

**Birmingham Festival 23**  
**Evaluation Report**  
**October 2023**

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## **Foreword**

This report was researched and written by FRY Creative Consulting (FRY). It represents 6-months collaborating with and working alongside Birmingham Festival 23 (Festival 23) to map out, measure and evaluate the impact of the official one-year anniversary festival of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The conclusions and recommendations given by FRY in the report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading. The evidence, data and research findings that inform this report, all rooted in a Theory of Change model developed by FRY with Festival 23, are products of the collective contribution of all those involved in the planning and delivery of Festival 23.

The original aim of Festival 23 and of Birmingham City Council - to have an outdoor, free-to-access festival, created by the people of the city for the people of the city - was successfully achieved. The festival was roundly celebrated as accessible, representative, and celebratory, all while continuing the strong sector development trajectory of the Birmingham 2022 Festival, and platforming an incredibly wide range of emerging and established creative talent, both on and off the stage. Birmingham City Council is to be commended for acting swiftly to ensure that the cultural legacy of the Games would be further embedded within the city.

While the nature of this report is, due to its timing, grounded in the short-term outcomes, it is worth noting that the aspirational environment that led to Festival 23's commissioning by Birmingham City Council in the hope of developing a blueprint for an annual/biennial 'signature' festival for the city has, over the duration of data analysis and report drafting, been somewhat dampened by the Section 114 notice publicly issued by Birmingham City Council on 5 September 2023. This Section 114 and its inevitable aftermath has not been directly taken into account within the report.

Throughout the report there are many learnings that can, and hopefully will, be incorporated into future iterations of a Birmingham 'signature' festival. As Raidene Carter, Festival 23's Creative Director noted, Birmingham already has a highly successful and interwoven ecology of significant festivals, more often than not with an international leaning. The addition of whatever Festival 23's legacy is should only serve to augment this existing ecology's great work.

For those interested, an Evaluation Summary slide deck to accompany this report has been designed by our wonderful colleague Tom Stevens.

We would like to take the opportunity to personally thank the Festival 23 team for all their help and support in making this evaluation happen. From the outset they have adopted a pragmatic, transparent, thorough and generous approach to evaluation, enabling our role in the project to be effective and fruitful. They have welcomed the challenges which come with evaluating outdoor, free-

to-access work and have facilitated this report in constructively contributing to the bank of learning being built about these types of events in our region.

**Fabio Thomas, Richard Hawley, Yasmin Damji**

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## **Festival Overview**

Birmingham Festival 23 was the official one-year anniversary festival for, and in celebration of, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Proudly outdoors and free-to-access, the Festival aimed to echo the city-centre experience of the Games, taking over Centenary Square with live music and performance, creative and participatory activities, and big-screen content to conjure the shared moments, magic and memories of 2022.

Birmingham Festival 23 aimed to welcome 190,000 audiences, artists, local communities and volunteers, who, together, reflect the diversity of Birmingham, coming together to watch, listen, relax, dance and play.

The Festival was developed by members of the culture and delivery teams behind Birmingham 2022 Festival and Festival Sites, who were convened by Birmingham City Council at the end of 2022 to write a feasibility report for its potential. Specifically, two former Birmingham 2022 employees took on Creative and Executive Director roles, and JA Productions and Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces (OPUS), took on Production Director and Executive Producer roles (respectively) to create an executive team for the new project. The feasibility report outlined a rationale for this approach based on speed of delivery and ensuring learnings from the Games could be applied before official 2022 evaluation material had been published.

Birmingham Festival 23 was commissioned by Birmingham City Council in January 2023 through a cultural project grant, and went on to attract additional support from Arts Council England and University of Birmingham (Principal Partners), Hollywood Monster (Presenting Partner), United By 2022 Legacy Charity (Volunteer Partner), Colmore Business District, Gowling WLG, Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Visit Birmingham (Festival Champions), and Chiltern Railways, Crosscountry, National Express West Midlands, West Midlands Metro and West Midlands Railway (Travel Partners).

The Festival was endorsed by the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) and Commonwealth Games Federation Partnership (CGFP) to be the 'official' one-year anniversary festival of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, and granted a licence to use selected Birmingham 2022 assets.

Partnerships and Games endorsement enabled a new audience development initiative, 'Perry's Party Picnic', which was designed with 'cost-of-living' concerns in mind, to ensure low-income family groups and other community groups could engage with the Festival in the city centre.

The commission from Birmingham City Council also asked Festival organisers to establish the governance and structure for a new 'signature' annual festival for Birmingham.

## **Programme Strategy & Framework**

As the one-year-on 'anniversary' festival for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, Birmingham Festival 23 wanted to bring recognised cultural assets of the Games, across sport, art, community and public engagement, into a new one-off celebration in Centenary Square. It sought to combine the creative and strategic drivers of the 6-month Birmingham 2022 Festival with the concept of the Games Festival Sites, which were delivered across the 12 days of the Games in city centre and community neighbourhood locations. Whilst the programme frameworks differed across these original Birmingham 2022 Festival platforms, they were born of the same, overarching principles to be:

- Free at the point of access
- Accessible and inclusive
- High-quality cultural experiences
- For and representative of the diverse population of the city and region
- Shine a spotlight on local creativity and talent.

These became the programme drivers for Birmingham Festival 23. In addition, without the instance of a major sporting event as a backdrop, the Festival wanted to showcase more screened cultural content and lean further into characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the city.

### ***Curatorial Lines***

The following statements acted as tools to hold the 2023 festival experience together, and to support programming decision-making. They were intended either to be seen in isolation, or brought together, using each as a lens to view the others:

**Celebrating the 2022 Commonwealth Games** – re-sharing, re-staging and re-imagining moments that made the Games so memorable for millions, from sporting heroes and Medals to volunteer journeys and cultural highlights. Re-seeing the Games from different perspectives and inviting people to remember what we achieved.

**The City is Ours** – outdoors and unashamedly accessible, diverse and welcoming. Using the civic landscape of Centenary Square as backdrop, stage and auditorium for everyone to watch, listen, chat, play and stay.

**Bold Expressions that Move Us (Forward)** – linear and non-linear narratives, participatory activations and multi-artform expressions with emphasis on Music and Movement, Interactivity and joyful Shared Experiences that stimulate the heart and mind. Conjuring the city's motto, we move to the future by sharing our heritage and being our whole selves.

## ***Programme Structure***

Birmingham Festival 23 ran from 28 July to 6 August 2023, across 10 days and 9 evenings.

As the Festival would be running across two weekends with a full week in between, the structure of the programme aimed to use pattern and consistency, whilst understanding how audience behaviours and motivations change according to the day of the week, and time of day.

The first weekend was designed to lean into the first curatorial line – Celebrating the 2022 Commonwealth Games - and featured a large-scale Opening Event on the Friday evening ahead of a weekend of takeovers by programme partners Sampad and FABRIC who featured heavily in the Birmingham 2022 Festival.

The midweek programme was designed around a daily pattern from 12:00pm to 9:00pm, encouraging audiences to return, but experience different content across the week. There was an emphasis on work that appealed to families with children in the daytimes, and young/adult groups of friends in the evenings.

The final weekend turned to face the third curatorial line with programmed events and content showcasing how creative Birmingham is, with an international outlook. The programme expected to present the city's musical heritage and future, Carnival-inspired music and dance (with a nod to Jamaica Independence Day on 6 August) and feature a closing spectacle, or event that would allude to a more confident creative city through supporting homegrown talent.

The Festival employed a number of Programming Mechanisms to draw work into the programme, these were:

- Direct Programming
- Devolved Programming Partnerships (Takeovers)
- Direct Re-commissioning (re-developed/created content)
- Community Call-Out (Made in Brum)
- Creative City Grantee/Culture Fund Invitation
- Alignment (existing self-funded work that supports the festival aims).

In addition, the ideas, influence and work of Artistic Associates was intended to support the programming process and ensure programme mechanisms were always considering the key drivers/principles.

## Artistic Associates

The Festival understood that its artistic leadership was temporary and wanted to serve as a bridge between 2022 and future ambitions for culture in the city and region. Organisers sought to support a broader notion of artistic leadership until such a time that plans for a new international festival might confirm the city's approach to new artistic leadership. For this reason, it created two Artistic Associate roles to work closely with the Creative Director.

The Artistic Associates brief sought those who were existing artists or creatives in the city with a developed practice compatible with the plans for 2023; and artists who know their audience, the communities (including artistic communities) their work engages, and who could be explicit about their artistic drivers (what it is that compels them to create). Their practice would be relevant and open to growth/exploration as we all consider what new/contemporary art will continue to define our multi-faceted, diverse region.

The Artistic Associate/s were engaged to:

- Work in alignment with the project team, supporting the overall intentions of the Festival, including 'getting behind' decisions already taken;
- Be part of artistic conversations about the programme, both with the Creative Director and Executive Producer, and where necessary, the producing team, and programme partners and artists;
- Contribute helpful comment, opinion and challenge on the festival programme, strengthening its appeal to a wider audience;
- Contribute creative ideas and programme options to bring about a more cohesive creative and meaningful experience for audiences;
- Where feasible and suitable, develop creative ideas/contributions into programmable, audience-facing activity, acting as creative lead for components of the festival;
- 'Sense-check' programme/creative decisions through a thoughtful, sector-focussed or audience-focussed lens;
- Expand the Festival's network of artists, creative partners and community activators for potential collaboration;
- Be able to advocate for and represent the Festival in the media, at sector and public engagements and partnership events.

A key factor in the Artistic Associate role/s was their ability to bring knowledge, practice, opinion and experiences to the festival from an audience-/sector-/community-first position, rather than only being a platform to present their own work. Two artists were directly approached by the Creative Director based on this brief: Mukhtar Dar, founder of Simmer Down Festival and recently working independently under Kalaboration Arts, had presented his solo work – a visual arts and photography exhibition - for the Birmingham 2022 Festival; and Elizabeth 'Zeddie' Lawal, co-founder of More Than a Moment (MTAM), who openly challenged the origins of the Commonwealth Games but presented



artists under the MTAM project, on the Victoria Square Festival Site. Their working relationship with one another and the Creative Director was new – none of them had worked together before.

### **Presenting Partners & Twilight Takeovers**

Three Programme Partners were identified for Programme Takeovers through the feasibility phase for the festival based on their previous work for Birmingham 2022 Festival. This was to both benefit from, and build on, established relationships for speed, trust and creative opportunity. FABRIC, who presented BIDE (Birmingham International Dance Festival) and the Critical Mass project in 2022; sampad (South Asian Music Arts and Dance), who worked closely with OPUS on Victoria Square Festival Site programming in 2022 and presented a project in the wider Games cultural festival; and ACE Dance & Music who also presented a large-scale project in 2022 and performed at multiple Festival Sites. B:Music, Birmingham REP and Fierce Festival were additionally identified as organisations with a strong track record from 2022 to be explored further in 2023.

#### Twilight Takeovers

The feasibility phase of the festival deduced that commissioning new artworks of scale in time for the festival would be challenging, with many of the artists spoken to outlining their concerns about creating large projects from scratch with the levels of community and participatory co-creation the city had experienced much success with during the 2022 festival. At the same time, less established artists in the city began to express their ambition to present new work and stories that would connect with their diverse and less mainstream networks of groups, artists and audiences. To find a middle-ground, the Festival designed a targeted open-call for new work around a tight brief, with a set budget that could support new ideas that artists might have already been developing, or existing work adapted to suit the outdoor festival stage and site. In this way, the Festival Executive Producer and Creative Director hoped to support new works that gave opportunity to less established artists that directly met the needs of an identified festival programme slot. The Twilight Takeover brief invited proposals for mid-week evening shows with staged music as the driving artform in collaboration with another artform. This open call opportunity was put out to the arts and cultural sector in Birmingham, through newsletters, direct email, and artists networks.

#### Made in Brum

Made in Brum was the Festival's open call for proposals from Birmingham's amateur and/or voluntary performing arts communities. The opportunity welcomed groups to submit ideas for staged music and dance performances that would be programmed mostly during midweek daytimes to attract Birmingham's communities as performers and audiences to the Festival. This open call was the first programming to be launched through a public media and press campaign alongside the Festival announcement in March.

## **Business & Tourism stakeholders**

The Festival was keen to capitalise on new relationships with city-centre businesses and wider sponsors given the commercial restrictions around the Commonwealth Games. The Birmingham 2022 Festival, for example, was unable to approach commercial sponsors or accept business relationships easily owing to the Games strict Sponsorship rights. Festival 23 sought to approach a range of commercial partners to build new relationships for cultural events in the city, despite already having a major commissioner in Birmingham City Council.

### Partners and Stakeholders

The festival was predominantly funded by Birmingham City Council as its major commissioner. Further funds were sought from lottery funders, Arts Council England, and the private sector (.e. city centre BIDs). These private partnerships were identified as having a shared interest in investing in Birmingham to promote the city as a great place to live and work.

Stakeholders around Centenary Square were approached to work collaboratively for the benefit of the festival, their business operations and audiences. There was the potential for commercial benefit for the organisations through additional audience footfall, alongside the opportunity for these businesses to provide in kind services to the festival through off-setting costs against their potential to make commercial income.

### Business and Tourism

The Birmingham Festival 23 team wanted to promote local businesses and organisations, and so made the decision not to host external concessions, such as street food traders on the festival site. The reason for this was two-fold; firstly, not hosting food traders meant that the site could run more sustainably with less infrastructure and power supply needed, and secondly it gave local businesses the opportunity to promote themselves and ensure that the increased footfall benefitted existing businesses.

## **Marketing, Communications and Press & Media<sup>1</sup>**

Festival 23's Marketing and Communications work was led by Birmingham-based consultancy, Creating Impakt. Initially, the Festival's feasibility report had identified a preferred delivery model of embedding a Senior Marketing & Communications Manager into the core team. This post was to develop the overarching strategy and approach with the Executive and Creative Directors, before engaging and overseeing the delivery of all activity via 2-3 supplier contracts. Following positive

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<sup>1</sup> supplied by Festival 23.

conversations with an individual who ultimately was unable to commit the necessary time to the role, the Executives approached Creating Impakt to deliver the work on a reduced timeline. This arrangement was confirmed in March 2023.

Rob Macpherson, Creating Impakt's Managing Director developed a plan based on the Festival's ambition to engage 190,000 people across the Festival, mostly as audiences from - and representative of - Birmingham. Audiences were segmented into 4 target groups with recognition that there would be overlap between segments:

- Mass appeal,
- Families with children (babies to younger teens),
- Arts audiences,
- Under-represented in mainstream arts and culture.

Multiple suppliers and partners were engaged through Creating Impakt; one supplier, Bread & Butter PR, had already been engaged by the Festival 23 Executive team to deliver press and media elements of the work. Marketing campaigns and online communications were targeted with straightforward core messaging, made more relevant to the target group through adapted imagery, and in some cases, using multiple languages.

A range of marketing methods and tools were used to reach all audiences. These included printed brochure and poster distribution, paid online and out of home ads, social media ads, created content, and media partnerships and promotions (online, print and radio). Additionally, a brand, a website and a city-centre dressing campaign were part of the overall communications plan. As the Festival inherited no audience database, social media channels or digital audience base from Birmingham 2022 Festival, an alternative approach was taken to access existing audiences through partnerships and social media takeovers, and to draw on the networks of individual artists, presenting partners and communities.

Audience Development strategist and specialist, Hardish Virk, was engaged to plan and activate a street and community distribution team. This aimed to target areas of the city with high densities of Asian, Black and Eastern European residents.

London-based Bread & Butter PR (supported by the appointment of a local freelancer), which delivered press and media for Birmingham 2022 Festival, was engaged to help build on trust and familiarity from media to benefit on the moment as a 'one-year-on' Games anniversary. The campaign aimed to focus on National Previews, National Feature Pitching, Local Previews, Local Features, National Invites, Photocalls / media calls and Broadcast media.

## **Evaluation Overview**

### **Scope of the evaluation**

In April 2023, FRY Creative were contracted to develop both a Theory of Change and an Evaluation Framework for Birmingham Festival 23. As part of this process FRY Creative held a session with the Festival 23 CIC team, representatives of Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces (OPUS - the principal programming and producing partner of the festival) and Creating Impakt, the consultancy delivering the Festival's marketing and communications work. Together we workshopped the strategic intentions of the Festival and better understood the practicalities of delivery. This informed the content of the Theory of Change, as well as the natures of the indicators included on the Evaluation Framework.

This work was undertaken and completed by June 2023, and used to publish a request for quotation containing the above documents and also outlining the full scope of work for delivery of the project. FRY Creative were successful in securing the contract for delivery of this evaluation scope, which commenced in early July 2023. FRY Creative were contracted to undertake this work in partnership with MEL Research, who were responsible for collecting audience data via fieldworkers, and also for undertaking the economic impact analysis.

As above, the evaluation for Birmingham Festival 23 was refined in consultation with its multiple stakeholders, as well as strategic documentation provided by Festival 23 and its funders. The result was an evaluation which would seek to outline the economic, social and cultural impact of Festival 23, displaying how it seamlessly led on from momentum built by the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games whilst also holding space and evidencing need for future cultural work in the city. More about its specific ambition and methods can be found in the programme overview section of this report.

### **Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework**

A theory of change identifies the changes an intervention is seeking to make, how they will happen, the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts associated with the intended changes and the external factors which could influence these.

The evaluation of Birmingham Festival 23 was driven by the need to demonstrate the worth and value of holding large-scale, free-to-access events in the public realm, in Birmingham. It sought to evidence how the impact of holding such an event was far beyond solely supporting the culture sector, and in fact played a central role in aiding tourism and perceptions, platforming local businesses and increasing footfall and spend.

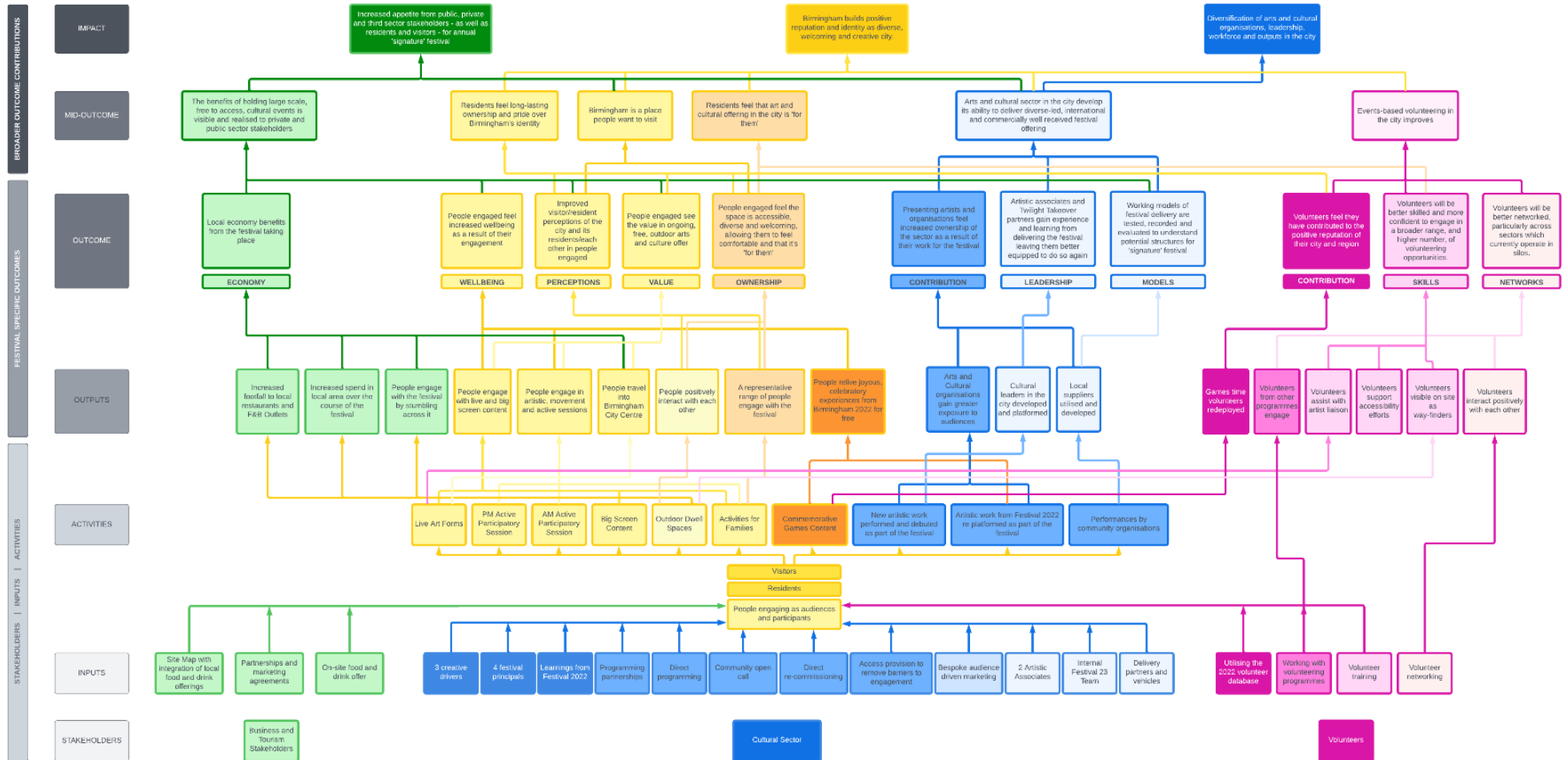
Beyond broader impact, the evaluation looked to evidence how events of this kind brought local people together, fostering positive physical and mental wellbeing, via connection, pride and inclusion. This process concluded in ten pillar outcomes: Economy, Wellbeing, Perceptions, Value, Ownership, Contribution, Leadership, Models, Skills, and Networks. The Skills and Networks pillar outcomes - relating specifically to volunteer engagement - whilst developed in the Theory of Change were not measured as part of the scope of this evaluation. This was predominantly as the volunteers were deployed by United By 2022.

The full Theory of Change can be viewed at [this link](#) and a version is visible below.

The Evaluation Framework can be viewed at Appendix 1.

# Birmingham Festival 23 Theory of Change

Full version can be found at [this link](#).



## **Evaluation Methodology**

As a result of these three areas of focus - broader economic ramifications, individual audience impact and sector engagement - data collection focused on obtaining information from:

1. Audiences;
2. Business and tourism stakeholders who benefited from the festival;
3. Presenting partners who delivered the festival content.

Whilst some data on volunteers was collected via United By 2022's volunteering platform, full analysis and reporting on the impact on volunteers was outside the scope of this work. As mentioned above in the scope section, this evaluation set out to achieve a practical level of evidence that would be able to be captured within the timeframe and budget available. As such, no baselining took place as part of data capture. In addition data collection has focused on evidencing the outcomes developed in the Theory of Change. Therefore there are no unexpected outcomes evidenced in this report. The only secondary data which has been used as part of this report is audience data from Birmingham 2022 Festival's evaluation. This can be seen in Figure 12 of the report.

A full list of primary data sources and collection methods can be found below.

### **Sources of information**

#### Audience Survey (quantitative and qualitative)

A mixed methods survey delivered via systematic sampling by MEL Research fieldworkers was conducted every day across the run of the festival. This survey was delivered to approximately 500 people, with a final sample of n=495 returns being utilised for the purposes of analysis following data cleaning and validation. The survey contained questions on demographics, sentiment on the festival, and spend whilst on location. Analysis on the data was conducted by MEL Research and FRY Creative. With a confidence level of 95%, these results have a confidence interval of between 0.87% < n < 4.38%.

#### Key Informant Interviews (qualitative)

From the 7 to 31 August FRY Creative conducted a total of 20 key informant interviews with people involved in the festival. This included the majority of Twilight Takeover partners who presented work at the festival; both of the Artistic Associates who were closely involved with the festival's curation; a number of Business and Tourism stakeholders and partners, who benefited directly and indirectly from the festival taking place; and finally members of the internal Festival 23 and OPUS (principal delivery vehicle for the festival) teams. These semi-structured interviews were conducted utilising a topic guide developed according to the evaluation framework. All consent was informed and collected at the point of interview. Data was coded and processed via narrative analysis by FRY Creative.

#### Staff Survey (quantitative and qualitative)

A short survey was circulated to all presenting partners contracted by OPUS to deliver work for the festival. This survey was to be completed by anyone who was paid by these organisations (PAYE and/or freelancers) to deliver work for the festival. All questions in the survey were optional. The survey was completed by 222 people, and a sample of  $194 < n < 206$  was used following data cleaning and validation. With a confidence level of 95% these results have a confidence interval of between  $1.13% < n < 5.91%$ .

#### Presenting Partner Activity Survey (quantitative)

Each presenting partner contracted by OPUS was asked to complete an activity survey. This collected information on the content of their performance/s, as well as how many people and organisations were involved in each. This data was then aggregated to be reported on a festival level. Of the 95 contracts held by OPUS, 70 completed and returned an activity survey.

#### Footfall Count Methodology<sup>2</sup>

The Festival was responsible for capturing an estimation of footfall on the festival site in order to share this with the evaluators for further processing. Four Festival Stewards with handheld 'clicker-counters' were placed at far ends of the festival site – two at each end of the main thoroughfare on Centenary Square, clicking in people who came onto the site, and clicking out people who left the site. These four counts were logged at hourly intervals, and a total number of people on site was calculated by reducing the number who came on to site, by the number who left the site. This number was accumulated throughout each day of the festival to give a total daily footfall. The Festival team and evaluators recognise the difficulties of precision counting footfall on a large, open access site, that also serves as a city thoroughfare. The clicker-counting process did not take into account people who may have entered or left the festival site via the fountain edge onto Broad Street, or via the side of the Library of Birmingham. Therefore, they accept that the footfall count methodology had flaws, and that the total figures are a conservative estimate, made reasonable through the consistency and simplicity of their approach.

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<sup>2</sup> Supplied by Festival 23.



## **Output Summary**

### Projects and Artistic Work

- 153 projects and performances took place at the festival, 40 of which contained new artistic work
- 14 projects re-displayed work from Birmingham 2022 Festival
- 5 Twilight Takeover partnerships
- 2 Artistic Associates

### Staff and Organisations

- 185 presenting partner organisations were involved in the delivery of the festival
- 658 were paid by presenting partners to deliver projects, 521 of these people were performers, artists or creatives
- 301 people took part in the festival as voluntary performers, artists or creatives
- 800+ total performers, artists or creatives<sup>3</sup>

### Volunteers

- 74 volunteers contributed to festival delivery via partnership with United By 2022
- 1358 volunteering hours

### Audiences

- Footfall of 123,831 - these were people counted on site during the course of the festival
- 46,521 engaged audiences - these were audiences who engaged deeply with festival content, staying for long periods and returning for multiple days
- 3-hour median dwell time on average per audience member, per day
- 20,991 unique people attending the festival - these were the total number of individuals we predict experienced the festival as engaged audiences
- On average people attended the festival for 2.2 days
- NPS score of 58<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Internal data collection undertaken by the Festival calculate total performers, artists and creatives is in excess of 1,100.

<sup>4</sup> Retently, 'What is a Good Net Promoter Score? (2023 NPS Benchmark)', May 18, 2023, [accessed 14/09/2023].

## Engagement Profile

Below outlines the engagement demographic profile of Audiences, Volunteers and PAYE staff and freelancers who were paid for their delivery role in the festival. Both PAYE employees and freelance contractors, including artists, are included here under the label 'staff' as survey returns did not facilitate a sample large enough for rigorous comparison between employment types. Sample sizes for each group, per graph are outlined throughout.

Figure 1. **How would you describe your gender?**  
 (Audience n = 495, Volunteers n=71, Staff n=204f)

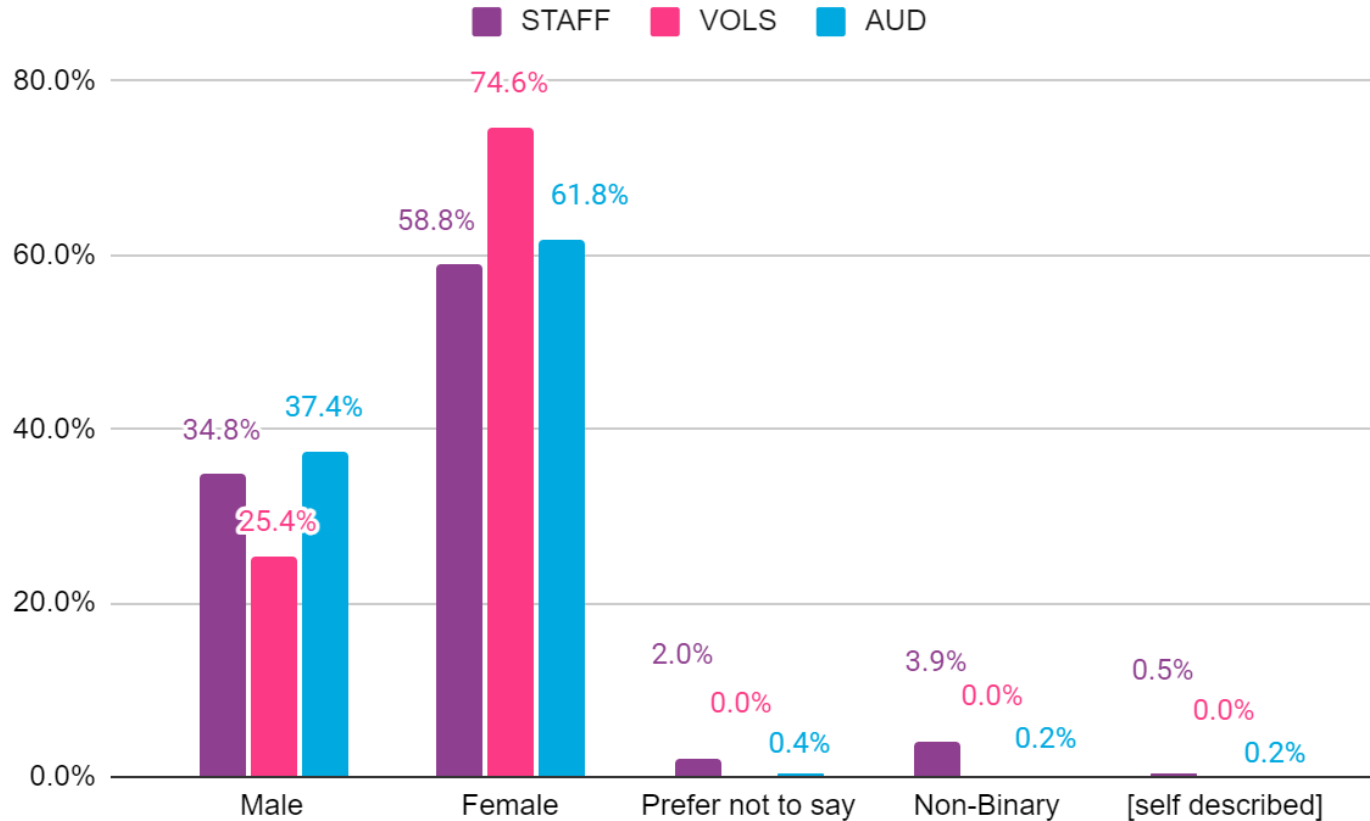


Figure 2. **Which of the following best describes your ethnic origin or cultural background?**

(Audience n=495, Volunteers n=71, Staff n=202)

Which of the following best describes your ethnic origin or cultural background?	STAFF	VOLS	AUD
Asian or Asian British: Chinese	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	11.9%	14.1%	10.1%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	4.5%	1.4%	8.3%
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian background	0.5%	1.4%	6.5%
Black or Black British: African	6.9%	4.2%	4.0%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	12.4%	18.3%	4.8%
Black or Black British: Other Black/African/Caribbean background	3.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Middle Eastern / Arab background	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%
Mixed: Other mixed/multiple ethnic background	2.0%	1.4%	0.4%
Mixed: White and Asian	1.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Mixed: White and Black African	0.5%	0.0%	1.4%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	5.4%	0.0%	2.6%
Prefer not to say	2.0%	2.8%	1.4%
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	35.6%	54.9%	47.9%
White: Other White background	12.9%	1.4%	5.9%
Other [specified]	0.5%	0.0%	3.4%

Figure 3. **How would you describe your faith?**  
 (Audience n=495, Volunteers n=70, Staff n=194)

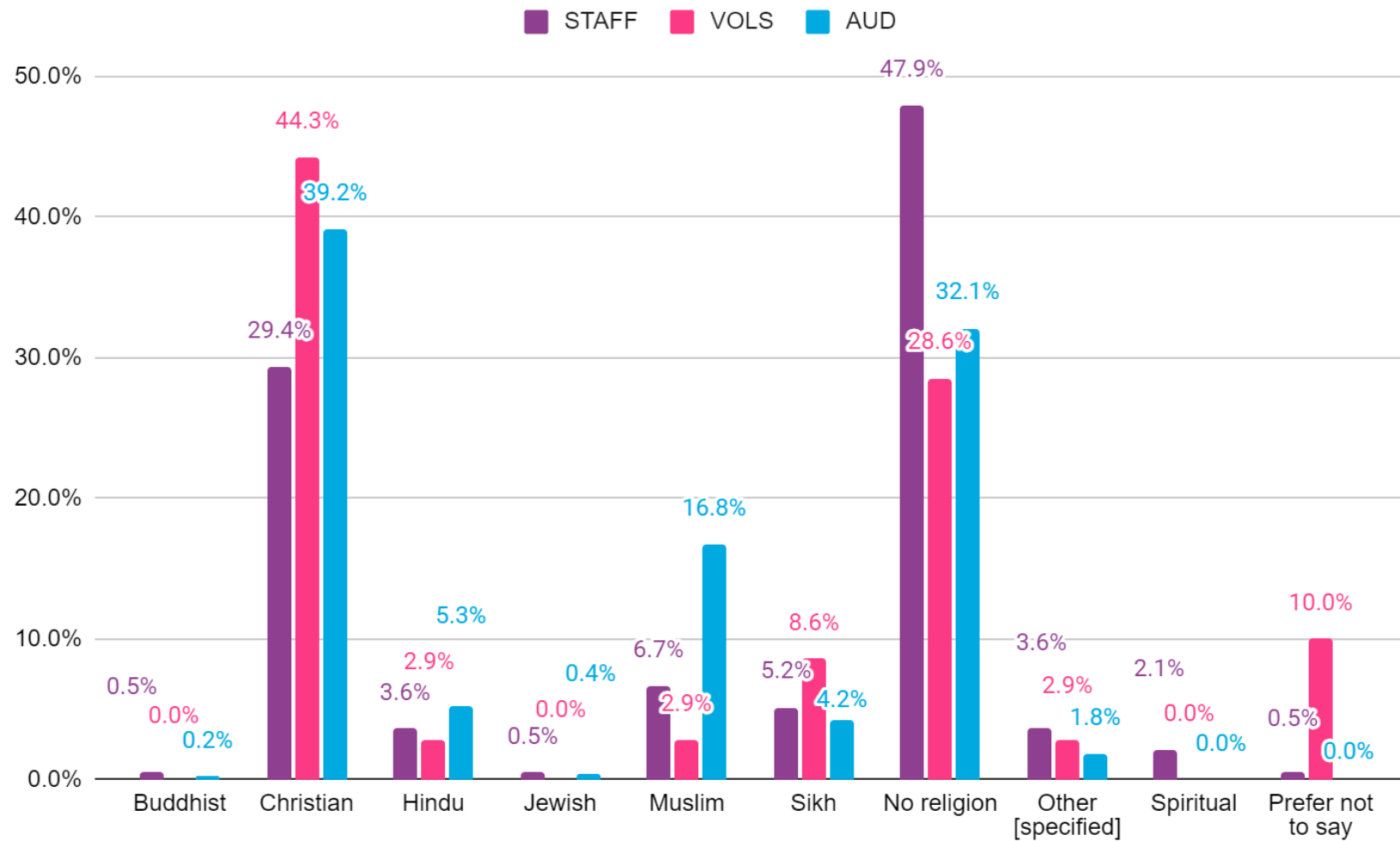


Figure 4. **What is your age?**

(Audience n=492, Volunteers n=74, Staff n=200)

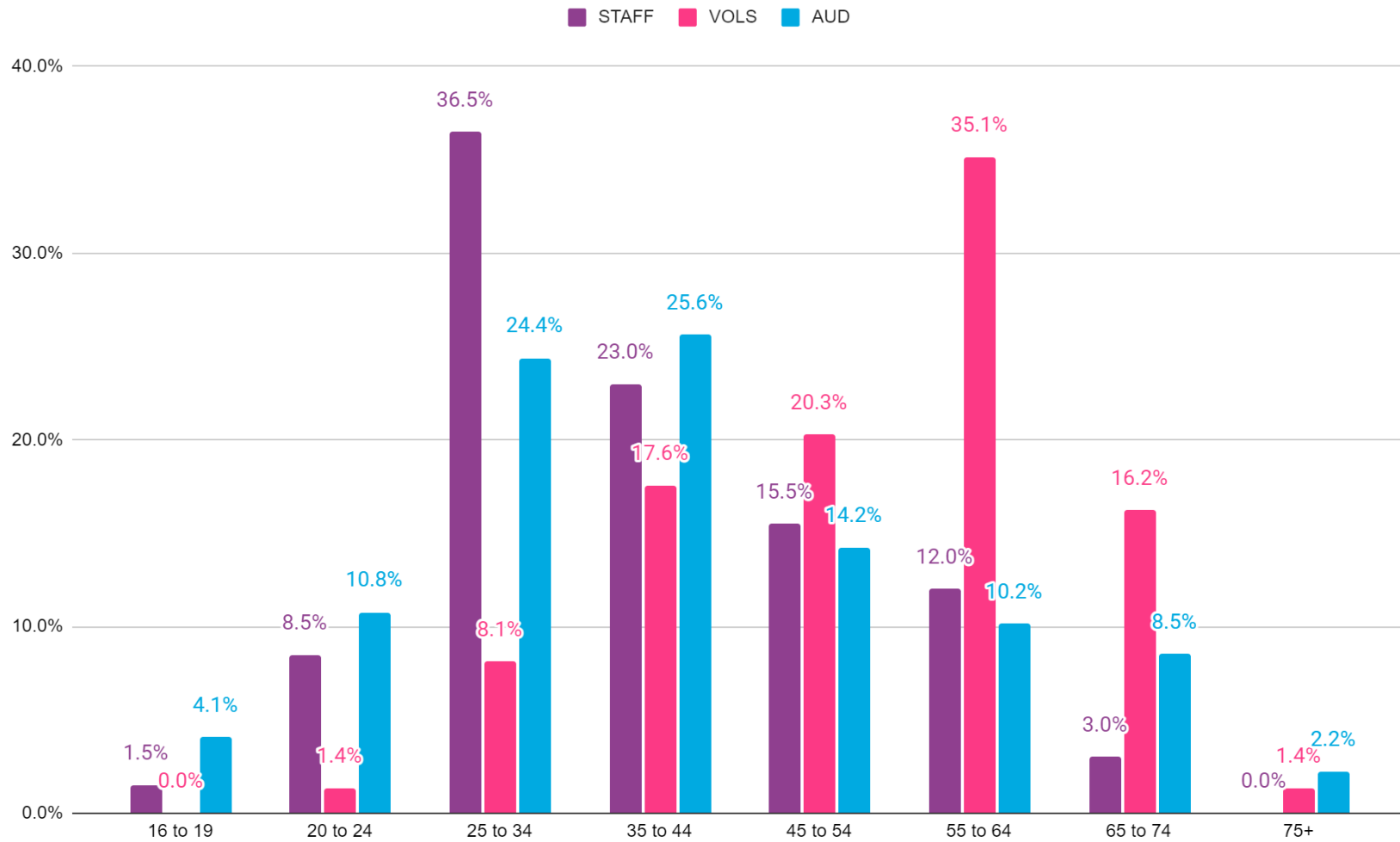


Figure 5. **Do you identify with any of the following?**  
(Audience n=492, Staff n=206)

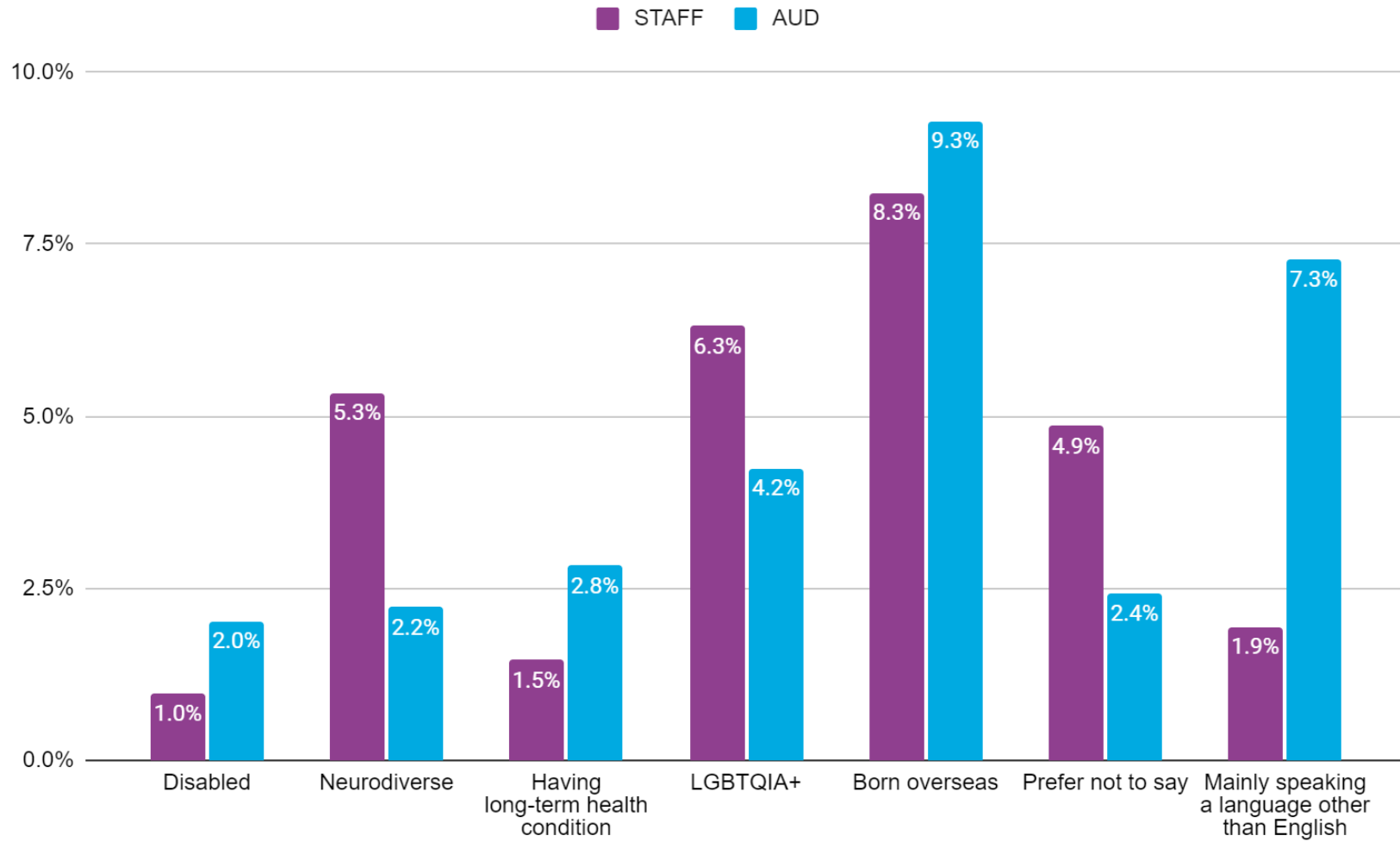


Figure 6. **Which of the following best describes where you usually live?**  
(Audience n=495, Staff n=206)

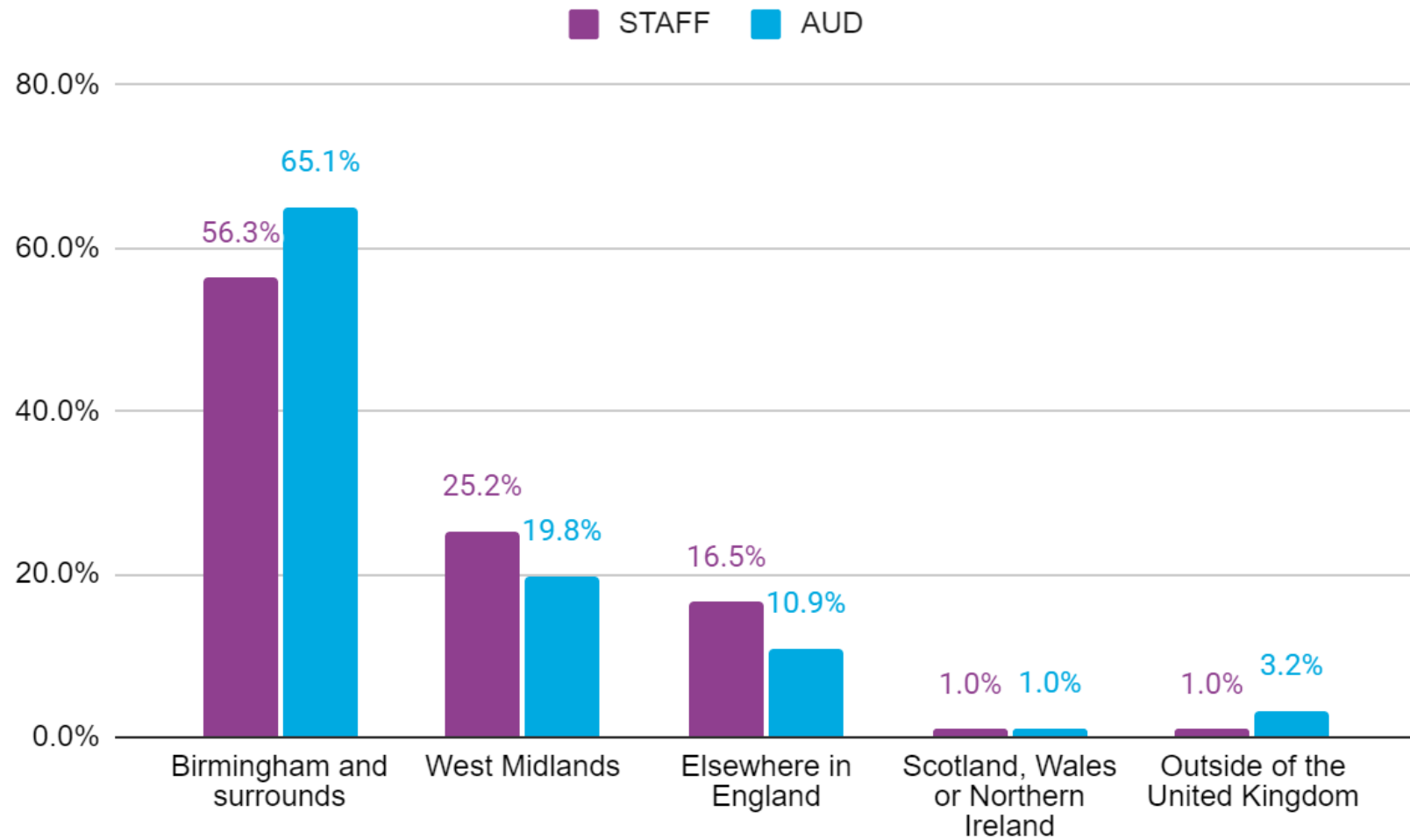


Figure 7. **Postcodes Engagement Map - Birmingham (Birmingham Only Postcodes)**

[View Interactive [Map Live Link](#)]

(Audience n=337, Organisation postcode n=68, Staff n=195, Volunteers n=74)

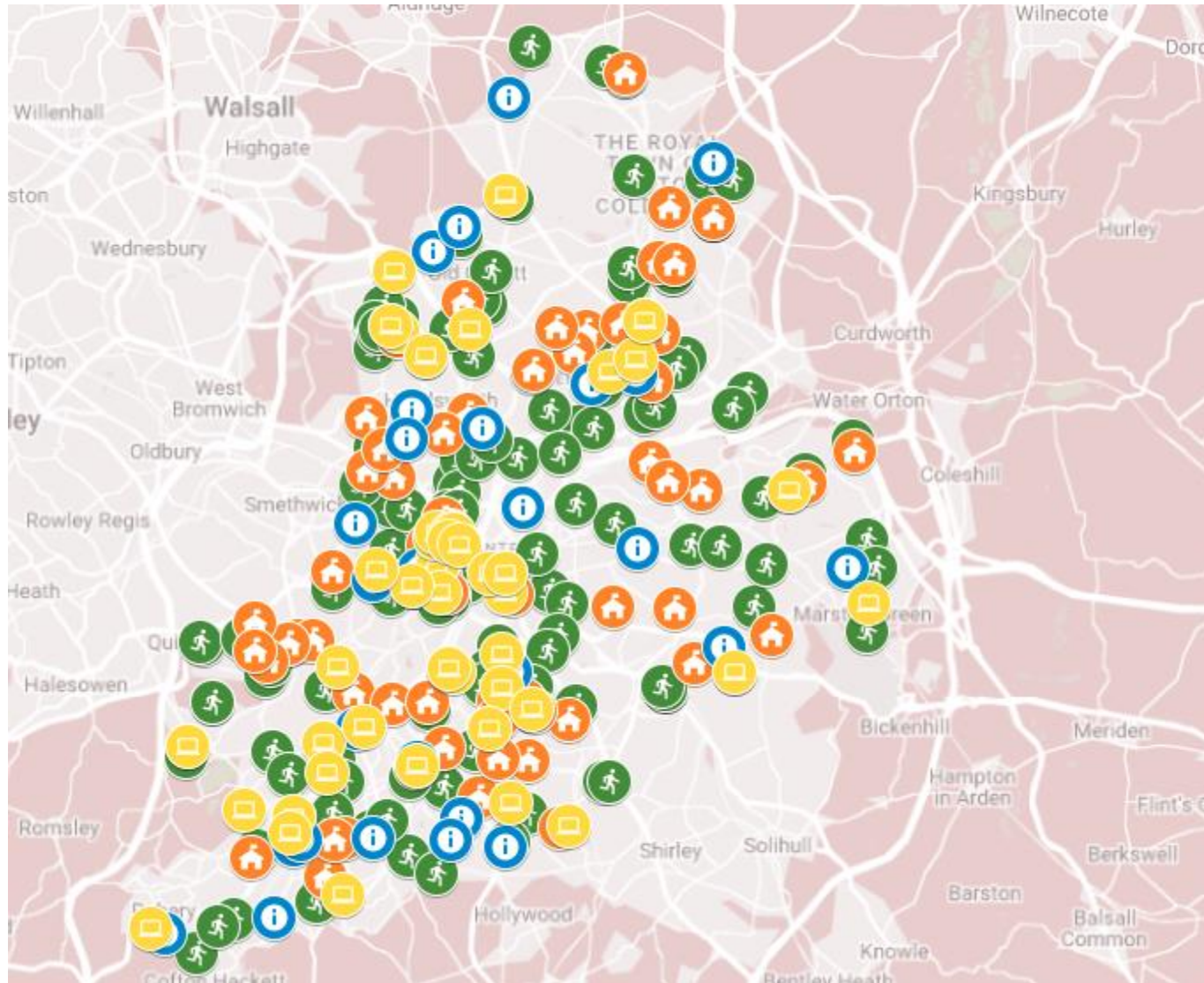




Figure 8. **Postcodes Engagement Map - England**

[[View Interactive Map Live Link](#)]

(Audience n=337, Organisation postcode n=68, Staff n=195, Volunteers n=74)

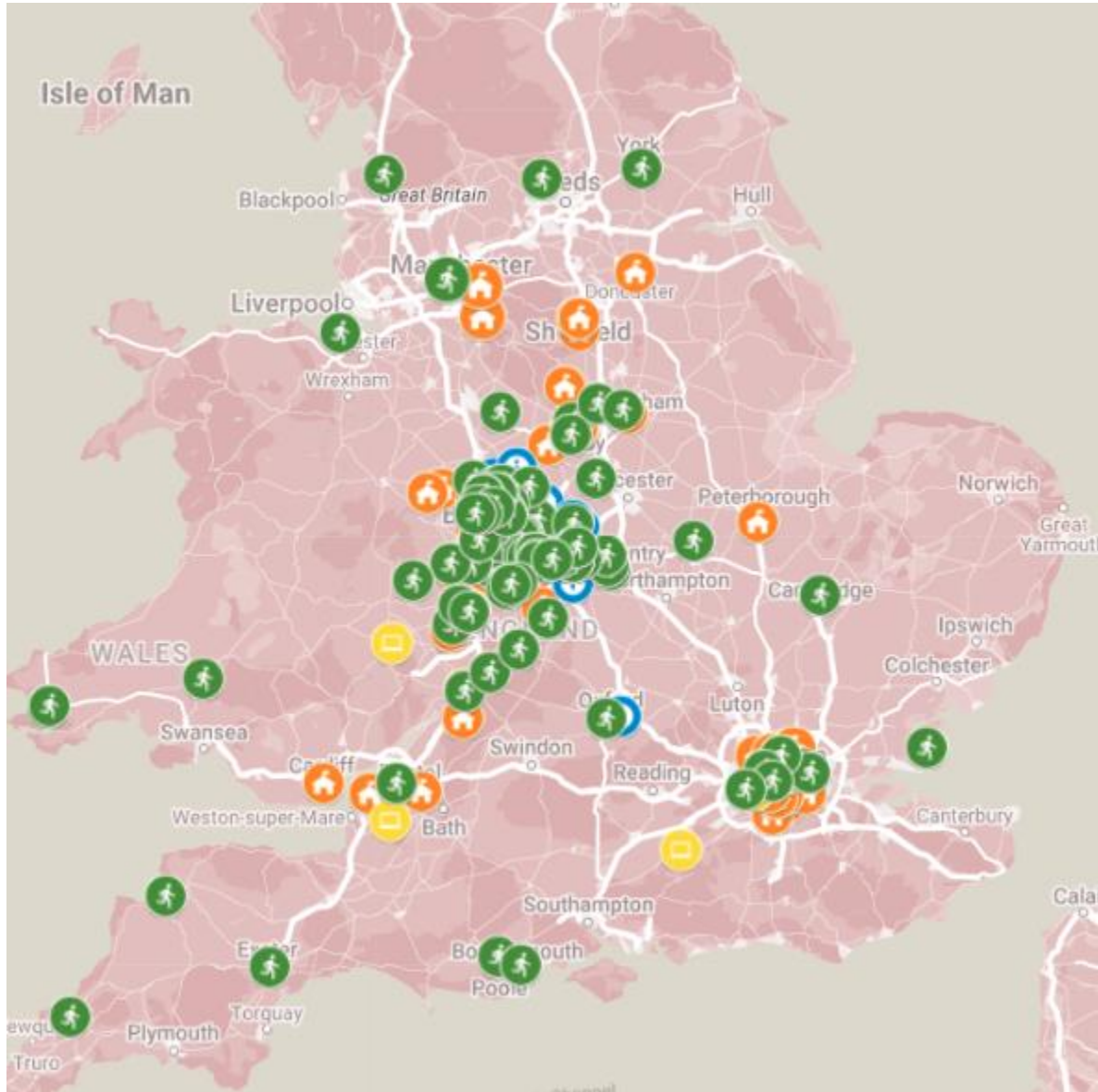
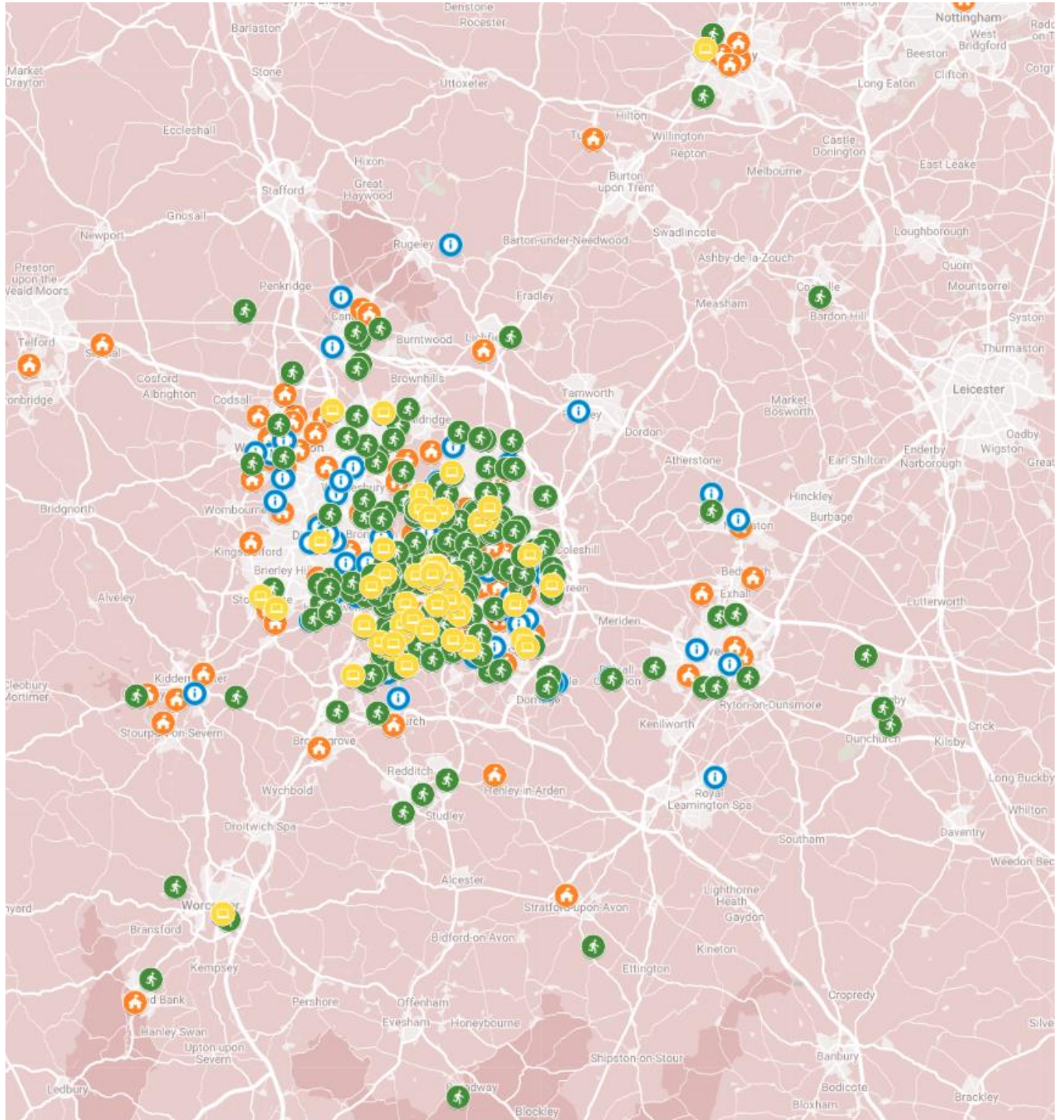


Figure 9. **Postcodes Engagement Map - West Midlands**

[[View Interactive Map Live Link](#)]

(Audience n=337, Organisation postcode n=68, Staff n=195, Volunteers n=7)



## **Dimensions Overview**

As part of Festival 23 there were eight dimensions questions asked to audiences about their experience. Audiences were asked to rank how far they agreed with the sentiments from 0 - 100. Figure 10 displays the results, highlighting the median value in pink, and the upper and lower quartile values in blue and purple respectively. The dimensions which audiences were asked to score were as follows:

**Distinctiveness:** It was different from things I've experienced before

**Connection:** It helped me to feel connected to people in the community

**Heritage:** It made me feel connected to a shared history/culture

**Pride in place:** It made me feel proud of my local area

**Insight:** It helped me gain new insight or knowledge

**Content:** It reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices

**Wellbeing:** It had a positive impact on my physical health and mental wellbeing

**Atmosphere:** It was friendly and inclusive

A clear outlier, as highlighted by the above graph, was 'atmosphere: it was friendly and inclusive'. This gained by far the highest median score, 95, which was 11 points higher than any other median from the dimensions. This sizable differentiation highlights that above all else, the most pervasive feeling about the festival on the part of audiences was that it cultivated positivity in the space: it made people feel comfortable and safe. This is compounded by the fact that 'atmosphere' had the smallest interquartile range of any of the dimensions, meaning that audiences answered more similarly to each other on this question, than on any of the other dimensions. Not only did people respond very positively to the dimensions, but also a large number of people felt a similar way. This clearly works towards the 'ownership' pillar outcome from the Theory of Change: 'people engaged feel the space is accessible, diverse and welcoming, allowing them to feel comfortable and that it's 'for them'.' This will be further discussed in the outcomes section below.

This is similarly the case for 'pride in place', which scored the second highest median. Though not to the same extremity as 'atmosphere', its median of 84 notes a strong positive sentiment towards pride over the local area. This may be connected with the fact that such a strong contingent of audiences (84.9%) were from Birmingham or the wider West Midlands. 'Pride in place' also had the second lowest interquartile range of the indicators, again displaying that the majority of audiences felt similarly about this dimension than they did about others. When taken together with the above results on 'atmosphere' we can clearly see the festival's success in establishing an event which helps 'residents feel that art and cultural offering in the city is 'for them'' - as noted in one of the medium-term outcomes from the Theory of Change.

On the other end of the dimensions scale, the two dimensions with the lowest median scores, were also those with the largest interquartile ranges. These were: 'distinctiveness: It was different from things I've experienced before' and 'insight: It helped me gain new insight or knowledge'. Both of these dimensions highlight reception to work which may be seen as pushing the boundaries on artistic endeavour and cultural experiences. When we refer back to Festival 23's Theory of Change, it is perhaps no surprise that these were our lowest scoring dimensions. The strategic intention of the festival was simultaneously about being inclusive, open, and accessible, whilst also displaying content from Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and Festival, in order to celebrate its anniversary. As such, it is perhaps less of a surprise that audiences were more likely to find the content familiar and less challenging.

Figure 10. **Dimensions Questions:** Lower quartile, Median, Upper Quartile (Audience n=495)

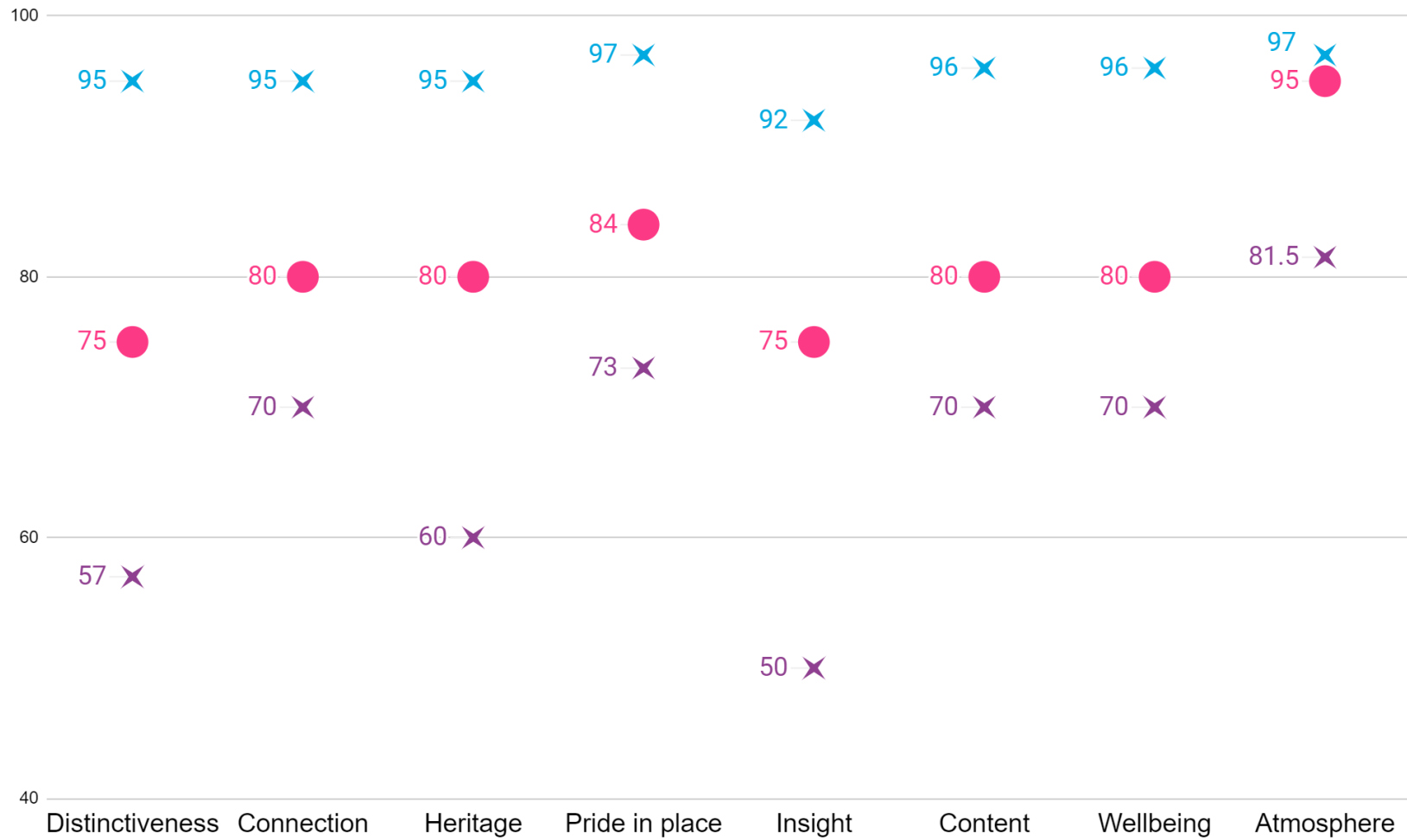


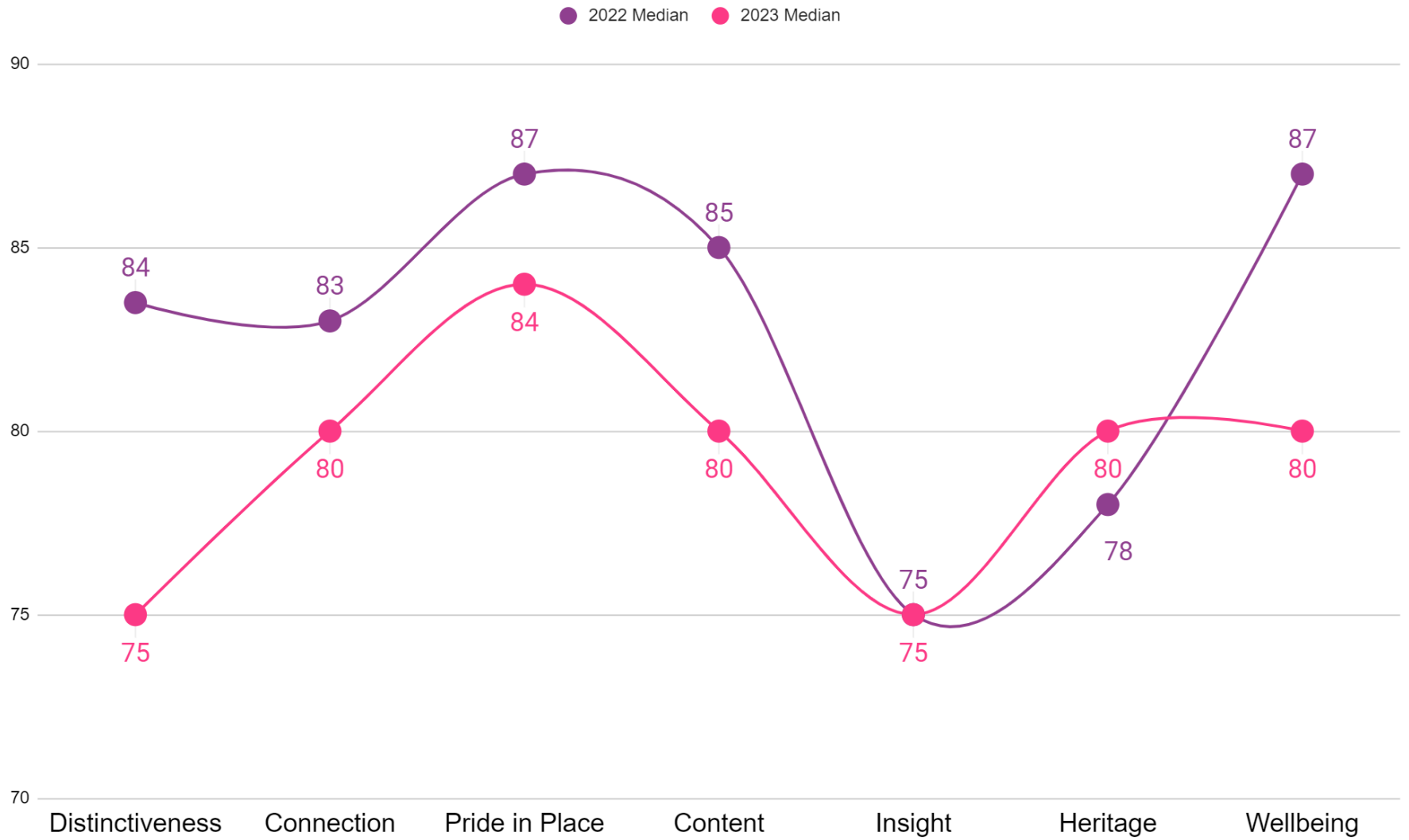
Figure 11. **Dimensions Questions: Mean Scores** (Audiences n=495)

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
Distinctiveness: It was different from things I've experienced before	72
Connection: It helped me to feel connected to people in the community	77
Heritage: It made me feel connected to a shared history/culture	75
Pride in place: It made me feel proud of my local area	80
Insight: It helped me gain new insight or knowledge	68
Content: It reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices	79
Wellbeing: It had a positive impact on my physical health and mental wellbeing	79
Atmosphere: It was friendly and inclusive	88

Whilst ‘heritage’, ‘connection’, ‘content’ and ‘wellbeing’ all scored the same median of 80 (as shown in Figure 10), the mean (average) scores of each varied slightly, offering some nuance to their discussion. This is displayed in Figure 11 above. Of the four dimensions, ‘content’ and ‘wellbeing’ both averaged a mean value of 79, slightly higher than that of ‘connection’ or ‘heritage’. Again, in some respects this reflects the intention outlined in Festival 23’s Theory of Change. As will be discussed further in the following section, ‘people engaged feel increased wellbeing as a result of their engagement’, and ‘a representative range of people engage with the festival’ were identified as strategic drivers. This was not the case for ‘heritage’ which remains largely absent from the Festival’s Theory of Change. ‘Connection’, however, was also a key driver discussed extensively in the document, which highlights an ambition for ‘people [to] positively interact with each other’. This is less decisively highlighted in the audience's dimension scores.

Figure 12 below compares dimensions data collected as part of the Festival 23’s evaluation (in pink) with that collected at the Festival Sites which took place as part of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (in purple). Perhaps as expected due to the fact that they took place within the context of a mega event, all except one of the median values for dimensions collected during 2022 were higher than that collected this year. However, Figure 12 shows a clear consistency between results across both years.

Figure 12 **Dimensions Questions:** *Median value 2022 Festival Sites, Median Value Festival 23*  
 (Audience Festival 23 n=495, Audiences 2022 Festival Sites 619 < n < 658)



The majority of the dimensions have a median which is a similar distance apart: for 5 out of 7 dimensions the medians are between 0 - 5 points difference. For two dimensions however, Festival 23 scored lower than its predecessor: distinctiveness and wellbeing. The former, as above, may well be attributed to the fact that Festival 23 was an anniversary festival celebrating the Games and therefore would be familiar with the majority of its audience. The wellbeing dimension has a discrepancy of 7 points - 86% of audiences agreed with the sentiment in 2022, compared with 78.6% in 2023. Whilst wellbeing remains a strong dimension for 2023 overall, this big discrepancy may be linked to the vast programme of engagement taking place during the Games, when the 2022 data was captured.

On the whole, the dimensions positively reflect the outcome ambitions for audience experience outlined in Festival 23's Theory of Change. Each, along with additional outcomes relating to the culture sector and Business and Tourism stakeholders, will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

## **Pillar Outcomes**

As discussed in the methodology section of this report, this evaluation contained ten pillar outcomes. These ten pillar outcomes form the main structure of reporting on the impact of the Festival. As detailed, they were developed in consultation with the Festival, its relevant stakeholders and the funding agreements to which they were contracted.

These ten pillars acted as the outcomes that Festival 23 had principal impact on. They were developed as the natural end to which the festival activities (and therefore outputs) worked towards, should they be delivered successfully. As such on the Theory of Change, they are discussed as the 'Festival Specific Outcomes'. Above them sit 'Broader Outcome Areas' - these are impacts that the festival, in successful delivery of its activities and outputs, are contributing towards, but don't have exclusive control over.

Below we have outlined the evidence collected against the pillar outcomes. In some instances we have also discussed some of the 'Broader Outcome Areas' that the festival is contributing towards in delivery of these festival specific outcomes. This section therefore simultaneously displays how Festival 23 was successful in delivering on its ten pillar outcomes, whilst also contributing to the broader ambitions of the region.

The ten pillar outcomes were attributed to stakeholder groups which they affected most. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is crossover between the outcomes and groups, we have discussed each outcome in relation to a specific grouping. As such there are four broader outcome areas, each relating to a stakeholder group. The ten pillar outcomes sit within each of the areas, as detailed below. As noted above, the volunteer outcomes of Skills and Networks were beyond the scope of this work and therefore absent from the below discussion.



**Audience Outcomes:** Wellbeing, Perceptions, Value

**Culture Sector Outcomes:** Ownership, Contribution, Leadership, Models

**Business and Tourism Stakeholder Outcomes:** Economy

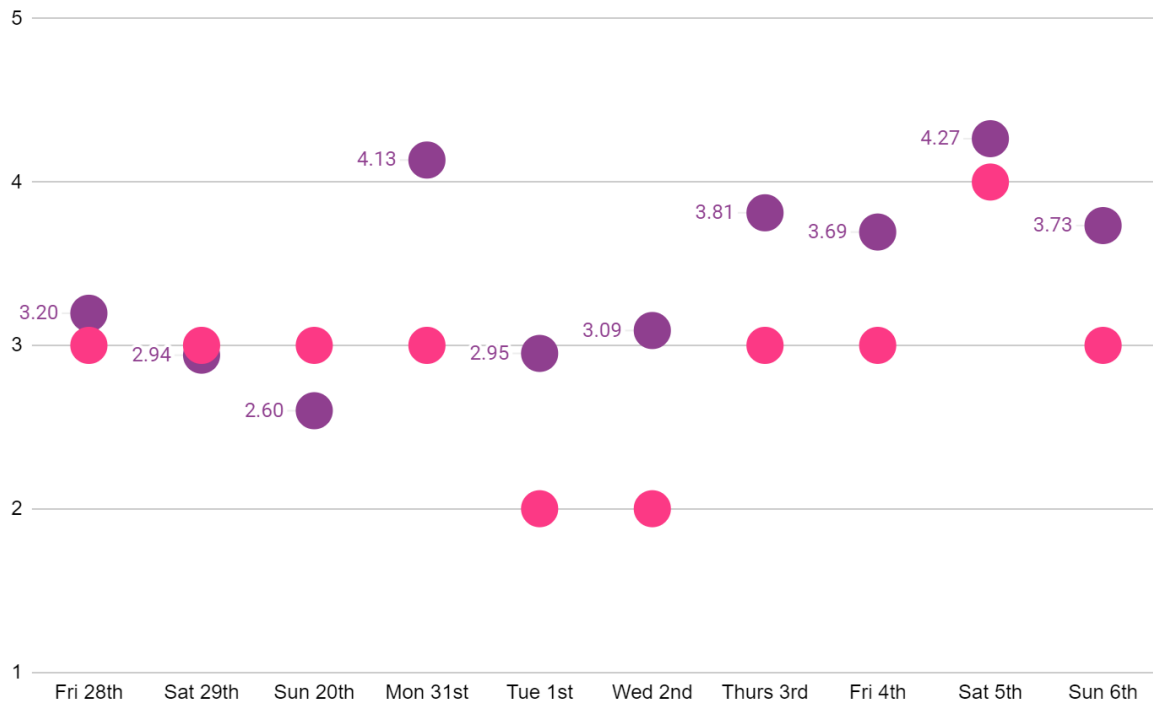
**Volunteer Outcomes:** Skills, Networks

## Wellbeing

The first outcome related to audiences in the Theory of Change is about wellbeing: ‘people engaged feel increased wellbeing as a result of their engagement’.

Over the course of the ten-day festival a footfall of approximately 123,831 was counted across the site. In order to calculate the number of audiences and unique audience this hourly, cumulative footfall count represented, we asked people on the ground about how long they had stayed, or were planning to stay, at the festival, as well as how many days they had attended, or were planning to attend.

Figure 13. **Hourly Dwell Time Audiences: Mean and Median per day**  
(Audiences n=495)



Audiences on average spent just over three and half hours on site when they attended the festival. The majority of days saw a median dwell time of 3 hours, with the exception of Tuesday and Wednesday - the midpoint of the festival - which saw the median dwell drop by an hour. The median average dwell time also peaked on the final Saturday of the festival, where it reached 4 hours. Applying these

median dwell times to the daily footfall, we estimate that the festival achieved a total audience of approximately 46,521.

Audiences on average attended 2.2 days of the festival. This average is then used in order to calculate a predicted number of individual people who experienced the festival as audiences. Applying our average number of days attended we predict that approximately 20,991 people experienced the festival over the course of its 10 days.

The above highlights and evidences the depth of engagement Festival 23 had with their audiences. When people came to the festival, they stayed, and after they went home that day, the majority of people came back. 53% of audiences attended the festival for 2 or more days. This is testament not only to the quality of programming achieved by Festival 23, but the quality of experience it engendered in its audiences.

As well as more traditional arts and cultural activities, the Festival spent time programming physical activity sessions as well as content which celebrated the anniversary of the Commonwealth Games happening in Birmingham. In our presenting partner activity survey, 20% of the contracted organisations said their projects contained work previously presented as part of Birmingham 2022 Festival. Nearly three quarters of audiences said they had an 'excellent' or 'good' experience engaging with this content. This was particularly the case for people from Birmingham and the West Midlands, who were more likely to identify a positive experience of this content, when compared to people from the rest of the UK or beyond it. When taken with the fact that 'pride in place' dimensions scored the second highest median and second smallest inter quartile range, it shows that through displaying anniversary content from Birmingham 2022, Festival 23 was successful in inspiring positive memories of the Games, which in turn led to renewed feelings of pride in place. Again, these were feelings which were similarly felt amongst a large proportion of the audience.

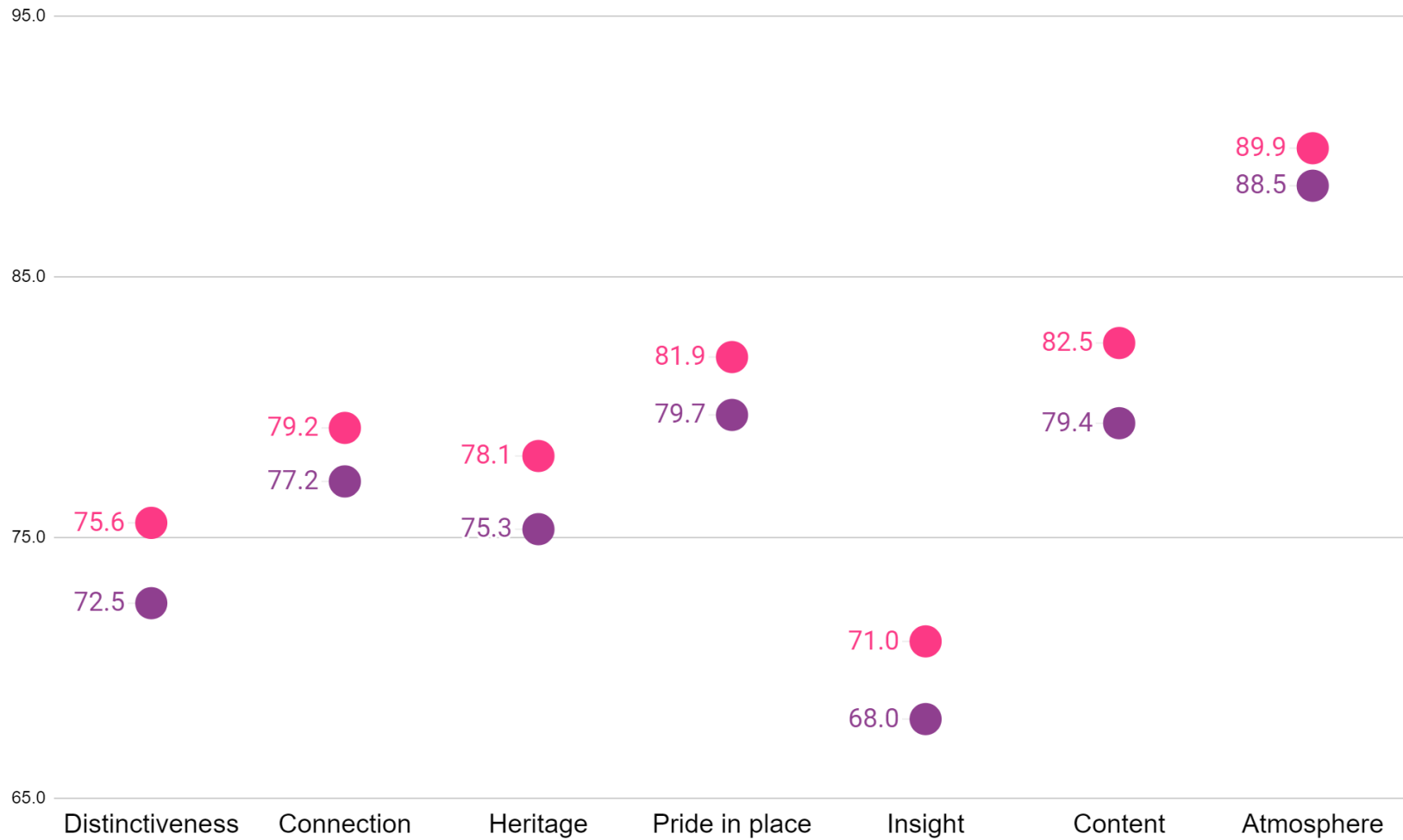
There was also a wide variety of physical activity sessions programmed as part of the festival such as participatory movement and fitness sessions, and 'have-a-go' sporting activities. 10.5% of audiences who attended the festival said they engaged with this content.

The combination of accessible and inclusive cultural programming, physical activity sessions, and anniversary content from the Games led to an audience which was engaged, and continued to engage over the course of the festival. As set out in the Festival's Theory of Change, it was this depth of engagement, as well as a combination of the above programming inputs, which was intended to contribute to audiences feeling a positive sense of wellbeing. 78.6% of people agreed that the festival had a positive impact on their physical health and mental wellbeing.

Wellbeing also had an effect on all other dimensions reported by audiences. Generally if audiences reported a positive impact on wellbeing (scoring the dimension above 62/100), they were more likely

to also report higher scores on every other dimension they were asked about. On average, those who experienced a positive increase to wellbeing scored all other dimensions between 1.44 and 3.08 points higher. The difference was most noticeable in 'distinctiveness' and 'content' dimensions.

Figure 14. **Dimensions Questions:** **General Sample Mean** vs **Mean of those who identified positive wellbeing**  
 (Audience general sample n=495, Positive Wellbeing Sample n=389)



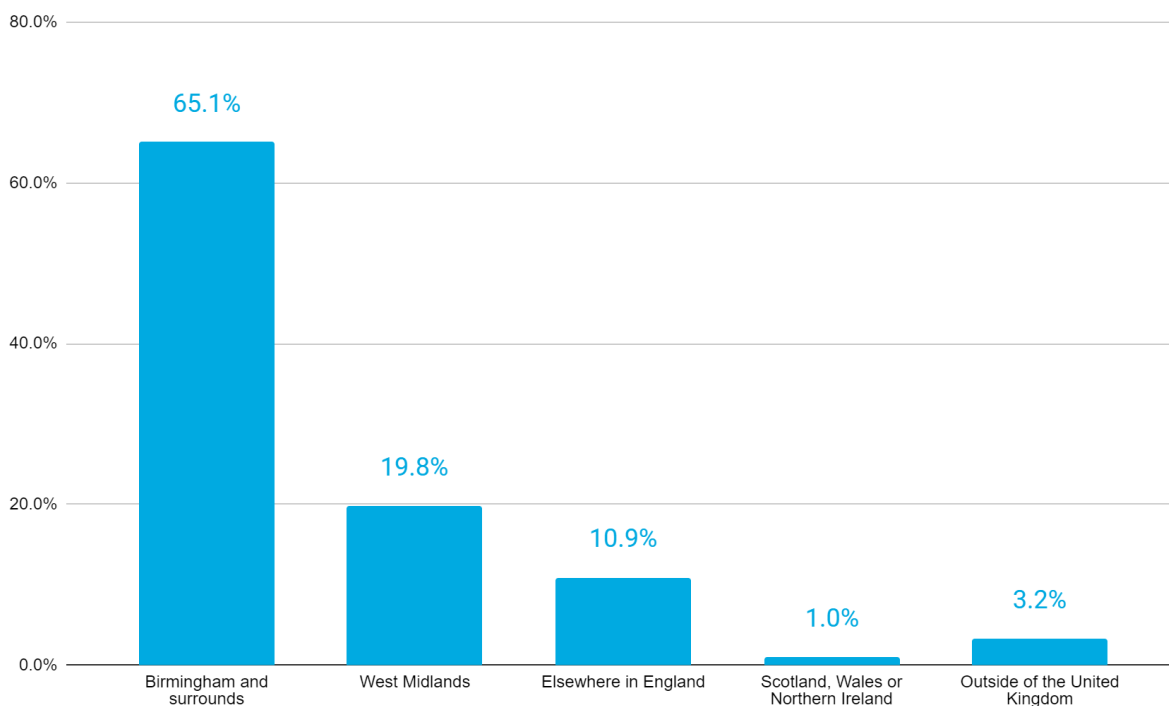
## Perceptions

The second principal audience related outcome was on perceptions: ‘improved visitor/resident perceptions of the city and its residents/each other in people engaged’.

*‘Very positive for Birmingham’*  
20 to 24 year old, Female, Denmark

This outcome contains a few principal ideas. First, that the festival intended to improve the perceptions of its city and also perceptions of its residents too. Second, that it was interested in the self-perceptions of the city (of its residents on each other and on the infrastructure of the city) as well as external perceptions of Birmingham. Both of these factors are driving the ongoing ambitions of the city, as represented in the medium-term outcomes of the Theory of Change: ‘Birmingham is a place people want to visit’ and ‘Residents feel long-lasting ownership and pride over Birmingham's identity’.

**Figure 15. Which of the following best describes where you usually live?**  
(Audience n=495)



The festival was clearly successful in drawing an audience from outside of the city. 15.1% of audiences came from outside of the West Midlands. A further 19.8% of audiences travelled from elsewhere in the

West Midlands, into Birmingham City Centre. As will be discussed in the 'Economy' Outcome of this report - drawing such a sizable proportion of people into Birmingham City Centre, and keeping them there, as shown through the dwell time reporting - is crucial in achieving the outcomes laid out above.

Audiences were asked how far they agreed with the statement 'Festival 23 has improved my perception of Birmingham'. In the full sample, 66.5% of people agreed,<sup>5</sup> showing not only that the festival gave a positive perception of the city, but that it worked to actively improve the perception of the city. This was more apparent in visitors than in residents - 59.6% of Birmingham residents agreed that it improved their perception of the city whereas 79.2% visitors agreed with the same statement.

The near 20% difference in opinion suggests two things. First, that Birmingham residents perhaps already hold their city in relatively high esteem, showing that their opinion is less likely to be improved. This is corroborated by the fact that during the Birmingham 2022 Festival, resident audiences reported a strong increase to their perceptions. The lack of continued increase again this year may reflect a higher baseline prior to attending Festival 23, on the part of resident audiences.<sup>6</sup> Second, that the festival has been incredibly successful in projecting a positive view of Birmingham to those outside of it. As above, this provides clear evidence of the festival making 'Birmingham [is] a place people want to visit', as highlighted in its Theory of Change.

Audiences were also asked to what extent they felt that Festival 23 played 'an important role in promoting the cultural life of the area'. 91.1% of audiences agreed with the sentiment. This was especially the case with visitors: 93.9% of those from the West Midlands and 98.1% of those from elsewhere in England agreed with the above statement. Again, this further highlights the positive impact the festival has had on perceptions of the city and its cultural offering, particularly in those who are visiting from outside of Birmingham.

As is shown in Figure 16 below, dimensions results did not differ significantly between Birmingham residents and visitors in the majority of instances. Results were similar for content, wellbeing, atmosphere and connection, all within a 3% deviation range. On two dimensions results differed significantly between visitors and residents. The first was 'pride in place: It made me feel proud of my local area', where 83.9% of residents agreed with the statement compared to 73.4% of visitors. Evidently this compounds the idea that the festival was successful in facilitating people from Birmingham feeling proud of their city. The second was 'Distinctiveness: It was different from things I've experienced before'. 72.8% of visitors agreed with the statement compared to 63.7% of residents. As shown in Figure 16, visitors were also much more likely to identify that the festival helped them gain new insight or knowledge, when compared to resident audiences.

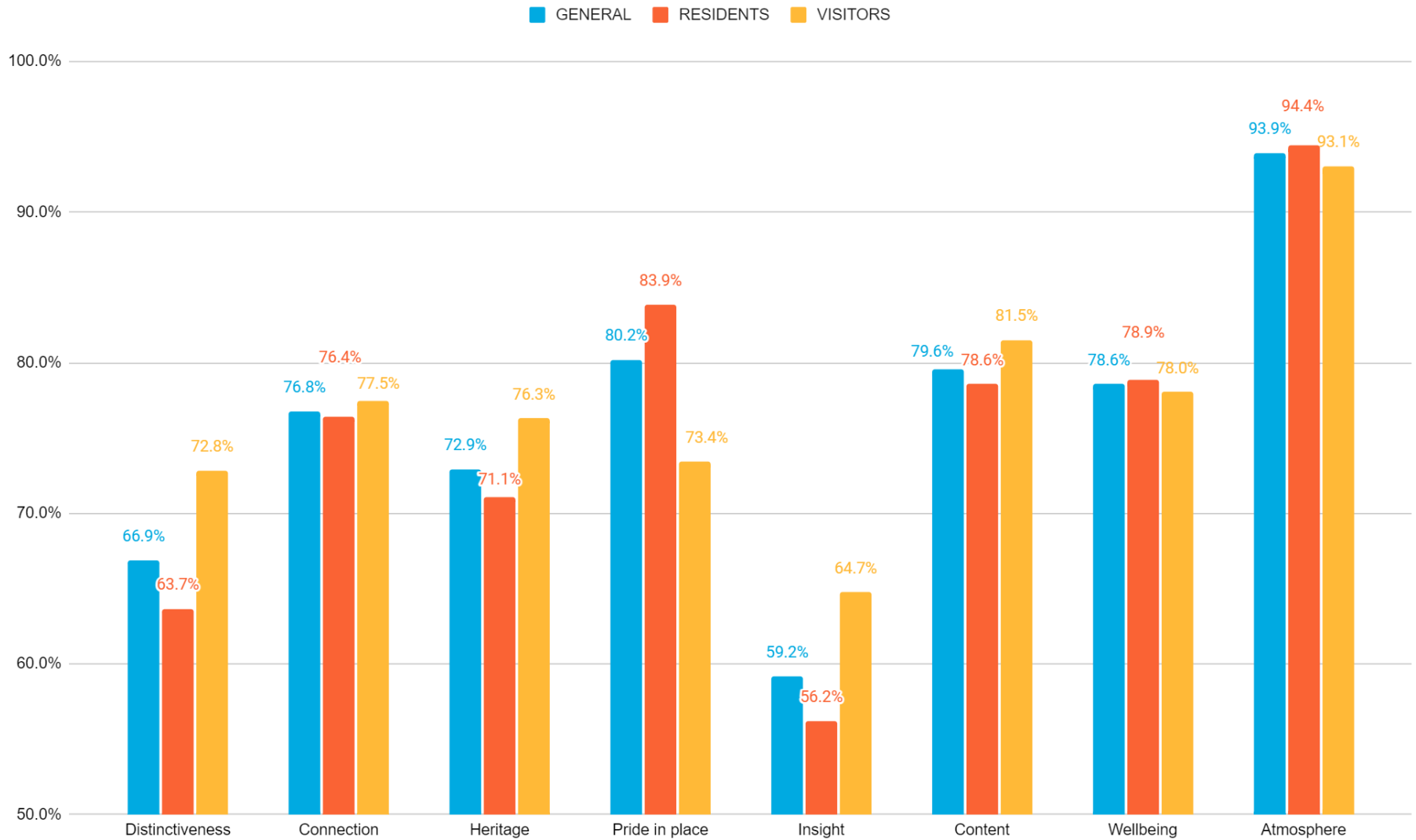
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<sup>5</sup> 'Agreement' in this context refers to all audiences who answered above 62 on a scale of 0 - 100 when asked how much they agree with a statement. All % agreement statistics in this report are calculated in this way.

<sup>6</sup> '[Festival 2022 Impact Report](#)', Birmingham 2022, Dec 2022, p.11 [Accessed 09/10/2023].

Again, this shows the impression that the festival made on visitors to Birmingham - not only did visitors report positive atmosphere and experience, as previously highlighted, they identified that there was also something distinctive about their time. This, combined with the evidence presented on pride in resident audiences, shows that the Festival 23 programme was uniquely Brummie in a way which appealed to people from the city, and beyond it.

Figure 16. **Dimensions Questions: Residents vs Visitors % Agreement**  
 (Audience n=495, Residents n=322, Visitors n=173)





## Value

The third audience focused outcome from the festival was about value, that ‘people engaged see the value in ongoing, free, outdoor arts and culture offer.’

This outcome works towards identifying an ongoing appetite for cultural events of this kind in the city. It goes some distance in proving that residents of Birmingham back a prospective long-term impact, as detailed on the Theory of Change: ‘increased appetite from public, private and third sector stakeholders - as well as residents and visitors - for annual ‘signature’ festival’.

For the ‘value’ outcome to be successfully achieved we must evidence not only that people had a positive experience of the festival, but more that they understand and can communicate the wider value of events such as this taking place. In short, that public opinion is behind public money being spent in such a way.

On the first point, the festival earned a net promoter score of 58. Benchmarking this against industry standards: ‘if your NPS is higher than 30, that would indicate that your company is doing great and has far more happy customers than unhappy ones.’<sup>7</sup> Therefore, a net promoter score of 58 shows that, generally speaking, audiences reacted very positively to the festival, and a high proportion of them would recommend the festival to a friend or colleague.

Furthermore, 91.9% of audiences had a positive experience of the festival, rating their overall experience ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Along with the high median results for dimensions questions discussed prior, it shows that overall, audiences felt that Festival 23 was a success.

Beyond top level identification of positive experiences, audiences were also forthcoming in their opinion that they would engage with similar events in the future. 34.6% of audiences said that they had never attended a free, outdoor arts event before. In spite of this, 74.3% of this group said that they would attend one again in the future, following their experience of Festival 23. This clearly highlights how the festival played a role in engaging ‘first time’ audiences, beginning to convert them into regular attendees. Not only then did Festival 23 promote audiences seeing the value in arts and cultural events of this kind, it also broadened this promoter base to those who had never experienced a similar event before.

*‘Keep doing it Love it that it's free’*

16 to 19 year old, Male, Elsewhere in England

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<sup>7</sup> *Retently*, ‘What is a Good Net Promoter Score? (2023 NPS Benchmark)’, May 18, 2023, [\[accessed 14/09/2023\]](#)

Audiences also went some way in identifying events of this type, and in this location, would be welcomed. 96% of audiences agreed that public spaces such as Centenary Square should be used more frequently for public cultural events. Overall, 90.9% of audiences said that they would attend free outdoor events in the future.

*'Keep it going'*

16 to 19 year old, Female, Birmingham

*'Great to see more of this'*

35 to 44 year old, Female, Birmingham

As noted in the 'wellbeing' outcome section, dwell time metrics highlight that a large number of people stayed at the festival for an average (mean) of 3.5 hours. The value this displayed is further compounded when we take into account that many people seemed to stumble across the festival - they had not been intending to attend, but walked past, and stayed. When asked their 'main reason for visiting Birmingham today', 39.2% of audiences identified a reason other than 'to attend the Birmingham Festival 23' - this included for work, for regular or one-off shopping trips, or to visit the city as a destination.

## **Ownership**

The fourth audience outcome listed on Festival 23's Theory of Change was around ownership: the organisation aimed for audiences to 'feel the space is accessible, diverse and welcoming, allowing them to feel comfortable and that it's 'for them''.

As discussed in the overview of the dimensions above, in the first instance, the highest scoring dimension of any was the 'Festival had a friendly and inclusive atmosphere'. 94.4% of residents and 93.1% of visitors agreed that the festival had a friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Again, this shows that an overwhelming majority of people found the festival welcoming and safe.

Festival 23 put a number of provisions in place to specifically make the festival accessible to those with disabilities, who identify as neurodiverse, or who live with a long-term health condition. Every performance across the 10 days was BSL interpreted, there were audio describers on hand throughout, who described visual work, and there was an accessible viewing platform that provided raised elevation to aid stage visibility, respite and distance from crowds.

*'It's very good and ideal for children and people with disabilities'*  
25 to 34 year old, Female, Birmingham

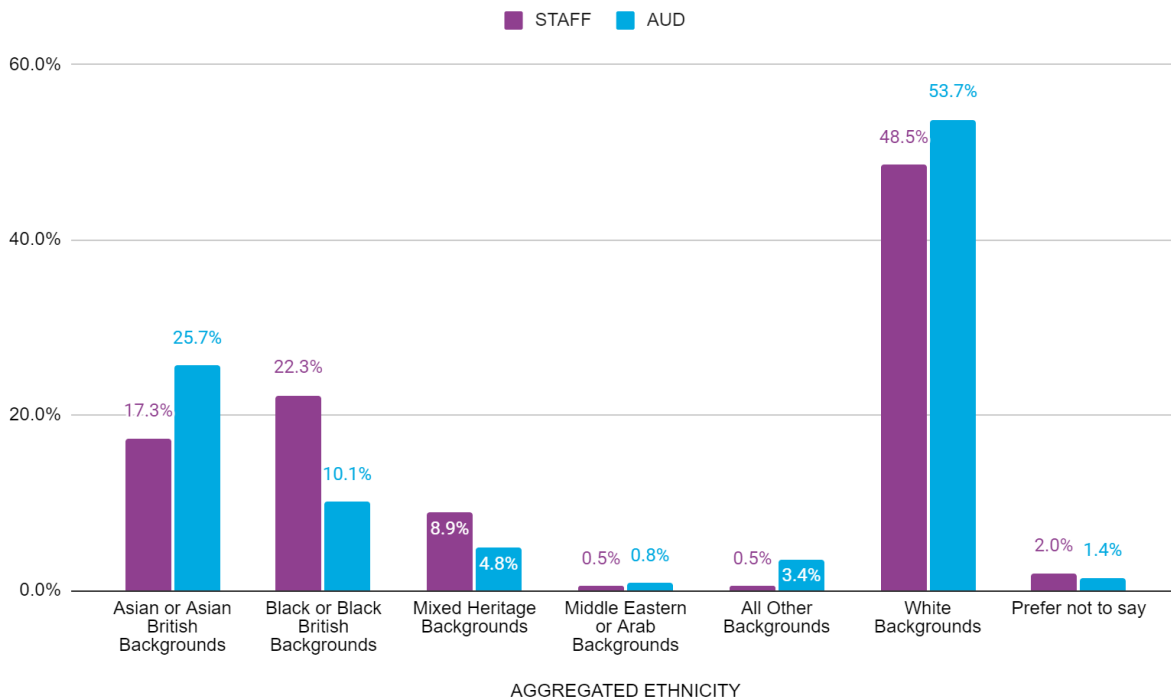
In addition, a large amount of programming was catered specifically towards families. 22.2% of audiences were attending with children under the age of 14.

Beyond ensuring the space was both welcoming and accessible, Festival 23 held an ambition for the event to platform a representative range of voices and organisations - who reflected the cultural diversity of Birmingham as a city. 79.6% of audiences across the festival agreed that the content reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices.

As shown in the engagement profile, audiences at the festival identified with a wide range of ethnicities: 25.9% were from Asian or Asian British backgrounds, 10.1% from Black or Black British backgrounds, 4.8% from Mixed Heritage backgrounds, 0.8% from Middle Eastern or Arab backgrounds and 53.7% from White backgrounds. 3.4% of audiences opted to self-describe their ethnic background.

**Figure 17. Aggregated Ethnicity: Staff and Audiences**

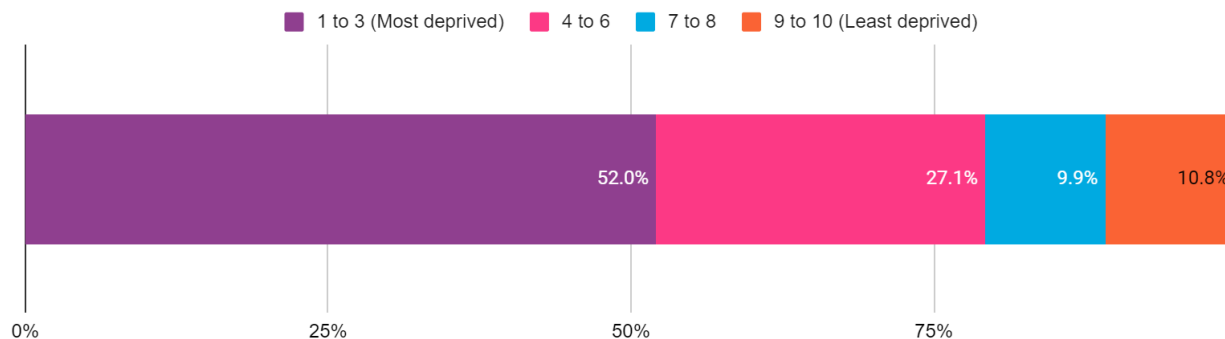
(Audiences n=495, Staff n=202)



The ethnic diversity of audiences was also mirrored in the staff delivering the work. However, there was a much stronger proportion of staff who identified as Black or Black British than audiences, and less staff who identified as Asian or Asian British.

In addition, as the below figure highlights, over half of the audiences of the festival came from areas identified as having a high level of deprivation. This was calculated using the [Indices of Multiple Deprivation](#) framework.<sup>8</sup> Valid, full postcodes were collected from a sample of 221 audiences at the festival. These were then converted to [LSOAs](#) and below displays the % of audiences from areas ranked 1 - 10 by deprivation. 52% of audiences came from areas ranked 1 - 3, 27.1% of audiences from areas ranked 4 - 6, 9.9% of audiences from areas ranked 7 to 8, and 10.8% of audiences from areas ranked 9 - 10, which are the least deprived in the England.

**Figure 18. Indices of Multiple Deprivation - Postcode Analysis**  
(Audiences n=221)



The title of this outcome is ‘ownership’. Whilst we have outlined in this report that audiences identified that the festival’s atmosphere was inclusive, and that audiences and workforce came from a wide range of backgrounds, this alone does not evidence the ‘ownership’ outcome. What does, however, is analysis and understanding of the ‘content’ dimension which asked if the performances ‘reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices’. 79.6% of audiences agreed that the content did. This dimension saw higher levels of agreement (84.2%) in those who had not attended a free, outdoor cultural event before.

Crucially, people from Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British and Mixed Heritage backgrounds were all more likely to agree that the content reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices, when compared to people from White backgrounds. In addition, audiences were more likely to identify that the content reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices if they identified as disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long-term health condition, or if they identified as LGBTQIA+. The same applies if they

<sup>8</sup> [The English Indices of Deprivation 2019](#), Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019 [Accessed 09/10/2].

were born overseas or they mainly speak a language other than English. Audiences attending with children under 14 were less likely to identify that the content reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices.

The above shows that, in the majority of instances, those who often experience misrepresentation or under-representation in mainstream spaces, were more likely to identify that Festival 23 platformed an inclusive range of voices, when compared to the average taken from the general sample. Taken collectively, evidence presented against this outcome represents significant progress towards feelings of ownership by those groups who are usually underrepresented in such spaces.

## **Contribution**

In addition to audience outcomes, Festival 23 focused three pillars on the cultural sector. In continuation of the work of Birmingham 2022 Festival, Festival 23 sought to engage, empower and develop creatives, artists and organisations from the West Midlands. This is encapsulated in the first culture sector focused pillar, contribution: 'Presenting artists and organisations feel increased ownership of the sector as a result of their work for the festival'.

Of all the presenting partners contracted by OPUS to present work at the festival 62.6% of them were based in Birmingham. A further 26.4% were based in the wider West Midlands, with only 7.7% of contracts leaving the region. This highlights how the majority of creative contracts were devolved to organisations in the region, with a particular focus on talent in the region.

Beyond presenting partner creative contracts, the majority of suppliers contracted, either directly by Festival 23, or by JA Productions (a principal delivery vehicle of the festival which held a large number of subcontractors), were from the region. 82.8% of all contracts from Festival 23 went to organisations based in the West Midlands.

The above statistics demonstrate that in delivering Festival 23, contracts (and the finances which accompanied them - as will be discussed in the Economy pillar) stayed within the West Midlands. A prime driver for this: to display the vast and diverse range of suppliers based in Birmingham and the West Midlands. By awarding contracts in this way, Festival 23 aimed to platform and showcase the contribution that these suppliers - as organisations and individuals - make to the culture sector in the region. Moreover, in addition to the creative suppliers contracted as presenting partners, the region plays host to the logistical delivery organisations crucial to making a festival like this happen.

Staff (PAYE and freelancers) from presenting partners were asked about this contribution and the response was largely very positive. 88.2% agreed that they felt more valued by the sector following engagement with Festival 23. 87.1% agreed that they felt that their work was more valued by the sector following engagement with Festival 23. Together with the concentration of contracts in the

West Midlands, this displays how Festival 23 engendered greater ownership over the sector, on the part of the organisations who played a role in delivering it.

## **Leadership**

The second pillar outcome focusing on the culture sector was leadership: that ‘Artistic Associates and Twilight Takeover partners gain experience and learning from delivering the festival leaving them better equipped to do so again’.

### ***Artistic Associates***

The Festival committed to ensuring that the ‘Festival supports a broader notion of artistic leadership’. Two Artistic Associates were identified and closely worked with the Creative Director and within the wider programming function of the Festival.

#### **The Commons**

The Commons: ‘a sanctuary for safe, playful yet challenging discussions about our connected past, present and future.’

*Presented by Elizabeth ‘Zeddie’ Lawal.*

#### **Empire, Pioneers and the New Radicals**

Empire, Pioneers and the New Radicals: ‘a deep dive into the tangled web of the empire, discovering the stories that weave our past and present, and collectively re-imagine and rebuild a just innovative future. Take yourself on an immersive tour mapping Birmingham’s journey from empire to innovation (1823-2023)’.

*Presented by Elizabeth ‘Zeddie’ Lawal.*

#### **Mast Qalandar Dancehall<sup>9</sup>**

‘The event beautifully blends the captivating melodies of Sufi music, the energetic rhythms of reggae dancehall, the vibrant beats of Afrobeat, the soulful tunes of English folk music, and a diverse range of dance forms. Through this unique amalgamation, our aim is to celebrate Birmingham as a super diverse international city of culture. Diversity is not just a concept here; it is ingrained in the very fabric of Birmingham’s DNA, residing within each and every one of us.’

*Presented by Kalaboration Arts (Mukhtar Dar).*

The active decision was made to ensure there were two artists/creatives who would help the Creative Director to think curatorially and programmatically, to make decisions alongside them and open the Festival up to the wider networks they each belonged to. They were pivotal in getting the Made in Brum out via their means. Each Artistic Associate brought their own expertise to the role.

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<sup>9</sup> The title of this was changed from Mast Qalandar Dancehall Mashup!

*It was good to have other voices [around the table]. In that respect, they were associate programmers really, in terms of ... [extending] the Made in Brum [reach]. I think that's quite powerful. ... Mukhtar is particularly well connected from a world music perspective and Elizabeth is particularly well connected from an up and coming - championing creative collectives - perspective.*

Creative Director, Festival 23

Mukhtar Dar was selected based on his extensive experience of working in the sector within Birmingham as the Director of Kalaboration Arts. Elizabeth 'Zeddie' Lawal established More Than A Moment in 2021, and was selected due to her vision and ambition to establish a new festival in the city. The associates felt that they complemented one another.

*So whilst I've had this kind of backlog of historical experiences, she's [Elizabeth] very future facing and that really complemented both of us as we're both committed in terms of looking at the social significance of arts to our target communities. And so she was very much around the environmental crisis and how the arts relate to that. And for me, it was very much about making sure that the festival is generally rooted in communities that have been hard to reach both artists but also audiences.*

Mukhtar Dar

For the Creative Director it was important that both associates had the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions that exposed both of them to a very intensive, high-profile, cultural activity, like Festival 23. Opportunities to do so in Birmingham aren't common, and not always accessible to individuals outside of cultural organisations. For the Creative Director it was important that both associates talk about the festival in a meaningful way exposing themselves to high-profile, intensive cultural discussions which are rarely available.

For the Artistic Associates, they felt that their role was to ensure that they were asking the right questions and ensuring that the Festival programme was reflective of the diversity of the city and the residents within the city. In addition to this the associates explored elements of the narrative of the Festival and what it meant to them, providing an alternative artistic lens.

*I was going back and forth and being like, 'Okay! How do we make sure that different types of creatives are reflected in the programming?' I guess we were challenging each other. Almost taking a nuanced approach to this, which was a real highlight too. Because every stone was turned in our conversations and I think that reflected into the actual Festival. I think that the city's really looking forward to this now [as] being a blueprint of what could be created [in the future].*

Elizabeth Lawal

*It was about how the whole sector comes together. It was about making sure people were not competing but collaborating and that everybody felt that they had a stake in the whole process of the programme.*

Mukhtar Dar

This was a valuable experience for the associates to work with other creatives to consider their ideas in a different way within the festival framework. However, whilst doing this they also recognised the lack of infrastructure available for a city filled with multidisciplinary creatives and collectives, emphasising the need for more to be done to support up and coming artists, which was also echoed by the Twilight Takeover partners.

For the Artistic Associates this was also an opportunity for exposure and a chance to build their capacity.

*Raidene took me and Elizabeth to Manchester ISPA 2023, which is an international gathering of the performing artist sector, which we've never been to before. It was very useful in terms of networking, and I really appreciate the opportunities that they provided us.*

Mukhtar Dar

By observing the role and responsibilities of the Creative Director the associates were exposed to more of the skills required to navigate difficult discussions and the importance of decision making in cultural leadership. Part of the learning journey for the associates was to engage in uncomfortable and challenging conversations and learn how best to navigate these.

The association between Festival 23 and the Commonwealth Games for one Associate Artist was challenging. Rather than disassociating themselves from the Festival, they instead acknowledged this challenge and decided to confront the conversation, engage in the narrative and go on a journey which was reflected through the artistic projects delivered by Elizabeth. Whilst for Mukhtar he believes that there is an opportunity to move on from the 'dark' past and focus on Birmingham being a future facing global city.

For both artists it was important to get a commission showcased within the Festival in addition to the Artistic Associate roles. Recognising that this can be seen as a conflict of interest especially in a sector which is seen to be nepotistic, Mukhtar explained that Artistic Associates should have the option to be commissioned, but transparency is key to ensuring all artists are aware of their commissions from the outset.

Moving forwards it is suggested that Artistic Associates are brought on earlier to ensure that they can engage in the design processes from the start. They also suggest exposing associates to other facets of the festival operations so they can get insights and experience of working on marketing, production etc.

Both Artistic Associates expressed their gratitude for the opportunity and the chance to engage with the many different organisations engaged in delivering the Festival. Through networking events the associates were able to speak to different individuals and become cultural champions for the city.



*It enabled me to definitely communicate the value of culture [more broadly] than the arts and culture sector, and to go a bit wider which is really incredible. It was a real galvanising moment. I think for lots of different individuals who don't necessarily get together and talk about Birmingham, as a flagship city for cultural events, which is great.*

Elizabeth Lawal

The Artistic Associates from Birmingham Festival 23 have aspirations of what they would like to do more of in the future. For Elizabeth, she sees herself producing more festivals within the artistic space that speak to Birmingham as an international city.

*It's experience and that's exactly what the Festival has granted me - the privilege to be part of the collective shaping of culture, and presenting that in a really great way. I think it's really given me the opportunity to meet new networks, to be able to have confidence... to grow in my own sense of personal confidence as well, which has been again really amazing. It's been a privilege to learn from Raidene and also from Mukhtar and being a sort of unit, to be honest. I think it's been great. I hated public speaking before, I hated talking to the press before. Now, I don't mind it and that has got a lot to do with the sort of media training that was offered for us. So, I think, I'm just really eternally grateful for this opportunity.*

Elizabeth Lawal

For Mukhtar, he's hoping that the Festival has raised his profile, and would like to apply for funding to put on the production he produced for the Festival at a mainstream venue and tour it to other UK cities. He wants to utilise the networks he was fortunate to make whilst visiting the Manchester International Festival. Recognising the city's desire to stage a 'signature' international festival, he wants to ensure that Birmingham has the right balance of local and international, and believes it should be rooted within the city to reach communities.

### **Twilight Takeovers**

Established and newly formed arts organisations across Birmingham brought performances specially created or adapted for the Festival, with powerful narratives and party vibes meshing to create one-of-a-kind experiences for audiences. Across the Festival, five Twilight Takeovers were presented.

#### **We Built this City**

'A grand lineup of Irish musicians and performers take to the stage embodying the spirit of Irish culture; from performing rousing renditions of traditional tunes, to looking to the future and what it means to be Irish in today's Birmingham.'

*Presented by Birmingham Irish Association and Ceol Creatives.<sup>10</sup>*

#### **Grimeboy**

'Another chance to see a concert version of this huge hit last year by writer Casey Bailey, recreated especially for the Festival.'

<sup>10</sup> Ceol Creatives is the new name of Ceol Agency.

*Presented by Birmingham Rep.*

**What if**

‘An untold street musical, explores the journey of three main characters: Petta-gay, who took a gallant leap to travel on the HMT Empire Windrush ship and later arrived in Birmingham, Jada who has a life-changing decision to make, and Blessing who needs to dig deep and take a leap of faith despite the naysayers.’

*Presented by Girl Grind UK, Eloquent Dance Company and Vocal Nova Academy.*

**Languages Between Strangers**

‘Three captivating stories that explore the meaning of home. These characters face numerous challenges along the way, but they discover hope and strength in each other’s company.’

*Presented by Amerah Saleh.*

**2093**

‘In a post-apocalyptic 2093, Birmingham has fallen into disarray after a catastrophic event, “The Blackout”. In an effort to reclaim their voices, the city’s resilient communities use music, fashion, and dance to promote unity and express their aspirations for a better world.’

*Presented by 93:00 Collective.*

Through key informant interviews, Twilight Takeover partners shared their experiences of engaging in Festival 23, highlighting the opportunities, challenges and their future plans and aspirations.

The highlight for many of the artists was the opportunity to participate in a festival of this magnitude, with not one organisation taking the lead but instead providing a chance for all to participate, including many up-and-coming artists that have never produced work at this scale previously.

*Getting the work on stage is a massive highlight...It was the joy to realise that people understood what we were trying to say as the narrative on the stage.*

Girl Grind UK

*It was just our first project of this scale as a company. Between the collaborators involved we've all been involved in productions of a certain scale, in the past. But this was our own and our first. So it was really important to put across the vision that we had... The main highlight for me was that this project didn't have a moment where it was just like someone takes the spotlight for too long. Everyone equally had their opportunity to shine and deliver, be it artistically or be it on a production, everyone had their time to shine and build this project.*

93:00 Collective

This was an opportunity for artists from Birmingham to have a stage to promote their work and ensure that it was reflective of the diversity of the city.

*So it was a chance to celebrate Brum...Originally, when I applied, it was because I know Birmingham quite well and I know the sector and when we have festivals, especially of that calibre, that we play the safe card of going to organisations, who have the product or thing ready. [Festival 23] allowed me to have free rein and sit down and create something in 6 weeks. We had no scripts, I had no actors, I had nothing. I just had this opportunity and I reached out to a couple contacts that I knew would make a great story. So yeah, it was that opportunity of freedom and creativity.*

Amerah Saleh

*It is refreshing to see so many acts sourced from within Birmingham and not national or international acts flown in, though that being said, I am not AGAINST this happening - it's just this is often the easiest way to sell tickets. I really think your programming has been excellent, and I recognised many of the acts, as well as being introduced to some new ones. I truly feel privileged to be a part of it and I'm so happy to have played a part.*

Ceol Creatives

For one organisation that adapted existing content, this allowed an alternative way to promote their work which would otherwise only be restricted to an indoor, often ticketed for, venue, thus making it accessible both for larger and newer audiences.

*I think the difference is people pay to come and see that show. Whereas outside it's free and because it's quite condensed, a lot of people don't necessarily get the full context of everything. So I think that was a challenge, but an opportunity because actually, people saw that and said 'I would love to come and see the show' because it was sort of a snippet of it. So they'd love to see it. There was talk about whether or not we'd be able to bring it back. So actually with the interest, it's great.*

Grimeboy

### Capacity building

For many Twilight Takeover partners this engagement in Festival 23 allowed them to build their capacity and understand where they need to continue to build their skillset, but for most the opportunity has provided them with confidence to do something bigger whilst acknowledging where it all started.

*For me, first of all, I've never directed anything, so that's part of the opportunity element. So for me it was a new way of working. I'm usually the artist and I really didn't want to be on purpose. I didn't even want to go up at the end. I just want to be kind of supporting the development of it, but now it's allowed me to think differently and the whole process of sustainability of the show.*

Amerah Saleh

*It was... an important catalyst in terms of what we know we're able to achieve. It really showed where we need development as a business and where our experience and skill sets need to be nurtured. We've made notes of those areas where we could have been tighter. I do believe that we'd be able to manage a production of a larger scale now.*

93:00 Collective

*I have these ideas. So, what is the way that we honour where it came from, as in, it all started at Birmingham Festival 23. What does that look like if this goes on tour around the UK or what does it look like if it's Street to Stage six-part series that goes on BBC iPlayer because that's where I see it going.*

Girl Grind UK

**Birmingham Festival 23 provided an opportunity for new young artists to have the opportunity to be on stage as well as for existing artists to try new things.**

*So some of our participants were recruited through St Basils [Youth Homelessness Charity]. Some of them are in hostels or supported living or they've experienced long periods of homelessness. If we weren't feeding them or paying for their travel, they wouldn't be here, or they'd be hungry. They're just full of raw talent and I've had to navigate the strength of black women, the attitude, the passion, the tenacity, all of the characteristics on top of the divas, but I love it. And I want to show that on stage.*

Girl Grind

*Raza [Hussain] has never acted, so he's a word artist and a brilliant musician. Sipho [Ndlovu] is an actor and a dancer and Czafari's never done this before, she's actually a DJ [singer and songwriter]. So I made it a thing on purpose that these were the people that I wanted in the show.*

Amerah Saleh

However, one Twilight Takeover partner they felt initially-mentioned opportunities for business development were not followed through with, and whilst it is recognised that with short timeframes opportunities for capacity building can be challenging, more should have been done to follow through.

*It was mentioned quite early on that there was an opportunity for business development. When it was mentioned, we showed our interest, and it wasn't kind of mentioned again.*

93:00 Collective

## Lessons learnt

As highlighted above, all Twilight Takeover partners have learnt from their engagement with Festival 23. This includes understanding the complexities of collaborative working and recognising the importance of leadership and decision making as instrumental especially for projects working at speed.

Other lessons included how to adapt existing work for alternative settings. For Grimeboy, there was a realisation that the story as presented on the stage last year could not be told in its entirety. However, recognising the need to keep up the energy of the audience, they utilised the music and actors on stage, to engage the crowd and realised that the DJ was key to connecting with the audience and keeping energy up. Guest artists - Harvey (So Solid Crew) and local Grime star, C4 - also facilitated strong crowd engagement, and may not have otherwise agreed to participate in the event had it been on stage or indoors at a more traditional venue. This marks a key advantage of the outdoor setting in leveraging different artists' engagement. The music element in engaging crowds also inspired the Grimeboy director to think about which other previous shows could be showcased at future festivals of this kind.

## Future aspirations

Partners and artists have aspirations to take their Festival 23 productions to venues within Birmingham including the Hippodrome, Symphony Hall and The Rep. Some commented on how they would like more venues within the city to commission work on the back of the Festival.

*Work should live on so that it becomes like a showcase where new work is commissioned and created. All these mainstream venues, they come to see the work and then they book the work for it to take place in those venues. Provide longevity so the festival becomes a place where people see the work that then gets commissioned, and we can go into partnership with those venues that like my work.... It makes economic sense if you reflect the city and the community you're calling hard to reach. If you cater for their cultural needs, they will come in rows. You will earn money on the back of it. And unless the sector begins to respond to that, it will become a sector which is non-relevant.*

Elizabeth Lawal

*It would be amazing to launch Languages Between Strangers with a Birmingham theatre company. I want it to be Brum. I want to approach the refugee and migration team in the council to see if they'll give me a bus and budget to tour the show around next summer to the parks and local areas on their theatre bus. I have ideas of how it could happen.*

Amerah Saleh

For these partners, especially those with alternative artistic offers, they believe that by working in collaboration with venues in and around Birmingham that these venues could attract more diverse audiences. These are the types of audiences that these venues are looking to attract.

But for some, they realise that doing something bigger requires going on a learning journey and/or leaving Birmingham, following the footsteps of mentors who have contributed to their development. Several have also recognised the need to move to London to learn, grow, and develop their own infrastructure, especially when their work is niche and the support structures of Birmingham don't match their aspiration.

*It's allowed us to elevate our intentions, from... grassroots to something that's... more developed. We're now in a position where we feel like we can be... unapologetic about what we want to deliver, how we want to deliver it, and what our terms are [for delivery].... I think one of the difficulties with Birmingham and delivering projects is that capacity is a big [challenge].*

93:00 Collective

For many though, the attraction of performing in Birmingham remains of vital importance.

Twilight Takeovers provided partners with an opportunity to showcase their work and a chance which they otherwise do not think would have been possible.

*Without the opportunity, as Birmingham Festival 23, this wouldn't have happened, not for a very long time and definitely not in this way but genuinely without the previous relationship with OPUS this wouldn't have been remotely on my radar.*

Girl Grind UK

## Models

Birmingham Festival 23 was the official one-year anniversary festival of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Taking over Centenary Square with live music and performance, creative and participatory activities, and big-screen content, the Festival aimed to welcome audiences who reflect the diversity of the city, to come together to watch, listen, relax, dance and play. Across the 10 days the Festival provided activities for audiences to participate in sports and culture, whilst providing a platform for artists to showcase Birmingham's talent in the hope to build trust and buy-in for a new 'signature' International Festival from 2024 onwards.

Through key informant interviews with the following stakeholders this section details some of the programme, operational and process successes, challenges and suggestions which should be noted for future festivals:

- Birmingham Festival 23 CIC
- Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces (OPUS)
- JA Productions
- Twilight Takeover Partners
- Artistic Associates
- Festival partner businesses and organisations

## Programme

Amongst all respondents the Festival was considered to be a success and met the objectives of offering an anniversary festival of high-quality cultural experiences with multiple live and digital artforms, sport, participatory activity and curated outdoor dwell-space.

*The events were a roaring success and made me feel really proud. I am generally in support of anything that makes Birmingham look good, and I especially enjoy the fact that you were not content enough with one festival but wanted to continue that legacy, and, as far as I'm concerned from what I have seen, the second festival was equally as exciting, especially from an arts point of view. Huge, huge, huge well done.*

Ceol Creatives

*Features of the Game's legacy have survived the year on, and they've got a future beyond the [Commonwealth] Games. I think that tied in really nicely to some of the Festival's objectives which were to look back and reminisce, be proud, celebrate a year on but also look forward. And what does the future feel like? What are we going to develop ... into the future? And so, that really resonated with some of the stuff we are doing as a charity, and it was the perfect moment to start raising awareness that the [United by 2022] charity is here.*

United by 2022

As evidenced in the engagement profile of this report the Festival engaged a diverse population of the city and welcomed visitors. From Perry's Party Picnic, Have-A-Go Zone, Power Hours, Twilight Takeovers and all-day/every-day installations, key stakeholders felt that there was something for everyone to engage in.

*The Perry's Party Picnic. Because it was [the] school holidays. That was incredibly well attended. And our learning is that this could be taken on the road again and used in other community festivals. And we would use that format again. It was so successful.*

United by 2022

Some respondents gave feedback on the overall narrative of the Festival, suggesting that the opening night event didn't align with the narrative across the rest of the festival.

*The launch event, there was no narrative. They pulled in Bambi Bains and Friendly Fire Band, and it was just like they do their thing. It wasn't woven in, there was no story. It wasn't a creative thing, it was just great bands, great musicians.*

Mukhtar Dar

It is acknowledged however, that the festival's narrative moved from being a reflective celebration of the previous year - including re-assembling artists from a key Birmingham 2022 Festival project, opening ceremony creatives, medal-winning athletes and community groups - to celebrating the emerging and bold talent of a confident creative city. This highlights that the Festival could have done more to communicate its overarching narrative to the creatives working on it, and perhaps missed an opportunity to bring artists closer to the purpose of using the Games anniversary as momentum for activating cultural legacy.

As an anniversary event of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, getting the balance between being a legacy celebration and looking towards the future was noted by respondents' comments about the look and feel of Birmingham Festival 23. Some felt that the continuity of familiar brands was a success and should continue to be used for future festivals whilst others felt that the colours and alignment with the city's 'Be Bold Be Birmingham' campaign was 'lazy' and looked leftover from the Commonwealth Games, and possibly contributed to not reaching target audience numbers. Despite this criticism, the Festival achieved a net promoter score of 58, a sign of strong brand loyalty, as detailed in the above 'Value' outcome. In addition, audience outcomes were strong largely across the board, highlighting that the marketing did reach those who enjoyed the festival. Moreover, as shown, a large number of these audiences represented people who had not engaged with this sort of work in the past. On balance, the pervasive point is that the marketing approaches did reach the target audience groups identified in the Festival's plans, but some key informant interviews expressed frustration about their engagement in marketing activity; the Festival could have potentially achieved



a more nuanced audience specific to some of the niche programming presented by younger artistic outfits and creative collectives had it activated funds for them sooner.

Birmingham Festival 23 built on the accessibility provisions from last year, using lessons learnt to adapt the site and ensuring more people were aware of the access provisions. In addition to an accessible viewing area opposite the stage for wheelchair users and those less able to stand, all on-stage performances were BSL-interpreted, and audio description was available across the festival site with headsets available for users. Investment and efforts were also made to reach out to schools and build relationships with groups and communities so they were aware of the access provisions available.

Similarly, efforts were taken to ensure that the Festival was sustainable. No temporary power was brought on to the site as the production team was able to utilise the land supply throughout the Festival. Water was tested and approved which meant that in addition to supplying the temporary bar, water stations were set up for use by audiences, staff and participants. For the production team, the sustainability efforts undertaken demonstrated to the next generation of event professionals what is feasible.

Partners across the Festival commended the Festival team and artists for what they achieved especially given the tight timeframes within which they were working.

*To put everything together in such a short period of time, to secure partners, to get the events programmed... I think they all did an absolutely fantastic job.*

Colmore BID

But the shortened timeframes were noted by all implementation stakeholders as a significant challenge. All Twilight Takeovers mentioned the challenge of timeframes and how what they delivered could have been better had there been more time. This too was echoed by the Festival team who also would not recommend doing a festival of this type and scale again within such a limited timeframe. Some artists felt the associated reporting and administrative requirements expected of them by Festival 23 were disproportionate given the tight delivery timelines and were noted among some of the reasons why some artists may not engage again in the future.

For partners and artists engaged across the Festival, establishing new networks and reigniting old relationships was key. Whilst some felt that the Festival enabled this, and it is acknowledged that all artists were invited to launch and media events, others felt more could have been done to convene the sector more fully.

*[The opportunity was to link] with cultural partners through the Festival. Some were existing links we were reinforcing, and [in] other cases it was creating new links, but by being in the virtual room, in the festival room, we were able to have conversations with partners and ... show [our] intention.*

The Exchange, University of Birmingham

*A festival to me is bringing people together through music and creative arts. I think that's the core of other festivals. It would be really nice to see an effort put in from the team to get all of the [production team], all of the organisers together [in] one room to...network and chat because you don't get that opportunity once the festival has started and when the Festival has finished, you're already on to the next thing. So this is just a suggestion, It's not anything that we missed out on. It would be nice, and I think no one else is doing that, so why can't Birmingham do that?*

93:00 Collective

### **Operational**

The Birmingham Festival 23 CIC is a subsidiary of the Birmingham Hippodrome Theatre Trust. Birmingham Hippodrome provided in-kind organisational structure to house the operational partners as well as back-office functions. The festival was delivered in partnership with two key partners: OPUS and JA Productions. OPUS was responsible for programming and producing, while JA Productions led on production, operations and technical aspects.

The CIC team consisted of staff who led the Birmingham 2022 Festival. This familiarity with the city, sector and partners gave them the agency they needed to come to the table to have discussions at a time when funding was still uncertain. These existing relationships and trust were pivotal in getting buy-in and enabled the CIC to deliver the Festival within a short timeframe.

The Birmingham Festival 23 Board were commended by the Executive staff for their pragmatic and balanced guidance and support. Their committed engagement ensured that they were aware of all decisions, providing constructive questioning and challenge when needed. The success of the Board, it was felt, was due to their awareness and engagement in the sector and the city. Continuity of the Board is vital to the future of the festival with the recommendation that one current board member at least take on the role of chair in any future transition or iteration of the company.

Housing the CIC within the Hippodrome was immensely helpful and enabled the CIC to set up and pay staff before grant income was transferred. For future festivals there have been discussions around creating a separate organisation, however, this will have its limitations as the organisation will have no reserves. Having the CIC continue as a subsidiary of a larger business has its benefits and will allow the Festival team to set up and fundraise simultaneously. However, remaining affiliated with a large organisation does not necessarily promote independence, and creative and commercial conflicts may exist with future iterations.

Utilising expertise from Birmingham 2022 Festival was pivotal to the success of the festival this year and partner organisations found this to be extremely helpful. Within the CIC though, they acknowledge that they did not have enough resources at a time when two parallel conversations were in play - artistic and fundraising - neither of which could have been delayed. An additional two people within the team would have helped at this stage to support these parallel discussions. However, the size of the team during the delivery and wrap up phase was ideal. Using lessons learnt from the previous year it was helpful to have specific people in their roles throughout the duration of the festival. This allowed the team to learn and adapt whilst in the role and be confident in owning the responsibilities in that position from start to finish.

*I think we're better this year compared to last year, giving at least people on site the time to settle into their positions. I remember that last year during the Festival site, we didn't really have that consistency, positions sometimes will have a different volunteer coordinator every day. And this year what worked better from my perspective was having that consistency of one or two people being assigned those delivery roles and not having to brief people over and over. Because especially with the kind of festival that this was, a lot of process improvements occurred during the onsite time which is based on repetition and on people getting comfortable with the roles and with the dynamics of the event and that is how you get a lot of the efficiency of the event.... There is definitely a balance to be struck between wanting to do lots of new and exciting things, but also trying to manage expectations and ... actually refining the process.*

OPUS

Alongside using some of the existing 2022 team, utilising the Commonwealth Collective, the Games volunteers, many now held by United by 2022, was really important in maintaining a thread between last year and this year, and in ensuring that the Festival was efficiently staffed from start to finish. Volunteers thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the Festival. The acknowledgement and recognition provided during the training was really appreciated, as was bringing the Games mascot, Perry, out to meet and greet them. The venue familiarisation was well executed and prepared volunteers to effectively carry out their duties across the Festival.

*The volunteers played a really big role maintaining that link from the past to the future and one of the things that people told us when we were on the square was that they got the buzz back! So, this is a really intangible thing, isn't it? It's a feeling. It's not a funding thing or it's not an economic return on investment, it's an emotion. One of the things that spectators told us was that the volunteers were one of the main ingredients in making them feel that buzz.*

United by 2022

Delays in contract administration and the green light to start spending hindered processes and payments to key production partners OPUS and JA Productions, requiring them to initially work at risk. This, alongside the delay in engaging a dedicated Marketing and Communications lead, had a knock on impact on contracts being issued to programme partners and artists.

Funder engagement during the Festival was positively received. Fortnightly meetings with Birmingham City Council were productive, and it was helpful to have them both strategically and operationally involved, provisioning the right balance to allow the CIC to get on with what needed to be done.

While perhaps at odds with earlier feedback regarding the administrative burden of Festival 23 reporting, the guidance and support provided by both the CIC and OPUS was acknowledged by all Twilight Takeover partners, who were appreciative of the direction provided.

*“...the check-ins with Rebecca constantly asking what we need. Is there anything else? And then the extra support that they gave that wasn't needed. They didn't need to. They went above and beyond for the show towards the lead up”.*

Amerah Saleh

Partnership working was pivotal to the success of the Festival, ensuring that the CIC and OPUS collaborated with organisations based around the square was key to designing and delivering the festival in a very short space of time.

*The Festival team was great [meaning] we were able to turn things around. They actively encouraged us to provide content and ... came up with ideas. ... The relationship worked very well, and everybody was super flexible. And not too pushy. [We were all] pushing in the right way to try and get the job done.*

The Exchange, University of Birmingham

*I really enjoyed working with all the stakeholders because it was clear that everybody was very passionate and invested in this and the success of it. And so there was really lovely energy here every day and everybody was really friendly and approachable and that obviously makes a great working environment. So, please do pass on thanks to all the stakeholders and the teams.*

Birmingham REP

As Festival champions, the Chamber of Commerce and Colmore BID promoted Festival 23 through their websites, networks and social media handles. For both organisations brand association with the Festival was key to demonstrating their commitment to the success and growth of Birmingham as a place to live and visit.

Marketing approaches used in the run-up to the festival and during the festival received mixed reviews. Some Twilight Takeover partners felt like they were looped in regarding what they could do and what was being led by the Festival Team, others felt more could have been done to engage them in reaching their specific audiences/communities.

*There was a marketing zoom, so that everybody knew how to do that or where they need to send the material. There was also a zoom production wise, you meet the production manager, you can have those conversations. So, keeping those touch points, so that even though, yes, it felt a bit last minute. There were still some points where actually everybody was connecting. So I think that's a good thing, the tech as well. Yes, it was only an hour and a half which wasn't great and wasn't long. However, it was getting a sense of the stage, getting a feel of everything, getting to meet, who comes on before you.*

Grimeboy

Some Twilight Takeover artists, local businesses and organisations felt that coverage was good and visible within the city, and felt the daily news reels on social media were engaging. Consistent messaging between partners was promising and ensured that the Festival was promoted effectively.

*Generally, it's everywhere. And I've seen it everywhere, and I don't know if that's because I'm in the bubble of it but everywhere I turn, I see it. And so I think that's been good.*

Girl Grind UK

*The signage was good around the city [including] the floor signage - certainly I saw it on Broad Street, on New Street and as you're walking through the city.*

Ikon Gallery

Despite the Festival marketing collateral utilising images of current Birmingham artists and recent audiences throughout the campaign, some Twilight Takeover artists believed that billboard posts used stock images to reflect the diversity of the city. It was felt that had these images been more identifiable as genuine Birmingham artists and audiences, it could have helped to mobilise even more audiences from diverse communities.

Similarly, it was felt more should have been done to use social media channels to reach audiences especially to engage younger audiences. It should be noted, however, that Festival 23 did not inherit any of the social media channels from 2022, and had a standing start developing engagement with new channels in this regard.

*With other teams... the social media team is the second biggest next to the production team. There should have been people [audiences] travelling from other cities. There should have been people our age more in the crowd. I feel like when we told people about it was like, "I didn't even know that was happening" and they live around the corner from [the] Birmingham Festival. So I think the one way of getting around that is to advertise, especially for socials, it needed to be a lot bigger than it was.*

93:00 Collective

Likewise, it was felt more could have been done to use social media channels to encourage emerging artists to attend and watch up and coming artists from Birmingham perform on the stage to know it is possible.

Some Twilight Takeover artists felt that, despite taking the necessary initiatives to market their events, they received little promotional engagement from either Festival 23, or the City Council.

*We had quite a well thought out marketing plan for how we announce our collaborators and constantly feeding information about what we're doing at the festival and also mentioning other people involved. We tagged all the people that we were told to tag or suggested the tag but then we weren't getting any engagement at all from the Birmingham Festival side. It was like 'come on what do we need to do?' Collaboratively posting? We didn't get any. We didn't get any information really from Birmingham council after the press launch that we did.*

93:00 Collective

Others felt that more should have been done to provide teams with a marketing budget and guidance from the outset so they also could have promoted the Festival and their individual segments on social media channels.

*It doesn't have to be too flashy. But just a bit of help because I know other people didn't have those resources to be able to do that. Whereas I asked a favour from somebody and in the end, we as The REP, gave him a little bit of money to do that for us and then it was later on that, we got an email to say, there's a little bit of money for marketing to help push it. So, if it had been stated at the beginning that you've got a little bit of money to do a little bit of marketing and then you've got this, that would have helped.*

Grimeboy

Many local organisations utilised their social media channels and newsletters to promote the festival to Birmingham residents. However, some felt Birmingham City Council communications channels should have been better leveraged to gain wider reach across local residents. The festival organisers did use opportunities of earlier festivals and events to promote and showcase some of the acts people would see at Festival 23, and distributed leaflets at these preceding events to encourage attendance.

There was some concern expressed internally that the marketing plan was not executed as effectively as had been initially envisaged, and the team would recommend that a marketing role be a key function within the CIC from the outset in preference to this function being undertaken by an external consultant. For the Executive team, the consultancy approach taken appeared to manifest as 'micromanaging', requiring them to make 'really small decisions' with multiple suppliers, in a way that an internal team member may have felt more empowered to make, and with fewer suppliers. Having an internal marketing role, ideally in place before early planning stages, is key to ensuring the marketing and communications plans are responsive, adaptable and always aligned to the needs of the festival. Despite needing to go down an alternative approach to the one initially planned, the

multiple agencies engaged did deliver the marketing and communications plans worked up by the lead Marketing consultant, at speed and within budgetary constraints.

Internally it was recognised that the Festival's marketing plan and budget had assumed many artists and performing groups would have their own existing core audiences and supporters, and the ability to activate greater reach within their communities. Whilst it might be the case that artists and groups could have drawn in more audiences from the communities the Festival aimed to reach, a more joined-up approach from the outset would have initiated more collaboration and capacity-building. Partners recommend that utilising businesses in and around Birmingham is vital for future festival engagement and promotion. However, groups of businesses require in-person conversations and on-boarding so they can help spread the word. Suggestions were also made to use similar advertising techniques such as those used by the Manchester International Festival with banners in London Euston and Birmingham New St stations to encourage visitors outside of the city to attend.

Twilight Takeover partners found their budgets limited and therefore extremely challenging. They acknowledged that the sector as a whole is underfunded but nonetheless would need larger budgets to produce another production of the same scale in the future. Whilst established organisations like Birmingham Rep were able to utilise internal resources to cover some of the additional services required, not all partners had this luxury. For instance, other partners mentioned the need for contingency funding to cover additional costs for rehearsal time, which was provided in every case requested, whilst some artists mentioned that, due to the dedicated time required to deliver their project within the tight timeframe of the festival (rather than over a longer period of time), their fee was one of several income streams required to ensure they were earning enough.

*We didn't need to put all these things in place because we're an established theatre and we had a lot of house help. However, if someone didn't have that, I think it would be quite difficult with the budget because it was quite tight to be able to do all the things that sort of needed to be done.*

Grimeboy

*When I reflect on it from that perspective, I worked with all these women, all these black people, I told a story, I wrote some new stuff, and those things are amazing and they're priceless but then I go to the things that I can quantify and I'm like £1500?! Let's be real, my salary needs to go up next time if we were doing that again and same for Romanah [Zhane Buchanan] and Bianca [Passelle-Reid] because we were all paid that £1500. A tough decision had to be made at different points, like, okay, are we gonna pay ourselves first, or are we gonna put everything into the project and to the cost of things that need to go out. So even then, I still haven't actually had that money because I chose to take mine from the last [instalment].*

Girl Grind UK

Lack of wet weather contingency plans and having no stage covering were among the most common challenges mentioned by artists. Whilst the Festival team acknowledge the challenge this brought all-

round and would draw in other factors to the design-planning phase in the future, they stand by their decision of not building a covered stage.

*Last year, we made a very conscious decision about design over functionality because we wanted to make a statement for Birmingham. It worked last year. It actually worked this year, in terms of the statement that was made, and all the talk about being about the sign and people wanting to be photographed with the sign, but it's almost impossible to have that kind of solution with a roof. Yes, it worked, and we just about got away with it apart from Saturday. Would we do it again? I'm not sure. I'd also bow down to some pressure that we may need to look at it, it's just difficult and expensive, and doesn't give you the clean look that we wanted.*

JA Productions

For artists, however, choosing not to have a roof caused significant challenges and resulted in developing contingency plans with little to no time. Whilst some of the Weekend Takeover programme by FABRIC on Sunday 30 July was accommodated in the Symphony Hall, for others the wet weather resulted in delayed starts, early finishes without performances being able to complete, or relocating to available indoor spaces, subject to availability. Concerns were also raised about health and safety as well as the lack of provisions to protect equipment from the rain.

Birmingham Rep opened up their Studio to relocate programmes when productions had the flexibility to be brought indoors. But this wasn't always possible, with venues around the square having their own programming or not having the necessary staff in place.

The Festival team recognises more needs to be done in advance with programme partners and artists for wet weather contingency planning, as well as clearly communicating the decisions about staging if it is again decided not to install a roof on an outdoor stage. They also acknowledge that future events should be better equipped with branded parasols/umbrellas to ensure that artists and equipment are better protected from both rain and sun as weather conditions become more extreme. More broadly, the Festival team reflected on the situation as one indicative of the future of working in outdoor arts in the UK; the weather was so changeable and unpredictable that a step-by-step plan, with clear indicators for what conditions trigger certain decisions, and in what order, is necessary, to be prepared for ongoing unseasonable weather.

The Executive Director proposed exploring options of earmarking contingency funding for reserving indoor spaces in case of inclement weather. This would be subject to the location of future festivals where relocating to indoor spaces is feasible.

Technical challenges to do with placement of the staging and location of sound systems were reflected on by artists. Some felt the placement of the sound engineer behind the speakers instead of a position out front led to sound issues. Many of the technical issues faced could have been resolved with more and better scheduled rehearsal time, and more interaction between the production team and Twilight Takeover artists.



*We didn't have a [technical] rehearsal, we had a site visit a week prior to our show that not everyone could make. We didn't understand that the site visit itself was our main sound check. Our collaborators come from all over the Midlands, and from London, and they work, and so a midday rehearsal didn't work. We were the only two that were able to make it out of twenty-six and our band weren't even aware of it.*

93:00 Collective

Similar challenges were shared about interactions with the tech team. Suggestions were made that the technical team needed to be better resourced to ensure that the energy and support received by artists at the start of the Festival is the same for artists presenting towards the end. Furthermore, it was noted by a couple of artists, that whilst the programme and audiences reflected the diversity of the city, the lack of diversity behind the scenes was noticeable.

*The same attention that is put on there being diversity on the stage should be the same at the back end. And I noticed that there wasn't really any cultural representation behind the scenes. Having a variation of ages, a variation of culture behind the scene would be a really great improvement moving forward.*

93:00 Collective

### ***Future of Birmingham Festival***

Across all stakeholders there is interest in Birmingham hosting an annual cultural festival, and the Festival team noted the need for adequate time to plan another festival. Internally, there were suggestions of pausing and taking stock in 2024, but finding ways to keep audiences engaged, and relaunching a new, full Birmingham Festival in 2026. Some artists felt that the next festival should be city-wide, reaching all communities in and around Birmingham, whilst acknowledging the benefits of hosting this year in Centenary Square. All stakeholders would be willing to engage with a festival of a similar nature in the future. While retaining Birmingham City Council's aspiration to stage an annual 'signature' festival with international status, ensuring Birmingham artists remain front and centre is key to making sure that diverse, local communities from the city continue to engage.

### **Economy**

The final pillar outcome was related to bolstering the wider economy of the city, helping other businesses and organisations in the surrounding area of Centenary Square, as well as beyond it, to thrive as a result of the festival taking place. As noted in the Theory of Change, this was principally motivated by the 'Local economy benefit[ing] from the festival taking place'.

Birmingham 2022 Festival put the city on the map, presenting it as a city and as a place to live, work and visit. Birmingham Festival 23 aimed to build on that legacy, and, according to the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, it achieved exactly that.

*It's really positive. I think the key takeaway piece has been it's about the perception of the city and for a business community, being a city that people want to live, work and visit is critical to attracting investment and retaining those businesses that are growing here. So it's all helped really bolster that wider environment and the cultural sector is a key part of the business community too. So actually bringing in visitors, whether it be for, coming to the Hippodrome or coming to The Rep, or whatever it might be... People want to come to interesting places. They want to live in interesting places, arts, culture are what make places interesting.*

Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

Organisations across Birmingham have positive feedback on the Festival, recognising the opportunity of festivals such as these in bringing local communities together.

*Festival 23 was a critical part of that legacy because what we tried to do throughout the Business and Tourism Programme was to raise awareness of Birmingham and the West Midlands, particularly to international audiences, but also to change perceptions to domestic audiences, and it was a wonderful success. The Business and Tourism Programme [showed] that... when you're trying to do those sorts of things, [it] is part of a longer-term strategy that we have for Birmingham and the region and for the visitor economy. And that work continues based on ... high quality products and Festival 23 was perceived to be one of those key moments in time, which enabled us to keep talking about Birmingham in a really positive way and to build on all of those images and experiences that people had in the Commonwealth Games time.*

West Midlands Growth Company

The University of Birmingham at The Exchange, situated in Centenary Square, offered free exhibitions, activities, family trails and talks and an opportunity for attendees to get close to the iconic Queen's Baton. The Exchange also hosted 'Nomad: A Tent for Reflection' a Soul City Arts booth which invited the public to scribe their most cherished thoughts and *du'as* (prayers) which were recorded during a single day and presented as a finished film on the main Festival 23 screen at the end of that day. The Director of Public and Cultural Engagement shared his reflections on the Festival:

*'The most obvious benefit was that The Exchange building is situated on Centenary Square.... It was an opportunity to welcome a significant number of new visitors into the space... It was about ... getting more people [and] new diverse audiences through the door.'*

Local businesses based in Centenary Square that had partnered with the Festival were appreciative of the opportunity to raise awareness of their establishments with visitors.

*"We had a lot of new visitors to the Library who enjoyed being in the Library of Birmingham and were impressed by what we had to offer. Our takings were good in the Library shop, who benefited too"*

Library of Birmingham

Birmingham Rep mentioned how the Festival helped with raising audience awareness of their programme and demonstrated their diverse offering. The Rep Café opened for extended hours and ran the Festival Bar adjacent to the screen. In addition to generating £4,000 profit, this opportunity allowed for their staff to work in different locations and engage with a different audience. In addition, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games merchandise stall took £15,435 worth of sales over the course of the 10 days.

For businesses around the square this was an opportunity to test how they could engage with events of this type. Each has their own lessons learnt on what they would do differently but would be eager to partner with a future Birmingham Festival.

*[F]rom our perspective, from a commercial perspective, and an engagement piece, I certainly think the daytime [activities] has much more traction than the evening [activities] for us. It felt that it was a great way for people to support doing something with their family and with their children during school holidays, that actually genuinely was for free .... For us, that's probably where we saw the biggest benefit. And it also, for us, brought in a family audience that perhaps is a little bit intimidated by the fact that we run symphony hall and town hall. And perhaps don't realise it's accessible for everybody because we do family related shows. So I think that was probably the biggest win-win for us as an organisation.*

B:Music

Partnerships were also established with venues beyond the Centenary Square site, using the opportunity of the Festival to signpost to the Ikon Gallery as well as the concurrent Birmingham Restaurant Festival.

*There's no doubt there were more people in the city centre and in this broad area during the Festival...I think it's a real shame about the weather but that did mean that people were going into other buildings and so they see the Library, The Rep, Symphony Hall and The Exchange as the nearest ones but then we think it's probably the Festival that brought some over to us and this ...area.*

Ikon Gallery

The Birmingham Restaurant Festival through discussions with Festival 23 was strategically moved to align and ensure the dates overlapped. Key to this was to ensure that the hospitality industry in and around the city could benefit from the additional footfall the Festival anticipated it would attract. In addition to changing dates, the Birmingham Restaurant Festival also adapted its offering to ensure that there was a family offering to cater to the needs of audiences who would be attending with children during their summer holidays.

For the 10 restaurants added to the Festival 23 map, many told the organiser [of the Birmingham Restaurant Festival] that they were thrilled with the added exposure, especially at a time of year when the city is traditionally and relatively quiet.

*In the last week, it got really popular, I don't know if that's due to more comms going out. What I was really excited about was being on that map. But I don't think that actually had an impact. I think that might purely be [that] people [were] just so excited about all the activities that were happening that weekend.*

Dishoom

As with other organisations, engagement with the Festival has inspired the Restaurant Festival to think about how it could adapt in following years, including adding accessibility, dog friendly and cuisine search functions on the website, to build on the family-friendly function they added this year in light of Festival 23. On accessibility the Restaurant Festival has been inspired by the provisions made available during the Festival and would be keen to learn from the sector to see how restaurants can be better equipped to cater to the needs of customers. This partnership is something the Director of the Restaurant Festival hopes will continue to fruition.

*And the two things that can do that, in my view (and I [accept] I am biased having worked in museums for so long) [are] culture... arts and food and drink... [These] are the things that bring people together, they're social beautiful experiences! So, there's something theoretically so beautiful about this partnership... [There's] so much more we can do, and I really hope that everyone in the team... gets the opportunity to do the Festival again and [that] we can explore what kind [a] deep[er] partnership would look like with more time to do that. [These festivals and partnerships] could be [part of] a real solution to some bigger Birmingham issues.*

Birmingham Restaurant Festival

The positive feedback reflected above by Business & Tourism stakeholder interviews was also reflected through audience data - which highlighted how much people spent on site whilst visiting the festival. 65.1% of audiences from the festival were from Birmingham. 65.2% of this group came into Birmingham across the 10 days to specifically attend Birmingham Festival 23. Primarily, this displays the positive effect that the marketing strategy had on local audiences. In addition, it suggests that spend made by this group may not have otherwise taken place were it not for the festival. Audiences from Birmingham, who attended specifically for the festival, spent £422,391.34 during their visits.

34.8% of audiences came from the wider West Midlands. 47.4% of this group said that they attended specifically for the festival. This proportion of people also contributed to the economic impact of the festival. In total they spent £210,016.95 during their trips. Moreover, unlike the local visitor spend outlined above, this £210,016.95 represents money which may not have otherwise been spent in the local economy, had the festival not taken place.

In addition to the added financial contribution made on the part of resident and visitor audiences, the spend made by Festival 23 into Birmingham and the wider West Midlands economies is also worth noting. Festival 23 spent £2,060,581.58 delivering the festival.<sup>11</sup> 56.5% of this spend was to organisations based in Birmingham and a further 30.8% to organisations based in the wider West Midlands. Only 12% of the total budget went to organisations beyond the region. This demonstrates a significant contribution to local infrastructure and the multitude of sectors required to deliver a festival of this kind. This emphasis on local procurement was also reflected in conversations with Business and Tourism stakeholders.

*I mean, what we always love doing is looking at local procurement and being really clear on how we can sign post local businesses to tender for this work... So JA Productions, I think you were working with them, and they're a local business as well. So perfect, but if there are things where services are being procured, just promote them locally. And having messaging to local businesses on this is how you can get involved. Explaining this is what we are looking for in terms of products and services, and this is how you can get involved. And that in terms of local business community support [meet the buyer webinars with major Games contractors], they loved it, because even if there wasn't something for the businesses, they didn't feel like they were missing out, it was transparent.*

Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

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<sup>11</sup> This spend figure and breakdown as supplied by Festival 23 on 6 September 2023.

## **Thank you**

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2FacedDance  
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93:00 Collective  
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Birmingham Museums Trust  
Birmingham Music Archive  
Birmingham Repertory Theatre  
Birmingham Restaurant Festival  
Black Rose Yogini  
Bollywood Dreams Dance Company  
Bostin' Creative  
Bowls England  
Boxout UK  
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Brazilian Cultural Centre Birmingham  
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British Wrestling  
Celebrating Sanctuary  
Central Stage Crew  
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Chiltern Railway  
Chitraloka Dance Academy  
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Critical Mass Dance Collective  
Cross Country  
Cube Modular  
Culture Central  
Cutch-I & The NuChaptah  
Czech & Slovak Club  
Dance India  
Dave Appleby  
Def Motion  
Denise Lensi  
Desi Blitz  
Devika Dance Theatre  
Dhol Blasters  
DJ Danny Byrd  
Elizabeth 'Zeddie' Lawal  
Eloquent Dance Company  
Emma Dunleavy-Dale  
Emma Smallman / Drum n Bounce  
England Athletics  
England Boxing  
England Hockey  
England Squash  
Enviroconsult  
Erica Love

Eternal Taal  
Evolve Entertainment  
Express & Star  
FABRIC  
FATT Projects  
Fierce and Paul Ramírez Jonas  
FITZELLES  
Flexus Dance Collective  
Forro Tempo  
Free Radio  
FRY Creative  
Future Shift & FABRIC Centre for Advanced Training  
G.A.P Entertainment  
Gem's Dance Academy  
Ginny Lemon  
Girl Grind UK  
Got 2 Sing Choir Harborne  
Gowling WLG  
Grand Railway Collaboration  
Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce  
Hardish Virk  
Harj Millington  
Harjit Jagdev  
Headquarters of Groove  
Headtapes  
Hollywood Monster  
HTE  
Hyacinth Powell  
I Choose Birmingham  
IAM WM  
Ideal Staff  
Immediate Care Medical  
Impakt  
India Island Academy  
JA Productions  
JACK ARTS  
Jacqueline Lewis  
Jas Sansi  
Jasmine Gardosi  
JPS  
Kalaboration Arts  
Kamchàtka  
Katja Ogrin  
Kaylee Golding  
Kerry Butler  
Kevaughn Laing  
Library of Birmingham  
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Natty Ola  
Neighbourhd  
Network Rail  
NewStyle Radio  
Nonsensical Media  
O'Driscoll Collective  
Old Dead Eye  
Olivia Whitter  
Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces  
Overlap  
Oya Batucada  
Paperock Creative  
Phil Oldershaw  
PRG  
Primary Times  
Priya Matharu  
Rachael Veasy  
Rachel Radford  
Rachel Tipping  
Radio XL  
Radiotek  
Rainbow Voices  
Rakeem Omar  
Raring2Go  
RCCG Instrumental Hub  
Reach  
Rewired PR  
Ryan Ball  
Sam Oxborough  
Samba Dance Birmingham  
SAMPAD  
Satnam Rana  
Scarlett Entertainment  
Second Cities  
Selexporterhood  
Sense Touchbase Pears  
Shakespeare Media  
SHE Choir Birmingham  
Smash Bengali

Smooth Radio  
Sofunk Dance Fitness  
Sonia Sabri Company  
Sonia'z Fusion  
Soul City Arts  
Soweto Kinch and Aritri Kundu  
Sport Birmingham  
Sport England  
Stage Audio Services  
Staging Services  
Stay Free Music  
Steven Knight CBE  
StickupMedia  
Strongbox13  
STS  
Style Birmingham  
Sweetpan Promotions  
Table Tennis England  
Takt Productions  
Tal Kang  
Talking Theatre  
Tammy Gooding  
Tariq Mahmood  
Taylex  
Tee Cee  
Tell It to the Music  
Thaisa Hughes  
The Exchange - University of Birmingham

The Hyatt  
The ICC  
The NEC Group  
The Seekers  
The Voice  
Tim Maycock  
Trigger  
TWS  
Ultimate Bhangra  
United by 2022  
University of Birmingham  
Vakhri-Tohr  
Verity Milligan  
Vimal Korpai  
VNS Productions CIC  
Vocal Nova Academy  
Voices Entwined  
Wan Sheung Chinese Cultural Dance Group  
Wavelength  
West Midlands Growth Company  
West Midlands Metro  
West Midlands Railway  
What's On Group  
Winston Denerley  
Words Direct  
Yaram Arts  
Zoo Riot

And all of the Birmingham Festival 23 staff and extended festival delivery team.



## Glossary

Accessibility	Giving equitable access to everyone along the spectrum of human ability and experience.
Audiences	This refers to instances in which members of the public engage with the festival both watching content, as well as minor forms of participation within it. It can mean watching a music performance, taking part in a sunrise yoga session, or having your picture taken with Perry. Audiences in this instance do not refer to individual people, but rather attendances at the festival. All total audience metrics will be calculated on site footfall date, as opposed to aggregating project level audiences, to avoid double counting.
Dwell time	We asked audiences how long they stayed, or intended to stay, at the festival as part of their visit for that day. A sample of 495 responses were collected across the whole festival. Responses were assigned to days of the festival and a median dwell time was calculated per day. This represents the average amount of time that an audience member was on site, engaging with work. The median was the average used to account for outliers.
Evaluation	Evaluation is a systematic assessment of the design, implementation and outcomes of an intervention. It involves understanding how an intervention is being, or has been, implemented and what effects it has, for whom and why. It identifies what can be improved and estimates its overall impacts and cost-effectiveness.
Evaluation Framework	A list out indicators relating to the outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs listed on Festival 23's Theory of Change. The document also includes the methods through which this data was collected. The framework is attached as appendix 1.
Festival CIC	Birmingham Festival 23 ('Festival 23') contracted staff and Board.
Festival team	The delivery team of the Birmingham Festival 23, including the contracted staff of Festival 23 CIC, Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces (OPUS) and JA Productions.

Footfall	The total number of people who were counted onto site over the course of the ten days of the festival. This metric was provided by Festival 2023.
Impact	The changes which result from the project outcomes over the short, medium and long term that would not have happened otherwise.
Impact evaluation	Impact evaluations focus on the changes caused by an intervention; measurable achievements which either are themselves, or contribute to, the objectives of the intervention.
Indicators	An observable and/or measurable quantity used to determine whether the intended outcome(s) and/or impact(s) have been achieved.
Movement or activity sessions	Projects self-defining that they contain elements of audience movement or physical activity.
New Artistic Work	Work which has not been publicly presented prior to Festival 23.
Organisations involved in festival delivery	This will be reported on at a project level and aggregated up. It will look to capture all organisations working on a single project, for example, sub-contracted organisations and partners.
Outcomes	The changes which result from the project outputs over the short, medium and long term.
Outputs	The deliverables that directly result from the inputs and activities related to a project. These are the immediate occurrences following an activity taking place. They may not necessarily pertain to a change in behaviour (which is more likely to follow as a short-term or medium-term outcome) but present an opportunity for the change to take place.
Participatory activity	Projects self-defining that the principal elements of audience interaction are participatory.
Performers/artists/creatives	Individuals with creative involvement (voluntary/paid) in a project. This will be collected at a project level and aggregated up.

Presenting Partners	The organisations who are in receipt of creative contracts with OPUS, on behalf of Festival 23. This excludes operational delivery partners.
Short-term outcomes	These are realised during and immediately after an individual's interaction with output associated with the commission. These are typically the most observable and attributable to the activities given the immediacy in occurrence.
Theory of Change	A theory of change identifies the changes an intervention is seeking to make, how they will happen, the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts associated with the intended changes and the external factors which could influence these.
Unique Audience	This attempts to estimate the total number of individuals who interacted with the festival as audiences. It will use the total audience number and a frequency of visitation metric to be calculated.
Visitors	Visitors refer to audiences who provide a residential postcode outside of Birmingham.

## Appendix 1: Evaluation Framework

Full version can be found at [this link](#).

PILLAR		DESCRIPTION	INDICATOR	Audience Survey	Presenting Partner Activity Survey	Presenting Partner Staff Survey	Internal Reporting	Artistic Associates Case Studies	Twilight Takeovers Interviews	Business & Tourism Stakeholder Interviews	Volunteering Portal Data
INPUT	Multiple	Expenditure through delivery by Festival 23	£ Total Festival 23 spend				Y				
			£ Total Partner spend outside of Festival 23 funding		Y						
			£ Devolved to creative projects/contracted organisations				Y				
INPUT	Multiple	Festival 23 and delivery organisation staff capacity for the festival	# Organisations involved in festival delivery (aggregated from project level)		Y						
			# Paid performers/artists/creatives		Y						
			# Voluntary performers/artists/creatives		Y						
			Staff demographic profile [split by involvement Staff, Freelancer, Creative, Delivery]			Y					
			Age			Y					
			Gender			Y					
			Sexuality			Y					
			Ethnicity			Y					
			Faith			Y					
Disability			Y								
Postcode			Y								
INPUT	Multiple	Volunteer capacity for the festival	# Volunteers				Y				
			# Gamestime volunteers redeployed								Y
			# New volunteers engaged								Y
			Volunteer demographic profile [split by involvement Staff, Freelancer, Creative, Delivery]								Y
			Age								Y
			Gender								Y
			Sexuality								Y
			Ethnicity								Y
Faith								Y			

			Disability												Y
			Postcode												Y
ACTIVITY	Multiple	Project and Festival wide work taking place to make the festival happen	# Projects containing new artistic work presented at the festival			Y									
			# Projects containing work from Birmingham 22 Festival presented at the festival			Y									
			# Commissioned projects/contracted organisations						Y						
			# Twilight Takeover Partnerships						Y						
			# Artistic Associates						Y						
			# Volunteering shifts / hours						Y						
OUTPUT	Multiple	Expenditure at the festival by live audiences	% Increase to footfall in local area						Y						
			% Visitors staying overnight			Y									
			# Visitors staying overnight			Y									
			Average number of visitors nights stayed			Y									
			£ Average daily spend per audience			Y									
			£ Average staff spend						Y						
OUTPUT	Multiple	People engage with festival and each other	# Audiences						Y						
			# Unique audiences engagement			Y									
			% Audiences travelling into Birmingham City Centre for the festival			Y									
			% Audiences who report positive interaction with other audiences			Y									
			% Audience who report positive experience engaging with anniversary material from 2022			Y									
			% Audience who report engaging in movement or active sessions			Y									
			% Audience who report engaging in more participatory activity broken down by activity (eg. Fierce)			Y									
OUTPUT	Multiple	A representative range of people engage with the festival	Audience demographic profile [split by Resident (Birmingham), Resident (West Midlands), Visitor (UK), Visitor (International)]			Y									
			Age			Y									
			Gender			Y									
			Sexuality			Y									
			Ethnicity			Y									
			Faith			Y									
			Disability			Y									
			Postcode			Y									

OUTCOME	ECONOMY	Local economy benefits from the festival taking place	£ Direct economic impact	Y	Y	Y						
			£ Gross value added (GVA)	Y	Y	Y						
			Local businesses report positive impact to sales attributing change to the festival taking place							Y		
			Organisations engaging in Birmingham Restaurants Festival report positive impact to sales attributing change to the partnership							Y		
OUTCOME	WELLBEING	Audiences feel increased wellbeing as a result of their engagement	% Audiences report positive impact on wellbeing attributing change to their engagement with the festival content	Y								
			% Audiences report positive impact on wellbeing attributing change to their engagement with other audience members	Y								
OUTCOME	PERCEPTIONS	Improved visitor/resident perceptions of the city and its residents/each other in audiences	% Resident audiences report positive perceptions of Birmingham whilst at the festival	Y								
			% Resident audiences report positive perceptions of friendly/inclusive atmosphere whilst at the festival	Y								
			% Visitor audiences report positive impact on their perceptions of Birmingham whilst visiting the festival	Y								
			% Visitor audiences report positive perceptions of friendly/inclusive atmosphere whilst visiting the festival	Y								
OUTCOME	VALUE	Audiences see the value in ongoing, free, outdoor arts and culture offer	% Audience who would recommend the festival to others (NPS)	Y								
			% Audience who identify that public spaces such as centenary square should be used more frequently for public cultural events	Y								
			% Audience who report positive experience at the festival	Y								
			% Audience who identify that they would attend free, outdoor cultural events in the future	Y								
			% Audience who identify that they would attend free, outdoor cultural events in the future despite not having engaged in free, outdoor arts before	Y								
			% Audience who report positive experience whilst at the festival despite not having engaged in free, outdoor arts before	Y								
			% Audience who report positive impact to wellbeing despite not having engaged in free, outdoor arts before	Y								
OUTCOME	OWNERSHIP	Audiences feel the space is accessible, diverse and welcoming, allowing them to feel comfortable and that it's 'for them'	% Audience who identify that the festival, its content and setting are inclusive	Y								
			% Audience who identify that the festival, its content and setting are inclusive, despite not having engaged in free, outdoor arts before	Y								
			% Audience who identify that the festival, its content and setting are inclusive, split by demographic	Y								
			Age	Y								
			Gender	Y								
			Sexuality	Y								
Ethnicity	Y											

			Faith	Y									
			Disability	Y									
			Postcode	Y									
OUTCOME	CONTRIBUTION	Presenting artists and organisations feel increased ownership of the sector as a result of their work for the festival	% Staff who report that they are more valued by the sector as a result of their engagement in the festival % Staff who report that their work is more valued by the sector as a result of their engagement in the festival				Y						
							Y						
OUTCOME	LEADERSHIP	Artistic associates and Twilight Takeover partners gain experience and learning from delivering the festival leaving them better equipped to do so again	Twilight Takeover partners identify how involvement in Festival 23 has built on involvement in Festival 2022 Twilight Takeover partners identify how involvement in Festival 23 has built capacity, enabling growth for the organisation Twilight Takeover partners identify principle learnings from engagement with Festival 23 Twilight Takeover partners identify upcoming projects/programmes/delivery which display organisational growth Artistic Associates feel more recognised as leaders of the sector in Birmingham as a result of the festival Artistic Associates feel their reputation has grown/been elevated as a result of their involvement in Festival 23 Artistic Associates identify principle learnings from engagement with Festival 23 Festival 23 team identify contribution and leadership from artistic associates							Y			
										Y			
										Y			
										Y			
										Y			
										Y			
OUTCOME	MODELS	Working models of festival delivery are tested, recorded and evaluated to understand potential structures for 'signature' festival	Delivery organisations and internal Festival 23 team record principal process learnings on delivery model for the festival				Y	Y	Y				
OUTCOME	CONTRIBUTION	Volunteers feel they have contributed to the positive reputation of their city and region	<i>Outside of this scope</i>										
OUTCOME	SKILLS	Volunteers will be better skilled and more confident to engage in a broader range, and higher number, of volunteering opportunities.	<i>Outside of this scope</i>										
OUTCOME	NETWORKS	Volunteers will be better networked, particularly across sectors which currently operate in silos.	<i>Outside of this scope</i>										

## Appendix 2: Key Informant Interviews

Organisation/Artist	Name & Role	Interview Date
<u>Artistic Associates &amp; Twilight Takeovers</u>		
Birmingham Rep	Madeleine Kludje, Associate Director	03/08/23
Girl Grind UK	Namywa Hutchinson, Founder & CEO	04/08/23
Amerah Saleh		16/08/23
93:00 Collective	Tarju Le'Sano & Indigo Marshall, Joint Founders	16/08/23
Elizabeth Lawal	Artistic Associate	16/08/23
Mukhtar Dar	Artistic Associate	21/08/23
Ceol Creatives	Jobe Baker-Sullivan, Head of Erdington Arts Forum	Notes provided via email
<u>Business &amp; Tourism Stakeholders</u>		
Ikon Gallery	Ian Hyde, Acting Chief Executive Officer	09/08/23
United by 2022	Nicola Turner MBE, Executive Director	10/08/23
The Exchange & University of Birmingham	Simon Cane, Director of Public and Cultural Engagement (UoB); Paula Mitchell, Director of Communications and Reputation (UoB)	11/08/23
Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce	Henrietta Brealey, CEO	16/08/23
Birmingham Restaurant Festival	Alex Nicholson-Evans, Founder & Director of Living For The Weekend	17/08/23
West Midlands Growth Company	Martin Clarke, Senior Marketing Manager (WMGC); Becky Frall, Head of Tourism (WMGC); TBC Dionne Gordon, Senior Marketing Executive (WMGC) Paul Marshall (Digital Marketing Manager, WMGC)	22/08/23
Dishoom	Harriet (Fay) Giles, Chatter walli	25/08/23
Colmore BID	Kelsey Dwyer, Events Executive	29/08/23
B:Music	Nicole Evans, Director of Commercial Services	30/08/23



Birmingham Rep	Jenna Harvey, Commercial Director	31/08/23
Library of Birmingham	Lee Mills, Facilities and Services Manager; Yvonne Barker, Business, Reception, Retail & Tourist Information Services Centre Manager.	Notes provided via email
<u>Festival team</u>		
Internal F23 and OPUS teams	John Adkins, Managing Director (JA Productions); Raidene Carter, Creative Director (F23); Caroline Davis, Founder & Managing Director (OPUS); Clelia Furlan, Producer (OPUS); Will Mauchline, Executive Director (F23)	14/08/23; 17/08/23; 21/08/23