

# Thwaite Watermill Consultation

## Full findings report

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## Background

Thwaite Watermill is an industrial mill on an island between the River Aire, and Aire and Calder navigation (the Leeds to Liverpool Canal) and is currently managed as a heritage attraction by Leeds Museums & Galleries.

Leeds City Council are proposing to end their lease on this property and no longer operate Thwaite Watermill as a heritage attraction from 2025. The site is currently leased from Canal and River Trust who own the property.

A public consultation was held between 20 December 2023 and 19 January 2024 to understand views on the proposal. Promotion of the consultation was carried out on social media, in local news reports, and shared with around 2500 members of the Leeds Citizens Panel .

This report is the initial findings and high-level results. Further analysis will be carried out to include open-text responses.

## Response Rates

The consultation received 978 responses in total. Most visitors (964) accessed the survey via a web link, either through email or online promotions. The remaining 14 respondents used the QR code via a mobile phone.

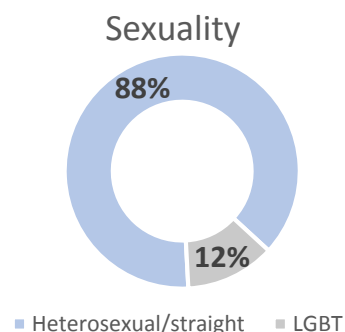
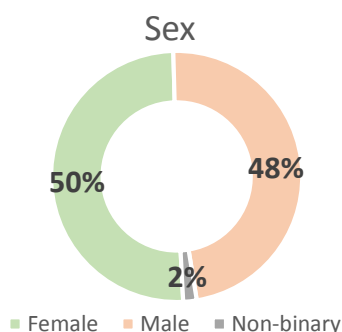
## Demographics

This section shows the demographic profile of respondents, where this detail was provided. Results percentages do not include those who chose not to answer or selected 'prefer not to say'. All comparisons with the population of Leeds are based on the 2021 Census.

### Sex and Sexuality

The respondents' sex and gender identity shows that 50% of respondents were female, 48% were male and 3% identified as non-binary. This is largely in line with the population of Leeds.

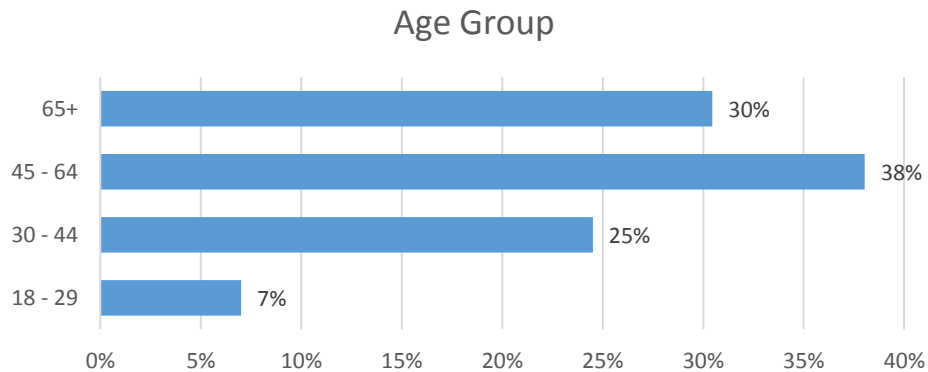
Altogether 12% of respondents identified as LGBT, which is above the Leeds population of 5%. This group refers to those who said they are either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other or who told us their gender identity is not the same as the sex registered at birth.



## Age Groups

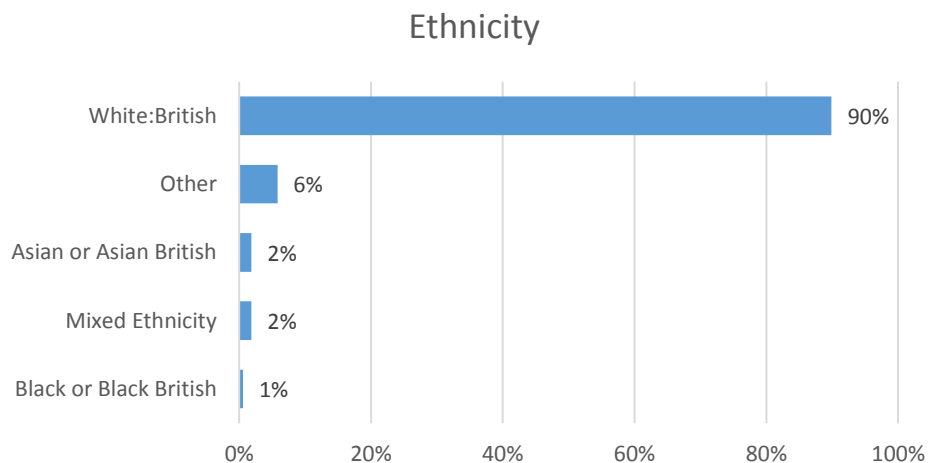
The consultation was underrepresented with those under 30 years old, with just 7% of respondents falling into this group compared to 24% of the Leeds population.

Those age 30 and 44 represented 25% of the respondents which is representative of this age group. We were slightly underrepresented in the 45 to 64 group at 38% compared to 48% in Leeds, and also slightly overrepresented by 10% in the over 65+ group.



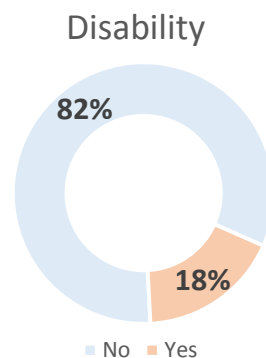
## Ethnicity

Those who describe themselves as White British accounted for 90% of respondents. The remaining 10% described themselves as another ethnicity, which is lower than the Leeds population where 24% are an ethnicity other than White British.



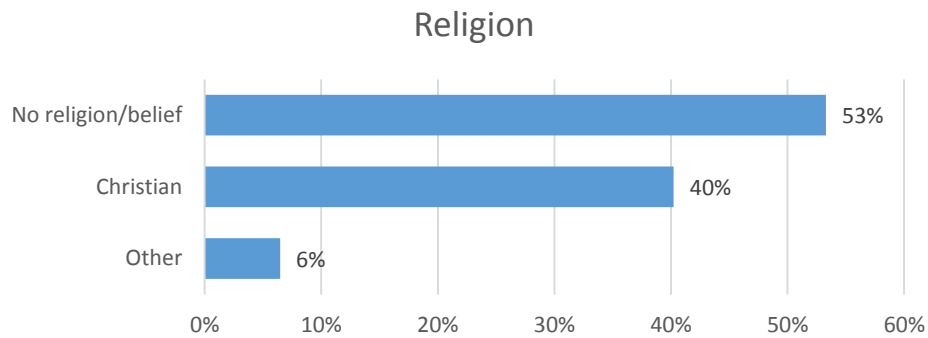
## Disability

Altogether 18% of respondents told us they have a disability, which is in line with the population of Leeds.



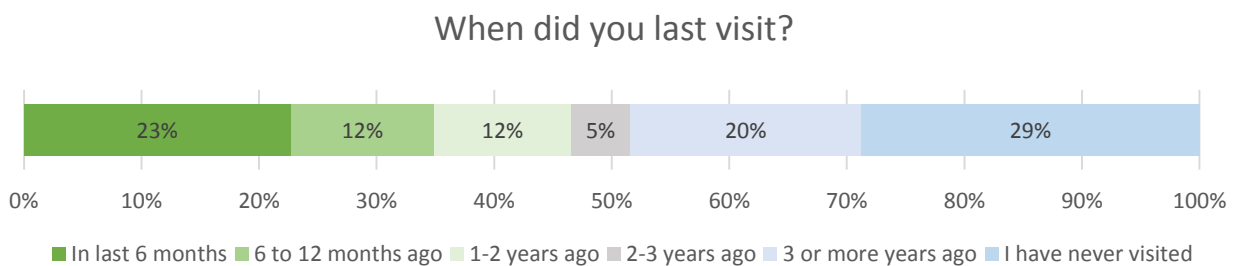
## Religion

Just over half of respondents (53%) said they have no religion or belief, compared to 43% in Leeds. Christians accounted for 40% (44% in Leeds) and those of follow another religion accounted for 6% (12% in Leeds).



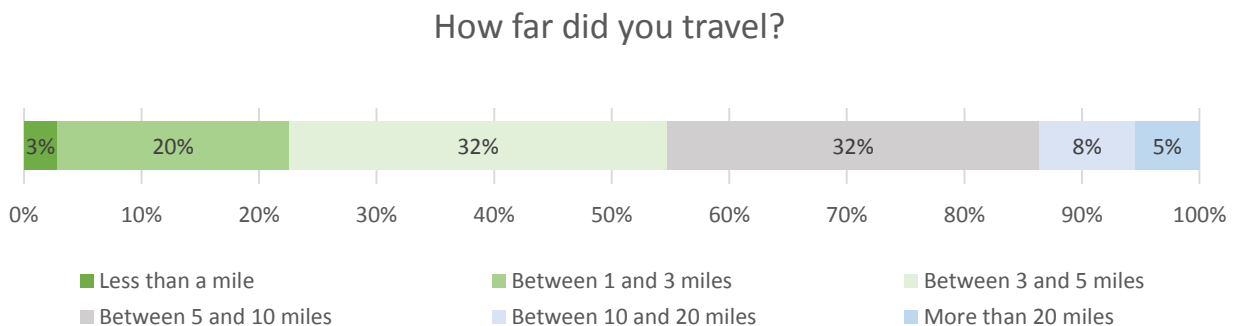
## When did you last visit Thwaite Watermill?

In total 35% of respondents have visited in the last 12 months, with just under of a quarter (23%) visiting within the last 6 months. 29% of respondents have never visited the mill.



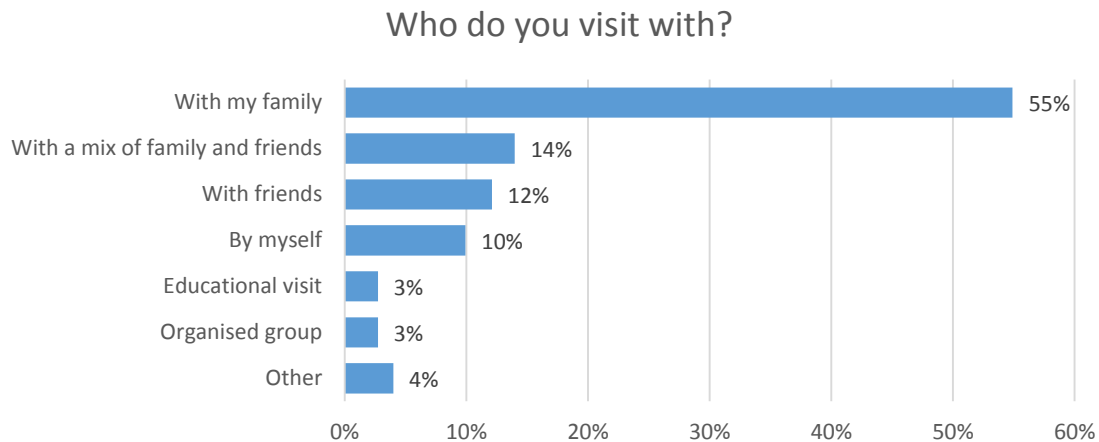
## How far do / did you travel to visit Thwaite Watermill?

Almost a quarter of visitors travel less than 3 miles to Thwaite Mill (23%) with a further 32% travelling between 1 and 3 miles. Just 5% travel from more than 20 miles away.



# Who do you usually visit Thwaite Watermill with?

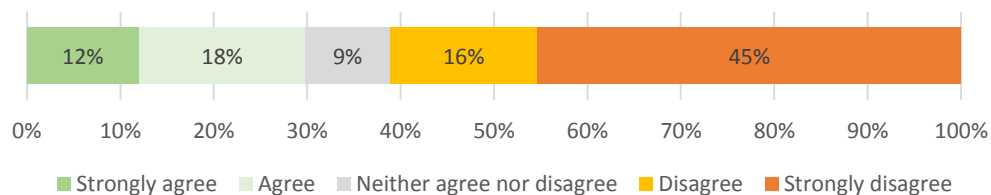
Just over half of respondents (55%) visit Thwaite Watermill with family, followed by a mix of family and friends at 14%. Organised groups and educational visitors account for just 6% of visitors.



# Do you agree with the proposal to end the lease and cease operating the site?

Respondents were asked, considering the opening statement and the Council's financial challenge, if they agree with the proposal for Leeds Museums & Galleries to end its lease and cease operating the site.

Altogether 61% of respondents disagree with the proposal, 45% of which strongly disagree. 30% of respondents agree with ending the lease and 9% neither agree nor disagree.



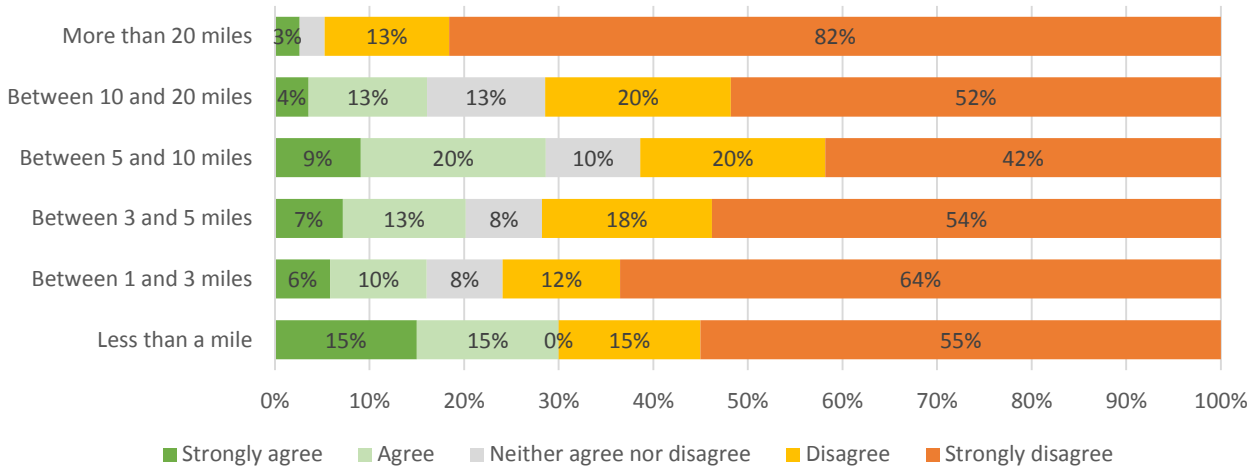
The following pages show the level of agreement by different groups and how they respond to other questions.

## Level of agreement by distance travelled

The chart below compares the level of agreement with the proposal against how far respondents travel to Thwaite Mills.

This shows that those who travel more than 20 miles are much more likely to disagree with the proposal to end the lease at Thwaite Mills.

Agree/disagree by distance travelled

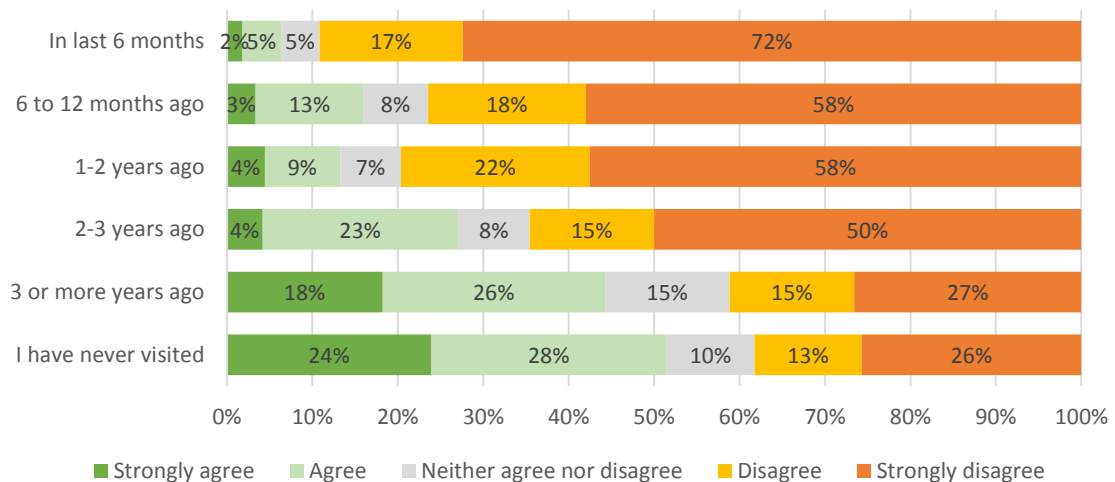


## Agreement by last time visited

The chart below compares the level of agreement against the last time the respondent visited Thwaite Mills.

This shows that those who visited more recently are more likely to disagree with the proposal.

Agree/disagree by last visited

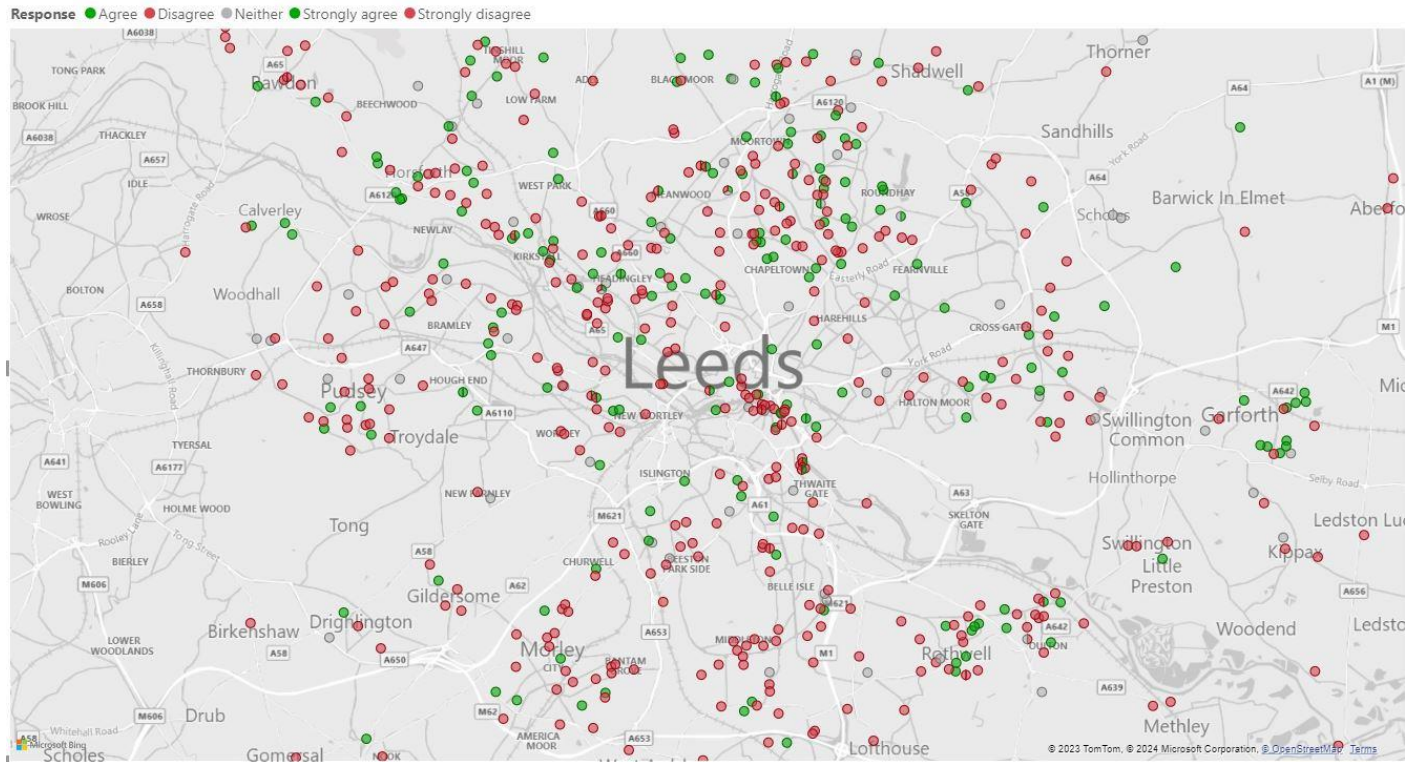


# Level of agreement by postcode

The map below shows those who agree/disagree with the proposal by the postcode they provided.

Altogether 804 respondents provided a valid postcode. The map below only focusses on Leeds and surrounding areas, as a number of postcodes were not local to the area.

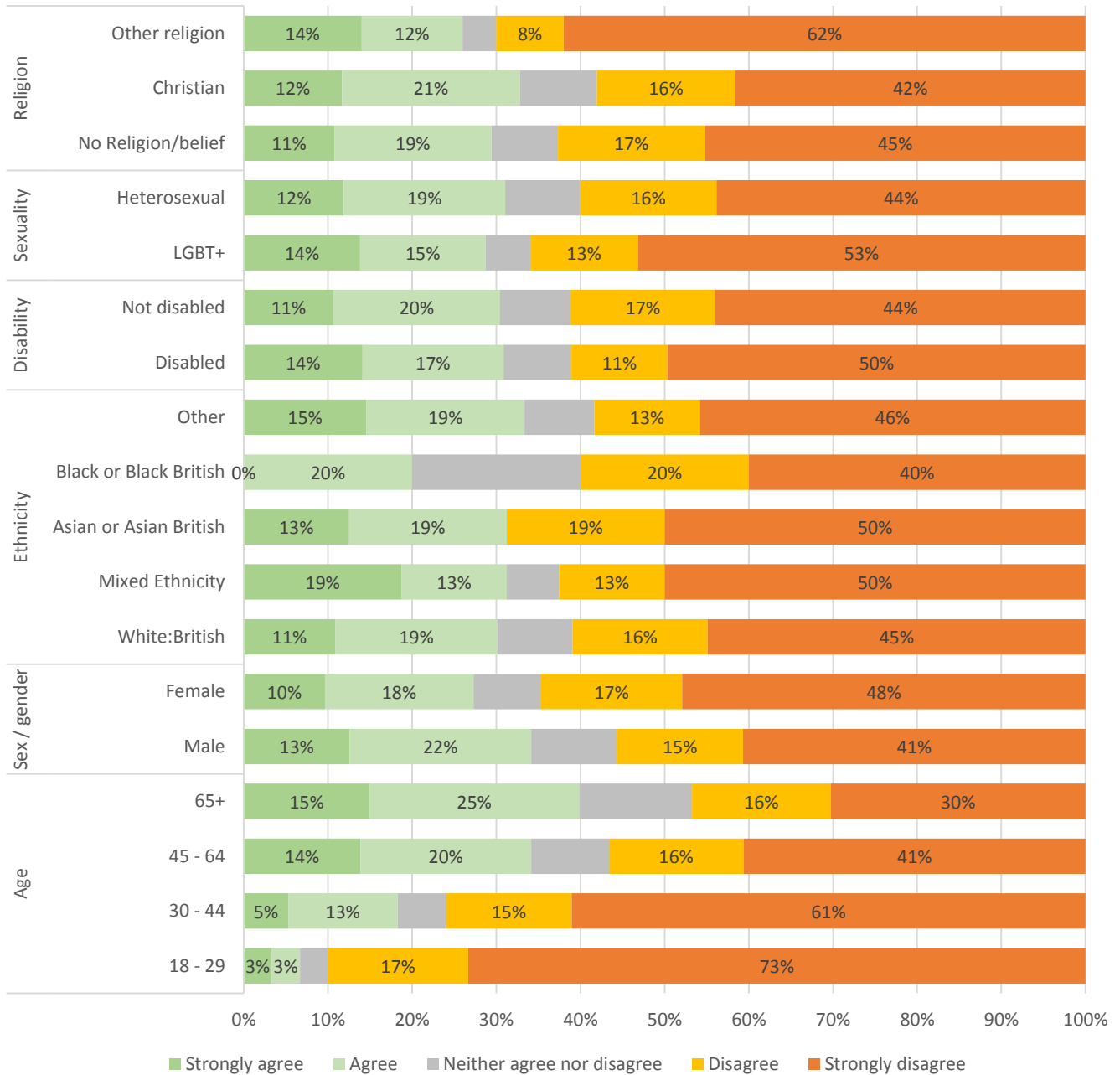
There is no clear trend in terms of their location and whether they agree or disagree with the proposal to end the lease at Thwaite Mills.



# Agreement with proposals by different groups

The figure below shows the level of agreement by different demographic groups. This shows that:

- There is no difference in opinion between disabled respondents and non-disabled respondents.
- There is a clear trend with younger age groups disagreeing with the proposals more than older age groups.
- Males are slightly more in favour of the proposals than females.



# Comments on the proposal

After stating whether they agree or disagree with the proposal, respondents were asked to tell us more about their choice.

Altogether 783 respondents left a comment, accounting for 80% of respondents. These comments were reviewed and placed into broader themes and are listed in the table below, along with example comments from the most popular themes. Note that some comments touch on multiple themes.

This shows that 39% of respondents felt that the site was an important part of our history and heritage. One in five respondents (21%) agreed with the proposal and understood the financial situation. A similar number of respondents (18%) felt that there was a lack of promotion or advertising for Thwaite Mills.

Theme	As %	Example
Part of our heritage/history	39%	Thwaite Mills is an important part of the industrial legacy of Leeds and the industry which made the city.
Agree or understand the reasons	21%	I think if savings have to be made this is something that would be a good option.
Lack of promotion	18%	Perhaps the main reason it is not visited as frequently as it could be, is down to lack of advertising. It is a hidden gem!
Generally disagree with proposal	10%	The council constantly say they wish to project Leeds as a city of culture. Closing such places of interest is counter productive.
Generate income/increase visitors	9%	I do feel that there is much more that could be done there and it could generate quite a large profit if there was a bit more oomph and expertise behind: Cafe offering Bookable workshops Advertising
Important for education/schools	9%	This is an important site for school children to visit and learn about the history and heritage of Leeds
Misc./General	6%	
Not visited before/not interesting	5%	
Needs better opening hours	4%	
Will fall into disrepair	4%	
Reduce Council waste/projects	4%	
When it's gone it's gone forever	3%	
CRT should continue to maintain	3%	
Find a new operator	3%	
Caused by lack of government funding	2%	

## What would you like to see for the future of the site?

This was another open text comment where respondents stated what they would like to see with the future of the site, should this be handed back to the Canal and River Trust.

Altogether this received 764 responses to this question, representing 78% of overall respondents. These comments were reviewed and placed into broader themes and are listed in the table below, along with example comments from the most popular themes. Note that some comments touch on multiple themes.

In total 41% of comments suggested that it should continue operation as a museum. This was followed by 18% of respondents who felt it was important that the heritage is preserved. 10% of respondents said there was a need for better promotion and awareness, and 9% of respondents felt it was important to maintain public/community access to the site.



Theme	As %	Example
Continued operation as a museum	41%	I would like to have it stay open as a museum ensuring that the history of the area is not lost
Need to preserve heritage	18%	Its preservation and development as an historic site.
Need for Better Promotion/Awareness	10%	Well publicised at least regionally, probably nationally as a destination to visit, which happens to be in Leeds - possibly some publicity link with the Royal Armouries
Misc./General	9%	Not optimistic
Community use / Public access	9%	I would love to see it continue to be accessed by general public in some form
Run by charity / volunteers	6%	Operated by a charitable trust if possible to retain public access at this incredibly rare heritage site which deserves a future.
Restaurant/Café	6%	A waterside café would be lovely. A café has always been the main thing it's been lacking.
Possible funding sources	5%	I would like to see it continue in its present form with possibly sponsorship from local businesses.
Events Venue	5%	Hopefully to continue with voluntary funding schemes or national lottery money
Canal and River Trust should manage site	5%	Ideally the canal and riverside trust would continue it's operation
Don't know / Not visited	3%	
Development for Housing or Commercial Use	3%	
Educational hub / youth activities	3%	
Maintain/better access to canal	2%	
Parks/Family activities	2%	
Arts & Craft / Exhibitions	2%	
Studio / Venue hire	2%	
Other uses	2%	
Moorings for boats	2%	
Nature reserve	2%	
Wedding venue	2%	
Other owners (e.g Heritage Trust)	1%	
Canal trips	1%	
Agreement with the Proposal due to Financial Reasons	0%	