

Survey of Visitors to UK Archives 2018

National Report

Archives and Records Association National Surveys Group

May 2019

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Executive Summary

- In 2018, the overall satisfaction with archive/record offices remained high, with a national average (mean) score of 9.3 out of 10
- Also in 2018, satisfaction with the archive/record office's staff remained high. The average (mean) score for attitude of staff was 9.8 out of 10; for quality and appropriateness of staff's advice it was 9.7; and for availability of staff it was 9.6
- In common with the results for both 2014 and 2016, the average dwell time at an archive remains at just over 3 hours
- The change to the age profile of visitors witnessed last year has remained, with a lower percentage of visitors aged 45 to 64 and a higher percentage aged between 17 and 25. However, the average age of an archive's visitor remains within the 55 to 59 year old age group
- In preparation for their visit to an archive, some 50% went online to check basic info such as opening times and 46% actually conducted online research
- Compared to results for both the 2014 and 2016 surveys, smaller proportions are relying on private transport and more are turning to public transport in 2018
- Whether by consequence or not more than half (52%) are now doing nothing else in the area, but one in six are eating out and one in eight are visiting another place of interest
- We continue to see an increase in the proportions of males visiting UK archives, up from 49% in 2014 and 51% in 2016 to 52% in 2018
- We note that archive visitors are more likely to reside in areas of low deprivation, although archives do attract visitors right across the deprivation spectrum.

Introduction

The resources available to archive visitors are increasing and their demands are becoming more sophisticated. As a result, the demands on archive staff have become more complex and their roles have shifted from acting as an information signpost to providing a wide range of support to visitors.

The Survey of Visitors to UK Archives looks at archive services provided from the adult individual's point of view. The survey captures the visitor journey by understanding:

- preparations taken in advance of their visit
- impressions of staff, services and facilities
- the consequences of their visit.

The survey is generally that of individual visitors to the record office. The point at which the questionnaires are usually issued includes:

- at the point the visitor was settled; at the enquiry desk
- at a point specifically set-up for the duration of the survey
- or at the point of entry, eg the reception or foyer.

All visitors were invited to take part provided they were aged 17 or older. Where a visitor refused to take part their gender and age group were recorded. This demographic data enabled us to determine if certain visitors preferred not to participate and therefore estimate if those who did were generally representative of all visitors.

The 2018 survey took place from Monday 24 September 2018 to Saturday 24 November 2018, at total of 9 weeks. Archives could choose to run the survey from a minimum of 1 week to a maximum of 9 weeks. On average the survey window was kept open for 35 days (5 weeks) whilst the shortest survey ran for just 7 days. To ensure that those archives who ran their surveys for longer than the minimum period of one week did not skew the overall results, their data was weighted so that their contribution to the total was effectively one week of survey activity.

The same survey questions were used in the 2018 survey as were in 2016 and 2014, which allows for comparison over time.

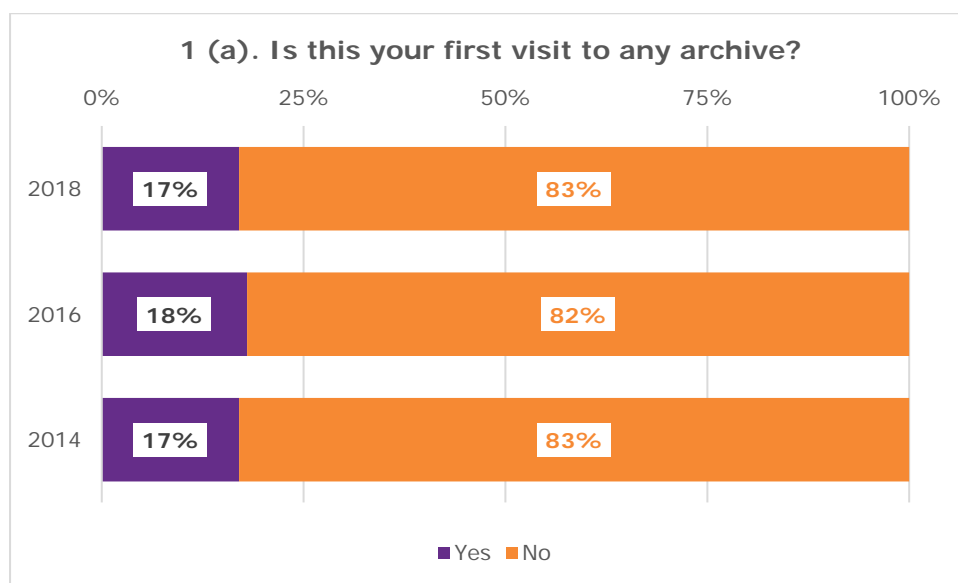
A total of 106 record offices undertook a survey of visitors to their archives in 2018; a decrease from the 114 in 2016 and the 107 from the 2014 survey. Despite this, there was an increase in the number of questionnaires completed over the past three surveys as follows: 6,921 in 2014; 7,814 in 2016; and 8,150 in 2018. Furthermore, we have noted that compared to both the 2014 and 2016 surveys, the proportion of local authority archives has reduced.

All percentages in this report have been subject to rounding. Consequently this may lead to some totals being greater or less than 100%.

Section A: The Reason for Your Visit

1 (a). Is this your first visit to any archive?

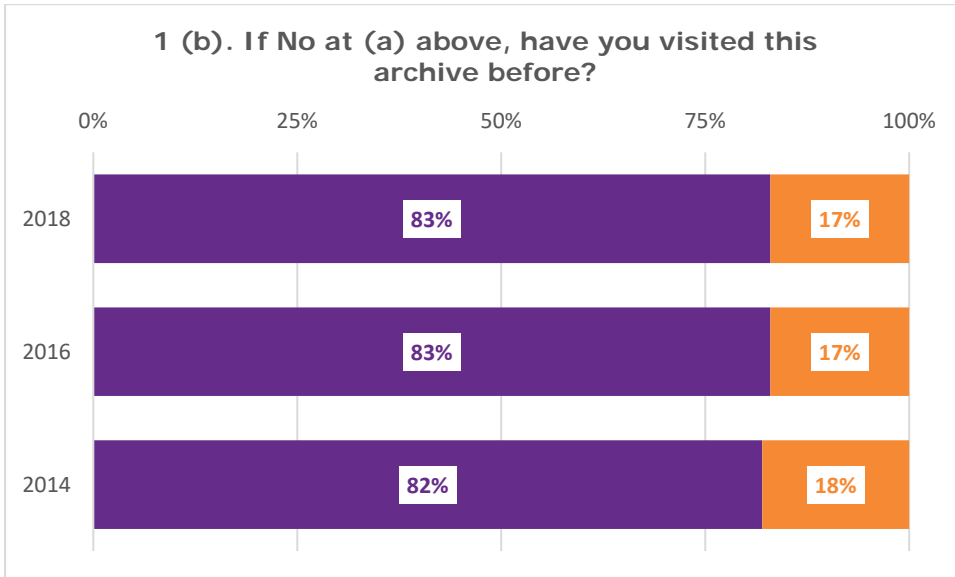
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,750	7,519	6,773
Yes	17%	18%	17%
No	83%	82%	83%



Just under 1 in 5 respondents were first time visitors to their respective archive and record offices.

1 (b). If No at (a) above, have you visited this archive before?

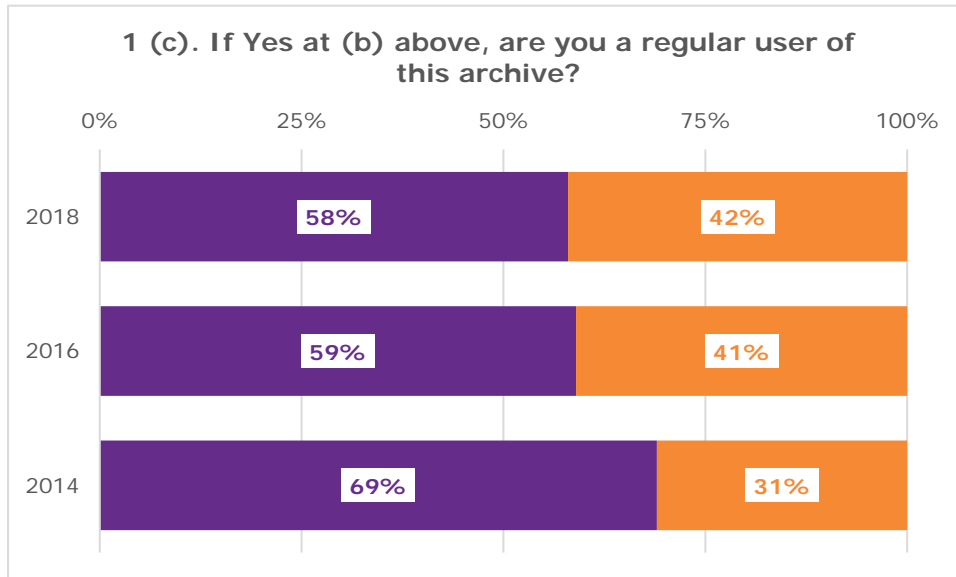
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	6,414	6,212	5,475
Yes	83%	83%	82%
No	17%	17%	18%



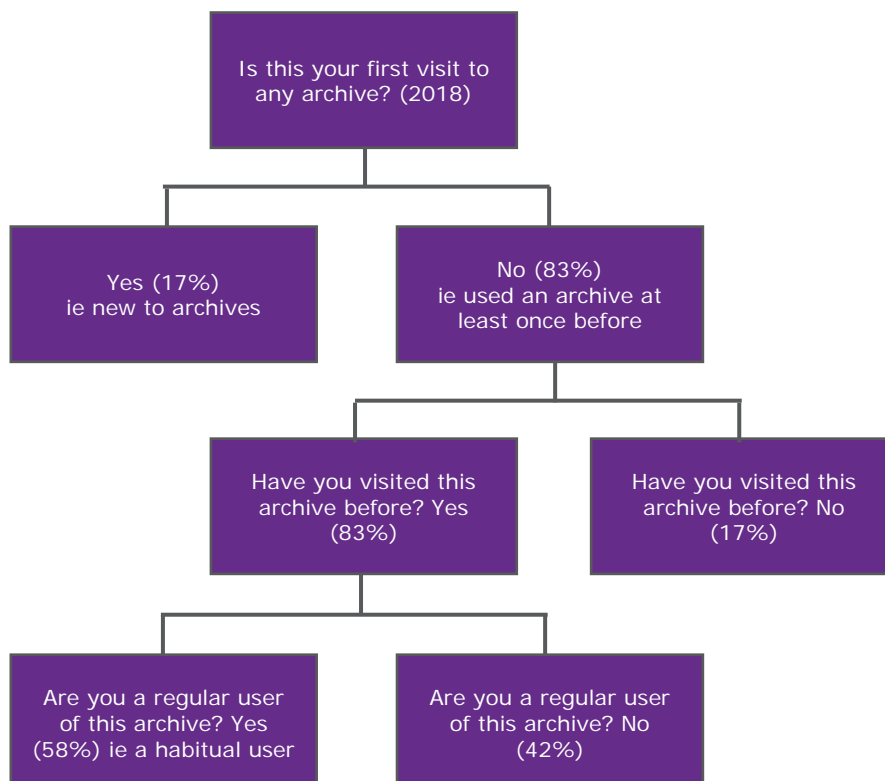
Of those that were not first time archive visitors, just over 4 in 5 respondents had visited the archive before.

1 (c). If Yes at (b) above, are you a regular user of this archive?

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	6,048	5,817	4,336
Yes	58%	59%	69%
No	42%	41%	31%

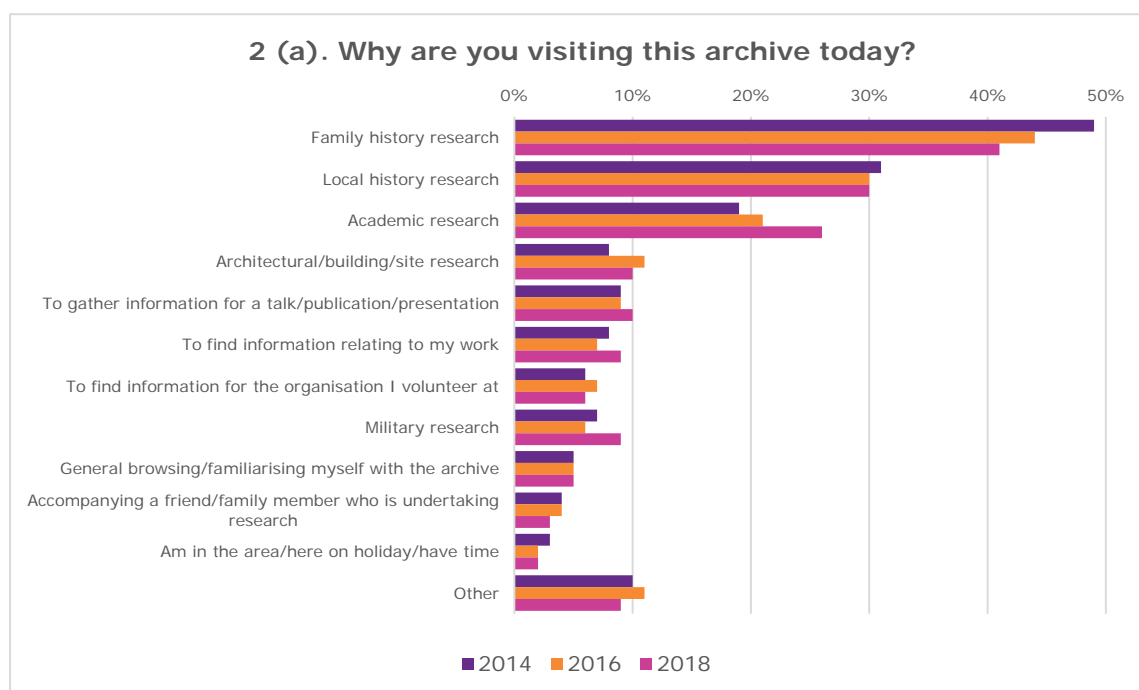


3 in 5 respondents that had visited the archive before were regular users of the archive. There was a drop in the percentage of respondents that said they used the archive regularly.



2 (a). Why are you visiting this archive today?

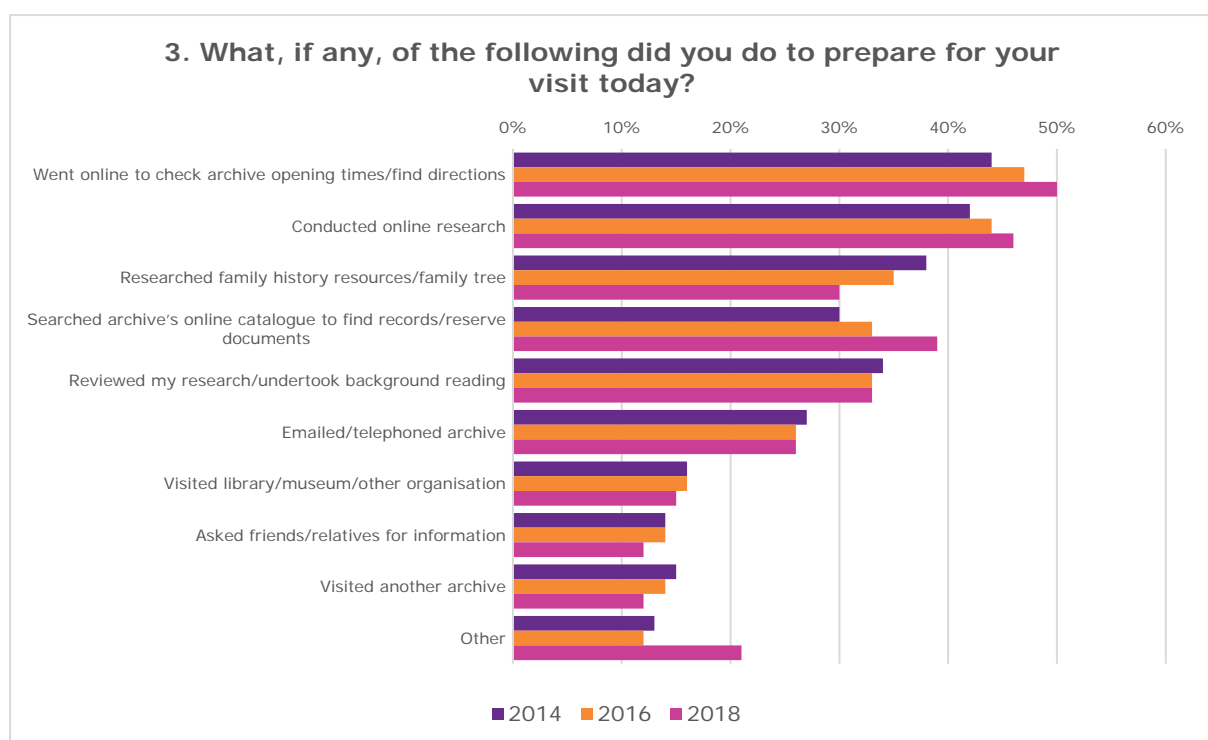
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,763	7,557	6,800
Family history research	41%	44%	49%
Local history research	30%	30%	31%
Academic research	26%	21%	19%
Architectural/building/site research	10%	11%	8%
To gather information for a talk/publication/presentation	10%	9%	9%
To find information relating to my work	9%	7%	8%
To find information for the organisation I volunteer at	6%	7%	6%
Military research	9%	6%	7%
General browsing/familiarising myself with the archive	5%	5%	5%
Accompanying a friend/family member who is undertaking research	3%	4%	4%
Am in the area/here on holiday/have time	2%	2%	3%
Other	9%	11%	10%



In 2018 the most frequent reason for visiting the archive was to conduct family history research (41%), however this has declined since 2014 (49%). This year there was an increase in the number of visitors saying they came to carry out academic research (26%), although this may be a result of more university archives participating in the survey. As in previous years, another common reason for visiting was to carry out local history research.

3. What, if any, of the following did you do to prepare for your visit today?

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,228	6,891	6,225
Went online to check archive opening times/find directions	50%	47%	44%
Conducted online research	46%	44%	42%
Researched family history resources/family tree	30%	35%	38%
Searched archive's online catalogue to find records/reserve documents	39%	33%	30%
Reviewed my research/undertook background reading	33%	33%	34%
Emailed/telephoned archive	26%	26%	27%
Visited library/museum/other organisation	15%	16%	16%
Asked friends/relatives for information	12%	14%	14%
Visited another archive	12%	14%	15%
Other	11%	12%	13%



Exactly half of respondents went online to check archive opening times/find directions before visiting the archive (50%). Some 46% of respondents conducted online research before visiting in person. Further information reveals that 39% were searching the archives online catalogue to find records/reserve documents – a significant increase compared to both 2016 and 2014. Interestingly, there was a marked reduction in those who researched family history resources/family tree (30%, 2018) continuing the trend that began in 2016.

Section B: Our Staff, Services and Facilities

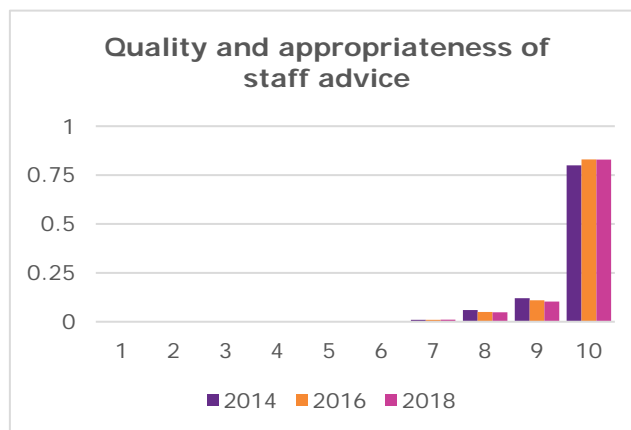
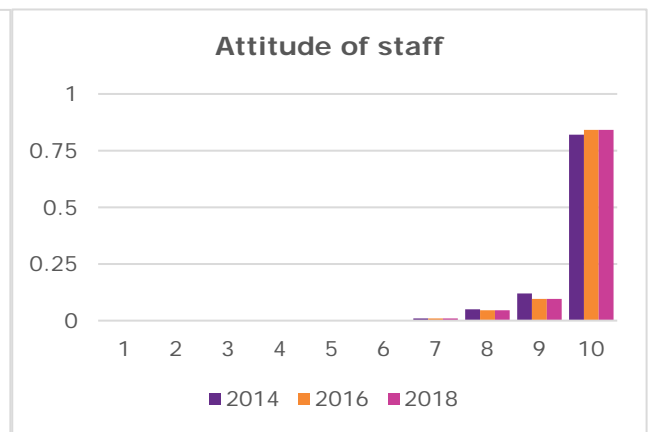
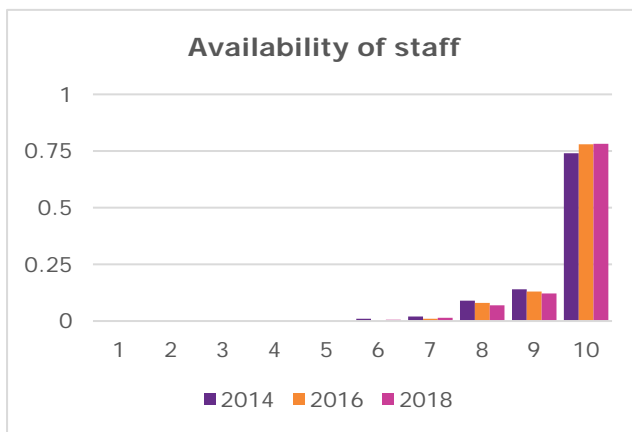
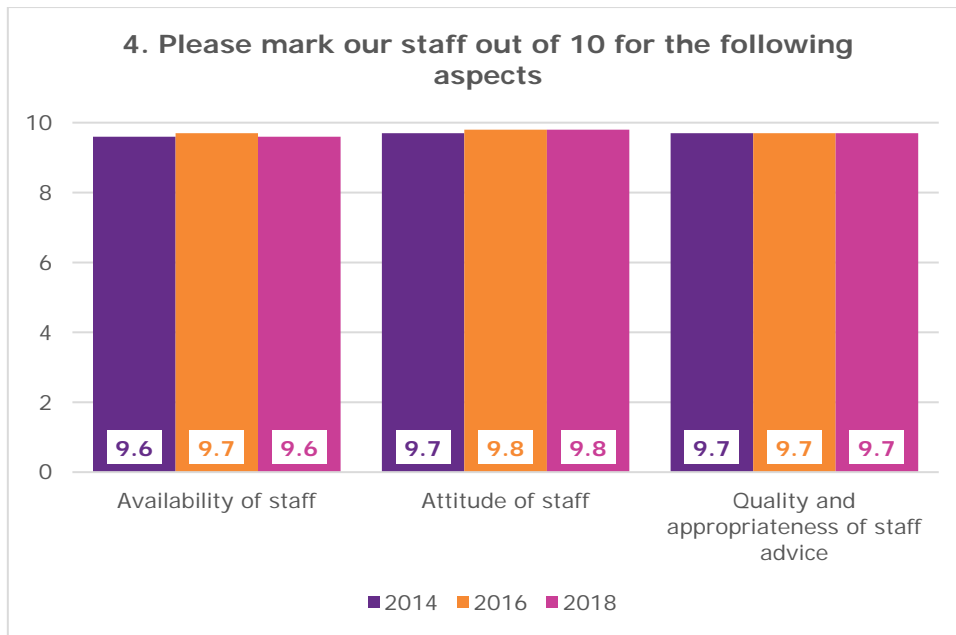
Staff

4. Please mark our staff out of 10 for the following aspects; where 10 is the highest and 1 is the lowest score

	Availability of staff		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,470	7,288	6,552
1	0%	0%	0%
2	0%	0%	0%
3	0%	0%	0%
4	0%	0%	0%
5	0%	0%	1%
6	1%	0%	1%
7	1%	1%	2%
8	7%	8%	9%
9	12%	13%	14%
10	78%	78%	74%
Average score	9.6	9.7	9.6

	Attitude of staff		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,455	7,284	6,542
1	0%	0%	0%
2	0%	0%	0%
3	0%	0%	0%
4	0%	0%	0%
5	0%	0%	0%
6	0%	0%	0%
7	1%	1%	1%
8	5%	4%	5%
9	10%	11%	12%
10	84%	84%	82%
Average score	9.8	9.8	9.7

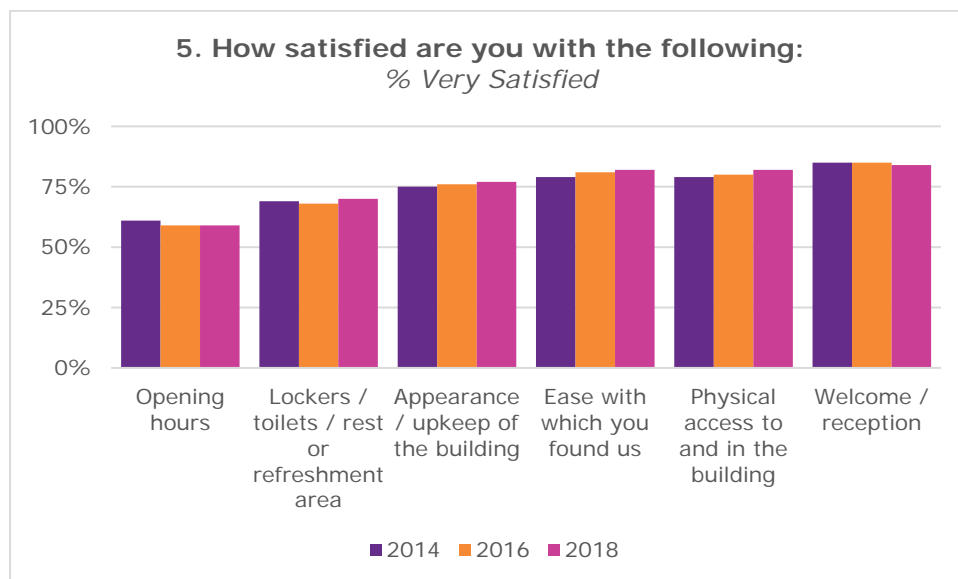
	Quality and appropriateness of staff advice		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,237	7,081	6,335
1	0%	0%	0%
2	0%	0%	0%
3	0%	0%	0%
4	0%	0%	0%
5	0%	0%	0%
6	0%	0%	0%
7	1%	1%	1%
8	5%	5%	6%
9	10%	11%	12%
10	83%	83%	80%
Average score	9.7	9.7	9.7



Scores or rating for archive staff have remained consistently high over time, with the majority of visitors awarding the maximum score of 10 out of 10.

Facilities and Accessibility

5. How satisfied are you with the following:



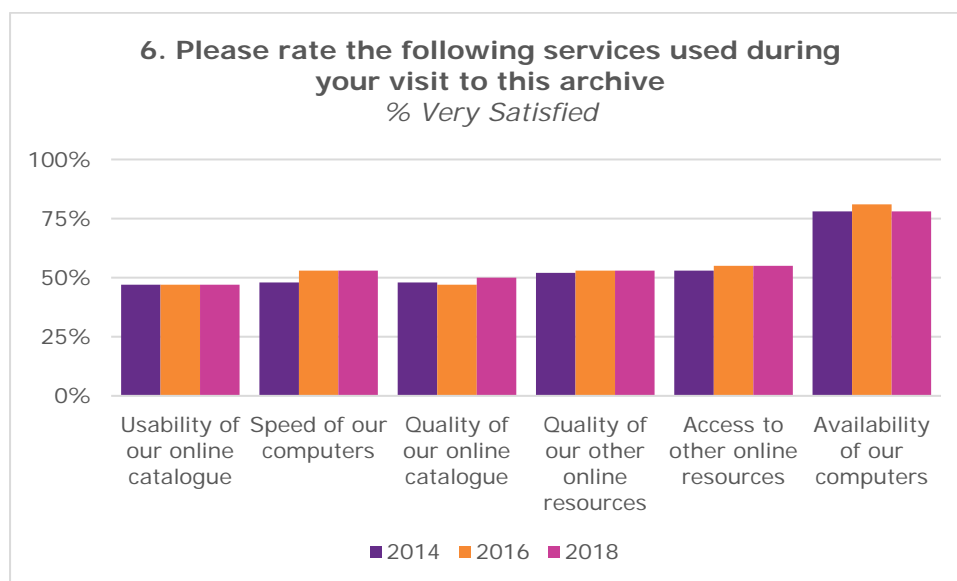
Satisfaction was highest for the welcome/reception at the archive with 84% of respondents “very satisfied” and lowest (59%) for the opening hours. Respondents were as equally impressed with the ease with which they found the archive and the physical access into the building (82% both). A detailed breakdown follows:

	Welcome/reception			Ease with which you found us			Physical access to and in the building		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,765	7,474	6,653	7,652	7,358	6,525	7,823	7,509	6,681
Very satisfied	84%	85%	85%	82%	81%	79%	82%	80%	79%
Fairly satisfied	12%	12%	12%	14%	15%	16%	14%	16%	16%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Not very satisfied	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%

	Appearance/upkeep of the building			Lockers/toilets/rest or refreshment area			Opening hours		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,828	7,522	6,659	7,137	6,821	5,975	7,748	7,414	6,585
Very satisfied	77%	76%	75%	70%	68%	69%	59%	59%	61%
Fairly satisfied	18%	19%	19%	22%	22%	22%	30%	29%	28%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%	5%
Not very satisfied	1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Computer Facilities and Online Resources

6. Please rate the following services used during your visit to this archive



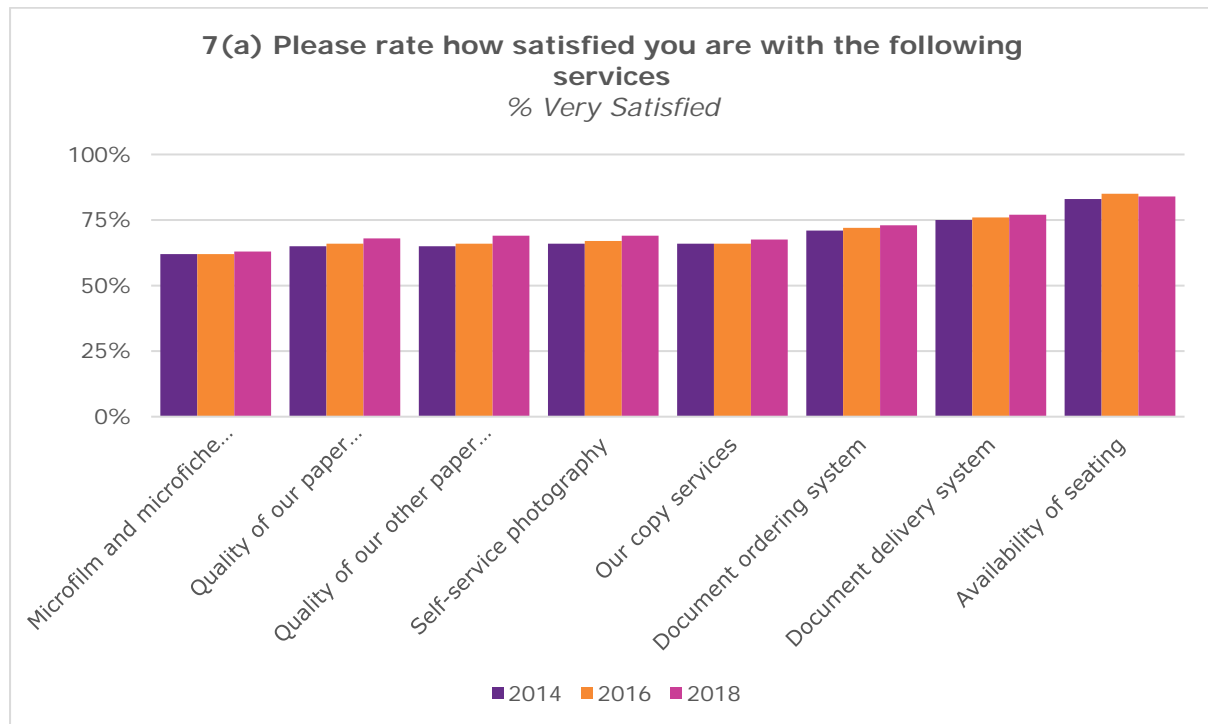
For 2018, in respect of computer facilities and online resources, the highest “very good” score was given for the availability of the computers (78%), whilst the lowest “very good” score (47%) was awarded to usability of the online catalogue. For the majority of the other factors, the “very good” score ranged between 50% and 55%. A full breakdown of results for this section is shown below:

	Availability of our computers			Access to other online resources			Quality of our other online resources		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	4,192	3,972	3,481	2,850	2,644	2,177	3,080	2,816	2,325
Very good	78%	81%	78%	55%	55%	53%	53%	53%	52%
Fairly good	18%	15%	18%	33%	33%	33%	35%	35%	36%
Neither good nor poor	3%	2%	3%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%
Poor	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Very poor	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%

	Speed of our computers			Quality of our online catalogue			Usability of our online catalogue		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	3,750	3,552	3,094	4,078	3,574	2,848	4,080	3,578	2,866
Very good	53%	53%	48%	50%	47%	48%	47%	47%	47%
Fairly good	33%	32%	35%	37%	38%	38%	37%	38%	37%
Neither good nor poor	9%	9%	11%	10%	10%	10%	11%	10%	10%
Poor	4%	4%	5%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Very poor	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Services

7 (a). Please rate how satisfied you are with the following services



Availability of seating scored highest with 84% of respondents being "very satisfied". The lowest rating was for microfilm and microfiche facilities, with 63% being "very satisfied" with this. A detailed breakdown of all satisfaction scores is shown overleaf:

	Availability of seating			Document delivery system		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,716	7,395	6,570	5,245	4,829	4,219
Very satisfied	84%	85%	83%	77%	76%	75%
Fairly satisfied	14%	14%	15%	18%	19%	20%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Not very satisfied	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

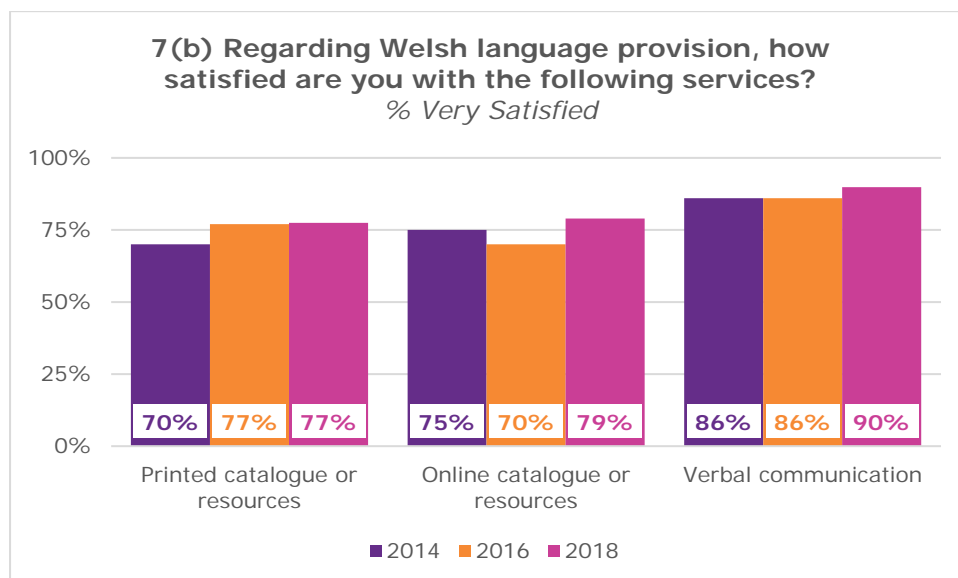
	Document ordering system			Our copy services		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	5,370	5,003	4,319	2,668	2,998	2,855
Very satisfied	73%	72%	71%	68%	66%	66%
Fairly satisfied	21%	22%	24%	21%	23%	24%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4%	4%	4%	7%	7%	6%
Not very satisfied	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%

	Self-service photography			Quality of our other paper resources		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	2,755	2,386	1,860	3,752	3,779	3,339
Very satisfied	69%	67%	66%	69%	66%	65%
Fairly satisfied	19%	20%	20%	24%	27%	29%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8%	7%	8%	6%	6%	6%
Not very satisfied	2%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all satisfied	2%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%

	Quality of our paper catalogues			Microfilm and microfiche facilities		
	2018	2016	2014	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	4,067	4,266	3,803	2,812	3,271	3,042
Very satisfied	68%	66%	65%	63%	62%	62%
Fairly satisfied	25%	28%	28%	25%	28%	27%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6%	5%	6%	8%	7%	7%
Not very satisfied	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%	3%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%

Welsh Language Provision

7 (b). Regarding Welsh language provision, how satisfied are you with the following services?



The questions in this section are only applicable to Welsh archives.

This year there was a notable increase in those stating they were “very satisfied” with the verbal communication (90%) and online catalogue (79%) compared with both the 2014 and 2016 surveys. A detailed breakdown of the results can be found below and overleaf:

	Verbal communication		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	247	250	212
Very satisfied	90%	86%	86%
Fairly satisfied	8%	11%	7%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1%	2%	6%
Not very satisfied	1%	1%	1%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	0%

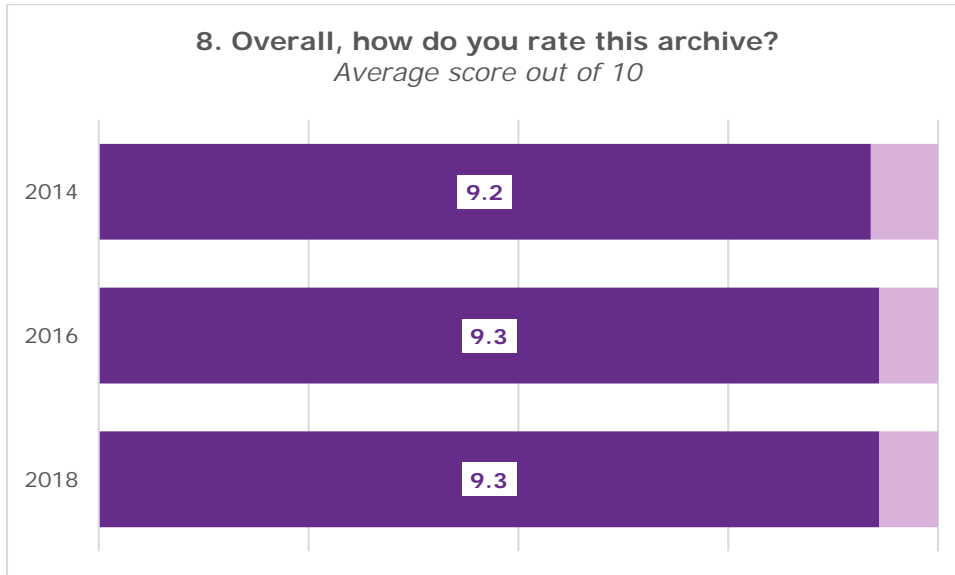
	Printed catalogue or resources		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	196	176	157
Very satisfied	77%	77%	70%
Fairly satisfied	17%	16%	18%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5%	6%	11%
Not very satisfied	0%	2%	1%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	1%

	Online catalogue or resources		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	181	162	126
Very satisfied	79%	70%	75%
Fairly satisfied	17%	22%	13%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4%	6%	9%
Not very satisfied	0%	1%	1%
Not at all satisfied	0%	0%	2%

Overall Score

8. Please mark the archive overall out of 10; where 10 is the highest and 1 is the lowest score

Overall, how do you rate this archive?

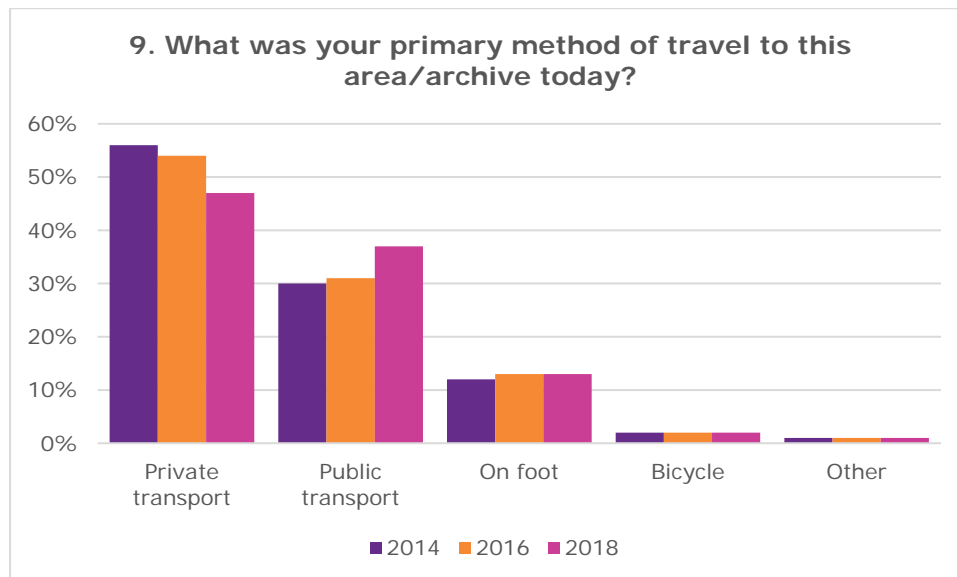


	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,176	6,897	6,020
Mean	9.3	9.3	9.2

Over the past three survey cycles, the overall satisfaction score has remained constant or subject to little variation. However, somewhat encouragingly, the number of people participating in the survey and answering this question has increased.

Section C: Your Visit

9. What was your primary method of travel to this area/archive today?

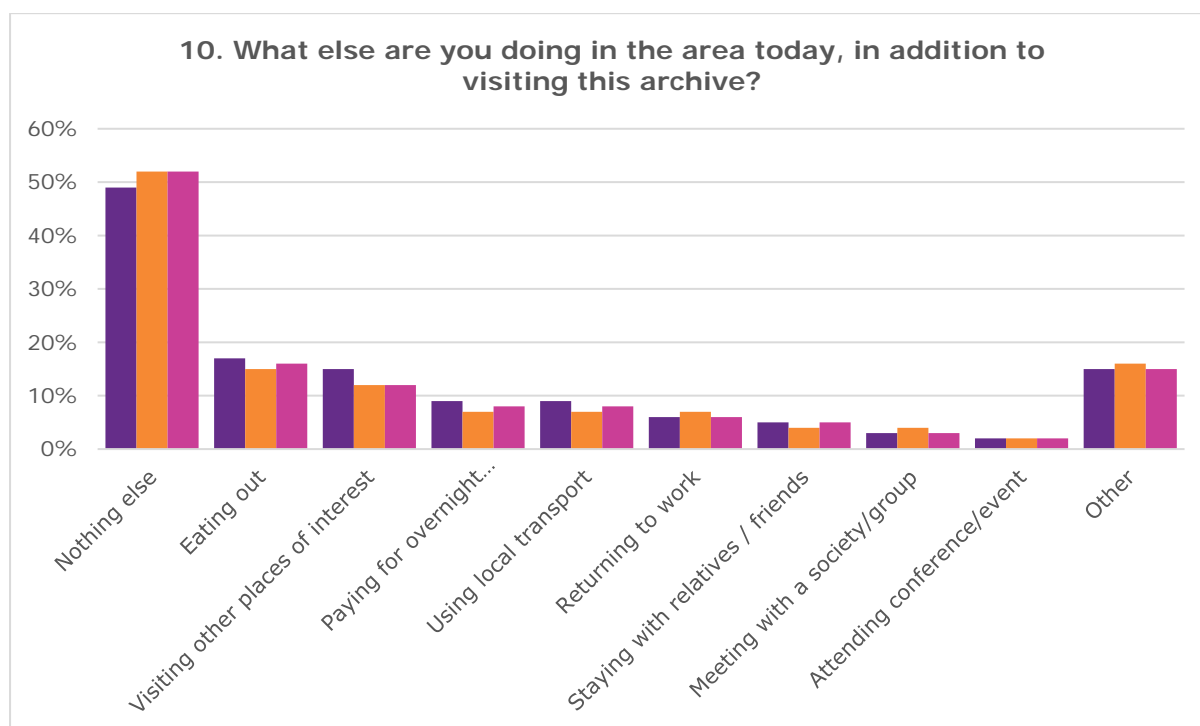


This year we have seen some notable changes in regard to how respondents travelled to a record office. In 2018 only 47% of respondents travelled using private transport, while in 2016, 54% of respondents did so. However, we have found that this downturn in use of private transport corresponds with an upturn in usage of public transport, up from 31% in 2016 to 37% in 2018. Interestingly results for either coming 'on foot' or by 'bicycle' remain constant.

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,687	7,414	6,655
Private transport	47%	54%	56%
Public transport	37%	31%	30%
On foot	13%	13%	12%
Bicycle	2%	2%	2%
Other	1%	1%	1%

Additional Activities

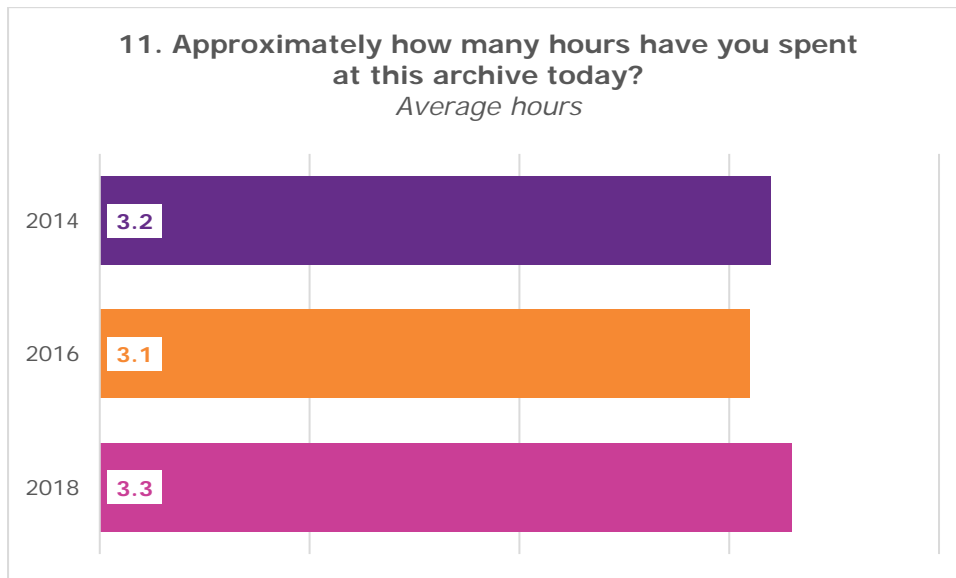
10. What else are you doing in the area today, in addition to visiting this archive?



Just over half of all respondents (52%) said they weren't doing anything in the area in addition to visiting the archive – identical to the proportion who said this in 2016. In fact, across all other factors the results for 2018 are broadly in line with those for 2016, or the differences are too small to be considered significant. However, for some aspects the biggest, or most meaningful differences are in comparison to the 2014 survey. For example, those doing nothing else has increased and most notably those visiting other places of interest has decreased.

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,694	7,392	6,634
Nothing else	52%	52%	49%
Eating out	16%	15%	17%
Visiting other places of interest	12%	12%	15%
Paying for overnight accommodation	8%	7%	9%
Using local transport	8%	7%	9%
Returning to work	6%	7%	6%
Staying with relatives/friends	5%	4%	5%
Meeting with a society/group	3%	4%	3%
Attending conference/event	2%	2%	2%
Other	15%	16%	15%

11. Approximately how many hours have you spent at this archive today?



It would appear that compared to 2016, visitors completing the 2018 survey are on average spending a little longer in the archive. However, results across the three surveys are broadly similar.

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	6,118	7,105	6,323
Mean	3.3	3.1	3.2

Section D: Outcomes

13. What benefits have you experienced from using archives? Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:



I developed new skills or improved existing skills (88% Agree)



I enjoyed myself (99% Agree)



I improved my knowledge in an area of interest (99% Agree)



I am inspired to find out more (99% Agree)



I have a greater understanding of my community, its history and people (97% Agree)

Generally, the benefits experienced by visitors to the archive have not changed significantly over time. The only exception to this is the small variation for those who developed new or improved existing skills.

	I enjoyed myself		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	6,792	6,513	5,769
Agree	99%	99%	99%
Disagree	1%	1%	1%

	I improved my knowledge in an area of interest		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	6,843	6,429	5,658
Agree	99%	99%	99%
Disagree	1%	1%	1%

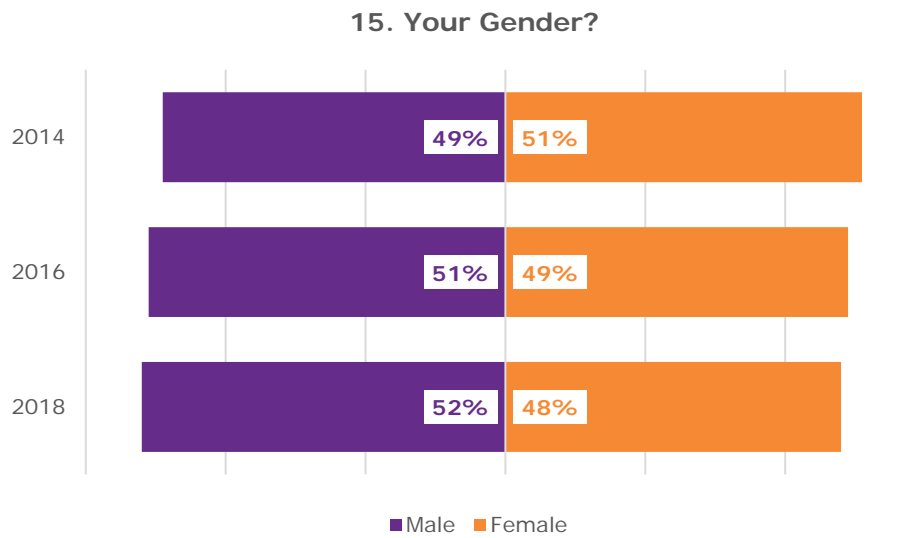
	I am inspired to find out more		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	6,307	6,016	5,338
Agree	99%	99%	99%
Disagree	1%	1%	1%

	I have a greater understanding of my community, its history and people		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	4,411	4,216	3,581
Agree	97%	97%	97%
Disagree	3%	3%	3%

	I developed new skills or improved existing skills		
	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	2,890	2,784	2,263
Agree	88%	89%	86%
Disagree	12%	11%	14%

Section E: About You

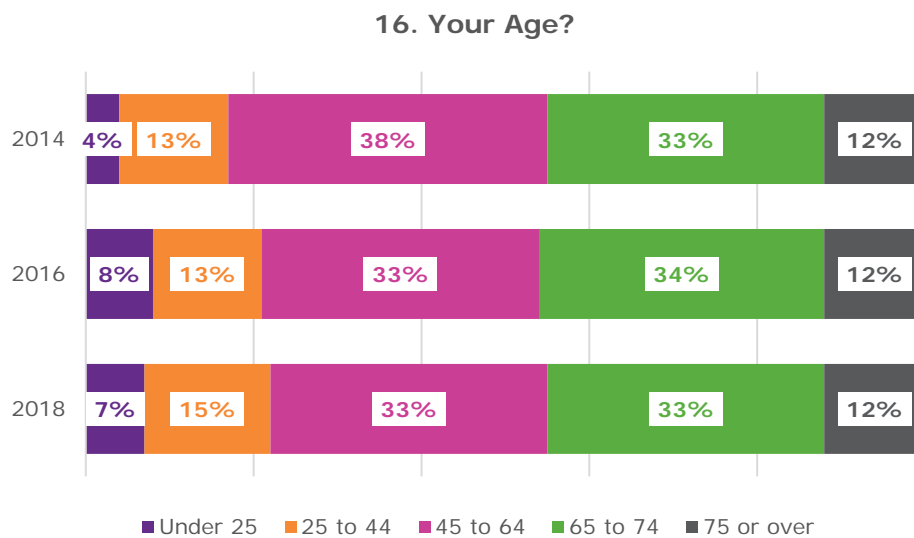
15. Your Gender?



Almost equal proportions of archive visitors were male and female. The proportions have switched from the 2014 survey, with slightly more males responding than females.

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,746	7,480	6,656
Male	52%	51%	49%
Female	48%	49%	51%

16. Your Age?

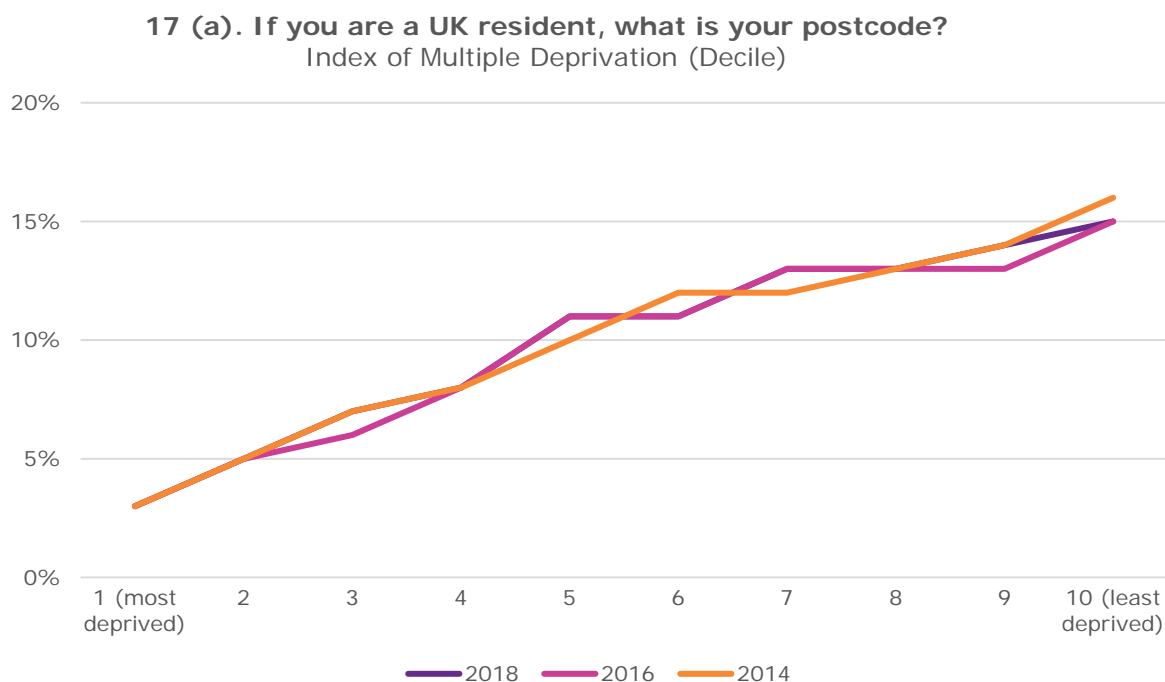


The chart above and table below show some subtle changes in age over time. For those aged 65 or over the figures are highly similar over the three surveys, ie around 45% to 46%. Whilst in 2018 the proportion of those aged under 25 has decreased slightly since 2016, we find that for those aged 25 to 44 it has increased by some 2%.

Interestingly, despite the shifts in proportions across the age groups the average age of an archive's visitor remains in the 55 to 59 year old age group.

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,083	6,780	6,024
Under 25	7%	8%	4%
25 to 44	15%	13%	13%
45 to 64	33%	33%	38%
65 to 74	33%	34%	33%
75 or over	12%	12%	12%
Average age	57	55	59

17 (a). If you are a UK resident, what is your postcode?



Where a survey respondent provides a verifiable postcode, ie one that can be identified against the Post Office Address File (PAF), then we can associate that postcode within a lower super output area (LSOA). For each LSOA there is an Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rank assigned and those rankings are then grouped into deciles, ie ten equal groups into which the population can be divided. So decile group 1 (most deprived) is made of those LSOAs with a rank of 1 to 3,284 inclusive. Whilst those in group 10 (least deprived) is made up by those with a rank of 29,560 to 32,844 inclusive.

As can be seen in the chart above and the table below, visitors to UK archives tend to live in areas with lowest or least levels of deprivation, ie in 2018, 67% lived in areas with an IMD of 6 or greater.

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted count	6,291	5,822	5,225
1 (most deprived)	3%	3%	3%
2	5%	5%	5%
3	7%	6%	7%
4	8%	8%	8%
5	11%	11%	10%
6	11%	11%	12%
7	13%	13%	12%
8	13%	13%	13%
9	14%	13%	14%
10 (least deprived)	15%	15%	16%

17 (b). If not a UK resident, what is your country of residence?

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	518	261	559
Europe	40%	34%	14%
Americas	37%	41%	54%
Oceania	16%	23%	28%
Asia	6%	2%	3%
Africa	1%	0%	1%

Of the 8,150 participants in the 2018 survey some 518 (6%) lived outside the UK. This compares with 261 of 7,814 (3%) in 2016 and 559 of 6,921 (8%) in 2014. Furthermore, over the three survey cycles we can see changes to the proportions in the regions/continents but we have no evidence to suggest why this might be so.

18. What is your ethnic group?

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	7,475	7,181	6,386
White	96%	97%	97%
Mixed	1%	1%	1%
Asian	1%	1%	1%
Black	1%	0%	1%
Other	1%	1%	0%

Compared to both the 2014 and 2016 surveys, we can see in the 2018 survey a small decrease in the proportion of those self-classifying as ethnically white, and a consequential increase across the other ethnic groups. However, given the small change in numbers this cannot be considered statistically valid.

19. Please indicate if you have a disability or condition in any of the following areas:

	2018	2016	2014
Unweighted Count	6,861	6,493	6,206
None/not applicable	84%	83%	83%
Mobility, eg walking short distances or climbing stairs	7%	8%	9%
Hearing, eg deafness or partial hearing	6%	7%	6%
Dexterity	1%	2%	1%
Vision/eyesight, eg blindness or partial sight	2%	2%	2%
Memory	1%	2%	1%
Mental health	3%	2%	1%
Learning/understanding/concentrating	1%	1%	1%
Other	2%	2%	2%

The majority of visitors to UK archives do not have a disability or condition in any of the specified areas. What is also patently clear is that the proportions for each disability or condition have not changed significantly over time and that the categories for mobility and hearing remain the most populous groups. Although it is worth noting the growth in proportions in those ticking mental health.

Profile of Participating Archives

Type	2018	2016	2014
Total count	106	114	103
Local	76%	84%	80%
University	12%	8%	10%
National	9%	7%	9%
Business	1%	1%	1%
Special	1%	0%	1%

Region	2018	2016	2014
Total count	106	114	103
England	71%	74%	68%
Wales	18%	15%	17%
Scotland	10%	10%	14%
Channel Islands	1%	1%	1%
Northern Ireland	0%	1%	1%

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