



# **Birmingham Perl Mongers**

## **The Survey Results from attendees of the 2006 YAPC::Europe Perl Conference**



## By Way Of Introduction

The seventh annual grassroots European Perl conference, more commonly referred to as YAPC::Europe::2006, was organised by members of the Birmingham Perl Mongers user group. The group started in September 2000, and has grown to be one of the largest Perl Mongers in the UK. With that it was suggested to the group that we should host a future YAPC::Europe conference ourselves. After all how hard can it be?

So organising began back in 2003. In 2005 we submitted our proposal and were accepted as the hosts for 2006. Then the real work began. Throughout the 3 years the organisers tried to prepare a conference that they felt attendees would both enjoy and get a lot of value out of. We did try to think of everything. We asked previous organisers, we asked previous attendees, but inevitably there were a few things we still missed. Thankfully, attendees still seemed to have enjoyed the experience.

This survey was conducted to find out what we got right, what we got wrong and how we can improve the conference experience for future attendees. We sent a survey request mail to 226 delegates, and over 50% responded.

What follows is the results of that survey and the organisers' observations and personal opinions of what the results meant to them. We hope they prove useful for future events and might give you an idea of what kind of people attend a YAPC::Europe, and what they expect to come away with.

Thank you to those taking part in the survey, and thank you very much to our speakers and sponsors for helping to make the event happen.

The organisers of YAPC::Europe::2006

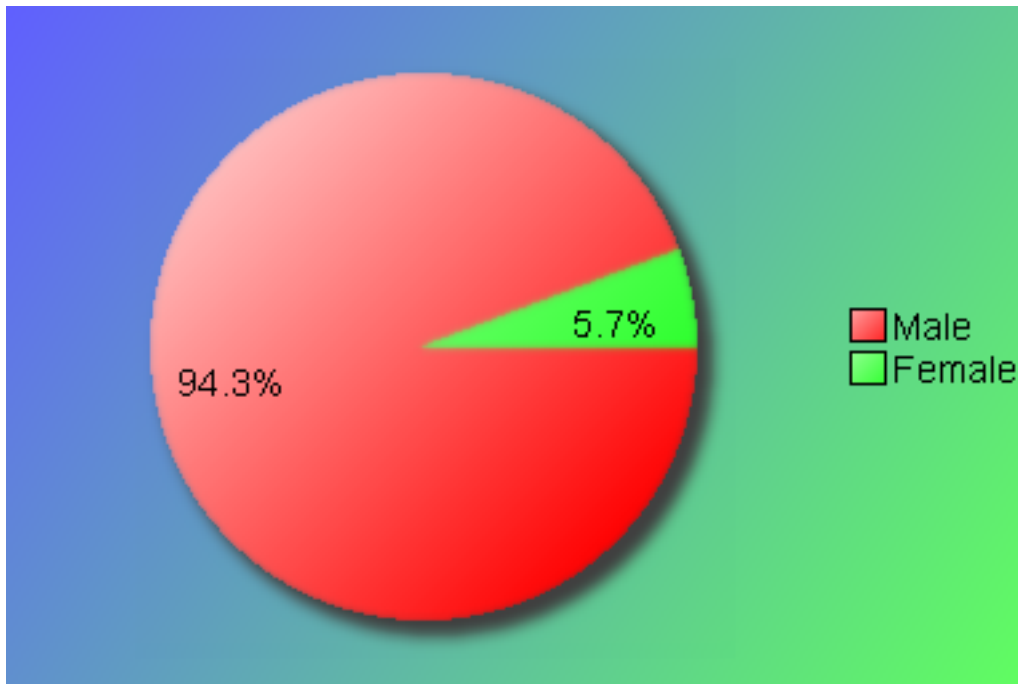


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# 1. Demographics

## 1.1. Response by Sex

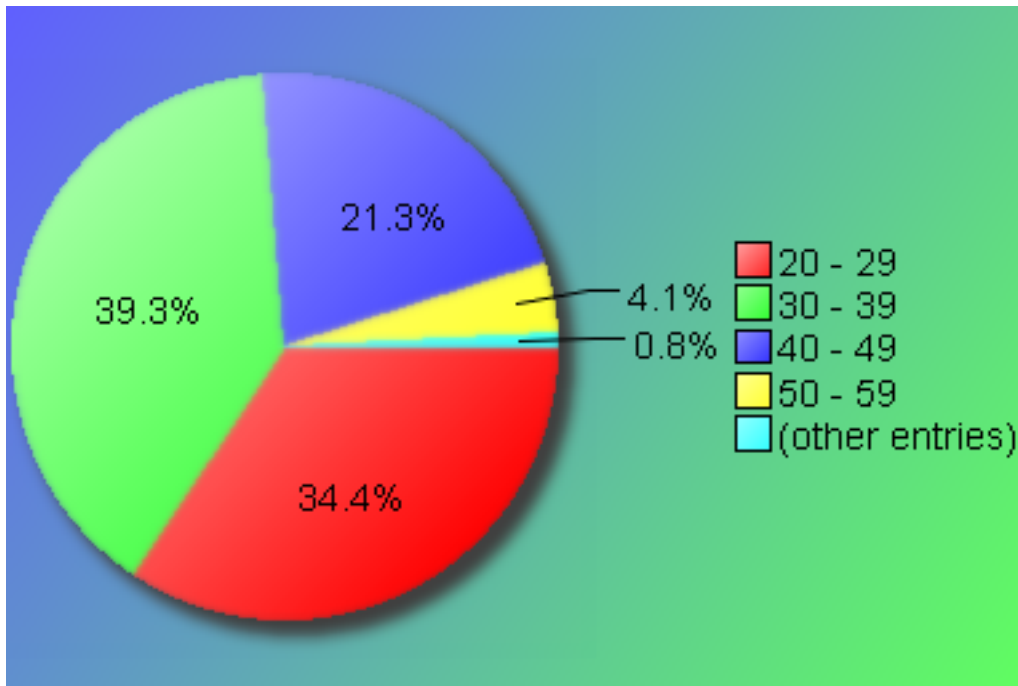


115	Male
7	Female
122	Total Responses

This is a fantastic response from the 226 attendees who were sent a survey. Yet another example of the overwhelming desire of the community to get involved and help to provide a better experience to future events.

The split of about 6% is roughly accurate of the actual number of female attendees, which seems to have improved over the years. Whether Perl has more or less female interest is undetermined, but we are keen to encourage more women to get involved in Perl events, so hopefully this is a good sign that male dominance isn't going to last.

## 1.2. Age Bands

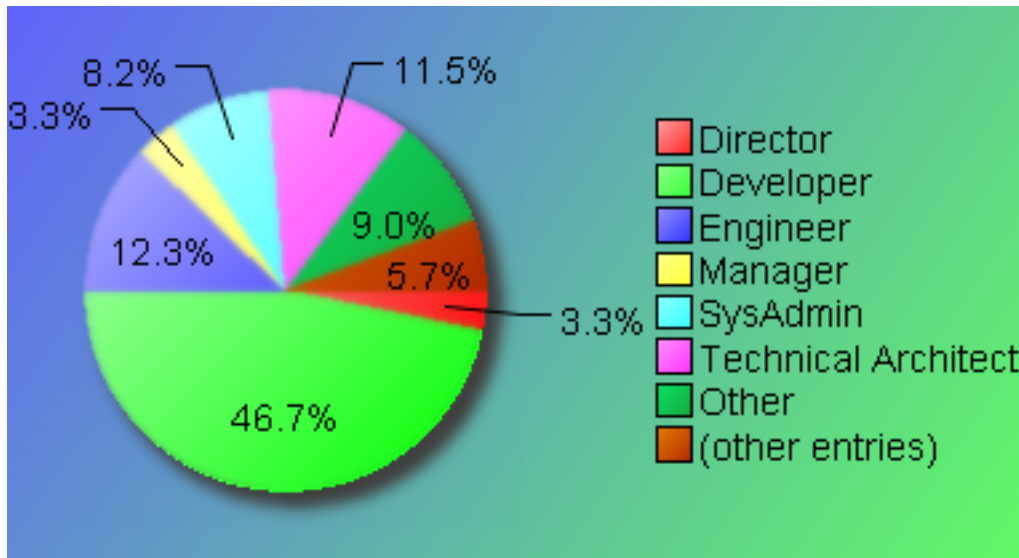


0	under 20
42	20 - 29
48	30 - 39
26	40 - 49
5	50 - 59
1	60 and over

The demographic of age was not too surprising, although there was an expectation that more students would attend. Originally the concept of the YAPC conferences was to encourage students and self funded individuals to attend, although increasingly companies are seeing the benefit of having their staff attend the technically orientated conferences. The ability to converse with other developers and in many cases the original authors of the code they use, together with a number of presentations that are often specifically targeted, can be very advantageous.

The vast bulk of the 2006 attendees are in paid employment and have appear to have been employed for several years. While many are not novices to programming, it is not unusual to find some attendees only recently discovering Perl.

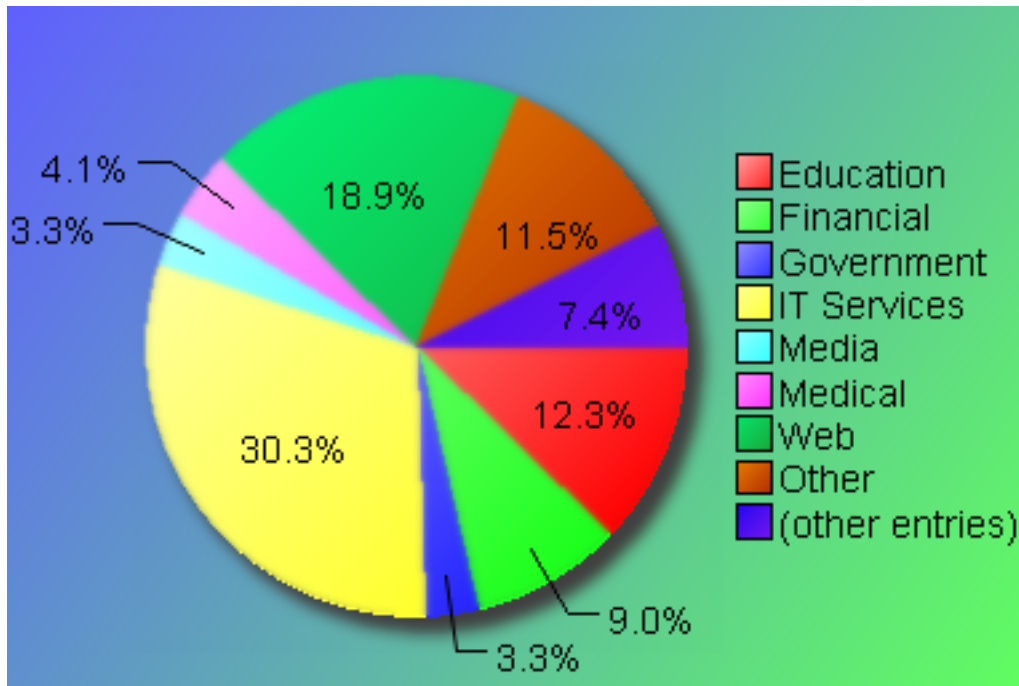
### 1.3. Job Types



1	CEO
4	Director
57	Developer
15	Engineer
4	Manager
2	Senior Manager
2	Student
10	SysAdmin
14	Technical Architect
11	Other
2	Lecturer/Teacher/Trainer

The bulk of attendees class themselves in a technical role, but it is positive to note that many senior members of staff, including Directors/CEOs, are also attending. Several attendees hold positions of influence, even if they may not have any budget control. Many attendees are discovering YAPCs for the first time, realising the value they have from an educational point of view and as an investment in social networking. Attendees are finding jobs through personal recommendations, from being able to meet and socialise with developers, hiring managers and sponsors alike.

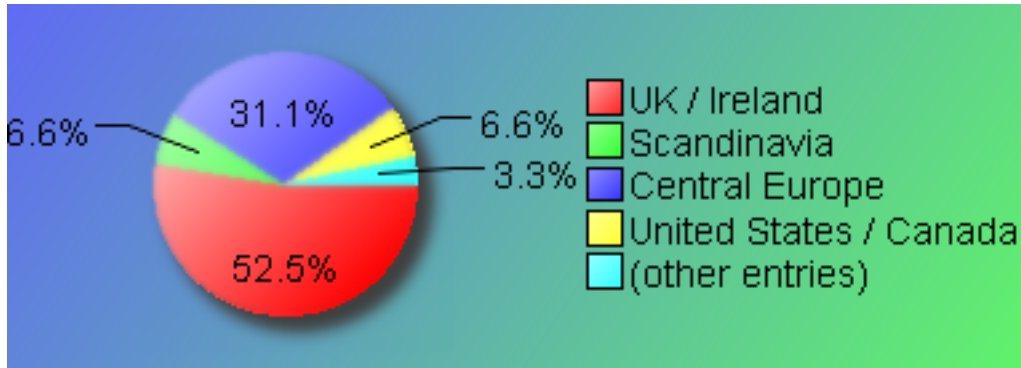
### 1.4. Industries



15	Education
11	Financial
4	Government
37	IT Services
4	Media
5	Medical
1	Retail
3	Telephony
3	Travel
23	Web
14	Other
2	Engineering

Traditional IT industries were strongly represented, together with an encouraging variety of others.

## 1.5. Regions



64	UK / Ireland
8	Scandinavia
38	Central Europe
8	United States / Canada
3	Asia / Australasia
0	South America
0	Former Soviet Europe
0	Former Soviet Asia
1	Africa

Unsurprisingly the regions from where attendees travelled from were centred around the UK, Ireland and Europe. However, it is pleasing to see that others are still making the effort to travel from further afield.





## 2. YAPCs & Workshops

### 2.1. YAPC Attendance

50	This was my first YAPC
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Over the last 2 years this has been a repeated number for both YAPC::Europe and YAPC::NA. At least 25% of the attendees are coming to YAPCs for the very first time. While some may find it's not for them, the conference committee and conference organisers are keen to get the feedback of these attendees and to ensure that they get the best experience we can possibly give to hopefully keep them coming. After all they are the future of these conferences.

Attended	Any YAPC	YAPC::Europe	YAPC::NA	YAPC::Asia	YAPC::Australia / OSDC::Australia	YAPC::Israel / OSDC::Israel	YAPC::SA
once	18	19	8	6			
twice	8	8	5				
3 times	19	20	1				
4 times	9	7					
5 times	8	9	1				
6 times	2	3	2				
7 times	1	2					
8 times	2		1				
9 times	2						
10 times	2						
12 times	1						

While we hoped previous attendees of the Australian, Israeli and South America conferences might have made it to YAPC::Europe, we appear to have missed them. An increasing number of attendees are returning again and again to the conferences and it will good to see this trend continuing.



## 2.2. Workshop Attendance

70	I've never been to a workshop
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Perl Workshops are mini-conferences, usually having talks predominately in a non-English language. The German, French, Dutch, Austrian, Italian and other workshops have been run successfully for several years. Their success has meant others have seen them as a good example to hold small workshops themselves, without having to worry about the constraints of conference organisation.

While it is perhaps not too surprising that several attendees have not been to a Perl Workshop, the rise in the number of small workshops and hack-a-thons, even in English speaking countries, will hopefully mean these attendees will get the opportunity to go along and perhaps even present at these smaller local events.

Attended	Any PW	Austrian PW	French PW	Italian PW	London PW	German PW	Netherlands PW	Nordic PW
once	12	1	3	1	10	3	2	7
twice	16		2	1	14	1		5
3 times	10	2		1	1	4	1	1
4 times	6					2	1	1
5 times	1					2		
6 times	2							
7 times	3					1		

An increasing number are attending the Perl Workshops though, and after this YAPC::Europe conference a Pittsburgh Perl Workshop and a Chicago Hack-a-thon took place, both of which proved very successful. It will be good to see more of these smaller events being promoted on a local level.



### 2.3. Plans for the Future

	Y	N
Do you plan to attend a future YAPC/Workshop?	117	3
Are you a member of a local Perl Mongers user group?	83	37
If not do you plan to find one, or start one?	22	24

Thankfully many of the attendees do plan to attend future events, but for the few that don't think they will attend another, it is worth remembering that a grassroots conference isn't for everyone. If you've previously only been to very corporate conferences or expos, then you experience a very different kind of conference at a YAPC. The content is very heavily geared towards lectures and training and not product marketing or sales promotions.

Approximately two thirds are already members of a Perl Mongers group, and of the third that aren't, around half plan to get involve or start a local group. We are aware of at least two groups in the UK that have started as a direct result of this conference, one geographic (NorthOfEngland.pm) and the other based on industry sector (Banking.pm).



### 3. YAPC::Europe::2006

The following survey questions were specifically aimed at the 2006 YAPC::Europe conference.

#### 3.1. *When did you decide to attend this conference?*

50	I'm now a regular YAPC::Europe attendee
11	After YAPC::Europe::2005 in Braga
40	This year after seeing references online/in the press
16	I was nominated to attend by manager/colleague

As there had been 6 previous YAPC::Europe conferences, it was expected that a significant number of attendees would have already have attended other events, but we were also interested to hear whether other reasons prompted people to attend.

The fact that 11 who attended for the first time in Braga, had decided to attend again this year, was very encouraging. The message must be getting across to some of the newcomers, and they enjoyed it enough to persuade bosses or their own bank balance that attending again was a good thing.

We are also encouraged that managers and colleagues are nominating people to attend the events. Those that are regular attendees are all too aware of the benefits from attending, and its good to hear that they are passing on that message to their bosses when they return.

This year the organisers made a big effort to try and promote the conference further afield than just the usual channels. While most attendees are already part of the Perl community is also important to ensure that those not in it are also aware of its existence. Linux groups, Open Source magazines and other avenues were all pursued. We even came close to promoting the event on local radio and TV, but no-one was brave enough stand in front of a microphone or camera :)

Perl is alive and well, and although we in the Perl community are aware of this, it is still important to get that message out to the wider IT industries. Many of the bosses who sign the chequebooks for large projects, should be asking is Perl an option for us? With the continued promotion of Perl conferences and workshops we might get that question asked a little more.



### 3.2. Were you a speaker?

82	No
27	Yes, and I have spoken before at similar conferences
4	Yes, and I have never spoken before at any similar conference

We had a nice mix of just attendees, regular speakers and new speakers. It's good to be able to offer new speakers the opportunity to get up in front of an audience, as they can be our future stars of the community. Unless we give them a chance to shine, we might never know how good they are.

The ratio of speakers to attendees has usually been about 1:4 for YAPC::Europe.

### 3.3. What was your motivation for attending the conference?

45	the list of speakers
58	the quality of the talks scheduled
24	to be a speaker
72	to meet with Perl/project co-contributors
101	to socialise with Perl geeks
24	to meet Larry Wall

The primary goal of the conference is to host some great talks. With the feedback we got, we managed this and more. There were several comments along the lines of "I had to decide what talks NOT to see". The ability to socialise and network with other Perl programmers was also a significant factor. Being able to talk in person to someone who wrote the Perl module you have been using for the past few years can often be invaluable. Buy them a beer and you have a friend for life :)

The presence of Larry Wall himself should not be under estimated. While Larry himself is very much interested in the Perl language and heavily involved in the development and design of Perl 6, those outside the Perl community are often unaware how much he still loves Perl. Many newcomers love the opportunity to say thank you in person to the man who has helped make our lives easier and fun.

We would have liked to have been able to invite many more "celebrity" speakers, but due to the lack of early sponsorship, it was unfortunate that we were unable to commit to any further high profile speakers. Thankfully several attended anyway :)



### **3.4. What aspects of the conference do you feel gave value for money?**

110	the talks
41	the conference bag
49	the tshirt
26	the expo
69	the conference dinner

Thankfully the results we got were pretty much the kind we had hoped for. While the primary aim of the conference is the talks, we did want attendees to be able to take away something worthwhile from other aspects of the conference. After all if they only wanted talks, why on earth did we torture ourselves organising all the other goodies we were able to lay on ;)

### **3.5. How would you rate your overall satisfaction of the conference?**

54	Excellent
52	Very Good
12	Good
0	Okay
1	Poor
0	Abismal

We're glad that we managed to provide at least a good conference experience to virtually all attendees, but we would like to hear from the individual who thought they got a poor experience. Whether they were not expecting the kind of conference on offer, or there was some aspect that really upset them, we don't know. We hope that it was just that their expectations were different from what a YAPC is, and no other deeper reason, but as the vast majority did say they had a good or better experience, I think we got it about right.



## 4. Conference Prices

### 4.1. How much would you or your company be willing to pay?

Standard Rate			Individual Rate	
£50	1		£25	1
£60	1		£40	2
£80	1		£50	10
£100	22		£60	3
£110	2		£65	1
£120	2		£75	30
£125	1		£80	3
£150	16		£85	1
£165	1		£90	2
£199	1		£95	1
£200	15		£99	1
£250	3		£100	13
£300	1		£150	7
			£200	3

The conference fees were set at £100 (standard rate) and £75 (individual rate). It is worth bearing in mind that the conference fee is actually a small part of many attendees costs, when you include travel, hotel, food and drinks into the expenses. All speakers had their fees waived.

The standard rate was aimed at company sponsored attendees, while the individual rate was for those that were typically paying for themselves. The benefit to companies was that they could pay one single sum for all their attendees, and help to contribute a little extra to the costs of the event.

Judging from the responses, many thought we had the price about right. Although it was significant that a number felt we could have charged a lot more. While the demographic suggests that the attendees are predominately in paid employment, it is worth still trying to attract the students. It has been suggested that students who are able to prove their student status, should be able to get a notable concession. While fees charged are decided by the local organisers, this is one suggestion that would be worth considering. Especially as many are happy to pay a higher price for their conference fee.



#### **4.2. How did you pay for the conference fee?**

33	N/A - I was a speaker
4	N/A - I was a sponsor
47	My company paid
37	I paid out of my own pocket
0	I wasn't able to attend

Following on from the previous question, just under a third of the attendees who responded paid for themselves.