

People’s Research Café at the Great Exhibition Road Festival June 2022 –Report

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Background

What is the Great Exhibition Road Festival?

The Great Exhibition Road Festival provides an opportunity for Imperial College researchers to engage the public about their work through fun and interactive activities. The other museums on Exhibition Road in South Kensington, London e.g. the Science Museum also get involved so the whole road is alive with activities and things to learn.

What is The People's Research Cafe?

The People's Research Cafe is a café with a twist. Visitors to the café are welcomed to sit down at a table with an Imperial College researcher. Over a free hot drink they find out about the researcher's project and are asked for their opinions on the project guided by three pre-prepared questions. The researchers will then use this feedback to improve their projects. The People's Research Café has been run previously at two Imperial Festivals (2018 and 2019) and also in four community venues in White City and Westminster which involved members of the community in planning and running the event. Over 650 people have visited the six People's Research Cafés we have run so far. The People's Research Café was previously called the "PPI Café" and [this blog](#) details the first PPI Café hosted at the Imperial Festival 2018.

How does the People's Research Cafe work?

A pop-up café space is created in a community venue or marquee (if outside) with tables covered in tablecloths and flowers, bunting with hot drinks available. Public visitors are encouraged by those standing at the entrance to the People's Research Café to come in (**Welcomer**) by being offered a free hot drink and to join a table of their choice to discuss a research project which interests them from a selection displayed on a menu (**Appendix 1**).

Each research project included in a People's Research Café is required to prepare the following about the project to ask visitors:

- a lay summary; and
- 3 pre-prepared questions about their project on which they wish to obtain feedback from the public

Once a visitor (or group of visitors) sits down at a table, a researcher (**Research Baristas**) will introduce their project using the pre-prepared lay summary as guidance (and/or provide a laminated copy of this to the visitor to read). They will then ask visitors the pre-prepared questions about their project. Comments and insights provided by the public visitors about the projects are written down by researchers as well as public contributors (assisting the researchers to facilitate conversations with the public) (**Public Baristas**).

These comments are then placed in coffee bean jars on each table in order that, after the event, the researcher can:

- write these comments up following the People's Research Café
- provide feedback as to how the insights gathered have influenced their project (or not). This feedback stage is a requirement of a researcher taking part in the People's Research Café.

A visitor may choose to join another table after concluding their discussion on one table to discuss a different research project.

When visitors leave the People's Research Café, they are also asked to provide feedback on their overall experience via a short feedback form (**Appendix 2**) or QR code linked to the same form online.

Photos of the People's Research Café are included at **Appendix 4**.

Aim and purpose

The aims of a People's Research Café are to:

- give the public some understanding of how the public¹ can get involved² in medical research
- gain the public's views on real research projects, which will be used to improve the projects, even if it is just in a one-off interaction
- reach out to new people
- have fun!

Event overview and agenda

In 2022, the People's Research Café was held at the Great Exhibition Road Festival on 18 and 19 June. The People's Research Café hosted 11 research projects over both days. Each research project was given a 2-hour slot to host a table. One project hosted two 2-hour slots. The research projects were as follows:

Saturday 18 June 2022

12-2pm

- Personalising treatments for health conditions
- Understanding the relationship between diet and gut health

2-4pm

- Gut hormone LEAP2 in human eating behaviour
- How have breathing infections in young children changed because of covid-19 lockdowns
- Designing a new tool for providing personalised dietary advice

4-6pm

- Developing a new ultrasound scan for detecting breast cancer that has spread to armpit lymph nodes
- Developing a new test to identify a virus that can lead to disabilities in newborn babies
- Gut hormone LEAP2 in human eating behaviour

¹ [“Public” is defined by the NIHR as: patients and potential patients, people who use health and social care services, carers and people from organisations that represent people who use services.](#)

² [NIHR defines public involvement in research as research being carried out ‘with’ or ‘by’ members of the public rather than ‘to’, ‘about’ or ‘for’ them.](#)

Sunday 19 June 2022

12-2pm

- Do the characteristics of the home and school environment affect children's GCSE grades?
- Patient safety risks & digital health technology and tools
- Using Artificial Intelligence to help clinicians make decisions
- Can a daily food supplement prevent weight gain?

2-4pm

- Analysing patient feedback to improve patient - centred care
- Developing an alternative to blood tests for health investigations
- Exploring ways to make healthy food and drink more affordable in the UK

Organisation of the People's Research Café

Identification of Research Projects

The following eight research groups from across Imperial College collaborated on this People's Research Café:

1. NIHR Imperial Patient Experience Research Centre (PERC)
2. Imperial Clinical Trials Unit (ICTU)
3. Imperial Clinical Research Facility (CRF)
4. NIHR London IVD Cooperative
5. NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) Northwest London
6. NIHR HPRU in Chemical and Radiation Threats and Hazards
7. NIHR HPRU in Environmental Exposures and Health
8. MRC Centre for Environmental and Health
9. NIHR HPRU in Healthcare Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance
10. NIHR Patient Safety Translational Research Centre

Each collaborating group was asked to recruit 2 to 3 research projects to be hosted at the event and projects needed to meet the following criteria:

- The project must be at such a stage that public perspectives are able to influence and improve/change it
- The subject matter must be suitable for a general audience e.g. not to cause alarm
- The subject matter must not be too specific e.g. a rare disease

Researchers interested in hosting a table at the People's Research Café were requested to complete an online application form which included a lay summary of their project and 3 proposed questions they wanted to ask the public about their project. Applications were reviewed by three members of three collaborating teams and a public contributor who had previously been involved in a People's Research Café. Projects that were deemed unsuitable for the People's Research Café were rejected. Researchers whose projects were successful were given feedback on the wording of their lay summaries and proposed questions and amendments were made where necessary to ensure that the summaries and questions were in plain English, without jargon and with any technical terms clearly explained. Ideally, the review of the lay summary and proposed questions can be done at a

training/pre-briefing session attended by both the researchers and public contributors assisting them to host tables. Ideally public contributors are paired with researchers where the public contributor has an interest in the project. This allows the public contributors to provide input into these from their perspectives as well as get to know the researchers with whom they will be hosting a table on the day of the People's Research Café. Unfortunately, due to time constraints this was not possible for this event and the lay summaries and proposed questions were reviewed by public involvement leads from the collaborating groups.

Public contributor recruitment

A proactive attempt was made to recruit public contributors who had not previously been involved in a People's Research Café and this was largely achieved. An email invitation was disseminated by the collaborating groups to their public networks and applicants were asked to complete a short simple online application to register their interest. These applications were reviewed by three members of the collaborating groups and where applicants were unknown to them, an informal telephone conversation was arranged to confirm the suitability of the applicant and provide them with more detail about what their role would be on the day.

Roles

Café Manager

A Café Manager ensures that the Research Baristas, the Public Baristas and the Welcomers understand their roles when they begin their shift. This is particularly important at the point at which the shifts change over. They also ensure the smooth running of the Café including dealing with any problems which may arise and ordering more hot drinks when required.

Welcomer

A Welcomer's role is to:

- approach people who are either walking past or seem interested in the People's Research Café
- explain they will get a free tea/coffee if they sit and have a chat with some other visitors and researchers to give their views on a research project. They can stay as little as a few minutes or longer if they wish
- ask them which project they are interested in after presenting the options on the 'menu' of projects available at that time and direct them to the appropriate table.
- if the table is full, they should ask the visitor to sit at the waiting table until the researcher can start a discussion again with a new group of visitors
- get the visitor a hot drink and bring it back to them at the table
- support the Research Barista in recognising when all useful feedback has been provided from a group of visitors. Communicate with the Research Barista to determine if this is the case and if so, ask visitors whether they would like to spend time at a different table or, if they are ready to leave the Café, take them to the feedback table
- when a visitor is leaving, ask them to complete a short feedback form (paper version or via QR code) which gives them the option to sign up to hear about future opportunities to get involved in research

Research Barista

A Research Barista's role is to:

- lead a discussion with visitors about their research project
- start the discussion with a few sentences about who they are and ask visitors to say their first names if they are happy to

- briefly explain that they want visitors to give their views on their research project through some questions
- set the scene by providing a brief summary of the project, ask if anyone has any questions for clarification
- ask visitors to write their thoughts down (if they would prefer to) about the questions on cards in order to capture all their feedback and place in the coffee jars on each table
- encourage visitors to contribute including those less inclined to talk. The Public Baristas will assist to get the conversation going
- at the end of each discussion with a group of visitors, summarise the feedback provided by visitors to ensure it was understood correctly
- write down key points from the discussion if visitors don't do this themselves (or the Public Barista has not done so)
- Once it is apparent that all useful feedback has been obtained from a table of visitors i.e. visitors are not providing any new ideas or are starting to talk off topic), thank the visitors for their valuable feedback and ask the Welcomer to direct visitors either to another table if they are interested in a different project, or to the feedback table if they are ready to leave the Cafe

Public Barista

A Public Barista's role is to:

- sit at their assigned table and help the Research Barista to encourage visitors to share their opinions, by actively listening (e.g. nodding etc.) and sharing their experience (where relevant) but allowing time for all visitors to speak
- support the Research Barista by trying to keep the conversation flowing and to keep visitors on topic by linking people's ideas to the questions which the Research Barista is asking
- take notes about what visitors are saying and place these in the coffee jar. These don't have to be word –for –word, just key points of the responses from the group. Visitors can also write their own responses on cards if they would like. The research barista may also make their own notes.
- When the visitors leave the table, direct them to the feedback table to give feedback on their experience or ask the Café Manager to show them to another table.

Training

Two training sessions were organised over Zoom for public contributors and researchers. Prior to the pandemic these sessions would have been held in person in order for the researchers and public contributors (with whom they were paired during their shift) to meet one another before the day of the People's Research Café. They would also discuss the research project and work on the lay summary and three pre-prepared questions together. However, this was not possible due to time and capacity restrictions. Unfortunately, there was a technical difficulty at one of the training sessions so it could not go ahead and therefore those scheduled to attend this session were sent the slides to read over in their own time and offered a phone call should they want one to answer any questions. It was acknowledged that this was not as effective as a training session but was the only option in the timeframe provided.

Payment for public contributors

The public contributors were paid for their time (in accordance with NIHR recommendations) to attend the training session or review the training session slides (and provided with a contribution to wifi/data expenses) and for their time spent at the People's Research Café as well as travel expenses to get to the event. Appropriate refreshments were also provided to the public contributors.

Visitor numbers and Demographics

Between 150 and 200 members of the public attended the People's Research Café over the 2 days. One limitation we faced was that there was not an efficient method for calculating the number of visitors who attended and we intend to improve this at the next People's Research Café. Please see Appendix 2 for visitor demographics.

Feedback

We collected feedback from those who participated in the People's Research Café in order to gauge their experience of the event and to understand how we might improve subsequent events:

Visitors via paper forms or an online form accessed by a QR code, provided at the feedback table (Appendix 2)

- Research Baristas via online forms following the event
- Public Baristas via online forms following the event
- Welcomers via online forms following the event

Feedback from visitors

Visitors to the People's Research Café were asked to complete a short feedback form either on paper or via a QR code when they left. In total 88 forms were completed over Saturday 18 June 2022 and Sunday 19 June 2022 (see **Appendix 2**). It was sometimes difficult to catch visitors as they left the People's Research Café especially when more than one table were leaving at the same time. We will look to improve the method of collecting visitor feedback at the next People's Research Café.

Of the 88 feedback forms completed

- 85% (n=75/88) rated their experience as "Excellent"
- 12% (n=11/88) rating it "Good"
- 2 people did not answer this question.

When asked **if before today, they had ever provided their feedback/views on health research design:**

- 33% (n=29/88) said they had
- 63% (n=55/88) said they had not
- 3% (n=3/88) said they didn't know
- 1% (n=1/88) did not answer this question

Visitors were also asked if there was any other feedback they would like to share. Full details of this feedback is set out at **Appendix 2**. Most feedback provided was positive with visitors enjoying the

experience and discussions however the loud music which could be heard at the People's Research Café from a nearby performance stage was noted as making it difficult to hear.

Visitors were also asked to provide their demographics in order for us to understand the diversity of the visitors to the People's Research Café and whether they were new to public involvement in research or not.

Age

The mean age of visitors who completed the feedback form was 38 years

Gender

- 60% (n= 53/88) were female
- 27% (n=24/88) were male
- 1% (n=1/88) were non-binary
- 11% (n=10/88) preferred not to say

Ethnicity

- 42% (n=37/88) being White/British
- 9% (n=8/88) Asian/Asian British
- 3% (n=3/88) Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- 22% (n=19/88) preferring not to say.

For full details please see **Appendix 3**.

Feedback from Research Baristas

19 Research Baristas took part in the People's Research Café of which 18 completed feedback forms

- 44% (n=8/18) rated their experience as "Excellent"
- 55% (n=10/18) rated their experience as "Good"
- 11% (n=1/9) rated their experience as "Average"

When asked if they would change any aspects of their research as a result of their interaction with the public at the café:

- 17% (n=3/18) said that definitely would change something
- 67% (n=12/18) said they probably would change something
- 11% (n=2/18) said they might or might not
- 6% (n=1/18) said they didn't know

When asked **what other support/preparation/training** they would have liked to assist them in their role as at the People's Research Café?

A number of comments related to communicating more effectively including explaining their projects succinctly, how to talk about research to the public, guidance on creating public friendly visual aids or dealing with difficult conversations/questions/views from the public. Others mentioned management of moving people on from their table and dealing with people joining the discussion once it had already started.

When asked if taking part in the Café had increased their knowledge of public involvement

- 94% (n=17/18) said it had and
- 6% (n=1/18) said it had not

Most comments related to understanding that there are different ways to engage with the public than they may have done previously and the importance of asking clear and simple questions and being able to explain a project in a clear way without jargon.

When asked if taking part in the cafe had increased their confidence to undertake public involvement

- 100% said it had

When asked if taking part in the cafe had made them more or less likely to undertake public involvement in future

- 72% (n=13/18) said they are more likely to undertake public involvement in future
- 28% (n=5/18) said they will continue to undertake the same amount of public involvement as they did before
- 0 said they were less likely to undertake public involvement in future

When asked for suggestions on how to change the People's Research Café in future to improve it, Research Baristas suggested:

that there should be a time limit for people staying at tables,

- having a dedicated note taker at each table in case the research barista and public barista don't get a chance to do this
- there should be a 15 minute changeover period between shifts
- the noise from the nearby music stage was noted as an issue

When asked if they would recommend getting involved in a People's Research Café to their research colleagues

- 100% said they would.

Research Baristas were asked to share any other feedback they had. Examples of comments received are:

"The whole experience was a pleasure to be involved in. The value of involving the public is clear and it is through interactions like the Research Café that we can promote and advocate our research and its aims. This raises awareness in the public, an integral part of the aims of our project! Nice work team".

All Research Barista feedback has not been included in this report but will be used for future Cafés.

Feedback from Public baristas

12 Public Baristas took part in the People's Research Café of which 6 completed feedback forms.

When asked how they would rate their experience at the People's Research Café:

- 67% (n=4/6) said it was "Excellent"
- 33% (n=2/6) and said it was "Good"

When asked if they felt supported in their role

- 67% (n=4/6) said they did
- 33% (n=2/6) said they did not

When asked if they thought the visitors to the Café understood the purpose of the Café and why they were speaking to researchers:

- 100% of those who answered this question (n=5) said they did.

When asked if they thought the visitors to the Café understood the specific project they were supporting:

- 83% (n=5/6) said yes
- 17% (n=1/6) said no.

When asked if they thought their role was useful i.e. that they were able to provide a positive influence over the interactions between the researchers and visitors:

- 67% (n= 4/6) said “Probably yes”
- 33% (n=2/6) said “Definitely yes”.

When asked if they would be interested in working with the People’s Research Café again:

- 100% said yes.

When asked if they would be interested in staying in touch and collaborating with the researcher who they were partnered with in future

- 83% (n=5/6) said yes
- 17% (n=1/6) said no

Public Baristas were also asked to share any other feedback they had. This has not been included in this report but will be used for future Cafés.

Feedback from Welcomers

Welcomers were members of the research or collaborating teams. 13 welcomers took part in the event and 9 welcomers completed the feedback form in relation to their experience at the People’s Research Café with:

- 33% (n=3/9) rating their experience as “Excellent”
- 55% (n=5/9) rating their experience as “Good”
- 11% (n=1/9) rating their experience as “Average”

Welcomers were also asked **what other preparation/training** they would have liked to assist them to undertake their role as a Welcomer at the People's Research Cafe?

A number of comments related to wanting more time to review the lay summaries of the projects before their shift and some guidance on engaging members of the public who are not willing to participate.

When asked for **suggestions on how to change the People’s Research Café in future** to improve it, Welcomers suggested having activities for children, snacks and setting a time limit for visitor discussions.

When asked if they would be **interested in being involved in a People’s Research Café again**:

- 100% said they would.

When asked if they would **recommend getting involved in a People’s Research Café** to their research colleagues

- 100% said they would

Welcomers were also asked to share any other feedback they had. This has not been included in this report but will be used for future Cafés

How visitor feedback impacted the research projects

Each research project which hosted a table at the People's Research Café was required to write a blog about their experience, including the feedback they received from visitors and how they intended to use this feedback to shape their projects. Links to the blogs which were written are here:

Saturday 18 June

12-2pm

- [Personalising health treatment for health conditions](#)
- [Understanding the relationship between diet and gut health](#)

2-4pm

- [Gut hormone LEAP2 in human eating behaviour](#)
- [How have breathing infections in young children changed because of covid-19 lockdowns](#)

4-6pm

- [Developing a new ultrasound scan for detecting breast cancer](#)
- [Developing a new test to identify a virus that can lead to disabilities in newborn babies](#)

Sunday 19 June

12-2pm

- [Patient safety risks & digital health technology and tools](#)
- [Using Artificial Intelligence to help clinicians make decisions](#)
- [Can a daily food supplement prevent weight gain?](#)

2-4pm

- [Analysing patient feedback to improve patient - centred care](#)
- [Developing an alternative to blood tests for health investigations](#)

Learnings and reflections from the event

From the feedback received from all stakeholders and our own reflections, for future People's Research Cafés, we intend to:

- allocate specific time for changing from one set of projects (shift) to the next
- implement a better system to count visitors to the People's Research Café
- consider using a timer or bell to indicate when people need to move on from their conversations to avoid one person dominating a conversation for a long time
- ensure training/briefing sessions are in person if possible
- signpost researchers to public engagement training and make clear to them that this training will not be provided as part of the People's Research Café training
- ensure the People's Research Café tent is situated away from any music stage or source as the noise from the nearby music stage made it difficult to hear at times


Appendix 1: Menu

An example of a menu of research projects available at a People's Research Café



ON THE MENU
SAT 18TH JUNE

- 12PM TO 2PM -

-  • UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN DIET, GUT HEALTH & INFECTIONS
-  • Personalising treatments for health conditions

- 2PM TO 4PM-

-  • EXPLORING THE ROLE OF HORMONES ON APPETITE & DIET
-  • Respiratory tract infections in children
-  • Designing a new tool for personal dietary advice

- 4PM TO 6PM-


- DEVELOPING A NOVEL ULTRASOUND TEST FOR BREAST CANCER
- Developing a new test to identify viral infections in newborns
- Exploring the role of hormones on diet

Your voice matters!




Appendix 2: Visitor Feedback

88 visitors to the People's Research Café across 18 and 19 June 2022 completed the following feedback form questions as set out below.




Feedback form





Prefer to provide your
feedback online?
Scan above


Please complete the questions below or scan the QR code to access the online feedback form


1. How would you rate your experience at the People's Research Café? (please circle)


Very bad


Bad


Average


Good


Excellent

2. Before today, had you ever provided your feedback/views on health research design? (please tick)

Yes No I don't know

3. Is there any other feedback you would like to share?

- - - - -

I am also happy to share my...

age...	No, thanks <input type="checkbox"/>	Sure, it's:	<input type="text"/>
ethnicity...	No, thanks <input type="checkbox"/>	Sure, it's:	<input type="text"/>
gender...	No, thanks <input type="checkbox"/>	Sure, it's:	<input type="text"/>
postcode... <small>(first section only e.g SW4, KT10)</small>	No, thanks <input type="checkbox"/>	Sure, it's:	<input type="text"/>

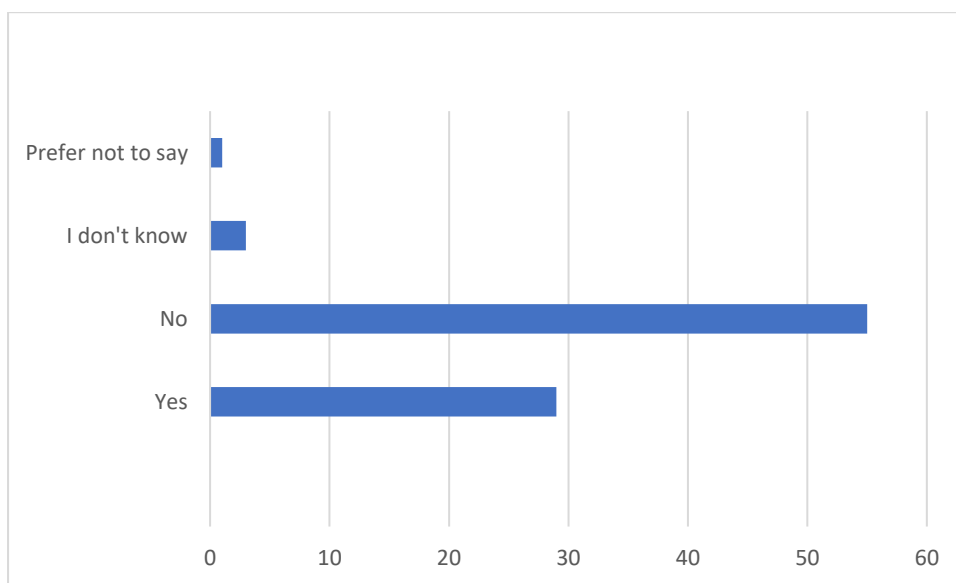
Interested in hearing about future opportunities to give your views on research? Ask us how!

Thank you for your feedback!

How would you rate your experience at the People’s Research Café?

Of the 88 feedback forms completed, 85% (n=75/88) said they **rated their experience** at the People’s Research Café as “Excellent” with 12% (n=11/88) rating it “Good” with two not answering this question.

Before today had you ever provided your feedback/views on health research design?



Yes	29
No	55
I don't know	3
Prefer not to say	1

Is there any other feedback you would like to share?

- A great experience would be nice to have the opportunity to do this more!
- A wonderful experience to get my voice heard on something important
- Amazing experience! Love the whole idea of chatting with researchers in person and providing feedback straightaway!
- Amazing idea!!!
- Engaging and thought provoking. Was great to be able to provide feedback also
- Felt a bit like I was being pressured to join a study rather than helping much today

- Fun!
- Glad to be part of PR Café. 3 sessions of our group worked very well. One small point, proximity to music was a challenge to hearing at times
- Good discussion on AI but organisers cut things short. Didn't get to talk on topic that I chose. I was concerned I was getting stereotyped having to talk about feelings and education instead of technical discussion.
- Great discussion
- Great to have the chance as a patient to do this
- Have got form for cafe drink in my bag
- It could be more neurodiverse and inclusive space (accessible)
- It was a good feeling to talk about how I felt that was important to me. I felt positive and heard
- It was great, really interesting discussion
- It was phenomenal
- Its just noisy. Hard to follow the conversation
- More variety of diets on checklist
- Music outside was loud so couldn't hear properly
- N/A
- N/A
- Nice idea and well explained and interesting
- No
- no
- No
- No
- No, good questions, didn't realise it was available. Heard about clinical trials but not questions like this, answered which haven't done before due to longer time commitments
- Really interesting and I think it's a great way to get opinions from a wide variety of people
- Researchers listened v. well, seemed v. unbiased
- Thank you for involving citizens
- Thank you for the tea!
- The PA system/music nearby makes it hard to hear
- The research was very interesting and very well explained
- The researcher needs to be more prepared and structured
- The researchers were very welcoming. It was interesting to hear opinions from others on the table and helped me think more about my own ideas
- They were great
- This is a fab idea
- This is such a lovely concept. I think it should be advertised more
- Useful exercise - but needs to be considered more holistically
- Very friendly, felt like a change was going to happen
- Very interesting and big cheers for research
- Very interesting!
- Very knowledgeable
- Very nice interaction sometimes a bit noisy due to proximity of a music stand
- Warm hospitality, informative

- Was very interesting. [Research Barista or Public Barista] was great
- Well run, Nice coffee, friendly
- Would be good to have opportunity to participate in more detailed discussions
- Would be great to read some research results on the college website
- Yes, I'll tell about [] experience my friends

Appendix 3: Visitor demographics

The feedback form for visitors to the People’s Research Café requested demographic details which are summarised below.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics (N=88)

Characteristics	n (%)
Age (in years)	
Mean (range)	38 (17-75)
Age groups (in years)	
18-24	19 (22.0)
25-34	21 (24.0)
35-44	10 (11.0)
45-54	13 (15.0)
55-64	5 (6.0)
65 – 74	6 (7.0)
75+	2 (2.0)
Prefer not to say	11 (12.0)
Gender	
Female	53 (60.0)
Male	24 (27.0)
Non binary	1 (1.0)
Prefer not to say	10 (11.0)
Ethnic group	
White	
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	37 (42.0)
Irish	1 (1.0)
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0 (0.0)
Other White background	4 (5.0)
Mixed/Multiple Ethnicity	1 (1.0)
White and Black African	0 (0.0)
White and Black Caribbean	0 (0.0)
White and Asian	0 (0.0)
Other Mixed/Multiple background	1 (1.0)
Asian/Asian British	8 (9.0)
Indian	2 (2.0)
Pakistani	3 (3.0)
Bangladeshi	0 (0.0)
Chinese	3 (3.0)
Other Asian background	2 (2.0)

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	3 (3.0)
African	1 (1.0)
Caribbean	0 (0.0)
Other Black/African/Caribbean background	0 (0.0)
Other	
Arab	0 (0.0)
Any other ethnic group: European, French, Mexican	3 (3.0)
Prefer not to say	19 (22.0)

Appendix 4: Photos

This is a selection of photos taken at the People's Research Cafe over 18 and 19 June 2022.



