



VisitBritain™



VisitEngland™

Annual Attractions Survey – About the Survey

Background to the survey

The Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions began in 1989 and was designed in order to monitor the performance of visitor attractions in England. The survey in particular measures the number of visitors to each attraction and analyses how this has changed over time. VisitEngland jointly sponsors this survey with Historic England. The research agency BVA-BDRC has managed the survey for VisitEngland since 2008.

The Annual survey aims to contact every visitor attraction in England in order to collect annual visitor information.

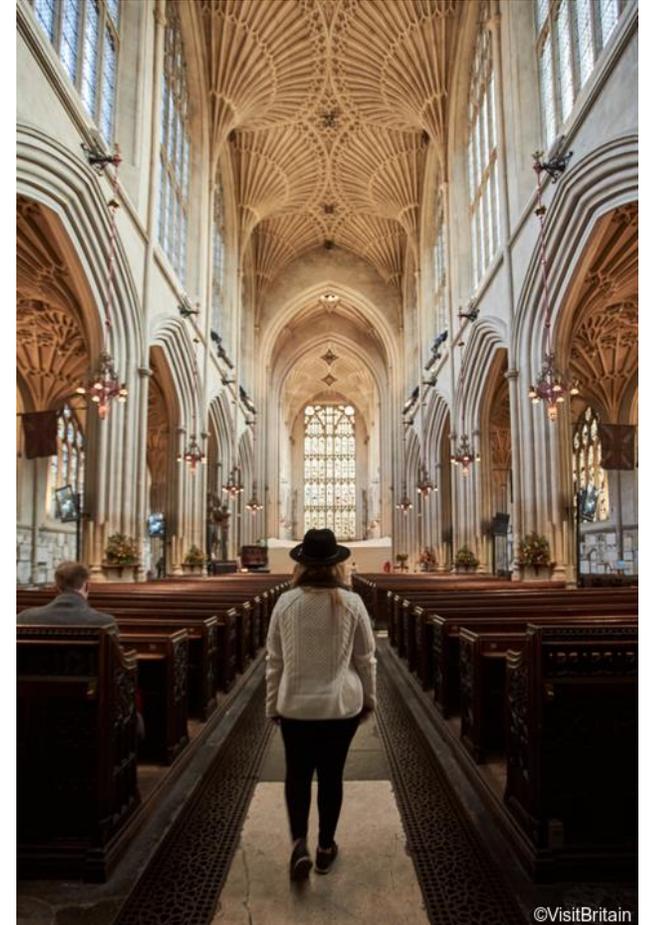
Attractions are given the opportunity to respond to the survey either online or by post. An effort is made to get as many attractions to respond to the survey as possible through telephone, email and postal reminders.

Surveys are usually contacted from March/April each year, when the majority of seasonal attractions are open for the year. The results are usually published in August. In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, fieldwork was extended until the end of August due to closures and furlough earlier in the year. Results have been published in October 2020.

Definition of a Visitor Attraction

For the purpose of this research a Visitor Attraction is defined as:

...an attraction where it is feasible to charge admission for the sole purpose of sightseeing. The attraction must be a permanently established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow access for entertainment, interest, or education; rather than being primarily a retail outlet or a venue for sporting, theatrical, or film performances. It must be open to the public, without prior booking, for published periods each year, and should be capable of attracting day visitors or tourists as well as local residents. In addition, the attraction must be a single business, under a single management, so that it is capable of answering the economic questions on revenue, employment etc.



Sample and responses

Sample sizes vary by year and details can be found in the annual report, but currently approx. 5,500 attractions are invited to participate, with a response rate of 25-30% (1,308 in 2020).

In 2012, a review of the list of attractions invited to participate in the survey was conducted, and some clearly not fitting the definition (for example, small parish churches and art galleries with a primarily retail focus) were removed. While Country Parks continue to be included in the survey sample, it is not always possible for these attractions to exclude visitors who have visited the park in such a way that falls outside our visitor attraction definition. Where this is the case they are not included in the list of 'most visited' attractions.

For the first time in 2009, data supplied by ALVA (The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions) was used for a number of major attractions where The Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions' data was unavailable. Data from other organisations including Historic England, the National Trust, destination organisations and museums groups may also be used where data from the survey is unavailable.

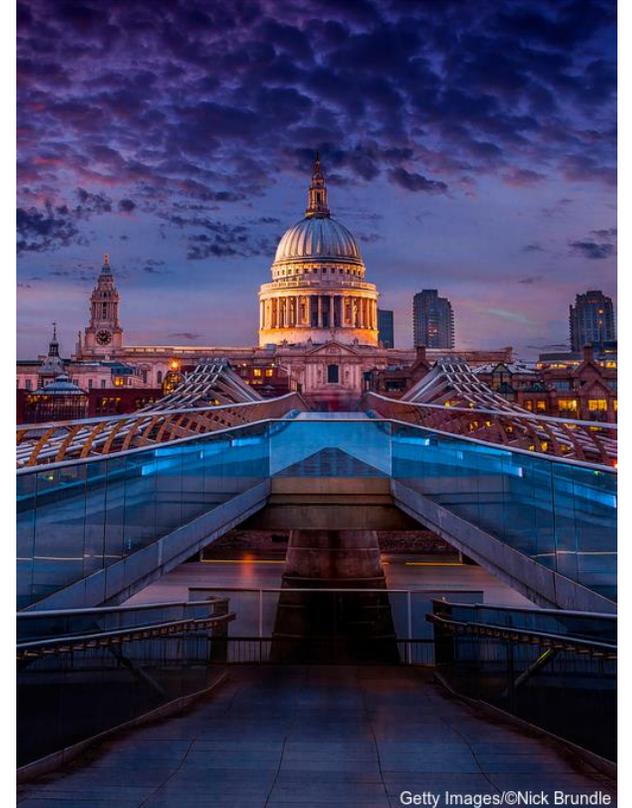
Survey Limitations

The Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions is a self-completion survey, which means all visitor numbers are provided by the attractions themselves. Whilst some responses are verified where there are big changes, the majority cannot be verified with each individual attraction and VisitEngland is not responsible for the accuracy of the numbers provided.

It is important to highlight that major individual attractions can have a significant impact upon the proportion of visits within each region and attraction category. Their participation or non-participation in the survey year-on-year can result in significant fluctuations in the data within each region and attraction category. We do not include estimates of non-responding attractions. Therefore these figures do not represent the total market.

How are annual changes calculated?

Attractions are asked to compare their gross revenue for the last two years and detail the overall percentage change. It should be noted that the average changes are calculated from percentage changes reported per attraction, not changes in actual revenue figures.



Survey Outputs & Reporting

There are three main outputs from the survey:

- The written report which focuses on trended data, including annual changes in visits, revenue and detailed reporting on attraction category and regional results. This report also includes indexing of visits data back to 1989 (by region and attraction category).
- We also provide a separate excel report of visitor numbers by individual attraction. This report includes data from attractions who are willing to provide permission for their admissions data to be published. Where attractions have provided estimates rather than exact visitor numbers this is highlighted.
- Top 20 free and paid lists for England overall and by English region

For more detailed information on this survey please contact:
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