NISRA
Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

Northern Ireland Annual Visitor Attraction Survey 2017

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The key points are:

- there were a reported 19.8 million visits to visitor attractions in 2017 by respondents to the survey;

- visits to the headline attractions (Giant's Causeway and Titanic Belfast) increased by 10% between 2016 and 2017;

- 38% of attractions indicated that their revenue had increased in 2017;

- A reported 38% of visits were made by visitors who lived outside of Northern Ireland; and

- Country Parks/Parks/Forests accounted 38% of all visitors reported in 2017.

Contents:

Introduction

This report is designed to give an overview of the performance of the Visitor Attraction market in Northern Ireland in 2017. Participation by attractions in the Visitor Attraction Survey is voluntary. The survey was issued to 400 attractions (details obtained from Discover Northern Ireland) and 276 attraction owners replied; of these 242 provided data for analysis. Unless otherwise stated, the statistics presented in this report refers to these 242 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](#)

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What you can say....

Looking at the full picture sources point to a general upward trend since 2011 of the number of visitors to attractions, based on those who participated in the survey. Visits to the headline attractions (Giant's Causeway and Titanic Belfast) have increased by 10%.

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What you cannot say....

In 2017 there was a definite increase in the overall number of visits to all NI attractions, rising 8% from 2016.

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Types of Attractions
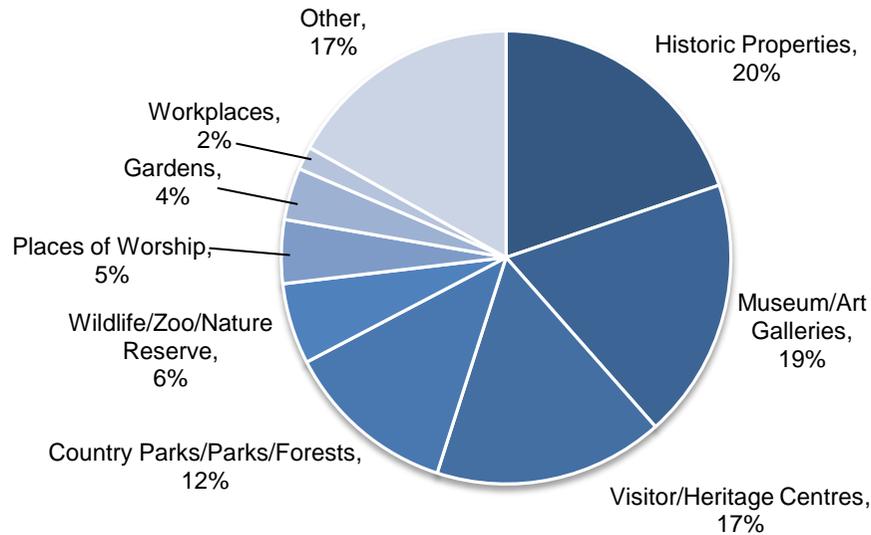
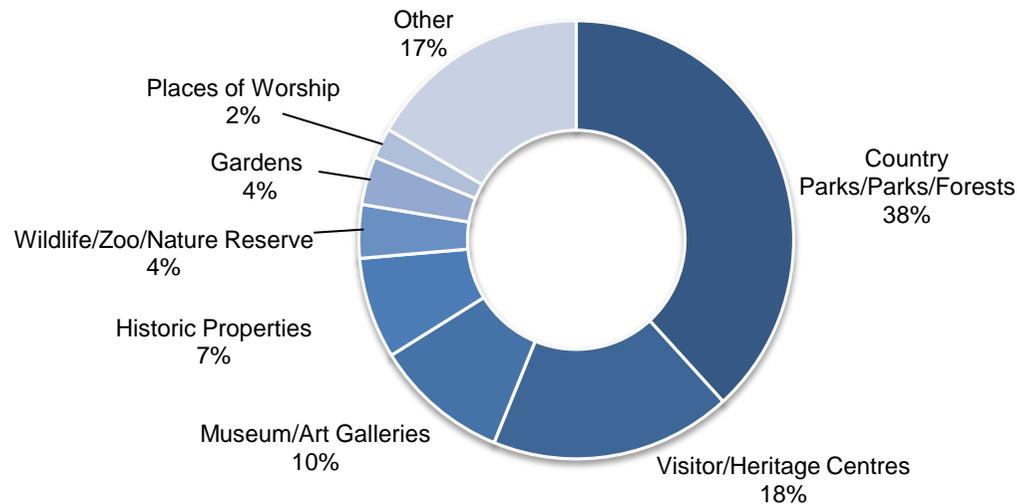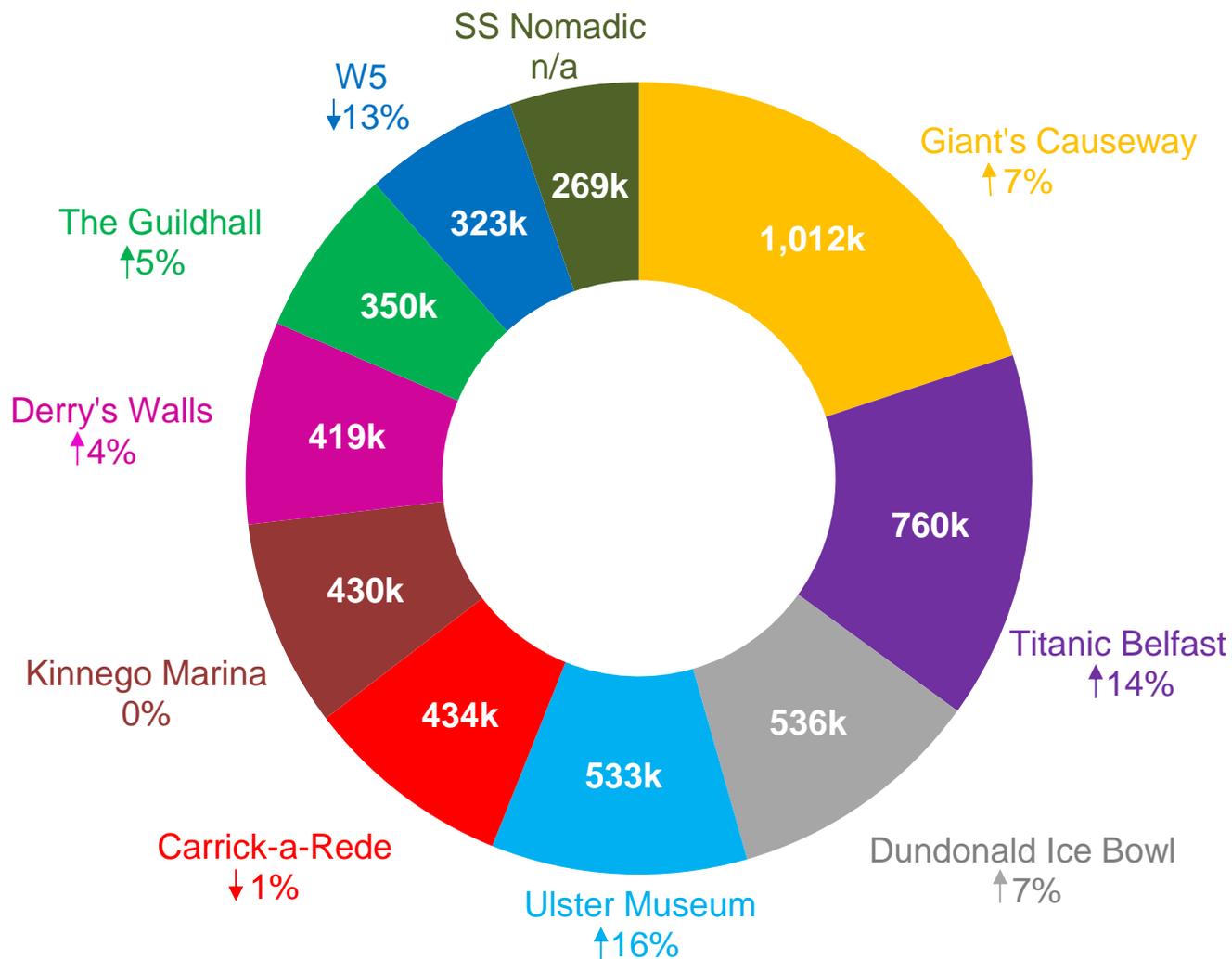**Figure 1: Percentage of Attractions by Attraction Category**

Figure 1 shows the proportion of responding attractions in each category. In 2017, the largest proportion of the 242 responding attractions were Historic Properties (20%) followed by Museums/Art Galleries (19%), and Visitor/Heritage Centres (17%).

During 2017 a reported 19.8 million visits were made to participating attractions. Country parks /parks /forests attracted the largest proportion of visitors (38%). Visitor/heritage centres attracted the second highest proportion of visitors during 2017 (18%). (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Percentage of Visits by Attraction Category

In total 201 participants returned data with figures for both 2016 and 2017. Based on the estimates provided, figures would suggest an estimated increase of 8% in the number of visits to attractions from 2016 to 2017.

*Workplaces do not appear in Figure 2 as they accounted for less than 1% of visits to attractions in 2017.

Full information on Northern Ireland visitor attraction statistics can be found at the following link: NI Visitor Attraction Statistics

Figure 3: Top Ten Visitor Attractions 2017 (excluding country parks/parks/ forests/gardens)

SS Nomadic n/a — 269k

W5 ↓13% — 323k

The Guildhall ↑5% — 350k

Derry's Walls ↑4% — 419k

Kinnego Marina 0% — 430k

Carrick-a-Rede ↓1% — 434k

Ulster Museum ↑16% — 533k

Dundonald Ice Bowl ↑7% — 536k

Titanic Belfast ↑14% — 760k

Giant's Causeway ↑7% — 1,012k

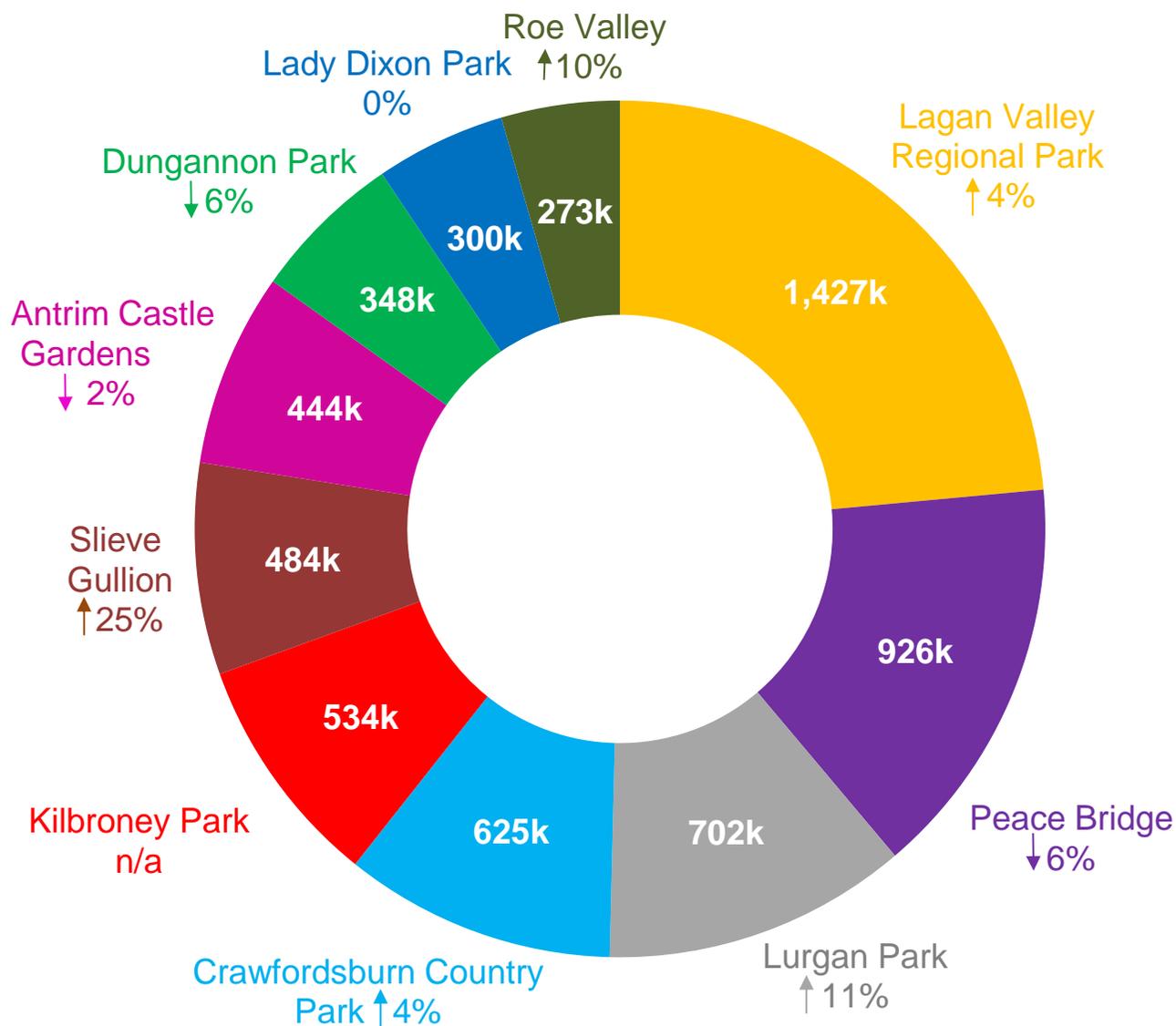*Arrow indicates increase/decrease between 2016 and 2017

Excluding country parks/parks/forests and gardens, there were a reported 11.6 million visits to attractions in Northern Ireland during 2017.

Within this group the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site attracted the highest number of visits (1 million). This was a 7% increase on 2016.

Titanic Belfast attracted the second highest number (0.76 million visits). This was a 14% increase on 2016.

In total the top ten attractions had a reported 5.1 million visits in 2017 accounting for 26% of the total visits to all attractions during 2017.

Full information on Northern Ireland visitor attraction statistics can be found at the following link: NI Visitor Attraction Statistics

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Figure 4: Top Ten Country parks/parks/forests/gardens 2017

Roe Valley ↑10%

Lady Dixon Park 0%

Dungannon Park ↓6%

Antrim Castle Gardens ↓2%

Slieve Gullion ↑25%

Kilbroney Park n/a

Crawfordsburn Country Park ↑4%

Lurgan Park ↑11%

Peace Bridge ↓6%

Lagan Valley Regional Park ↑4%

273k
300k
348k
444k
484k
534k
625k
702k
926k
1,427k

During 2017 a reported 7.4 million visits were made to Northern Ireland country parks, parks, forests and gardens. Visits to the top ten country parks/parks/forests and gardens accounted for a reported 6.1 million.

Lagan Valley Regional Park attracted the highest number of visitors. A reported 1.4 million visitors visited the park during 2017.

The Peace Bridge, attracted the second highest number of visitors with a reported 0.9 million visits during 2017.

*Arrow indicates increase/decrease between 2016 and 2017

Full information on Northern Ireland visitor attraction statistics can be found at the following link: NI Visitor Attraction Statistics

Residency of Visitors

Figure 5: Proportion of Attraction Visitors by Place of Residence 2017

62%	12%	9%	17%

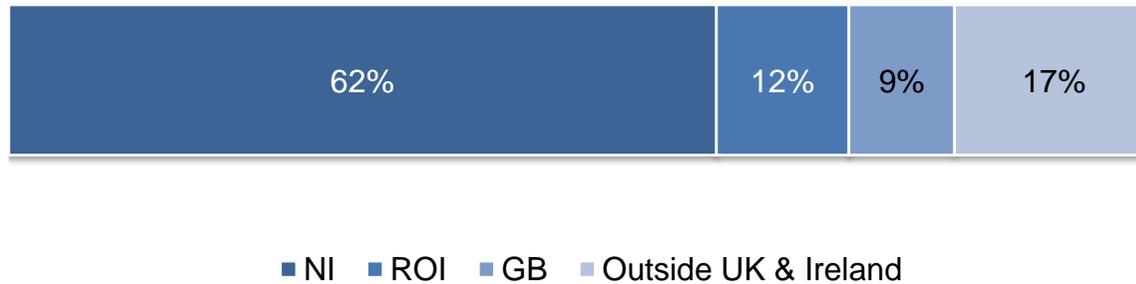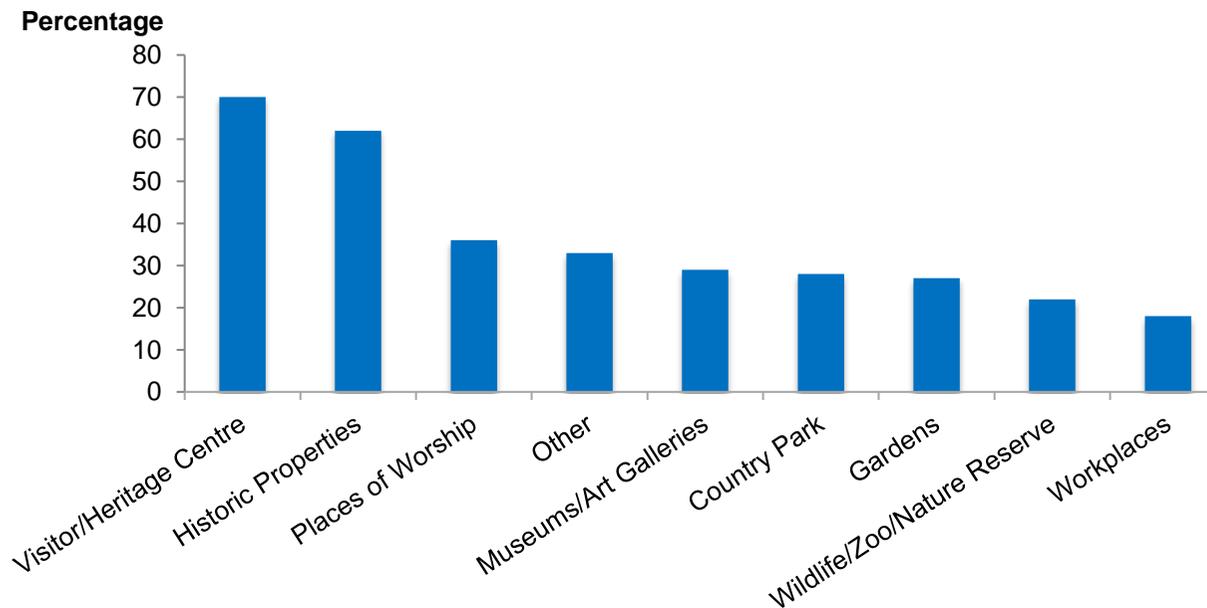■ NI ■ ROI ■ GB ■ Outside UK & Ireland

Figure 6: Proportion of Visitors External to NI by Attraction Type 2017


Respondents to the survey were also asked to provide information on the country of residence of their visitors. Based on respondents who replied, a reported 62% of visits were made by residents of Northern Ireland.

Therefore, 38% of all visitors were external to NI. This includes 12% of all visitors who were from the Republic of Ireland, 9% who were from Great Britain and 17% who were from outside the UK and Ireland.

The proportion of visitors external to NI by attraction type can be seen in figure 6. Visitor/Heritage centres attracted the largest proportion (70%) followed by Historic Properties (62%). 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.

Full information on Northern Ireland visitor attraction statistics can be found at the following link: NI Visitor Attraction Statistics

Seasonality

Figure 7: Number of Visits to Attractions by Month 2017 (Thousands)
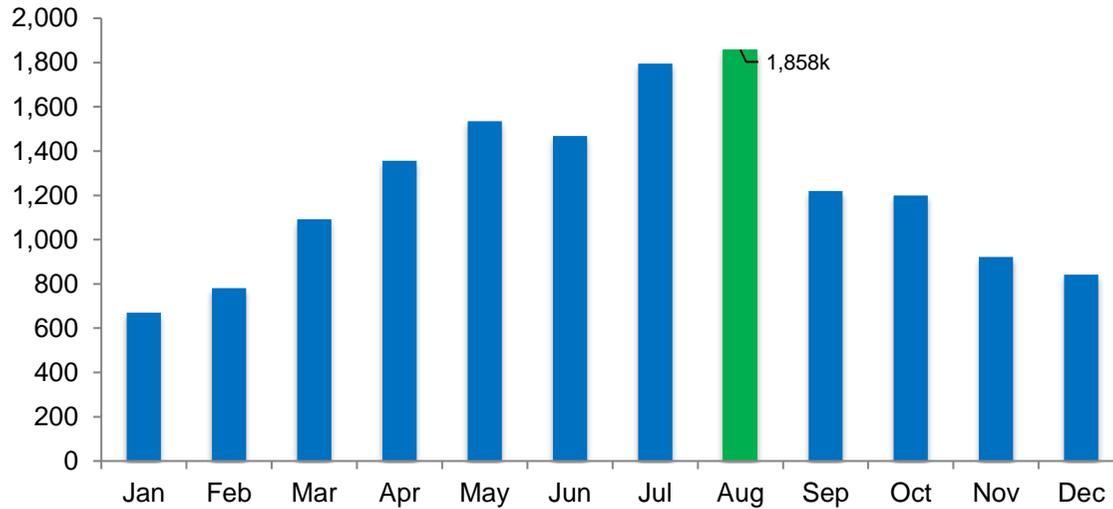
According to the responding attractions, August was the most popular month, with 1.9 million visits reported. The least popular month was January with a reported 0.7 million visits made during the month.

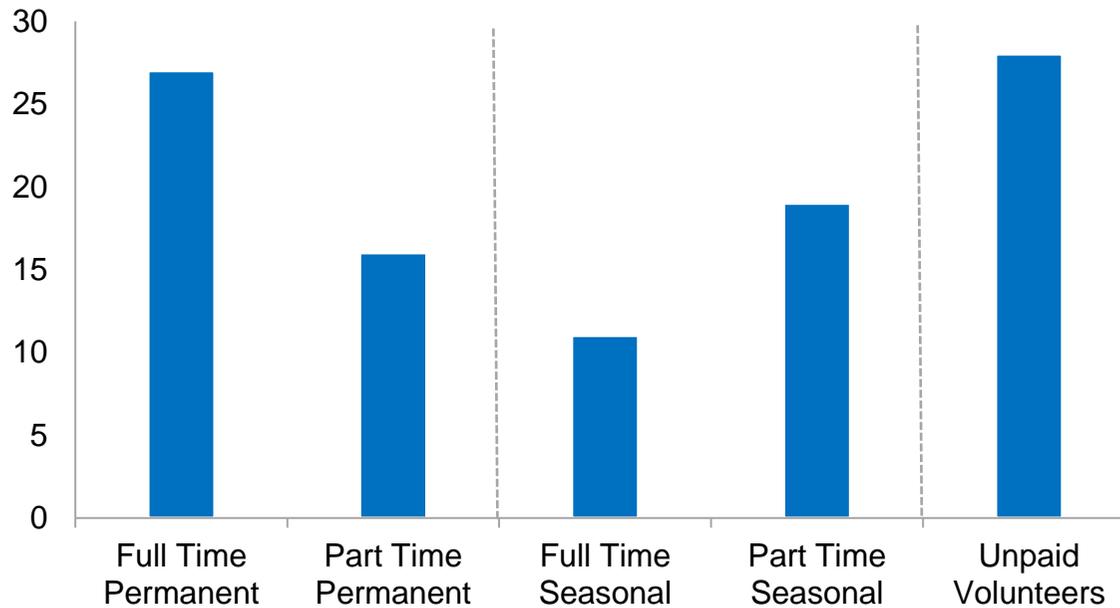**Figure 8: Seasonality of Attraction Opening 2017**
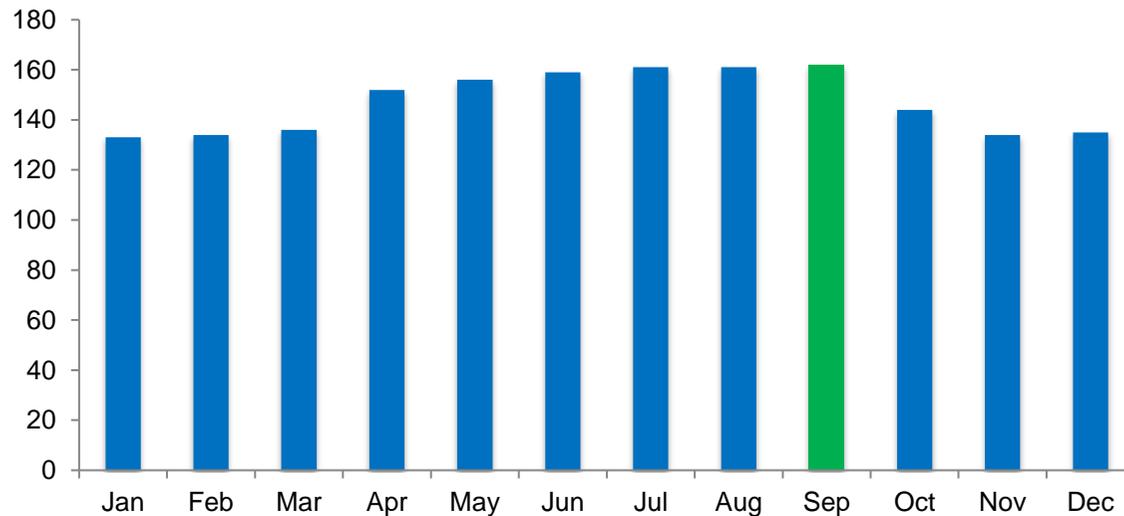
In total 165 respondents supplied information on the months attractions were open (partially or fully). The number reported as being open (partially or fully) each month during 2017 varied slightly over the year with the highest number of attractions being open in the month of September (162) and the lowest number being open in the month of January (133).

Full information on Northern Ireland visitor attraction statistics can be found at the following link: NI Visitor Attraction Statistics

Employment

Figure 9: Employment Type 2017

Percentage

A total of 145 attractions provided information on employment totalling 3,033 employees and volunteers in 2017. Around 27% of staff were employed on a full time permanent basis.

Admission charges

Of the 51 attractions responding with information on admission charges in 2017. the highest admission charge per adult was £18.00 while the highest admission charge for a child was £8.00. The lowest admission charge reported per adult was £1.60 while the lowest per child was £0.50.

Revenue

Of the 125 respondents who supplied information on revenue, 38% reported revenue in 2017 had increased when compared to 2016. Nearly half (48%) reported similar revenue to the previous year, while 14% reported that revenue was down.

Upgrades

A total of 35 attractions indicated they had upgraded or made improvements to their attraction in 2017. The median spend on upgrades was £15,000 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 2017 for responding attractions (129) was 69% adult to 31% children.

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Background Notes

In total 417 attractions across Northern Ireland were invited to participate in the 2017 Visitor Attraction Survey by means of a self-completion questionnaire. The list of attractions was obtained from Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI).

In 2017 there was a 64% response rate with 242 respondents providing visitor numbers. A total of 40 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.

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.

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 2017 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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