Tourism Business Monitor 2018

Wave 3 – Post Christmas

Full report

Contents

Background

Objectives, research method and sampling

The Tourism Business Monitor is designed to measure, monitor and understand tourism business performance and confidence and the factors which influence them.

The survey is conducted via telephone immediately following key tourism periods, with 'hot topic' questions inserted on a periodic basis.

The survey is conducted amongst:

300* accommodation sites, principally split into:
- Hotels
- Guest houses / B&Bs
- Self-catering
- Caravan / campsites

Accommodation sites are also split by region and number of bed spaces.

250* visitor attractions, principally split into:
- Indoor sites
- Outdoor sites
- Mixed sites

And
- Smaller sites (less than 20,000 visitors p.a.)
- Larger sites (more than 20,000 visitors p.a.)

Attractions are also split by region, free/paid admission and whether they are members of the VisitEngland Quality Scheme.

Prior to July 2017, sample sizes were 500 for accommodation and 300 for visitor attractions.

Recent fieldwork dates

January 2019: 7-11 Jan, reviewing the Christmas and New Year period 2018

September 2018: 5-11 Sep, reviewing the period from mid-July up until the end of the summer holidays

April 2018: 16-20 Apr, reviewing the Easter period 2018

January 2018: 2-5 Jan, reviewing the Christmas and New Year period 2017

September 2017: 4-8 Sep, reviewing the period from mid-July up until the end of the summer holidays

July 2017: 12-17 Jul, reviewing the period after the Easter holidays up until mid-July

April 2017: 24 Apr-2 May, reviewing the Easter period 2017

January 2017: 3-11 Jan, reviewing the Christmas and New Year period 2016

July 2016: 18-25 Jul, reviewing the period after the Easter holidays up until mid-July

April 2016: 18-24 Apr, reviewing the Easter period 2016

January 2016: 5-11 Jan, reviewing the Christmas and New Year period 2015

November 2015: 2-8 Nov, reviewing the period from mid-September until the end of the October

September 2015: 3-10 Sep, reviewing the period from end of May until the end of the school summer holidays

June 2015: 1-5 Jun, reviewing the period from Easter up until the end of May

January 2015: 5-9 Jan, reviewing the Christmas and New Year period 2014

Key Findings

Key findings: Accommodation

Business over the Christmas and New Year period mirrored the performance across 2018 as a whole, with 43% of accommodation providers reporting an increase compared with the previous year, while 17% saw a decline in visitors.

The net improvement in performance came mostly from domestic visitors (+14), although sites also reported an increase in overseas visitors (+3) in 2018.

Hotels and caravan / campsites reported the strongest growth from both domestic and overseas visitors. Guest houses / B&Bs were the only accommodation type to report a decline in both.

When asked about external influences affecting business performance, 10% of businesses spontaneously mentioned exchange rates/ Brexit.

Assessment of advanced booking levels from now until the end of Easter is comparatively low across all accommodation types, with 18% of sites describing levels as ‘very poor/ poor’.

Subsequently, confidence for the forthcoming period has dropped slightly this wave.

At an overall level, business optimism for 2019 is cautiously positive: the majority (51%) of accommodation sites predict that business will be the same as 2018 and 38% expect business to be better overall.

Hot topics

Accommodation booking outlook for Summer 2019 looks fairly stable, with 58% reporting the same booking levels as last year. However, with nearly a quarter reporting fewer bookings than 2018, there is a net decline in bookings overall.

Accommodation booking are more likely to be made online in advance than bookings to attractions. Nearly 1 in 10 accommodation providers reported 100% online bookings and nearly 2 in 5 say that over 75% of guest bookings are made online. Conversely, nearly 3 in 5 (58%) of attractions reported no online bookings.

Key findings: Attractions

Over half (56%) of attractions reported improvement in admissions over the festive period, which is consistent with the result for 2018 overall. However, sector performance improved overall with fewer sites reporting a decline during the Christmas holidays compared with 2018 as a whole (16% versus 27%).

This led to 46% of attractions reporting they are 'very satisfied' with their performance.

Attractions experienced net increases in domestic (+19) and overseas (+15) visitors in 2018 as a whole compared to 2017.

Larger attractions (with over 20k visitors a year) and those with both indoor and outdoor spaces were most likely to reported improved visitor numbers compared with the same period last year. Their growth came from both the domestic and overseas markets.

Exchange rate/ Brexit was spontaneously mentioned by 6% of businesses as affecting performance in 2018 as a whole.

Business confidence in the period up until Easter is more tentative than during past waves. Over 9 in 10 still feel confident, but only 27% feel 'very' confident.

Attractions remain optimistic for 2019 as a whole with 53% expecting their business performance to be better than in 2018, and only 8% expecting a decline in admissions. However, optimism is at a slightly lower level to what has been seen in previous January waves.

Hot topics

Only 2 in 5 attractions received bookings online. Only a minority (12%) received the majority of their bookings online.

Case Studies

Case study: Accommodation
Lower Campscott Farm (North Devon)

A unique eco-friendly, "hands on" family farm experience sums up Lower Campscott Farm Cottage's recent success (and being so close to local beaches hasn't hurt either).

Lower Campscott Farm offers a unique farm experience for families, the introduction of smaller animals has helped to attract families with younger children. Tractor & trailer rides, daily animal feeding with Farmer Tony along with indoor and outdoor play add to the offering.

Emphasis is placed on the Farm's green credentials; this includes wherever possible sourcing local produce for the small farm shop and actively working towards Organic Status.

"We have increased activity on our Facebook and Social Media platforms over the past couple of years to help us increase core branding awareness. We run the farm as eco-friendly as we can - we have our own borehole water supply, Solar PV with any top up electric we need from 100% renewable sources, and we have our own wood pellet boiler which provides all the cottages with year round heating and hot water" say Tony & Kathy Mortimer, Proprietors of Lower Campscott Farm.

Forward bookings already suggest that 2019 will be a particularly busy year for Lower Campscott Farm.

- **Family friendly and sustainable farm holidays**
- **Green credentials**

Case study: Attractions
RSPB Fairburn Ings (Yorkshire)

A combination of a variety of factors including good promotion, innovative events and positive word of mouth have led to RSPB Fairburn Ings' success, Site Manager Darren Starkey explains.

"We are always making sure visitors have a positive experience, this leads to good word of mouth". With a high average score on TripAdvisor, Fairburn Ings continues to experience the benefits of positive online presence, *"we're the second highest rated attraction in the local area, we got lots of positive feedback"*.

Key to a positive visit experience is the staff, *"having a great team of people who are passionate and committed means visitors perceive us to be a happy and welcoming place to visit"*.

Fairburn Ings also reaches out to the local community, "*We run a schools education programme where we get 2,500 school children visiting the site each year as part of a recognised school visit."* This drives a lot of repeat business from locals as many children subsequently visit with their families.

Promotion and marketing is primarily through the digital route, *"we do a lot through Facebook, Twitter and our own website via blogs and articles"*. Additionally, "*we do have internal promotion through RSPB magazine which goes out to a million members"*.

Darren explains how changing their events programme by *"running fewer bigger events with more promotion and participants rather than lots of smaller ones"* contributed to their recent success.

Furthermore, *"we do now have another site 4 miles up the road, so there is an element of cross promotion which does drive footfall between the two sites"* says Darren, who is optimistic that this success will continue into 2019.

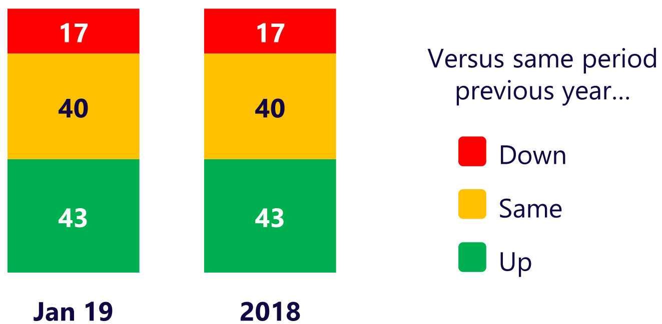
- **Free outdoor nature reserve**

Business Dashboards

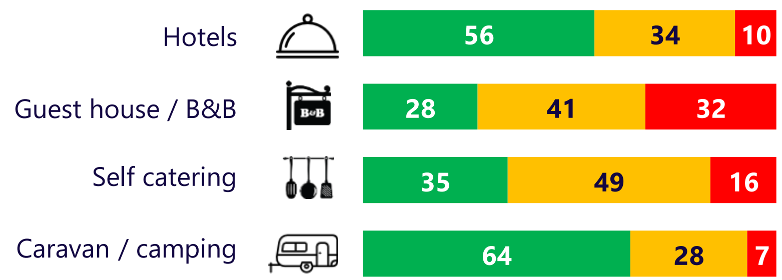
Business performance dashboard: Accommodation (%)

VISITOR NUMBERS

Visitor numbers (%)

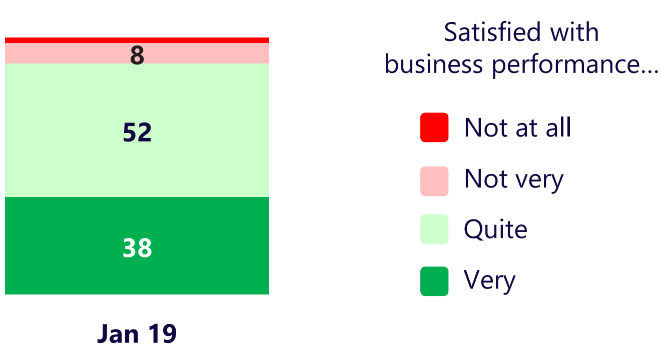


Visitor numbers during the Christmas and New Year period, compared with the same period in 2017 (%)

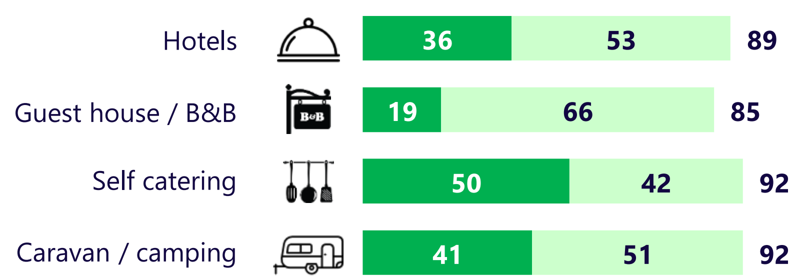


SATISFACTION

Satisfaction (%)

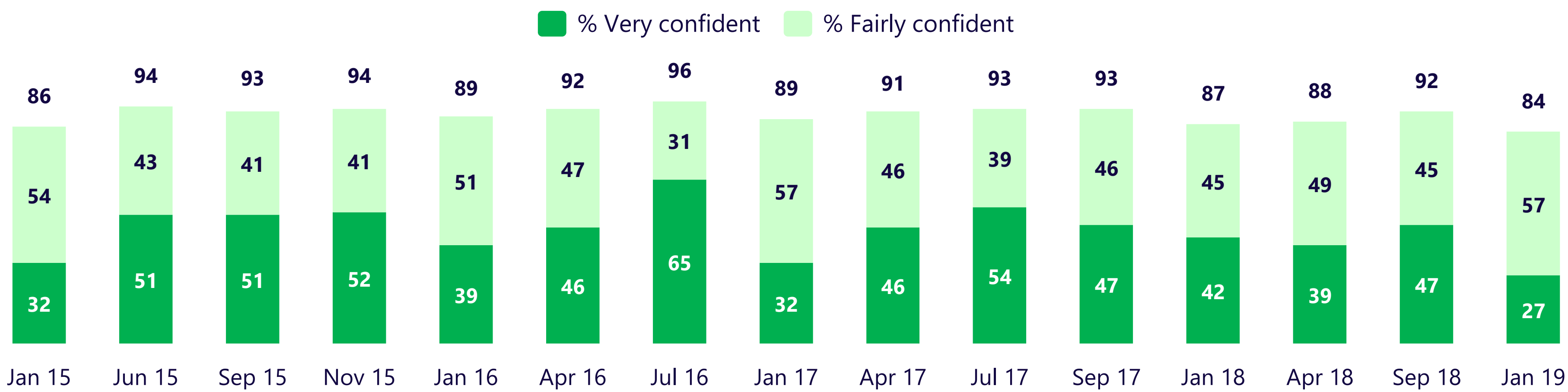


Satisfaction with Performance during period (%)

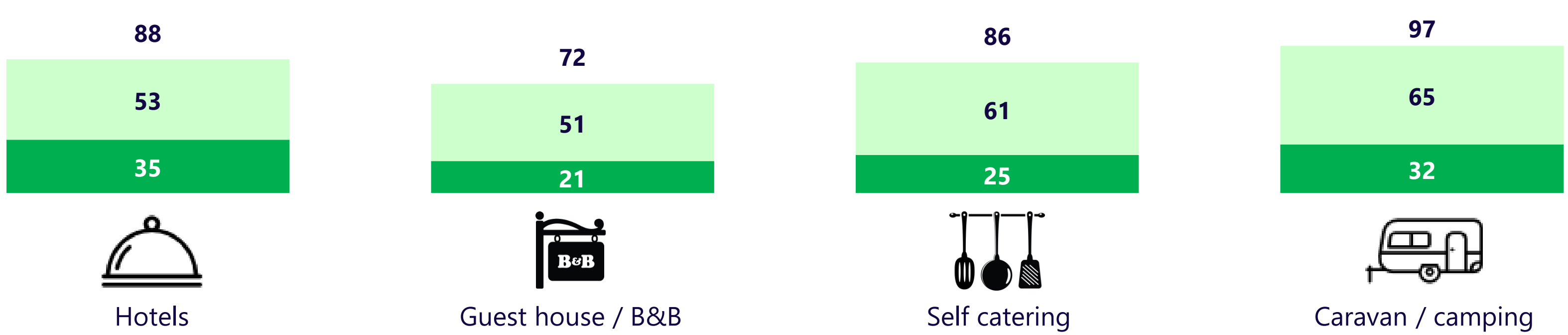


PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Business confidence dashboard: Accommodation (%)



January 2019



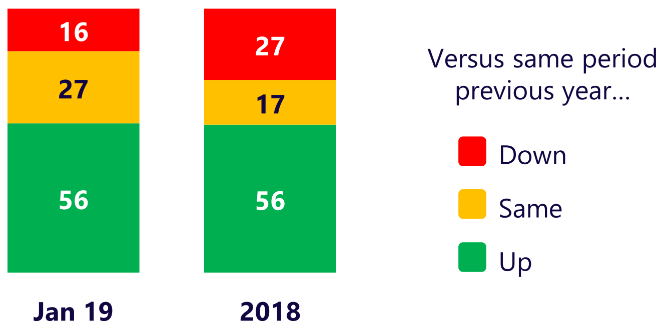
PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR FUTURE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE
January 19: Until the end of Easter

Q13 CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES

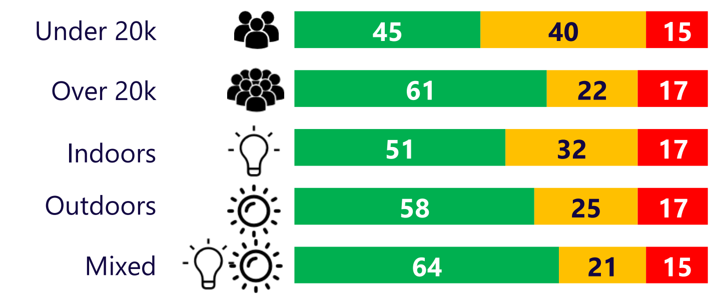
Business performance dashboard: Attractions (%)

VISITOR NUMBERS

Visitor numbers (%)

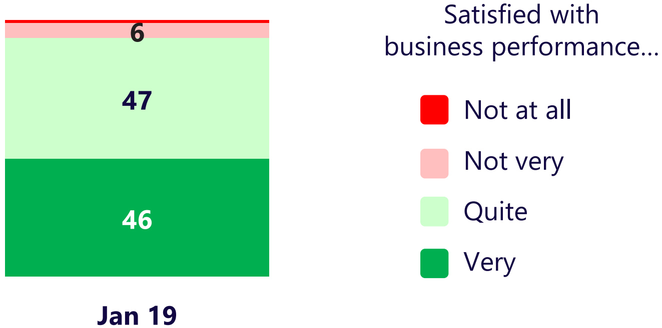


Visitor numbers during the Christmas and New Year period, compared with the same period in 2017 (%)

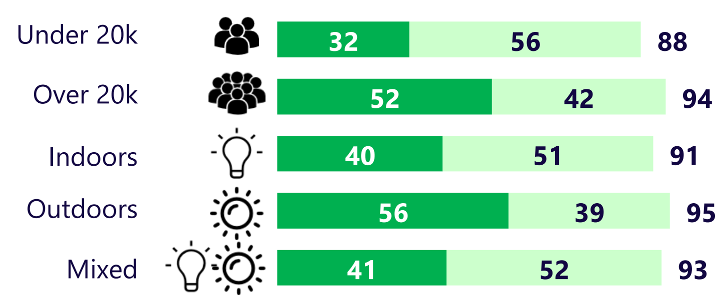


SATISFACTION

Satisfaction (%)



Satisfaction with Performance during period (%)

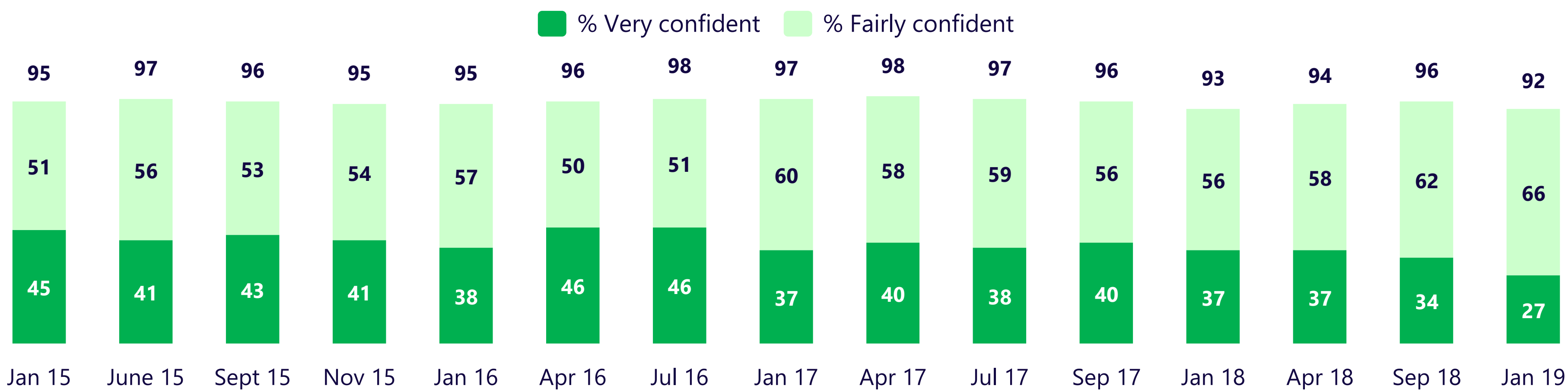


PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

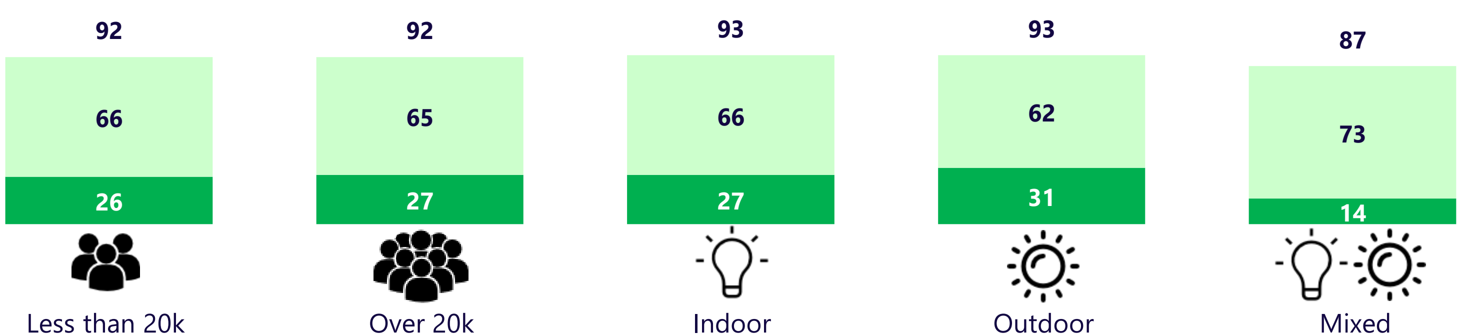
Q3/4, Q6, Q7/8

VisitEngland

Business confidence dashboard: Attractions (%)



January 2018



PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR FUTURE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE
January 19: Until the end of Easter

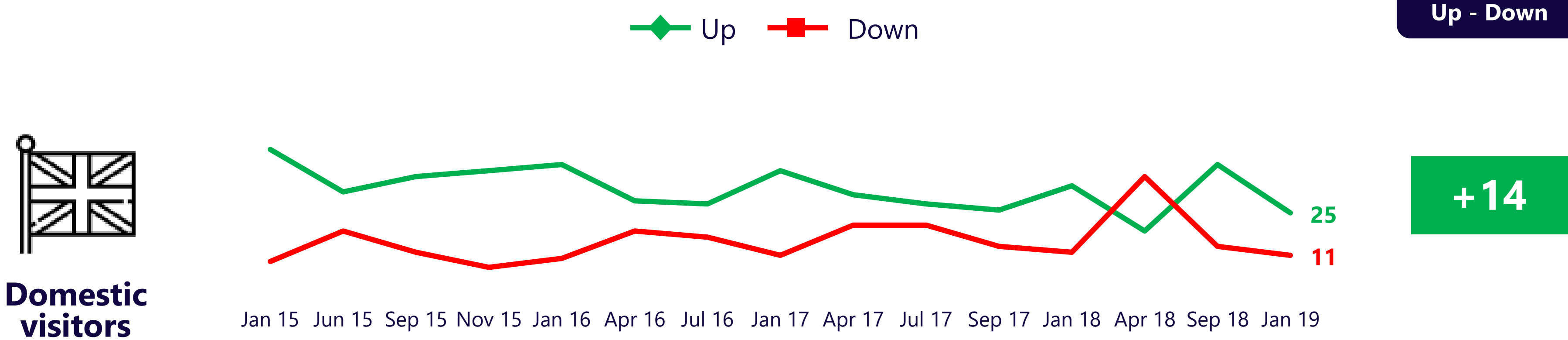
Q13 CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES

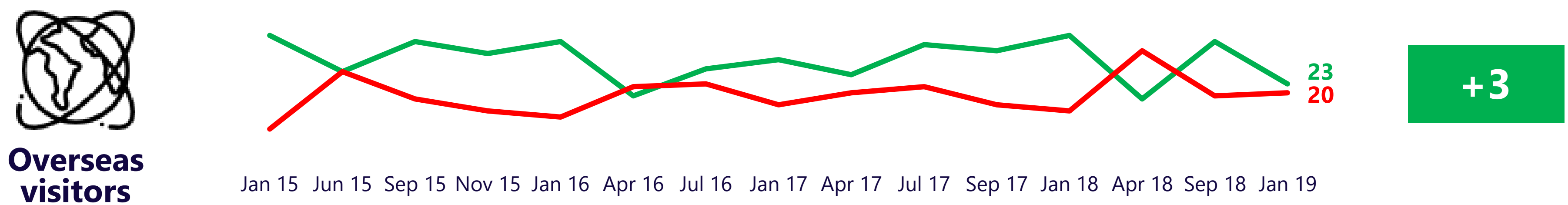
Visitor Profile

Changing visitor profile (2018 as a whole vs. 2017): Accommodation (%)

Accommodation sites saw net increases in domestic (+14) and overseas (+3) visitors in 2018 as a whole compared to 2017.

NET: Up - Down

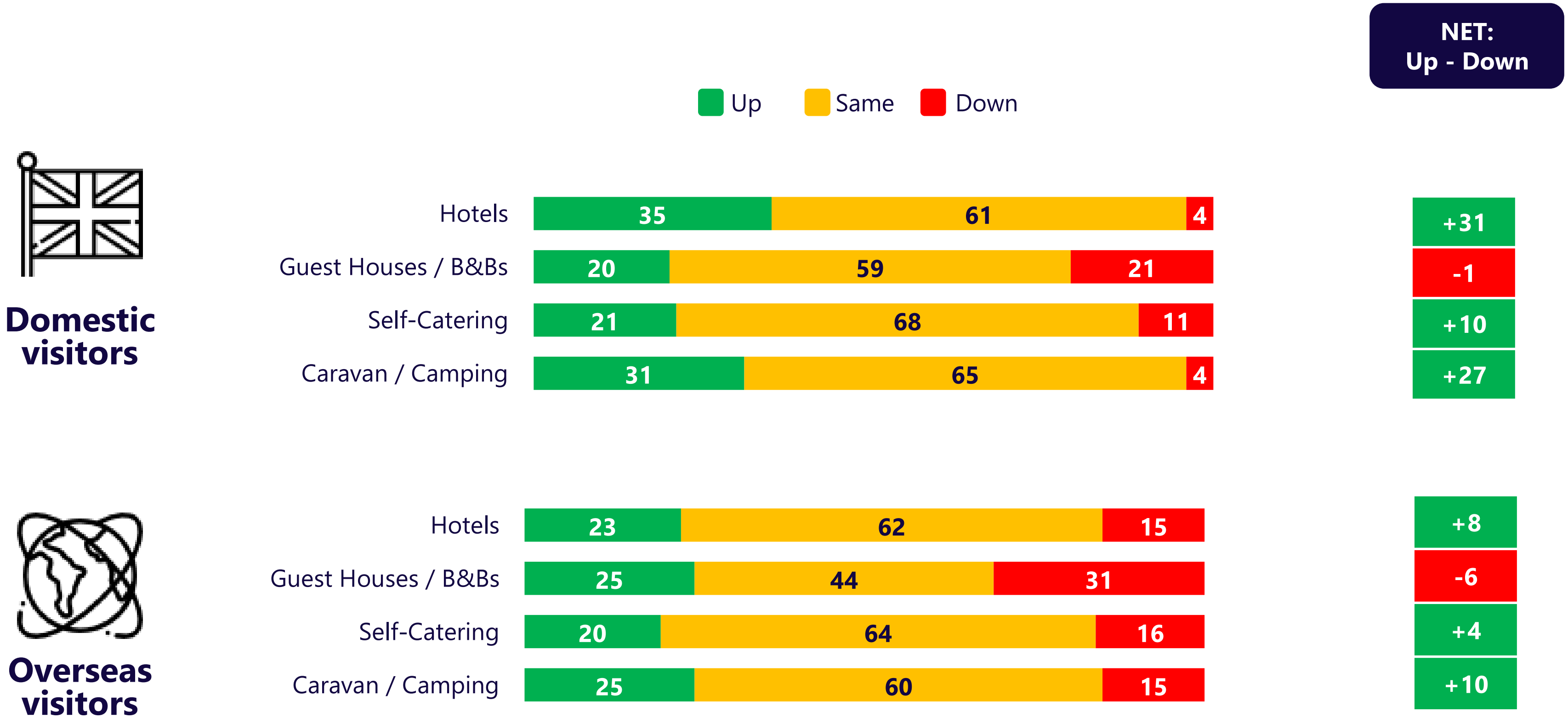




Q12

Changing visitor profile (2018 as a whole vs. 2017): Accommodation – by type (%)

Amongst domestic visitors, hotels followed closely by caravan/ camping saw the strongest net increases. Guest houses/ B&Bs saw a decline amongst both domestic and overseas visitors.



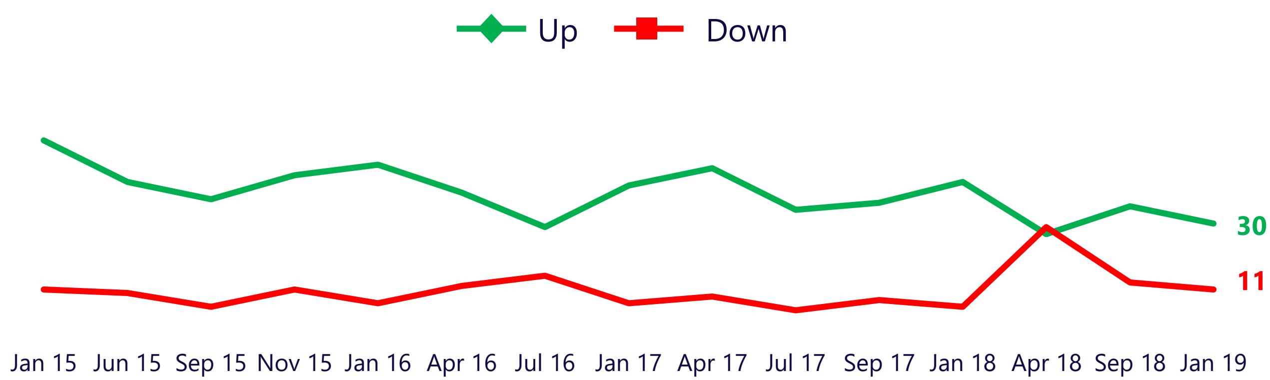
Q12 CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES

Changing visitor profile (2018 as a whole vs. 2017): Attractions (%)

Visitor attractions performance increased amongst domestic visitors (+19) and overseas visitors (+15).

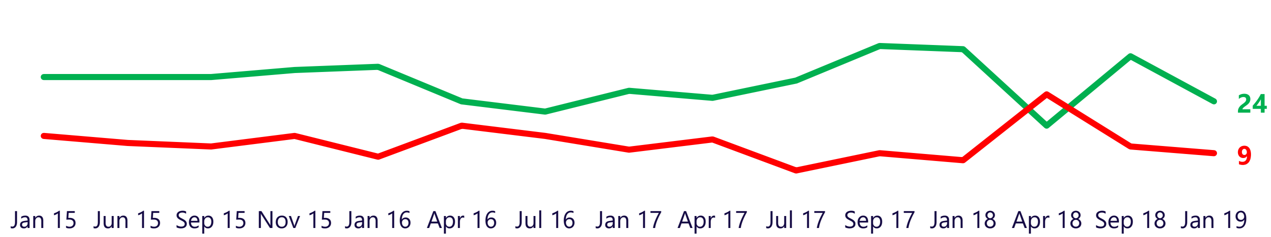
NET: Up - Down

Domestic visitors



+19

Overseas visitors



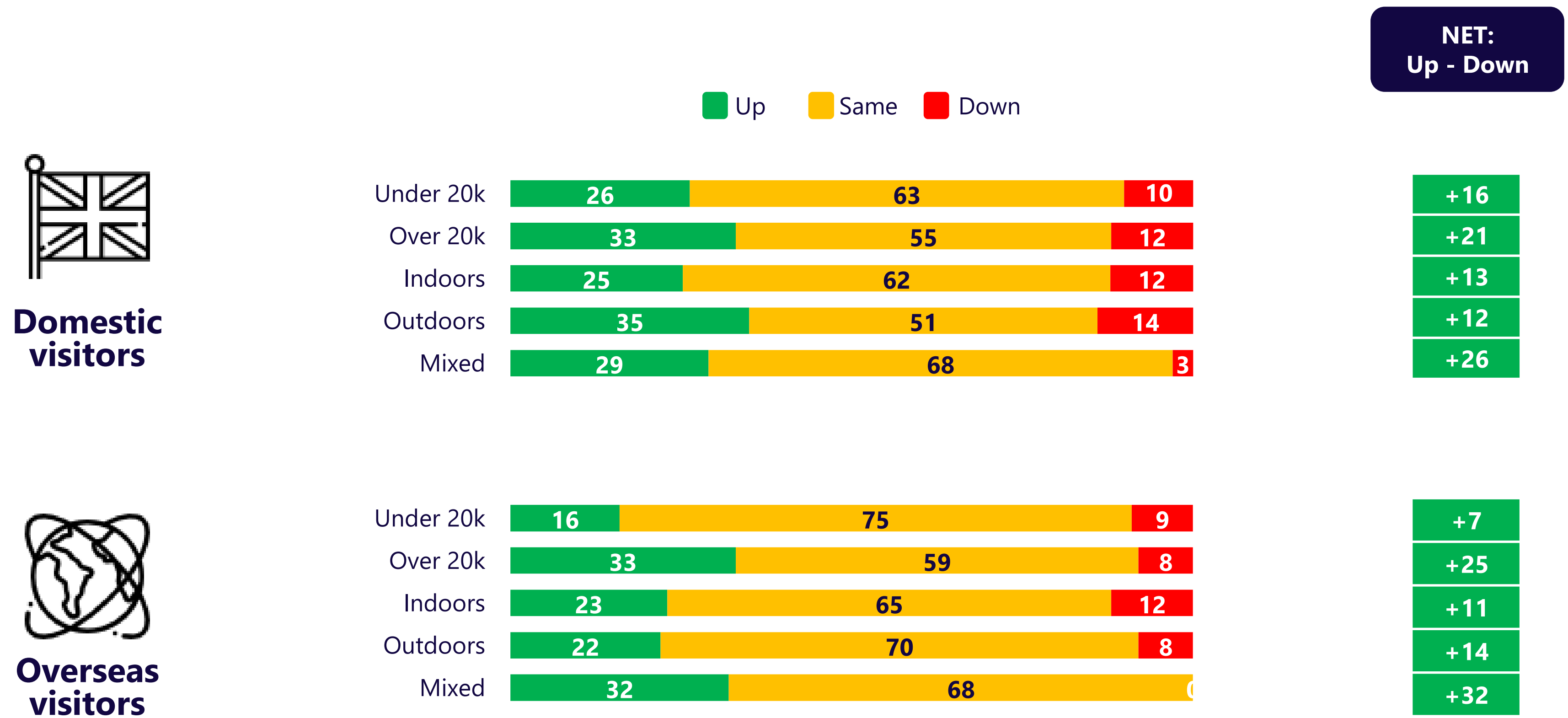
+15

Q12

VisitEngland

Changing visitor profile (2018 as a whole vs. 2017):
Attractions – by type (%)

The highest increases in domestic (+26) and overseas (+32) visitors were observed amongst attractions who offered both indoor and outdoor exhibits.

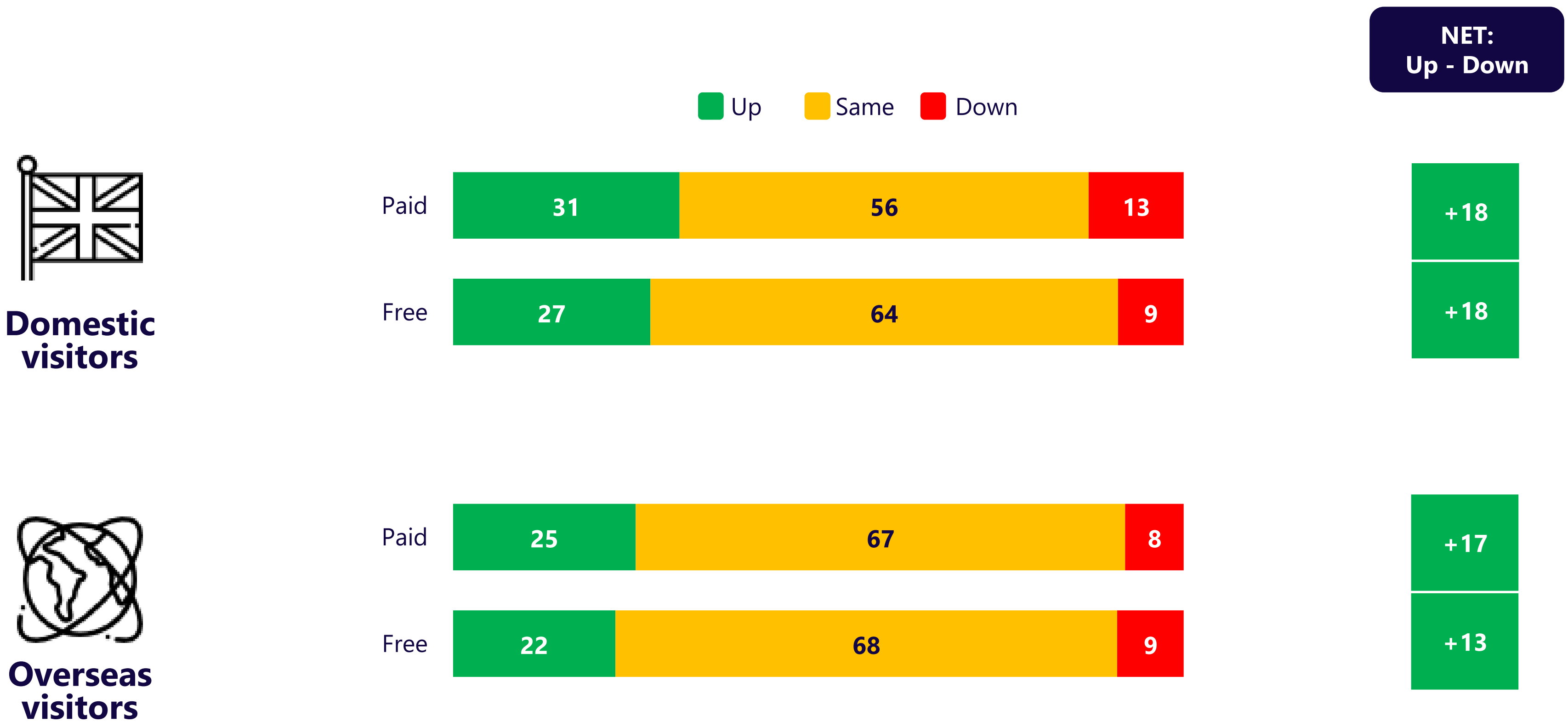


BVA BDRC

Q12 CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES

Changing visitor profile (2018 as a whole vs. 2017): Attractions – charging vs. free (%)

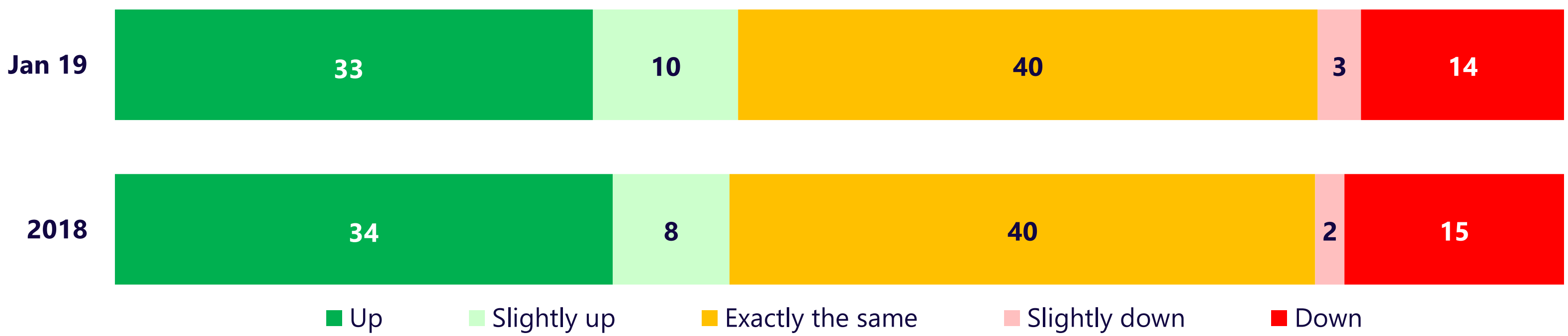
Similar net increases in both paid entry and free entry sites were observed amongst domestic visitors. Higher increases for paid sites amongst overseas audience (+17).

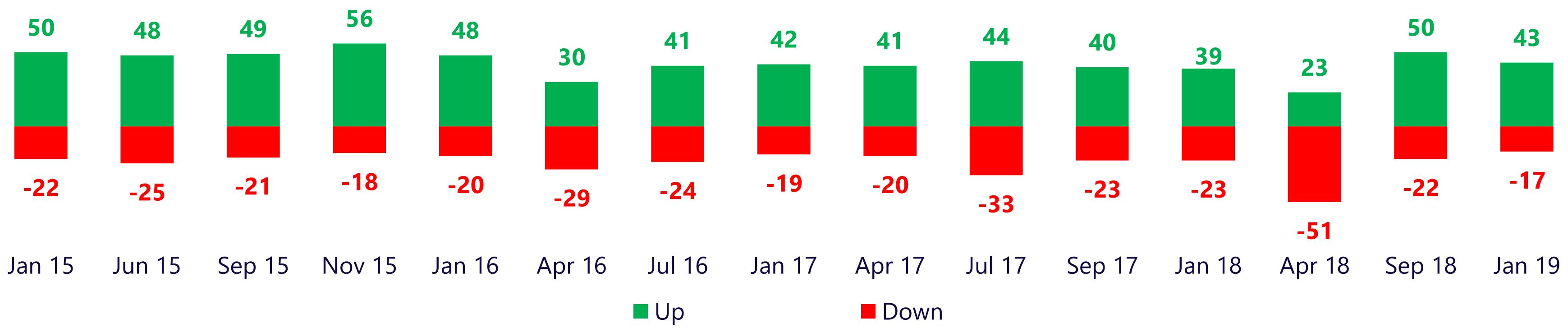


Business Performance

Visitor numbers: Accommodation year-on-year changes (%)

Growth in visitor numbers for accommodation businesses over the Christmas and New Year period mirrored the performance across 2018 as a whole, with just over 2 in 5 reporting an increase.

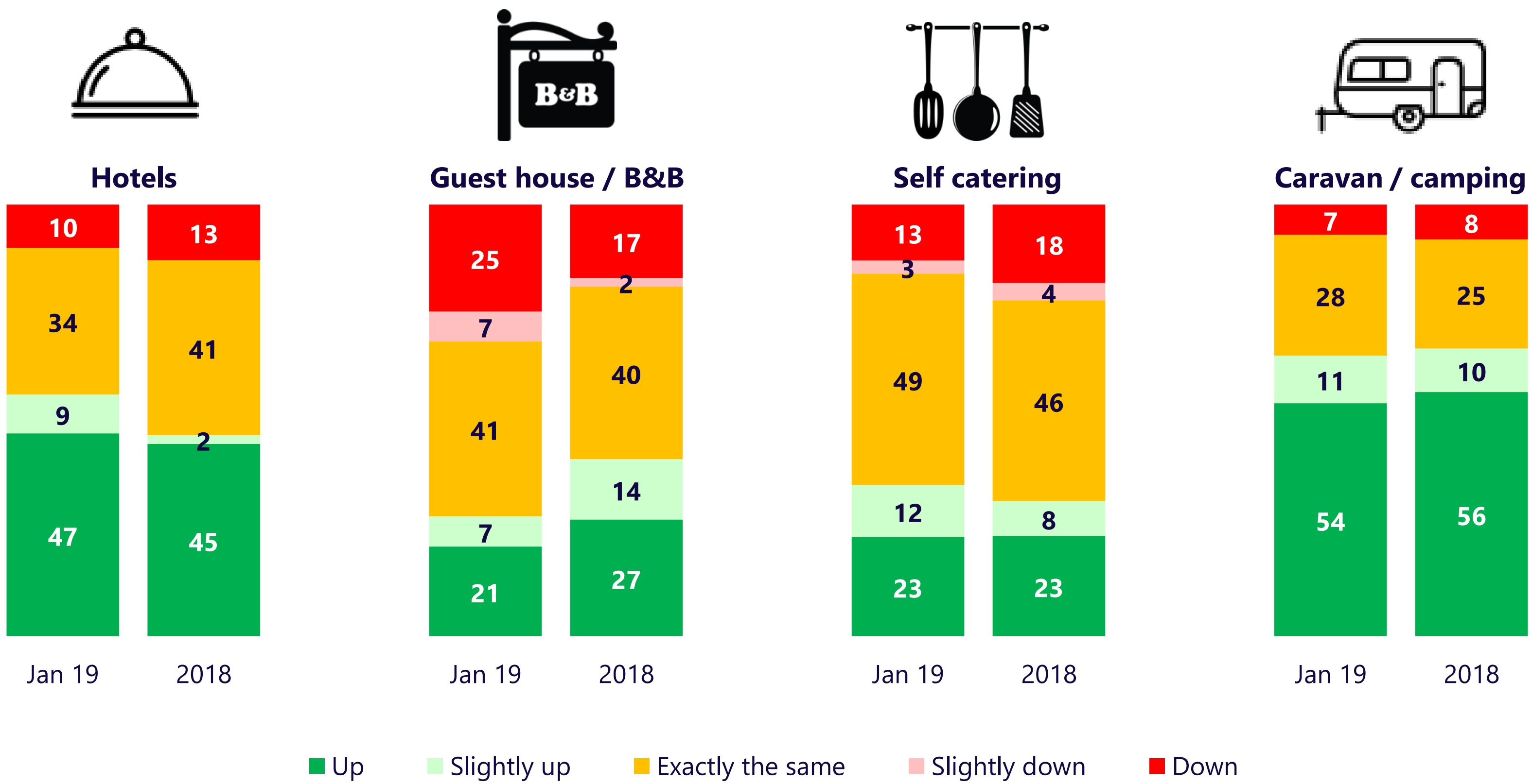




PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Visitor numbers: Accommodation - by type (%)

Slightly slower growth over the festive period amongst guest houses/ B&Bs than 2018 as a whole, with 28% reporting an increase in visitors over the festive period vs 41% up for the full year.

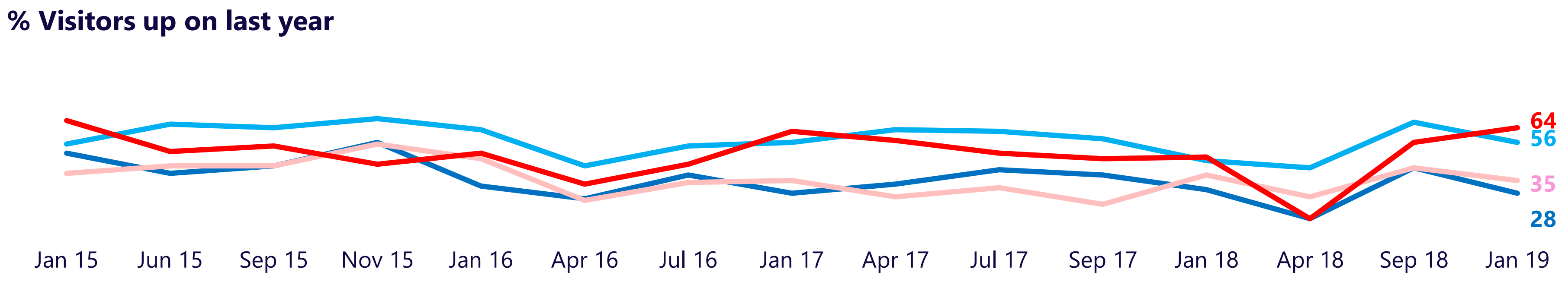


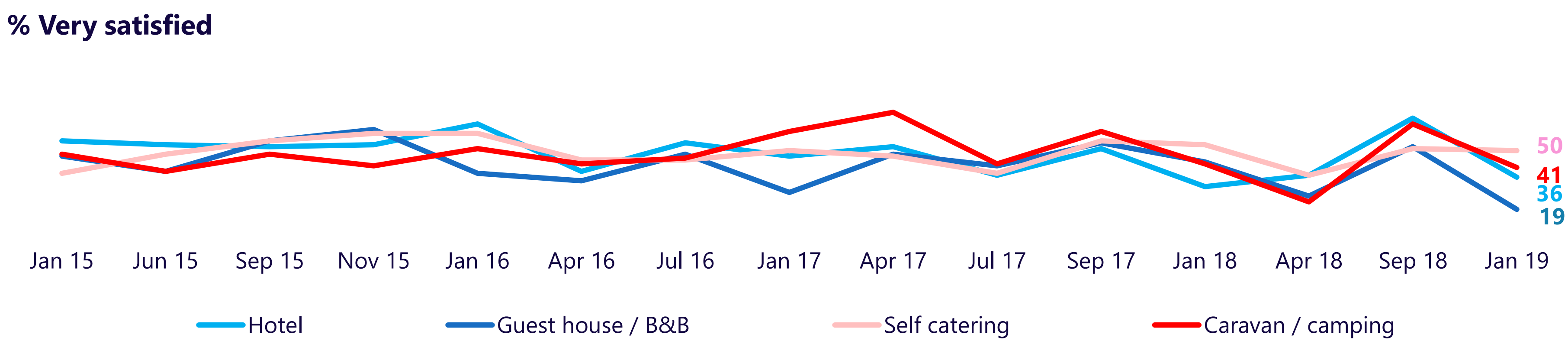
PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Q3/4, Q7/8

Changing business performance: Accommodation year-on-year changes - by type (%)

The most significant visitor growth is seen amongst caravan/campsites, which translates into fairly high satisfaction scores.

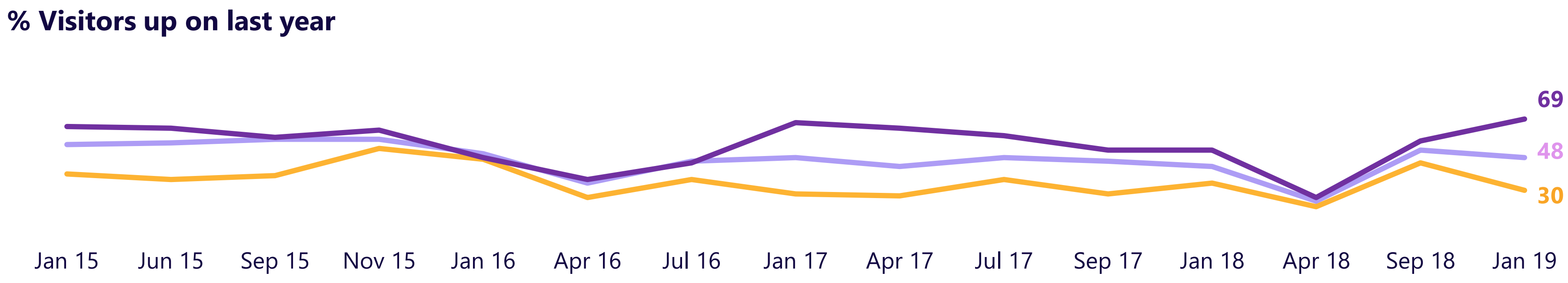


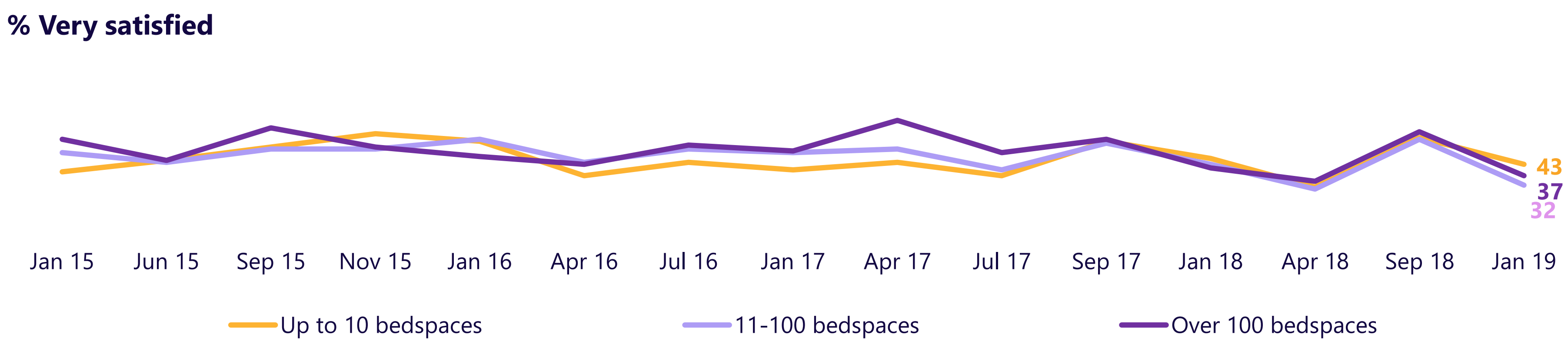


PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Changing business performance: Accommodation year-on-year changes - by bed spaces (%)

Despite high level of visitor growth amongst larger accommodation (over 100 bedspaces), only 37% of sites described themselves as 'very satisfied' with the performance. Conversely, the highest satisfaction scores were observed amongst businesses with up to 10 bedspaces, despite lower visitor growth (30%).





PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Positive verbatim comments on business performance in 2018
Accommodation

"

The internet for online bookings has resulted in more bookings for us

I get lot of repeat guests, who come year after year

Good weather has meant more bookings and better business performance

Using various offers during the low season in order to get people in

"

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: 2018 overall

Negative verbatim comments on business performance in 2018: Accommodation

"

Profoundly less people from abroad visiting because of Brexit

Couple of multinational companies opening hotels which have made it harder

"

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: 2018 overall

External influences affecting business performance in 2018: Accommodation

10% of accommodation sites report that the issues of Brexit / exchange rate affected business performance in 2018 as a whole.

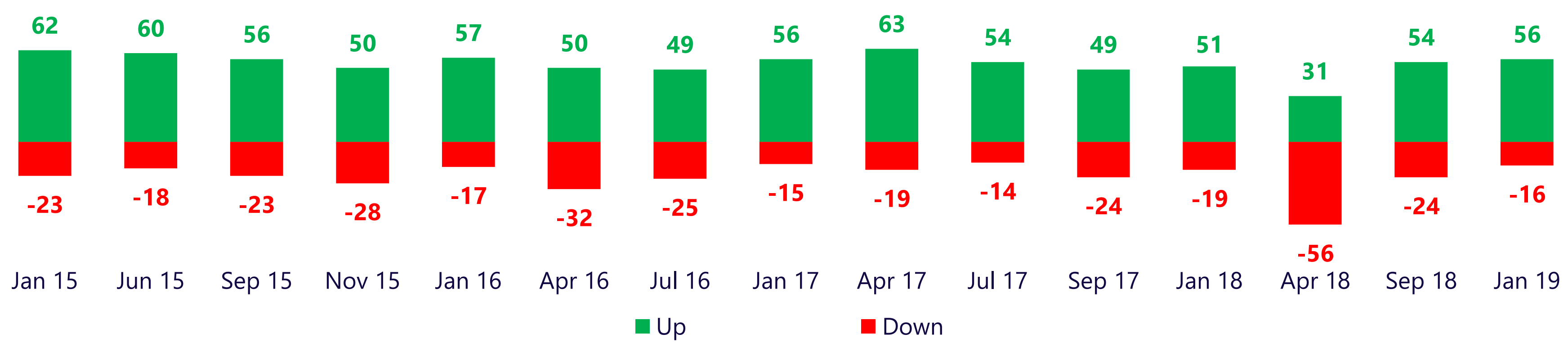
10%

Exchange rate / Brexit

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: 2018 overall

Visitor numbers: Attractions year-on-year changes (%)

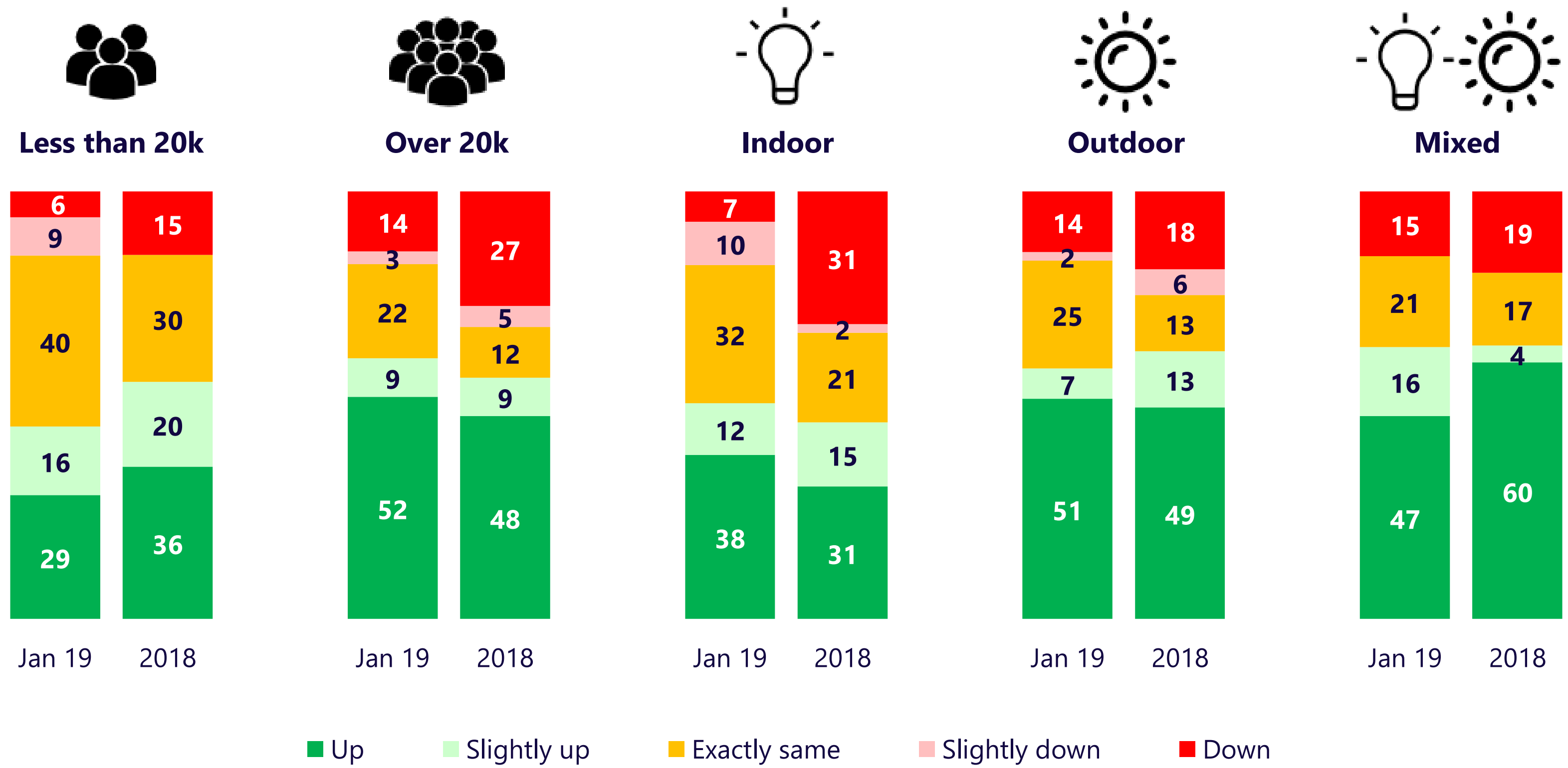
Over half (56%) of attractions reported increased visitor numbers over the Christmas / New Year period and over 2018 as a whole. Less attractions reported lower visitor numbers over Christmas / New Year than over the full year.



PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Visitor numbers: Attractions - by type (%)

Indoor attractions and those over 20k experienced a faster growth rate over the Christmas and New Year period.



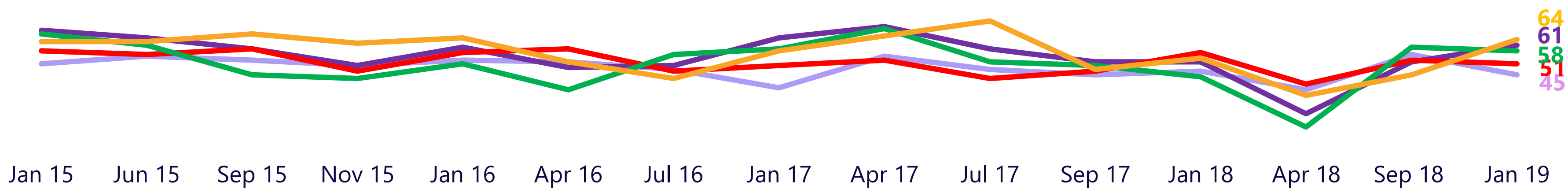
PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Q3/4, Q7/8 CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES

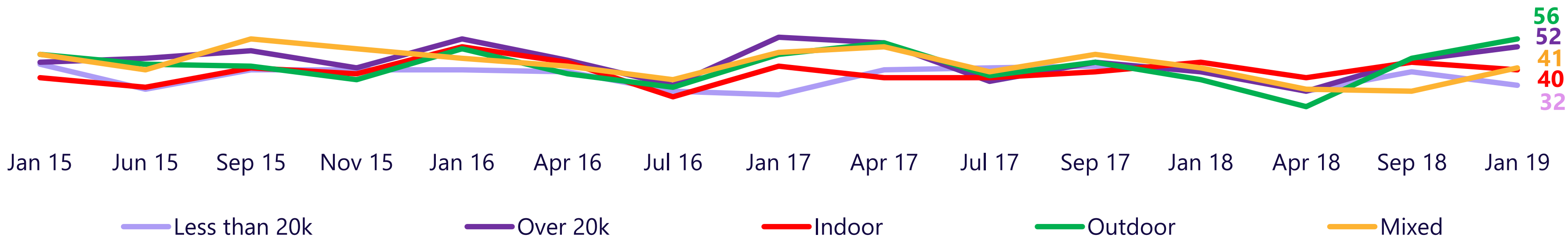
Changing business performance: Attractions year-on-year changes - by type (%)

There was a considerable increase in visitors amongst mixed attractions over Christmas / New Year, which has subsequently translated into a growth in satisfaction; 2 in 5 businesses reporting they are 'very satisfied' with performance.

% Visitors up on last year



% Very satisfied



PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

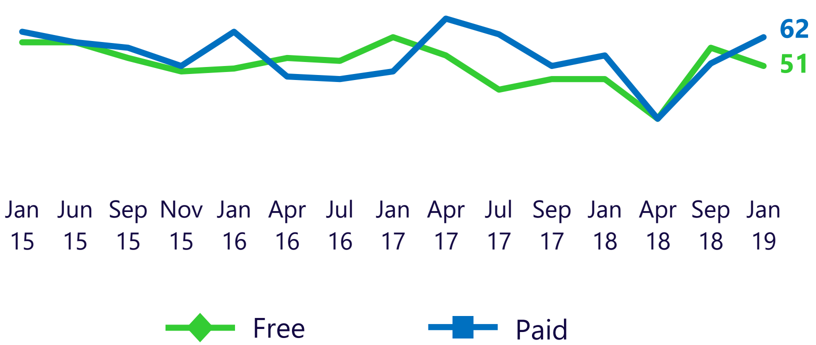
Q3/4, Q6

Changing business performance: Attractions year-on-year changes - by admission charge and VisitEngland Quality Scheme (%)

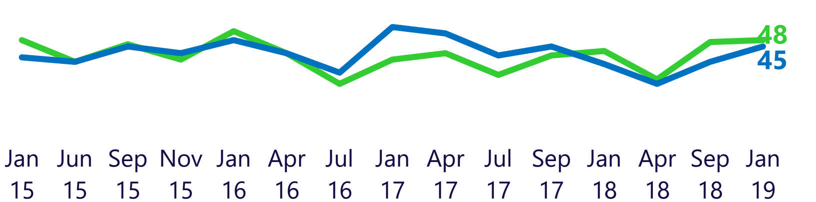
More paid attractions reported increased visitor numbers than free attractions, but satisfaction levels were similar for both attraction types.

ADMISSION

% Visitors up on last year

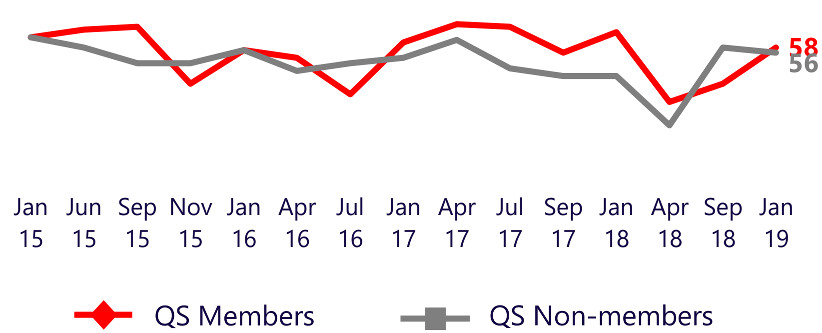


% Very Satisfied

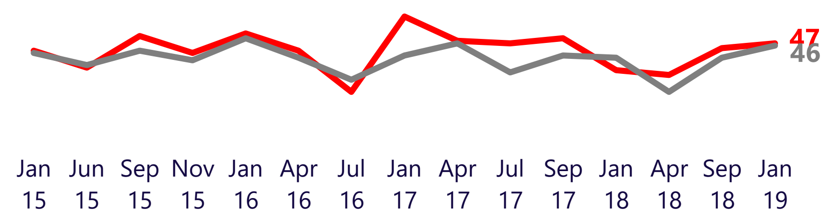


VisitEngland Quality Scheme

% Visitors up on last year



% Very Satisfied



PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: The Christmas and New Year period

Q3/4, Q6 CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES

Positive verbatim comments on business performance in 2018: Attractions

Increased marketing; new attractions; probably product awareness

We held extra events which were well attended

Social media has helped

The biggest impact on us has been TripAdvisor and the advertising that has come with that

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: 2018 overall

Negative verbatim comments on business performance in 2018: Attractions

"

The uncertainty with Brexit, people being more cautious.

Poor weather and very hot weather during the summer have had a major negative impact

Financial cuts from central and local government

"

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: 2018 overall

External factors affecting business performance: Attractions

Exchange rate and Brexit were a concern for 6% of attractions, who stated this affected their business performance in 2018 as a whole.

6%

Exchange rate / Brexit

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR PAST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE
January 19: 2018 overall

Hot Topics

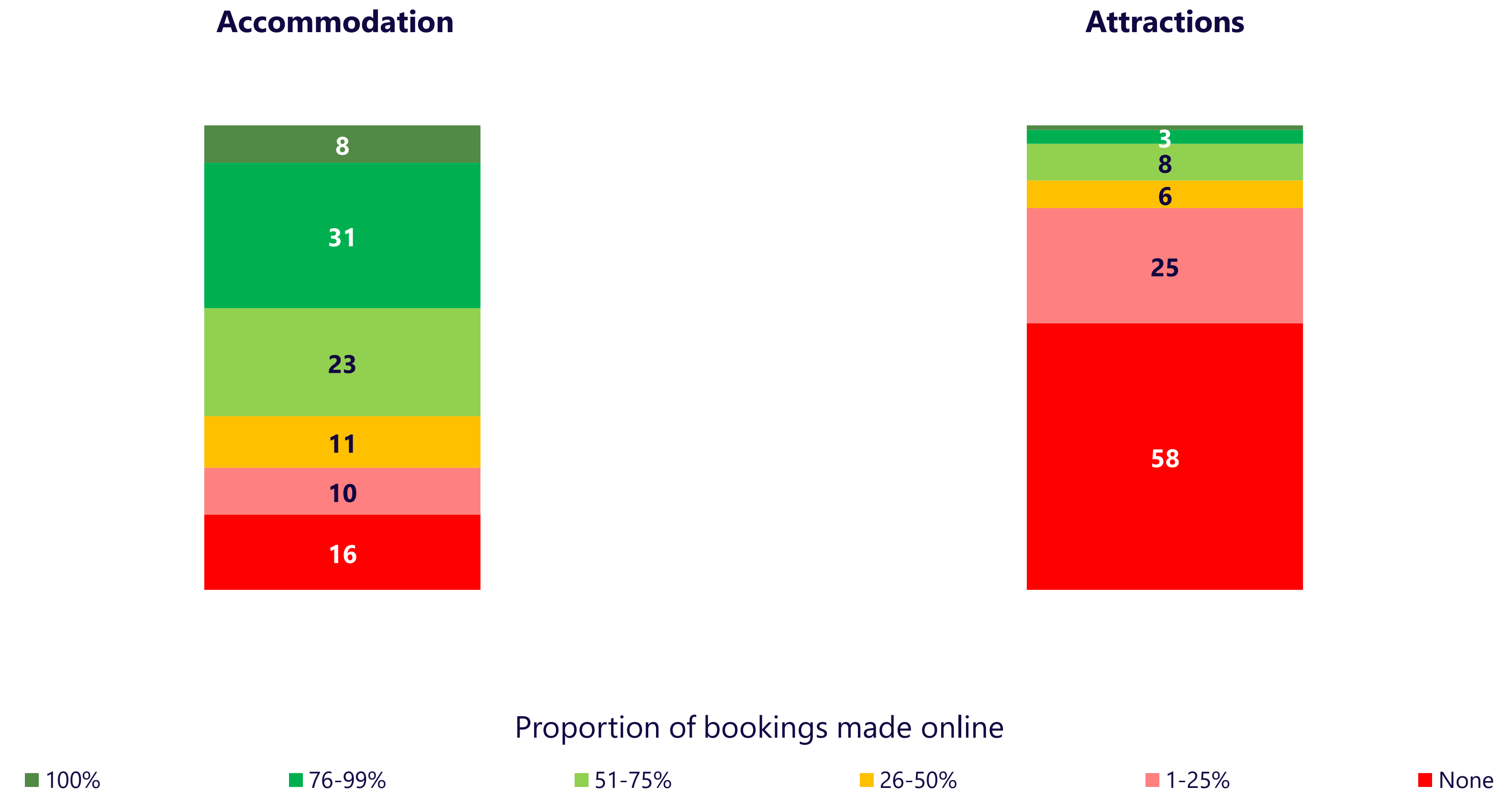
Accommodation bookings outlook for Summer 2019

This wave, accommodation sites were asked how their booking levels were looking for Summer 2019. The majority of sites (58%) reported booking levels are the same as last year. However, there is a net booking decline of 4%, with nearly a quarter of accommodations reporting fewer bookings than summer 2018.

Q16a

Online Bookings

Accommodation bookings are more likely to be made online in advance than bookings to attractions. Nearly 1 in 10 accommodation providers take 100% online bookings, and nearly 2 in 5 say that over 75% of guest bookings are made online. Conversely, nearly 3 in 5 (58%) of attractions reported no online bookings.

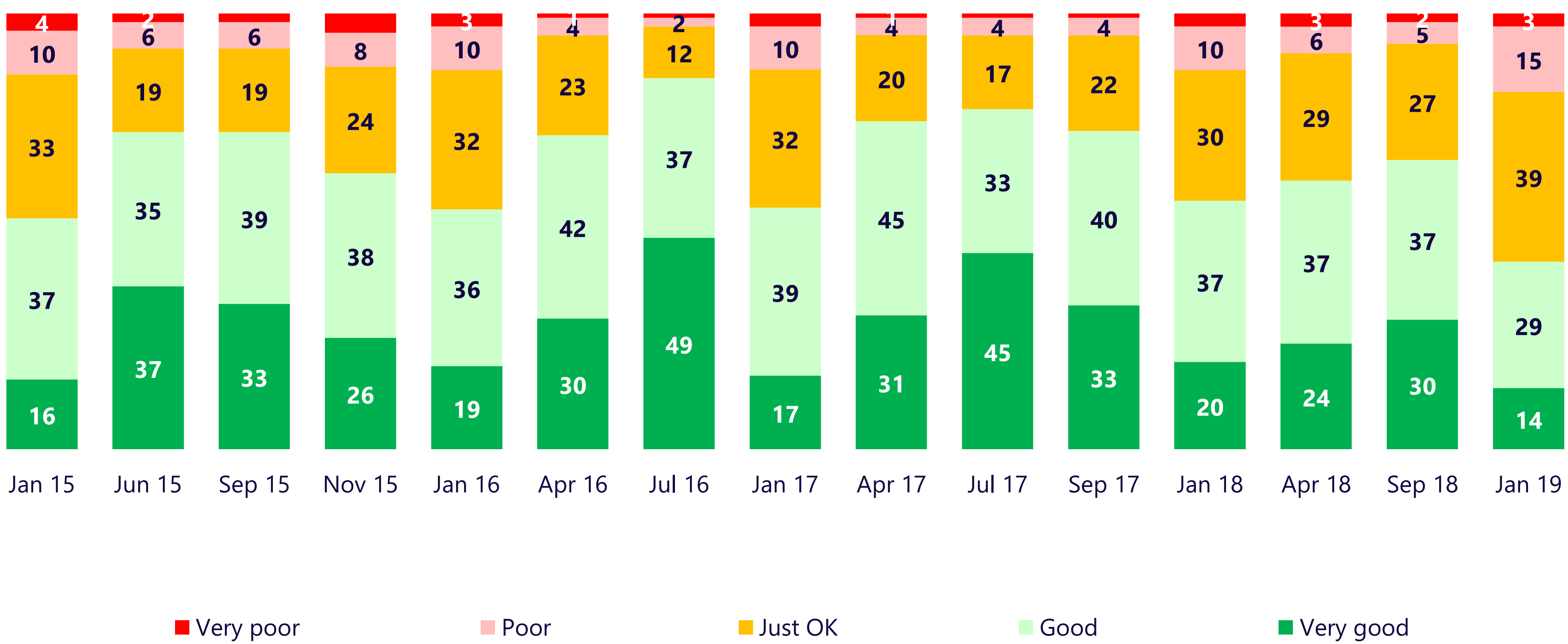


Q16b

Business Confidence

Advance booking levels: Accommodation (%)

Advanced booking levels from now until the end of Easter have decreased, with nearly 1 in 5 describing booking levels as ‘very poor/ poor’ and just over 2 in 5 ‘very good/ good’.



PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR FUTURE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE
January 19: Until the end of Easter

NOTE: ‘Don’t know’ responses have now been excluded from the data due an increase in recent waves. Data has been re-based to reflect this.

BVA BDRC

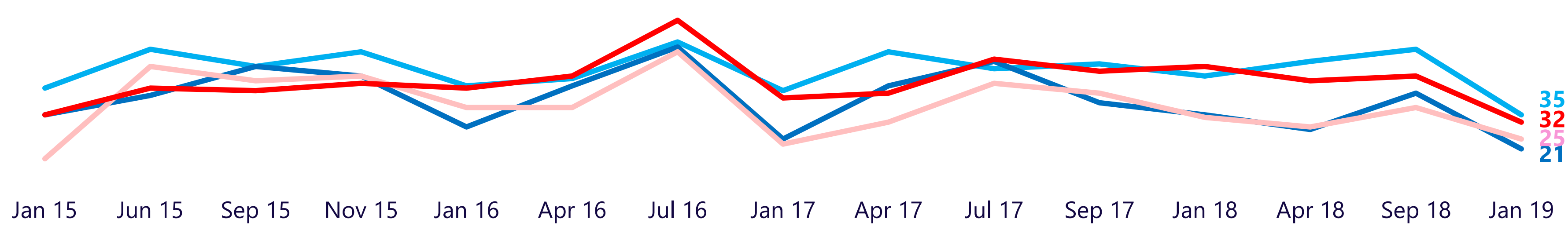
Q14

Confidence for forthcoming period: Accommodation (%)

Confidence levels and advanced bookings have dropped for the majority since the previous wave. Caravan/campsites however, have increased advanced bookings, with 3 in 5 reporting 'very good/ good' advanced bookings.

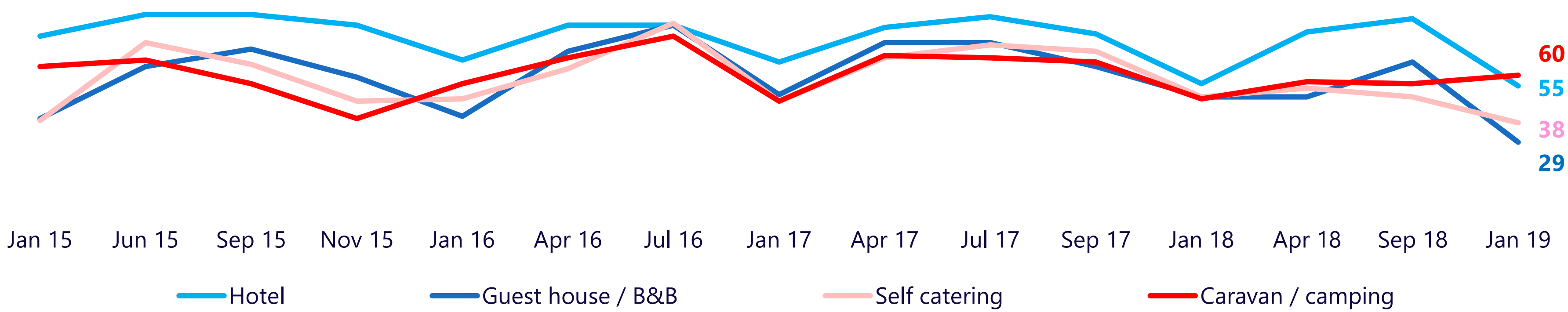
CONFIDENCE

% Very confident



ADVANCED BOOKINGS

% Very good / good

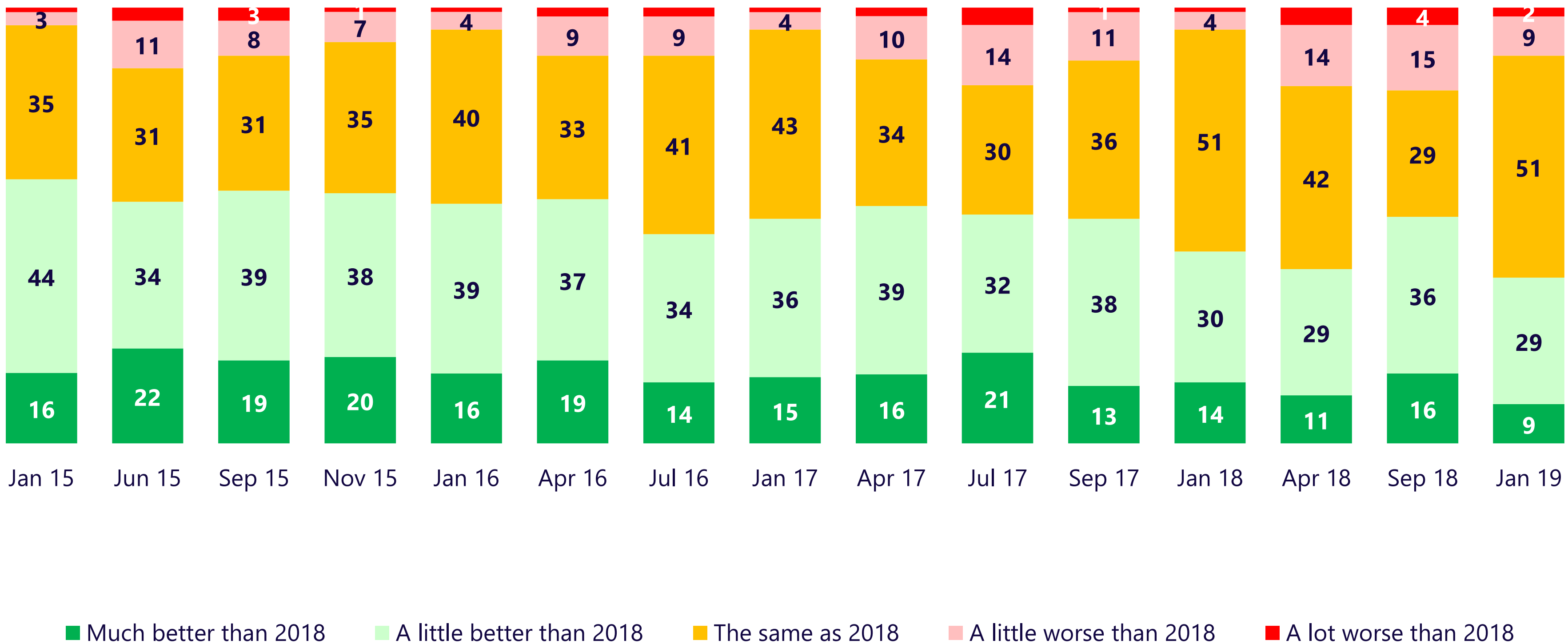


PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR FUTURE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE
January 19: Until the end of Easter

Q13, Q14

Business optimism for 2019 overall: Accommodation (%)

Business optimism for 2019 is slightly lower than seen in previous waves, with 38% expecting business to be better than 2018. The majority of accommodation sites (51%) predict business will be the same as 2018.



PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

Positive verbatim comments on business optimism for 2019: Accommodation

"

We are going to make major changes which will influence the bookings

We will be pushing more with advertising and direct marketing

We have picked up a couple of new coach parties

We are getting more reviews on site

"

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

Negative verbatim comments on business optimism for 2019: Accommodation

"

I generally think that the world economy is not good and is affecting our business

Devaluation of the pound and the uncertainty with the political situation

The prices are very competitive

"

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

External factors affecting business optimism for 2019: Accommodation

15% of accommodation businesses felt that exchange rates/ Brexit affected their business optimism for 2019 as a whole.

15%

Exchange rate / Brexit

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

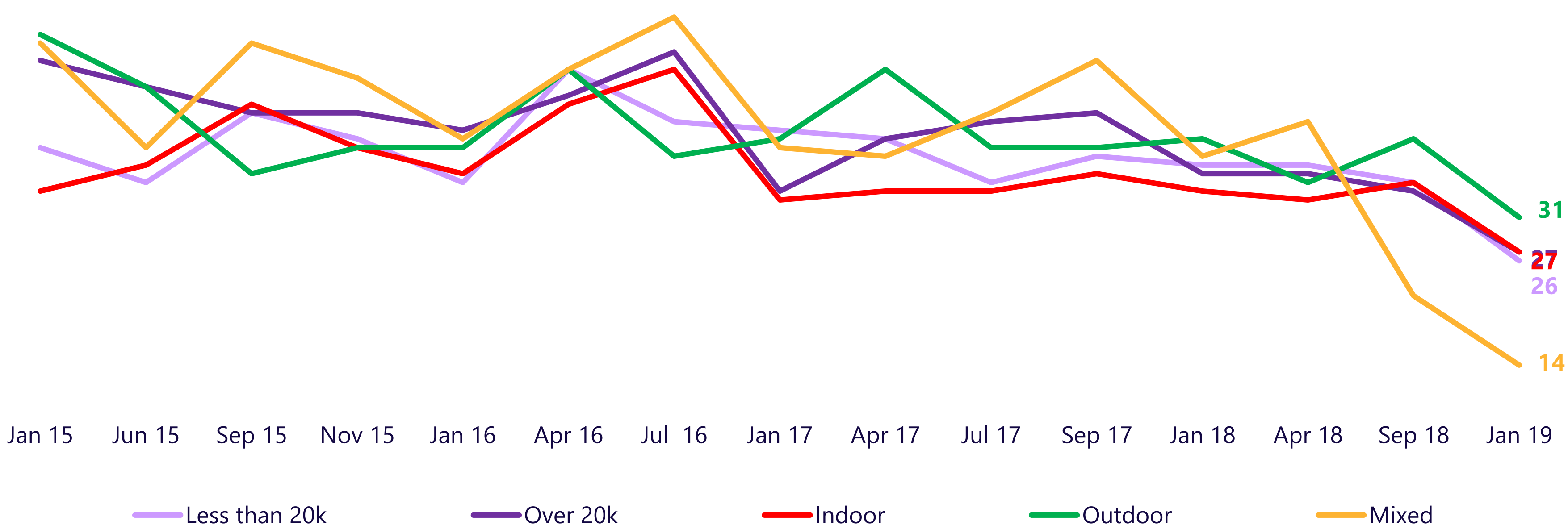
Q15b

Confidence for forthcoming period: Attractions (%)

Confidence in business performance for up until the end of Easter is highest amongst outdoor attractions, 31% reporting they are 'very confident'.

CONFIDENCE

% Very confident

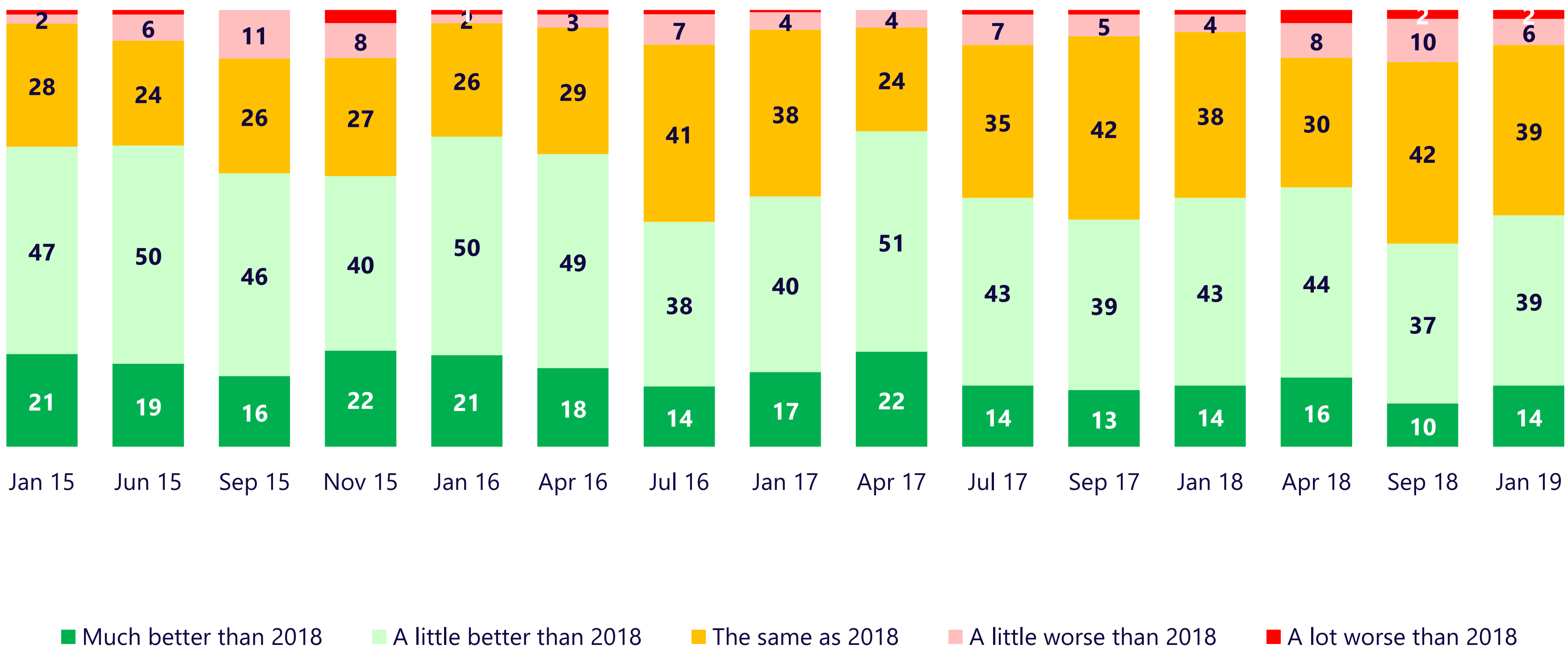


PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR FUTURE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE
January 19: Until the end of Easter

Q13 CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZES

Business optimism for 2019 overall: Attractions (%)

The majority of attractions (53%) report they expect their business performance in 2019 to be better than 2018. However, optimism has slightly decreased compared to previous January waves.



PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

BVA BDRC

Q15

Positive verbatim comments on business optimism for 2019: Attractions

"

We have high hopes that the new exhibition will bring more visitors.

Increased marketing especially to overseas, repeat visits and better offers for locals

There has been rebranding and good yearly upwards trend

Increased advertising especially with TripAdvisor

"

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

Negative verbatim comments on business optimism for 2019: Attractions

"

Our business will be affected by Brexit like most other businesses around here

Brexit is a concern because of the potential gridlock on the roads

People are not spending much

"

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

External influences affecting business optimism for 2019: Attractions

6% of attractions reported exchange rates / Brexit as impacting business optimism for 2019.

6%

Exchange rate / Brexit

PERIOD ASKED ABOUT FOR BUSINESS OPTIMISM
2019 overall

Appendix

Performance and confidence snapshot: January 2019

Accommodation

		Visitor Numbers (the Christmas and New Year period)			Confidence (until the end of Easter)	
		Up	Same	Down	Very	Very / fairly
	TOTAL (%)	43	40	17	27	84
Type (%)	Hotel	56	34	10	35	88
	Guest house / B&B	28	41	32	21	72
	Self catering	35	49	16	25	86
	Caravan / campsite	64	28	7	32	97
Bedspaces (%)	Up to 10	30	52	18	21	81
	11-100	48	32	20	33	85
	Over 100	69	25	6	30	92
Grading (%)	5 star	54	46	0	31	77
	4 star	43	40	17	28	88
	1-3 star	52	29	18	29	84
	Budget / other	36	45	20	25	84
Location (%)	Seaside	29	45	26	26	77
	Large town / city	80	13	7	29	81
	Small town	43	38	19	39	86
	Rural	44	43	14	24	88

Performance and confidence snapshot: January 2019

Attractions

		Visitor Numbers (the Christmas and New Year period)			Confidence (until the end of Easter)	
		Up	Same	Down	Very	Very / fairly
	TOTAL (%)	56	27	16	27	92
Visitor numbers p.a. (%)	Less than 20k	45	40	15	26	92
	20k or over	61	22	17	27	92
	20k-50k	53	19	28	21	92
	50k-100k	58	33	9	24	90
	100k-200k	72	24	4	42	93
	Over 200k	62	14	24	25	95
Type (%)	Indoor	51	32	17	27	93
	Outdoor	58	25	17	31	93
	Mixed	64	21	15	14	87
Charge(%)	Paid	62	29	9	25	96
	Free	51	25	24	29	87
Quality Scheme (%)	Yes	58	28	14	25	99
	No	56	27	18	27	89
Location (%)	Seaside	67	8	25	19	85
	Large town / city	45	35	21	31	95
	Small town	52	36	12	29	94
	Rural	61	26	13	25	92

Periods asked about for past business performance

Wave	Period asked about
January 2019	Christmas and New Year period
September 2018	Mid-July until end of the summer holidays
April 2018	Easter period
January 2018	Christmas and New Year period
September 2017	Mid-July until end of the summer holidays
July 2017	After Easter holidays until mid-July
April 2017	Easter period
January 2017	Christmas and New Year period
July 2016	After Easter holidays until mid-July
April 2016	Easter period
January 2016	Christmas and New Year period
November 2015	Mid Sept until the end of October
September 2015	End of May until end of the summer holidays
June 2015	Easter up until the end of May
January 2015	Christmas and New Year period

Periods asked about for future business confidence

Wave	Period asked about
January 2019	Christmas and New Year period
September 2018	Until end of October
April 2018	Until late Spring/ early Summer
January 2018	Until end of Easter
September 2017	Until end of October
July 2017	Until the end of the school summer holidays
April 2017	Until late Spring/ early Summer
January 2017	Until end of Easter
July 2016	Until the end of the school summer holidays
April 2016	Until late Spring/ early Summer
January 2016	Until end of Easter
November 2015	Until end of the year
September 2015	Until end of October
June 2015	Until the end of the school summer holidays
January 2015	Until end of Easter

Quality standards and other details

BDRC Continental comply with ISO 20252, the recognised international quality standards for market research, thus the project has been carried out in accordance with these standards.

- Adherence to the standard is independently audited once per year.
- Where subcontractors are used by BDRC Continental, they are briefed to ensure any outsourced parts of the research are conducted in adherence to ISO 20252.

Full methodological details relevant to the project, are available upon request.

VisitEngland

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