



Visit Portsmouth
Visitor Survey Results - 2024

Overview and methodology

The latest iteration of our Portsmouth Visitor Survey was conducted in January 2025, covering the calendar year of 2024.

We asked visitors where they came from, what they did, how they travelled, how much they enjoyed, and plenty more besides. We also asked questions of those who'd not visited recently, to contrast opinions and circumstances of those who had been to Portsmouth and those who had not.

With many years' results now banked, the questions in 2025 were purposefully kept similar to previous versions wherever possible, to allow like-for-like comparisons and build on our existing reports.

This year saw a particularly large response set, with more than 3,500 people completing the survey. Responses were garnered by sharing the survey in e-newsletters from Visit Portsmouth, Tourism South East and The D-Day Story. People who live and work in Portsmouth were excluded to the best of our ability, for us to better reach tourists and not skew the results with people who come to the city regularly.

Note: As some of the results below will attest, in many questions the respondents were permitted to select all appropriate answers, which is why the total sometimes exceeds 100%.

The three types of visitor

As in previous iterations, respondents were split into three categories:

- **Visitors** were those who had been to Portsmouth within the past two years.
- **Lapsed Visitors** had visited the city more than two years ago but less than five.
- **Non-Visitors** were those who had never visited the city before, or last done so more than five years ago.

A unique set of questions delivered to respondents in each category, with Visitors asked about their trip, whilst Lapsed and Non-Visitors were quizzed on their perceptions of Portsmouth, any prior experiences and where else they go.

The results are detailed below, along with some comparisons to previous years.

What Three Words

Once they had been categorised, respondents were asked what three words they most associate with Portsmouth.

In recent years we have seen a shift away from nouns and dry, factual words towards more descriptive, experiential ones. The trend remained for 2024, with 'Interesting', 'vibrant', 'fun' and 'exciting' among those with a particularly good showing.

Visitors

The below word cloud details the 75 most common responses among Visitors, with the larger the word appears the more times it was cited.



The ten most popular words were, in order:

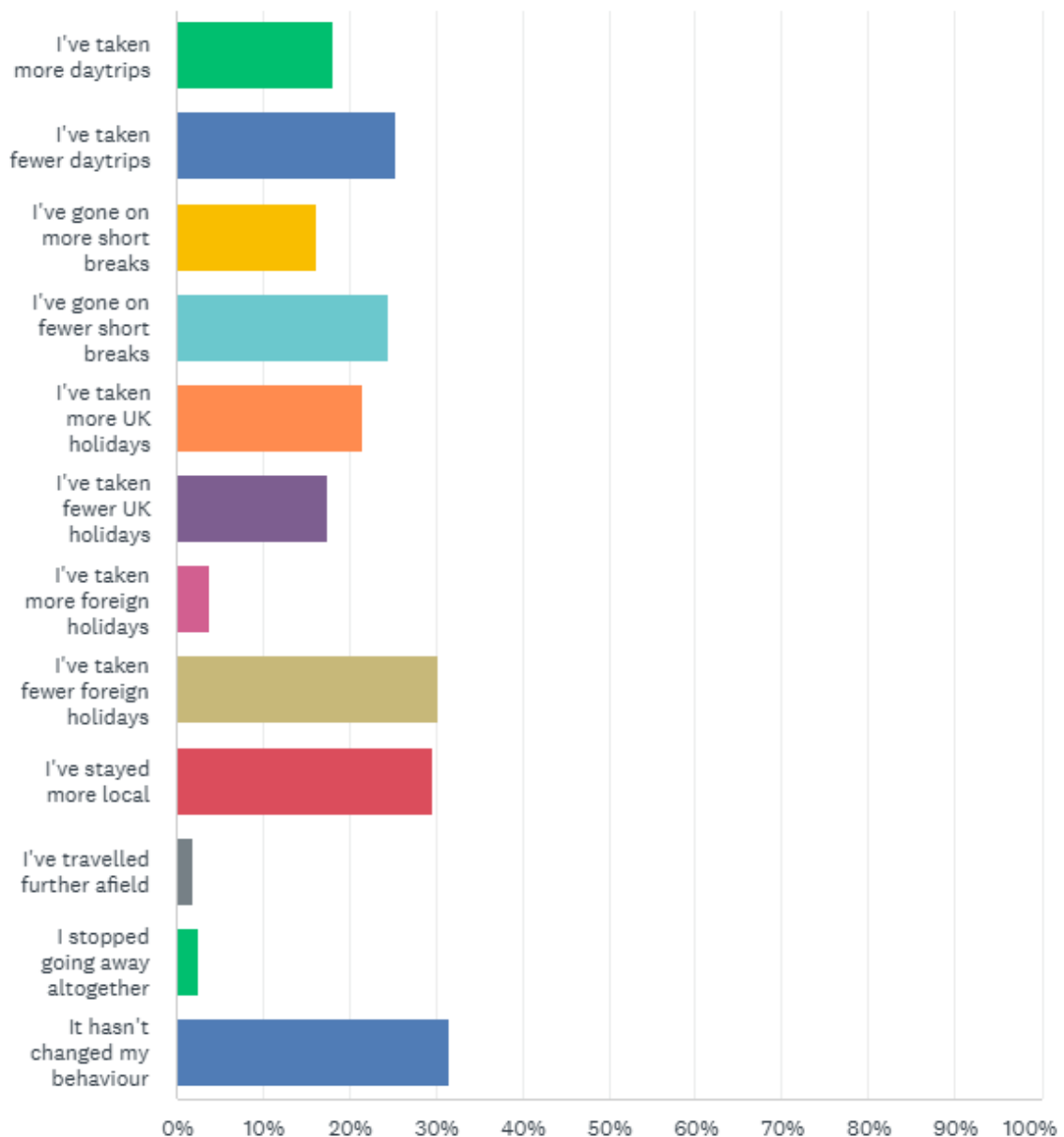
1. Historic
2. Interesting
3. Vibrant
4. Historical
5. Shopping
6. Naval
7. Fun
8. Busy
9. Friendly
10. Exciting

Cost of Living

Although cost of living concerns aren't as prevalent in the media as they were 12 months ago, we retained questions on how much increased living expenses had impacted the ways in which people travel, to see what (if anything) had changed over the year.

Reassuringly, the trend appears to be a positive one, with Visitors in 2024 generally reporting lower levels of concern than they were last year. Whilst in 2023 the most popular responses were 'I've taken fewer foreign holidays' and 'I've taken fewer daytrips', this time it was 'It hasn't changed my behaviour'.

Those who reported 'I've gone on fewer short breaks' dropped from 26% last year to 24.5% this time, whilst those saying 'I've gone on fewer daytrips' fell from 29.3% to 25.3%. The below graph is for those in our Visitors category.



This optimism continues when looking ahead to the next 12 months. The most popular answer among Visitors was that living concerns won't impact their plans or behaviours at 29.1%, up from the 27.3% who said this last year.

Financial uncertainty also continues to abate. Those who said they didn't know the impact that rising costs would have on their travel plans dropped to 14.8% in 2024. It was at 16.5% in 2023 and 19.4% the year before.

Comparing across the three categories of visitors, we see a familiar trend to what was witnessed last year, and perhaps few surprises in that those who have travelled are less impacted, and have a rosier outlook on the future.

Some 9.5% of Non-Visitors and 9.9% of Lapsed Visitors said they've taken more daytrips in the past year. For Visitors it was 18%. Likewise, 13.4% of Non-Visitors and 13.2% of Lapsed said they have gone on more short breaks - it was 16.3% among Visitors.

Other notable response variations:

'I've taken more UK holidays'

Visitors - 21.5%

Lapsed Visitors - 17.7%

Non-Visitors - 12.4%

'I've stopped going away altogether'

Visitors - 2.5%

Lapsed Visitors - 4.5%

Non-Visitors - 5.6%

Looking ahead, Visitors were also more optimistic:

'I'll take more daytrips'

Visitors - 17%

Lapsed Visitors - 12.8%

Non-Visitors - 12.3%

'Cost of living concerns won't change my behaviour'

Visitors - 29.1%

Lapsed Visitors - 27.8%

Non-Visitors - 22.9%

They also had less uncertainty:

'I'm not sure [what the next 12 months will hold]'

Visitors - 14.85%

Lapsed Visitors - 19%

Non-Visitors - 20.4%

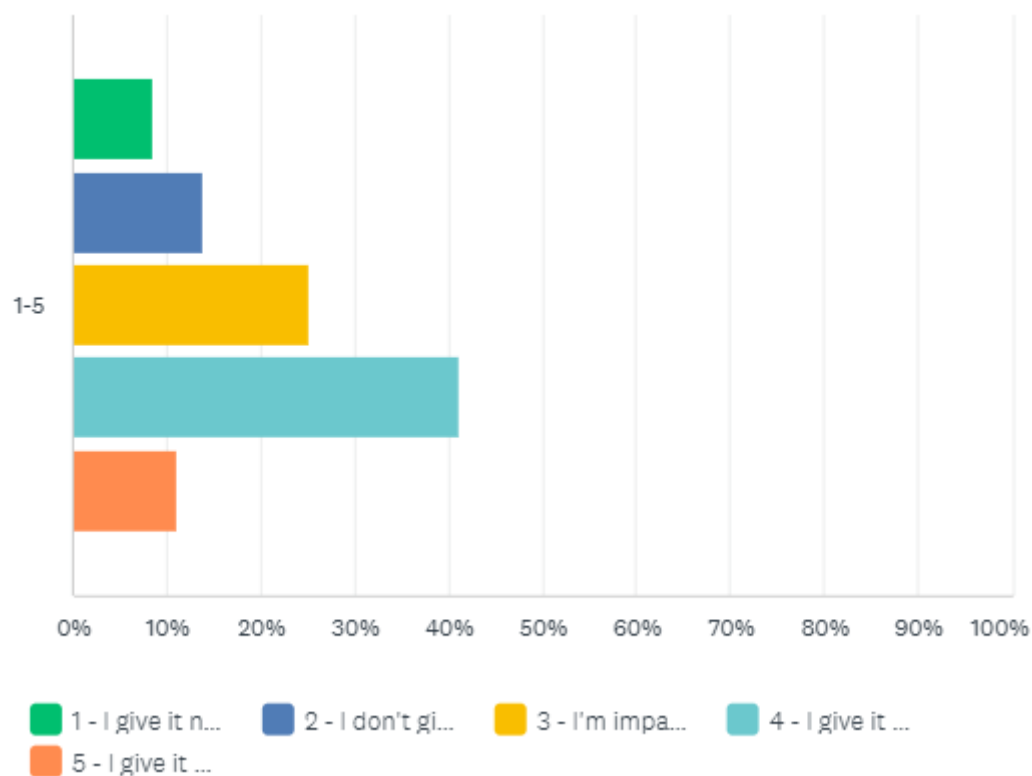
Green Travel

Before the question streams split so that we could drill down into each visitor category, all respondents were asked to report how much of an impact the environment had on their travel plans. First we asked respondents to label how much of a role green travel plays in their decision making process - from 1 (I give it no consideration) to 5 (I give it major consideration).

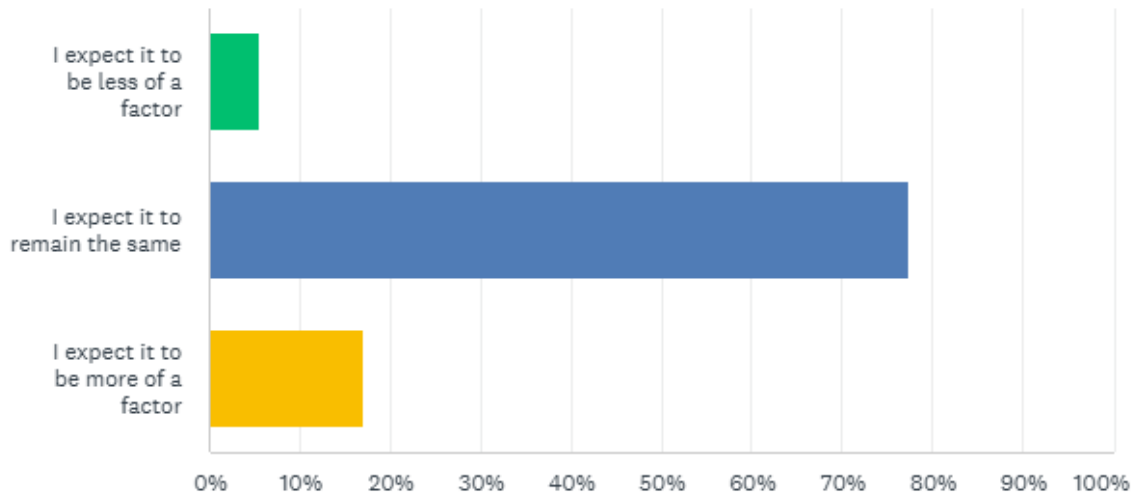
This year did see a small shift towards eco-conscious travel among Visitors - but the change was very minor.

Those who give the environment no consideration dropped year-on-year from 9% to 8.6%, whilst the number of people at the other end of the scale rose from 10.8% to 11.2%.

As before, the trend showed a steady increase in response volumes going from one to four, before it crashed back down again at five.



In this section we also asked respondents to consider how much of a factor green travel will play when booking their holidays for 2025. Here, the vast majority (77.5%) anticipated it staying the same, although (perhaps surprisingly) the only growth here was among those who said green travel would play less of a factor over the coming 12 months - a response that rose from 4.6% to 5.4% year-on-year.



The results were broadly unchanged across the three visitor categories, with only a small number of percentage points separating each answer - except for the response 'I expect it to be more of a factor'. This was chosen by 21.3% of Non-Visitors, dropping to 18.9% for Lapsed Visitors and falling further again to 17.1% for Visitors.

Visitors

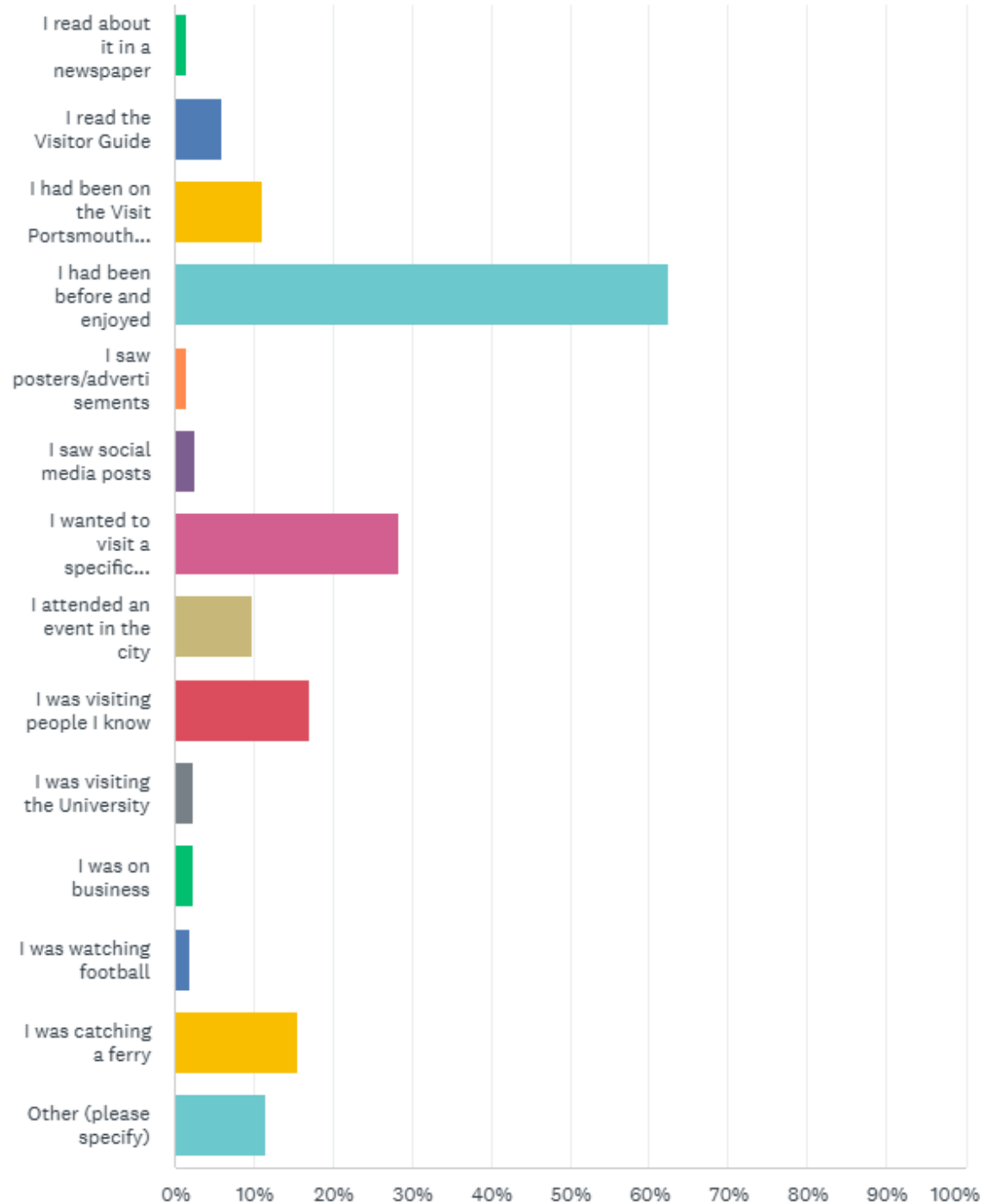
The above questions were asked to all three categories of respondents (albeit with the results split across them to highlight any potential differences). Now we will go into the Visitors section, where questions were asked specifically about a trip (or trips) undertaken within the past two years.

Why Portsmouth?

We began by asking Visitors what made them choose to come to Portsmouth in the first place. The spread of responses here quite closely mirrored that from 2023, with only small differences between the percentages. One of the biggest changes was 'I attended an event in the city', going from 6.9% in 2023 to 9.8% in 2024. (Note: the true figure for event attendance may be higher still, with a number of those in the free text box for 'Other' saying they attended Victorious Festival.)

The most popular answers were 'I had been before and enjoyed' (62.4%), 'I wanted to visit a specific attraction' (28.4%) and 'I was visiting people I know' (17.2%).

The results were broadly unchanged across the three visitor categories, with only a small number of percentage points separating each answer - except for the response 'I expect it to be more of a factor'. This was chosen by 21.3% of Non-Visitors, dropping to 18.9% for Lapsed Visitors and falling further again to 17.1% for Visitors.



Additional responses in the 'Other' category always make for fun reading. Some highlights this time included:

"To check the vibes in case I would like to move there."

"I needed to be by the sea."

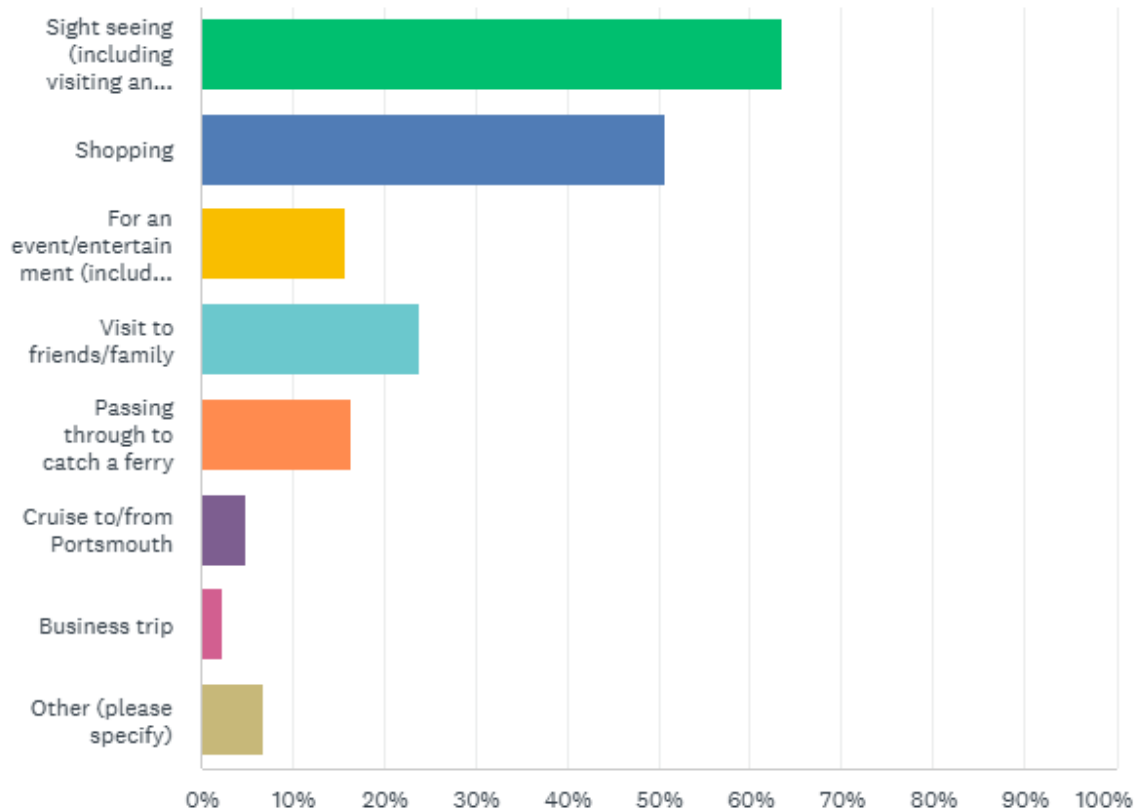
"Been close many times and thought it would be a nice place to visit. I was correct."

"I live in Greenwich so feel an affinity to Portsmouth through the Nelson connection."

The type of trip

Asked to categorise the kind of trip they took, most Visitors (63.6%) put it as 'Sightseeing'. Also popular was 'Shopping' at 50.6% (the total exceeding 100% as respondents could select all that applied).

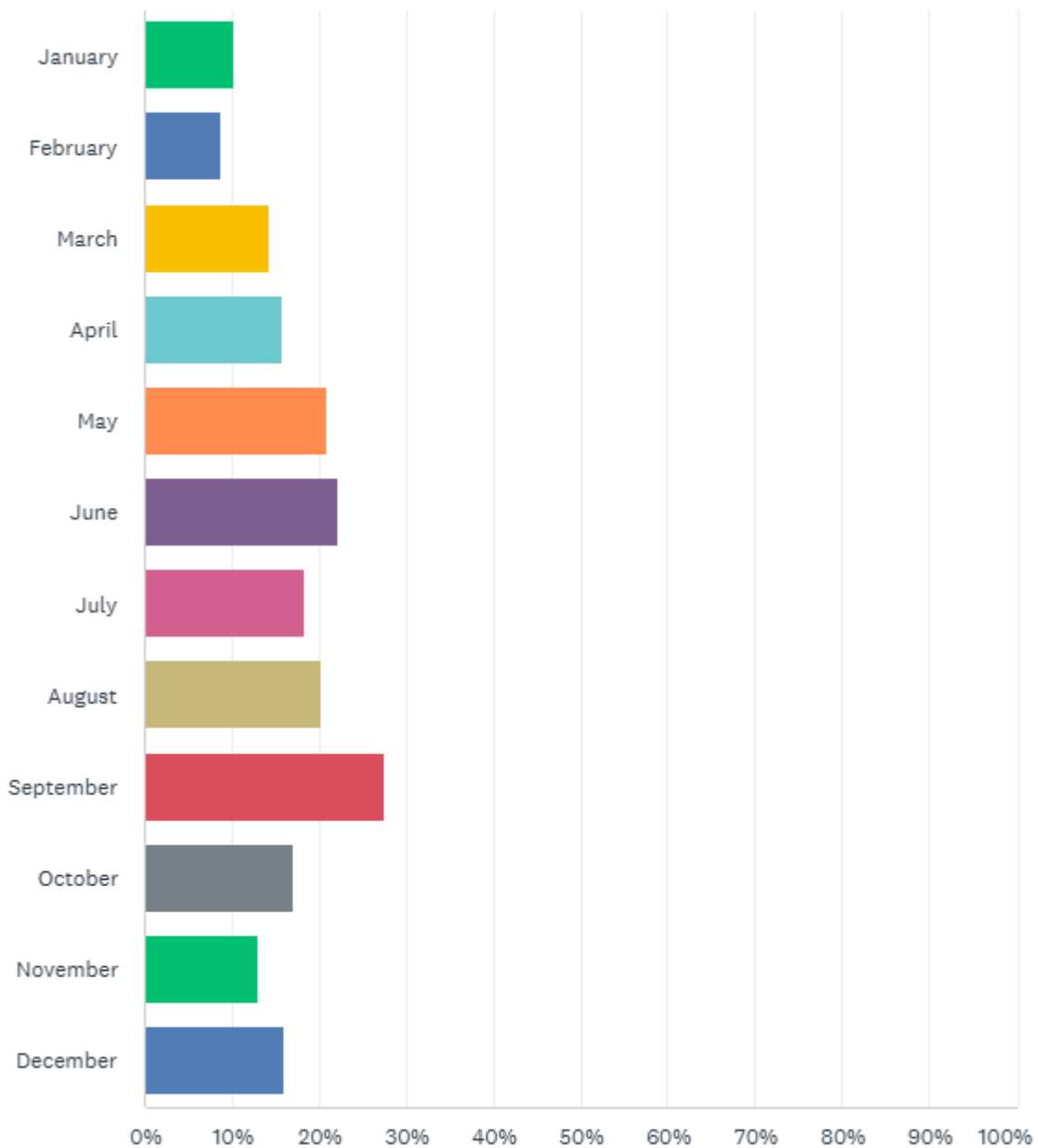
Year-on-year this actually indicates a slight drop on sightseeing trips (it was chosen by 65.3% of respondents in 2023), with some of the other answers (most notably 'For an event' and 'Visiting friends/family') taking up the slack.



What time of year

Since 2022 we've asked Visitors when in the year they came on their trip. It was somewhat surprising that first time to see September take top spot, though the following year it was the more expected August. In 2024, however, the trend reverted back - September proving the most popular month for a visit (among survey respondents, at least), followed by June, then May and finally August.

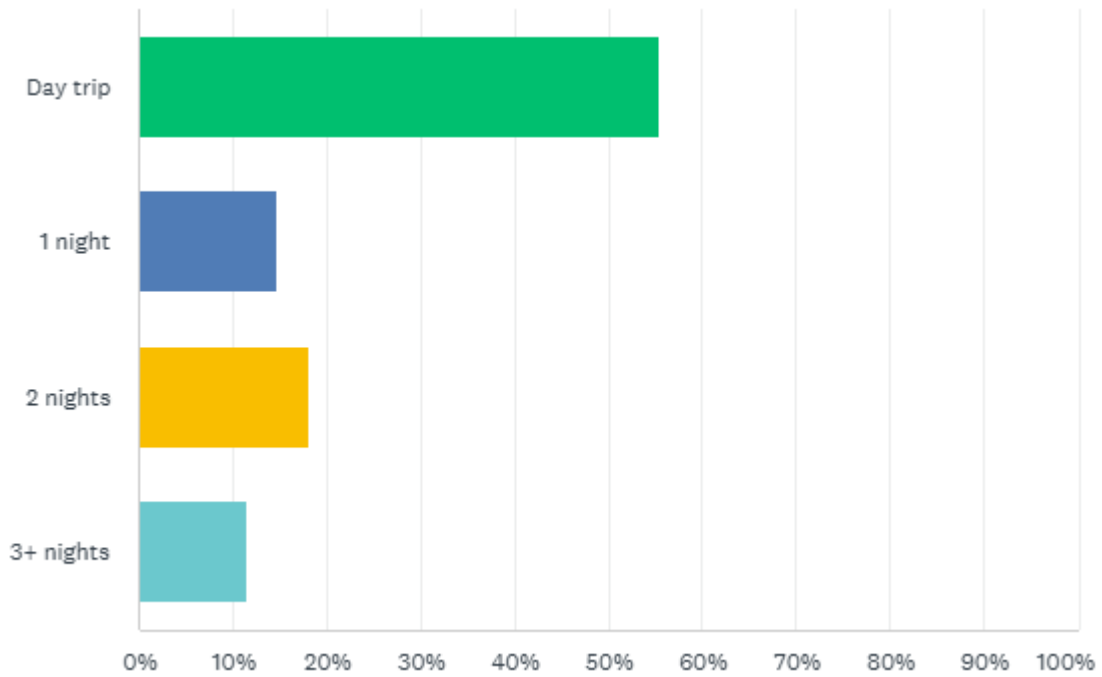
However, the demographic data (detailed further at the end of this report) may shine a light on why this is the case. More than 70% of survey respondents were aged 55 or over, and therefore may be less likely to have school-age children, making the shoulder months more typical options.



Visit duration

When it comes to visit duration, daytrips remain the most popular. Just over half (55.4%) of visitors didn't stay the night, whilst staying two nights was the next most popular option at 18.2%.

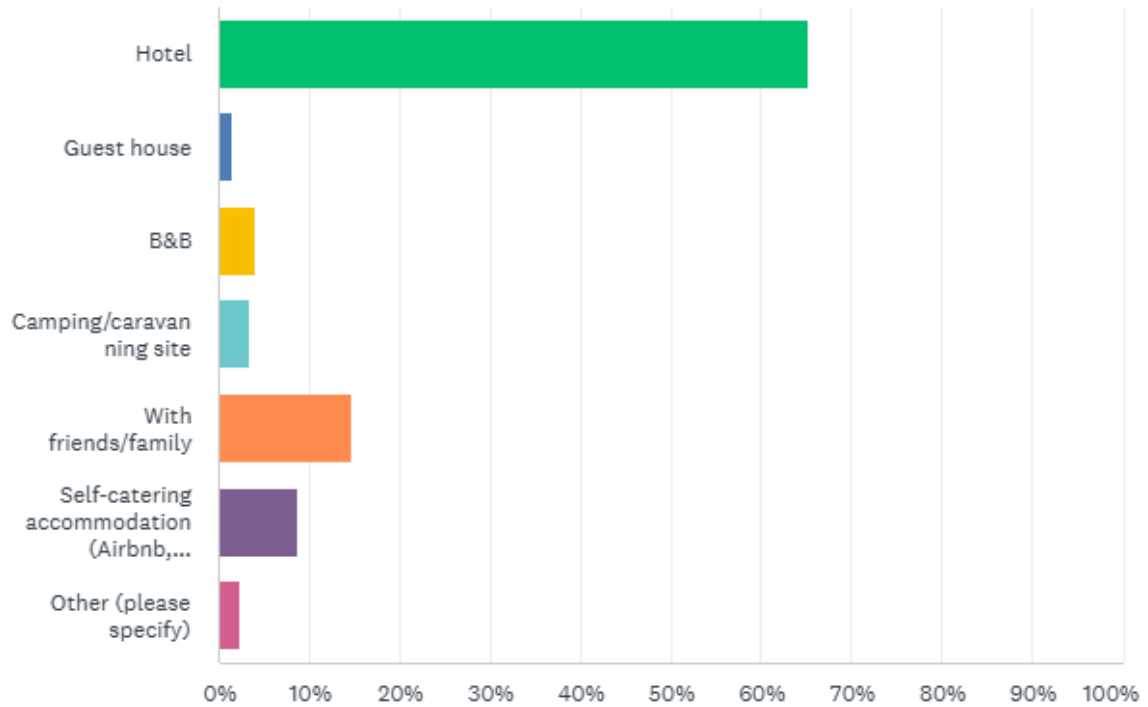
This almost exactly mirrors the results from last year, with the figures seeing a change of less than 1% across the board.



Accommodation

Those who reported staying for a night or more were then asked for the type of accommodation they used. As in previous years, hotels proved by far the most popular, this time being named by almost two thirds (65.2%) of respondents. This was even a slight increase on the 2023 figure, which was 62.3%.

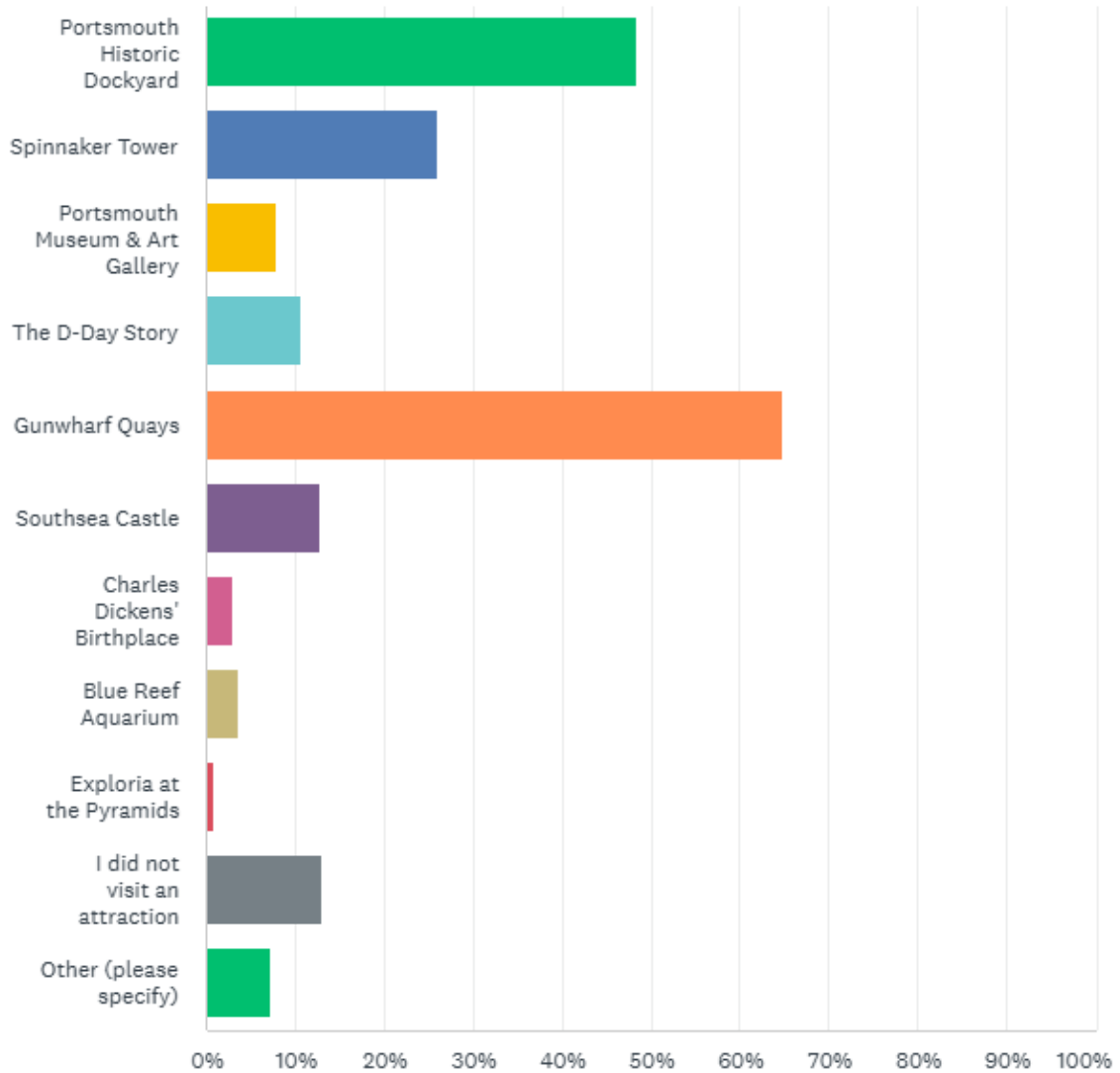
Again, staying with friends/family and self-catering accommodation were in second and third place, but polled just 14.6% and 8.8% apiece.



Attractions

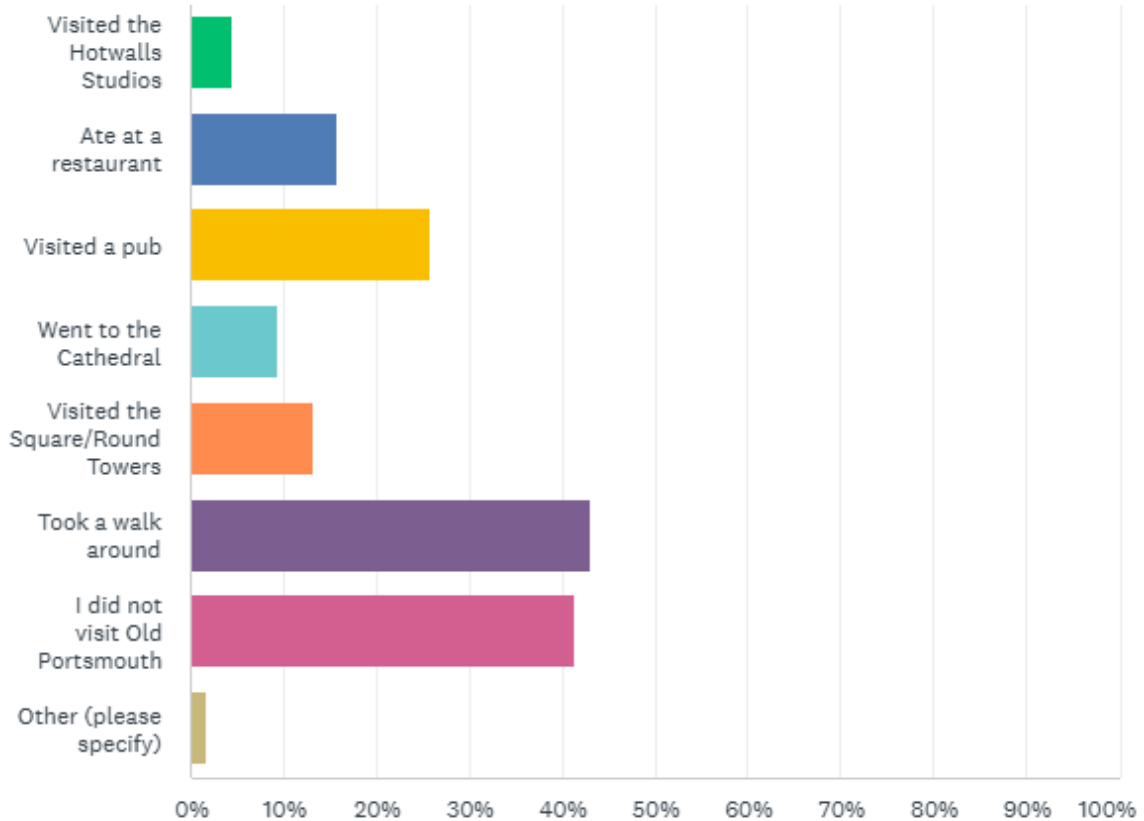
2024 was a good year for Gunwharf Quays, with it not just retaining its top spot amongst our Visitors, but consolidating its place with an even higher vote share. It was frequented by 64.9% of respondents, up on the 62.6% who went in 2023.

Elsewhere the other popular attractions remained Portsmouth Historic Dockyard (polling 48.4%) and Spinnaker Tower (26%).



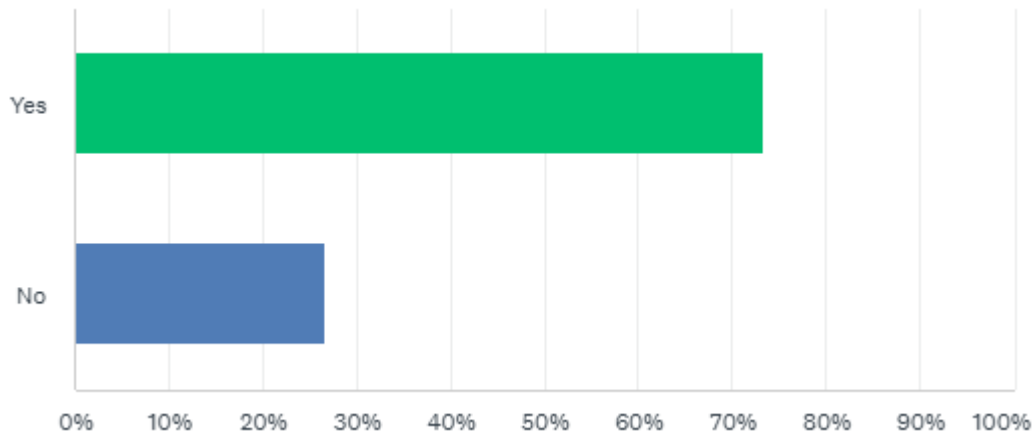
Old Portsmouth

There was a change at the top in our Old Portsmouth question. Where previously the most popular answer was 'I did not visit Old Portsmouth' (albeit still less than a majority at 42.8%), this was overtaken in 2024 by 'I took a walk around' at 43%. Other popular options for those heading to the area were visiting a pub (25.8%) or restaurant (15.8%).

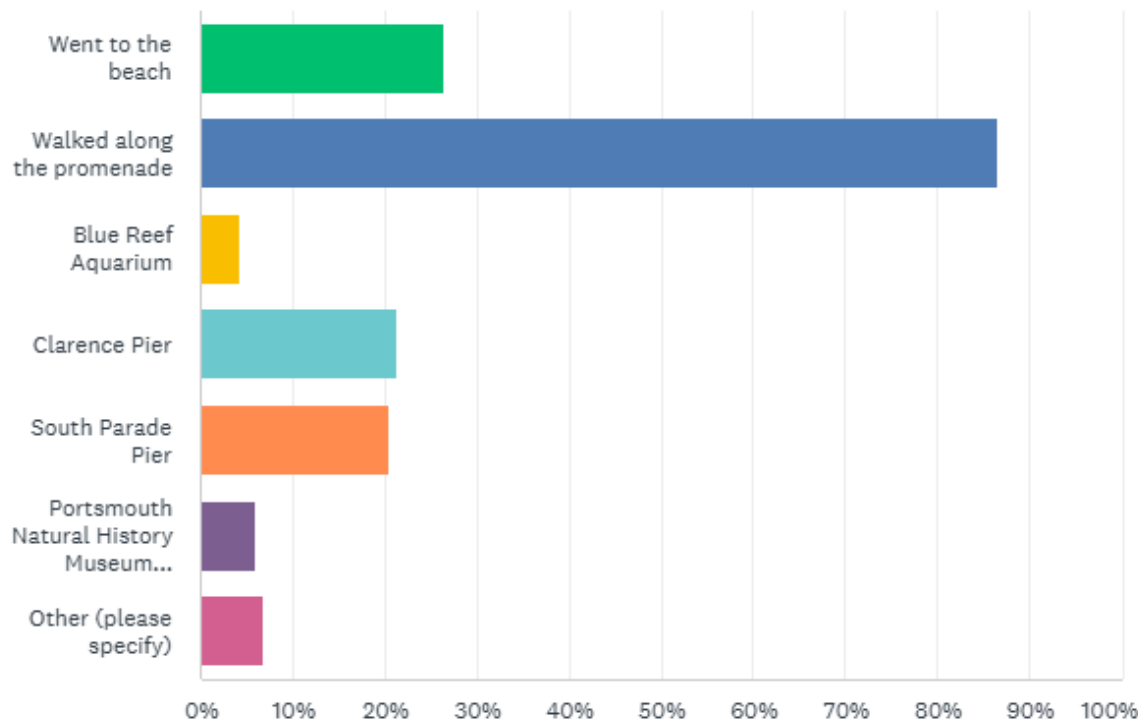


The seafront

The seafront remained a popular option for Visitors to Portsmouth, with just under three quarters (73.3%) finding time during their trip to head to the water's edge. This was a very slight drop on the 74.1% who said the same in 2023, but the trend has been for a steady decrease post-pandemic, countering the time when outdoor recreation reached its height.

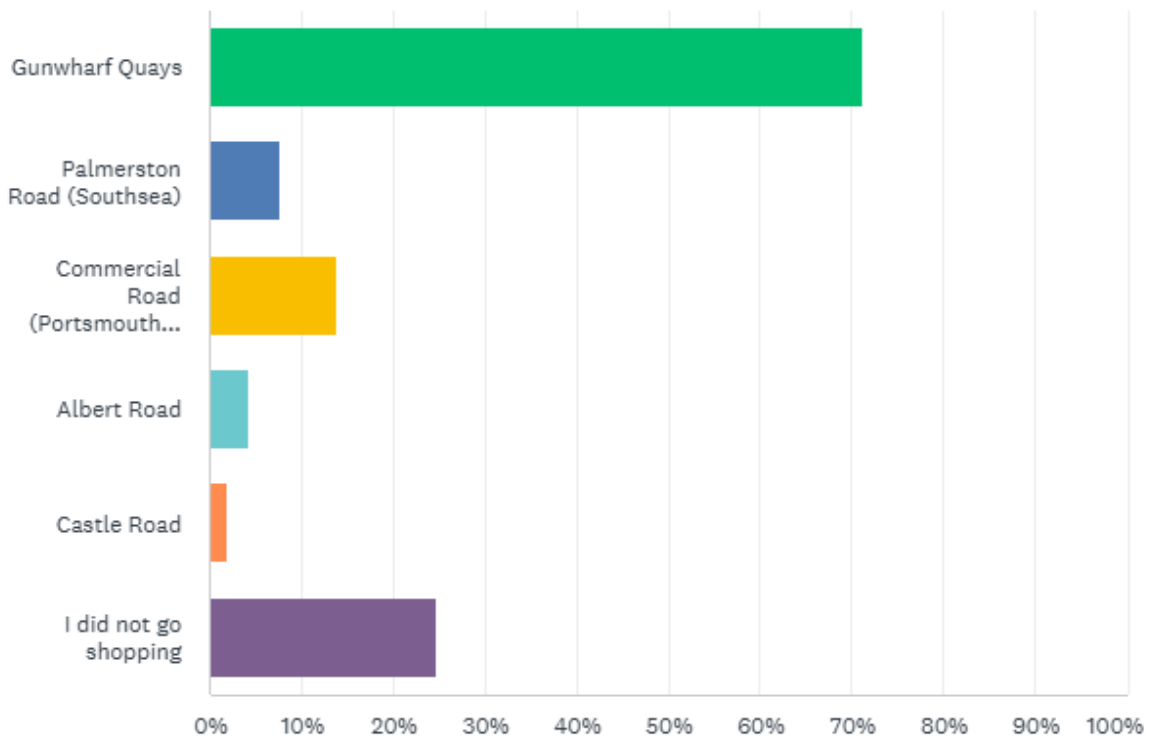


Among those who did go to the seafront, walking along the promenade remained firmly on top of the pile. This was cited among the activities undertaken for 86.6% of respondents - way above the next most popular option, going to the beach, on 26.4%. Furthermore, a number of the responses in 'other' field were 'walk', 'general wander' and variations thereon.



Shopping

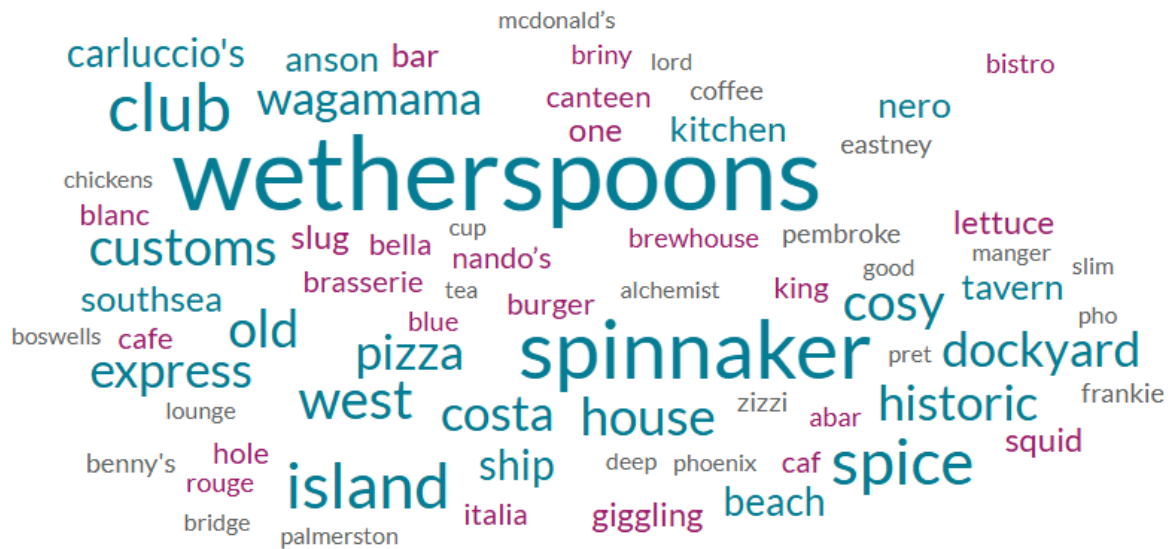
As in all previous years, 2024 saw Gunwharf Quays remain streets ahead when it comes to popular shopping areas in Portsmouth. When asked about where they went shopping, some 71.2% said Gunwharf Quays, with the next best being Commercial Road on 13.9%. Further, if the 24.6% of respondents who ticked 'I did not go shopping' were removed, it would put Gunwharf Quays on 94.5% (and Commercial Road on 18.4%). Palmerston Road and Albert Road each increased by around one percentage point apiece, but the former is still seeing around half of its previous volumes from back when Debenhams and John Lewis were present.



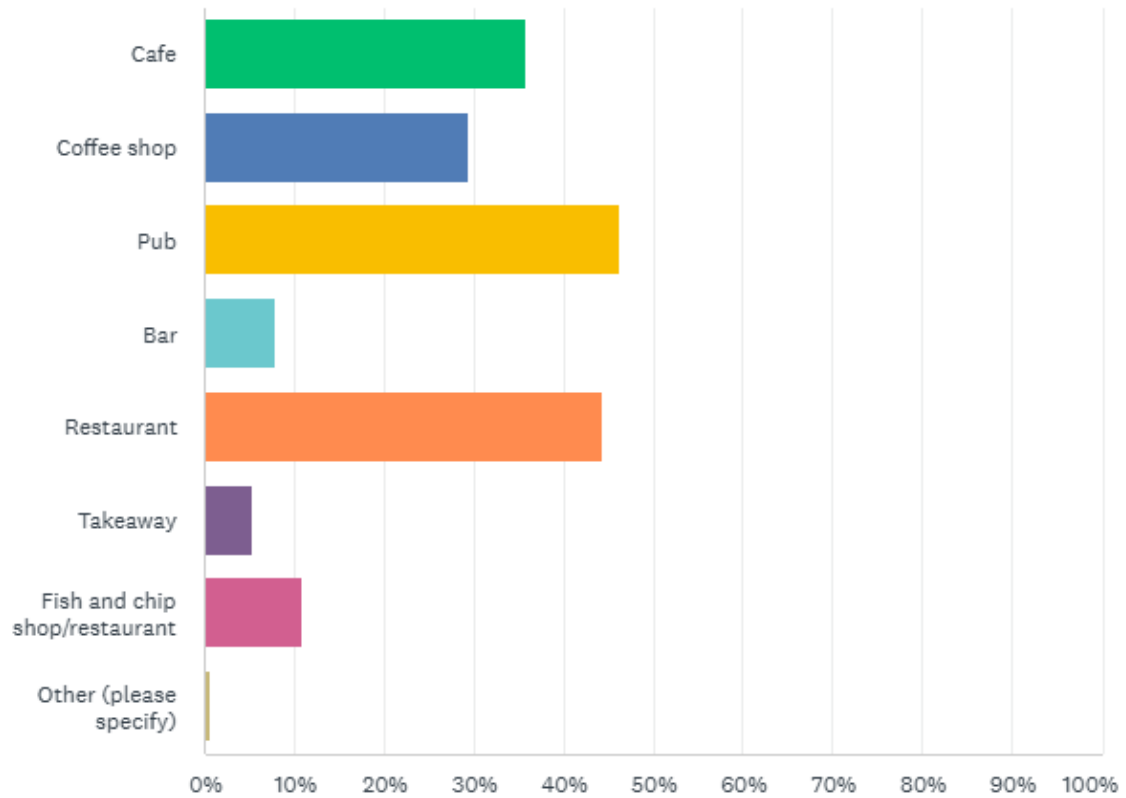
Food and drink

Food and drink remained popular among Visitors, with 82.2% saying they went to a café, pub, bar or restaurant during their trip. This total is virtually identical to figures recorded in 2023.

In the free text field where respondents were asked where they went, 'Wetherspoons' was the most common entry, with 'Spinnaker' and 'Spice Island' placing second and third. It was a good showing for Old Portsmouth, with the Still & West and Spice Island both featuring prominently, alongside a number of restaurants at Gunwharf Quays.



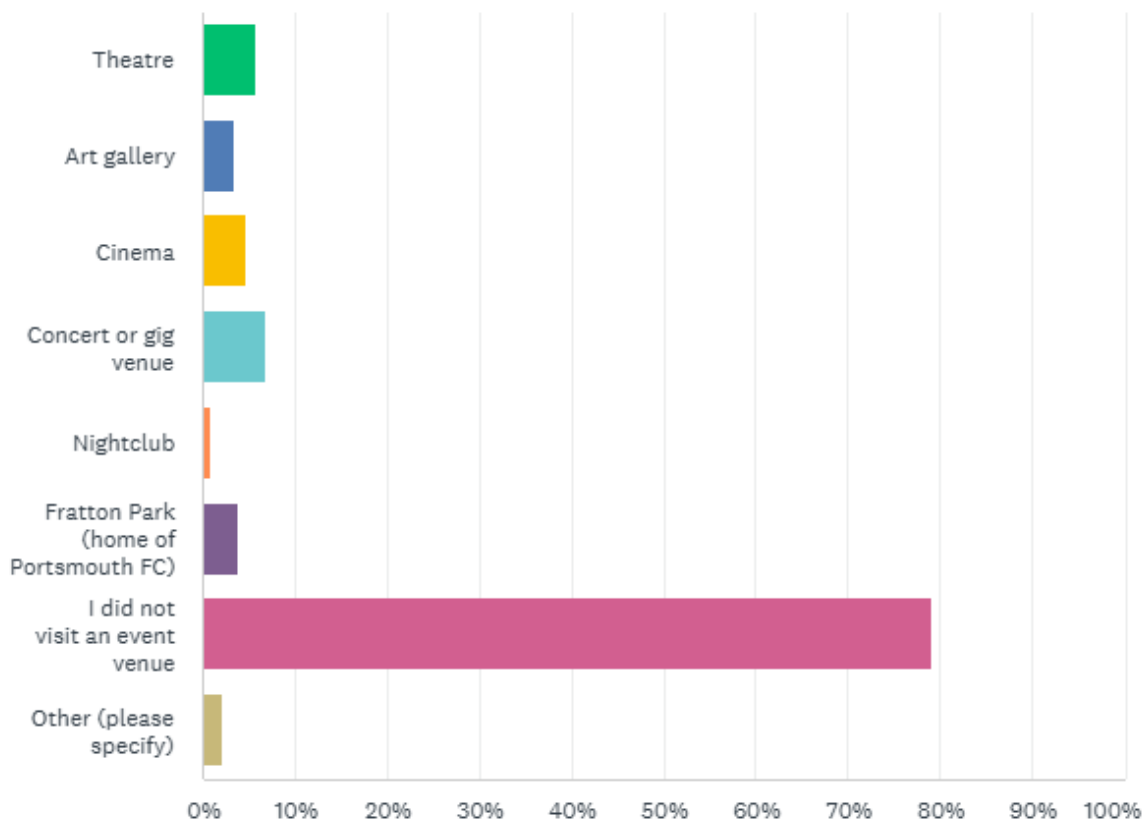
Looking more broadly at the type of establishment, or for those unable to remember the name of where they visited, pubs and restaurants actually placed higher than cafes (perhaps it appeared more in the word cloud owing to 'café' typically turning up more often than 'pub' or 'restaurant' in an eatery's name). The 46.4% who said they visited a pub during their trip was a notable increase on the 39.6% who said the same last year. For restaurants it was a slight drop, from 46% in 2023 to 44.3% now.



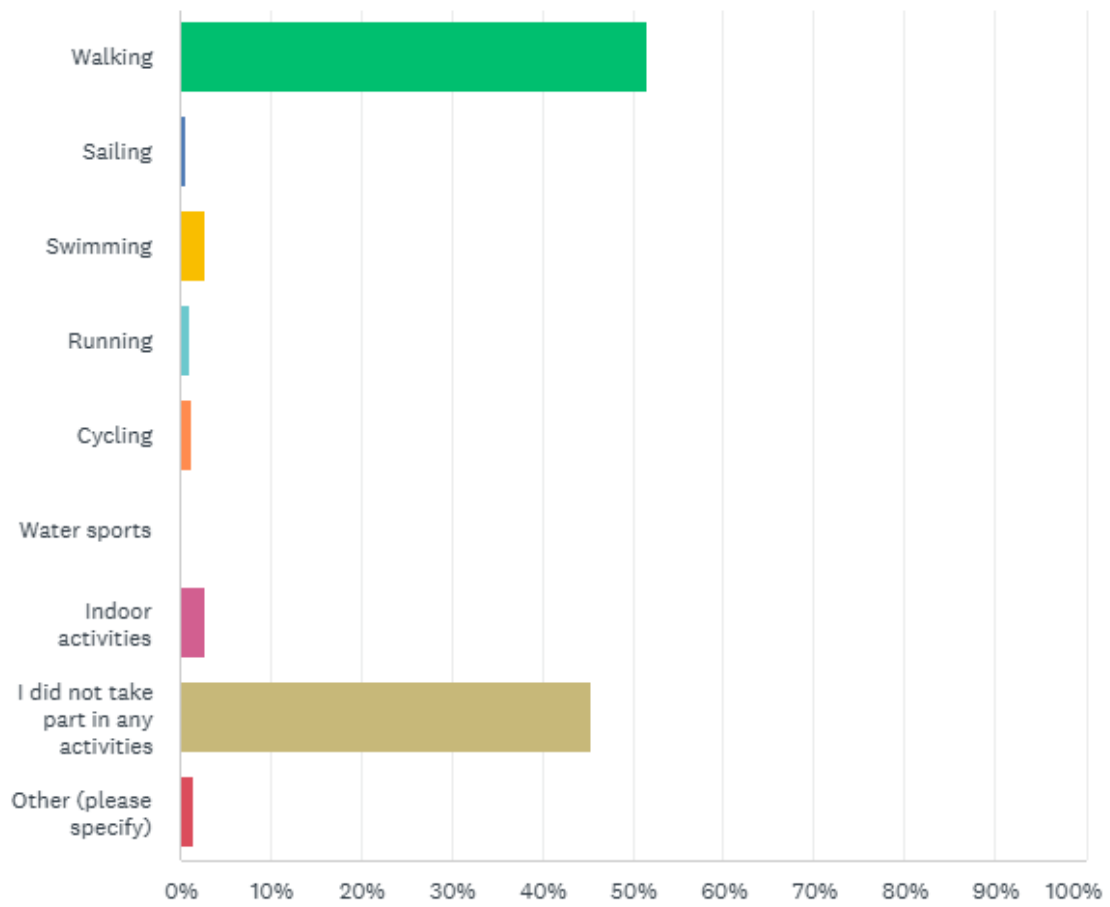
Venues and activities

We asked Visitors whether they visited any cultural venues; the vast majority (79.1%) said they did not. Of those who did, 32.9% went to a concert or gig venue, 27.5% went to the theatre, 22.9% went to the cinema and 18.2% went to Fratton Park.

However, it's worth noting here that the total number of Visitors who went to an event venue was 258. As this is a smaller total than many other questions in our deck, relatively small changes in number here can lead to larger percentage swings than would be the case elsewhere.



In a somewhat related fashion, our question on activities showed 'none' or 'walking' cited by nearly all respondents (answered by 45.5% and 51.7% respectively). Of the others, the next highest was 'indoor activities', but at just 2.8%.

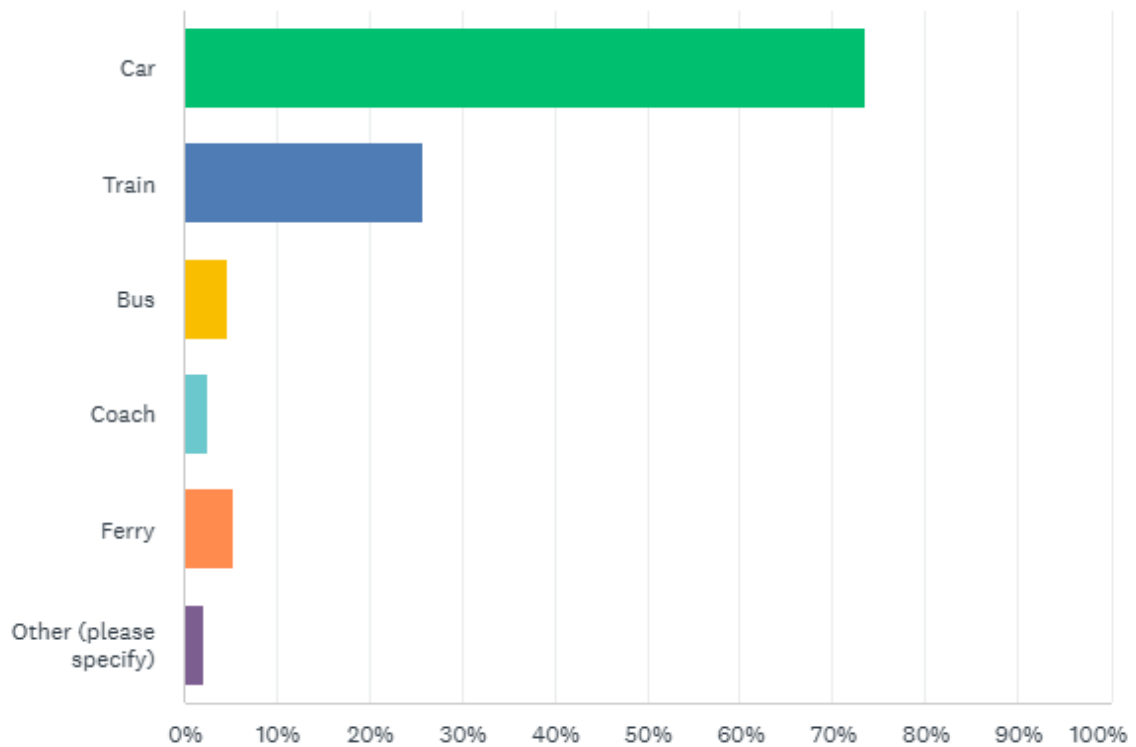


Travel to Portsmouth

The vast majority of people travel into Portsmouth by car. This is a trend we've seen every year, and 2024 was no exception. However, there was a notable shift at the top.

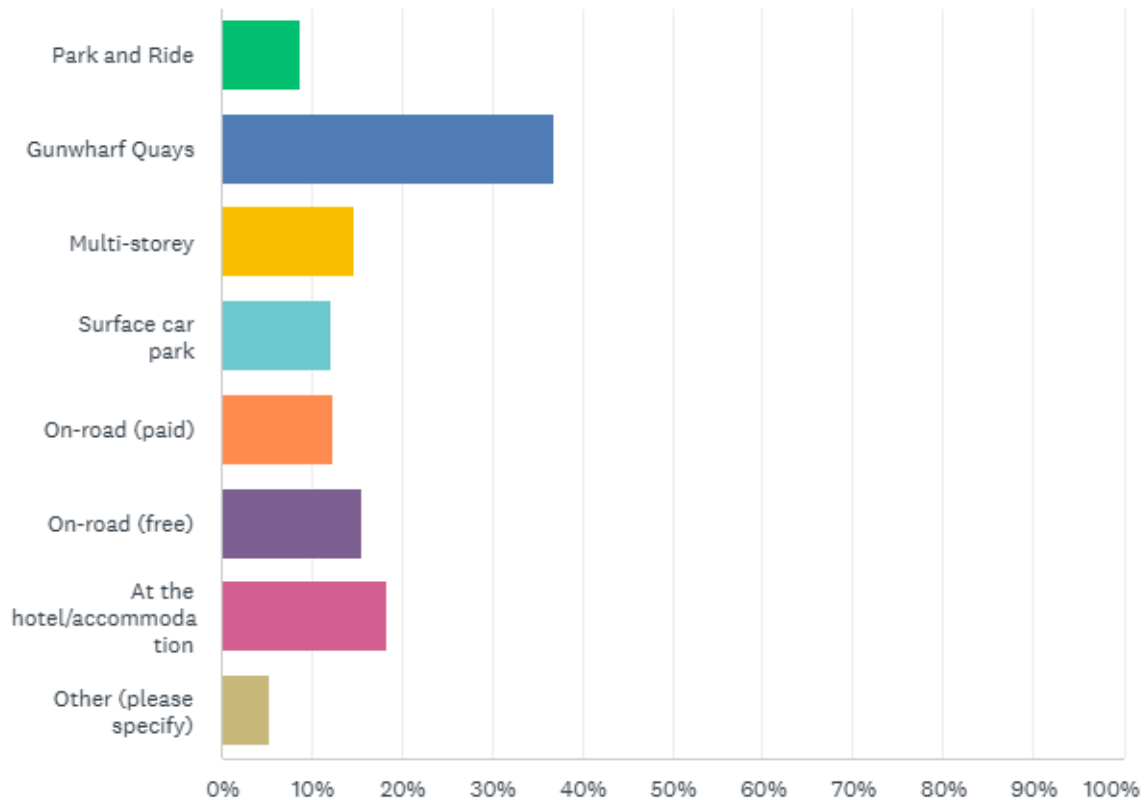
Car travel still took by far the biggest share in 2024 - 73.6% of Visitors travelled this way, compared with the 25.9% who took the train. Compared with last year, though, car travel dropped by around 4.5 percentage points, the same amount by which rail travel increased.

Others, such as bus and ferry, are (and remain) around the 5% mark.



Parking

For those driving into the city, parking choices remained somewhat stable year-on-year. Gunwharf Quays continues to be the most popular, no doubt helped by the fact this was the destination to which a large share of visitors headed in the first place. In 2024 it was where 36.9% of our respondents parked their cars, a small increase on the 35.4% who said the same in 2023. There was a relatively even split across much of the remainder, with just a 6% difference separating all of: 'at my accommodation', 'on road (free)', 'multi-storey', 'on road (paid)' and 'surface car park'.



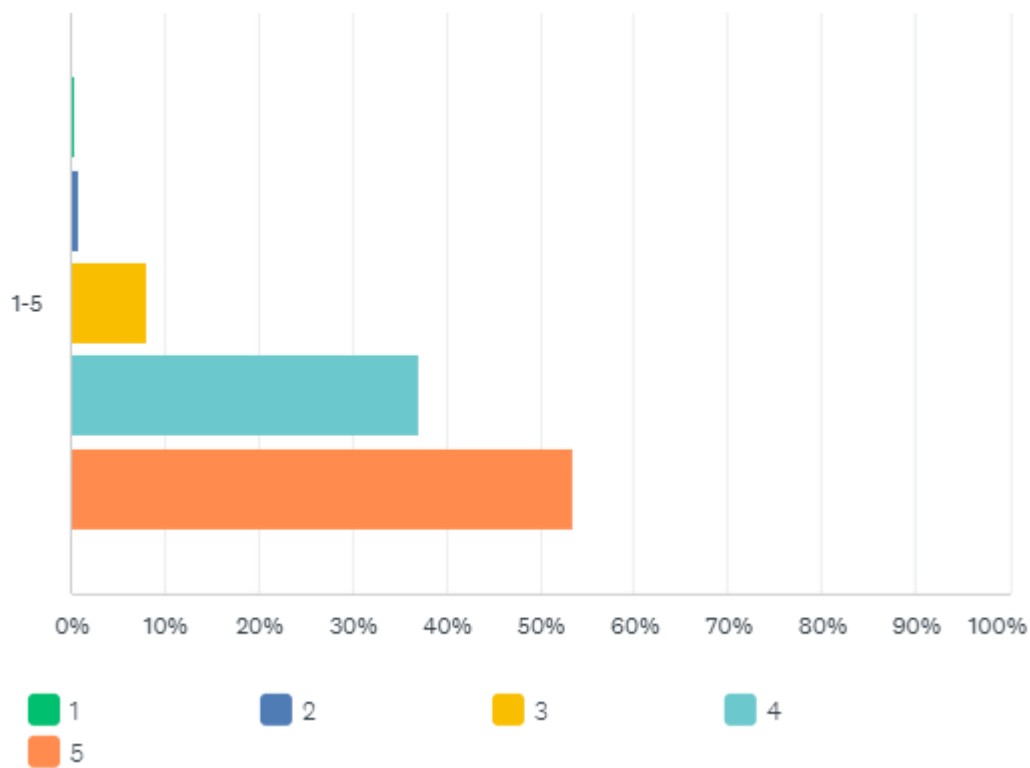
How much did you enjoy?

Visitors are next asked how much they enjoyed their trip, giving it a rank of one to five stars. In 2024, the majority of visitors (53.5%) awarded the full five stars, whilst a further 37.1% gave four. It means that over 90% of visitors had a good or great time.

The top end in particular shows positive growth, as last year 50.4% gave five stars.

At the other end of the spectrum, just 1.2% didn't have a good time at all, with 0.4% awarding one star and 0.8% giving two. Last year these were 0.5% and 0.9% respectively.

This puts the weighted average for 2024 at 4.43 out of 5. This was a marginal increase on the 4.41 recorded in 2023, itself up on the 4.38 from the year before.



Will you come back?

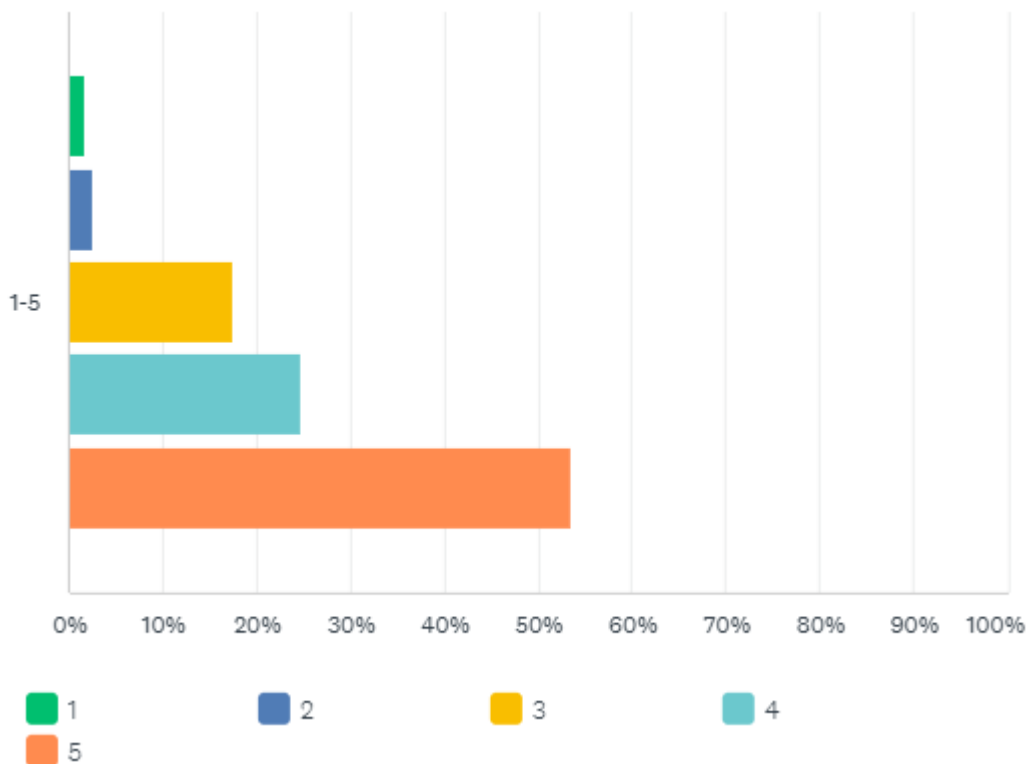
We next asked how likely it would be that Visitors will return to Portsmouth in the coming year.

Again ranked on a scale of one to five, this question saw 53.5% of respondents award full marks, saying it was 'extremely likely' they'd return. A further 24.7% gave a four, putting the positive response total at 78.2%.

Down at the other end, 1.8% of respondents said there was little to no chance of them coming back, giving a score of one. A further 2.6% awarded two - putting the negative response total at 4.4%.

This shows a marked improvement on results from 2023. The five-star cohort has grown by over 5.9% (with the total last year not quite tipping over the 50% majority), whilst the 1.8% who gave one star is a slight drop on the 2% who did last time.

Surely enough this has given a positive trend to the weighted average. This year it's at 4.26 out of five, compared with the 4.13 recorded in 2023.



Lapsed Visitors

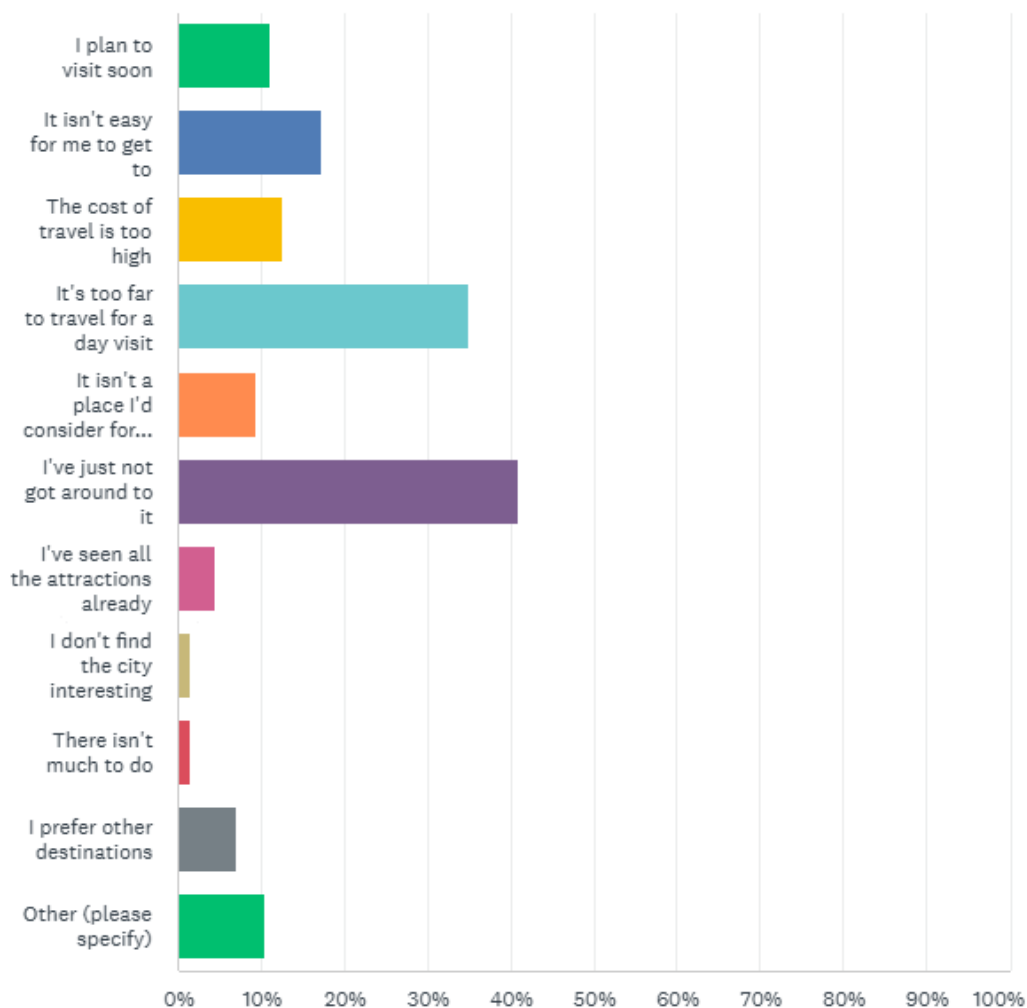
Why haven't you visited?

We begin the question deck for Lapsed Visitors by finding out why they've not been to the city in recent years. This year we offered a few new response options, to mirror what cropped up quite frequently in the 'other' free text box when we did the survey for 2023. It meant that the likes of 'I plan to visit soon', 'the cost of travel is too high' and 'I've just not got around to it' all featured as answers in their own rights.

The result was a large difference in responses year-on-year, as these new options changed the pattern quite notable.

As it happens, 'I've just not got around to it' proved to be the most popular response, selected by 40.9% of respondents. Not too far behind was 'It's too far to travel for a day visit' on 35% - with the somewhat related 'it isn't easy for me to get to' polling 17.3%. There was optimism from 11.1%, who said they planned to visit soon.

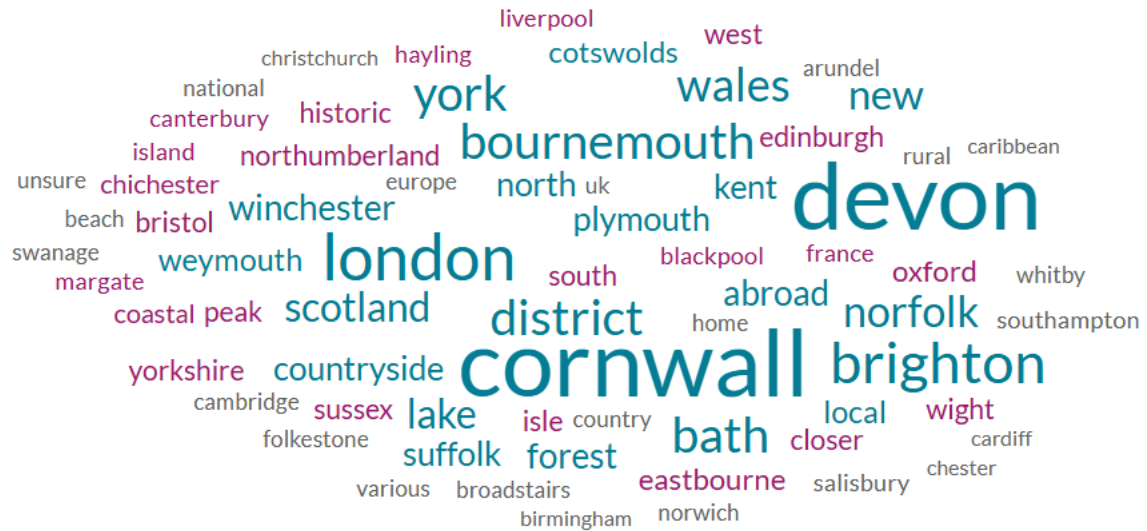
In the free text field for 'other', a number of respondents cited mobility issues stopping them from travelling so much, whilst another delivered this barb: "Portsmouth FC haven't been in the premier league for quite a few years."



Where do you prefer instead?

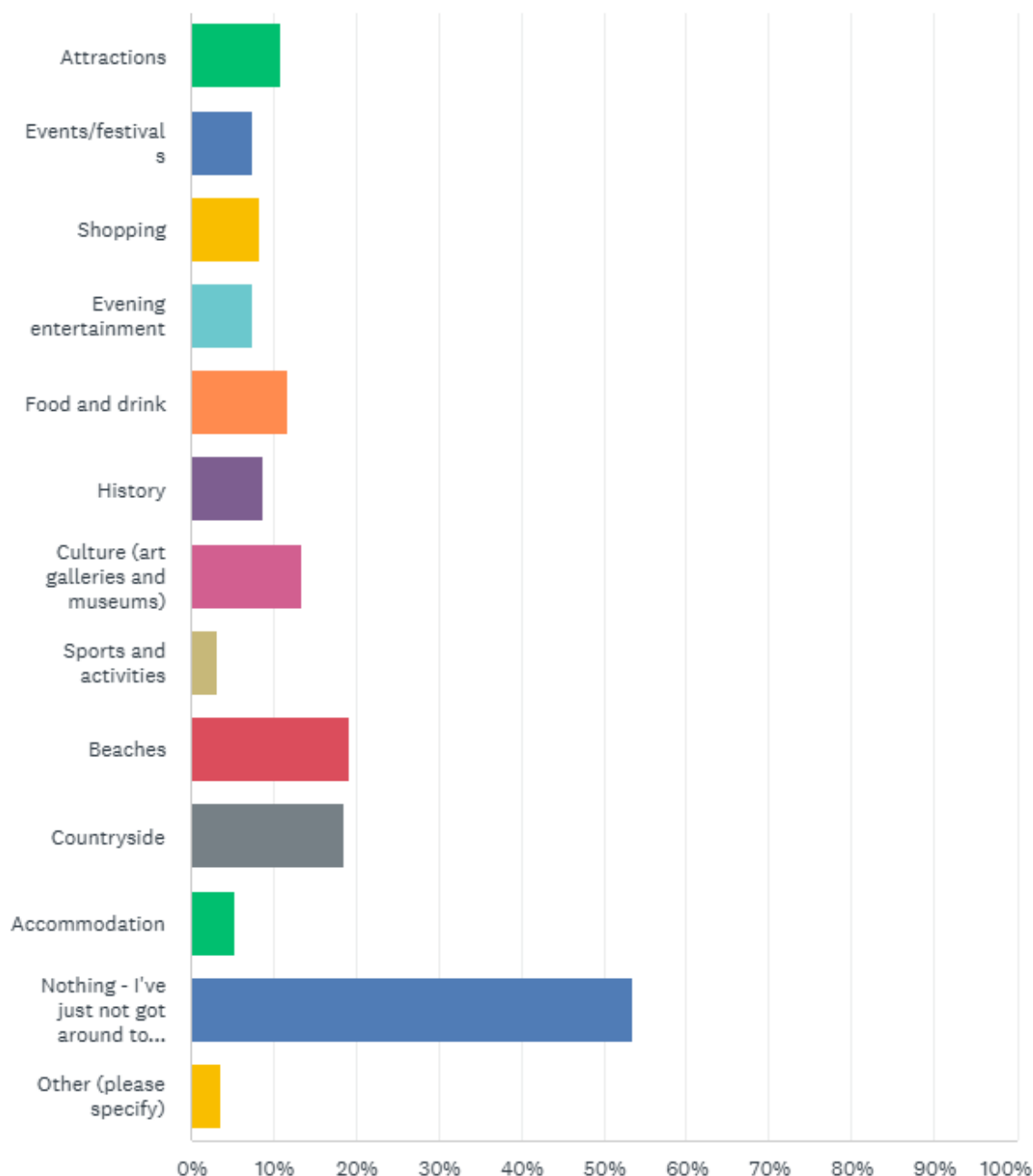
We followed the first question up with a free text field asking Lapsed Visitors where they might prefer to go instead. 'Cornwall' and 'Devon' placed joint top, with 'London', 'Brighton' and 'Bath' completing the top 5. 'New' came up a few times, for people saying they want to go places they've never been before, whilst 'closer' and 'local' were also notable inclusions.

Meanwhile, one person said 'Brazil' and another 'The Caribbean'!



What can you get elsewhere?

Looking specifically at what those other places offered, it was another new answer which topped the bill. Following it being written many times in the 'Other' section last year, this time around we included 'nothing, I've just not got around to visiting recently' to the answers. It was by far the most popular answer on 53.6%. The next most common response were 'Beaches' on 19.3% and 'Countryside' close behind on 18.5%.

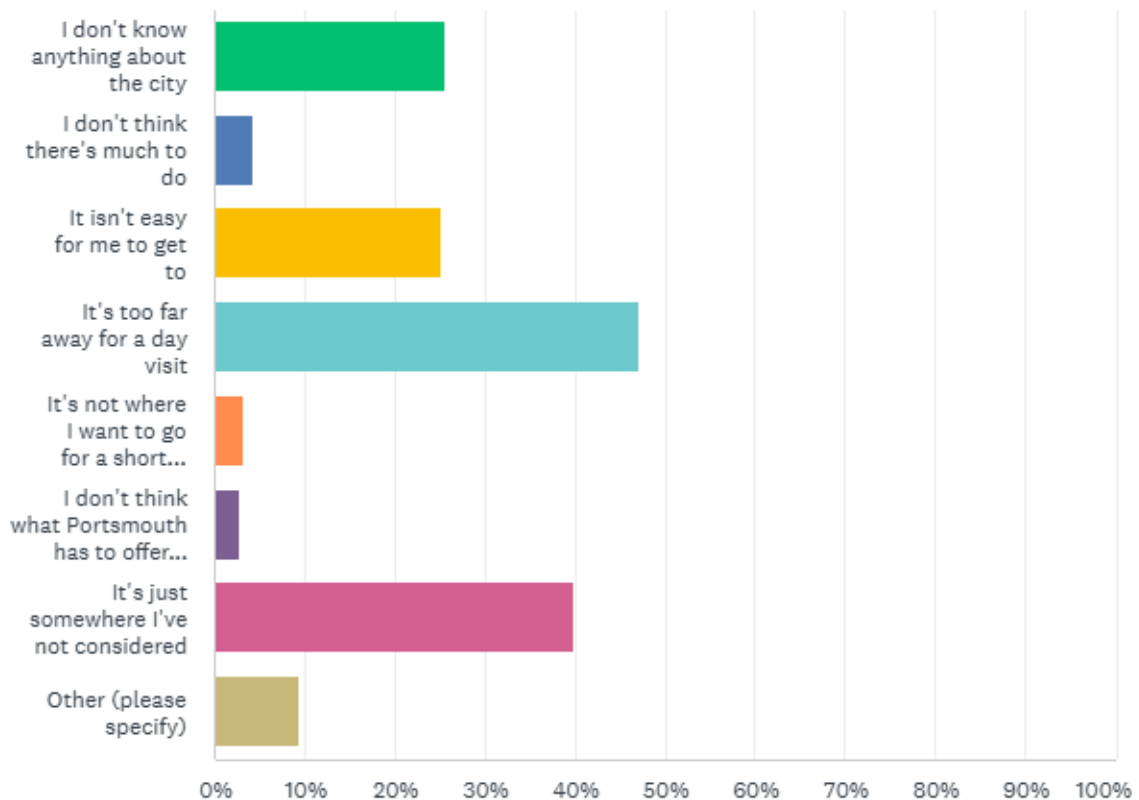


Non-Visitors

Why not Portsmouth?

Moving on to Non-Visitors, the general thread of responses continues as above. In the first question we ask why they've not visited Portsmouth and the most common answer (47.1%) is 'It's too far away for a day visit'. Following on 40% is 'It's just not somewhere I've considered', with 'I don't know anything about the city' and 'It isn't easy for me to get to' virtually tied for third, with just a single response separating the two.

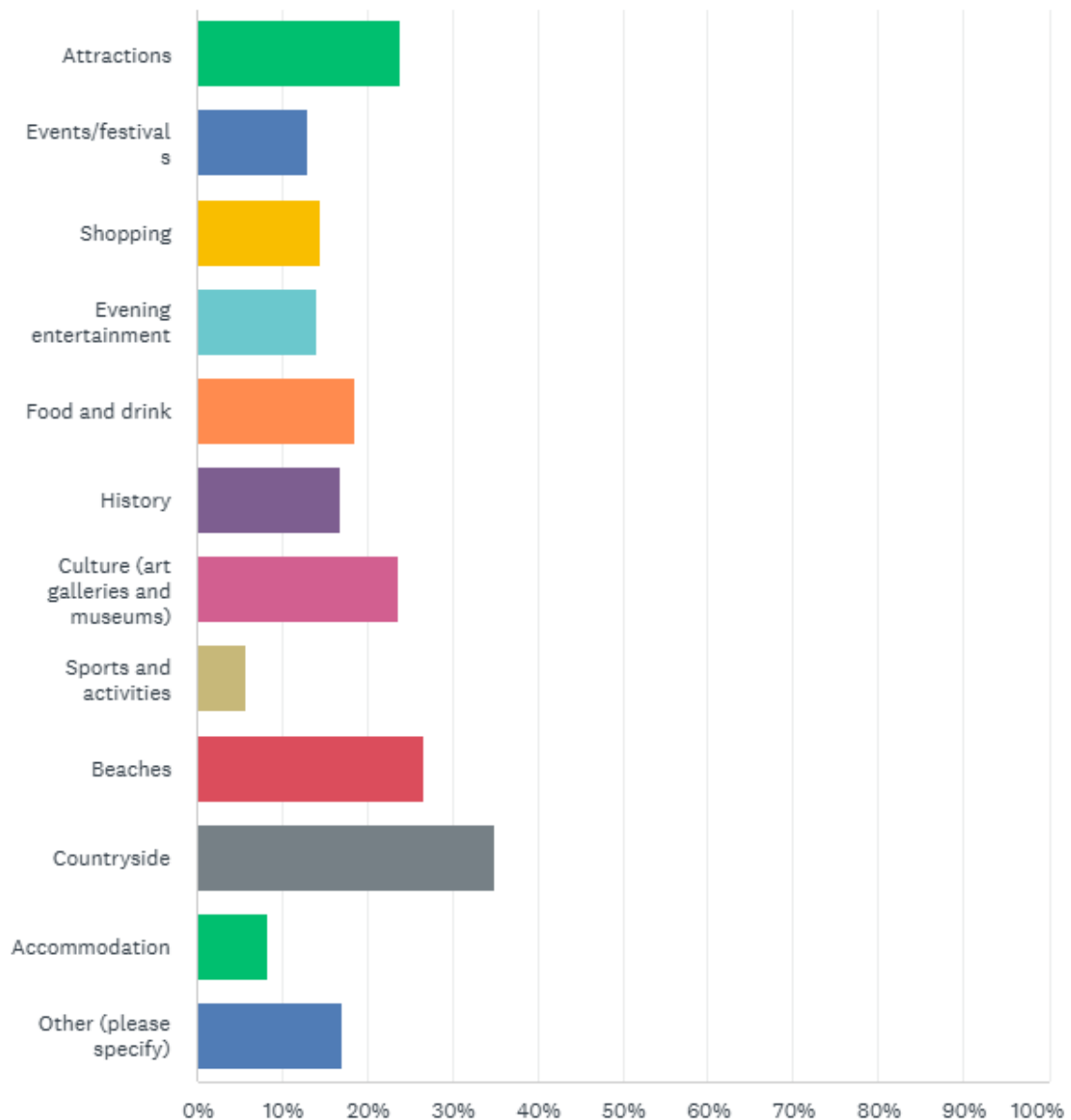
In the 'Other' answer's free text box, most of the responses involve a variation on not having enough time, money or opportunity to visit. The 'I've just not got around to it yet' answer wasn't added for Non-Visitors so didn't get as good a showing as for Lapsed Visitors, but it featured quite prominently in the 'Other' free text field, so will be added for next year to see the difference it makes.



What can you get more of elsewhere?

As with Lapsed Visitors we pressed further on what Non-Visitors feel they can get more of at other destinations. This time, 'Countryside' proved a clearer favourite, being named by 35% of respondents. Some of the other common answers included 'Beaches' (26.7%), 'Attractions' (23.8%) and 'Culture' (23.6%).

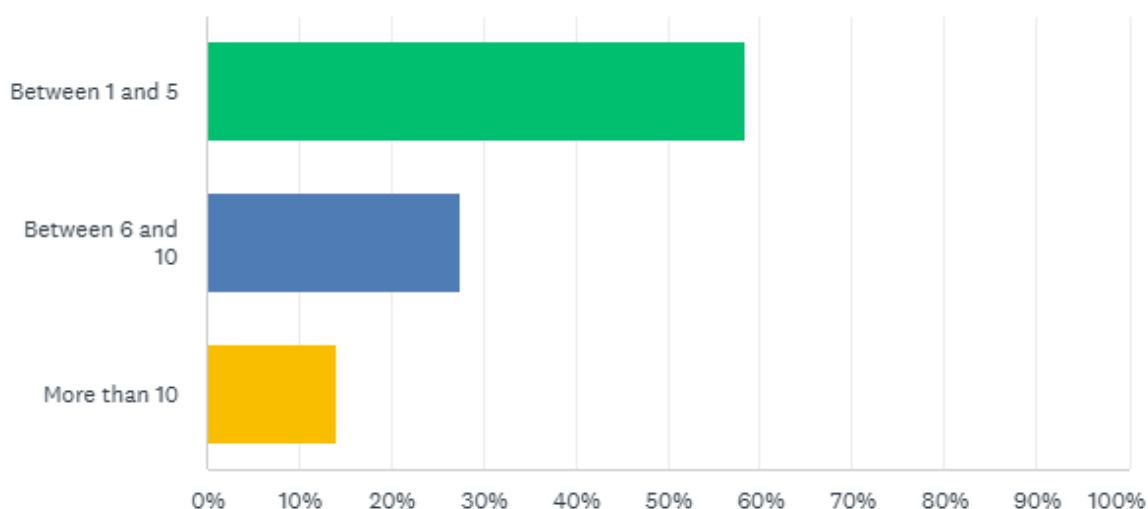
Many of the responses in 'Other' were 'Don't know' or words to that effect, with people having never visited before, or not for quite a long time.



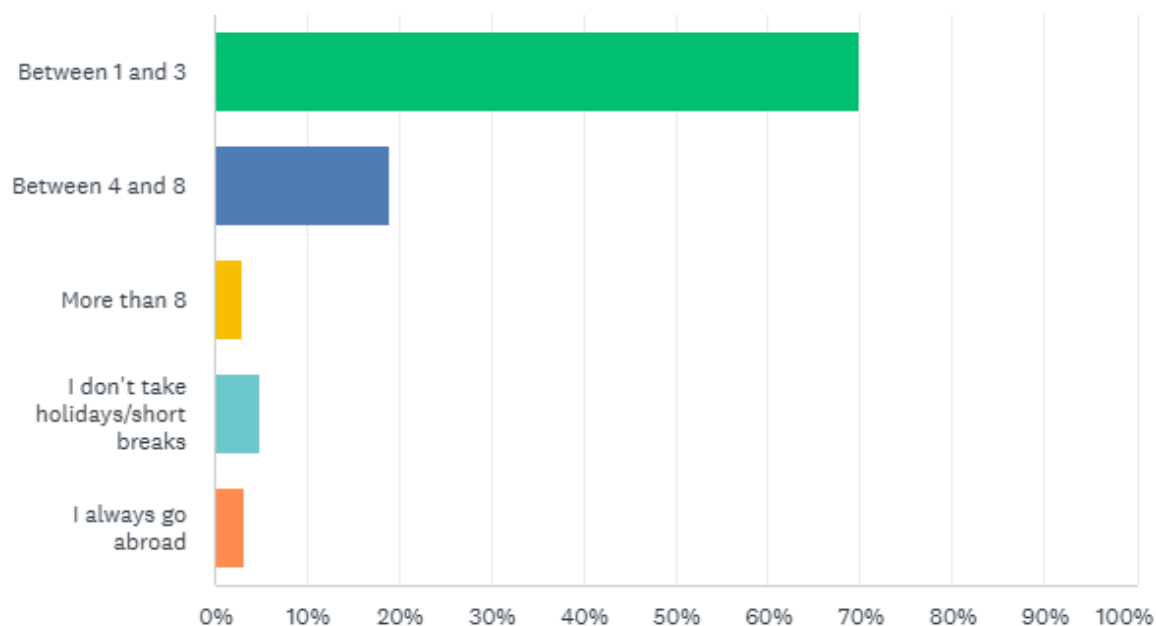
How many trips do you take?

Non-Visitors were asked how many day trips and short breaks/holidays they take in the UK each year.

For day trips, the majority of respondents (58.5%) take just one to five, with a further 27.4% taking between six and ten. Only 14.1% take more. It was a positive change from last year, though, when 54.2% said they take one to five day trips in a year - possibly related to the aforementioned increased optimism around living costs and more certainty in the future.

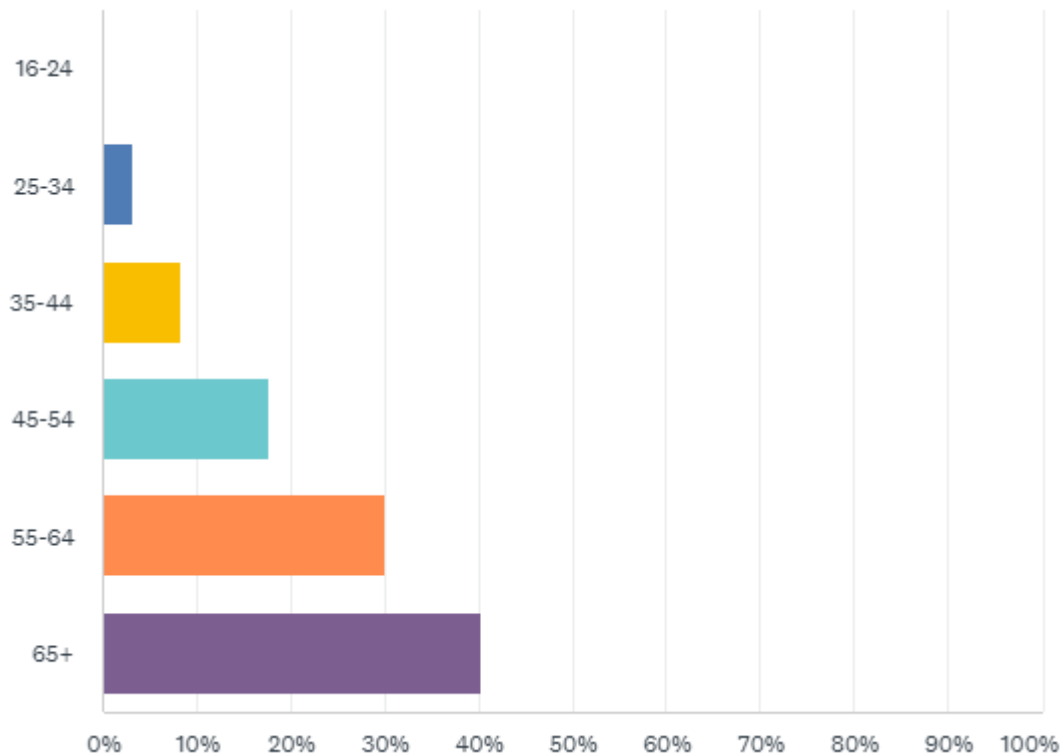


The figures were similar when it came to short breaks/holidays - 69.9% take one to three in a year, whilst 19% take between four and eight. Combined, this means almost nine in every ten respondents take eight short breaks or fewer in a year. Some 4.9% said they take no short breaks at all (although this was around half of the figure that said the same in 2023), whilst 3.2% said they always go abroad.

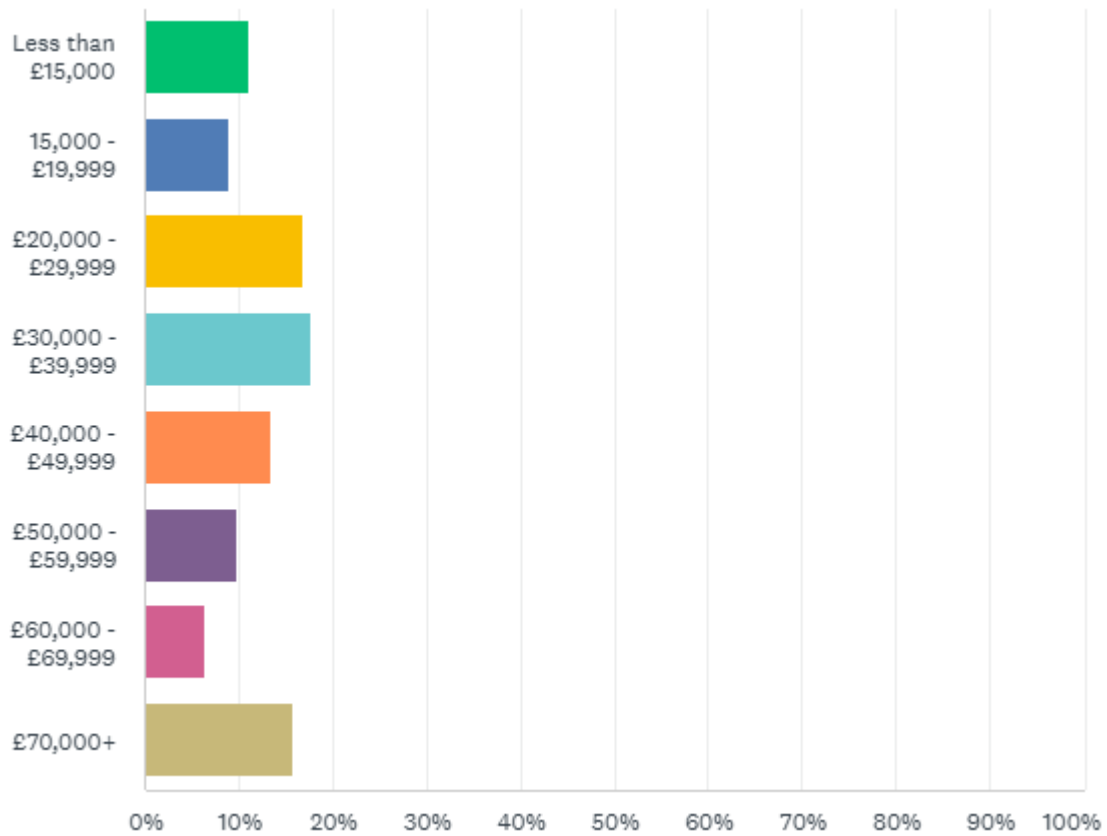


Demographics

The survey concludes with all three categories of visitor brought back into one stream, where we then ask demographic questions to cover age, wealth and location. This year we had marginally more responses from the younger age demographic, although those aged 65+ still accounted for the largest share at 40.3% (down from 41.3% last year). The 55-64 age range dropped by a similar amount, with the 45-54, 35-44 and 25-34 all rose by around a percentage point each.

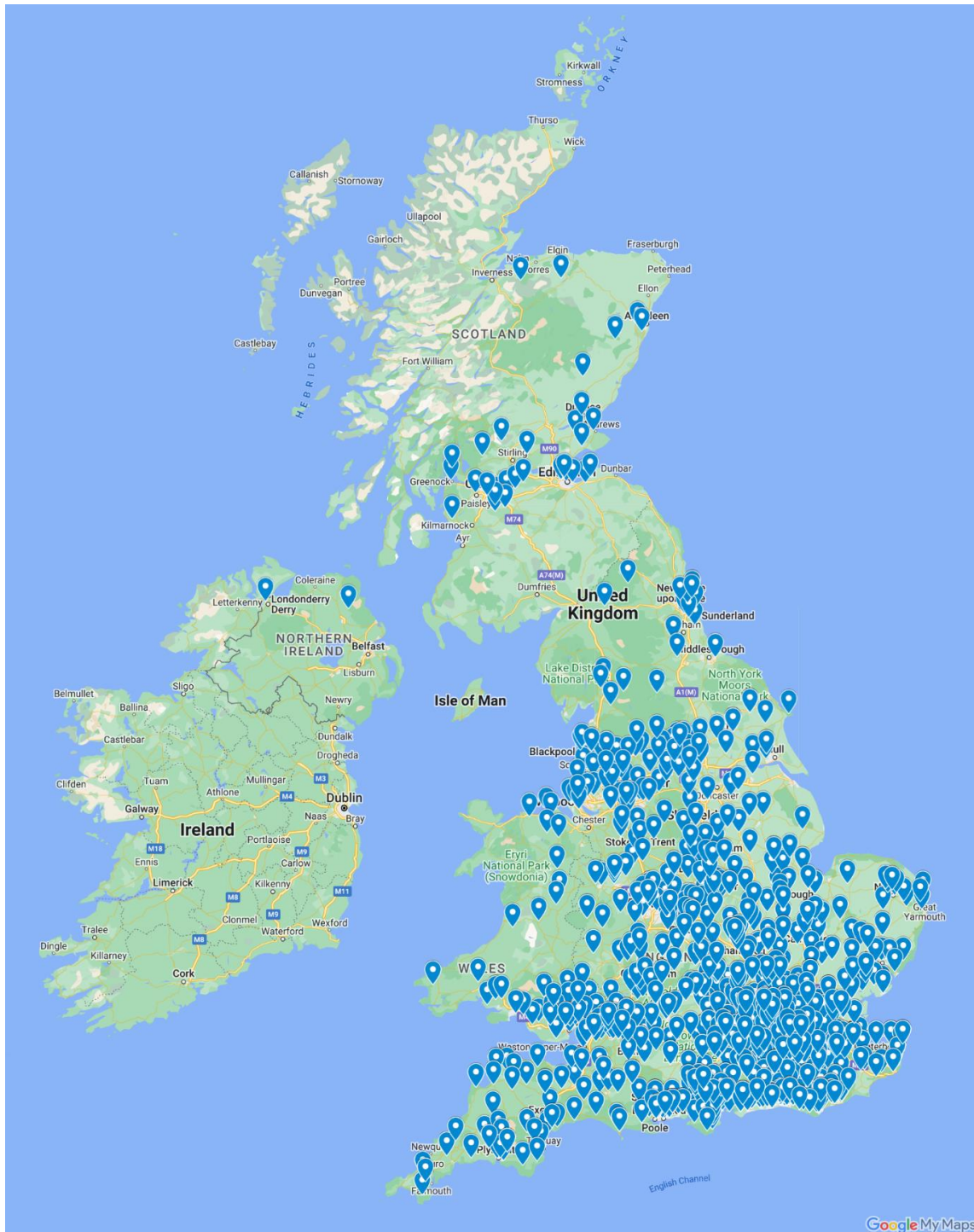


The spread of incomes in 2024 largely mirrored that of 2023. The graph shows a relatively suppressed bell curve rising up through the amounts to the £30,000s, before dropping back down again, only to rise once more at £70,000+. That said, there was less than 11.5 percentage points difference between the most popular answer (£30,000-£39,999) and the least (£60,000-£69,999).



We also asked respondents to provide the first half of their post codes to ensure a good spread of responses but also see where those with an interest in the city/region come from (remembering that the survey was distributed via the e-newsletters of Visit Portsmouth, Tourism South East and The D-Day Story).

The below map plots out responses for the UK only as this was responsible for the vast majority (although there were others in Sweden, Poland, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Zambia, Australia, Brazil and the USA).





Contact us

If you have any questions about the results of our 2024 Visitor Survey please get in touch:

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