

East Suffolk Town Centre Users Perception Survey

Southwold 2024



Prepared by:



Prepared for:



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October 2024



Research Methodology

As part of a wider programme around town centre revitalisation, East Suffolk Council were looking to survey town centre users across 12 key towns & villages in East Suffolk. The aim of the study was to understand how and why people are using our town centre in order to support future intervention plans.

As part of the research plan, we interviewed consumers and businesses using a mixed methodology (face-to-face, online and telephone interviewing). Our surveys (consumer and business) were incentivised with a free prize draw.

We conducted face-to-face interviews with consumers at each of the 12 town centres. We created a QR code linked to the face-to-face consumer survey. Those wishing to take part in the consultation but unable to do so ‘on the spot’ were offered a chance to upload the survey onto their phones so that they could submit the responses in their own time.

Businesses were targeted via an online survey. We engaged with town centre businesses by using the existing local business networks and partnerships, with the support of the Economic Development and Communications Teams at East Suffolk Council. We then targeted businesses by phone as an additional resource for targeting specific town centre businesses in order to top up any towns which proved hard to reach using the online method mentioned above.

The results of the study are based on 1560 interviews with town centre users and 425 interviews with local businesses. The following table shows the sample for each individual town.

Sample of interviews		
East Suffolk Towns	Consumers	Businesses
Aldeburgh	125	36
Beccles	125	42
Bungay	110	34
Felixstowe	170	43
Framlingham	110	33
Halesworth	110	32
Leiston	110	34
Lowestoft	215	42
Saxmundham	110	41
Southwold	140	35
Woodbridge	157	37
Wickham Market	78	16
Total	1560	425

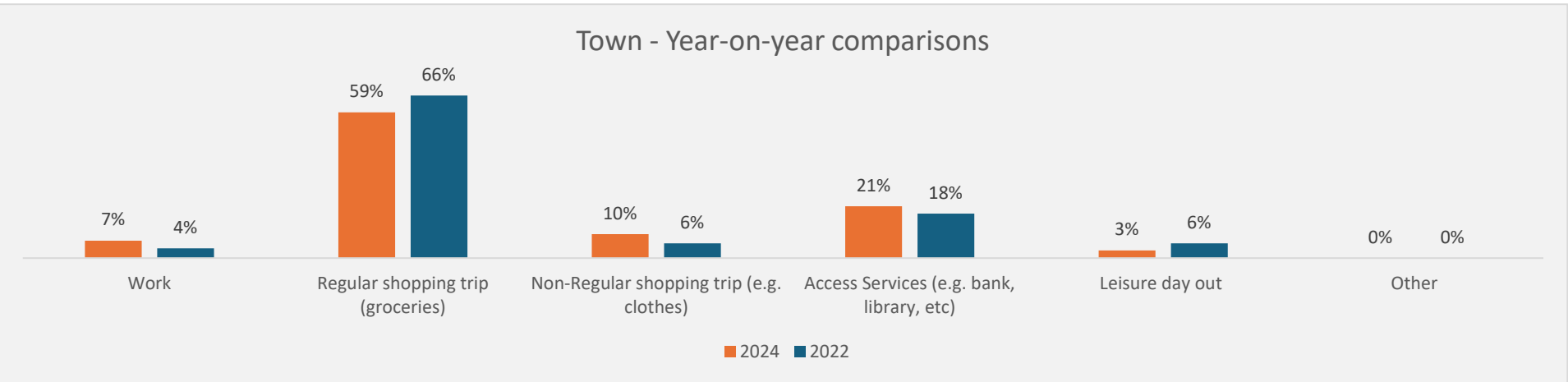
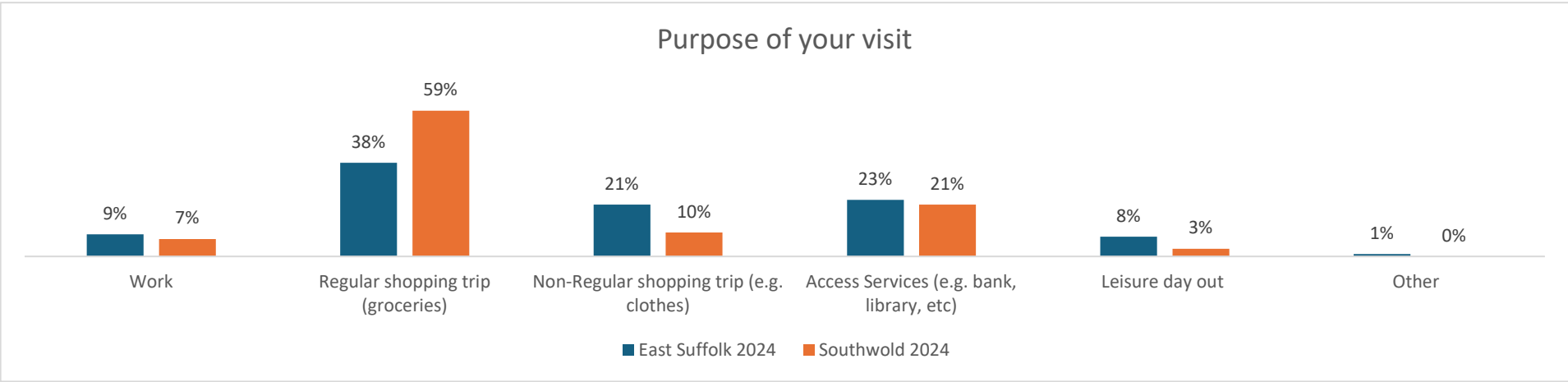
Town centre users - Contents

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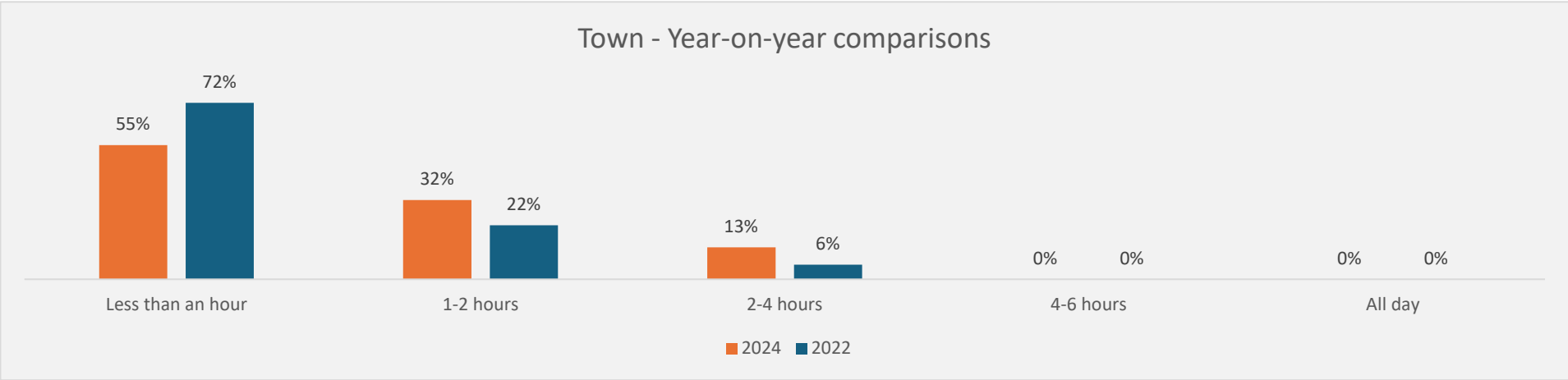
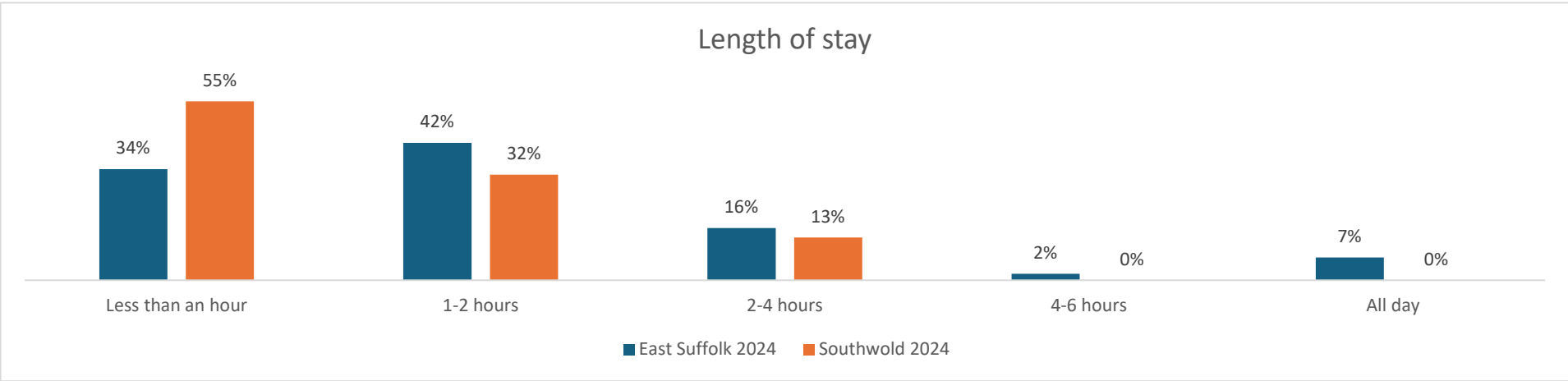
Town centre users – Trip characteristics

What is the main purpose of your visit to the town centre today?



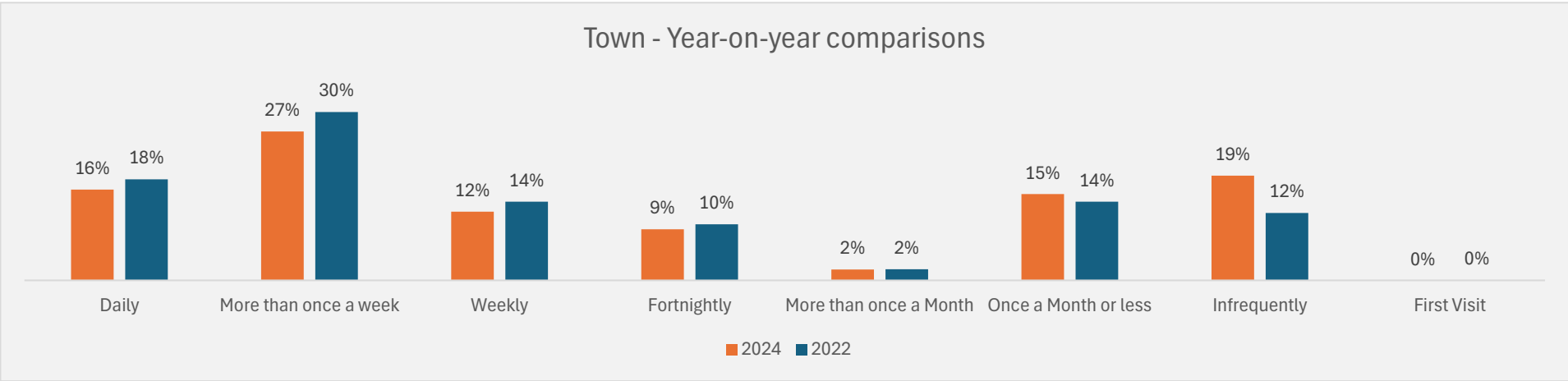
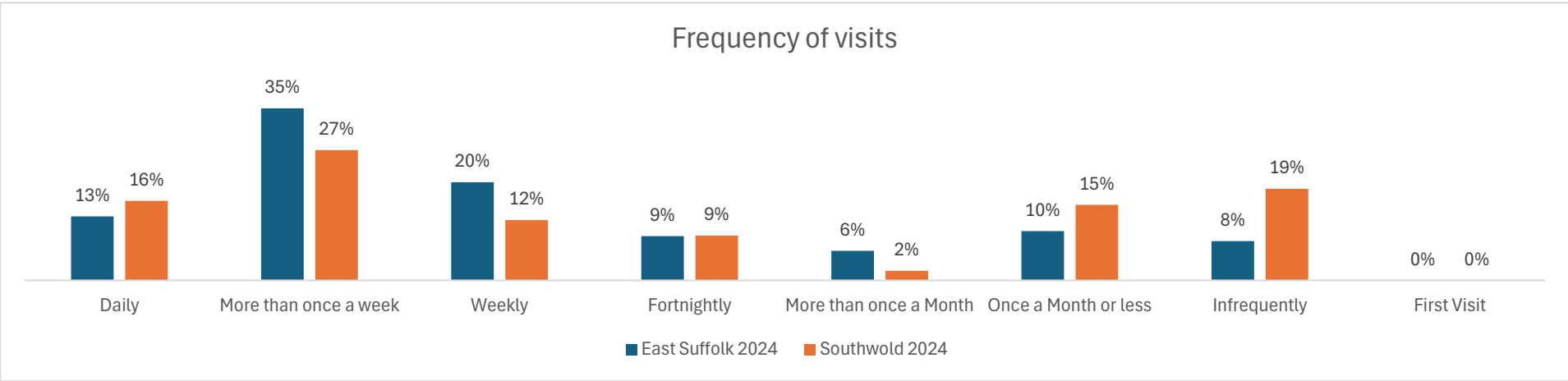
Town centre users – Trip characteristics

How long do you intend to stay on this visit to the town centre?



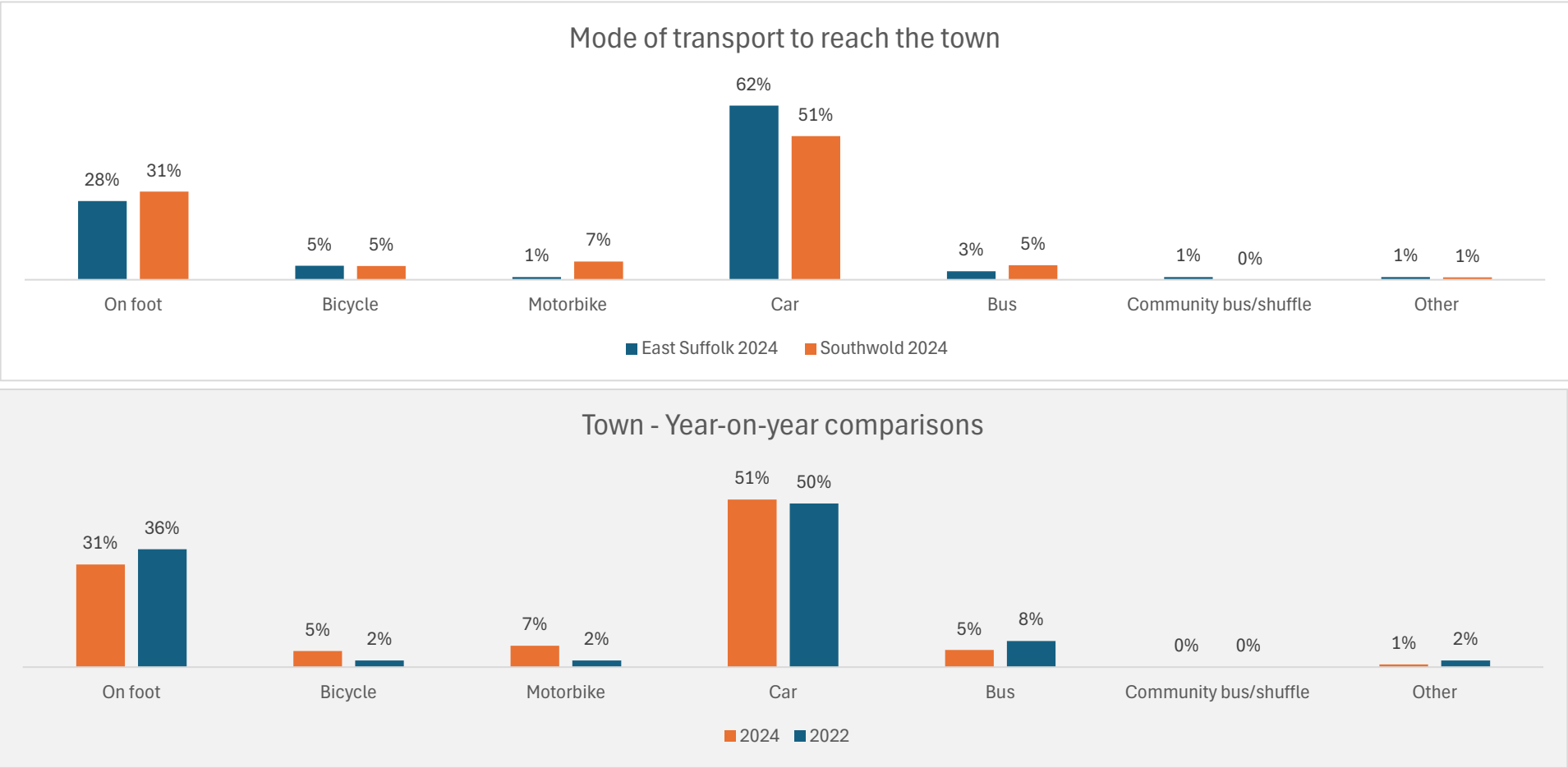
Town centre users – Trip characteristics

How often do you visit the town centre?



Town centre users – Trip characteristics

How did you travel into the town centre today?



Town centre users – Trip characteristics

Including yourself, how many people in your party are male and female, and which of these age groups do they fall into?

Southwold 2024				East Suffolk 2024			
Age	Male	Female	All	Age	Male	Female	All
0-15	1%	1%	2%	0-15	2%	4%	6%
16-24	1%	0%	1%	16-24	2%	2%	4%
25-34	0%	0%	0%	25-34	2%	2%	3%
35-44	1%	1%	2%	35-44	2%	2%	4%
45-54	3%	9%	11%	45-54	2%	5%	7%
55-64	5%	6%	11%	55-64	8%	7%	16%
65+	32%	41%	73%	65+	27%	33%	61%
	43%	58%			45%	55%	

Year-on-year comparison : Southwold 2024

2024				2022			
Age	Male	Female	All	Age	Male	Female	All
0-15	2%	4%	6%	0-15	1%	1%	2%
16-24	2%	2%	4%	16-24	3%	4%	7%
25-34	2%	2%	3%	25-34	2%	2%	4%
35-44	2%	2%	4%	35-44	1%	2%	3%
45-54	2%	5%	7%	45-54	4%	4%	8%
55-64	8%	7%	16%	55-64	7%	7%	14%
65+	27%	33%	61%	65+	25%	38%	62%
	45%	55%			43%	57%	

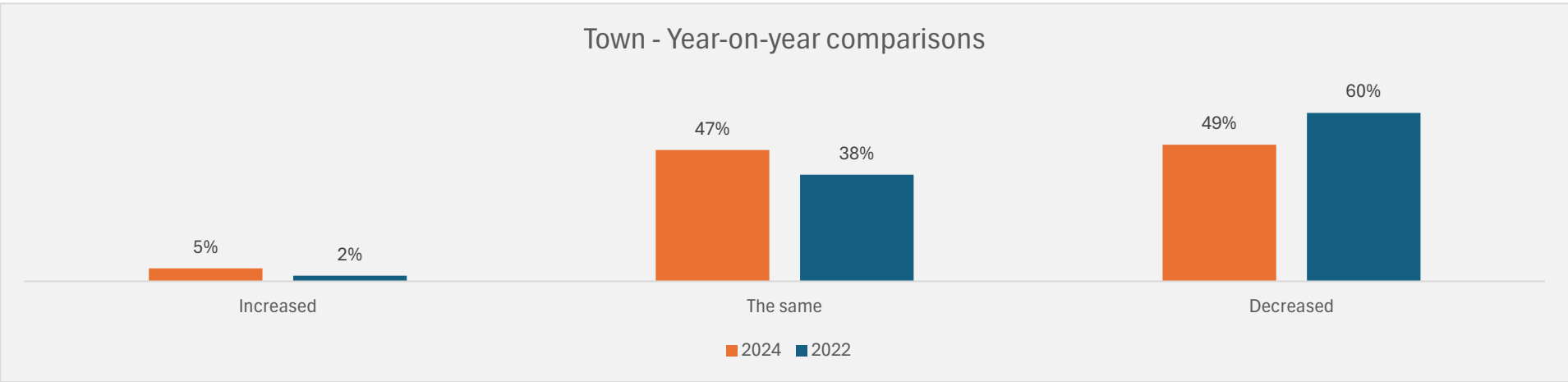
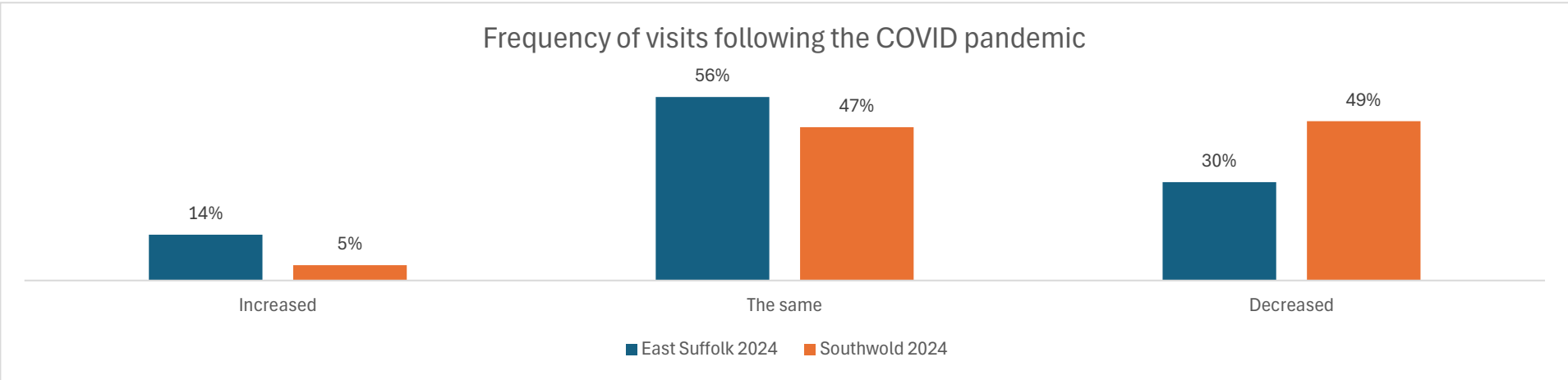
Town centre users – Trip characteristics

Including yourself, how many people in your party are male and female, and which of these age groups do they fall into? Thinking about today as a whole, how much do you expect that you and your immediate party will have spent on your visit to the town centre?



Town centre users – Trip characteristics

Would you say your frequency of visits to the town centre has increased, decreased or stayed the same since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic?



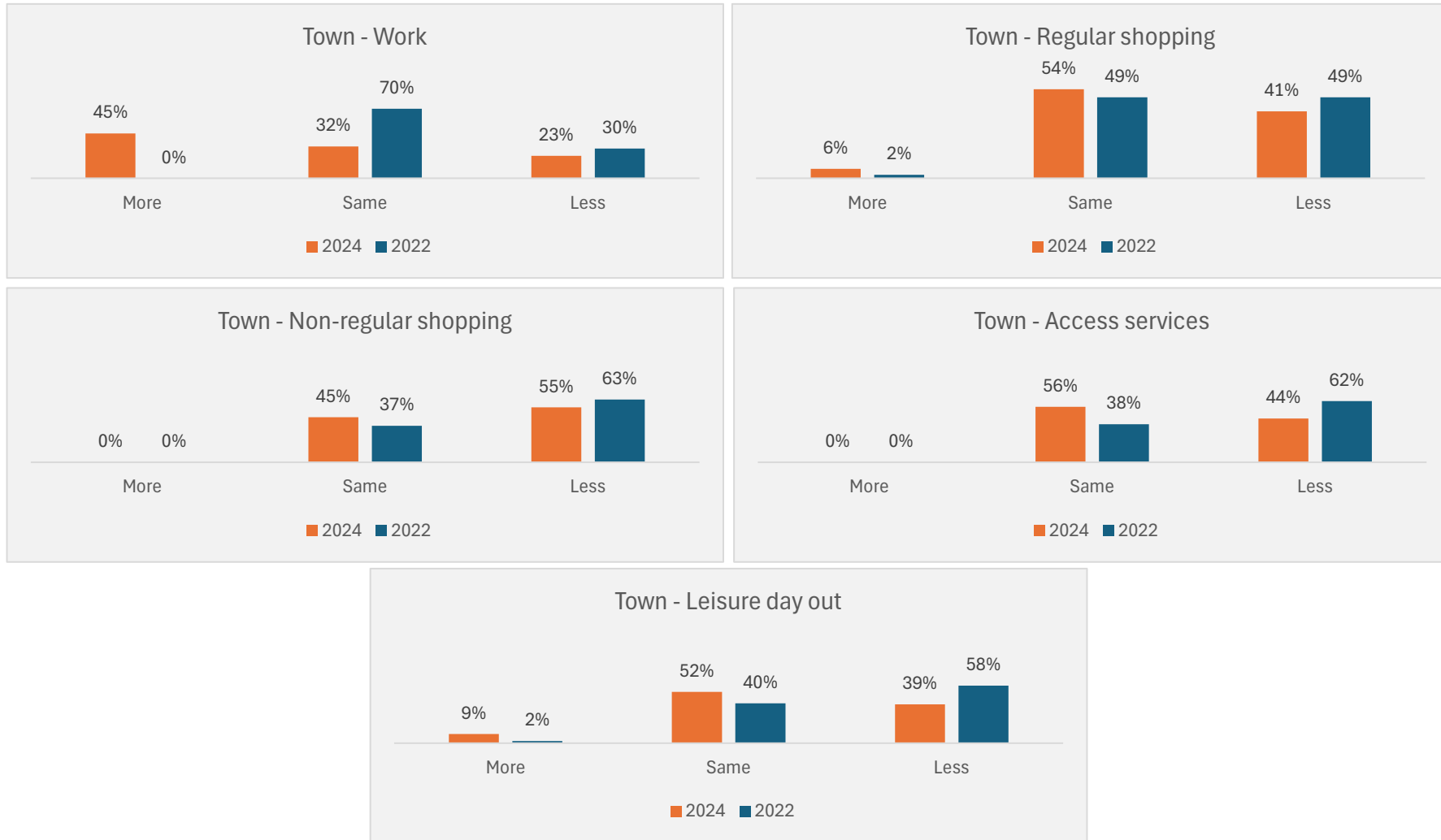
Town centre users – Trip characteristics

Has the frequency of your visits changed since the start of the pandemic for any of the following trip purposes?



Town centre users – Trip characteristics

Year-on-year comparison : Southwold 2024



Town centre users – Opinions and scores

We are interested in your opinions about different aspects of the town centre. Please rate your satisfaction level based on this visit? Please rate your satisfaction levels for the following aspects of the town.

1 = Not at all satisfied, 5 = Very satisfied

	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024		East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024
Groceries shops	3.3	3.2	Events	3.0	3.0
Clothes, gifts etc.	2.9	2.9	Range of events	3.6	3.5
Independent shops	3.5	3.7	Number of events	3.5	3.5
National chains	2.3	2.1	Leisure facilities	2.7	2.9
The Market(s)	1.9	2.8	Walking trails	3.7	3.8
Pubs/ bars	3.1	3.3	Green spaces	3.8	3.8
Cafes / restaurants	3.7	3.5	Cleanliness Streets	3.2	2.7
Places to Eat and Drink - Value for money	3.3	2.9	Customer Service	3.1	3.1
Places to Eat and Drink - Range/Offer	3.6	3.8	Access to services	2.9	2.8
Road / Pedestrian Signs	3.2	2.8	Information & Maps	3.6	3.7
Cycle lanes and bike racks	1.6	1.9	Places to sit	3.6	3.5
Public transport	1.9	2.0	Accessible toilets	3.4	3.3
Car Parking	3.0	2.3	Feeling of safety	3.9	4.0
Pavement surfaces e.g. raised areas	3.6	3.8	Welcoming Feeling	3.6	3.2
Dropped kerbs	3.7	3.8	Value for money	3.7	3.6
Cultural activities	2.8	3.0	Quality experience	3.8	3.6

Town centre users – Opinions and scores

Please rate your satisfaction levels for the town centre Southwold 2024

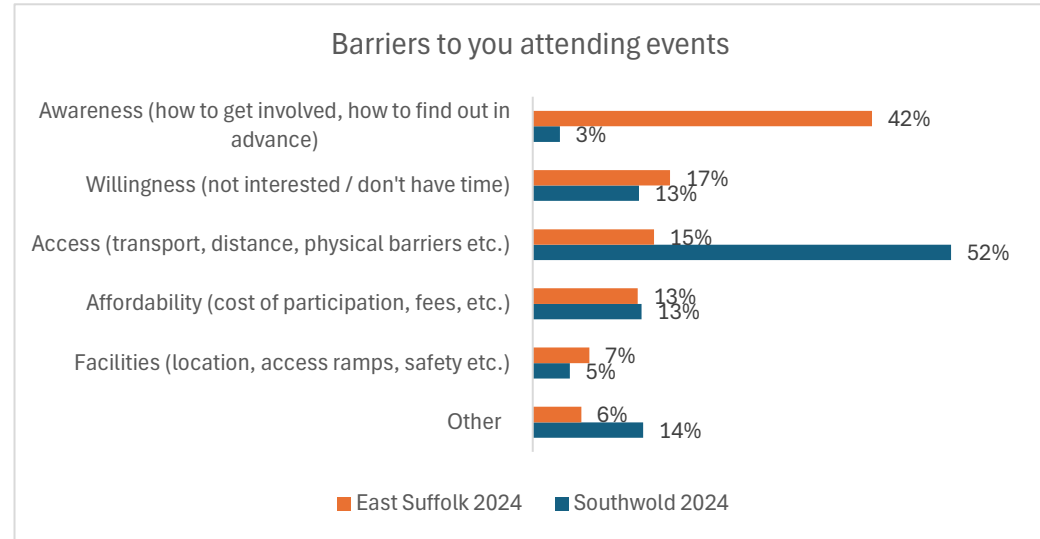
Year-on-year comparison :

1 = Not at all satisfied, 5 = Very satisfied

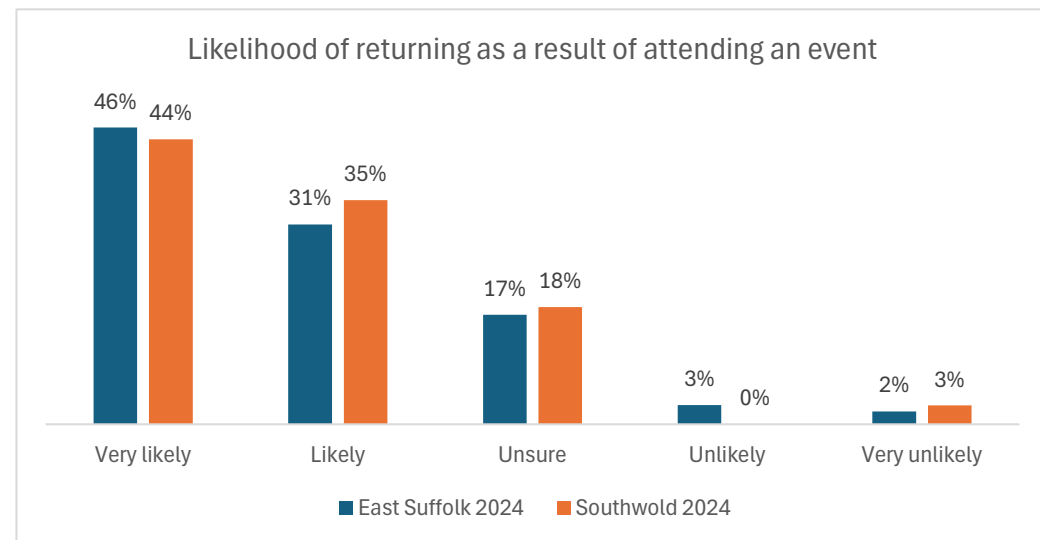
	2024	2022		2024	2022
Groceries shops	3.2	3.2	Events	3.0	2.7
Clothes, gifts etc.	2.9	2.6	Range of events	3.5	N/A
Independent shops	3.7	3.5	Number of events	3.5	N/A
National chains	2.1	2.7	Leisure facilities	2.9	3.0
The Market(s)	2.8	3.5	Walking trails	3.8	N/A
Pubs/ bars	3.3	2.7	Green spaces	3.8	N/A
Cafes / restaurants	3.5	3.0	Cleanliness Streets	2.7	3.2
Places to Eat and Drink - Value for money	2.9	2.6	Customer Service	3.1	3.5
Places to Eat and Drink - Range/Offer	3.8	N/A	Access to services	2.8	3.3
Road / Pedestrian Signs	2.8	2.8	Information & Maps	3.7	N/A
Cycle lanes and bike racks	1.9	1.5	Places to sit	3.5	N/A
Public transport	2.0	1.8	Accessible toilets	3.3	N/A
Car Parking	2.3	1.8	Feeling of safety	4.0	4.1
Pavement surfaces e.g. raised areas	3.8	N/A	Welcoming Feeling	3.2	3.6
Dropped kerbs	3.8	N/A	Value for money	3.6	N/A
Cultural activities	3.0	2.9	Quality experience	3.6	N/A

Town centre users – Opinions and scores

Are there any barriers to you attending events in the town?

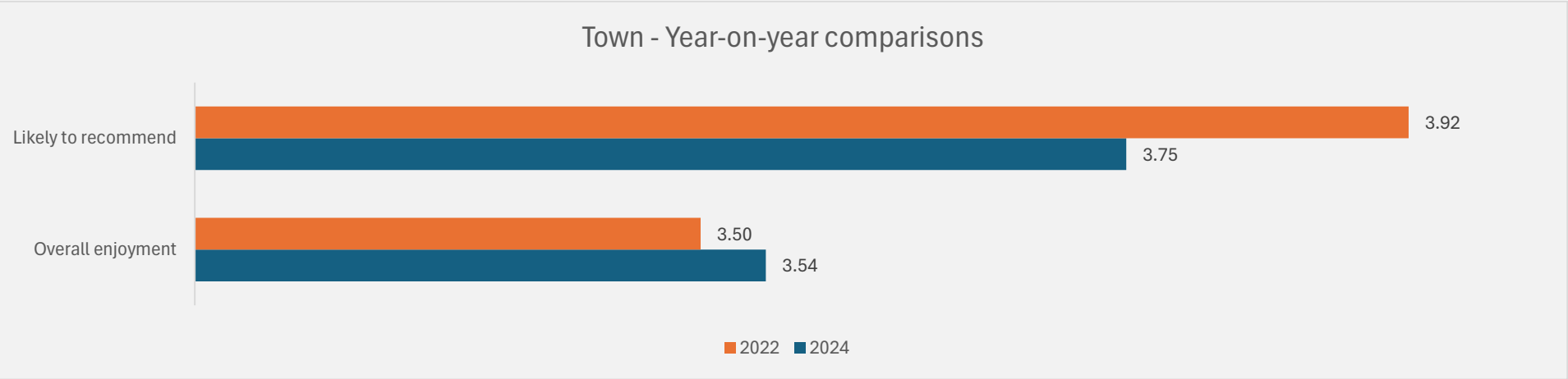
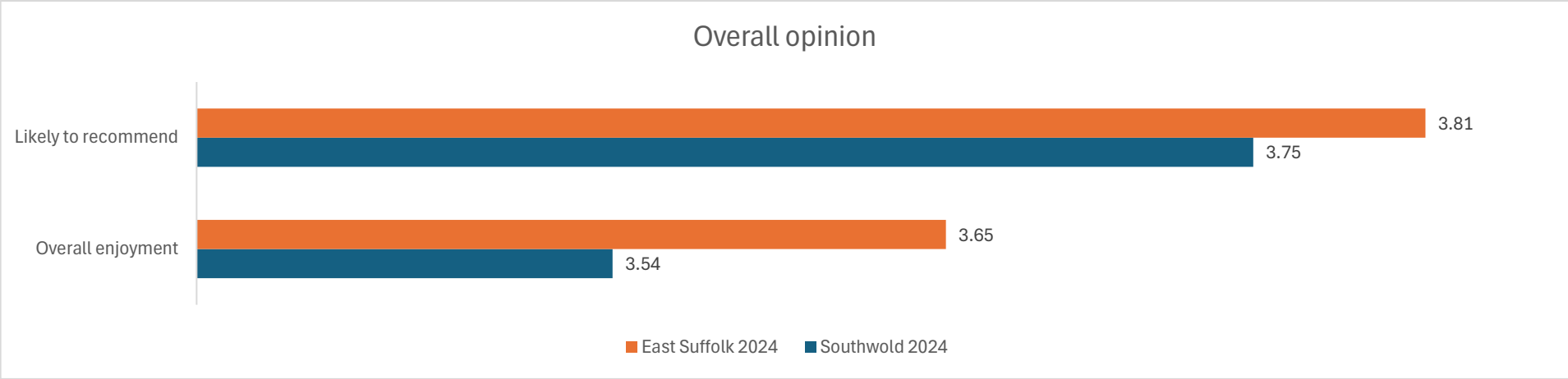


As a result of attending the event(s), how likely are you to return to the town in the future?



Town centre users – Opinions and scores

Taking everything into account, how would you rate the overall enjoyment of your visit today?
How likely are you to recommend the area to someone else? (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High)



Town centre users – Opinions and scores

As part of your visits to the town, how useful do you find the following:

(1 = Not at all useful, 5 = Very Useful)

	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024
Web sites about the town or businesses to help plan your visit in advance	3.31	4.25
Info on social media about businesses, products, places to eat, things to do, etc.	3.48	4.76
'Click and collect' or the ability to browse products as part of your visit.	2.04	2.28
Regular updates direct from businesses about special offers, things to do, etc.	2.79	3.56
Free public WiFi in the town centre	3.22	3.80
Visitor websites like the Suffolk Coast Ltd	3.04	3.49

Year-on-year comparison : Southwold 2024

	2024	2022
Web sites about the town or businesses to help plan your visit in advance	4.25	2.53
Info on social media about businesses, products, places to eat, things to do, etc.	4.76	2.59
'Click and collect' or the ability to browse products as part of your visit.	2.28	1.94
Regular updates direct from businesses about special offers, things to do, etc.	3.56	2.45
Free public WiFi in the town centre	3.80	N/A
Visitor websites like the Suffolk Coast Ltd	3.49	N/A



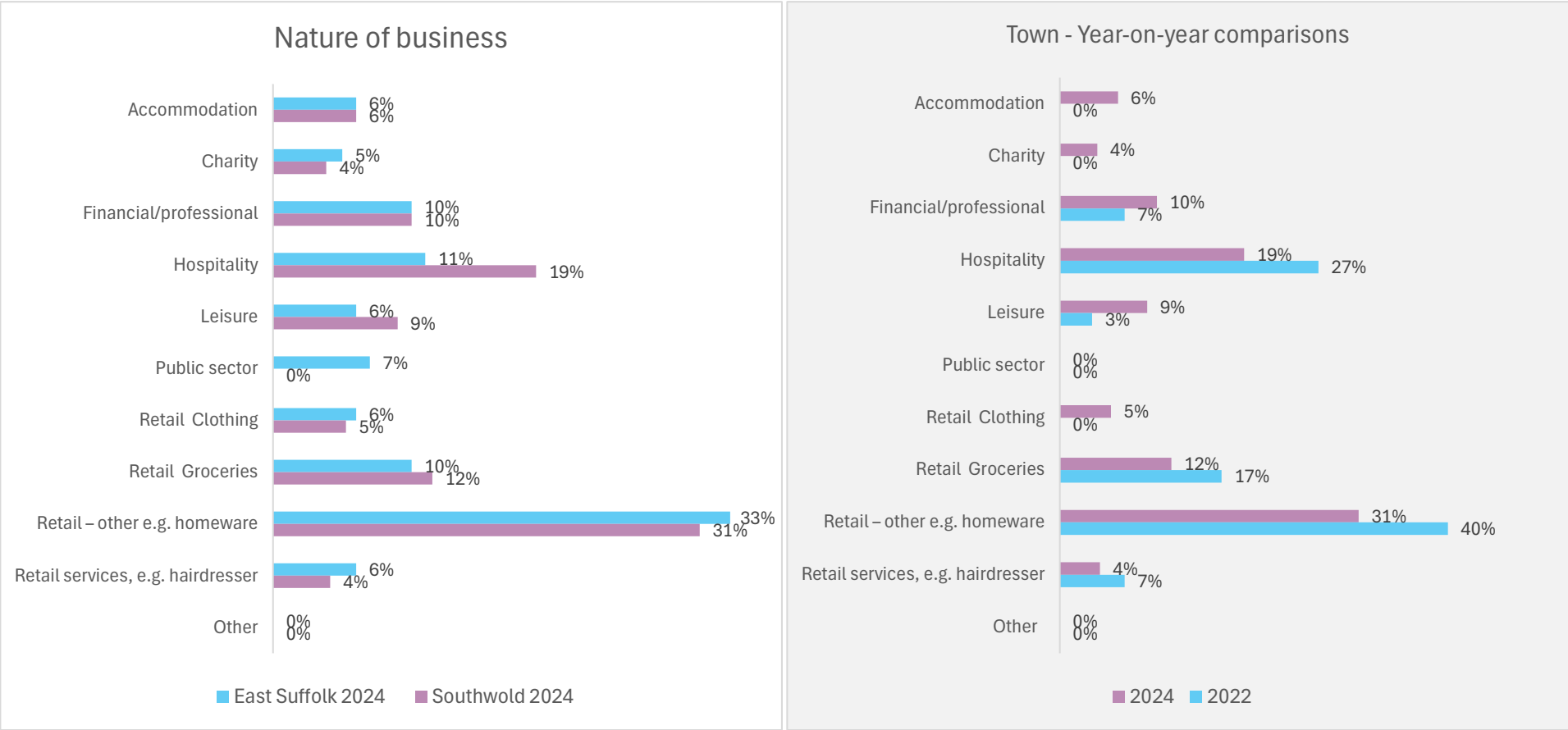
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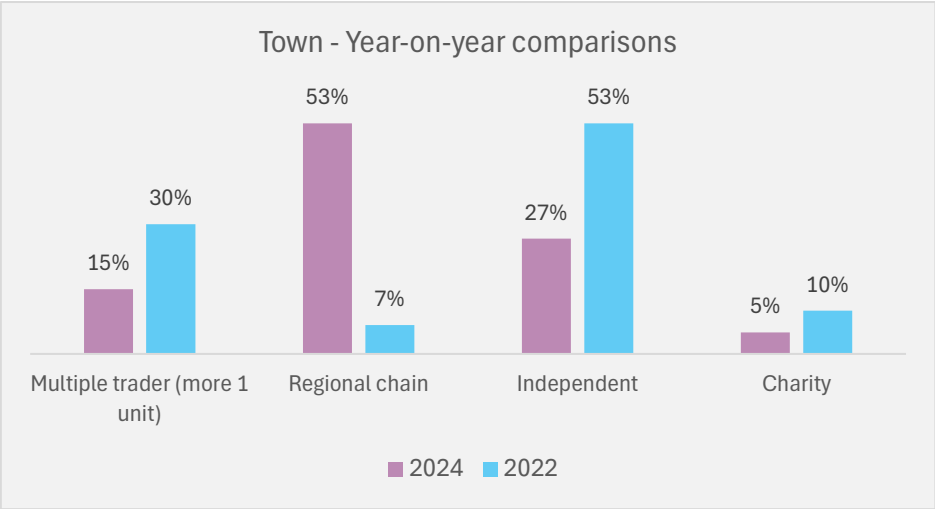
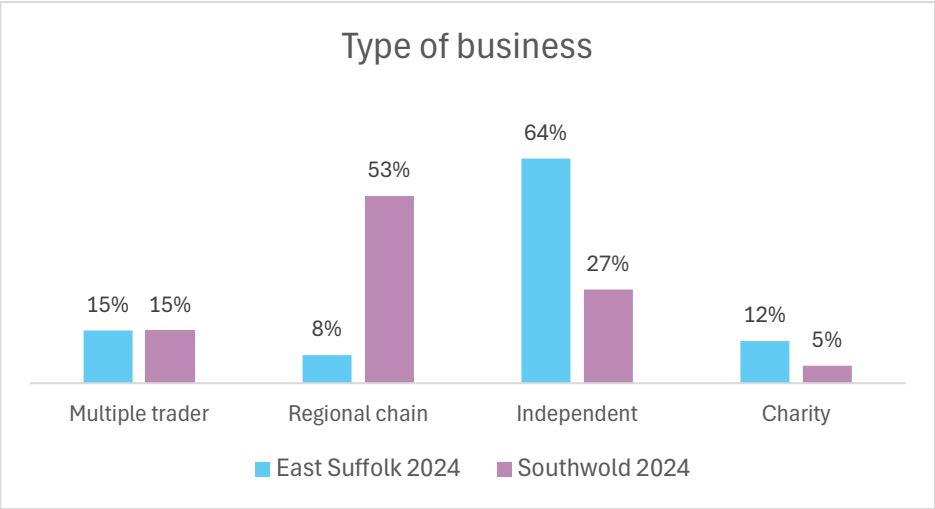


Town centre businesses – Business profile

What is the nature of your business?

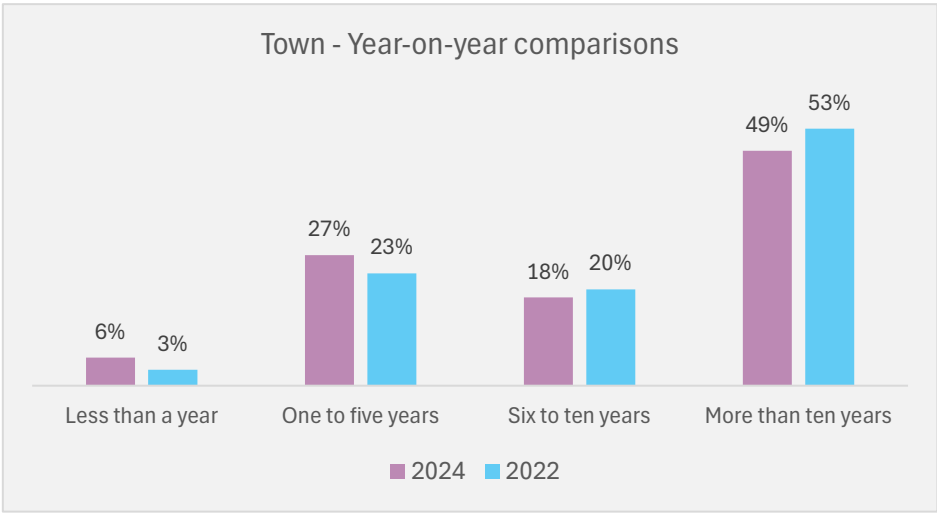
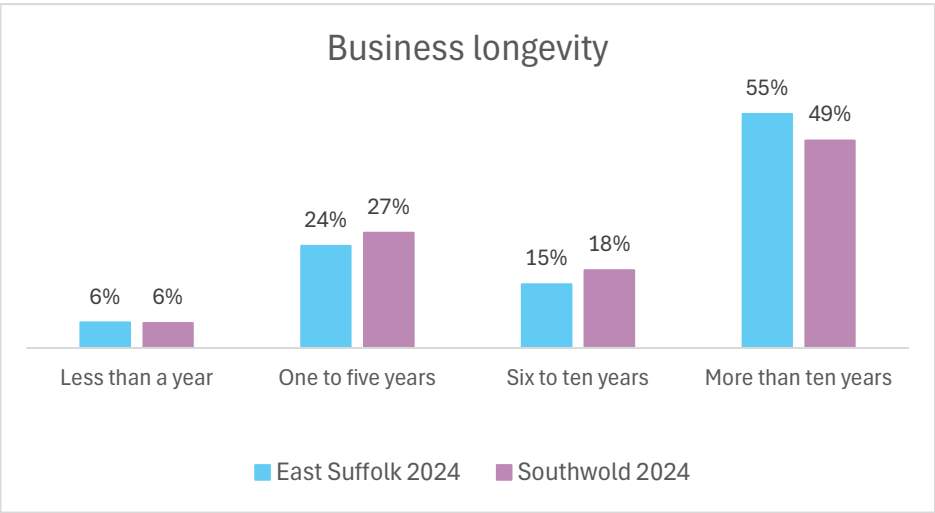


Town centre businesses – Business profile



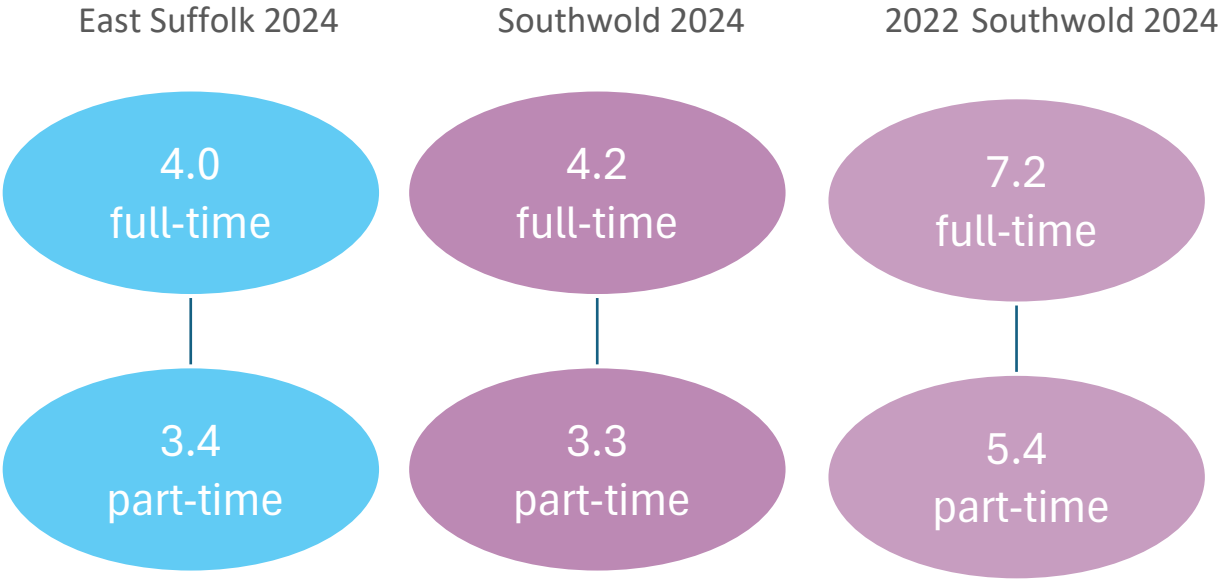
Town centre businesses – Business profile

What type of business are you? How long has your business been in the town?



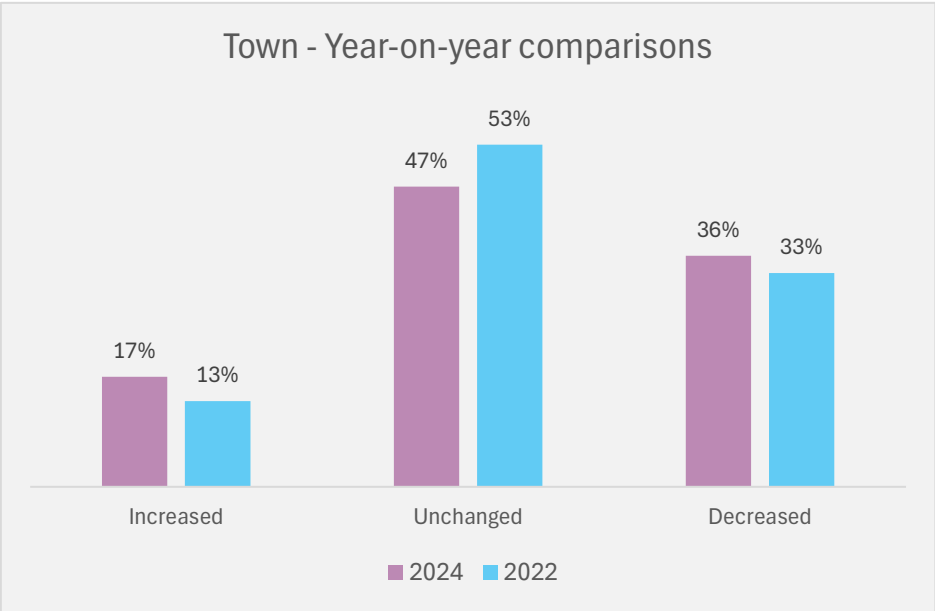
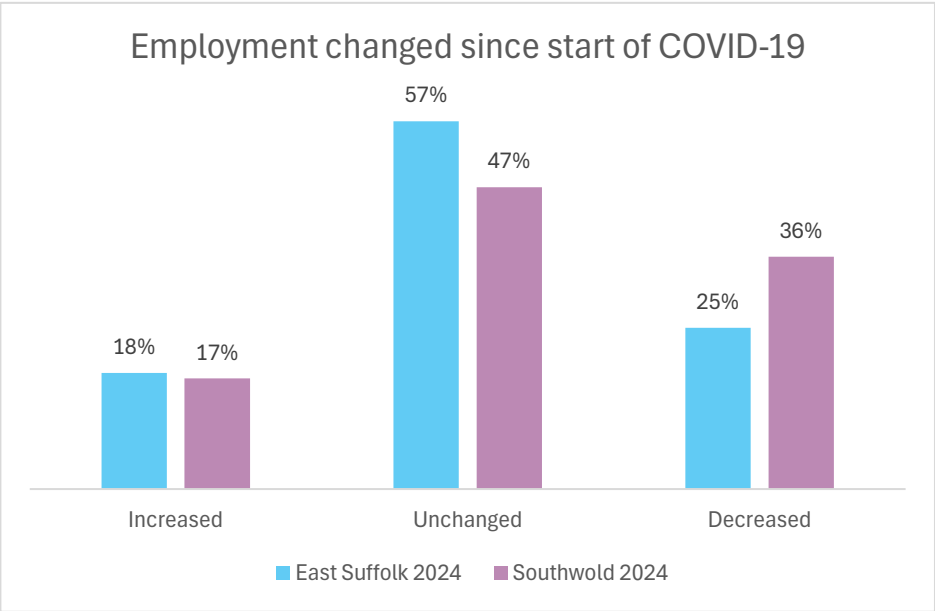
Town centre businesses – Business profile

How many people work at these premises?
(Including owners)



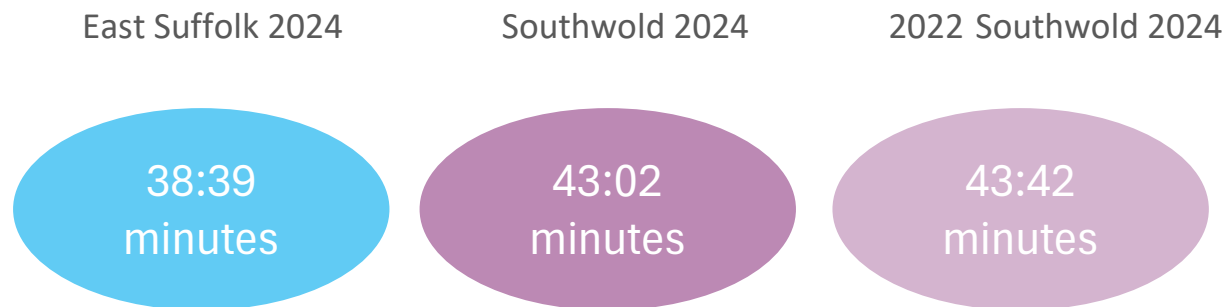
Town centre businesses – Business profile

Has this changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?



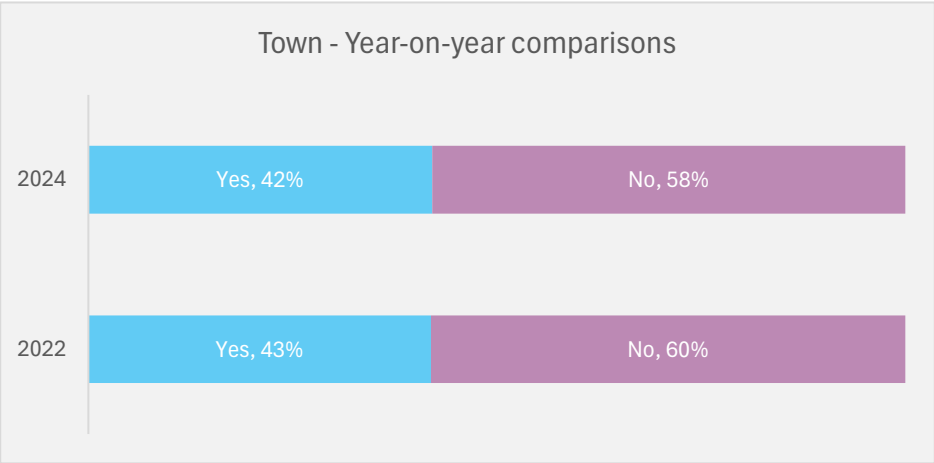
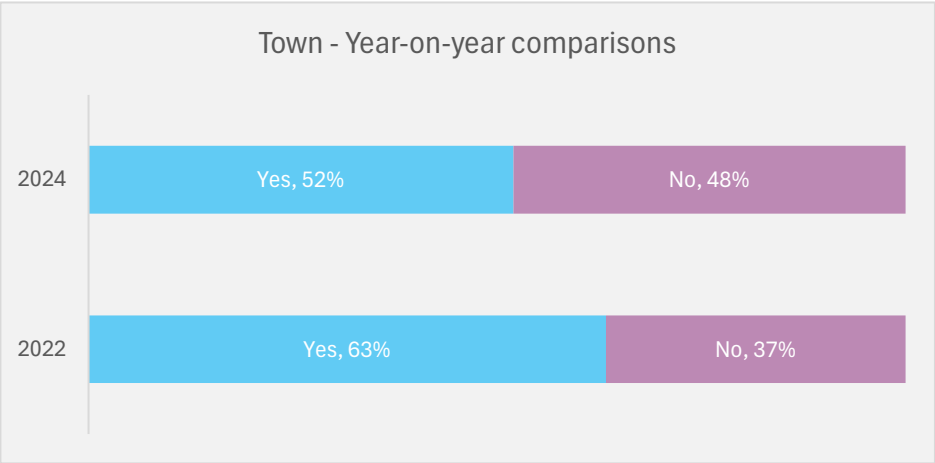
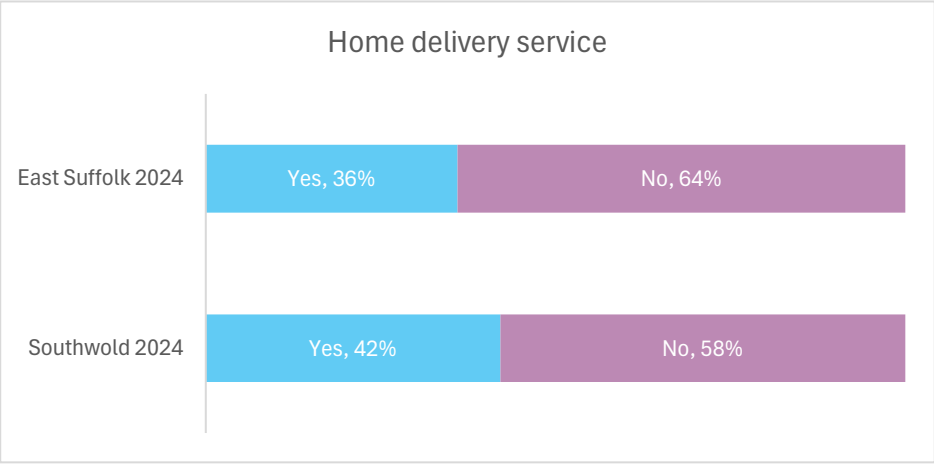
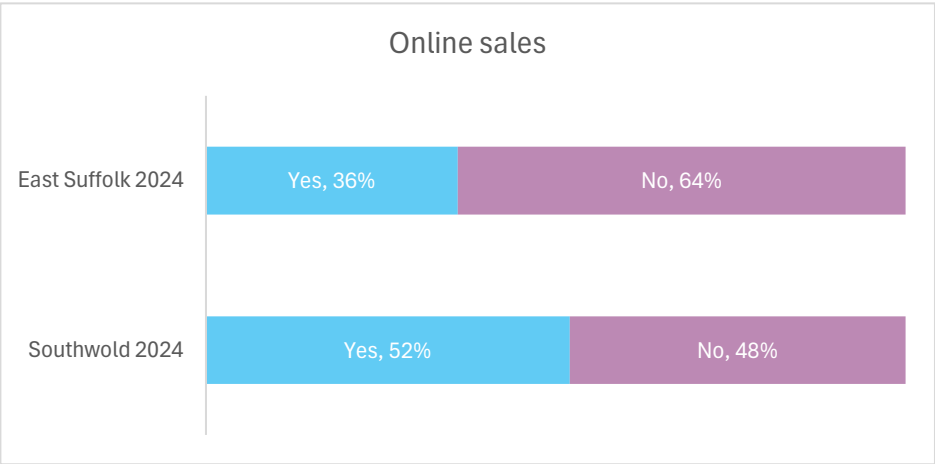
Town centre businesses – Business profile

What would you say is the average customer dwell time for a standard visit to your premises?



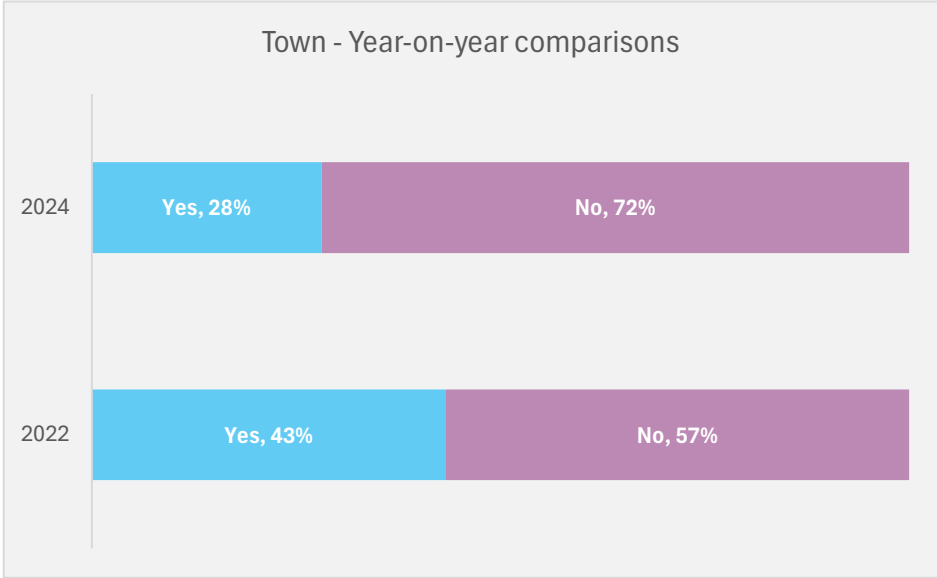
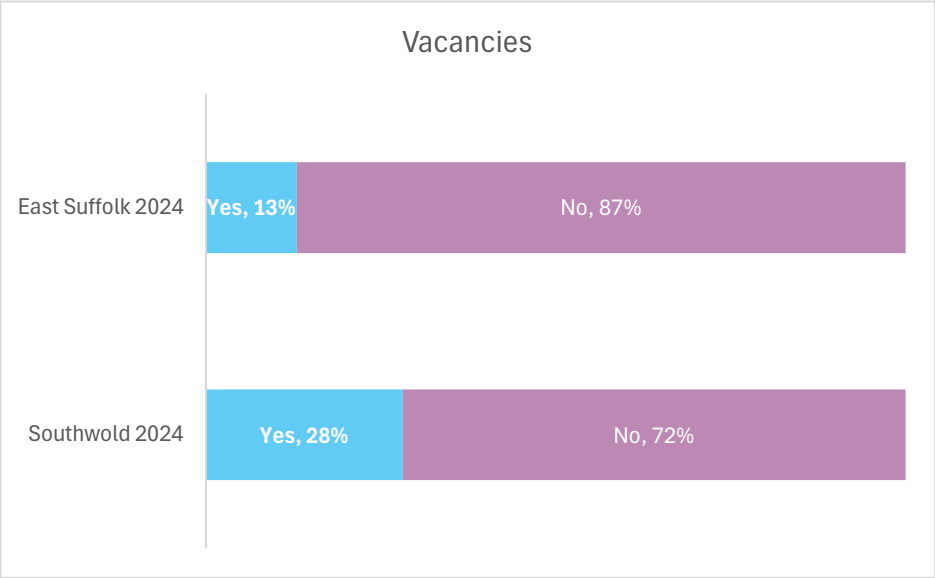
Town centre businesses – Business profile

Do you offer any of the following?



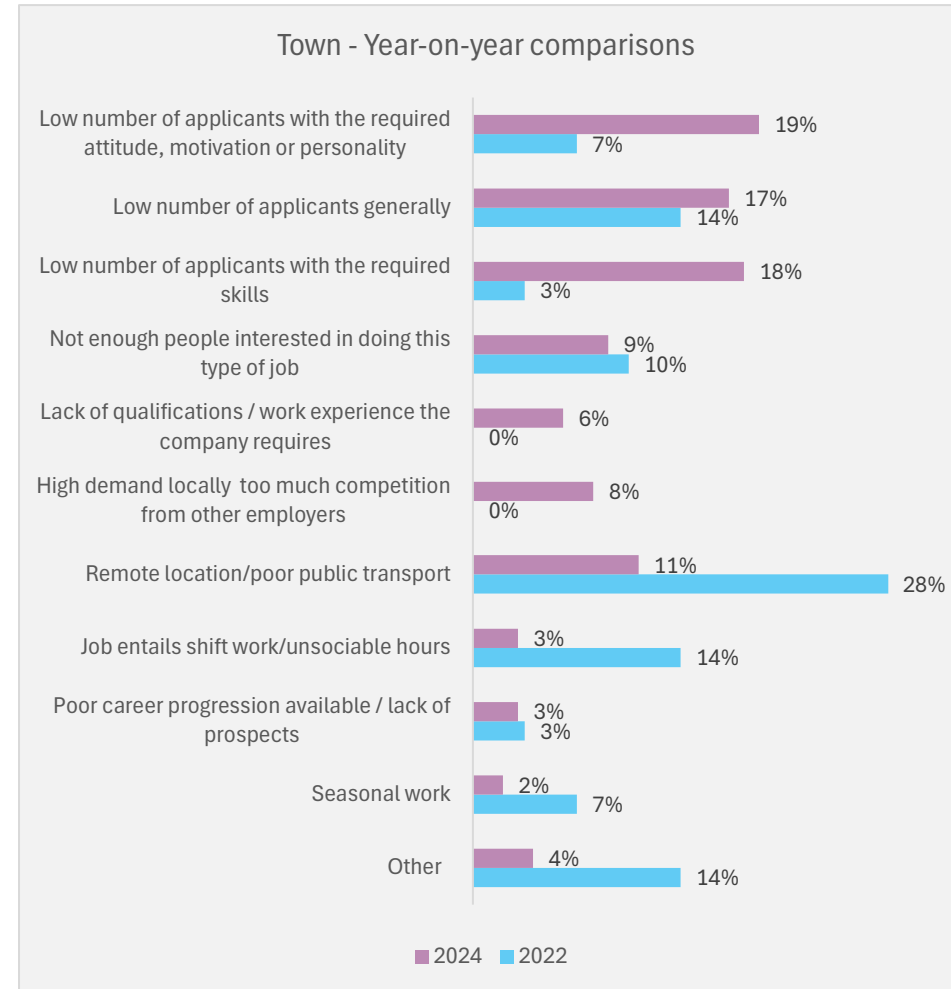
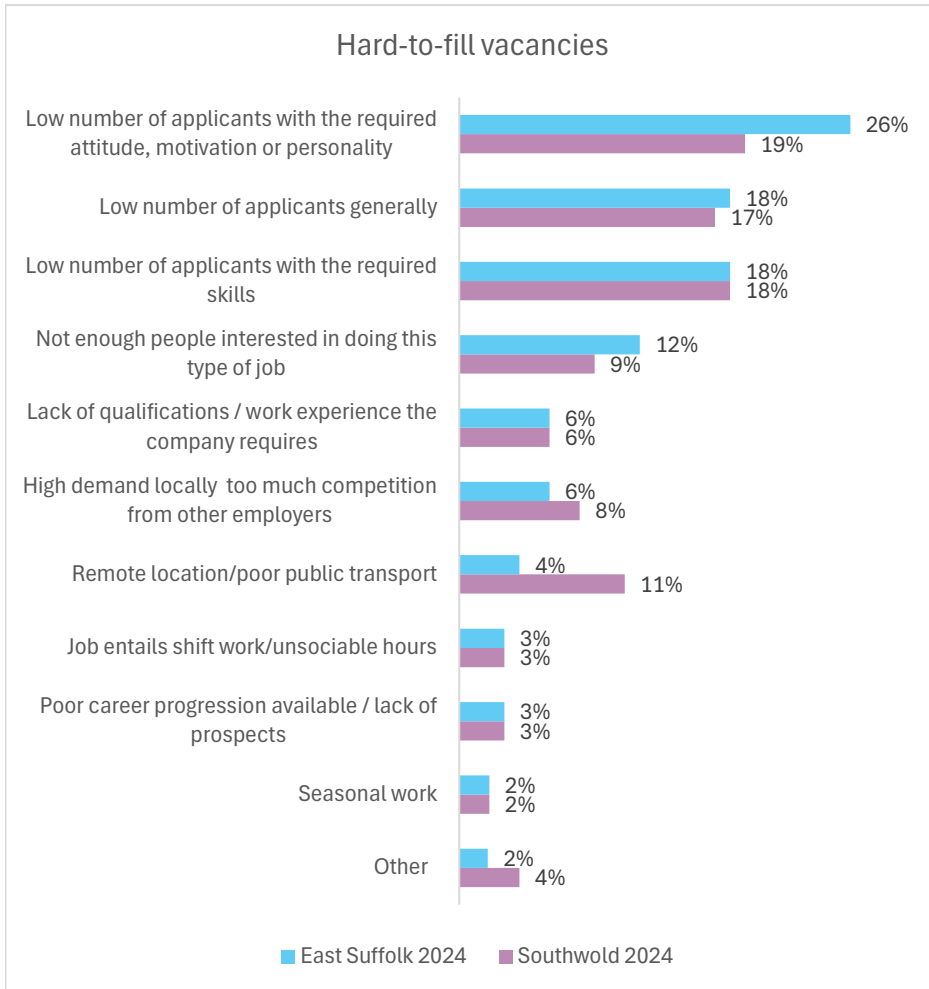
Town centre businesses – Vacancies

Do you currently have any vacancies?



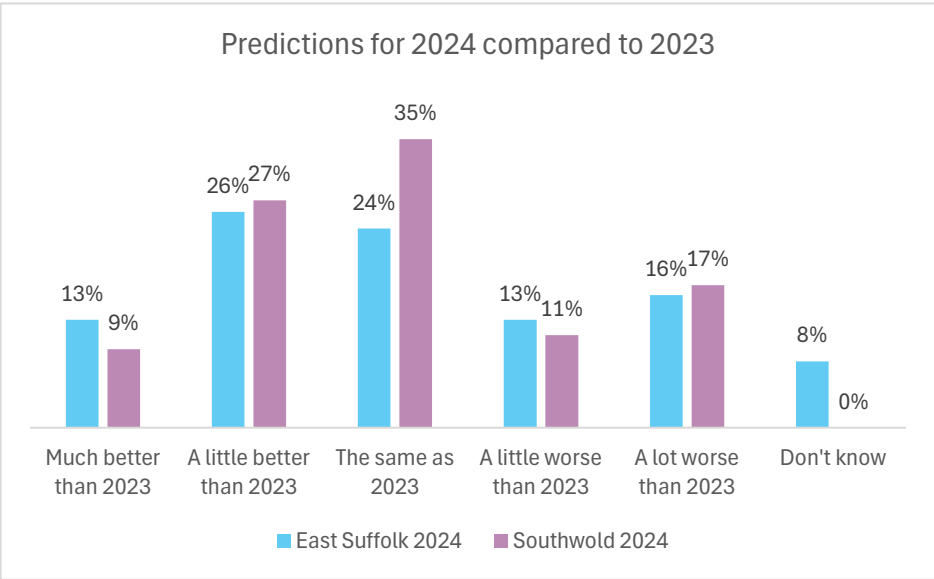
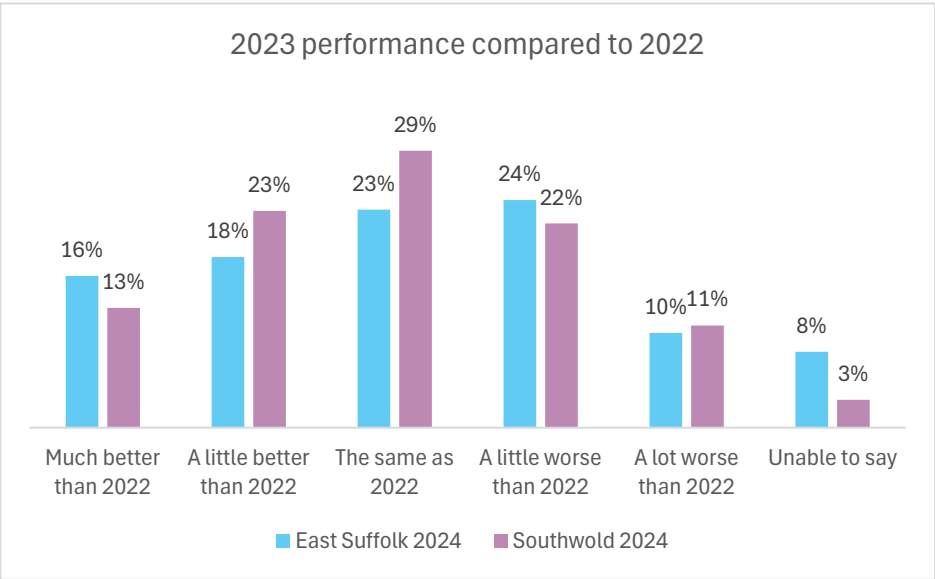
Town centre businesses – Vacancies

In your view, what are the reasons that make your vacancies hard-to-fill?



Town centre businesses – Business performance

Thinking now about 2023, how was your business performance? Thinking now about 2024, do you expect your business performance to be?



Town centre businesses – Satisfaction scores

Aspects of Town Centre	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024	Town v District
LOCAL BUSINESS			
Cafes, pubs, restaurants	4.0	4.6	0.6
Geographical location	3.9	4.2	0.3
Mix of retail offer	3.4	3.6	0.2
Prosperity of the town	3.4	3.9	0.5
Physical appearance	3.3	4.2	0.9
The Market(s)	3.0	3.8	0.7
Labour pool	2.9	2.7	-0.2
Availability of premises	2.9	2.9	0.0
Rental values/ rates	2.6	1.5	-1.1
CUSTOMERS TO YOUR BUSINESS			
Seasonal economy	3.3	3.9	0.6
Customers - Volume of visitors	3.1	3.9	0.8
Customers - Volume of town residents	2.8	2.7	-0.2
Footfall	2.7	3.9	1.2
Affordable housing	2.2	1.4	-0.9
EASE OF ACCESS (TOWN)			
Road / Pedestrian Signs	2.9	2.0	-1.0
Traffic volumes	2.9	2.4	-0.5
Car Parking provision	2.3	1.9	-0.3
Public transport availability	2.4	2.8	0.4
Cycle lanes / bike racks	2.1	2.3	0.3
PROMOTION (TOWN)			
Events/ activities	3.1	2.8	-0.3
Free public WiFi	2.9	3.3	0.4
Local partnerships/ organisations	2.9	2.6	-0.3
Local marketing & promotion platforms	2.8	2.6	-0.2

Please rate your satisfaction level based on the following aspects of the town using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all satisfied, 5 = Very satisfied).

Town centre businesses – Satisfaction scores - Year-on-year comparisons

Aspects of Town Centre	2024	2022	2024 v 2022
LOCAL BUSINESS			
Cafes, pubs, restaurants	4.6	4.1	0.5
Geographical location	4.2	3.3	0.9
Mix of retail offer	3.6	3.1	0.5
Prosperity of the town	3.9	3.6	0.3
Physical appearance	4.2	3.3	0.9
The Market(s)	3.8	2.8	1.0
Labour pool	2.7	2.1	0.6
Availability of premises	2.9	2.4	0.5
Rental values/ rates	1.5	2.4	-0.9
CUSTOMERS TO YOUR BUSINESS			
Seasonal economy	3.9	3.8	0.1
Customers - Volume of visitors	3.9	4.0	-0.1
Customers - Volume of town residents	2.7	2.4	0.3
Footfall	3.9	3.4	0.5
Affordable housing	1.4	2.0	-0.6
EASE OF ACCESS (TOWN)			
Road / Pedestrian Signs	2.0	2.1	-0.1
Traffic volumes	2.4	2.2	0.2
Car Parking provision	1.9	1.8	0.1
Public transport availability	2.8	2.2	0.6
Cycle lanes / bike racks	2.3	N/A	N/A
PROMOTION (TOWN)			
Events/ activities	2.8	3.2	-0.4
Free public WiFi	3.3	N/A	N/A
Local partnerships/ organisations	2.6	3.0	-0.4
Local marketing & promotion platforms	2.6	3.0	-0.4

Please rate your satisfaction level based on the following aspects of the town using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all satisfied, 5 = Very satisfied).

Town centre businesses – Satisfaction scores

What priority does your business currently give to? (1= *Very unimportant*, 5 = *Very important*)

Aspects of Town Centre	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024	Town v District
Creation and management of business web site	3.3	4.1	0.8
Regular use of social media to promote business and engage with customers	3.9	4.2	0.4
Generation and provision of on-line sales	2.5	3.4	0.9
Collection and analysis of customer data to help target marketing	2.9	4.0	1.2

Year-on-year comparison : Southwold 2024

Aspects of Town Centre	2024	2022	2024 v 2022
Creation and management of business web site	4.1	3.9	0.2
Regular use of social media to promote business and engage with customers	4.2	4.1	0.1
Generation and provision of on-line sales	3.4	3.4	0.0
Collection and analysis of customer data to help target marketing	4.0	3.5	0.5

Town centre businesses – Satisfaction scores

How do you rate the competition to your business? (1 = Always a problem for me, 5 = Never a problem for me)

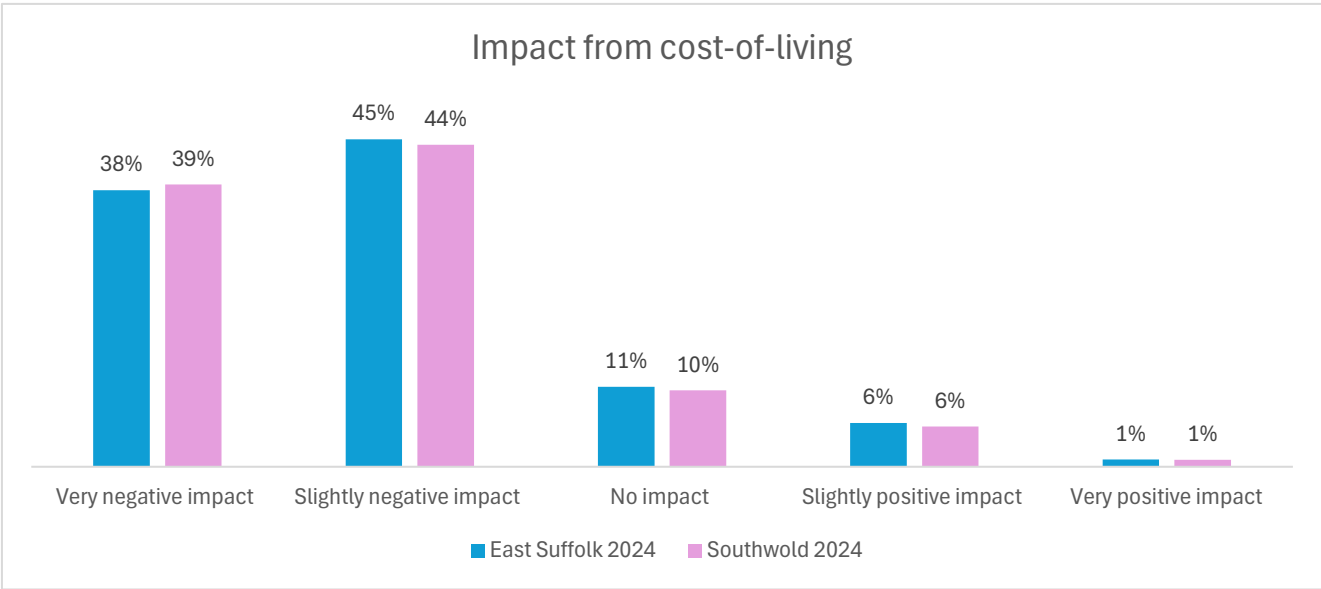
Aspects of Town Centre	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024	Town v District
Local business competition	3.2	3.6	0.4
Competition from other localities	3.2	3.6	0.4
Competition from out-of-town shopping	3.1	3.4	0.3
Competition from internet	3.0	3.2	0.2

Year-on-year comparison : Southwold 2024

Aspects of Town Centre	2024	2022	2024 v 2022
Local business competition	3.6	4.0	-0.4
Competition from other localities	3.6	3.7	-0.1
Competition from out-of-town shopping	3.4	3.5	-0.1
Competition from internet	3.2	3.2	0.0

Town centre businesses – Cost of living

How much of an impact, if at all, has the rising cost of living had on you (e.g. wellbeing, confidence, etc)?



Town centre businesses – Business support

What type of business support and advice have you accessed in the past? And what business support and advice would you benefit from and be most interested to receive in the future?

	Accessed in the past		Would use in the future	
	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024
Advertising, marketing and communications	64%	65%	62%	63%
Digital development (e.g. website and establishing or increasing your	55%	56%	70%	72%
Business essentials (e.g. finance and business planning, HR,	73%	78%	43%	47%
Accessing new markets e.g. expanding customer base, suppliers,	44%	46%	74%	79%
Networking opportunities	79%	79%	54%	54%
Making physical changes to your business premises and equipment	63%	66%	63%	67%
Business model improvement (e.g. ebusiness model, cost & sales	57%	58%	67%	69%
Making energy efficiency improvements to your business	45%	46%	62%	63%
Expanding staff numbers including apprentices	40%	41%	72%	75%
Visual merchandising e.g. shop window displays, online presentation	65%	67%	61%	64%
Grants and Funding Advice	41%	43%	82%	88%

Town centre businesses – Business practices

Sustainable business practices does your business support any of the following business practices? Do you offer any of the following services to your customers?

	Business practices supported		Services offered to customers	
	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024	East Suffolk 2024	Southwold 2024
Recycling	77%	78%	46%	46%
Reusing	51%	52%	28%	28%
Repairing	41%	41%	21%	21%
Refurbishing	42%	42%	13%	13%
Not applicable	19%	19%	53%	54%
Other	3%	3%	2%	2%



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