

R&D-Report

Bodø2024 through the Voices of the People's Jury

Oliver Henk
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Nord University
R&D-Report no. 137
Bodø 2026



www.nord.no

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ISBN 978-82-7456-909-6

ISSN 2535-2733

Bodø 2026

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Dekangodkjenning

Tittel	Offentlig tilgjengelig	Publikasjonsnr.
BODØ2024 THROUGH THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE'S JURY	S	#00
	+) * Ž S Ž & (Ž " + Ž	ISSN S % Ž %
	Antall sider og bilag 45	
Emneord Kultur Deltakende evaluering Bodø2024 Offentlig mening Longitudinelt borgerpanel	Keywords Culture Participatory Evaluation Bodø2024 Public Opinion Longitudinal Citizen Panel	
Forfatter(e)/prosjektmedarbeider(e)	Prosjekt	
Oliver Henk Anastasiya Henk	Monitor2024: Effekter av Bodø som europeisk kulturhovedstad	
Oppdragsgiver(e) EU, Bodø2024	Oppdragsgivers referanse	
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Executive Summary: Four Trajectories, One Arctic City

In January 2024 a stormy gale swept along the Norwegian coast just as up to 20 000 residents gathered at Bodø's harbor to witness Queen Sonja inaugurate Europe's first European Capital of Culture north of the Arctic Circle. Among the crowd stood members of the Monitor 2024 *People's Jury* – more than a thousand citizens who volunteered to judge a €60 million cultural investment across two years. Importantly, the People's Jury was designed as a fixed panel: the same individuals were followed over time, rather than drawing new groups of respondents at each measurement point, as is common in many survey wave designs.

This report analyzes their verdict that there is not one single verdict. Instead, our longitudinal analysis reveals four distinct trajectories through Bodø2024. Some residents became more enthusiastic about the program and their city, others grew increasingly skeptical, some remained ambivalent, and a small group continued to feel alienated. Surprisingly, the actual participation in events was low across all groups. Even the most supportive jurors attended only around three events on average out of a program comprising roughly a thousand. This suggests that Bodø2024's impact operated primarily through symbolic value and civic pride rather than direct cultural consumption.

In this report, we find four key insights that frame the narrative:

1. There were four distinct trajectories

The largest group—"Community Anchors" (around 41% of jurors)—remained stable and most supportive throughout; "Cultural Enthusiasts" (15%) started high but declined toward the end; similarly, "Balanced Participants" (29%) showed an initial lift that later waned; and "Pragmatic Skeptics" (16%) remained consistently low, though with slight improvement by year's end.

2. Participation reflected a disconnect between support and attendance

Support for the capital of culture year does not directly translate into high event attendance. Across all personas the average number of Bodø2024 events attended ranged from roughly half an event to just over three events. Even the most active jurors went to only a handful of happenings. Most jurors never set foot in a single event: more than four-fifths of Pragmatic Skeptics, and around two-thirds of both Cultural Enthusiasts and Balanced Participants reported zero attendance, while slightly more than half of Community Anchors stayed home. Thus, the program's value lay as much in *knowing* that culture was available as in *consuming* it.

3. Independence of place and program

Our analysis shows that attachment to Bodø and support for Bodø2024 are independent dimensions. Some jurors love their city while doubting the program's value; others celebrate the European designation while preparing to move away. Recognizing this decoupling is essential when assessing cultural mega-events as it shows that the propensity to move is not strongly influenced by the program.

4. The value of the People's Jury as a participatory experiment

The People's Jury illustrates how evaluation itself can be an act of cultural democracy. Instead of a one-off poll, the same jurors answered surveys of varying length, typically once or twice per year during the evaluation period. Their voices reveal nuanced patterns that aggregated averages would likely mask. This methodology, while resource-intensive, provides a richer account of cultural impact and underscores the importance of listening to diverse groups.

The following sections describe how the participatory evaluation unfolded. The text begins with the Arctic setting and explains how the People's Jury was assembled. The four personas are then introduced, followed by an analysis of how each group moved through the cultural year. The discussion then turns to the gap between support and attendance and concludes with reflections on what Bodø2024 implies for cultural policy.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary: Four Trajectories, One Arctic City	2
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	7
1.1 Setting the Stage.....	7
1.2 The assembly of the jury.....	7
1.3 The Methodological Foundation.....	7
1.4 Representative calibration	8
Chapter 2: Four Journeys Through the Cultural Year	8
2.1 Community Anchors – The Steady Optimists (≈41 %).....	9
2.2 Cultural Enthusiasts – The Curious but Fading (≈15 %)	10
2.3 Balanced Participants – The Mixed Locals (≈29 %).....	11
2.4 Pragmatic Skeptics – The Value-for-Money Critics (≈16 %).....	11
2.5 Demographic patterns across personas	12
2.6 Geographic distribution and attrition.....	14
2.7 Composition of the wave 1 jury	15
Chapter 3: The Participation Paradox	18
3.1 Civic Pride vs. Direct Participation	19
3.2 Barriers to Participation	20
3.3 Visualizing the Paradox	20
3.4 Comparing event attendance across waves.....	21
Chapter 4: Patterns Revealed	23
4.1 Independence of Dimensions	23
4.2 Trajectory Summary	23
4.3 Divergent perceptions on program value and relevance.....	25
4.4 Wave-by-wave trajectories across key measures	27
Chapter 5: Key Findings	31
5.1 Support Doesn’t Require Participation	31
5.2 Place Love Doesn’t Equal Program Love	32
5.3 Alienation Exists	32

Chapter 6: Discussion 32

Chapter 7: Limitations and cautions 33

Chapter 8: Conclusion 34

 8.1 For European Capitals of Culture 34

 8.2 For Bodø and Nordland 34

 8.3 For Evaluation Methodology 35

9. List of References 35

Methodological Appendix..... 36

 A.1 Evaluation Framework 36

 A.2 European Commission Context..... 36

 A.3 People’s Jury Design 39

 A.4 Analytical Methods 40

 A.5 Persona Profiles 41

 A.6 Extended qualitative findings..... 42

List of Figures

Figure 1: Persona distribution within the panel	9
Figure 2: Age Distribution by Persona	13
Figure 3: Car Availability by Persona	14
Figure 4: Round 1 jurors by postal area	15
Figure 5: Current panel jurors by postal area (01.06.2025).....	15
Figure 6: Distribution of Age (Wave 1)	16
Figure 7: Distribution of Gender (Wave 1)	17
Figure 8: Distribution of job_situation (Wave 1).....	17
Figure 9: Distribution of Gross_income (Wave 1)	18
Figure 10: Event Attendance Distribution by Persona	19
Figure 11: Perceived Investment Value of Bodø2024 by Persona.....	20
Figure 12: Satisfaction with Local Cultural Life by Persona.....	21
Figure 13: Event attendance distribution (Wave 3)	22
Figure 14: Event attendance distribution (Wave 4)	23
Figure 15: Mean agreement that Bodø2024 is unnecessary by persona	27
Figure 16: Trajectory: Program seen as a good investment	28
Figure 17: Trajectory: Satisfied with cultural life	29
Figure 18: Trajectory: Satisfied with municipality	30
Figure 19: Trajectory: Propensity to move (3 years)	31

List of Tables

Table 1: Trajectories by Persona (Wave 1 to Wave 2 and Wave 1 to Wave 4).....	24
Table 2: Selected high variance variables by personas	25
Table 3: ECoC hierarchy of objectives (European Commission, 2018).....	37
Table 4: Objectives of Bodø2024 (Bodø2024, 2019)	38
Table 5: Selected KPIs for the report	38
Table 6: Persona highlights	41

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Setting the Stage

In 2019 Bodø was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture for 2024. As the first city north of the Arctic Circle to receive this honor, Bodø promised to stage more than 1000 events and attract half a million visitors. Yet the ambitions went beyond tourism; they aimed to strengthen cultural life, foster European connections and improve quality of life (Bodø2024, 2019). Realizing that cultural impacts are often intangible and unfold over time, and therefore notoriously qualitative and difficult to grasp in the evaluation, our team Monitor2024 developed an innovative approach to measuring the impacts on the local population – an evaluation approach that treats residents not as passive subjects but as co-evaluators.

1.2 The assembly of the jury

Evaluation often relies on cross-sectional surveys taken before and after an event. However, such designs face a congruence challenge in which different individuals respond at different times, making it hard to observe change. To overcome this, the Monitor2024 team recruited a People’s Jury of over 1000 residents in the county of Nordland (plus a handful of people from other regions in Norway).

We expected from the beginning that mostly residents who would be positive towards the program would sign up for the evaluation. In order to counter such a development from the start, we decided that the recruitment should be open and deliberately provocative, encouraging also those who thought Bodø2024 was a waste of money to sign up. In such a way, we managed to establish a diverse group of jurors. While the jury is not statistically representative, it offers a broad cross-section of ages (16 to 85), backgrounds and attitudes. It was also important to us that the anonymity of the participants was safeguarded and responses stored securely, to build trust among and comply with GDPR regulations.

1.3 The Methodological Foundation

The jury answered a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions across multiple waves, where we measured amongst other things whether Bodø2024 was “worth the money” and “a good investment,” satisfaction with local cultural life and the municipality, and propensity to move. These core items were repeated in each survey wave to track change. Additional modules asked about event participation, motivations (fun, family time, learning) and barriers (time, money, information). The open-ended questions invited jurors to explain their views. To identify underlying patterns, we performed a cluster analysis on Wave 1 and Wave 2 responses to the four core variables: perceived investment value, satisfaction with

cultural life, satisfaction with the municipality and stay intention. As a result of this effort, four clusters emerged with distinctive trajectories and demographic profiles. These personas, described in much more detail in Chapter 2, serve as narrative anchors throughout this report.

For readers seeking additional technical details, including clustering procedures, survey instruments, and the European Commission's evaluation framework, please find a comprehensive Methodological Appendix in the end of this report.

1.4 Representative calibration

Recognizing that the jury might not be fully representative, the evaluation team commissioned a parallel survey with a random sample of fifteen hundred residents across Nordland to calibrate the People's Jury, shortly before the opening ceremony of Bodø2024. Conducted by Ipsos and using the same core questions as the jury, this survey measured satisfaction with cultural life and living in the municipality, perceptions of Bodø2024 as a good investment and personally relevant, and intentions to move. The distributions of responses mirrored those of the People's Jury so closely that we as evaluators gained confidence that the jury captured the broader contours of public opinion. While the baseline report cautioned that the jury was not statistically representative and that additional surveys were planned to improve robustness (Baseline Report, 2023), the concordance between the representative survey and the jury results confirmed that the composition of the People's Jury provided a reliable lens through which to view public reactions.

Chapter 2: Four Journeys Through the Cultural Year

Cluster analysis revealed four archetypes among the jurors. Each persona represents a pathway through Bodø2024. By tracking them over time, we investigate and shine some light on how different segments responded to the program and their city.

Before diving into the stories of each persona, it is useful to understand how prevalent they are within the jury. Close to 250 jurors (242) took their time to answer all waves of the people's jury and could therefore be clustered and tracked over time. The pie chart below shows the distribution of personas within the panel. Community Anchors constitute roughly two-fifths of jurors (41%), Balanced Participants account for almost a third (29%), Pragmatic Skeptics make up around one-sixth (16%), and Cultural Enthusiasts comprise about one-seventh (15%). These proportions remind us that the loudest voices are not necessarily the

most numerous: the skeptical perspective is represented, but the largest group is genuinely supportive. Understanding the size of each group provides context for interpreting their trajectories and the aggregate results.

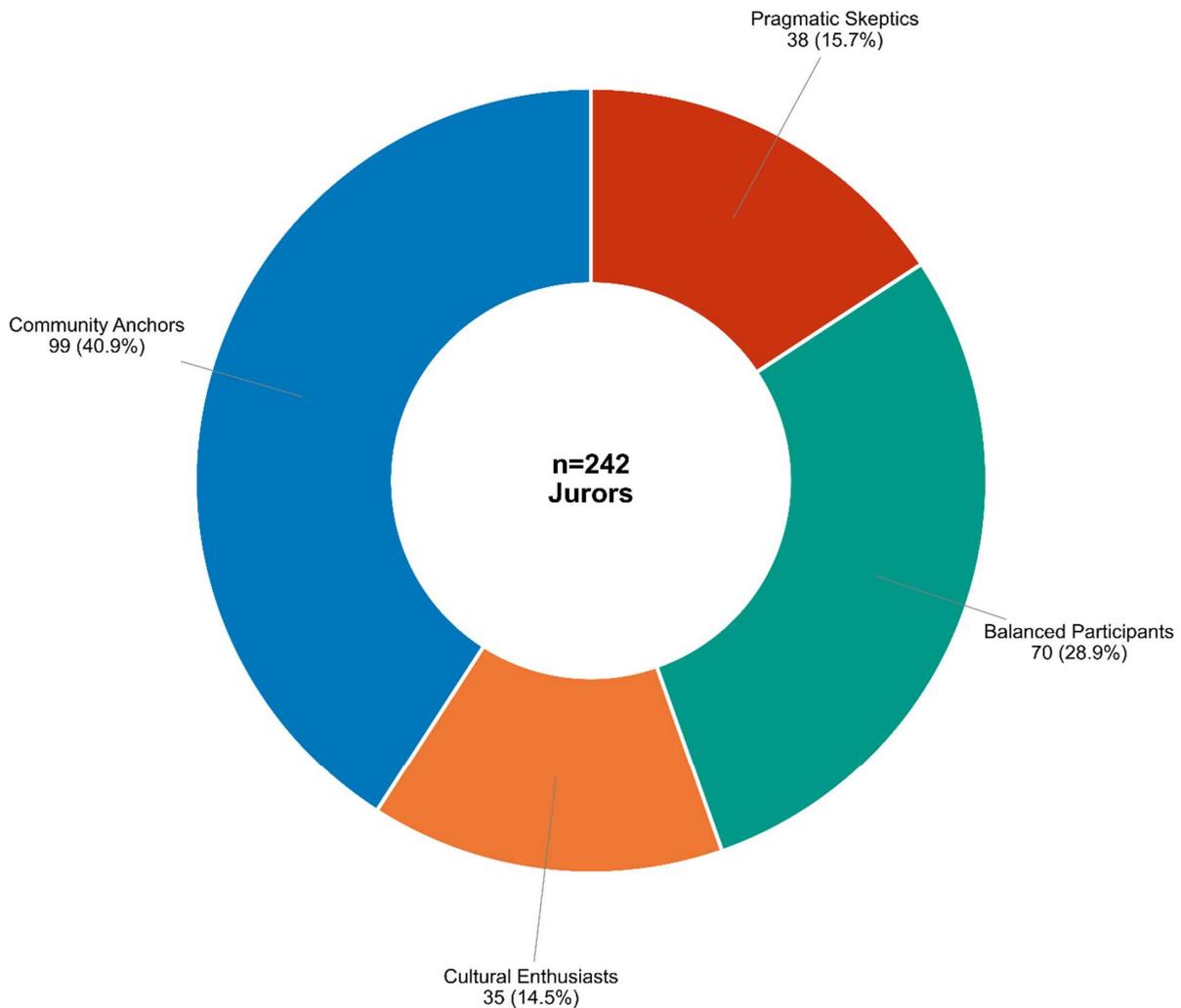


Figure 1: Persona distribution within the panel

2.1 Community Anchors – The Steady Optimists (≈41 %)

“Bodø2024 reminded us that we are not just Norway’s periphery but part of Europe.” – Female juror.

Community Anchors, often pensioners with strong local ties, already believed Bodø2024 was a good investment (mean 5.78/7). They were satisfied with the cultural life in their municipality (5.51/7) and reported very high satisfaction with living there (6.26/7). Their

average event attendance was modest: around 3.2 events in the mid-program survey, and about half of all Anchors ended up not attending any events at all.

Demographics

Anchors are also the most senior cohort, and very few have children living at home—only about 13 % of them reported having children at home in the baseline survey (versus nearly 22 % of e.g. the Skeptics). This age structure and, particularly, the absence of young members may partly explain why they were able to engage more with Bodø2024 and why they felt strongly connected to their municipality.

Trajectory

Anchors became more positive on all measures. Agreement that Bodø2024 was a good investment rose to 6.24 in Wave 2 (+0.46). Satisfaction with cultural life climbed to 5.85 (+0.34), and satisfaction with living in the municipality edged up to 5.99 (+0.05). Anchors also had the highest participation of all groups, attending on average three events even though the program offered roughly 600–1 000 events.

As such it seems that for Anchors, Bodø2024 reinforced existing pride and community cohesion. Even limited participation sufficed to boost their sense of belonging. This group exemplifies the success story the organizers hoped for – and they represent almost half of the People’s Jury.

2.2 Cultural Enthusiasts – The Curious but Fading (≈15 %)

“I tried contemporary dance for the first time and liked it, but later it all felt a bit repetitive.”
– Male juror.

Cultural Enthusiasts tend to be younger and open to experimenting with new art forms. They rated Bodø2024 as a good investment at 4.69/7 and were less satisfied with their municipality’s cultural life (3.83/7) and living conditions (4.74/7) than Anchors. Their event attendance averaged around 1.7 events, and roughly two-thirds of those who answered said they did not attend any events.

Demographics

Enthusiasts are younger on average than other clusters and moderately likely to have children at home (around 16 %). This may contribute to the time constraints and fatigue reported in later waves.

Trajectory

Enthusiasts' evaluations climbed initially – by Wave 2, they rated the investment at 5.11 (+0.43) and cultural satisfaction at 4.66 (+0.83). Their satisfaction with living in the municipality improved markedly to 5.37 (+0.51). However, qualitative comments hint at fatigue: some felt that the novelty wore off and that the later program lacked freshness.

Enthusiasts show therefore that initial excitement can wane if programs do not continuously innovate. Their moderate participation suggests that even curious participants face time and information barriers.

2.3 Balanced Participants – The Mixed Locals (≈29 %)

“I’ll never leave Bodø – it’s home – but this money should have fixed our roads.” – Male juror.

Balanced Participants occupy the middle ground. They regarded Bodø2024 as somewhat worthwhile (3.41/7) and were fairly satisfied with cultural life (5.14/7) and very satisfied with living in their municipality (6.01/7). Their event attendance averaged about 1.2 events, and around two-thirds of Balanced Participants never attended any Bodø2024 events.

Demographics

Balanced Participants are often middle-aged and have the second-highest share of children at home (about 19 %). This combination of age and family commitments may contribute to their mixed feelings, as they love Bodø but find the program too narrow and poorly communicated for busy households.

Trajectory

This group's attitudes shifted only slightly. They modestly increased their good-investment score to 3.56 (+0.14) but saw declines in cultural satisfaction (4.84, –0.30) and municipal satisfaction (5.08, –0.31). Despite growing more rooted (data on stay intention show a slight increase), they became less supportive of the program. Like the Skeptical Locals in our narrative sample, they love their place but question the investment.

Interpretation. Balanced participants illustrate the paradox of loving one's community while being unconvinced by a cultural mega-event. Their low participation (most never attended an event) and mixed evaluations highlight the need for programs to connect with everyday concerns.

2.4 Pragmatic Skeptics – The Value-for-Money Critics (≈16 %)

“This money could have been spent on schools or healthcare. Bodø2024 doesn't speak to my life.” – Male juror.

Pragmatic Skeptics, often middle-aged men with children, expressed strong reservations from the outset. They rated Bodø2024 as a good investment at just 1.47/7 and were relatively neutral about cultural life (4.18/7), but markedly less satisfied with living in the municipality (3.95/7) than other groups. Their event attendance was the lowest of all personas: around half an event on average (≈ 0.55), and more than four-fifths of all Skeptics never attended any Bodø2024 event.

Demographics

Skeptics have the highest proportion of jurors with children at home (about 22 %). Combined with demanding work and family obligations, this may intensify their perception that Bodø2024 was a misallocation of municipal resources and help explain their strong negative reactions and low participation.

Trajectory

Skeptics became even more negative by Wave 2: their investment score fell to 1.34 (-0.13), cultural satisfaction declined to 3.76 (-0.42), and municipal satisfaction dipped slightly to 4.95 (-0.13). Their qualitative comments reveal frustration with perceived financial waste and a sense of exclusion from the cultural offerings.

As such, this group exemplifies comprehensive dissatisfaction: they do not see the value of the ECoC year, and their views deteriorate over time. Addressing their concerns would require demonstrating actual tangible benefits for them beyond symbolic pride.

2.5 Demographic patterns across personas

The four personas not only differ in their attitudes toward Bodø2024 but also in their demographic profiles. While our survey did not record exact ages, respondents selected from age categories (under 16 years – who were not allowed to participate due to GDPR considerations –, 16–25, 26–35, 36–45, 46–55, 56–65, 66–75 and 76 years or older). Community Anchors are the oldest cohort: only about 1 % are under 25, whereas more than a quarter are aged 66–75 and another quarter fall in the 56–65 bracket. Balanced Participants are more evenly distributed across middle age, with roughly 29 % aged 36–45 and 23 % aged 56–65. Pragmatic Skeptics are likewise predominantly middle-aged, with over a third in the 36–45 category and another third in the 46–65 range. Cultural Enthusiasts, by contrast, skew younger: about 15 % are aged 16–25 and 26 % are 26–35. These patterns suggest that initial enthusiasm for the cultural year came more from younger and older residents, while middle-aged groups tended to be more cautious. The chart below visualizes the age distribution per persona.

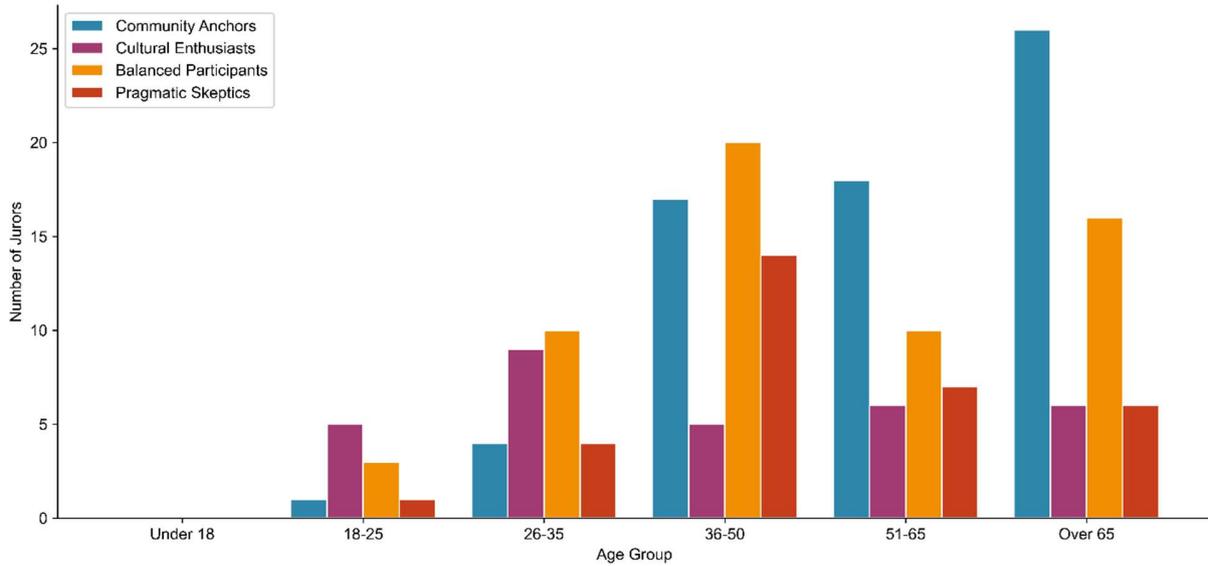


Figure 2: Age Distribution by Persona

Car availability shows less variation across personas. A large majority of jurors reported access to a car, indicating that transport constraints were not primarily about owning a vehicle. Access was highest among Pragmatic Skeptics (about 95 %) and Balanced Participants (around 90 %) and slightly lower among Cultural Enthusiasts (approximately 77 %). The stacked bar chart below illustrates these differences.

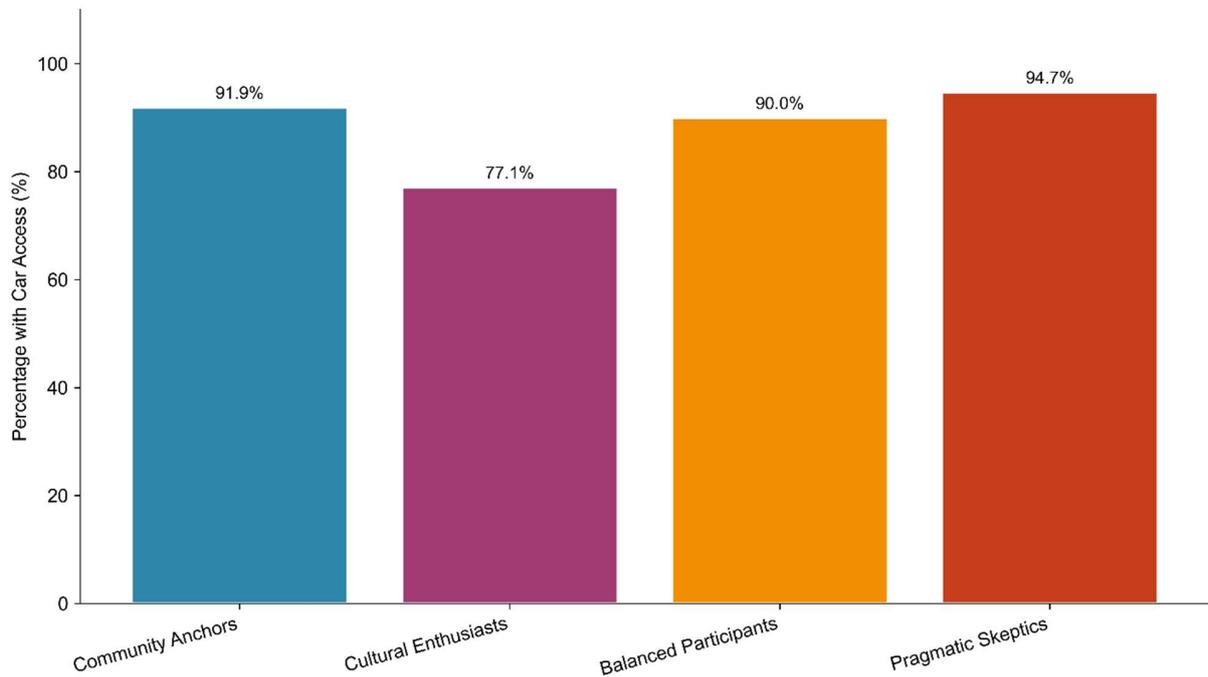
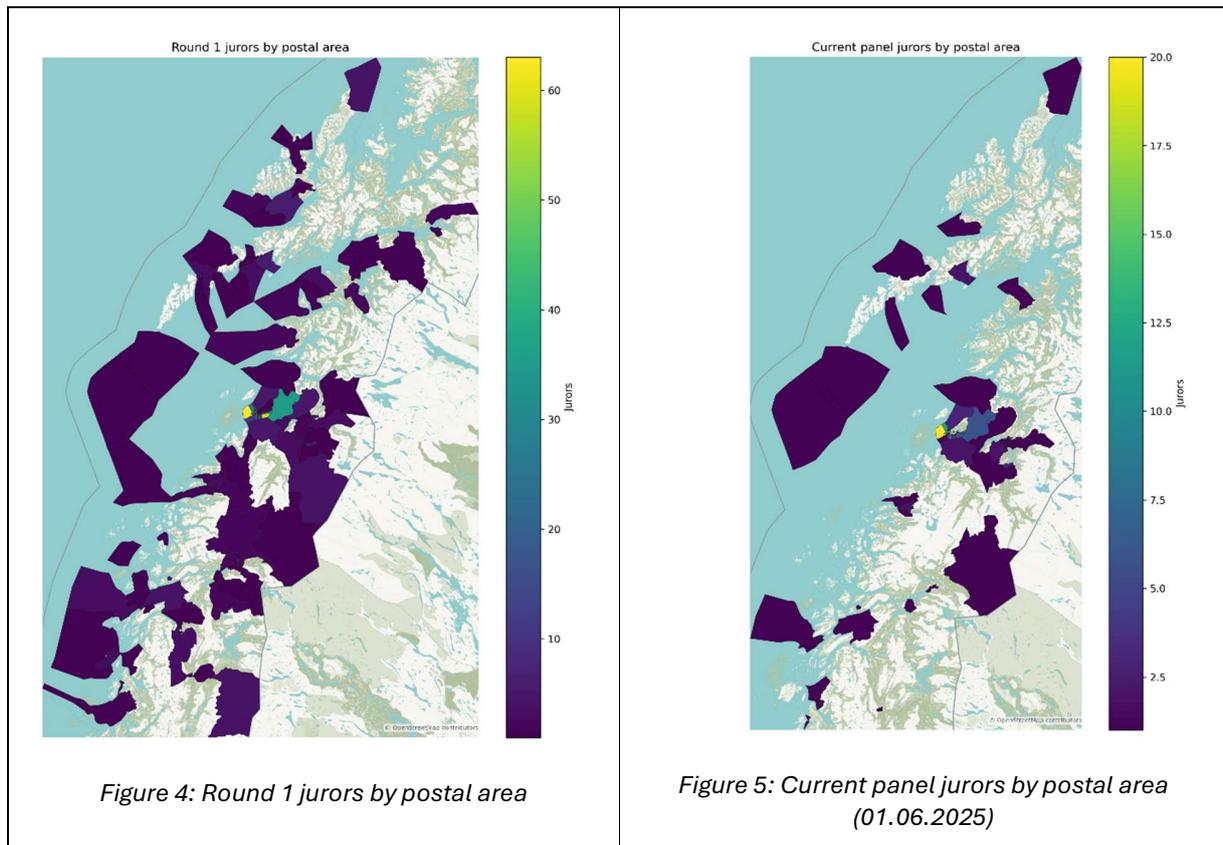


Figure 3: Car Availability by Persona

2.6 Geographic distribution and attrition

Although our panel is not statistically representative, it covers a broad geographic part of Nordland. The maps below illustrate the distribution of jurors by postal area at the start of the project (Wave 1) and near the end (Wave 4). Each polygon represents a postal area, shaded according to the number of jurors residing there. In the first wave (left map), jurors were dispersed across much of the region: Bodø and the surrounding islands show the highest concentrations (green and yellow hues), but participants also came from the Lofoten archipelago, Vesterålen, Helgeland and the inland districts. In the final map (right panel), the colors are generally darker, reflecting the fact that many jurors dropped out over time. Nonetheless, several peripheral areas still contain active jurors, indicating that the panel retained voices from outside the city. The attrition pattern therefore did not erase the geographic diversity of the jury; rather, it reduced the overall number while preserving a core of engaged participants.



These maps complement the demographic analysis in Section 2.5 by showing that participation in the People’s Jury was not confined to the urban center. At the same time, they also visualize attrition: the color scale in Wave 1 reaches above sixty jurors in Bodø, whereas the final wave peaks around twenty. Despite this decline, the presence of shaded areas in the peripheral municipalities highlights that the evaluation continued to capture perspectives from the wider region. Such geographic nuance is important when considering whether the program resonated beyond the city and whether future cultural initiatives should allocate more resources to rural districts.

2.7 Composition of the wave 1 jury

The first wave of the People’s Jury comprised 1,019 participants. Their demographic profiles reveal a broad cross section of Nordland’s population. Most jurors were in the prime working age groups. Those between 36 and 45 years made up roughly 19% of the panel, while those between 26 and 35 and those between 46 and 55 each accounted for about 16%. People under 16 and over 76 were naturally least represented (with those under 16 not permitted to

go on further with the surveys). Women formed the majority of the jury, at around 61%, while men accounted for about one third and a small number identified as nonbinary. Over half of the jurors were employed on a full-time basis. About 12% worked part time, nearly 14% were retired and a small minority were unemployed, students, homemakers or on disability benefits. Household income levels spanned the entire spectrum. Approximately 35% reported annual incomes between 800,000 – 1,500,000 NOK, about 18% reported incomes between 600,000 – 800,000 NOK and similar shares fell in the lower income brackets. These patterns are visualized in the figures below, which illustrate the distribution of ages, genders, employment situations and household incomes among the wave one jurors.

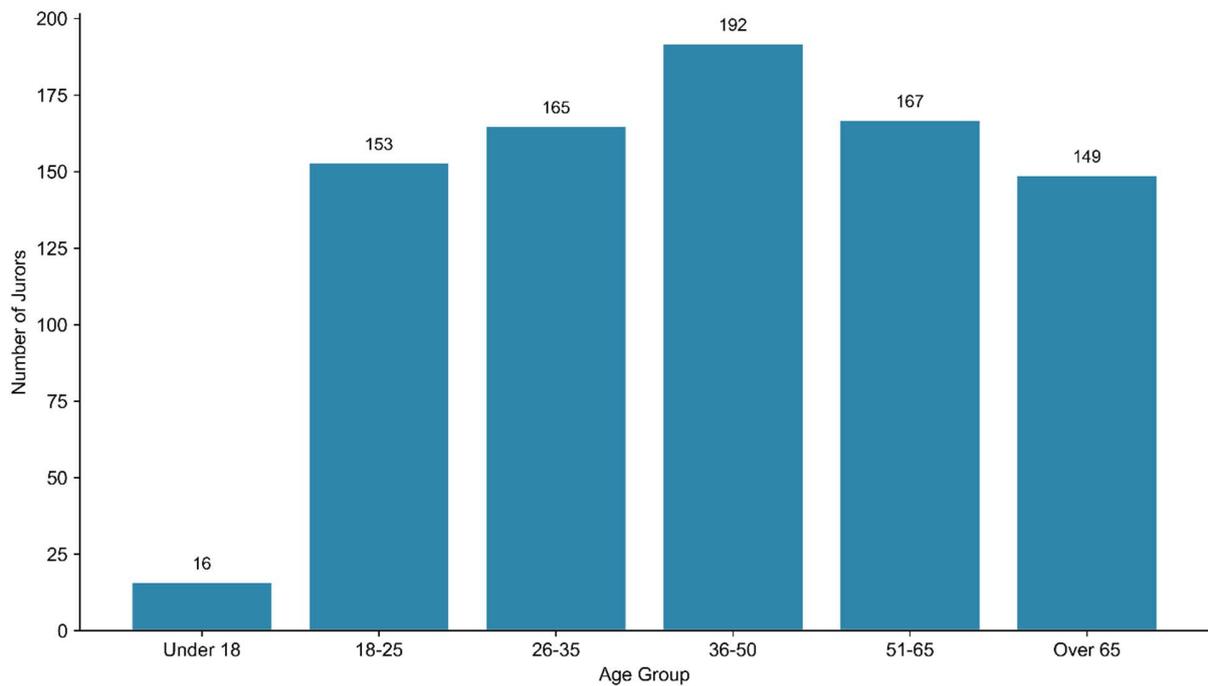


Figure 6: Distribution of Age (Wave 1)

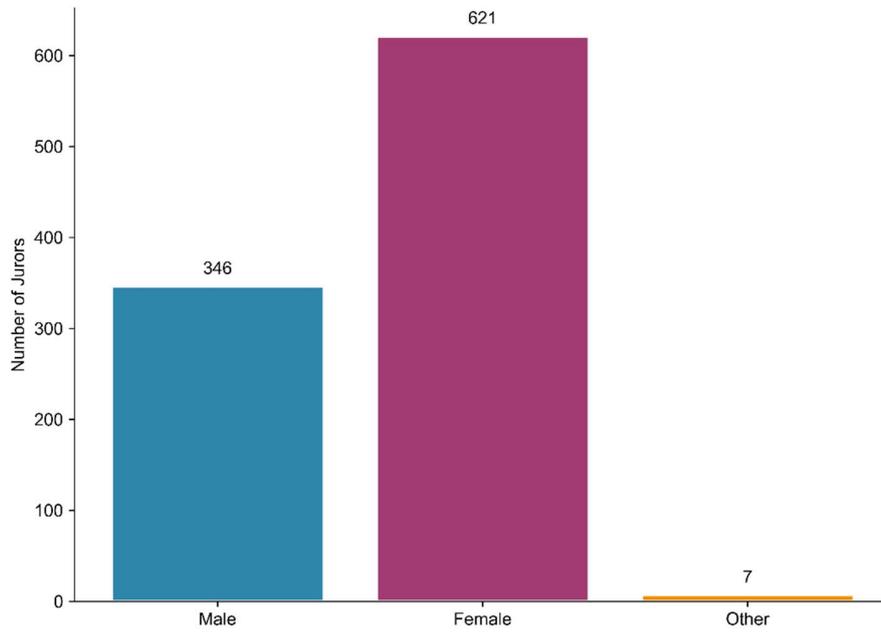


Figure 7: Distribution of Gender (Wave 1)

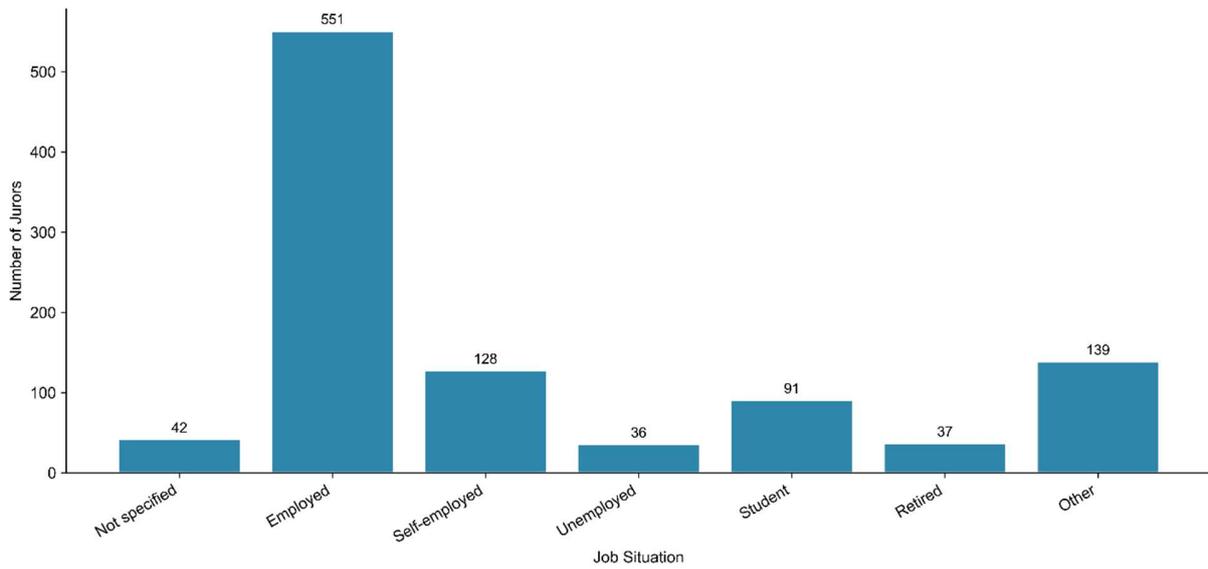


Figure 8: Distribution of job_situation (Wave 1)

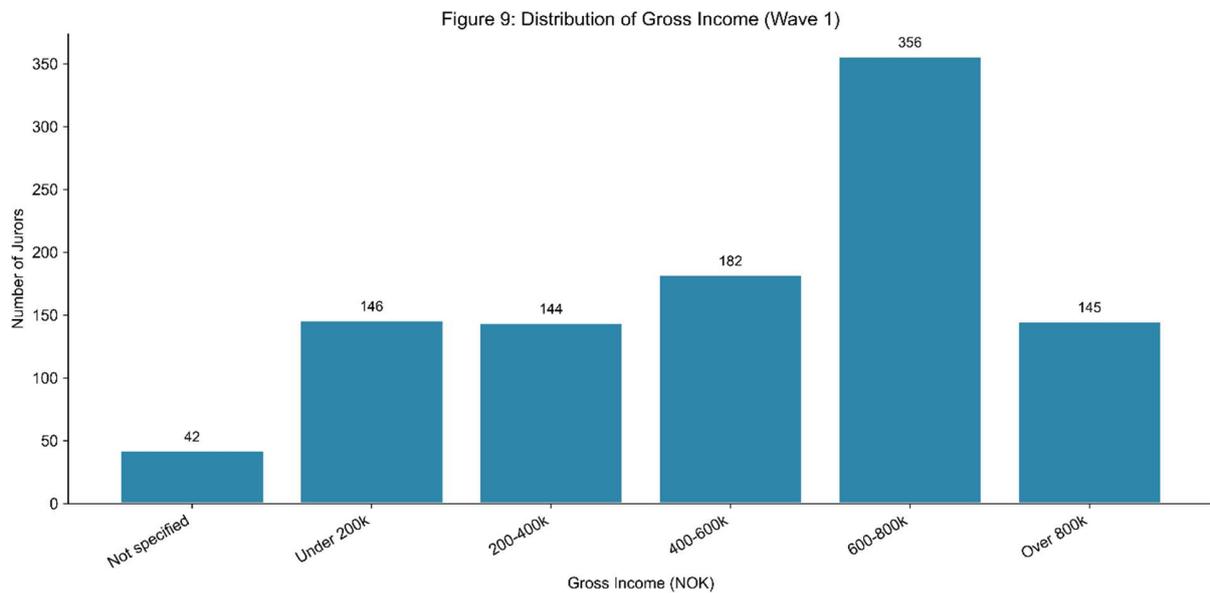


Figure 9: Distribution of Gross_income (Wave 1)

Beyond these core variables, the first wave data show that roughly one third of jurors had children living at home and nearly three quarters had access to a car. A majority reported that they did not belong to any religious community, although more than a third said they were members of the Church of Norway or another Christian congregation. The vast majority identified as Norwegian, with smaller shares indicating Sami or other minority Norwegian backgrounds or origin from elsewhere in Europe or beyond. Only about one in eight jurors reported feeling like a minority in their local environment, and fewer than 6% said they needed special arrangements to participate in cultural life. Taken together, these figures underscore that the People’s Jury embodied a wide range of life situations and socioeconomic circumstances, thereby providing a sound foundation for analyzing how different groups experienced Bodø2024.

Chapter 3: The Participation Paradox

The People’s Jury revealed an interesting participation paradox: while attitudes toward Bodø2024 varied, actual engagement with events was modest across the board. The table above shows that even Community Anchors, the most active group, attended on average just over three events. Among Cultural Enthusiasts and Balanced Participants, participation hovered around one to two events. Far from being a minority, most jurors never set foot in a single event: more than four-fifths of Pragmatic Skeptics, around two-thirds of both

Cultural Enthusiasts and Balanced Participants, and more than half of Community Anchors reported no attendance. Their opposition was therefore not due solely to lack of experience, as their skepticism deepened even without direct exposure.

The distribution of event attendance across more granular categories underscores this point. Each persona exhibits a long tail of low participation. Among Cultural Enthusiasts and Balanced Participants, roughly a quarter attended exactly one event, another quarter attended two, and only a small fraction attended five or more. Community Anchors show a similar pattern but with a slightly higher share attending 5 – 10 events. Pragmatic Skeptics are the most extreme: more than half attended zero events and virtually none attended more than three. The figure below displays the full event-attendance distribution by persona.

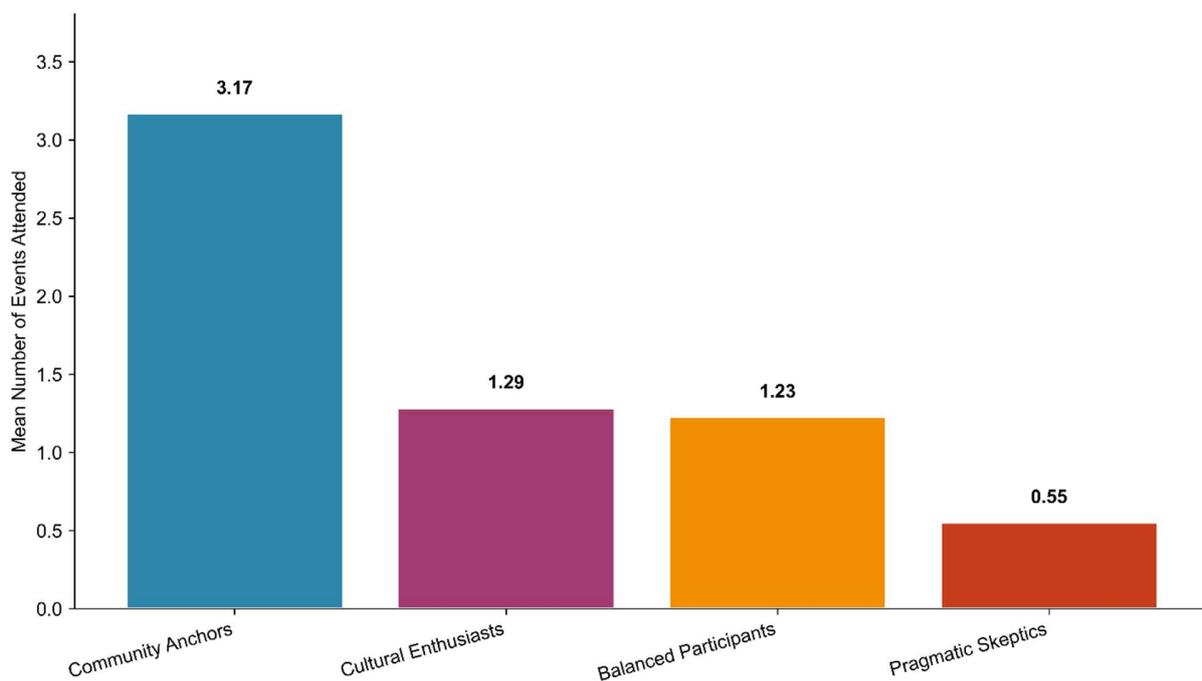


Figure 10: Event Attendance Distribution by Persona

3.1 Civic Pride vs. Direct Participation

What explains this mismatch? Open-ended comments suggest that many residents derived satisfaction from civic pride rather than direct consumption. Simply knowing that Bodø was Europe’s cultural capital enhanced civic pride and international recognition. People appreciated that their city was on the European map and that cultural options were available, even if they did not personally attend. This symbolic value can coexist with low participation, challenging assumptions that success should be measured by footfall alone.

3.2 Barriers to Participation

The most important universal barrier appeared to be time. Across personas, jurors cited work schedules, family obligations and travel distances as reasons for not attending more events. Some emphasized cost and information gaps, but the dominant refrain was lack of time. These finding echoes research on cultural participation elsewhere: mega-events may enrich the cultural ecosystem without overcoming everyday constraints (European Commission, 2013; Garcia, 2008). Programs seeking broader engagement must therefore consider event timing, duration and accessibility.

3.3 Visualizing the Paradox

The following chart illustrates the average agreement that “Bodø2024 is a good investment” by persona (Wave 2).

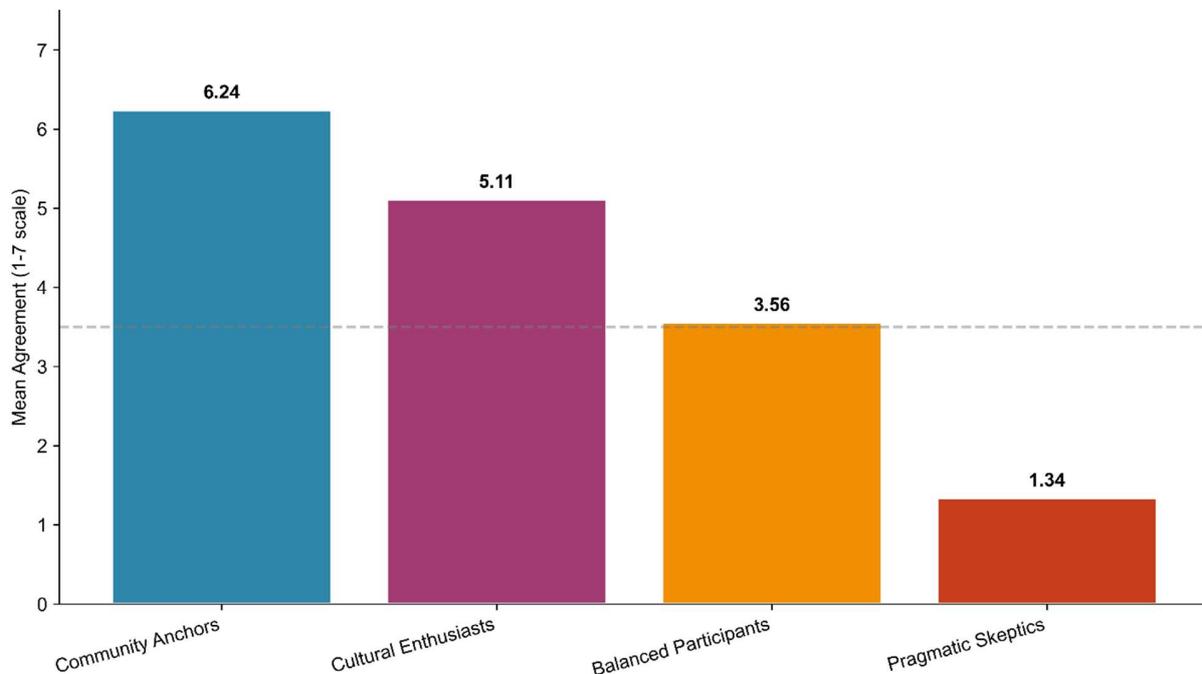


Figure 11: Perceived Investment Value of Bodø2024 by Persona

Another chart shows satisfaction with cultural life by persona (Wave 2). While Anchors report the highest satisfaction, participation levels remain modest.

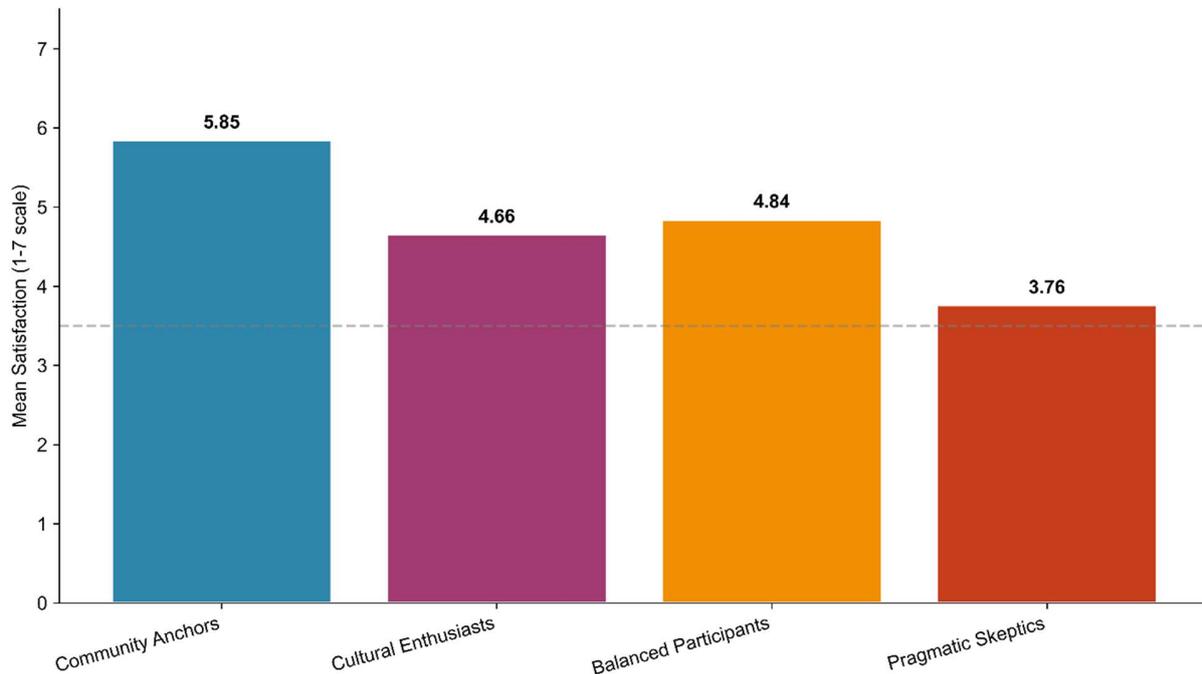


Figure 12: Satisfaction with Local Cultural Life by Persona

These visuals underscore the independence of attitudes and behavior.

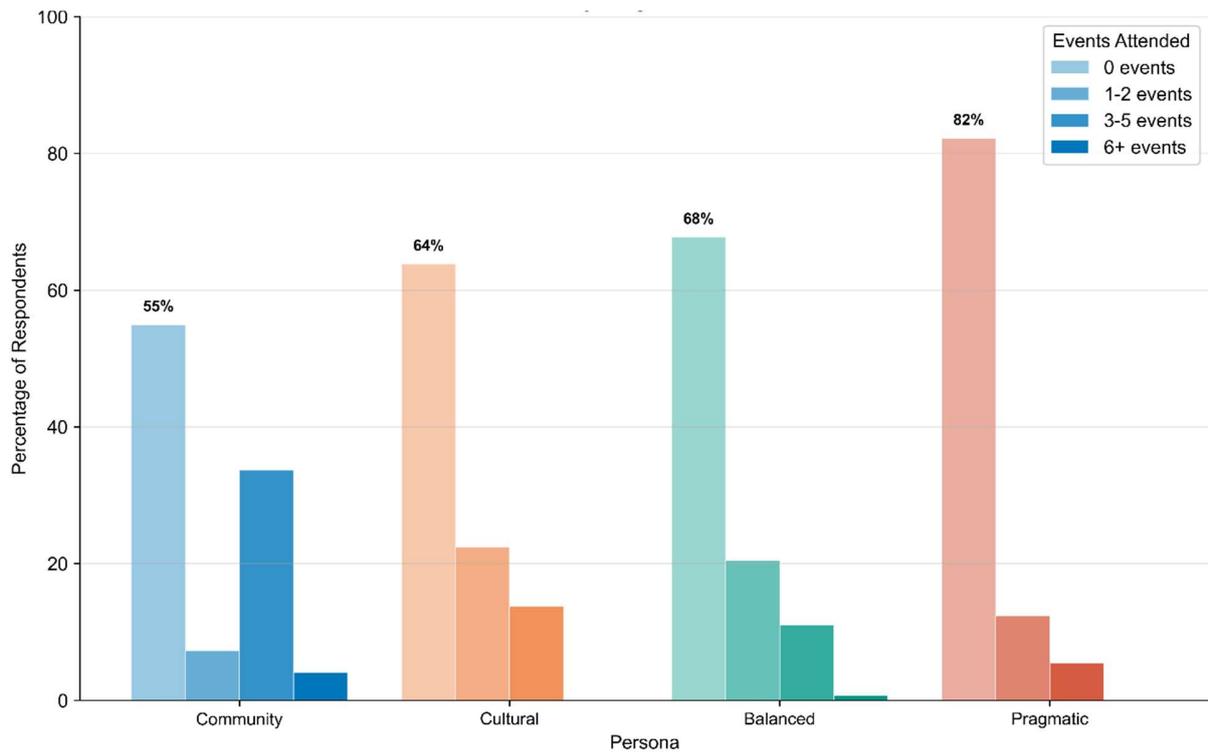
3.4 Comparing event attendance across waves

To understand whether participation patterns changed toward the end of Bodø2024, we examine the event-attendance distribution in both Wave 3 and Wave 4. The two figures below break down, for each persona, the share of jurors who attended zero, one to two, three to five or six or more events. A few patterns stand out:

- For Community Anchors, the share attending three to five events remains the largest category across both waves, while the proportion attending six or more events grows slightly in the final wave. This suggests that a subset of Anchors became increasingly engaged.
- Balanced Participants and Cultural Enthusiasts exhibit modest increases in the 1–2 event category between Wave 3 and Wave 4, but both groups still feature large segments (around 40%) who report zero attendance. These figures underscore how time and accessibility constraints persisted.

- Among Pragmatic Skeptics, participation remains extremely low: the proportion attending no events declines only slightly from about 60% to around 40%, and virtually none attend more than three events. Their strong skepticism is reflected in these continued non-engagement patterns.

By comparing these distributions, we see that while there is some movement toward slightly higher participation in the final wave, the overall picture of low engagement remains, particularly among Skeptics and Balanced jurors. These charts reinforce the point that support or opposition to the program is only weakly linked to direct cultural consumption.



Note: Non-response to the attendance question was treated as zero attendance.

Figure 13: Event attendance distribution (Wave 3)

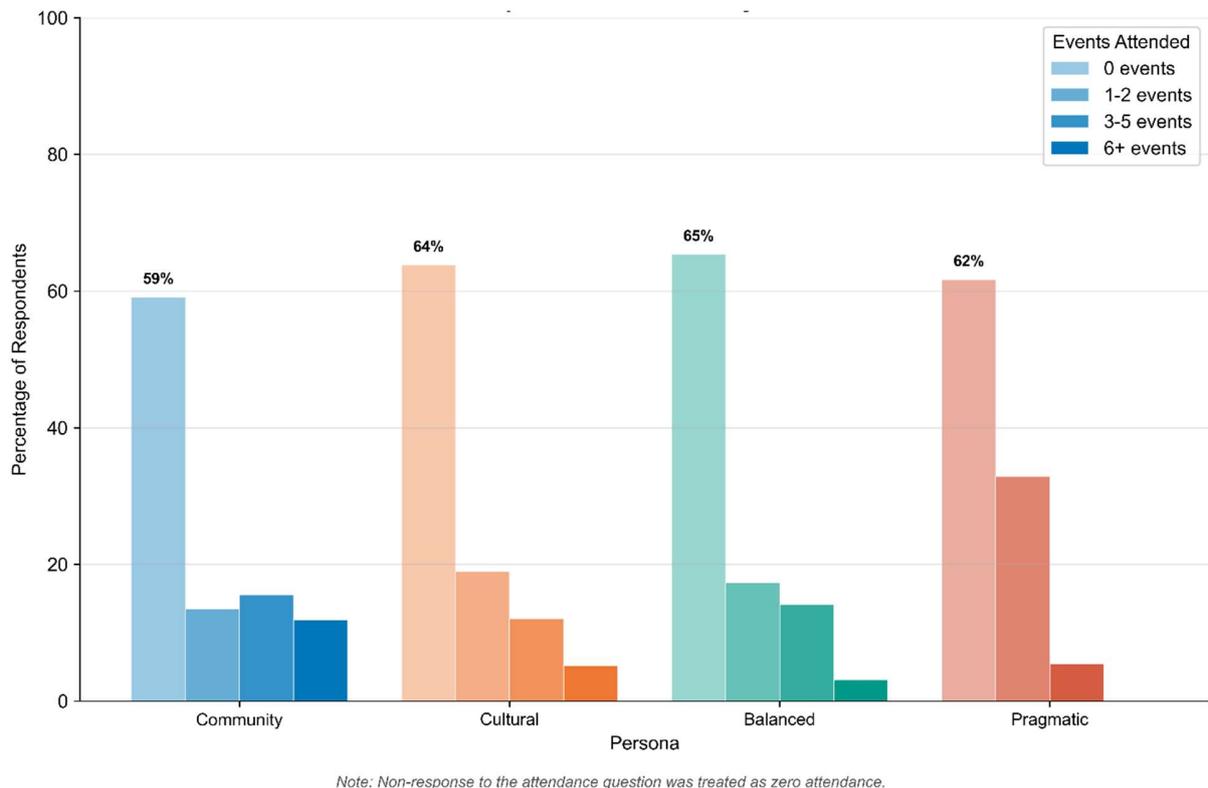


Figure 14: Event attendance distribution (Wave 4)

Chapter 4: Patterns Revealed

4.1 Independence of Dimensions

The People’s Jury data demonstrate that place attachment and program support operate independently. Community Anchors maintained strong attachment to Bodø throughout the year, while Cultural Enthusiasts showed increased intention to stay despite declining satisfaction with the municipality. Yet their evaluations of Bodø2024 moved in different directions—Anchors remained stable, Enthusiasts declined after an initial lift. Balanced Participants, meanwhile, became more rooted but less supportive. Pragmatic Skeptics remained detached on both counts. This decoupling means that loving one’s city does not guarantee support for a cultural mega-event, and vice versa.

4.2 Trajectory Summary

The personas presented in Chapter 2 were derived from cluster analysis of Wave 1 and Wave 2 survey responses. Table 1 therefore captures both the initial trajectories that helped define each group (W1→W2) and where each persona ended the year relative to where they started

(W1→W4). This dual perspective reveals how the four personas first diverged and then evolved throughout the cultural year.

Table 1: Trajectories by Persona (Wave 1 to Wave 2 and Wave 1 to Wave 4)

Measure	Community Anchors	Cultural Enthusiasts	Balanced Participants	Pragmatic Skeptics
Wave 1 → Wave 2 (Formative Period)				
Good investment	↑ (+0.46)	↑ (+0.42)	↑ (+0.15)	↓ (-0.13)
Stay intention	↑ (+0.15)	↑ (+0.34)	↑ (+0.09)	↓ (-0.29)
Cultural satisfaction	↑ (+0.34)	↑ (+0.83)	↓ (-0.30)	↓ (-0.42)
Municipality satisfaction	→ (+0.05)	↑ (+0.52)	↓ (-0.31)	↓ (-0.13)
Wave 1 → Wave 4 (Full Year Outcome)				
Good investment	→ (-0.07)	↓ (-1.12)	↓ (-0.60)	→ (+0.50)
Stay intention	↓ (-0.62)	↑ (+0.92)	↓ (-0.51)	↓ (-0.32)
Cultural satisfaction	↑ (+0.34)	↓ (-0.54)	↓ (-0.93)	↓ (-0.52)
Municipality satisfaction	→ (-0.29)	↓ (-0.74)	↓ (-1.52)	↓ (-0.48)
Event Participation				
Events attended (mean)	High (3.17)	Low (1.29)	Low (1.23)	Very low (0.55)

The table 1 reveals a striking contrast between the formative period and full-year outcomes. During Wave 1 to Wave 2, Community Anchors and Cultural Enthusiasts showed improvement across most measures. By the end of the year, however, Community Anchors

had proven their name: they remained anchored in their positive attitudes, showing stability on investment perceptions (-0.07) and net improvement in cultural satisfaction (+0.34). In contrast, Cultural Enthusiasts and Balanced Participants experienced notable declines. Pragmatic Skeptics, though consistently the least supportive, showed little net change in their stance toward the program, and even slight improvement on investment perceptions (+0.50).

As such, this table shows very clearly that the experiences of the European Capital of Culture year have been very much mixed for the members of the People’s Jury: while almost half of them experienced all metrics trending up, some show mixed directions and others trend down. Averaging across the whole panel or taking surveys with random people over time would have masked these subtleties.

4.3 Divergent perceptions on program value and relevance

Beyond the broad trajectories summarized above, several survey items exhibited particularly high variation across the four personas. These questions reveal sharp divides in how residents judged the cultural year, felt personally involved and considered their future in Bodø. Higher numbers indicate stronger agreement or greater propensity to move (on a 1–7 scale).

Table 2: Selected high variance variables by personas

Statement (Wave 1 unless noted)	Community Anchors	Cultural Enthusiasts	Balanced Participants	Pragmatic Skeptics
Bodø2024 is unnecessary	1.81	2.91	4.01	5.60
Bodø2024 concerns me (Wave 2)	6.29	4.94	4.41	2.05
My interest in art increased because of Bodø2024 (P02, Wave 4)	5.73	4.38	2.39	1.07
I appreciate that Europe has diverse cultural expressions (I05, Wave 4)	5.90	4.29	2.89	1.32

The table 2 makes several patterns very clear. First, on core evaluative statements, such as the investment value of Bodø2024, Community Anchors and Cultural Enthusiasts lean positive, while Pragmatic Skeptics view the program as “waste”. Balanced Participants are somewhere between these extremes. Second, the reverse is true for *Bodø2024 is unnecessary*: Skeptics strongly agree (5.6/7) that the year was unnecessary, Balanced Participants are undecided, and Anchors emphatically disagree (1.8/7). These differences underscore that what thrilled some residents left others cold.

The high-variance items also shed light on personal relevance and mobility. When asked whether “Bodø2024 concerns me,” Anchors again scored highest (6.29), Balanced Participants moderate (4.41) and Skeptics very low (2.05). The statement “Bodø2024 is a good investment” repeated in Wave 2 shows a similar polarization, with Anchors still agreeing (5.95) and Balanced Participants dipping to 2.80. The propensity to move further illustrates that place attachment and program support are not correlated: Cultural Enthusiasts and Pragmatic Skeptics have higher move intentions (4.63 and 2.68 respectively), whereas Balanced Participants and Anchors show strong intent to stay (1.43 and 1.59). Interest in living in the municipality follows the same pattern. These differences reinforce our earlier conclusion that support for a cultural project does not necessarily translate into a desire to remain in the region, and vice versa.

Finally, the legacy indicators from the final wave reveal that only certain groups report lasting cultural benefits. Community Anchors exhibit the strongest growth in interest in art and appreciation of Europe’s cultural diversity (around 5.8–5.9 on a 1–7 scale), followed by Cultural Enthusiasts (about 4.3–4.4). Balanced Participants rate these legacies much lower (around 2.4–2.9), while Pragmatic Skeptics again show minimal change (around 1.0–1.3). This suggests that the European dimension of Bodø2024 resonated most with those who already valued culture from before, showing not only that opinions differ, but also that some divides widened as the project progressed.

“Bodø2024 is unnecessary”

Among all high-variance questions, one statement stands out for its polarizing power: “Bodø2024 is unnecessary.” When we plot the average agreement on this 1–7 scale across personas, the extremes become visually striking. Community Anchors rated this item very low (≈ 1.8), signaling strong disagreement that the program was superfluous. Cultural Enthusiasts scored somewhat higher (≈ 2.9) but still leaned towards disagreement. Balanced Participants sat in the middle (≈ 4.0), reflecting ambivalence. Pragmatic Skeptics, however, rated the project as unnecessary at an average of 5.6, signaling broad consensus that the year was wasteful. The bar chart below illustrates these differences and underscores the deep divide between supporters and sceptics.

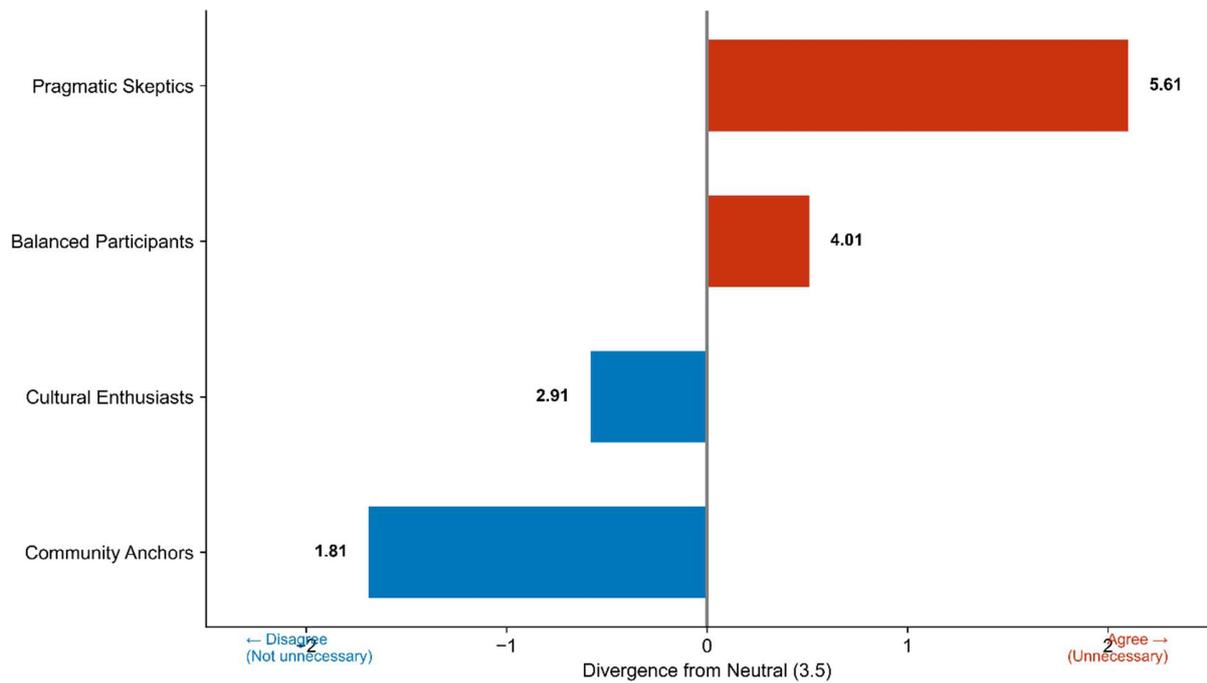


Figure 15: Mean agreement that Bodø2024 is unnecessary by persona

This figure complements the earlier table by showing the gulf in perceptions. It also highlights that Balanced Participants are often torn, as they disagree that the project was unnecessary yet are far from convinced of its value. By presenting these contrasts graphically, we can better appreciate why dialogue around Bodø2024 sometimes felt so divisive.

4.4 Wave-by-wave trajectories across key measures

The previous sections compared personas at single points in time and highlighted high-variance items. To capture the longitudinal arcs of the program, we now examine how key measures evolved across all waves for each persona. The line charts below trace mean scores on a 1–7 scale (higher values indicate stronger agreement or greater propensity).

Program seen as a good investment

Perceptions of Bodø2024 as a good investment showed divergent patterns. Community Anchors started highest (5.78) and remained remarkably stable throughout, ending at 5.71—a net change of only -0.07. This stability validates their "Anchor" label. Cultural Enthusiasts declined from 4.69 to 3.57 (-1.12), showing the most pronounced drop. Balanced Participants fell modestly from 3.41 to 2.81 (-0.60). Surprisingly, Pragmatic Skeptics actually increased slightly from 1.47 to 1.97 (+0.50), though they remained the least supportive group

throughout. The persona ranking never changed: Anchors remained most positive, followed by Enthusiasts, Balanced Participants, and Skeptics.

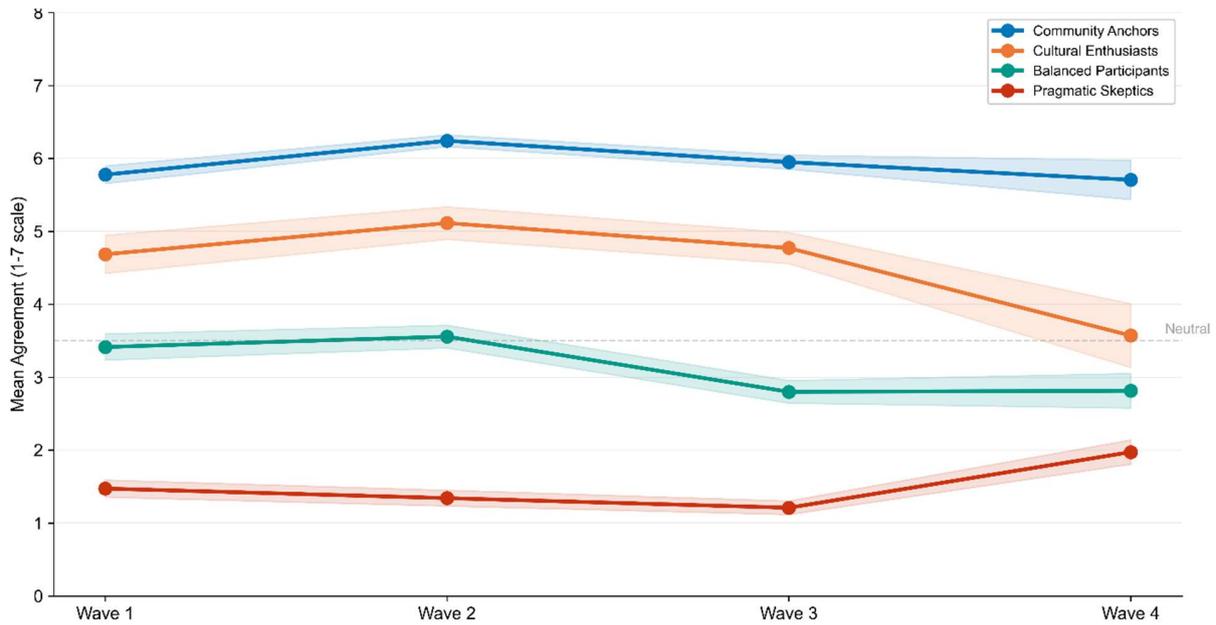


Figure 16: Trajectory: Program seen as a good investment

Satisfaction with cultural life

Satisfaction with the broader cultural life in the municipality (not just Bodø2024 events) followed a different pattern. Community Anchors rose from 5.51 to a peak of 6.10 at Wave 3, settling at 5.85 by Wave 4—a net gain of +0.34, making them the only group with positive change. Balanced Participants were relatively stable early on, peaked modestly around Wave 3 (5.21) and then declined to 4.21 by Wave 4. Cultural Enthusiasts increased early (to 4.66) and levelled off before falling to 3.29. Pragmatic Skeptics experienced a gradual decline from 4.18 to 3.66.

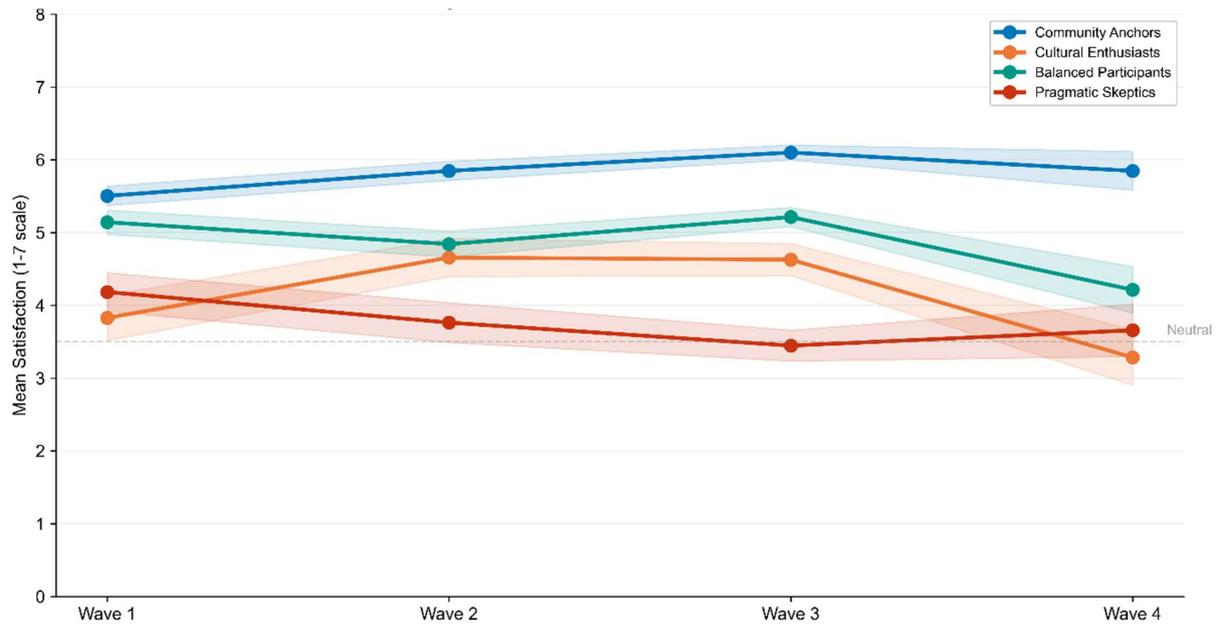


Figure 17: Trajectory: Satisfied with cultural life

Satisfaction with the municipality

Municipal satisfaction is an indicator of overall quality of life and local governance. Community Anchors remained stable and high throughout, declining only modestly from 6.26 to 5.97 (-0.29). Balanced Participants showed the largest decline, from 6.01 to 4.49 (-1.52). Cultural Enthusiasts peaked at Wave 3 (5.37) before dropping to 4.00. Pragmatic Skeptics started lower (3.95) and ended at 3.47 (-0.48). The variation in Wave 4 may reflect broader factors such as cost-of-living pressures or national political sentiments rather than solely the cultural program.

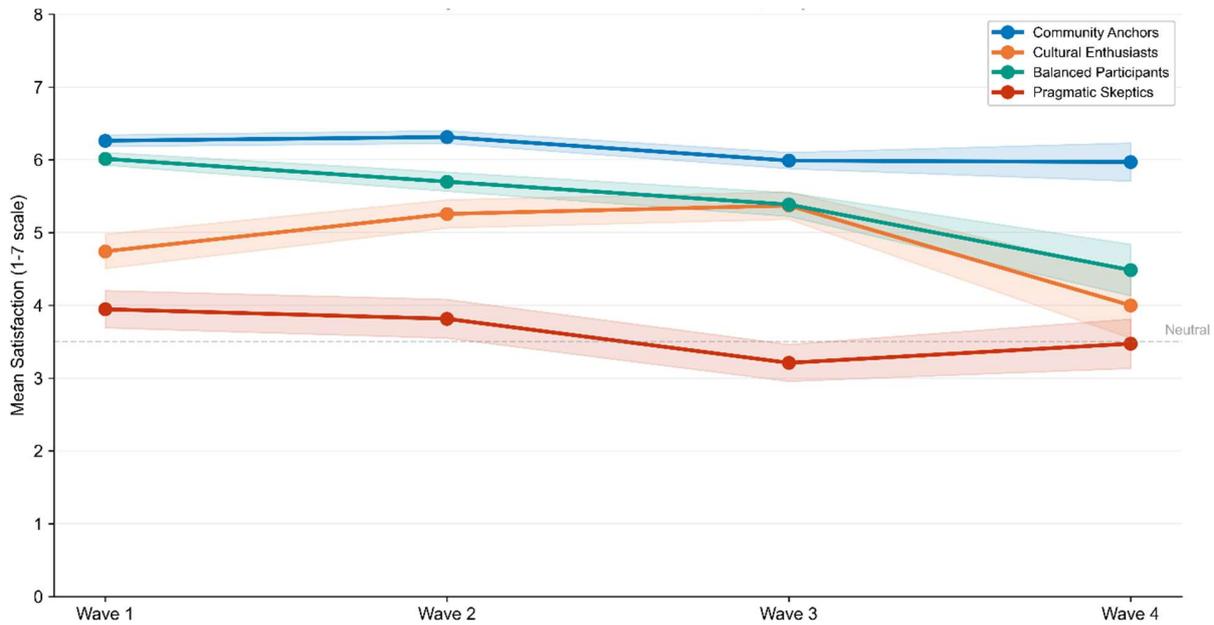


Figure 18: Trajectory: Satisfied with municipality

Propensity to move within three years

Finally, we examine the propensity to move, i.e. the inverse of stay intention. Cultural Enthusiasts expressed the highest move intentions throughout, starting at 4.63 and declining to 3.71 by Wave 4 (-0.92)—a positive sign indicating reduced likelihood of leaving. Pragmatic Skeptics began lower (2.68) and increased through Wave 3 (3.42) before settling at 3.00. Community Anchors and Balanced Participants consistently reported very low move intentions (around 1.4–2.2), suggesting strong attachment to the area regardless of program sentiments.

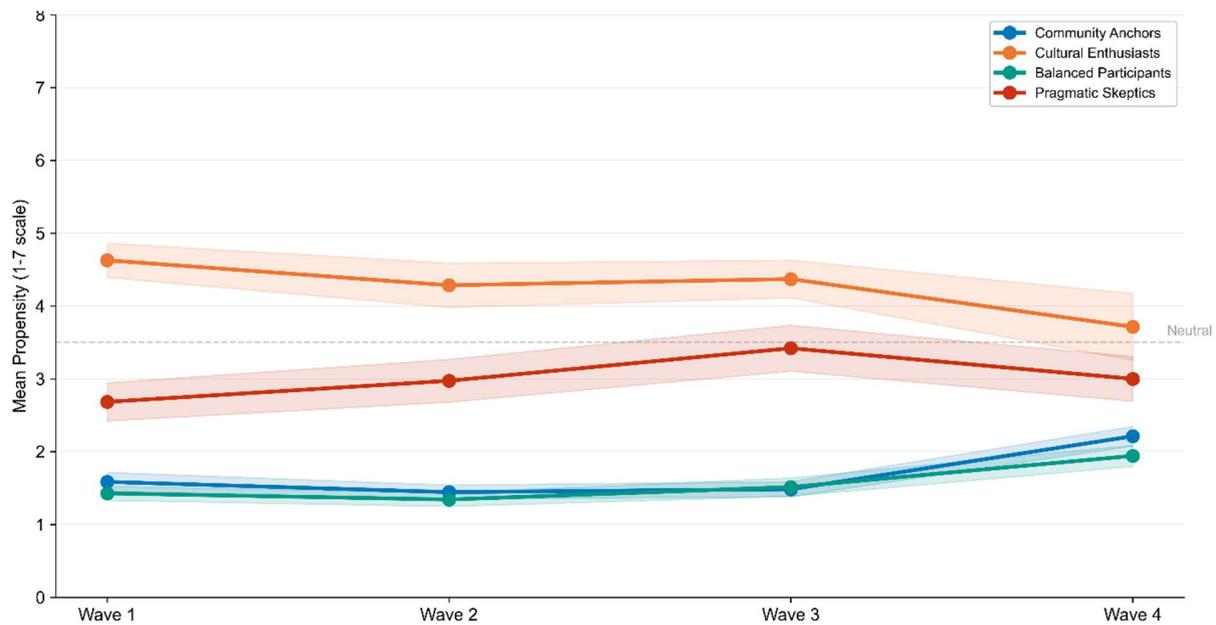


Figure 19: Trajectory: Propensity to move (3 years)

These trajectories reveal nuanced patterns among respondents. Community Anchors remained remarkably stable on investment perceptions (changing only -0.07) and were the only group to show net positive change in cultural satisfaction ($+0.34$). Other groups showed more pronounced declines, particularly Cultural Enthusiasts and Balanced Participants. The persona ranking remained consistent across all four waves. Place attachment remained strong for many, and mobility plans were not strongly correlated with program opinions. These longitudinal insights underscore the value of the People's Jury methodology and caution against simplistic narratives of success or failure.

Chapter 5: Key Findings

5.1 Support Doesn't Require Participation

One of the most interesting findings from the People's Jury is that positive attitudes do not require direct participation. Community Anchors embody this, as they remained consistently supportive even while attending only a handful of events. Their pride in the European designation and the sense that Bodø matters on a larger stage outweighed actual consumption. This phenomenon urges caution when equating success with attendance figures.

"My grandchildren finally want to visit. That alone was worth every krone." — Community Anchor, Wave 4

5.2 Place Love Doesn't Equal Program Love

Balanced Participants started with deep roots in Bodø but grew more skeptical of both the municipality and Bodø2024 as the year progressed. Pragmatic Skeptics, meanwhile, were moderately satisfied with living in the municipality but highly negative about the program. This shows that cultural policy cannot assume that investing in culture will automatically win hearts among those already rooted. Transparent communication about costs and benefits may help, but some residents may still prioritize other municipal needs.

"The summer concerts under the midnight sun changed my mind. I still plan to move to Oslo, but I'll cherish the memories." — Cultural Enthusiast, Wave 3

5.3 Alienation Exists

The Pragmatic Skeptics were not simply indifferent; they remained consistently skeptical throughout the year. Their municipal satisfaction declined modestly (-0.48) and cultural satisfaction dropped from 4.18 to 3.66, though their view of Bodø2024 as a good investment improved slightly towards the end (+0.5). Nevertheless, such comprehensive skepticism suggests deeper structural issues – perhaps economic insecurity, perceived neglect of essential services or a mismatch between program themes and personal interests, particularly in the light of struggles that the municipality was facing at the time. Merely expanding cultural offerings will not address these concerns.

"Bodø2024 was for tourists and the cultural elite, not for us." — Balanced Participant, Wave 4

"Everything feels worse now—the money wasted, the promises broken." — Pragmatic Skeptic, Wave 4

Chapter 6: Discussion

Synthesizing the quantitative and qualitative findings yields several overarching insights. First, perceptions of Bodø2024 are highly segmented. While most participants viewed the program positively, particularly Community Anchors and Cultural Enthusiasts, significant minorities either drifted toward greater skepticism (Balanced Participants) or remained consistently negative throughout (Pragmatic Skeptics). These differences suggest that cultural programming must adapt to diverse expectations and highlight different value

propositions (e.g., novelty for Enthusiasts, practicality for Balanced participants, community cohesion for Anchors, and cost-effectiveness for Skeptics).

Second, longitudinal patterns matter. Enthusiasts and Balanced participants both exhibited non-linear trajectories, with early enthusiasm giving way to waning interest. This phenomenon underscores the challenge of sustaining engagement over a prolonged period. The decline could stem from event fatigue, insufficient variety, or difficulties in navigating the program. In contrast, Community Anchors show that positive momentum can build over time when events are both inclusive and strengthen local pride.

Third, the People's Jury method itself demonstrates its utility. By following the same participants, the evaluation could detect subtle changes in perceptions and link them to personal experiences. For instance, the sustained positivity among Anchors is supported by qualitative reports of meaningful community interactions, while the persistent negativity among Skeptics is explained by cost concerns and perceived irrelevance. Such insights would be lost in cross-sectional surveys. Throughout the 2 years when we actively used the People's Jury for our evaluation, we have received a lot of feedback from the jurors. These voices that were always very honest (and at times somewhat harsh) remind us that evaluation is not just about metrics but about listening to lived experience. The longitudinal design also reveals that aggregated averages can mask important subgroup differences: overall attitudes might appear stable, but underlying clusters may move in opposite directions.

Chapter 7: Limitations and cautions

While the People's Jury provides rich insights, several limitations warrant caution. Selection bias is an inherent risk: although recruitment sought representativeness, participation was voluntary, and those with strong opinions, whether positive or negative, may have been more likely to join. The baseline report notes that the jury does not fully represent the population of the region and that additional representative surveys are planned to enhance robustness. Consequently, findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive measures of the entire community's views.

Attrition and fatigue pose another challenge. Keeping participants engaged over multiple waves is difficult, and dropout may skew the sample toward those who remain highly motivated. The survey design mitigated this by keeping questionnaires short and by offering incentives such as draws for free tickets. Nonetheless, analyzing attrition patterns is important to ensure that changes over time are not driven by shifts in the composition of the panel rather than by actual opinion change.

Causal attribution is limited. Although longitudinal data can suggest associations between Bodø2024 and changes in attitudes or behavior, it cannot definitively prove that the program caused these changes. External factors, such as economic conditions, national politics, global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, etc., may of course influence the perceptions. The integration of supplementary data sources (media analysis, geospatial data, secondary statistics) naturally enhances the interpretation opportunities, but it does not eliminate these risks and limitations. As such, caution must be exercised when translating findings into policy recommendations. Future analyses could employ quasi-experimental designs or control groups to strengthen causal claims, but ethical and logistical constraints may limit such approaches.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The People's Jury component of Monitor2024 offers a pioneering example of involving residents in evaluating a cultural mega-event. After two years of listening to hundreds of voices from all over Nordland, we find multiple truths rather than a single verdict. Bodø2024 has been well received by many, particularly those with strong community ties and cultural curiosity—nearly half the jurors (Community Anchors) remained consistently positive about both the program and their city. Yet significant segments remain unconvinced: Pragmatic Skeptics felt alienated by the investment, and even Balanced Participants with deep local roots did not translate place attachment into program support. The participation paradox underscores that symbolic value may be the program's main legacy: Bodø2024 made people proud of their city, even if they rarely attended events.

8.1 For European Capitals of Culture

These findings highlight that ECoC years create symbolic value that can surpass direct participation. Evaluators and organizers should measure success through multiple lenses—civic pride, media visibility, cultural ecosystem enrichment and long-term engagement—not just event attendance. Programs should anticipate that many citizens will experience the year indirectly and design communication accordingly. For other cities contemplating ECoC bids or large-scale cultural events, the People's Jury findings on symbolic value speak directly to recommended evaluation criteria and underscore why cultural programs should be appraised beyond simple attendance statistics.

8.2 For Bodø and Nordland

Bodø2024 appears to have enhanced local pride for many residents and strengthened the city's European identity. Yet the participation paradox and persistent skepticism among some groups indicate room for improvement. Future cultural initiatives should address

practical barriers (time, access, cost) and connect more directly with local priorities. Engaging skeptical residents requires demonstrating tangible benefits—through inclusive formats, family-friendly events and clear evidence of community return on investment. Planners should continue to diversify programming, maintain clear communication and ensure that cultural offerings extend beyond the city center.

8.3 For Evaluation Methodology

The People's Jury demonstrates the value of longitudinal, mixed-methods evaluation. By following the same individuals over time, we uncovered trajectories that would remain invisible in cross-sectional surveys. Segmenting data by personas revealed heterogeneity and prevented misleading averages. Integrating qualitative feedback contextualized the numbers and exposed underlying reasons. While this approach is resource-intensive, it fosters cultural democracy in which residents become co-evaluators rather than passive data points. The persona framework also facilitates communication of complex findings to stakeholders. Adopting a similar social-audit methodology could help other evaluation teams capture resident voices and inform decisions that align cultural ambitions with community needs.

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Methodological Appendix

A.1 Evaluation Framework

The impetus for the Monitor2024 evaluation lies in the European Commission's requirement that every European Capital of Culture conduct an independent assessment of its impacts. Traditional evaluations of cultural projects have often focused on economic indicators such as visitor numbers or direct revenues. However, the European Commission's guidelines emphasize that intangible outcomes, such as community pride, social cohesion, cultural participation, etc. should also be measured. The Monitor2024 team adopted a social audit approach, which integrates stakeholders and beneficiaries into the evaluation process. In this framework, the voices of the public are not passive data points but active inputs into understanding value creation. By periodically soliciting feedback from the same jurors, the project seeks to answer whether the capital of culture year was perceived as worthwhile, whether it engaged new participants, and whether it enhanced quality of life.

Based on this, the main evaluation questions that we asked continuously throughout the project were formulated. First, is Bodø2024 perceived as a good investment? This includes assessing whether residents feel that the project is worth the public funds and whether they find it exciting, interesting and engaging. Second, does the program concern ordinary residents and make them feel more connected to their hometown? This question asks whether people feel personally affected by the events, whether they can easily find information, and whether the program "concerns them" in the sense of being relevant to their lives. Third, who participates, what motivates participation, and what barriers prevent engagement? By mapping activities, interests, motivations (e.g., enjoyment, learning, belonging) and barriers (e.g., lack of time, money, information), the project examines how inclusive the cultural year is. Fourth, does Bodø2024 affect broader outcomes such as satisfaction with living in the municipality, attachment to place, and intentions to stay or move? Finally, fifth, are there early signs of legacy, such as increased interest in art or appreciation of European cultural diversity? Together, these questions guide both the design of the People's Jury surveys and the subsequent analyses.

A.2 European Commission Context

The European Commission presents a hierarchy of ECoC objectives (European Commission, 2018), outlined in Table 3. The objectives relating to the People's Jury include the General Objective (G01), which states that the aim of the ECoC is to strengthen citizens' sense of belonging and foster identification as members of a cultural community. This

general objective is translated into a Specific Objectives (SO2): Widen access to and participation in culture. It is further operationalized through Operational Objectives OO3: Involve a wide range of citizens and stakeholders in preparing and implementing the cultural programme, OO4: Create new opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural events, and OO9: Improve the international outlook of residents.

Table 3: ECoC hierarchy of objectives (European Commission, 2018)

General Objectives								
Safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe, highlight the common features they share, increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space (G01), and foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities (G02).								
Specific Objectives (SO)								
SO1: Enhance the range, diversity and European dimension of the cultural offering in cities, including through transnational co-operation			SO2: Widen access to and participation in culture		SO3: Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector and its links with other sectors		SO4: Raise the international profile of cities through culture	
Operational Objectives								
Stimulate extensive cultural programmes of high artistic quality	Ensure cultural programmes feature a strong European dimension and transnational co-operation	Involve a wide range of citizens and stakeholders in preparing and implementing the cultural programme	Create new opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural events	Improve cultural infrastructure	Develop the skills, capacity and governance of the cultural sector	Stimulate partnership and co-operation with other sectors	Promote the city and its cultural programme	Improve the international outlook of residents

Based on the EU's ECoC objectives, the Bodø bid-book translates these goals into a set of locally adapted objectives. Table 4 illustrates Bodø's objectives for participating in the ECoC 2024 project. Several of these objectives are directly relevant to potential members of the People's Jury. In particular, Objective B01 – to reverse the image of Nordland – internally and externally, and Objective B03 – connecting with groups not yet engaged highlight the importance of broadening participation.

The overarching ambition is that Bodø's involvement in the ECoC will strengthen its cultural foundations and, in turn, make the city a more attractive place to live and work for all residents.

Table 4: Objectives of Bodø2024 (Bodø2024, 2019)

NR	Strategic Objectives	Goals
1	To reverse the image of Nordland – Internally and externally	More attractive and exciting to visit, and to study, work, and stay in
2	To widen the production base for culture	More producing, co-producing, and cross-working
3	To connect with groups still not engaged	Addressing issues like diversity, mental health, isolation
4	To make better use of unusual spaces	New cultural areas and venues, driven by where people live
5	To create a connected web of “hotspots” especially for young people	Facilities are improved to create a strong and widely recognised cultural region
6	To make our cultural offer more international	More international collaborations. Better links with European artists and institutions
7	To improve the careers and opportunities for cultural professionals	A major capacity-building focus, which improves skills and experience, and creates jobs
8	To address freedom of expression	With our democratic experience, include freedom of expression in future cultural events

Based on both the EU-level and local Bodø2024 objectives, the Monitor2024 team developed a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that allow us to measure to what extent these objectives are met. The full list of all KPIs are outlined in detail in the “Inception Report” for Monitor2024. In this report, we choose to focus on selected measures that allow us to evaluate to what extent ECoC Bodø2024 has contributed to the goals and objectives of the overall ECoC-initiative and Bodø2024 as presented in Table 4 and 5. Given that the members of the People’s Jury represent the people that are living here in the area of Bodø and Nordland, our focus in this report is on residents.

The derived KPIs are displayed in Table 6. We see that KPI DEM003 measures different aspects of attendance among the residents, OCV003 measures the degree of change that less engaged groups expressed over time, OCV008 measures the cultural reputation of Bodø by local residents, and OCV009 says something about the degree of Europeanness that residents express over time.

Table 5: Selected KPIs for the report

KPI	Description
DEM003	Frequency of Attendance
OCV003	% change in level of interest by less engaged groups
OCV008	City Image
OCV009	Citizen's sense of belonging

A.3 People's Jury Design

The Monitor2024 Peoples Jury was established to systematically evaluate the effect of Bodø2024, on the people of Bodø and the wider Nordland region. Recognizing that cultural projects can influence civic pride, well-being and future mobility decisions, the evaluation team from Nord University created a longitudinal panel in which the same residents would answer short questionnaires throughout the project period. This design allows the project to capture changes in perceptions rather than relying on one-off polls. The jury consisted of more than 1 000 participants who volunteered or were recruited to represent a broad cross-section of the population. Participants were promised anonymity and the surveys were designed to be brief, in order to reinforce continuous engagement.

The People's Jury represents an innovative response to challenges inherent in evaluating cultural impacts. The inception report notes that traditional surveys, which randomly select respondents before and after an event, suffer from a "congruence challenge" because the individuals surveyed at different points in time may differ. To address this, the evaluation team proposed establishing a jury of residents who would commit to participating for the entire duration of the project. By following the same people across multiple waves, the evaluation can detect changes in attitudes and behaviors that are attributable to the cultural year rather than to differences in sample composition.

Recruitment for the jury aimed to include a broadly representative sample of Bodø and Nordland residents. The public invitation emphasized that everyone was welcome—whether they considered Bodø2024 a fantastic opportunity or thought it was a waste of money. Participants were promised anonymity and their data were stored in secure systems that comply with Norwegian data protection legislation. The surveys were designed to take

approximately 15-30 minutes to complete, reducing burden and encouraging continued participation.

Each wave combined quantitative and qualitative items. Quantitative measures used seven-point agreement scales for statements about Bodø2024 (e.g., “Bodø2024 is worth the money”), the attractiveness of cultural life, satisfaction with living in the municipality and so on. Later waves introduced items on program awareness (“Have you looked at the Bodø2024 program?”), event participation (number of events attended) and legacy signals (e.g., “My interest in art has increased because of Bodø2024”). Qualitative questions invited participants to comment on what they liked, disliked or wished for. This mixed-methods design provides both statistical trends and the narratives behind them. Data quality procedures included regular reminders, checks for inconsistent responses, and the possibility for participants to withdraw themselves from the study at any time.

A.4 Analytical Methods

A.4.1 Persona Identification

Cluster analysis was performed on Wave 1 and Wave 2 data from 449 jurors with complete responses to four core variables: perceived investment value, stay intention (reverse of propensity to move), satisfaction with cultural life and satisfaction with the municipality. The variables were standardized and grouped using k-means clustering ($k = 4$), producing a silhouette score of 0.33, which is weak but acceptable and also typical for social science attitude data where humans do not form perfectly discrete groups (Rousseeuw, 1987). The resulting clusters correspond to the four personas described above. Demographic and participation variables were **not** used for clustering but remain useful to characterize the personas.

A.4.2 Trajectory Tracking

The same personas were tracked across waves. Only questions asked consistently across waves were used for longitudinal comparison. Demographic and participation variables provided context. Changes were calculated as differences in mean scores between Wave 1 and Wave 2. Where later waves added new items (e.g., European cultural appreciation).

A.4.3 Persona Metrics Summary

To convey the scale of differences between the personas, the table below summarizes three key metrics from the first survey wave and the mid-year participation module. Values are group means on the seven-point agreement scales (7 = strongly agree) or counts of events attended. The numbers illustrate clearly how enthusiastic or skeptical each group was, how satisfied they were with local cultural life, and how many events they attended.

Table 6: Persona highlights

Persona	“Bodø2024 is a good investment” (Wave 1)	Cultural life satisfaction (Wave 1)	Events attended (mid-year)
Cultural Enthusiasts	4.69	3.83	1.29
Pragmatic Skeptics	1.47	4.18	0.55
Balanced Participants	3.41	5.14	1.23
Community Anchors	5.78	5.51	3.17

Means on a 1–7 scale (higher = more agreement). Event counts reflect the average number of Bodø2024 events attended in the mid-programme survey.

A.5 Persona Profiles

Cultural Enthusiasts are characterized by curiosity and openness toward new cultural forms. They are often younger residents who already participate in a broad array of cultural activities. In the first survey wave, they rated Bodø2024 highly on being worth the money, a good investment and exciting. Their engagement is reflected in moderate event attendance and high scores on personal relevance (“Bodø2024 concerns me”). However, the longitudinal data show that their enthusiasm softened toward the later waves. Particularly, the open-ended responses suggest that novelty effects wore off or that the program content did not always meet their expectations. In the final wave, their scores on value items declined, though they still remained above the mid-point on most scales. This trajectory implies that to maintain the interest of Enthusiasts, cultural programs need to continue offering fresh, diverse experiences that challenge habitual tastes.

Pragmatic Skeptics represent a group that is cautious about public spending and selective in their engagement. They are frequently middle-aged men with children and exhibit low interest in arts and culture. In the first wave, Skeptics already rated Bodø2024 poorly on value indicators and were little enthusiastic about cultural life in their municipality. Throughout the program, their skepticism remained consistent: ratings for “worth the money” and “good investment” stayed low, and many continued to report feeling “no connection” to the program, though their views showed a slight uptick by the final wave. Their event attendance remained very low, and their qualitative comments often framed the program as diverting resources from other local needs. This trajectory highlights the challenge of convincing this group of the benefits of cultural initiatives; interventions may need to emphasize practical benefits (e.g., family-friendly events, free entry, or concrete community improvements) to resonate with them.

Balanced Participants occupy the middle ground. They are moderately interested in culture and open to different formats when practical conditions align, such as convenient scheduling or family considerations. In the early waves, Balanced participants exhibited neutral to slightly positive attitudes toward Bodø2024. During the mid-program period they recorded an uplift in excitement and satisfaction, suggesting that the summer events or initial programming resonated with them. However, this was followed by a downturn in the final waves, where some reported difficulties finding events that fit their schedules or a sense that the program was losing momentum. As such, their participation patterns reflect this arc: modest event attendance early on, a slight increase mid-year, and a decline later. This persona underscores the importance of consistent communication, ease of access and a varied calendar across the entire program year.

Community Anchors are often pensioners with strong attachment to their locality. They may not have been heavy cultural consumers, but value events that foster community cohesion and involve family and neighbors. Their early ratings of Bodø2024 were high, and they remained consistently positive about both the program and the city throughout the year. By the later waves, Anchors recorded the by far the highest scores on “Bodø2024 is a good investment,” “concerns me,” and satisfaction with cultural life. They also attended the most events, particularly those oriented towards community engagement or tradition. Qualitative comments frequently mention pride in seeing their city highlighted and enjoying shared experiences with neighbors. Their trajectory suggests that accessible, community-focused programming can convert initially indifferent residents into advocates for cultural projects.

A.6 Extended qualitative findings

Our longitudinal People’s Jury tracked roughly 250 core participants across four survey waves. Out of these, about 209 provided substantive comments in open-text questions. These qualitative voices reveal a spectrum of reactions that complement the quantitative trajectories that we discussed before. These are honest opinions that the jurors have spent a lot of time and effort on. Hence, rather than fitting neatly into positive or negative categories, jurors articulated ambivalence, pride, frustration and hope.

A.6.1 Community Anchors

Trajectory: 5.78 → 6.24 → 5.95 → 5.71 (most positive and stable overall).

These jurors often praised Bodø2024’s variety and inclusivity. One wrote, “*Variert. Passer for alle aldre.*” (Varied. Suitable for all ages.) Others nonetheless felt the execution could be improved: “*Åpningsseremonien kunne ha hatt mer om Bodø, og kanskje vel mye samisk preg. Dette har det kommet frem blant folk i byen.*” (The opening ceremony could have had more about Bodø, and perhaps too much Sami emphasis. People in town have pointed this

out.) A third celebrated the prestige, writing *“Fantastisk! Håper Nordland får European region of gastronomy.”* Yet even strong supporters questioned necessity: *“Det var masse bra som skjedde, men jeg syns det var mye penger og jeg tror ikke det har betydd så mye. Bodø har et fantastisk kulturliv uten 2024.”* (There was lots of good things happening, but I think it was a lot of money and I don’t think it has meant much. Bodø has a fantastic cultural life without 2024.)

The quantitative data from the surveys already showed that Anchors were broadly supportive, proud of their city and appreciative of shared experiences. However, these voices from the jurors add another layer as they show that many of them were actually quite pragmatic about costs and skeptical of the long-term impact. As such, their comments illustrate how pride and criticism can coexist in a way that the project enhanced local identity while leaving some unconvinced it was essential.

A.6.2 Balanced Participants

Trajectory: 3.41 → 3.56 → 2.80 → 2.81 (neutral, then declining).

This group wanted broader appeal and better execution. Several found the programming too narrow: *“For smalt. Forventet flere arrangementer med bredere appell utover de svært kunst- og kulturinteresserte. Gir kritikkerne langt på vei rett i at Bodø2024 er ekskluderende...”* (Too narrow. I expected more events with broader appeal beyond those very interested in arts and culture. It largely gives critics the right that Bodø2024 is exclusive.) Frustration with the website was a recurring theme: *“Nettløsningen er rotete. Blir mye scrolling for å finne frem.”* (The website is messy. It requires a lot of scrolling to navigate.) Others mentioned unmet expectations: *“Bodø2024 har solgt seg inn som noe helt annet enn det pr nå ser ut til å bli. Hvor er folkefestene og det som virkelig skaper engasjement rundt lunsjbordet?”* (Bodø2024 sold itself as something completely different than what it appears to be now. Where are the folk festivals and what truly generates excitement around the lunch table?) After the year ended, one simply said, *“Ble ikke helt som jeg trodde.”* (It did not turn out exactly as I thought.)

Balanced participants represent the “moveable middle.” They were open to being convinced but felt the programme was too narrow and poorly communicated. Their satisfaction dipped sharply mid-year when expectations were unmet and recovered only slightly. They highlight the importance of broad programming and easy access to information.

A.6.3 Pragmatic Skeptics

Trajectory: 1.47 → 1.34 → 1.21 → 1.97 (low throughout, slight uptick at end).

This group offered the most direct critiques. One called the project “*Tøv og tull. Luksus prosjekt som går utover kommunens økonomi. Kultur onani.*” (Nonsense. A luxury project that burdens the municipality’s finances. Cultural self-gratification.) Another said, “*Bortkastet bruk av penger som trenges andre plasser i et kommunalt budsjett.*” (A waste of money that is needed elsewhere in the municipal budget.) They also found the programming uninspiring: “*Elendig. Det er rett og slett for smalt. Bryan Adams som unntak føles som et hån og unnskyldning.*” (Terrible. It is simply too narrow. Bryan Adams as an exception feels like a mockery and an excuse.) Their final verdicts were harsh: “*Totalt unødvendig. Katastrofe.*” (Totally unnecessary. A catastrophe.) and “*Smalt, usynlig og for de få. Bodø 2024 var elendige greier!*” (Narrow, invisible and for the few. Bodø 2024 was dreadful!). Geographic grievances also surfaced: “*Dere MÅ begynne å se utenfor sentrum, og la distriktene også få delta i kulturtilbud.*” (You MUST start looking beyond the city centre and let the districts participate in the cultural offerings.)

Skeptics remained critical of Bodø2024 throughout, though their views softened marginally by year's end. They perceived the initiative as elitist, poorly targeted and fiscally irresponsible. Their comments emphasise the importance of demonstrating tangible, broad-based benefits and addressing perceptions of exclusivity and waste.

A.6.4 Cultural Enthusiasts

Trajectory: 4.69 → 5.11 → 4.77 → 3.57 (declining enthusiasm)

Enthusiasts began with high expectations. One wrote, “*Bredt program, noe for enhver smak.*” (Broad program, something for every taste.) and another noted, “*Viktig og riktig å satse tungt på et slikt arrangement. Det gir bolyst og utviklingslyst for hele regionen 👍*” (Important and right to invest heavily in such an event. It fosters a desire to live and develop the whole region.) However, towards the end of the year critical voices emerged: “*Kulturåret var bortkastet tid og penger. Pengene burde vært brukt på skoletilbud og barns oppvekstvilkår.*” (The cultural year was a waste of time and money. The money should have been used for school offerings and children’s living conditions.) They requested higher quality and novelty: “*Høyere kunstfaglig kvalitet. Høyere overaskelse-faktor, og nye opplevelser som man vanligvis ikke får i regionen.*” and lamented limited outreach: “*Det har vært litt lite utenfor Bodø, og dårlig opplyst om enkelte arrangementer.*” (There has been little outside Bodø, and some events were poorly publicised.)

As such, Enthusiasts were not uniformly enthusiastic. While supportive of the concept, many wanted better quality, more variety and improved communication. Their declining scores show that initial positivity can diminish if expectations are not met.

A.6.5 Cross-cutting themes

Several themes cut across all personas:

- Website problems: Jurors described the Bodø2024 website and calendar as “*elendig*” (terrible), “*rotete*” (messy), “*søppel*” (trash) and “*vanskelig å orientere seg i*” (hard to navigate). Poor digital design hampered people’s ability to find and plan events.
- Geographic exclusion: Many felt the program focused too much on central Bodø. Comments such as “*Det har vært litt lite utenfor Bodø*” (There was little outside Bodø) and “*Dere MÅ begynne å se utenfor sentrum*” (You must start looking outside the centre) echoed across clusters.
- Narrow appeal: Even supporters criticized the program for being “*for smalt*” (too narrow) or “*for de få*” (for the few). Balanced participants labelled it “*ekskluderende*” (exclusive).
- Information gaps: Jurors wanted more and better information. Suggestions included program booklets, clearer online calendars and coverage in local media (e.g., “*Info bedre direkte på egen spalte i AN*”).

A.6.6 The complexity of reception

These real voices reveal that Bodø2024’s reception is more nuanced than a simple success/failure narrative. Even among those scoring the program highly, criticisms came to the surface: Community Anchors who rated the investment 6/7 still questioned whether the money was well spent; Enthusiasts who championed the concept complained about poor execution; and Skeptics never moved away from their stance that the project was a waste. Practical problems like the website and information distribution hurt everyone, and geographic centralization alienated residents outside the city center. Repeated accusations of narrowness and exclusivity suggest that the program struggled to reach beyond its core audience. The experience of one Anchor encapsulates the ambivalence: “*Det var masse bra som skjedde, men jeg syns det var mye penger og jeg tror ikke det har betydd så mye. Bodø har et fantastisk kulturliv uten 2024.*” Pride and disappointment coexisted, and questions about necessity and value remain unresolved even among supporters.