



# ***Research Report***



## **Citizen's Panel December 2008 – Walsall's Parks, Open Spaces and Leisure Centres**

**Prepared for: Walsall Council**

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**Prepared for: Walsall Council**

**Prepared by: BMG Research**

**June 2009**

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**Produced by BMG Research**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In August 2005, Walsall Council commissioned BMG Research to recruit and manage the council's Citizens' Panel of over 1,200 individuals. This report presents the results of the panel survey conducted in December 2008. In this survey, panel members were asked to respond to questions about parks, open spaces and leisure centres in the borough of Walsall.

## 1.2 Method

A postal survey of all panel members was carried out between early December and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2008/9. In total, exactly 1,200 questionnaires with accompanying cover letters were mailed out with one full reminder mailing going out mid point of field to those panel members who had not responded to the prior mailing. By the closing date, 657 panel members responded, yielding a response rate of 55%.

A sample of 657 is robust and is subject to a maximum standard error of  $\pm 3.82\%$  at the 95% confidence level on an observed statistic of 50%. Thus, we can be 95% confident that responses are representative of those that would be given by the total adult population, if a census had been conducted, to within  $\pm 3.82\%$  of the percentages reported. This means that if the total adult population had conducted the survey and a statistic of 50% was observed, we can be 95% confident that the response lies between 46.18% and 53.82%.

Upon receipt of each completed questionnaire, BMG coded the verbatim (open-ended) questions, input and then analysed the data. As part of the analysis process the data were 'weighted' by geography, gender, age, and economic status to ensure that it more accurately represented the broad population of Walsall borough.

## 1.3 Reporting and analysis

The data report that has been produced sets out the findings of the survey in tables and analyses them according to a number of cross tabulations. These include:

- Ward
- Local Neighbourhood Partnership area;
- Gender;
- Age;
- Broad Ethnicity;
- Limiting long-term illness or disability;
- Economic Status and Activity;
- Whether respondent owns or rents their property;

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- Local park visited in last 12 months;
- Satisfaction with local park;
- Whether respondent has visited the Arboretum in the last year;
- Local leisure Centre; and,
- Length of time lived in the area.



Throughout this report analysis will be provided by Local Neighbourhood Partnership area (LNP). Local Neighbourhood Partnerships are locally formed geographic areas comprising two or three wards. LNPs help local people to be more involved in matters that affect them in the area where they live and the survey results provide a valuable local perspective on a local level. The definitions of the nine LNPs are shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Local Neighbourhood Partnership Definitions**

LNP	Wards
Aldridge South and Streetly	Aldridge Central and South
	Streetly
Blakenall and Bloxwich	Blakenall
	Bloxwich East
	Bloxwich West
Brownhills Aldridge North	Aldridge North and Walsall Wood
	Brownhills
Darlaston	Bentley and Darlaston North
	Darlaston South
Palfrey and Pleck	Palfrey
	Pleck
Pelsall and Rushall-Shelfield	Pelsall
	Rushall-Shelfield
Pheasey and Paddock	Pheasey Park Farm
	Paddock
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Birchills Leamore
	St Matthew's
Willenhall	Short Heath
	Willenhall North
	Willenhall South

Please note that significance testing to opposing sample groups (e.g. male to female, Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BME) to non-BME or working age to non-working age) is included within this report. This means we can be 95% confident that it is a significant difference. Please note that throughout the report the word 'significant' has only been used to refer to those figures which have been proved to be statistically significant through this test.

There may be occurrences where tables and graphics do not match exactly to the text in the report. This occurs due to the way in which figures are rounded up (or down) when responses are combined. Results that differ in this way do not have a variance any larger than 1%.

Any asterisk (\*) within the report denotes a figure less than 0.5%.

## 2 Walsall parks and open spaces

### 2.1 Introduction

The first section asked residents to provide opinions on various aspects of parks and open spaces in the borough of Walsall. This includes which parks residents have visited in the 12 months prior to the survey, which is their local park, how often they visit it and how satisfied they are with their local park.

### 2.2 Parks visited in last 12 months

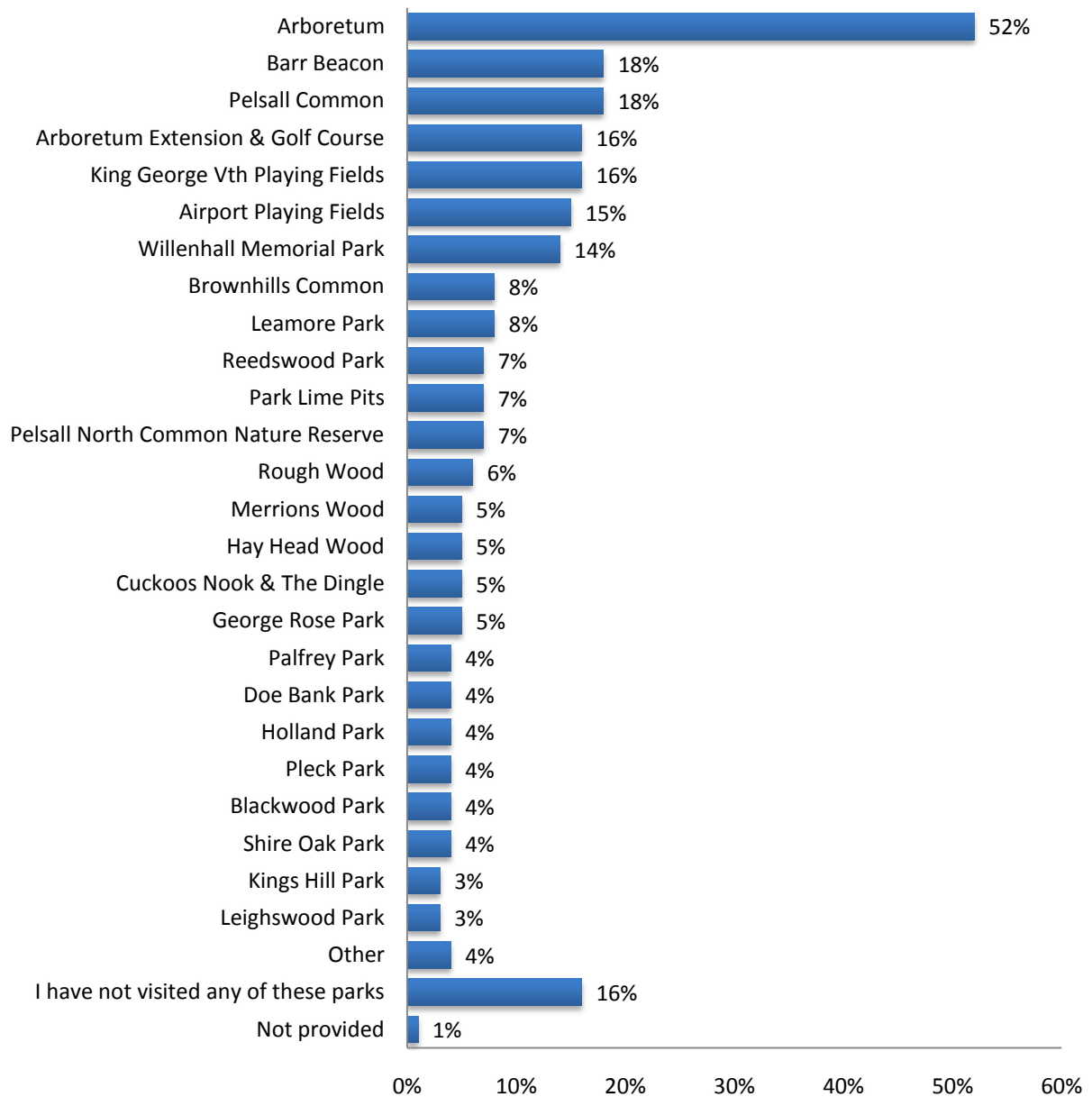
All respondents were presented with a list of parks and open spaces and asked to say which, if any, they had visited in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The following table shows the top ten most visited parks and open spaces and shows that the Arboretum, Walsall's flagship park is by far the most visited. Figure 1 shows *all* of the parks and open spaces visited. 16% (106 respondents) had not visited any of the parks in the last 12 months.

**Table 2: Which of the following parks or open spaces have you visited in the last 12 months? (All respondents) – top ten visited**

	Total %
Arboretum	52
Barr Beacon	18
Pelsall Common	18
Arboretum Extension & golf course	16
King George V playing fields	16
Airport playing fields	15
Willenhall Memorial Park	14
Brownhills Common	8
Leamore Park	8
Reedwood Park	7
I have not visited any of these parks	16
<b>Unweighted sample base = 657</b>	

**Figure 1: Which of the following parks or open spaces have you visited in the last 12 months?**



Unweighted base: 657

Worth noting is the finding that almost one in six residents (16%) claim not to have visited any of the parks. This is slightly more prevalent among females (18%) than males (14%). In addition the economically active (56%) are significantly more likely to have visited the Arboretum than the economically inactive (45%).

As might be expected, residents of St Matthews and Birchills Leamore (82%) are significantly more likely to have visited the Arboretum, while those in Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield are more likely to have visited Pelsall Common (80%).

Table 3 shows the top three most visited parks for each of the LNP areas.

**Table 3: Which of the following parks or open spaces have you visited in the last 12 months? (All respondents)**

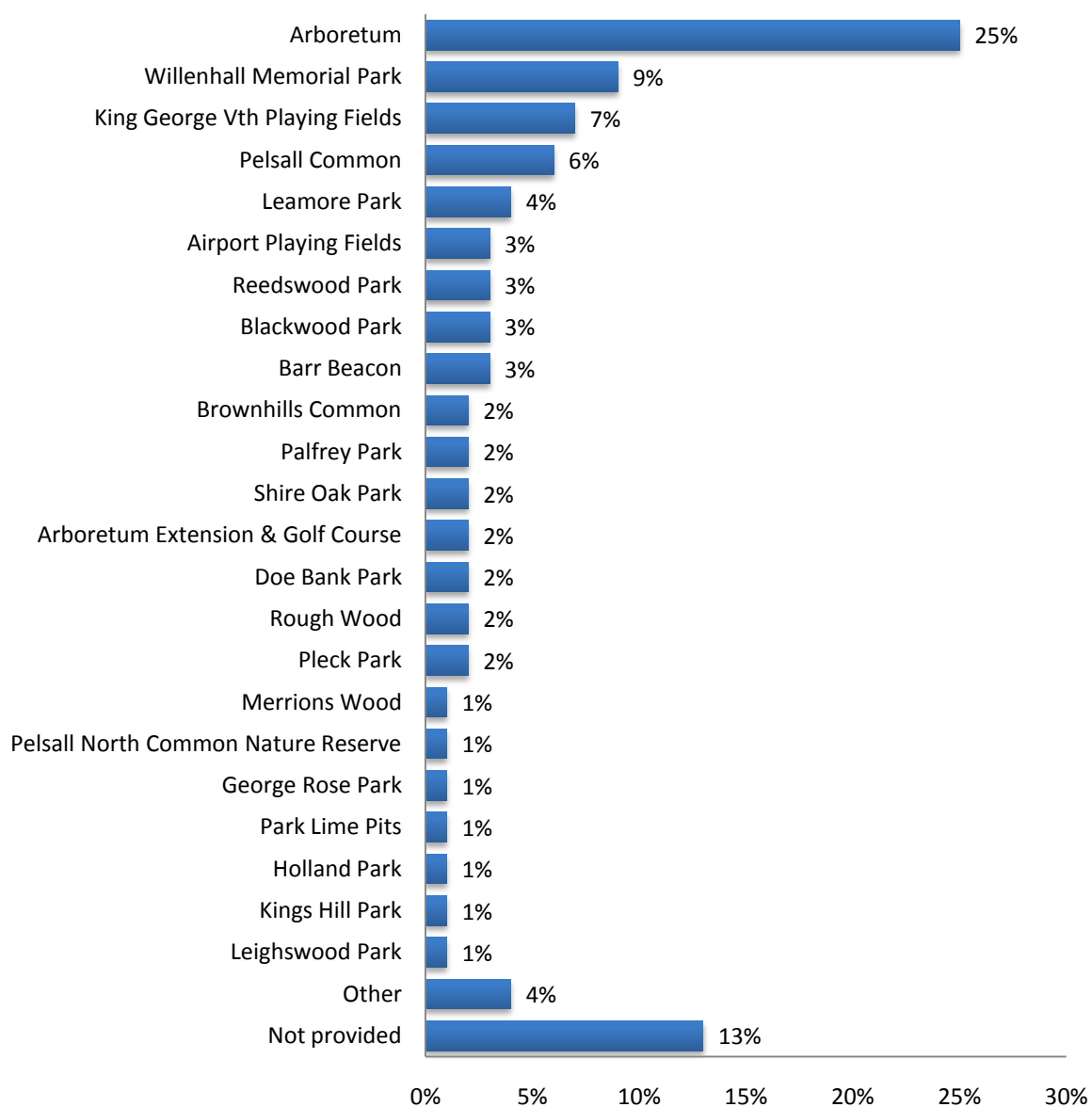
LNP	Park visited
Aldridge South and Streetly	Arboretum: 46% Barr Beacon: 45% Airport Playing Fields: 39%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	King George V Playing Fields: 63% Arboretum: 49% Leamore Park: 32%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Brownhills Common: 48% Arboretum: 42% Holland Park: 36%
Darlaston	Arboretum: 33% George Rose Park: 29% King Hill Park: 25%
Palfrey and Pleck	Arboretum: 51% Pleck Park: 31% Palfrey Park: 25%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Pelsall Common: 80% Arboretum: 63% Pelsall North Common and Nature Reserve: 44%
Pheasey and Paddock	Arboretum: 59% Barr Beacon: 45% Doe Bank Park: 32%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Arboretum: 82% Arboretum Extension & Golf Course: 26% Reedwood Park: 23%
Willenhall	Willenhall Memorial Park: 63% Arboretum: 45% Rough Wood: 32%

Those respondents who had visited a park or open space in the last 12 months were then asked to name which of those they had visited most often. Again, as the following table and figure show, the Arboretum was the most visited.

**Table 4: Which one park have you visited most often in the last 12 months?  
(Respondents who had visited a park in the last 12 months) – top ten visited**

	Total %
Arboretum	25
Willenhall Memorial Park	9
King George V playing fields	7
Pelsall Common	6
Leamore Park	4
Airport playing fields	3
Reedwood Park	3
Blackwood Park	3
Barr Beacon	3
Brownhills Common	2
Unweighted sample base = 530	

**Figure 2: Which ONE park have you visited most often in the last 12 months?**



Unweighted base: 530

Table 5 shows the top three most visited parks for each of the LNP areas

**Table 5: Which ONE park have you visited most often in the last 12 months?  
(Respondents who had visited a park in the last 12 months)**

LNP	Most visited park
Aldridge South and Streetly	Blackwood Park: 27% Arboretum: 19% Airport Playing Fields: 15%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	King George V Playing Fields: 44% Leamore Park: 24% Arboretum: 14%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Brownhills Common: 20% Shire Oak Park: 16% Arboretum: 13%
Darlaston	Arboretum: 24% Willenhall Memorial Park: 19% George Rose Park: 13%
Palfrey and Pleck	Arboretum: 40% Pleck Park: 13% Palfrey Park: 13%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Pelsall Common: 49% Arboretum: 21% Pelsall North Common and Nature Reserve: 13%
Pheasey and Paddock	Arboretum: 26% Doe Bank Park: 17% Barr Beacon: 14%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Arboretum: 53% Reedwood Park: 17% Palfrey Park: 4%
Willenhall	Willenhall Memorial Park: 44% Arboretum: 17% Rough Wood: 11%

Respondents were then presented with a list of statements about parks and open spaces and asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with each one in relation to the park that they visited most often in the 12 months prior to the survey.

All statements received a positive net score except, 'the park is free from dog mess'. There is the high level of agreement with the statements that 'the flower beds, trees and shrubs are attractive and well maintained' both in terms of the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement (55%) and for the net agreement score (+40%). 'I feel safe using the park during the day' received an even higher agreement (63%) and net agreement score (+48%).

**Table 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the park or open space you have visited most often in the past 12 months? (Respondents who had visited a park in the last 12 months)**

	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Don't know /not provided %	Net agreement score %
The park is well used	68	13	9	10	+59
I feel safe using the park during the day	63	15	15	7	+48
The park meets my needs	58	20	14	8	+44
The flower beds, trees and shrubs are attractive and well maintained	55	19	15	12	+40
The park is welcoming	52	24	14	10	+38
The signposts in the park are easy to follow	39	26	16	19	+23
The park has sports facilities that are suitable for casual use	40	18	22	19	+18
The park is tidy and free from litter	43	24	26	6	+17
The park has enough signposts	38	26	22	15	+16
The park pathways are level and well surfaced	43	20	27	10	+16
The park has enough play facilities for all ages	39	17	30	16	+9
The park has enough seating	38	18	35	9	+3
The park is free from dog mess	30	22	37	10	-7
<b>Unweighted sample base = 530</b>					

These results suggest panel members wants parks to be free of dog mess, to have more seating and more play facilities for children of all ages.

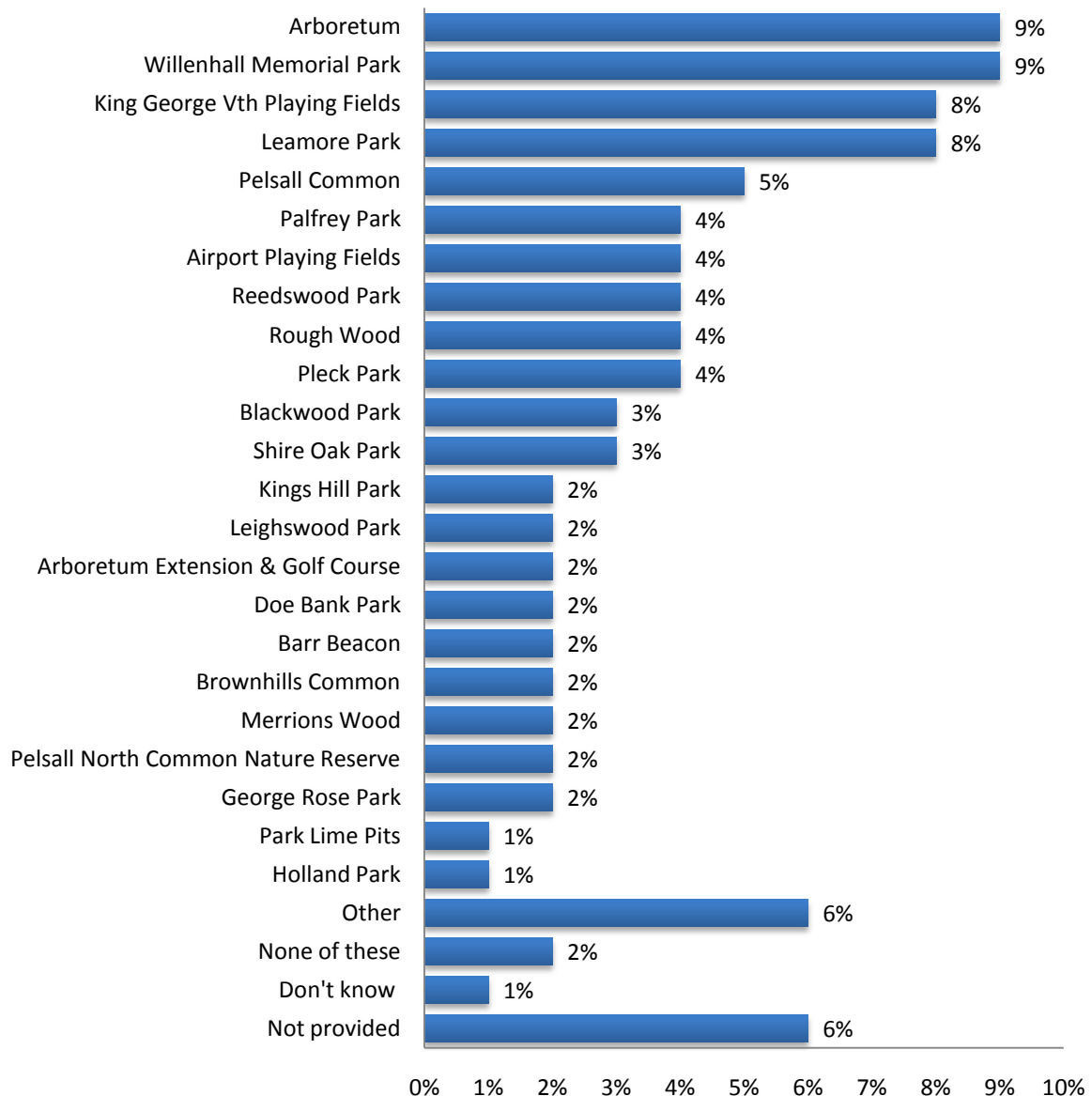
Responses in relation to particular parks (where sample bases support this analysis) are shown in Appendix One.



## 2.3 Local park or open space

All respondents were presented with the same list of parks and open spaces and asked to say which one is their local park. As the following figure shows, Arboretum and Willenhall Memorial Park are the most frequently mentioned.

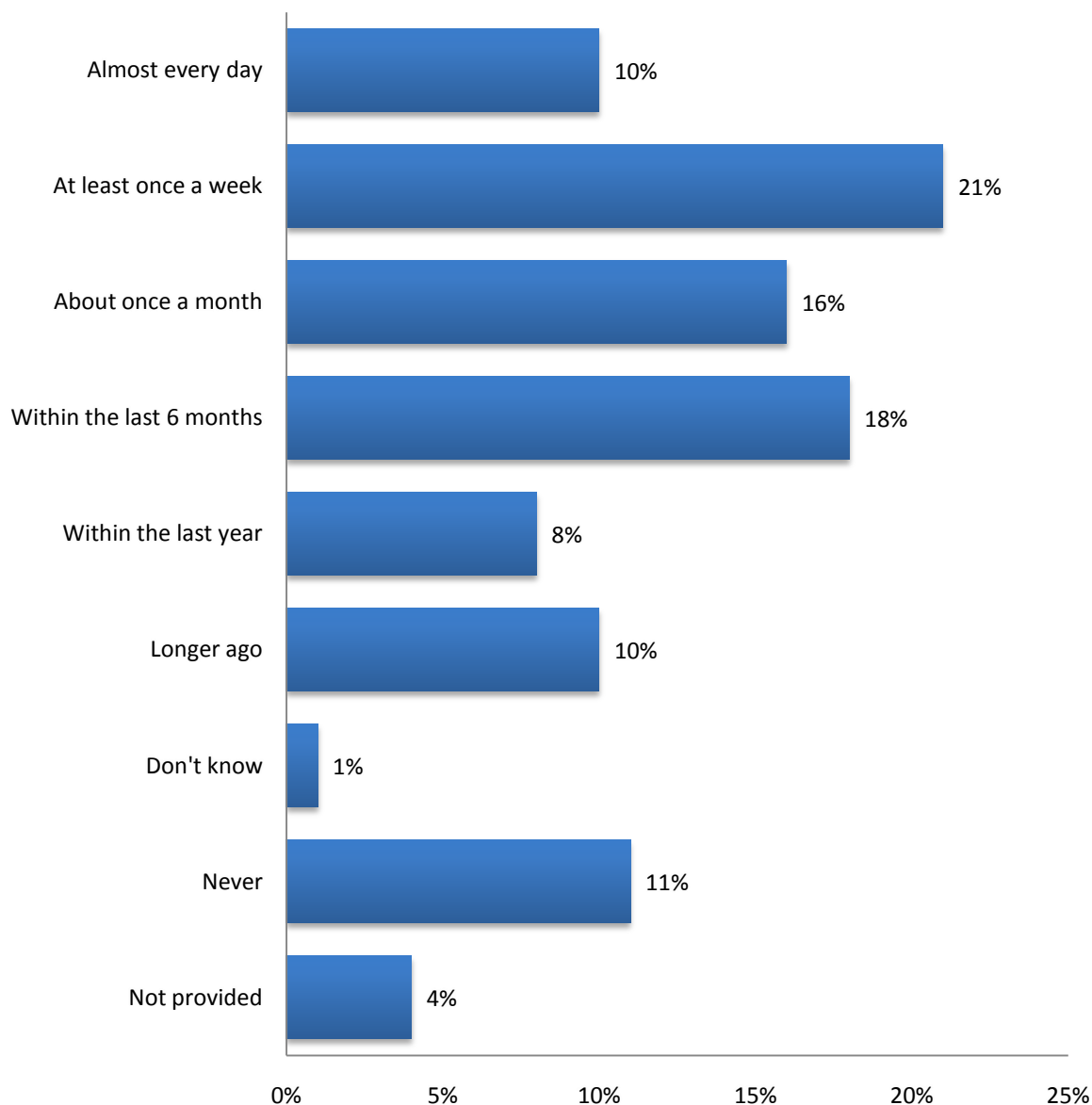
**Figure 3: Which of the following is your local park or open space? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 530

Respondents who were able to say which is their local park were then asked how often, if at all, they visit it. Almost a third visit every week (10% almost every day; 21% at least once a week), while a further one in six (16%) visit about once a month. In total almost half of residents visit their local park once a month or more frequently. One in nine (11%) residents state they never visit their local park or open space.

**Figure 4: How often if at all do you visit your local park or open space? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 608

Those aged 45-64 years are the age group most likely to state that they have never visited their local park or open space (15%). It should also be noted that 12% of non-BME residents have never visited their local park. Among BME respondents this percentage falls to zero.

In terms of LNP area, those in Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield (58%) were more likely to visit every week (16% almost every day; 42% at least once a week), while those from Blakenhall and Bloxwich were least likely to visit this frequently (7% almost every day; 15% at least once a week).

**Table 7: How often, if at all, do you visit your local park or open space? (Respondents who provided a response)**

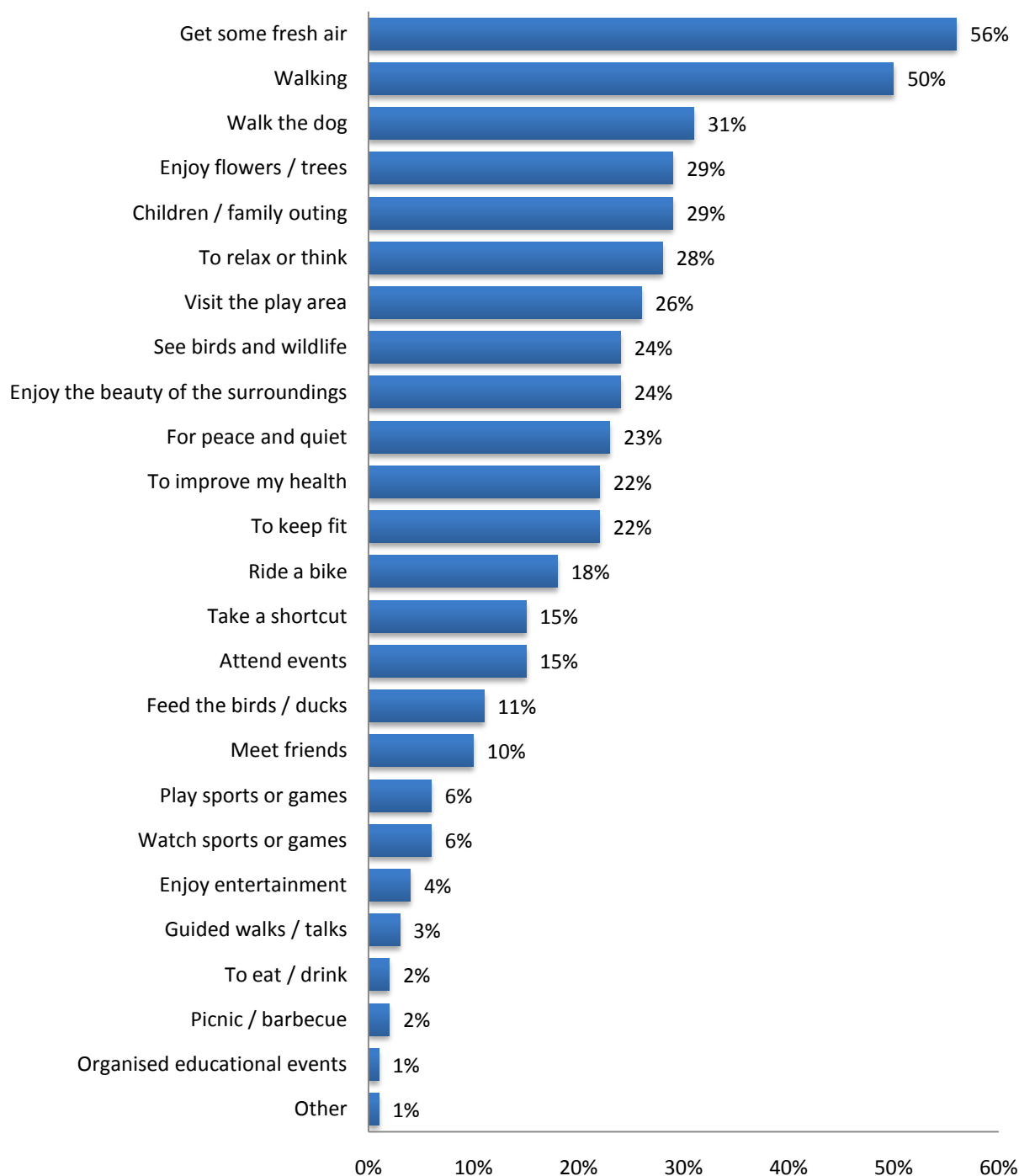
LNP	Frequency of visit
Aldridge South and Streetly	Almost every day: 6% At least once a week: 19% Aggregate – every week: 25%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	Almost every day: 7% At least once a week: 15% Aggregate – every week: 22%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Almost every day: 13% At least once a week: 22% Aggregate – every week: 35%
Darlaston	Almost every day: 2% At least once a week: 27% Aggregate – every week: 29%
Palfrey and Pleck	Almost every day: 16% At least once a week: 11% Aggregate – every week: 27%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Almost every day: 16% At least once a week: 42% Aggregate – every week: 58%
Pheasey and Paddock	Almost every day: 14% At least once a week: 18% Aggregate – every week: 32%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Almost every day: 8% At least once a week: 31% Aggregate – every week: 39%
Willenhall	Almost every day: 13% At least once a week: 16% Aggregate – every week: 29%

There were no major differences in terms of age with those of non-working age, i.e. those aged 65 and over slightly more likely to visit every week than those of working age (34% c.f. 31%). Males, however, were more likely to visit every week (12% almost every day; 25% at least once a week) than females (9% almost every day; 18% at least once a week).

Interestingly, there were no major differences between the economically active (10% almost every day; 22% at least once a week) and the inactive (12% almost every day; 24% at least once a week) given that the inactive would, by definition, have more free time. Also worth noting is the finding that those who are dissatisfied with their local park are only marginally less likely to visit frequently (6% almost every day; 29% at least once a week) than those who are satisfied (14% almost every day; 27% at least once a week).

Asked to say what they normally do when they visit their local park or open space, more than half said they went there to get some fresh air (56%) while a similar proportion (50%) said they went walking, and almost a third (31%) walk the dog.

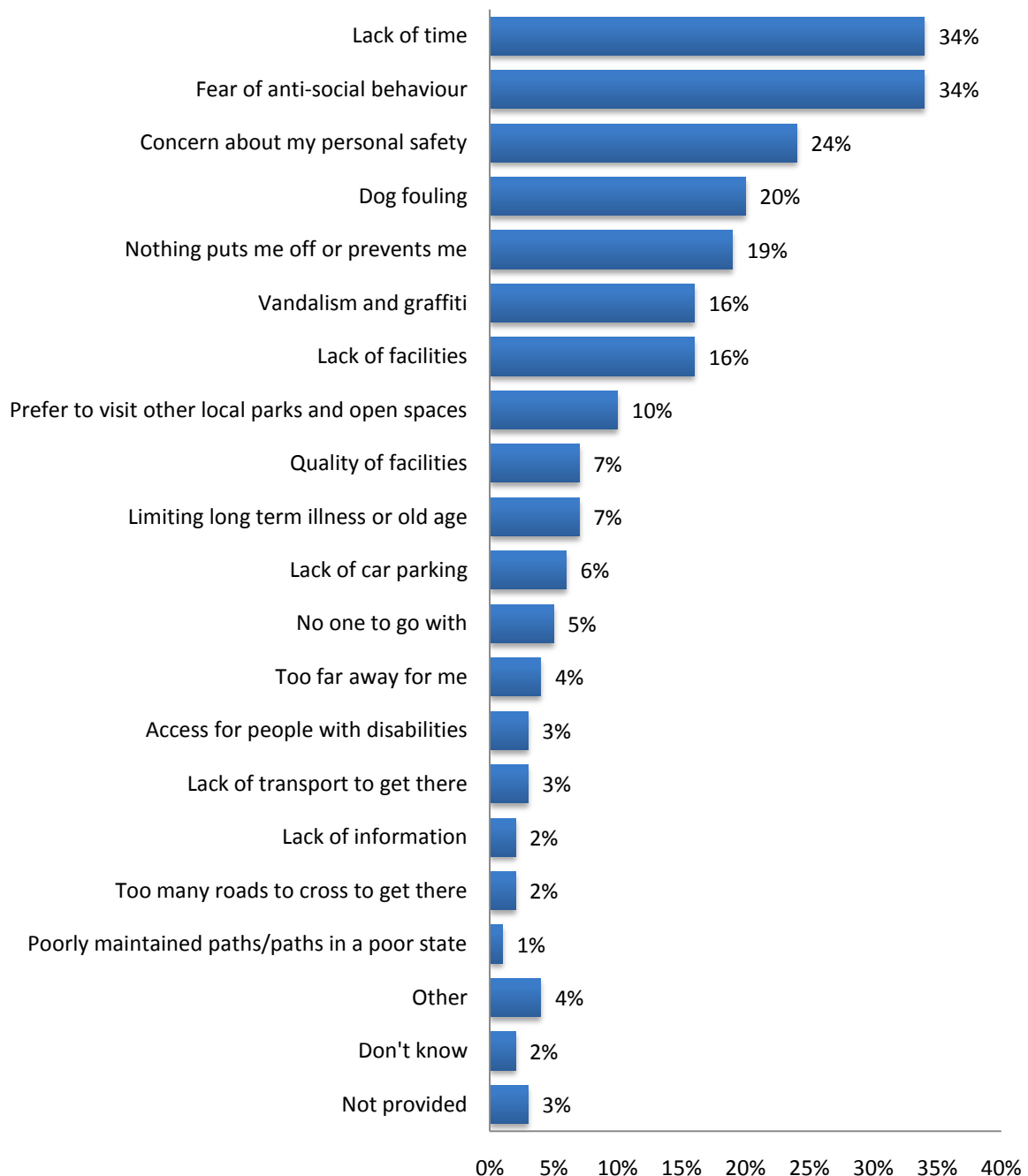
**Figure 5: What do you normally do when you visit your local park or open space? (Respondents who provided a response)**



Unweighted base: 452

All respondents were asked to say if there is anything that puts them off or prevents them from visiting their local park or open space or from visiting it more often. As may be seen from the following figure, lack of time (34%) and fear of anti-social behaviour (also 34%) are the two most frequently mentioned reasons for not visiting more often. Also high on the list, is dog-fouling (20%) and this, coupled with the response to an earlier question in which a high proportion of respondents disagreed with the statement that 'the park is free from dog mess', may give the Council some cause for concern if it wants to increase frequency of visits to its parks and open spaces.

**Figure 6: Are there any reasons that put you off or prevent you from visiting your local park or open space or visiting it more often? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

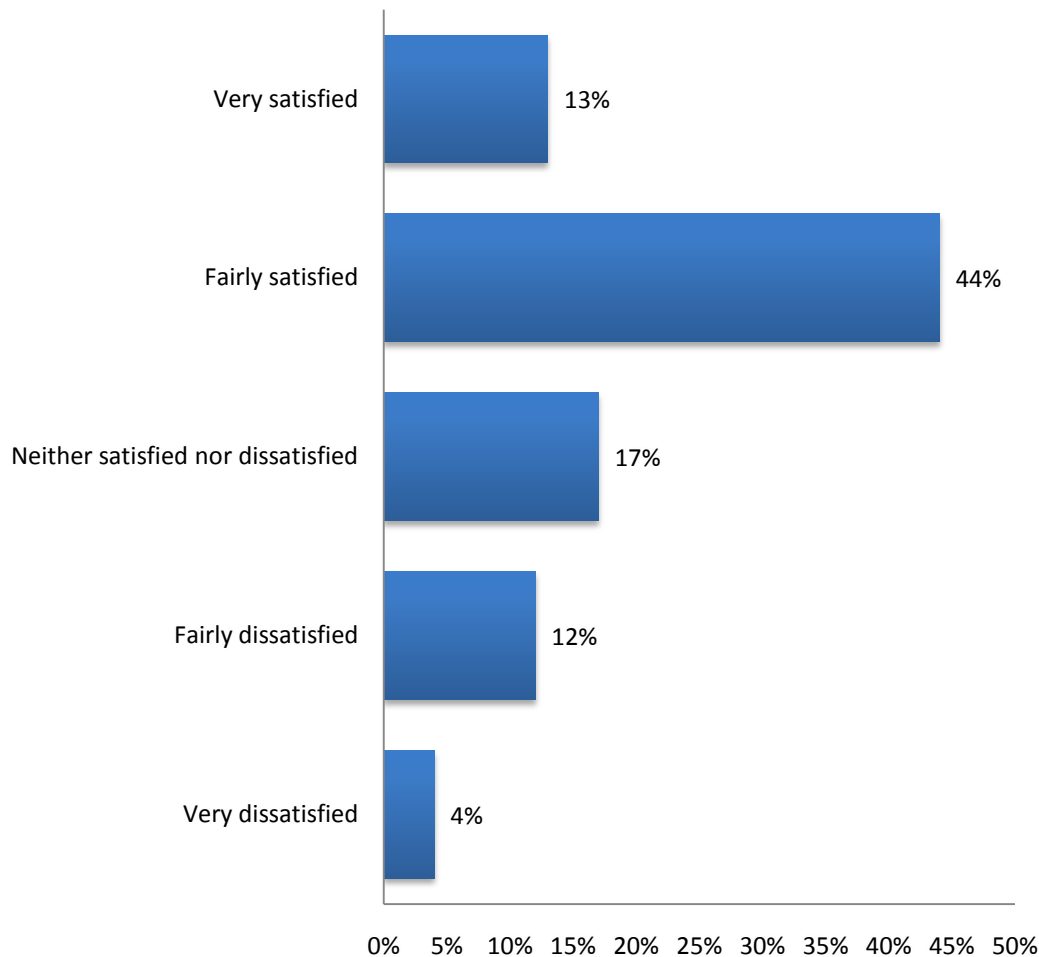
Residents were then presented with another series of statements about parks and open spaces and asked to rate their agreement with each one. As the following table illustrates, agreement with the statements 'parks and open spaces can make this a nice place in which to live' and 'trees and open spaces can improve the appearance of the town' is particularly high (88% of panel members agree) but this is probably not too surprising. Perhaps more encouraging is the high level of agreement that 'where I live there is a park or open space within easy walking distance from my home,' which is encouraging for a predominantly urban borough.

**Table 8: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Balance (% points)
Trees and open spaces can improve the appearance of the town	88%	7%	*%	+88%
Parks and open spaces can make this a nice place in which to live	88%	7%	1%	+87%
Where I live there is a park or open space within easy walking distance from my home	85%	5%	7%	+78%
Improving off road footpaths and cycle-ways between parks and open spaces is important	79%	13%	2%	+77%
Parks and open spaces are a focal point for local communities	69%	20%	5%	+64%
High quality parks and open spaces encourage people and businesses to locate in a town	64%	24%	4%	+60%
Improved traffic free footpaths and cycle routes would encourage me to walk or cycle	64%	19%	9%	+55%
Parks and open spaces help me stay fit and healthy	58%	25%	6%	+52%
I can easily get to other parks or open spaces that provide the facilities I need	56%	19%	15%	+41%
Generally when I visit parks and open spaces I feel safe	50%	22%	20%	+30%
Generally the parks and open spaces are clean and well maintained	45%	28%	17%	+28%
I am happy with the facilities that are available in my nearest park or open space	44%	21%	26%	+18%
It is easy to find out about parks and open spaces and the facilities they provide	33%	31%	24%	+9%

Asked to say how satisfied they are with their local park, almost three fifths (57%) said they were satisfied (13% very satisfied; 44% fairly satisfied), while just 16% were dissatisfied.

**Figure 7: Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local park? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

Males (65%) are significantly more likely to be satisfied than females (51%). In terms of LNP area, those living in Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield (73%) were significantly more likely to be satisfied than those living in Aldridge South and Streetly, Blakenhall and Bloxwich, Darlaston and Willenhall (50%, 54%, 35% and 54% respectively).

The satisfaction ratings given for particular parks (where sample bases support this breakdown) are shown in the following table. Seven in ten (73%) of those whose local park is the King George Vth playing fields express satisfaction with it. Two thirds of local residents (66%) are satisfied with Willenhall Memorial Park and 68% of those whose local park is Walsall Arboretum are satisfied with it.

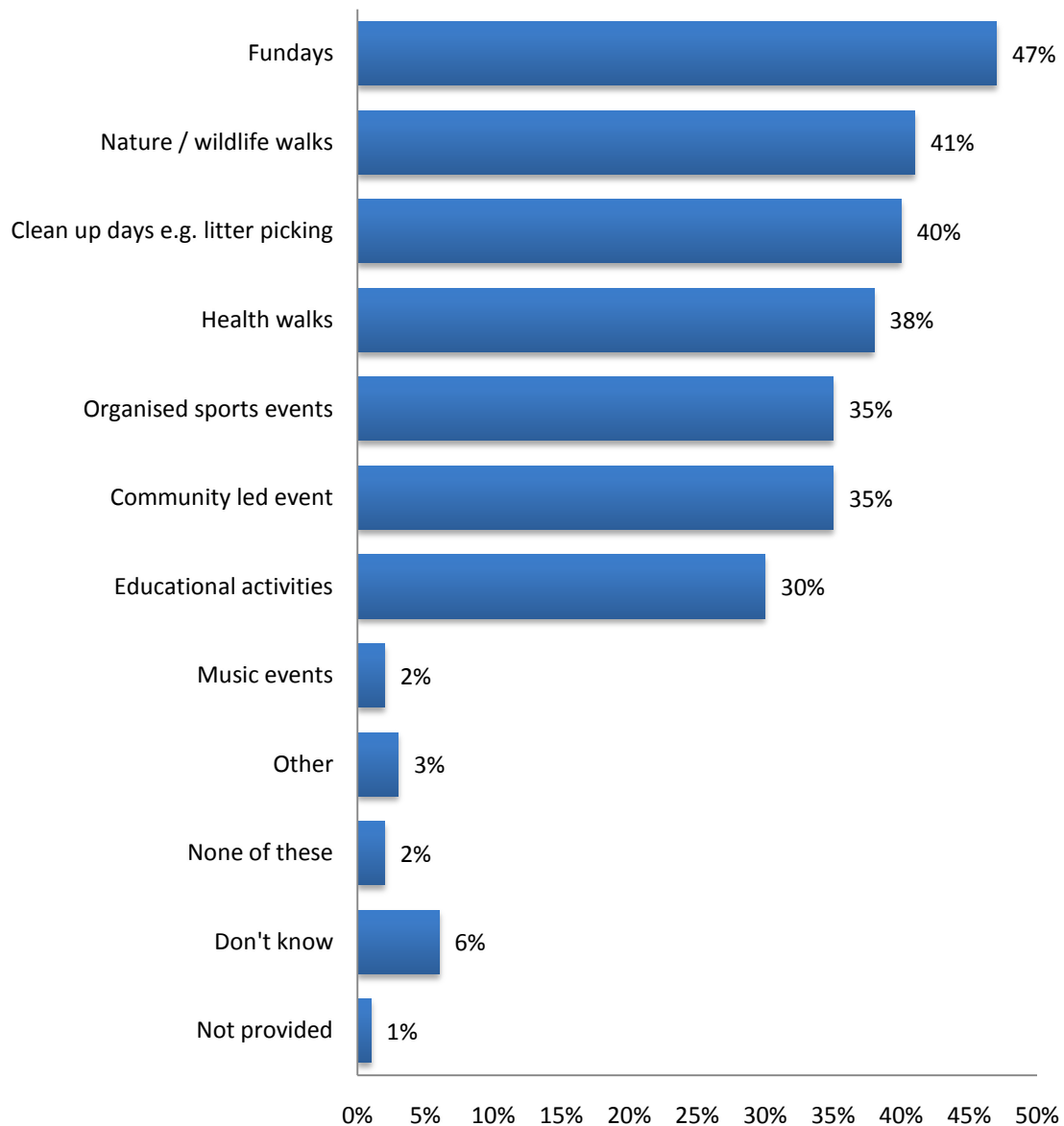
**Table 9: Satisfaction with local park – responses by park**

	Local Park		
	Arboretum	King George V <sup>th</sup> Playing Fields	Willenhall Memorial Park
Very satisfied	25%	8%	16%
Fairly satisfied	43%	65%	40%
Neither	19%	9%	24%
Fairly dissatisfied	0%	10%	3%
Very dissatisfied	2%	1%	4%
<b>Unweighted sample base</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>57</b>



Asked to say what organised events or activities they would like to see in parks and open spaces, almost half (47%) wanted to see 'fundays' while two fifths (41%) would like nature/wildlife walks and clean-up days.

**Figure 8: What organised events or activities would you like to see in your parks and open spaces? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base:657

The events or activities supported per local park (where sample bases are sufficient to allow analysis) are shown in the table below.

**Table 10: What organised events or activities would you like to see in your parks and open spaces? - responses by local park**

	Arboretum	King George 5 <sup>th</sup> Playing fields	Willenhall Memorial Park
Fundays	47%	50%	63%
Nature/Wildlife walks	50%	31%	53%
Clean up days e.g. litter picking	28%	41%	51%
Health walks	30%	45%	47%
Organised sports events	39%	45%	35%
Community led event	27%	45%	43%
Educational activities	26%	37%	39%
Music events	6%	0%	8%
Other	4%	0%	2%
None of these	4%	2%	1%
Don't know	5%	8%	3%
Not provided	1%	0%	0%
<b>Unweighted sample base</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>57</b>

### 3 Walsall Arboretum

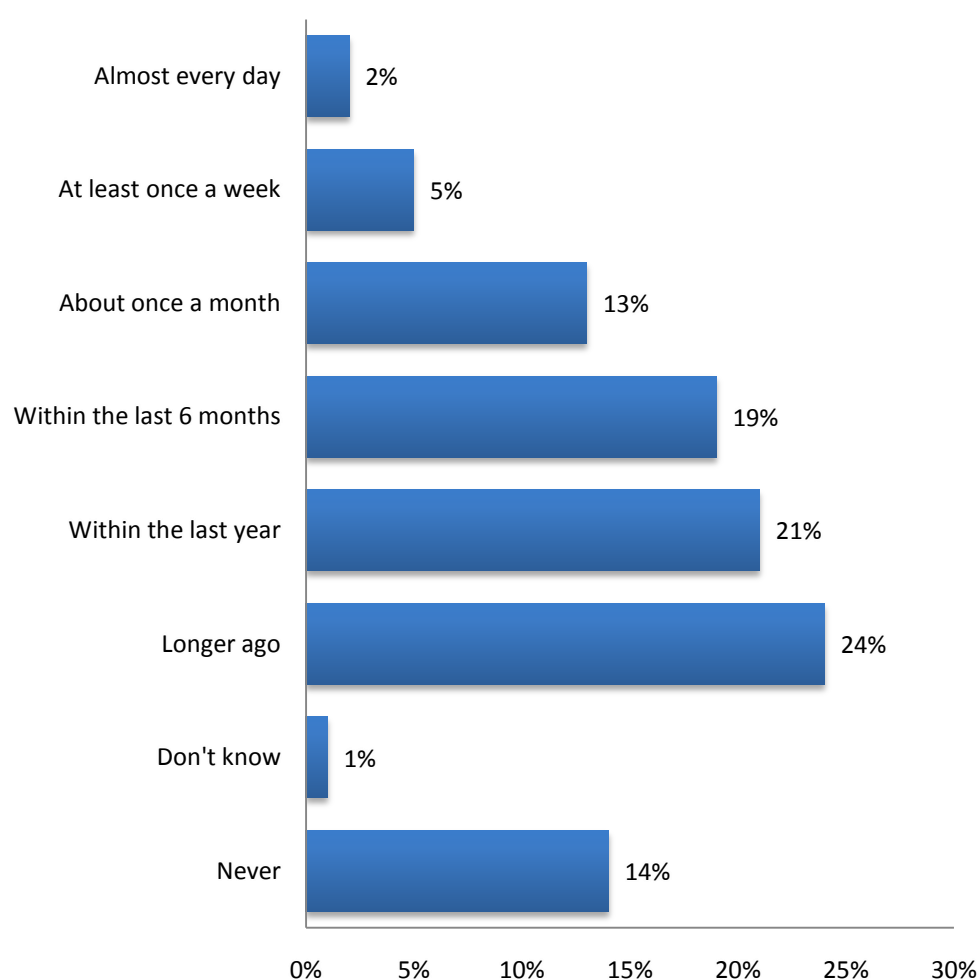
#### 3.1 Introduction

The next section asked residents to provide opinions on Walsall Arboretum. This includes frequency of visits, form of accompaniment (if any) to the Arboretum and what could be done to improve it.

#### 3.2 Frequency of visits

All respondents were asked to say how often, if at all, they visit the Arboretum. Almost a quarter (24%) have not visited in the last year. One in fourteen (7%), however, claim to visit every week (2% almost every day; 5% at least once a week).

**Figure 9: How often, if at all, do you visit Walsall Arboretum? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

In terms of LNP area, it can be seen that the most frequent visits to the Arboretum are made by residents of St Matthews and Birchills Leamore, the LNP in which the Arboretum is located. Conversely, those from the Brownhills & Aldridge North and Pelsall & Rushall Shelfield LNP areas make the least frequent visits, being further away and adjacent to open countryside.

**Table 11: How often, if at all, do you visit Walsall Arboretum? (All respondents)**

LNP	Frequency of visit
Aldridge South and Streetly	Almost every day: 1% At least once a week: 3% Aggregate – every week: 4%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 2% Aggregate – every week: 2%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Almost every day: 1% At least once a week: 0% Aggregate – every week: 1%
Darlaston	Almost every day: 6% At least once a week: 2% Aggregate – every week: 8%
Palfrey and Pleck	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 6% Aggregate – every week: 6%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 1% Aggregate – every week: 1%
Pheasey and Paddock	Almost every day: 3% At least once a week: 8% Aggregate – every week: 11%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Almost every day: 8% At least once a week: 27% Aggregate – every week: 35%
Willenhall	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 2% Aggregate – every week: 2%

The most infrequent visits to the Arboretum, as may be seen from the following table, are made by residents of Darlaston, closely followed by those from Aldridge South and Streetly. Whilst Darlaston is some distance away, Aldridge South and Streetly is adjacent to open countryside.

**Table 12: How often, if at all, do you visit Walsall Arboretum? (All respondents)**

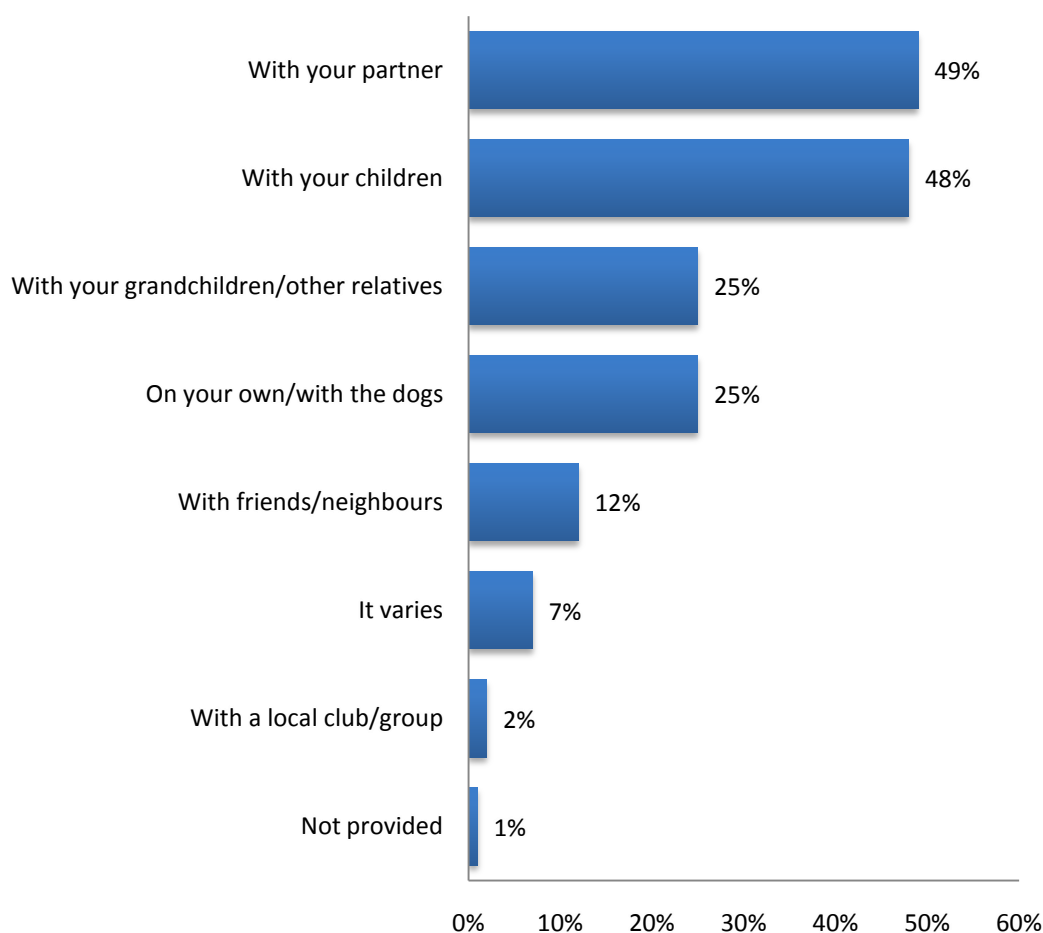
LNP	Frequency of visit
Aldridge South and Streetly	Within the last year: 21% Longer ago: 37% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 58%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	Within the last year: 21% Longer ago: 27% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 48%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Within the last year: 20% Longer ago: 34% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 54%
Darlaston	Within the last year: 25% Longer ago: 28% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 63%
Palfrey and Pleck	Within the last year: 12% Longer ago: 24% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 36%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Within the last year: 29% Longer ago: 21% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 50%
Pheasey and Paddock	Within the last year: 12% Longer ago: 22% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 34%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Within the last year: 31% Longer ago: 9% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 40%
Willenhall	Within the last year: 20% Longer ago: 18% Aggregate – longer than 6 months: 38%

Darlaston is one of the borough's most deprived areas of the borough and has the lowest number of parks and open spaces in the borough.

### 3.3 Company on visits

Those who visited the Arboretum in the last year were asked to say who, if anyone, they normally visit Walsall Arboretum with. Almost half (49%) visit with their partner and/or their children (48%), while a quarter go with their grandchildren/other relatives or on their own/with their dogs (both 25%).

**Figure 10: Who, if anyone, do you normally visit Walsall Arboretum with?  
(Respondents who have visited Walsall Arboretum in the last year)**



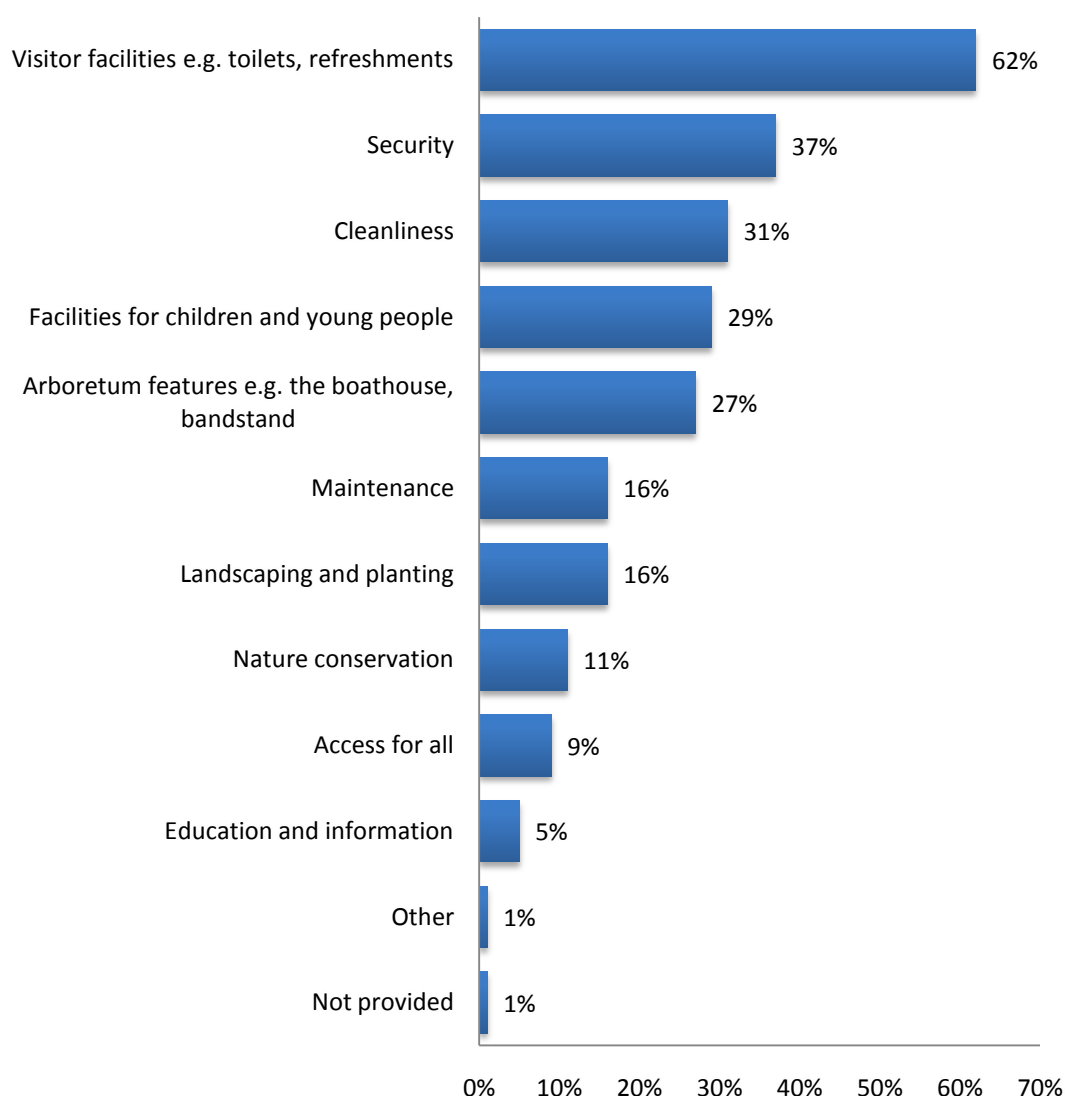
Unweighted base: 371

### 3.4 Improvements to the Arboretum

Respondents were presented with a list aspects relating to Walsall Arboretum and asked to indicate which, if any, they thought are most important for improving the Arboretum.

Just over three fifths (62%) think that visitor facilities (e.g. toilets or refreshments) are the most important aspect for improvement. Approaching two fifths (37%) think that security is most important while around three in ten think cleanliness (31%), facilities for children and young people (29%) and Arboretum features such as the boathouse and bandstand (27%). Other aspects received less support as may be seen from the following figure.

**Figure 11: Which of the following aspects do you think are most important for improving Walsall Arboretum? (Respondents who have visited Walsall Arboretum in the last year)**

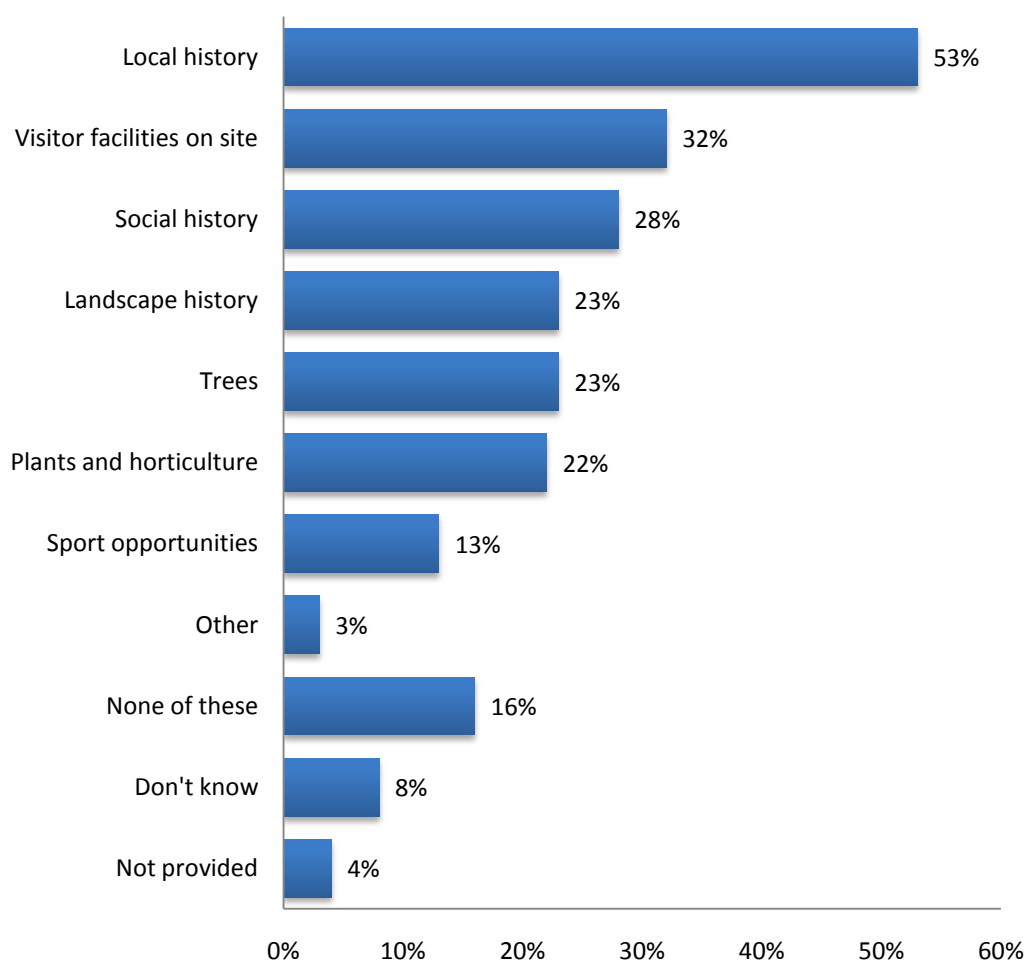


Unweighted base: 371

### 3.5 Further knowledge and involvement

Presented with a defined list, all respondents were asked to say which topics related to Walsall Arboretum they would be most interested in knowing more about. One in six (16%) are not interested in any of the topics while a further one in twelve (8%) did not know and 4% provided no answer. Of the remainder, just over half (53%) are interested in local history while a third (32%) would like to know more about visitor facilities on site.

**Figure 12: Which of the following topics, related to Walsall Arboretum, would you be most interested in knowing more about? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657



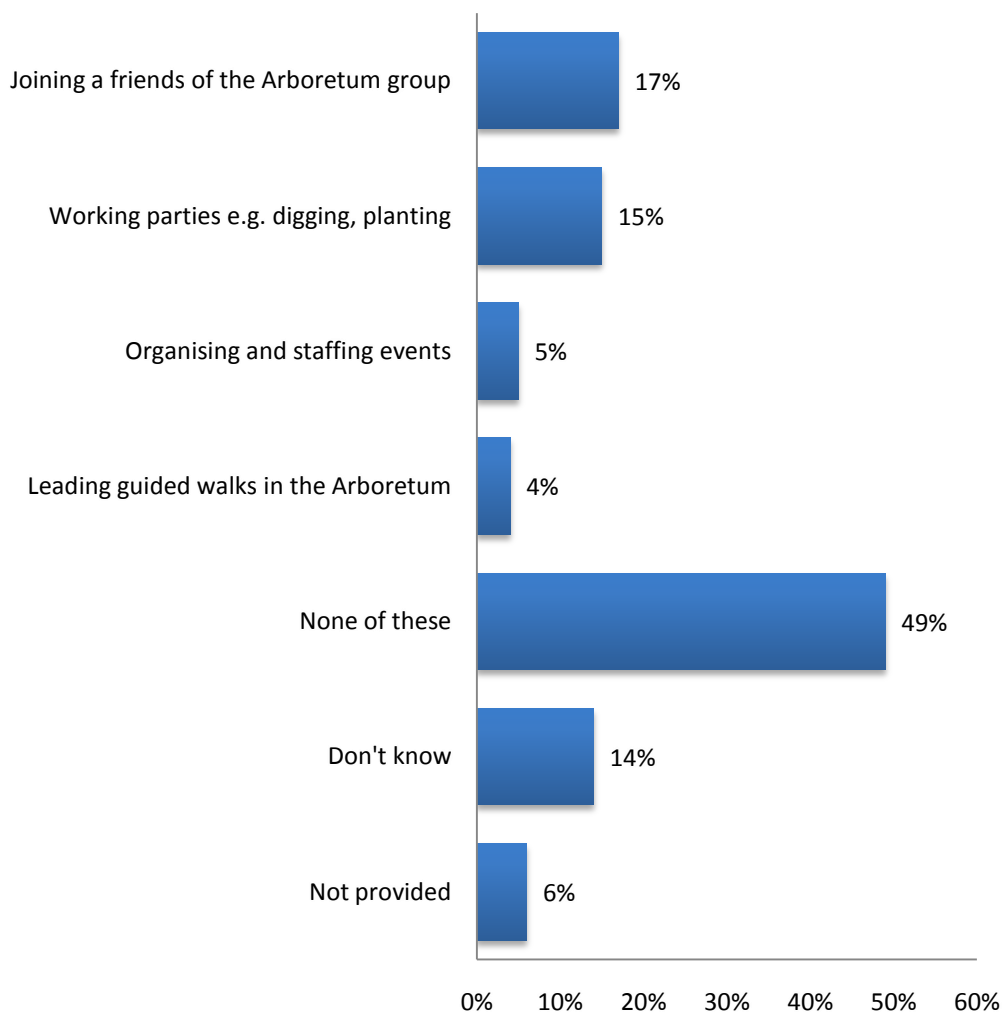
While there is a higher proportion of respondents interested in none of the topics from those who had *not* visited the Arboretum in the last year, it can be seen that local history is the topic mentioned most frequently by both those who had and had not visited in the last year.

**Table 13: Which of the following topics, related to Walsall Arboretum, would you be most interested in knowing more about? (All respondents)**

Topic	Total	Have visited Arboretum in last year	Have not visited Arboretum in last year
	%	%	%
Local history	53	58	44
Visitor facilities on site	32	37	25
Social history	28	34	17
Landscape history	23	26	19
Trees	23	25	19
Plants & horticulture	22	23	20
Sports opportunities	13	15	9
Other	3	3	2
None of these	16	9	26
Don't know	8	7	8
Not provided	4	4	2
<b>Unweighted sample bases</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>281</b>

When asked to say how, if at all, they would be willing to get involved to help support the Arboretum, half (49%) said they are not willing to be involved, while a further one in seven (14%) did not know and 6% provided no answer. Of the remainder, one in six would like to become involved through joining a friends of the Arboretum group while a similar proportion (15%) are interested in working parties.

**Figure 13: How, if at all, would you be willing to get involved to help support Walsall Arboretum? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

Finally, in an open response question, all respondents were asked to say what they thought would improve the appeal of Walsall's local parks to its residents.

The most frequently mentioned response was safety/security:

- Safety/security 19%;
- Need to be clean/tidy 9%;
- Visible wardens/keepers/supervisors 9%;
- Grass needs cutting/should be maintained 5%;
- Clear the litter/should be litter-free 5%;
- More/cleaner/better toilets 4%;
- More social events/clubs 4%;
- Address anti-social behaviour 4%;
- Stop vandalism/graffiti 4%;
- Address dog fouling 4%;
- Park/cafe refreshments 4%;

## 4 Walsall Sports and Leisure Centres

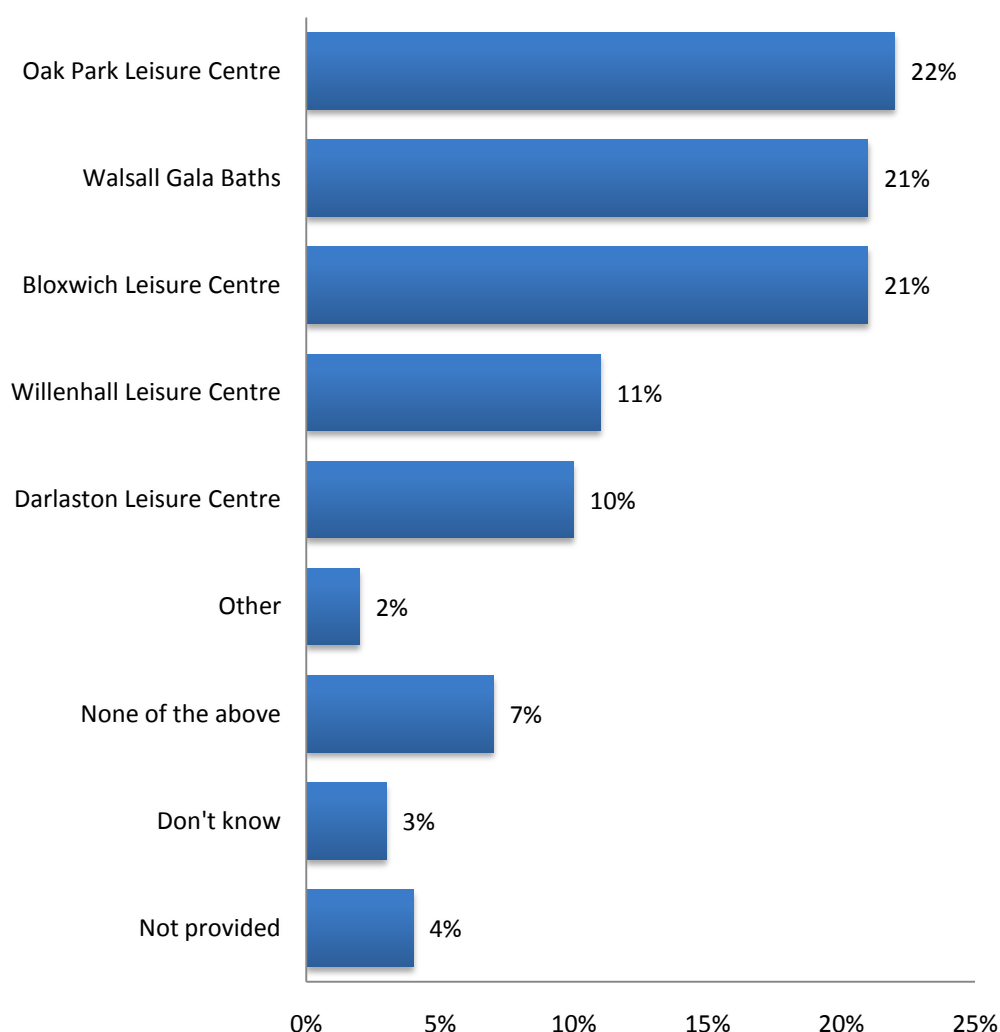
### 4.1 Introduction

The following section deals with residents' use and experience of leisure centres in the borough of Walsall and includes frequency of visits, activities undertaken in when there and what more could be done to encourage greater use.

### 4.2 Local Leisure Centre

All respondents were asked to name their local leisure centre. Three centres were mentioned by the same proportions of respondents: Oak Park Leisure Centre, Walsall Gala Baths and Bloxwich Leisure Centre.

**Figure 14: Which of the following is your local leisure centre? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

The following table shows the most frequently mentioned leisure centre for each of the LNP areas.

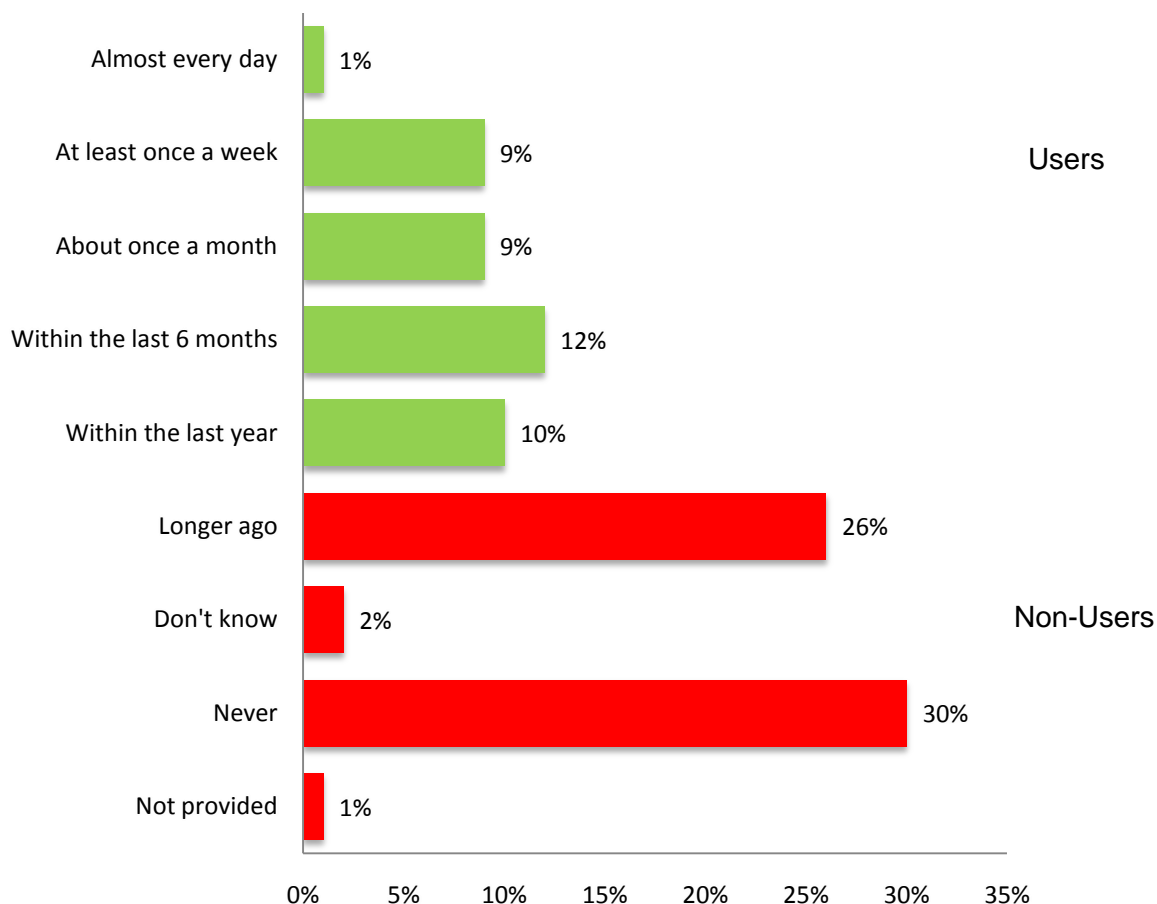
**Table 14: Which of the following is your local leisure centre? (All respondents)**

LNP	Most frequently mentioned Leisure Centre
Aldridge South and Streetly	Oak Park Leisure Centre: 55%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	Bloxwich Leisure Centre: 87%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Oak Park Leisure Centre: 92%
Darlaston	Darlaston Leisure Centre: 71%
Palfrey and Pleck	Walsall Gala Baths: 58%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Oak Park Leisure Centre: 53%
Pheasey and Paddock	Walsall Gala Baths: 62%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Walsall Gala Baths: 65%
Willenhall	Willenhall Leisure Centre: 62%

### 4.3 Frequency of use

Figure 15 below illustrates that one in ten residents use their local leisure centre every week (1% almost every day; 9% at least once a week). Three in ten (30%), however, never use theirs and a further quarter have not used theirs in the last 12 months. In subsequent questions analysis of responses will refer to users and non-users. As shown below, a user is defined as someone who has used a local leisure centre within the last year.

**Figure 15: How often, if at all, do you use your local leisure centre? (Respondents who provided a response)**



Unweighted base: 556

In terms of LNP area, those in Blakenhall and Bloxwich (20%) were more likely to visit every week (2% almost every day; 18% at least once a week), while those from Darlaston were least likely (0% almost every day; 1% at least once a week).

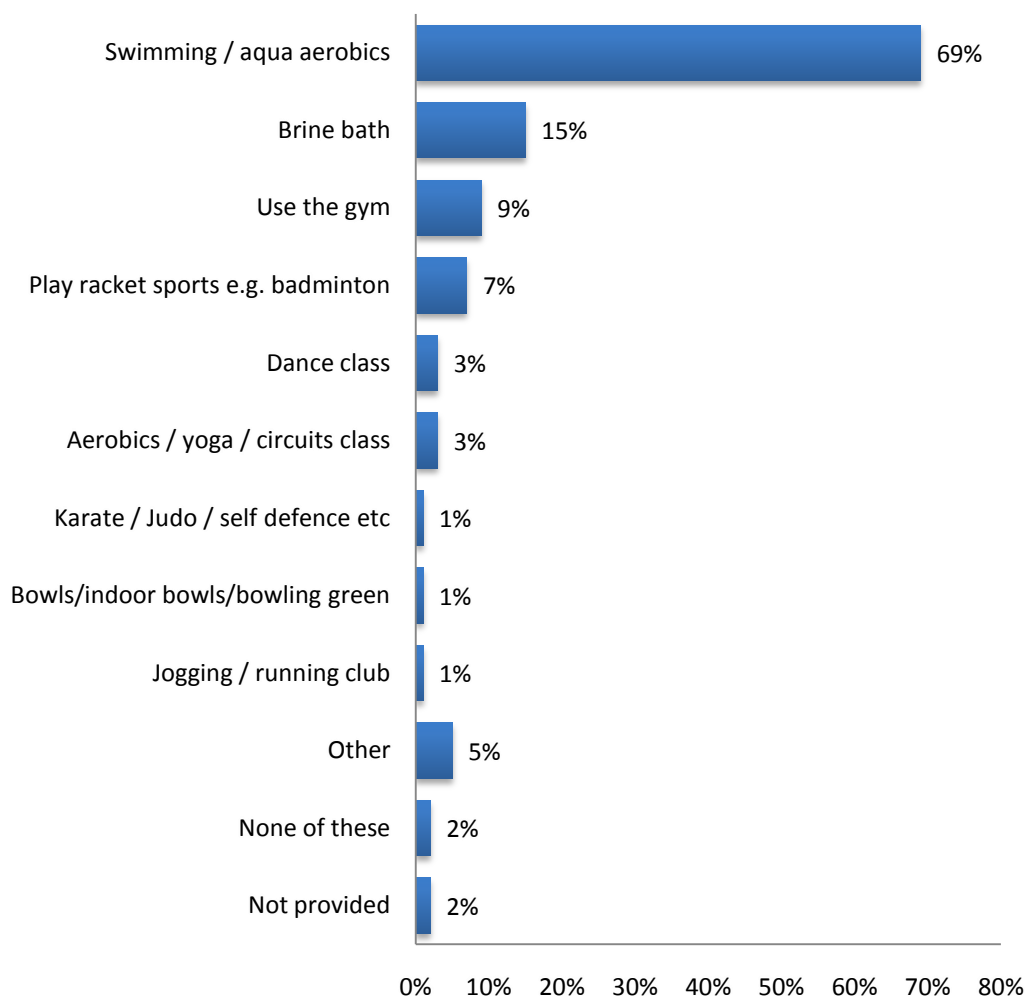
**Table 15: How often, if at all, do you use your local leisure centre? (Respondents who provided a response)**

LNP	Frequency of visit
Aldridge South and Streetly	Almost every day: 6% At least once a week: 11% Aggregate – every week: 17%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	Almost every day: 2% At least once a week: 18% Aggregate – every week: 20%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 17% Aggregate – every week: 17%
Darlaston	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 1% Aggregate – every week: 1%
Palfrey and Pleck	Almost every day: 5% At least once a week: 0% Aggregate – every week: 5%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 9% Aggregate – every week: 9%
Pheasey and Paddock	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 8% Aggregate – every week: 8%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 2% Aggregate – every week: 2%
Willenhall	Almost every day: 0% At least once a week: 11% Aggregate – every week: 11%

#### 4.4 Purpose of visit and future visits

Almost seven in ten (69%) respondents took part in swimming and/or aqua aerobics the last time they visited their local leisure centre. As may be seen from figure 16, this is the activity undertaken by the vast majority of residents with any other activity being mentioned by much smaller proportions of respondents. Few panel members participate in aerobics/dance classes (both 3%).

**Figure 16: Thinking about the last time you visited your local leisure centre, which of the following activities did you do? (Respondents who provided a response)**



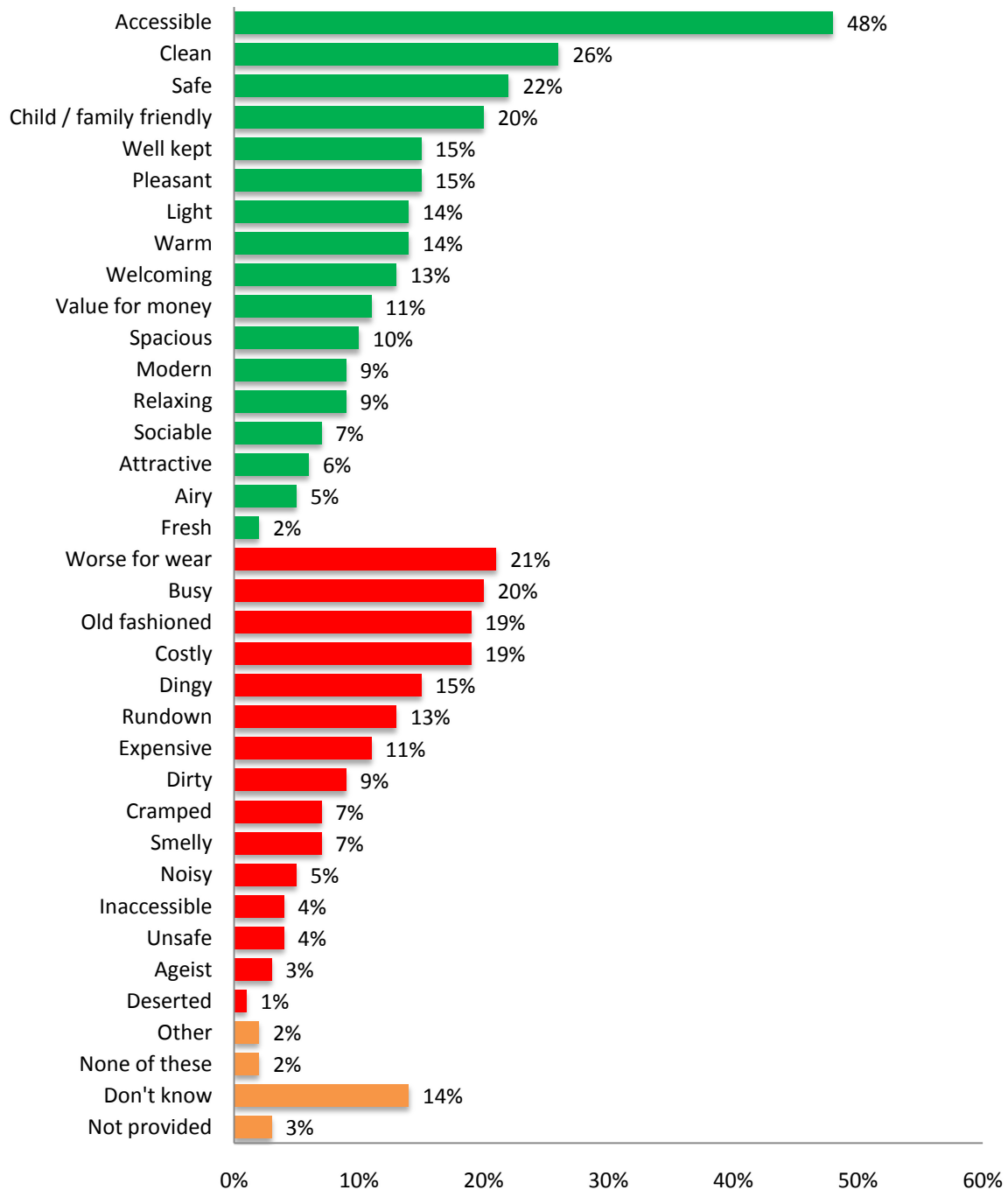
Unweighted base: 193

Respondents aged 25 to 64 years (71% of those aged 25 – 44 and 75% of those aged 45 – 64) are significantly more likely to go swimming than other age groups. Also those in full time employment are also more likely to go swimming than those that are not in employment (75% compared with 60%).



All respondents were presented with a list of words and, regardless of whether or not they had used their local leisure centre, were asked to say which of the words they would use to describe it. Among the top ten words chosen six were positive descriptions and four were negative. Encouragingly, almost half said their local centre was accessible. Conversely, only a quarter said theirs was clean and even fewer said safe. In the figure below green bars represent positive statements and red bars represent negative statements.

**Figure 17: Whether you have used your local leisure centre or not, which of the following words would you use to describe it? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

The top ten words most frequently selected by users and non-users in relation to their local leisure centre are shown in the table below. Both groups most commonly describe their local leisure centre as accessible (67% of users c.f. 44% of non-users). Among leisure centre users, seven of the top ten descriptions are positive, the exceptions being where this group described their local leisure centre as costly (30%), old fashioned (29%) and worse for wear (28%).

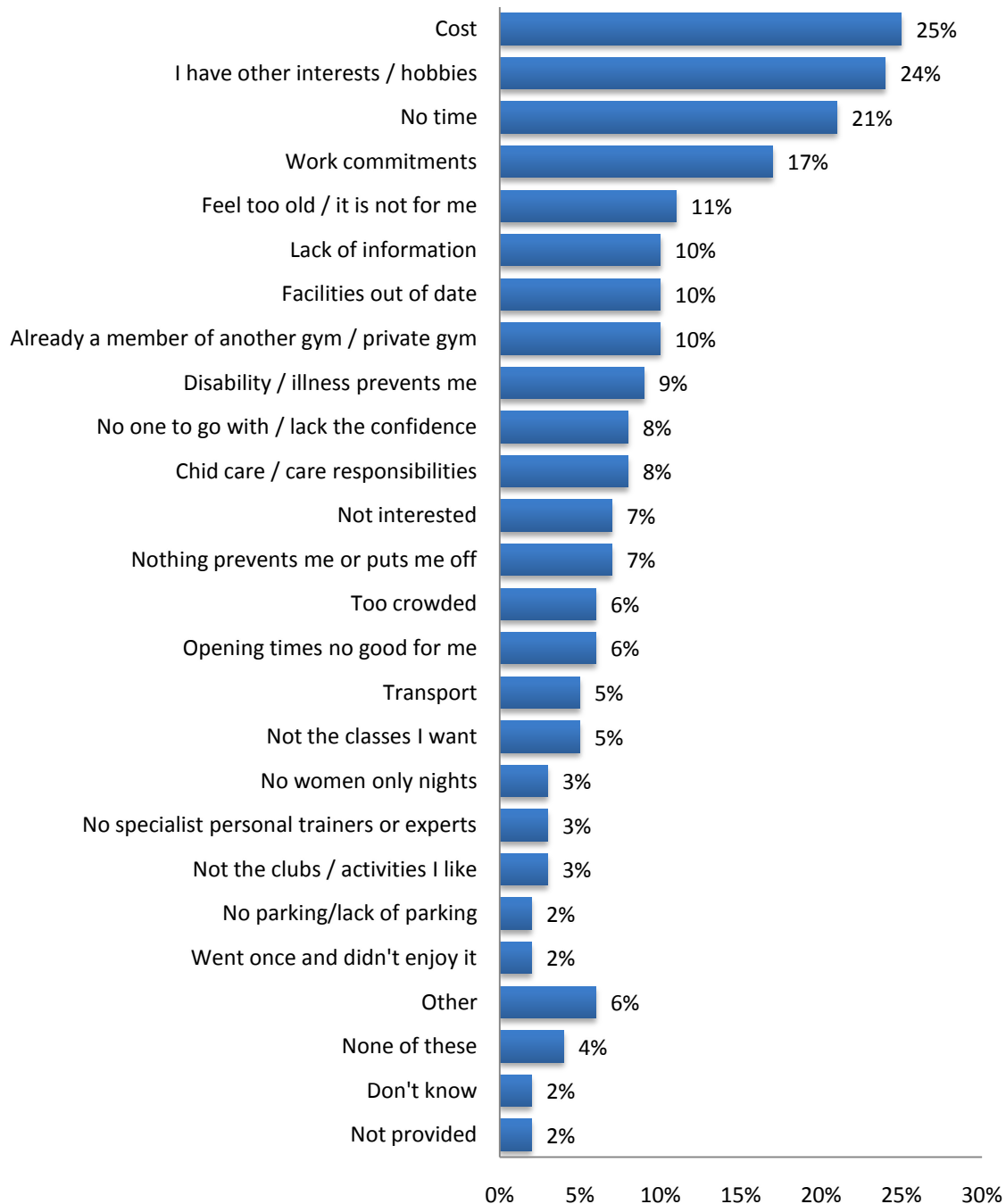
Among non-users of local leisure centres, the views expressed will be based on perception rather than experience. As well as accessible, this group perceive their local leisure centre to be clean (22%), busy (17%) and safe (17%). However, four of the top ten words that non-users chose to describe local leisure centre were negative, namely worse for wear (17%), old fashioned (15%), dingy (15%) and costly (14%).

**Table 16: Top ten descriptions of leisure centres by users and non users**

Users (193)		Non users (357)	
Accessible	67%	Accessible	44%
Child / family friendly	35%	Clean	23%
Clean	33%	Busy	22%
Safe	33%	Safe	17%
Costly	30%	Worse for wear	17%
Old fashioned	29%	Old fashioned	15%
Worse for wear	28%	Dingy	15%
Light	25%	Costly	14%
Welcoming	24%	Warm	14%

Following on from this, all respondents were prompted with a list of criteria and asked to say which, if any, puts them off or prevents them from using their local leisure centre more often. A quarter (25%) mentioned cost and a similar proportion said they have other interests or hobbies, while a fifth said they have no time. An interesting finding is that 10% mentioned lack of information and this is perhaps an issue the Council could address. No particular demographic group was more likely to cite a lack of information as a reason.

**Figure 18: What, if anything, puts you off or prevents you from using your local leisure centre or using it more often? (All respondents)**



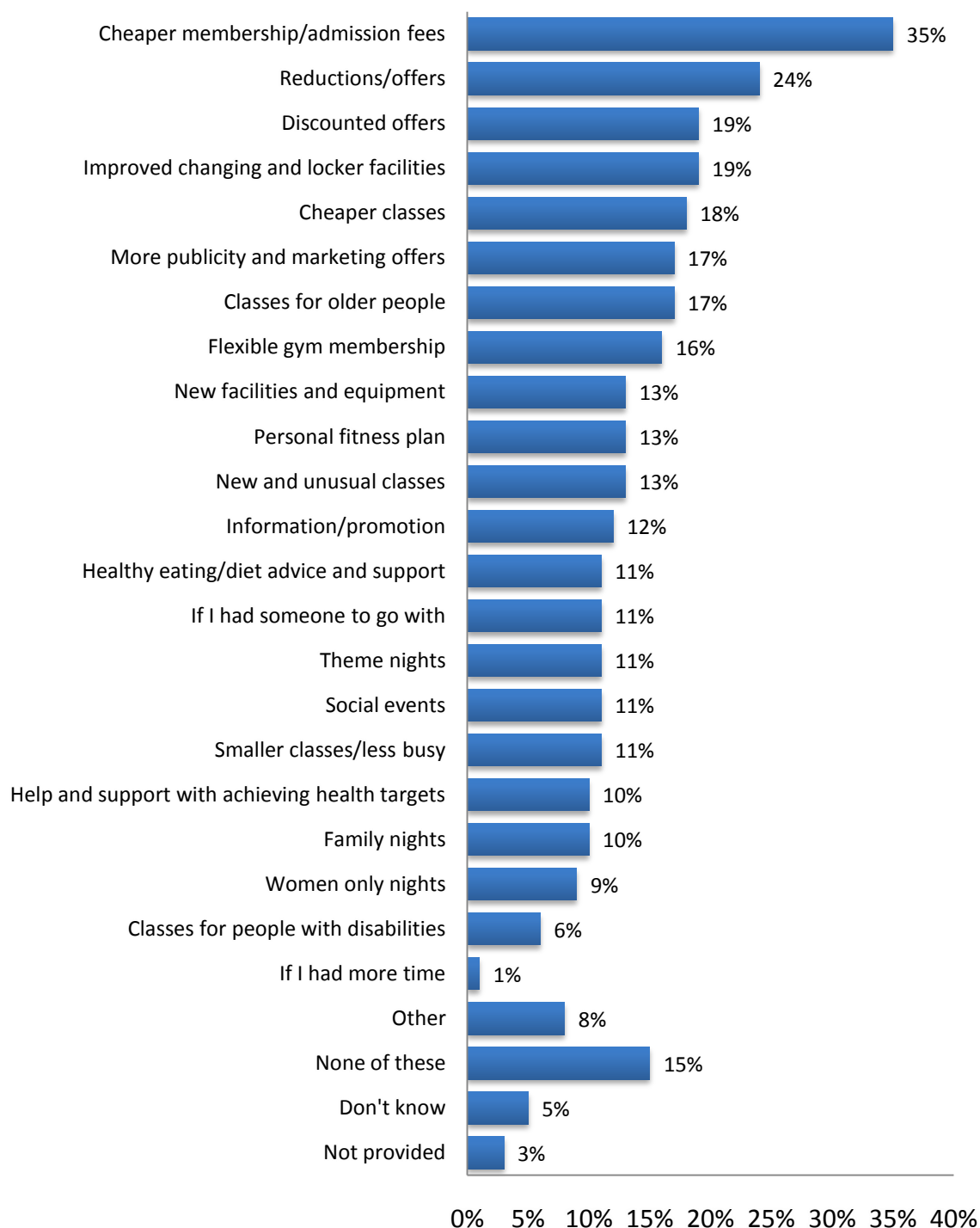
Unweighted base: 657

Looking specifically at the views of non-users, only two of the top ten reasons given by this group for not using local leisure centres are factors that Walsall Council can have a direct influence over. These factors are cost (21%) and a lack of information (13%). The top ten reasons cited among non-users of leisure centres (sample base of 357) are:

- I have other interests / hobbies (31%);
- No time (26%);
- Cost (21%);
- Work commitments (17%);
- Feel too old / it is not for me (16%);
- Lack of information (13%);
- Disability / illness prevents me (12%);
- Not interested (12%);
- No one to go with / lack the confidence (11%); and,
- Already a member of another gym / private gym (9%).

Just over a third of respondents (35%) said cheaper membership/admission fees would encourage them to use their local leisure centre more often, followed by a quarter who wanted reductions and/or offers (24%).

**Figure 19: What, if anything, would encourage you to use your local leisure centre or use it more often? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

Table 17 shows the two most frequently mentioned responses for each LNP area. It can be seen that cheaper membership and admission fees are mentioned by respondents from seven of the nine LNP areas and given as the main source of encouragement by six of them.

**Table 17: What, if anything, would encourage you to use your local leisure centre or use it more often? (All respondents)**

LNP	Frequency of visit
Aldridge South and Streetly	Improved changing and locker facilities: 30% Cheaper membership/admission fees: 27%
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	Cheaper membership/admission fees: 45% Discounted offers: 28%
Brownhills and Aldridge North	Reductions/offers: 29% Improved changing and locker facilities: 28%
Darlaston	Cheaper membership/admission fees: 43% Flexible gym membership: 26%
Palfrey and Pleck	Cheaper membership/admission fees: 31% If I had someone to go with: 26%
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	Cheaper membership/admission fees: 42% Improved changing and locker facilities: 24%
Pheasey and Paddock	Improved changing and locker facilities: 19% Reductions/offers: 18%
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	Cheaper membership/admission fees: 48% Reductions/offers: 33%
Willenhall	Cheaper membership/admission fees: 35% Classes for older people: 26%

Among those who do not currently use their local leisure centre the types of encouragement most commonly favoured are:

- Cheaper membership / admissions fees (30%);
- Reductions / offers e.g. buy one get one free (19%);
- More Publicity and marketing offers (19%);
- Classes for older people (18%);
- Flexible gym membership (16%);
- Improved changing and locker facilities (16%);
- Cheaper classes (14%);
- Discounted offers (14%);
- Smaller classes / less busy (13%); and,
- Help and support with achieving health targets (13%).

The views of users of particular centres are shown in Appendix 2.

## 4.5 Value for money of membership

Membership of Walsall Council's leisure centres costs from £29 per month. Respondents were asked if they think that this represents good value for money. A quarter (26%) think it does represent good value for money while almost two in five (37%) do not. A third (34%), however, do not know whether it represents good value for money.

Those who are significantly more likely to think membership fees represent good value for money include:

- Those without a disability (29%) compared with those with (21%);
- Those in employment (29%) compared with those not (21%);
- The economically active (28%) in comparison with the inactive (21%).

Conversely, those who are significantly more likely to think membership fees *do not* represent good value for money include:

- Males (41%) compared with females (33%);
- Working age respondents (40%) compared with non-working age (23%);
- Those who have lived in their local area for between 1 and 5 years (53%) in comparison with those who have been residents for 6-10 (30%) and 11 or more years (35%);
- Those who have visited the Arboretum (40%) compared with those who have not (32%).

In terms of LNP area the following table shows that residents of Aldridge South & Streetly and Brownhills and Aldridge North are statistically significantly more likely to agree that membership fees do represent good value for money. These are the more affluent areas of the borough.

Conversely, those living in (the more deprived) Darlaston, Palfrey and Pleck, St Matthews and Birchills Leamore, and Willenhall are more likely to believe that membership fees do *not* represent good value for money. Significant differences are shown by the shaded cells in the table below.

**Table 18: Membership of Walsall Council's leisure centres costs from £29 per month. Do you think that this represents good value for money? (All respondents)**

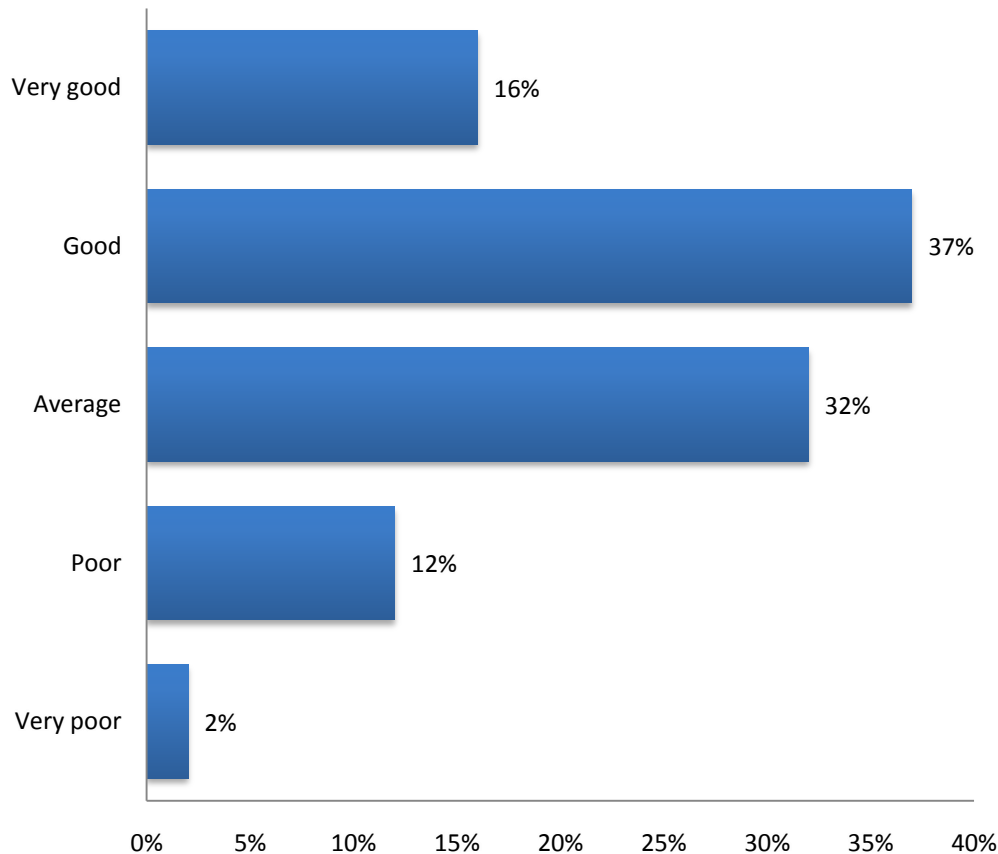
	Yes %	No %	Don't know %	Not provided %
Aldridge South and Streetly	41	29	28	2
Blakenhall and Bloxwich	22	32	43	3
Brownhills and Aldridge North	40	24	32	4
Darlaston	19	42	30	9
Palfrey and Pleck	21	41	36	2
Pelsall and Rushall Shelfield	21	36	41	2
Pheasey and Paddock	33	24	42	1
St Matthews and Birchills Leamore	29	48	22	1
Willenhall	16	47	33	3
Total	26	37	34	3



## 4.6 General health

All respondents were asked to describe their general health over the last 12 months. As may be seen from the following figure more than half (53%) said their health was good, including 16% very good. Only one in seven describe their health as poor.

**Figure 20: Overall, how would you describe your general health over the last 12 months? (All respondents)**



Unweighted base: 657

Panel members aged 25-44 were most likely to describe their health as good (65%). Those aged 65 and over are significantly more likely to describe their health as poor (25%).

## 4.7 Further comments

At the end of the questionnaire respondents were given the opportunity to write in any comments they wished to make. Three quarters (74%) did not provide any answer and a further 3% chose not to make any further comments, but based on all responses the comments most commonly given related to:

- Gym is too expensive 3%;
- Local park needs updating/improving 1%;
- Use Sutton Park instead 1%;
- Leisure centre facilities need updating/more investment 1%;
- Local swimming pool services are too expensive 1%;
- Dog mess problem needs attention/is everywhere 1%;
- Better facilities need to be provided locally/other areas better 1%;
- Swimming pool public use times are too limited 1%;
- Local swimming pools need refurbishment 1%;
- Too much litter 1%;
- Gangs of youths hang around 1%.

## 5 Sample Profile

	Unweighted Sample Base	Unweighted total
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	347	53%
Female	310	47%
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	6	1%
25-34	45	7%
35-44	88	13%
45-54	130	20%
55-64	192	29%
65-74	141	22%
75+	55	8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
British	619	94%
Irish	3	1%
White Other	3	1%
Mixed	3	1%
Asian	24	4%
Black	4	1%
Chinese/Other	0	0%
Not Provided	1	*%
<b>Disability</b>		
Yes in household	181	28%
Yes, Respondent	106	16%
No	363	55%
Not Provided	7	1%
<b>Economic Status</b>		
Employed Full Time	219	33%
Employed Part Time	66	10%
Full Time Education	3	1%
Long Term Sick / Disabled	45	7%
Looking After Home Or Family	26	4%
Retired	244	37%
Self Employed	33	5%
Unemployed	13	2%
Unemployed Seeking Work	4	1%
Other	4	1%

## 6 Appendix One: Perceptions of particular parks in Walsall Borough

### Views of park - among residents whose local park is Walsall Arboretum

	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Don't know /not provided %	Net satisfaction score %
The park is well used	72	17	5	7	+67
The flower beds, trees and shrubs are attractive and well maintained	72	15	7	5	+65
The park meets my needs	59	34	5	2	+54
The park is welcoming	58	30	10	2	+48
The park is tidy and free from litter	51	31	17	1	+34
I feel safe using the park during the day	57	20	23	0	+34
The signposts in the park are easy to follow	46	31	13	11	+33
The park has enough seating	53	20	23	3	+30
The park pathways are level and well surfaced	50	21	25	3	+25
The park is free from dog mess	48	25	23	4	+25
The park has enough signposts	40	34	19	6	+21
The park has sports facilities that are suitable for casual use	42	12	37	7	+5
The park has enough play facilities for all ages	38	16	40	5	-2
<b>Unweighted sample base = 61</b>					

**Views of parks - among residents whose local park is King George Vth Playing Fields**

	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Don't know /not provided %	Net satisfaction score %
The park meets my needs	65	10	10	15	+55
The park is well used	67	16	14	3	+53
I feel safe using the park during the day	62	6	14	18	+48
The park is welcoming	49	21	10	20	+39
The flower beds, trees and shrubs are attractive and well maintained	58	14	24	2	+34
The park has sports facilities that are suitable for casual use	49	12	15	7	+34
The park has enough signposts	46	38	12	3	+34
The park has enough play facilities for all ages	55	12	22	7	+33
The signposts in the park are easy to follow	35	41	7	3	+28
The park pathways are level and well surfaced	40	18	25	16	+15
The park has enough seating	45	19	34	2	+11
The park is tidy and free from litter	35	27	33	5	+2
The park is free from dog mess	21	23	39	17	-18
<b>Unweighted sample base = 48</b>					

**Views of parks - among residents whose local park is Willenhall Memorial Park**

	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Don't know /not provided %	Net satisfaction score %
The signposts in the park are easy to follow	62	21	5	11	+57
The park is well used	67	15	11	7	+56
The park is welcoming	58	24	10	8	+48
The park meets my needs	58	18	13	11	+45
The park has enough signposts	56	21	12	11	+44
The park has sports facilities that are suitable for casual use	51	25	13	11	+38
The flower beds, trees and shrubs are attractive and well maintained	58	14	24	2	+34
I feel safe using the park during the day	46	34	12	9	+34
The park has enough play facilities for all ages	55	12	22	7	+33
The park has enough seating	47	27	17	8	+30
The park pathways are level and well surfaced	43	21	28	9	+15
The park is tidy and free from litter	35	33	22	9	+13
The park is free from dog mess	31	23	36	11	-5
<b>Unweighted sample base = 44</b>					

## 7 Appendix Two: Suggested improvements by users of particular Leisure centres

	Bloxwich Leisure Centre	Oak Park Leisure Centre	Walsall Gala Baths
Cheaper membership / Admissions fees	48%	48%	38%
Reductions / offers e.g. buy one get one free	30%	35%	26%
Discounted offers	33%	23%	19%
Improved changing and locker facilities	21%	29%	32%
Cheaper classes	33%	18%	19%
Flexible gym membership	7%	29%	10%
New facilities and equipment	12%	19%	13%
Personal fitness plan	24%	14%	8%
Social events	14%	9%	23%
Classes for older people	17%	17%	14%
Theme nights e.g. Bollywood, Salsa	16%	6%	14%
New and unusual classes	24%	7%	11%
More Publicity and marketing offers	9%	18%	9%
Family nights	12%	9%	4%
Healthy eating / diet advice and support	17%	11%	12%
Information / promotion	6%	11%	8%
If I had someone to go with	16%	6%	15%
Help and support with achieving health targets	13%	4%	7%
Women only nights	4%	4%	22%
Classes for people with disabilities	9%	5%	7%
Smaller classes / less busy	3%	5%	10%
If I had more time	2%	0%	3%
Other	13%	6%	0%
None of these	3%	3%	2%
Don't know	1%	7%	2%
Not provided	1%	*%	3%
<b>Unweighted sample base</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>39</b>

## Because people matter, we listen.

With some 20 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

Our business is about understanding people; because they matter. Finding out what they really need; from the type of information they use to the type of services they require. In short, finding out about the kind of world people want to live in tomorrow.

BMG serves both the social public sector and the commercial private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of technologies such as portals and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

