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Research Bulletin

'Trowel and Error': A Public User Needs Survey for Archaeology

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Trowel and Error': a Public User Needs Survey for Archaeology (PUNS2) was funded by Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland and Cadw and took place between 2023 and 2025. It builds a bridge between the initial 1998–99 survey conducted for the PUNS project (Jones et al 2001), which investigated the usage and expectations of archaeological fieldwork publications within the UK archaeological sector, and current practice and expectations. Considering the subsequent expansion of digital practices, social media, online content, platforms such as YouTube and the establishment of archaeological archive repositories, such as the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) and OASIS, the PUNS2 project sought to examine the impact of these developments on the sector and to investigate whether these progressions have equated to greater accessibility of archaeological outputs to the public.

Utilising a mixed methodological approach, including literature reviews, surveys, workshops and interviews, and through the development of an 'audience matrix', the PUNS2 project has generated a considerable amount of data regarding the engagement needs of archaeological audiences and the position of content producers. Alongside feedback from a Critical Friends Group and an internship, the various methods resulted in:

- Over **2,600** survey participants, from both archaeological and non-archaeological backgrounds.
- **27** in-depth interviews with key practitioners, researchers and volunteers in the field
- **16** community workshops (eight in-person, eight online) sessions conducted both virtually and in-person with **290** participants, with extra efforts made to reach those from underrepresented backgrounds.

In total the PUNS2 project has gathered insight from **3,119** participants across the UK. The sheer amount of data received has provided significant insights for the project's recommendations. There remain opportunities for further analysis and comparison between groups, and between different geographies (England, Wales and Scotland, English Regions), which may also shape more devolved approaches to undertaking similar surveys in the future.

Numerous practical recommendations are given at the end of the report (Section 8.1) which offer:

- Ways to mitigate the negative consequences of a 'data first culture' in the archaeology sector, which has been shown to exclude audiences and shrink public benefit opportunities.
- Ideas on how to resolve issues around siloed and dispersed archaeological datasets, considering other key programmes (e.g. TETRARCHs) in the sector.
- Logistical steps towards increasing accessibility and inclusion for our audiences when creating archaeological outputs.
- Ways to consider approaching audiences and evaluating their experiences to understand how archaeology can be of value to wider society.

The findings of the PUNS2 project also emphasise the necessity of ongoing reflection on consultation strategies to better align initial intentions with practical delivery and to recognise the crucial role of stakeholders in the process.

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1   INTRODUCTION

The Public User Needs Survey 2 (PUNS2) project follows on from the original CBA-led Publication User Needs Survey (PUNS), published almost 25 years ago (Jones et al 2001). The original survey examined the use and expectations of archaeological fieldwork publications by the archaeological community in UK, resulting in recommendations for optimising their dissemination.

Given the breadth of time between PUNS and PUNS2, the CBA was keen explore how the sector has changed since the expansion of the digital age and the establishment of the ADS and Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS), in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Both initiatives sought to make archaeological materials and knowledge – primarily generated through the planning-led system – more accessible to different audiences. PUNS highlighted dissatisfaction at the lack of accessibility of archaeological reports within the archaeological community, but it did not focus on accessibility to the *wider* public, which remains a relatively under-researched area (and, indeed, remains an area that the sector is failing to address; see Watson 2025).

Therefore, the PUNS2 project has endeavoured to bridge the gap between the two surveys by addressing how the digital landscape has impacted archaeological engagement. Through this, the project has also explored methodologies around understanding archaeological audiences, their needs and engagement preferences, and how to meaningfully impart archaeological information with these in mind (Shanks & Webmoor 2013, Pitts 2015, Bonacchi 2017, Perry & Copps 2022, Perry 2023, Gargett 2023, Perry et al 2024). The literature review, carried out in 2023, also drew from wider research beyond the archaeology sector focusing on media literacy, and access and inclusion trends in the UK. These included We Are Social's Digital Reports, Hootsuite's Social Trends, Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) demographic data, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Taking Part surveys, the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI) research, and Office of Communications (Ofcom) media literacy data.

Overall, the PUNS2 project aimed to:

- Contribute towards an evidence-based framework for improving how archaeological information is shared with its audiences.
- Broaden and underpin the public value of archaeology through enriching current understanding of audiences' uses and appreciation of archaeological outputs.
- Build on the original PUNS survey, continuing to assess the role of archaeological publications (interpreted broadly, as described below), the mechanisms used to disseminate them, and their value in enhancing understanding of archaeological research across the United Kingdom.
- Foreground the needs and opinions of end-user audiences, recognising that it is only via active forms of listening to – and direct dialogue with – these audiences that it will be possible to provide recommendations and guidance that might genuinely achieve meaningful impacts and positive outcomes.

Building on the original survey, PUNS2 has broadened its scope to encompass the wider range of forms of dissemination available today (e.g. social media, open access publications, films and blogs) and has made headway into the challenge of targeting broader ranges of audiences. Using a mixed methodological approach (i.e. literature review, surveys, workshops and interviews), the project has gained ample data which can inform continual improvements in the sharing of archaeological results. Indeed, reflection on consultation strategies has been especially important for this project, to consider initial intentions versus practical solutions within delivery and to identify and review the key stakeholders involved in this project.

Consultation activities reached a total of 3,119 people (well over the target of 2,000). The online survey reached across the UK, with small numbers (c. 35 responses) from the USA, Canada, Australia, India and Europe.

This report outlines the full methodological approach, followed by the presentation of findings, reflections on approach, overall conclusions and, finally, the recommendations stemming from the results.

2   METHODOLOGY

2.1 Brief Description of Overall Method

This section covers the methodology, drawing from the project aims (as outlined above) and the following objectives:

1. To understand current practices in communicating archaeological information.
1.1. To understand which 'outputs' archaeological organisations choose to create and why (i.e. are there data supporting communities' interests in these outputs, or are they chosen for different reasons, e.g. client preference, legislative requirements etc.?).
1.2. To identify gaps in current offerings and explore, with stakeholders, types of output that might better resonate with a range of audiences.
2. To understand audience needs and specific barriers to engagement.
2.1. To engage with audiences and collaborators from the outset to better understand their opinions of archaeology, what kinds of archaeological outputs they want, how they would like to use them and what might preclude this opportunity.
2.2. To understand how blended approaches to archaeological publication and communications (i.e. using multi-format approaches across multiple publication platforms and media) might reach different audiences.
2.3. To understand how different media formats deliver different types/levels/focus of public value for different audiences, and how to make informed decisions about which formats may be most effective for different audiences.
3. To horizon-scan future needs and emerging technologies where possible to help with future-proofing continuous learning over time.
4. To arrive at a set of recommendations for the future development of guidance for those who commission and/or generate archaeological output (e.g. professional and voluntary organisations, archaeological communicators).

The project aims and objectives meant the project team had to reach a wide range of stakeholders and audiences – those who create archaeological outputs and those who might engage with them. Initial consultation groups included:

- Existing stakeholders, partners and funders, CBA networks and volunteers who provided useful feedback, including on the designs of the project's outputs. A selection of these stakeholders formed a Critical Friends Group and gave feedback on the design of the project.
- A wider consultation of archaeological practitioners, organisations and researchers, who provided insight into creating output.
- The wider public and new audiences, who could offer useful insight on existing interaction with archaeological outputs, and barriers and opportunities for further engagement.

To engage with different audiences a variety of research and consultation methods were required. These consisted of:

- The creation of a Critical Friends Group.
- An internship position.
- A literature review.
- A public survey (developed through Qualtrics).
- Online and in-person audience-focused workshops.
- Semi-structured interviews with practitioners.

Overall, this methodological approach has been delivered (with increased refinement as time went on) and the project team engaged with high numbers of participants in various contexts (3,119 in total). From reflecting on the approach and via analysis of data – both quantitative and qualitative, and specific to each method (see sections 3.1, 4.1 and 5.1) – rich insight was gained into the project aims, specifically around what archaeological outputs are created in the industry and how people engage/want to engage with them.

Notably, the question regarding 'what archaeological outputs are created' required thought during early methodological design stages. While the project builds upon the parameters of the original PUNS study, the focus of the project was restricted to these specific areas:

- Social media and web-based dissemination, potentially including apps, podcasts, virtual reality (VR)/augmented reality (AR) experiences, downloadable resources and videogames.
- TV and film.
- The press.
- Non-academic publications including magazines, comics, manga etc.
- Digital archives.
- 'Grey' literature.
- Academic research, including Masters and PhD research.
- Books, journals and reports (print and digital).
- Voluntary and community group publications.

Where these outputs stem from is also a major consideration. Museum exhibitions and physical archives, although both forms of archaeological dissemination, were intentionally excluded from the project parameters as the focus remained on print and digital outputs.

Audience approaches to museum displays and media and analysis of their impact and value is a significant area of study, covering several decades, which lies beyond the scope of this project (see for example: Miles 1986, Schweibenz 2008, Drotner et al 2019). For the museum sector, such work and the high amount of dedicated research is in part due to the prominent relationship with audiences – they are 'present' within museums, engage with and sometimes create exhibits and directly or indirectly provide funding through fees or donations that keep museums operational. By contrast, with archaeology (especially development-led projects) audiences can often seem more 'distant' and are not guaranteed to be proximate to the work of, for instance, field archaeologists, processing and archival teams.

Although physical archives are intrinsically linked to publications, this area is large and made more complex by the ongoing challenges around storage and access across the UK. Much of

this will be addressed as part of the Future for Archaeological Archives Programme, coordinated by Historic England (2025) and by upcoming work by TETRARCHs (Transforming Data Re-use in Archaeology https://www.tetrarchs.org).

Lastly, the study focused on archaeological outputs stemming from commercial and charitable/voluntary archaeological organisations, but also from those stemming from higher education or academic sources (many of the project's interviewees were researchers and many of the respondents to the survey were students). The UK archaeological research sector plays a vital part in forming the knowledge production and engagement with archaeology (see literature review, Appendix 1) and sits within a specific context of regulation (specifically the Research Excellence Framework). While PUNS2 data includes evidence regarding academic archaeological outputs, the project scope did not include specific focus on the wider higher education context and its subsequent influence upon outputs. Further research to compare the influence of commercial, charitable/voluntary and academic contexts upon archaeology outputs, and ultimately perception, is required.

2.2 Critical Friends

The project benefitted from a Critical Friends Working Group, with c. 15 members drawn from key stakeholder groups within the archaeological sector. Members included, for example, a representative of the 21CAP Project, university affiliates, representatives from interested cultural or charitable organisations or underrepresented groups, and contacts from archaeological units or professional bodies.

The PUNS2 Critical Friends Working Group was tasked with:
• Providing advice, support and assistance in the development and implementation of the PUNS2 project programme.
• Providing objective and valuable feedback on project progress and outcomes.
• Helping generate more ideas and perspectives based on the lived experience of the members.
• Ensuring that the project avoided 'groupthink' and made better decisions.
• Providing access to other networks and outside knowledge/support.
• Helping identify and mitigate risks and obstacles.

The Critical Friends met approximately every four months throughout the project. The group reviewed research findings, tested consultation ideas and contributed to survey and workshop design, as well as drafting the final recommendations. The group was able to give detailed feedback on aspects of the methodology and ask the team beneficial questions, encouraging them to consider their approach, which the project team was able to embed. A working Critical Friends Group is recommended for any ongoing projects.

2.3 Internship

A project intern was included in the PUNS2 team to transcribe and clean recordings taken during the one-to-one interviews. This role aligned with both MOLA's and CBA's wider goals to diversify the archaeological sector by introducing young people from varied backgrounds to careers in archaeology. The team advertised locally to the MOLA offices, in North London,

and prioritised applicants between 18 and 21 years old who were not in education and welcomed applicants without previous experience in archaeology. The successful applicant was a musician and an electrician by profession, living within walking distance of the MOLA offices. He was from an ethnic global majority background and had not previously studied archaeology or been in full-time higher education. A schedule was planned for the intern which balanced the repetitive but necessary work on transcription and data input with more varied learning activities such as shadowing MOLA staff, attending PUNS2 workshops, sitting in on meetings with MOLA's CEO, learning about the archaeological process (e.g. recording and Harris Matrix training) and undertaking a tour of the archaeological excavations at Fenchurch Street. During this time the intern contributed to the design of the workshops (he helped create an icebreaker question which was extremely effective). After two months the intern was successful in finding a new role as an apprentice for Transport for London.

"Thank you so much – it was a pleasure working with you and the whole team I loved every second of it. [...] I hope that I made a positive impact on the team while I was there; hopefully we cross paths in the future."

Message from intern

As the transcription work was not complete when the original intern left, the opportunity was offered to field archaeologists at MOLA who would benefit from professional development on audience engagement and the methods and challenges of sharing archaeological outputs to different groups. In total four field archaeologists undertook the task and feedback indicated that they appreciate the insights gleaned from cleaning the interviews:

"I think it is really interesting; even just from the two interviews I managed to complete the transcriptions for it is obvious that you all have found an interesting and diverse group of people within the area of engagement in archaeology to interview and get insight from. I especially enjoyed [Interviewer X] interview, and both interviews really made me think of the future of archaeology, and even how much it changed since I first got into the field in undergrad (~2011)."

Message from archaeologist 1

"I found this project really interesting and I will be interested to see how and if technology is able to reach other audiences and may

The project team reflected that inclusive internships and involvement of field archaeologists in engagement or interpretation work would be beneficial. This is discussed as part of the project's recommendations.

2.4   Literature Review, Data Scan and Audience Engagement Strategy

The literature review provided an update for the archaeological sector on recent and relevant research into archaeological outputs and audience engagement (for the full literature review, please see Appendix 1). The review traced the gap between PUNS and PUNS2, as well as demonstrating how the latter fits into current research priorities and builds upon recent findings and recommendations. The literature review was also used to help define target audiences and provided insight on accessibility and inclusivity.

A 'data scan' was also undertaken, to establish an understanding of social media usage by wider society and the associated practices of archaeological organisations (e.g. how many organisations are using Facebook etc.).

The first step of the data scan involved exploring publicly available, and accessible, datasets focused on general media consumption, media literacy, and access and inclusion trends in England, Scotland and Wales. These included We Are Social's Digital Reports, Hootsuite's Social Trends, Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) demographic data, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Taking Part surveys, the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI) research, and Office of Communications (Ofcom) media literacy data and reports.

Next, the social media presence of 82 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)-affiliated archaeological organisations was analysed. High-profile archaeological organisations, with a broad range of social media, were targeted and invited to participate in PUNS2 by sharing their organisational social media analytical data. Further archaeological organisations and groups were also reached through an expression of interest sign-up sheet, via Google Forms. Those that completed the sign-up sheet were contacted and asked to provide their social media analytical data. Archaeological organisations based in Wales, Scotland and Ireland were also examined for their social media presence using specific nation-based historical record websites.

An audience matrix for PUNS2 was developed through a prior collaboration between Historic England and CBA (resulting in the Historic England Segments) and thereafter informed by the

data scan and the literature review. This resulted in the development of three project-specific audience segments[1]:

1   **'Known to Archaeology'**: This group comprises existing audiences, CBA members and the established archaeological community and professionals. Together, they represent the wider public most likely to engage with archaeological outputs and events.

    This group corresponds to the following Historic England audience segments:
    - Green (nature, active, discovery).
    - Yellow (progressive, creative, social).
    - Purple (nostalgic, traditional, professional).

    In total, this group makes up 27% of the general population and 49% of heritage professionals.

2   **'New to Archaeology':** This audience is supportive of archaeology and heritage in general and is most likely to encounter archaeology via other heritage activities, like visiting English Heritage or National Trust properties. They may work in the wider heritage sector.

    This group corresponds to the following Historic England audience segments:
    - Pink (cultured, fascinated, open-minded).
    - Orange (mainstream, proud, family).
    - Red (escapists, enjoyment, trips out).

    In total, this group makes up 45% of the general population and 44% of heritage professionals.

3   **'Archaeology: Why me?':** This audience may not immediately see the relevance of archaeology to them and as such their inclusion is critical for addressing matters of representation and shaping new perspectives on archaeology. This group may include people who work within the heritage sector but do not have an obvious connection with archaeology (e.g. Human Resources and Administration).

    This group corresponds to the following Historic England audience segment:
    - Blue (dynamic, passionate, outgoing).

This group makes up 27% of the general population and 5% of heritage professionals, per Historic England Segments (2023).

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[1] The project-specific audience segments outlined in PUNS2 are based on a proposed interpretation of Historic England's audience segmentation study (2023), rather than direct evidence or validated data, and should be considered as a conceptual framework for understanding target groups: https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/inclusion/audiences/segments.

KPIs FOR SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS AND WORKSHOPS

To help assess our progress the PUNS2 team set a series of key performance indicators in relation to the number of participants through surveys, interviews and workshops. It can be estimated that there are about 25,000 – 30,000 individuals currently active in archaeology across the UK through direct employment, undergraduate and post-graduate research and grassroots involvement.[2] Target numbers calculated as a percentage of this number:

Audience segment	Minimum number of participants	Percentage of total people involved in archaeology in the UK (25,000)
Known to Archaeology	1,250	5%
New to Archaeology	500	2%
Archaeology: Why Me?	250	(equivalent of 1%)

Table 1: PUNS2 target participant numbers by audience segment

The project team anticipated a high level of response from the 'Known to Archaeology' audience because these individuals would already be actively engaging with a range of different archaeological outputs and would be relatively easy to reach out to. The target figures for 'New to Archaeology' and 'Archaeology: Why Me?' are lower, reflecting the differing levels of engagement with archaeology and the team's expectations of the challenges in reaching them. With the 'Why Me?' target, this is a comparative percentage and reflects audiences who will likely lie outside the sector (although specific staff within the sector might lie in the 'Why Me?' category – e.g. administrative staff).

These KPIs were considered throughout the data capture phase and where necessary adjustments were made to specific approaches to achieve these targets.

2.5 Survey Design and Methodology

The primary research tool, as with the original PUNS project, was a survey. From early stages in the project design, the survey tool platform decided upon was Qualtrics, a GDPR-compliant (with ISO27001 certification) online platform which enables a large volume of data collection and contains inbuilt analytical tools for both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The name 'PUNS2' was deemed a non-engaging title for the survey, because it would be meaningless to most of the target audiences. The CBA's Youth Advisory Board was invited to collaborate on a catchy title ('Trowel and Error') and logo to help lift awareness of the survey.

Survey questions (see Appendix 2) were then initially designed in close consideration of the overall aims of the PUNS2 project, different audience groups, the previous PUNS survey and team discussion of more contemporary surveys (e.g. the NEARCH survey by Martelli-Banégas

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[2] Data taken from Profiling the Profession (Landward Research 2020), HESA (2022) and CBA (2024).

et al 2015, Perry et al 2024), and collaborative discussion within the PUNS2 team (including use of a Miro board for ideas-storming).

Once an initial draft was circulated, this was shared for consultation with the Critical Friends Group and with the project Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) consultant, who advised on accessibility and inclusivity.

From the above, feedback was fed into the consideration of the 'flow' or structure of the survey and the wording of questions: indeed, the semantics around the word 'archaeological output' had to be reconsidered for non-professional audiences (and reformatted as 'archaeological information' – note that in this report the term 'output' is retained). Moreover, through this process, an important connection was made regarding the understanding of audiences during the survey design; while still considering the target audiences as 'Known', 'New' and 'Archaeology: Why Me?', the survey necessitated a distinction between those who create archaeological outputs and those who do not (but may engage with them).

Although it is possible to both create and engage (especially in the Known and New to Archaeology audiences), it was decided that this general distinction needed to be made early in the survey to structure the remaining questions in a manner that made sense for the respondents. Those selecting that they had (or maybe had) created archaeological outputs were short-handedly referred to as 'producers', and their questions branched off into a series of tailored questions, while those who declared they had not created archaeological outputs were referred to as 'consumers' (and had their own set of questions).

The survey was circulated through CBA and MOLA social media platforms, free and paid advertising on Facebook and LinkedIn and in-person events (such as the CIfA conference in April 2024 and the Festival of Archaeology in July 2024). Additionally, all workshop participants, organisers and contacts were also invited to take part.

To mitigate any access barriers created by only offering the survey online, an additional 8,000 physical copies of the survey were included in the September/October 2024 issue of *British Archaeology* magazine (complete with Freepost envelopes). This approach was anticipated to generate perhaps 100 responses; unexpectedly the project team received over 600, thus highlighting the high levels of engagement with printed forms of archaeological outputs.

Notably, the project team decided against offering a financial incentive received on completion of the survey: insight from a different, recent CBA project highlighted a risk of AI bots and/or 'repeat' responders who can take advantage of the online vouchers.

The survey distribution methods followed that of Convenience Sampling (Etikan et al 2016), which draws on avenues and 'platforms' that are ready to hand. This technique resulted in the return of 2,800 surveys (of which 2,607 respondents gave formal consent) across a wide geographic spread (see Section 3.2.2).

2.6 Workshop Design and Methodology

The survey was very successful, with a high rate of completion and a wide geographic spread. However, as the survey was mainly distributed via archaeological channels and networks, it ran the risk of not reaching into the target 'Archaeology: Why Me?' audience. To counter this, the workshops were designed to reach wider audiences and delve more deeply into why and how users currently engage (or do not) with archaeology. The workshops aimed to understand how this segment would prefer to engage with archaeology (if at all) and how archaeological outputs could meet their range of needs.

The workshops were designed to optimise accessibility and inclusivity; from the onset of the project design provisions were made for travel expenses (e.g. local public transport, or more complex travel arrangements such as taxis, trains), catering for in-person events, translator fees, carer costs and participation renumeration vouchers. Moreover, following insight from the EDI consultant, half of the workshops were repurposed to be online, thus enabling participants to join from the convenience of their own homes.

In consultation with the community groups and facilitators, the workshops (which were 1.5 – 2 hours each) were individually tailored to ensure reasonable adjustments could be made, which became a highly useful aspect of the design. Methods for enabling participation and recognising the contributions of our audiences had previously been trialled in a series of community consultations funded by the UKRI Future Leader Fellows Plus Funds (summer 2022), which were facilitated by MOLA staff. The CBA piloted further activities at the 2024 Festival of Archaeology at the Crannog Centre, Scotland.[3]

Following this work and insight from the Critical Friends, the final design of the workshops included icebreakers to uncover people's assumptions about archaeology (i.e. participants were asked '**what three words** would you use to define archaeology?' – and results were analysed thematically). The icebreakers were followed by activities encouraging multimedia and creative approaches to archaeological outputs, using collages and storyboards, which also became a key component for later analysis. For online workshops and work with the visually impaired, the collage and storyboard activities were repurposed into the Padlet platform, where it became easy to scribe the words of the participants in real time – again enabling group interaction while simultaneously capturing qualitative data for analysis. Following an informed consent protocol, all workshops were audio recorded, with feedback gathered at the end of the sessions and remuneration vouchers handed out.

There were challenges in workshop recruitment and sampling. The project team contacted and coordinated with 45 prospective organisations and community groups (including metal detectorists, a shopping mall, libraries, wellbeing groups and even a 'korfball' team, to name

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[3]The project team tested some light-touch engagement methods at the 2024 FoA at the Crannog Centre, in Scotland, as well as introducing the project. People were asked to vote on which methods of dissemination they used (social media, television, books and magazines, talks). Voting was via stickers, and this playful style of engagement that worked across all ages led to the development of the collage idea.

but a few): these efforts resulted in a total of eight in-person and eight online workshops. This was significantly more than the target of 10 workshops in the project design.

In-person workshop & date	Audience type & location	Online workshop & date	Audience type & location
Festival of Archaeology 13.7.24	Known/New to Archaeology - The Scottish Crannog Centre, Kenmore	ESOL group 06.02.25	New to Archaeology/Archaeology: Why Me? - Ethnic minority, Thurrock
CAER Heritage Consultation 1 (AM) 28.8.24	Known/New to Archaeology - Cardiff	AAWAZ 13.02.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Ethnic minority, Blackburn
CAER Heritage Consultation 2 (PM) 28.8.24	Known/New to Archaeology - Cardiff	GDA online 18.02.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Audience facing barriers, Glasgow
Roman Carlisle 1 10.10.24	Known/New to Archaeology - Carlisle	VIP - Eyes for Positivity 21.02.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Audience facing barriers, London
Roman Carlisle 2 10.10.24	Known/New to Archaeology - Carlisle	ScotInform1 18.2.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Emergent, Scotland general
Dagenham Young Carers 11.01.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Youth group, London	ScotInform 2 25.02.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Emergent, Scotland general
Glasgow Disability Alliance 11.02.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Audience facing barriers, Glasgow	Kurdish Women's Group 10.05.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Ethnic minority, Glasgow
Leith Library 12.02.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Emergent but mainly families (mums & kids), Edinburgh	Kurdish Youth Group 10.05.25	Archaeology: Why Me? - Ethnic minority and youth group, Glasgow

Table 2: summary of workshops and target audience segments

The table above shows the project team was successful in reaching diverse groups. Overall, the sampling technique was both Purposive (Etikan et al 2016) – with the PUNS2 researcher and expert relying on specific criteria and judgement to recruit groups – and Convenient, relying on emerging opportunities to recruit based on existing connections from colleagues (and in some cases family members and friends), 'cold-calling' community groups (successful in one case), seeking support from the HES Equalities team to establish connections and

paying to advertise on a cultural research forum (i.e. ScotInform). Reflections on the challenges in recruiting for workshops, and the insights gained, are detailed in Section 4.3.

2.7 Interview Design and Methodology

As with the original PUNS project, the methodology triangulated the workshops and survey with semi-structured interviews with relevant organisations and researchers. These interviews were used to develop a better understanding of why and how certain outputs are being produced and used within the sector; whether they feel that current practices meet their needs, as well as those of their audiences; and their ideas and feelings on the potential for new types of archaeological outputs.

All the interviewees were from the Known/New to Archaeology groups – meaning that they were all producers of various kinds and had professional, academic or voluntary backgrounds (Why Me? groups were targeted via the workshops). In total, 27 interviews were conducted from across the UK. The question design for interviews was based on the PUNS2 aims and objectives and benefitted from the discussions held regarding the questions of the survey. The design was semi-structured, with themes and topics emerging based on the direction of the dialogue between the PUNS2 researcher and interviewee.

The sampling technique was a mix of both Purposive (with certain criteria being in place) and Convenient (as suitable candidates emerged throughout the project). Some interviewees were also asked to participate in the project's Critical Friends Group and so became very familiar with the project.

3 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Method of Analysis

To undertake the analysis of the survey, the Qualtrics built-in software was utilised. This software allowed us to run chi-squared tests automatically when analysing any relationships in the quantitative data and create basic visualisations of the responses.

We also analysed the qualitative data from the free-text responses in Qualtrics. Each response was tagged with its key themes/content. For instance, the statement: 'I like to watch archaeological videogame walk-throughs on YouTube' would be tagged with #VideoGames and #YouTube. Once these tags were created, we could then see how many comments fell under these categories and pick out the most common themes.

3.2 Findings

3.2.1 Demographic Data

The first few questions on the survey were written to gather demographic data from those participating. By comparing the results from our survey's demographic data to that of the 2021 Census (ONS 2022), we can begin to build up a picture of how far our survey's sample represents the wider population of the UK.

Age: How old are you?
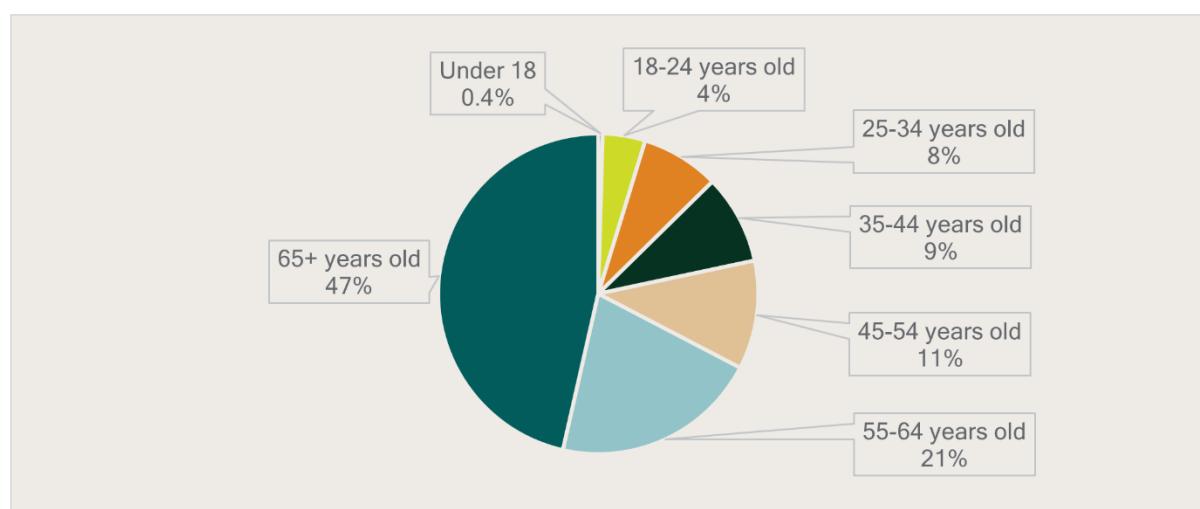
Figure 1: age of survey respondents

47% of the survey's respondents were over 65 years old, which is significantly higher than the general population (19% of those censused in 2021 were over 65). This trend continues into the second-oldest age group, with 21% of respondents between 55 and 64 years old, compared to 13% of the general population. The number of respondents in the age categories from 18 to 34 were also lower than expected (only 4%).

Gender identity: How do you describe yourself?
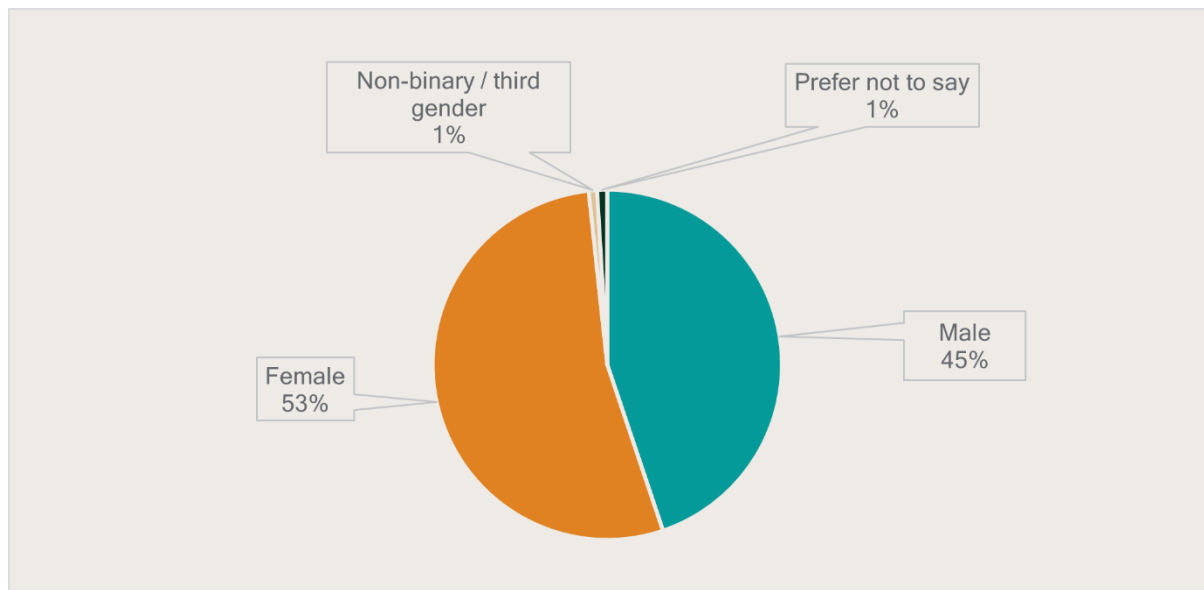
Figure 2: gender of survey respondents

Across the survey population, people identifying as female made up a slight majority. However, when we looked at the relationship between age and gender (see below), we could see that women form a much larger majority of the respondents under 55 years old. However, in the over 65s, men make up the majority.
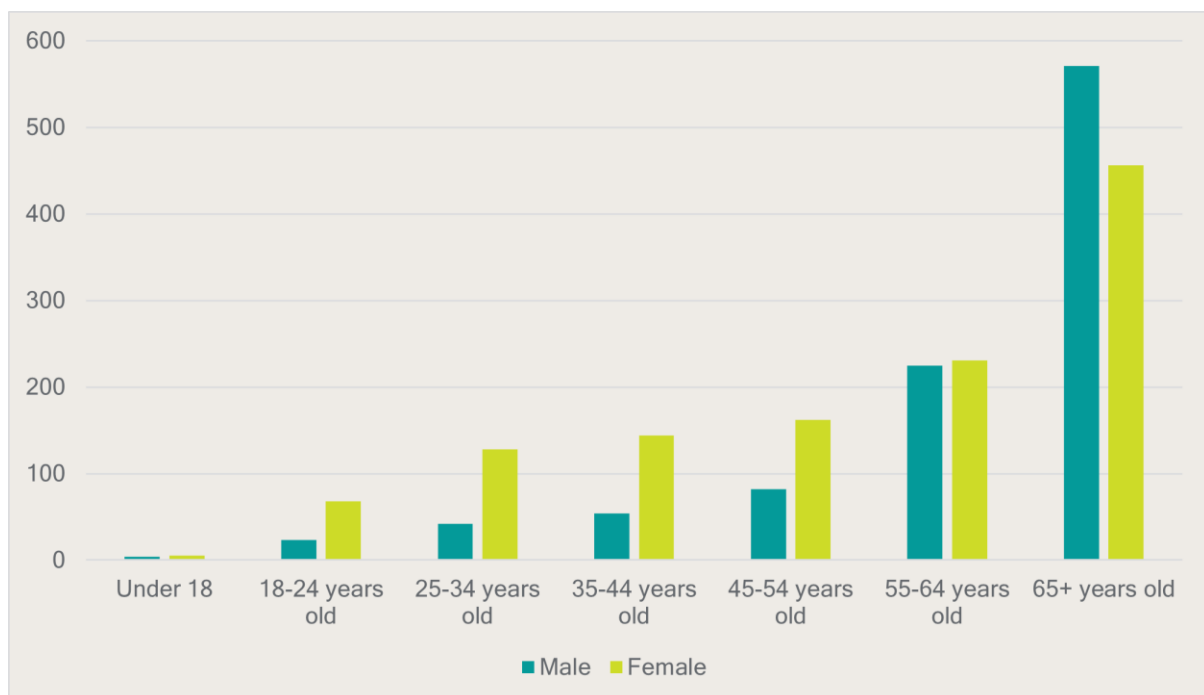
Figure 3: gender and age distribution of survey respondents

Ethnicity: Would you describe yourself as…?
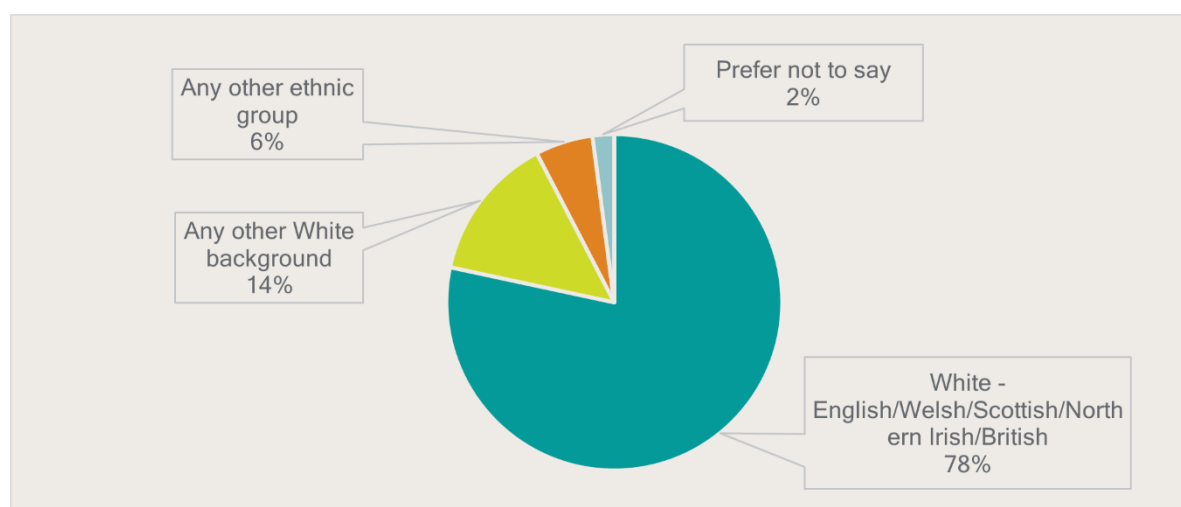
Figure 4: ethnicity of survey respondents

As shown above, the vast majority of those completing the survey identified as 'White-English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish', at 78%. In the 2021 Census, 74.4% of people surveyed identified as 'White British'. Our survey has a larger number of respondents identifying as White, but not British, than the Census. This can be explained because there was a significant number of internationally based respondents.

Only 6% of those who participated in the survey identified as an ethnicity other than White, which is not in line with the demographic data of England and Wales, given below.[4]

White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	74.4%
White: Other White	6.2%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	9.3%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	4.0%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	2.9%
Other ethnic group	2.1%

Table 3: UK ethnicity as per 2021 Census

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[4] Source: Office for National Statistics (2022) – Census 2021.

Disability: Do you consider yourself dis/abled / disabled?
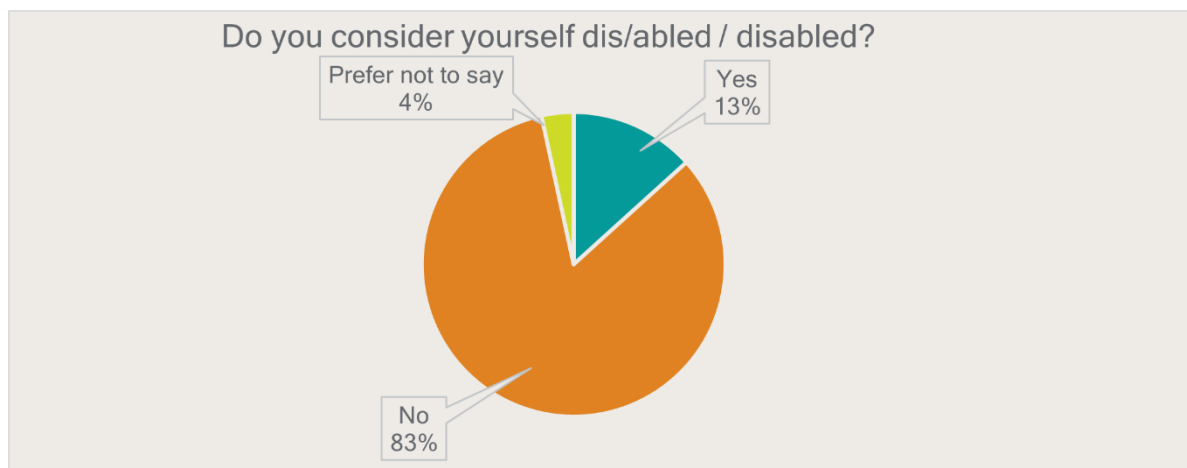
Figure 5: dis/abled / disabled survey respondents

According to the 2021 Census, 17.4% of the population of England and Wales identified as disabled, whereas only 13% of the PUNS2 online survey consider themselves disabled.

3.2.2 Geographic Data

The following map was created using the respondents' postcode information. The map is divided into the UK's postcode areas and the darker the blue, the more respondents were from that postcode area.

The PUNS2 survey has achieved a good overall spread of the UK, per our initial aims. However, by comparing this map to the population data from the 2021 Census, we can see that certain areas were underrepresented – namely the Midlands, Greater Manchester, County Durham, London and some parts of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The large number of respondents from the York area may possibly be explained by a known concentration of archaeologists based in the city and that it is the location of the CBA's office.
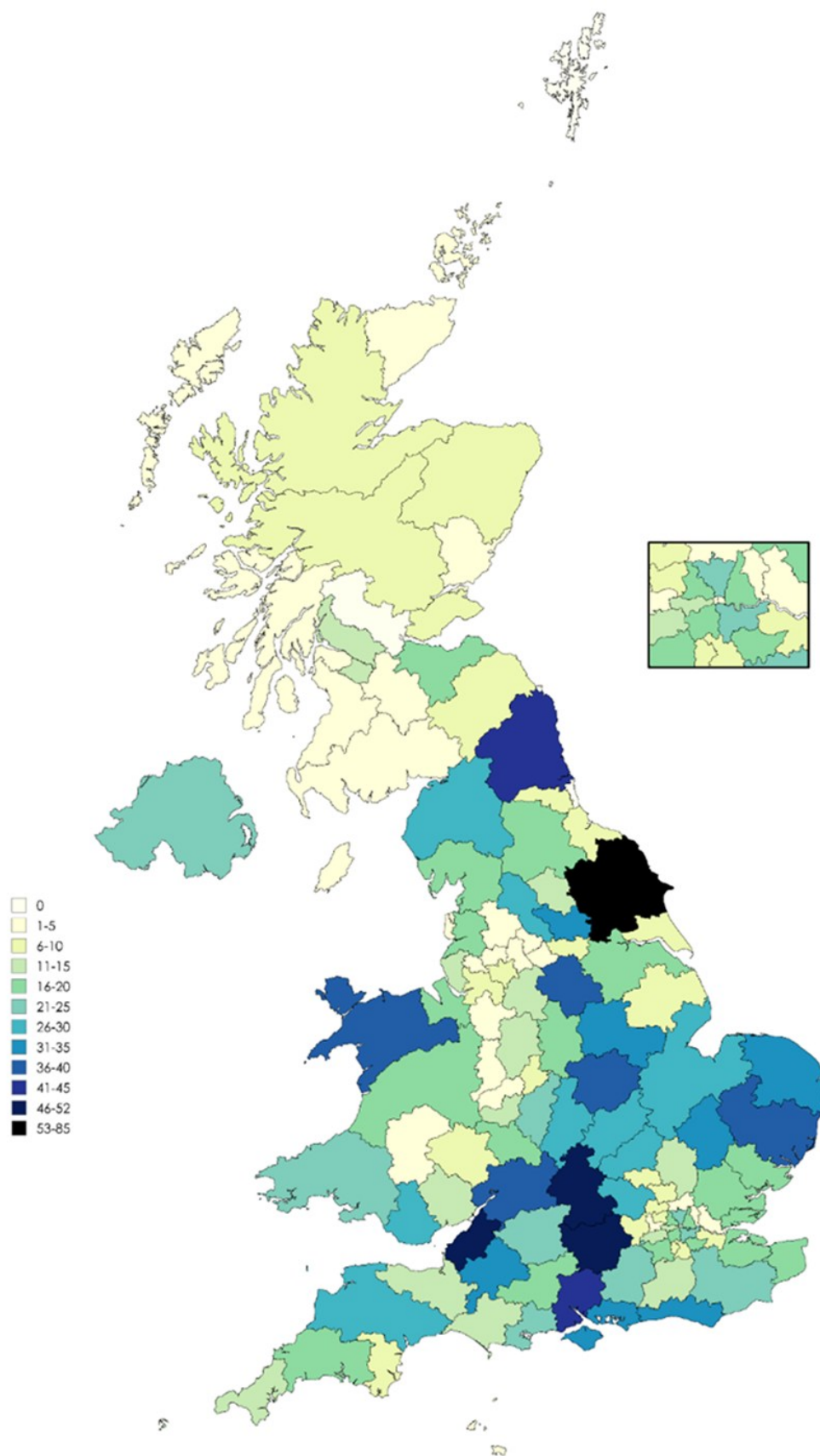
Figure 6: distribution map of survey respondents

3.2.3 Connection to Archaeology

The next section of the survey asked participants about their connection to and background in archaeology.

Do you have a background in archaeology or heritage?

Category	Percentage
I am a student	8.2%
I am an academic	8.9%
I have worked in the heritage sector	16.9%
I am a professional	18.0%
I have no background in archaeology or heritage	30.8%
I volunteer	31.7%

Figure 7: survey responses on background to archaeology

How often do you engage/interact with archaeology? -

Category	Percentage
Other	6.9%
Never	3.1%
Once every six months	5.9%
Every other month	5.1%
Once a month	12.4%
Every other week	7.5%
Weekly	27.5%
Daily	31.7%
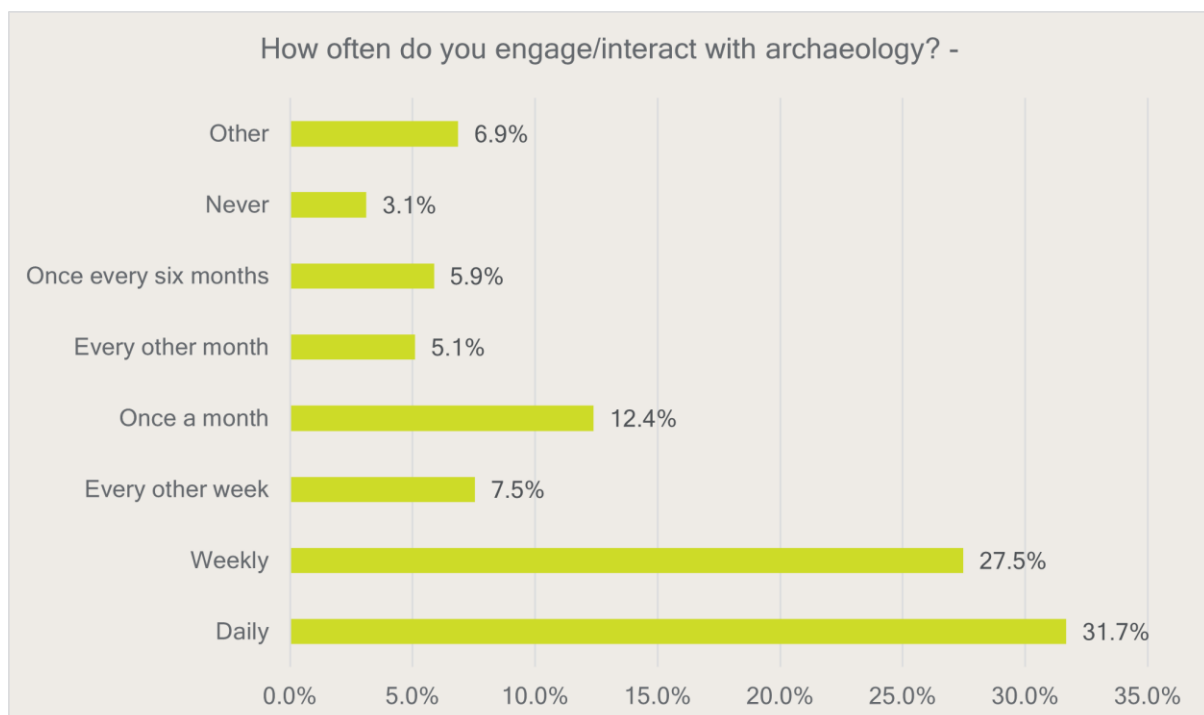
Figure 8: survey responses on frequency of engagement with archaeology

How far do you agree that archaeology is 'important to me as individual.'

Strongly disagree	0.3%
Disagree	1.2%
Agree	27.7%
Strongly agree	70.9%
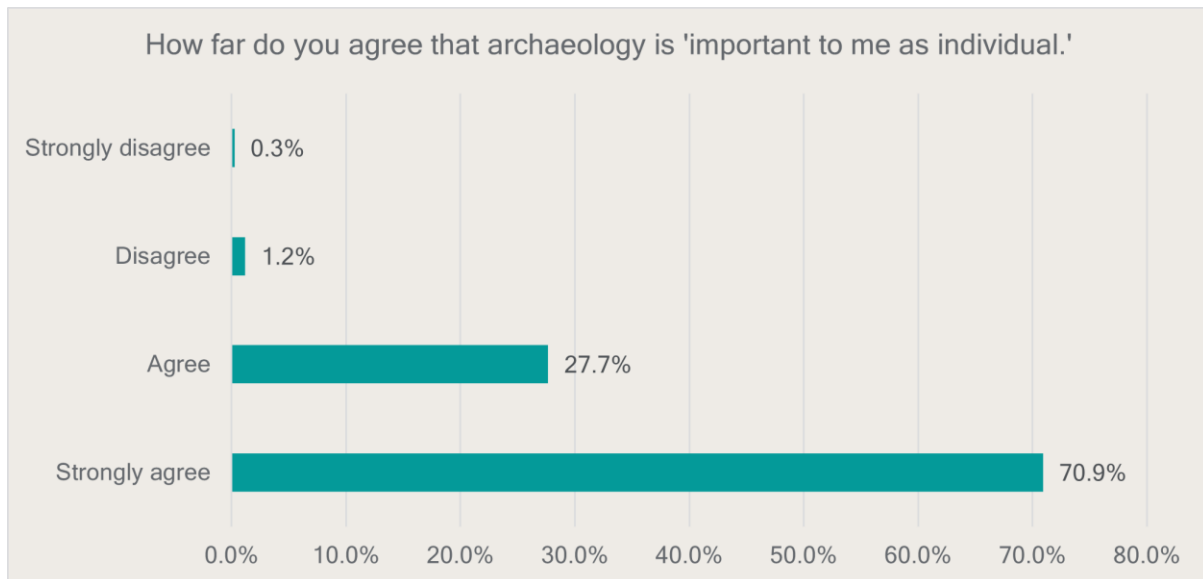
Figure 9: survey responses on the importance of archaeology 'to me as an individual.'

These previous three graphs demonstrate that the PUNS2 survey was successful in targeting a non-professional audience without a background in archaeology (the Archaeology: Why Me? group). Those taking part, regardless of their background, mostly strongly agreed that archaeology is important to them as individuals.

The below graph illustrates the relationship between a participant's age and the regularity of their engagement with archaeology. The age group most likely to interact with archaeology daily is 18—24 year olds, which would align with the age of archaeology university students. High levels of engagement remain equal until the 45—54 year old demographic, where it steadily begins to decrease in frequency.

How often do you engage with archaeology and how old are you? (%)

	Daily	Weekly	Every other week	Once a month	Every other month	Once every six months	Never	Other
65+ years old	21	31.4	9.4	14.1	6	6.1	3.2	8.7
55-64	27.9						3.2	
45-54	36.2	28.5	8.2	14	4.8	5.6	2.5	7.8
35-44	55.2	24.3	5.8	11.9	4.9	8.6	1.5	5.8
25-34	55.8	21.1	3	7.5	5.5	3.5	5.8	2.5
18-24	61.4	15.7	6.4	8.1	1.7	4.1	2.1	2.3
		20.8	2.1	6.3	3.1	3.1		1

Legend: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+ years old
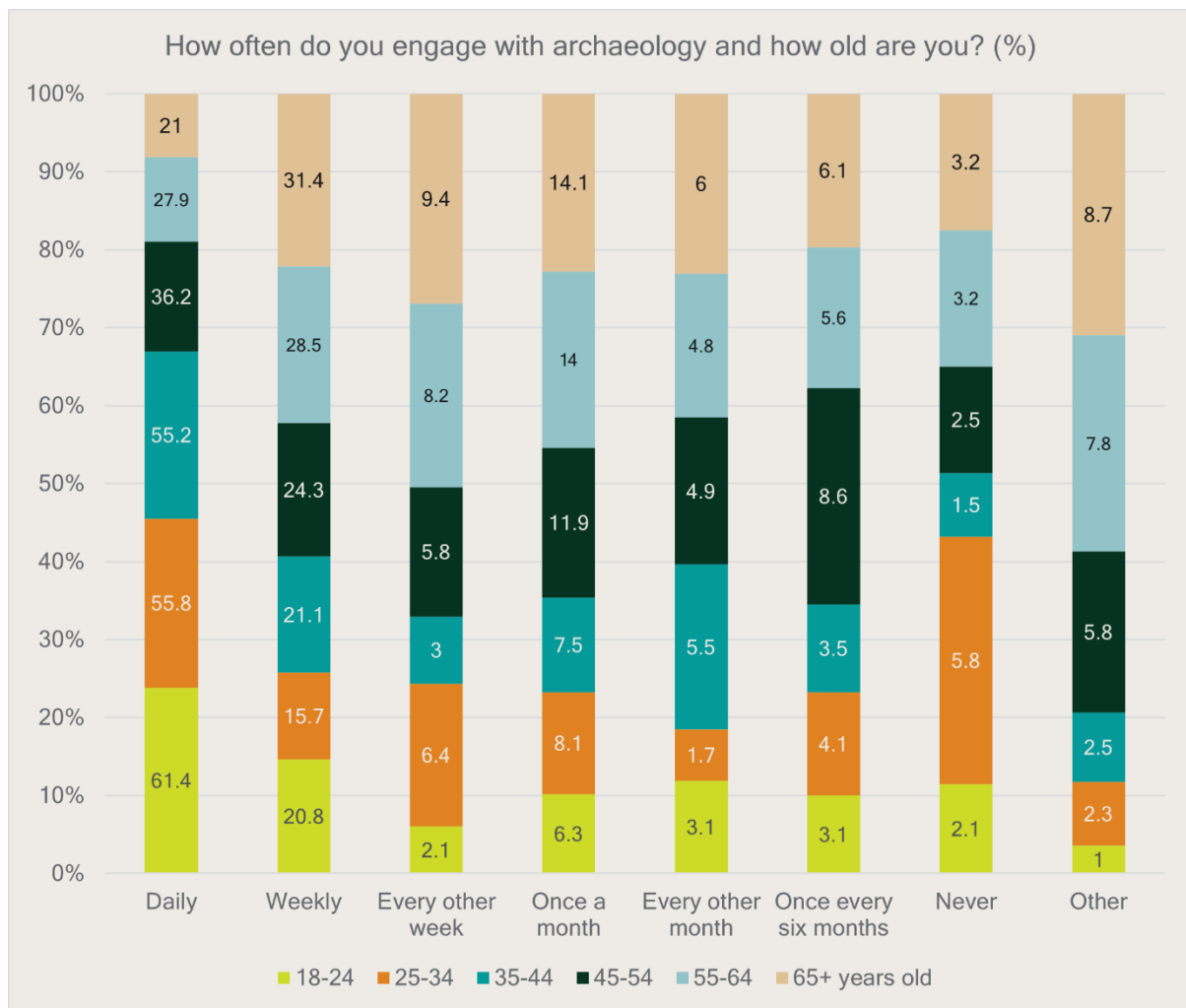
Figure 10: relationship between survey respondents' age and how frequently they engage with archaeology

How far do you agree that archaeology is 'important to me as an individual' And how often do you engage/interact with archaeology? (%)

Other
- Strongly disagree: 0
- Disagree: 0
- Agree: 37.2
- Strongly agree: 62.8

Never
- Disagree: 0
- Agree: 12.1
- Agree: 48.3
- Strongly agree: 39.7

Once every six months
- Strongly disagree: 1.8
- Disagree: 7.1
- Agree: 54
- Strongly agree: 37.2

Every other month
- Strongly disagree: 1
- Disagree: 1
- Agree: 52.9
- Strongly agree: 45.1

Once a month
- Strongly disagree: 0.4
- Disagree: 0.8
- Agree: 36.7
- Strongly agree: 62.2

Every other week
- Strongly disagree: 0
- Disagree: 1.3
- Agree: 35.8
- Strongly agree: 62.9

Weekly
- Strongly disagree: 0
- Disagree: 0.4
- Agree: 23.5
- Strongly agree: 76.1

Daily
- Strongly disagree: 0.2
- Disagree: 0.3
- Agree: 12
- Strongly agree: 87.5

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Figure 11: relationship between survey respondents' frequency of engagement with archaeology and how important archaeology is to them

Here (see above) we can see that those participating in archaeology more frequently were more likely to strongly agree with the statement that archaeology 'is important to me as an individual'.

3.2.4 Producers

The following section will examine the questions posed to those identifying as producers of archaeological outputs.
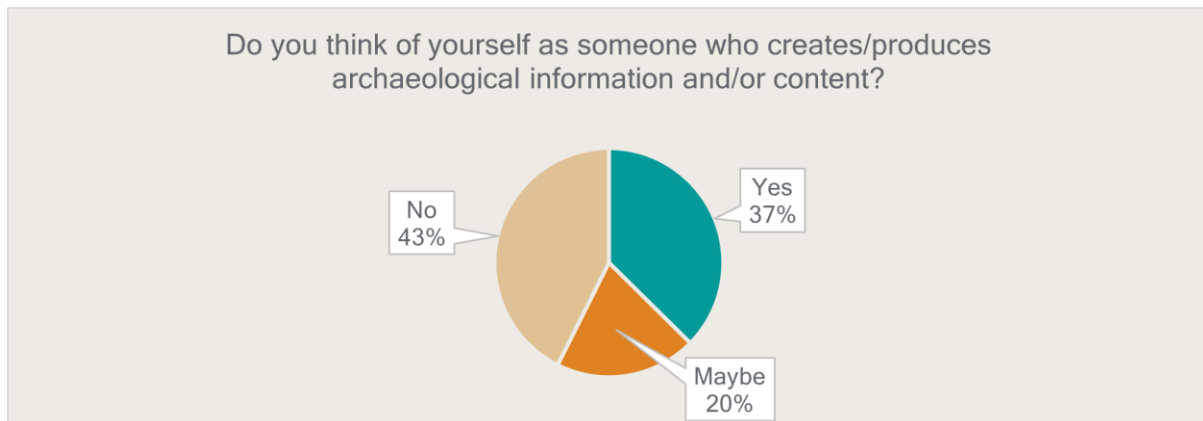
Figure 12: percentage of survey respondents who consider themselves to be creators or producers of archaeological content

Only those who answered 'yes' or 'maybe' to the above question (57% of respondents in total) were able to answer the questions in this section.
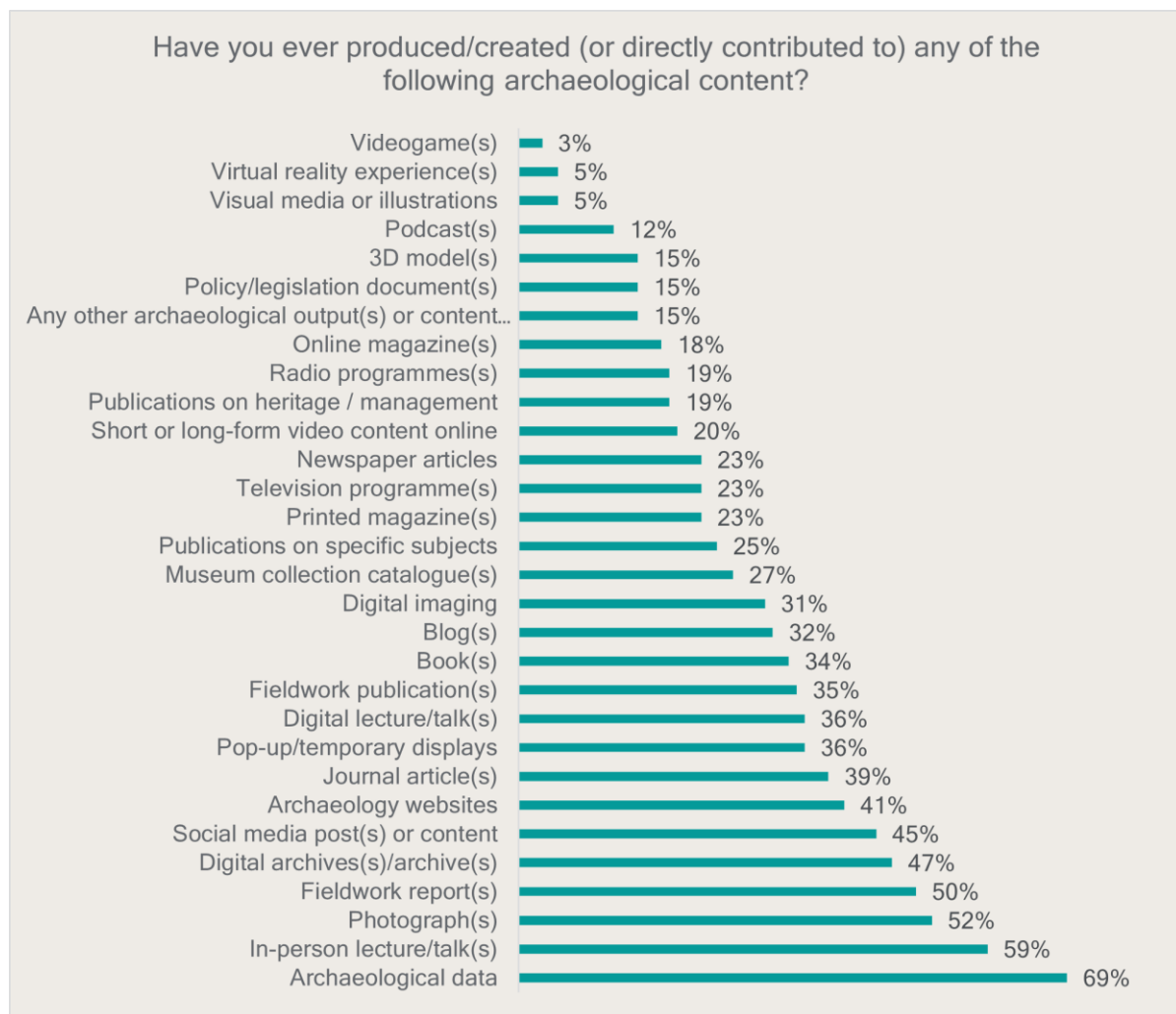
Figure 13: types of archaeological content produced by survey respondents

The most common types of archaeological content for producers to have created are archaeological data in-person lectures/talks, photographs and fieldwork reports, all of which over half the respondents had been involved in producing.

Also reasonably popular are social media posts, archaeology websites and journal articles. The least common types of content for producers to have contributed to are videogames, virtual reality experiences and visual media or illustrations.

3.2.5 Audiences

The following questions posed to producers focused on their understanding of their audiences.
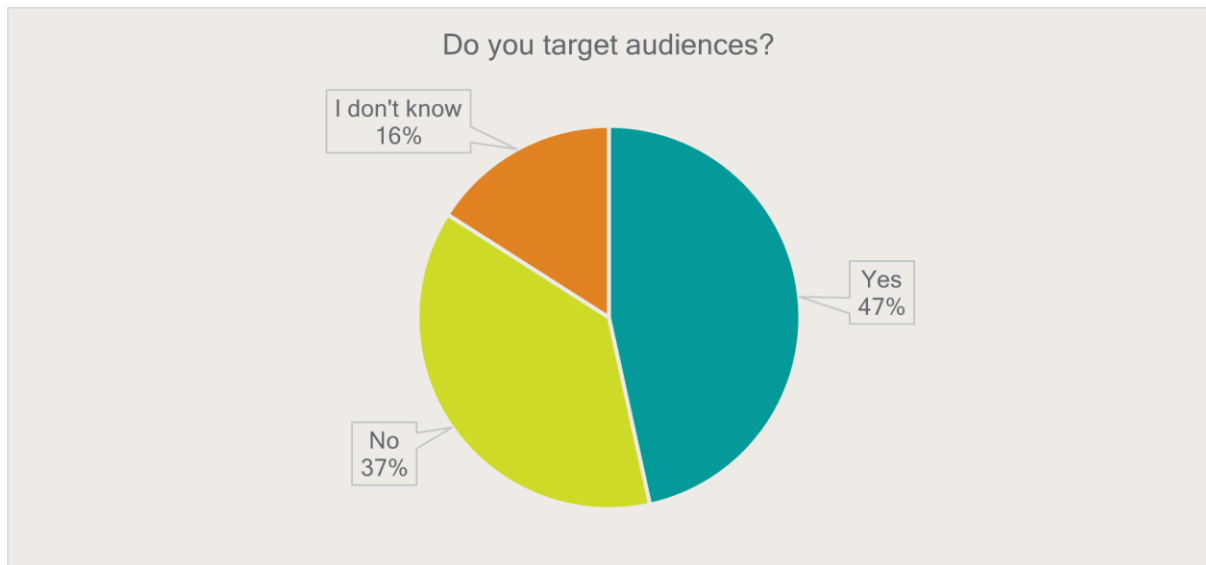
Figure 14: responses to producers asked, 'Do you target audiences?'

Less than half of producers target audiences for their content, and 16% are uncertain whether they do so.
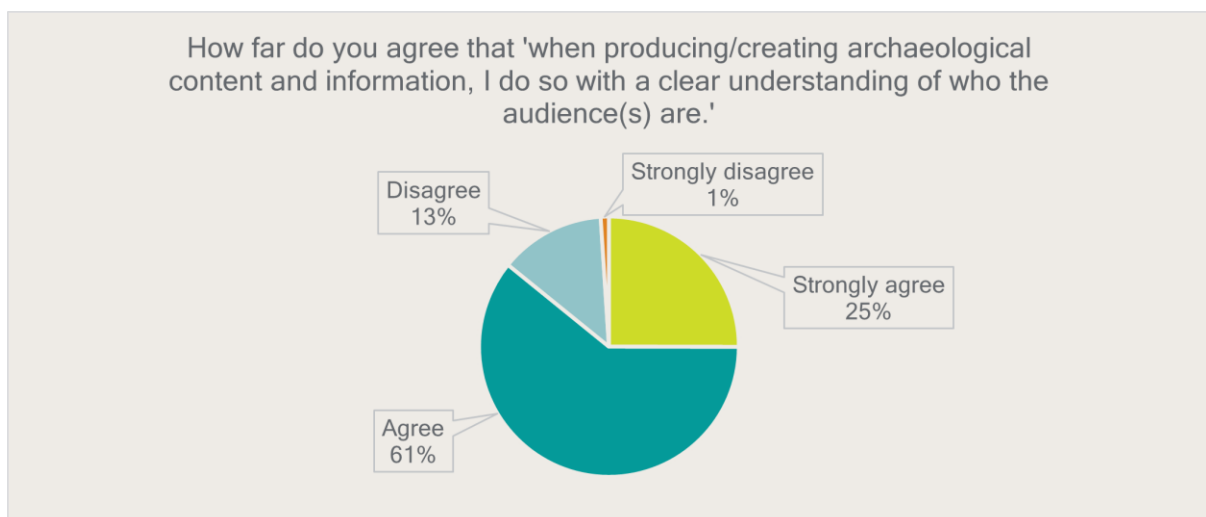
Figure 15: responses to producers asked how far they agree that 'When producing/creating archaeological content and information, I do so with a clear understanding of who the audience(s) are.'

Yet, when asked whether they create content with a 'clear understanding of who the audiences are', 86% either agreed or strongly agreed (see above).
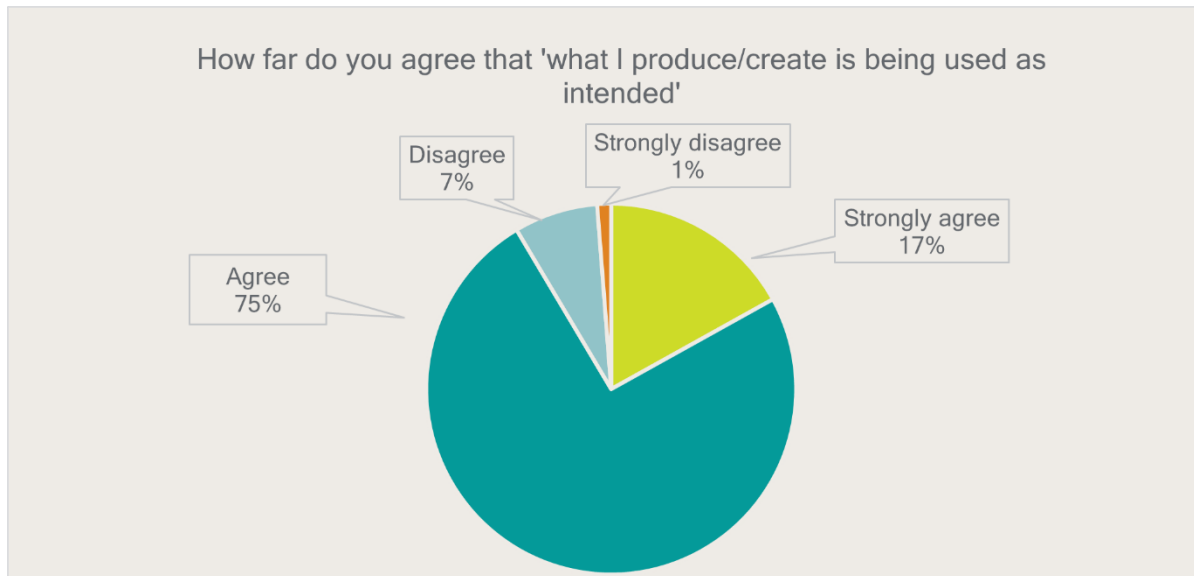
Figure 16: responses to producers asked how far they agree that 'what I produce/create is being used as intended.'

The above question was also answered with a similar level of confidence; 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that what they produced is being used as intended.
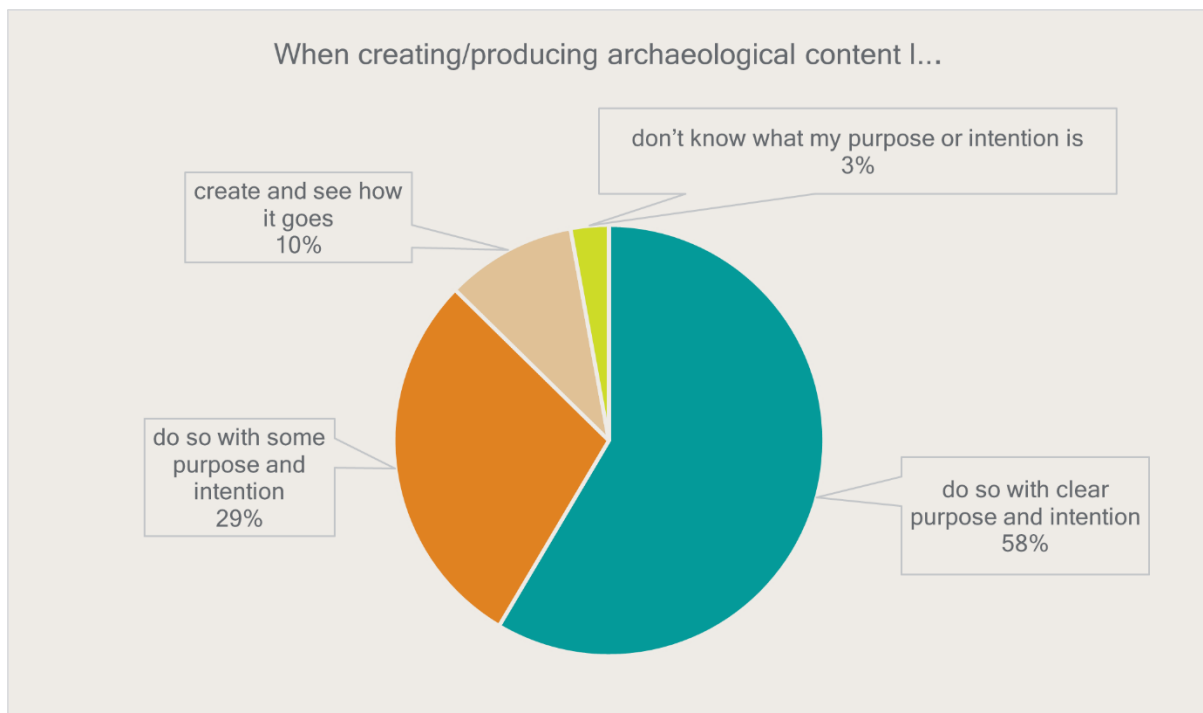
Figure 17: responses to producers asked to what degree they have a clear intention/purpose when creating archaeological content

Yet, as can be seen above, only 58% of respondents agreed that when producing they do so 'with clear purpose and intention'.
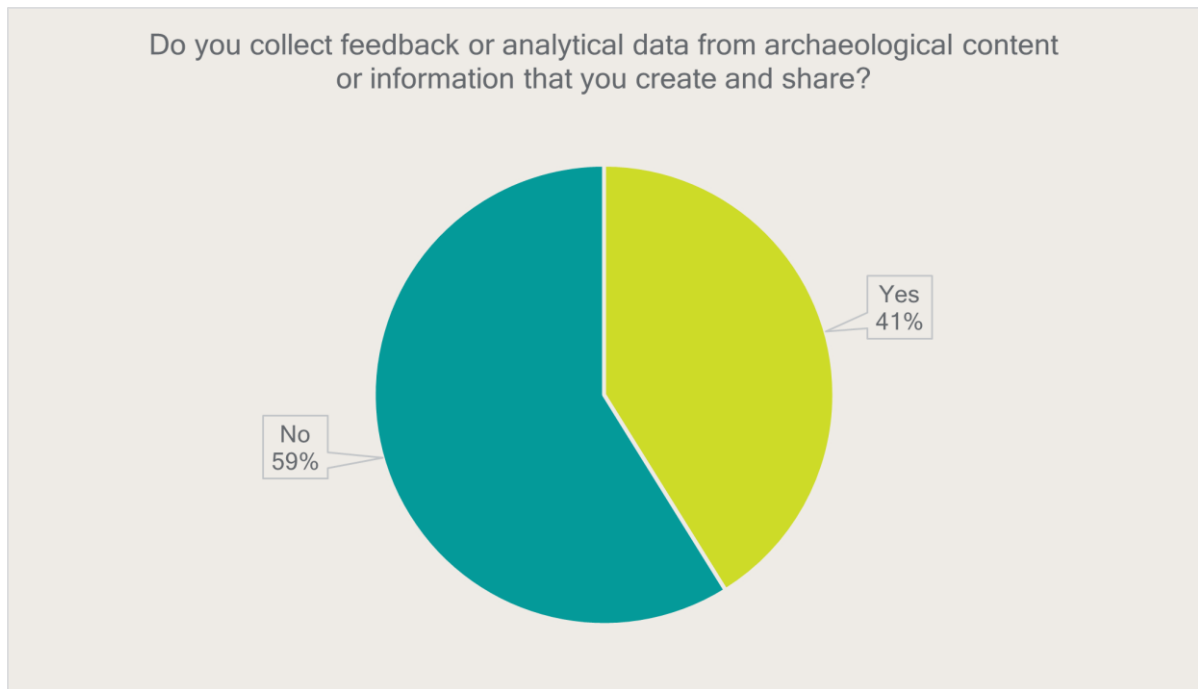
Figure 18: responses to producers asked if they collection feedback or analytical data from archaeological content

Additionally, 59% of respondents said they did not collect feedback or analytical data from the content they create and share (see above). This could be explained by the answer to the following question, where respondents disagreed that they had the budget and time to develop an understanding of their audiences.
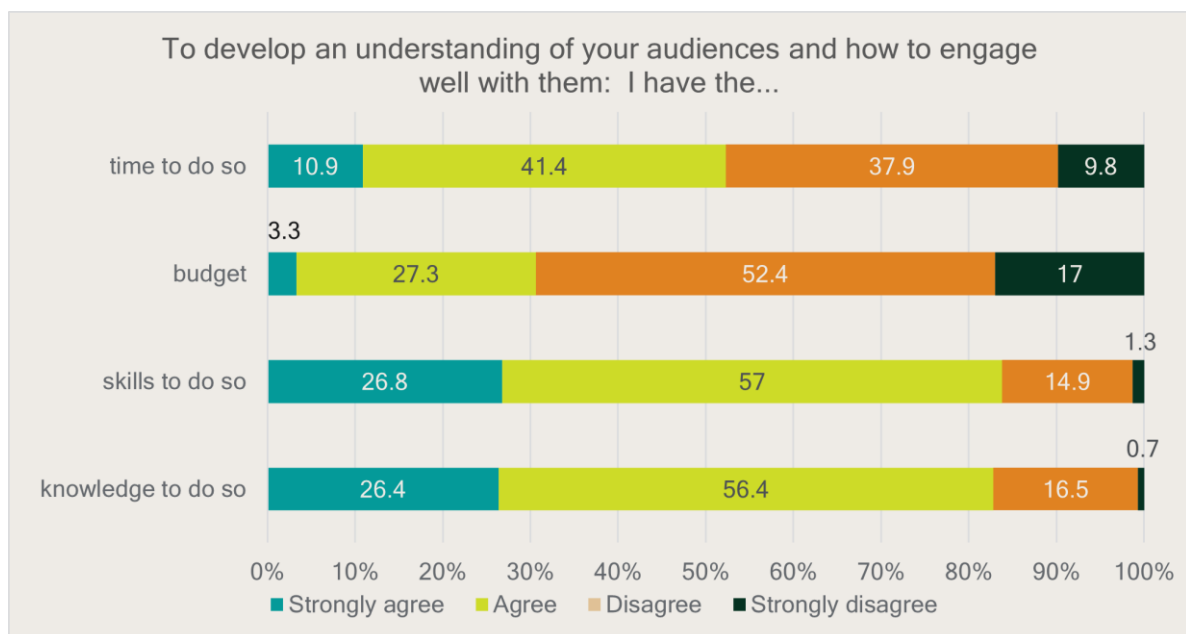
Figure 19: responses to producers asked if they had the budget, time, skills and/or knowledge to develop an understanding of their audience(s)

When producer participants were asked if they could provide an example of a time they felt successful in reaching or engaging their target audience, a significant number of examples involved direct interaction with an audience – e.g. doing site tours or lectures. One potential

explanation for this could be that, if some producers lack the time or budget to run an evaluation, situations where feedback can be gathered instantly may feel more successful.
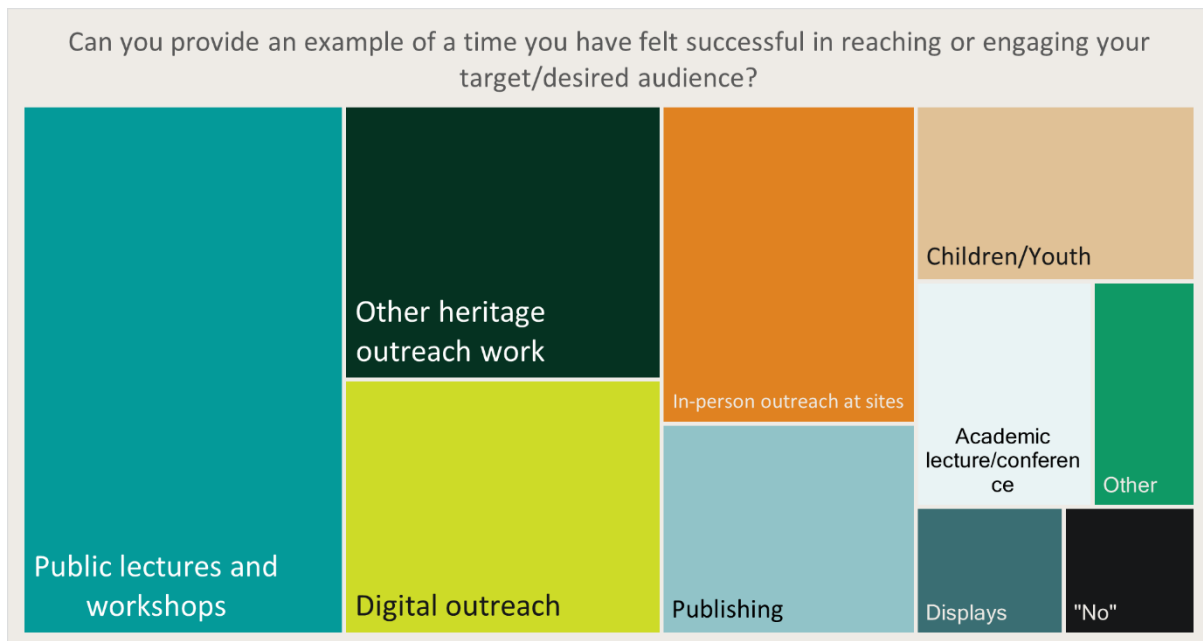
Figure 20: responses to producers asked to provide an example of a time they felt they had been successful in reaching a target audience

3.2.6 Purpose and Means of Content Production
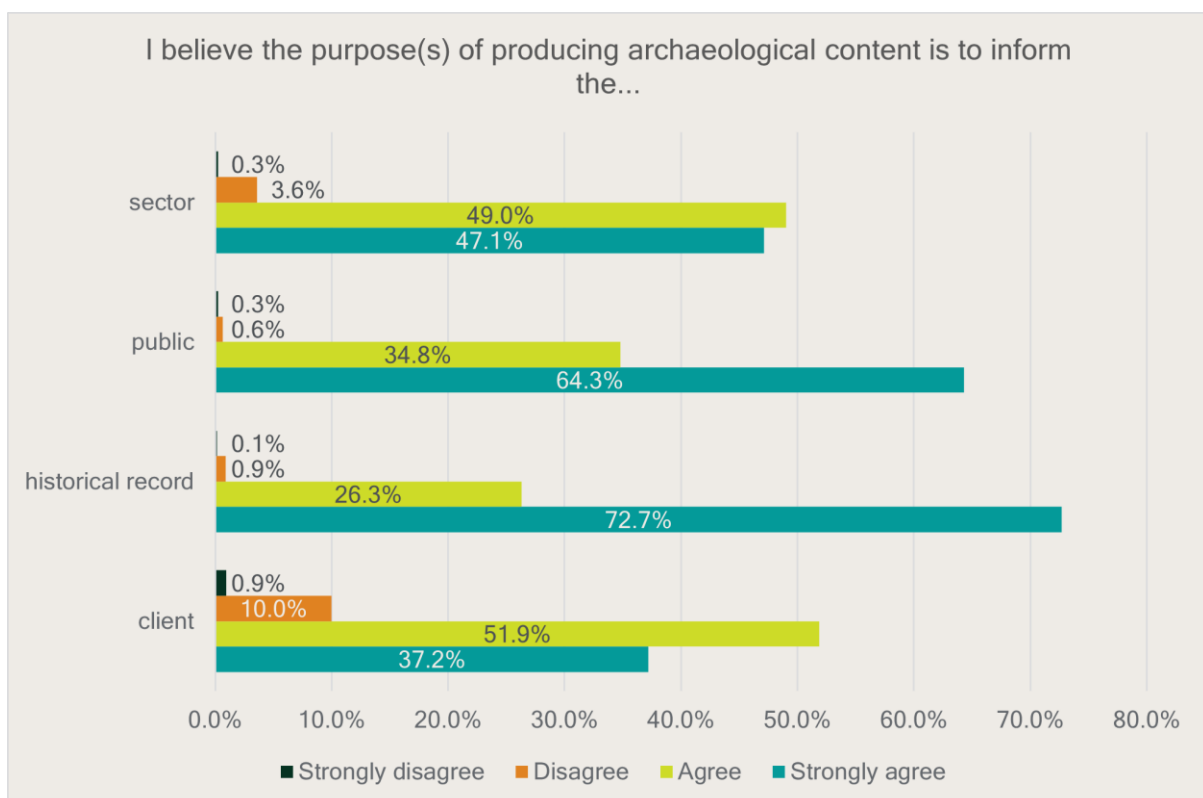
Figure 21: responses to producers asked about the purpose of producing archaeological content

99% of producers agreed or strongly agreed that the purpose of producing archaeological content is to inform the public and the historical record; however, they were more likely to strongly agree with the historical record as the purpose. 96% also agreed or strongly agreed that the purpose is to inform the sector, and 89% agreed or strongly agreed that the purpose is to inform the client. This last purpose was the least strongly agreed upon.
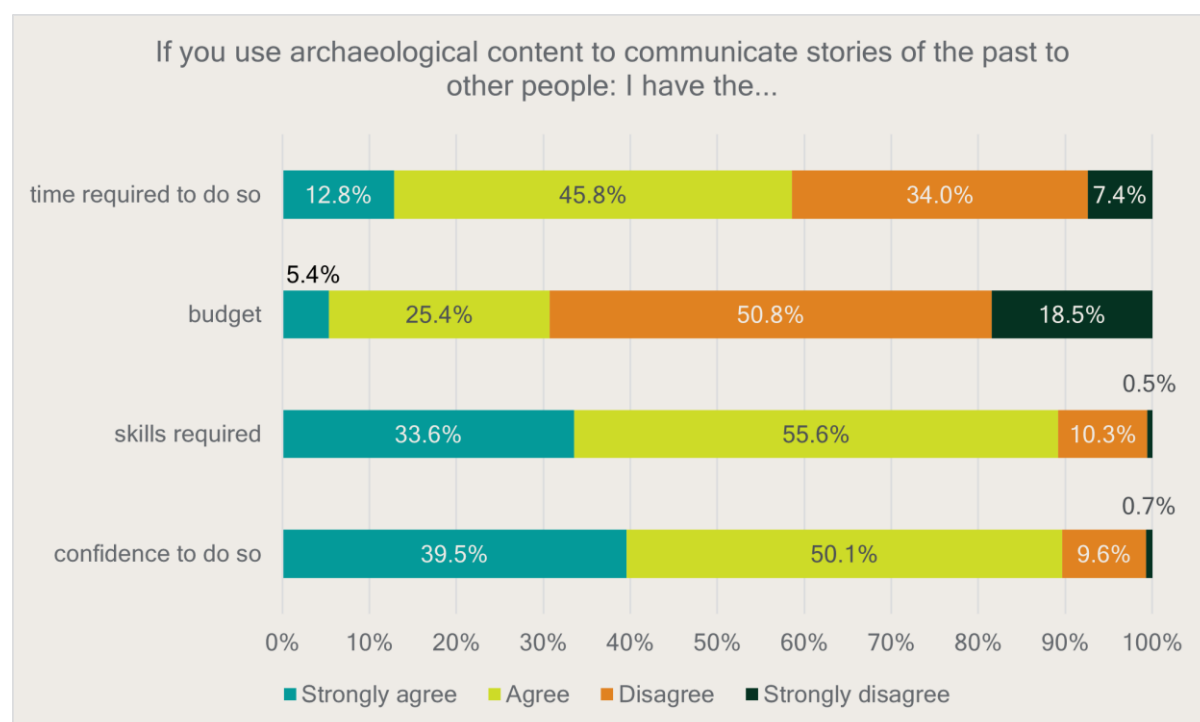
Figure 22: responses to producers asked if they have the time, budget, skills and/or confidence to communicate stories of the past

When it came to informing the public and communicating these stories, respondents agreed that they had the skills and confidence to do so, yet disagreed that they had the budget, and were less confident that they had the time required to do so.
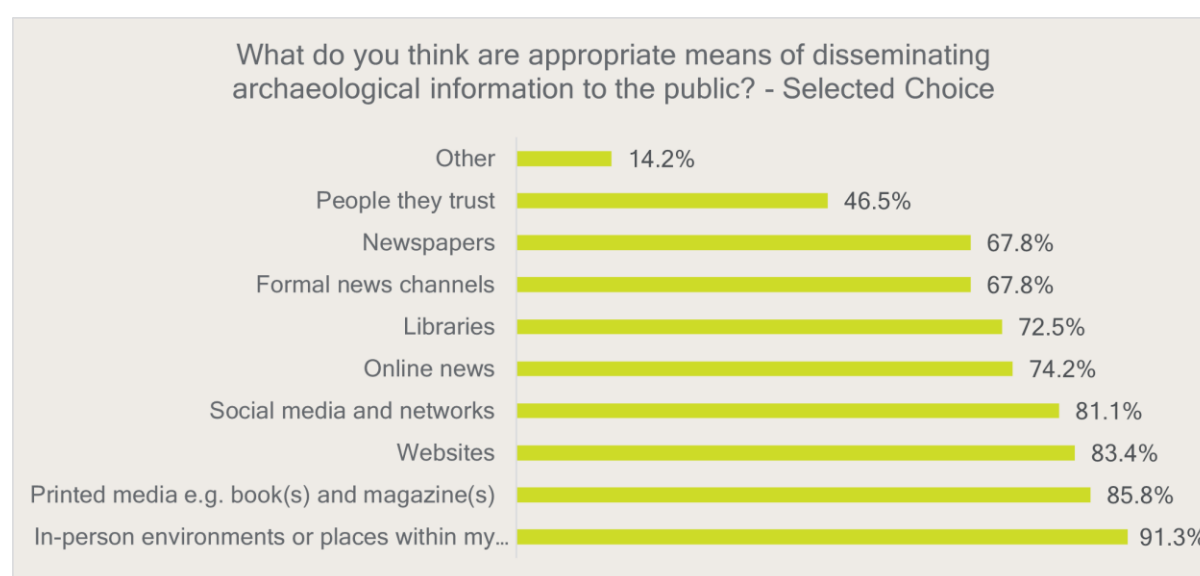
Figure 23: responses to producers asked about appropriate means of disseminating archaeological information

Lastly, when asked what the appropriate means were of disseminating archaeological information to the public, most respondents agreed that nearly all the given means were appropriate. The only option that less than half of respondents agreed with was 'people they trust'. The most popular means of dissemination was 'in-person environments or places within my community' at 91%, with printed media, websites, and social media following closely behind.

3.2.7 Consumption of Content

The following questions were posed to all respondents and focused on their experiences finding and taking in archaeological content.

Have you ever used any of the following types of content about, or involving, archaeology?

Content type	Percentage
Any other archaeological output(s) or content	3.9%
Virtual reality experience(s)	8.1%
Videogame(s)	8.2%
Visual media	11.4%
3D model(s)	18.4%
Policy/legislation document(s)	26.5%
Podcast(s)	28.0%
Blog(s)	31.3%
Pop-up/temporary displays	32.7%
Publications on specific subjects	35.9%
Radio programmes(s)	37.0%
Online magazine(s)	37.3%
Short or long-form video content online	38.3%
Social media post(s) or content	39.2%
Publications on heritage / management	41.1%
Digital imaging	42.9%
Fieldwork report(s)	43.4%
Museum collection catalogue(s)	54.1%
Digital archives(s)/archive(s)	55.1%
Digital lecture/talk(s)	55.1%
Archaeological data	59.2%
Fieldwork publication(s)	59.9%
Photograph(s)	62.7%
Newspaper articles	65.2%
Printed magazine(s)	68.5%
Journal article(s)	69.9%
In-person lecture/talk(s)	72.7%
Television programme(s)	73.5%
Archaeology websites	83.6%
Book(s)	86.6%

Figure 24: survey responses on the appropriate means of disseminating archaeological information to the public

The most popular type of archaeological content for respondents to have used was books. This was universal across all age groups (except under 18s, of which the sample was too small to draw any conclusions). This may be due to a skew in the audience profiles of respondents (which are mainly Known to Archaeology, while younger 'readers' might also be students) – essentially, further research is required. Equally, archaeology websites were the second most popular type of content to be used across all age groups. Social media and video content online proved to be much more popular with younger respondents, whereas printed magazines were more popular with older respondents.
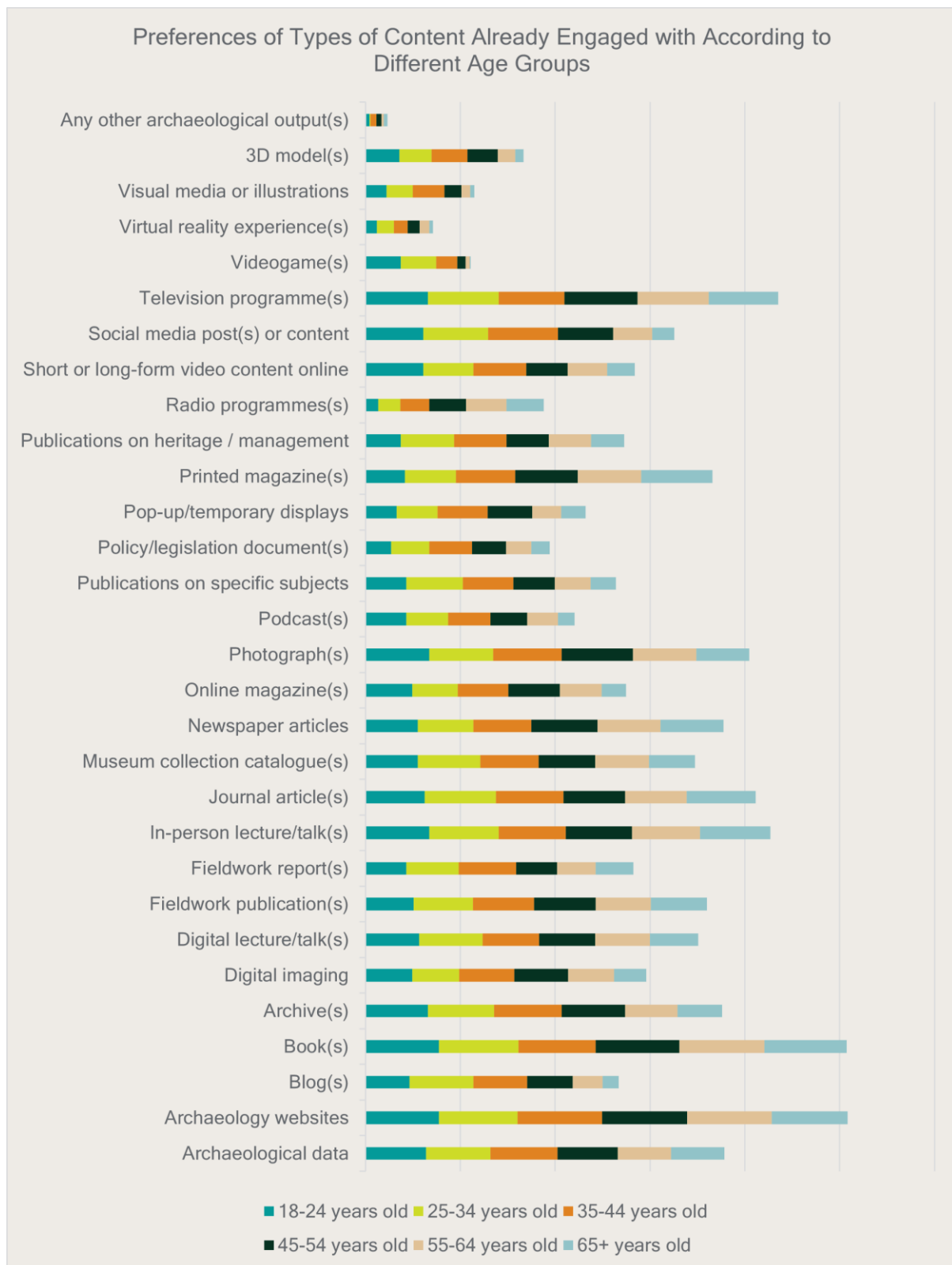
Figure 25: relationship between types of archaeological content engaged with and respondents' age

It is worth noting that the content most used by respondents does not align with what is most created by producers – for example, fieldwork reports/publications fall in the middle of what is most used, not at the top.

It is also important to consider that this question asked respondents what they had ever used, and not what they would like to use if given the choice.
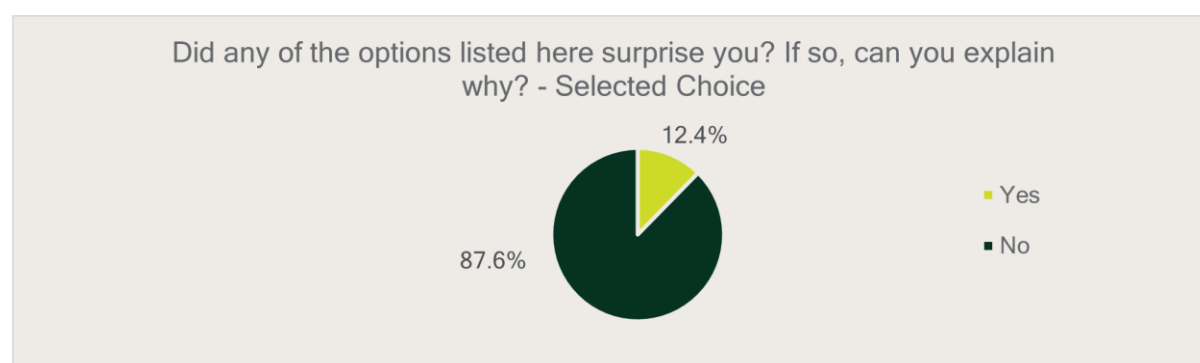
Figure 26: response to 'Did any of the [types of content] surprise you?'

When asked if any of the listed content options surprised them, most respondents answered 'no', but for those who were surprised the most frequent answer was that they did not realise videogames could be a place to find archaeological information.

Figure 27: response to 'Who do you trust to provide you with content or information?'

Most trusted to provide content or information were 'experts' and 'organisations'. However, since designing the survey the research team has reflected that the term 'expert' could have multiple meanings (e.g. local experts, specialists, per Schofield 2014), and merits deeper thought.
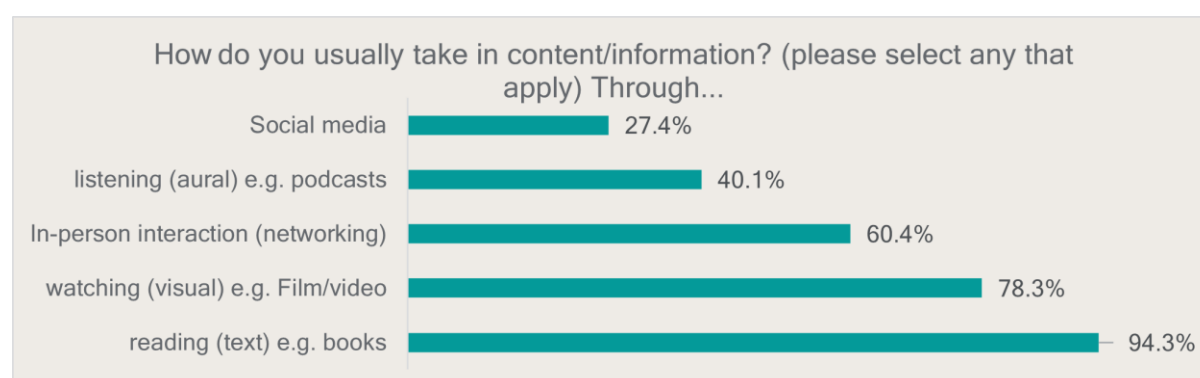
Figure 28: response to 'How do you usually take in information?'

Overall, the most popular method of taking in content/information was through reading, followed by watching.

However, when the relationship between the answers to this question and the respondent's age was considered, the nuance became slightly more complicated. The general shape of the answers remains the same; 'reading' is the most popular amongst all age groups, followed by 'watching', and 'in-person interaction'. However, for under 35s, 'social media' comes third, yet for over 35s 'listening' takes that place. Both 'listening' and 'in-person interaction' are the most popular in the 35–44 age group.
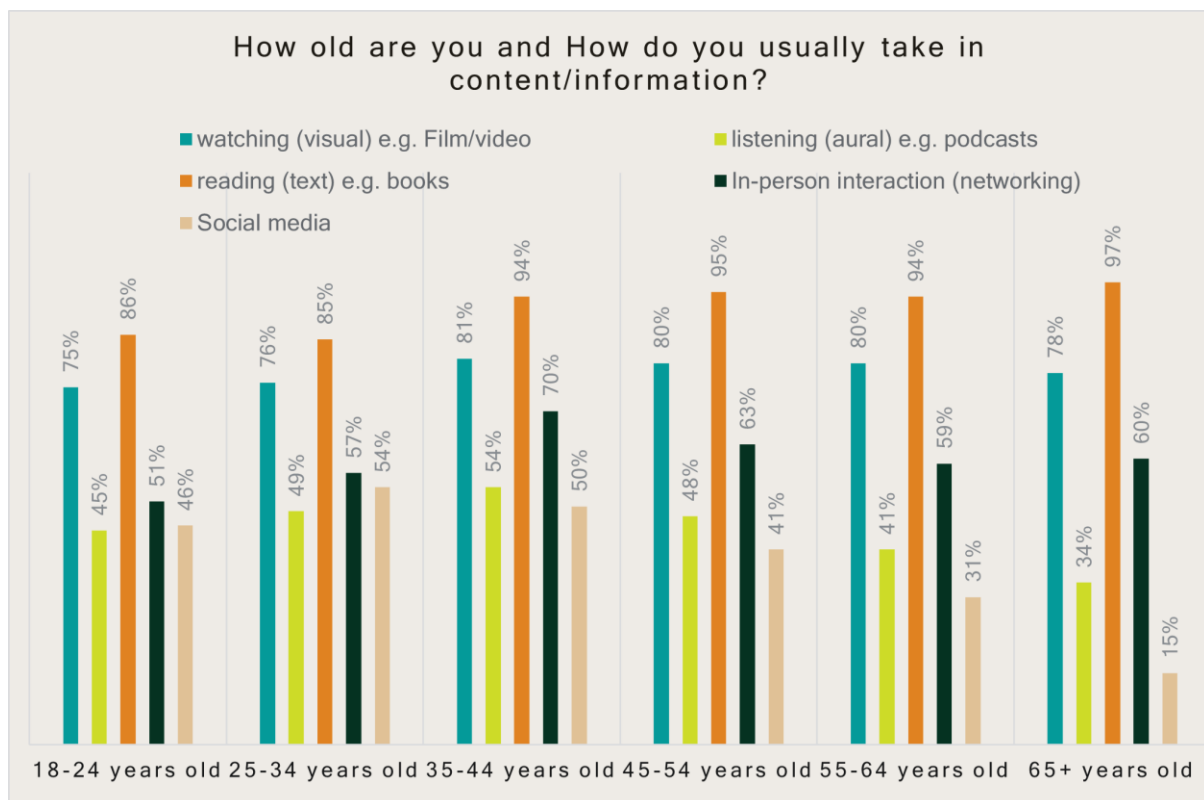
Figure 29: relationship between survey respondents' age and how they usually take in content/information

Like the above question, when respondents were asked how they usually find content/information, 'printed media' was the most popular answer.

How do you usually find content/information?

Source	Percentage
Other	4.1%
People you trust	30.5%
Newspapers	38.0%
Social media and networks	40.7%
Libraries	43.1%
In-person environments or places within my...	45.2%
Online articles or journals	46.4%
Formal news channels	46.9%
Websites	49.5%
Online news	51.2%
Printed media e.g. book(s) and magazine(s)	84.5%
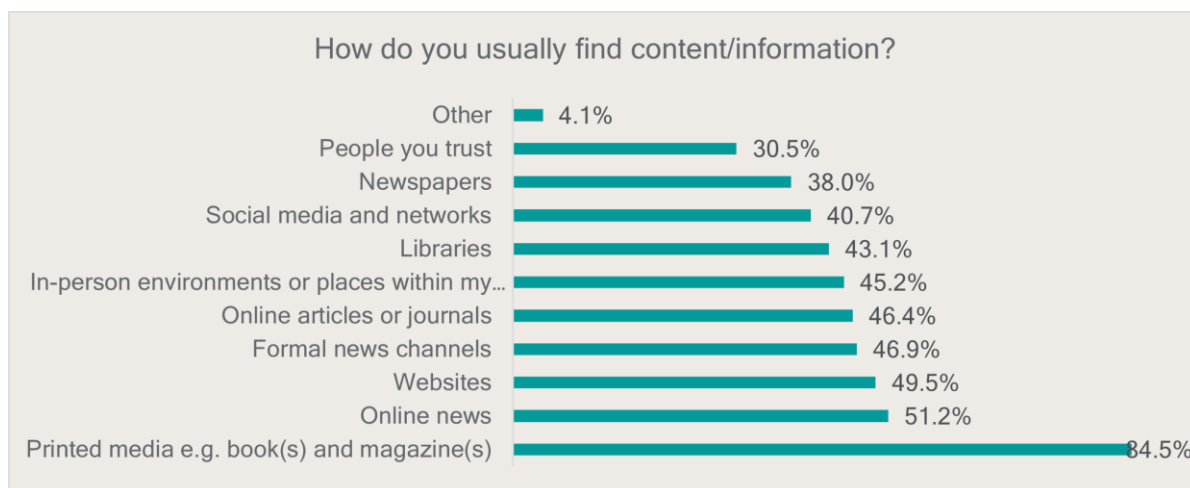
Figure 30: responses to the question 'How do you usually find content/information?'

Yet, when we compare this question to the ages of respondents, 'printed media' drops to third place for under 35s after 'social media' and 'online articles'.

How old are you and How do you usually find content/information?

Legend: ■ 65+ years old ■ 55-64 years old ■ 45-54 years old ■ 35-44 years old ■ 25-34 years old ■ 18-24 years old

Other
- 65+ years old: 5%
- 55-64 years old: 2%
- 45-54 years old: 6%
- 35-44 years old: 4%
- 25-34 years old: 4%
- 18-24 years old: 1%

Websites
- 65+ years old: 37%
- 55-64 years old: 64%
- 45-54 years old: 62%
- 35-44 years old: 70%
- 25-34 years old: 56%
- 18-24 years old: 44%

Social media and networks
- 65+ years old: 25%
- 55-64 years old: 42%
- 45-54 years old: 59%
- 35-44 years old: 65%
- 25-34 years old: 77%
- 18-24 years old: 70%

Online articles or journals
- 65+ years old: 31%
- 55-64 years old: 54%
- 45-54 years old: 61%
- 35-44 years old: 70%
- 25-34 years old: 72%
- 18-24 years old: 65%

Printed media e.g. book(s) and magazine(s)
- 65+ years old: 91%
- 55-64 years old: 85%
- 45-54 years old: 80%
- 35-44 years old: 78%
- 25-34 years old: 70%
- 18-24 years old: 59%

People you trust
- 65+ years old: 23%
- 55-64 years old: 32%
- 45-54 years old: 38%
- 35-44 years old: 44%
- 25-34 years old: 50%
- 18-24 years old: 33%

Online news
- 65+ years old: 42%
- 55-64 years old: 56%
- 45-54 years old: 64%
- 35-44 years old: 68%
- 25-34 years old: 63%
- 18-24 years old: 59%

Newspapers
- 65+ years old: 51%
- 55-64 years old: 32%
- 45-54 years old: 32%
- 35-44 years old: 19%
- 25-34 years old: 13%
- 18-24 years old: 9%

Libraries
- 65+ years old: 50%
- 55-64 years old: 37%
- 45-54 years old: 40%
- 35-44 years old: 28%
- 25-34 years old: 38%
- 18-24 years old: 33%

In-person environments or places within my community
- 65+ years old: 45%
- 55-64 years old: 46%
- 45-54 years old: 47%
- 35-44 years old: 46%
- 25-34 years old: 41%
- 18-24 years old: 44%

Formal news channels
- 65+ years old: 53%
- 55-64 years old: 42%
- 45-54 years old: 44%
- 35-44 years old: 39%
- 25-34 years old: 37%
- 18-24 years old: 36%

Figure 31: relationship between survey respondents' age and how they usually access content

Examining social media use further, YouTube stands out as the leading platform across all ages at 68.7%, with Facebook at 56%, followed by Instagram (29%), LinkedIn (20.8%), Twitter (20.3%), TikTok (5.8%) and Threads (3.2%). Although Facebook is popular amongst older respondents, Instagram is the most popular for younger respondents.
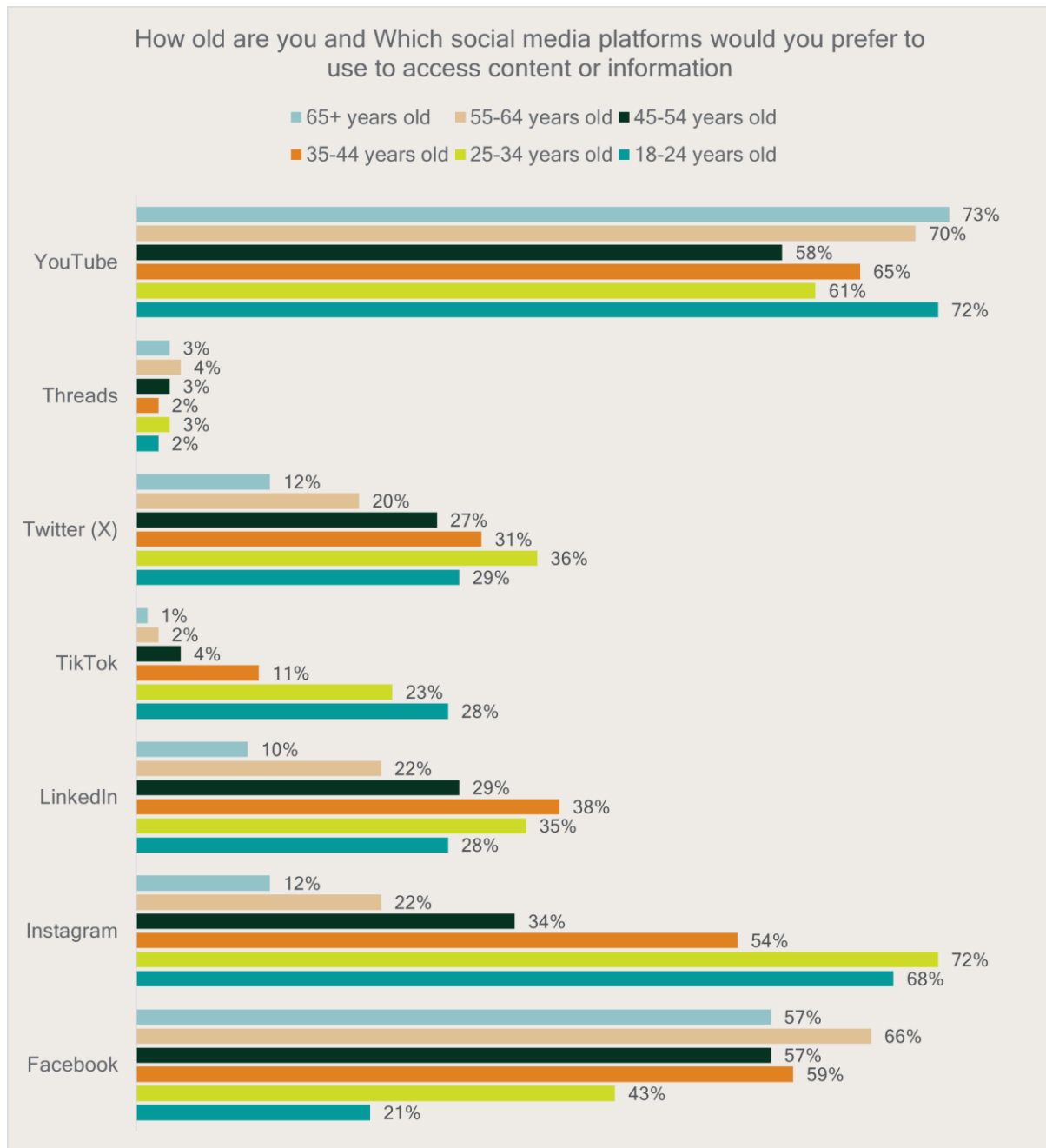
Figure 32: relationship between survey respondents' age and which social media platforms they prefer

The following question asked respondents to consider a series of statements to understand what role archaeological outputs should play.

How important do you consider the following? Information about archaeology should:

- tell a story
- teach me something new
- represent people that share my…
- involve lots of people
- inspire me to learn more
- include images
- connect me with people or places
- build my skillset
- be very intellectual
- be presented in a way that I usually…
- be online
- be memorable so that I can recall it at a…
- be kept updated
- be interactive
- be free
- be entertaining
- be easy to find
- be easy and simple to understand
- be brief

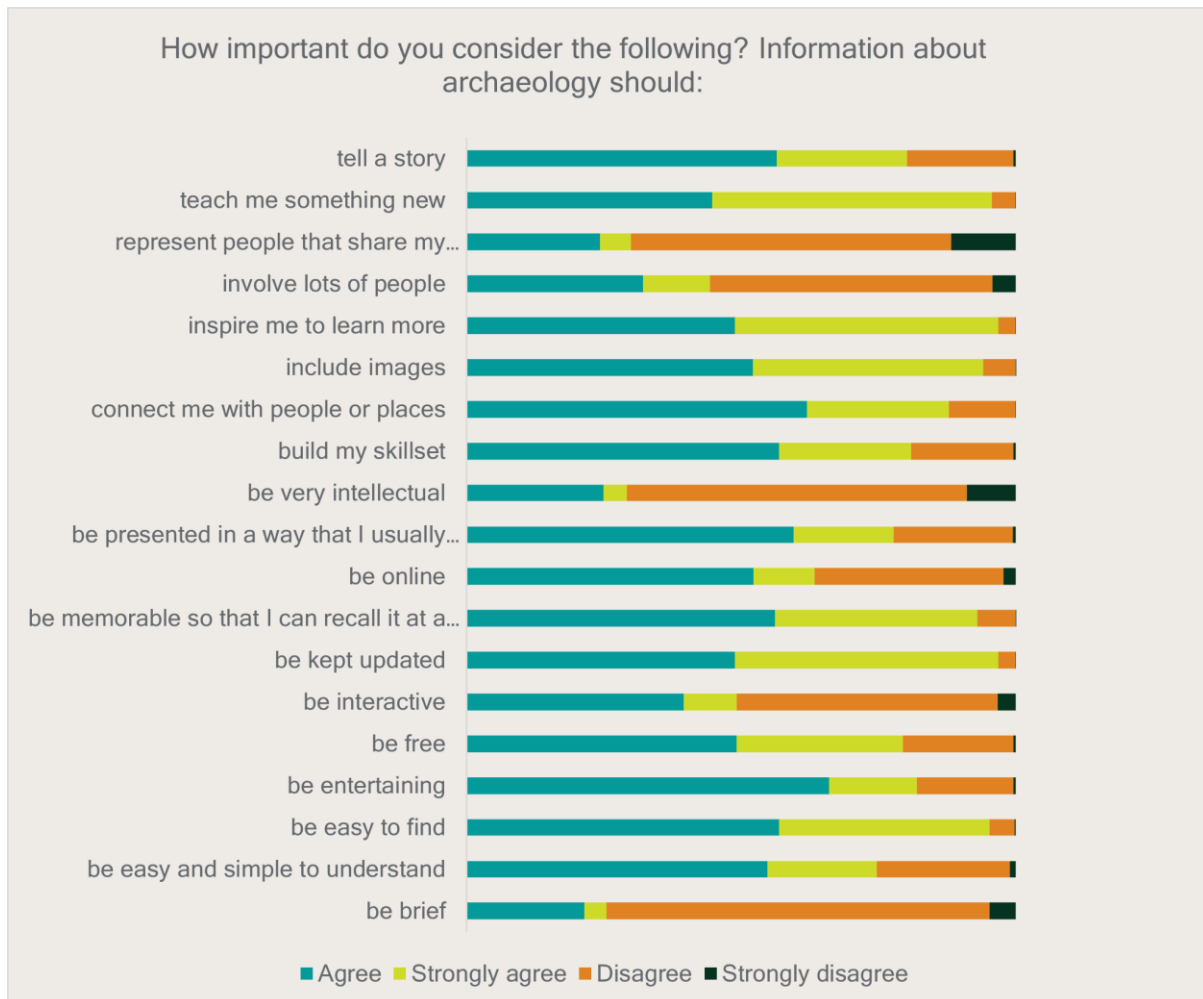■ Agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Figure 33: responses to what survey respondents value in archaeological information and content

The most disagreed-with statements were that archaeological information should: 'be brief', 'be very intellectual', 'involve lots of people', and 'represent people who share my heritage/identity'. The disagreement with the last statement should be considered in the context that the vast majority of the respondents to this survey were White British, and this answer may be different for those who come from backgrounds underrepresented in archaeological research, engagement and communication.

The most agreed-with statements were that archaeology should: 'be kept updated', 'include images', 'inspire me to learn more', and 'teach me something new'.

Certain statements were more popular amongst different age groups. For example, under 35s were more likely to agree that archaeological content should be 'free', 'interactive' and 'kept updated', 'build my skillset', 'connect me with people or places', and 'inspire me to learn more'. Older generations were more likely to disagree that archaeology should be 'presented in a way that I usually experience information'.

How much do you agree with the following?

Information or content about archaeology fits my needs
I want to experience more content or information about archaeology
I know how to find content or information about archaeology that is not available online
I know how to find content or information about archaeology online
I find there are barriers or issues when engaging with archaeological content and information
I feel that content or information about archaeology is targeted towards me

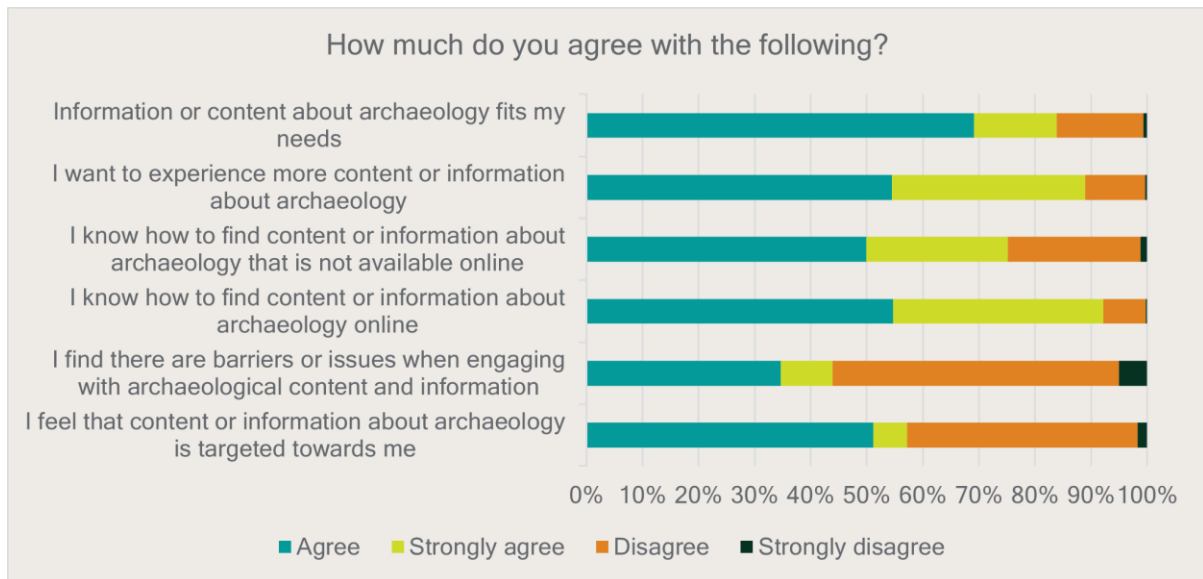Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Figure 34: survey respondents' experiences in accessing archaeological information

Answering the question around experiences in accessing archaeology, consumers mostly agreed or strongly agreed that archaeological information 'fitted their needs' and they 'know how to find archaeological information online'. However, opinion was split over the question about whether there were barriers when engaging with archaeological content (with 56% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing, versus 44% agreeing/strongly agreeing). Further division can be found in the response as to whether they felt 'content and information about archaeology is targeted towards me' – 57% agreed/strongly agreed versus 45% disagreed/strongly disagreed.

Please select the barriers or access issues you have encountered when experiencing content or information about archaeology.

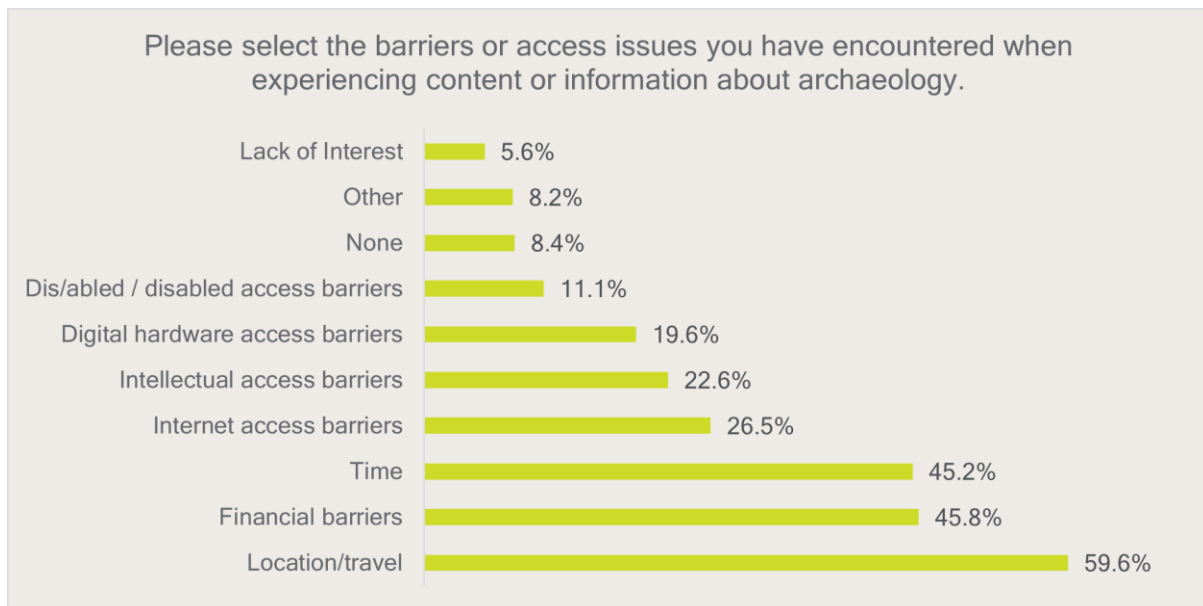| Barrier	Percentage
Lack of Interest	5.6%
Other	8.2%
None	8.4%
Dis/abled / disabled access barriers	11.1%
Digital hardware access barriers	19.6%
Intellectual access barriers	22.6%
Internet access barriers	26.5%
Time	45.2%
Financial barriers	45.8%
Location/travel	59.6%

Figure 35: barriers to accessing information about archaeology

Examining potential barriers more closely, location/travel, financial and time were the most-encountered access issues.

How old are you *and* Please select the barriers or access issues you have encountered when experiencing content or information about archaeology

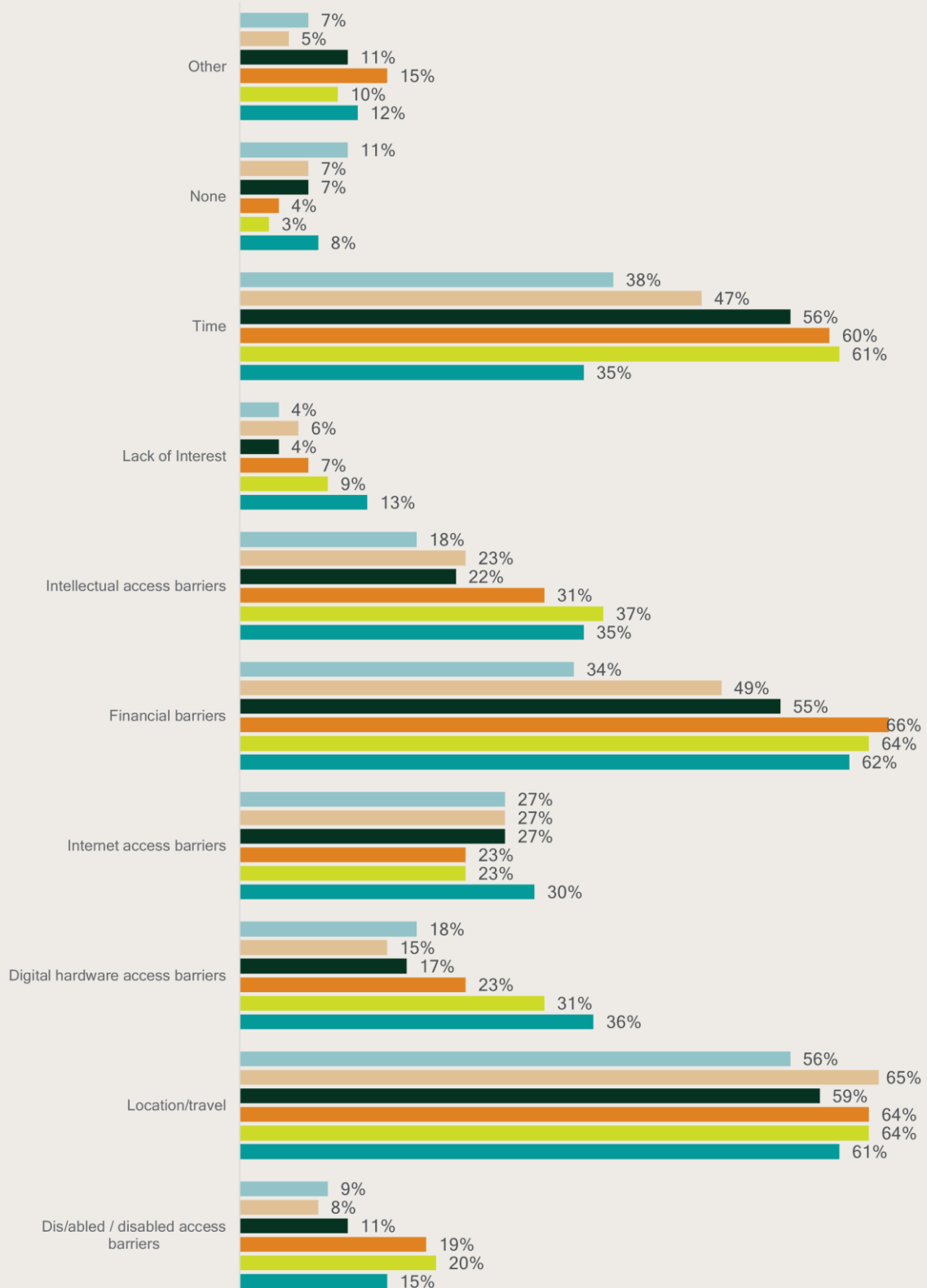Legend: ■ 65+ years old ■ 55-64 years old ■ 45-54 years old ■ 35-44 years old ■ 25-34 years old ■ 18-24 years old

Other
- 65+ years old: 7%
- 55-64 years old: 5%
- 45-54 years old: 11%
- 35-44 years old: 15%
- 25-34 years old: 10%
- 18-24 years old: 12%

None
- 65+ years old: 11%
- 55-64 years old: 7%
- 45-54 years old: 7%
- 35-44 years old: 4%
- 25-34 years old: 3%
- 18-24 years old: 8%

Time
- 65+ years old: 38%
- 55-64 years old: 47%
- 45-54 years old: 56%
- 35-44 years old: 60%
- 25-34 years old: 61%
- 18-24 years old: 35%

Lack of Interest
- 65+ years old: 4%
- 55-64 years old: 6%
- 45-54 years old: 4%
- 35-44 years old: 7%
- 25-34 years old: 9%
- 18-24 years old: 13%

Intellectual access barriers
- 65+ years old: 18%
- 55-64 years old: 23%
- 45-54 years old: 22%
- 35-44 years old: 31%
- 25-34 years old: 37%
- 18-24 years old: 35%

Financial barriers
- 65+ years old: 34%
- 55-64 years old: 49%
- 45-54 years old: 55%
- 35-44 years old: 66%
- 25-34 years old: 64%
- 18-24 years old: 62%

Internet access barriers
- 65+ years old: 27%
- 55-64 years old: 27%
- 45-54 years old: 27%
- 35-44 years old: 23%
- 25-34 years old: 23%
- 18-24 years old: 30%

Digital hardware access barriers
- 65+ years old: 18%
- 55-64 years old: 15%
- 45-54 years old: 17%
- 35-44 years old: 23%
- 25-34 years old: 31%
- 18-24 years old: 36%

Location/travel
- 65+ years old: 56%
- 55-64 years old: 65%
- 45-54 years old: 59%
- 35-44 years old: 64%
- 25-34 years old: 64%
- 18-24 years old: 61%

Dis/abled / disabled access barriers
- 65+ years old: 9%
- 55-64 years old: 8%
- 45-54 years old: 11%
- 35-44 years old: 19%
- 25-34 years old: 20%
- 18-24 years old: 15%

44

Time is much less of a barrier for 18—24 year olds, sharply rising for 25—34 year olds. Financial barriers were more of an issue for 35-44 year olds than older generations. The way these barriers made respondents feel are captured below:
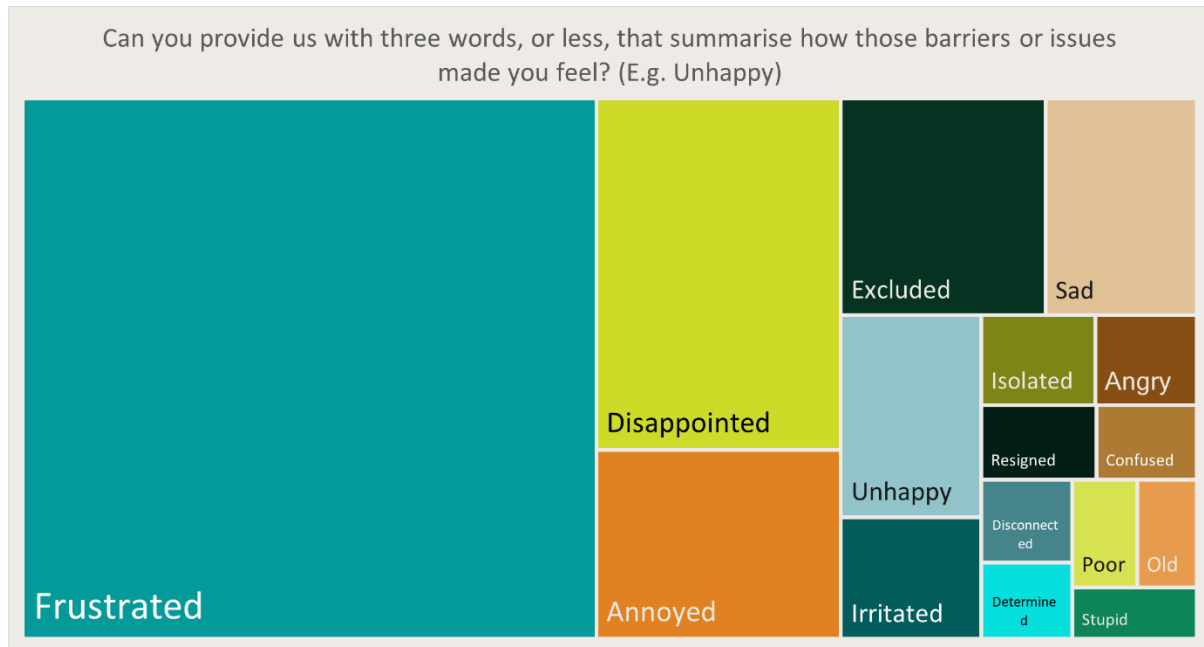

Figure 37: summary of survey respondents' feelings towards barriers in accessing information

The following question was a free-text question allowing participants to write freely, and the most common themes are presented below:
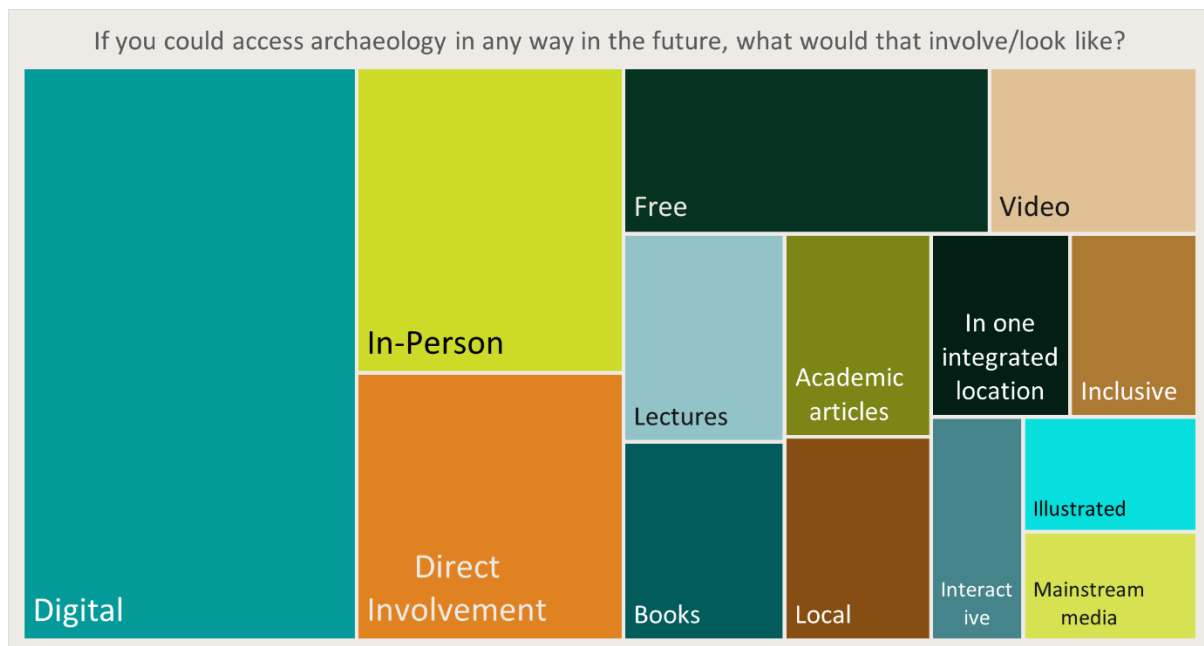

Figure 38: summary of how survey respondents' want to access archaeological information in the future

The most popular way to access archaeology for respondents is 'digital', but 'in-person' is still very popular. It is important to note that these themes were not exclusive, and that some respondents wanting in-person interaction also mentioned a desire for digital engagement as well.
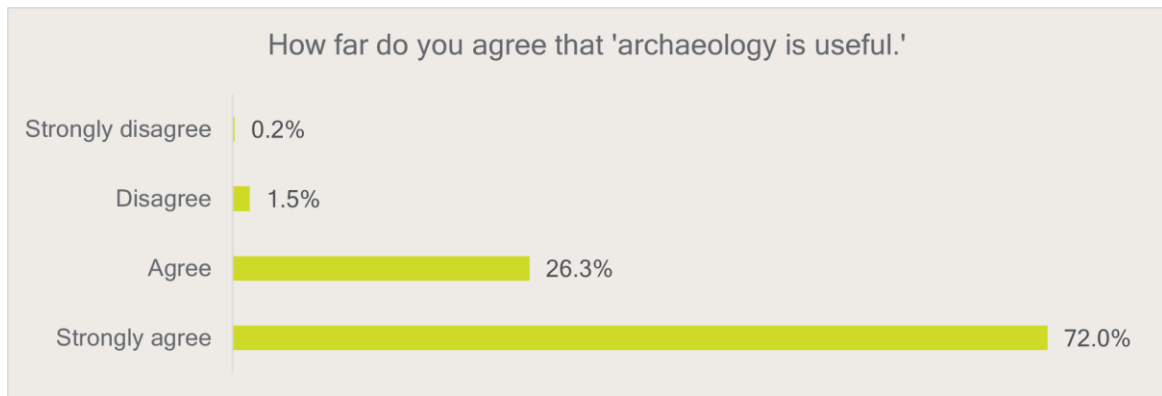

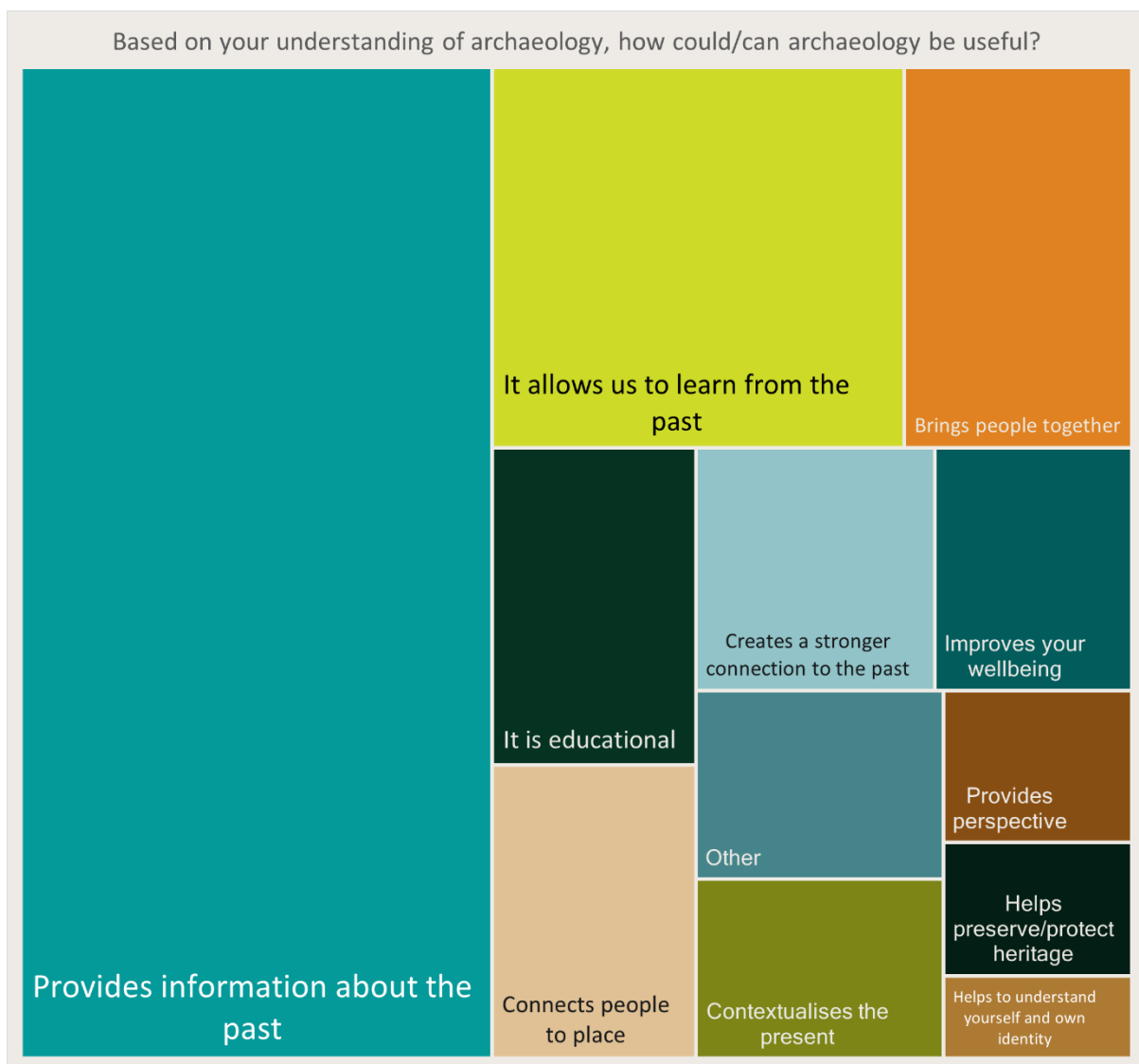Figure 39: responses to 'How far do you agree that 'archaeology is useful'?'

Figure 40: responses to 'Based on your understanding of archaeology, how could/can archaeology be useful?'

For the last free-text question of the survey (above), participants were asked first whether they thought archaeology could be useful, which was largely strongly agreed with, then how it could be useful.

The most common answer was that archaeology provides information about the past, but importantly its value as an educational tool was recognised, as well as its role in creating connections between people, the past and places. It was also recognised for its wellbeing outcomes. These themes highlight expectations (e.g. providing information is more general than deeper educational engagement, whereas 'learning from the past' tends more to future application of lessons) that people have for archaeology and that could impact their engagement levels.

3.3 Reflections on the Survey

The survey was the most successful method in terms of receiving high numbers (unexpectedly so!). Feedback on the survey from respondents was overall positive:
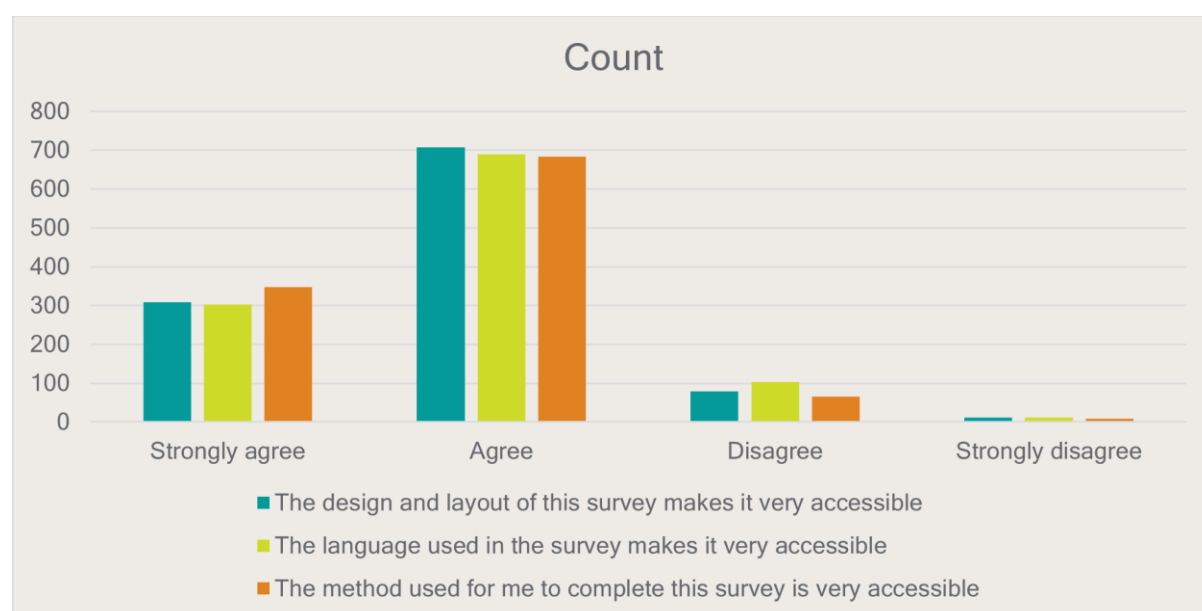

Figure 41: survey respondents' feedback on the design, layout and method of the survey

298 participants also gave qualitative feedback about their experience of the survey:

Topic (not discrete)	Number	Percentage
Needs more nuanced or neutral options (in Likert ratings)	93	31%
Confusing	35	12%
Too long/not clear on length	28	9%
Experienced technical problems	26	9%
Leading questions/bias in the survey	25	8%
Inaccessible	16	5%
Good/helpful survey	15	5%
Too wordy	11	4%

Not sure the purpose of the survey	9	3%
No	8	3%
Participants adding more context to their answers	6	2%
Typos	6	2%
Generally poorly written	4	1%
Dislike of the term dis/abled	4	1%
Other	43	14%

Table 4: qualitative feedback on survey design and structure

Along with the skew in demographic reach, the above feedback shows that more could be done to the design of the survey to ensure it was inclusive and accessible (see Qualtrics 2025). This may also reflect the lack of participants with disabilities taking part in the survey. We did not include an option to feedback/identify as living with different types of disability or neurodiversities. Given that other surveys have shown there is a higher percentage of neurodiversity in the archaeology sector (Landward Research 2020), neurodiversity is something that the project team recommends be better incorporated into future research.

Moving on from the design, the circulation of the survey was recognised as limited (reflecting how the CBA and MOLA platforms reached certain demographics). The project team was advised on strategies to reach beyond the usual audiences, including targeting interest groups and professional groups (e.g. Museum Detox). However, capacity, and the need to take time to enable analysis, precluded such steps – they are acknowledged in the recommendations for future projects.

Lastly, the respondents were not invited to self-identify as Known, New or Archaeology: Why Me?, as such a selection was deemed more nuanced than could be imparted within the context of the survey. However, this meant that the project team could not map back directly to the three audience segments, which again is a pragmatic lesson learned for future projects.

4 RESULTS OF WORKSHOPS

4.1 Analysis of Workshops

A total of 290 people participated in the online and in-person workshops. All workshops were audio recorded and transcribed (with one exception, being the pilot at the Crannog Centre – Festival of Archaeology). These transcriptions were then analysed, along with the creative outputs from the workshop (the collages and storyboards), using content and thematic analysis methods. Firstly, emerging themes within the content of the transcripts, collages and storyboards were captured within a table. For instance, a collage featuring cut-out pictures of archaeologists excavating along with images of Roman pottery, a sheep and Stonehenge, would be included in the table as four separate entries: pottery, animals, standing stones, and 'process of doing archaeology'.

We then used the transcripts from the conversations around the collages to provide context for the images and help identify what they were and what they meant to the participants, to capture the 'reason' behind the inclusion. This data was taken from the transcript and any notes that the participant had added to their collage to explain their choice. For instance, if a participant said: 'I included a picture of a sheep because I am a keen knitter, and I'm interested in animal domestication and textile history' this would be added to the 'why' section of the table next to 'animal domestication/textile history'. This could then be placed under several themes such as 'day-to-day heritage' and 'connection to creative work/craft'. This process is interpretative and iterative, with themes being developed as the researcher is exposed to more data.

A similar process was also carried out for the storyboards, using tables covering what the archaeological story being told was, their method of telling that story and the audience.
Once these tables were complete for the entire workshop, they were analysed. We identified and counted any common inclusions and placed together any common themes in categories to be able to examine any shared characteristics of the collages and storyboards more easily. Notes were also made on each workshop to capture any other topics of discussion that were not part of the two creative exercises.

Lastly, we compared the data pertaining to each audience group using word frequencies, reflective notes and looking at all other collated data, to identify and create comprehensive categories of themes and draw any overarching conclusions. The below is an example of one of the collages.
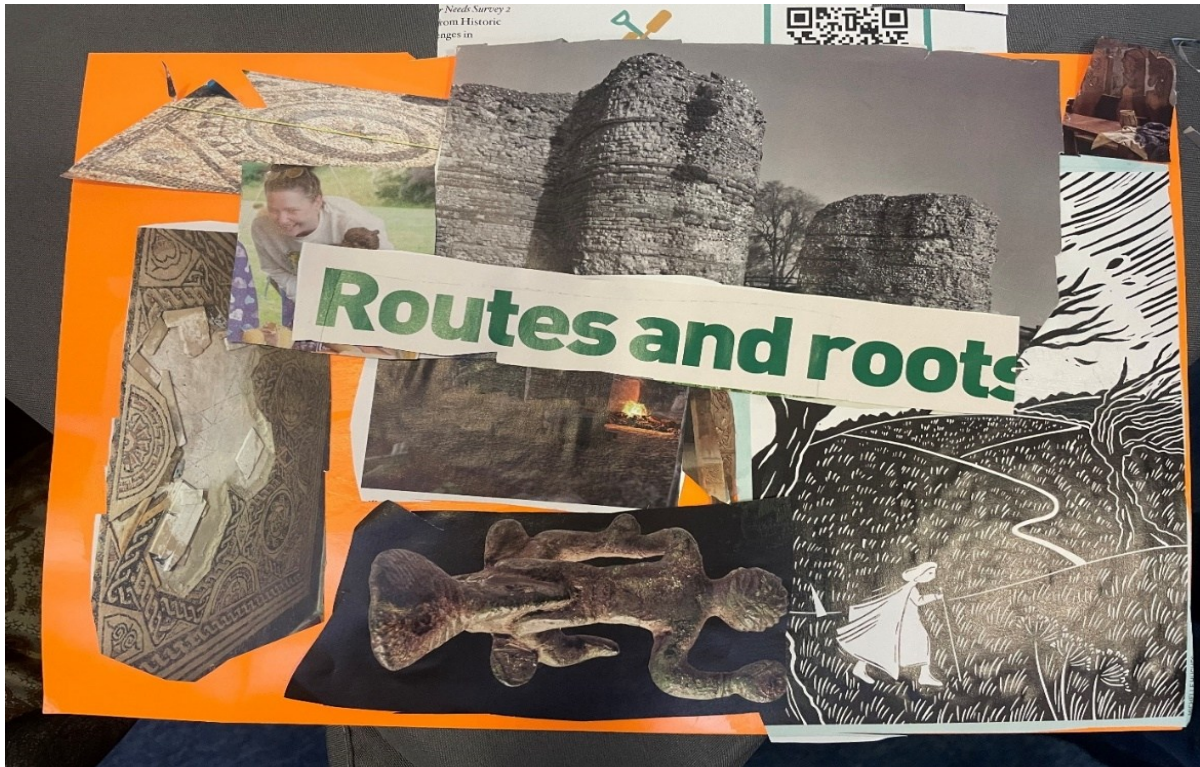
Figure 42: an example of a participant collage created during an in-person workshop

4.2 Findings

Figure 43: summary of the 'what 3 words' [do you think of when you think about archaeology] ice breaker used during workshops

Not surprisingly, the two most common themes emerging from the 'what three words' activity focused upon history and a reference to a period of time (i.e. 'ancient', 'the past', 'Medieval period' etc.) or 'fieldwork' (and other themes to do with archaeological process – i.e.

'digging', 'research', 'mud'). Another key theme were words that centred around 'intangible heritage' – including crafts, oral traditions, songs, cooking etc. (UNESCO 2025). The highest number of intangible heritage references came from the AAWAZ[5] group (see also the case study with the Kurdish Women's and Youth Groups below). Furthermore, there were other words to do with the experience of discovery – e.g. awe inspiring, wonder, curiosity etc. – highlighting participants' emotional connection to their conception of archaeology or the past.
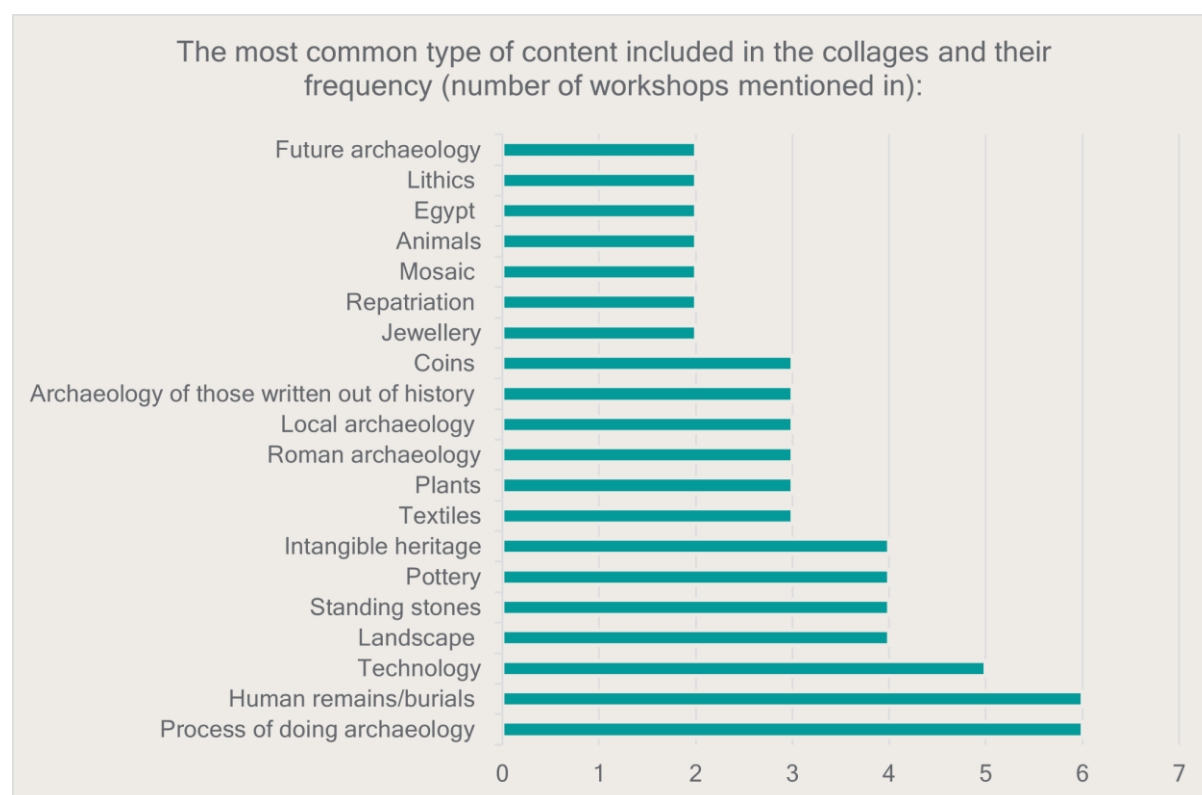
Figure 44: summary of the most common type of content/story used in collages created during workshops

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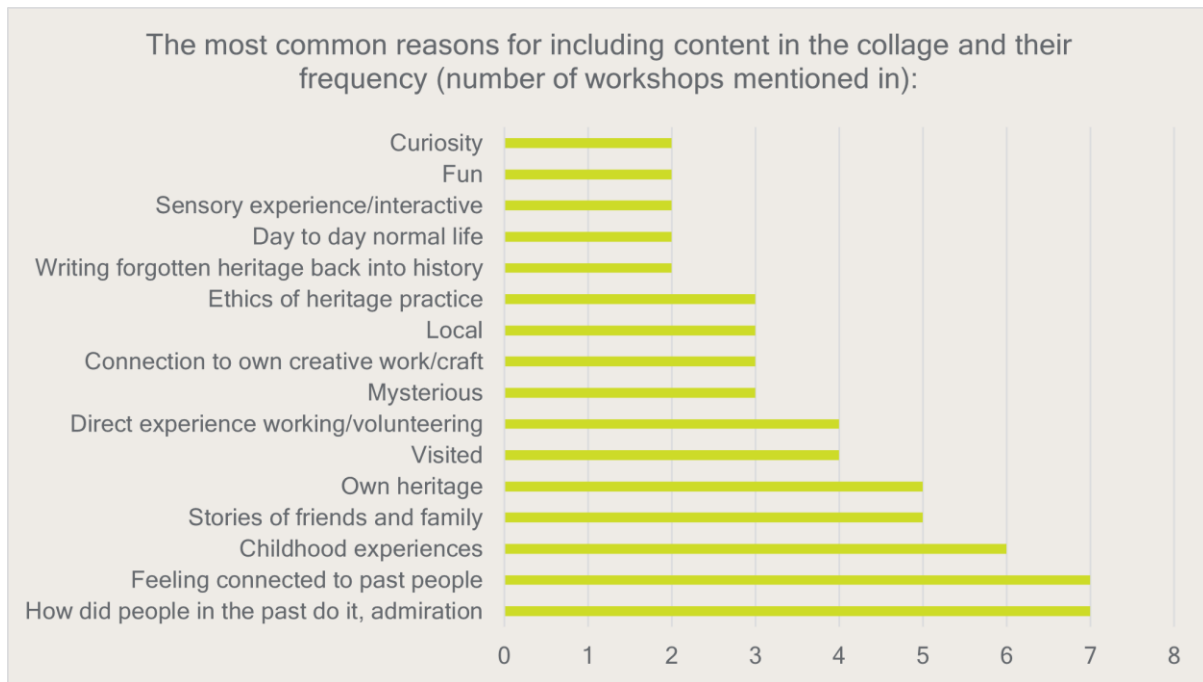
Figure 45: summary of the most common reasons for including content/stories in collages created during workshops

The content of collages is extremely wide ranging and the reasons for their inclusion are equally complex, including a curiosity for how people managed in the past and even the ethics of heritage practice. As such the following takeaways have been put forward:

- The participants did not shy away from hard conversations; there were discussions surrounding the ethics of digging, representation, repatriation and the impact of wider politics on historical narratives.
- There is an emphasis on the importance of daily life: elites (i.e. rulers, monarchs, historical celebrities) were not mentioned often.
- There is a curiosity about how things are done. Both the process of excavation and particularly how people in the past did things.
- Local is important, but people often mention things far away and always did if their home country was not in the UK.
- Personal heritage is important for some groups, but not necessarily a focus for others (see table below for more insight).
- What future archaeologists would think of us now was an intriguing theme for participants, and sometimes wove in themes of sustainability and climate change etc.
- If participants undertook a craft or hobby themselves, this would always be reflected on within their collages.
- Textual/numerical information, such as titles, facts, figures and maps, was often included within the collages.
- Other key themes included human relationships with animals, landscape, burials and religion.

Storyboards: how people would like to share specific archaeological stories

During the storyboard activity participants were invited to think about the themes they'd captured in their collages and draw from these to focus on specific stories that they would like to share with other people. Three specific questions were asked: What are Your Specific Stories, How Would You Tell Your Story (what media)? and Who Would You Tell Them To? The results were thematically analysed and indicate the following:
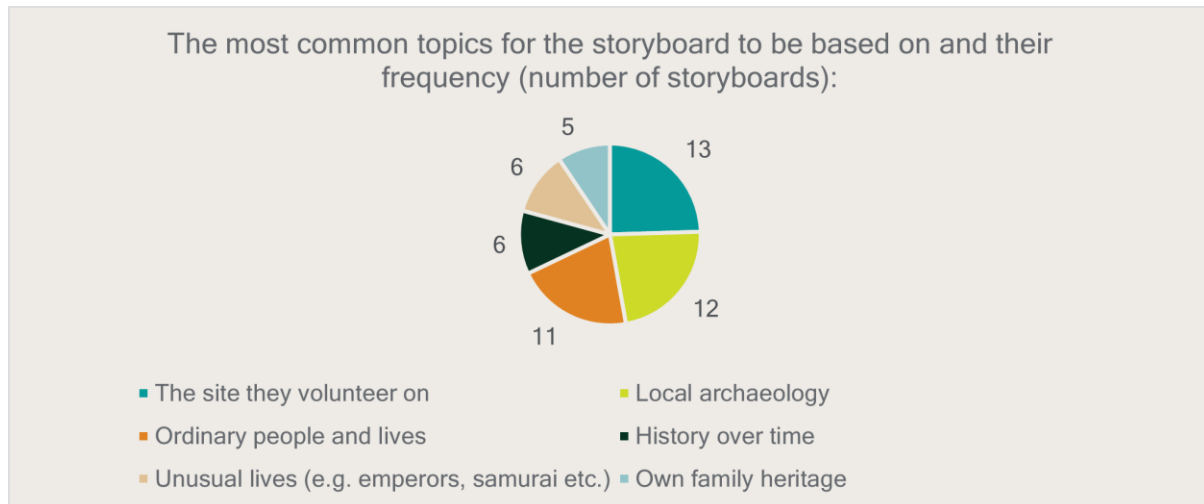

Figure 46: common topics for storyboards created during workshops
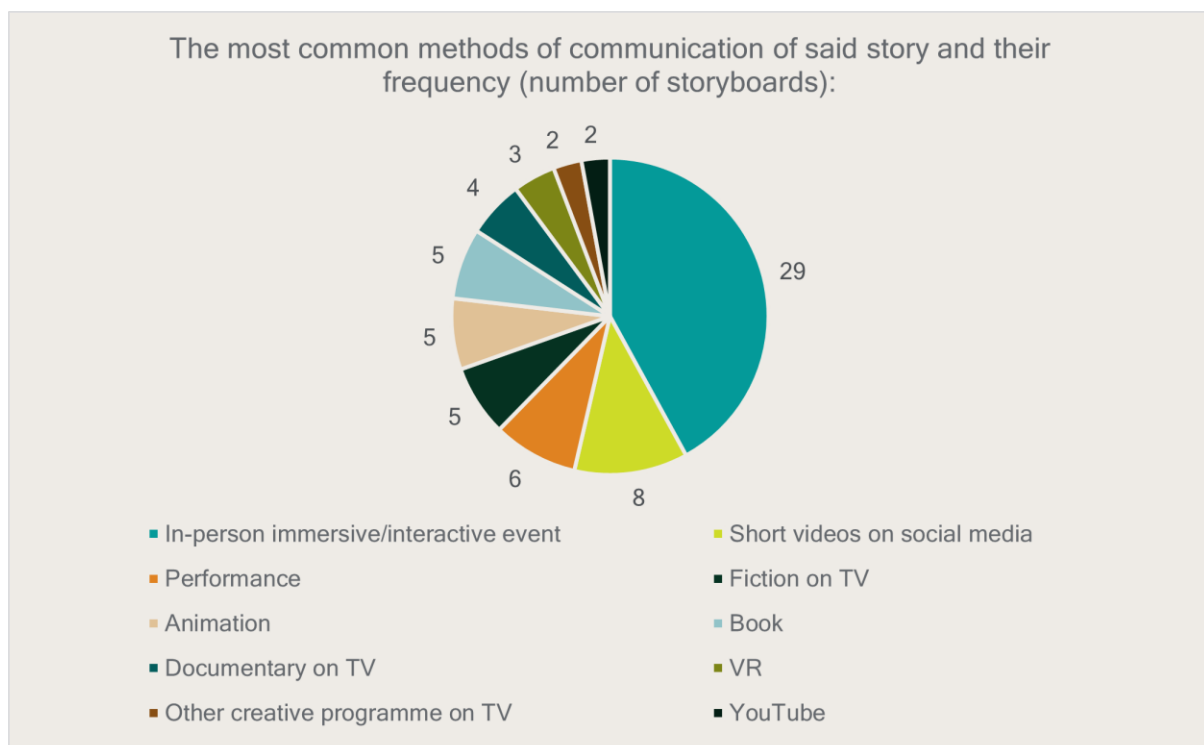
Figure 47: how workshop participants wanted their story to be shared
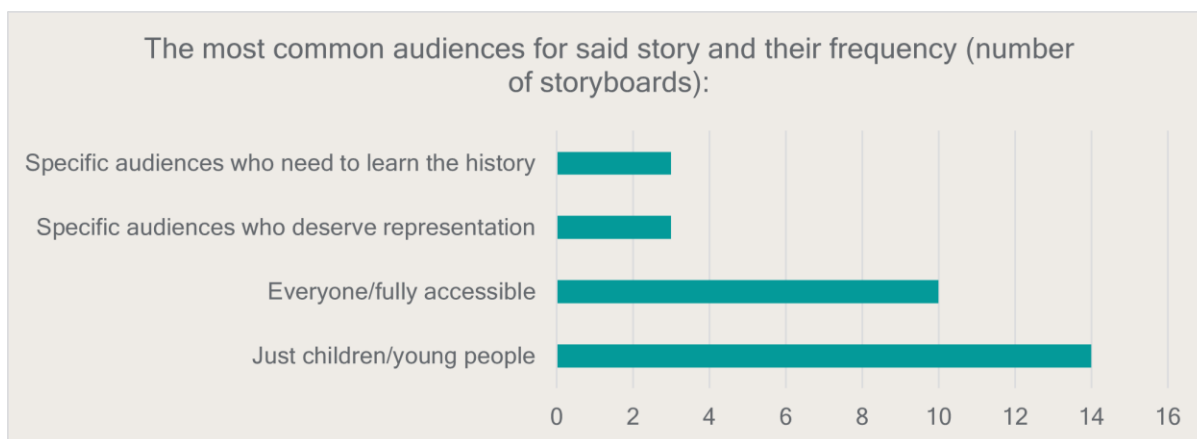
Figure 48: who workshop participants created their storyboards for

Considering this data and other reflections upon the transcripts, the storyboard activity shows us that:

- Interactive and immersive experiences were a popular choice for telling archaeological stories.
- Participants often wanted to show things changing through time (including live-feed excavations or ways to show changing landscapes).
- Again, a strong focus for participants was about bringing ordinary experiences and people to life – the excitement of seeing someone's authentic daily life.
- Many participants mentioned wanting to reconnect children with in-person things and their heritage.
- Accessibility was also mentioned regularly, even within groups who were not specifically placed within the demographic of 'audiences facing barriers'.
- There was also a strong desire among many participants not to glamorise and to be as accurate as possible in their desire to bring stories to life.

Further work has been completed to compare the different audiences' focus, through considering word frequencies within the transcripts and themes on collages and storyboards:

In person workshop	Key themes	Online workshop	Key themes
Festival of Archaeology: Known/New to Archaeology – The Scottish Crannog Centre	No record of dialogue: emphasis on visual and digital interactions through 'sticker' data capture	**ESOL group: New to Archaeology/Archaeology: Why Me? – Ethnic minority, Thurrock**	Landscapes Own heritage (home countries)
CAER Heritage Consultation x 2: Known/New to Archaeology – Cardiff	Craft (intangible heritage) Landscapes/standing stones	**AAWAZ: Archaeology: Why Me? – Ethnic minority, Blackburn**	Stories of friends and family Craft (intangible heritage) Writing forgotten heritage back into history (for children) Own heritage (home country)

Roman Carlisle x 2: Known/New to Archaeology – Carlisle	Process of doing archaeology Childhood experiences	**GDA online: Archaeology: Why Me? – Audience facing barriers, Glasgow**	Sensory experience/interactive Process of doing archaeology
Dagenham Young Carers: Archaeology: Why Me? – Youth group, London	Human remains/burials Day-to-day archaeology How did they do it in the past?	**VIP – Eyes for Positivity: Archaeology: Why Me? – Audience facing barriers, London**	Sensory experience/interactive (supportive of future technology) Landscapes (accessibility)
Glasgow Disability Alliance: Archaeology: Why Me? – Audience facing barriers, Glasgow	Craft (intangible heritage) Ethics of heritage work Sensory experience/interactive	**ScotInform1: Archaeology: Why Me? – Emergent, Scotland general**	Landscapes Ethics of heritage work Day-to-day archaeology How did they do it in the past?
Leith Library: Archaeology: Why Me? – Emergent but mainly families (mums & kids), Edinburgh	Craft (intangible heritage) Landscapes (Collage only)	**ScotInform 2: Archaeology: Why Me? – Emergent, Scotland general**	Sensory experience/interactive Ethics of heritage work
		Kurdish Women's Group: Archaeology: Why Me? – Ethnic minority, Glasgow	Day-to-day archaeology Stories of friends and family 'intangible heritage' of home country Ethics of heritage work
		Kurdish Youth Group: Archaeology: Why Me? – Ethnic minority and youth group, Glasgow	Day-to-day archaeology Stories of friends and family 'intangible heritage' of home country

Table 5: relationship between workshop audiences and key themes

The above table highlights how different audiences may have had specific areas of interest. Deeper analysis, beyond the scope of the project, is likely required to more fully understand whether these different interests are wholly related to demographics, or if there are more context-specific factors to consider (i.e. the nature of the workshops themselves and how people react within certain group settings). Certainly, there is a strong indication that ethnic minority groups will focus on heritage in relation to their home countries but there are also numerous themes that overlap across the different workshops – including intangible heritage, the curiosity of 'How did they do it in the past?' and an emphasis on in-person interaction alongside digital ways to learn about archaeology. This finding (of both differences and shared interests across audiences) will be put forward as part of the recommendations in relation to audience-centred work.

CASE STUDY: Kurdish Women's and Youth Groups

The effort to coordinate workshops with numerous groups within the project timeframe was a challenge (as is discussed further in Section 4.3) and one group – the Kurdish Women's Group in Glasgow – was not available during the workshop delivery phase due to unforeseen circumstances and religious events (Ramadan in March). However, the project team considered that a conversation was still important, for understanding different ethnic minorities' perceptions of archaeology, despite time constraints. In May 2025, the Project Expert was able to coordinate two online workshops with the Kurdish Youth and Women's groups (with 15 participants in each group) and the results from the conversations are summarised below using word frequency analysis and interpretative reflection from notes. The below word cloud, for example, shows the highest-frequency words occurring during discussions with the Kurdish Youth Group.

Figure 49: word cloud created during discussions with the Kurdish Youth Group

After a discussion with the Kurdish group facilitator about the meaning of 'archaeology' and the workshop logistics, as well as considering language barriers, the participants were (as with the AWAAZ workshop) asked to bring in to the workshop objects of cultural and heritage significance workshop.

Within the Youth Group workshop, the discussion centred on different traditional clothing and jewellery of the Kurdish culture. Seven participants brought their clothing to the workshop – such as women's dresses (sorani) or men's headgear (e.g. the white-and-black-checked jamana) and trousers, shawls (shal) or woollen shoes (klash/clash) – and participants stressed the pride and importance of wearing and honouring these items, even if they were modern remakes: e.g.:

> *"It's been passed on from generations and I feel like we chose to pick the most important items."*

Kurdish Youth participant 1

"You know, people are getting back into, like, wearing their cultural clothes. They decided to bring it back, but obviously they use kind of like cheap materials on them. And like, it's not as authentic as like the old days."

Kurdish Youth Participant 2

"the way of sewing the clash plunges a person into the depths of history."

Comment via email from Kurdish Group facilitator

Participants presented their attire (including showing how it could be worn) and explained when items would be worn or in what contexts. Four brought in necklaces and other jewellery; these presented a long tangible relationship with past generations, as they were typically passed down from family members. There was also much discussion around the knowledge surrounding the craftmanship around their making – including the traditional use of wild pistachio (qazwan) beads for prayer necklaces (tasbih) that would help alleviate stress, or the use of cloves in necklaces to remind them of older family members (there was much discussion around the scent, and the strength of the scent, which could be renewed if soaked in water). One participant brought in a spear head from near the Hazar Mard cave, found by a family member and thought to be ancient, and this item had been kept in the family.

During the storyboard activity each group focused on an object they'd brought to the session and how they would present it to different audiences. The Youth Group particularly understood that different platforms related to different audiences and wanted to share their stories between both young and older generations (using different platforms). The below word cloud shows the highest-frequency words occurring in discussions with the Kurdish Women's Group.

Figure 50: word cloud created during discussions with the Kurdish Women's Group

Similarly, the Women's Group also focused on traditional dress and jewellery,2 including shawls (worn in different styles for different occasions and contexts, including in honour of the Kurdistan Defence War) and a kohl eyeliner pot (made from crushing stibnite).

"And so different style to show how brave our Kurdish women, especially for the women who were who are fighting for our freedom [...]. And while we have a different style of Kurdish clothes as well, and you can use it as a belt as well."

Women's Group participant demonstrating the different use of her shawl

"[A]gain, this is from older generation and our older generation. They use a lot. And as you can see, there is like a black powder inside and this is more special for our culture and to use for yes... Exactly like eyeliner, yes."

Women's Group facilitator explaining kohl pot

The Women's Group also discussed generations and family, and the final conversation was around differences between ways that Kurdish people 'do memory work' in comparison to Scottish and English. One lady voiced that she had chosen to live in Scotland because she felt that there was a similar honouring of culture, particularly Scottish traditional dress, including the kilt and tartan. Another suggested that more people didn't pass on family heirlooms in English culture, and that memory work was being undertaken by museums and 'government', who could do the work looking after the nations' memories and tangible heritage (such as castles) – and there was a concern this was not being done in their home country.

This raises a very interesting area of debate: Kurdish culture and heritage work are firmly centred around family, home and religion and have the backdrop of historical cultural displacement (certainly for these two groups). 'English' cultural heritage memory work is different, again due to many historical contexts, including colonial history (which was discussed in the group) and a move away from religion since the 1950s. Thus our relationship to archaeology does not operate in the same way. The result is there is more 'distance': archaeology is *not in the home*. Furthering this, for the Kurdish group, there is an emphasis on use of objects as part of a 'living heritage' – objects that connect to the past and previous generations but are still part of everyday practices (such as a kettle, fixed by a grandmother, using the handle of a spoon). Moreover, the impression given was that

this was a topic that was seen as nostalgic but people welcomed presentation of their culture (as one participant voiced during the storyboard activity: "To show our culture to stop people forgetting") and an important bonding exercise for those in the room due to the knowledge exchange – with some reporting that they had enjoyed learning from others about their heritage they had not known before.

What have you learned?

"I learned about some stuff I never heard about [...] before, examples: (mashka), kurds use the chum to make buttermilk, yoghurt and other dairy products."

What would you change about the workshop?

"I would like to work on myself better to have more knowledge about our history, tradition and archaeology."

After the workshop, many photos of culture attire and details of the items including their traditional or religious significance were sent by the facilitator via email. While this report can never do justice to the information shared, an important reflection is that as archaeologists we should create space for such dialogues, to honour the nuance and important meaning-making role that archaeology and heritage can play for different communities. There are different relationships with 'the past' for different cultures, as was echoed within the AWAAZ and ESOL workshop groups and this undoubtedly should be considered in how we approach and engage with different audiences.

4.3 Reflections on Workshops

As discussed in Section 2.6, it was harder (compared to the survey and interviews) to recruit people to participate in the workshops. The insight into this challenge is telling in and of itself in terms of perceptions of archaeology and levels of familiarity, working relationships and trust for MOLA and CBA (or for research), at least for the gatekeepers and facilitators primarily approached.

The original PUNS2 project design had aimed for 10 in-person workshops; this shifted to five in person and five online to widen accessibility and to meet the project KPIs of reaching the Archaeology: Why Me? audience. In the end, we conducted eight in-person workshops and eight online ones. Following the closure of the survey in late 2024, we were able to target underrepresented segments for the remainder of the workshops, and made particular effort to reach younger audiences, ethnic minority groups, those experiencing barriers in terms of disability and geographic spread.

Despite making full use of contacts and other suggested networks, it soon became clear that the amount of time for the project team to reach and successfully coordinate with such groups was severely underestimated, certainly in terms of time to build working relationships. This should be factored into future projects.

The connection to the Kurdish Women's Group was made through Historic Environment Scotland's Equalities team. In coordinating with HES, the team also highlighted the need to build trust with communities and advocated for establishing flexible working arrangements to suit the needs of diverse participants. While the PUNS2 team was offering such flexibility, the workshops were only two hours, and thus temporally restricted connections and working relationships with facilitators (so perhaps the benefits of our 'offer' was not weighted enough in comparison to the time taken to organise the workshops). To repeat, time to invest in working relationships must be accounted for and increased.

Another observation made by a facilitator running a climate action group in Scotland was that, simply, their group would not be interested in discussing *only* archaeology. If the workshops had wrapped archaeological discussions around topics that were of greater interest to the community groups (for example, if archaeology was discussed in the context of climate change) uptake might have been easier. Thus, perhaps the key issue facing recruitment was inevitably that the project team was trying to reach groups who did not see the immediate value of archaeology. It would be of interesting to review the resources needed to reach such groups against the benefits (short and longer term) both for communities and for the sector long term in expanding the impact of archaeology's value. Indeed, as the findings suggest, it was very easy once participants were 'around the table' to generate deep dialogues, focusing on a wide range of themes, and post-workshop feedback was extremely positive:

Q: What have you enjoyed?

"Coming up with ideas."

VIP participant 1

"I enjoyed all the conversation and old items for bring to show and the experience people to share."

AWAAZ participant

"Outside-the-box qualitative research, interesting method for approaching the problem."

CAER CENTRE participant 1

"Listening to everyone else's stories and ideas."

CAER CENTRE participant 2

"The collage, this really set the mind thinking, very interesting."

CAER CENTRE participant 3

"[A]rchaeology, it's not just a bit of broken pot. Or a, you know, a bone. It's what it says and it what it starts, the process within ourselves, looking at it and thinking about it and just being in touch and also that fantastic feeling that one has that you know there's people been doing this for tens of thousands of years and ...what am I worried about?"

Scotinform participant

"I have enjoyed learning, being educated, meeting and engaging with lovely people."

GDA participant 1

"I thought the activity was really fun and the atmosphere was really welcoming! I also enjoyed looking through the articles in the magazines."

GDA participant 1

Q: What have you learned about?

"I learned about heritage and how things were preserved in past. How old people used different things."

AWAAZ participant 2

"Witches' jars and Romani archaeology."

GDA participant 2

"Got a bit of confidence, learned more history and learned about other people's culture."

GDA participant 3

"There are lots of different kinds of archaeology."

Leith Library participant

"I have learned two of my job options [can come] together: marine archaeology"

Dagenham Young Carer participant

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5   INTERVIEW RESULTS

5.1 Analysis of Interviews

As with the workshops, each interview was recorded and transcribed. We analysed each interview transcription by reviewing statements and assigning them codes that describe their meaning. We then extracted all the codes from each interview and placed them in a table, to enable the counting and organising of any shared sentiment across the interviewees.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Public Engagement

All the interviewees agreed that public engagement was a beneficial and essential part of archaeological practice, with one interviewee stating:

> *"I think it's just an ethical responsibility as archaeologists to be as open and transparent as possible. And if we do any research, why would we not want to share it with the public?"*
>
> *Interviewee A*

Multiple interviewees shared the above sentiment, adding a belief that without communicating archaeology to the public, the discipline would cease to exist.

Speaking on how that engagement could be done, a few interviewees stated that it would be beneficial to talk about archaeology in schools. They did not see it being taught as a subject but a pedagogical tool to assist lessons in subjects from English to Chemistry, for example:

> *"Archaeology should be all the way through the school curriculum, not even a subject in its own right. It's just there. It helps with math's, religious education, physics, chemistry, geography, history, everything."*
>
> *Interviewee B*

Only one out of 27 interviewees raised the use of co-design techniques to collaborate directly with audiences to co-create outputs which were designed to suit their specific needs.

A couple of interviewees spoke about a fear that when running community archaeology projects, if the funding ends, they would be abandoning that community. They expressed a desire to create more long-lasting engagement through training and ongoing connections.

However, among nearly all interviewees, there was a shared sentiment that a large barrier to creating and working on outreach projects was time. They felt that they were often not given enough time to do this work as successfully as they believed it could be done. Interviewees working in the commercial sector acknowledged that there was currently no guidance or law in place to make clients fund or support public engagement programmes. They also spoke on client confidentiality rules and how they can impact the amount of data that can be shared with the public.

One interviewee told us that they would like there to be an insistence that a percentage of all archaeology must be made public. To explain that hope, they said:

> *"At the moment there is nothing saying that anything has to be made public. Even though it 'belongs to everybody', this is not a resource that belongs to us."*
>
> *Interviewee C*

5.2.2 Creative Outputs

Among multiple interviewees there was a concern that archaeological outputs were at risk of becoming 'stale' and that they desired to produce and explore more experimental and creative outputs. They wanted to showcase interdisciplinarity and work with people in multiple fields to create these.

Interviewees already creating these outputs, or interested in starting, emphasised the need for a centralised place to share their work and get feedback and support from colleagues. They also mentioned that there should be a place to archive creative interpretations in the same ways that raw data is stored.

However, when these interviewees spoke about their experiences creating this work, several mentioned how other archaeologists can be a barrier to their work:

> *"One of the biggest challenges we have to overcome is other archaeologists."*

They explained that other archaeologists can sometimes worry that creative archaeological interpretations just 'dumbs things down':

> *"They have to really trust you. They have to really trust that you're not just trying to dumb it down. Do you know what I mean? That you're not trying to take away what they see as valuable and rich."*

Interviewee C

Several interviewees also communicated how, in their experience, creative outputs were not 'taken as seriously' as more traditional outputs by other archaeologists. They described a culture of having to prove yourself as an archaeologist through commercial archaeology and traditional data-heavy reports to be respected. Lastly, a few interviewees admitted that more creative outreach work, such as blogging or podcasting, often does not boost your academic profile in the same way as traditional outputs do.

5.2.3 Open Access

Multiple interviewees identified how publishing open access (OA) has become much more accepted over the past two decades, as has depositing in the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). However, they acknowledged that OA could cost the author more, creating a barrier, and that some archaeologists see publishing OA as a box ticked, and then do nothing more to make that information accessible:

> *"I think that Open Access doesn't really mean anything if what you've written isn't accessible."*

Interviewee E

5.2.4 Accessibility

All interviewees agreed that they had considered the accessibility of their work, but most confessed that they did not believe they had done enough to make their work fully accessible and wanted to do more.

Most interviewees, when asked about accessibility, primarily discussed language choices and writing styles. Multiple interviewees acknowledged the problem of using too much jargon in their writing, and the importance of presenting information in a clear and easily understood format. Interviewees based in Wales and Scotland also mentioned the importance of bilingual publishing for accessibility (in Welsh and Gaelic).

A few interviewees mentioned the importance of making work accessible to those with disabilities such as enabling screen reader compatibility, including subtitles on videos, making sites accessible to those using mobility aids such as wheelchairs, and creating work inclusive of neurodiversity. These interviewees also acknowledged that 'one size does not fit all' when it comes to accessibility.

5.2.5 Databases and Data Archiving

Many interviewees brought up the importance of open access databases such as the ADS. However, they also emphasised the need to advertise these resources better, and shared a concern that the public often does not know that they exist or where to find them.

Several interviewees also expressed a desire to integrate these resources into one large database, or to create a centralised website which would link to all of them. They further mentioned the want to standardise search and filtering vocabulary across different systems and that these should encompass as many different terms for the same thing as possible.

Multiple interviewees did, however, recognise that uploading data and creating relevant metadata can be time-consuming and is a skill in itself. They suggested that training should be given to people interested in open access and data deposition on how to do this and that more time should be allocated to this process by project managers, clients and funders.

Interviewees also discussed the drive to preserve and record data, and that data preservation is prioritised over interpretation. Some interviewees explained this as the result of a belief that data is seen as pure and untarnished, whereas interpretation can be biased. There was a suggestion that this 'data first' culture may have come from a desire for archaeology to be respected as a science. Interviewees also added that they are unsure how many researchers trust and reuse data that has been uploaded and shared and would like to know what impact data deposition has.

Regarding the access of this data by interested members of the public, a few interviewees conveyed their desire for a short statement to be uploaded accompanying any data which explains what is there and what it means in clear and understandable language. They explained that archaeologists should also include interpretation in this statement but to explain how they reached any conclusions using their evidence. Other interviewees suggested that there should be training sessions to empower the public to understand the raw data for themselves.

5.2.6 Digital Archaeology

All interviewees discussed the growing reliance on and use of digital methods in data storage, creation and communication. A significant number expressed their reservations when it comes to some novel digital forms of engagement such as virtual reality, as they were uncertain how many digital methods are utilised not because of their archaeological value but just because they are 'new and exciting'. One interviewee specifically wondered whether the public enjoys engaging with archaeological VR just because the technology is novel, and not because of the archaeology. However, another interviewee suggested that this may still create meaningful engagement as users will remember the experience and associate archaeology with it.

Multiple interviewees expressed their uncertainty around whether audiences enjoy novel digital engagement, specifically whether it engages younger audiences or if that is just an assumption. A few cited anecdotal evidence of younger audiences being equally engaged in much older technology, such as video games from the early 2000s.

Interviewees who had created some form of digital-only output all expressed their concerns about the life cycle of the technology they had used, and whether it would become obsolete or expire, leaving their projects without a legacy:

> *"I've opened up some of my old projects [...] and they're all out of date. And they're all like, 'you need to download the latest version or this is broken now.'"*
>
> *Interviewee F*

Continuing this discussion, Interviewee F mentioned their worries regarding QR codes at archaeological sites and how one website update could render them unusable, resulting in '*broken links* [...] *scattered across the landscape'.*

They, and other interviewees, mentioned the importance for funders to recognise this issue and put aside funding for the maintenance of the technology used in the project.

5.2.7 Social Media

Many interviewees communicated a feeling of tiredness when it came to social media. They explained how they are getting less meaningful engagement now than they used to, particularly on X (previously Twitter) and that they feel burned out. They also referenced their experiences witnessing an increase in negative and hateful discussion on sites such as X.

One interviewee conveyed their fear (resulting from what happened regarding the sale of Twitter and the brief ban of TikTok in the USA) that one decision could wipe out a social media platform and you could lose your following.

A few interviewees expressed their enjoyment of the newer site Bluesky and that they feel they can build a sense of online community there.

5.2.8 Misuse of Archaeology

Several interviewees brought up their concerns around the growing misuse of archaeology by those holding extreme political views as well as the rise of misinformation and pseudoarchaeology. Some added that they believe this is the result of a lack of trust in archaeologists due to a culture of elitism among archaeologists, the opacity of archaeological methods and miscommunication with the public of what it is archaeologists do. To counter this, multiple interviewees suggested, archaeology should be humanised, and the *process* of archaeology should be put in the spotlight.

One interviewee emphasised the importance of portraying archaeology as done by 'normal people doing a job', thus demystifying practices. Another put forward that the methods of archaeology should be highlighted, to provide context on how information was gathered, instead of just presenting an artefact or an interpretation. Many shared the belief that an important way of combatting misinformation and the misuse of archaeology is to not patronise their audience, presenting findings and theories in clear conversational language but backed up with citations and evidence:

> *"We live in a time when increasingly the truth is a difficult concept to pin down. And so it's really important that we evidence what we say."*
>
> *Interviewee E*

Interviewee D specifically spoke about how they felt when they hear other archaeologists say that some topics are too complicated or boring for the public:

> *"I think that's a really condescending attitude that archaeologists can have. I think that it's our responsibility to make that information accessible and I don't think there's any concept we can encounter that is too difficult to explain to people."*
>
> *Interviewee D*

Lastly, a few interviewees mentioned that they had noticed a hesitation among their colleagues about speaking out about the misuse of archaeology by those holding extreme political views. They acknowledged that there is a danger in doing so, and that some people faced severe backlash and threats afterwards. However, they believed that archaeologists (as humans) have a moral and ethical responsibility to be aware of and challenge these misuses, as put by Interviewee G:

> *"We will have a political result one way or another, and it's just a matter of whether or not it's one which we can control and support."*
>
> *Interviewee G*

5.2.9 Discrimination in Archaeology

A few interviewees described their experiences working in archaeology and feeling unwelcome, discriminated against or tokenised because of their background and identity. Others expressed an awareness that there is a problematic lack of diversity in archaeology. To achieve a more diverse, equitable and inclusive discipline, interviewees suggested that there need to be more varied opportunities to get involved with archaeology. They added that archaeologists need to be more proactive with outreach, activism, community engagement and anti-racism, as interviewee H stated:

> *"Some people need to make the space."*
>
> *Interviewee H*

Several interviewees discussed how understanding and reaching out to new/underserved audiences should be done to achieve this, but that archaeologists should be cautious to avoid profiling and tokenising communities as 'hard to reach audiences'. Some interviewees also expressed a concern that they did not want to force people to be interested in archaeology in fear that that would push people away, and that there may be people who simply do not care about archaeology. However, multiple interviewees took the stance that while you cannot make people care, you can make sure you give them the opportunity to realise whether they care:

> *"Awareness is very important, so that people are empowered to choose whether archaeology is something they want to explore or not."*
>
> *Interviewee I*

5.2.10 Understanding of Audiences

A few interviewees had some audience analytics, but the majority felt very uncertain about who their audience was and admitted that they had not purposefully targeted an audience for their work. Most interviewees were concerned about this and were keen to learn more about their audiences, with some having plans to do this. Some explained the difficulties in reaching new audiences, as they often need high engagement numbers to show funders and clients, which results in them having to target the usual audiences to get these statistics:

> *"Effectively we have to go to the groups that we're more familiar with because that produces the data that says we're doing a good job."*
>
> *Interviewee D*

They continued by saying that they wished they could get clients and funders to understand that sometimes obtaining a small number of highly engaged individuals who were previously not involved in archaeology can be more valuable than having lots of already interested participants.

5.2.11 Evaluation

Multiple interviewees expressed their belief that evaluation (which could include measuring impact and determining the success of outreach) needs to be embedded throughout a project and part of their mission statement.

> *"The evaluation should be part of your mission statement. It shouldn't be an afterthought. The evaluation is the thing that is helping you do [...] the things that you have actually set out to do."*
>
> *Interviewee J*

However, there was uncertainty among interviewees about what the best method of evaluation was, and an admission that they did not believe they had done enough evaluation in previous projects.

A few interviewees expressed a desire for a developed method for how to do longitudinal evaluation to track the impact of a project on people's lives and over time.

5.2.12 Funding

As has been discussed throughout this section, funding was a key topic of conversation throughout the interviews and among all interviewees. When interviewees were asked if they could choose one thing to help their work, nearly all mentioned either more funding, more time or both.

Interviewees expressed a constant feeling of instability due to the nature of funding, always being unsure whether a project can continue into the next season. They described how their work can often feel 'up in the air' which can stop them making plans and putting down roots in the community they are working with. Multiple interviewees also described difficulties obtaining funding and time due to new ideas being prioritised over existing projects:

> *"There are so many funders who don't want to fund good ideas because they've already done that one and they want to fund a new idea. So, you've got all these, kind of, broken down projects that don't lead anywhere."*
>
> *Interviewee K*

Every interviewee emphasised how much more they want to do in outreach, public engagement and creating alternative outputs which they are unable to do due to a lack of funding. They also expressed a frustration with the application process, which they describe as time-consuming and requiring the use of 'buzzwords'. However, there was some acknowledgement from Scotland-based interviewees that Scotland's Archaeology Strategy had been helpful when making funding applications to broaden engagement and outputs.

5.3 Reflections on Interviews

The interviews were a straightforward methodology and relatively easy to recruit (possibly due to the familiarity with the two organisations CBA and MOLA, and even the PUNS legacy). The interviews have provided rich insight into the current practices surrounding archaeological outputs, which resonate with the findings of the literature review.

In terms of representation across the UK, there were more interviews carried out with English practitioners or researchers (this also reflects the large amount of funding from Historic England); however, their work was not necessarily 'England focused'. Five of the 27 interview

participants were based in Scotland and three were based in Wales. Forty-six individuals were contacted in total.

One key area, however, which was not successfully explored was interviews with clients (i.e. development and construction companies). This had been anticipated within the project design but there was no capacity for the project researcher to pursue this investigation. The project team has identified this as another recommendation that can be explored in further research.

6 PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Advantages and Limitations of Methods

The PUNS2 research methods were designed to reach different audiences in different ways, and to use a range of techniques (survey, workshops and interviews). The project team was adaptive to changes throughout the research period, such as pivoting from only in-person workshops to half in-person and half online to better reach target audiences and distributing (and subsequently inputting data from) the survey on paper instead of exclusively online.

At the end of the research phase the team was able to reflect on methodologies and where the advantages and limitations lay:

- The Critical Friends Group worked effectively and should be a key part of any similar projects. In addition, members should incorporate as wide a range of backgrounds and experiences as possible and not be limited (as they were) to 'Known to Archaeology' audiences and include those who have been involved in the workshops.

- The internship proved an important opportunity to involve those beyond the archaeology sector and should be repeated. MOLA has reflected on how it can better provide for internships and placements, but it was significant to include the field archaeologists and give them opportunities to contribute and learn from the project.

- The literature review and data scan found key issues surrounding the sector and gave a snapshot into the practices of archaeological organisations, which enabled a suite of recommendations to be formed surrounding these practices. Limitations of the literature review and data scan lie within the creation of the audience matrix, which was difficult to measure against, and lack of deep geographical comparative data of Scotland and Wales statistics in terms of each country's demographics.

- The survey generated an unanticipated large response and thus could be considered to be a highly successful method; however, considering the demographic of respondents (predominantly 55+, white, able-bodied etc.) it drew a traditional audience and furthermore, the structure did not straightforwardly aid the researchers in mapping back to audience segmentations. Creating inclusive and accessible surveys is one area to explore, in addition to allowing responses to map back to audience segments, to better define certain terms (e.g. 'experts') and to collect comparable data for the future.

- The workshop methodology was challenging and highlighted a need to build trust with facilitators and the need for such projects like PUNS2 to consider legacy or facilitate longer-term working relationships. However, the workshops themselves were highly successful, enjoyable for participants and provided a great deal of insight into people's thoughts and preferences in how they wish to engage with archaeology. Deeper analysis into the data (including multimedia data) to compare different audiences is recommended in future.

- The interviews were also successful with the range of different practitioners within the sectors that were consulted. But there was a missed opportunity to consult with an important audience: the sector's clients.

Overall, the PUNS2 project has been delivered successfully and has addressed its aims and objectives (see Section 8 below). But methodologically, one area has been a persistent challenge. Although different audience representation was a vital area of investigation for PUNS2, and the reach exceeded expectations in terms of numbers, the project KPIs were difficult to judge and likely have not been met in full:

Audience segment	Target number of participants	Estimated achievement [6]
Known to Archaeology	1,250	1,995
New to Archaeology	500	30
Archaeology: Why Me?	250	735

Table 6: PUNS2 actual participant numbers by audience segment

The survey, interview and workshop methods failed to accurately capture and profile the different audiences – there is no clear way to bracket the audiences in terms of whether they fit in the New to Archaeology or Archaeology: Why Me? audiences particularly (notably, Known to Archaeology is much easier).

The dialogue within the workshops also highlights a large question in relation to one of the segments: is the term 'Archaeology: Why Me?' appropriate? Through discussion with facilitators, it transpired that some of the groups (such as AWAAZ and ESOL) were in fact undertaking cultural activities already (and have thus been counted in the New to Archaeology numbers). Furthermore, on a more theoretical level, many of the participants have an understanding around archaeology and certainly their relationship to the past, but they may engage with different interpretations (and specifically around more intangible aspects of heritage, personal relationships and crafts etc.). The onus of understanding should instead fall on the shoulders of practitioners, and we should begin a journey through dialogue to discover how archaeology might overlap with their interests. Overall, there is a notable opportunity to further consider audience and demographic data, including geographic data, disabilities, and ethnicity etc (age was better accounted for) alongside the different activities and engagement preferences.

6.2 Overall Conclusions

The multi-method approach has enabled the PUNS2 team to realise the project objectives in the following ways:

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[6] Audience segment estimates were calculated from survey respondents identifying that they had some/no connection to archaeology, plus all interviews, the Critical Friends and by categorising those taking part in the workshops using researcher insights.

1. To understand current practices in communicating archaeological information.

Literature review | Survey | Interviews | Critical Friends

The literature review provided evidence on the 'digital revolution' anticipated by the original PUNS team and provides insight into the impact of this on the sector, including the rise of the use of social media by archaeological organisations. The review also highlighted that non-digital engagement is still relevant to the sector. It highlighted a growing awareness in the sector of the need to consider audiences more carefully and matters relating to accessibility.

The survey gathered evidence from archaeological 'producers': the highest frequency of outputs created included 'archaeological data', in-person talks, photographs and fieldwork reports (social media was ranked fifth) – the lowest were podcasts, illustrations, VR experiences and videogames.

Interviews gathered insight into producers' opinions around archaeological outputs and engagement practices – novel technologies (such as VR) and social media were met with some critique.

Critical Friends gave expert insight into the contexts of traditional archaeological outputs and gave insight into different styles of engagement and preferences (e.g. when testing the Padlet platform); and discussions highlighted an impetus to create accessible outputs (including the PUNS2 survey).

1.1 To understand which 'outputs' archaeological organisations choose to create and why (i.e. are there data supporting communities' interests in these outputs, or are they chosen for different reasons – e.g. client preference, legislative requirements, etc.?).

Literature review |Survey | Interviews

Literature review: demonstrated the context of traditional archaeological outputs and ran a data scan of social media sites by relevant organisations.

Survey: gathered insight from archaeological producers: while responses show most producers create outputs with an audience and intention in mind, 59% do not gather feedback on their outputs. This may be reflected by a lack of resources/time, as was reported in later responses; however, it is at odds with the fact that 99% of producers believe creating outputs is for the benefit of the public, alongside updating the historical record, and sector at large – 'for the client' received 89%.

Interviews: highlighted that most interviewees felt strongly that public engagement was a beneficial and essential part of archaeological practice (if not, the discipline would cease to exist). Also highlighted a lack of confidence in fully understanding whether they had specific audiences in mind and how to reach them – often going to audiences that are 'ready to hand'

and highlighted difficulties in reaching new audiences. Interviewees felt that evaluation should be better embedded in the sector and that thorough evaluation practices (and relevant resources) were lacking in their practices.

1.2 To identify gaps in current offerings and explore, with stakeholders, types of output that might better resonate with a range of audiences.

Literature review | Survey | Workshops | Critical Friends

Literature review: while highlighting that digital engagement techniques are worth developing to reach different audiences, non-digital engagement remains highly relevant to the sector.

Survey: producers felt that in-person, localised engagement, printed media, websites and social media are the most appropriate means to disseminate information. Consumers similarly selected books, archaeology websites, TV programmes and in-person talks as the most used means of finding out about archaeology (however, these results differed strongly when compared to different age groups). Fieldwork reports were not the most used – sitting somewhere in the middle. Experts and organisations were considered the most trusted sources of information by consumers.

Workshops: most participants wished to create a range of in-person and interactive archaeological events, with short videos on social media a second consideration, followed by performances or fiction on TV. Participants of ethnic minority groups spoke most about the significance of intangible heritage. The processes of archaeology were also a topic of interest within collages.

Critical Friends: suggested ideas such as the use of Wikipedia as a well-positioned starting point for archaeological learning which could benefit from existing archaeological data.

2. To understand audience needs and specific barriers to engagement

Literature review | Survey | Interviews | Workshops | Intern

Literature review: highlighted digital access (or lack thereof), language barriers, disability, educational background, religion and other demographic distinctions which can shape how people interact with archaeology.

Survey: showed that travel, finances and time are identified as the main barriers to access (this changed dependent on age groups). The demographic spread showed a lack of those with disabilities or other demographic qualifiers taking part in the survey.

Workshops: the main barriers to engagement were in relation to logistics and set-up – the PUNS2 team needed to work closely with facilitators to carry out reasonable adjustments to create discussion space that was accessible and inclusive.

Interviews: highlighted how producers felt time constraints precluded engagement and a lack of being able to build longer-term connections to communities.

Intern: highlighted the need to reach to youth groups (and accordingly designed effective icebreaker for workshop) and showed curiosity around archaeological processes. Subsequent 'field archaeologist interns' highlighted a desire to learn more about the bridge between archaeological processes and engagement, which does not exist in practice.

2.1 To engage with audiences and collaborators from the outset to better understand their opinions of archaeology, what kinds of archaeological outputs they want, how they would like to use them, and what might be precluding this opportunity.

Survey | Workshops | Interviews | Critical Friends / Intern

Survey: gathered evidence on opinions of archaeology: consumers stated that they felt that archaeology was useful (72% strongly agreed), and helped them learn about the past and about humanity. They wanted archaeological outputs to inspire them to learn more, teach them something new, be updated and be easy to find. In terms of access, for consumers the most frequently used medium to take in information was reading (across all ages), followed by watching and in-person interaction (although ages differed – below 35 social media is third; for 35—44 it is 'listening'). YouTube is the most popular form of social media for respondents (Threads and TikTok the least). Digital and in-person interaction/direct involvement rated highest as the most desired ways to engage with archaeology.

Workshops: the responses to the collages and storyboard showed a desire to utilise archaeology as a way of connecting with the past and past peoples, and even personal heritage and childhood memories. Notable was a candid approach to discussing tricky ethical topics of discussion (e.g. burials, politics, representation). In terms of access – in-person interaction was most discussed. Not much discussion regarding specific barriers or preclusion – this was not raised as part of the workshop design. However, this can be reflected in the logistical reflections in coordinating workshops (and can be discussed elsewhere – e.g. MOLA & Eyes4Positivity 2024).

Interviews: as above in terms of 'preclusion'. In addition: other archaeologists' concern of 'dumbing down' information and was also seen as a specific barrier – the need to build trust within ranks; lack of creative outputs being taken seriously; lack of accessible outputs (which undermines the cause of 'open access') and a need to develop skills in this area further. Also, a concern for the misuse of archaeology, which some interviewees attribute to being a result of elitism and a lack of trust in archaeologists.

Critical Friends: highlighted the importance of exploring the end point of outputs, and the process of archaeological research, citing examples of non-traditional approaches.

Intern: demonstrated a keen interest in archaeological process during internship and the stories that archaeological perspective could help to tell.

2.2 To understand how blended approaches to archaeological publication and communications (i.e. using multi-format approaches across multiple publication platforms and media) might reach different audiences.

Literature Review | Survey | Workshops | Interviews

Literature review: highlighted how digital access is not necessarily ubiquitous or even trusted – other forms of engagement are still relevant.

Survey: the evidence gained from the survey showed that different media were used by different age groups AND that different groups faced different barriers. Thus, to reach wider age groups, multiple output strategies must be sought.

Workshops: the workshops' storyboard activity highlighted a broad range of co-created ideas of how archaeological outputs can be reimagined – with interactive and immersive experiences being more frequently referenced. The most targeted audience via the storyboard activity was children.

Interviews: highlighted how different media (e.g. use of audio and visual outputs) could help to overcome barriers including disability – interviewees acknowledged a 'one size fits all' approach is not viable.

2.3 To understand how different media formats deliver different types/levels/focus of public value for different audiences, and how to make informed decisions about which formats may be most effective for particular audiences.

Literature review | Survey | Workshops | Interviews

Literature review: created a set of recommendations relating to audience approaches based on its findings.

Survey: as above.

Workshops: as above

Interviews: as above. In addition, interviewees highlighted an impetus to enable accessible data archiving to share this with the public (more training and resources required). Some ideas on this were shared and will be added to recommendations.

3. **To horizon scan future needs and emerging technologies where possible to help with future proofing continuous learning over time**.

Report

4. **To arrive at a set of recommendations for the future development of guidance for those who commission and/or generate archaeological outputs (e.g. professional and voluntary organisations, archaeological communicators).**

Report

Overall, the PUNS2 methodology has uncovered some unanticipated findings, including:

1. While digital technology is sought after by audiences, in-person experiences are on an equal footing in terms of popularity.
2. Audiences trust 'experts' and organisations to impart information but there seems to be a hesitancy or lack of confidence (self-devaluing) with doing this in the sector and a concern of dumbing down – however, the workshops showed how audiences willingly engage with complex areas of discussion and seem hungry to learn more about the processes of archaeology.
3. There lies an opportunity for commercial field archaeologists to be better connected to public engagement opportunities and there is a potential desire here too.

Through the realisation of the project objectives 1—3 and general delivery of the project, challenges have been uncovered which form our approach to objectives 3 and 4 – to horizon-scan and arrive at a set of recommendations, which have been conceived through a series of specific challenges interpreted from the findings. This leads us to the impact of the PUNS2 project.

7   GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISONS

Funding from HES and Cadw enabled the delivery of further workshops and expansion of the survey, literature review and data scan into Scotland and Wales.

7.1 PUNS2 in Wales

The literature review (see Appendix 1) of Welsh strategy documents (including *Priorities for Culture 2025*) and other reports demonstrates awareness of the barriers to archaeological information for the wider public. Various strategies and commentators seek to broaden access, particularly through harnessing 'storytelling' to explore both pan-Welsh and regional narratives, and further resourcing towards building stronger collaborative partnerships across the sector. There is also a consideration around bilingualism – one report highlights a need for translations that are authentic to original meanings, to ensure they retain engaging content (and arguably lessons from Wales could inform cross-UK approaches to broadening multilingual approaches).

The literature review findings suggest that there is an impetus to increase consideration of audiences, their needs and how they want or tend to engage with archaeological information. Resources are required to make these advances, but strong alignment with the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act* (2015) may reinforce archaeological organisations to work towards the benefit of Welsh audiences and beyond.

Data scan: Regarding ways in which Welsh audiences engage, a data scan of media usage in Wales highlighted continual use of 'traditional' media (television, radio and newspapers) but social media usage is also comparatively high. ONS data indicates also that usage differs according to ages and other demographics – further work in this area is required.

Social media use by Welsh archaeological organisations is estimated to reach at least 100,000 people, via various platforms including Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram. Heneb's presence on social media is already strong and is anticipated to grow.

The PUNS2 survey reached the following areas in Wales (sorted by postcode):

Postcode	Area Name	Number
CF	Cardiff	30
LD	Llandrindod Wells	2
LL	Llandudno	37
NP	Newport	14
SA	Swansea	22

Table 7: PUNS2 survey respondents - Welsh postcodes

Totalling 105 respondents, it may be possible to compare responses to demographic information (age, ethnicity etc) for this sample – this is currently beyond scope for this project (but see Section 8.2 below).

Workshops: Two workshops were undertaken with the CAER heritage centre in Cardiff. Eighteen participants took part and comprised a mix of different ages, and eight people completed the feedback survey:

Age Group	Count	Percentage (%)
18–24 years	1	12.5%
25–34 years	1	12.5%
35–44 years	1	12.5%
55–64 years	3	37.5%
65+ years	2	25.0%

Table 8: PUNS2 survey respondents - Welsh ages

Ethnicity was predominantly white (with one Irish and another of Maltese heritage), with two-thirds identifying as female. All were volunteers at the CAER heritage centre (with various roles).

Themes covered in the workshops were wide ranging; however, most conversations centred on craft (e.g. textiles) or how things were made and landscapes – particularly standing stones:

Figure 51: word cloud created during workshops at CAER Heritage Centre

Interviews: Two interviewees were solely based in Wales; one researcher from Bangor University, another from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, but one other practitioner (Historic England) had worked in Wales previously. A thematic overview of relevant interviews highlighted the following key points:

1. Access to Data
Interviewees agreed that archaeological data should be **freely and easily accessible** to both professionals and the public. Increased access reduces duplication of effort, promotes informed decision-making and enables broader engagement in research.

2. Consistent Metadata and Standardisation Are Ongoing Challenges
These issues make it hard to search, link and interpret archaeological data. Interviewees expressed frustration that older records often lack adequate metadata, and newer data is inconsistent due to time/resource constraints.

3. Hands-On Engagement Works Best

Interactive, tactile activities, like bead-making or wet sieving, are consistently effective for engaging people of all ages. These activities encourage conversation, creativity and lasting interest, especially when participants can take something home.

4. Outreach and Public Engagement Should Be Two-Way

There's a strong desire to move beyond passive dissemination and towards **collaborative knowledge production**. The public shouldn't just consume archaeological information – they should be empowered to contribute local knowledge and perspectives.

5. Digital Technologies Are Expanding Possibilities - But Also Creating New Pressures

Trends like **3D modelling**, drone photography and interactive visualisations are increasingly common and well-received by the public. However, they also increase the **volume and complexity** of data that needs to be archived, processed and preserved.

6. Funding and Staffing Limit Ambition

Most interviewees cited **limited funding and lack of staff capacity** as major barriers to improving access, maintaining systems and developing new resources. Many promising ideas (e.g. multilingual content, mass digitisation) are stalled due to these limitations.

7. Language and Inclusion Need Greater Attention

Welsh language content and broader multilingual or culturally diverse perspectives are often sidelined due to lack of capacity. There is growing awareness that inclusion, including linguistic and cultural inclusivity, is vital to ensure equitable access and representation in the archaeological record.

The following opportunities for Wales have been identified from the data collated through the literature review, workshops and interviews (further analysis is needed to pull out data from the main survey):

- **Combine digital and non-digital methods** to disseminate archaeological outputs, ensuring inclusivity and broader reach.
- **Keep using traditional methods** like printed media, radio, and television to reach non-digital audiences and those at risk of digital exclusion.
- **Continue to create outputs that emphasise local archaeology** and personal connections to place, alongside pan-Wales narratives, to attract and engage wider communities.
- **Develop interactive and educational materials** to engage younger audiences and promote skills development (i.e. offer digital archaeology placements etc.).
- **Include a variety of stories and perspectives by incorporating more diverse** voices in content creation and dissemination via approaches such as co-design and early onset collaboration, which is particularly important for commercial archaeology.
- **Ensure outputs are available in different languages** and compatible with auto-translation tools to engage non-English speakers and vice-versa**.**
- **Encourage in-situ feedback and participation from audiences** to increase engagement and better support evaluation practices.

- **Develop comprehensive audience strategies** to reach and engage with wider and more diverse audiences, and support evaluation of these audiences' experiences.
- **Seek funders and advocates to support evaluation initiatives** and increase infrastructure around audience-focused practices.

7.2 PUNS2 in Scotland

The Scottish literature review (see Appendix 1) mirrored many of the concerns identified in the Welsh and wider literature reviews, including:

- Concerns that traditional forms of engagement (e.g. archaeological reports, lectures) were 'one-directional' and did not lead to deeper understanding or nuance for audiences.
- Inaccessible archaeological data, due to lack of access (e.g. physical or digital barriers).
- Inaccessible archaeological data, due to technical aspects of archaeology and overtly expert-focused data, and exclusion of diverse audiences.

From the literature, there is an indication that the Scottish sector has begun exploring the relationship between audiences and archaeology, via various strategies that give space for communities to be involved in the discussion about what the past is, and what it means to them. These advances are likely directly attributed to the role that the *Scotland's Archaeology Strategy* plays in bringing together numerous heritage bodies around its five core aims. There is however some concern that audience focus is still not reflected upon thoroughly to inform ongoing strategies.

The data scan on media usage in Scotland demonstrated that, like Wales, television, newspapers and radio play a key part in consumption. However, use of other media platforms is increasing (including social media) and specifically podcasts and TikTok.

Social media use: Scottish archaeological organisations today make use of a variety of social media platforms (including those currently 'off the beaten track' such as BlueSky, SketchFab, Tumblr and Behance). The total estimated reach of Scottish archaeological organisations scanned is at least 88,500 people. There is a notable mutual inclusivity between the number of platforms and estimated reach (probably attributed to each organisation's capacity to manage multiple platforms). Indeed, through additional qualitative feedback from two archaeological units, organisational size and capacity enable communications teams to manage and evaluate their social media practices.

Survey: The numbers of survey respondents (88) from Scotland form a comparatively small sample compared to the rest of PUNS2 but there is broad reach across 14 different postcodes:

Postcode	Area Name	Number
AB	Aberdeen	6
DD	Dundee	1
DG	Dumfries	5
EH	Edinburgh	17
G	Glasgow	14
HS	Hebrides	1
IV	Inverness	8
KA	Kilmarnock	3
KW	Kirkwall	5
KY	Kirkcaldy	6
ML	Motherwell	2
PA	Paisley	3
PH	Perth	9
TD	Galashiels	8

Figure 52: Table 7: PUNS2 survey respondents - Scottish postcodes

This may be attributed to the survey being shared to the ScotInform network, as part of the workshop recruitment drive. This data could be used to interrogate demographics against media usage and audiences' opinions: this task is not within project scope but will be considered for ongoing projects and data can be made available in the interim.

Workshops: Eight workshops were undertaken with Scottish audiences (five online, three in-person) including Kurdish Women's and Youth groups, which occurred after the project delivery phase.

In-person workshop	Key themes	No. of participants	Online workshop	Key themes	No. of participants
Festival of Archaeology: Known/New to Archaeology – The Scottish Crannog Centre	No record of dialogue: Emphasis on visual and digital interactions through 'sticker' data capture	116	**GDA online Archaeology: Why Me? – Audience facing barriers, Glasgow**	Sensory and interactive experiences Process of doing archaeology	2
Glasgow Disability Alliance: Archaeology: Why Me? – Audience facing barriers, Glasgow	Craft (intangible heritage) Ethics of heritage work Sensory and interactive experiences	10	**ScotInform1: Archaeology: Why Me? – Emergent, Scotland general**	Landscapes Ethics of heritage work Day-to-day archaeology 'How did they did it in the past'	5
Leith Library Archaeology: Why Me? – Emergent but mainly families (mums & kids), Edinburgh	Craft (intangible heritage) Landscapes (Collage only)	8	**ScotInform 2: Archaeology: Why Me? – Emergent, Scotland general**	Sensory and interactive experiences Ethics of heritage work	11

			Kurdish Women's Group: Archaeology: Why Me? – Ethnic minority, Glasgow	Dy-to-day archaeology Stories of friends and family 'Intangible Heritage' of home country Ethics of heritage work	15
			Kurdish Youth Group: Archaeology: Why Me? – Ethnic minority and youth group, Glasgow	Day-to-day archaeology Stories of friends and family 'Intangible Heritage' of home country	15

Table 9: relationship between Scottish workshop audiences and key themes

Thus, **172/290 total** PUNS2 workshop participants were Scottish audiences. All the workshops facilitated high levels of conversations around archaeology and – given the interpretative analysis of reoccurring topics above – there may have been more focus on intangible heritage and certainly more on the 'ethics of heritage work' compared to other workshops. Further analysis of the qualitative data is merited, particularly comparing different audience demographics (see also the Kurdish Case Study above, which highlighted how migrant groups may approach archaeology in different ways due to the historical and political status of their country of origin).

Interviews: Six interviews were undertaken with researchers and practitioners based in Scotland – these covered several overlapping topics:

1. Audience Engagement
All interviewees emphasised the importance of connecting with diverse audiences, whether through community co-design, school outreach or public-facing exhibitions. Interviewees shared a belief that archaeology should be relevant, participatory and emotionally resonant, not just academically rigorous. Interviewees described efforts to reach underrepresented groups, such as visually impaired users, non-coastal communities or those unfamiliar with archaeology, often through tailored storytelling or immersive experiences.

2. Communication Formats
There is a strong focus on the variety of formats used to communicate archaeology: blogs, podcasts, social media, exhibitions, talks and printed materials. Many participants blend traditional and digital media to reach different audiences and adapt tone and style depending on the platform.
Several interviewees noted that conversational, informal writing styles, especially in blogs, can be more effective than academic prose in engaging the public.

3. Digital Tools and Immersive Technologies
Augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), spatial audio and interactive apps are widely discussed as tools for enhancing public understanding and emotional connection to archaeological sites. However, there is also caution about over-reliance on novelty and the need for meaningful, place-based experiences. AR was often preferred over VR for its accessibility and ability to embed

interpretation in the landscape, while immersive soundscapes were praised for evoking presence and atmosphere.

4. Funding and Sustainability
Concerns about the sustainability of digital outputs were common. Interviewees highlighted the need for long-term maintenance plans, service-level agreements and funder awareness of ongoing costs beyond initial development.

Several projects faced challenges with app updates, broken links or outdated platforms, prompting calls for better planning and institutional support.

5. Evaluation and Impact
There is a shared frustration with the difficulty of evaluating the long-term impact of archaeological outreach. Although download numbers and event attendance are easy to track, deeper behavioural change, learning outcomes or emotional resonance are harder to measure.

Interviewees expressed a desire for better tools and shared frameworks to assess what works and why, especially for funders and internal reporting.

6. Accessibility and Inclusion
Accessibility – both physical and intellectual – was a recurring theme. Participants discussed barriers faced by disabled users, the need for plain language and non-jargon outputs and the ethical imperative to make archaeology open and inclusive.

Some interviewees also reflected on the limits of universal appeal, arguing that although access should be available to all, not everyone will or should be expected to care as much as archaeologists.

The following opportunities for Scotland have been identified from the data collated through the literature review, workshops and interviews:
- **Consider the impact of digital content**: Although there is active engagement with a variety of digital platforms, the Scottish archaeological sector could benefit from audience mapping and further evaluation practices, (in addition – the Scottish Heritage Social Media Group may have further ideas about how to undertake this with Scottish heritage bodies).
- **Remember non-digital outreach**: To avoid digital exclusion, it is essential to continue producing traditional outputs and ensuring they are distributed through physical means such as libraries, schools and community centres.
- **Use different methods of evaluation** for different engagement activities, and potentially with different audiences. There is a challenge in creating cross-comparable data to demonstrate the value of archaeology to commissioners.
- **Bring commissioners and advocates on board** if necessary – there will be a capacity gap between different organisations, so help may be needed to enable evaluation and audience-led strategies to manifest comprehensively within the sector.

7.3 Comparison of UK Practices

Across the UK, there are undoubtedly shared practices and concerns from archaeological practitioners in terms of data, understanding audiences and thinking about how to increase capacity within our heritage sectors. To varying degrees, data from all three countries emphasise the importance of both digital and non-digital methods to ensure inclusivity and avoid digital exclusion, including utilising social media, websites, and traditional methods such as physical publications and community events. There is a strong shared focus on making archaeological content accessible to diverse audiences, including non-native speakers and people with disabilities. This involves providing translations, closed captions and content in non-technical language.

The data showed a universal interest in engaging local communities through collaboration, and collaboration with local communities and wider interest groups is a common strategy. This fosters a sense of ownership and interest in heritage and archaeological discovery and interpretation. Additionally, all regions aim to create educational materials for different age groups and educational levels to promote archaeology as a field of study and career.

However, one slight difference is that Scotland has more thoroughly embraced, within its strategy documents, the exploration of localised history and heritage stories to attract specific audiences interested in their immediate surroundings. England and Wales also value local content but may adopt a broader regional approach.

One clear question from undertaking this research is that there is a need to further understand the differences between the demographics of the different populations to tailor dissemination strategies accordingly. At the time of writing, a key point that has been raised is increased awareness of traits or needs according to audience demographics in comparison to ONS data specific to each country (e.g. according to 2022 ONS data, there is evidence of higher numbers of people living with disabilities in Wales than in England). This is clearly an area for further development.

8 THE IMPACT OF THE PUNS2 RESEARCH

Drawing from the conclusions above, it is important to reflect on the changing context of the archaeology sector since the survey (1998—99) and publication of the original PUNS research.

The consequence of previous and current planning policy, and an unintended impact of the original PUNS, has been that the archaeology sector now emphasises a 'data first culture', escalated by a digital revolution, which, despite open access opportunities, has decoupled the archaeological process from the narrative of archaeology and other . This study thus supports the concerns (Lennox 2016, Nixon 2017) and more recent commentary (Belford 2019, Watson 2021 & 2025) on the consequences of the archaeological sector now being mainly led by planning policy procedure. Unintended impacts have included, as discussed in the PUNS2 interviews, 'broken down projects that don't lead anywhere' and a push for new innovative ideas (increasingly digital outputs), and no strategy towards legacy for projects with communities – although these are sought initially for inclusion on projects. Although digital is still seen as an important way to access archaeology, in-person events and human connections are still very highly regarded by the respondents to the PUNS2 survey. There is also evidence of concern that excluding insight into archaeological practices can risk mistrust and create a barrier to working directly with groups. Significantly, the 'data first culture' is having a wider impact on the perception of archaeology in general, beyond the commercial context. It may preclude the ability to hold those all-important dialogues (and thus reduce opportunity to demonstrate public benefit) with wider society about the work of archaeology and its impact.

As other commentators and practitioners have previously raised, opportunities exist to incite 'small wins' to remedy these conditions (Schofield 2024). The preceding section outlines overarching conclusions from the data, and recommendations supporting sectoral progress.

However, there are limitations to bear in mind: the PUNS2 project has investigated the wider concept of 'archaeological information' and how to consider our audiences, predominantly regarding the challenges facing community engagement practices. The contexts of other specific practices (i.e. archiving, museums, data management, relationships with commissioners or clients and geographical comparison) have not been fully investigated. While the recommendations are generally decoupled from specific actions for these contexts, where possible relevant suggestions of interest to archaeological managers, advocacy practitioners, commissioners, curators and those involved or interested in community engagement work are supplied.

8.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

This section highlights four main conclusions regarding the state of the archaeology sector, drawn from the PUNS2 data, and puts forward recommendations aimed at archaeological organisations, considering their approach to different audiences and stakeholders.

Conclusion 1: the dominant focus on the 'historical record' and 'data first' culture means archaeologists risk undervaluing and hiding ourselves, our practices and the role we play in society.

THE DATA THAT INFORMS THIS CONCLUSION

Interviewees highlighted the importance of the historical record but acknowledged more could be done to make it accessible. The interviews highlighted a concern that archaeological outputs are at risk of becoming 'stale' or dull and irrelevant – with a disconnect between the data, and the humans and processes that created it. There is a perceived risk that data preservation is prioritised to the detriment of interpretation and thus such outputs are insufficient for connecting with audiences, and that a lack of understanding of the decisions made and processes undertaken by archaeologists can lead to 'mystification' around findings and even misinformation.

There's also recognition that combatting misinformation or extreme views is mentally taxing. Several interviews highlighted this issue: if archaeologists are to be more proactive in informing wider society about what we do, we must also safeguard ourselves from negative engagement.

Alongside this, within the survey, both producers and consumers strongly agreed (70%) that archaeology is important to them as individuals. Producers agreed that capturing archaeological data for public benefit is secondary in terms of importance (compared to the historical record). With consumers, however, there is a desire or interest for archaeology to shape their understanding of the past and to highlight human-centred topics. The respondents to the survey also consider experts as the most trusted source of information: the findings together could indicate that archaeologists are valued sources of information about humanity. The survey responses from consumers also show high interest in in-person interaction and involvement in the process.

In the workshops, the feedback showed high levels of positive engagement through discussing a vast range of archaeological inspired topics, and an acknowledgement that they don't often get this chance, while the focus on the archaeological process was the most frequently captured theme within the collages.

IMPACT: A data first culture risks divorcing the human aspect of archaeology and minimises the opportunity for important and desired dialogues about the past. Furthermore, divorcing the methodologies and processes from data disconnects the pursuit and understanding of archaeology from audiences, which can exacerbate misinformation and shrink the relevancy and value of the profession.

How archaeological organisations should approach…

New to Archaeology/Archaeology 'Why Me?' audiences and consumers
People are interested in what we are doing, how and why, and the process of discovery is important as is our insight as part of a wider dialogue. Archaeologists are being called upon to be active and visible leaders by audiences, and thus:

- Any archaeological output intended for circulation to audiences (whether in-person lectures, social media posts etc.) should include reflections on how archaeologists made overarching decisions about the archaeological process, or how it felt, and what wider conclusions (in addition to the Archaeological Research Questions of any project Written Scheme of Investigation) might be relevant to your audiences (also see Conclusion 3).

- Furthering this, where appropriate give insight into why specific methods are chosen (the pluses and minuses of them), and human responses to this (e.g. give 'behind the scenes' insight, even live-stream excavations.)

- Another specific example is that short summaries be provided at the beginning of grey literature reports, aimed at local press and using laypeople's language, separate from the technical summary that currently appears, and giving bullet points outlining what was found, what it means and (crucially) how to find out more. This will validate the archaeological process as part of the archaeological archive.

Known to Archaeology/Producers
Many in the sector already have the confidence and skills to undertake community engagement practices. However:

- Those who are experienced/specialists in engagement practices should seek new or expand existing opportunities to share expertise 'in house' with colleagues where possible – e.g. creating opportunities for field archaeologists to take part in engagement work, for example, MOLA's (2024) Digital Engagement Assistants enabled field archaeologists to create social media campaigns during the A428 excavations or the Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) funding which has enabled a diverse range of archaeologists to work directly with communities (2025).

- Formal training is required in how to translate data into interpretation appropriately and ethically for different audiences (also see below and Conclusion 3).

- While archiving is not an area that PUNS2 has specifically investigated, it is appreciated that this recommendation has potential to impact archaeological archiving practices (i.e., could it be possible to include *interpretation* and *reflection* alongside the raw data?). The TETRARCHs project highlights that, amongst other issues, GDPR protocols (i.e. keeping archaeologists' data and identity private) also conflate this issue and thus solutions must consider this. Advice around how to give insight and leadership within the archival process will be upcoming within TETRARCHs guidance to the ADS. Lessons and expertise could be sought from other related projects, including the efforts of the Heritage Information Access Simplified (HIAS, Historic England 2021), the Unpath'd Waters Project (Sloane et al 2025),

the ethics around digital collections (Rutherford et al 2024), the Our Heritage Our Stories project (Arnold 2024, Hughes et al 2025) and wider Towards a National Collection recommendations (Bailey et al 2024).

- To mitigate the risk of burnout in engaging with the public, particularly those with extreme views on social media or elsewhere, establish codes of conduct (e.g. Perry & Henderson-Schwartz 2021) to create respected spaces for engagement. Furthermore, archaeological organisations are encouraged to establish meaningful support systems within and across the workforce (e.g., potentially mental health first aiders), alongside support from advocates and leaders.

Commissioners (e.g. funders, clients etc)

- Following the work of Watson (2021 and 2025), archaeologists need to collectively champion archaeology's public benefit provision. The sector should be 'singing from the same hymn book' and there are already examples of social value reporting strategies by commercial archaeological organisations.
- Through highlighting the public benefit of providing access to archaeology, this must therefore include the archaeological process itself. Commercial clients should be encouraged to facilitate this, whether through excavation site visits or through more accessible archiving practices.

- Further research will be required into understanding the working relationships between archaeologists and commissioners, to ensure clarity and effective communication (see Díaz de Liaño and Watson 2023, Díaz de Liaño and Watson 2025 upcoming).

Advocates

- Sectoral advocates should consider the impact of this conclusion: archaeology is a science working towards a humanities task and the process of archaeological method in this role should be included.

- Advocates can support the sector in striving towards resilience by further incorporating public benefit provision, enabling archaeologists to become 'visible leaders' and build capacity in this regard as part of their strategies.

- This should also include joined-up collaborations between our sector and other allies (e.g. regarding archaeological archival practices).

- Advocates should be aware of archaeologists' position regarding political interpretations of archaeology and the impact that working in engagement can have on the workforce. Support is required to build guidelines and toolkits - a very specific recommendation is that the CIfA Community Archaeology Group could investigate staff safeguarding and wellbeing strategies in relation to working with the public and include this within their Community Archaeology Toolkit in an accessible manner.

Conclusion 2: Archaeological data is siloed and dispersed

DATA THAT INFORMS THIS CONCLUSION

The survey showed that consumers want information that is up to date, online and easy to find, and that they do consult websites to find information (dependent on age). However, the interviews highlighted a need in the sector to come together to share work and insights and to use this to generate more creative outputs (ideally to work across interdisciplinary fields). The interviewees also consider that open access databases and articles are ideal but should develop further towards accessibility and inclusivity for different audiences.

IMPACT: Lack of access to data, accessibility and inclusion of platforms, and the disparate nature of data exclude audiences, but there are opportunities to work collaboratively and creatively.

How archaeological organisations should approach…

New to archaeology, Archaeology 'Why Me? audiences and consumers
There are multiple ways to mitigate against this concern:

- Promote 'tours' of free and open access digital platforms where available and offer guidance on use – ADS and OASIS do not yet provide accessible and inclusive platforms to access data for diverse audiences, but work is ongoing (i.e. TETRARCHs), and other platforms may exist which this study has not been able to collate.

- Furthering this, offer training sessions for the public to 'dig into' specific archaeological data archaeologically archived.

- Develop YouTube channels and create new vlogs on specific sites and how to 'dig into' the data.

- Create projects around enhancing existing 'knowledge platforms' that lots of people already use – e.g. Wikipedia – and link back to raw archaeological data.

Known to Archaeology/Producers

- Continue training for the profession on how to make effective use of metadata (and how to follow FAIR principles).

- The sector should be wary of the term 'synthesis' as a panacea – the real issue is access and inclusion.

Commissioners

- Where possible, include relevant 'data reuse' and 'accessibility and inclusion' outcomes into funding bids and analysis. Archaeologists will need to demonstrate the worth and impact for specific audiences, but this could lead to exciting opportunities such as crowd-sourced data consolidation activities (e.g. linking burial records with archaeological data to reunite names with burials and artefacts).

- It should be a standard expectation that developer-funded work is open access – technical reports and grey literature, academic reports, journals (this does have a cost implication, but this is not expected to be excessive).

Advocates

- Seek funding opportunities that aim towards the interoperability and accessibility of existing and new archaeological data sources, which consider ethical paradigms (Rutherford et al 2024).

- Await the outcomes from the TETRARCHs project for further guidance.

Conclusion 3: The traditional view of archaeology is still loaded with elitism, leading to exclusion

DATA THAT INFORMS THIS CONCLUSION

The literature review highlighted that limitations exist in reaching audiences (and that ensuring accessibility is key for mitigating against exclusion from the benefits of archaeology).

The interviews uncovered a concern that archaeologists not working towards engagement may worry about interpretative work 'dumbing things down'. Interviewees also raised questions about 'new media', with audiences being simply wowed by technology and not necessarily learning from it. But there were equally concerns over 'condescending attitudes' (which can exacerbate stereotypes around elitism). Thus, the interviews highlighted an uncertainty and a need to build trust within ranks, to demonstrate that interpretative work is a hugely beneficial exercise for the sector and needs to be taken seriously as a skill, to optimise public benefit. The interviews and survey also raised a continued lack of diversity in the workforce and archaeological audiences.

The survey pinpointed barriers with accessing archaeology, including time, location financial and difficultly accessing the internet. A significant number (225) also cited intellectual barriers. Respondents stated that archaeological outputs should 'not' be intellectual NOR brief – and thus there is an important balance to be met here. The consumers also didn't think archaeological information necessarily needed to represent people from same backgrounds as them. Although 'experts' were deemed the most trustworthy sources of information, the research team has posited that a better definition of this term is required, because it should encompass local experts (not solely professional archaeologists).

While media preferences altered with ages, a surprising find was that books, magazines and printed media were the most frequent way that certain respondents find out about things (84%); libraries were lower but still a large percentage of 43% make use of them (higher than newspapers). YouTube was shown as the most ubiquitous social media platform – used by audiences of all ages – although media trends can change. Essentially, media needs to be considered alongside decisions about accessibility and inclusivity.

The workshops themselves were both accessible and inclusive, but a challenge to set up, indicating the need to build working relationships with different groups and facilitators across a longer period of time. Moreover, the workshops demonstrated that participants can and want to engage with ethically nuanced subject matters and high levels of detail – which arguably resolves any concern around 'dumbing things down'. They are amazed by 'how people in the past managed' and want to know more.

IMPACT: Intellectual barriers and other exclusions disconnect audiences from the benefits of archaeology, which can exacerbate portrayal of elitism and potentially limit the amount of nuance created in our work, shrinking the relevancy and value of the profession.

How archaeological organisations should approach…

<u>New to Archaeology, Archaeology 'Why Me?' audiences and consumers</u>
While the matter of capacity and availability of resources is a key consideration, there are many logistical best practices drawn from the data above and the literature review to increase accessibility, inclusion and nuance:

- Co-design approaches (where audiences collaborate directly with archaeologists on design of outputs) could be applied in archaeological engagement projects, to fully include diverse voices. Co-design approaches can fully optimise archaeological dialogues and allow for further nuance, even to the benefit of archaeological knowledge.

- In outputs, layer information (from brief to deep) to enable a range of understanding and broaden the intellectual accessibility of archaeological output/content.

- Offer outputs that can be available in different languages and ensure visuals can be easily interpretated by non-English speakers and associated captions screen read.

- Bring people in by discussing topics relevant to daily life, local areas or home countries.

- Use a range of media to reach your audiences – books, in-person lectures and social media are still important (and 'ready to hand') but other creative methods may still be important to explore with different audiences.

- The survey results showed different preferences of media type across ages, but long- and short-form video content, accessible via YouTube, is popular and likely to reach a wide range of audiences. NB – it is noted however that social media algorithms and thus audience alignment can change (as seen with X/Twitter), so archaeologists are recommended to conduct up-to-date assessments of media platforms to ensure target audiences are reached.

- Libraries are still an important venue for gaining information about local areas, as well as other local 'watering holes': schools, noticeboards, hoardings, flyers, posters and radio.

- Use a range of different interface types for digital outputs (mobile, tablets etc.) and consult accessibility standards and ensure screen reading is possible.

- During in-person events and activities make reasonable adjustments (catering, timings, support) to suit audiences. Consult community facilitators ahead of an event – this will build trust.

- Consider offering pre-recorded talks, or question and answer-based discussions with archaeologists, deliverable through video and telephone to avoid digital exclusion and isolation.

- Students and children were identified as important target groups by our interviewees, survey respondents and workshop participants. Include such groups early on in planning and work with relevant facilitators to understand their time constraints (school, homework, clubs etc.).

- Audiences are flexible in their understanding of archaeology – it is possible to be nuanced and engage in a dialogue with them. Balance must be found between nuance and 'overly intellectual' content. There is a fine line, and this has to do with tone, layering information and emotion (Perry 2019).

- Keep in mind that audiences will ask questions from many different perspectives or theme, which your engagement output could anticipate – for instance, audiences may not simply be focused on local history, there will be other 'research concerns' such as family history, methodology (past and present!) etc. If possible, try to anticipate different angles and offer signposting when information to hand is exhausted.

- Ultimately, many of the above recommendations can be fulfilled via **audience mapping** (consultation research on who your target audiences are) ahead of projects. Generally, further understanding of the practical *and* ethical nuances of audience mapping is needed in the sector.

Known to Archaeology/Producers

- Prioritise training to upskill colleagues and enable engagement and co-design training, specifically on how to bring people into nuanced archaeological dialogues.

- Increase opportunities for diverse audiences to get involved with archaeology and consider it as a useful career step via internships and placements, training etc. This could include a focus on a range of transferable skills including social media experience (potentially to reach new audiences).

- Tackle assumptions about how different 'fields' of archaeology feel about each other's work; generate more understanding of how archaeology works as a series of practices. Engagement practices should be considered equally as specialist techniques, within this bigger picture.

- Gather ideas (in an 'ideas bank') generated from the users and audiences – these ideas can heighten relevance for audiences.

- As the term 'experts' can be considered more broadly, continue to work with local experts to create knowledge exchanges and enhance archaeological knowledge.

<u>Commissioners</u>

Commissioners should be presented with the benefits of fully understanding our audiences' needs towards increased public benefit. Audience mapping is one example (MOLA 2023). Furthermore, if the expansion and deeper understanding of our audiences occurs hand in hand with our commissioners, then it's a shared journey and increases the significance of archaeological engagement practices.

The 'ideas bank' concept could be such an example to accentuate this working relationship; if supported by commissioners it has the potential to include creative practitioners, artists and people from other backgrounds who will bring in different and diverse perspectives. Such community-driven outputs can also be included within commissioners' communications, sales, etc., which could bolster their brand, such as local billboards or hoardings highlighting archaeological or historical information in creative ways.

Such work will also demonstrate the benefits of communities engaging deeply with archaeological content earlier in the process.

<u>Advocates</u>

- Support work that demonstrates accessibility (share case studies) and encourages consolidation and sharing of knowledge and skills across the sector.

Conclusion 4: There is a lack of understanding around audience selection and little tracking of feedback and evaluation

- Advocate for further co-design work with underserved groups.

- Encourage and enable resources in engaging topic areas and ethical considerations (social, ecological, economic) that archaeology uncovers.

DATA THAT INFORMS THIS CONCLUSION

While the survey suggested that producers are confident overall about who their intended audiences are and that they are creating outputs with them in mind, the interviews highlighted more uncertainty (and concern) over this matter. Some interviewees highlighted concerns that archaeologists are often working with familiar groups to 'get bums on seats', and that this is influenced by clients' wishes to have higher quantities of people engaged (rather than considering the quality of engagement). Both the survey and interviews highlighted a lack of effective means to initially undertake research on audiences (known as audience mapping) and thereafter gather useful feedback and evaluation – with interviewees suggesting that evaluation must be better embedded throughout the whole process, and concerns about the accessibility of evaluation methods.

The survey shows that different age groups answered the same questions differently: this concisely highlights that audience type will impact reach and engagement level. Both survey and interviews highlighted a lack of resources and capacity to effectively evaluate the impact of archaeological outputs.

IMPACT: A deficit in our understanding of audiences and the impact of archaeological outputs for them will preclude clear strategy for professionals, potentially leading to further exclusion of audience groups while a 'default' audience is continually catered for. This will undermine efforts to demonstrate the public benefit of archaeology to our funders.

How archaeological organisations should approach…

New to Archaeology, Archaeology 'Why Me?' audiences and consumers

- Know your audiences through 'audience mapping' research and design your outputs around an understanding of their needs (see Conclusion 3).

- Create output and social media policies and strategies with clear project aims (follow Theory of Change methodology – see CIfA CAG toolkit and the work by DigVentures (CIfA 2024).

- Project KPIs are very useful to check whether you are meeting the correct target audiences at different review stages of the project, to reorient your approach if necessary.

- Offer in-person outputs and digital content that is interactive and invites immediate audience feedback – e.g. polling or 'show of hands' after a lecture.

- Consider surveys and all methods of evaluation must be considered in terms of their accessibility – it is possible to co-design evaluation methods with audiences to ensure optimal accessibility and inclusion.

Known to Archaeology/Producers

- Share (non-identifying) audience data between peers – this may exist, as was discovered through the Archaeological Audience Network.

- Re-establishing something akin to the Archaeology Audience Network as a 'discussion space' – e.g. a LinkedIn group –that may enable practitioners to lobby for and undertake:
  - A training programme on audience segmentation, writing for different audiences.
  - Continual discussion and training in evaluation methods.
  - Learning about your audiences and evaluation of how well you did – create lessons learned loops.

- Avoid profiling and tokenising communities as 'hard to reach audiences', and explore mutual benefits.

<u>Commissioners</u>

- Work with commissioners to develop Theory of Change or, at minimum, identify key aims for audience-centred work.

- Draw from commissioners' own expertise, guidance and resources on working with audiences.

- Create clear and comprehensive evaluation reports aimed at commissioners, clearly demonstrating how you met project objectives.

- Demonstrate how evaluation impacts feed into their public benefit aims (likely via social value indicators).

- Present project failings constructively, demonstrating how they can be opportunities for learning in future projects.

While clients or funders will likely have project aims and audience strategies, community/engagement archaeologists may have insight or expertise that can lead towards optimal impact (and it may be possible to evaluate for both client and internal project aims simultaneously at no extra cost).

<u>Advocates</u>
Alongside campaigning for shared spaces for peers to discuss audience mapping and evaluation within the sector, such discussions should include:

- What constitutes success across the sector, in anticipation that success in archaeological engagement terms will exceed the perimeters of social value frameworks.

- Whether we can enable research into 'audience friendly/specific' evaluation techniques alongside comparable data.

- How to bring commissioners on board with a beyond 'bums on seats' approach and to change their perspectives around failings or small numbers.

- Discuss whether archaeologists can collaborate further with interdisciplinary sectors and independent researchers on audience mapping and evaluation frameworks (in a way that ensures that such activities do not get divorced from archaeological practices.)

- Discuss whether an archaeology strategy (akin to the one in Scotland) could help further such advances.

8.2 Further Data Opportunities

Considering all the information, findings, reflections and conclusions above, it has been noted that certain areas are ripe for further development. These include:

- Geographic comparisons (for Scotland, Wales, England, and Northern Ireland) – demographics and further study on Census and demographic data and how this impacts the four conclusions.

- Comparing the influence of commercial, charitable/voluntary and higher education contexts on archaeological outputs and public perception.

- Audience profiling methodologies (e.g., how to ask questions to enable us to understand our audiences) and analysis capabilities within the sector, with clear visualisations and supporting accessible explanations.

- Research which can compare resources needed to reach underserved groups against the benefits (short- and long-term) for communities and the sector (including social value measures per the work of Dr Sadie Watson – 2022), which may lead to further funding strategies.

- Negating 'silo-effects' when targeting audiences: can archaeology bring people together as well as tailor to their specific needs?

- Use of images (collages) and other media (Padlet) to denote engagement preferences for different audiences.

- Developing an 'ideas bank' of co-created ideas from communities.

- How to continue legacy projects and develop networks of trust.

- The impact and use of AI on audience engagement and archaeology engagement practices.

While data will be available for other researchers to consider and make use of, a toolkit brief for future funded projects will be provided to our funders for consideration and will cover aspects of these opportunities above.

9 CLOSING REMARKS AND ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

"Trowel and Error": a Public User Needs Survey for Archaeology (PUNS2) represents a significant step forward in the sector's efforts to understand, innovate and improve our ability to demonstrate archaeology's value to wider society. The wide-ranging analysis and thorough considerations presented in this report highlight a continual commitment towards addressing the needs of our stakeholders and audiences, for the benefit of the sector and society. As we move forward, it is essential not to lose sight of such goals, to collaborate effectively across disciplines and organisations, and essentially move in concert towards a more sustainable position. We need to be mindful that our primary ethical purpose is to generate knowledge and understanding and that we do so on behalf of, for and with wider society. Understanding and reflecting on how we might do this better is something we should all be actively engaged in. Therefore, this research has the potential to support future funding opportunities; CBA and MOLA look forward to ongoing discussions with collaborators.

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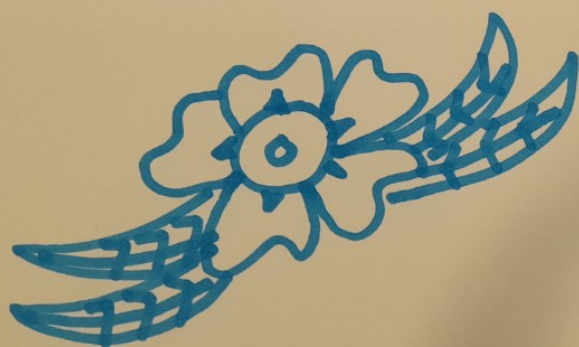
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