



## **AV Festival 06: LifeLike**

### **Evaluation Highlights**

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## Summary

According to the Evaluation AV Festival 06 achieved nearly all of its aims. Particular achievements of the festival were:

- 15 newly commissioned works were made for the festival and premiered 21 world premiers and 4 UK premiers
- 4 commissioned works are on international touring festivals. Ryoji Ikeda is on an international tour which includes Tate Modern, London in May; Sonar, Barcelona in June; and, ISEA2006 in San Jose in August. Ken Rinaldo's *Autotelematic Spider Bots* will be shown in at least 6 galleries and museums across Northern Europe and Russia before 2007. 2 pieces by Richard Fenwick were chosen by internationally renowned touring festivals (OnedotZero and Resfest) to tour the world

Other strengths and achievements included:

- The festival was rated as artistically outstanding by audiences, artists and collaborators
- It attracted new audiences to view AV and many of these audiences (56%) had not been to a similar event before
- Over 90% of audiences surveyed said they would come to a similar event in the future
- The two day Symposium discussing the theme of the festival and the debates following films received very positive reviews
- Workshop participants positively rated the teaching and content of the workshops and most of those interviewed said they would go on to use the skills they learned
- New skills were developed amongst local artists and other residents including some from socially excluded groups
- Local artists and practitioners worked closely with national and international artists and developed their AV production skills
- 70 volunteers participated and gained on the job experience
- The status and profile of the festival was raised and it gained national and began developing international recognition amongst AV artists and audiences
- The festival gained strong local and national publicity
- A logo and branded form of marketing was developed which began to give the AV Festival a clearer identity
- Venues within the region gained new audiences with over 43% of the surveyed sample attending a venue for the first time
- A highly complex programme with temporal and geographically distinct phases was successfully delivered
- Constructive and mutually beneficial relationships were developed with local cultural venues
- New and beneficial relationships were developed between regional organisations and between staff at different venues

- Non-conventional venues and outdoor exhibitions facilitated access to AV for new audiences
- The programme was successfully and more equally spread across the 3 urban centres than in 2003
- It attracted people to the region. 22% of those surveyed were staying away from home whilst at the festival
- Inclusion strategies facilitated access by families with children, young people and children, ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic groups.
- The survey indicated an almost equal gender split amongst audiences
- 88% of the surveyed audience were new to AV Festival 06 and had not participated in 2003
- The organisation of the festival was highly rated by audiences and artists.
- The festival created employment for local, national and international artists and gave high profile to AV skills and arts within the region.

## Artistic Quality

An important aim was to produce a festival of “outstanding artistic quality”. In the survey and interviews, audiences, artists and other participants were asked to rate the event they participated in or attended with regard to its artistic quality. The response to this question was overwhelmingly positive .

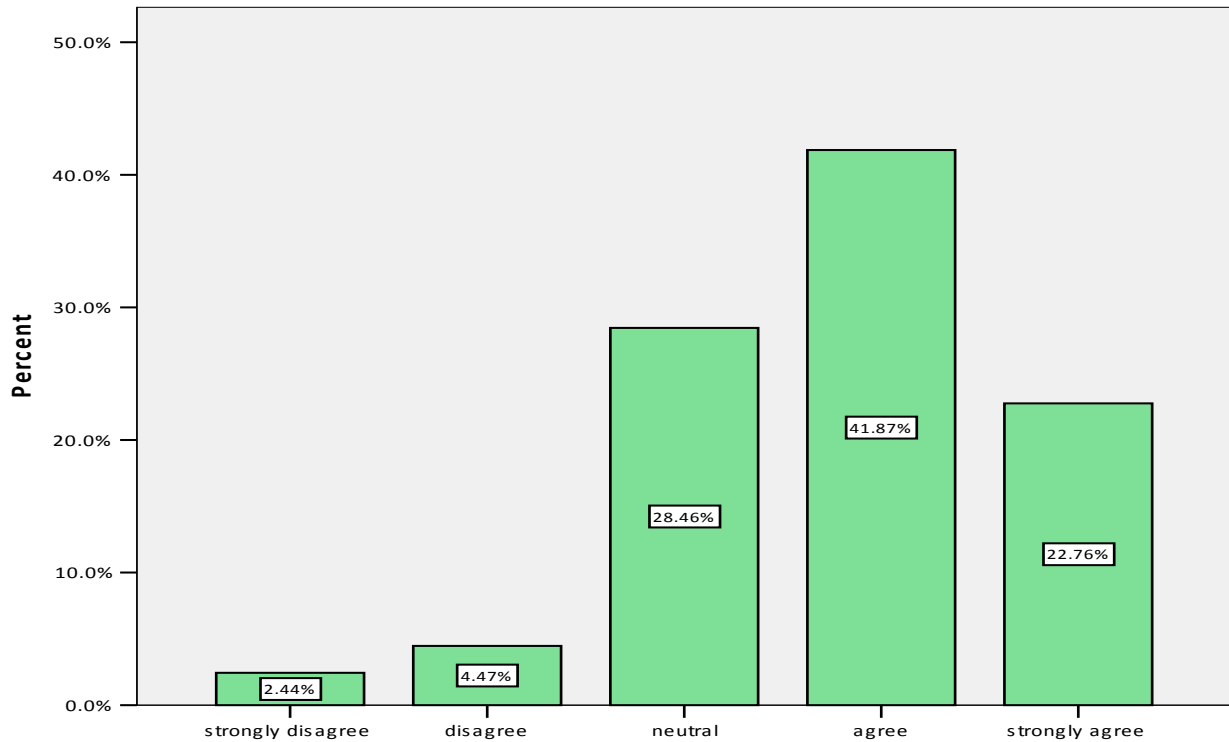


Fig. 1 Percentage of attendees who agreed the work was of outstanding artistic quality

## In Quotes

“Really good, I didn't really know what to expect but it was very interesting, it was yeah, I don't really know what to say about it, I've never seen anything like it before, interesting [in] the way that it combines technology and nature and philosophy and politics and a lot of things, very thought provoking.” (Audience Member, Opening Gala)

“Excellent and unique and ..., should be done more.” (Audience Member, Opening Gala)

“I found the whole event really very interesting, for myself as being an artist as well, seeing the scientific side of it as well, seeing factors that may be involved in our futures.” (Symposium Participant)

“I thought it was spectacular, the opening in Sunderland.” (AV Festival 06 Artist)

I ... basically knew nothing about it before I came. Then you got a lot of discussion between people who had given the issue a lot of time and thought also. And also having questions so they can actually engage the general public, I actually thought that the process was particularly interesting and unique.” (Audience Member, What I Know About Stem Cells, Film Premiere)

“It opened up a whole new world in software for art educators.” (Participant, AV Festival 06 Workshop)

"I really enjoyed it actually, I thought it was really well done ...and I think that's the sort of thing the general public should be watching, rather than the different articles in newspapers, which sometimes try to sensationalise the whole thing. I really enjoyed the debate as well, I thought ..., everyone put their point of view across very well, and I think it raised some really interesting questions." (Audience Member, What I Know About Stem Cells, Film Premiere)

"I think it's got a few really hot internationals, and it's got a few really good locals and it's got lots of people from the whole spectrum of AV arts." (AV Festival 06 Artist)

"It gives more confidence for local artists who develop their work ... more confidence that they have a future and that they can develop their work." (AV Festival 06 Artist)

"Its amazing, the building really comes to life at night. It really does demonstrate its suitability as a night time venue." (Venue Staff, The National Glass Centre Sunderland)

"Spider Bots [does] seem to have increased the numbers of younger visitors we are attracting and also the numbers of people who are travelling from an NE postcode". (Emma Pybus, Communications Officer, Tyne and Wear Museums)

"It was really exciting to be able to explore the different cities and there was kind of a more festival atmosphere in a couple of the buses, and being able to travel from venue to venue." (AV Festival 06 Artist)

"I travelled from Bristol because I saw Ryoji Ikeda advertised." (Audience Member, Opening Gala)

"It's the biggest public artwork I've ever shown, it's a 20 metre high projection in a very, very, very public place so that has been fantastic for me, so I'm getting lots of normal Newcastle people seeing the work.." (AV Festival 06 Artist)

"Absolutely flawless, flawless, the use of the itinerary, the use of the buses to take people around ... the team ...was outstanding." (AV Festival 06 Artist)

## Audience Size and Diversity

AV Festival 06 attracted 1649 people to education, training and symposium events and 1909 people to films. Indoor exhibitions attracted 21,270 people, outdoor events had audiences of 60,870 and concerts and radio 12,344 people. Other events which included the website and the mobile cinema attracted 17,774 people.

As fig. 17 demonstrates the surveyed audiences were mostly concentrated in the 25-34 age range (39.4%). The next two biggest groups were the 35-44 age group (21.18%) and the 19-24s. This means that approximately 72.5% of people surveyed were between 19 and 44. Overall the festival did seem to appeal to a relatively wide range of adults. Although a lower proportion of people were over 45 there were still approximately 22% of the audience/participants in this age range.

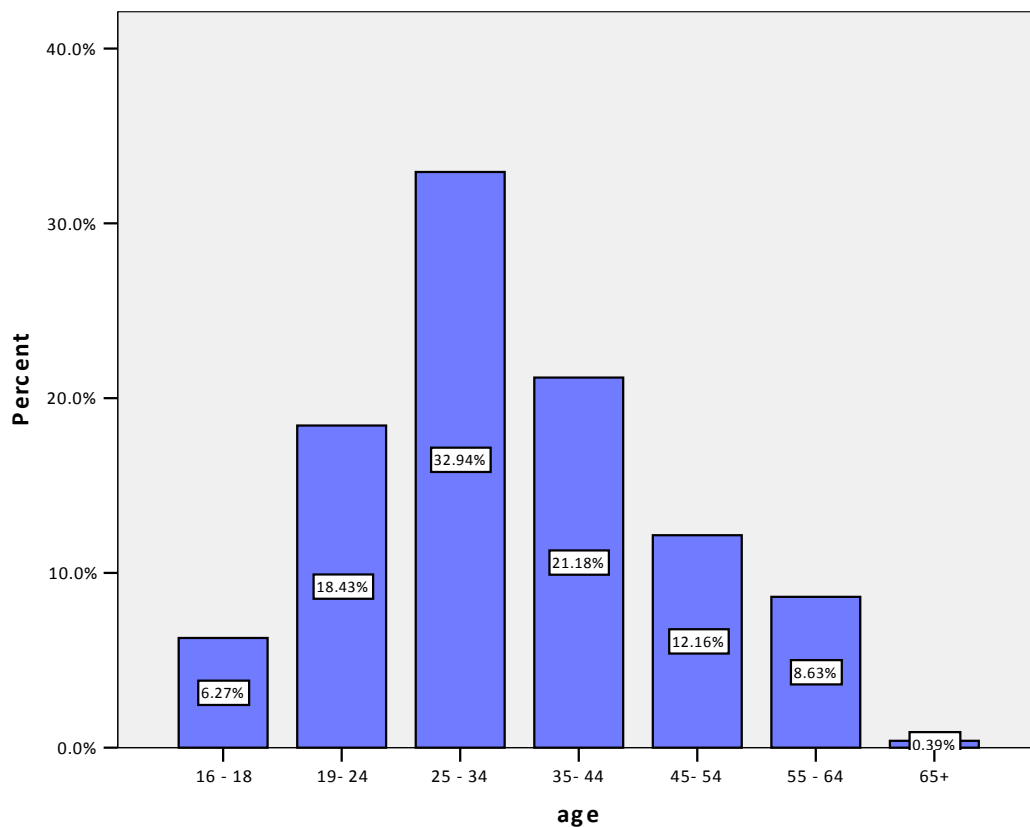
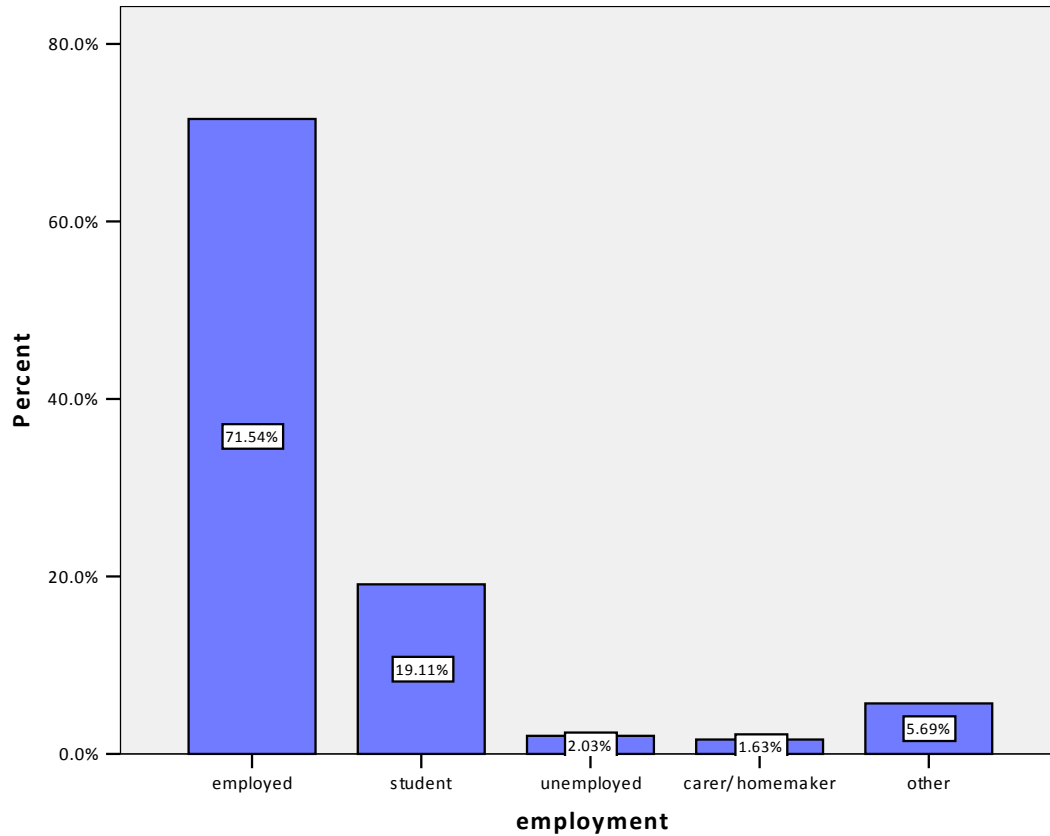
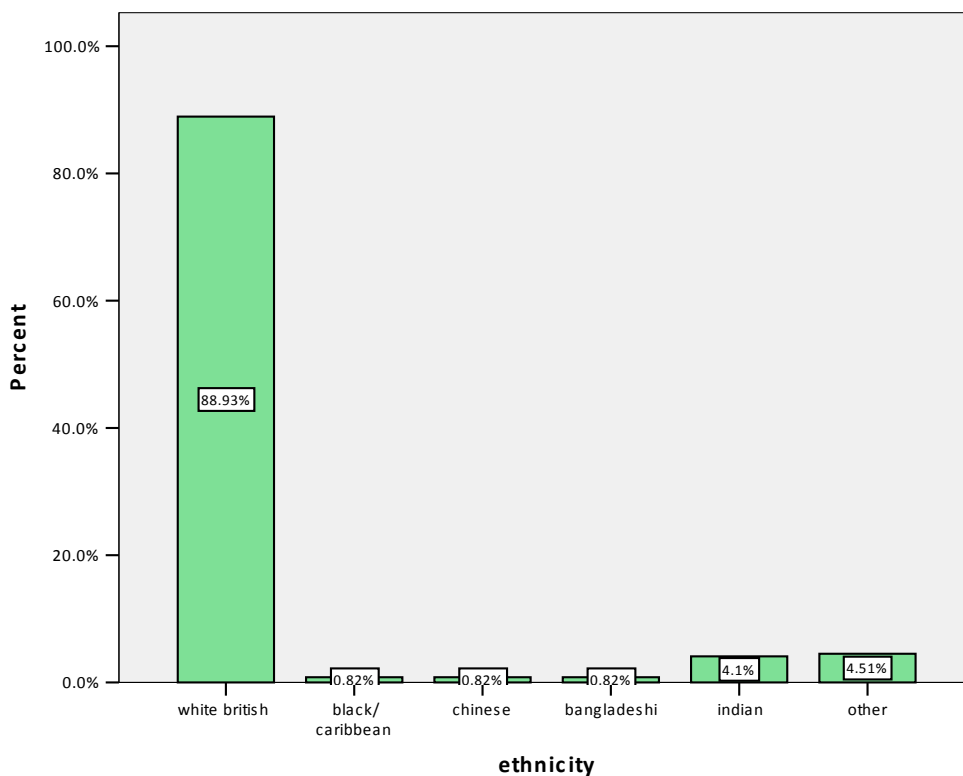


Fig. 17 Age range of people responding to survey



**Fig. 18 Employment status of people responding to survey**

The organisers did not set targets around ethnic diversity. However, given that ethnic diversity within the North East is approximately 2% of the population (National Statistics, 2001) then around 11% of the audience being non-white British is an excellent achievement (see Fig. 20).



**Fig. 20 Ethnicity of people responding to survey**

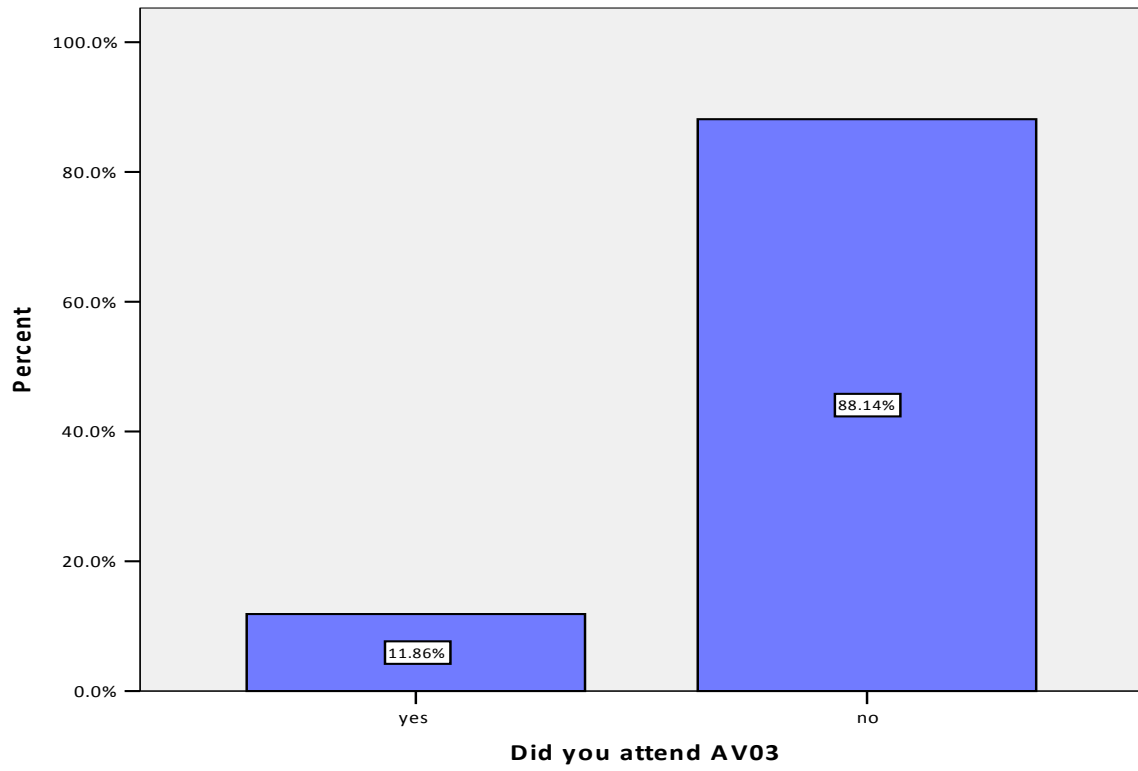


Fig. 24 People attending the festival for the first time.



## International & National Audiences

In endeavouring to become an international festival it was important to attract people with an interest in AV from outside the region and to work towards building an international audience.

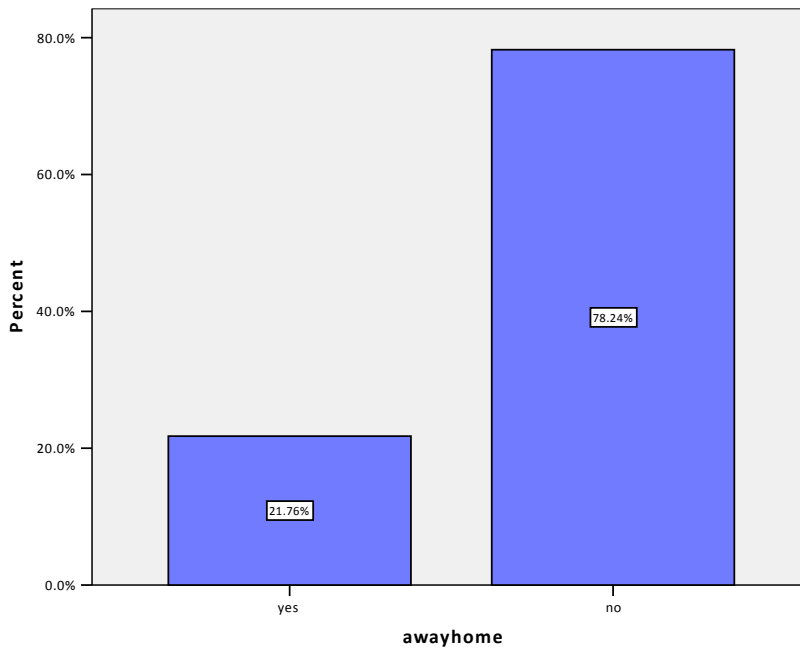


Fig. 10 Percentage of People Staying Away from Home

Performance Name	% Regional	% Non- Regional	% International
Ryoji Ikeda	74.6%	24.6%	0.8%
First Friday	75%	25%	0%
Michael Nyman	89%	10.3%	0.8%

Fig. 12 Regional, Non-Regional and International Audiences at The Sage Gateshead Events.

As these Italian tourists at the opening gala suggested in a mini-interview, they and some friends were visiting the city and decided to give the opening gala a try because they:

*"are interested in this building and this kind of event"* (Audience, Opening Gala)

## Future Attendance

Over 90% of people indicated that they would come to similar events in the future (see fig. 4). Given that audiences were attending novel events, this is positive. This is not only testimony to the quality of the event but is also a positive indicator for future festivals.

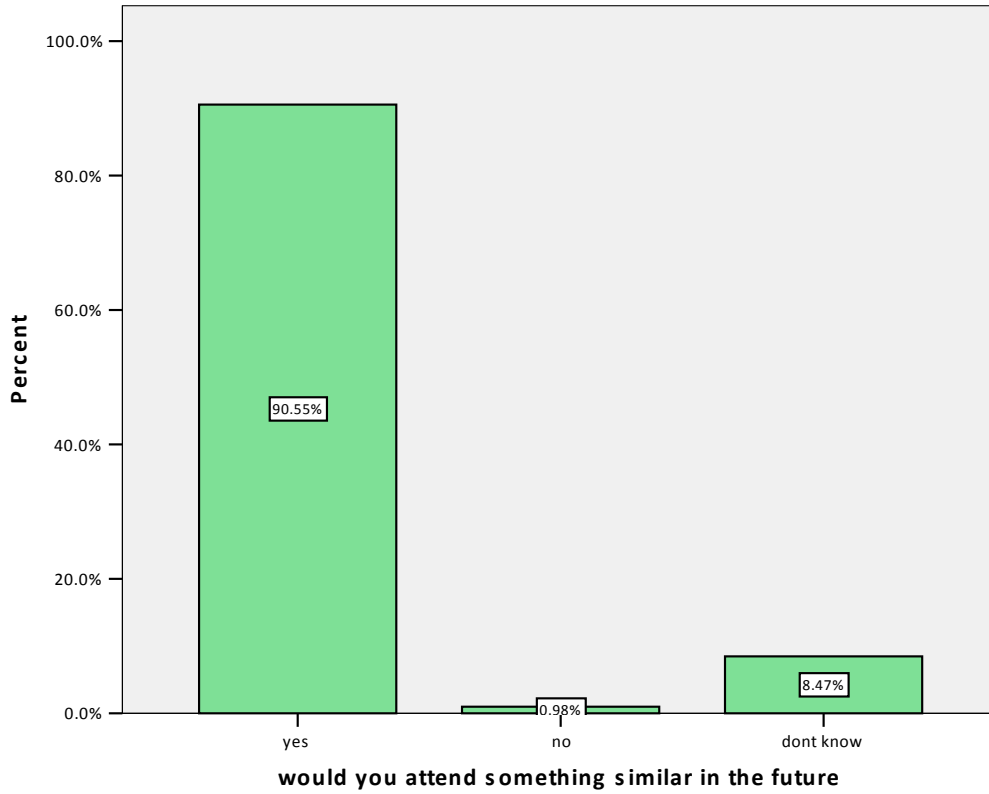


Fig. 4 People who would attend a similar event in the future.

## Networking & Venue Promotion

The festival also facilitated new collaborations between regional organisations and raised the profile of local cultural venues. A good example of productive regional collaborations is that facilitated between the exhibition venues in Sunderland:

- The Reg Vardy Gallery
- National Glass Centre
- Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art
- Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens

These galleries and museums worked together for the first time on a joint exhibition opening during AV Festival 06 on 7 March. The way in which these organisations worked together in co-ordinating gallery staff, creating a joint programme and transporting visitors between the 4 venues was recognised as a major success of the Sunderland aspect of AV Festival 06. The galleries and museums were so inspired by their experience of working together for the first time that they will be doing so again in 2007 for DOTT07.

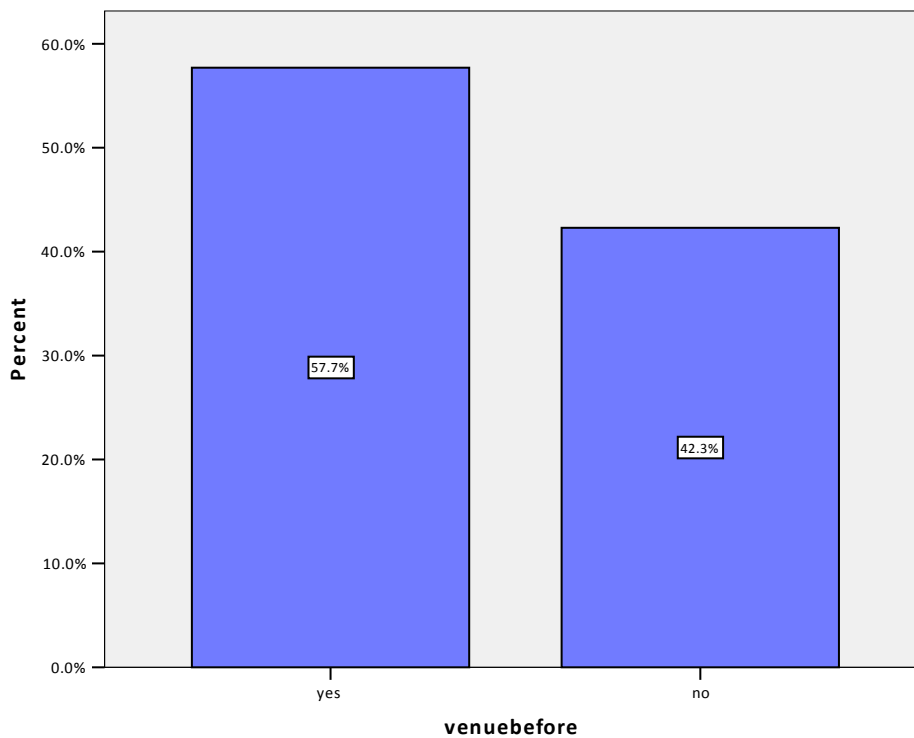


Fig. 7 Percentage of people indicating that they had not been to the venue before.

## Publicity

One of the major ways in which the festivals status has been raised is through press and media coverage. The biggest transformation from AV Festival 2003 was in the coverage that AV Festival 06 got in the national press. AV Festival 06 events were covered in double page spreads in The Guardian and The Times and on Front Row (on BBC Radio 4). AV Festival 06 also made a much bigger splash in the local press than AV Festival 2003. The media analysis put the total value of the press, radio and television coverage achieved at £464,146.25.

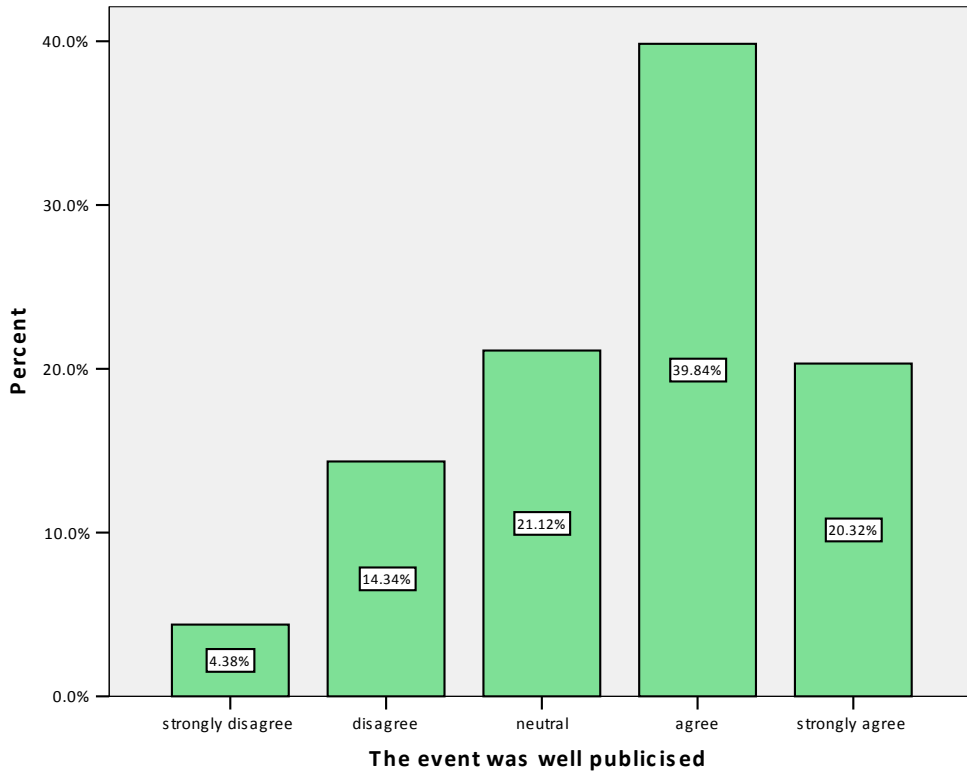


Fig. 23 Peoples views on how well publicised events were

## Organisation

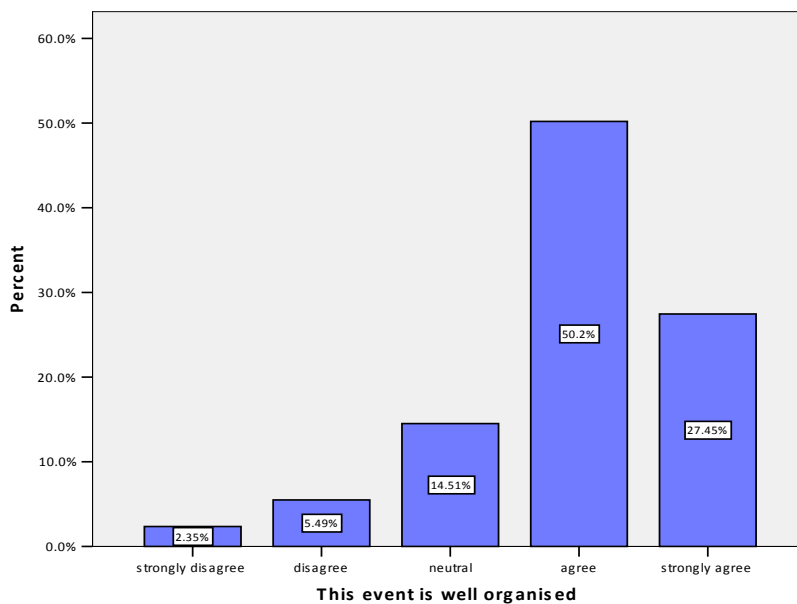


Fig. 25 Views on the Organisation of the festival

## Evaluation Methodology

The methodology to evaluate AV Festival 06 was, broadly speaking, designed to explore the success of the festival. The organising committee produced a list of targets or "critical success indicators" which, if achieved, would be evidence of having met the aims.

1. Produce a festival of outstanding artistic quality, as measured by qualitative feedback from audiences and participants
2. Attract an audience of 200,000 people to festival events or festival produced activity (including the festival website)
3. Commission or co-commission at least 10 new artworks
4. Feature 10 international speakers in seminar, symposium or public discussion events
5. Create national /international touring programmes from AV.06
6. Create 345 learning opportunities through workshops, symposium, seminars, talks & summits
7. Establish a new brand for AV
8. Create the festival as a forum to engage artists scientists, ethicists and policy-makers in critical debate
9. Safeguard 1 job, create 1.5 new jobs and 6 freelance positions
10. Provide 200 days work for artists, musicians, filmmaking talent or other creative producers
11. Include at least 10 local practitioners in the festival programme, allowing them to benefit from working alongside internationally renowned talent
12. Broaden the diversity of the participants by ensuring the availability of festival programme for:
  - Under 5s and their families
  - Women (underrepresented in the new media sector)
  - C2/D/E's
13. Spread provision of festival events and audiences more equally between the three cities target 40/30/30 split between Newcastle Gateshead, Sunderland and Middlesbrough
14. Create a sustainable festival infrastructure

## Methods

- A survey of those attending events (1000 distributed 312 Returns)
- A survey of those attending the symposium (80 distributed, 20 Returns)
- A survey of artists and organisers views (100 distributed, 20 returned)
- 95 recorded mini-interviews with people attending events
- Observational data collected throughout the festival
- Interviews with 11 artists
- Interviews with 6 members of the organising committee
- Interviews with 10 participants in education workshops
- An analysis of data collected by the AV Festival 06 organising committee
- Analysis of the programme and data on publicity provided by the media company
- Additional data gained from contacting the venues