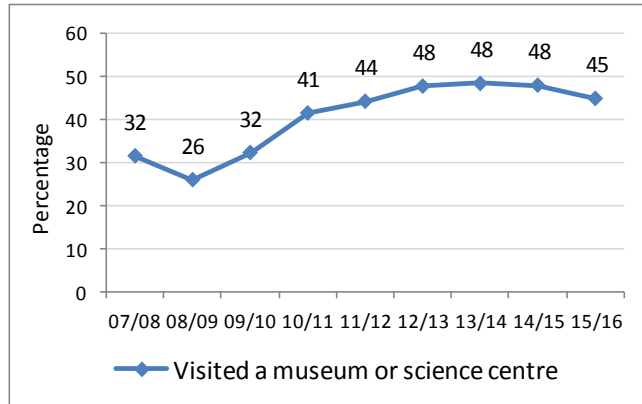


## Main stories

- Overall, there was a decline in the proportion of adults visiting museums and science centres during 2015/16 compared with the previous years' figures. This decrease was largely driven by a decrease in the proportion of adults visiting a National museum.
- The most frequently cited reasons for visiting a museum or science centre were 'To see a specific exhibition/display', 'Something to interest the children' and 'General interest in the subject of the museum/collection'.

### Visited a museum or science centre

Decrease from previous years' figures



In 2015/16, the proportion of adults visiting a museum or science centre within the previous year decreased when compared with each of the three previous years.

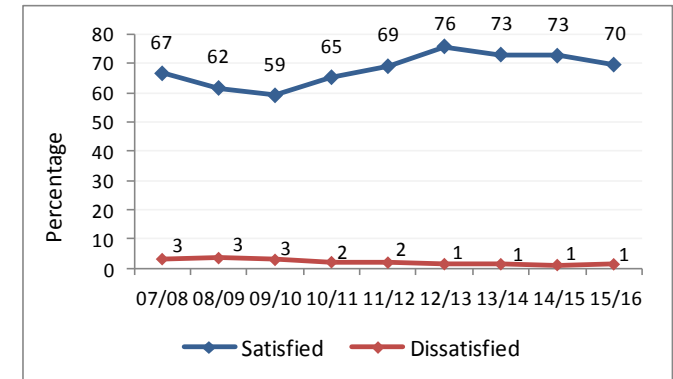
### Reasons for visiting a museum

Main reasons for visiting a museum



The main reasons for visiting a museum or science centre were 'To see a specific exhibition/display', 'Something to interest the children' and 'General interest in the subject of the museum/collection'.

### Satisfaction with museum provision



Although a slightly lower proportion of adults were satisfied with museum provision in 2015/16 compared to the three previous years, the proportion of adults who were dissatisfied with museum provision remains consistently low at 1% of adults.

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## Introduction

The Department for Communities (DfC) is committed to ensuring the highest standards for museums and continuing to develop them as attractions for the local population and for visitors. DfC leads policy development in relation to the museum sector and provides support for museums through its Arms Length Bodies. The Northern Ireland Museum Policy states that DfC's vision for museums is a coordinated and sustainable museum sector that:

- develops, preserves and interprets its collections to the highest possible standards;
- delivers quality services that inspire, educate and engage local, national and international visitors; and
- harnesses its strengths and diversity to support economic, social and cultural development.

There are forty- four museums in Northern Ireland recognised under the Museum Accreditation Scheme. National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) holds collections of national significance. In 2015/16, it had three main sites: the Ulster Museum, the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, and the Ulster American Folk Park. In 2015/16, there were twenty one accredited local authority museums, thirteen accredited independently/voluntary run museums and seven National Trust Museums across Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) supports local museums across Northern Ireland in maintaining and improving their standards of collections care and public service, and to promote a coherent framework of museum provision. The Council provides grant assistance to local museums in support of their programmes, research on collections and the acquisition of objects. In addition to museums, DfC also provides financial support for the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium and has an oversight role in relation to W5 - Interactive Science and Discovery Centre, having previously provided the organisation with financial support. Both W5 and the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium are considered as science centres in this report.

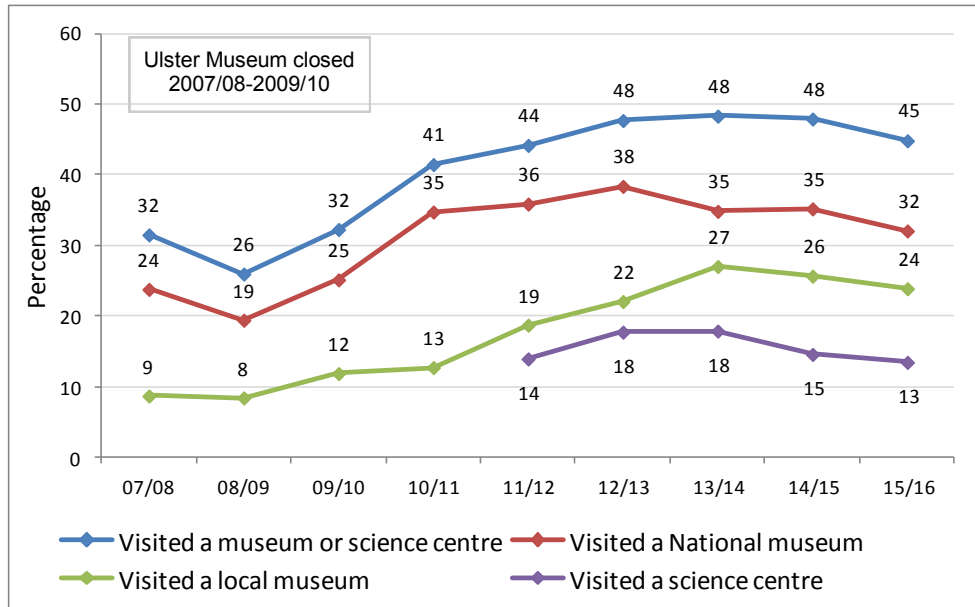
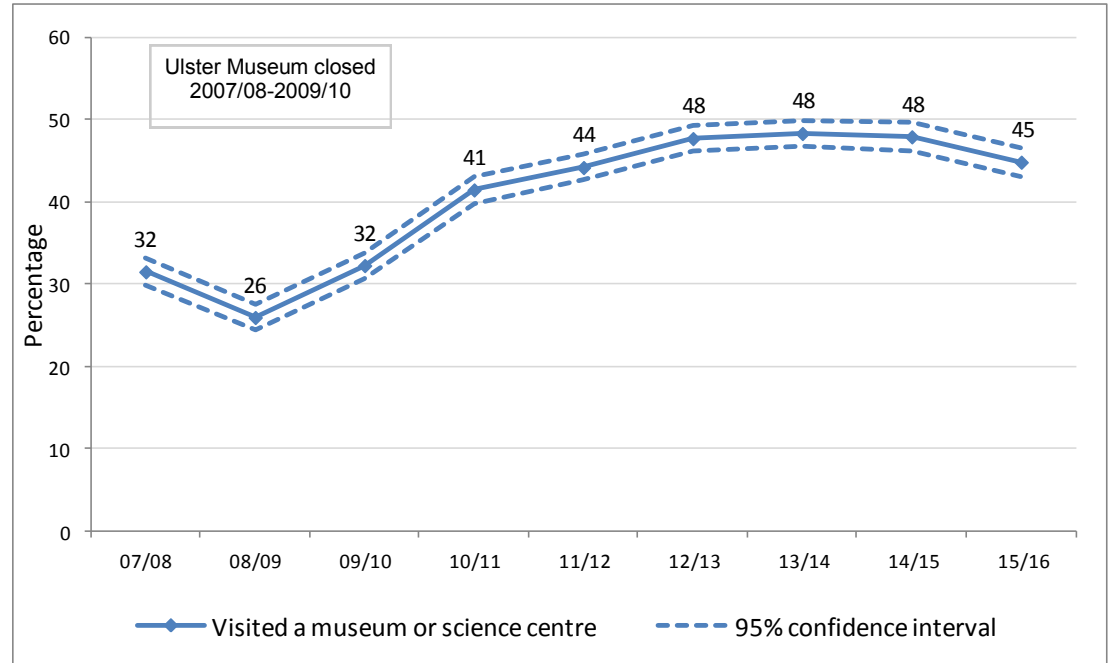
### Continuous Household Survey

This report presents the findings from the 2015/16 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to visits to museums and science centres in Northern Ireland. More information relating to the CHS, methodology, definitions and the interpretation of the figures can be found in the [definitions and technical notes section](#). Visits to museums and science centres in 2015/16 is based on visits in the year prior to respondents being surveyed. Data tables are available in [Excel](#) and [ODS format](#). The questions that were asked in the CHS 2015/16 are available [here](#).

# Visits to museums and science centres

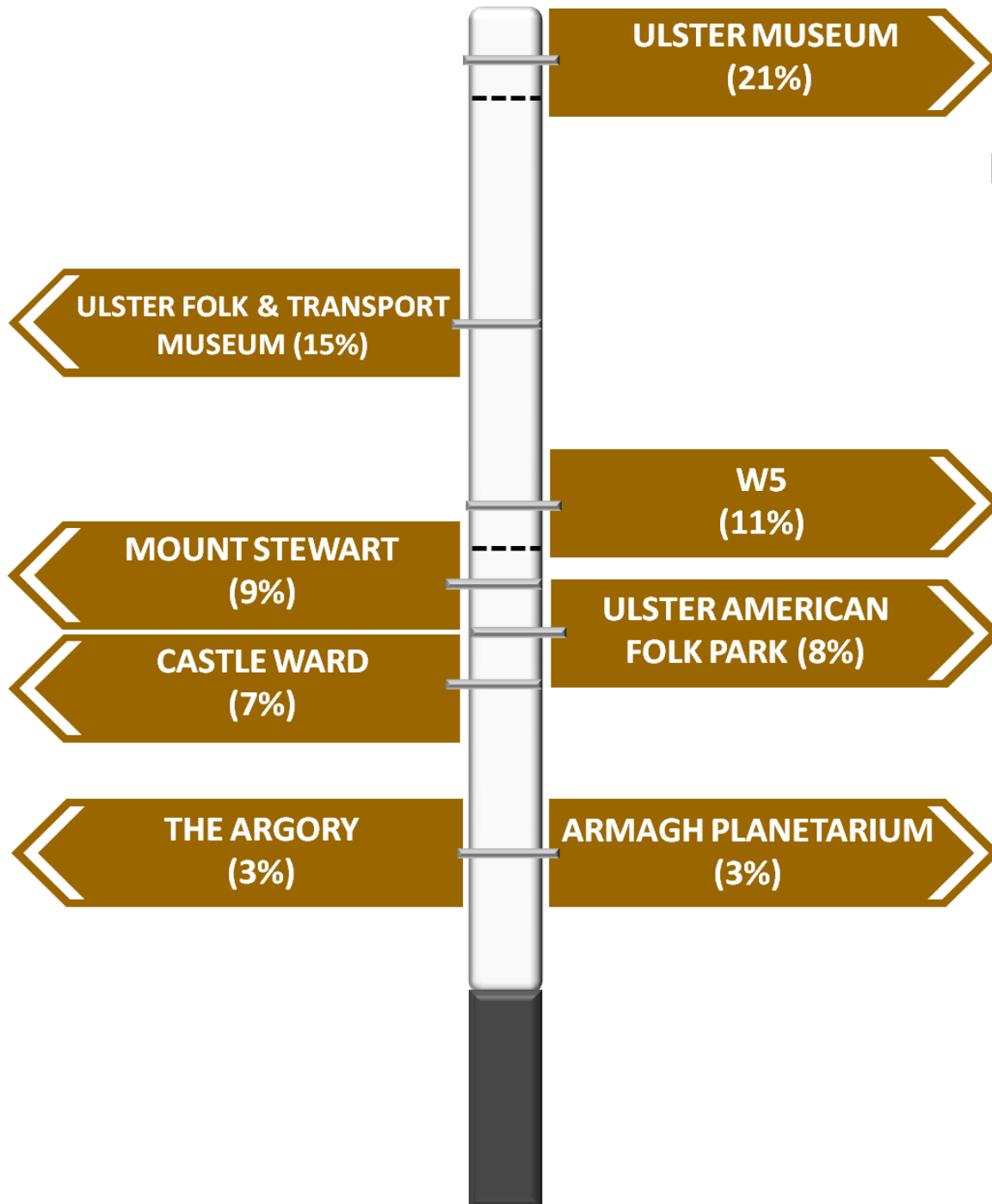
Four-fifths (80%) of adults have visited a museum at some stage in their life, while just under a half (45%) have visited a museum or science centre in the last year.

In 2015/16, the proportion of adults visiting a museum in the last year decreased when compared with the previous three years when the proportion had remained stable. It is worth noting that the longer term trend was likely to be impacted by the closure of the Ulster Museum for refurbishment over the years 2007/08-2009/10.



The decrease in the proportion of adults attending a museum or science centre has largely been driven by a decrease in the proportion of adults visiting one of the three National museums (35% v 32%). Over the last three years, since reaching a peak of 38% in 2012/13, the proportion of adults visiting a National museum has been in decline.

The proportion of adults visiting a local museum in 2015/16 is similar to that in 2014/15 (24% and 26%, respectively). However, the long-term trend for visits to local museums shows an increase of some 15 percentage points between 2007/08 and 2015/16. Although there was an increase in the proportion of adults visiting a science centre in 2012/13, the 2015/16 figure has returned to a level similar to 2011/12.



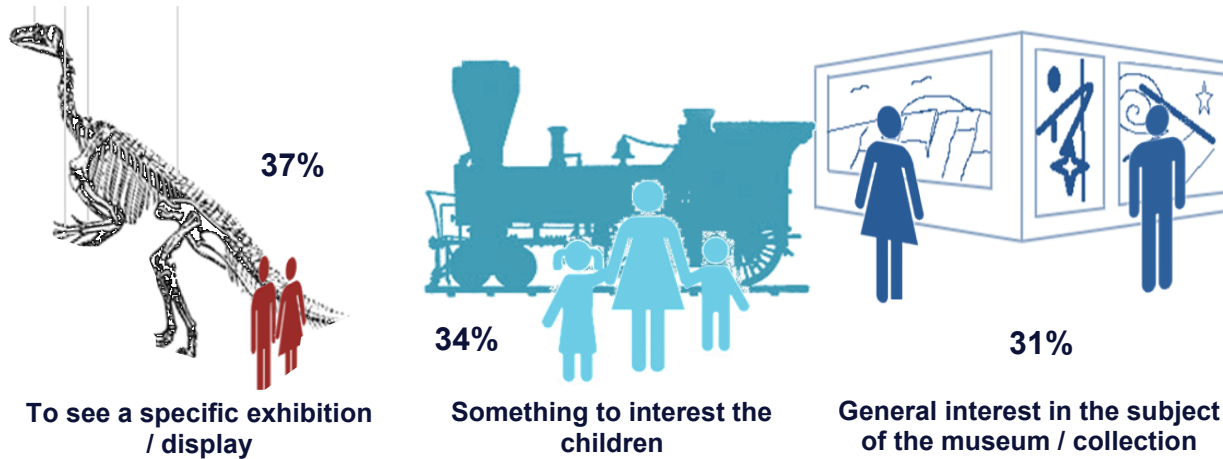
## Popular museums and science centres

Although the proportion of adults stating that they had visited the Ulster Museum decreased from the previous year's figure (24%) it remained the most popular museum to visit in Northern Ireland with over one fifth of adults (21%) having done so within the last year. Another of the three National museums, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, was the second most visited museum among adults in Northern Ireland with 15% having done so. Eight per cent of adults had visited the other National museum, the Ulster American Folk Park, making this the fifth most cited museum or science centre to visit in Northern Ireland among adults.

Just over one in every ten adults (11%) had visited the W5 interactive discovery centre within the previous year. This was higher than the proportion of adults who visited the Armagh Planetarium within the last year (3%).

Amongst the local museums, Mount Stewart was the most frequently cited museum attraction among adults, with 9% stating that they had visited here within the last year. Castle Ward was the next most popular local museum among adults (7%), followed by The Argory (3%).

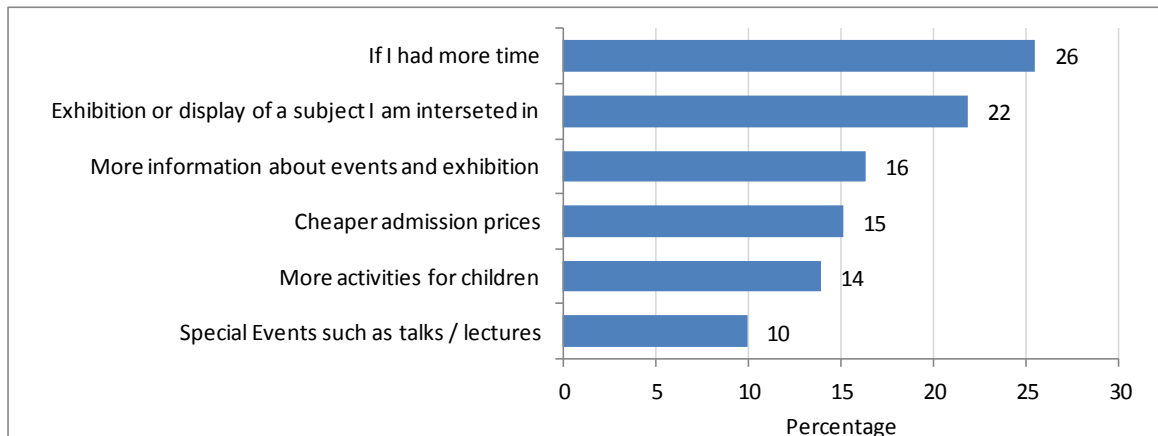
# Why do adults visit museums, how often do they go and what would encourage them to go more?



The three most frequently cited reasons adults give for visiting a museum or science centre were 'To see a specific exhibition/display', 'Something to interest the children' and 'General interest in the subject of the museum/collection'. For each of the last four years when this question has been asked, these have been the most frequently cited reasons for visiting a museum or science centre.

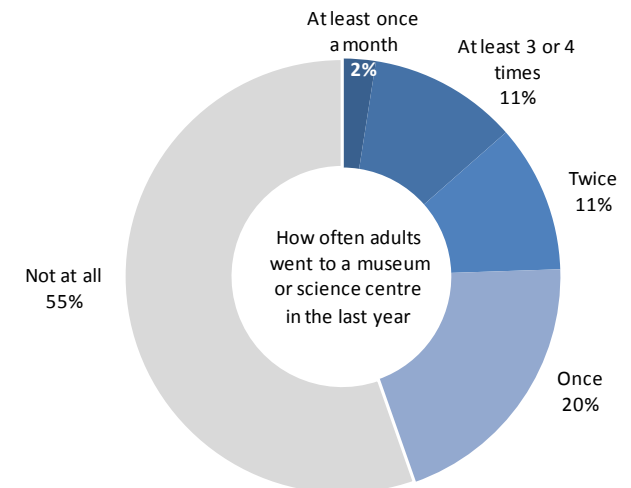
## Encourage adults to visit to museums and science centres

When respondents were asked what would encourage them to visit museum or science centres more often, the most frequently cited response was 'If I had more time'. While this is outside the control of the museum sector, other responses included having an 'exhibition or display of a subject I am interested in' and 'more information about events and exhibitions'.



## Frequency of visits to museums and science centres

A question on frequency of visits to museums and science centres was included in the CHS for the first time in 2015/16. While a fifth of adults had only visited a museum or science centre once in the last year, more than one tenth had visited twice in the year and a further tenth had visited three or four times in the year (each 11%). In addition, 2% of adults had visited a museum or science centre at least once a month.

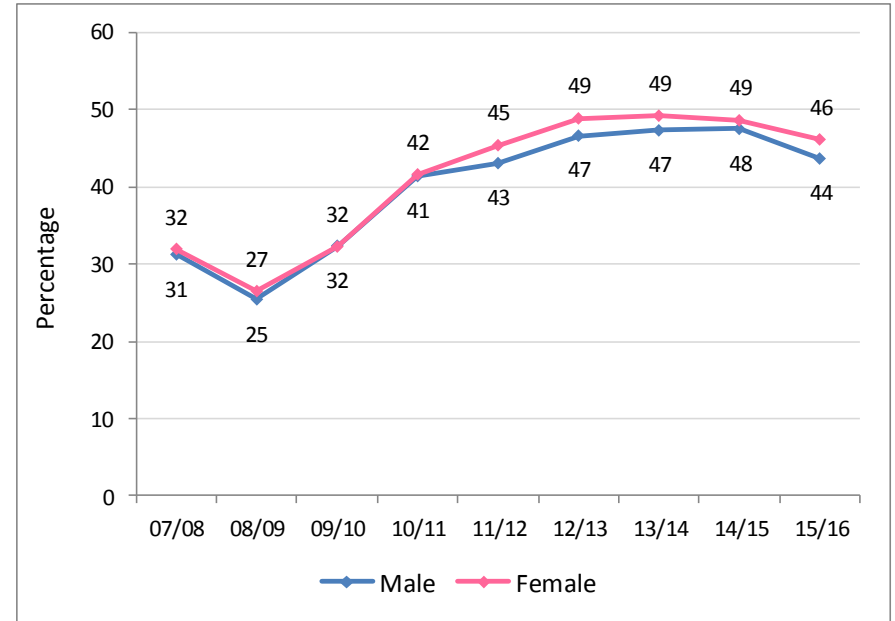


# Gender and visiting museums and science centres

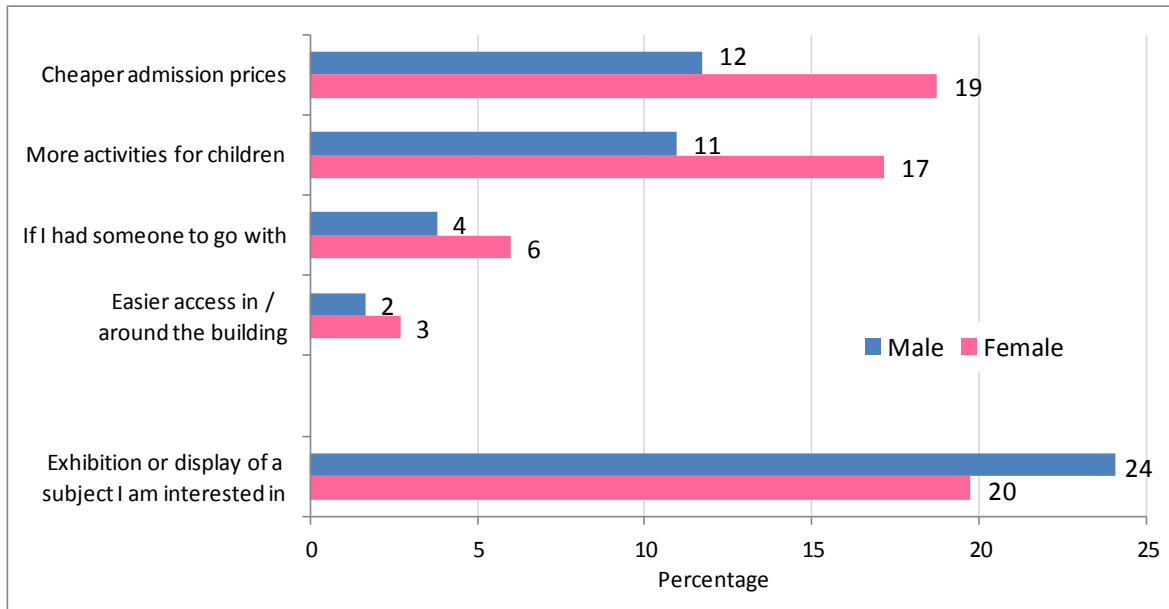
In 2015/16, the proportions of males and females visiting a museum or science centre were similar (44% and 46%, respectively). This has been the case throughout the period for which data are available (2007/08-2015/16).

Analysis by type of museum again shows that for National and local museums there was no difference in proportions of males and females visiting. However, in 2015/16 a lower proportion of males than females had visited a science centre.

Asked why they visited museums there were few differences between the responses of males and females. However, women were more likely to say that they went to the museum or science centre as 'Something to interest the children' or 'To take part in a creative activity'. On the other hand, men were more likely to have visited the museum because they had a 'General interest in the subject of the museum / collection' or 'To attend a talk, seminar or workshop'.

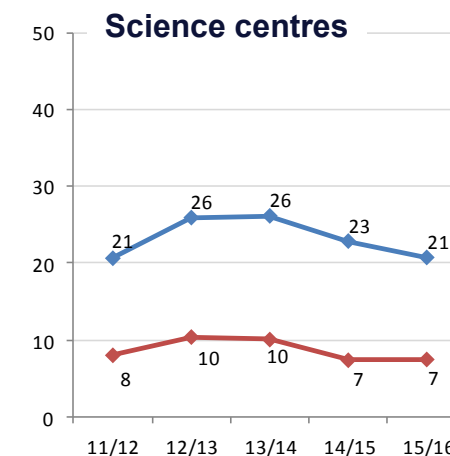
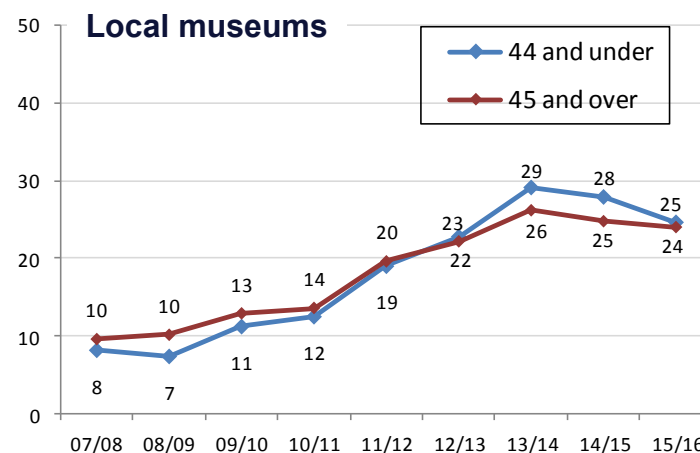


## Factors that would encourage more visits to museums



Respondents were asked to identify factors that would encourage them to visit museums and science centres more often. The only factor cited by a higher proportion of men than women was if there was an 'Exhibition or display of a subject I am interested in'. In contrast, there were four factors cited by a higher proportion of women than men that would encourage them to visit museums and science centres more, namely 'Cheaper admission prices', 'More activities for children', 'If I had someone to go with' and 'Easier access in / around the building'.

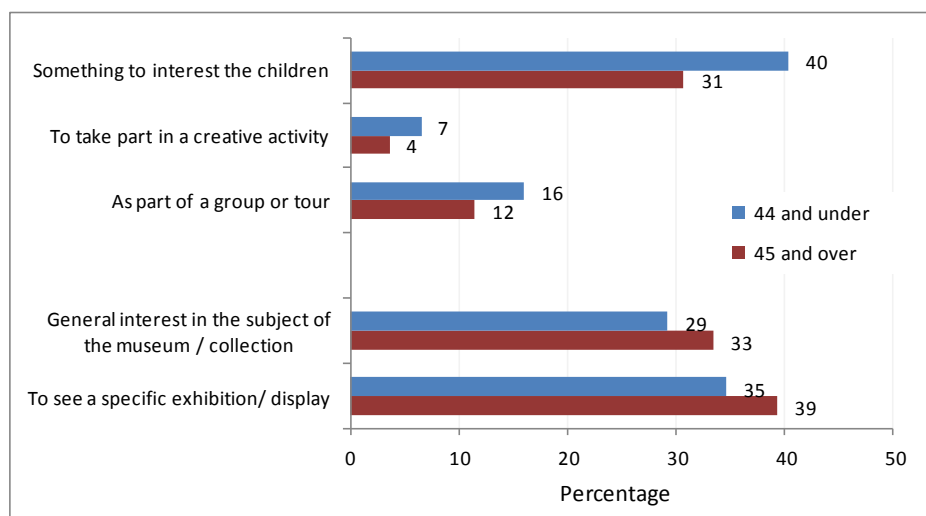
## Age and visiting museums and science centres



Age is a factor in the likelihood of adults visiting a museum or science centre with younger adults more likely to visit than older adults (Aged 44 and under: 51%; Aged 45 and over: 39%). A similar trend has been seen since these figures were first available from the CHS in 2007/08.

Further analysis by type of museum visited, however, shows that while younger adults are more likely than older adults to visit National museums and science centres, there is no difference in the proportions of adults visiting local museums (Aged 44 and under: 24%; Aged 45 and over: 25%).

## Factors that would encourage more visits to museums



Some reasons for visiting a museum are also different when analysis is carried out by age group. Younger adults are more likely to visit a museum as 'Something to interest the children', 'To take part in a creative activity' or 'As part of a group or tour'. On the other hand, higher proportions of older adults visited museums because they had a 'General interest in the subject of the museum/collection' or 'To see a specific exhibition/display'. When asked what would encourage them to visit a museum or science centre more, almost a third of older adults (31%) said 'Nothing, I am not interested in going to museums', while 16% said 'Nothing, I already go as often as I want'. For younger adults, having more time, particular exhibitions of interest and more activities for children were among the key factors that would encourage more visits to museums and science centres.

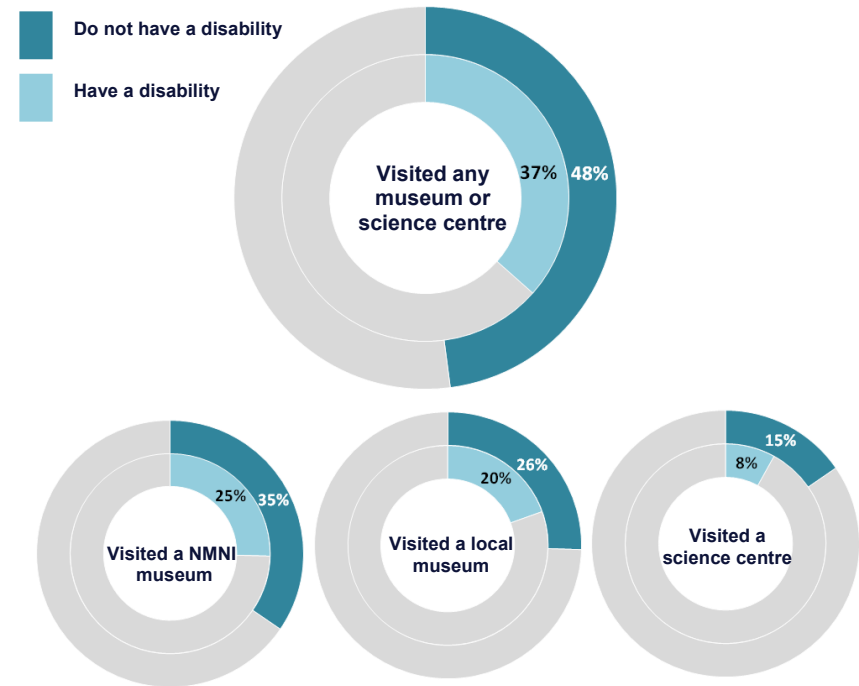
# Disability and visiting museums and science

A lower proportion of adults who have a disability visited a museum or science centre in 2015/16 than adults who do not have a disability. This was the case for all types of museum or science centre.

It is interesting to note, however, that while the proportion of adults overall who visited a museum or science centre decreased in 2015/16 compared with 2014/15 a similar fall was not seen for adults who have a disability. This was largely unchanged at 37% (2014/15: 35%).

Looking at the longer-term trend, adults with a disability have been less likely to visit a museum or science centre throughout the period 2007/08-2015/16.

When asked why they visited a museum or science centre, adults who have a disability were more likely than those who do not have a disability to say they went 'To meet friends / family'. In contrast, adults who do not have a disability were more likely to say they went 'As part of a group or tour'.



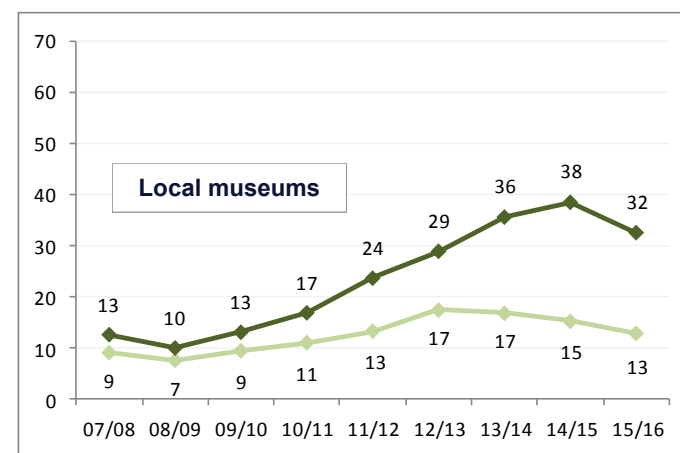
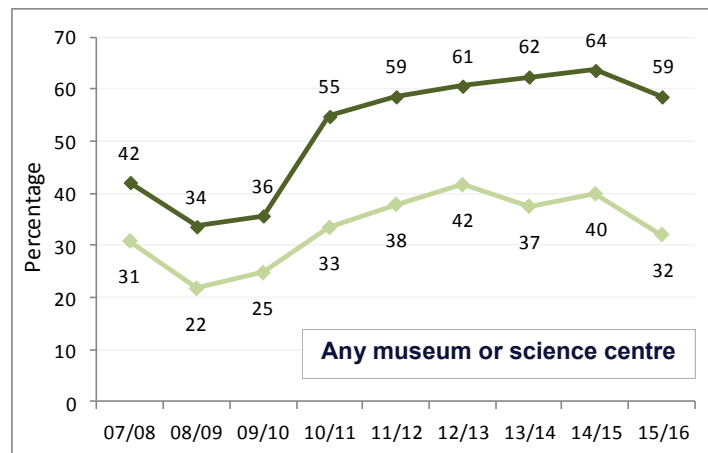
In response to the question on what would encourage them to visit museums or science centres more often, the most frequently cited response by adults who have a disability was 'Nothing, I am not interested in going to museums' (34%). For adults who do not have a disability the most frequently cited response was 'If I had more time'.

Other responses that would encourage more visits to museums that were more frequently cited by adults with a disability include 'Easier access in / around the building', 'Better public transport links / access to transport' and 'If I had someone to go with'.



## Deprivation and visiting museums and science centres

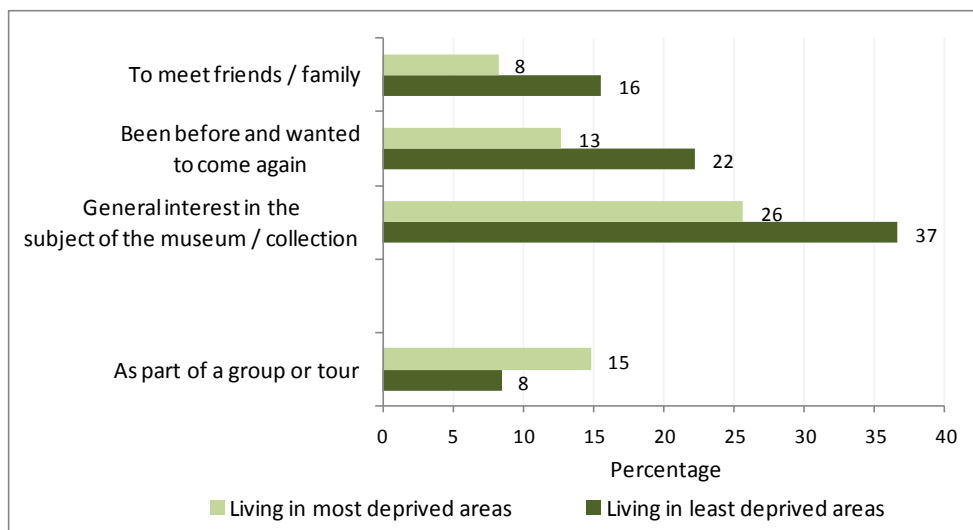
Relatively fewer adults living in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland had visited a museum or science centre in the last year than those living in the least deprived areas (32% v 59%). This is also the case for each type of museum and science centre and has existed throughout each year for which data are available.



— Living in most deprived areas — Living in least deprived areas

Over the period from 2010/11 to 2014/15, the proportion of adults visiting museums and science centres increased for both the most and least deprived areas of Northern Ireland. However, the increase was greater amongst those living in the least deprived areas, particularly in relation to those who visited a local museum. As a result, the gap grew over the period despite the increases amongst each group individually. In addition, the fall in the proportion of adults visiting a museum or science centre between 2014/15 and 2015/16 was across the most and least deprived areas but was sharpest amongst those living in the most deprived areas.

## Why visit museums or science centres

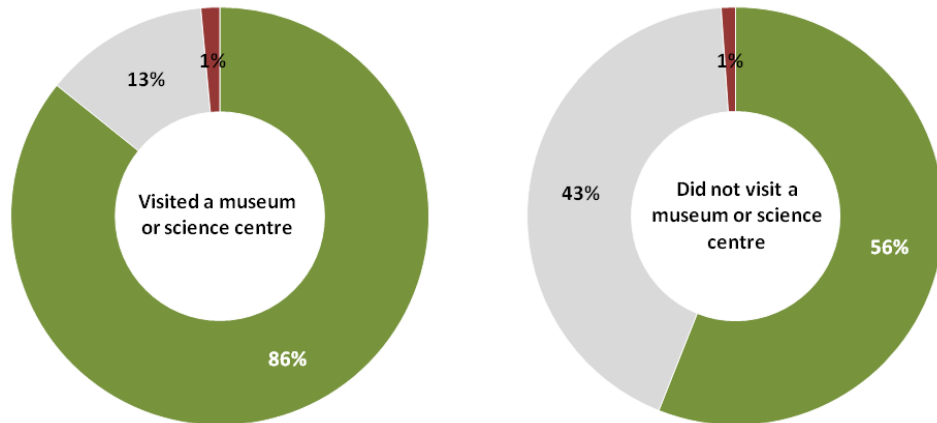
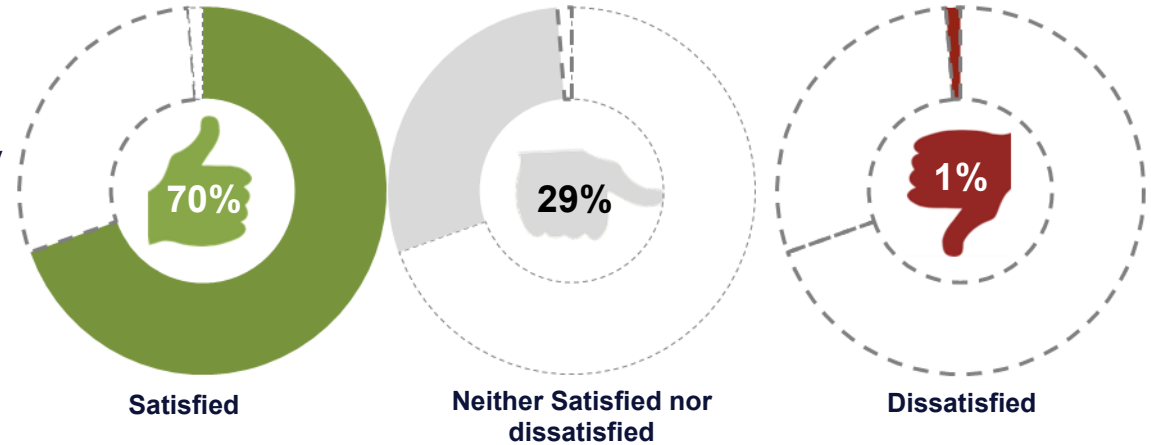


Visiting 'As part of a group or tour' was the only reason for visiting a museum that was cited by a higher proportion of adults living in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland. In contrast, adults living in the least deprived areas were more likely to say they had visited a museum or science centre because they had a 'General interest in the subject of the museum / collection', had 'Been before and wanted to come again' and 'To meet friends / family'.

For adults living in the most deprived areas, the most frequently cited response on what would encourage more visits to a museum or science centre was 'Nothing, I am not interested in visiting museums' (36%). On the other hand, adults living in the least deprived areas cited 'If I had more time' (30%) and having an 'Exhibition / display on a subject I am interested in' (27%).

# Satisfaction with museum provision

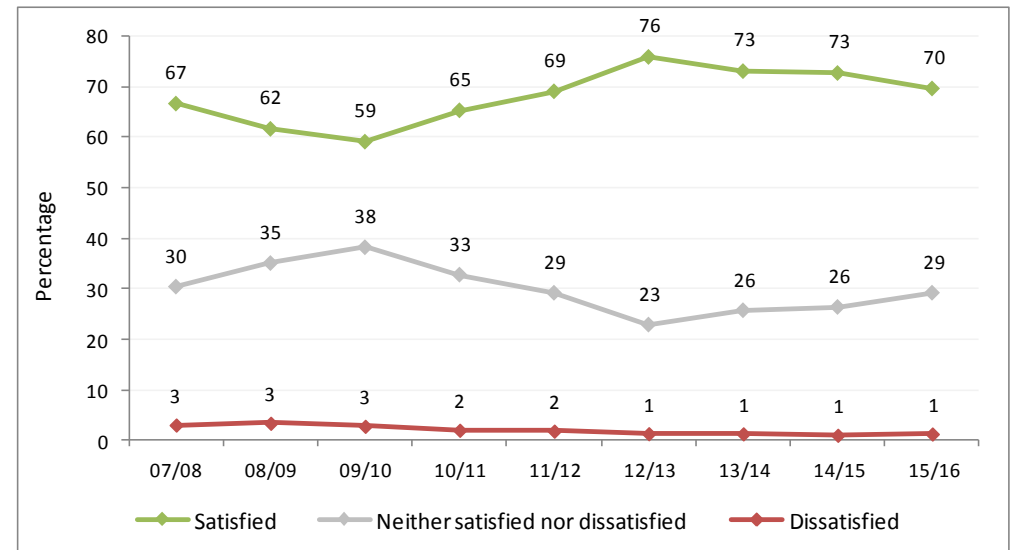
Seven out of every ten adults (70%) were satisfied with museum provision in Northern Ireland in 2015/16, with only 1% stating that they were dissatisfied. The remainder of the adult population (29%) stated that they were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'.



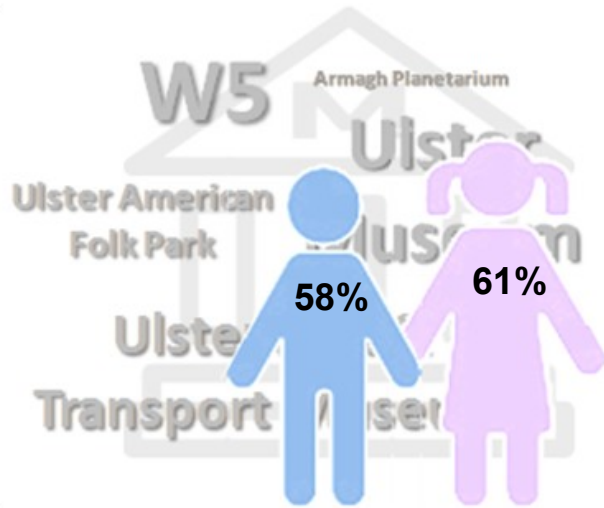
A higher proportion of adults who had visited a museum or science centre in the last year were satisfied with museum provision than those who had not visited (86% v 56%). However, only 1% of both groups stated that they were dissatisfied with museum provision.

Following a decline in satisfaction with museum provision over the years 2007/08-2009/10 (which may have been impacted by the closure of the Ulster Museum for refurbishment), satisfaction levels increased to a peak of 76% in 2012/13. Since then, the satisfaction with museum provision has decreased somewhat to 70% in 2015/16.

It is important to note that dissatisfaction with museum provision has decreased over the period from 3% in 2007/08 to 1% in 2015/16.

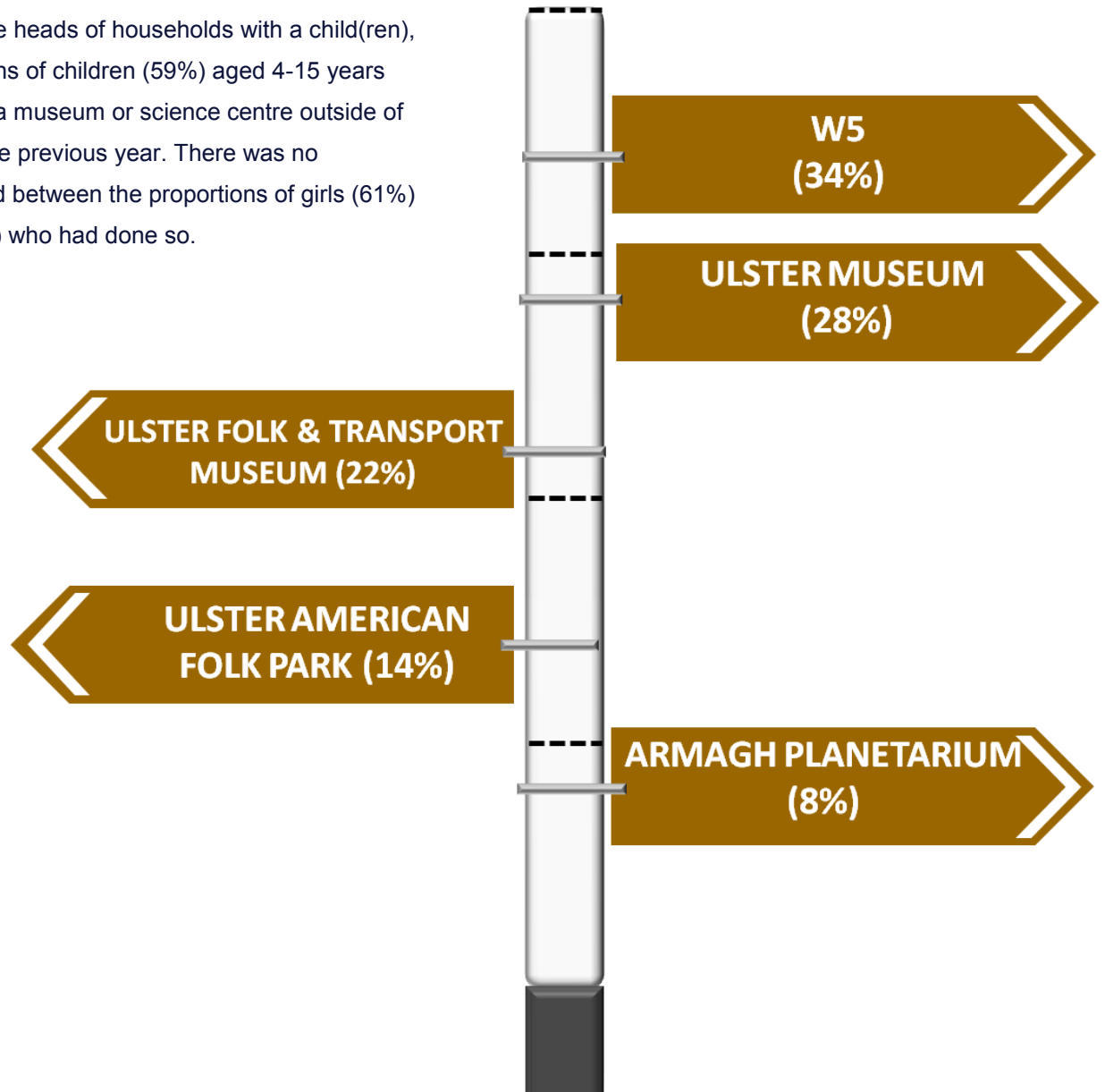


# Children's experience of museums and science centres



According to the heads of households with a child(ren), nearly three-fifths of children (59%) aged 4-15 years old had visited a museum or science centre outside of school within the previous year. There was no difference found between the proportions of girls (61%) and boys (58%) who had done so.

The most popular museum or science centre was the W5 interactive discovery centre where over a third of children (34%) had visited outside of school within the previous year. Almost three in every ten children (28%) had been to the Ulster Museum outside of school within the previous year, making this venue the second most popular museum or science centre for children. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum was the third most popular museum or science centre with over a fifth of children (22%) having visited this venue outside of school within the previous year.



## Definitions and technical notes

**Visited a National Museum** – Visited one of the following museums in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- Ulster Museum
- Ulster American Folk Park
- Ulster Folk & Transport Museum

**Visited a local museum** – Visited one of the following museums in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- Andrew Jackson & US Rangers Centre
- Ardress House
- Argory
- Armagh County Museum
- Armagh Public Library
- Ballycastle Museum
- Ballymoney Museum
- Barn Museum
- Carrickfergus Museum
- Castle Ward
- Coleraine Museum
- Craigavon Museum Service
- Down County Museum
- Downpatrick Railway Museum
- F E McWilliam Gallery and Studio
- Fermanagh County Museum
- Flame - the Gasworks Museum of Ireland
- Florence Court
- Garvagh Museum and Heritage Centre
- Green Lane Museum
- Hezlett House
- Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum
- Inniskillings Museum
- Limavady Museum, RVACC
- Mid Antrim Museum
- Milford House Museum
- Mount Stewart
- Newry & Mourne Museum
- North Down Museum
- Northern Ireland War Memorial
- Police Museum
- Railway Preservation Society of Ireland
- Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum
- Royal Ulster Rifles Museum
- Sentry Hill
- Somme Museum
- Springhill
- Strabane Museum Service
- Tower Museum
- Some other museum not mentioned

**Visited a science centre** - Visited one of the following science centres in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- W5
- Armagh Planetarium

**Visited a museum or science centre** – Visited a National or local museum or science centre in the 12 months prior to the CHS.

**Disability** – The questions used to ascertain whether or not a person has a disability are harmonised with the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010. This states that a disabled population is classified on the basis of having a long-lasting physical or mental health condition or illness which restricts day-to-day activities. The disabled population in this report are those who have answered yes to both the questions below:

- Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?
- Does your condition or illness / do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?

**Dependants** – A person is defined as having dependants if they have responsibility for either the care of a child, a person with a disability or an elderly person.

**Deprivation** – The data have been analysed by whether respondents are living in the 20% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) or in the 20% least deprived SOAs. This is estimated using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010 which is a weighted combination of seven domains of deprivation. Rank 1 indicates the most deprived SOA, while rank 890 denotes the least deprived SOA.

**Urban / rural** – The data have also been analysed by whether respondents are living in SOAs that have been categorised as either urban or rural as set out in the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements report (2015)<sup>2</sup>. This report classified each settlement in Northern Ireland into one of eight bands (A-H) and recommended that Government and other users should consider defining ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ areas in ways which are appropriate for different programmes and projects. In the absence of a programme-specific definition, Bands A-E can be defined as urban and Bands F-H as rural. This definition was applied in the analysis in this bulletin.

### **Statistical significance in this report**

Any statements in this report regarding differences between groups such as males and females, different age groups, religion, etc., are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident that the differences between groups are actual differences and have not just arisen by chance. Both the base numbers and the sizes of the percentages have an effect on statistical significance. Therefore on occasion, a difference between two groups may be statistically significant while the same difference in percentage points between two other groups may not be statistically significant. The reason for this is because the larger the base numbers or the closer the percentages are to 0 or 100, the smaller the standard errors. This leads to increased precision of the estimates which increases the likelihood that the difference between the proportions is actually significant and did not just arise by chance.

<sup>1</sup> [Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Report 2010](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements 2015 Report](#)

**Other notes**

The following should be noted when interpreting figures and tables:

Percentages less than 0.5% are denoted by '0' and where there are no responses, they are denoted by '-'.

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Percentages may not add to 100% for questions where multiple responses are allowed.

Detailed tabulations are not provided where the number of respondents is too small to allow meaningful analysis.

The base number of responses to each question, which is shown in each table, is the unweighted count. The base may vary due to some respondents not answering certain questions.