

Westonbirt, the National Arboretum: Visitor Experience Evaluation

Liz O'Brien and Jack Forster 2018



Westonbirt
The National
Arboretum

 **Forestry Commission
England**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

As part of the evaluation of the Westonbirt Heritage Lottery Fund Programme, visitor experiences, perceptions and understandings were studied to look at the impact of the projects developed and to explore whether there were suggestions and insights on how the current welcome and information offer at Westonbirt Arboretum could be improved. The evaluation questions include:

1. What are visitor perceptions and experiences of the Westonbirt site welcome and Welcome Building information centre
2. To what extent are visitors engaging with information and interpretation before and during their visit to Westonbirt
3. What awareness do visitors have of the role of Westonbirt as the National Arboretum in England

Data was gathered through an on-site survey (n=767) of first time or infrequent visitors, an online survey (n=1,233) of members of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum and non-members, and six focus groups (n=51) of dog walkers, members and non-members of Westonbirt, member post 2014, and families with babies and toddlers and families with children 6-15 years of age.

Key results

Visits

- In the on-site survey 45% were first time visitors; these were significantly more likely to be younger (16-24 year olds) than older (65 years plus) individuals.
- In the online survey 67% were Friends of Westonbirt. Individuals visiting the site more than 1-3 times a year were significantly more likely to be Friends of Westonbirt.
- When the on-site and online surveys were combined, walking (65%) and general seasonal interest (40%) were the most popular reasons for visiting Westonbirt.
- Site surveyed individuals were significantly more likely to visit the Silk Wood part of the site, whereas online respondents were significantly more likely to visit the old arboretum or both the arboreta and Silk Wood.
- Focus group participants talked about visiting for the following: walking, play area, running, orienteering, concerts, events, Gruffalo trail and Enchanted Christmas.
- Focus group participants felt the site had a very positive impact on their wellbeing, they talked about Westonbirt as a calm and peaceful place, somewhere to get

some fresh air, for children to let off steam, to gain a sense of freedom and as a safe space where children could run around and explore.

Arrival experience

- In the on-site survey the majority of individuals (91%) found the arrival experience relaxed and welcoming, along with finding staff/volunteers helpful (81%). Just under half (42%) of individuals indicated that options and activities were explained to them by a member of staff/volunteer on arrival; whereas only 1% of individuals recorded having Welcome Building exhibits explained to them.
- In the online survey the majority of individuals (65%) found the arrival experience relaxed and welcoming, along with finding staff/volunteers helpful (73%). Younger people were significantly more likely to report that the arrival was relaxed and welcoming versus older people.
- In the combined survey data individuals in the on-site survey were significantly more likely to be positive regarding the arrival being relaxed and welcoming and staff/volunteers being accessible than the online survey (versus both non-members and Friends of Westonbirt).
- In the combined data online (non-members) were significantly more likely to report that options/activities were explained than on-site visitors.
- The majority of focus group participants stated that they were welcomed occasionally when they came onto the site, a small number outlined they were welcomed most times they visited. A small number of long term members preferred to approach staff or volunteers themselves when needed rather than be approached as they felt they knew the site well. The majority of focus group participants said staff and volunteers were always friendly and pleasant.

Welcome Building

- In the on-site survey, approximately 20% of respondents went into the Welcome Building. The most cited reason for not going into the Welcome Building was that people wanted to go straight to the arboretum (41%). Over a quarter (28%) of individuals indicated that they did not realise the Welcome Building was an information centre.
- In the online survey around half of respondents online do not usually go in the Welcome Building, although they have been in before (48.7%). The most frequently cited reasons for going into the Welcome Building were to look at exhibits (40%) or pick up a leaflet (39%). The most frequently cited reason for not going into the Welcome Building was due to having a dog (8%).
- Half of the focus group participants had been into the Welcome Building, most suggested that their reason for visiting Westonbirt was to go straight onto the site and highlighted that the entrance area drew them on to the site rather than into the Welcome Building. Newer members or visitors did not always recognise what the Welcome Building was and thought they might be staff offices.

Information and understanding

- In the on-site survey in terms of understanding how Westonbirt is cared for by Forestry Commission England, younger people reported significantly poorer understanding than older people (23% 16-24 year olds reported understanding more, versus 50-58% of 55 years and older).
- In the online survey all four of Westonbirt's key messages are viewed as important by the majority (>80%) of online respondents. On-site exploration supported by written information was viewed as the most important way of providing information (89% of respondents ranked this as important/very important).
- In the combined data the most popular planning method across both surveys was to look at the FC/Westonbirt website (43% of individuals), with online respondents significantly more likely to plan than on-site respondents.
- In the combined data the treetop walkway, seasonal/family trail and information on gate signs were the most popular activities across both surveys.
- In the combined data the majority (96%) of individuals would recommend Westonbirt to their friends and family across both surveys, on-site respondents reported significantly more positive experiences across a range of questions.
- Focus group participants felt that the information and interpretation on site were very good and should be made more widely known by targeting specific types of visitors such as families. They enjoyed the interpretation boards and did not always remember what was on them so could enjoy them again at a later date.
- The focus group participants illustrated that many were not actively seeking information about what to do on site as they visited spontaneously. There seemed to be quite a number of trails and information that participants were not aware of. However, a number of people felt they probably ought to be more proactive and find out more about the site and what was on offer.
- Focus group participants recognised the challenge that Forestry Commission England faces in trying to provide information, interpretation, trails and activities for the very wide range of people that visit Westonbirt.
- Focus group participants felt they should probably have a greater awareness and recognition of the importance of the site in terms of the tree collection and the conservation activities that take place at Westonbirt. They thought this work was very important, but their understanding of it was limited.

In conclusion those visiting more frequently were likely to be Friends of Westonbirt, walking and seasonal interest were the most popular activities, and the site had a positive impact on people's wellbeing. Arrival was generally viewed as relaxed and welcoming. Respondents were less familiar with the conservation work undertaken at Westonbirt as part of its role as an arboretum, however the majority felt all the key messages of Westonbirt were important i.e. its role as a botanic collection, the importance of trees, and the day to day care of the site and landscape.

Recommendations

A significant amount of data was gathered to understand visitor's experiences. It should be noted that Westonbirt attracts a wide variety of people doing a wide range of activities. The majority of visitors very much enjoy the experiences they have and a very large majority would recommend it to others. The qualitative research highlights the multiple benefits and rich experiences many visitors have at Westonbirt. However the survey did identify some areas for improvement including that would in particular support greater understanding of the arboretum key messages and provide visitors with a greater awareness and understanding of the visitor offer. We suggest that some recommendations are appropriate to consider for all groups while others make a distinction between new and infrequent visitors and Friends of Westonbirt.

Pre-visit

Develop the website information offer of both the FCE Westonbirt webpages and Friends of Westonbirt as over half of survey respondents looked at what was on offer before visiting the site. Via this route there is potential to ensure that visitors know what leaflets and information they can pick up on site and where. Less frequent visitors are more likely to look for this information.

Consider how the Welcome building can be publicised via the websites so that potential visitors get an understanding of what it has to offer.

Arrival experience

Work with staff/volunteers to develop the explanation of options, and how to approach visitors to inform them of site options on arrival. At busy times having the capacity to do this will be impacted by the number of visitors. Prioritise new and infrequent visitors by asking if people have visited before. Members may feel they have all the information they need, so ensure staff/volunteers ask people if they are a member and would they like to know more or not.

Consider adding a board (chalk or whiteboard) near the entrance that outlines the key options for visitors that day, enabling seasonal interest to be flagged up or a tree of the week to be identified or a guided walk or workshop. Families are particularly interested in school holiday activities for children.

It is a fine balance between those that are happy to know staff/volunteers are there if they need to ask a question or want to find out more, and do not necessarily feel the need to be approached ensuring we continue the relaxed and welcoming approach to arrival noted by many respondents.

Welcome building

Create a sign or board, and place it in a prominent position, that makes it clear what the Welcome building is; as many people do not seem to be aware of this at present, particularly newer and infrequent visitors. This needs to entice people in.

Ensure the doors to the Welcome building are open as much as possible both the side door and the doors facing the arboretum as this can make it easier for people to dip in and out.

Short talks, demonstrations in the Welcome building could potentially increase visitor footfall and awareness of the resource. This could include provision of information on the wildlife at Westonbirt, the bird hide, and Wolfson Tree Management centre and other interpretation hotspots.

Consider the current purpose and layout of the Welcome building – infrequent visitors, families and those without dogs were significantly more likely to access the building.

Recognise that many visitors are interested in heading straight into the arboretum and consider whether there are opportunities to encourage use of the Welcome Building on the way out of the site as well as on the way in and using more of the outdoor space and surrounding area.

Areas of the site visited

More visitors visit Silk Wood than the Old Arboretum, although just under half of visitors are going to both places on site. Part of this is related to dogs not being allowed into the Old Arboretum. There is potential to consider using events and organised activities focused more on the Old Arboretum as a means to encourage more visitors to enjoy that area of the site.

Information and understanding

Target the existing information and interpretation by tailoring it towards attracting families, new and infrequent visitors and members. There seemed to be a range of trails and interpretation visitors were not necessarily aware of, partly because they feel they are coming to the site to do their own thing. However, there is an appetite and interest at key points such as the school holidays or when members visit with their non-local friends, or for newer visitors wanting to get to know the site.

Short pieces of interpretation were preferred and can be used to prompt interest. There is an opportunity to develop a way to prompt visitors as focus group participants felt that with all the site had to offer, already, they themselves should be more proactive in finding out about trails, events and activities. Making this as easy as possible will be important by using staff and volunteers to promote and explain various activities to visitors.

Consider placing key information at other points on site where people are likely to gather; for example, outside the restaurant, great oak hall and restaurant toilets.

1. Introduction

The Westonbirt Arboretum Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) Programme ran for five years from 2012 until 2017 and was led by Forestry Commission England (FCE). The overall aims of the full programme were as follows:

- Project Aim 1: Enable our visitors to increase their learning about and appreciation of Westonbirt Arboretum's tree collection and landscape heritage by improving their welcome.
- Project Aim 2: Conserve the Grade 1 registered historic landscape of Westonbirt Arboretum to enable us to be good custodians of our landscape heritage.
- Project Aim 3: Increase the number of people and the range of people who take part in Westonbirt Arboretum's heritage.

Over the five years of the Westonbirt Programme the Grade One historic landscape at Westonbirt has been conserved and visitors have been provided with more opportunities to engage with and learn about Westonbirt's landscape and tree collection. Actions and activities on site have included:

- Restoration of the Grade 1 down land by removing the old car park
- Creation of a new Welcome Building and installation of interpretation (including exhibits, trails – see list on page 13)
- Provision of a better and more informative visitor welcome and experience
- Engagement with more diverse audiences specifically young adults 14-25 years of age and adults at risk of exclusion (for more on this aspect of the programme see the evaluation by O'Brien, 2018 and Forestry Commission England, 2018).

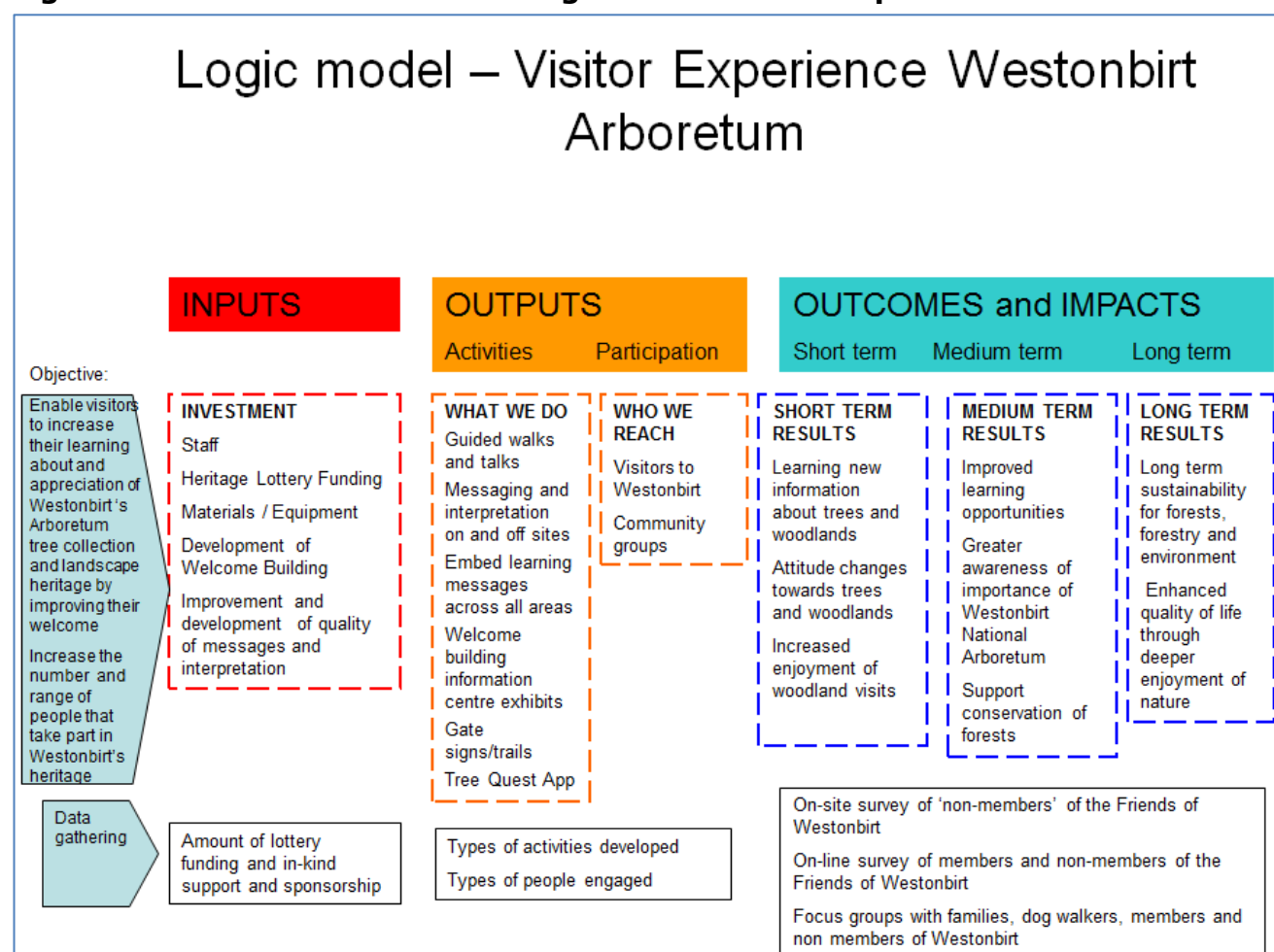
As part of the evaluation of the Westonbirt HLF Programme, visitor experiences, perceptions and understandings were studied to look at the impact of the projects developed and to explore whether visitors had suggestions and insights on how the current welcome and information offer at Westonbirt Arboretum could be improved. This report provides a post project evaluation to feed into Aims 1 and 3 outlined above. The evaluation questions include:

- 1 What are visitor perceptions and experiences of the Westonbirt site welcome and Welcome Building information centre
- 2 To what extent are visitors engaging with information and interpretation before and during their visit to Westonbirt
- 3 What awareness do visitors have of the role of Westonbirt as the National Arboretum in England

- 4 How do the above differ for different groups such as members and non-members of the Friends of Westonbirt, by age, by families or non-families, by dog walkers.

Figure 1 illustrates a logic model for the Westonbirt Visitor Experience activities and how the types of inputs and outputs might lead to short to longer term outcomes and impacts.

Figure 1. Westonbirt Arboretum logic model visitor experience



A 'Quality of Experience' survey was run at Westonbirt in 2010 (BMG Research, 2011), it found that favourite aspects of Westonbirt identified by visitors included the trees and variety of trees, the beautiful scenery and views, the peace and tranquillity of the site and the choice of walking paths. Changes to the site have been made via the Westonbirt HLF Programme and understanding current visitor experiences is important to ensure future plans and activities can improve this experience. The site receives about 500,000 visits a year and is one of the busiest sites managed by Forestry Commission England (FCE).

Westonbirt has a very large and active 'Friends' group (Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum) which is a charity that works in partnership with FCE to ensure that Westonbirt is supported, cared for and enjoyed. There are over 31,000 people who have joined the 'Friends' and membership of the 'Friends' provides the public with free access to the site, a quarterly magazine, friends events and other benefits including access to other places and gardens.

The ways in which visitors can participate and learn about Westonbirt as an historic tree collection, as a heritage landscape and about its environmental heritage (as outlined in the FCE HLF funding bid) takes place through on-site interpretation and orientation, social outings and walking, volunteering, training, formal learning, natural play, family programmes and large scale events.

As a result of the Westonbirt Programme the main new interpretation elements created were:

- The Welcome Building
- Welcome Building exhibits
- 3d Map board outside and near to the Welcome Building
- The Tree Quest App
- Birt's i-Spy trail (aimed at families with young children aged 3-6)
- The threatened tree trail
- Picture perfect trail
- Tall interpretative gate signs around the site.

Other developments did take place on site during the HLF programme period that were not funded by the HLF programme, the most notable of which was the Tree Top Walkway which was a major site development allowing visitors to gradually rise via the walkway to 13.5 metres providing new views high up amongst the canopy. The Tree Top Walkway has proved a very popular addition to Westonbirt.

2. Methods

A mixed methods approach was chosen to try and better understand the visitor experience. This involved the following:

- On-site survey of those who are not members of the 'Friends' of Westonbirt (see Appendix 1)
- On-line survey of the Westonbirt mailing list that includes both 'Friends' (members) of Westonbirt and people that have expressed an interest in receiving Westonbirt updates and news (see Appendix 2)
- Focus groups with respondents to the on-site and on-line survey who agreed they were willing to take part in a focus group on site.

The on-site survey was undertaken by Westonbirt volunteers and staff face to face with visitors, using a sampling strategy devised by Forest Research (FR). This involved FR looking at the visitor numbers per month for 2015 to explore seasonal change in visit numbers and identifying a sample per month for volunteers to collect to gain a representative sample across a year from November 2016 - October 2017. Volunteers and staff were not able to gather the full sample originally identified per month due to many regular visitors to Westonbirt being members of the 'Friends'. The site survey was aimed at non-members as members had recently been surveyed regarding the membership offer and the time needed to be spent on site to survey a suitable number of non-members became prohibitive. Instructions were provided for the volunteers to help with survey completion. Nine volunteers were involved in gathering survey data.

The on-line survey ran from 18th July until 13th August, it was mailed to a database of 61,088 Friend members and non-members email contacts who had opted in to receive regular Westonbirt news. They were offered entry into a prize draw to win family tickets to the Enchanted Christmas 2017 at Westonbirt which involves an illuminated tree trail and festivities. 27% of the 61,088 who received the email opened it and 2% clicked through to the survey.

Both surveys were essentially the same, there were a few changes made to the on-line survey in order to make it suitable for completion by an on-line audience and because the on-site survey was of those who were not members of the Friends of Westonbirt. Those in the site survey were not asked 1) the reasons they did not look for pre-visit to the site information and 2) how important were different ways of providing information (see Appendix 1 and 2 for the survey questions).

The surveys covered the following:

- **Demographics:** including age, gender, if people were visiting with others, with children or with dogs.

- **Visits to Westonbirt:** including had people visited before, were they a member of the 'Friends', the frequency of their visits, the purpose of their visit.
- **Activities on site:** including what activities people took part in and Likert statements were asked to understand the level of enjoyment of those activities.
- **Information provision and seeking:** did they look at any information before their visit to the site to help them identify what they might do, did they receive or seek information when on site via the welcome from volunteers or staff or by visiting the Welcome Building information centre.
- **Visits to the Welcome Building information centre:** if people visited what where they doing – seeking information or looking at the interactive displays, Likert statements were asked to understand more about the on-site arrival experience.
- **Comments:** comments were asked for at various stages of the questionnaire to gain feedback from respondents concerning any improvements that could be provided to improve the visitor experience.

A protocol was designed for the focus groups that took account of the approach of the two surveys but also included a strong focus on the type of welcome visitors received when they came on to the site and their use of the Welcome Building information centre and on-site interpretation (Appendix 3). Six focus groups were run on site at Westonbirt in early October 2017, made up of people who had completed the online and on-site survey and said they were willing to participate in a focus group. Participants were recruited by FCE and incentivised with a £25 John Lewis voucher for those who took part. Four of the focus groups were run in the evening, while the other two were run during the day on a Sunday. This approach was taken to try and ensure that anyone working could attend. Using the data from the online and on-site survey, six different types of groups were recruited based on the key audiences of interest to FCE, such as:

- Long term members of the Friends
- Members of the Friends of Westonbirt post 2014 (i.e. newer members)
- Non-members of the Friends of Westonbirt
- Those with families (babies and toddlers 0-5 years)
- Those with families (older children 6-15 years)
- Dog walkers

Table 1. Numbers of respondents involved in the surveys and focus groups

	On-line survey	On-site survey	Focus groups on site
Numbers involved in each method	1,233*	767	51

*Completed surveys

2.1. Analysis

2.1.1. Quantitative

Analysis was conducted using the statistical programme R. The following R packages were required:

Base R package (R Core Team, 2016)

Package "car" (Fox & Weisberg, 2011) - ANOVA

Package "ggplot2" (Wickham, 2009) - graphics

Package "lsmeans" (Lenth, 2015) - least-square means

Package "MASS" (Venables & Ripley, 2002) - ordinal logistic regression

Package "multcompView" (Graves et al., 2016) - least-square means lettering

Package "nnet" (Venables & Ripley, 2002) - multinomial logistic regression

Package "sentimentr" (Rinkler, 2017) - Sentiment analysis

Package "tidytext" (Silge & Robinson, 2016)

The statistical methodology applied to the data was determined by the type of response variable considered and is described below. For the on-site survey, the following factors were considered as potential drivers of differences in responses: age group, families (i.e. individuals accompanied/not accompanied by under-16s), individuals who usually have a dog with them and frequency of visits. For the online survey, the same factors were considered, with the addition of whether individuals were/were not Friends of Westonbirt. A combined analysis was also conducted using the same factors, to compare results across the two surveys (i.e. allowed comparison of on-site survey (all non-members), online survey (non-members) and online survey Friends of Westonbirt).

For Likert-type responses (e.g. strongly disagree to strongly agree) that were ordered, categorical and followed the rule of proportional odds, the data were analysed using ordinal logistic regression in R (polr() in the MASS() package). The significance of predictors were determined based on the likelihood-ratio chi-square test statistics from the analysis of deviance (car() package). Post hoc tests were used to estimate differences between categories, correcting for multiple comparisons using Bonferroni's multiple comparisons test.

For responses that were ordered and categorical but that did not (in general) follow the rule of proportional odds (e.g. time spent on site, number of visits), the data were analysed using multinomial logistic regression in R (multinom() in the nnet() package). The significance of predictors were determined based on the likelihood-ratio chi-square test statistics from the analysis of deviance (car() package). Post hoc tests were used to

estimate differences between categories, correcting for multiple comparisons using Bonferroni's multiple comparisons test.

For responses that were yes/no, data were treated as binary responses in a generalised linear model with binomial errors and logit link function. The significance of predictors were determined based on the likelihood-ratio chi-square test statistics from the analysis of deviance (`car()` package). Post hoc tests were used to estimate differences between categories, correcting for multiple comparisons using Bonferroni's multiple comparisons test.

Across all statistical methodologies, a more conservative significance value of $p < 0.01$ was used to account for the risk of type 1 (false positive) error propagation, given the large number of potential predictors applied to the same response. Predictors were applied as individual main effects, and post hoc marginal means averaged across all categories. This approach accounts for the uneven distribution of other significant factors. All statistical analysis is outputted in Supplementary Appendix 1 (Forster, J. 2018), along with a short example at the beginning to help interpret the tables and meanings. Given the amount of analysis, only the main results are referred to in the main document, so please refer to Supplementary Appendix 1 for a full list of significant results.

For free text responses, individuals' responses were analysed by counting the number of unique words (unigrams) used by each individual. In addition, counts of "bigrams", i.e. two words, were calculated across the sample and frequencies appended to the unigrams. These counts were then used to construct frequency tables, to get a representation of single and pairs of words most commonly used (with common words such as "the", "and" etc. stripped out using the `"stop_words()"` library in R). Word frequencies were calculated on a per person basis (i.e., if an individual used a word more than once, it was only counted once, such that frequencies represent the number of individuals). In some cases, analysis of free text responses was considered beyond simple frequency counts, by calculating the average sentence sentiment score for each individual. This sentiment score (using the `sentimentr()` package) assigns a positive score to a sentence that is generally positive (accounting for negators (e.g. "not", amplifiers (e.g. "very") etc.) and a negative score to a sentence that is generally negative. An overall positive score indicates that individuals tend to respond positively to the question.

2.1.2. Qualitative

All of the focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were imported into NVivo (a qualitative data management software package) and coded for key themes. This process involves reading through each transcript sentence by sentence to become familiar with the data and identifying initial codes to organise the data into meaningful groups. These groups are labeled with a code that provides an indication of what is included within that group. These can be added to, changed or further developed

as the analysis progresses. The themes identified in this report were inductive i.e. were identified from the data rather than being developed from existing theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Codes were grouped under 7 high level themes relating to the general visitor experience, interpretation and information, site welcome, Welcome Building, wellbeing benefits of Westonbirt, Westonbirt as a tree collection and motivations to visit Westonbirt.

We adhered to the protocols set out in the Social and Economic Research Group ethics statement (SERG 2010). Signed consent was gained from all focus group participants to involve them in the research, to record their discussions. Participants were informed that they could stop participating at any time for any reason. We made it clear that the data provided by participants in the discussions or questionnaires would be anonymised and their names would not be used.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative Analysis: On-site Survey (non-members)

3.1.1. Demographics

Figure 2. Site data analysis: Demographics

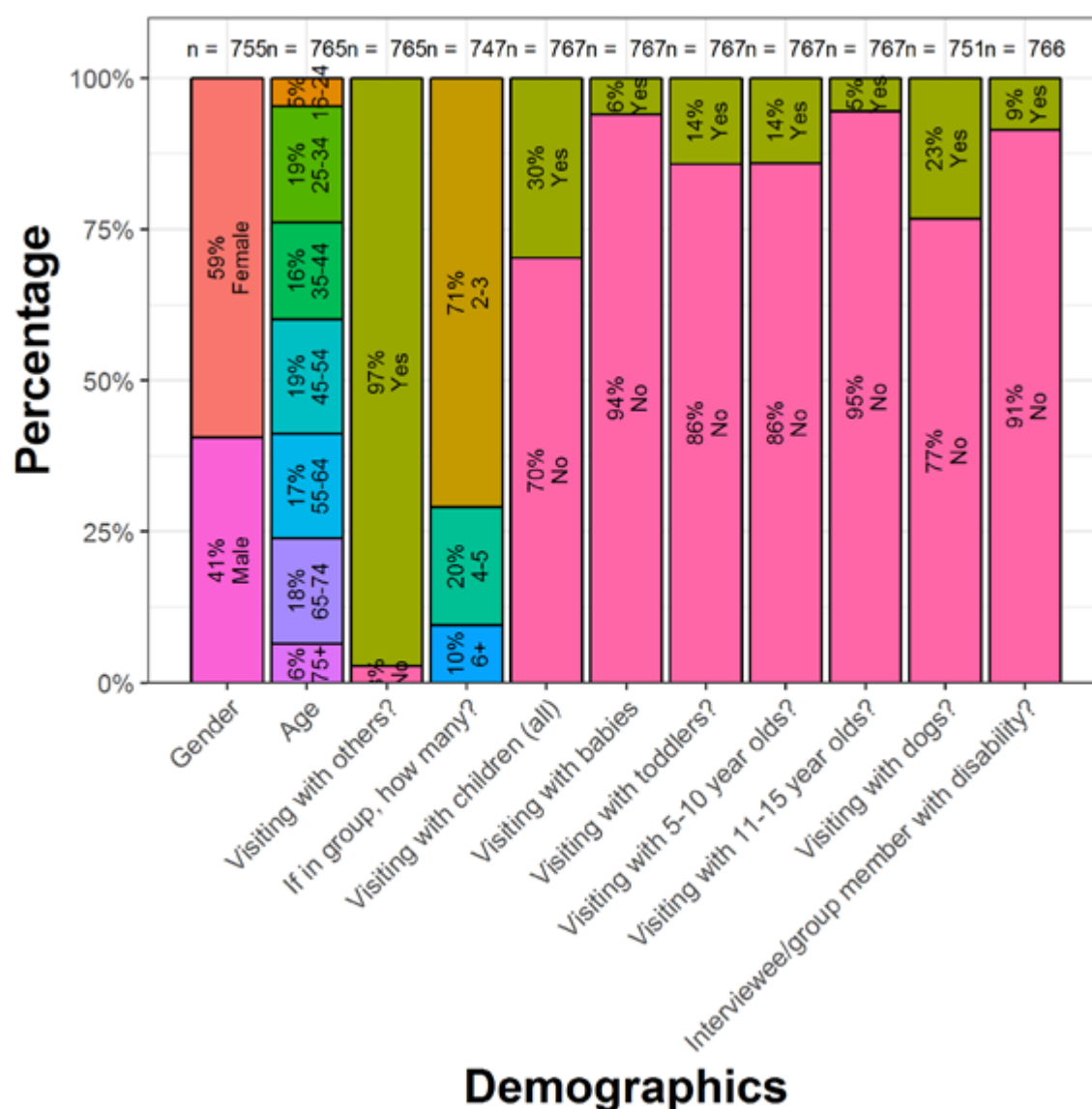


Figure 2 shows the demographics of interviewees. The proportion of females was slightly higher than males (59% versus 41%). The majority of individuals visited with others, although most (70%) did not visit with children (babies to 15 year olds), suggesting individuals were accompanied by other adults. The age ranges were evenly represented

between 25 and 74, with smaller numbers of 16-24 year olds and 75+. With regards to disability, 9% of interviewees reported a disability (either themselves or within their group).

The age of interviewee was a significant driver of the probability of an interviewee reporting a disability, with older individuals significantly more likely to report a disability (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Site data statistical analysis: Disability by age group

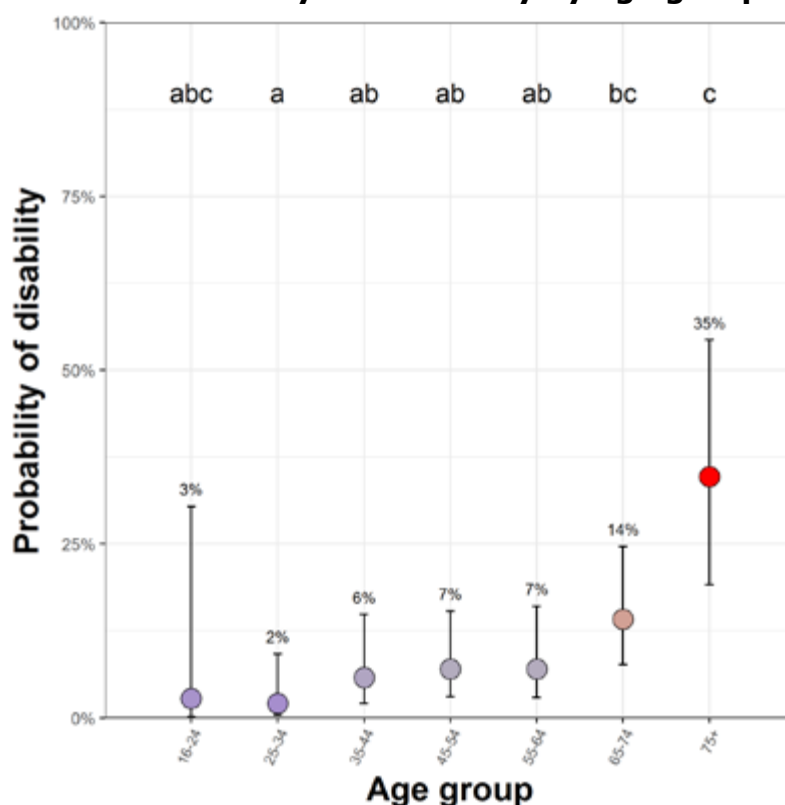


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. “a” versus “c”) are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. “ab” versus “b” are not significantly different).

3.1.2. Visits

The number of monthly visitors sampled on-site in 2017 were a good representation of previous monthly visitor numbers (2014 and 2015), with proportions in the sample being within 5% of actual visitor proportions (see Figure 4). Table 2 compares the number of actual surveys versus the target number by month, showing the same trend as Figure 4, with January and February being under-represented in the sample, and May-July being over-represented.

Figure 4. Site data analysis: Comparing monthly sampling (2017) to monthly visits (2015)

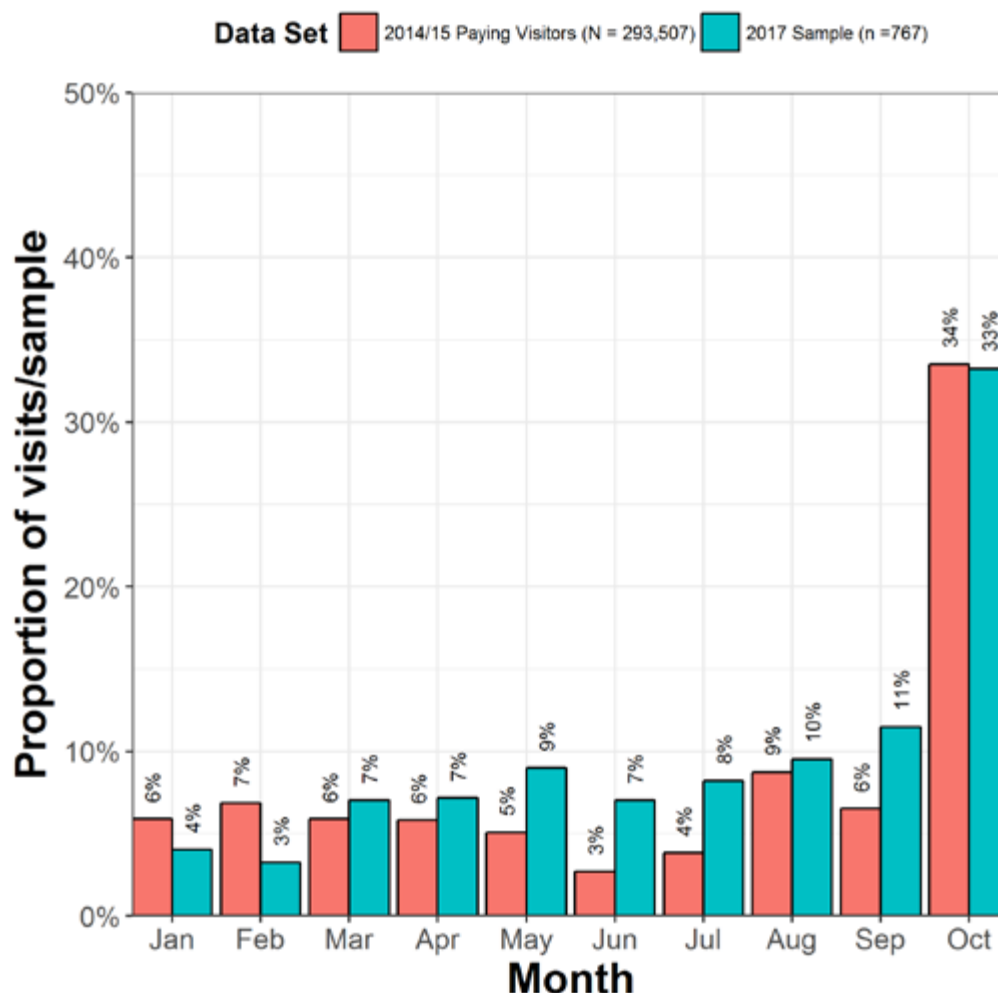


Table 2. Site data analysis: Comparing actual sample to recommended sample

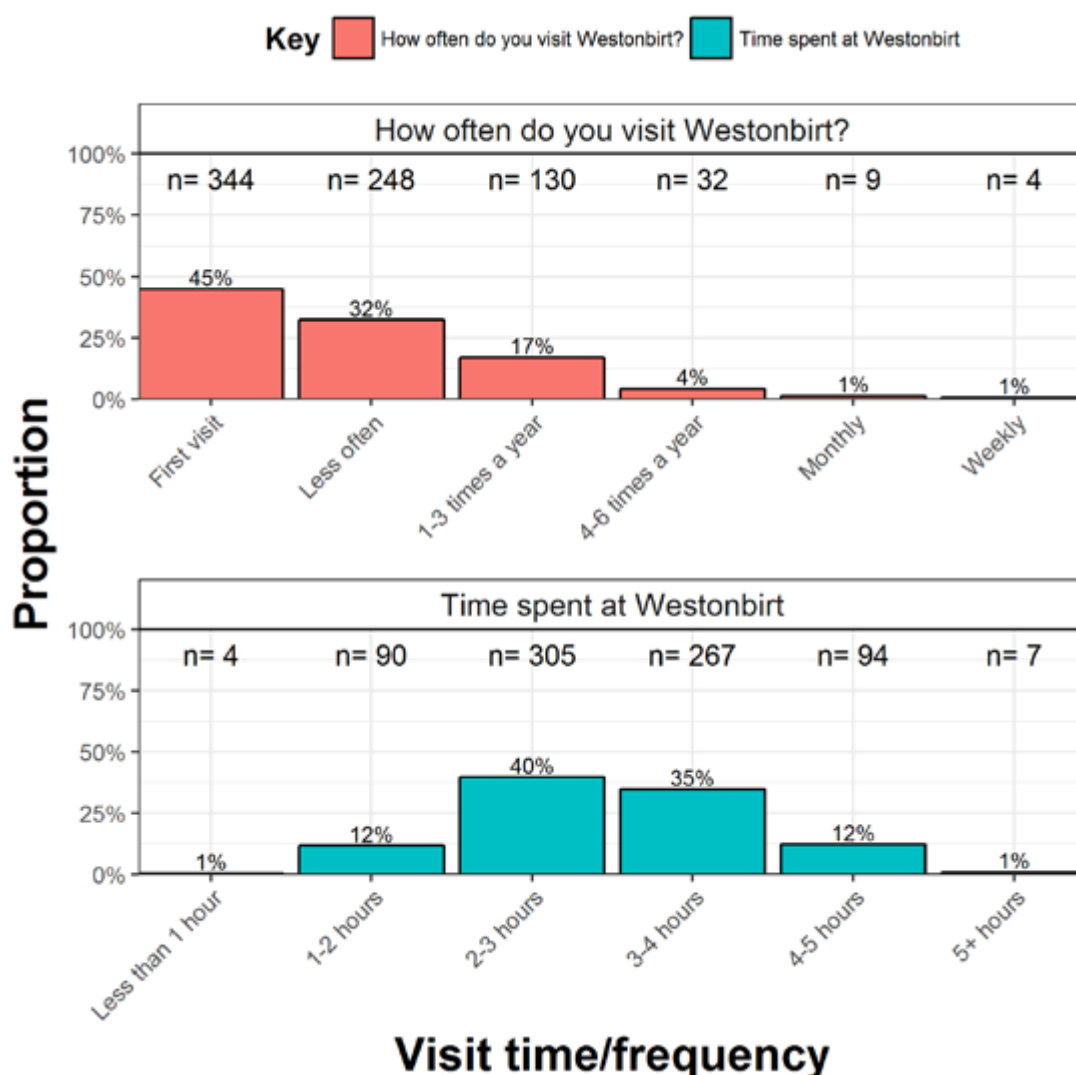
Month	Actual Sample	Recommended Sample	Difference
Jan	31	50	-19
Feb	25	57	-32
Mar	54	50	4
Apr	55	50	5
May	69	43	26
Jun	54	23	31
Jul	63	33	30
Aug	73	76	-3
Sep	88	55	33
Oct	255	283	-28
Sum	767	720	47

Individuals sampled tended to be infrequent visitors, with 45% being first-time visitors; the majority of individuals (approximately 75%) spent between 2 and 4 hours on site (see Figure 5).

There was a significant difference in frequency of visits by age (see Supplementary Appendix 1). Very young individuals tended to be first time visitors (estimated probability of first time visit for 16-24 year old = 69%, versus 16% for 75+ years). The oldest age group (75+) were likely to visit less often than younger people (16-44 years, see Supplementary Appendix 1).

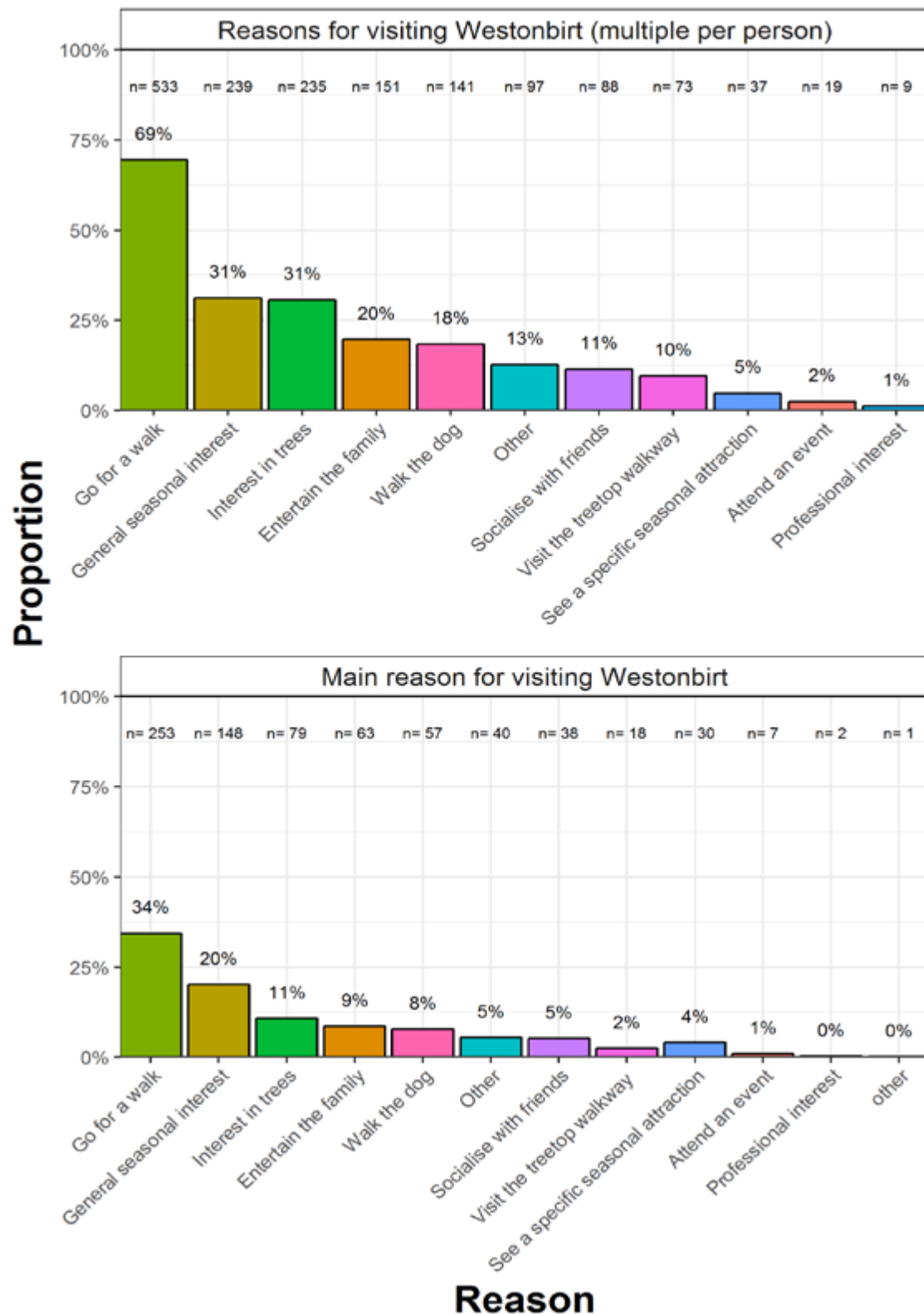
For time spent at Westonbirt age, individuals with dogs and families were all significant factors; individuals with dogs and no families stayed on site for significantly longer; younger individuals (25-34 years) stayed on site for significantly longer than older (55-74 years) individuals (See Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 5. Site data analysis: Number of visits and time spent visiting (n=767)



3.1.3. Purpose and planning

Figure 6. Site data analysis: Purpose for visiting Westonbirt (n=767)



More than two thirds of individuals (69%) recorded "go for a walk" as one of their reasons for visiting Westonbirt, although only half of these individuals (34%) recorded this as their main reason for visiting (see Figure 6). This indicates that walking is a secondary benefit for many individuals whose main reason for visiting may be general seasonal interest, interest in trees, entertaining the family or other popular main reasons in Figure 6. For those individuals reporting "Other", the most common references made in the free text box were "Gruffalo, Autumn and Photography" (see Table 3).

Factors were tested as potential drivers of the different reasons for visiting Westonbirt (see Methods) for the top five responses in Figure 6 (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for full details, main findings presented here). Younger people (16-44 years) were significantly more likely to list "go for a walk" one of their reasons for visiting Westonbirt than older people (75+ years); interest in trees was significantly greater in older people (55-74 years) than younger adults (25-34 years).

Table 3. Other reasons for visiting Westonbirt - Top 10 word counts (n = 71)

Word	n
gruffalo	13
autumn	12
photography	10
birthday	8
trees	8
lunch	5
visit	5
day	3
family	3
trail	3

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Of those on-site visitors who were interviewed, 53% had a look at what Westonbirt had to offer in advance. The most popular planning method by far was to look at the website (45% of individuals, see Figure 7). Statistical analysis indicated that the main thing driving the differences in individuals who did/did not look at the website was how often individuals visited Westonbirt, with first-time visitors being significantly more likely to look at the website than more frequent visitors (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for all significant factors).

Table 4 shows the most frequent words reported under the free text "Other" response, with general information, times and prices being the most popular responses.

Figure 7. Site data analysis: Planning for visiting Westonbirt (n=767)

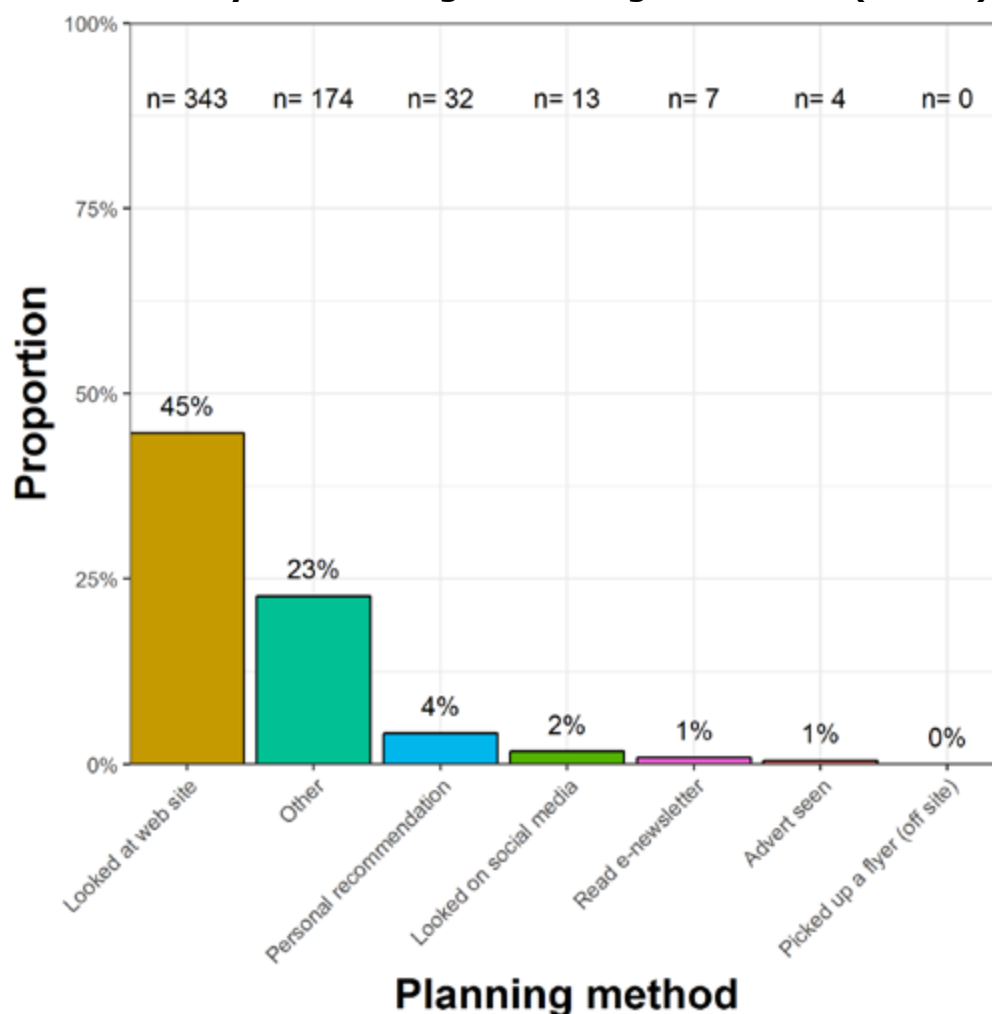


Table 4. Other planning for Westonbirt visit - Top 10 word counts (n = 134)

Word	n
information	40
times	30
general	26
general information	26
prices	19
dogs	13
gruffalo	9
walkway	9
prices times	9
looked	7

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

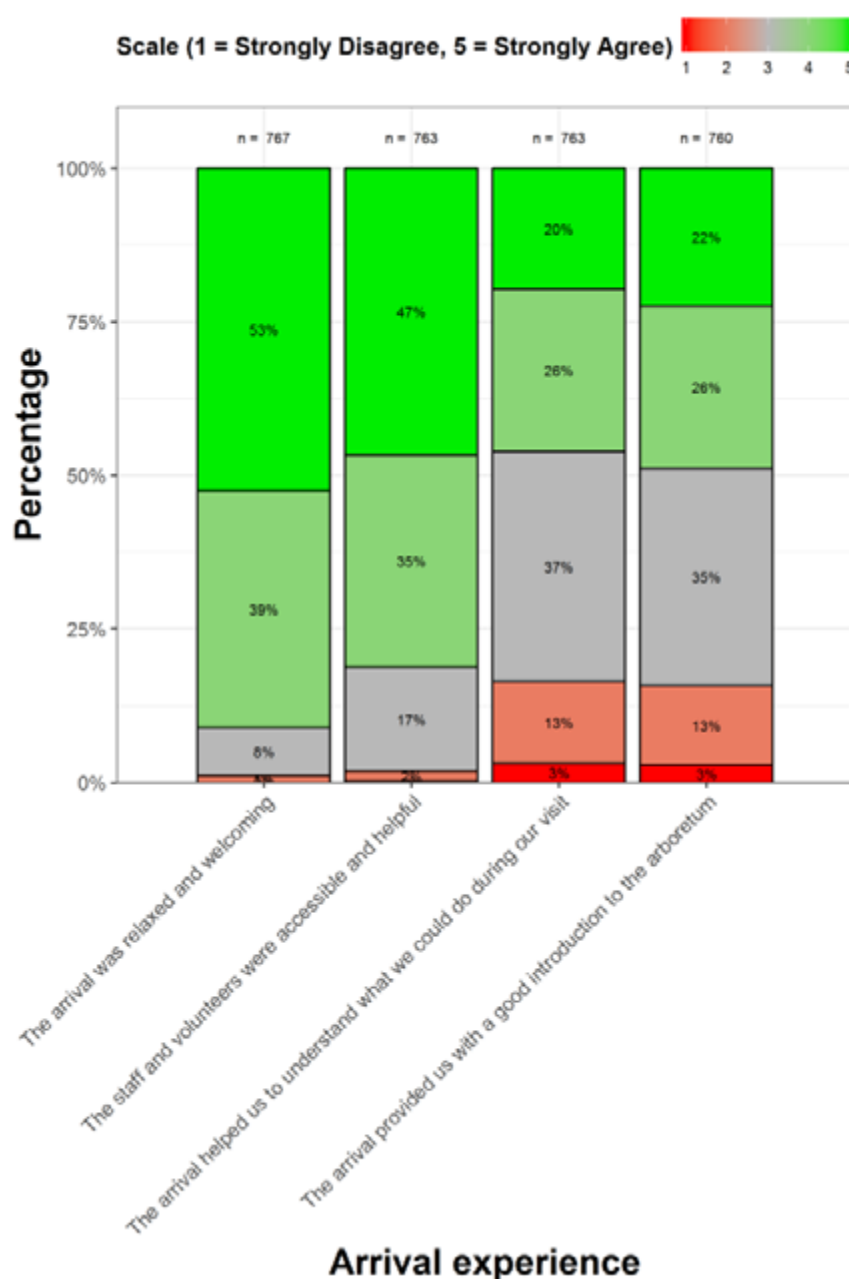
Table 5 shows that most individuals visited either both areas of the arboretum or Silk Wood only, with fewer individuals visiting only the old arboretum (10.5%).

Table 5. Site sample: proportion of individuals visiting different areas of the arboretum

Area of the arboretum	n	Percentage
Both	366	47.8%
Silk Wood	319	41.7%
Old Arboretum	80	10.5%

3.1.4. Arrival experience

Figure 8. Site data analysis: Likert scale analysis of arrival experience reported by individuals (n=767)



The majority of individuals found the arrival experience relaxed and welcoming (91% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 8), along with finding staff/volunteers helpful (81% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 8). There were no significant differences in relation to the welcoming experience; individuals that visited more frequently (monthly) were significantly more likely to find staff/volunteers helpful (98% agree/strongly agree, see Supplementary Appendix 1) than less frequent visitors (less often and first visit, 75% and 81% agree/strongly agree respectively).

Around half of people reported that the arrival helped them to understand what they could do during their visit (46% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 8), and a similar proportion reported the arrival provided a good introduction to the arboretum (49% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 8). These proportions are markedly different, indicating that although the arrival is friendly and welcoming, information provision could be improved. Families were significantly more likely to agree/strongly agree with these two statements than non-families (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

The free text response regarding arrival indicated that individuals reported the arrival being busy (reported by 23 individuals, see Table 6), and negative associations with information (no+information, didn't+information, nobody+information, more+information) but the sentiment analysis indicated that, on the whole, individuals were not negative about their arrival experience (20.7% scored negatively on sentiment analysis).

Figure 9. Site data analysis: Arrival experience: "Other" free text sentiment analysis.

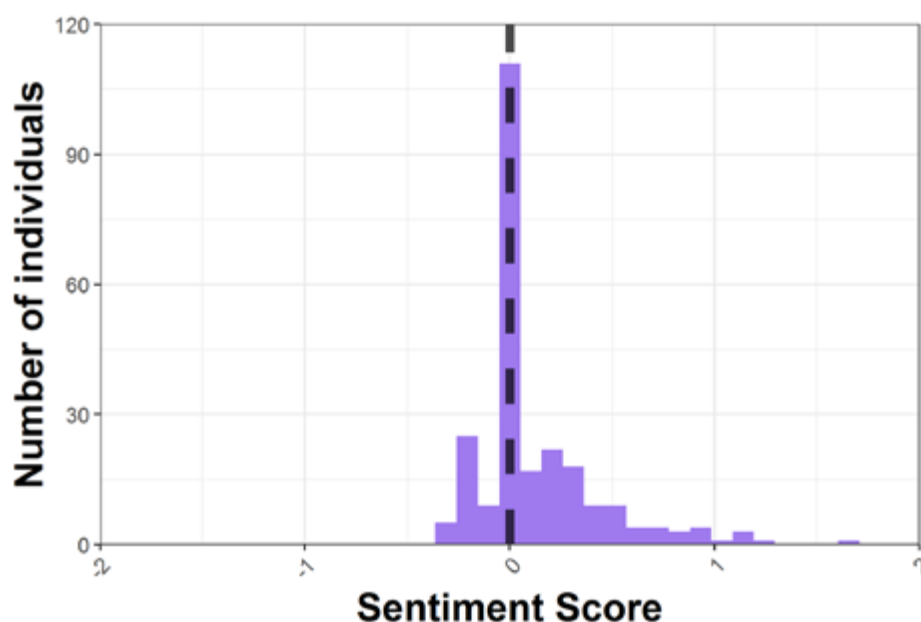


Figure note: "Other" free text sentiment analysis: positive score (> 0) indicates a likely positive response from individuals (i.e. on balance, use of more positive words than negative words in their response); negative score (< 0) indicates negative response (i.e. on balance use of more positive words than negative words in their response).

Table 6. Table 6: Free text responses regarding arrival experience - Top 20 word counts (n = 246)

Word	n
information	53
busy	23
map	21
helpful	19
more	19
no	17
nobody	17
information more	15
didn't information	14
arrival	11
staff	11
information no	11
entrance	10
offered	10
queue	10
spoke	9
straight	9
nobody spoke	9
information nobody	8
information offered	8

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

3.1.5. Activities

Of the 765 individuals who responded, 42% indicated that options and activities were explained to them by a member of staff/volunteer when they arrived on site (see Figure 10). Families and those visiting less often were more likely to report having options explained to them (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

Aside from overall options, directions/orientation of the site tended to be explained more frequently, whereas only 1% of individuals recorded having Welcome Building exhibits explained to them. Approximately 15% of individuals reported having seasonal trails explained to them, and this was significantly more likely to occur for those without dogs (17%) than those with dogs (9%, see Supplementary Appendix 1). Table 7 shows the occurrence of words by individual in the free text "Other" option, indicating that maps, other information and Gruffalo trails were explained to some individuals.

Figure 10. Site data analysis: Activities explained at Westonbirt (n = 767)

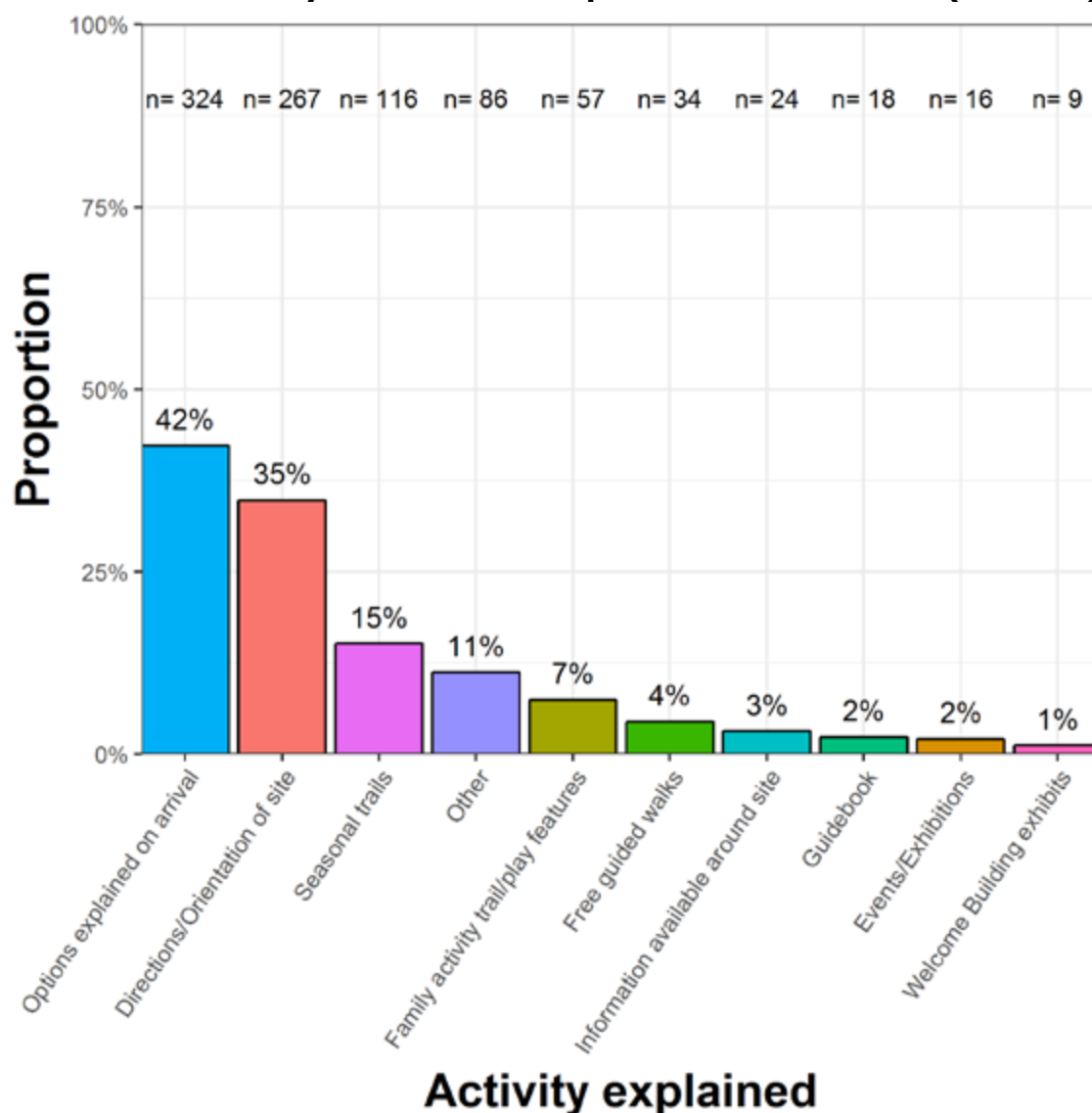


Table 7. Other activities explained - Top 10 word counts (n = 74)

Word	n
map	26
information	11
helpful	10
gruffalo	8
dogs	7
very	7
leaflet	6
no	6
told	6
didn't	5

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Figure 11 shows the activities undertaken by individuals at Westonbirt. Three activities stand out as being most popular: the STIHL Treetop Walkway, seasonal/family trail and information on gate signs. First-time visitors were significantly more likely to undertake the three most popular activities than more frequent visitors (e.g. first-time visitors = 92% probability using treetop walkway, versus 4-6 times per year = 69% probability, see Supplementary Appendix 1). Individuals with dogs were significantly less likely to follow the seasonal trails than individuals without dogs (Supplementary Appendix 1). Table 8 shows the occurrence of words by individual in the free text "Other" option, indicating that Gruffalo trails were undertaken by at least 32 individuals.

Figure 11. Site data analysis: Activities undertaken by individuals visiting Westonbirt (n=767)

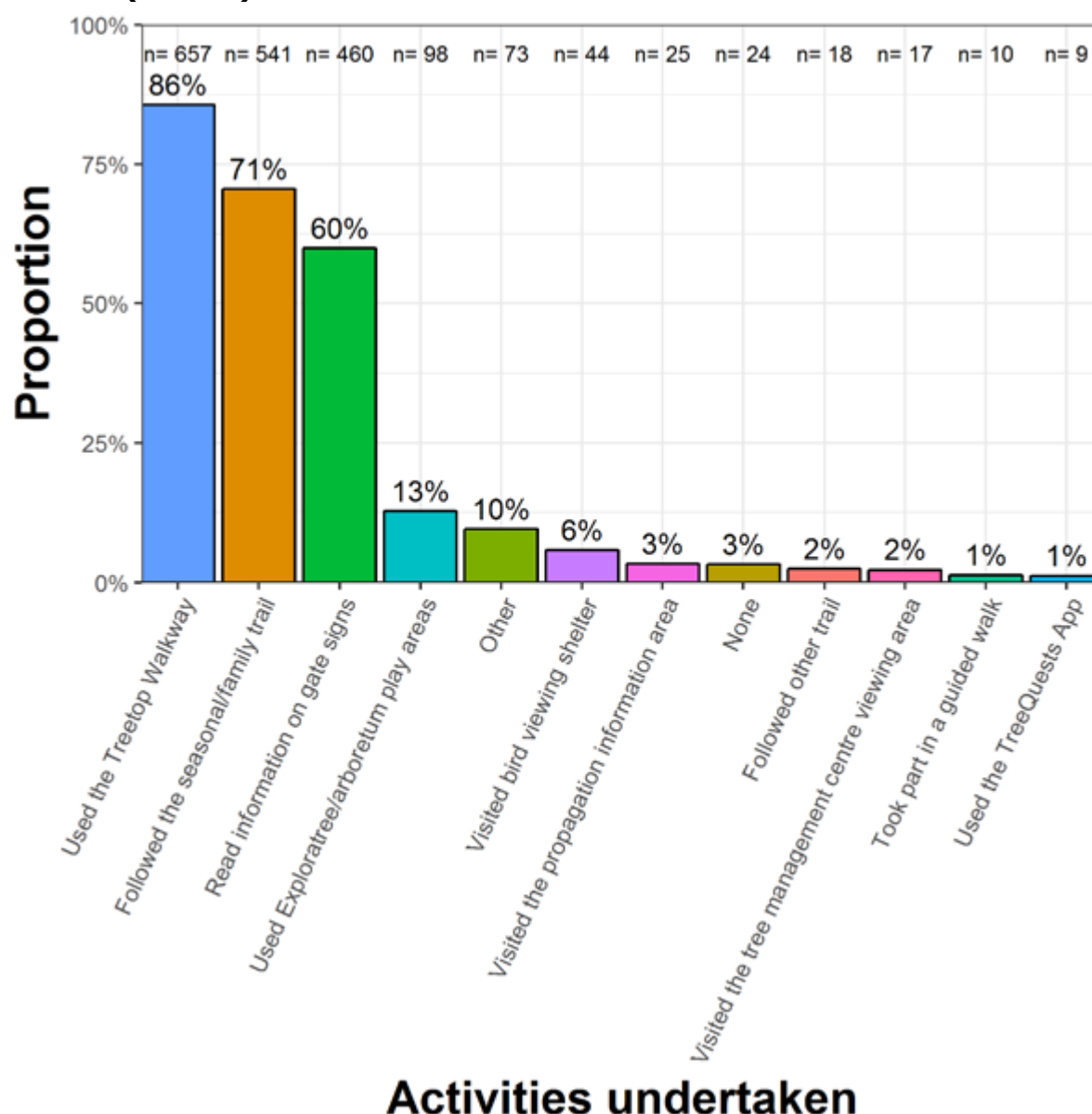


Table 8. Other activities undertaken - Top 10 word counts (n = 73)

Word	n
gruffalo	32
trail	15
gruffalo trail	12
coppicing	7
spotter	6
gruffalo spotter	6
spotter trail	6
centre	4
charcoal	4
learning	4

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Out of the 767 interviewees, 6% reported doing no activities (Figure 12). The most common reason for individuals not undertaking a specific activity was because they wanted to do their own thing (Figure 12). Non-families were significantly more likely to want to do their own thing, and more frequent visitors tended to want to do their own thing. Specific reasons (7% of individuals) and "Other" reasons (6%, Figure 12) were explored in more detail; Tables 9 and 10 shows the occurrence of words by individual, indicating that (dog) walking was the most common specific reason for not undertaking specific activities, whereas the weather and time available were most common for "Other" reasons.

Figure 12. Site data analysis: Reasons why no activities were undertaken (n=767)

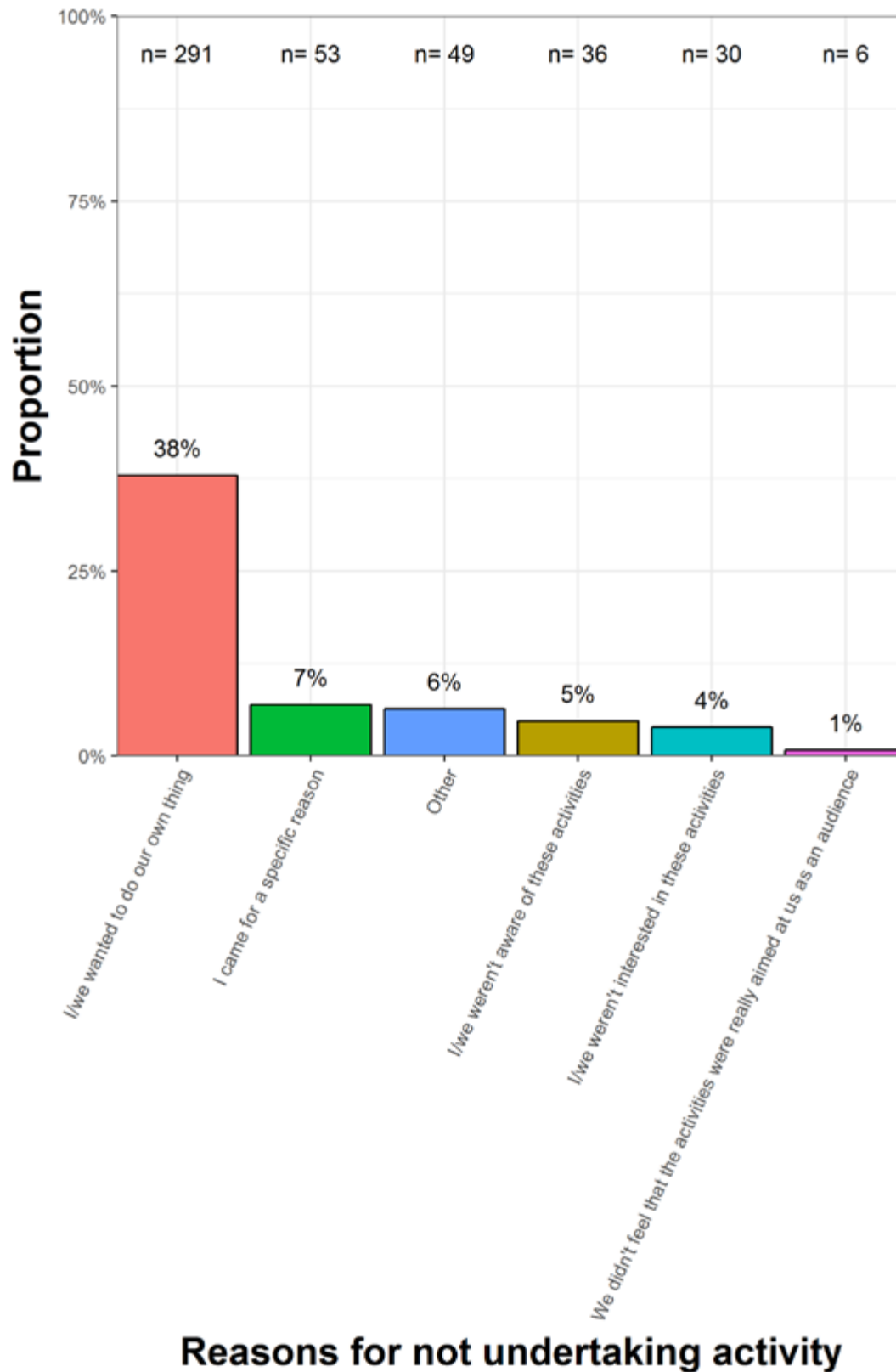


Table 9. Specific reasons for no activities - Top 10 word counts (n = 65)

Word	n
walk	18
dog	12
dog walk	10
gruffalo	8
colours	5
ticked	4
walkway	4
photos	3
reason	3
visit	3

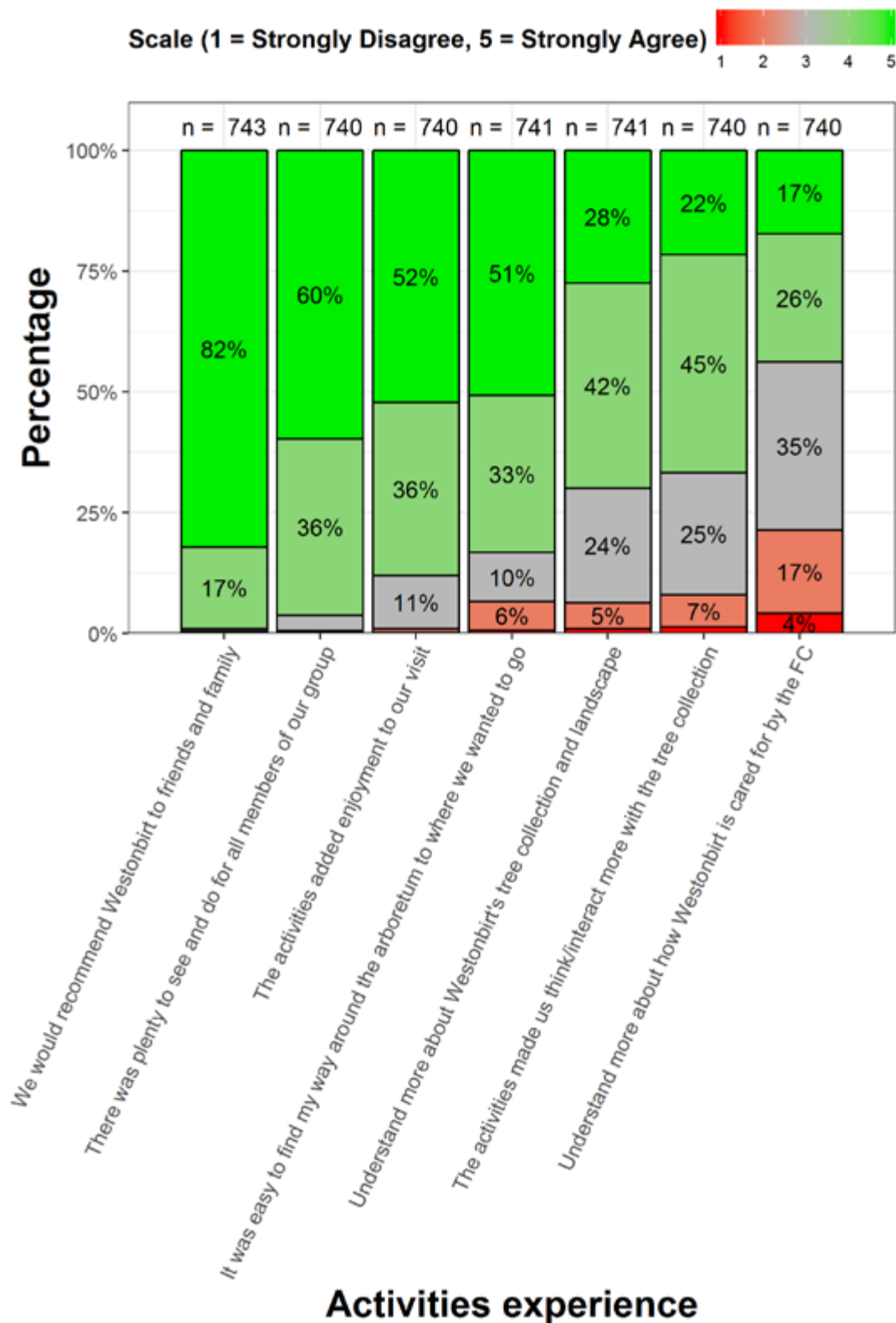
Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Table 10. Other reasons for no activities - Top 10 word counts (n = 49)

Word	n
time	6
weather	6
no	5
didn't	4
dogs	4
too	4
bad	3
comments	3
map	3
comments	3
no	3

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Figure 13. Site data analysis: Likert scale analysis of activities experience reported by individuals (n=767)



Almost all interviewees would recommend Westonbirt to their friends and family (Figure 13; 736/743 individuals strongly agree/agree). Results were very positive for all responses in Figure 13 (more than two thirds of individuals agreeing or strongly agreeing in all cases) except for understanding more about how Westonbirt is cared for by the Forestry Commission, where 324/740 (44%) of individuals agreed/strongly agreed.

The more frequent visitors (weekly/monthly) found it easier to navigate the site than less frequent visitors (less often/first visit, see Supplementary Appendix 1). First-time visitors were significantly more likely to report understanding more about Westonbirt's tree collection/landscape (76% agree/strongly agree) than more frequent visitors.

There were large and significant differences between age groups in terms of understanding how Westonbirt is cared for by the Forestry Commission. Younger people reported significantly poorer understanding than older people (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Site data statistical analysis: "Understand more about how Westonbirt is cared for by the Forestry Commission" by age

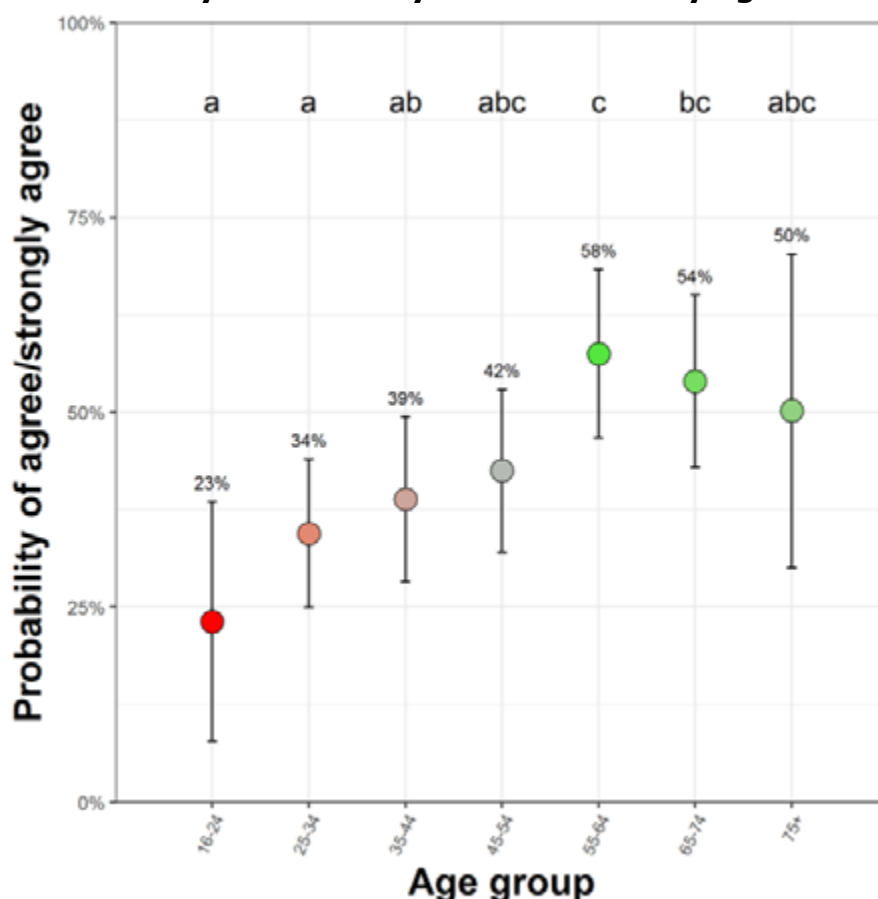


Figure note: Probabilities are predicted probabilities from statistical model. Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

3.1.6. Welcome Building and information

Figure 15. Site data analysis: Reasons individuals did use the Welcome Building (n=767, zero or multiple responses possible)

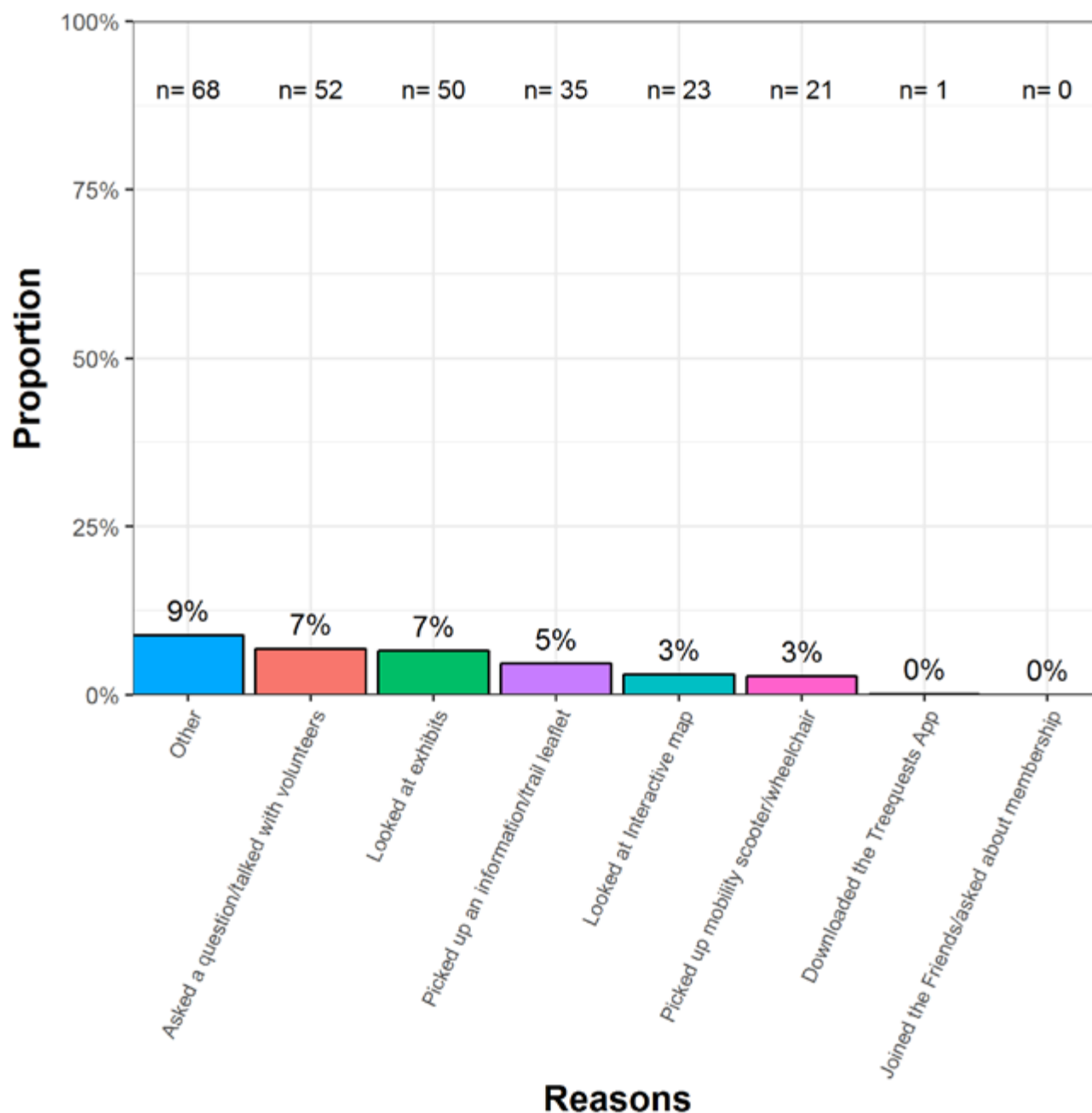
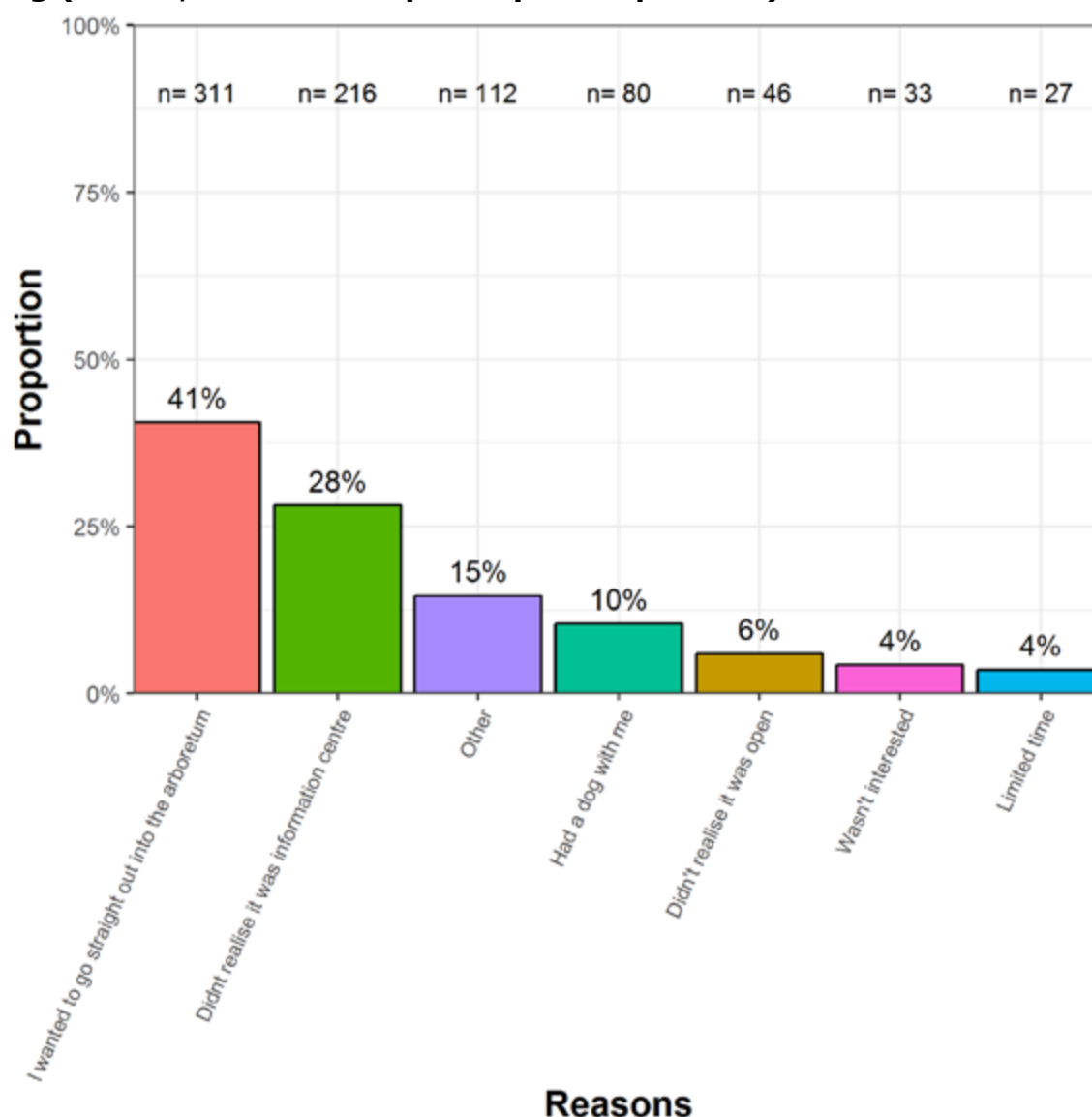


Figure 16. Site data analysis: Reasons individuals did not use the Welcome Building (n=767, zero or multiple responses possible)



Of the 767 individuals who responded, 20% indicated that they went into the welcome building. The most frequently cited listed reasons were to ask a question/talk with staff/volunteers, and to look at exhibits (7% in each case, see Figure 15). No individuals reported downloading the Treequests App or joining/enquiring about Friends of Westonbirt. Statistical analysis indicated that families were significantly more likely to go in than non-families, and that older individuals were significantly more likely to go in than younger individuals (see Supplementary Appendix 1). Whether or not individuals were visiting with a dog did not significantly alter their likelihood of going into the Welcome Building. Age was a significant factor in whether individuals asked a question of staff/volunteers (although trends were unclear, see Supplementary Appendix 1); and families and those without dogs were significantly more likely to look at exhibits (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

The most cited reason for not going into the Welcome Building was that people wanted to go straight to the arboretum (41%, see Figure 16); individuals without families or dogs were significantly more likely to want to go straight to the arboretum. Over a quarter of individuals indicated that they did not realise the Welcome Building was an information centre (no significant factors driving this). "Other" was a popular response under both Yes/No categories; for "Yes", the free text counts in Table 11 indicate that picking up a map was a popular other reason to visit the Welcome Building (10 individuals); for "No" there were no clear reasons indicated by free text, beyond going straight into the arboretum (Table 12).

Table 11. Other reasons for entering the Welcome Building - Top 10 word counts (n = 69)

Word	n
map	10
information	9
exhibits	6
children	5
looked	4
trees	4
day	3
didn't	3
picked	3
didn't exhibits	3

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Table 12. Other reasons for entering the Welcome Building - Top 10 word counts (n = 112)

Word	n
straight	12
entrance	10
building	7
walk	6
café	5
information	5
notice	5
told	5
didn't notice	5
café straight	4

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Table 13 shows the most common words/pairs of words contained within an individual's response to suggestions for enabling visitors to get a better understanding of Westonbirt. This indicates that suggestions of more signs and information were common responses, along with "no" (frequency = 106/629 respondents = 17%), which suggests that many visitors had no suggestions for improvements.

Table 13. Ideas suggested to enable visitors to get a better understanding of Westonbirt - Top 20 word counts (n = 629)

Word	n
signs	135
no	106
more signs	78
information	73
map	57
information more	51
trees	45
arboretum	40
building	36
entrance	29
people	29
centre	24
more trees	23
information signs	22
maps	21
arboretum more	21
clearer	20
building more	19
signs trees	18
activities	17

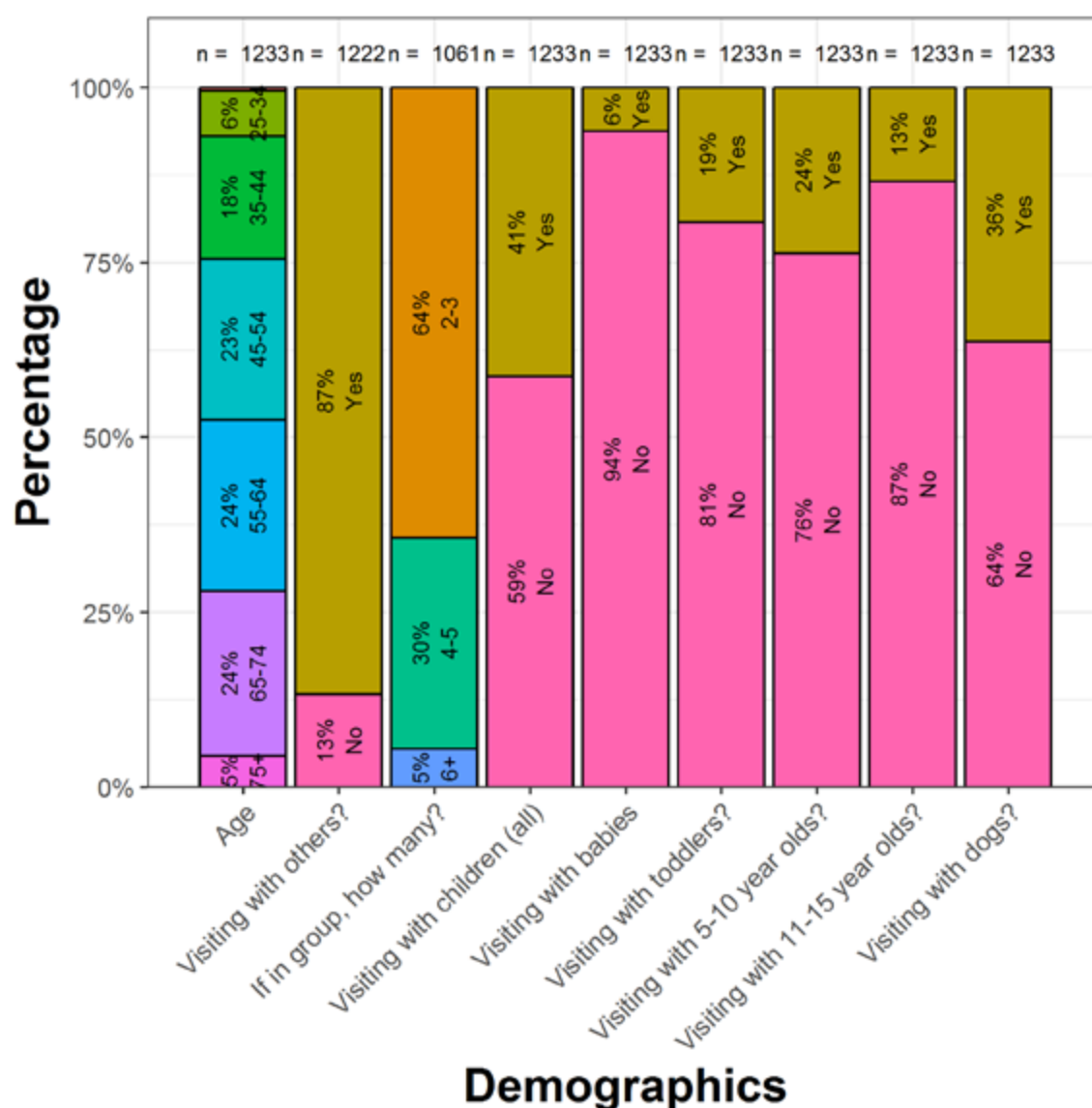
Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Westonbirt Online Data

3.1.7. Demographics

Figure 17 shows the demographics of respondents (data not available in the data set for disability). The majority of individuals visited with others, although most did not visit with children (41% visited with babies to 15 year olds) suggesting individuals were accompanied by other adults. The age ranges were evenly represented between 25 and 74, with smaller numbers of 16-24 year olds and 75+. Over a third of individuals tended to visit with dogs.

Figure 17. Online data analysis: Demographics



3.1.8. Visits

Of those individuals who completed the online survey, 67% were friends of Westonbirt. Figure 18 shows the breakdown of memberships by length, with 1-3 years being the most common length of time.

Figure 18. Online data analysis: Length of time for which Friends of Westonbirt have been members (n = 827)

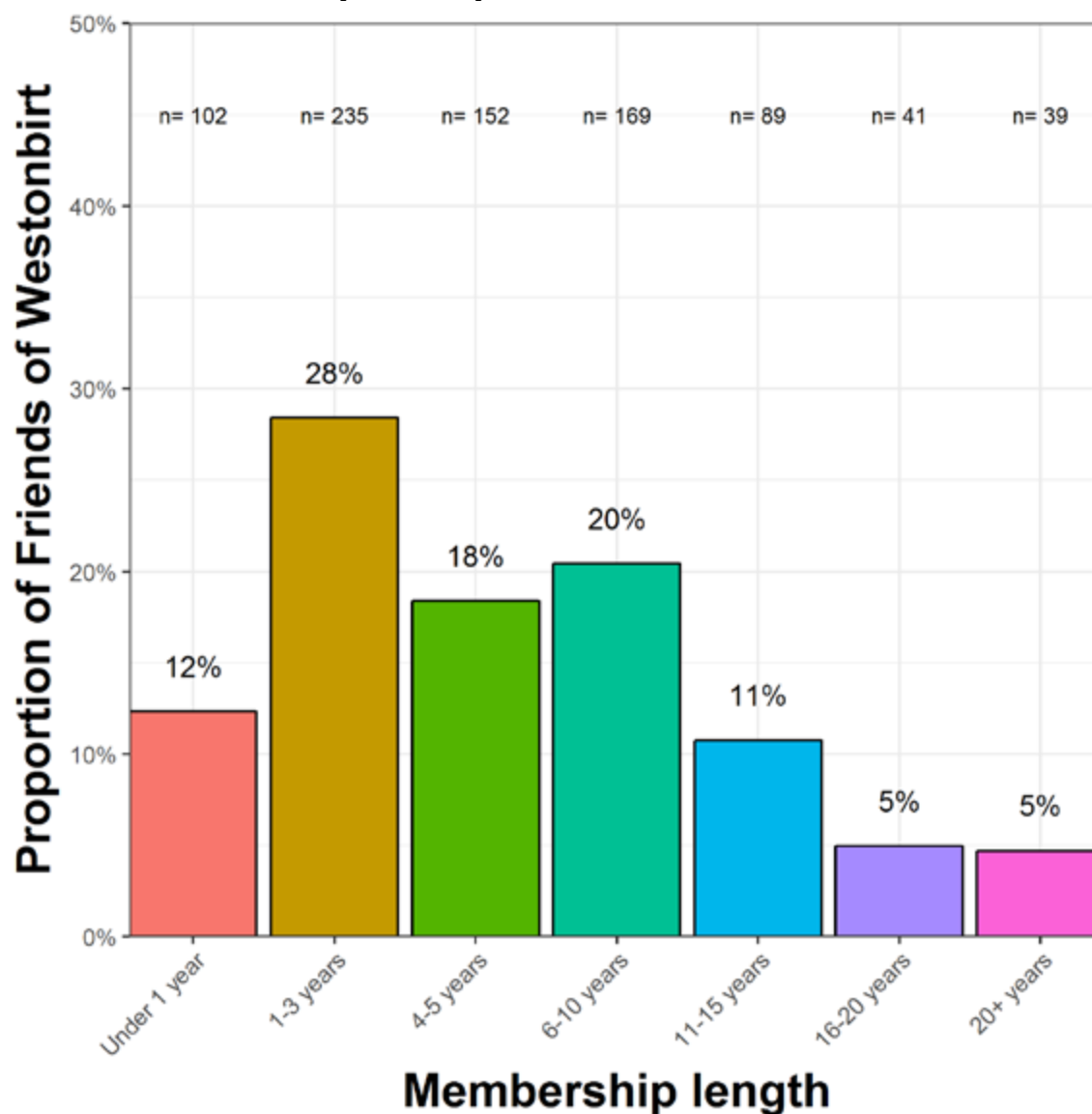


Figure 19 shows the frequency and length of visits for all online respondents. Individuals tended to visit the site between 1 and 6 times per year, spending 2-3 hours on site. Individuals with dogs were significantly more likely to visit daily or weekly, and for 1-2 hours (see Supplementary Appendix 1). Families were more likely to visit monthly and for 3-4 hours than non-families.

Figure 19. Online data analysis: Frequency of visits by online respondents (n = 1,233)

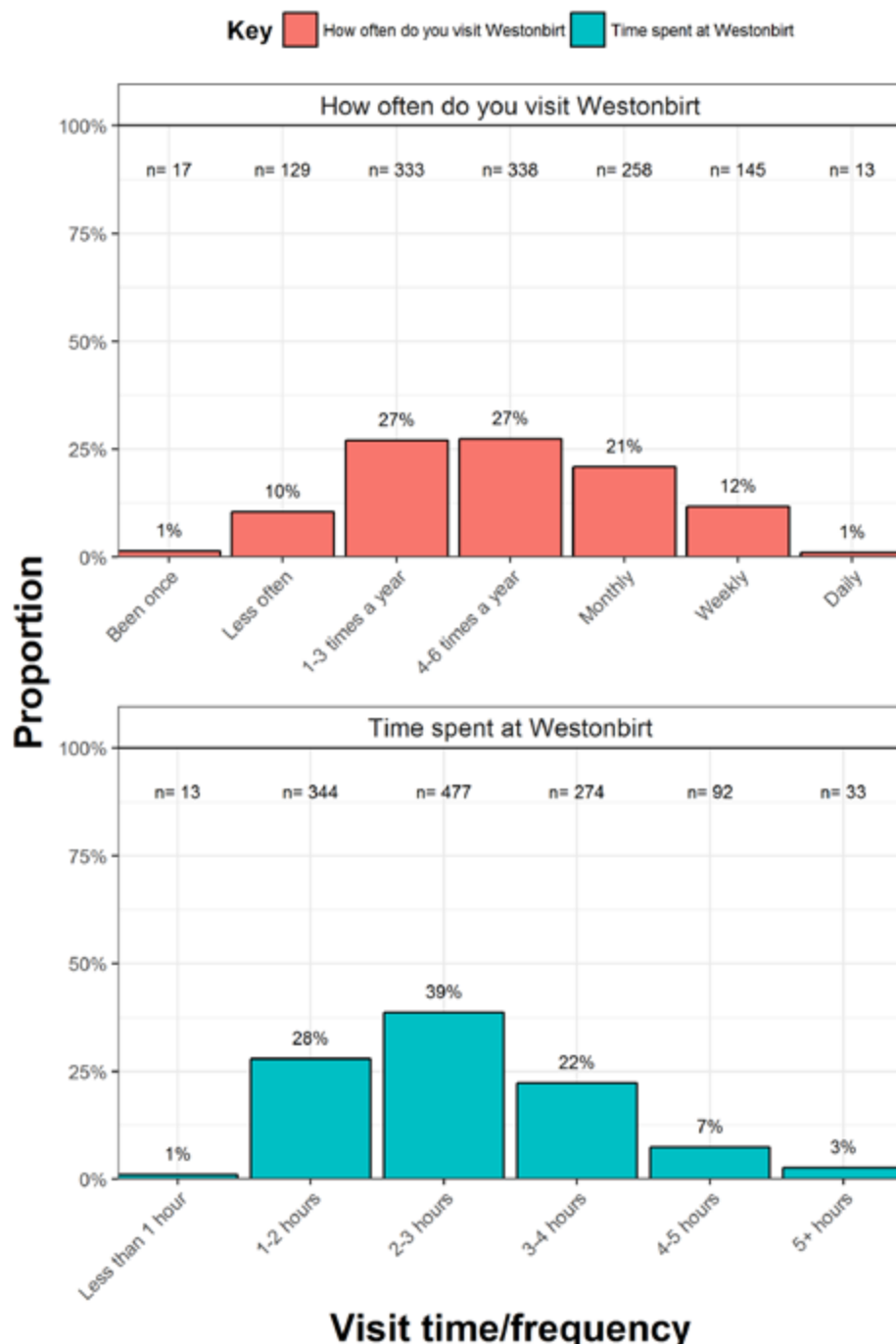


Figure 20 shows the significant differences in frequency of visits between Friends of Westonbirt and non-members. There appears to be a switch at 1-3 visits a year; individuals visiting more frequently than this are significantly more likely to be Friends of Westonbirt. This likely represents the pivot point at which membership is more cost-effective for individuals.

Figure 20. Online data statistical analysis: Frequency of visits to Westonbirt – non-member/non-friend versus member/friend

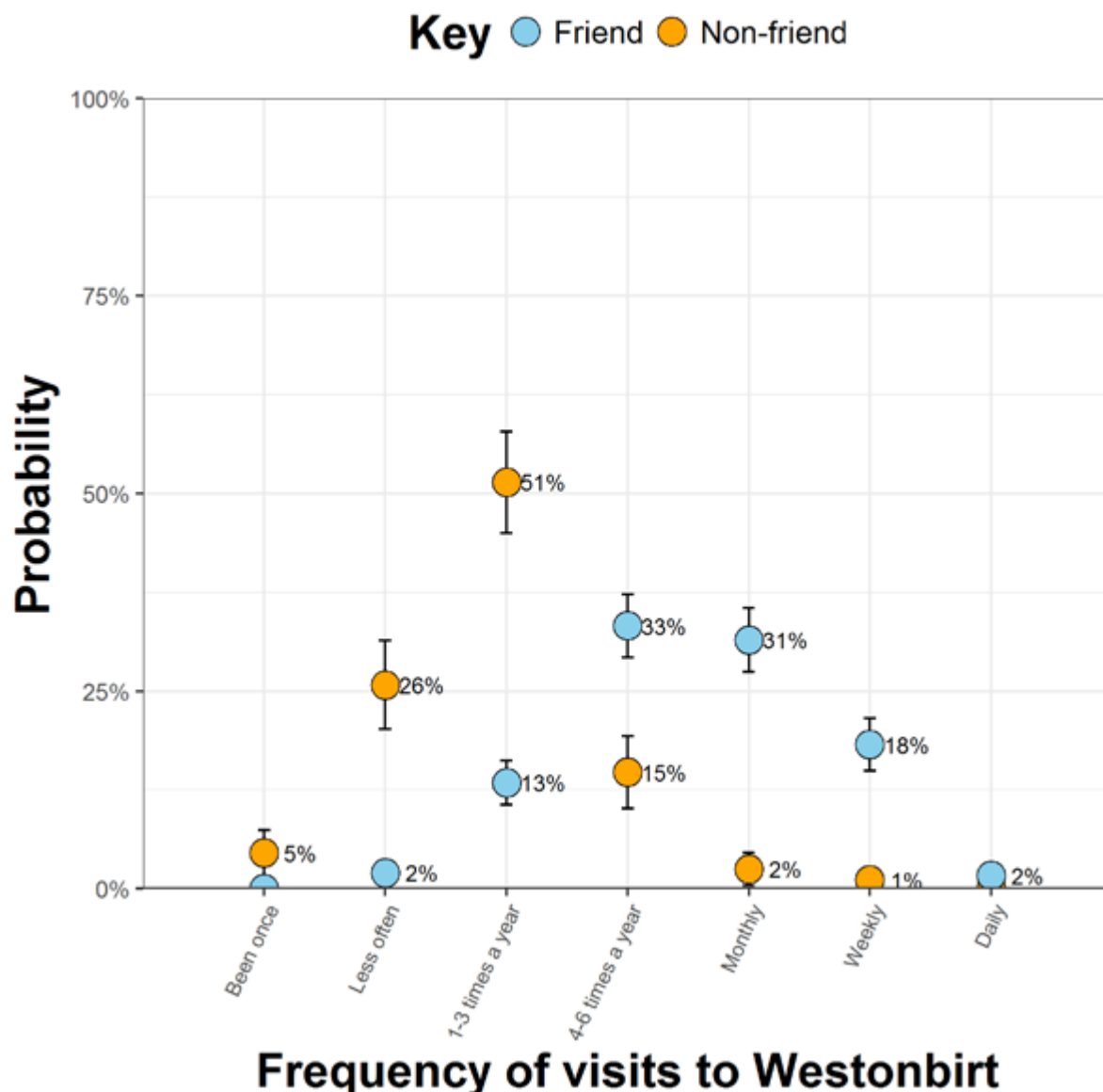


Figure note: Probabilities are predicted probabilities from statistical model. Error bars = 95% confidence intervals.

3.1.9. Purpose and planning

Around two thirds of individuals (62%) recorded "go for a walk" as one of their reasons for visiting Westonbirt in the online survey (see Figure 21). General seasonal interest was also popular, with 45% of individuals attending for this reason. Table 14 shows the most common words used by individuals in the "Other comments" section; individuals tended to use this comments box to give further detail regarding activities with their dogs, trees, and expressing their enjoyment.

Figure 21. Online data analysis: Purpose for visiting Westonbirt (n = 1,233)

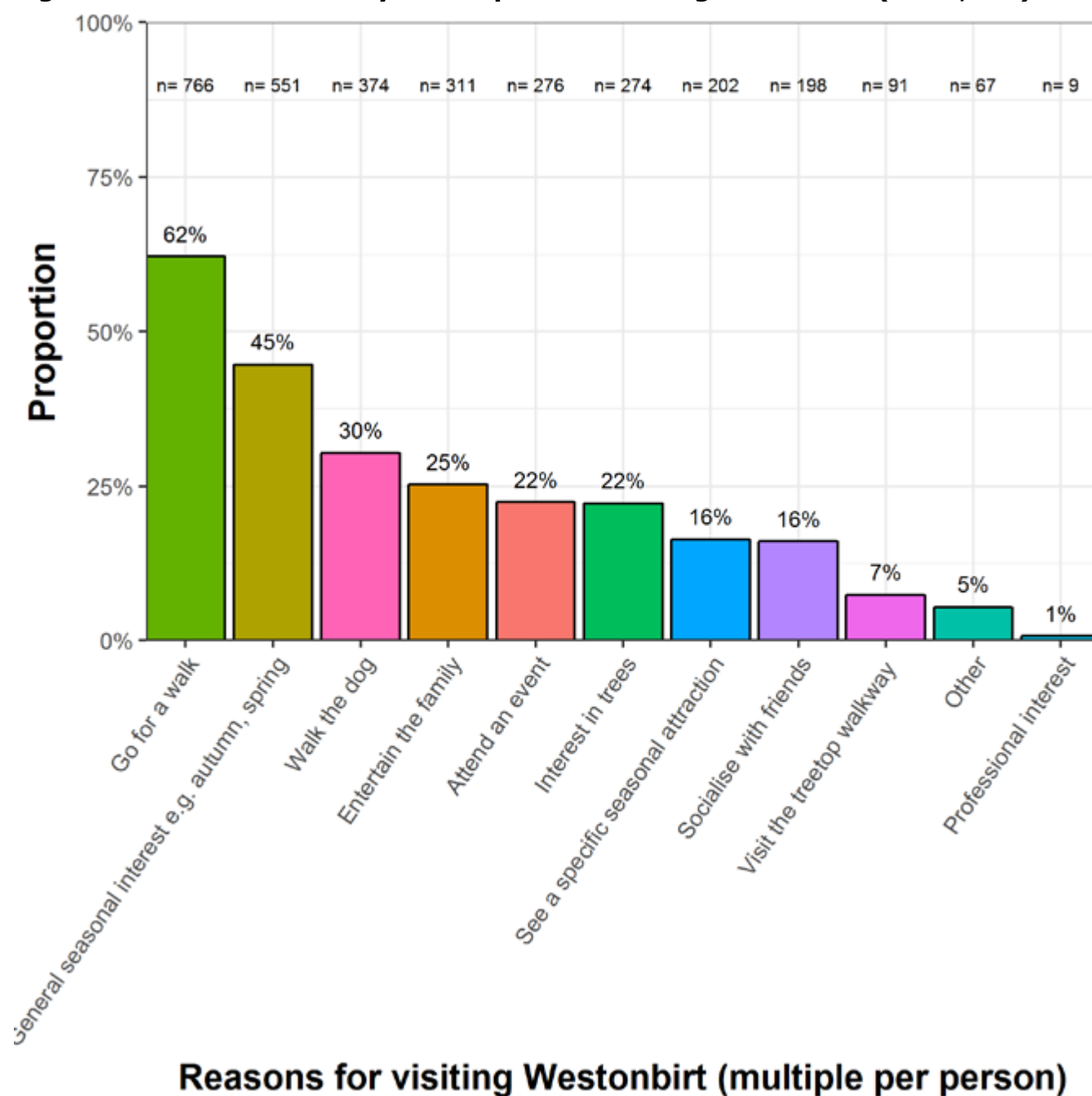


Table 14. Table 14: Other reasons for visiting Westonbirt - Top 10 word counts (n = 156)

Word	n
trees	19
dogs	17
visit	17
enjoy	16
walk	14
time	10
westonbirt	10
arboretum	9
cafe	9
family	9

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Statistical analysis by factors (conducted on all reasons with >10% response rate, see Supplementary Appendix 1) indicated that Friends of Westonbirt were significantly more likely to list going for a walk and attending an event as reasons for visiting. There tended to be an age split with regard to general seasonal interest, with individuals aged 55 and up being more likely to list this as a reason than individuals between 25 and 54. Friends (vs. non-members) and individuals aged 45-64 were significantly more likely to list "attend an event" as a reason than individuals aged 65 and above. Interestingly, there was no significant difference between Friends of Westonbirt and non-members in their likelihood of listing an interest in trees as one of their reasons for visiting. Specific seasonal attractions and interest in trees were listed more often by young (16-24 years) and older (65+years) than middle-aged groups (35-54 years).

Of the online respondents, 55% had a look at what Westonbirt had to offer in advance. Less frequent visitors were significantly more likely to look for information in advance. There were four popular planning methods used by at least 20% respondents: FCE website, Westonbirt magazine, Friends of Westonbirt website and the e-newsletter (see Figure 22). The FC website was used significantly more by younger non-members (see Supplementary Appendix 1); Friends of Westonbirt magazine/website were significantly more likely to be used by members.

Figure 22. Online data analysis: Planning for visiting Westonbirt (n = 1,233)

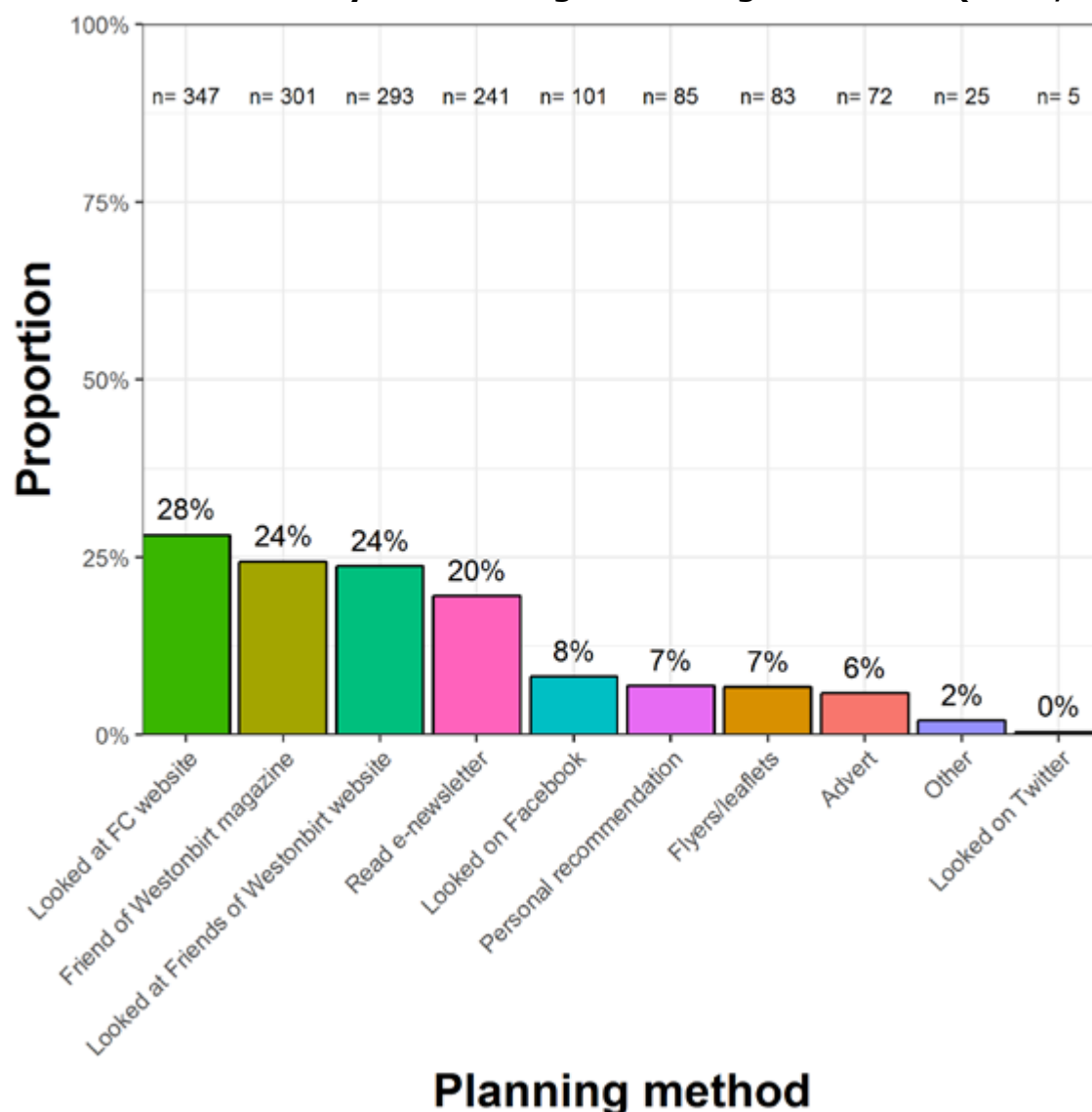
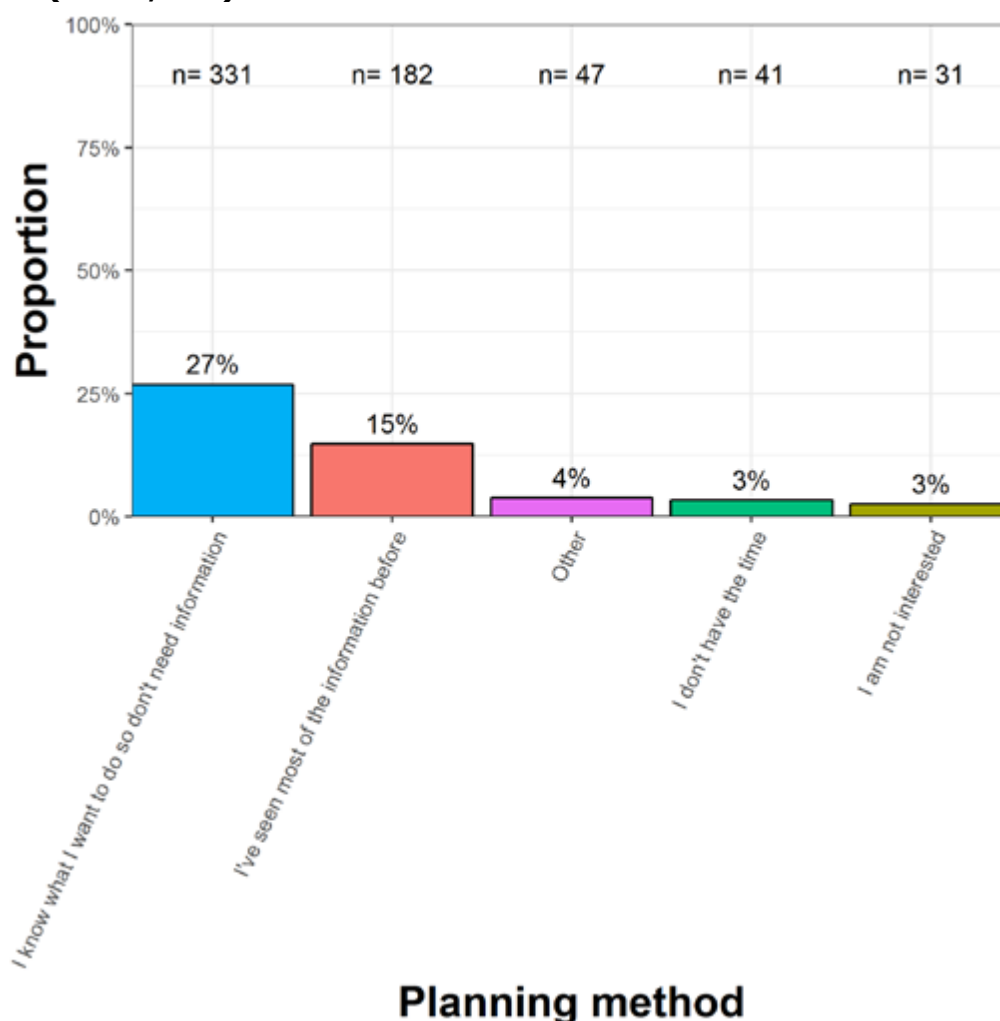


Table 15. Online sample: proportion of individuals visiting different areas of the arboretum

Area of the arboretum	n	Percentage
Both	726	58.9%
Silk Wood	310	25.1%
Old Arboretum	197	16.0%

Those who did not plan in advance tended to already know what they wanted to do (see Figure 23); statistical analysis indicated that these were significantly more likely to be frequent visitors without families. Table 15 shows that most individuals visited both areas of the arboretum (58.9%).

Figure 23. Online data analysis: Reasons for not planning for visiting Westonbirt (n = 1,233)



3.1.10. Arrival experience

Two thirds of individuals found the arrival experience relaxed and welcoming (65% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 24), and most found staff/volunteers helpful (73% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 24). Less than half of people reported that the arrival helped them to understand what they could do during their visit (44% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 24), and a similar proportion reported the arrival provided a good introduction to the arboretum (40% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 24), highlighting similar issues as the on-site survey.

Statistical analysis (Supplementary Appendix 1) showed families provide more positive responses to all four questions than non-families. Younger people were significantly more likely to report that the arrival was relaxed and welcoming versus older people (see Figure 25). Individuals without dogs reported more positive responses to staff/volunteers being helpful, understanding and good introduction to the arboretum questions (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 24. Online data analysis: Likert scale analysis of arrival experience reported by individuals (n = 1,233)

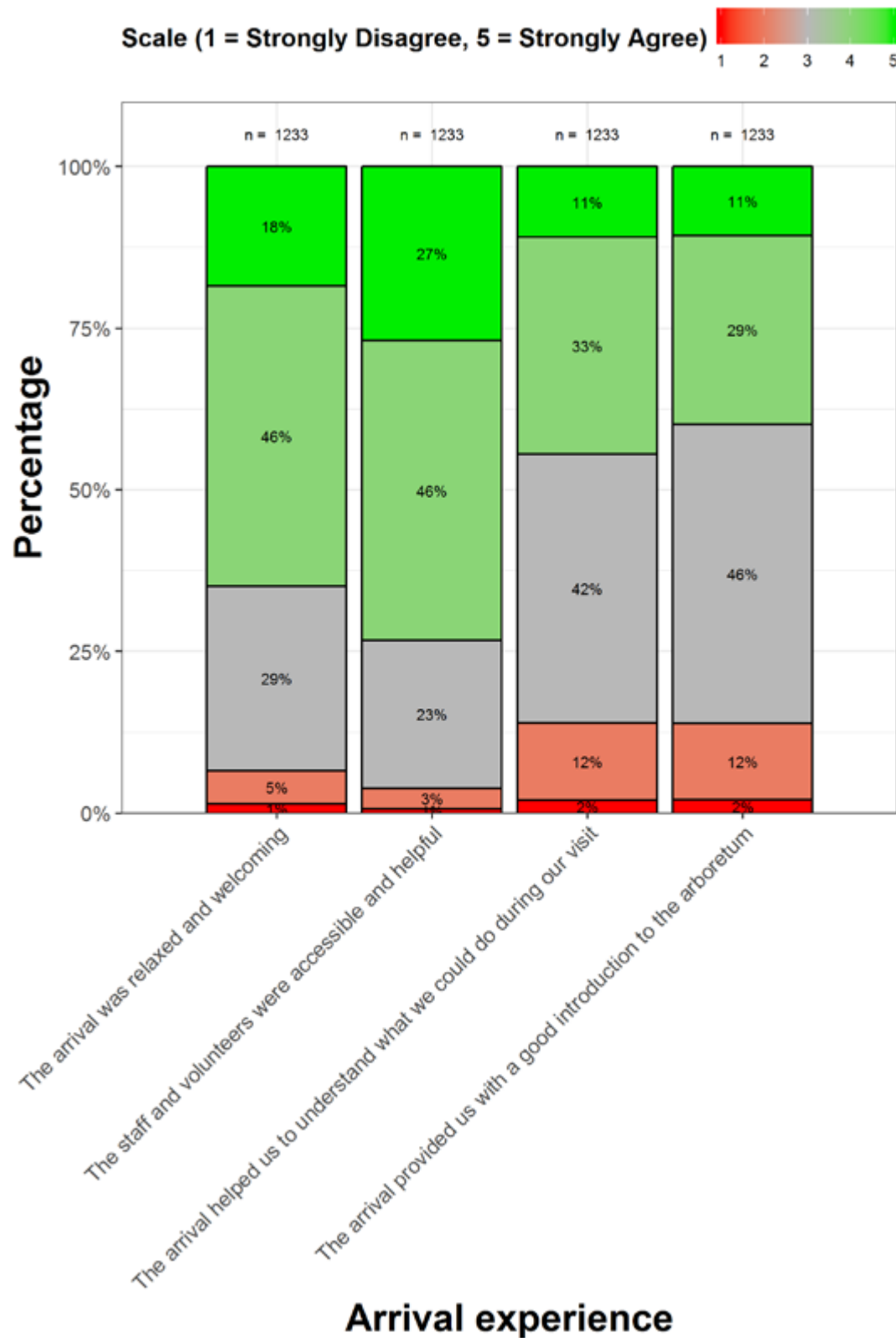


Figure 25. Online data statistical analysis: “The arrival was relaxed and welcoming” by age

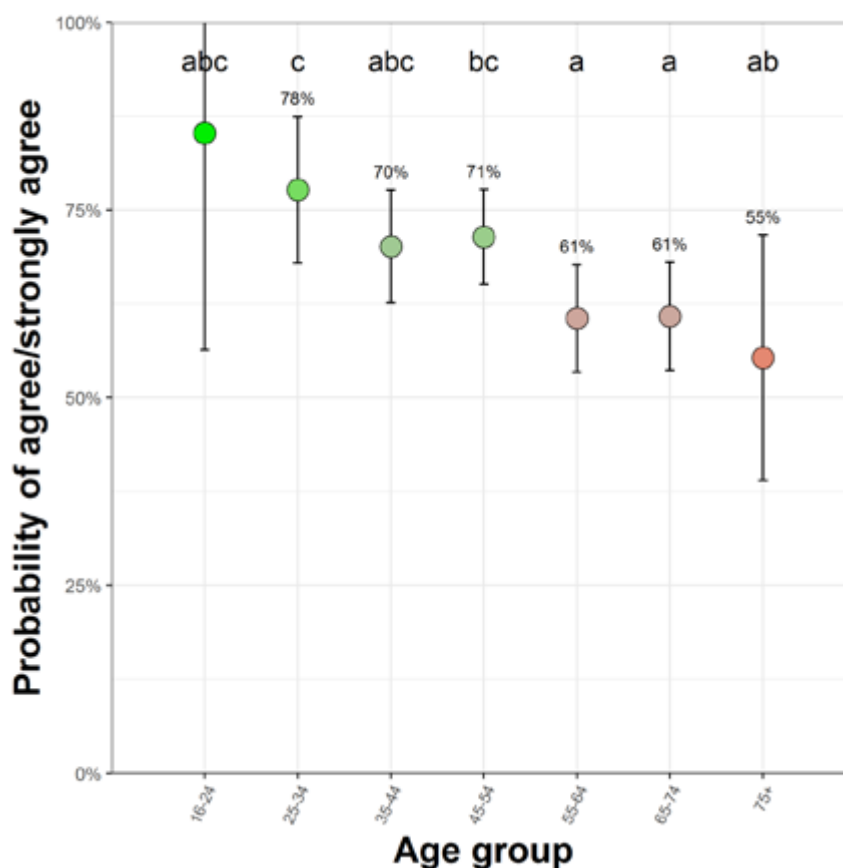


Figure note: Probabilities are predicted probabilities from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. “a” versus “c”) are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. “ab” versus “b” are not significantly different).

3.1.11. Activities

Of the 854 individuals who responded online, 37% indicated that options and activities were explained to them by a member of staff/volunteer when they arrived on site. For specific activities explained, directions/orientation of the site and seasonal trails tended to be explained more frequently (15% and 14% of individuals respectively, Figure 26), whereas 4% of individuals recorded having Welcome Building exhibits explained to them.

Table 16 shows, when asked whether individuals had suggestions for improving the personal welcome, the most common response was “no” (134/475 respondents), with “staff”, “volunteers”, “friendly” and “helpful” all being commonly used by individuals. Statistical analysis (see Supplementary Appendix 1, all responses >10%) sheds more light on Figure 26: For overall and specific options listed in Figure 26, non-members were significantly more likely to respond positively than Friends of Westonbirt. Individuals visiting less often (1-3 times a year) were also significantly more likely to

indicate that options and activities were explained to them by a member of staff/volunteer when they arrived than more frequent visitors (Monthly).

Figure 26. Online data analysis: Activities explained at Westonbirt (n = 1,233)

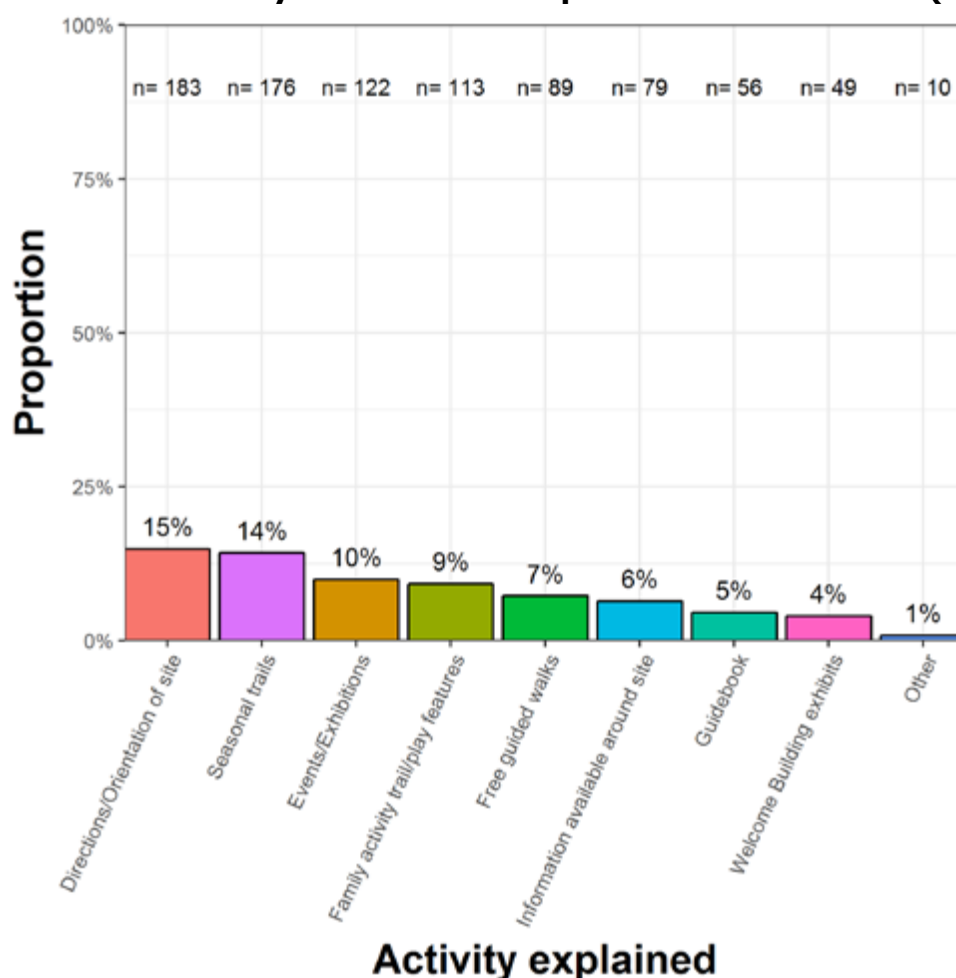


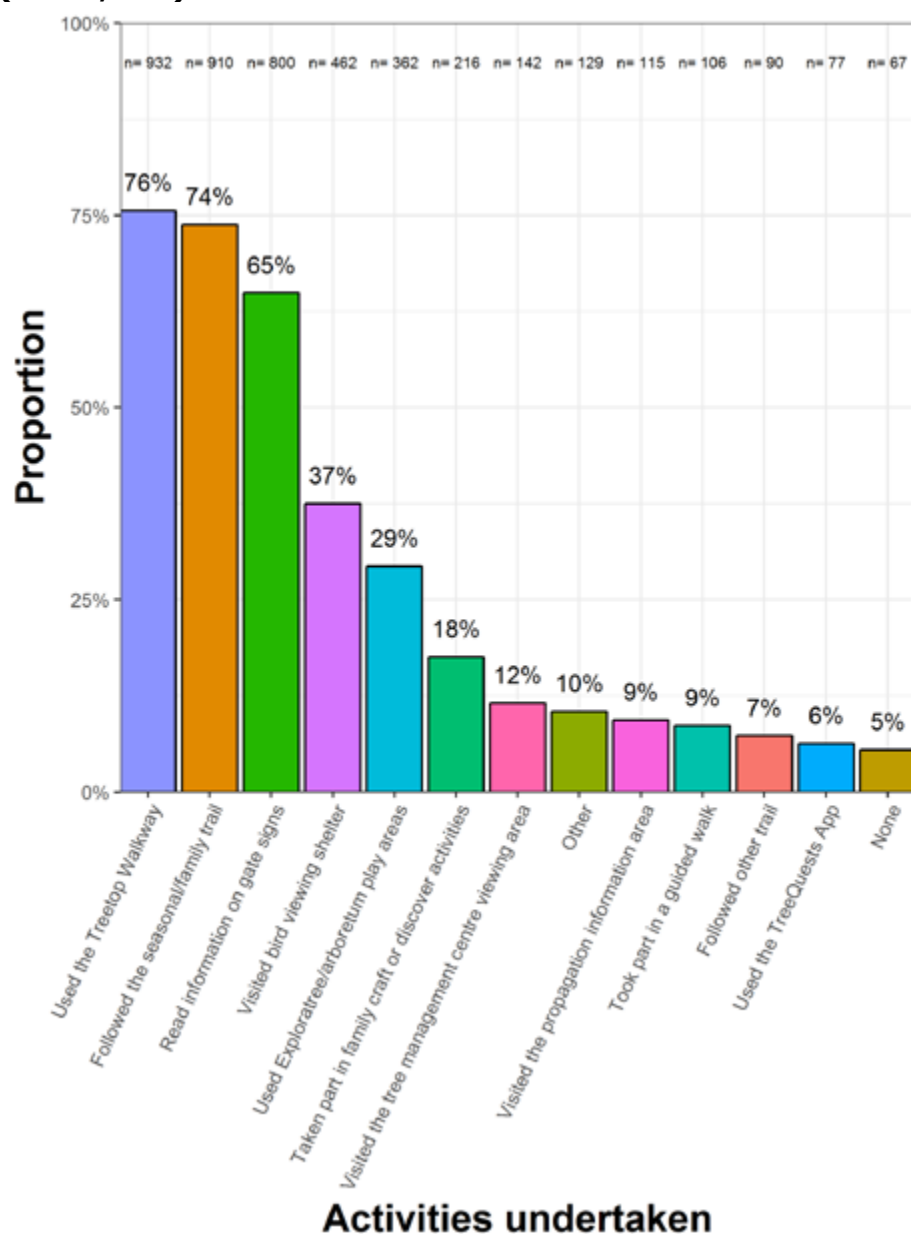
Table 16. Other suggestions for improving personal welcome at Westonbirt - Top 10 word counts (n = 134)

Word	n
no	134
staff	87
more	50
volunteers	47
friendly	38
helpful	38
information	35
entrance	34
dogs	31
people	29

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

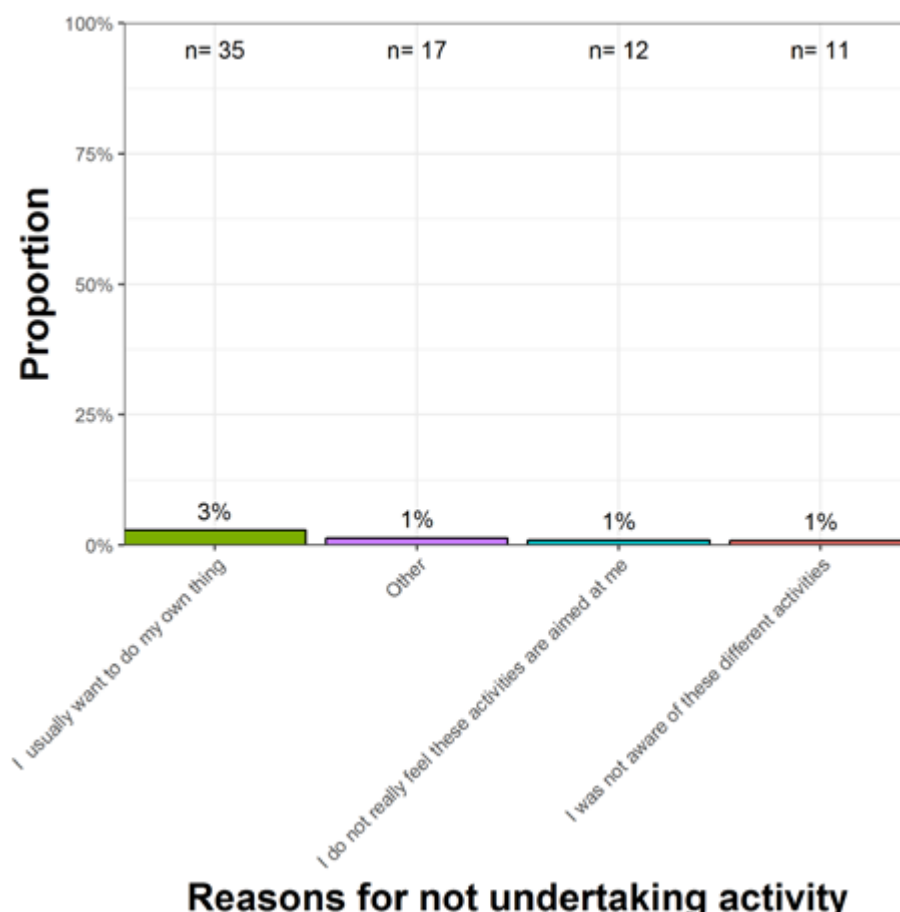
Figure 27 shows the activities undertaken by online respondents. Three activities stand out as being most popular: the treetop walkway, seasonal/family trail and information on gate signs. The top five activities in Figure 27 showed that all activities (except gate sign information) were more popular with families than non-families. More frequent visitors were significantly more likely to take part in the top five activities than infrequent visitors (see Supplementary Appendix 1). Individuals with dogs were significantly less likely to use seasonal/family trails, bird viewing and play areas. The bird viewing shelter was used significantly more by the oldest age category (75+) than 25-44 year olds (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 27. Online data analysis: Activities undertaken by individuals visiting Westonbirt (n = 1,233)



Out of the 1,233 respondents, 5.4% reported doing no activities (Figure 28). The most common reason for individuals not undertaking a specific activity was because they wanted to do their own thing (see Figure 28, proportions were too low to conduct meaningful statistical analysis).

Figure 28. Online data analysis: Reasons why no activities were undertaken (n = 1,233)



A large proportion of respondents online would recommend Westonbirt to their friends and family (Figure 29; 94% individuals strongly agree/agree). Results were very positive for all enjoyment responses in Figure 29 (more than 70% of individuals agreeing or strongly agreeing in all cases). For the three learning responses, more than half of individuals agreed/strongly agreed. Text analysis of suggestions for improving or developing activities showed "no" to be the most frequent response (63/233 respondents); there were several responses featuring birds, bird viewing and bird shelters.

More frequent visitors (4-6 times a year to weekly), were significantly more likely to recommend Westonbirt to friends/family than those who visited less often. Families, visitors without dogs and the youngest age group (16-24) were all significantly more likely to agree/strongly agree with activities adding enjoyment. Families were

significantly more likely to report improved understanding of how Westonbirt is cared for by the Forestry Commission and that activities made them think/interact more with the tree collection.

Figure 29. Online data analysis: Likert scale analysis of activities experience reported by individuals (n = 1,233)

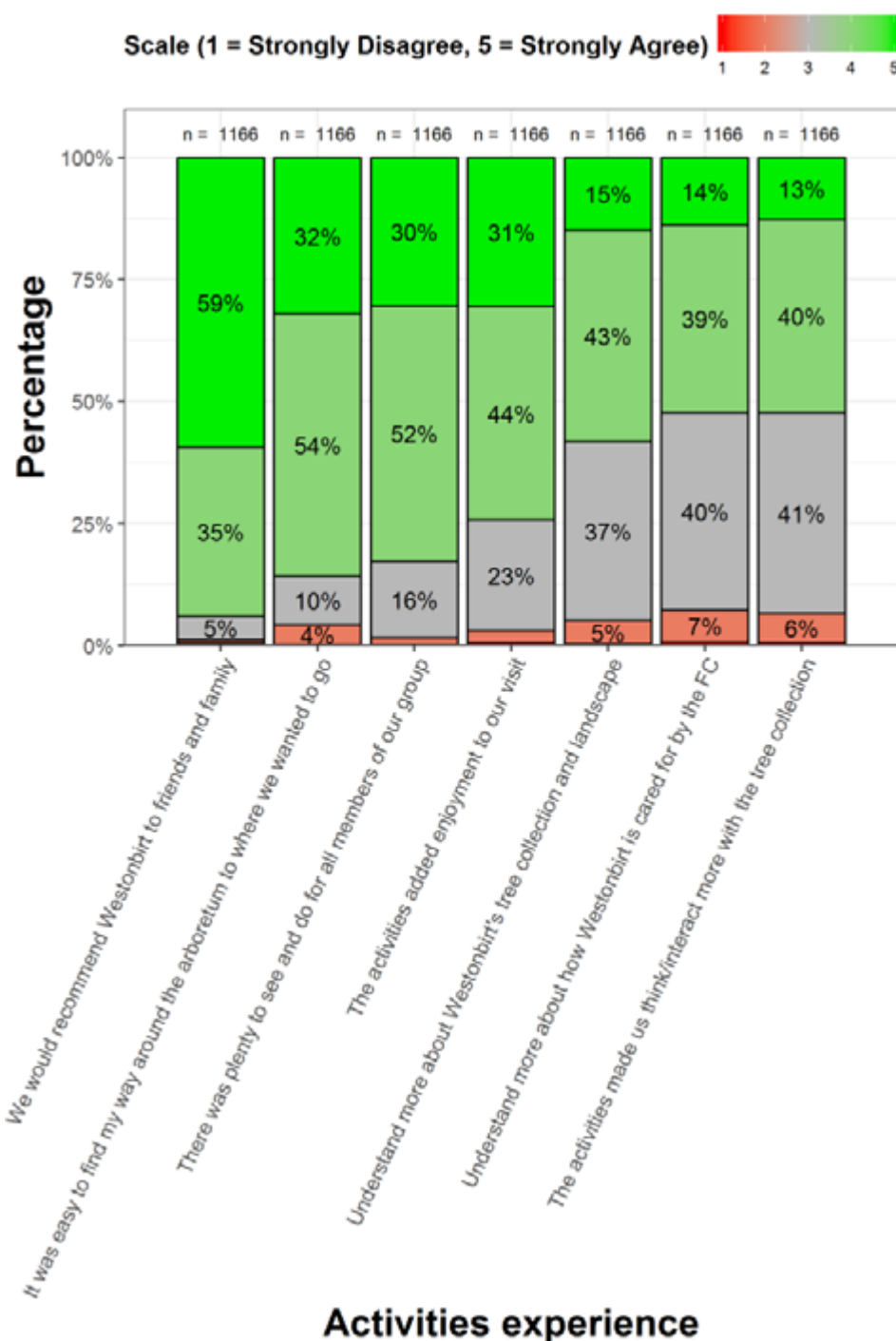


Table 17. Suggestions for improving activities at Westonbirt - Top 20 word counts (n = 233)

Word	n
no	63
activities	30
dogs	25
trees	22
arboretum	18
children	18
bird	15
viewing	12
wood	12
gruffalo	11
trails	11
westonbirt	11
activities more	11
bird viewing	11
people	10
trail	10
walk	10
information	9
park	9
shelter	9

3.1.12. Welcome Building and information

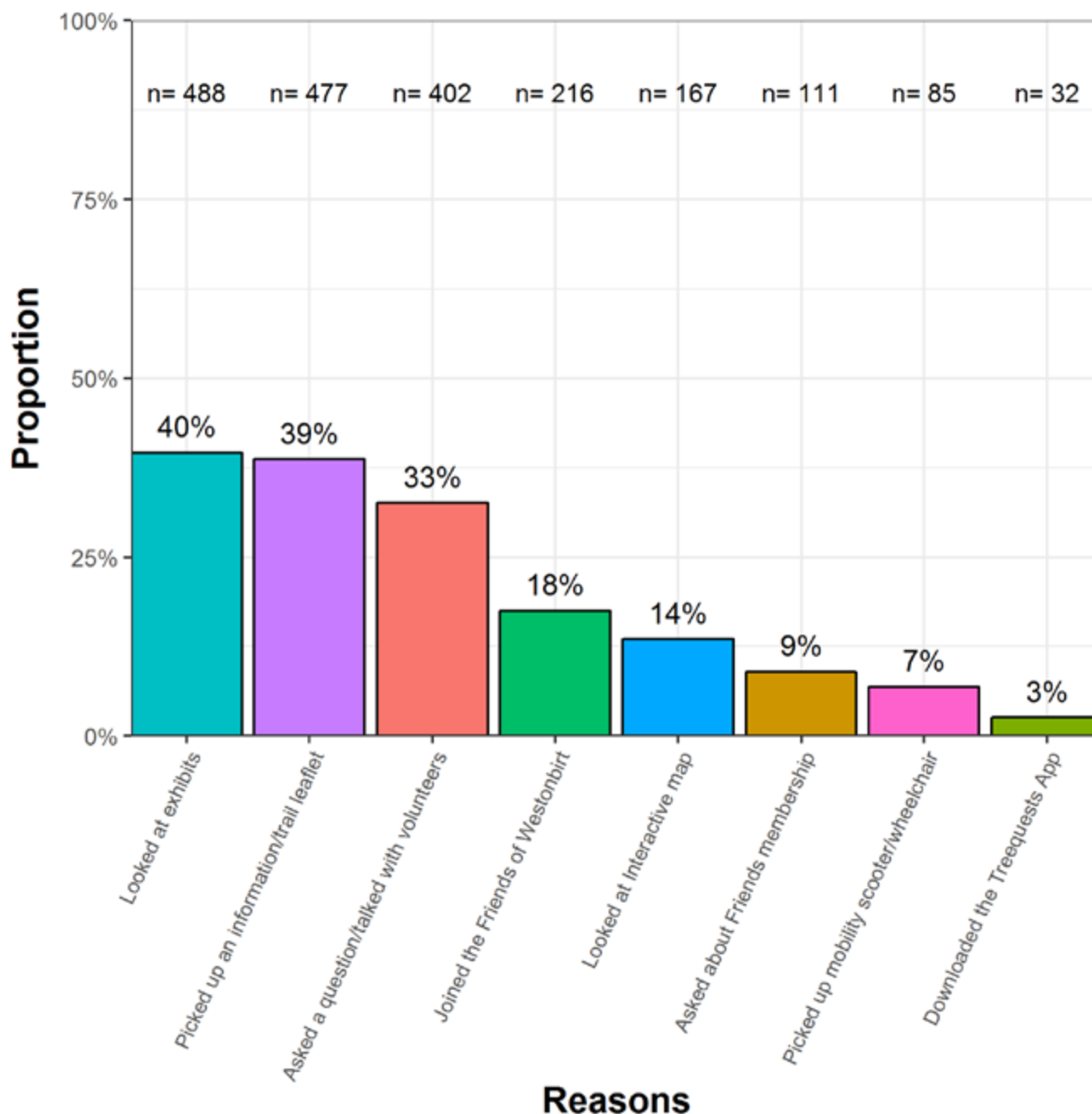
Table 18 shows that around half of respondents online do not usually go in the Welcome Building, although they have been in before (48.7%). Very few individuals go into the Welcome Building every time they visit. Frequent visitors (daily, weekly) were significantly more likely to answer "no, but I have been in". Individuals with dogs were significantly more likely to have never been in the Welcome Building. Individuals between 25 and 54 were significantly more likely to have never been in the building than the youngest (16-24) and oldest (75+) age categories.

Table 18. Online sample: use of the Welcome Building by individuals

Area of the arboretum	n	Percentage
No, but I have been in	601	48.7%
Yes, but only if I have a specific reason	252	20.4%
No, I have never been in the Welcome Building	227	18.4%
Yes, most times I visit	123	10.0%
Yes, every time I visit	30	2.4%

The most frequently cited reasons for going into the Welcome Building were to look at exhibits (40%) or pick up a leaflet (39%, see Figure 30). The oldest age groups (65 and older) tended to be more likely to look at exhibits than middle-aged groups (35-54), as did individuals with families. Friends of Westonbirt were significantly more likely to go into the Welcome Building to ask a question/talk to volunteers.

Figure 30. Online data analysis: Reasons individuals did use the Welcome Building (n = 1,233)



The most frequently cited reason for not going into the Welcome Building was due to having a dog (8%, Figure 31). The issue of dogs was also raised in the free text boxes. Although the most frequently cited response to improvements of the Welcome Building were "no" (75/219 individuals, see Table 19), "dogs" was the second most frequently used word in encouraging individuals to visit the Welcome Building again (70/552 individuals, see Table 20).

Figure 31. Online data analysis: Reasons individuals did not use the Welcome Building (n = 1,233)

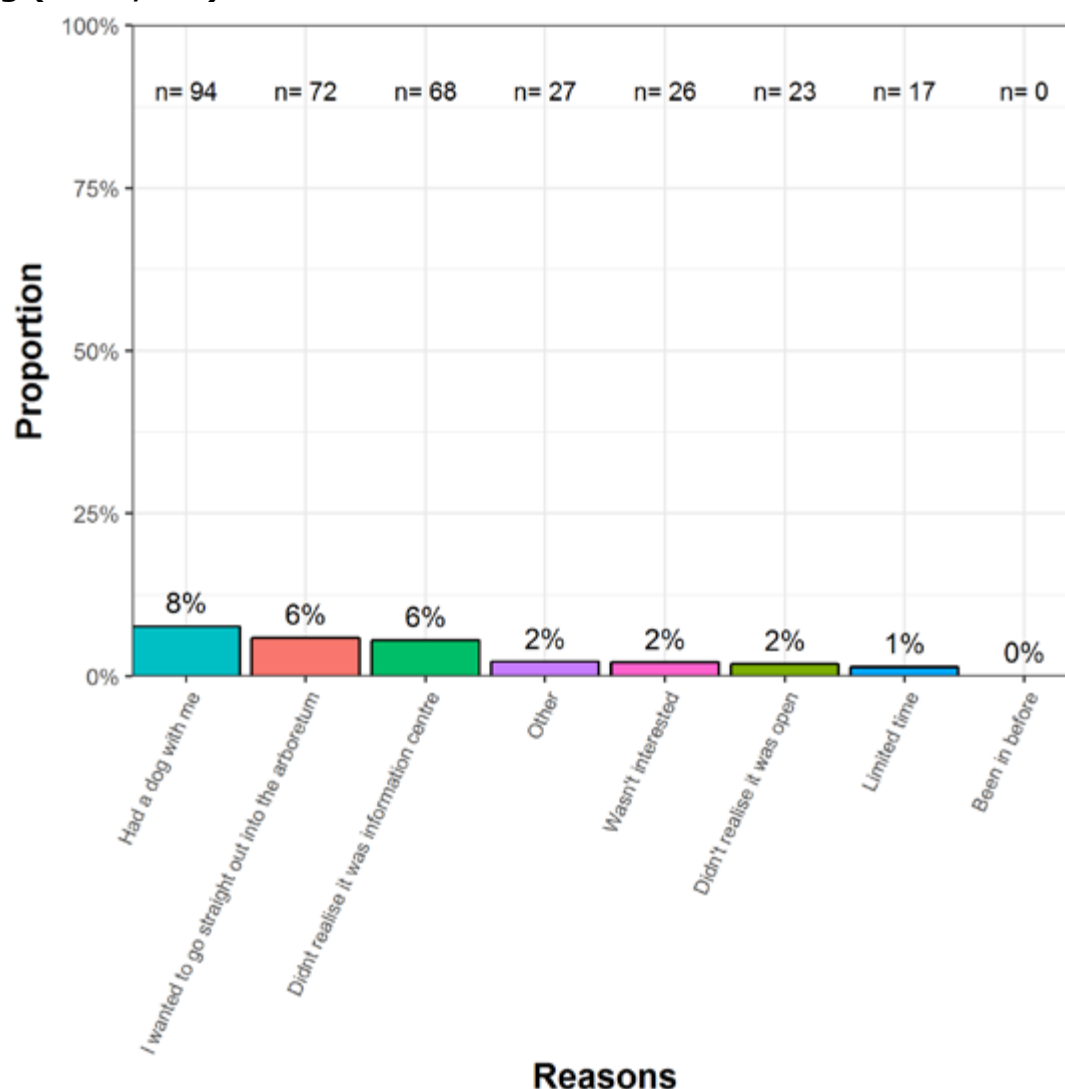


Table 19. Suggestions for improving the Welcome Building - Top 10 word counts (n = 219)

Word	n
no	75
more	29
building	21
information	17
dogs	14
visit	10
arboretum	9
exhibits	8
people	8
too	8

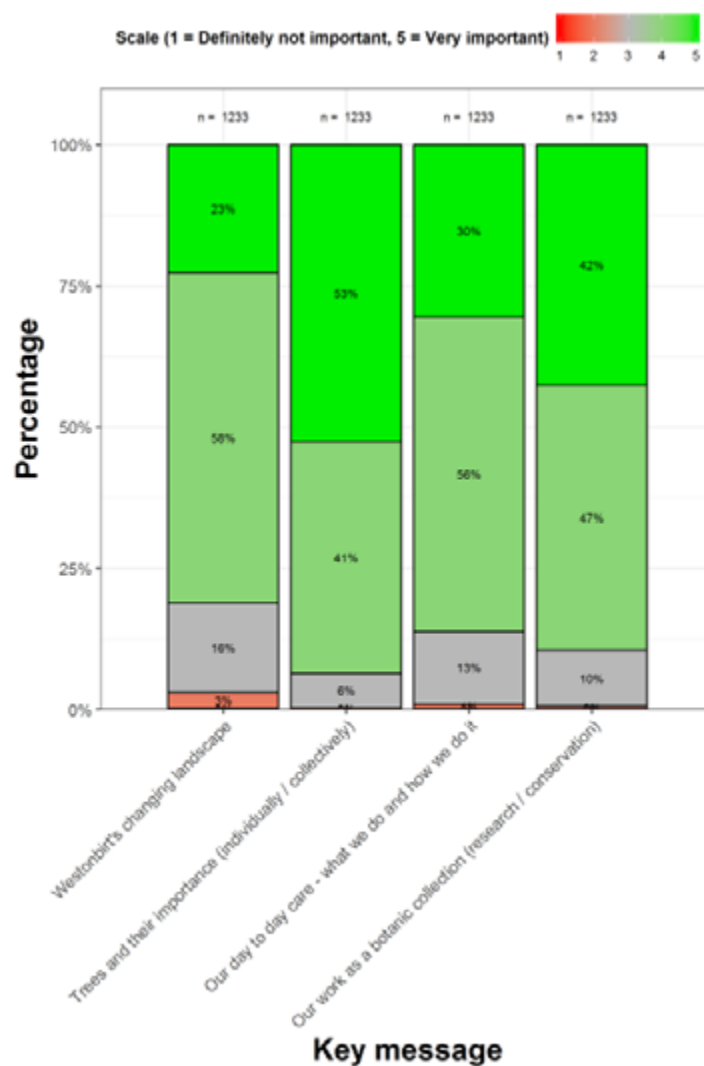
Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Table 20. Suggestions for encouraging further visits to the Welcome Building - Top 10 word counts (n = 558)

Word	n
information	79
dogs	70
more	63
visit	38
building	27
time	26
exhibits	25
walk	25
arboretum	22
children	22

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Figure 32. Online data analysis: Likert scale analysis of respondents' importance of Westonbirt's key messages



All four of Westonbirt's key messages are viewed as important by online respondents (>80% respondents indicated each of the four messages were either important or very important, see Figure 32). Statistical analysis of positive responses was not conducted, given the very high proportion of positive responses. The free text responses regarding further information individuals would like to see at Westonbirt, summarised in frequency Table 21, indicate more information about the trees at Westonbirt would be popular.

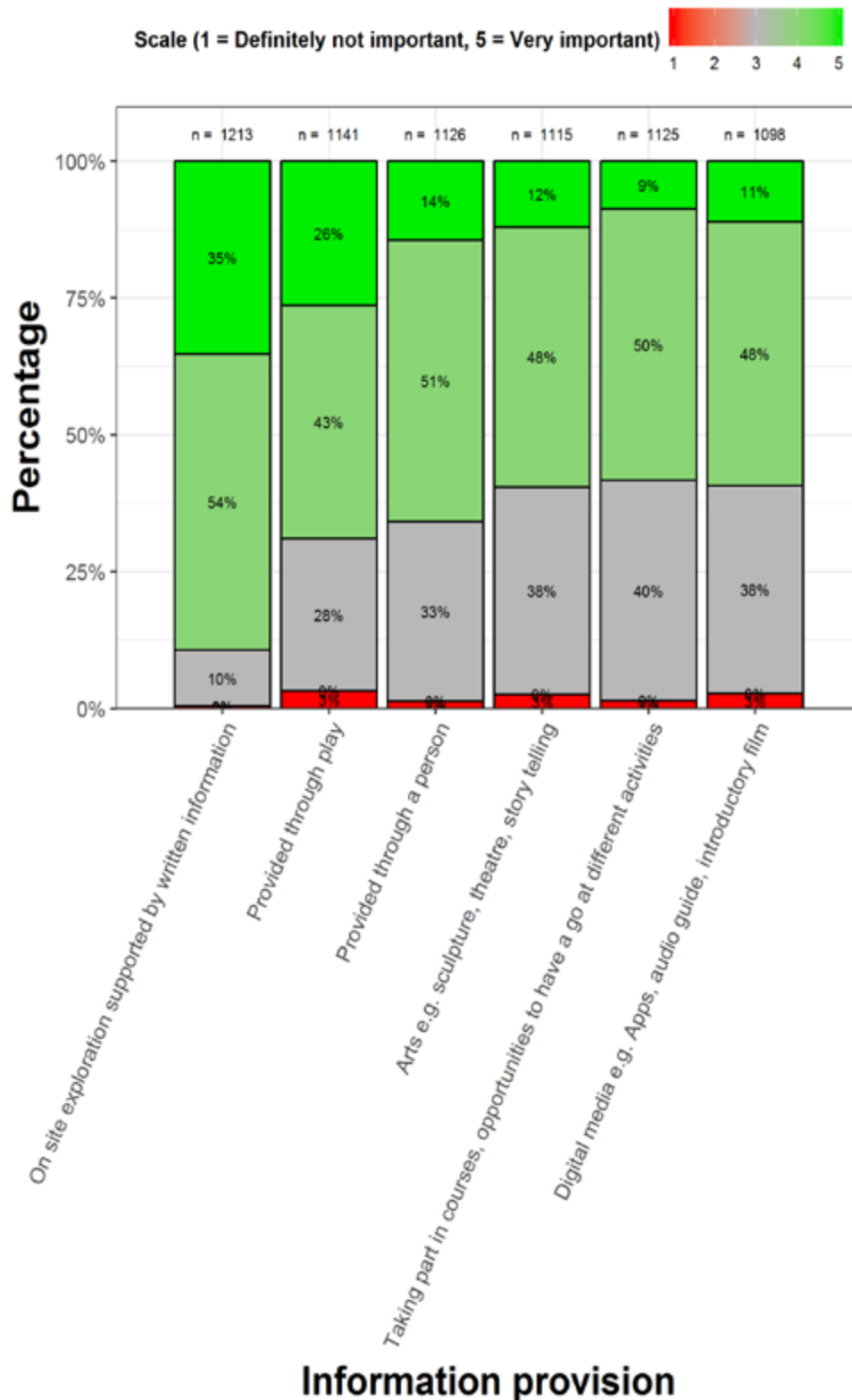
Table 21. Suggestions for information individuals would like to see at Westonbirt - Top 10 word counts (n = 267)

Word	n
no	64
information	62
trees	59
information more	27
more trees	23
arboretum	22
westonbirt	20
information trees	18
dogs	14
arboretum information	12

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Online respondents indicated that on-site exploration supported by written information was the most important way of providing information (89% of respondents ranked this as important/very important, Figure 33); statistical analysis (Supplementary Appendix 1) showed no significant differences in responses by factor. Providing information through play was more important to families and those aged 25-44 years than non-families and those aged 55+ (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for statistical significance). Information through arts was seen as more important to families (67% rated as important/very important versus 54% of non-families, a statistically significant difference). Younger people (25-44 years) rated taking part in courses as important/very important significantly more than older people (55-64, 75+, see Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 33. Online data analysis: Likert scale analysis of ways in which to provide information (n = 1,233)



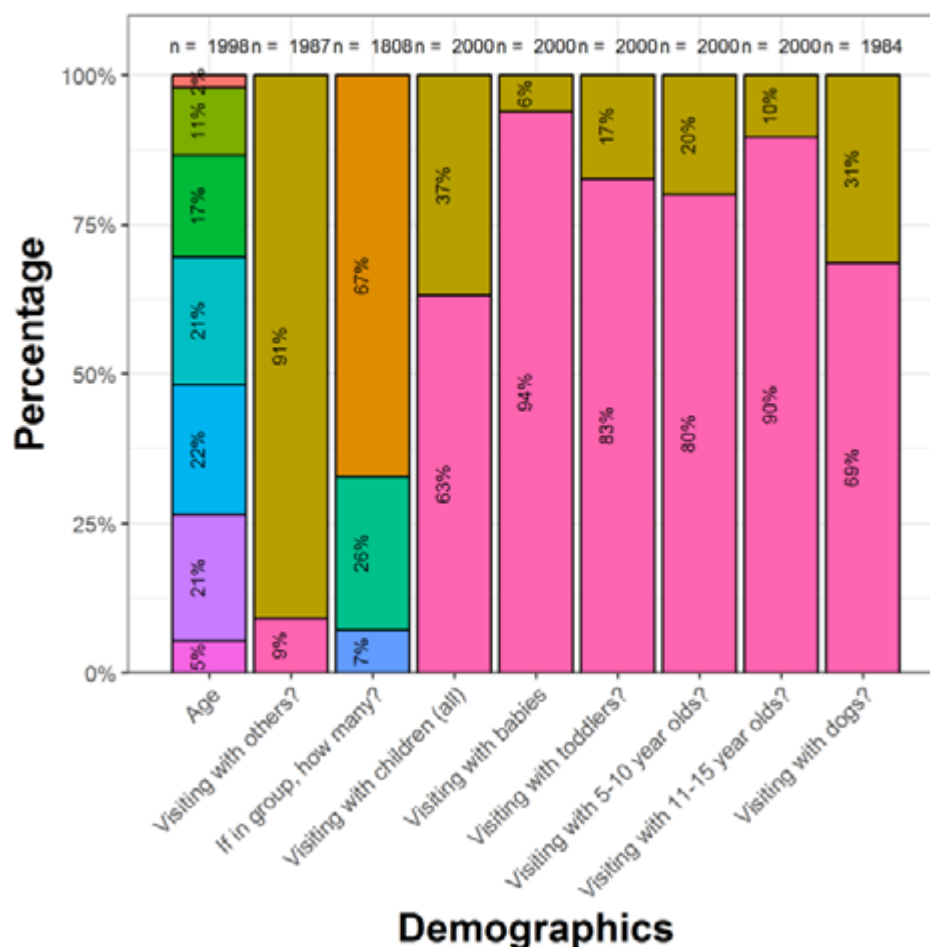
Westonbirt Combined Data

The combined data includes both the on-site survey data and the online data (both non-members and members): statistical analysis compared these three groups, along with other factors. The following section describes the combined data and presents charts of comparisons of on-site, online non-members and online members data. Other significant factors are also described, with results available in Supplementary Appendix 1.

3.1.13. Demographics

Figure 34 shows the demographics of interviewees (disability data available for on-site survey data only, therefore excluded). The majority of individuals visited with others, although most did not visit with children (37% visited with babies to 15 year olds), suggesting individuals were accompanied by other adults. This proportion varied by survey, with the on-site survey having lower proportions of accompanying children than the online survey (see Figures 2 and 17); within the online survey, members and non-members were similar in terms of the proportion of accompanying children (40% and 45% respectively). The age ranges were evenly represented between 25 and 74, with smaller numbers of 16-24 year olds and 75+.

Figure 34. Combined data analysis: Demographics



3.1.14. Visits

Combining the data sets indicated that individuals tended to visit 1-3 times a year; with most popular length of time spent on site being 2-3 hours (39%, see Figure 35).

Figure 35. Combined data analysis: Number of visits and time spent visiting (n = 2,000)

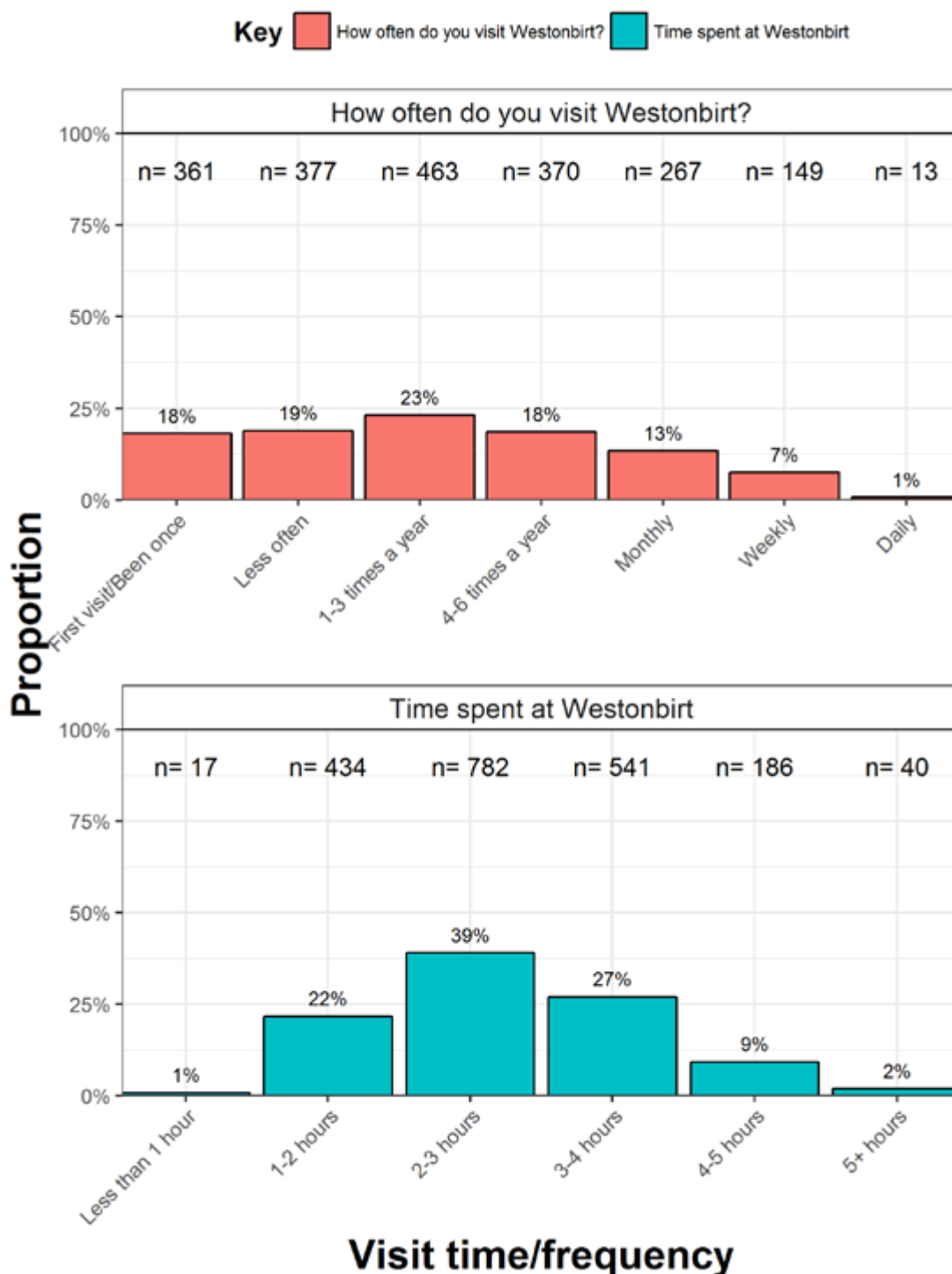


Figure 36. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership by visit frequency/duration

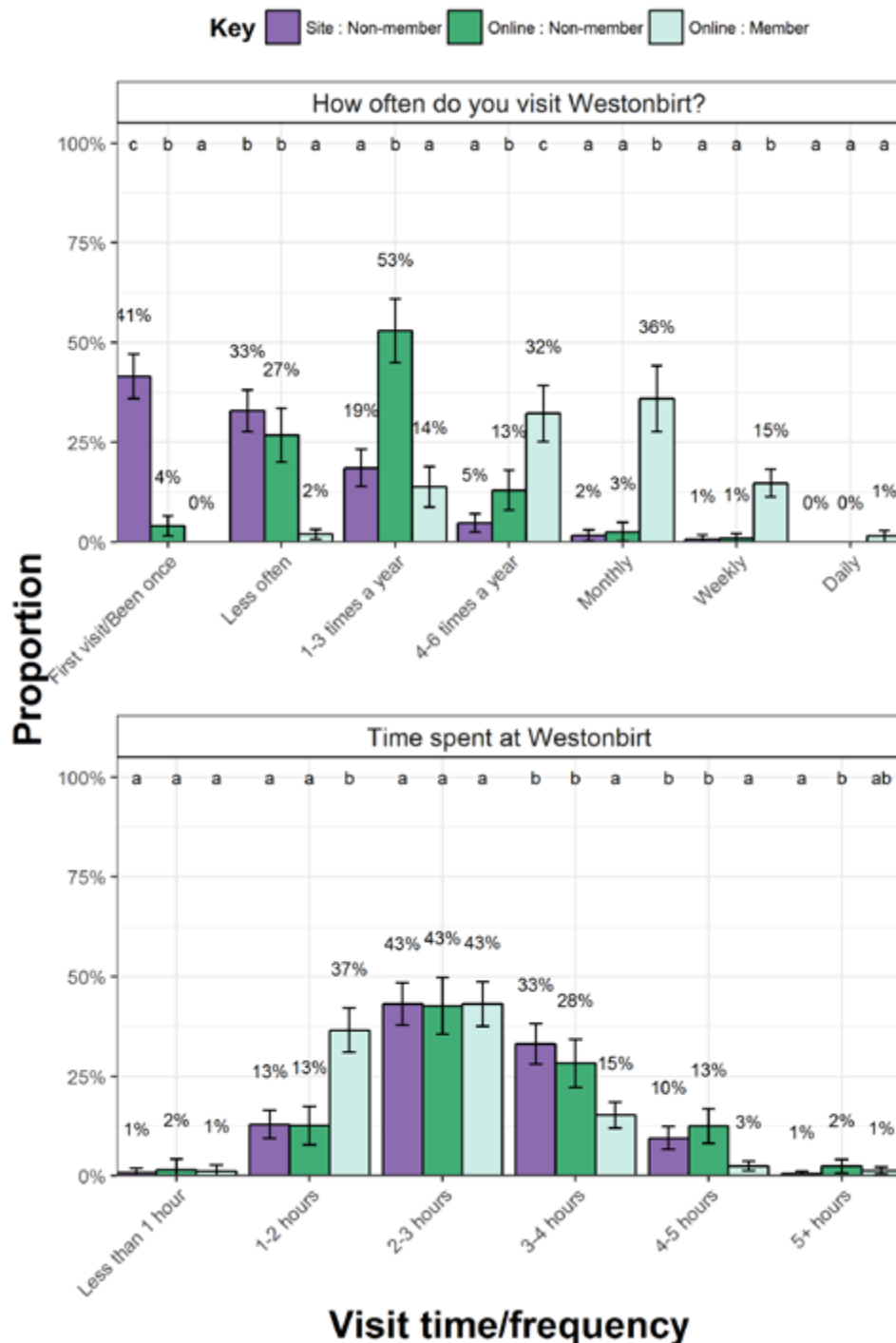


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

Figure 36 shows the results of the statistical analysis comparing the site survey to the online (members and non-members). There were significant differences between the two surveys in terms of frequency of visits, with the site survey significantly more likely to capture first time visitors than the online survey was of capturing visitors that had only been to Westonbirt once (non-members). For duration of visits, non-members (from both surveys) were significantly more likely to visit the site between 3 and 5 hours than Friends of Westonbirt (Figure 36).

Individuals with dogs were significantly more likely to visit weekly/daily, people 65 and over were significantly more likely to visit "less often" than those under 55 and that Friends of Westonbirt visited more frequently than non-members. Individuals with dogs and Friends of Westonbirt were significantly more likely to visit the site for 1-2 hours than those without dogs (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

3.1.15. Purpose and planning

Approximately two thirds of all individuals (65%) recorded "go for a walk" as one of their reasons for visiting Westonbirt, with "general seasonal interest" also proving popular across the combined data set (40% of individuals, Figure 37).

Full statistical analysis is provided in Supplementary Appendix 1. There were significant differences between the two surveys regarding "Go for a walk", "General seasonal interest" and "Walk the dog" (see Figure 38). Online non-members were significantly less likely to report going for a walk or walk the dog as their purpose for visiting. On-site survey respondents were significantly less likely to report general seasonal interest as a reason than online survey individuals. There were no significant differences by survey/member type for the other purposes for visiting.

In terms of other significant results, general seasonal interest was reported as a purpose for visiting Westonbirt significantly more often by families, older individuals (55+) and individuals without dogs. More frequent visitors and non-families were significantly more likely to list dog walking as a reason for visiting Westonbirt.

Age was a significant factor in choosing interest in trees as a reason for visiting, with 65-74 years being the most popular age category (significantly more likely to list interest in trees versus 25-54 year olds). Socialising with friends was chosen significantly more often as a reason by frequent visitors versus less frequent visitors (see Supplementary Appendix 1), and tended to be a more popular option for younger age groups. Visiting the treetop walkway and entertaining the family were popular choices for families versus non-families (Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 37. Combined data analysis: Purpose for visiting Westonbirt (n = 2,000)

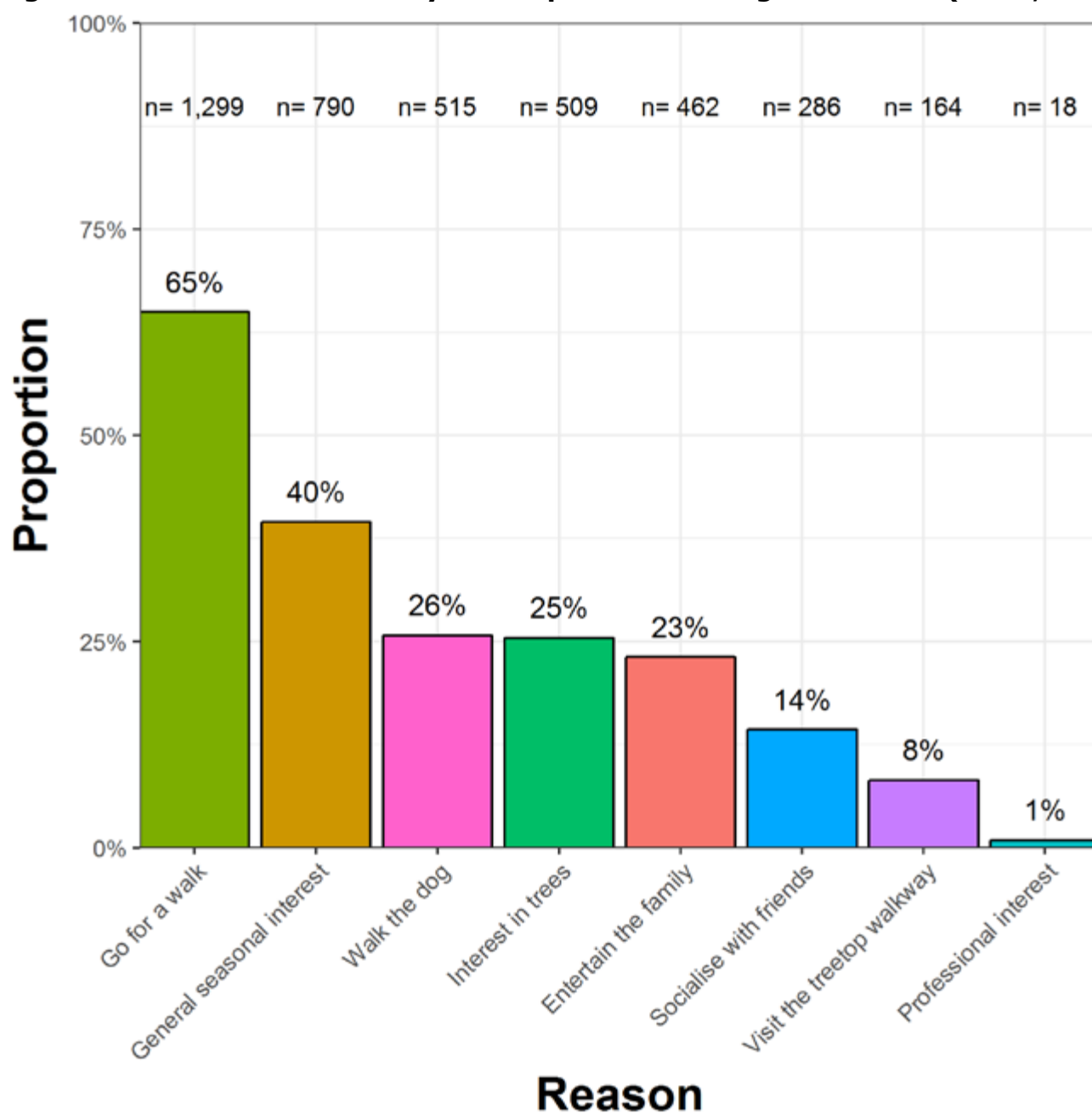


Figure 38. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership in purpose for visiting Westonbirt

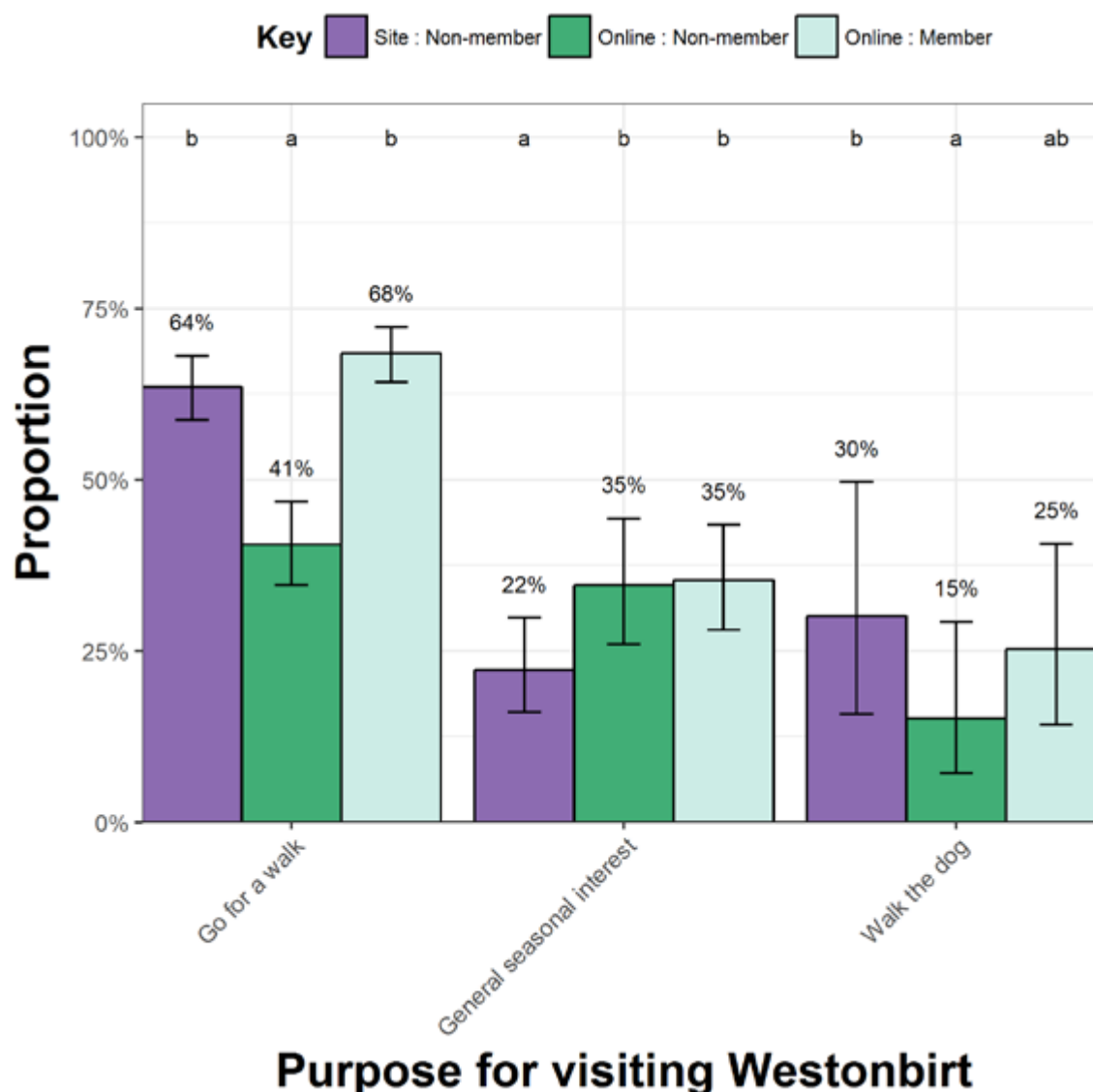


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

Overall, 54% had a look at what Westonbirt had to offer in advance. The most popular planning method by far was to look at the FCE/Westonbirt website (43% of individuals, see Figure 39). There were significant differences across the two surveys and by membership, with site survey respondents significantly less likely to plan in advance than the online visitors (both members and non-members, see Figure 40). This applied across all methods when comparing non-members only (with the exception of flyers,

where sample sizes were small). Statistical analysis also showed less frequent visitors and families to be significantly more likely to plan in advance (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 39. Combined data analysis: Planning for visiting Westonbirt (n = 2,000)

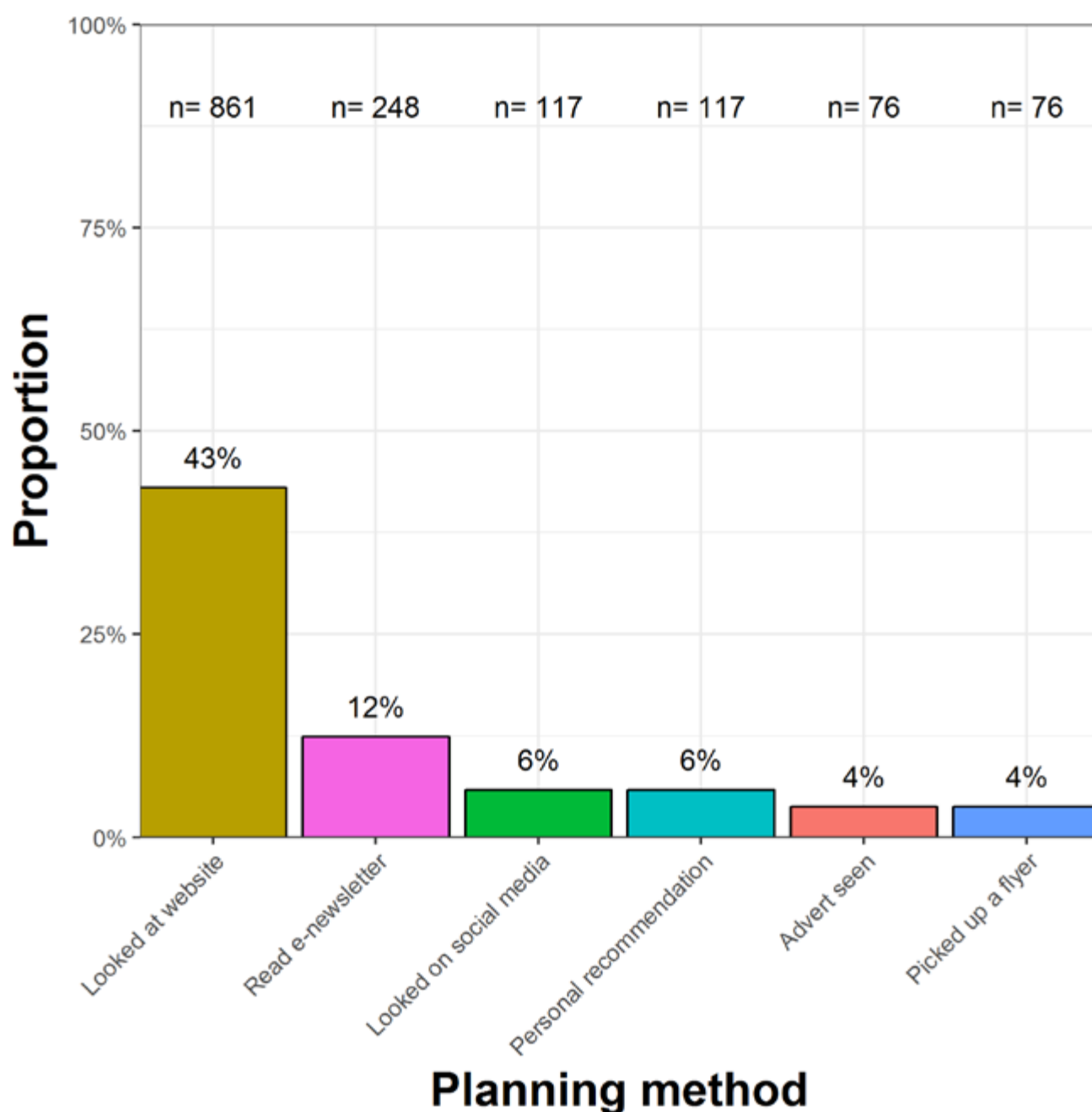


Figure 40. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership in planning method for visiting Westonbirt

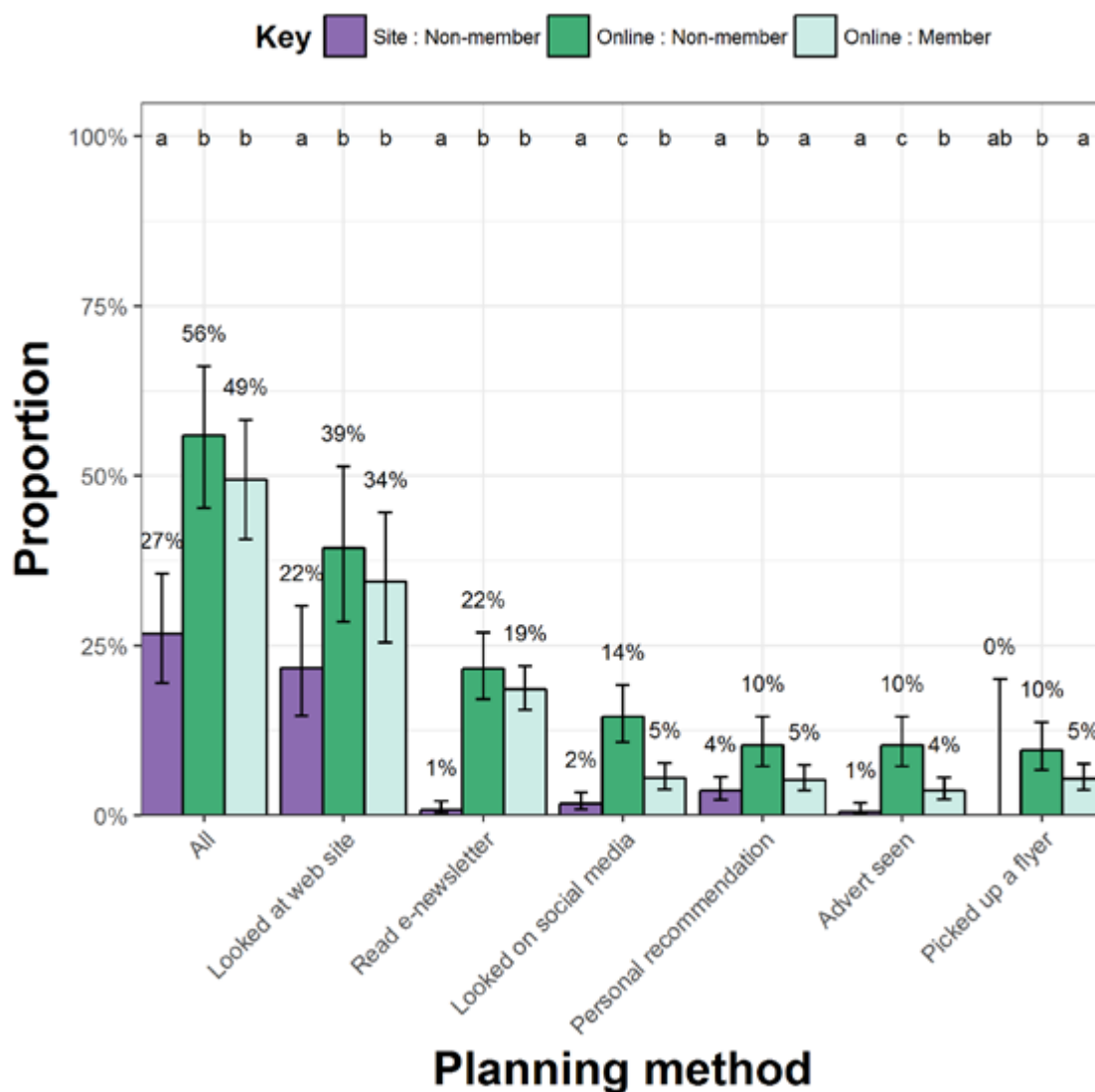


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

Table 22 shows that, across the combined data set, most people visited both areas, or the Silk Wood, with fewer individuals visiting just the old arboretum (13.9%). On-site survey respondents were significantly more likely to visit Silk Wood only, and significantly less likely to visit the Old Arboretum or both (see Figure 41). Within the online survey respondents, non-members were significantly more likely to visit both arboreta than members (Figure 41). The other significant factor in determining areas visited was dog walkers: individuals with dogs were significantly more likely to visit the

Silk Wood and less likely to visit the Old Arboretum (where dogs are not allowed) or both (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

Table 22. Combined sample: proportion of individuals visiting different areas of the arboretum

Area of the arboretum	n	Percentage
Both	1092	54.7%
Silk Wood	629	31.5%
Old Arboretum	277	13.9%

Table note: Units are words used per individual, and exclude duplicates by a single individual.

Figure 41. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership in arboretum visited at Westonbirt

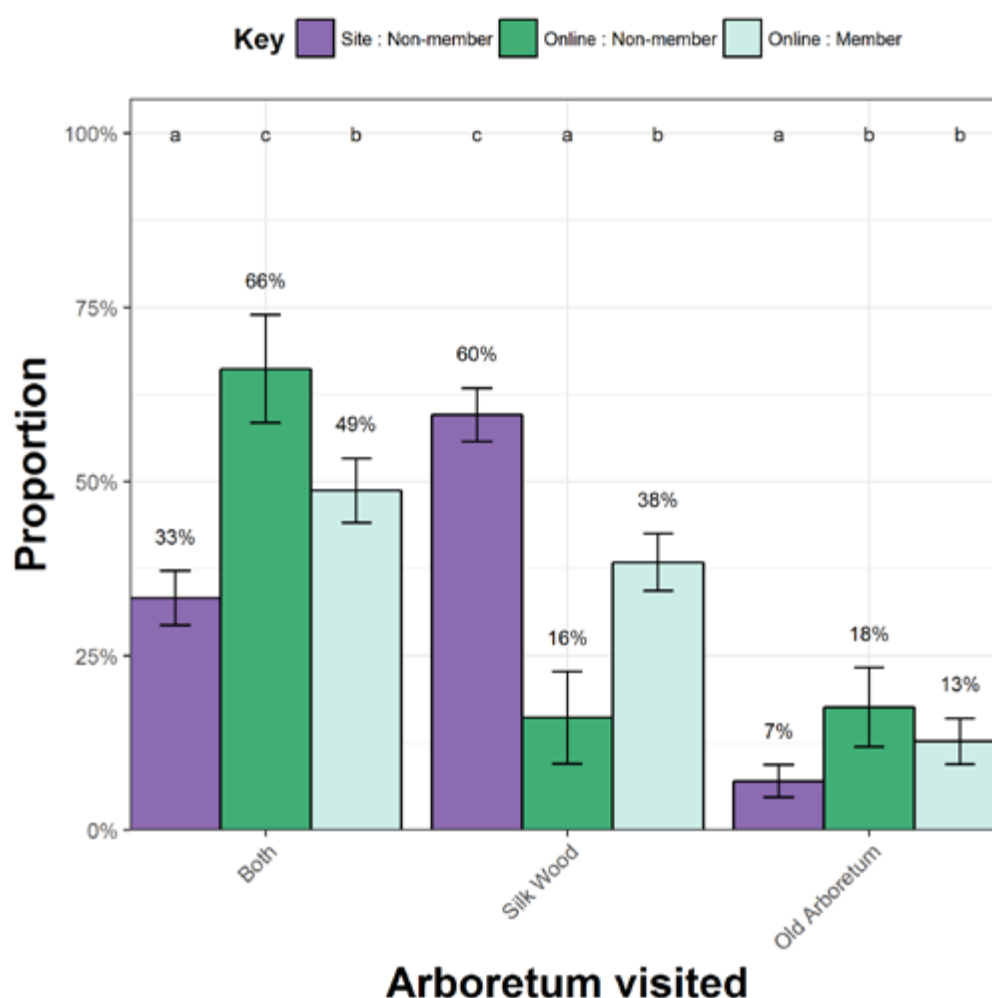
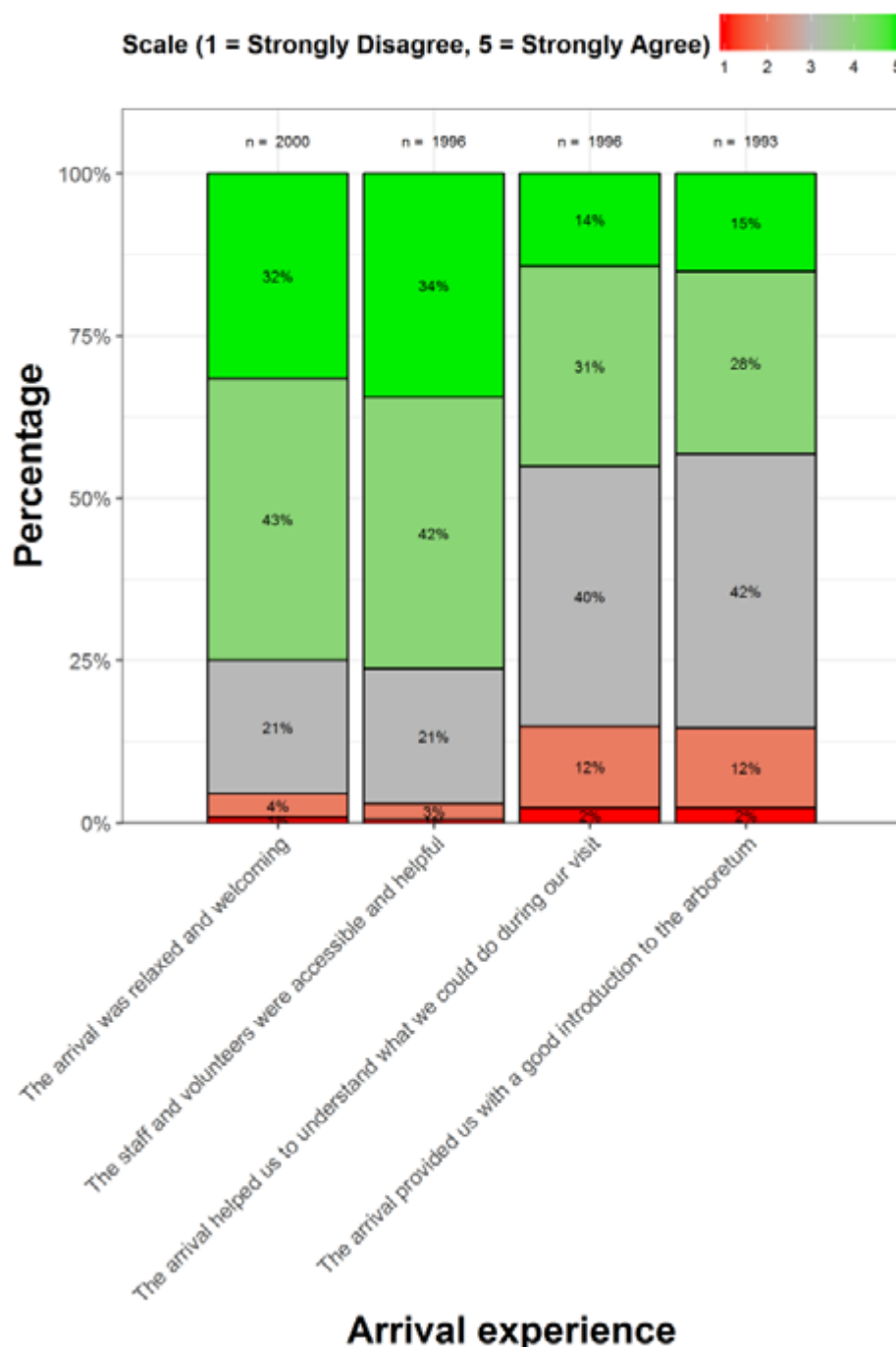


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

3.1.16. Arrival experience

Figure 42. Combined data analysis: Likert scale analysis of arrival experience reported by individuals (n = 2,000)



The majority of individuals found the arrival experience relaxed and welcoming (75% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 42), along with finding staff/volunteers helpful (76% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 42). Around half of people reported that the arrival

helped them to understand what they could do during their visit (45% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 42), and a similar proportion reported the arrival provided a good introduction to the arboretum (43% agreed or strongly agreed, Figure 42).

There were significant differences across the on-site and online survey regarding arrival being relaxed and welcoming and staff/volunteers being accessible and helpful (see Figure 43). In both cases, individuals in the site survey were significantly more likely to be positive than the online survey (versus both non-members and Friends of Westonbirt).

Families were significantly more positive across all four questions. Less frequent visitors tended to be more positive regarding staff/volunteers, understanding and introduction questions.

Figure 43. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership for arrival experience

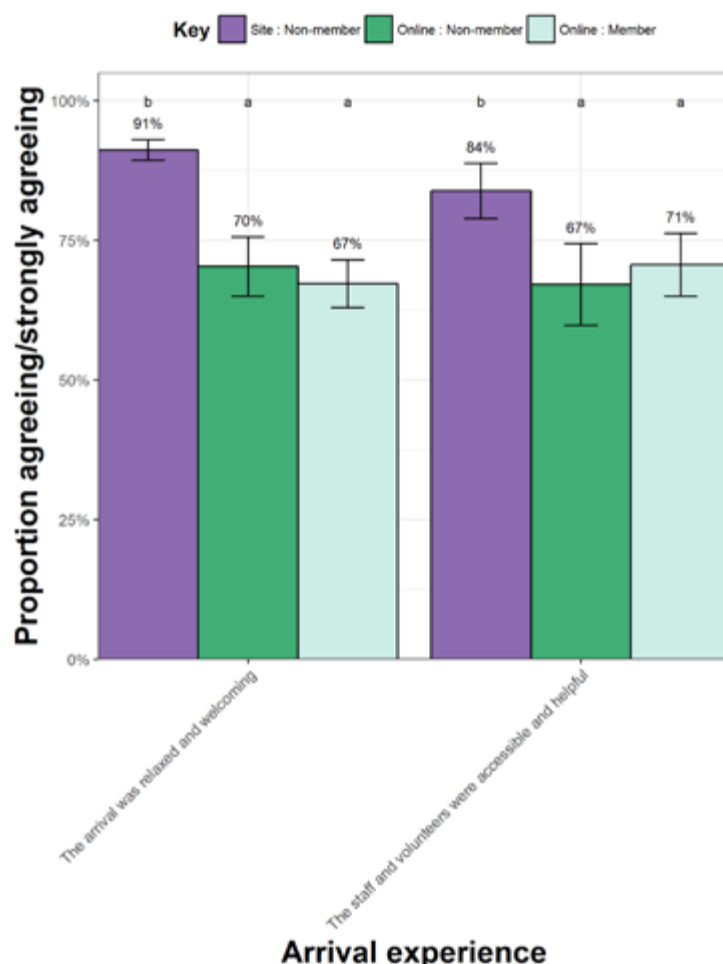


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

3.1.17. Activities

Of the 1,619 individuals who responded, 40% indicated that options and activities were explained to them by a member of staff/volunteer when they arrived on site (see Figure 44). Directions/orientation of the site was most often explained (to 22% of individuals), with seasonal trails explained to 15% of respondents. There were significant differences by survey and membership across the majority of responses (see Figure 45): online (non-members) were significantly more likely to report that activities were explained than site visitors and online members across most of the responses, with the exception of directions/orientation.

Statistical analysis also showed families to be significantly more likely to have options/activities explained (Supplementary Appendix 1). Less frequent visitors and families were significantly more likely to have directions/orientation and seasonal trails explained. Individuals with dogs were less likely to have family trails and information around the site explained to them (see Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 44. Combined data analysis: Activities explained at Westonbirt (n = 2,000)

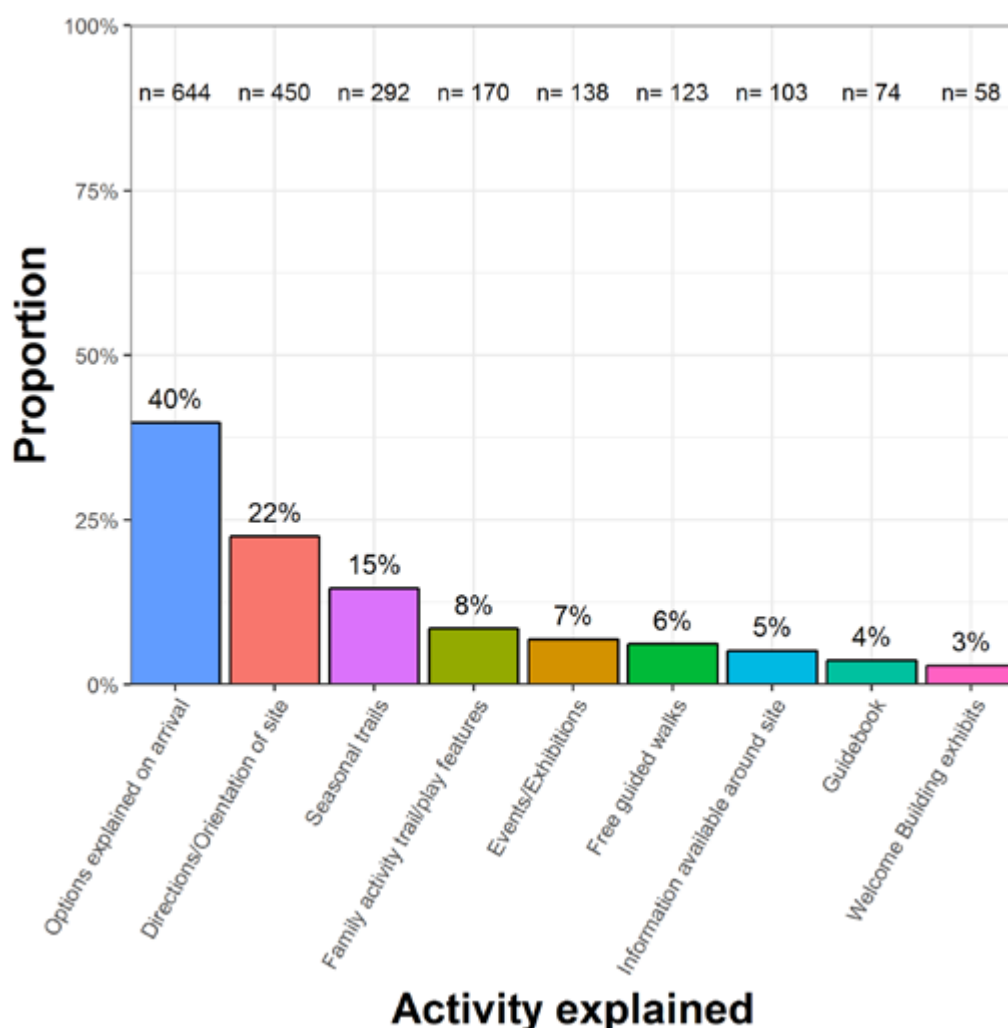


Figure 45. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership in activities explained to them at Westonbirt

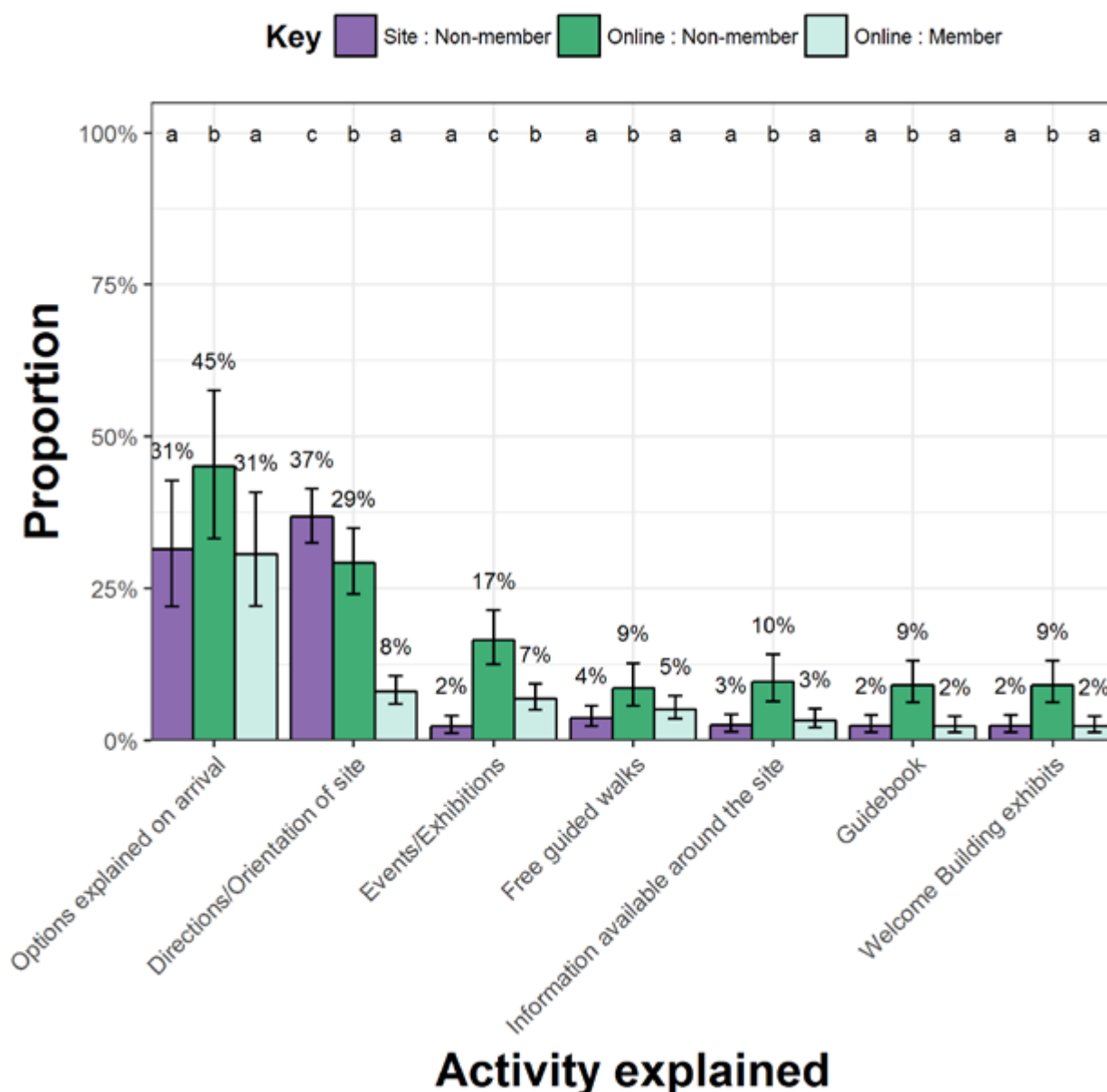
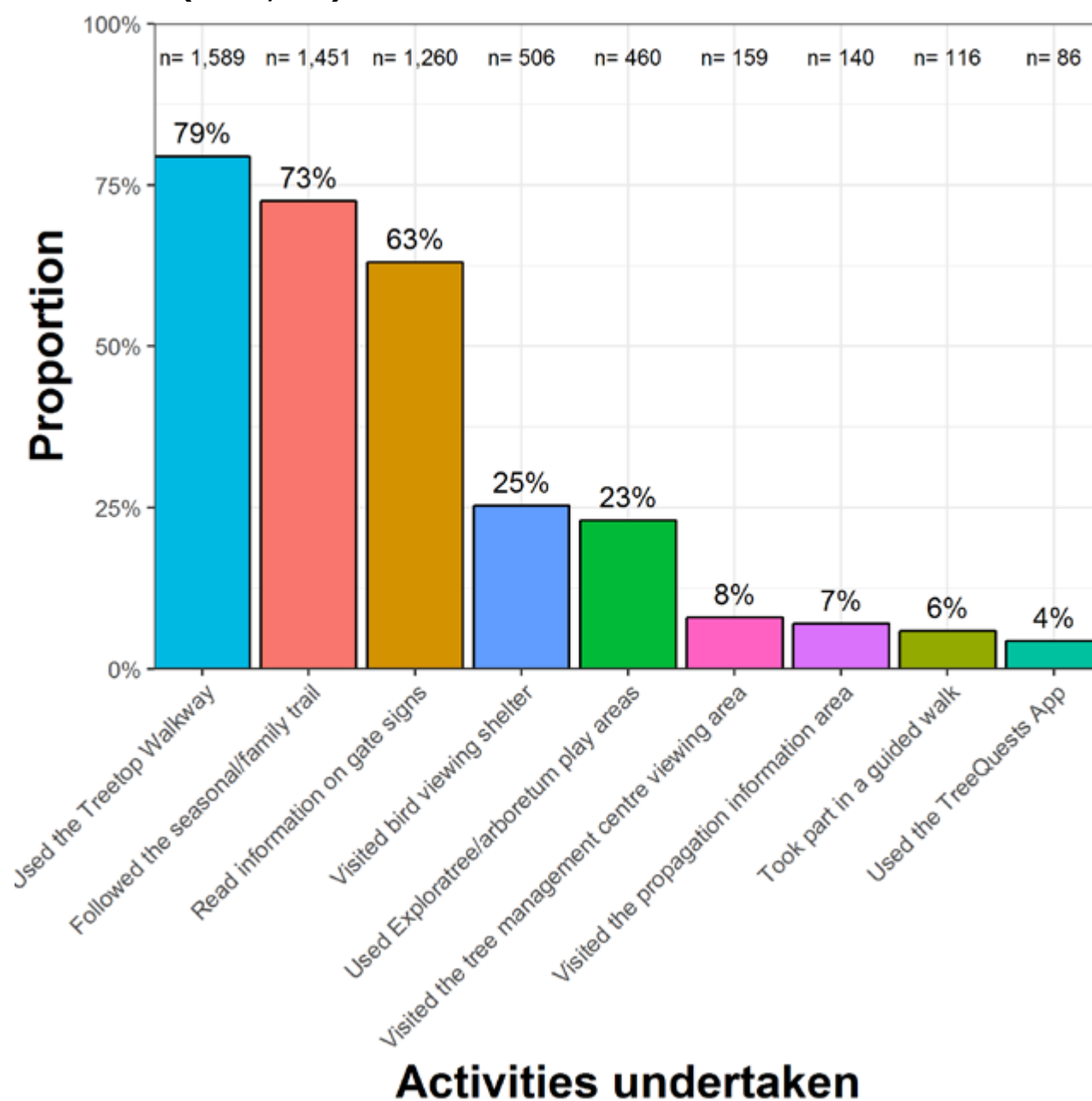


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

Figure 46 shows the activities undertaken by individuals at Westonbirt. Three activities stand out as being most popular: the treetop walkway, seasonal/family trail and information on gate signs.

Figure 46. Combined data analysis: Activities undertaken by individuals visiting Westonbirt (n = 2,000)



There were significant differences by survey/membership for the top five activities undertaken (see Figure 47). Members were significantly more likely to undertake all five activities than either online or on-site surveyed non-members. The treetop walkway was used significantly less by online non-members than by on-site respondents or members. Families, individuals without dogs and Friends of Westonbirt were significantly more likely to use seasonal trails (Supplementary Appendix 1).

Figure 47. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership in activities undertaken at Westonbirt

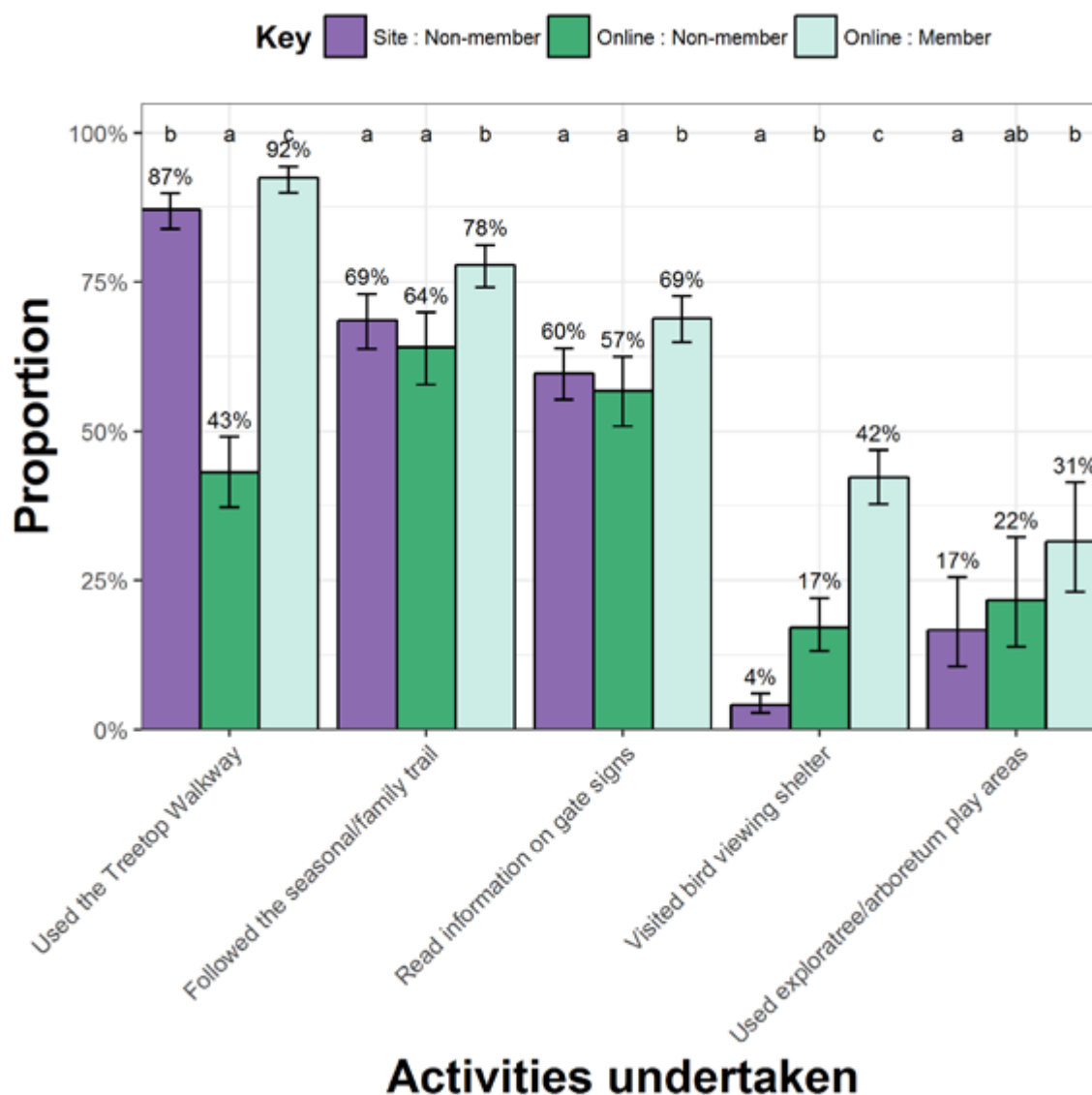


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

A large proportion of respondents would recommend Westonbirt to their friends and family (Figure 48; 96% individuals strongly agree/agree). Results were very positive for all enjoyment responses in Figure 48 (80% or more individuals agreeing or strongly agreeing in all cases). For the three learning responses, approximately half of individuals agreed/strongly agreed.

Figure 48. Combined data analysis: Likert scale analysis of activities experience reported by individuals (n = 2,000)

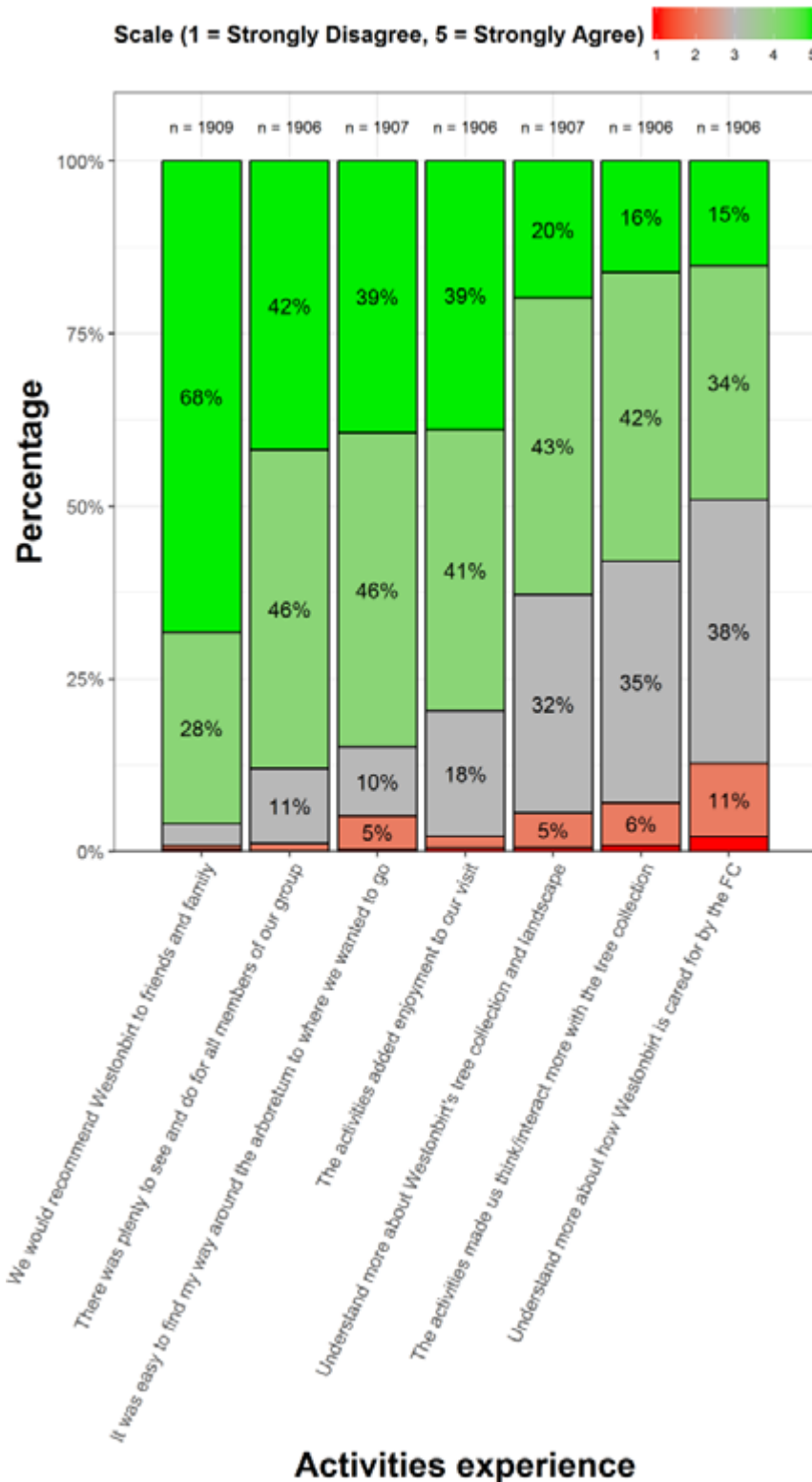


Figure 49. Combined data statistical analysis: Significant differences in survey/membership in activities experience at Westonbirt

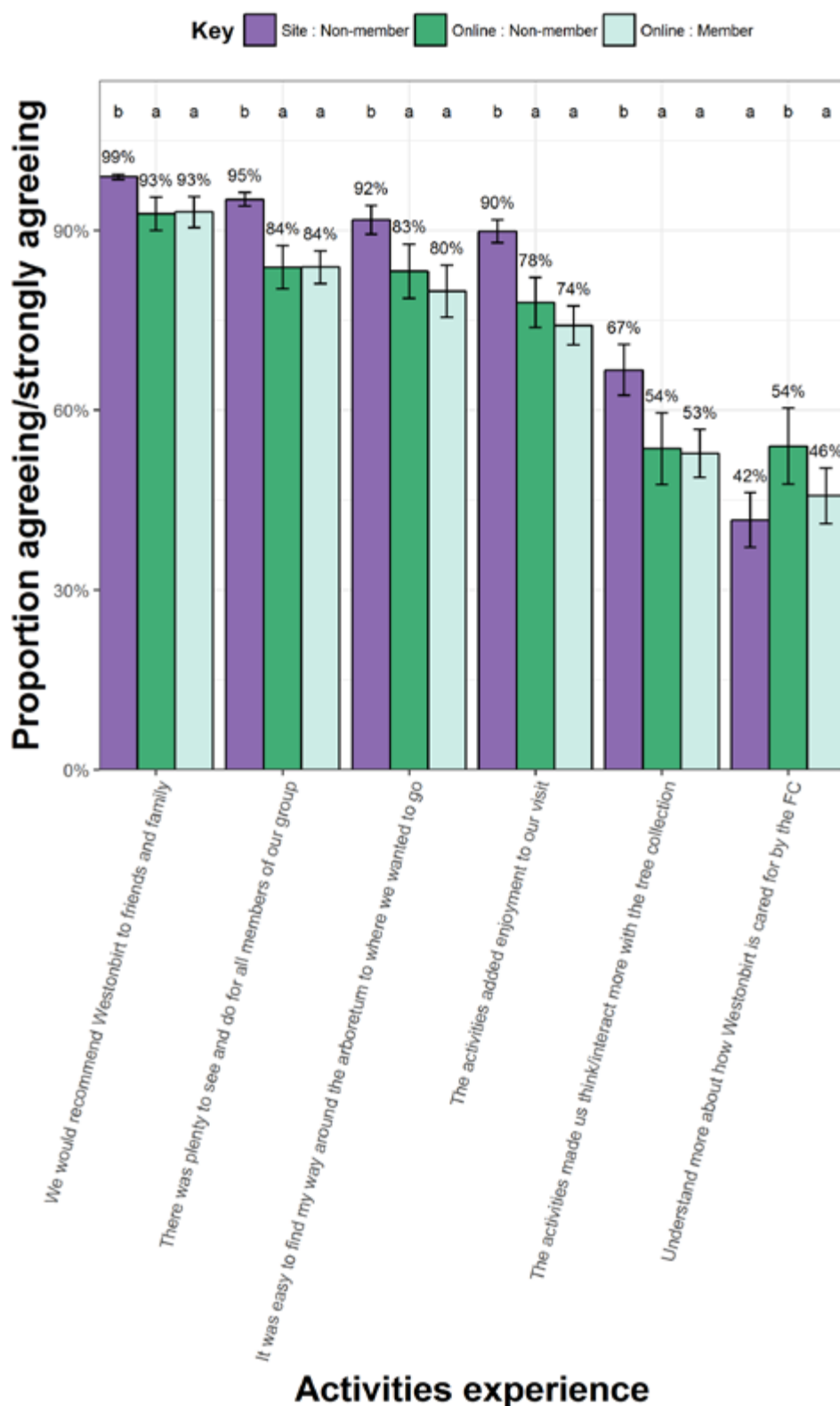


Figure note: proportions are predicted proportions from statistical model; predictions are corrected across all significant factors, and therefore likely differ from raw percentages (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for details). Error bars = 95% confidence intervals; lettering (a-c) indicates significant differences between groups (those groups not sharing a letter (e.g. "a" versus "c") are significantly different; those groups sharing a letter (e.g. "ab" versus "b" are not significantly different).

Significant results of the statistical analysis for survey type/membership are shown in Figure 49. Site visitors tended to be significantly more positive across the majority of responses (5/6 significant results), with the exception of understanding how Westonbirt is cared for by Forestry Commission England, which was most positive in online non-members.

More frequent visitors were significantly more likely to recommend Westonbirt (see Supplementary Appendix 1). For the majority of responses, families tended to be more positive (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for full details).

3.1.18. Welcome Building

Figure 50. Combined data analysis: Reasons individuals did use the Welcome Building (n = 2,000)

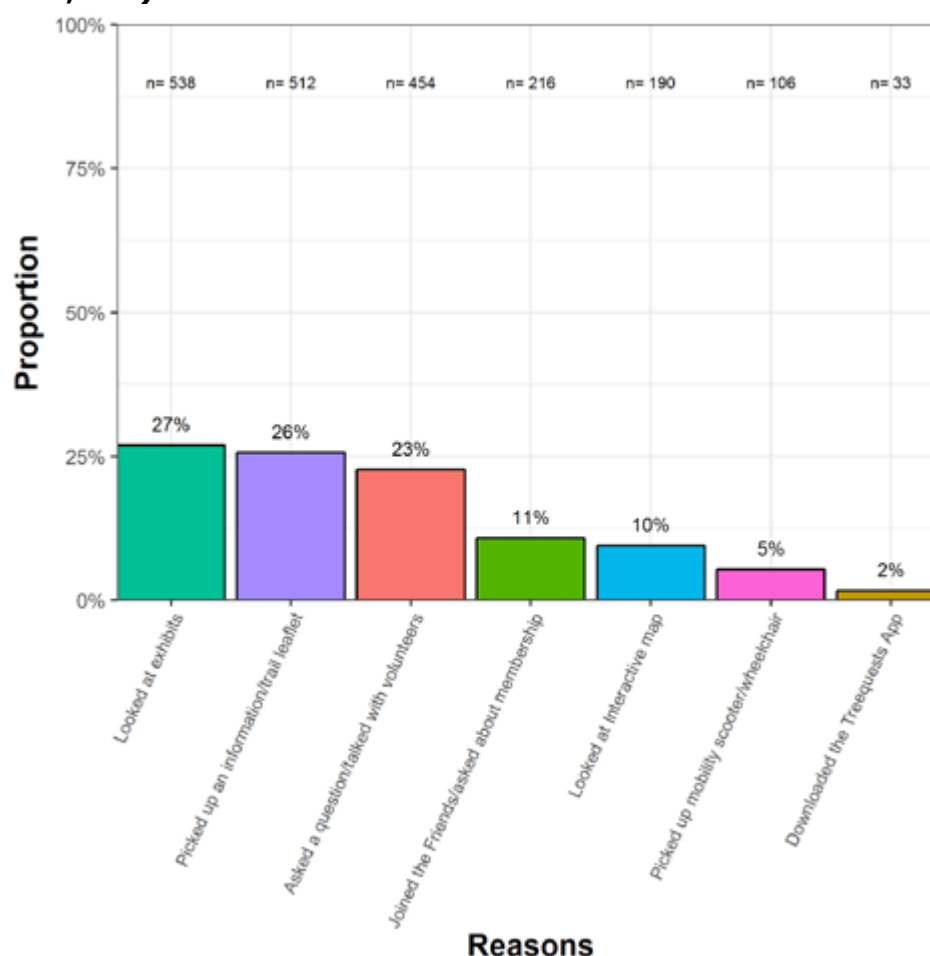
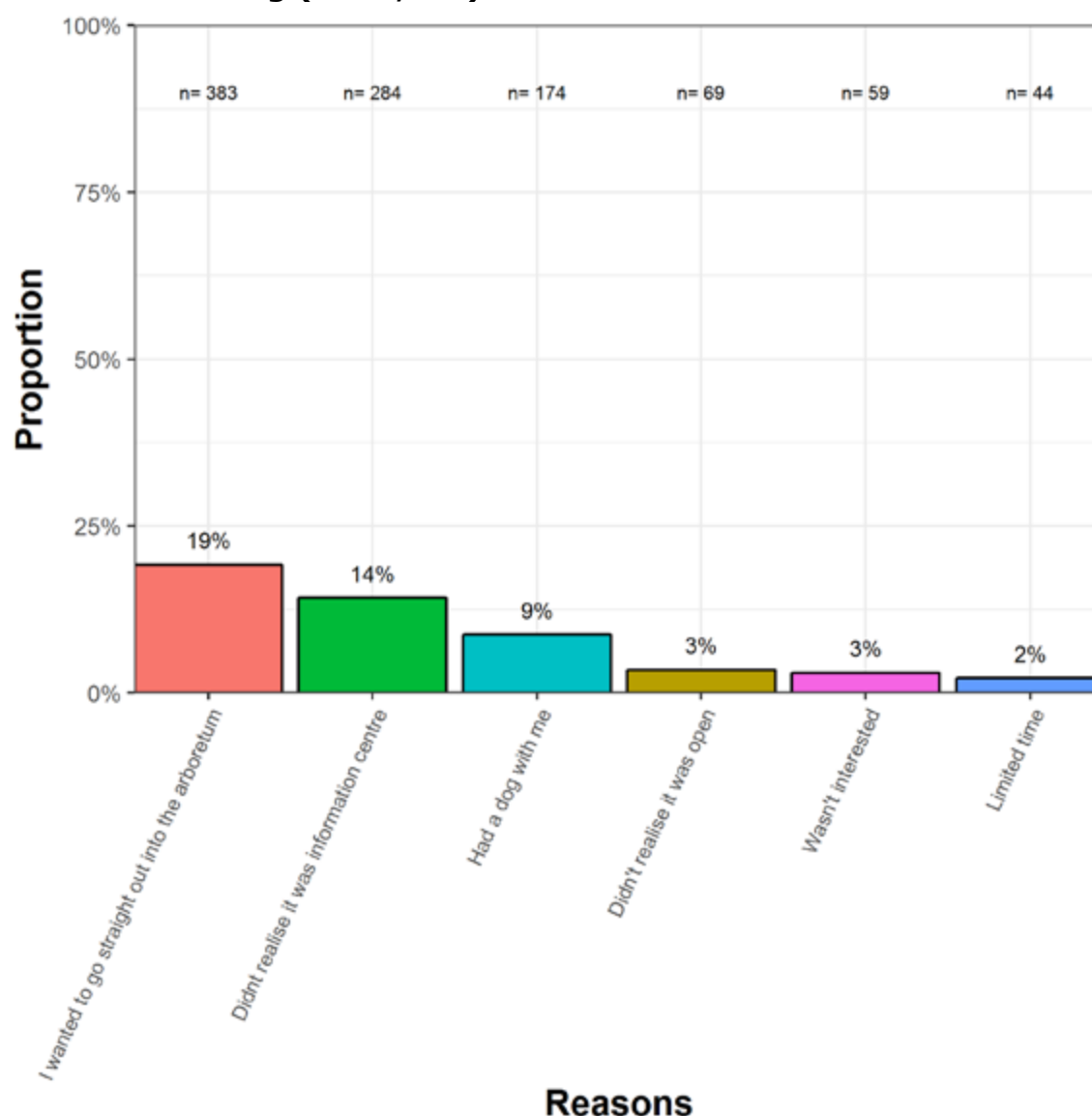


Figure 51. Combined data analysis: Reasons individuals did not use the Welcome Building (n = 2,000)



Of the 1,998 individuals who responded, 28% indicated that they have been into the Welcome Building. Infrequent visitors, families, older individuals and those without dogs were significant more likely to use the Welcome Centre (see Supplementary Appendix 1). There was a significant difference across the two surveys, with the individuals completing the online survey (non-members for relevant comparison) significantly more likely to use the Welcome Building than the on-site survey individuals. This likely reflects a difference in the question asked across the surveys with site visitors asked whether they had used the Welcome Centre on that visit, whereas online participants were asked if they have ever used the Welcome Centre (analysis not presented in main document, due to this difference in question asked).

The most frequently cited reasons for going into the Welcome Building were to look at exhibits (27%) or pick up a leaflet (26%, see Figure 50). The patterns are generally consistent with the overall use of the Welcome Centre, with infrequent visitors, families, older individuals, those without dogs and online survey participants more likely to use the Welcome Centre for these reasons.

The most frequently cited reason for not going into the Welcome Building was that individuals wanted to go straight out to the arboretum (19%, see Figure 51). For the top three reasons cited for not going into the Welcome Centre, on-site survey participants were significantly more likely to cite these reasons than online participants.

3.2. Qualitative Analysis

3.2.1. Focus group sample size

Fifty one people participated in six focus groups; two groups were recruited as families with very young children or older children, while members (i.e. Friend of Westonbirt), new members and non-members group were recruited along with a dog walkers group. These are the key groups of interest to FCE and make up a very large proportion of the different types of visitors to the site. Table 23 shows the number of males and females involved in each focus group, whether they were a member or non-member of Westonbirt and if they were a member was this short term or long term. Differences across the different focus groups were explored as well as commonalities and similarities. At the beginning of the focus groups participants were asked to read and sign a consent form that outlined that their participant was voluntary and they could leave at any time and that their details would be managed in line with the Data Protection Act, and would only be used for the purposes of research. They were also asked to write three words downs of what came into their mind when they thought about Westonbirt.

The focus group participants were recruited via the online survey. Focus groups lasted for one hour, some leaflets and trail information was shown to explore whether participants were aware of some of the trails and activities available on site.

Table 23. Focus group numbers and membership or not of Westonbirt Arboretum

Focus groups	FG1 Families with older children (6-15 years old)	FG2 Families with babies and toddlers (0-5 years of age)	FG3 Non members	FG4 Long term Members	FG5 Dog walkers	FG6 Members post 2014
Females	5	7	6	5	6	3
Males	2	2	2	3	5	5
Non members	1	4	8	0	1	0
Members Short term 1-3 years	1	3	0	0	4	8
Members long term 4 years and over	5	1	0	8	4	0
Total numbers in each focus groups	7	9	8	8	11	8

3.2.2. Visits

Focus group participants had known and visited Westonbirt over a range of years with the majority having known about the site for over 5 years. A considerable proportion had known and visited the site for decades; a small number had visited from the 1950s onwards. Members of the 'Friends' were more likely to visit the site frequently and the majority stated that they made a combination of visits from short visits through to day visits depending on what activities they wanted to do and the purpose and motivation for their visit. A small number talked about avoiding the site at bank holidays and at busy periods in the summer when the site was extremely busy, however others suggested that even when the car park is full and lots of people are on site there are still places they can go that are quiet.

Motivations to visit were often to spend time with family and friends. Adults talked about visiting with their parents, or with children or grandchildren. Visiting was an opportunity for different generations to spend time together, with one person stating that five generations of their family had visited. A few people started visiting when they moved to Bristol or Gloucestershire. Seeing the autumn colours was also mentioned as a motivation for a seasonal visit to Westonbirt, as well as discovering new parts of the site not seen or visited on previous trips.

Both [visiting for the day or a short time], a couple of hours just for a quick walk around one section or the other section, or we bring the grandchildren and they spend loads of time in the playground here and then we sometimes have something in the restaurant. We make full use. (FG1 Families with older children)

It's a great place to come with visitors. We come with visitors all the time' (FG1 Families with older children)

Peace and quiet as well and a bit of discovery, because every time you come you find a little bit you've never found before (FG6 Members post 2014)

3.2.3. Activities on site and impacts on wellbeing

The activities people undertook on site were varied including playing with children or using the children's play area, walking, running, orienteering, using the Gruffalo trail and bird watching. Participants also talked about attending music concerts or visiting the Enchanted Christmas light show that is held at Christmas time. Participants talked about exploring as Westonbirt is a large site (242 ha) while outlining that there are fewer places where that opportunity can happen nowadays:

It certainly affected the children, when my children were small Westonbirt was less of a park and much more a wood, and the children could pretend to get lost, and Silk Wood really was a wood, there was a lot more exploring. You know, in a suburban garden there aren't the chances now, you know, everything is just a little bit too small and contained, but I think it makes a big difference to how they feel and how the parents feel, because sometimes you can deliberately try to lose them

(FG4 Long term member)

Not knowing exactly where you are was also seen by some as positive:

P1¹: It's quite good when you don't actually know where you are, isn't it.

P2: It's brilliant (FG6 Members post 2014)

One person in FG1 stated that they had adopted a tree in order to remember a loved one, which provided a spiritual connection to Westonbirt:

..but it's a way of not having a grave if you're not into that but going somewhere natural and being able to go and remember someone. So we come here often just for a short time but for I guess a grieving process as well (FG1 Families with older children)

Participants were asked whether visiting the site had an impact on their wellbeing, many mentioned that the site helped them to relax, feel calmer, was peaceful, with one person stating that it gave them headspace and another outlining that it was an opportunity to practice mindfulness. Participants also talked about being in the fresh air, that the site was great for children to let off steam, gave children and adults a sense of freedom and was a safe space away from traffic, as the following quotes illustrate:

And also with the children, with my 2½ year old I feel the same because I'm more relaxed because there are no cars or anything so we can just leave him. So he's more relaxed and he's tired after it, so I think the whole day is more relaxed at the end because we both are more relaxed (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

Also actually, you're not going to be judged by lots of people if they're shouting, if they're making a bit of noise, if they get excited, swinging and they want to climb some of the trees. It's just nice because you know they've got that environment where they can do that, but equally it's large enough that you can just go off on your own as well (FG1 Families with older children)

Yes, definitely, because there was a period of my life which was quite difficult and I would be coming a few times a week up here, when it was open, you know, early at 8, nobody around and you'd come up, part of my wellbeing (FG4 Long term members)

Table 24 shows three key words participants wrote down when asked to state what came into their mind when they thought about Westonbirt. Terms related to emotional experiences such as peace and relaxation, fun; also mentioned are activities such as walking, concerts, events and then the things people see on site such as the trees, colours and reference to wider experiences of the weather and seasonal change.

¹ P1 = Participant 1, P2 = Participant 2 etc.

Table 24. Three key words participants used to outline what came into their mind when they thought about Westonbirt

Focus group	Key word 1	Key word 2	Key word 3
FG1 – Families with older children	Trees 2 nd Living room Big Peaceful	Mud Amazing Busy Trees	Fun Fun with kids Wood Family
FG2 – Families with babies and toddlers	place to think trees natural space peacefulness peacefulness colours outdoors	for fun with family space fun headspace calm walking trees	time out wide ranging appeal safe relaxation refreshing tranquillity family
FG3 – Non-members of Westonbirt	childhood trees colour concerts leaves relaxed	pride fresh air history leaves walkway colourful	nature colour outdoors colours peace woody
FG4 – Long term members of Westonbirt	trees seasons trees space colour trees trees trees	colour quiet peace trees experience the enchanted forest family 4 generations visiting exercise beauty	freedom information trees growth seasons garden festival / events children weather
FG5 – Dog walkers	peaceful peaceful trees autumn nature walking trees space beauty	dog walking beautiful peace walks peace colourful autumn fresh air tranquillity	calm spacious walks beautiful quiet peace quiet high tree walk freedom trees
FG6 – Members post 2014	colour relaxing walking tranquil woodland walk	vibrance exercise trees relaxing peace	forest changing coffee established rare trees

	trees walking trees autumn	conservation nature peace colour	education adventure confusion
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3.2.4. Pre-visit information seeking

Participants were asked whether they looked at information before visiting the site and where they would look for information if they wanted to plan their visit. The majority outlined that they would visit spontaneously without planning exactly what they were going to do. Parents did say that they would look out for any activities that might interest the children at half term or in the school summer holiday. Although parents in the babies and toddlers focus group outlined that their children were too small for that type of planning and just wanted to play. For those visiting from a distance then there seemed to be more focus on looking for information as they would be visiting for more than just a walk. There was also some recognition that it might be useful sometimes to look at what is going on on the site before visiting.

No, we just wake-up one morning and say, where are we going? Let's go to Westonbirt and we jump in the car and come down here. We don't see what's on, which we probably should but we don't (FG5 Dog walkers)

A couple of long term members talked about looking out for wild flower or seasonal walks. While others talked about not planning or wanting to plan and seeing what caught their attention when they arrived:

I mean, I view my trips to Westonbirt as unplanned, so I don't look up activities and things, I haven't got an idea of where I'm going to walk when I arrive here, I just walk. I might get diverted by something I see or hear, or if there's too many people in one area or whatever. So for me Westonbirt is very much like it's an unplanned area, unlike a museum, where you might walk round. If I stumble across things, like the boards, that's good, but I don't... it's not an environment for me to be planned (FG4 Long term members)

For those who did look at information such as members of the 'Friends', the magazine or newsletter, and emails were mentioned and informed them about what was happening or they looked at the website. No one really seemed to know whether they looked at the Forestry Commission England website of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum website, they would 'google' Westonbirt and go to the links that came up from those searches. Members liked getting information about opportunities for 'early bird' activities that made them feel special as members. Non-members said they saw information about Westonbirt in the local press sometimes and that would be a way to reach them. Only a couple of people mentioned looking at Facebook. Most felt that emails prompting them about what was happening on site was a way to reach them, however some participants also spoke about not always looking at emails as they received so many. The majority

felt that targeted emails would be most useful for example, targeting parents about opportunities for activities for children.

3.2.5. On-site welcome

Participants were asked about whether they were engaged, approached, talked to by staff or volunteers when they entered the site. A small number said they were welcomed by staff or volunteers most of the time and told about a map, trails or activities, while the majority stated they were welcomed occasionally when they came on to the site. For those who were not members and had to go to the ticket window on entrance to get a ticket, they talked about getting a map of the site. A small number stated that they did not really want to necessarily be approached and would rather decide to approach staff or volunteers if they had a question or wanted to know something. These participants liked the fact that people were there if they wanted to ask for information. Parents with children often were focused on the children and therefore thought they might not be approached as they looked like they had their hands full. Although for one participant being approached had led to a new activity:

The only time that I recall somebody intercepting me was when we came during a school holiday or something and I had the boys with me, she said, 'oh are you here for the craft activity?' and I hadn't done my research before I came and didn't know it was happening and I said, 'no', and the boys were like, 'yeah, yeah can we do it?!' So it was great because otherwise we would have gone off and had a walk and we wouldn't have known that that was happening (FG1 Families with older children)

Those who had been stopped recalled that they had been told about seasonal activities or seasonal things of interest. Long term members who feel they know the site did not necessarily want to be stopped:

I have once recently this year and it was not a pleasant experience, and I think I probably fed back on the survey form. I mean, genuine enough, I stopped to have a chat and everything, but I just felt like I was treated like somebody that had never been here before, just sort of not 'Have you been here before?' or anything like that, it was straight into the... almost like 'This is what you should do', not 'Why are you here?', you know, 'Such and such is looking lovely today if you want to go there, do you know where you're going?' It was just a sort of a bit schoolmarm, teacher-ish, that just put me off a little bit, so if I see somebody it's sort of fear in a way (FG4 Long term members)

Long term members also outlined that in their experience when the site gets busy the entrance area gets very busy with people and there is less time for staff or volunteers to engage people and the meeting point near the entrance where guided walks can start from also can add to the number of people and confusion at the entrance to the site.

A few of the dog walkers who are members stated that their membership tickets did not always work so they needed help to get through the barriers. One person suggested that

the barcode is not read quickly and that causes congestion at the entrance to the site and means staff/volunteers can be busy helping people through the entrance. One person who outlined that her husband was a volunteer said that he often gets welcomed and asked if he would like more information about the site when he knows a lot about it already. Most said that if they approached staff or volunteers or were approached themselves then staff and volunteers were friendly and pleasant.

Quite a few thought that having a board at the entrance that said what was on for that day or what to look out for in terms of the seasons would be really useful. For a newer member with children, having options pointed out at half term was extremely helpful and well targeted at people with children. This quote also illustrates that the site has changed over the past few years, and that more people are visiting the site and this can add a new vibrancy to the site:

One of the things I really like and appreciated it and noticed it last autumn half term when I was up here was the education team being in that area out there, pointing the children in the direction, and their parents, in the direction of the activities, and there were some really lovely activities going on, you know, art work in the forest and things like that, and there the team was very much taking groups of people who probably were not familiar with the forest and pointing them in the right direction, I thought actually was very exciting. One of the things in the time I've been here, I think the demographic has changed because, slightly typecasting things, 30 years ago people tended to wander round this forest wearing plus 4s and having floras and it was all pretty much like a museum and a bit dull, whereas particularly in the last two to five years you come up here on a busy day and there's a real buzz and there's all sorts of different age groups looking around, finding interesting things to do and they're finding it in different ways. One has to say, I mean, the steel walkway has completely altered the dynamic of the whole forest (FG6 Members post 2014)

3.2.6. The Welcome Building information centre

The Welcome Building houses the information centre and within the information centre are interactive exhibits, photographs on screens, leaflets and maps, the ability to approach staff or volunteers to become a member or renew membership and to book a mobility scooter or ask staff or volunteers questions or for directions. Just over half of the participants had been into the information centre and most of them stated they went in sometimes. They talked about entering to look at the exhibits, photos:

Because I sent in a photograph once and that was fun because we would wait for our photograph to come up (FG1 Families with older children)

Also participants had been in to ask questions, to book a scooter or join as a member. Some parents said their children liked to play with the exhibits. Although a small number felt the exhibits were not particularly child friendly:

I spend quite a lot of time just standing waiting for the children to stop playing with the telephones and spinning the globe around. They love it and it's the same

thing but they don't understand. My parents go on holiday to Madeira and they happened to pick up the phone today when they were talking about a tree in Madeira, so they were like, 'oh Madeira, Madeira!' So I had a little listen but I was surprised at how complex what's on the other end of the telephone is. The content on the phone is probably more aimed at adults than the children but it's the children that want to play. So now having just listened to it, I thought maybe I would make a point of listening to what it is now that I know it's not designed for children, or aimed at children. The globe, incidentally, is also quite high for the children so quite a lot of stretching and they can't see. They always want to see where the UK is and that's obviously on the top of the globe and they can't quite reach that bit. It's interesting that the phones are low down and the globe is high (FG1 Families with older children)

Figure 52. The Welcome Building information centre interactive exhibits



A long term member outlined how changes in the layout of the site could make it difficult for people with mobility issues, however staff and volunteers in the Welcome Building were helpful and she was hopeful that the trial of a shuttle to take visitors from the entrance to the café area would be useful for her mother and herself in enabling them to visit the site:

She's got dementia so she wouldn't be able to use a scooter, she wouldn't be able to learn to use it or to remember what to do with it. Some people in the Welcome Building were really helpful when I told them what the problem was, because I've got back problems myself and arthritis so I can't push a wheelchair, they have one power assisted one here, so it's got a battery pack but it's kind of down at foot level, so when you're pushing it you kind of have to lean forward otherwise you're kicking the battery pack. I mean, we did try it, but it will only go up to the restaurant because of the surfacing on the paths in the Arboretum, she said it makes the tyres skid. So we had it to go up to the Oak Hall and then we'd arranged to leave it at the Oak Hall and took mum's four wheel walker up, and so she then did a walk in the Arboretum, but it was just such an effort for everybody, it wasn't really worth it. Then I've just seen at the weekend that you've now got a mobility shuttle, just started on Saturday, and I'm absolutely thrilled to bits, because I've been suggesting it for ages, you know, thinking 'Nobody's going to take that up', so when I saw it's actually happening, it's on a trial for six months, which I presume is to see what the uptake is (FG4 Long term members)

There was a broad agreement for many that the purpose of their visit to Westonbirt was to go out on to the site as soon as possible and the entrance area (with its view onto the site) drew them out on to the site as outlined in these quotes:

There is something about this being an outdoor place that kind of just pushes you through and then you just take a path and boy runs (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

It's of interest now I know about it but I guess I just haven't really... once I've sort of come through, you just see the open space and go towards it and I haven't thought of going in, but I'll have a look today on the way out and probably will visit it when I come in next time FG2 Families with babies and toddlers

I mean, for me it doesn't work, but then what I come to Westonbirt for is different to other people, so maybe if you're new or with families or whatever it may function, I don't know (FG4 Long term members)

A number of participants suggested that if the doors of the information centre were open it would be easier or more likely that people entered:

If the doors were open... if it was a nice summer's day and if the doors were actually open, I would wander in just to see what was in there and maybe then I would pick up a few of the leaflets. But I think when it's a building where the doors are closed and you have to physically make the effort to open the doors to go in, you need to then have a purpose to go in (FG3 Non-members)

Some of the more recent members did not know that it was an information centre, a couple of people thought it was a staff office, another couple thought it was an education centre and a small number of others thought it was a space for children. Participants discussed whether the information centre was something that would draw people in and also debated what then might bring people back to the centre. Participants felt exhibits

would need to change more regularly or thought live demonstrations might add interest. Overall they felt the layout of the Welcome Building was to draw people straight onto the site and the information centre was not well signposted so they did not notice it was there:

No, and this is the Welcome Building but I didn't realise it was here because it's hidden, isn't it, as you come through and walk off, you think 'Where's the Welcome Building?' and you've just walked passed it (FG6 Members 1-3 years)

I must sound really thick, but as I say, I've been here half a dozen times, I never knew all of this was in here. (FG6 Members 1-3 years)

It's quite bizarre because I've never realised this was anything other than a little room for the reception and people just standing handing out tickets (FG5 Dog walkers)

Figure 53. Admissions window and access to Westonbirt



A couple of participants wondered whether there was an opportunity to divert people into the information centre in the same way people are often diverted into a shop in museums. However, one woman went on to say:

P1: The nice thing about being here is that don't feel like you're forced with everybody else (FG1 Families with older children)

Another woman agreed with this, but a male participant outlined that they were not being asked to purchase anything:

P2: Yes, that's one of the things I like too.

P3: I know but if you've gone to the trouble of producing all this information, you're not asking us to buy anything. I do object to gift shop channelling...

Others with children thought more child friendly exhibits would be good and parents who see things through their child's eyes might also be inspired to find out more. However, there was recognition that getting the right balance and the right approach given the variety of people who access and enjoy Westonbirt was difficult, as the following suggests:

What I think is really difficult for you is you have the whole spectrum of people coming and interests. We're mainly parents here but there are so many other people that just come to walk their dogs, or they just come for running, and then there are people that they want to get information and look around and find all those special varieties. I think in a few years, I would like to have the ability to teach my son all the basic trees, to give him an easy way that he knows the basic trees and I think he can find them here. So it is really difficult for you because there are so many different interests you have (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

3.2.7. On site information and interpretation

Participants were asked whether they were aware of, had done or noticed different trails at Westonbirt such as the seasonal trails, the family seasonal trail, picture perfect trail or Birt's i-spy adventure trail, and Gruffalo trail. Approximately half had at some point been on the seasonal trail, most knew about the Gruffalo trail but nobody seemed aware of the picture perfect trail and very few knew of the Birt's i-spy adventure trail. Participants did express surprise and much interest in these trails, with some of them suggesting that they don't necessarily go on these trails as they go where their children lead them or do a similar walk each time they visit or might have done the trail but not realised that it was a specific trail:

P1: I think I probably did know there were different trails but I'm quite happy just to do my own thing and just wander (FG5 Dog walkers)

P2: I didn't know there was a seasonal one and I didn't know there was a family specific one. Is that fairly recent? (FG5 Dog walkers)

An orienteering participant felt the orienteering courses were great and mentioned a plant hunter's trail:

there's a plant hunter's trail, so as you go round and you find the various checkpoints it'll tell you about quite a lot of the people that have brought the trees back in Victorian times and the adventures they had in remote bits of the world. So you have to navigate, you have to find something, but when you do it tells you a story, and I think that's a tremendous idea (FG6 Members post 2014)

The discussion then moved on to explore whether participants looked at the interpretation signs on site. Over half stated that they looked at the interpretation boards at different times, not necessarily on every visit but they did appreciate them:

P1: They're pretty good. They look pretty indestructible...

P2: Yes, they're well made.

P3: so it's not like they've gone all faded or they're covered in mould, they're nice and clear.

P4: They are, yes.

FCE staff: Someone does clean those.

P4: It gives the impression the place is being cared for, doesn't it? (Families with older children)

Figure 54. Birt's I Spy trail

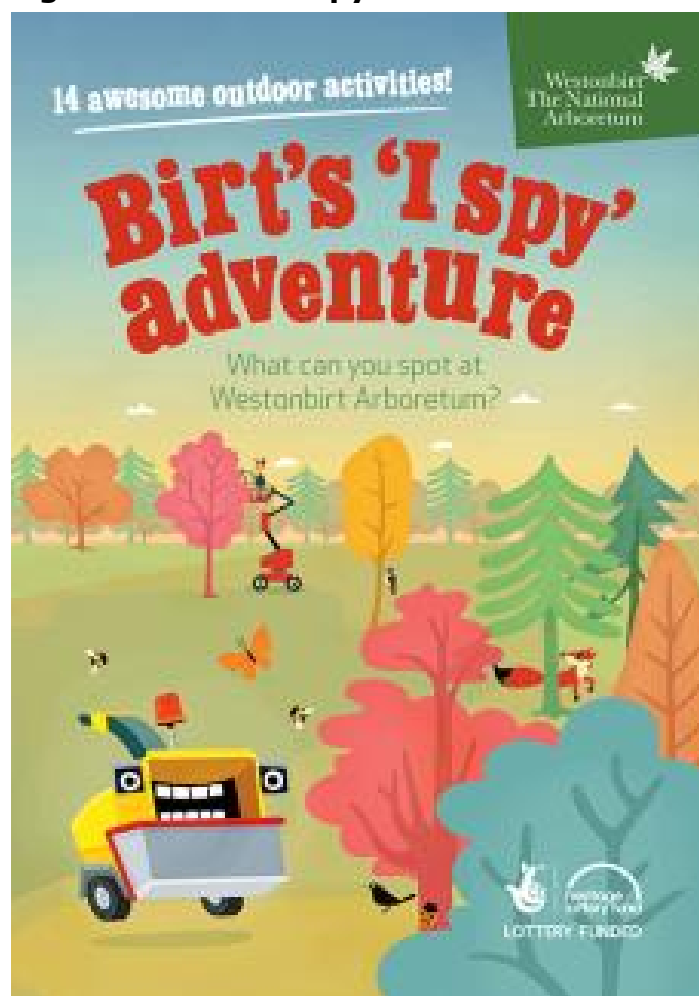


Figure 55. Picture perfect trail



Participants stated they do not always remember what was on the interpretation boards so that they could look at them more than once on different visits. They also stated they might also be likely to look at the boards when coming along with friends who do not know the site as well as they did, and one person outlined that it was a way to see the interpretation through new eyes and sometimes gain a fresh perspective.

The following exchange between participants illustrates how interpretation can lead to people searching out for a particular tree:

P1: I like reading about the different trees there are. Is it the Katsura tree? I smelt it and I was wandering around for ages trying to find this one particular tree.

P2: Is that the toffee tree?

P1: Yes.

P2: I can't find it, where is it?

P1: In Silk Wood on the main trail.

P1: It's one of the games we always play is, can you find the toffee tree?

Interviewer: Anyone else? Do you look at the interpretation as you're going round?

P1: More and more. I haven't done in the beginning and now more and more because as my son gets older and he's now also looking. He can't read it but he's looking at the pictures and then I start reading while he's looking, so more and more (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

Participants felt it was important that interpretation and signs were not too intrusive, they were generally positive that interpretation done in the right way could enhance a visit to Westonbirt.

I do look at quite a bit of the boards and I like the ones that are on the trails where you have two sections, so you've got something about a tree or trees in front of you, and then sometimes you've got like a little story or something on the right hand side (FG4 Long term members)

People were interested in information about trees, where they grow naturally, what the wood of the tree can be used for and sometimes information about the wider environmental or habitat context or why trees were being felled. Short pieces of interpretation were seen as best - providing nuggets of interesting information. A long term member recognised the impossibility of trying to please everyone:

I mean, I think it's difficult to please everyone, but from my point of view I think the facilities here are excellent actually. I mean, there are always things that can be improved, but I think the signage is good, the changing signage is good, all the places you can sit. I think the restaurant facilities are good, loos are good, the walkway is great, I particularly like... I thought it was a very nice idea to put people's names who have financially contributed to it on the walkway, which I thought was a really nice thing because it will survive the individual when they go on to worse or better things. So I think, from my point of view, I always enjoy coming here and I think it's a place where - it's a forward thinking place (FG4 Long term members)

Figure 56. Interpretation board on site



A couple of participants talked about looking at the posters outside the toilets near the Great Oak Hall and finding that was a useful place to put information. Another outlined that too many signs might detract from people having a calming and relaxing visit to the site.

Participants were then asked whether they had been on one of the guided walks and very few had:

P1: Well we've been on two of them, one was around Silk Wood and one was around the old Arboretum a bit, and they do kind of take you off the trail, so you know you can come off here and find this little place.

Interviewer: And they tell you about the trees?

P1: They tell you about the trees and where they've come from, depending on... kind of a different focus each time. Once we went on the spring flower walk, so they were focusing more on the flowers rather than the trees actually, that was interesting as well (FG6 Members post 2014)

A couple of long term members had only recently been on a guided walk:

Yes. I deliberately did that last week, because I hadn't been on a guided walk for about 10 years, and it was absolutely excellent, superb. You know, it was the right length, the right route, and there were so many different points of interest, some of it I'd heard before, immaterial, just a charming thing to do, really, really good, and if anybody hasn't been to Westonbirt one of the first things I would say to them is 'Try to get there when you can catch a guided walk' (FG4 Long term members)

Yes, we did one, they were very good at talking about things like Ash die back and things like trying to plant for global warming, and what they were doing, I think there is an area, isn't there, where they're looking at drought resistant and different... and they were very good at explaining that, and I thought they were excellent at explaining some of the stuff that they were doing (FG4 Long term members)

Others felt maybe they should try to go on one, as even if they were long term members they could learn something:

I think we should. As a group here, we all come thinking we're familiar with the place and maybe we should just one day have a guide (FG1 Families with older children)

One participant was keen to go on a guided walk but outlined that they ran when she was at work. However, she was informed that the walks now run every day of the week so that she would be able to join one on her day off.

3.2.8. Phone apps

Using phone apps on site led to a discussion about connectivity. There is connectivity in the Welcome Building but elsewhere on site it can be poor. The Gruffalo Spotters App (augmented reality²) was said to be a large App by participants and was easier to download at home before visiting Westonbirt.

It's quite interesting with the apps because you did the Gruffalo Trail and that was brilliant. We came with the kids to see it, thinking we could download the app when we got here and you can't download it. So we walked round and went back home and downloaded the app at home. It was absolutely fantastic but that is the problem, when you get here and see it, ah there's an app for that, let's download it, and there's just nowhere to download (FG1 Families with older children)

The discussion also went on to include dialogue about whether coming to Westonbirt was a way to leave phones and technology behind for both adults and children and reduce screen time.

² Uses augmented reality technology so that the Gruffalo character will appear to blend in within the forest around people.

I'd like it but the whole point of me coming here is that he's not near any of that, so the first thing he does is, can I play on your phone? No, just go and find something and he likes that (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

Another person felt Westonbirt was a place to detox from the phone. While others acknowledged that some apps could be useful and entertaining. This tension is nicely illustrated by the following quote:

I think it's nice to have the area and you can do that, but I also think, especially with the younger generation and technology, I think it's nice to actually say that you can incorporate both things at the same time without it being... it's like that whole danger thing, the whole internet and stuff, but actually there's something really good and useful stuff on there as well. I think it's quite a tricky balance, and it's definitely nice to come somewhere where you're not dictated by TVs and phones and stuff like that. But I also think you kind of have to go with some of this stuff and if you can do it in the right way, it's the way to move forward (FG1 Families with older children)

Figure 57. Leaflet for Tree Quest App and picture related to the Gruffalo App



None of the participants had downloaded and used the Tree Quests app, a few had heard about it while most had not.

3.2.9. Knowledge of the Arboretum and its purpose

FCE want to gain a better understanding of what people know about the Arboretum and its purpose as the national tree collection for England. FCE staff visit other countries to collect seeds from trees that are in danger, and conservation of trees is a key part of the work that goes on at Westonbirt.

One participant outlined that whatever the purpose of the site it was special:

Yes, I think it's a special place whatever. Whether it was the National Arboretum or not, it still is what it is. It's still a wonderful place to come (FG1 Families with older children)

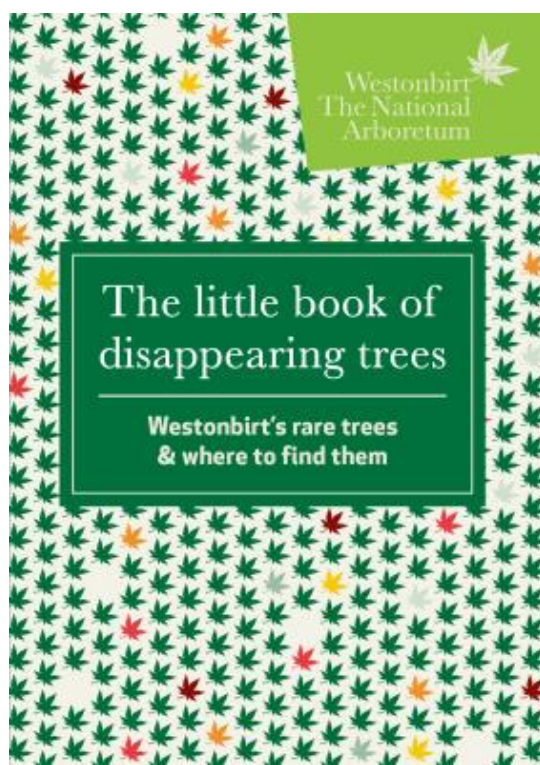
The sheer variety of tree and tree species on site was seen as a key attraction:

No, it feels special. It feels different to me and I think the fact that there are so many different types of species here, I find that really interesting, and also the history of why the arboretum is here that interests me, so yes that's definitely a big attraction (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

The 'Little Book of Disappearing Trees' and its trail had been recently launched at Westonbirt, some had seen the book while most were not aware of it. It was an approach that could inspire visitors at this participant outlines:

I think the Rare Trees little booklet, that's brilliant and last weekend when we came to see the little new signs that have gone up saying, this is a really rare tree and this is where it's from, that was brilliant, and actually I even to my husband when we got home last week that I had no idea of some of trees. A tree is a tree and when you come to the arboretum, there are hundreds but actually you could be looking at one and you think, crumbs, there are only a couple of those in the whole world, and the boys think that's amazing. This is really special that I'm here touching this bark or looking at this tree that nobody else in the world might be able to do. That for them is huge. That's brilliant; I really like that little book (FG1 Families with older children)

Figure 58. The new book of rare trees at Westonbirt



Although finding out about and seeing the booklet [there were copies on the Welcome Building information centre] was limited in the focus group participants – many of whom were not aware of it. As one participant stated:

I'll have to pay more attention. I like little books like that (FG1 Families with children)

Again the variety of trees on site and their environmental and global importance was recognised, there was also a recognition that participants did not always think about or appreciate the site in terms of the tree collection and conservation, however there was a strong sense of ownership of the site and sometimes pride in it, as the following exchange from FG2 outlines:

P1: You can tell I'm a Woodland Trust member because I love trees too. I value what they do for the planet and for me, but you can walk in a wood anywhere and you can spot maybe 7, 8, 15 if you're lucky, species but here your imagination is blown because they're from... but the leaf shapes, just things that you will never find in a British wood.

P2 The variety.

P3: Yes, absolutely.

P4: Every visit is different again actually, not even just the seasons, it's just you spot every time something new.

P5: I think as well we don't always appreciate it. Like I have friends that live all around the country and sometimes we're trying to meet halfway and I've googled how many arboretums there are and actually you don't appreciate that this is so special because there are hardly any in the whole country, let alone that ours is sort of...

P6: We went to, part of this group, the arboretum in Yorkshire and it's nothing like this, there were hardly any trees and we were like, ours is better

P7: I don't think we always appreciate the research type activities that go on here, certainly they're not obvious and brought to your attention but nonetheless they are important and need to be done. It's not unlike Kew in some respects like that, is it? You go to Kew Gardens and you can see everything under the sun and then you suddenly find out they've got a massive research and retention facility there as well (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

Not everyone came to the site to understand more about it or the purpose of the collection:

I can imagine my grandchildren might but I'm not very diligent, shall I say, on researching things like that. I'm glad it's there, don't misunderstand me but I don't want to delve into it very much (FG2 Families with babies and toddlers)

Getting to know more about the arboretum and its work did not always occur on site for the newer members and one participant also felt that the time was a good one to talk about conservation, the tree collection and the loss of trees as the following exchange outlines:

P1: I've encountered it more on and off over the years actually from outside. You hear about it when you're reading about other stuff and then you suddenly read something about Westonbirt is doing this and you think, yes I'd forgotten they do that. I haven't particularly looked for it here. My knowledge of the conservation aspect of Westonbirt comes more from just reading articles and stuff and then suddenly you see it and you think, oh wow yes.

Interviewer: So it's not so much on site, it sometimes happens off site as well.

P1: Yes, but I'm not necessarily gathering information when I'm here anyway.

P2: I think it could be something that could be promoted more.

P1: Yes, very much so.

P2: Just the conservation work that they do. I definitely think the movement is more now environmentally friendly, and conservation and less waste, and what are we doing about this that's becoming extinct? The whole mood of the country, young people coming through is more about conservation, so I think it would be good to promote that side of it a little bit more (FG6 Member post 2014)

Many of the newer members thought that a focus on tree diseases and tree health would be important:

P1: One of the things that isn't emphasised very much round here, possibly rightly, but it's something that profoundly effects my view on the UK forests is the amount of serious plant disease that is in the UK at the moment, and there was a lot of work done here on beetle resistant Elms about 20 years ago, but we've got Larch die-back, we've got the Chestnuts going. It would be nice to know a bit more about that type of research and how much is going on here along those lines, because biosecurity in our forests is...

P2: A big issue.

P1: I think it's really important if you move between forests at the moment.

P2: For some reason one knows about the work Kew is doing, I don't know how it's managed to put it there.

P3: I was just thinking that, yes.

P2: But you obviously are doing something equally important, but it's not really being pushed in the same way.

P3: But there's a lot of permanent building at Kew, isn't there, there's a lot of exhibition areas that you can go in and you see all of these things.

P2: Yes, and private too, a lot of research buildings.

P3: Yes, there is, and you see a lot more laid out, it seems to have more educational focus on it. There's not a huge amount of that here, you turn up, you walk passed this place, the other structures tend to be the shop and the cafe, there's not much else where you've got stuff on display.

Interviewer: Would you be interested in that side, the science side?

After this question there was general agreement from the group of an interest in the science of what was happening at Westonbirt.

Long term members felt that more could be made of the conservation activities and had some ideas of what they and others might be interested in:

P1: Yes. I know, I haven't been in it recently, but the nursery area and everything, there's stuff in there, but whenever I have been in there it's been very quiet, there's not been much there, there's not been a volunteer or anybody there to ask questions of. You know, that's quite a hub in terms of your conservation work but it doesn't feel like it.

P2: You could almost have like a tree of the month and make a big feature of that,

and for people like us, who come on a regular basis, that could be something. You know, you could have a picture, 'This is how you get to it', and make a real feature of just one tree

P3: That's how I learnt all the trees for my mythology course, we do one tree a month and I'd look at the mythology and the healing and the history and the folklore and what it looked like, and we had to learn to identify all the trees all year round, not just by the leaves but by their bark. So that's how I did it and it was really an easy way of learning all these trees, so I think that's a great idea.

I mean, one thought, I've been recently flicking through the latest magazine, one of the members of staff has been on a trip, it's about going to Vietnam, and his collection, yes, and it was very interesting reading in there, but is there any way that you could actually have some sort of display or something about it as well? You know, pictures and what he's discovered, like the fact they've discovered some new species that we weren't aware of, but try and bring in some sort of sensory display or something so it would appeal to all ages, so different barks that people maybe could touch or something, you know, just so it would appeal to all ages, so that would be a little bit more awareness of what all your staff are doing and where they're all going to collect (FG4 Long term members)

3.2.10. Other site related issues

Focus group participants talked about general issues to do with visiting the site such as the changes brought about by the Westonbirt Programme, also charging and dog walking.

Long term members, who often feel a strong sense of ownership of the site, could sometimes make negative comments about some of the changes on site brought about by the Westonbirt Programme, such as the creation of the Welcome Building and the moving of the car park to restore the downland habitat. However, they also recognised the value of the site to themselves and others and the difficulties of balancing different interests for a wide variety of site users:

P1: Yes, for all our comment we're all still members and have been for a very long time and we continue to be.

P2: I was just thinking the same thing.

P3: Personally I prefer it to be less commercial and everything, because I like the other aspect.

P4: It's got to be.

P1: But there are areas that I can still go to, and in today's world, and because of the nature of funding and everything, you have to, and it's what some people want as well, so just trying to get that balance (FG4 Long term members)

The long term members were more likely to make comparisons with visits to the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Kew Gardens etc. and there were reciprocal arrangements between some of these places and Westonbirt so that a person with membership of Kew Gardens could get into Westonbirt and vice versa.

The entrance cost to visit Westonbirt was discussed, with some stating that visiting, particularly for a short time, was expensive for non-members with an adult being charged £10.

I mean, to some it may seem a lot of money, and if you're just coming for an hour or so it may be, but you have got a day's entertainment, activities out there, if they wish (FG4 Long term members)

However, membership was seen as good value. Single membership is £38 per year and children are allowed in for free when accompanied by a parent or grandparent member.

Focus groups often sit round and try to think up the next complaint, but in terms of the Arboretum, the way it charges for entry, can I say I praise it. The fact that parents can bring any number of children in free, that is a super development. Years ago no one thought of it, they had family tickets and what have you, but making it children free and recognising that a child still costs you money right up until they're 18 and whatever, it doesn't suddenly stop when they're 15 (FG4 Long term members)

More recent members at first thought membership was quite a lot but when they got to know the site and realised what they could do on site it seemed much better value. Being able to get into other places with reciprocal arrangements with Westonbirt added value and one participant suggested an opportunity to draw others into membership by allowing members to bring a guest:

Well there were two things, just we come, we took the mother-in-law, thought it would be a nice day out, we haven't been here for a long time, where can we go? So we came here, we paid the membership so it would pay for the entrance fee, we did think it was steeper than what we were expecting, but when we got in we thought it was very much better than what we thought and we joined on the day because we thought the membership was fantastic value, really it's the best membership I know for value for money. The day entry fee probably the opposite, it's enough to put people off coming if they don't know what they're coming for, if that makes any sense? (FG6 Members post 2014)

So we think, to use an analogy, I volunteer at a gym and that gym has a thing where members can bring along a guest for three visits, they don't pay, and most of those guests, statistically speaking because I know the manager, they join, yes, and I think to adopt something like that here might work and probably wouldn't take three visits either because I think you just need to come here the once to make you realise 'This is not what we thought it was', and I think a large majority of people would join (FG6 Members post 2014)

P1: Even though we don't live [near Westonbirt] my friend and I both joined, we don't live that close to come here, but we thought 'Well we'll still be able to go to different places in different areas'.

Interviewer: A sort of reciprocal membership.

P1: Yes, exactly.

P2: I mean, the reciprocation with Kew is extraordinary good value. (FG6 Members post 2014)

There was some discussion about dog walking, particularly but not exclusively from the dog walking focus group. Dogs are allowed off the lead in Silkwood but are not allowed in the Old Arboretum. A few parents with children were glad that there was a dog free area on site, as one parent said their children were scared of dogs. A couple of other adults also outlined that it was good to have a dog free area. Three or four people talked about being either themselves or seeing other people being challenged about having their dog off the lead in Silkwood – where it is allowed. They were concerned that not everyone knows what the site policy is. While another couple of people said they had seen dogs in the Old Arboretum (where they should not be). A couple of dog walkers felt a small amount of frustration that they always had to go to Silkwood if they brought their dog and wondered whether it was feasible to have dogs on leads in the Old Arboretum at restricted times and restricted to certain days.

3.2.11. Ideas and suggestions from respondents

Focus group participants felt that the trails, activities and events on site were good and interesting although some were not aware of them; they discussed a variety of ways in which changes might be made to encourage people to make more use of the activities, trails and information on site. Although, they recognised that not all of their suggestions would be achievable or there might not be funding to implement them.

Pre-visit information

- Focus on greater targeting of the existing information about trails, events and activities at Westonbirt. Participants were not primarily asking for more trails or activities or more information about them as they often led busy lives so they did not want to be bombarded with too much information. They suggested for example targeting those with children with any family friendly activity information.

On site welcome and the Welcome Building

- Provide a written blackboard or whiteboard on entry that outlines seasonal plants to look out for and any organised events or guided walks on site.
- Open the doors of the Welcome Building as often as possible to attract people in.

- Provide better signage to make it clearer what the Welcome Building information centre is and to draw people in.
- Consider interactive exhibits in the Welcome Building that are aimed at children.
- Consider live demonstrations in the Welcome Building information centre.

On site information and interpretation

- Provide audio handsets in a similar way to those provided in museums so that visitors could take a handset out and stop at different points of interest on site.
- Use webcams to highlight activity/wildlife on site.
- Make more of the wildlife by focusing beyond the trees to illustrate the range of wildlife at Westonbirt.
- Organise night walks as a means to give people a different perspective on the site.
- Develop a loyalty card so that, for example, if people do a number of trails/activities they get a free cup of coffee, or something else, or a free booklet

On site activity

- On agreed days at a certain time allow dog walkers with dogs on leads into the old arboretum.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion those visiting Westonbirt more frequently were more likely to be Friends of Westonbirt. Walking and seasonal interest were the most popular activities, and overall the site had a positive impact on people's wellbeing.

Arrival was generally viewed as relaxed and welcoming, with staff and volunteers being viewed as friendly and helpful. However the engagement and explanation of the visitor offer and introduction to the arboretum is not reaching its desired level. The onsite survey shows only 20% of visitors entered the Welcome Building; of those 7% asked a question and 7% looked at the exhibits. Only 1% had the exhibits explained and introduced to them by a member of staff or volunteer. Reasons for not visiting were due to visitors being attracted by the site and wanting to head straight into the arboretum.

Respondents were less familiar with the conservation work undertaken at Westonbirt as part of its role as an arboretum, however the majority felt all of the key Westonbirt messages were important i.e. its role as a botanic collection, the importance of trees, and the day to day care of the site and landscape. There is potential for Westonbirt to consider how it targets some of its existing information and interpretation to specific groups to raise awareness, as many felt what was on offer was very interesting and relevant, however many visitors were not aware of this information.

5. Recommendations

A significant amount of data was gathered to understand visitor's experiences. It should be noted that Westonbirt attracts a wide variety of people doing a wide range of activities. The majority of visitors very much enjoy the experiences they have and a very large majority would recommend it to others. The qualitative research highlights the multiple benefits and rich experiences many visitors have at Westonbirt. However the survey did identify some areas for improvement including that would in particular support greater understanding of the arboretum key messages and provide visitors with a greater awareness and understanding of the visitor offer. We suggest that some recommendations are appropriate to consider for all groups while others make a distinction between new and infrequent visitors and Friends of Westonbirt.

Pre-visit

Develop the website information offer of both the FCE Westonbirt webpages and Friends of Westonbirt as over half of survey respondents looked at what was on offer before visiting the site. Via this route there is potential to ensure that visitors know what leaflets and information they can pick up on site and where. Less frequent visitors are more likely to look for this information.

Consider how the Welcome building can be publicised via the websites so that potential visitors get an understanding of what it has to offer.

Arrival experience

Work with staff/volunteers to develop the explanation of options, and how to approach visitors to inform them of site options on arrival. At busy times having the capacity to do this will be impacted by the number of visitors. Prioritise new and infrequent visitors by asking if people have visited before. Members may feel they have all the information they need, so ensure staff/volunteers ask people if they are a member and would they like to know more or not.

Consider adding a board (chalk or whiteboard) near the entrance that outlines the key options for visitors that day, enabling seasonal interest to be flagged up or a tree of the week to be identified or a guided walk or workshop. Families are particularly interested in school holiday activities for children.

It is a fine balance between those that are happy to know staff/volunteers are there if they need to ask a question or want to find out more, and do not necessarily feel the need to be approached ensuring we continue the relaxed and welcoming approach to arrival noted by many respondents.

Welcome building

Create a sign or board, and place it in a prominent position, that makes it clear what the Welcome building is; as many people do not seem to be aware of this at present, particularly newer and infrequent visitors. This needs to entice people in.

Ensure the doors to the Welcome building are open as much as possible both the side door and the doors facing the arboretum as this can make it easier for people to dip in and out.

Short talks, demonstrations in the Welcome building could potentially increase visitor footfall and awareness of the resource. This could include provision of information on the wildlife at Westonbirt, the bird hide, and Wolfson Tree Management centre and other interpretation hotspots.

Consider the current purpose and layout of the Welcome building – infrequent visitors, families and those without dogs were significantly more likely to access the building.

Recognise that many visitors are interested in heading straight into the arboretum and consider whether there are opportunities to encourage use of the Welcome Building on the way out of the site as well as on the way in and using more of the outdoor space and surrounding area.

Areas of the site visited

More visitors visit Silk Wood than the Old Arboretum, although just under half of visitors are going to both places on site. Part of this is related to dogs not being allowed into the Old Arboretum. There is potential to consider using events and organised activities focused more on the Old Arboretum as a means to encourage more visitors to enjoy that area of the site.

Information and understanding

Target the existing information and interpretation by tailoring it towards attracting families, new and infrequent visitors and members. There seemed to be a range of trails and interpretation visitors were not necessarily aware of, partly because they feel they are coming to the site to do their own thing. However, there is an appetite and interest at key points such as the school holidays or when members visit with their non-local friends, or for newer visitors wanting to get to know the site.

Short pieces of interpretation were preferred and can be used to prompt interest. There is an opportunity to develop a way to prompt visitors as focus group participants felt that with all the site had to offer, already, they themselves should be more proactive in finding out about trails, events and activities. Making this as easy as possible will be important by using staff and volunteers to promote and explain various activities to visitors.

Consider placing key information at other points on site where people are likely to gather; for example, outside the restaurant, great oak hall and restaurant toilets.

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Appendix 1. On-site survey

(for non-members of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum)

Information and guidelines for volunteers carrying out site surveys at Westonbirt

Objectives for evaluation:

To understand the impact of our engagement activities in relation to key HLF project aims and identify possible areas for improvement. The specific HLF aims we are looking to evidence;

1. Enable visitors to increase their learning about / appreciation of Westonbirt's tree collection
2. To improve their welcome

Specifically the evaluation will seek to

- Assess the role of the Welcome Building / arrival experience in increasing understanding and enabling day visitors to understand what they can do during their visit
- Assess what parts of the engagement offer day visitors are doing and whether they met expectations
- Identify what factors/issues reduce the quality of the experience
- Identify possible future developments to improve visitor awareness of the offer
- Identify possible future developments to improve the offer

Parameters of evaluation

- Given the considerable data we already have for members compared with day visitors, we have decided to focus this evaluation on day visitors' experiences.
- Given the key HLF aims the evaluation is primarily aimed at exploring engagement with the heritage / collection rather than use of broader visitor facilities (such as restaurant / toilets / shop).
- We recognise that it is almost impossible to unpick HLF components with the broader visitor experience (indeed all elements are interrelated / connected).

Interviewer guidelines

1. The interviewer will be based outside the Welcome Building by large wooden map (arboretum side)
2. Only day visitors (**i.e. non-members**) will be targeted. **If they are a member of Westonbirt already thank them for their time and explain that this survey is specifically targeted at non-members as members have recently been surveyed**
3. Approach all visitors to identify non-members. If someone is a non-member interview them, then go onto the next non-member. If non-members are in a group, ask (those 16 and over) who in the group has the next birthday, before the other members of the group, and interview that person.

Only those 16 and over should be targeted (if you are not sure you can always approach the person and if they are under 16 then let them know you cannot interview them)

Questionnaire guide

Please remember to put in the date of interview, an interview number (sequentially) and your initials at the top of each questionnaire.

Before starting the questionnaire interviewers should identify who they are and why they are undertaking the survey.

As this is an exit survey interviewers should first make sure that the day visitor(s) are on their way out of the arboretum (rather than just arriving). If they are just arriving please thank them for their time and explain that it is an exit survey. **Do not promise/offer to survey them on their way out as we must stick to our sampling technique.**

Once you know they are suitable for interview you can start the survey. Below is a list of instructions for what to do with each question.

1. Tick one answer
2. Tick one answer
3. Tick up to three responses. If appropriate record additional information
4. Indicate which was their primary reason for visiting based on the responses they gave to Q3
5. Tick one answer – **if they answer 'no' skip to Q7**
6. This question is about what visitors did to find out more about Westonbirt before they arrived – i.e. pre-visit – tick as appropriate
 - a. Please get specific detail; e.g. where they saw advert, what pages on web site? What info did they look for, did they find it
7. Tick one response

Questions 8 – 11 are about the **arrival experience** specifically

8. Tick one answer
 - a. If they answer yes ask them what information they were given – tick as appropriate. There is space available to record specific comments
 - b. **If they answer no go to Q9**
9. Tick one response;
 - a. if they respond yes – go to Q10
 - b. **if they respond no skip to Q11**
10. Tick as many as appropriate – if possible record specific comments in space provided. **Then jump to Q12**
11. Tick as many comments as appropriate – record specific comments in space provided
12. Use a 1-5 scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. **Please press for score – don't just leave blank.** This question assesses the impact on the Welcome Building experience to their visit.
 - a. Please try and capture any comments associated with scores given.

Questions 14 – 17 are about the **connection experience** they had while on-site; what they did and what impact this had

13. Tick as many as applicable
 - a. Again try and capture any associated comments, particularly about likes / dislikes
 - b. If they say 'none of the activities' **jump to Q15**

14. Use a 1-5 scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. This question tries to assess the impact on the connection activities on their visit. **Please press for score – don't just leave blank.**
15. This question tries to explore why visitors did not use activities – tick as appropriate and record specific responses
16. Free text – try and find out how we can improve our offer in relation specifically to enabling visitors to understand Westonbirt better – i.e. this is not about general comments re toilets, shop, catering etc.
17. Tick one answer – if yes record contact email
18. Record demographic/group details

After you have finished thank them for their time.

1. How often do you visit Westonbirt?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> First visit | <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 times a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> Less often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | |

2. How long have you spent here today?

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 hour | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 4hrs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 hrs | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 5hrs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 – 3 hrs | <input type="checkbox"/> 5hrs+ |

3. What was the main purpose of your visit today? (choose up to 3)

- ☐ Go for a walk
- ☐ Walk the dog
- ☐ Interest in trees
- ☐ Professional interest
- ☐ General seasonal interest e.g. autumn, spring
- ☐ See a specific seasonal attraction e.g. maples:

What: _____

- ☐ Entertain the family
- ☐ Socialise with friends
- ☐ Visit the treetop walkway
- ☐ Attend an event

Which: _____

- ☐ Other: _____

4. Of the reasons you selected in Q3 what was the main/primary reason for your visit:

5. Did you look at what Westonbirt had to offer before your visit today?

- ☐ Yes (go to Q6) ☐ No (go to Q7)

6. What did you use to plan your visit? (tick as many as applicable)

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Picked up a flyer (off-site) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Advert seen | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Looked at web site | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Read e-newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Looked on Facebook / Twitter | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Personal recommendation | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Details: _____

7. Which areas of the arboretum did you visit? *(show map)*

- ☐ Old Arboretum ☐ Silk Wood ☐ Both

8. When you arrived on site, were the options and activities explained to you by a member of staff/volunteer?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No (**go to Q9**)

If yes – what information was given? *(tick as many as applicable)*

- ☐ Clear directions / orientation of the site given
- ☐ Seasonal trails were explained
- ☐ Family activity trail / play features explained
- ☐ Information about free guided walks provided
- ☐ Told about events and exhibitions taking place
- ☐ Told about the exhibits in the Welcome Building
- ☐ Told about information available around site
- ☐ Told about the guidebook

Other (e.g. app):

9. Did you go into the Welcome Building information centre itself?

- ☐ Yes (**go to Q10**) ☐ No (**go to Q11**)

10. What did you do in the Welcome Building?

- ☐ Looked at exhibits
- ☐ Asked a question / talked with volunteers
- ☐ Joined the Friends / asked about membership
- ☐ Downloaded the Treequests App
- ☐ Looked at Interactive map
- ☐ Picked up mobility scooter / wheelchair
- ☐ Picked up an information / trail leaflet

Details (e.g. what they talked to volunteers about, which exhibits they looked at etc.)

Now jump to Q12

11. If no, was there a reason you didn't go in?

- ☐ Didn't realise it was an information centre
- ☐ Didn't realise it was open
- ☐ I wanted to go straight out into the arboretum / Silk Wood
- ☐ Had a dog with me so couldn't go in
- ☐ Limited time
- ☐ Wasn't interested

Other (specify):

12. On a scale of 1 – 5 how much do you agree with the following statements *(use prompt):*

The arrival experience was relaxed and welcoming	
The staff and volunteers were accessible and helpful	
The arrival experience helped us to understand what we could do during our visit	
The arrival experience provided us with a good introduction to the arboretum	
Comments	

13. Did you do any of the following activities during your visit today?

- ☐ Followed the seasonal / family trail
- ☐ Used other information trails
- Please specify: _____
- ☐ Used the TreeQuests App
- ☐ Read information on gate signs
- ☐ Used Exploratree play area / arb play features
- ☐ Used the Treetop Walkway
- ☐ Visited the tree management centre viewing area
- ☐ Visited the propagation information area

- ☐ Visited bird viewing shelter
- ☐ Took part in a guided walk

Other: _____

- ☐ None of the above (**GO TO Q15**)

Any comments about the activities they did:

14. On a scale of 1 – 5 how much do you agree with the following statements *(use prompt):*

The activities added enjoyment to our visit	
It was easy to find my way around the arboretum to where we wanted to go	
There was plenty to see and do for all members of our group	
We understand more about Westonbirt's tree collection and landscape as a result of the activities we did today.	
We understand more about how Westonbirt is cared for by the Forestry Commission as a result of the activities we did today.	
The activities made us think / interact more with the tree collection	
We would recommend Westonbirt to friends and family	

15. Were there particular reasons why you didn't use or take part in any of the available activities?

- ☐ I / we wanted to do our own thing
- ☐ I came for a specific reason

Please specify: _____

- ☐ I / we weren't aware of these activities
- ☐ I / we weren't interested in these activities
- ☐ We didn't feel that the activities were really aimed at us as an audience
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

Any additional comments

16. Do you have any suggestions for how we could enable visitors to get a better understanding of Westonbirt?

We would like to undertake some follow-up focus groups. These sessions would last 1 hour and would involve a discussion about people's experiences at Westonbirt. They will take place at Westonbirt and will take place in the evening after the site has closed.

17. Would you be happy to take part in follow-up focus group? ☐ Yes ☐ No**Contact email:** _____**Gender of interviewee:** ☐ Male ☐ Female**Age of interviewee**

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-74 | |

Visiting with others? ☐ Yes ☐ No**If visiting in group, how many are in group?**

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6+ |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Visiting with children?

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Babies | <input type="checkbox"/> Toddlers | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|

Visiting with dogs? ☐ Yes ☐ No**Does the interviewee / any of their group have a disability?**☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix 2. On-line survey

(for members and non-members of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum)

Thank you for taking part in our survey. Over the past 5 years we have developed the arboretum through the Westonbirt Project which aimed to conserve our Grade One historic landscape and provide visitors with more opportunities to engage with and learn about Westonbirt's landscape and tree collection. The information you give us about your activities at Westonbirt will help us to assess the success of the Project and inform our future plans to further improve your experience. The information will be analysed anonymously and will only be used by the Forestry Commission team. This survey will take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

As a thank you all completed surveys will be entered into a draw to win 1 of 10 family tickets to Enchanted Christmas 2017.

18. Are you a Friend of Westonbirt?

Yes (go to Q2) / No (go to Q3)

19. How long have you been a Friend of Westonbirt?

Under 1 year
1-3 years
4-5 years
6-10 years
11-15 years
16-20 years
20+ years

20. How often do you visit Westonbirt?

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
4-6 times a year
1-3 times a year
Less often
Only been once

21. How long do you usually spend on site?

Less than 1 hour
1 – 2 hrs
over 2 – 3 hrs
over 3 – 4hrs
over 4 – 5hrs
over 5hrs+

22. What are the main reasons for your visits to Westonbirt? (choose up to 3)

Go for a walk
Walk the dog
Interest in trees
Professional interest

General seasonal interest e.g. autumn, spring
 Entertain the family
 Socialise with friends
 Visit the treetop walkway
 Attend an event
 See a specific seasonal attraction e.g. maples
 Other: _____

23. Do you ever look at what Westonbirt has to offer before you visit? (e.g. web site, newsletter, leaflets)

☐ Yes (**go to Q7**) ☐ No (**go to Q9**)

24. What sources of information do you use to plan your visits? (*tick as many as applicable*)

Flyers / leaflets
 Adverts
 Forestry Commission web site
 Friends of Westonbirt web site
 e-newsletter
 Facebook
 Twitter
 Personal recommendation
 Friends of Westonbirt magazine
 Other

25. Is there any reason you don't look at this pre-visit information?

I know what I want to do
 I've seen most of it before
 I don't have time
 I'm not interested
 Other
 Not applicable

26. Which areas of the arboretum do you usually visit?

☐ Old Arboretum ☐ Silk Wood ☐ Both

27. When you arrive on site, are the options and activities usually explained to you by a member of staff/volunteer?

☐ Yes ☐ No (**go to Q11**) Not applicable

If yes – what information is usually given? (*tick as many as applicable*)

- ☐ Clear directions / orientation of the site given
- ☐ Seasonal trails were explained
- ☐ Family activity trail / play features explained
- ☐ Information about free guided walks provided
- ☐ Told about events and exhibitions taking place
- ☐ Told about the exhibits in the Welcome Building
- ☐ Told about information available around site
- ☐ Told about the guidebook

Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve this personal welcome provided by staff and volunteers?

28. Do you usually go into the Welcome Building ? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes, every time I visit
- ☐ Yes, most times I visit
- ☐ Yes, but only if I have a specific reason
- ☐ No but I have been in
- ☐ No I have never been in the Welcome Building ([go to Q13](#))

29. Which of the following activities have you done in the Welcome Building? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Looked at exhibits
- ☐ Asked a question / talked with volunteers
- ☐ Joined the Friends of Westonbirt
- ☐ Asked about membership of the Friends of Westonbirt
- ☐ Downloaded the Treequests App
- ☐ Looked at Interactive map
- ☐ Picked up mobility scooter / wheelchair
- ☐ Picked up an information / trail leaflet
- ☐ Not been into the Welcome Buildings

Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve the Welcome Building information centre?

[Now jump to Q14](#)

30. If you did not go into the Welcome Building was this because of any of the following? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Didn't realise it was an information centre
- ☐ Didn't realise it was open
- ☐ I wanted to go straight out into the arboretum / Silk Wood
- ☐ Had a dog with me so couldn't go in
- ☐ Limited time
- ☐ Wasn't interested
- ☐ Been in before
- ☐ Other

What might encourage you to visit (again or for the first time) the information centre in the Welcome Building in the future?

31. On a scale of 1 – 5 how much do you agree with the following statements *(on a scale from definitely agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, totally disagree:*

The arrival experience was relaxed and welcoming	
The staff and volunteers were accessible and helpful	
The arrival experience made us aware of the activities and events on site	
The arrival experience provided us with a good introduction to the arboretum (e.g. tree collection, history of Westonbirt, work done by the Forestry Commission)	
Comments	

The aim of the information centre is to provide visitors with an introduction to Westonbirt and its significance as an arboretum and to help visitors to make the most of their visit.

32. Westonbirt has four key messages. Please choose how important you think each one is (from very important, important, neither important or unimportant, not very important, definitely not important.

- The changing Westonbirt landscape
- Trees and their importance (individually and collectively)
- Our work as a botanic collection (research/conservation)
- The day to day care – what we do and how we do it

Do you have any specific interests / comments about what sort of information you would like

33. Have you done any of the following activities during your visit to Westonbirt? *(tick as many as you wish)*

- ☐ Followed the seasonal / family trail
- ☐ Used other information trails: Birt's Adventure, Picture Perfect

- ☐ Used the TreeQuests App
- ☐ Read information on gate signs
- ☐ Used Exploratree play area / arboretum play features
- ☐ Used the Treetop Walkway
- ☐ Visited the tree management centre viewing area
- ☐ Visited the propagation information area
- ☐ Visited bird viewing shelter
- ☐ Joined a guided walk
- ☐ Taken part in family craft / discovery activities

Other: _____

- ☐ None of the above (**GO TO Q18**)

Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve or develop these activities?

34. How much do you agree with the following statements *(on a scale from definitely agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, totally disagree)*

The activities / trails added enjoyment to our visit	
It was easy to find my way around the arboretum to where we wanted to go	
There was plenty to see and do for all members of our group	
We understand more about Westonbirt's tree collection and landscape as a result of the activities we have done.	
We understand more about how Westonbirt is cared for by the Forestry Commission as a result of the activities we have done.	
The activities made us think / interact more with the tree collection	
We would recommend Westonbirt to friends and family	

35. Is there any particular reason why you have not taken part in the different activities that are available at Westonbirt?

- ☐ I / we usually want to do our own thing
- ☐ I / we aren't aware of these activities
- ☐ I We don't feel that the activities are really aimed at us as an audience
- ☐ Other

Any additional comments

36. There are lots of different ways information can be provided – please can you outline how important the following statements are: (on a scale from very important, important, neither important nor not important, not important, definitely non important)

- Provided through a real person e.g. guided walk, talk
- Provided through on-site exploration supported by written information e.g. information panels, trail leaflets to follow
- Provided through digital media e.g. introductory films, audio guide, apps
- Provided through doing e.g. taking part in courses, opportunities to have a go at different activities
- Provided through arts e.g. sculpture, theatre, story telling
- Provided through play

37. Do you have any other suggestions for how we could enable visitors to get a better understanding of Westonbirt's importance as an arboretum and its tree conservation work?

What age bracket are you?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-74 | |

Do you usually visit Westonbirt with other people?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If visiting in a group, how many are usually in the group?

- ☐ 2 – 3 ☐ 4 – 5 ☐ 6+

Do you usually visit with?

- ☐ Babies ☐ Toddlers ☐ 5-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ No

Do you usually visit with a dog/dogs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have a long term illness, health problem or impairment that limits your daily activities?

- Yes
- No

We would like to undertake some follow-up focus groups in September/October. These sessions will be facilitated independently by Forest Research and will last about 1 hour. These sessions involve a discussion about people's experiences at Westonbirt exploring some of the issues raised in the survey responses in more depth. They will take place at Westonbirt in the evening after the site has closed. In recognition for their time participants will each receive a £25 John Lewis gift voucher.

38. Would you be happy to take part in follow-up focus group? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes please leave your contact email: _____

Thank you very much for completing this survey

The information you provided will enable us to develop and improve your experience.

Appendix 3. Focus group protocol

Research questions

1. Gain a better understanding of the visitor experience and how visitor motivations and expectations can impact their experience of Westonbirt.
2. Exploration of awareness and use of, motivations to use, ideas to encourage use for:
 - a. Pre-visit information
 - b. On-site welcome and information / interpretation
 - c. Welcome Building information centre

Equipment needed

Dictaphone and batteries

Questions

Consent forms

Topic Guide and interviewer questions:

The approach will be split into four elements:

1. General background
2. Pre-visit
3. On site welcome information and interpretation
4. Welcome Building information centre

Introduction

- Introduce self and outline working for FR and involved in a research evaluation project for Westonbirt. The overall focus of the research is to explore the visitor experience at Westonbirt and what information and interpretation can enhance the visit.
- Outline that people are free to say they do not want to participate at any point. We would like to record the conversation and use the recording for research purposes, but nothing anyone says will be attributed to them personally. [check this is okay with everyone]. Ask participants to give verbal consent in giving their permission for recording.

Focus group questions

General visit experience (to put people at their ease and get the discussion started)

Qu How long have you known Westonbirt?

Qu Are any of you regular visitors to the site? [prompt – is this where you come for a day out or for a short visit or a mix of both]

Qu How do you feel during and after a visit to Westonbirt? [prompt – rested, stimulated, happy, relaxed, have learnt something, have been interested by something]

Pre-visit information

Qu We want to start by asking you if you draw on any information before you make a visit to Westonbirt and through what means [prompt: flyers, adverts, website, facebook, friends website, other people, twitter]

Qu If you do draw on information before you visit, what motivates you to do that? [prompt: want to do something new, see a different part of the site, learn something new about the site, your bringing others to the site and want to do something different or special]

Qu What sort of information are you looking for or would like to know about before your visit?

Qu Some people have said they don't look at this type of information before they visit as they have seen it before, is that the case for anyone here? – [prompt: things do change and new trails are flagged up – would you take a look at these to see if there is anything new, if you wouldn't look at this why not – your happy with what you do already]

Qu Are there things Westonbirt could do to make known to you any new trails, things to do on site before you visit [prompt: anything that might catch your attention, and through what medium – website, newsletters etc]. If not why not?

On site welcome and information

Qu When you have come on to the site and have passed through the entry point, do staff or volunteers ever engage you to let you know what is happening on site that day and any new things that might interest you? [prompt: every time you visit, never, occasionally, if they do engage you what sort of things do they tell you]

Qu Has any of the information you have gained from staff and volunteers differed during different seasons or at different times of the day that you arrive? [prompt: quieter in Winter, busier in autumn, if so how has it differed, has this helped you to make more of your visit]

Qu Would you be interested in being engaged and getting a bit more detail and explanation of what is on offer? [prompt: would you still be interested in this if you had to queue or wait a bit longer, how long would you be prepared to wait]

Qu To what extent would you be open to receiving / looking at information and therefore open to new experiences on site or new ways of understanding the site? [For example

someone who had been a member for years, who had never joined a guided walk – did one and said it opened their eyes to Westonbirt and what it was about]

Qu How aware are any of you of the seasonal guides, the Birts i-spy trail (aimed at families), the picture perfect trail, the new threatened tree trail, the tall interpretative gate signs [prompt: if you are aware have you done them/looked at them or your family, are interested in them]

Qu Do you recognise the difference between different trails e.g. seasonal trail which is different from the Gruffalo trail or do you get confused about which trail is which – does it matter to you?

Welcome Building information centre

Qu How many of you have been into the information centre in the Welcome Building? [prompt: what exhibits have you looked at, what caught your eye and interested you, did you find out things you didn't know before]

Qu Do you have a favourite exhibit or what would you say are your top 3 exhibits? [prompt: what do you particularly like about them, do you look at these exhibits more than once, remember what they tell you]

Qu Have staff or volunteers engaged you while you have been looking at the exhibits? [if so in what way – help you get more out of them, add extra information of interest, pointed you in the direction of other information]

Qu In the survey a number of people said they did not go into the information centre:

Because they didn't realise it was one – is this the case for any of you? [how do you think it be more clearly signposted as an information centre, is the door often open for people to wander in]

Didn't go in because they had dogs and dogs are not allowed in [do you ever use the dog ties and pop in to the info centre, are you worried about leaving you dog outside]

Didn't go in as people said they wanted to go straight through and get on with their visit [if this includes you, do you feel you already have enough information or you look elsewhere on site for information, or you feel you've seen enough of the exhibits]

Information and interpretation on site

Qu. Do any of you stop to read any of the interpretation boards as you walk around the site? E.g. tall interpretative gate signs etc.

- What makes you stop to read them or not stop? [prompt – interested to learn more about the site, want to know interesting facts, learn more about trees, learn more about conservation, about trees, about management of the site, about importance of the site nationally etc.]
- What does capture your interest / what might you like to have information on and in what format? [prompts – anything other than boards e.g. apps, info elsewhere on site]
- If you stop and read them – is this once or do you stop regularly [what is regular every month etc.]

Qu. Does the role of Westonbirt as the National arboretum have any impact on how you feel about the site [prompt: does it make it more special, more interesting, is it different from visiting other woodland sites]

Qu. Do you have any ideas as to how you think the work of Westonbirt as an arboretum might be made known more easily to visitors?
[prompt - website, on site, through events, walks, talks, other. Different approaches for different audiences]

Ending the interview

1. Check with the participants if there is anything else they would like to say about Westonbirt or their involvement in it that they haven't been able to so far
2. Thank participants warmly for their time and input, outlining the importance of getting the views of those who use and engage with the site.

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