

# Findings of Horsham Park user survey

## Key findings

- A survey was carried out of Horsham Park users. There were 890 responses. Most respondents were frequent visitors, with five out of six (83%) visiting the park at least weekly in the summer months.
- Overall satisfaction with the park was very high, with 96% being very or fairly satisfied.
- 70% of users visited with a range of different companions, including 64% with adults, 52% with children aged 11 and under, and 48% on their own.
- Walking was the most common mode of transport (74%) followed by car/van (49%). The choice of transport was (unsurprisingly) influenced by how far away the respondent lived, and if they visited with children, pets or an organised group.
- There were differences between age groups in the main reasons for visiting the park. Younger people are more likely to use the park for socialising or as a shortcut, those aged 35-44 for activities such as sport or public events, and people aged 45-64 for reasons relating to pets or nature.
- The most frequent facilities used were the gardens, café and seating. The pond, play area and events/entertainment were also selected by a majority of respondents.
- The most common issues reported were lack of toilets, litter and rats. These had at least some effect on at least one in five respondents. It was also evident from comments that width of pathways and lighting also affected people's enjoyment of the park.
- 40% of respondents wanted more events in the park, with music and children/family events being mentioned most often. However, events need to be balanced with disruption of other uses.
- 61% of respondents felt the park was fairly well maintained, and 31% very well maintained.

## Introduction

A survey was conducted of Horsham Park users, which is intended to inform the management plan. The survey was conducted online, and was promoted through the council's website and via friends' groups. The survey was open between 19<sup>th</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

## Who responded to the survey?

There were 890 responses to the survey. It is difficult to assess how representative these are, as the make-up of Horsham Park users (by age, gender etc.) is not known.<sup>1</sup> Over one hundred respondents (13% of the sample) mentioned involvement in Park Run in their comments, even though the survey did not specifically ask about this (and therefore the total number is likely to be higher). This suggests that the survey may have been promoted among some of the organised groups which use of the park, although there also appear to be many responses from the general public. Overall, 84% of respondents were frequent users (see '*How often do respondents visit?*' below), so responses are likely to be well informed.

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<sup>1</sup> For this reason, while surveys often 'weight' data to match the profile of the general population, this was not possible in this circumstance.

## Age and gender

63% of responses were from females and 37% from males, which suggests that males may be under-represented. Slightly over half of responses came from people aged between 35 and 54. There were few responses from park users aged 24 and under appear, making just 4% of the sample. However, the views of this age group may not be under-represented, as 61% of respondents said they visited the park with children (aged 11 and under) and/or young people (aged 12-17). The needs of younger park users are evident in many of these responses.

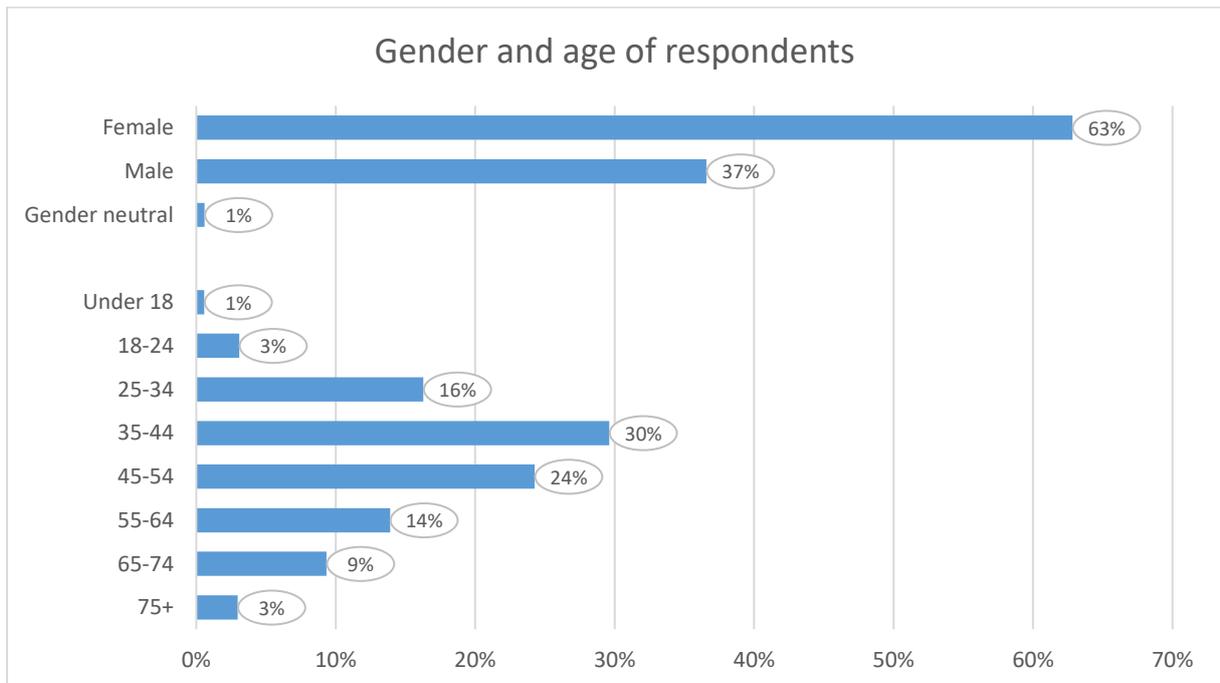


Figure 1

## How often do respondents visit?

Most respondents were frequent visitors to the Park. In the summer months, five out of six (83%) respondents visited at least weekly, while 70% did so during the winter months [Figure 2].

A seasonal effect was evident, as a third of respondents visited less frequently during the winter than the summer. This was most evident among the most regular visitors: 39% of respondents said they visited 'most days' during the summer, but only 25% during the winter.

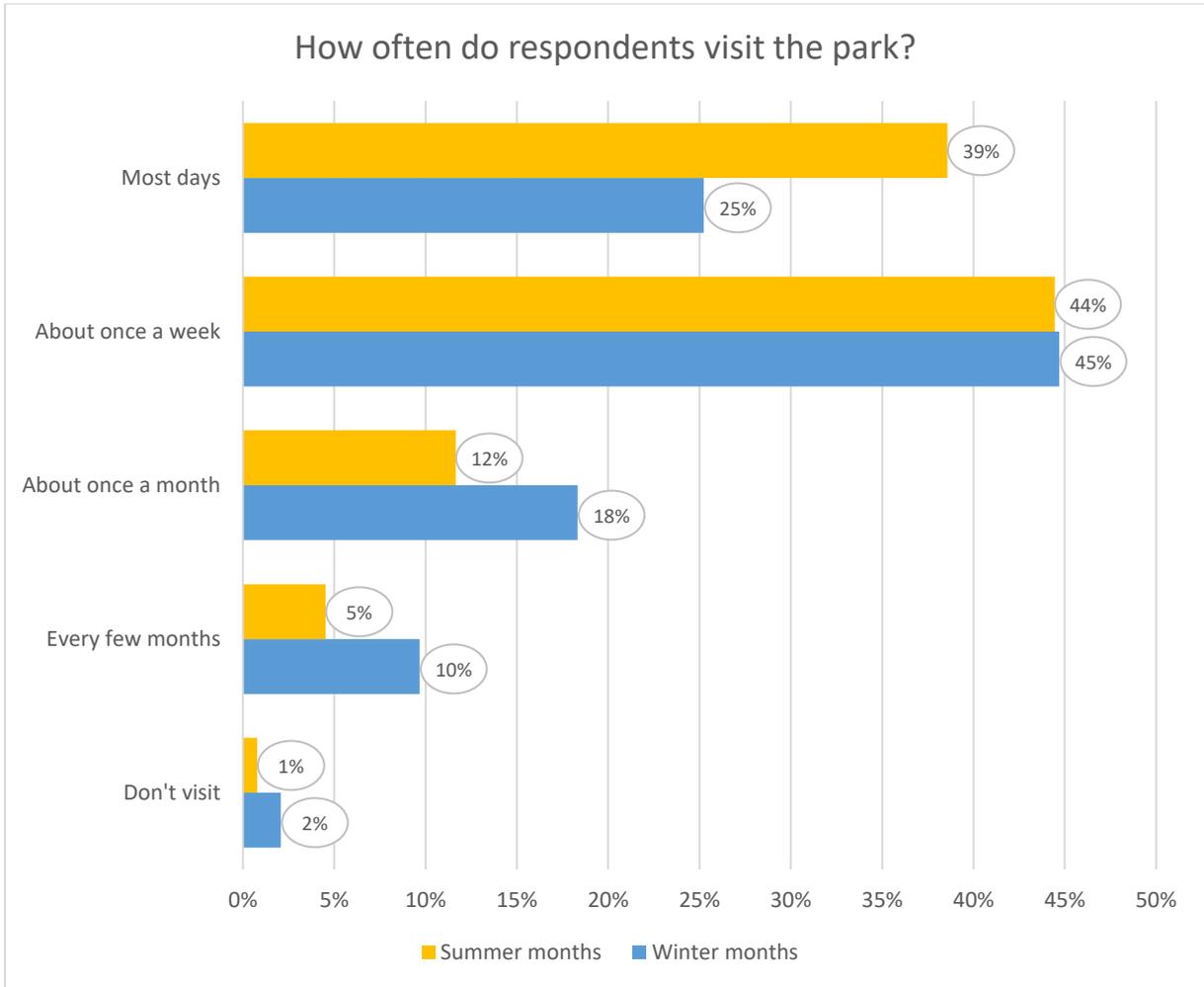


Figure 2

Respondents have been classified into categories as shown in Figure 3, according to how often they visit the park during the summer and winter months. 68% visit frequently in all seasons, while 15% visit frequently during the summer only, and 14% are occasional visitors.

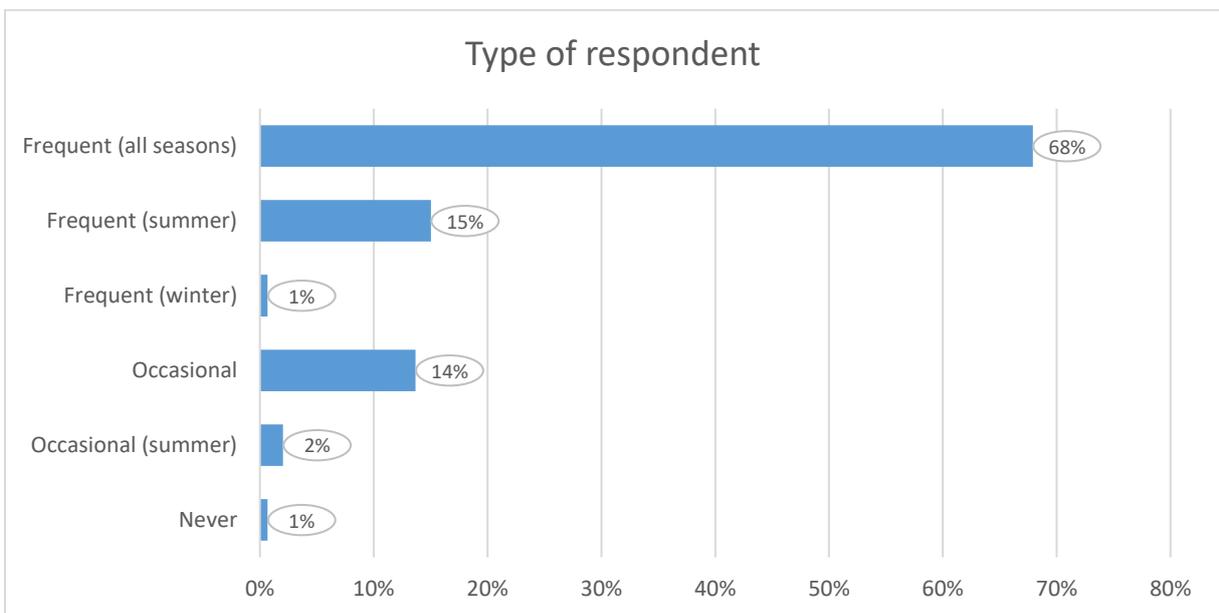


Figure 3

## Who do respondents visit with?

Respondents were asked who they visited the park with. The most common response was with adults (64%), followed by with children aged 11 or less (52%) and alone (48%).

Respondents were able to tick as many categories as applied. In total, 70% ticked more than one category, demonstrating that most people use the park with a variety of different types of companions (most often visiting with adults and children, or alone and with adults). However, two thirds of respondents who visited with children only visited in this way. By contrast, 85% of respondents who used the park with an organised group also visited in other types of company.

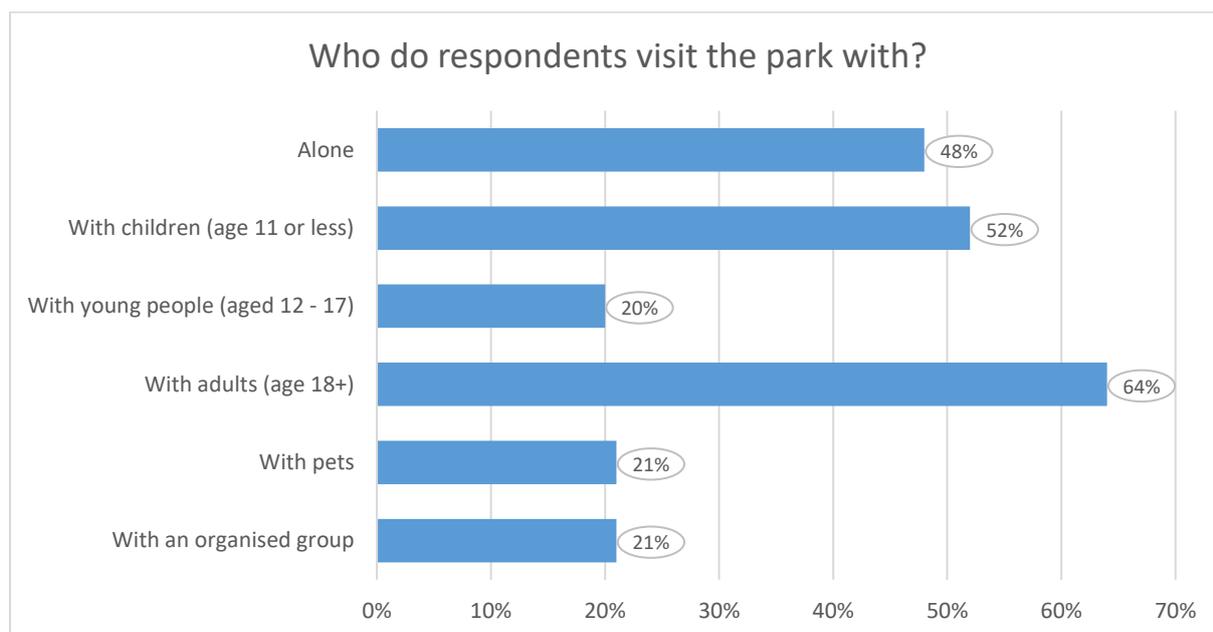


Figure 4

## How do respondents get to the park

Almost 95% of respondents gave (at least a partial) home postcode. This is an unusually high response rate for this type of question, and indicates a high degree of trust in the council with regards to this survey.

Using this information, travelling routes were calculated from each respondent's home to the central point of Horsham Park (shown in red in Figure 5).<sup>2,3</sup> Figure 6 shows the times needed to walk to the park, and the distance of the walking route. More than half of respondents live within 1.2 miles of this point, and can walk it in 22 minutes or less. (It should be borne in mind that many people travel to the park from their place of work, or while visiting other locations in the town centre.)

<sup>2</sup> The websites used were [gridreferencefinder.com](http://gridreferencefinder.com); [www.freemaptools.com](http://www.freemaptools.com) and [doogal.co.uk](http://doogal.co.uk)

<sup>3</sup> Note that respondents will have entered the park boundaries several minutes before reaching this mid-point, particularly those arriving from a northerly direction.



Figure 5

Travel to Horsham Park			
Walking time		Distance	
Less than 15 mins	27%	Less than 0.5 mile	9%
15-29 mins	34%	0.5 - 0.99 miles	33%
30-44 mins	18%	1 - 1.49 miles	19%
45-59 mins	6%	1.5 - 1.99 miles	14%
More than 60 mins	15%	2 miles+	25%

Figure 6

#### Mode of travel to the park

Respondents were asked how they travel to the park.<sup>4</sup> The most common method was walking (74%), followed by car/van (49%), while just 16% travelled by bicycle. This pattern was true of all age-groups.

Figure 7 shows the mode of travel, broken down by travel distance.<sup>5</sup> As might be expected, respondents who walked were more likely to live within one mile of the park, while a higher proportion of those travelling by car/van or public transport lived over two miles away.

<sup>4</sup> It was possible to select more than one option.

<sup>5</sup> The distance used is for a walking route

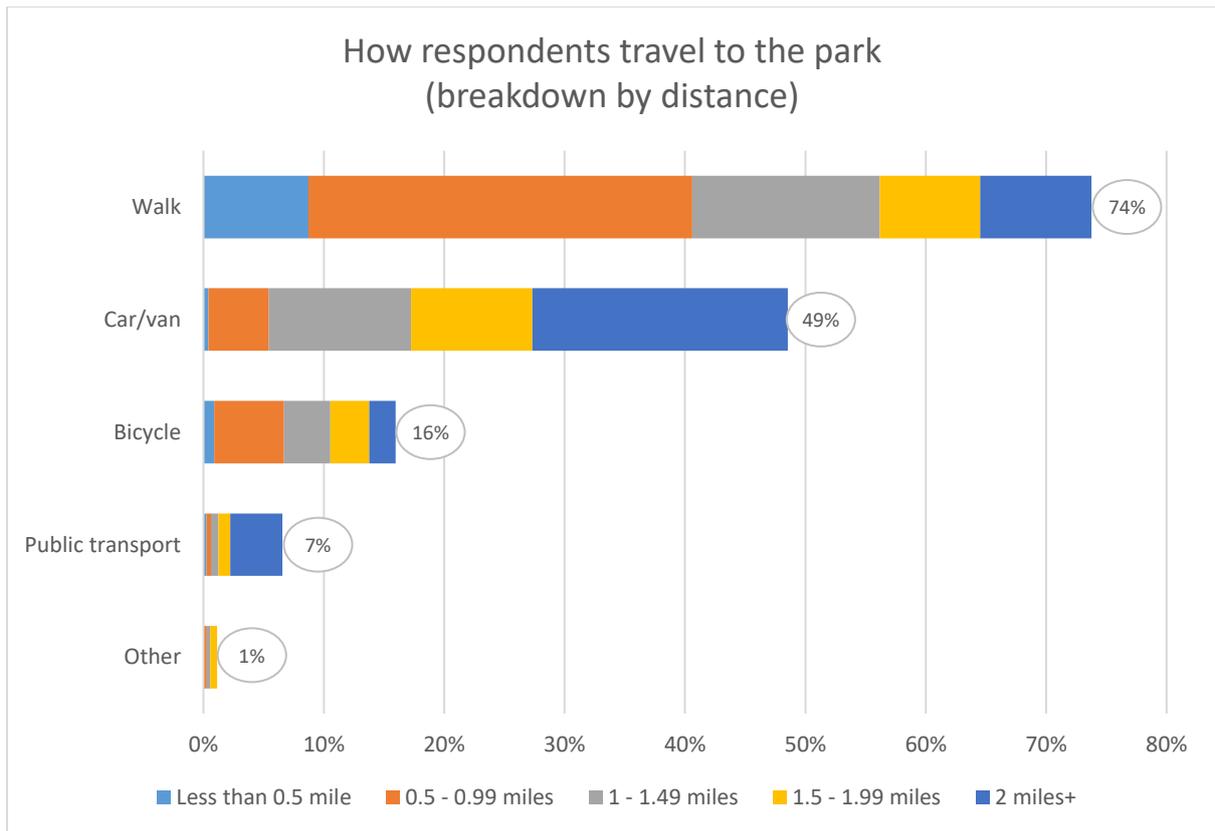


Figure 7

Figure 8 shows the mode of transport used, broken down by whom the respondent travelled with. Those who visited the park alone were more likely to have walked. Travel by car/van was relatively high when visiting with children aged 11 or less, organised groups or with pets.

Travelling companions					
% using each mode of transport					
	Walk	Car/van	Bicycle	Public transport	Other
Alone	88%	33%	19%	8%	1%
With pets	71%	50%	9%	4%	2%
With children (age 11 or less)	72%	57%	17%	9%	1%
With young people (aged 12 - 17)	82%	47%	24%	4%	2%
With adults (age 18+)	77%	47%	16%	7%	1%
With an organised group	77%	56%	27%	5%	3%

Figure 8

Walking was the most common mode of transport among all age groups, but was most likely among under 25s, whereas cyclists were most likely to be in the 35-44 age group, and those travelling by car/van were most likely to be aged 25-34 (see Figure 9).

Most common age-group using each mode of transport	
Walk	Under 25
Car/van	25-34
Bicycle	35-44
Public transport	Under 25/65 and over
Other	—

Figure 9

Taken together, this evidence suggests that decisions about how to travel to Horsham Park are made on a functional basis, e.g. travel by car/van may be more likely for those visiting with young families, pets or undertaking structured activities requiring equipment. Any changes to parking provision or cost is likely to disproportionately affect these groups. There may also be limited scope to discourage use of vehicles among these users, although there may be the potential to encourage cycling, given the relatively small proportion of respondents who travel by this method.

### Reasons for visiting Horsham Park

Respondents were asked what their main reasons were for visiting the park, selecting from a list of options. The most frequent reasons were sport, exercise or physical health (64%); on the way to another destination (59%); and to enjoy nature (54%). Meeting and socialising with other people, public events and physical or mental health were also common reasons. Just one in five respondents used the park to walk pets.

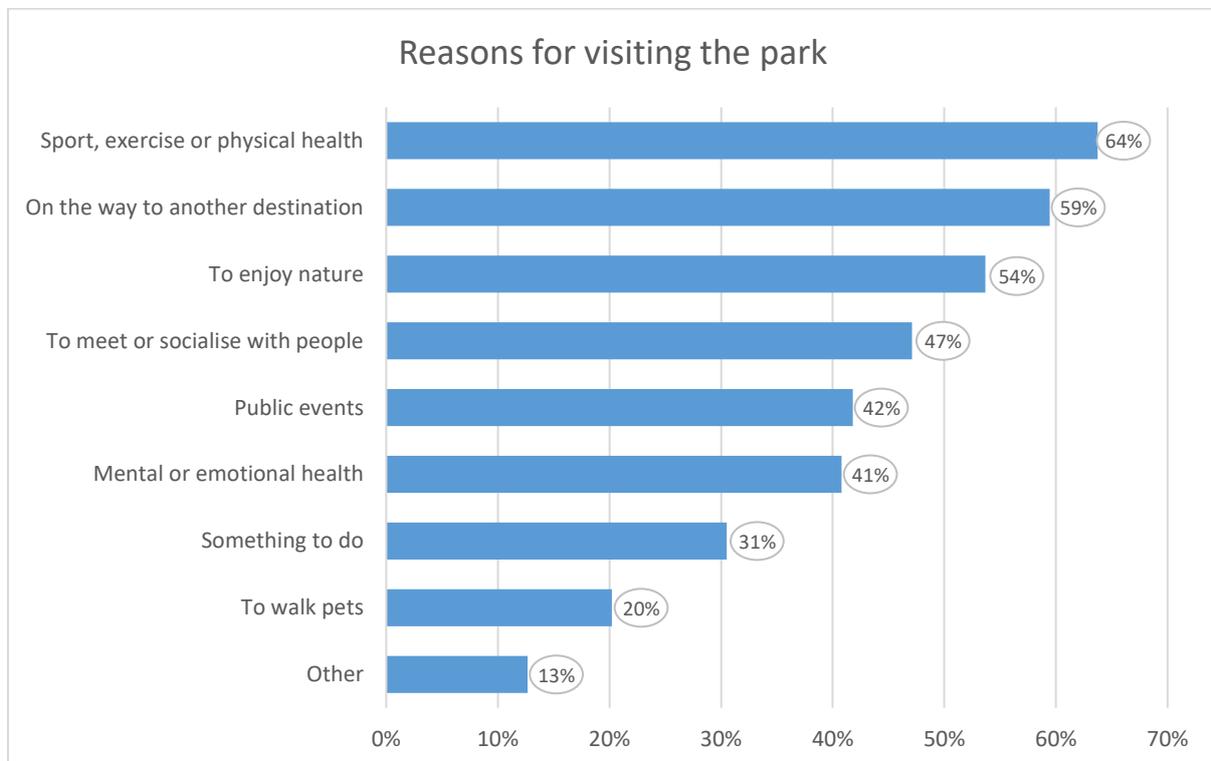


Figure 10

Respondents were more likely to visit the park frequent in all seasons if they came for the following purposes:

- Sport, exercise or physical health
- Mental or emotional health
- To meet or socialise with people

Respondents who visited for ‘*something to do*’ were more likely to visit during the summer only (with more doing so occasionally than frequently). By contrast, there was a strong seasonal effect in both summer and winter among respondents who visited for public events, suggesting that some activities succeed in turning occasional visitors into frequent ones during their time of operation (but that this effect does not persist once the activity finishes).

Figure 11 shows the age group most likely to cite each reason. Younger people are more likely to use the park for socialising or as a shortcut, those aged 35-44 for activities such as sport or public events, and people aged 45-64 for reasons relating to pets or nature.

Females were more likely than males to cite many of the reasons, but notably there were no significant differences between genders for sport/exercise/physical health.

Most common age-group and gender for each reason		
	Age group	Gender <sup>6</sup>
Sport, exercise or physical health	35-44	No difference
On the way to another destination	Under 25s	No difference
To enjoy nature	55-64	Female
To meet or socialise with people	Under 25/25-34	Female
Public events	35-44	Female
Mental or emotional health	55-64	Female
Something to do	35-44	Female
To walk pets	45-54	No difference
Other	35-44	No difference

Figure 11

It is also notable that there is lower use of the park for reasons of:

- *mental or emotional health* among under 25s
- *meeting and socialising people* among those aged 55+
- *sport, exercise or physical health* among those aged below 35 and those aged 65+

## Facilities used

Respondents were asked what facilities they used in the last 12 months. The most frequent responses were the gardens, café and seating. The pond, play area and events/entertainment were also selected by a majority of respondents.

<sup>6</sup> Gender neutral is not included in this column because the sample size is not large enough to assess statistically significance

Combining responses for seating in sun and shade, 78% of respondents selected at least one of these options, making it the most commonly used facility. 40% of respondents selected at least one facility relating to sport or physical exercise<sup>7</sup>, with the trim trail being most frequently mentioned.

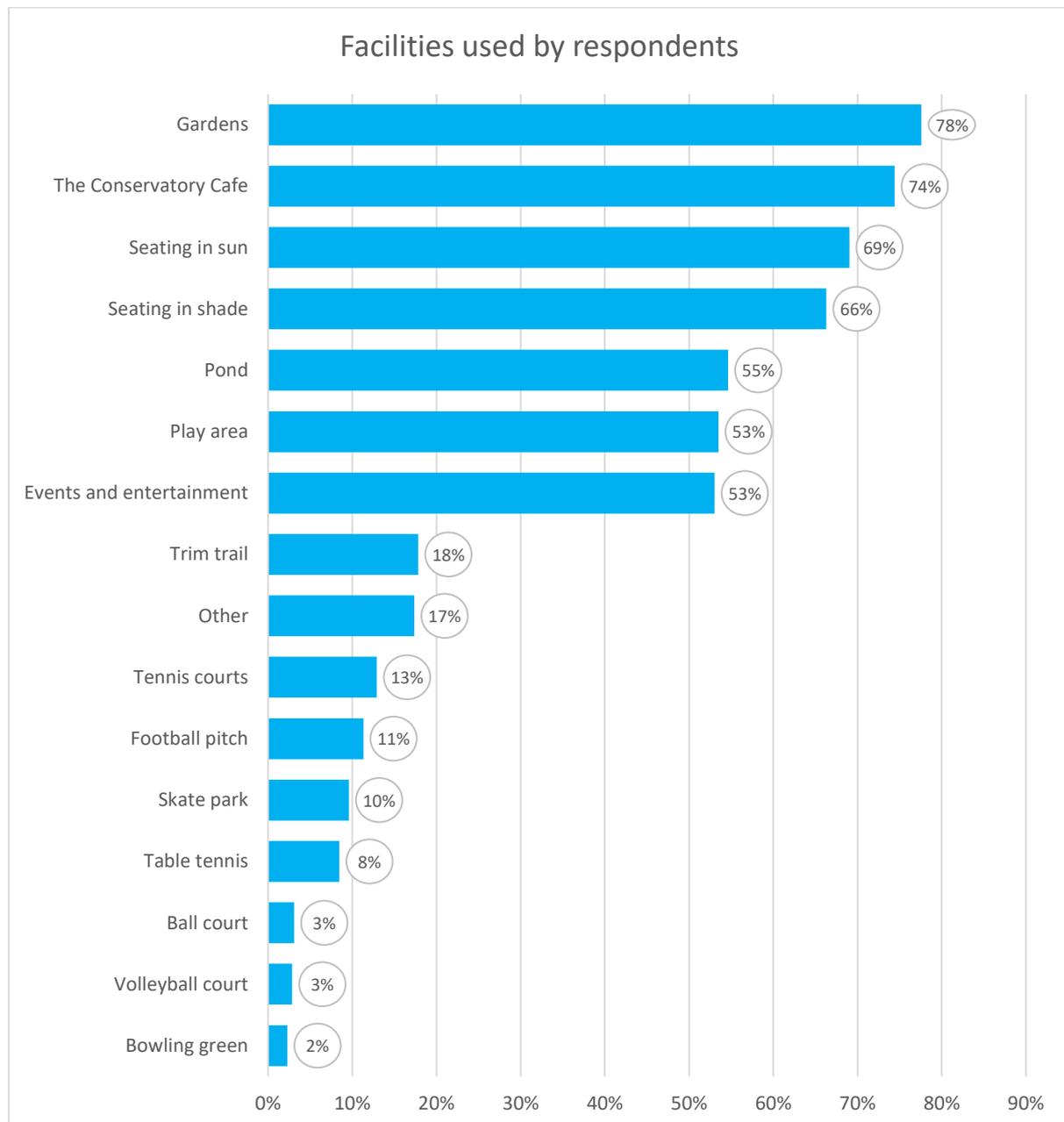


Figure 12

Almost all respondents used a range of different facilities: the most common number of options picked was five (which 17% of the sample selected). Not surprisingly, frequent visitors mentioned using more facilities than occasional visitors. Figure 13 shows which other groups tend to use the most/fewest facilities.

<sup>7</sup> Including trim trail, tennis courts, football pitch, skate park, table tennis, ball court, volleyball court and/or bowling green.

	Who uses most/fewest facilities (mean average)			
	Uses most		Uses fewest	
<b>Gender</b>	Females	5.6	Males	4.8
<b>Age</b>	35-44 year olds	6.2	Aged 65 and over	4.2
<b>How often</b>	Frequent visitor	5.6	Occasional visitor	3.8
<b>Companion</b>	Visit with children/young people	6.3	Visit with pets	5.3

Figure 13

### Changes and additions to facilities

Comments were collected about additional facilities which are needed or facilities which should be moved to a more appropriate location. There were 344 responses, over a third of the sample. Figure 14 shows some of the most frequently mentioned words/themes from a brief analysis. As might be expected, there was a mix of positive and negative comments for many of the themes.

Key words mentioned			
park	157	gym	21
paths	73	green	19
toilet	42	nature/wildlife	19
lighting	41	good	17
wider	41	great	17
ice/rink	40	play(ground)	17
skate/skating	30	runners/running	17
facility	29	Park Run	16
dog	25	safety	16
bins	22	walking	16

Figure 14

### Problems experienced by park users

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which certain problems affected their enjoyment of Horsham Park. Ten of the sixteen issues had some effect or a significant effect on more than one in five respondents. The top four issues (toilets, litter, rodents and dog fouling) had a significant effect on at least 10% of respondents. Results are shown in Figure 15.

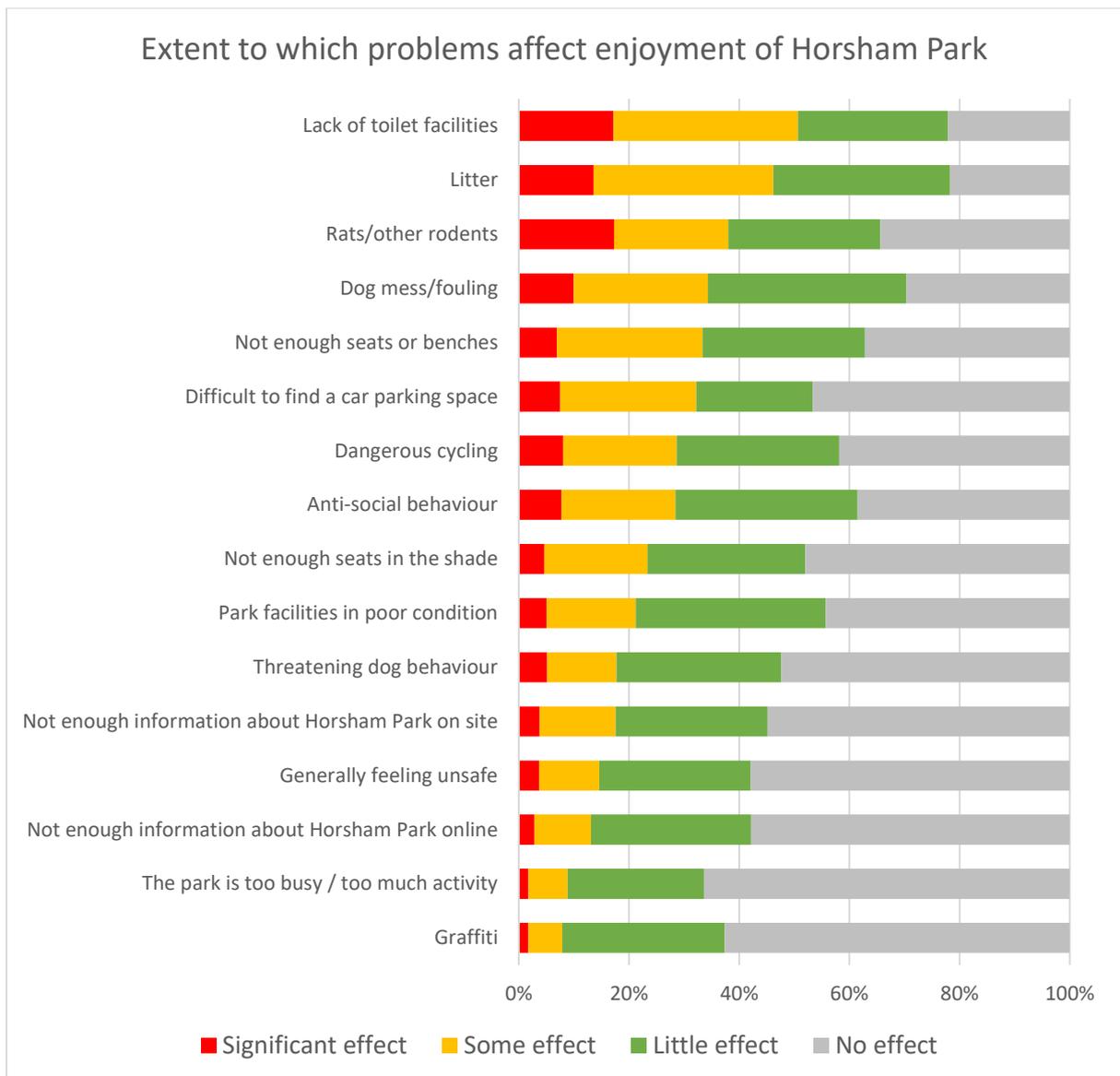


Figure 15

Figure 16 shows the groups which are affected by these problems to a greater extent which is statistically significant. This shows that the groups which are particularly affected by specific issues are the over 65s and visitors with children or pets.

Who do the problems particularly affect?	
Parking spaces	Visitors with children
Litter	Over 55s, visitors with pets
Dangerous cycling	Over 65s, visitors with pets
Rodents	Over 65s
Lack of toilets	Visitors with children
Facilities in poor condition	Over 65s
Not enough seats in the shade	Females, visitors with children

Figure 16

## Usage of space

Respondents were asked the question “is there too much or too little of each of the following in Horsham Park?” These four questions were not answered by over a fifth of the sample, a significantly higher rate of non-response than for other questions in the survey.<sup>8</sup> This indicates that the question may not have been clearly understood by respondents. The results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Use of space				
	Formal activity areas	Open green space	Gardens	Pedestrian footpaths
<b>Too little</b>	5%	9%	13%	14%
<b>Just right</b>	65%	68%	64%	64%
<b>Too much</b>	6%	1%	1%	1%
<b>No response</b>	23%	22%	22%	21%

Figure 17

Overall, the majority of respondents felt the amount of space devoted to the functions listed (see Figure 17) was just right. There was a small minority who felt too little space was devoted to pedestrian footpaths; this reinforces some of the open comments which referred to this point (see Figure 14).

For example, one respondent wrote:

*“In some areas of the park, particularly near the skate park and the boxing gym the paths are too narrow to use comfortably. I have two young children and therefore always travel with a buggy (like many others in Horsham) and it is not easy to get two buggies passed each other. Often leading to squeezing to the bushes to pass other park users.”*

A number of comments about pathways cite the conflict between different types of user, e.g. cyclists, Park Runners, wheelchair users. Others mention poor lighting as a restriction on their ability to use the park in the dark. Several comments describe the area near to the skate park and hospital entrance as particularly in need of widening.

## Events

Respondents were asked if they would like there to be more events in Horsham Park. 40% answered ‘Yes’ while 60% said ‘No’. Just 21% of respondents aged 65+ wished to see more events, significantly fewer than for other age groups. There was little difference between genders.

<sup>8</sup> Other multiple choice questions in the survey have a non-response rate of less than 1%. This was mainly due to the same respondents in each case, who opted to answer just a few questions. The exceptions to this were the questions “would you like there to be more events in Horsham Park?” and “what is your gender?” Respectively, 2% and 5% of the sample preferred not to answer these questions.

When analysed by main reason for visiting the park, those who did so for public events or something to do were unsurprisingly most likely to want more events. However, even among these groups, only a little over half wanted more events (56% and 50% respectively). By contrast, the least likely to agree were those who visited to walk pets (30%); for mental or emotional health (36%); or to enjoy nature (37%).

It is important to note that the question does not allow the strength of feeling to be measured, in particular, the degree of opposition to events. However, although, the findings suggests that while there is an appetite for more events in the park, getting the right mix and quality of events may be more important than the number per se. While events will typically be relatively short in duration, consideration should still be given to minimise disruption for other types of users.

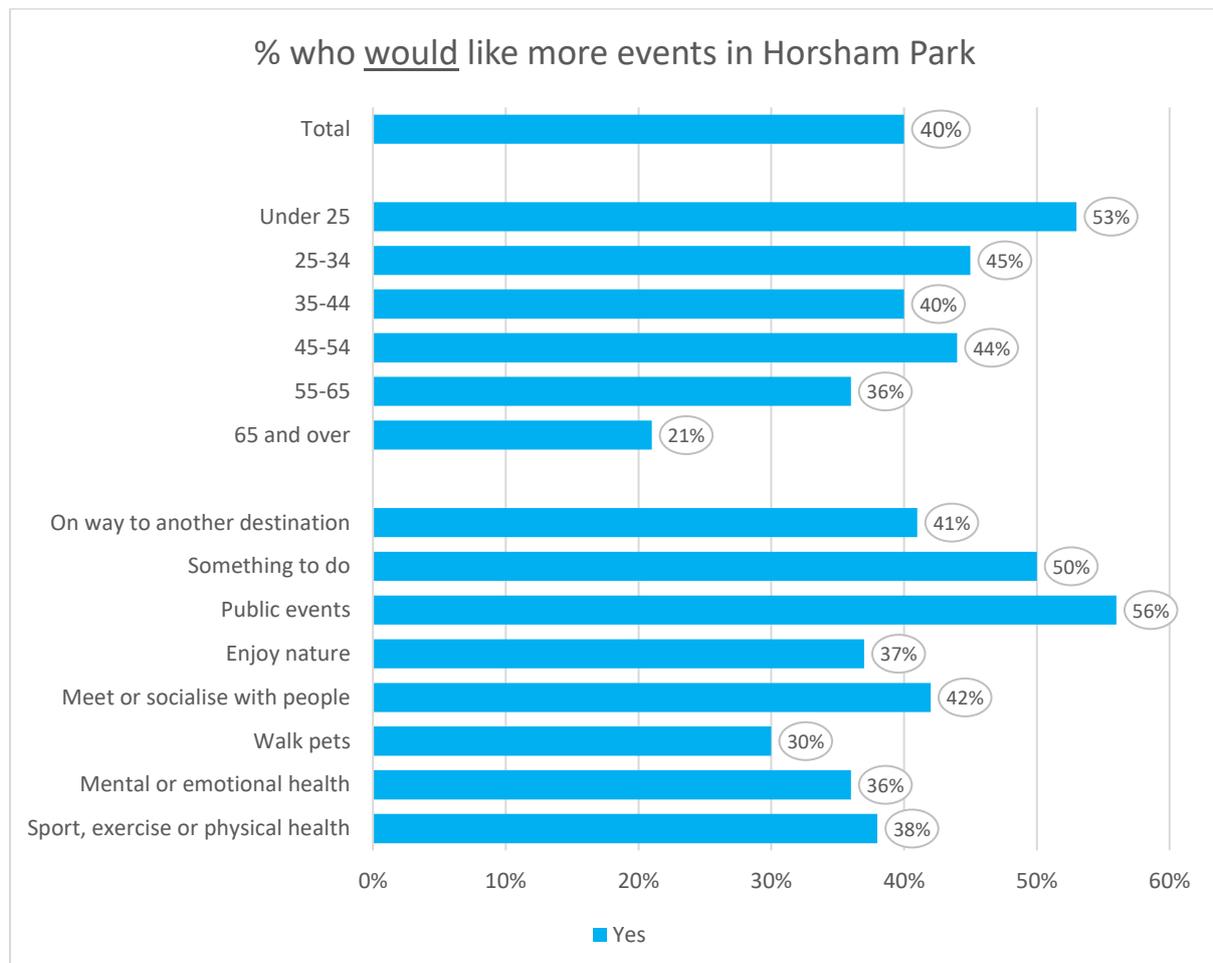


Figure 18

Respondents were also asked to specify the type of events they would like to see: 331 made a comment. Figure 19 gives a sense of the main themes and how often they were mentioned. Some comments were slightly unclear, and there was a degree of overlap among suggestions for music, festivals, fairs, markets and carnivals.

Types of event suggested	
Music	147
Children/family	106
Sport	38
Fair/carnival	25
Theatre & cinema	24
Food & drink	18

Figure 19

## Maintenance of the park

Respondents were asked how well they thought Horsham Park was maintained. The vast majority of responses were positive, with 31% saying it was very well maintained and 62% fairly well maintained. Just 7% said it was either not very well maintained or not at all well maintained.

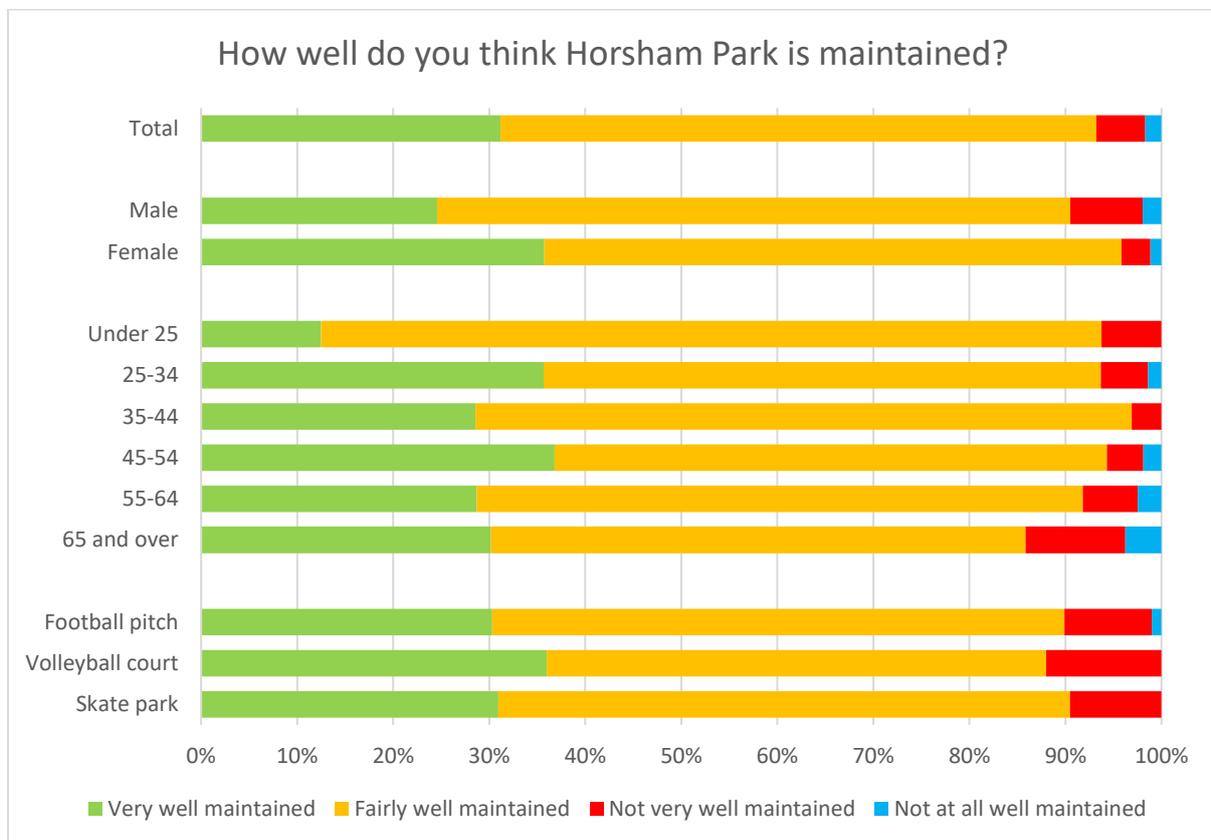


Figure 20

Views were generally more positive among females than males. When considering age groups, respondents aged 65+ were most likely to say the park was not very well/at all well maintained. The Under 25s largely felt the park was fairly well maintained, with fewer saying it was very well maintained.

Differences according to users of different facilities were not statistically significant. Rates of dissatisfaction among users of football pitches, volleyball courts and the skate park should be considered. However, the question asks about maintenance of Horsham Park overall, rather than for individual facilities.

## Overall satisfaction with Horsham Park

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with Horsham Park overall. Results were highly positive, with 46% very satisfied, and 50% fairly satisfied. Just 4% were either fairly or very dissatisfied.

As with the previous question, there was a higher level of satisfaction among females than males, although both groups are very positive overall. Differences between age groups are not statistically significant, except that under 25s were less likely to be highly satisfied.

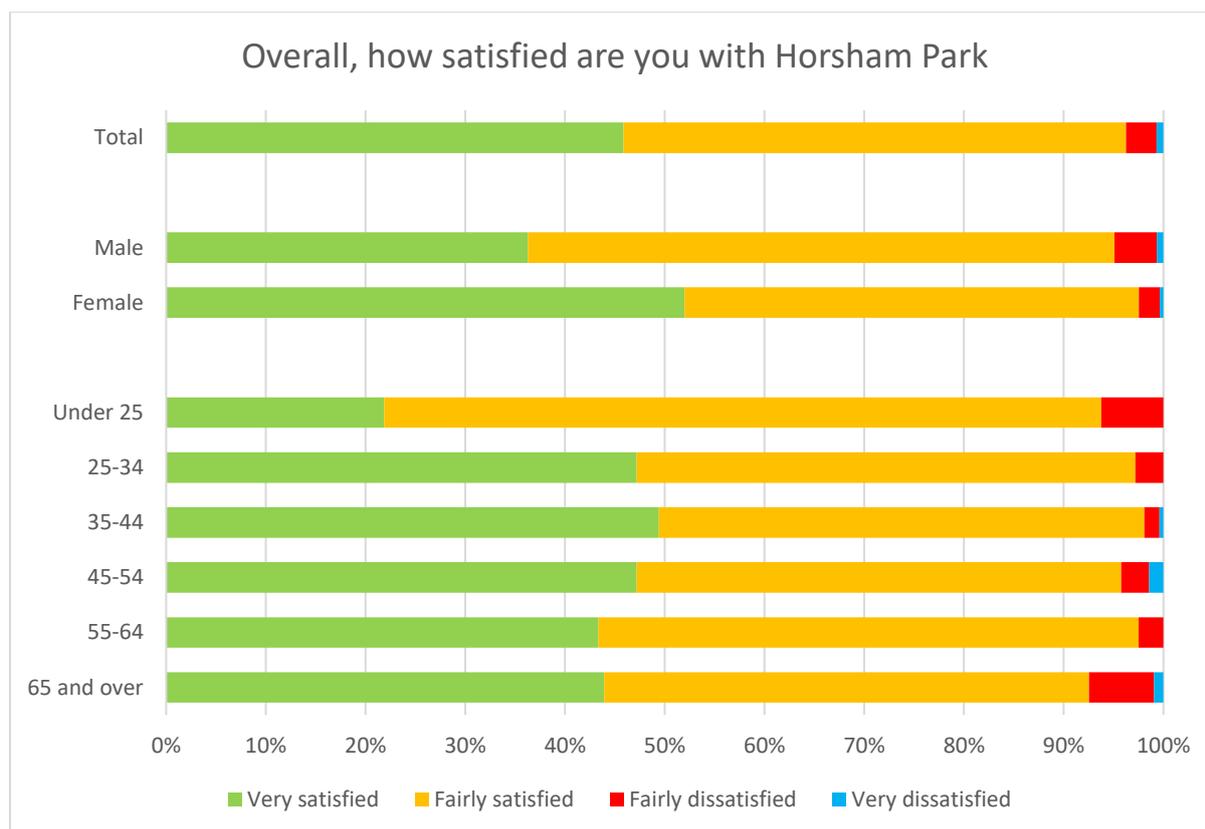


Figure 21

## Additional suggestions

Respondents were asked for suggestions about how Horsham Park could be improved. 445 people left comments, an unusually high response rate for this type of optional question, which again demonstrates the strength of feeling towards Horsham Park from the people who completed the survey.

Despite the high degree of satisfaction with the park, the majority of the comments showed a degree of concern that the park needs to be maintained and protected. There were few requests for new facilities to be developed, other than toilets. There were mixed views about the ice rink, many hinting that this is acceptable as a temporary facility but not as a permanent feature. Other common themes in comments were the tidiness of paths, safety in the dark, rats and litter.

A selection of comments is given below:

*Hedges along path need cutting back, litter wardens needed - summer evenings especially, I don't use the park if weather is nice as too much rubbish for dog to pick up and eat.*

*Horsham parkrun is a fantastic weekly event. It does struggle in the winter months though. There are certainly improvements to the paths that can be made that would benefit it and protect the parks grassy areas.*

*This park is vital to our family of 2 adults and 3 children. We visit approx. 5 times a week. I am fearful, because of the ice rink development and recent application to put hard standing in that same place, that the park is going to be diminished, reduced and open green spaces destroyed. Please keep this beautiful free resource as it is without "developments" so other families and children can enjoy the open spaces in our town.*

*The subway across to park - both from the town centre and from new street are really not pleasant or well maintained and let the rest of the park down. Otherwise a beautiful resource & important part of what makes Horsham such a lovely place to live.*

*I don't think the funfair should come to Horsham Park. This year I think it came two or three times and it's loud and I don't feel safe at the funfair. Also, it creates a lot of litter.*

*The only main problem I find with the park is the amount of litter - particularly within range of the college. There is no respect for cleaning up rubbish from people who use the park. This equally rarely seems to be cleared to what I personally see an acceptable standard by litter pickers.*

*Add lights as it is dangerous and unsafe during winter afternoons. Robbery have taken place after college time due to lack of lighting*

*I would really like to see more green activities to encourage the children to learn about their environment on a variety days.*

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*Family fun days in the park are welcome but I'm less keen on longer events such as fun fairs etc. as they can be quite disruptive and I enjoy the park as a peaceful environment and cheap day out. The addition of things like an expensive trampoline next to the free playground is not a good addition - noisy and expensive for parents and small children don't understand that it costs a lot.*

*For there to be signs at least that inform everyone who uses it that it is cycle friendly. Some people do not like cyclists in the park. Considering environmental problems, walk to school campaigns, exercise which Horsham well-being team encourage I think that cycling in the park should be recognised as being equal to walking.*

*The rats are a real problem and do make me think twice about walking the kids around the edge of the park or near the pond. Perhaps the hedge that separates the pathways and the grass near the road could be removed to avoid rats hiding in them? A paddling pool or water play could be nice in the summer?*

*Horsham Park is practically perfect. Please don't pave over any more of it.*

*The only reason I go through the park is to get somewhere else, the lack of things to do for 14-25 year olds throughout the Horsham area is frustrating. Many events in the park are children's events or things that this age group are not interested in.*