



THE SOMERSCIENCE FESTIVAL 2023 Evaluation Report

The Somerscience Trust
June 2023

Somerscience Festival 2023 – Evaluation Report



Evaluation Report

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Introduction

The first Somerscience Festival was held in South Somerset on 1st May 2023. This was developed in support of The Somerscience Trust's stated aim "to advance the education of the public in Somerset in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and to promote public engagement in all aspects of STEM developments." In the first year, the objectives were to reach a minimum of 5000 engagements by young people from Somerset, recruit at least 50 contributing organisations and offer 100 discrete activities, achieve a quality experience for participants and attendees, and establish a baseline of visitor numbers and demographic profile upon which to improve year on year. A longer term aim was to change attitudes towards STEM and STEM careers from visitors leading to an increase in uptake of such pathways in careers and school destinations.

The target audience was the young people of South Somerset and their families as this would address the inequity of access to STEM engagement opportunities found in rural areas and this particular area, which was in the bottom 10 of 387 Local Authority areas for such opportunities according to the British Science Association's 2022 survey.

This report documents how outputs and outcomes were measured, explains what these were, and discusses the impact, legacy and learning.

Somerscience By Numbers

- 4802 visitors documented
- 178 STEM professionals from 55 organisations participating
- 80 volunteers involved on the day and 2500 local volunteer hours utilised in the organisation phase
- Indicative average of 453 meaningful engagements (20 minutes plus) per stand at the Science Fair – a likely 14.9k individual meaningful engagements
- 13 South Somerset schools actively involved in the pre-festival computer science challenge, and 23% of visitors heard about the event through their school
- 91 organisations engaged with
- A reach of 86,000 on social media
- 45.3% of visitors travelled over 15 miles, 54.7% were local to South Somerset. External visitors hailed from Somerset West & Taunton, Sedgemoor, Mendip, Bath and NE Somerset, Bristol, Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon and even as far afield as London and Kent.
- 55% of visitors were female
- 45% of visitors were aged between 4 and 18
- 85% of visitors who expressed an opinion would recommend the festival to their network.
- 94% of visitors felt the festival gave them a better understanding of STEM and 87% a better understanding specifically of STEM careers
- 86 % of visitors felt the festival had a positive impact on their belief that STEM is relevant to their daily life
- 98.8% of visitors reported positive or very positive attitudes to STEM after the festival up from 77% prior
- 100% of professional contributors reported Good or Excellent
 - The number of interactions they had with target audience
 - The level of engagement from the audience
 - The quality of interactions they had
 - The gender reach of the fest

Success Criteria

1. Afford a minimum of 5000 engagements by young people from South Somerset
2. Recruit at least 50 contributing organisations and 100 discrete activities
3. Achieve a quality experience for participants and attendees (measured by survey and recognising that experts/researchers, informal educators/explainers, STEM employers and public may each have different goals)
4. Establish in year 1 a baseline of visitor numbers and profile to improve upon year on year
5. Effect positive change on attitudes towards STEM and STEM careers from visitors, leading eventually to a quantitative increase in STEM uptake at GCSE, A/T Level and STEM destinations after school

Evaluation Approaches

Our rationale for evaluating this year's festival was based on the above success criteria and the commitments made in grant funding applications:

There will be an in-depth review evaluating inputs, outputs, outcomes and attempting to assess the longer-term impact.

Inputs, by survey, include satisfaction levels with the resources, venues, pre-festival communications and overall organisation.

Outputs include, by venue registration data and interview, numbers of contributors and visitors attending, broken down by demographics, number of engagements, whether individual activities worked or could be improved.

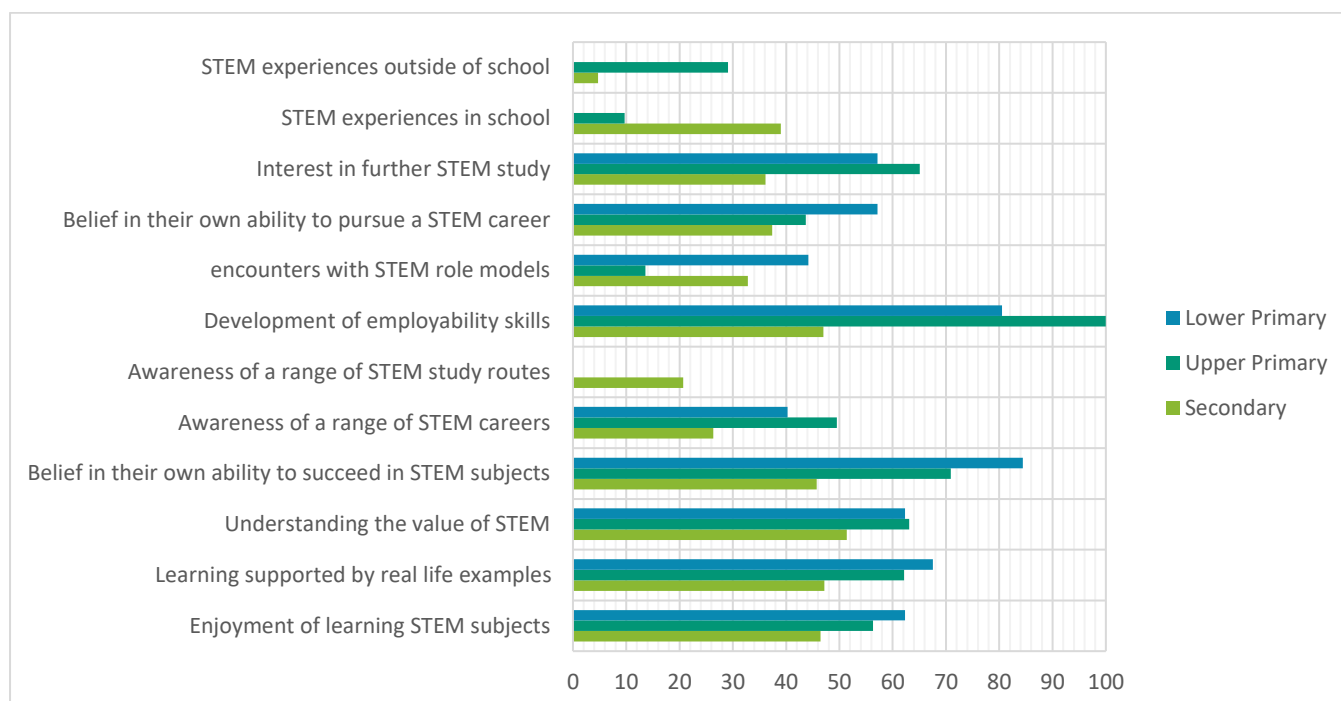
Outcomes, by intercept and retrospective online survey, will include quantitative data on whether attitudes towards STEM have become more positive, whether visitors are more likely now to engage with other STEM activities, whether they have a better understanding of various component aspects of STEM, whether they are more likely to consider choosing a STEM subject or career pathway and whether they are more likely to consider STEM as relevant to their lives. Qualitative outcome data will be collected via comment cards or graffiti wall and coded as positive or negative. To assess overall impact, we will be looking for evidence of increased interest in STEM pathways and destinations noted by schools or participating companies but acknowledge that this will be impossible to spot in the first year, expecting a cumulative effect once the festival is established as an annual fixture.

Schools ‘Temperature Check’

We used a quick method to sample attitudes to STEM in schools participating in the TCS challenge or engaged in other ways, prior to the festival day – In the form of a ‘hands-up’ activity, that teachers can easily do with their classes and sent us the results. Results collection simply by email, as a tally of hands ‘up’ to each statement.

Responses were returned by two schools, one primary (Castle Cary Community Primary School) and one secondary (Sexey’s School in Bruton). They are summarised in the table below and the associated graph:

Marker	Percentage positive response		
	Lower primary	Upper primary	Secondary
Enjoyment of learning STEM subjects	62	56	46
Learning supported by real life examples	68	62	47
Understanding the value of STEM	62	63	51
Belief in their own ability to succeed in STEM subjects	84	71	46
Awareness of a range of STEM careers	40	50	26
Awareness of a range of STEM study routes	NA	NA	21
Development of employability skills	81	100	47
encounters with STEM role models	44	14	33
Belief in their own ability to pursue a STEM career	57	44	37
Interest in further STEM study	57	65	36
STEM experiences in school	NA	10	39
STEM experiences outside of school	NA	29	5



Having more data sources (schools) would increase the validity of any conclusions drawn; however, we will highlight a handful of points worth noting from our survey results:

‘Positivity’ tends to decrease as these young people progress through education; with the caveat that these are different young people, surveyed at different stages and in different settings, this is by no means a longitudinal study!

The most positively viewed aspects of STEM, based on these results, are the development of employability skills (teamwork etc.) and self-belief in their ability to succeed. Both encouraging to see.

In terms of the least positively viewed aspects – STEM experiences in school for upper primary pupils comes out at just 10% but rebounds to 39% once they reach secondary. STEM experiences outside of school scores lowly for both primary and secondary, hence highlighting the importance of events like Somerscience in developing Science Capital locally.

Programme Review

Reviewing the programme reveals 85 planned individual activities from 55 different organisations; however, on the day, it became clear that many of the billed ‘activities’ were in fact multifaceted, for example the Royal Navy had a large team of volunteers on hand delivering multiple activities. With this in mind, it is safe to say that both parts of success criteria 2 are met.

Visitor Count

Volunteers were stationed across the festival sites with tally counters. Every venue had an individual count and visitors were counted at the main entrance to the Science Fair in Castle Cary. The overall ‘visitor count’ obtained by totalling each individual tally was 4802 with 2037 counted at the Science Fair marquee alone. Whilst there will inevitably have been some double counting, this will be balanced by the impossibility of a complete tally in the marquee where large volumes of visitors arrived at once. It is a safe assumption that there were many thousands of visitors to the festival and 5000 individual engagements of young people from South Somerset is a certainty. Also, the baseline for visitor numbers has now been set at an impressive level. Success criteria 1 and 4 are met.

Whilst footfall is important, engagement matters at least as much. Several contributors shared engagement data from their stands with us (measured by visitors spending > 20 minutes interacting with the stand). Exeter Science Centre had 480 ‘meaningful engagements’, RSPCA had 354 and another (unnamed) respondent had 525.

Social Media Review

Follower numbers were healthy across the different social media platforms from a standing start:

Instagram – 140 followers

Twitter – 164 followers

Facebook – 614 followers, 86000 ‘reach’ and 6800 page visits*

*Greatest engagement on Facebook came from the Yeovil area, the town in South Somerset most challenged in terms of socioeconomic factors (based on indices of multiple deprivation).

Comments and Tweets provide useful feedback from visitors on the day:

“Inspiring, informative, fun. Absolutely loved it all, so many things for my 9 year daughter to get involved in. I wish we had time to fit in more of the many activities and talks.

I agree it was difficult for non-locals to find anywhere for lunch that wasn't full up due to it being a sunny bank holiday, we resorted to a packet of crisps from the local co-op. A catering van would have made a fortune in the Castle Cary field. Our highlights were the NHS hub in Bruton, getting a Teddy bear examined and talking to Dr Snot about... well snot! Making a helicopter in the main tent and listening to the I'm a scientist get me out of here talk which was funny and informative. Thank you to all involved in organising it and to everyone who participated, everyone was friendly and engaging.”

“Inspiring, engaging and fun. The stands in the tent made a real effort to make it fun for children. We enjoyed the Wyke Farm tour. My suggestion for next time would be to have a clear map showing the actual bus route with stops and times between stops (I plotted the stops and venues on a map myself as I didn't know the area). Also, more buses/drivers so that when they are on a break it doesn't mess up the 'every 20 minute' timetable. I heard some people had to wait 1hr 15 during the middle of the day and there were some very fraught parents of small children.”

“Awesome, interactive, educational! So much there for these two to discover and even a lot to entertain their nearly 3 year old sibling. Thanks so much to everyone involved, especially the 'yellow t shirt' volunteers who made the day run smoothly, you were very helpful and kind!”

“Engaging, interactive, fun. We travelled an hour to the event, and have no local knowledge. Improved parking specific to the event would be a good idea, more event sign posting, a food and drinks stall at each location, and it would be better if the exhibitors didn't pack up their stalls until the event has ended, as many of them in the marquee were packing up by 4pm. We had a brilliant time, and will definitely come to it again.”

“Informative, engaging, free - a fabulous event, can't wait for next year's!!”

“Amazing. Inspirational. Inclusive.”

“My girls are beyond inspired by Katie O'Brien - her visit to Antarctica absolutely fascinated them and she chatted so much with them. A real life inspirational woman according to my daughter!”

“Our highlights were the NHS hub in Bruton, getting a teddy bear examined and talking to Dr Snot about, well, snot. Making a helicopter in the main tent and listening to the I'm a Scientist Get me Out of Here Show, which was funny and informative. Thank you to all involved in organising it... Everyone was friendly and engaging.”

“I just wanted to say thanks to everyone involved in the event today. We took our young son to both Castle Cary and Bruton and there was so much that he engaged with. He is only four but loves Maths

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and the Science experiments that they do in school. He loved the practical activities and events like this get them really excited about Science and Engineering.”

Big thanks to the organisers and passionate students, volunteers and companies for [#somerscience](#) Was a great day out for the kids and me too!

🗨️ ↻️ 1 ❤️ 2 ⋮

Really enjoyed visiting the 1st Somerset Science Festival today [@somerscience](#). So much to engage everyone with the possibilities of science & technology. It was fantastically well organised too! [#somerscience](#) [#stemeducation](#) [#STEM](#) [#castleclary](#) [#bruton](#) [#somerset](#)



🗨️ ↻️ 6 ❤️ 27 ⋮

[@iopsw](#) giving a talk at the busy market place for [#somerscience](#)



🗨️ ↻️ 3 ❤️ 2 ⋮

Whilst feedback from social media was overwhelmingly positive (success criteria 3), it is important to note the mention of food / catering venues (not enough) and transport / accessibility issues, both of which will be addressed in future years. There was a rationale to the lack of provision of food at the Science Fair marquee – to improve visitor flow around the twelve venues and to encourage custom for local businesses but lessons have been learned.

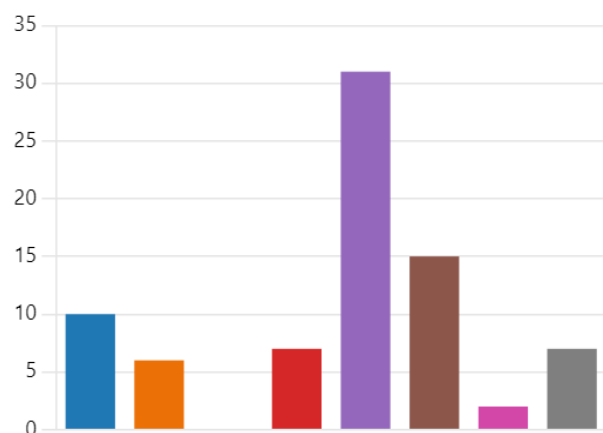
Visitor Survey

Responses to an MS Form visitor survey were invited on the day using QR code links and via website / social media. As of 7th June, there were 82 responses. A summary is provided below:

1. Which age category do you belong to? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

Under 11	10
11-18	6
18-24	0
25-34	7
35-44	31
45-54	15
55-64	2
64 and above	7



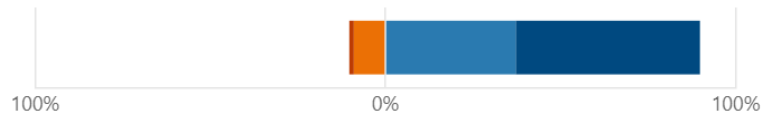
Somerscience Festival 2023 – Evaluation Report

NB – This data could be skewed and is not in agreement with the visitor registration data which showed 45% of visitors to be in the 4-18 age-group, most likely due to adults being more likely to access the online survey.

2. How would you rate the overall quality of the festival? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Poor ■ Satisfactory ■ Good ■ Very Good

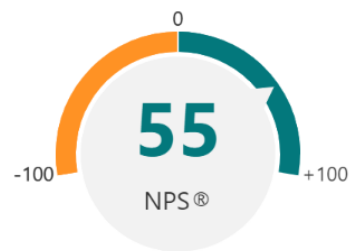


90.3% 'Good' or better

3. How likely are you to recommend visiting SomerScience Festival to a friend, family member or colleague? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

Promoters	52
Passives	17
Detractors	9

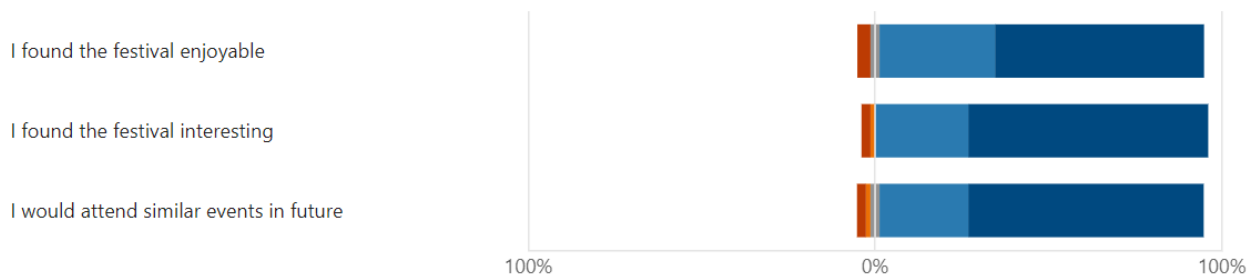


Our Net Promoter Score exceeds both Google (53) and Amazon (54)

4. Please use the scale below to state how much you agree with the following statements about your experience of the festival: (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

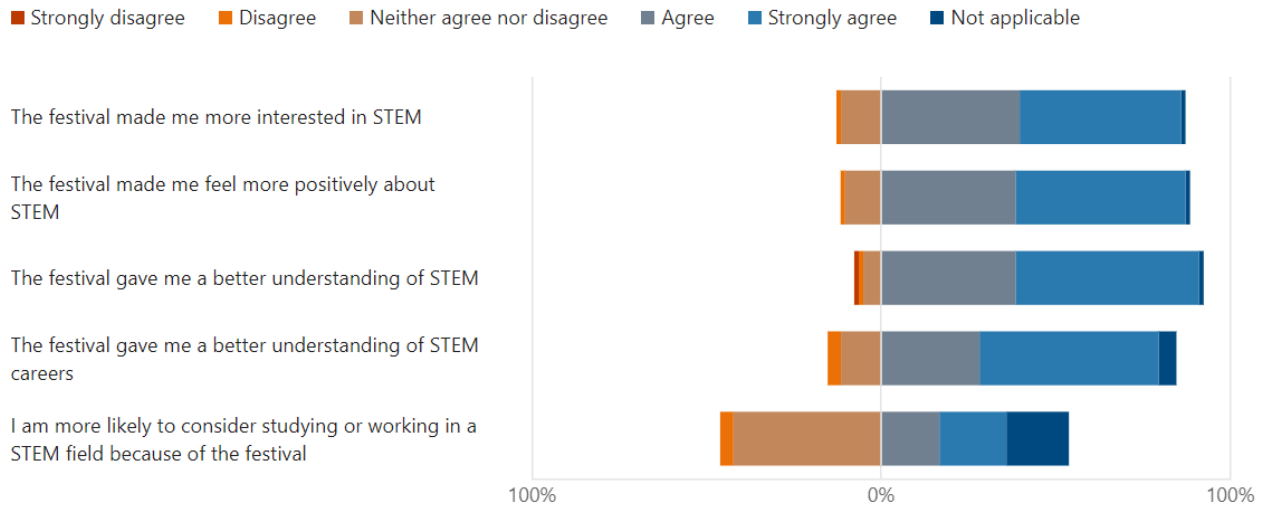


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85-93% agreed or strongly agreed with the statements and it is particularly encouraging to see the level of enthusiasm for future events (67% strongly agreed).

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about how the festival impacted you? (0 point; *We use 'STEM' to refer to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths / Medicine.*)

[More Details](#)



Although not the most on-paper positive statistic from this set of questions, the most pleasing must be the fact that almost 90% of respondents agreed that the festival made them more interested in STEM. 50% strongly agreed that their understanding of STEM had been furthered.

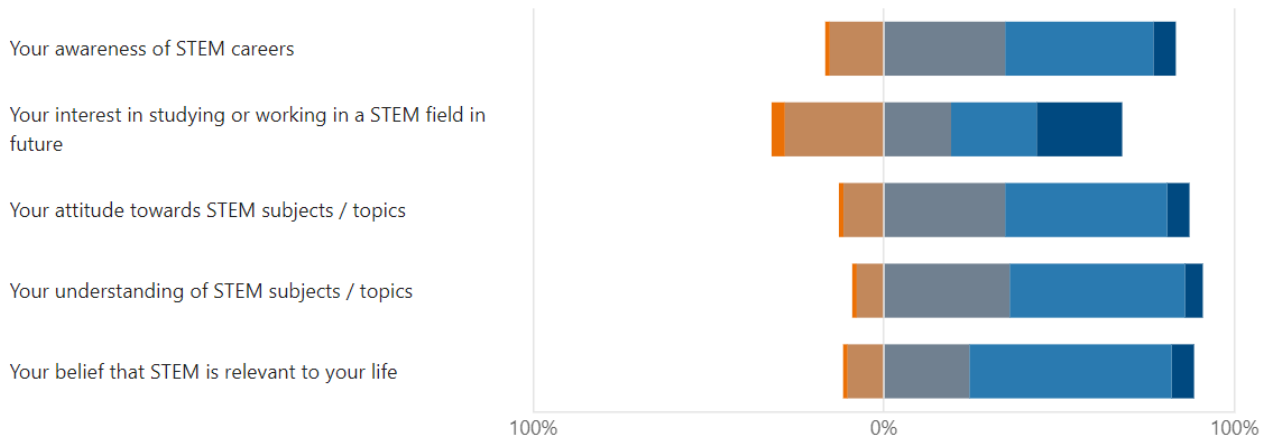
50% felt that they could not agree with the statement regarding the festival making them more likely to study or work in the STEM field – This is likely to be linked to the ages of respondents, as older visitors already engaged in their chosen careers were the most likely to complete this survey. The result may have been significantly different had we particularly sampled the younger age groups.

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6. How would you describe the impact of the festival on: (0 point)
We use 'STEM' to refer to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths / Medicine.

[More Details](#)

■ Very negative
 ■ Negative
 ■ Neither positive nor negative
 ■ Positive
 ■ Very positive
 ■ Not applicable



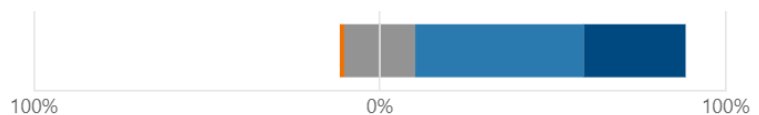
The response regarding studying or working (29% neither positive or negative) may well fit in with the above hypothesis on age and life stage of respondents.

Responses to the other questions were all overwhelmingly positive for example, 57% said that the festival had a very positive impact on how relevant they believe STEM to be to their lives.

7. How would you rate your attitude towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths / Medicine) **before** the festival? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Very negative
 ■ Negative
 ■ Neither negative nor positive
 ■ Positive
 ■ Very positive

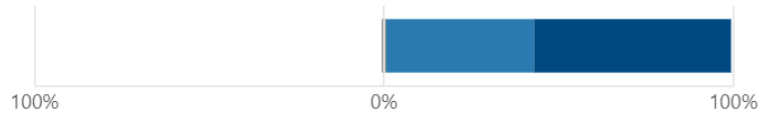


As a baseline – 23% rated their attitude to STEM as ‘Negative’ or ‘Neither negative nor positive’

8. How would you rate your attitude towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths / Medicine) **now**? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Very negative
 ■ negative
 ■ Neither negative nor positive
 ■ Positive
 ■ Very positive



This set of responses give a very pleasing picture of the impact of the festival. ‘Negative’ disappears completely and ‘Neither negative nor positive’ shrinks to just 1.2%, which certainly suggests that festival attendance contributed positively to the attendees’ attitudes to STEM.

9. What was your favourite activity at the festival? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

Insights

82
Responses

Latest Responses

"Talk on sun and its energy"

"Teddy bear hospital "

"The snake venom stand and all their info on lab work"

13 respondents (16%) answered **talk** for this question.



Contributor Survey

Contributors were surveyed online using anonymous MS Forms. There were 22 respondents and a summary of their feedback is included below:

1. How did you contribute to the festival? (Activity / Organisation / Capacity) (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

22

Responses

Latest Responses

"Organisation"

"Exhibitor"

"We ran a Sustainability tour."

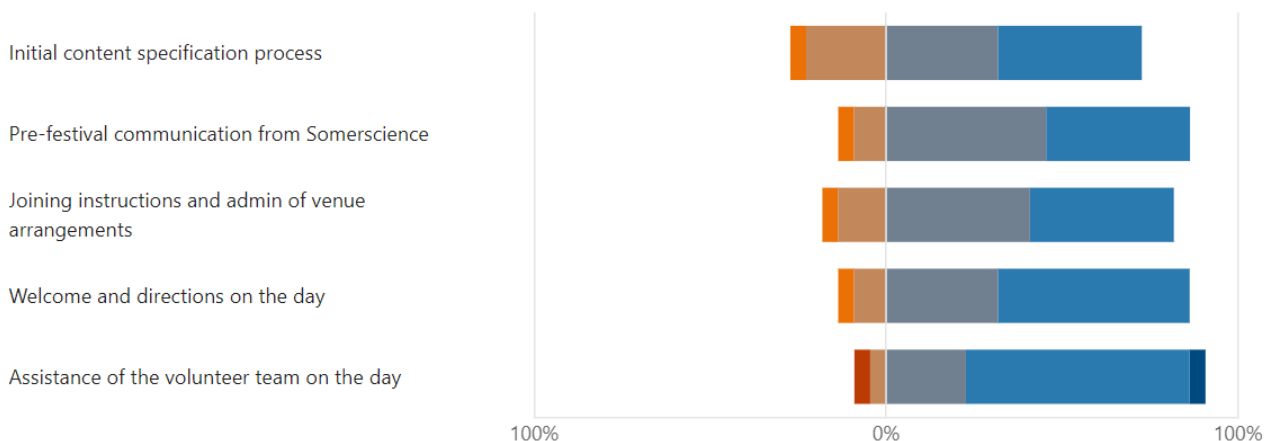
7 respondents (32%) answered **Activity** for this question.



2. Please rate the following on the scale below: (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Poor
 ■ Could be better
 ■ Satisfactory
 ■ Good
 ■ Excellent
 ■ N/A



Extremely positive responses in terms of organisation and support. Generally reporting greater than 80% 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Festival volunteer assistance garners heaviest praise overall at 64% 'Excellent', although one contributor clearly had a bad experience which they didn't specify.

3. Do you have comments to share on any of the above? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

10

Responses

Latest Responses

"There was limited signage upon the arrival to the event."

5 respondents (50%) answered **event** for this question.



4. Please rate the following using the scale below: (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Poor
 ■ Could be better
 ■ Satisfactory
 ■ Good
 ■ Excellent
 ■ N/A



Once again very positive feedback regarding publicity and audience-facing materials; around 80% ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’. The festival website is a particular highlight, with 50% of responses rating it ‘Excellent’. This was an area that required collaboration from the contributors as each had their own sub-page within our website which could only be populated with material they gave us so it is possible those that didn’t engage were less satisfied. This was also true of pre-festival publicity which was extensive but could only feature in detail contributors who supplied enough information. The level of pre-festival collaboration would be an area to improve on next year. Other comments received for the follow-on Q5 (below) suggest the contributors did not see any publicity in Bristol but they would not have as we were targeting south and rural areas of Somerset.

5. Do you have comments to share on any of the above? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

5

Responses

Latest Responses

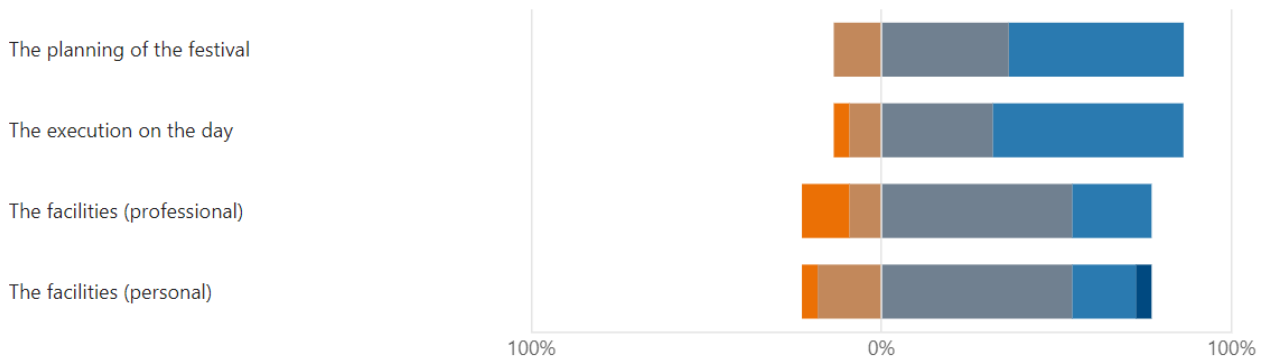
1 respondents (20%) answered **parts of the process** for this question. ...

advance day
 number of expectations good Bristol
 content able parts of the process short
 events engagement levels larger number not being able
 low things afraid timeframes timescales
 not see any publicity
 publicity

6. Please rate the following using the scale below: (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Poor
 ■ Could be better
 ■ Satisfactory
 ■ Good
 ■ Excellent
 ■ N/A



Delivery and facilities on the day were similarly highly rated by contributors, all around 80% ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’ once more. Planning and execution both received 50% ‘Excellent’ ratings. The slightly higher level of “Could be better” on the professional facilities question has been noted and feeds into our likelihood of changing the format so we rely less on venues unused to hosting exhibitions/conferences etc, but also reflects the difficulty of managing expectations for a rural science festival.

7. Do you have comments to share on any of the above? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

12
Responses

Latest Responses

"We found it hard to park when not attending for the whole day. The car par...

"We lost floor space on the day and a bin was placed within our space, whic...

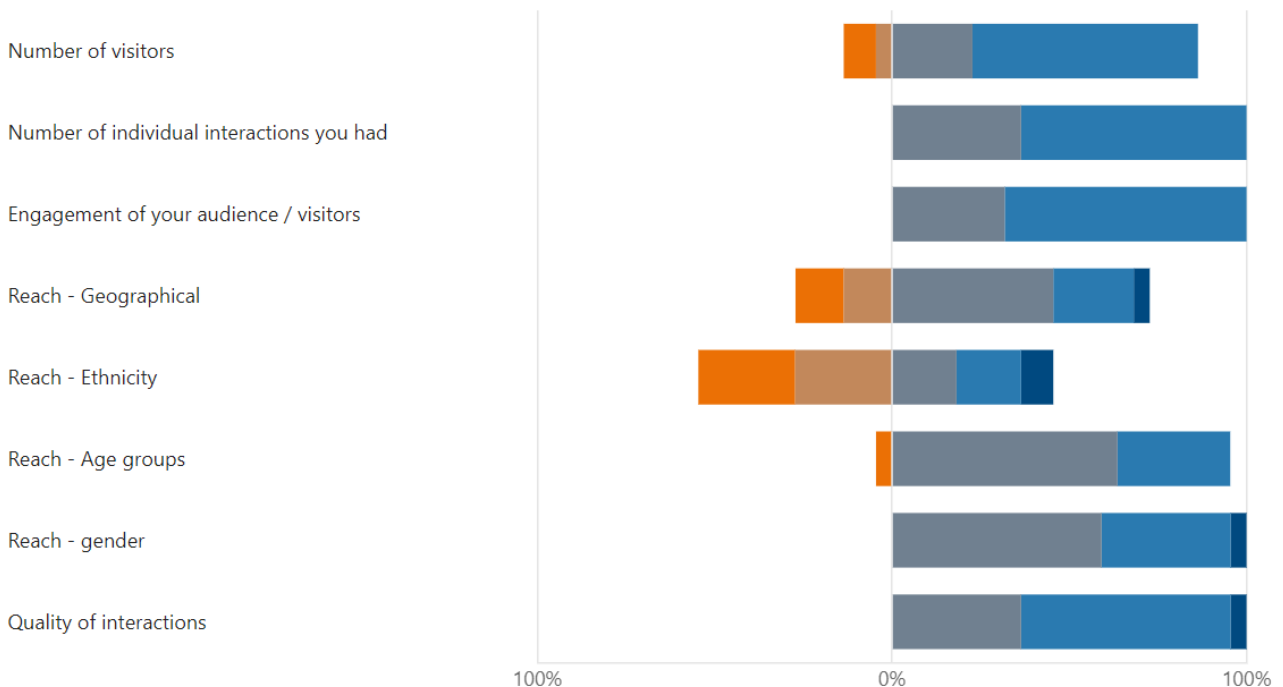
5 respondents (42%) answered **food** for this question.



8. Please rate the following using the scale below: (0 point)

[More Details](#)

■ Poor
 ■ Could be better
 ■ Satisfactory
 ■ Good
 ■ Excellent
 ■ N/A



This question on reach and engagement also drew positive responses; however, two interesting points arise. Number of interactions, engagement of the audience and quality of interactions all received particular positivity with 60-70% 'Excellent' ratings. Geographical and 'ethnic' reach both stand out as areas the

contributors saw scope for improvement. Public transport issues on the day of the festival (train strike) may have affected the geographical reach but ultimately the main aim of SomerScience from the outset was to engage with the local community in South Somerset. Whether the ethnic make up of the visitor body broadly mirrors that of the local population is an issue beyond the scope of this report but it seems likely and if so, one would not expect to see in a rural area the diversity some contributors may have hoped for.

One contributor commented (Q9 invited comments):

“I think ethnicity is a challenging metric to include given 97% of Somerset is white according to ONS. Glad to see it included though. The website had more diversity foot print which is a good thing.”

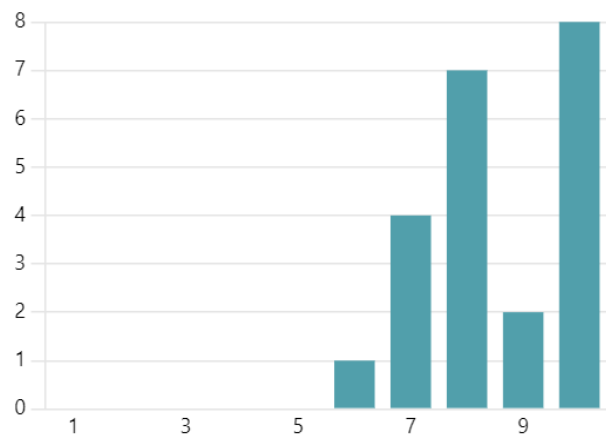
Another said *“We didn't really log the reach categories but we were impressed with overall numbers and there seemed to be a good gender split as well as a range of ages. Anecdotally, it did appear to cater to people primarily from the Castle Cary who were predominantly white but being that that was the demographic of the catchment, there's not much to be done about that!”*

10. To what extent did the festival meet your expectations? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

8.55
Average Rating



A very pleasing result given the planning that went into the organisation of the festival and arrangements for contributors.

11. How did this festival compare with others you have attended in terms of helping you meet your outreach/engagement goals? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

22
Responses

Latest Responses

"There was a great variety of audiences who attended, which is not always t...
"Regarding bus sponsorship, expectations on what we had to manage regard...
"It was very professional and we'd like to say very successful."

5 respondents (23%) answered **good** for this question.



12. Did the festival enable useful professional networking opportunities for you? If so, in what way? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

21
Responses

Latest Responses

"To an extent, within our stand vicinity we were able to network, yes."
"Met with local schools"
"No."

3 respondents (14%) answered **stands** for this question.

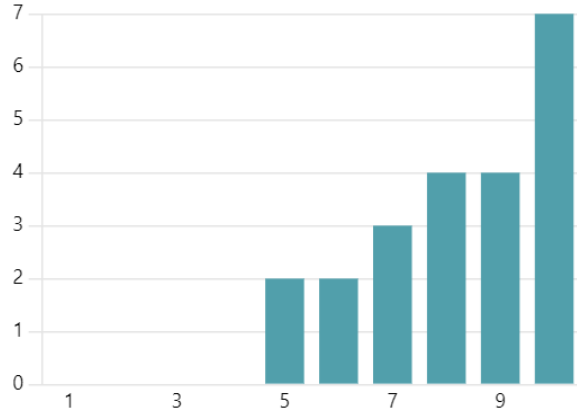


13. The festival was free for contributors. Based on that, please rate overall value for time invested. (0 point)

[More Details](#)

 Insights

8.23
Average Rating



Often contributors are charged, not insignificant sums, to take part in similar festivals.

Registration Data

Volunteers at 7 of the 12 venues across the festival venues were able to engage visitors and encourage them to provide demographic and postcode data. The responses are summarised below:

Where are you visiting from today?

- 54.7% Over 15 miles away (Taunton, Bridgwater, Bristol, Bath, Frome, Gillingham, Crewkerne codes mainly)
- 45.3% Within 15 miles (Castle Cary, Bruton, Yeovil, Wells, Street, Sherborne codes 4mainly)
- 71.6% Rural postcode
- 28.4% Urban postcode

How do you identify in terms of gender?

- Male 44%
- Female 55%

Which age group do you belong to?

Less than 18	45%
18-30	1.8%
30-50	32.8%
50+	20.4% (82% in talk venues)

How did you hear about the festival?

Facebook	30%
School	23.2%
Word of mouth	20.3%

Live Sampling

Ping Pong Poll

Visitors were encouraged to vote using ping pong balls on the questions below. The result was clear with no count required!



Graffiti Wall

Visitors were encouraged to leave their feedback on a 'graffiti wall' in the Castle Cary Science Fair. A selection of comments from across the demographics is below:

Adults! Where's your feedback?!
Not enough toilets
Lots of buzz and opportunities to try things
Feeding imagination!!!
Food or/and drink stalls welcome
(or arrange local shops to be open/stock more)
Seeing the science show,

Give us your comments...
Great wealth of stuff for kids to experiment with - very tactile and much appreciated
proper stay period

making propellers
the church talk (no. 9) was boring.
cats r better than dogs 100%.
Cool!

We'd love feedback...
Brilliant! Please come back!

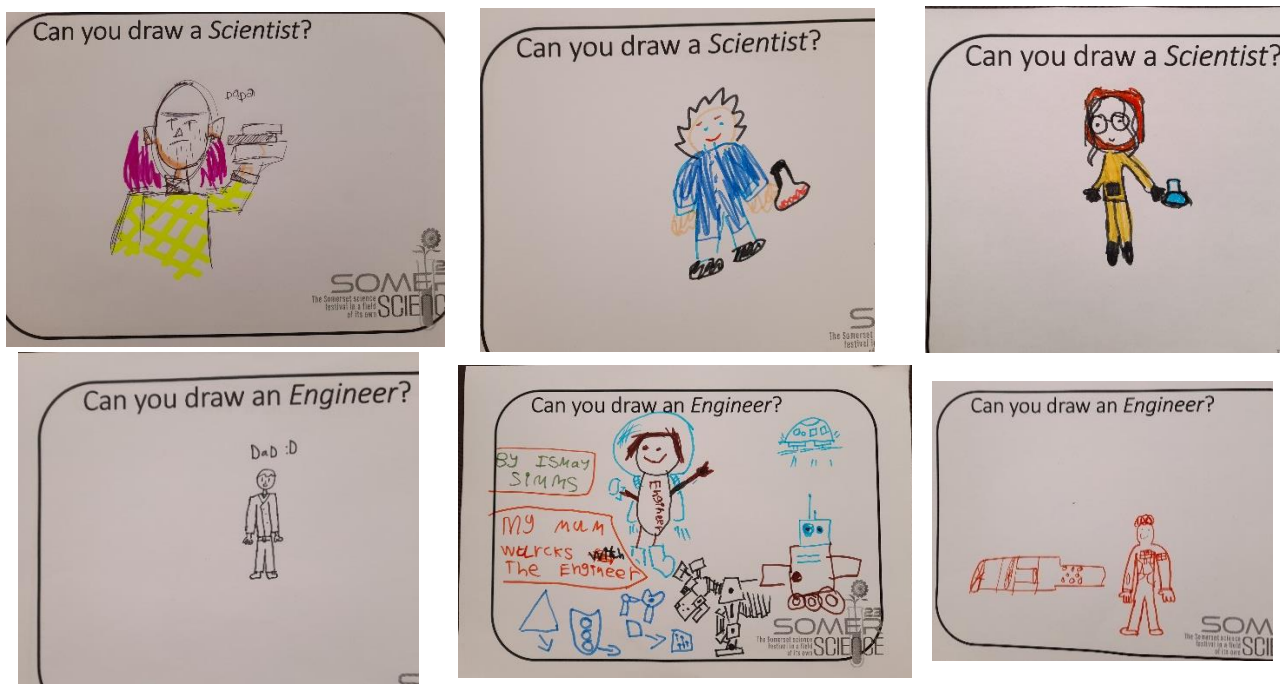
Help make somerscience brill...
Fantastic event - all really excellent stands!

FEEDBACK
pls.
very interactive
enjoyable
would have loved to sit somewhere when my grandpa was engaged
Have multiple photographs so each different broken can be covered
In
Incredibly
I loved it!
good

Although this did not prove the most effective source of specific feedback, it did give visitors young and old the opportunity to express themselves. There were regular positive comments about 'hands-on' activities and the themes around catering (also toilets) were repeated here.

Draw a STEM Professional

Younger visitors to the Science Fair were encouraged to draw ‘an engineer’ or ‘a scientist’ to gain an insight into their attitudes towards such professionals. A selection of the images is shown below:



Themes that developed through the day around this activity included the propensity for drawings of family members (the idea of Science Capital), gender of the professional drawn reflecting that of the artist and a focus on practical / hands on activities for engineers (rather than digital or problem-solving domains); likewise, scientists were often pictured with lab equipment and/or PPE (also Einstein-style hair!). By and large, scientists were the more popular choice.

Conclusion

Based on information from the various modes of evaluation, the judgements against our success criteria, set out prior to the festival are as follows:

Success Criteria	Judgement	Comments
1. Afford a minimum of 5000 engagements by young people from South Somerset	Fully met	
2. Recruit at least 50 contributing organisations and 100 discrete activities	Fully met	
3. Achieve a quality experience for participants and attendees (measured by survey and recognising that experts/researchers, informal educators/explainers, STEM	Partially met	In future years, greater provision of catering and toilets, and better information and accessibility around transport, will ensure this criterion is met.

employers and public may each have different goals)		
4. Establish in year 1 a baseline of visitor numbers and profile to improve upon year on year	Fully met	
5. Effect positive change on attitudes towards STEM and STEM careers from visitors, leading eventually to a quantitative increase in STEM uptake at GCSE, A/T Level and STEM destinations after school	Partially met	Whilst initial feedback is positive, only time will tell as regards outcomes linked to attainment and destinations for young people.

Learnings and Legacy

The festival demonstrated there was a great appetite for engaging with STEM in South Somerset and proved to be an effective vehicle for outreach in a neglected area.

As to whether this was an effective way to reach the target audience, we conclude it was demonstrably so. The problem faced was that those wanting to involve children in STEM engagement activities would usually have to trek to the nearest city like Bristol, Bath or Exeter which precluded those without the monetary or science capital doing so. The festival brought STEM to the people where they live, was free, and also would have attracted incidentally people who weren't even seeking an encounter with science. However, there is more work to be done on this as some of the schools outside the two festival towns that we liaised with regarding the pre-festival challenge explained that many of their community's parents would be unlikely to bring their children to the festival without the school laying on transport so we need to be able to reach these families too having regard for such barriers. We should also aim for a greater number of teenagers next time, it being noted that many of the young people were primary/middle school age, by involving teen groups in the design, orchestration and promotion of the festival.

With practical rather than content matters providing almost the only main areas for criticism by visitors or contributors – the mention of food outlets, difficulties of getting around the venues despite the buses laid on, road signage and in some cases car parking – we have decided in future to seek one main appropriately appointed venue to house all the various activities of the festival with perhaps a few satellite or taster events across the two towns. We will also revise our contributor registration format to provide all information in one document on expression of interest to manage expectations better.

As well as making this an annual event, it is intended to maintain interest and momentum between festivals via our website Steps Into STEM pages which we are encouraging our contributors to populate with resources and further events and opportunities; also via our social media posts (our Facebook page has 614 followers and achieved a reach of 86,000 during our promotional period); monthly Café Scientifique sessions running from October to May in Castle Cary; and finally greater involvement with the area's schools and home education groups both in interesting them in the next festival challenge work between September and May, and in encouraging them to contribute to the festival themselves in various ways.

Strong relationships have been formed and will be maintained with our contributing organisations and also with the channels who publicised the festival such as the Education Business Partnership, Heart of the South West Careers Hub, local branches of STEM professional organisations, STEM Learning and Graphic Science (STEM Ambassadors) as well as both Town Councils and the County Council Education Dept, and local volunteering organisations.

The festival could not have happened without the volunteer implementation team who put in over 2500 hours of free time collectively. Whilst they all were using and “giving back” specialist skills or knowledge they already had such as in direction, organisation, event management, budgeting, website development, logistics, risk management, promotion, evaluation and education, the experience of working as a volunteer team, bound only by a common passion for STEM and commitment to the project, brought its own learning journey. The team has become stronger and more cohesive in the process and the experience of putting on a successful festival has only increased our motivation to continue to make it bigger and better each year.

Finally, effective financial management and negotiation, as well as our success at achieving good will, grants and sponsorships this year, has meant that we now have a budget surplus which already provides the basis for confidence that we can fund next year’s festival and so have a sustainable event.