

Creating an Active Birmingham Strategy

Birmingham Physical Activity Strategy 2024 – 2034

Consultation Findings

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Introduction

The Creating an Active City Forum is a sub-forum of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Forum in collaboration with other stakeholders has co-produced the Creating an Active Birmingham Strategy with the aim of increasing Physical Activity levels in Birmingham, across all ages and abilities. This is the first Physical Activity-oriented Strategy for Birmingham. The Strategy has been developed by the Physical Activity team in the Public Health Division within Birmingham City Council (BCC), with input from the public and local stakeholders whose vision is aligned with Physical Activity directly or indirectly. It has also been informed by local and national research and evidence that includes conversations with Birmingham Seldom Heard Voices. This is a stream of work whereby various providers working with grassroot communities obtain views and perspectives from the most disadvantaged groups in Birmingham.

The Strategy aims to address low levels of Physical Activity with a focus on developing opportunities for people to build Physical Activity into everyday life, through active living, active recreation, and active travel. The Strategy complements other programmes of work in place across the city, such as the Sports Strategy and Birmingham Travel Plan. Collectively these come together to ensure a holistic approach to increasing Physical Activity. Birmingham will achieve this by focussing on five areas:

- **Active People:** By creating and promoting access to Physical Activity opportunities, taking a life course approach across multiple settings, we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.
- **Active Society:** By creating and protecting the places and spaces that promote and engage people of all ages and abilities in activity, we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.
- **Active Environment:** By changing how we talk about Physical Activity across the city, building insight and evidence into policy, commissioning, planning decisions, communication messages and marketing campaigns, we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.
- **Active System:** By creating a more connected system and strengthening our local leadership, governance, partnerships, and workforce capabilities, we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.
- **Closing the Gap:** By continuing to develop a better understanding of local barriers and enablers to increase activity across the city and ensure we focus on the least active groups as identified in the Physical Activity Needs Assessment, we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.

In November 2023, BCC Cabinet granted us permission to start Physical Activity consultation of the Strategy with the public. This took place from the 20th of November 2023 until 15th of January 2024. Throughout this period, the Council Physical Activity team heard from local citizens, strategic partners, and key agencies. This report outlines the findings from the consultations.

Methods

The consultation method is built on the approved standards and evidence-based best practices for public consultation. We designed a comprehensive and innovative consultation plan, built on other previous successful consultations (e.g., the Food System team). This led us to engage with 1200 Birmingham residents.

One of the key rationales for the Strategy public consultation is to develop a people and community-oriented Strategy co-produced and co-implemented by the people of Birmingham to create a more active city. Hence, it was necessary to obtain the feedback of the diverse public and other stakeholders across Birmingham.

The Consultation was done through three different platforms.

1. **BeHeard** - This is the BCC platform for collating opinions, views, perspectives, and suggestions of residents. We obtained 321 responses, inclusive of responses from Assisted Consultation.
2. **Face to face consultation** - The team leveraged its existing relationship with partners to access various Council owned or commissioned spaces to hold consultation sessions. These include libraries, leisure centres, wellbeing centres and ward meetings. We engaged with 879 residents through this means. We ensured that areas with lower health outcomes were allocated more in-person consultation as a means of promoting inclusion and bridging existing health inequality gap. *Figure 1* shows the distribution of face-to-face consultation sessions across the city.
3. **Assisted consultation** - Due to the disparity of Physical Activity levels in Birmingham among more disadvantaged groups such as those with disabilities or South Asians, the team commissioned existing providers to obtain support these demographics. We obtained 93 BeHeard responses through this means.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analysed through data analysis software and presented visually where possible.

The qualitative data were analysed using Content Analysis to complement the quantitative information. The more poignant quotes were also included in the report and, where relevant, the Strategy.

Communication Plan

The weekly communication plan was comprehensive. We leveraged existing relationships as well as various communication platforms to promote the consultation. These included emails, Healthy Brum, intranet, social media, Yammer, phone calls, webinars, and Birmingham City Council website.

Key Findings

Inclusivity and accessibility have come across through all questions posed to respondents. Birmingham residents feel it is paramount that the Creating an Active Birmingham Strategy and the Action plan to implement it take into consideration the diverse needs of the Birmingham population. This, no doubt, comes from an understanding of the city needs from living, working, studying and /or socialising in the city. Respondents felt people of all ages and all abilities should have access to means, resources, services, and environment to be physically active in. Respondents felt the Strategy should cater equitably to the most disadvantaged groups facing widening health inequalities from not engaging with adequate Physical Activity. This includes people living in more disadvantaged areas of the city, older adults, people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and women, especially South Asian women.

The other aspect of accessibility that came through was the tangible and practical access to Physical Activity. For example, residents felt activities that they could benefit from are at times when they work or in areas of the city that they cannot access. They felt this put working-age people at a disadvantage as they are not able to access various Physical Activity offers as they would be working during hours they are offered. Others felt they may make the time to travel but due to poor public transport, they are unable to access activities that suit them.

One of the key themes that came out was affordability. This went beyond accessing activities; people felt activities should be made more affordable to them. They are aware and concerned that the Council is currently going through some financial challenges, and this may translate into even less affordable opportunities in the city to be active. They were concerned, therefore, whether the Council will have the necessary resources to deliver such an ambitious Strategy.

One of the key things that came out from the consultation and is linked to accessibility was adequate infrastructure. This included safer roads and cycle paths, continued investment in green spaces and generally safer city to be able to be active in. This also included safe and adequate leisure centres and other indoor spaces to be active in.

Residents also felt a holistic whole-system approach is needed to ensure Birmingham becomes an active city. They felt that, in order to deliver the Creating an Active Birmingham Strategy, the Council should continue to collaborate with partners. However, collaboration should extend beyond them; the Council should weave links with and empower grassroot and community-led organisations to engage citizens in increasing Physical Activity. Tapping into the existing relationships these organisations have with local communities should be a key priority in bridging the inactivity gap in the city.

Demographics

We engaged face-to-face with a total of 879 people across Birmingham with an average of 25 people at each of the consultation session. The venues for the in-person events included 19 libraries, 11 community centres, 10 leisure centres and 1 faith-based organisation across Birmingham.

The map shows the different areas the team has held consultation sessions. Significant effort has been made to be present in venues in the most deprived wards.

Figure 1a: MAP of Birmingham showing the different wards where consultation sessions took place

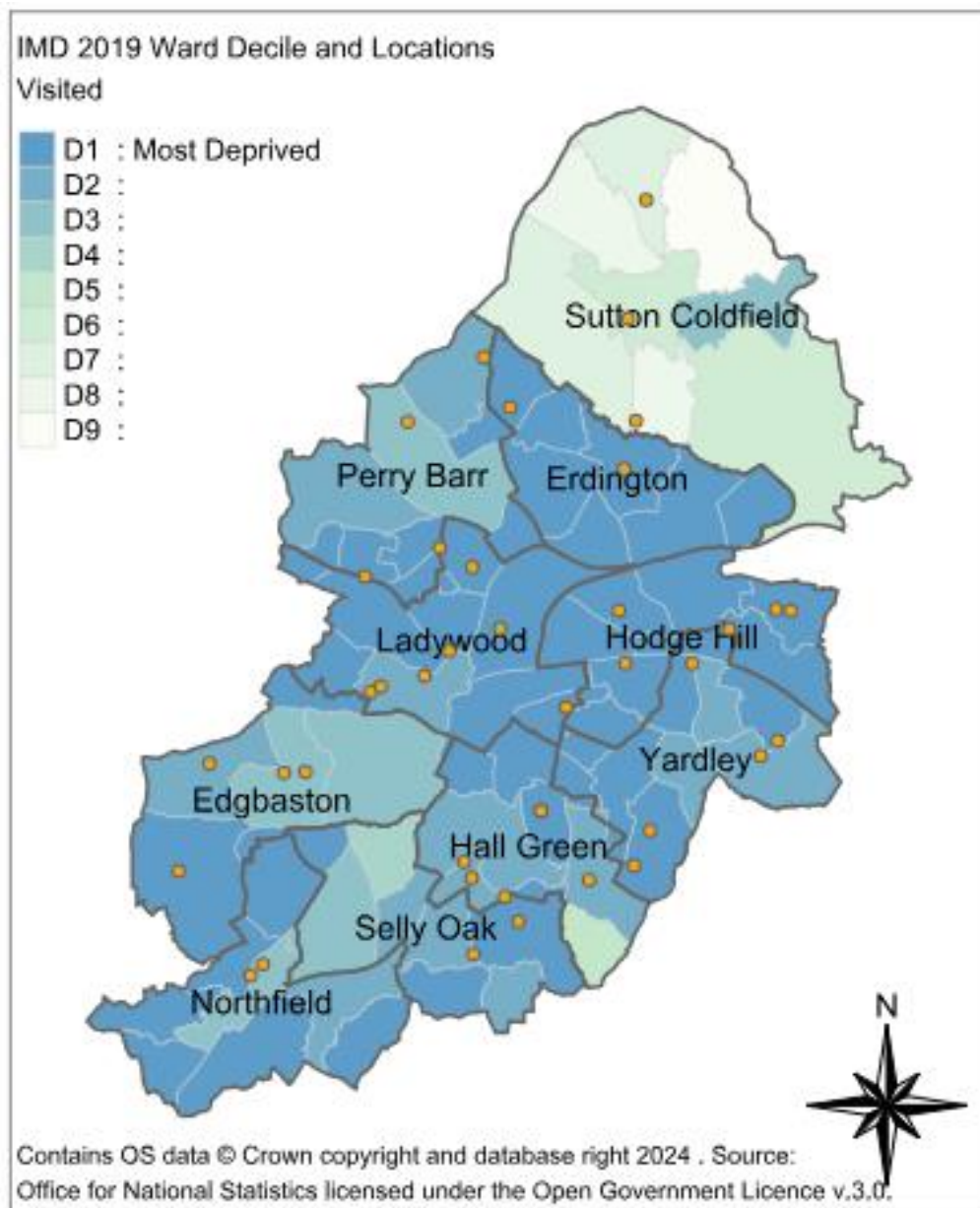
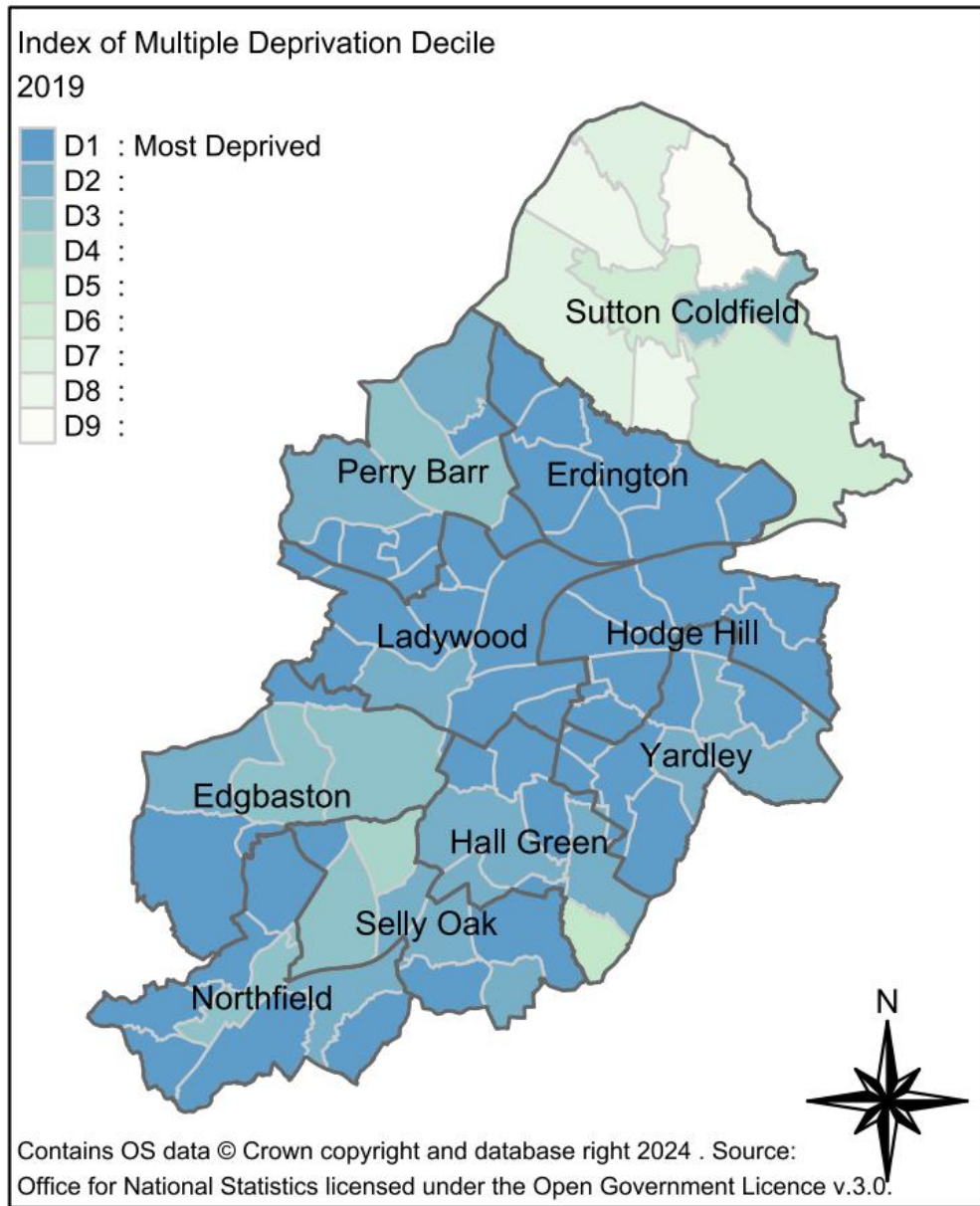
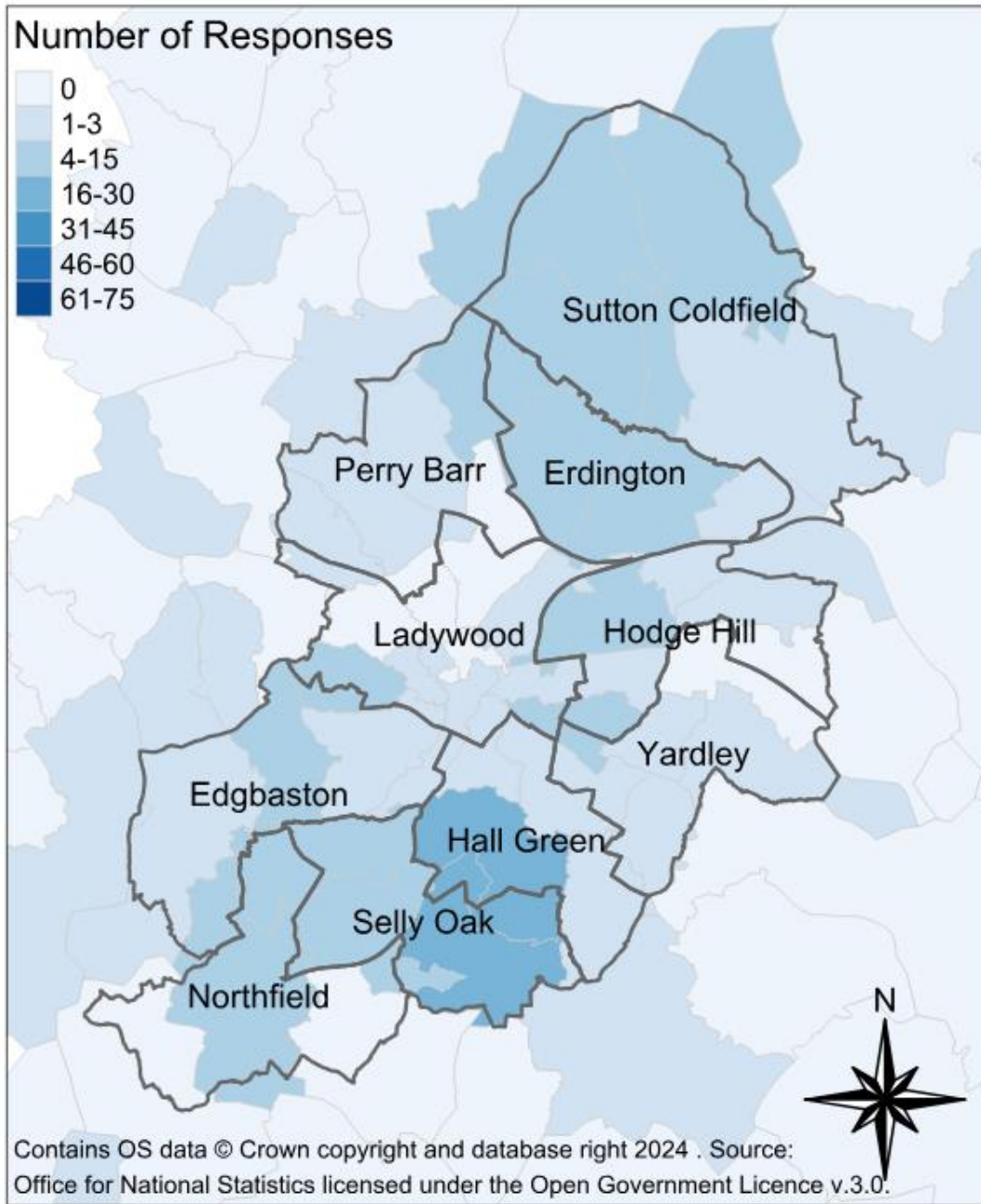


Figure 2a: MAP of Birmingham showing index of multiple deprivation across the city



All of the communications work of the team resulted in 321 members of the Birmingham public completing BeHeard survey. The heat map (Figure 2b) shows the locations of respondents with regards to their postcodes, where provided.

Figure b2: MAP of Birmingham showing the specific locations of respondents



The below graphs show the demographics information of the BeHeard respondents.

Figure 3a: The activity spread of respondents

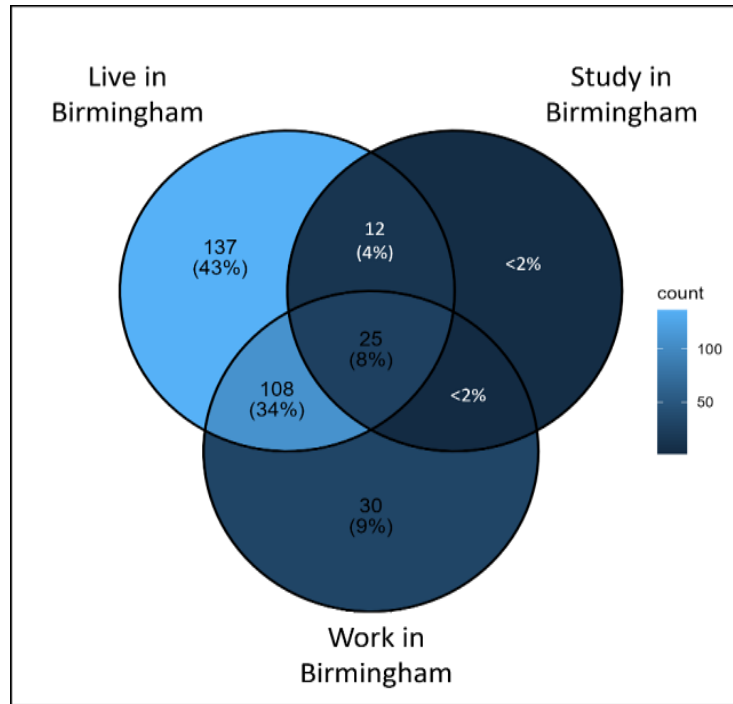


Figure 3b: The activity spread of respondents

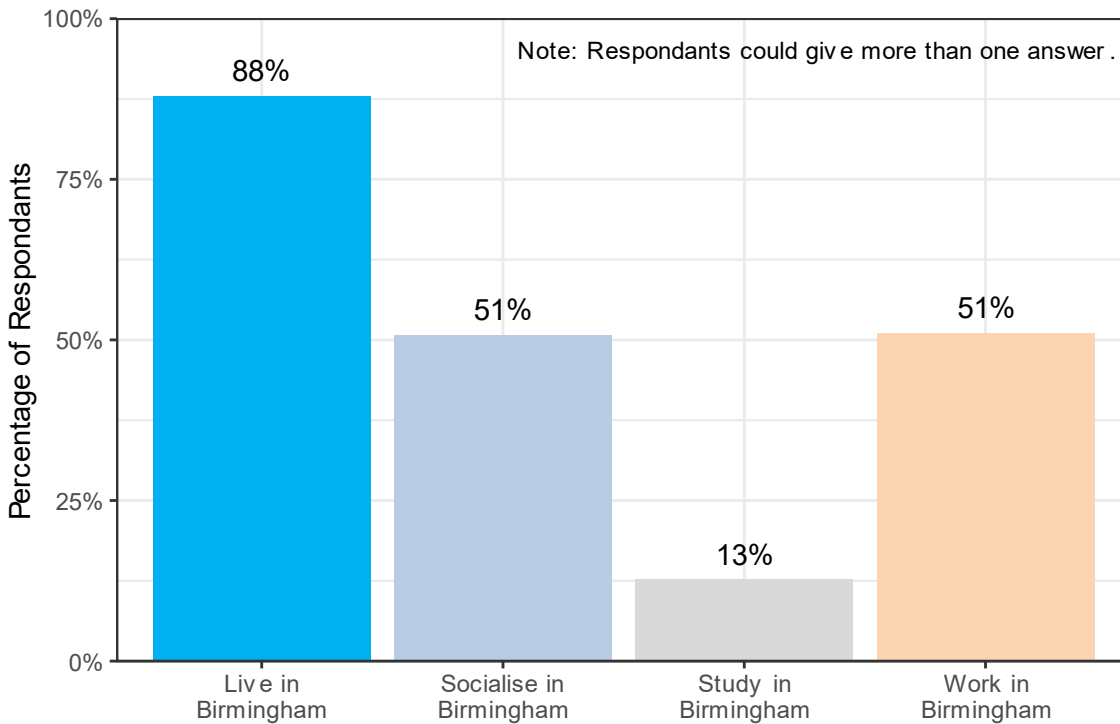


Figure 4: Age of respondents

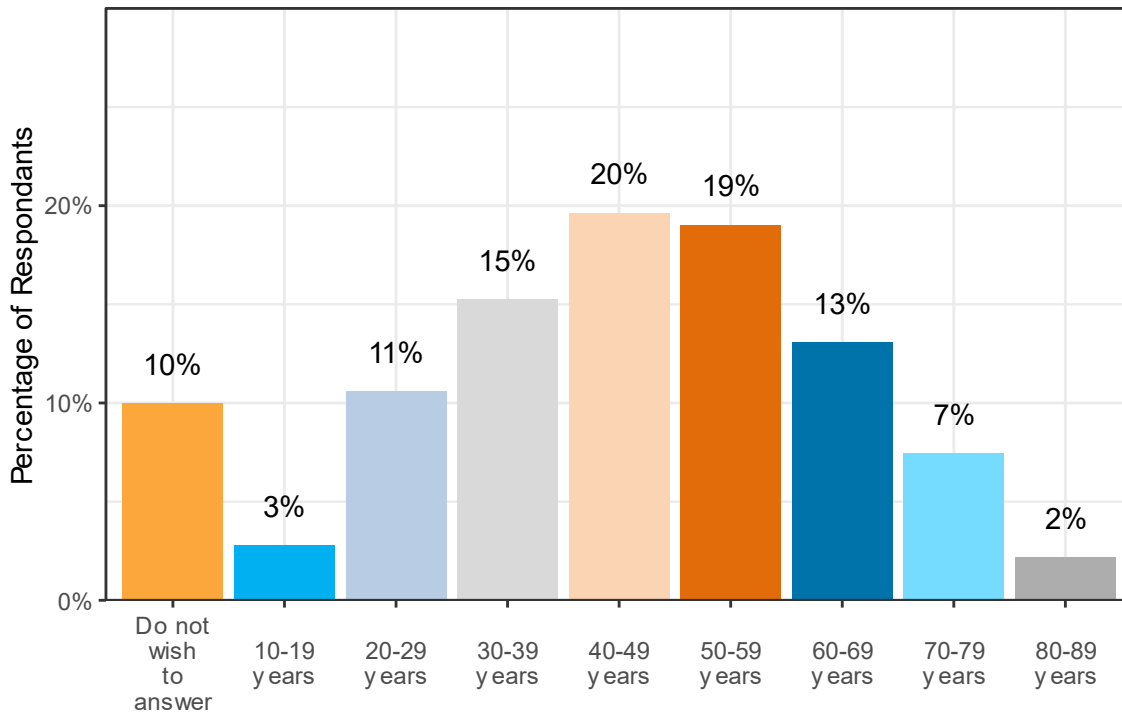


Figure 5: Gender distribution of respondents

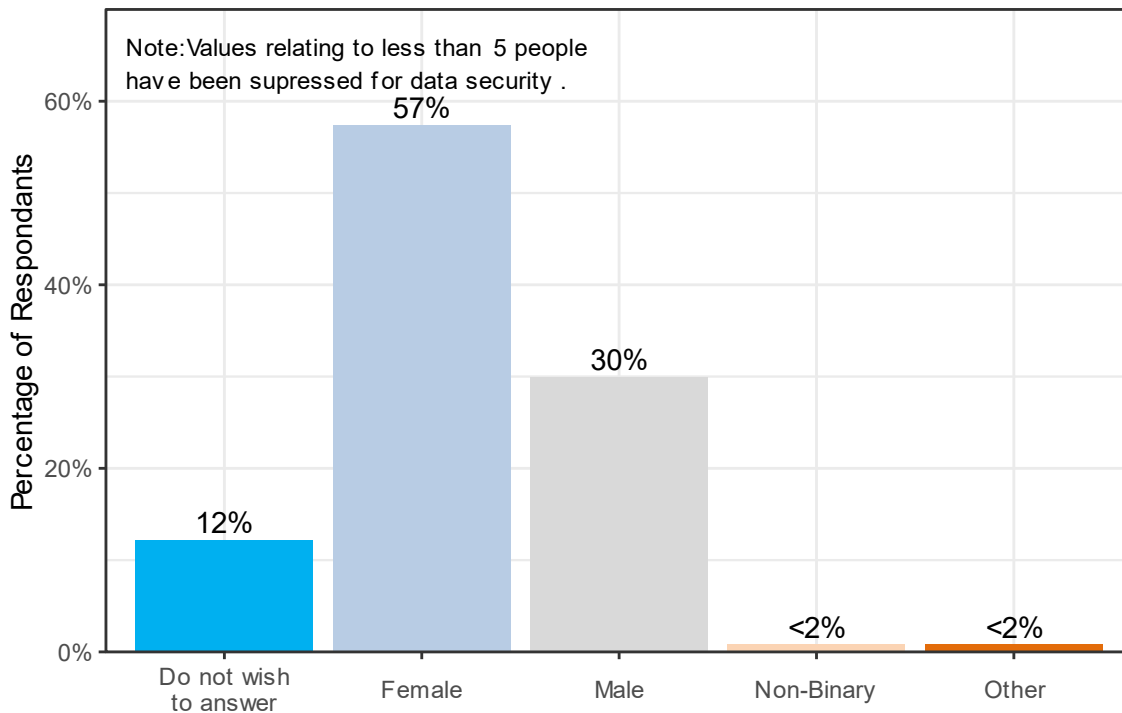


Figure 6: Gender identity of respondents - Respondents who were asked whether their gender identity is the same as the sex registered at birth

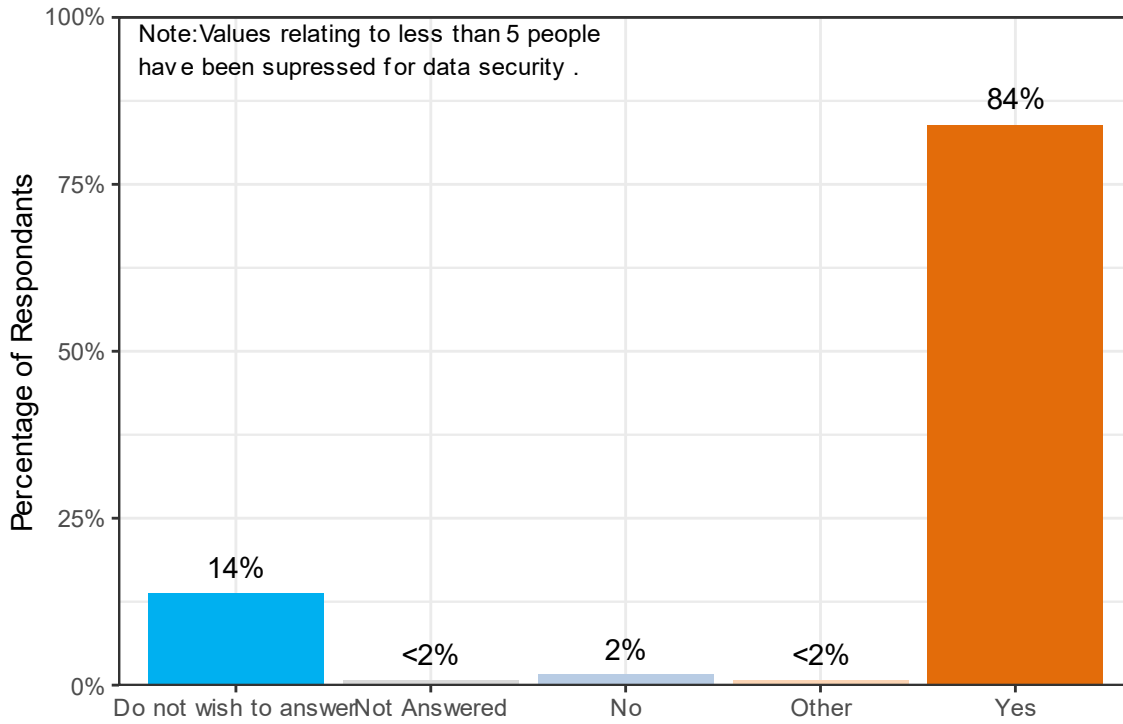


Figure 7: Sexual Orientation of respondents

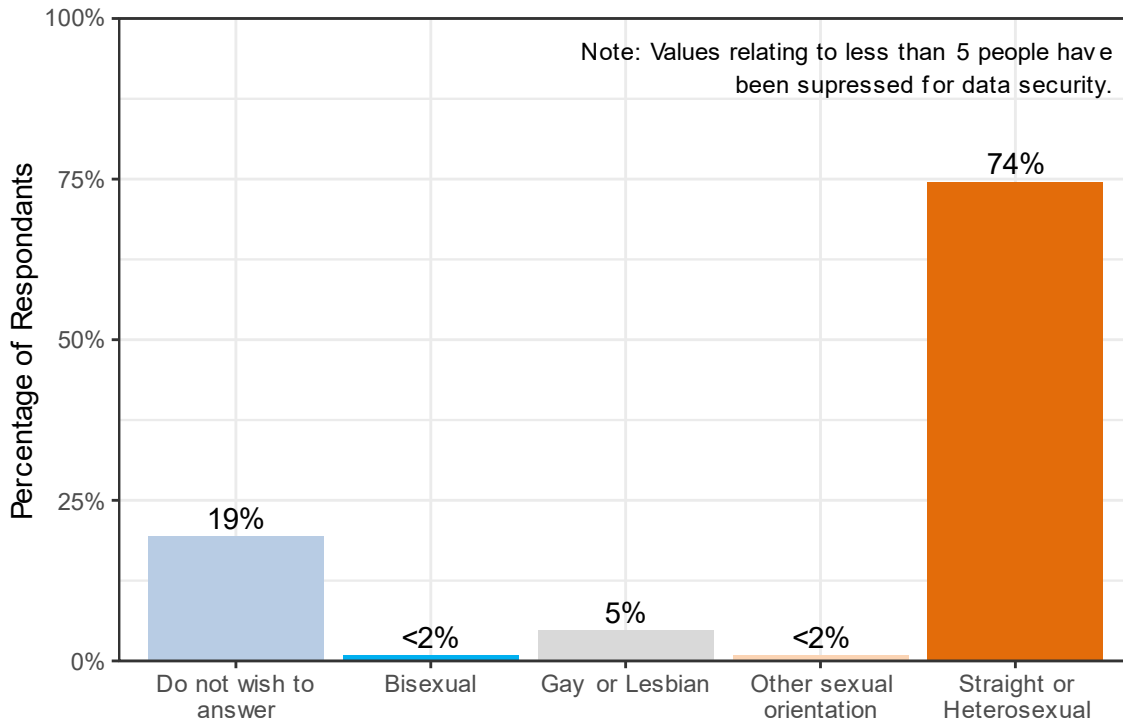


Figure 8: Ethnic spread of respondents

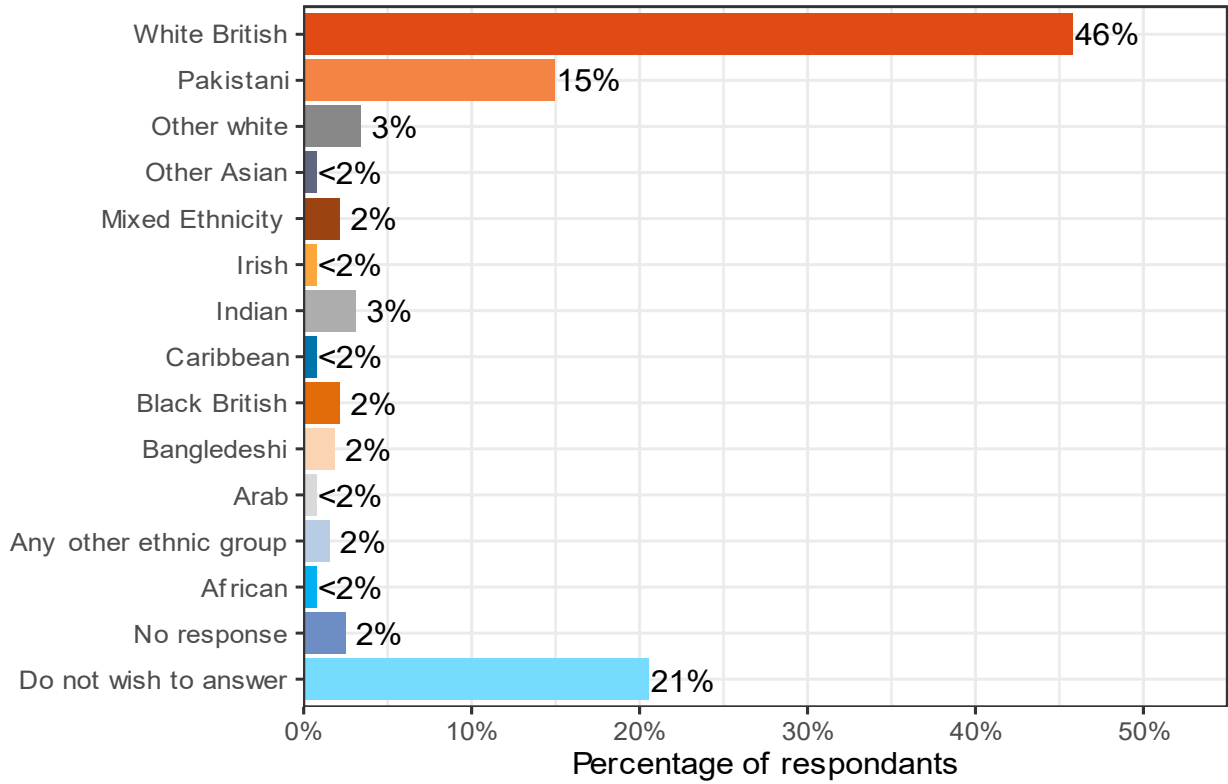


Figure 9: Respondents of mixed ethnicity

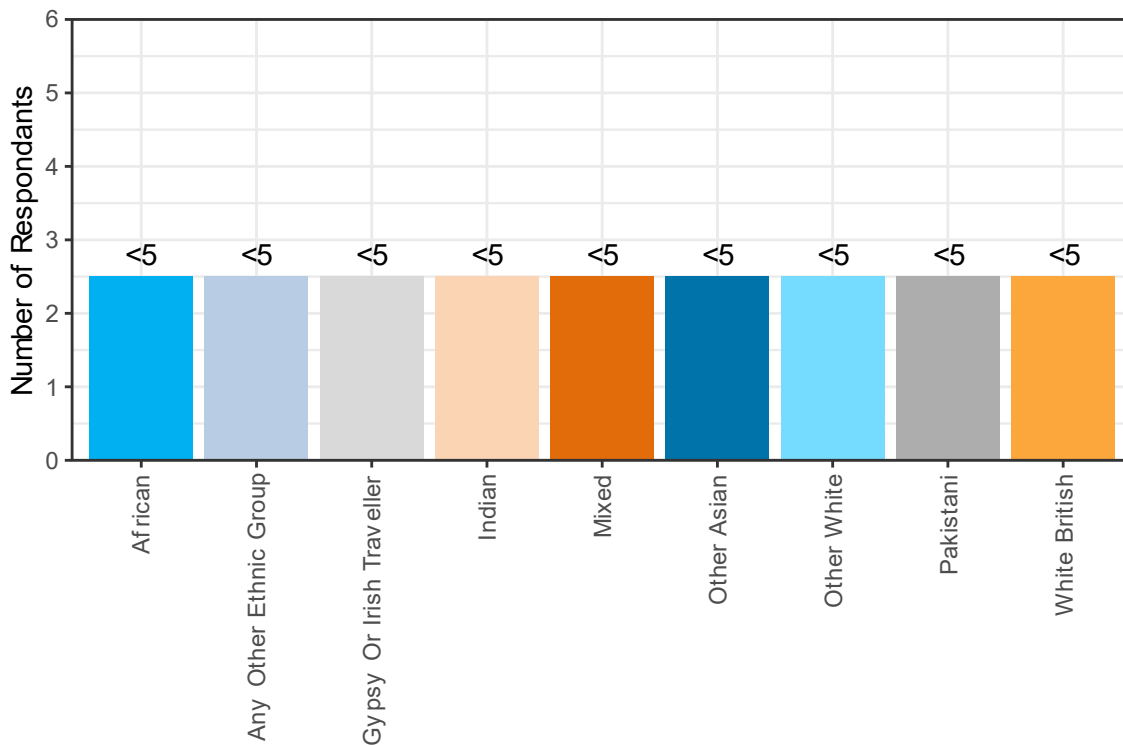


Figure 10: Employment status of respondents

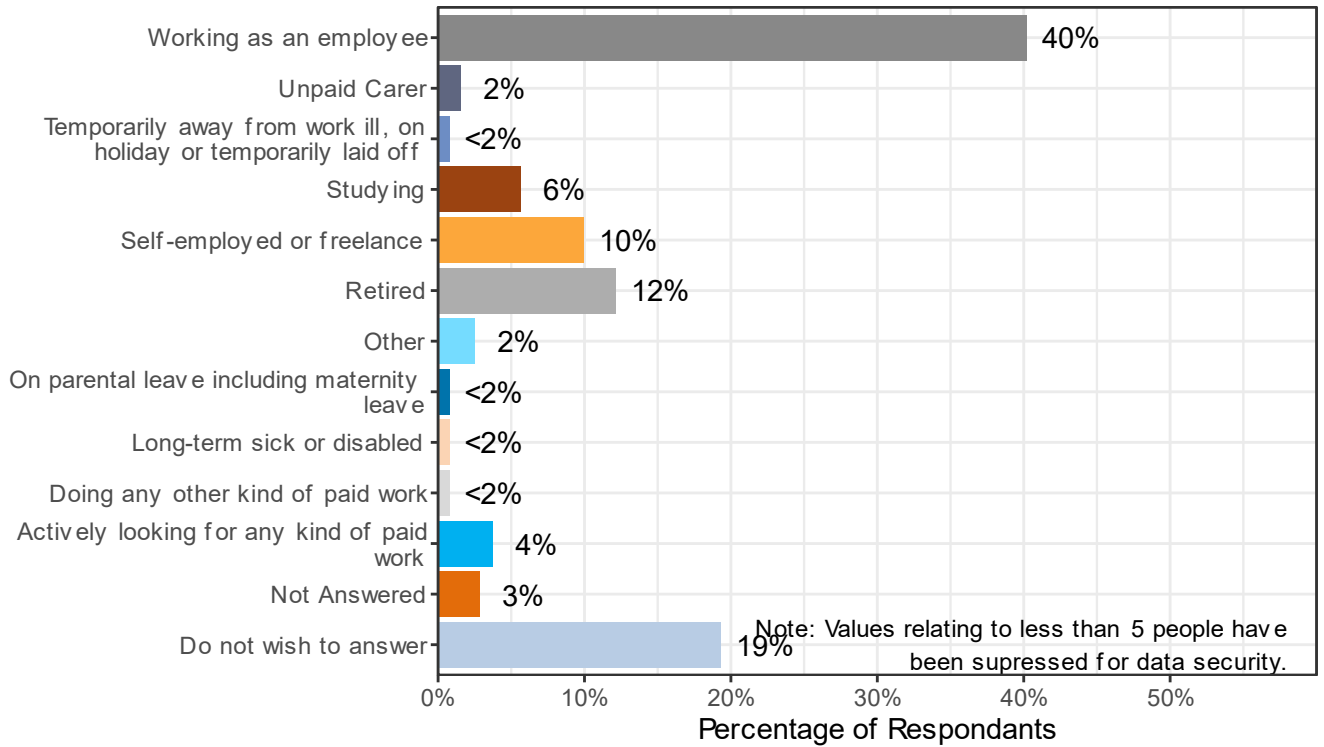


Figure 11: Religion of respondents

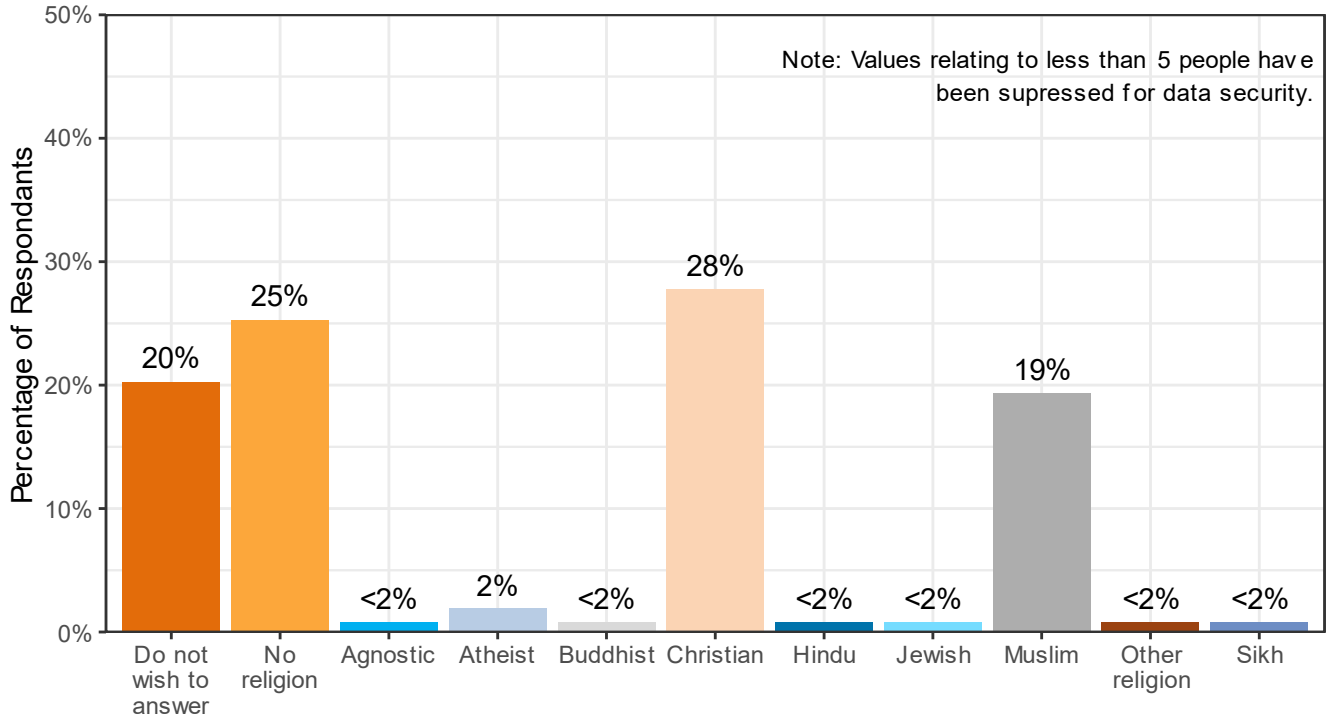


Figure 12: Living situation of respondents.

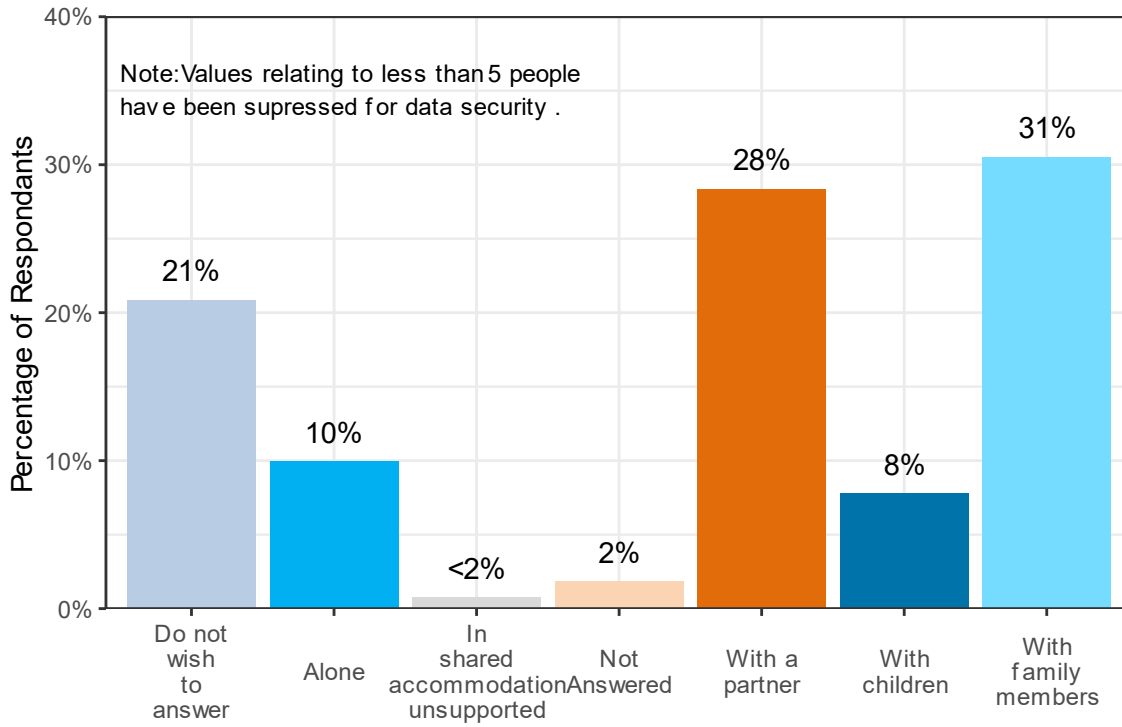


Figure 13: Life experiences of Respondents

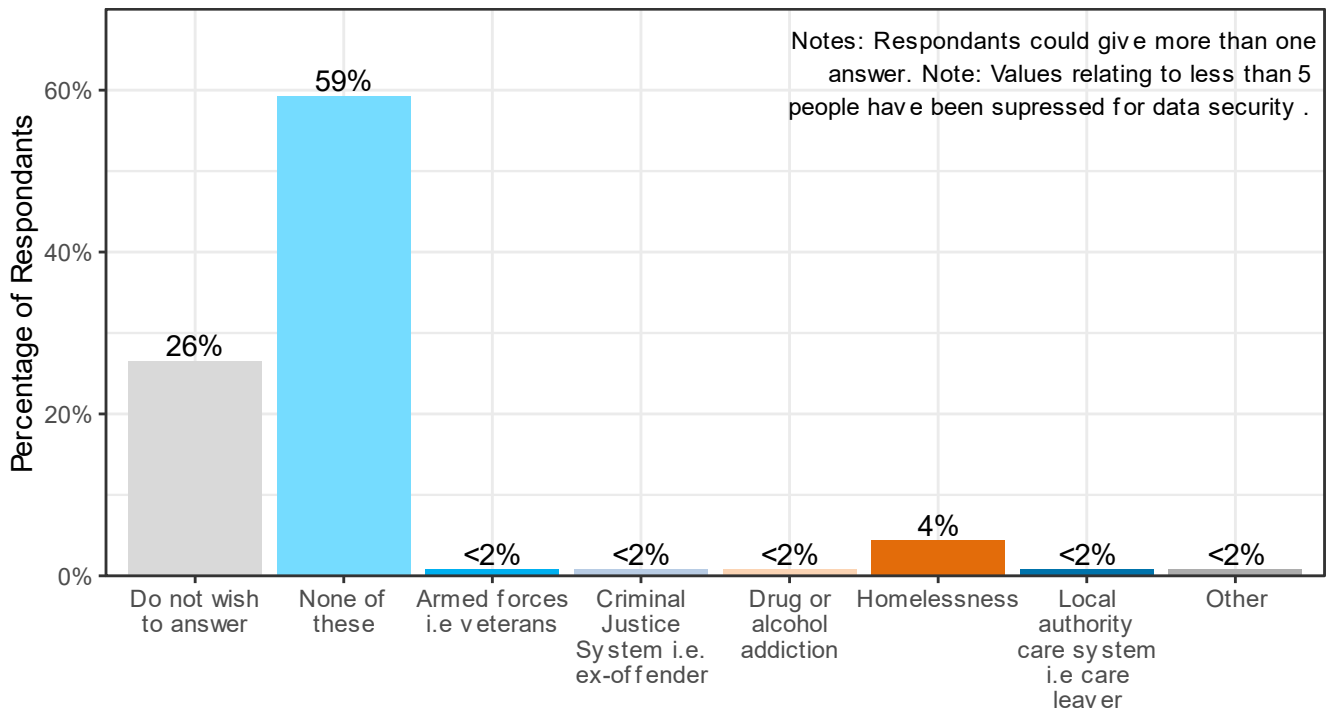


Figure 14: Legal marital or civil partnership status of respondents

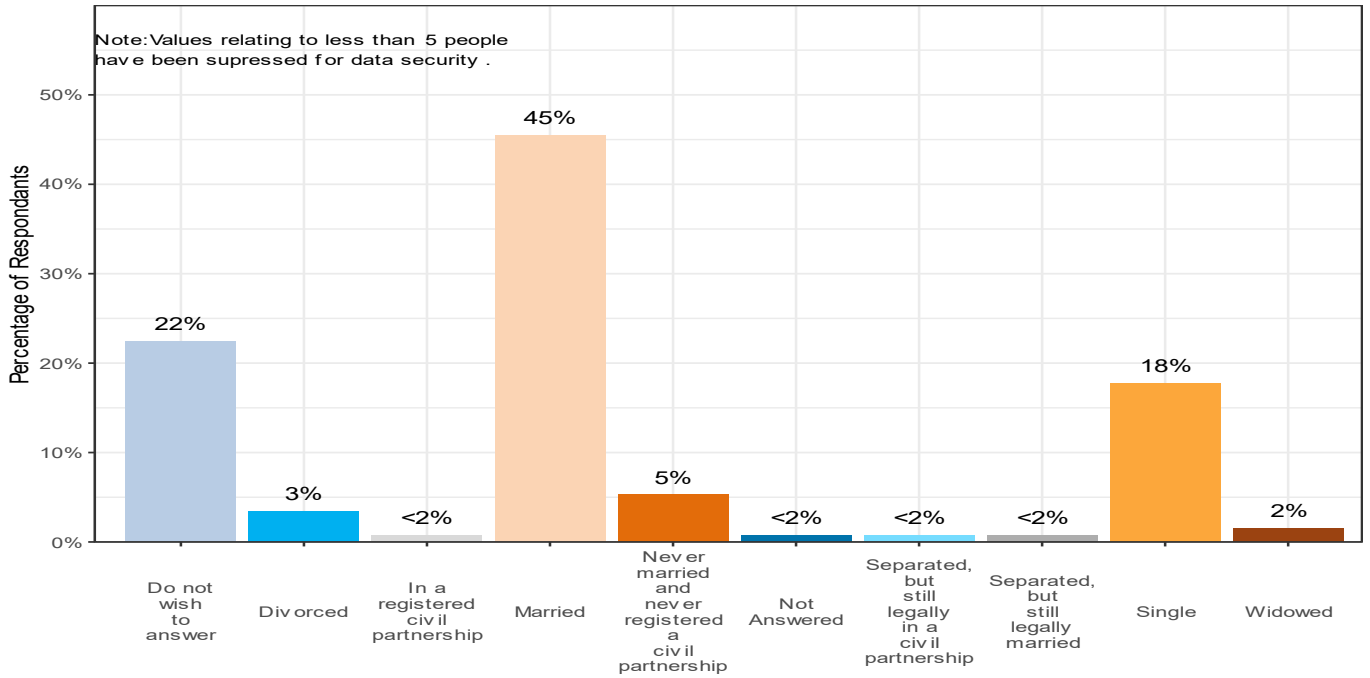


Figure 15: Respondents who have partners

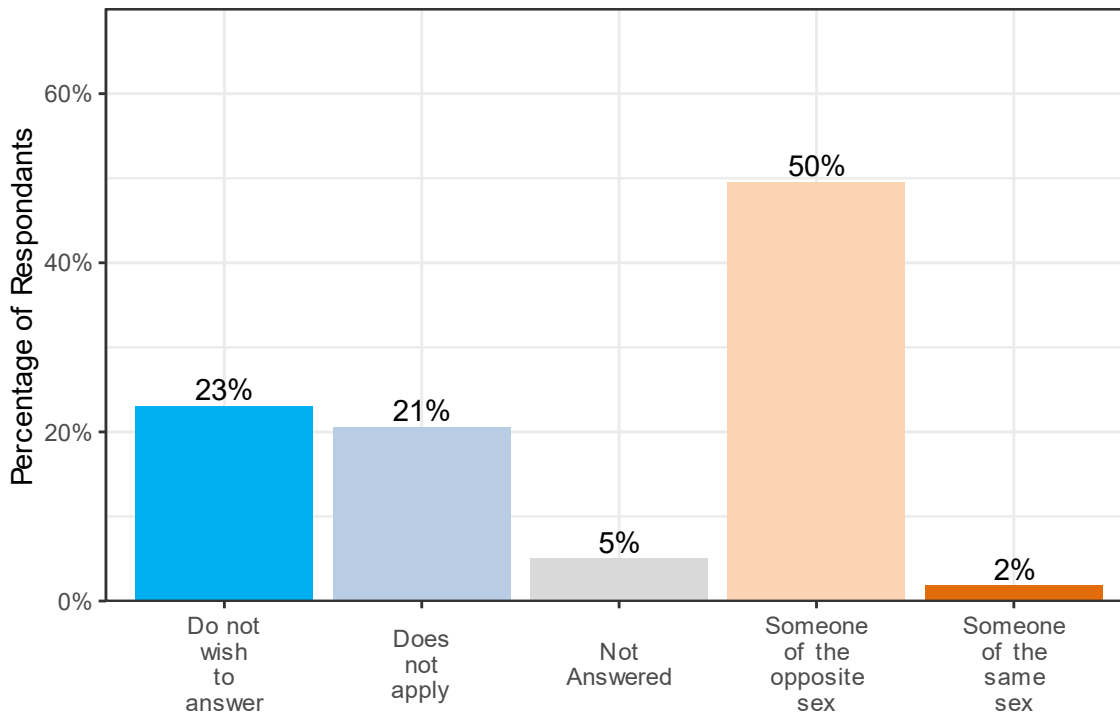


Figure 16: Respondents who are pregnant

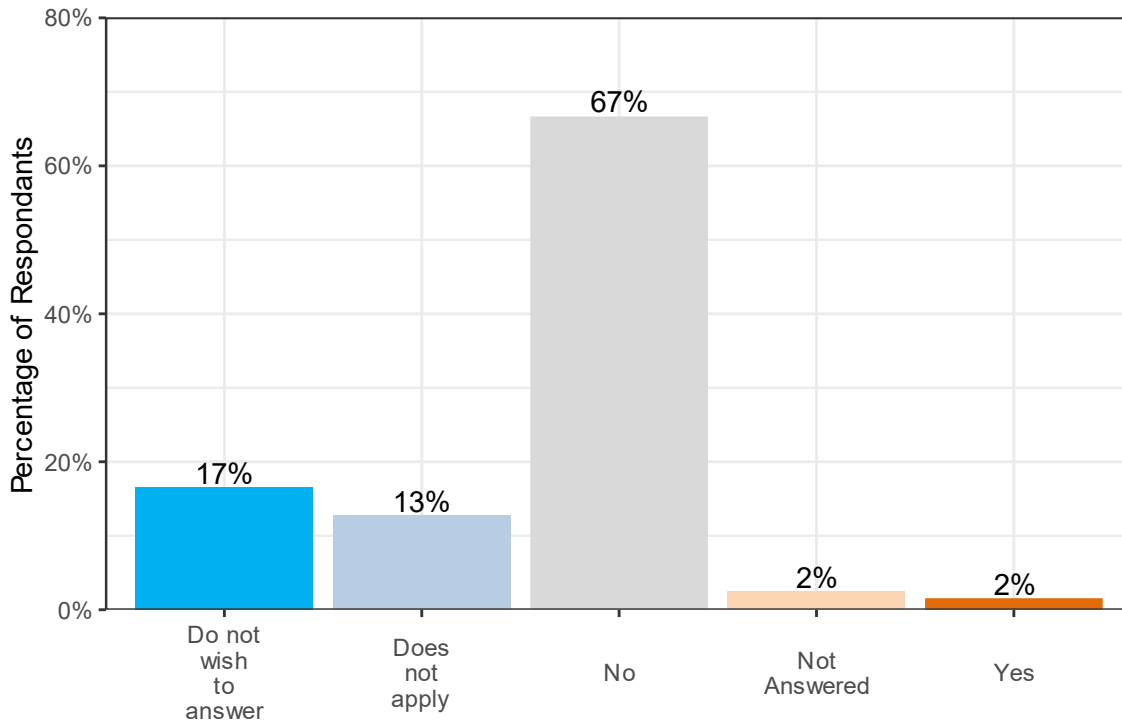


Figure 17: Respondents with childcare responsibilities

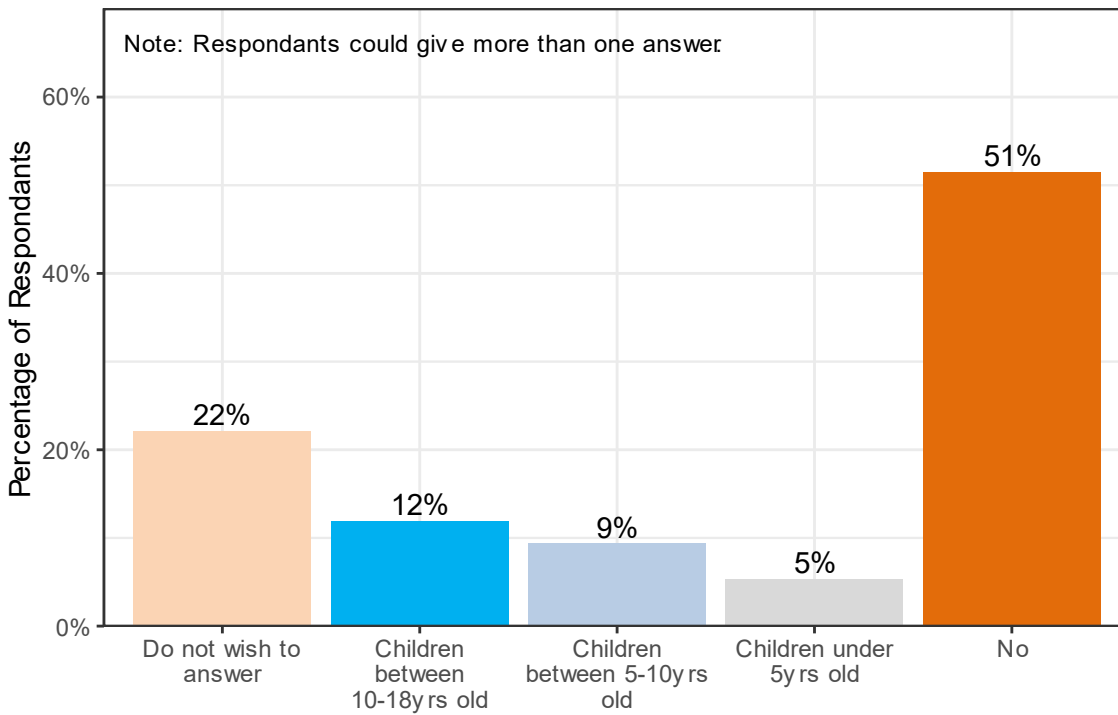


Figure 18: Respondents who are caregivers

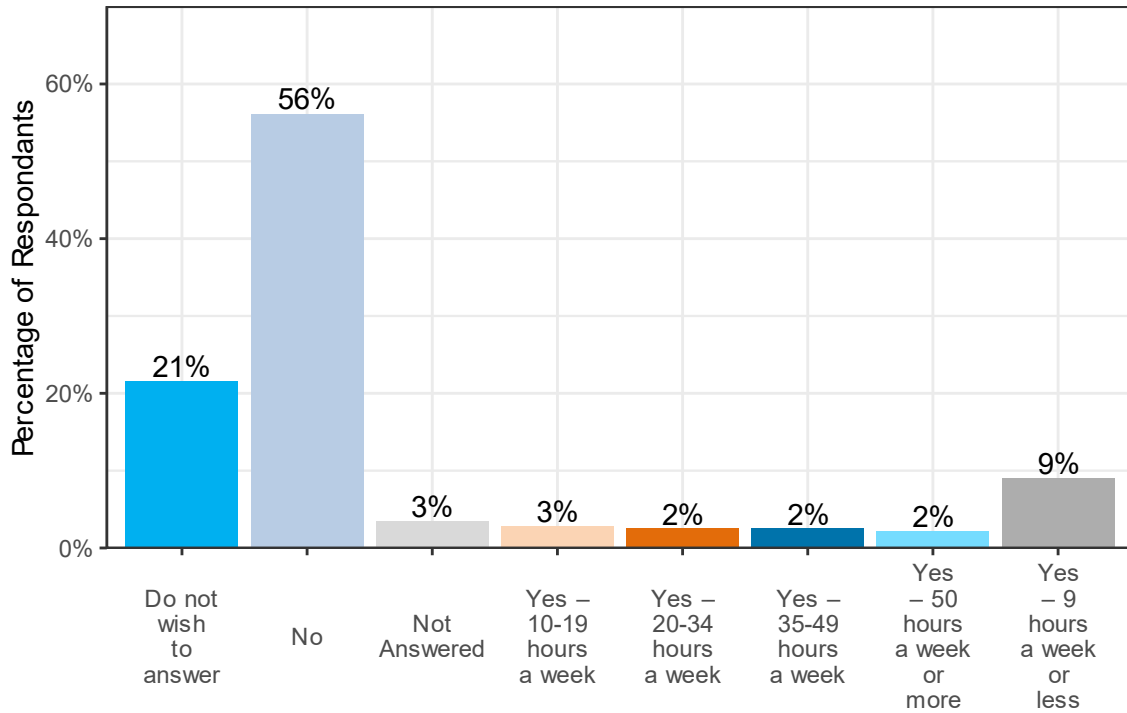


Figure 19: Respondents with health conditions hindering regular activities

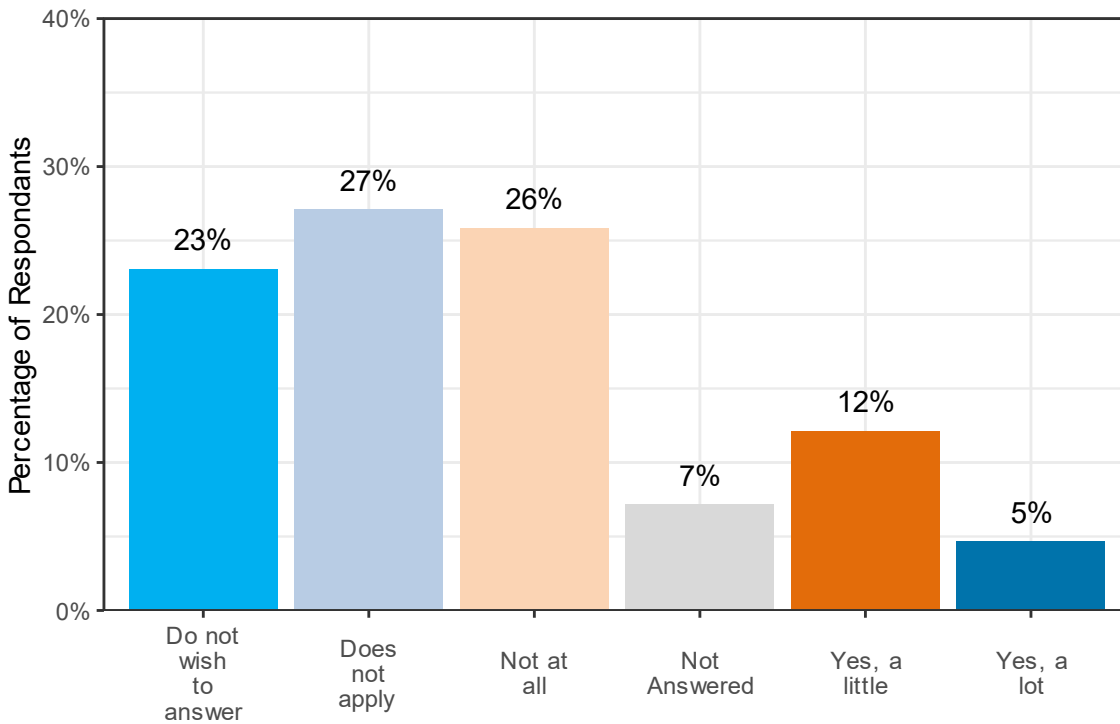


Figure 20: Respondents who have autism, dyslexia or neurodivergence

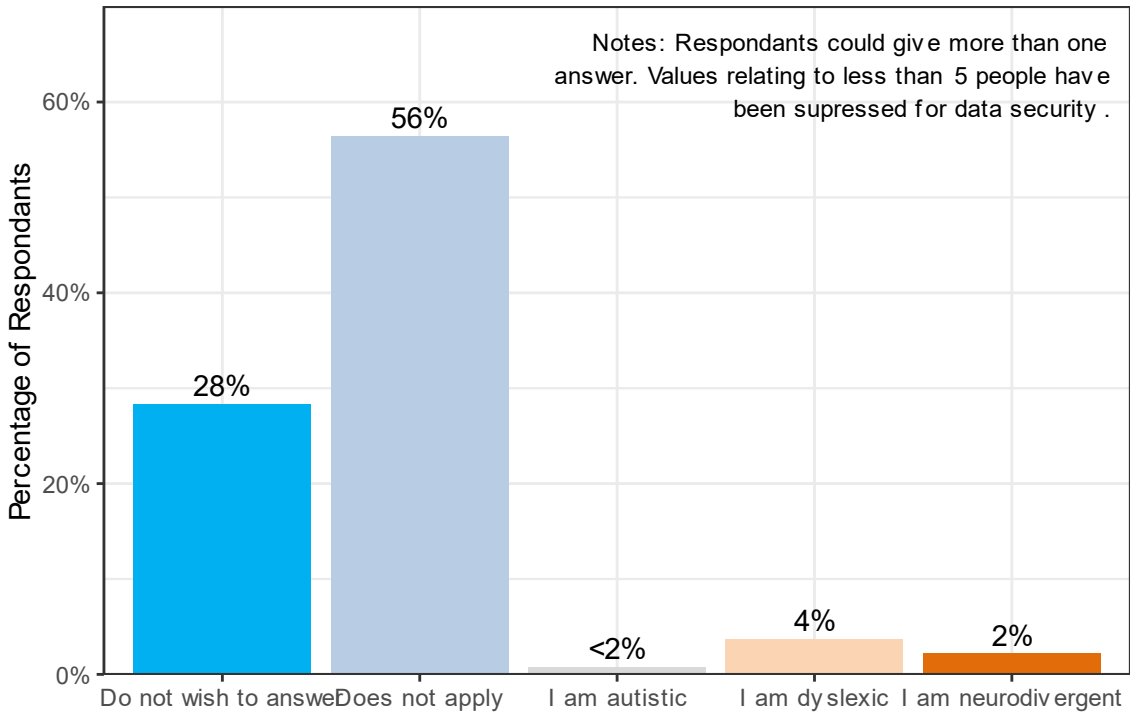


Figure 21: Respondents who experienced daily difficulties

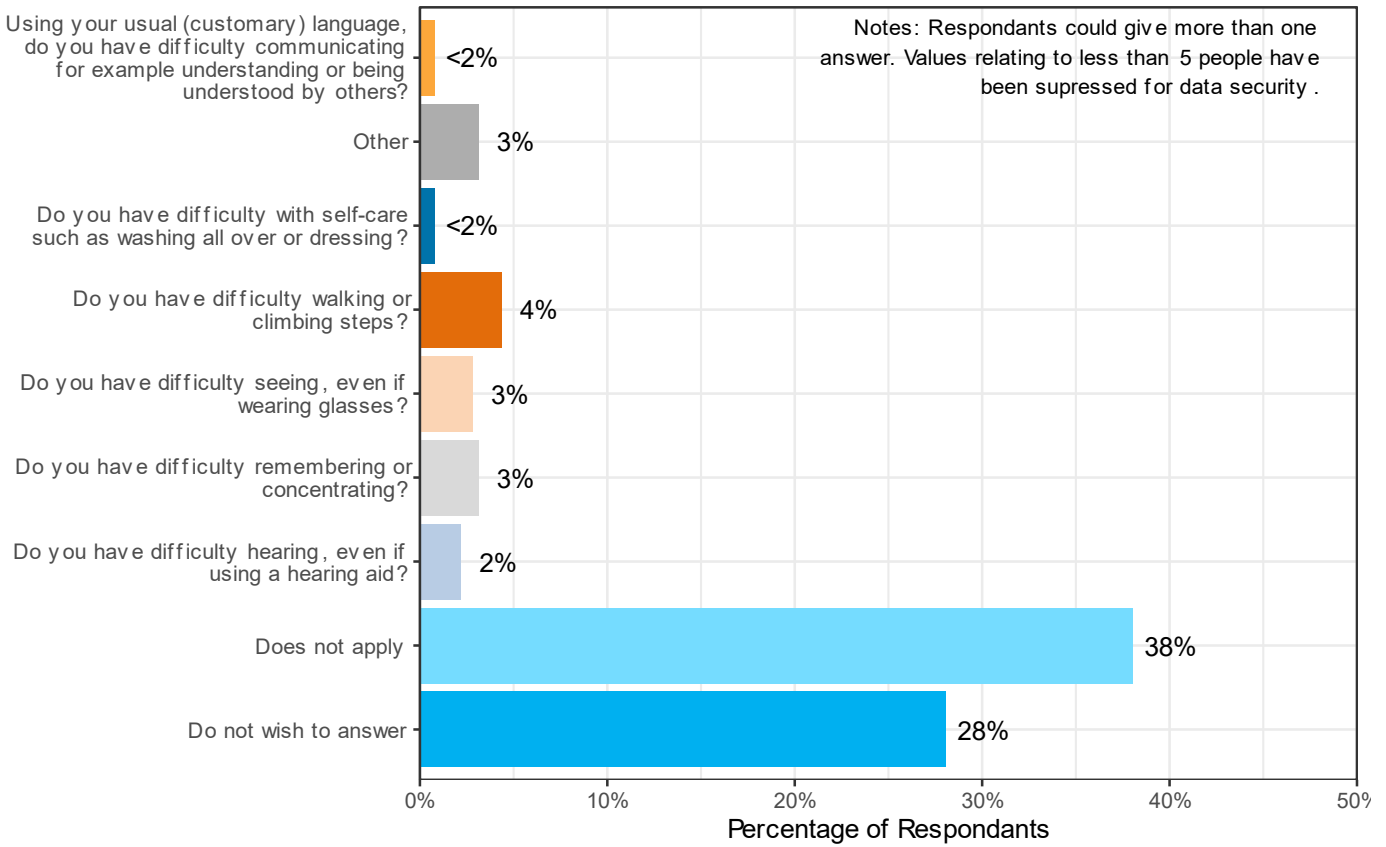
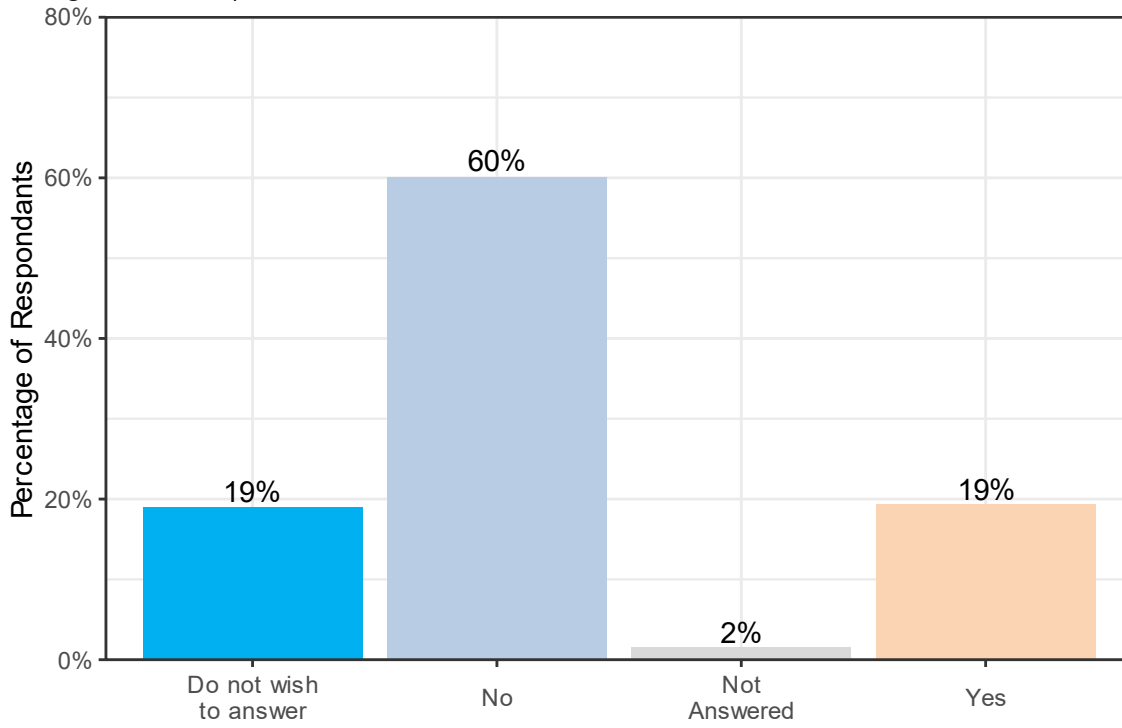


Figure 22: Respondents with disabilities

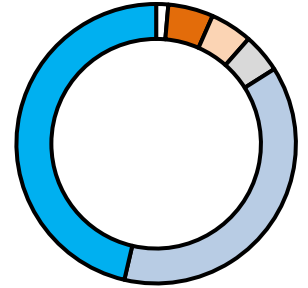


Findings

Vision statement

Our vision is to create a bold, healthy, and active city where people have access to a wide range of opportunities and a supportive environment to enable them to become more active. Birmingham will be a city where Physical Activity improves people's lives and the places in which they live.

By working collaboratively with partners from across Birmingham we will inspire, motivate, and make it easier for everyone to be active at every age and ability. Recognising that some people will require more support than others to be active.



317 respondents answered this question using the scale with 85.66% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement. 154/317 respondents also provided a written response.

Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
167	52.02%	108	33.64%	13	4.05%	14	4.36%	15	4.67%	4	1.25%

Top Themes and what they are saying

- **1 in 6 respondents (n=24)** who provided a written answer to their rating of the **Vision (n=154)** highlighted the importance Physical Activity have in **improving mental wellbeing**, be it **physical, psychological, and social**.
- However, there were two main things that respondents felt are key to increasing Physical Activity levels in Birmingham and that they should be included in the Strategy -
 - **Accessibility - 1 in 5 respondents (n=34)** felt services proposing Physical Activity across the city should be more inclusive catering for those across all ages and all abilities.
 - **Safe and Adequate infrastructure** - This was supported by **1 in 15 respondents (n=12)**.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

"As an 80-year-old I am no longer able to cycle, walk far, and use public transport. As my wife is disabled, we are unable to access many areas of the city center due to excessive walking distances."

"It makes sense and is inclusive."

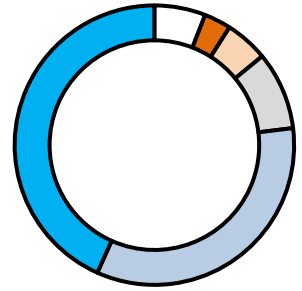
"I have recently joined a music/movement/exercise class and I found it extremely beneficial for me aged 78 years."

"I like the idea that the vision statement has taken into account its people, environment and physical activities and also acknowledged that some people will need more support than others."

"I want to live in a city with these values."

Implement a whole system approach to Physical Activity in Birmingham.

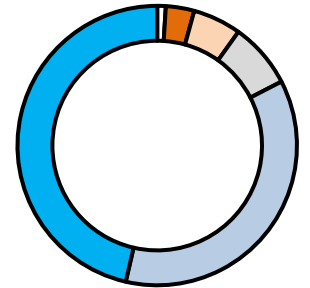
302 respondents answered this question using the scale with 76.94% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
139	43.30%	108	33.64%	29	9.03%	16	4.98%	10	3.12%	19	5.92%

Provide senior level commitment to embed Physical Activity in policy to ensure multiple outcomes are met around health, climate change, air quality through strong strategic collaboration.

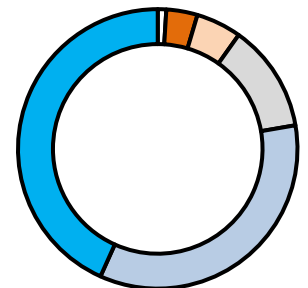
301 respondents answered this question using the scale with 78.20% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
141	43.93%	110	34.27%	23	7.17%	17	5.30%	10	3.12%	20	6.23%

Take a life course approach and focus on the unmet needs using data, intelligence, and insight to focus on geographies and communities where inequalities exist.

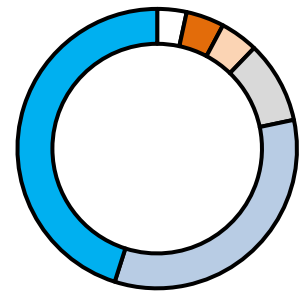
302 respondents answered this question using the scale with 73.83% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
132	41.12%	105	32.71%	38	11.84%	16	4.98%	11	3.43%	19	5.92%

Adopt a community centred approach and empower local people to lead, embedding the voice and influence of local people across the system.

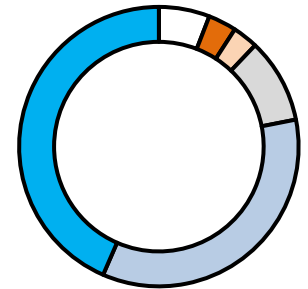
301 respondents answered this question using the scale with 76.55% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
149	46.02%	98	30.53%	28	8.72%	13	4.05%	13	4.05%	20	6.23%

Focus on early help and prevention and ensure interventions are tailored and person-centred.

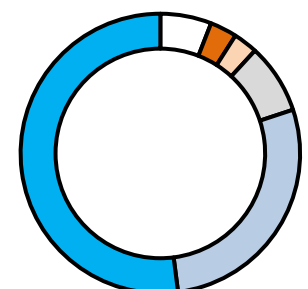
303 respondents answered this question using the scale with 79.13% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
148	46.11%	106	33.02%	30	9.35%	9	2.80%	10	3.12%	18	5.61%

Develop local, accessible activity opportunities, built on local community assets.

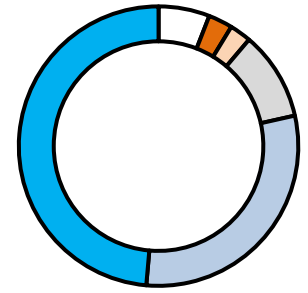
302 respondents answered this question using the scale with 80.06% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
167	52.02%	90	28.04%	26	8.10%	9	2.80%	10	3.12%	19	5.92%

Support a more sustainable, strategic, and joined up approach to funding opportunities.

302 respondents answered this question using the scale with 78.51% of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
156	48.60%	96	29.91%	33	10.28%	8	2.49%	9	2.80%	19	5.92%

Principles – Key Findings

168

respondents provided a written response to their ratings on Principles.

Top Themes and what they are saying

- **Over 1 in 4 (n=46)** of respondents who provided a written answer to support their rating of the principles (n=168) felt there is a **discrepancy in access for those with limited ability**. This was often accompanied by the need for **increased opportunities to be more active (1 in 12; n=16)** and **better infrastructure (1 in 16; n=8)** that were **accessible (1 in 6; n=29)**, especially to those who are from a **lower socio-economic background** living in **more disadvantaged areas** of the city (**1 in 16; n=9**). This will not only lead towards **better health outcomes** but **increased social inclusion (1 in 20; n=9)**.
- There was, however, a **minority of respondents (1 in 34; n=5)** who felt having a Strategy to improve Physical Activity levels in Birmingham was **waste of public resource**.

The following comments are typical of many points raised

“Giving people the opportunity to engage with physical activities local to them will help combat issues health related. Physical and mental. I think there should be long term sustainable plans to continue access of physical activities to the locals.”

“Good to implement health and fitness policies across the whole community, regardless of wealth and age very important, compared to other areas to keep everybody healthy, as possible is best for all.”

“All communities have inequalities. Girls especially. Also, people with disabilities. A better approach than the postcode lottery is needed. It will be necessary to invest in youth and community workers and social spaces in all communities.”

“Long-term funding is needed to enable providers to establish and deliver activities over a longer time period rather than lots of smaller, short-term pots of funding. Activities also need to be delivered across all days/times to enable everyone, including those who work to take part along with activities which families can take part in together.”

“This is all very aspirational, but I want to see it in action. I want a website which lists every step forward and every time you tried something that was not successful. I also would like to see something about funding community hubs. We are a social species, and we should make opportunities to play together, no matter the age.”

“Clear and concise.”

“I agree with these values. I want to live in a healthier and greener city.”

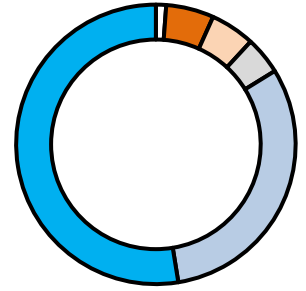
“An asset-based approach is important to enable those living in the most deprived areas to have access to the facilities to support them with a healthier lifestyle.”

You are becoming a dictatorship and you are not listening to the people

Priorities

Active People: By creating and promoting access to Physical Activity opportunities taking a life course approach across multiple settings, we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.

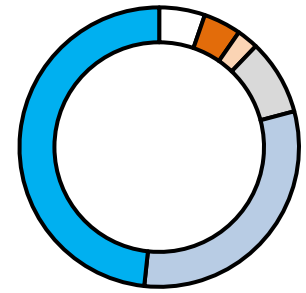
303 respondents answered this question using the scale with 76.26% out of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
138	42.99%	110	33.27%	30	9.35%	15	4.67%	10	3.12%	18	5.61%

Active Environments: By creating and protecting the places and spaces that promote and engage people of all ages and abilities in activity we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.

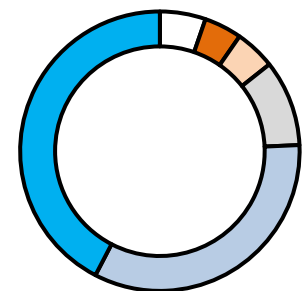
304 of respondents answered this question using the scale with 79.13% out of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
155	48.29%	99	30.84%	28	8.72%	8	2.49%	14	4.36%	17	5.30%

Active Society: By changing how we talk about Physical Activity across the city, building insight and evidence into policy, commissioning, planning decisions and communication messages and marketing campaigns we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.

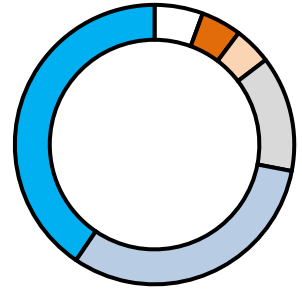
304 of respondents answered this question using the scale with 75.70% out of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
136	42.37%	107	33.33%	32	9.97%	15	4.67%	14	4.36%	17	5.30%

Active Systems: By creating a more connected system and strengthening our local leadership, governance, partnerships, and workforce capabilities we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.

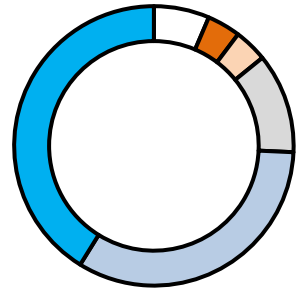
303 of respondents answered this question using the scale with 71.96% out of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
130	40.50%	101	31.46%	43	13.40%	14	4.36%	15	4.67%	18	5.61%

Closing the Gap: By continuing to develop a better understanding of local barriers and enablers to increase activity across the city and ensure we focus on the least active groups as identified in the Physical Activity Needs Assessment, we will enable more people to engage in regular activity.

301 of respondents answered this question using the scale with 75.08% out of total respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision statement.



Strongly Agree		Agree		Don't know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Answered	
138	42.99%	103	32.09%	36	11.21%	12	3.74%	12	3.74%	20	6.23%

Priorities – Key Findings

150

respondents provided a written response to their ratings on the Priorities of the Strategy.

Top Themes and what they are saying

- **1 in 5 of respondents (n=31)** who also provided a written response to their rating of the Priorities (n=150) felt the priorities should ensure they take **accessibility and affordability** into account when creating opportunities to be embed Physical Activity in the city. This was often accompanied by the need to use **community-oriented approaches (1 in 15; n=11)** and **improved infrastructure that were safe (1 in 16; n=9)**. Some examples mentioned were **green spaces and cycle lanes**.
- There was, nevertheless, a **minority of respondents (1 in 10; n=14)** who felt that the Strategy might be a **waste of time** as the Council may not have the relevant **resources to deliver the consultation findings**.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

“The plans put forward do not take into consideration the disabled and the elderly within the community.”

“People choose the lifestyle they lead because that is how they want to live their lives. Constant lecturing by BCC won't change this. People need to want to live an active lifestyle for themselves, not because BCC tell them to do so.”

“Stop using Cannon Hill Park as a car park for Edgbaston Cricket ground, put pedestrians first not last, ensure footpaths are well maintained and protected as a priority, not dropped at a moment's notice when there are utility or maintenance works taking place and that bus stop remain accessible.”

The Strategy will create a Plan for Action to implement change themed around the five priorities:

- 1. Active People**
- 2. Active Society**
- 3. Active Environment**
- 4. Active System**
- 5. Closing the Gap**

There were 267 responses to this part of the question.

Top Themes and what they are saying

- **Accessibility and affordability** were some of the points that stood out in the suggestions for a Plan of Action. Out of the 267 who provided suggestion for a Plan of Action, **nearly 1 in 5 (n=59)** expressed the importance of ensuring the plan includes **activities, services and resources that were accessible and affordable**.
- Accessibility focused on ensuring **equitable provision to disadvantaged groups** such as older adults, people with disabilities, learning difficulties, women (especially South Asian women) and those who usually do sedentary jobs.
- Beyond **accessibility** to disadvantaged groups, respondents felt various activities across the city do not always **suit their schedule** and they would want **more activities during suitable times**. This was in line with the need for **adequate, safe and appropriate environment and infrastructure** for be active in **(1 in 6; n=45)**.
- **Affordability** included **proximity of services** but also **ease of access** such as **improved transport system** across the city.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

"Affordable and accessible gyms, pools, and better infrastructure for cycling around the city. An easy way to find all information and upcoming events in 1 single place."

"Workplaces should be included as they have the opportunity to support and influence those they employ to be active. Also, an active workforce is more likely to be healthy and productive."

"Ensuring people from all backgrounds have access to Physical Activity opportunities, lots of free opportunities to help reduce barriers to being physically active."

"Develop a city-wide system that actively promotes all opportunities to get active."

"Encouraging walking by creating a more pleasantly built environment. Encouraging walking by having a better public transport network so the car stays at home. Protecting and enhancing green space for use for sports and leisure."

"Different places that can hold all ages to bring the community back to how it should be."

"Consideration the diverse needs of the city. Work collaboratively with other partners. e.g., how can we continue to cap bus prices to promote active travel. Public health can't control all of this or commission our way out of this; we need to work with partners across the city and influence them."

"It should be community led and focused, ask the people what they need and will benefit from, and they will both guide you and tell you."

More Comments

184

respondents provided a written response to their ratings on the Priorities of the Strategy.

Top Themes and what they are saying

- 184 respondents chose to provide more comments and **1 in 8 of them (n=22)** had **concerns over whether the Council had adequate resources** to deliver against the consultation findings. Some of the **respondents (1 in 13; n=14)** even expressed their concerns whether the plans were **realistic and practical**.
- An important number (**1 in 3; n=64**) felt, however, that all plans should take into consideration **accessibility** and **inclusivity** such **transportation, harnessing on local assets**, ensuring **equitable services** to those who are **more disadvantaged** and **safer infrastructures**.

The following comments are typical of many points raised.

“Brilliant idea. Building a network of mobility lanes to encourage more people to use active travel is very much needed. Giving people the choice on how to get around will encourage healthier living.”

“Funding for families, young people and elderly people.”

“Active Travel should be at the core of all policies. This is much better than subsidising gym membership.”

Face-to face Consultation feedback

Top Themes and what they are saying

- We engaged with 879 people face to face.

Most, if not all, of the things that people in the face-to-face consultations said were important to them were similar to what have been reported through the BeHeard platform.

- Inclusivity and accessibility were important to them. While a great deal agreed with the strategy, its vision, principles and priorities, many felt it should cater for the diverse Birmingham population - especially those who are disadvantaged.
- Many felt the opportunities available to be physically active should be affordable. For example, there should be more BeActive classes at suitable times.
- They also felt the spaces to be active in should be adequate. They raised the concerns that various spaces they have access to are not maintained and safe. This is about leisure and wellbeing centres, but it goes beyond that to include road, cycle paths and green spaces.
- They also agreed the council need to take a holistic and whole-system approach working more closely with organisations at the heart of the community. One lady in her late fifties who is a GP, said that she could see how community hubs with access to green spaces would be beneficial. This would enable families to engage with nature such as planting their crops.

Recommendations

1. The Creating an Active Birmingham Strategy, Implementation Plan and subsequent programmes of work should take accessibility, inclusivity and affordability into consideration making sure the Physical Activity offer is inclusive, equitable and affordable.
2. The Council should invest into creating and maintaining safe and adequate spaces to be physically active in, be it indoor spaces like leisure centres or outdoor spaces like safer roads, cycling paths and green spaces.
3. The Council should take a holistic whole-system approach and work with not just traditional partners but grassroot community-led organisations to ensure equitable delivery of the Strategy.