

Agenda Item 7a

Allotment Survey Results

Introduction

Green Sefton has undertaken its largest survey relating to allotments ever to find out the views of those using allotments, those on a waiting list or the general public. The results of this survey will assist in shaping the development of a long-term strategy for allotments in the borough.

Some 817 responded to the survey which closed at the end of Summer 2021. This summary report gives an indication of the responses. Some parts of the questionnaire were specifically for those already on an allotment site, a section was for those on the waiting list, and a small section for general public.

This is a summary of those results in general. It may be possible given more time to provide a response from plot holders on specific sites to create an action plan for each site (where possible)

Questions for All

Question One

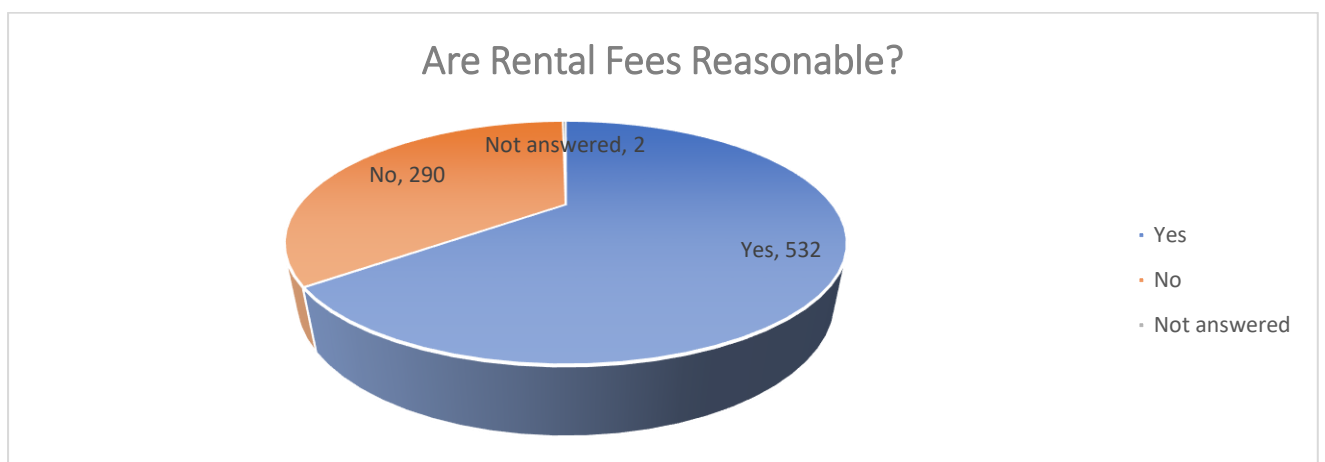
This looked at the type of respondent and which category they fell into (Allotment holder, on the waiting list or neither). Of the 814 who responded, the majority were involved with allotments in some way as either a tenant or on the waiting list (93.5%)

Option	Total	Percent
Plot Holder	300	36.81%
On the waiting list	462	56.69%
Neither	52	6.38%
Not Answered	1	0.12%

This shows that the survey was answered by the target audience in the main.

Question Two

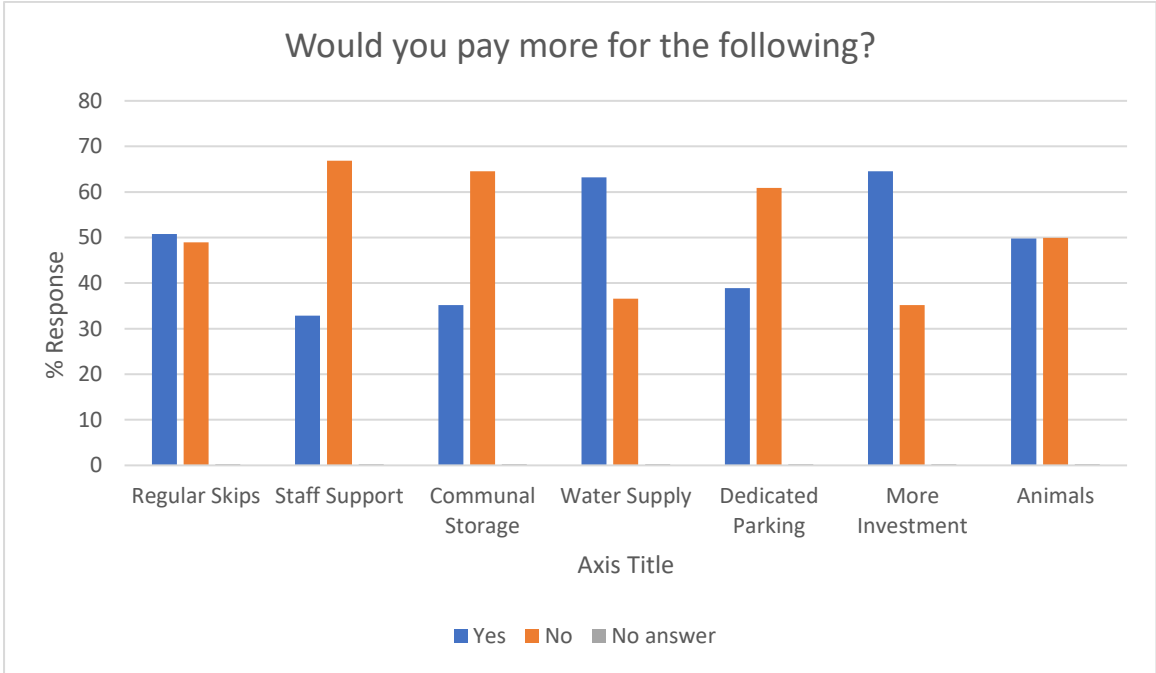
Looked at whether all respondents felt that the rental costs for an allotment was reasonable. Nearly two thirds of answers felt that the costs are reasonable with the remaining third feeling they are not.



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Question Three

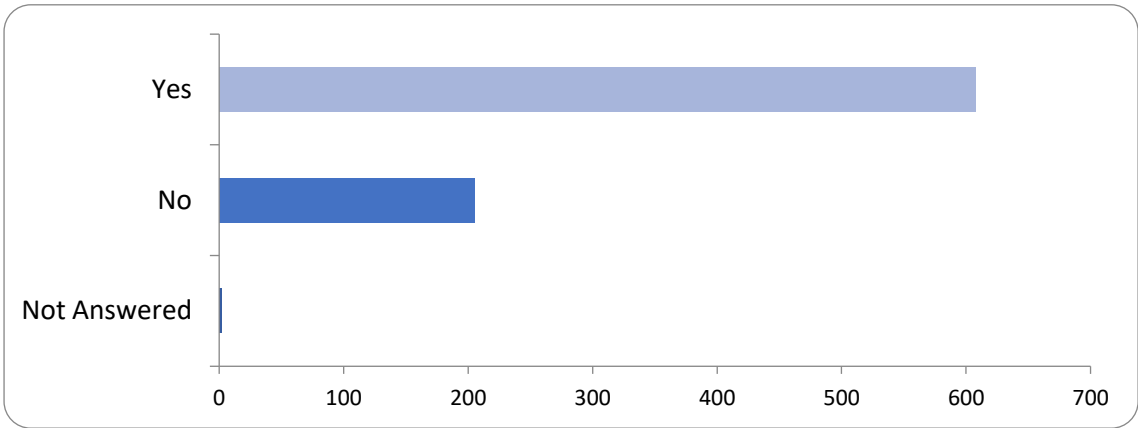
The next question looked at if people would be willing to pay more for an improved offering in several areas. The graph below shows the answer to this



This shows that most people would be willing to pay more allotment fees if it meant getting an improved water supply and more investment on site. People also stated they wouldn't pay more for staff support, communal storage or parking on site. There was marginal support for paying more to get regular skips and being able to keep chickens or bees on site.

Questions Four-Six

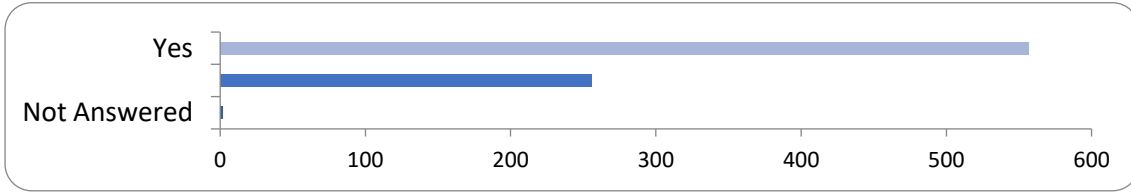
When ask 'Do you think there should be concessions on rental? e.g. lower rates for pensioners, unemployed etc' there were 813 responses to this part of the question. An overwhelming majority (75%) felt that there should be a concession scheme in place



A similar question was asked regarding free provision for registered charities 'Do you think there should be free plots for charities and other individuals? e.g. registered disabled' with 68% of

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responses responding in a positive manner for this policy to be implemented.



However when viewed with the answers from the next question 'Would you be happy to pay more rental to help provide free plots and concessions for others?' the response was very different. This time respondents would not pay any more themselves to provide concessions

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	308	37.79%
No	505	61.96%
Not Answered	2	0.25%

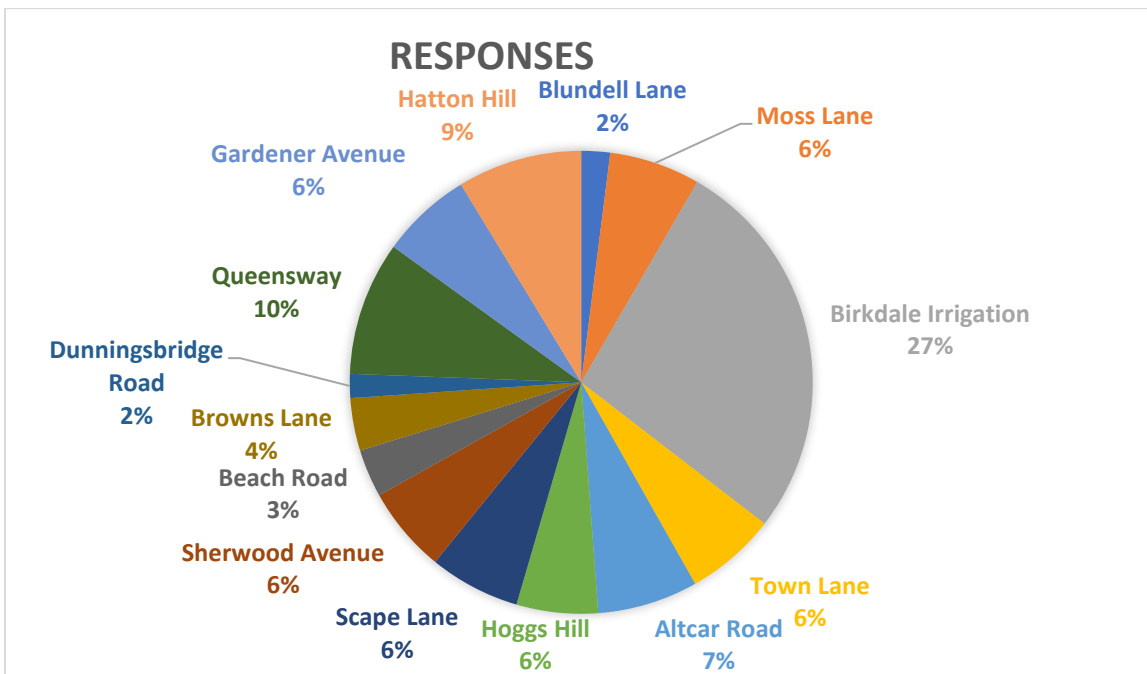
From this we can assume that people would be willing to provide concessions and free plots in certain circumstances but that the cost of this should not be borne by the other allotment holders.

Plot Holder Only Questions

These questions were answered by 299 of the participants in this survey.

Which Site are you on?

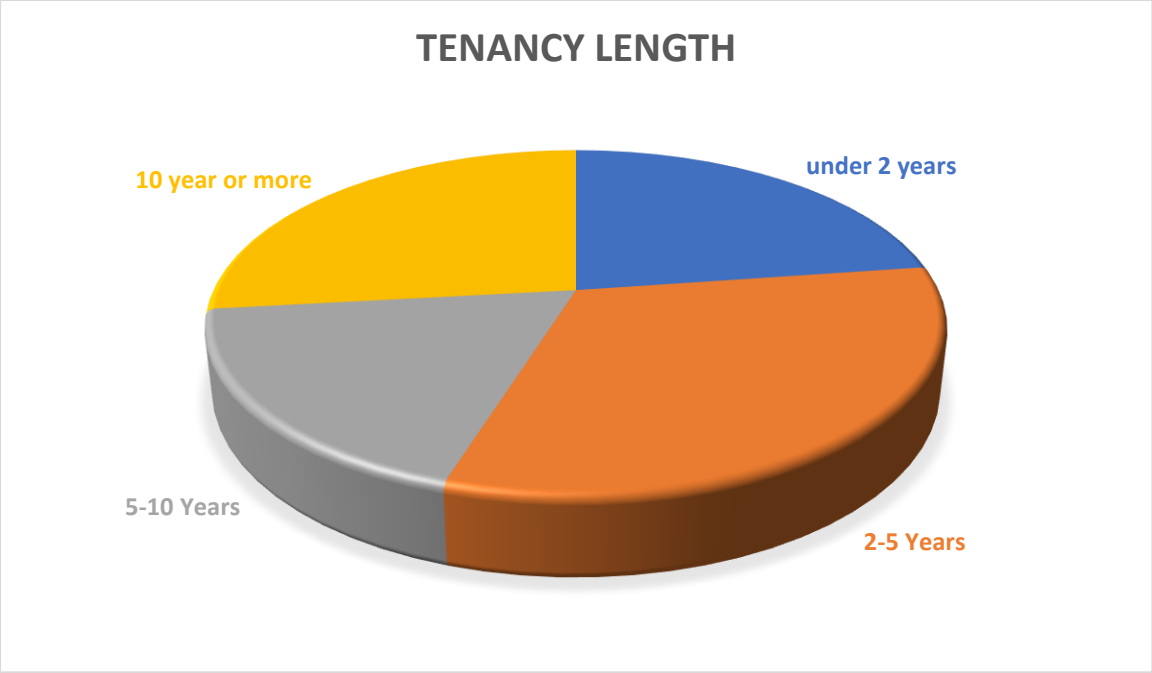
This question gives us more insight into what the tenants think on each site. The breakdown of responses is as follows



Just over 25% of responses were received from Birkdale Irrigation which is a large site compared to smaller sites like Blundell Lane.

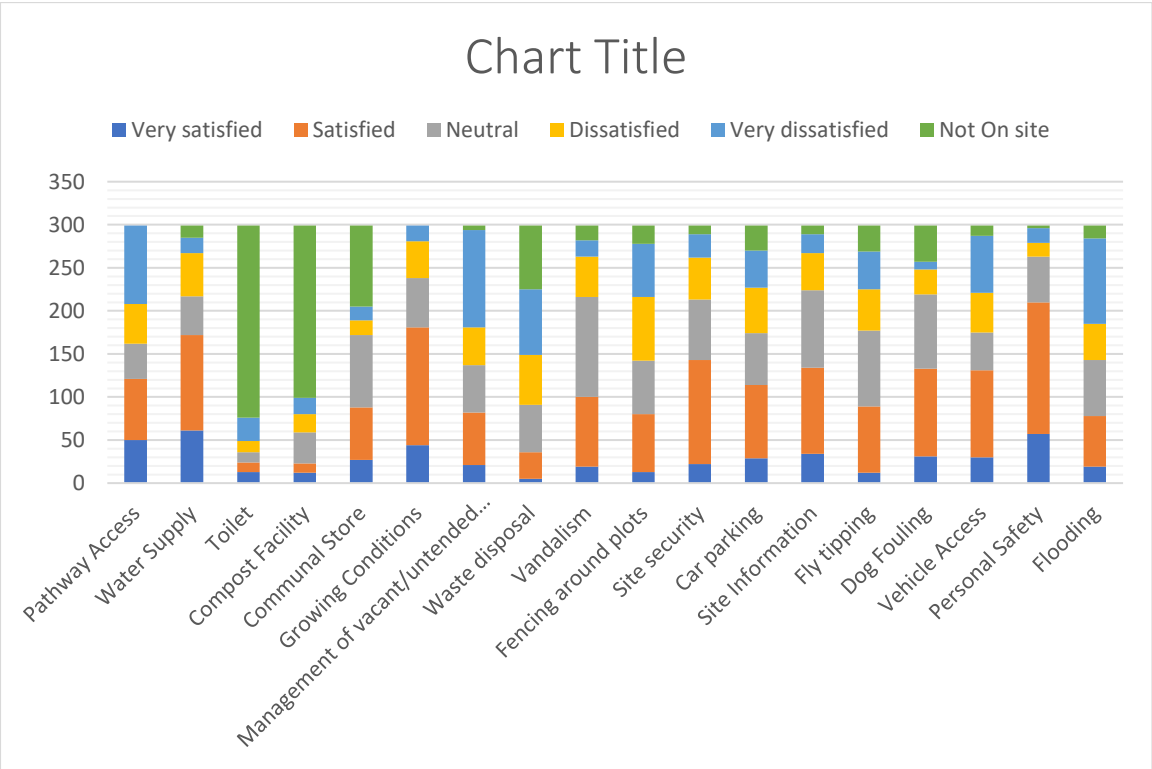
The next question was about how long they have been a tenant on this plot. This looked at the longevity of plot holders once they are on site

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It will be interesting to see if this alters if the survey (or aspects of it) are repeated every year.

The next set of questions for plot holders looked at the condition of their site and their satisfaction levels.



In summary this shows that:

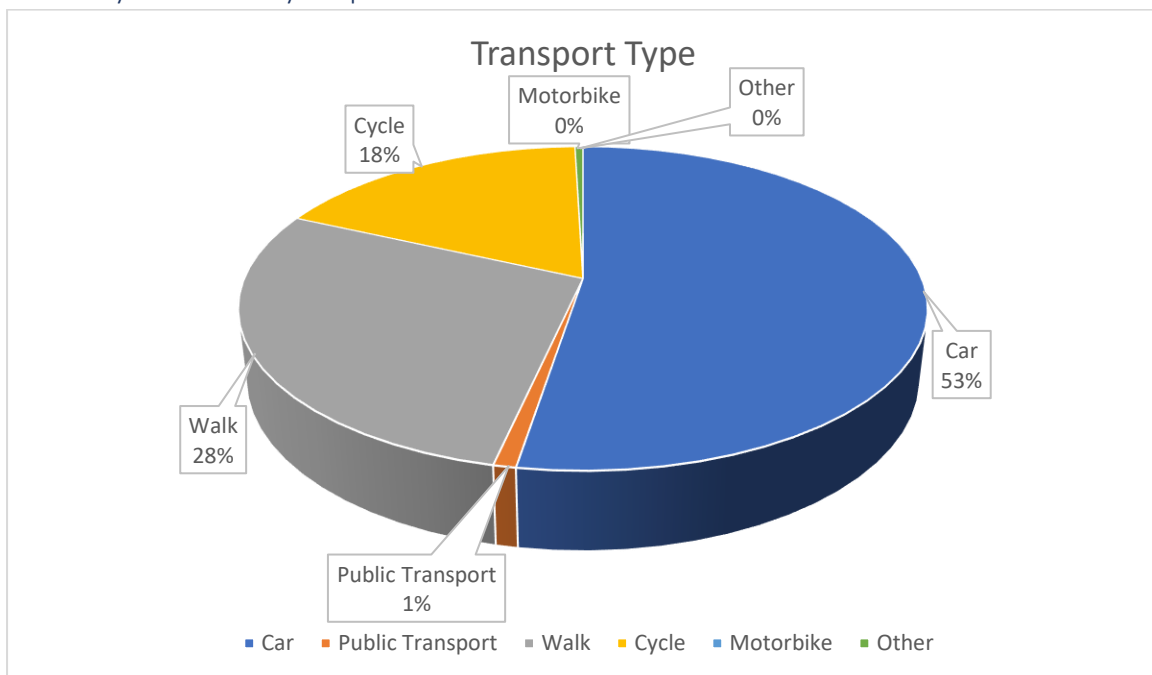
- There was a general dissatisfaction with the condition of pathways / communal areas.
- Tenants were broadly happy with the water supply provided to sites (NOTE: one site does not have a supply).
- Where provided they were happy with the toilets on site, however most sites have no toilet.

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- Communal buildings were seen positively by the respondents.
- There was strong satisfaction with the growing conditions, but analysis shows dissatisfaction comes from waterlogged sites.
- We found that many people were unhappy with vacant plots / those in an unkempt state.
- Waste disposal provided, mixed responses, but generally more were dissatisfied. This requires further analysis as we have not regularly provided skips.
- Vandalism was not a major concern and we had a strong neutral response on this matter.
- Tenants were often dissatisfied with boundaries.
- In terms of site security, respondents were strongly satisfied overall.
- The availability of site information found people were more satisfied than dissatisfied. The results reflect whether the site had a noticeboard and association meetings or not.
- Fly tipping was not identified as a serious concern.
- Respondents were largely satisfied with vehicle access.
- People felt safe / personal safety, strongly satisfied they feel safe.

A more detailed analysis of the results at a later date will provide more details to allow action plans for improvements on each site to be drawn up as part of the Allotment Strategy.

How do you travel to your plot?

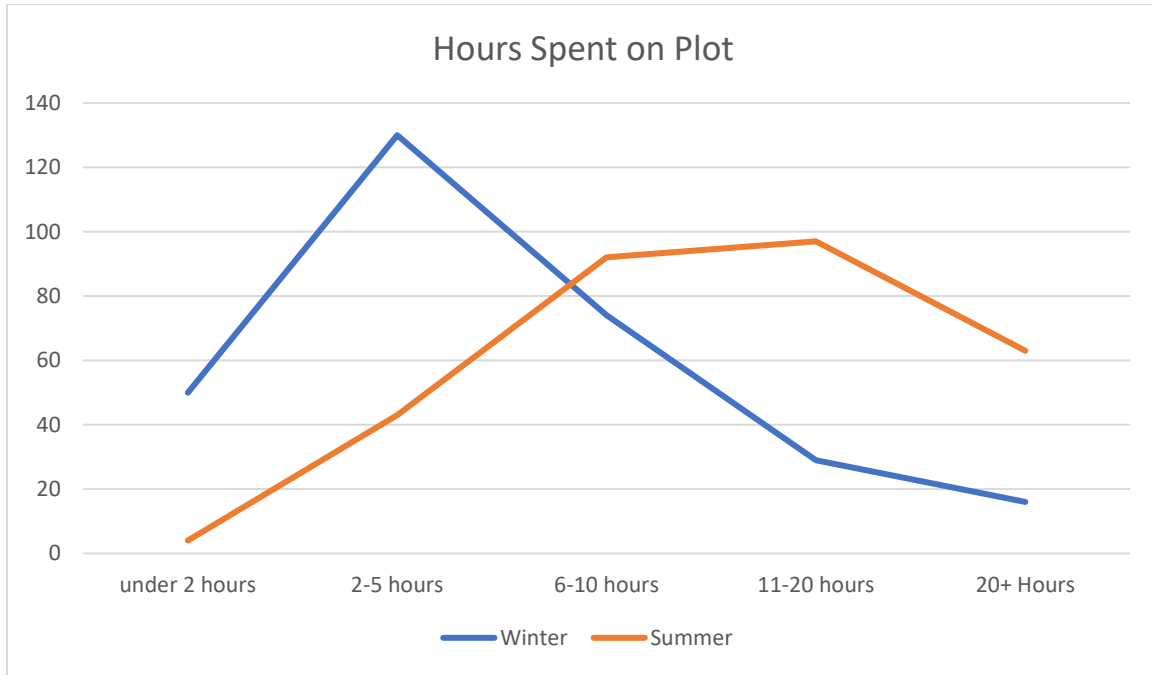


Clearly most people use their car to get to site but a slight majority had issues with car parking based on previous answers. This is not surprising given that only half plots are let and the amount of carparking has remained the same. Only 1% use public transport but nearly 30% walk suggesting their plot is local.

How long do you spend on you plot?

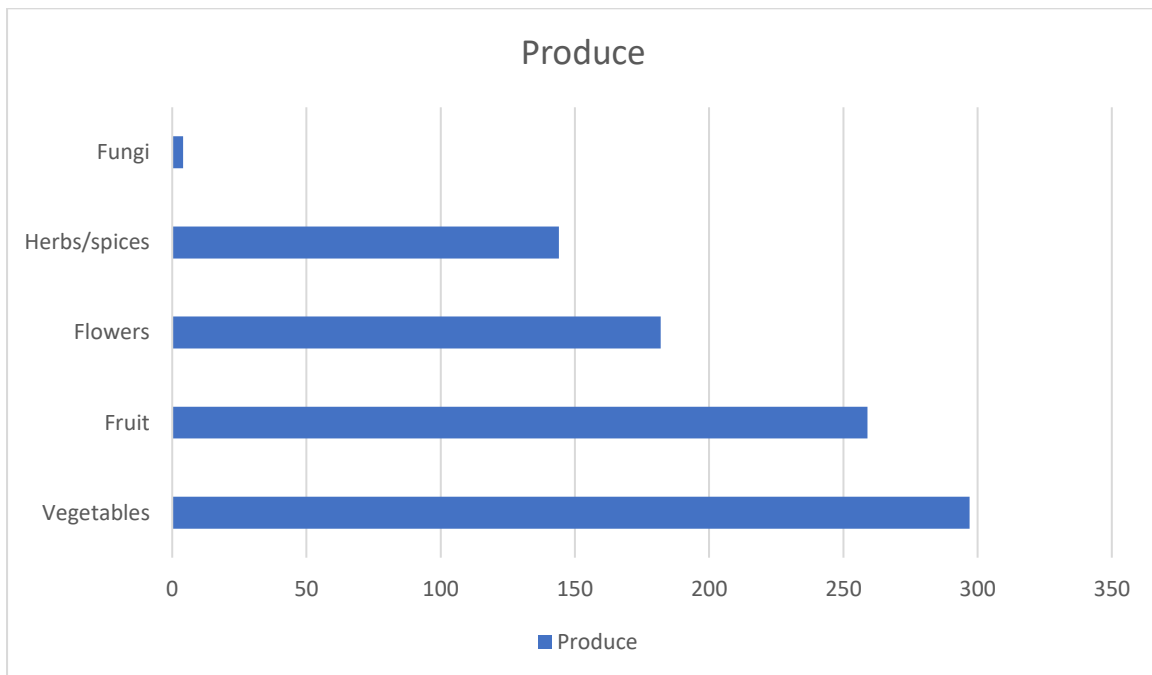
This question was split into summer and winter with more people spending longer on their plots in the summer as expected the chart illustrates this with significantly more hours on an allotment in the summer.

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What do you grow?

As we suspected, nearly all who answered grow vegetables with the majority growing fruit. Some grew flowers, approximately half grew herbs and spices and a minority grew fungi.



Do you use skips provided?

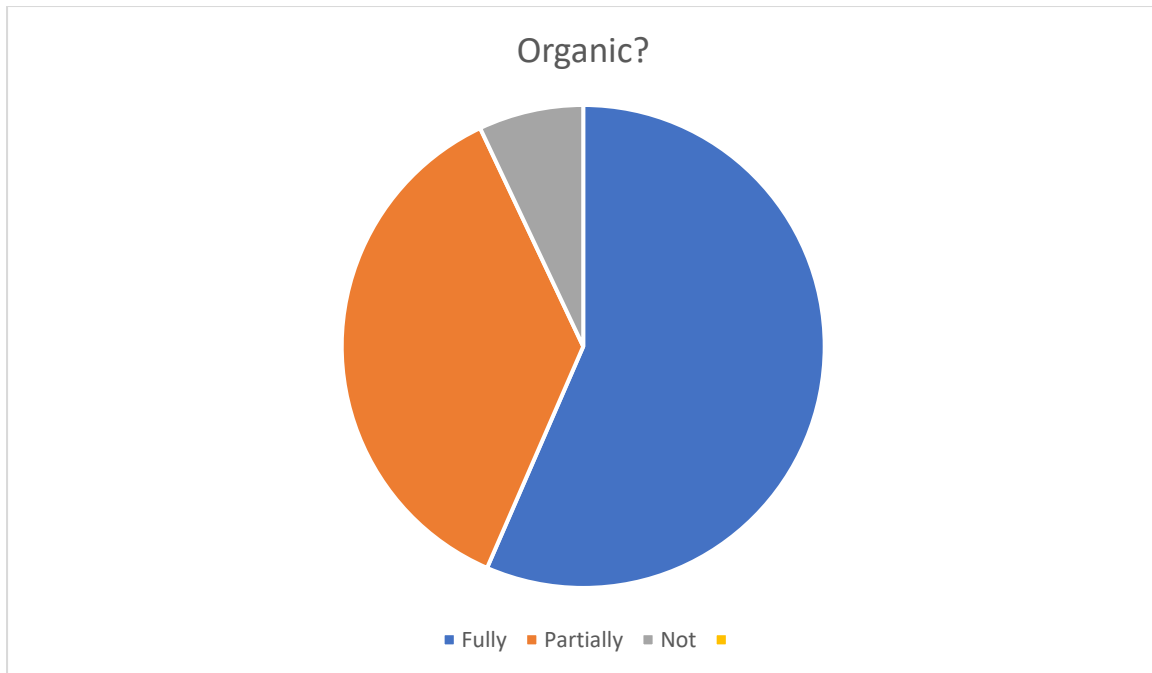
Occasionally the limited allotment budget allows us to provide skips for tenants to use. This is often supplemented by Ward funds and Allotment Association provision. The skips are well received and very well used with 80% of plot holders using them to clear rubbish from their plot.

Do you use communal storage areas?

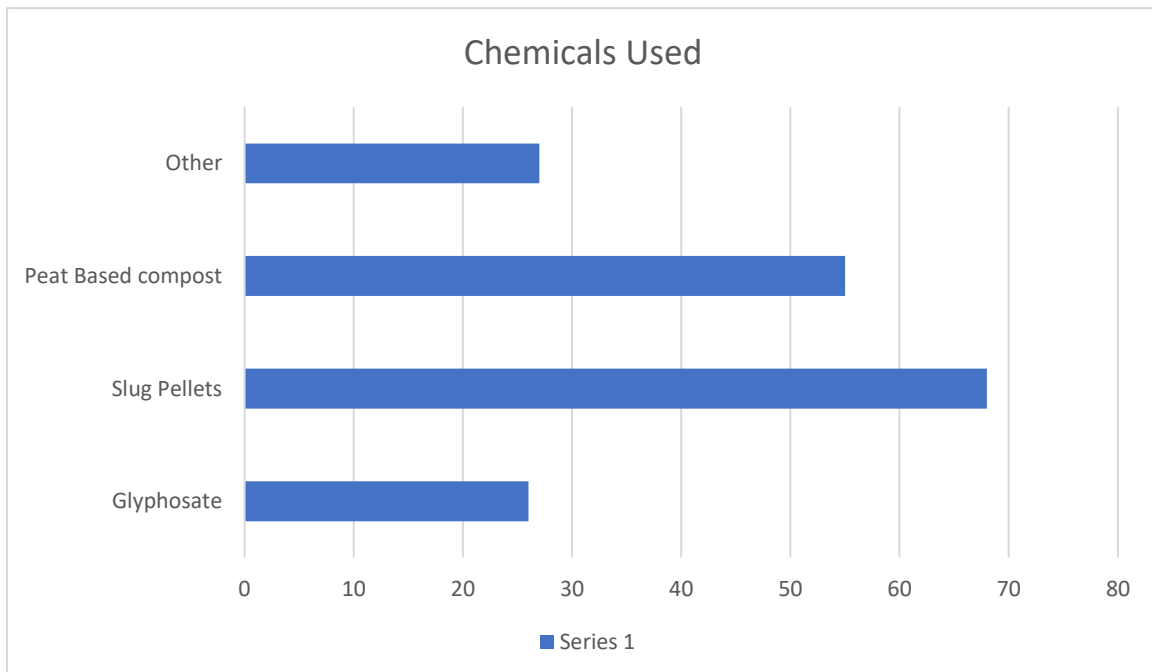
This is not always provided on site so from the small response from plot holders with communal storage on site, only 10% of tenants make use of it.

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The next set of questions looked at the environmental aspects of owning an allotment. Specifically, we asked if they tend their plot organically, what (if any) chemicals they use and how they store any chemicals. Interestingly there is a strong drive towards sustainability and green credentials with 93% of plot holder being either fully or partially organic.



Chemicals used on site were as follows:



The following question tells us that 60% store their chemicals on site, either locked away in their shed or a cabinet.

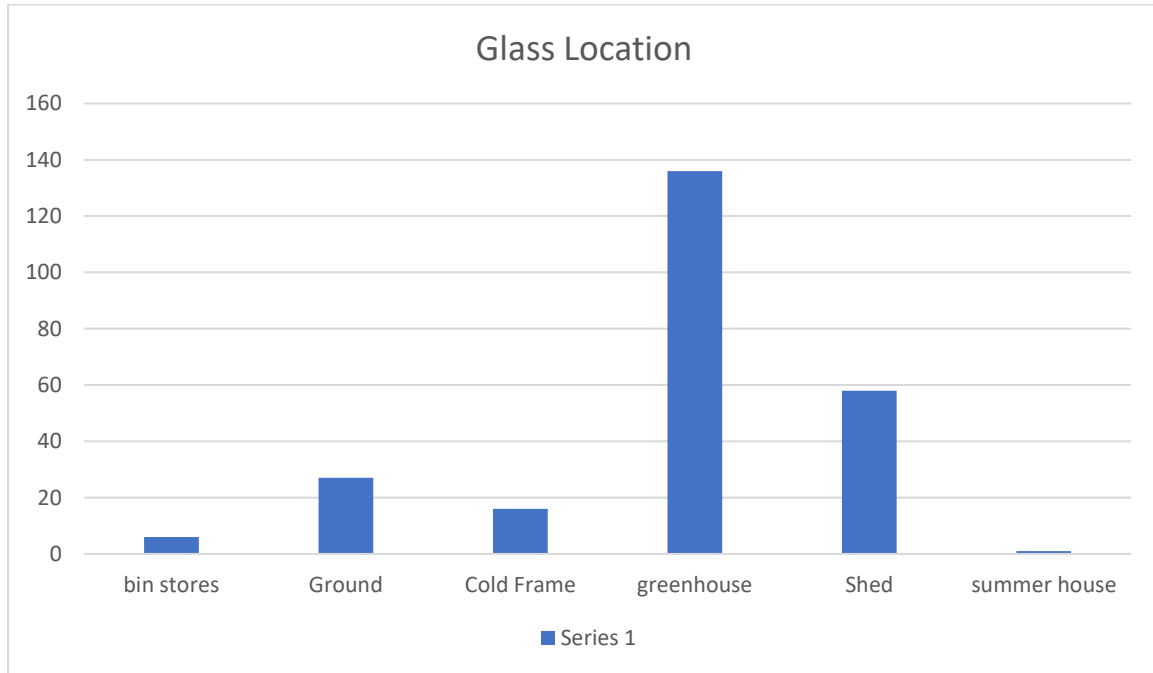
Do you compost waste?

Overwhelmingly the tenants do compost their own green waste on site with 95% of people doing so. This again points to the environmental awareness of plot holders and how they can help.

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Do you have Glass on your plot?

Glass, and the disposal of, is a large problem on allotments sites. Recently Officers suggested that glass should be prevented from being brought on to site as if is often broken and can cause hazards. Two thirds of plot holders have glass on their site however this doesn't tell the whole picture.

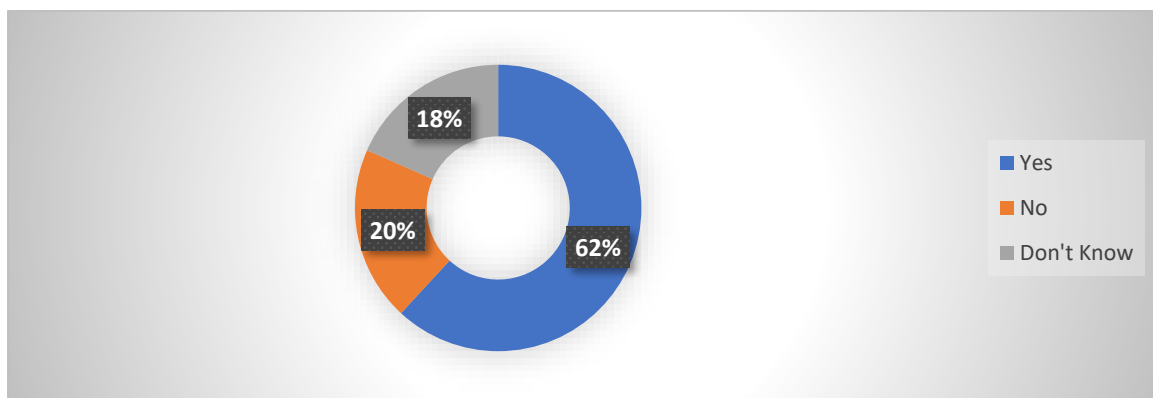


The graph shows most glass is where we would expect it – sheds, green houses and cold frames. However, there is some in the ground, smashed up which can be a major problem when cultivating the land.

Do you store equipment not associated with gardening on your plot?

Given issues with fly tipping on some sites and plots across the borough, this was a good response with only 6% of respondents doing so. This however does need to be reduced and all allotments should be free from items not needed on site.

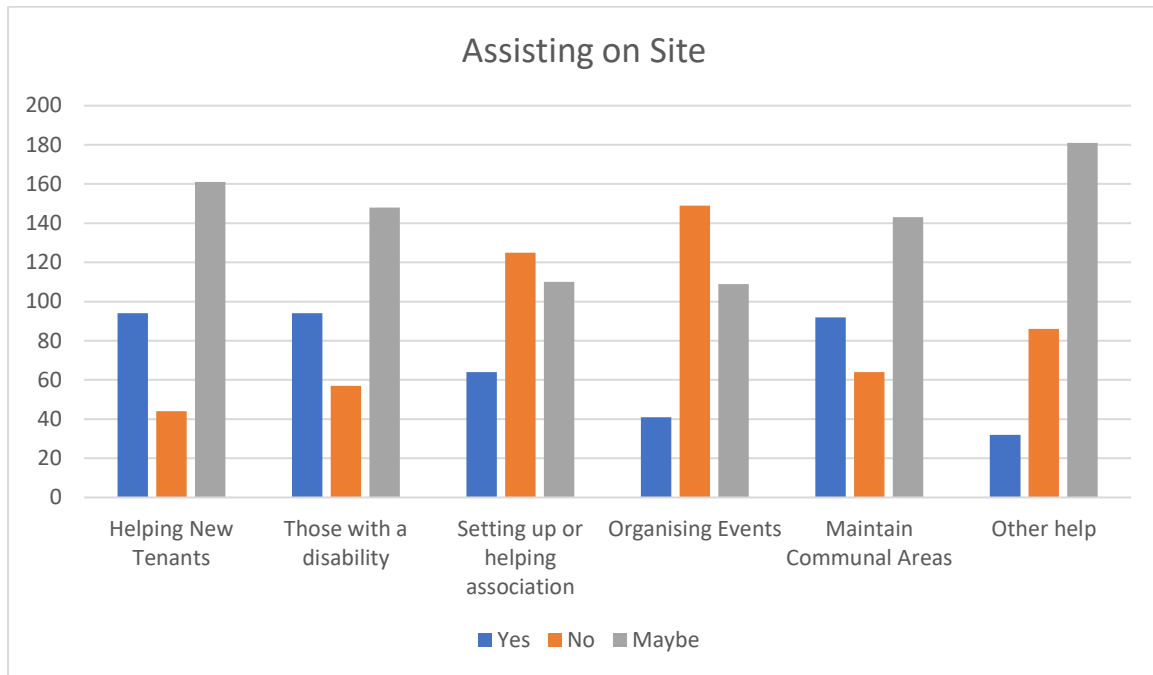
The next phase of questions looked at the support available on site in terms of associations and providing help on site for others. When asked 'Does your site have an Association or Federation?' most knew but surprisingly 18% didn't know, suggesting groups need to have a higher profile on sites.



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On further questioning, 27% of plot holders on sites with Associations or Federations do not know who is on their committee which again highlights the lack of awareness of the groups on sites.

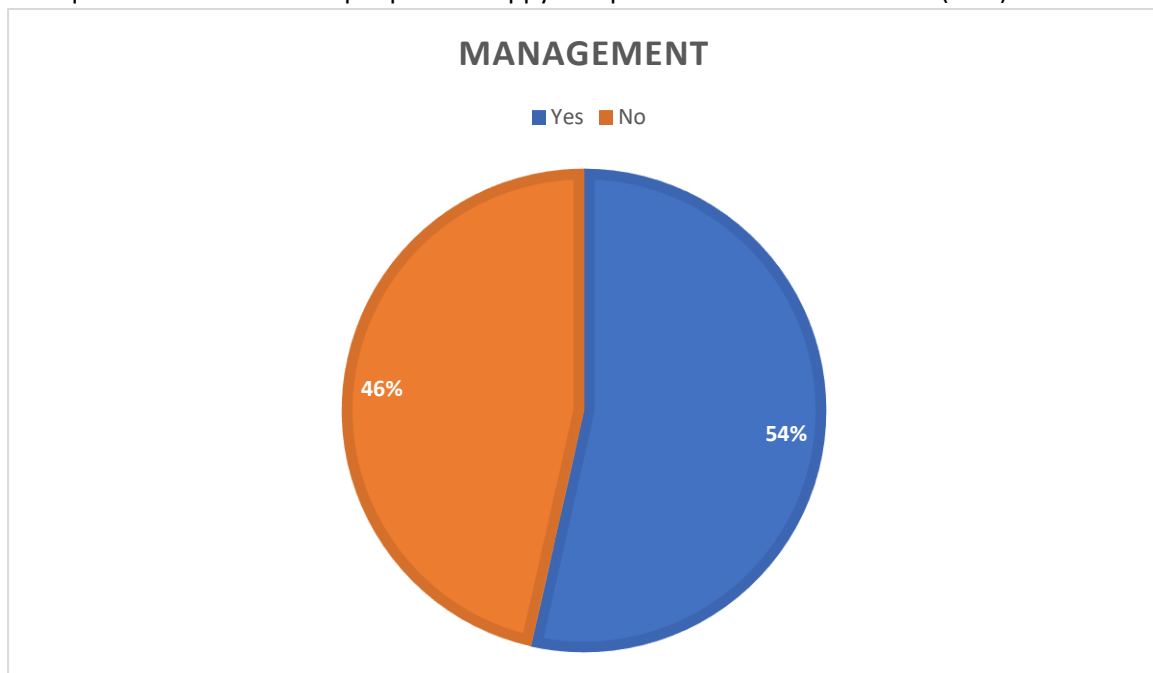
When asked about helping on their site more, the plot holders gave the following views:



From this we can see that there is support to assist other plot holders on site including new tenants and those with a disability. There is also some support for helping to maintain communal areas on site too. There is not a strong desire to help with an Association and a very strong desire not to help organise events on site.

Are you Happy with the way Allotments are managed and inspected?

This question showed more people are happy compared to those that are not (54%)



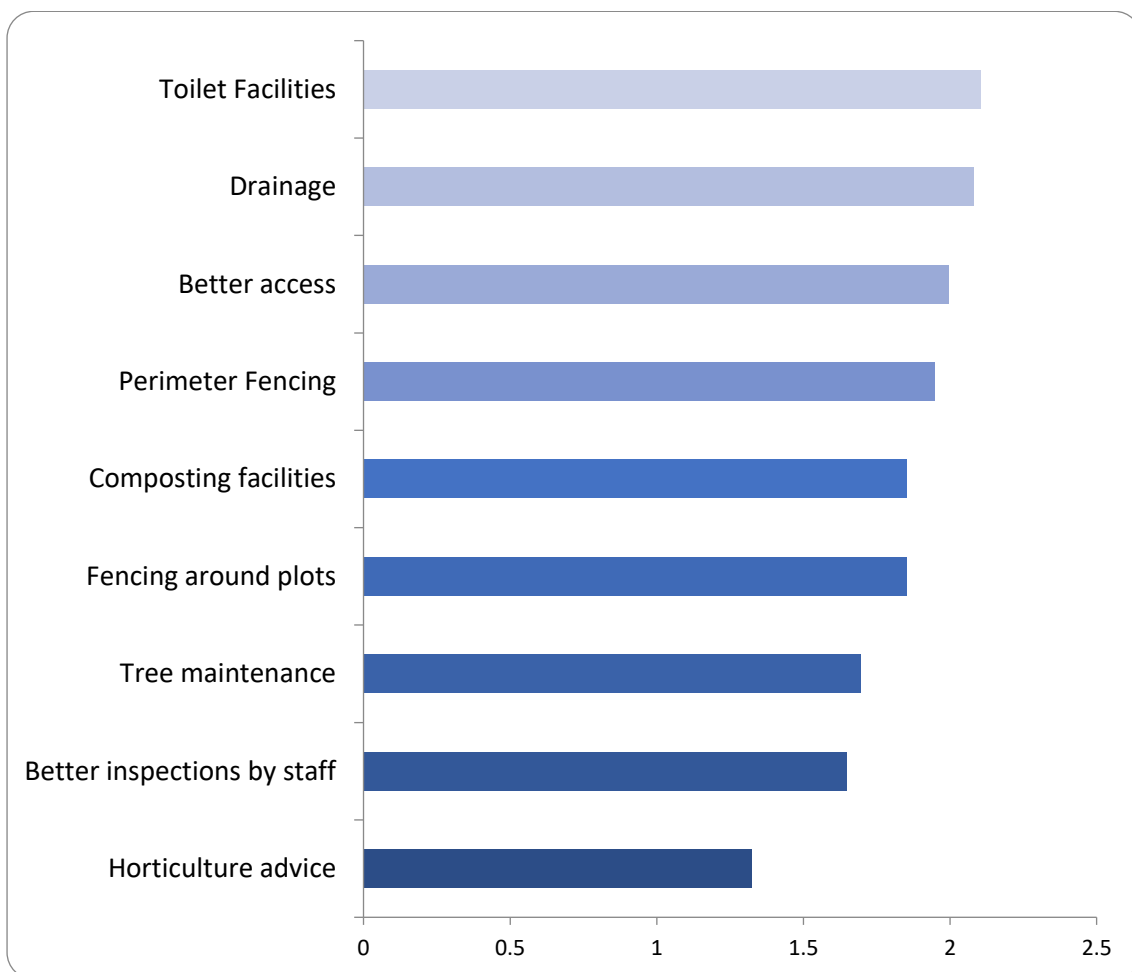
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Should allotments get external accreditation awards?

This question investigated whether plot holders felt sites should get independent quality awards such as Community Green Flag accreditation. Just under half (48%) felt that independent quality awards should be applied for with a further 38% not sure if allotment sites should do this. Any external accreditation would need to be applied for as a site with some support from Green Sefton in a similar way to other community groups working within Green Sefton sites.

What improvements should be made if money was available?

This question asked plot holders to rank their priorities for improvements on site. This will obviously vary from site to site and a more detailed analysis can develop individual site improvements based on answers given. Broadly the return showed a lack of support for providing management support and advice but more support for investment in the infrastructure on site. The chart below shows which elements were the most popular with improvements in toilets, drainage and access being the top three improvements.



One of the ideas for managing allotments in Sefton was to create an allotment forum managed by officers, run by volunteers from all allotment sites. The question was there for posed 'Have you heard about the new allotment forum being planned?'

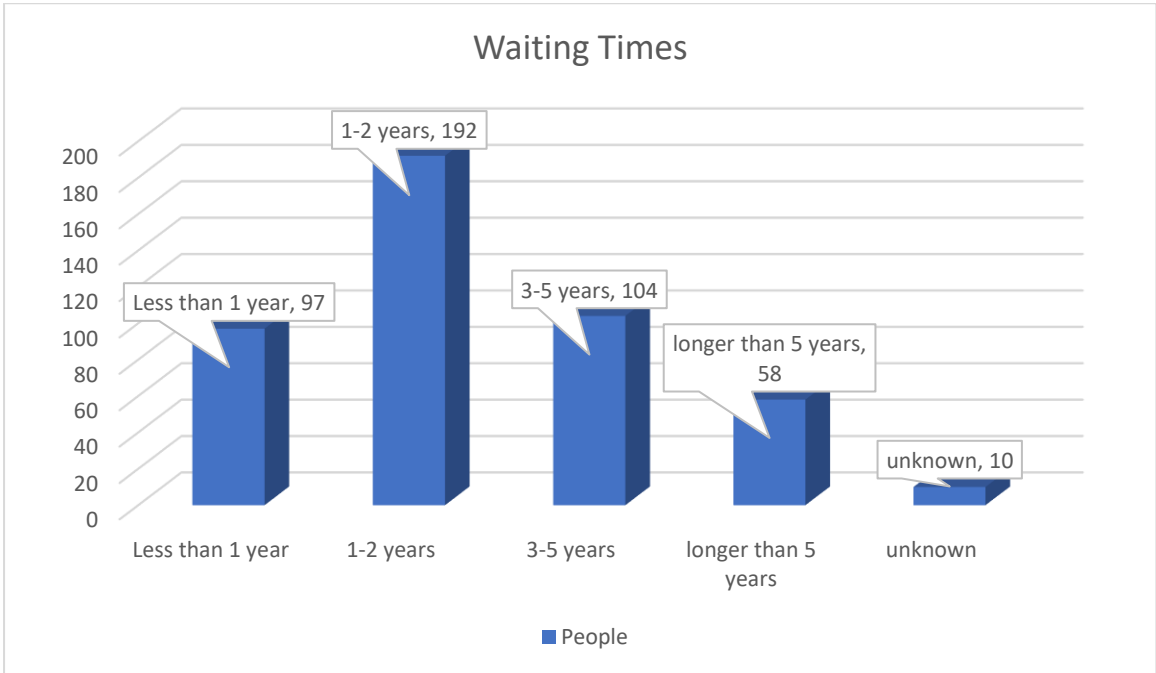
It comes as no real shock that most plot holders hadn't heard about it – only 14% had heard of the plan. The next question looked at would people get involved in one and 58% of people wouldn't get involved in a forum for allotment holders indicating no real support for the development of such a forum within existing tenants.

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The next part of the survey was for those on the waiting lists only.

How long have you been on the waiting list?

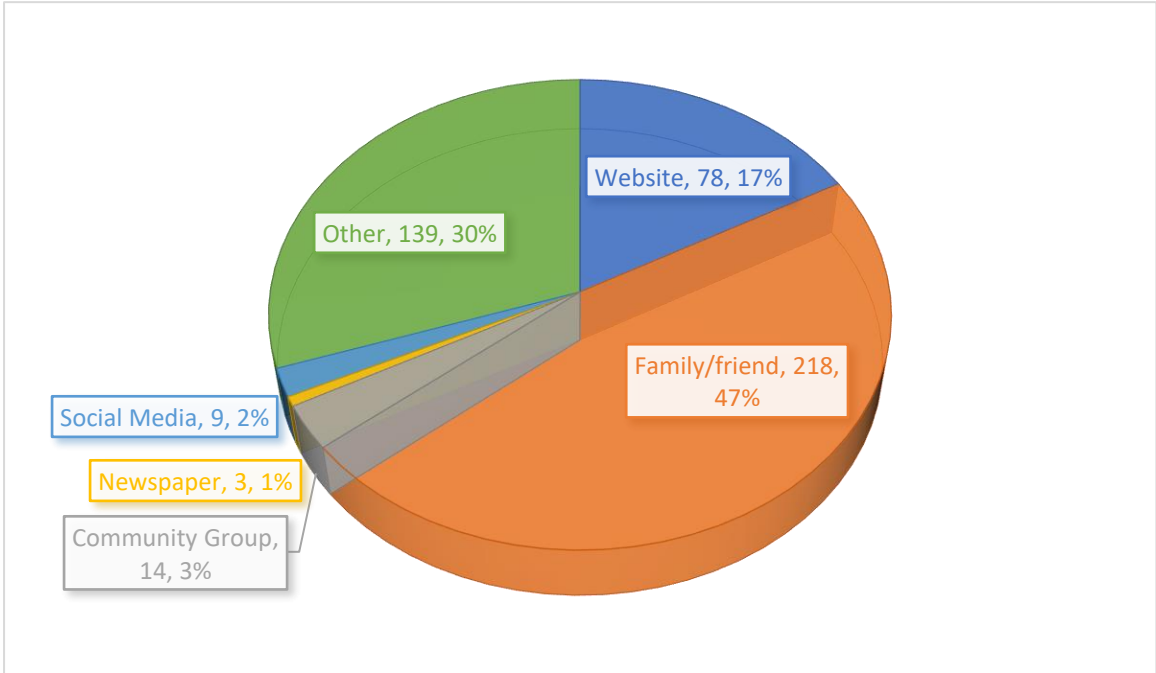
This question gave us an idea of how long people have been waiting for an allotment.



The data clearly shows that the majority of people have been waiting less than 5 years for their plot. The length of time on waiting lists are of course determined by tenants giving up plots or being removed for non-cultivation. The length waiting times could also be due to a large number of residents who registered for an allotment during the lockdowns.

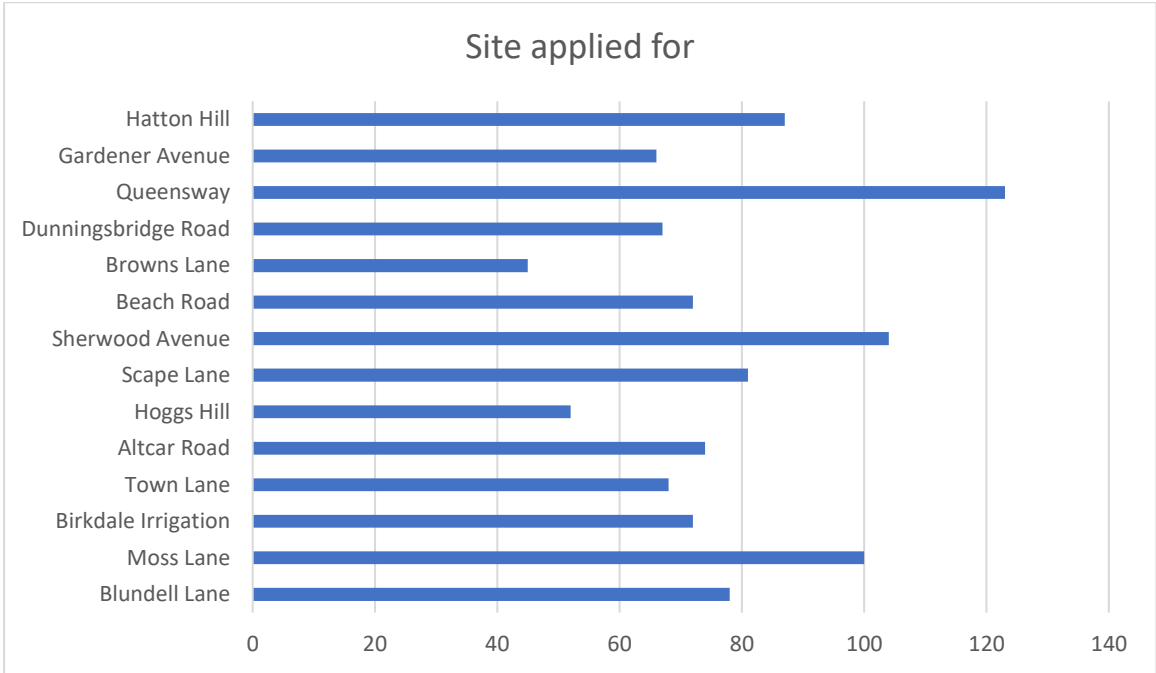
Where did you hear about allotments?

This showed most people knew of allotments via family or friends (47%) with other ways and the website being the next most popular.



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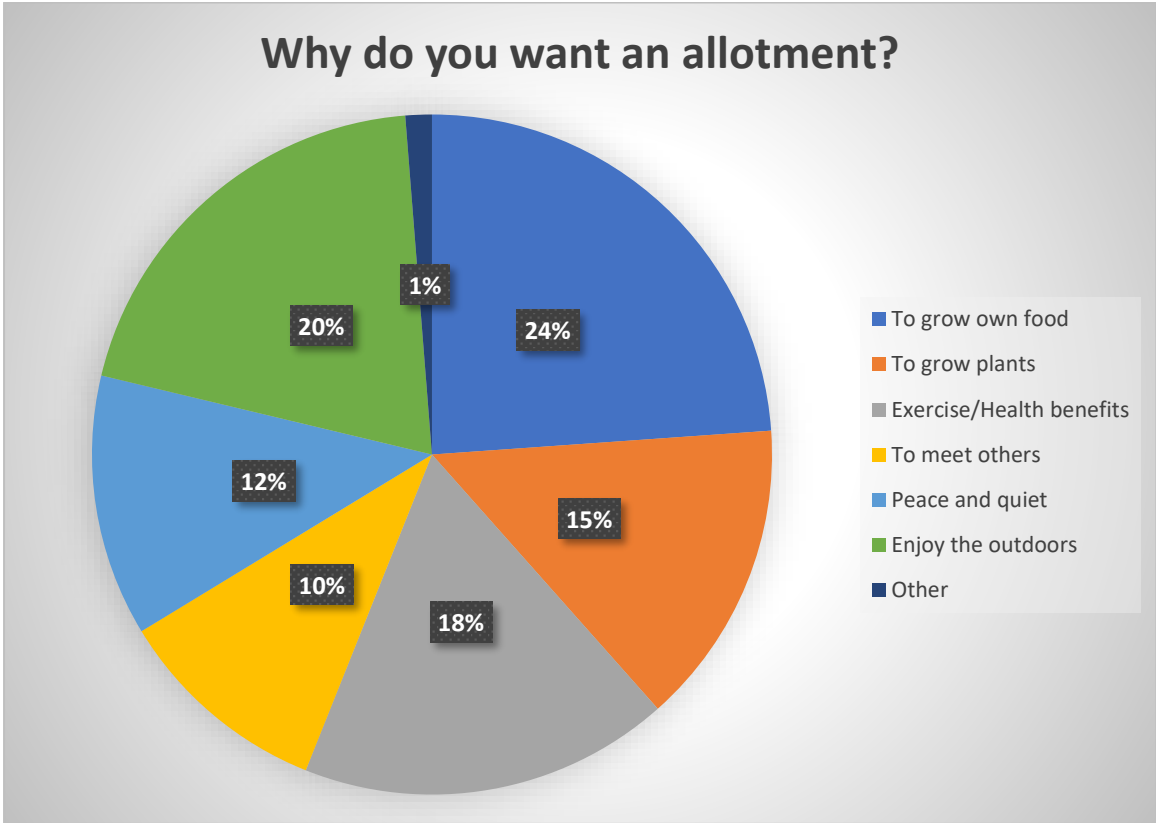
Which site are you interested in?



We can see from this that all sites are popular with larger sites being more popular.

Why do you want an allotment?

This question gave a range of interesting answers but in reality most wanted to grow their own food, enjoy the outdoors and have the health benefits of doing so.



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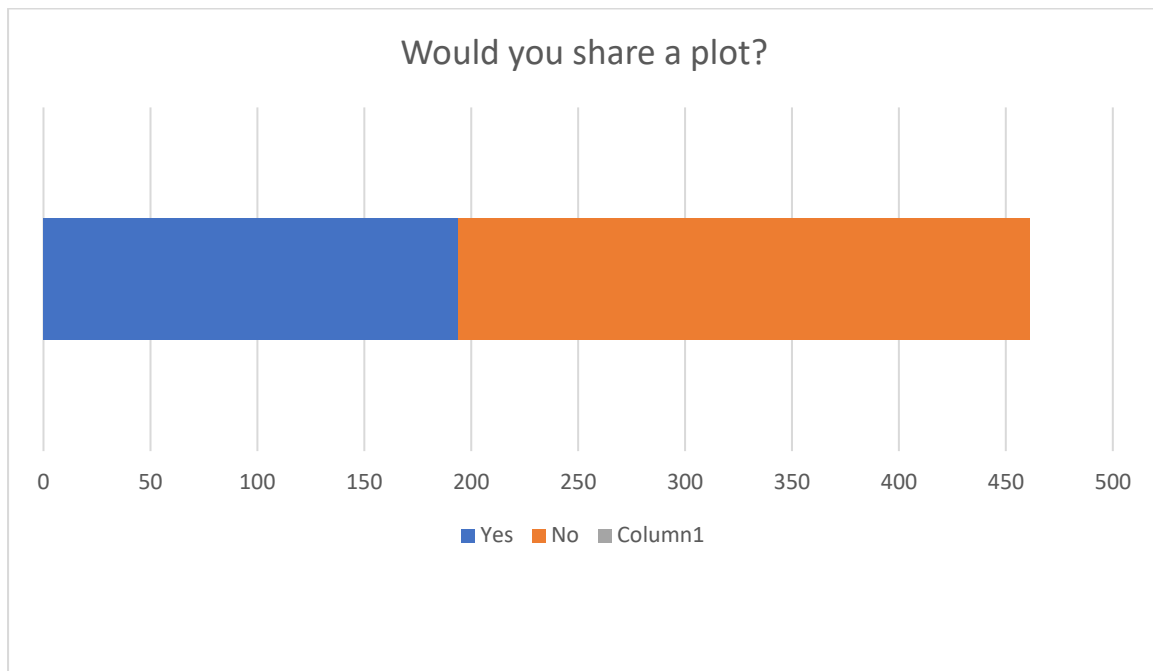
How long are you prepared to wait for an allotment?

Obviously turn-over of allotment sites depends on removing not cultivators and those giving up their plot for various reasons. Having said that most people are prepared to wait at least two years before getting a plot.



Would you consider sharing an allotment?

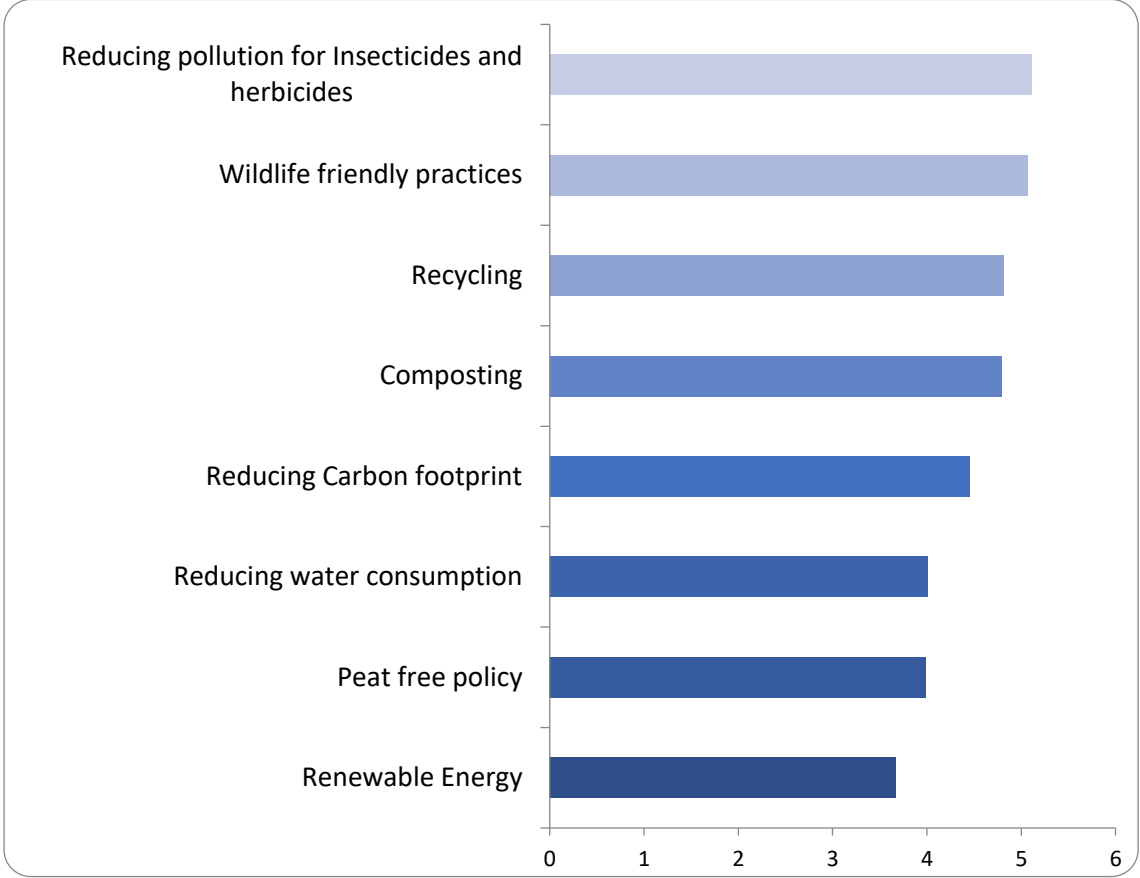
Those on waiting lists are generally do not to share a plot presumably as they want their own plot. Sefton has a policy of only letting half plots in a bid to reduce waiting times but thought of reducing these futher would create more issues including car parking and access.



The final few questions were for all to complete including equalities monitoring information.

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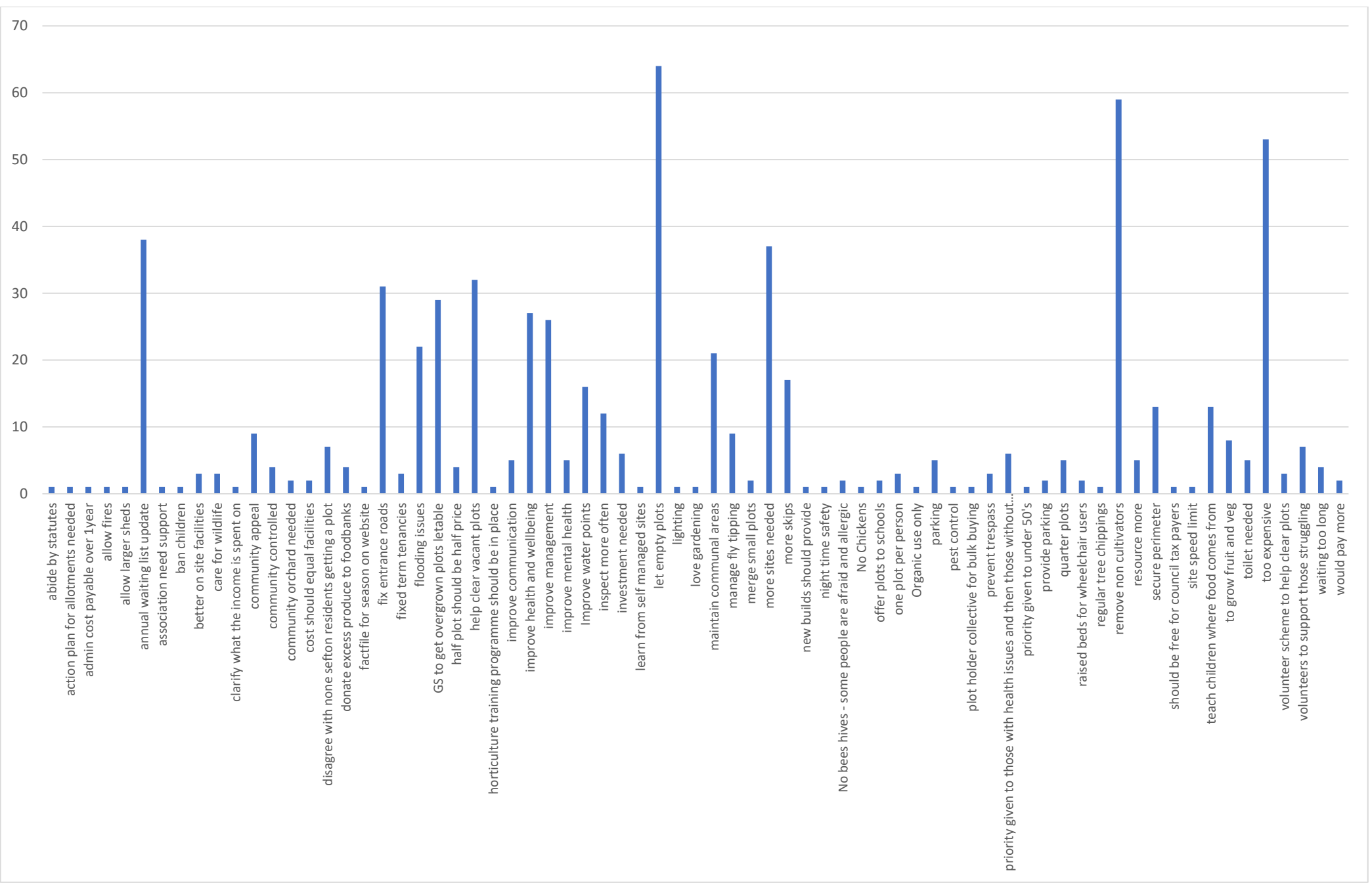
Which of these environmental considerations do you feel are most important for Allotment holders?



From the rankings we can see that most people felt it was most important to reduce pollution, protect wildlife and recycle or compost where possible. There was also some support for a peat free policy on allotments – peat being an important carbon store.

The final question was an opportunity to tell us anything else. As you can imagine with over 800 responses to the survey there were a wide range of further comments. Some of the more frequent comments were around getting empty plots lettable and removing non cultivators with a strong support for Green Sefton to clear empty plots to re-let them. There was also support for annual updates on waiting lists position for those waiting. The graph below details all the responses in a simple chart.

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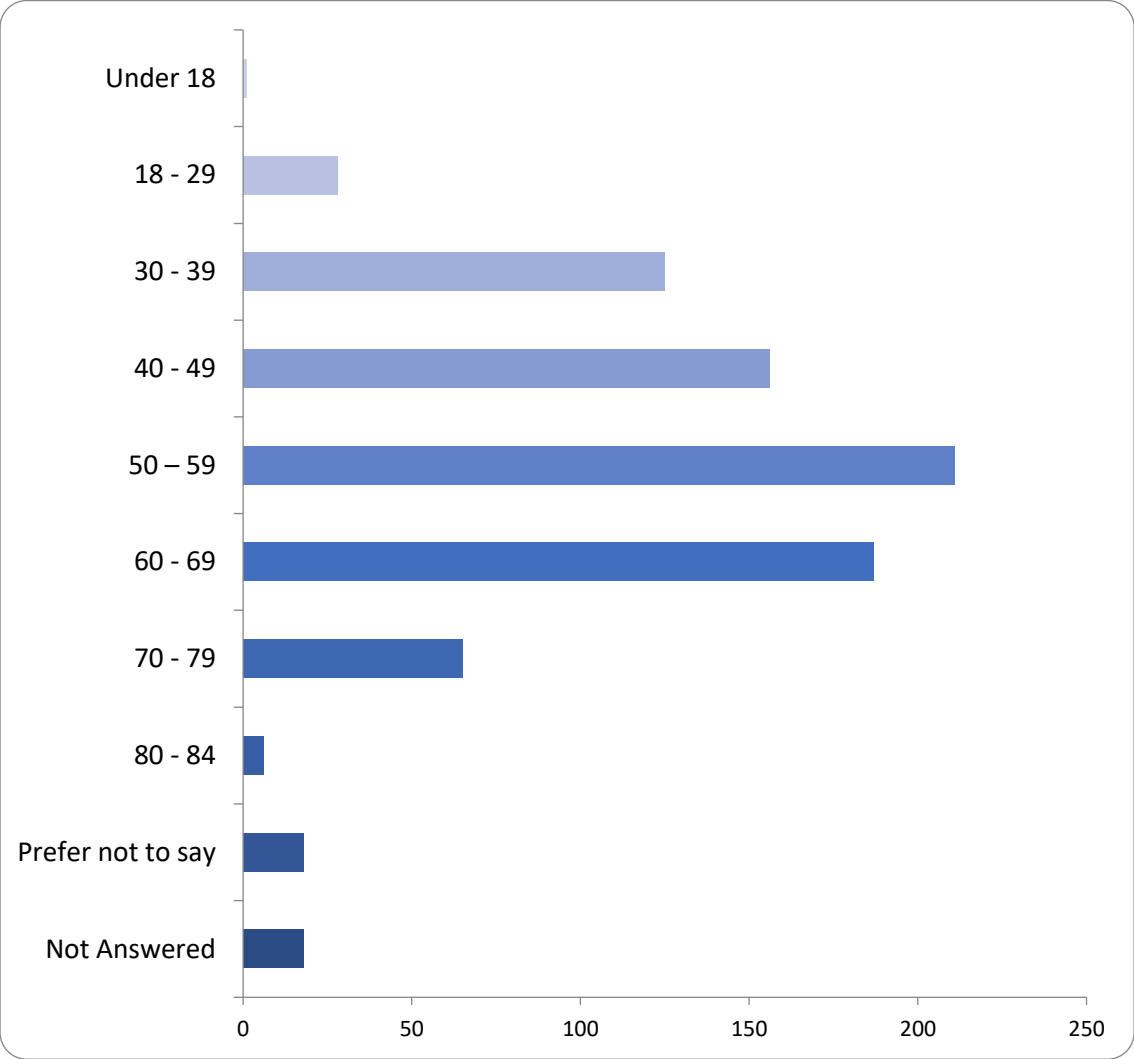
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Equalities Data

The following information gives some equalities data on those that completed the questionnaire. There was a fairly even split of male to females responding and mostly those who responded were over 40.

Age

There were 797 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	1	0.12%
18 - 29	28	3.44%
30 - 39	125	15.34%
40 - 49	156	19.14%
50 - 59	211	25.89%
60 - 69	187	22.94%
70 - 79	65	7.98%
80 - 84	6	0.74%
85+	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	18	2.21%

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Not Answered	18	2.21%
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What Sex Are You

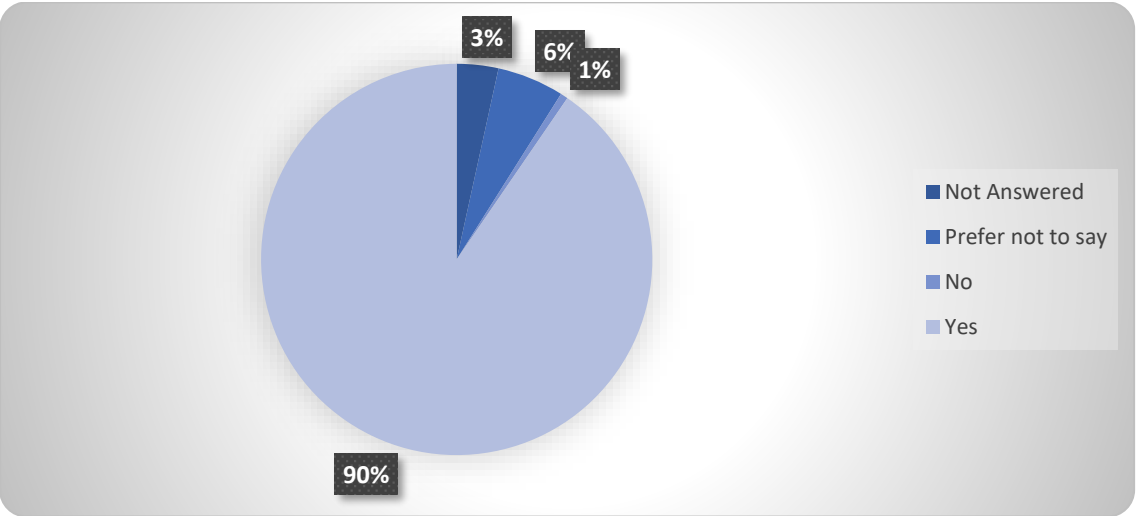
There were 791 responses to this part of the question.

Option	Total	Percent
Male	380	46.63%
Female	372	45.64%
Non-binary	3	0.37%
Prefer not to say	36	4.42%
Not Answered	24	2.94%

Other sex:

There were 2 responses to this part of the question

Do you live in the gender you were given at birth?

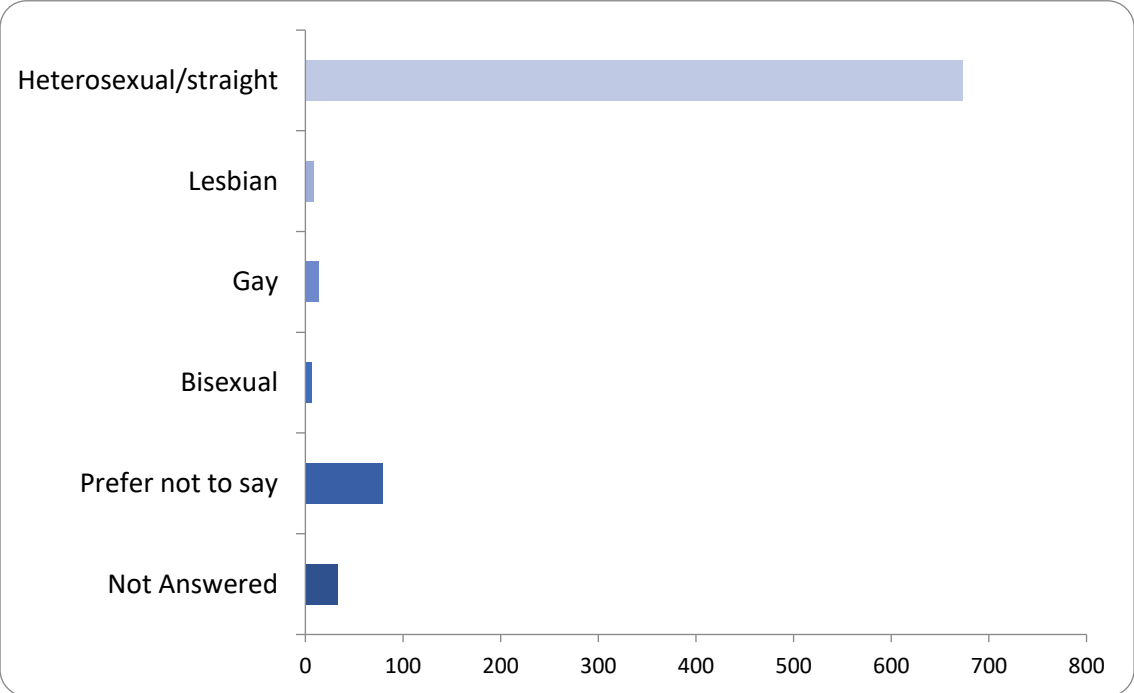


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	737	90.43%
No	5	0.61%
Prefer not to say	45	5.52%
Not Answered	28	3.44%

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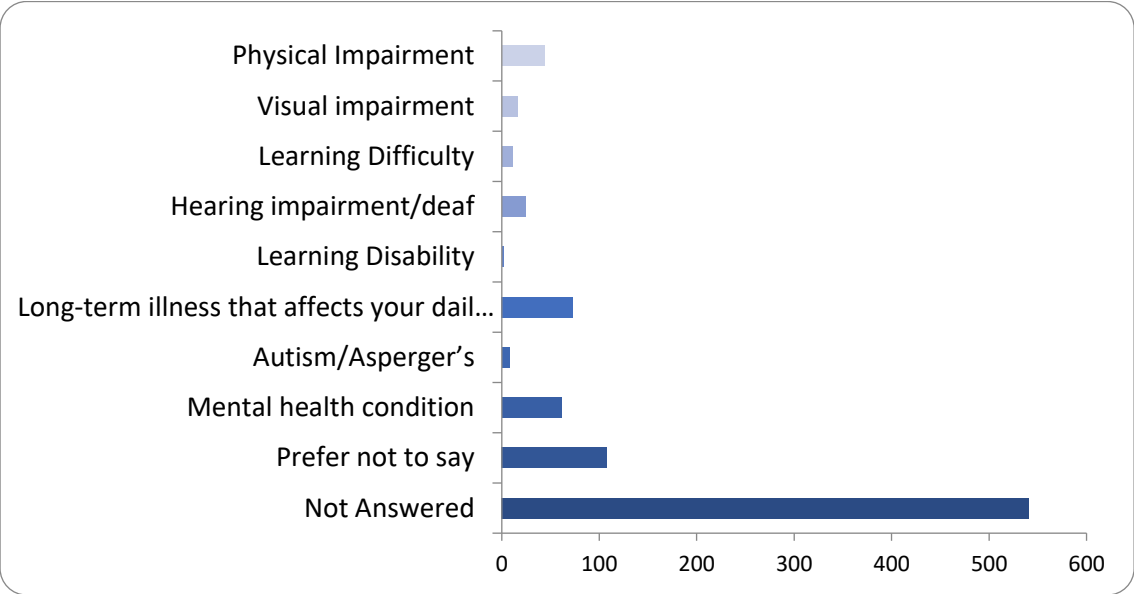
How would you describe your sexual orientation?

There were 782 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Heterosexual/straight	673	82.58%
Lesbian	9	1.10%
Gay	14	1.72%
Bisexual	7	0.86%
Prefer not to say	79	9.69%
Not Answered	33	4.05%

Disability: Do you have any of the following (please tick all that apply):

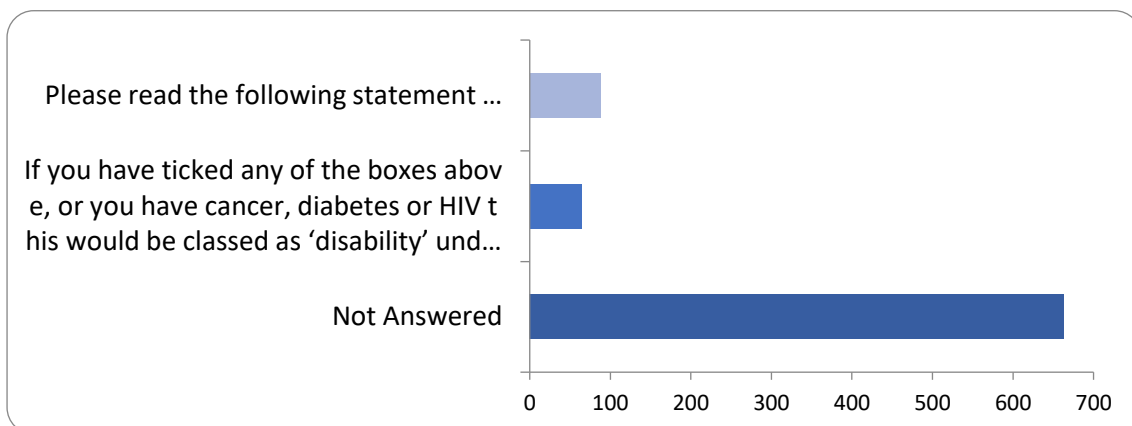


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Option	Total	Percent
Physical Impairment	44	5.40%
Visual impairment	16	1.96%
Learning Difficulty	11	1.35%
Hearing impairment/deaf	24	2.94%
Learning Disability	2	0.25%
Long-term illness that affects your daily life	73	8.96%
Autism/Asperger's	8	0.98%
Mental health condition	61	7.48%
Dementia	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	108	13.25%
Not Answered	541	66.38%

Consider disabled?

There were 152 responses to this part of the question.

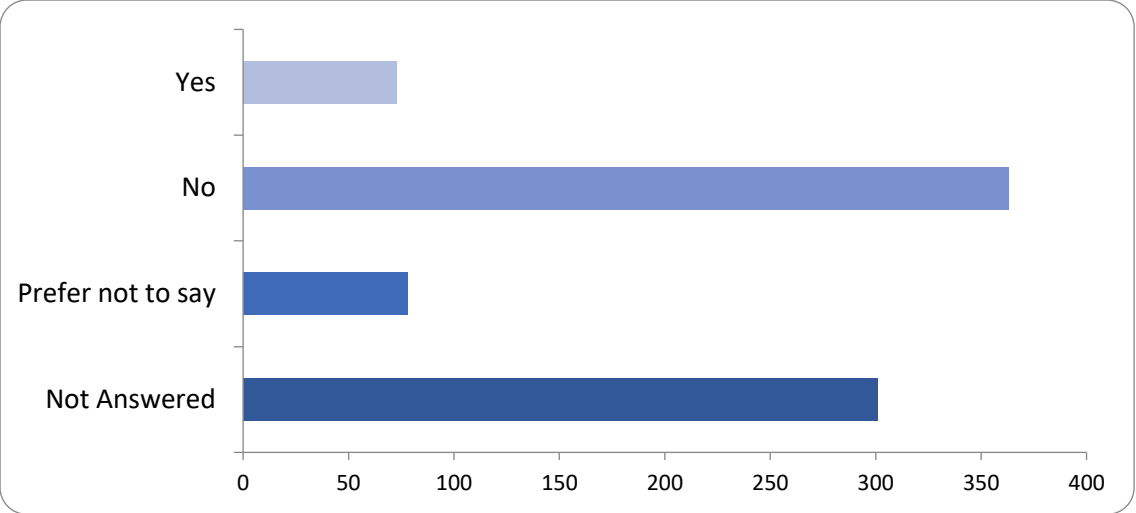


Option	Total	Percent
Please read the following statement ...	88	10.80%
If you have ticked any of the boxes above, or you have cancer, diabetes or HIV this would be classed as 'disability' under the legislation. Do you consider yourself to be 'disabled'?	64	7.85%
Not Answered	663	81.35%

If you have ticked any of the boxes above, or you have cancer, diabetes or HIV this would be classed as 'disability' under the legislation. Do you consider yourself to be 'disabled'?

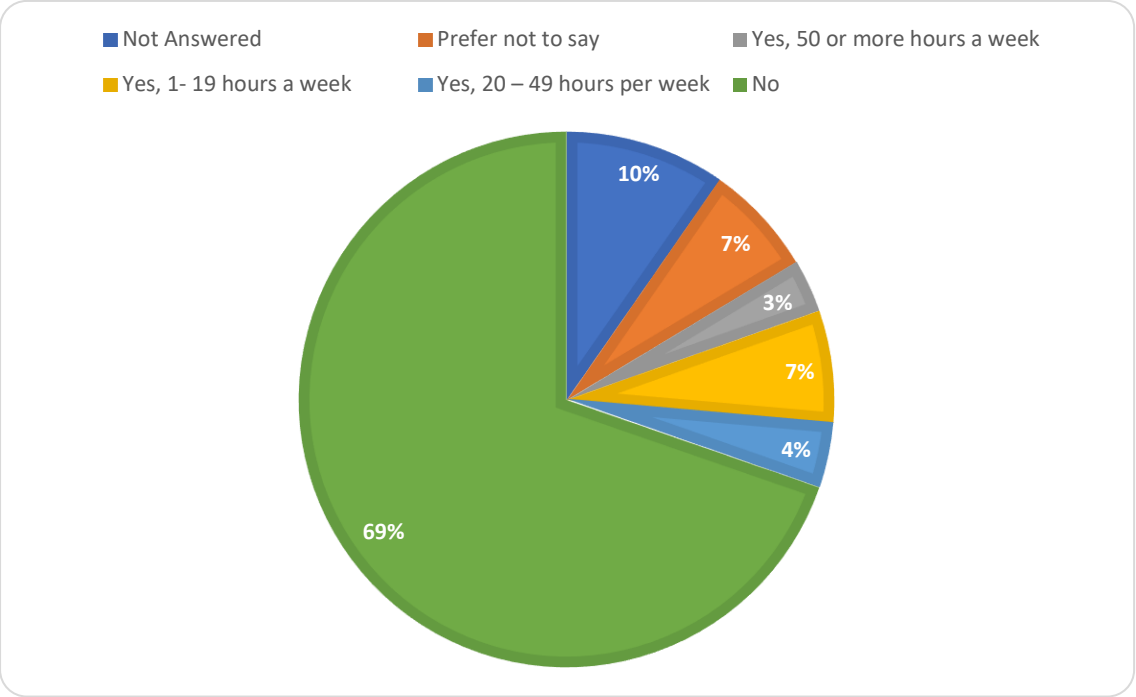
There were 514 responses to this part of the question.

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Option	Total	Percent
Yes	73	8.96%
No	363	44.54%
Prefer not to say	78	9.57%
Not Answered	301	36.93%

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support/care for a family member, friend etc who needs help with their day-to-day life; because they are disabled, have a long-term illness or they are elderly. Are you a carer?



Option	Total	Percent
No	568	69.69%

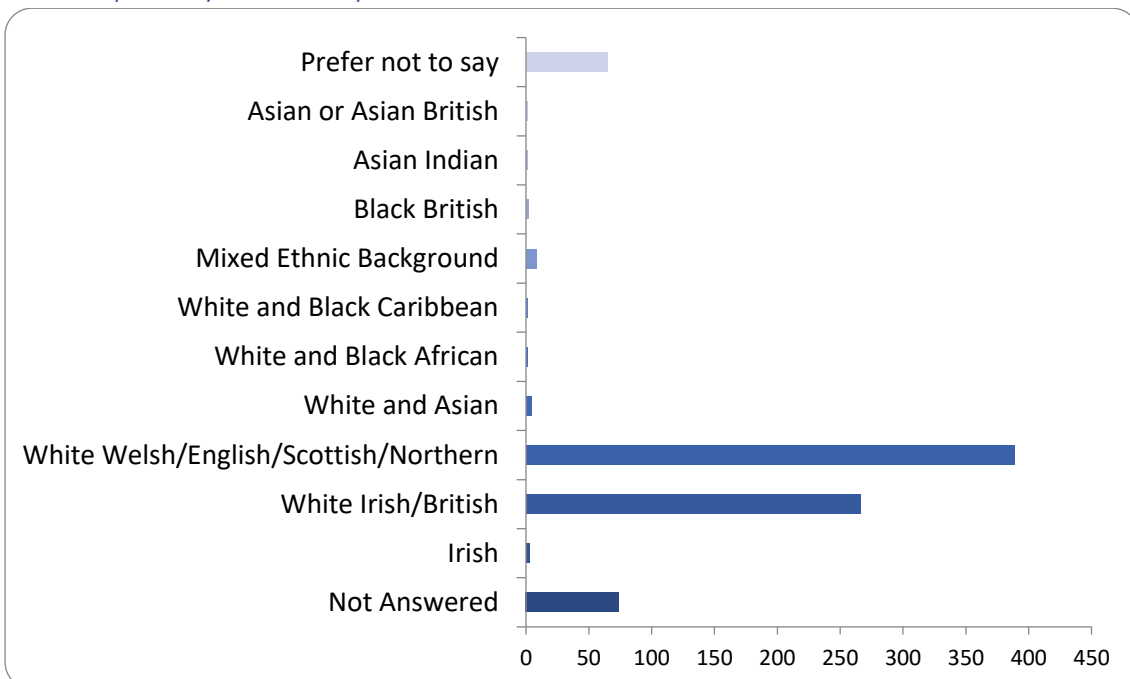
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Yes, 20 – 49 hours per week	32	3.93%
Yes, 1- 19 hours a week	55	6.75%
Yes, 50 or more hours a week	26	3.19%
Prefer not to say	55	6.75%
Not Answered	79	9.69%

What is your religion/belief?

Option	Total	Percent
No religion/belief	237	29.08%
Christian	419	51.41%
Hindu	2	0.25%
Muslim	3	0.37%
Jewish	0	0.00%
Sikh	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	97	11.90%
Not Answered	57	6.99%

Ethnicity – do you identify as:



Option	Total	Percent
Prefer not to say	65	7.98%
Asian or Asian British	1	0.12%
Asian Indian	1	0.12%

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Asian Bangladeshi	0	0.00%
Asian Pakistani	0	0.00%
Black Asian	0	0.00%
Chinese	0	0.00%
Black African	0	0.00%
Black Caribbean	0	0.00%
Black British	2	0.25%
Mixed Ethnic Background	8	0.98%
White and Black Caribbean	1	0.12%
White and Black African	1	0.12%
White and Asian	4	0.49%
White Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern	389	47.73%
White Irish/British	266	32.64%
Irish	3	0.37%
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	0	0.00%
Roma	0	0.00%
Not Answered	74	9.08%