



November 2020

Research into the use of the natural environment by communities living around Heathrow airport before and during lockdown



Summary (1)

- Lockdown highlighted the importance of green areas to many. Two-thirds (67%) say they appreciate local green areas more as a result of the lockdown and 57% say they will use them more in the future than they were previously. Residents mention being aware of the importance of getting a change of scene or going out for some ‘fresh air’ and many have found new areas during lockdown that they wish to keep exploring.
- Green areas have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local residents: 77% report a positive impact on their physical health and 76% a positive impact on their mental health. Some refer to it as an ‘escape’ – a place for taking time out to recover and recharge. This was particularly pertinent during the Coronavirus lockdown; green areas were a refuge for many from the anxiety and stress caused by the pandemic.
- The vast majority (95%) of local residents have some green areas easily accessible from their home and most had used them in the four weeks prior to completing the survey (71%).
- Over half (53%) visit nearby green areas at least once a week, with an average visit time of 77 minutes.
- Visits to green areas became more common during the Coronavirus lockdown, with half (49%) visiting more while a quarter (24%) visited around the same amount. Residents report engaging in outdoor activities such as exercise, getting fresh air and meditation more during lockdown, suggesting that green areas have additional value for them when they are otherwise confined to their homes. The lockdown prompted many to spend time exploring new areas, with parents particularly likely to visit new green areas.

Summary (2)

- Three-fifths (61%) say they enjoyed using green areas more during lockdown than they had done previously. Respondents noted reductions in air and noise pollutions that made green areas more pleasant and tranquil locations to be; however, others felt that they saw more anti-social behaviour and litter in parks.
- Accessing green areas is a key barrier to using them. Many reported that well-maintained paths and cycleways, as well as cheaper car parking, would encourage them to use green areas more.
- Around two-fifths (38%) have visited a green area within the Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) previously and the park is highly valued by those use it: the majority (74%) consider it a unique resource for the local area. Those living to the West of Heathrow Airport are more likely to have visited.
- In the Southern part of the CVRP, while few residents know the park by name most have visited green areas in the area before. Ankerwycke and Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve are commonly visited areas for their natural beauty, while the facilities at Lammas Park are frequently used by families.
- Many residents in the South CVRP mention how much they appreciate having nature on their doorstep and the positive impact it has on their mental and physical health. This was particularly important during the lockdown, where residents noticed an increase in wildlife in the South CVRP and reduced noise and air pollution in the area.
- Issues in the South CVRP raised by residents include litter in Langley Park, a lack of parking at Harmondsworth Moor and Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve and unsafe walking and cycle routes.

Background, method and sample

Background – HCEB and the Colne Valley Regional Park

The present research

The Heathrow Community Engagement Board (HCEB) and the Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) are working on a joint project to understand how people living around Heathrow airport have / have not used the natural environment (or green areas as we sometimes refer to it) around them before and during the Covid-19 lockdown. Where they have used the natural environment, the HCEB and the CVRP are keen to understand what they have been doing and what their experiences have been, and where they have not used the natural environment, the HCEB and the CVRP are keen to understand why not.

The aim of the research was to understand usage and experiences of green space in the area around Heathrow Airport, particularly the CVRP and to understand what could be done to support use of these areas in future. The research involved two elements to ensure that views and experiences were captured from the area surrounding Heathrow Airport, including those near to the southern end of the park. The executive summary provides the headlines from the research.

About the HCEB and the CVRP

The Heathrow Community Engagement Board (HCEB) is working with the Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) team on this joint project. The CVRP is represented on one of the HCEB's strategic advisory groups as well as its Independent Forum.

Background – HCEB and the Colne Valley Regional Park (2)

About the HCEB

The HCEB is independent of Heathrow Airport and Government with an independent Chair, set up to be the Airport Consultative Committee and the Community Engagement Board for Heathrow Airport. HCEB values are independence, impartiality, inclusivity, transparency and integrity.

HCEB aims to publicly hold Heathrow Airport accountable to the stakeholders and communities who are impacted by the airport's operations and ensure that they facilitate engagement in decision-making at Heathrow Airport. For further information, please see their website: <https://www.hceb.org.uk/about-us>

About Colne Valley Regional Park

The Colne Valley Regional Park, founded in 1965 stretches from Rickmansworth in the north to Staines and the Thames in the south, and from Uxbridge and Heathrow in the east, to Slough and Chalfont St Peter in the west. Covering 43 square miles the landscape is a mix of bustling villages, green spaces, wildlife habitats and waterways, which comprise the first taste of countryside immediately west of London. Most of the area is designated Green Belt. The Colne Valley Community Interest Company (CVCIC) aims to highlight and improve this fantastic and varied area, its history, rich landscape and biodiversity. Many people live, work and visit the Colne Valley, but too few realise it forms part of a vibrant regional park. Enjoyment of sections of the southern part of the Park is compromised by urban activities, poor access routes and maintenance issues – issues the CVCIC wish to see addressed. For more information please see the CVRP website: <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk>

Background – HCEB and the Colne Valley Regional Park (3)

About YouGov

YouGov is an international research firm headquartered in London and considered pioneers in online market and social research. YouGov's mission is to **supply a continuous stream of accurate data** and insight into what the world thinks, so that companies, governments and institutions can better serve the people and communities that sustain them. The highly engaged YouGov panel covers over nine million people worldwide across 44 countries and the company serves the needs of 4,000 clients each year.

For further information please visit: <https://yougov.co.uk/>

Background, method and sample – Quantitative

YouGov Public Sector team ran an online survey of 503 local residents between the 22nd and 30th of September 2020. The survey examined awareness and access to green areas as well as what respondents valued in them and how their usage has changed during the Coronavirus lockdown.

The aim of the research was to understand use and experiences of green areas in the wider area around Heathrow Airport, particularly the Colne Valley Regional Park and to understand what could be done to support use of these green areas in future.

All respondents lived within five miles of Heathrow Airport and results were weighted to be representative of the 12 boroughs around the airport.

Sample

503 local residents, selected from YouGov's online panel.

All respondents live within approximately five miles of Heathrow Airport.

Results have been weighted by age, gender and social grade to be representative of the area around Heathrow Airport.



Background, method and sample – Qualitative

YouGov Qualitative conducted 2x 90 minute online chat-based focus groups in September 2020 with members of the general public living within 5 miles of Heathrow Airport, recruited from the YouGov online panel in the UK.

Following a quantitative survey and the initial qualitative focus groups, 31 additional respondents took part in a four-day online forum, exploring views and experiences of the southern section of the Colne Valley Regional Park.

Where possible, locations mentioned are included in the quotations included.

Sample

Group 1 (ages 18-39) – 10
respondents

Group 2 (ages 40+) – 13
respondents

4-day forum – 31 respondents
from areas within the southern
Colne Valley Regional Park.

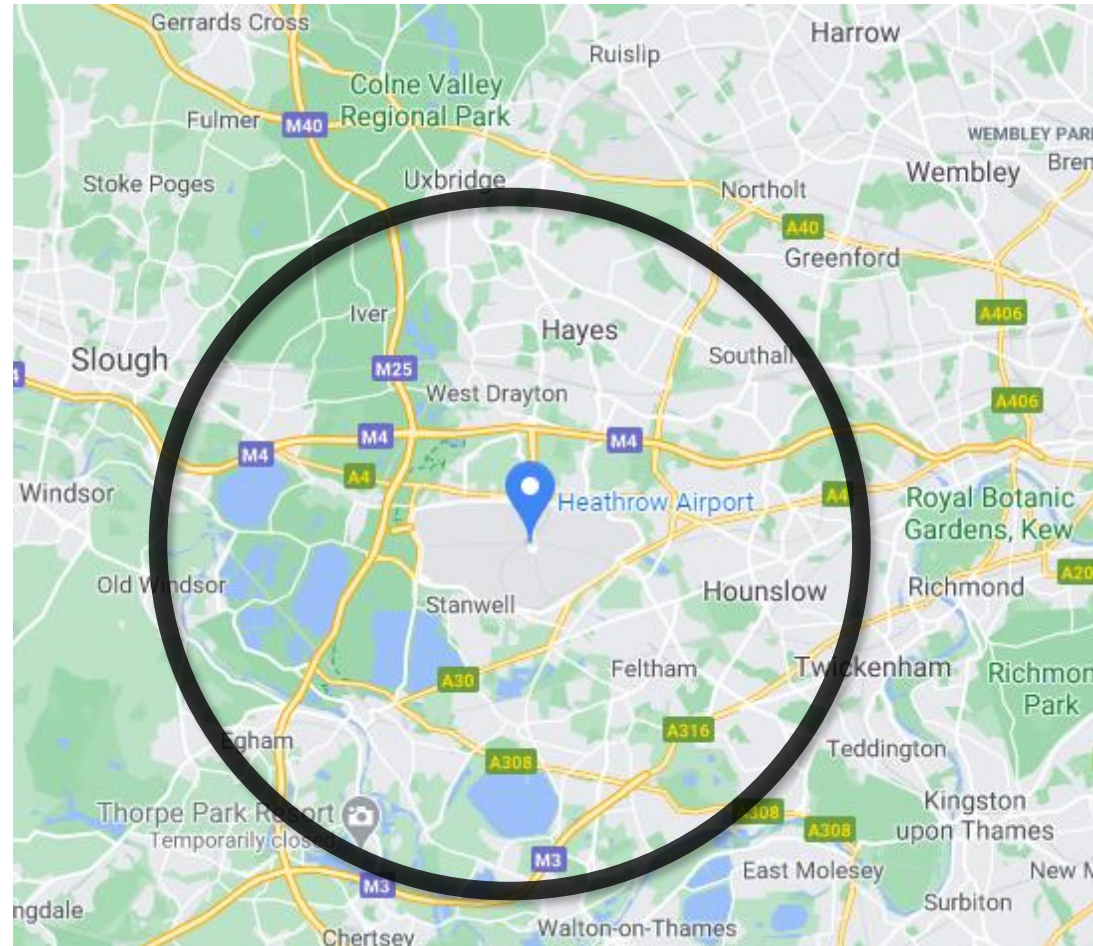
*Within each group, respondents
were recruited to have a mix of
gender, ethnicity, social grade,
location, and parental status.*



Respondents in phase 1 of the research were recruited from within a 5 mile radius of London Heathrow Airport

503 participants completed a quantitative survey.

23 participants attended 2x online focus groups.



Respondents in phase 2 of the research were recruited from areas within the southern section of the Colne Valley Regional Park

31 respondents took part in a 4-day online forum. Respondents were recruited from specific postcode areas within the Southern section of the CVRP and discussions drilled down into their use of this area specifically.*

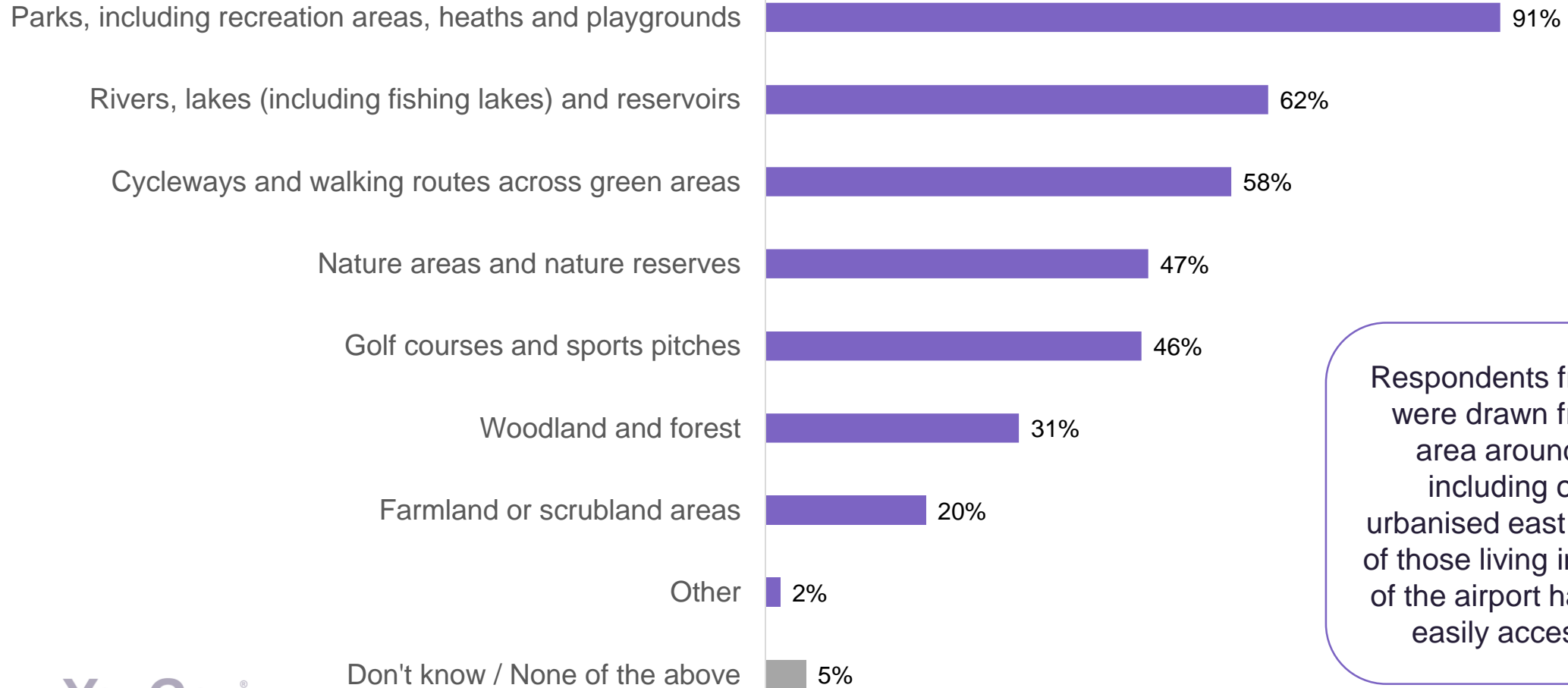


Awareness of and access to green areas

Analysis based on all elements of the research.

Almost all (95%) have some green areas that are easily accessible from their home. For most, this is a park or recreation area, but rivers and lakes, cycleways and nature reserves are also common

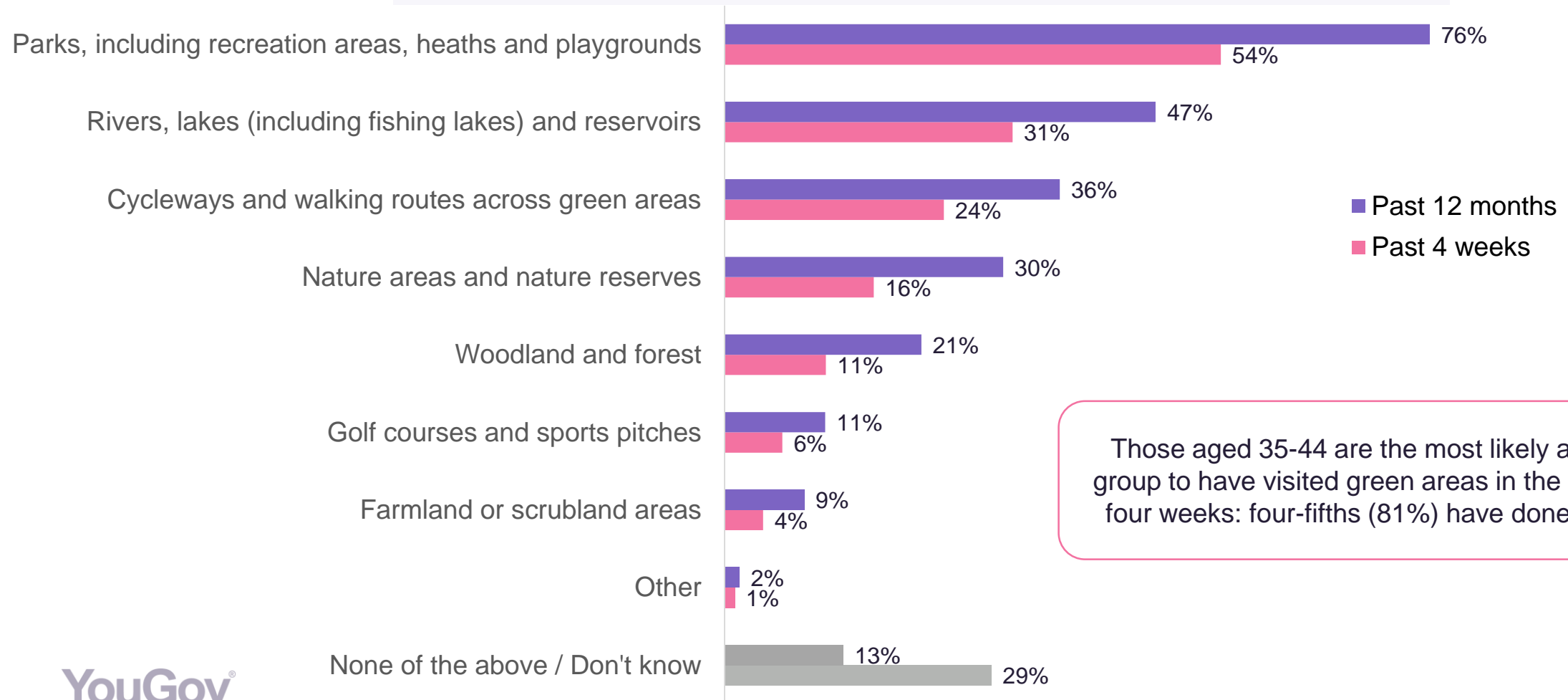
Which green areas are easily accessible from your home?



Respondents from this survey were drawn from the wider area around Heathrow, including on its more urbanised east side: almost all of those living in the area West of the airport had green areas easily accessible (98%)

Green areas are widely used by the people living around Heathrow Airport: the majority have visited at least one in the past four weeks (71%) and almost all (87%) have done so in the past twelve months

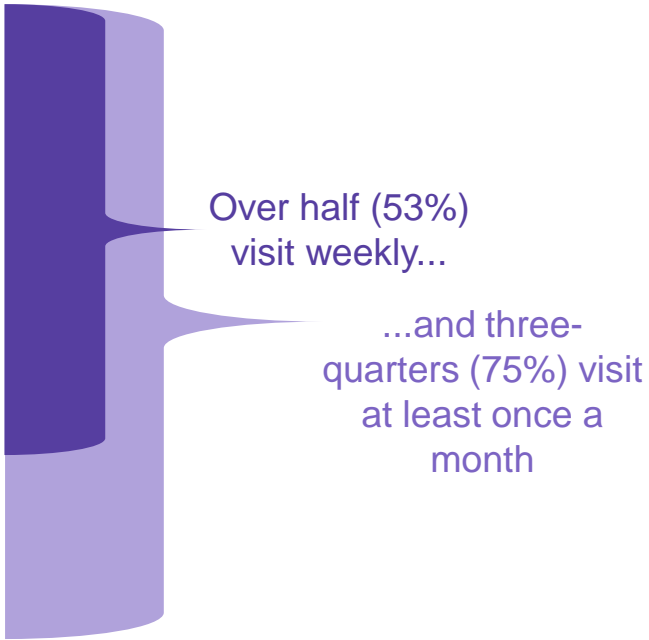
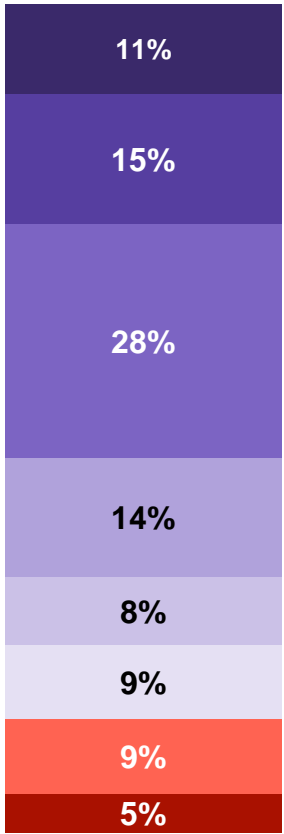
Green areas visited in the past 12 months / 4 weeks



Over half visit a green area at least once a week, with one in ten visiting every day

Frequency of visiting green areas

- Every day
- Three or four times a week
- Once or twice a week
- Once every two or three weeks
- Once a month
- Less than once a month
- Never
- No green space accessible from home



Certain age groups are more likely to visit local green areas more frequently with those aged 55-64 the most likely

% visiting weekly

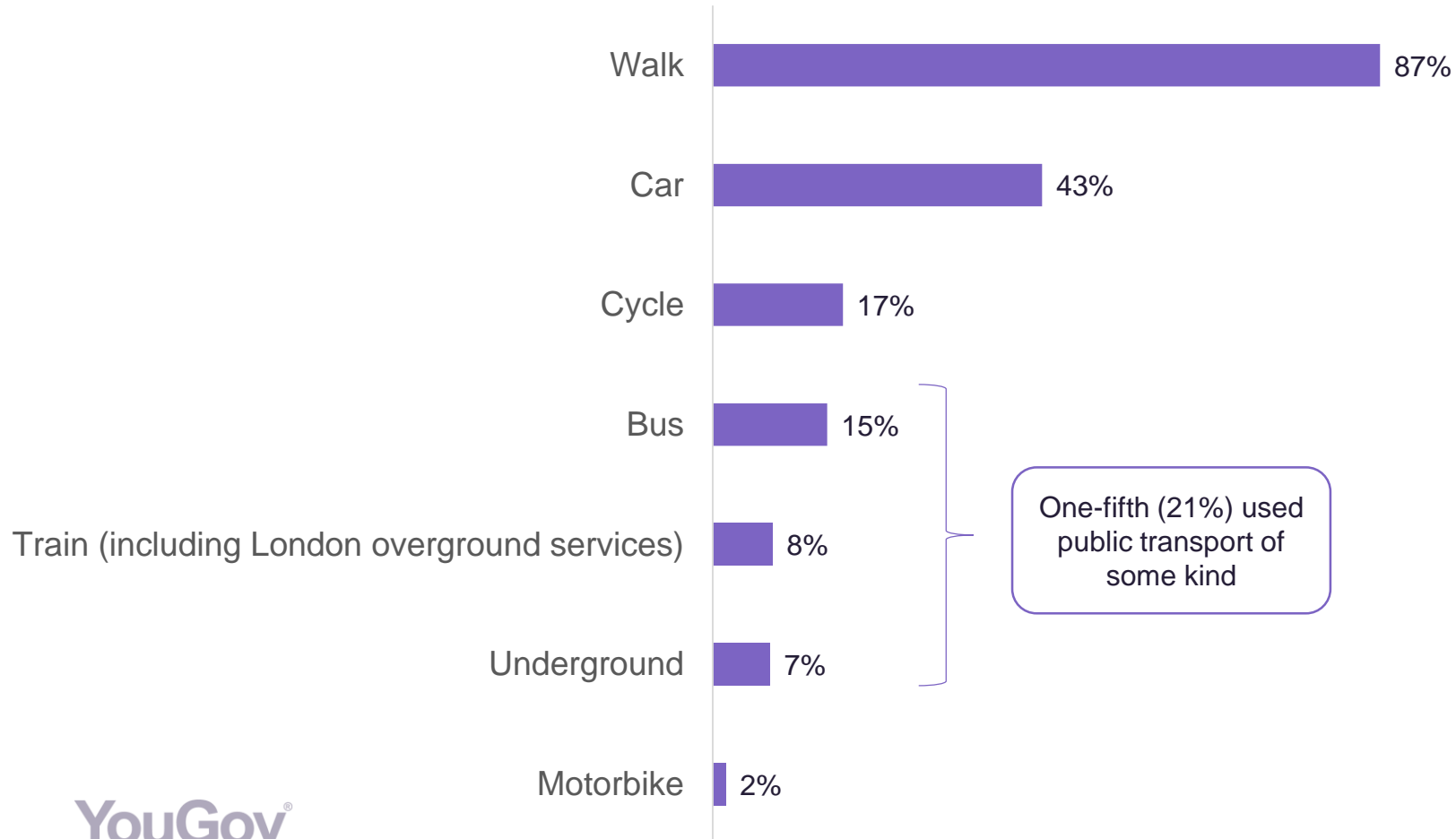
- 53% of 25-34s
- 59% of 35-44s
- 49% of 45-54s
- 63% of 55-64s
- 50% of over 65s



Q4_rb. Rebased: Approximately how often do you visit green areas in your local area?
 Base: all (503)
 Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey.

The majority of local residents who visited a green area in the past four weeks walked there with around two-fifths taking the car

Modes of transport used to access green areas in the past four weeks



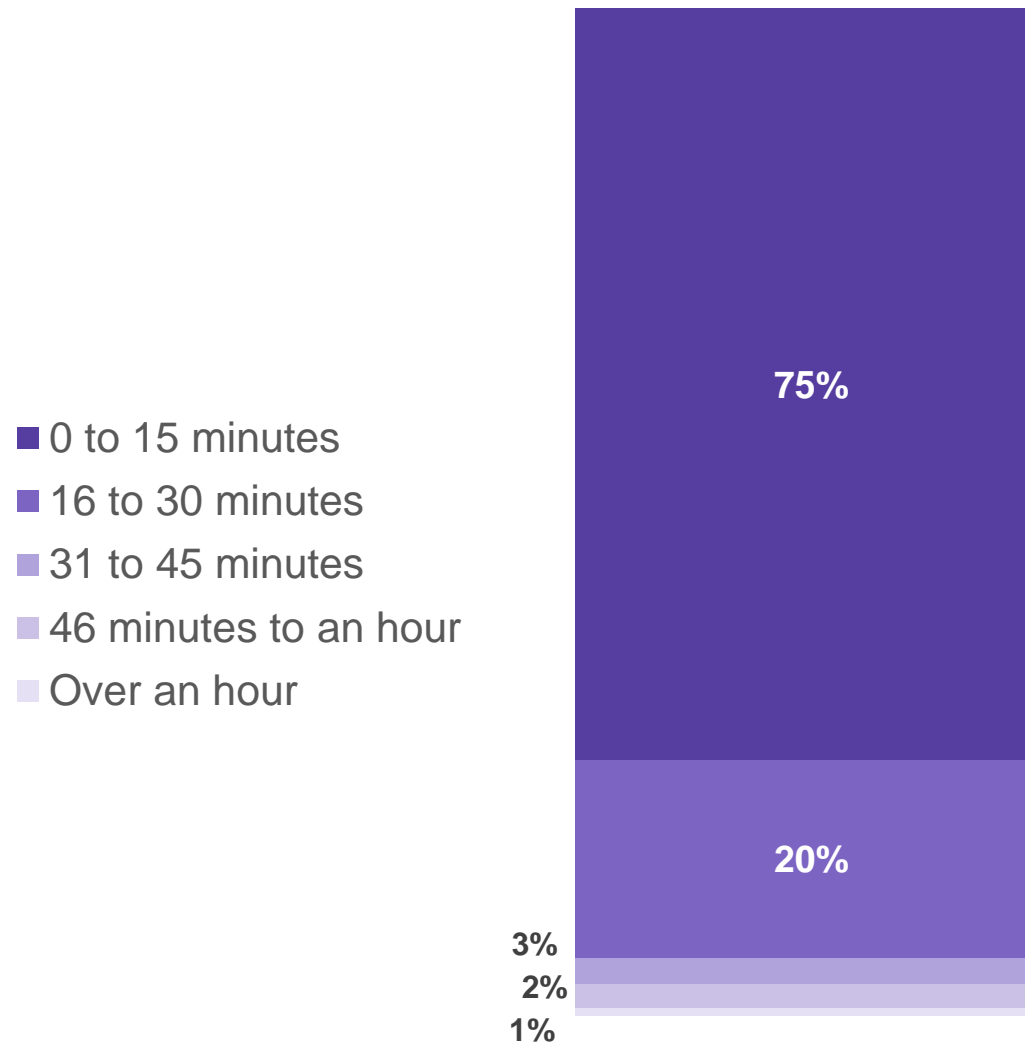
Many will use multiple methods of transport to access green areas. For example: over a third (35%) of those who cycled to a green area have also used the car to get there in the past four weeks as have 30% of those who used public transport.

Almost all of those who used public transport or car to access a green area also walked there

Journey time for almost all (94%) was less than half an hour when they last visited a green area

The mean journey time was 13.91 minutes and the median was 10 minutes

Journey time to green areas at last visit



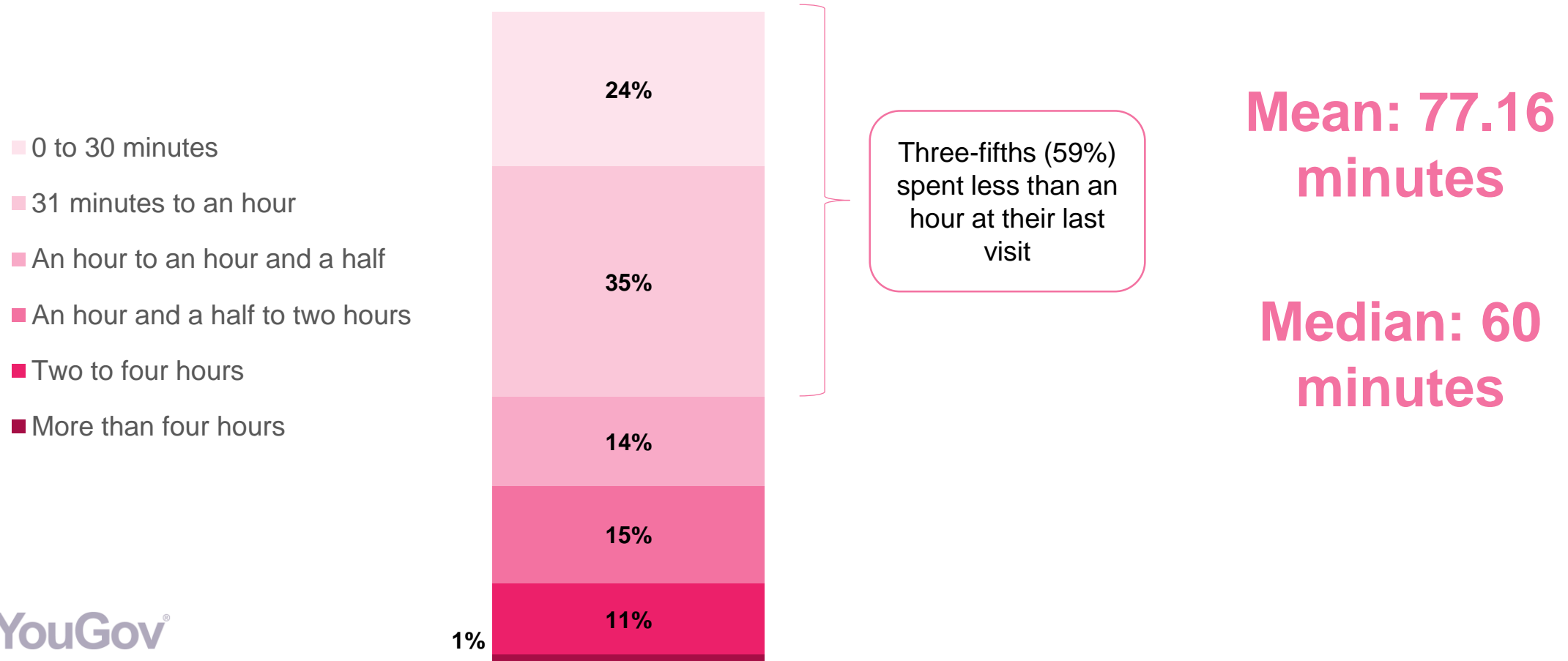
Q6_rb. Thinking about the most recent time you visited a green area, how long did the journey take from your home? Please enter an answer in minutes.

Base: all who have visited green space in the past 4 weeks (360)

Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

Most are short visits, lasting less than an hour, but a substantial proportion are spending extended periods of time in green areas

Time spent in green area at last visit



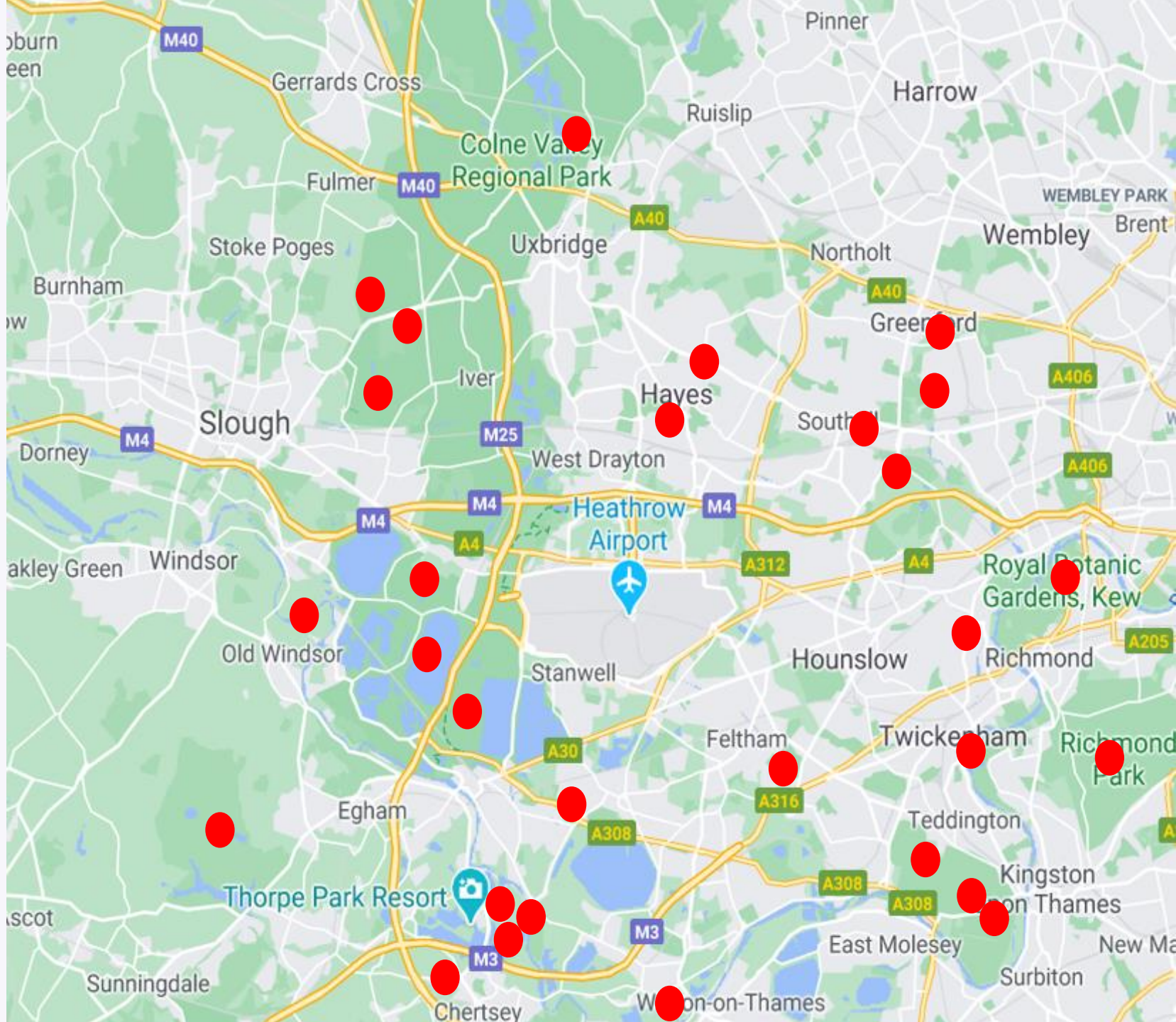
Use of green areas before and during lockdown

Analysis based on all elements of the research.

Respondents are using a wide range of green areas, including those in the CVRP

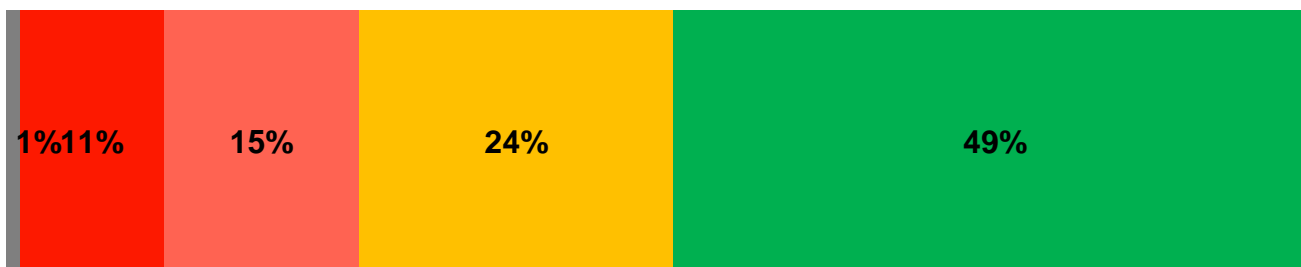
...Parks, canals and riverside areas are all regularly mentioned...

N.B. Locations mentioned in online focus groups. Other areas outside of this geographic area are not included.



Half reported using local green areas more during lockdown, with a quarter using them the same amount and one-seventh using them less. Around one-in-ten stopped using them entirely

How did the lockdown change how you use local green areas?



- Don't know
- I stopped using them entirely during the lockdown
- I used them less during the lockdown than I did before
- I used them about the same amount before and during the lockdown
- I used them more during the lockdown than I did before

By age, those aged 25-34 are most likely to have used green areas *more* during lockdown:

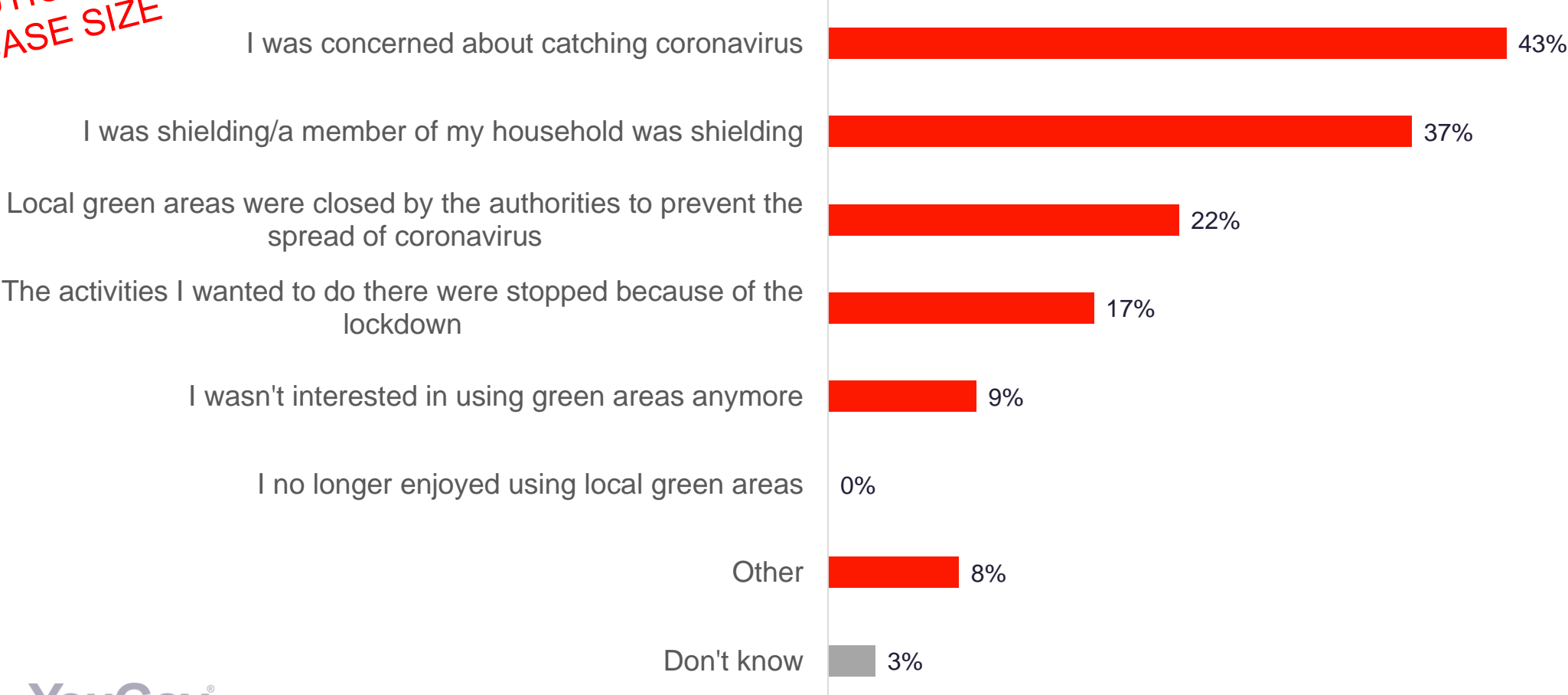
- 67% of 25-34s
- 45% of 35-44s
- 37% of 45-54s
- 42% of 55-64s
- 40% of over 65s

ABC1 social grades are also more likely to have used green areas more during lockdown compared to C2DE (54% vs 42%)

Of those who stopped using local green areas entirely, the most commonly given reasons were to do with concerns over Coronavirus; none found that they no longer enjoyed using them

CAUTION: LOW
BASE SIZE

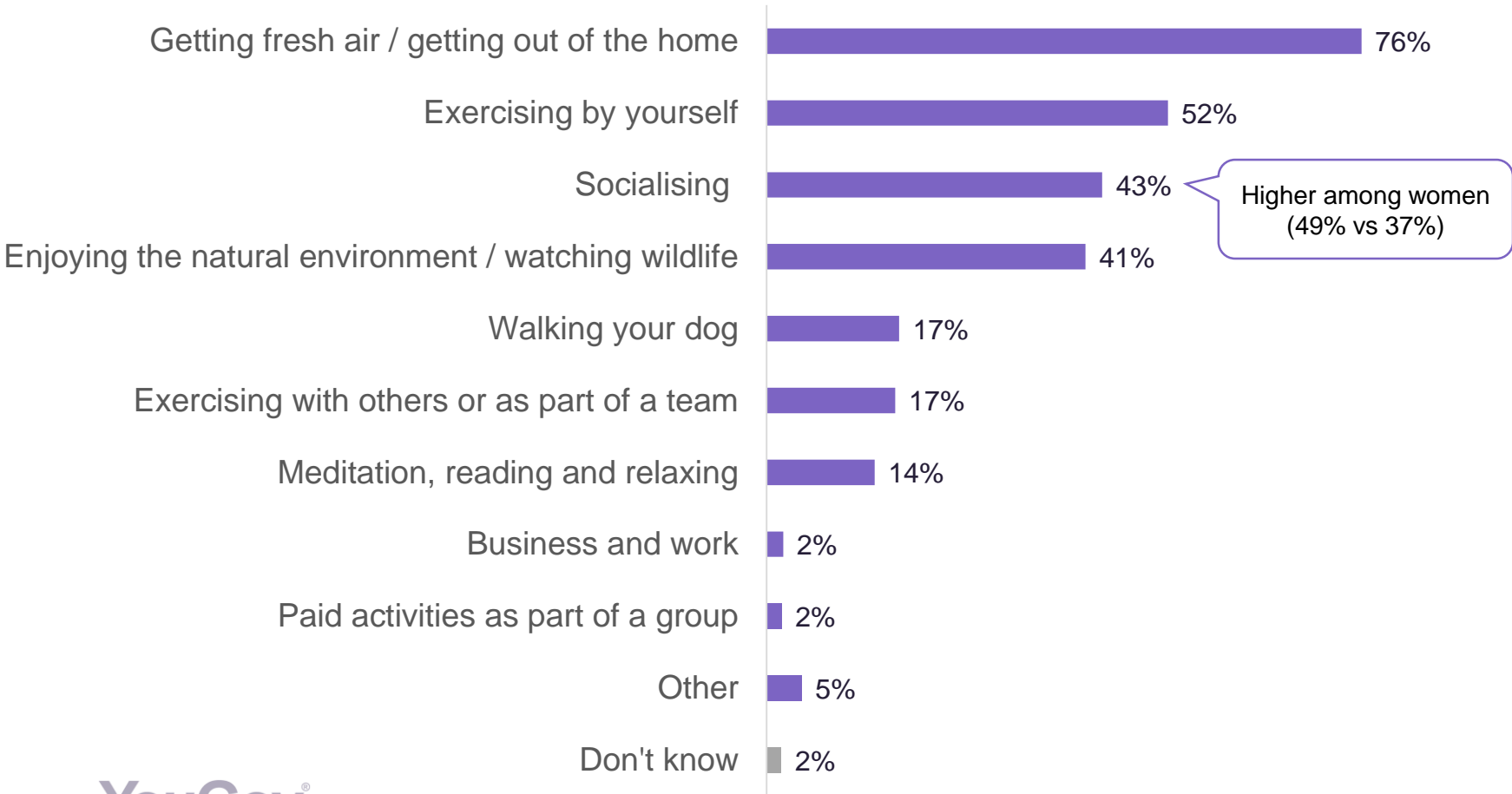
Reasons for stopping using local green areas during lockdown



Q11. Why did you stop using local green areas during the lockdown?
Base: All who stopped using local green areas during the lockdown (47)
Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

Getting fresh air is the most commonly given reason for going to a local green area in the past 12 months

Activities done in local green areas in the past 12 months



Local green areas are an important resource for exercise. In total, 58% of respondents used them for exercise in the past 12 months. Certain groups are especially likely to have done so:

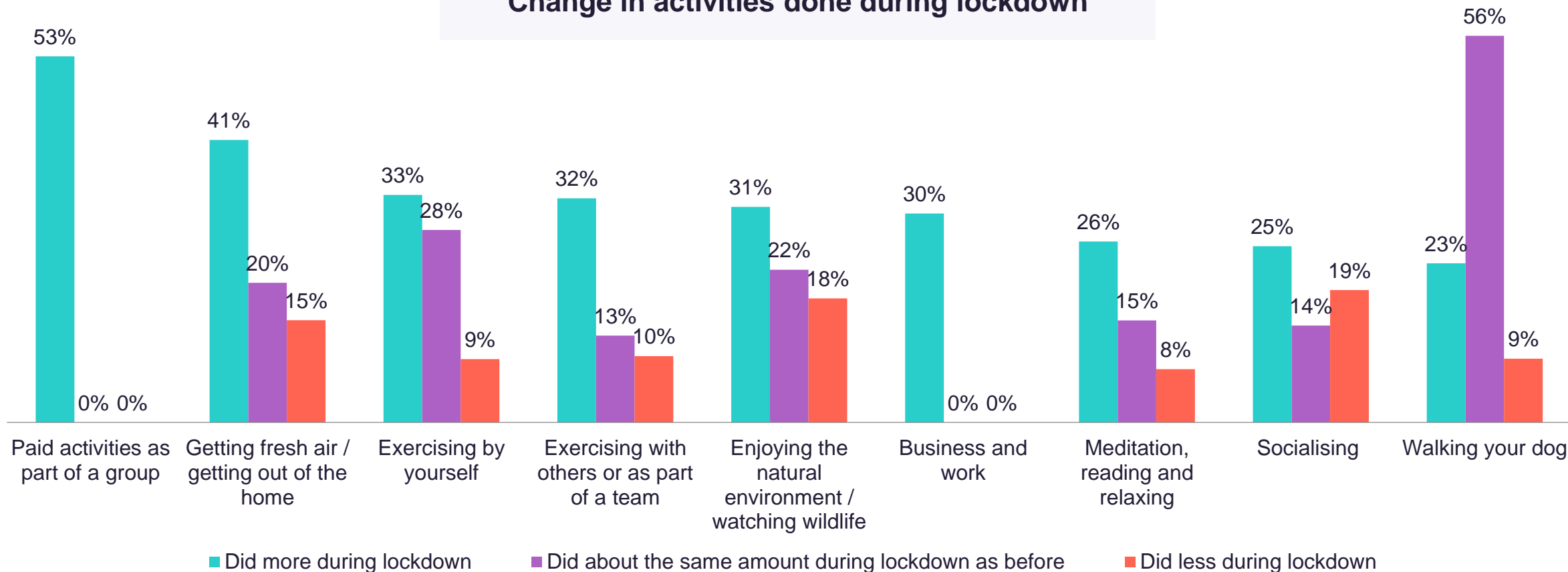
- Men (65% vs 51% of women)
- Those aged 55-64 (79%)
- Those who's use of green areas increased during lockdown (67% vs 45% of those who's use decreased)



Q12. Which of the following activities have you used the green areas in your local area for in the past 12 months?
Base: All who have visited green space in the past 12 months (440)
Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

During lockdown, certain outdoor activities became more popular with more exercising and getting out of the house for fresh air than previously; this suggests green areas have additional value when people cannot leave home

Change in activities done during lockdown



Many have embraced the outdoors during lockdown, finding new areas to visit and explore

- Parents especially say they have appreciated having access to green areas during the lockdown – many regularly visited nearby locations to entertain their children and give them space to ‘burn off energy’
- Others have been prompted by the lockdown to spend time exploring new areas outdoors, enjoying the change and variation to their routine
- Many say they are surprised at the range of green areas available nearby – something that they had low awareness of previously
- Some warn of the potentially negative impact if a third runway encroaches on green space in their local area, keen to ensure that the natural environment is maintained.

During Covid, it's been a blessing as we could get out daily and easily into a space the children were comfortable running around in. - Forum

Living in an area predominantly prone to noise/air pollution (Stanwell Moor) and traffic with the M25 and Heathrow airport- we need to ensure that our green spaces remain without reduction (just better utilised for the local community). The potential expansion of Heathrow will have a massive impact on the green space and air/noise and traffic. - Forum

Lockdown has encouraged many to rediscover green areas nearby

“

I use green areas regularly, but during lockdown I have begun to appreciate green areas more than ever. It is a conscious fact now to my quality of life and assessment of where to live. – Male, Younger

I used to visit maybe 2 or 3 times a month at most, during lockdown this increased to 2 or 3 times a week. – Male, Younger

I find parks with large open green spaces (such as Laleham, Bedford lakes etc.) the most appealing to us as my daughters will get demotivated just walking and perk up when they know there is a play area. – Female, Younger

”

“

I have found that places I knew of were closer than I thought and rediscovered some little shops, parks and riverside walks that I had forgotten about completely. – Male, Older

Found small parks and nice greener areas just by going for more walks, plenty of nice places about that I never knew of before. – Female, Older

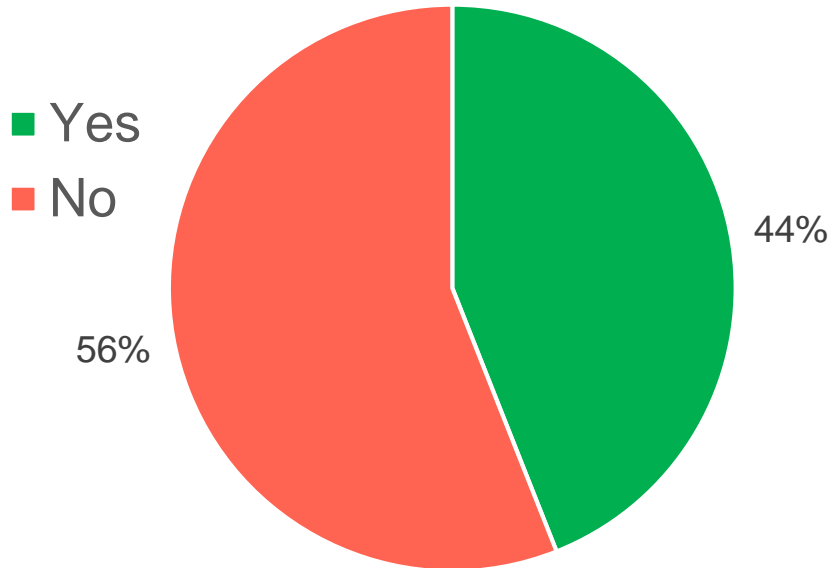
Try to go for more walks in the local parks. Take the kids cycling around the parks, away from traffic etc. – Male, Older

Green areas felt like a treat but during lockdown have become a necessity. – Male, Older

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During lockdown, 44% of those in the quantitative survey who used local green areas discovered new ones near their home

Whether discovered new green areas during lockdown



“Colne Valley...Black Park in particular”

“Colne Valley Park, various green corridors around the town”

“Walton to Weybridge walk”

“Crane park: I found different areas that I hadn't before explored”

“The haven' open water swimming lake at Bedfont lakes”

“Several different parks in the area that we had never been too which we could walk to.”

“Part of Hillingdon trail. Rickmansworth aquadrone.”

“A local footpath - Colne Valley Path”

“Osterley Park walking routes”

“Hounslow Heath”

“Went to Little Britain Lake for the first time (I knew it existed, but hadn't been there)”

“I have never been to Osterley Park, seeing the birds, cows and horses – beautiful”

“Hillingdon Trail”

Three-fifths (61%) enjoyed using green areas more during lockdown while it made no difference for under a third (30%)

Enjoyment of green areas during lockdown

Net: more

61%

58%

65%

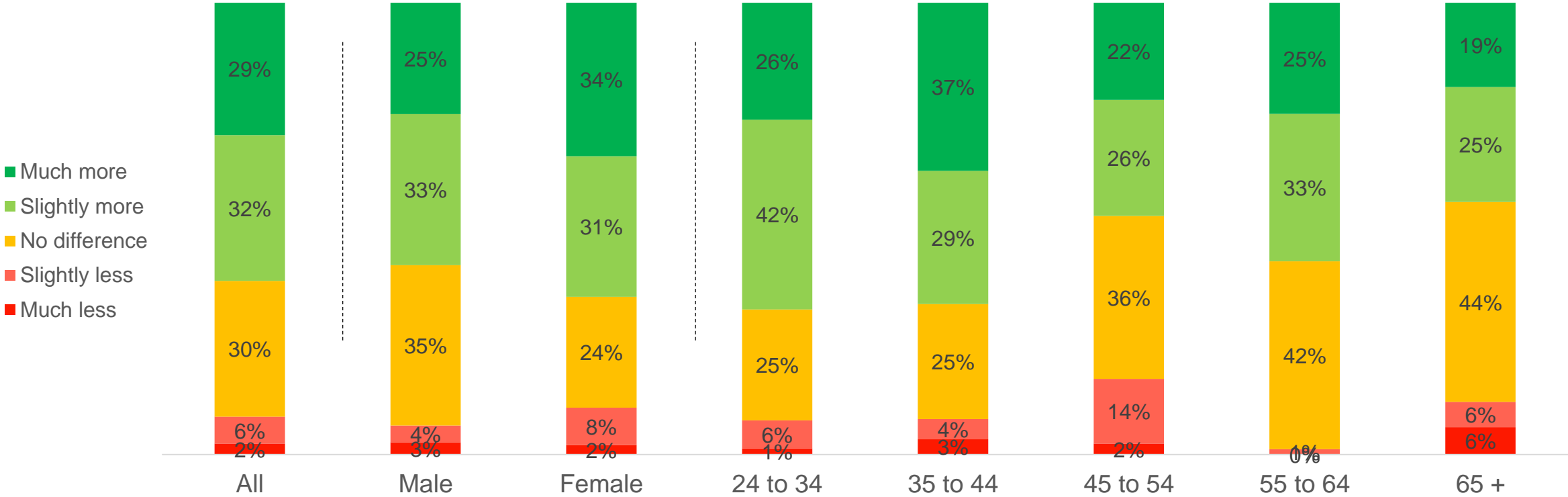
68%

66%

47%

57%

44%

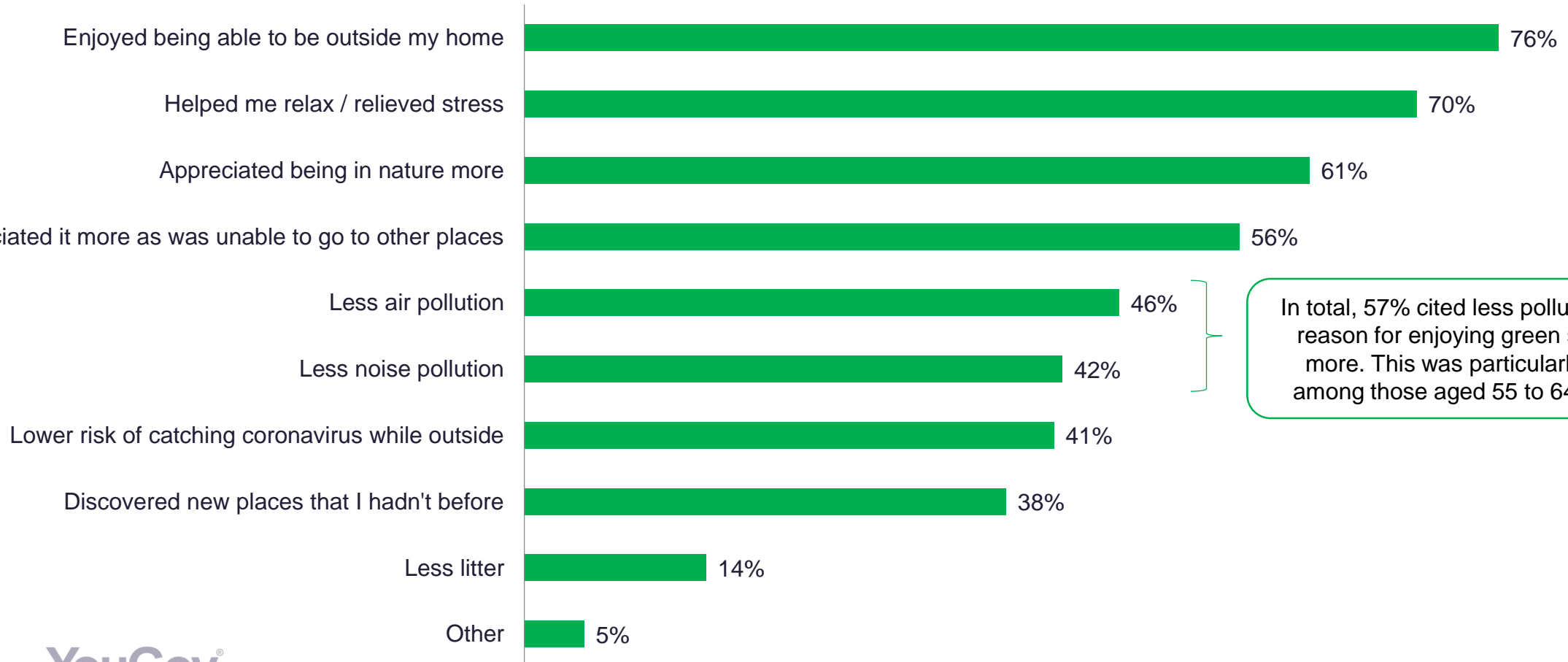


Q16. Compared to before the lockdown, did you enjoy using local green areas more or less during the lockdown?

Base: All who used local green areas during lockdown (389)
 16 to 24 age group not shown due to prohibitively low base size
 Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

Three-quarters (76%) enjoyed green areas more as a place outside their home and for 70% time spent in green areas helped relieved stress; this suggests that green areas were a crucial resource for mental health during the lockdown

Reasons for enjoying green areas more



In total, 57% cited less pollution as a reason for enjoying green spaces more. This was particularly high among those aged 55 to 64 (78%)

Although a small base size limits analysis, results indicate that the main reasons for enjoying green areas *less* was that they became too crowded and that respondents were concerned about Coronavirus

Reasons for enjoying green areas less

Too crowded / more people using it because of the lockdown

71%

Concerns about catching coronavirus

58%

More litter

21%

Other

16%

CAUTION: LOW BASE SIZE

Q17. You said you enjoyed using local green areas less during the lockdown than before it. Which, if any, of the following reasons made you enjoy using it less?

Base: All who enjoyed using green areas more during lockdown (36)

Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

Lockdown has brought both positive and negative change to green areas

While many note enjoying greater peace and quiet during the lockdown, some have seen an impact on cleanliness / upkeep in green areas nearby.

Positive

Respondents noticed less noise pollution over lockdown – fewer airplanes and less traffic meant that green areas felt more peaceful

The tranquillity of green areas is a positive and many noted being able to hear birdsong due to the quieter surroundings, and a re-emergence of wildlife

Some also noted cleaner air as a result of less traffic and air travel.

Negative

In some areas however, respondents say they saw larger gatherings and anti-social behaviour (e.g. youths loitering and drinking)

In some areas, greater use due to restrictions on indoor meet-ups has meant noticeable litter – although some say this has always been an issue to some extent

Given concerns about public transport and COVID, some would like to see better maintained and safer cycle tracks to allow easy access to green areas.

Many noticed greater tranquillity over lockdown and appreciate the peace that this brought

“

It was so much quieter, without traffic, people, planes, much nicer to be out and about. – Female, Younger

You appreciate the surroundings so much more, I was surprised by how many things I must have just walked past and never really noticed. – Male, Younger

We live under the Heathrow flight path (Hounslow) - the difference in being able to hear birdsong was phenomenal. – Female, Older

”

“

On paths like that (Grand Union Canal) I don't trust that other people will maintain social distancing. – Male, Older

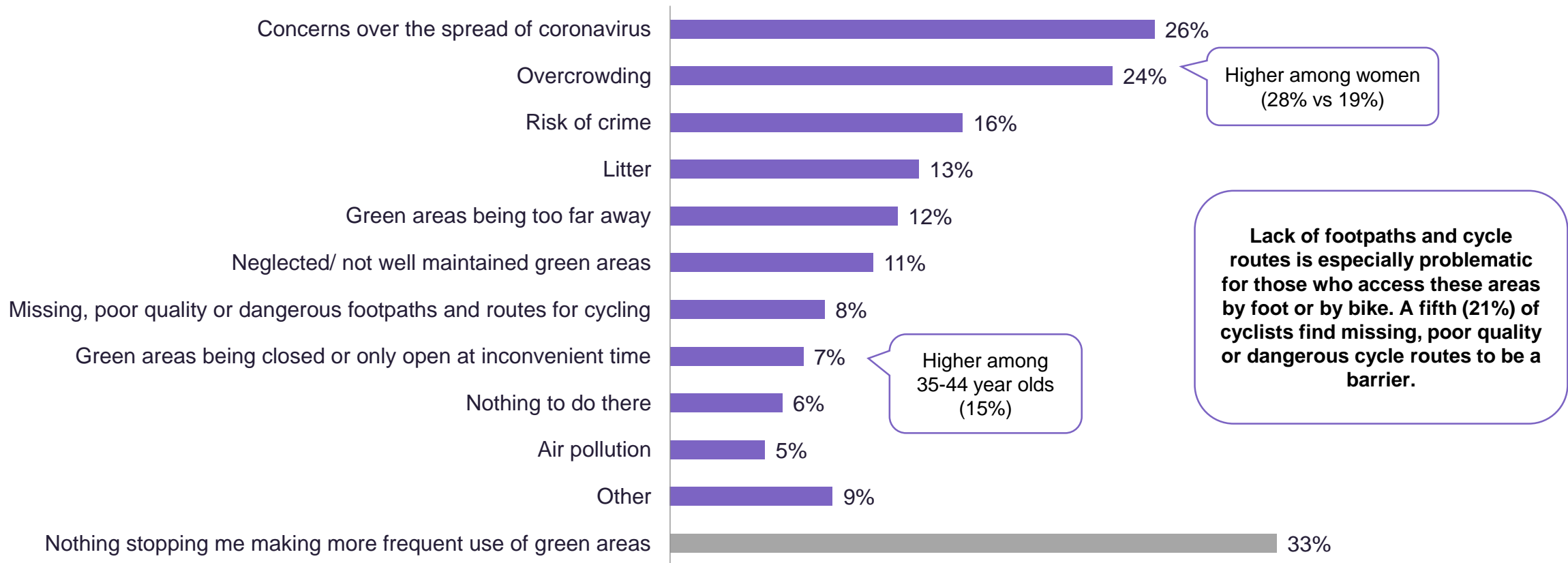
(avoid) local parks as they are too overcrowded. – Female, Younger

I agree about the overcrowded part of parks - particularly at the moment I find lots of people not paying any notice to the number limits in the park especially older children/young teenagers. – Male, Younger

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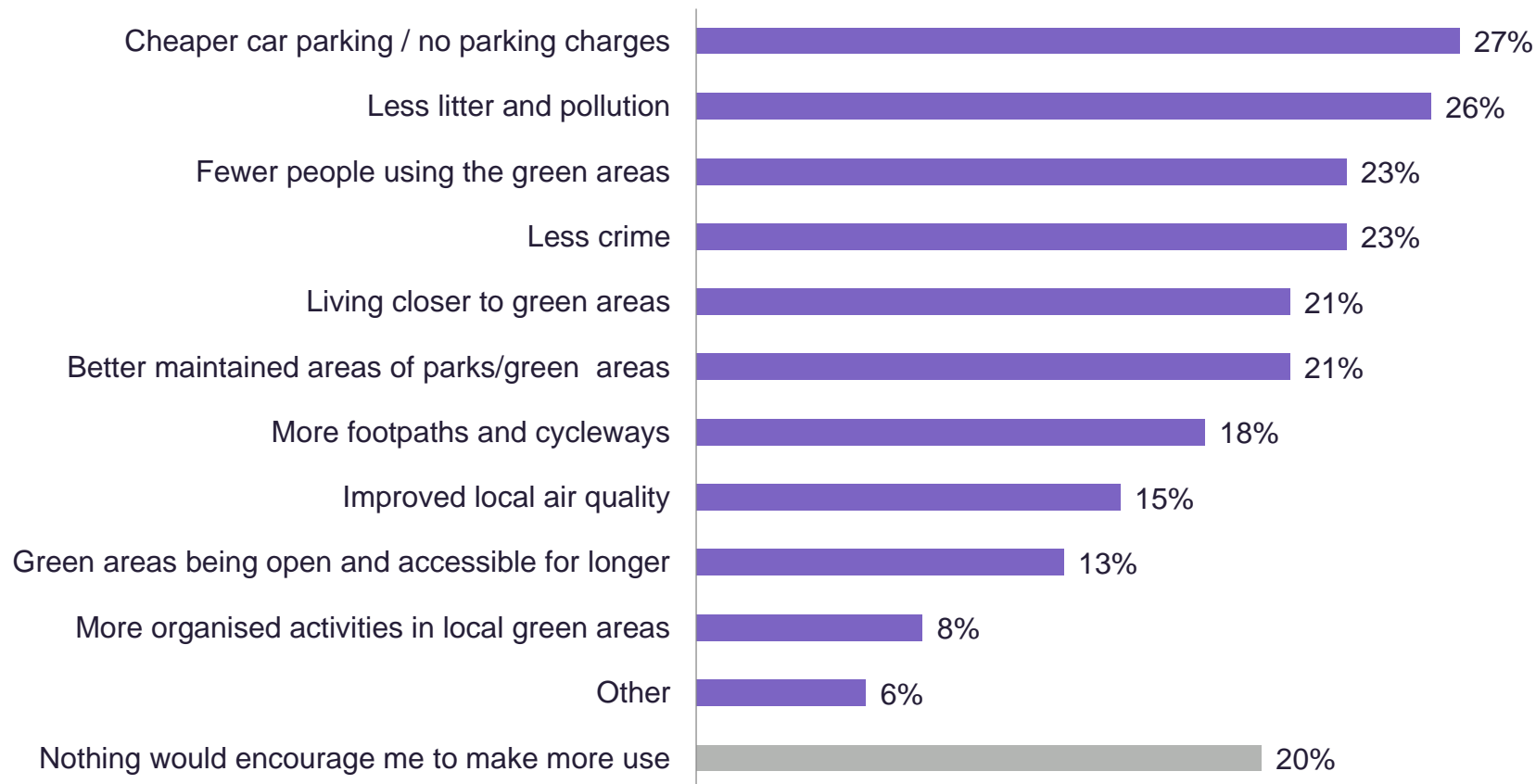
No single barrier emerged as the overriding issue stopping residents accessing green areas: most commonly mentioned are concerns over Coronavirus, overcrowding and crime. A third say there is nothing stopping them using green areas

Barriers to using green areas



Similarly, no single reason emerged that would encourage more use of green areas but reducing the cost of car parking and tackling litter and crime are commonly mentioned

What would encourage more use of green areas



Over a third (35%) of those who use the car to access green areas would like cheaper car parking

Again, those who cycle to green areas are significantly more likely to report that more footpaths and cycleways would encourage them to use green areas (41%)

For many, it's access to green areas and the facilities available that may impact their use

Access: travel and parking

Green areas that are easily accessible – by foot, bike or car – are particularly appealing, as most are using these means to access green areas. Good, well maintained bike paths are important, as are well set out paths so that people can easily get to and use the green area when they arrive. For those travelling by car, good (free) car parking adds to overall appeal.

Facilities and amenities

Respondents are looking for basic facilities / amenities in green areas, as these make for a more appealing experience, and encourage usage. Many speak about litter issues and dog mess, so bins (that are regularly emptied) are key. There are also calls for benches so that they can sit and take in their surroundings, toilets (where possible) as well as play areas to keep children occupied.

For many, it's access to green areas and the facilities available that impact their use

“

“Bike accessibility, areas to rest” Male, Younger

“Just the need to get out and be active somewhere that is natural and away from traffic. Very lucky round here to be able to do that easily” Male, Older

“Bike racks are a simple and good idea” Male, Younger

”

“

“Benches, bins, lighting, toilets if possible (but I understand a lot of places wouldn't be feasible)”
Female, Younger

“Gates, water, a lot of open space. A cafe could be very cute though I imagine more people would litter then. Nicely maintained grass and plenty of trees/shade” Female, Younger

“If areas are well maintained, no litter, information boards, easy and free parking if they are further away. Varied scenery” Male, Older

“Nice environment, things to occupy kids, facilities (toilets, cafe etc.)” Male, Older

”

There are a number of challenges associated with specific green areas that negatively impact the user experience

Canals / riverside areas

Particularly in areas where there paths are narrow, there's a lot of concern about social distancing. Negotiating other people can be difficult, especially during busy times and where paths are overgrown. While some areas are too busy, others are too isolated: where there's poor lighting or people 'hanging around' it can make people feel unsafe. Many also mention litter as a big challenge here.

Cycle paths / tracks

The main issues with cycle paths focus on maintenance and positioning of these vs. main roads. There are comments about cycle paths being poorly maintained (overgrown, uneven ground), and so can be hidden and hard to cycle along. Others also mention poor lighting, which can make them feel unsafe. There are also comments about cycle paths being too close to busy main roads to appeal.

There are a number of challenges associated with specific green areas that negatively impact the user experience

“

“The amount of litter everywhere along Grand Union Canal and the canal itself is unbelievable... We regularly fish litter out of the canal or clean the towpath. It changes a nice activity into a chore”

Female, Younger

“The Grand Union Canal path has been significantly improved recently (by Stockley Park businesses) – this has made it much nicer, but also much busier”

Male, Older

“There are canal paths which I'd use occasionally but they don't really feel safe... local canal sides can be intimidating too as there are a lot of homeless people camping there and again they feel very isolated”

Female, Older

”

“

“I would love to cycle, but just don't feel safe on the roads.. I would love to be able to cycle more in green spaces, but don't because I would have to cycle on the roads to get there”

Female, Older

“I really enjoy the route alongside Staines/Stanwell reservoir, it is a little tricky to get my bike over the cattle gate into Staines Moor...so if that was made more accessible for bikes I think a lot more people would use it”

Male, Younger

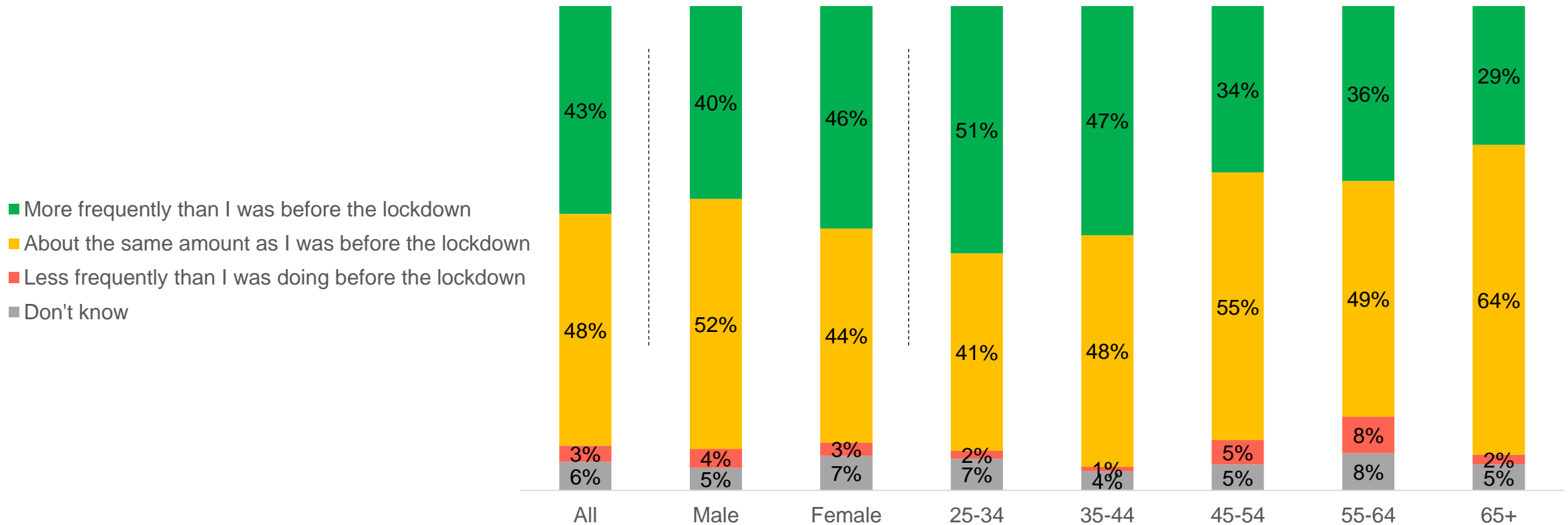
“I've love to cycle more but roads aren't fun and safe these days and always a pain to get a puncture from a nail in the kerb”

Male, Older

”

Over two-fifths (43%) will use green areas more than they were before the lockdown with around half (48%) using them the same amount. Younger respondents are the most likely to use them more

Future use of green areas



Lockdown has brought the importance of green areas to the fore, and many say they have increased their use

Use of green areas pre-lockdown

- Use of green areas pre-lockdown tended to be more irregular, juggled with busy work schedules and other time commitments
- Use of the outdoors for exercise was established for some, however others relied on gym memberships, or did not prioritise outdoor activity
- Some spoke of using green areas in a planned way – using green areas as a destination for a day out (e.g. Kew Gardens), rather than making spontaneous use of areas closer to home.



Use of green areas during lockdown

- While some say they did not go out at all at the start of lockdown, once restrictions eased nearby green areas became an important part of their daily routine
- Many have increased their use of green areas, mentioning the importance of getting a change of scene and some 'fresh air'; especially for those without outdoor space at home
- Some have actively explored new areas nearby, looking for larger areas to allow them to be distanced from others and enjoying taking time to cover new ground.

Value of green areas

Analysis based on all elements of the research.

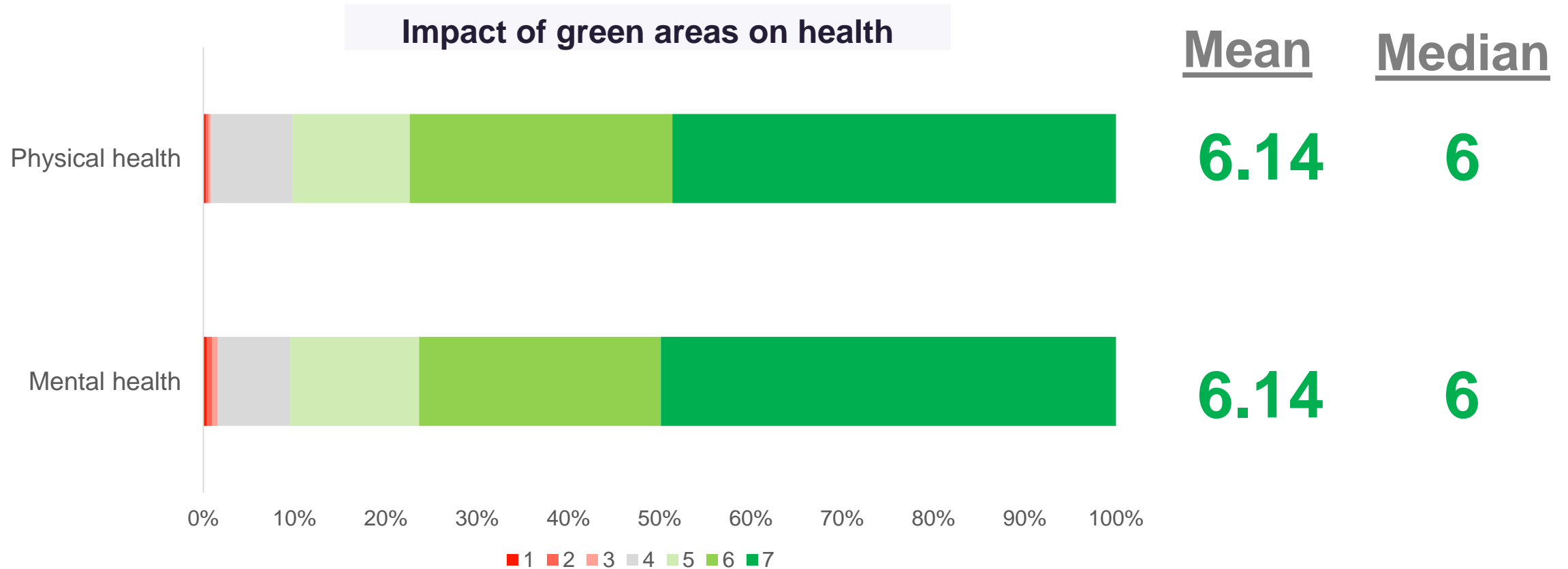
Using green areas has a positive impact on mental and physical wellbeing, and it's particularly welcomed in summer

- For many, being able to access green areas has a positive impact – getting some fresh air and exercise is particularly important during summer when the weather is pleasant.
- Some talk about it providing an 'escape' – a place where they can while away time, sit and people watch and simply take in the view – they can detach from the overstimulation of daily life.
- For those who are working from home, taking time out to visit green areas gives them welcome respite from screens. This is felt to be important for mental health.
- Visiting green areas also aids physical wellbeing – many talk about their walk to green areas as 'part' of the exercise – and whether walking, running, cycling, it's all aids physical health.
- One or two also talk about openness of green areas being important – inside (especially if they're working) can feel very claustrophobic, but getting into green areas provides a release.

*“The main benefits are easing of tension from not getting out and the kids feel refreshed from the freedom of being in green spaces. I think all green spaces are beneficial to mental and physical health” –
Female, Younger*

“Areas that feel 'cared' for make it easier to appreciate the area too and respect it. when bins are left overflowing people are less careful about what they do with their waste“ – Male, Older

Results from the quantitative survey support this: on a scale of 1 to 7 the majority reported that green areas have a positive impact on their physical (77%) and mental (76%) health



Q22_1_scale. Does having green areas nearby have a positive or negative impact on your physical health and wellbeing?

Q22_2_scale. Does having green areas nearby have a positive or negative impact on your mental health and wellbeing?

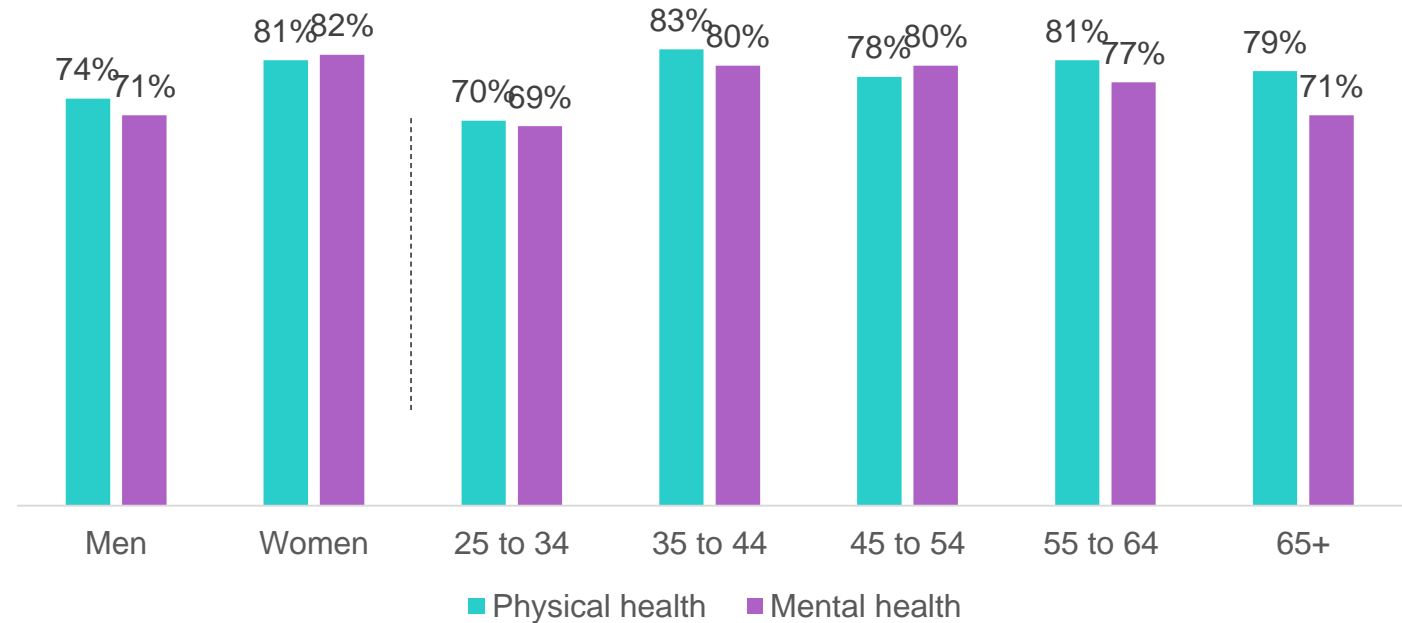
Base: all who chose to answer the question (physical health: 491; mental health: 488)

Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey. A score of 6 or 7 on the scale is counted as a positive impact.

Women are significantly more likely to report a positive impact on their health than men. Those aged 35 to 44 are also more likely to report a positive impact, but for all age groups a majority reported a positive impact

Those who used green areas more during lockdown are more likely to say that green areas have a positive impact on their physical health, but there is no connection to mental health

Impact of green areas on health by age and gender



Impact of green areas on health by use during lockdown

Mean score	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	Stopped entirely
Physical health	6.34	6.20	6.31	6.13
Mental health	6.31	6.23	6.33	6.14

Q22_1_scale. Does having green areas nearby have a positive or negative impact on your physical health and wellbeing?

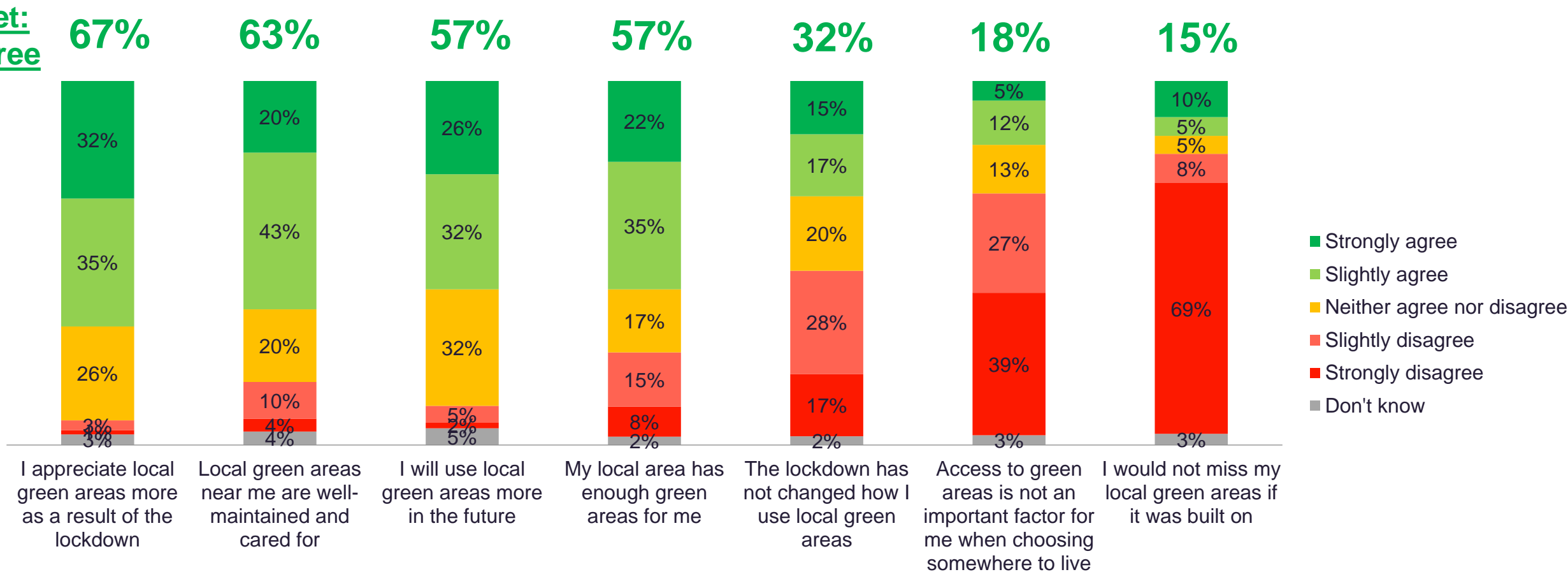
Q22_2_scale. Does having green areas nearby have a positive or negative impact on your mental health and wellbeing?

Base: all who chose to answer the question (physical health: 491; mental health: 489)

Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

Lockdown has made local green areas more popular: 67% appreciate them more since the lockdown and 57% say they will use them more in the future

**Net:
agree**



YouGov

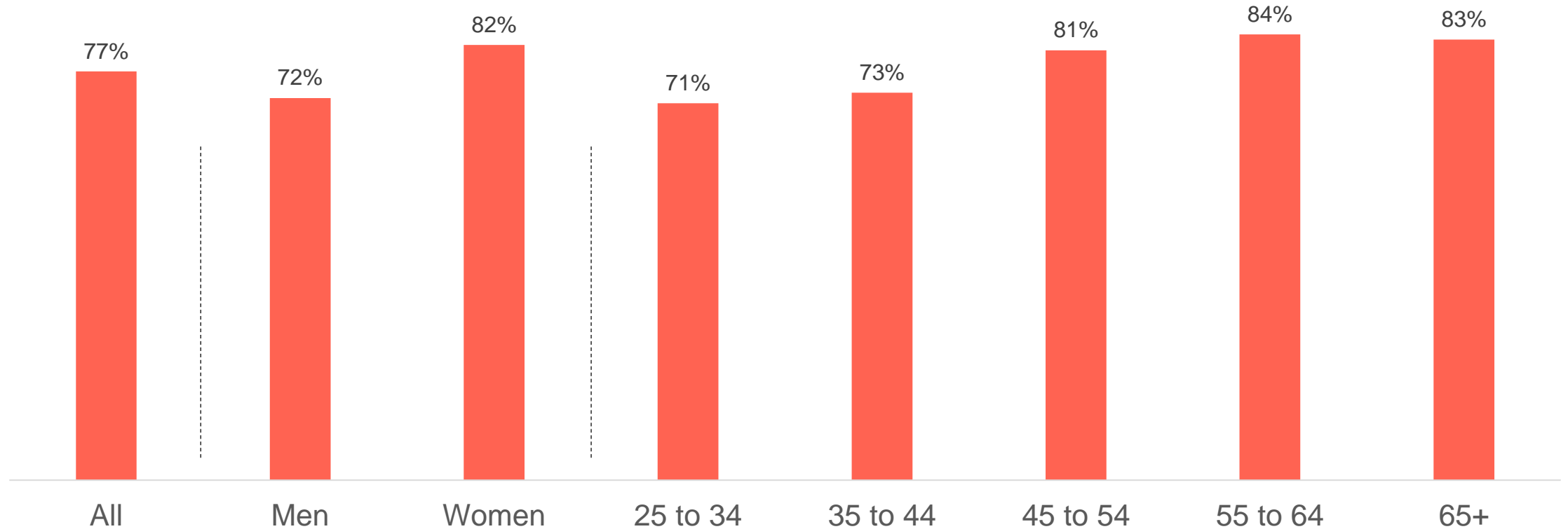
Q23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

Base: all (503)

Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

Over three-quarters (77%) would miss their local green areas if they were built upon with women more likely to disagree than men

% who disagree: "I would not miss my local green area if it was built on"



Colne Valley Regional Park

Analysis based on all elements of the research.

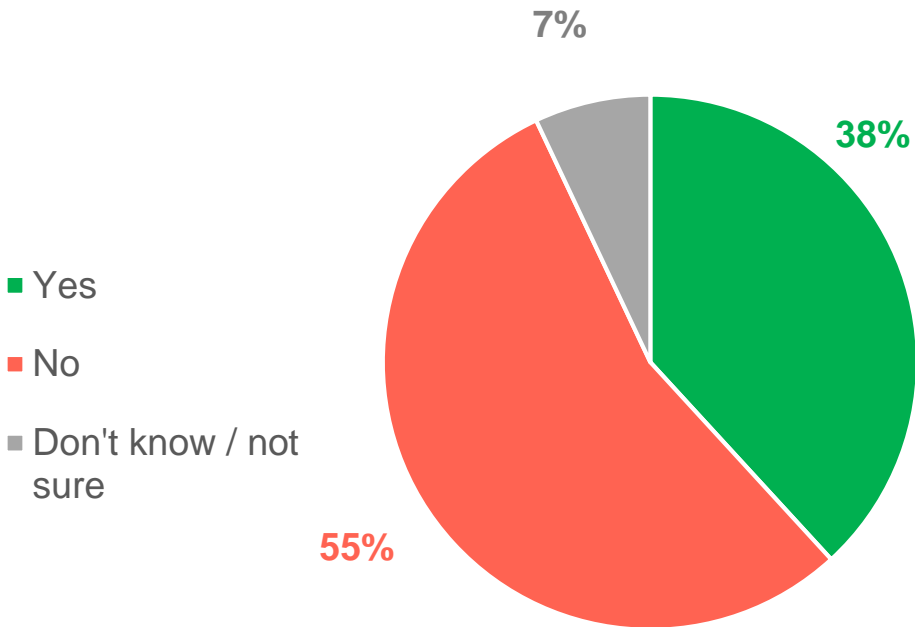
The Colne Valley Regional Park, founded in 1965 stretches from Rickmansworth in the north to Staines and the Thames in the south, and from Uxbridge and Heathrow in the east, to Slough and Chalfont St Peter in the west.

Covering 43 square miles the landscape is a mix of bustling villages, green spaces, wildlife habitats and waterways, which comprise the first taste of countryside immediately west of London.



Almost two-fifths (38%) in the quantitative survey have visited a green area within the CVRP and of this group a third (33%) did so in the past month

Whether visited CVRP



When visited CVRP



Sample for this survey was drawn from a 5-mile radius around Heathrow Airport and therefore includes those living East of the airport, further from the CVRP. Over three-fifths (62%) of those living in the Western part of the sample area had visited the park

Half (49%) visited the CVRP to enjoy the natural environment while 30% visited it to exercise, either by themselves or as part of a group

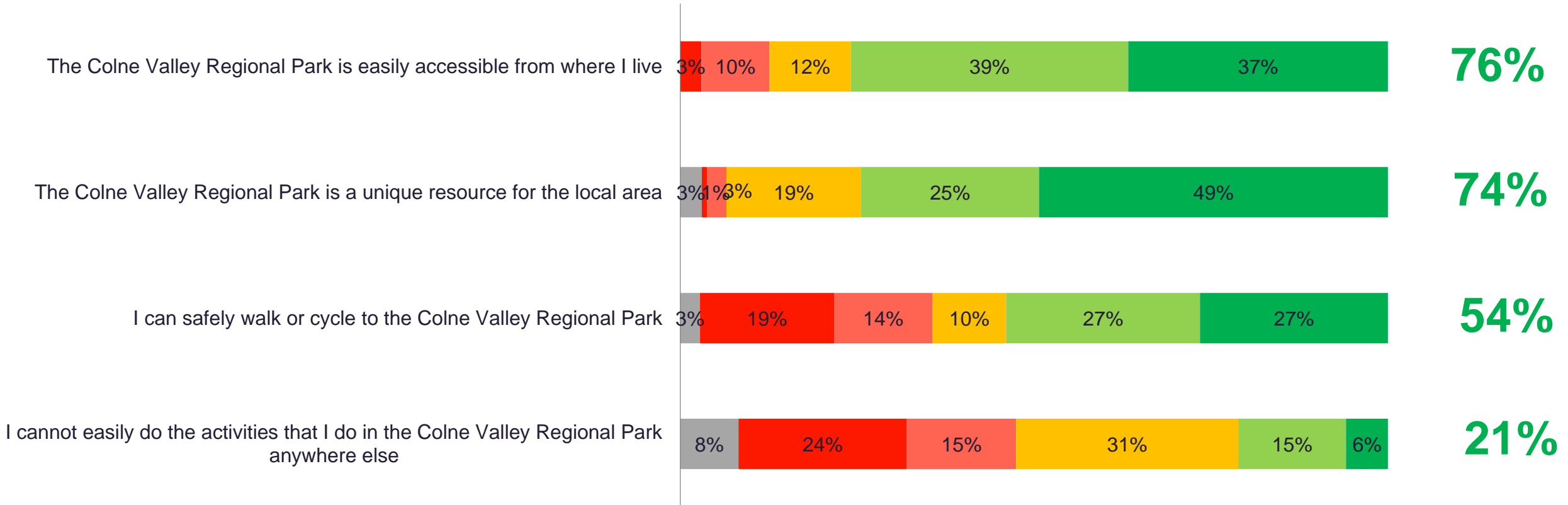


Men are more likely to use the CVRP for exercise (41% vs 17% of women)

The CVRP is valued by those who live nearby, with three-quarters (74%) considering it a unique resource for the local area. Most (76%) also find it easily accessible from their home

Net: agree

■ Don't know
■ Strongly disagree
■ Slightly disagree
■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Slightly agree
■ Strongly agree



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Colne Valley Regional Park?

Base: All who have been to the CVRP (192)

Analysis based on 500 sample quantitative survey

They're accessing green areas using a range of transport; good access to green areas will prompt greater use in future

Gaining access in a number of ways

They're accessing green areas in different ways, depending on their situation (driver / non-driver), who they're with (along vs. a group), and where they're going (close to home vs. further away). It is clear, however, that choice is important: the more accessible a green area is, the more likely they are to use it.

Pedestrian / cycle access key for all

Being able to walk to green areas is key, especially when accessing areas nearby; well-kept pathways and clear access points from roads is key. For cyclists, there's demand for better maintained and safer cycle paths (i.e. away from main roads), and for secure cycle parking for convenience.

Cars used for non-local green areas

Many are uncomfortable with using public transport (due to safety concerns cf: COVID-19), and few are using this to travel to green areas outside their locale as a result. Those that drive are looking for good, ample and (importantly) free parking. Availability of parking is a challenge for some at present.

South CVRP deep dive – experiences and improvements

Analysis based on discussion had in 4-day online forum (participants recruited from within south CVRP).

Phase 2 of the qualitative research explored the views and experiences of those living within the southern section of the Colne Valley Regional Park

The following analysis is based on discussions had in the 4-day online forum in which 31 respondents participated.

Forums touched on respondents' use of green areas more broadly before deep-diving into use of the south CVRP and specific areas visited. Where exact locations were mentioned, these have been included in the quotes for reference.



While few know the CVRP by name, a majority have accessed green areas in the area before - many are regular visitors

- Many respondents are unfamiliar with the CVRP by name when asked about their use of this area spontaneously. However, when shown on a map, a majority say that they do currently use areas in the South CVRP, visiting with friends and family alike.
- The size of the CVRP is a surprise – many were previously unaware of the range of green areas local to them. The range of cycling and walking trails available in the area appeal in particular.
- Having seen the CVRP information, many say that they plan to look into the green areas available nearby and make greater use of these in future. Some suggest greater promotion would encourage access, and many are keen to add variation to the areas they regularly visit.

A bit more recognition and would like to find out more about it (CVRP). I have only used a very small part and think that I should make the effort to explore more. -

Forum

More information available - noticeboards about wildlife. Local information. Historic places. Route maps to tell you different ways to get places. The length of the walks and different ways to go - on Staines Moor we have 'devised' 3 or 4 of our own walks with different routes and it would be good to see this information on noticeboards. It would give people options and ideas and encourage use. - Forum

They are making regular use of the CVRP...

...Ankerwycke and Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve are commonly visited areas for the natural environment, while the facilities at Lammas Park are appreciated by families...

Ankerwycke Estate

I have only just discovered Ankerwycke Estate and find that a very pleasant walk. I like how it has wooded areas as well as an open field with cows and horses and it's great of course to see one of the oldest trees in the country.

Lammas Park

Lammas Park, we visit here mainly to use the children's play park and feed the ducks in the Thames. This park is great for families and has toilet facilities and a cafe.

Harmondsworth Moor Country Park

I think parking can be improved at a lot of the green space areas in the southern part of the Colne Valley region. Harmondsworth Moor needs to look at the issue of British Airways Staff using the car parks.

Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve

We love going to Arthur Jacobs nature reserve down the road from us as a nice little walk with lots of wildlife. To the right there is a nice woodland area which we love to go walking through, it's nice and relaxing and makes you forget about to this horrid virus!

Black Park Country Park

Black Park - another great park for families with a Go Ape trail. I've run here on several occasions and the routes are clearly signposted. Parking is good and the cafe provides a good variety of food and beverages.

Staines Moor

Staines Moor - a short walk from my home...Open space and very rarely see other people, which makes it peaceful and also provide quality family time away from the hustle and bustle, without transport noise and other people. Great for wildlife spotting.

The South CVRP is appreciated by local residents who value the wellbeing impacts of spending time in nature

The South CVRP is highly valued by many – having access to green areas on their doorstep is appreciated for its effects on mental and physical health.

- Many comment on the peace and tranquillity that the South CVRP offers – visiting these green areas is a good way to unwind, occupy children, get some fresh air and include exercise into their weekly routines. For many, the ability to get some space from the stresses of work and become immersed in nature has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.
- Access to water and wooded areas as well as open space is appreciated. Many say they enjoy the feeling of being in nature, so while they enjoy areas that are well maintained, some caution that adding facilities could give a feeling of artificiality and distract from the natural environment.
- However, for those visiting with children, facilities are an important factor – clean toilets are a must for longer trips, while play areas / play equipment keep younger children entertained on family outings (e.g. Lammas Park, Black Park).

I actually like the fact that once I am walking by a stream or across a meadow, e.g. on Harmondsworth Moor, that I feel I'm immersed in the countryside. I like the feeling of peace and actually like the fact that it's never busy. - Forum

Over lockdown, many have experienced a quieter, less polluted CVRP

An increase in wildlife

Since many have been using green areas more frequently during the lockdown, a diversity of wildlife has been noted. Some say that this in itself is an attraction to the CVRP sites that they visit, for example seeing herons as a result of the reduction in planes flying overhead. While keen for this to continue, some note that this may not be a long lasting effect.

Reduced noise and pollution

Again due to a reduction in air traffic, but also reduced traffic on the roads, many note an increase in tranquillity when visiting areas of the CVRP, saying areas feel less polluted by noise. Given the positive benefits of peace and quiet for mental wellbeing, this has been appreciated by many. However, some are pragmatic – *‘Stopping the planes taking off from LHR be the only solution, but obviously not possible’*.

Many are using areas of the CVRP regularly, and have appreciated this space during lockdown especially

“

Ankerwyke and Arthur Jacob I use regularly, they are really nice open walks, Ankerwyke in particular is nice as there are animals, cows and horses that the children like to see. - Forum

I like simplicity, not to travel to far away, peaceful (no noise) quiet (no crowds of people) Harmondsworth Moor is open space, therefore I have felt safe to walk alone in this area. - Forum

The Arthur Jacob Nature reserve is lovely but isn't peaceful as it's right underneath the landing route for Heathrow. During lockdown it was very peaceful and quiet and we could hear so much more wildlife. - Forum

”

“

I have used some Colne Valley walking routes when walking to Langley park. The alley way between swallow street and Wood Lane. - Forum

I'm encouraged to visit areas which are easily accessible and generally not overcrowded, the Arthur Jacobs area offers this to me. It is generally clean (very little dog mess), it is quiet, and it offers an ever changing array of vegetation. - Forum

I generally find that Langley Country Park is very clean and well maintained, never have a problem with anything there - I think that's why I use it more. - Forum

”

Adequate maintenance would encourage greater use of areas in the South CVRP – overgrowth can make access more challenging

Litter and bins

Some say that litter has become more visible over lockdown – not only does this detract from the look of the natural environment but it poses a hazard for those walking their dogs or visiting with children. Some suggest that more bins are needed (e.g. Langley Park), and should be regularly emptied, to help tackle this. Some also comment that they see dog mess which is off putting; again more bins could improve this.

Cycling / walking routes

While some say they do use walking and cycling routes, there tended to be low awareness of these. Stony or muddy ground can inhibit use of these, and overgrowth and fallen branches can make routes feel narrow (e.g. Stanwell Moor, Langley Park). Proximity to traffic in some areas is off-putting (e.g. around junct. 14), with many cautious of cycling near to busy main roads. Poorly lit routes can feel unsafe, especially for those accessing them alone.

Increasing the number of bins in the area could help reduce litter and many agree that parking facilities could be improved

Litter in Langley Park...

Something that does frustrate me is the lack of bins in most places. With little bins comes a lot of litter and I can see why people just think 'sod it' and leave their rubbish behind. ...For instance, just yesterday my dog fouled at Langley Park and I had to walk my dog the entire way around the park holding dog mess in a bag due to the lack of bins. - Forum

On occasion when I walk to Langley park there is fly tipping. This frustrates me and also makes me worry about my dogs wellbeing as some rubbish is spread over the entire road where there's no footpath and it's unavoidable. - Forum

Parking at Harmondsworth Moor and Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve...

The biggest issue as Harmondsworth moor is access to the parking on a weekday due to the British Airways staff. - Forum

Similarly, the Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve car park has been closed for a number of years making it inaccessible for people who do not live locally. - Forum

Many comment that walking and cycle routes could be made safer – proximity to traffic and poor surfacing are current barriers to use

Footpaths and cycle paths around Harmondsworth, Stanwell and Staines...

The footpath has not changed for as long as I can remember and that is 40 odd years. The top of the concrete has come away leaving embedded stones exposed. This makes it very bumpy and when cycling it really shakes you about. By the time we get home my arms are tingling because of it. Half of it is like this and half (section towards Staines) is better condition. I would like to see it replaced with a 'soft' surface (not concrete or tarmac as I think that would encourage cyclists to speed and it should be for walkers as well. -

Forum

The walk across Staines reservoirs is not particularly welcoming and could be enhanced... - Forum

The cycle way running alongside the A3044 was previously very dangerous but with the upgrade and the installation of the traffic lights makes this a lot more accessible and easier and safer to use. - Forum

To cycle leisurely in the local area is difficult, I feel there are limited cycle paths on the main roads, some off road pathways are narrow and very overgrown. Because the roads are quiet it was OK to cycle, however the pot holes and condition of most roads are dangerous and poorly maintained. - Forum

Occasionally it gets far too overgrown and becomes an issue as a narrow path when walking a dog isn't ideal for meeting cyclists coming the other way. - Forum

Some say improved facilities in the CVRP area could encourage visitors, although warn that these should not detract from the natural environment

- Safe and affordable parking is a necessity – while some can access green areas nearby on foot, if visiting with others (e.g. children) or meeting with friends and family from further afield, there is more need for this facility; some comment that parking is taken up by airport staff (Harmondsworth Moor) or has been closed long-term (Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve).
- While some say that additional facilities are not a priority, greater access to toilets would be appreciated by some, as well as smaller additions such as clean benches to rest on
- A minority also mention café facilities, however note that the natural environment should be protected, and not detracted from by these additions; any facilities which do exist must be properly maintained
- Some also warn that increasing facilities and thereby encouraging use of the CVRP could have its drawbacks – many have noticed an increase in antisocial behaviour and are keen to deter those who use the area for drinking, or who leave litter behind.

It would be nice to have a small discreet toilet. And possibly some areas would benefit from a small cafe or like. ...unless the area could be properly maintained, it would soon lose its charm as a quiet reflective place where people can enjoy the peace and tranquility of nature and the countryside. - Forum

It would be lovely to encourage people into the area who visited because they enjoy the countryside, but those who want to binge drink alcohol, or groups who barbecue/picnic and leave all their debris behind should not be encouraged and more should be done to stop it. - Forum

Many are keen to see the southern CVRP better promoted to local communities; it is seen as a valuable resource

- Many are appreciative of the natural environment nearby and would like to see the area better promoted
- Suggestions centre around making use of social media to signpost to the area, using community boards to disseminate information and even organising events (e.g. Easter egg hunts)
- Some suggest that the area could be promoted to children in school which in turn could help to educate parents about the areas nearby
- Others favour traditional leaflets or increasing signage in the area to better promote the area
- Beyond practical information about routes and facilities, some are keen to hear more about attractions and landmarks – for educational value and general interest in understanding the area.

It would be nice for locations to have some kind of signage about other areas within the Colne Valley region, I believe Harmondsworth Moor has the general Colne Valley map but it would be nice to see a list of photos of other areas or parks nearby such as telling you about the Ankerwyke Estate and seeing the tree that is there, this would allow you visit a lot more areas that you may not have realised are in the same trust. - Forum

Signage and route information for walks and some more maps of the area with a 'you are here' sort of pin point I think would be great and would encourage people to use these fasciitis and discover more of them that they haven't yet. - Forum

Conclusions

Final thoughts – Green areas and CVRP

1

People are using green areas more since lockdown, visiting places nearby and discovering new areas to make the most of their limited time outdoors.

2

Green space is appreciated for its mental and physical wellbeing benefits, especially given lockdown restrictions, and for those without greenspace at home.

3

Many have noticed the positive effects of lockdown on the natural environment – less noise pollution and cleaner air were mentioned – and many noticed the changing seasons more readily.

4

While many access areas nearby on foot, walking and cycle routes could be better maintained to facilitate this; those accessing by car would like to see safe and affordable parking available to encourage usage.

5

Specific improvements that would encourage greater use of green areas in the CVRP include basic facilities such as clean toilets, bins which are emptied regularly, rest points and well maintained, safe public areas.

Final thoughts – South CVRP

1

While many enjoy the CVRP already, there is scope to increase awareness of the variety of green spaces available in the south CVRP and increase signposting for walking and cycling routes in the area.

2

There is opportunity to promote natural landmarks in the area to encourage greater engagement, especially for those who are newly discovering the area or are visiting with children.

3

Many highlight a need for adequate parking nearby – particularly in Harmondsworth Moor and Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve; many are keen to see this made affordable, too.

4

More isolated areas need to be well maintained, particularly during winter time, to ensure people continue to feel safe using them.

5

While facilities such as toilets and benches are valued, these must be well maintained and care should be taken to ensure they do not detract from the natural environment.



November 2020

Research into the use of the natural environment by communities living around Heathrow airport before and during lockdown

