

Northern Ireland Annual Visitor Attraction Statistics 2016

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The key points are:

- there were an estimated 15.0 million visits to visitor attractions in 2016;
- between 2015 and 2016 visits to the headline attractions (Giant's Causeway and Titanic Belfast) increased by 9%;
- 43% of attractions indicated that revenue had increased in 2016;
- an estimated 60% of visits were made by Northern Ireland residents; and
- Country Parks/Parks/Forests accounted for an estimated 33% of all visitors in 2016.

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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 2016. Participation by attractions in the Visitor Attraction Survey is voluntary. The survey was issued to 400 attractions (details obtained from Discover Northern Ireland) and 257 attraction owners replied; of these 210 provided data for analysis. Unless otherwise stated, the data presented in this report refers to these 210 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.

This report should be read in conjunction with other tourism statistics reports for a full picture. When looking at the full picture, sources point toward a general upward trend in visits to NI visitor attractions since 2011, however, we cannot say that this is a statistically significant change. A full picture of all tourism activity can be found in the [Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics Publication](#)

What you can say....

Whilst we cannot say there has been a statistically significant change in the number of visitors to NI attractions between 2015 and 2016 when looking at the full picture sources point to a general upward trend from 2011 onward. Visits to the headline attractions (Giant's Causeway and Titanic Belfast) have increased by 9%.

What you cannot say....

During January to December 2016 there was a definite increase in the overall number of visits to NI attractions rising 5% from 2015.

Types of Attractions

Figure 1: Percentage of Attractions by Attraction Category

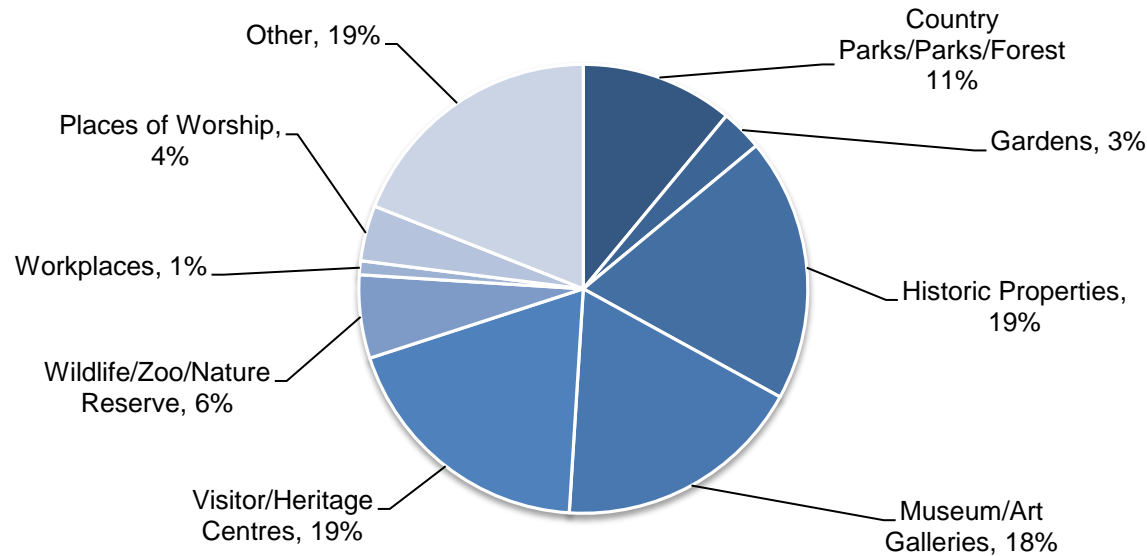


Figure 2: Percentage of Visits by Attraction Category

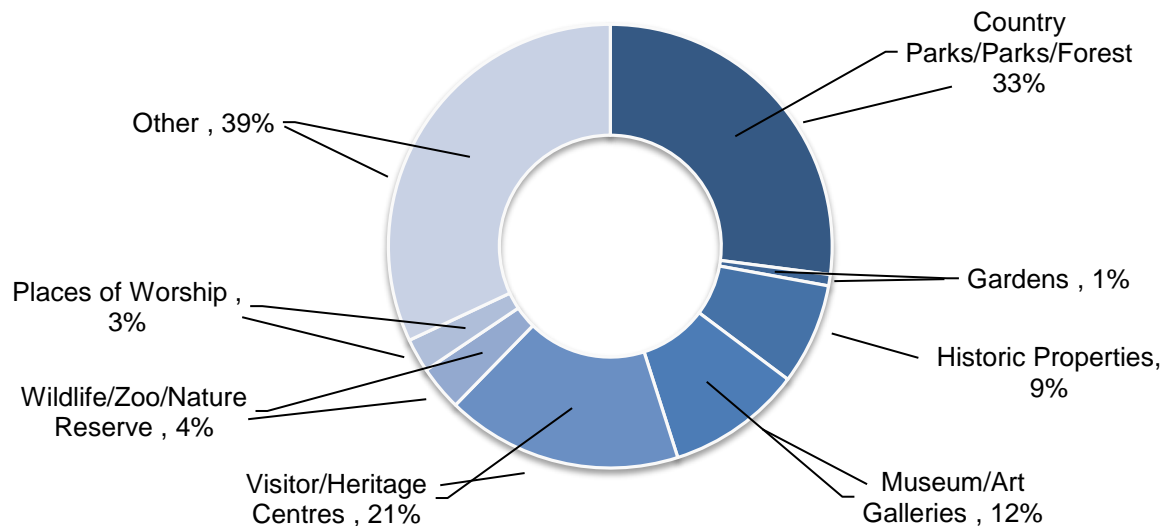


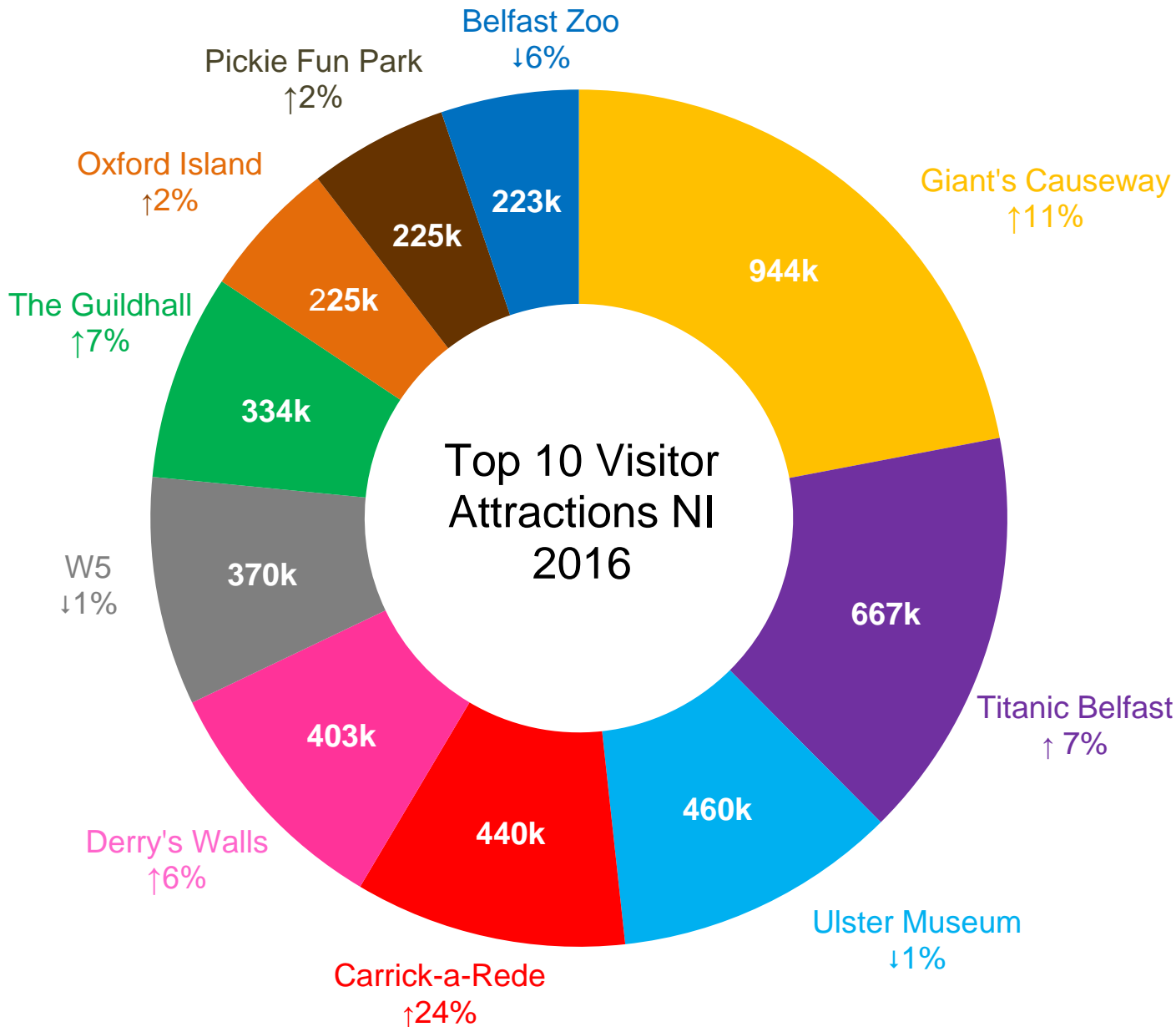
Figure 1 shows the proportion of responding attractions in each category. In 2016, the largest proportion of the 210 responding attractions were Visitor/Heritage Centres (19%) and Historic Properties (19%), followed by Museums/Art Galleries (18%).

During 2016 an estimated 15 million visits were made to participating attractions. Country parks /parks /forests attracted the largest proportion of visitors (33%). Visitor/heritage centres attracted the second highest proportion of visitors during 2016 (21%).

In total 162 participants returned data with figures for both 2015 and 2016. Based on the estimates provided, figures would suggest an estimated increase of 5 % in the number of visits to attractions during 2016.

*Workplaces do not appear in Figure 2 as they accounted for less than 1% of visits to attractions in 2016.

Figure 3: Top Ten Visitor Attractions 2016 (excluding Country parks/ parks/ forests/gardens)



Excluding country parks/ parks / forests and gardens last year there were an estimated 9.8 million visits to attractions in Northern Ireland during 2016.

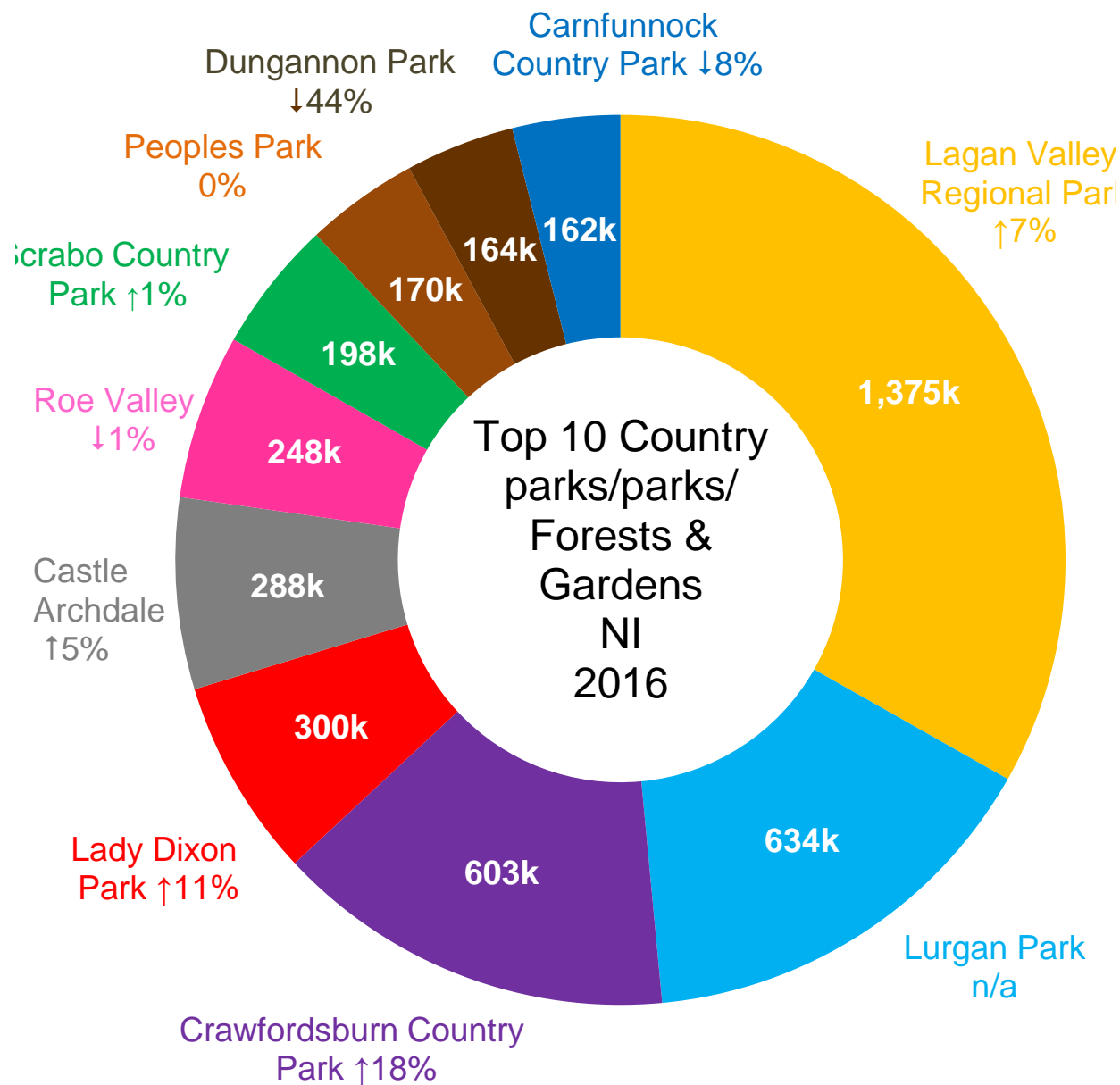
Within this group the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site attracted the highest number of visits (0.94 million). This was an 11% increase on 2015.

Titanic Belfast attracted the second highest number (0.67 million visits). This was a 7% increase on 2015.

In total the top ten attractions had an estimated 4.3 million visits in 2016 accounting for 29% of the total visits to attractions during 2016.

*Arrow indicates increase/decrease between 2015 - 2016

Figure 4: Top Ten Visitor Country parks/parks/forests/gardens 2016



During 2016 an estimated 5.1 million visits were made to Northern Ireland country parks, parks, forests and gardens. Visits to the top ten country parks/parks/forests/gardens accounted for an estimated 4.1 million.

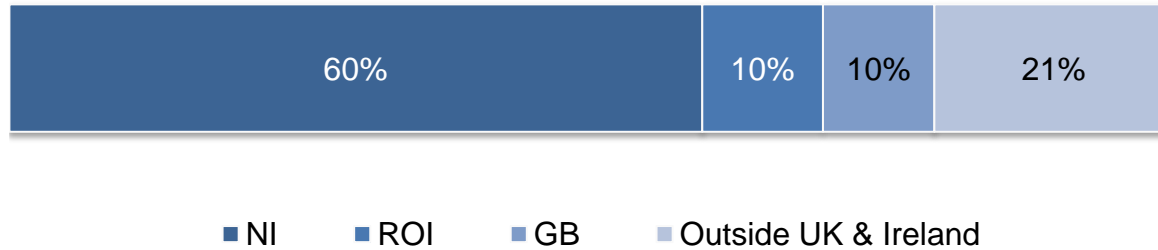
Lagan Valley Regional Park attracted the highest number of visitors. An estimated 1.4 million visitors visited the park during 2016.

Lurgan Park, attracted the second highest number of visitors with an estimated 0.6 million visits during 2016.

*Arrow indicates increase/decrease between 2015 – 2016

Residency of Visitors

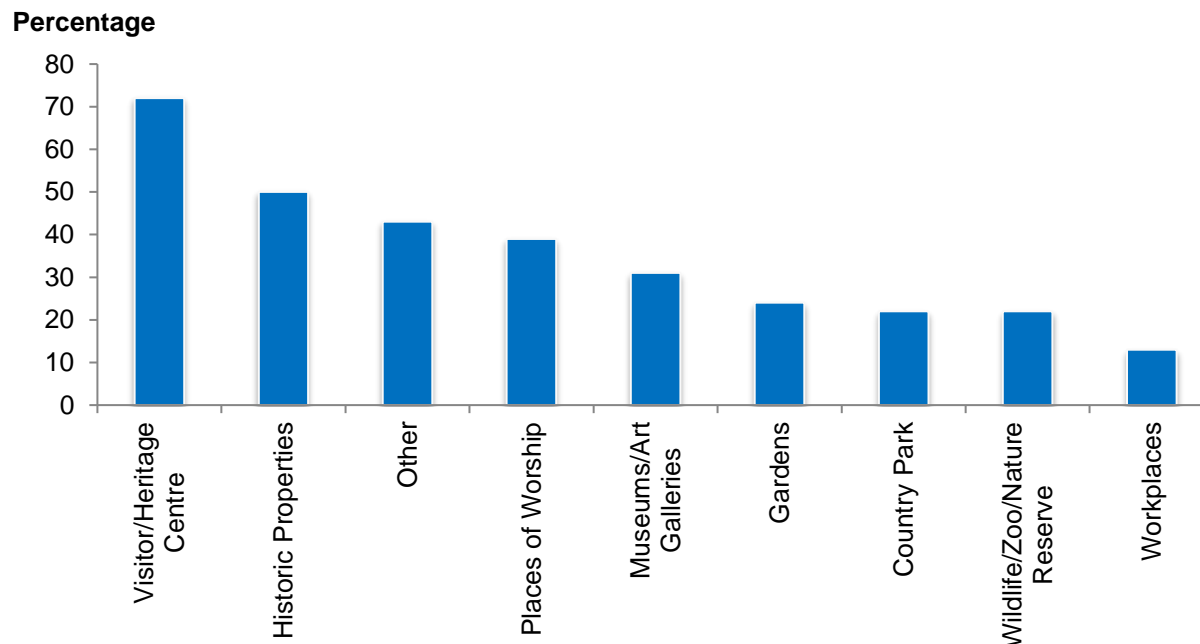
Figure 5: Proportion of Attraction Visitors by Place of Residence 2016



Respondents to the survey were also asked to provide information on the country of residence of their visitors. Respondents who replied reported an estimated 60% of visits were made by residents of Northern Ireland.

An estimated 40% of all visitors were external to NI. Approximately 10% were from the Republic of Ireland, 10% were from Great Britain and 21% from outside the UK and Ireland.

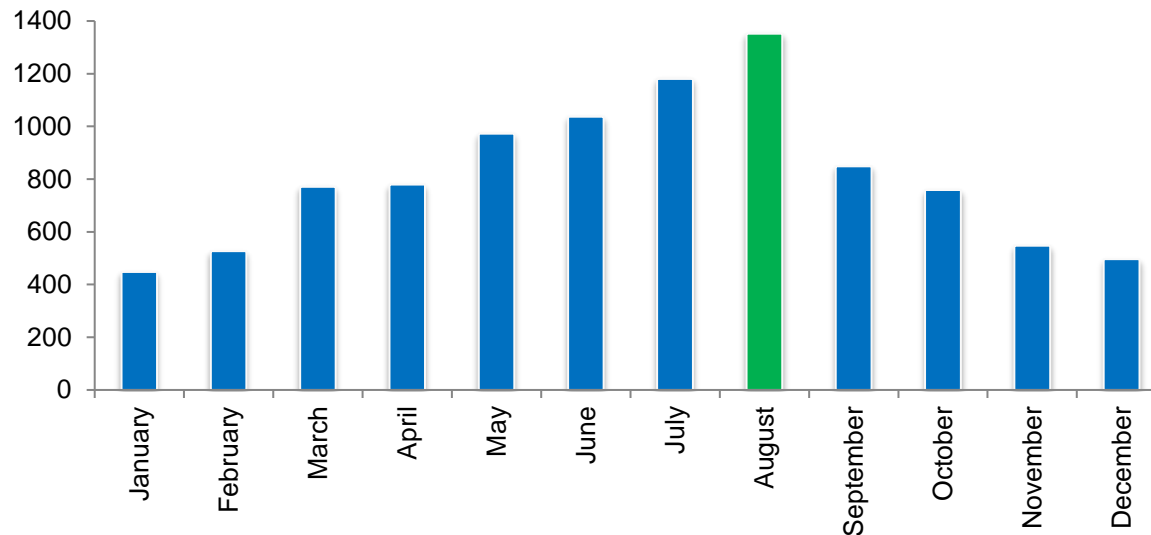
Figure 6: Proportion of Visitors External to NI by Attraction Type 2016



The proportion of visitors external to NI by attraction type can be seen in figure 6. Visitor/Heritage centres attracted the largest proportion (an estimated 72%) followed by Historic Properties with an estimated 50%. 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.

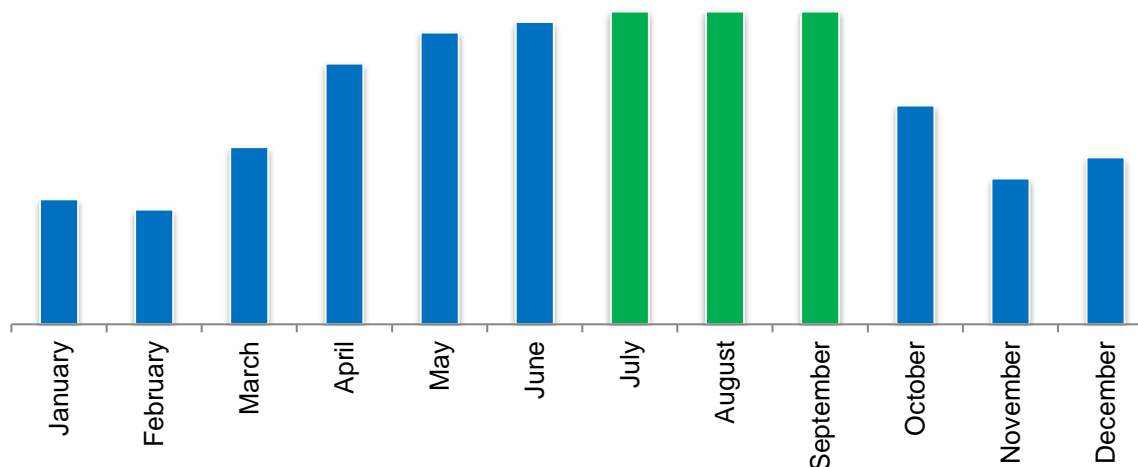
Seasonality

Figure 7: Number of Visits to Attractions by Month 2016 (Thousands)



Of the responding attractions August was the most popular month with an estimated 1.4 million visits recorded. The least popular month was January with an estimated 0.4 million visits made during the month.

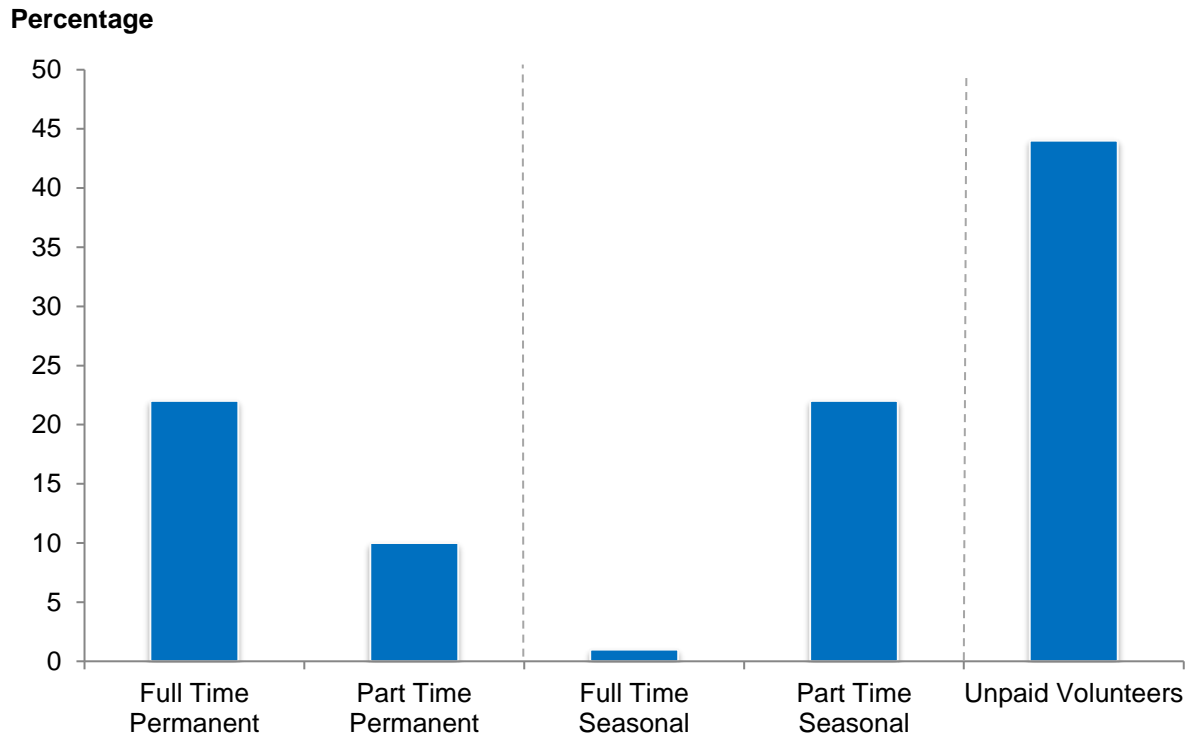
Figure 8: Seasonality of Attraction Opening 2016



In total 118 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 2016 varied slightly over the year with the highest number of attractions open in the months of July, August and September (115) and the lowest number open in the month of February (96).

Employment

Figure 9: Employment Type 2016



A total of 98 attractions provided information on employment totalling 3,158 employees and volunteers in 2016. Around 22% of staff were employed on a full time permanent basis.

Admission charges

Of the 36 attractions responding with information on admission charges the highest admission charge per adult was £20.00 while the highest admission charge for a child was £10.00 in 2016. Lowest admission charges reported were the same for both adults and children at £2.00.

Revenue

Of the 87 respondents who supplied information on revenue 43% reported revenue in 2016 had increased when compared to 2015, while 15% reported that revenue was down and 43% reported similar revenue to the previous year.

Upgrades

In 2016 27 attractions indicated they had upgraded or made improvements to their attraction. The median spend on upgrades was £10,000 with attractions spending from £1,000 to over £2,000,000.

Adult child ratios

The average overall ratio of adult to child visitors during 2016 for responding attractions (91) was 70% adult to 30% children.

Background Notes

In total 400 attractions across Northern Ireland were invited to participate in the 2016 Visitor Attraction Survey by means of a self-completion questionnaire. The list of attractions was obtained from Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI).

In 2016 there was a 61% response rate with 210 respondents providing visitor numbers. A total of 49 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 ‘external to NI’ 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 2016 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@nisra.gov.uk

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

Information on the quality of administrative sources can be found at [Data Quality Administrative Sources](#).

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