

# **The 'Hadrian's Wall' FutureLearn MOOC Considering Impact and Contributing to a REF Case Study**

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# Hadrian's Wall: Life on the Roman Frontier

Online Courses / History



## Hadrian's Wall: Life on the Roman Frontier

★★★★★ 4.9 (163 reviews)

Explore the archaeology of the most heavily fortified frontier in the Roman Empire, its people and their lives.

64,784 enrolled on this course



Duration  
6 weeks



Weekly study  
4 hours



# Hadrian's Wall: Life on the Frontier – MOOC development

- MOOC development team: Newcastle University – School of History, Classics and Archaeology; Learning and Teaching Development Service (LTDS); Digital Media service.
- Lead educator: Professor Ian Haynes. Co-Educator: Dr Rob Collins
- Produced March to August 2014 (including filming on location).
- MOOC course developed from existing research
- No previous knowledge of archaeology or Hadrian's Wall was assumed for learners

Collins, R., Davis N. and Hardy, S. 2018. The “Virtual” Wall: Building Global Interest in Roman Frontiers through Digital Outreach. In: C. Sebastian Sommer, Suzana Matešić (eds). Limes XXIII. Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies Ingolstadt 2015.





# Hadrian's Wall: Life on the Frontier – Course Structure

- Six week course – Four hours of learning
- Mixed media content (video, discussion f
- Content also provided by experts from E
- Wear Archives and Museums, Historic En
- Structure was thematic but also broadly

**Week 1:** Welcome to the Wall

**Week 2:** The Roman Army in Britain

**Week 3:** Frontier communities: Life in the northern frontier late 1st-early 3rd century

**Week 4:** Ritual, religion and the Roman Wall

**Week 5:** Conflict, consolidation and renaissance: life on the Wall in the 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries

**Week 6:** The ending of the Wall'

Run number	Start date
1	22 Sep 2014
2	15 June 2015
3	2 November 2015
4	7 November 2016
5	9 October 2017
6	19 February 2018
7	2 July 2018
8	5 November 2018
9	4 February 2019
10	6 May 2019
11	7 October 2019
12	10 February 2020
13	25 May 2020



# 'Hadrian's Wall: Life on the Frontier' MOOC - Evaluation Report

- Analysis was undertaken to support the Newcastle University Impact Case Study entitled 'Sustaining The Wall in the Past, Present, and Future: Longevity and sustainability of a World Heritage Site'.
- Report provided
  - Introduction to the Hadrian's Wall MOOC;
  - Analysis of participant demographics;
  - Learner activity (supporting pedagogical research);
  - Course satisfaction and evaluation;
  - A bespoke Impact Survey.



# Method

- FutureLearn provide series of datasets through MOOC platform for Course creators
- Downloadable for each run, each as .csv files
- Updated periodically – may be slightly different over time

Data	Description
Archetype survey responses	Responses from Pre-course survey
Comments	All comments from participants on all steps of the course
Country subdivisions	Participant county of origin
Course measures	Measures of course participants including number of learners etc.
Post course survey data	Responses from Post-course survey
Question response	All responses of questions from participants on relevant steps of the course
Step activity	Data of activity of each step from all participants across the course

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/sections/360005297794-Data>



## Method

- Analysis undertaken in R programming language
- Rapid analysis of large datasets (including all 13 runs of course)
- Code is reproducible for all other FutureLearn MOOC courses, including production of visualisations
- How? Universal data file names for data downloads from Course Creator

*'[COURSENAME]\_step-activity.csv'*



<https://www.r-project.org/>



<https://github.com/nickyjgarland>

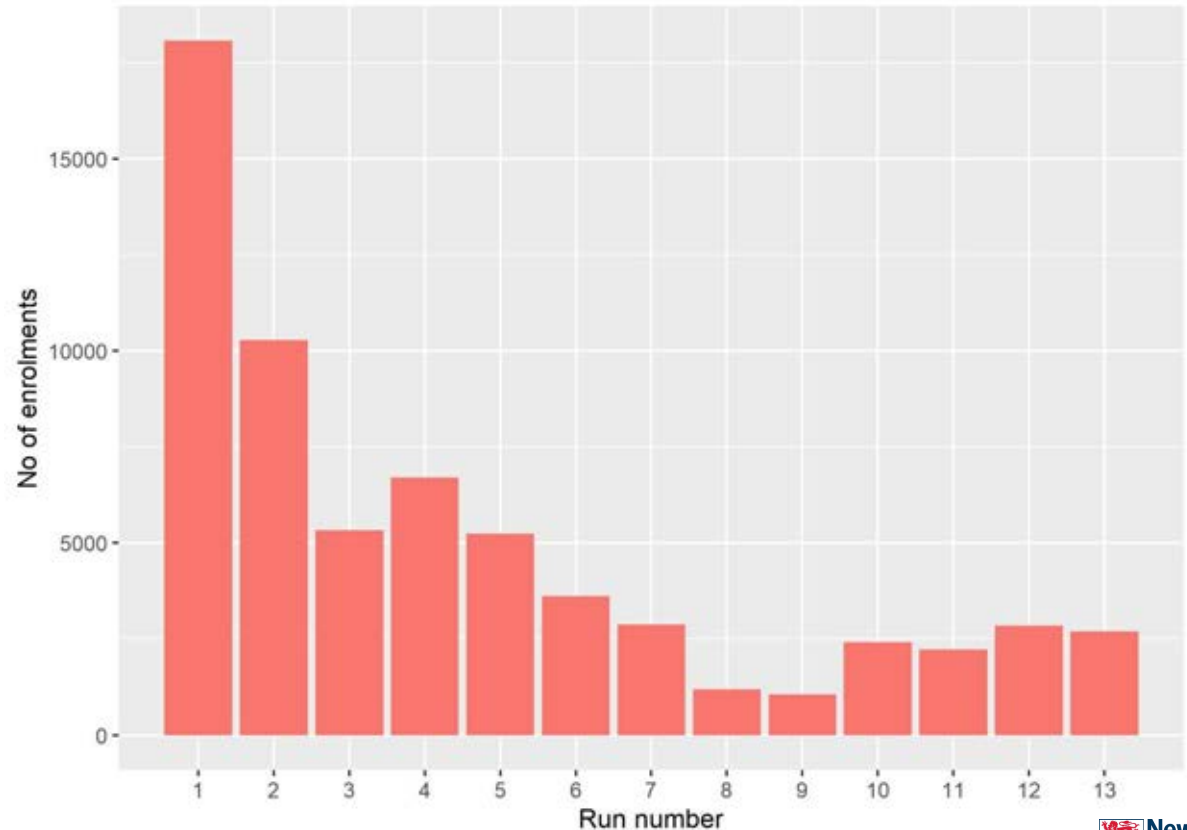


# Enrolment

Total number of  
enrolments  
over 13 runs of  
the course =

64,563

(participants who  
signed up via platform  
rather than those who  
completed course)



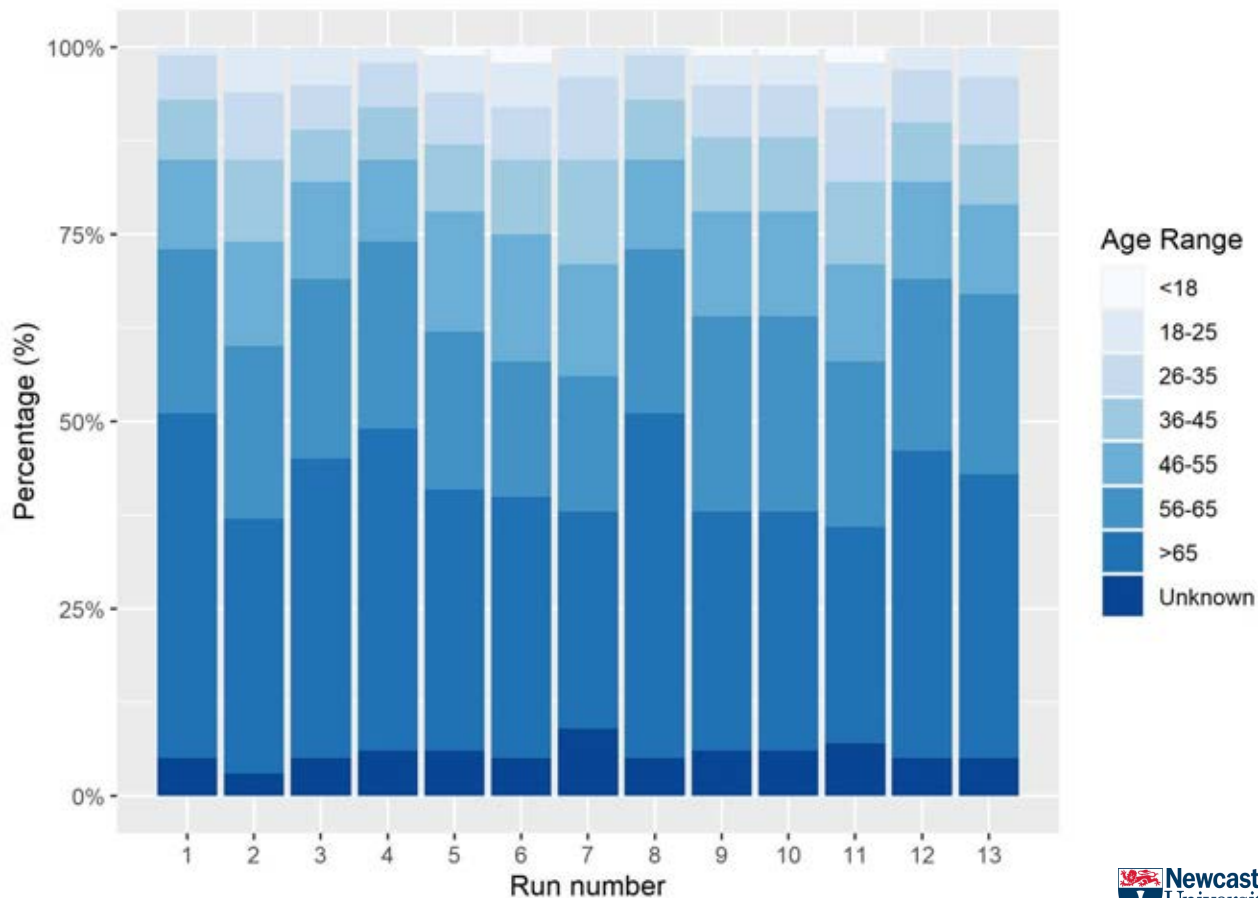


# Participant Demographics

## Age

Approximately 60-70% of participants were '55-65' and '65+'

Only 5-12% of participants fell were '< (or under) 18' and '18-25'



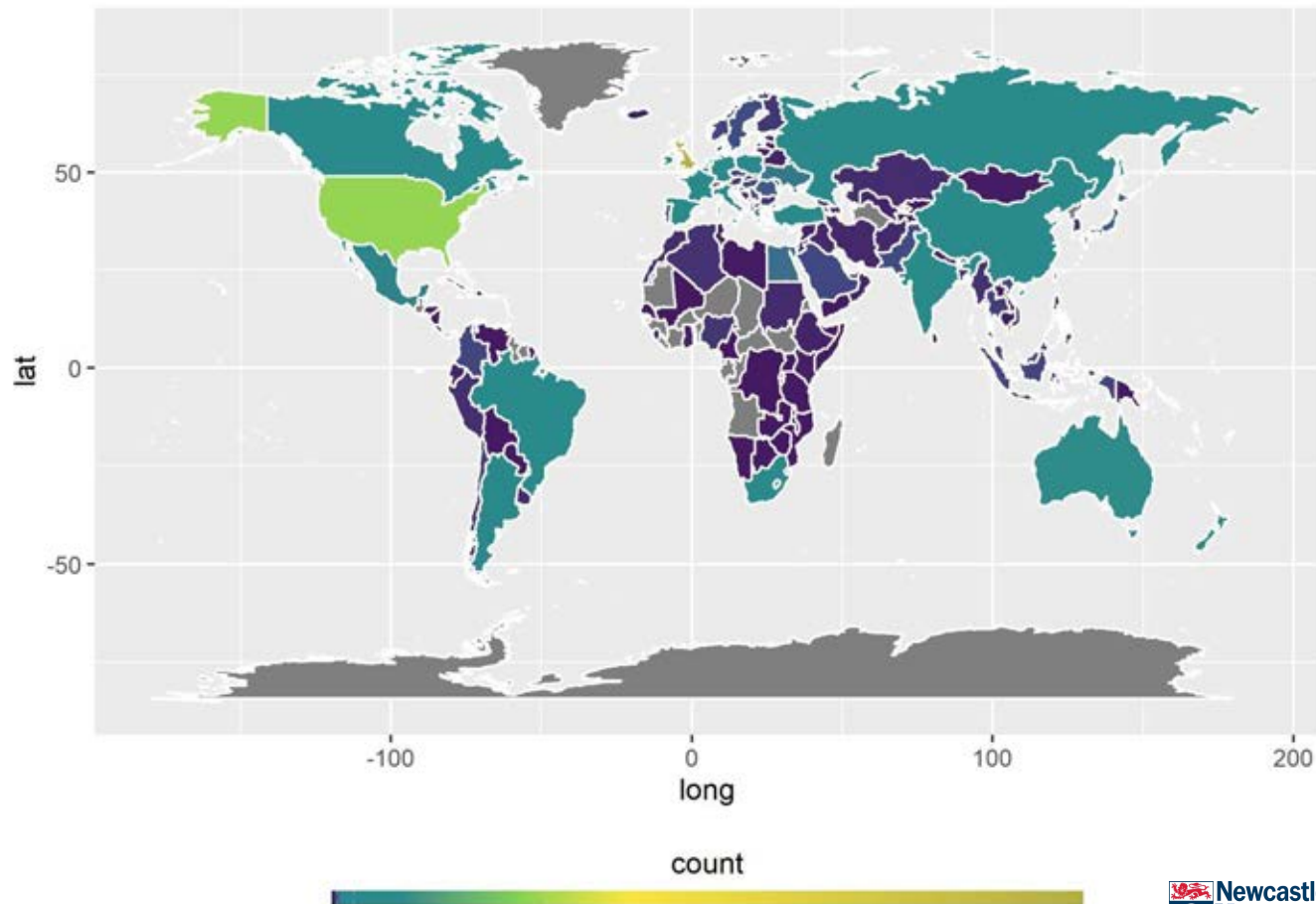


# Participant Demographics

## Country of origin

Participants from 170 different countries across the World

Majority of participants from UK - large numbers from USA, Australia, Canada and Europe (esp. France, Italy, Spain and Ireland).





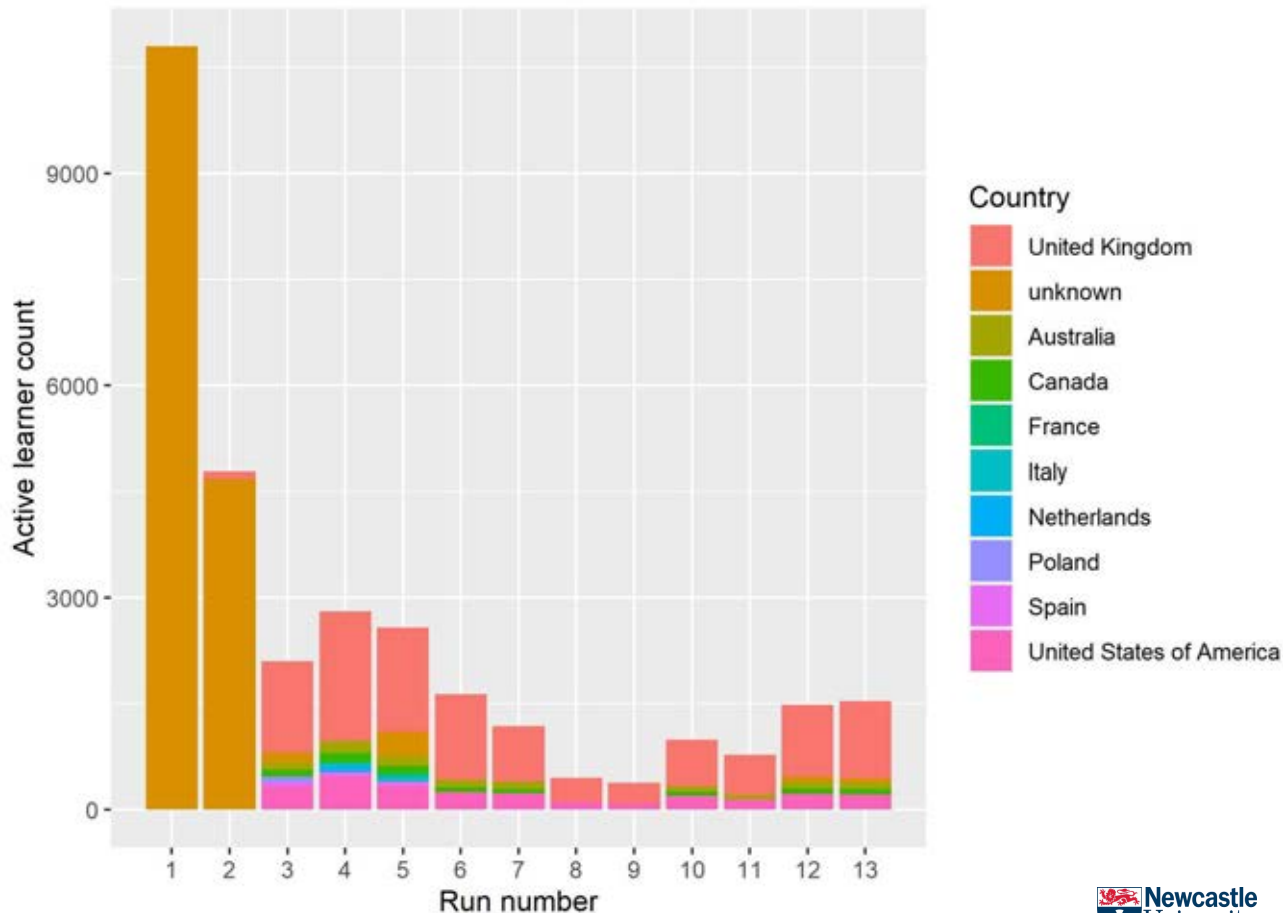
# Participant Demographics

## Country of origin

No data for Runs 1-2


Majority from UK  
(red)

Diversity is seen  
early on but fades  
over time





# Archetype survey

FutureLearn

Subjects ▾ Courses ▾ Using FutureLearn ▾

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Register







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Home / Press / Newsletter Content / Who are our Learners? Part 1: What we did and why

January 24th, 2018  
by [Niamh O'Grady](#)

Category: [Newsletter Content](#)

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## Who are our Learners? Part 1: What we did and why

A research-based insight into FutureLearners.

Part 1: What we did and why.

*By Tracey Walker, User Experience Researcher at FutureLearn*

After 4 years, thousands of courses, and millions of learners, it seemed a good time to investigate who our learners really are and get to know them better.

At the beginning, we assumed that our learners might follow the Open University demographic; mostly retired people looking for a new lease of life through study and learning. This proved to be correct but as with the world itself, FutureLearn evolved and by the time I joined in 2016, our learners were much more diverse. Thus, with a determination to shake up our comfortable understanding of learner demographics, the research and data team set about doing some foundational research which we hoped would permeate the strategy and design of FutureLearn and help us to understand how far we had come and the types of people we were now attracting.

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Course spotlight: HR  
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Educating the Rainbow Children:  
The Impact of Lockdown on  
Children's Wellbeing and Learning

Register for free to receive  
relevant updates on courses  
and news from FutureLearn.



# Archetype survey

Table 4: Archetype descriptions

Archetype	Description
Advancers	Advancers are on their chosen career path. They're ambitious and self-motivated to do better, progress and not stagnate.
Explorers	Explorers are evaluating their options and want to inform their decisions about what to do next. They might be looking to change career, find a better life balance or decide where to start their working lives.
Preparers	Preparers tend to be starting out in jobs, careers or related study, having already chosen what they want to do. They have specific career or study goals and learn in order to improve their chances of success, improve their career prospects, stand out from the crowd, and increase their confidence.
Fixers	Fixers learn in order to understand or manage current aspects of their personal life. This could include the physical or mental health of themselves or those close to them, political or cultural issues, situations requiring practical life skills, or major life changes such as bereavement, parenthood, retirement or redundancy.
Flourishers	Flourishers enjoy self-help learning in order to be happy and healthy in their personal and professional lives. They may learn to be calm, manage stress, be enriched, build self-esteem, gain motivation, help others and/or share what they learn.
Hobbyists	Hobbyists learn in order to support their existing personal projects, leisure activities and pastimes. Our courses complement, inform and enable their activities.
Vitalisers	Vitalisers learn as a hobby and for the love of learning. They may be proud to call themselves lifelong learners, occupying themselves by learning anything of personal interest.
Other	Other group that does not fit into the archetypes described above

Work and Study

Personal life

Leisure

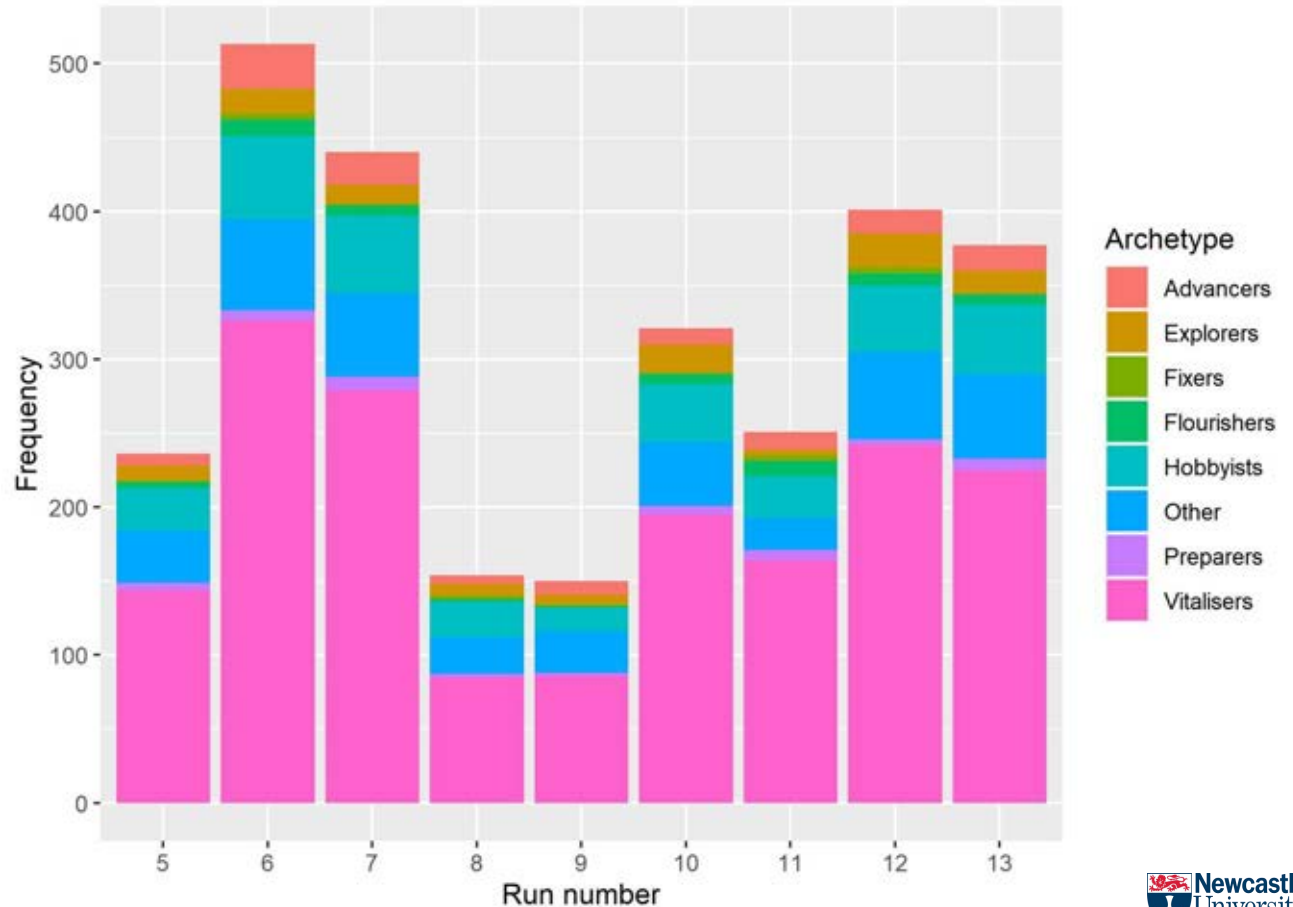


# Archetype survey

## Archetypes

No data from  
Runs 1-4

Vast majority of  
participants from  
'Vitaliser'  
archetype





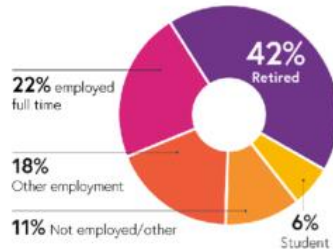
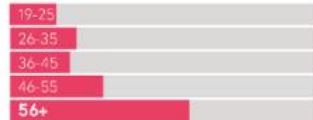
# Archetype survey

Vitalisers -  
who learn  
“as a hobby”  
to occupy  
“themselves  
by learning  
anything of  
personal  
interest”.

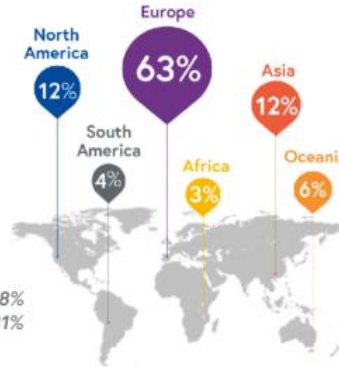


## Vitalisers

Vitalisers learn as a *hobby* and for the *love of learning*. They may be proud to call themselves *lifelong learners*, occupying themselves by learning anything of personal interest. They see learning as a *enjoyable* and *stimulating* activity, perhaps even an *indulgence*. They also feel it's a good, *constructive use of their time*, keeping them *mentally active*. They were one of the groups least motivated by communicating with other learners.



Female 68%  
Male 31%



"I'm a lifelong learner and use FutureLearn to keep my brain active and gain knowledge in areas that interest me."

number of enrolments	3.96
activation rate	38.5%
full participation rate	8.64%
purchase rate	0.44%



### Example needs

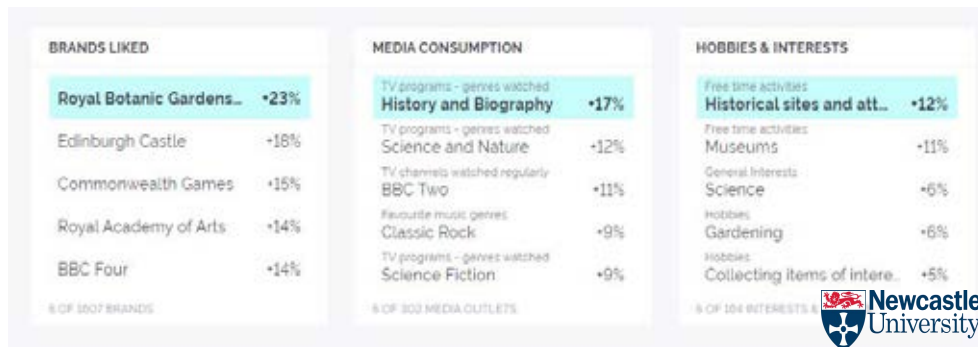
- Regular supply of diverse and interesting courses, allowing them to learn regularly
- To spend personal and luxury time learning
- Sound, accessible content and good reference materials
- To feel stimulated, mentally active and entertained
- To feel good about themselves, their identity as a learner and their good use of time



# YouGov – Audience explorer

## People in 'Great Britain' With an interest in 'Time Team'

<https://screen.yougov.com/audience>



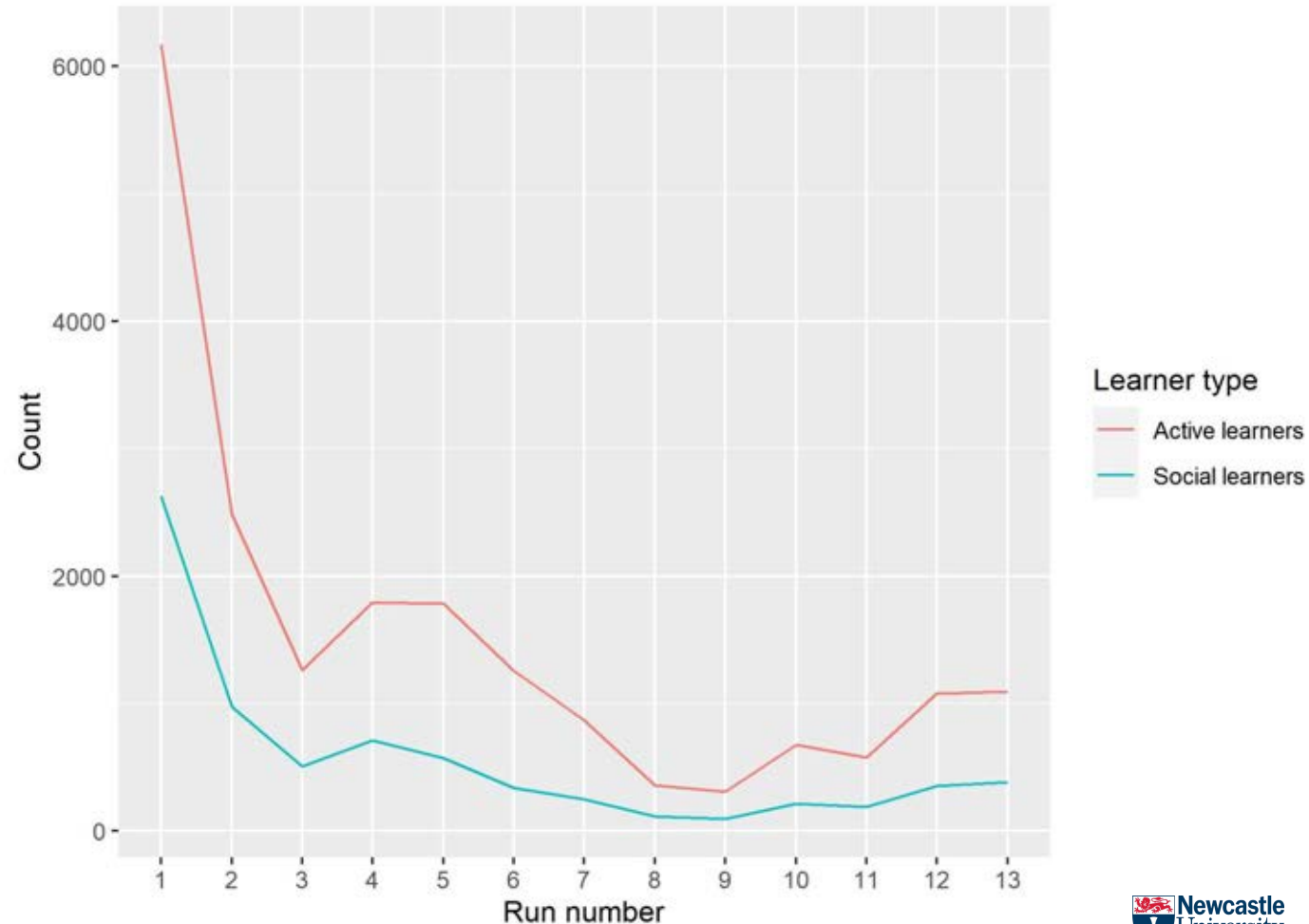


# Learner Activity

## Social and Active Learners

Active = mark at least one step as complete.  
Social = leave at least one comment.

Average number of social learners was approx. half of average number of Active learners.





# Learner Activity

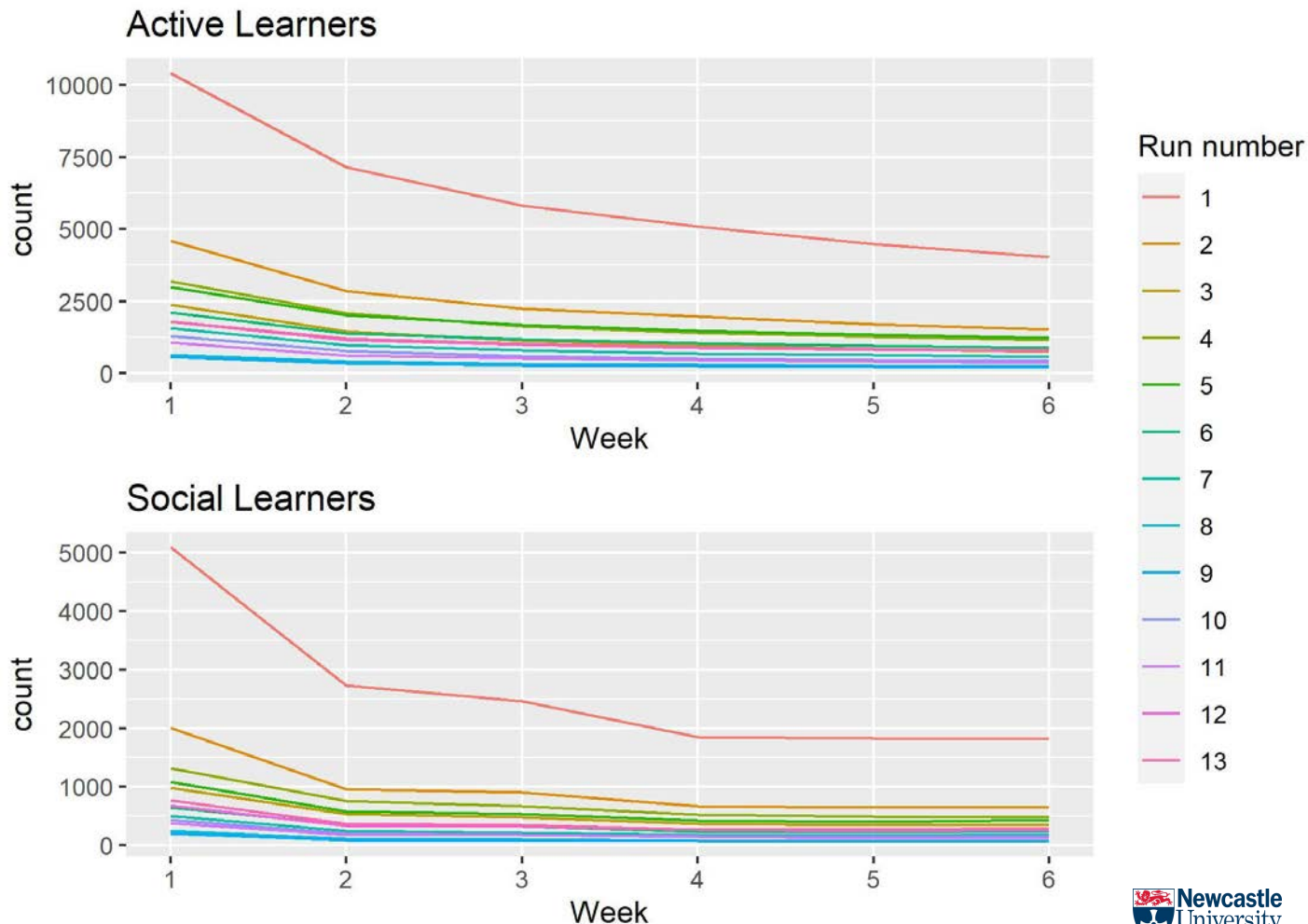
## Social and Active Learners

General decline in both over six weeks of course.

Why?

Lengthy course with time commitment?

Needs wider comparison





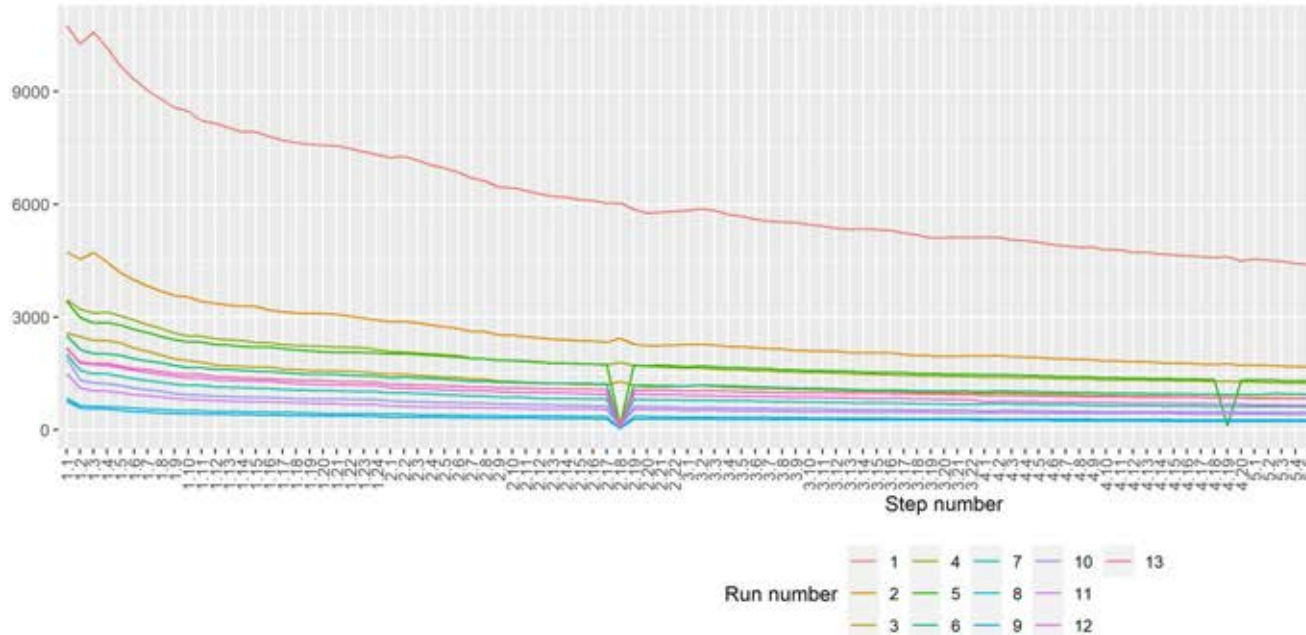
# Learner Activity

## Step participation across entire course

Slow decline over course

Steep decline in participations in specific w

## Step participation

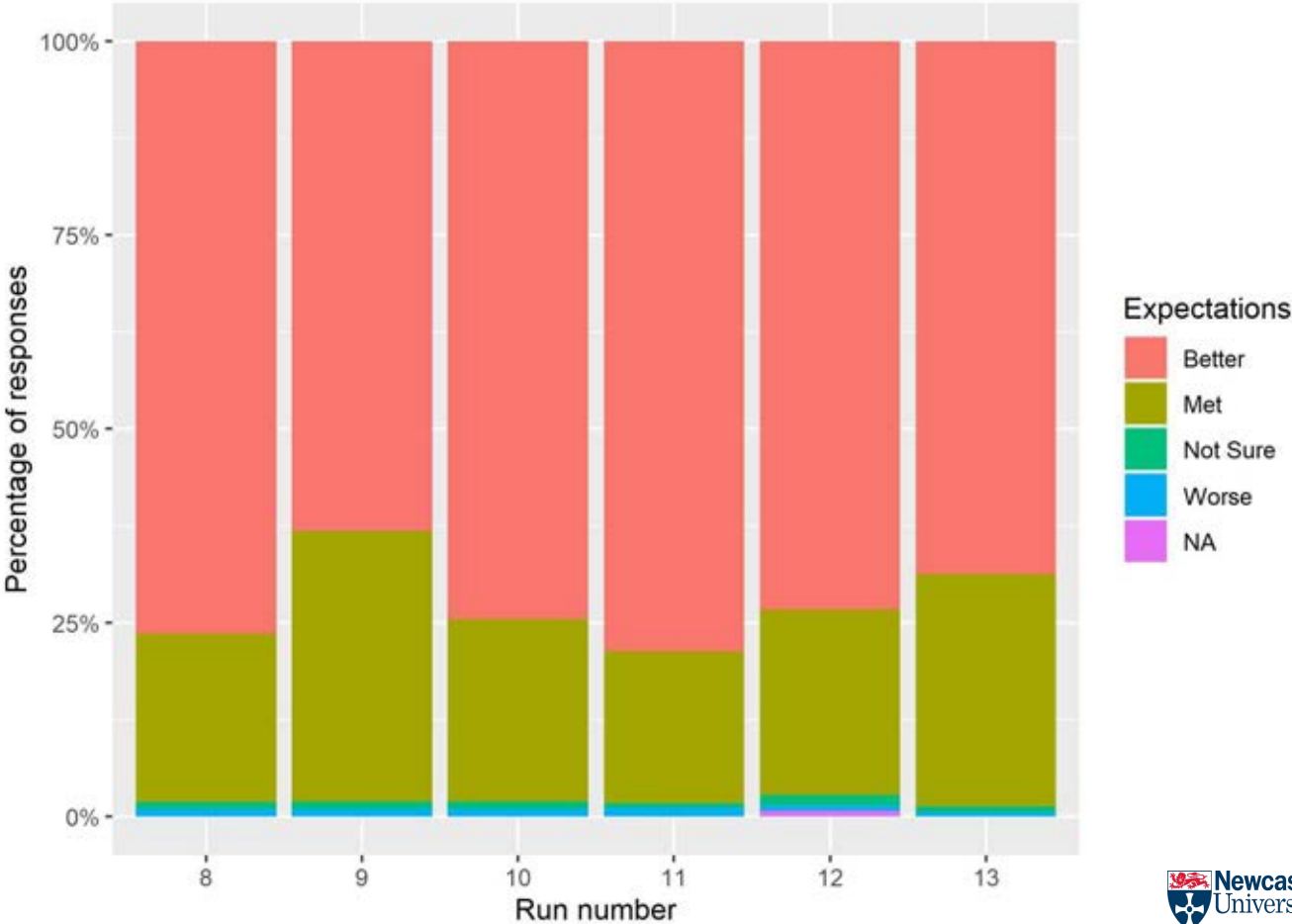


- 2.18 What have you learnt so far (Test)
- 4.19 What have you learnt over the last two weeks? (Test)
- 6.17 what have you learnt over the last six weeks? (Test)



# Participant satisfaction - Post course survey

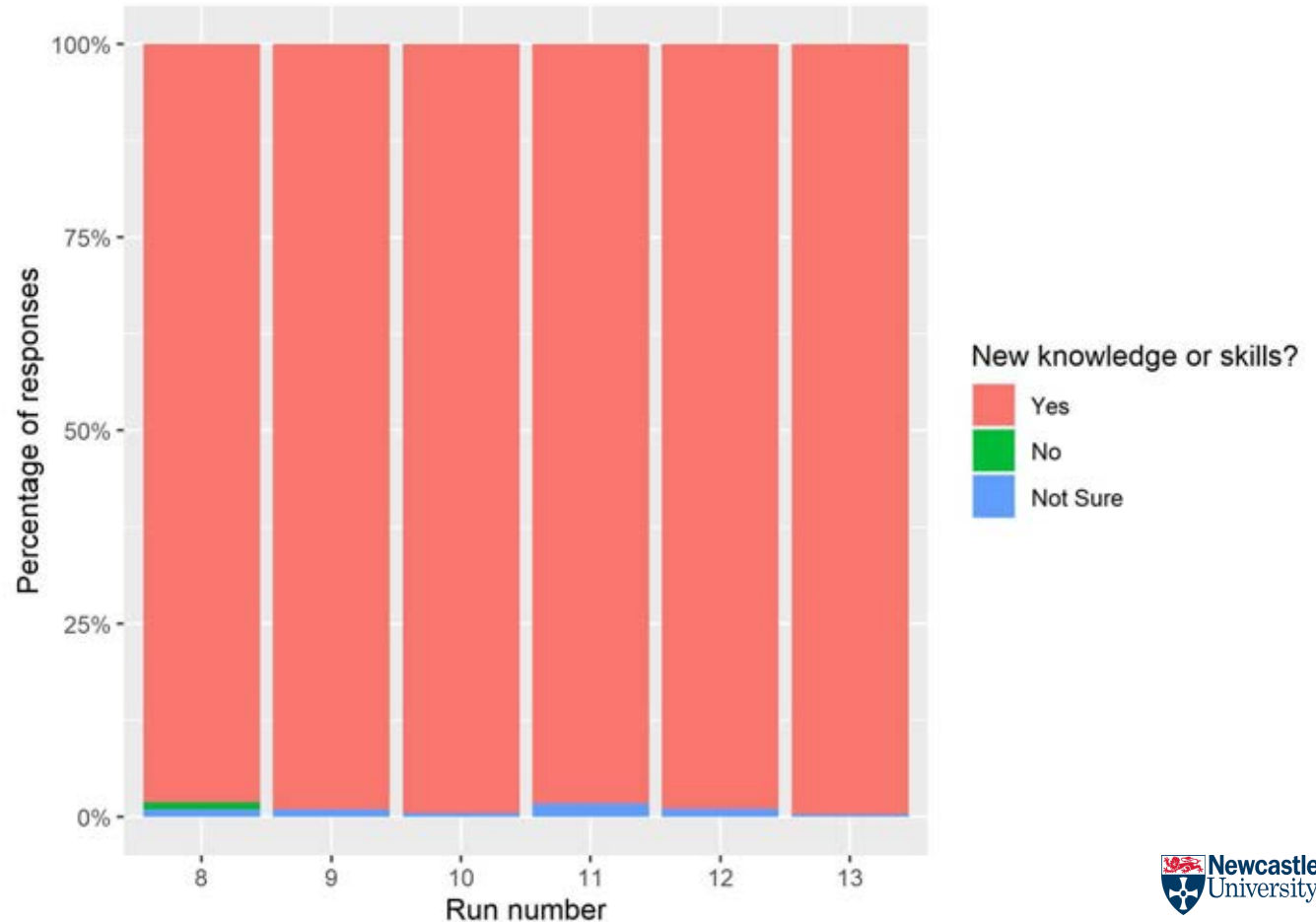
Did this course meet your expectations?





# Participant satisfaction - Post course survey

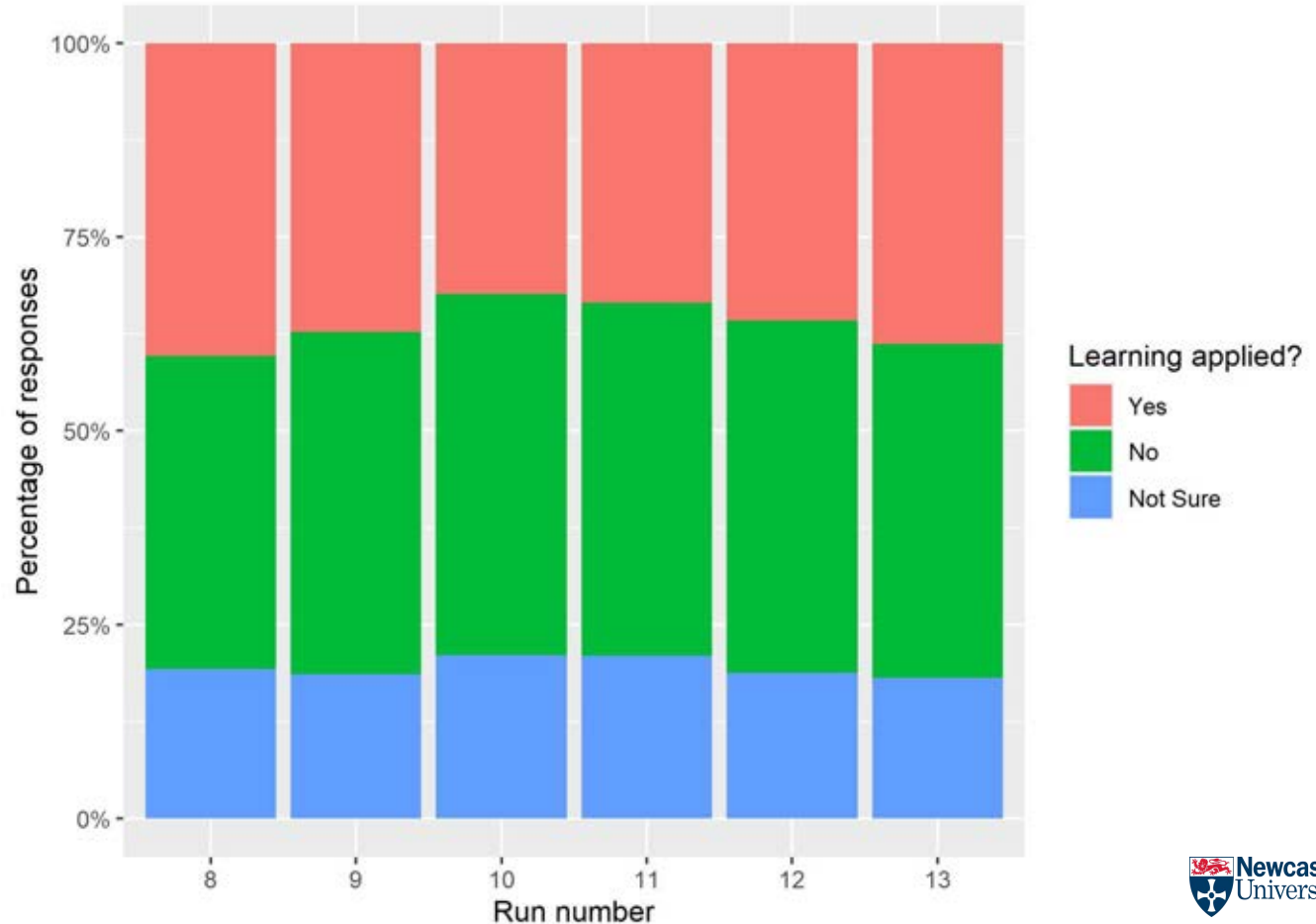
**Did you gain  
new  
knowledge or  
skills by taking  
the course?**





# Participant satisfaction - Post course survey

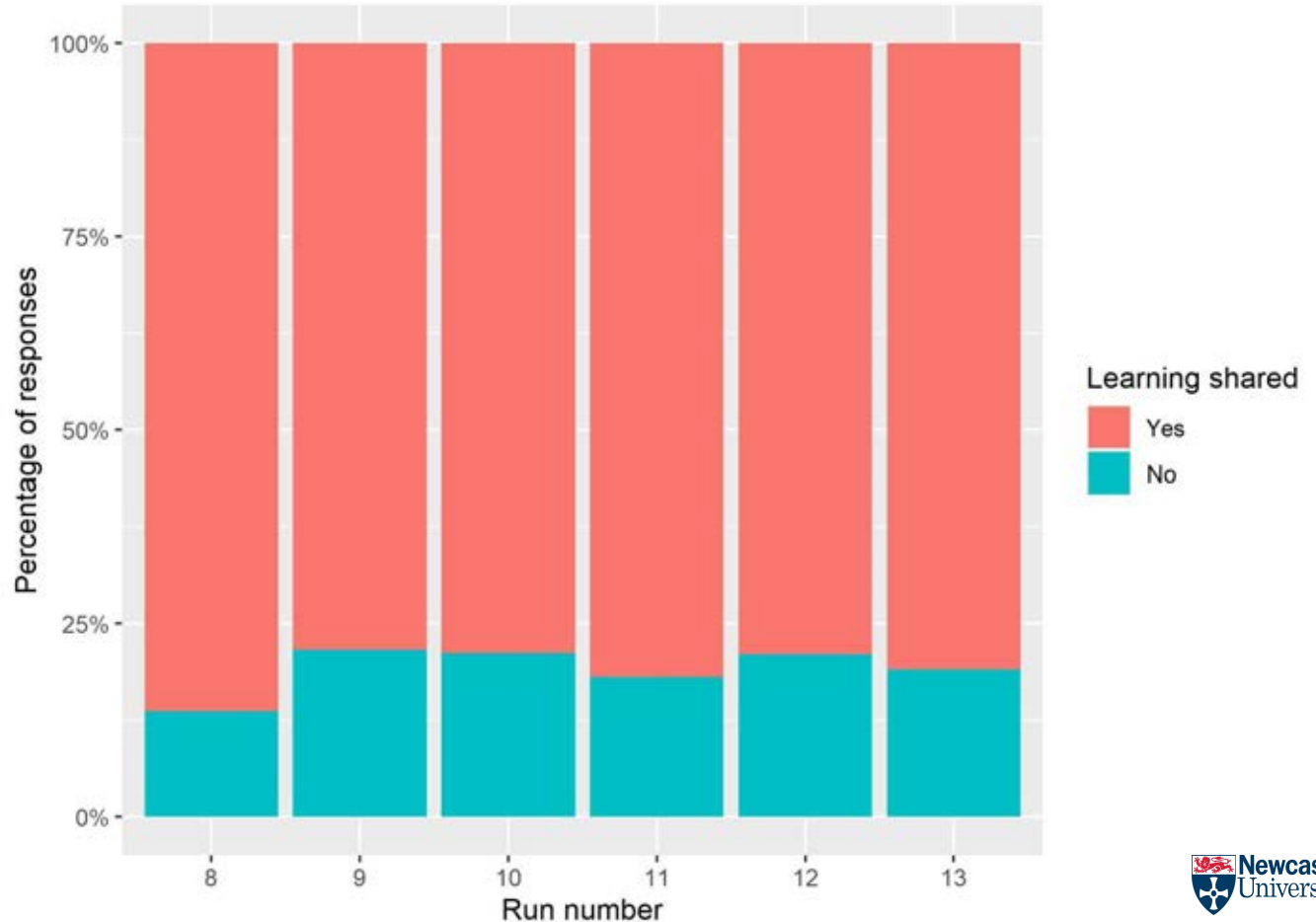
Since starting the course, have you applied what you learned?





# Participant satisfaction - Post course survey

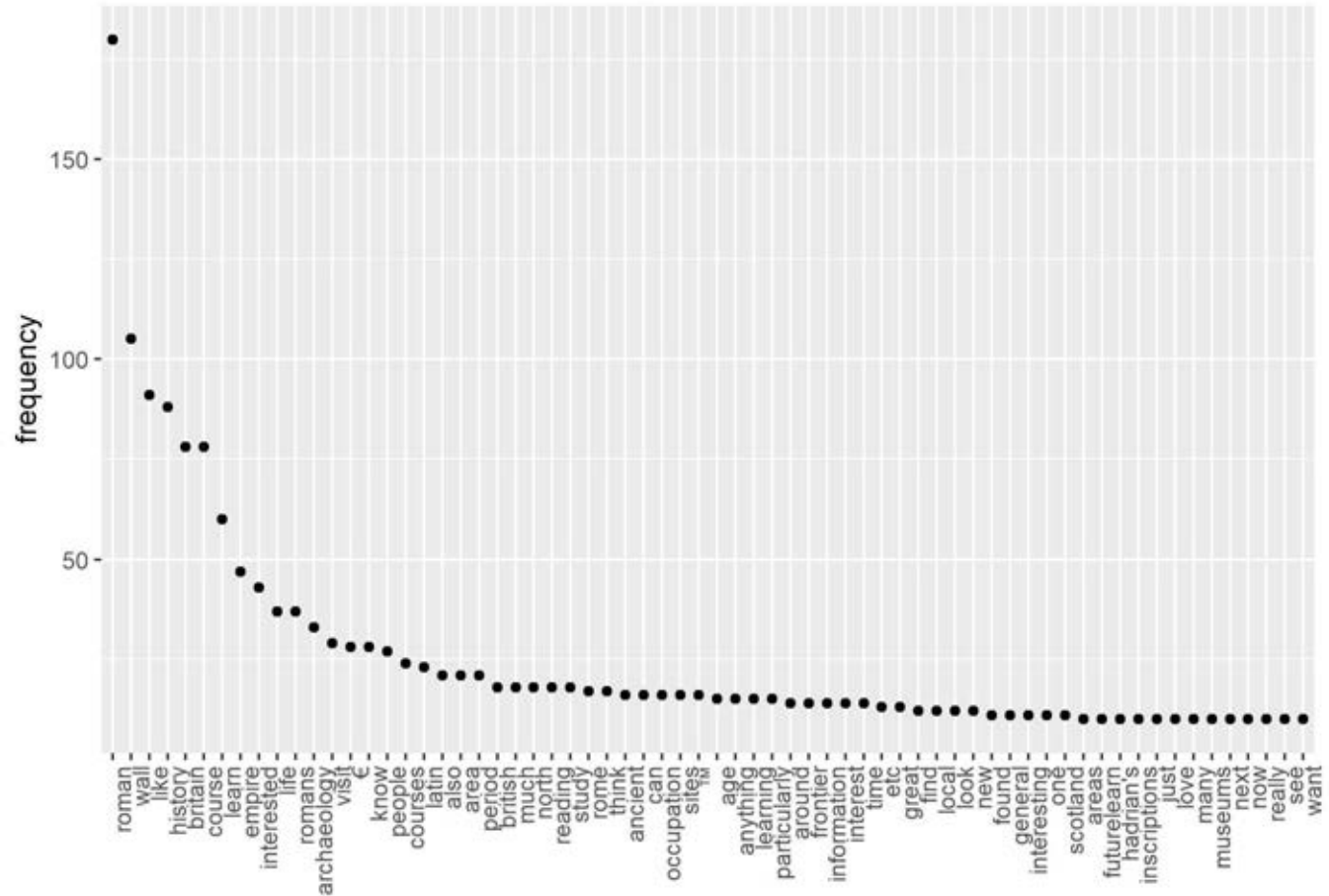
Since starting the course, have you shared what you learned with other people?





# Participant satisfaction - Post course survey

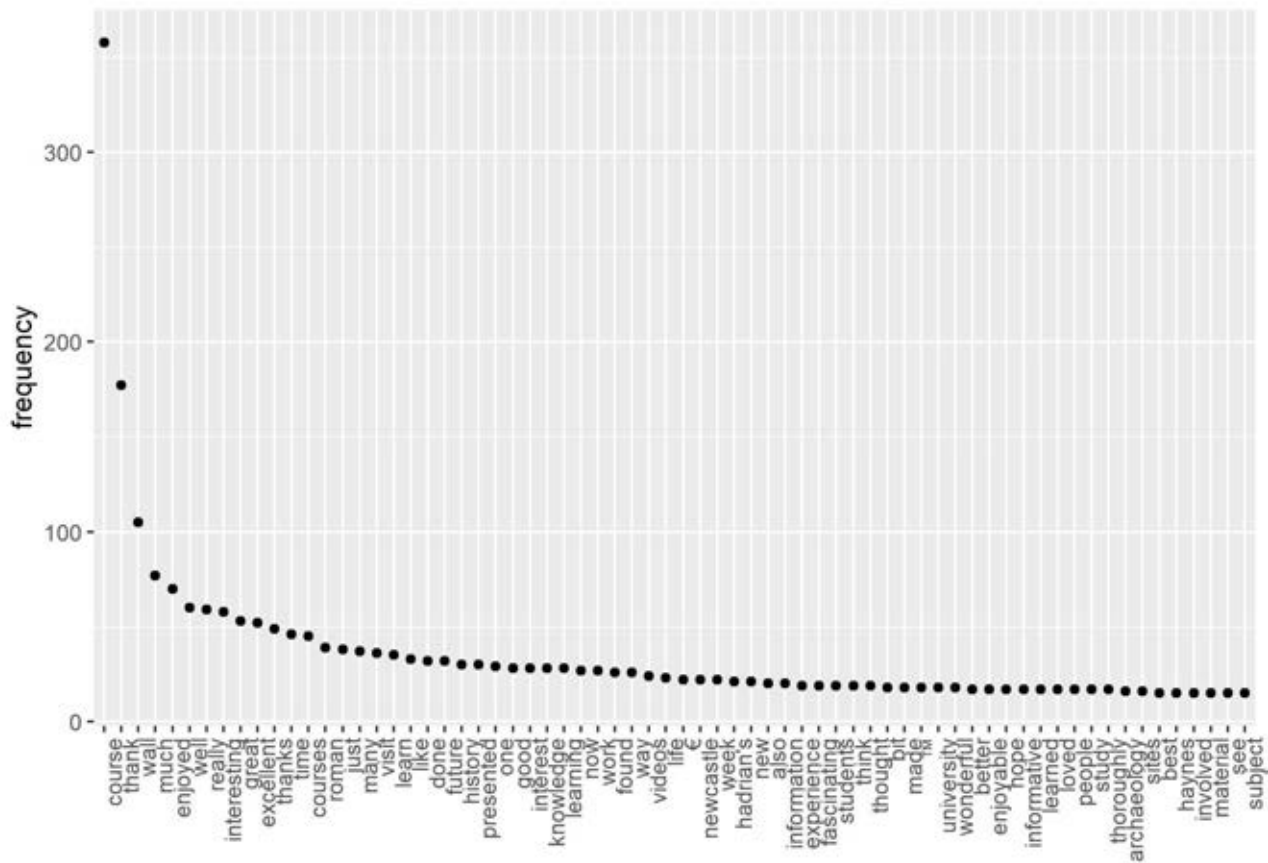
What (if anything) would you like to learn next in this subject area?





# Participant satisfaction - Post course survey

Is there  
anything else  
you would like  
to tell us?





# Impact

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) define 'Impact' as:

“an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia”

<https://re.ukri.org/research/ref-impact/>

Adapted from: Reed, M.S. 2020. The Research Impact Handbook. 2nd Edition. Table 1 – p18

Type of Impact	Definition
Understanding and awareness	People understand an issue better than they did before
Attitudinal	A change in attitudes, typically of a group of people who share similar views
Economic	Monetary benefits, either in terms of money saved, costs avoided or increases in turnover/profit/funding
Environmental	Benefits to genetic diversity, species or habitat conservation, and ecosystems
Health and well-being	Better outcomes for the health of individuals, social groups or public health
Policy	Contribution to new or amended laws, regulations or other policy mechanisms
Other forms of decision-making change impacts	Informing a wide range of individuals, group and organisational behaviours
Cultural	Changes in the prevailing values, attitudes, beliefs, discourse and patterns of behaviour
Other social	Benefits to society not covered by other types of impact
Capacity or preparedness	Research that leads to new or enhanced capacity



# Impact Survey

A bespoke survey was created to understand whether participation in the MOOC had generated wider impact

## Considerations

- Secure location to host survey
- Ethical approval (institution level)
- Support and Approval from FutureLearn (including tips on design, email templates, terms and conditions)

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/categories/360002208134-Surveys-and-Research>

### FutureLearn - Hadrian's Wall: Life on the Roman Frontier MOOC (Mass Open Online Course)

Newcastle University is carrying out research to understand how participating and completing in the FutureLearn course 'Hadrian's Wall: Life on the Frontier' has impacted upon your lives. You have been sent this survey as you opted in to receiving additional information from FutureLearn following the completion of the course. Participation in this survey is voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this survey.

By taking part in this study, you'll help Newcastle University to better understand the long-term impact of their teaching and research on society at large. We'll use the findings as part of the upcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) to quantify the impact of our research and possibly publish the results in due course.

If you would like further information about this study and the use of the data in the future please contact Dr Rob Collins, Newcastle University (Robert.collins@newcastle.ac.uk).

1. What is your age? \*

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ Over 65
- ☐ Would prefer not to say

2. In which year did you participate in the FutureLearn course? \*

3. How would you rate your overall experience of the course?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ OK
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very Poor
- ☐ I don't know

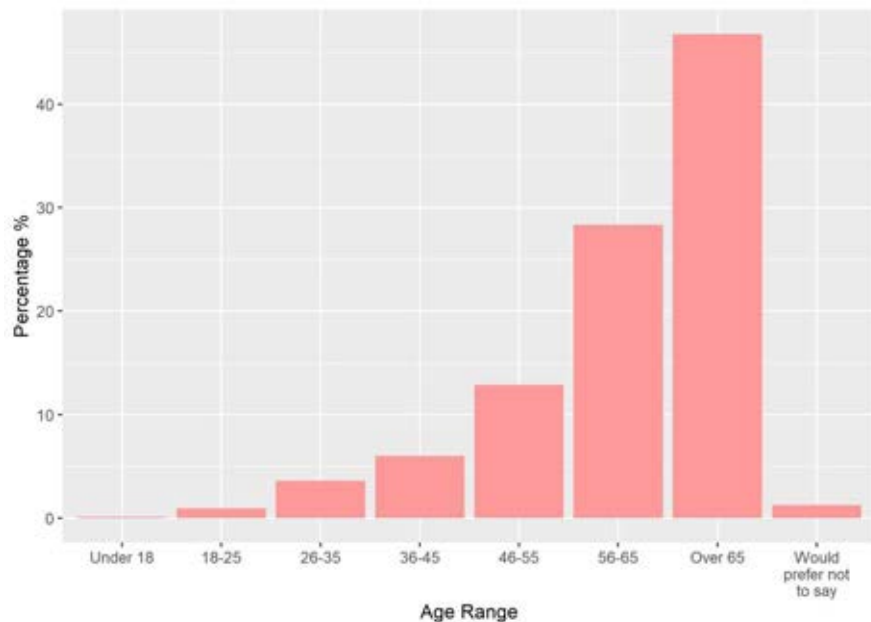


# Impact survey - Demographics

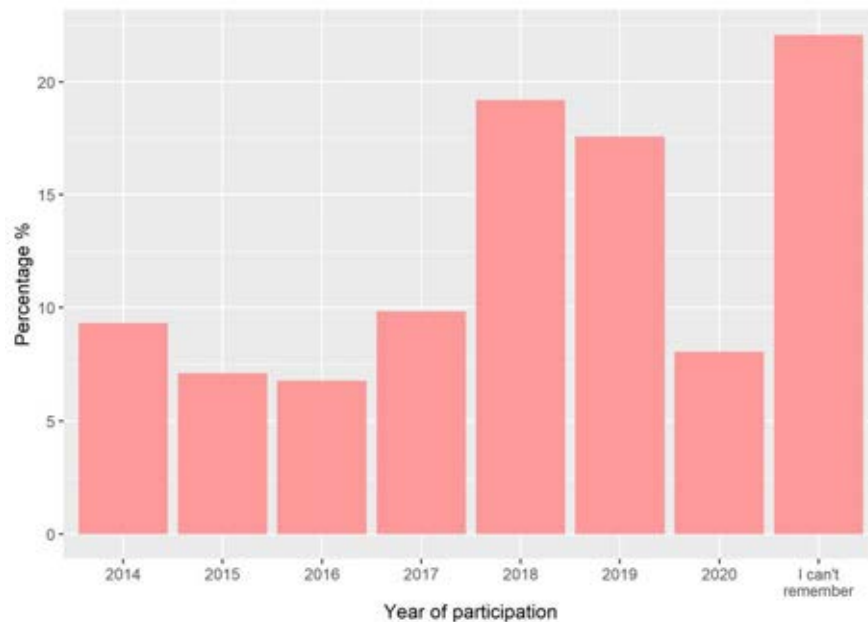
Survey sent to 30,442 past participants

Response rate = 12.56 %

## 1. What is your age?



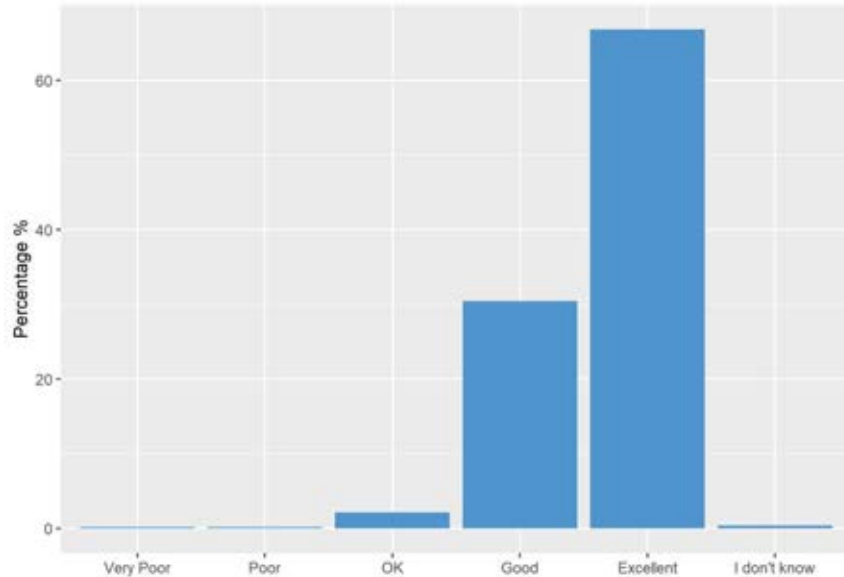
## 2. In which year did you participate in the FutureLearn course?



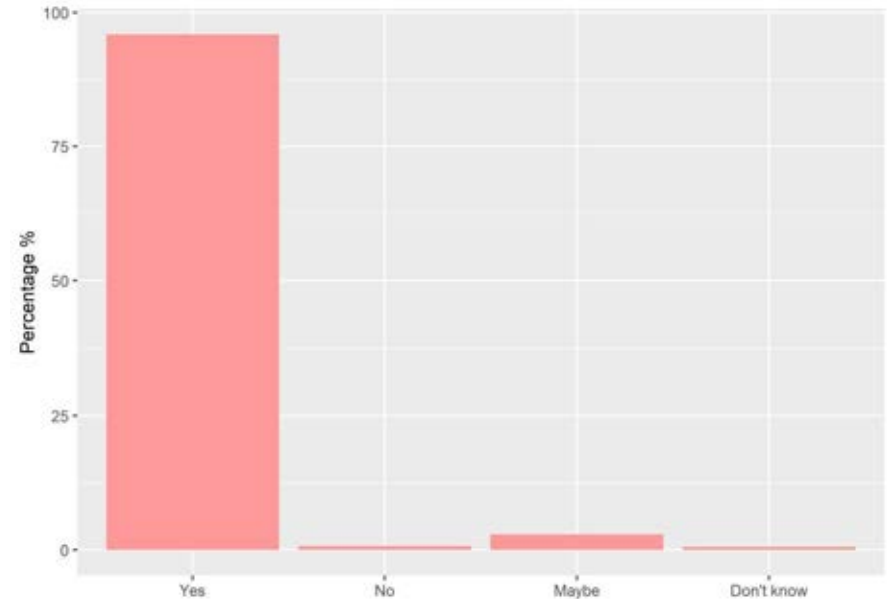


# Impact survey - Demographics

3. How would you rate your overall experience of the course?



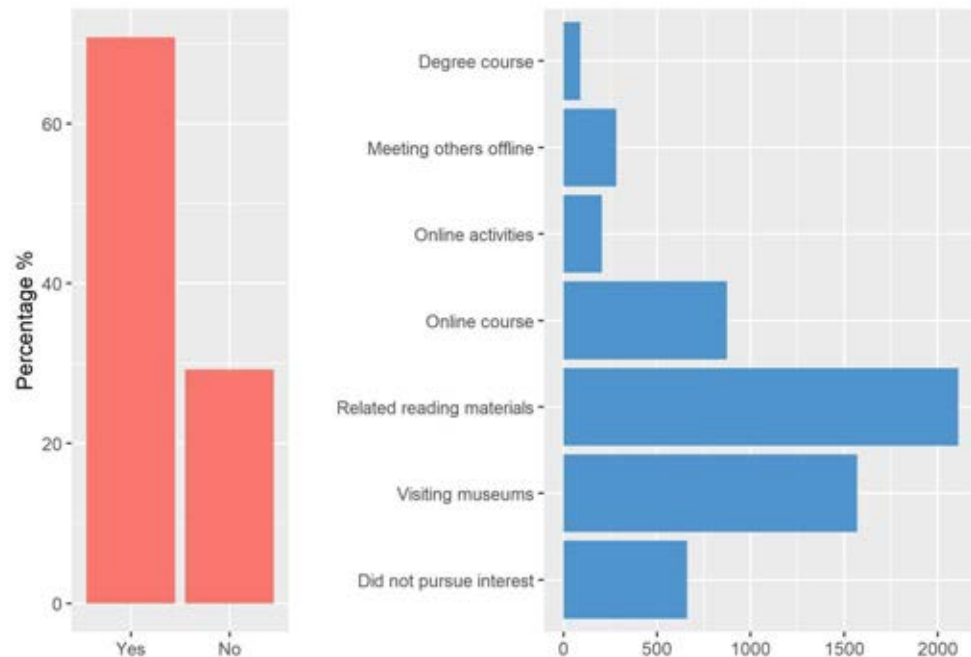
4. Do you believe that your knowledge of Hadrian's Wall and Life on the Frontier has improved after completing this course?





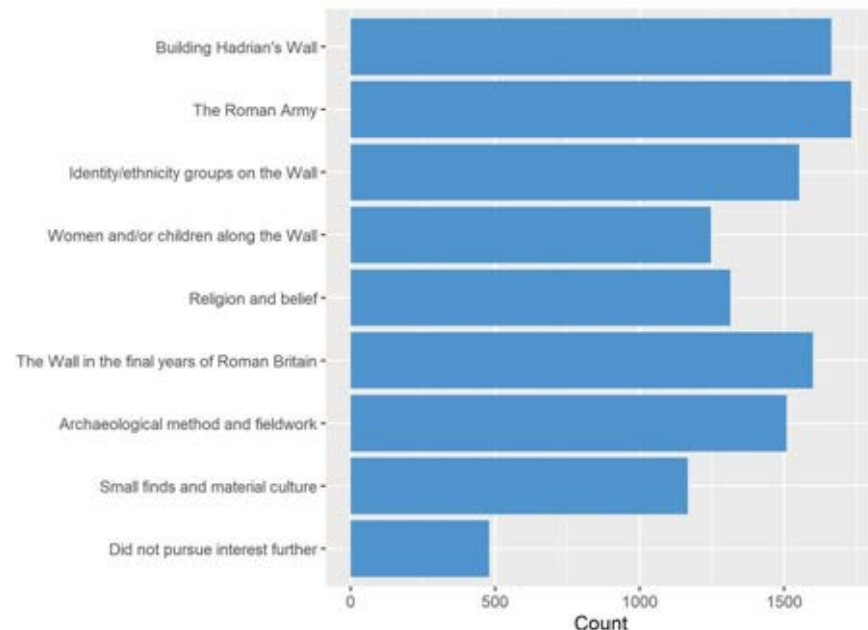
# Impact survey – Further interest

5a. Following the course did you go on to pursue your interest in the subject?



5b. If so, in what ways did you continue learning about the topic?

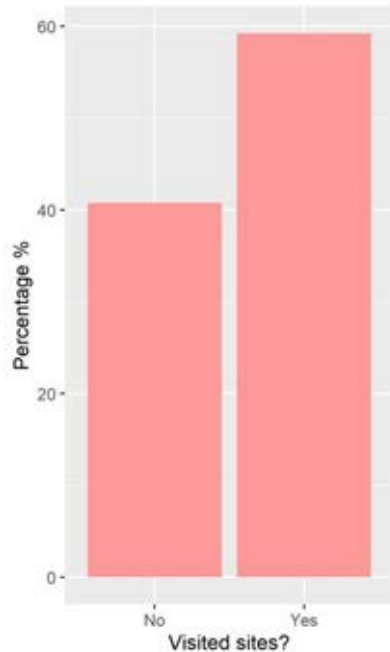
5c. If so, what topics do/did you want to learn more about?



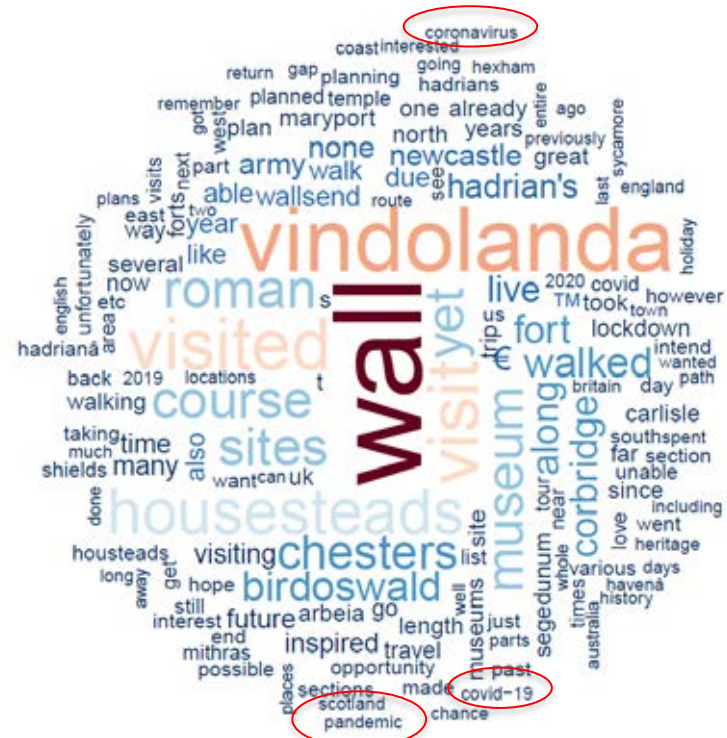


# Impact survey – Visiting Hadrian's Wall

6a. Did taking the course inspire you to visit one or more sites in the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site?



6b. If so, which locations within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site have you visited?



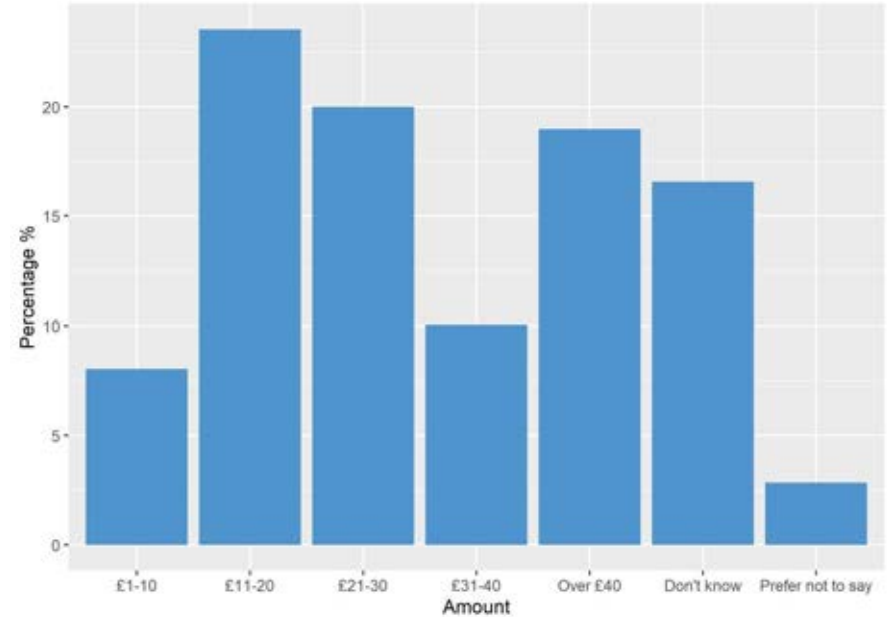
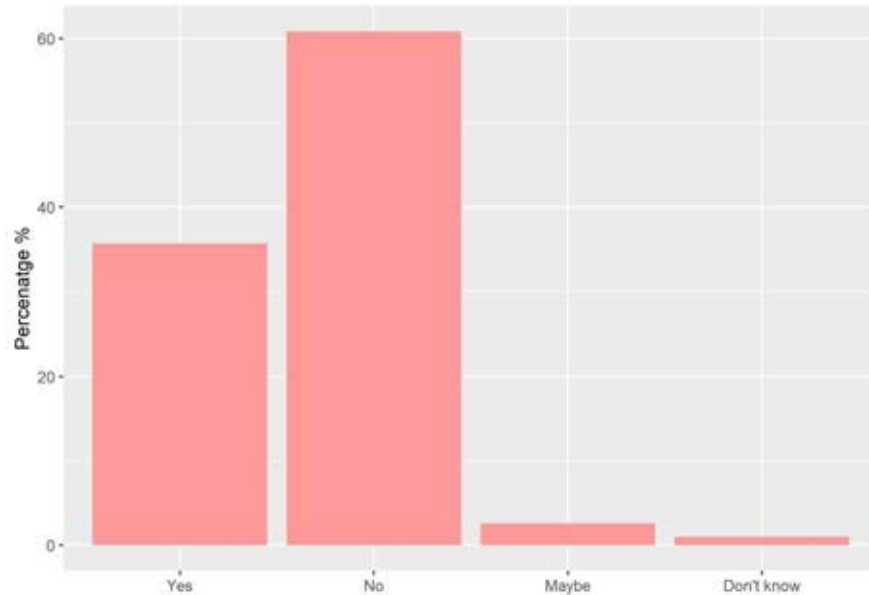






# Impact survey – Purchasing resources

8a. Since taking the course, have you purchased any books or other materials about Hadrian's Wall?



8b. If so, approximately how much have you spent on additional materials?



# Conclusions

- Method provides a rapid analysis of large-scale dataset to understand participation, pedagogy and learning outcomes
- R code can be utilised for other FutureLearn MOOCs (will be available to download open access soon)
- FutureLearn MOOCs can have a demonstrable research impact
  - Cultural – changing appreciation for heritage across the world leads to increase support for local heritage resources (museums, archaeological sites etc.)
  - Attitudinal – greater attitudes to role of archaeological and historical sites in different areas
  - Economic - increased revenues for local area through increased tourism and purchasing of associated resources (books magazines etc.)



# Thank you

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@Nicky\_Garland

