



Aberdeen 2023 Christmas Village Research Evaluation Results



Prepared for: *Codona's, Aberdeen Inspired & Aberdeen City Council*

Prepared by: *The Research Chamber, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce*

January 2024



**Who we
talked to**



Research Conducted on 3 relevant groups: *Village visitors, Village vendors and City businesses*

Who	Village visitors	Village vendors	City businesses
Survey Sample	304 on street interviews 8 QR Code poster	29	48
Methodology	In person interviews at the Village & by QR code publicised/ distributed at the Village	Distributed by Aberdeen Inspired	Distributed by Codona's management team.
	Range of times/venues/days spread throughout the duration of the event	Vendors invited to participate, mailed throughout the Village	Link also sent to AGCC members and follow-up by Codona's to encourage a high response rate

SCAN HERE TO LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF THE CHRISTMAS VILLAGE



As a thanks, you will be entered into a prize draw to win a **£25 gift voucher**.





Village Visitors



Executive Summary

Key facts: Village Visitors

Over half of visitors came to the City Centre to visit the Village. Their main reasons included the *food/drink, getting into the Christmas spirit and the rides*.

Almost nine out of ten (87%) respondents are advocates of the Village and are *completely likely* or *very likely* to recommend it to friends and family.

Village visitors were happy to share their ideas of how to enhance the experience to make it even better. One of the most common themes was to have more rides and activities for adults, and to bring back past featured rides.

There was a noticeable increase in respondents feeling that the Christmas Village had a positive impact on their perception of Aberdeen (88% vs 75%), as well as an increase in pride of the city (76% vs 62%).

The Christmas Village was highly regarded as safe (96%) by respondents.

96% of respondents wished for the Aberdeen Christmas Village to be repeated in the future.





Executive Summary

Key facts: Village Visitors

Over 1/3 (39%) of respondents felt that the village was better than in previous years, however there was also an increase in respondents thinking it was worse, from 2% to 11%.

46% of respondents spent money inside the Christmas Village – spending slightly less than last year (£31 v £34).

21% of respondents spent money shopping out with the Christmas Village / other external spends; for those that did other shopping - the amount decreased by almost £30.

Although a low base, it is worth noting that the only recurring qualitative topic across all respondent groups (visitors, quad vendors and city businesses) was Location – with 10% of respondents mentioning this.

A third of the comments were complimentary; of those that suggested moving the Village, the key themes mentioned were to consider a *larger location*, a *more central location* (Union Street and Union Terrace Gardens mentioned) and *the location's accessibility*.

(low base - 42 respondents across Visitors, Quad Vendors and City Businesses)

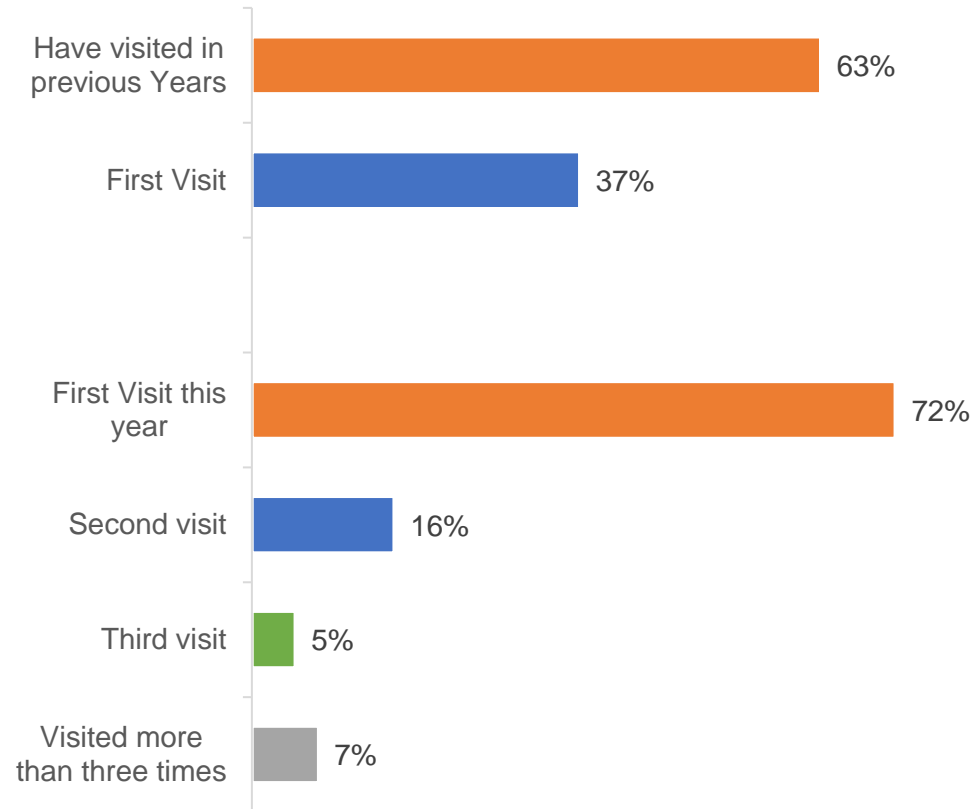


87% of respondents would recommend Aberdeen's Christmas Village to others



Visitor Statistics

Most respondents had visited the Christmas Village in previous years. Similar to 2022, over half of respondents were female, aged between 25-44, and from Aberdeen City.



Age	59% 25-44
Gender	54% Women 45% Men 1% Other/prefer not to say
Postcode	66% City 23% Shire 7% Elsewhere in Scotland 4% Overseas, 0% Elsewhere in UK
Came with	44% With family 26% With Friends
Group Size	Average group size was 2.7 35% of groups had children with them (33% in 2022)

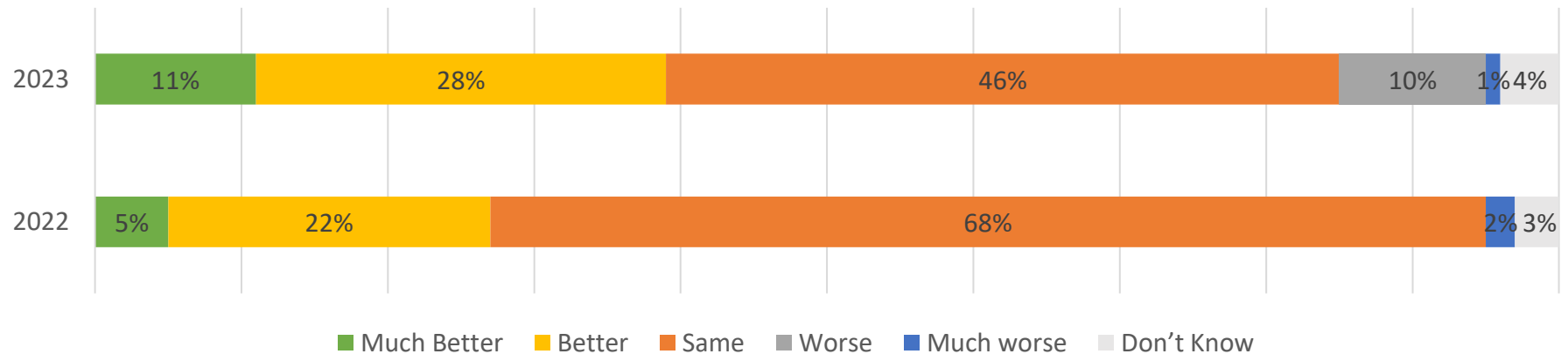
Q: Have you been to the Aberdeen Christmas Village in previous years?
Q: Is this your first visit to the Aberdeen Christmas Village this year?



Comparison to 2022

Most respondents believe that the Xmas Village is either better or the same as previous years. There is an 8% increase in those thinking it is better / much better compared to 2022 (39% vs. 27%).

However, there has also been an increase in those thinking it is worse/much worse, from 2% to 11%. The younger age group (16-24 years) were more likely to rate the Village as 'worse' than those aged 25-44.



Example comments:

Better: Key themes within the positive comments were liking the rides, enjoying the village atmosphere and aesthetic and the number of stalls: "I don't remember as much seating last year. This year feels busier, but also more accommodating." "Like how space for stalls & rides separate", "More comfortable space and nice arrangement".

Respondents also reacted well to the Ferris wheel and bigger rides; "Ferris wheel is much better", "Prefer the rides"

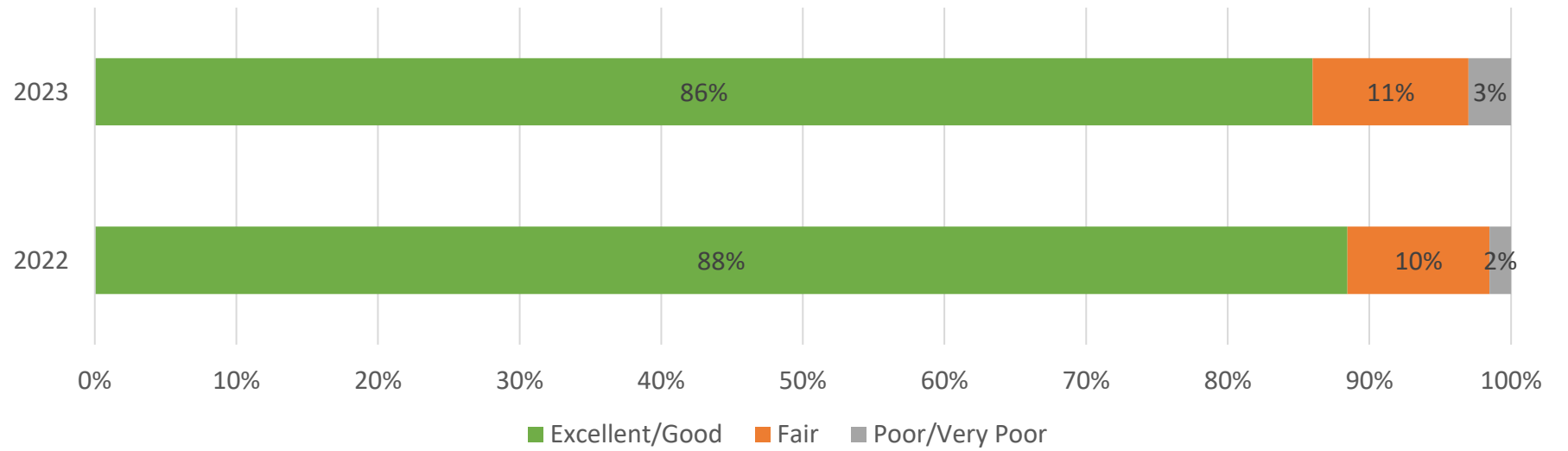
About the same: Just under half of respondents (46%) believed that the Christmas Village was the same, a 22% decrease from last year. Most comments focused on the rides being the same, while others commented that they could not see a difference.

Worse: Negative comments discussed a perceived lack/decrease in rides; "There are no rides for adults", "Got rid of the best ride"



Overall Satisfaction

86% felt the Christmas Village was *Excellent or Good*.



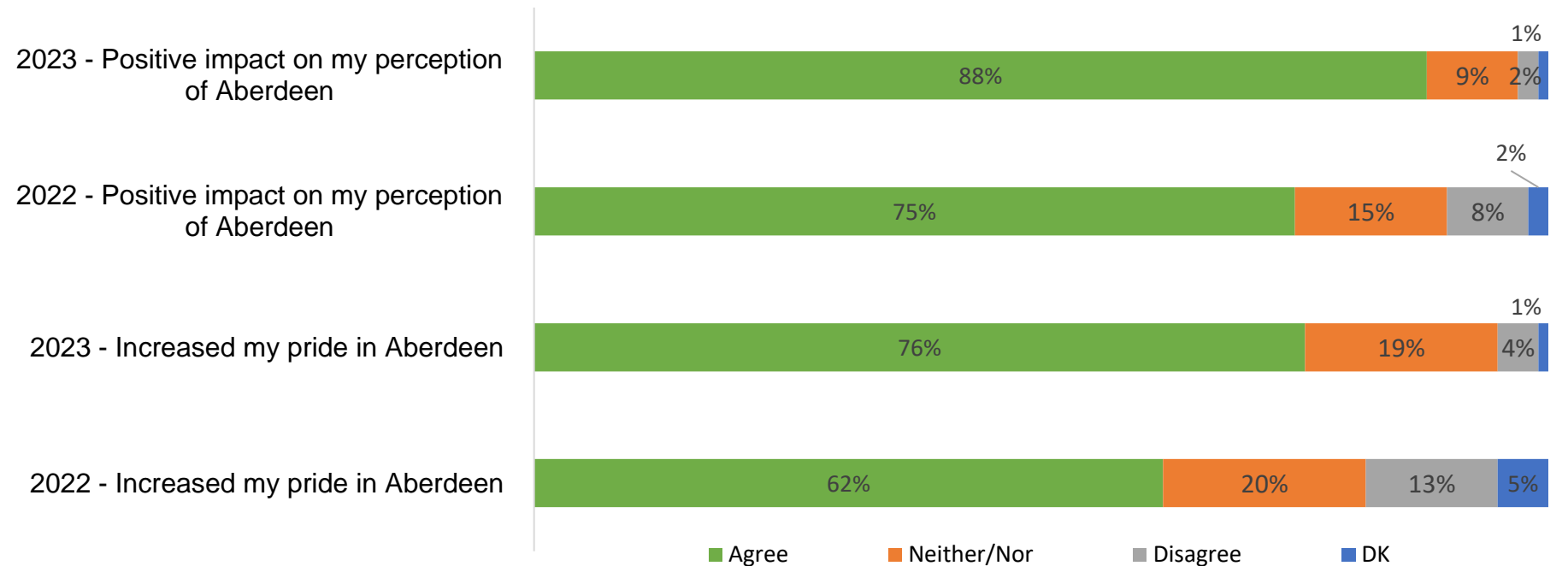
96% felt the Christmas Village was *safe*.



Christmas Village Perception

96% would like the Christmas Village to be repeated.

Compared to 2022, there has been a notable increase in city pride (76%, up from 62%) and a more positive perception of Aberdeen (88%, up from 75%). 100% of visitors from 'elsewhere in Scotland' said that the village had a positive impact on their perception of Aberdeen (base 21).

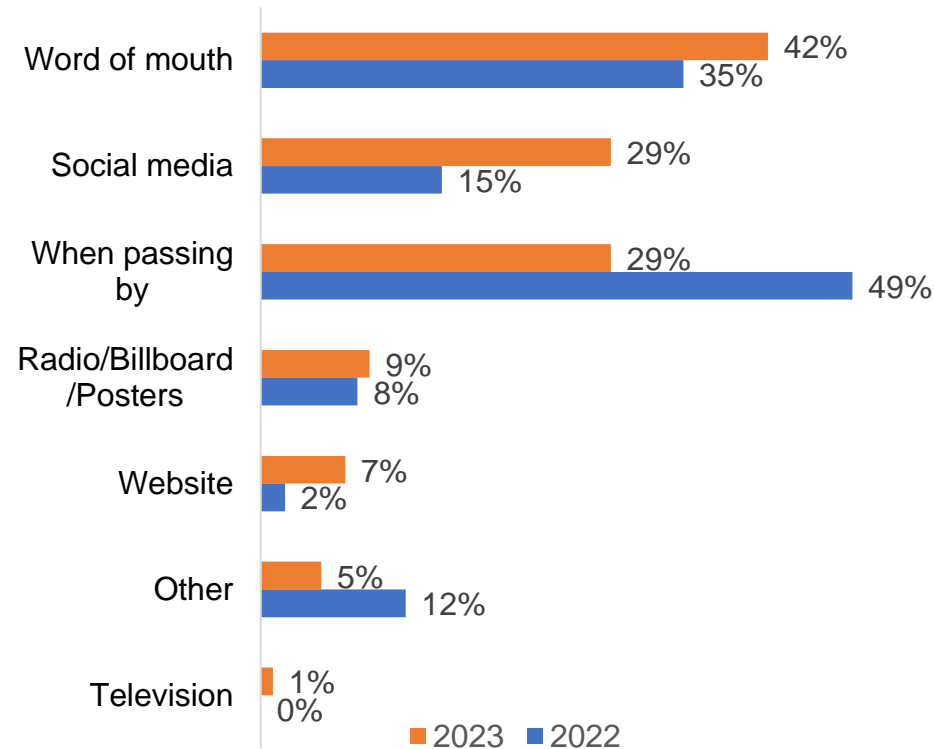




Christmas Village Marketing

Social media awareness has almost doubled this year, from 15% to 29%.

Predominantly, visitors to the Village from outside of the City or Aberdeenshire became aware of it by 'word of mouth' or when 'passing by'.



Those that saw it on social media were more likely to be aged 25-44.

Younger respondents, however, were most likely to have heard about the Village through 'word of mouth' (56%).

Aberdeen Inspired mainly promoted the Christmas Village on Facebook and Instagram which would correspond with the profile of respondents who completed this survey.

Depending on target markets, other social media channels could be considered for the mix in 2024.



Q: How did you hear about the Christmas Village this year?

Q: What was your main reason for coming to the Aberdeen Christmas Village today?

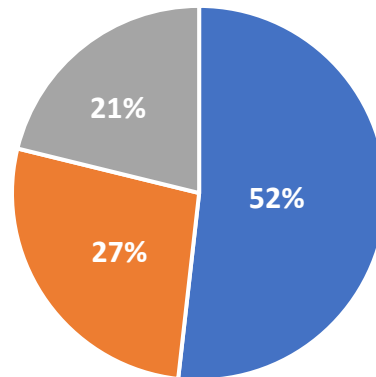


Reasons for visiting the Christmas Village

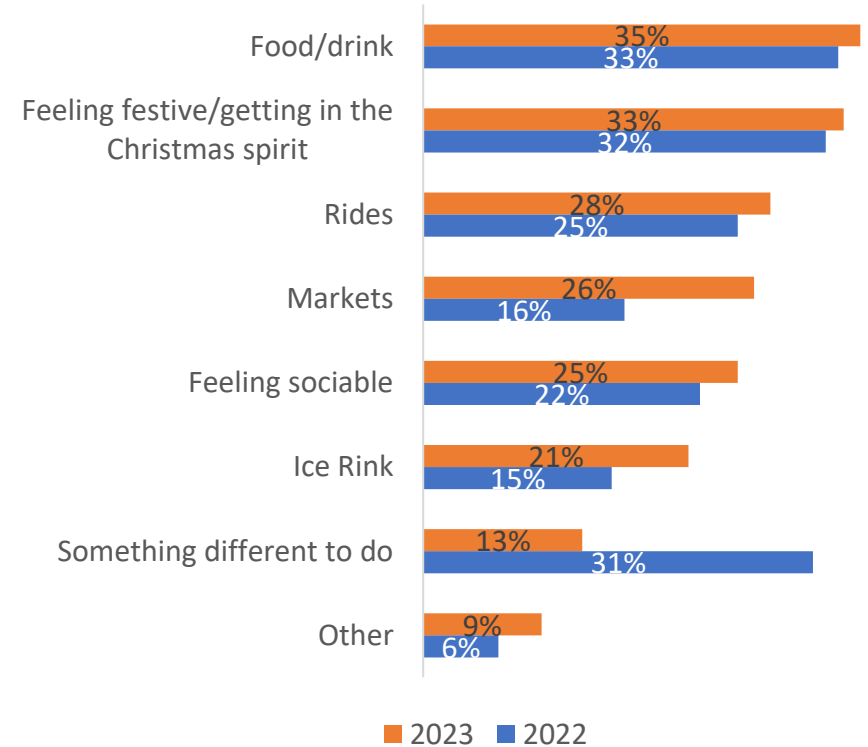
Just over half (52%) of visitors came to the City Centre to visit the Christmas Village.

Top three reasons to visit were cited as the *food & drink*, to *get into the Christmas spirit*, and to *try the rides*.

This is very similar to the results in 2022, although people visiting for something different to do decreased by 18%.



- Visiting the Christmas Village was my main reason for coming into Aberdeen City Centre
- I was visiting Aberdeen City Centre for something else but always planned to come to the Christmas Village too
- I was visiting Aberdeen City Centre for something else but have ended up visiting the Christmas Village too

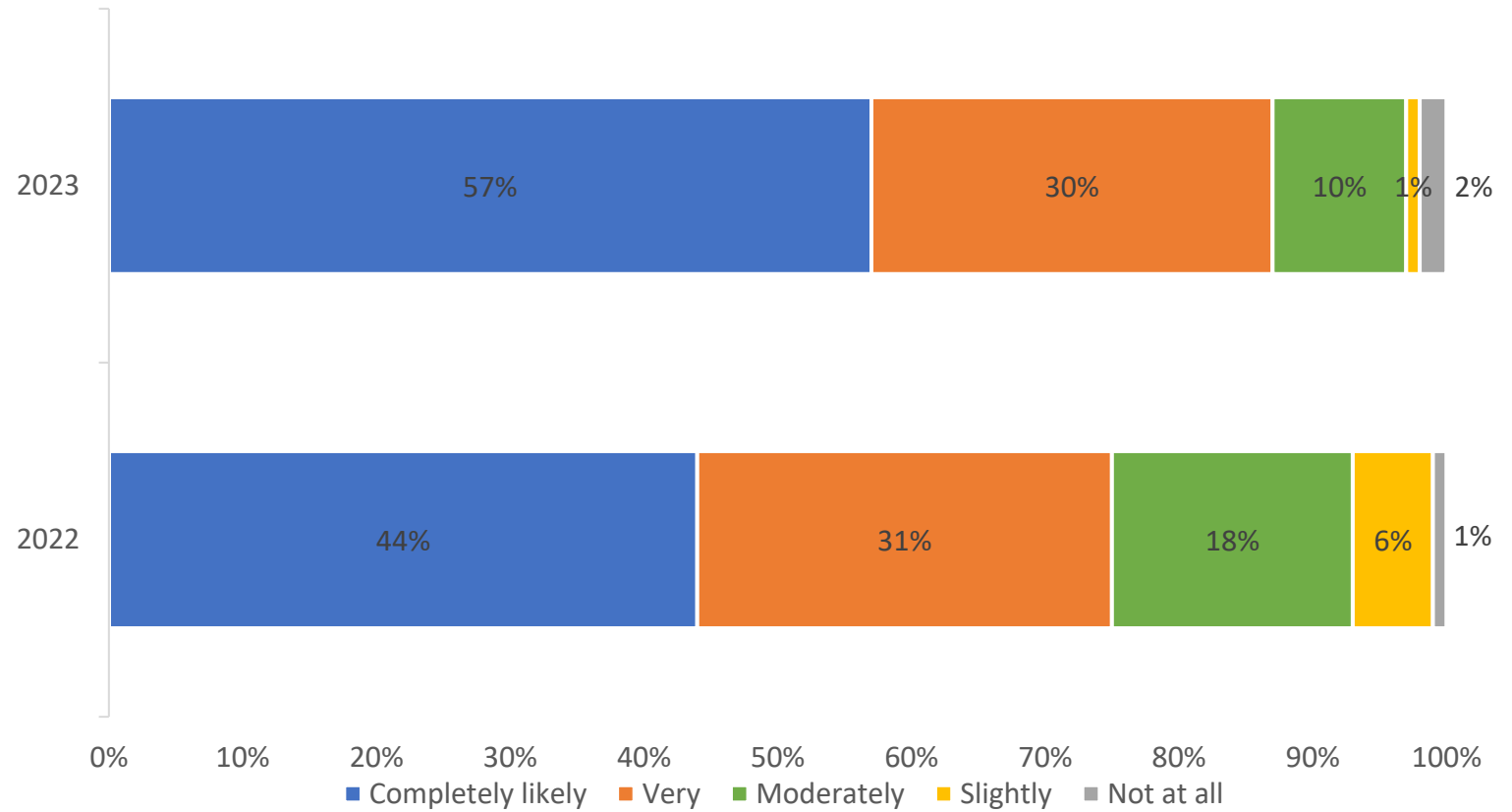


*Respondents could select more than one response



Advocacy

Visitors are more likely to recommend the Christmas Village to others compared to last year (87% vs. 75%).



Q: How likely or unlikely are you to recommend friends and family to visit the Christmas Village in the future?



Advocacy – Reasons for recommending the Christmas Village

Overall, many respondents were inclined to recommend the Christmas Village to others due to the festive atmosphere and to get into the Christmas spirit. Over a quarter of respondents (28%) mentioned the atmosphere and festive layout as a reason to recommend the Village.

There was also a strong response for respondents' recommendations based on enjoying Aberdeen's city centre being used. Some respondents mentioned that they considered it great for Aberdeen's economic growth and were keen to support this.

The 3 most discussed key themes included the *atmosphere and layout, enjoyability, and family friendly environment*.

Key positive themes also included the Village's benefit for children, the experience of something to do, and the food/ drink.

50 responses mentioned the word "fun", which implies that entertainment and enjoyability is a key factor in terms of advocacy.



Example Comments:

Festive, cheers up the city centre as normally dreary

Good place to hangout and have fun once a year with your closed ones

In Aberdeen we don't have much things to do, so this kind of stuff encourages more

Good feeling, supporting local businesses and good rides

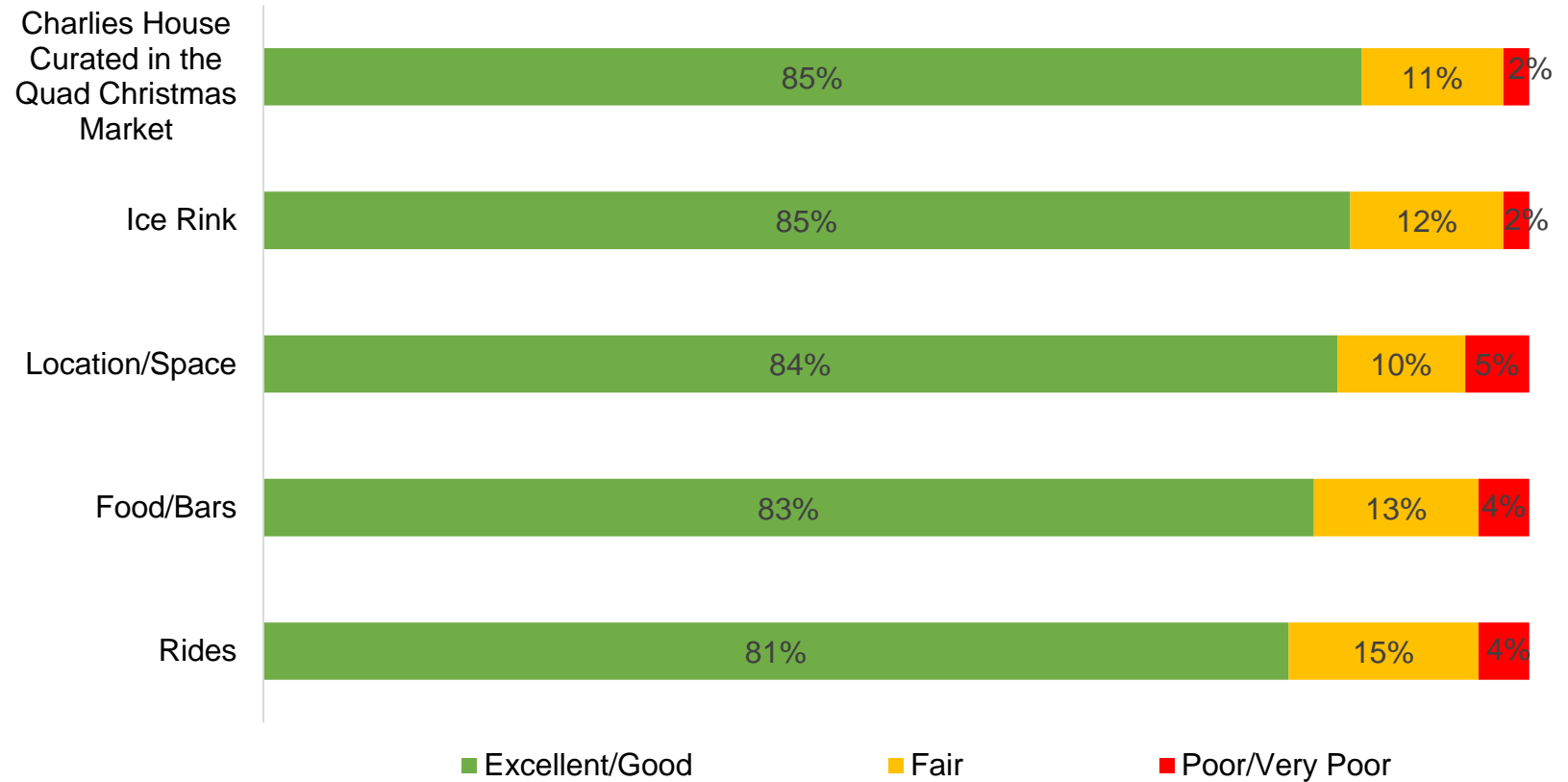
Safe and inviting and friendly

It's important to support efforts and local traders and to be part of the Christmas spirit by getting involved. Makes other people happy too to see others enjoying themselves.



How would you rate your experience of the Christmas Village?

Across all aspects surveyed, 4/5 respondents ranked the experience as excellent/ good.





Recommendations for the future

Village visitors were keen to share their ideas of how to further enhance the Village. The recurrent themes included *more things to do*, *more activities for adults*, *location* and *layout changes*, and the *resurrection of past rides*.



More activities and things to do / entertainment	More activities for adults	Location/Layout	Rides
<p>“Please make it livelier by adding more games and more food stalls and bars.”</p> <p>“I hope for it to be bigger next time. More stuff to do will be nice”</p> <p>”We want more new fun”</p>	<p>“More rides for older kids would be nice.”</p> <p>“More for adults in terms of rides or entertainment such as bands”</p> <p>“Rides for bigger kids, bigger scale”</p>	<p>“Would love to see a little indoor area for the bars we like Glasgow / Edinburgh have - or just more electric heaters / fires!”</p> <p>“A warm shack could be created for families to relax”</p> <p>“The space is a little too small”</p>	<p>“Miss the really big rides that were here last year”</p> <p>“everyone wants the freak out back !!!! :))))”</p> <p>“It has to have more rides”</p>
<p>Visitors thought that their experience could be enhanced by adding more activities and things to do. Overall, visitors would like to see more of what is already at the Village, and on a bigger scale; whether it comes to the stalls, rides, or space.</p>	<p>There was an overwhelming surge of responses which included the suggestion of more activities for adults. Many respondents felt that this would be a great improvement to the Village, whether it be rides for adults or other adult activities.</p>	<p>Many respondents felt that the Village would benefit from warmer areas, such as huts with electric heaters or warm shacks. Many respondents also felt that the size of the Village could be increased, to make it appear more spacious and attractive.</p>	<p>Respondents generally felt that the experience would be better if rides from last year were brought back. Many mentioned missing the bigger ride that was present last year and expressed that it would be a great addition if it were to come back.</p>



Visitor Spend

230 people provided insight to their anticipated spend whilst visiting the Christmas Village. As in previous years, an average across the total respondents for this question was taken and compared to previous years.

<i>Spend per 'party group'</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>Difference 2022 v 2021</i>
<i>Inside Christmas Village</i>	£20	£25	£25	-
<i>Food, drink outside the event</i>	£8	£10	£17	+ £7
<i>Other shopping/ anything else</i>	£12	£20	£17	- £3
<i>Overnight Accommodation</i>	£1	£6	£6	-
<i>Local travel, i.e. to get to Aberdeen City Centre</i>	£1	£4	£3	- £1
<i>Outside Christmas Village *</i>	£22	£40	£43	+ £3
Total Spend	£42	£65	£69	+ £3

* All spending outside the Village

Note: numbers are rounded

2023 Individual bases : Inside Christmas Village 151; Food & Drink out with 130; Other shopping / anything else 112*; Local travel 99;

Overnight accommodation 60

* Two bases added – may be duplication included

*Spend breakdowns were not compulsory and bases vary.
Further insight continues on the next slide.*



Visitor Spend

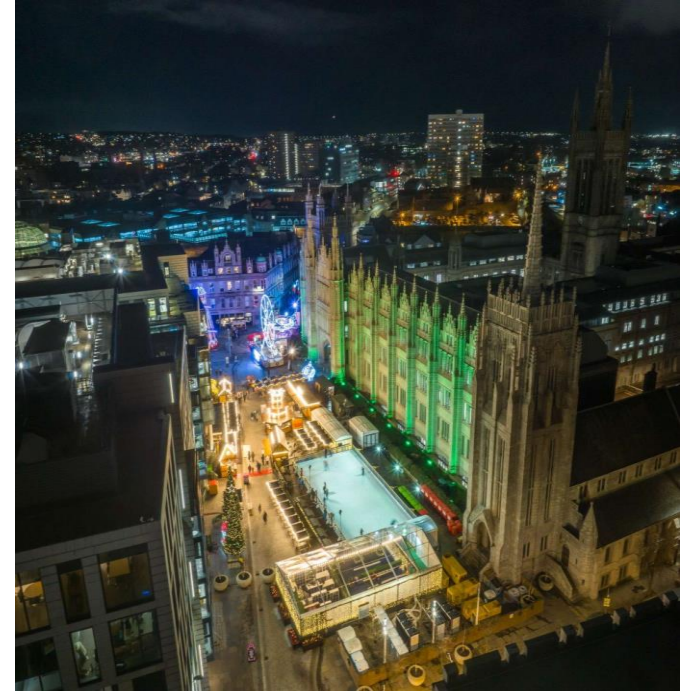
The average spend of those who spent on:

Food and Drink outside the Christmas Village
(114) – £26

Local travel (58) – £10

Overnight accommodation (11) – £97

Other shopping or anything else out with the
Christmas Village (64) – £67





Quad Vendors



Executive Summary

Key facts: Quad Vendors

The vast majority of Quad Vendors, believed that having a stall was good for their business.

Most Quad Vendors were satisfied and aim to return as an event stallholder next year.

However, vendors were also keen to share improvements that could enhance their experience.

91% of Quad Vendors believed that having a stall was good for their business.

94% of Quad Vendors were happy with their decision to become a stall holder.

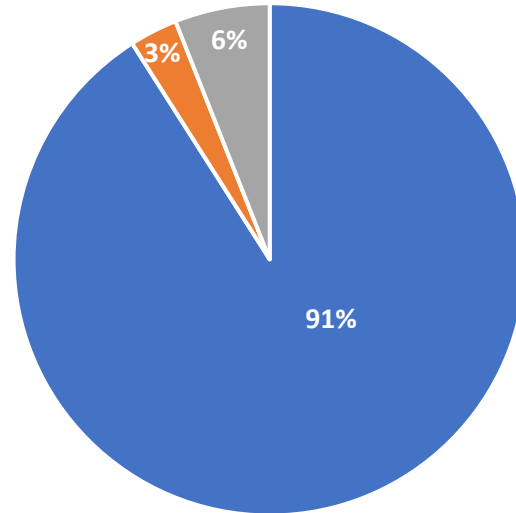




Christmas Village Impact on Quad Vendors

Over 9/10 Quad Vendors surveyed believed that having a stall was good for their business.

“Being in a close proximity to the village, every year we see increased footfall into our venue which is directly linked to increased business turnover during the period the village is up and running.”



- Yes, having a stall was good for my business
- No, having a stall was not good for my business
- Don't know/can't say

Why do you say that?

Footfall	<i>The Christmas Market is undoubtedly my favourite market to be a part of. The atmosphere is amazing, and the foot traffic is off the charts. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be part of the market!</i>
Brand awareness	<i>“It would appear not so many people knew we existed so it's been amazing for us”</i>
Sales	<i>“Between historic customers and new customers, we saw a 23% overall increase in sales from last year.”</i>

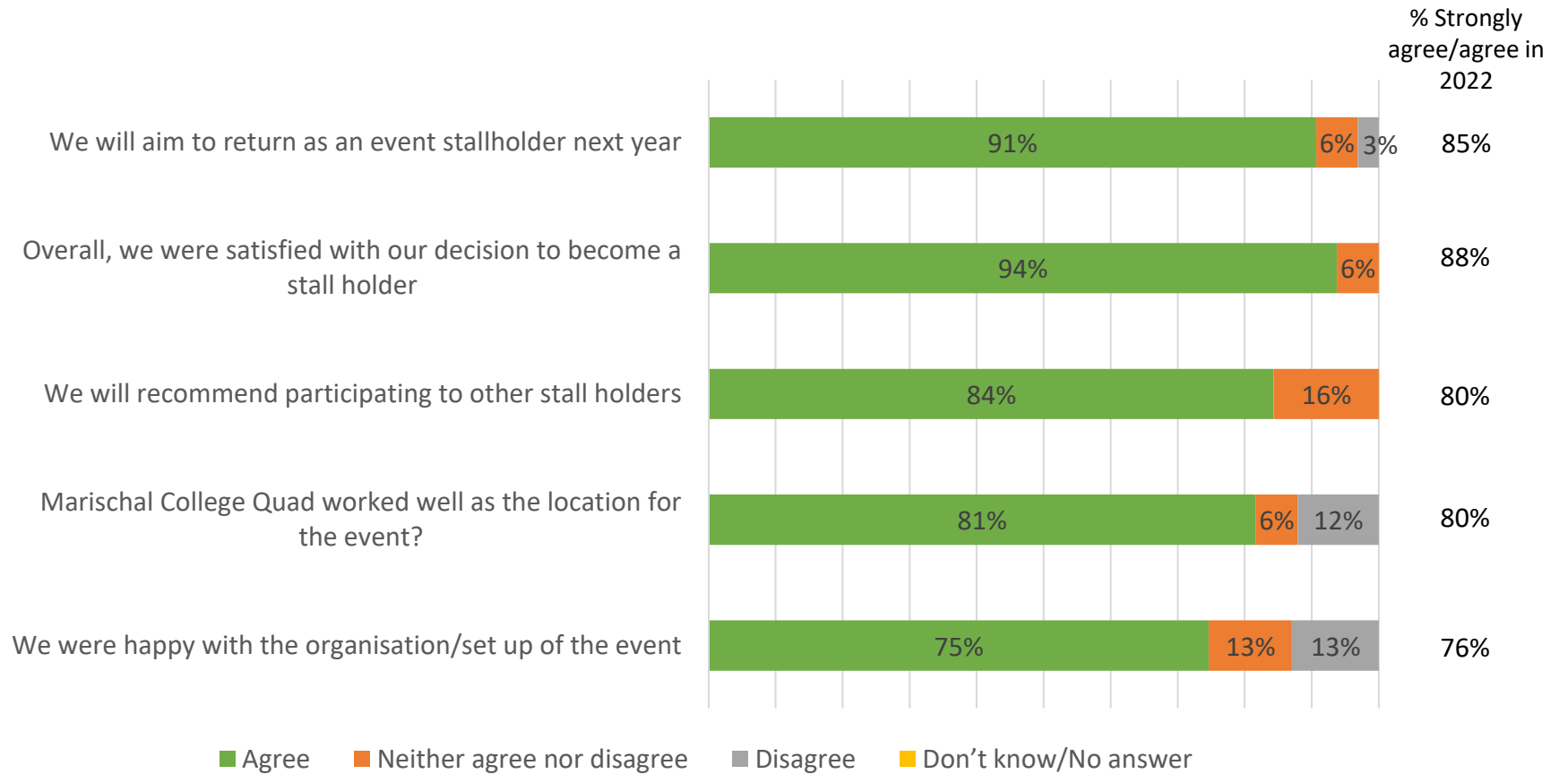


Q: Was having a stall at Aberdeen Christmas Village market good for your business?



Stall Holder Ratings

The vast majority (91%) of Quad Vendors were satisfied and aim to return as an event stallholder next year. Almost all measures have increased since 2022.



Q: How much do you agree or disagree about these Christmas Village stall holder statements?



Quad Vendors - Suggested Improvements

Themes included *stall-holder facilities*, *organisation/ set up*, *location/ layout* and *stall amenities*.

Stall-Holder Facilities	Organisation/ Set Up	Location/Layout	Stall amenities
<p>Almost a third of all responses discussed the need for more accessible bathroom facilities</p> <p><i>"Would love to have a toilet for stall holders on site as very difficult to run to the ones at the bottom of the Christmas village when on the stand solo."</i></p> <p><i>"Toilets are a big problem"</i></p>	<p>Organisation and set up was the highest mentioned key theme when it came to responses, with just under half of responses mentioning this aspect.</p> <p><i>"The access for set up is difficult"</i></p> <p><i>"I do think the rules and Information should be better told to all stall holders as a lot of us didn't know or weren't told!"</i></p>	<p>Respondents generally wanted better signage and further disability provisions in place. The location and huts also proved challenging to vendors.</p> <p><i>"It is still difficult for disabled and mobility challenged stall holders to get their stuff into the Quad"</i></p> <p><i>"Better signage"</i></p>	<p>Respondents wanted to see more local and high standard products.</p> <p><i>"more stalls which have been vetted as quite a number re-selling toys / prime drinks this year which took it away from local makers"</i></p> <p><i>"There were a couple of stalls the weekend that I was there selling Lego and headphones and nerf guns and other plastic toys etc. make all my own products by hand and I feel that by having those types of stall there really cheapens the whole atmosphere."</i></p>

Curated in the Quad

Week 1 - 17 - 19 Nov 2023



13-23 Jewellery

Collections at 1979

Aladdins Cave Forres

Cookie Cult

Arctis Designs

Curiously Charmed

Book Mama

Happy Howlers

Charlie House

Kilted Fudge



City Businesses



Executive Summary

Key facts: City Businesses

Half of city business responses saw the Village as good for business, a decline on last year. However, only 7% rated the experience as bad.

There were mixed results from local businesses with about half feeling it positively impacted their footfall and turnover.

City businesses want to see the Christmas Village bigger and better in the future.

56% of respondents saw the Village as very / fairly good for business

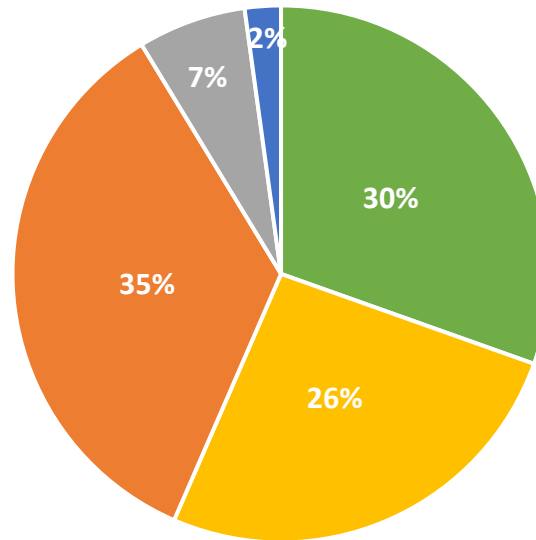
78% of businesses agree that the Christmas Village helps to boost the city centre





Christmas Village Impact on Local Businesses

Just over half (56%) of local businesses saw the Village as good for business; a 7% decrease compared to 2022.



- Very good for my business
- Fairly good for my business
- Neither good nor bad for my business
- Fairly bad for my business
- Don't know/can't say

Why do you say that...

Very/ fairly good for business

"Increased footfall to the area, increase weekend sales in the cold winter months."

"I feel it takes more people down to the bottom end of Aberdeen"

"Love it each year brings extra business and secondary spend"

Fairly bad for business

"Adding more road closures meant customers didn't venture into the city as often."

Don't know

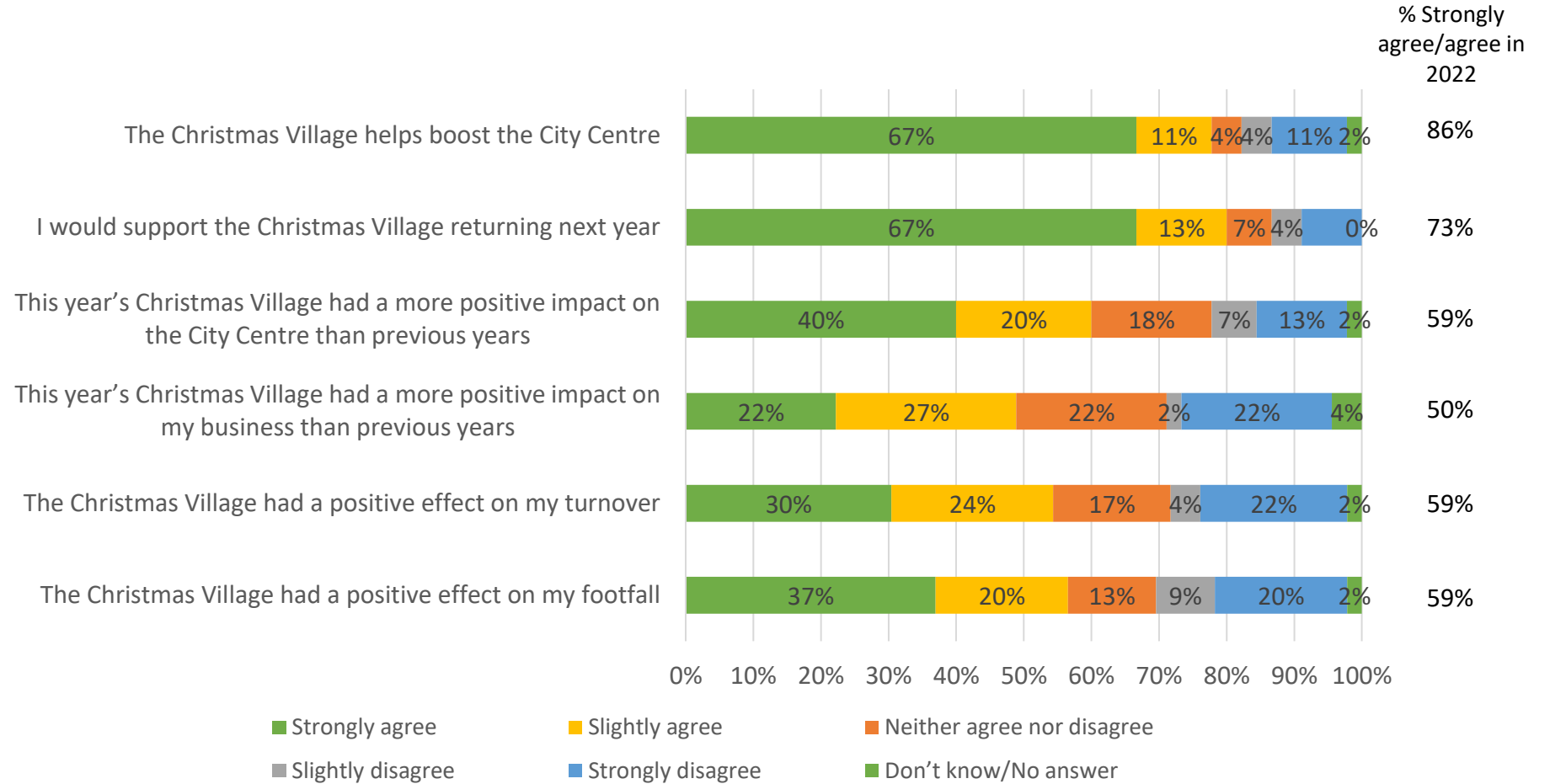
"Our business is not reliant on footfall, and so bringing additional people to the city centre does not provide direct benefit to us."





Local Business Ratings

Overall, there are positive views of the Village from city businesses. 8/10 respondents believe that the Christmas Village helps boost the City Centre, slightly down on 2022. Less respondents reported a positive effect on their turnover and footfall than in 2022.





Suggested Improvements from Local Businesses

City business respondents generally want to see the Christmas Village bigger and better in the future, while over 20% of improvement responses mentioned a location change. There was also plenty of positive feedback. 50% of location responses for Q3 discussed the revival of Union Terrace Gardens (n=6).

Bigger/better	Location
<p><i>“Can we expand on it and make it bigger... Possibly some new attractions”</i></p> <p><i>“Has improved on last year but love to see even more”</i></p> <p><i>“It needs to be bigger, bolder and more ambitious to compete with offerings in competitor destinations.”</i></p>	<p><i>“It needs to be in a better location away from main roads / bus routes.”</i></p> <p><i>“The central portion of Union Street would do more”</i></p> <p><i>“Currently it’s shoehorned into a small area in the wrong place”</i></p>
<p><i>“Nice to see the giant lit up statues that people could take selfies at, nice touch, liked the big wheel, felt more Christmassy this year which I liked”</i></p> <p><i>“Fantastic- brings extra business to the area, can’t praise it enough!”</i></p>	

