UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Festival of Bright Ideas 2026

Evaluation and Insights Report

Community Engagement, Tasmania Engagement

September 2026

UNIVERSITY of
TASMANIA

GEMSTONES
CODES

COLD
PLANT TRAITS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SURV
PUZZLE
MATCH EACH PLANT TO IT'S ENVIRONMENT!
HINT: LOOK AT THE TRAITS...

FESTIVAL OF BRIGHT IDEAS
FESTIVAL OF BRIGHT

Mark
Pearson

Saving wildlife.
Stopping extinctions.
Protecting nature.
GONE: Australian animals
A BUCK TOO FAR

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA
School of Engineering

Fish for the future
Tasmanian Government

TRANS

BUG
HUN
Discover a hid
in your
and help
wildlife
invasive
species council

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

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Evaluation and Insights Report

Community Engagement, Tasmania Engagement

September 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Palawa people of Lutruwita, the traditional owners of the land upon which we live and work.

We pay respects to Elders past and present as the knowledge holders and sharers. We honour their strong culture and knowledges as vital to the self-determination, wellbeing and resilience of their communities.

We stand for a future that profoundly respects and acknowledges Aboriginal perspectives, culture, language and history.

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1

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

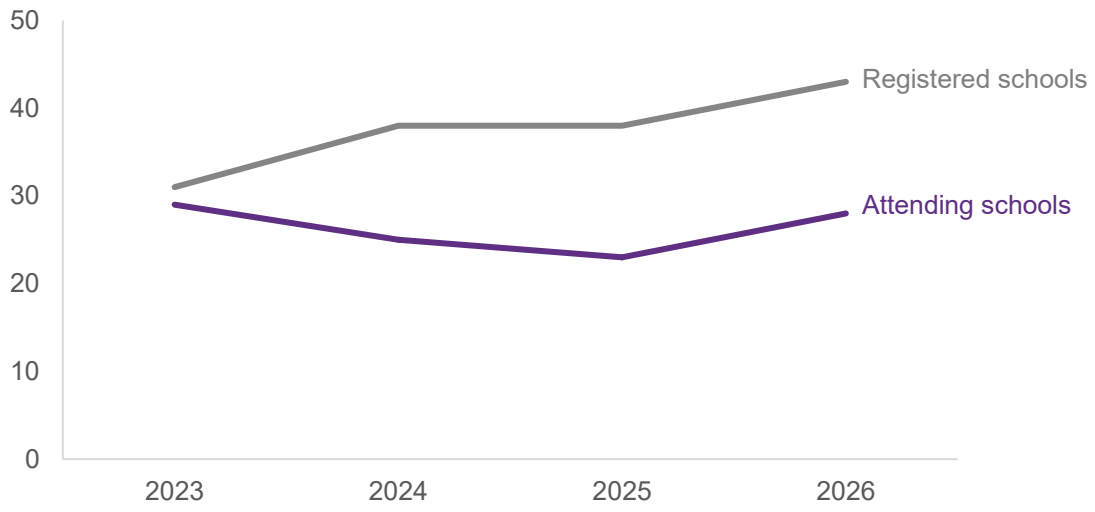
- **Festival of Bright Ideas (FOBI) 2026** was held at Princes Wharf 1 in Hobart during National Science Week, bringing together more than 3,600 attendees, 36 activity providers and 25 volunteers to deliver a large-scale celebration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- **FOBI continued to demonstrate strong community demand, reaching diverse audiences** including communities experiencing greater disadvantage, people historically underrepresented in STEM, and those without connections to STEM or the University connections.
- **Visitors reported an overwhelmingly positive experience** with hands-on activities, children's learning, and interaction with STEM professionals identified as key strengths.
- **FOBI delivered meaningful STEM engagement outcomes**, with 90% reporting increased excitement about science, 91% agreeing FOBI increased their child's curiosity about STEM, and almost all indicating they intend to continue engaging with STEM following the event.
- **Schools, activity providers and volunteers** also reported **highly positive experiences**.
- **Opportunities exist** to expand participation, enhance visitor experiences, and strengthen engagement with teenagers and STEM pathways.

2

Reach and Audience

School demand for FOBI continues to grow, with registrations reaching a record high in 2026

Registered and attending schools, 2023-2026



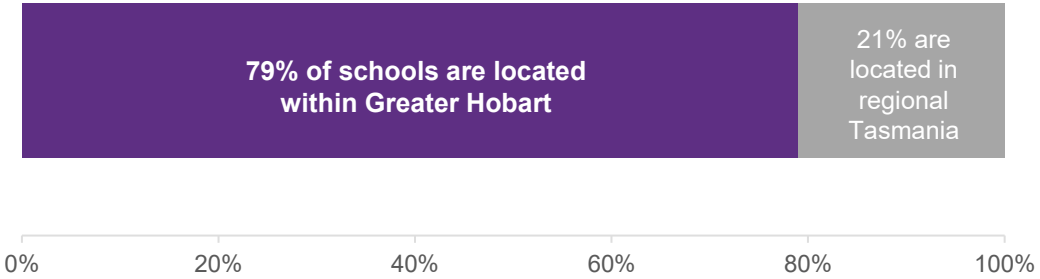
Key insights

- Interest from schools has grown steadily, with **registrations** increasing by almost 40% since 2023.
- **Attendance** places have remained relatively stable, with 28 schools participating in 2026.
- The **gap between registrations and attendance** indicates continued interest from schools beyond the number of places that can currently be accommodated.
- Growing demand may present opportunities to explore future capacity expansion or alternative engagement models.

Source: FOBI school registration and attendance records, 2023-2026.
Notes: Registered schools indicate demand for participation. Attending schools indicate schools that attended FOBI. Not all interested schools can be accommodated due to capacity limitations. Homeschool groups excluded from counts.

FOBI attracted schools from across Tasmania, with most participating schools located in Greater Hobart

Location of participating schools



Key insights

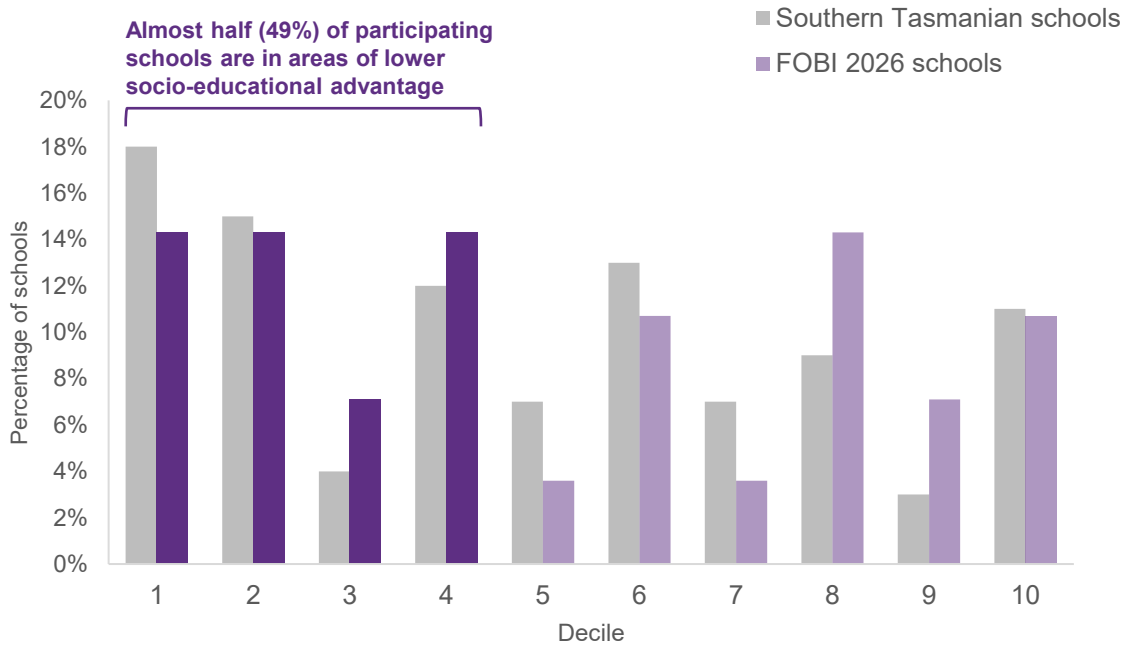
- FOBI attracted 28 participating schools from eight Tasmanian Local Government Areas.
- Most participating schools (79%) were located within Greater Hobart.
- Schools also attended from regional areas including the East Coast, Brighton, Derwent Valley and the Tasman Peninsula.

28 participating schools. The homeschool participant is not included.

FOBI attracted schools from areas of lower socio-educational advantage while maintaining participation across the socioeconomic spectrum

Socioeconomic profile of participating schools compared with Southern Tasmanian schools

ICSEA indicates the relative socio-educational advantage of a school's student population.
Decile 1 represents the lowest ICSEA percentiles and decile 10 the highest.



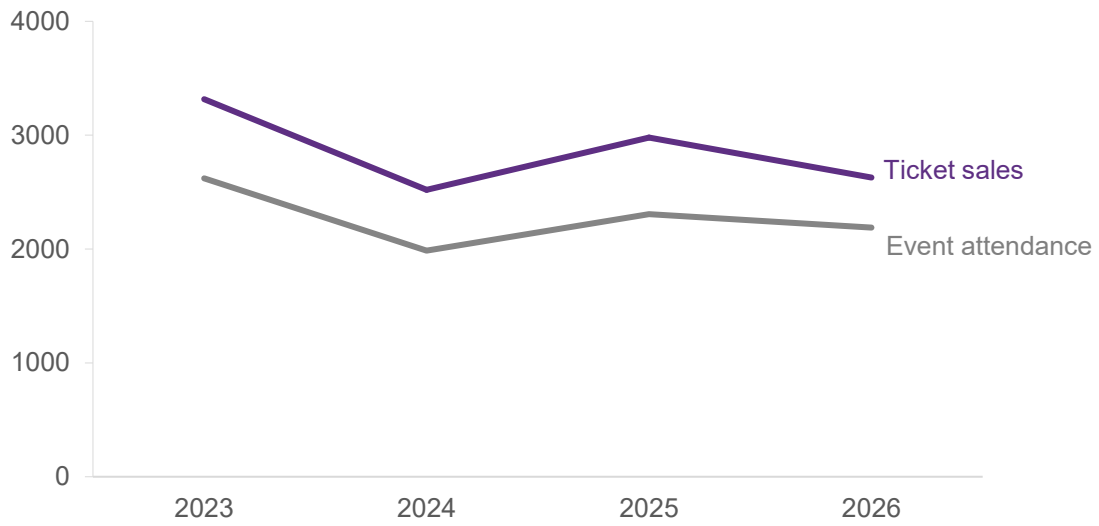
Key insights

- FOBI attracted schools from a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Lower-decile schools were well represented (49%) among participating schools.
- The results suggest FOBI is reaching students from communities that may face greater barriers to STEM engagement opportunities.

28 attending schools; the homeschool group is excluded. Percentages are based on schools and may not total 100% due to rounding.
ICSEA percentile deciles are based on each school's reported ICSEA percentile. **Source:** School Profile 2025 (XLSX) from ACARA Data Access Program.

FOBI continues to attract strong community interest, with ticket demand and attendance remaining consistently high over the past four years

Ticket sales and event attendance, 2023-2026



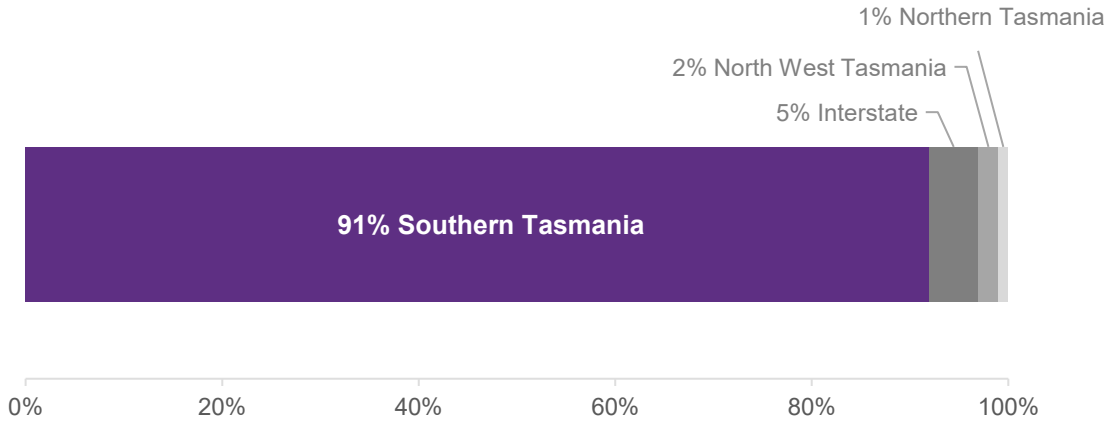
Key insights

- FOBI continues to attract strong community demand, with **more than 2,500 tickets claimed annually**.
- Attendance has remained consistently high, exceeding 2,000 attendees each year.
- Ticket sales and attendance trends closely align, reflecting strong visitor commitment to attending FOBI.

Source: Humanitix ticketing data FOBI 2023-2026.

Respondents were predominately from Southern Tasmania

Region in which respondents reside



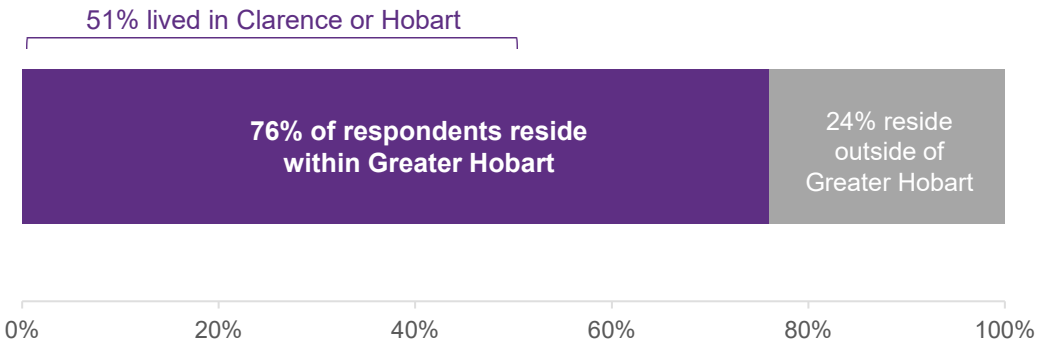
Key insights

- Nine in ten survey respondents (91%) lived in Southern Tasmania, reflecting FOBI's strong appeal within its host region.
- Respondents from Northern Tasmania (1%), North West Tasmania (2%) and interstate (5%) were also represented, indicating FOBI attracted visitors from beyond the South.
- A total of 95% of survey respondents were Tasmanian residents.

If you reside in Australia, what is your postcode? n=359

Three in four respondents lived in Greater Hobart

Respondents by location of residence



Key insights

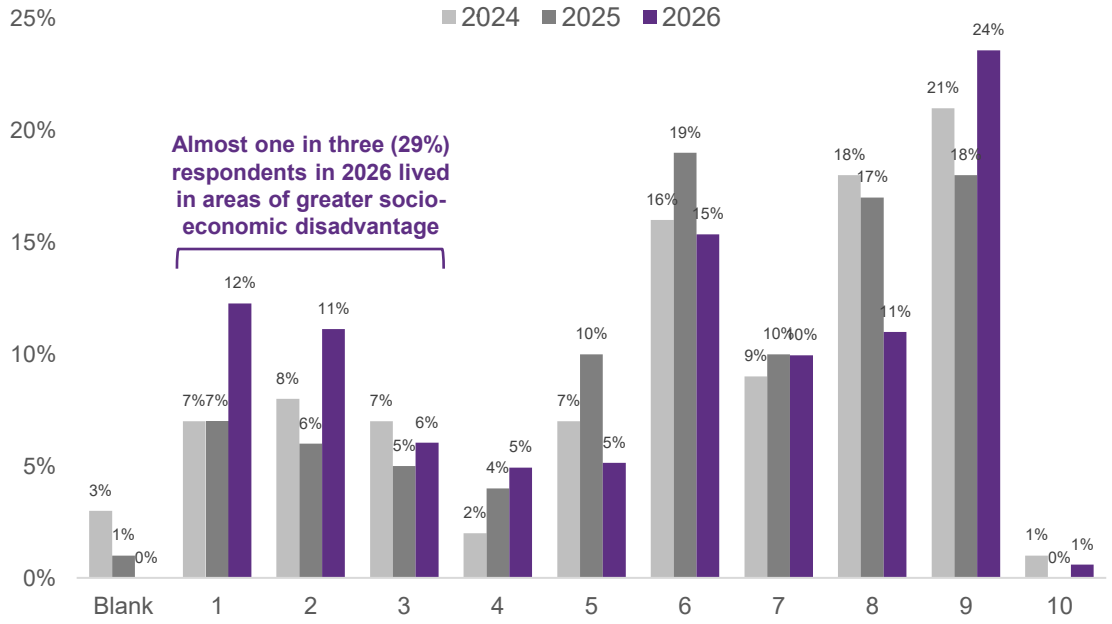
- Three in four respondents (76%) lived in the Greater Hobart Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Clarence, Hobart, Glenorchy, Kingborough and Brighton.
- Clarence (26%) and Hobart (25%) accounted for the largest shares, together representing 51% of respondents.
- Almost one quarter of respondents (24%) lived outside Greater Hobart, with responses received from LGAs across Tasmania.

If you reside in Australia, what is your postcode? n=359

This year, almost one in three respondents lived in areas of greater socio-economic disadvantage

Socio-economic profile of respondents (IRSAD deciles)

IRSAD summarises information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area, including both relative advantage and disadvantage measures. Decile 1 indicates relatively greater disadvantage and a lack of advantage; Decile 10 indicates a relative lack of disadvantage and greater advantage.



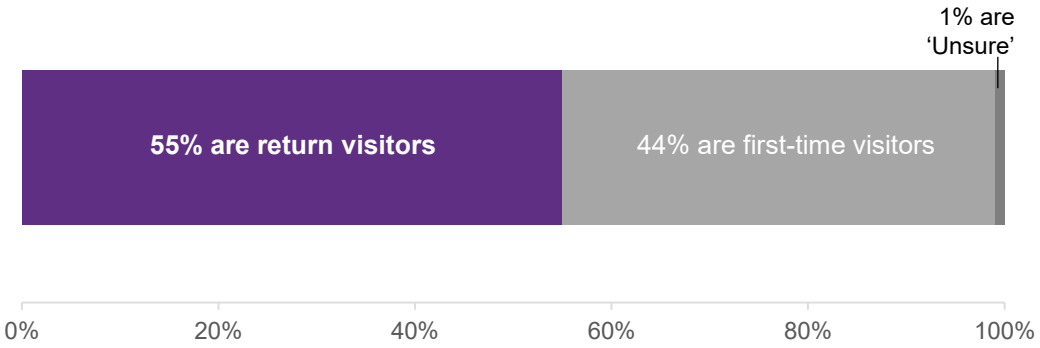
If you reside in Australia, what is your postcode? 2024 n=184, 2025 n=202, 2026 n=361.

Key insights

- Over the last three years, almost one in four respondents reside in areas of greater socio-economic disadvantage.
- The findings suggest FOBI is engaging respondents from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds and maintaining reach into communities experiencing greater disadvantage.

FOBI maintains a loyal audience while attracting new visitors

Previous attendance at the Festival of Bright Ideas



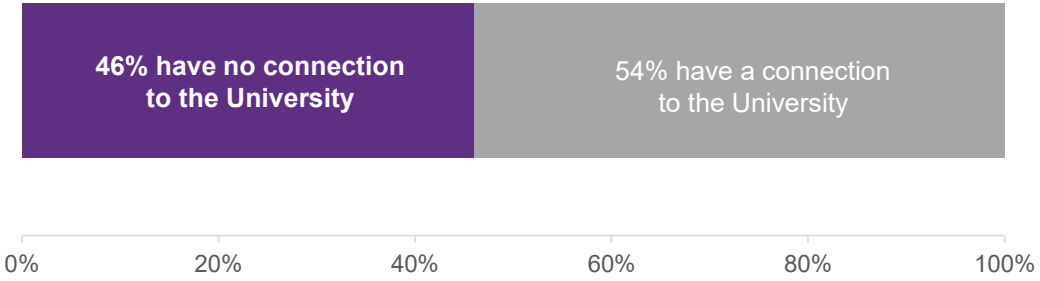
Key insights

- **More than half** of respondents (55%) have **attended FOBI before**, demonstrating strong audience loyalty, while 44% are first-time visitors, indicating FOBI continues to attract new audiences.

Have you been to the Festival of Bright Ideas before? n=361.

FOBI continues to reach audiences beyond the University community

Connections to the University of Tasmania



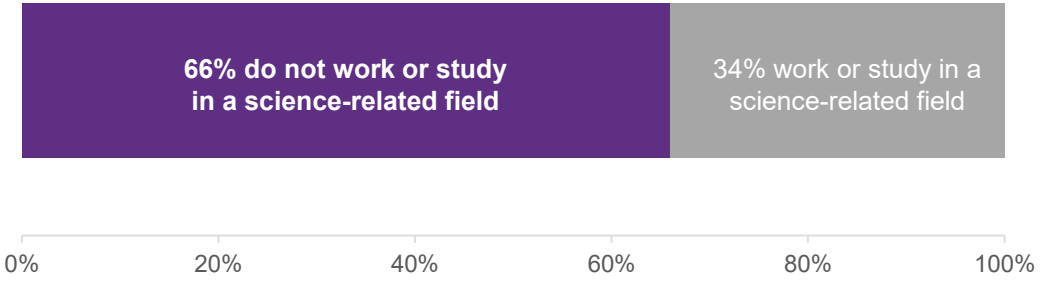
Key insights

- **Almost half of respondents (46%) reported no connection to the University of Tasmania**, up from 42% in 2025.
- This reinforces FOBI's ability to attract audiences beyond the University's existing networks and engage the broader Tasmanian community.

Have you or an immediate family member ever done any of the following: (Select all that apply) Worked with the University of Tasmania, Worked for the University of Tasmania, Studied at the University of Tasmania. n=361.

FOBI continues to engage audiences beyond the STEM sector

Connection to science through work or study



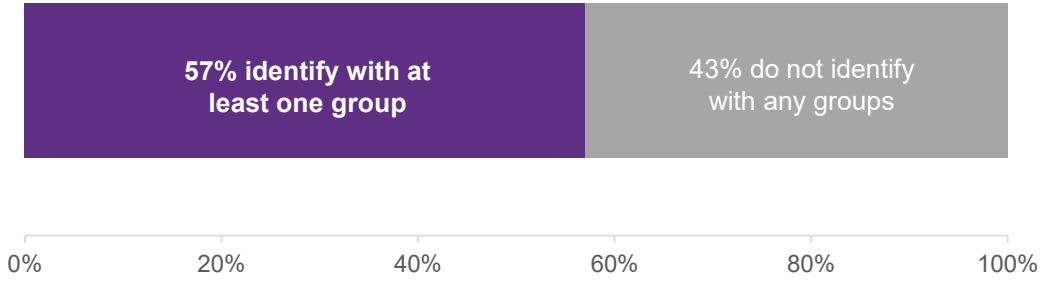
Key insights

- **Two-thirds of respondents** (66%) do **not work or study in a science-related field**, suggesting FOBI successfully engages a broad community audience beyond those already connected to STEM through employment or education.

Do you currently work or study in a science-related field? n=361.

More than half of respondents identified with at least one group historically underrepresented in STEM

Respondents identifying with groups historically underrepresented in STEM



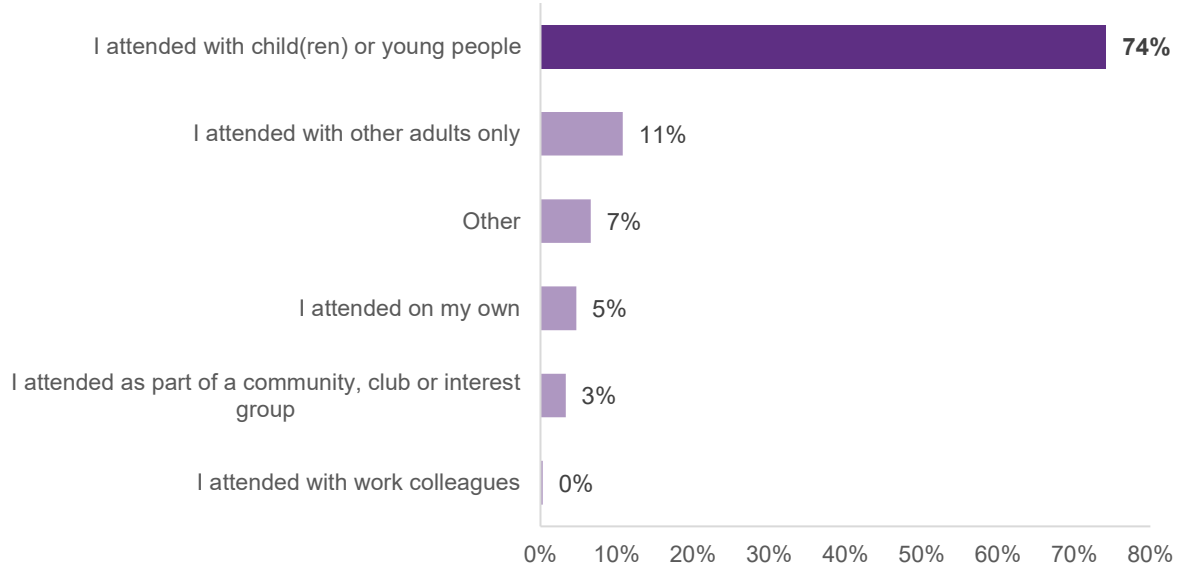
Key insights

- 57% of respondents identified with at least one group **historically underrepresented in STEM**.
- *Women and girls* were the most commonly identified group (40% of respondents), followed by *neurodiverse people* (16%). Smaller proportions identified as *people with a disability* (5%) or *LGBTQIA+ people* (5%). Respondents could select multiple groups.
- The findings suggest FOBI engages a diverse audience, including people from groups that have historically faced barriers to STEM participation.

Do you identify with belonging to any of the following groups? (Select all that apply) Do not identify with any of these groups, Women and girls, Neurodiverse people, People with disability, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people, First Nations people, LGBTIAQ+ people, Prefer not to say. n=361.

Family groups remain FOBI's primary audience

Group composition of respondents



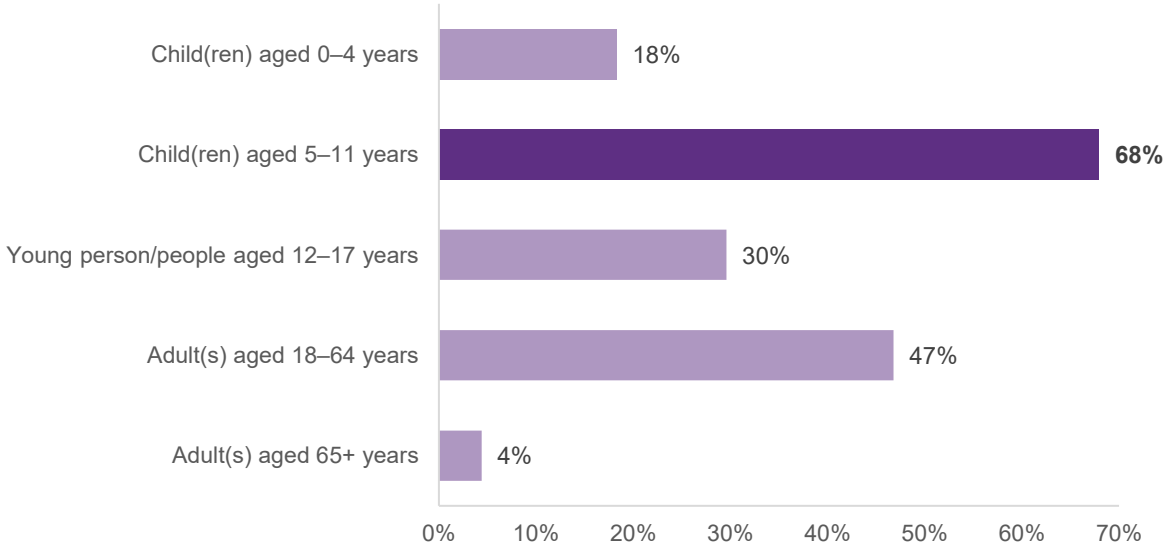
Key insights

- Families are FOBI's core audience, with **almost three in four (74%)** respondents **attending with children or young people**.
- This highlights FOBI's strong appeal as a family STEM experience and reinforces the importance of family-focused programming and engagement.

Which best describes the group you attended with today? n=361

FOBI is primarily experienced by families with children aged 5-11

Age composition of respondents' attendance groups



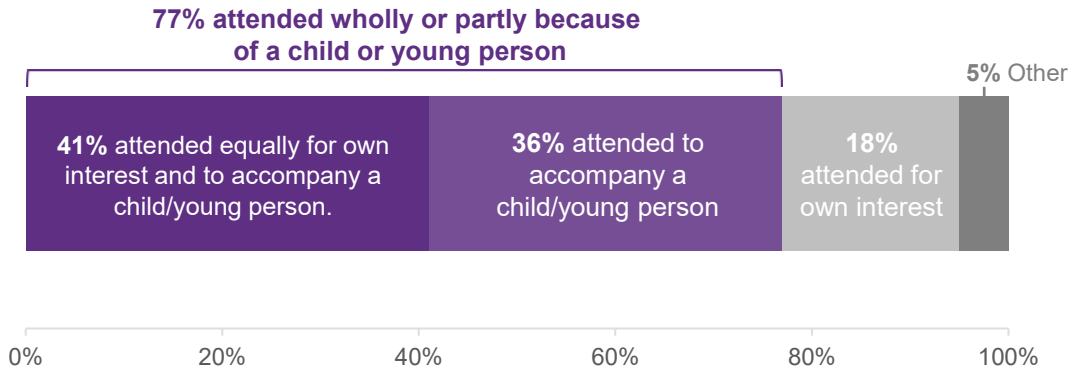
Key insights

- **Children aged 5-11 years** were represented in more than two-thirds (68%) of respondents' groups, making them the most commonly represented age group.
- Nearly half of respondents attended with other adults (47%), reflecting FOBI's appeal as a shared family experience.
- Young people aged 12-17 years were represented in 30% of respondents' groups, suggesting potential opportunities to strengthen engagement with secondary school-aged audiences.

Including yourself, who did you attend the Festival of Bright Ideas with? (Select all that apply) n=361

FOBI brings young people and adults together through a shared interest in STEM

Respondents' primary reason for attending FOBI



Key insights

- The largest group, 41%, attended equally for their own interest and to accompany a child or young person.
- A further 36% attended to accompany a child or young person, while 18% attended primarily for their own interest.

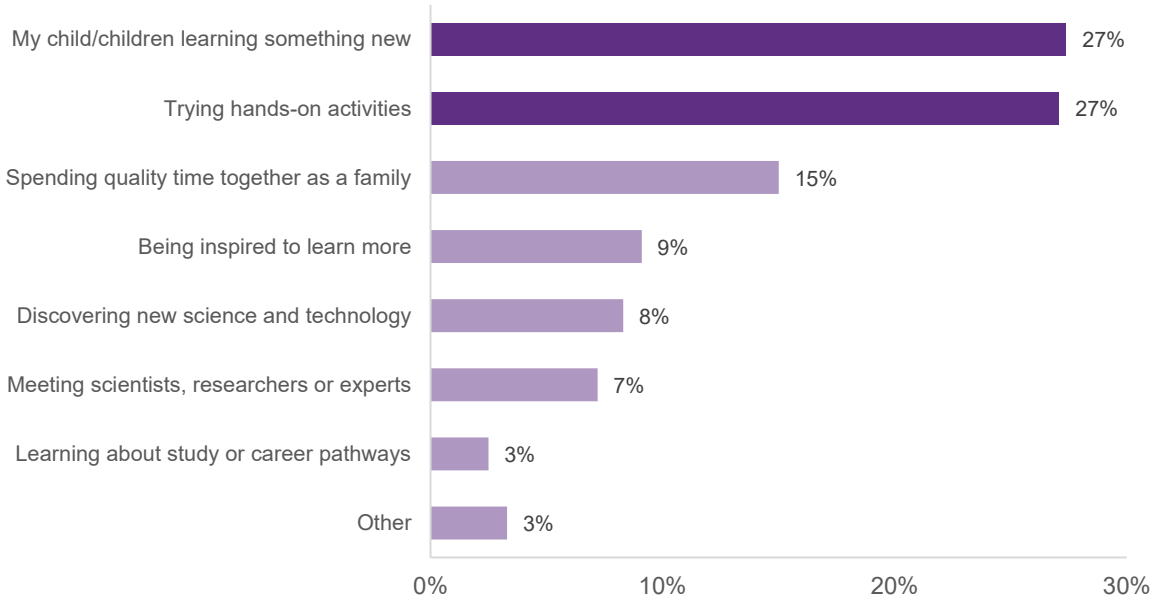
Which best describes your reason for attending today? n=361.

3

Visitor Experience and Outcomes

Hands-on learning delivers the greatest value

Most valuable part of the FOBI experience



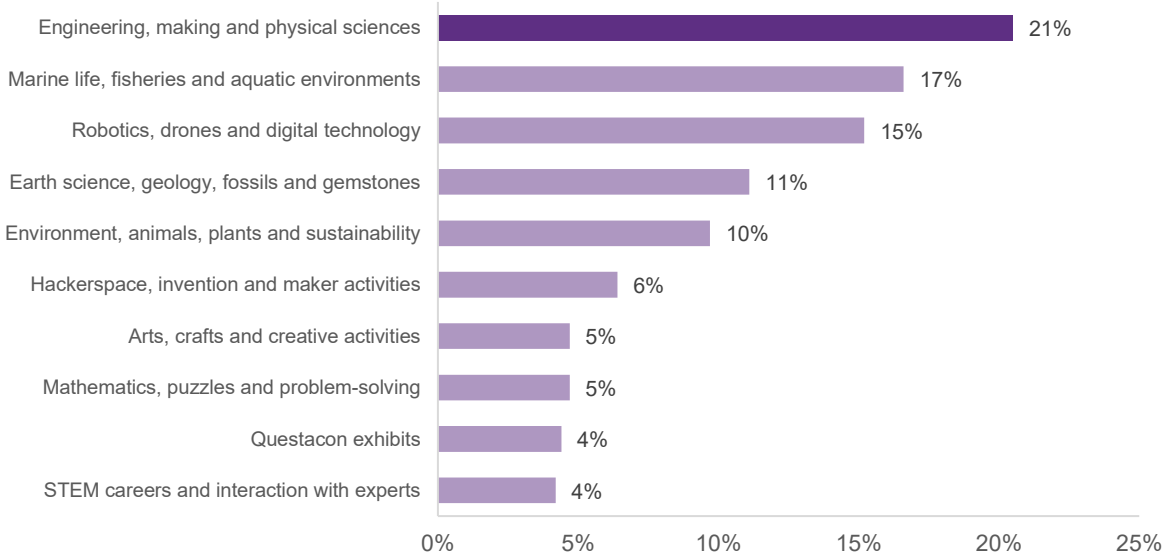
Key insights

- **More than half** of respondents selected either **trying hands-on activities** or **seeing their children learn something new** as the most valuable part of their FOBI experience, with both rated highest at 27%.

What was the MOST valuable part of your Festival experience? n=361

Hands-on STEM experiences were the strongest drivers of enjoyment

Activities most frequently mentioned by survey respondents (top 10 categories shown)



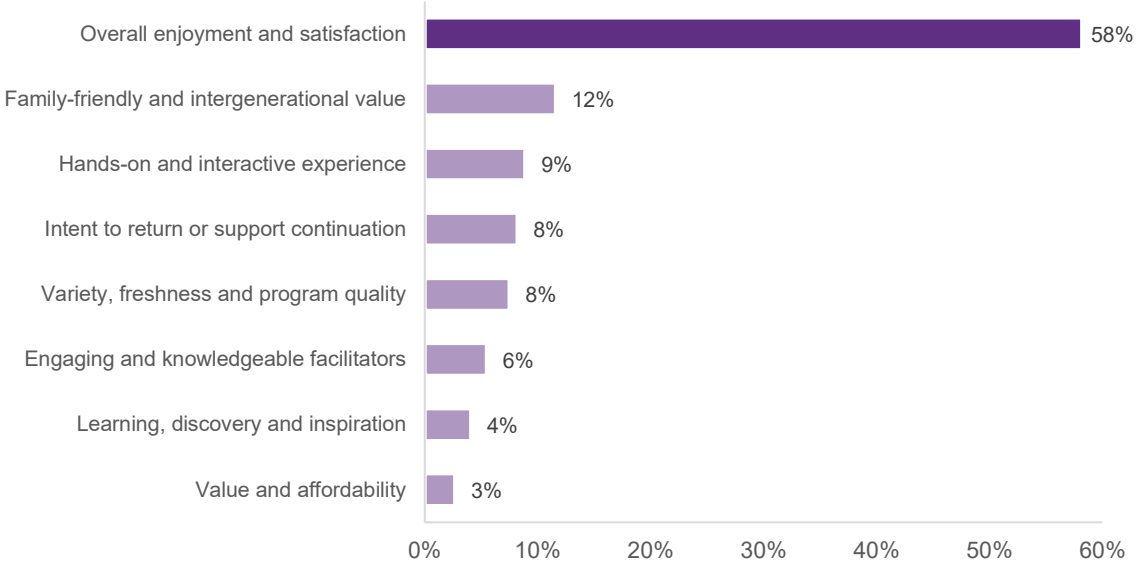
Key insights

- **Engineering and physical sciences** were most frequently mentioned, followed by **marine science** and **robotics or digital technology**.
- Across subject areas, respondents particularly valued **hands-on activities** that allowed children to build, operate, explore or experiment.
- The **breadth of activities** and opportunities to engage with **knowledgeable STEM professionals** also contributed to enjoyment.

What activities did you enjoy most at the Festival of Bright Ideas? n=361. Responses were coded into multiple themes where applicable; percentages do not total 100%.
AI was used in the analysis of data for this graph. I acknowledge the use of CoPilot to analyse the survey responses and identify the dominant themes. The prompt used includes “Create thematic groups, with the associated number of responses that relate to those groups”.

Visitors highly valued the Festival's hands-on and engaging STEM experiences

Positive themes identified in survey respondents' open-ended feedback



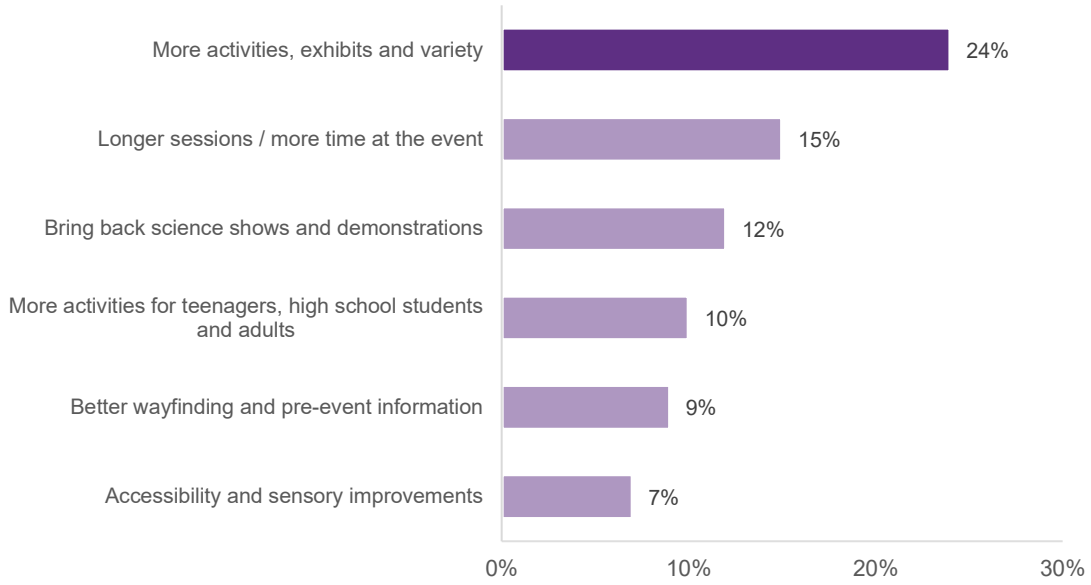
Key insights

- **Respondents overwhelmingly described FOBI as enjoyable, engaging and worthwhile**, with many expressing strong support for its continuation and intentions to return in future years.
- Hands-on activities and opportunities to interact directly with scientists, students and STEM professionals were consistently identified as key strengths of the FOBI experience.
- Many respondents highlighted FOBI's ability to inspire curiosity, introduce children to STEM concepts and provide meaningful learning experiences for the whole family.

Do you have any additional feedback about the Festival of Bright Ideas? 146 respondents who provided substantive feedback. Responses were coded into multiple themes where applicable; percentages do not total 100%. More specific positive themes are lower because many respondents provided only a brief overall assessment without explaining what contributed to that experience. AI was used in the analysis of data for this graph. I acknowledge the use of CoPilot to analyse the survey responses and identify the dominant themes. The prompt used includes “Create thematic groups, with the associated number of responses that relate to those groups”.

Respondents saw opportunities to expand and enrich FOBI experience

Suggestions for enhancing future FOBIs



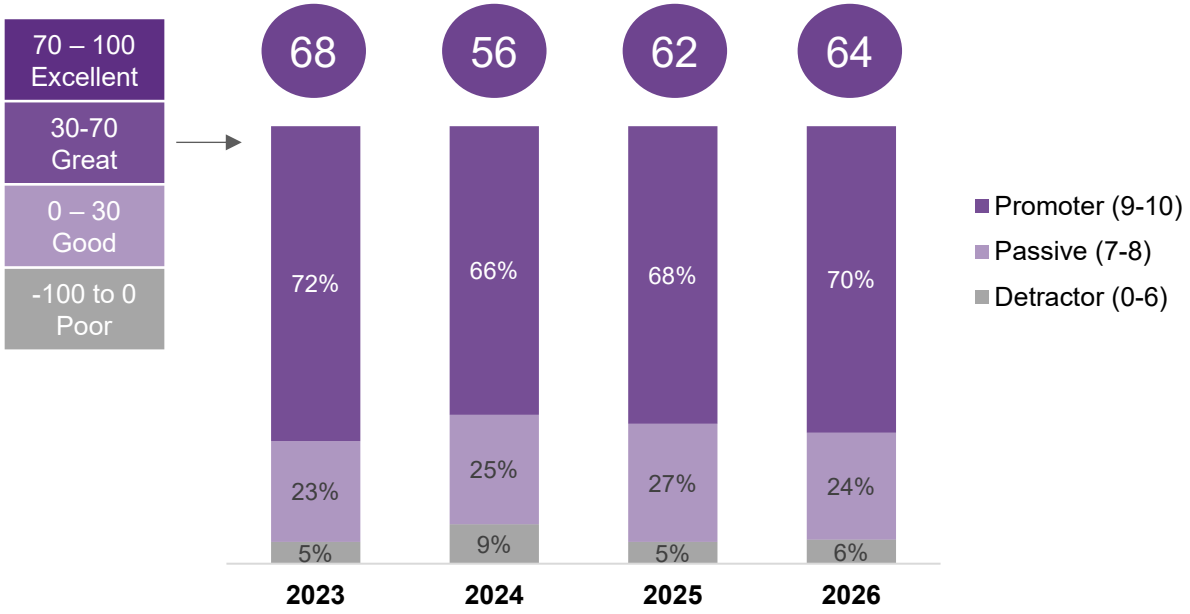
Key insights

- Among the 67 coded improvement-theme mentions, the strongest theme was **demand for a broader program**, including more activities, greater variety and additional content for teenagers, adults and repeat visitors.
- Respondents also expressed **interest in longer and more immersive experiences**, including longer session times and the return of science shows and demonstrations featured in previous years.
- Operational feedback was less common and centred on **visitor experience improvements** including clearer wayfinding, reduced crowding at popular activities, and additional accessibility measures such as quiet spaces and sensory-friendly options.

Do you have any additional feedback about the Festival of Bright Ideas?
Percentages are based on 67 coded improvement-theme mentions, not survey respondents. Responses could contribute to more than one theme.

Visitors remain highly likely to recommend the Festival

Net Promoter Score among Festival survey respondents (2023–2026)



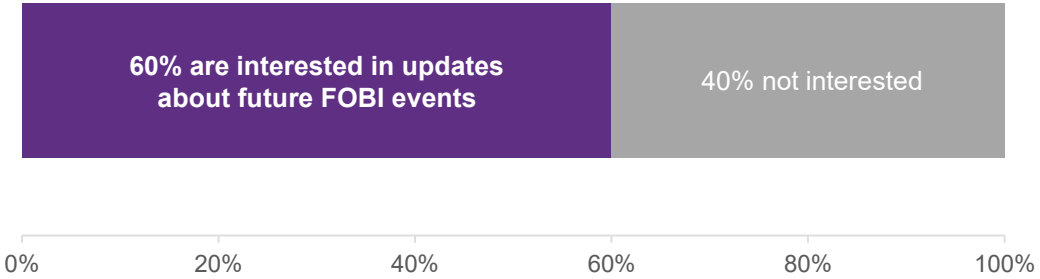
Key insights

- FOBI maintained a strong Net Promoter Score of **64** in 2026, up from 62 in 2025.
- With **70%** of respondents classified as promoters and only 6% as detractors, visitor willingness to recommend FOBI remains a key strength.

How likely are you to recommend the Festival of Bright Ideas to a friend or colleague? 2023 n=111, 2024 n=181, 2025 n=202, 2026 n=361.
Net promoter score is calculated by subtracting detractors (0-6) from promoters (9-10). Percentage labels may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Respondents showed strong interest in future engagement with FOBI

Interest in receiving information about future FOBI events



Key insights

- 60% of respondents indicated they would like to receive updates about future FOBI events.
- Interest in future communications suggests ongoing engagement with FOBI beyond the event day.
- The results indicate an opportunity to build and maintain relationships with past attendees through direct communication.

Would you like us to keep you updated about the next Festival of Bright Ideas event? n=361

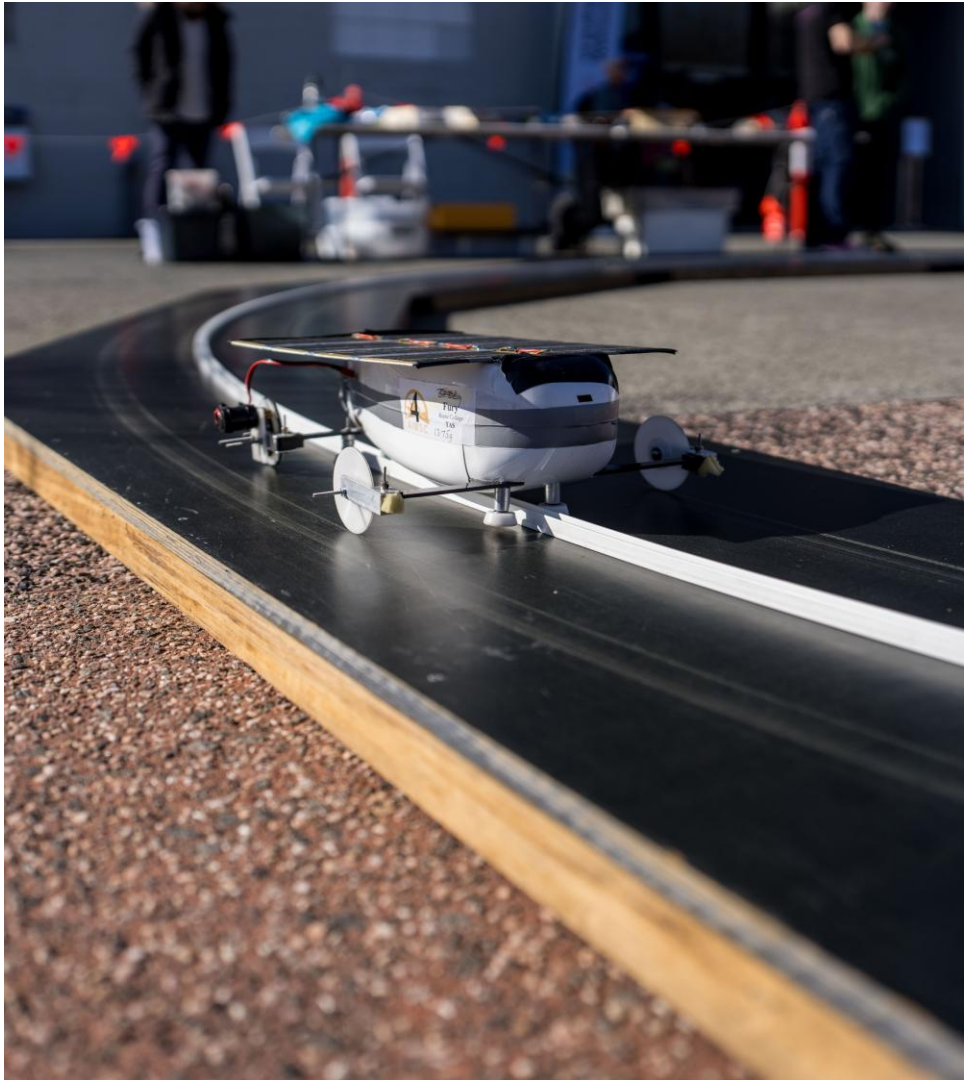
FOBI inspired curiosity, connection and a sense of possibility

“I love taking my kids to this every year and seeing their interests develop. Frankly, I enjoy it as much as they do. It's an inspiring way of seeing how many people in Tasmania work in the sciences … It gives a sense of us and our kids being part of a bigger community and like there are opportunities for them.”

“Watching my children become absorbed in activities, and display natural strengths.”

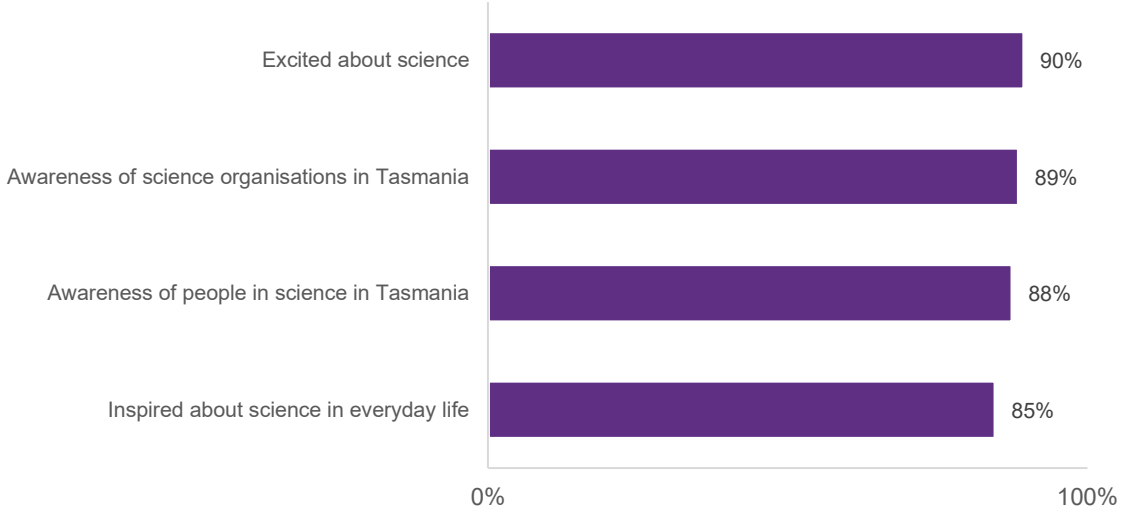
“The interactive activities. I loved that kids can be hands on, when so often they are told 'don't touch!’”

“Everyone was so passionate about their stalls and every stall had someone very keen and enthusiastic to pass on their knowledge which was very inspiring for the kids. Great job as always, we come every year!"



FOBI continues to deliver consistently strong STEM engagement outcomes

Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with each impact statement



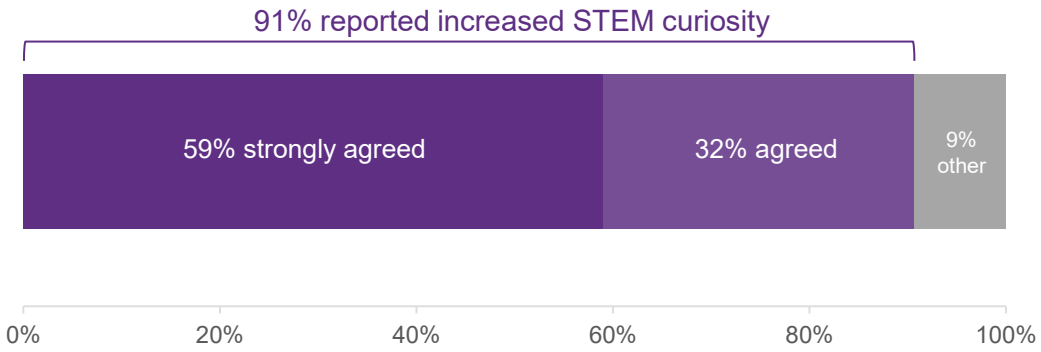
Key insights

- **Agreement exceeded 85% across all STEM engagement measures**, with 90% of respondents reporting FOBI made them more excited about science.
- Results have remained consistently high since 2024, with agreement exceeding 85% across all measures each year.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Festival of Bright Ideas? FOBI made me excited about science, FOBI made me more aware of the variety of science organisations in Tasmania, FOBI made me more aware of the number of people involved in science in Tasmania, FOBI inspired me to find out more about science in everyday life. n=361.

Nine in ten respondents agreed that FOBI increased their child's STEM curiosity

Perceived impact of FOBI on children's curiosity about STEM



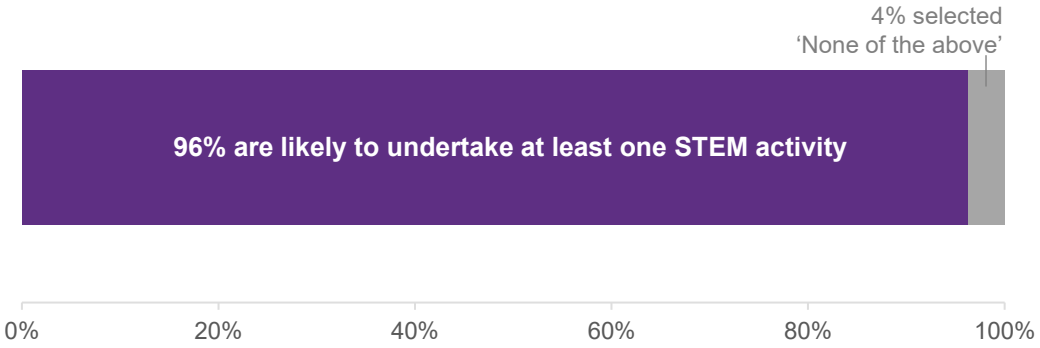
Key insights

- Curiosity is an important precursor to ongoing STEM learning and engagement.
- The strength of agreement suggests FOBI is creating meaningful science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) experiences for young people.

Thinking about the child or children who attended with you today, how strongly do you agree with the following statement? Attending the Festival of Bright Ideas increased my child's curiosity about science, technology, engineering or mathematics. Note: Based on respondents who attended with children or young people. n=268. "Other responses" combines unsure, disagree and strongly disagree responses. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Almost all respondents intend to continue engaging with STEM after FOBI

Likelihood of undertaking at least one STEM-related activity in the next 12 months



Intended activities

- **59%** visit a museum, science centre or science event
- **49%** encourage their child to explore science-related interests
- **43%** participate in a science-related activity at home
- **41%** learning more about a science topic
- **35%** attend another National Science Week event

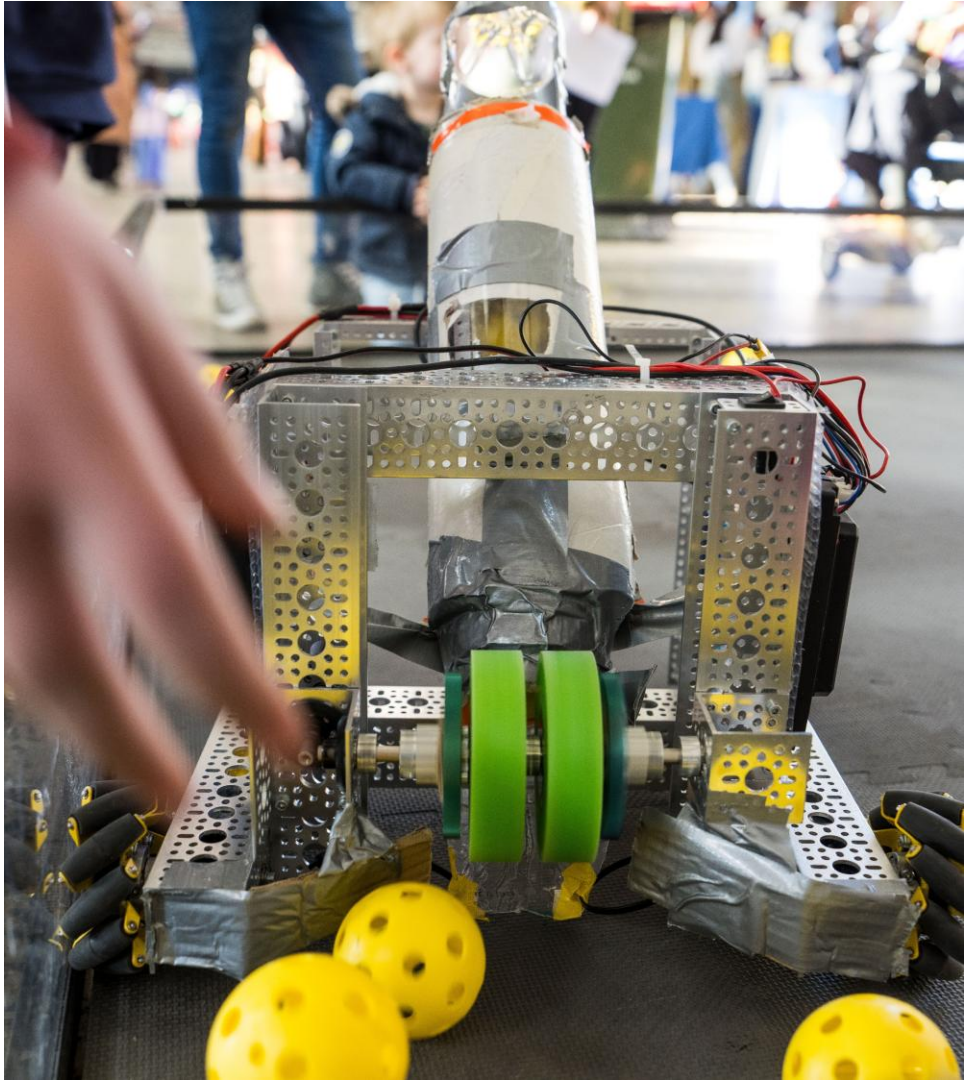
As a result of attending the Festival of Bright Ideas, which of the following are you likely to do in the next 12 months? (Select all that apply). n=361. Respondents could select multiple activities. "At least one activity" includes respondents who selected one or more listed STEM-related activities; 4% selected "None of the above".

4

School Experience and Outcomes

Schools reported a positive experience at FOBI

- **The majority** of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their school's experience.
- **Almost all** agreed FOBI was worthwhile and well organised.
- **Most** respondents indicated they were very likely to recommend FOBI to a friend or colleague.
- **Almost all** indicated they are interested in bringing students to the next FOBI.



Teachers observed strong engagement outcomes for students

- **Almost all** respondents reported that:
  - students appeared actively engaged
  - FOBI complemented classroom learning
  - FOBI highlighted STEM study and career pathways for students
  - FOBI increased students' interest in STEM

- **All** respondents indicated that FOBI exposed students to ideas they may not otherwise encounter.

5

Activity Provider Experience and Outcomes

Activity providers reported a positive experience at FOBI

- **All** respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience as an activity provider.
- **Almost all** respondents agreed:
  - FOBI was well organised,
  - communication was clear and timely, and
  - participation was a worthwhile experience for their organisation.
- **About three-quarters** of respondents indicated they were very likely to recommend participating in FOBI to a friend or colleague.
- **Almost all** respondents indicated they are interested in participating in a future FOBI.

Activity providers observed strong visitor engagement and STEM outcomes

- **Almost all** respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:
    - visitors were engaged with their activity
    - their activity reached its intended audience
    - FOBI provided meaningful STEM engagement opportunities for visitors

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Volunteer Experience and Outcomes

Volunteers reported a positive experience at FOBI

- **Almost all** respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their volunteering experience at FOBI.
- **Almost all** respondents indicated they felt well supported by the FOBI team and felt valued as a volunteer.
- **Most** respondents indicated they found volunteering at FOBI to be a worthwhile experience.
- **Most** respondents indicated they are interested in volunteering at a future FOBI.
- **Half** of respondents indicated they were very likely to recommend volunteering at FOBI to a friend or colleague.

Volunteers observed strong visitor engagement and STEM outcomes

- **Almost all** respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:
  - Visitors appeared engaged in the activities and exhibits.
  - FOBI created meaningful opportunities for visitors to engage with STEM.
  - FOBI increased awareness of science and STEM organisations in Tasmania.

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Recommendations

Recommendations

- Explore capacity expansion to meet unmet school demand.
- Strengthen engagement for 12-17 year olds.
- Deepen STEM pathway and career engagement.
- Link FOBI community to Inspiring Connections.
- Continue to prioritise hands-on experiences.
- Continue to grow access for underrepresented audiences.
- Continue to improve the visitor journey.

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Thank you

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey methodology

- 361 visitor surveys were completed from an estimated visitor population of 2,015 attendees.
- This sample size provides a representative view of festival attendees, giving confidence that the findings reflect the broader visitor experience.
- Respondents could enter a draw to win one of three $100 gift vouchers.

Visitor survey

Responses were collected via two channels:

- At the event: 223 surveys completed
- Post-event email: 138 surveys completed from 606 attendees invited

Stakeholder surveys

Post-event surveys were also distributed to key stakeholder groups:

Stakeholder	Invited	Responses	Response Rate
Schools	32	13	40.6%
Activity providers	36	17	47.2%
Volunteers	25	10	40.0%