

NewcastleGateshead Initiative

headlines from

latest tourism research

If you would like to discuss the research or see it in more detail, please contact our research manager David Bowe at David.Bowe@ngi.org.uk

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Key Takeaways..... | 3 |
| Visitors..... | 3 |
| Residents..... | 3 |
| Non-Visitors..... | 4 |
| NewcastleGateshead Visitor Survey..... | 4 |
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Visitor Profiles..... | 4 |
| Visitor Perceptions..... | 4 |
| Visitor Satisfaction..... | 5 |
| Visitor Spend..... | 6 |
| NewcastleGateshead Resident Perceptions Research..... | 6 |
| Introduction..... | 6 |
| Resident Perceptions..... | 6 |
| Resident Satisfaction..... | 6 |
| NewcastleGateshead Non-Visitor Perceptions Research..... | 7 |
| Introduction..... | 7 |
| General Perceptions from Non-Visitors..... | 8 |
| Barriers to Visiting..... | 8 |

Key Takeaways

NGI have recently conducted extensive research with residents, visitors, and non-visitors to NewcastleGateshead to better understand perceptions of the city, usage, satisfaction, and barriers to visiting. The key findings can be found in this document.

Visitors

Satisfaction levels are high amongst visitors to NewcastleGateshead. **46%** of visitors rated their trip to NewcastleGateshead a **10/10** and no one gave their visit less than a 7/10. **99%** of visitors said they would recommend NewcastleGateshead to a friend as a daytrip/city break destination.

When asked what they liked most about their visit to NewcastleGateshead the most common responses included **how friendly the locals are**, the quality and variety of **food and drink offer**, the **architecture**, the proximity to **coast and countryside**, and the fact the **city is compact** with lots to do in quite a small area.

In terms of what visitors didn't like, or what they would like to see improved, they mentioned **improvements to public transport** with metros and buses running later, **cleaner/tidier spaces in the city centre**, and if possible better advertising of what's on for families with young children.

Visitors were also asked what attractions/things to do they think are missing from Newcastle. There were several suggestions and they mainly focused on **adventure/outdoor activities** such as bike trails, indoor ski slopes, and watersports. There was also a demand for more events for families with young children.

Generally speaking, visitors to NewcastleGateshead are the **strongest advocates** of the destination. They frequently provided more positive feedback than the two other groups (residents and non-visitors). For example, 95% of visitors to the area agree that it is an ambitious place (only 81% of residents agree with this description). Other descriptions visitors are more positive about include rundown (14% vs 31%), prosperous (86% vs 53%), elegant (85% vs 70%) and dirty (15% vs 43%).

Residents

Residents agree that Newcastle is **lively, friendly, welcoming and fun**. 94% of residents believe Newcastle has a **great atmosphere** and 91% find the city **beautiful**. As mentioned above, amongst residents there is a greater consciousness of the cleanliness of the area. 43% of residents agreed that Newcastle is **dirty**, 44% agreed that the city is **deprived**, and 62% would describe the city as **rowdy**.

The vast majority of residents appreciate Newcastle as a great base from which to access nearby coast and countryside and that the city has character and history. 21% disagree that Newcastle is accessible to people with disabilities and 18% disagree that there is plenty to do in the city for children and young people on a break with their families.

Many of the negative perceptions amongst residents centre around drinking, lack of cleanliness, rowdiness and empty buildings and retail units.

Non-Visitors

There are mixed perceptions of NewcastleGateshead by those who have never visited before. For many, when they think of Newcastle, they picture a destination that is **friendly, welcoming, vibrant, sporty, and lively**. In terms of the more negative perceptions, some non-visitors imagine it **as industrial, rundown, and cold**. When asked what Newcastle is known for, many non-visitors said football, the nightlife, brown ale, and an industrial heritage.

When asked why they haven't visited yet, most non-visitors cited either a **lack of awareness** of things to do in Newcastle, or they felt like **there isn't enough to do** to warrant a visit. There are still some outdated perceptions of Newcastle from those who haven't visited. For example, from the **26% who stated they are not interested in visiting Newcastle in future**, they said the main reasons are that Newcastle is only known for its drinking culture, they imagine the city to be rundown, it only caters to young people and students, and that it is a typical deprived, post-industrial northern city that is trying to promote itself as something it is not.

NewcastleGateshead Visitor Survey

Introduction

Across the summer of 2022, 400 visitor surveys were conducted in Newcastle and Gateshead. For qualification purposes visitors had to be either staying overnight or on a day trip outside of their normal routine which exceeded 3 hours.

The interviews were conducted by Market Research Society trained and accredited researchers on E-tablets, gathering a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

Visitor Profiles

- The majority of Newcastle's **out-of-region** visitors come from **Yorkshire, the North West, and the West Midlands**.
- Most international visitors come from Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, and the United States.
- Just over a 1/3rd of those interviewed were visiting with their partner only.
- Day visitors spent an average of **5 hours** in the city on their trip.
- Over **62% of visitors drove** to the city, 16% got the train, 14% got the metro. In terms of once they were in the city, most walked, although over a third used the metro to get around the city. Interestingly 3% used Neuron E-Scooters.
- 27% of visitors used **NewcastleGateshead.com** to access visitor information.

Visitor Perceptions

- Visitors were asked what three words they would use to describe Newcastle. The most common words used were **friendly, fun, busy, and great**. In terms of negative words, **loud/noisy** were the most mentioned.

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- We investigated visitor perceptions further via an online survey (more details on the perceptions survey are below). Generally speaking, visitors to NewcastleGateshead are the **strongest advocates** of the destination. They frequently provided more positive feedback than the two other groups (residents and non-visitors). For example, 95% of visitors to the area agree that it is an ambitious place (only 81% of residents agree with this description). Other descriptions visitors are more positive about include rundown (14% vs 31%), prosperous (86% vs 53%), elegant (85% vs 70%) and dirty (15% vs 43%).
- Perceptions survey respondents were asked to think about which British cities provide 20 different key aspects required for an enjoyable city break e.g. ease of getting there / around, value for money, excellent choice of accommodation and interesting places to explore. With people from outside North East England who had visited Newcastle, the city did very well against the competitor set of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow, Liverpool and Edinburgh, being selected more often than any of the other cities for all aspects except for stunning architecture, 5* or luxury accommodation, places of cultural / historic interest to see, a romantic break and a relaxing break. For these aspects, Newcastle came second behind Edinburgh.

Visitor Satisfaction

- When asked to rate their visit to NewcastleGateshead out of 10, **46% gave it a 10/10**. No one gave their visit less than a 7/10.
- 99% of those interviewed said they would visit NewcastleGateshead again, and **99% would recommend NewcastleGateshead** to a friend as a daytrip/city break destination.
- Visitors were asked what they liked best about Newcastle. The most common responses centred on **how friendly the locals are**, the quality and variety of food and drink offer, the architecture, **the proximity to coast and countryside**, and the fact the city is compact with lots to do in quite a small area. Some examples of feedback from visitors include:
 - 'I love how everything is so close and the food choices.'
 - 'The people and food and amount of things to see and do.'
 - 'New and old architecture seems to work better than other cities.'
 - 'The people and atmosphere.'
- In terms of what visitors didn't like, or what they would like to see improved, they mentioned **improvements to public transport** with metros and buses running later, **cleaner/tidier spaces in the city centre**, and if possible better advertising of what's on for families. Comments included:
 - 'Later metros.'
 - 'Rubbish. Invest in run down areas in city centre.'
 - 'More bins as it's got a lot of litter.'
 - 'Better advertising of what's on for families.'
- Visitors were also asked what attractions/things to do they think are missing from Newcastle. There were a number of suggestions and they mainly

focused on **adventure/outdoor activities** such as bike trails, indoor ski slopes, and watersports. There was also a demand for more events for families with young children. Comments included:

- 'More outdoor activity centres and bike trails.'
- 'More inner city activities for families.'
- 'More events specifically for kids.'
- 'More children's street activities.'
- 'Water sports centre or free outdoor events.'
- 'Indoor ski slope like xscape.'

Visitor Spend

- An average day visitor to NewcastleGateshead spends £58.61 on their trip.
- The average overnight visitor to NewcastleGateshead staying in paid for accommodation spends £300.38.

NewcastleGateshead Resident Perceptions Research

Introduction

NGI carried out an online survey to residents of the North East (including residents of Newcastle and Gateshead) to get an understanding of their views on the destination. The survey received over 520 responses.

Resident Perceptions

Residents were very agreeable with describing the city as lively, friendly, welcoming and fun. 94% of residents believe Newcastle has a great atmosphere and 91% find the city beautiful. It should be noted that there is a greater consciousness of the cleanliness of the area by residents compared to non-residents.

- 43% of residents agreed that Newcastle is dirty, 44% agreed that the city is deprived, and 62% would describe the city as rowdy.

Resident Satisfaction

The vast majority of residents appreciate Newcastle as a great base from which to access nearby coast and countryside and that the city has character and history. 21% disagree that Newcastle is accessible to people with disabilities and 18% disagree that there is plenty to do in the city for children and young people on a break with their families. 17% disagree that there are lots of exciting new developments happening in Newcastle. Reasons included Newcastle's reputation as a drinking city, rowdiness, and lack of family-based activities. Responses included:

- "It's a city where people go to drink. It's dreadful for shopping as far too much is in the Metro centre and the city centre is becoming more and more of a ghost town as shops leave"
- "Proposed Quayside developments of residential property are uninspiring and ugly. Rowdiness on quayside means not an area for families"
- "I wouldn't take my kids on a trip to Newcastle. Not that much to do for a family in the city centre."

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One respondent also disagreed with Newcastle being an accessible destination for a couple reasons:

- “As a very hill-heavy city, I can imagine it’d be quite hard to get around in a wheelchair. For other disabilities, such as Crohn’s, IBS or IBD, it’s a bit of a nightmare to be completely honest, due to the vast lack of public toilets.”

Furthermore, residents highly rated NewcastleGateshead for having a vibrant nightlife with a wide evening activity offer. Residents that rated Newcastle poorly further explained that Newcastle’s fine dining presence was limited, as well as the fact that nightlife is a dominant aspect of the city. Residents also noted a lack of variety in things to do or places to shop as well as cleanliness issues within the city.

- “The city nightlife is based on drink not fine dining”
- “restricted choice”
- “I am not aware of Michelin starred places in Newcastle - and local choice not inspiring”
- “Streets are cramped. Buses/ traffic everywhere. Limited sports activities and few festivals/ big events. All very piecemeal-next to nothing for older people and limited for teens.”
- “Please see previous comment, a real lack of big retail names, high end designers and independents which you get in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester etc.”
- “It has become very dirty in centre of town with many beggars, chewing gum lining Northumberland Street, too many fast food joints, empty buildings, an air of underlying poverty.”

Other comments from residents

- “The city is unpleasant to be in. Drunkenness, drug use, begging are hard to escape in the centre and the quayside”
- “There is very little in the form of entertainment for younger children. The only thing that Newcastle really has is has and pubs. The historic side of Newcastle, which I often walk with my family, is often overshadowed.”
- Several residents explained they found it difficult to access information on what Newcastle has to offer.
 - “It’s really difficult to find out what’s on- if anything from tourist info or webpages of Ncle & Gateshead”
 - “I live there - I don’t really see a lot of attractions for a city break”

NewcastleGateshead Non-Visitor Perceptions Research

Introduction

NGI carried out an online survey to 640 consumers from the UK who have never visited Newcastle, or if they have, they haven’t visited in at least 7 years or more. This research was conducted to understand perceptions of Newcastle as a city break destination for UK consumers.

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General Perceptions from Non-Visitors

- The most popular words to describe Newcastle from people who have never visited the city included welcoming, friendly, lively, sporty, vibrant, historical, cold, and industrial.
- When asked what Newcastle is known for, many respondents said **football, the nightlife, brown ale, and an industrial heritage.**
- 45% of non-visitors agreed that Newcastle is the sort of place that would appeal to them for a city break.
- 48% agreed that Newcastle is a great place to go for a weekend away with their partner/spouse.
- **49% of non-visitors** said they are either **interested or very interested in visiting NewcastleGateshead in future** – so there is a sizeable audience there that can be convinced to visit in future with the correct marketing and prompts.

Barriers to Visiting

- **26%** said they are **not very interested or not at all interested in visiting Newcastle in the future.** In order to understand barriers to visiting, we asked why they are not interested, the main reasons include:
 - **Over a third said they don't think there is enough to do in the city.** 28% cited a lack of awareness on what there is to do in Newcastle. 28% mentioned that it was expensive for them to get to Newcastle.
 - In terms of other reasons, people said Newcastle is known only for drinking, they imagine the city to be rundown, it only caters to young people, and it is a **typical deprived, post-industrial northern city:**
 - 'I just would not like to visit Newcastle there is a big drinking culture.'
 - 'I have never been to Newcastle but my perception is that the place is slightly run down and tired.'
 - 'I don't have a very positive impression of Newcastle it seems to me a deprived Northern English city.'
 - 'Media coverage suggests Newcastle is dominated by football drunken youths/students and is trying to cast itself as something it probably isn't ie somewhere for a cultural city break.'
 - 'I have never been there but my impression of the place is that it's industrial dirty and deprived.'
 - 'I don't know enough about what's on offer in Newcastle but imagine it to be a run down industrial city'
 - 'It still seems to be playing catch up with other cities and is some way behind.'