

# Leisure Facility Survey Report

## Health, Wellbeing and Facility Use in Shropshire

January 2024



# 1 Introduction and Methodology

Shropshire Council ran a survey from mid October 2023 to 17<sup>th</sup> December 2023 to understand more about leisure facility use in Shropshire and what matters to people when it comes to health and wellbeing. The survey was conducted because there is a recognition that leisure facilities are better when the views of customers are understood, and changes made in response to valuable feedback. The survey covered three main areas:

- Gathering information about the people using leisure facilities.
- The impact leisure facilities have on health and wellbeing.
- What customers think of services and their ideas for improvement.

The survey was promoted to customers through Shropshire Council's leisure services webpages, through posters, through leisure services social media/contact methods and other Shropshire Council communication channels. QR codes were also used on posters and at leisure centre facilities to encourage completion of the online survey.

A total of 372 responses were submitted during period that the survey was open (eight and a half weeks). The feedback from these responses is set out within this report. The feedback will inform the work of Shropshire Council's Leisure Services department and will be used to inform service planning and decision making.

This report proceeds in the following sections:

- Section 1 (this Introduction) provides a description of the survey background and methods.
- Section 2 outlines the profile of respondents taking part in the survey.
- Section 3 covers the use of leisure facilities and activity levels.
- Section 4 details the health and wellbeing of survey respondents.
- Section 5 considers service feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Section 6 provides a brief summary and conclusion of the report.

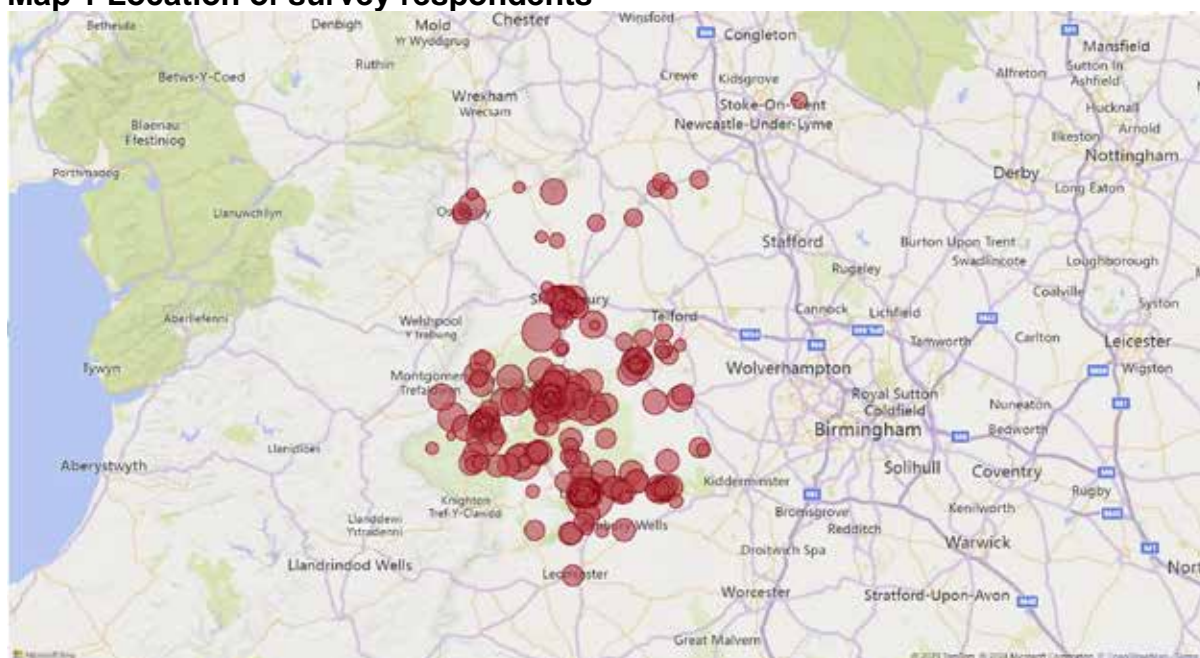


## 2 Profile of Respondents

372 respondents completed the online engagement survey. Demographic data was collected through the survey to help Shropshire Council understand the profile of respondents and whether any feedback has been missed from key groups or respondent types. This data also provides an insight into the characteristics of local people using Shropshire Council's leisure centre facilities.

**Map 1** below illustrates the approximate location of survey responses (the approximate location is used to ensure any individual responses cannot be identified). The map, and closer analysis of the data, highlights that the responses to the consultation came from across Shropshire and beyond. All county settlements were represented in the responses with more responses from areas of higher population, as would be expected.

**Map 1 Location of survey respondents**



**Figure 1** displays that more women responded to the consultation (61%) compared to men (26%). This pattern is seen within most, but not all, types of survey. Research suggests that women are more likely to respond when a response is submitted on behalf of a household. Men are slightly more under-represented in this survey than most. 3% preferred not to provide a gender, 10% did not respond to the question.

**Figure 2** illustrates the age group of survey responses and highlights that there was only 1 respondent under the age of 25. There were more responses across the other age groups with the greatest response from those aged 55 to 64 (27%) followed by 65 to 74-year olds (19%). 76% of survey respondents were aged 35 to 74.

Figure 1: Gender of survey respondents

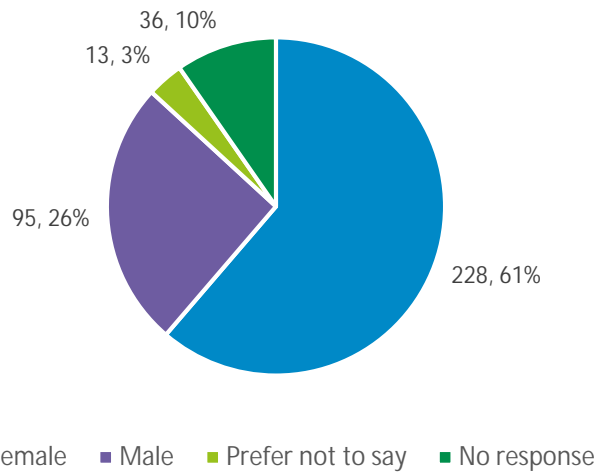
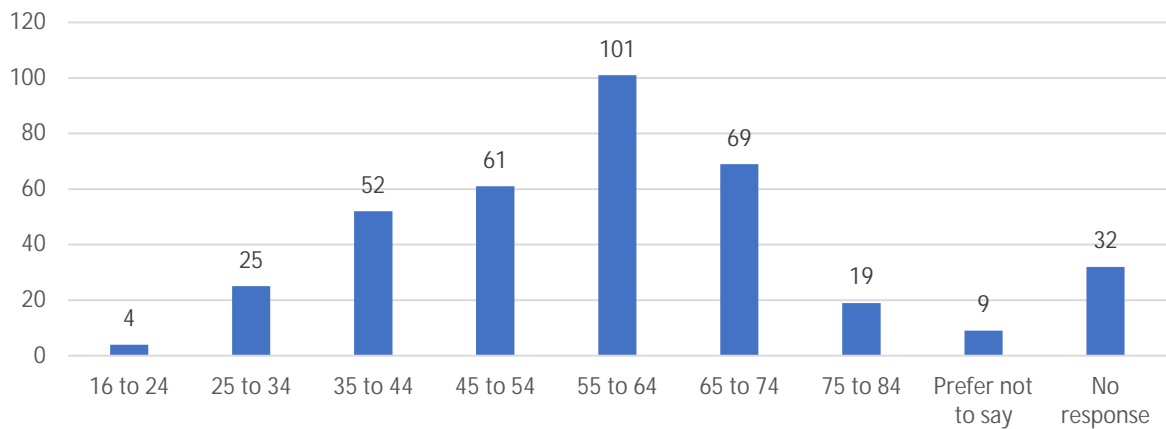
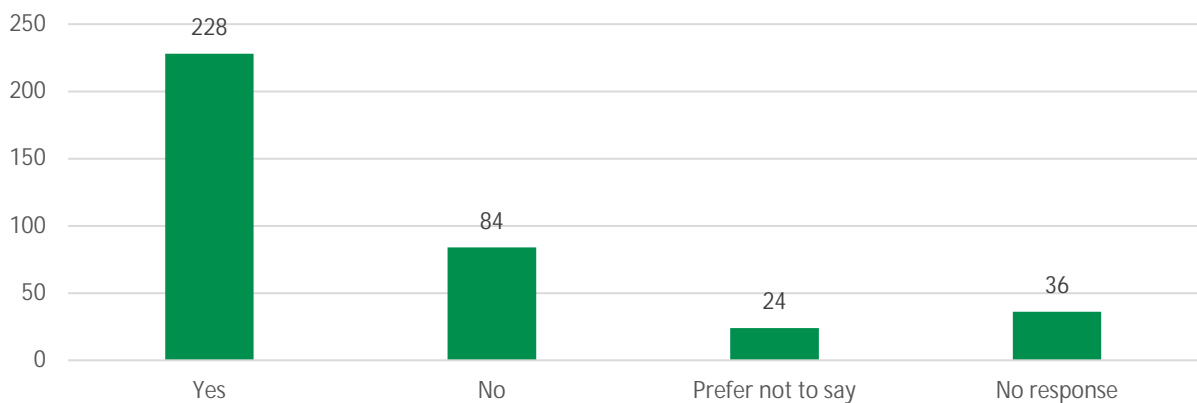


Figure 2: Age group of survey respondents



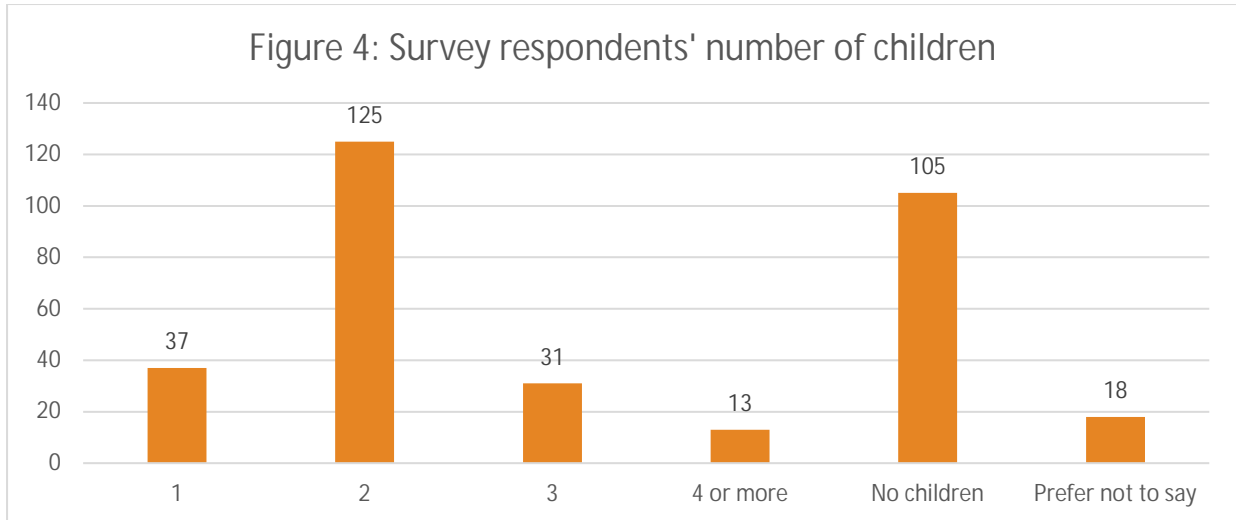
Survey respondents were asked about their relationship status to more fully understand the characteristics of local people using leisure centres. **Figure 3** shows that 61% of survey respondents are married or in a civil partnership and 23% are not (6% preferred not to say and 10% skipped the question).

Figure 3: Survey respondents' relationship status

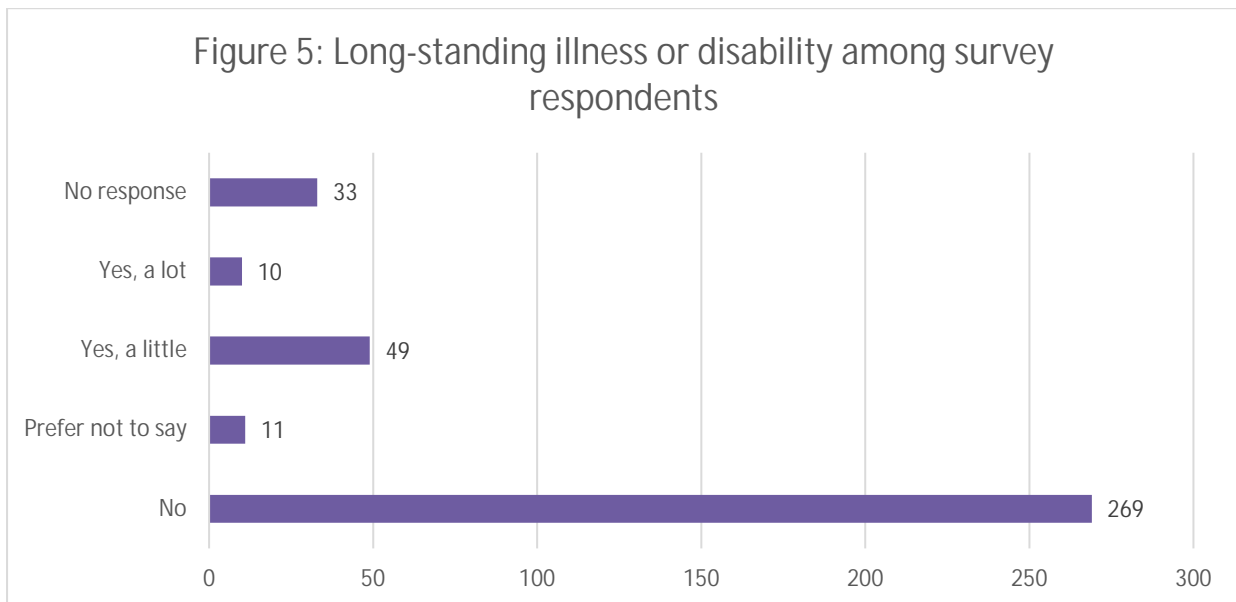




Family use of leisure centres is an important factor when planning and delivering services, so survey respondents were asked how many children they have. **Figure 4** displays the response. 28% of survey respondents don't have any children, 10% have 1 child, 34% have 2 and 11% have 3 or more. **More than half (55%) of all survey respondents are parents with at least one child.**

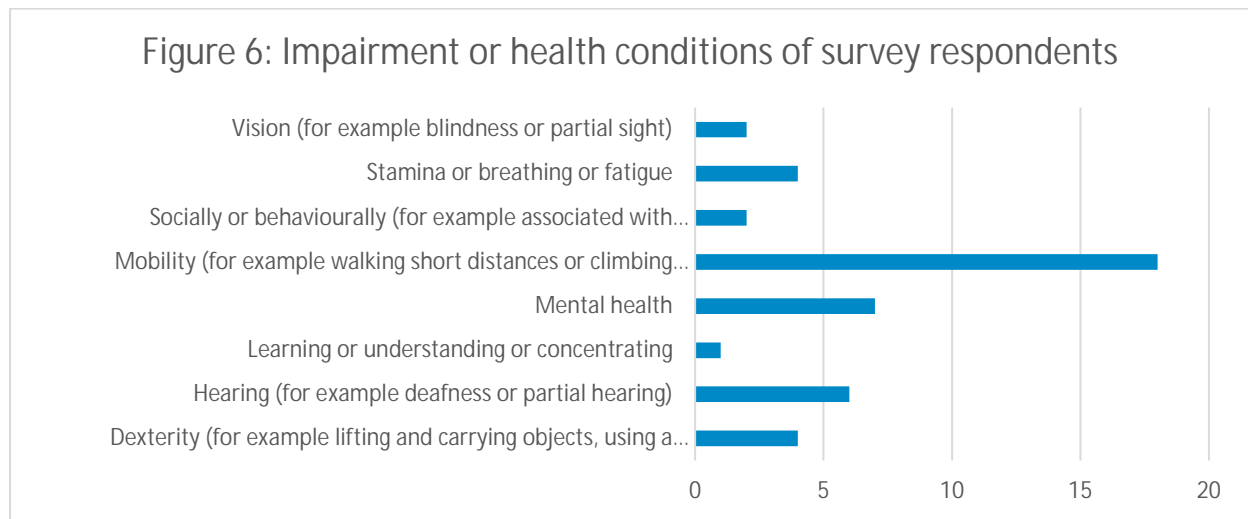


When designing the provision of leisure facilities, it is very important to understand the needs of customers. For this reason, survey respondents were asked 'Do you have any long-standing illness or disability that limits your daily activity?' The results are shown in **Figure 5**. 72% of survey respondents do not have any long-standing illness or disability and 16% do. **13% describe that illness or disability impacts mobility a little and 3% a lot.**

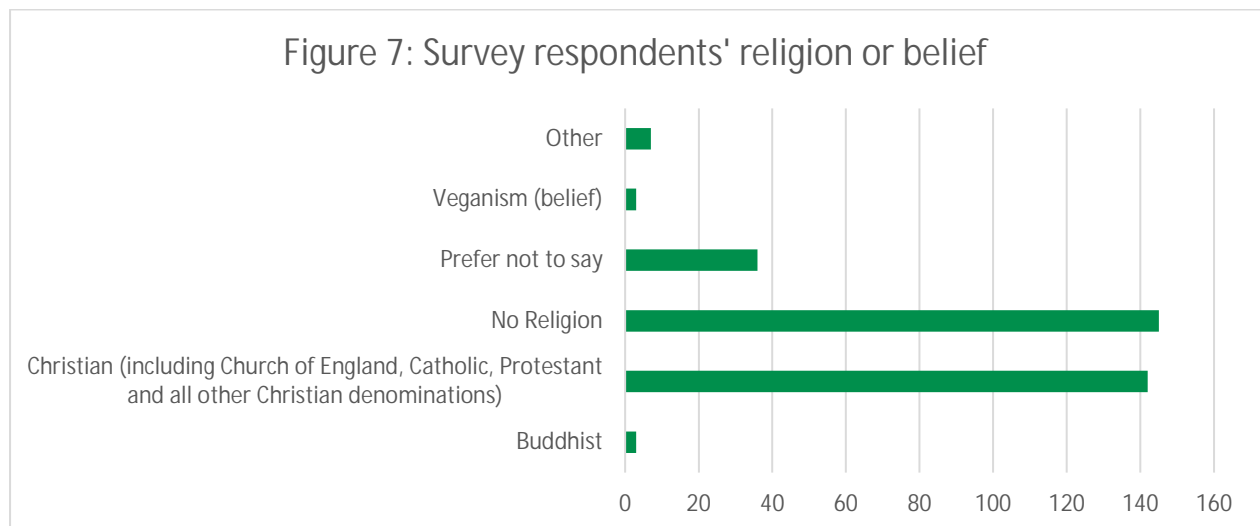


An additional question was included to understand any needs further. The results are shown in Figure 6. In total 44 people described impairment or health conditions that could be considered when providing/designing leisure services. Mobility was the main issue mentioned, followed by mental health concerns and hearing difficulties. Some survey respondents helpfully referred to their needs within the comments

provided within the survey. There was a space for other comments and commonly mentioned concerns included arthritis, knee problems and other concerns associated with age. This is very helpful feedback.



Survey respondents were asked about their ethnicity and religion to understand a little more about the people using Shropshire’s leisure centres. 84% of people responding to the survey are White (British, Irish, Welsh). There were few of other ethnic backgrounds (3.5%). **Figure 7** illustrates that 40% of survey respondents (145 people) have no religion and 38% are Christian. There were few people with other religions and beliefs. A few used the other category to mention religions and beliefs including Humanist, Atheist, Agnostic, Orthodox and Pagan.



The issue of service and facility costs is often an issue when engaging with customers of leisure facilities. To understand customers’ needs two questions were included covering employment and household income brackets. **Figure 8** shows that 41% of respondents are employed, 12% self-employed and 34% retired. There were very few people with other daily lifestyles such as students and that should be considered when interpreting the feedback.

Figure 8: Employment status of survey respondents

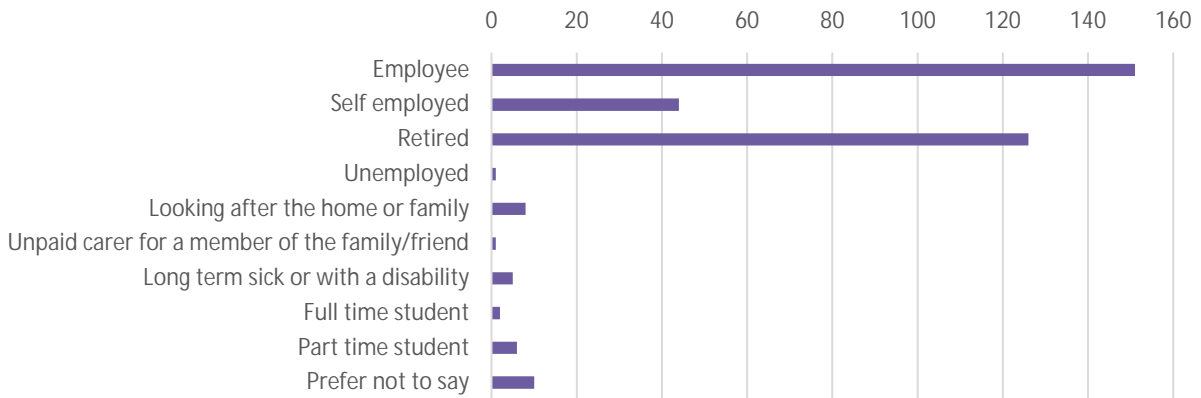
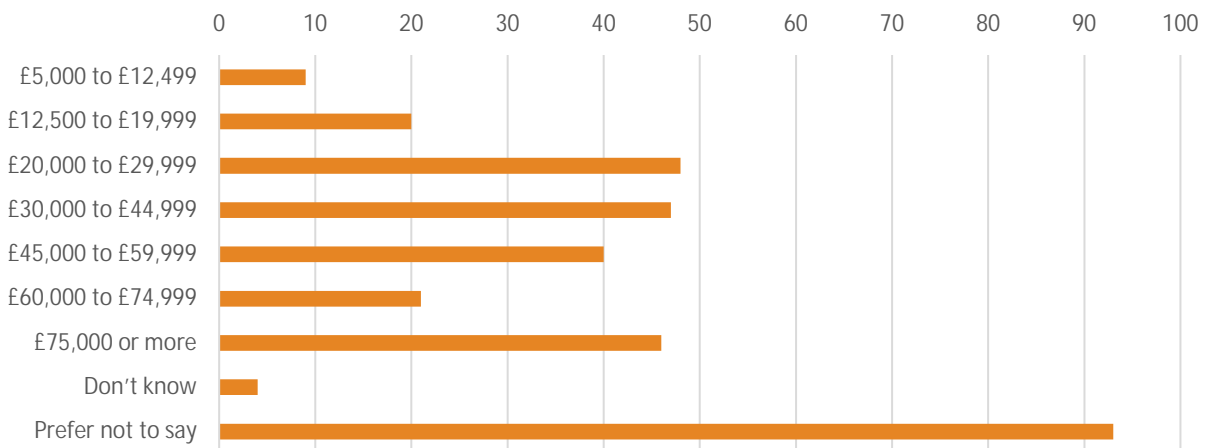


Figure 9: Household income brackets of survey respondents



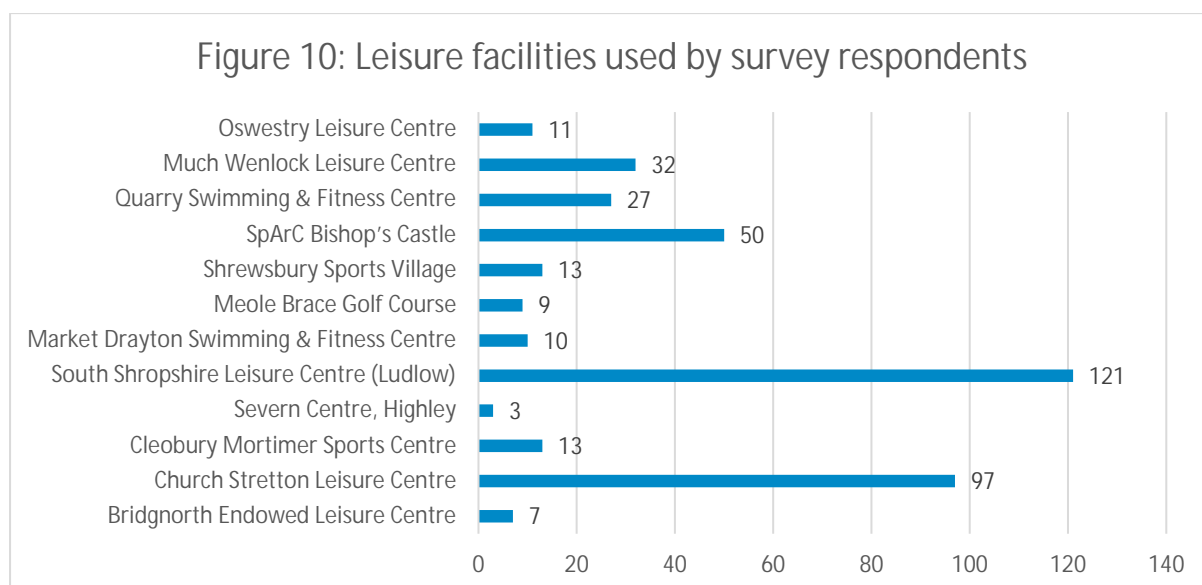
**Figure 9** shows that there are a range of household incomes represented by the survey respondent sample. This is helpful to understand when considering access and pricing. The two categories more commonly used with 13% of responses each were the £20,000 to £29,000 bracket and the £30,000 to £44,999 bracket.

The last main question in the section ‘About You’ asked if survey respondents had any other features helpful to understand when applying Shropshire Council’s responsibilities and planning services. Some suggestions were used and of those 13 survey respondents highlighted that they are either Armed Forces veterans or serving members, or family members of serving members.

The data allows additional analysis of the data by the characteristics of survey respondents. Additional detailed analysis hasn’t been included in this report since this focuses on the higher-level findings of the survey engagement (and numbers can be small when broken down into too many categories). The next section of the report focuses on the way survey respondents are currently using leisure facilities in Shropshire.

### 3 Use of Leisure Facilities

The 372 survey respondents use a range of leisure centre facilities across Shropshire. Figure 10 shows which facilities in the county are use by the survey respondents. Respondents could select more than one centre but only a small number (approximately 21 respondents visit more than one location). There were more responses from the South Shropshire Leisure Centre in Ludlow than for any other centre (31%) followed by Church Stretton Leisure Centre (25%) and SpArC in Bishop’s Castle (13%). There were fewer users of centres to the north of Shropshire. The smallest response was received from users of the Severn Centre in Highley (3 responses).



Survey respondents were asked when they started using the leisure centre. **Figure 11** displays the results. **Most of the survey respondents have been using their leisure centre for a long time with 68% using the centre for over 2 years.** Fewer respondents have started attending more recently with 12% starting to use the facilities within the last 6 months. The distribution of responses is similar when the results are considered for individual leisure centres, and further analysis can be provided on request, as needed.

**Figure 12** considers how the activity levels of survey respondents changed when comparing activity before using a leisure centre and after joining/attending. **Before attending the leisure centre only 45 survey respondents (12%) undertook more than 150 minutes a week (2.5 hours +) of exercise a week. After attending one of the leisure centres that increased to 144 survey respondents (39%).** Very few survey respondents reported no change in activity levels. Figure 12 illustrates how levels of no activity, 30 minutes or less and 60 minutes or less a week were much more likely before attending a leisure centre (151 respondents). Since attending only very small numbers report these lower levels of exercise or inactivity (48 survey respondents).



Figure 11: When survey respondents started using the leisure centre

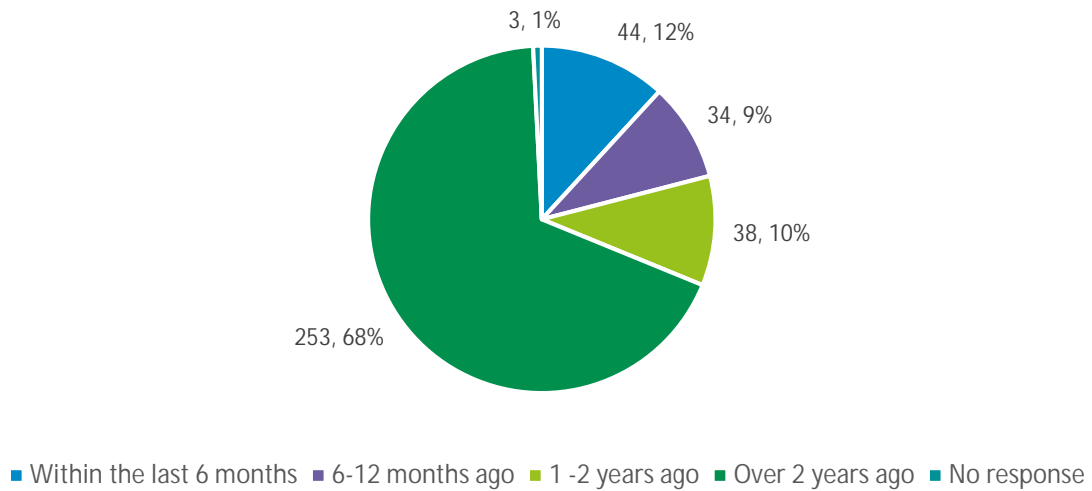
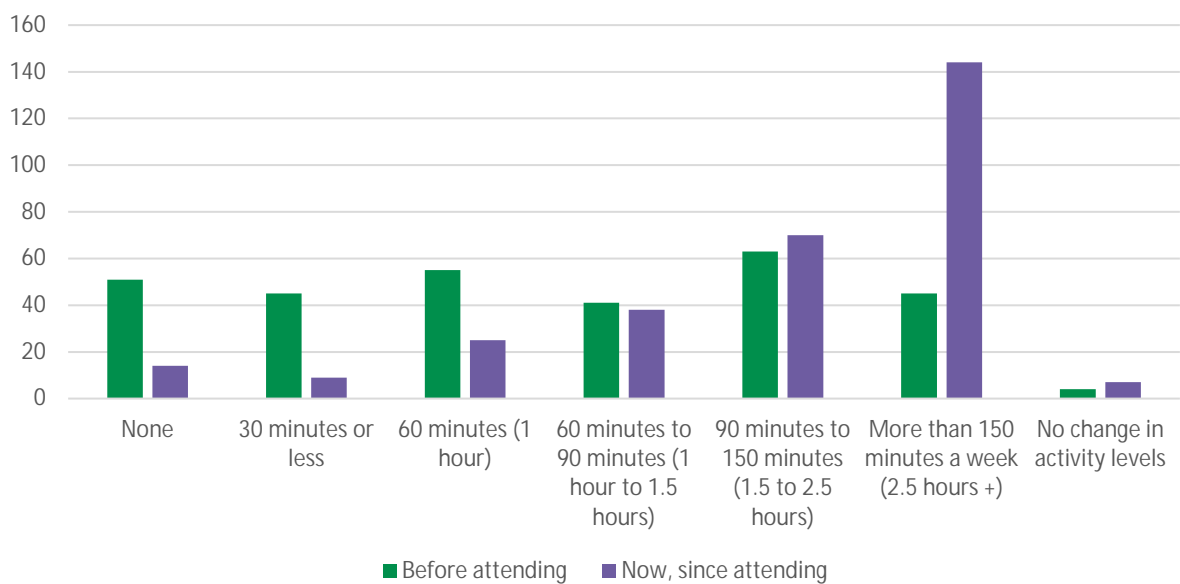
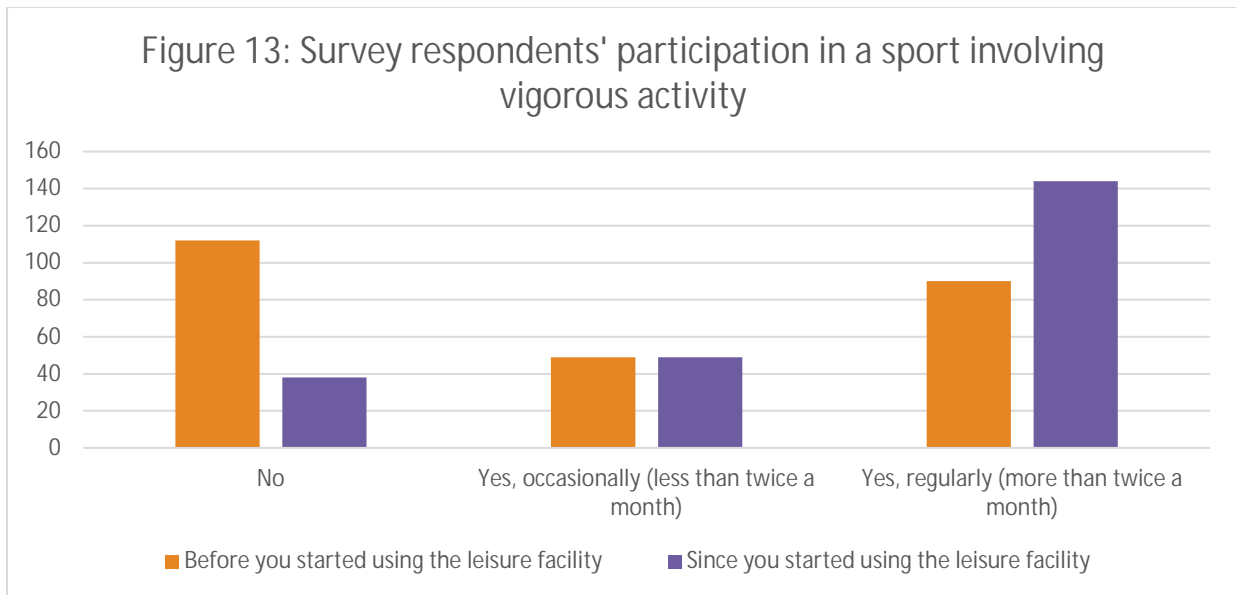


Figure 12: Survey respondents activity levels before and after using the leisure centre



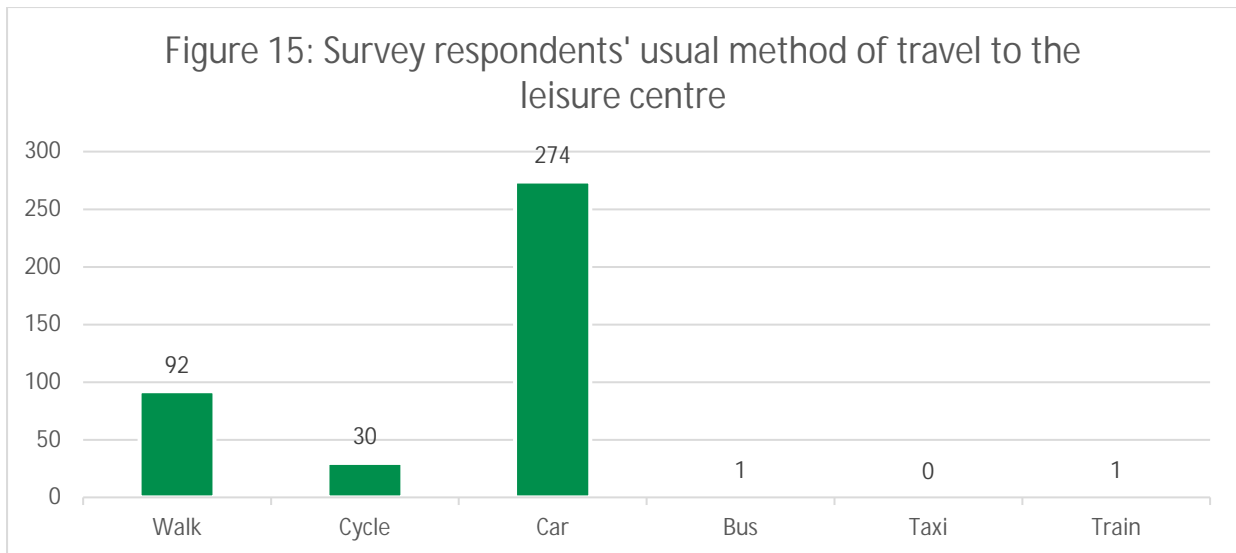
Survey respondents were asked whether there was any change in undertaking vigorous activity before and after attending a leisure centre. **Figure 13** displays the feedback received and shows very clearly that **survey respondents are much more likely to regularly participate in a sport which involves vigorous activity since attending a leisure centre (39%) compared to before (24%)**. Attending a leisure centre is much less likely to impact occasional participation in sport involving vigorous activity. It is also clear to see from Figure 13 that 112 people (30%) didn't do any sport involving vigorous activity before attending a leisure centre compared to 38 (10%) after joining/attending.



Frequency of use was also considered within the survey, to better understand activity levels among survey respondents. The results, shown in **Figure 14**, highlight that more **survey respondents are regular visitors and visit the leisure centre 2-3 times a week (42%) followed by 4-6 times a week (24%) and once a week (20%). Only very small numbers visit less than once a week (12 survey respondents).**



Considering how people travel to their leisure centre/facility is also very helpful for planning services but also for understanding active travel. Figure 15 displays the feedback received for travel patterns. A small number of respondents selected more than one main method of travel but overall, **74% regularly travel by car, 25% walk, 8% cycle and the remainder use other methods of travel.**



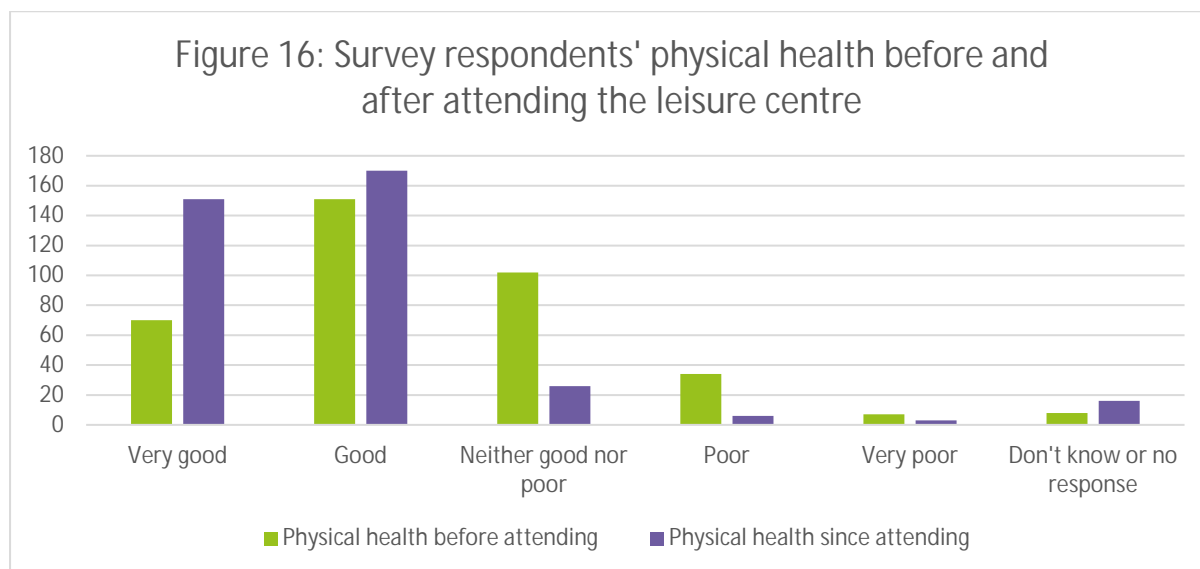
In total 33% access their leisure centre/facility using active travel methods. Only 2 survey respondents use a bus or train.

The next set of questions within the survey considered the health and wellbeing of survey respondents and how leisure facility use influences health and wellbeing. The results are covered within the next section of this report.



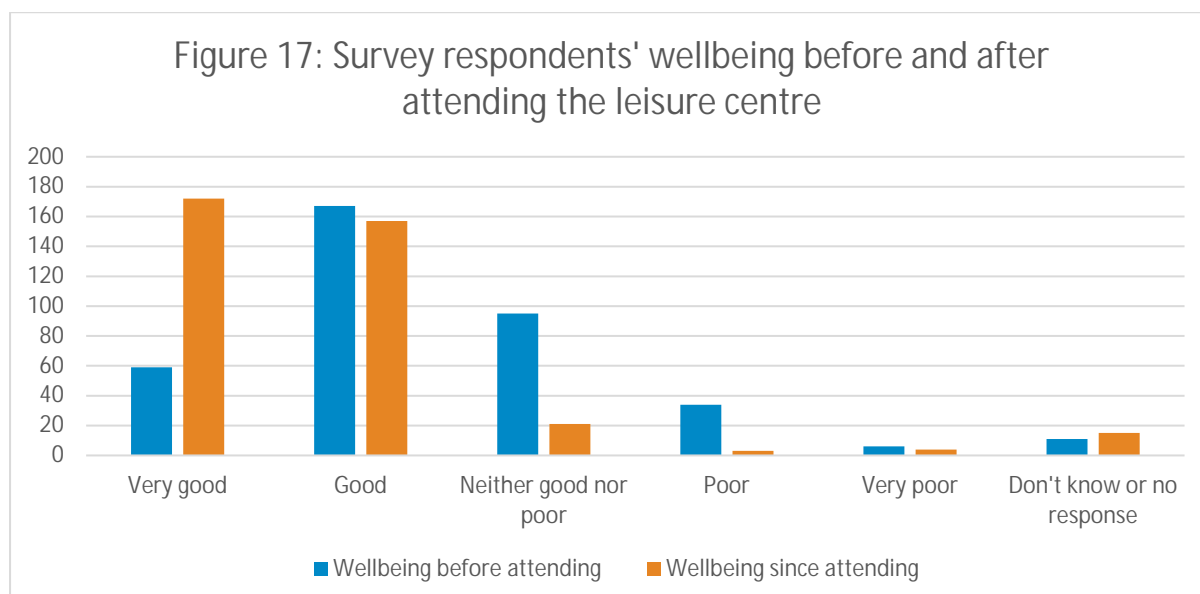
## 4 Health and Wellbeing

The survey included a set of questions designed to find out how leisure facility use impacts on health and wellbeing. Survey respondents were asked to rate their physical and mental health before and after they started attending their leisure centre. **Figure 16** displays results for physical health.



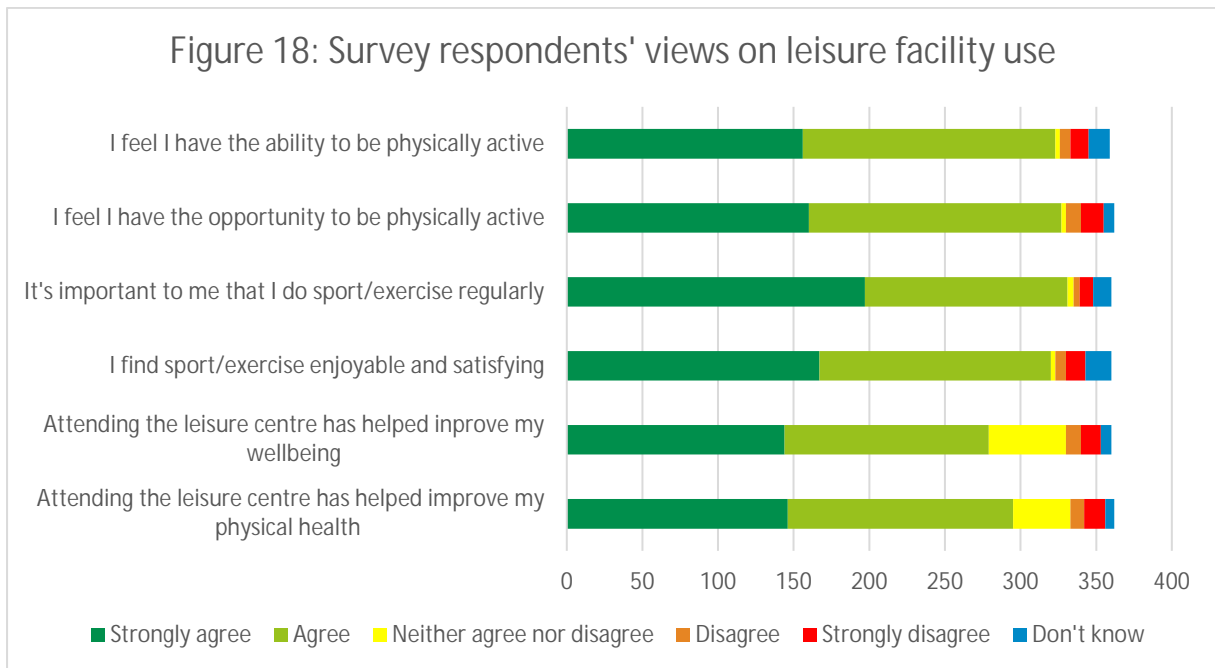
**The results show that survey respondents were much more likely to report very good physical health since attending a leisure centre (41%) compared to before (19%).** Similarly, 11% describe their physical health as poor or very poor before attending a leisure centre compared to 5% after attending.

**Figure 17** displays similar results for wellbeing. **Before attending a leisure centre 16% describe their wellbeing as very good compared to 46% after attending.** 11% describe poor or very poor wellbeing before attending a leisure centre compared to 2% after.



The survey asked participants whether they could give a view on a series of statements. These statements are listed below, and the results shown in **Figure 18**.

- Attending the leisure centre has helped improve my physical health
- Attending the leisure centre has helped improve my wellbeing
- I find sport/exercise enjoyable and satisfying
- It's important to me that I do sport/exercise regularly
- I feel I have the opportunity to be physically active
- I feel I have the ability to be physically active

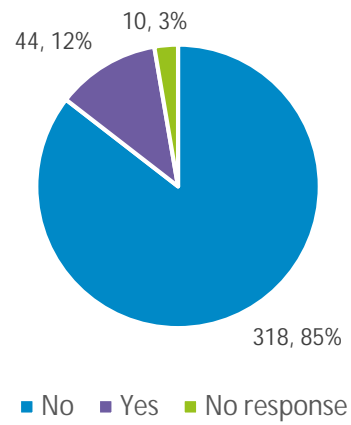


The results highlight that there is strong agreement with all of the statements included within the survey. **Overall, the vast majority of respondents believe they have the ability (87%) and opportunity (88%) to be physically active.** 79% agree or strongly agree that attending the leisure centre has helped improve their physical health and 75% agree or strongly agree that attending the leisure centre has helped improve their wellbeing. There are very few people who disagree with any of the statements. There are 25 people who disagree or strongly disagree that they have the opportunity to be physically active and 23 disagree or strongly disagree that attending the leisure centre has helped improve their physical health or their wellbeing.

Figure 19 displays the results when survey respondents were asked if they had any contact with an Exercise on Referral instructor or a member of the Social Prescribing team. The results show that **44 people (12%) have had contact with an Exercise on Referral instructor or a member of the Social Prescribing team.** 318 people (85%) have not and the remainder did not answer the question.



Figure 19: Whether survey respondents have had contact with an Exercise on Referral instructor or a member of the Social Prescribing team.



The next section of the report focuses on the feedback received when members of the public were asked about their satisfaction with leisure facilities in Shropshire and for their suggestions for changes or improvements.

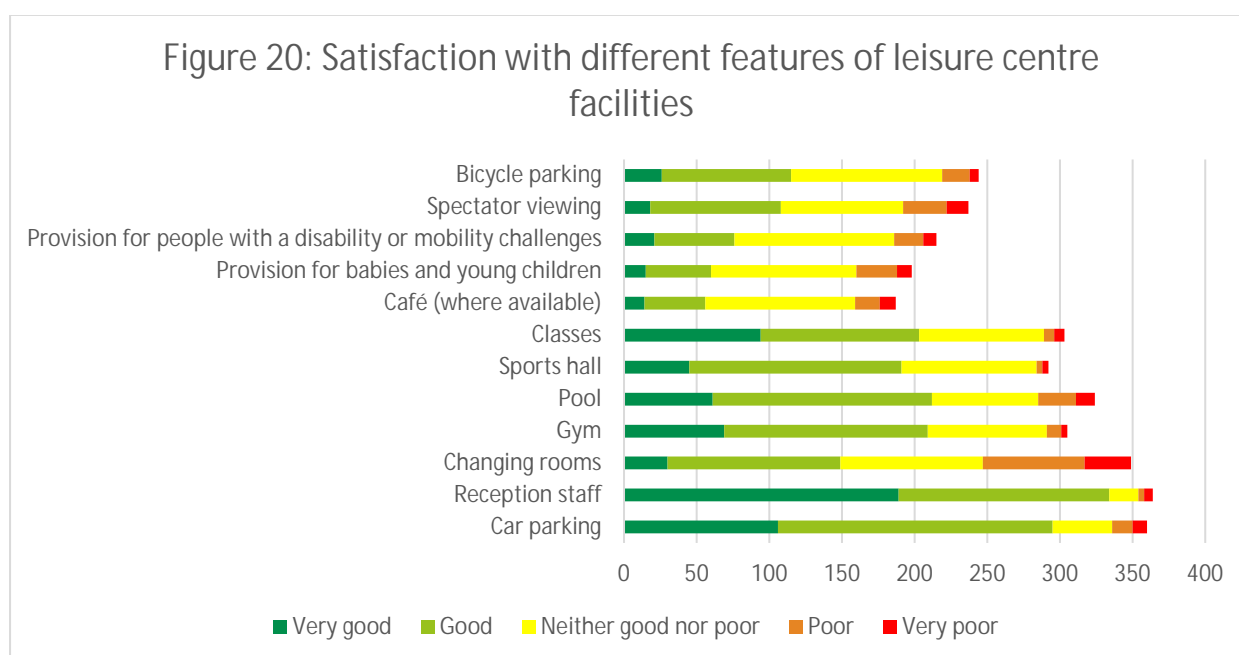


## 5 Feedback and Suggestions

The survey asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with a range of features of leisure centre facilities. The features were:

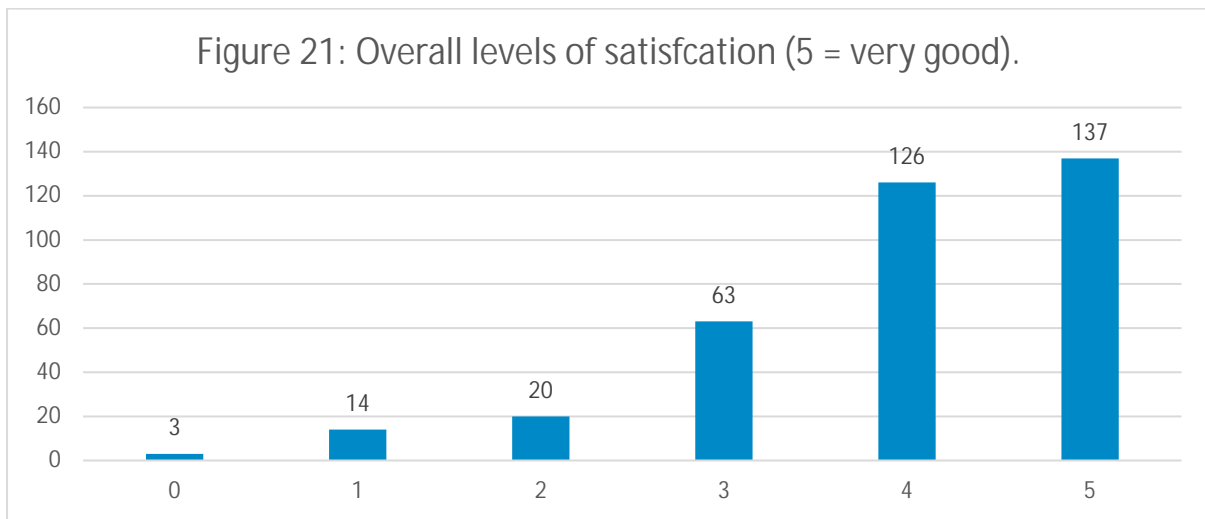
- Car parking
- Reception staff
- Changing rooms
- Gym
- Pool
- Sports hall
- Classes
- Café (where available)
- Provision for babies and young children
- Provision for people with a disability or mobility challenges
- Spectator viewing
- Bicycle parking

**Figure 20** shows that there was mixed feedback. **The highest levels of satisfaction were with reception staff followed by car parking.** The lowest levels of satisfaction were with café facilities and provision of babies and young children (there were also much lower response rates for those categories). **Changing room provision was rated poor or very poor by 102 of the survey respondents (27%),** this was by far the feature with the greatest negative feedback. There was also some dissatisfaction with the provision of spectator viewing and the swimming pool (39 people rated both of those features as poor or very poor, 10%).

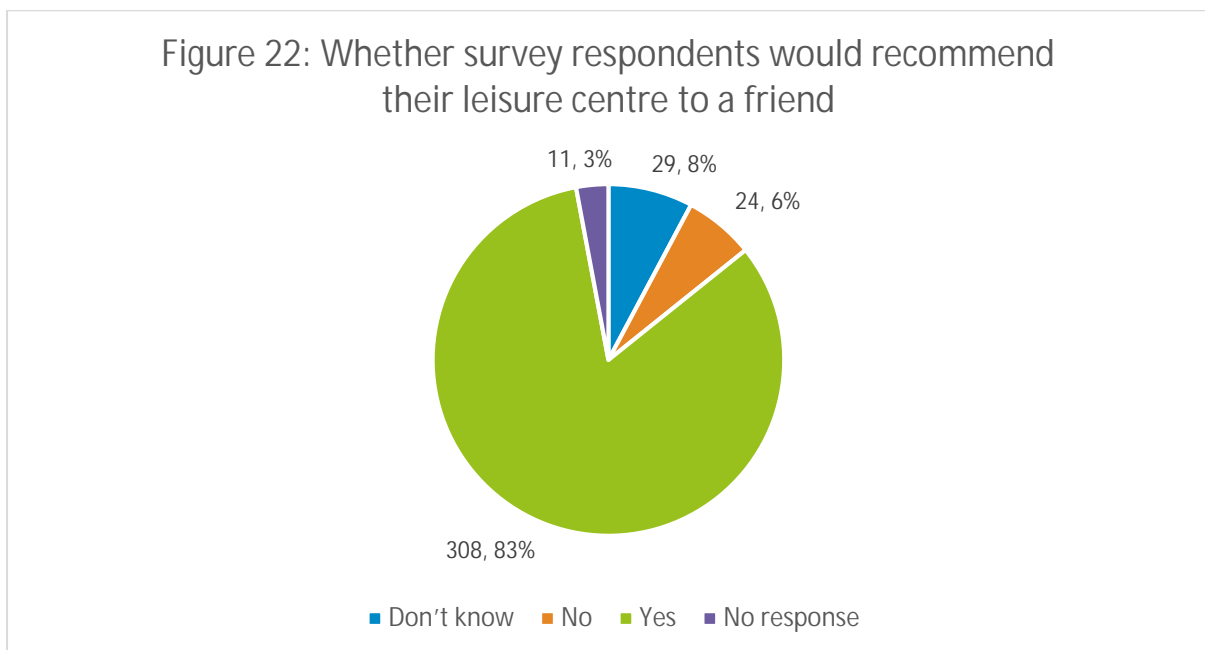


To understand overall levels of satisfaction the survey included a summary question which read 'Please rate your overall experience of using the leisure centre (where 1

is very poor and 5 is very good)'. **Figure 21 shows that 71% of survey respondents rate their leisure centre facilities a 4 or 5 out of 5.** Only 10% gave an overall rating of 2 or less.



To confirm survey respondents' feelings, they were asked if they would recommend their leisure centre to a friend. The results are shown in **Figure 22. 83% would recommend their leisure centre to a friend**, 6% would not and the remainder did not know or did not respond to the question.



The last main question asked for comments to better understand any areas of improvement. 261 survey respondents (70%) provided a comment. Most of the respondents covered more than one issue within their response. Each of the issues raised was themed and recorded. In total the 261 people made 378 separate comments. The comments are categorised in **Table 1. The most commonly mentioned issue with 19% of comments was the need to improve changing facilities and showers**, followed by the need for cleaning and maintenance (17%) and increasing availability or classes - number of spaces/sessions (12%).

**Table 1 Are there any improvements you would like to see?**

Theme	Count	%
General improvement	2	1
Extended opening times and more sessions	34	9
Accessibility (centre design and equipment)	7	2
Availability of classes - number of spaces/sessions	44	12
Modern equipment, gym weights and machines	13	3
Improved changing facilities and showers	73	19
Café and seating areas	11	3
Parking area improvements	12	3
New facilities (e.g. sauna, steam room, practice green)	6	2
Cleaning and maintenance (heating and lighting)	64	17
Additional class types and instructors/ extended offer	30	8
Swimming pool improvement (heating)	20	5
Cover for absent instructions/few classes cancelled	5	1
Improved information, advertising and promotions	3	1
Improved booking systems	1	0
Improved staff/instructor customer service	9	2
Positive feedback and compliments for staff	6	2
Other	38	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>100</b>

The example comments below help to illustrate the feedback received.

### **Opening hours**

- “Highley pool is a massively underused resource. Opens too late closes too early and your initial timetable was totally unacceptable. Needs a passionate rethink for 2024.
- “More Pilates classes after 6pm, for people who work in the day.”
- “Cleobury has limited opening hours compared to Ludlow which is frustrating. And recently it has failed to open on time at the weekends, which is poor customer service.”
- “The centre feels like it is aimed at the older population and it isn’t being used as widely as it could be. Family memberships. Adult swimming lessons. Junior life guarding. Being able to hire the rooms privately. Opening the facilities early to support working people. Swim fitness classes. It has the potential to be awesome, but the limitations of the council mean it is ok.”

### **Access and classes**

- “Access is more than just a building. Inclusion is more than a lift and parking spaces. Diversity is about every single person. A hand cycle, free weights and a cable machine does not mean a gym is exclusive enough for wheelchair users. Seriously spend a day or a week in a wheelchair and see how accessible it really is.”
- “As a member I cannot get into the classes I would like to attend due to the lack of number of spaces & people booking in advance. Sometimes there are spaces as people don’t turn up but it’s too late. People should be penalised for booking and not attending. As a member I am not able to utilise my membership as much as I would like and feel I was better off using private trainer circuits.”

- “The classes are becoming an issue again. You try to book spaces, but the system doesn't always work. No one answers the phone or gets back to you if you leave a message.”
- “More classes in Much Wenlock as my local centre within walking distance would be nice to use this more instead of travelling to Bridgnorth website doesn't list what classes are available Bridgnorth makes it very easy to find classes. I only attend Bridgnorth a few times a week for classes a monthly membership isn't worth it for me. I don't think it's fair you have to pay for parking when not a member when attending classes having to park elsewhere and now it's coming into winter the dark nights and rain is putting me off from using the centre.”
- “More classes. More variety of classes. More access to classes at different times/on different days. Better equipment. Additional equipment e.g. there are not always enough weights for everyone to have the ones they need/want. Some equipment is old/tired/outdated. More access for sports groups...currently the costs are very high.”
- “Some classes are very difficult to reserve, due to space constraints. Offering the most popular classes more than once a week would be a big improvement. This might be accomplished within budget by dropping one or two less popular classes.

### **Gym facilities**

- “There never seem to be many resistance bands in the gym the are often broken. Please can we have some new ones.”
- “Yes, I have sent several emails regarding the fitness suit, there are 2 out of 3 treadmills out of order, 1 out of 2 of the rowers are not working. And since April we have had no music in there, as the school had some IT works carried out and the gym users were never given passwords to log on. This may sound trivial, but a little music really helps keep people motivated when working out. The small repairs to equipment and rectifying the music issue would really make the gym a great place to be again and an excellent facility for the community.”

### **Showers, changing rooms, toilets and pool**

- “The showers are awful, not enough...broken. The changing rooms and toilets: toilets are appalling, and the overall smell of the changing rooms isn't nice. No family rooms for changing. The centre is great and used by so many; it just needs improvement. My children and I use it a lot it's just a shame to see it in a poor state. Also, fitness classes would bring lots of people in. I used to come twice a week to classes now there aren't any.”
- “The changing rooms and general maintenance of the building is appalling. It needs new showers, they are always cold I'm unable to shower my children after swimming, they are dirty, need painting, the staff could use bleach and give the place a good clean. Yes, I understand everything costs money, but general cleaning should be done all the time and it's clearly never cleaned. I placed a sweet wrapper in the spectator area and 4 weeks later it was still there!! The glass so always filthy. Please teach the staff to stop sitting in the back office and start cleaning the place!! Also answer the phone. I see them just ignoring the phone every week.”
- “The pool changing rooms and showers/toilets desperately need refurbishment. They are in a poor state. Please also increase the temperature of the showers; everyone wants a warm shower after a swim. Your staff are great, but they can't make the changing rooms clean enough anymore. Thank you.”



- “The centre needs a really good clean and toilets and changing rooms need completely cleaning and decent maintenance. No one answers the phone and the reception staff all seem like they would rather be doing something else. The music was too loud in the pool the other week it was making my daughter upset.”
- “My daughter goes swimming once a week and the changing rooms on a Sunday are disgusting. The toilets are gross, half the showers don’t work and when they do, they are either boiling hot or freezing cold. There is a smell of sewage around the toilets and they don’t look like they are cleaned very often, I’d say at a push once a week. Sort them out or you’ll be losing customers. Also, the viewing area carpet is disgusting as there aren’t enough seats, we end up sitting on the floor, so we now bring a rug to sit on. The hand rail up there fell apart when my husband used it and ended up taking it down to reception himself when they said, oh yea, that’s been lose for a while.....it’s like the whole place is run by kids who don’t care.”
- “Learner Pool temperature is often unpleasantly cold. Spa changing room and toilets would benefit from more thorough cleaning. No outdoor footwear at pool side - often parents accompanying children for lessons are at pool side in outdoor footwear.”
- “The toilets need a good clean they are filthy!”

### **Service offer and information**

- “More classes on as there is a very poor choice of times and instructors.”
- “More variation in classes available in the evenings.”
- “A greater selection of classes.”
- “Greater variety of classes/ activities e.g. dance. More parking at peak times - would be helpful if school staff did not use the car park.”
- “Better provision for deputising a teacher when regular teacher is on statutory holiday leave.”
- “More step and aquafit classes. Also have cover for classes when instructor is on leave so classes not cancelled.”
- “On your website there is no information at all about: 1. Junior membership 2. Cost of pay as you go for any facility for either adults or juniors. 3. Concession membership or pay as you go for older people. 4. Court cost for Badminton or Pickleball. 5. Squash membership. 6. Court cost for pay as you go squash court. How is anyone to know what you are offering?”
- “A cafe or larger area to sit that’s warm. A spectator area for people to sit and view especially the pool area.”
- “Way too expensive for a membership. Out of reach for normal people. Then to use the creche as well is impossible. Swimming ratios make going swimming as a family 2 adults and 3 children impossible. Can go elsewhere. Daughters swimming lessons are expensive and poor, doesn't get enough help, teacher to student ratio is low and for the cost should be higher.”
- “Covered, secure cycle parking - covered by CCTV.”
- “I would like to see more staff as they seem to have been reduced and that is having an impact.”

### **Positive comments**

- “All staff and facilities excellent and user friendly.”
- “Fantastic staff and communication with members, be lost without the centre.”

## 6 Summary and conclusions

This report presents the results of a survey conducted by Shropshire Council to understand more about leisure facility use in Shropshire and what matters to people when considering health and wellbeing. The survey was open from mid October 2023 to 17th December 2023 and received 372 responses from across the county and beyond. The survey covered three main areas: the profile of respondents, the use of leisure facilities and activity levels, and the health and wellbeing of survey respondents.

The survey respondents were mostly women (61%), aged 35 to 74 (76%), married or in a civil partnership (61%), and parents with at least one child (55%). Most of them did not have any long-standing illness or disability that limits their daily activity (72%), were White (British, Irish, Welsh) (84%), and had no religion (40%).

The most used leisure facilities by the survey respondents were South Shropshire Leisure Centre in Ludlow (31%), Church Stretton Leisure Centre (25%), and SpArC in Bishop's Castle (13%). Most of the respondents had been using their leisure centre for over 2 years (68%) and visited 2-3 times a week (42%). The majority of them travelled by car (74%) to their leisure centre.

The survey respondents reported significant improvements in their physical health and wellbeing since attending the leisure centre. Before attending, only 19% described their physical health as very good, compared to 41% after attending. Similarly, only 16% described their wellbeing as very good before attending, compared to 46% after attending. The respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that attending the leisure centre had helped improve their physical health (79%) and wellbeing (75%), that they found sport/exercise enjoyable and satisfying (86%), and that it was important to them to do sport/exercise regularly (89%).

The survey respondents expressed mixed levels of satisfaction with different features of the leisure centre facilities. The highest levels of satisfaction were with reception staff and car parking, while the lowest levels of satisfaction were with café facilities and provision for babies and young children. Changing room provision was rated poor or very poor by 27% of the respondents, and this was the most common issue raised in the comments. Other areas of improvement suggested by the respondents included extended opening times and more sessions, availability and variety of classes, modern equipment, cleaning and maintenance, swimming pool heating, and accessibility.

The survey respondents rated their overall experience of using the leisure centre as 4 or 5 out of 5 (71%) and most of them would recommend their leisure centre to a friend (83%). The respondents also gave positive feedback and compliments for the staff and their work at the leisure centres.

The feedback from the survey will inform the work of Shropshire Council's Leisure Services when service planning and designing future service provision. The survey has shown that leisure facilities are highly valued by the customers and have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. The survey has also identified some areas of improvement that could enhance customer experience and satisfaction.



**January 2024**

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