

FUTURES:

EUROPEAN RESEARCHERS' NIGHT

Friday 27 and
Sat 28 November
2020

#FUTURES NIGHT



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH



University of
BRISTOL

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

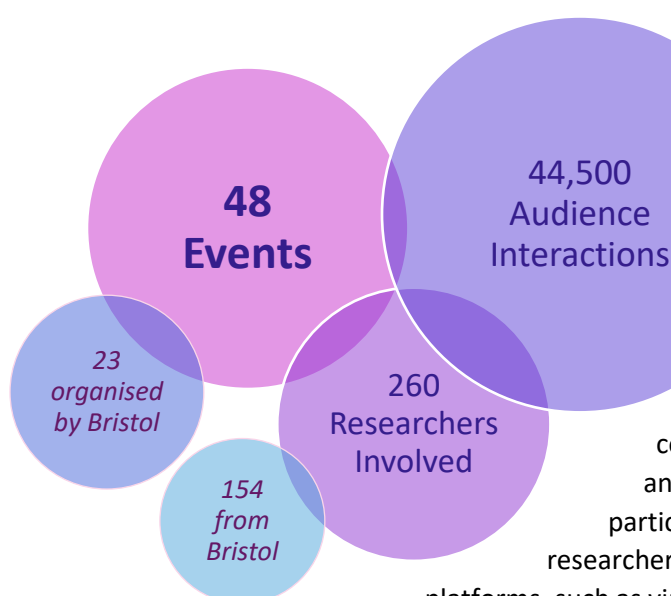


UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH



This project is funded by the
European Commission under the
Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions

FUTURES2020 is part of European Researchers' Night - a massive Europe-wide public event dedicated to the promotion of science and research careers, funded by the European Commission's Horizon2020 programme under a Marie Skłodowska-Curie action. Bristol led a consortium comprising Bath, Exeter, Plymouth and Bath Spa Universities, building on successful FUTURES events in 2018 and 2019 to remotely deliver an inspiring Festival of Discovery reaching across the entire South West of England.



"We would like to say a massive thank you and well done to everyone involved. We LOVED it!" (Event Participant)

Over **44,500 people** interacted directly with a FUTURES2020 activity and awareness-raising activities reached nearly **1.9 million people**. The programme was delivered entirely remotely, with **48 individual events** taking place, mostly over just two days (27th & 28th Nov). Translating what had previously been a vibrant in-person festival into a socially distanced one was challenging, but a combination of ingenuity, technology and creativity delivered an equally diverse and engaging experience. 1,545 people participated in live events involving real-time interaction with researchers. Very large audiences were reached by activities on online platforms, such as virtual Art Exhibitions and Twitter, Reddit & Instagram events, as well as through a series of Community Radio programmes broadcast on 5 local stations.

Feedback showed that overwhelmingly participants enjoyed their FUTURES2020 interaction. 93% of respondents in the audience survey said they found the events enjoyable and **70% described them as 'Very Enjoyable'** through finding out about new research and engaging directly with researchers.

"I was amazed at the amount of research that is going on. We need more of these events to inform people about science and the importance of research. Just brilliant." (Event Participant)

92% of survey respondents described FUTURES2020 as **'Interesting'** and 90% said they **learnt something new** from participating. The main benefit reported was gaining a **better understanding** of a research topic (71%) and three quarters said their participation had made them **more curious** about research that takes place in universities. 72% agreed that attendance made them think that **university research is relevant** to their life and audiences particularly connected with research topics that had relevance to their own lives or where they lived.

The fully remote nature of the programme **diversified** the audiences taking part and opened up events to people who otherwise would not be able to attend in person, with 'offline' activities such as letter-writing and community radio helping to overcome issues of digital exclusion. Using social media platforms brought research to familiar online spaces, making it **'everyday'** rather than inaccessible, and normalising conversations about it.

Researchers from all disciplines and career stages participated. 93% of researchers said they had **benefited from taking part**.

The main perceived benefit was the **enjoyment of sharing their enthusiasm** for research (75%), trying out **new ways of engaging** with the public (72%), improving their **communication skills** (61%) and **digital skills** (41%)

89% said they felt a bit **more confident** engaging with the public as a result of taking part. Nearly half (46%) said they were much **more likely to participate** in public engagement activity in the future.

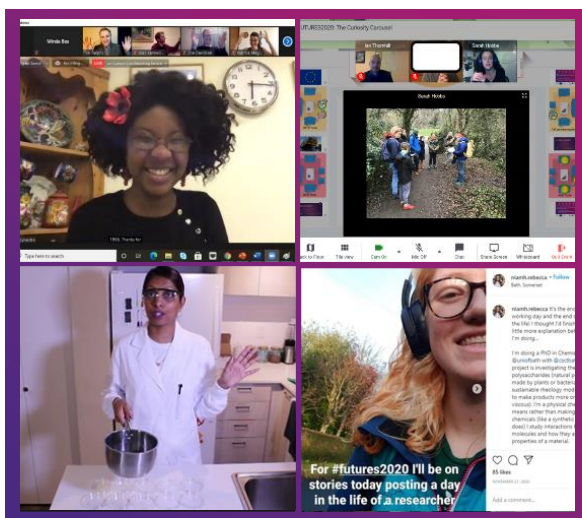
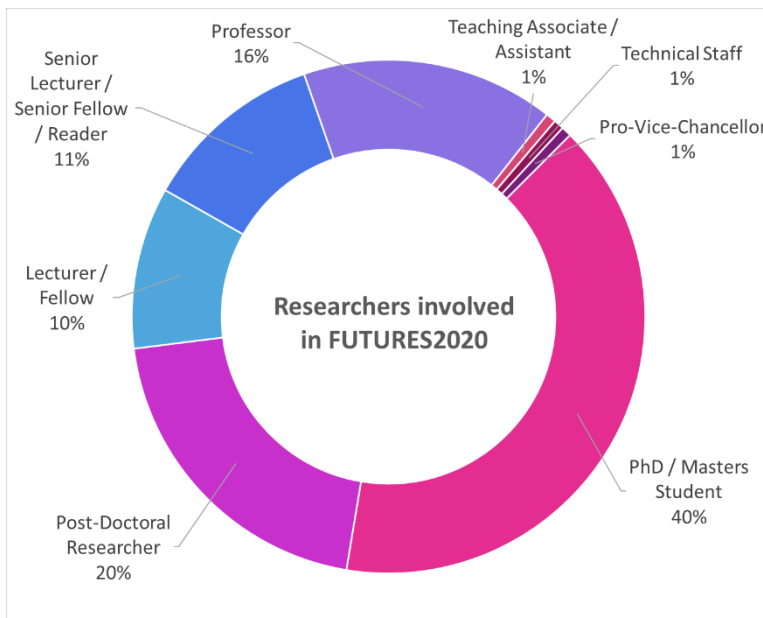
70% agreed that **public engagement can improve the quality of their research**, with 40% strongly agreeing.

Three quarters (76%) of participating researchers believed **FUTURES brought credit to their university** (31% said a great deal), with two thirds (66%) of researchers believed taking part had brought at least some **credit to their research group**, with 12% believing it had delivered a great deal of credit.

Researchers taking part in online activities had to adapt and re-think the way they engaged with audiences. Developing **new ways of remotely sharing** their research, they faced a range of challenges. While much of the re-imagining involved online engagement, **co-creating activities** (like the community radio programmes) proved to be a very satisfying process, demonstrating the value that such collaborations can bring to researchers and creative partners, as well as the benefits to the public.

Some of the interactions based on social media and online platforms appear to have created **genuine dialogue** between the public and researchers. Whilst it is often thought that such online interactions are perhaps shallow or fleeting, in fact they appear to have had a much deeper impact than expected.

"The question and answer process that's the Reddit AMA made me reflect on my entire academic career. That was both stimulating and humbling. It's important to researchers to be made to think about the wider societal implications of their work and consider their responsibilities. The FUTURES event(s) highlighted that." (Researcher)



The conversations and connections between audiences and researchers at FUTURES2020 have facilitated a better understanding of an incredibly wide variety of research topics; of researchers as people, thus reducing stereotypical impressions; and of the benefits and opportunities that a career in research affords. The large number of children and young people participating with their families means they have all been exposed to the same positive messages and are encouraged to stay curious and keep on discovering together, into the future...



This European Researchers' Night project is funded by the European Commission under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

