

Dorset Open Land (Number 2) Anti-social Behaviour Related Public Spaces Protection Order 2025

Consultation Response Report

**Produced by Consultation and Engagement Team
for Dorset Council**

May 2025

Consultation Response Report

What was the consultation about?	Dorset Council ran a public consultation for residents and organisations to share their thoughts on the Dorset Open Land (Number 2) Anti-social Behaviour Related Public Spaces Protection Order 2025. It is a new Order which is intended to tackle issues of Anti-social Behaviour arising from the starting of fires in grass, heathland and forest areas. Such fires can contribute to climate change and result in risk to life; damage to biodiversity, habitats and property; and loss of income from tourism and other land uses, and include provisions relating to placing, throwing or dropping items likely to cause a fire, lighting fires, barbeques (including disposable barbeques), Chinese lanterns or fireworks, or using items which either (i) cause a naked flame or (ii) pose a risk of fire.
Over what period did the consultation run?	The consultation ran for 8 weeks finishing on 20 April 2025.
What consultation methods were used?	The consultation was available both electronically online and in paper form via post upon request. The consultation was promoted widely through both the local press and social media. The consultation had a separate communications plan and consultation plan prepared beforehand.
How many responses were received overall?	438 overall responses were received.
How representative is the response to the wider population?	From those that answered the demographic questions, 91.8% of responses were from residents of the Dorset Council area, 4.3% from residents elsewhere, 1.6% from Councillors or Politicians, 1.1% from third sector organisations, 0.2% from a public sector organisation, and 0.9% identified as 'other'. 66.1% of respondents were female, with 27.5% male. 49.5% of the overall response were from people aged 60 and above, with just 10.4% 39 or below. 91.1% of respondents that answered this question stated their ethnic group was White British. This is representative of the wider Dorset population. Responses from disabled people were at 12.9%.
Where will the results be published?	Results will be published on the council's website www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

How will the results be used?	Results from this survey will be used to inform the proposals and their next steps.
Who has produced this report?	Consultation Team, Dorset Council, May 2025.

Background

Following the disastrous fire at Wareham Forest in May 2020, which was most likely to have been started inadvertently, councillors asked officers to investigate ways in which the Council could help prevent wildfires in such terrain. A report was brought to the Council's Cabinet on 6 April 2021, outlining a number of measures that could be taken and included investigating the use of a PSPO to restrict activities likely to cause fires. This led to an Open Land PSPO being introduced for areas of Wareham Forest which is considered to have been successful, by raising public awareness.

Research has identified a small number of other councils who have introduced a similar provision following wildfires on open land and discussions with them have helped form an opinion the approach benefits public safety and protection of our natural environment. Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, Forestry England, and National Landscapes are all supportive.

National Landscapes has asked for a number of areas in their control to be covered by the provision. The evidence of issues at each location varies however, the similarity of terrain and level of public access are considered to be important factors when determining that the necessary criteria for a PSPO are met.

The draft Order covers areas of forest and heathland in the Parishes of Winterbourne Steepleton, Portesham, Stinsford, Puddletown, Moreton, Winfrith Newburgh, Affpuddle, Bere Regis, Wool, East Stoke, Wareham St Martin, Arne, East Holme, Steeple, Corfe, Studland, Corfe Mullen, Lytchett Minster and Upton, Ferndown, Holt, West Moors, St Leonards and St Ives, Verwood and Alderholt.

The Consultation

This consultation survey was directed at organisations and residents of Dorset Council. It asked for their thoughts on the proposed Open Land (Number 2) Public Space Protection Order 2025. This is a new Order intending to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour arising from the starting of fires in grass, heathland and forest areas.

Analysis Method

All questions within the consultation and the responses will be shown throughout the report. In most sections, due to the low number of responses, open text-box responses are shown verbatim. Where there are enough responses, these have been coded and themed.

Note: some figures may not sum due to rounding.

Executive Summary

There was an almost unanimous level of support for the proposals, with 95.7% (419 respondents) stating they were in support. 3.7% had concerns and a further 0.7% were not sure.

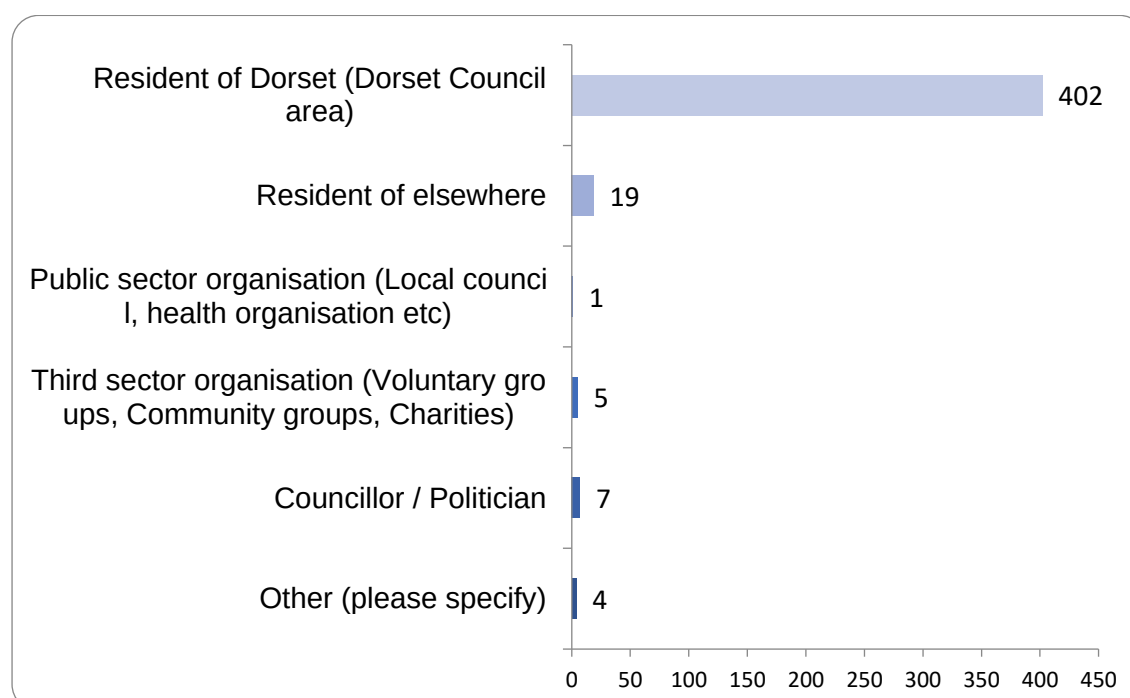
As shown in the open-text responses, support for the proposals continues, though there are several references to the area being expanded to cover a wider area.

Other notable comments are:

- How will this be enforced? Enforcement is key
- Linking to that, various suggestions on further controls to be put in place
- Selling of portable BBQs to be banned, or at least reduced
- Greater emphasis on enforcement and prevention
- Some comments referencing the risk to housing and residential areas

Q. Are you responding as a...?

(n-438)



Option	Total	Percent
Resident of Dorset (Dorset Council area)	402	91.8%

Resident of elsewhere	19	4.3%
Private business	0	0.00%
Public sector organisation (Local council, health organisation etc)	1	0.2%
Third sector organisation (Voluntary groups, Community groups, Charities)	5	1.1%
Councillor / Politician	7	1.6%
Other (please specify)	4	0.9%

The 4 'Other' consisted of:

1. Concerned member of the public
2. Soon to be lodger in Dorset
3. Resident of Ringwood Forest
4. Resident of BCP, scientific researcher Nature based Solutions to Climate change, climate change impacts on biodiversity

5 organisations or groups also gave an official response:

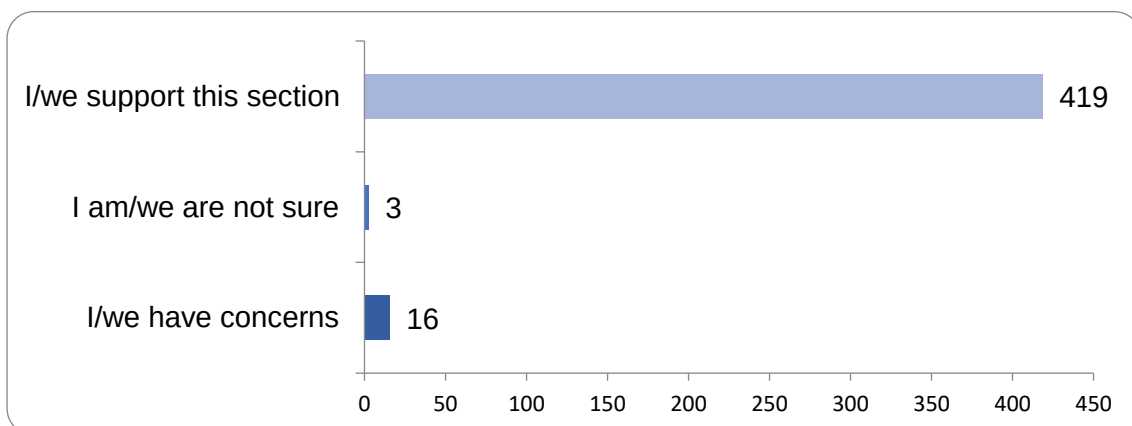
1. People Need Nature
2. Kingston Lacy National Trust
3. Verwood Town Council
4. Lesley Haskins Charitable Trust
5. RSPB

Their comments will be left in relevant points throughout the report.

Friends of Uddens and Cannon Hill Woodlands also responded, though it was not an official response.

Q. How do you feel about the Lighting of Fires proposals?

(n=438)



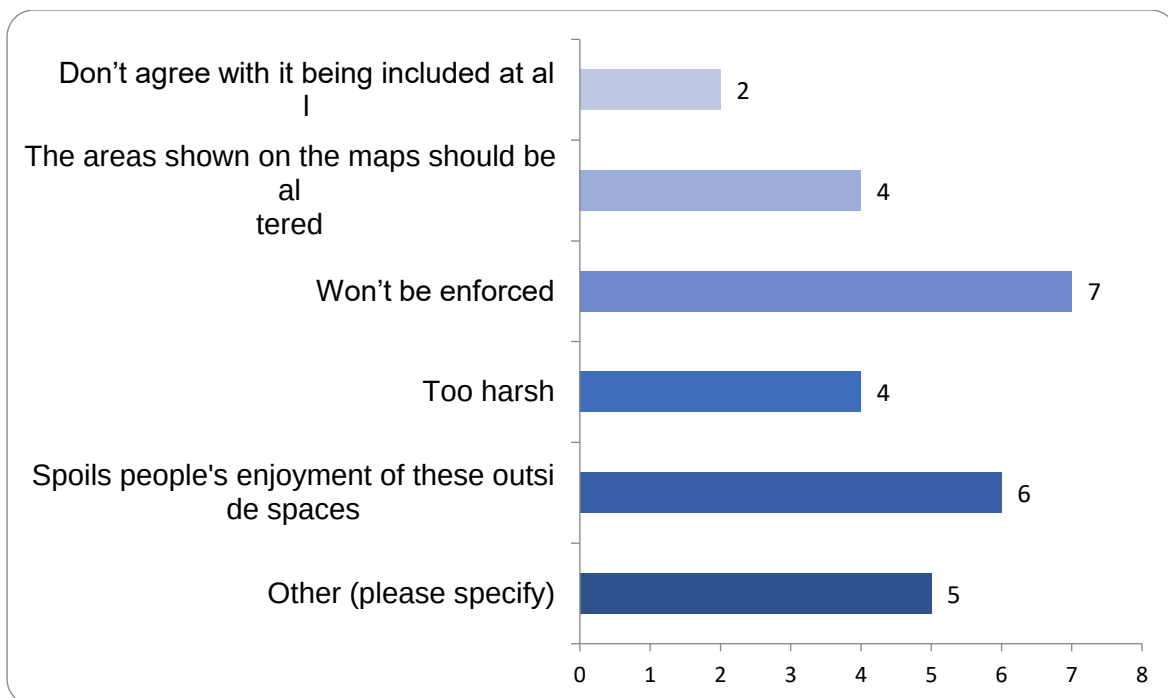
Option	Total	Percent
I/we support this section	419	95.7%
I am/we are not sure	3	0.7%
I/we have concerns	16	3.7%

95.7% of respondents (419) support the proposals, showing a clear consensus. 3.7% (16) have concerns, and a further 0.7% (3) were not sure.

Respondents who identified as disabled were just below the general level of support for the proposals, with 92.6% (50 respondents) in support. 7.4% (4) had concerns.

Q. What are your concerns about the lighting of fires proposals?

(n-16)



Option	Total	Percent
Don't agree with it being included at all	2	12.5%
The areas shown on the maps should be altered	4	25%
Won't be enforced	7	43.8%
Too harsh	4	25%
Spoils people's enjoyment of these outside spaces	6	37.5%
None of the above	0	0%
Other (please specify)	5	31.3%

It is worth noting for this question the low number of responses, meaning it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. However, of those that did have concerns, 43.8% (7 respondents) picked the proposals not being enforced as the primary issue. 37.5% (6) picked the proposals spoils people's enjoyment of these outside spaces; 25% (4) said that the areas shown on the map should be altered and that the proposals were too harsh; and 12.5% (2) did not agree with the proposals being added at all. Lastly, 31.3% (5) picked 'Other', and specified their response, which can be seen verbatim.

Other comments, verbatim:

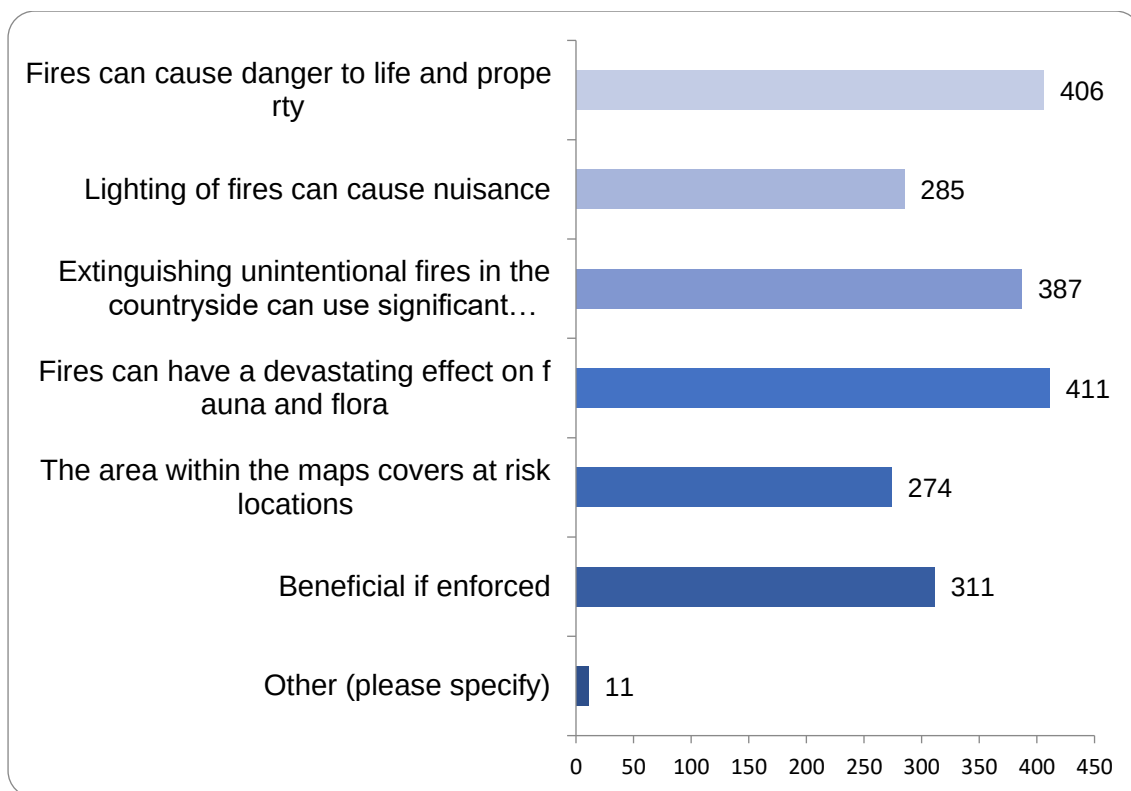
See comment
You should include candles specifically
£100 is not a deterrent. The areas covered are so large people will think it's worth the risk. If you get caught, you can share £100 between friends you're enjoying the fire with.
penalises responsible people
The whole area should be kept from lighting fires & enforced properly with a severe consequence for those that do
To be honest, common sense needs to prevail. Anyone caught lighting a fire should be dealt with under current legislation. We don't need more legislation to restrict ALL people because of a few idiots and miscreants
Mapping is incomplete. Has omitted Rushmoor (part of Holt and West Moors Heath), and Potterne Hill LNR, SNCI. Large area of Ringwood Forest that includes Moors Valley Country Park (we have seen several fires there in the last week!) must be included. Will cigarettes be banned and if so how enforced?

Organisation response

Lesley Haskins Charitable Trust had concerns for the proposal, stating that: "The areas shown on the maps should be altered."

Q. What do you particularly support about the lighting of fire proposals?

(n=419)



Option	Total	Percent
Fires can cause danger to life and property	406	96.9%
Lighting of fires can cause nuisance	285	68%
Extinguishing unintentional fires in the countryside can use significant emergency services manpower	387	92.4%
Fires can have a devastating effect on fauna and flora	411	98.1%
The area within the maps covers at risk locations	274	65.4%
Beneficial if enforced	311	74.2%
None of the above	0	0%
Other (please specify)	11	2.6%

There are 3 options that had over a 90% pick rate from the 419 respondents that answered this question. 'Fires can have a devastating effect on fauna and flora', 'Fires can cause danger to life and property' and 'Extinguishing unintentional fires in the countryside can use significant emergency services manpower' were the top 3 options at 98.1%, 96.9% and 92.4% respectively.

74.2% picked the proposal would be 'Beneficial if enforced', 68% chose 'Lighting of fires can cause nuisance' and 65.4% said 'The area within the maps covers at risk locations.' A further 2.6% responded with 'Other', and their verbatim responses are below.

Other comments, verbatim:

I don't know all the areas proposed but they would appear appropriate
Durlston Country should be included
The area within the maps is insufficient and doesn't cover all of the at risk locations.
I think some people do not appreciate that a fire can start long after they have left the area as the ground retains the heat
Fires can affect air quality and be bad for health
I worry about the animals. Ground living creatures, and ground nesting birds. It is so frightening.
Rubbish burning should not be necessary and all rubbish taken home for disposal. Fires are often not extinguished properly by amateurs.
Any new rules or orders must be enforced. If not, they are a waste of time.
Not just emergency services affected - so are land managers involved in fire fighting and mitigation
PSPO desperately needed!
Studland is particularly at risk if a mass evacuation is required during hot weather when the beaches are busy
I think the area needs to be wider
The devastating effects to wildlife and the unnecessary risks it puts our firefighters at!
Ban sale of disposable bbqs .
Budgens Copse is not included
Fine should be £1000, otherwise what deterrent?
Must be enforced.
Include bonfires.
Loss of birds, reptiles, insects and other animals
Loss of habitat for key species
environmental impact of single-use barbecues - impossible to recycle or responsibly dispose of, and harmful during manufacture.
Doesn't seem to cover the area it was originally meant for ie Wareham Forest. It also shouldn't be limited to a small No of areas but should cover all heaths, forest and other important land eg Durlston NNR.

Organisation response

Verwood Town Council commented: "PSPO desperately needed!"

Q. Further comments:

In this section, the organisation responses will be shown verbatim. For the general answers to this question, these have been coded and themed, to highlight the areas of particular importance to the respondents.

Organisation official responses:

People Need Nature: “People Need Nature strongly supports this proposal to ban fires, barbecues and other sources of fire ignition on Dorset's heathlands.”

Kingston Lacy National Trust: “We support this joined up approach to managing unwanted fires on our special places, particularly now we are seeing more fires started due to climate change.”

Verwood Town Council: “Fully support the proposed PSPO.”

RSPB: “The RSPB supports the implementation of the PSPO and welcomes the addition of more areas into this PSPO to extend from the Forestry Commission areas covered by the previous one. Whilst the areas have been extended and cover much more suitable ground, there are still some areas that seem to have been left out, including non-SSSI heathland, for example, land managed by the Erica Trust, and Cranborne Common. It would be useful to include these areas into this PSPO as well.”

Lesley Haskins Charitable Trust: “Additional areas need to be put in.

Not even all SSSI Heathland is Mapped eg. between Potterne Park and three legged cross.

Further Heathland, which is not SSSI is not shown e.g. North and west of Culpepper's dish.

Much Heathland within Forestry England land is not shown e.g. Morton plantation.”

Coding from the general comments:

Theme	Total
Support the principle	37
Area is too small/should include another area/be expanded	34
How will this be enforced?/Enforcement is key	21
Other	12
Stricter controls should be considered/blanket ban	11
Selling of disposable BBQs should be banned/reduced	10
Sentences reflecting damage caused/£100 not a deterrent	8
Greater emphasis on enforcement and prevention	8
As volume of houses increases, risk to residential areas increases	7
Enforced with fines	6
Cigarettes also pose a risk and should be included	6
Information must be made clear, concise and prominent in these areas	6
People carry produce into area but are unable to remove it/don't ensure coals are extinguished before leaving	5

Recording and education in schools needed	4
Find spaces where small campervans can visit without use of naked fires/responsible use of camping stoves and lamps	4
Designated spaces for bbqs	3
Fire breaker is no longer maintained - dangerous/fire rides not maintained	3
Use of trailcams/drones for surveillance	2
Fireworks a big issue	2
Fine/order won't stop people lighting fires	2
Other	8

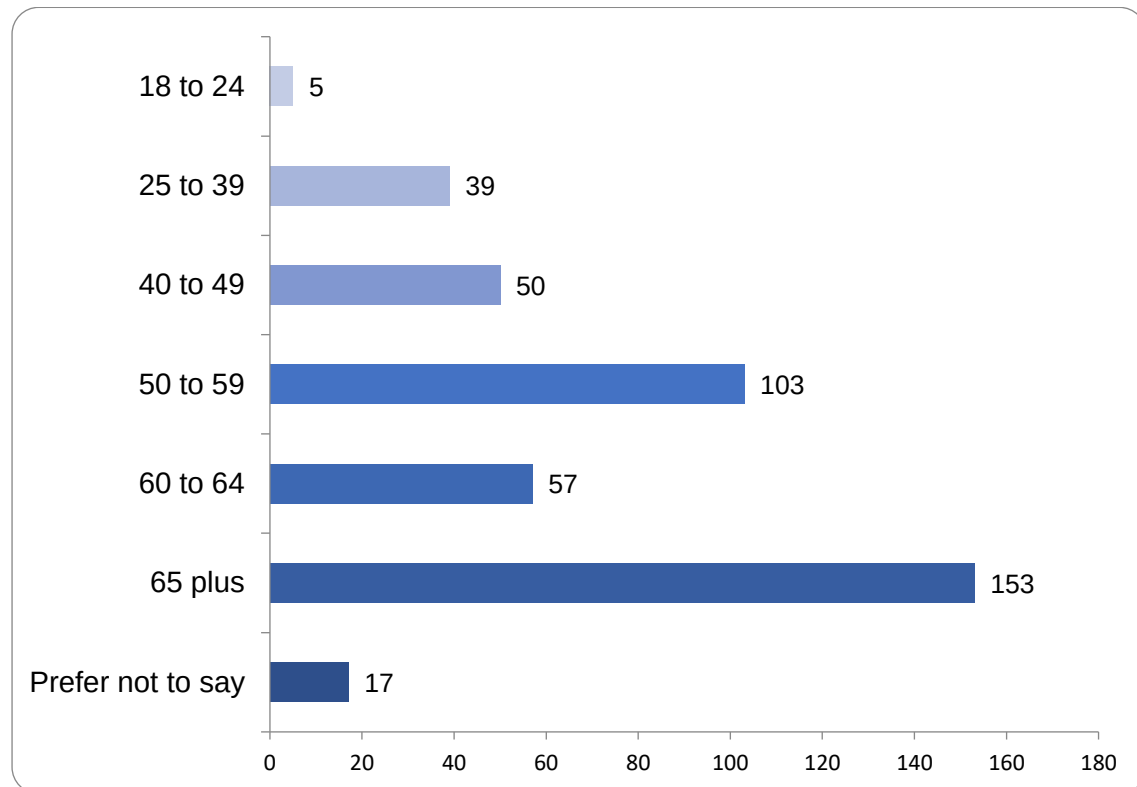
As part of the coding, there were several references to specific areas that should be part of the proposals. These have also been coded:

Location	Total
Durlston Country Park	7
All of Purbeck	3
Cannon Hill Plantation	3
Rempstone Estate	2
Puddletown forest	2
Ringwood forest	2
Townsend (Dorset Wildlife Trust)	2
Wareham forest	2
Uddens Plantation	2
Potterne Park	2
Moors Valley	2
Cranborne Common	2
FurtherHeathland, which is not SSSI	2
Swanage	1
Old Harry Rocks	1
Ballard Down	1
Morden Bog	1
White Sheet	1
Bourne Valley Nature Reserve	1
Talbot Heath	1
West Moors plantation	1
Castle man trailway	1
All wooded areas in Alderholt	1
Budgens Copse	1
Verwood forest	1
All SSSI Heathland	1
Much Heathland within Forestry England	1
Poor Common	1
Canford Heath	1
Land managed by Erica Trust	1

Demographic information

Q. Age

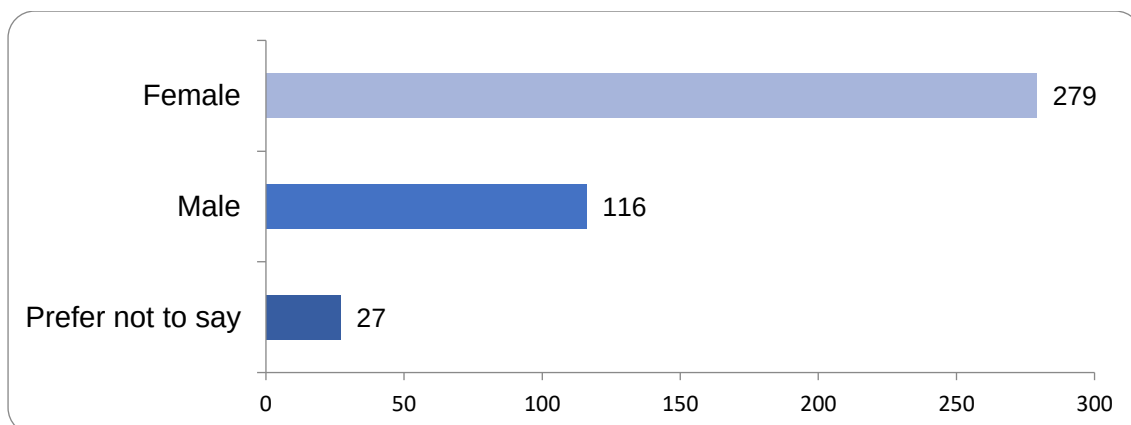
(n-424)



Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	0	0%
18 to 24	5	1.2%
25 to 39	39	9.2%
40 to 49	50	11.8%
50 to 59	103	24.3%
60 to 64	57	13.4%
65 plus	153	36.1%
Prefer not to say	17	4%

Q. What is your sex?

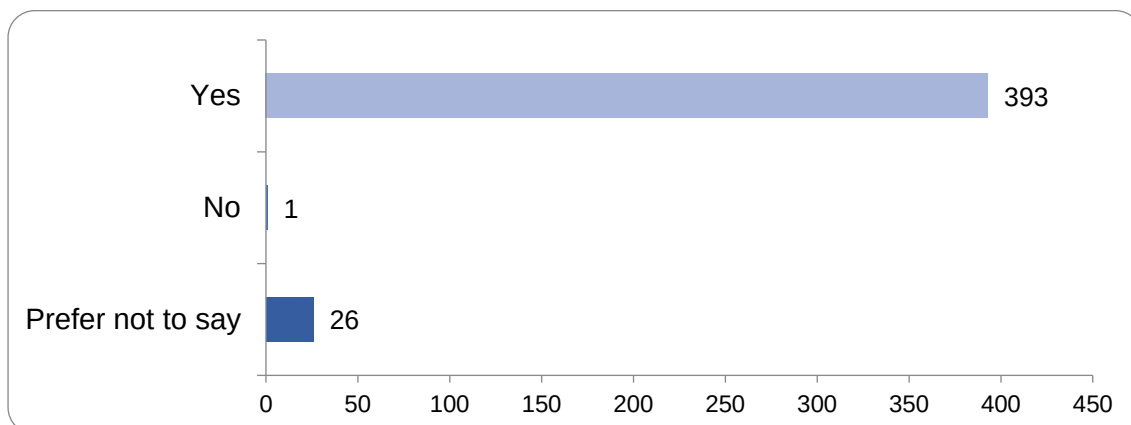
(n-422)



Option	Total	Percent
Female	279	66.1%
Male	116	27.5%
Prefer not to say	27	6.4%

Q. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

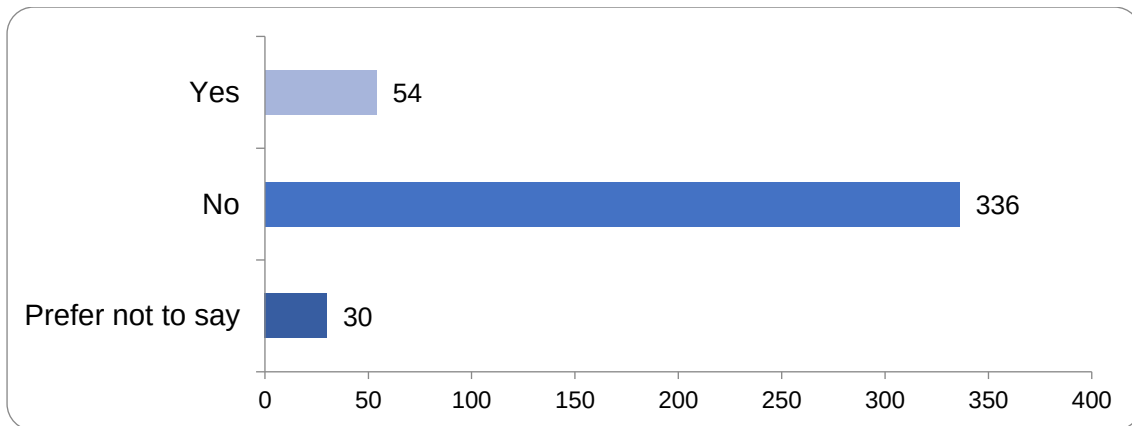
(n-420)



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	393	93.6%
No	1	0.2%
Prefer not to say	26	6.2%

Q. The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

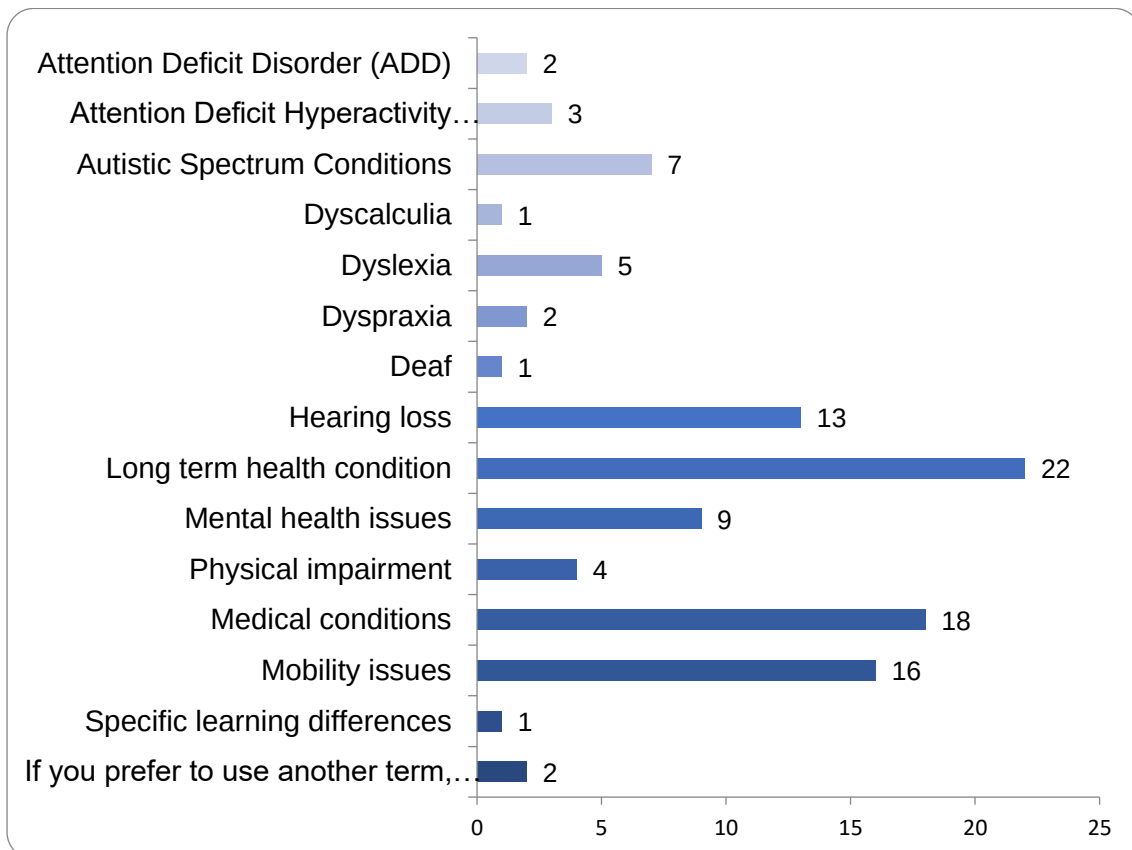
(n-420)



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	54	12.9%
No	336	80%
Prefer not to say	30	7.1%

Q. If at the previous question you stated you consider yourself to have a disability, please state the type of disability which applies to you.

(n=61)

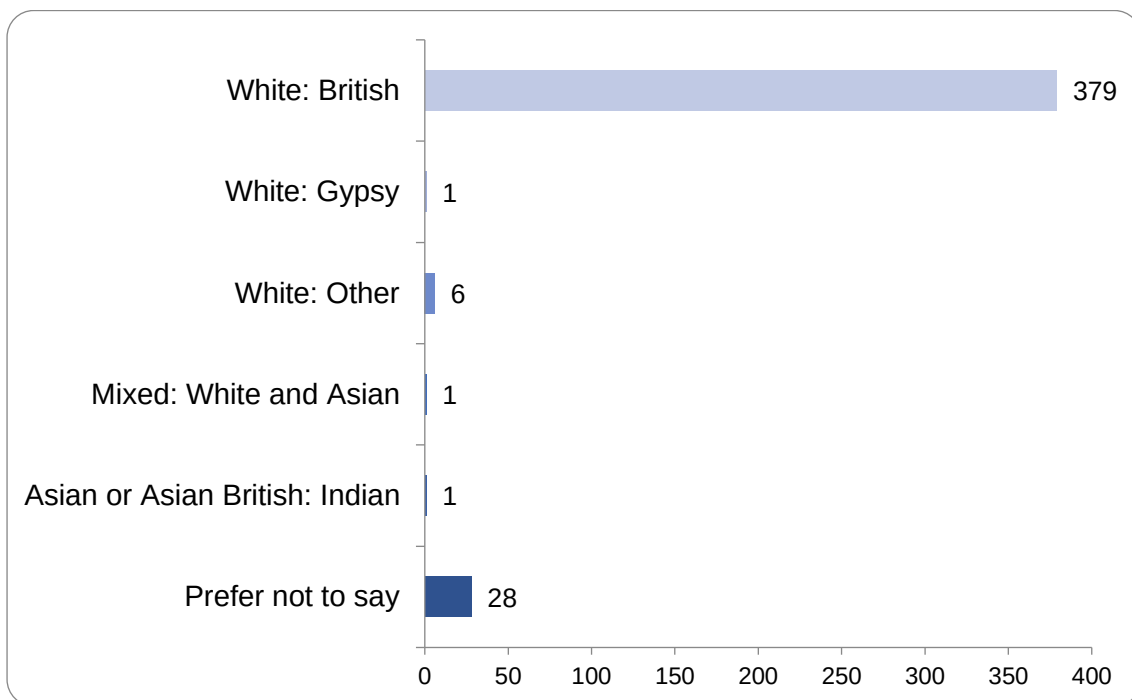


Option	Total	Percent
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	2	3.3%
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	3	4.9%

Autistic Spectrum Conditions	7	11.5%
Blind	0	0%
Dyscalculia	1	1.6%
Dyslexia	5	8.2%
Dyspraxia	2	3.3%
Deaf	1	1.6%
Hearing loss	13	21.3%
Long term health condition	22	36.1%
Mental health issues	9	14.8%
Physical impairment	4	6.6%
Sign Language User	0	0%
Visually impaired	0	0%
Medical conditions	18	29.5%
Mobility issues	16	26.2%
Learning disability	0	0%
Specific learning differences	1	1.6%
Wheelchair user	0	0%
If you prefer to use another term, please write in the box below	2	3.3%

Q. What is your ethnic group?

(n=416)

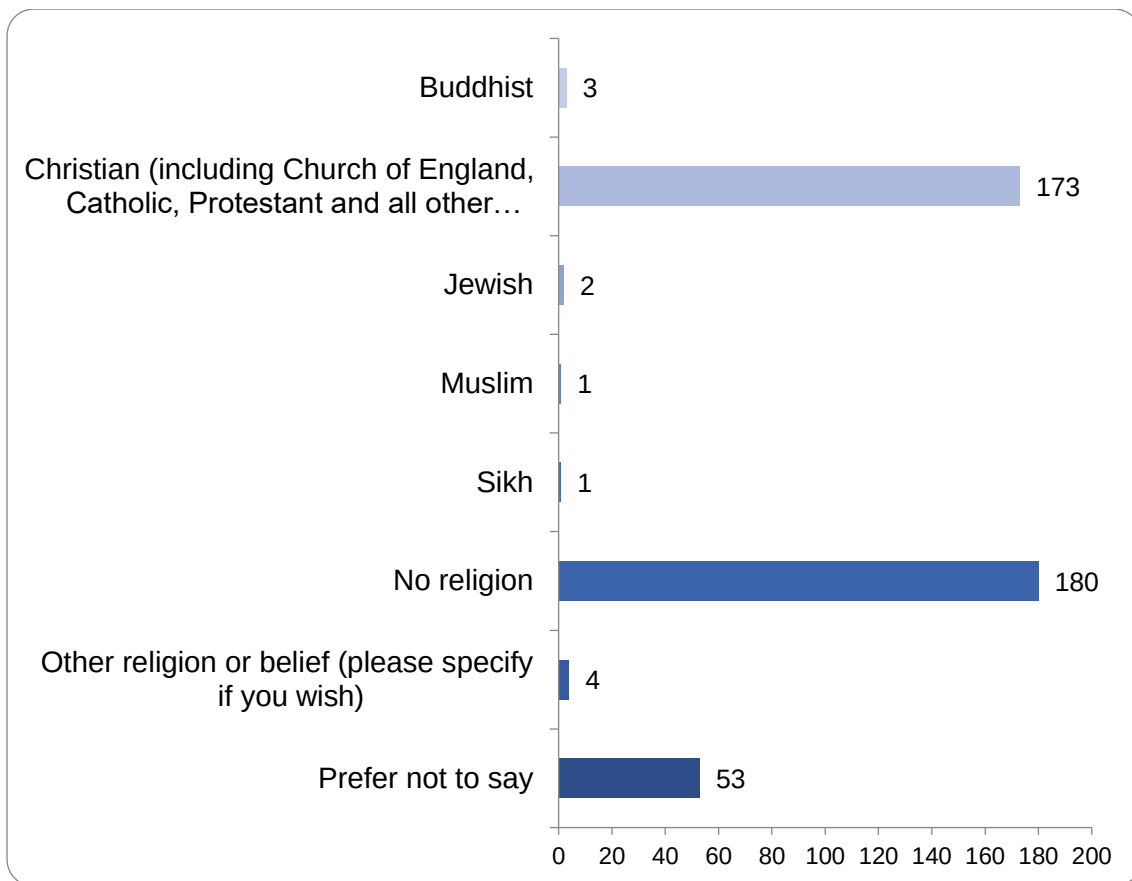


Option	Total	Percent
White: British	379	91.1%
White: Irish	0	0%

White: Gypsy	1	0.2%
White: Irish Traveller	0	0%
White: Other	6	1.4%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0%
Mixed: White and Asian	1	0.2%
Mixed: Other	0	0%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	1	0.2%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistan	0	0%
Asian or Asian British: Chinese	0	0%
Asian or Asian British: Other	0	0%
Black or Black British	0	0%
Arab	0	0%
Other ethnic group	0	0%
Prefer not to say	28	6.7%

Q. What is your religion or belief?

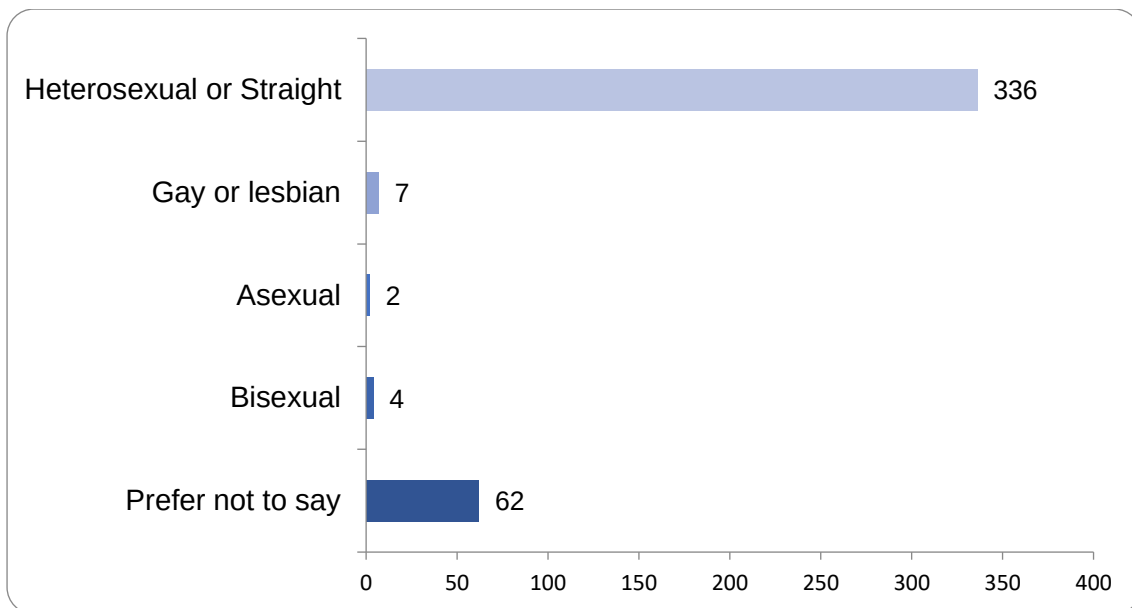
(n-417)



Option	Total	Percent
Buddhist	3	0.7%
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	173	41.5%
Hindu	0	0%
Jewish	2	0.5%
Muslim	1	0.2%
Sikh	1	0.2%
No religion	180	43.2%
Other religion or belief (please specify if you wish)	4	1%
Prefer not to say	53	12.7%

Q. What is your sexual orientation?

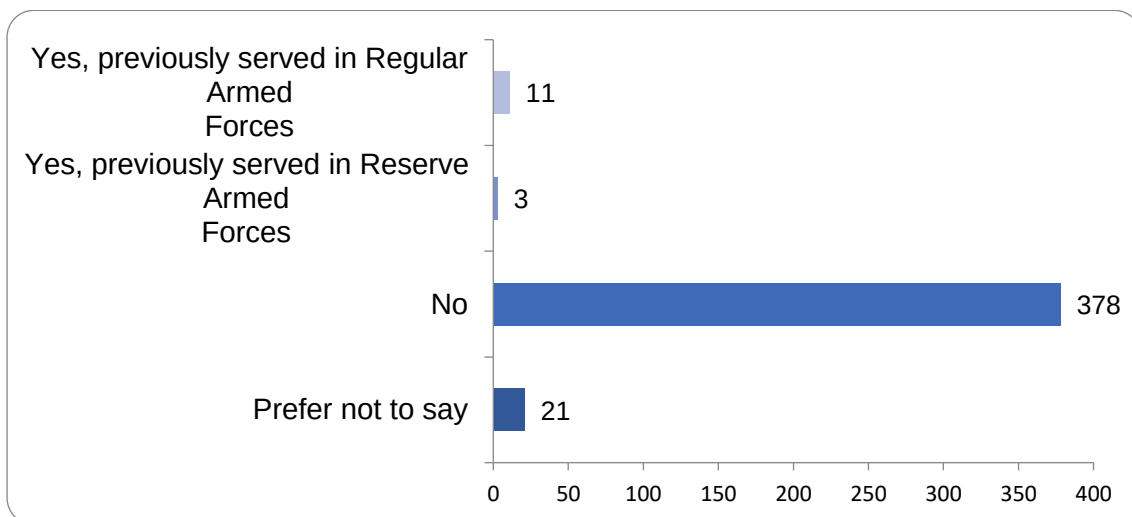
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Option	Total	Percent
Heterosexual or Straight	336	81.8%
Gay or lesbian	7	1.7%
Asexual	2	0.5%
Bisexual	4	1%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	62	15.1%

Q. Have you previously served in the UK Armed Forces?

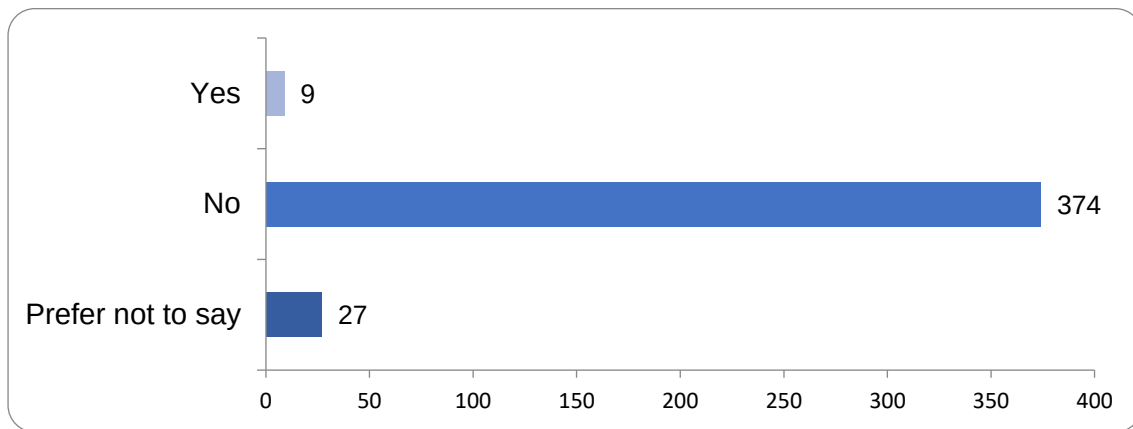
(n=413)



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, previously served in Regular Armed Forces	11	2.7%
Yes, previously served in Reserve Armed Forces	3	0.7%
No	378	91.5%
Prefer not to say	21	5.1%

Q. Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?

(n=410)



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	9	2.2%
No	374	91.2%
Prefer not to say	27	6.6%