



Market Performance Network Results 2024

Issued May 2025



Executive summary

The main findings of this report are as follows:

- 90% of the markets surveyed were managed by local authorities which has increased over the past 6 years from 82%
- 33% of respondents stated that the number of stalls has decreased over the last 5 years, while 23% thought that this has increased.
- Nearly half of respondents have introduced new markets, events or services in the last 5 years, including one day specialist markets and entertainment.
- 15% stated that they have closed markets, events or services over the last 5 years including a reduction in market days and the closure of specialist markets.
- Over two thirds stated that occupancy (indoor and outdoor) has either decreased or stayed the same in the last 5 years.
- Most markets have lost less than 10% of their Traders in the last 12 months and have gained less than 10% in the last 12 months which suggests stability in the number of Traders.
- The average age of the trader community remains high with 49% in the 40-50 age category and 30% in the 50-60 age category.
- Nearly two thirds provide incentives to attract new traders and of these, the main incentives used were business support and free rent.
- Over 80% actively try and attract new traders and the main methods used are advertising and social media, showing that modern communication methods are being actively used in the sector.
- Only 38% make a surplus, which has reduced from 46% in 2018 and 63% stated that their trading surplus has either decreased or stayed the same in the last 5 years.
- Over 85% use their market for wider community purposes and the main purposes are celebrating local events and supporting local charities.
- Community Asset and Heart of the Town are regarded by respondents as the greatest assets of their Market.
- Just over half of respondents work with schools and colleges to promote markets and market trading.

The results of our first Performance Network Survey mirror, in many respects, the results of the last National Retail Markets Survey in 2022. Local authorities are managing more Markets. Whether this is a conscious decision is debatable. It more likely to arise from the fact that many Markets are operating in deficit and are therefore less attractive to private operators. Over the next few years, with local authority budgets under severe pressure, it is likely that Markets will need to justify their continued existence. Traders numbers are falling, and we are not attracting sufficient new young traders to offset the loss. In these circumstances it is important to take a long hard look at the current market offer in your area and see what you can do to make things better.

While the overall picture gives cause for concern there are areas of encouragement which need to be celebrated. Some Markets have introduced new events to revitalise the Market. There is significant evidence of promoting opportunities for market trading and providing incentives to give newcomers and an opportunity to establish their business. More importantly, particularly in the context of fewer Markets making a surplus, there is overwhelming evidence of Markets taking on a community role and making the local Market "the heart of the town".

The next Performance Network Survey will be undertaken in 2026. In the meantime, it is important that all Markets use the information that has been collected and consider the direction of travel for their Market(s). Doing nothing will only hasten the decline of the markets industry. Hopefully over the next twelve months we will see some positive discussions and results emerging.

Contents

- 2** Executive Summary
- 5** Introduction
- 8** Type of Operator
- 10** Stall numbers
- 13** Changes in services provided in the last 5 years
- 15** Stall Occupancy Levels
- 22** Financial Performance
- 25** Wider benefits of Markets

Case studies:

- 29** Leeds: Community engagement
- 31** Leighton Buzzard: Retaining and attracting traders
- 33** Stevenage: Retaining and attracting traders
- 35** Market Harborough: New market ideas
- 37** York: communications
- 39** Belfast: Engagement with Schools and Young People
- 41** Oswestry Town Council: Schools and education



Introduction



David Preston, NABMA Chief Executive

For almost 20 years, NABMA has produced surveys on the state of the Retail Markets Industry. This latest edition, issued in 2024 is the first of a unique collaboration between NABMA, APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) and Edge IT which draws on APSE's 25 years of benchmarking experience and the software platform provided by Edge IT. The aim of the collaboration is to enable a more simplified and user-friendly approach to capturing data whilst utilising APSE's validation and reporting techniques.

This latest survey in 2024 highlights several issues which the markets industry needs to address going forward. These include celebrating progress and developments in introducing new markets, events and services as well as innovative methods of communicating with and attracting new traders. In addition, the contribution that markets make to the wider community such as celebrating local events and supporting local charities needs to be recognised. However, there remains concerns of the financial viability of many markets.

NABMA's first serious attempt to assess the state of the Markets in the UK was undertaken in 2005 with the commissioning of "The Rhodes Report" which made a significant contribution to the work of the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee looking at "Market Failure? Can the traditional Market survive?" Nick Rhodes, at the time with Leicester City Council, was responsible for producing this important Survey.

Subsequently, the first comprehensive Survey of Retail Markets was commissioned in 2009 by NABMA on behalf of the Retail Markets Alliance. It was undertaken by the late Krys Zasada who, at the time, was NABMA's Policy and Development Officer. Markets 21 was described as "A landmark Report providing a snapshot of the Markets Industry". Interestingly, Markets 21 was produced in the aftermath of another crisis but this time financial not health.

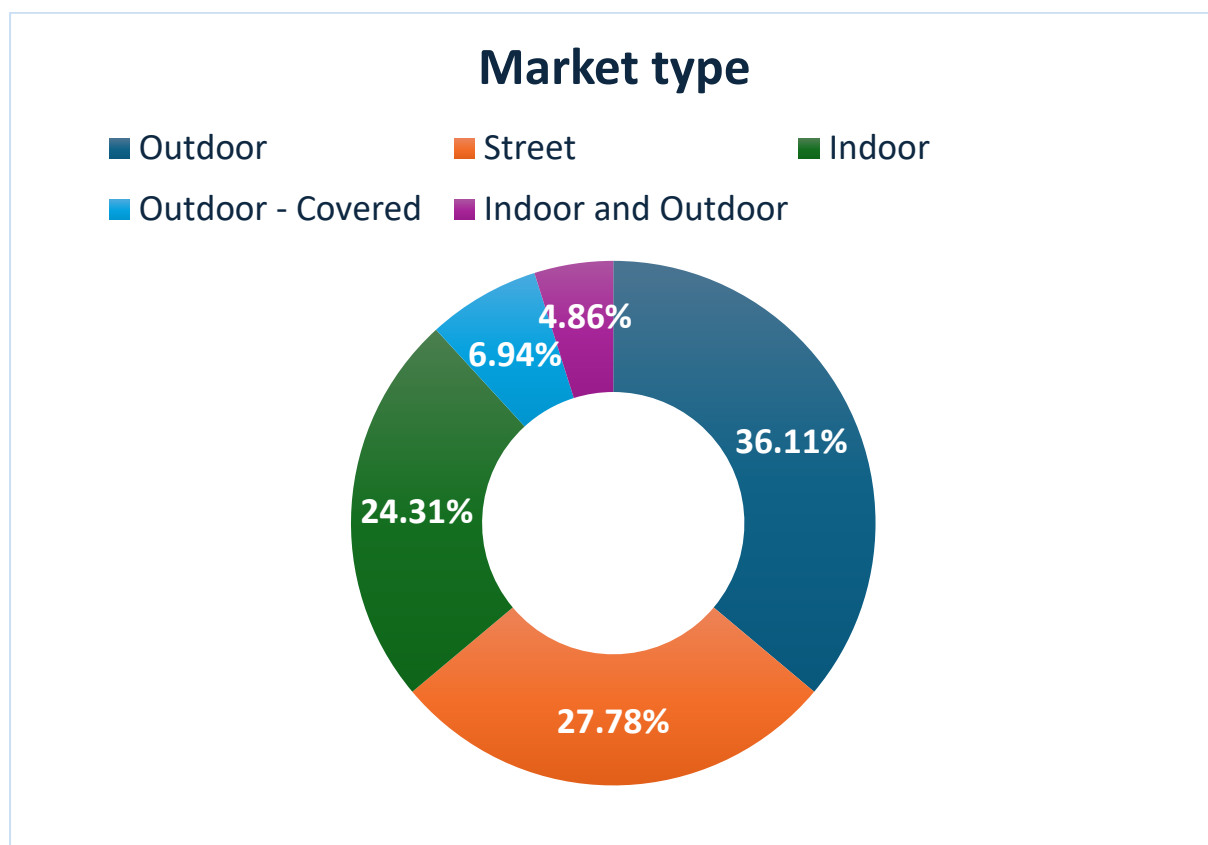
In the years following Markets 21 there have been further Surveys produced by NABMA. Between 2011 and 2014 annual Retail Market Surveys were produced. In 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2017-18 the Surveys were produced by NABMA in partnership with NMTEF as part of the 'Mission for Markets' campaign. Mission for Markets was a joint campaign run by NABMA and the NMTEF.

In 2015-16 it was decided to move to a bi-annual basis. A further Survey was planned for 2019-20 but sadly had to be deferred because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the next survey that was conducted was 2021-22 which was four years later.

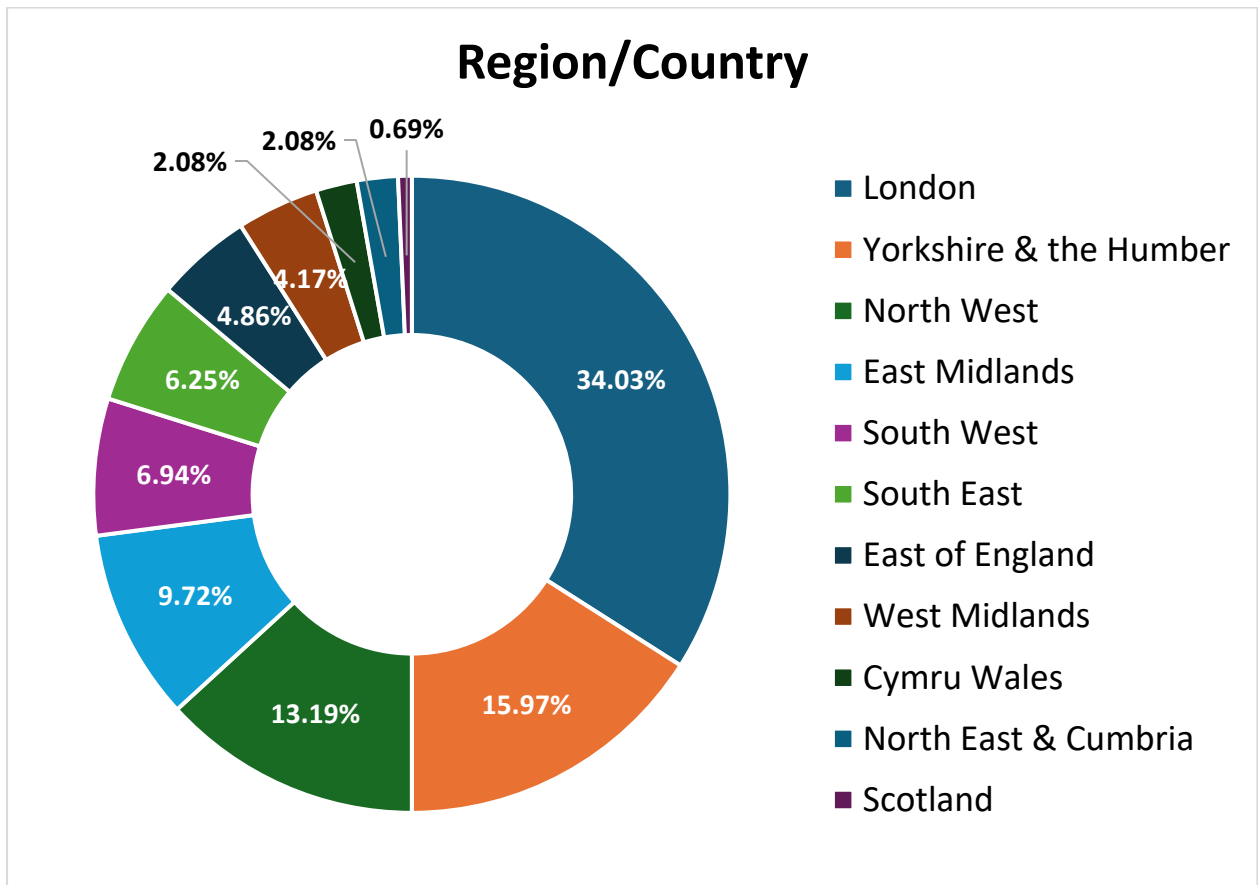
This publication highlights some of the headline findings from the 2024 Survey. As this report is intended to also highlight innovation and good practice, there are a series of case studies which have been included to complement these findings.

144 Markets contributed to the production of the 2024 Survey, and they are made up of the following:

- 52 Outdoor Markets
- 40 Street Markets
- 35 Indoor Markets
- 10 Outdoor – Covered Markets
- 7 Indoor and Outdoor Markets



The regional/country breakdown is as follows, with 34% from London, 16% Yorkshire & the Humber, 13% North West, 10% East Midlands, 7% South West and 6% South East. The remaining 14% were from East of England, West Midlands, Wales, North East & Cumbria and Scotland.



I hope you find this report interesting, and it is useful as a tool to learn from other providers and share good practice across the industry.

David Preston (BA Hons)

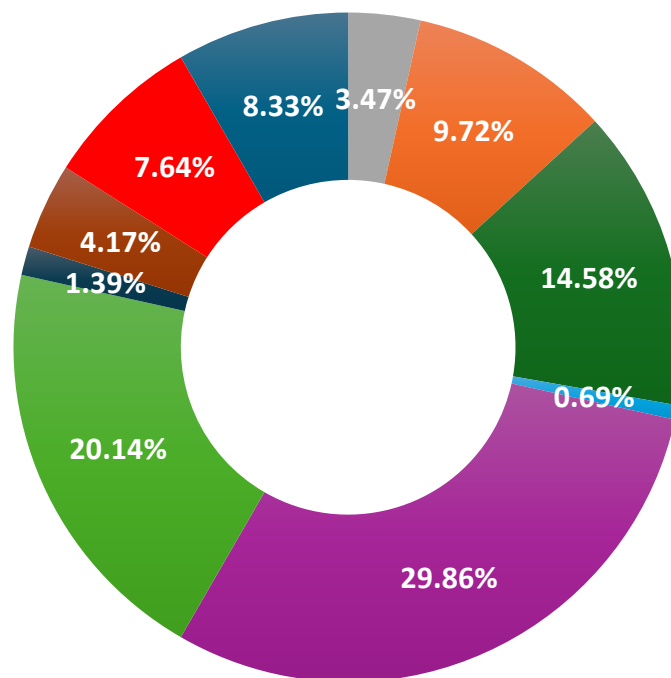
NABMA Chief Executive

Type of Operator

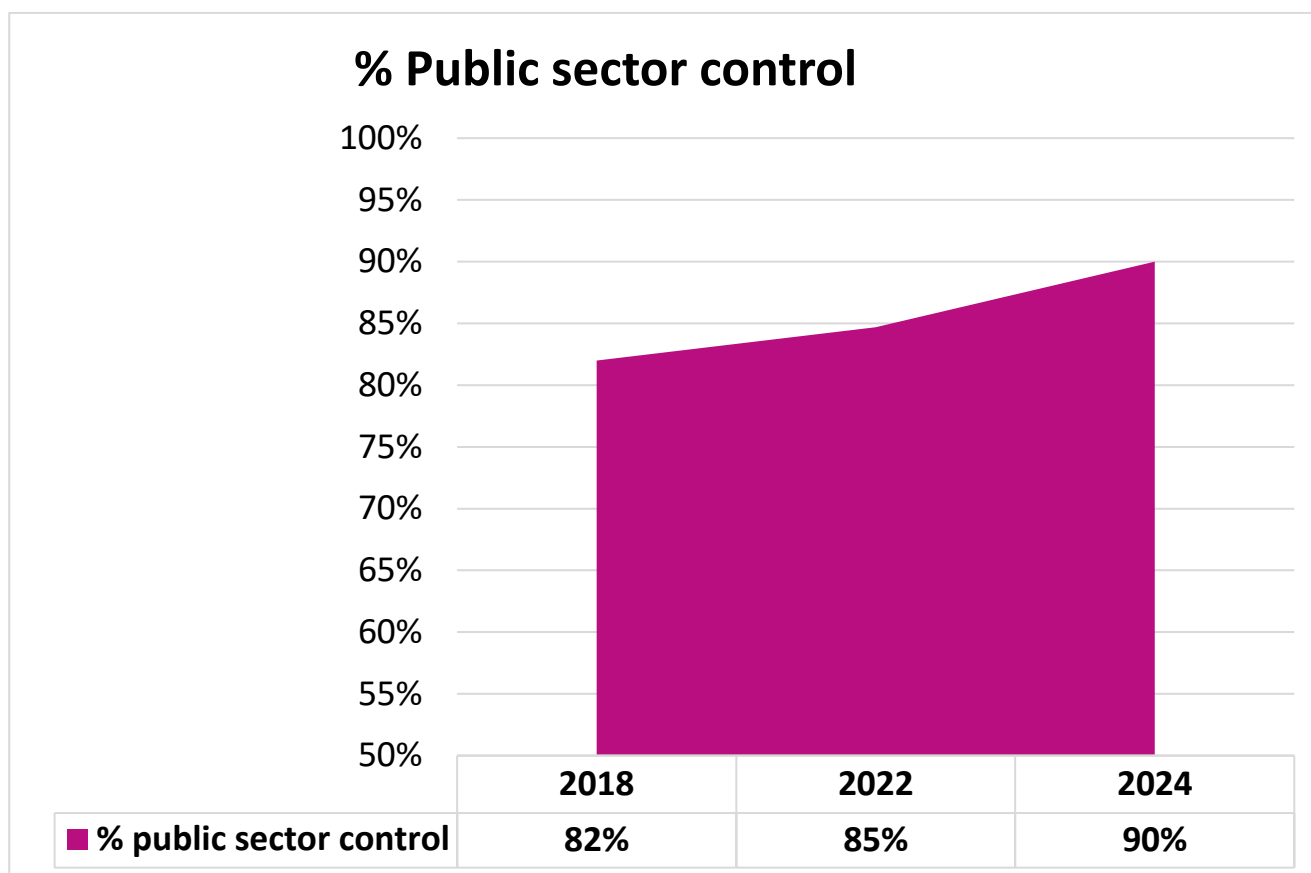
The 144 Markets included in the 2024 Survey are managed as follows:

| | |
|--|--------|
| London Borough | 29.86% |
| Metropolitan Borough/ District Council | 20.14% |
| District Council | 14.58% |
| County Council | 9.72% |
| Parish / Town Council | 8.33% |
| Unitary Council | 7.64% |
| Private | 4.17% |
| Community/ Charity | 3.47% |
| Other | 1.39% |
| Farmers | 0.69% |

Type of operator



Out of the sample, 90% of the 144 Markets were managed by local authorities. This has increased over the past 6 years from 82% in the 2018 Survey and 85% in the Survey in 2022.

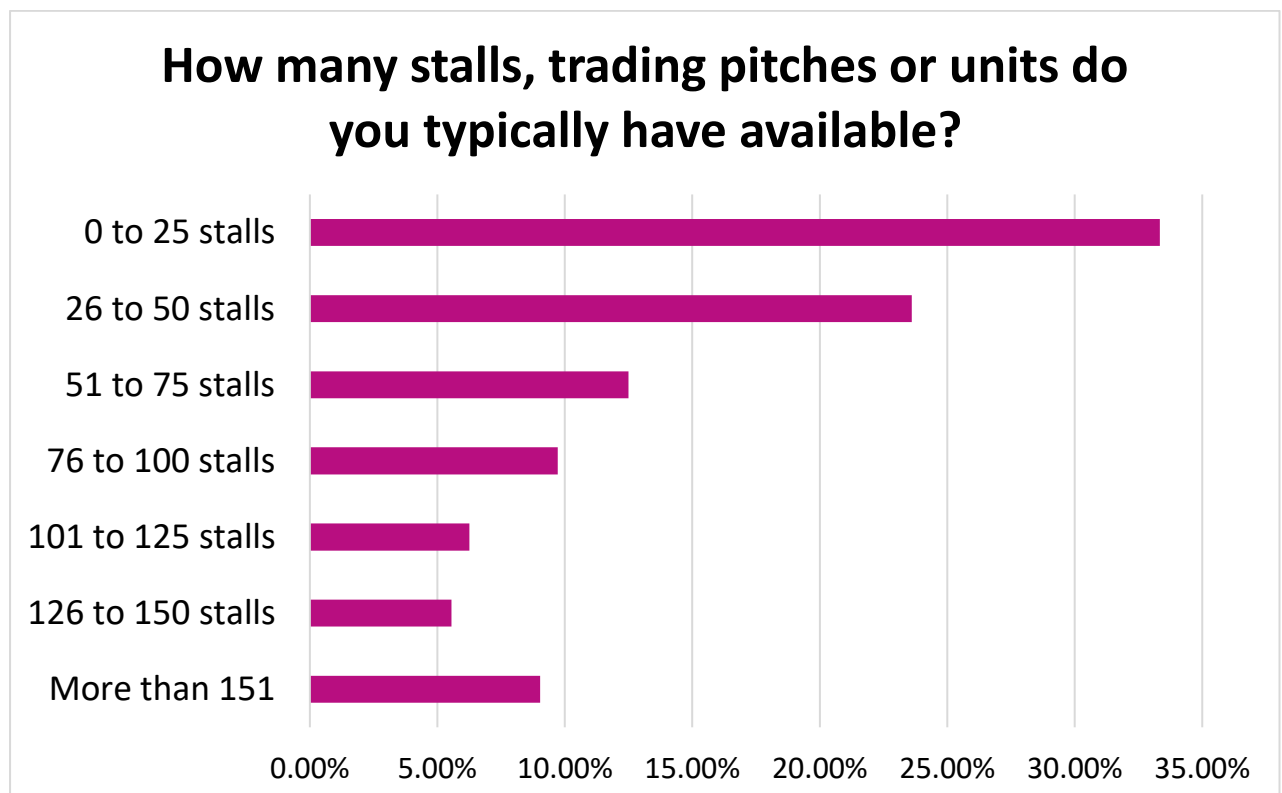


This is the highest percentage local authority control in the last fifteen years. Markets 21 suggested the figure was approximately 60%. It appears the gain in local authority management has come primarily at the expense of the private sector. Markets 21 recorded that around 29% were managed by the private sector. This change needs to be viewed in the context that the sample of Markets surveyed in the different years is not stable and therefore this could indicate that less private sector Markets are engaging in the survey. On the other hand, this could indicate more councils taking Markets back into their control.

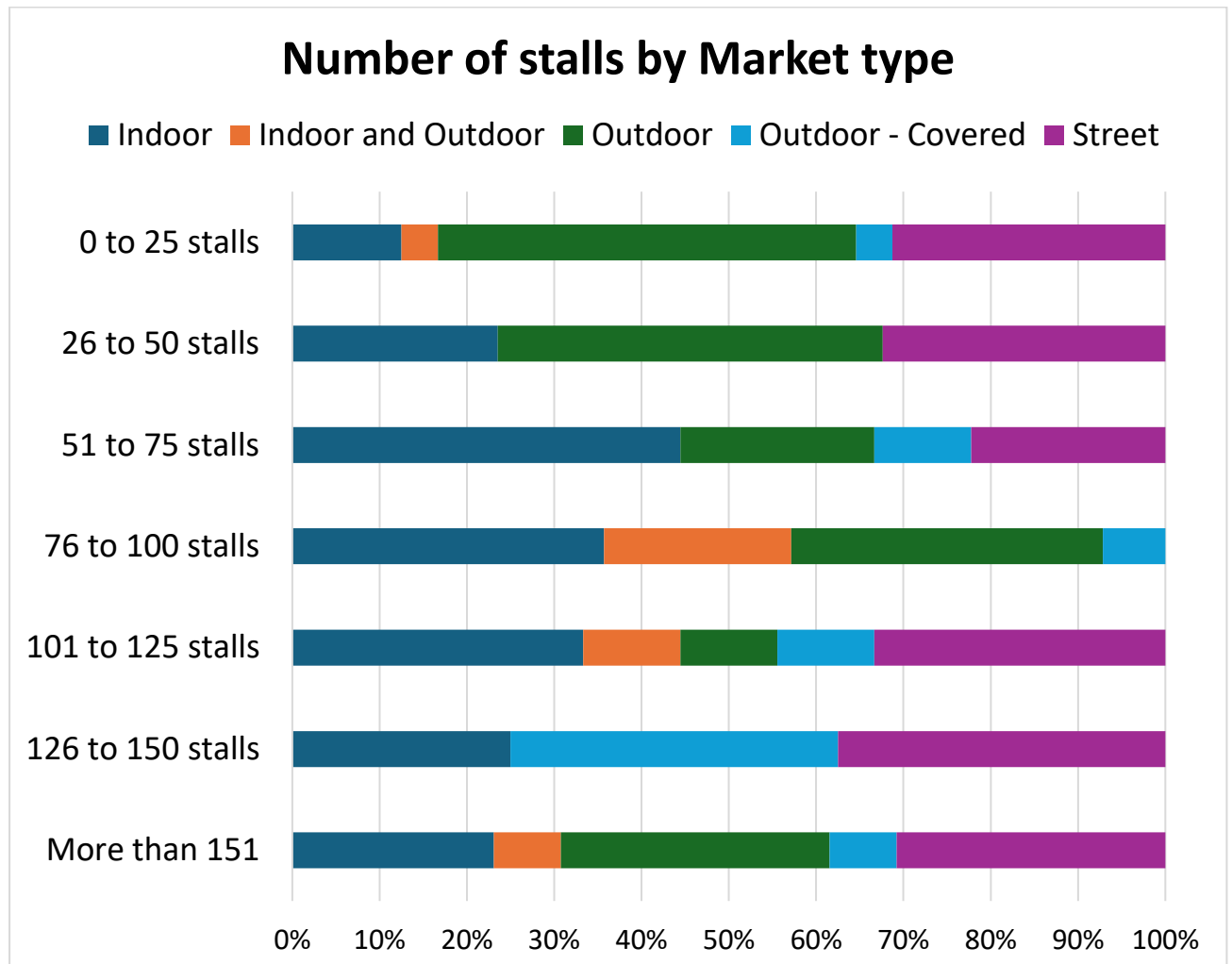


Stall numbers

The Survey sample typically reflected Markets with stall numbers being predominantly below 50, although some Markets reported stall numbers above 151.

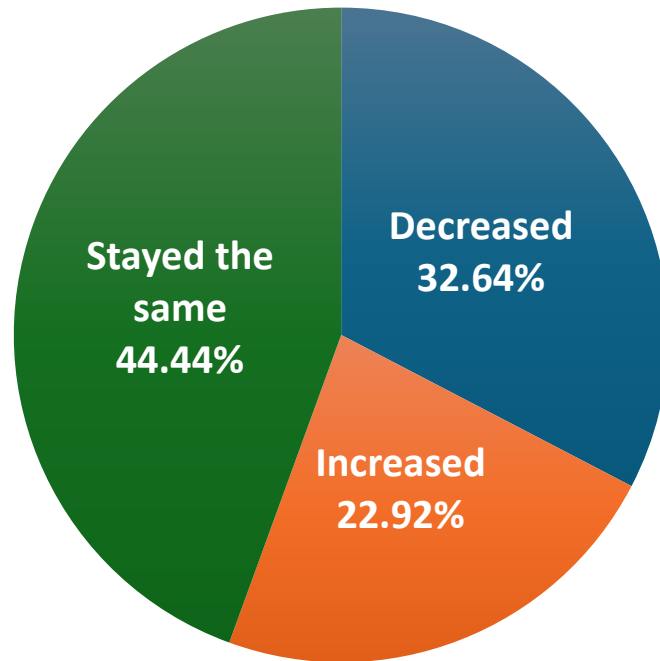


The breakdown of these stalls by Market type shows that Indoor Markets predominantly have less than 100 stalls and Outdoor Markets have typically less than 50 stalls. Outdoor covered Markets tend to have a larger number of stalls and there is a wide range in the number of stalls for street Markets.



In the Survey, 77% reported that the number of stalls have either decreased or stayed the same since pre-Covid.

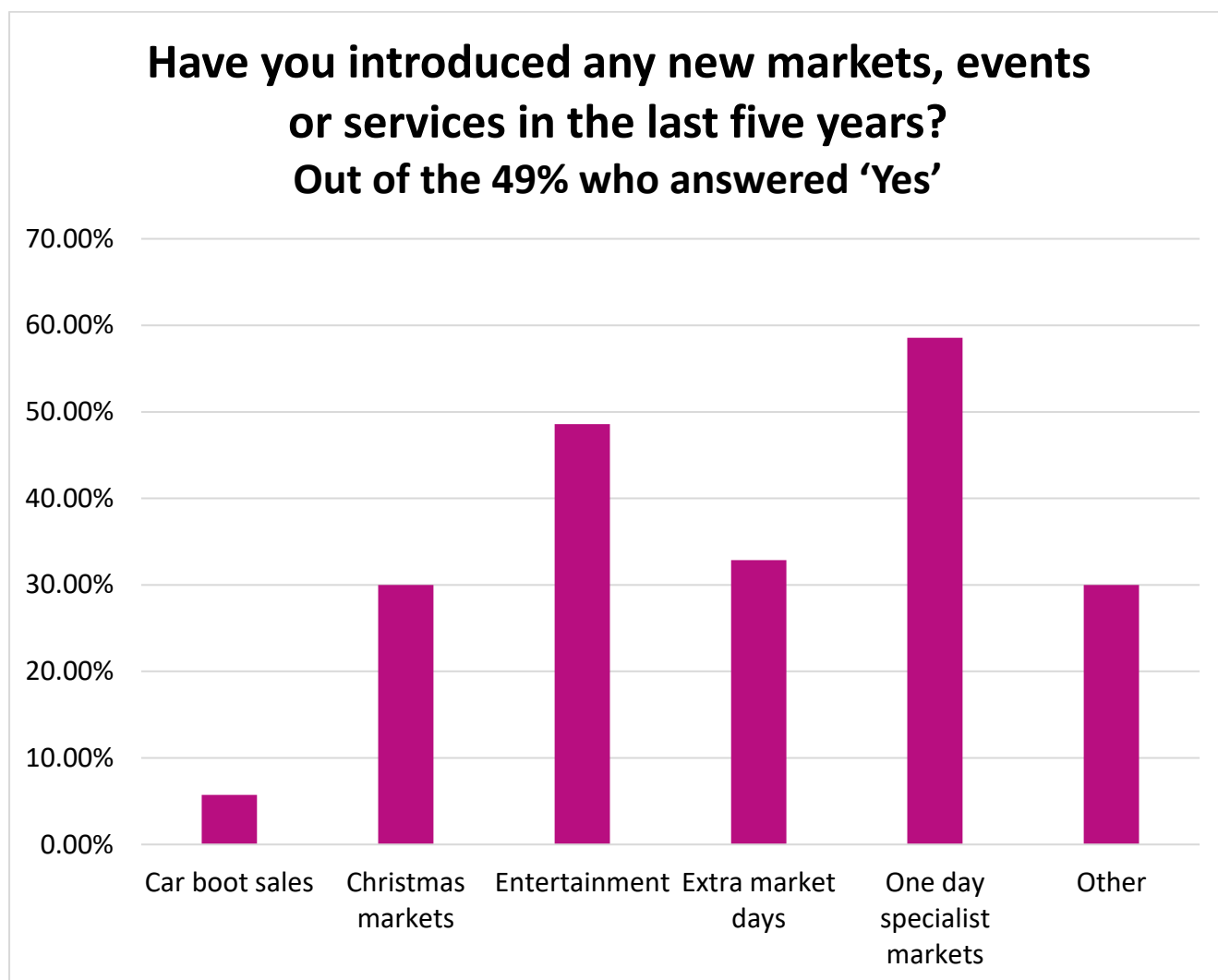
Has the number of stalls increased, decreased or stayed the same in the last five years, i.e. pre COVID



The main reason cited as to why the number of stalls had decreased was the redesign/redevelopment of the space. Other comments included the reduction of traders due to factors such as retirement and a lack of footfall.

Changes in services provided in the last 5 years

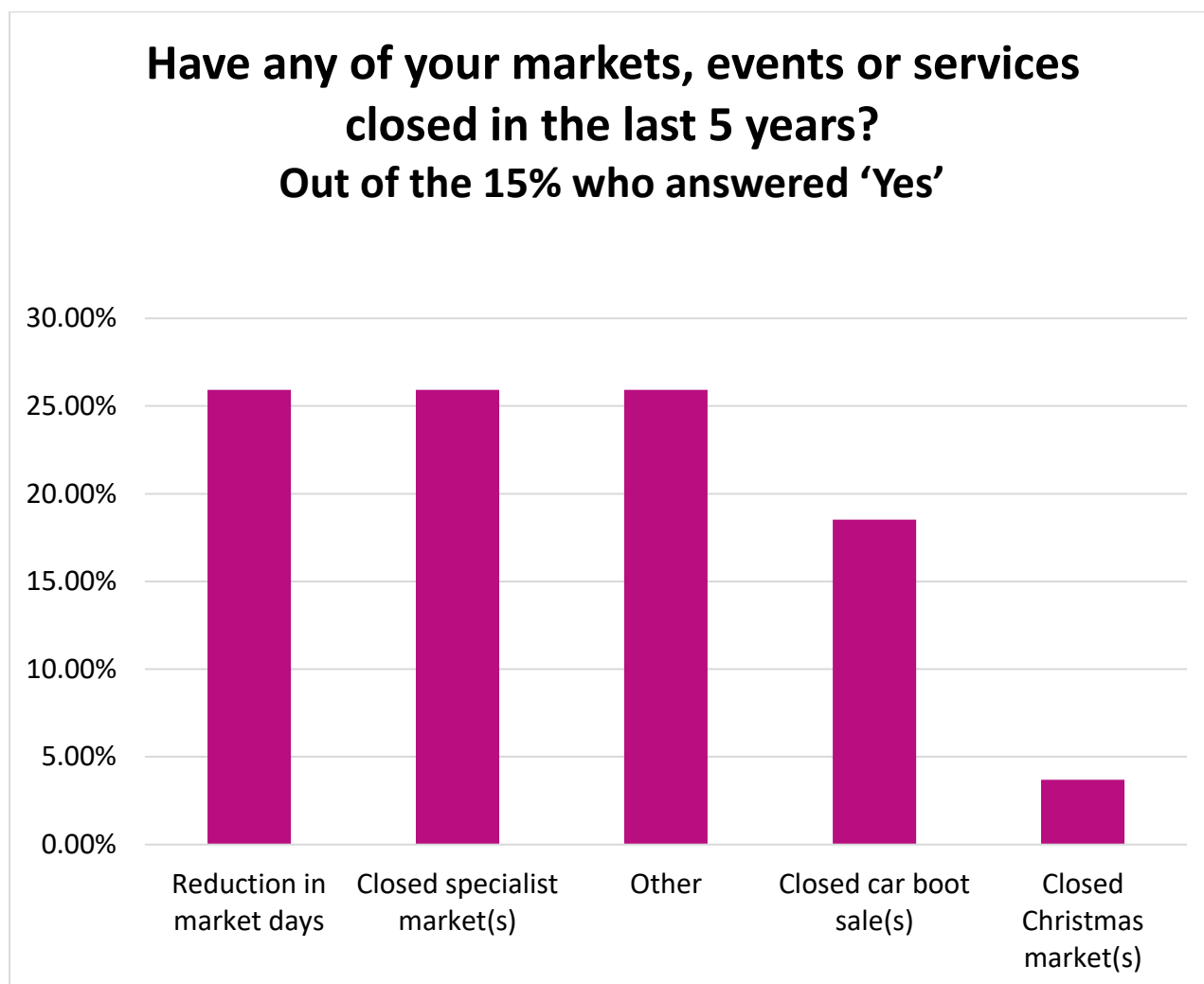
49% said they had introduced new markets, events or services in the last 5 years. Out of these respondents, the main things which have been introduced are entertainment and one day specialist markets.



Comments included the following new markets, events or services:

- Specialist themed events such as Comic Con
- Community/neighbourhood events
- Late night trading/night events
- Changing places and toilet facilities
- Vegan markets
- Mission kitchens and food events

15% said that they had closed markets, events or services over the last 5 years. Out of these respondents, a quarter have reduced market days or closed specialist markets.

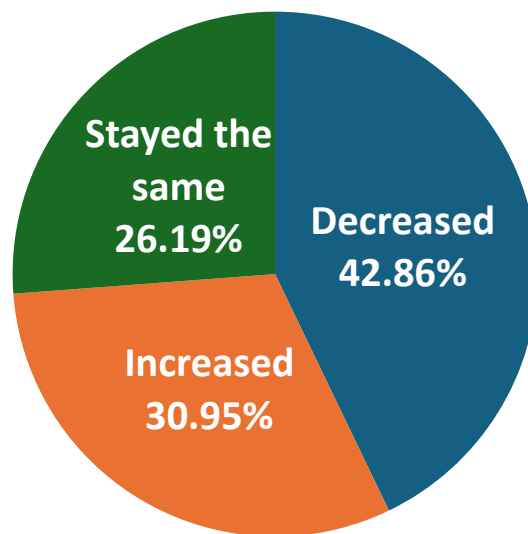


The comments in the 'other' option above included the refurbishment or restructure of the market, the closure of rooms such as indoor hall or kitchen and the closure of other markets such as Sunday markets.

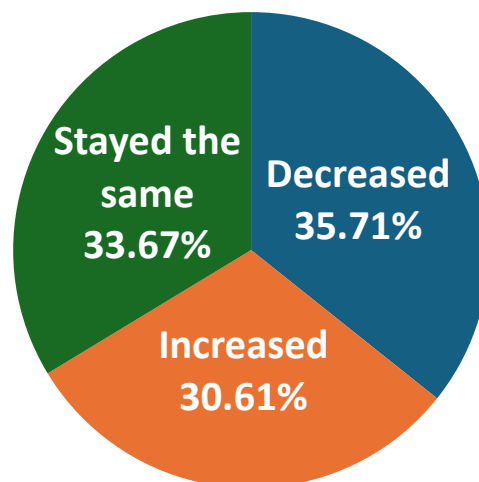
Stall occupancy levels

Over two thirds stated that indoor occupancy has either decreased or stayed the same in the last 5 years. A similar picture is also evident for outdoor occupancy.

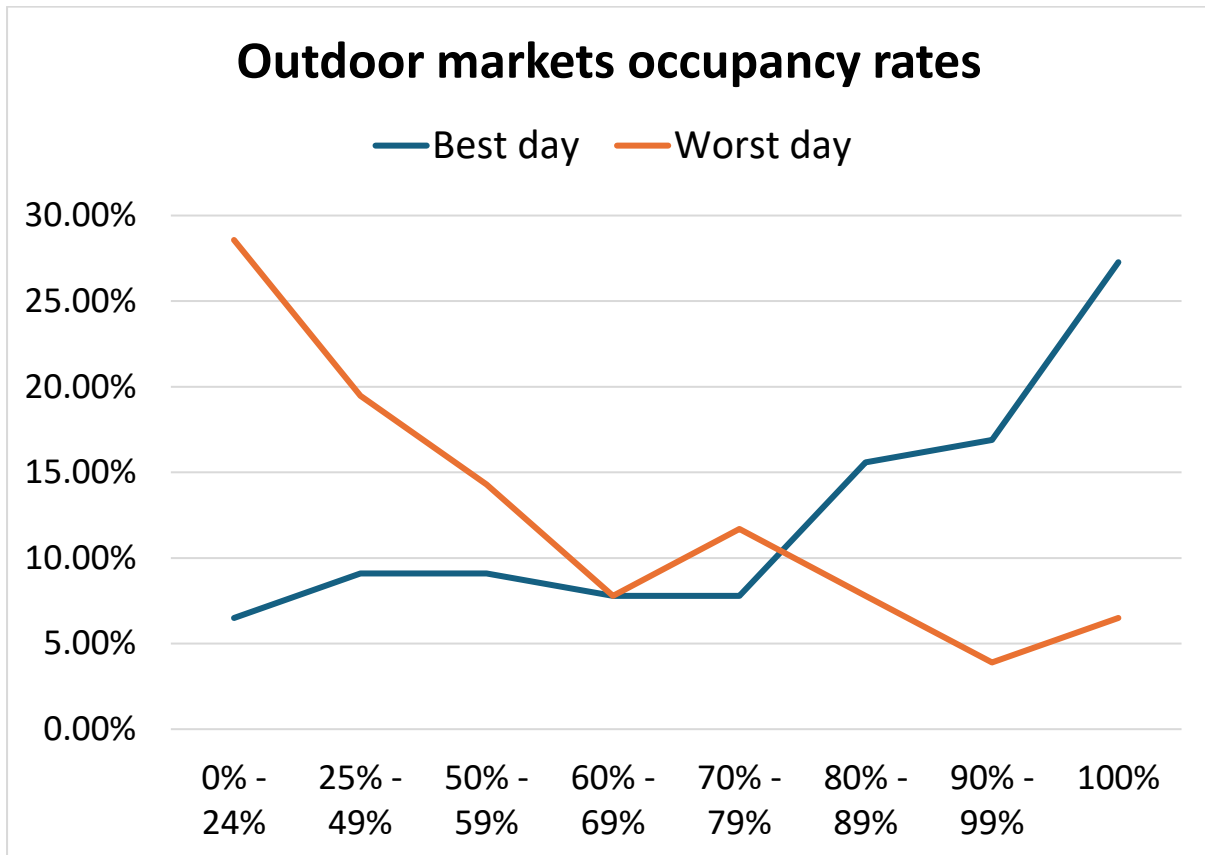
Has indoor occupancy increased or decreased in the last 5 years?



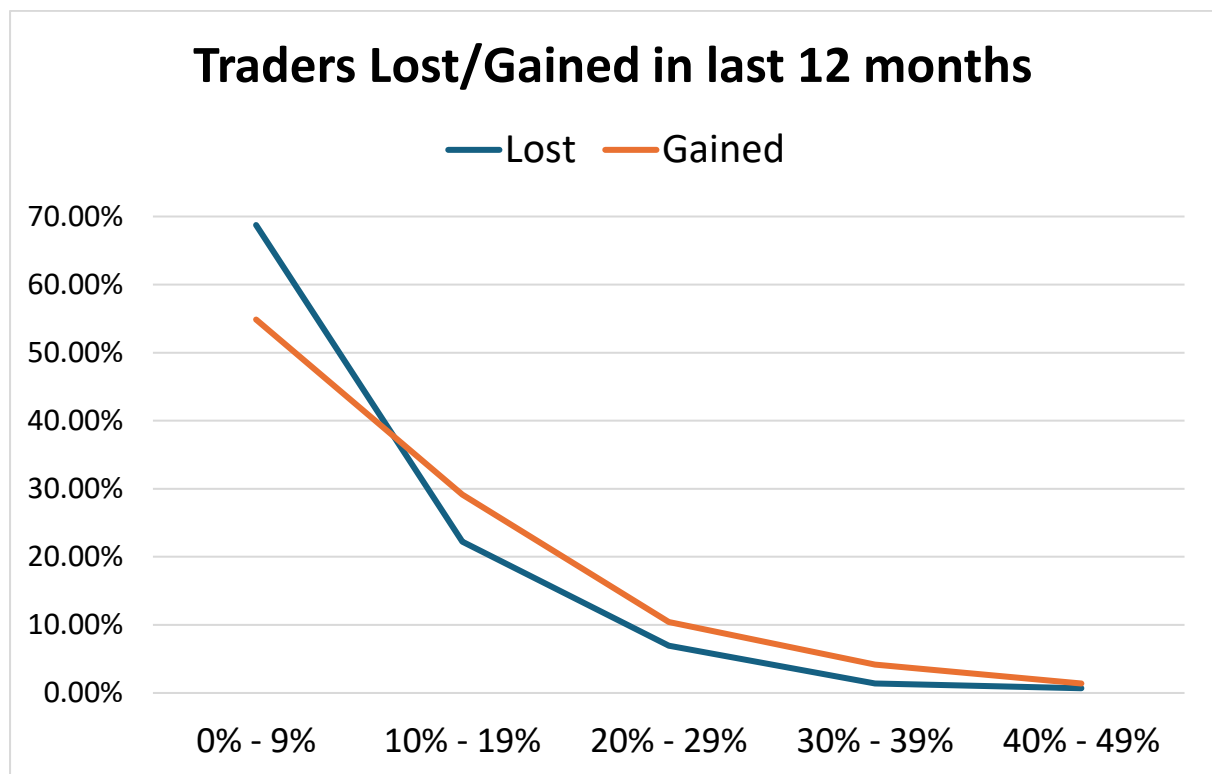
Has outdoor occupancy increased or decreased in the last 5 years?



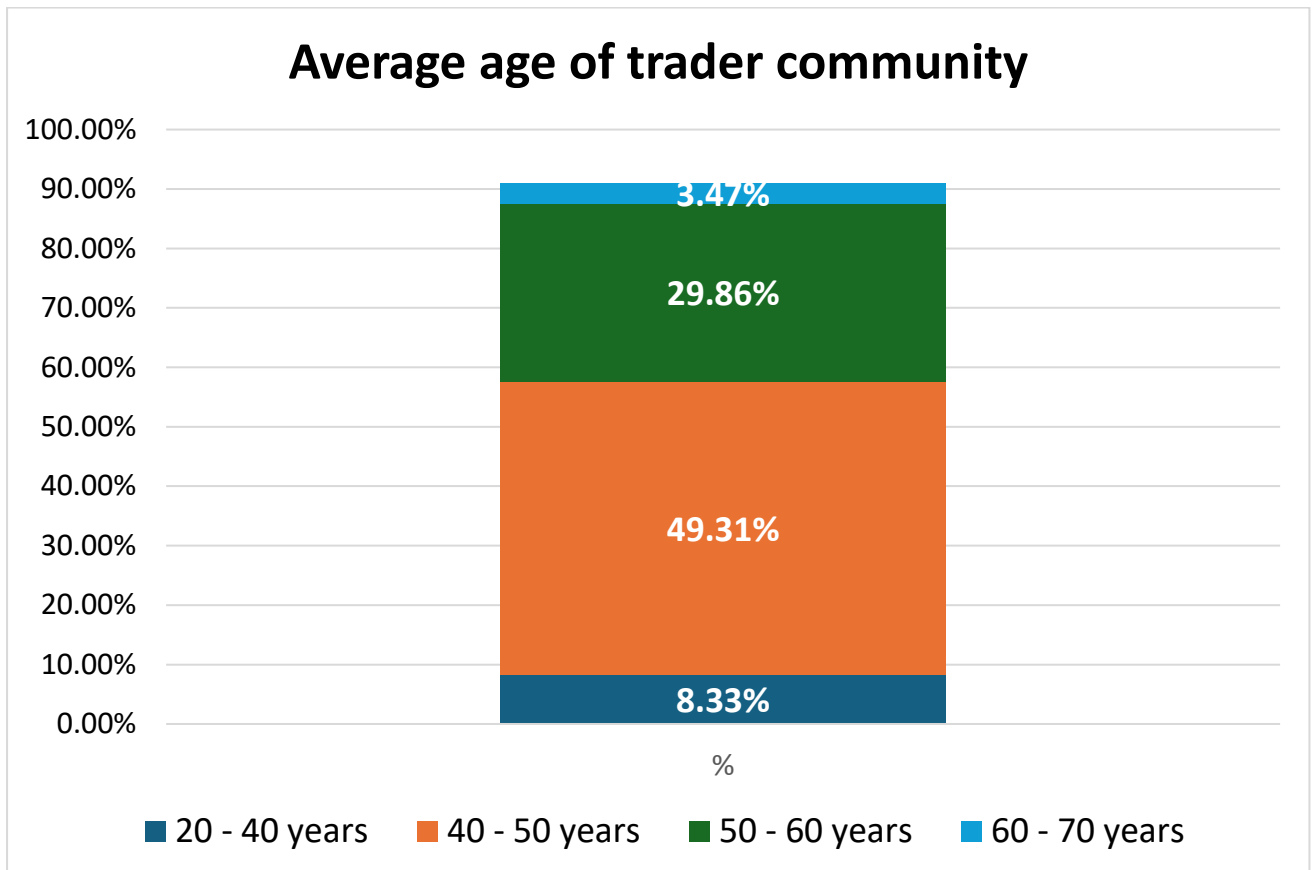
The Survey asked about the 'Best day' and 'Worst day' occupancy rates. Over a quarter of respondents have 100% occupancy on their best days and 60% have over 80% occupancy on their best day. However, over a quarter have less than 25% occupancy on their worst day.



Most Markets had lost less than 10% of their Traders in the last 12 months and had gained less than 10% in the last 12 months which suggests stability in the number of Traders.

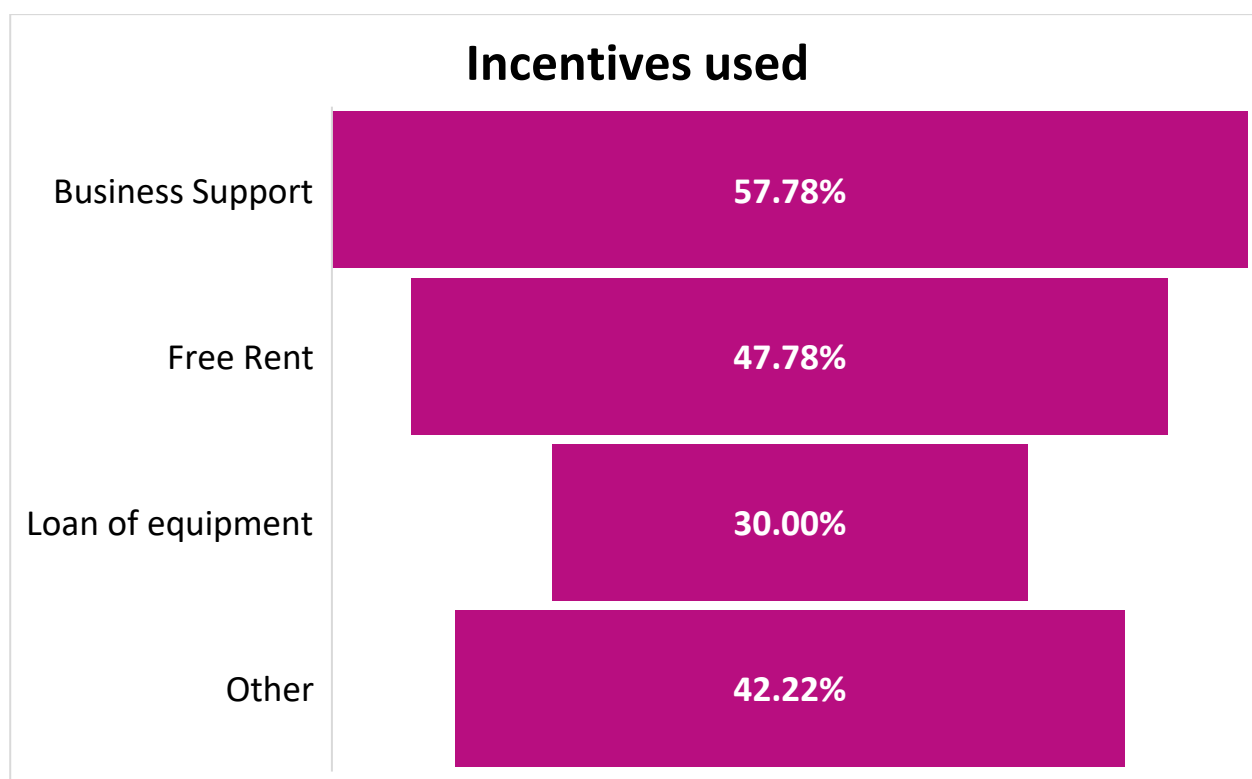


The average age of the trader community remains high. The 2022 Survey revealed that 47% of traders were in the 41-50 category and 41% of traders were in 51-60 category. Only 8% of traders were in the under 40 category. The 2024 Survey results are similar with 49% in the 40-50 category, 30% in the 50-60 category and only 8% in the 20-40 category.



Nearly two thirds of Survey respondents provide incentives to attract new traders and of these, the main incentives used were business support and free rent.

Do you provide incentives to attract new traders? – 62.5% yes

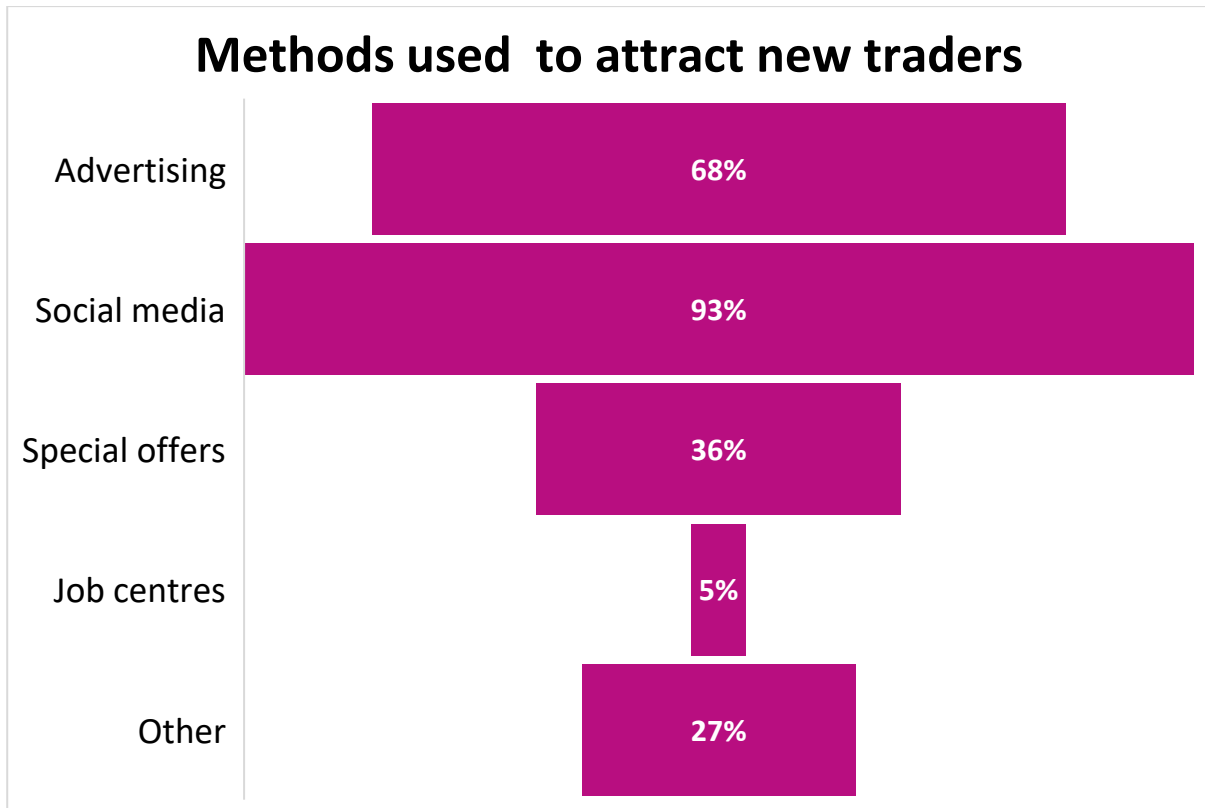


Over 80% actively try and attract new traders and the main methods used are advertising and social media, showing that modern communication methods are being actively used in the sector.

'Other' incentives provided include:

- Discounted rent for an introductory offer period
- Social media and marketing support
- Community pitch schemes
- Incubator/new start up scheme
- Free parking support
- Storage

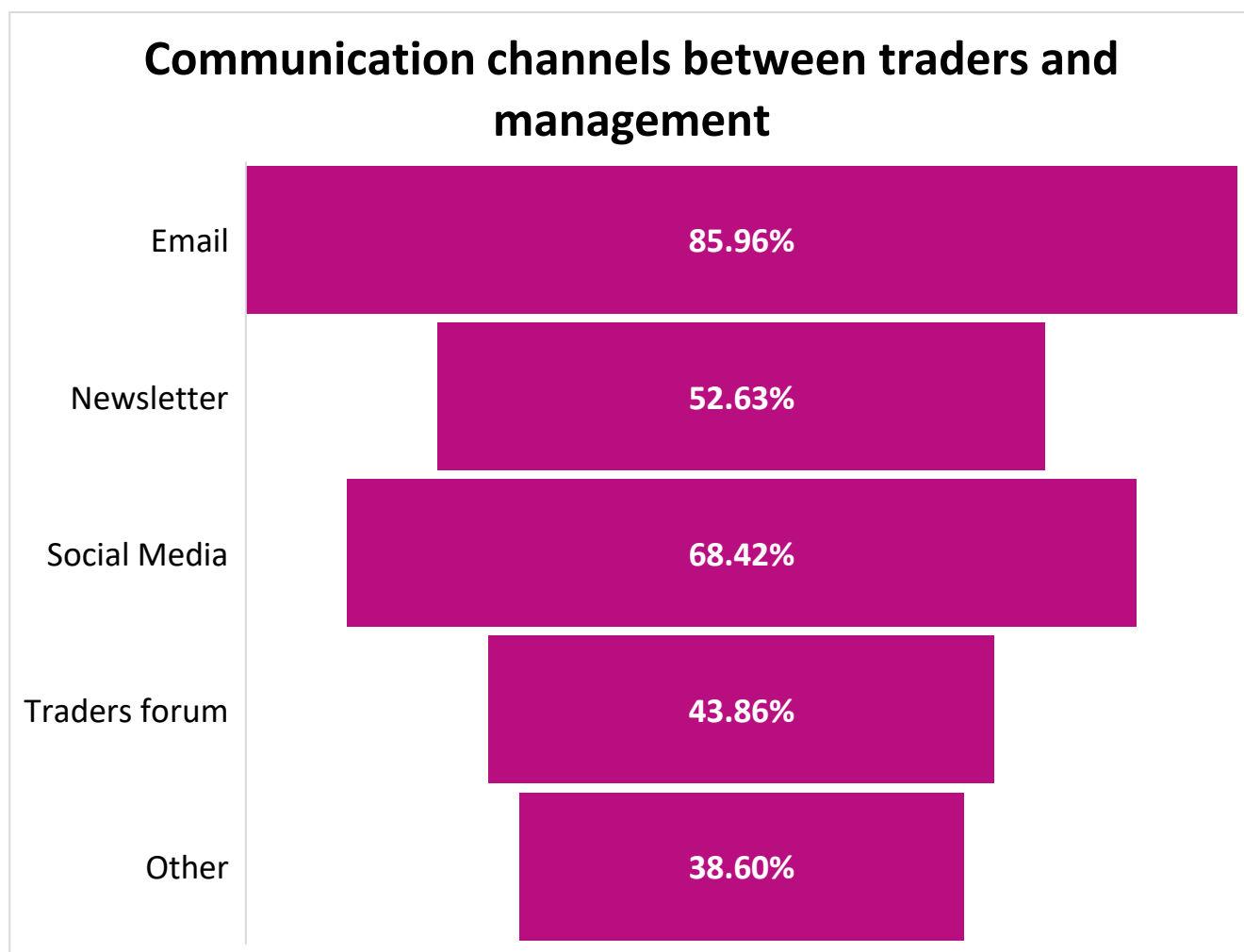
Do you actively try to attract new traders?
– 82.35% yes



'Other' methods used include:

- Business development teams/business support in the Council
- Trading Places programme
- Youth Enterprise Programme
- Visiting other markets and cross promotion
- Hosting pop up events e.g. speciality and youth
- Job Fairs
- Advertise vacant units on-line and display signage in vacant units

84% respondents stated that they have a regular and active communication channel between traders and management, and these include the following:

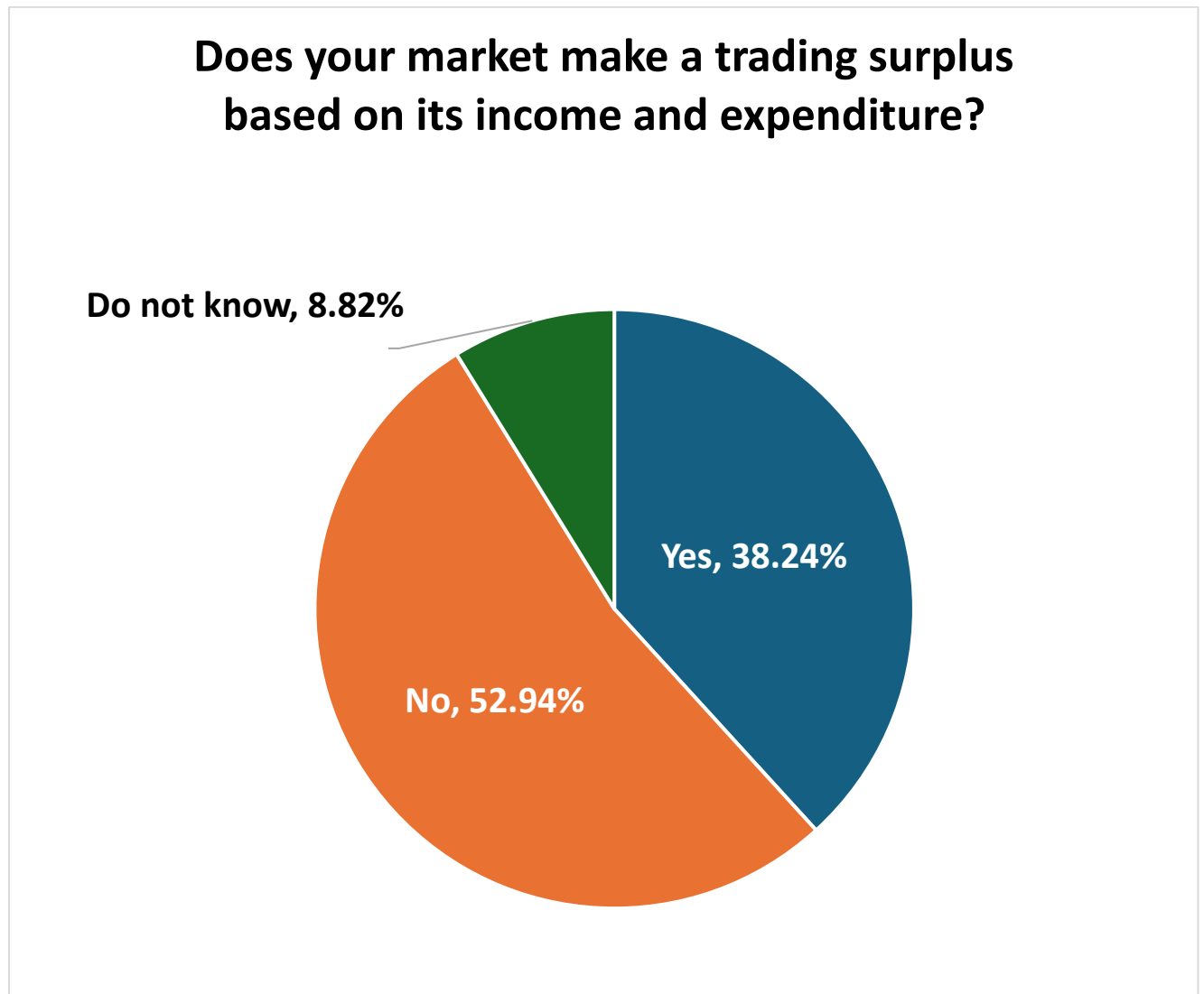


'Other' communication methods used include:

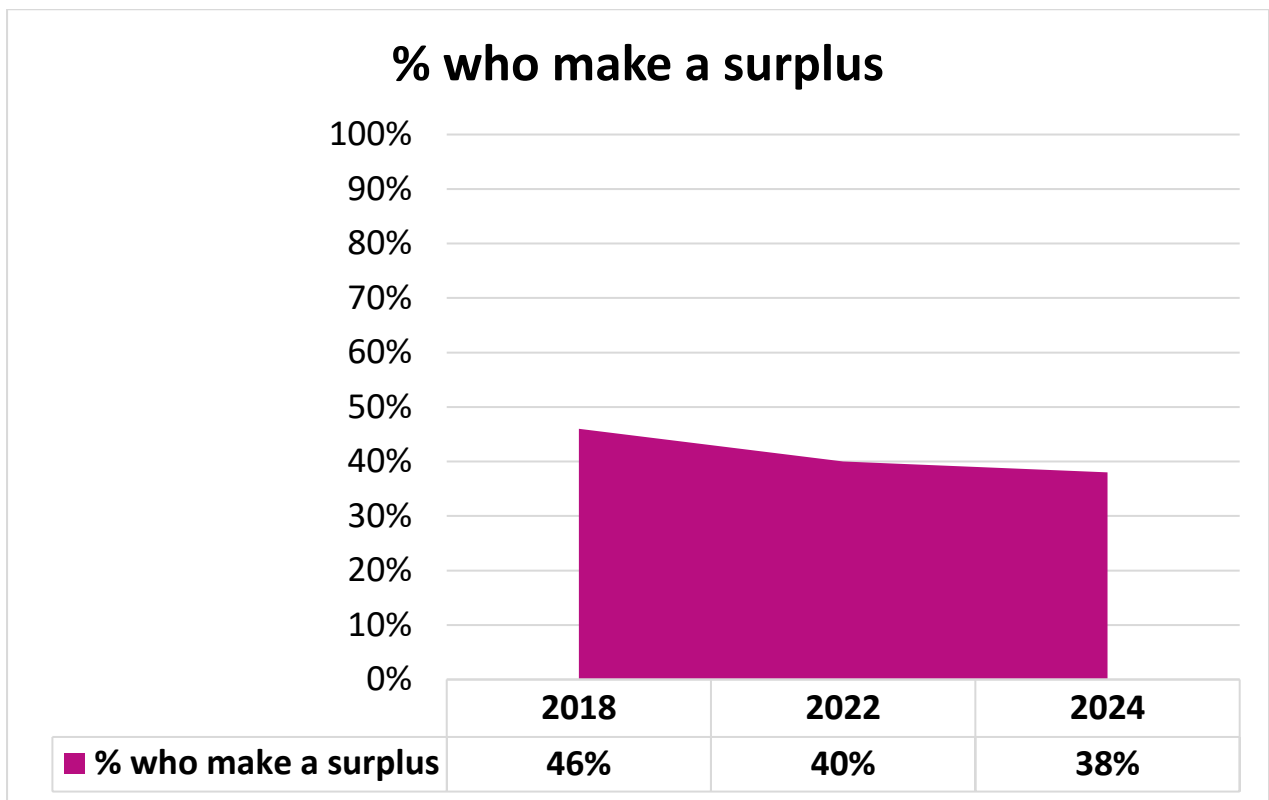
- Face to face meetings and 'open door' policy
- Market Manager on-site on market days
- Working group/action group meetings
- Whatsapp groups

Financial performance

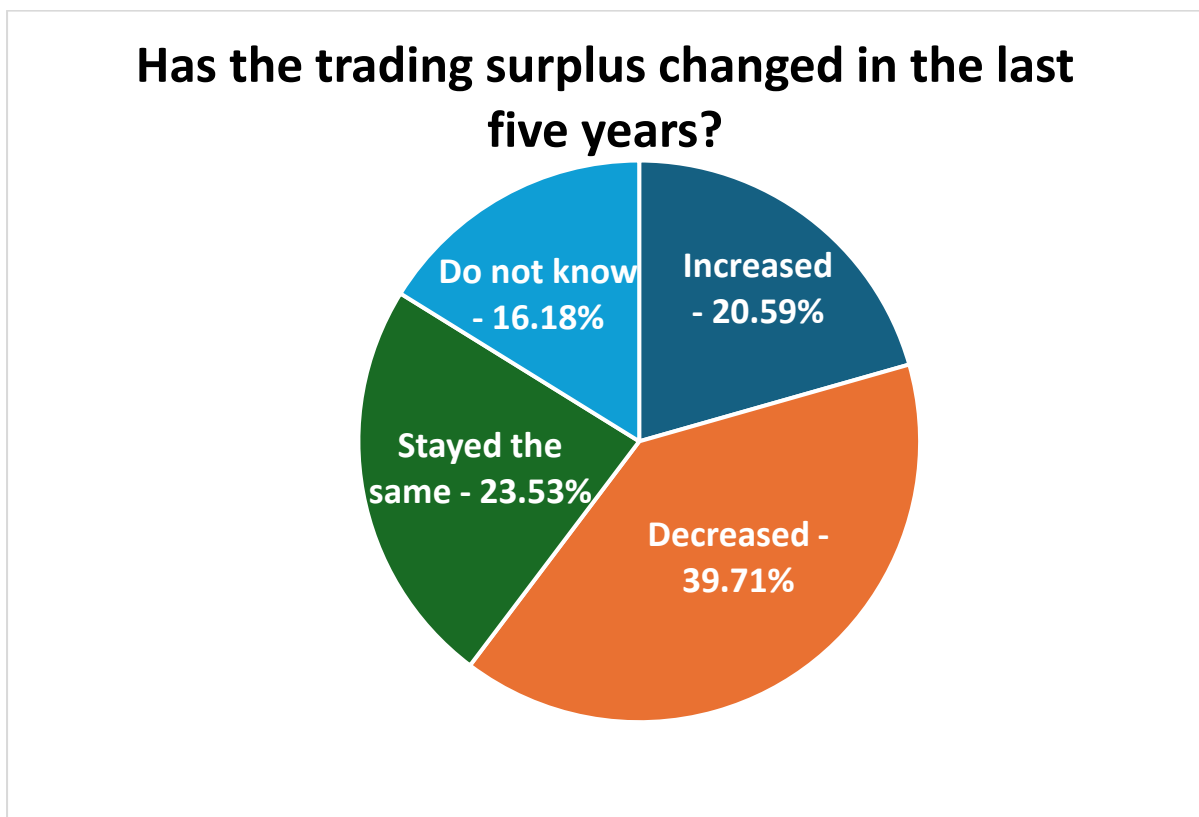
This is one of the most important areas of the Survey and yet 9% of those who provided information on their Market(s) do not know how their Market(s) is/are performing financially. Only 38% of Markets in the Survey sample make a surplus.



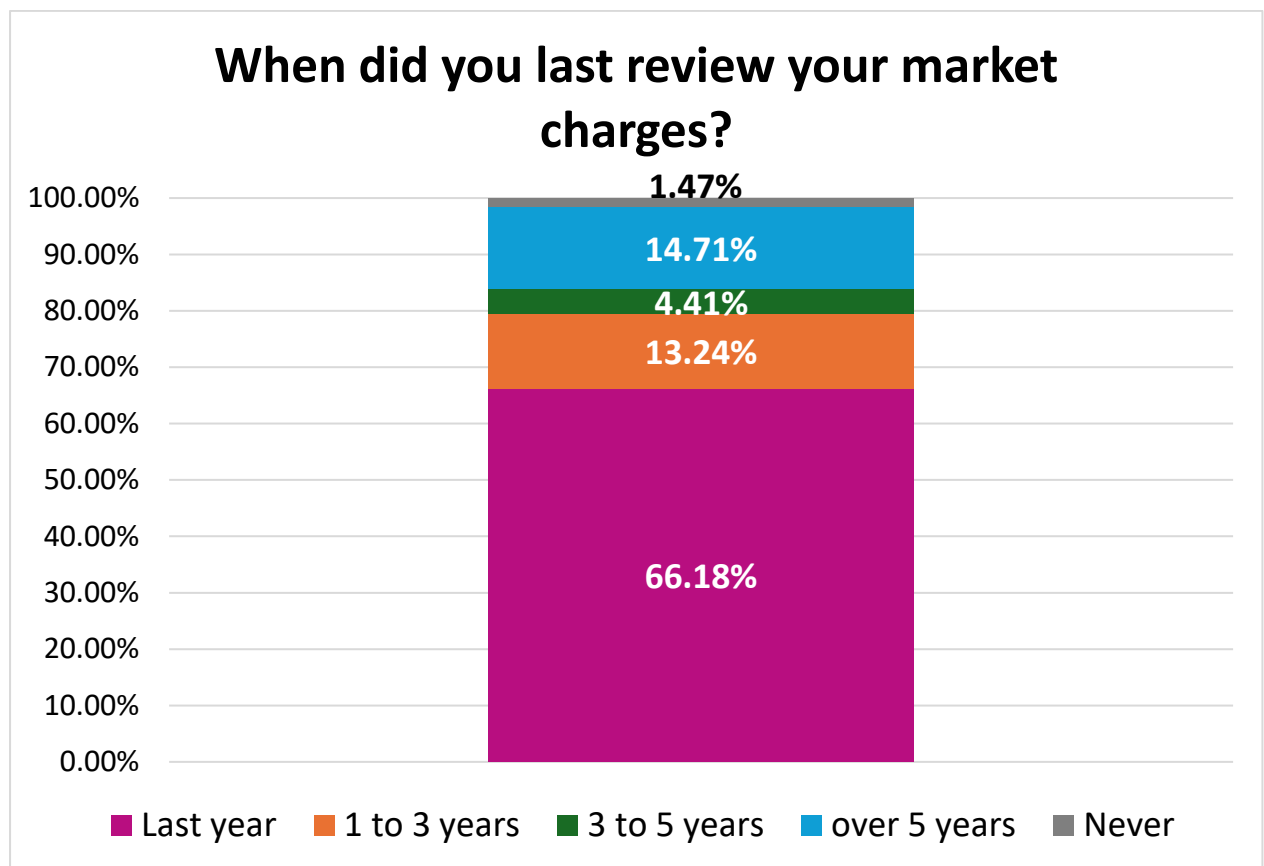
There has been a downward trajectory over the past 6 years from 46% in 2018 to 40% in 2022 and 38% now in 2024.



63% stated that their trading surplus has either decreased or stayed the same in the last 5 years – only 21% say its increased.



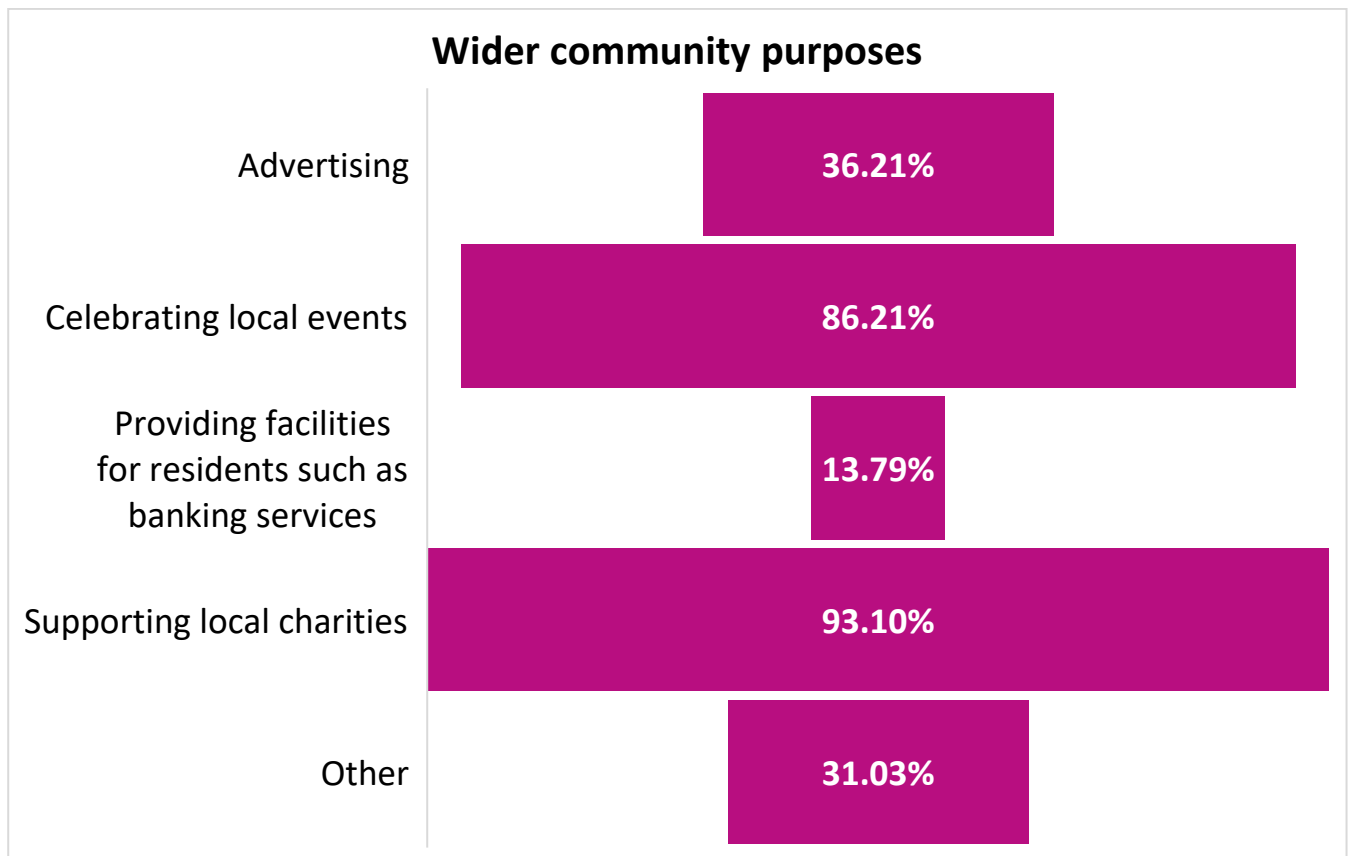
When asked when they last reviewed their market charges, two thirds had done this within the last year.



Wider benefits of Markets

Encouragingly, over 85% use their market for wider community purposes and the main purposes are celebrating local events and supporting local charities.

Do you use the market for wider community purposes? – 85.29% yes

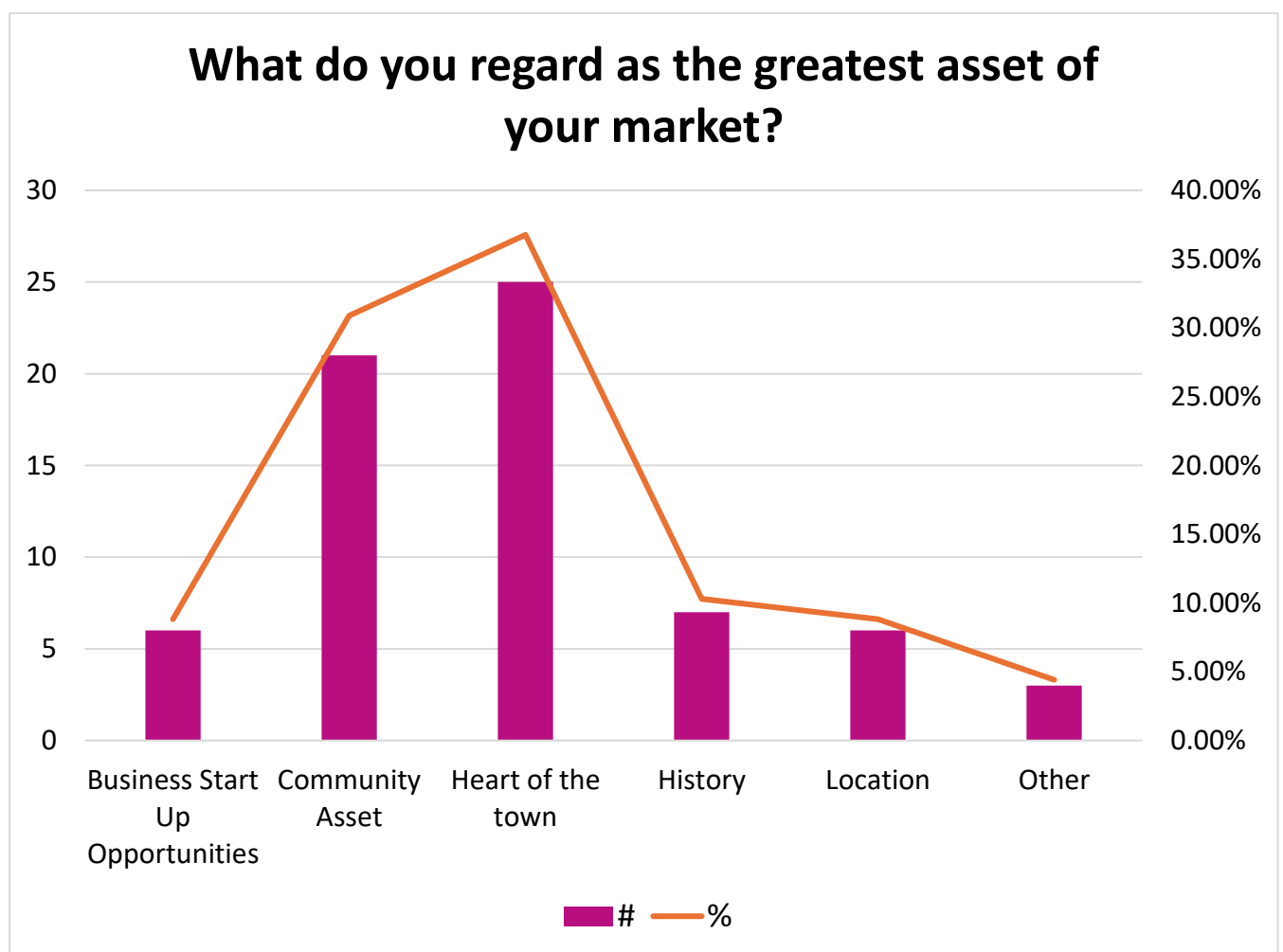


'Other' uses include the following:

- Health and wellbeing stalls
- Credit and financial advice stalls
- Music, theatre and arts projects
- NHS services e.g. health screening
- Local Council services and Parish Council information
- Community consultations/drop-ins

- Police hub
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Charity units e.g. Age UK
- Community point for the elderly and people with disabilities
- Schools/college tours
- Visitors centre
- Chatty café
- Sports pitches on-site

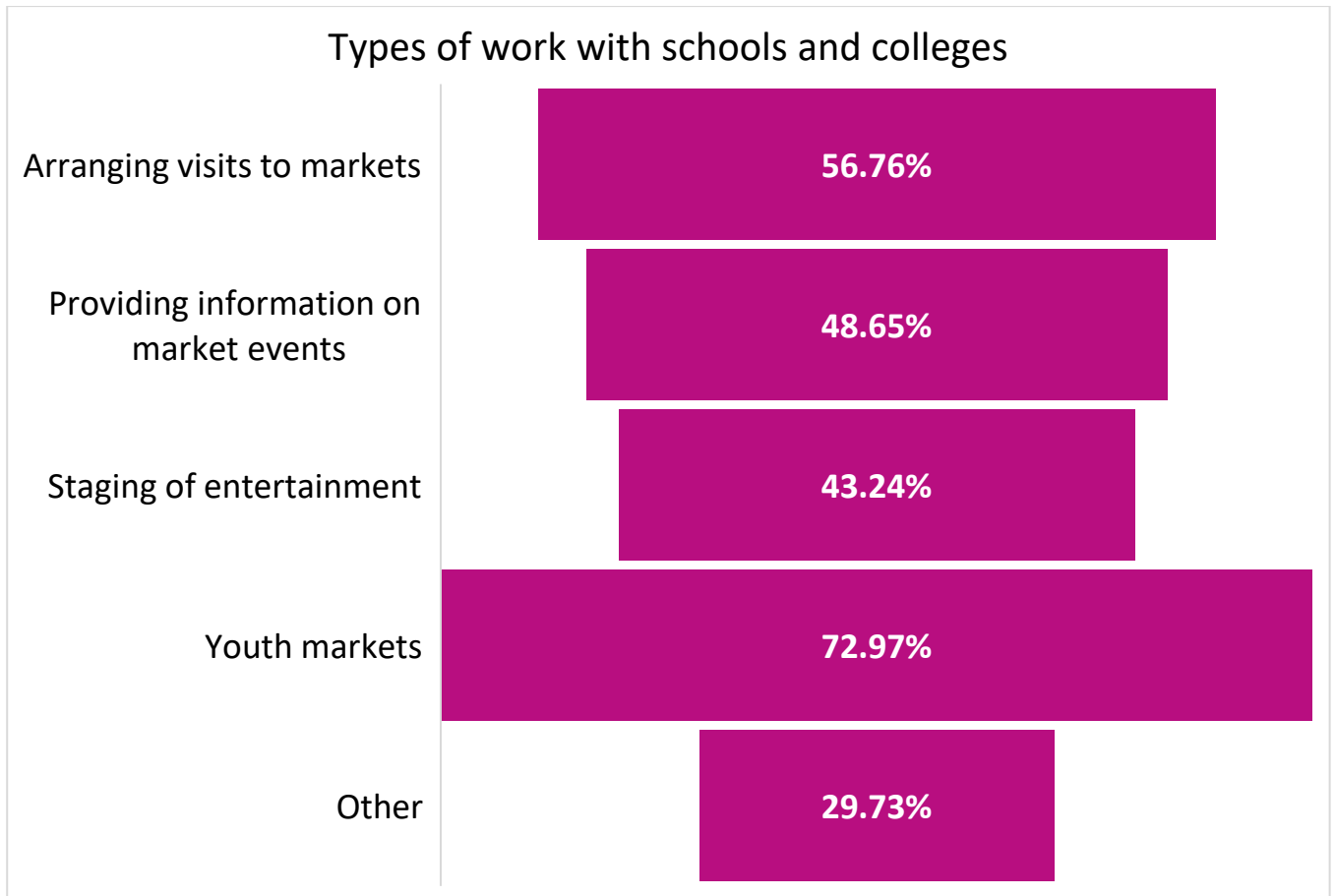
Community Asset and Heart of the Town are regarded by respondents as the greatest assets of their Market.



Just over half of Survey respondents work with schools and colleges to promote markets and market trading. This may be an untapped area which some markets could consider in the future. The main types of work are youth markets and arranging visits to markets. Over 40% provide information on market events and stage entertainment.

Do you work with schools and colleges to promote markets and market trading?

54.41% yes



'Other' activities included the following:

- Experience of running a market stall
- Funded school stalls
- School Food Matters and student food schemes
- Market mascot visits to schools
- Heritage walks
- Work with local universities on modules for their degree

Case studies:

Leeds – Community engagement

Leighton Buzzard – Retaining and attracting traders

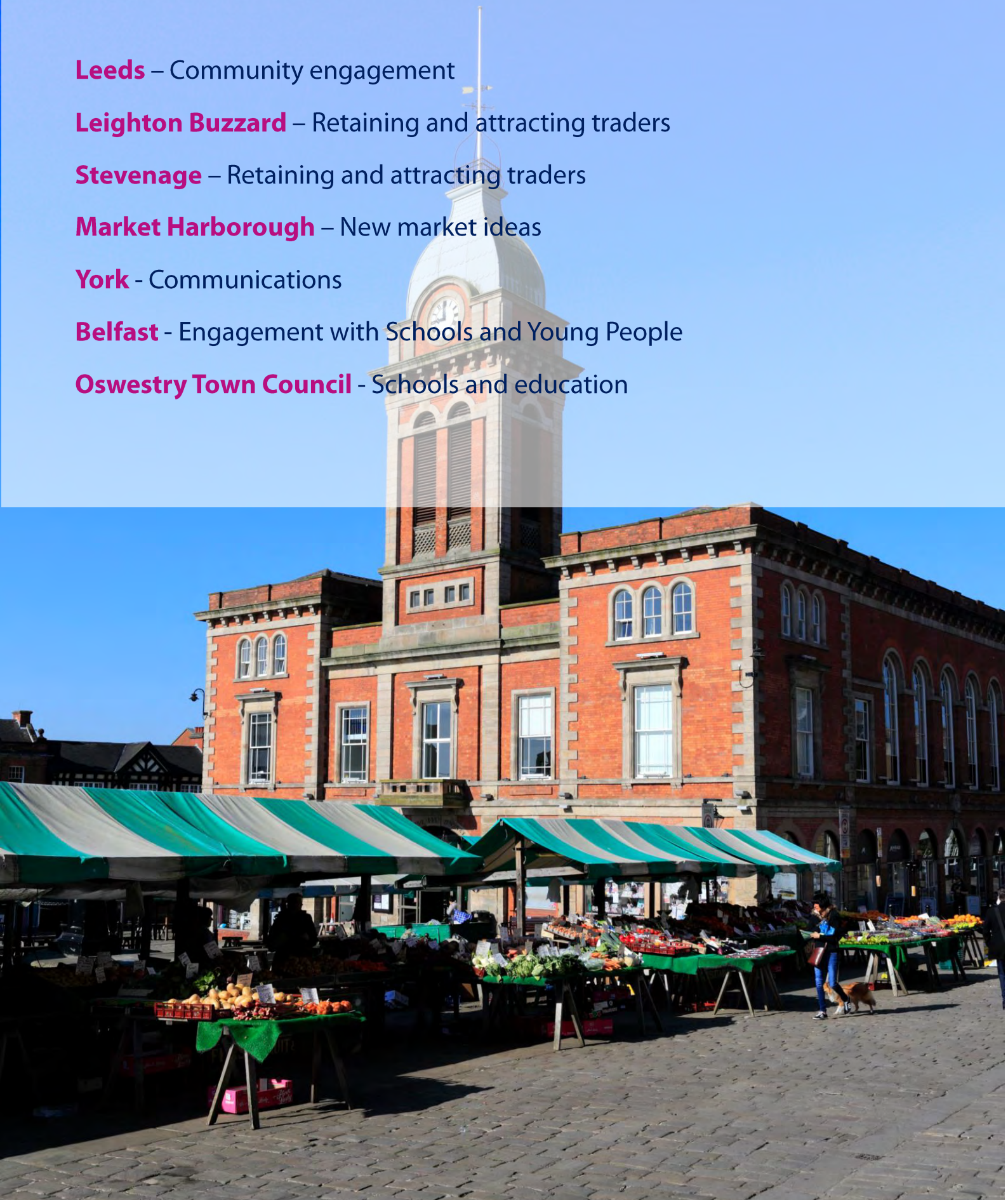
Stevenage – Retaining and attracting traders

Market Harborough – New market ideas

York - Communications

Belfast - Engagement with Schools and Young People

Oswestry Town Council - Schools and education



Leeds - Community engagement

Leeds Kirkgate Market is a covered market complex located in the city centre that dates back to the mid-1800s – it is the largest covered market in Europe and a Grade 1 listed building. Kirkgate has a very strong focus on community engagement – there are a huge number of events, services and initiatives for people across all sections of the local community, including the elderly, disabled people, families, children, young people, plus schools and universities. The market hosts events with a range of partners including the NHS, local theatres and various community groups, including refugee support groups. Cultural events such as celebrating Chinese New Year, Indian food festivals and gothic fairs prove extremely popular and are amongst the most well-attended events the market hosts. Additionally, the market's tenant base is very diverse and representative of the city.

Community is not only the focus of events and services but also the wider market strategy, with the five-year strategy developed through extensive community consultation. Accessibility is also a key focus, with Kirkgate Market being awarded the Scope Inclusive Activity Award in 2023 for their dedication to providing accessible activities for families and local people.

A key example of the market's community focus is the 'library hub', providing access to library services in an additional location to

the main Leeds central library. The hub includes free computer and internet access, as well as a free printing service – these resources are often used by job seekers and people who do not have home access to a computer.

The market provides free event spaces for community activities and initiatives including:

- Voluntary Action Leeds (supporting people into local volunteer positions).
- Public health initiatives (cancer awareness, liver and heart health checks).
- School engagement programs (teaching young children where fresh produce is sourced locally and the importance of a healthy diet)
- University collaborations (using the market as gallery space and being able to sell their products).
- Support for local refugees (setting up a speciality market to allow them to sell goods they have made and to help integrate with the local community).
- Free children's events during school holidays.
- A specially designed community space for people with disabilities. It allows them to have quiet space in the market if needed, alongside specially adapted tables to enable wheelchair users to sit with friends and family altogether.

Challenges

In recent years the promotion budget available to the markets team has been reduced, meaning that they need to be more creative with their promotional activities to stretch the smaller budget. The cost-of-living crisis is also cited as something impacting both market tenants, who have had to increase prices for products and goods, but also visitors – some of whom are spending less money. There are concerns over how this will impact visitor numbers and footfall in the longer term.

The ability of some community groups to operate and hold events may be impacted if their funding is cut, which in turn impacts the number of events hosted in the market impacting footfall and potential new business openings.

Solutions

Become more creative with limited resources; maintain a flexible and diverse event programme to attract a diverse range of people as you can; build strong and adaptable relationships with partners and continue to put community needs and accessibility at the heart of the strategy.

Future plans

- Develop a new five-year strategic plan for 2026-2031 – moving from recovery post-covid to market growth.
- Becoming more dementia friendly.
- Continue to expand the public health offer.
- Development of a hotel and council-run gym.
- Collaborating with Stack (a food and beverage company) to develop the outdoor market and drive added footfall to the market.
- Creating local job opportunities through the new developments.
- Continue to expand the cultural event offer.

Other recent achievements include the opening of 26 new businesses in the past 14 months and helping to maintain over 255 local businesses across Leeds, creating a circular local economy where traders and businesses support each other.

The council have also carried out the redevelopment of the oldest part of the market dating back to 1875 to bring historic market units up to modern standards as part of an £11m investment by Leeds City Council to ensure the long-term future of the market.

Leighton Buzzard – Retaining and attracting traders

Leighton Buzzard is a historic market town, with the market's Royal Charter granted in 1086. The market is a twice-weekly outdoor market, which won the NABMA Great British Market Award for Best Local Council Market in 2022. The market has a strong local reputation and attracts many visitors.

Initiatives

- **Historical branding and engagement:** The council-run social media profile (as well as the market website) has a significant focus on the market's heritage, with old photos of the market posted and references to its Royal Charter being a mainstay.
- **Free gazebos:** The council provides gazebos and tables to traders for free. Although some more established traders choose to have their own branded tables and gazebos, it makes it easier for startups and new traders to set up by reducing costs.
- **Active social media:** New traders get social media shout-outs, as well as continued 'check-ins' and coverage, this is done in-house by the council.
- **Community involvement:** Collaborations with local schools, artists, and non-market businesses to help boost local engagement.

- **Market busking:** Select local buskers (they must send through examples of their performances, which are then approved by the market team) are allowed to perform under a provided gazebo, enhancing the market atmosphere.

Challenges and solutions

- **Limited space for certain traders:** There is a high number of prospective traders wishing to open stalls selling baked goods and clothing stalls; to prevent oversaturation the council has created a waiting list. When a space is made available for a certain type of stall (trader is off or left) somebody on the waiting list will be invited to take the space.
- **Attracting young traders:** Although the market is well known in the local area, there are other larger markets nearby, meaning that attracting new young traders can be difficult. They have responded by offering flexible participation options.
- **Ageing trader population:** Many traders are approaching retirement, this, combined with some difficulty in attracting younger traders is a concern. The team is actively seeking to draw in younger traders.

- **Specialist market issues:** The specific farmers' market has been struggling in recent years, due to fewer local farmers participating and selling their produce. In response, the team has broadened the definition of the farmers' market, to include 'food producers' as well.
- **Operational inefficiencies:** Data collection is currently managed via spreadsheets, limiting strategic planning. They aim to improve data tracking for better decision-making.
- **Evening markets:** Discussions are ongoing about having evening markets in the warmer months. This includes collaborations with local pubs, bars and shops, as well as providing entertainment (DJ etc) to attract younger people.
- **Services market:** Looking at opening a 'services market', where local businesses (e.g. cleaners, dog walking services) can pay for a short-term pitch to promote themselves to the public

Future plans

- **More seating and food options:** Plans to introduce picnic-style seating and increase the number of hot food vendors – encouraging longer visits by making the market a place people can spend time in.
- **Atmosphere improvements:** Expanding the busking initiative and integrating more community events and workshops.
- **Improved signage:** Making the farmers' market more visible to increase footfall.



Stevenage – Retaining and attracting traders

Stevenage market is a covered indoor market located in the town centre – it opened in 1973. The Stevenage market team provide a number of initiatives and tailored support to retain current traders and attract new ones. These include:

- **New Trader Rates:** New traders are offered a 6-month discounted rate. This allows them to test their business model with less financial risk – encouraging new traders to operate in the market.
- **Short-term trading licenses:** Another offer for new traders, where they can take advantage of a 28-day trading license instead of a regular long-term license – again allowing for greater flexibility and less commitment on the part of new traders. People can also apply for a very short-term ‘pop up’ stall costing £20 per day – ensuring that the market is open to the widest range of people possible.
- **Social media and marketing support:** The council uses an external marketing agency to manage social media promotion for Stevenage market traders – including Facebook, Instagram and TikTok – traders do not pay for this service. It allows for regular uploads and professional management of

content to help traders reach more customers and increase sales and general footfall.

- **Free events and workshops:** Stevenage market organises free events for families and children in the town centre, incorporating traders and helping to increase footfall. Examples include a Mother’s Day mug design workshop.
- **Partnership with Wenta:** The market has a partnership with Wenta, a non-profit social enterprise that offers business training. Free advice, support and courses are available to both new and existing traders to improve their business skills.

These offerings help to cater for both new and existing traders – providing discounts and flexible licenses encourages people to ‘take the plunge’ and open a market stall, safe in the knowledge that they do not have to sign a long-term trading license and are able to minimise their financial risk due to paying lower rates initially. For established traders, the market teams work to increase the visibility of the market via the external marketing agency, as well as drawing potential customers to the market and town centre area with free events.

Challenges

The challenges faced by Stevenage Market are representative of the challenges faced by markets across the UK. The primary ones mentioned were:

- **Cost of living crisis:** The rising cost of goods has meant that the financial environment has become more challenging for traders, as they are forced to put prices up whilst customers have less money in their pockets to spend.
- **Rise of online shopping:** Like many markets and physical shops, the popularisation of online shopping has reduced foot traffic in the town centre, leading to reduced customers and sales. The markets team previously attempted to use a (now defunct) online shopping platform that allowed traders to sell their goods online – a lack of willingness to engage and preference for ‘traditional’ practices amongst the traders prevented this from succeeding.

Future plans

The current indoor market has been open since the 1970s – a new location for the market is planned to provide a modern, brighter and generally more appealing environment for traders and customers. Further to this is a general rebranding of the market, with a new logo and fresh decorations – this has spurred interest from new traders, with a waiting list set up for the new market space.

Although the market relocation and rebranding is not officially part of the wider Stevenage regeneration project – totalling £1bn of developments – it will accompany a renewal of the town centre, including new event spaces and greenspaces for the local community, helping to further contribute to greater footfall.



Market Harbourough – New market ideas

Harbourough Market dates back at least 800 years – there has been a market in some form since 1204. The current indoor market was built in the early 1990s, with a full refurbishment taking place in 2014. Recently, the market won the NABMA award for ‘Best Small Indoor Market 2025’, with the judges commenting that “this market has undergone a remarkable transformation, achieving 100% occupancy while fostering strong engagement with traders and local events. Known for its vibrant atmosphere and innovative initiatives, Harbourough Market is a shining example of resilience and reinvention.”

The market team is particularly proud of the market’s links with the local community, and have carried out a number of initiatives to give the market a unique character and enjoyable atmosphere.

Initiatives

- **Supporting young traders:** The market has partnered with the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) to support young traders and help them establish their businesses – with a young traders market held in the past, including a prize of four free weeks of trading across four awards categories.
- **Community workshops:** The team is organising workshops – led by traders – to allow people to learn

new skills such as cake decorating, plant repotting, and dim sum-making. These events not only help to engage the local community in the market, but also allow traders to build relationships with customers and awareness of their business.

Challenges

Like a lot of markets, Harbourough has seen the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on customers, with average spend for customers decreasing, while the price of goods – particularly hot street food – have increased. However, footfall has remained quite consistent despite this, and the team is focusing on maintaining a balance between the types of goods on offer – making sure that there is an availability of more traditional market item such as fresh fruit and veg, whilst also catering for more expensive goods.

An issue specific to Harbourough is the state of its current indoor market building, which has experienced a number of maintenance issues such as roof leaks, as well as an outdated lift. The cost of the refurbishments is high, so the market is seeking funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, along with capital funding from the council.

Future plans

- **Twilight Market:** Inspired by other markets, Harborough is planning to introduce an evening market once a month during the summer, including live music and a greater focus on food. They hope to attract new customers who don't attend regular market days, particularly young people.
- **Digital screens:** The team is considering the instillation of digital screens (depending on funding) to enhance visitors' experiences and increase footfall, showing live events such as Wimbledon.
- **Utilising space:** There are also plans to add and improve aspects of the market environment, such as adding more seating and providing live music.



York - Communications

The Shambles Market in York has developed a unique and inclusive approach to engaging with their traders, a key example of this was in the review of market rules and regulations, along with the establishment of an elected trader representative forum. As a Teckal company (City of York Council is the sole shareholder), they were able to take an unconventional approach in their recent rules and regulations review. It is usual practice for market operators to engage with their council legal department who play a key part in the review. However, Make it York engaged with the industry bodies such as NABMA for legal guidance and NMTF for their input into the overall process and timeline. Regarding trader engagement, they did the following:

1. Established a 'trader representative' position, elected by the market traders, to attend meetings and provide a unified voice.
2. Created a transparent, inclusive process for the rules review.
3. Held drop-in sessions for traders to ask questions and seek clarity so that they could provide their individual feedback.
4. Provided a complete and detailed rationale for changes and non-changes.

This approach allowed for a more robust, collaborative process that ensured all

stakeholders' voices were heard. In the past, trader representative meetings had been somewhat disjointed and "ad hoc", messaging had been somewhat inconsistent with traders interpreting changes differently. The new approach was designed to ensure clear, simple and straightforward communication to the whole trader community, with opportunities for them to ask questions via the drop in forums or directly to the trader representative.

Additionally, the document outlining the rules and regulations changes was designed to be as clear as possible, with a table-style layout outlining what had and had not been changed, including the rationale.

Challenges

- Some opposition to rule changes
- Only received a 14% direct response rate from traders regarding the rule changes. They did receive mainly positive verbal and anecdotal feedback, but converting this into formal feedback (via the official forms) was tricky.
- Although council contact was fully briefed on the rule changes, in retrospect they would have liked to have done more to engage councillors themselves.

Future plans

- Establishing more frequent daily drop-in sessions
- Reviewing trader representative meeting terms of reference
- Encouraging new trader representatives to come forward
- Continuing engagement through social events like the Christmas 'meet the team' event and summer BBQs
- Sponsoring tourism awards
- Integrating the market trader in to more city-wide events



Belfast - Engagement with Schools and Young People

Belfast City Council oversees several markets, including both permanent and seasonal (e.g. Christmas and Spring markets). The biggest is St. George's Market, a weekend market that hosts around 190 traders.

Engagement with Schools

The council has established strong relationships with schools across the city, engaging them and their pupils in a range of activities. These include specific market events such as choir performances during Christmas and themed workshops for pupils throughout the year, such as Mother's Day and Halloween. Schools are also included in the market team's sustainability strategy, with pupils being invited to create and maintain small gardens and vegetable patches – this also helps to teach students about healthy eating and food production. The market also hosts learning sessions on recycling, building on pupils' knowledge of sustainable practices.

Additionally, the council runs a young enterprise market every year at St George's, giving school and college enterprise groups across Northern Ireland the chance to sell their products. The programme has been running for over ten years, allowing students to gain firsthand business

experience – the market has received coverage in the media, including the BBC.

Support for young traders

Outside of school and college-based groups, the council supports young entrepreneurs (as well as new businesses) by offering 'test trading' spaces in St George's market. Businesses must have been operating for less than two years to qualify and are given the opportunity to trade for six weeks for free. This allows traders to test the viability of their products and reduce initial financial risk.

The council also partners with the National Market Traders Federation - which holds the Young Traders Market competition – to host the regional final, further supporting local young traders.

Additionally, the market team organises paid performances for weekend markets, often putting social media requests out for young musicians.

Challenges

Overall, engagement with schools and young people has been very successful – however some challenges do exist. Firstly, in the case of school visits, some traders can be hesitant to engage with pupils, showing concern that having school children in the

market could disrupt their trading. This requires careful consideration to navigate on the part of the markets team, ensuring that traders do not feel disrupted while also maintain the educational offer for local schools.

Future plans

The council aims to expand its sustainability efforts by integrating:

- **Formal food strategy:** Offering workshops and tours relating to food and sustainability, linking with wider plans to make St George's market more sustainable.
- **Educational tours:** Beyond historical and food tours, the council plans to introduce structured educational tours. The hope is that this will help to engage children from a young age in the market and help to secure the next generation of traders.
- **Further supporting young traders:** Having seen increasing participation, the team is keen to offer more support to young traders, as well as expand school engagement in the young enterprise market.



Oswestry Town Council - Schools and education

The Town Council has a big focus on youth engagement and providing opportunities for young people in the community and this is reflected in the operation of its markets. This covers supporting and including local young people through the market, engagement with schools, and working to develop young traders.

Engagement with young people includes the youth forum, which invites 11- to 17-year-olds to contribute to council business and share their views on local issues, they also sponsor a "makers cabinet" giving budding entrepreneurs an opportunity to sell their goods. The market team and wider council also take pride in offering meaningful work experience to young people, giving them insight into council operations, including market management.

Market engagement with schools:

- Inclusion in 'Love Your Local Market': The event, which takes place in May, serves as a celebration of the markets and seeks to encourage new traders to set up stalls at discounted rates. Schools – particularly secondary schools – and colleges are invited to participate in the 'Youth Market' by selling arts, crafts, and catering products at the markets. These are usually school-based entrepreneur clubs, which

give the pupils a chance to have real hands-on experience in serving customers and trading.

- School visits: The council encourages local schools to visit the market to learn about the town's history and heritage – which helps to develop a sense of ownership, pride and interest in the markets amongst young people.
- Arts display Space: Schools have the opportunity to display their artwork in a gallery space at the indoor market.

Young Traders

The council is keen to create an environment for younger traders where they can thrive, offering short-term and flexible trading spaces, as well as low startup costs to reduce the barriers to entry as much as possible – around 10% of traders at council markets are under 30, with many engaging in other jobs at the same time.

It was noted that young people do face non-financial barriers too, including a perception that the goods they offer may be inferior to those of more established traders. Additionally, young traders tend to be 'makers' of their goods, such as crafts and baked goods, which require more time to prepare, and more effort in aspects, they are therefore less likely to be at every

market all year around. The council hosts a local 'Young Market Trader of the Year' competition to promote emerging young traders, with the prize of a free market stall up for grabs.

Challenges

In addition to the barriers faced by young traders, the team noted that there can be some difficulty in getting schools to participate regularly in market activities. Limits on the amount of time pupils can spend outside of school as well as transportation issues have contributed to this.

Future plans

The council is planning to introduce 'speciality markets' alongside the regular Saturday market – for example, a vegan market, which would enable young traders to reach new audiences and help grow their businesses. By providing greater flexibility and a wider customer base, the market teams hope to make market trading a more viable full-time business opportunity for young people, thereby establishing new permanent and long-term traders.

