

## Appendix 1

<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet/Commissioner Decision Making Meeting
<b>Date:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2018
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Allotments Self-management</b>
<b>Ward</b>	All

### ALLOTMENT PLOT-HOLDER SURVEY FINDINGS

#### 1. Background

- As part of a review of the allotment service provided by the Council's Culture, Sport and Tourism Service, a questionnaire was supplied to gardeners on sites managed directly to the Council, and also those on sites leased by the Council to allotment societies.
- The purpose of the consultation has been to gather basic information about allotment users, and to understand their views on a range of issues including allotment rents, strengths and weaknesses of current service arrangements, and possible interest in having a greater involvement in the running of allotments.
- The survey was distributed, by post, directly to plot-holders on directly-managed sites during the week beginning 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Distribution to users of society sites was co-ordinated by Rotherham and District Allotment Association who forwarded sufficient copies to each society secretary for every plot-holder to receive one.
- A total of 1,077 questionnaires were issued.

#### 2. Return Rate

- The overall number of questionnaires returned was 282, or 26.2% of the 1077 total sent out.
- This gives a margin of error of +/- 5.02% at a 95% confidence level (<https://www.snapsurveys.com/support/calculators/margin-error-calculator/>) suggesting that the results of the survey are likely to reflect the views of allotment users generally.
- The return rate from tenants on directly managed sites was better, at 34.1%, than the rate from plot-holders on society sites (19.4%).
- Additionally, 29 (or 10.3%) questionnaires did not make it clear which site the respondent had an allotment on.
- Return rates for individual sites varied widely, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Allotment Survey Return Rates by Site

<b>Council-managed</b>	Number Sent	Number Returned	Percentage return rate
Avenue Road	48	14	29.2%
High Street	27	12	44.4%
Highfield Road	5	4	80.0%
Lowfield Avenue	6	2	33.3%
Moor Road	16	5	31.3%
Psalters Lane	5	1	20.0%
Rectory Fields	44	13	29.5%
Rosehill Park	24	9	37.5%
Vicarage Fields	43	19	44.2%
St Leonards Road	10	1	10.0%
Barnsley Rd/Wetmoor Lane	71	22	31.0%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>34.1%</b>
<b> </b>			
<b>Allotment society-managed</b>	Number Sent	Number Returned	Percentage return rate
Kimberworth Park	28	4	14.3%
Broom Allotments	69	11	15.9%
Broom Valley Old	67	5	7.5%
Clifton Garden Society	130	32	24.6%
Clough Bank	66	3	4.5%
Hartley Lane	83	27	32.5%
Herringthorpe Valley Rd	36	5	13.9%
South St	30	7	23.3%
Wharf Road	30	10	33.3%
Wood Street	33	0	0.0%
Sandymount Road	30	5	16.7%
Scrooby *	80	17	21.3%
Queen St. North	54	8	14.8%
Queen St South	42	17	40.5%
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>19.4%</b>
Site not stated		29	
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>1077</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>26.2%</b>

\*Note that since the survey took place, the Allotments Society at Scrooby has disbanded, and the site has reverted to direct Council management.

### 3. Analysis of Responses

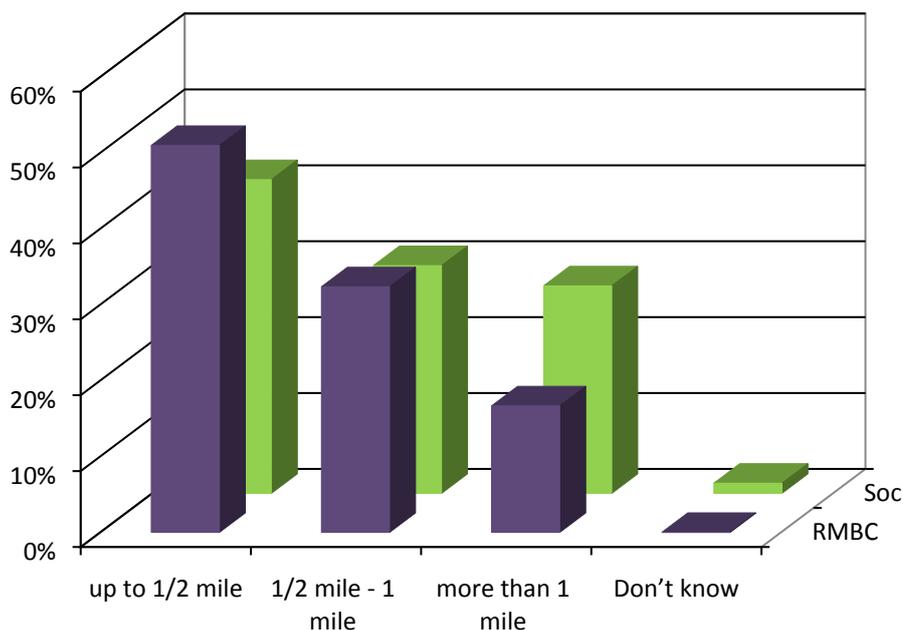
A summary of responses to each question, broken down into directly-managed and society sites is given in following sections. In most cases, percentage scores for different answers are shown graphically to allow quick comparison of directly-managed and society sites.

#### 3.1 Which allotment site do you have a plot on?

Responses to this question are shown in Table 1, and discussed in section 2 above.

#### 3.2 How far is your allotment from your home?

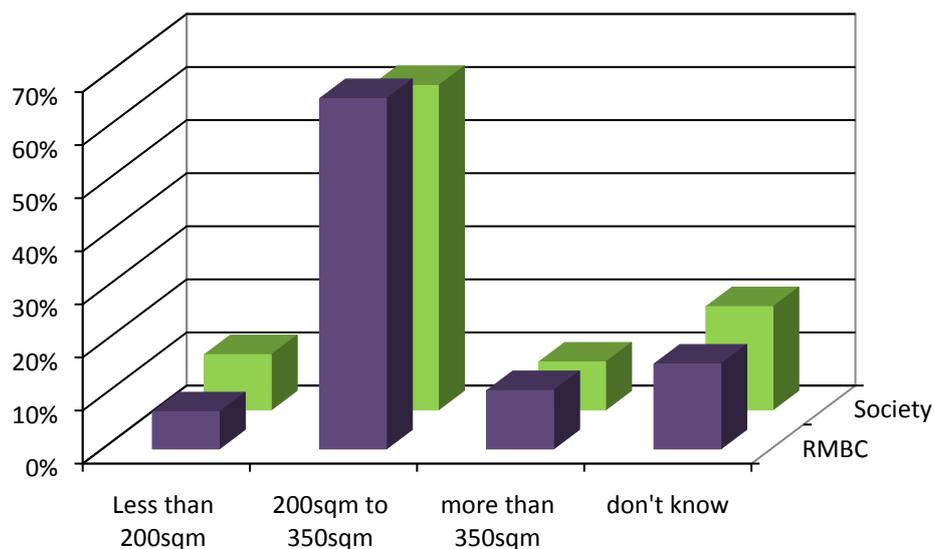
	RMBC	Society	Total
up to 1/2 mile	52	62	114
1/2 mile - 1 mile	33	45	78
more than 1 mile	17	41	58
Don't know	0	2	2
Total	102	150	252



A larger proportion of respondents at society sites live more than a mile from their allotment plots, whilst those at directly managed sites tend to live closer to their plots.

### 3.3 What size is your allotment plot?

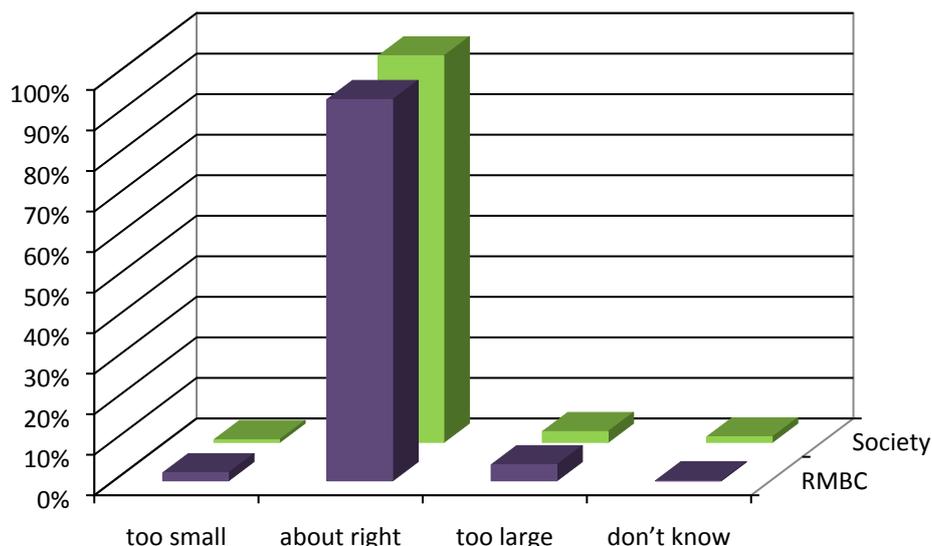
	RMBC	Society	Total
Less than 200sqm	7	15	22
200sqm to 350sqm	66	88	154
more than 350sqm	11	13	24
don't know	16	28	44
Total	100	144	244



A large majority of respondents at both society and directly-managed sites still have a 'traditional' sized plot.

### 3.4 Is your allotment plot the right size?

	RMBC	Society	Total
too small	2	1	3
about right	95	143	238
too large	4	4	8
don't know	0	2	2
Total	101	150	251

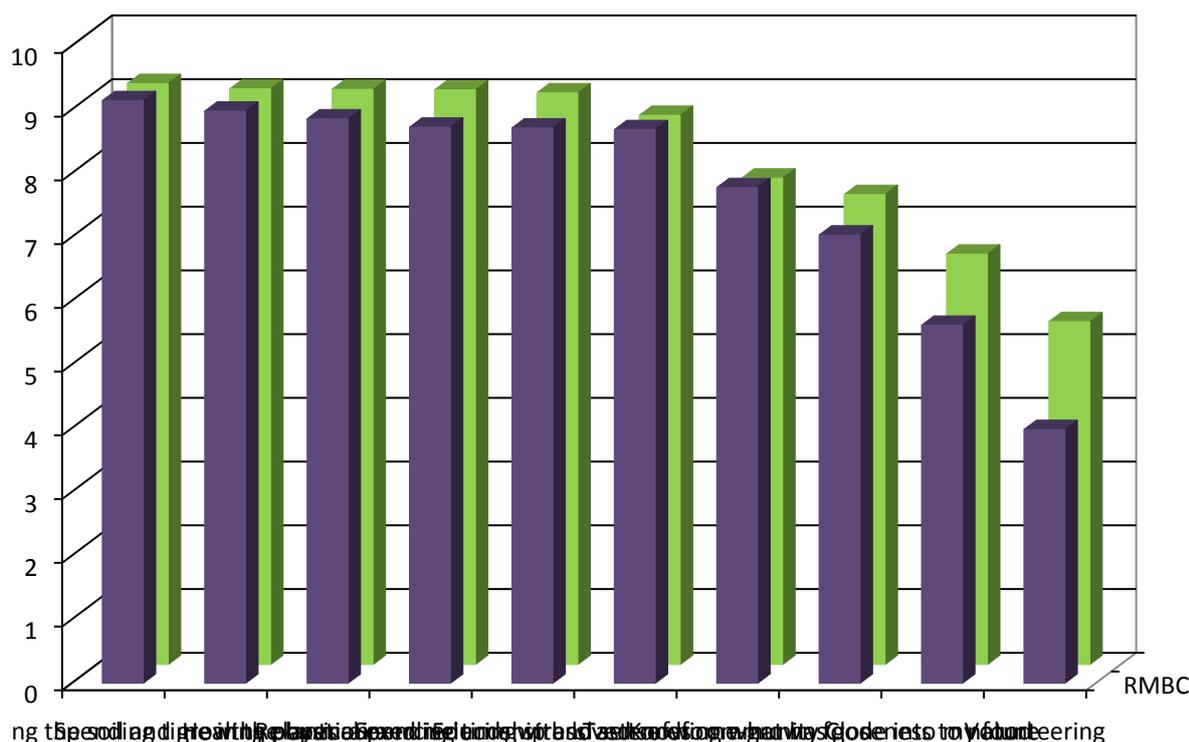


Respondents are almost all happy with the size of their current plots which, as noted above, are mostly traditional full-size plots. However, concerns have been expressed in recent years that the cost and amount of work involved in keeping a plot of this size might put some people off, and therefore it is possible that the views of current allotment users do not reflect the views of non-users who might consider taking on a smaller plot if more were available.

**3.5 How important to you are the following possible benefits of having an allotment?**

Possible responses to this question are ‘Very Important’, ‘Important’, ‘Slightly Important’, ‘Not at all Important’ and ‘Don’t know’. Average numeric scores were calculated using the methodology shown in section 5 below. Thus, a higher numeric score indicates that more people viewed the benefit as being more important.

	RMBC	Society
Enjoy tending the soil and growing plants	9.14	9.12
Spending time in the open-air	8.98	9.03
Healthy physical exercise	8.86	9.02
Relaxation and reducing stress	8.73	9.02
Spending time with loved-ones	8.71	8.97
Friendship and sense of community	8.69	8.62
Taste of home-grown food	7.78	7.63
Knowing what has gone into my food	7.03	7.37
Closeness to nature	5.62	6.44
Volunteering	3.98	5.38



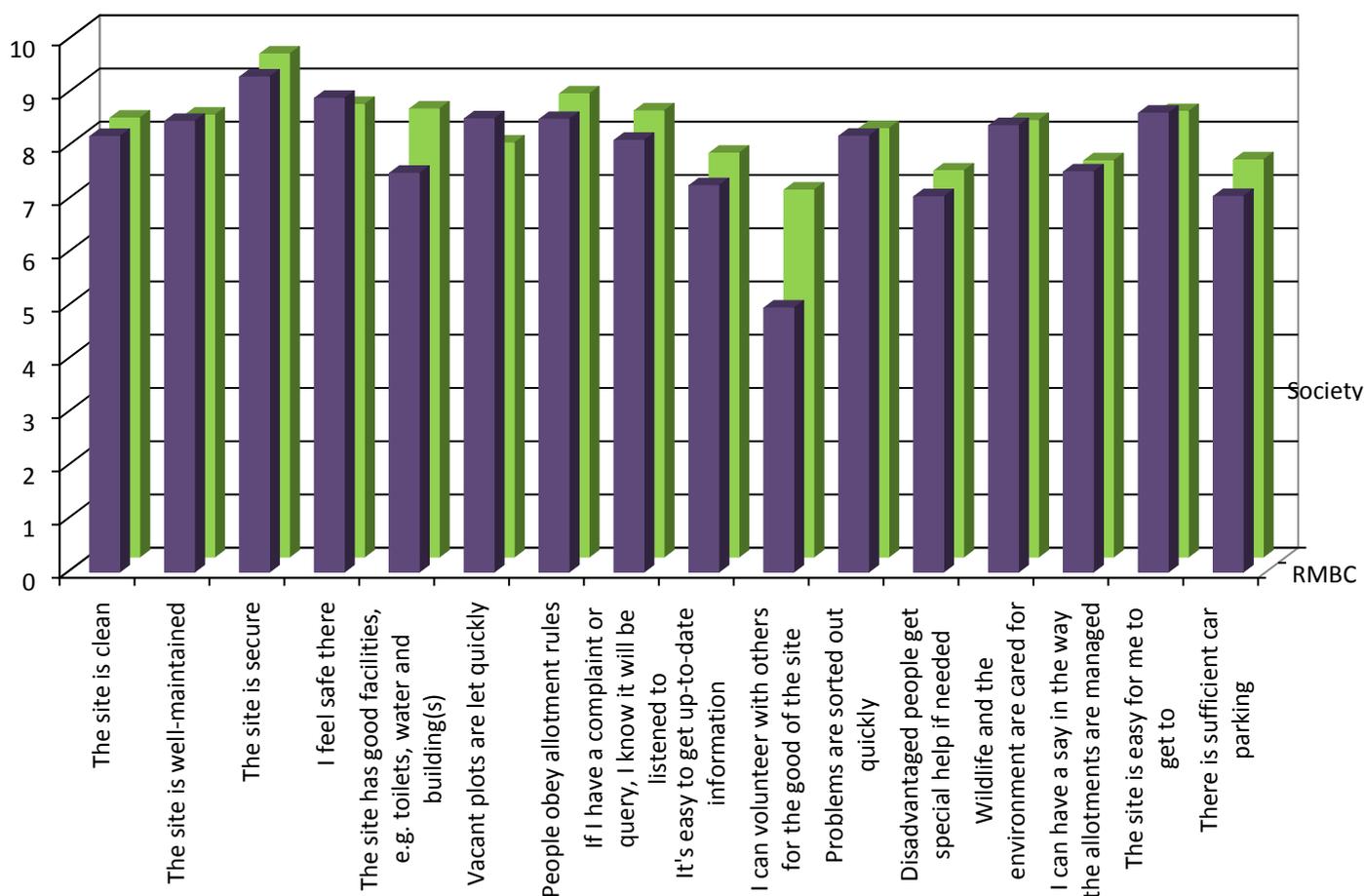
Responses from people on directly-managed sites and society sites were very similar, with ‘enjoying tending the soil and growing plants’, ‘spending time in the open-air’, ‘healthy physical exercise’, ‘relaxation and reducing stress’, ‘spending time with loved-ones’ and ‘friendship and sense of community’ being the main reasons people enjoy the activity. ‘Taste of home-grown food’ and ‘knowing what has gone into my food’ are slightly less important, followed by ‘closeness to nature’. ‘Volunteering’ was seen as the least important aspect of allotment gardening for respondents from both directly-managed and society sites.

### 3.6 Thinking about the way the allotments are managed, how important are the following things to you?

As in the previous question, possible responses are ‘Very Important’, ‘Important’, ‘Slightly Important’, ‘Not at all Important’ and ‘Don’t know’. A similar numeric analysis has been performed to give the scores shown below.

	RMBC	Society
The site is clean	8.18	8.24
The site is well-maintained	8.47	8.30
The site is secure	9.30	9.45
I feel safe there	8.90	8.50
The site has good facilities, e.g. toilets, water and building(s)	7.49	8.42
Vacant plots are let quickly	8.51	7.78

	RMBC	Society
People obey allotment rules	8.50	8.70
If I have a complaint or query, I know it will be listened to	8.11	8.38
It's easy to get up-to-date information	7.26	7.58
I can volunteer with others for the good of the site	4.96	6.89
Problems are sorted out quickly	8.19	8.05
Disadvantaged people get special help if needed	7.05	7.25
Wildlife and the environment are cared for	8.39	8.20
I can have a say in the way the allotments are managed	7.52	7.44
The site is easy for me to get to	8.62	8.37
There is sufficient car parking	7.06	7.46

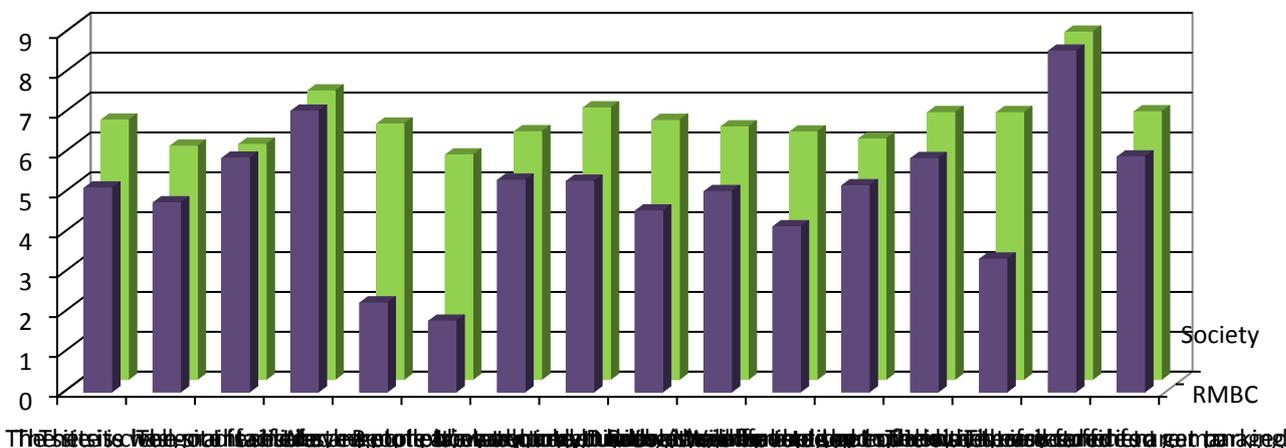


Site security is seen as the most important aspect of allotment management on both society sites and those managed directly by the Council, while 'I can volunteer with others for the good of the site' is the least important for both, although respondents from directly managed sites scored this significantly lower than those from society sites. A higher proportion of society plot-holders viewed having good facilities as important, while a higher proportion of people on directly-managed sites see letting vacant plots quickly as important. Otherwise, both sets of respondents have broadly similar views about the importance of the listed factors.

### 3.7 How good do you think the same things are now where you have an allotment?

The format of this question, and analysis of answers, is similar to 3.6.

	RMBC	Society
The site is clean	5.12	6.51
The site is well-maintained	4.75	5.85
The site is secure	5.87	5.90
I feel safe there	7.04	7.24
The site has good facilities, e.g. toilets, water and building(s)	2.23	6.40
Vacant plots are let quickly	1.78	5.63
People obey allotment rules	5.31	6.21
If I have a complaint or query, I know it will be listened to	5.29	6.81
It's easy to get up-to-date information	4.54	6.50
I can volunteer with others for the good of the site	5.03	6.34
Problems are sorted out quickly	4.15	6.21
Disadvantaged people get special help if needed	5.18	6.04
Wildlife and the environment are cared for	5.86	6.69
I can have a say in the way the allotments are managed	3.33	6.69
The site is easy for me to get to	8.55	8.71
There is sufficient car parking	5.90	6.71



Respondents from society-run sites scored all aspects of management higher than those on directly-managed sites. The areas where the difference is greatest are as follows:-

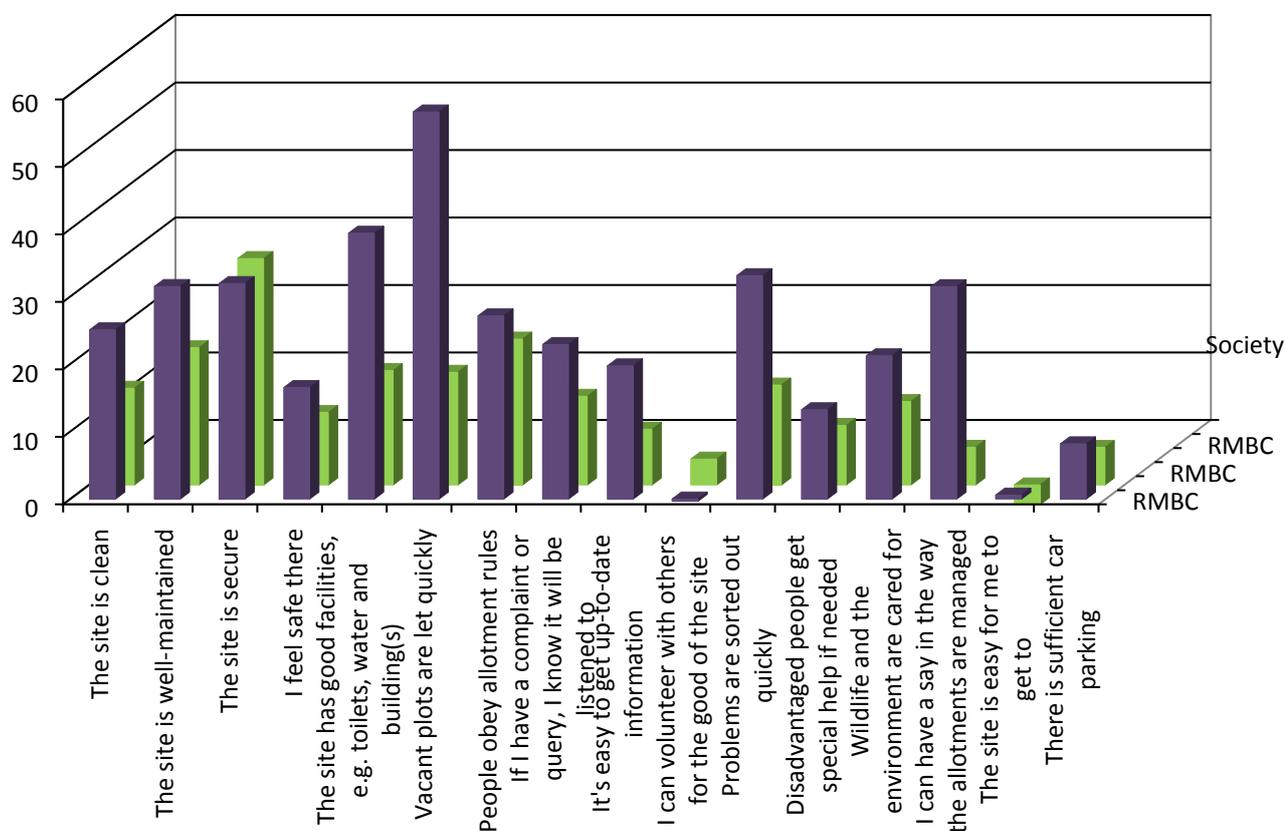
- The site has good facilities. This is unsurprising as societies have tended to become established on larger, better equipped sites. The Council has very limited resources to undertake significant improvements to sites under direct management.
- Vacant plots are let quickly. This is believed to reflect both the large total number of plots the Council's allotments team is responsible for letting, and also recent staffing issues within the same team. The absence of an Allotments Operative has delayed preparation of vacant plots for letting, and the Allotments Officer is able to spend less time processing plot lettings than previously due to having to take on a wider range of duties. By contrast, society officials are able to focus their efforts on letting plots just on their own site.
- I can have a say in the way allotments are managed. This is as expected, since allotment societies exist to represent their members. The Council's allotments team is not resourced to facilitate a similar level of tenant involvement.
- Problems are sorted out quickly. Again, the relatively poor score for directly-managed sites is believed to be due to difficulties the Council allotments team is having responding to issues across all its sites, which is compounded by current staffing pressures. By contrast, allotment societies are well placed to address issues as their committee members are routinely on site and therefore become aware of problems quickly and are well-placed to find solutions.
- If I have a complaint or query I know it will be listened to. This is very similar to the previous point, and the reasons for the difference in performance between directly-managed and society sites are likely to be the same.
- It's easy to get up-to-date information. This suggests that allotment societies do a good job of communicating with their members.

### 3.7.1 Priority for action

Scores for importance and current performance need to be considered together to identify which aspects of site management are most in need of improvement. For example, a factor that people think is performing weakly but which is also viewed as relatively unimportant is not as much of a priority as one that is performing weakly and is also viewed as important.

A numeric value has been calculated using the methodology shown in section 6 below to indicate how much of a priority each factor is.. The greater the score, the higher the priority for action is, as shown below.

	RMBC	Society
The site is clean	25.07	14.32
The site is well-maintained	31.49	20.32
The site is secure	31.93	33.55
I feel safe there	16.51	10.73
The site has good facilities, e.g. toilets, water and building(s)	39.38	16.94
Vacant plots are let quickly	57.36	16.70
People obey allotment rules	27.13	21.61
If I have a complaint or query, I know it will be listened to	22.89	13.14
It's easy to get up-to-date information	19.73	8.24
I can volunteer with others for the good of the site	-0.33	3.83
Problems are sorted out quickly	33.10	14.80
Disadvantaged people get special help if needed	13.23	8.82
Wildlife and the environment are cared for	21.22	12.35
I can have a say in the way the allotments are managed	31.47	5.57
The site is easy for me to get to	0.58	-2.89
There is sufficient car parking	8.18	5.55



A larger number of issues are seen as priorities for action on directly-managed sites than on society sites. Generally, it is believed that this is due

to lack of capital investment in directly-managed sites, difficulties addressing site and tenant issues which are exacerbated by current staffing pressures, and the fact that allotment societies are better placed than a centralised service to focus on the specific needs of their particular site and plot-holders. Issues with a 'priority for action' score of 30 or more are highlighted below.

#### Directly Managed Sites

- Vacant plots are let quickly.
- The site has good facilities
- Problems are sorted out quickly
- The site is secure
- The site is well-maintained
- I can have a say in the way the site is managed
- People obey allotment rules
- The site is clean
- If I have a complaint or query, I know it will be listened to
- Wildlife and the environment are cared for

#### Society Sites

- The site is secure
- People obey allotment rules
- The site is well-maintained.

This suggests that self-management of sites by societies allows a higher quality service to be provided to plot-holders than is possible on directly-managed sites with the resources that the Council currently allocates to the service. However, such comparison also needs to take into account that many of the sites still managed directly by the Council are small and have intrinsic problems that would make them difficult subjects for self-management.

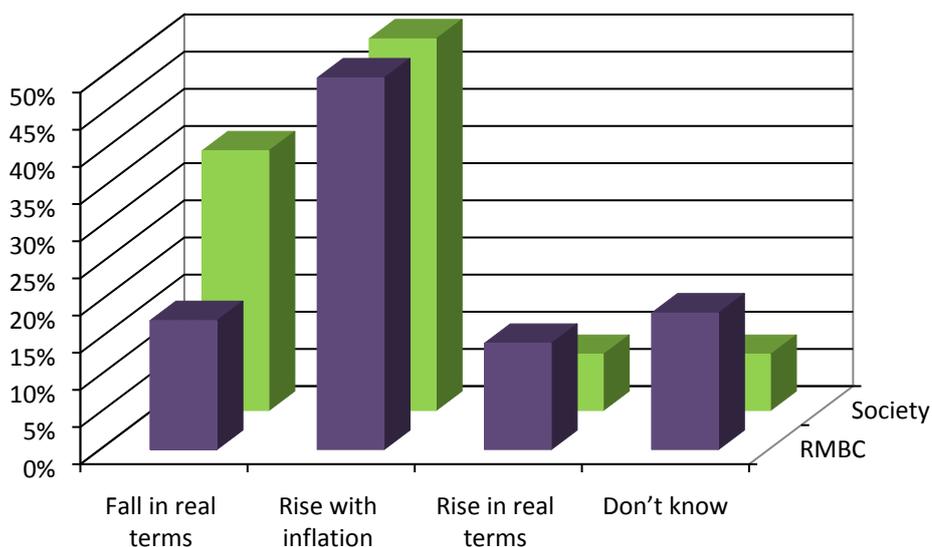
### **3.8 Allotment Rents**

The questionnaire explained the reasons for recent increases in allotment rents, and asked respondents whether they thought rents should in future:

- fall in real terms, with services being reduced, or undertaken by volunteers, to achieve the necessary savings
- rise in line with inflation, to allow current levels of service to be maintained, or
- increase in real terms (i.e. faster than inflation) to pay for improvements in allotment provision

Responses were as shown below.

	RMBC	Society	Total
Fall in real terms	17	51	68
Rise with inflation	49	73	122
Rise in real terms	14	11	25
Don't know	18	11	29
Total	98	146	244

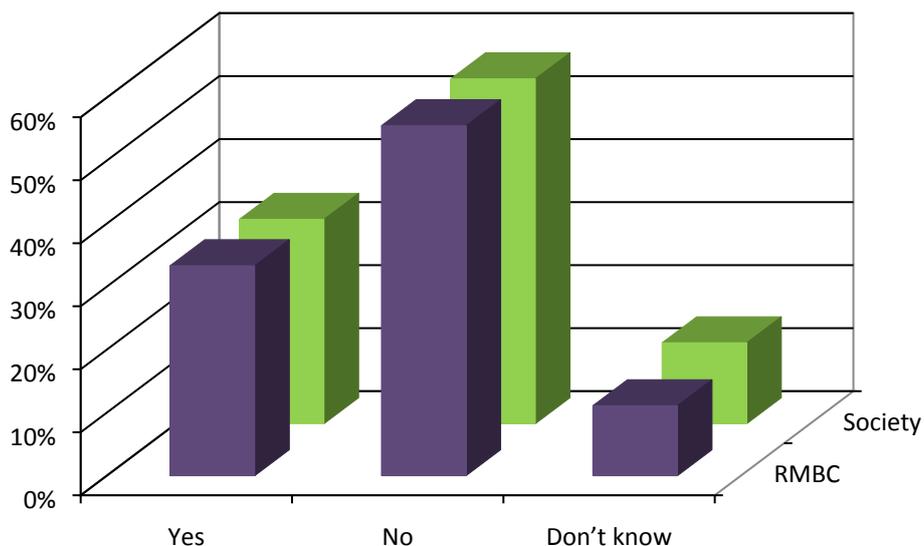


Around half of all respondents think that rents should continue to rise in line with inflation to allow the current level of service to be maintained. A significant minority of people on society sites (around 35%) believe that rents should fall in real terms, whilst only 17% of people on directly-managed sites share this view. It should be noted that each society determines the rents to be paid by individual plot-holders, but clearly the rent the Council charges the society for the whole site will be a major consideration in this

### 3.9 Do you think that disadvantaged people should be offered discounted rents?

This question also noted that if discounts were to be introduced, then rents paid by other allotment users would need to increase to compensate for the resulting loss of income.

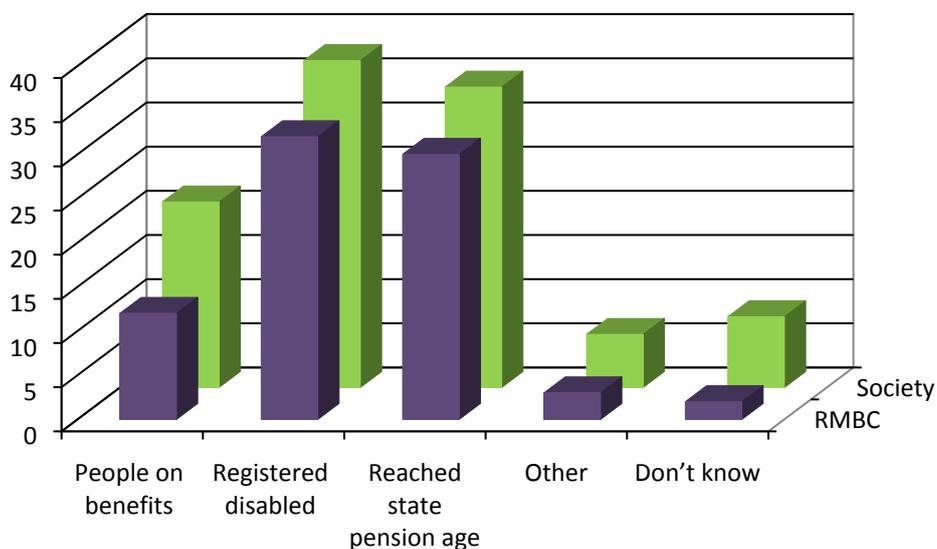
	RMBC	Society	Total
Yes	33	48	81
No	55	81	136
Don't know	11	19	30
Total	99	148	247



The results to this question from directly-managed and society sites were very similar, with around 55% not in favour of the introduction of discounts.

**3.10 If you answered YES to question 9, which of the following groups of people you think should be able to receive a discount?**

	RMBC	Society	Total
People on benefits	12	21	33
Registered disabled	32	37	69
Reached state pension age	30	34	64
Other	3	6	9
Don't know	2	8	10
Total	79	106	185



The total number of people answering this question was more than the number who said they believed that discounts should be offered. It is assumed that some people chose to say which groups they believe should receive discounts in the event that a decision is taken to introduce them, even though they do not agree with the principle of discounts being offered.

The results from directly managed sites and society sites are similar, with most supporting discounts for people who are registered disabled or who have reached state pension age. A smaller number think people on benefits should receive discounts. Other suggested recipients of discounts were people who don't work but get no benefit, people on low income, Rothercard holders, young working families, community and voluntary groups and people with mental health problems.

### 3.11 Other comments about allotment rents

120 people commented about allotment rents. The analysis of these is being carried out separately, and any conclusions will be taken into account in making recommendations for future rents.

### 3.12 Other comments about allotments in general

150 people supplied comments here. A separate analysis is being carried out of these to identify:-

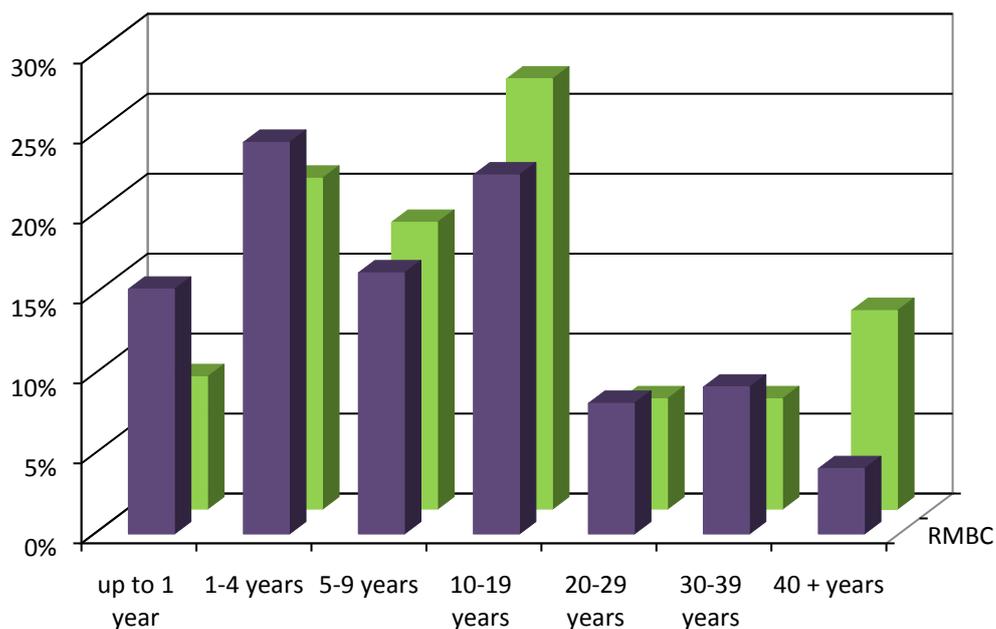
- any site-specific issues requiring action to be taken,
- any recurring themes that add to our understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the service as a whole.

The results of this analysis are not available at the time of writing.

### 3.13 Roughly how many years have you been allotment gardening?

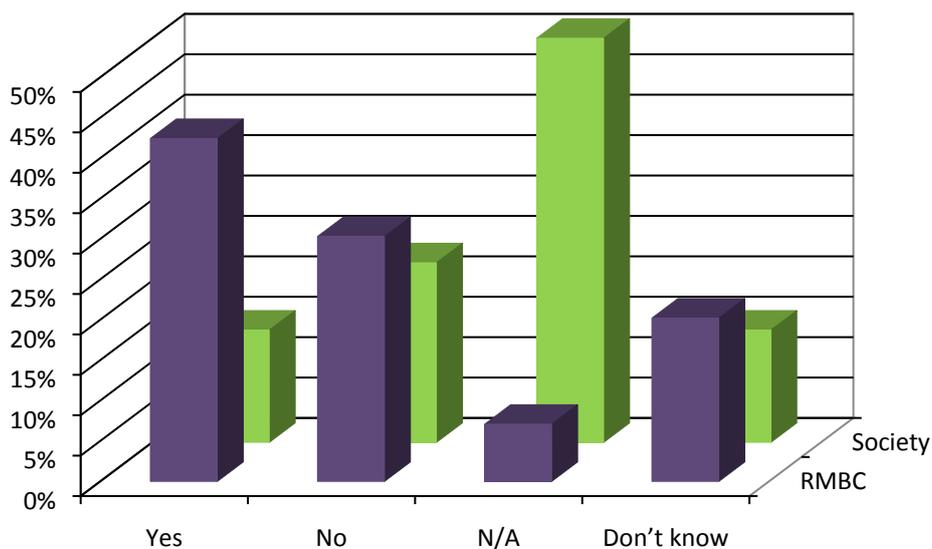
The main observation from analysis of answers to this question is that a larger proportion of respondents on directly-managed sites are relatively new to allotment gardening, whereas a larger proportion of people on society sites have been doing so for more than 40 years.

	RMBC	Society	Total
up to 1 year	15	12	27
1-4 years	24	30	54
5-9 years	16	26	42
10-19 years	22	39	61
20-29 years	8	10	18
30-39 years	9	10	19
40 + years	4	18	22
Total	98	145	243



**3.14 Would you like to join an allotment society?**

	RMBC	Society	Total
Yes	42	20	62
No	30	32	62
N/A	7	72	79
Don't know	20	20	40
Total	99	144	243



This question was intended to gauge the level of interest amongst people on directly-managed sites in being part of an allotment society. The main observations are as follows:-

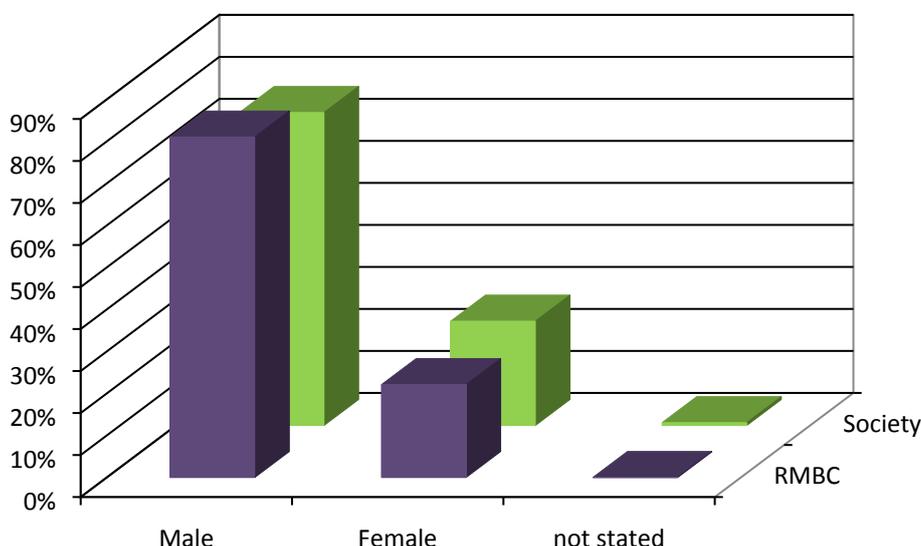
- More than 40% of respondents on directly-managed sites would like to join a society
- A number of people on directly-managed sites stated that they were already members of a society, suggesting that they may have plots on more than one site (i.e. including a society site)
- Around 22% of people on society sites stated that they do not want to be members of the allotment society.

This suggests there is some an appetite amongst a significant proportion of plot-holders on directly-managed sites to be part of a society, although this may be difficult to achieve unless suitable individuals come forward to form a committee.

#### 4. Respondent Profile Results

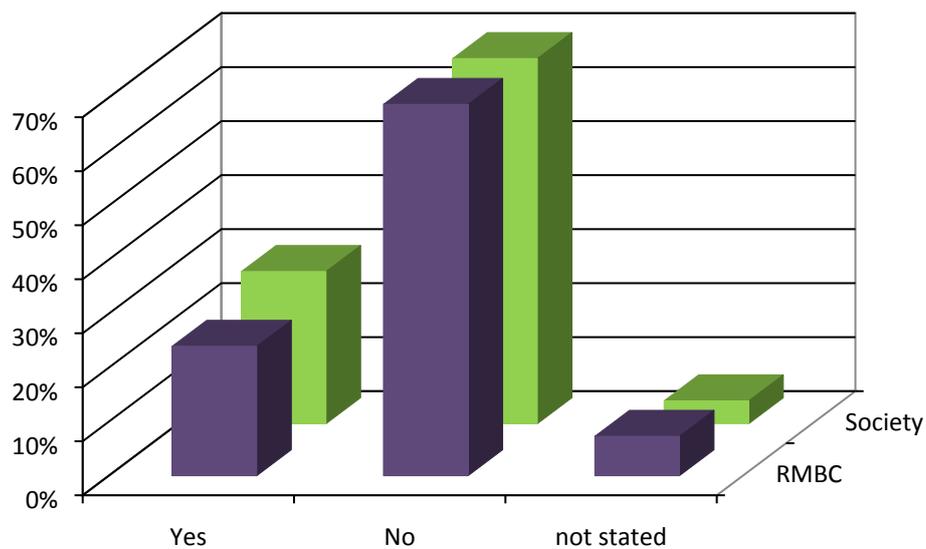
##### 4.1 What is your gender identity?

	RMBC	Society	Total
Male	77	111	188
Female	21	37	58
not stated	0	1	1
Total	98	149	247



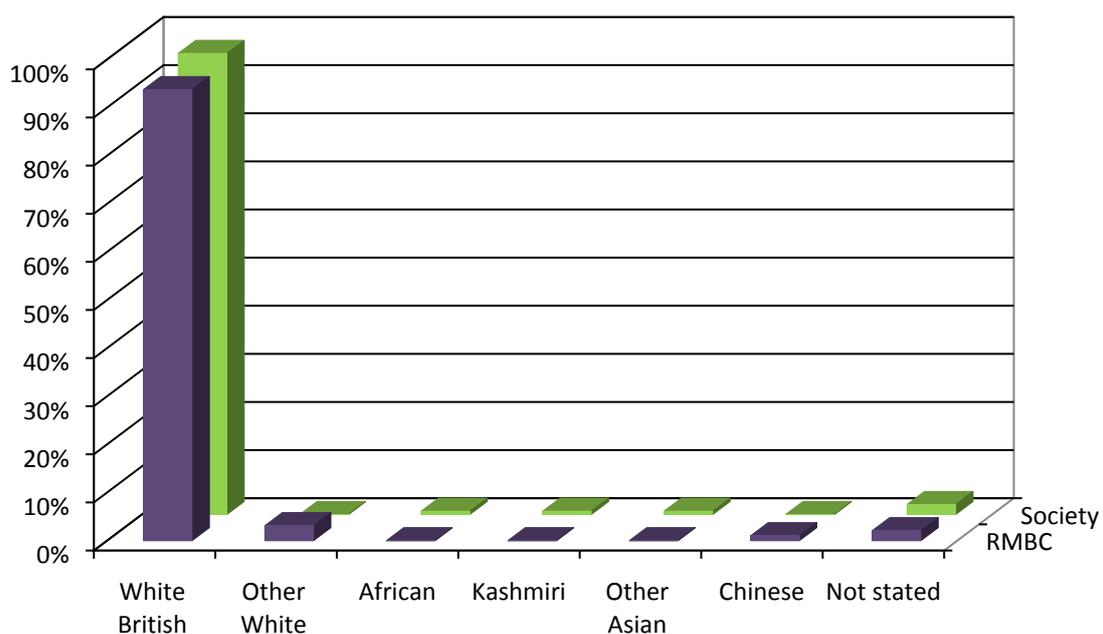
##### 4.2 Do you consider yourself to be disabled or have a limiting illness?

	RMBC	Society	Total
Yes	23	40	63
No	66	96	162
not stated	7	6	13
Total	96	142	238



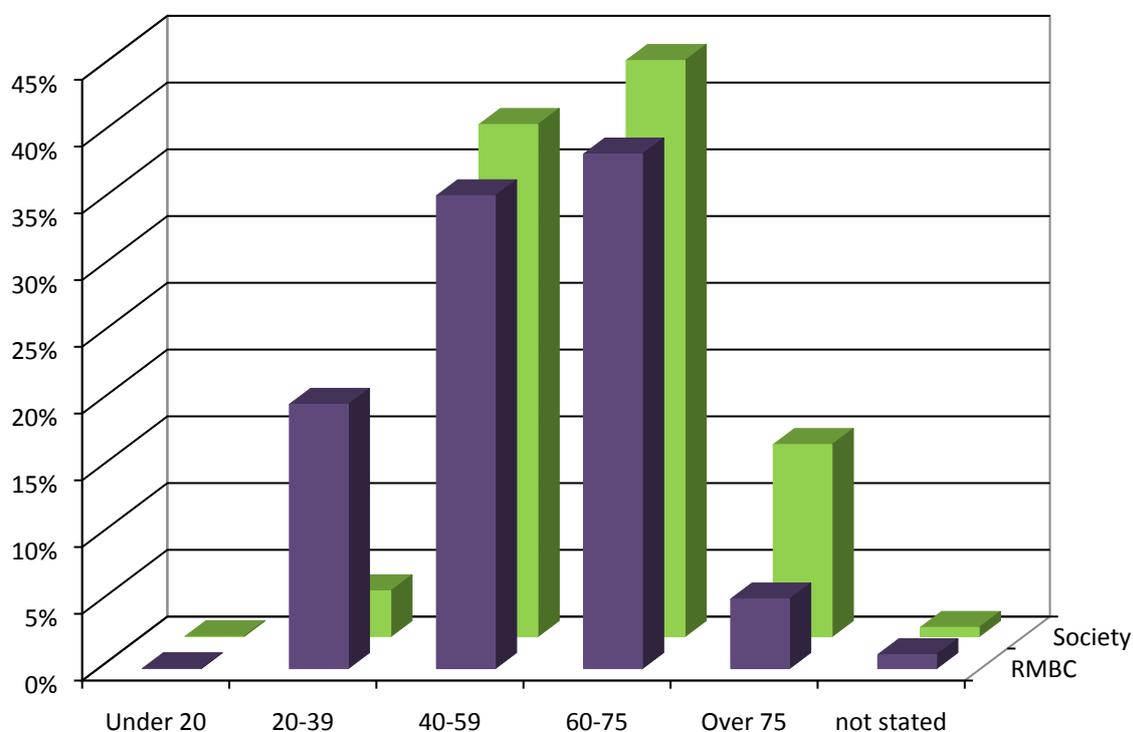
### 4.3 How would you describe your ethnic origin?

	RMBC	Society	Total
White British	90	138	228
Other White	3	0	3
African	0	1	1
Kashmiri	0	1	1
Other Asian	0	1	1
Chinese	1	0	1
Not stated	2	3	5
Total	96	144	240



#### 4.4 What is your age on 1st September, 2017?

	RMBC	Society	Total
Under 20	0	0	0
20-39	19	5	24
40-59	34	56	90
60-75	37	63	100
Over 75	5	21	26
not stated	1	1	2
Total	96	146	242



#### 5. Calculation of Average Values from Multiple-choice Questions

In questions referred to in sections 3.5 and 3.6 above, people were asked to rate the importance of various factors as one of the following:-

- Very important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

They were also given the options of stating 'don't to allow the answers to be averaged, each was first given a numeric value as follows:-

- Very important = 10

- Important = 6.667
- Slightly important = 3.333
- Not at all important = 0.

Don't knows were omitted from the calculation of the average because of the uncertainty about what their view might be if they had one.

The average score was then determined as follows, where (A) is the number of people selecting 'Very important', (B) is the number selecting 'Important', (C) is the number selecting 'Slightly important' and (D) is the number selecting 'Not at all important'.

$$(10*A + 6.667*B + 3.333*C) / (A + B + C + D)$$

The same approach was used for calculating an average performance score for question 3.7, where (A) is the number of people selecting 'Very good', (B) is the number selecting 'good', (C) is the number selecting 'poor' and (D) is the number selecting 'very poor'.

## 6. Calculation of 'Priority for Action' Score

Scores for importance and current performance need to be considered together to identify which aspects of site management are most in need of improvement. The following methodology is used by commercial market research organisations, such as MORI.

Priority for Action = (Average importance score - Average performance score) \* Average importance score.

Thus, a larger number shows that people regarded a factor as important, but that its performance was rated as relatively poor, whereas a smaller number shows that a factor was regarded as relatively unimportant, and that its performance was better.

This method was used to calculate scores shown in section 3.7.1 above.