

PRIORITIES FROM THE COALFACE

**UK & IRELAND
PLACE PRACTITIONER
RESEARCH**

2026 Report

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Led by The Place Coalition, and supported by the Association of Town & City Management, 2026.

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The Association of Town and City Management is delighted to support The Place Coalition on this key piece of research for the second year running. Assessing the current views of town and city centre practitioners is critical to the work of the ATCM, and this annual report allows for a range of ongoing improvements to the place management industry.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the second successive year, **The Place Coalition** has partnered with **The Association of Town & City Management (ATCM)** on research to better understand the needs of the place management industry, with research data being provided by town and city centre management practitioners via an open online survey. The survey ran between **March** and **May 2026** and attracted 53 responses, with the following main findings having emerged.



SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES ARE THE MOST PREVALENT CURRENT CONCERN



FOOTFALL TRENDS HAVE BEEN MIXED, DEPENDING ON THE LOCATION IN QUESTION, ALTHOUGH HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY BALANCED OVERALL, IN TERMS OF THE RANGE OF INCREASES AND DECREASES



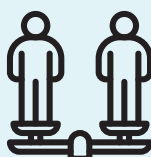
THE 2026 REVALUATION HAS SEEN AN OVERALL INCREASE IN THE RATEABLE VALUE OF PREMISES



THE ATCM, AGAIN, TOPS THE LIST OF THE ORGANISATIONS WHICH PRACTITIONERS TURN TO FOR SUPPORT



A KEY PRIORITY REMAINS FOR PRACTITIONERS TO DRIVE FOOTFALL INTO THEIR LOCATIONS, PREDOMINANTLY VIA MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS



SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE SUPPORT WITH BENCHMARKING THEIR LOCATION WITH COMPARABLE PLACES



PRACTITIONERS IDENTIFY PRONOUNCED PROBLEMS WITH THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

A particular theme of the research has been to identify the support which practitioners require to take the management of their places to the next level, and this is examined in detail within this document. By way of a headline summary, the following identifies both the key issues currently identified by practitioners as being barriers to vitality.

This report is a definitive annual snapshot position statement on the views of industry practitioners regarding both the challenges they face and the solutions they are seeking.

About The Place Coalition

The Place Coalition is a collective of award-winning businesses, all of whom provide advice, guidance and support to the place management industry. Each constituent business is comprised of experts in their field, with embedded place management experience, either as practitioners, suppliers, or both. Membership of The Place Coalition is restricted to organisations who have proven themselves in the delivery of excellent services and who demonstrate an approach to work collaboratively in reinvesting a proportion of their time and resources into key place management industry projects, such as this report, at no cost. To discover how The Place Coalition can support you location, please visit **www.theplacecoalition.co.uk**

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

For the second year, The Place Coalition has partnered with the ATCM on research to better understand the needs of the place management industry, and this report provides a summary of the findings. The research data was provided by town and city centre management practitioners and was derived from an open online survey, which ran between March and May 2026, and which was designed to assess the current challenges facing practitioners, whilst also identifying their key support requirements.

The findings of the research are summarised within this report, and provide a definitive position statement of the views of industry practitioners regarding both the challenges they face, and the solutions they are seeking.

SECTION 2

SURVEY ANALYSIS

The following section outlines headline information from the survey respondents, the key challenges they have identified and the possible support measures which are considered to be required.

2.1 Survey respondents



A total of 53 responses were received to the survey



Almost 80% of survey respondents represented BIDs



Over 80% represented places with a population of less than 200,000

2.2 Challenges identified

The main current challenges identified by practitioners are shown as follows.

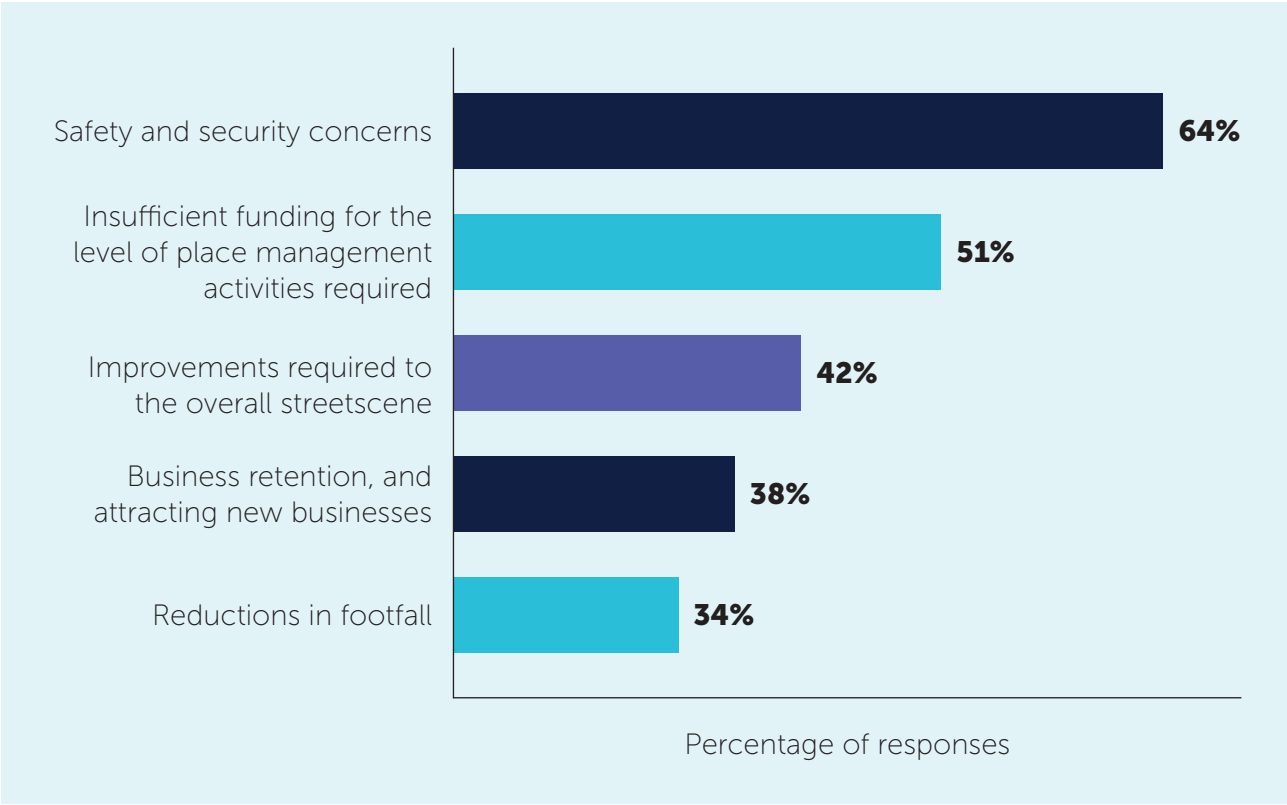


Figure 1: Ranked priority challenges identified by survey respondents.

As can be seen, safety and security is by far the highest current concern identified by survey respondents, with funding concerns also ranking highly amongst the current barriers to progress. Upon comparison of the data from 2026 with last year, the following trends were identified.

Priority challenges 2025	Priority challenges 2026
1. Reductions in footfall	1. Safety and security
2. Prevailing economic difficulties	2. Insufficient funding
3. Competition from online shopping	3. Streetscene improvement
4. Loss of key retailers	4. Business retention, and attraction
5. Insufficient funding	5. Reductions in footfall

Figure 2: Comparison with key challenges 2025 & 2026.

The trend comparison between 2025 and 2026 indicates significant shifts in the challenges being identified by place practitioners, with only two key challenges featuring within both lists, which is considered to demonstrate the current pace of socio-economic change within UK towns and cities.

2.3 Footfall trends

Practitioners were asked to indicate any changes to overall footfall within their location during the past year, with the results shown as follows.

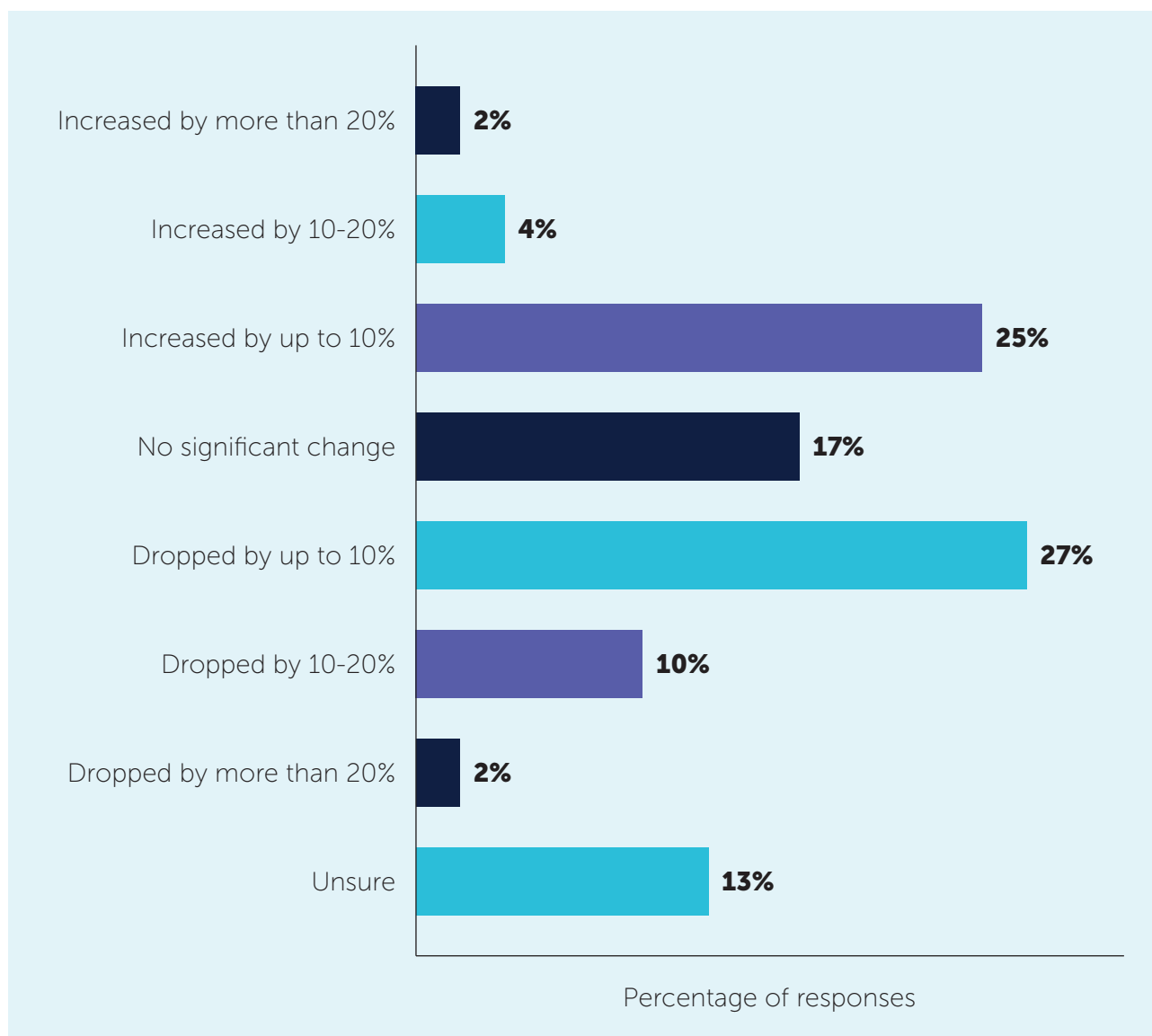


Figure 3: Recent changes in footfall in respondent locations.

The changes in footfall are attributed to a range of factors, with those reporting increases highlighting factors such as better events, new businesses opening, and regeneration activities coming to fruition. Meanwhile, those reporting decreases, point to factors such as the current economic climate, car parking costs, and changing consumer behaviours.

The overall 2026 data compares very well with that reported last year, when approximately 56% reported a drop in pedestrian numbers, with the corresponding figure for this year having dropped to 39%.

2.4 2026 business rates revaluation

Those respondents representing BIDs were asked to report the impact of the national business rates revaluation, which came into effect on **1st April**, on the total rateable value of their BID area, with the following results emerging.

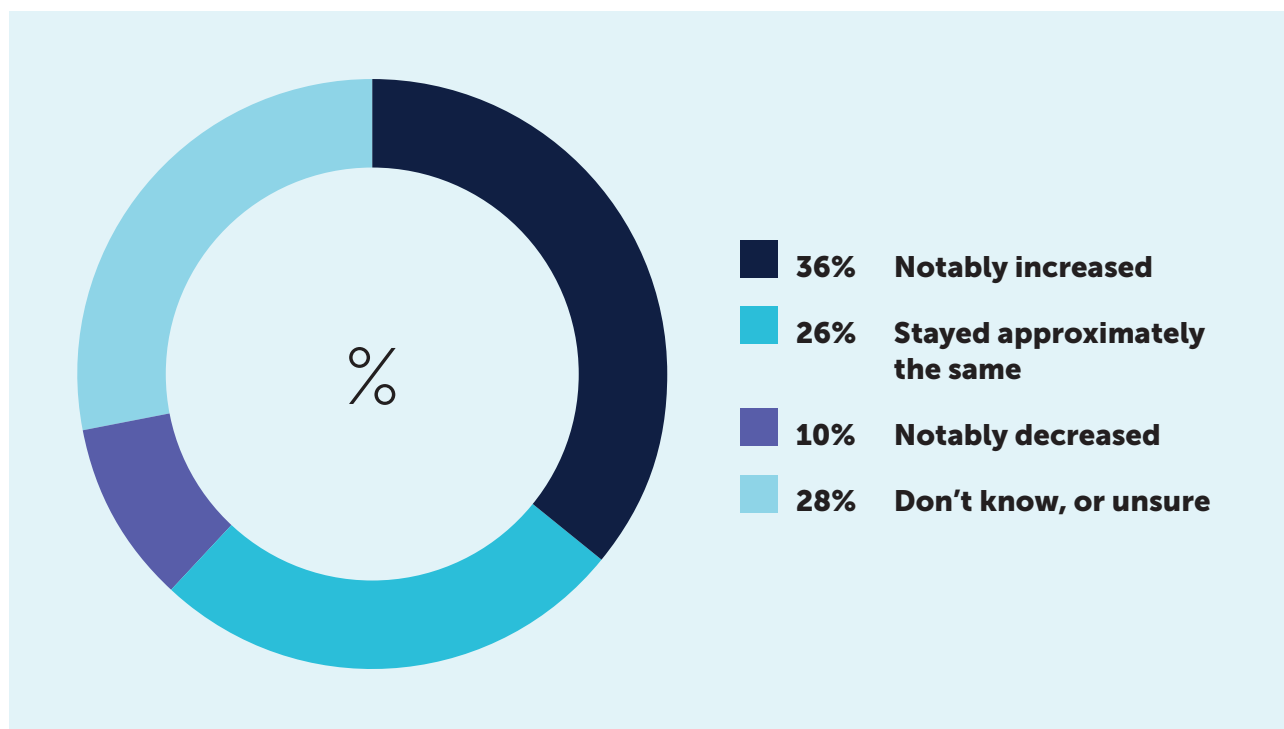


Figure 4: Impact of the 2026 business rates revaluation on BID rateable values.

The changes indicate an overall increase in the rateable value of premises, meaning that those BIDs which base their levies on the prevailing rating lists, will have benefitted from increases in levy income.

2.5 Industry bodies

Survey respondents currently gain support from a range of sources and the following identifies the organisations or networks which place management practitioners currently rely upon for support in their role.

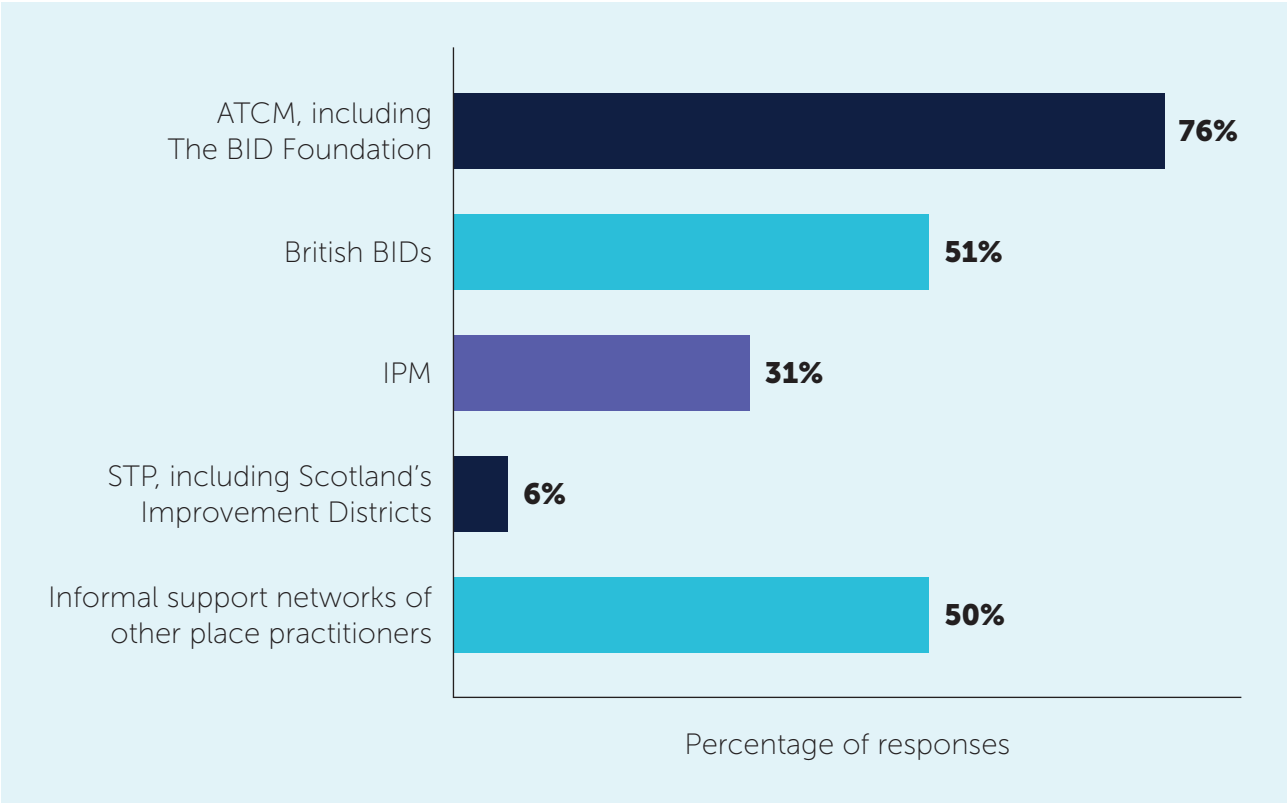


Figure 5: Main place practitioner support bodies.

The results indicate that the ATCM again top the list of the organisations which practitioners turn to for support, although it is resonant that a firm source of support is provided via informal place practitioner networks.

2.6 Priority place projects

Place management activities are constantly evolving, as a reaction to changing circumstances, and respondents identified the following as the key activities which they plan to do more of in their locations in 2026.

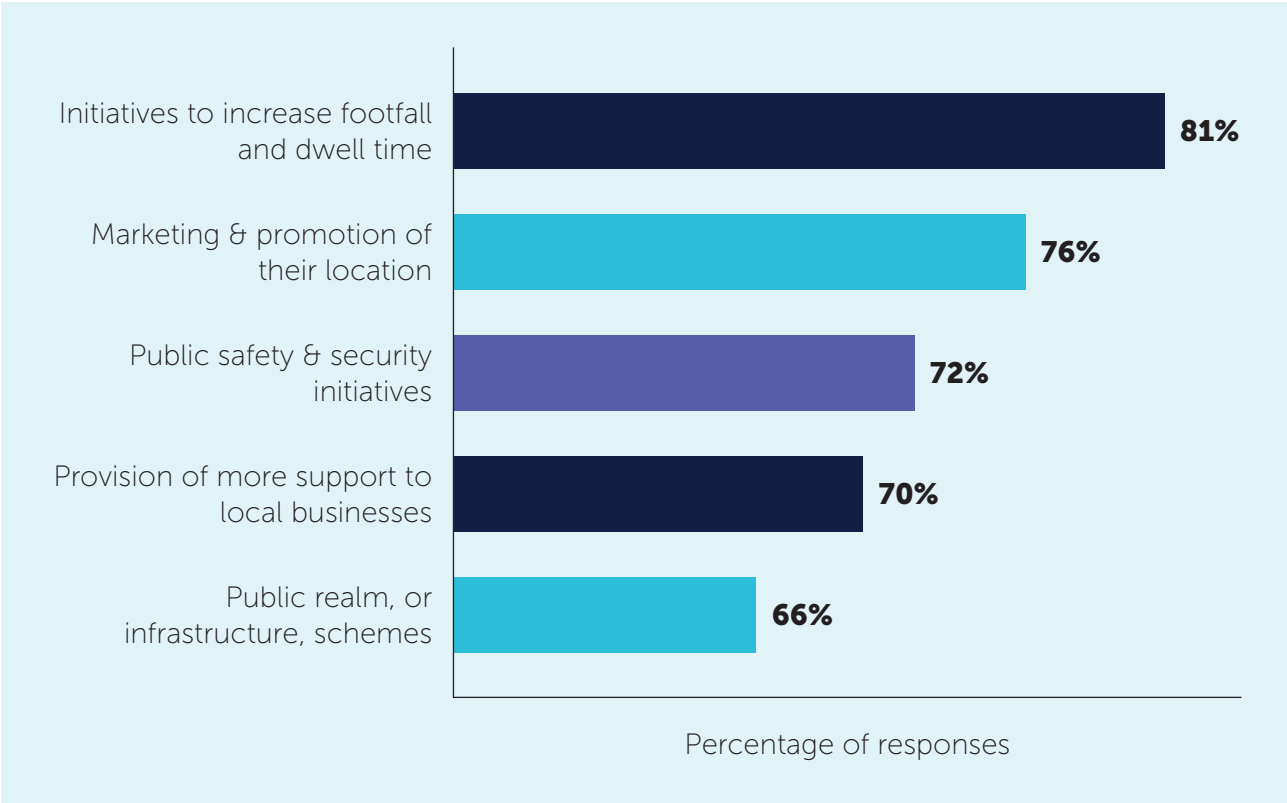


Figure 6: Current priority place projects.

The results indicate that a key priority remains for practitioners to drive footfall into their locations, predominantly via marketing and promotional campaigns. The increases in concerns regarding safety and security also mean that plans to combat these issues also feature highly on the agenda.

2.7 Support required

The survey included a question regarding any support which respondents considered that they would like support to achieve, with the following representing the ranked themes for this.

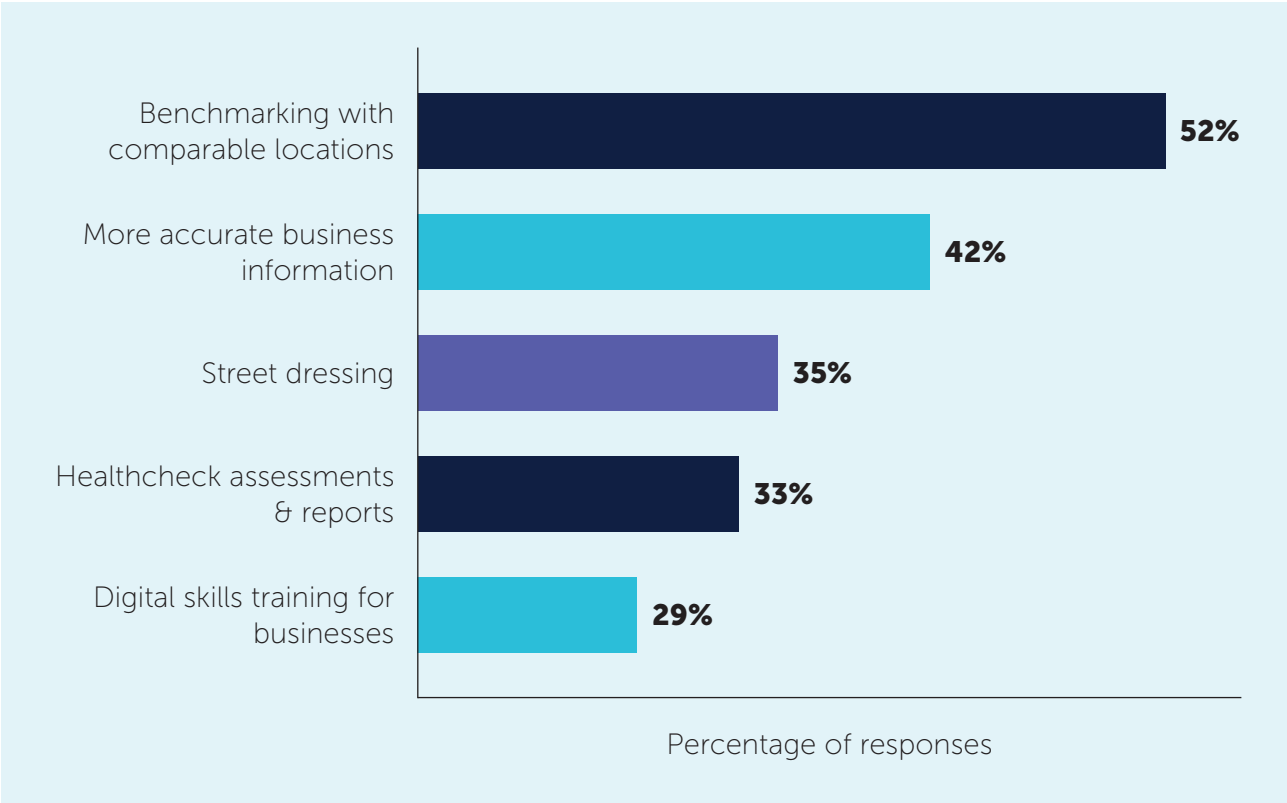


Figure 7: Ranked support requirements.

2.8 Wish list

Survey respondents were asked to outline the one thing they would like to see changed to improve the effectiveness of place management in their location, and the responses are represented as follows.



The results indicate pronounced problems with the relationship between place practitioners and their local authorities, with respondents highlighting the need for more support and better partnership working. The requirement for greater levels of funding for improvement projects is also identified as a key requirement for UK places.

SECTION 3

NEXT STEPS

The research has identified a range of issues which have been directly identified by place practitioners and all of the following are subsequently proposed:

1. The Place Coalition will distribute the report to the key UK industry bodies, including **ATCM** (incorporating **The BID Foundation**), **British BIDs**, **Institute of Place Management**, and **Scotland's Towns Partnership** (incorporating **Scotland's Improvement Districts**) and facilitate a discussion between all parties regarding the issues highlighted.
2. The report will be published on The Place Coalition website for viewing by all place practitioners, and other interested parties.
3. The survey and workshop will be repeated in **2027** to allow both progress to be monitored and further key practitioner issues to be explored.

It is therefore intended that this report will become the definitive annual industry benchmark for both the key concerns and required areas of support identified by place practitioners.

The Place Coalition would like to thank the ATCM for their support with this research, as well as the respondents to the survey of place practitioners, without whose invaluable participation, this report would simply not have been possible.

The Place Coalition members

