



**Archives & Records
Association**
UK & Ireland

Distance Enquiry Services Survey 2023

Headline Report

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Introduction

This report shares the details and insights gleaned from what is now the seventh in the series of surveys of distance users. A distance user being an individual who accesses archive services remotely, from any point on the globe. This latest update includes results spanning the previous decade, ie going back as far as 2013. Such comparisons allow us to evidence significant change(s) and any reversion to the norm, ie results settling around similar previous levels.

However, it should be noted that the survey conducted in 2023 varies both with that conducted in 2021 and previously. In 2021 evidence was needed on what remote archive clients required during a period of lockdown. Whereas in 2023 the evidence required focusing on movement to a new norm or set of expectations. Consequently, some aspects are no longer being tracked and have been omitted from this report, whilst some new factors have been introduced, eg rating the value for money of archive services.

Furthermore, as a consequence of a much shortened window of opportunity for registration, fewer archives participated in the 2023 (47) compared to 2021 (58), giving rise to a downturn in the number of responses received. Regardless, participating archives still managed to obtain feedback from some 1,653 individuals. Reassuringly this means that from a statistical perspective the results provided in this report are highly reliable. Further details regarding survey response and error rates can be found in the section on [Statistical Validity](#)

Readers of this report should also note that:

- All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole figures. This may result in some totals being greater or less than 100%.
- Cases, refers to the number of respondents who answered the question.
- Base, the number of respondents that were eligible to respond to the question.
- Survey response rate, the number of cases divided by the base number.

Conclusions

We highlight here elements of this report where there exists a high degree of variance with previous reports or issues that are, in our opinion, highly salient at this point in time.

- The number of achieved responses is at the lowest over the past decade.
- Whilst the average time to complete the survey has increased, for the vast majority of respondents the survey was completed in a far shorter period of time.
- The three main reasons why clients choose to access archive services remotely are:
 - That they live too far away to visit or live outside the UK and Ireland;
 - To see if archive has relevant information; and
 - Because electronic methods are more convenient.
- Some 6 in 10 survey respondents learned about the distance enquiry service via the archive's website. This is very similar to results obtained from the surveys that ran between 2013 to 2019, but is down from the figure in 2021 of 74%, during lockdown.
- The main research purpose remains family history at 36%, however this is significantly down on all previous results since 2013. Furthermore, this decline has been quite persistent. The new option of local history research elicited 24% of all responses. Other reasons, including work in connection with your employment or formal education as student / researcher, remained consistent at around 10% of all responses.
- All factors regarding satisfaction elicit highly positive ratings, with the majority of people rating them as very good. However, some factors stood out as exemplary, including:
 - Quality of content;
 - Promptness of response;
 - Value for money; and
 - Relevance of content.
- Since 2013 we note that there has been a small but continual increase in the average age of males making use of distance services. Whilst back in 2013 the average age for males was 59.4 years, in 2023 it was 64.8 years. By comparison, women are consistently younger and there's no similar discernible trend in age increase.

Method

The 2023 survey was created using an application (app) provided by Microsoft, on its 365 Business platform, specifically Forms. Its use in this case is to enable feedback from customers of archive services in order to measure satisfaction, improve services and gain a more in depth understanding of who these customers are.

Rather than rely on one centralised survey to capture all responses, as the survey did between 2013 and 2021 inclusive, the system used in 2023 was replicated for each archive. This had a number of benefits including:

- Increased resilience, ie if one survey became locked out / malfunctioned, it didn't impact on any of the others.
- Each survey can be individually named, so the client is assured they are completing the correct form / survey.
- Each archive could then monitor their own aggregated results, through a unique link provided to them. By aggregated results we mean an analysis for each question, rather than viewing the individual responses¹.

The survey was open for a total of 10 weeks, from Monday 9 October 2023 through to Sunday 17 December 2023, inclusive. Archives were advised that an invitation to undertake the survey should be sent in response to all enquiries, including enquiries from within the parent organisation. A suggestion was provided in terms of what to say, but archives were free to adapt this as they saw fit. They were additionally instructed that: *"This should be sent in response to all enquiries, including repeat enquiries from the same individual / organisation if you are contacted for more than one reason. Ideally invites should only be issued to those aged 18 or over"*.

During this period archives were asked to keep a log of those they sent an email to and the date they sent it, as well as record any refusal to participate. Collecting this information then enabled them to:

- Issue a follow up email, whether or not their client responded, but excluding anyone that had previously refused, as archives are not able to track or connect responses².
- Inform Shaffer & Co of the number, not the identity, of emails issued. This information enables the calculation of the survey response and error rates.

Other changes were made to how survey respondents were routed, or directed, through the survey. In common with the 2021 survey, we only asked respondents about their postcode if they were a resident of the UK, Ireland, or the Channel Islands. However, we asked all respondents the remaining demographic questions including those regarding ethnicity and any long-lasting physical or mental health conditions.

¹ On closure of the survey on Monday 18 December 2023, each archive was sent a copy of the raw data collected on their behalf.

² All responses are classified as anonymous, as everyone is issued an identical link to the survey. Furthermore, Microsoft Forms is unable to collect this data from anyone issued with such a link.

Steering Group

The steering group holds responsibility for the design, development, analysis and subsequent dissemination of the report. The group members are:

[Chair] Lisa Snook, County Archivist, Gwent Archives

Helena Smart, Sector Development Manager: National and Networks, The National Archives

Jonathan Gordon, Researcher, Shaffer and Co

Julian Pooley, Public Services and Engagement Manager, Surrey History Centre

Rhian Diggins, Senior Archivist, Glamorgan Archives

Tahlia Coombs, Cultural Lead for Heritage & Learning, Hackney Council

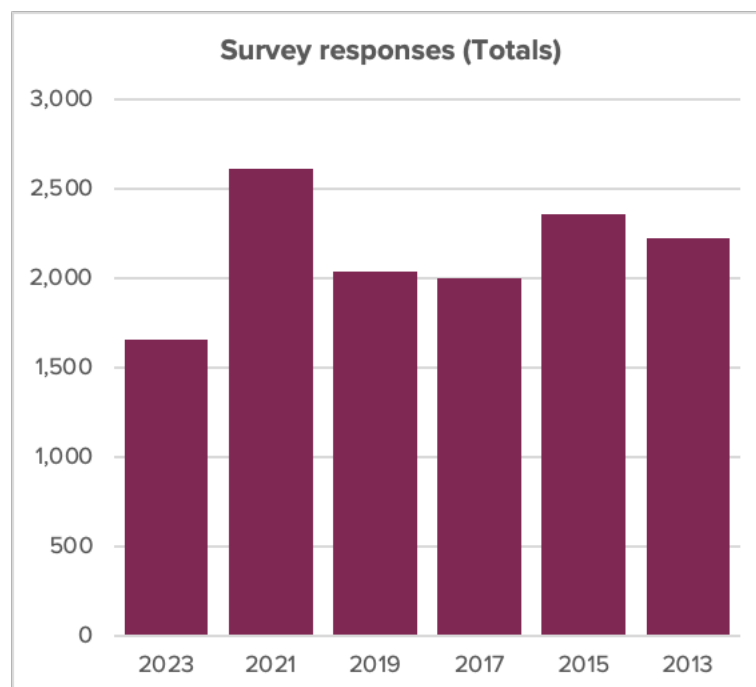
Tom Stevenson, Principal Research Officer, Welsh Government.

This report was compiled by Jonathan Gordon, with support from group members.

Report: General

Survey responses

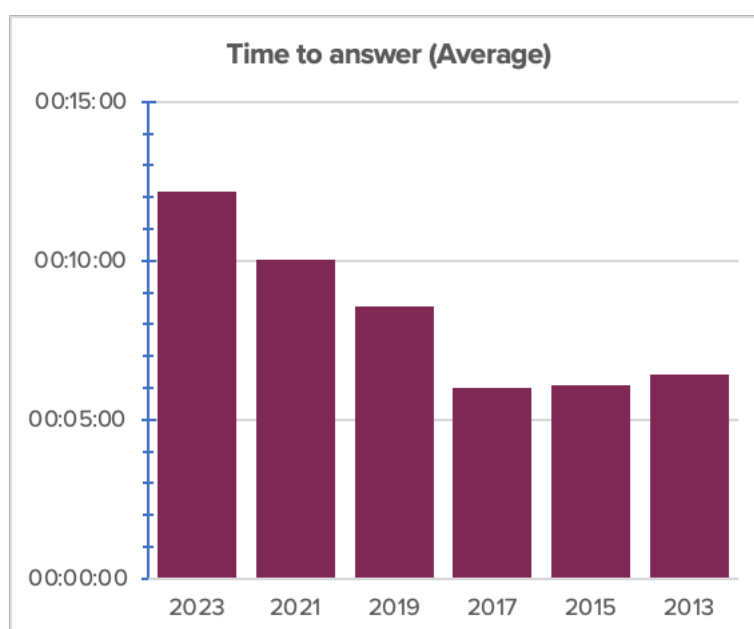
		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Nation	England	1,266	2,181	1,548	1,486	2,011	1,532
	Wales	253	348	337	351	269	578
	Scotland	27	40	134	165	77	72
	Other	107	44	18	0	0	39
Type	Local	1,205	2,216	1,592	1,724	2,076	1,622
	National	242	135	277	190	135	507
	Special	54	43	26	0	0	0
	University	152	219	142	88	146	92
Total	Cases	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221



When compared to the 2021 survey we find that only 47 archives participated in 2023, compared to 58 back in 2021, ie almost 20% less. Consequently, we can see a downturn in overall numbers from 2,613 in 2021 to 1,653 in 2023. A drop of some 37%, the vast majority of which was across local archives. Nonetheless, this number of responses still legitimately allows us to interpret the results with a high degree of confidence.

Time to answer

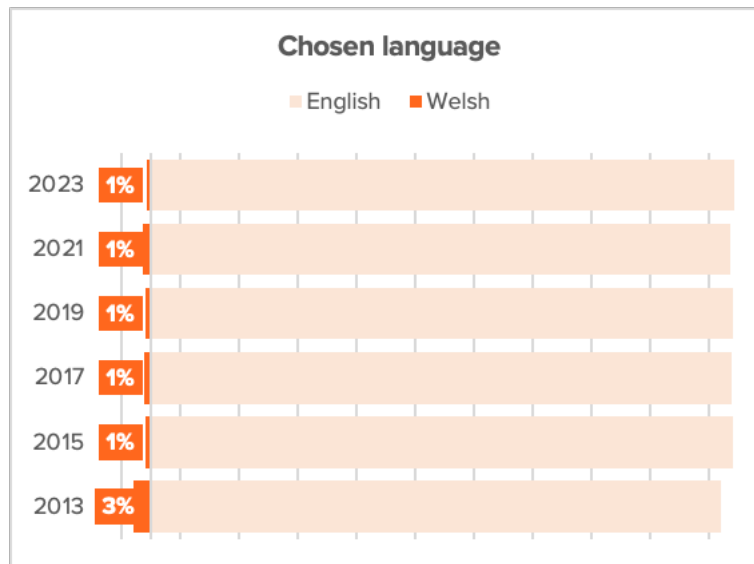
	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Mean / Average	00:12:10	00:10:03	00:08:34	00:06:01	00:06:06	00:06:25
Minimum	00:00:25	00:01:33	00:01:06	00:00:37	00:01:16	00:00:26
Maximum	20:52:48	07:07:42	06:15:42	07:25:00	08:28:23	05:51:17
Percentile 25	00:02:28	00:04:01	00:03:09	00:03:05	00:03:09	00:03:09
Median / Percentile 50	00:03:29	00:05:42	00:04:21	00:04:14	00:04:16	00:04:25
Percentile 75	00:05:09	00:08:49	00:06:59	00:06:01	00:06:04	00:06:23
Percentile 95	00:10:51	00:18:28	00:14:32	00:13:21	00:13:28	00:13:40
Cases	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221



We note with some interest that, despite an overall shortening of the survey, the average time to complete has increased. This is almost certainly as a consequence of someone remaining logged in, whilst not actually completing it. To explain, an individual started their survey at 8pm on 6 December but didn't complete it until 6pm on 8 December. Regardless, what is apparent is that all other measures, eg the media time, are significantly down.

Chosen language

	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
English	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	97%
Welsh	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Cases	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221



Whereas in previous surveys only clients of Welsh archives were offered the opportunity to respond in Welsh, this year all respondents were offered this option. Nonetheless, this made little difference to the proportion who did so.

What were your main reasons for using email or other electronic method, e.g. via the web, to contact the Record Office rather than making a personal visit?

	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Live too far away to visit / Live outside the UK and Ireland	33%	41%	48%	45%	47%	51%
See if archive has relevant information	32%	39%	37%	34%	37%	37%
Email / phone / letter / other electronic method more convenient	31%	35%	33%	30%	31%	32%
In advance of a personal visit	22%	18%	22%	19%	23%	20%
Used the archive's website but needed further help or advice	17%	21%	23%	17%	16%	17%
Saves on travel costs	14%	13%	15%	12%	13%	15%
Need advice on services available	10%	13%	13%	11%	12%	11%
Don't have time to visit	7%	5%	7%	6%	7%	7%
Follow-up to personal visit	5%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%
Cannot visit easily due to health related issues	4%	..	..	..	..	..
Cannot visit during your opening hours	3%	..	..	..	..	..
Other	5%	9%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Cases	1,639	2,610	1,994	1,992	2,352	2,177
Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	99%	100%	98%	100%	100%	98%

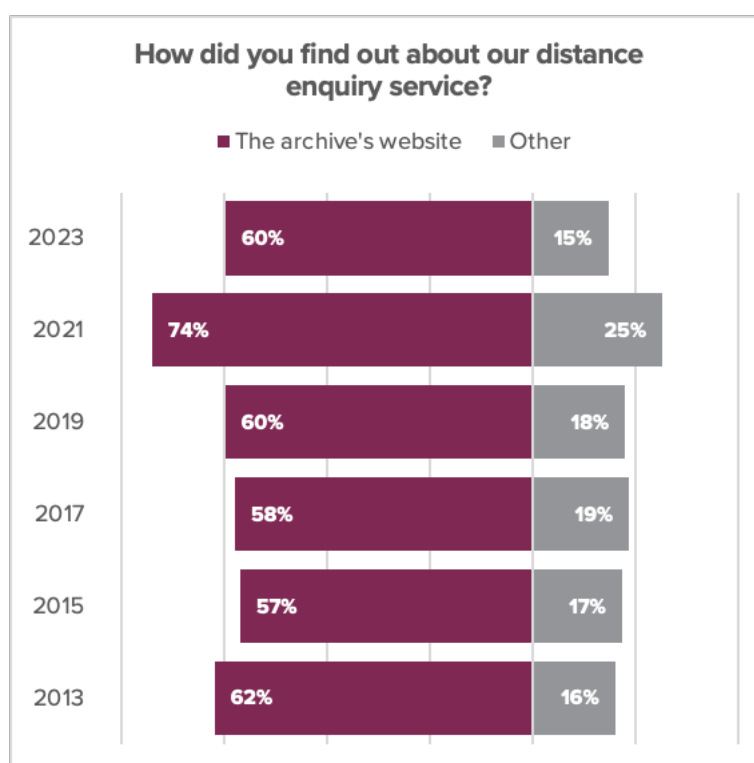


Although a third (33%) of respondents live too far away to visit or because they live outside the UK or Ireland, in comparison with all previous surveys this is a far smaller proportion. A similar picture emerges in reference to those enquiring if the archive has relevant information, ie in comparison to the other stated reasons it is still significant, but compared to previous years it is also a smaller proportion.

Why this has occurred cannot be reliably determined. But it does appear that survey respondents are currently more inclined to select just one rather than multiple factors

How did you find out about our distance enquiry service?

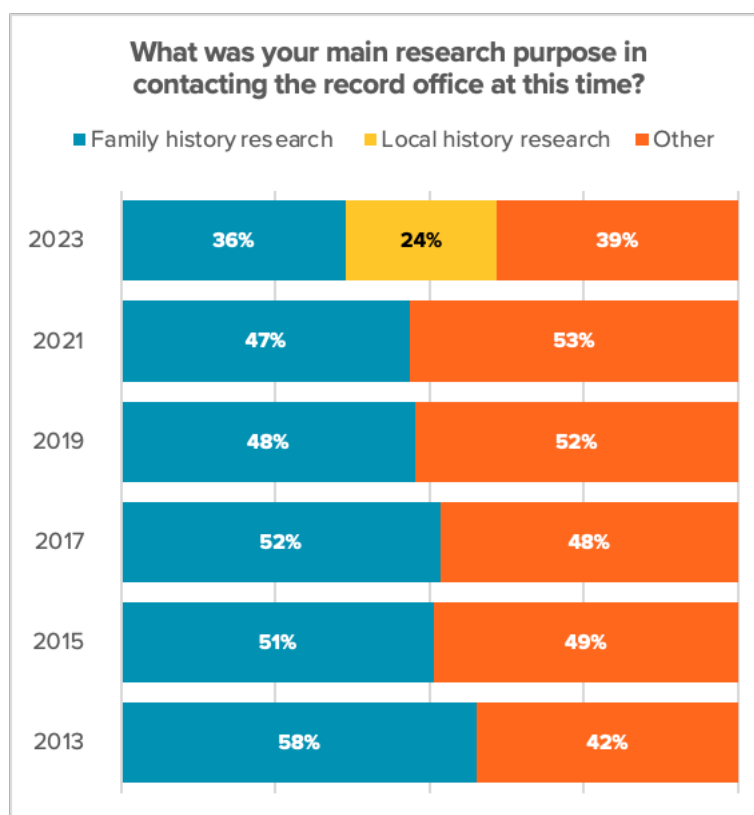
	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
The archive's website	60%	74%	60%	58%	57%	62%
Word of mouth, including friends or family	9%	..	7%	7%	8%	8%
A library / museum	7%	..	8%	10%	11%	8%
Through the course of my employment	6%	..	6%	6%	5%	4%
A family history society	5%	..	6%	5%	5%	6%
Through the course of my education / training	5%	..	4%	4%	4%	5%
Through a social media site, e.g. Twitter, Facebook	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%
A magazine / newspaper / other publication	1%	..	1%	2%	2%	1%
Leaflets / posters	0%	..	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	15%	25%	18%	19%	17%	16%
Cases	1,578	2,573	2,028	1,991	2,351	2,170
Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	95%	98%	100%	99%	100%	98%



It remains the case that most people find out about distance enquiries through the archive's own website. Although in 2023 the proportion reporting this (60%) has dropped back down to its previous levels prior to 2021. Interestingly, those stating other reasons has also reduced to its lowest figure ever of 15%. And for those who selected this option they were primarily using Google or a web search. Whilst the proportions selecting any of the other options appear to have remained pretty similar over the past decade.

What was your main research purpose in contacting the record office at this time?

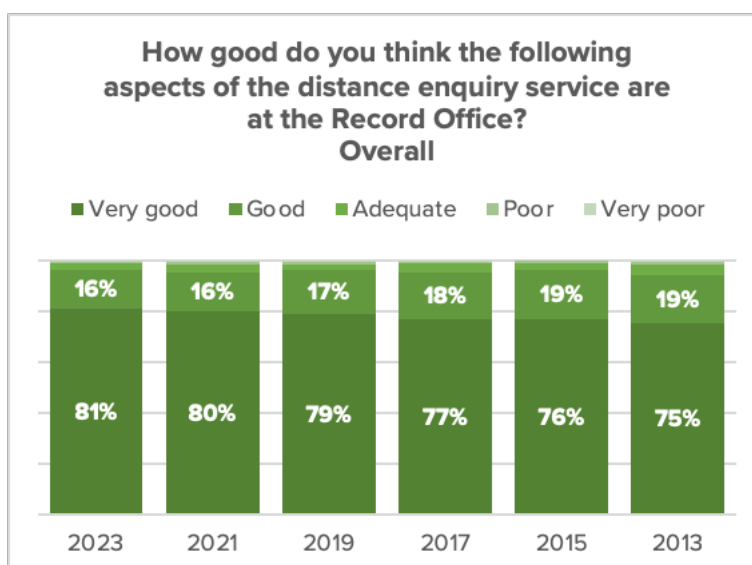
	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Family history research	36%	47%	48%	52%	51%	58%
Local history research	24%					
Work in connection with your employment	12%	10%	13%	11%	12%	9%
Formal education as student / researcher	10%	10%	11%	10%	11%	10%
Personal leisure / recreation	5%	9%	11%	10%	10%	9%
Non-leisure personal or family business	2%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Formal education as a teacher	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	9%	19%	14%	13%	13%	10%
Cases	1,603	2,562	2,017	1,982	2,350	2,169
Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	97%	98%	99%	99%	100%	98%



A new category of response 'local history research' was introduced in the 2023 survey and elicited a high level of response (24%). It also appears to have had a significant impact on those selecting 'other', to a new low of just 9%. Also, smaller proportions now state their main reason is 'personal leisure / recreation'.

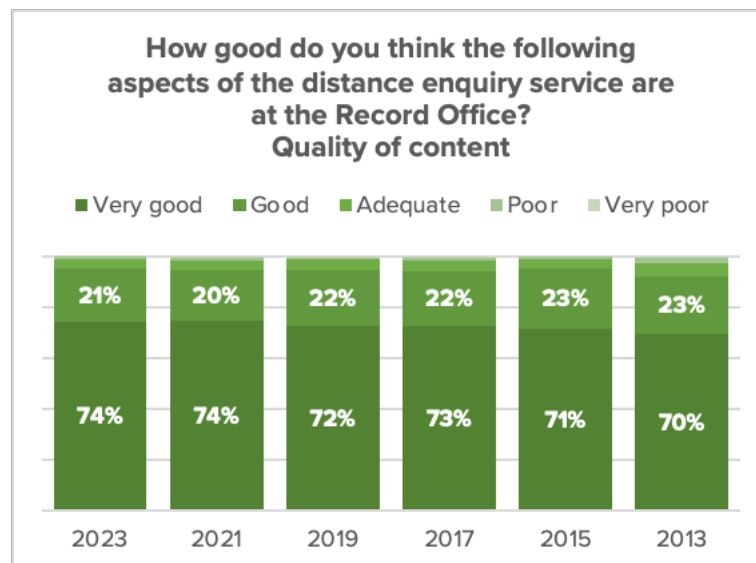
How good do you think the following aspects of the distance enquiry service are at the Record Office?

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Overall	Very good	81%	80%	79%	77%	76%	75%
	Good	16%	16%	17%	18%	19%	19%
	Adequate	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
	Poor	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Very poor	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	Cases	1,606	2,457	1,888	1,931	2,285	2,111
	Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate		97%	94%	93%	96%	97%	95%



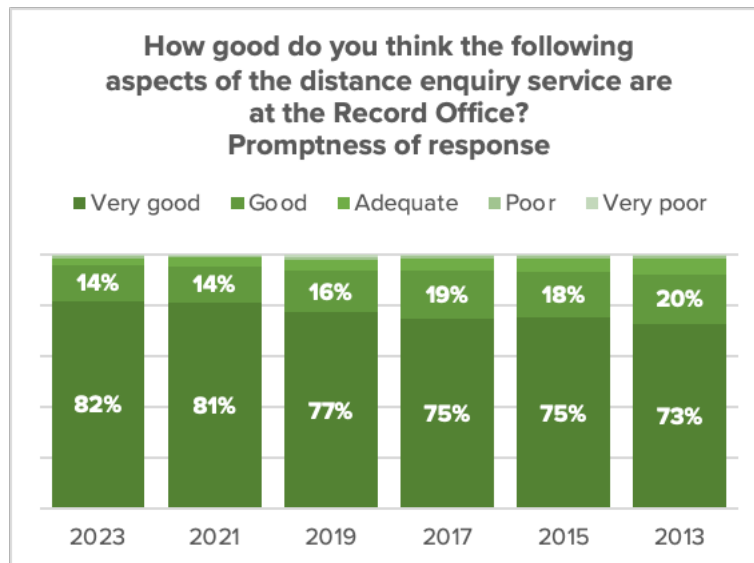
The results for 2023 remain on a par with those for 2021, and an increase on those from 2013 through to 2019 inclusive. Although, compared to all previous reporting periods, the combined proportions ticking adequate, poor, or very poor have decreased.

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Quality of content	Very good	74%	74%	72%	73%	71%	70%
	Good	21%	20%	22%	22%	23%	23%
	Adequate	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%
	Poor	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
	Very poor	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	Cases	1,480	2,335	1,900	1,907	2,268	2,091
	Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	90%	89%	93%	95%	96%	94%	



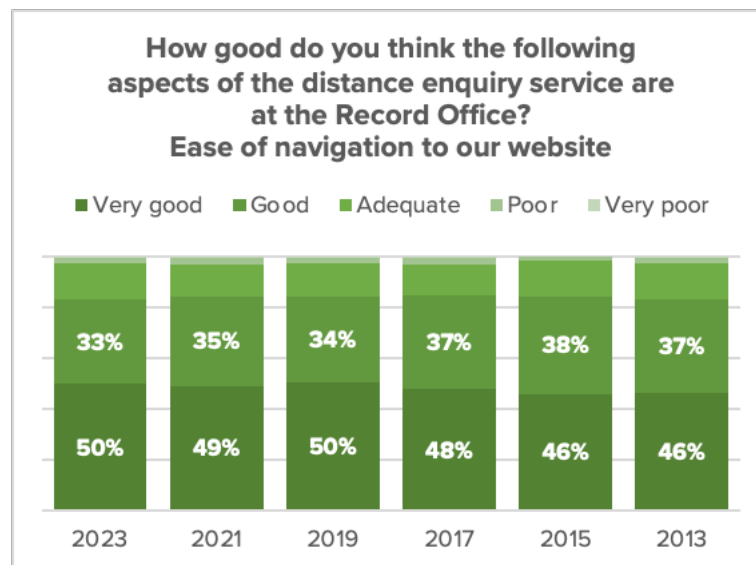
As with overall satisfaction, ratings for 'quality of content' remain consistently high, with some 95% ticking either 'very good' or 'good' in 2024.

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Promptness of response	Very good	82%	81%	77%	75%	75%	73%
	Good	14%	14%	16%	19%	18%	20%
	Adequate	3%	4%	5%	5%	5%	6%
	Poor	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Very poor	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Cases	1,595	2,462	1,925	1,952	2,292	2,104
	Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	96%	94%	95%	98%	97%	95%	



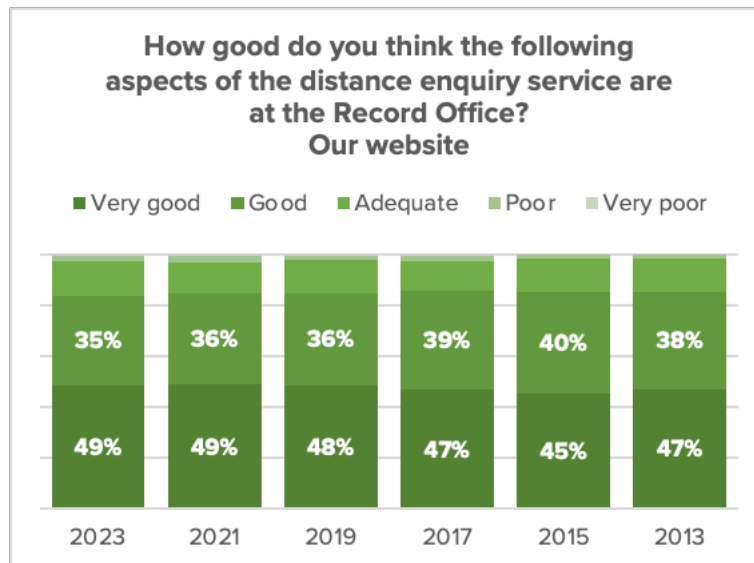
Since 2013 there has been a steady uplift in those stating that the ‘promptness of response’ has been very good to a new high of 82%. Resulting in a consequent downturn in those ticking any of the other options.

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Ease of navigation to our website	Very good	50%	49%	50%	48%	46%	46%
	Good	33%	35%	34%	37%	38%	37%
	Adequate	14%	13%	13%	13%	14%	14%
	Poor	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
	Very poor	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	Cases	1,392	2,122	1,809	1,826	2,161	1,995
	Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	84%	81%	89%	91%	92%	90%	



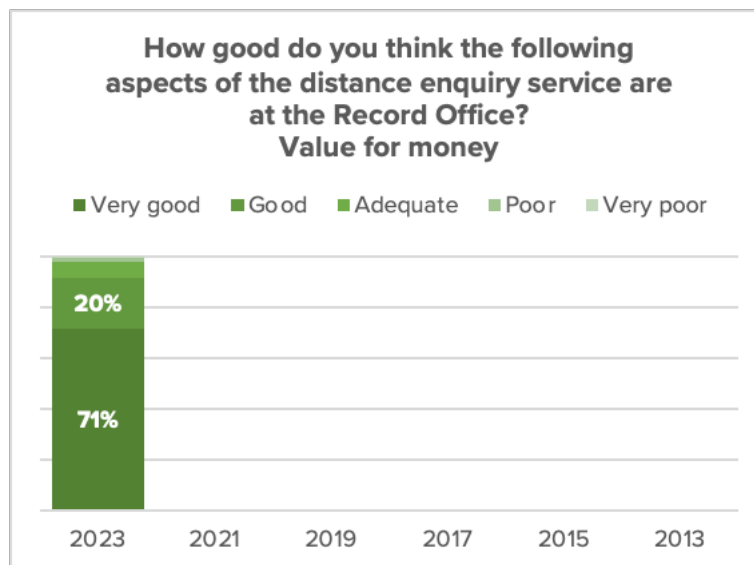
For the past few years, ie since 2019, results for ‘ease of navigation to our website’ have remained pretty constant. Generally though, ratings related to an archive’s website are low, in comparison to other factors.

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Our website	Very good	49%	49%	48%	47%	45%	47%
	Good	35%	36%	36%	39%	40%	38%
	Adequate	14%	12%	13%	12%	13%	13%
	Poor	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
	Very poor	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%
	Cases	1,395	2,150	1,807	1,811	2,137	1,984
	Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	84%	82%	89%	90%	91%	89%	



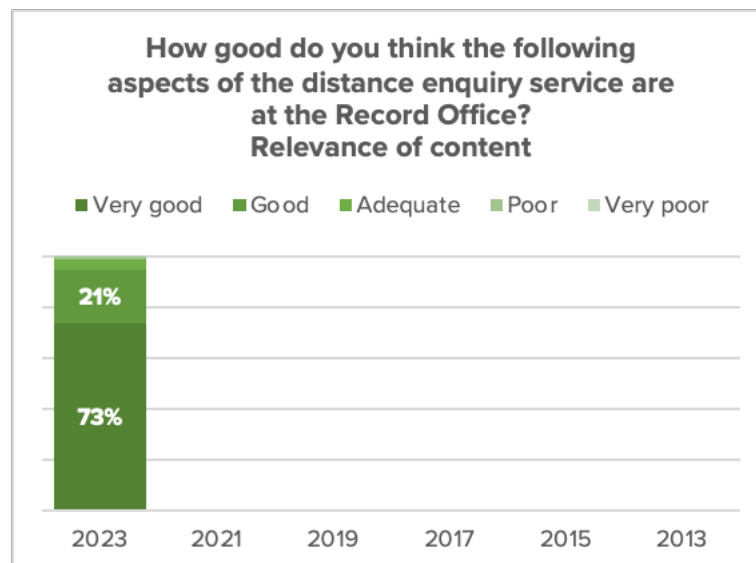
As noted in relation to ease of navigation to the archive's website, the proportions scoring the website as very good still remains below 50%. Albeit that in total some 84% state that this aspect is very good or good. However, in 2023, the proportion stating adequate is at its highest level to date at 14%.

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Value for money	Very good	71%					
	Good	20%					
	Adequate	7%					
	Poor	1%					
	Very poor	1%					
	Cases	1,041					
	Base	1,653					
Survey response rate	63%						



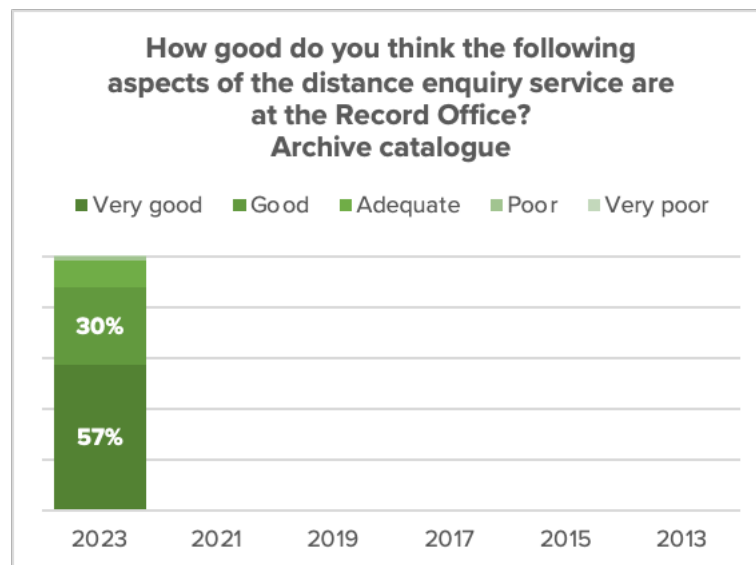
A new question for 2023 on the topic of value for money (VfM). In total some 91% of respondents stated that they considered archive services VfM as good or very good.

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Relevance of content	Very good	73%					
	Good	21%					
	Adequate	4%					
	Poor	1%					
	Very poor	0%					
	Cases	1,467					
	Base	1,653					
Survey response rate		89%					



Another new indicator for 2023. With an even greater proportion who consider that the ‘relevance of content’ offered by an archive to be good or very good (94% in total).

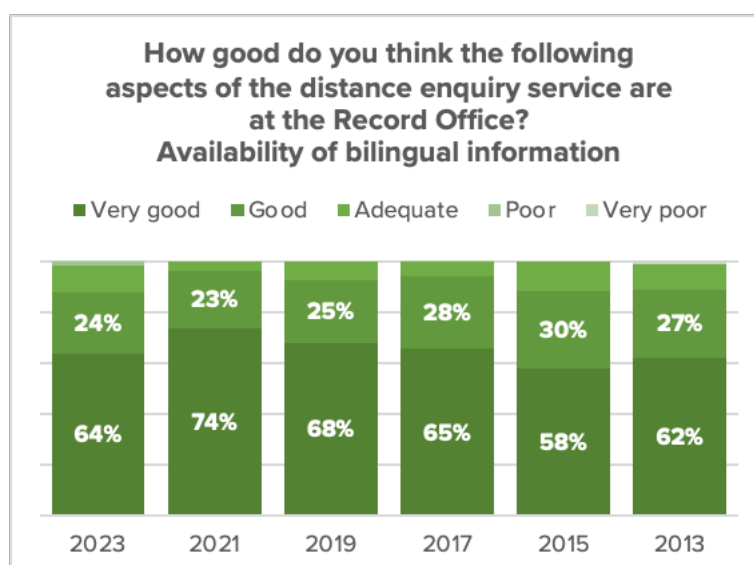
		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Archive catalogue	Very good	57%					
	Good	30%					
	Adequate	10%					
	Poor	2%					
	Very poor	0%					
	Cases	1,203					
	Base	1,653					
Survey response rate	73%						



There are a myriad of types of archive catalogues, some of which run on open-source software and others on commercial software. Furthermore, some archives will have digitised assets and may store these on Digital Asset Management Systems (DAMS), whilst others may have integrated their Collection Management System (CMS) and DAMS. The results shown here, for the first time, do not differentiate between the various types but simply provide an overall picture of satisfaction.

		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Availability of bilingual information	Very good	64%	74%	68%	65%	58%	62%
	Good	24%	23%	25%	28%	30%	27%
	Adequate	11%	4%	7%	6%	12%	10%
	Poor	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Very poor	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Cases	423	213	268	295	233	458
	Base	1,653	348	337	351	269	578
Survey response rate	26%	61%	80%	84%	87%	79%	

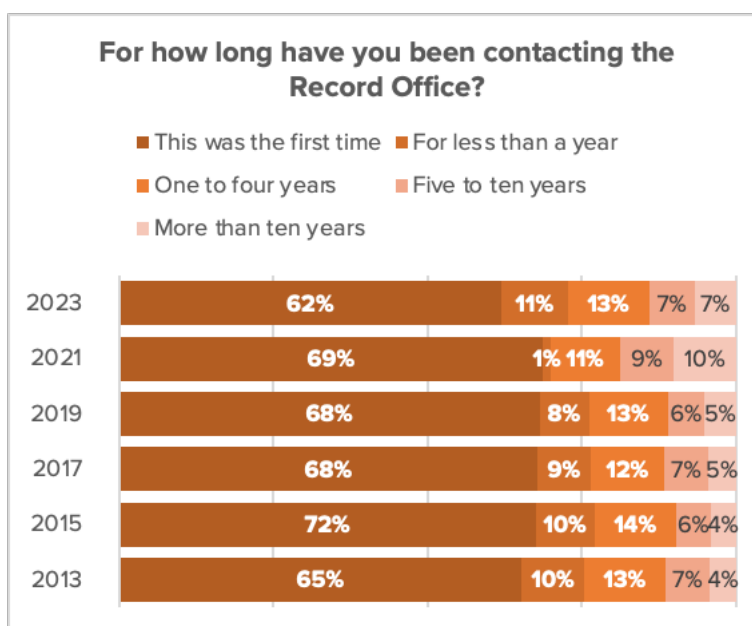
(2013 to 2021 asked solely of respondents to Welsh archives, in 2023 all respondents asked)



Originally this question was only asked of clients of Welsh archives but has now been expanded to include all survey respondents. This fact may well explain the change in scores for 2023 in comparison with that for 2021, nonetheless they remain broadly in line with all previous results. However, focussing on results purely for Welsh archives, the proportions stating very good is at 76% and that for good at 21%, an improvement on results for 2021.

For how long have you been contacting the Record Office

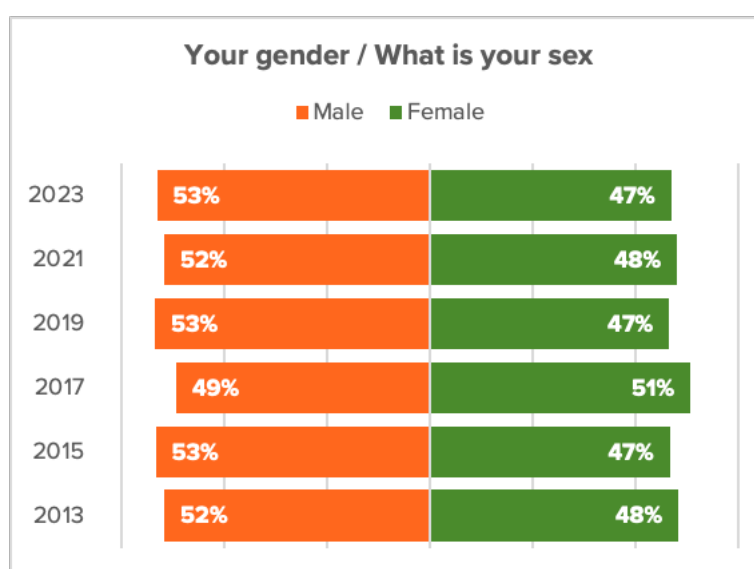
	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
This was the first time	62%	69%	68%	68%	72%	65%
For less than a year	11%	1%	8%	9%	10%	10%
One to four years	13%	11%	13%	12%	14%	13%
Five to ten years	7%	9%	6%	7%	6%	7%
More than ten years	7%	10%	5%	5%	4%	4%
Cases	1,641	2,501	1,954	1,989	2,352	2,174
Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	99%	96%	96%	99%	100%	98%



Although those that contacted the archive for the first time formed the largest group in 2023 (62%), this was the smallest proportion recorded in the past decade.

Your gender / What is your sex

	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Male	53%	52%	53%	49%	53%	52%
Female	47%	48%	47%	51%	47%	48%
Prefer to self-describe	..	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Cases	1,543	2,440	1,938	1,975	2,355	2,158
Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	93%	93%	95%	99%	100%	97%

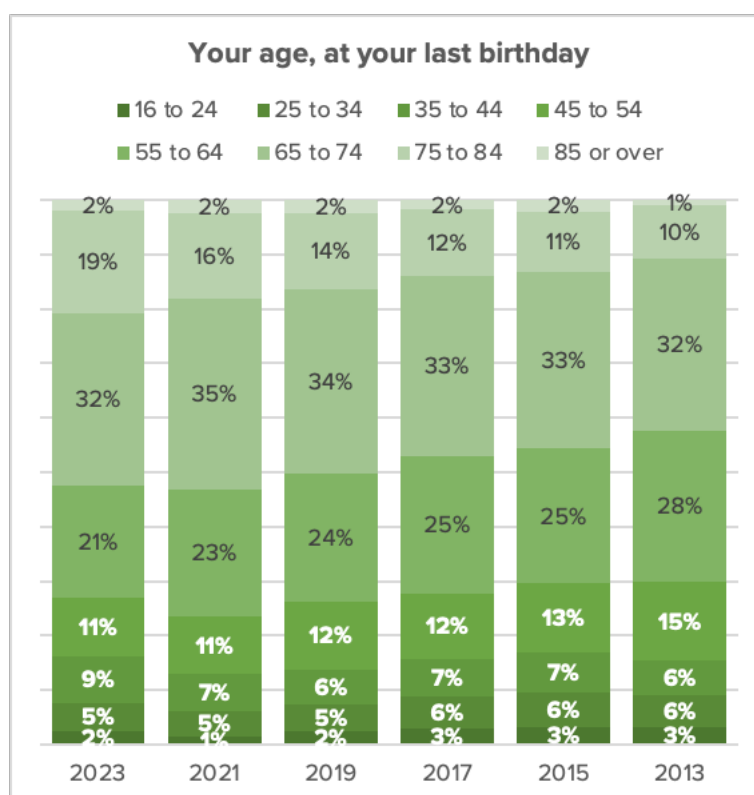


Prior to 2023 the question was phrased 'Your gender'. The change to 'What is your sex' led to another new question being included namely 'Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?'. Also, the option 'prefer to self-describe' was removed in 2023. Regardless, the male / female split remained broadly similar in 2023 compared to the results for previous surveys. Interestingly, in answer to the question: "Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?", some 1,515 (93.6%) answered 'yes', and 103 (6.4%) answered 'prefer not to say'. Absolutely no one (0.0%) answered 'no'.

By way of comparison, the 2021 census results for England and Wales revealed that for those aged 16 or over some 52% were female and 48% were male. Furthermore, again for those aged 16 or greater, in response to the question "*Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?*", some 93.5% said yes, a further 6.0% did not answer the question, and 0.5% stated yes. So, whilst there is a disparity in the male / female splits comparing distance users with that of the census, the results for gender identity are broadly very similar. However, a caveat applies, in that close to 1 in 5 (17%) of respondents to this survey reside outside of the UK, but are included in the table and chart above.

Your age, at your last birthday

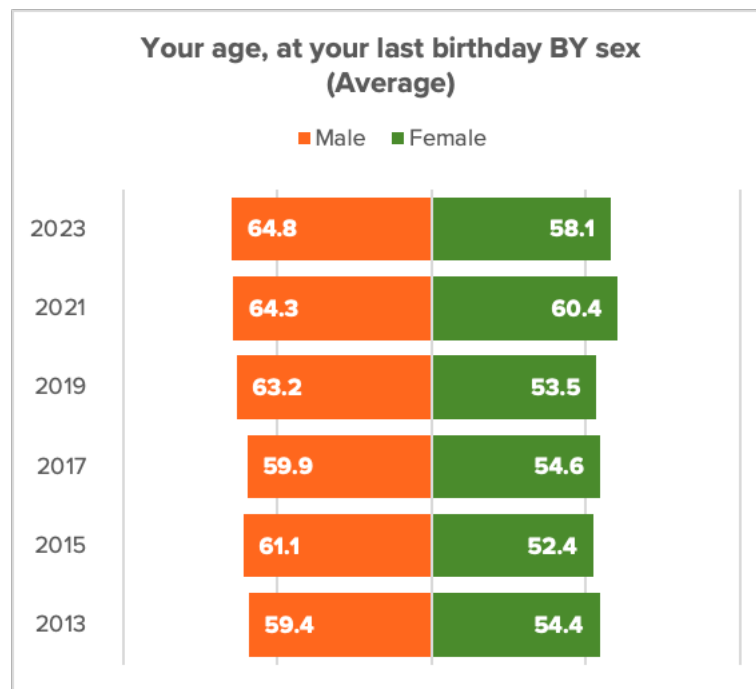
	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
16 to 24	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	3%
25 to 34	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%
35 to 44	9%	7%	6%	7%	7%	6%
45 to 54	11%	11%	12%	12%	13%	15%
55 to 64	21%	23%	24%	25%	25%	28%
65 to 74	32%	35%	34%	33%	33%	32%
75 to 84	19%	16%	14%	12%	11%	10%
85 or over	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Cases	1,429	2,230	1,818	1,881	2,356	2,085
Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	86%	85%	89%	94%	100%	94%



Essentially, over the past decade archives appear to be responding to enquiries from an ever-increasing range of older clients. For example, in 2013 those aged 75 or more represented 11% (10% aged 75 to 84 + 1% aged 85 or over) of all respondents, while by 2023 this figure had reached 21% (19% aged 75 to 84 + 2% aged 85 or over).

Your age, at your last birthday BY sex (Average)

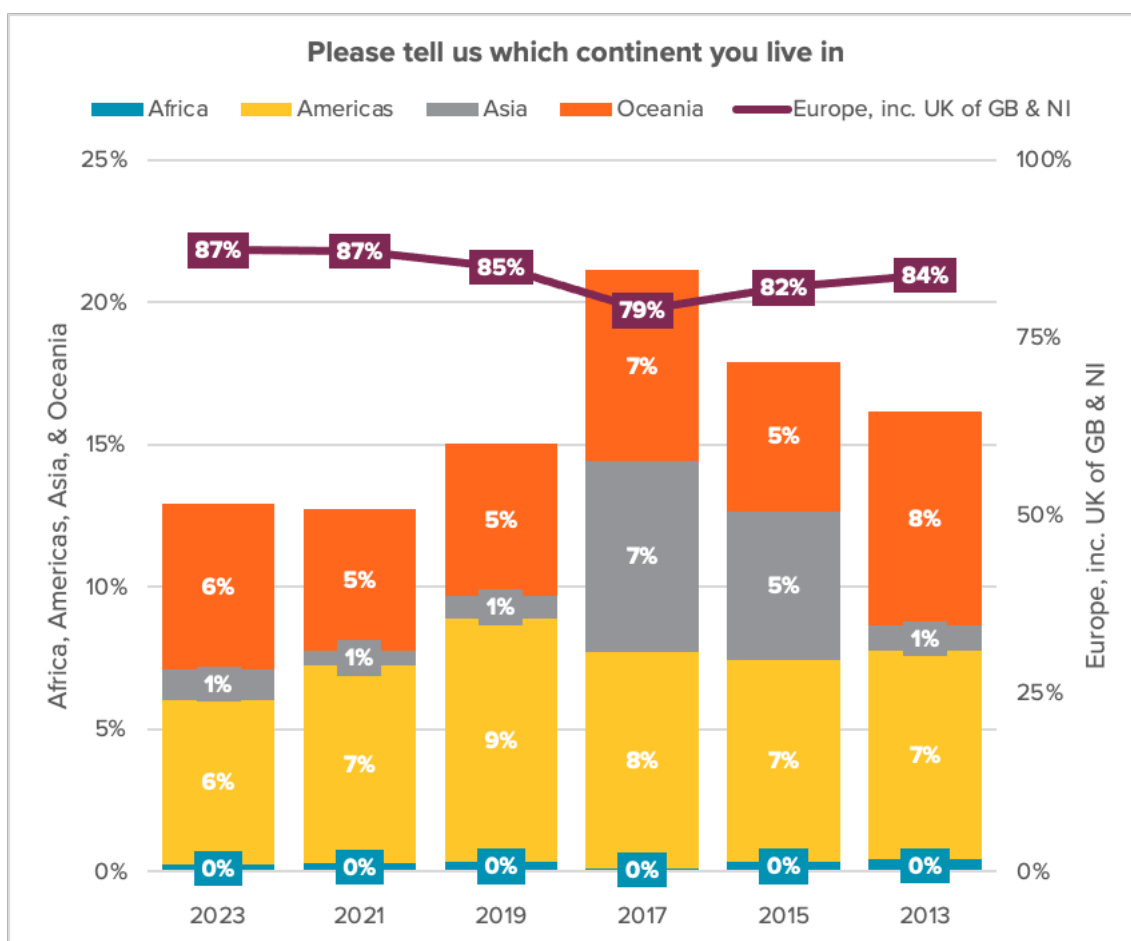
		2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013	
Male	Average age	64.8	64.3	63.2	59.9	61.1	59.4	
	Cases	754	1,172	989	943	1,254	1,077	
	Base	818	1,259	1,034	973	1,254	1,113	
	Survey response rate	92%	93%	96%	97%	100%	97%	
Female		Average age	58.1	60.4	53.5	54.6	52.4	54.4
	Cases	635	1,053	828	932	1,100	1,000	
	Base	725	1,176	904	1,002	1,101	1,045	
	Survey response rate	88%	90%	92%	93%	100%	96%	



This increase in age of archive clients can be mostly accredited to males, as the average age for females over the past decade has varied from survey to survey, ie there is no discernible trend. Whereas that for males has shown a tendency to gradually increase over time.

Please tell us which continent / region you live in

	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Africa	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Americas	6%	7%	9%	8%	7%	7%
Asia	1%	1%	1%	7%	5%	1%
Europe, inc. UK of GB & NI	87%	87%	85%	79%	82%	84%
Oceania	6%	5%	5%	7%	5%	8%
Cases	1,627	2,446	1,922	1,957	2,339	2,153
Base	1,653	2,613	2,037	2,002	2,357	2,221
Survey response rate	98%	94%	94%	98%	99%	97%

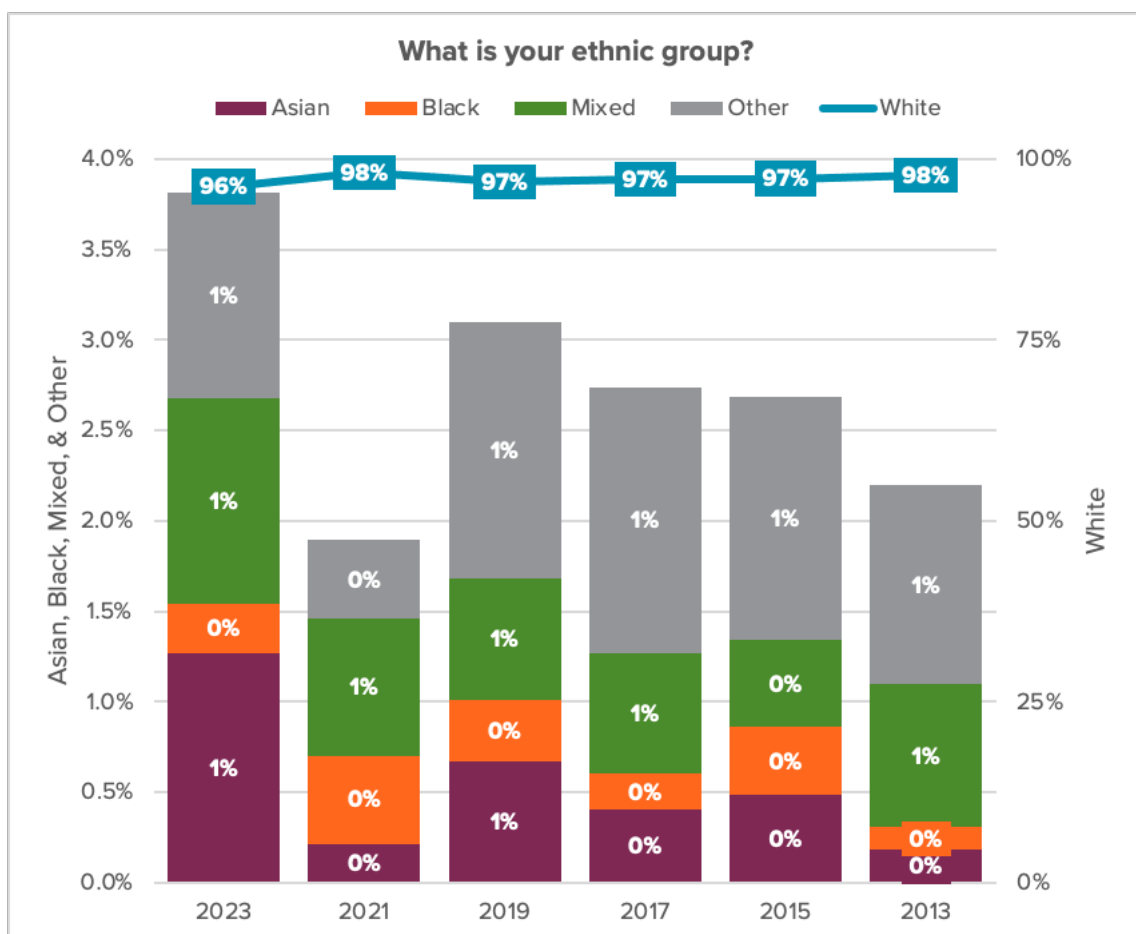


Whilst the 2017 survey attracted a higher level of response from those outside of the Europe, results for all other periods are reasonably similar.

What is your ethnic group?

	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Asian	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Black	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mixed	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
White	96%	98%	97%	97%	97%	98%
Other	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Cases	1,494	1,849	1,485	1,496	1,862	1,639
Base	1,653	1,897	1,533	1,569	1,902	1,692
Survey response rate	90%	97%	97%	95%	98%	97%

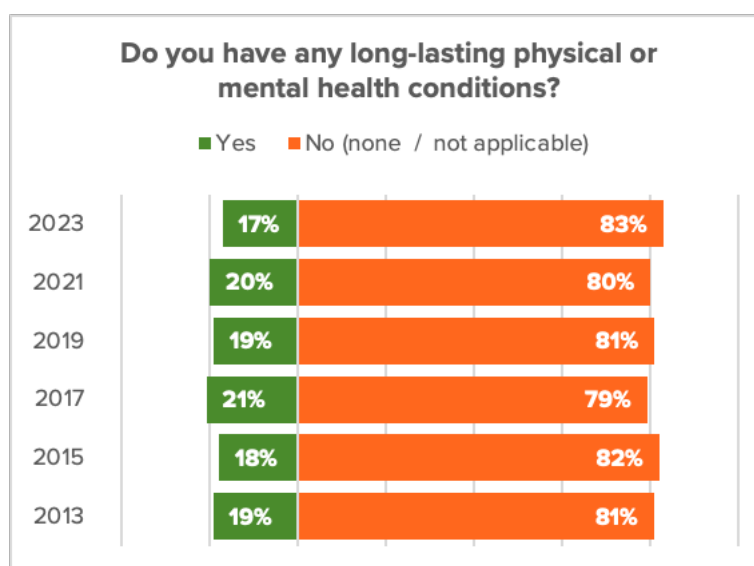
(Only asked of residents in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland & Ireland)



The ethnicity split for 2023 is higher than at any point in the past decade, with a small reduction in those stating they are white and a small reciprocal increase in all other ethnic groups.

Do you have any long-lasting physical or mental health conditions?

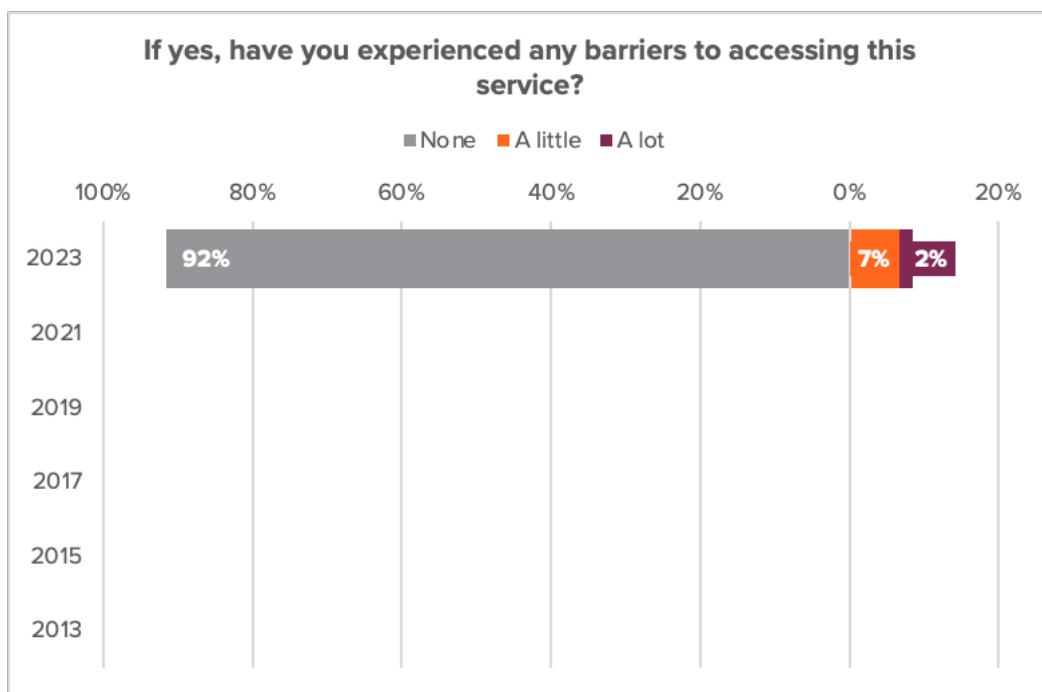
	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
Yes	17%	20%	19%	21%	18%	19%
No (none / not applicable)	83%	80%	81%	79%	82%	81%
Cases	1,598	1,947	1,446	1,460	1,824	1,605
Base	1,653	2,062	1,533	1,569	1,902	1,692
Survey response rate	97%	94%	94%	93%	96%	95%



Prior to 2023 the question asked survey respondents to choose from a list of disabilities or conditions, eg hearing or mobility. Whereas in 2023 we simply asked them to respond yes or no. So, anyone that previously selected a disability or condition was recoded as a yes purely for comparison purposes. Whilst this might be an inexact method, it does appear to show a downturn in those with any long-lasting physical or mental health conditions in 2023 compared to previous surveys.

If yes, have you experienced any barriers to accessing this service?

	2023	2021	2019	2017	2015	2013
A lot	2%					
A little	7%					
None	92%					
Cases	272					
Base (Yes)	272					
Survey response rate	100%					



For anyone that responded yes to the previous question, they were then asked if they experienced any barriers in accessing an archive’s services. Whilst 92% said none, some 9% stated that they did, ie a lot or a little. Archives will need to follow this up independently where permissible.

Appendices

Online Survey

Distance Enquiry Services Survey 2023

You recently contacted this archive by letter, email or other electronic method, e.g. via the web, to draw on our distance enquiry services. Your feedback and views will help improve our services to customers. Do note that:

- This survey is being conducted by this archive and the ARA (UK and Ireland), in collaboration with Shaffer and Co;
- Shaffer and Co abide by the Social Research Association's ethical guidelines; and
- We estimate that this survey should take 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Page 1

1. How did you find out about our distance enquiry service? Please select all that apply

- The archive's website
- Leaflets / posters
- A magazine / newspaper / other publication
- Through the course of my education / training
- Through a social media site, e.g. Twitter, Facebook
- Word of mouth, including friends or family
- Through the course of my employment
- A family history society
- A library / museum
- Other

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Page 2

2. What was your main reason for contacting us at this time? *Please select one option*

- Formal education as student / researcher
- Local history research
- Formal education as a teacher
- Family history research
- Work in connection with your employment
- Non-leisure personal or family business
- Personal leisure / recreation
- Other

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Page 3

3. **What were your main reasons for using email, letter or other electronic method, e.g. via the web, to contact us rather than making a personal visit?** *Please tick all that apply*

- Follow-up to personal visit
- See if archive has relevant information
- Saves on travel costs
- Cannot visit easily due to health related issues
- Used the archive's website but needed further help or advice
- Don't have time to visit
- Live too far away to visit / Live outside the UK and Ireland
- In advance of a personal visit
- Cannot visit during your opening hours
- Need advice on services available
- Email / phone / letter / other electronic method more convenient
- Other

Page 4

4. How good do you think the following aspects of the distance enquiry service are at this archive? Please select one option per row


	Very good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor	Not applicable
Overall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevance of content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Archive catalogue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promptness of response	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ease of navigation to our website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of bilingual information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>


Page 5

5. **For how long have you been contacting this archive by email, letter or other electronic method, e.g. via the web?** *Please select one option*

Select your answer 

6. **What is your sex?** *Please select one option*

Select your answer 

7. **Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?** *Please select one option* 

Yes

No

8. **Optionally, please write in your gender identity**

Enter your answer

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9. **Your age, at your last birthday**

If you prefer not to answer, please leave blank

The value must be a number

10. **Which one of the following countries do you live in?** 

Please select one option

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Nort... 

11. **What is your home postcode?**

Enter your answer


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12. **What is your ethnic group?** *Please select one option*

Select your answer 

13. **Do you have any long-lasting physical or mental health conditions?** 

Please select one option

Yes

No

14. **If yes, have you experienced any barriers to accessing this service?** *Please select one option*

A lot

A little

None

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15. **Are there any changes or improvements you would like to see made to the service at this archive?**

Enter your answer

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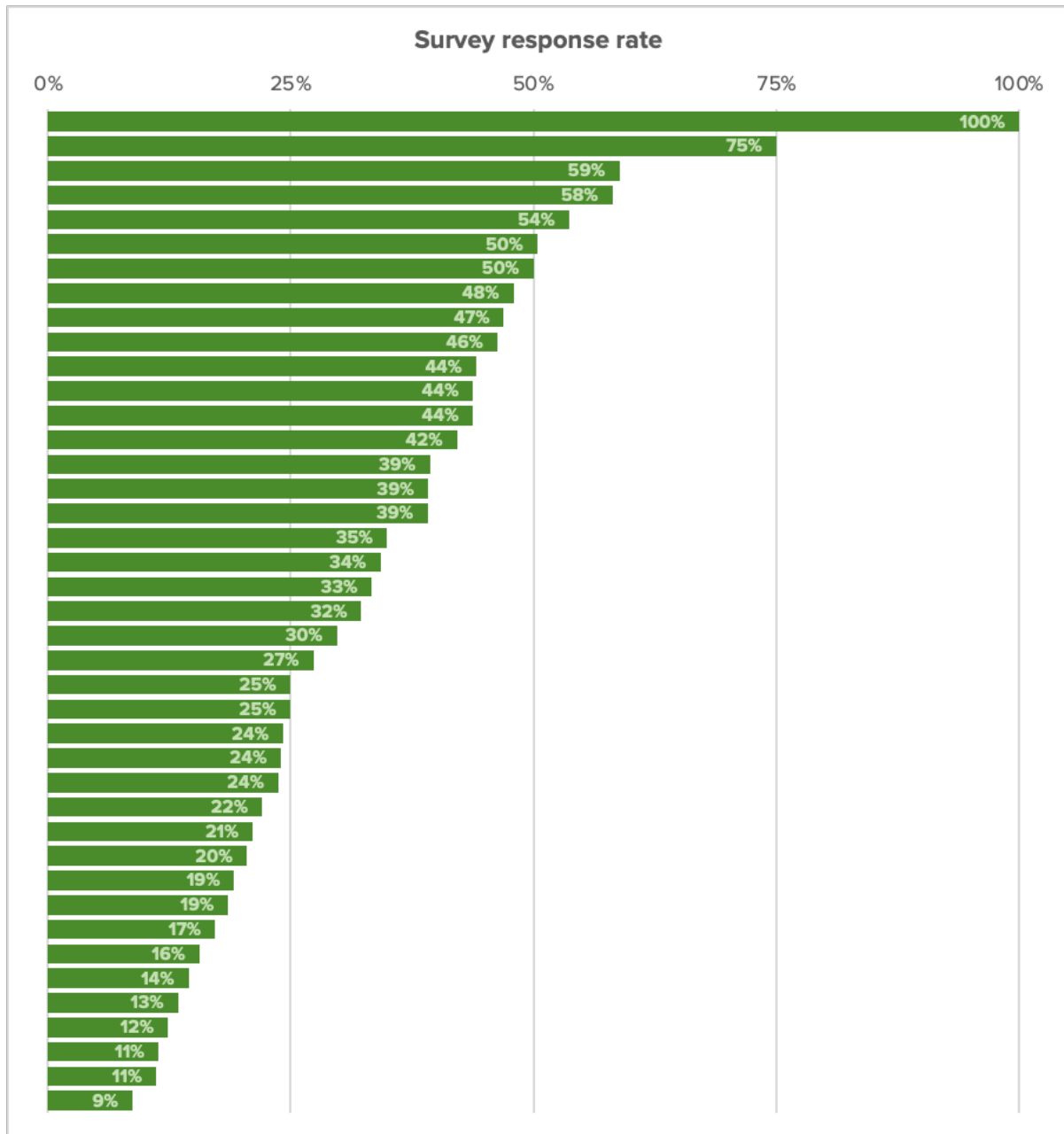
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Participating Archives

Archive	Archifau	Country	Region	Class
Anglesey Archives	Archifau Ynys Môn	Wales	Wales	Local
Archifdy Ceredigion Archives	Archifdy Ceredigion	Wales	Wales	Local
Bangor University Archives and Special Collections	Archifau a Chasgliadau Arbennig, Prifysgol Bangor	Wales	Wales	University
Bristol Archives		England	South West	Local
Cardiff University Special Collections & Archives	Casgliadau Arbennig ac Archifau, Prifysgol Caerdydd	Wales	Wales	University
Carmarthenshire Archives	Archifdy Sir Gâr	Wales	Wales	Local
Cheshire Archives		England	North West	Local
Conwy Archive Service	Gwasanaeth Archif Conwy	Wales	Wales	Local
Dorset History Centre		England	South West	Local
Essex County Council		England	East	Local
Explore York Libraries & Archives		England	Yorkshire and The Humber	Local
Glamorgan Archives	Archifau Morgannwg	Wales	Wales	Local
Gwent Archives	Archifau Gwent	Wales	Wales	Local
Hackney Archives, Libraries and Heritage Services		England	London	Local
Hampshire Archives and Local Studies		England	South East	Local
Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre		England	West Midlands	Local
Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies		England	East	Local
Historic England		England	South West	National
Historic Environment Scotland		Scotland	Scotland	National
Inspire Culture		England	East Midlands	Local
Jersey Heritage		Channel Islands	Channel Islands	Special
Kent History and Library Centre		England	South East	Local
London Metropolitan Archives		England	London	Local
National Library of Wales	Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru	Wales	Wales	National
North East Wales Archives (Hawarden)	Archifau Gogledd Ddwyrain Cymru (Penarlâg)	Wales	Wales	Local
North East Wales Archives (Ruthin)	Archifau Gogledd Ddwyrain Cymru (Rhuthun)	Wales	Wales	Local
North Yorkshire County Record Office		England	Yorkshire and The Humber	Local
Oxfordshire History Centre		England	South East	Local

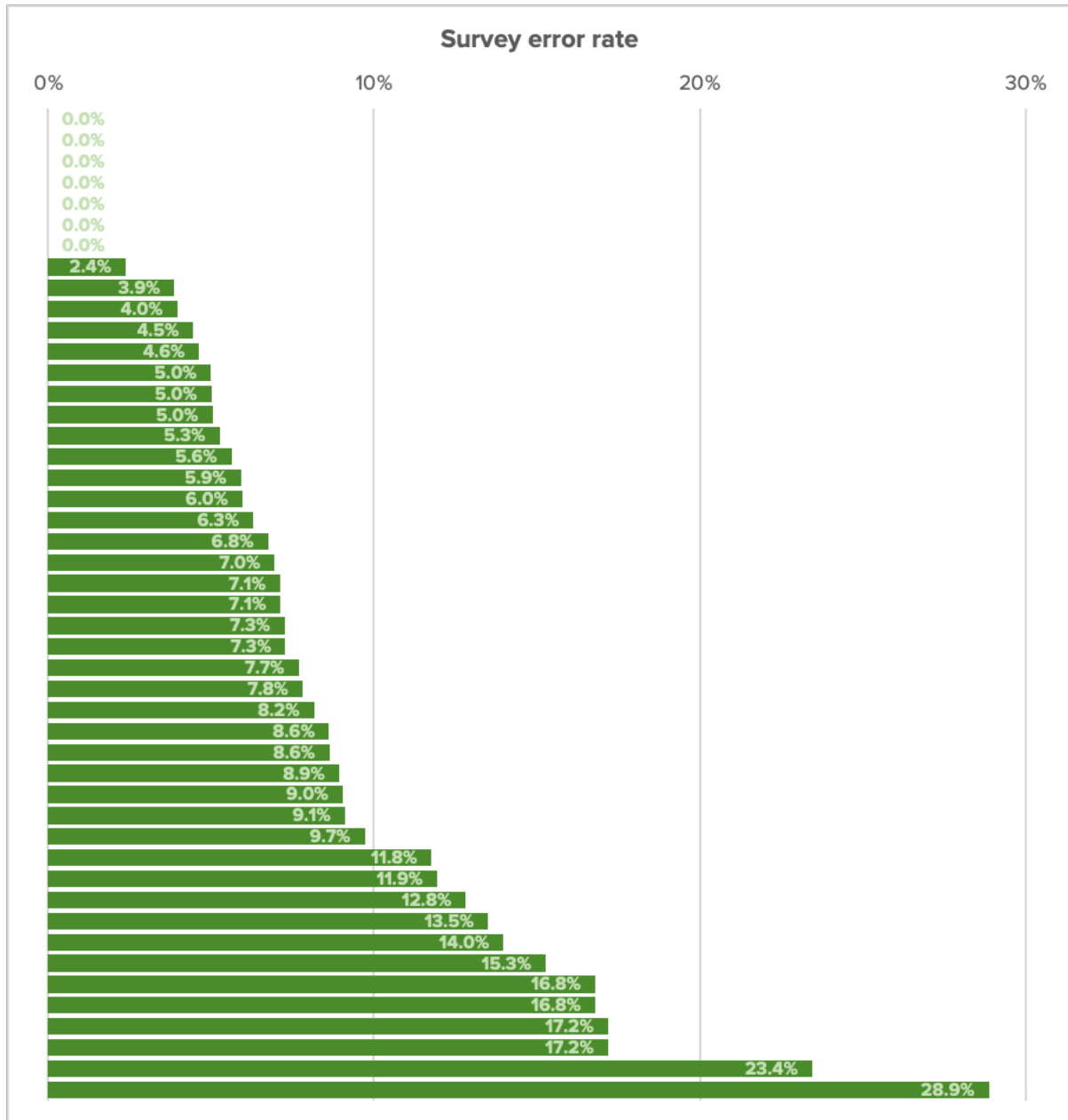
Archive	Archifau	Country	Region	Class
Parliamentary Archives		England	London	National
Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art		England	London	Special
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)		Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	National
Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University	Archifau Richard Burton, Prifysgol Abertawe	Wales	Wales	University
Richmond upon Thames Local Studies Library and Archive		England	London	Local
Royal Berkshire Archives		England	South East	Local
Staffordshire County Council		England	West Midlands	Local
Surrey History Centre		England	South East	Local
The Box (Plymouth City Council)		England	South West	Local
The Museum of English Rural Life and Special Collections		England	South East	University
The Postal Museum		England	London	National
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives		England	London	Local
Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums		England	North East	Local
University College London		England	London	University
University of York		England	Yorkshire and The Humber	University
Warwickshire County Council		England	West Midlands	Local
Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre		England	South West	Local
Wolverhampton City Archives		England	West Midlands	Local
Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service		England	West Midlands	Local

Statistical Validity



The number of invites issued by each archive varied significantly, from as low as 12 to as many as 539. Consequently, the number that replied also varied significantly, from as few as 6 to a maximum of 83. This resulted in a wide degree of variance when it came to response rates, as shown in the chart above, ie ranging from 9% and up.

In total some 5,745 archive clients were approached, albeit that some may have received more than one invitation. And of these, some 1,503 replied, resulting in an overall response rate of 26%, ie one in four. We also note some variation in response rate from country to country, for example in England the response rate was at 26% whilst in Wales it was 33%. Furthermore, there was also a degree of variation in response rates across the different types of archives, as follows: National (15%); University (26%); Local (30%); and Special (47%).



Given the wide variation in response rates, it is not unsurprising to see such a high degree of variation in the survey error rates, see chart above. As a rule of thumb, the results for archives that achieve an error rate of less than $\pm 10\%$ are considered reliable, especially if it is at or below $\pm 5\%$. Those archives where the error rate exceeds $\pm 10\%$ just need to be mindful of the implications, which are outlined below. Generally speaking, the lower the survey response rate, the higher the survey error rate is likely to be.

In cases where the error rate exceeds $\pm 10\%$ it doesn't mean that results are unreliable. It just means that we can only rely on the results where the gap in scores is significant. For example, the results for overall satisfaction are as follows: Very good (81%); Good (16%); Adequate (2%); Poor (1%); and Very poor (0%). Even if our error rate was as $\pm 30\%$, then the lowest our very good score could be is 51% ($81\% \pm 30\%$), and the highest the good score could be is 46% ($16\% \pm 30\%$). This still shows a difference of 5% meaning that the result is reliable.

Interestingly, the results nationally are subject to an error rate of $\pm 1.1\%$. Whilst those for England are at $\pm 1.3\%$, and Wales at $\pm 3.3\%$. By type of archive there is a higher degree of variation as follows: Local ($\pm 1.5\%$); National ($\pm 1.8\%$); University ($\pm 3.5\%$); and Special ($\pm 9.1\%$).