

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL MOTE PARK CONSULTATION REPORT

Prepared by Lake Market Research for Maidstone Borough Council

Date: 22nd December 2014

This report complies with ISO: 20252 standards and other relevant forms of conduct



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1. RESEARCH CONTEXT

1.1 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Maidstone Borough Council commissioned Lake Market Research to understand the Mote Park visitor profile and overall attitudes towards the Park's facilities amongst visitors as well as Maidstone residents in terms of:

- Frequency of use and reasons for visiting
- Normal mode of transport to the Park
- Overall opinion of the Park and rating of the Park's facilities
- The idea of introducing a car parking charge
- Most important facilities for Maidstone Borough Council to protect and improve in the future
- Likely interest in the eight new activities and events

The research was conducted in two phases:

1. A visitor survey amongst visitors of Mote Park
2. A resident survey about Mote Park

1.2 METHODOLOGY - VISITOR SURVEY

This phase was conducted via a face to face questionnaire of visitors at Mote Park. Visitors were interviewed over two fieldwork periods – Monday 25th August to Tuesday 2nd September and Monday 15th September to Friday 26th September. Interviews were conducted across different areas of Mote Park. 1,133 visitors were interviewed in total using a five minute questionnaire.

Mote Park Visitor Survey - Respondent Profile

The profile of residents interviewed for this survey incorporate a range of demographics:

Area	58% Maidstone	42% Outside of Maidstone				
Gender	70% Female	30% Male				
Age	5% 18-24	24% 25-34	28% 35-44	14% 45-54	11% 55-64	18% 65+
Ethnicity	98% White	2% BME				
Disability	5% Yes	95% No				
Ward within Maidstone	3% Allington 1% Barming 6% Bearsted 1% Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton 5% Boxley 3% Bridge 4% Coxheath & Hunton 3% Detling & Thurnham 3% Downswood & Otham 6% East 5% Fant 1% Harrietsham & Lenham 1% Headcorn 2% Heath	10% High Street 1% Leeds 1% Loose 2% Marden & Yalding 1% North Downs 6% North 5% Park Wood 10% Shepway North 4% Shepway South 9% South 2% Staplehurst 1% Sutton Valence & Langley 5% Prefer not to answer				

1.3 METHODOLOGY - RESIDENT SURVEY

The primary element of this phase was conducted via a postal survey distributed to a random sample of 5,000 residents across all wards of the Maidstone Borough Council area; sourced from the Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF).

Questionnaires were despatched to selected households on Thursday 13th November 2014. 1,071 completed postal surveys were returned by Wednesday 3rd December, the closing date for invited households to complete and return questionnaires. The covering letter enabled respondents to also complete the survey online if they preferred, this resulted in 12 residents completing their survey online as opposed to returning it by post, and thus a total of 1,083 completed surveys were returned – a 22% response rate.

The secondary element of the survey was conducted via an online survey that mirrored the postal survey in terms of content. The survey was advertised by Maidstone Borough Council publicised via press releases, facebook, twitter and their website.

437 completed online surveys were completed by Wednesday 3rd December, the closing date for invited respondents to complete the online survey.

For the purposes of this report, the two sample groups have been combined to provide an overall response to the questions posed as both sample groups are considered random. We

have, however, highlighted where responses are significantly different between the two samples as we recognise the online sample contains a higher proportion of frequent visitors.

Mote Park Resident Survey - Respondent Profile

The profile of residents interviewed for this survey incorporate a range of demographics:

Area	97% Maidstone	3% Outside of Maidstone				
Gender	45% Female	54% Male	1% Prefer not to answer			
Age	4% 18-24	20% 25-34	28% 35-44	23% 45-54	14% 55-64	9% 65+
	3% Prefer not to answer					
Ethnicity	96% White	4% BME				
Disability	9% Yes	91% No				
Ward within Maidstone	5% Allington	6% High Street				
	2% Barming	1% Leeds				
	8% Bearsted	2% Loose				
	2% Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton	3% Marden & Yalding				
	6% Boxley	2% North Downs				
	3% Bridge	6% North				
	4% Coxheath & Hunton	3% Park Wood				
	3% Detling & Thurnham	7% Shepway North				
	2% Downswood & Otham	3% Shepway South				
	5% East	7% South				
	4% Fant	2% Staplehurst				
	3% Harrietsham & Lenham	1% Sutton Valence & Langley				
	2% Headcorn	7% Prefer not to answer				
	3% Heath					

1.4 ANALYSIS, WEIGHTING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA

It should be noted that a sample of visitors and residents participated in these surveys rather than all visitors of Mote Park and all residents of the Maidstone Borough Council area. Results are therefore subject to sampling error, which means that not all differences are statistically significant.

Overall results for the resident survey are accurate to a confidence interval (also called margin of error) of +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level. There are three factors that determine the size of the confidence interval for a given confidence level: sample size; percentage; and population size. In calculating the general level of accuracy for reporting purposes, we have used:

- The sample size of 1520 achieved
- The worst case percentage (50%);
- 2011 Census data estimate of 122,000 residents across all wards of the Maidstone Borough Council area aged 18+.

Confidence interval calculations assume you have a genuine random sample of the relevant population (in practice, margins of error may be slightly higher).

As the exact demographic of Mote Park visitors are unknown, there has been no weighting applied to either the visitor or resident survey datasets.

1.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the team at Maidstone Borough Council for all their help and advice in developing the project. We would also like to thank all 1,520 residents and 1,133 visitors of Mote Park who agreed to take part and whose views made this research possible.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 USAGE AND OVERALL OPINION - VISITOR SURVEY

Visitors use Mote Park frequently with just under seven in ten visiting at least monthly, and just over four in ten visiting either daily or weekly. Frequency of use is higher amongst those who normally walk to the park compared to those that travel by car. The majority of visitors interviewed, however, normally travel by car. 13% indicated they normally walk to the park.

Overall opinion of Mote Park is very encouraging with six in ten visitors rating it as an excellent park. Four in ten indicated that it was a good park but could be better. Perceptions are consistent amongst visitors from Maidstone and outside Maidstone. Perceptions of Mote Park are strongest amongst the more frequent visitors, those aged 55 and over.

The primary reasons for visiting are to take children to the play area or to simply go for a walk. Secondary reasons are to take the dog for a walk and to relax. A significantly higher proportion of 18-54 year olds visit to take children to the play area and a significantly higher proportion of visitors aged 55 and over visit to simply go for a walk, to relax and view wildlife.

The majority of Mote Park's facilities receive encouraging ratings, notably the children's play area, recreational facilities, car parking, provision of benches and provision of litter and dog waste bins. Compared to the other facilities provided, the Kiosk / Cafe does not perform well. The toilet facilities receive very low scores.

When asked to describe in their own words how they thought Mote Park could be improved to make visits more enjoyable, the most common improvements concern the toilet facilities at Mote Park in terms of better facilities as well as a cleaner appearance.

2.2 USAGE AND OVERALL OPINION - RESIDENT SURVEY

Just over eight in ten of the residents indicated they had visited Mote Park in the last year. Use of Mote Park is significantly higher amongst the 18-44 year old residents responding. Claimed visiting is high amongst residents of all Maidstone wards but is particularly high amongst those in close proximity: Downswood & Otham, East, Bearsted, High Street, Shepway North, South and Detling & Thurnham. Just over two thirds of the residents responding normally travel to Mote Park by car.

Mote Park's children's play area and recreational facilities received encouraging ratings. Car parking and provision of benches and litter & dog waste bins receive lower scores than those observed for the visitor survey but are still broadly positive. Consistent with the visitor survey, the Kiosk / Cafe and toilet facilities receive low scores.

When asked to select the most important areas to protect if the overall budget for Mote Park was to be reduced, the toilet facilities ranked highest. The children's play area ranked second on the list, likely reflecting its importance to current visitors. A significantly higher proportion of 18-44 year old residents opted to protect the children's play area and a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 55 and over selected car parking, provision of benches and toilets.

When asked to select the areas they would most like to see improved, the top two facilities selected reflect overall rating scores - the toilet facilities and the Kiosk / Cafe. The children's play area ranked third on the list, together with car parking and the provision of litter & dog waste bins.

2.3 CAR PARKING CHARGES

Set in the context of any revenue generated being used to maintain and/or improve the current standards of Mote Park, residents were asked whether they would be prepared to pay a small charge such as £1 to park at Mote Park for a short stay of up to 6 hours, if stays of up to an hour were free.

Just over three quarters of all residents responding indicated they would be willing to pay £1 to park at Mote Park. Focusing on those who normally travel to Mote Park by car, 73% of these residents indicated that they would be willing to pay. There are no significant differences by age or gender with all demographic groups broadly in line with total proportions.

2.4 INTEREST IN NEW ACTIVITIES / EVENTS

Of the four new activities posed, crazy golf received the highest interest amongst visitors with just over two thirds indicating they would be very / fairly likely to use it. The seasonal ice rink was also popular with just over two thirds indicating they would be very / fairly likely to use it. Just over half indicated they would be likely to use an Aerial Ropeway / High Wire and 37% indicated they would be likely to use Segways. Interest in all the activities is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old visitors.

A consistent pattern is observed amongst residents with crazy golf receiving the highest interest of the four activities with just over half indicating they would be very / fairly likely to use it. 38% indicated they would be likely to use the Aerial Ropeway / High Wire and 30% indicated they would be likely to use Segways. Consistent with the visitor survey, interest in all four activities is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old residents.

Of the four new events posed, Markets, Music and Theatre performances are popular amongst visitors with at least seven in ten indicating they would be very / somewhat

interested in attending them. There is less interest in amusement fairs. Interest in all four events is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old visitors.

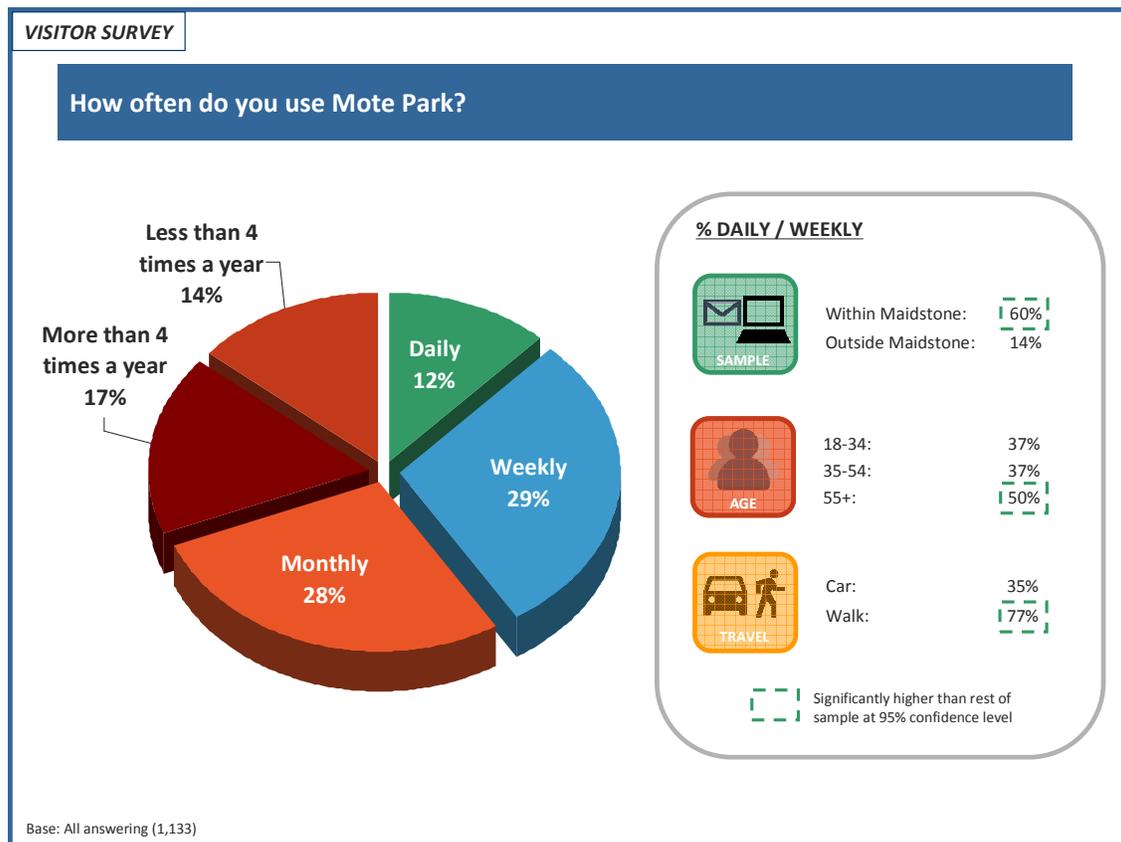
A consistent pattern is observed amongst residents with Markets, Music and Theatre performances all popular with at least two thirds indicating they would be very / somewhat interested in attending them if they were hosted at Mote Park. Again there is less interest in amusement fairs. Consistent with the visitor survey, interest in all four events is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old residents.

3. VISITOR SURVEY - USAGE PATTERNS & OPINIONS

3.1 USAGE AND TRAVEL

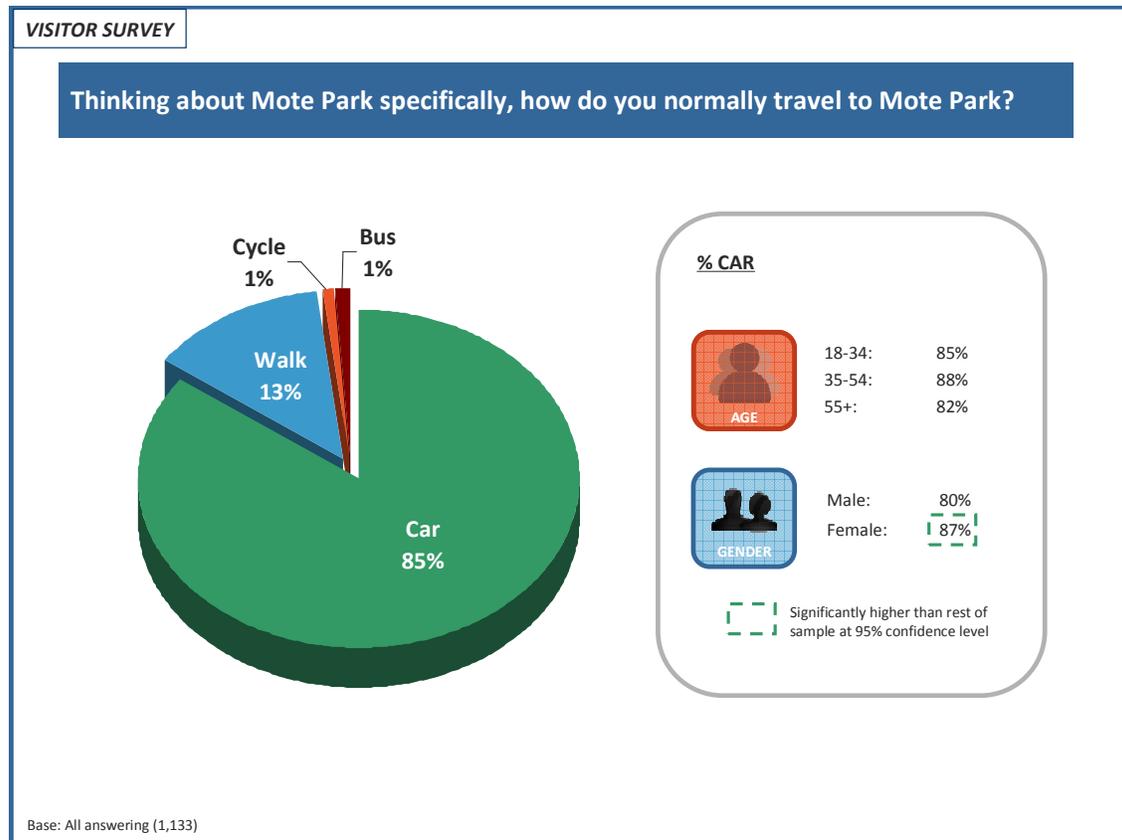
Visitors indicated they visit Mote Park frequently with 41% visiting either daily or weekly and a further 28% visiting at least monthly. As perhaps expected, visitors that live in Maidstone visit more frequently than those living outside of Maidstone (60% daily / weekly compared to 14% daily / weekly). Frequency of use is also higher amongst those who normally walk to the park (77% daily / weekly) compared to those that travel by car.

Usage frequency increases with age with 37% of 18-34 and 35-54 year old residents visiting daily / weekly and 50% of residents aged 55 and over visiting daily / weekly.



The majority of visitors (interviewed at the Park itself) indicated that they normally travel to Mote Park by car (85%). 13% indicated they normally walk to the park.

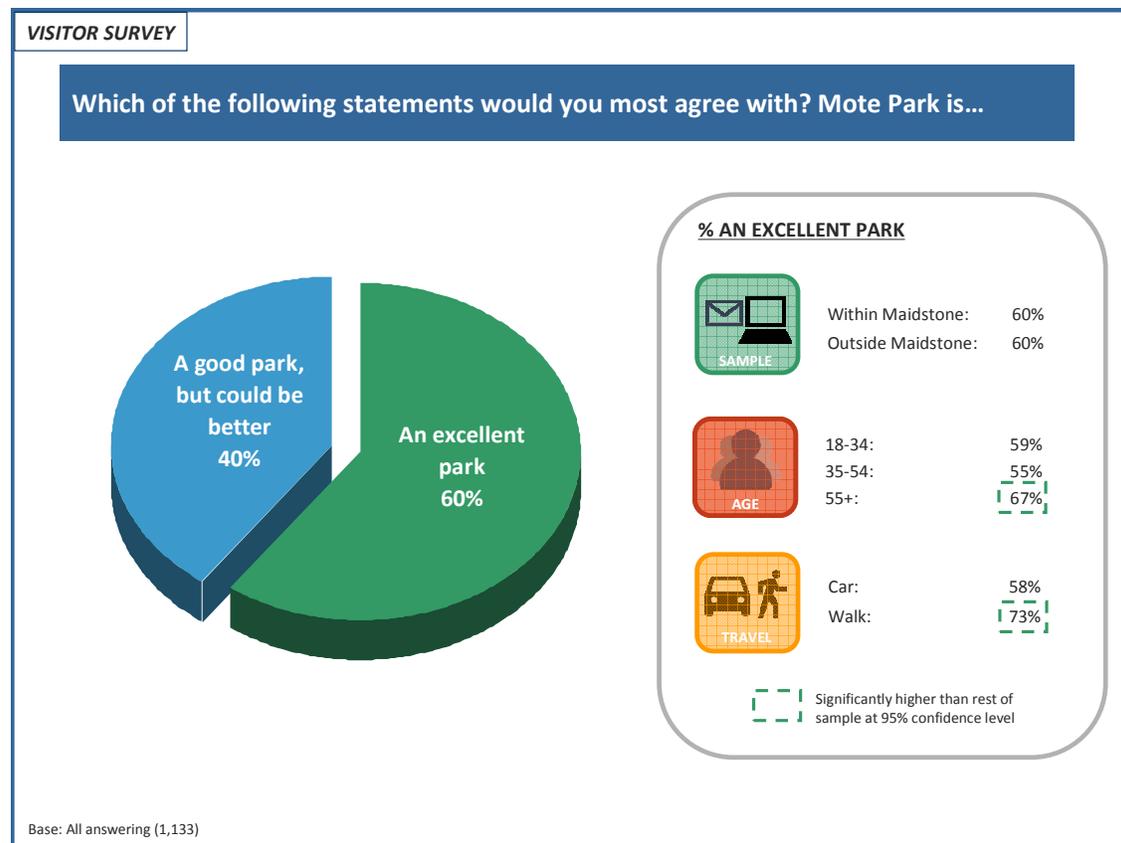
There are no significant differences by age but a significantly higher proportion of female visitors indicated that they normally travel to Mote Park by car.



3.2 OVERALL OPINION AND REASONS FOR VISITING

Overall opinion of Mote Park is very encouraging with 60% of visitors rating it as an excellent park. 40% indicated that it was a good park but could be better. Perceptions are consistent amongst visitors from Maidstone and outside Maidstone.

Perceptions of Mote Park are strongest amongst the more frequent visitors, those aged 55 and over, with 67% of them rating Mote Park as an excellent park. As well as those who walk to the park, with 73% of them rating Mote Park as an excellent park.

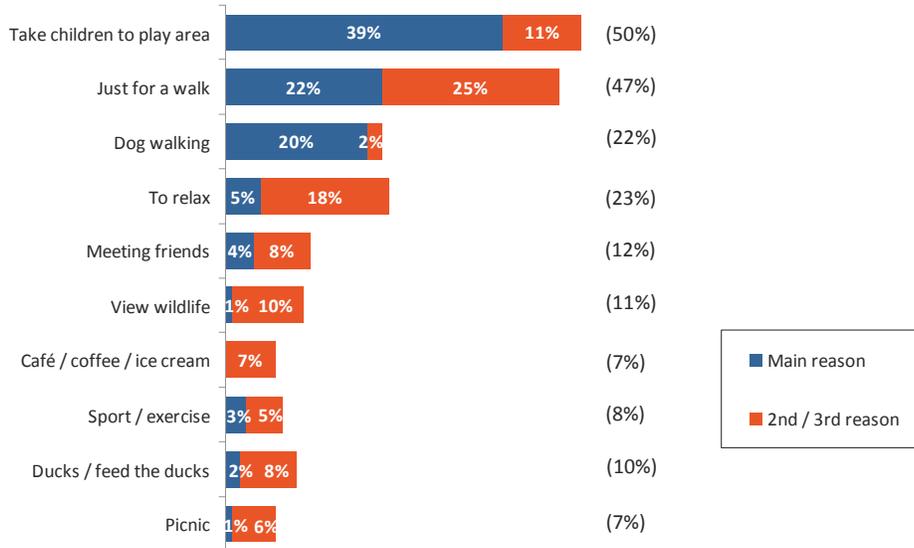


Visitors were asked to select up to three of a prompted list of reasons for visiting Mote Park on the visit of interview. Visitors were also allowed to express their own reason in their own words if preferred.

The primary reasons for visiting amongst those surveyed are to take children to the play area (50%) or to simply go for a walk (47%). Secondary reasons are to take the dog for a walk (22) and to relax (23%).

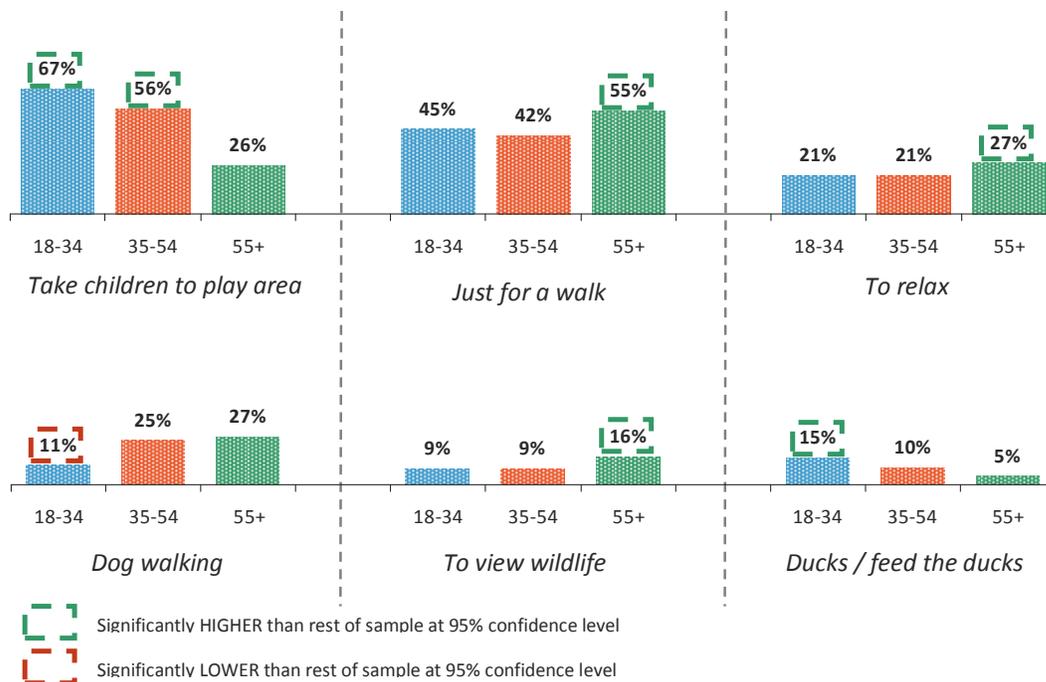
What was your reason for coming to Mote Park today?

UP TO 3 REASONS COULD BE SELECTED...

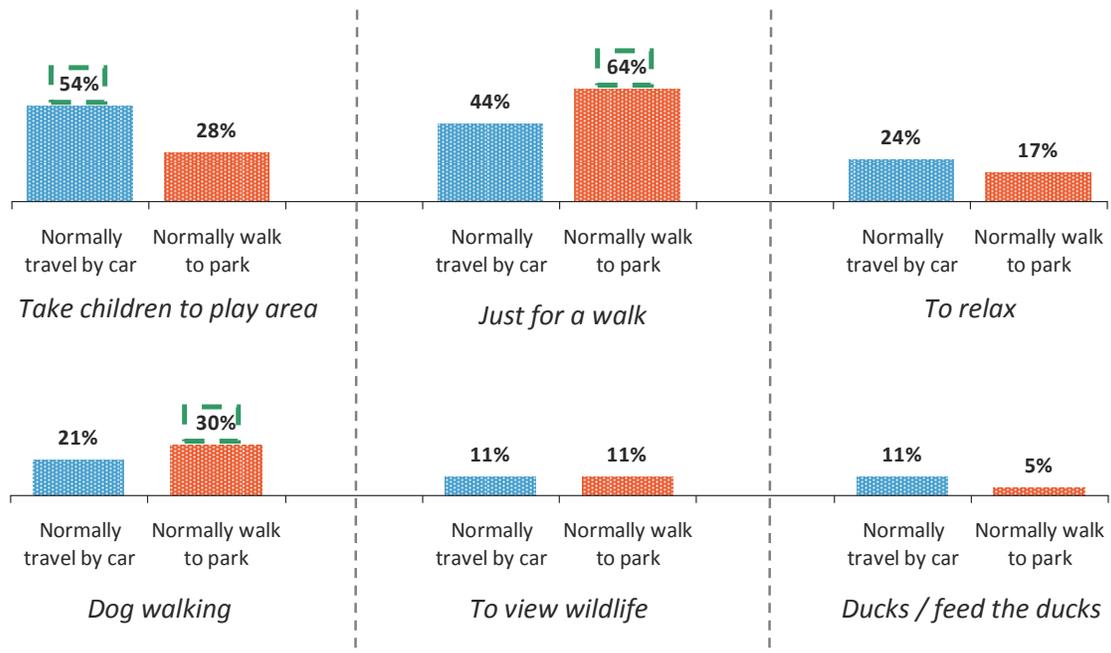


Base: All answering (1,133)

There are significant differences observed by subgroup with a significantly higher proportion of 18-54 year olds visiting to take children to the play area and a significantly higher proportion of visitors aged 55 and over simply going for a walk or to relax and view wildlife.



Perhaps unsurprisingly, a significantly higher proportion of those who travelled to Mote Park by car visited to take children to the play area. Conversely, a significantly higher proportion of those who walked to the Park visited simply to go for a walk or walk a dog.



 Significantly HIGHER than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

3.3 OPINION OF FACILITIES PROVIDED

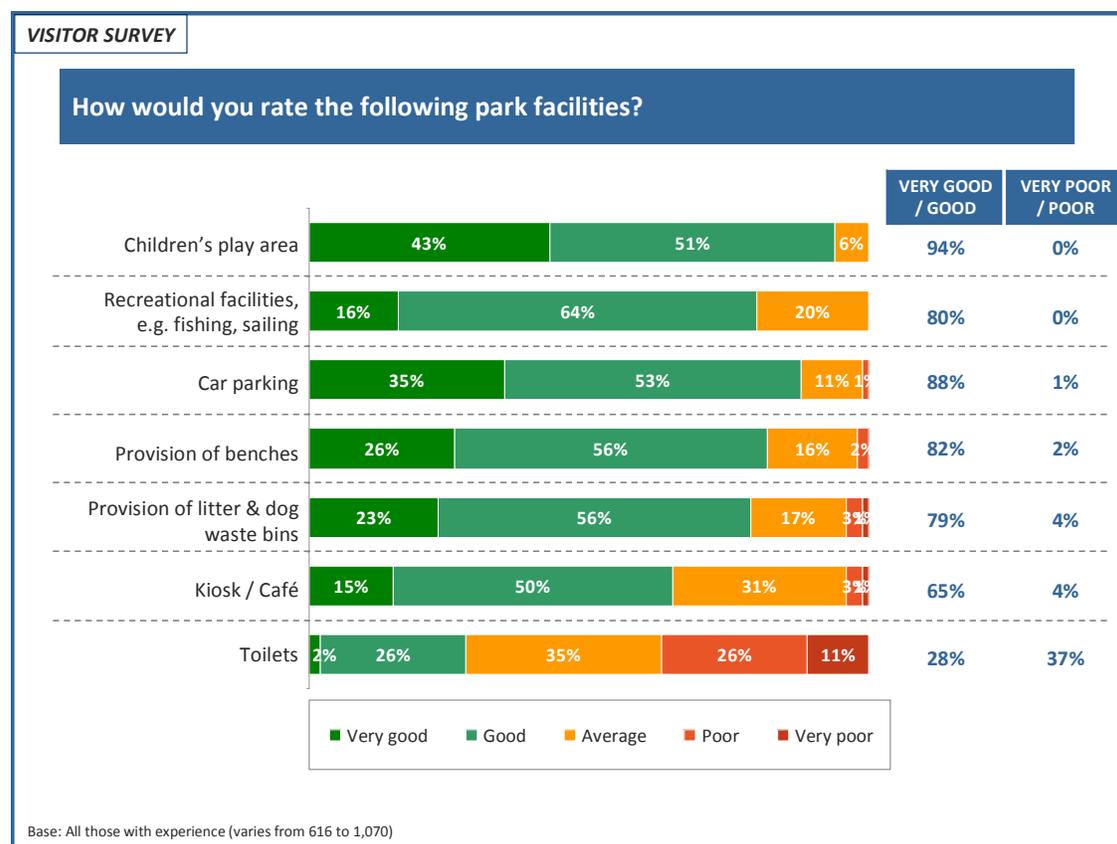
Visitors were asked to rate their overall opinion on a list of facilities provided at Mote Park on a five point semantic scale of Very Good, Good, Average, Poor and Very Poor. The following scores represent all those that had an opinion; visitors who indicated 'Don't know / No experience' have been removed from the charts below.

The majority of facilities receive very encouraging ratings with:

- 94% rating the children's play area as Very Good or Good
- 80% rating the recreational facilities as Very Good or Good
- 88% rating the car parking facilities as Very Good or Good
- 82% rating the provision of benches as Very Good or Good
- 82% rating the provision of benches as Very Good or Good
- 79% rating the provision of litter and dog waste bins as Very Good or Good

Compared to the other facilities provided, the Kiosk / Cafe does not perform as well with 65% rating it as Very Good or Good and 31% indicating it as Average.

The toilet facilities receive very low scores with 25% rating them as Very Good or Good, 35% as Average and 37% as Very Poor or Poor.

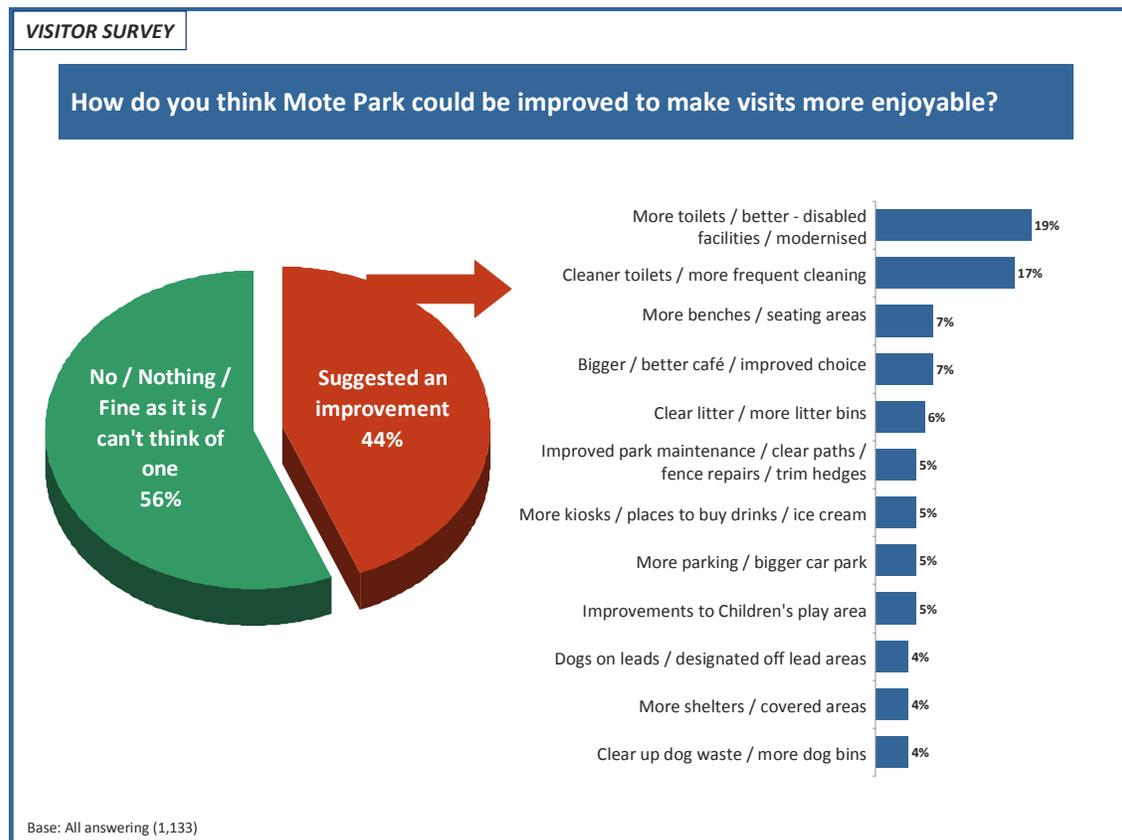


3.4 POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Visitors were asked to describe in their own words how they thought Mote Park could be improved to make visits more enjoyable. 56% of visitors indicated that they couldn't think of anything and 44% of visitors suggested an improvement.

Consistent with other feedback, the most common improvements concern the toilet facilities provided at Mote Park. Visitors requested:

- More toilets / better - disabled facilities / modernised - 19%
- Cleaner toilets / more frequent cleaning 17%

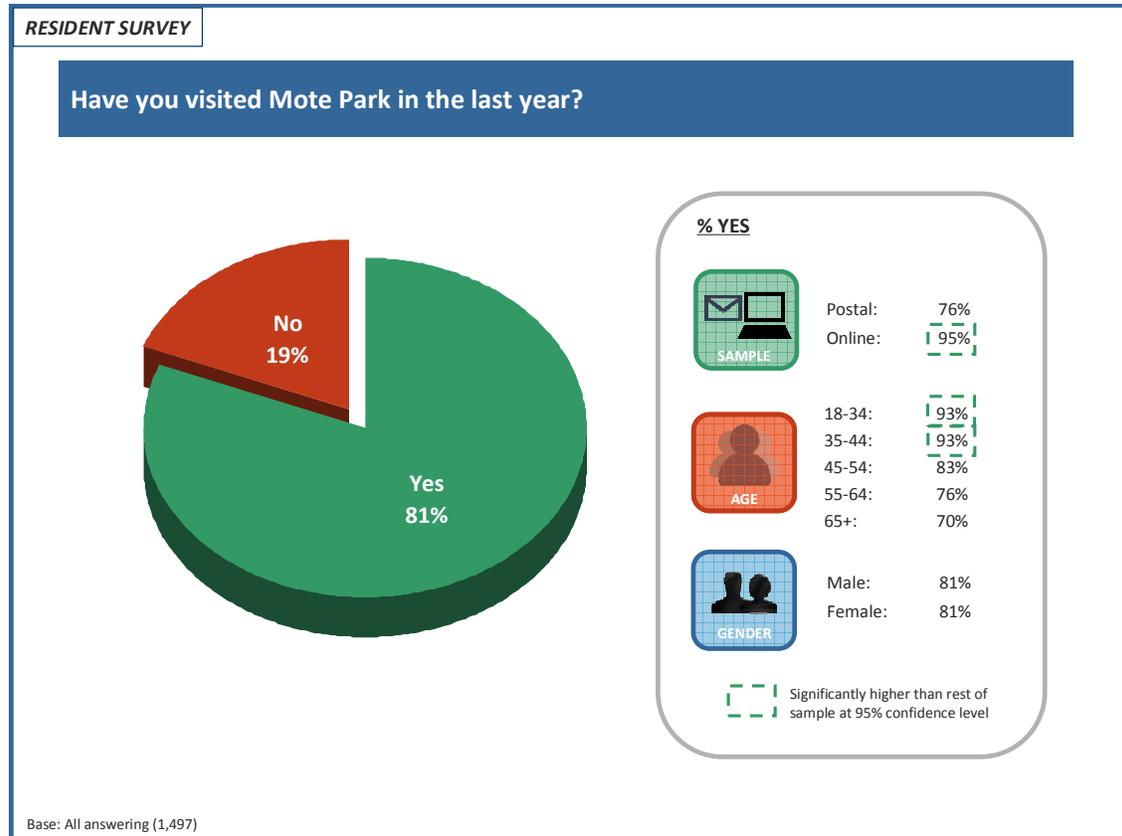


4. RESIDENT SURVEY - USAGE PATTERNS & OPINIONS

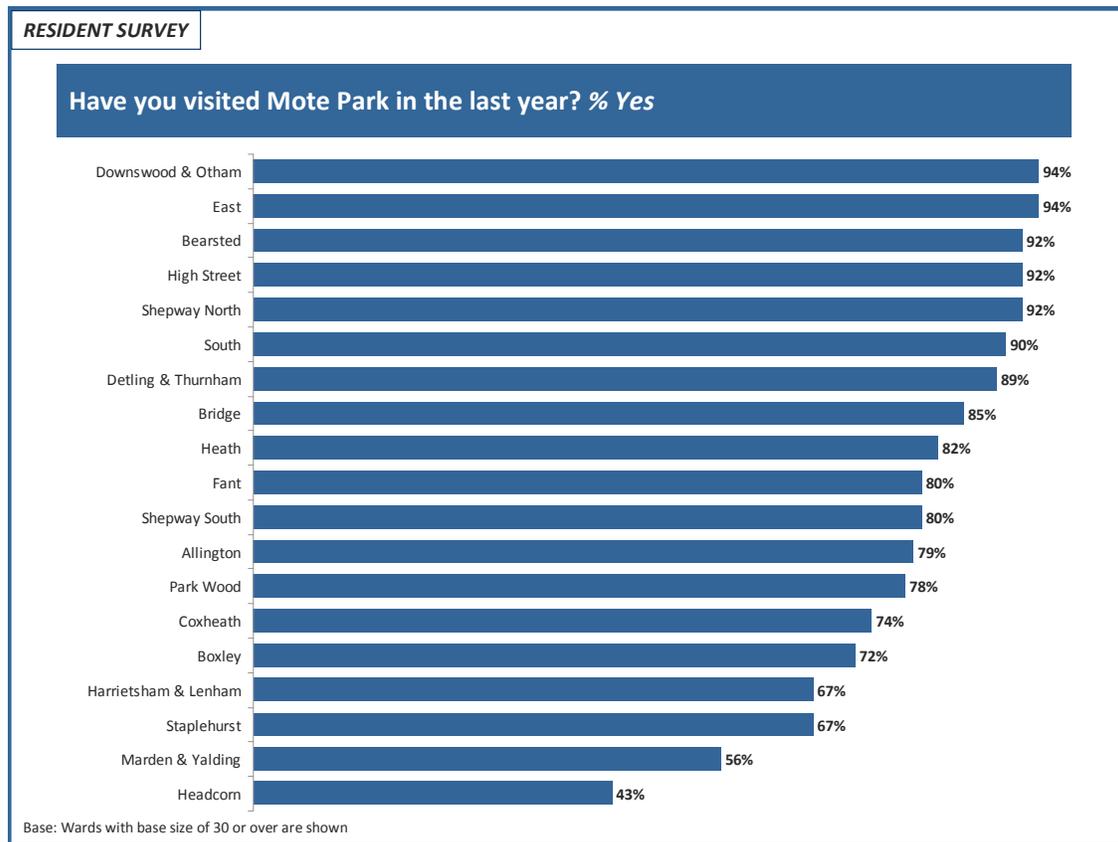
4.1 USAGE AND TRAVEL

81% of residents responding to the survey indicated they had visited Mote Park in the last year. The proportion of residents visiting in the last year is significantly higher amongst residents who completed the survey online as opposed to via the post.

Use of Mote Park in the last year is significantly higher amongst the 18-44 year old residents responding. Use is consistent amongst the male and female residents responding.



Claimed visiting of Mote Park in the last year is high amongst residents of all Maidstone wards but is particularly high amongst those in close proximity: Downswood & Otham, East, Bearsted, High Street, Shepway North, South and Detling & Thurnham.



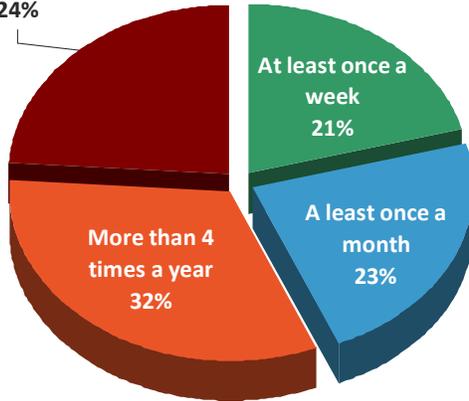
Residents indicated they visit Mote Park frequently with 21% visiting at least once a week and a further 23% visiting at least once a month. Consistent with the visitor survey, frequency of use is higher amongst those who normally walk to the park (63% at least once a week / month) compared to those that travel by car.

A significantly higher proportion of the 18-34 year old residents responding visit more frequently, with 56% indicating they visit at least once a week / month.

Claimed frequent visiting of Mote Park is high amongst those in close proximity: Downswood & Otham, Shepway North, High Street, Detling & Thurnham, Bearsted, South and East.

How often do you use Mote Park?

Less than 4 times a year
24%



% LEAST ONCE A WEEK / MONTH



Postal: 37%
Online: 57%



18-34: 56%
35-44: 48%
45-54: 40%
55-64: 48%
65+: 33%

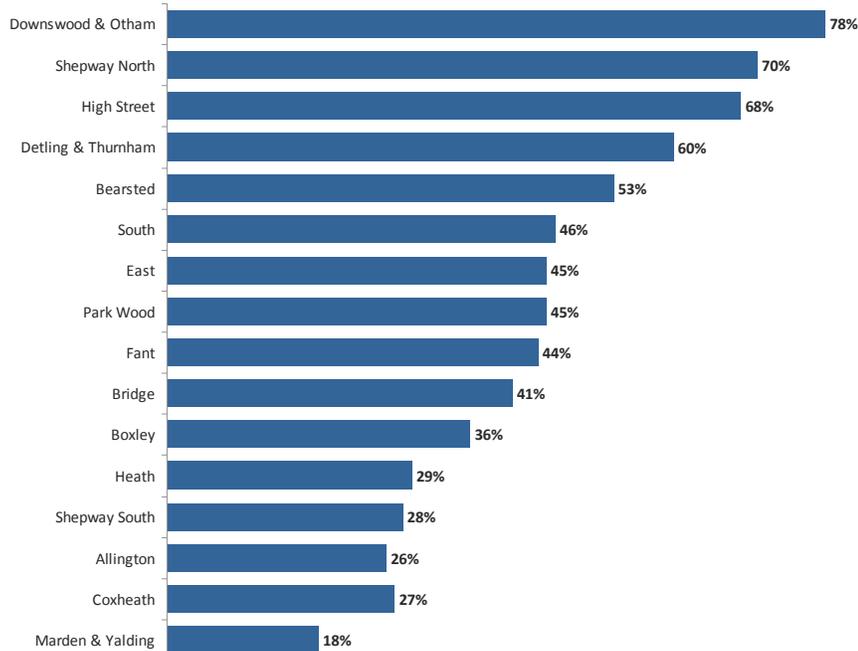


Car: 35%
Walk: 63%

Significantly higher than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

Base: All answering (1,286)

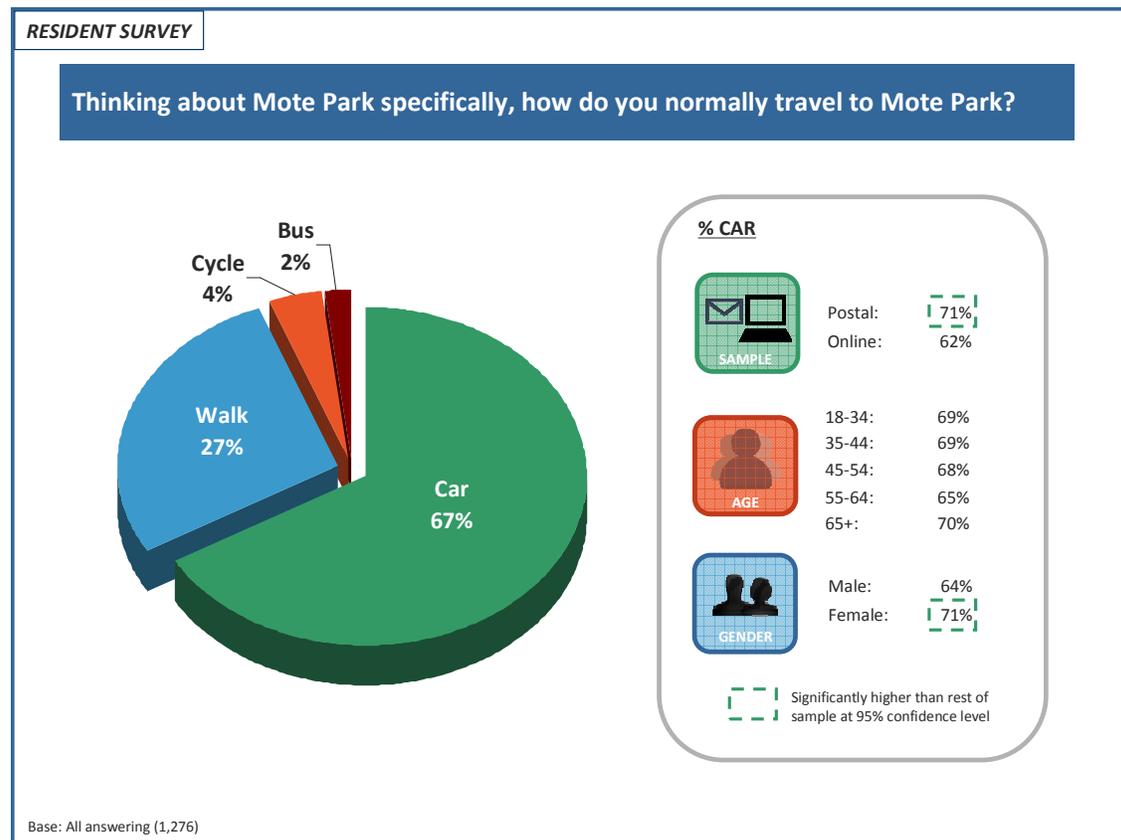
How often do you use Mote Park? % At least once a week / month



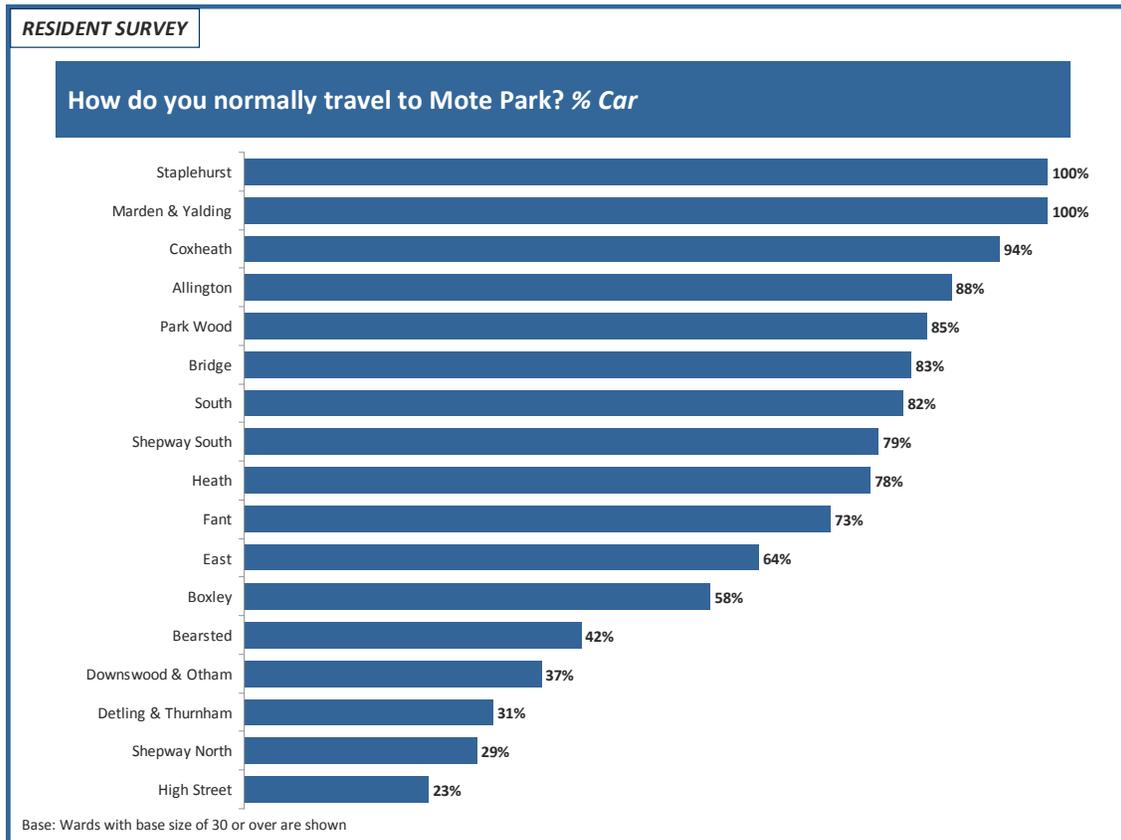
Base: Wards with base size of 30 or over are shown

Just over two thirds of residents indicated that they normally travel to Mote Park by car (67%). 27% indicated they normally walk to the park.

Consistent with the visitor survey, there are no significant differences by age but a significantly higher proportion of female visitors indicated that they normally travel to Mote Park by car. A significantly higher proportion of residents completing the survey by post indicated they travel by car compared to those who completed the survey online.



Claimed visiting of Mote Park by car is highest amongst the Staplehurst, Malden & Yalding, Coxheath, Allington, Park Wood, Bridge and South wards of Maidstone.



4.2 OPINION OF FACILITIES PROVIDED

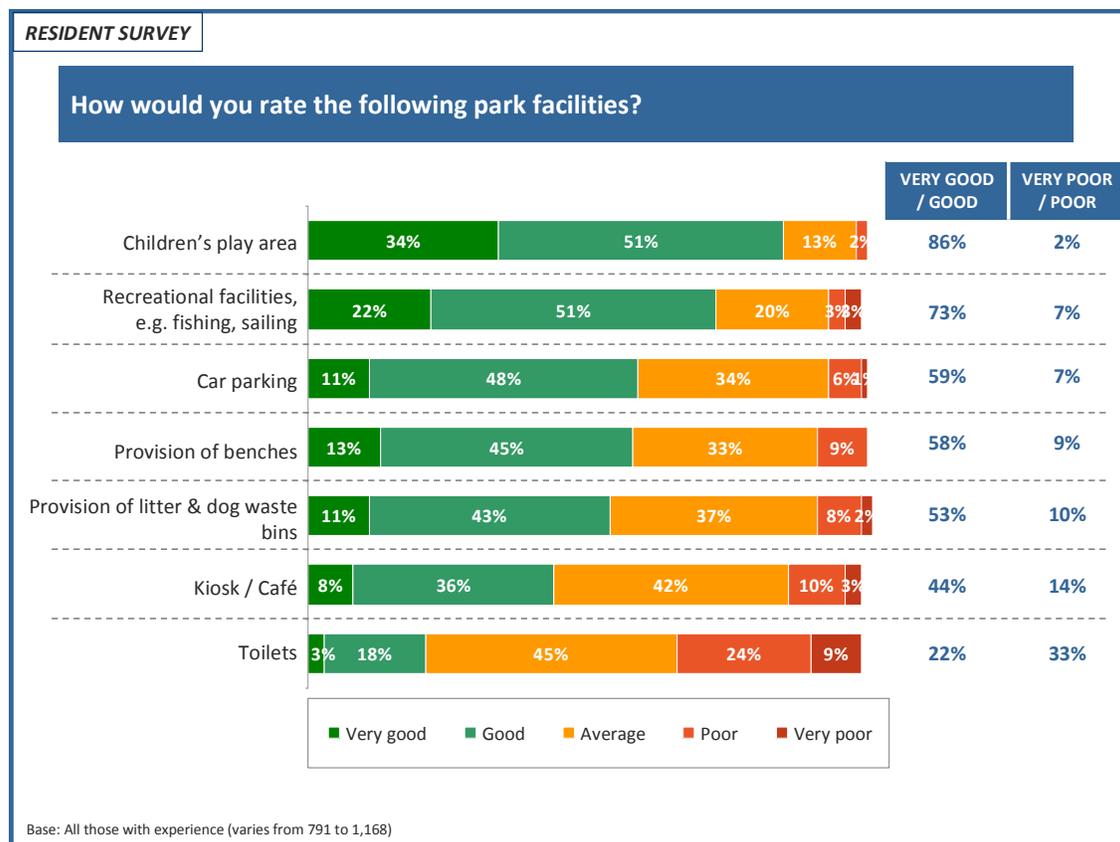
Consistent with the visitor survey, residents were asked to rate their overall opinion on a list of facilities provided at Mote Park on a five point semantic scale of Very Good, Good, Average, Poor and Very Poor. The following scores represent all those that had an opinion; visitors who indicated 'Don't know / No experience' have been removed from the charts below.

The children's play area and recreational facilities receive very encouraging ratings with:

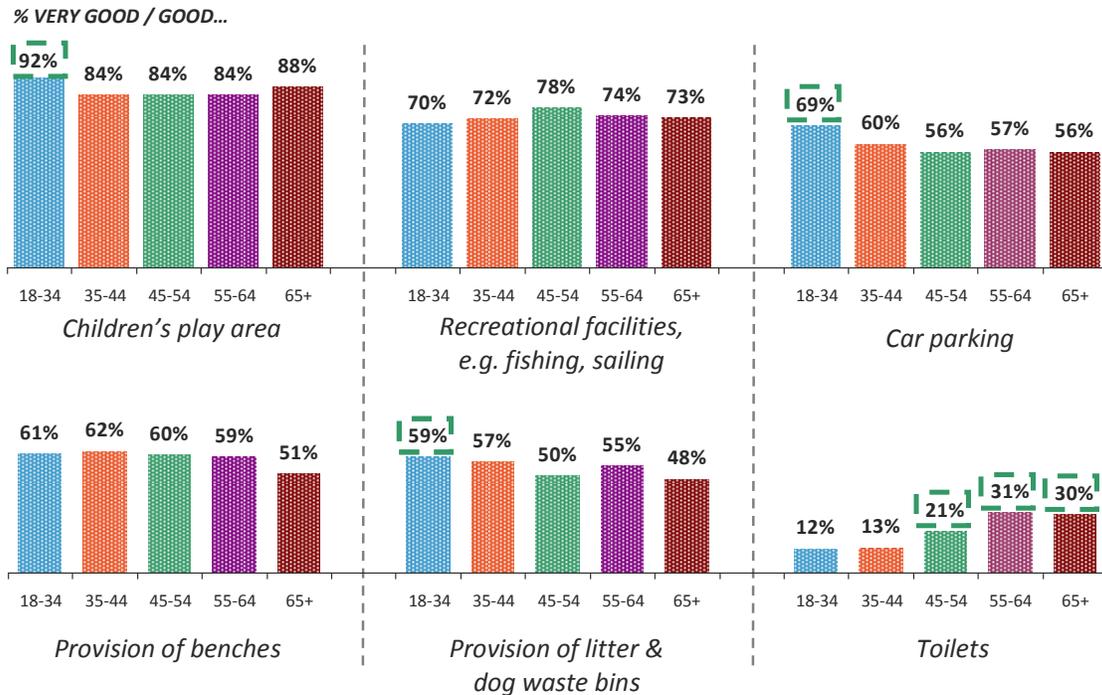
- 86% rating the children's play area as Very Good or Good
- 73% rating the recreational facilities as Very Good or Good

Car parking and provision of benches and litter & dog waste bins receive lower scores than those observed for the visitor survey but are still broadly positive with 59%, 58% and 53% rating them as Very Good or Good respectively.

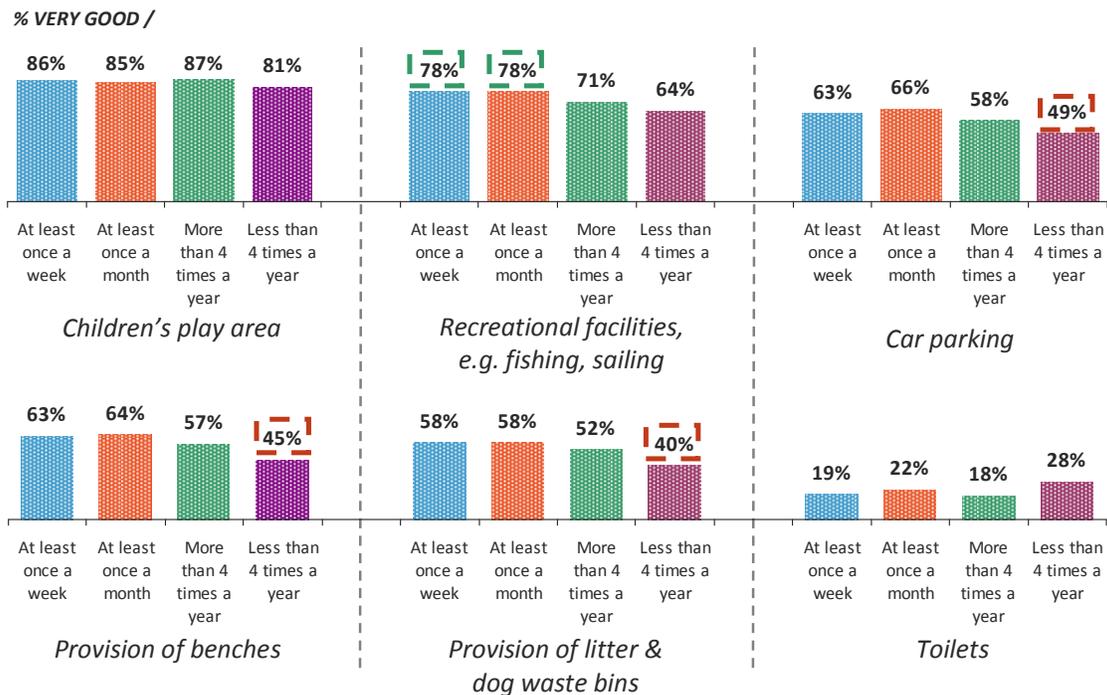
The Kiosk / Cafe and the toilet facilities receive the lowest scores, consistent with the visitor survey, with 44% and 22% rating them as Very Good or Good respectively. 33% rated the Toilets as Very Poor or Poor.



There are some significant differences by subgroup with a significantly higher proportion of 18-34 year old residents rating the Children's play area, car parking and the provision of litter & dog waste bins as Very Good or Good compared to other age groups. Ratings are also generally lower amongst less frequent visitors.



Significantly HIGHER than rest of sample at 95% confidence level



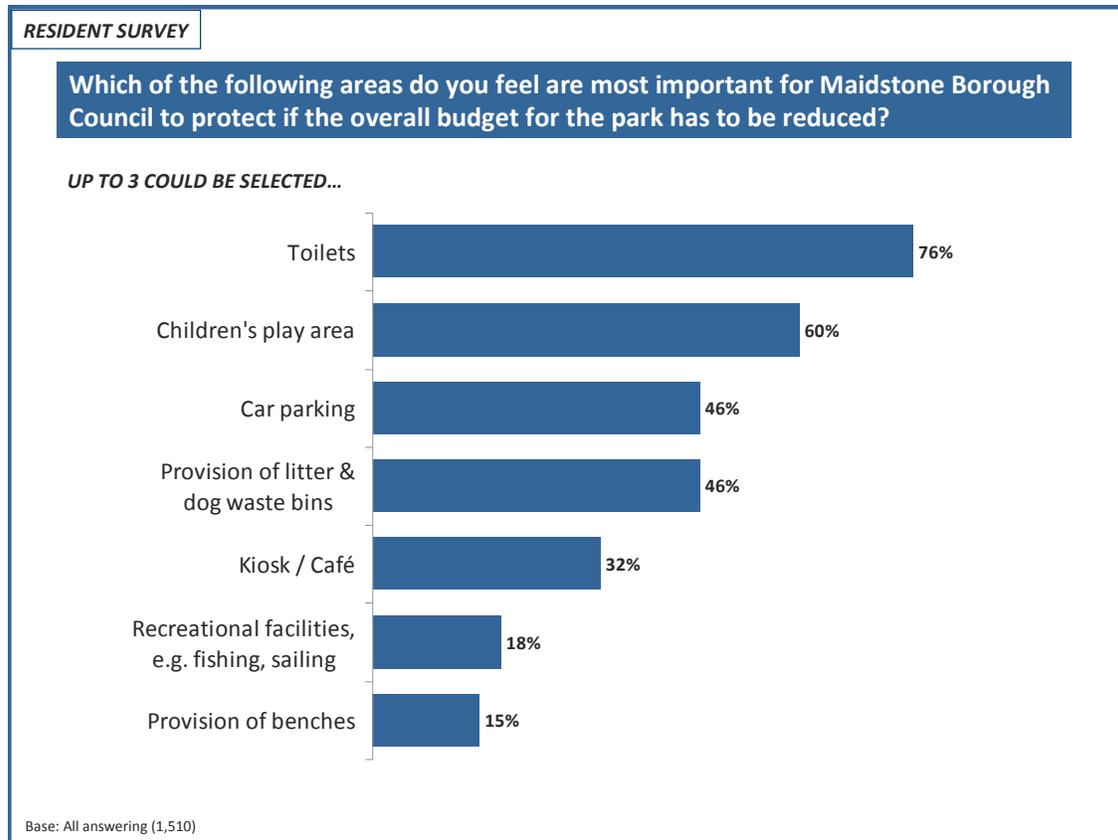
Significantly HIGHER than rest of sample at 95%

Significantly LOWER than rest of sample at 95%

4.3 AREAS MOST IMPORTANT TO PROTECT IN OVERALL BUDGET

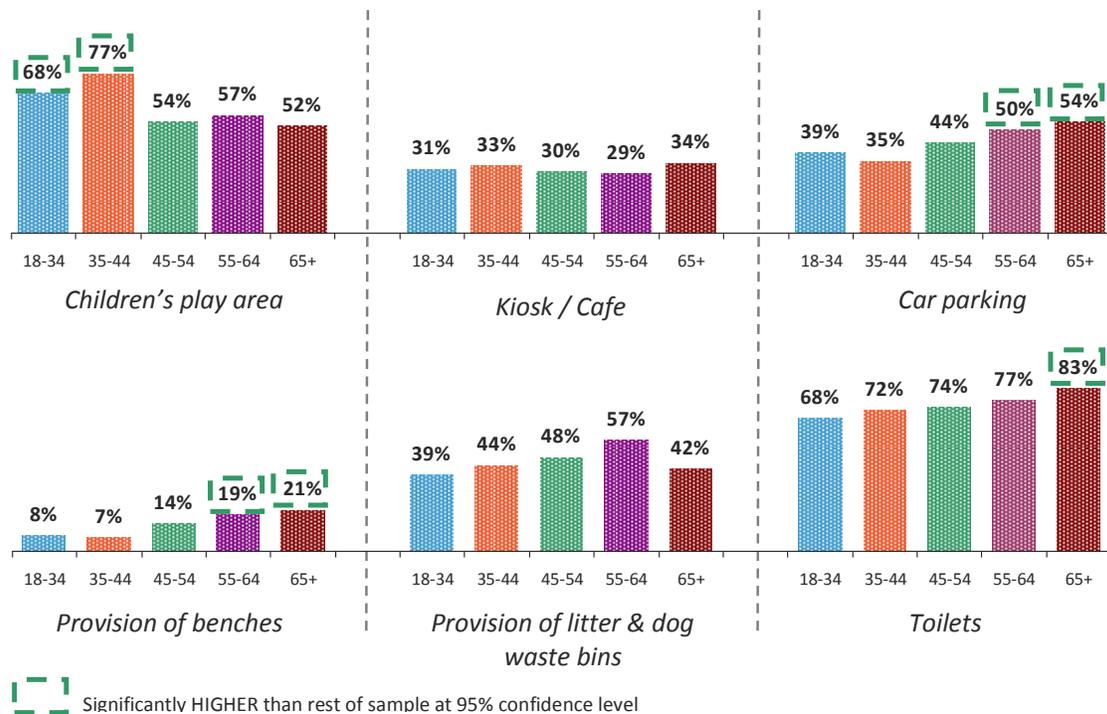
From the same prompted list of facilities, residents were asked to select the areas they felt were most important to protect if the overall budget for Mote Park has to be reduced. Residents could select up to three of the list provided.

The toilet facilities ranked highest on the list, perhaps unsurprising given the overall opinion of these currently in terms of quality. The children's play area ranked second on the list, likely reflecting its importance to the visitors (as it ranked highly in reasons for visiting).

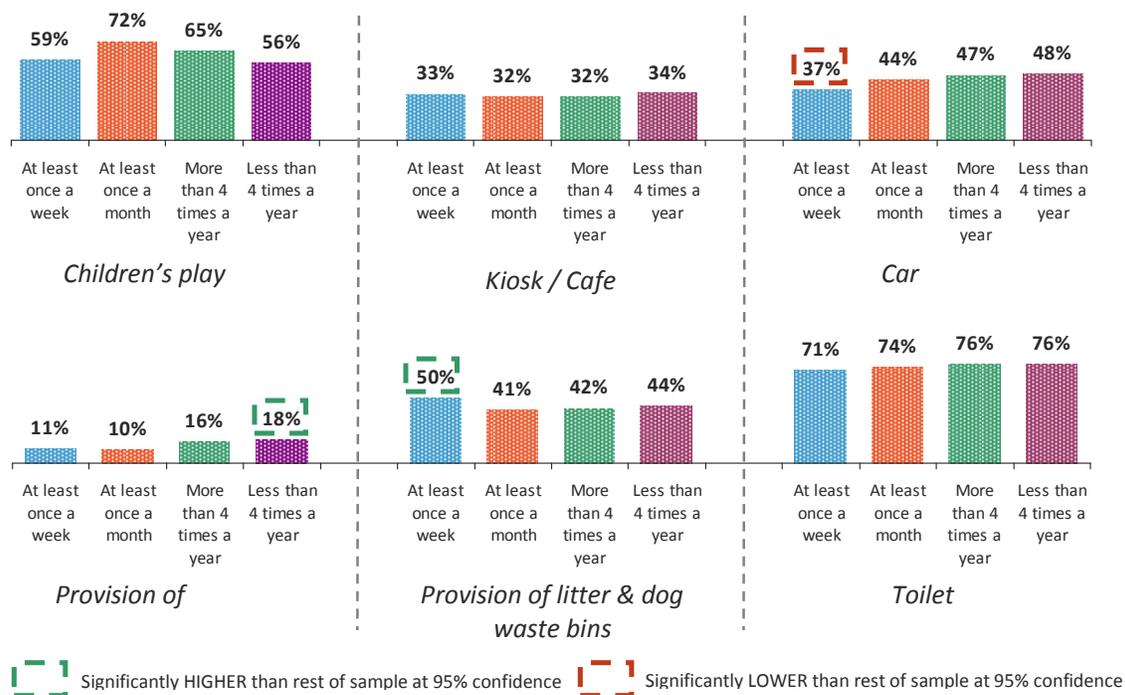


Toilets are the highest scoring facility across all demographic groups.

There are however significant differences observed with a significantly higher proportion of 18-44 year old residents opting to protect the children's play area and a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 55 and over selecting car parking, provision of benches and toilets.

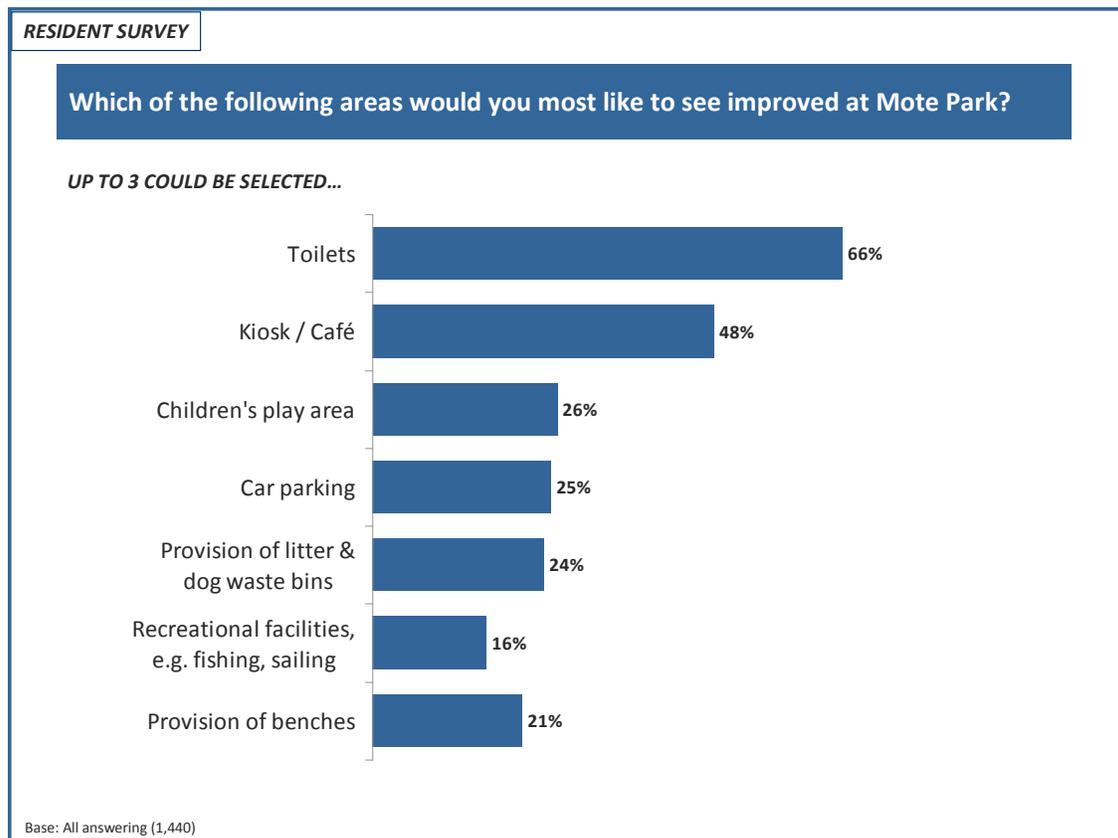


A significantly higher proportion of residents who visit at least once a week selected the provision of litter & dog waste bins.



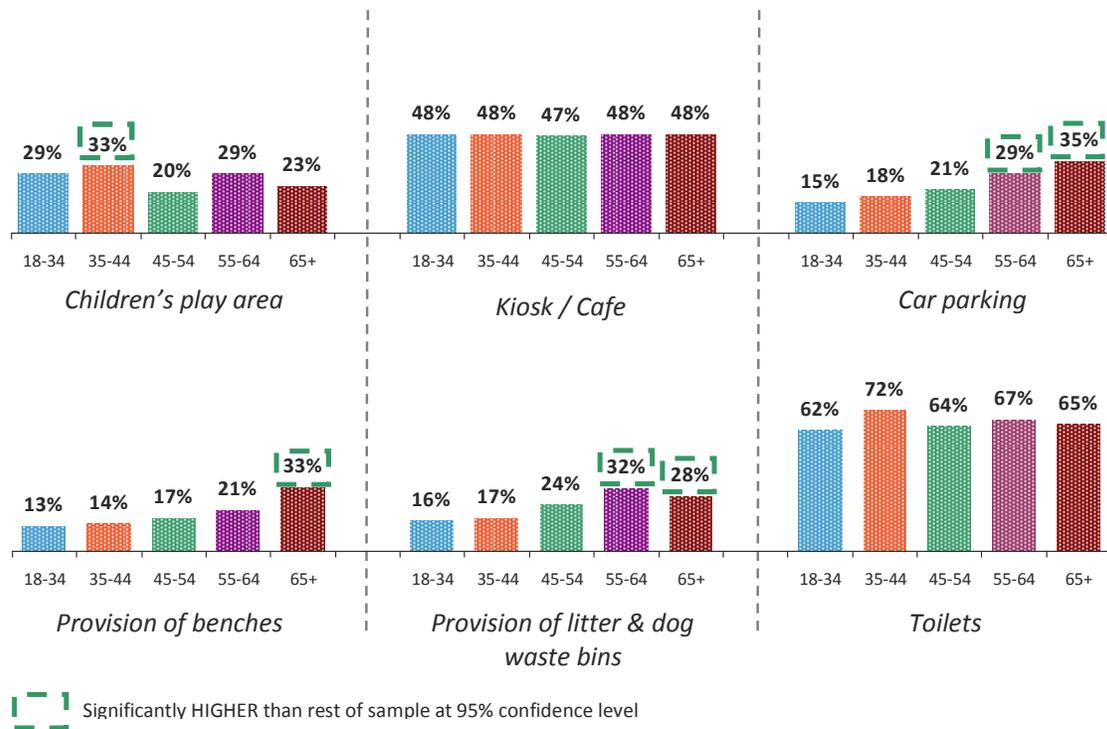
From the same prompted list of facilities, residents were also asked to select the areas they would most like to see improved at Mote Park. Residents could select up to three of the list provided.

The top two facilities selected reflect overall rating scores - toilet facilities (66%) and the Kiosk / Cafe (48%). The children's play area ranked third on the list, together with car parking and the provision of litter & dog waste bins.



Toilets are the highest scoring facility across all demographic groups.

There are however significant differences observed with a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 55 and over selecting car parking, provision of benches and provision of litter and dog waste bins.



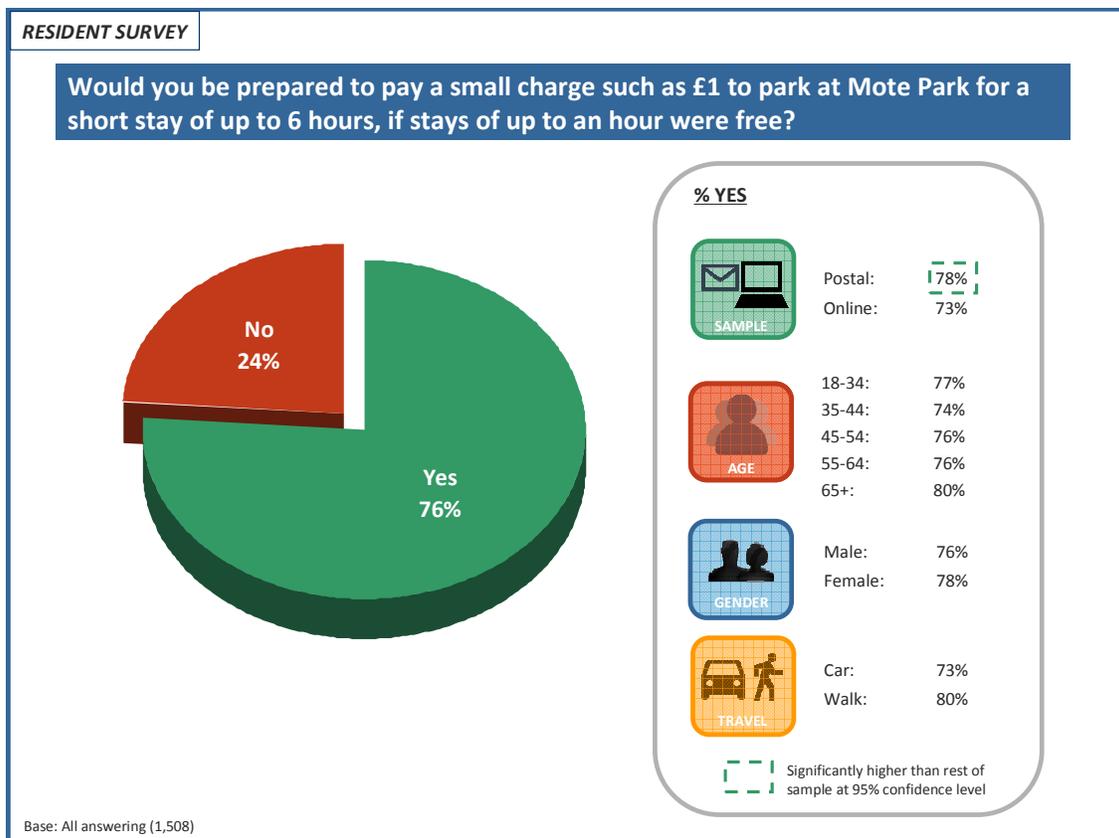
5. CAR PARKING CHARGES

Set in the context of any revenue generated being used to maintain and/or improve the current standards of Mote Park, residents were asked whether they would be prepared to pay a small charge such as £1 to park at Mote Park for a short stay of up to 6 hours, if stays of up to an hour were free. Please note that this question was not included in the visitor survey.

Just over three quarters of all residents responding indicated they would be willing to pay £1 to park at Mote Park. Response is very positive amongst both sample groups with 78% of residents responding via the postal survey indicating they would be willing and 73% of the residents responding via the online survey indicating they would be willing.

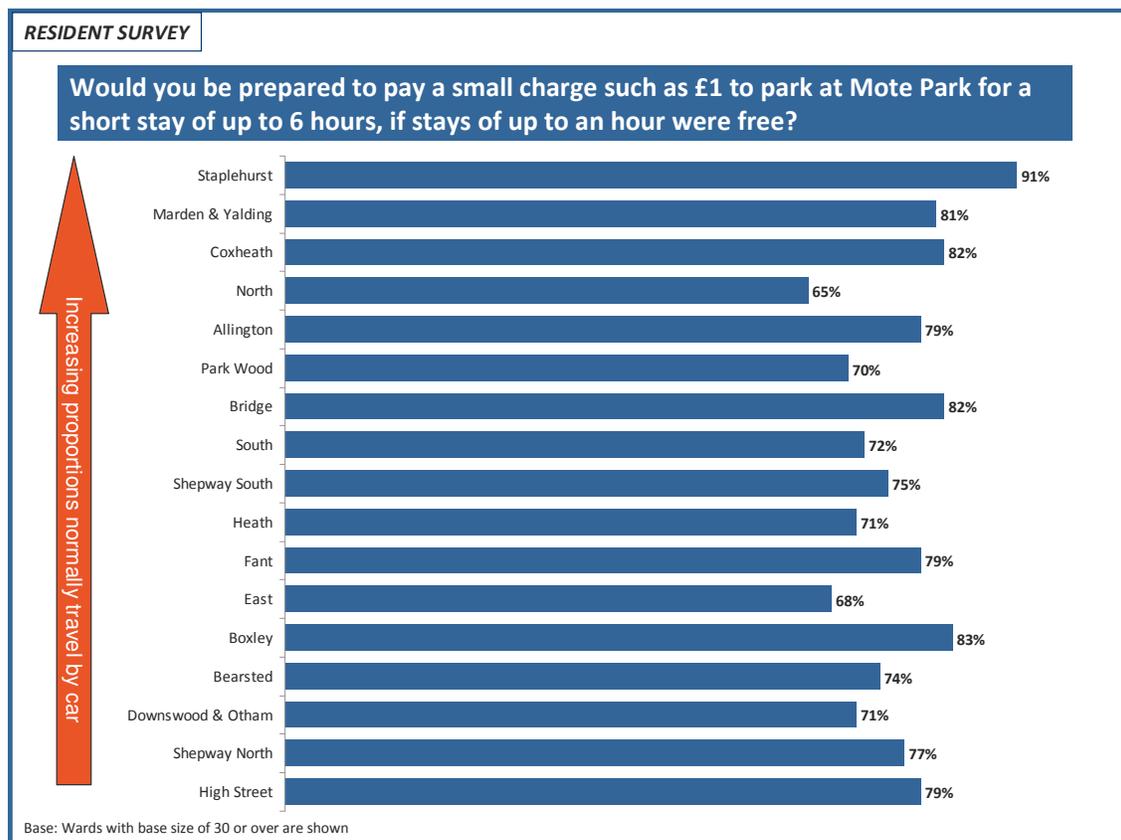
Focusing on those who normally travel to Mote Park by car, 73% of these residents indicated that they would be willing to pay.

There are no significant differences by age or gender with all demographic groups broadly in line with total proportions.



There are encouraging agreement levels across residents from all Maidstone wards, particularly amongst those with the highest proportions of residents who normally travel to Mote Park by car:

- Staplehurst - 91%
- Marden & Yalding - 81%
- Coxheath - 82%
- North - 65%
- Allington - 79%
- Park Wood - 70%
- Bridge - 82%

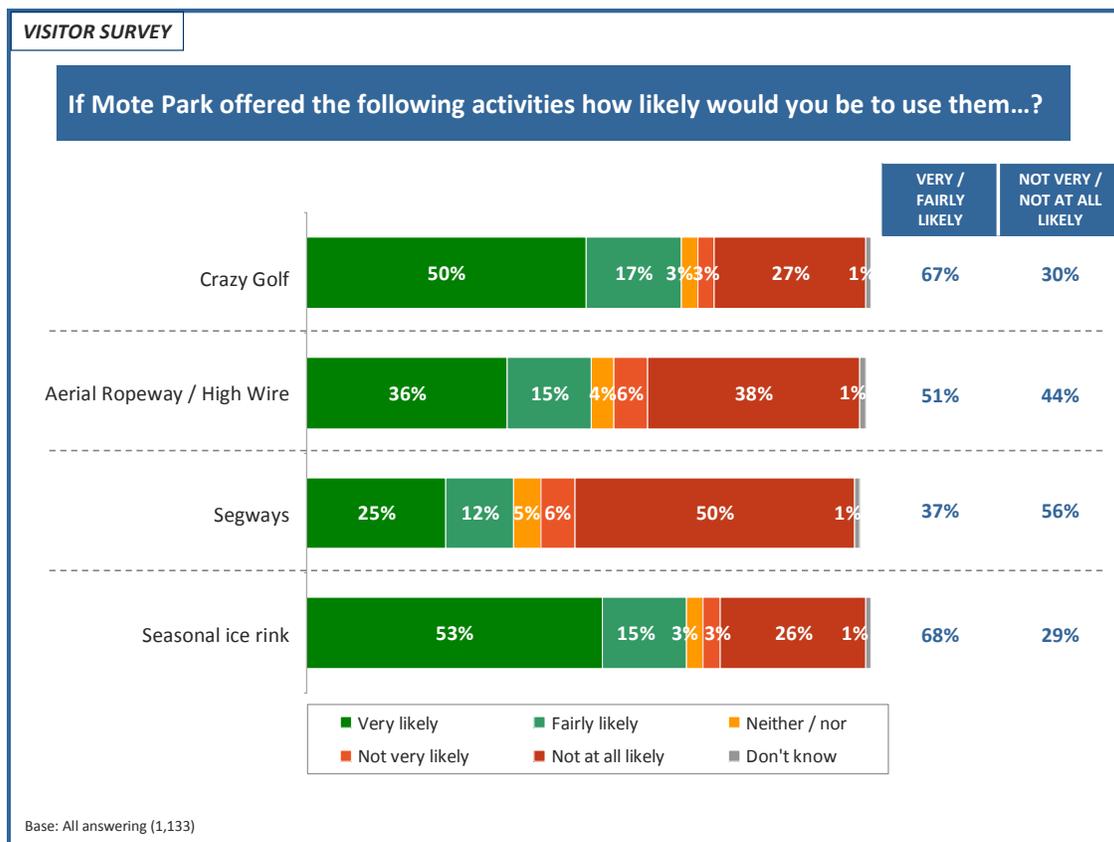


6. INTERESTS IN NEW ACTIVITIES / EVENTS

6.1 VISITOR SURVEY - NEW ACTIVITIES

Visitors were asked their likely usage of four new activities if they were introduced at Mote Park. Please note that no prices were mentioned so these are indicative usage figures only.

Crazy Golf received the highest interest with two thirds (67%) indicating they would be very / fairly likely to use it. The seasonal ice rink was also popular with 68% indicating they would be very / fairly likely to use it. 51% indicated they would be likely to use an Aerial Ropeway / High Wire and 37% indicated they would be likely to use Segways.

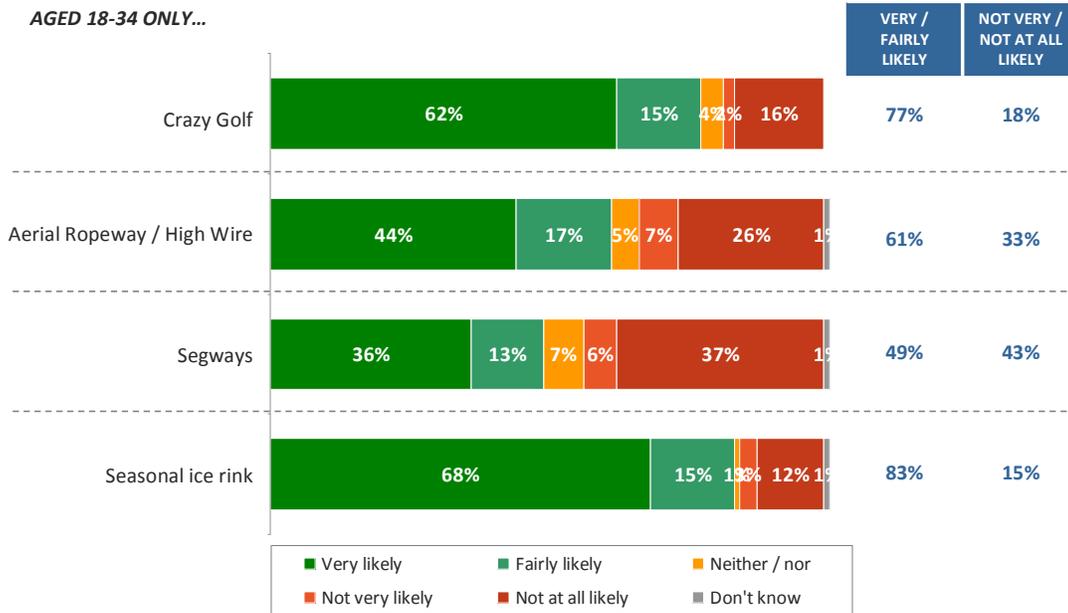


Interest in all the activities is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old visitors:

- 77% very / fairly likely to use Crazy Golf facilities
- 83% very / fairly likely to use Seasonal ice rink
- 61% very / fairly likely to use Aerial Ropeway / High Wire
- 49% very / fairly likely to use Segways

If Mote Park offered the following activities how likely would you be to use them...?

AGED 18-34 ONLY...



Base: All answering (323)

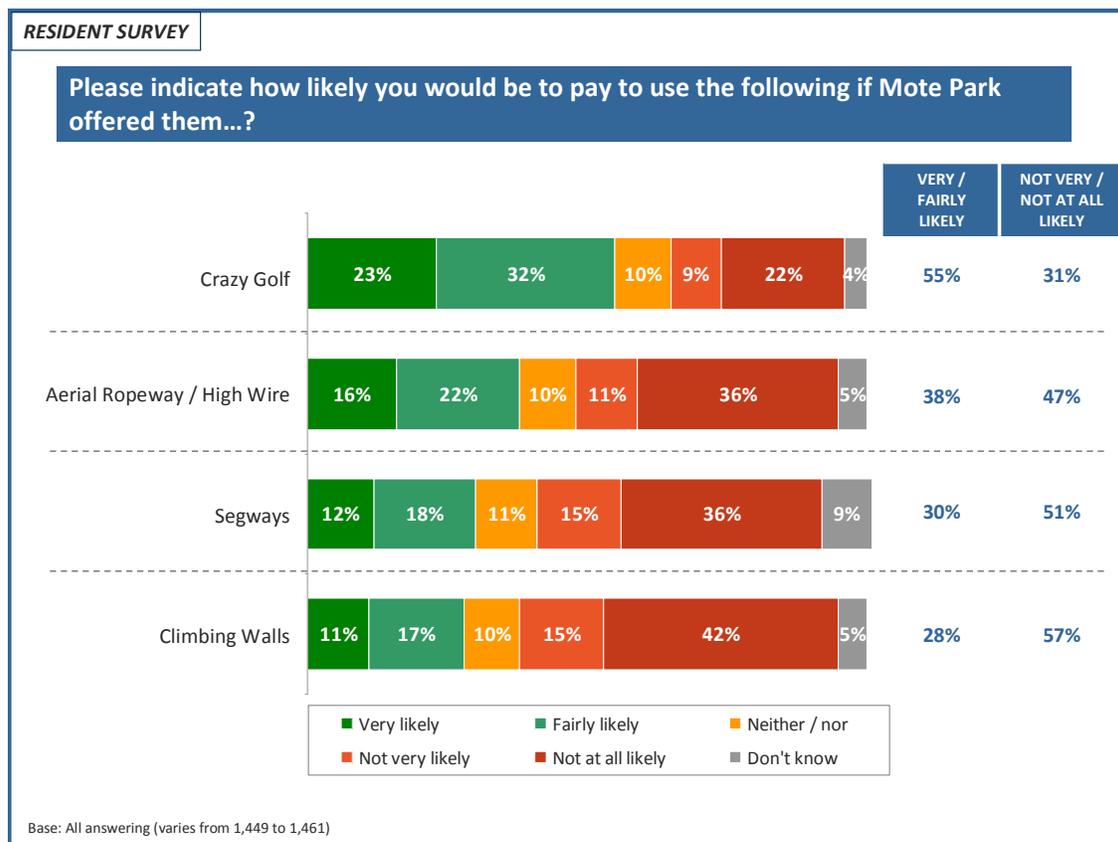
6.2 RESIDENT SURVEY - NEW ACTIVITIES

Residents were asked their likely usage of four new activities if they were introduced at Mote Park and they had to pay for them. Please note that no prices were mentioned so these are indicative usage figures only.

As expected, interest levels are lower compared to the visitors interviewed across the board.

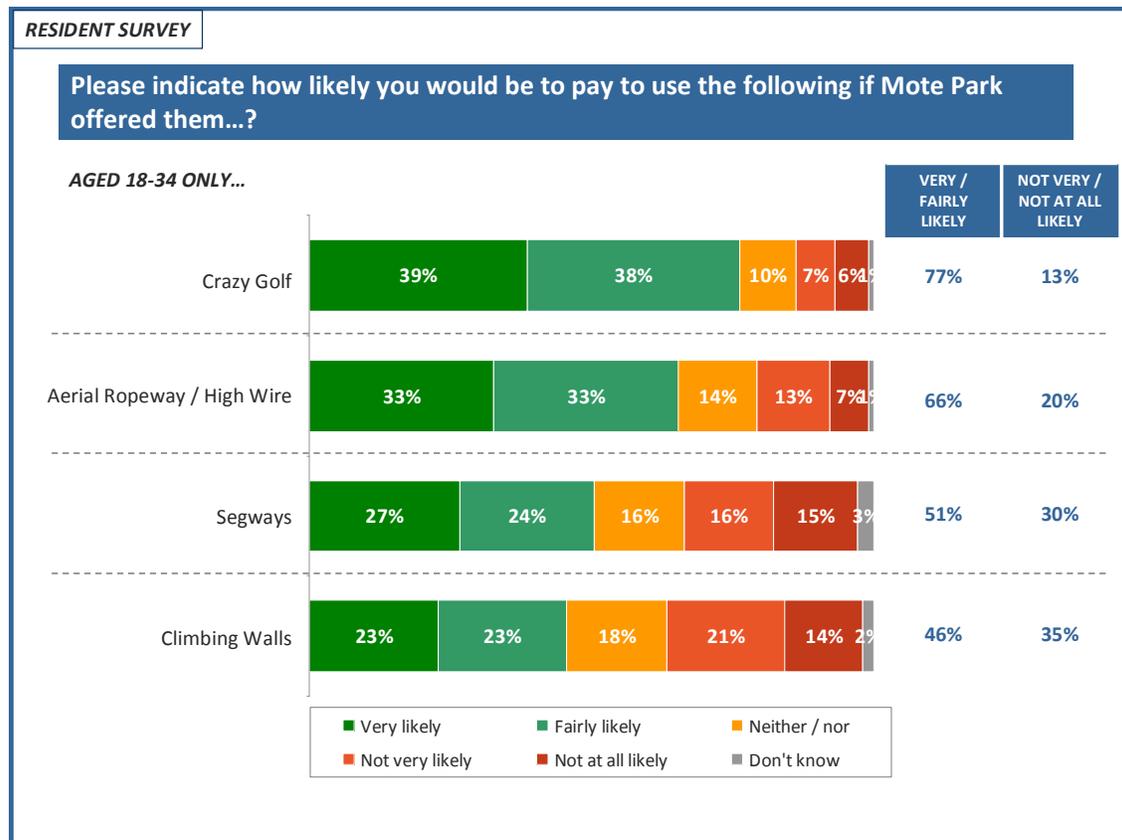
Crazy Golf received the highest interest with just over half (55%) indicating they would be very / fairly likely to use it. 38% indicated they would be likely to use the Aerial Ropeway / High Wire and 30% indicated they would be likely to use Segways.

Climbing Walls were tested in the resident survey only and 28% of those responding indicated they would be very / fairly likely to use it.



Consistent with the visitor survey, interest in all the activities is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old residents:

- 77% very / fairly likely to use Crazy Golf facilities
- 66% very / fairly likely to use Aerial Ropeway / High Wire
- 51% very / fairly likely to use Segways
- 46% very / fairly likely to use Climbing Walls

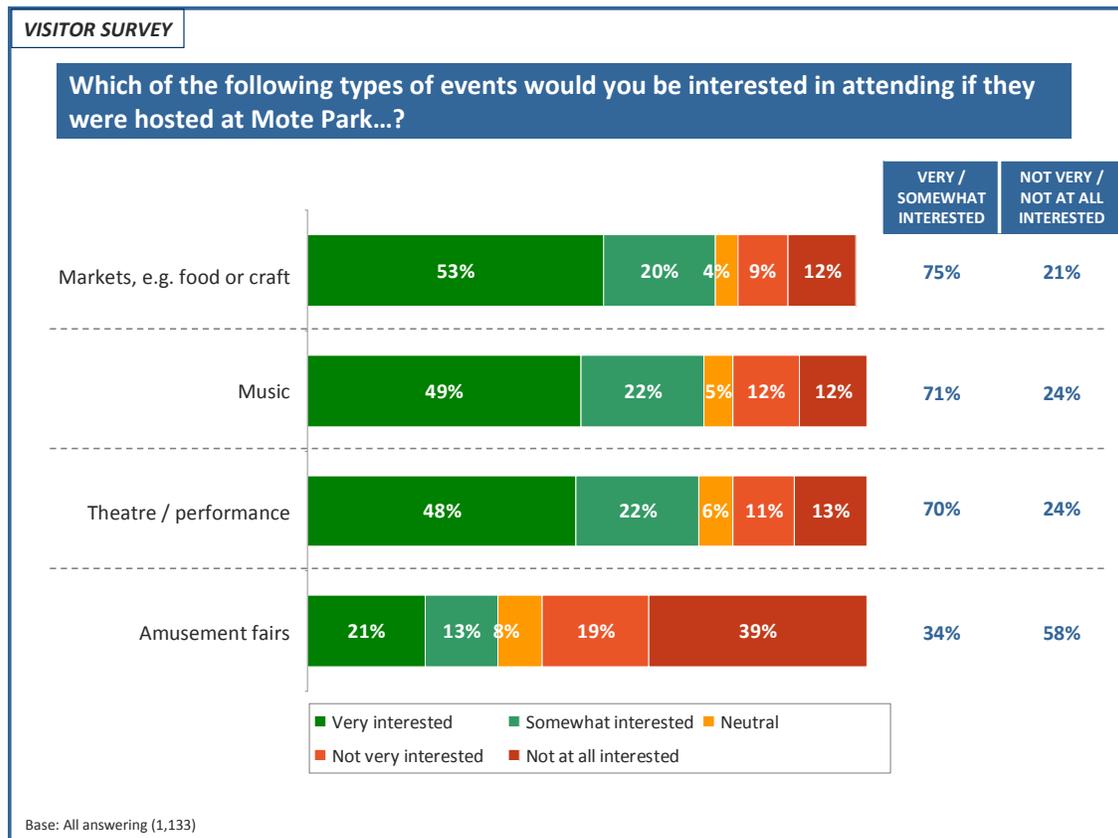


6.3 VISITOR SURVEY - NEW EVENTS

Visitors were asked their likely usage of four new events if they were introduced at Mote Park. Please note that no prices were mentioned so these are indicative usage figures only.

Markets, Music and Theatre performances appear popular with at least 7 in 10 indicating they would be very / somewhat interested in attending them if they were hosted at Mote Park (75%, 71% and 70% respectively).

There is less interest in amusement fairs with 34% very or somewhat interested and 58% not very or not at all interested.

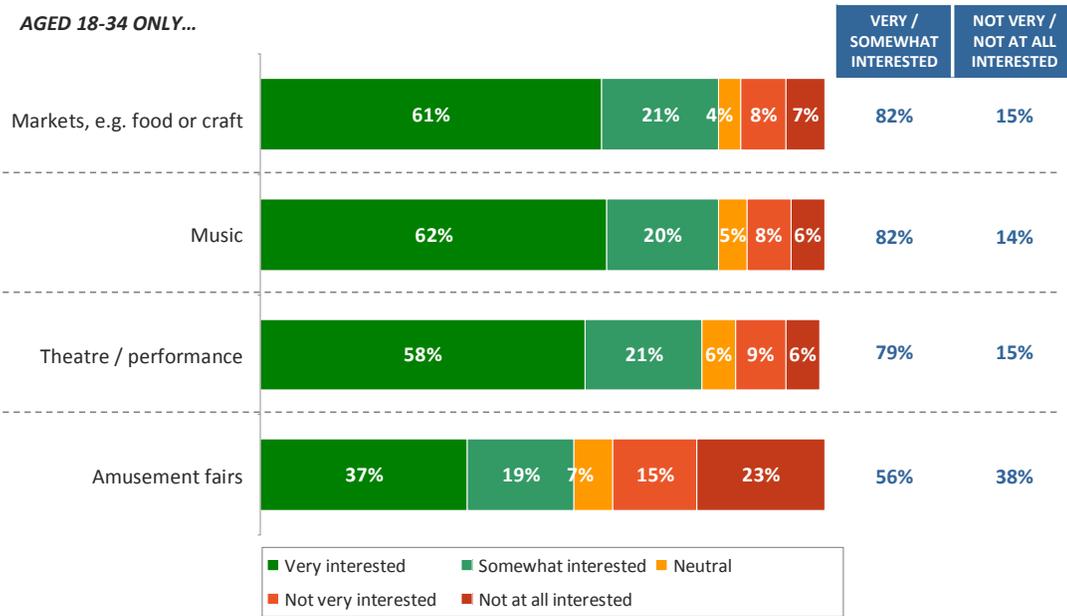


Interest in all the events is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old visitors:

- 82% very / somewhat interested in attending Market events
- 82% very / somewhat interested in attending Music events
- 79% very / somewhat interested in attending Theatre / performance events
- 56% very / somewhat interested in attending Amusement fairs

Which of the following types of events would you be interested in attending if they were hosted at Mote Park...?

AGED 18-34 ONLY...



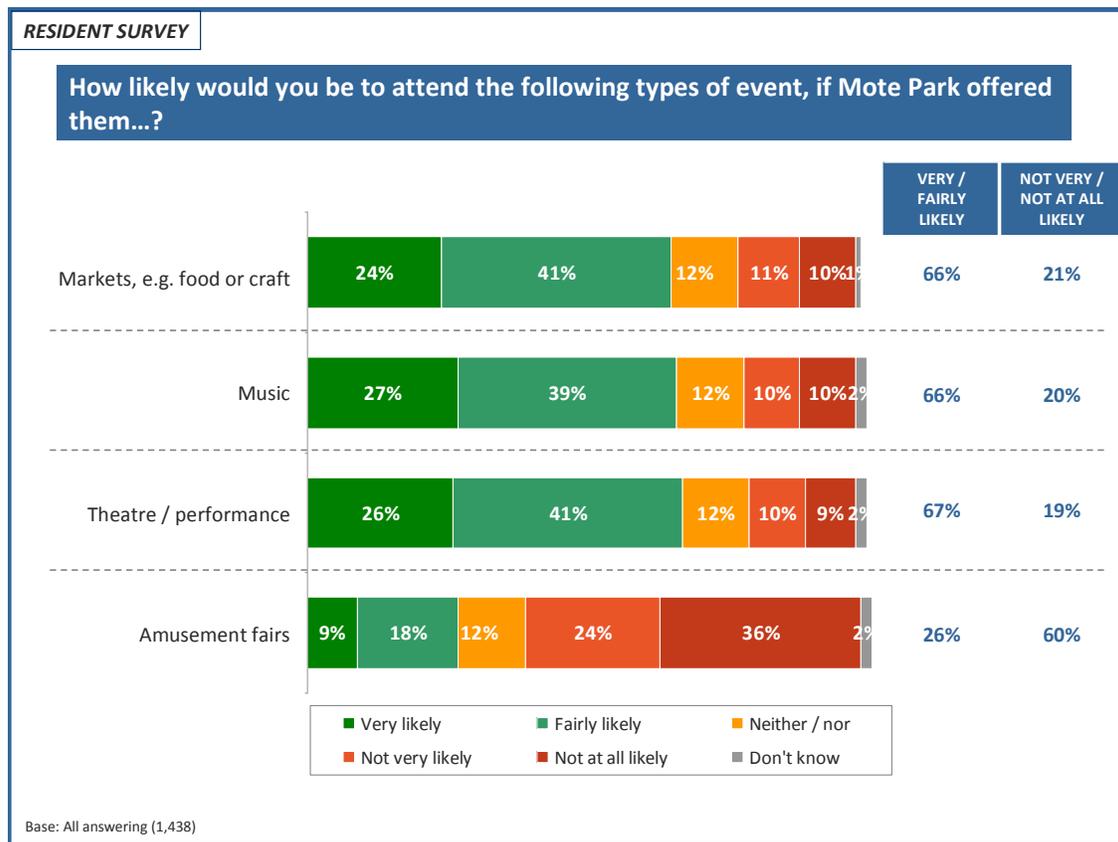
Base: All answering (323)

6.4 RESIDENT SURVEY - NEW EVENTS

Residents were asked their likely usage of four new events if they were introduced at Mote Park and they had to pay for them. Please note that no prices were mentioned so these are indicative usage figures only.

Consistent with the visitor survey, Markets, Music and Theatre performances appear popular with at least two thirds indicating they would be very / somewhat interested in attending them if they were hosted at Mote Park (66%, 66% and 67% respectively).

There is less interest in amusement fairs with 26% very or somewhat interested and 60% not very or not at all interested.



Consistent with the visitor survey, interest in all the events is particularly high amongst 18-34 year old residents:

- 71% very / somewhat interested in attending Market events
- 74% very / somewhat interested in attending Music events
- 62% very / somewhat interested in attending Theatre / performance events

- 43% very / somewhat interested in attending Amusement fairs

