

**MINUTES OF THE WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HALL ON WEDNESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> JULY 2024 AT 6.00PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Lithgow (Vice Chair),  
Councillors J Lloyd, M. McGuffie, S Mercer, J. Thorne, K. Wheatley.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** David Farrow – Town Clerk  
Annette Kirk - Assets & Events Officer  
One member of the public  
One member of the press

Councillor M Lithgow Chaired meeting in the absence of Councillor Booth.

**156 APOLOGIES**

No apologies

**157 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest.

**158 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve and sign the minutes of the Economic Development Committee held on 15th May 2024.

**159 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

One member of public spoke, asking that the Town Council support his application to Somerset Council for a double loading and unloading parking bay outside the former Emporium building.

Standing Orders was suspended to allow Councillors to ask and answer questions.  
Standing Orders were reinstated.

**RESOLVED** to bring Agenda item.11 forward.

**160 REQUEST FOR CHANGE OF PARKING ARRANGEMENTS OUTSIDE THE FORMER EMPORIUM BUILDING**

Councillors welcomed the new business into the town.  
First proposal to support the owner’s application to Somerset Council Highways for a double loading/unloading bay. Proposed by Councillor K Wheatley not seconded, so did not go through.

A second proposal was made to support a single loading/unloading bay.

**RESOLVED** to support a single loading/unloading bay outside the former Emporium building.

**161 WORK PLAN 2024/25**

(i) Giles Adams, Chair of Visit Somerset presented to the Committee about its work and how they could offer to promote Wellington.

**RESOLVED** to recommend to full council that a Promotion of Wellington Working Group be established to work with Visit Somerset to develop proposals for how the Town Council could promote Wellington. Councillors J Thorne, M Lithgow expressed an interest in being part of the Working Group.

(ii) **RESOLVED** to use the Heritage Support Budget to source a consultant to develop proposals for improving frontages of buildings in the conservation area in the town centre and to identify and source grant funding and develop a heritage register for the town.

The Town Clerk asked committee members to come back with further ideas to cover the scope of economic development in the town e.g. events, market arrangements, conservation area, the promotion of Wellington, tourism, Heritage action plan.

#### **162 TOWN CENTRE NOTICE BOARD**

**RESOLVED** consider refurbishing the notice board and to obtain a quotation to be bought back to the next Committee meeting.

#### **163 VICTORIAN LANTERN CORNHILL**

The Committee reviewed the report provided by Gown Engineering on a suitable location to site the lantern.

**RESOLVED** to site the lantern in the new residential street off Cornhill, giving access to Old Court Mews, subject to the usual permissions and planning enquiries. Council Officer to also source installation costs.

#### **164 STREET TRADING CONSENT PERMIT**

**RESOLVED** to defer this for 12 months until it is clearer how much more the Town Council would be taking on from Somerset Council.

#### **165 EVENTS 2024/25**

##### **(i) 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY EVENTS**

The Committee noted the Payment and Receipts reports circulated with the agenda and agreed it was a very successful celebration.

##### **(ii) WELLINGTON CARNIVAL – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September**

**RESOLVED** to approve a budget of £500.00 for council officers to spend to cover costs for light buffet and drinks for the Mayor's Reception.

##### **(iii) 2024 Events in Diary**

Remembrance – Armistice Day – Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November

Remembrance Sunday - 10<sup>th</sup> November - road Closure Application submitted to Somerset Council.

Councillor J Lloyd informed the Committee that the RBL will invite the Town Council to join the Rockwell Green School Children in October to lay flowers and remembrance crosses in the cemetery.

##### **(iii) Christmas 2024 - Christmas Market and Lights Switch on – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November**

The Event Working Group to meet to discuss event format and expenditure. Report back at the next committee meeting.

**(iv) Film Festival**

Councillor K Wheatley gave an overview of the Film Festival 2024. Following the success and popularity of the screenings and events, the next Film Festival will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup>,4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

**(v) PULSE Smart Hubs**

The Committee considered the information presented to them. Some concerns were raised including the suggested number for the town. Pulse Representatives will deliver a presentation to the Town Council at its August meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.20 pm.

.....  
Councillor M Lithgow

Wellington Town Council  
c/o Dave Farrow – Town Clerk  
28 Fore Street  
Wellington  
Somerset TA21 8AQ

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
19<sup>th</sup> August, 2024

Dear Dave Farrow,

This is a matter I spoke to you about the other day regarding a Green Man Folk Festival. Perhaps this could be put on the agenda of your next Council meeting, or brought up as 'any other business'. So I'll give it here in great detail.

This would be a procession starting at the Cleve Hotel (with their permission), going down their drive into Mantle Street, along Fore Street and High Street, turn into Longforth Road, left into Victoria Street, across into Cleaveland Road, and into the Park. (The Friends of Wellington Park are happy for us to do so, especially as it's on a Saturday (21<sup>st</sup> June, 2024), and doesn't interfere with their 'dancing in the Park' Sunday.

The procession will be as follows: A Leader at the front with a bell to ring and wearing a tricorn hat; followed by the Green Man (traditional with oak leaves as decoration about his face), who will walk under a canopy held up by four people; behind him will follow (dancing freely) Flower Faeries based on Cicely Mary Barker's paintings in her book *A Flower Fairies Treasury*. These, naturally, will be children dressed up; with them will be musicians playing the appropriate music for the dancing/skipping around 'Faeries'.

Taking the Padstow May Day celebrations as an example, there will be a short, six line song, composed especially for the occasion which will be repeated over and over again during the procession. The musicians (could be schools have children and musical instruments who would like to be involved) will be followed by most of the 'Faeries', (though it's thought to have several about the Green Man under his canopy), and these followed by Morris Dancers walking who would perform at the Park when the procession finishes.

At Padstow virtually the whole of the town folk turn out to follow their Obby Oss around the streets of the town. So perhaps the citizens of Wellington would follow our procession, either dressed appropriate to a folk/Nature event, or just singing along once they've heard and learnt the words.

The procession will end with a double whistle blown shortly after a surprise magical moment (not to be revealed yet!).

So this letter is to put the Council fully in the picture as to what is envisaged. I've called for volunteers to form a team, each one having specific responsibilities. If there is a member of the Council who would be especially interested in this event, they would be welcome to attend our first meeting starting at 7.30pm at 19 Mantle Street, on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September.

The procession takes thirty minutes at a slow walking pace going from the Cleve to the Park. We realise permission to close roads off prior and during the procession could be a problem, and that the cost to legally get a professional company to do this might prove more expensive than we could afford. So fund raising will be considered with someone in the team responsible for this. Also to obtain charity status to avoid tax. All this and much more we would like advice on.

Well Mr Farrow, this has been a long comprehensive letter. We – or should I say I – have started with the big idea, but as I said when we met in your office, it might have to be altered, especially if we can't get the road closures. But if it takes off in a big way and becomes an annual event, it might draw hundreds of visitors to our town to spend their money in our shops. The May Day Celebrations at Padstow in Cornwall draw thousands of visitors to their town.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

John Jarrett.

PS: Barn dancing with a caller may follow on after the Morris Dancers.

## **Town Centre Footfall Counters**

### **Proximity Future Ltd Contract January 2025.**

The town centre currently has three footfall sensors, located at:

Fore Street (Squirrel Court)  
South Street (MJC Financial)  
High Street (Wellington Weekly News)

The sensors were originally installed by Somerset West and Taunton Council to monitor the effectiveness of initiatives taken to encourage people back to the High Street following a downturn in visitor numbers during the Covid pandemic. The cost was funded by the government's "Welcome Back Scheme".

Somerset Council have reviewed the necessity for continuing the use of these specific counters along with budgetary considerations. External funding is no longer available to fund the contract for the sensors.

Somerset Council would like to know by the end of September if the Town Council use the data and would they be interested in continuing the contract from January 2025.

The Data provides footfall figures in the areas where the three sensors are located in the town. Reports provide information on the number of new and repeat visitors to the town, It shows the number of visitors at Town Centre Events during specific time periods. See attached report for the 80<sup>th</sup> D-Day Anniversary Street Fair on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024.

### **Annual Contract from January 2025:**

£2844.00 per annum for 3 sensors. To be funded from the 24/25 Town Centre Projects budget line.

### **Maintenance Repairs:**

Currently the sensor at Fore Street (Squirrel Court) is currently working offline due to a power outage and has been off now for some time. Proximity Future Ltd have been talking to Somerset Council to get this resolved as the issue is related to a larger Power Outage some time ago which also affected the CCTV cameras. The CCTV was repaired but the footfall sensors were not checked. Unfortunately, Somerset Council are not in a position to pay for an engineer to go out to resolve the issue.

Proximity Future Ltd have their own electrician who is willing to come over and fix the problem but there will be a cost of £350.00. The cost to be split with Bridgwater Town Council, as they have a similar problem.

Selected Event

Start Hour

10

End Hour

16

Comparison Date

08/06/2024

Event Date

01/06/2024

Zones

× Fore St / Squirrel Court × Wellington Weekly News × MJC Financial

Remove All

Select All

Submit

THE DATA ONLY REPRESENTS THE SELECTED ZONES. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THE ZONES COVER THE ENTIRE EVENT AREA, PLEASE BARE THIS IN MIND WHEN REVIEWING THE VISITOR NUMBERS.

Visitor % difference

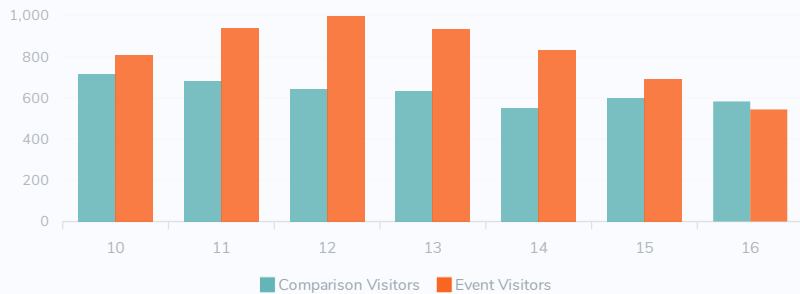
# 30%

Comparison vs event visitors

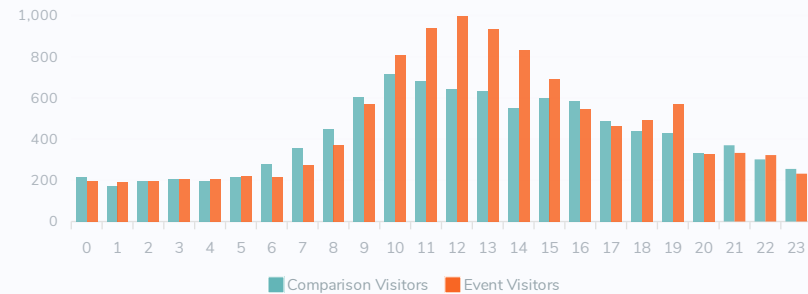
# 4,410 / 5,753

VISITOR NUMBERS ARE NOT THE SAME AS UNIQUE VISITORS NUMBERS AND THEREFORE THEY CAN NOT BE COMPARED AGAINST EACH OTHER USING THE UNIQUE VISITOR REPORTS.

### HOURLY VISITORS (EVENT PERIOD)



### HOURLY VISITORS (FULL DAY)



Selected Event

Start Hour

10

End Hour

16

Comparison Date

08/06/2024

Event Date

01/06/2024

Zones

× Wellington Weekly News

Remove All

Select All

Submit

THE DATA ONLY REPRESENTS THE SELECTED ZONES. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THE ZONES COVER THE ENTIRE EVENT AREA, PLEASE BARE THIS IN MIND WHEN REVIEWING THE VISITOR NUMBERS.

Visitor % difference

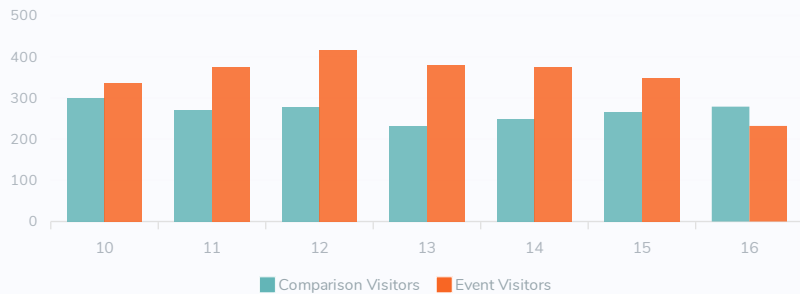
## 32%

Comparison vs event visitors

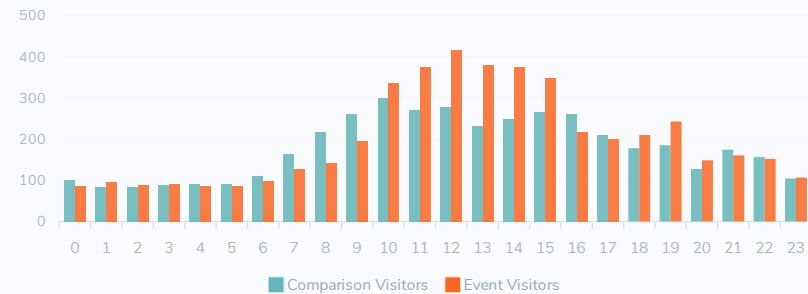
## 1,855 / 2,450

VISITOR NUMBERS ARE NOT THE SAME AS UNIQUE VISITORS NUMBERS AND THEREFORE THEY CAN NOT BE COMPARED AGAINST EACH OTHER USING THE UNIQUE VISITOR REPORTS.

### HOURLY VISITORS (EVENT PERIOD)



### HOURLY VISITORS (FULL DAY)





Selected Event

Start Hour:  End Hour:  Comparison Date:  Event Date:

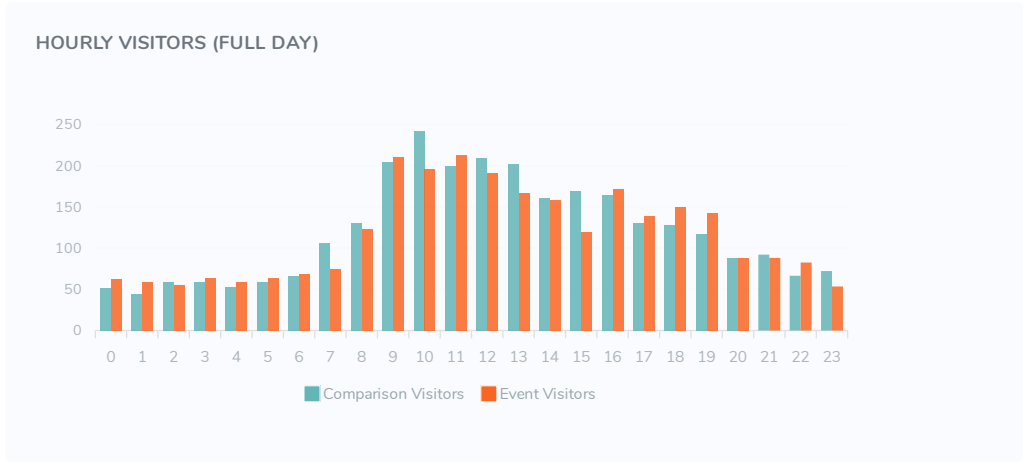
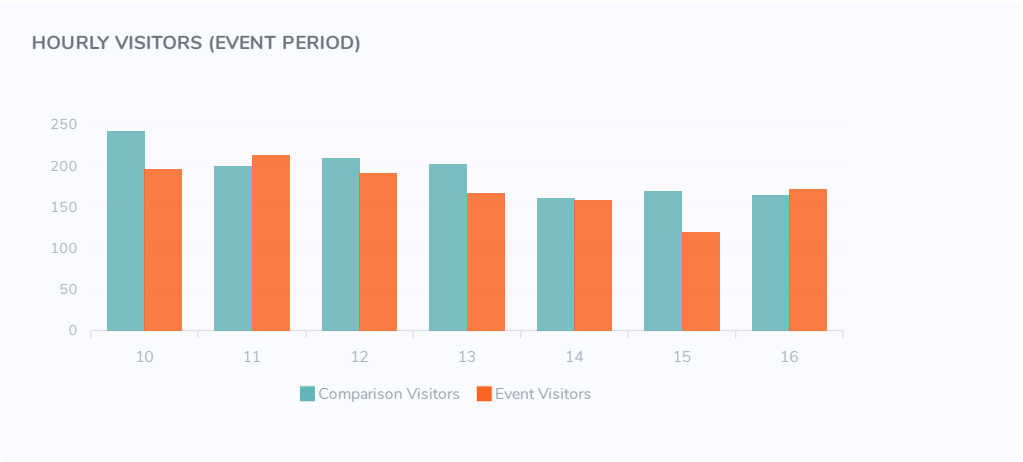
Zones:

THE DATA ONLY REPRESENTS THE SELECTED ZONES. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THE ZONES COVER THE ENTIRE EVENT AREA, PLEASE BARE THIS IN MIND WHEN REVIEWING THE VISITOR NUMBERS.

Visitor % difference  
**-10%**

Comparison vs event visitors  
**1,348 / 1,216**

VISITOR NUMBERS ARE NOT THE SAME AS UNIQUE VISITORS NUMBERS AND THEREFORE THEY CAN NOT BE COMPARED AGAINST EACH OTHER USING THE UNIQUE VISITOR REPORTS.



Selected Event

Start Hour: 10 | End Hour: 16 | Comparison Date: 08/06/2024 | Event Date: 01/06/2024

Zones: x MJC Financial

Remove All Select All Submit

THE DATA ONLY REPRESENTS THE SELECTED ZONES. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THE ZONES COVER THE ENTIRE EVENT AREA, PLEASE BARE THIS IN MIND WHEN REVIEWING THE VISITOR NUMBERS.

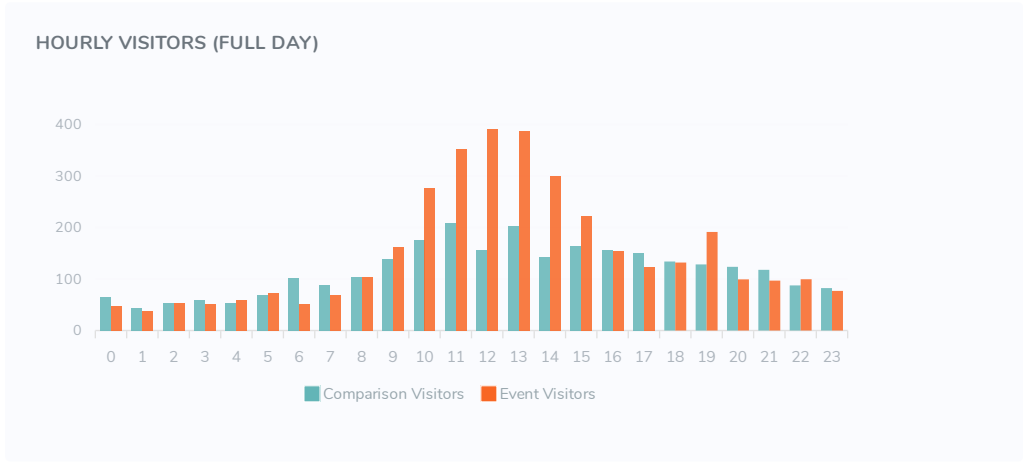
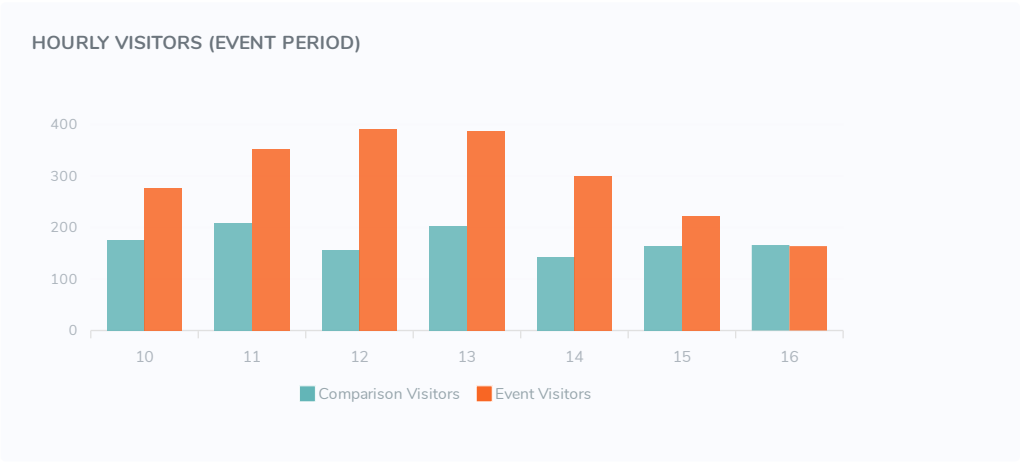
Visitor % difference

## 73%

Comparison vs event visitors

## 1,207 / 2,087

VISITOR NUMBERS ARE NOT THE SAME AS UNIQUE VISITORS NUMBERS AND THEREFORE THEY CAN NOT BE COMPARED AGAINST EACH OTHER USING THE UNIQUE VISITOR REPORTS.



## **Post Covid 2021 Survey – What have we improved since?**

This report only highlights the questions we have had power to have an impact on. Some survey results reflected things outside of our control like the amount and variety of shops on offer so these questions have been omitted.

### **Question 11 – Culture (e.g. museum, theatre, cinema, exhibitions, library)**

**Average rating: 6.1**

- We have continued to support the museum and helped publicise them through our social media channels and noticeboards.
- One of the reasons that encouraged us to buy 28-30 Fore Street was to ensure that the museum had a safe and permanent home.
- We have given significant funding to the first two Wellington Film Festivals which attracted many visitors both from within the town and from further afield.

### **Question 13 - Services (e.g. library, bank, estate agents, financial advisors)**

**Average rating: 5.5**

- When Lloyds bank announced its closure we did ask them to reconsider as it was a well-used and needed facility in the town. When we were informed that the closure would definitely be going ahead we worked with Cash Access UK to bring a Banking Hub into the town. We are currently housing them in our building and have done so since March. The Council have agreed to allow the Banking Hub to remain in 30 Fore Street for a further 6 months while their permanent location at 26 Fore Street is refurbished.

### **Question 14 – Toilets**

**Average rating: 3.5**

- After the survey, the Council began exploring options for refurbishing these toilets and were considering a total rebuild or just updating works. This was tabled in 2022 to be looked at in the following financial year when on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022 a car crashed into the block, making them unsafe and forcing them to be closed. It took over a year for the block to be demolished as we ran into issues regarding the level of insurance that we had for the building. The Council has been evaluating rebuild options and have decided to go for a modular building that will include two unisex cubicles, one disabled cubicle, and a store room. This modular block is predicted to be up and running by August 2025.

### **Question 15 – Parking**

**Average rating: 6**

- We have worked with Somerset Council to make suggestions for improvements in North Street Car Park. We have also funded free parking on Saturdays leading up to Christmas in 2023 and 2024 as well as for our own Street Fairs. In terms of limiting parking, we have successfully had Somerset Council extend the double yellow lines in South Street to improve road safety.

#### **Question 16 – Signposting/wayfinding e.g. how to find services, town centre maps?**

**Average rating: 6.2**

- Since 2021 we have installed a map in each of the four main car parks (Longforth Road, South Street, North Street, Waitrose) that shows points of interest, green spaces, services, schools, places of worship, and supermarkets.
- We also installed four finger posts in strategic locations (Corner of Fore St & South St, Corner of North St & Victoria St, at the Fore St entrance to North St car park, and at the entrance to Courtland Rd car park.) these fingerposts are in a traditional style and point to major points of interest such as the museum, Wellington Park, The Basins, and the Council Offices. They also show a rough time estimate for how long it will take to walk to each location from the finger post it is on.

#### **Question 18 – Safe/Secure Environment**

**Average rating: 7.3**

- Continued to foster a good relationship with our local police and invite the sergeant to attend our monthly meetings to give a report and for Councillors to raise any questions.
- Agreed as part of 23/24 budget to fund CCTV in the town centre as Somerset Council's budget crisis meant that we were at risk of losing it.

#### **Question 19 – Street lighting**

**Average rating: 7.6**

- Followed up street lighting issues with Somerset Council and relevant bodies – most recently working to restore lighting in Lancer Court.
- Community Warden has repainted street lamps in the town centre as lower sections had become worn and paint had flaked off.

#### **Question 20 – Clean and tidy streets**

**Average rating: 7.2**

- We employed a Community Warden in September 2023 who has helped to drastically improve the street scene in town. Although the main street sweeping jobs are undertaken by an ID Verde employee on behalf of Somerset Council our Community Warden has recently refreshed a lot of the paintwork on our street furniture and will be painting the town centre railings once the flowers are removed in the autumn.

#### **Question 24 – Ease of access via car or public transport**

**Average rating: 6.8**

- In Q1 of 2024 we gave a £420 grant to Wellington Bus User Group to support their initiative to encourage more people to catch the bus.

#### **Question 25 – Ease of access via bicycle**

**Average rating: 6.5**

- We worked with Somerset Council and WSP to develop an LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) but this has unfortunately stalled due to Somerset's budget struggles.
- We installed new bike racks in the town centre with Emergency High Street funding, giving more options for cyclists to secure their bikes.

#### **Question 27 – Events and attractions**

**Average rating: 5.4**

- We have run four successful summer Street Fairs and two Christmas Lights Switch On events. Our events have improved each time and we have formed a good working relationship with local suppliers and businesses to help these events run smoothly. Our events are attended by upwards of 3000 people and draw people from surrounding areas into the town.
- We have supported other event organisers through grants, advice, and publicity. Namely Eat Festivals, Wellington Produce Market, Wellington Independent Market, Friends of Wellington Park, Wellington Carnival Committee.

#### **Question 28 – Sense of Community**

**Average rating: 6.5**

- Over the past three years we revamped our communications strategy to make the public feel like they are more included in our work and encourage people to get involved and actively stay up to date on what the Town Council gets up to.
- We regularly work with a variety of Community Groups in town, again providing grants, advice, and publicity for their initiatives and events.
- Our recent usage of the Place Standard Tool shows that “Identity and Belonging” is the best part about Wellington, scoring 7 out of 7 in the results from Wellington Street Fair 2024.

### **Question 30 – What would encourage you to visit the town centre more often?**

#### **Most popular: Post Office, more independent retailers, more markets**

- Many of the options in this list are out of our purview but where possible we have tried over the past three years to make improvements where possible. See above for more detail on some of the work we have done. Items not covered above are described below:
- Pop-Up Shops and outdoor vendors – the Pop-Up Shop has grown year on year and is one of our success stories. It continues to be popular and shows no signs of slowing any time soon. There has been little uptake on our promotional space with the fishmonger still being its only renter but there has recently been an application for Farmhouse Pies and Pasties to regularly set up outside of Co-Op.
- Post Office – **The Council made an agreement in principle to provide financial assistance to reopening a Post Office in town.** This is difficult however as there are not currently any shops in the town centre that would like to take on the running of a Post Office. This issue was relayed to our previous MP without fruition but our new MP Gideon Amos brought up this matter in his early day motion and will be discussing this with Councillors in an informal meeting at the end of September.

### **Question 32 – What would you like to see that would ‘enhance’ Wellington?**

#### **Most popular: Improved toilet facilities, street markets, benches and picnic tables on green spaces**

- **Benches in the town centre**
  - We installed a number of new benches in the town centre in the original traditional style and also installed a new curved bench on the corner of Fore Street and South Street.
- **Benches and picnic tables on green spaces**
  - We installed picnic tables on Roly Poly Green which have proven very popular. We also installed four benches on the main route through the Green Corridor with funding leftover from the disbanded Wellington Garden Club.

- **More litter bins**

- We have funded 12 new litter bins across the town

- **More dog waste bins**

- **Planters/living wall floral displays**

- In 2023 we installed living wall displays in the town centre to improve the look of the traffic barriers and to act as a carbon sink.
- Existing planters were refurbished and a few new wooden planters were purchased and installed in the town centre and beyond.
- Wellington Town Council paid for the flowers in town centre planters and hanging baskets for the first time in 2024 and many members of the public have commented that this is the best they have looked in years.

- **Street trees**

- While actual trees in the pavement have proved to be too costly our Climate Change Project Officer and Open Spaces Manager have been scouting other locations around the town where trees could go such as verges and car parks.

- **Street markets**

- As mentioned above we have been the lead organiser on six successful market events and have provided financial support and publicity to other organisations trying to run markets in the town.

- **Improved toilet facilities**

- As mentioned above we are in the process of rebuilding the destroyed facility at Longforth Road. We have also just commissioned surveys for the toilets blocks that we will be taking on from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 and will be taking surveyor's advice on how these facilities can be improved.

- **Town Centre Trail**

- In 2022 we created and released a Town Trail that takes participants on a roughly 3.5km walk around the town centre, The Basins Nature Reserve, Wellington Park, and the Recreation Ground. This trail has proved immensely popular over the years with hundreds of copies being picked up. Travelodge Wellington requested a bundle of copies to give away over the summer and we will be approaching them for feedback on how many were collected.
- In 2023 we created a companion piece for the main trail, the Children's Scavenger Hunt. We created this so younger children could join in on the walk as the scavenger hunt asks them to spot things in their surroundings and learn about the area. This has been well-received too.
- Both trails are printed in-house on 160gsm paper to keep costs down. In the first year they were distributed in shops throughout the town and in 2024 they are available in Wellington Museum and the Council Offices.

### **Question 34 – Quality of the street lights and decorations/Christmas tree**

**Average rating: 6.8**

- We unveiled a new lighting scheme in 2023 which was applauded by Wellingtonians and those further afield.
- As well as continuing to gratefully receive a large Christmas tree for the town centre from Langford Lakes, we have installed tree pits for smaller trees in Rockwell Green and Tonedale. This helps these communities, who sometimes feel left out, to be included in the festivities.

### **Question 35 – Father Christmas meet and greet**

**Average rating: 5.9**

- In 2023 for our switch-on event we decided to host a Santa's Grotto in our Wellington Town Council Gazebo. We designed and printed a grotto scene onto vinyl banners and affixed these onto the interior walls of the gazebo and added lights and other decorations. Santa was provided by the Rotary Club of Wellington. There were lines of children waiting to meet Santa well into the evening and we will be doing this again in 2024, likely in two slots to give more children a chance to meet him.

### **Question 36 – Christmas Street Entertainers and Buskers**

**Average rating: 5.5**

- We have a range of entertainers at our Christmas event and in 2021 and 2022 we paid for street performers to entertain Christmas shoppers on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas. Funded by the Emergency High Street and Welcome Back.
- Our Switch On Event entertainment has been kicked up a notch in recent years as we have invested in the hire of a covered stage for the event. To personalise it, we had a large stage backdrop made that reads "Wellington Town Council Christmas Lights Switch On"

### **Question 37 – Christmas Lights Switch On Event/Ceremony**

**Average rating: 5.8**

- As detailed above we have put a lot of work in over the past few years to make the Christmas Lights Switch On a big event that draws people into the town centre. Our events since 2021 have featured a small market (run in 2022 and 2023 by Wellington Produce Market) that begins in the morning and runs until the lights are switched on.



- In 2024 we are running the market ourselves and hope it will have more stall variety. We have also invited special guest Clinton Rogers to comper the event from 4pm.

### **Question 38 – Free Christmas parking**

**Average rating: 7.1**

- This initiative was supplied free of charge by Somerset Council until 2023 when they announced that they would be charging for parking on Saturdays throughout the Christmas period. Wellington Town Council in turn paid for the car parks to be free on the Saturdays leading up to Christmas to encourage shoppers into the town.

### **Question 40 – Offer organised festive events e.g. carol singing, choirs, shows**

**90.9% voted YES**

- Local schools and performers are invited to be part of the entertainment at our Christmas event. Local groups such as Wellington Silver Band will often do a performance on the corner of Fore Street and South Street, Churches Together organise carols around the tree, and the Friends of Wellington Park organise carols in the park. Our Mayor and Councillors are often invited to represent us at these events.

### **Question 41 – Offer festive markets – e.g. outdoor vendors, specialist foods**

**95.7% voted YES**

- Our Christmas Market and Lights Switch On will feature more food vendors this year but there are no other markets planned for 2024.



## WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL RETAIL SURVEY

COMPLETED WEEK ENDING FRIDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2021.

### Background

Wellington Town Council commissioned Enterprise South West, (ESW), to complete a face-to-face survey of independent retail Businesses in the town. Business Advisor, Alan Smith, visited many retail outlets in the town over a three-day period, talking to shop owners and staff. We worked from a list of pre-determined questions, but also discussed any specific concerns these operators may have.

The original questions were based around the following;

1. How have you found the bounce-back from Lockdown? (or, if they are essential retail)
  - a. How has trading been through the lockdowns?
2. Do you feel safe working within the current Covid-19 regulations?
3. Have you had to spend significant amounts of money to make your premises Covid-19 secure?
4. What could the Town Council do to help boost shopper visits in the town?
5. Is there any support you think would be helpful to you, and what form would that take?
6. Do you have a plan for where your Business will be in 12 months?
7. Would you be interested in a town-wide loyalty scheme?

### Statistics

- Visited 81 Retail premises
- 18 Shops were closed when visited – some operate quite restricted hours.
- 14 Shops were very busy and unable to speak, despite visiting on more than one occasion.
- Added 11 Retailers not on the original supplied list
- Of these 81 Independents - 20 are pubs/cafes/restaurants or takeaways
  - 12 are Hairdressers or Barbers, (with another one due to open soon).

### General Findings & Feedback

#### Post Covid-19 & Lockdowns

- The general feeling amongst retailers in Wellington is one of optimism. They nearly all reported that Business had been strong, and were confident this would continue with the final easing of restrictions.
- Many businesses have diversified their offer to reflect the demand during the periods of Lockdown – introducing online selling/home deliveries/click and collect services. Approximately 33% have said they intend to continue offering these services even when restrictions are completely removed.

- Most of the retailers have incurred significant extra expense to provide PPE for a COVID-19 safe environment for customers, with a lot of them supplying face masks to people who have forgotten their own.
- They feel safe working in their current environments, with very few reports of difficult or awkward customers refusing to abide by the COVID-19 guidelines.
- Less than one in 20 have a plan in place should a similar disaster to COVID-19 occur. Most expected to just react if/when it happens.

### Barriers to Success

- Rents in Fore St are reported to be very high, forcing many smaller or newer operators to seek premises away from the main shopping areas. This can sometimes mean that these shops aren't visited by as many customers because of their location.
- The hospitality businesses are really struggling. They say that business is booming, but they cannot attract staff, so they are having to limit the amount of customers they can deal with. Unfortunately this is a sector problem since the easing of lockdown, with many people who previously worked in the sector seeking alternative employment.
- From a personal perspective, far too many shops are closed on a Monday or for half days, or operate restricted opening hours. This is an old-fashioned concept, and retailers must take some responsibility for the success of their own Businesses. None of the major retailers open at 10am instead of 9am, and none of them have half-days or a day of closure during the week. No doubt all the people who do close will have a reason for doing so, but my belief is that it has a negative effect on their business. One of the premises I visited had three different opening hours notices!

### Improvement Opportunities

- Car Parking, (unsurprisingly), was something that was raised by a number of retailers. Free parking on a designated day each week could help encourage more visitors to the town. One store asked for concessionary parking rates for staff, as they currently spend £120 per month on parking between them.
- More town centre 'events' would also bring people into the shopping area – markets/festivals etc have proven to be a good draw for other towns in the county. Although some street events have taken place these have often been setup and administered by external agencies, (I'm specifically thinking of EAT Festivals), – thereby removing some of the wealth from the town. If events were managed 'in-house' that wealth remains circulating in Wellington.
- Better signage to encourage shoppers to venture away from the Fore Street/South Street areas would also be welcome. There are some terrific shops just off the main shopping area, but they are suffering because people don't walk past, or they drive past and don't notice the stores.
- Shop Appy has been an annoyance for some. It hasn't really worked despite some heavy promotion. One of the most important aspects of this is that retailers felt they hadn't been consulted, and that communications between the Town Council/SWT & Business owners has been poor, and needs to improve.
- A couple of shop owners would like to see more public seating areas for people to rest, and encourage them to remain in the centre of town for a little longer.

### *The Future Prospects for Retailers*

- There is a sense that Wellington has a terrific opportunity to become a champion of Independent Retail shops, and turning the town into a destination for unique shopping experiences.
- Encouragingly, there aren't many empty units, unlike most small market towns.
- There is also a clamour of support to get a Post Office back open in the town. It brings footfall, and will save journeys, (often by car), to other outlets.

### **CONCLUSIONS – Summary**

Wellington has a thriving town centre, but like many other town centre retail areas, suffers from exorbitant rents which often preclude small retailers from taking well-sited premises. That said, it has not stopped new-start businesses from opening, even in the throes of the pandemic and various lockdowns. Lou's Sweet Treats & the Wellington Bakehouse are both recent additions to the High Street and both report good sales so far. There is a vibrant mix of Businesses as well, (aside from lots of food outlets and hair salons). Better signage in the central congregation areas, or a town map might help shoppers to find the slightly more far-flung hidden gems. Something really eye-catching, with descriptors, located in the various car parks, and maybe outside the Co-op, will help shoppers navigate to those stores off the main shopping area. Perhaps commissioning the local schools to design something would be a nice community engagement exercise. Also using the Town Council social media pages as more than just an information-sharing platform to help promote shopping locally. Spotlighting one business a week, or something similar might help more people to visit that retailer.

There is a huge opportunity for Wellington to become a hub of independent shops, much like Frome in the North East of Somerset. Taunton's retail centre is struggling, and with Wellington being only a 10 minute drive away, it is possible to attract more discerning shoppers. Maybe some advertising outside of Wellington – in surrounding villages and towns, could help draw more visitors.

Although the pandemic has increased the boom in online shopping, which has had a dramatic effect on UK High Streets, the ability and will of small retailers to offer great personal, friendly and convenient service has helped these businesses to thrive. They cannot compete on price so they recognize that they must excel in other areas to survive. This seems very evident in the Independent Retail sector in Wellington.

Many retailers feel communication between them and the Town Council and SWT needs addressing. There was a town centre association but it has ceased to exist. If implemented it needs to be run properly, and not become a forum for certain people to use as a soapbox. It is evident that most shop owners only talk to their immediate neighbours, and that some communication – common to all the retailers in the town – might be useful.

The car parking charges are reasonable, and with limited-time free parking at both Asda and Waitrose, there is some provision to encourage shoppers to stay local. But a dedicated, regular 'Park Free' day could encourage even more visitors. One or two retailers, particularly in South Street complained about the over-zealous parking warden, saying a little more flexibility would help them.

Overall the picture is quite rosy, with most shops having survived the pandemic and come out the other end with strong prospects. When Business Rates bills start to land we may see a slightly altered picture but hopefully the buoyancy currently in evidence will continue.

Oxygen\*

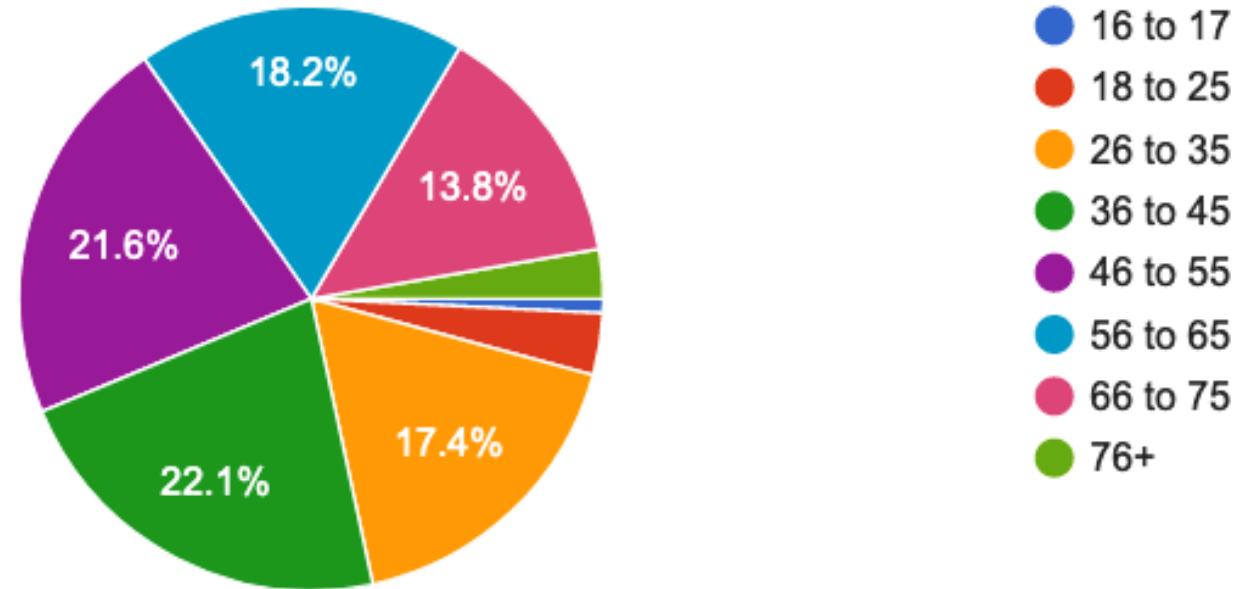
Wellington Town Centre survey

# Results

## About you

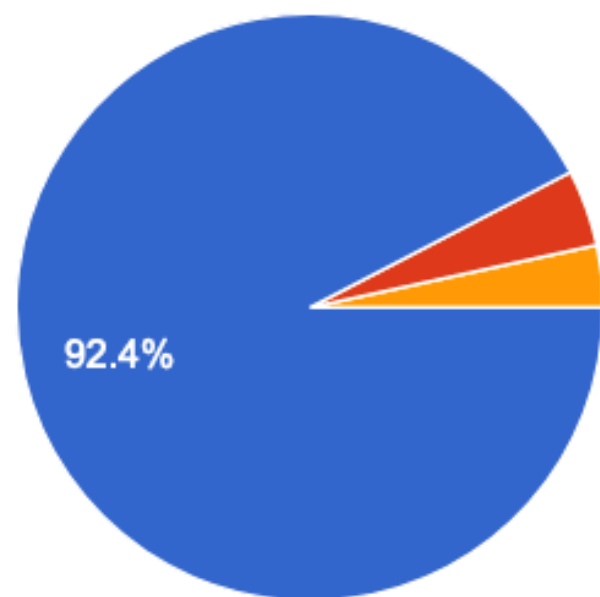
### 1. How old are you?

879 responses



## 2. Where do you live?

879 responses



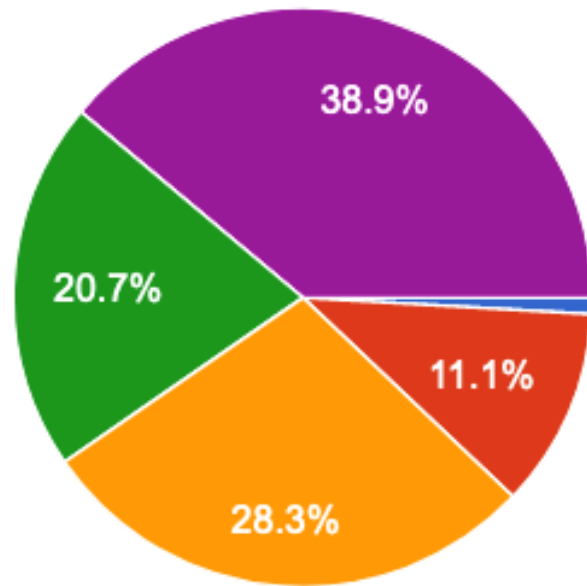
- Resident in Wellington with a postcode TA21 8??, TA21 9?? or TA21 0??.
- Resident near to Wellington with a different TA21 postcode.
- I do not live in the area.



## About Wellington town centre

How often do you visit the town centre?

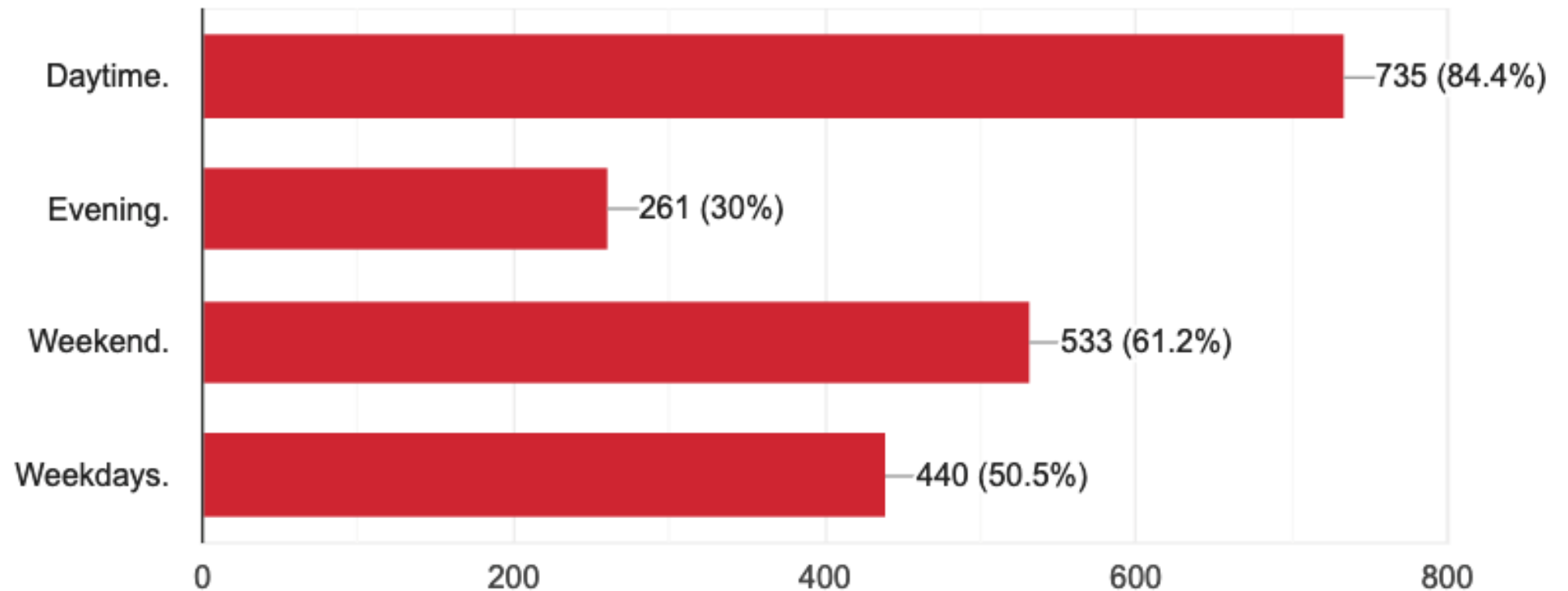
879 responses



- Never visit.
- Once a month
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- More than twice a week.

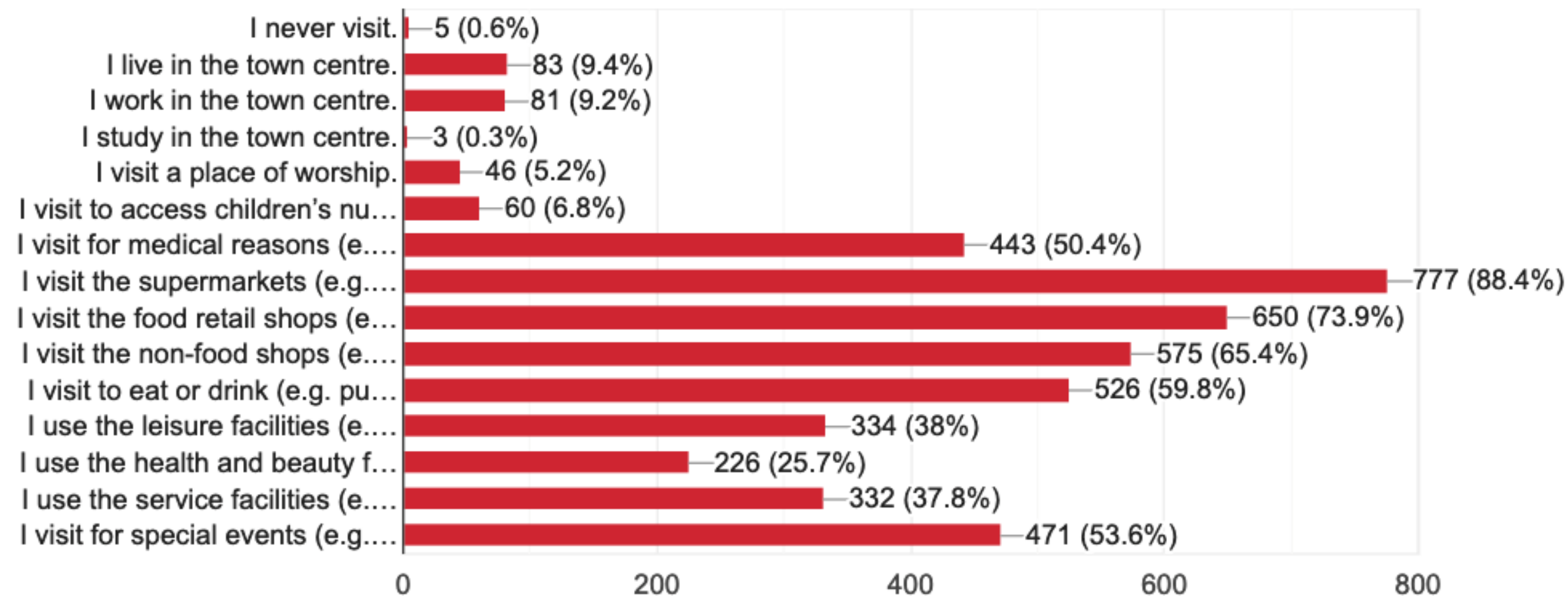
When do you usually visit the town centre? Choose all that apply.

871 responses



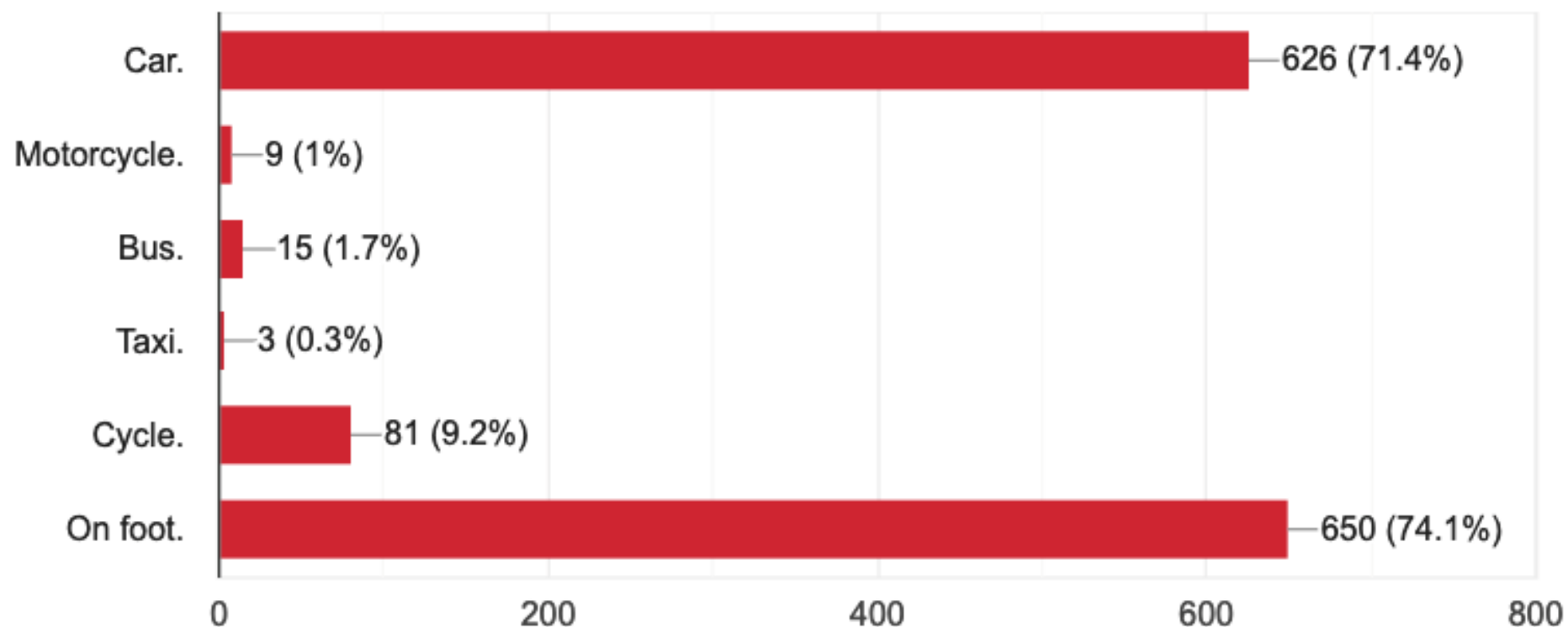
## Why do you visit the town centre? Choose all that apply.

879 responses



How do you get to the town centre? Choose all that apply.

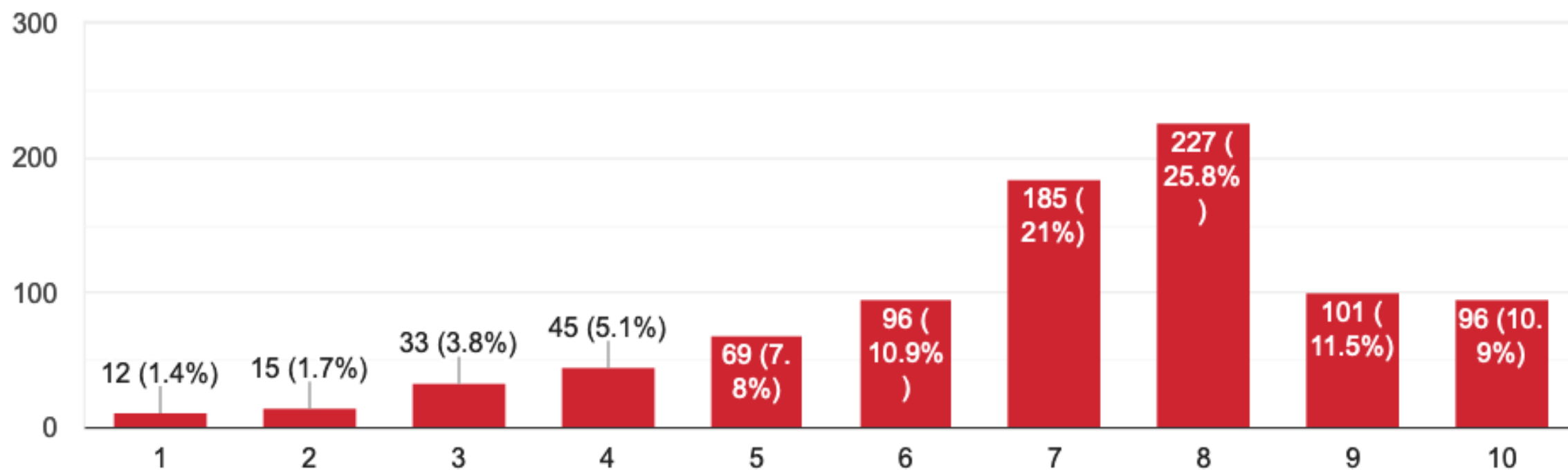
877 responses



## How do you rate the shops/facilities in the town centre?

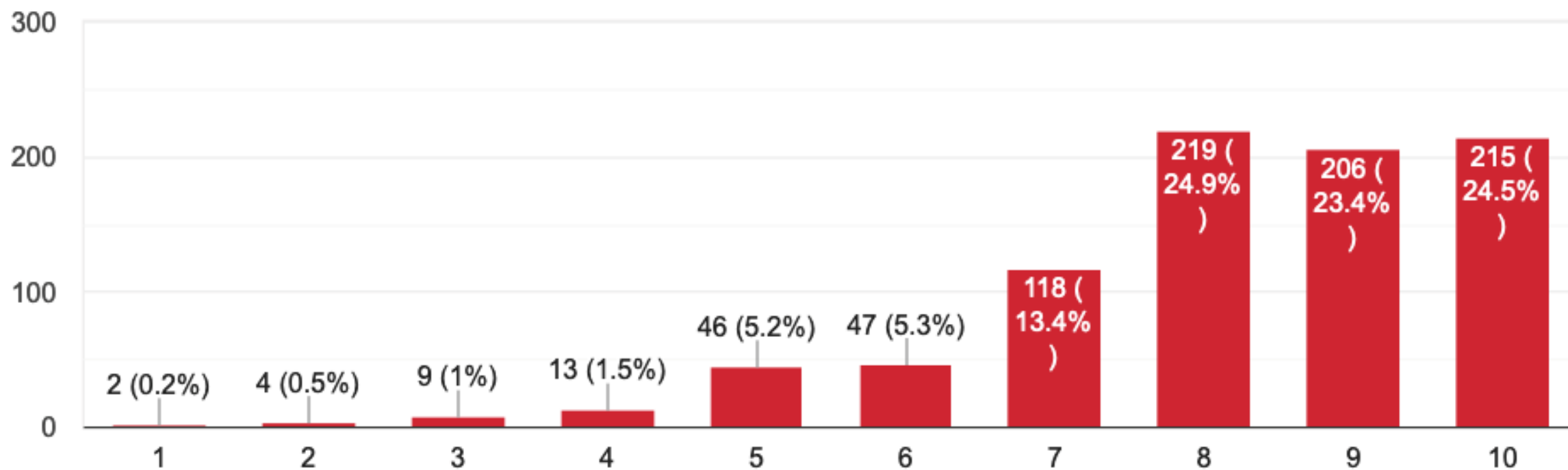
Supermarkets (e.g. Waitrose, ASDA, Co-op).

879 responses



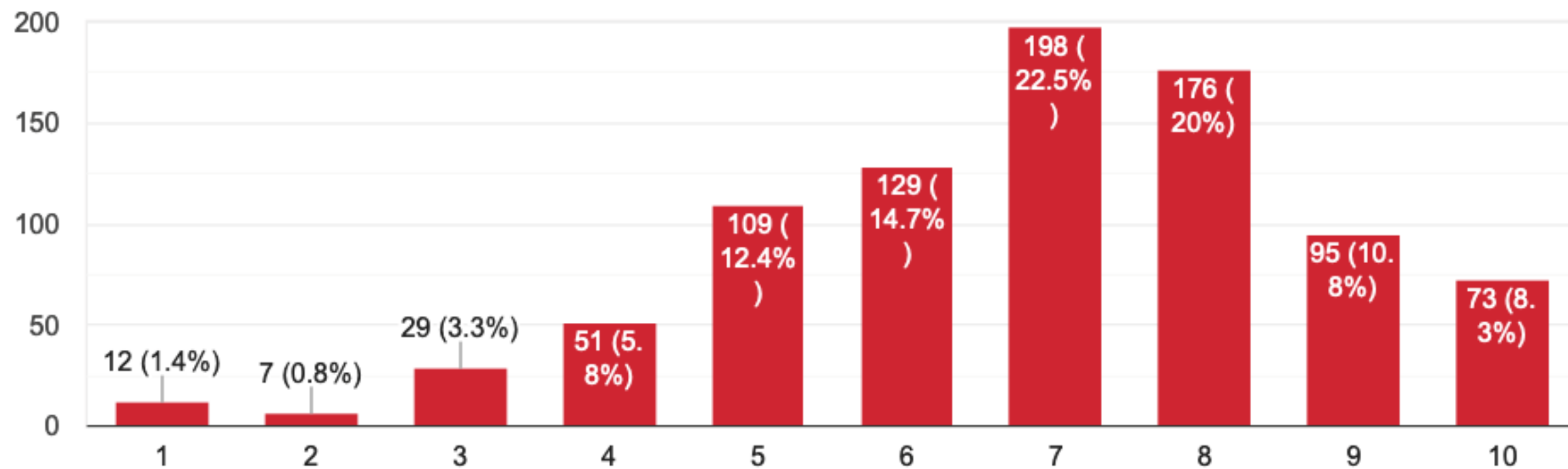
## Independent food shopping (e.g. butcher, deli, grocer, bakery).

879 responses



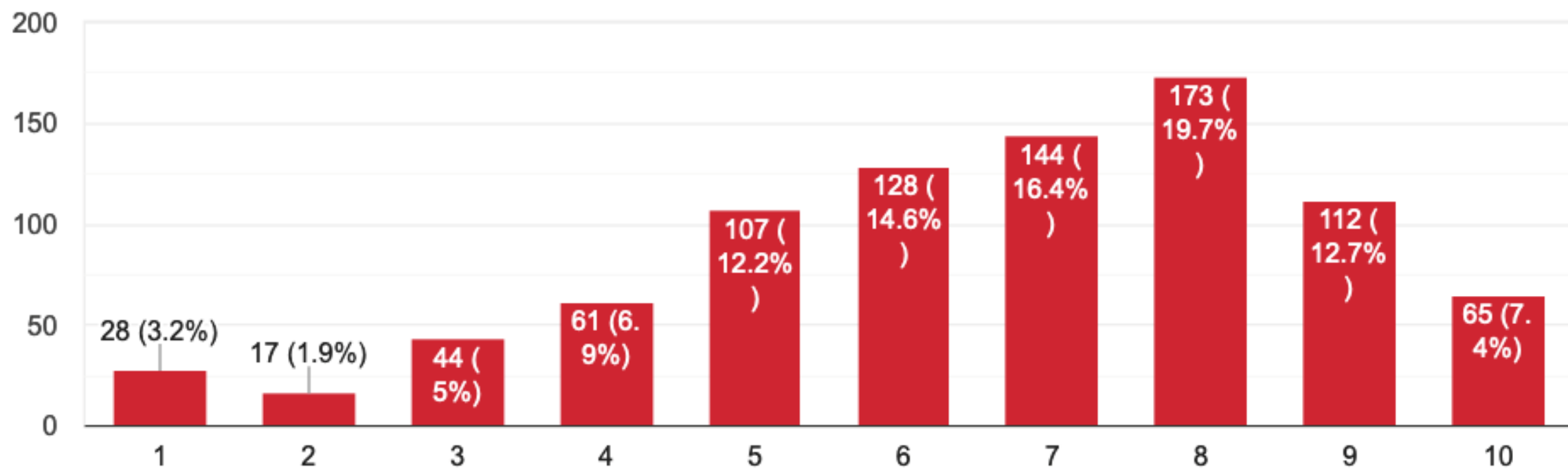
## Eating and drinking (e.g. pubs, cafés, restaurants and takeaways).

879 responses



## Independent non-food shops (e.g. gifts, clothing, hardware, electronics).

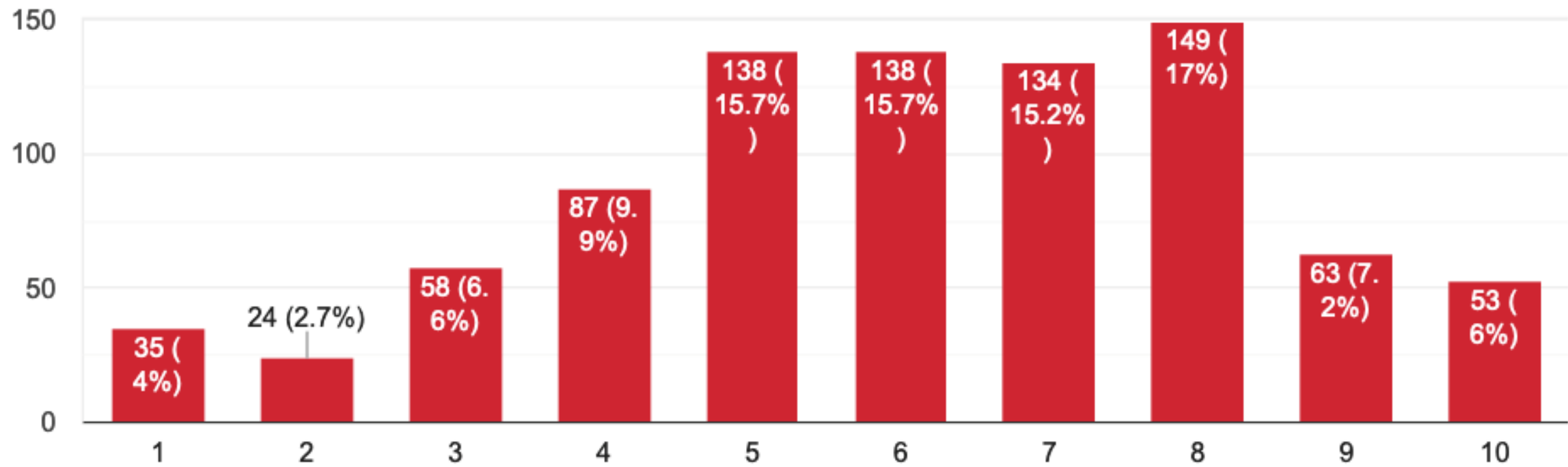
879 responses





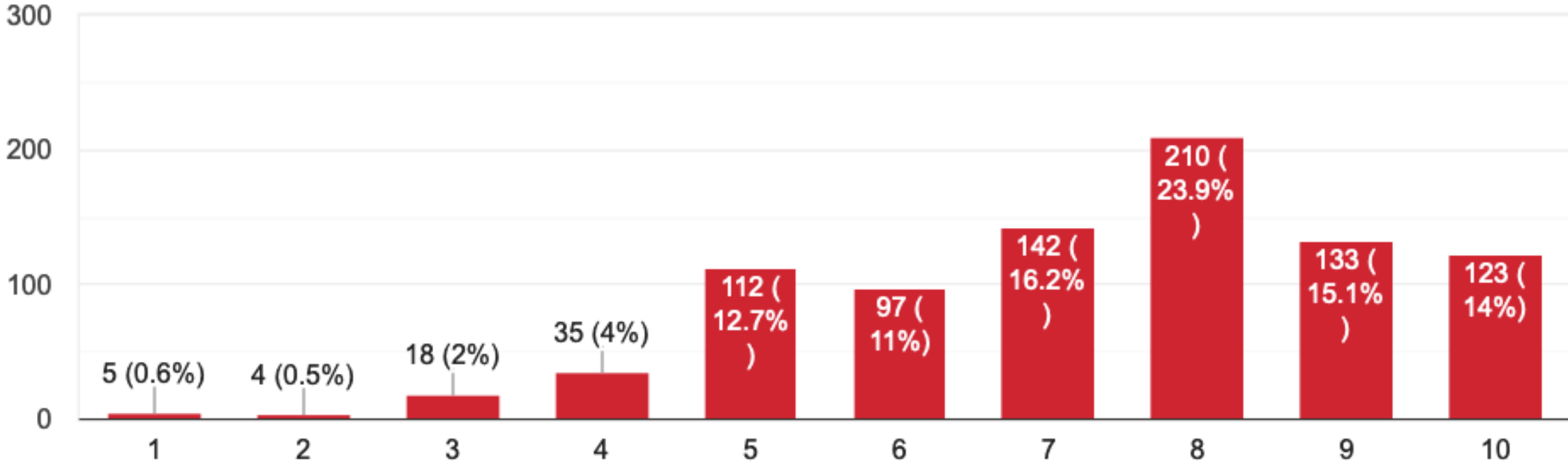
## Culture (e.g. museum, theatre/Cinema, exhibitions, library).

879 responses



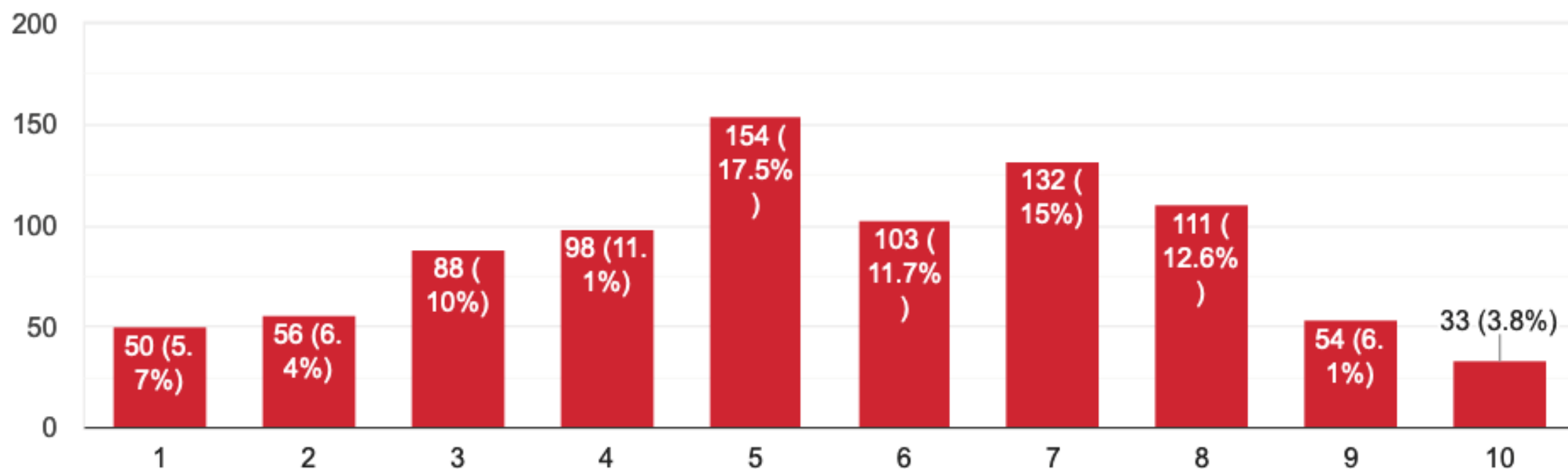
# Personal care facilities (e.g. hairdressers, salons).

879 responses



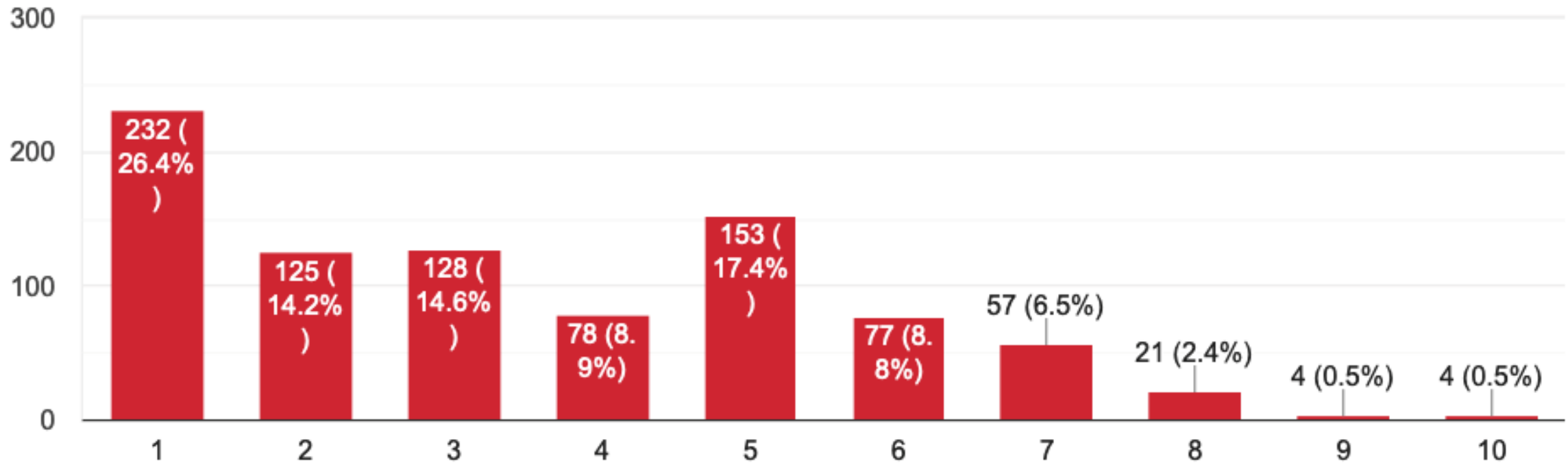
## Services (e.g. library, bank, estate agents, financial advisors).

879 responses



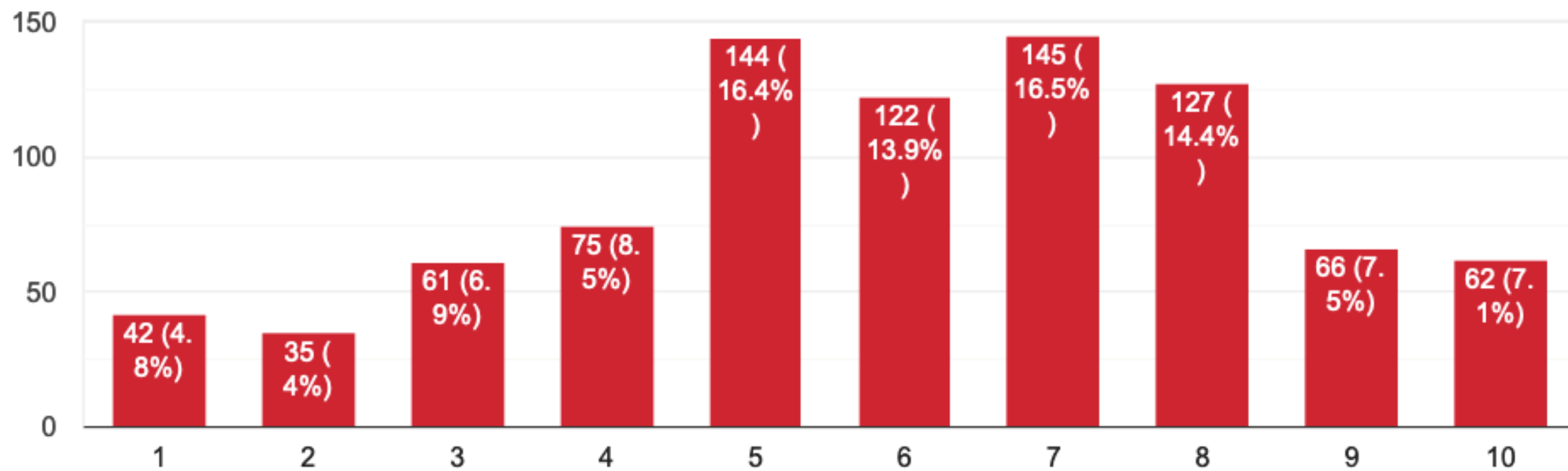
## Toilets.

879 responses



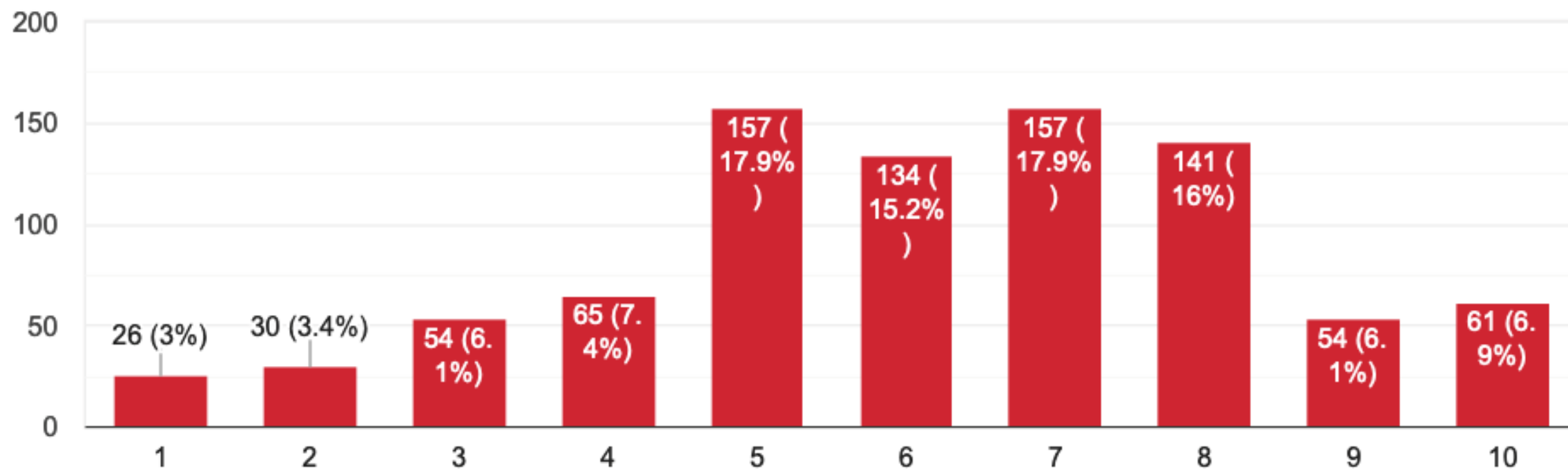
## Parking.

879 responses



## Signposting/wayfinding e.g. how to find services, town centre maps.

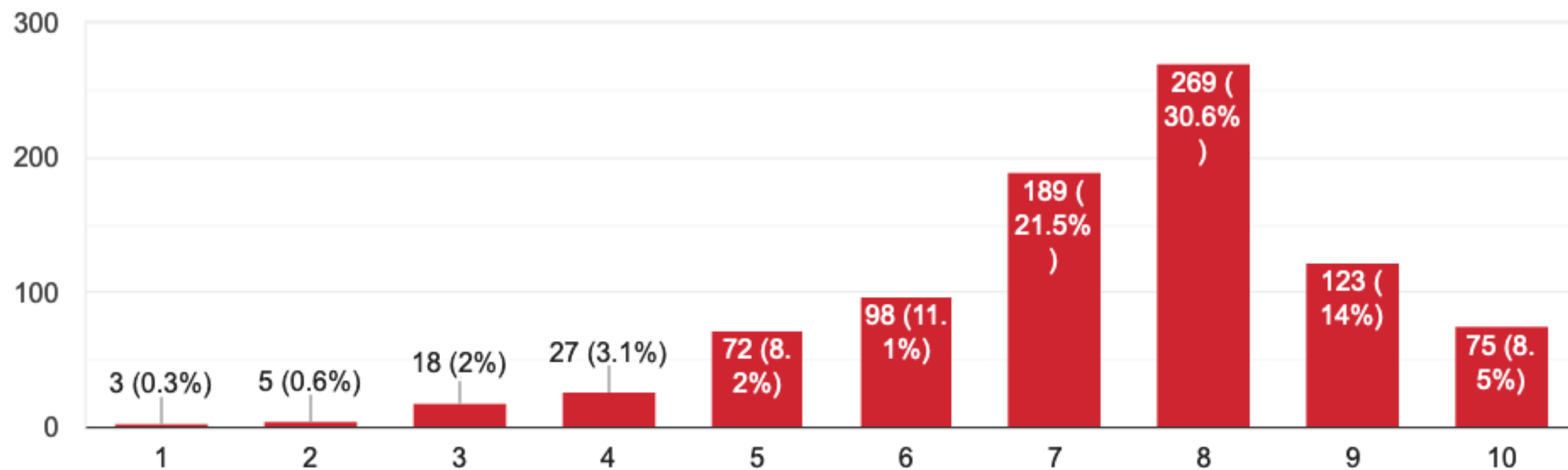
879 responses



## How do you rate the town centre?

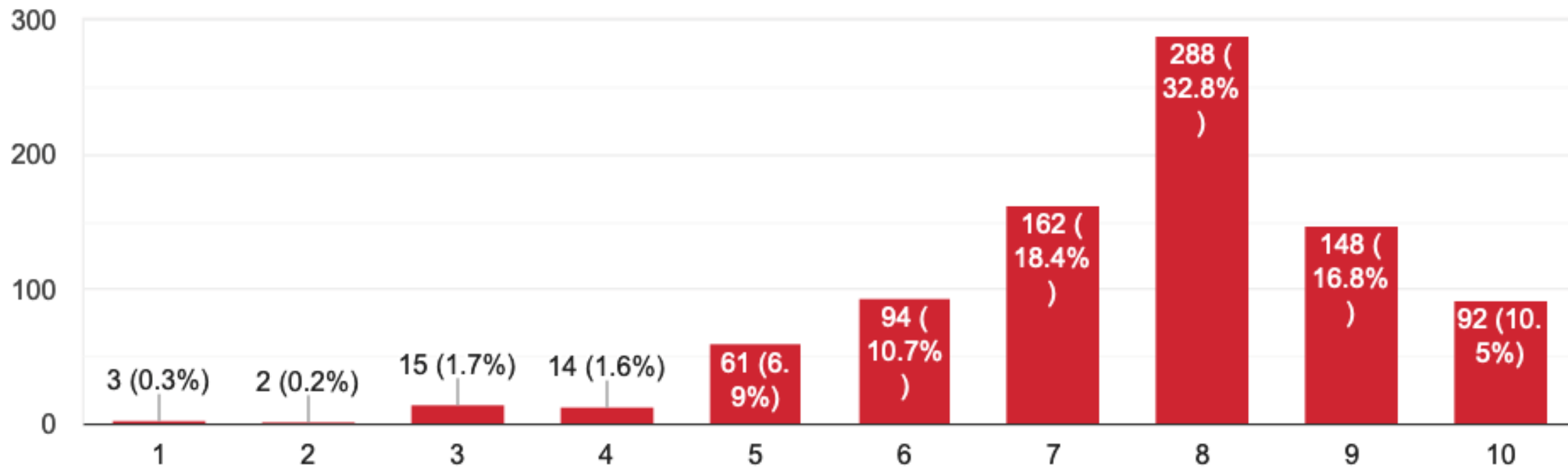
Safe and secure environment.

879 responses



## Street lighting.

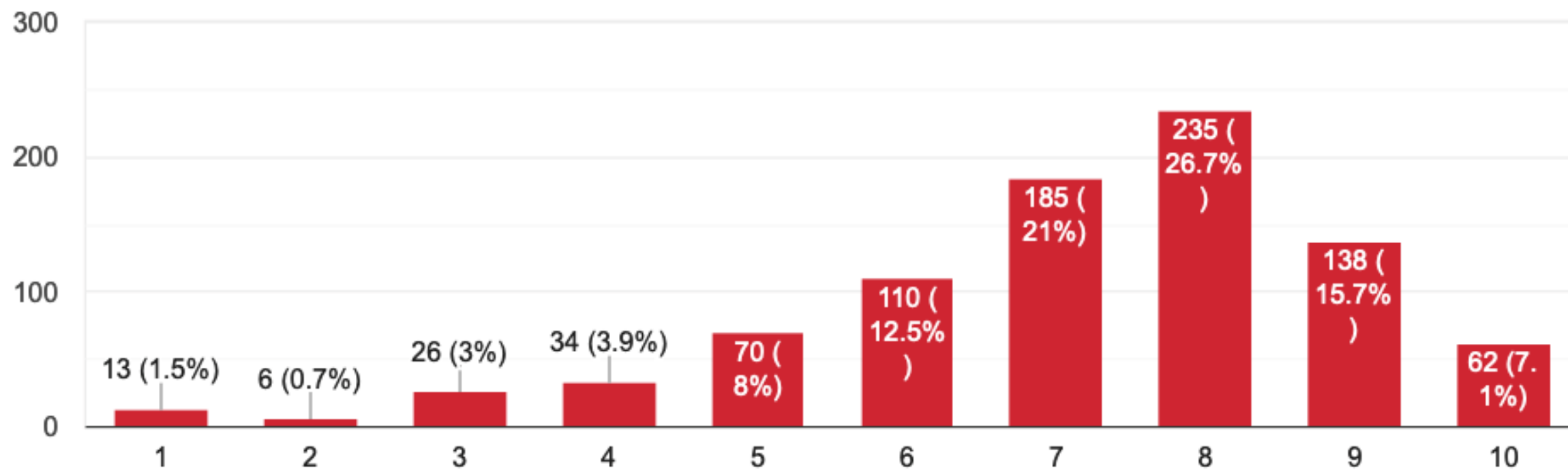
879 responses





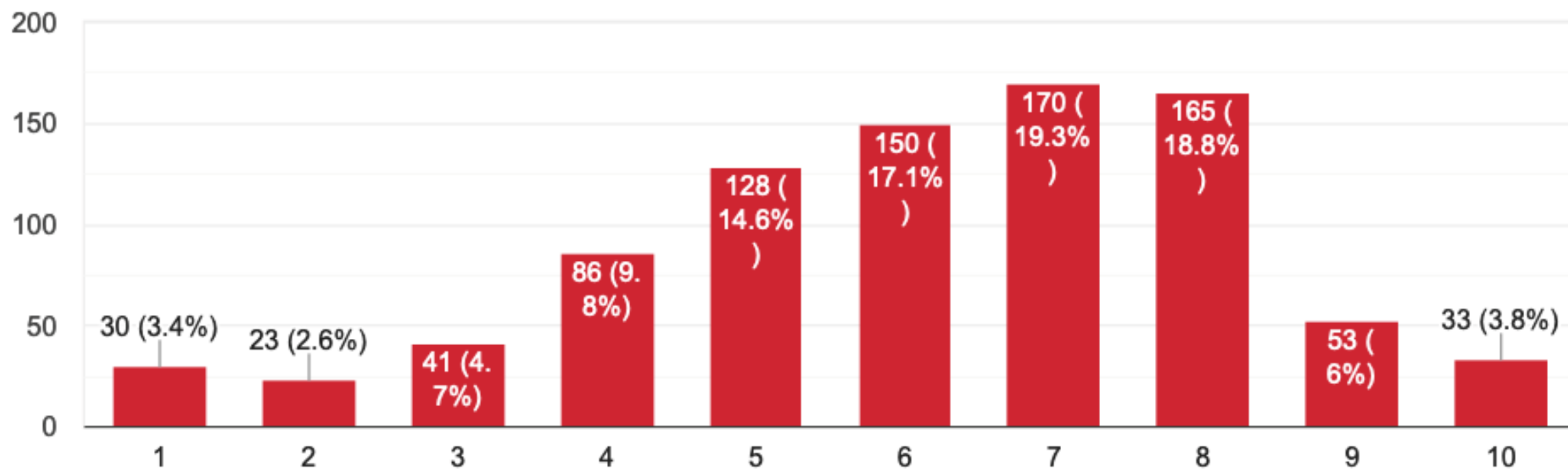
## Clean and tidy streets.

879 responses



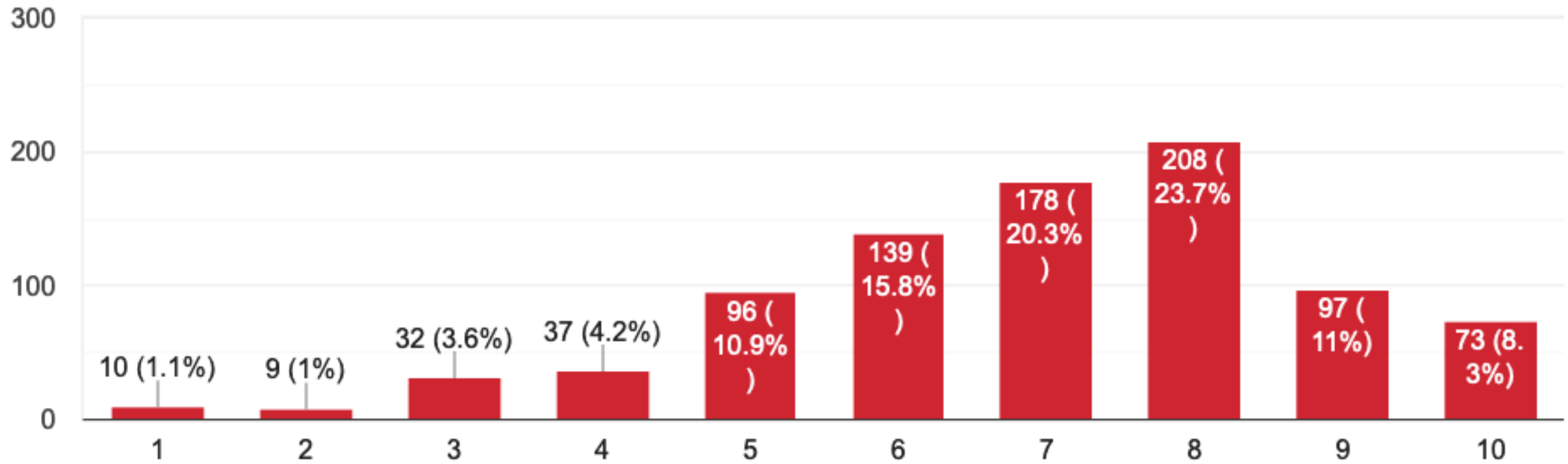
## Road and pavement quality.

879 responses



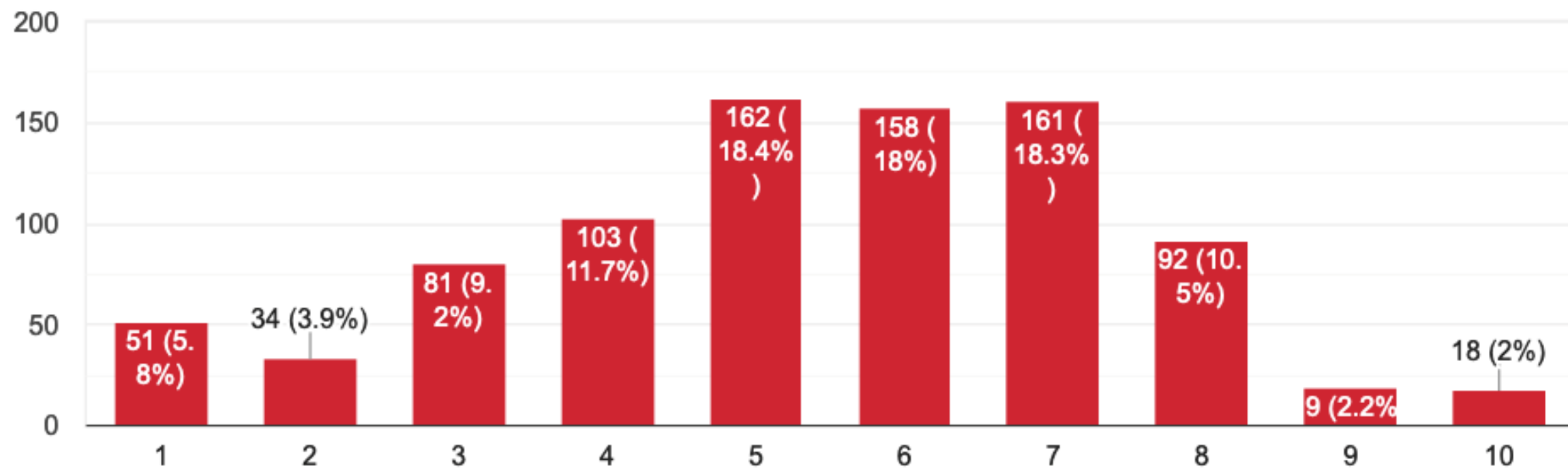
## Daytime shopping facilities.

879 responses



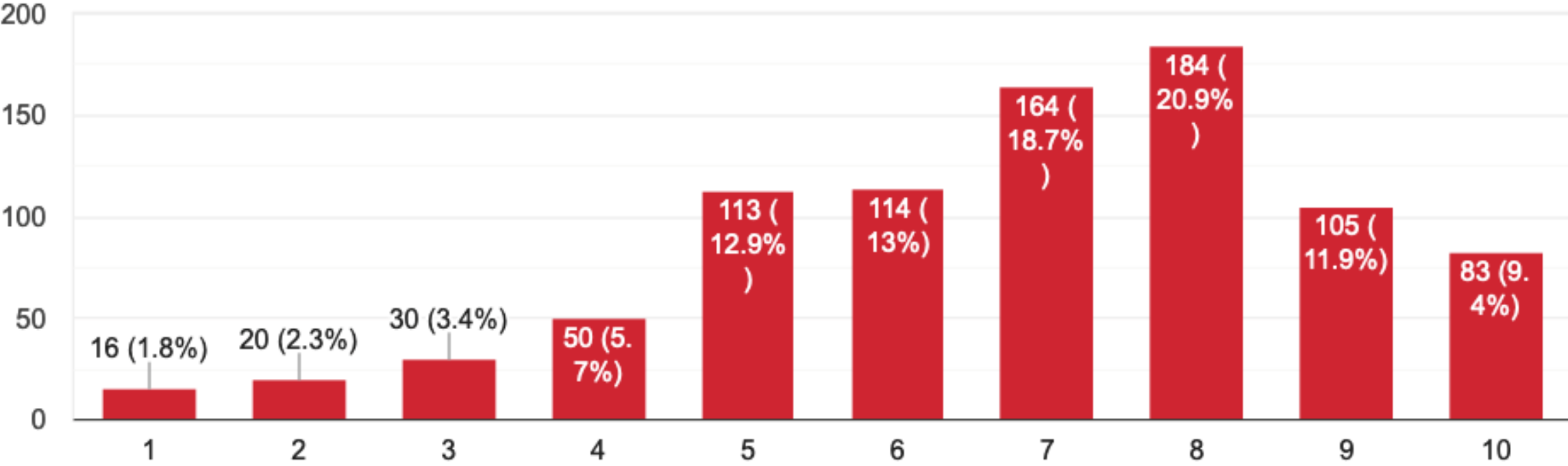
## Evening entertainment facilities.

879 responses



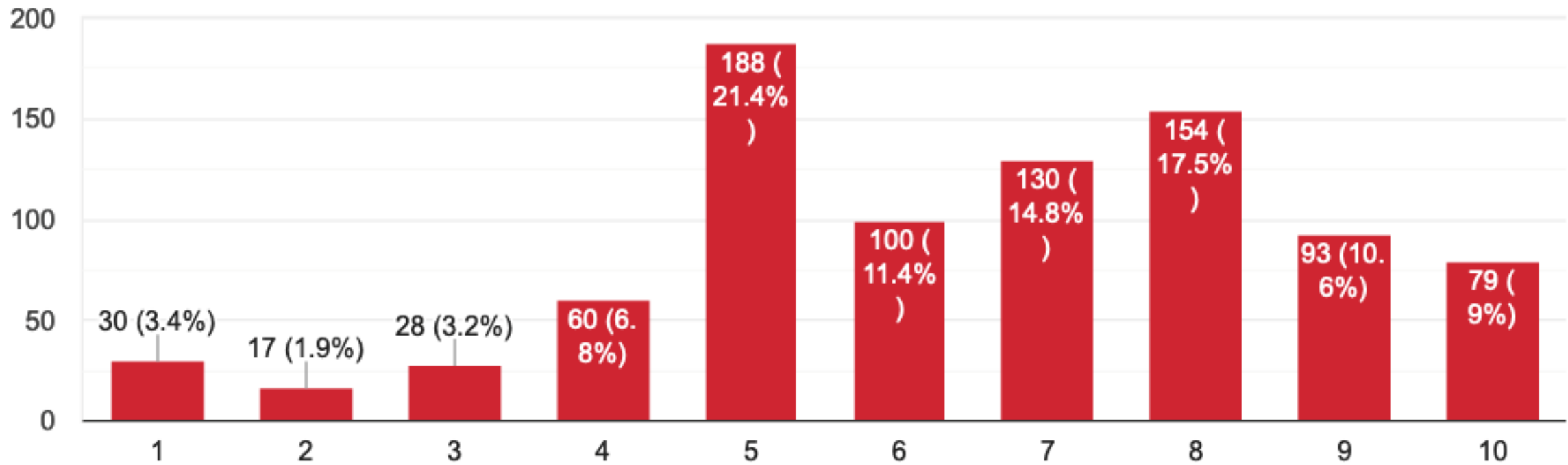
# Ease of access via car or public transport.

879 responses



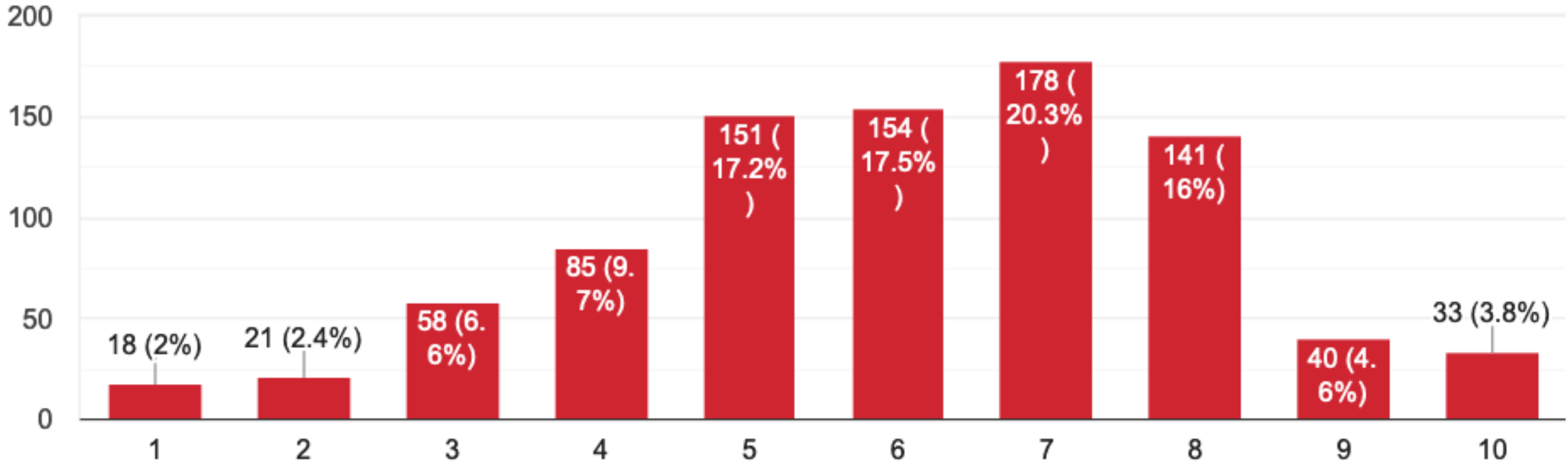
## Ease of access via bicycle.

879 responses



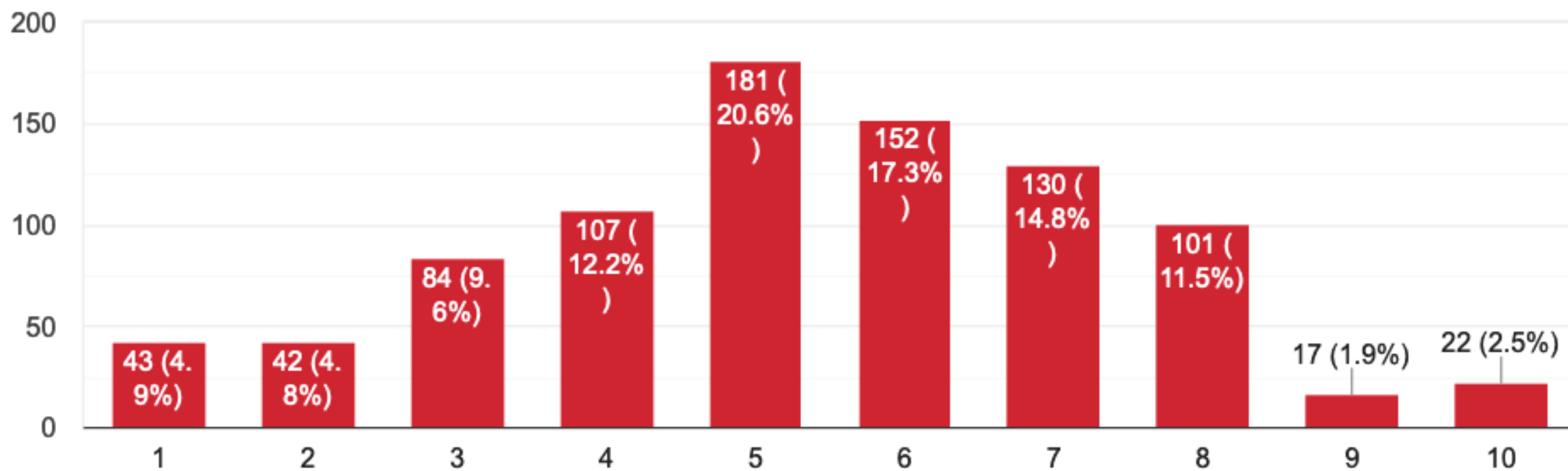
# Clean and smart retail buildings.

879 responses



## Events and attractions.

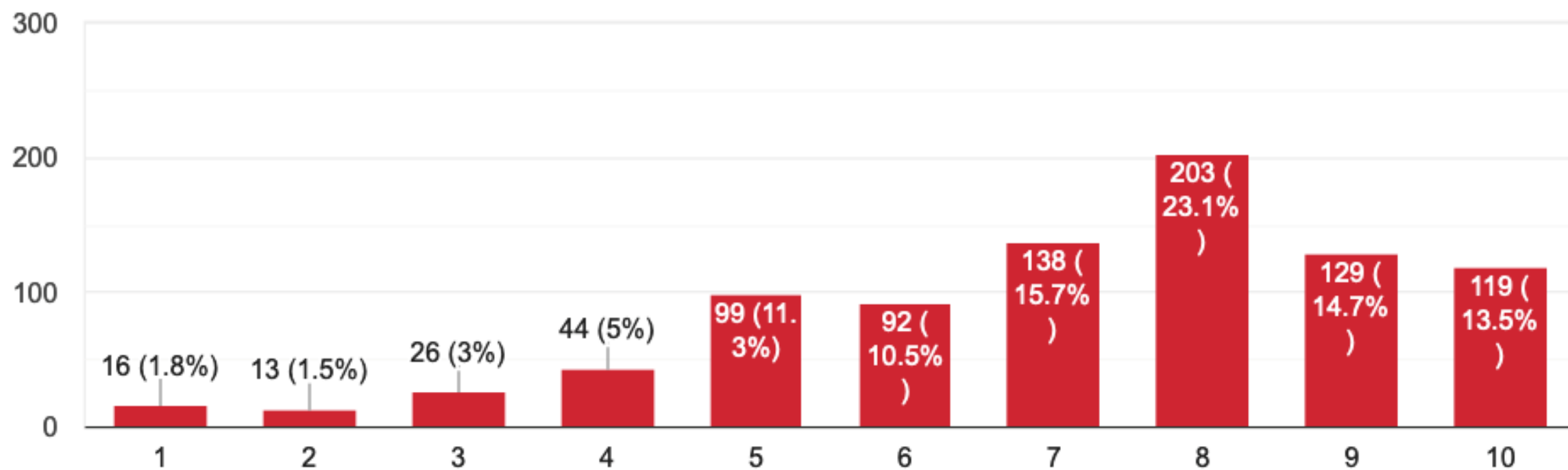
879 responses





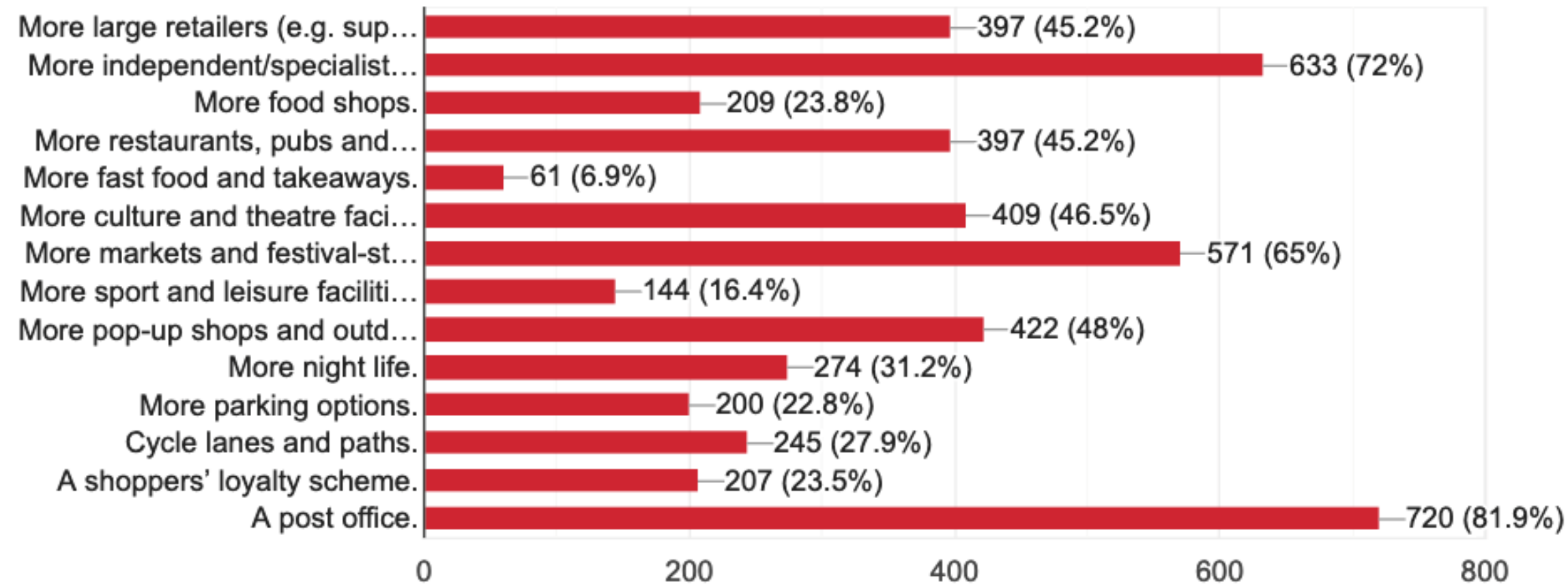
## Sense of community.

879 responses



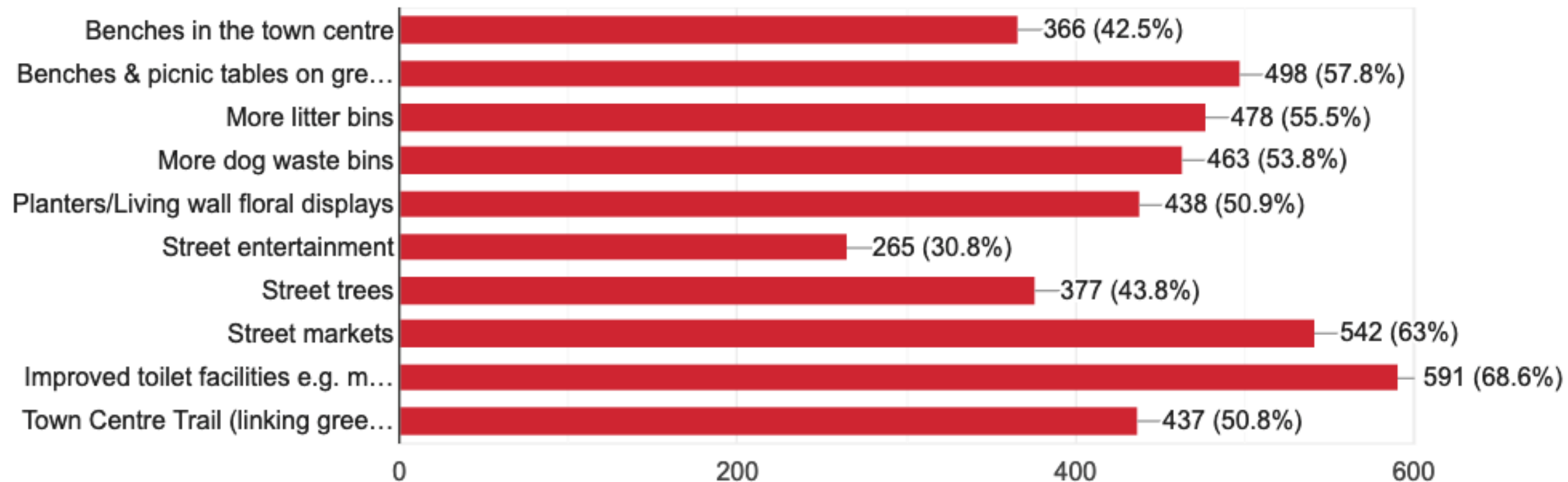
## What would encourage you to visit the town centre more often? Choose all that apply.

879 responses



## What would you like to see that would 'enhance' Wellington? Choose all that apply.

861 responses

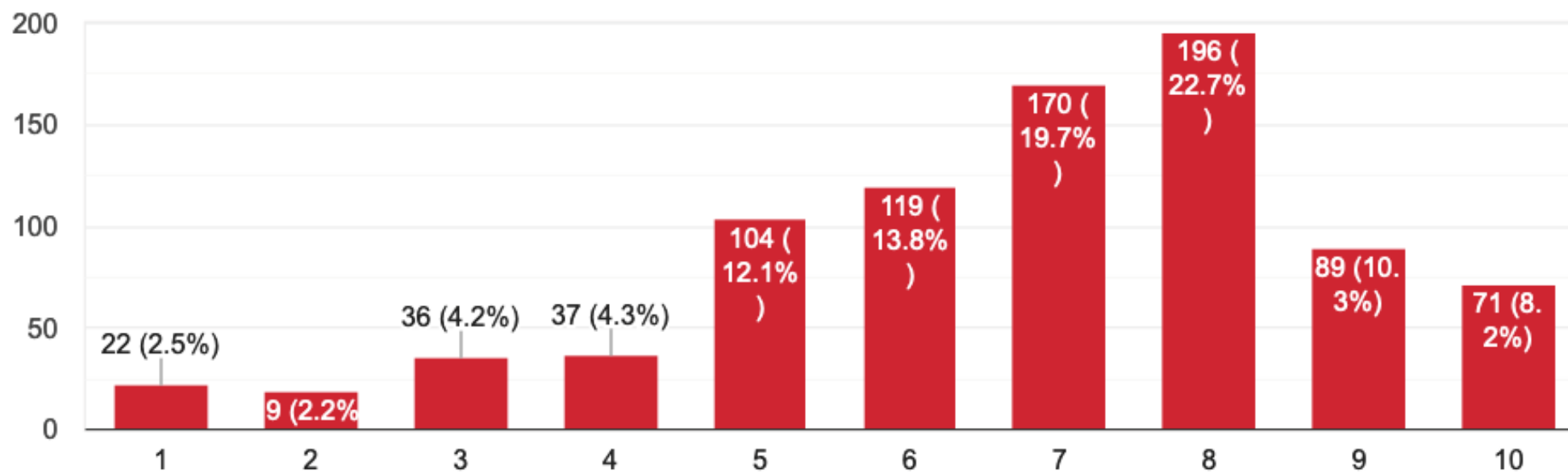


## Wellington's Christmas celebrations

How would you rate your Christmas experience in Wellington?

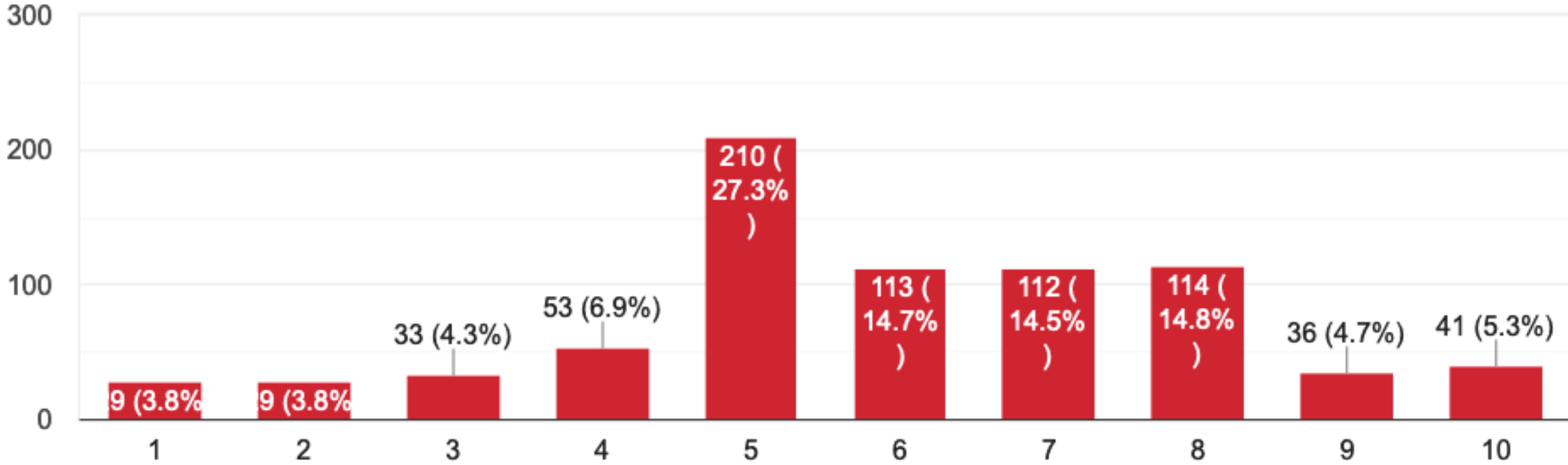
Quality of the street lights and decorations/Christmas tree.

863 responses



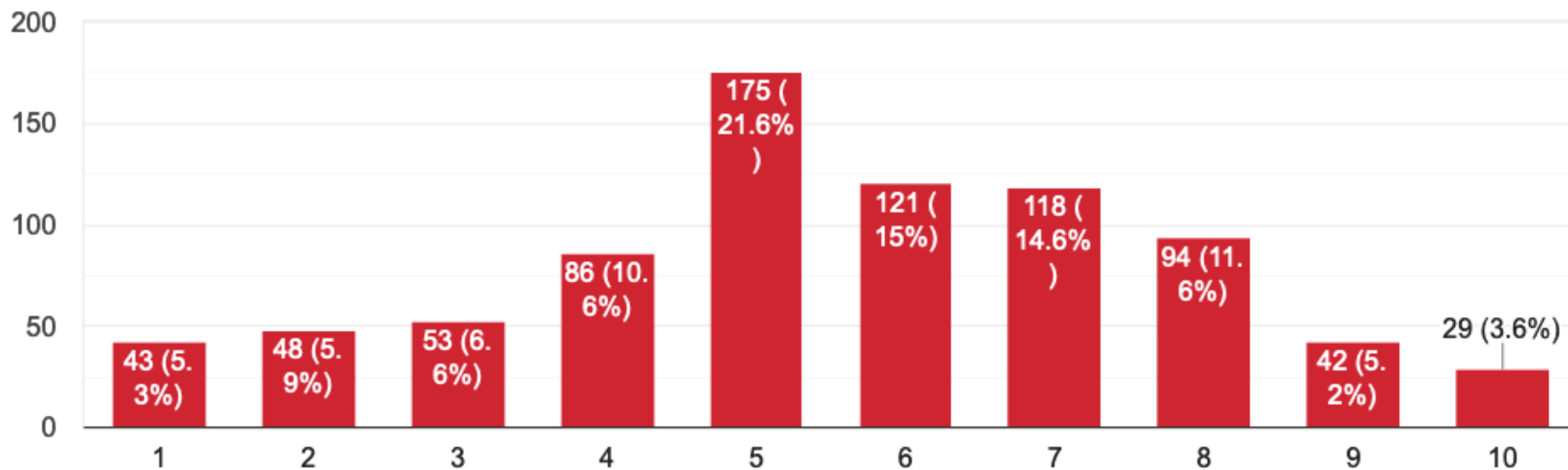
# Father Christmas meet and greet.

770 responses



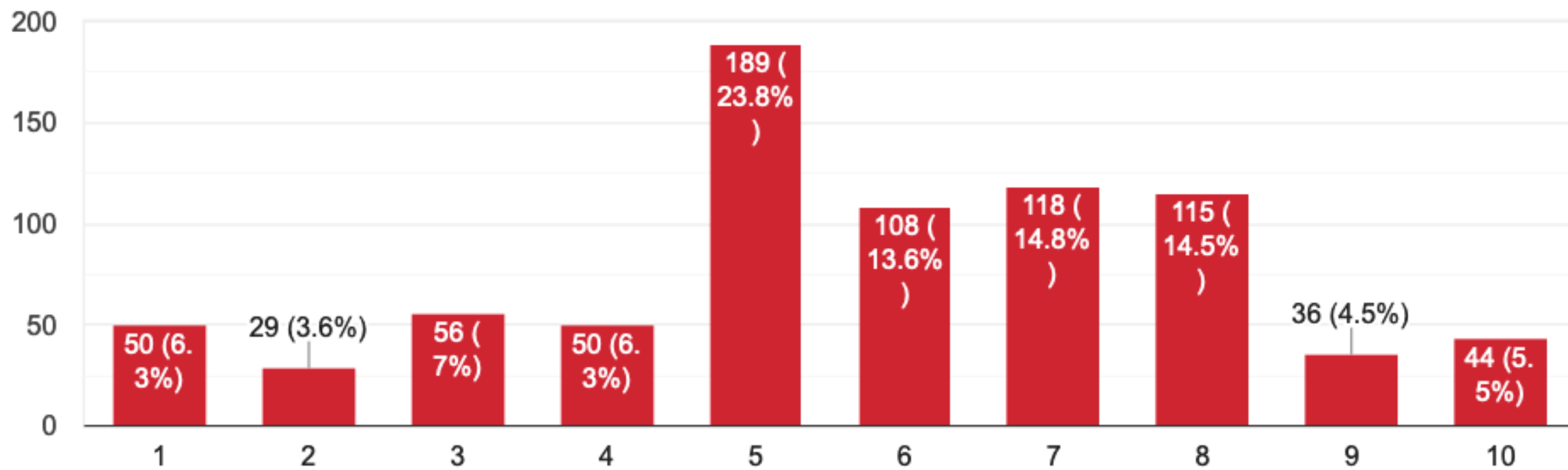
## Street entertainers e.g. musicians, buskers.

809 responses



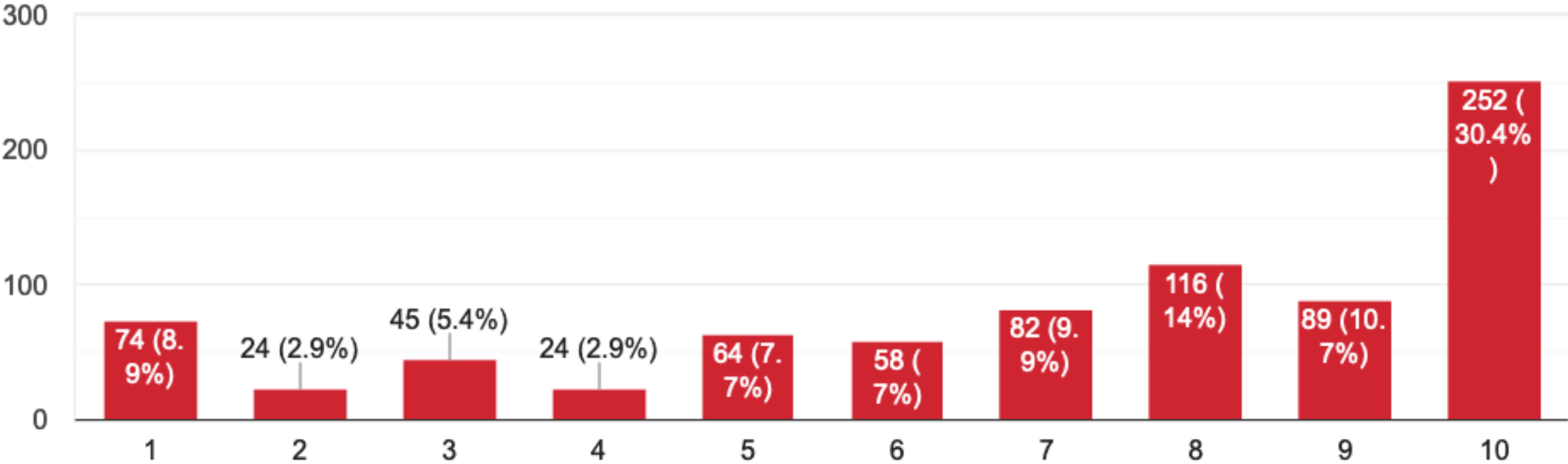
## Christmas light switch-on event/ceremony.

795 responses



# Free parking.

828 responses

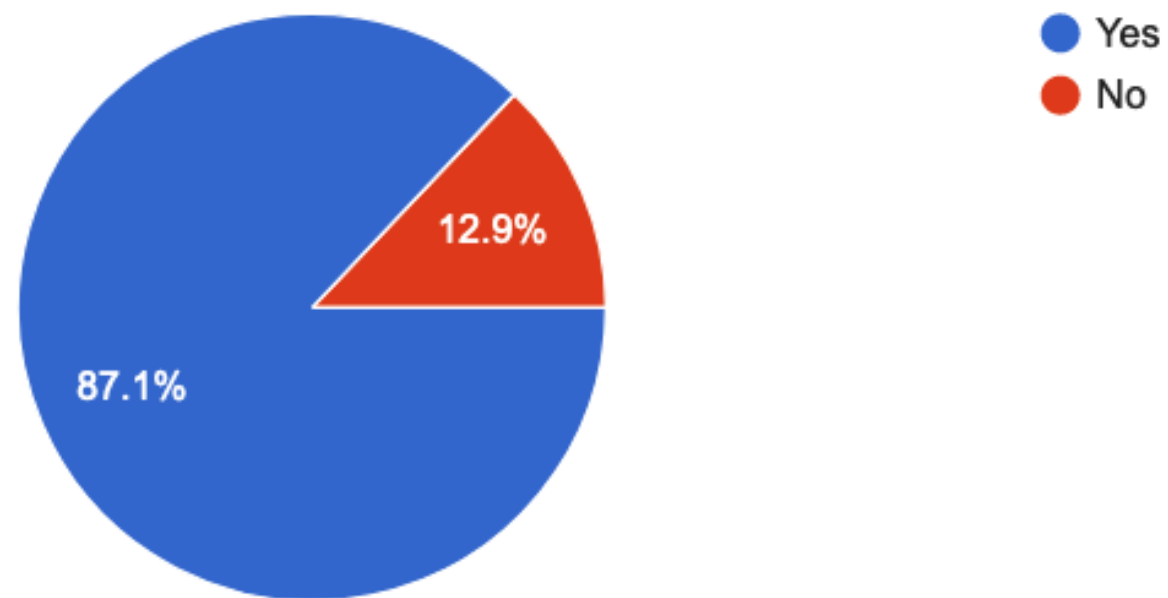




## What else could we offer?

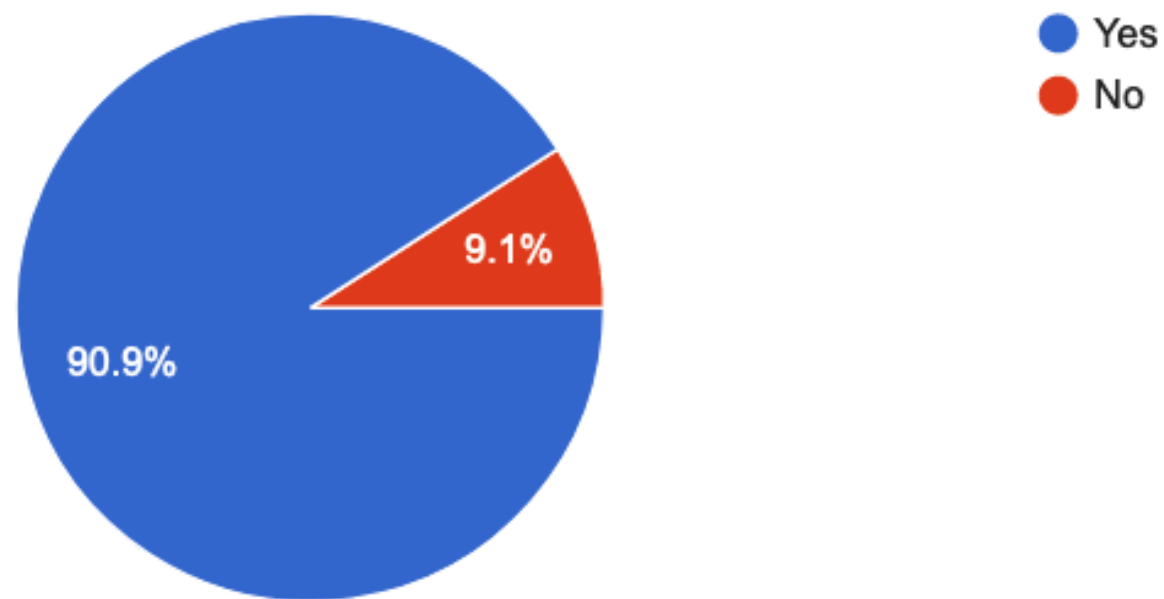
### Late night Christmas shopping events

836 responses



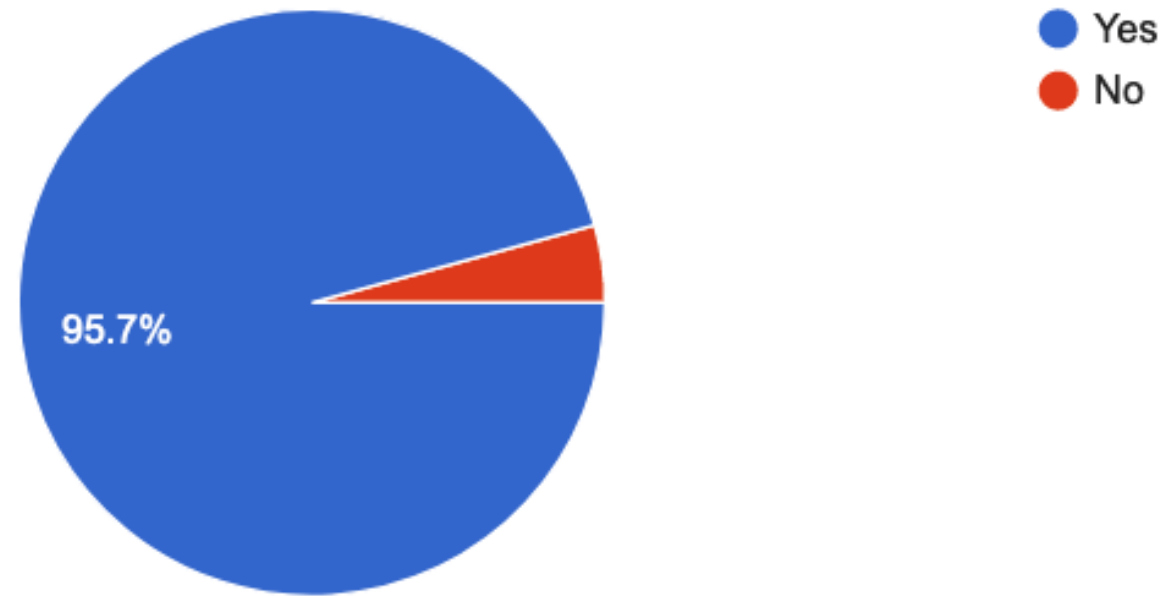
## Organised festive events e.g. carol singing, choirs, shows

825 responses



## Festive markets e.g. outdoor vendors, specialist foods

846 responses



Oxygen\*

**WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL  
EVENTS WORKING GROUP MEETING  
HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 28 FORE STREET, WELLINGTON EX15 3XB.  
ON MONDAY 29<sup>th</sup> JULY 2024 AT 4.30PM**

## **MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Councillors C Booth (CB) J. Lloyd (JL) C. Govier (CG)  
Annette Kirk, Assets & Events Officer (AK)

**1. ELECT A CHAIR**

Councillor C. Booth was elected as chair.

**2. APOLOGIES**

No Apologies. Rebecca Hunt, Admin Assistant was unable to attend.

**3. ANNUAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Reviewed the calendar of events.

**4. CHRISTMAS MARKET AND LIGHTS SWITCH ON EVENT**

- a. Noted: 2024/2025 budget: Christmas Light Switch on Event £10,000
- b. Noted: 2024/2025 budget: Free Parking - £5,500
- c. Noted: Wellington Town Council will organise the market – Budget Line, Stall income for 30 stalls at £45.00 = £1350.00.
- d. Fuse Performance Ltd – Quotation for 4 jugglers/spinners fire/glow performers – cost £250.00 plus travel (approx. average £30-£40):  
**RECOMMENDATION** to full council that the quotation from Fuse Performance Ltd – 4 Jugglers/Spinners Fire/Glow Performers – Cost £250.00 plus travel (approx. average £30-£40) be accepted. Expenditure to be taken from the Christmas Light Switch on Event Budget Line.
- e. Prosound and Lighting – Quotation: £2000 for stage, lighting, and PA System Hire.  
**RECOMMENDATION** to full council that the quotation of £2000 from Prosound and Lighting for Stage, Lighting and PA System Hire be accepted. Expenditure to be taken from the Christmas Light Switch on Event Budget Line.
- f. The Assets and Events Officer to look at cost for a compere for the last of part of the event. JL suggested Clinton Rogers. To bring this back to the next meeting.

**5. EVENTS – 2025/2026**

- a. Night Event – night walk in Wellington Park. The working group thought this was a promising idea. AK to obtain more information on cost and what it entails to run this event.
- b. Lantern Procession. AK suggested this could be run in the town centre, but concerns were raised over cost for traffic management/road closures. AK suggested it could be work well on the evening of the carnival or one evening in the park. It was agreed that we would talk to the Carnival Committee after this year's Carnival event.
- c. VE Day – 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It was agreed that we would wait for the official guidance to be released. AK to speak to RBL to see what they were planning.

**6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** To be confirmed.

**CHRISTMAS MARKET & LIGHT SWITCH ON - Saturday 30th November 2024**

**Projected Expenditure Report**

Budget £10,000

Budget £5,500 for free parking for the 3 Saturdays leading up to Christmas

	<b>Projected Costs 2024</b>		<b>Actual Cost 2024</b>
Saturday 30th November - 4 jugglers incl. fire juggler (incl admin fee and travelling)	£ 1,160.00		
Steve Hawker - 2 Generators and set up	£ 300.00	£	300.00
Prosound & Light - Stage Lighting	£ 900.00	£	900.00
Sound/PA System	£ 500.00	£	500.00
Window Wrap	£ 600.00	£	600.00
Artwork for Posters, Newspaper lamp post banners and Social Media	£ 300.00		
Carly Press - The Edge Aug/Sept and Nov/Dec Editions	£ 200.00	£	200.00
St Johns Ambulance x 4 First Aiders	£ 500.00	£	572.00
Wellington Weekly adverts - 2 x	£ 500.00		
Bay Media Lamp Post Banners	£ 1,500.00		
Traffic Management/Road Closure	£ 1,100.00		
Free Parking - Somerset Council	£ 1,000.00		
S171 Christmas Tree - Somerset Council	£ 50.00		
Extras: cable ties, sweets etc.,	£ 150.00		
	<b>£ 9,260.00</b>		
Projected Stall income:			
Food Vans: 4 x £70.00	£ 280.00		
30 Stalls x £45.00	£ 1,350.00		

## Economic Development Committee Budgets

### 1. Introduction

1.1. As the Council enters the budget setting process, each of its Committees need to review the budgets they are responsible for and assess any budget requirements for any newly proposed projects for the 25/26 year.

### 2. Background

2.1. The Committee has been delegated responsibilities which are set out in the its Terms of Reference. In line with this, specific budgets have been allocated to the Committee to spend appropriately.

2.2. The report attached in Appendix 1 details the budgets delegated to the committee. Note that only those marked in orange within the Town Centre cost centre are applicable to this Committee.

2.3. Committees are reminded that given the budgetary pressures expected in 25/26 due to the impact of devolution from Somerset Council, there is little room for excess budgets which may remain unspent. Therefore, each line should have specific plans or projects for its use.

### 3. Budget Details

3.1. The table below give more detail on each budget line.

<b>Christmas</b>			
	Income	Expenditure	Notes
Hire of Lights		£10,000	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of 3 year contract. Fixed price £10k per year.
Lights Install		£11,900	£9k install / take down lighting scheme. £1,650 Tree haulage. £1.2k Install & Dismantle Trees (SC tree dept). £50 S171 Fee
Switch on Event	£1,350	£10,000	Committee still to sign off budget schedule for expenditure, committee/working group to monitor and consider any updated amounts for 25/26. Income from stall bookings.
Electricity		£500	Some supplies for lights are on Non Metered Supplies. Summary provided each year but billing is often delayed (still waiting for 2023 bill)
Free Parking		£5,500	Switch on plus three Saturdays before Xmas,

			previous cost £1,250. + 10% as SC indicated that parking charges will increase at time of budget setting. Committee to review and sign off expenditure.
<b>Town Centre</b>			
	Income	Expenditure	Notes
Town Centre Projects		£20,000	The budget was developed following the Council's administration of the Town Centre Recovery and Welcome Back Funds following the pandemic. Total spend in 23/24 - £5,425 Current spend in 24/25 - £3,191. The Committee need to form specific plans for this line. The current recommendation from Officers is that it is reduced. There are some upcoming likely spends for the Cornhill Lantern (more info will be presented to a future meeting)
Summer St Fair	£2,000	£7,000	This line for 24/25 is overspent but there are a number of spends relating to specific D-Day related items that will not be incurred in future years.
Remembrance & AFD		£1,000	It has been previously suggested that an Armed Forces event be scheduled every two years meaning the next will be in 25/26. The Committee therefore need to assess what budget is required for this.
Heritage		£5,400	No spend to date. This budget was based on previous estimates to the Town Clerk for possible consultancy work given the possible impact to the Heritage at Risk Team at Somerset Council. No income was budgeted but



			donations for Toneworks Tours total £576 which can be added to the original budget available to spend.
Clocks		£500	Budget for service and maintenance of the Clock at the Old Town Hall (JD Wetherspoons) building.

#### 4. Next steps

- 4.1. Attached at Appendix 2 is a copy of the Project Initiation Form. Councillors should use this to gather details of projects that they would like to present to the Committee for inclusion in the 25/26 budget. Officers will also use this to present suggestions to the Council. Completed forms should first be submitted to the Facilities Manager who will review and discuss with the Councillor before submitting to the Committee for consideration. The form is available as word document on request for ease of completion.
- 4.2. The deadline for items to be included in the 25/26 budget proposal is close of business on 7<sup>th</sup> October in readiness for the Committee meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> October.
- 4.3. The October meeting must make its final budget recommendations to Policy and Finance.

#### 5. Current Officer Suggestions/Recommendations

- 5.1. Having reviewed the current budgets, it is the Officer's recommendations that:
- 5.1.1. Unless a schedule of activities is developed by the Committee, the Town Centre Projects budget be reduced by at least half.
- 5.1.2. That the Summer St Fair budget be renamed as a generic Events Budget to incorporate the Remembrance and AFD code. The Events Working Group to be tasked with drawing up a proposed calendar and costings.
- 5.1.3. The Facilities Manager be given delegated authority to incur expenditure from the Clocks budget to enable servicing and maintenance (if required) to be scheduled.

Alice Kendall  
RFO/Deputy Clerk

Annette Kirk  
Facilities Officer

5 September 2024

**Wellington Town Council**  
**Summary of Income & Expenditure 2024 - 2025**  
All Cost Centres and Codes (Between 01/04/2024 and 31/03/2025)

## Appendix 1

**Christmas**

Code	Title	Income			Expenditure			Net Position
		Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
114	Hire of Lights				10,000.00		10,000.00	10,000.00 (100%)
115	Lights Install				11,900.00		11,900.00	11,900.00 (100%)
116	Switch on Event	1,350.00	320.00	-1,030.00	10,000.00	100.00	9,900.00	8,870.00 (78%)
123	Stall Deposits		45.00	45.00				45.00 (N/A)
136	Electricity				500.00		500.00	500.00 (100%)
137	Additional Lights & Install							(N/A)
160	Free Parking				5,500.00		5,500.00	5,500.00 (100%)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>1,350.00</b>	<b>365.00</b>	<b>-985.00</b>	<b>37,900.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>37,800.00</b>	<b>36,815.00 (N/A)</b>

**Town Centre**

Code	Title	Income			Expenditure			Net Position
		Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
53	Longforth Road Toilets				11,000.00	1,628.41	9,371.59	9,371.59 (85%)
133	Longforth Rd Toilet Refurb				10,000.00	57,732.71	-47,732.71	-47,732.71 (-477%)
134	Kings Arms				18,000.00		18,000.00	18,000.00 (100%)
135	Town Centre Projects				20,000.00	3,191.32	16,808.68	16,808.68 (84%)
138	Carnival				1,000.00		1,000.00	1,000.00 (100%)
140	Summer Street Fair	2,000.00	2,160.00	160.00	7,000.00	9,920.05	-2,920.05	-2,760.05 (-30%)
141	Street Fair Refundable Deposits		42.75	42.75				42.75 (N/A)
147	Remembrance & AFD				1,000.00	20.00	980.00	980.00 (98%)
170	Heritage		576.51	576.51	5,400.00	1.10	5,398.90	5,975.41 (110%)
171	Clocks				500.00		500.00	500.00 (100%)
179	Annual Fireworks				2,000.00		2,000.00	2,000.00 (100%)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>2,000.00</b>	<b>2,779.26</b>	<b>779.26</b>	<b>75,900.00</b>	<b>72,493.59</b>	<b>3,406.41</b>	<b>4,185.67 (N/A)</b>

Restated

(N/A)

<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>3,350.00</b>	<b>3,144.26</b>	<b>-205.74</b>	<b>113,800.00</b>	<b>72,593.59</b>	<b>41,206.41</b>	<b>41,000.67 (35%)</b>
<b>V.A.T.</b>					<b>13,976.90</b>		
<b>GROSS TOTAL</b>		<b>3,144.26</b>			<b>86,570.49</b>		



# WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

## Project Initiation Form



Project Initiator			
Project Title			
Description			
Benefits			
<b>Financial Implications</b>			
Upfront / Set Up Costs		Ongoing Costs (Per Year)	
Does the Project generate income	Y / N	If Yes, Please Specify	
Existing Council Budget?	Y / N	If Yes, Please Specify	
Other Implications (i.e., environmental etc.)			
Staffing resource required			
Risks and Issues			
<b>For Office Use</b>			
Name of Committee for discussion		Date of Meeting Presented	
Scheduled start date <i>(if passed by resolution)</i>			
Lead Officer			

Once completed, please return this form to the Town Clerk. An informal discussion is encouraged before a project is presented to a Committee. Please be sure to also include/attach any documents relevant to the project.