

May Fair Survey 2016 Report

The online survey of business views of the May Fair 2016 was conducted during the event and remained open until 31st May 2016.

A total of 65 responses was received, but when adjusted for test and incomplete responses this reduced to 62. In addition, there were 4 firms submitting 2 or more responses, further reducing the sample size to 55 unique responses. Given the population size of approx. 600 (Businesses receiving notification of the survey), this represents an error margin of approx. 17% at a confidence level of 99%. This is the first year of the survey, so the statistics should be treated with some caution, but the intention is to repeat the survey next year and through earlier notification achieve a higher response rate.

The summary results are as follows:

Businesses responding represented a broad spectrum of types from retail and hospitality to professional and financial. Some have been in Hereford for many years and others are relatively or very recent additions. However, the sub-groups are too small to be of use for cross-tab analysis. (All results have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage point; most respondents answered all the questions, but a few were omitted by a small number of respondents.)

How beneficial do you think the May Fair is to your business?

38% said it was very detrimental
24% said quite detrimental
30% neither good nor bad
5% quite beneficial
3% very beneficial

When the Fair is operating, do you see a change in your turnover?

42% saw a large decrease
27% saw a moderate decrease
21% no change
8% moderate increase
2% large increase

Thirty six respondents were prepared to share the percentage change in their turnover.

Five reported an increase of between 1% and 20%
Thirty-one reported a decrease. Of these 2 closed and so saw a 100% reduction. Of those who remained open the decrease in turnover ranged from 90% to 5%, with an average decrease across those reporting figures of 36%.

How does the Fair affect footfall to your business?

44% saw a large decrease
32% a moderate decrease
13% no change
10% a moderate increase
2% a large increase

Respondents were then asked whether or not they agreed with a number of statements about the Fair and trade:

- 82% felt that the Fair does not bring extra shoppers to the city. With only 14% thinking it does.
- There was a range of opinion about whether the Fair attracts different shoppers. 46% think it does, 20% weren't sure and 33% think there is no change.
- We asked whether fair goers like to buy refreshments from stalls or from regular cafes and pubs. 35% thought they buy from the stalls, whilst 54% felt that fair-goers won't go into regular premises but buy from the Fair.
- 83% of respondents felt that the Fair discourages their normal shoppers from coming into town, with 71% feeling that the road closures are a strong contributor to this.
- We asked whether fair-goers are in a mood to shop while at the Fair. 87% thought they weren't and a similar number puts other shoppers off too.
- 30% were concerned that their businesses had become invisible to shoppers because of a stall or ride right outside their shop window.

How does the day-to-day operation of the Fair affect your business

Respondents were on the whole much more positive about the practical logistics related to setting up the fair with most (90%) saying it caused them little or no problem.

Similarly, litter and waste were not a major issue for most businesses, only 9% had a problem with this. Antisocial behaviour was cited by 16% as a serious issue and by 48% as slightly problematic and congestion was important to 22% and a slight problem to a further 61%, but this is difficult to attribute directly to the Fair.

Noise during the event was particularly problematic for 24%, mainly professional and businesses involved in music and smells from stalls caused a major issue for 11% of respondents.

30-40% of respondents felt that all of these items caused some problem, but that it was slight.

Respondents were then asked whether they felt the Fair is good for Hereford, even if not for their Business directly.

Most feel that the Fair is not good for business generally. 40% feel it is very detrimental and a further 29% feel it is somewhat detrimental.

When asked slightly differently about the general benefits for the city, there was a slightly more positive response, with only 58% feeling that it is negative.

We asked whether businesses like the Fair as it is. 45% don't and disagreed with this and a further 26% disagreed slightly.

46% like the Fair, but think it is just too big for the city streets. A similar percentage thinks that the individual rides and stalls are too big as opposed to the Fair as a whole. 77% feel that the Fair doesn't leave shoppers enough room to move around the city.

Opinion was fairly evenly split on whether the Fair's traditions are important to maintain (38% for and 45% against), but 69% feel that it is good for youngsters.

89% of respondents feel that the Fair attracts leisure users, but not shoppers, and 52% said it brings life and colour to the city.

16% said that they close their business when the Fair comes to town.

Finally we asked what business respondents feel should happen to the Fair in the future.

- 17% feel that there should be no change, but 53% feel that change is needed.
- 22% want the Fair to stay in the city centre but to reduce in size.

- 42% would be happy with the fair staying in the city centre if it was smaller and more traditional with smaller, old-fashioned rides.
- Most however want the Fair to be part of Hereford, but move to another location such as the racecourse or King George V Playing Fields. 49% were strongly in favour of this and a further 22% agreed to some extent.
- 19% feel strongly and a further 13% feel to some extent that the Fair should now be scrapped, but on this question 31% were undecided and 35% were definitely against this.