

# Festival of Social Science 2023

## programme report

### Overview

The [Festival of Social Science](#) is an annual celebration of the role social science research plays in helping understand some of the big issues facing society and has been delivered by holders of the Economic and Social Research Council's Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) grants since 2002.

2023 was the first year the University of Bath contributed to the Festival of Social Science. Over the four weeks of the Festival (Saturday 21 October to Friday 21 November) the Public Engagement Unit supported the delivery of [18 in-person and online events](#) attended by a public audience of 5,784 people and involved 38 researchers from across the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science and the School of Management.

### Programming approach

The Festival programme was managed by the [Public Engagement Unit](#) steered informally by a working group involving the IAA team with contributions from the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Associate Dean for Research for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science. It was agreed, given the staffing levels of the delivery teams and the short lead-in time, that the programme would consist of activities that were either pre-planned to happen during the Festival period (which was done by [inviting contributions](#) from colleagues) as well as offering staff the opportunity to participate in activities managed by the Public Engagement Unit.

### University of Bath Festival of Social Science programme

The University's contribution consisted of 18 events. This was a combination of pre-planned activities that were 'badged' as Festival of Social Science events in exchange for additional funding, new activities, and Public Engagement Unit managed events. The programme was a mix of exhibitions, live in-person events and online activities.

### Exhibition

Images of Research exhibition (Wed 18 Oct to Wed 8 Nov 2023)



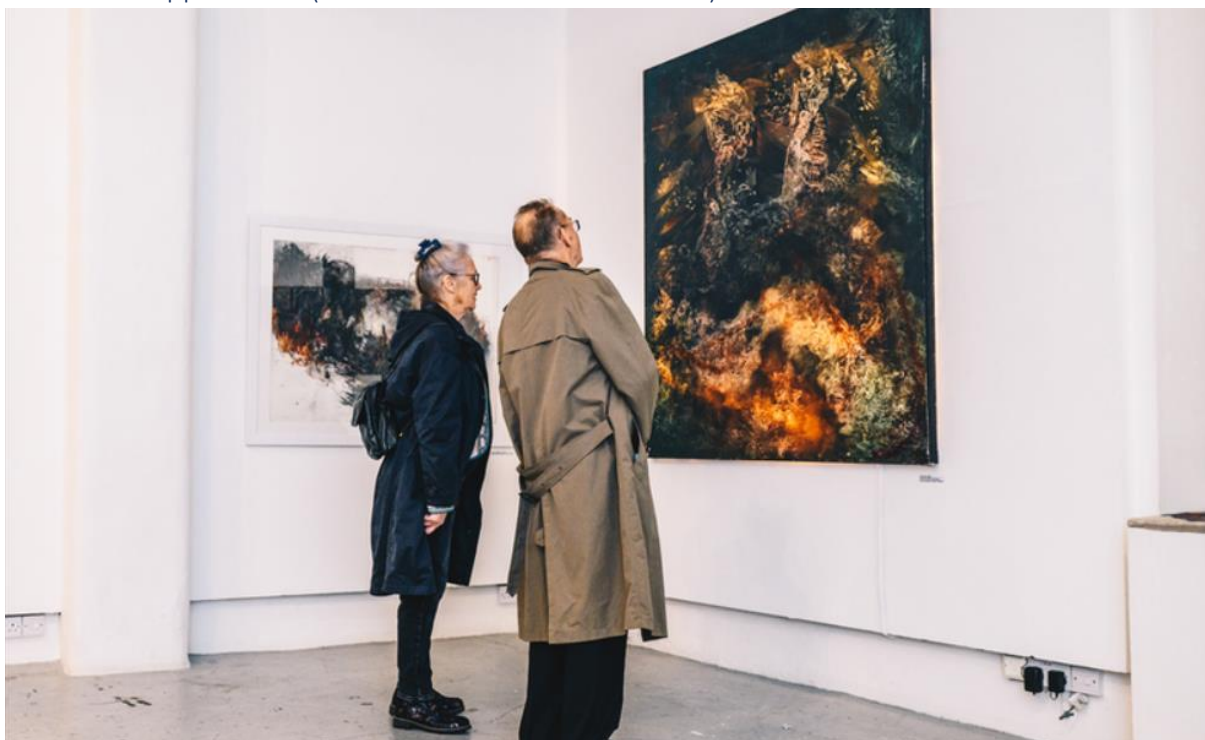
The University's Images of Research exhibition at Bath Spa railway station was extended by a week to overlap with the Festival of Social Science and highlighted a range of social science research projects. The exhibition is estimated to have been visited by 1,000 people during this week and featured images submitted by 19 researchers from all departments across the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science.

*In Their Eyes: Work, Discrimination and Dignity in the Middle East, Africa and the UK* (Mon 6 to Sun 12 Nov 2023)



*In Their Eyes*, led by Katharina Lenner (Department of Social and Policy Sciences) and hosted at local art space 44AD, was an exhibition of photography by migrant and refugee workers in Jordan as part of Katharina's AHRC funded research project. The exhibition also featured contributions from colleagues at the Centre for Development Studies (Hala Alaouie, Jason Hart, Michelle James, Naomi Pendle and Polly Winfield) that showcased several research projects that used photography, film and theatre to highlight the experiences of marginalised communities in the Middle East, Africa and the UK. The exhibition received 200 visitors with the exhibition launch attended by 35 invited guests.


*State of Disappearance* (Sat 28 Oct to Wed 8 Nov 2023)



Over two weeks at Bristol's CentreSpace art gallery, the [State of Disappearance exhibition](#) presented new work by Mexican abstract painter Chantal Meza. Brad Evans (Department of Social and Policy Sciences), Director of the Centre for the Study of Violence, worked with Chantal to bring together artists, academics, policymakers and advocacy groups together to explore the wider problem of disappearance as part of the broader State of Disappearance project in collaboration with UK-based charity Locate International. The exhibition is Chantal's response to the violence of human disappearance. The exhibition was visited by 2,000 people over the duration of the show.

[Live in-person events](#)


Dust to Data: Fictional Explorations of the Digital Afterlife (Thurs 26 Oct 2023)










**DUST TO DATA**

Fictional Explorations of the Digital Afterlife

18:00-19:30  
26 October, 2023  
[www.filmbath.org.uk](http://www.filmbath.org.uk)

 FILM BATH UK

Step beyond and envision a future where digital immortality becomes a reality.

 Dorothy House HOSPICE CARE  UNIVERSITY OF BATH  Kilter BEYOND THEATRE  UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL  UKRI  Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council  EPSRC FESTIVAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Doctoral students from the [EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Cyber Security](#) worked with Bath-based hospice and palliative care charity Dorothy House and Kilter Theatre to explore the impact of technology on grief, mortality and digital legacies as part of their Responsible Research and Innovation week. The event presented four short films about their research on 'grief bots' – a computer programme designed to simulate a conversation between a human user and a deceased person. The event screened these four film monologues that presented a near future where digital avatars of deceased people were created for four fictional characters from their digital legacies. Using these films as prompts, attendees were invited to discuss the opportunities and ethical dilemmas of the technological advancements in Artificial Intelligence, Digital Avatars and Deepfakes and how prepared we are as a society we are to embrace, or reject, the emergence of AI immortality. The event took place in Widcombe Social Club as part of the Bath Film Festival and was attended by 48 people.

Tobacco Slave (Thurs 2 Nov 2023)



Organised by the [Tobacco Control Research Group](#) and hosted at Bristol's MShed Museum, this event was the UK premiere of the Roy Maconachie's (Department of Social & Policy Sciences) film [Tobacco Slave](#) which explores labour exploitation in the global tobacco industry focusing on the experiences of farmers in Malawi and Kenya. The themes of the historical colonial practices and current business practices of the tobacco industry were explored in a post-film panel discussion in front of an audience of 141 people between Roy, Bristol Councillor Asher Craig, Dr Lonjezo Masikini-Phiri (Tobacco Control Research Group) and community activist Jendayi Serwah.

[State of Disappearance exhibition events programme \(various dates\)](#)



A programme of seven events accompanied the State of Disappearance exhibition at the CentreSpace gallery. These events engaged 200 people with some of the themes of the exhibition

and involved 10 academics from six other higher education institutions include LSE, Universities of Bristol and Exeter and Durham University among others.

Green energy at what cost? (Thurs 9 Nov 2023)



*Cobalt Rush* is a film by Roy Maconachie (Department of Social & Policy Sciences) and Simon Wharf (Audio Visual Unit), that explores the human impacts of the global rush for a mineral Cobalt in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The film was screened and followed by a panel discussion between Roy, Annie Snelson-Powell (School of Management) and Bossissi Nkuba (Catholic University of Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo) chaired by Charlie Larkin (Institute for Policy Research) to discuss the human cost of the transition to green energy and delve into our complex relationship with green technologies. 80 people attended the event at the Little Theatre Cinema.

Online events

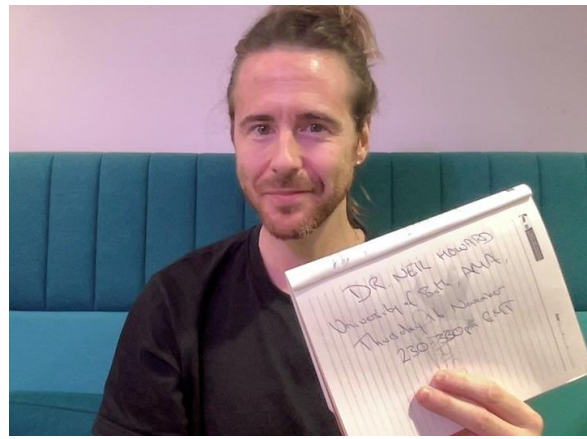
SENSE(LESS) Live - How Do We Cultivate Compassion? (Wed 1 Nov 2023)



SENSE(LESS), a podcast hosted by Mike Richardson (Department of Psychology) and Naomi Heffer (Bath Spa University) explores sensation, perception and cognition through conversations with academics working in these fields. For the Festival of Social Science edition of their podcast, the team livestreamed their conversation with Lucy Maddox (Department of Psychology) about her work

on compassion fatigue among those working in children's mental health to an audience 50 people from the University's TV Studio.

I'm a Social Scientist – Ask Me Anything! (various dates)



Five researchers: Ioannis Costas Battle (Department of Education), Richard Fairchild and Oishee Kundu (School of Management), Neil Howard and John Troyer (Department of Social & Policy Sciences), invited users of social news website Reddit to ask them anything about their work. Each logged into Reddit and spent an hour in a chat-based discussion on the platform answering questions posed to them about their research. These events proved popular with a total of 1,950 active engagements with users (this includes questions, shares and up-votes of the topic).

**Dean Veall (Deputy Head of Public Engagement)**

**November 2023**