Future Oswestry: Survey Results 2020

Introduction

The survey was led by the Future Oswestry Group made up of Shropshire Council, Oswestry Town Council and Oswestry BID. The survey ran from October and closed on 13 November 2020.

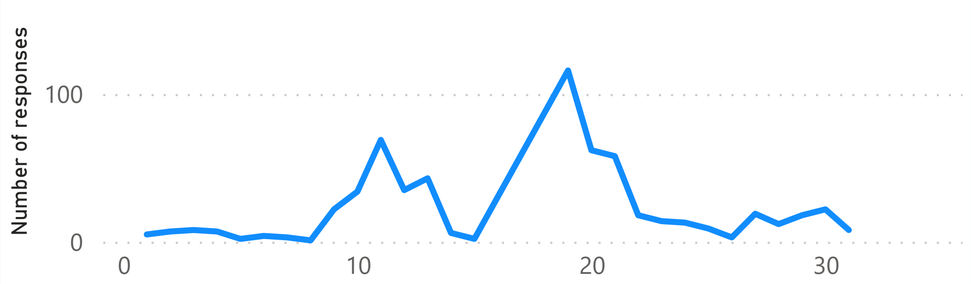
The survey results will inform the development of an investable concept masterplan for Oswestry to help develop a collective vision for the town.

Report produced by Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team. Nov 2020

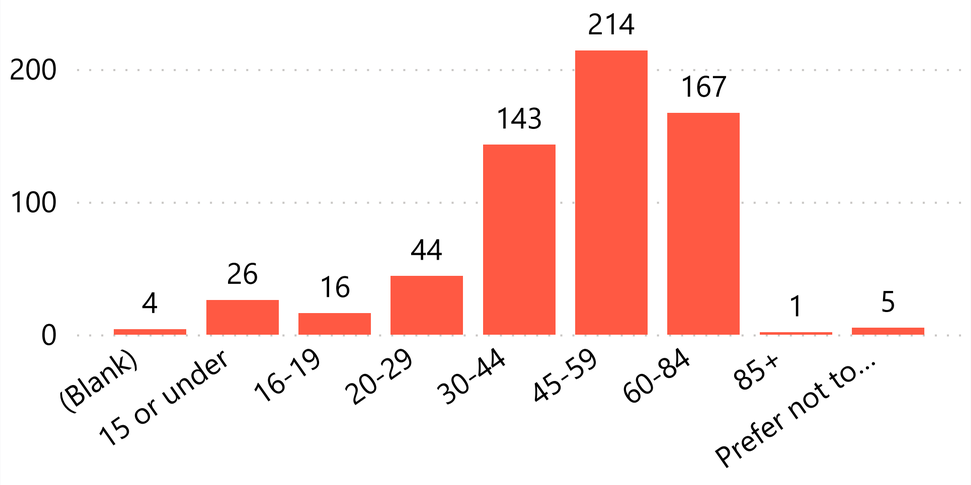
Number of responses

620

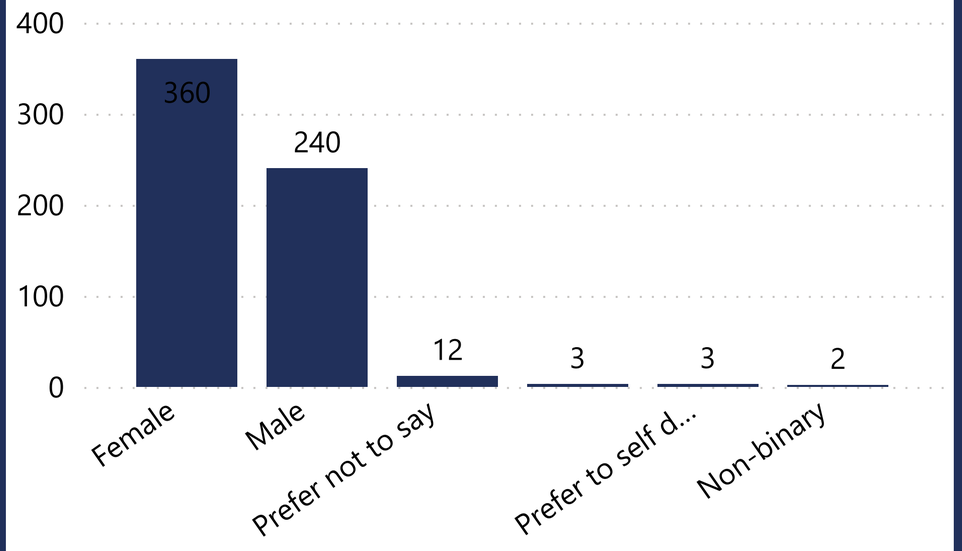
Survey completions by date



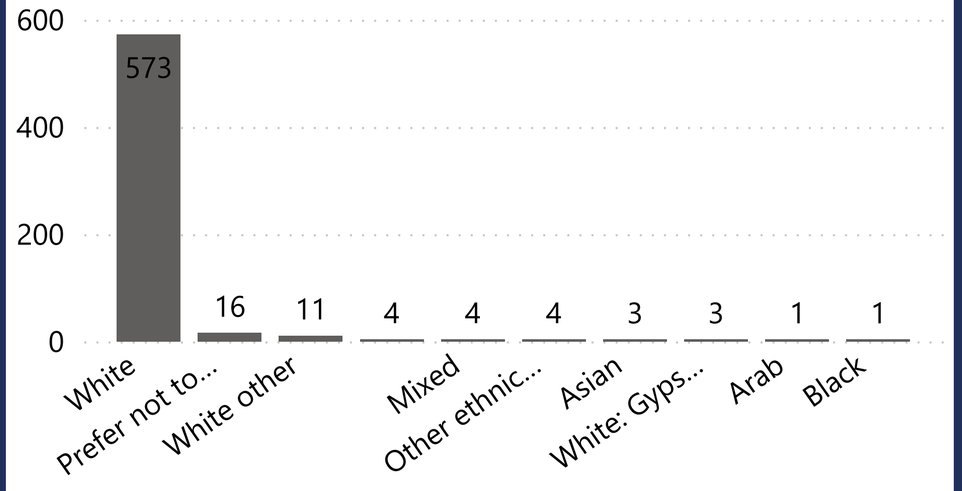
Age group



Gender



Ethnic origin



Future Oswestry: Survey Results 2020

Using the report

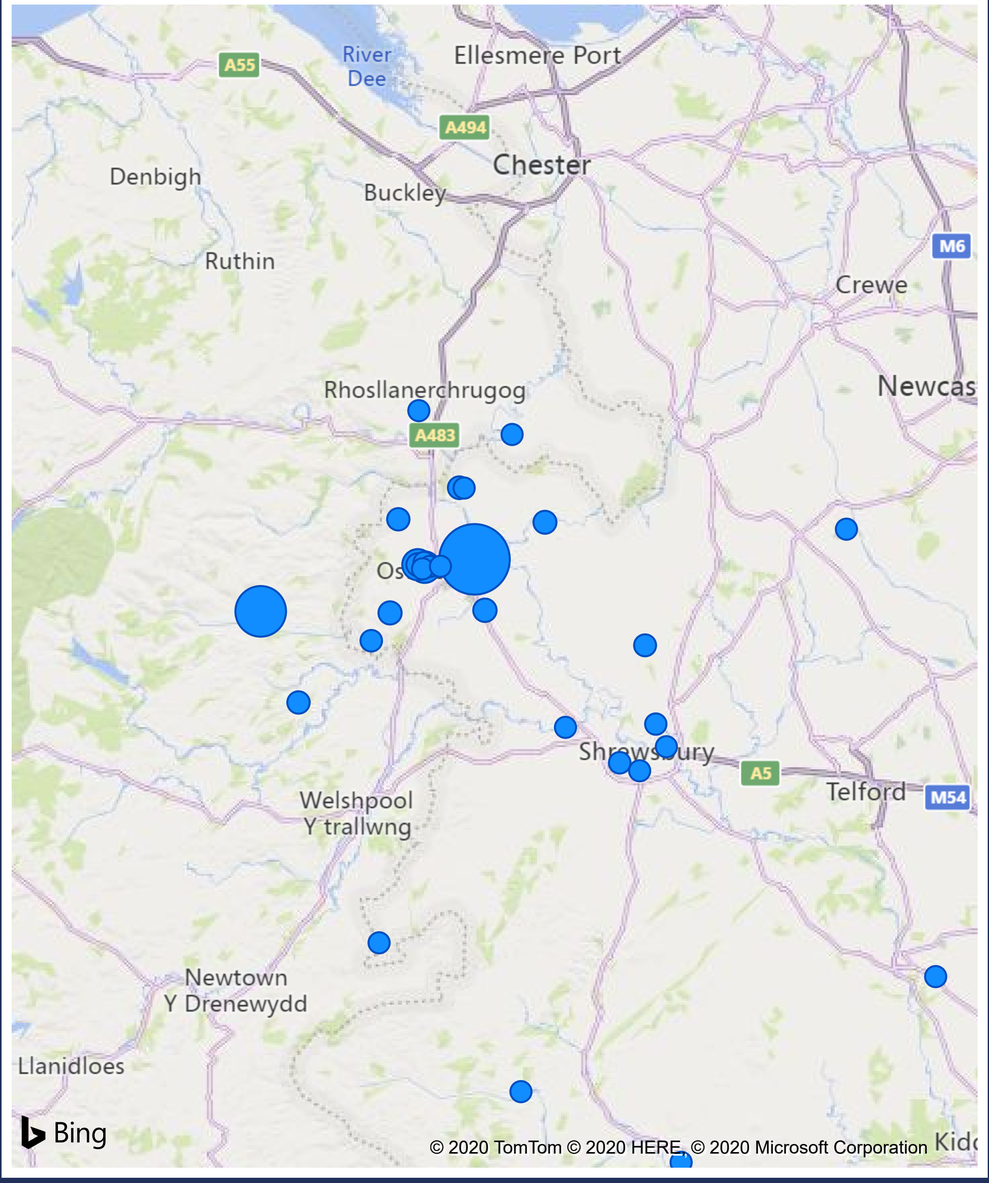
This report can be filtered to explore how feedback may change depending on different characteristics such as age, gender and ethnic origin.

Many of the questions in the survey were open ended comments. These have all been read and categorised into themes. Some people may have made comments that covered more than one theme for each question and, as a result some of the charts will have multiple blocks (main comment, second comment, third comment). For this reason the totals for some questions may be greater than the total number of survey participants.

Allocating a theme allows us to see where there are areas of agreement among survey respondents and where priorities may need to be highlighted.

Themes are helpful but in order to bring 'life' to the results it is also important to consider some example comments. These really help to provide a better understanding for each topic.

First 3 or 4 characters of post code



Use these to filter the report by characteristic. Use Ctrl to select multiple options.

Gender

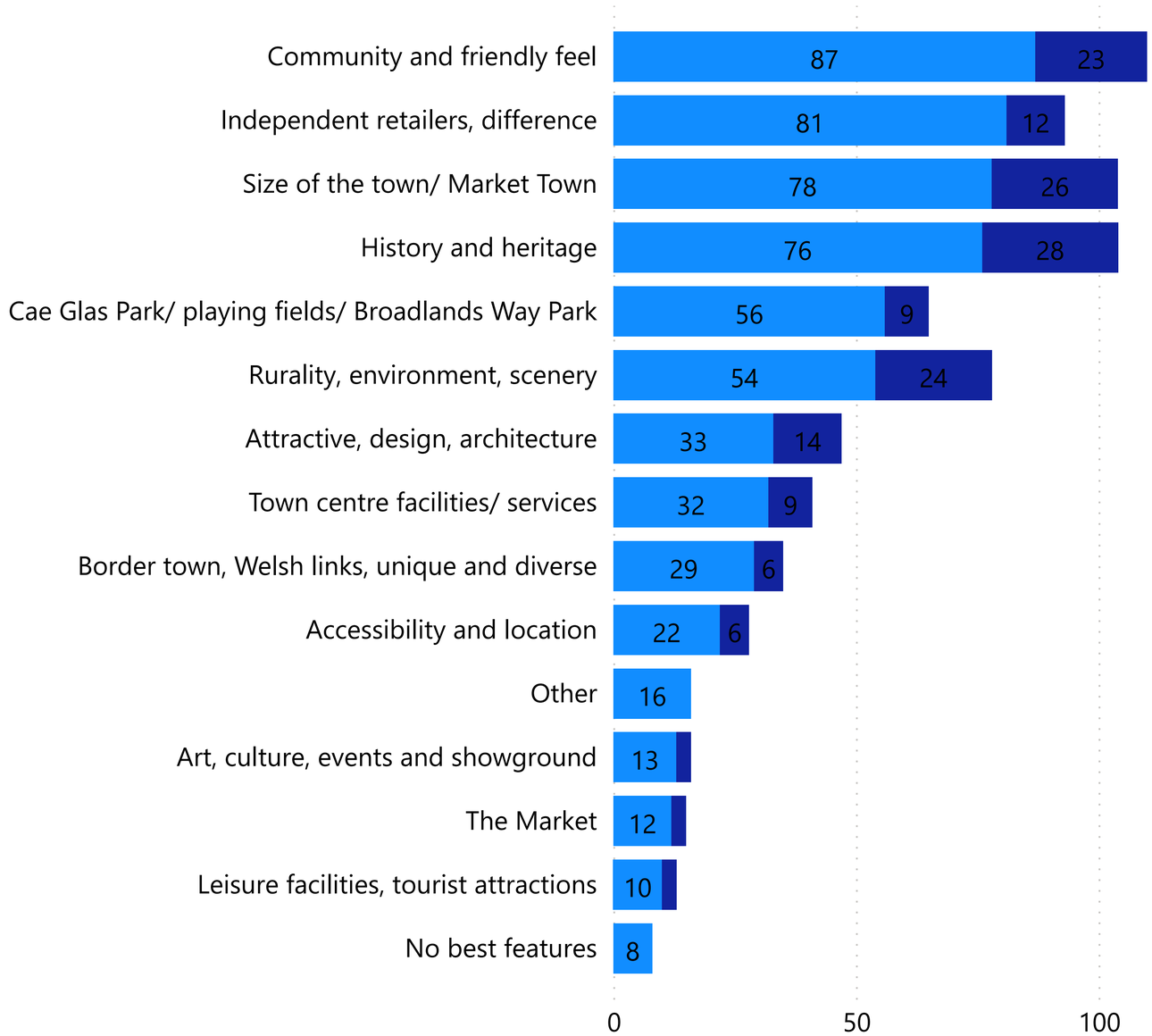
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Non-binary
- [ ] Prefer not to say
- [ ] Prefer to self describe

Age group

- [ ] (Blank)
- [ ] 15 or under
- [ ] 16-19
- [ ] 20-29
- [ ] 30-44
- [ ] 45-59
- [ ] 60-84
- [ ] 85+
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Oswestry's best characteristics

What do you think is Oswestry's best characteristic?



Example comments

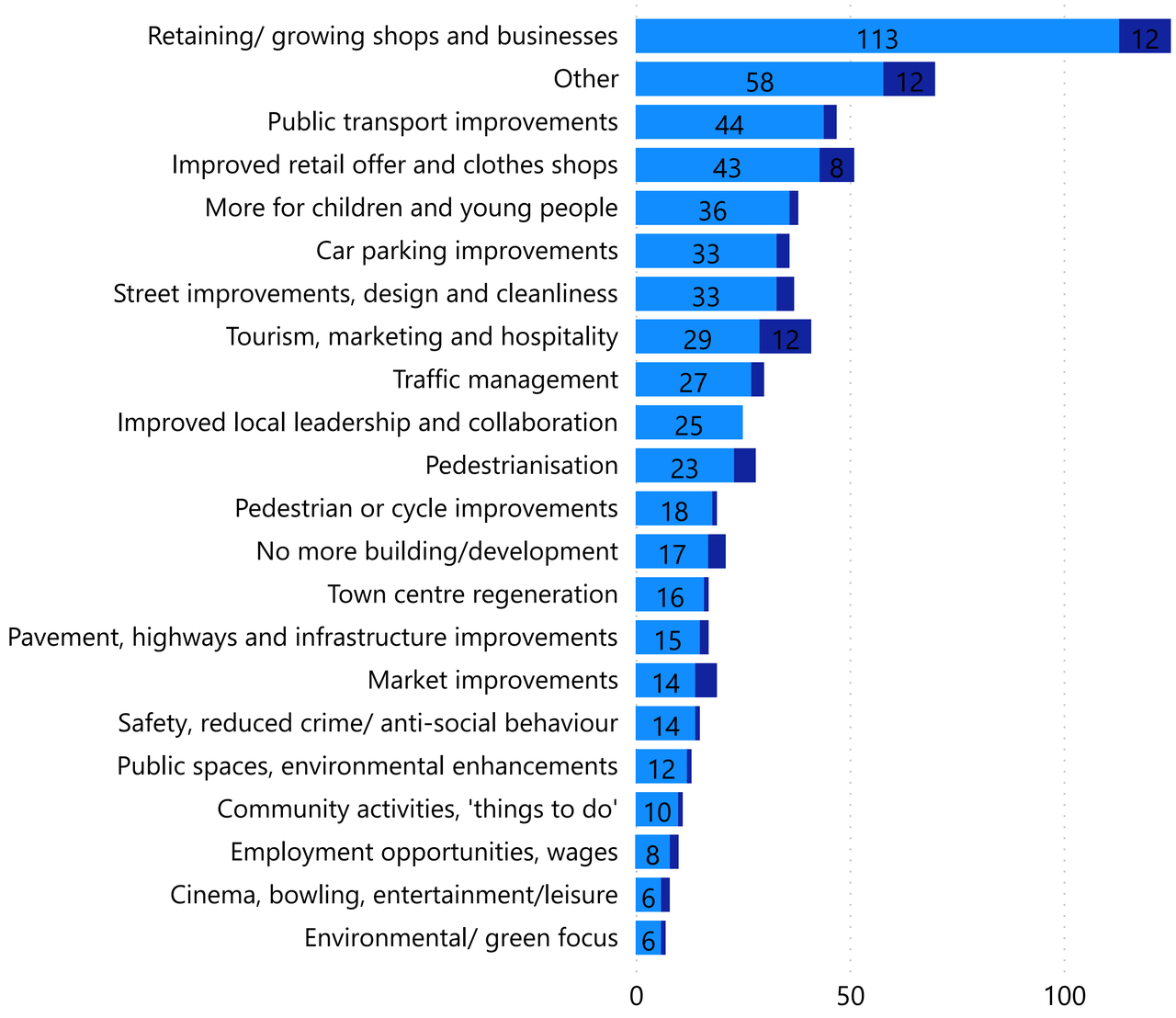
- The combination of diversity and tradition.
- Small enough to be homely and friendly.
- The surrounding countryside and the unique hillfort.
- Its position. Town near beautiful countryside with good road links.
- Location, rural feel with easy access to more urban areas when needed.
- It is a classic market town that hasn't been spoilt by over development.
- Various historic buildings and fabulous park.
- Perfect size for a town, with a compact centre small enough to wander slowly through in a couple of hours and without sprawling suburbs, so you're out in the countryside easily.
- In normal times, the great number of things going on. There are an enormous variety of events particularly, for me, musical and artistic/creative.
- Market town with strong sense of community.
- Mix of independent shops including antique, book shops and bistros.
- Its honesty - it doesn’t pretend to be anything other than what it is, and it doesn’t feel like every other town.
- Minutes from town to countryside. Love the fact I will generally run into somebody I know when out. The town centre could be an extension of my living room.
- Firstly the people, friendly and inclusive. Secondly it’s architecture, amazingly Oswestry has preserved some beautiful properties.
- Being a traditional, border market town with an eclectic mix of people gives

Main Messages

- The feedback highlights a large number of good characteristics. It is good to see Oswestry's community and friendly feel coming through as the most commonly mentioned theme. Many also like the size and location of Oswestry.
- Appreciating the unique nature of the town, its independent retailers, history, parks and environment are also all features that came across strongly within comments.

One thing to change

If you were in charge of Oswestry's future, what one thing would you change?



Example comments

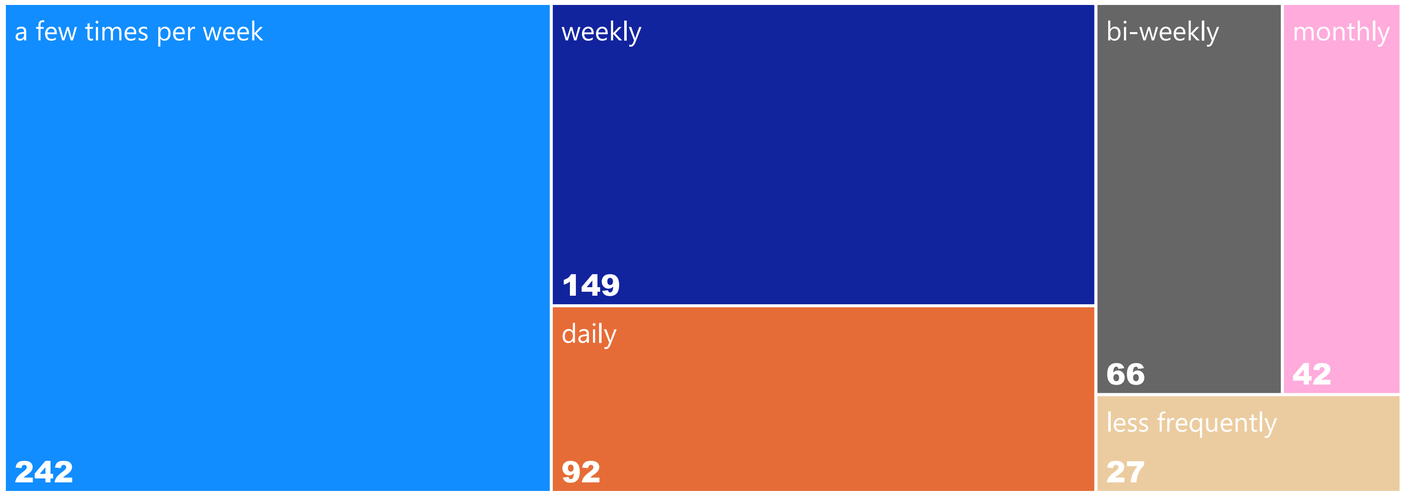
- I would help the small businesses especially small traders in the town to help make it a thriving interesting place to live.
- I'd try to secure investment to attract independent shops, restaurants and cafes etc to become a town of culture, literary, arts, gastronomical excellence along the lines of Ludlow, for example.
- Encourage more visitors and shoppers to experience all that Oswestry has to offer.
- The outdoor market trailing all down the street. Fill up the market square first, only stalls down the street if the square is full.
- Move the market into the town. The bailey is too far and not in the hub. The indoor market is ghastly. So old fashioned, dark, smelly. Just awful. Clean out and refurb Empty shops. Make their owners let them for peanut rents.
- Expand the market, seek more independent market sellers. Utilise market area with more food independent outlets.
- Accessibility of business space for small independent businesses.
- Make sure no buildings are left empty and grubby looking.
- Sort out the night time economy and make it safe for visitors.
- Build stronger sense of community (to tackle issues like mental health, poverty, drugs, isolation etc) by prioritising the support of community groups, ensuring the town centre is thriving with all shop units inhabited.
- Dog poo in residential areas, boy racers to be eradicated, clothes shops for men.

Main Messages

- The top concern highlighted strongly throughout, is a concern that Oswestry has lost many shops and businesses. The top theme would be to change this and retain or grow shops and businesses in the town.
- Public transport was another area for improvement followed by an improved shopping or retail offer and more to do for children and young people.
- Car park and street improvements were also commonly mentioned.

Oswestry Town Centre

How often do you normally visit the town centre?



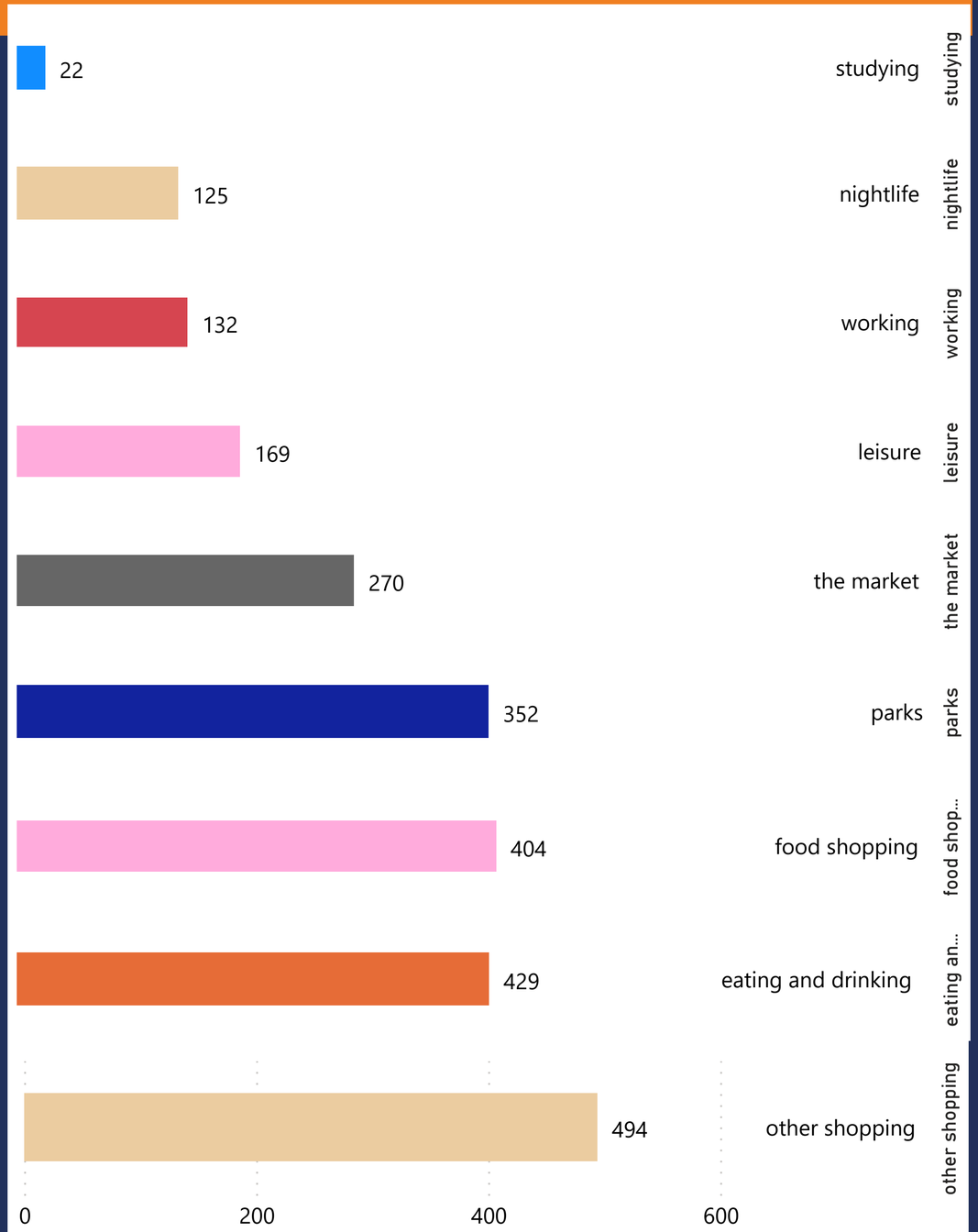
Example comments

- Nothing puts me off going to town ,I don’t need encouraging.
- Shout loud to the rest of the world how great our town is.
- I don't work in town anymore so three or four times a week is my max anyway.
- If I was not on a time limit with my parking ticket.
- Cheaper parking so not having to clock watch.
- I go to town for the independent businesses so any support for them would encourage me. I like the creative and collective feeling of places such as Shrewsbury indoor market or Ty Pawb in Wrexham.

Main Messages

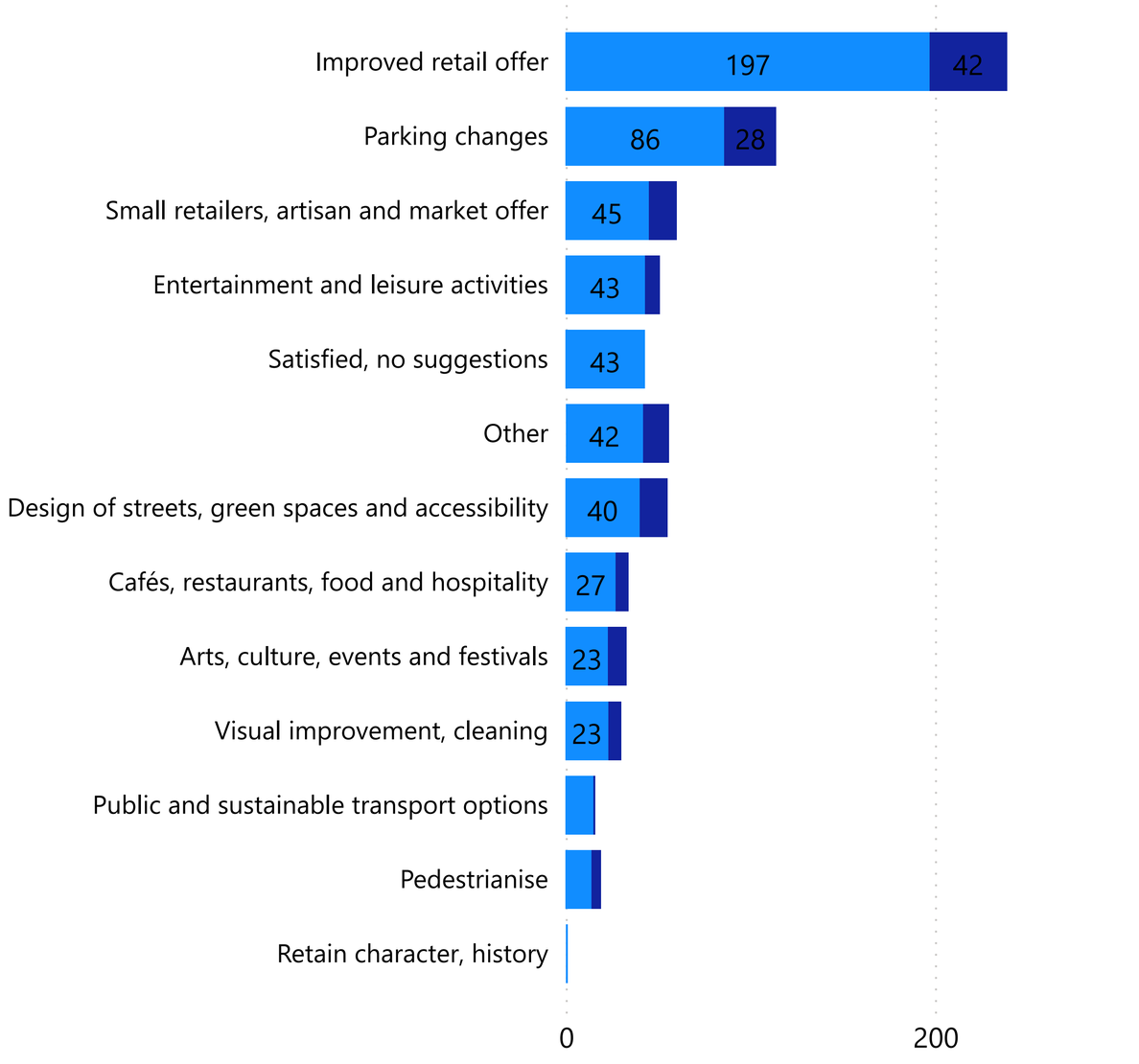
- More people visit Oswestry a few times a week, than any other frequency. Overall most of the survey respondents are very regular visitors to the town with only 69 visiting monthly or less often.
- The most common reasons for visiting the town centre are other shopping, eating and drinking, food shopping and to visit the parks.
- 132 of the survey respondents work in the town centre and 22 study in Oswestry.

What do you normally use the town centre for?



Increasing visits

What would encourage you to visit the town centre more often and/or to stay longer?



Example comments

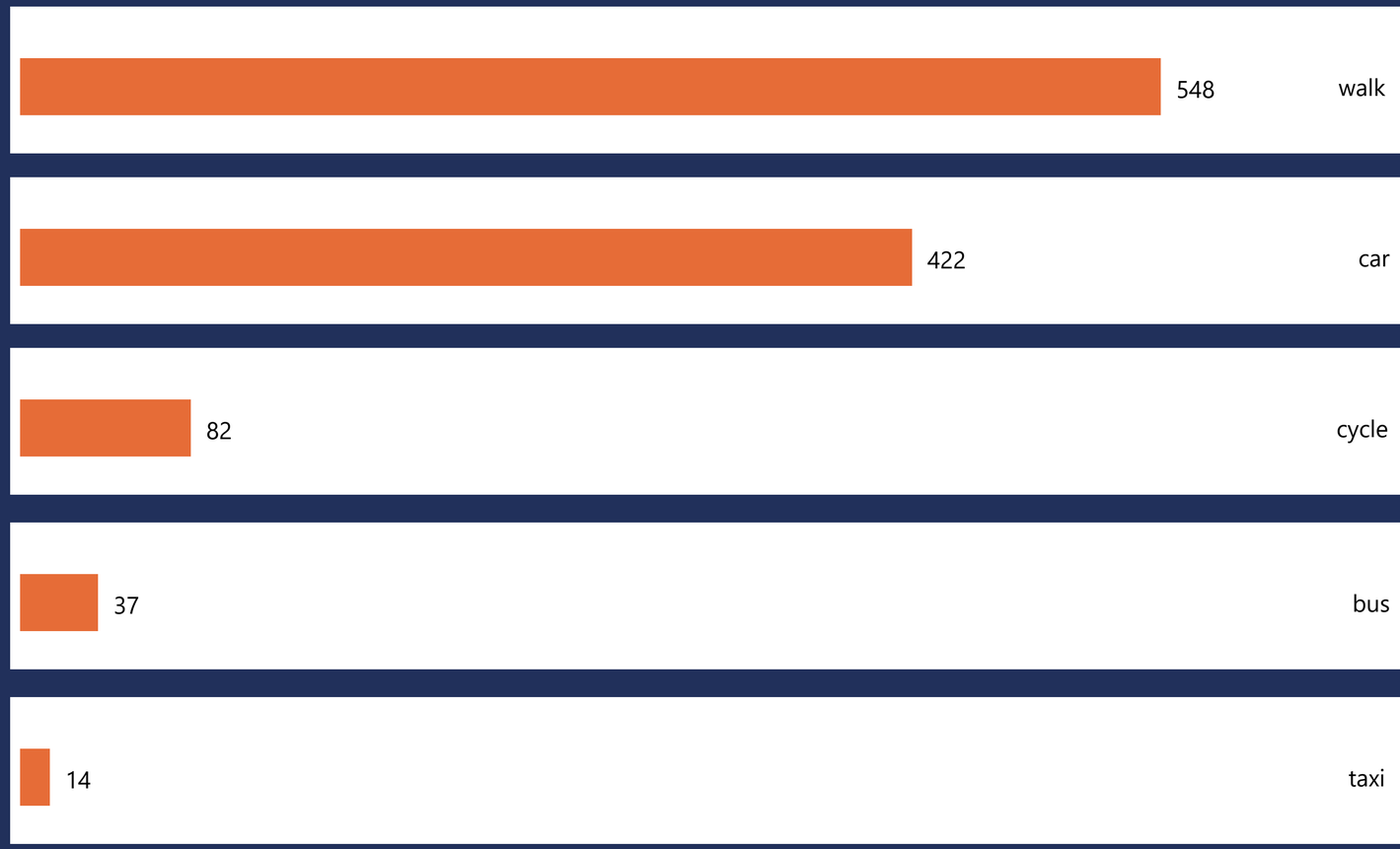
- More shops. Maybe some bigger national chains and most importantly, men's clothes shops.
- A wider selection of shops. Leisure activities in the town centre. More upmarket places to go in the evening to eat and drink. More selection for men's clothing.
- More branded shops so I don't have to travel to Shrewsbury or Wrexham.
- More shops! Local and chain shops are needed to bring the town into the future. I like to support local but they don’t always stock what I need so means I have to look elsewhere. We don’t need anymore mobile phone shops, charity shops or travel agents.
- Different selection of shops/restaurants i.e. clothes shops.
- More family friendly cafes and activities.
- Having more shops that are intriguing to the younger generation would encourage me to go to town more and spend more time in town itself.
- Sheltered outdoor facilities and a better skate park.
- Tidying up scruffy shops with horrible signage.
- More key attractions, an improved public realm, variety of uses and attractive shopfronts, greater range of evening economy uses.
- Attractive shops and a more vibrant market like there used to be. People came from all over on a Wednesday.
- Artisan food/drink.
- More seating areas where smoking is banned. More variety of shops.
- Make it clean, sort out the ugliness of some buildings, less charity, pound and betting shops, more cafes, in the evenings make it safer, more police. Improve the market, have more fruit and veg stores, farm shops etc.

Main Messages

- The top theme within the comments was shopping and there were many similar comments suggesting a lack of good clothes shops encouraging shoppers to travel to other nearby towns instead.
- Parking is seen as another factor preventing more frequent or longer visits.
- Many would also like to see more small independent and artisan traders and a cafe style culture within the town.

Travel and transport

How do you move around Oswestry?



Example comments

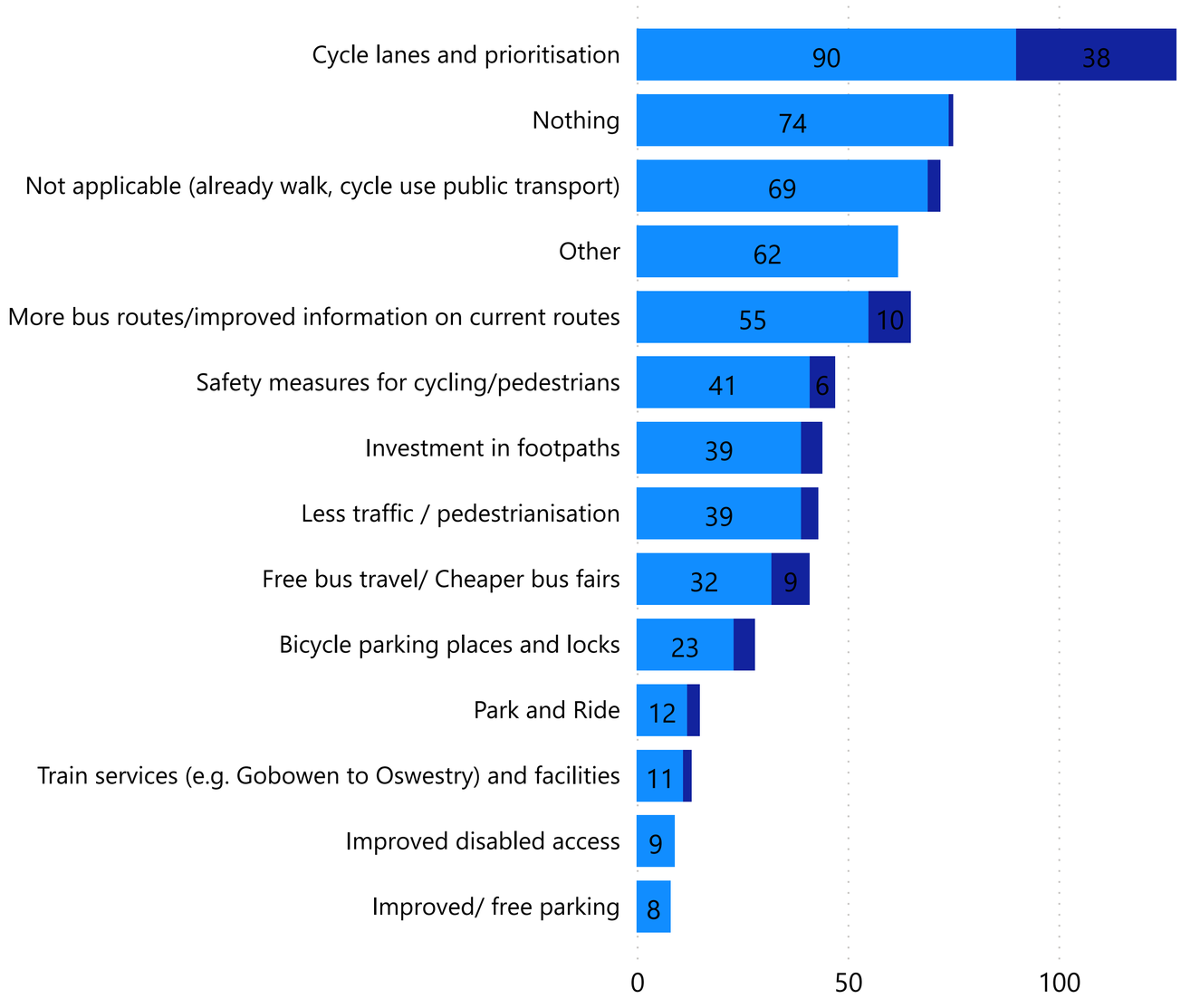
- I already walk and happy to continue.
- I already walk for short journeys.
- I walk where possible, but obviously cheaper reliable bus service will motivate.
- I walk loads but free buses must be way forward.
- I do walk. Only use car if needed for something awkward or heavy.
- I live 15 miles away and there is no public transport at the times I need, so I have to drive.
- I live too far away and not on a bus route.
- I drive into town as I live in Pant, the buses are not very reliable.
- No public transport where I live.
- I live 15 minutes out of town in hills. The road is not safe to walk on into town.
- I live a few miles outside so use a car...but park and ride?
- Cheaper transport, taxis are ridiculously priced.
- Disabled so cant walk, but when younger walked everywhere, so can recommend safer walkways regular more comfortable small town buses.
- I have a perception that public transport is limited (may not be correct). Happy to park on outskirts and walk in.
- I would use a bike lane if they weren't blocked by cars parked and you didn't have to use the road.

Main Messages

- Most people walk around Oswestry. The car is the second most common form of travel.
- Very small numbers of people report using a bus.
- Survey respondents highlight that their transport options are limited if they live outside of Oswestry.
- Large numbers of people walk around Oswestry and many comment they would like to see improvements to pavements and pedestrian routes. Some ask for consideration of safety and walking routes on the outskirts to encourage people living further afield to walk into the town.
- More information is available on the next slide (suggested improvements to encourage more sustainable forms of travel).

Sustainable transport

What would encourage you to walk, cycle or take public transport more often for short journeys?



Example comments

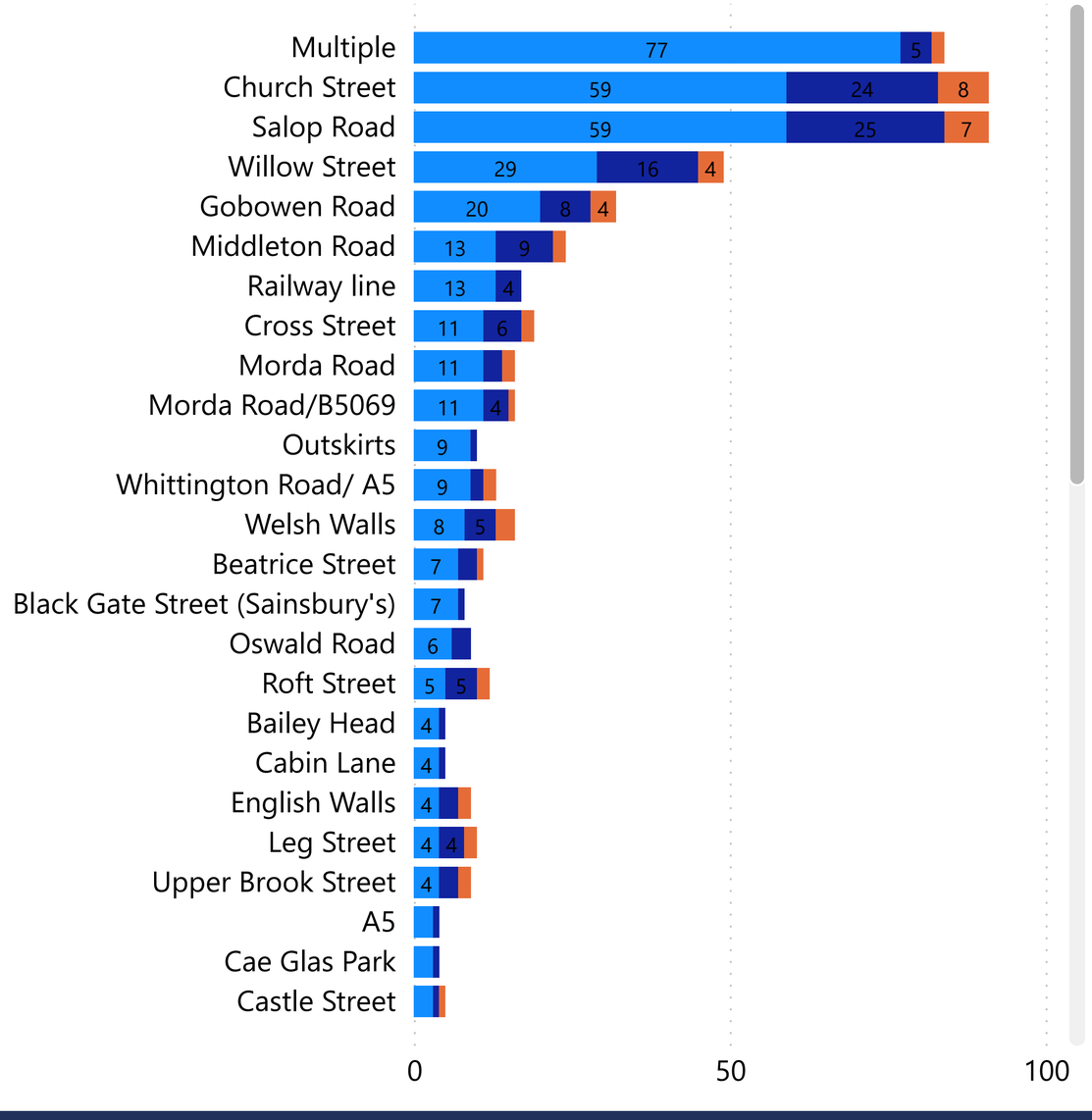
- Better cycle paths. More plants to soak up pollution. The air quality is terrible.
- Wider footpaths, dedicated cycle paths.
- Places to lock up my bike.
- I would use a bike lane if they weren't blocked by cars parked and you didn't have to use the road.
- Better information about bus routes and frequency; improved bus station with cover and toilets.
- Cheaper bus fares on the town service.
- If public transport was more reliable and frequent.
- The train station should be opened and run to Gobowen.
- Better pavements from outer Oswestry.
- We live a mile from town so walk there and back although my husband is finding this increasingly difficult. Public transport might be an option but we have found the service unreliable or non existent in the past.
- Phasing of traffic lights to give pedestrian priority; more pedestrian crossings/traffic restrictions.
- If there was more choice in the town centre then there would be less journeys out of the town.
- Improve the British weather!!
- No dog poo on pavements.

Main Messages

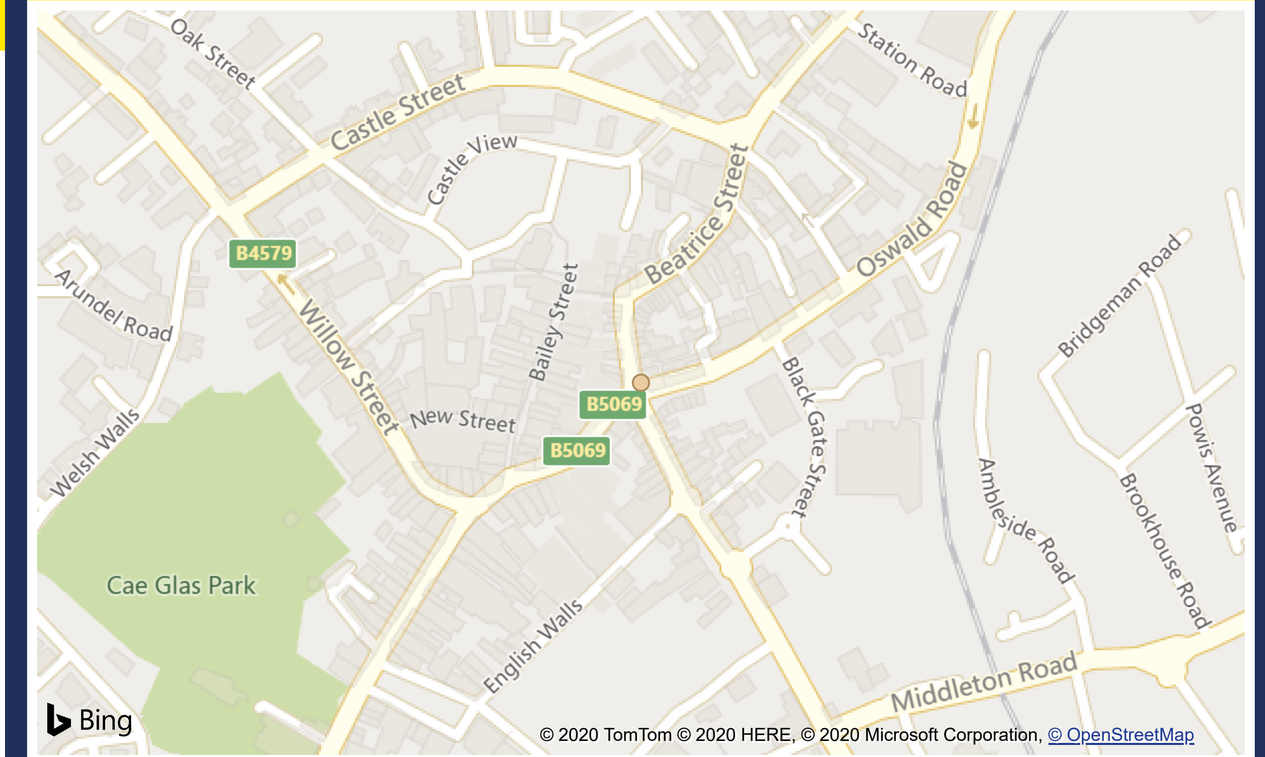
75 survey respondents can't be persuaded to use different forms of transport (some due to age or disability). The vast majority understand the importance of more sustainable travel options and provided suggestions. The main theme was cycle route improvement and cycle prioritisation, followed by changes to bus service provision, safety measures and footpath improvements.

Improving routes and crossings

Please suggest locations for introducing new or improving existing routes and crossings for pedestrians and cyclists:



Town Centre Map

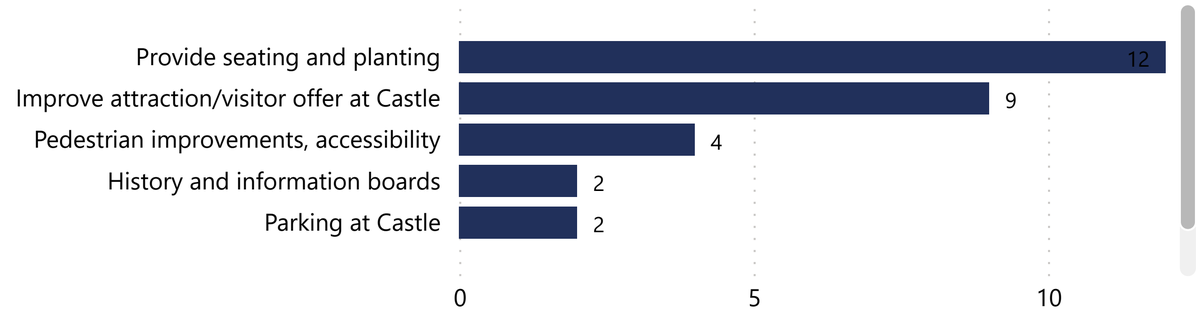


Example comments

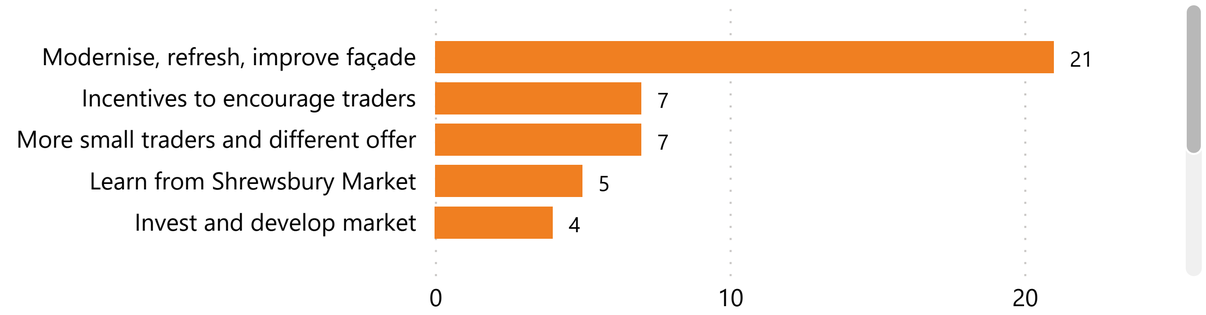
- Keep existing routes and introduce speed restrictions for motor vehicles along narrow roads.
- The traffic lights by St Oswald's Parish Church, this would make it safer for children going to the Marches School and other primary schools.
- Change the zebra in upper brook street to a pelican crossing.
- Oakhurst road around the bad bends with dangerous walls.
- Castle Street/Willow Street crossing is difficult for pedestrians and cyclists...
- The road by the co-op (near to the cross roads near school) because it's quite busy and difficult to cross [Cabin Lane].
- Crossing in front of the bus stop by Sainsbury's [Black Gate Street}.
- Traffic lights Roft Street/Salop Road or at least pelican crossing.

Area improvements

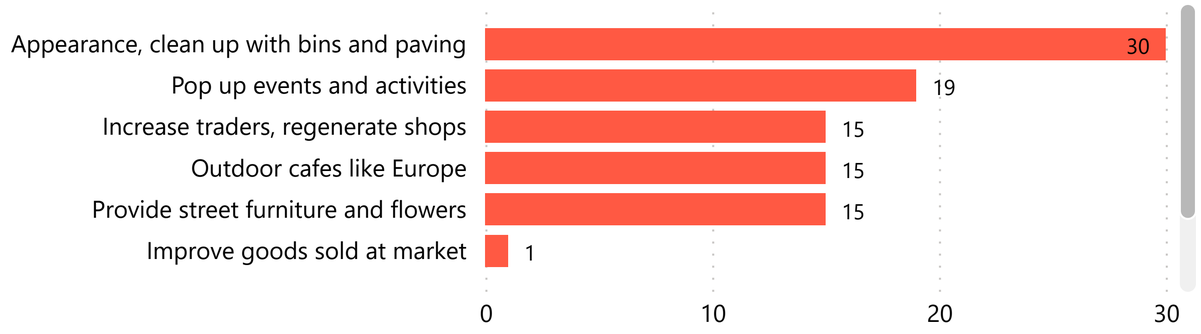
The Castle



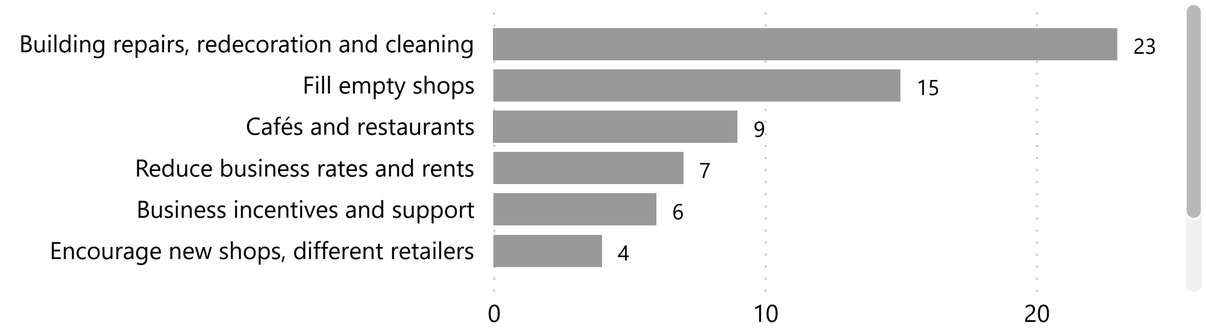
Indoor Market



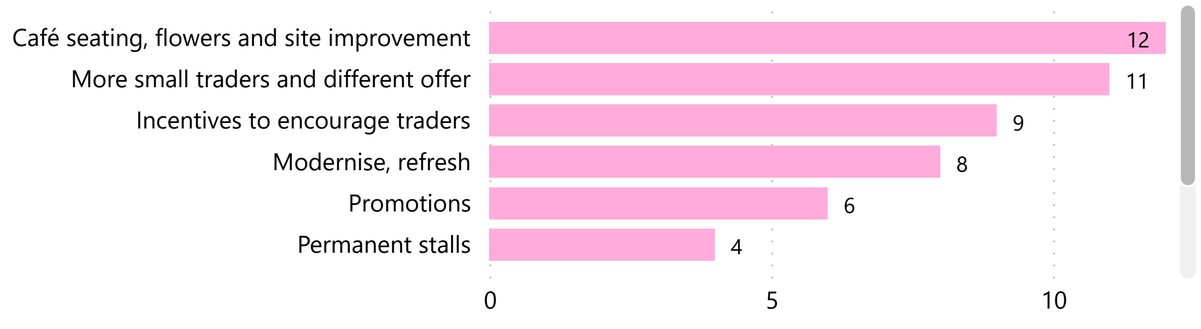
Bailey Head



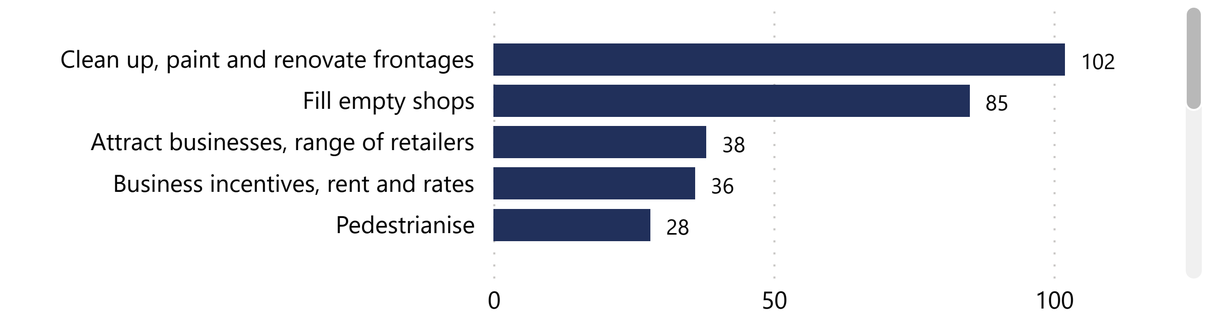
Bailey Street



Outdoor Market

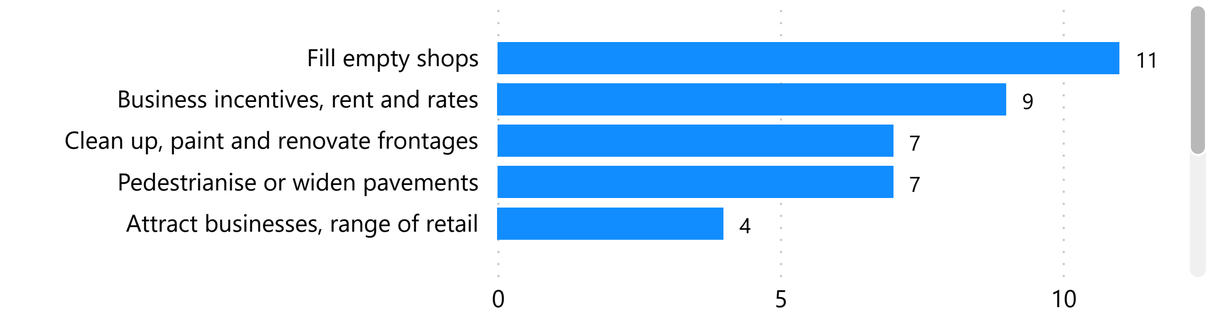


Cross Street

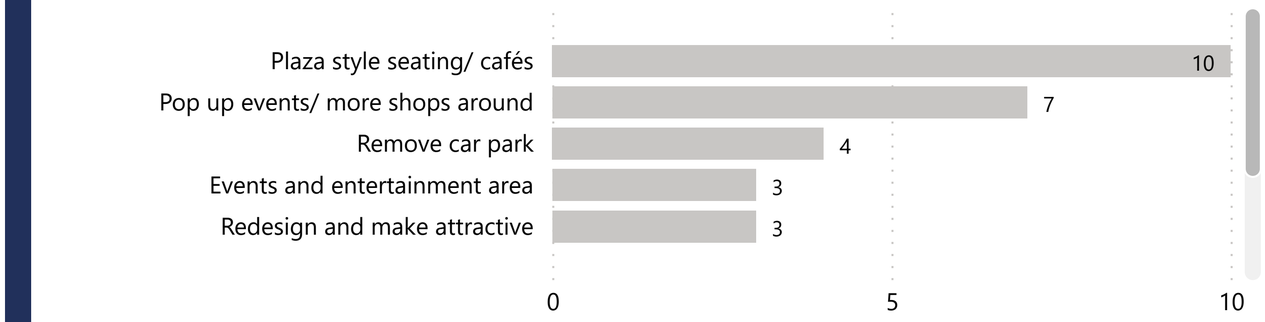


Area improvements

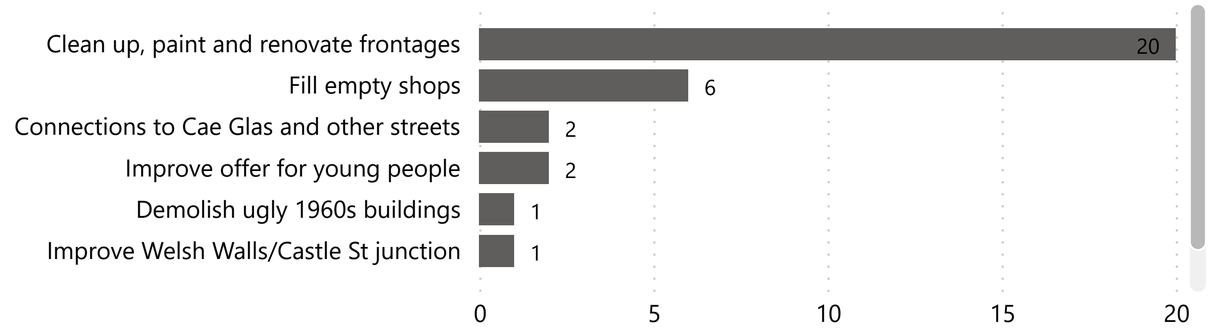
Leg Street



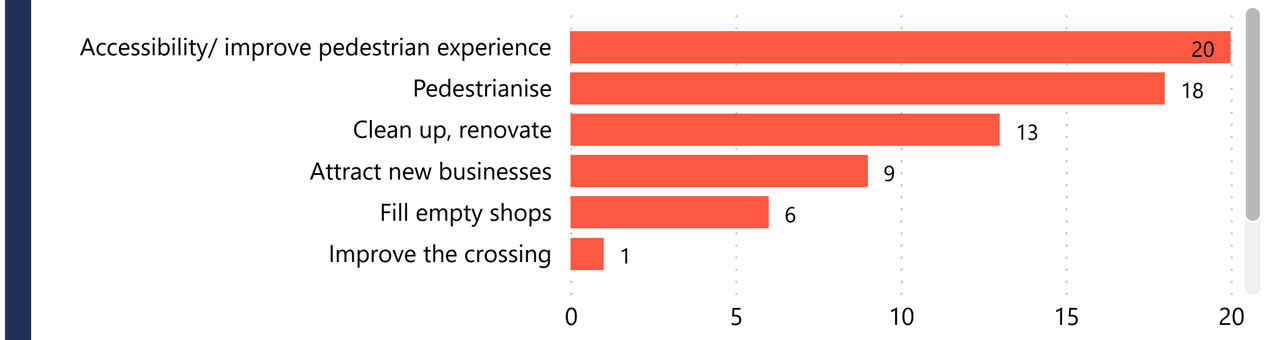
Festival Square/ Red Square



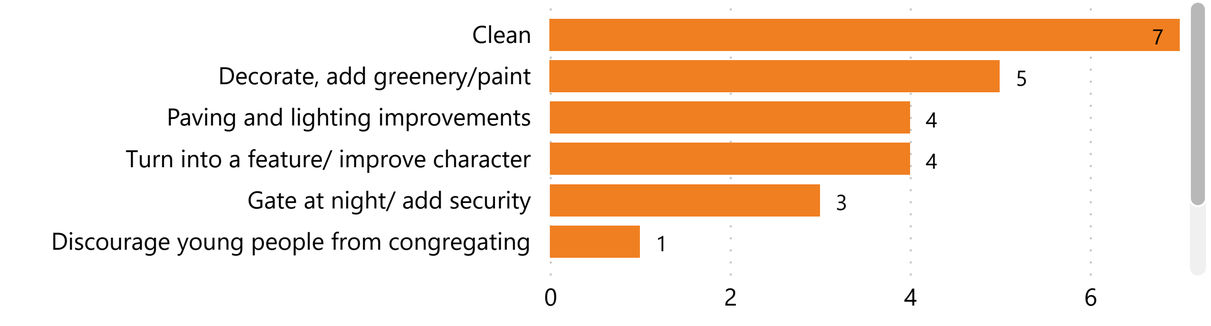
Willow Street



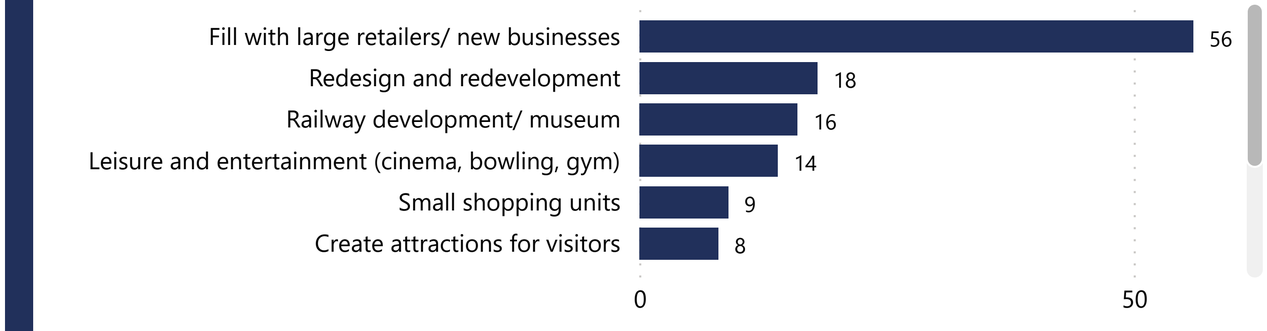
Church Street



The Shuts and Courts

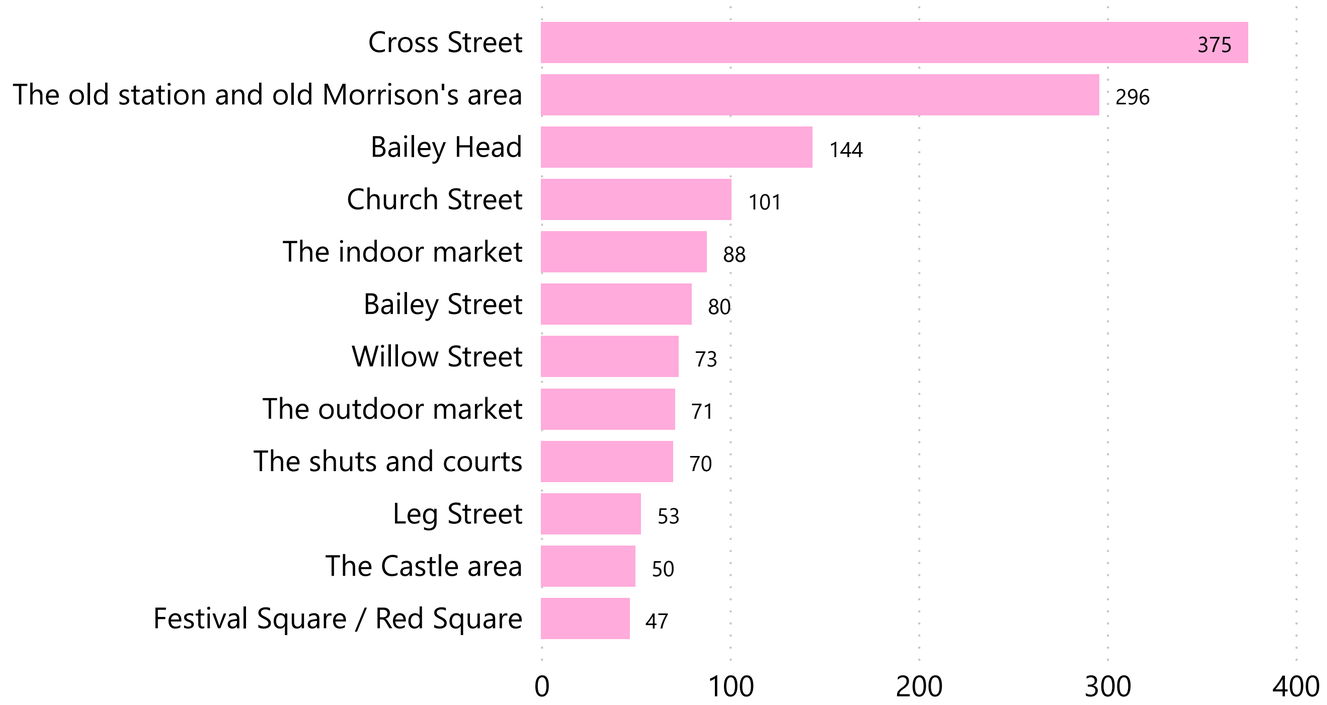


The old station and old Morrison's area



Area improvements

Which of these locations would you prioritise for investment and improvement (3 choices per person)?



Main Messages

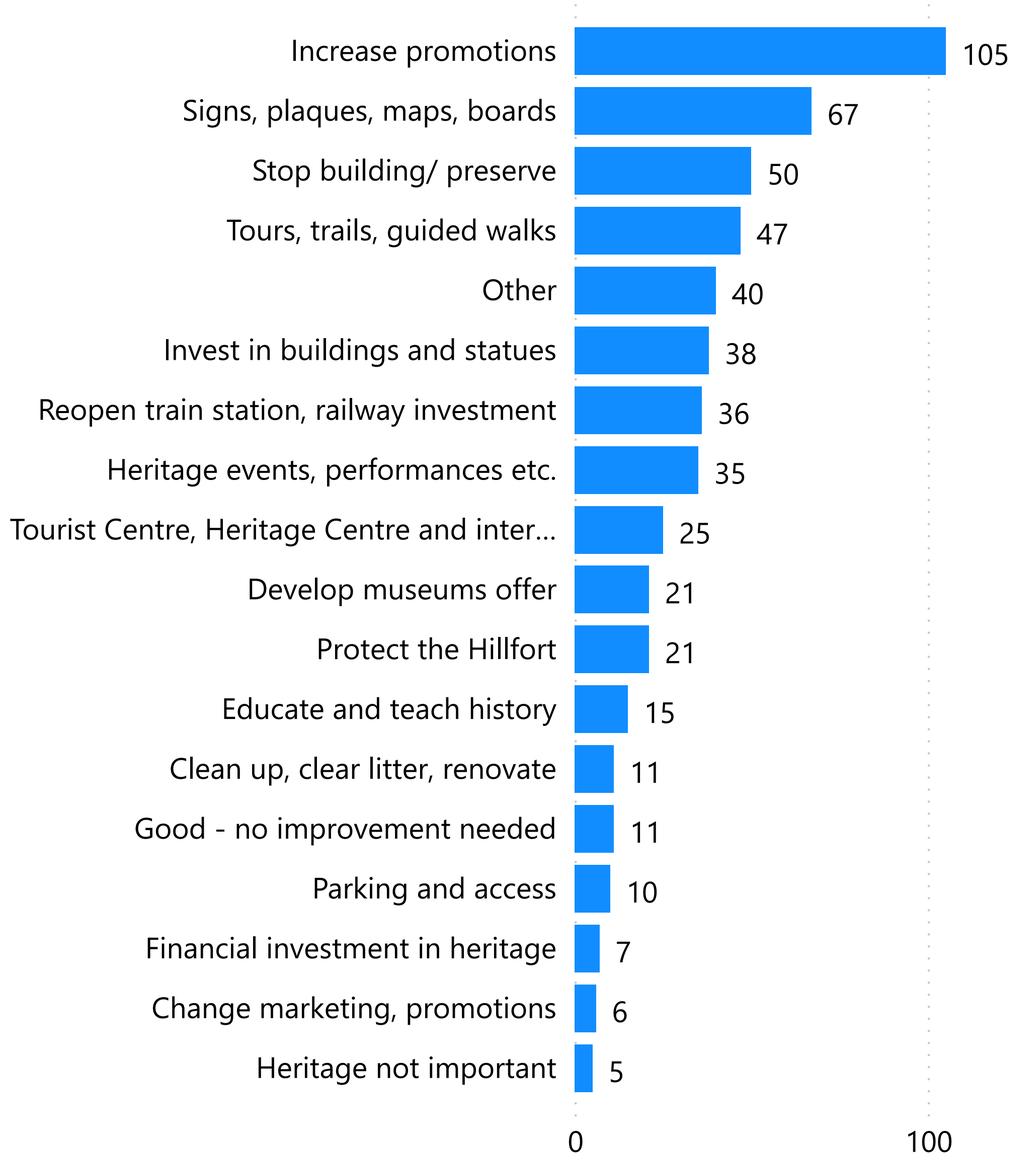
- There were 12 main locations highlighted within the survey. Some of the locations attracted more comments than others but the feedback was very helpful and displayed some common suggestions.
- Survey respondents often suggested locations need cleaning up and general improvements in the appearance of streets and building frontages.
- Requests for planting, seating, bins and investment in public spaces were seen throughout the feedback.
- Outdoor cafe areas were mentioned as a possible development for many of the locations.
- Other common concerns for many locations are the number of empty shops. Calls for business incentives and support to attract more business into the town were common.
- Cross Street and the old station and old Morrison's area attracted the most feedback.

Example comments

- Make area below the castle pedestrian friendly and link to Bailey Head. Make the Cross Street area more attractive and upgrade. Make the Market more vibrant live music and other community events in the evenings as well.
- Encourage more market traders. Reduce the cost to the trader with a loyalty scheme if they attend on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Castle Bank in underdeveloped. There is nothing there to attract people to go there. Can't think the last time I walked up to the top.
- Cross Street looks dull and dingy with fading and tired shop fronts. There is no character.
- Encourage businesses, pedestrianisation, benches and trees, references to the beautiful first floor architecture.
- Push outdoor market inside and put chairs, tables and umbrellas for outdoor cafe culture European style.
- Create a covered arcade ,smarten up the existing frontages to create the right atmosphere for investment to encourage customers.
- Get the empty properties into use, make features of the shuts and courts, reduce rates to encourage unique businesses.
- Get a tenant into the old Morrison's. It's the gateway into our town and is letting it down, same goes for Cross Street, it looks bad when you see empty shops.
- Old Morrison's should be a large gym complex or cinema. Indoor market should be renovated, perhaps with local artists/designers. Cross Street looks run down and there are many empty shops.
- Design roads to slow traffic to allow browsing. Improve public realm. Plant trees.
- More attractive frontage for market and more creative, imaginative space inside. Pedestrianised streets that encourage social interaction, recreation and wildlife.
- Better pedestrian access/paving.
- Programme to renovate dilapidated buildings, convert flats over shops, and other new

History and heritage

How can we make the most of Oswestry's heritage?



Example comments

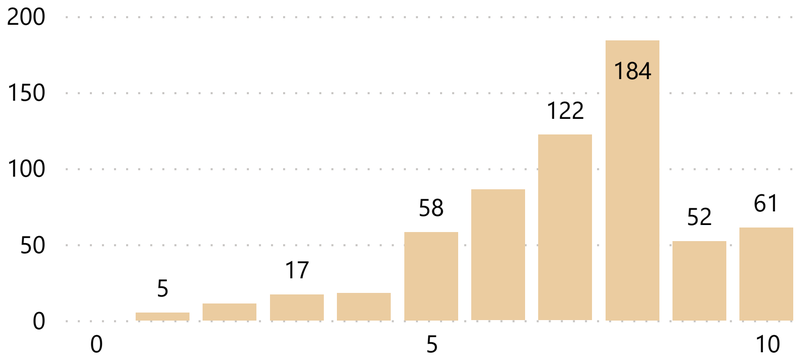
- Stop it being over whelmed by new developments, and preserve what there is.
-leaving it largely untouched and avoid trying to copy failed town centre developments that have removed the character of the town.
- Visitor Centre explaining the Hill Fort, this is a huge asset to the area very much underused or promoted.
- Promotion through local museum and sign boards and Tourist Information Centre.
- Move the OBT office [tourist office] to a mid town shop to promote to the casual visitor.
- Show it off to the best - the heritage railway in Oswestry is a good example of part of the Oswestry history that is being shown off and is improving year on year. The Railway Station is Oswestry is a fantastic building which helps the railway show just a glimpse of that history.
- By keeping the railway, making the most of historical sites, not to let any building take place near or on them.
- Support the Cambrian heritage railway in restoring track from Gobowen to attract tourists into town. A military museum on a ground floor building.
- Stop focusing on military links, and extol all other bonuses.
- Promote it as a heritage destination - hillfort, town trail, railway and nearby attractions such as Whittington and Chirk castles, canals. Promote as a walking destination linked to heritage - trails to hillfort, racecourse, railway, canals etc. As single destinations they wont attract many tourists but as a package they could.
- Marketing and promotion. No facilities at Iron Age Fort which should be a major attraction.

Main Messages

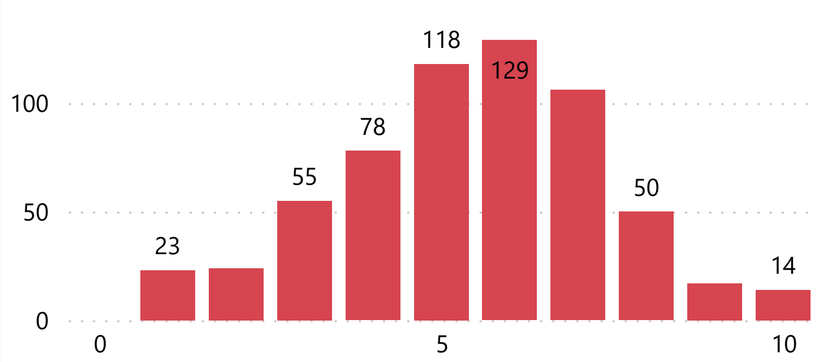
- Many people believe that Oswestry has a lot to offer visitors and could be promoted more effectively. There seems to be a general consensus (although small numbers disagree) that Oswestry has a very rich history and heritage. There is some positive feedback about existing provision.
- Many comment that signs, maps, boards etc. promoting historic locations would be a good investment. Tours and trails are also commonly

Ratings - How would you rate Oswestry.... (10= excellent)

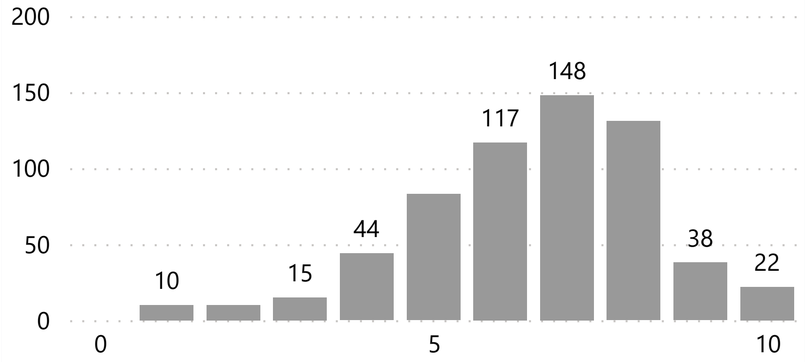
...as a place to live - a local market town?



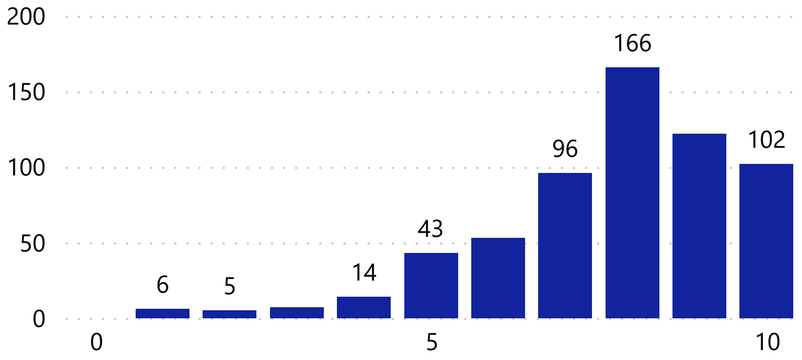
...as a place to visit – the visitor experience?



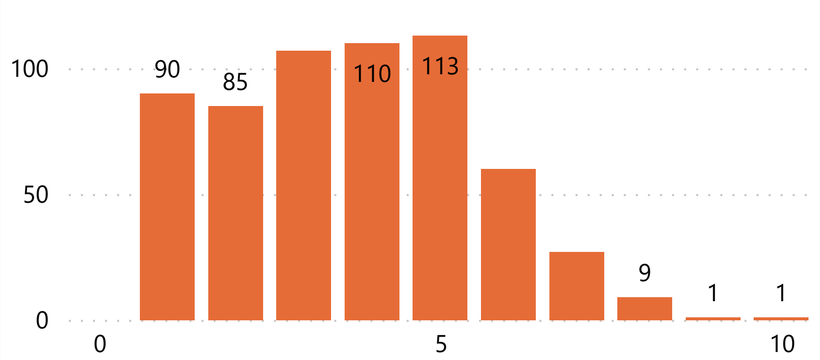
...for character and townscape?



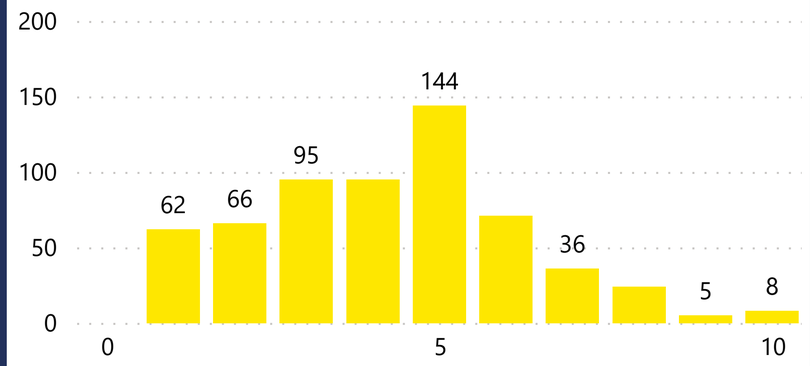
...for parks and open spaces?



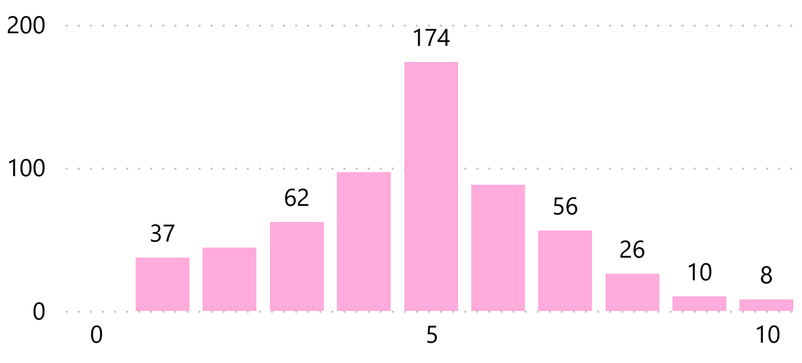
...for activities for young people?



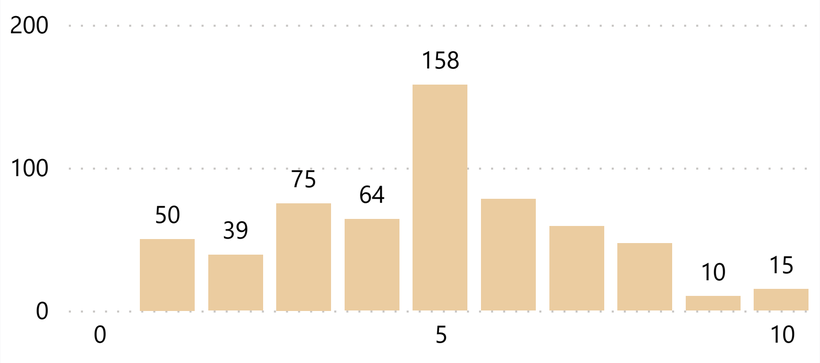
...for cycling environment?



...for access for people with disabilities?



...for bus services?

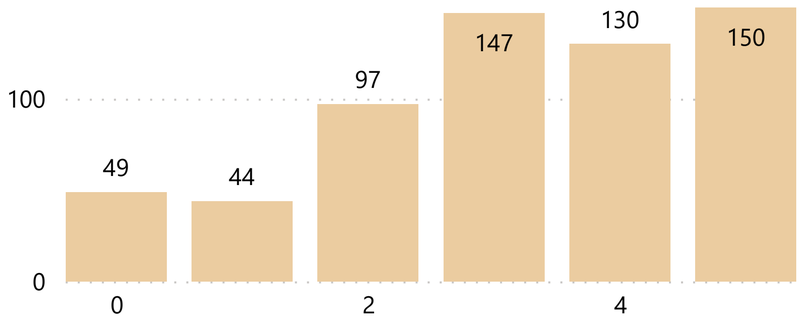


Main Messages

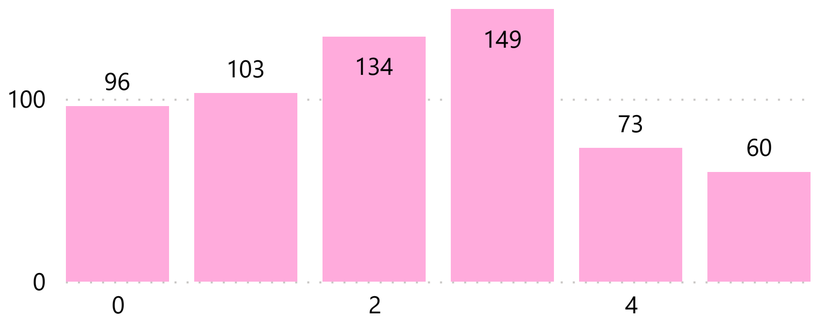
- The top rated theme is parks and open spaces.
- There are positive results for Oswestry as a place to live/ market town.
- The results highlight that activities for young people is the lowest rated theme.
- The scores suggest that the areas in need of greatest attention are activities for young people, cycling, bus services and access for people with disabilities.

Covid-19 has affected people's behaviour, with regards to your experience, please rate the following.... (0= Strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree)

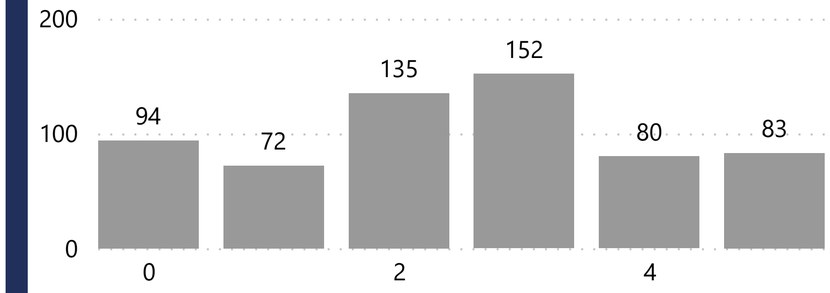
I shop locally more often.



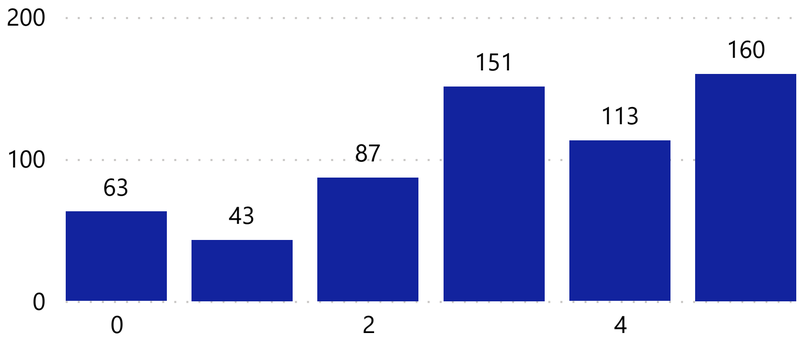
I come to Oswestry town centre more often.



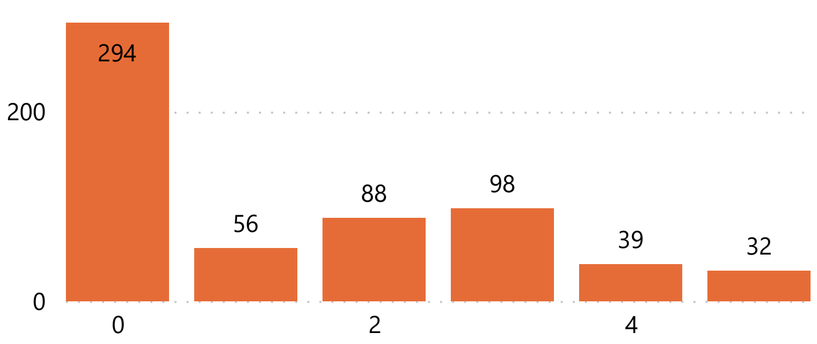
I visit Oswestry's parks and green spaces more often.



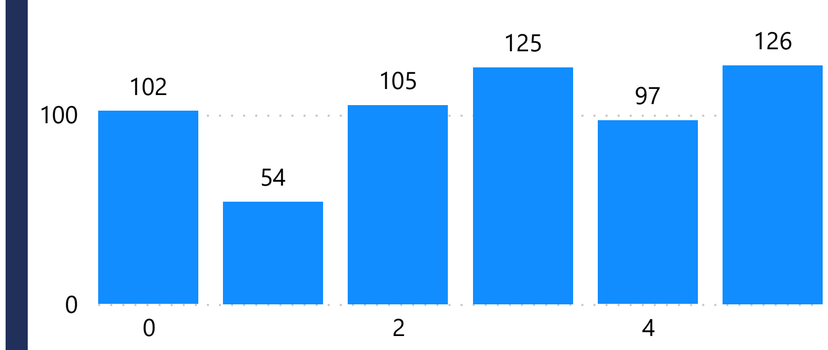
I walk more often.



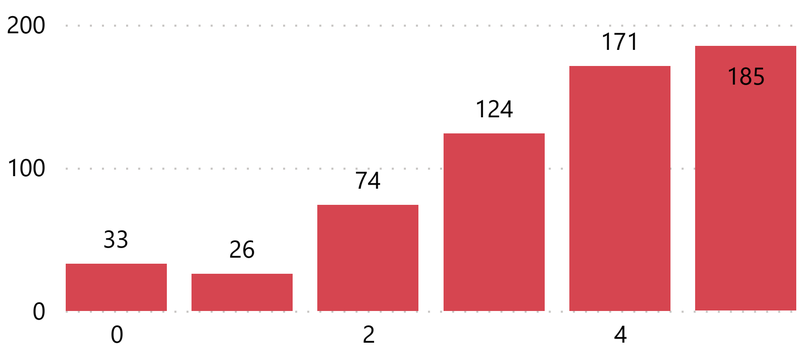
I cycle more often.



I use my car less.



I spend more time in my neighbourhood.

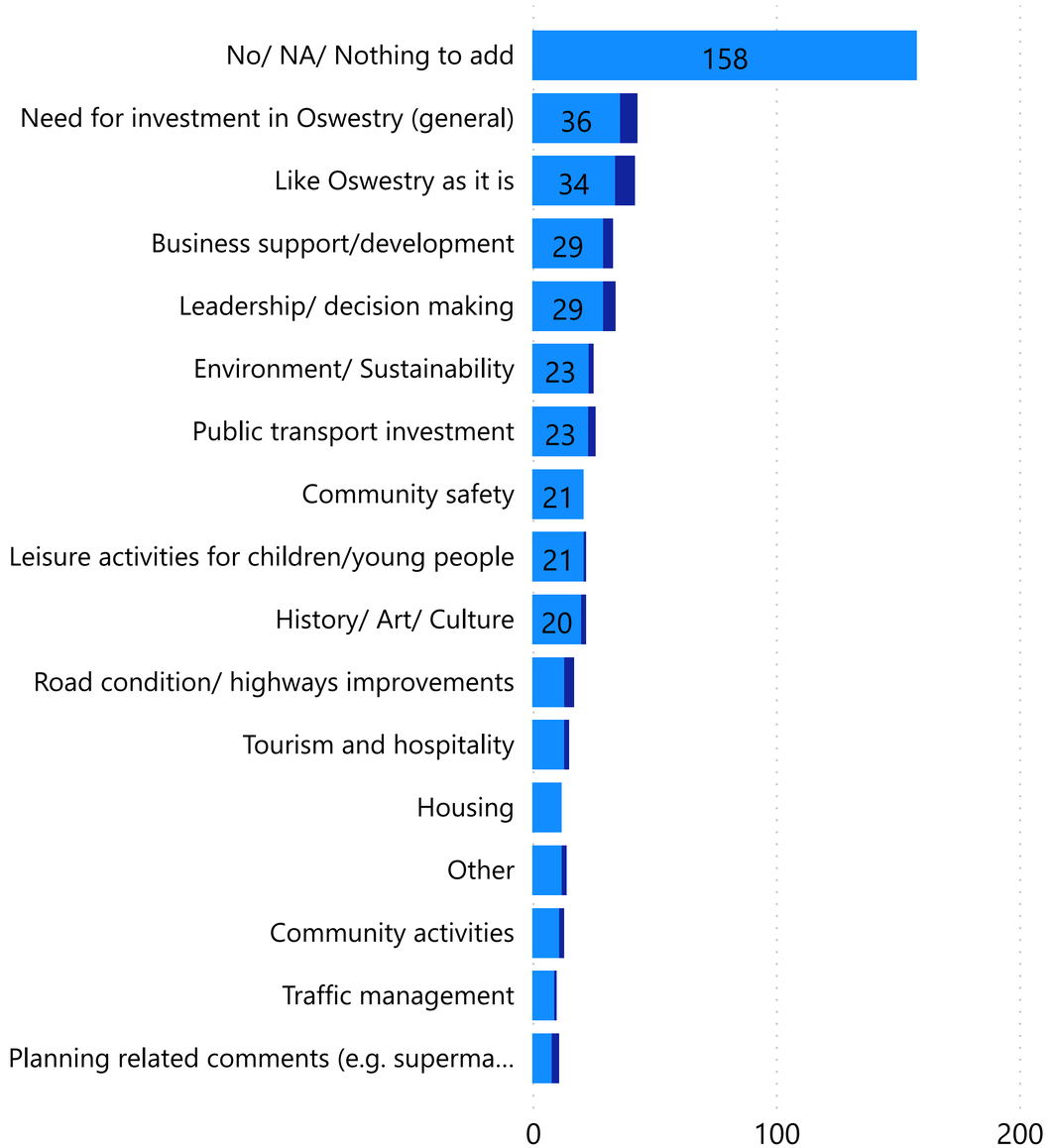


Main Messages

- The results show that many people shop locally more often and spend more time in their neighburhood as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Large numbers agree they have spent more time in their local area with very small numbers disagreeing.
- Many people walk more often. Some are also using their car less often. Small proportions of survey respondents have started to cycle more often.
- Experiences are very mixed concerning whether survey respondents have found they visit Oswestry town centre more often.
- Overall it is likely that the experiences of people living in or near Oswestry reflect some of the national patterns in behaviour change generated as a result of lockdown restrictions and social distancing.

Other comments

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?



Example comments

- I have a toddler and there is nothing to do with a toddler in town only the park which is usually really busy. There is the funhouse but not very clean/friendly. A cinema would be good. I love the flowers in the summer and the umbrellas in that alleyway.
- I really think we should do more for the youth! It's ridiculous that there is nothing for them to do! They are our future and we need to do more to enhance their potential! This, in my opinion, should be the highest priority!
- We don't need any more supermarkets.
- I used to be proud of my home town but now it seems tired and run down. I need to go to Shrewsbury, Wrexham or Chester if I want to buy clothes as no where in Oswestry. Plus all the road signs leading to our town are either filthy or unreadable. We need them to be bright and welcoming. The roads and pavements are a disgrace and quite dangerous.
- Please support the small local businesses it's the life of the high street.
- Lower rent on shops so more local people can afford to open shops for their small businesses.
- The library is an amazing asset needs to be recognised for its value to all Oswestrians.
- Affordable homes in redundant commercial/retail buildings would have a significant positive social and economic return.
- Free Parking would help rejuvenate the town enormously. I shop at Stan's because it is free to park.
- We need a real train station and we need to stop cyclists using the pavements.
- We need more events - for example party in the park was brilliant and brought the community together. The council need to support more events like they do the Oswestry Balloon Carnival.
- Oswestry has enormous potential to not only be a thriving and appealing town, but to look like it. Visual

Main Messages

A wide range of messages were highlighted under the other comments section of the survey. Many people described how much they like living in, or near, Oswestry but many people would like to see sympathetic improvements to improve the appearance of the town, support a thriving town centre economy and ensure there is something for people of all ages and with different access needs. Some concerns about local leadership were highlighted throughout the survey responses.