

NI Annual Visitor Attraction Statistics 2015

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The key points are:

- there were 17.5 million visits to visitor attractions in 2015;
- between 2014 and 2015 there was no change in the number of visits – however visits to the headline attractions (Giant’s Causeway and Titanic Belfast) increased by 4% while visits to the top ten attractions increased by 5%;
- around a third of attractions indicated that revenue had increased in 2015;
- around two-thirds (66%) of visits were made by Northern Ireland residents; and
- Country Parks/Parks/Forests accounted for 43% of all visitors in 2015.

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Introduction

This report is designed to give an overview of the performance of the Visitor Attraction market in Northern Ireland in 2015. Participation by attractions in the Visitor Attraction Survey is voluntary. The survey was issued to 428 attractions (details obtained from Discover Northern Ireland) and 327 attraction owners replied; of these 225 provided data for analysis. Unless otherwise stated, the data presented in this report refers to these 225 attractions.

Statistics presented in this report are given in good faith on the basis of information provided by proprietors of attractions.

Respondents to the survey are given the opportunity to revise data supplied in the previous year. Participants are also given the option for their information to remain confidential. Counting methods for individual Attractions may also change from year to year which might impact on results and patterns over time. Further details about the survey methodology are contained in the methodology section.

Types of Attractions

Figure 1: Percentage of Attractions by Attraction Category

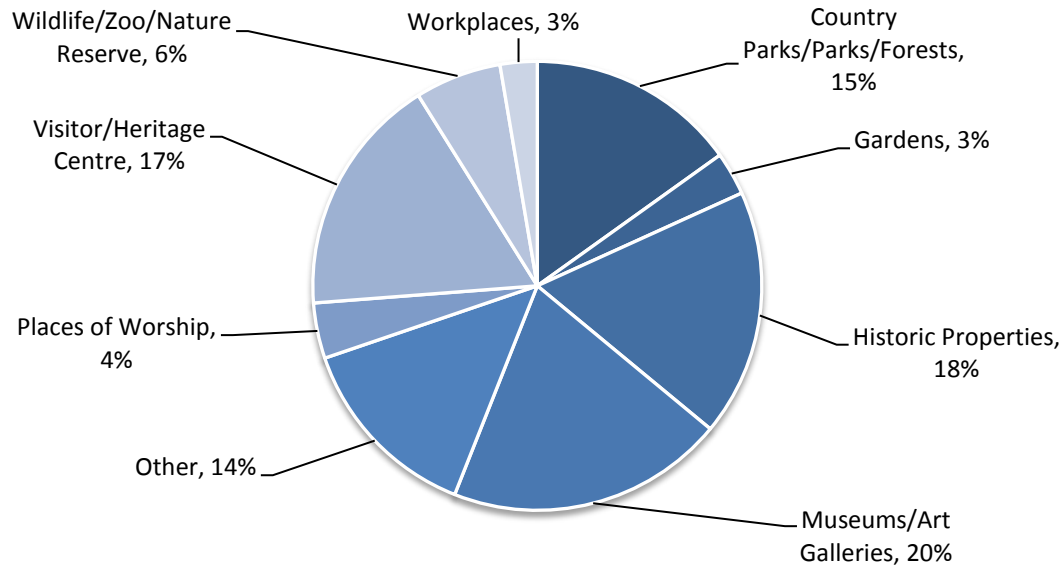
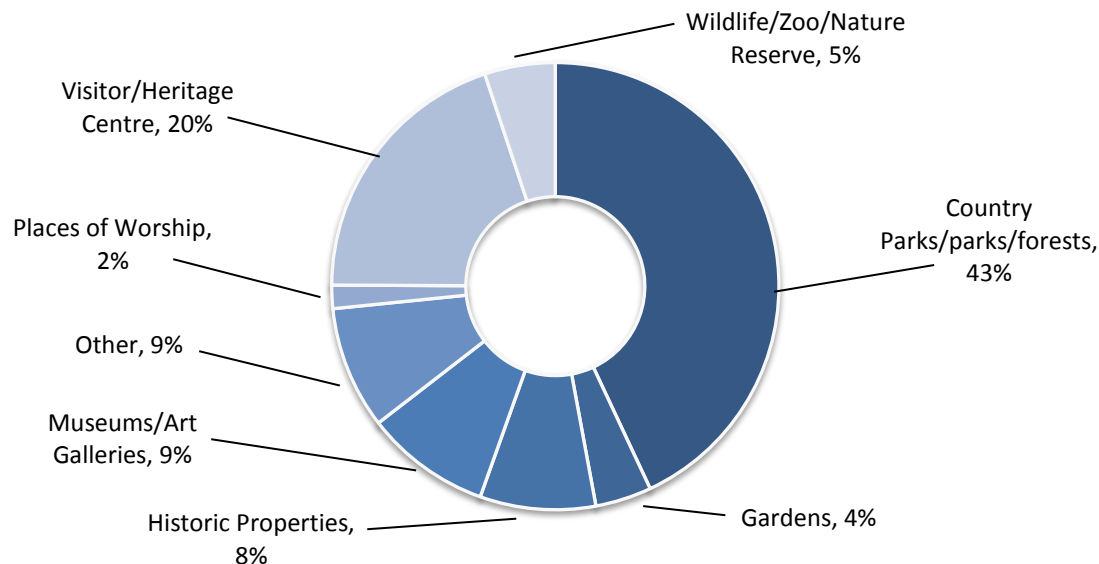


Figure 1 shows the proportion of responding attractions in each category. In 2015, the largest proportion of the 225 responding attractions were Museums/Art Galleries (20%) followed by Historic Properties (18%).

Figure 2: Percentage of Visits by Attraction Category

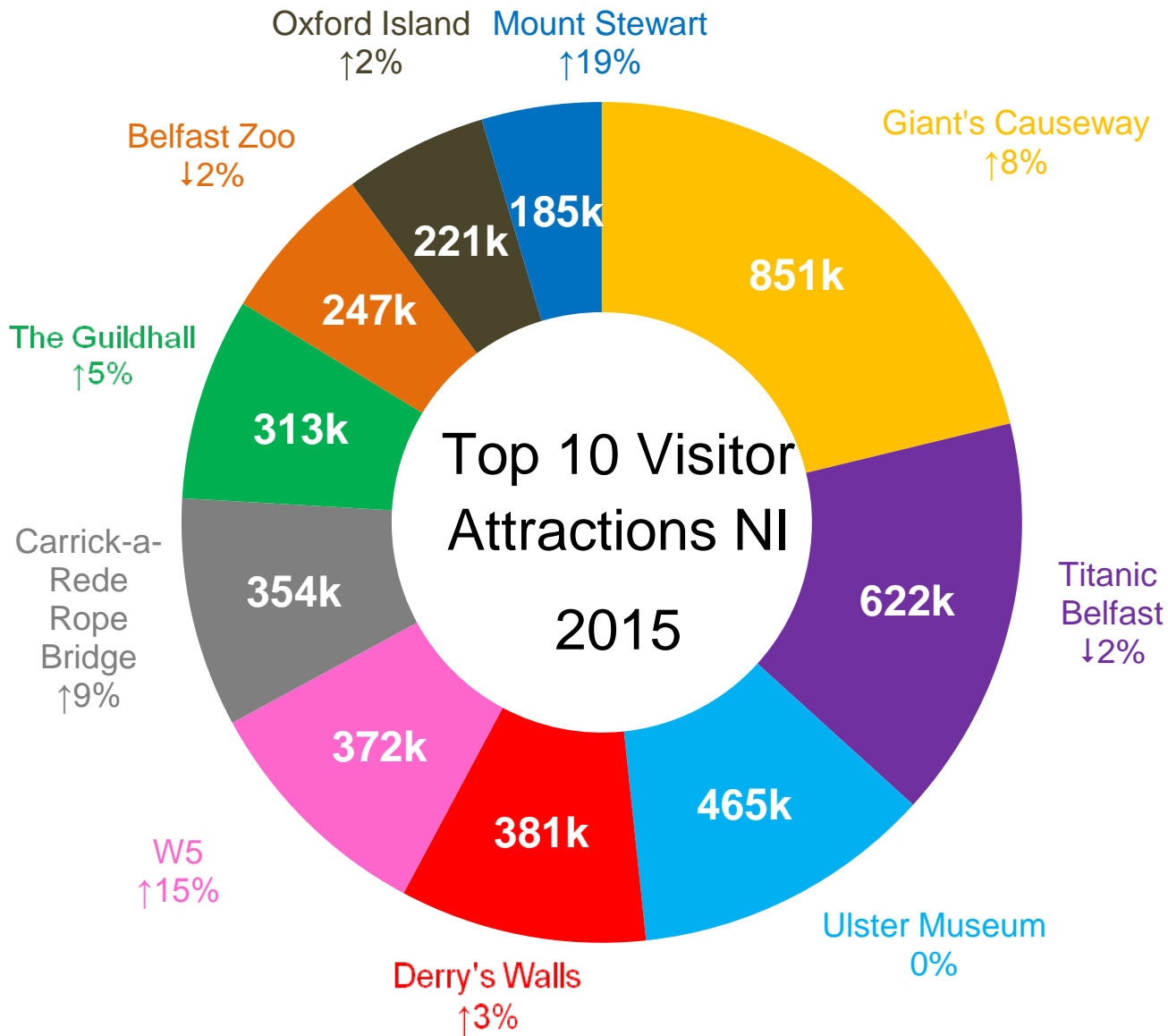


During 2015 over 17 million visits were made to participating attractions. Country parks/parks/forests attracted the largest proportion of visitors (43%). Visitor/heritage centres attracted the second highest proportion of visitors during 2015 (20%).

In total 174 participants returned data with figures for both 2014 and 2015. These showed that there was no change in the number of visits to attractions between 2014 and 2015.

*Workplaces do not appear in Figure 2 as they accounted for less than 1% of visits to attractions in 2015.

Figure 3: Top Ten Visitor Attractions 2015 (excluding Country parks/ parks/ forests/gardens)



Excluding country parks/parks/forests and gardens last year there were 9.3 million visits to attractions in Northern Ireland.

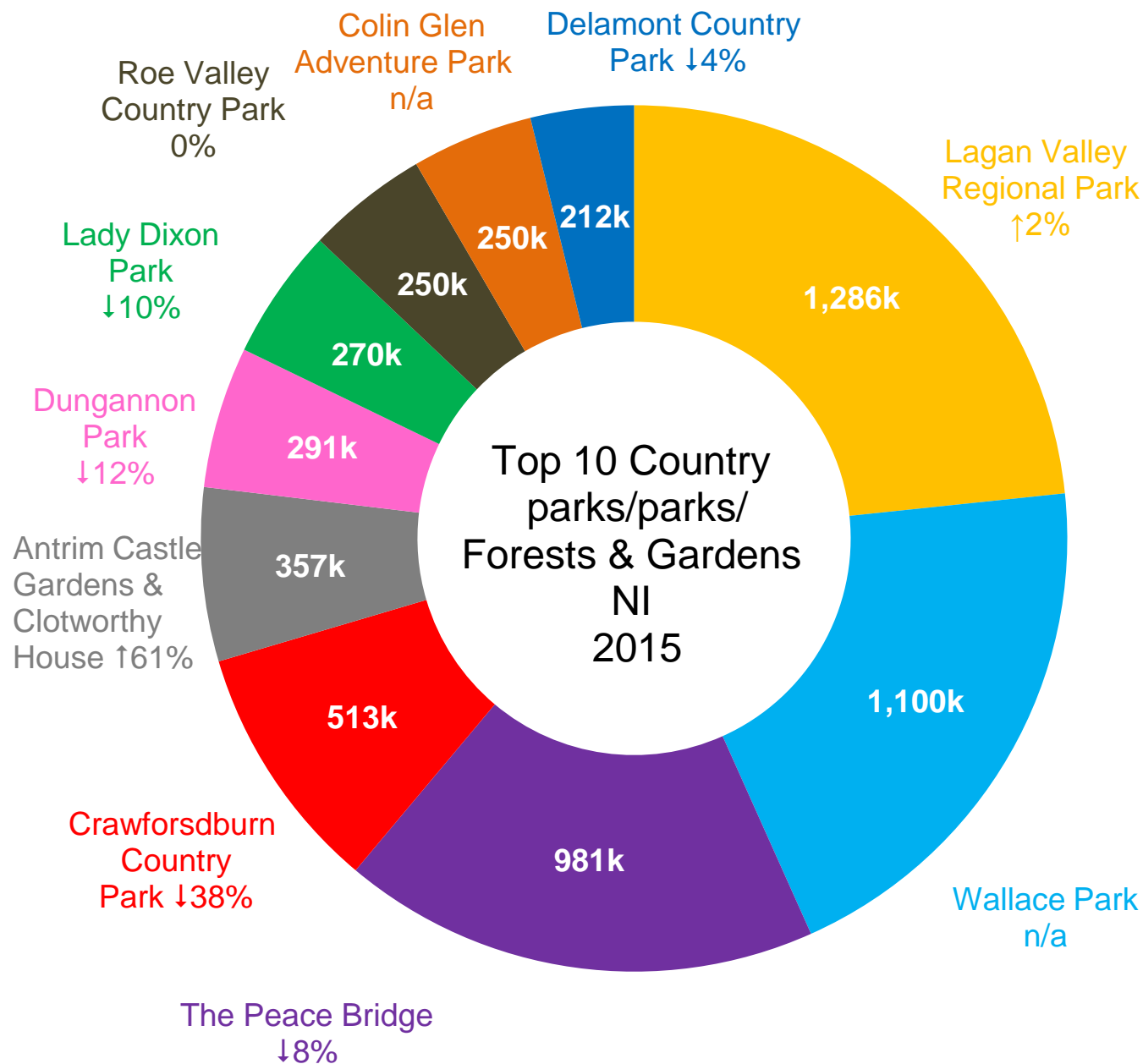
Within this group the Giant's Causeway world heritage site attracted the highest number of visits (0.85 million). This was an 8% increase on 2014.

Titanic Belfast attracted the second highest number (0.62 million visits). This was a 2% decrease on 2014.

In total the top ten attractions had 4 million visits in 2015 – this was an increase of 5% to these ten attractions in 2014.

*Arrow indicates increase/decrease between 2014 - 2015

Figure 4: Top Ten Visitor Country parks/parks/forests/gardens 2015



During 2015 over 8.2 million visits were made to Northern Ireland country parks, parks, forests and gardens. Visitors to the top ten country parks/parks/forests/gardens accounted for 5.5 million.

Lagan Valley Regional Park attracted the highest number of visitors. Around 1.3 million visitors visited the park during 2015 – a 2% increase in the number of visitors when compared to 2014.

Wallace Park, attracted the second highest number of visitors with 1.1 million.

*Arrow indicates increase/decrease between 2014 - 2015

Residency of Visitors

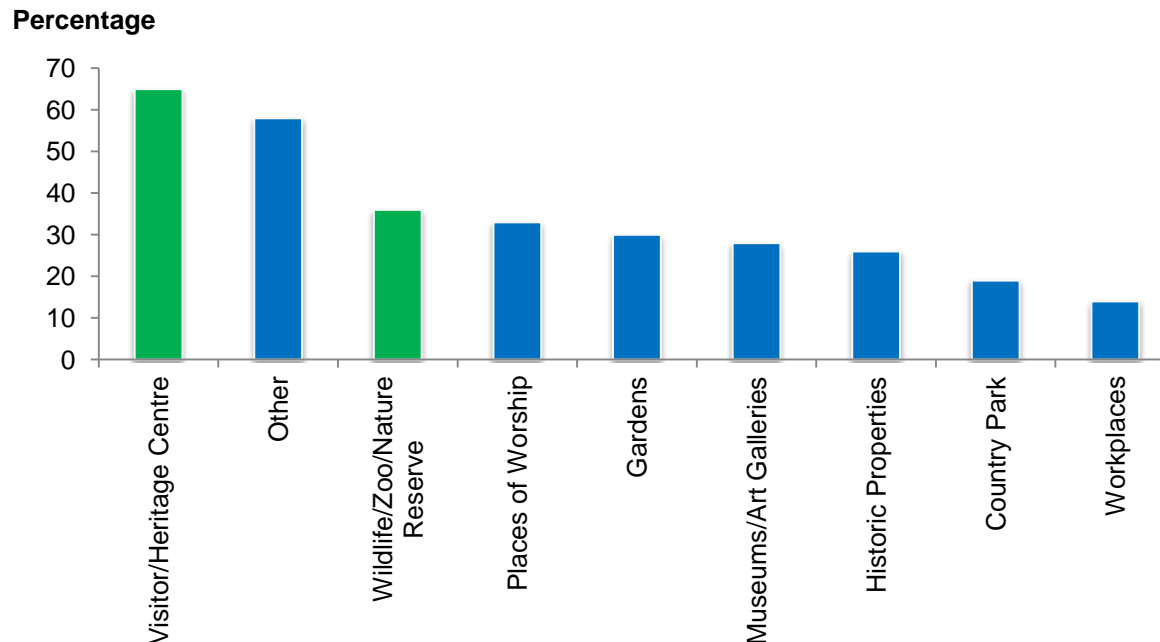
Figure 5: Proportion of Attraction Visitors by Place of Residence



Respondents to the survey were also asked to provide information on the country of residence of their visitors. Respondents who replied reported 66% of visits were made by residents of Northern Ireland.

Over a third (34%) of all visitors were external to NI. Approximately 11% were from the Republic of Ireland, 9% were from Great Britain and 14% from outside the UK and Ireland.

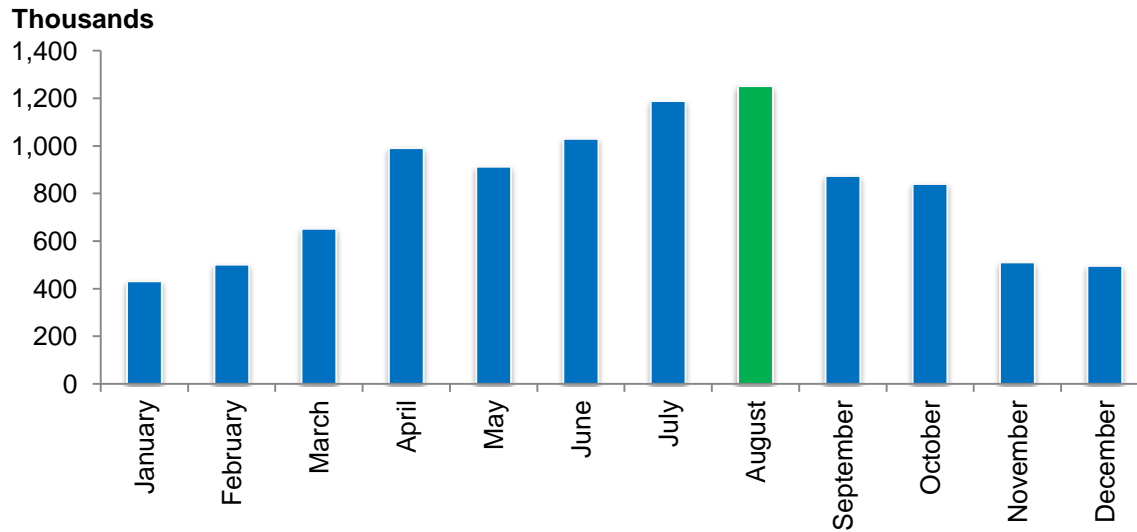
Figure 6: Proportion of Visitors External to NI by Attraction Type



The proportion of visitors external to NI by attraction type can be seen in figure 6. Visitor/Heritage centres attracted the largest proportion (65%) followed by Wildlife, Zoo & Nature Reserve with 36%. This points towards visitors external to NI being drawn towards the larger visitor attractions such as Giant’s Causeway / Titanic Belfast in the Visitor/Heritage Centre category.

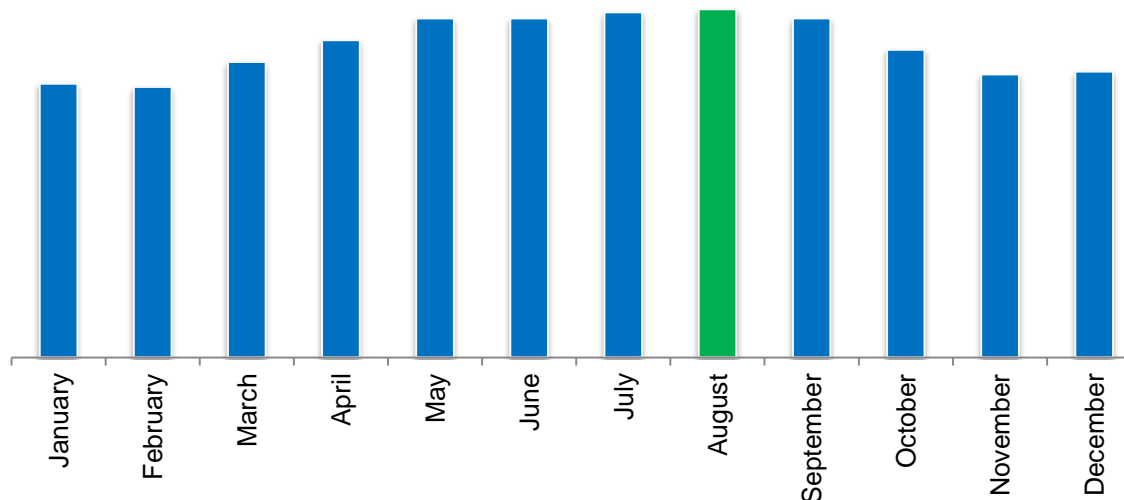
Seasonality

Figure 7: Number of Visits to Attractions by Month (Thousands)



Of the responding attractions August was the most popular month with around 1.3 million visits recorded. The least popular month was January with a total of 0.4 million visits made during the month.

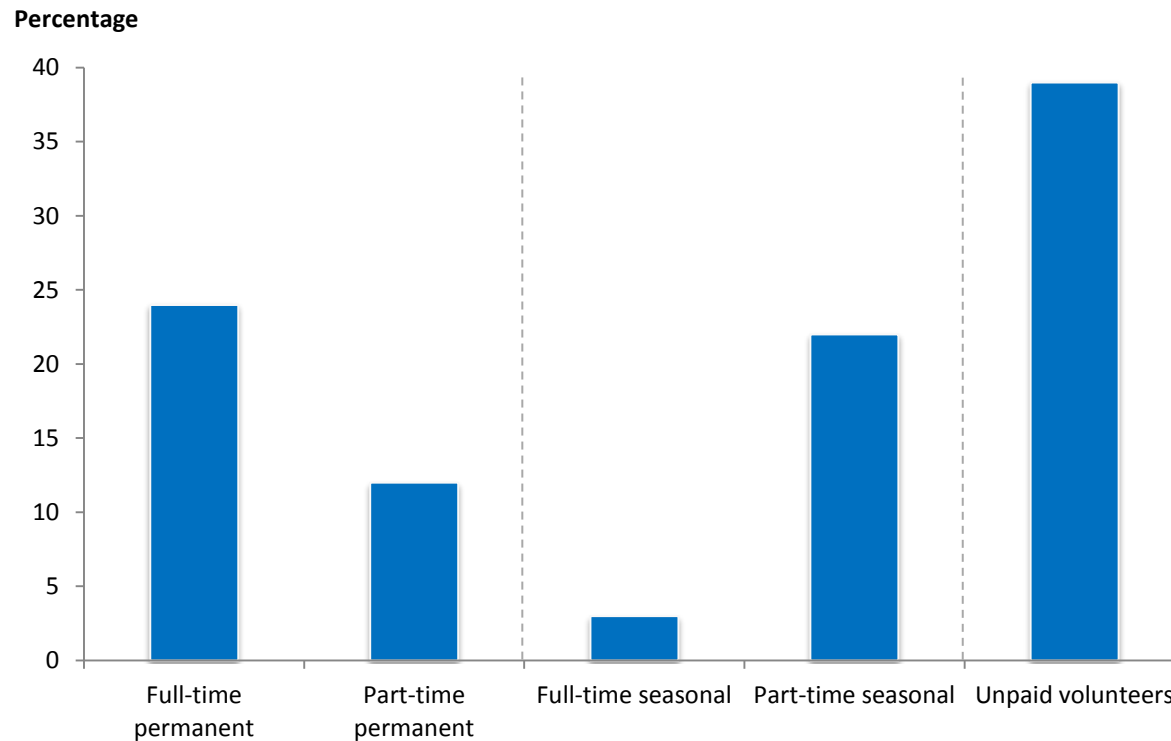
Figure 8: Seasonality of Attraction Opening



In total 112 respondents supplied information on the months attractions were open (partially or fully). The number of attractions indicating they were open (partially or fully) each month of 2015 varied slightly over the year with the highest number of attractions open in August (112) and the lowest number open in the month of February (87).

Employment

Figure 9: Employment Type



A total of 114 attractions provided information on employment totalling 2,752 employees and volunteers. Around a quarter of staff were employed on a full time permanent basis (24%).

Admission charges

Of the 40 attractions responding with information on admission charges the highest admission charge per adult was £15.50 while the highest admission charge for a child was £8.50. Lowest admission charges reported were the same for both adults and children at £1.00.

Revenue

Of the 91 respondents who supplied information on revenue 32% reported revenue had increased when compared to 2014, while 33% reported that revenue was down and 35% reported similar revenue to the previous year.

Upgrades

In 2015 36 attractions indicated they had upgraded or made improvements to their attraction. The median spend on upgrades was £20,000 with attractions spending from under £1,000 to over £2,000,000.

Adult child ratios

The average overall ratio of adult to child visitors during 2015 for responding attractions (102) was 68% adult to 32% children.

Background Notes

In total 428 attractions across Northern Ireland were invited to participate in the 2015 Visitor Attraction Survey by means of a self-completion questionnaire. The list of attractions was obtained from Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI).

In 2015 there was a 79% response rate with 225 respondents providing visitor numbers. A total of 89 attractions responded indicating they were closed; that their numbers were included with another attraction; their visitor numbers were not recorded; or they were unable to provide visitor numbers to the attraction element of their business.

Respondents to the survey were asked to classify the attractions from a given list of categories and the classifications which they provided were used in the analysis of this report.

Participants were also given the option for their figures to remain confidential. A list of participating attractions, excluding those who requested that their visitor numbers remain confidential, is contained in the appendix.

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. and must be receiving revenue directly from visitors'.

Details regarding individual attractions (description, address, contact details etc.) may be obtained by visiting www.discovernorthernireland.com.

Where this report refers to 'visits' to attractions, unless specified as 'out-of-state visits' this refers to all visits made to an attraction, regardless of the country of residence of the visitor, therefore including Northern Ireland residents.

For the purpose of analysis, the attractions have been classified by types (e.g. country parks/parks/forests, gardens, historic properties, museums/art galleries, visitor/heritage centres, wildlife/zoo, workplaces and places of worship). The procedure excluded establishments whose main component is a retail or leisure facility. It is, however, recognised that these facilities do offer a significant service to both the home market and out-of-state visitors.

Abbreviations:

LA	Local Authority
G	Government Department/ Agency
NT	National Trust
OTC	Other Trust/Charity
O	Other
P	Private

Visitor figures:

Statistics presented in this report are given in good faith on the basis of information provided by proprietors of attractions.

It should be noted that respondents to the survey are given the opportunity to revise data supplied in the previous year. Counting methods for individual Attractions may also change from year to year which might impact on results and patterns over time. Full information on visitors to Northern Ireland during 2015 can be found at [NI Visitor Attraction Statistics Additional Tables](#)

Data Revisions

The information here-in may be subject to revision due to improvements to the survey/analysis methodology or the inclusion of data returned after the publication date. The figures presented in this bulletin are the most up-to-date available at the time of publication. Full information on the revision of tourism statistics can be found at [Tourism Statistics Branch Revisions Policy](#)

A full picture of all tourism activity can be found in the [Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics Publication](#).

Further Information

Tables containing data used in this publication can be found at: [NI Visitor Attraction Statistics Additional Tables](#).

For more information relating to this publication or if an alternative format is required, please contact us at tourismstatistics@finance-ni.gov.uk

More information on data quality can be found at [Data Quality Report](#).

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