



people spaces places

## Naturally Birmingham Future Parks Accelerator

### Volunteer Survey

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## 1 Introduction

In order to inform the Naturally Birmingham Future Parks Accelerator project to develop a new model for parks and green space in Birmingham, a volunteer survey was carried out. Birmingham City Council and its partners wished to learn more about the volunteer activity that was delivered in parks and green spaces across the city.

The survey was distributed to people currently engaged in volunteers activity, those that have volunteered in the past and people with an interest in parks and green spaces who have not volunteered their time before. Volunteering was defined as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit parks and green spaces and surrounding neighbourhoods.

The survey was developed by consultants CFP and available online between 19<sup>th</sup> August and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020. It was completed by 80 respondents.

## 2 Demographics

### 2.1 Respondent Profile

Respondents were asked how they identified. Of the 76 respondents who answered the question, the majority identified as female (59.2%). This is an overrepresentation compared with Birmingham overall, where there is a more or less even gender split (49.2% male: 50.8% female).

Respondents were asked if they considered themselves to have a disability or long-term illness. Of the 74 respondents who answered the question, ten said they did (13.5%). This is only a slightly smaller proportion compared with Birmingham City, where 18.4% of residents consider themselves to have a limiting long-term illness or disability which limits their day-to-day activities a little or a lot.

**Table 1** overleaf below shows the age profile of respondents compared with Birmingham City overall. Around a quarter of Birmingham residents (24.2%) are under the age of 16, however, no respondents were in this age category. While this indicates a significant underrepresentation, according to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, no persons under the age of 16 would have been surveyed without the consent of a responsible adult which may go some way to explain this.

Younger residents aged 17 to 34 were underrepresented with only six respondents (8.2%) within this age category compared with 28.9% of residents. This may indicate an underrepresentation in Birmingham volunteers or in survey respondents.

Over four fifths of respondents (83.6%) were aged between 35 and 69, substantially higher than the proportion within Birmingham (37.6%). There was a fair representation of respondents over the age of 70 (8.2%) compared with Birmingham overall (9.3%).

Age Group	Survey Respondents		Birmingham City
	n	%	%
16 or under	0	0.0	24.2
17-24	1	1.4	13.5
25-34	5	6.8	15.4
35-49	23	31.5	19.7
50-59	17	23.3	10.1
60-69	21	28.8	7.8
70-79	5	6.8	5.6
80 and over	1	1.4	3.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 1** Age profile

**Table 2** below shows the ethnic profile of respondents compared with Birmingham City. With 94.3% of respondents identifying as White, this is a vast overrepresentation compared with Birmingham City, where only 57.9% of residents are White. Only four respondents (5.7%) were BAME compared with two fifths of Birmingham residents (42.1%).

Ethnic Group	Survey Respondents		Birmingham City
	n	%	%
White	66	94.3	57.9
Asian or Asian British	3	4.3	26.6
Black or Black British	0	0.0	9.0
Other	1	1.4	6.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2** Ethnicity

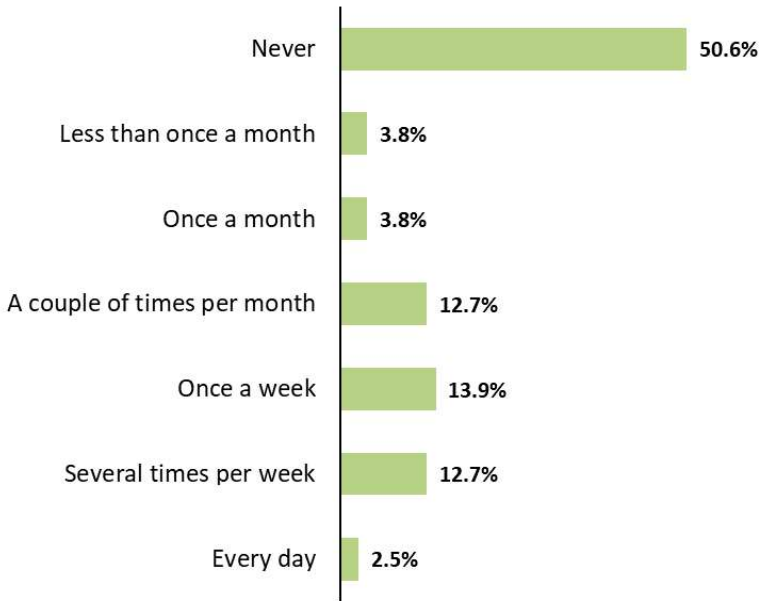
2.2 Respondent Locations

Respondents were asked to provide their postcodes to better understand where in Birmingham volunteers come from. In total, 61 respondents provided their postcodes which have been plotted and analysed, as shown in **Figure 1** overleaf. Only eight respondents (13.1%) lived outside of the City boundary. Wards with the most volunteers tended to be in the south of the City, with some also coming from the north west, patricianly from Sutton Four Oaks. Of the 69 wards, 40 did not have any volunteers residing in them. The majority of these were located towards the centre of the City.

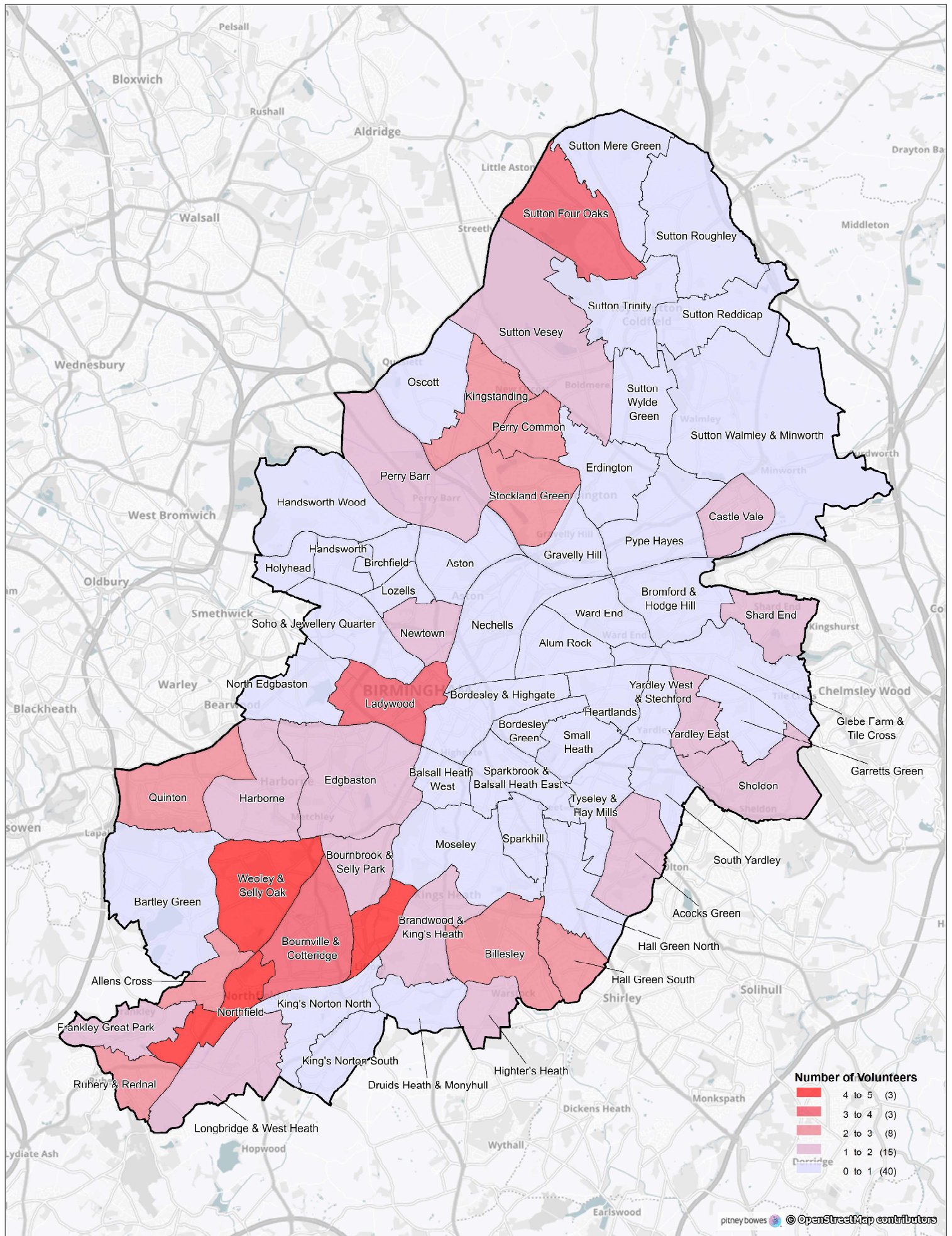
3 Data Analysis

3.1 Current Volunteer Activity

As shown in **Chart 1**, half of the volunteers who completed the survey (50.6%) had never volunteered for a park or green space. Almost a third (29.1%) volunteered at least weekly, while one in six (16.5%) volunteered in a park or green space at least monthly.



**Chart 1** How often do you volunteers or give up time for a parks or green space in Birmingham?



Birmingham Future Parks  
Accelerator

Figure 1  
Volunteer Locations

**LEGEND**

- Birmingham
- Ward Boundary

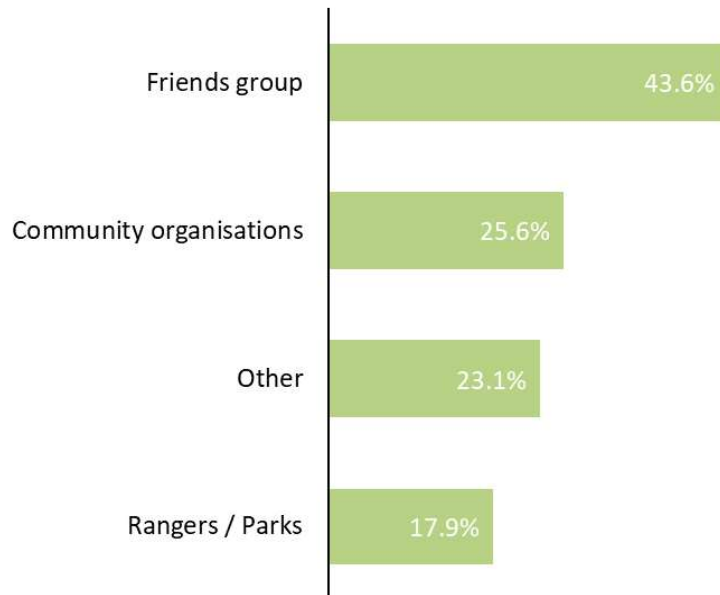
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The following questions were only completed by respondents who have volunteered or given up time for a park or green space.



**Chart 2** Who do you volunteer with?

Two thirds of respondents (43.6%) volunteered with Friends Groups (**Chart 2**). These included:

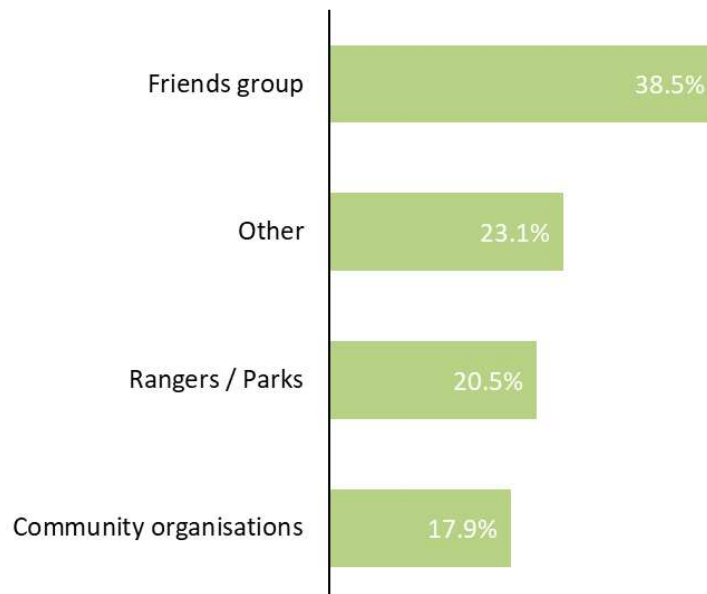
- Friends of Muntz Park
- Friends of Ley Hill park
- Friends of Manor Farm
- Friends of Sutton Park
- Friends of Witton Lakes
- Friends of Harborne Walkway/Nettlefold
- Waterside Care
- Witton Lodge Community Association
- Lickey Hills Society
- The Friends of Balaam's Wood LNR
- Friends of Senneleys Park

This was followed by community organisations (25.6%). These included:

- Stirchley Bloomers
- Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre
- Fruit and Nut Village
- Junk Food Project
- Erdington Litter Busters
- Habitat Heroes at The Lickey Hills
- Lickey Hills Country Park
- Moor Pool Heritage Trust
- Compass Support
- Friends of Manor Farm Park
- Rea Valley Conservation Group
- Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust



Respondents were asked which organisation they volunteered the most time with. With 38.5% of respondents, most volunteered most time with a Friends Group (**Chart 3**).

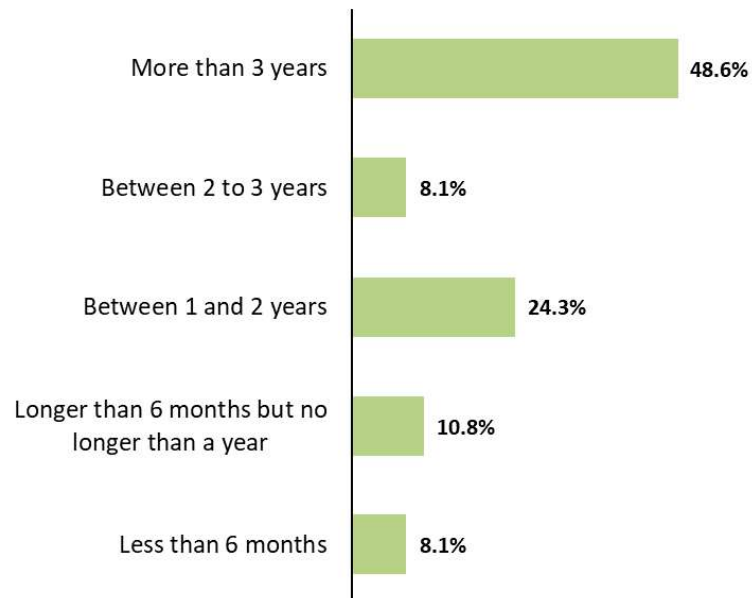


**Chart 3** Which organisation do you volunteer most time with?

- Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust
- Compass Support
- Erdington Litter Busters
- Friends of Manor Farm Park
- Friends of Muntz Park
- Friends of Senneleys Park
- Friends of Sutton Park
- Friends of Witton lakes
- Fruit & Nut Village
- Junk Food Project
- Habitat Heroes at Lickey Hills
- Ley Hill Park
- Lickey Hills Society
- Nettlefold Garden
- Ranger service
- RVCG
- Stirchley Bloomers
- The Friends of Balaam's Wood LNR
- Witton Lodge Community Association
- Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

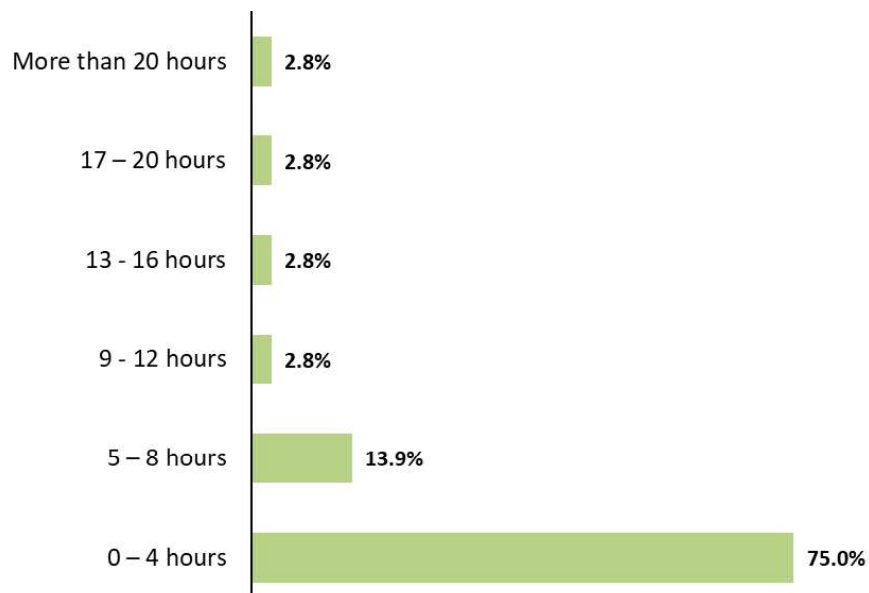


Respondents were asked how long they had volunteered with the group they volunteer the most time with. Over half of the volunteers (56.8%) said they had been with the group for more than two years, with a further quarter (24.3%) for at least a year.



**Chart 4** How long have you volunteered with the group you volunteered the most time with?

Three quarters of respondents said they typically volunteers for up to four hours a week with the group they volunteer the most time with (**Chart 5**). Just over a tenth (11.1%) volunteer for more than nine hours a week.



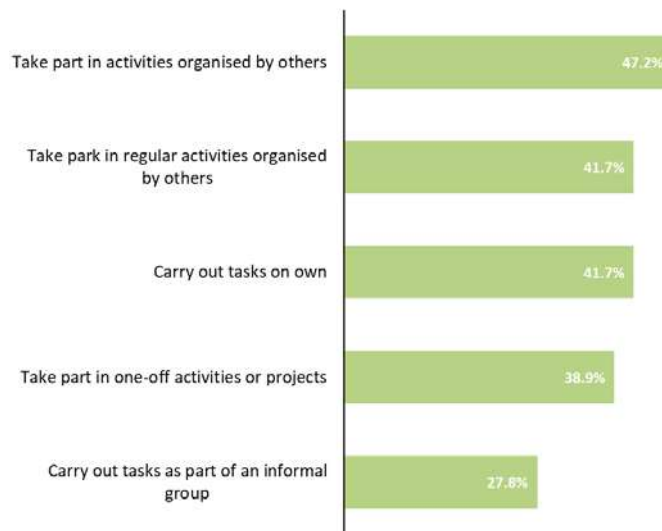
**Chart 5** How much time do you volunteer per week for the group you volunteer the most time with?

As shown in **Chart 6**, most popular volunteering activities were litter picking (73.0%), practical conservation work (64.9%), monitoring the park condition (45.9%) and discussing park management (40.5%). Under other, respondents said they helped with gardening and woodland management, web development, running activities and unlocking and locking the gardens where they volunteer.



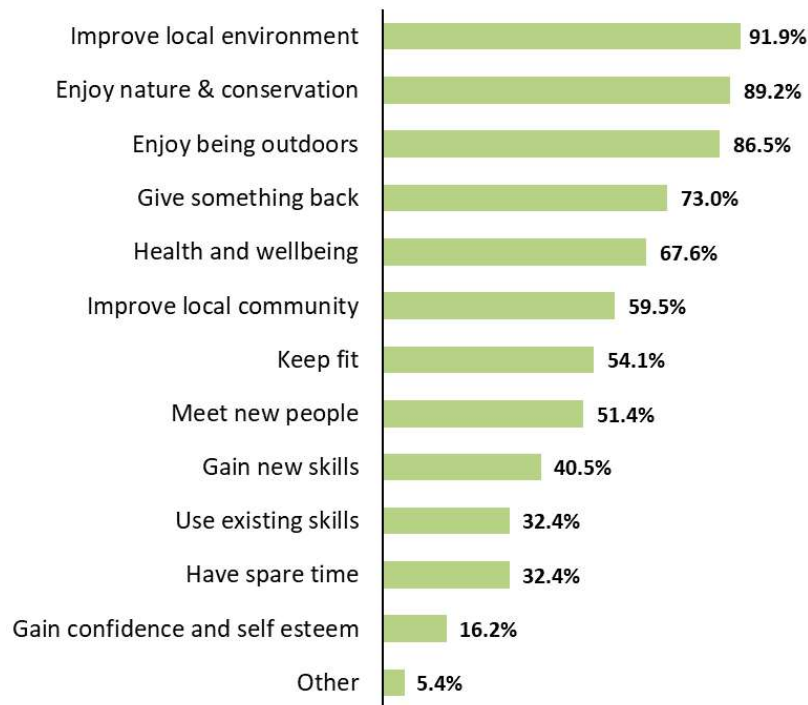
**Chart 6** What type of volunteer activities do you participate in?

Respondents were asked about how they normally volunteered. Around two fifths (42.5%) of respondents said they tended to take part in volunteer in activities organised by others, while 37.5% carry out tasks on their own or take part in regular activities organised by others. A quarter (25.0%) said they carried out tasks as part of an informal group (**Chart 7**).



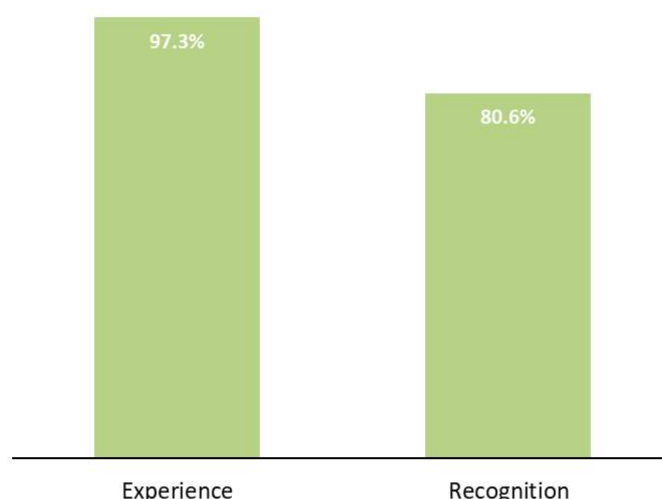
**Chart 7** When you volunteers do you tend to...

With around nine in ten respondents, the most popular reasons for volunteering time were to improve the local environment (91.9%) and enjoying nature & conservation (89.2%) as well as enjoying being outdoors (86.5%). Almost three quarters said they volunteered to give something back (73.0%) while other popular reasons included keeping fit (51.4%) and improving health and wellbeing (67.6%). Gaining confidence and self-esteem was the least popular reason (16.2%). Under other, one respondent said they volunteered to increase biodiversity and negate climate change.



**Chart 8** Why do you volunteers your time?

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their experience as a volunteer and the level of recognition they received. **Chart 9** below shows the proportions of respondents who said they were satisfied or very satisfied. The vast majority (97.3%) of respondents reported being satisfied with their experience as a volunteer, while four fifths (80.6%) were satisfied with the level of recognition they received. Notably nine (25.0%) said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the level of recognition.



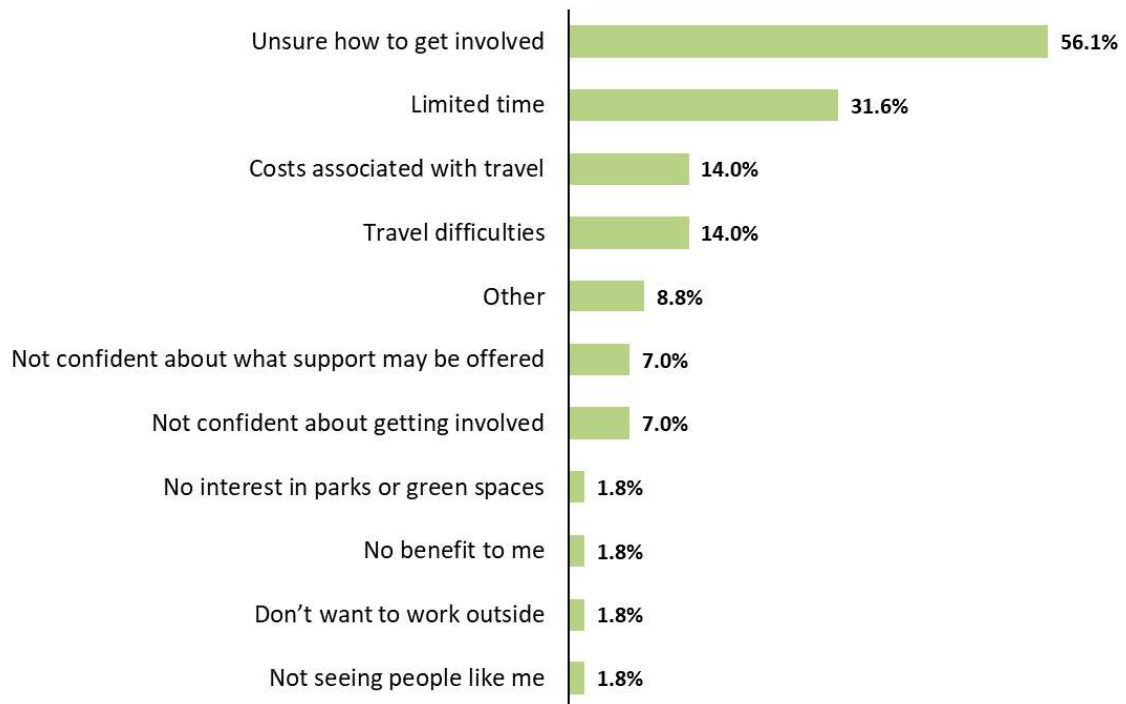
**Chart 9** Level of satisfaction

Respondents were asked whether they had any comments about their experiences as a volunteer. 14 respondents answered this question. Some respondents added that they found volunteering very satisfying, commenting that it was “fun” and offered a sense of ownership and community. Other benefits included learning about flora and fauna, learning new skills and getting exercise, as well as making new friends in the area and improving their mental health.

Volunteers from the Lickey Hills Friends Group especially said the Ranger they had worked with were excellent, particularly the leader who had provided “strong but friendly team leadership”. Another respondent added that they had worked closely with them and helped supported a number of events. However, respondents commented they had begun to receive less support from the Ranger Service and seen fewer Rangers on site, noting the service was short staffed. There was a concern that, with fewer staff members, volunteers would be less and less supported. Another added that volunteers could work to make up this shortfall.

One respondent added that it would be good to have more awareness of volunteering as there is a misconception that they work for the Council, which can be a barrier to gaining additional support.

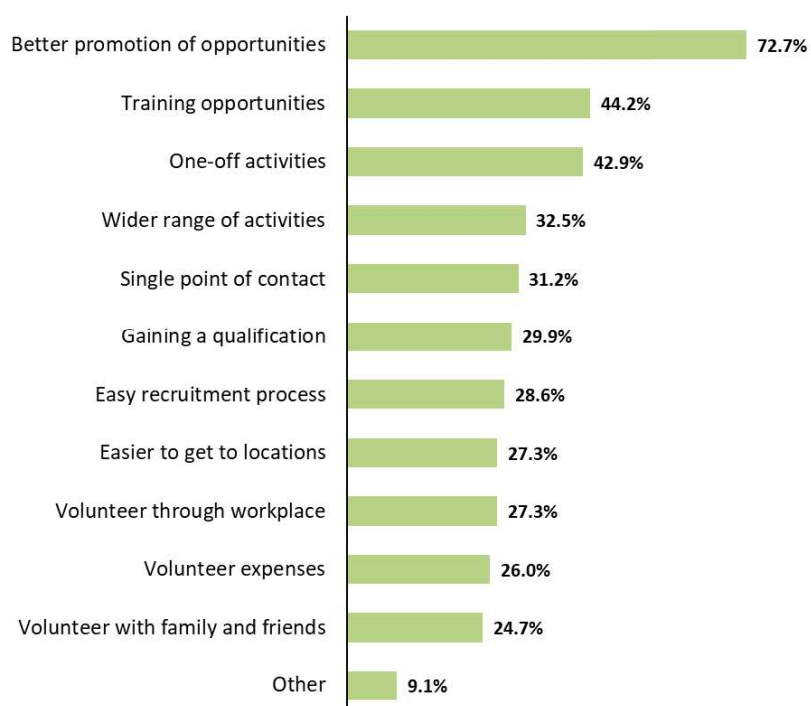
All 80 respondents were asked if there was anything that limited their willingness or ability to volunteer in parks and green spaces in Birmingham or that prevented greater participation. As shown in **Chart 10** below, the most common reason, with over half of respondents (56.1%) was being unsure about how to get involved. Under other, respondents cited issues with their health and “problems with storing and transporting equipment. This is very difficult if you do not have a car”.



**Chart 10** Is there anything that limits your willingness or ability to volunteer in parks and green spaces in Birmingham or that prevents greater participation?

### 3.2 The Future

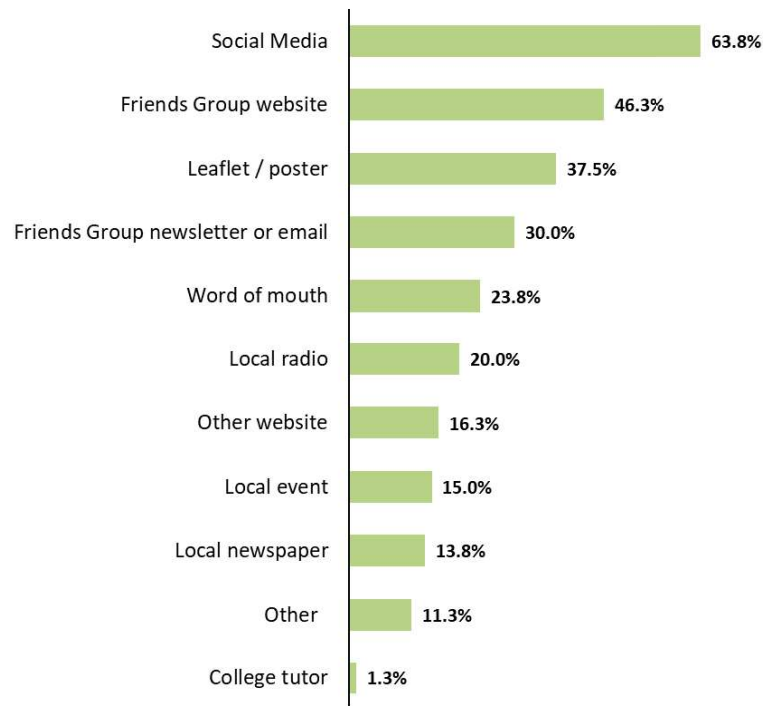
When asked how volunteering in parks and green spaces could be improved, the majority (72.7%) said better promotion of opportunities (**Chart 11**). Providing training opportunities (44.2%) and one-off activities (42.9%) were also popular suggestions. Under other, respondents suggested the timing of events, getting JSA to volunteer as part of being paid or getting more Council officials interested.



**Chart 11** How could volunteering in parks and green spaces in Birmingham be improved for the future?

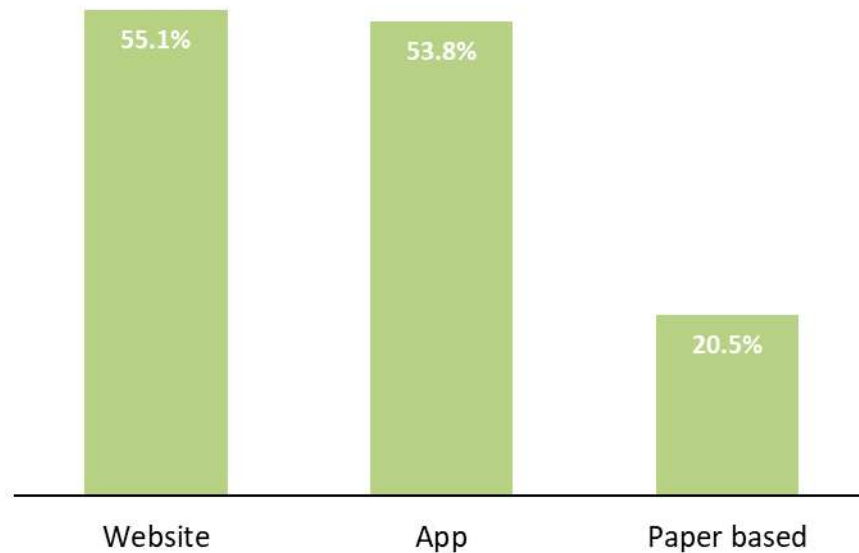


The majority of respondents (63.8%) said they preferred to find out about volunteer activities via social media. At a local event (15.0%) or through the local newspaper (13.8%) and through a college tutor (1.3%) were the least popular method of communication (**Chart 12**). Under other, respondents said they preferred email or alerts to their phone.



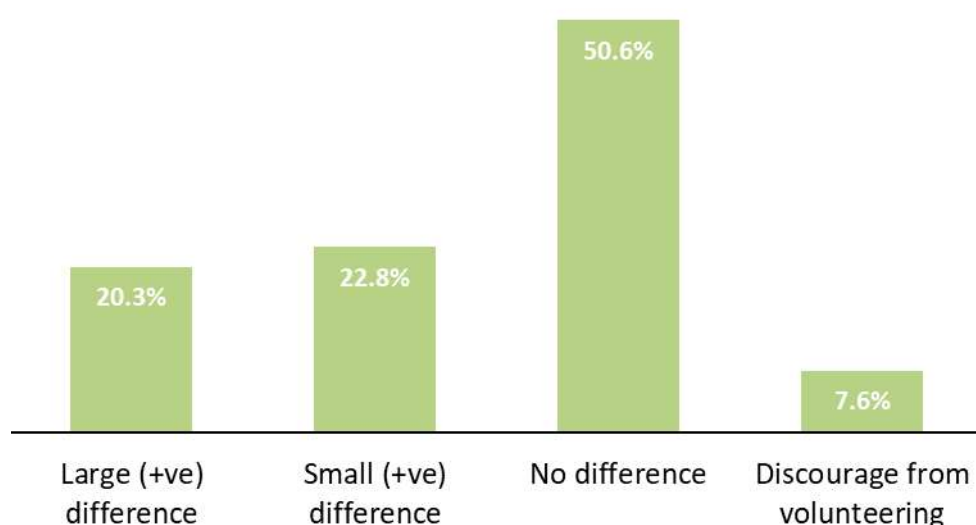
**Chart 12** How would you prefer to be contacted about volunteers activities in parks and green spaces?

Respondents were informed that Birmingham City Council wished to develop a better system for recording the hours contributed by individuals and groups so their work could be better recognised and used to support future campaigns to encourage greater participation. Respondents were asked how willing they would be to log their volunteer activities and their preferred way of logging hours. Six respondents (7.7%) commented they would not be willing to do this, while another six respondents commented that they already logged their volunteer hours with their Friends Group or the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum. As shown in **Chart 13**, using a website or smartphone app were the most popular ways of recording hours selected by those who would be willing to log their volunteer activities.



**Chart 13** How willing would you be to log your volunteer activities?

Respondents were asked if they thought a volunteer registration and reward scheme would encourage them to volunteer more frequently or take part in future activities. Around two fifths (43.1%) of respondents agreed it would make a difference (**Chart 14**). Of these, 20.3% though it would make a big positive difference and 22.8% a small positive difference. However, half of respondents through it would make no difference, while six (7.6%) said it would discourage them from volunteering.



**Chart 14** Would a volunteer registration and reward scheme using a smartphone app or online tool that allowed you to collect points for each activity you participant in encourage you to volunteer more frequently or take part in future activities?

Respondents were also asked if they would like to be added to the database of volunteers. In total, 46.8% of the 80 volunteers who completed the survey said they would and provided their name and email address.

## 4 Summary

- The survey was completed by a total of 80 respondents.
- The majority of respondents identified as female, were White and aged between 35 and 69. 13.5% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability or long-term illness.
- The majority of volunteers lived in the south and north west of the City.
- Around half of the respondents had volunteered at least once a month for a park or green space. Almost a third of respondents volunteered at least weekly in a park or green space.
- Friends Groups were the most popular way to volunteer in a park or green space and the organisation most had volunteered the most time with.
- Many of the respondents had been volunteering for a long time; almost half of the volunteers who had helped out in parks or green spaces had been volunteering for more than three years.
- Three quarters of respondents typically volunteered for up to four hours a week.
- The most popular volunteer activities tended to be practical. Most said they litter picked, carried out practical conservation work or monitored park condition. Discussing park management was also a popular volunteer activity.
- Respondents said they volunteered in a variety of ways. Almost half took part in activities organised by others but many also took part in regular activities organised by others, one-Off activities or carried out tasks on their own.
- Improving the local environment and giving something back, as well as enjoying being outdoors, and nature were the most popular reasons for volunteering. Although still popular, gaining new skills and meeting new people were less important to many volunteers, while gaining confidence and self-esteem was the least popular reason.
- The majority of respondents were satisfied with their experiences as a volunteer and the level of recognition they received.
- Several respondents were very positive about their experiences, however, reduced support from the Ranger Service was noted.
- By far the most common barrier to volunteering in parks and green spaces was uncertainty about how to get involved. This reflects a comment by a volunteer who said there was often a misconception that volunteers worked for the Council, which acted as a barrier to additional support.
- Moreover, the majority of respondents considered that volunteering in parks and green spaces could be improved by providing better promotion of opportunities.
- Social media is the most popular way to find out about volunteering opportunities.
- The majority of respondents indicated they would be happy to record their volunteer activities, preferably using a website or smartphone app.

- Around two fifths of respondents thought a volunteer registration and reward scheme would make a positive difference, encouraging them to volunteer more frequently or take part in future activities. A minority felt this would discourage them from volunteering.