

# The Place Theatre at Oakengates

## Survey Report

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### Introduction

Telford & Wrekin Council recently announced a £28m package of investment into a wide range of projects, including funding to refurbish The Place Theatre at Oakengates.

In order to inform and develop future plans for the theatre, the views of residents and visitors aged 16 and over were collected via a survey conducted between 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The survey was available to those who already used the theatre and those who did not. This report presents the main findings from that survey.

## Executive Summary

- 1,590 people responded to the survey between 24<sup>th</sup> May and 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022.
- Three quarters of respondents were resident in the borough. Responses were received from all 30 of the borough's wards, of those residents that provided valid postcode details, 8% were from Oakengates & Ketley Bank.
- 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for Telford and Wrekin to have a theatre/performance venue.
- 1 in 10 respondents said they 'rarely/never' visited the theatre in Oakengates. 29% of respondents gave the reasoning; 'I can't afford to go to the theatre', 'I don't know what's on at The Place Theatre' and 'The Place Theatre doesn't have the type of shows on that I want to go to'.
- Of those who did visit The Place, 65% visited two or three times a year.
- The majority of respondents felt positively about the outside of the theatre, finding the entrance easily and the space outside clean and well maintained. The majority also agreed the bar staff were helpful and polite, the toilets were clean and well maintained and the lighting and sound of the shows was good. Fewer respondents agreed that the cost of drinks/snacks was value for money, the seating in the auditorium was comfy and there were enough toilets.
- Since The Place Theatre re-opened in July 2021, 43% said they had been to see Comedy shows, 38% Tribute music acts and 35% Pantomime shows. 20 respondents said that they had not been back since the re-opening. When asked more generally about visiting, 50% of the respondents stated that they are most likely to see Comedy or Musical shows at the theatre. 32% said Pantomimes.
- 97% of respondents said they would recommend The Place Theatre to friends or family.
- When asked to provide one thing that could be improved at The Place Theatre, key themes were; The Bar Area, Seating and Increased quality/variety of acts, shows and performances.
- 37% of respondents said The Place Theatre was their most visited theatre / performance venue. The top reasons for visiting were 'Free Parking' (49%)

and Easier Access (40%).

- Of those that had visited another theatre/performance venue aside from The Place, 67% visited Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury and just over half Wolverhampton Grand Theatre. The top reasons for visiting another theatre were 'Better choice of shows that I enjoy' (60%) and 'Bigger named shows' (43%).
- Thinking about before and after a theatre show, 64% stated they like to have a drink. 70% said that if there was a wider choice of things to do near The Place theatre before or after shows they would be more likely to visit.
- When asked about other arts and cultural activities that should be provided at The Place Theatre, just under half selected; Amateur dramatic companies of all ages, Youth Theatre and Gallery space for local artists to exhibit their work.

## Arts & Culture in Telford and Wrekin

The majority of respondents felt it was important to have a theatre/ performance venue in the area, and that arts and cultural activities benefit the local community.

99% agreed it was important for Telford and Wrekin to have a theatre / performance venue, 91% of which strongly agreed. 7 respondents strongly disagreed.

97% agreed that taking part in arts and cultural activities benefits the local community, 74% of which strongly agreed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is important for the Telford & Wrekin area to have a theatre/performance venue?

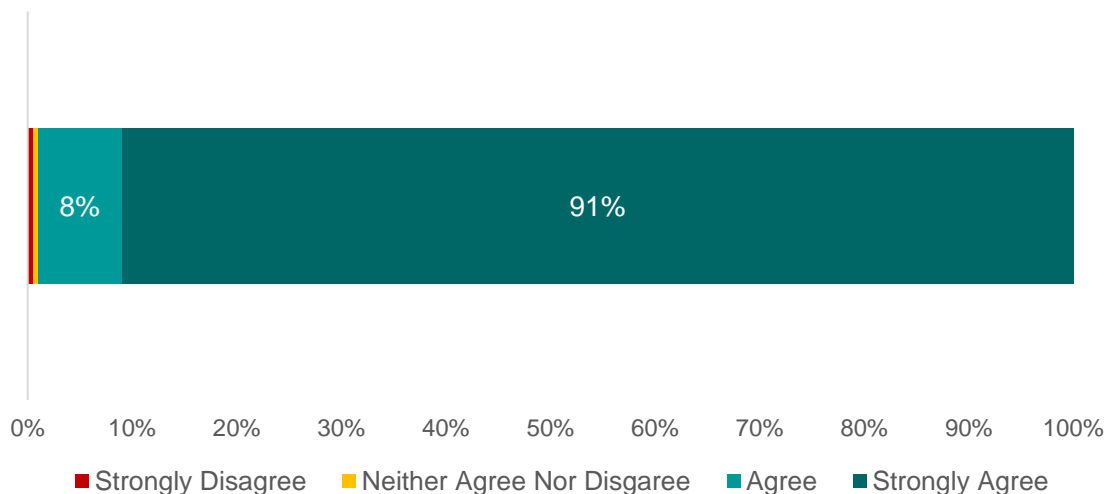


Figure 1: Q1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is important for the Telford & Wrekin area to have a theatre/performance venue? Answer summary.

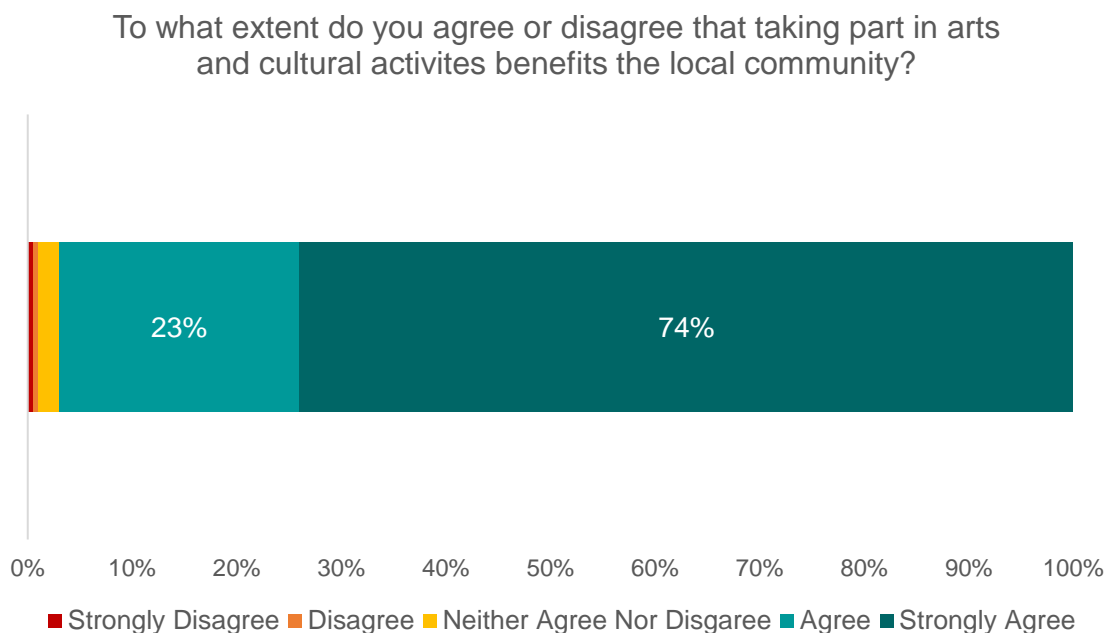


Figure 2: Q2 To what extent do you agree or disagree taking part in arts and cultural activities benefits the local community? Answer summary.

## Respondents who 'Rarely/Never' visit The Place Theatre

1 in 10 respondents said they rarely/never visited the theatre at Oakengates. 65% of these respondents were Telford & Wrekin residents, 32% were from out of borough and 3% did not provide a valid postcode. Of those that were resident and provided a valid postcode, 10% were from Oakengates & Ketley Bank, 8% from Ketley & Overdale and a further 8% from Madeley & Sutton Hill.

Of those that provided their age, 65% were aged 35 to 64, 20% were 65+ and 11% were under 35.

When asked why they rarely visited, 29% of respondents gave the answers;

- I can't afford to go to the theatre,
- I don't know what's on at The Place Theatre,
- The Place Theatre doesn't have the type of shows on that I want to go to.

One person stated that they didn't enjoy going to the theatre.

Why do you rarely/never visit The Place Theatre at Oakengates? (please tick all that apply)

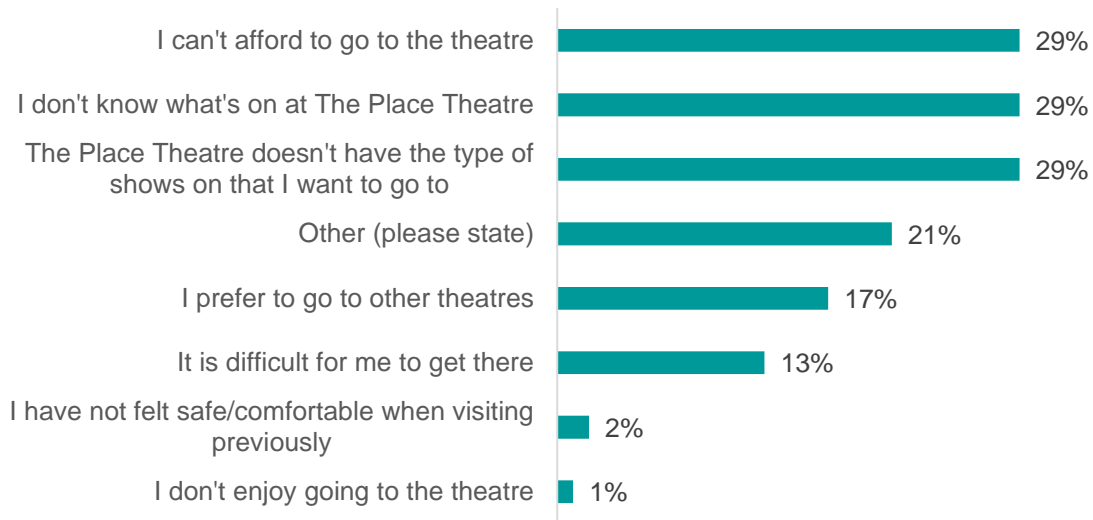


Figure 3: Q4 Why do you rarely/never visit The Place Theatre at Oakengates? Answer summary.

For Telford and Wrekin residents, 'The Place Theatre doesn't have the type of shows on that I want to go to' was the main reason for rarely/never visiting (36%).

Why do you rarely/never visit The Place Theatre at Oakengates? (please tick all that apply) - Telford and Wrekin Residents

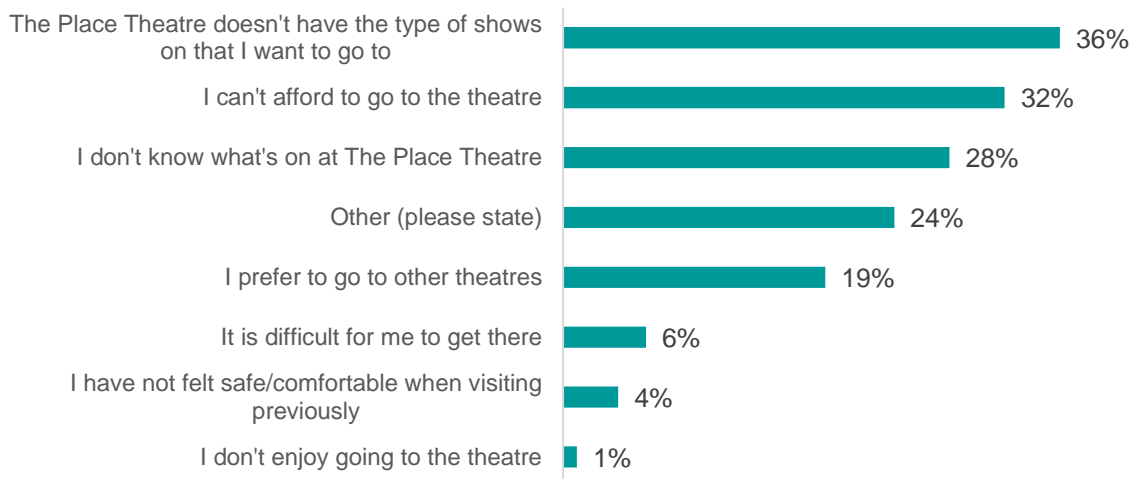


Figure 4: Q4 Why do you rarely/never visit The Place Theatre at Oakengates? Answer summary T&W residents.

Other reasons given for not visiting can be summarised as; 'Deterred by location or theatre itself' (24%), 'Unaware of Theatre's existence' (18%) and 'Covid-19 limitations/reluctance' (16%).

When asked what would encourage them to visit The Place Theatre more, common themes reflect the responses above:

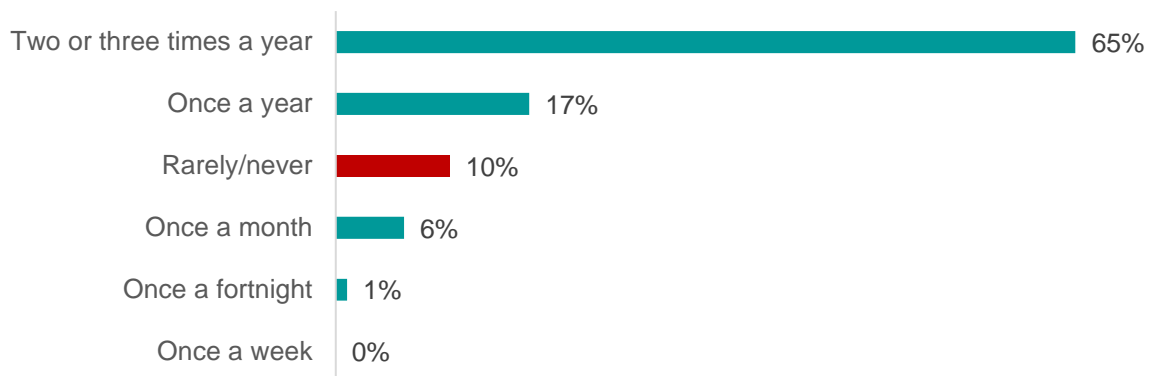
- Greater variation of performances and of a higher quality (41% mentioned this).
- If it was more affordable (23% mentioned this).
- Greater awareness and advertising (20% mentioned this).

## Respondents who visit The Place Theatre

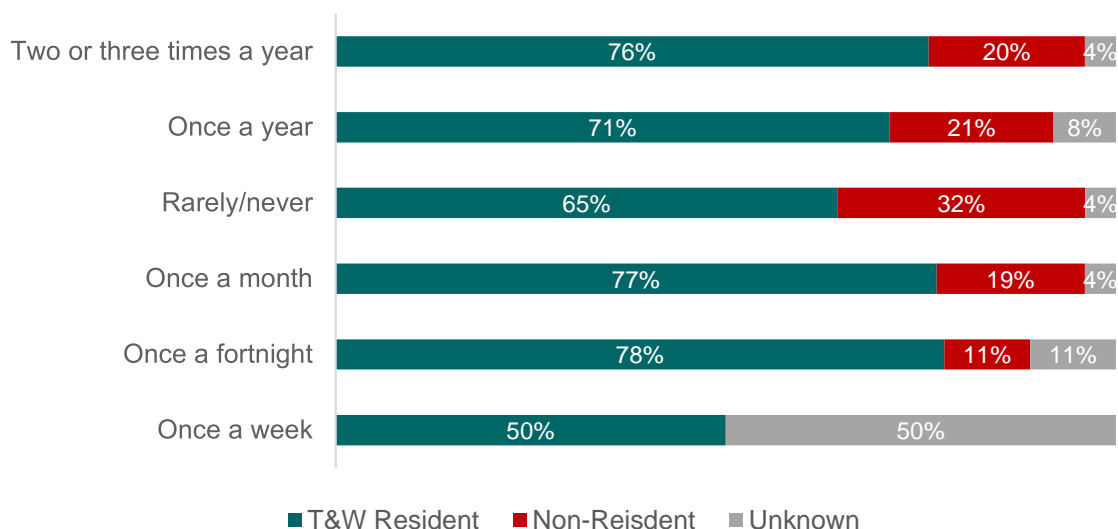
65% of respondents said they visited The Place Theatre two or three times a year, consistent with the responder profile, three quarters were Telford and Wrekin residents. 17% said they visited once a year and 6% once a month.

Generally speaking, of those visiting more regularly (once a month, once a fortnight) a greater proportion were residents, note only 4 respondents stated they visited weekly.

How often do you visit The Place Theatre at Oakengates?



How often do you visit The Place Theatre at Oakengates?  
Resident Breakdown



Figures 5 & 6, Q3 How often do you visit The Place Theatre at Oakengates? Answer summary and residence split.

## Outside the Theatre

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:

- The public open space outside the theatre was clean and well maintained (76%),
- The outside of the theatre was well lit (76%),
- The area around the theatre felt safe (65%),
- The theatre looked inviting from the outside (62%).

Approximately 1 in 5 felt neutral about 'The theatre looked inviting from the outside' and 'The area around the theatre felt safe'.

79% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the entrance was difficult to find.

5% did not know if the outside of the theatre was well lit.

Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

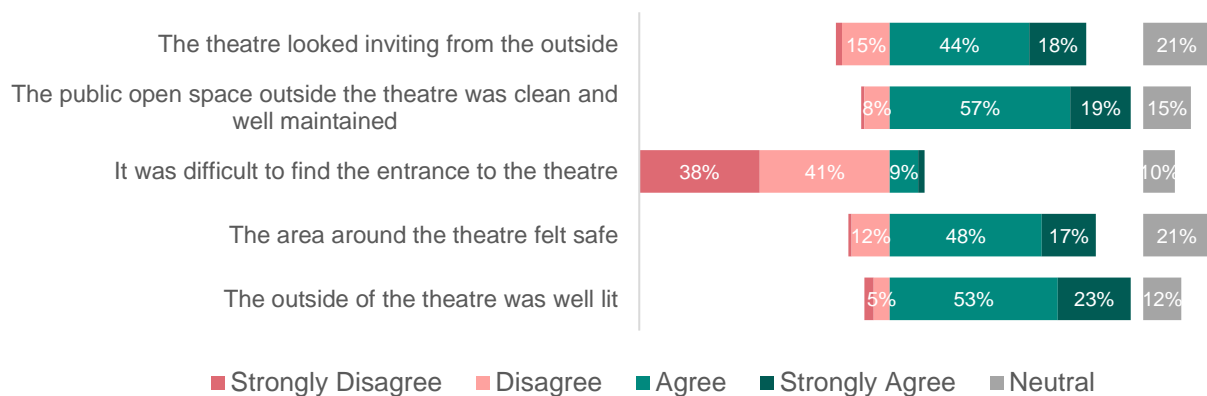


Figure 7: Q6 Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Answer summary.

## The Bar Area

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:

- The bar staff were helpful and polite (81%),
- The bar area was clean and well maintained (79%)

Though opinions were more split, respondents generally agreed or strongly agreed that:

- The cost of the drinks/snacks was value for money (44%)
- I liked the ambience/atmosphere in the bar area (60%)
- There was a good choice of drinks/snacks available (52%)

1 in 5 felt neutral about the choice of drinks/snacks available and a third felt neutral about their value for money.

11% did not know if there was a good choice of drinks/snacks available, 9% did not know if the cost of the drinks/snacks was good value for money and 8% did not know if they got served quickly at the bar.

Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

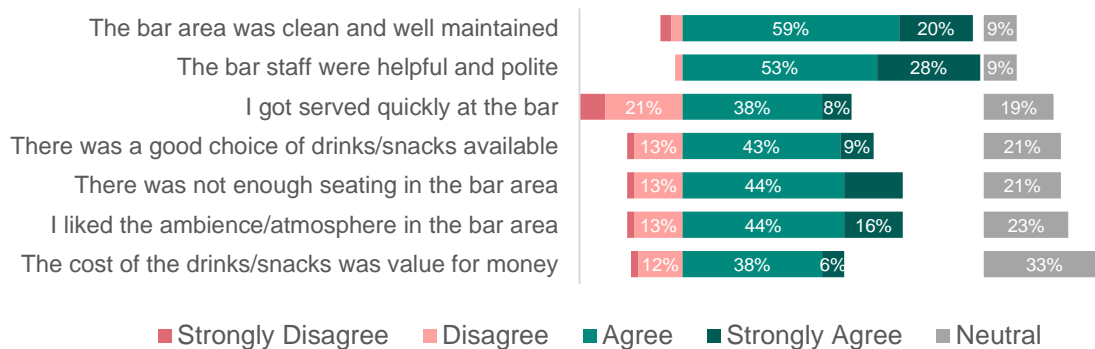


Figure 8: Q7, Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Answer summary.

### The Toilets

83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the toilets were clean and well maintained.

1 in 4 felt neutral about the number of toilets, though 41% agreed or strongly agreed that there were not enough.

85% of those that strongly agreed identified as female. 27% were aged 45 to 54 and 26% aged 55 to 64.

Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

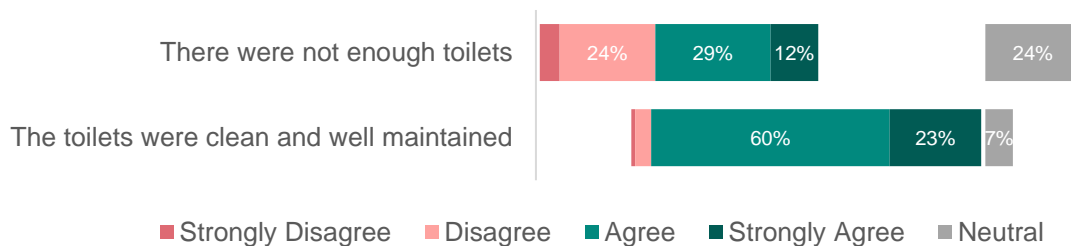


Figure 9: Q8, Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Answer summary.



## The Auditorium

The majority of respondents felt positive about the auditorium.

They agreed or strongly agreed that:

- The auditorium was clean and well maintained (75%),
- The lighting of the show was good and I could see clearly from my seat (94%),
- The sound of the show was good and I could hear clearly from my seat (92%),
- The ambience/atmosphere in the auditorium was positive/exciting (86%)

83% felt they had a good view of the stage from their seat.

85% felt it was not difficult to find their seat in the auditorium.

Two thirds (66%) agreed or strongly agreed that the seating in the auditorium was comfortable and 14% felt neutral about this.

Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

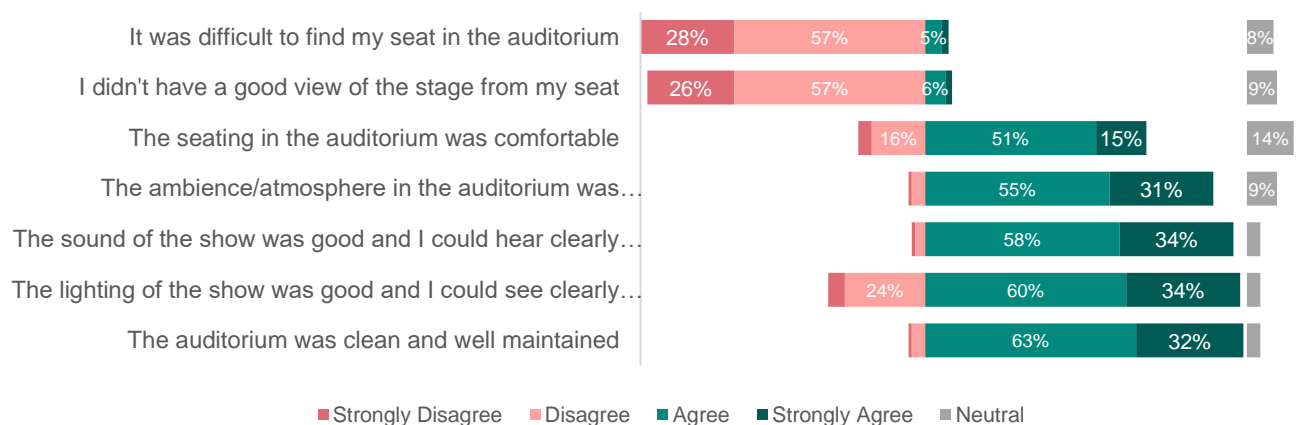


Figure 8: Q9, Thinking about the last time you visited The Place Theatre, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Answer summary.

91% stated that the number of people in the audience last time they visited was "About right".

## Visits since re-opening (July 2021)

Since The Place Theatre re-opened in July 2021, 43% said they had been to see Comedy shows, 38% tribute music acts and 35% Pantomime shows. 20 respondents said that they had not been back since the re-opening.

Thinking about your visits to The Place Theatre since it re-opened in July 2021, which of the following type of shows did you see? (please tick all that apply)

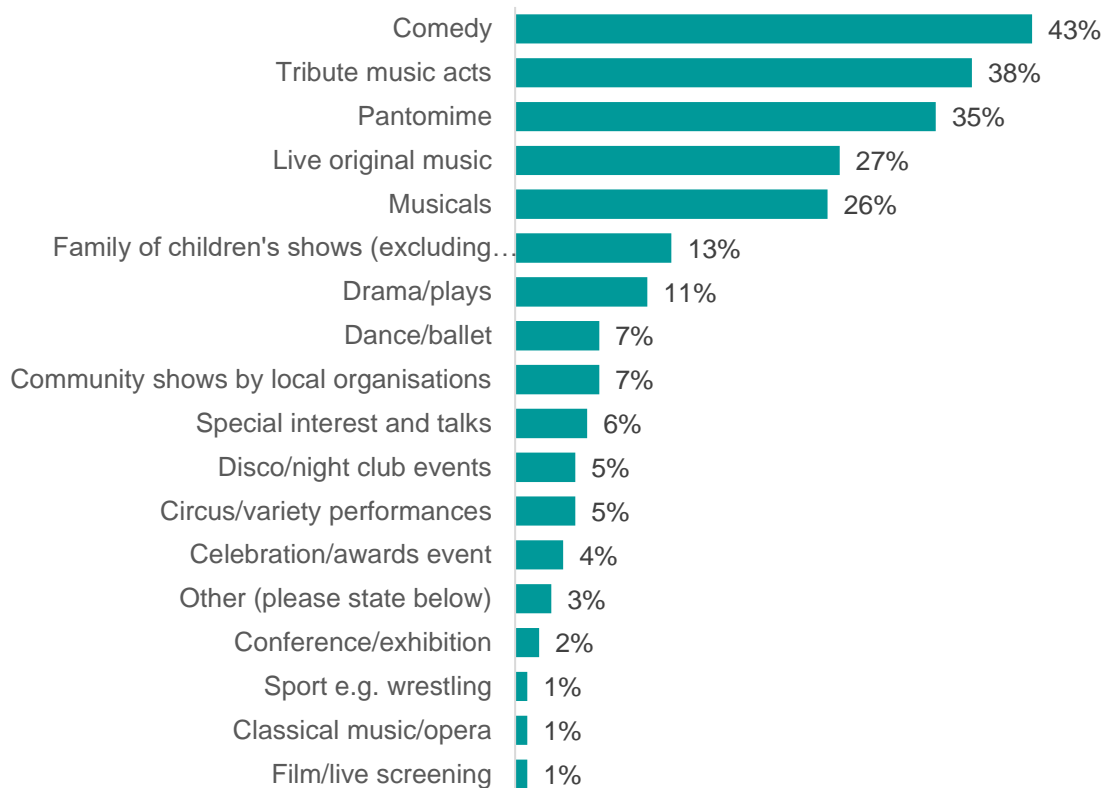


Figure 9: Q11, Thinking about your visits to The Place Theatre since it re-opened in July 2021, which of the following type of shows did you see? Answer summary.

## Recommendations and Improvements

97% of respondents said they would recommend The Place Theatre to friends or family.

Respondents were also asked “What one thing do you think could be improved at The Place theatre?”. The main themes to come from this question were:

- The Bar Area (24% mentioned this) – including the seating, the area (increase size / reduce crowding) and better service,
- Seating (23% mentioned this) - in both the bar and the auditorium. The respondents primarily talked about increasing comfort and legroom,
- Increased quality/variety of acts, shows and performances. (13% mentioned this).

Also frequently mentioned were; The Toilets (10%), The Entrance (4%), The Outside (4%), “Creating a Theatre feel” (3%) and Increased advertisement (3%).

8% stated that they wouldn’t change anything about The Place.

## Theatres and Performance Venues (in the last 3 years)

### Most Visited

When asked which theatre/performance venue have you visited most often in the last 3 years? 37% said The Place Theatre, Oakengates (82% of these were Telford and Wrekin residents). This was followed by 23% visiting the Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury and 12% Wolverhampton Grand Theatre.

Overall the top reasons given for choosing a particular venue were 'Better choice of shows that I enjoy' (49%), followed by 'Bigger named shows' (31%) and Free parking (23%).

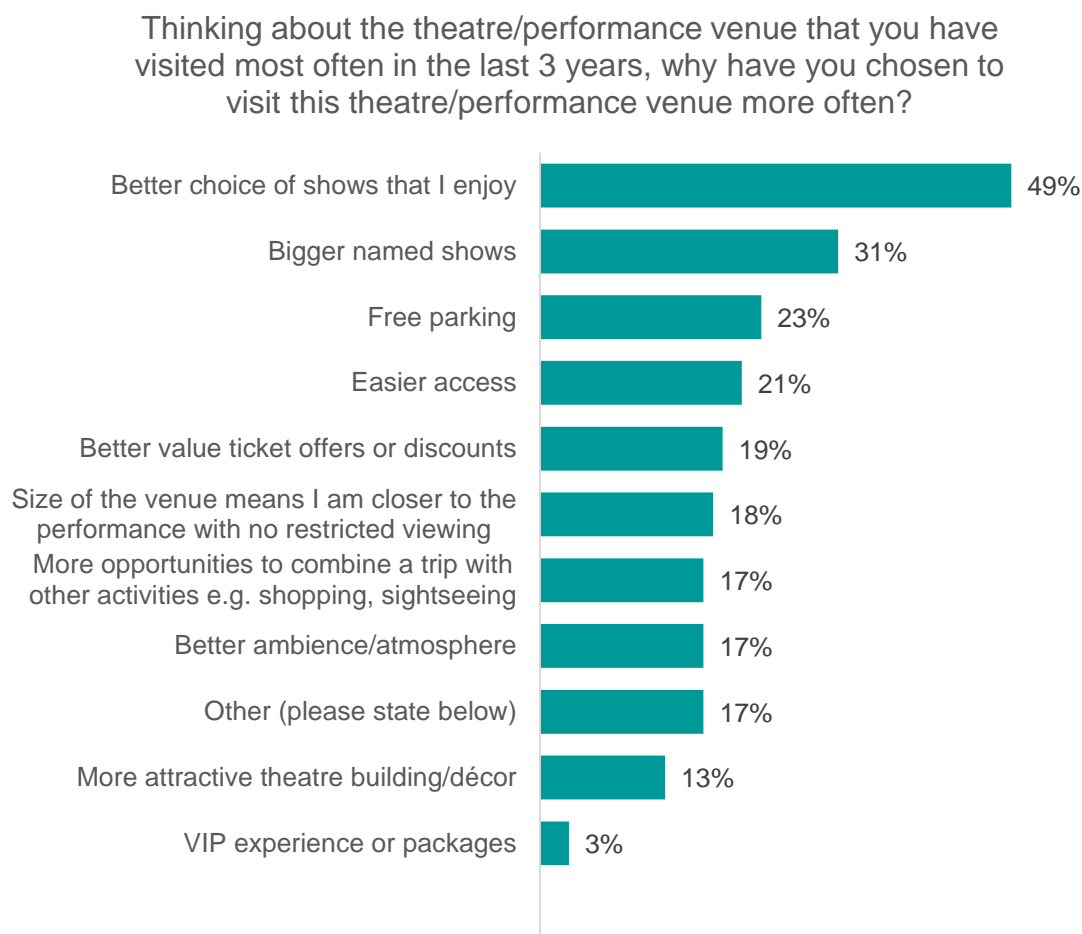


Figure 10: Q17, thinking about the theatre/performance venue that you have visited most often in the last 3 years, why have you chosen to visit this theatre/performance venue more often? Answer summary.

Where the respondent chose 'Other' the main reason given was 'Location' i.e., the venue was the closest to home or easiest to get to (48% of responses mentioned this).

Considering those who visited The Place most often, 'Free parking' was the main reason given for visiting (49%).

Thinking about the theatre/performance venue that you have visited most often in the last 3 years, why have you chosen to visit this theatre/performance venue more often? - The Place Theatre

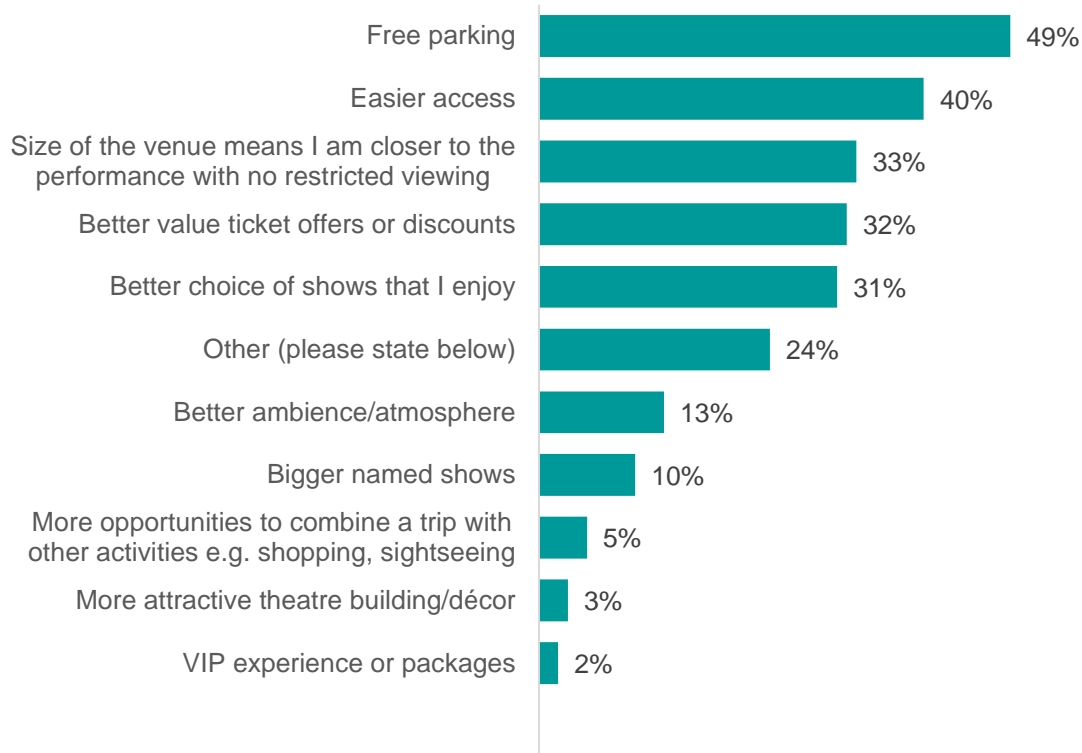


Figure 11: Q17, thinking about the theatre/performance venue that you have visited most often in the last 3 years, why have you chosen to visit this theatre/performance venue more often? Answer summary, The Place Theatre Oakengates.

Considering those who visited another theatre/performance venue most often, 'Better choice of shows that I enjoy' was the main reason given for visiting (60%).

Thinking about the theatre/performance venue that you have visited most often in the last 3 years, why have you chosen to visit this theatre/performance venue more often? - All Other Theatres

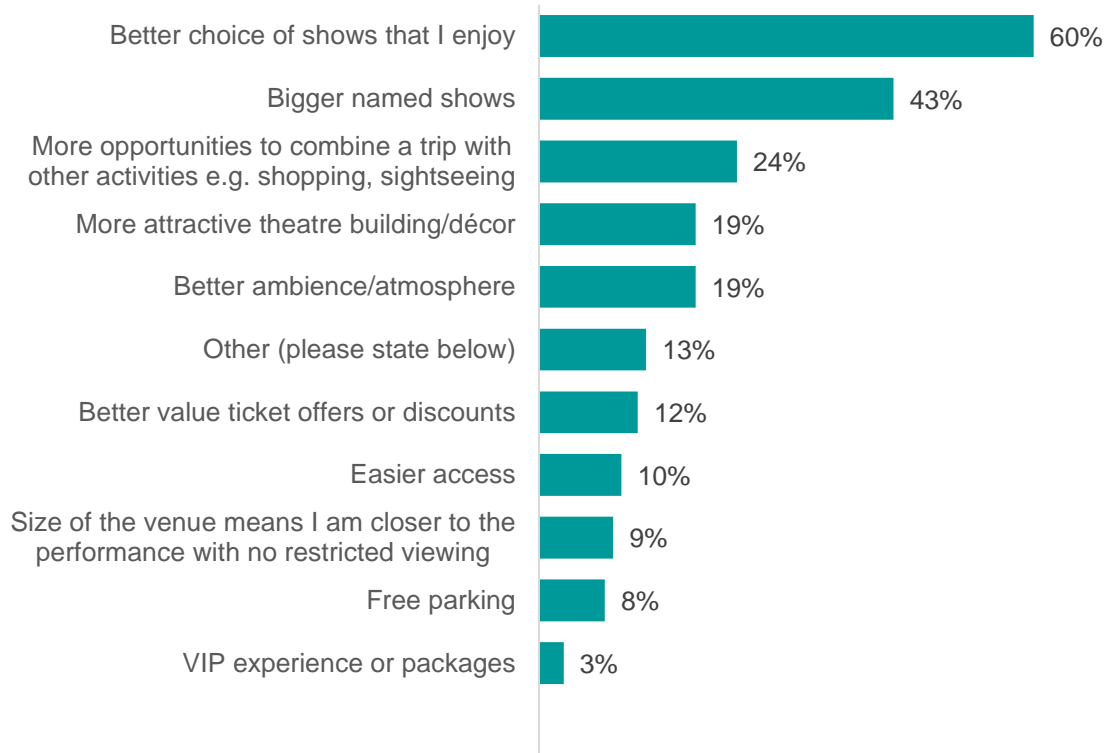


Figure 12: Q17, thinking about the theatre/performance venue that you have visited most often in the last 3 years, why have you chosen to visit this theatre/performance venue more often? Answer summary, All Other Theatres.

### Other Visits

80% of people had visited other theatres/performance venues in the last 3 years, aside from The Place Theatre. 100% of people who had visited The Place theatre had visited at least one other too.

67% had visited the Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury and just over half Wolverhampton Grand Theatre.

Which other theatre/performance venues have you visited in the last 3 years? (please tick all that apply)

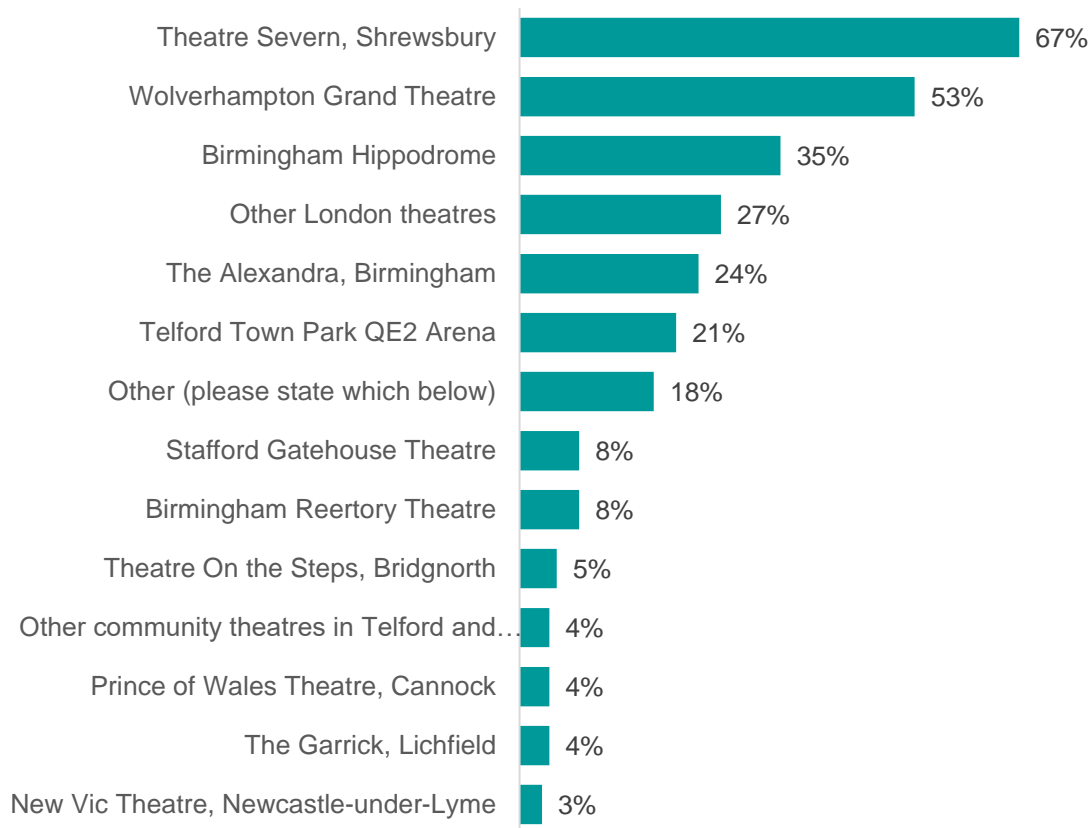


Figure 11: Q15, which other theatre/performance venues have you visited in the last 3 years? Answer summary.

18% of respondents stated they had visited other venues, not listed. These primarily comprised of other Birmingham venues (Resorts World, O2 Academy, Symphony Hall) and venues in Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent.

## Visiting the Theatre

Half of the respondents stated that they are most likely to see Comedy or Musical shows at the theatre. 32% said pantomimes.

The majority of people (64%) stated they like to have a drink before or after their theatre show, this was followed by going for a meal (50%). Conversely, 17% of respondents said they don't do anything before a show.

70% said that if there was a wider choice of things to do near The Place theatre before or after shows they would be more likely to visit.

Which other theatre/performance venues have you visited in the last 3 years? (please tick all that apply)

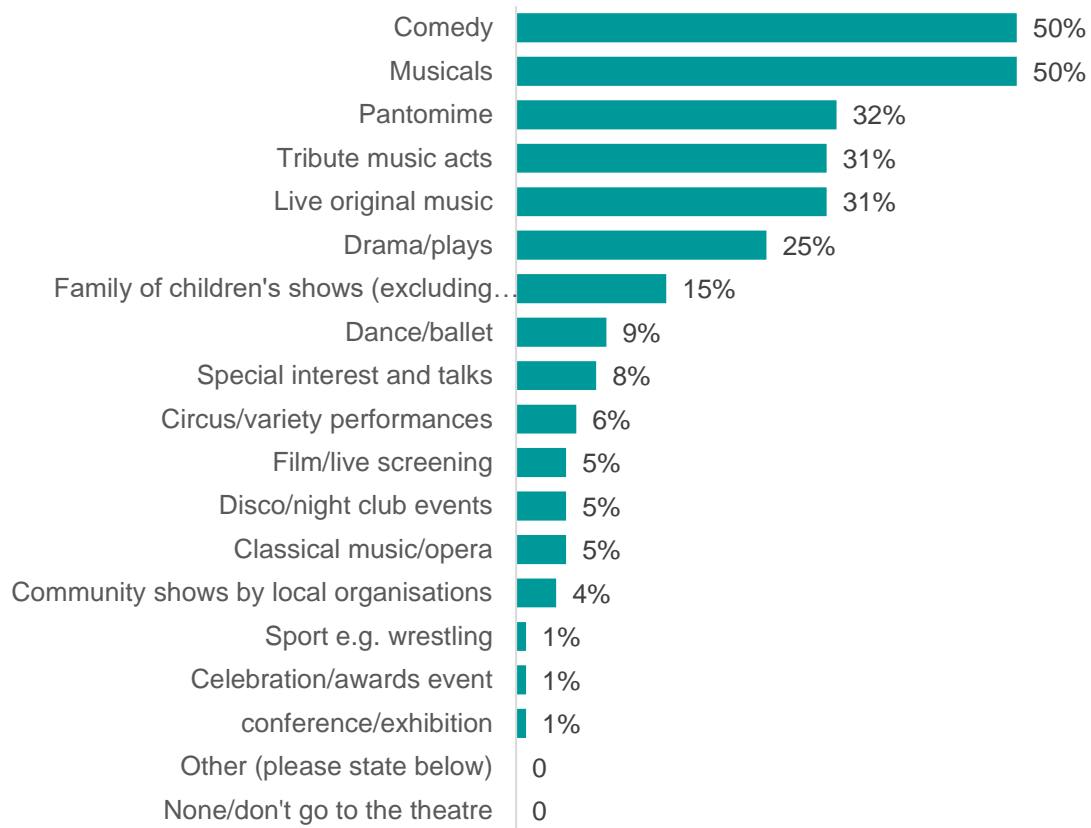


Figure 12: Q18, What type of shows are you most likely to go to at the theatre? Answer summary.

When you visit the theatre, what do you like to do before or after the show? (please tick all that apply)

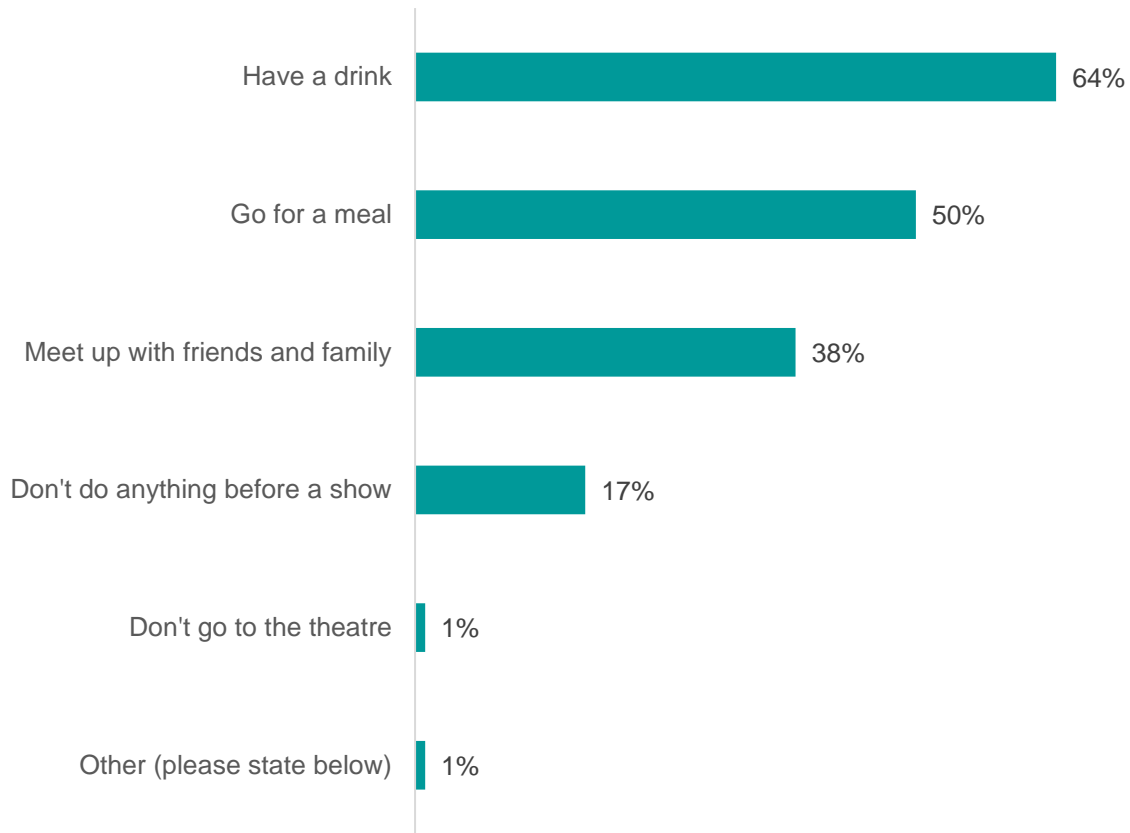


Figure 13: Q19 When you visit the theatre, what do you like to do before or after the show? (please tick all that apply)

Of those who stated they 'rarely/never' visit the theatre, 48% said they were most likely to go and see Musicals, and 44% said both Comedy and Drama/plays. Thinking about before or after a show, 54% said they would go for a meal or have a drink.

## Other Uses for The Place Theatre

When asked about other arts and cultural activities that should be provided at The Place Theatre, just under half selected:

- Amateur dramatic companies of all ages (49%)
- Youth Theatre (48%)
- Gallery space for local artists to exhibit their work (47%)



## Which other arts and cultural activities should be provided at The Place Theatre?

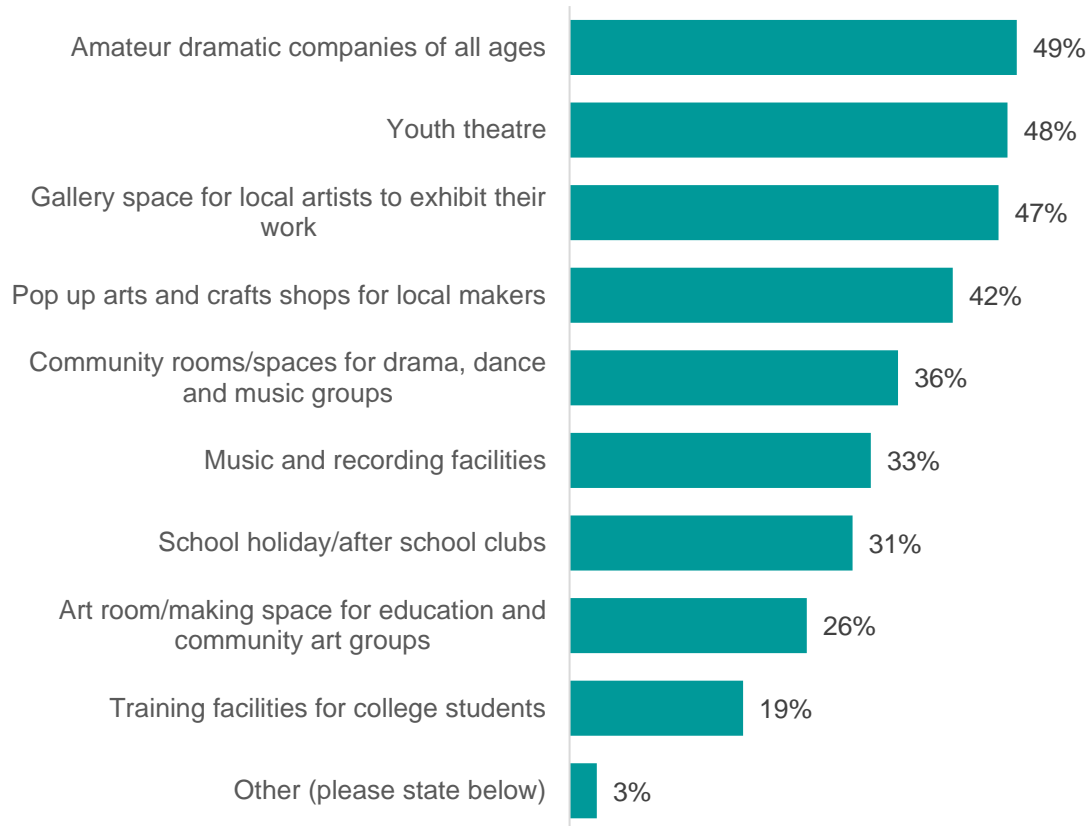


Figure 14: Q21, Which other arts and cultural activities should be provided at The Place Theatre? Answer summary.

## Respondent Profile

- There were 1,590<sup>1</sup> responses to the survey, approximately three quarters of which were Telford and Wrekin residents. There were respondents from all 30 wards in the borough, and of those that provided a valid postcode; 8% were from Oakengates & Ketley Bank, 7% were from Ketley & Overdale and there was 6% each from Priorslee, Hadley & Leegomery, Madeley & Sutton Hill, Horsehay & Lightmoor.
- 75% identified as Female, 24% Male and 1% preferred not to say.
- 94% of respondents were White: English/Welsh/Scottish/ Northern Irish/British, 3% of respondents were from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 70% of respondents were aged between 35 and 64. Age groups 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 had the largest proportion of respondents (25%) followed by those

<sup>1</sup> Not all respondents answered every question.

aged 35 to 44 (20%). 17% of responses came from the 65+ age group and 11% from the Under 35's, (2% preferred not to give their age and there were no respondents from the 16 – 17 age group).

- Approximately 1 in 5 respondents (22%) stated they had a long-standing illness, health problem or disability. 73% did not, and 6% would rather not say. 13% were caring for someone else who has a long-standing illness or disability that limits their daily lives. 84% were not and 3% would rather not say. 57 respondents had caring responsibilities alongside their own illness', health problems and disabilities.
- 46% of respondents were working full-time, 21% were retired and 18% were working part-time. 4% were permanently sick or disabled, a further 4% were looking after the home, 1% were unemployed and available for work, another 1% were in full-time education. 2% were doing something else and 3% would rather not say.