

MARKETS 4 PEOPLE

Grainger Market: a community asset at the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne

It's a bit like that Cheers song, 'where everybody knows your name'.

Drs Sara González, Myfanwy Taylor, Andy Newing, Lisa Buckner* and Rosie Wilkinson
School of Geography, University of Leeds. *School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds



Inside Grainger Market, Newcastle upon Tyne. (Myfanwy Taylor)

Authors of the report

Dr Sara González is Associate Professor at the School of Geography, University of Leeds. She has 10 years of experience researching and publishing on traditional markets in the UK and internationally. She is the Principal Investigator of Markets4People, a 3-year research project on understanding the community value of markets.

Dr Myfanwy Taylor is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the School of Geography, University of Leeds. She is an expert on urban economies and politics, including collaborative research with market traders, industrial firms and other small businesses. She is the main researcher in the Markets4People research project, leading on data gathering, analysis and publications.

Dr Andy Newing is Associate Professor in Applied Spatial Analysis at the School of Geography, University of Leeds. He is an expert on consumer data analysis and carries out applied high impact research in collaboration with commercial and public sector organisations. He is co-investigator in the Markets4People research, leading on geospatial coding and catchment analysis.

Dr Lisa Buckner is Associate Professor of Social Statistics at the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. She is an expert on the analysis of large and complex data sets, and the use of official statistics and surveys for policy-applied research. She is co-investigator in the Markets4People research, leading on the statistical analysis.

Rosie Wilkinson is a Research Assistant at the School of Geography, University of Leeds. She has experience of supporting numerous research projects themed around culture and heritage. She is the research assistant in the Markets4People project, leading on communications, networking, ethical processes, data management and non-academic dissemination.

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Contact us:

✉ markets4people@leeds.ac.uk

☎ +44 (0)113 34 33300

🌐 trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/

🐦 @markets4people



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Executive summary

This report demonstrates the importance and success of Grainger Market as an affordable and quality fresh food market and a welcoming and supportive community asset, particularly benefitting elderly and low-income groups in Newcastle.

It is one of three reports documenting evidence from the Markets4People research project¹ about the wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits produced by three of the UK's largest and strongest traditional retail markets. Building on previous research, the reports bring a new focus on the importance of markets from the perspective of their existing customers. In each of the three case study markets, the research involved a survey of 500 market users (capturing a representative sample in terms of age, gender and ethnicity), two focus groups with selected user groups and around 10 interviews with key local actors, to contextualise the findings.

Grainger Market was selected for this research as one of three exemplary case studies well-placed to demonstrate the wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits of traditional markets in the UK. Located at the heart of the historical city centre of Newcastle upon Tyne, Grainger Market is a Grade 1 listed large indoor market, owned and managed by Newcastle City Council. It is valued very positively by its customers and it was voted Britain's favourite market in 2020. It is well known in the markets sector for being a traditional market which has incorporated new types of stalls, such as hot and street food, over the years. However, it is now at a turning point as the Council seeks to generate more income from this asset, coupled with calls to rethink the role of retail in city centres after negative impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic. This could see the Market become more of a leisure space in order to attract new customers.

In this context, our research has focused on understanding the *existing* customers' experience of the Market, including economic, social and cultural aspects, as well as wider governance issues.

The key findings from the research include:

Grainger Market is *particularly important to older groups, specifically women and people on lower incomes*. Twenty-five percent of all users surveyed are women between the ages of 60 and 69. Fifty-two percent of market users live in the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Eighty-nine percent come from the less affluent socio-economic groups C, D and E.

Grainger Market is a *highly successful and established shopping destination of choice*, valued for its affordable and good quality produce. Seventy-two percent of market customers visit at least once a week. Sixty-three percent of customers have been visiting for over 20 years.

Grainger Market is a *social, welcoming and supportive community asset*, generating feelings of well-being in particular for older and vulnerable groups of people. Almost 80% of users over the age of 70 bump into people they know at the Market. Sixty-two percent of users feel less lonely when they visit, a feeling which is stronger amongst those in less affluent socio-economic groups.

Grainger Market is an *intercultural and intergenerational meeting point*. Although the majority of users are white and tend to be older, the Market also attracts in particular users from other ethnic groups, those not born in the UK and young students. Between 40 and 50% of customers agree that they interact with traders and other customers of a different ethnic or cultural background to their own.

We also found that, despite the successful community value that Grainger Market generates, Grainger Market is affected by some pressing *external* challenges, such as the future of the high street and traditional retail, and struggling council finances. Significantly, there are also *internal* challenges within the governance of the Market, which we believe could be detrimental to its community value unless significant mitigating measures are put in place:

- A push against the Market's traditional character and leaving existing customers behind;
- A narrow, income-driven approach which overlooks the wider community value of the Market;
- A strained relationship between traders and the Council.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of these pressures, with the UK markets sector as a whole struggling. However, our view is that markets such as Grainger Market can play a vital role in a community-led and more environmentally sustainable recovery of retail and the high street.

To that effect our research has distilled several *recommendations* for Newcastle City Council, in particular, as the Market owner and operator:

- Embed our research across the Council, ensuring that all relevant teams have access to this report and relate their work to the Market.
- Reframe Grainger Market as a community asset, actively utilising its broad social and cultural benefits to contribute to the Council's goal for a healthy and fairer city.
- Celebrate and incorporate the current customer base, developing strategic policies to reach out to these groups in positive ways.
- Identify the potential impact of any future policy options on different user groups, in particular equalities groups and other vulnerable groups, and mitigate against any negative impacts.
- Set up a Market Forum, bringing together key stakeholders of Grainger Market such as officers, councillors across various departments, traders and representatives of community groups.
- Put Grainger Market at the centre of a community-led recovery plan for the city and the high street.

Beyond the local authority, our findings across the Markets4People research also provide a strong rationale to recommend that the national government implement a package of support for market traders and operators, as proposed by the markets' sector lead organisations NABMA and NMTF. This would enable markets to continue to deliver wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits to marginalised, disadvantaged and vulnerable communities as they emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The reports also suggest that the role of traditional retail markets in serving older people, lower-income communities, migrants and ethnic minority groups is something to be celebrated and supported by the sector. The reports challenge the idea that the only future for traditional markets must be to attract new, younger and more affluent customers. Thus, we recommend a joined-up approach by local and national government which recognises markets' contributions to wide-ranging policy goals relating to economic development, public health and social inclusion. This new community approach can unlock new much needed investment, to reposition markets as community hubs for more sustainable high streets.

Contents

1. Introduction	6
Who is this report for?	7
2. Newcastle Grainger Market	8
3. Who uses Grainger Market?	10
3.1 Serving the local community and beyond.....	10
3.2 Serving older women and lower income communities.....	11
3.3 Serving diverse and multicultural communities	11
4. Visiting Grainger Market and shopping there	12
4.1 A very loyal, frequently visiting and intergenerational customer base	12
4.2 Affordable, environmentally friendly and quality shopping under one roof	12
4.3 A sustainable city-centre shopping destination	14
4.4 Driving footfall and contributing to the local economy.....	15
5. The social and cultural life of Grainger Market	16
5.1 A convivial space for socialisation	16
5.2 Inter-ethnic and inter-cultural engagement	18
5.3 Care, belonging and feeling safe at the Market	18
5.4 An important and valuable community hub	20
6. The future of Grainger Market: balancing community and commercial logics	21
6.1 Losing the Market's traditional character and leaving existing customers behind.....	21
6.2 A narrow, income-driven approach, which overlooks the wider community value of the Market	22
6.3 A strained relationship between traders and the Council.....	23
6.4 Summary.....	24
7. Recommendations	25
7.1 Embed the research across the Council	25
7.2 Reframe Grainger Market as a community asset and not only as a commercial property asset	25
7.3 Celebrate and incorporate the current customer base into any future strategies for the Market.....	25
7.4 Identify and mitigate negative impacts of policies on different user groups	26
7.5 Set up a Market Forum linking up across the Council and with community groups.....	26
7.6 Put Grainger Market at the centre of a community-led Newcastle Recovery Plan	26
Annex 1 – Research Methodology	27
Annex 2 – Research Team	28
Endnotes	29

1. Introduction

This report about Grainger Market, is one of three documenting evidence from the Markets4People research project² about the wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits produced by three of the UK's largest and strongest traditional retail markets (TRMs). TRMs are 'indoor and outdoor markets selling food, household goods, clothing and the like', their broad, diverse and affordable offering distinguishing them from more narrowly-focused and often more expensive farmers' and specialist markets.³ TRMs provide affordable and quality produce, they are inclusive and generally accessible places, sustain employment and livelihoods for traders and generate economic value through customers' purchases, rental income for market operators⁴ and increased footfall in towns and cities through the 'anchor' role they play.⁵ As our research confirms, TRMs are particularly important to low-income communities, older people, migrants and black and minority ethnic groups.

Despite their wide-ranging importance, UK TRMs have been marginalised and neglected in recent decades. Compared to supermarkets and the wider retail sector, they have been framed as declining and in need of modernisation. This has contributed in many cases to an under-investment in market infrastructure, maintenance and repairs over decades, particularly as local authorities, who tend to manage and own them, suffer from austerity cuts in their budgets. In this context, the national market operators' and traders' organisations, NABMA and NMTF, have supported the professional development of the sector, including adapting to changing consumer habits and expectations. They have also produced evidence and tools to demonstrate the importance and contribution of markets.⁶



Young market users at an Indian street food stall in Grainger Market. (Newcastle City Council)

Historic underinvestment, coupled with pressures shared by retail and the high street in general, have led to market redevelopment schemes often designed to appeal to new, younger and more affluent customers.⁷ In the process, pre-existing traders and customers can be marginalised as rents become higher and markets change their atmosphere and offer.⁸ This is a particular problem because the customer base of TRMs generally includes groups of people already suffering from isolation or multiple vulnerabilities, who rely on markets for affordable provisioning and opportunities for social interaction. The impact of changing the market offer on these user groups is rarely taken into account, partly because there is a lack of evidence and research about them. While the importance of markets as spaces of social and cultural interaction was firmly-established by Professor Sophie Watson's work in the 2000s,⁹ there has been no large-scale consumer research which has included markets' social and cultural functions as well as their economic functions.

It is in this context that the Markets4People research project brings a focus on the combined economic, social and cultural benefits of TRMs, which we call "community value". Through a rigorous selection process,¹⁰ we identified Queen's Market in Newham, east London, Newcastle upon Tyne's Grainger Market and Bury Market in Greater Manchester. We surveyed a representative sample of 500 customers in each market, to explore how different groups (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and income, for example) use and value markets as spaces for shopping, eating and socialising and as local community assets. We also undertook two focus groups with selected customers and approximately 10 interviews with key local actors in each case. This case study research was preceded by around 30 interviews and several workshops with key actors within the markets industry nationally, as well as analysis of documents and participation in key sector events.¹¹



Materials laid out for a focus group with Grainger Market users. (Rosie Wilkinson)

Our community focus on markets makes an important contribution to the current debate about the future of the UK high street. Research from the Institute of Place Management has already established markets' positive impact on footfall in high streets and town centres.¹² This evidence contributed to markets being identified by the High Streets Task Force as one of its 25 'vital and viable' priorities.¹³ In addition, Grimsey's influential report has called to rethink the high street as a 'community hub' away from the more traditional retail uses, highlighting how markets can play a role.¹⁴ Markets can also be at the heart of increasingly-influential inclusive growth and community wealth building policy agendas.¹⁵ The Greater London Authority, for example, has funded a number of market improvement schemes as part of its 'Good Growth' regeneration programme, and developed a toolkit through which operators and others can demonstrate the 'social value' of markets.¹⁶

The community role of TRMs as inclusive spaces has been sharply exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Their role in providing access to affordable food has been particularly important at a time when many household budgets have come under pressure, especially because, as our research shows, market users are less likely to shop online. The possibilities markets afford for social interaction between traders and customers have also been particularly precious at a time when other opportunities have been severely restricted. Recognising the importance of markets, over 90% of operators did not charge rents or other payments from traders during the first lockdown of 2020.¹⁷ However, the sector is presently in crisis, with 85% of market operators considering their markets to be at risk as a result of Covid-19 and a number of markets already being forced to close.¹⁸ To ensure the survival of the markets industry, NABMA and NMTF have urged the UK government to put in place a dedicated package of support for market operators and traders.¹⁹

Traditional retail markets are therefore not a lingering feature of a nostalgic high street but very much a key aspect of a future strategy for inclusive, community-focused and sustainable towns and cities.²⁰ However, this future should not be one of standardised and gentrified markets. When markets serve older people, low-income communities, migrants and black and minority ethnic groups, this should be celebrated and strategically supported to bring benefits to economic development, public health and social inclusion. In this context, the evidence contained in these three reports about the wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits of TRMs can help not only to make the case for a dedicated support package for markets but also to reposition markets as community hubs for more inclusive economies.

Who is this report for?

This report will be of particular interest to Newcastle City Council, as the owner and operator of Grainger Market. We believe that the findings will be relevant not only for the Council staff or elected members directly linked with the operation of the Market but, more widely, for officers and councillors with responsibilities across Adult Social Care and Integrated Services, Children, Education and Skills, and City Futures Directorates, as well teams from Public Health, Well-being or Communities.

More widely, the report is for everyone who cares about Grainger Market: market users, traders, local community groups, local councillors and local business groups, as well as wider regional and national decision makers with an interest in retail, the high street, local economic development and community inclusion.

2. Newcastle Grainger Market

Key facts

- Built in 1835 and designed by John Dobson, Grade 1 listed building.
- Open Monday to Saturday, 9am to 5.30pm.
- 123 stalls and approximately 95 businesses (November 2019).
- Occupancy rate above 85% in the last few years, which compares favourably with occupancy rates on the high street in the North East.
- Employs approximately 800 people directly and indirectly.²¹
- Footfall of around 120,000 people per week, in slow decline which has been very significantly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic since March 2020.
- Generates a surplus for the Council of between £260k and £600k per year in the last decade, which has supported services across the Council. In more recent years, this surplus has been reduced significantly due to loan repayments.
- Awarded Britain's favourite market in 2020 by NABMA, as a result of a national vote.

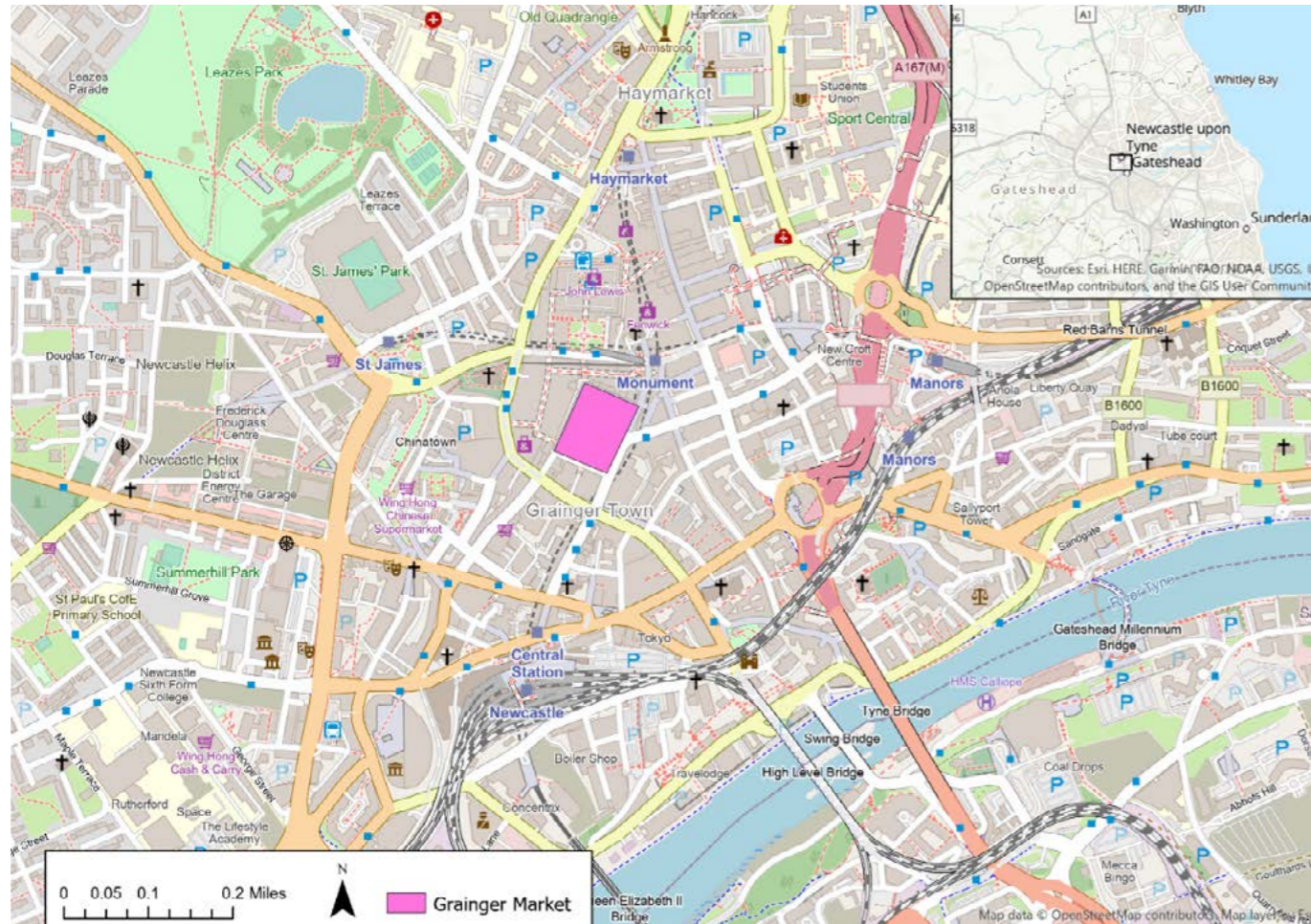


Figure 1: Grainger Market is located in the Grainger Town historical area in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne.
© OpenStreetMap contributors

Newcastle Grainger Market is a lively and historical market, combining long-standing and traditional market stalls and cafes with more recent additions serving hot food. It is located in the heart of the city centre, within the Grainger Town historical area (Figure 1). It is well connected to the rest of the city and region through links to public transport networks and it attracts both older and younger customers from across the region, as well as visitors and tourists from further afield. Grainger Market has a central place in many people's lives across Newcastle and the region. It is loved as an independent retail outlet and leisure space, and was voted Britain's favourite market in 2020.

The Market is organised around four main alleys and one large, glass-roofed arcade. The stalls, numbering over a hundred, are not necessarily clustered depending on the type of commodity as, over the years, what used to be mainly fresh food stalls, have been mixed up with other trades. This creates an interesting mix of new and traditional stalls next to each other. The main arcade features several cafes where customers often spend considerable time eating and drinking. The Market has 14 entrances although, paradoxically, they can be difficult to discern from the outside.



Some of the market's 14 entrances are more easy to spot than others. (AlixChaytor, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

The Market is owned and managed by Newcastle City Council under its Place Directorate. There is no dedicated manager for Grainger Market; instead the Market is one of several properties managed within the Council's commercial property portfolio. There has been no mechanism to reinvest part of the surplus generated from traders' rents into the upkeep of the building, which has historically generated a backlog of maintenance works and, at some points, a poor environment.²²

Over the last few decades the Market has, however, received some investment from the Council, drawing on the income from traders' rents. The investment has focused on upgrading the listed building and modernising the facilities. Following the 2001 Council strategy, "The Markets Project Plan", around £3m was invested in the Market, including on restoring the Market's traditional features, creating a new events space and seating, refurbishing the toilets and installing CCTV.²³ In 2016, the Market's 14 entrances were improved at a cost of £820k, funded through the Council's Capital Investment Fund.²⁴ In 2019, work began to replace the glazed Arcade roof at a cost of £2.7m, to be financed through council borrowing and repaid by exploring options for increasing the income generated by the Market.

Like most markets and retail outlets across the UK, Grainger Market has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. While Grainger Market remained open during the lockdown periods in 2020 and 2021, it did so at a very reduced capacity only, with some of the traders allowed to sell essential goods and with reduced opening hours.²⁵ Outside of these lockdown periods, trade and footfall remained significantly lower than usual. For example, footfall was around 60% lower than usual in December 2020, in the weeks after the national lockdown ended,²⁶ and the vacancy rate now stands at 15.5%, with the Council admitting that Covid-19 has negatively affected the Market.²⁷ More positively, Covid-19 prompted traders to develop an online shopping and delivery scheme, Grainger Market Delivery, supported by Newcastle City Council (which allocated vehicles and drivers from Parking Services) and the Business Improvement District NE1 (which assisted with administration).²⁸ By February 2021, the scheme included over 20 market traders and had passed £1m total sales.²⁹

3. Who uses Grainger Market?

Key facts

- Grainger Market is particularly well-used by people living in deprived neighbourhoods and from less affluent socio-economic groups, in a range of different employment situations.
- It is particularly well-used by women and older people BUT also attracts younger people.
- The majority of market users are white British and white other.
- Market users live in a range of different household types and include people living alone and with children.
- Grainger Market has a loyal customer base, with customers who have been visiting for many years and who visit very regularly.
- Market users come mainly from the locality and the region, with a few coming from further afield.
- The majority of users travel to the Market by bus.
- Grainger's catchment areas extend approx. 4.5km (50% of users) and 6.5km (the next 25% of users) from the Market.

3.1 Serving the local community and beyond

While, like many markets, Grainger Market primarily serves the local community, it also attracts customers from across the region and a few from further afield. Fifty-five percent of respondents are residents of the Newcastle upon Tyne Local Authority District. Eighty-five percent of respondents live within 10km of Grainger Market and the mean travel distance for those consumers is just over 4km, suggesting that the Market predominantly serves a local customer base. Identifying core and secondary catchment areas (Figure 2) allows us to compare market users with all households living in the catchment areas, using neighbourhood level data based on postcodes (at unit postcode level).

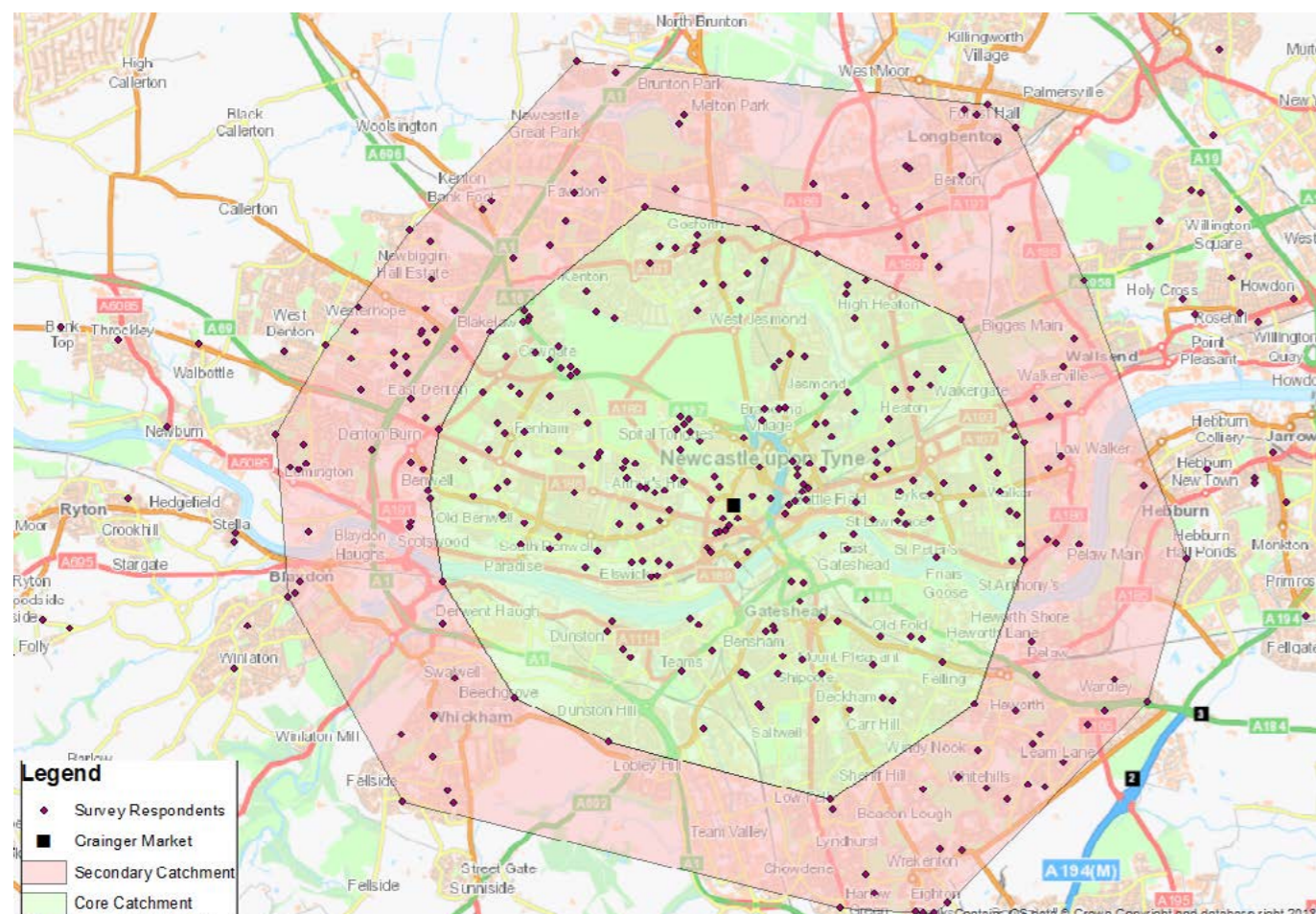


Figure 2: Grainger Market's core catchment area (the area within which 50% of customers live; in green), extending approximately 4.5km from the Market, and its secondary catchment area (including the next 25% of users; in pink), extending approximately 6.5km from the Market. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018.

3.2 Serving older women and lower income communities

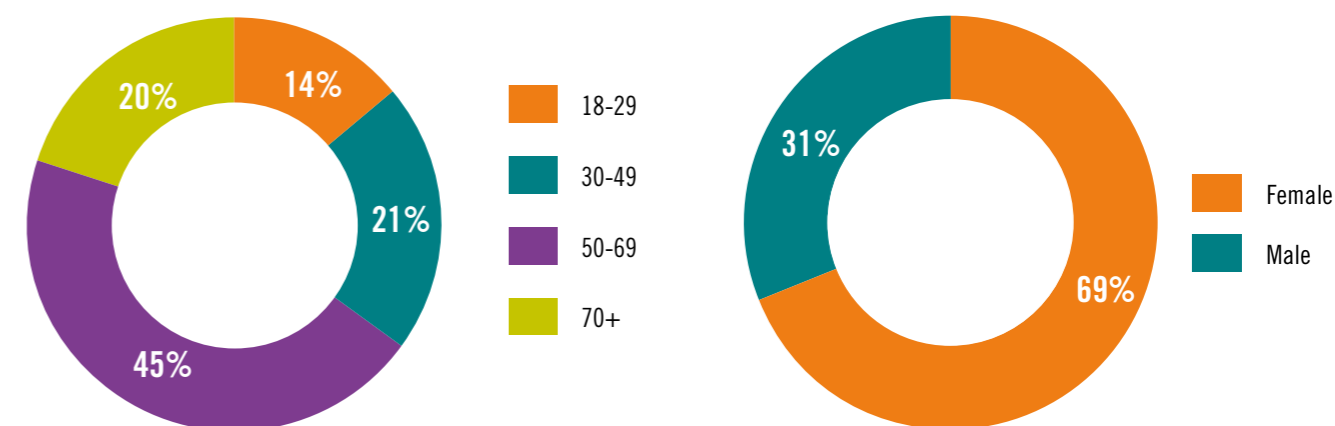


Figure 3: The age and gender of Grainger Market users.

Grainger Market is particularly well-used by women and older people (Figure 3). About 25% of all users surveyed were women between the ages of 60 and 69, and 44% of those surveyed are retired. However, the customer base also includes plenty of young people; 14% of market users are aged 18 to 29 years old.

	Core Catchment		Secondary Catchment	
	Survey Respondents	All Households	Survey Respondents	All Households
Proportion of households in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England (IMD 2015)	43%	37%	37%	31%
Proportion from social grade D and E	43%	32%	50%	31%
Proportion not owning a car	67%	46%	54%	36%

Table 1: Measures of deprivation amongst market users compared to the core and secondary catchment areas as a whole.

Markets throughout the UK are particularly important to lower-income communities since they provide affordable food and other goods, when compared to the prices in supermarkets and other local stores. In the case of Grainger Market, this trend is definitely apparent. Twenty-four percent of market users live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation, and a total of 52% in the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods. The majority of market customers (89%) are also classed as 'social grades' C, D and E, which are the less affluent socio-economic groups.³⁰ Compared to the catchment area as a whole, Grainger Market users are more likely to come from socio-economic groups 'D' (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations) and 'E' (unemployed and less skilled occupations), to lack access to a car and to live in the most deprived neighbourhoods (Table 1).

These findings are consistent with previous research commissioned by Newcastle City Council more than 20 years earlier in 1998³¹ and later in 2008,³² which showed that users tended to be older, female and live in relatively more deprived areas. However, they also show that a trend for the ageing of the customer base identified in a survey of customers in 2014 has not progressed.³³ In comparison to 2014, 65% of customers continue to be over 50 years old, according to our survey in 2019, while the percentage of younger customers under 25 years old has gone up from 6% to 9%.

These findings highlight the importance of markets as social spaces for older women.³⁴ The data suggest that Grainger Market has a consolidated position serving these groups, while also attracting young users. Although the predominance of older customers in markets is often regarded as a measure of decline (since these customers will eventually die), Grainger Market's longstanding success in attracting older customers over the last two decades suggests it is continuing to attract new generations as they get older. Older customers also play a role in introducing the Market to younger generations. Forty-two percent of those aged between 25 and 49 have been visiting the Market for over 20 years and 27% of those between 5 and 20 years,³⁵ suggesting that these younger people may have continued to use the Market after visiting as children with their parents. This observation was confirmed in focus groups when shoppers told us that they used to visit with their parents.

3.3 Serving diverse and multicultural communities

Grainger Market is a multicultural space in a predominantly white city. Although most customers are white and born in the UK, when we compare to the core catchment area in particular, Grainger Market seems to attract a slightly more diverse customer range. Twelve percent of people living in the core catchment area as a whole are born outside of the UK, whereas 22% of market users living in that same catchment area are born outside of the UK. While the differences in terms of ethnicity are less pronounced, within the core catchment area, 18% of market users are from non-White ethnic groups compared to 13% within the core catchment area more generally. More specifically, Asian and Asian British (Indian) communities within the core catchment area appear to be relatively well represented amongst market users (5% of market users compared to 2% of the core catchment area). The Market therefore can be seen as an integration space for ethnic minorities and migrants in the city. This should be regarded as a significant asset for the city and one that the local authority and local charities and community groups can build on (see Section 5.2).

4. Visiting Grainger Market and shopping there

Key facts

- Grainger Market has a loyal customer base, with customers who have been visiting for many years and who visit very regularly.
- People mainly come to the Market to shop, and to eat as a secondary use.
- Many market users rely on the Market for the majority of their shopping, particularly younger and older people.
- Market users rate highly the quality and price of food and drinks sold in the Market, with the vast majority agreeing that it provides access to affordable and good quality produce.
- Market users spend a considerable amount of money inside and outside the Market, generating an economic impact for the rest of the city centre.
- People go out of their way to use the Market, travelling further than they do to supermarkets.

4.1 A very loyal, frequently-visiting and intergenerational customer base

Grainger Market has a very loyal and active customer base, with customers who have been visiting for many years and who visit very regularly. Sixty-three percent of customers have been visiting for over 20 years. Although these loyal customers tend to be older, it is worth noting that 35% of younger customers between 18 and 29 years old have been visiting between 6 months and 5 years. Customers from “vulnerable groups”³⁶ and the less affluent socio-economic groups have been visiting the longest. In terms of frequency, 72% of market users told us that they visited at least once a week. In comparison to data from the late 2000s and 2010s,³⁷ we can see that a trend for more frequent visits has consolidated. While in 2009, 54% of users tended to visit at least weekly, this had gone up to 65% in 2014 and 72% in 2019. The most frequently-visiting age groups today are the youngest (18-24 year olds) and the oldest (over 70 years old). Although these groups might visit for different purposes and uses, what it is interesting to note is that they find themselves together on a weekly basis. These findings suggest that Grainger Market is also an important intergenerational space.

4.2 Affordable, environmentally friendly and quality shopping under one roof

I mostly go in the afternoon times during my couple hours' break and go to the sandwich shops or the eatery places. [...]. And I think they're quite reasonably priced; they're not very expensive. And I also like the loose sugar, the warehouse, fruit and warehouse, I think that's very good, cheap, friendly staff... I also like the French Oven that sell after four o'clock their bakery stuff half price; everything's a pound. Also the perfume, Ellen's Cosmetics, I bought my mum and my sister perfumes from there and they're quite reasonably priced and that (M1, FG2).³⁸

In keeping with wider trends in the UK market sector, the prepared and street food offering at Grainger Market has significantly developed in recent years. While 79% of market users visit primarily to shop, 13% visit primarily to eat, suggesting that the Market's prepared and street food offering is the main attraction for some customers.

97% of market users spend money on food and drink at Grainger Market. In the context of the UK grocery market, where supermarkets are extremely powerful and dominant, it is significant that 28% of users do at least half of their food and drink shopping at Grainger Market. The proportion of food shopping done at the Market also varies significantly by the economic status of market users, with students the most likely to rely on the Market for the majority of their food shopping (38% of students surveyed) followed by ethnic minorities.



Shopping for fruit and vegetables in Grainger Market. (Myfanwy Taylor)

Users are most likely to buy fruit/veg, meat/fish and prepared food/drink from cafes at the Market (Figure 4) but there are differences in terms of these shopping habits depending of the demographic characteristics of users and what they use the market for. As can be seen in Figure 4, younger people tend to buy more prepared food and drink, while older people buy more fruit and vegetables and fish and meat although fresh foods are still by far the most popular products. The data also shows that those that don't do most of their household shopping at the Market tend to come to buy specifically fish/meat and delicatessen goods, pointing at the specialist role of the Market for these products, at least for some groups.

The price and quality of food and drink on sale at the Market, including of fresh food, is rated very highly by market users. 97% of market users strongly agree or agree that the Market provides access to affordable, quality fresh food. When market users were asked what they would miss most if the Market ever disappeared, 17% of respondents mentioned the affordability of the produce and significantly 8% respondents said it would increase their household expenditure.

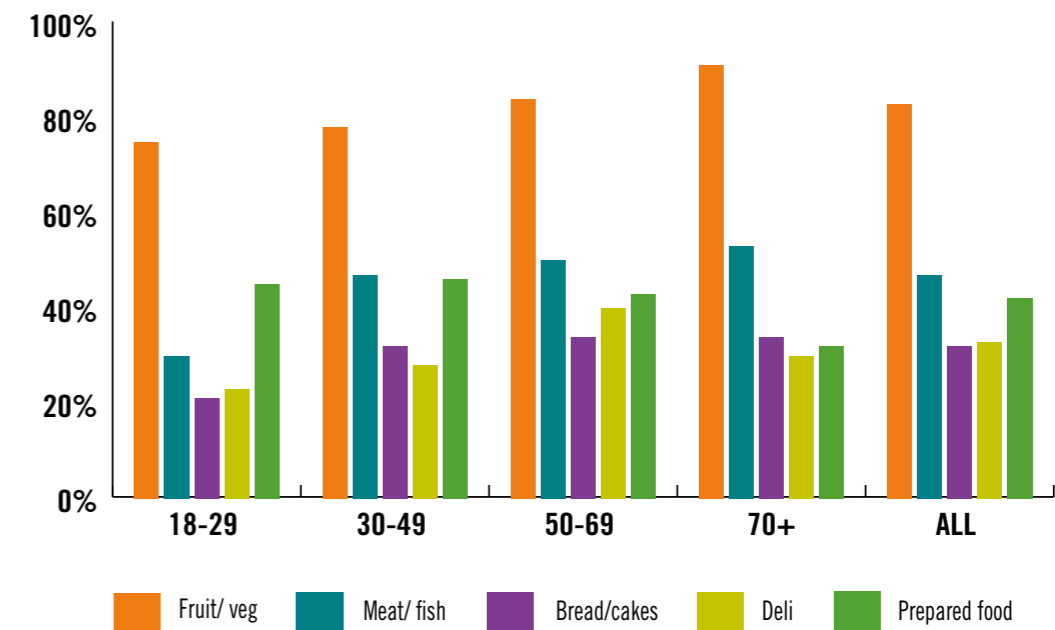


Figure 4: Percentage of market users buying different kinds of food and drink at Grainger Market by age.

Beyond food, market users tend to buy clothing, flowers and plants, arts, crafts and gifts, books and magazines and pet supplies. Focus groups revealed a range of reasons why market users shop at Grainger Market, from social and environmental to economic. The affordability of the produce and the convenience of comparing prices and customising portions are particularly important to market users.

When I lost my husband I couldn't get into the habit of just buying for myself, and when you go to supermarkets it's like all in a pack. And that's why I like it because if you want one pork chop or enough to make a stew, that's why I like it (F4, FG1).

It's not all wrapped in plastic either (F2, FG1).

I love the market butchers, buy sausage, bacon, egg, totally different to the supermarket, totally. There's none of that gunk comes off it when you fry it (F1, FG1).

I'll say have you got any cushion covers, and he says, come with me pet. He goes down, opens the curtain and he has cushion covers stacked up. But you never get them in the shops because they've all got cushions in them. I just want the cover... (F2, FG1).

You can also wander round and compare prices in a small area; you don't have to go from shop to shop... You have got all the food shops together, the butchers together, so you can just walk up and down and then if you think, oh that looks good there... (F5, FG1).

I think there is a lot of value for money in terms of the quality and the price of the products. Because for me, as a student coming to Newcastle on a scholarship, I could compare the prices and the quality, for example, of food and vegetables, and once I realised I could get it cheaper and better from the Market I stopped buying it from any other supermarket (F2, FG2).

You go in [upmarket store in the city centre] and have a look for a pair of curtains and they're about £95. I can go to the Market and get a pair for £35 (F4, FG1).

It is worth noting that Grainger Market users are not used to doing their food shopping online; just 12% shop online for food. Over half of market users live in neighbourhoods characterised as 'e-withdrawn' or 'passive and uncommitted users' in the 2018 Internet User Classification, a neighbourhood classification of internet engagement.³⁹ Among our respondents, younger market users, students and those in paid work are more likely to shop online for food and drink than other groups. However, the restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic have changed some of these habits and, according to a National YouGov survey, more older consumers are doing their grocery shopping online.⁴⁰ The new Delivery Service set up at Grainger Market could therefore also play a role in reaching older and vulnerable groups that in the past might have been written-off.

4.3 A sustainable city-centre shopping destination

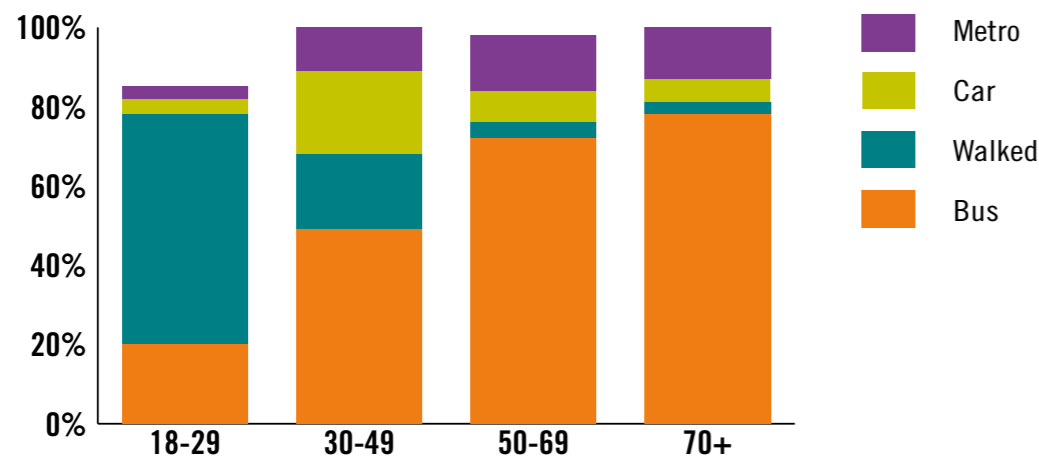


Figure 5: Travelling to the Market, for different age groups.

The majority of market users travel to Grainger Market by public transport or – in the case of younger market users – on foot (Figure 5). Sixty-one percent of visitors said they had travelled by bus to the Market, with 12% using the metro and just 10% coming by car. Fifteen percent walked to the Market. This finding suggests that any changes to public transport links need to be very carefully assessed in terms of the impact they could have on the future of Grainger Market. This finding also consolidates the role of Grainger Market as a sustainable shopping destination, which unlike out-of-town shopping centres, generates very little private car use, thus reducing pollution and congestion, in line with Newcastle City Council's and the Tyne and Wear Combined Authority's vision for an accessible, integrated and sustainable transport network.⁴¹

Focus group participants highlighted the central location of the Market as a draw:

I think the best thing about [Grainger Market]... is how it brings community from different places into one place. It's like a central location. It's easy to find. It's quite a friendly place. It's recognisable as well (F1, FG2).

I live close to Central Station so actually Grainger Market is on my way to the university, and that's how I started visiting the Market because it was actually a good surprise when I first saw it. I didn't expect to have such a nice market... I could always choose to go the fast way to get to the university but I prefer to walk through the Market (F2, FG2).

4.4 Driving footfall and contributing to the local economy

I wouldn't even come into town on a Sunday because the Market isn't open... I wouldn't come into town if I thought the Market wasn't open (F1, FG1).

Grainger Market users make a special effort to travel to the Market despite having many shopping alternatives closer to home. Consumers living within 10km of Grainger Market travel an average distance of 4km to reach the Market, whilst they travel an average distance of just over 2km to their alternative nominated grocery store(s). This finding is not the result of the Market having a specialist role in selling goods that cannot be found elsewhere as only 16% of customers surveyed said this was the case. Discussions in focus groups and interviews suggest that Grainger Market's attraction is more related to the quality and affordability of the produce, the personal service offered by traders and the Market's social and cultural aspects, rather than its specialist offer.

This customer attraction has a positive economic effect for in the Market and on the whole city. The average spend of markets users is £30 per visit, with women, those between 30 and 65 and in paid employment or retired spending the most. As we know that market users visit very regularly, often daily and more than once a week, the economic impact of these visits is significant. What is more, this economic effect spills out of the Market. For 44% of market users, visiting Grainger Market was the main reason for coming to the city centre that day. The majority of market visitors also spend money in other facilities and retail outlets in the city centre. Market users spend an average of £14 outside the Market per visit, with women and those aged 30-69 and in paid employment spending significantly more. Given that 72% of market users visit at least once a week, the Market has a significant impact on the wider city centre. This finding resonates with work from retail specialists which demonstrates the positive effect that markets have on town centres and high streets by increasing footfall and generating extra expenditure.⁴² It also shows the positive multiplier effect of the Market in circulating money within the local economy: local customers spend money in the Market, in turn traders pay rent to the Council from this turnover, which the Council can spend on local public services.

5. The social and cultural life of Grainger Market

Key facts

- Grainger Market is a convivial space which facilitates long term relationships as well as social interaction between people who don't know each other.
- Older people, generally more at risk of being isolated, particularly rely on the Market for social encounters.
- The Market is regarded by customers as a community hub, and more important than libraries, parks, pubs and other retail outlets.
- The Market generates a sense of well-being: the vast majority of market users feel safe and welcome. Many receive help and advice from traders and feel less lonely when they visit.
- The Market facilitates interaction between people from different age groups and ethnic and cultural backgrounds

5.1 A convivial space for socialisation

Grainger Market is an important social place for the people of Newcastle and beyond. Twenty-three percent of market users visit the Market for leisure and 26% visit with either family or friends. For many market users, Grainger Market is a place where they arrange to meet people they know (42% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement) and/or bump into people they know (63%). The majority of users tend to visit the same traders (80% strongly agreed or agreed with this statement). For many market users, therefore, Grainger Market is a comforting place where they know they will see familiar faces. As many users have been visiting for a long time, the Market plays a role in facilitating meaningful and long-term relationships and friendships amongst customers and traders. As well as being a place for social interaction with friends, family and acquaintances, Grainger Market also facilitates interactions amongst users who don't know each other. More than half of users surveyed (56%) strongly agreed or agreed that they talk to people they don't know at the Market.

	18-29 year olds	70+ year olds
Visit with friends	41%	21%
Visit with family	14%	20%
Agree/Strongly Agree that 'I bump into people I know'	45%	78%
Agree/Strongly Agree that 'I arrange to meet people I know'	25%	48%
Agree/Strongly Agree that 'I share news/information with traders'	25%	63%

Table 2: The social function of Grainger Market for younger and older market users.

This social function of the Market varies for different groups of people. Younger people are more likely to visit the market with friends and are less likely to speak to strangers, bump into people they know there and exchange news with traders (Table 2). For older people, the social function of the Market is slightly different. Amongst market users over 70 years old, almost half strongly agreed or agreed that they arrange to meet people they know at the Market, 63% that they share news with traders and 78% that they bump into people they know (Table 2). This finding is particularly significant in light of evidence of high levels of social isolation amongst older people in the North East,⁴³ a point that we develop in Section 5.3, below.

Gender also seems to make a difference, with women more likely than men to visit Grainger Market with family and friends. White ethnic groups are also significantly more likely than other ethnic groups to arrange to meet people, bump into people they know and talk to people they don't know at Grainger Market.

The Market appears to be a particularly important site of social interaction and access to information for market users from the less affluent socio-economic groups, who are significantly more likely to bump into people they know, speak to people they don't know and share news with traders at Grainger Market. Vulnerable market users are also more likely to bump into people they know at the Market. In focus groups, market users discussed the range of social interactions they have at the Market, from brief and occasional to meaningful and long-term. They highlighted the importance of the space of the Market itself to facilitate social interaction, supporting established friendships and creating new ones. And in terms of relationships with traders, customers valued the fact that they were being acknowledged and recognised in an honest way and not as part of a marketing strategy.

You also can meet up with friends. You do shopping and then meet up with friends and just have a coffee or have a meal or just a snack... (F6, FG1).

When you go [to Oliver's Café] I'll be sitting next to this lady and we'll just get chatting. You don't know who they are; they'll just sit and chat to you (F7, FG1).

'Hi, how are you doing today? Hello missus, what can we do you for?' – that sort of thing. They'll acknowledge that they've seen you before, that you're a customer that comes in a couple of times a week... (F5, FG1).

You wouldn't get any of that in the shops; they're too... especially in supermarkets I'm finding now they can't be bothered with you. They want you away so fast from the tills, they don't give you time... (F7, FG1).

A friend of mine who lives in my area, Audrey she was called, she went to the Market every day, rain, hail or snow. And when it was her funeral there were five traders from that Market at her funeral... And they were saying, we miss her, she never wore a coat, she used to go like this. She used to just march on. But she got on well with everybody in there. (F1, FG1).

These findings echo wider evidence that markets are important spaces for social interaction, especially for older people, low-income groups, migrants, women and single parents with children.⁴⁴ Markets' role in facilitating social interaction has a positive impact on individuals' well-being as well as broader policy goals relating to social inclusion and community cohesion. This is particularly true for older people whose only interaction on a daily or weekly basis might be with the traders of the Market. It is also one of the main reasons people shop at markets.⁴⁵ In the case of Grainger Market, the particular layout, the types of goods and services sold, the range of sitting options and informal yet neat and tidy atmosphere seems to make it particularly conducive for beneficial and meaningful social interaction.



The market plays an important role in facilitating social interaction. (Myfanwy Taylor)

5.2 Inter-ethnic and inter-cultural engagement

Grainger Market is also a place for social interaction between people from different ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds. Almost 50% of users agree that they interact with traders of a different ethnic and cultural background to their own. This interaction is higher between customers and traders than amongst customers themselves. This may, in part, be a reflection of the greater ethnic diversity of the traders at Grainger Market compared to market users. It also chimes with research which suggests that consumption spaces, such as markets, may have a particularly strong potential to facilitate positive attitudes towards ethnic and religious minorities.⁴⁶ In a similar way, Grainger Market appears to be a place in which a majority white British customer base can encounter people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds in a familiar and comfortable environment

In focus groups, older market users highlighted the role of new ethnic minority-run food businesses providing them with new experiences. The Market was recognised by focus group participants – as well as a councillor for Newcastle City Council – as a central place for different people to come together across different class and cultural backgrounds and ages.

They've got loads of like cultural café parts now, all different ones, which I think is great that people come here of different cultures. All right, we can go there. There's a Turkish one and things like that, Lebanese, brilliant (F4, FG2).

The Market now has people from lots of different communities and I think it's a great place to actually bring people together, and for people to start to get to know each other and share each other's cultures in quite a relaxed way. And we often spend quite a lot of time and effort trying to bring communities together and we actually have something that does that quite naturally (Ward Councillor).

Grainger Market does get people from all walks of life through every single day. And with me working over the years [at the market] we've found we get people from different countries coming to stay for a bit or uni or college or maybe temporary work and they come for a little bit, but they knew if they ever came back it would be the first place they would go. And you could guarantee somebody would probably remember them (F1, FG2).

5.3 Care, belonging and feeling safe at the Market

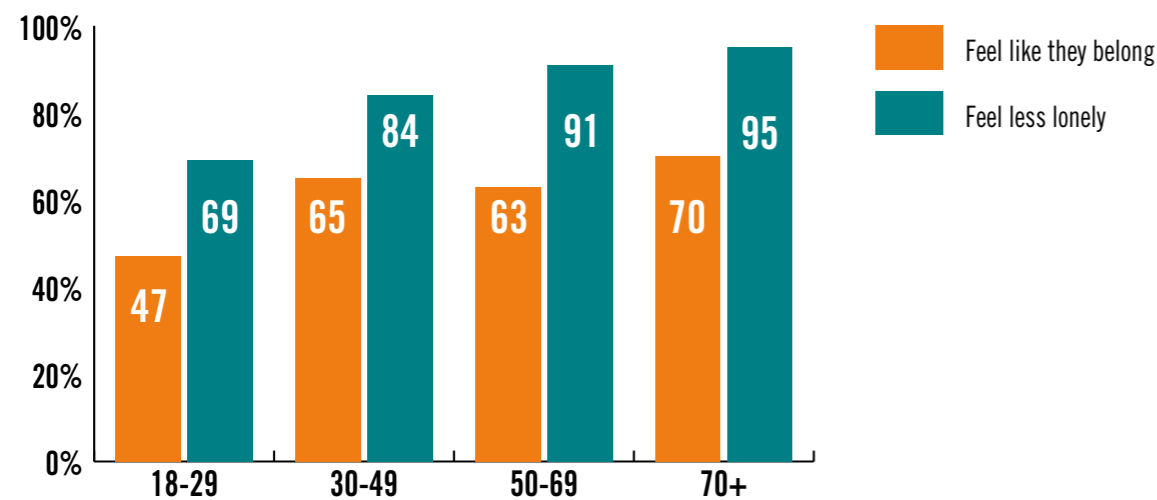


Figure 6: Percentage of market users who strongly agree or agree that they feel less lonely and like they belong at the Market, by age group.

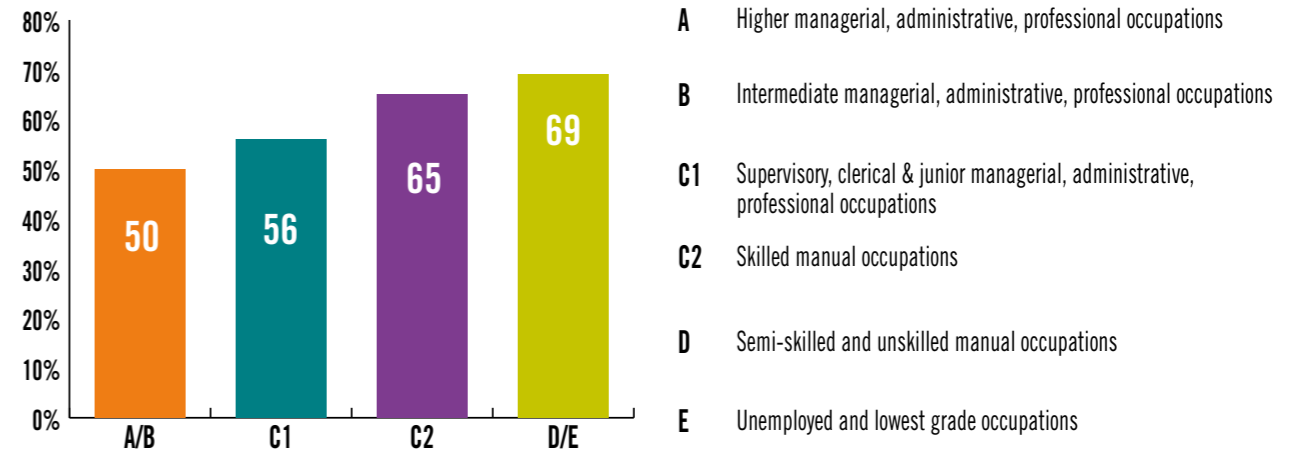


Figure 7: Percentage of market users who strongly agree or agree that they feel less lonely at the Market, by socio-economic group of the main householder.

The vast majority of market users feel safe, welcome (over 97% in agreement) and like they belong at Grainger Market. Significantly, 62% of market users strongly agree or agree that they feel less lonely when they visit. Older people are more likely than younger people to feel like they belong and to feel less lonely (Figure 6). Users from the less affluent socio-economic groups are also more likely to feel less lonely when they visit than those from more affluent groups (Figure 7). The Market's role in alleviating loneliness is particularly significant in the context of high levels of loneliness amongst Newcastle residents, as well as older people in the North East more broadly.⁴⁷

An overwhelming majority of market users also strongly agree or agree that the Market is an open and welcoming space for all. These feelings and atmosphere translate into what we would call an ethic of care at the Market, where 40% of market users agree that they have received help or assistance from other customers (or vice versa) and 34% that they have received help or assistance from traders, for example storing bags or accepting late payment. One market trader, for example, keeps a folding chair handy in his stall to offer to customers who might need a rest. Older market users are more likely to receive help or assistance at Grainger Market than younger market users. These positive feelings of belonging towards Grainger Market, and experiences of care, are particularly relevant in a national context where social capital seems to be eroding. The Office for National Statistics has reported a decrease in exchanges between neighbours, help received and given by parents, and feelings of belonging to a neighbourhood, as well as a drop in reported membership of organisations.⁴⁸

Focus group participants also commented on the Market's supportive and caring environment and particularly on how elderly and disabled people find comfort in the space of the Market. Mike Duckett, Grainger Market's artist-in-residence – recipient of an initiative of Newcastle City Council – also shared his observations about the Market as a caring and supportive space for older people.

I think a lot of old people... go there just to have a sit and just have a chat with anybody in the Market... (F6, FG1).

Personally there's a lot of my family who are elderly and my mum's disabled, and she finds she can go there, she can do her shopping, she can have her lunch, go and have a chat with her friends and she can be there a good couple of hours and she's got a whole day out just under one roof (F1, FG2).

There was one very old lady with a Zimmer frame walking along to the toilets and she lost control too early... Another person eating in the café spotted it and then went to go and talk quietly to a member of staff at the café... there's only one female market officer... she organised the cleaning stuff and maybe spare things and went over to the toilets and called out to her and helped her out... And the nicest thing for me was seeing this guy sitting having his sandwich at the café, he notices it, and telling somebody and that communication happening... you wouldn't necessarily see that in a McDonald's or somewhere like that, would you? (Mike Duckett, Grainger Market's artist-in-residence).

I know my son, who suffers from anxiety and depression, he's nearly 23 now and I've actually known him to go into the Market, maybe not even to speak to anyone, but he knows it's a place where he can feel comfortable. ((Agreement)) He isn't going to be judged, he isn't going to be asked to leave because he hasn't bought another coffee (F1, FG2).

I like the atmosphere; it's not threatening (F7, FG1).

Like a comfort zone going there; I feel comfortable (M1, FG2).

It's a bit like that Cheers song, 'where everybody knows your name'. ((Laughter)) (F5, FG2).

[Older people] come in because they can't afford to put their heating on, so they'll come in here, buy a cup of tea and they can sit for hours in the warm (F7, FG1).

Newcastle City Council has played a role in cultivating the Market's role as a caring and inclusive space, in particular for older people. The Council selected Grainger Market as a venue for a dementia awareness project, using a vacant unit as a space to raise awareness about dementia, as well as organising activities designed to appeal to and support people with dementia, such as singing and pottery sessions and memory tours (interview with Community Well-being Lead, Newcastle City Council). The Council also commissioned an artist to produce a short play about what it is like to live alone as an older person needing care and support, which was performed from a market unit converted into an interior living room, to large audiences. Dementia training was also organised for market staff and traders. The Market's artist-in-residence also pointed out the ways in which traders make time to chat with older people and how other customers also support and enable that by being patient when queuing.

5.4 An important and valuable community hub

In our survey, 90% of market users agreed that Grainger Market is a community hub. Market users also overwhelmingly agree that the Market is an important part of the local identity. When we asked market users how important the Market and other amenities was to them, Grainger Market was considered more important than libraries, parks, other retail locations and pubs/cafes/restaurants (Table 3). The importance of Grainger Market to market users increases with age.

	Very Important	Important
Grainger Market	49%	43%
High street / shopping centre / supermarket	40%	49%
Park	36%	38%
Pub / café / restaurant	34%	47%
Library	24%	28%

Table 3: The importance of Grainger Market and other amenities to market users.

When respondents were asked what they would miss the most if the Market ever disappeared, most people responded by naming the top products, such as vegetables and fruit. Importantly, 10% answered that they would miss the sense of community, 15% its atmosphere, and 19% said that the Market not being here would have a big impact on their lives.

All in all, our research confirms the community value that Grainger Market provides for its customers and, in particular, as we have seen across various issues, for the elderly and the most disadvantaged.

This community aspect of the Market has been recognised by Newcastle City Council and other organisations which use the Market as part of their outreach activities. The Newcastle West End Food Bank (supported in part by fans of Newcastle United Football Club) used a unit in the Market as a drop-off point for donations for three years as they recognised not only the central location but also the ethos and solidarity of the market customers and traders. The Council regularly runs children's and public health related events at the Market. In particular, as mentioned above, there have been very successful Dementia Awareness events hosted at the Market, reaching new audiences and creating a comforting environment for people with dementia. This community value of the Market is nurtured by the traders' everyday caring attitude to their customers but also by trader-led events, supported by the Council, that have elevated the Market to a public space for all in the city.

6. The future of Grainger Market: balancing community and commercial logics

Our research demonstrates an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards Grainger Market and its role as a public space bringing different groups together across the city and beyond, shared by customers, traders, council officers and politicians. Grainger Market is recognised as an important landmark in the city, part of the local identity and history of the city. It is valued as distinctive from high street retailers and, as public officials told us repeatedly, as an "antidote" to the identikit of the High Street. There is also an overall recognition of the professionalism and friendliness of the traders and the importance of sustaining independent businesses in the city centre. Compared with previous customer and trader surveys commissioned by Newcastle City Council in 2014, our research reveals even more positive attitudes towards the Market.

Despite this universally positive attitude, the community value that Grainger Market generates and that our research has evidenced is not necessarily guaranteed in the future. There are many external challenges that have an impact on Grainger Market and many other markets across the UK, which have only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. These external challenges include:

- The dominance of international and corporate retailers;
- Pressure on local authorities to raise income due to very significant cuts in their budgets;
- Changing consumption patterns, in particular younger people's choice to shop online;
- A legacy of disinvestment at national level on traditional retail markets; and
- An ageing population of traders.

There are also internal challenges, identified through our multi-methods research, pushing the Market to a potentially crucial moment in its history. If not managed carefully, these internal challenges might lead to a reduction in the community value that the Market generates. Through our research, we identified three particularly significant internal challenges:

- Losing the Market's traditional character and leaving existing customers behind;
- A narrow income-driven approach which overlooks the wider community value of the Market; and
- A strained relationship between traders and the Council.

6.1 Losing the Market's traditional character and leaving existing customers behind

Grainger Market has been changing gradually over the years, shifting away from traditional stalls towards street and other hot and street food stalls. This is partly a result of the type of businesses that are interested in setting themselves up in the Market but also a long-term strategy from the city Council.⁴⁹ Interviewees and focus group participants felt this change was potentially beneficial for the Market as a whole, attracting younger and more affluent customers in particular, but we also heard from concerned customers and key stakeholders who feared the Market might lose its traditional function as a place to buy affordable products and welcome elderly users who might use the Market as a social space.

I worry that, like you say, they're lovely all these new eatery places, but I worry that it could in a few more years become an eatery place rather than a Market. ((Agreement)) I'm worried that the little market stalls will just decline where it will be an eatery... (F4, FG2).

I think that would be my concern that they would start opening longer hours and it would push the small, like the butcher and the vegetable and things, out of business ((agreement)) and it will get taken over from that... (F3, FG2).

When it starts losing things like your fruit and veg. There is no DIY place, that went, so that's a bit of an indication of where it's going when it has shops closed down. [...] then suddenly they'll start shouting they want to open it later and the next thing it's just going to be another kind of Eldon Square... (F3, FG2).

[It] will push the more traditional longstanding ones out, which we've already seen. It used to be the Green Market across [the road], and we used to have the Bigg Market, and over the years they slowly declined. My worry is [Grainger Market] would turn into a bit like the Quayside is now (F1, FG2).

As part of their efforts to attract a younger and wealthier clientele, the Council has initiated a discussion about late and Sunday opening hours, a debate that many other markets in the UK are also having. In 2018, traders conducted their own survey on this issue and the results showed that they are divided, with the majority preferring to stick to the current opening times.⁵⁰ The mixed nature of businesses in the Market means that opening late and on Sundays might be beneficial and relatively easy to adapt to for some traders, while for the

more traditional stalls it would not be sustainable. Changing opening hours would therefore impact unevenly across the Market and most negatively on traditional stalls. The trend towards more leisure and street food in markets and in high streets, in order to capture more affluent customers, is reflected across many other markets and cities in the UK and internationally, and has been associated with the displacement of traditional stalls, traders and the most vulnerable customers.⁵¹ If the Council were to pursue this strategy it would need to carry out in-depth equality and community impact assessments and design a comprehensive set of mitigation measures to maintain the community value of the Market, in particular for low-income and vulnerable customers.



A delicatessen and tapas bar in Grainger Market. (Moz278, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, via Flickr)

6.2 A narrow, income-driven approach, which overlooks the wider community value of the Market

The management of Grainger Market sits within the Place Directorate and the Council takes a commercial property view of Grainger Market. The interviews we conducted with council officers and elected members highlighted the narrowly economic and income-driven nature of this view. As owners and managers of the Market, the Council rightly focuses on keeping the building safe and compliant with its listed heritage status and collecting enough rent from traders to keep this asset economically sustainable. In addition, over the last decade the Market has generated a healthy surplus for the Council which has generally been spent on other services. One senior councillor told us that this surplus redistribution was a very important community function of the market. However, this historical lack of reinvestment in the upkeep of the building has resulted in a backlog of repairs, now addressed by the latest investment. This investment via prudential borrowing has, in turn, as council officers and elected members stressed in interviews, put the market finances under pressure to a point where the Market is only just financially sustainable. The downward trend for footfall worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with constraints in public spending due to ongoing austerity measures,⁵² are creating very significant challenges. This context has exacerbated the Council's emphasis on income generation.

As part of the Council's strategic thinking on income generation, it carried out a 'soft market-testing exercise' in 2018 with the aim of gathering ideas from consultants and potential private operators to "evolve the service and ensure its sustainability and further maximise income to support the capital investment on the Market building".⁵³ No definitive decisions were taken but the Council is now preparing a new strategy for the Market. Some interviewees worried that this income-driven approach would be incompatible with the cultural and social value that the Market generates while others worried it would compromise it. The national-level Markets4People research has identified similar concerns amongst a wide range of actors in the UK markets sector, especially in light of the difficulty in measuring markets' social and community benefits.⁵⁴

At Grainger Market, all stakeholders are positive about the broader social and cultural aspects of the Market. However, our research found that this positivity does not translate into a strategic direction to enhance them. For example, the Market is used to host events or disseminate information from departments across the Council, such as Public Health and Social Services. But, as two council officers recognised respectively, this is done in a "light touch approach" or as a result of a "hunch by elected members or some [other] colleagues", rather than through a strategic and coherent effort on the part of the Council to recognise and enhance the community potential of the Market. The risk is that an income-driven approach, focused on attracting wealthier customers, will lead to decisions on tenant mix, re-design of the space or increased rents that will irreversibly damage the community value that the Market currently generates, particularly for vulnerable residents. In interviews, participants expressed these concerns:

I don't think anybody at the Council has any bad intentions towards the Market. I think where there are any gaps in terms of how it's valued or managed it's really been the structural thing [...] and being seen as 'oh that's a bit of property we have to manage, that's a bit of heritage we have to stop falling down,' and that's something that might be impacts from, but rather than seeing it fitting it into the broader themes (Ward Councillor).

Our department [at NCC] hasn't historically had a relationship with Grainger Market until about a year, a year and a half ago, when we used the Grainger Market as a venue to have dementia week. So until then we really hadn't had any role that linked health and social care type work to the Grainger Market at all (Community Well-being Lead, Newcastle City Council).

Let's be honest about it, [traders] have got some valid issues with how the Grainger Market's been under-invested in, it hasn't really kind of had that sense of purpose (Representative, NE1 Business Improvement District).

[We've] got to find a balance of the landlord and tenant position of rental payments that will go towards paying its debt, but need to also ensure that [there is] the opportunity to increase rents in some of those areas; and it might be that the way we deal with the social and economic value is that we have a menu of rentals, that some organisations will pay a certain specific rate and others will have an almost subsidised position (Director of Place, Newcastle City Council).

Since our research, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed some of the implications of Newcastle City Council's narrow commercial property approach to managing Grainger Market. While 93% of market traders were offered zero, reduced or deferred rents during the first lockdown of 2020,⁵⁵ Newcastle City Council officers felt unable to introduce a rent-free period at Grainger Market, not only because of the Council's reliance on income from commercial property to subsidise its services and responsibilities but also because of the potential pressure this could create for similar provisions to be made in relation to its wider commercial property portfolio.⁵⁶ Officials told us this meant they would be unable to waive rents for market traders even if a dedicated financial package were introduced to support market operators, as proposed by NABMA.⁵⁷ The Council instead focused its efforts on supporting traders to access the various government grants and support schemes available, and taking a 'gentle' approach to handling rent arrears with individual traders.⁵⁸ However, the different ways in which market traders operate their businesses (e.g. as sole traders, self-employed partnership, limited company and plc), and whether or not they pay business rents, has left some traders in a particularly difficult situation and some have had to close their businesses.⁵⁹ The commercial property approach therefore restricted the Council's ability to support and sustain Grainger Market through this extremely challenging period.

6.3 A strained relationship between traders and the Council

A third key challenge identified through our research is a strained relationship between the Council and many of the market traders. Grainger Market has approximately 95 traders, many of whom are actively involved in thinking collectively about the Market beyond their individual businesses. Traders are organised as a local branch of NMTF, the national body for market traders, and meet regularly to discuss market issues such as maintenance and cleaning, opening hours, special events, etc. The Market has seen excellent collaborative initiatives between the traders and the Council, such as a Christmas night market, which in 2016 attracted 11,000 visitors, or the new delivery scheme.

Despite these positive aspects, the feeling on both sides is that the relationship could be better. It is worth noting that this is not a new issue; indeed a Council report in 2001 mentioned "open and deep-rooted cynicism amongst the tenants".⁶⁰ Interviews with long-term traders made clear that this distrust has been building over decades, driven by issues including under-investment and poor trading environment, the final closure of a nearby market (The Green Market) in 2012 and a perception that the Council has historically neglected the Market over other businesses and parts of the city. In interviews, traders told us about their frustrated efforts to understand the Council's strategy towards the Market and the lack of transparency over decision-making.

On a more positive note, the Council has recently taken steps to improve relationships with the traders by, for example, regularly attending trader meetings, taking minutes and updating traders on actions. Council officers also reported good relationships with some traders, suggesting that not all traders have the same perceptions. However, overall, the Council tends to adopt a tenant-property owner relationship rather than see traders as a key resource and experts in generating community value in the city centre.

In interviews, participants expressed these concerns:

It's difficult to really know what the Council's thinking because you don't really have the access to see exactly where they're going with that (Grainger Market Trader).

Our relationship with the [traders] I have to say could be better. The traders are very suspicious of us (Director of Place, Newcastle City Council).

6.4 Summary

Overall, the Markets4People survey and focus groups with customers found that Grainger Market delivers very important social and cultural value to its existing customers, particularly for those on low-incomes and older people. This community value is sustained by traders' professionalism and friendliness, and the Market's affordable, diverse and quality offer. Together, customers and traders have generated a convivial space where people feel welcome, less lonely and can develop genuine and lasting social relationships. This community value has been sustained by Newcastle City Council's guardianship of the building and its commitment to the Market as a place for independent businesses that act as an antidote to the more corporate high streets and shopping centres.

However, the interviews, observations and secondary document analysis also carried out as part of this multi-method study have identified key challenges which have the potential to adversely impact Grainger Market's community value in the future. External pressures and internal dynamics are pushing the Council towards an income-driven approach to the governance of the Market, which we believe could be detrimental to the community value of the Market unless significant mitigating measures are put in place. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of these pressures, with the UK markets sector as a whole struggling.⁶¹ However, our view is that markets such as Grainger Market can play a vital role in a community-led and more environmentally sustainable recovery of retail and the high street.⁶² The restrictions imposed by government to curb the pandemic have brought to the surface the essential role played by markets in providing affordable and healthy food. The community value of Grainger Market provides a strong foundation to grow a community-led economic and social recovery.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed primarily to Newcastle City Council, as the owner and operator of Grainger Market, and draw on findings from the Markets4People research project.

7.1 Embed the research across the Council

We recommend that the Council ensures all relevant teams have access to this report and embed it in their work relating to the Market. As the first large-scale, representative study of the community value of Grainger Market, the research offers a new understanding of Grainger Market from the perspective of market users. It reveals Grainger Market's role as an affordable and quality fresh food market and a welcoming and supportive community asset serving, in particular, elderly and low-income groups in Newcastle. This understanding will be of benefit to various teams within Newcastle City Council with responsibilities over the Market. Firstly, it is essential that council officials working within the Place Directorate actively engage with the community aspects of Grainger Market, so that it can be embedded in their work to manage the Market. Given the benefits the research evidences in terms of well-being, combating loneliness, feelings of belonging and care, other teams across the Council that have statutory duties to promote individuals' health and well-being, such as Public Health Service, the Communities Team or Adult Care Services would also benefit from understanding the community value of Grainger Market. In particular, the Council's innovative 'Health in All Policies' approach should extend to thinking strategically about Grainger Market. We therefore recommend that the Council ensures all relevant teams have access to this report and embed it in their work relating to the Market. We would be happy to offer further workshops and briefings to council officers and representatives, as well as any other interested parties.

7.2 Reframe Grainger Market as a community asset and not only as a commercial property asset

We recommend that future decisions regarding Grainger Market should reframe the Market as a community asset, a more holistic appreciation than the current commercial property asset approach, which is overwhelmingly focused on income generation. We fully recognise the need for the Council to generate income from the Market (and its historical role in subsidising other services), but a narrow focus on this can miss other opportunities for the Market to generate other forms of wealth. This community approach to the Market suits Newcastle City Council's goal to achieve a healthy and caring city, tackling inequalities and supporting jobs and training.⁶³ We recommend that any strategy for Grainger Market should therefore seek to enhance its wide-ranging economic, social and cultural roles, making the most of the opportunities it offers to access affordable and healthy food, other goods and services, community facilities and support, and social interaction, in particular for low-income groups, older people and other vulnerable groups. An example of such an approach would be to explore how to provide Alexandra Rose fruit and vegetable vouchers and registering traders to accept NHS Healthy Start Vouchers⁶⁴ (if they are not doing so already). Such a holistic approach could only be developed by creating well-resourced and durable links with other Directorates and departments, as we recommend below, via a dedicated Forum or by moving the management of the Market, in the future, to a directorate with a broader social and/or local economic development remit.

7.3 Celebrate and incorporate the current customer base into any future strategies for the Market

We recommend that any future strategy for the Market should seek to expand its current type of customer base and develop strategic policies to reach out to these groups in positive ways. As our survey has evidenced, the demographic characteristics of Grainger Market users have remained stable for at least 20 years, since a Pragma consulting report described customers as "older and from the lower socio-economic groups". These users feel very positive about the Market and derive particular benefits from its custom, such as feeling less lonely, socialising and receiving help and advice. They also contribute economically, through spending not only at the Market but across the city centre when they visit. This is therefore a loyal and established customer base that the Council should regard positively, celebrate and incorporate in any future strategies for the Market. Although market improvement and redevelopment schemes tend to focus on attracting younger and more affluent customers, our research provides firm evidence to suggest that the current customer base in Grainger Market is central to the Market's success. A future strategy for the Market should therefore aim to attract more of these types of customers, which in fact include the very same vulnerable groups that the Council is prioritising in these particularly challenging times.⁶⁵ Newcastle's most vulnerable resident groups are, unfortunately, disproportionately more deprived and suffering from inequalities and lower life expectancy compared to the England average, many at risk of food insecurity; the city population is also ageing.⁶⁶ The Market therefore represents a strategic place where the Council can reach these groups through specific engagement programmes. At the moment, sporadic and disconnected activities and events are going in this direction but there would be palpable benefits if this would be done strategically.

7.4 Identify and mitigate negative impacts of policies on different user groups

We recommend that Newcastle City Council identifies the potential impact of any future policy options on different user groups, in particular equalities groups and other vulnerable groups. This should include any proposals to raise rents or significantly alter the mix of traditional/new stalls, as well as any broader thinking about the future of the Market. Care should be taken to understand and mitigate any negative impacts, and/or to explore other options. As discussed in this report and as evidenced in further literature, strategies to shift the customer base of markets towards a wealthier clientele risk displacing and pricing out some traders and leaving less affluent and vulnerable customers without a place to go for affordable goods and company. As the Council progresses their future strategy for the Market, the demographic information provided by the Markets4People survey about the existing customer base should be used to assess – and minimise or mitigate – the impact of its policies on key user groups, including women and older people, low-income groups and migrant communities and ethnic minority groups. Information about how different user groups are using the Market will be particularly relevant to an equalities impact assessment.

Annex 1 – Research Methodology

This report on Grainger Market is part of a wider research project called Markets4People,⁷¹ funded by the Economic and Social Research Council since 2018, which has progressed in several phases.

The first phase of the Markets4People research project sought to identify key actors shaping the debate in the markets industry and to explore their perspectives on the economic, social and cultural value of markets, including how markets are changing, how their value or performance can be measured and how it can be enhanced. This phase involved 30 interviews with key national, regional and local stakeholders in the markets sector⁷² as well as workshops with market operators, traders and market community groups.⁷³ As a result, we published a report with the New Economics Foundation⁷⁴ which was launched at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Markets.⁷⁵

The second phase of the project – the focus of this report – has explored the views and experiences of markets users themselves, in order to gain an understanding of community value from their perspective. This is an understudied area with little pre-existing data. The research team firstly developed a set of criteria through which to select three case study markets. These criteria included that these three markets should be large enough to support a 500-customer survey, have strong economic, social and cultural roles and serve a diversity of customers. In light of the project's aims to influence policy and practice, the team also selected markets in which both the operator and traders were interested in and broadly supportive of the research. Following a rigorous selection process, involving informal interviews with market operators and trader/community representatives, as well as visits,⁷⁶ the research team selected Bury Market, Newcastle upon Tyne's Grainger Market and Queen's Market in Newham, East London. This report is one of three reports summarising research findings from each case study market for key stakeholders.

Grainger Market was selected as a case study as one of the UK's best known and recognised markets, which has maintained many traditional stalls and long-term customers, as well as incorporating new offerings, such as street food, to attract young people. It was named Britain's favourite market in 2020 by NABMA, as a result of a national vote. Traders in Grainger Market are organised as an NMTF group and meet regularly and collaborate with Newcastle City Council on initiatives. There is little research on Grainger Market and even less on its customers. However, Julie Smith's doctoral research included short interviews with 24 shoppers, which focused on their values of fresh food.⁷⁷ Research commissioned by the Council in 2008 and 2014,⁷⁸ with comparable samples to the Markets4People survey, also looked at the demographic characteristics of customers and their shopping habits but did not investigate how the customers use the space and socially interact. The Markets4People research is therefore the first in this area, offering new perspectives on the current use and value of the Market, which are highly relevant to ongoing discussions about the future of Grainger Market.

The Markets4People team designed a 10-15 minute survey to explore the economic, social and cultural value of each case study market from a user perspective. The survey covers key demographic information, shopping and eating at the market, socialising at the market, and feelings and views about the market.⁷⁹ It was carried out in early 2019, with 500 customers at each of the three case study markets being interviewed on our behalf by a fieldwork company expert in conducting research in markets, Fieldwork Assistance. At Grainger Market, the survey was conducted over 15 days during March 2019. Survey data were analysed by Dr Lisa Buckner and Dr Andy Newing.

Two 90-minute focus groups were also organised at each case study market, with survey respondents from selected typically marginalised or vulnerable user groups, which wider academic research tells us benefit most from the community value of markets. For Grainger Market, the research team ran one focus group with older market users (over 50 years old) and a second with market users living in low-income neighbourhoods (the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods in England as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015)) on the 11th of July 2019 at Newcastle City Library.

The research team interviewed key local figures at each case study market in order to contextualise the survey data. At Grainger Market, 11 interviews were undertaken with the following key actors during 2019. From Newcastle City Council: a Ward Councillor, the Director of Place, a Commercial Property Manager, a Commercial Property Officer and the Community Well-being Lead from the People Directorate. In terms of traders, we interviewed the Chairman of the Grainger Market NMTF group as well as three other market traders. We also interviewed a representative of NE1 (the Business Improvement District) and a former artist-in-residence at Grainger Market. Focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed (with participants' permission) and analysed by Dr Sara González and Dr Myfanwy Taylor.

This primary research has been complemented by further analysis of policy, media and academic documents and papers that relate to Grainger Market and its geographic, social and economic context.

The research team attended several meetings of the traders' NMTF group, to receive feedback on the research process and update traders on interim findings. On the 10th of December 2019 the team presented a draft of this report in a meeting with Newcastle City Council, chaired by Michelle Percy and attended by councillors, relevant council officers, trader representatives and a representative of the BID. Feedback from participants at this meeting, as well as from additional discussions on further drafts, has been taken into account and incorporated as much as possible. The report has also been reviewed by members of our research team and Steering Group, who also provided very useful feedback.

We would like to thank to all survey respondents, focus group participants, interviewees and administrative staff at the Council and the Market for participating in the research. Ultimately, the authors of this report are solely responsible for its comments.



The current customer base is central to Grainger Market's success. (Myfanwy Taylor)

7.5 Set up a Market Forum linking up across the Council and with community groups

We recommend that Newcastle City Council sets up a Market Forum, bringing together key stakeholders in Grainger Market, such as officers, councillors, traders and representatives of community groups. This Forum would bring the Commercial Property team together with other relevant teams and divisions across the breadth of Newcastle City Council's priorities (e.g. public health; adult social care; libraries; education and skills etc.). This coordination would formalise some of the pre-existing initiatives, such as Dementia Awareness, and embed them more strongly across the Council's objectives.

A Market Forum would also allow the Council, traders, market users and the wider community to pursue a more collaborative approach to the day-to-day operation of the Market and to its future, as well as identifying new opportunities. For example, it could lead to making Grainger Market a focus for projects funded by the Newcastle Fund, which directly tackle well-being and inequalities. Involving community groups would provide the Council with further insight into the Market's value and function for users and the impact of any potential changes on them. A Market Forum could help improve relationships with traders, supporting the scaling-up of some of the initiatives that individual traders have been running, such as apprenticeships or employing ex-offenders. The Market Forum could also provide more capacity to run events and outreach activities that, at the moment, are either happening on an ad-hoc basis or not taking place at all due to lack of resources.

7.6 Put Grainger Market at the centre of a community-led Newcastle Recovery Plan

We recommend that Grainger Market should be regarded as a strategic community asset (as suggested above) in Newcastle's Economic Recovery Plan and the City Centre Transformation Programme. Our research findings demonstrate the crucial role of Grainger Market – and other local markets⁵⁷ – during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, and its strategic potential to contribute to the Council's plans for an inclusive, green, and prosperous economic recovery. As household budgets come under continued pressure, Grainger Market's fresh and affordable food offer is as important as ever. The community role of Grainger Market in facilitating social interaction and as a space where users feel safe, less lonely, welcome and like they belong is even more relevant now that traditional retail uses are struggling in city centres.⁶⁸ Markets are also accessible places for people who have lost jobs to start new businesses.⁶⁹

Our findings support NABMA and NMTF's proposal that markets should be given parity with supermarkets, to allow them to remain fully open during national lockdowns.⁷⁰ The community value of Grainger Market, evidenced in this report, also provides a strong rationale for further government support for market traders and operators, as proposed by NABMA and NMTF, to enable markets to continue to deliver wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits to marginalised communities as they emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Annex 2 – Research Team

This report is written by members of the Markets4People project, led from the University of Leeds;⁸⁰ an interdisciplinary team of internationally renowned academics with expertise on retail markets, cities and retail change. As well as the authors of this report, whose short biographies can be read on the inner cover, the team also includes other academic experts with complementary expertise:

- **Dr Paul Waley**, Senior Research Fellow at the School of Geography, University of Leeds with expertise on cities and urban restructuring, particularly in East Asia but also in respect to traditional retail markets in the UK.
- **Professor Graham Clarke** at the School of Geography, University of Leeds with expertise on the geography of retail change and retail location models and urban service analysis.
- **Professor Sophie Watson**, Head of Sociology, Open University, internationally renowned sociologist with expertise on urban life. She has researched and published on street markets and, in 2009, was an adviser to the Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry on Markets.

The research team is also made up of two non-academic co-investigators:

- **NMTF**, the only national trade association for market and street traders. Founded in 1899, it has around 20,000 members. It supports market traders and the markets sector in general. At NMTF, Chris Savage was co-investigator in the Markets4People project until November 2020 when he left the organisation, later replaced by Shanaaz Carroll.
- **New Economics Foundation**, a think tank that promotes a people-oriented economy with research expertise on markets. At NEF, Frances Northrop is co-investigator in the Markets4People project. She has expertise on communities and place-based stakeholders, and regularly works with community economic practitioners and local and regional policy makers.

This team is supported by a Steering Group made up of academics, experts and key actors in the markets sector and related areas:

Dr Suzanne Hall (London School of Economics and Political Science) is an urban ethnographer and has practised as an architect in South Africa. She is Co-director of the Cities Programme and Associate Professor in Sociology at the LSE.

Professor Alan Hallsworth (University of Portsmouth) has a 30-year research record in retailing. His studies have frequently helped to underpin aspects of planning policy guidance and inform UK policy makers.

Sasha Laurel Jagroo (Friends of Queen's Market). The Friends of Queen's Market is a dynamic, grassroots community group which formed in 2009 to campaign successfully against the proposed demolition of Queen's Market and continues to meet regularly to campaign to protect and promote it.

Richard Lee, Just Space. Just Space is an informal alliance of community groups, campaigns and concerned independent organisations. Its aim is to improve public participation in planning, to ensure that policy is fairer towards communities.

Ailbhe McNabola, Power to Change. Power to Change is an independent charitable trust that supports and develops community businesses in England and also works with community businesses to revive local assets, protect the services people rely on, and address local needs.

Jonathan Pauling, Alexandra Rose Charity. The Rose Vouchers for Fruit & Veg Project, set up by Alexandra Rose Charity, helps families on low incomes to buy fresh fruit and vegetables at local markets. The project also benefits markets, fostering economic vibrancy through regular trade.

David Preston, NABMA. The National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) promotes markets on the national stage and also provides a wide portfolio of services for market operators.

Gary Warnaby, Institute of Place Management. IPM is the international professional body that supports people committed to developing, managing and making places better. The Institute works with policy makers, practitioners and providers to identify the core skills required for the effective management, development and marketing of places.

Endnotes

1. The full name of the research project is 'Understanding and Enhancing the Community Value of Traditional Retail Markets in UK Cities' (ESRC grant number ES/P010547/1, Principal Investigator Dr Sara González, University of Leeds). See Annex 1 and Annex 2 for more details on our research team and research methodology, and our website and blog for further information and updates: <https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/>; <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FP010547%2F1#/tabOverview>.
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11. More details on the methodology and research design of the Markets4People project are available in Annex 1. Our blog also provides information and updates about our research activities: <https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/blog/>.
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36. 'Vulnerable' refers here to a group made up of the following characteristics: long term sick / disabled; retired; looking for work / unemployed; less than one year living in UK; living with young children; and living alone. The Markets4People team analysed the responses of 'vulnerable' market users compared to 'non-vulnerable' market users in order to identify whether they were significantly different.
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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

University of Leeds
Leeds, United Kingdom
LS2 9JT
Tel: 0113 243 1751
www.leeds.ac.uk