance for people to sign up to the procession or to hear their ideas on how they could contribute would be a good idea moving forward. Especially the groups who are in the procession, as a lot of these community festival audiences throughout the year could be deemed as hard to reach groups, so it would be helpful in reaching a new demographic or a different style of audience*

<https://www.preston.gov.uk/>

## Rebranding

Encounter Festival had undergone rebranding for 2024.





# REACH & ENGAGEMENT



**The total reach achieved in 2024 was over 1 million, at 1,290,982.**

The majority of this reach, 80%, was generated by the Central Radio Campaign. 13% of reach was generated by Facebook posts. The reach of the Facebook posts at 169,035 is over six times the reach of the Instagram posts at 26,718. The reach of the Encounter website at 29,198 is 75 times greater than the reach achieved from the Visit Preston webpage reach, 387.

**Table 1: Encounter Festival 2024 reach**

Source of reach	Number	% of total reach
Central Radio Campaign reach	1,032,665	80
Facebook posts reach	169,035	13
Total social media ad reach	31,647	2.5
Encounter Festival website reach	29,198	2.2
Instagram posts reach	26,718	2.1
Creative Tourist campaign reach	1332	0.1
Visit Preston webpage reach	387	0.03
<b>Total reach</b>	<b>1,290,982</b>	<b>100</b>

*Data source: Preston City Council social media report*

The total engagements achieved in 2024 is 10,378. The largest proportion of engagements was generated through Facebook posts (70%), with 16% of engagements generated through Instagram posts and 14% of engagement through social media ads.

**Table 2: Encounter Festival 2024 engagement**

Source of engagement	Number	% of total reach
Facebook	7269	70
Instagram	1630	16
Social media ads	1479	14
<b>Total engagements</b>	<b>10, 378</b>	<b>100</b>

*Data source: Preston City Council social media report*

## Facebook

There were a total of 156 Facebook posts running from 20.02.24 to 24.09.24. These posts generated a total reach of 169,035, 7269 engagements and 1105 clicks. This generates an average reach of 1084 per post, an average of 47 engagements per post and an average of 7 clicks per post.



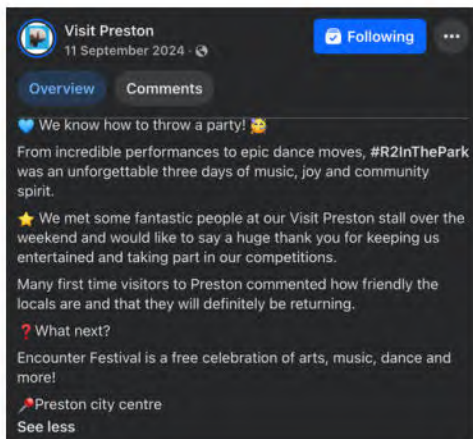


# REACH & ENGAGEMENT

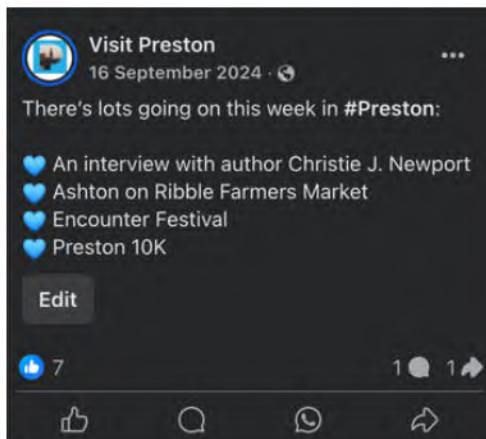
## Three posts achieved a reach of over 10,000:



Reach: 23,254

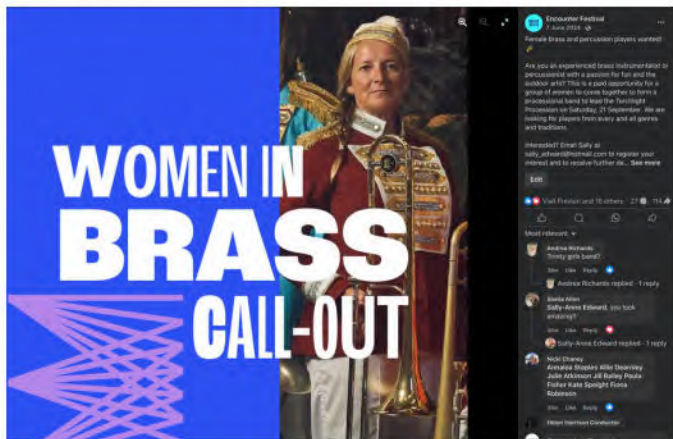


Reach: 18,604

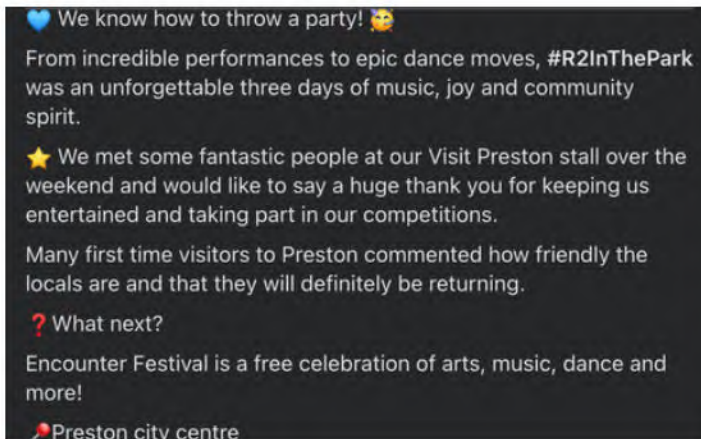


Reach: 13,320

## Two posts achieved over 1000 engagements:

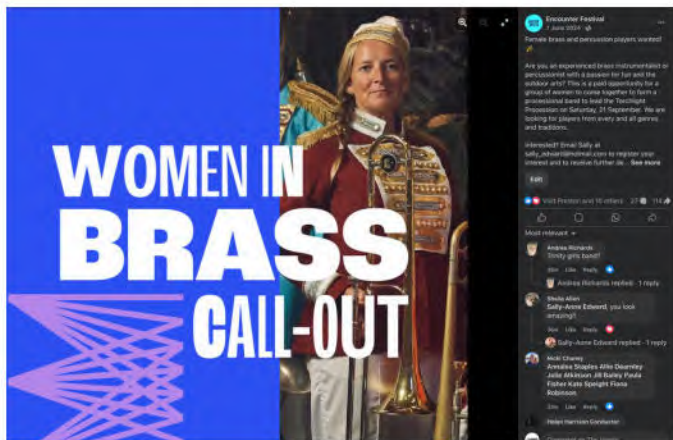


1192 engagements

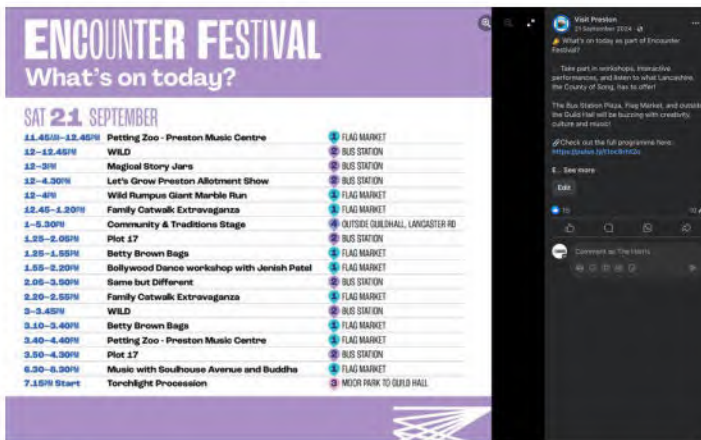


1033 engagements

## Two posts achieved over 100 clicks:



141 clicks



139 clicks



# REACH & ENGAGEMENT



The 156 Facebook posts in 2024 is around four times the number of 38 posts in 2023. The total reach of 169,035 in 2024 is 91% higher than the total reach of 88,595 in 2023. The average reach per post in 2024 however of 1084 is 53% lower than the average reach in 2023 of 2331.

The total number of clicks of 1105 in 2024 is virtually the same as for 2023, 1103. The average number of clicks per post in 2024 however at 7 is 76% lower than the average of 29 clicks per post in 2023.

**Table 3: Facebook analysis: 2023 and 2024**

Facebook analysis	2023	2024	% change 2023 - 2024
Number of posts	38	156	+311
Total reach	88,595	169,035	+91
Average reach per post	2331	1084	-53
Total clicks	1103	1105	0
Average clicks per post	29	7	-76

Data source: Preston City Council social media report



## Instagram

There was a total of 85 Instagram posts from 1.01.24 through to 24.09.24. These 85 posts generated a total reach of 26,718.

Three posts achieved a reach of over 1000:



Reach: 1500



Reach: 1313



Reach: 1313

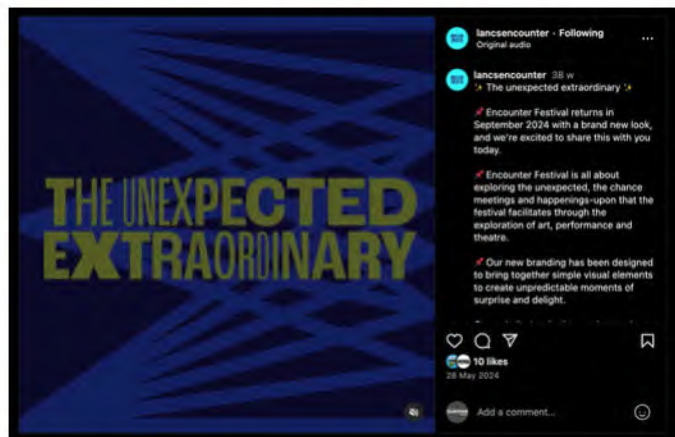




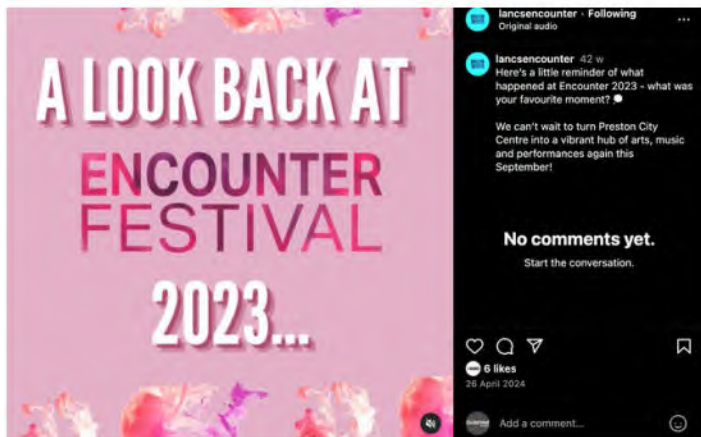
# REACH & ENGAGEMENT

A total of 1630 engagements were achieved from the 85 posts, generating an average of 19 engagements per post.

## Two posts achieved over 100 engagements:



510 engagements



153 engagements

The 85 Instagram posts in 2024 is a 143% increase on the 35 Instagram posts in 2023. The 2024 reach of 26,718 is a 69% increase on the reach of 15,785 in 2023. The average reach per post in 2024 however at 314, is 30% lower than the average reach of 2023 at 451.

Table 4: Instagram analysis: 2023 and 2024

Instagram analysis	2023	2024	% change 2023 - 2024
Number of posts	35	85	+143
Total reach	15,785	26,718	+69
Average reach per post	451	314	-30

Data source: Preston City Council social media report







## Detail of current or most recent occupation of visitors

Occupational detail	Number of visitors
Student	13
Retired	8
Teacher	8
Civil servant	5
Engineer	5
Home maker	4
Never worked	4
Unemployed	4
Carer	3
Not working	3
Self-employed	3
Teaching assistant	3
Accountant	2
Bus driver	2
Doctor	2
Graphic designer	2
Nurse	2
Pharmacist	2
Police	2
State pension	2
Support worker	2
Unemployment	2
Agent	1
Artist	1
Assistant accountant	1

Occupational detail	Number of visitors
BAE	1
Barber	1
Bid writer	1
Cafe	1
Cafe manager	1
Care assistant	1
Catering assistant	1
Charity	1
Charity corporate fundraiser	1
Charity organisation	1
Charity shop worker	1
Charity worker	1
Cleaning company	1
Cleaner	1
Cleric	1
Clerical officer	1
Cocktail bar attendant	1
College manager	1
Compliance	1
Council worker	1
Craft maker	1
Debt collector	1
Designer	1
Disabled	1
Employed	1





# ANNEX 1

Occupational detail	Number of visitors
Foster carer	1
Ground worker	1
H&S	1
Head teacher	1
Health worker	1
Highways engineer	1
House association	1
IT	1
Kitchen porter	1
Letting manager	1
Local government officer	1
Manager	1
Mature student	1
Mechanic	1
Medical science	1
Mental health services	1
Musician	1
None	1
Nursery nurse	1
Nursery teacher	1
Office manager	1
Outreach worker	1
Post office	1
Private cleaner	1
Production manager	1
Public health	1

Occupational detail	Number of visitors
Retail manager	1
Retail sales	1
Retired cook	1
Retired footballer	1
Retired nurse	1
Retired nursery staff	1
Sales	1
Sales assistant	1
Sales director	1
Scaffolding	1
School administrator	1
Senior carer	1
Shop worker	1
Shop owner	1
Social worker	1
Solicitor	1
Speech therapist	1
Sports worker	1
Student support	1
Supervisor	1
Technical / craft occupation	1
Traditional performance	1
Welfare assistant	1
Welfare officer	1
Window fitter	1
Youth worker	1



## Postcode detail of visitor

Postcode detail	Number of visitors
PR1	60
PR2	23
PR4	20
PR5	16
PR3	9
PR25	5
FY8	3
PR6	3
LA2	2
PR7	2
BB10	1
BB2	1
BB6	1
FY1	1
FY2	1
FY3	1
FY4	1
FY6	1
FY7	1
G43	1
L1	1
L40	1
L8	1
LA1	1
LA4	1

Postcode detail	Number of visitors
LA5	1
LA9	1
M14	1
M20	1
M21	1
OL14	1
OL4	1
OR1	1
PR26	1
PR9	1
WA4	1
WN2	1
WN6	1







# ANNEX 3 & 4

## Annex 3: Press links

- [Creative Tourist: Encounter Festival in Preston](#)
- [Preston City Council: Encounter Festival Announces Spectacular Torchlight Procession for 2024](#)
- [The Lancashire Evening Post: Preston's Encounter Festival set to light up city with spectacular Torchlight Procession for 2024](#)
- [Creative Tourist Newsletter, 30 August 2024](#)
- [Preston City Council: Encounter Festival 2024 Unveils Community and Traditions Stage and Commissions Programme](#)
- [The Lancashire Evening Post: 35 fun-filled pics as Lancashire Encounter Festival returns to Preston with dancers and dragons](#)
- [Blog Preston: In pictures: Preston city centre torchlight procession for Encounter Festival](#)
- [Blog Preston: In pictures: Encounter Festival's 'wild' performance outside Preston Bus Station](#)
- [Blog Preston: Winckley Square road closure as Encounter Festival brings family day to the Square](#)
- [Central Radio: Encounter Festival lights up Preston with arts and music](#)
- [The Lancashire Evening Post: 21 fabulous pictures as crowds soak up the atmosphere from the Encounter Festival in Preston](#)
- [Lancashire Evening Post: 54 colourful pictures of Preston's inspiring Pride Festival celebrating the city's LGBTQ+ community](#)

## Annex 4: Range of analysis undertaken on primary survey data

Where available, data from previous years has been included within the 2024 evaluation. Testing for significant differences has been calculated based on the difference between whole percentage responses using a confidence level of +/-90% where one or both percentages being compared is 5% or higher. Any change referenced within the report therefore relates to a "significant change" rather than any insignificant difference in percentage responses.

Visitor survey data has been provided based on the nearest whole percentage point, except for data lower than 0.5% which has been provided to 1 decimal place. For the purposes of analysis, where data has been combined, this is based on recalculating the raw data based on absolutes rather than summing the percentages. Data may not always appear therefore to exactly sum.







# ENCOUNTER



# FESTIVAL

# PRESTON

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