UK Heritage Pulse

Operational use of AI

Executive Summary: October 2025

UK Heritage Pulse is a collaborative data and insight project for the UK's heritage sector. It is operated by Baker Richards on behalf of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, and their supporting organisations.

Find out more: heritagepulse.insights-alliance.com
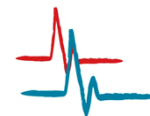
Executive Summary

In September 2025, we received 115 responses to at least one question about how AI is influencing heritage work, or the monthly "Pulse Monitor" questions which track the individual and organisational resilience of respondents.
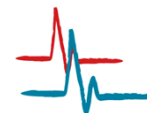
Key findings from the research exploring the operational impact of AI, shows:

- 60% of respondents believe AI presents more of an opportunity than a risk for their organisation, up from 40% when the question was previously asked in June 2023.
- Heritage Pulse panel members report that AI is automating existing procedures, rather than replacing existing roles in heritage.
- While respondents are finding a role for AI in their work or organisation, four-in-five are concerned they do not have access to the training to maximise their use of the technology.
- Concerns/objections are both philosophical and practical, but these do not outweigh its potential usefulness to heritage practitioners.
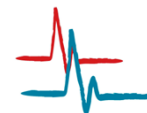
Pulse Monitor
Taking the pulse of the people who care for our shared heritage

- The reported stress of panellists continues to decline, yet fewer respondents intend to stay with their current organisation over the next year. Those employed in smaller organisations, with a turnover of £500K or less, are particularly less likely to see themselves remaining than they were at the start of the year.
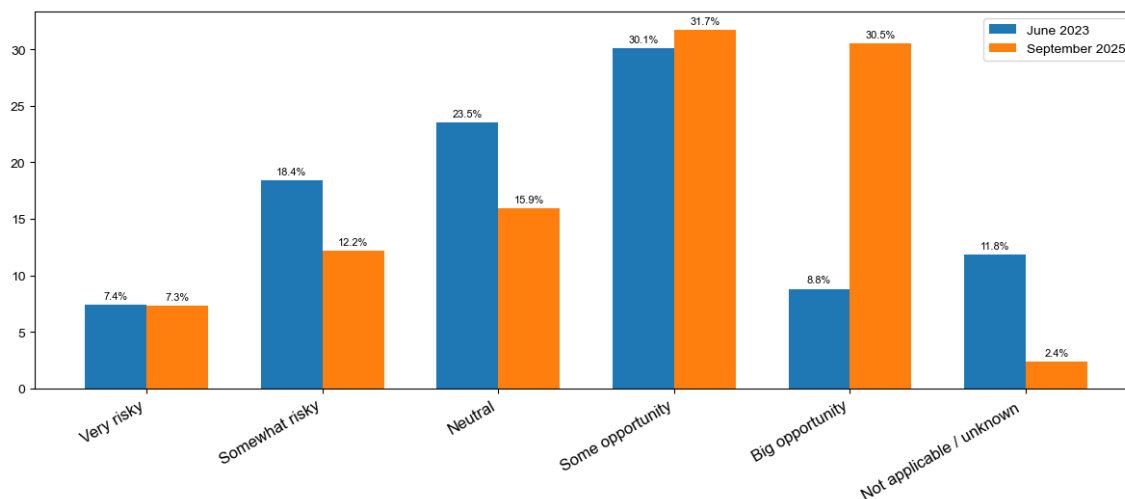
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Opportunities of AI outweigh risks for panel members

On balance, do you think AI presents more of an opportunity or a risk to your organisation?

Over 60% of respondents believe AI presents an opportunity for their organisation – an increase of 20 percentage points over the past two years, with a significant growth in those saying it presents a big opportunity. Almost half of this is driven by a fall in those that believe AI will not be applicable for their organisation.

There has been a shift away from respondents saying AI is somewhat risky, or being neutral on the topic. However, those that believe AI is very risky remains at around 7%.

Respondents see AI supporting administrative functions, rather than replacing human-led roles

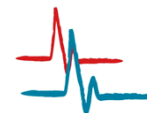| 5. Please indicate which of the following potential applications of AI you see as most valuable and least valuable for your organisation.				
Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Automating or speeding-up admin tasks	1		511	60
Transcription	2		471	60
Analysing visitor data (e.g. for trends & forecasts)	3		395	56
Creating marketing / engagement content	4		383	60
Educational content creation	5		305	57
Automated cataloguing and metadata creation	6		295	50
Interactive interpretation	7		288	52
Personalised visitor recommendations	8		206	46
Digital restoration and reconstruction of artifacts	9		194	51
Chatbots for potential visitors	10		157	46
		Lowest Rank Highest Rank		

When asked to rank which uses of AI the panel saw as most valuable, respondents stated that AI can have its greatest impact on back-office functions such as automation and speeding up admin tasks and assisting with transcription.

The least valuable uses of AI identified by the panel are in visitor facing roles – including interactive interpretation, personalised recommendations, the digital reconstruction / augmentation of artifacts, and providing chatbots for visitors.

Half of the respondents are discovering approaches to AI that work for them

2. Which of the following best describes your organisation's current use of AI?
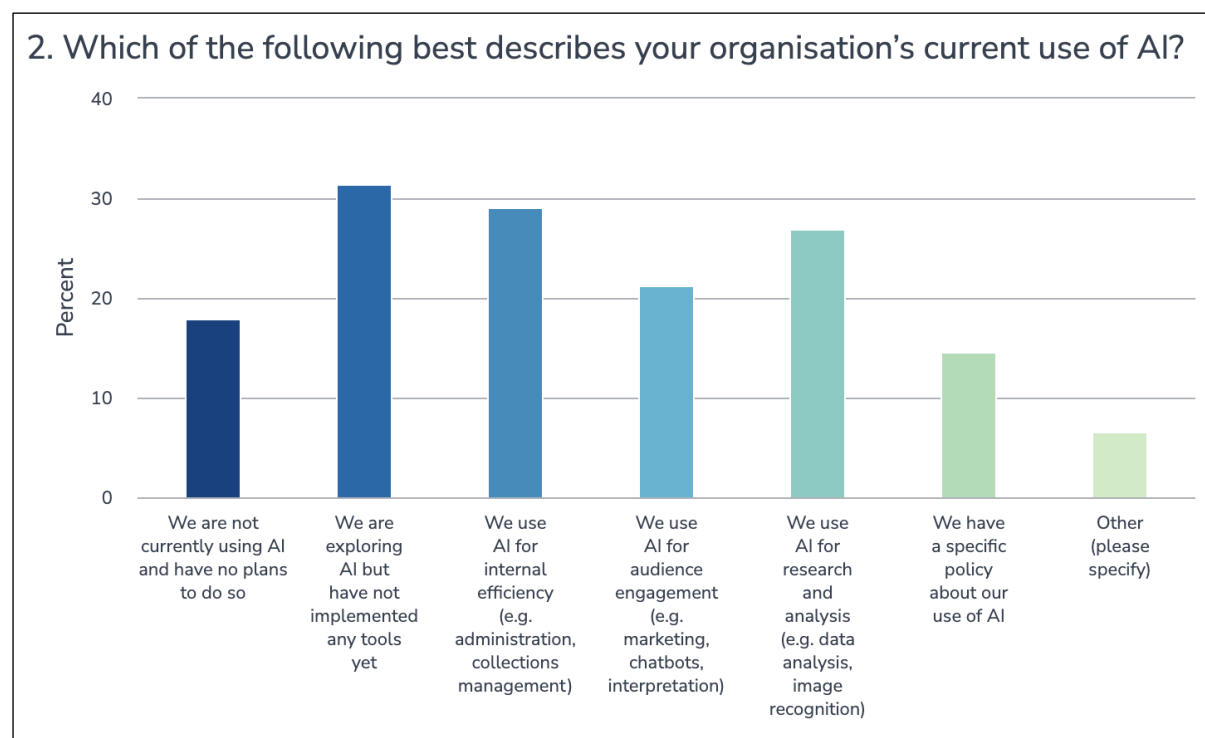
50% of respondents say they are not currently using AI, or are at an early explorative stage. For the remainder, the top current uses are for internal efficiency (E.g. administration, collections management), and for research and analysis (e.g. data analysis, image recognition).
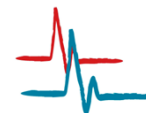
Read more

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has published its approach to AI, which can be read at heritagefund.org.uk/about/transparency/ai-statement

Four-in-five are concerned they do not have access to training to make the most of AI

| 3. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about AI in your heritage work:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Responses
I have the knowledge needed to effectively use AI tools in my heritage work Count Row %	5 5.9%	28 32.9%	39 45.9%	13 15.3%	85
I feel confident identifying when AI could improve processes in my organisation Count Row %	7 8.2%	35 41.2%	33 38.8%	10 11.8%	85
I can critically evaluate the quality and accuracy of AI-generated outputs Count Row %	12 14.3%	49 58.3%	14 16.7%	9 10.7%	84
I have access to adequate training resources about AI applications in heritage Count Row %	2 2.4%	15 18.1%	48 57.8%	18 21.7%	83

Most panel members disagree that they have the knowledge to make use of AI, expressing a wish to access training to successfully apply it to heritage. Despite this, respondents agree they can critically evaluate AI-generated outputs.

Respondents see philosophical and practical issues to adopting AI in heritage

4. What are the main concerns preventing your organisation from adopting AI technologies?	1 (not a concern)	2	3	4 (major concern)	Not applicable	Responses
Budget constraints Count Row %	23 27.7%	15 18.1%	18 21.7%	13 15.7%	14 16.9%	83
Concerns about accuracy/reliability Count Row %	1 1.2%	13 15.3%	26 30.6%	42 49.4%	3 3.5%	85
Ethical concerns Count Row %	11 12.9%	8 9.4%	28 32.9%	35 41.2%	3 3.5%	85
Resistance to change within the organisation Count Row %	27 32.5%	24 28.9%	14 16.9%	9 10.8%	9 10.8%	83
Lack of suitable training/support Count Row %	8 9.4%	14 16.5%	27 31.8%	30 35.3%	6 7.1%	85
Can't see how it will help us in reality Count Row %	34 40.0%	17 20.0%	13 15.3%	16 18.8%	5 5.9%	85
Sustainability concerns Count Row %	20 24.1%	15 18.1%	19 22.9%	24 28.9%	5 6.0%	83

While the panel believe they can critically evaluate AI's outputs for reliability, more than two thirds say that concerns around accuracy are preventing them from adopting the technology. In addition, a similar number have ethical concerns.

60% have little worry about the utility of AI in heritage – the panel sees a role now and in the future. There is little expectation amongst the panel of resistance from within their organisations (25%).
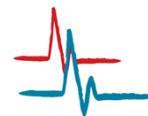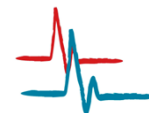
However, the panel has no fixed view on the sustainability of adopting AI technologies.

Signposts

You can read more about what innovation in AI looks like across the sector at heritagefund.org.uk/about/insight/research/artificial-intelligence-digital-heritage-leadership-briefing
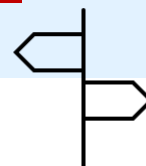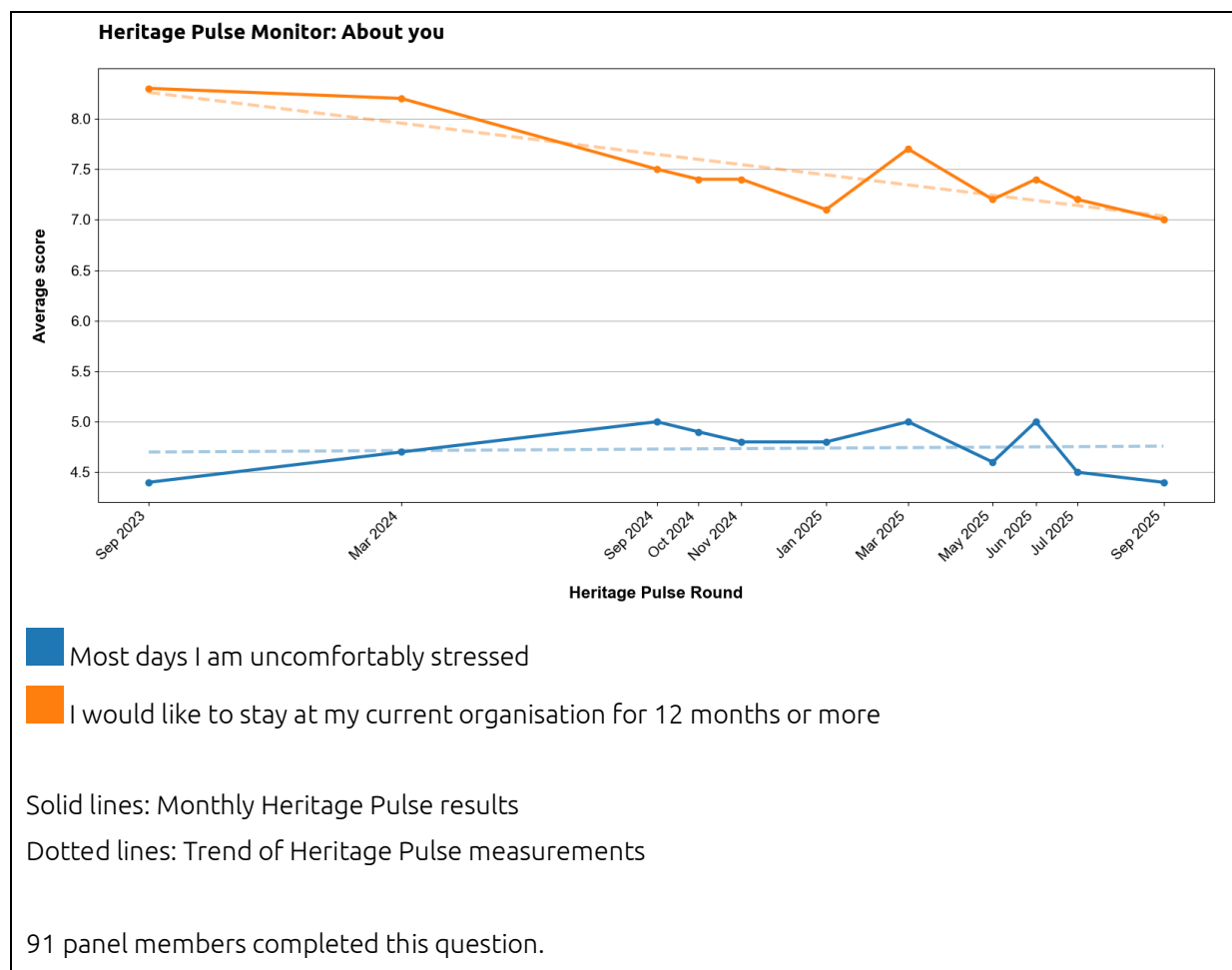
Pulse Monitor

Pulse Monitor is a monthly health check on the heritage sector, measuring its resilience, confidence and ambition.

Reported stress of panel continues to decline, but desire to stay falls

Heritage Pulse Monitor: About you

Legend:
- Most days I am uncomfortably stressed
- I would like to stay at my current organisation for 12 months or more

Solid lines: Monthly Heritage Pulse results
Dotted lines: Trend of Heritage Pulse measurements

91 panel members completed this question.

This month we saw the reported stress of the panel fall to 4.4 / 10, level with the lowest ever score for this measure in the first Heritage Pulse survey two years ago. However, those respondents saying they wished to remain at their current organisations fell to 7 / 10, having decreased by 16% over the past two years.

Heritage Pulse Monitor: About you
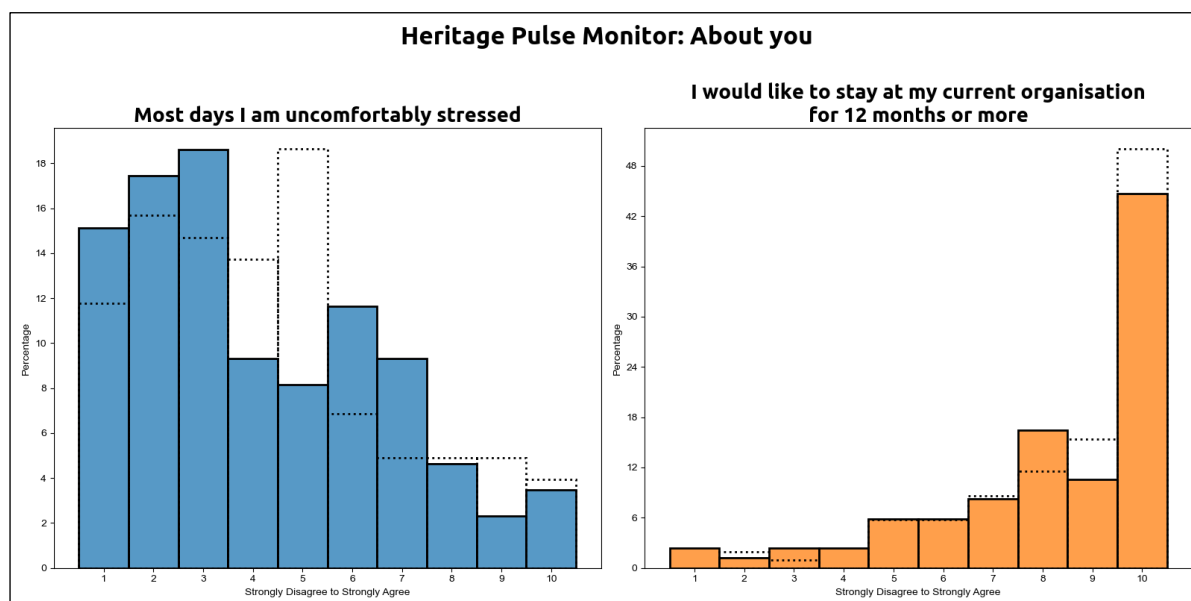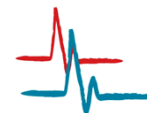
In terms of the response distributions, we observed a shift from strongly agree to agree, and from disagree to strongly disagree. More than four in ten respondents scored 10 / 10 for their desire to stay at their current organisation, consistent with the distribution from previous round.
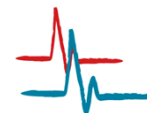

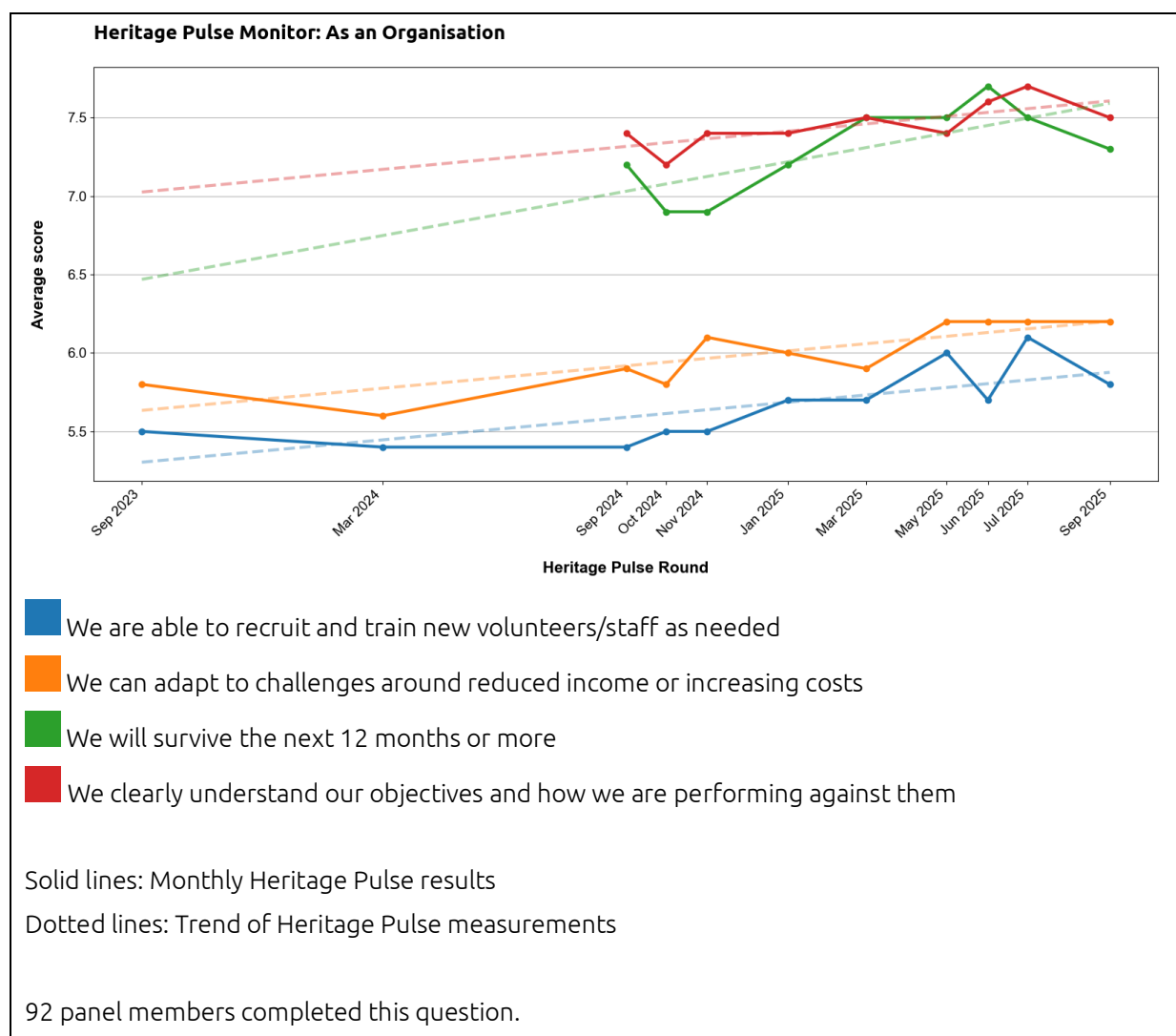Organisations with a turnover > £500K, January 2025 onwards
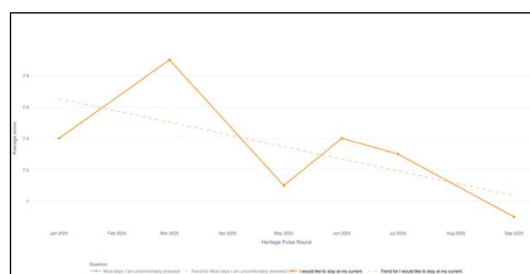
Organisations with a turnover < £500K, January 2025 onwards
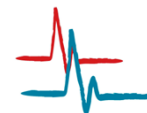
Looking deeper into the decline in panellists saying they wish to stay at their current organisation for 12 months or more, there is an emerging pattern between organisation size and likelihood of staying. Panellists in organisations with a turnover of less than £500K are more likely to score lower for this measure, compared to those working for organisations where turnover exceeds £500K.
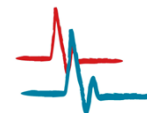
Confidence when facing organisational challenges trends upwards, despite falls

Heritage Pulse Monitor: As an Organisation

We are able to recruit and train new volunteers/staff as needed

We can adapt to challenges around reduced income or increasing costs

We will survive the next 12 months or more

We clearly understand our objectives and how we are performing against them

Solid lines: Monthly Heritage Pulse results

Dotted lines: Trend of Heritage Pulse measurements
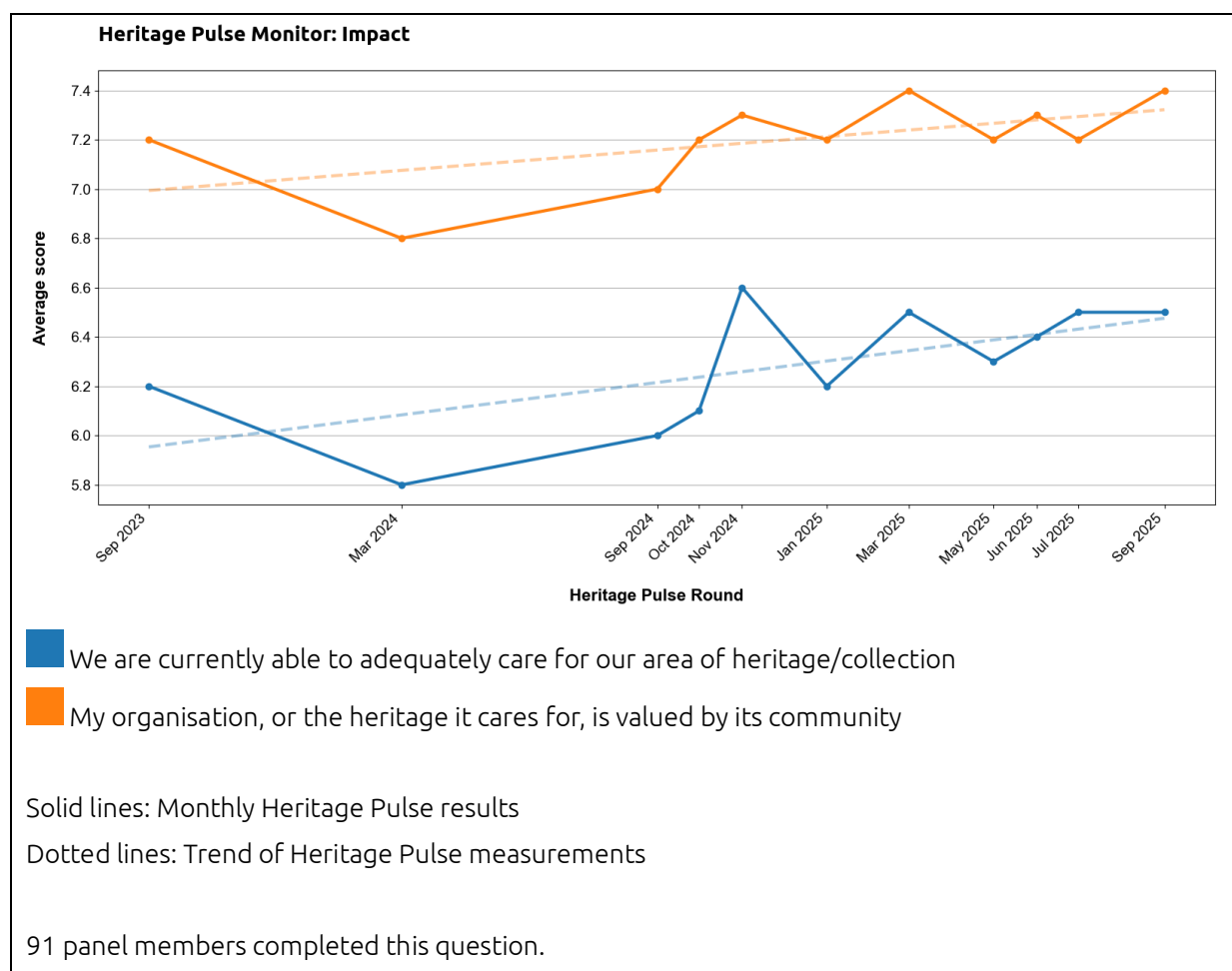
92 panel members completed this question.

September 2025 saw the organisational measures either remain static or fall, but within the context of an upward trajectory. The increase in panel members' resilience to challenges has levelled off since the spring, remaining at 6.2 / 10.

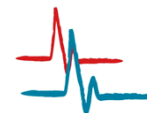Heritage Pulse Monitor: As an Organisation
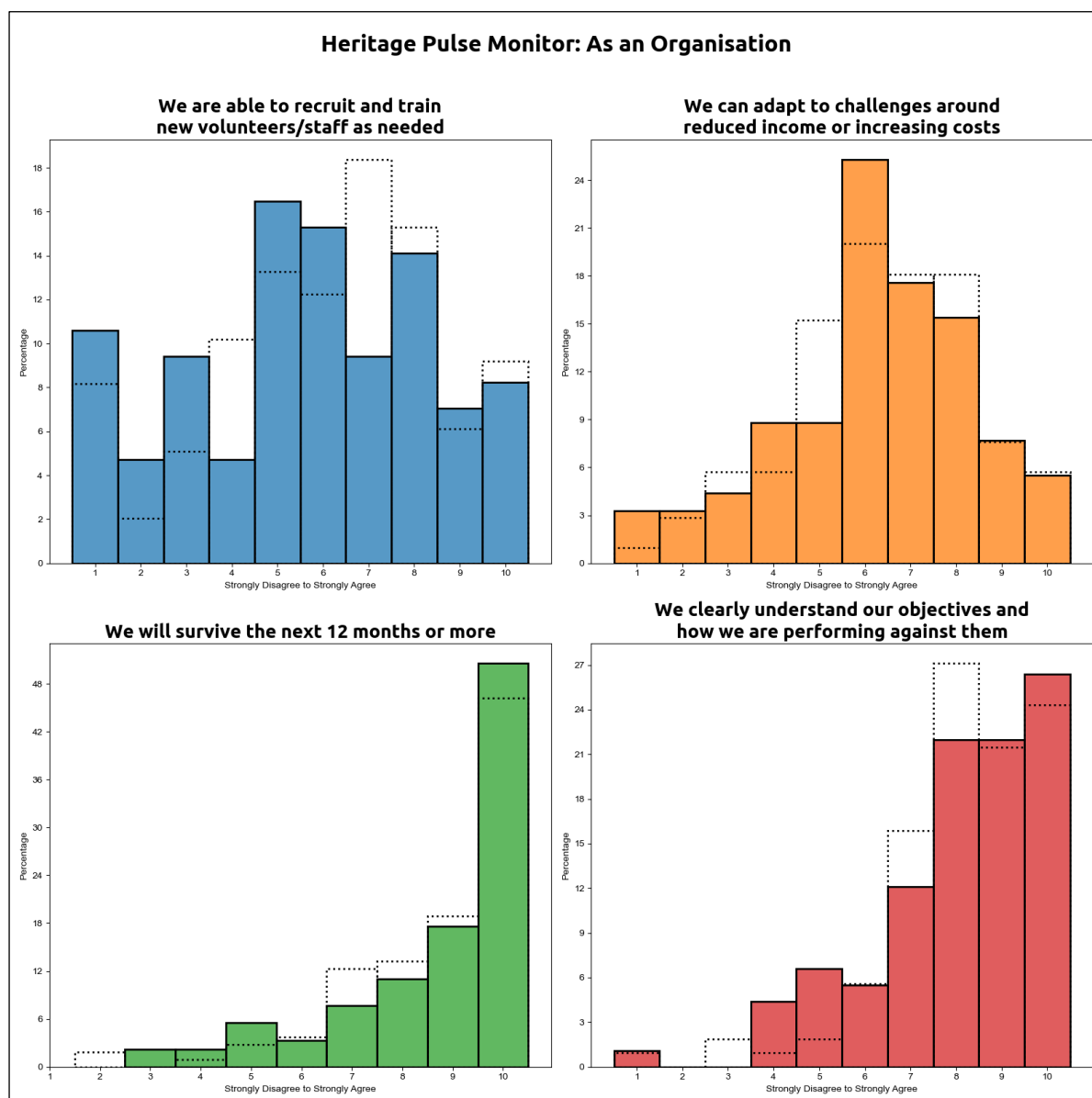
Panel members' understanding of their objectives and performance has a narrow distribution of responses, with more than 80% of respondents opting for agree to strongly agree.

Respondents' perception of their community's value of heritage matches highest level

Heritage Pulse Monitor: Impact

We are currently able to adequately care for our area of heritage/collection

My organisation, or the heritage it cares for, is valued by its community

Solid lines: Monthly Heritage Pulse results

Dotted lines: Trend of Heritage Pulse measurements

91 panel members completed this question.

As autumn begins panel members belief that their heritage is valued by the community reaches the same level as seen in March at 7.4 / 10. Despite remaining static on July, panellists increasingly believe they can adequately care for their collection or area of heritage.

Heritage Pulse Monitor: Impact
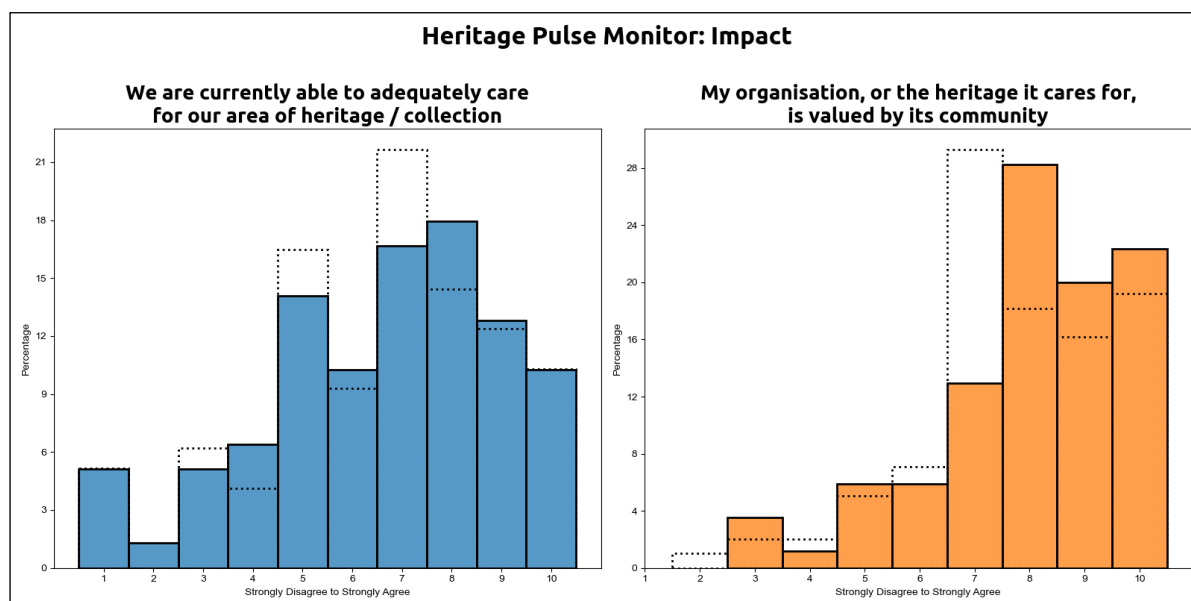
The perception of heritage's value follows a similar pattern to panel members' understanding of their objectives, with responses clustered towards agree and strongly agree. There is a wider set of responses when asked if they can adequately care for their heritage.
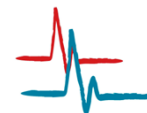
How representative of the Heritage Pulse panel were the September 2025 respondents?
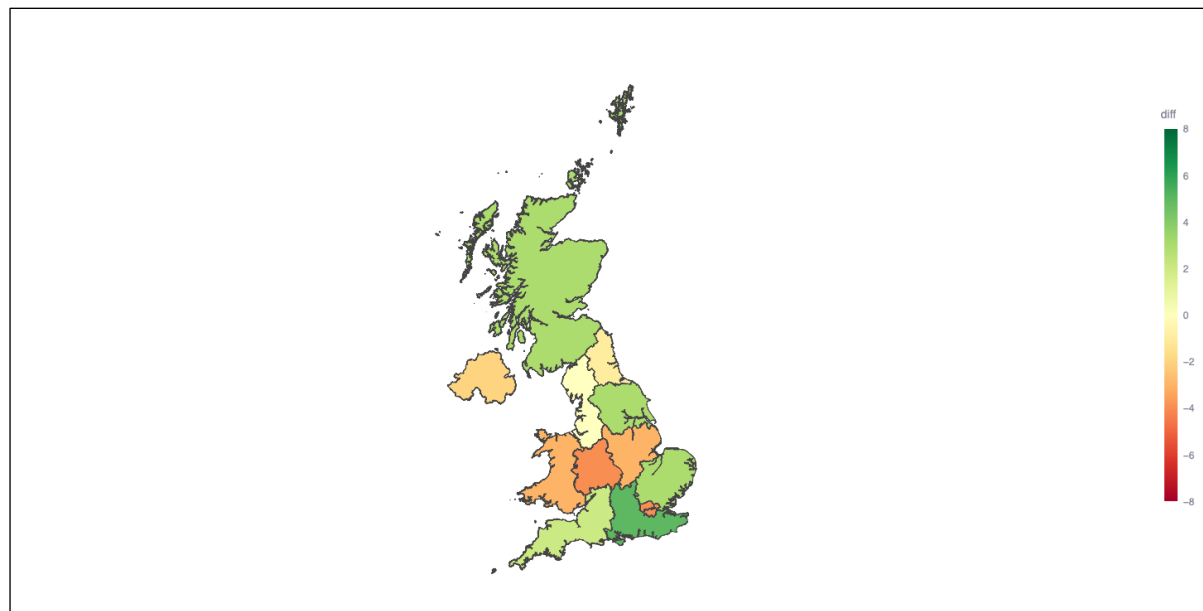
Compared to the whole panel, London and the West Midlands were the most underrepresented regions in this survey, four points lower than their overall position. By contrast, the South East of England was the most overrepresented region, five points higher than its panel average.

ENDS