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Foresters' Forest National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership Programme in the Forest of Dean

Appendix 1 – Survey Results



Project Title:

Foresters' Forest National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership Programme in the Forest of Dean

Final Evaluation 2022

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Contents

Contents	iii
List of Figures	iv
List of Tables.....	v
1. Introduction and overview of the evaluation	1
1.1. Introduction	1
2. Residents and Visitors	3
2.1 The On-line Foresters' Forest Survey 2021.....	3
2.2 Characteristics of the Hundred of St. Briavels	4
2.3 Basic demographic characteristics of the sample.....	5
2.4 The Foresters' Forest Programme – Awareness and Participation.....	12
2.5 Knowledge of the heritage of the Forest of Dean	17
2.6. Opinions on Forest of Dean issues	21
2.7. Impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Residents and Visitors.....	30
2.8. Our Shared Forest	36
2.9. Respondent perceptions of what is special or needs to be improved	37
2.10. Comments relating to the Foresters' Forest Programme	39
2.11. How respondents found out about the survey.....	42
3. Volunteers and Volunteering.....	44
3.1. Volunteer Characteristics	44
3.2. Volunteer Activity	46
3.3. Volunteer Motivations and Impact.....	49
3.4. Volunteering and COVID-19	54

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Gender of sample respondents	5
Figure 2 - Self-reported disabilities of sample	6
Figure 3 - Age of sample respondents	7
Figure 4 - Ethnicity of Respondents	7
Figure 5 - Occupation of Respondents.....	8
Figure 6 - Resident / Visitor breakdown of respondents	9
Figure 7 - Length of Residence in the Forest	9
Figure 8 - Annual visits to the Forest by visitors in the sample	10
Figure 9 - Distribution mapping of visitors to the Forest of Dean (2021 survey sample)	11
Figure 10 - Awareness of the Foresters' Forest Programme	12
Figure 11 - Participation in Foresters' Forest activities	13
Figure 12 – Sample respondent participation in Foresters' Forest activities (by category; 2021 survey).....	14
Figure 13 - Volunteering in the Foresters' Forest Programme	15
Figure 14 - Numbers of Respondents volunteering on Projects.....	16
Figure 15 - Self-reported knowledge of heritage topics	17
Figure 16 - Self-reported knowledge of heritage topics (Mean scores).....	18
Figure 17 - Attribution of learning about heritage to Foresters' Forest by topic.....	19
Figure 18 - Attribution of learning about heritage to Foresters' Forest by heritage category	20
Figure 19 - Views on Heritage in the Forest of Dean.....	23
Figure 20 - Views on Heritage in the Forest of Dean (mean scores)	24
Figure 21 - Views on the Forest of Dean.....	25
Figure 22 - Views on the Forest of Dean (mean scores for 2018 and 2019).....	26
Figure 23 - Views on learning and involvement.....	27
Figure 24 - Views on learning and involvement (mean scores)	27
Figure 25 - Views on Woodland Management: comparison of 2018 and 2021 data	28
Figure 26 - Frequency of visits to woodland in the Forest of Dean	29
Figure 27 - Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on visits.....	30
Figure 28 - Reasons behind Forest visitation behaviour due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)	31
Figure 29 - Reasons behind visit changes due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Other).....	32
Figure 30 - Learning about heritage as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19)	32
Figure 31 - Changes to the amount of learning as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19).....	33
Figure 32 - Reasons behind changes in learning behaviour due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)	33
Figure 33 - Impact of Foresters' Forest projects being interrupted.....	34
Figure 34 - Impact of Foresters' Forest projects being interrupted (crosstab status).....	35
Figure 35 - How did changes to projects as a result of COVID-19 impact you?.....	35
Figure 36 - Awareness of 'Our Shared Forest'.....	36
Figure 37 - Awareness of 'Our Shared Forest' by Resident/Visitor	36
Figure 38 - Aspects of Heritage that make the Forest of Dean special	37
Figure 39 - Aspects of Heritage that make the Forest of Dean special (Summary).....	38
Figure 40 - Aspects of the heritage that needs to be improved in the Forest of Dean.....	39
Figure 41 - Comments on the Foresters' Forest Programme.....	40
Figure 42 - How Respondents found out about the Survey	43
Figure 43 - Proportion of the sample undertaking Foresters' Forest volunteer work (2021). 44	

Figure 44 - Have you done any volunteer work? Comparison of survey sample responses over the programme period.....	45
Figure 45 - Volunteers cross-tabulated with residency	45
Figure 46 - Volunteer employment status.....	46
Figure 47 - Volunteer participation in projects (frequency)	47
Figure 48 - Types of work engaged in by volunteers	48
Figure 49 - What were your reasons for wanting to undertake volunteer work?.....	49
Figure 50 - What were your reasons for wanting to undertake volunteer work in? (Mean scores)	50
Figure 51 - I can make a difference to the future of the Forest of Dean.....	51
Figure 52 - I can make a difference to the future of the Forest of Dean (Mean).....	52
Figure 53 - Personal benefits from FF volunteering activity (comparison)	53
Figure 54 - The impact of COVID-19 on volunteering.....	54
Figure 55 - How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect your volunteering?.....	55

List of Tables

Table 1 - Perceptions of Heritage (% of Respondents).....	22
Table 2 - Views on Heritage in the Forest of Dean, aggregated	22

1. Introduction and overview of the evaluation

1.1. Introduction

This report presents the key results and analysis of a survey of residents, visitors and volunteers, to contribute to the understanding of the impact of the Delivery Stage of the Foresters' Forest National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership Programme operating in the Forest of Dean at the end of December 2021.

The resident and visitor on-line survey was developed to explore awareness of the Foresters' Forest programme in the Forest of Dean, and incorporated questions relating to volunteering and other forms of participation in the natural, built, and cultural heritage projects delivered through the Programme. Data were collected from an on-line survey during the period 22 October – 30 November 2021. A total of 1004 questionnaires were completed.

Methodology

At the start of 2018 an online survey was designed and implemented over the period 1st February – 31st March 2018 (at the start of the Delivery stage). The target population were residents of the Forest of Dean and visitors to the area. The aim of the survey was to assess understanding, knowledge, and perceptions about the activities of the Foresters' Forest programme in the Forest of Dean. This baseline survey received a total of 780 questionnaires completed during the period.

The survey was repeated between 26th September – 30th October 2019 at the end of the first half of the Delivery phase, receiving 402 responses.

Latterly, the survey was repeated as the Delivery Stage drew to a close, being open for responses for the period 22nd October – 30th November 2021, which received 1004 responses.

The survey was designed to be repeated through the programme period to enable a comparison of responses over the full delivery time period of the Foresters' Forest Programme (2017-22).

The on-line survey was designed to maximise potential responses from residents in the Forest and was also available for visitors to make a submission. As with any form of remotely delivered survey, the respondents are a self-selected group that will not necessarily be representative of the target population (residents within the Hundred of St. Briavels and visitors to the Forest of Dean). A key aspect of the methodology therefore is an initial comparison of socio-economic characteristics of both the survey sample respondents and the wider Forest of Dean (FoD) population.

Analysis of the survey data includes the following:

- Descriptive statistics that summarise key characteristics of the sample;
- Cross-tabulations to compare answers from sub-groups within the sample (e.g. comparisons of male/female; visitor/resident; within age group) on the same questions;
- Comparison of mean scores between sub-groups to explore for significant differences in terms of understanding, knowledge, and perceptions about the forest.
- Comparison of survey results over the programme period.

The on-line survey, in line with other elements of the Foresters' Forest programme evaluation incorporates NLHF Guidance on evaluation (Evaluation guidance: Landscape Partnerships, Feb 2013, revised July 2014), identifying nine key outcomes for landscape partnership programmes:

Outcomes for heritage with NLHF investment, heritage will be:

- better managed
- in better condition
- identified/recorded

Outcomes for people – with NLHF investment, people will have:

- developed skills
- learnt about heritage
- volunteered time

Outcomes for communities – with NLHF investment:

- environmental impacts will be reduced
- more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage
- your local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit

In addition, the LP Guidance notes the following:

- The evaluation must measure the difference the programme makes as a whole: to heritage, to people, and to communities.
- Individual projects should contribute to one or more of the nine outcomes.
- Evidence collected should enable the evaluation to show the 'distance travelled' as a result of NLHF funding.
- Decision-makers, stakeholders, local people and partners will all want a better understanding of the nature of lasting benefits arising from the programme.

2. Residents and Visitors

2.1 The On-line Foresters' Forest Survey 2021

The target population for the on-line survey were residents of the Hundred of St. Briavels and visitors to the Forest of Dean. A large number of people live around the edges of the Forest and visit regularly, some are also involved in volunteering for FF projects, and others take part in a range of activities delivered through the FF Programme.

The aims of the survey include the following:

- understand the views of residents and visitors towards the Forest
- assess the level of knowledge about natural, built and cultural heritage of the Forest
- identify areas of concern
- identify the level of participation in FF programme activities
- identify demographic characteristics of the respondents

The evaluation team recognise that an on-line survey is unlikely to provide a representative sample of the population of the target area. Those without access to a computer, or lacking in the skills required, will not be included, neither will young people who are unlikely to have the interest or capacity for engaging with an on-line instrument. Feedback from these elements of the population were sought through other measures. Evaluation resource constraints, however, limited the data collection options in relation to exploring the views of the wider community of the Forest of Dean. An on-line survey was identified as the most cost-efficient means of collecting data from the wider community and a survey was designed in 2017 and applied in the first quarter of 2018, receiving 780 usable responses. Analysis revealed a reasonable representation of the population although excluding those under 18 years of age. The survey was therefore modified slightly and delivered for a second time in the Autumn of 2019 to explore any changes in understanding of the Foresters' Forest Programme, engagement in activities, or levels of knowledge regarding heritage. A significantly smaller sample of respondents (N=402) engaged with the survey, although with similar socio-demographic characteristics as the previous sample of respondents. The survey was further modified for delivery in Autumn 2021 to take account of a number of issues arising in the previous iterations of the survey, and to collect additional data to reflect the potential impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The 2021 survey achieved a considerably higher participation rate, resulting in 1004 responses. This success can be attributed to use of targeted paid advertising on social media and use of survey incentives. The results of the 2021 online survey are presented in following pages of this report. Comparisons have been made with 2018 data and, where appropriate and useful, with 2019 data.

2.2 Characteristics of the Hundred of St. Briavels

The Foresters' Forest Programme was delivered across the area of the Hundred of St. Briavels, an area of land totalling 48,327 acres (19,557 hectares) which has had a fluctuating boundary over the years, although a boundary was specifically defined for the purposes of Programme delivery¹.

The total population of the Hundred (2011 Census) was 44,260 with 20% of the total under 18 years of age and 27.8% over the age of 60 years. This age structure is broadly similar to that across the rest of England but with an older population than compared to the rest of England. The age structure is also showing a trend towards ageing, with a slight decline in those under 13 years and a larger increase in older people (those over 60 years of age) over the ten-year period 2001-2011. An increase in 'one-person' and 'married couple-no dependent children' households, and a slight reduction in the proportion of those living in 'married couple – dependent children' households is also indicative of this.

The sub-set of the population identifying as an ethnic minority was 1.48% in 2011, up from 0.95% in 2001. The surveys carried out in 2018 and 2021 compare with the 2011 Census as follows:

	2011 Census	2018 Survey (Residents)	2021 Survey (Residents)
Age under 18 years	20%	2.31%	0.26%
Age over 60 years	27.8 %	30.46%	38.25%
Ethnic Minority	1.48%	1.09%	0.77%

This indicates that the survey significantly under-represents those in the local population aged 18-years or under. Those in the over 60-years band appear to be slightly over-represented but allowing for the impact of an aging population since the census, is likely to be less significant than at face value. The survey also under-represents ethnic minorities.

¹ Hart, C.E. (1945) The Origin and the Geographical extent of the Hundred of St. Briavels in Gloucestershire.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Vol. 66, pp.138-165.

2.3 Basic demographic characteristics of the sample

Gender

A total of 1004 responses were received in 2021, compared to 402 in 2019 and 780 in 2018. In 2021 the respondent breakdown was 34.9% Male and 63.1% Female (2% not specifying) compared to 2018 when the gender breakdown was 34.7% Males and 62.7% Female (0.7% not specifying) representing similar sample characteristics.

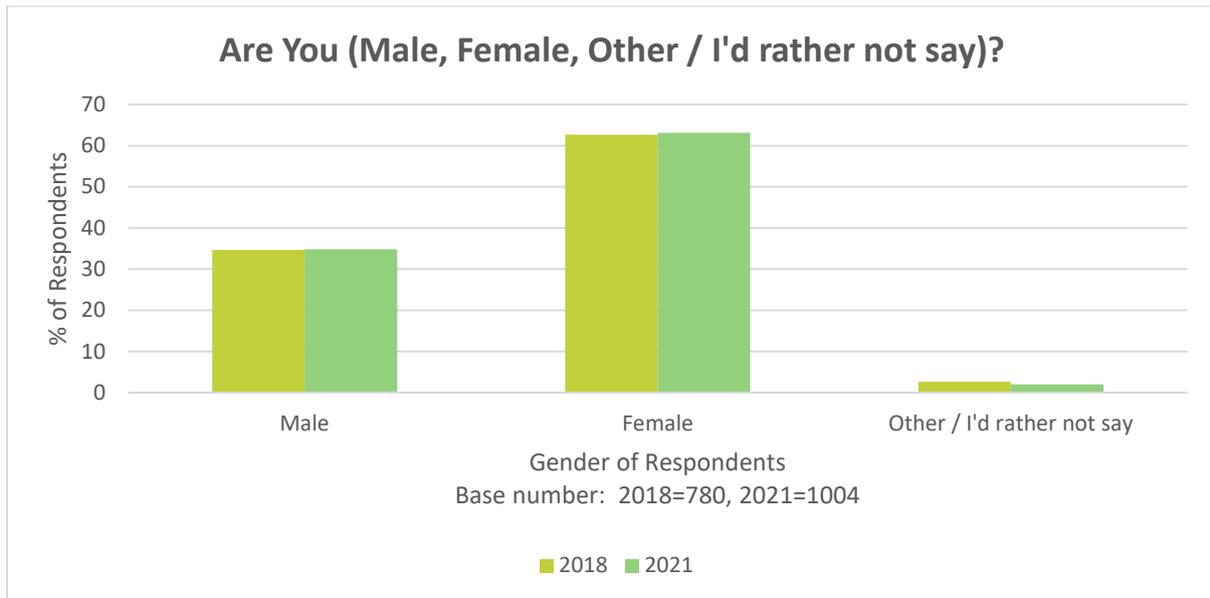


Figure 1 - Gender of sample respondents

Disability

For the purposes of these surveys, disability is defined consistent with the Equality Act 2010, under which you are defined as disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative affect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

In 2021, 11% of respondents reported having a disability of some form compared to 2019 with 9% and 10% in 2018. The majority of those stating a disability indicated some kind of physical impairment affecting mobility (8.5% of the total sample, n = 85), while only 1.2% indicated a mental impairment and 1.4% a communications disability. These sample percentage figures are broadly stable across the three surveys. It is worth noting that 4% of the sample (n=40) indicated they did not want to state whether or not they had a disability.

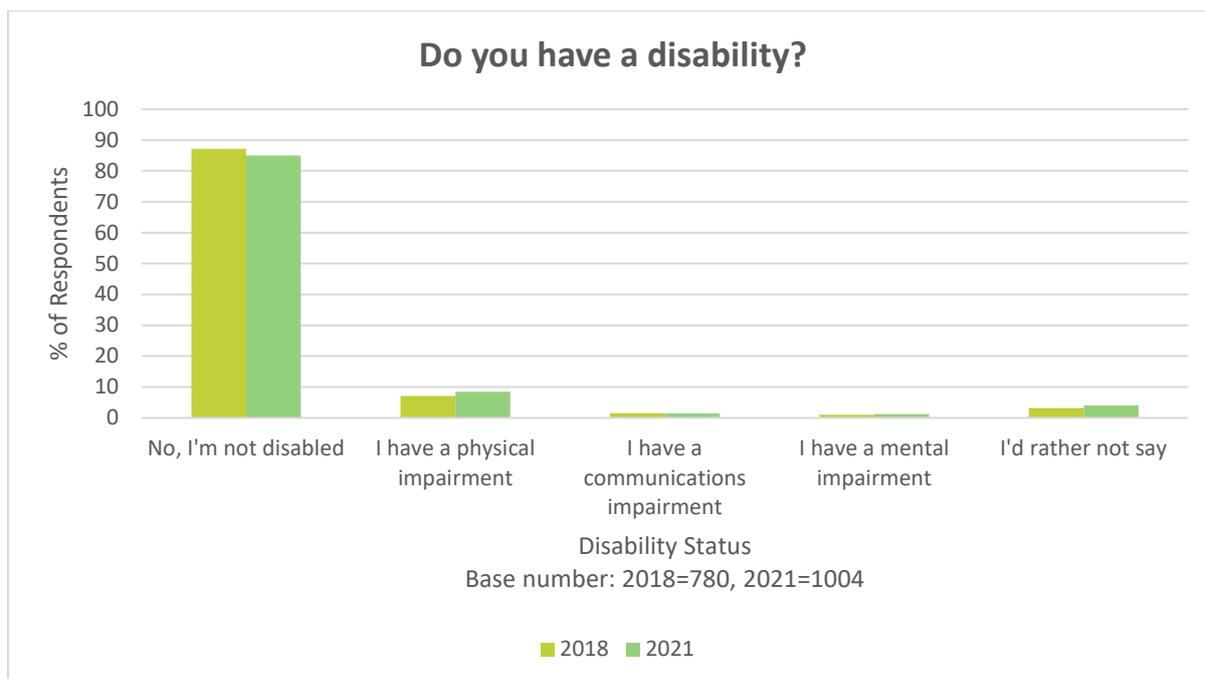


Figure 2 - Self-reported disabilities of sample

Age

The age of respondents was heavily skewed towards those over 26 years of age with 2% being 25 yrs. or under, although this is a marginal increase on the 1.5% of 2019, and only 0.3% (n=3) of sample respondents being under 19 yrs. The most well-represented age group at just over 35.5% (n=357) are those aged between 45 and 59 years, closely followed by the 60-74-year age bracket at just under 32.7% (n=329). The other significant group of respondents were those aged 26-44 years (23.6%; n=237), this group having been consistently 'third-place' over the programme period, with a much smaller number of respondents aged over 75 years.

This grouping of respondents in the 26-74 age range is consistent across the programme period and with the age structure of the area population weighted towards older people, this is a reasonable representation of those in the 26–74-year range. The lack of young respondents, whilst disappointing, likely reflects the nature of the subject matter, the use of a relatively long and complex online survey, and the use of Facebook to promote the survey which whilst very effective does have age targeting limitations as younger people increasingly reject this platform. The sample thus appears to over-represent the older age categories of the wider population in the area, while the younger age groups are not well-represented (particularly those under 25 years), compared to characteristics of the resident population. It is important to keep in mind that the sample of respondents includes visitors as well as local residents, making a comparison with the resident Forest population more difficult.

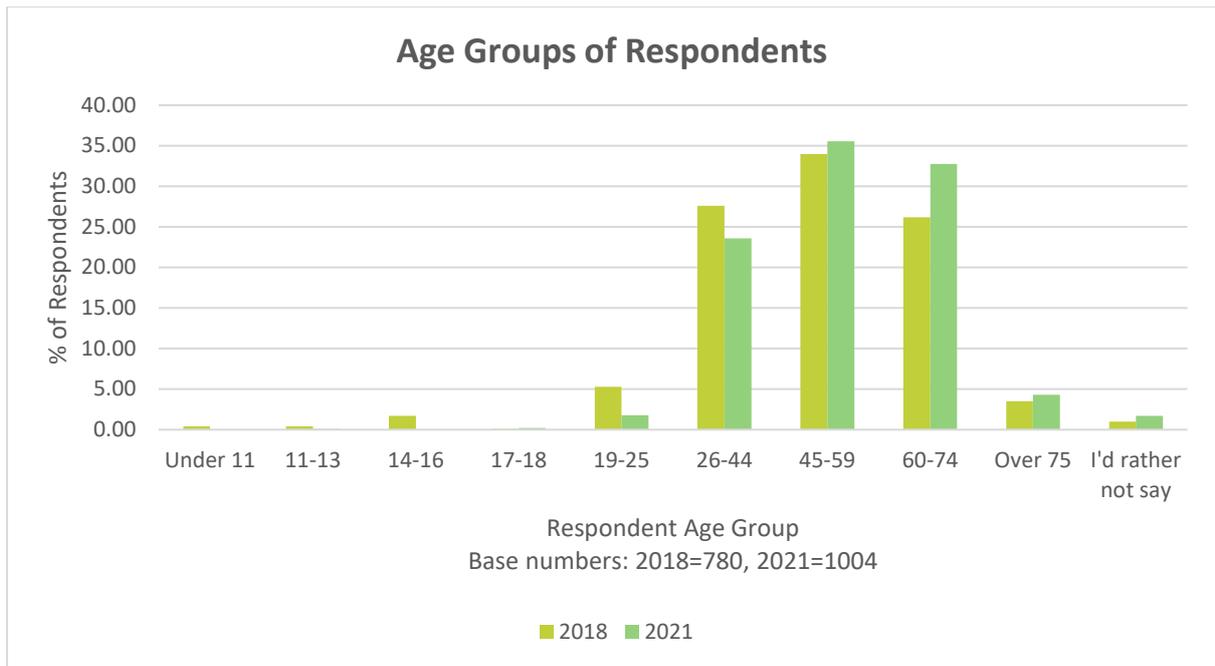


Figure 3 - Age of sample respondents

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of respondents was overwhelmingly white (95%), with other ethnic groups representing around 1%, and approximately 4% electing not to specify. There is no substantive change between this and the previous surveys and it is representative of the target population in the Forest of Dean according to the 2011 census information.

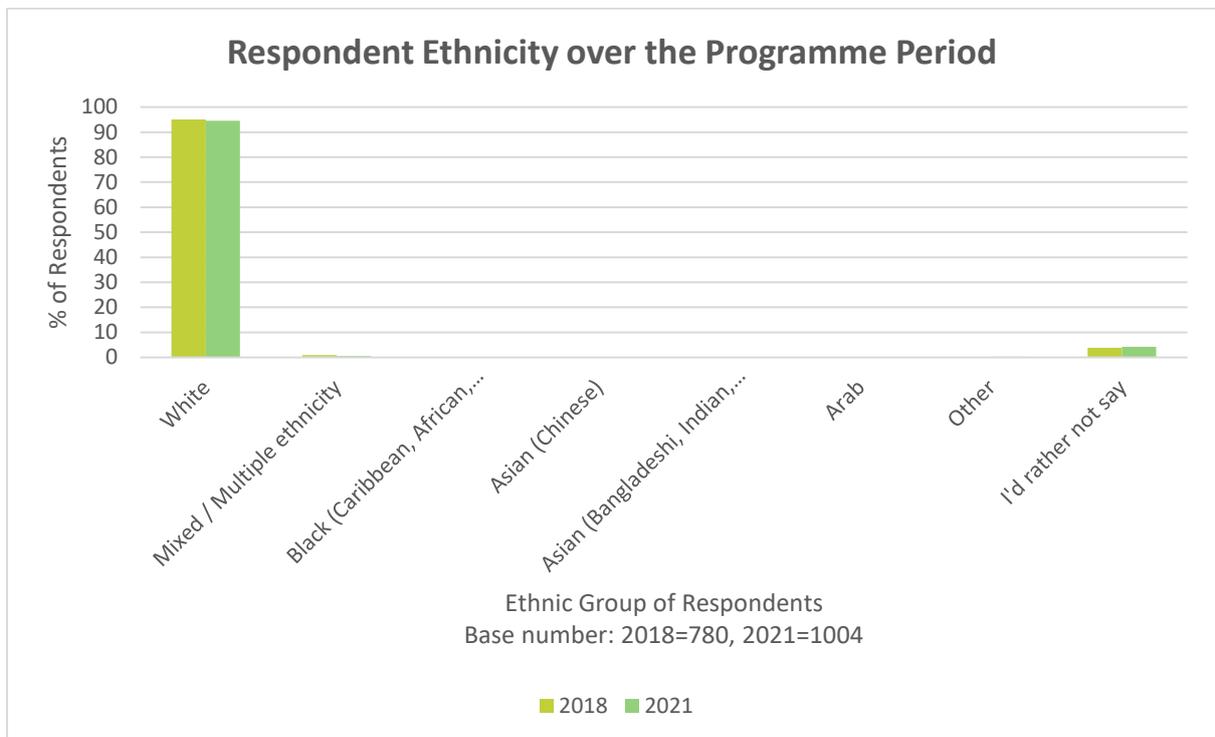


Figure 4 - Ethnicity of Respondents

Occupation

Respondents were asked to indicate their occupational status. The highest responses were for the categories 'Work full-time' and 'Retired', at 43% and 30% of the responses respectively. A further 18% of respondents reported being in part-time work, thus indicating that 61% of the sample were in employment of some form, with a further 2% identifying themselves as unemployed.

People with caring responsibilities (children or relatives) formed 1% of the sample, and 1% reported being at school or a student. A small proportion of responses (4%, n=45) elected not to state their occupation.

It is worth noting that respondents were able to indicate more than one 'occupation' category but the data shows that there were only 20 'excess' responses indicating just less than 2% of the sample listed multiple categories in their response to the question.

Over the programme period overall employment remained very consistent with just 6.3 percentage points(pp) difference from highest (61%) to lowest (54.7%) and variation in retirees only marginally greater at 8.9pp. Relatively few respondents identified themselves as 'Homemaker' or 'Carer'in either the 2018 Or 2021 surveys..

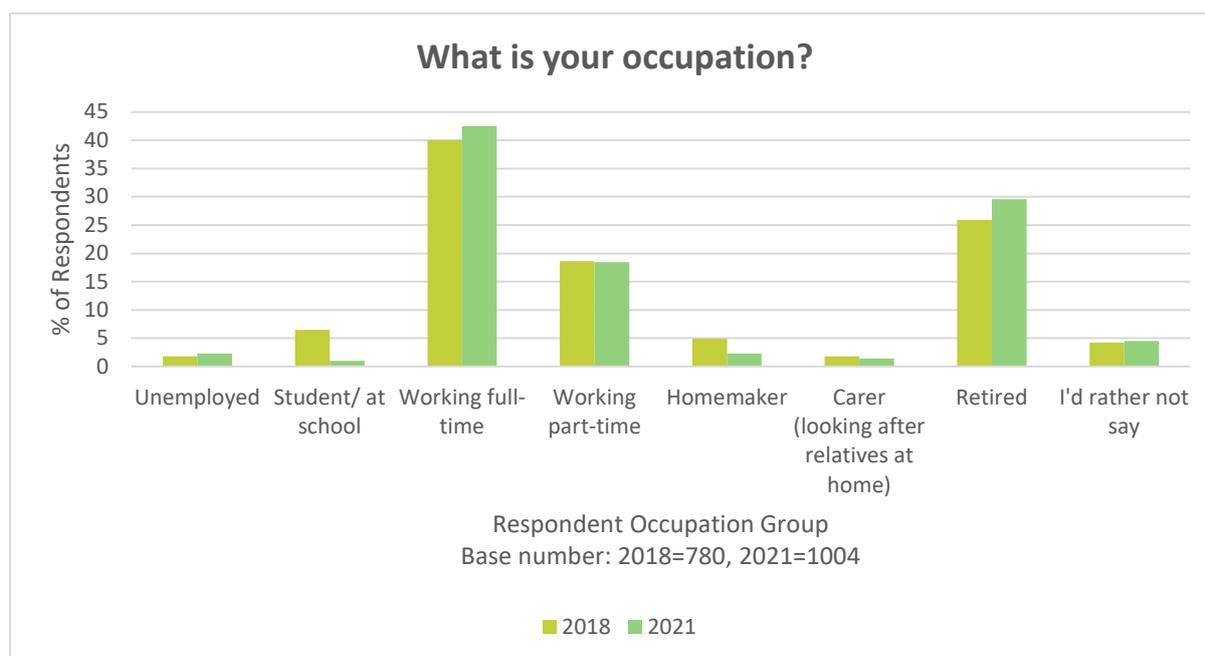


Figure 5 - Occupation of Respondents

Residential status

In 2021 the majority of the sample (77.6%, n=779) were residents, which represents a lower proportion compared to both of the previous surveys (86% in 2019, 83% in 2018), and 22% (n=225) were visitors to the Forest, up from 14% in 2019 and 17% in 2018.

Analysis of residents in the sample revealed that 25% indicated they had lived in the Forest 'less than 10 years' and the same proportion for '10 to 30 years', with 18% reporting residency of more than 30 years. For all three options the percentage point (pp) difference was no more than 4pp over the programme period, showing a reasonable degree of stability

in sample characteristics. Approximately 18% of residents indicated they had lived in the Forest of Dean for 'all of their lives', dropping 3pp over the programme; and in 2021 around 14% of residents indicated they were a 'Born & Bred Forester', the same as in the 2018 survey.

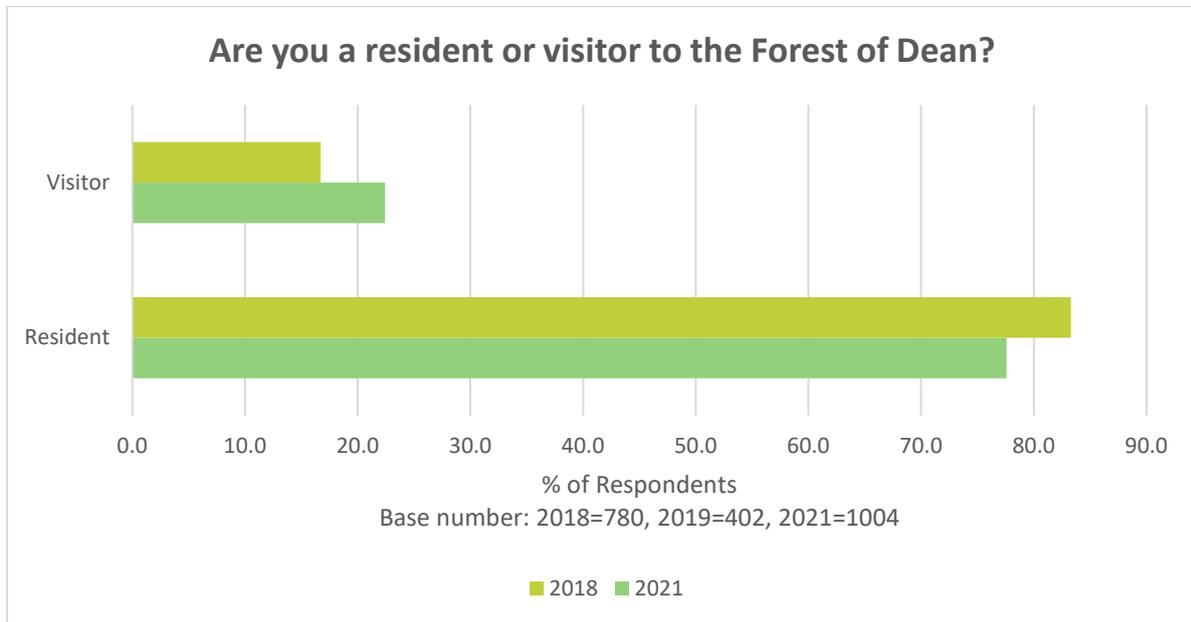


Figure 6 - Resident / Visitor breakdown of respondents

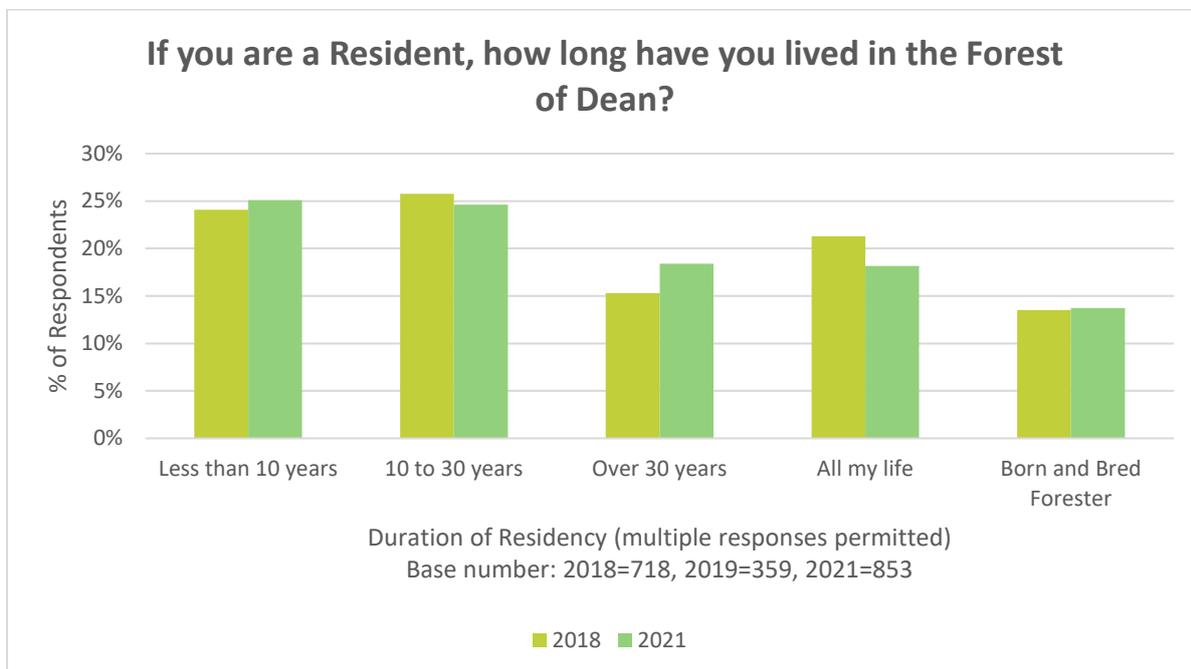


Figure 7 - Length of Residence in the Forest

A total of 218 respondents classified themselves as 'visitors to the Forest of Dean' in 2021. Of these, almost half (49.5%) visited six or more times per year. This compares to 47% in the 2018 sample, representing just a 2.5pp increase, some of which might reasonably be attributed to Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, which are examined elsewhere. Another

third (33%) visit 2-5 times a year, while 17% of visitors in the sample visiting once per year or less.

The on-line questionnaire would appear to be capturing the more regular and so perhaps more engaged visitors rather than occasional Forest Visitors.

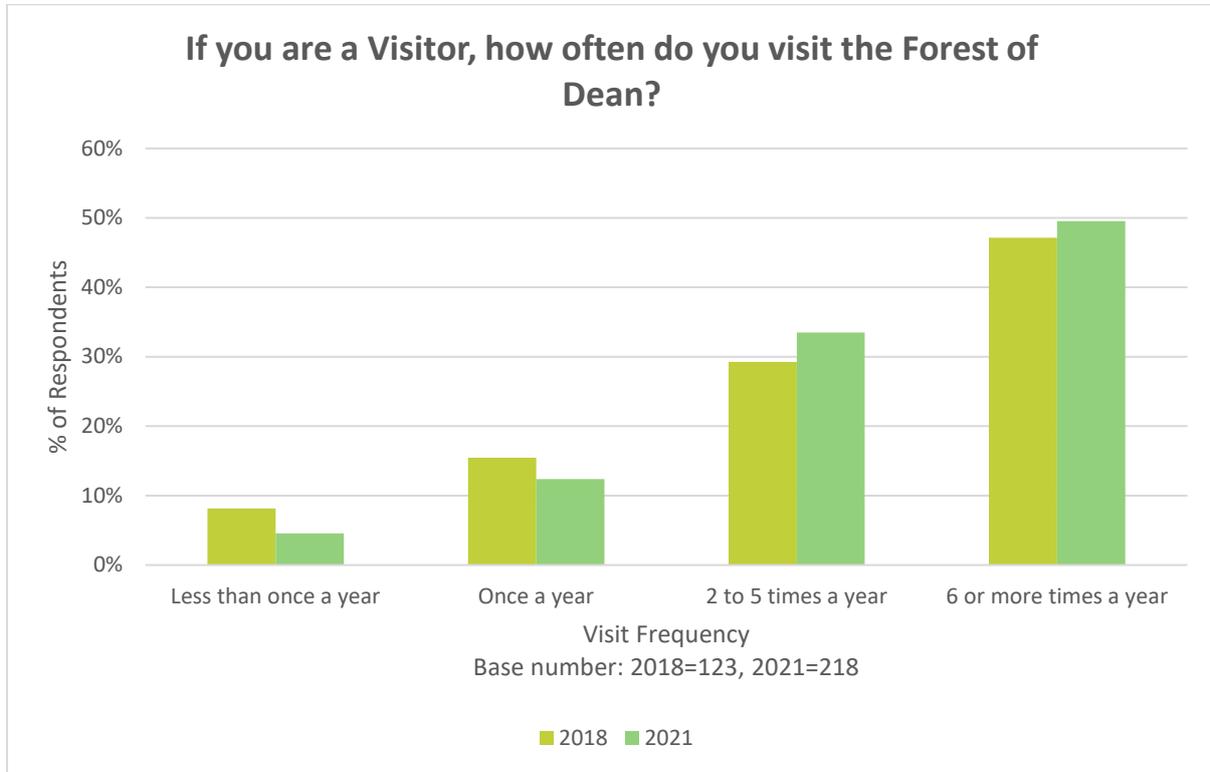


Figure 8 - Annual visits to the Forest by visitors in the sample

The location of the respondents, based on postcode data supplied in the survey, shows an extremely strong degree of localisation around the immediate area of interest to the programme (Figure 9), but with a well-distributed spread of responses from across England, Wales and Scotland.

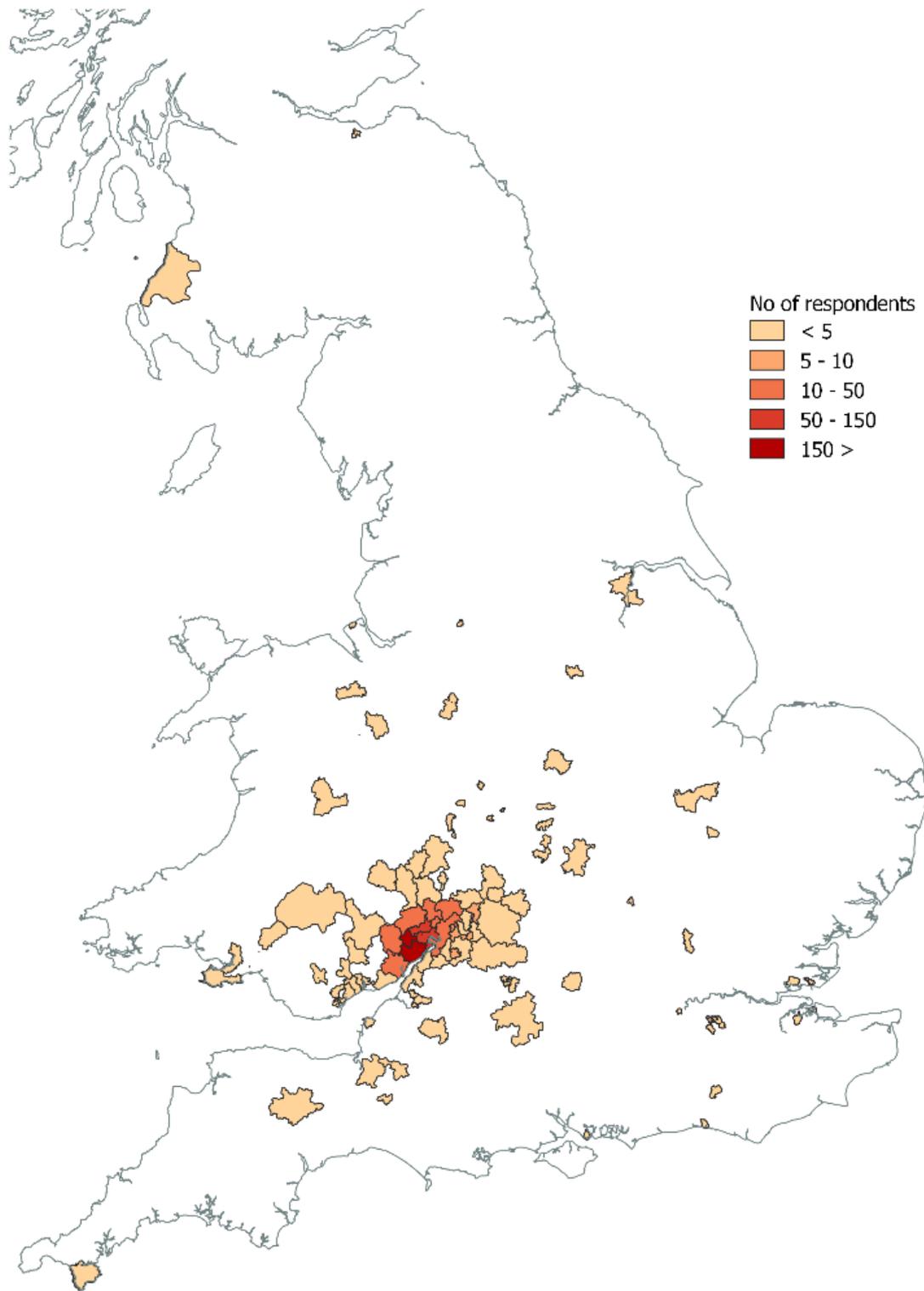


Figure 9 - Distribution mapping of visitors to the Forest of Dean (2021 survey sample)

2.4 The Foresters' Forest Programme – Awareness and Participation

A total of 49.8% (n=500) of the 2021 sample indicated they had heard of the Foresters' Forest before taking the survey. This compares to around 44% in the 2018 survey (n=345), giving an increase in awareness of 5.8 percentage points. Figure 10 indicates that there was a marginal decrease in awareness by visitors (-2pp), but a more pronounced increase in the awareness of Residents (+8pp), which would be expected given the greater opportunities for exposure to the programme in both frequency and depth.

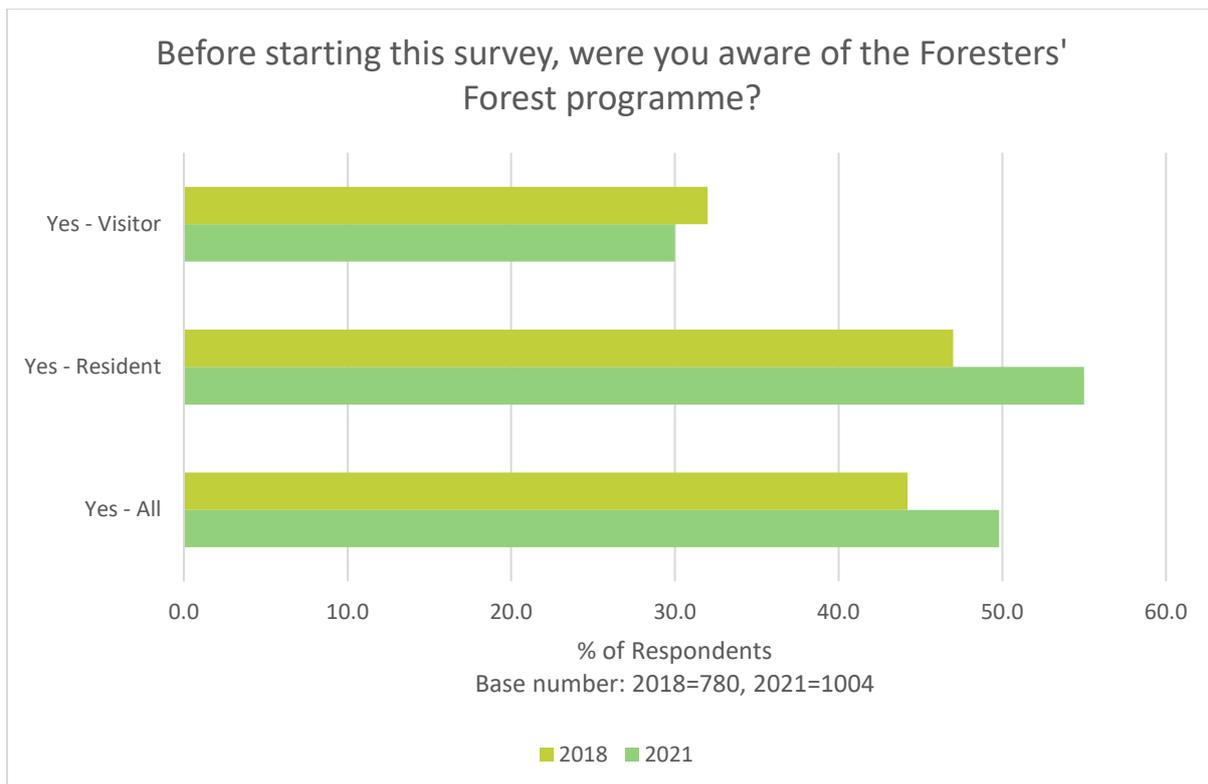


Figure 10 - Awareness of the Foresters' Forest Programme

Comparing responses between Residents and Visitors, it can be seen that there is a clear difference in awareness of the Foresters' Forest programme with a much higher proportion of the residents sample (>50%) indicating awareness compared to the proportion of visitors (30%). This would support a logical conclusion that residents would be expected to be more aware of what was going on in their local area compared to non-residents, being more attuned to local events and having been more exposed to potential opportunities to read, learn, or hear about the programme from local media, as well as social media. The higher proportion of visitors indicating awareness of the Programme in 2018 may be indicative that Visitor respondents to the survey were those who tend to be more engaged with the Forest of Dean as a chosen 'place of interest' to visit.

Awareness of the Programme was, unsurprisingly, very high amongst Volunteers, but interestingly, not complete. Of those volunteering on Foresters' Forest projects 4% (n=5) reported not being aware of the programme prior to the survey. Amongst non-Volunteers, 42% (n=368) indicated awareness of the Programme prior to starting the survey.

Participation in Foresters' Forest activities

A total of 16% of respondents (n=160) indicated that they had taken part in some form of activity, event, or training course run by the Foresters' Forest programme (compared to 12% of respondents in the 2018 survey). Increases in participation amongst sample respondents increased slightly for Residents between 2018 and 2021, whilst the proportion of Visitors participating dropped significantly over the period. This is most likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in large numbers of volunteers either shielding or not engaging in programme activities.

We must advise caution in the interpretation of the data, however, as the online survey is likely to be capturing a wider proportion of those that have been involved in the programme in some way, rather than a representative cross-section of the Forest of Dean population.

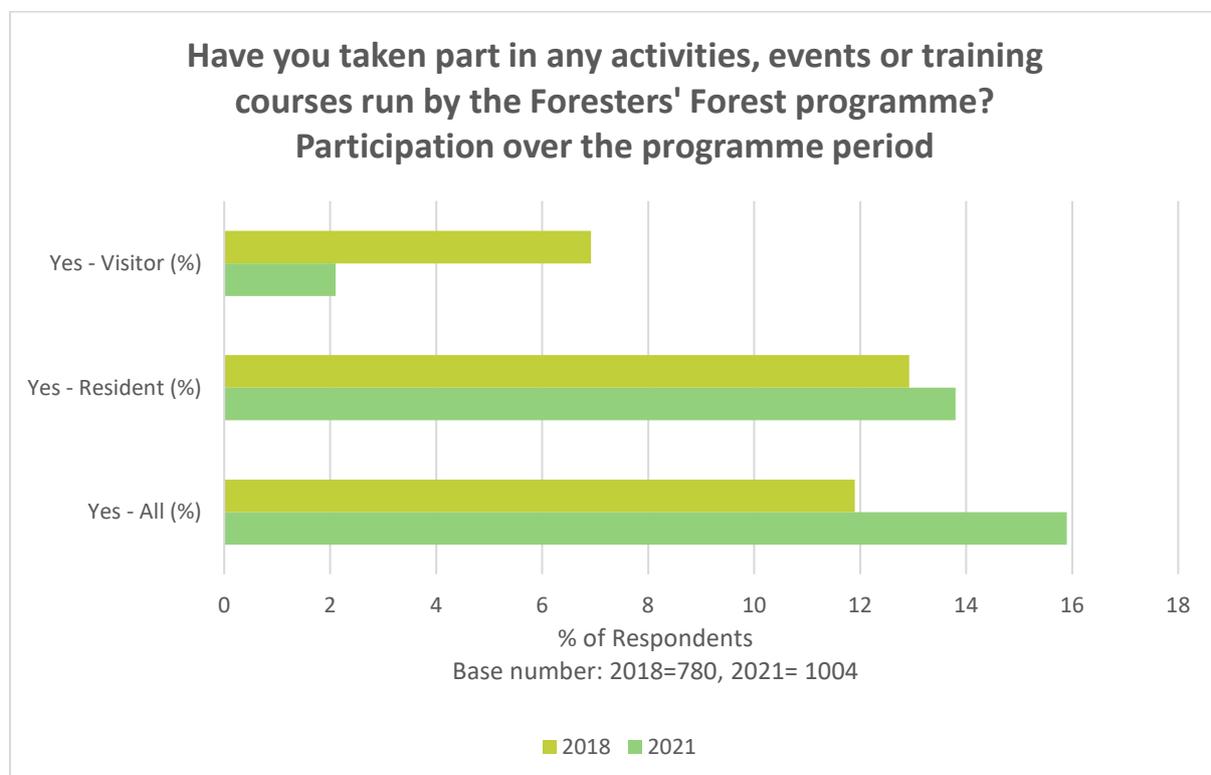


Figure 11 - Participation in Foresters' Forest activities

Further analysis of comments provided by sample respondents indicates higher levels of participation in natural heritage-type activities, including surveying and archaeology (33%), and lower levels of participation in cultural heritage (19%) and Built / Industrial Heritage (9%), with smaller numbers engaging in management and educational activities. Of the responses received, 23% were not sufficiently clear to identify where they fitted into the programme, but included descriptions such as “walks” or “went to a talk”, suggesting the attendance at events rather than any deeper level of engagement.

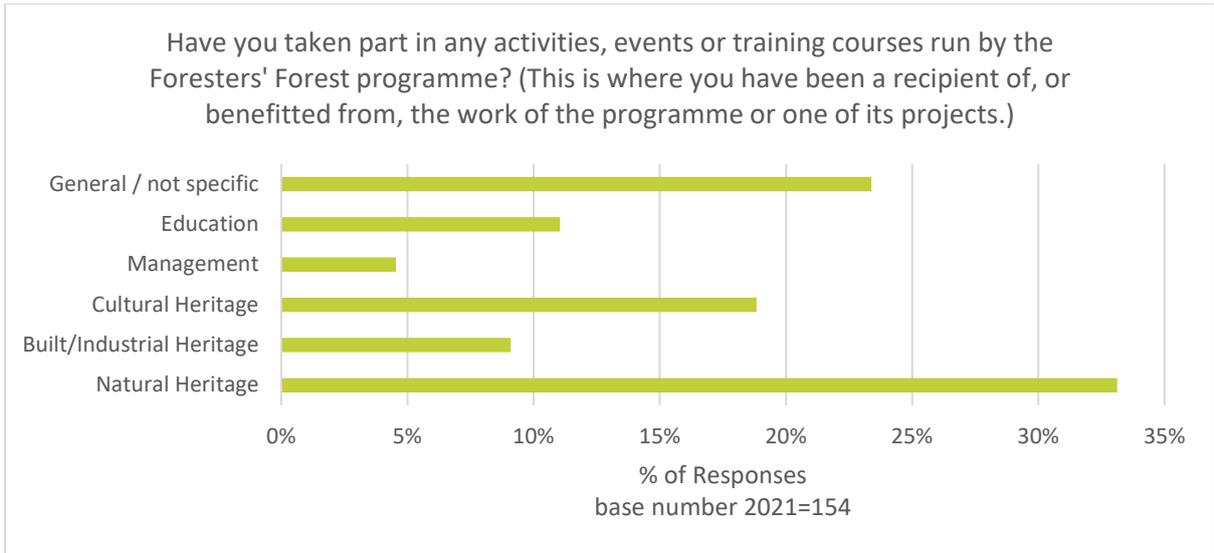


Figure 12 – Sample respondent participation in Foresters' Forest activities (by category; 2021 survey)

Volunteering

A total of 13.6% (n=137) of the sample indicated they had done some volunteer work with the Foresters' Forest Projects, compared to 9.1% (n=71) of the sample from the 2018 survey, a 4.5 percentage point difference. It is difficult to interpret the results here as this could indicate a growing level of participation, or it could simply be attributed to a larger proportion of volunteers answering the survey in 2021. .

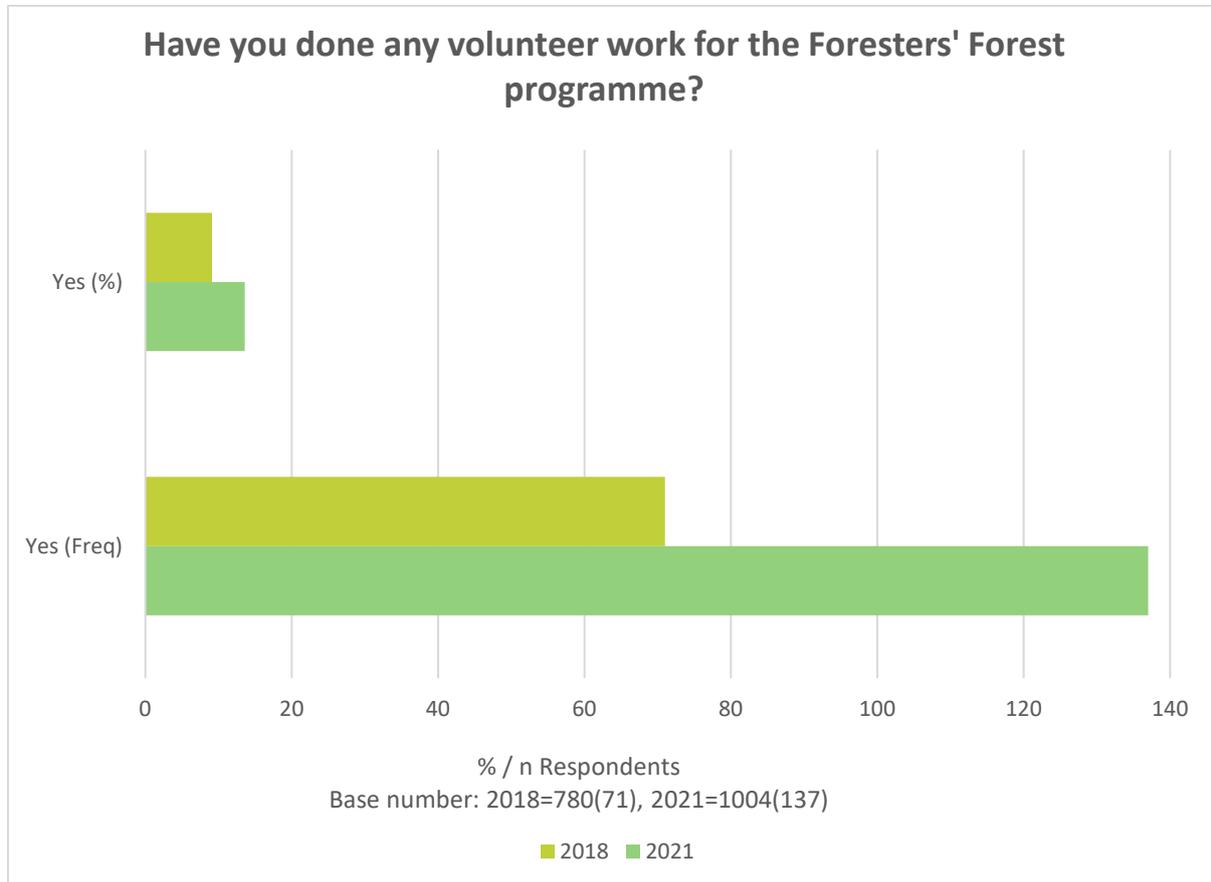


Figure 13 - Volunteering in the Foresters' Forest Programme

Further analysis of comments provided indicates higher proportions of volunteering in relation to the natural heritage projects, followed by built heritage, and least in cultural heritage projects and other activities. It should also be noted that 300 responses were received from 137 volunteers (average projects per volunteer = 2.18) indicating that a significant proportion of volunteers are active on more than one project (which was supported by the qualitative data drawn from volunteer discussion groups held in the Autumn of 2021).

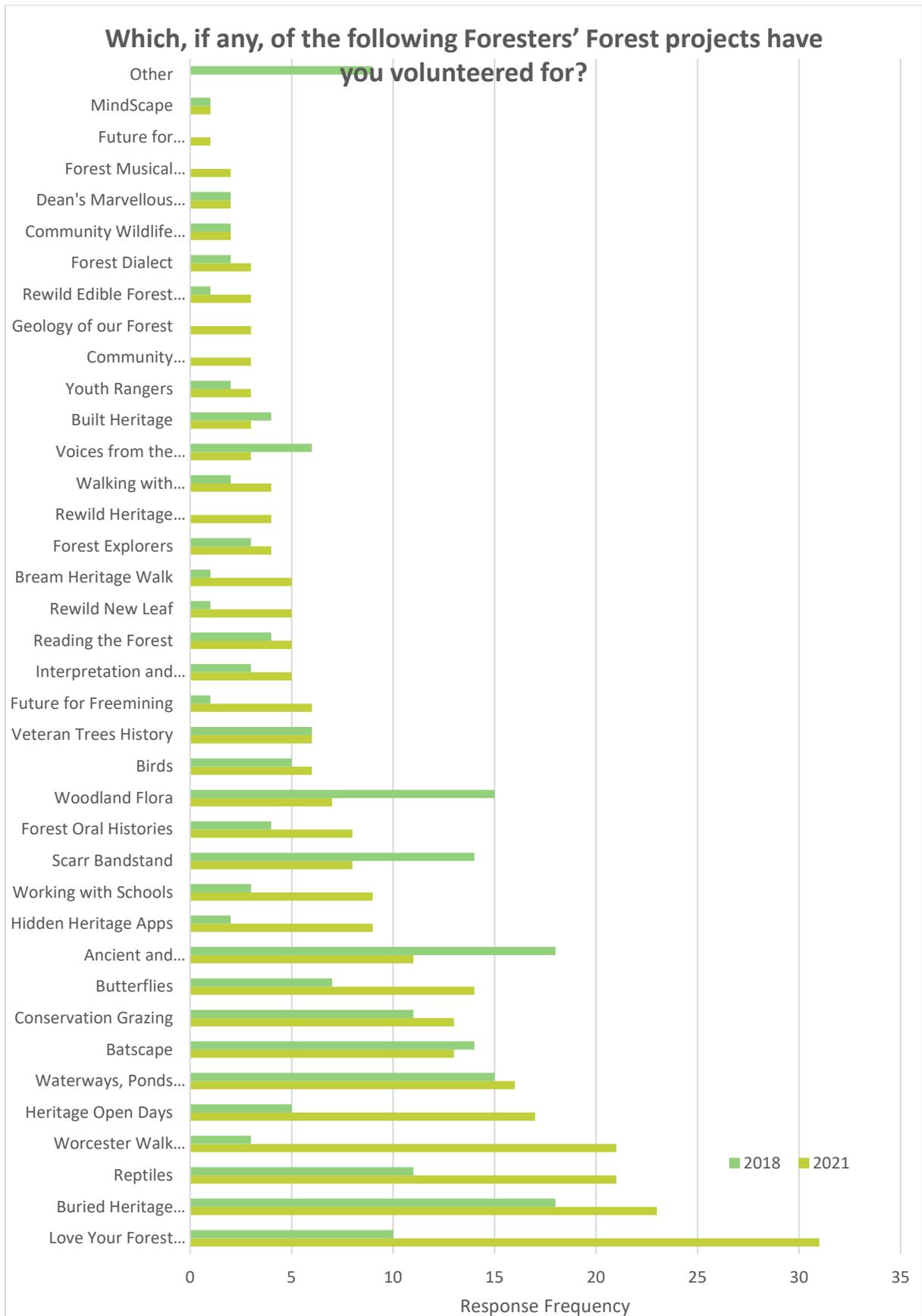


Figure 14 - Numbers of Respondents volunteering on Projects

2.5 Knowledge of the heritage of the Forest of Dean

Respondents in the 2021 survey were asked to self-assess their knowledge of a variety of heritage topics relevant to the Foresters' Forest programme. This differed slightly from the previous two surveys where respondents were asked specific questions to test their actual knowledge of the same topic areas.

For the purposes of the survey, 'heritage' was defined as, *“anything that has originated from the historic activities of previous generations. This could be the language or dialect, music, literature, the natural environment, industry, buildings, local rights to use resources, or even the very appearance of the landscape around us.”*

Heritage was divided into three sub-groups: built and industrial heritage, natural heritage, and cultural heritage, with questions being asked in the survey that related to each of these.

The majority of respondents (no less than 63% and up to 93%) reported that they had some knowledge of the topics from 'I know a little' up to 'I know a lot', although 'I know a lot' scored a maximum of only 15% of respondents, compared to 'I know a little' which was reported by 51% of respondents in one instance.

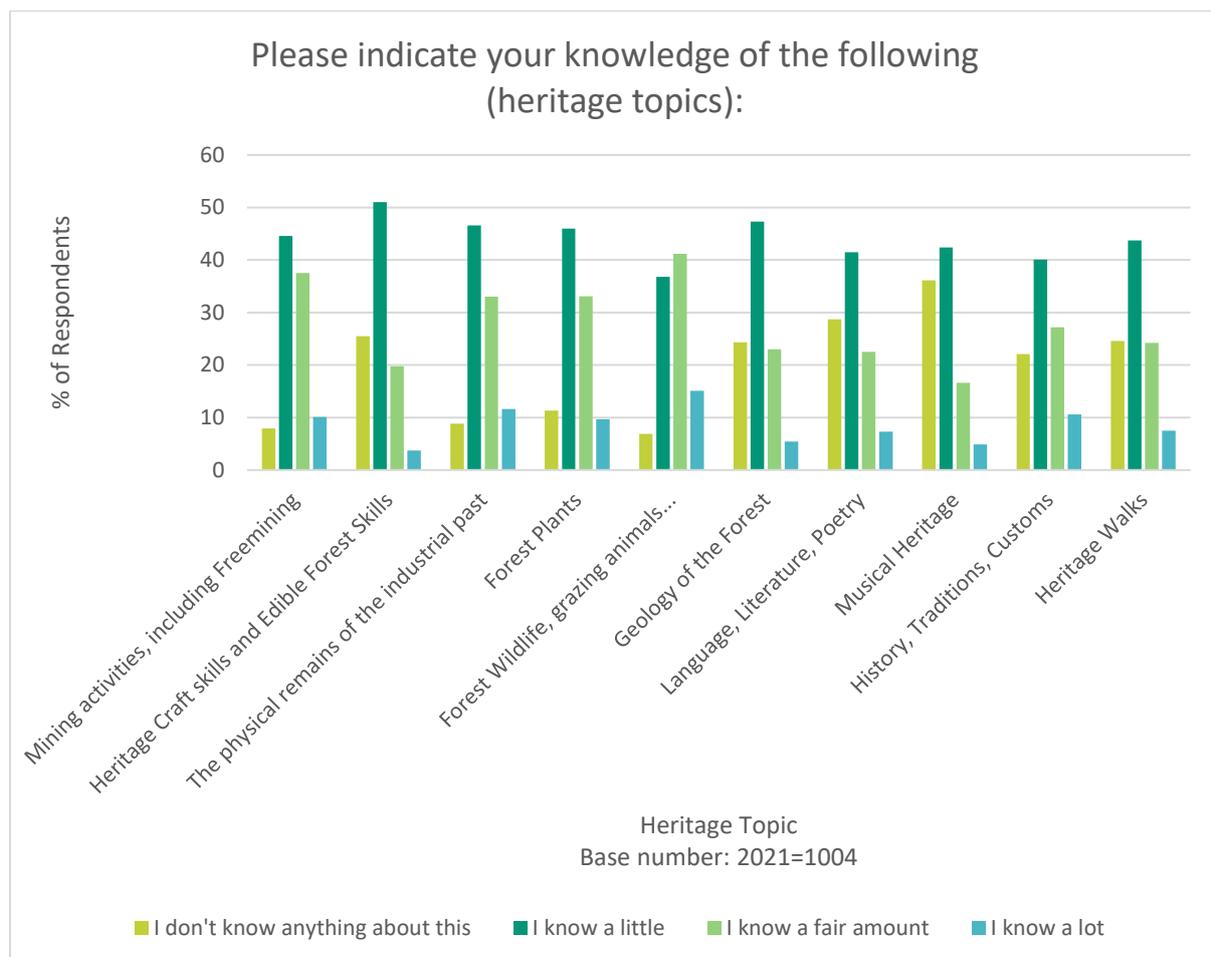


Figure 15 - Self-reported knowledge of heritage topics

This weighting towards a lack of confidence in self-reported knowledge is more visible when viewing the mean scores for each topic, where the number of topics scoring a mean of greater than two is limited to half of the topics, including Mining, Physical remains of the industrial past, Forest Plants and History and traditions; whilst only Forest Wildlife, grazing animals etc. scores higher than 2.5. It can also be noted that Volunteers score higher on all topics, ranging from a 0.15 to 0.59 difference in Mean score. This suggests that volunteers either have an initial higher level of interest and information about an issue, or have learned from their volunteer experiences.

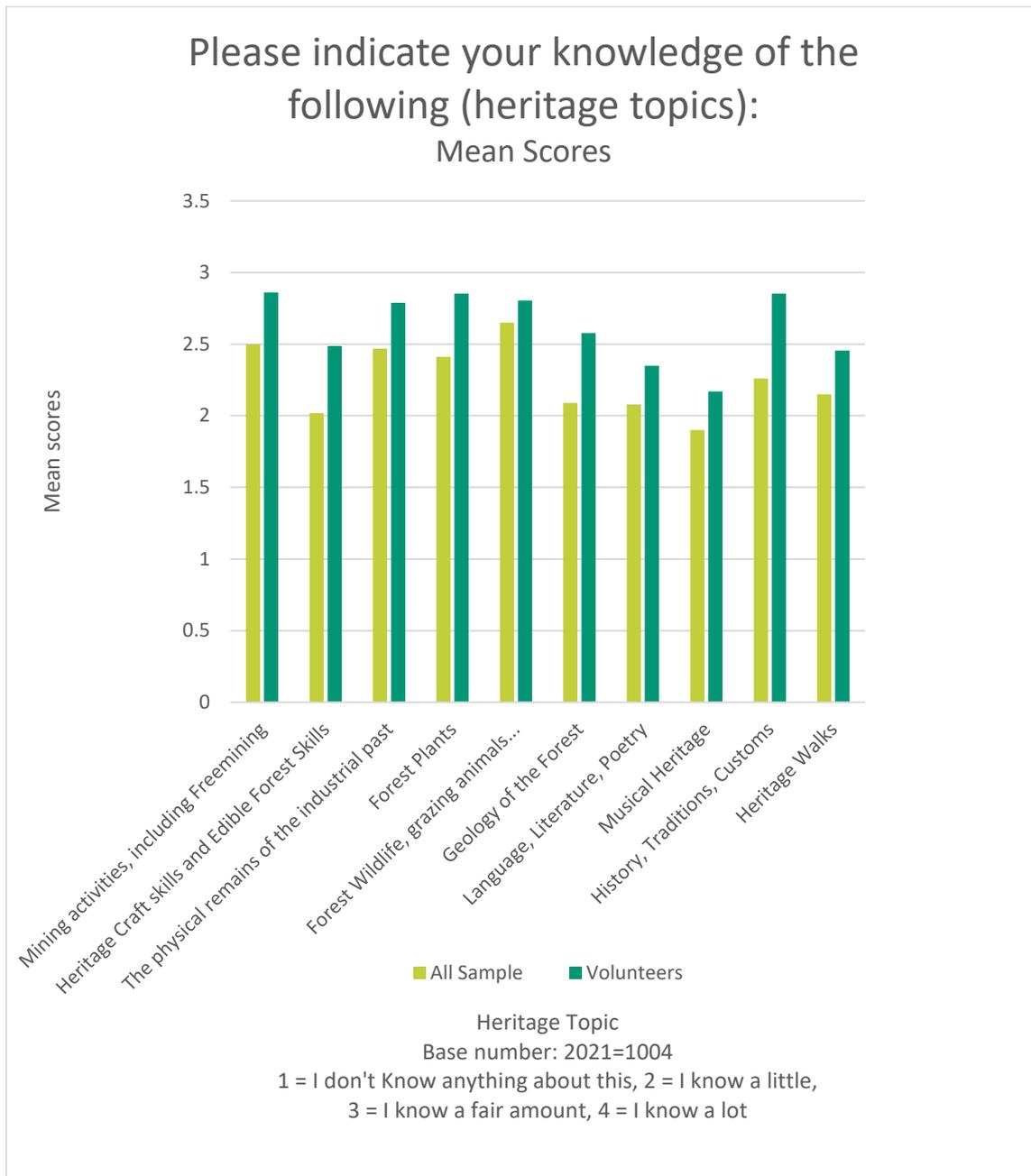


Figure 16 - Self-reported knowledge of heritage topics (Mean scores)

Respondents were also asked if the knowledge of the topics that they had reported was as a result of the Foresters' Forest programme. Across the topics, between 1.7% and 5.6% of respondents reported that the programme was responsible for their learning. The highest scoring of these topics were 'the physical remains of the industrial past' and 'heritage walks', both of which had high participation rates and which are particular to Foresters' Forest activities. These are relatively small proportions and perhaps reflects volunteer experiences with projects rather than other forms of more limited engagement.

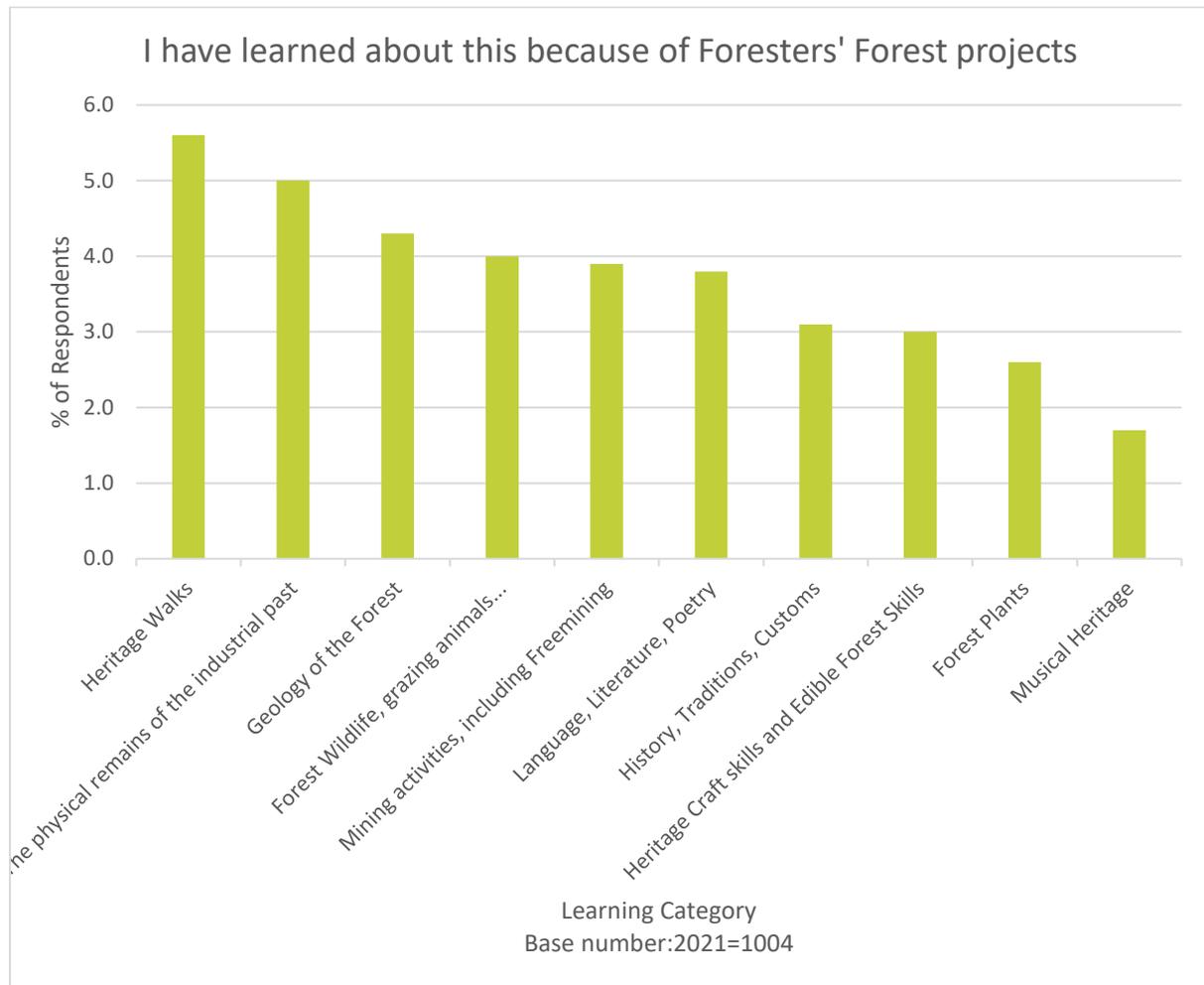


Figure 17 - Attribution of learning about heritage to Foresters' Forest by topic

When these individual topics are grouped into built, natural and cultural heritage, there is a small majority of respondents whose learning about built heritage is greater, although the total range in scores is no greater than 1 percentage point.

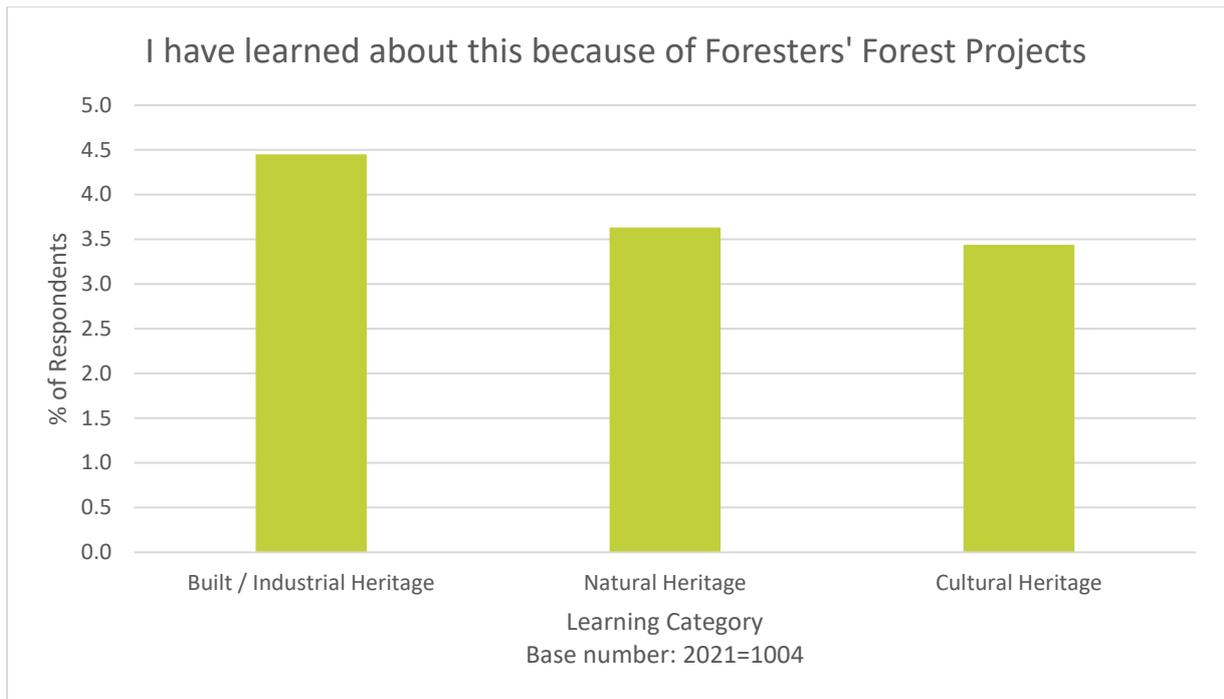


Figure 18 - Attribution of learning about heritage to Foresters' Forest by heritage category

2.6. Opinions on Forest of Dean issues

Respondents were asked to score three statements about their opinions on the heritage in the Forest of Dean. The statements referred to: the condition of heritage, whether it was being preserved for future generations, and to what extent it is being identified and recorded. The statements were scored on a 1 – 10 scale where 1 is equivalent to ‘very strong disagreement’, and 10 equates to ‘very strong agreement’ with the statement.

Table 1 below indicates that in general, the majority of respondents agreed with the statements. Table 2 provides a clearer overview by grouping the scores into three categories of ‘disagree’ (those that generally disagreed with the statements scoring below 5 on the scale); those that scored in the middle of the scale (5 or 6), and ‘agree’ (those who generally agree with the statements scoring 7 – 10).

Table 2 shows that 43% of the respondents agreed that heritage is being identified and recorded, and a slightly smaller proportion (38%) agreed that heritage is being protected and preserved for future generations. However, just less than one-third of (29.9%) agreed that the heritage is in a good condition, whilst another third (37.5%) of respondents scored this in the middle of the scale (5 or 6) and the final third of the sample (30%) disagreed with the statement. This is an interesting outcome suggesting that although the majority of sample respondents feel heritage is being recorded and protected there is a significant proportion that feel it is not in good condition.

Figure 19 shows the breakdown of responses for the 2021 survey, whilst Figure 20 compares the respondent perceptions on these three characteristics between the 2018 and 2021 surveys. Figure 20 indicates that a majority of respondents agreed that ‘Heritage is being identified and recorded’ with a mean score of 6.2 out of 10. A significant number of respondents agreed that ‘Heritage is being protected and preserved for future generations’ with a mean score just over 6 out of 10; but respondents more often disagreed that ‘Heritage is in good condition’ with a mean score of 5.46. However, over the programme period the strength of agreement with the first two categories has declined, and the latter becoming closer to strongly disagreeing. These are not results that would be expected but again may be an outcome of the Covid-19 Pandemic which effectively halted almost all Programme Activity in 2020 and for part of 2021.

Score	Heritage is being protected and preserved for future generations	Heritage is in good Condition	Heritage is being identified and recorded
Very strongly disagree 1	2.2	3.0	2.2
2	4.8	6.0	3.7
3	7.6	10.0	5.6
4	8.0	11.1	8.6
Neither agree nor disagree 5	17.4	20.4	15.0
6	14.7	17.2	16.0
7	19.2	15.6	18.3
8	15.1	10.8	17.2
9	4.1	3.5	8.2
Very strongly agree 10	7.0	2.4	5.2

Table 1 - Perceptions of Heritage (% of Respondents)

Score	Heritage is being protected and preserved for future generations	Heritage is in good Condition	Heritage is being identified and recorded
Disagree (Scores 1-4)	22.6	30.1	20.1
Neutral (Scores 5-6)	32.1	37.5	31.0
Agree (Scores 7-10)	38.3	29.9	43.7

Table 2 - Views on Heritage in the Forest of Dean, aggregated

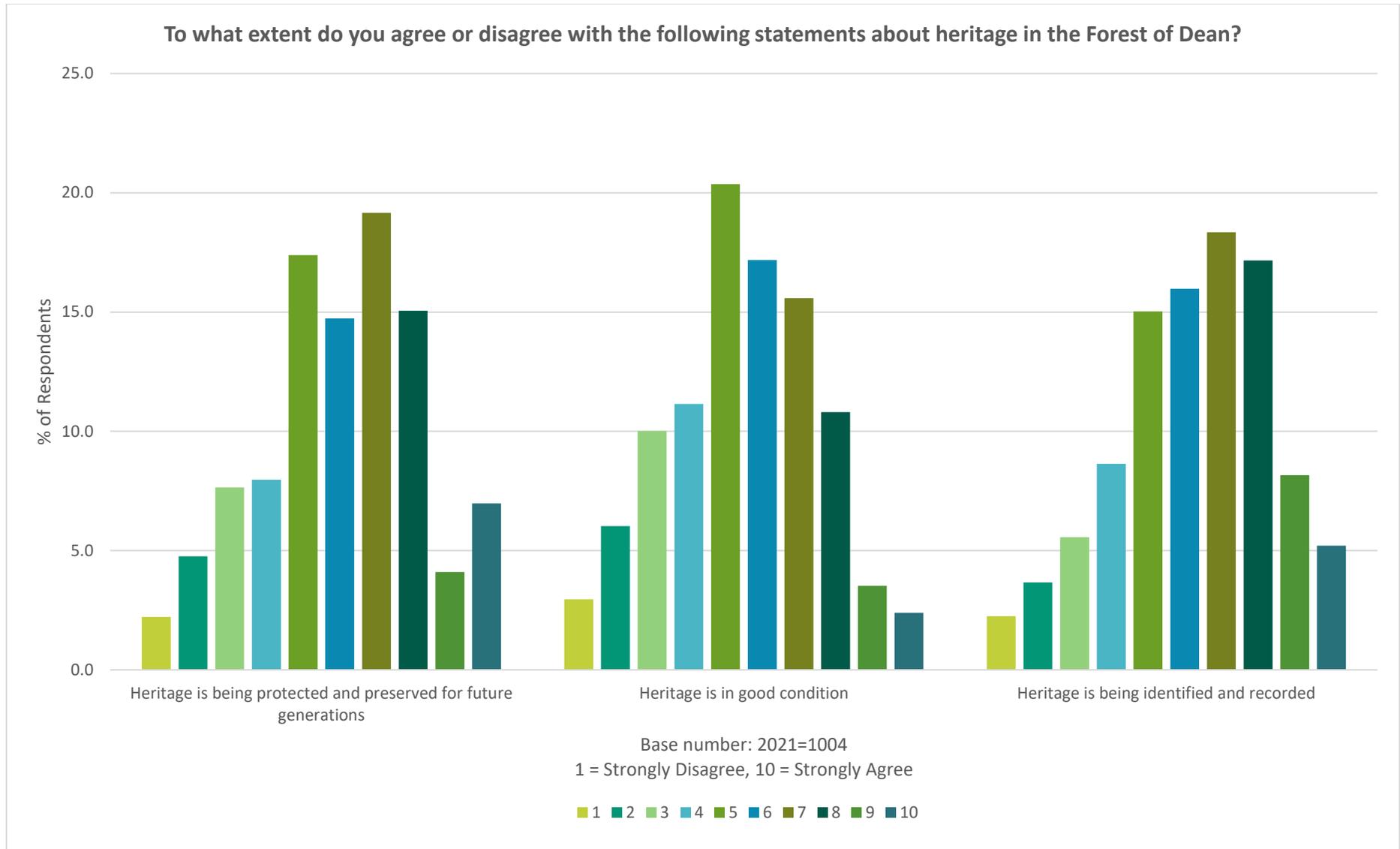


Figure 19 - Views on Heritage in the Forest of Dean

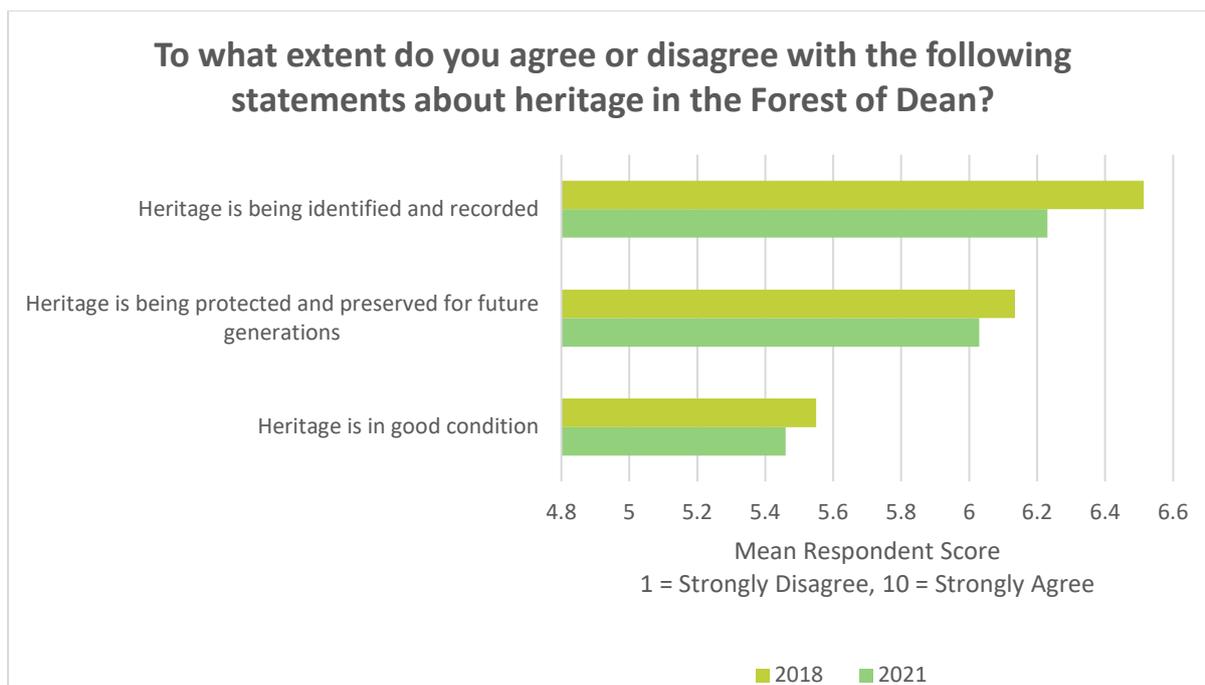


Figure 20 - Views on Heritage in the Forest of Dean (mean scores)

Respondents were then asked about their views on the Forest of Dean more generally. Each of the following statements: “It is clean and tidy”, “it is a good place to live”, “it is a good place to work”, “it is a good place to visit” and “it is a beautiful area” were scored on a 10-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree, to 10 = strongly agree.

Responses to the question “It is clean and tidy” were the only ones where there is a greater variety of response scores, with a considerable clustering around the central scores, but even here some 59% scored this as 6 or higher. In response to “it is a good place to work” there was again a very evenly distributed scoring, with 64% scoring 6 or higher. In the three other cases, 92-98% of the responses scored 6 or higher, demonstrating clearly the esteem that the area is held as a place to live, or visit, and for its aesthetic character, this last feature being particularly highly rated in the 2021 survey. Again, this might be influenced by the Pandemic when many more local people were utilising the Forest due to travel restrictions and were grateful to live in a rural location.

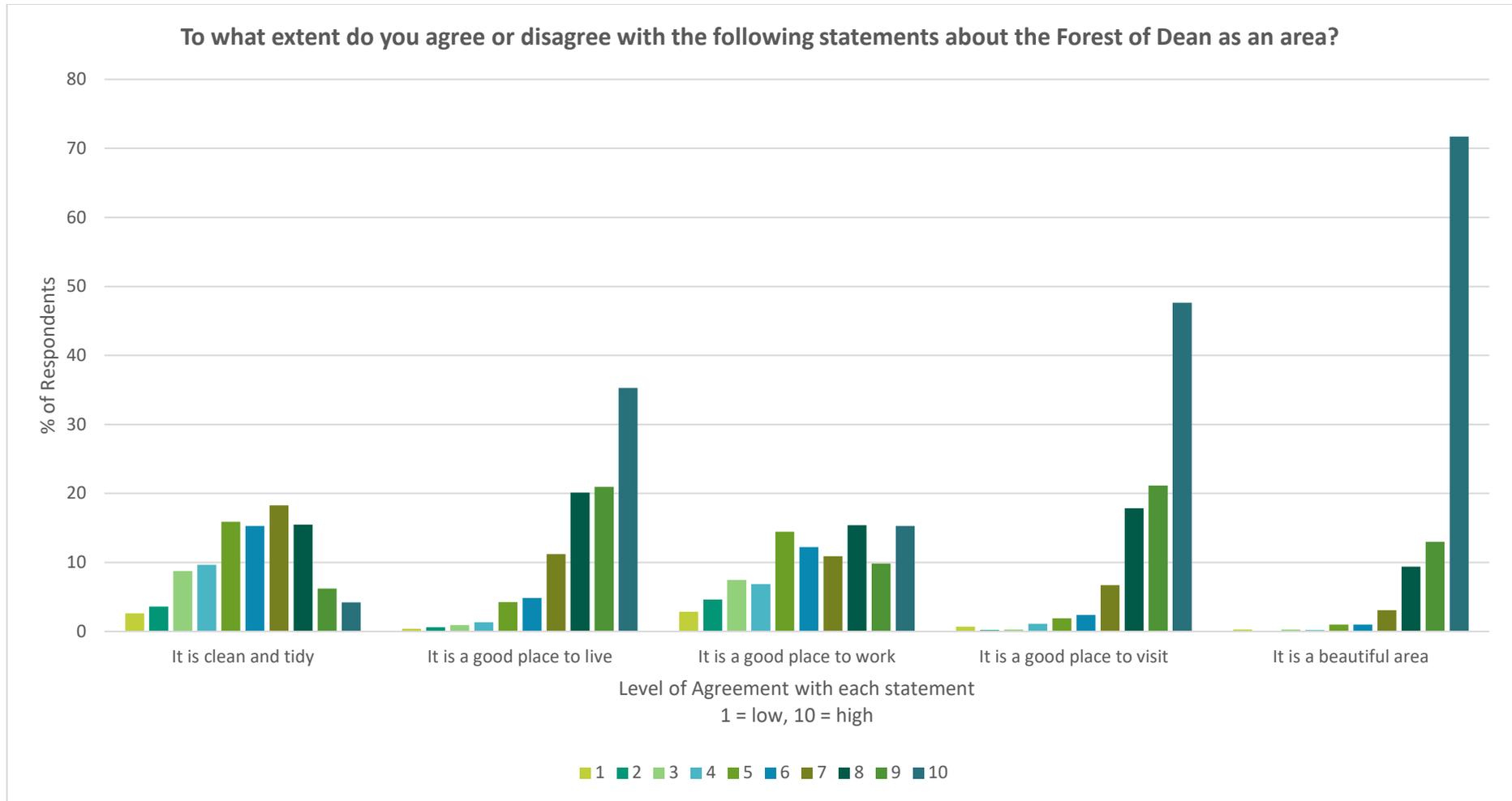


Figure 21 - Views on the Forest of Dean

Mean scores in the 2021 survey are marginally higher than that for 2018 and an improving trend is indicated, but a comparison of mean scores between the surveys reveals no significant differences between the samples.

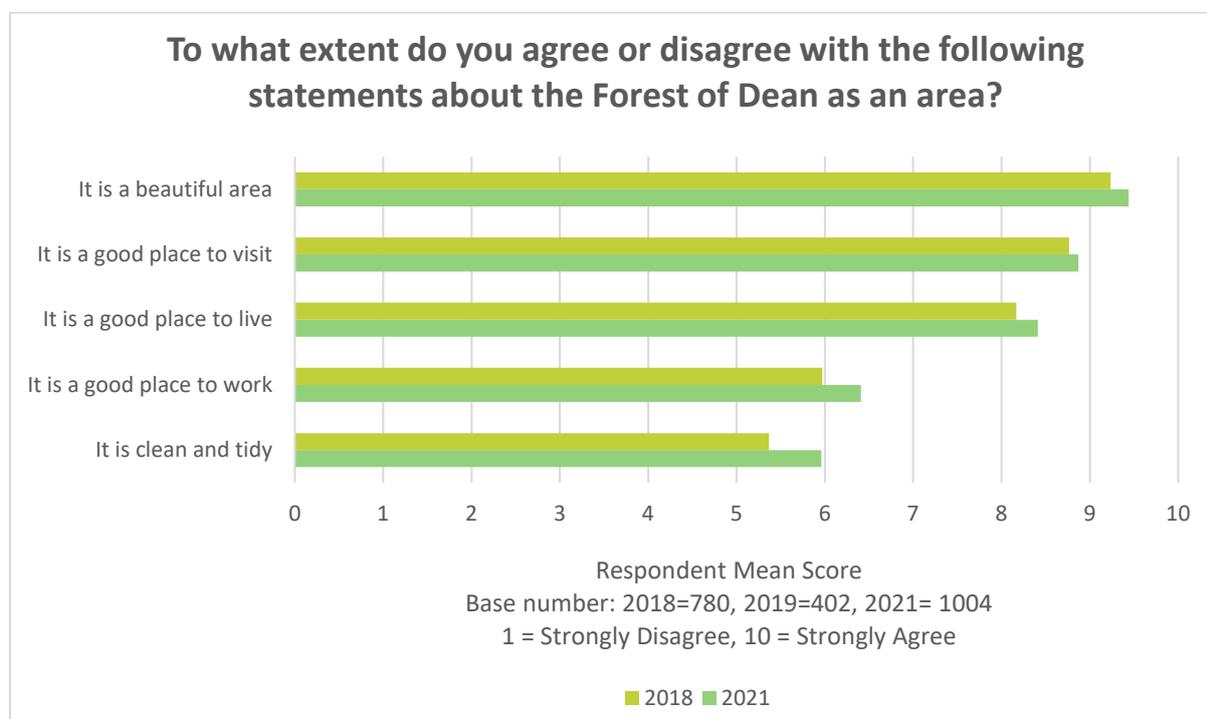


Figure 22 - Views on the Forest of Dean (mean scores for 2018 and 2019)

Learning

Respondents were asked about their views on learning more about the Forest of Dean. Agreement was strong for wanting to learn more about ‘the wildlife and habitats of the Forest of Dean’ with 86% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement (compared to 87% for the 2018 survey), closely followed by wanting to learn more about ‘the historical and industrial importance’ where 85% agreed or strongly agreed (compared to 85.7% in 2018). Learning about music scored the lowest level of interest at 63% agreeing or strongly agreeing (compared to 62% for the 2018 survey). In each question, there were some respondents who reported already having a good knowledge, this ranges from a low of 3% to a high of around 10%.

Overall, these responses suggest a high level of demand for learning in relation to all aspects of the Forests’ heritage.

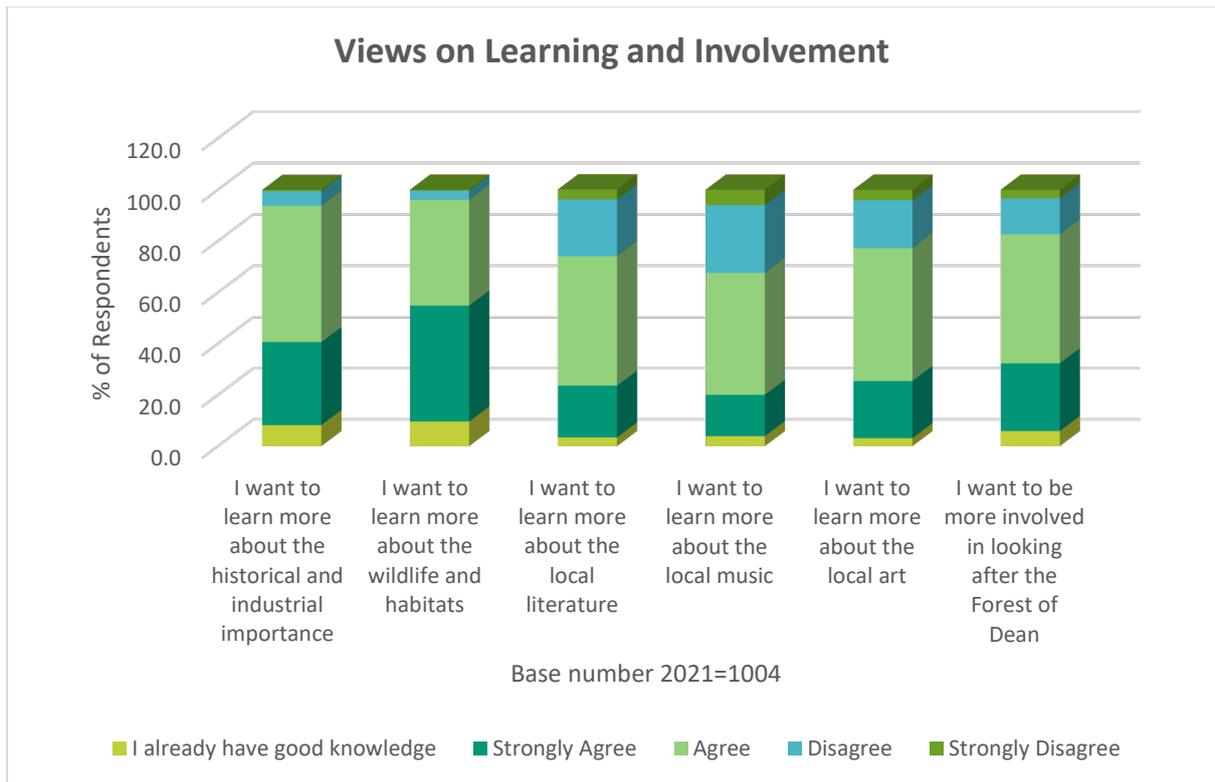


Figure 23 - Views on learning and involvement

Comparison of sample mean scores between the 2018 and 2021 surveys reveals a clear increase in score value (from around 2.0 increasing to 2.4-3.1), indicating a strong desire for continued learning and which is also a substantial increase over the previous years and over the programme period.

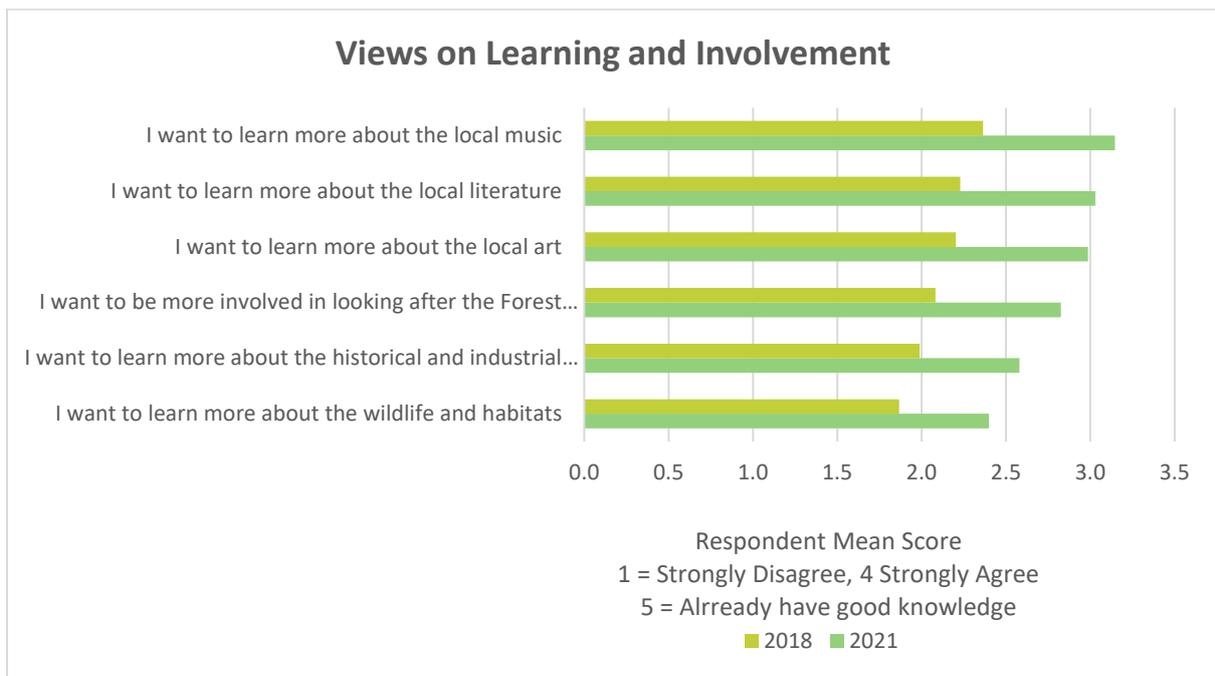


Figure 24 - Views on learning and involvement (mean scores)

Woodland Management

Respondents were asked for their views on six different aspects of woodland management. As was the case in the previous surveys (2018 and 2019), ‘access to outdoor activities’ stands out as an area of good management with over half the sample (54%) indicating good or very good management. Managing an ‘increased amount of grazing animals’ was identified by 39% of the sample as good or very good (compared to 18% from 2018), whilst similarly, ‘Protecting wildlife habitat’ also stands out with around 38% of the sample indicating that management is good or very good (compared to 33% for the 2018 survey). The ‘management of tree felling and timber production’ was identified as good or very good by 28% of the sample (compared to 27% in 2018).

The remaining management aspects, ‘Control of wild boar’ and ‘Conservation of built heritage’ scored less well. A total of 34% of the sample reported ‘Conservation of built heritage’ as poor, very poor, or not undertaken, although this is an improvement of 5 percentage points from 2018. Similar to the 2018 survey responses, the ‘Control of wild boar’ received the lowest score with 46% reporting this as poor, very poor, or not undertaken, but again representing a 4-percentage point change from 2018.

In all cases, the score ‘about right’ dominated with between 37-47% of responses per statement.

Comparison of sample mean scores between the 2018 and 2021 surveys indicates relatively small differences (none of which are statistically significant) for the majority of categories. However, it can be observed that there are consistent, if small, improvements in the opinion of respondents with regard to ‘control of wild boar’ and ‘increasing the amount of grazing animals’.

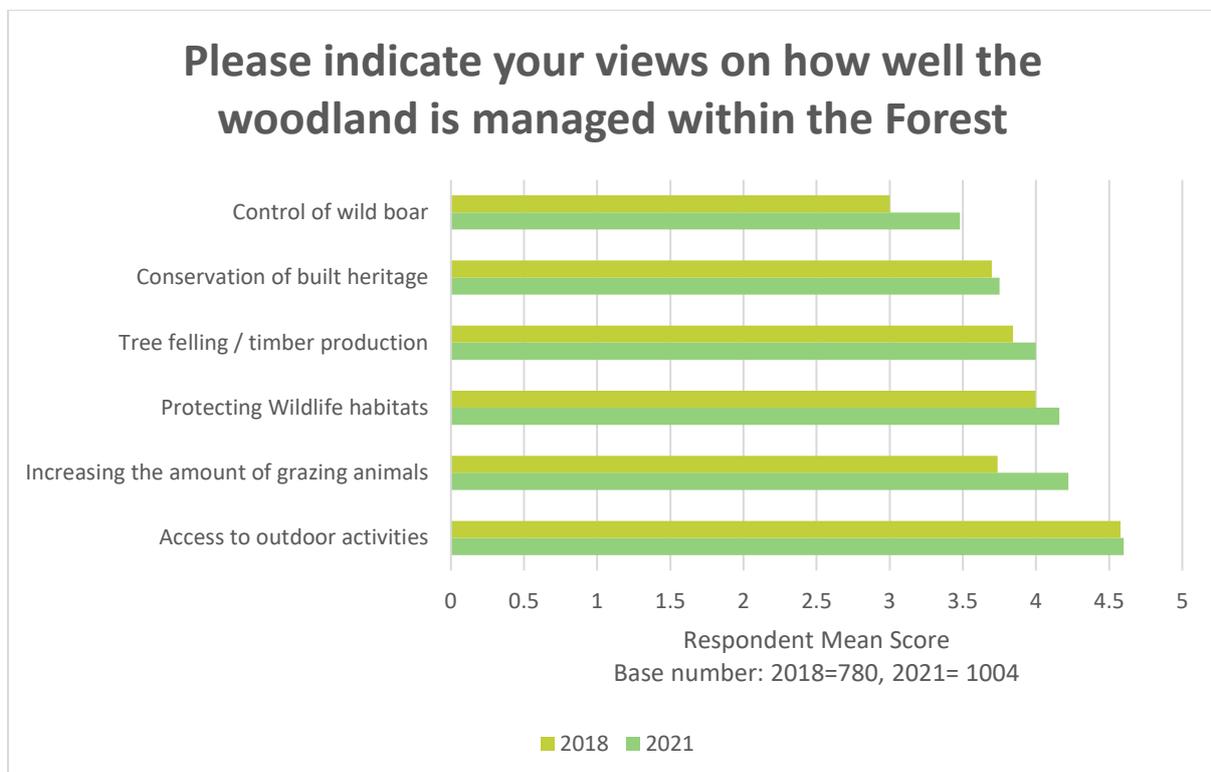


Figure 25 - Views on Woodland Management: comparison of 2018 and 2021 data

Woodland visitation

Respondents were also asked how frequently they visit the woodland within the Forest in an effort to understand the level of utilisation of the woodland resource. The use of the term ‘woodland’ was deliberate to try and ascertain the proportion of respondents who went into the forested areas for recreation or some other purpose, and how often.

A total of 37.5% of respondents (includes both visitors and residents), (compared to 41% in 2019 and 35.6% in 2018) said they visited the woodland on a daily basis (the majority may possibly be regular dog walkers), while a further 32% said they visited weekly (no change from 2019 and compared to 29% in the 2018 sample). In the 2018 survey, a small proportion (2%) indicated they would like to visit the woods but have limited mobility, this was not reported in either the 2019 or 2021 surveys (though whether this is due to the Walking with Wheels project cannot be ascertained).

Comparisons of the surveys indicate relatively minor differences between the proportion of the sample frequenting the woodland on a daily (5pp range) or weekly basis (4pp range), but small differences overall in the frequency of visits, except for the frequency of ‘once every 6 months’; it is not clear why there is such an increase for this specific frequency, but it could be a sampling issue. The proportion of ‘monthly’ visitors drops 4pp over the programme period with three of those being between 2019 and 2021, likely to represent a drop in visits by those prevented by Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in place in the period between the two surveys.

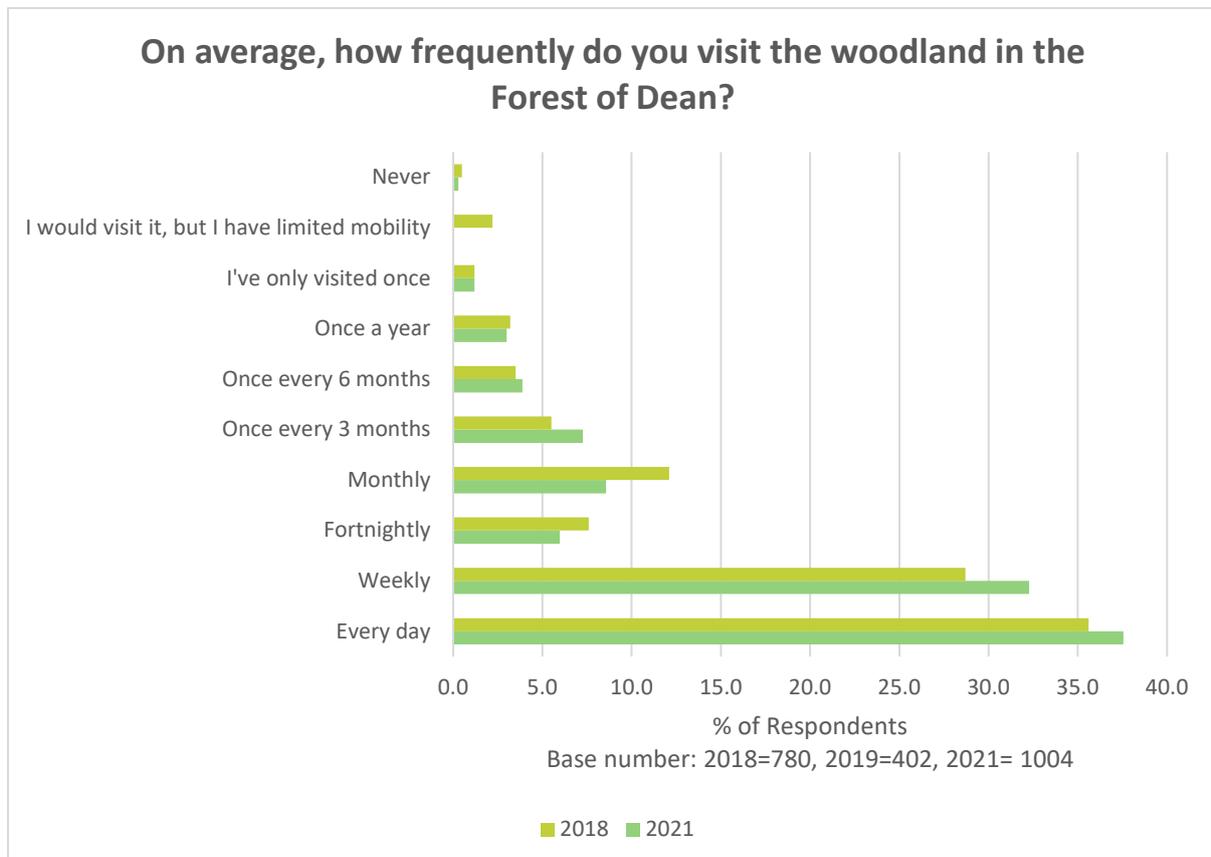


Figure 26 - Frequency of visits to woodland in the Forest of Dean

2.7. Impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Residents and Visitors

To try to assess the effect of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Resident and Visitor behaviours, a number of additional questions were asked about this in the 2021 survey.

Around 25% of respondents visited 'less than usual' due to the situation, whilst around 45% were able to continue as before unaffected. Of interest is the remaining 30% of respondents who were able to increase the frequency of their visits as a result.

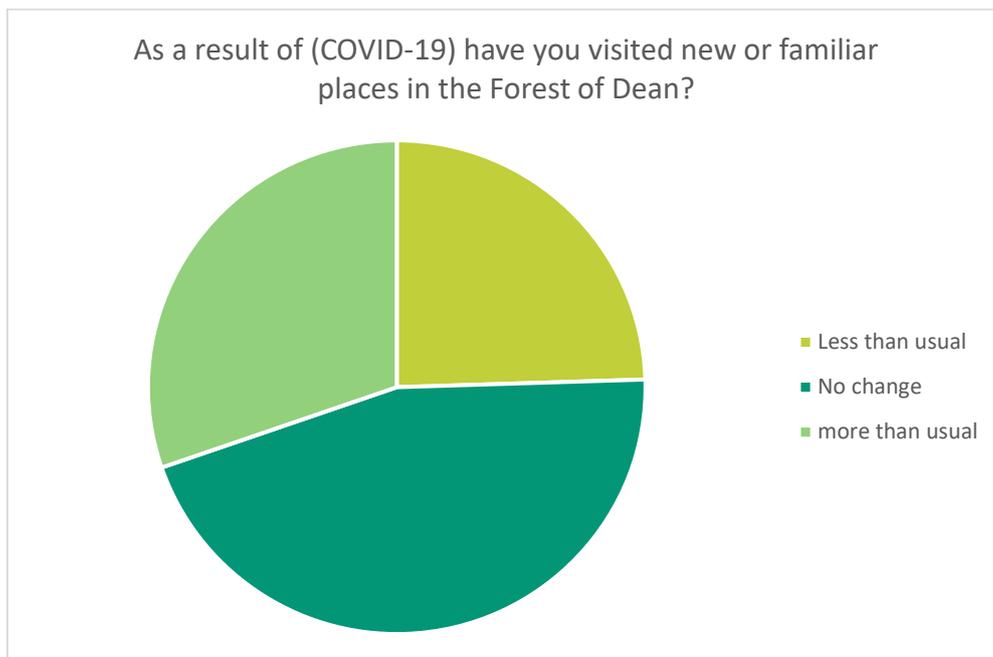


Figure 27 - Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on visits

When asked to provide a reason for this change, respondents answered as follows.

- Just under 10% were time restricted,
- around 32% were restricted by direct impact of the pandemic with either Government imposed controls, or self-imposed control for their own or other family members health reducing visits.
- 30% of respondents stated that changes of circumstances such as working from home or furlough schemes enabled them to increase their visits.
- 27% cited 'other' reasons for changes of visit behaviour.

Of the respondents who provided an additional answer to 'other', 142 separable comments were identified. Of these, 33% indicated a general increase in time or accessibility as a result of the pandemic leading to different personal circumstances, 10% were people who had moved to the Forest during or around the pandemic and wanted to explore their new locality, and 8.5% were retirees. One interesting feature is that respondents noted that there were different effects on outside visitation during the pandemic. At some points the Forest being quieter, enabling local people to enjoy it more (22%), but also sometimes busier causing either concern or frustration (4%), or causing the respondents to explore their environment more widely finding new places to visit (7%).

Other reasons for change in visitation clearly represented COVID-19 lifestyle changes, with 6% saying that they could visit more as they were working from home, but 11% reported decreases in visitation due to home-schooling their children, working extended hours as a key worker (e.g. for the NHS), engaging in higher levels of shielding and avoiding meeting people in public spaces, or as a result of travel restrictions.

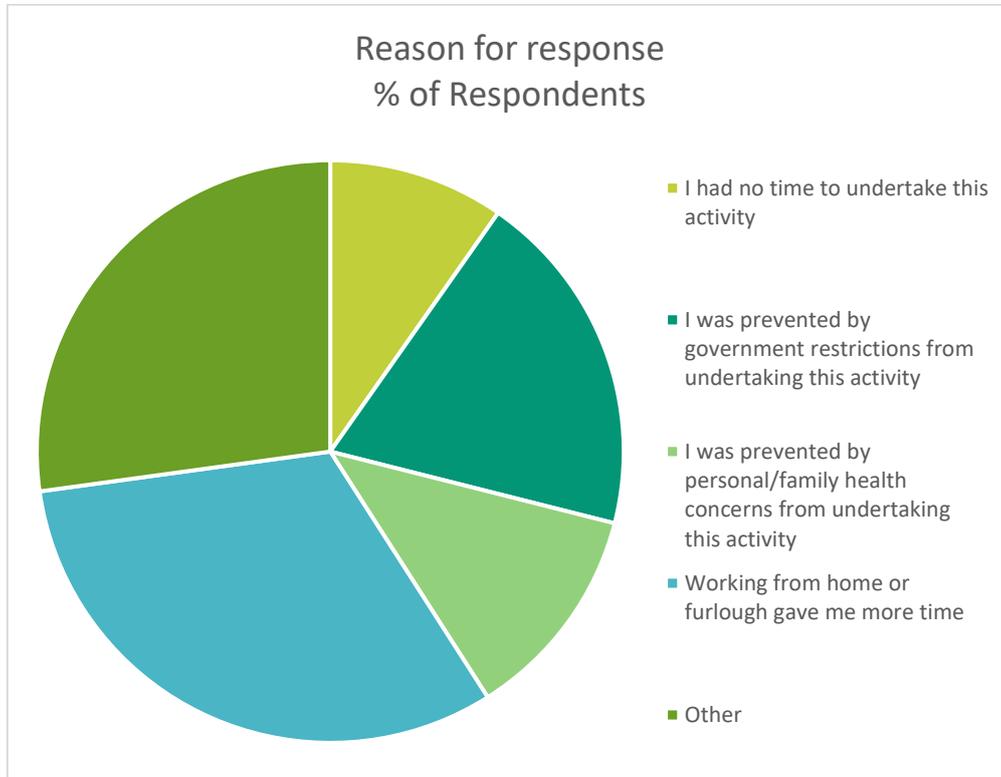


Figure 28 - Reasons behind Forest visitation behaviour due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

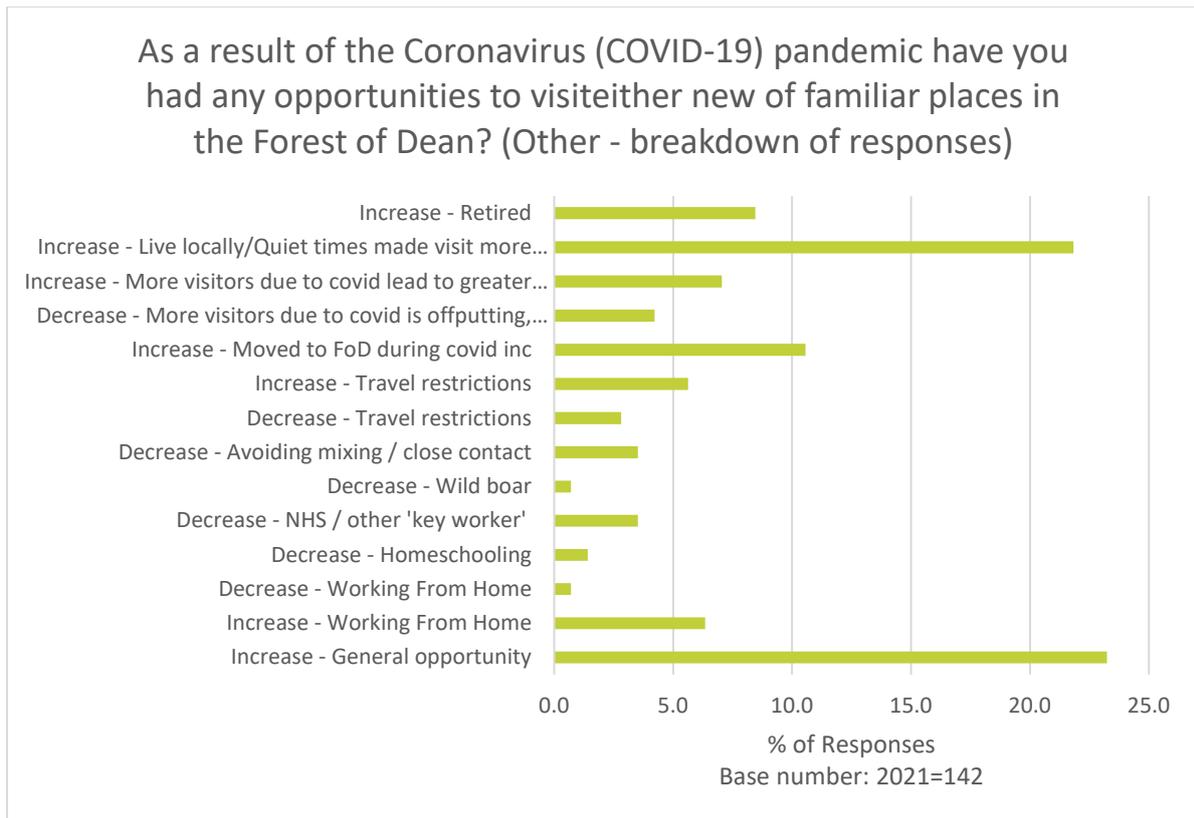


Figure 29 - Reasons behind visit changes due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Other)

Respondents were also asked about their learning as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Multiple answers were permitted to this question to allow respondents to state each area that they may have learned about and as a result 1,276 answers were received from the 1004 respondents. As can be seen (Figure 30), the lowest scoring activity was learning about cultural heritage, with local history and industrial heritage following with 14% and 13% respectively, and the preferred learning activity being environment and nature by a small margin of 8pp.

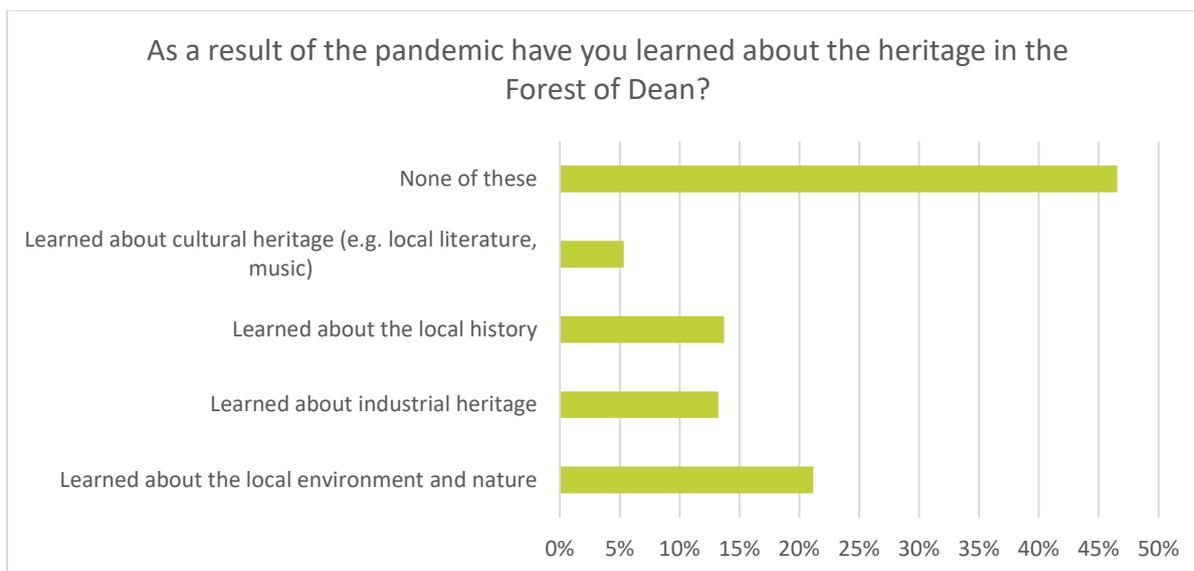


Figure 30 - Learning about heritage as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

More than 60% of respondents stated that there had been no change to the amount of learning that they did as a result of the pandemic, whilst 14% reported doing less and 23% reported doing a greater amount of learning.

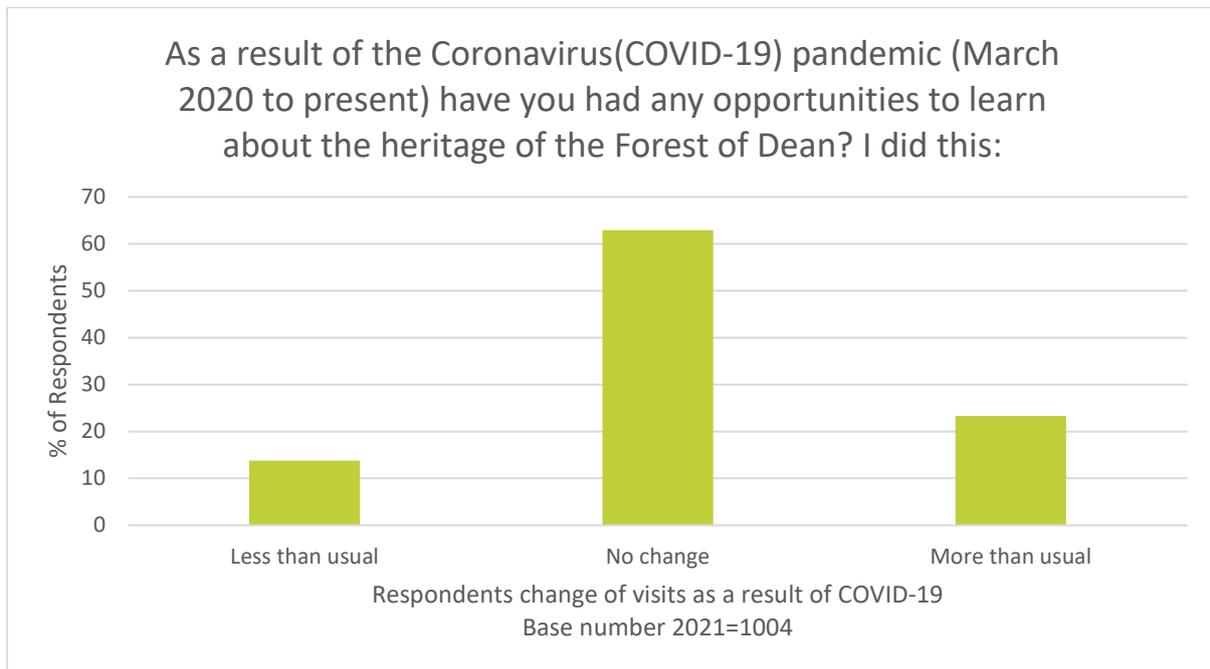


Figure 31 - Changes to the amount of learning as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The reasons for reductions were stated as being lack of time (23%) and either government restrictions or health concerns directly from the pandemic (collectively 19%). In addition, 20% of the sample stated that they had been able to engage more due to working from home or furlough, with 19% citing other reasons.

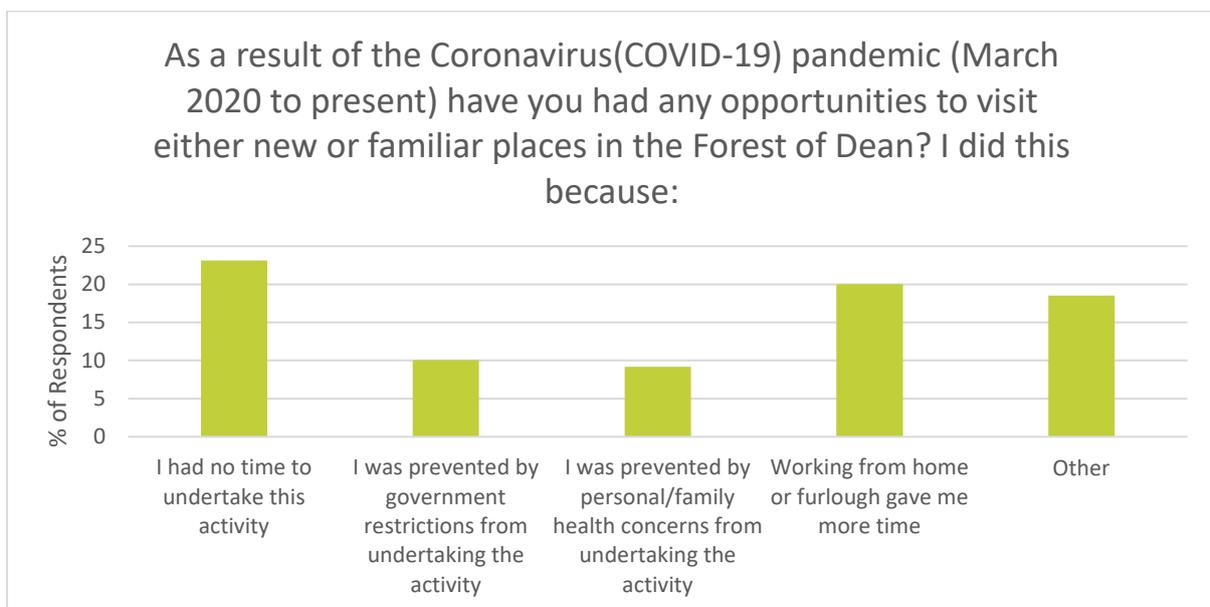


Figure 32 - Reasons behind changes in learning behaviour due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Of the 'other' reasons stated for engaging the same or more as before, were increased time (20%), access to the forest because of being local (22%) or recently moving to the area (8.7%). Many of those who said that they had done less activity cited a general lack of interest (16.5%), no change in circumstances (15%), lack of awareness of the activities/projects of the programme or general lack of awareness as to where to find out information to learn from (10%). One respondent noted that they had engaged less with the programme due to less activities and projects being active during the periods of most severe restrictions.

The survey asked, "Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, delivery of Foresters' Forest activities had to change or stop completely at some times. Did this impact you?"

Perhaps surprisingly, the majority of respondents (77%) stated that they were not impacted at all by interruptions to the delivery of Foresters' Forest projects. This percentage reflects the proportion of residents in the sample and further analysis by comparing responses to this question against Resident, Visitor or Volunteer status, shows that the responses of both Residents and Visitors were broadly similar and the most heavily affected (72% of their population) were Volunteers, as might reasonably be expected.

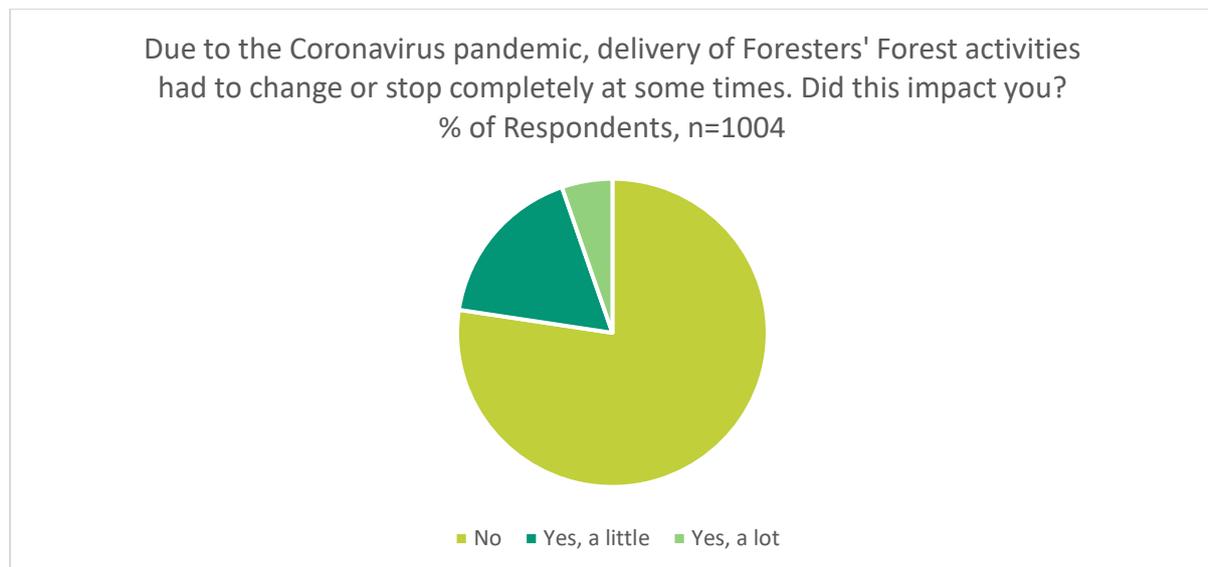


Figure 33 - Impact of Foresters' Forest projects being interrupted

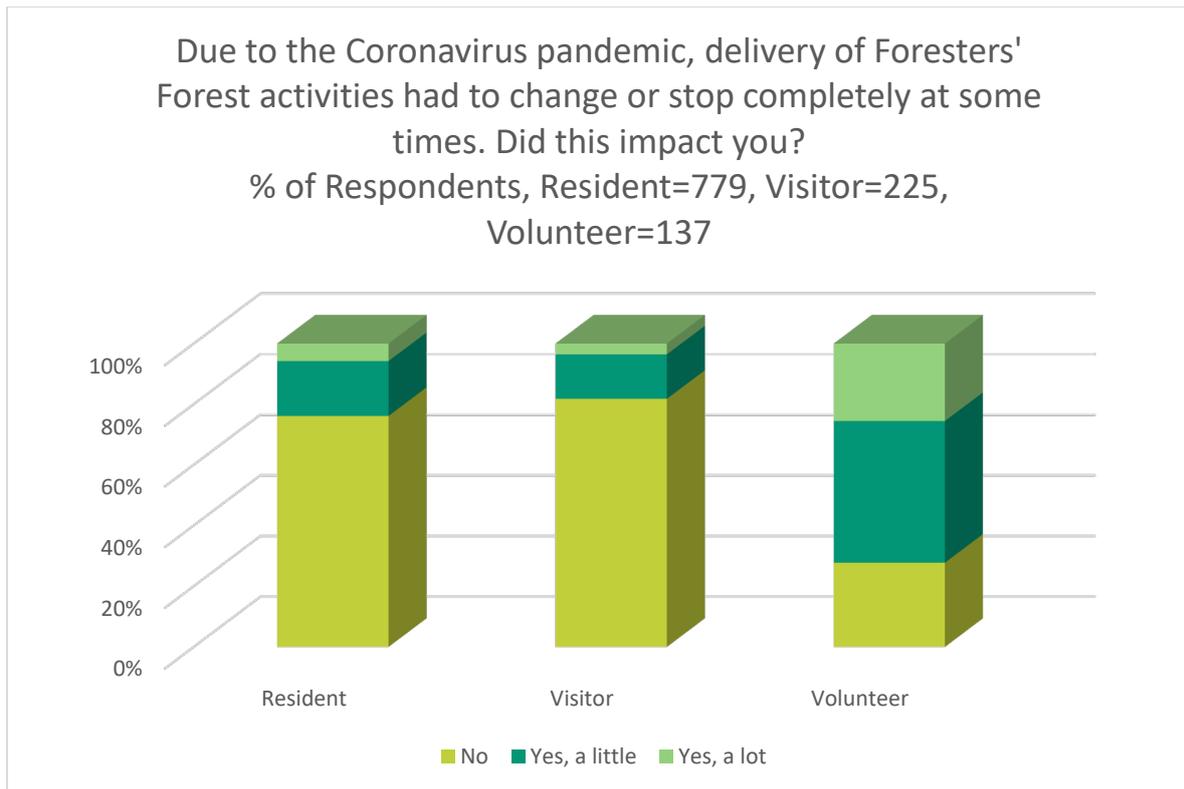


Figure 34 - Impact of Foresters' Forest projects being interrupted (crosstab status)

When asked how Coronavirus (COVID-19) had impacted their activities, respondents provided 111 responses, with the majority (74% of responses) stating that the activities or project work had either been reduced, delayed, or stopped altogether. Small numbers reported issues with travel to projects, even when they were open, and with Forestry England bureaucracy including additional restrictions. Some 5% of responses indicated that the reduction in activities and project work had a negative impact on their mental health.

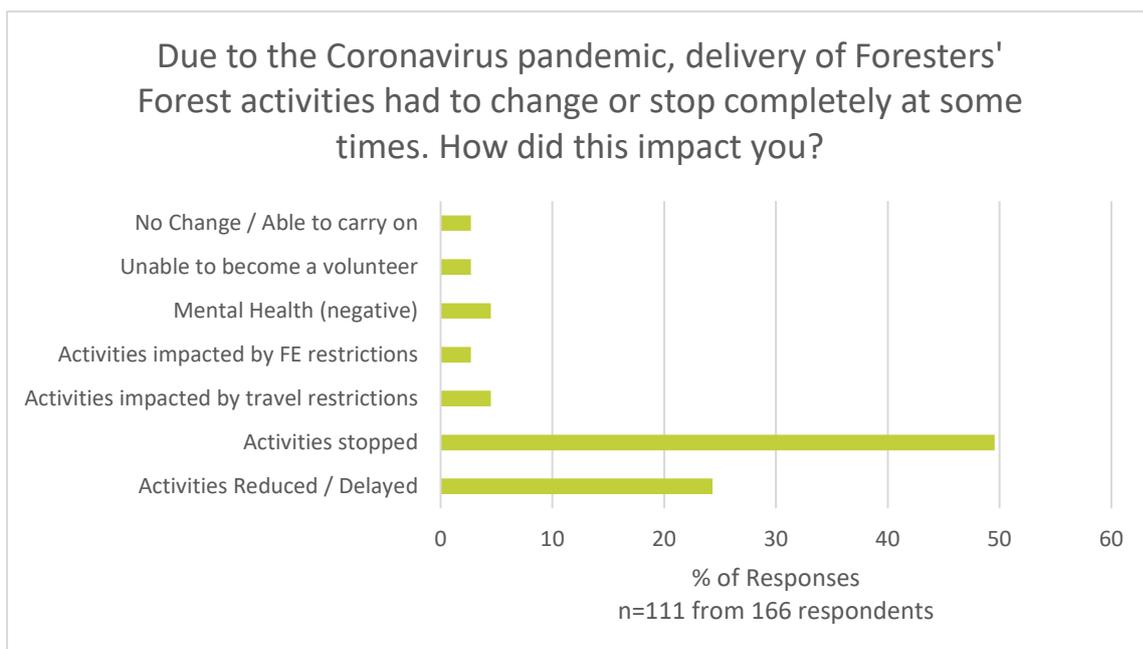


Figure 35 - How did changes to projects as a result of COVID-19 impact you?

2.8. Our Shared Forest

As the Foresters' Forest programme comes to a conclusion, this part of the survey looked towards the future. One aspect of future planning in the Forest of Dean, which it is hoped will involve the local community, is Forestry England's strategic programme 'Our Shared Forest'. As shown in the following figures, awareness of this limited at the time of the survey with 82% of respondents stating they were not aware of the strategy from a sample composed of 77% residents.

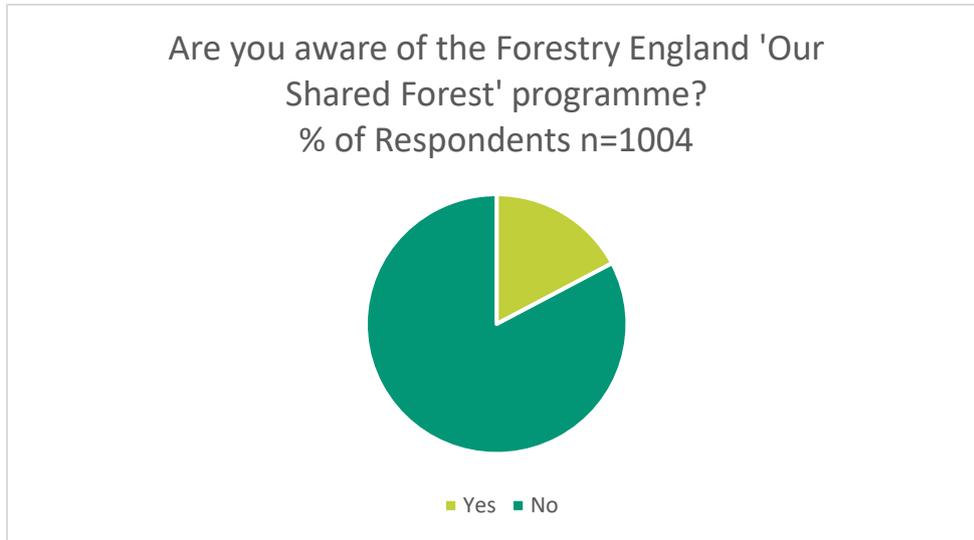


Figure 36 - Awareness of 'Our Shared Forest'

When this is viewed as a comparison between residents and visitors, the differences are minimal, with 82% of Residents and 85% of visitors stating a lack of awareness.

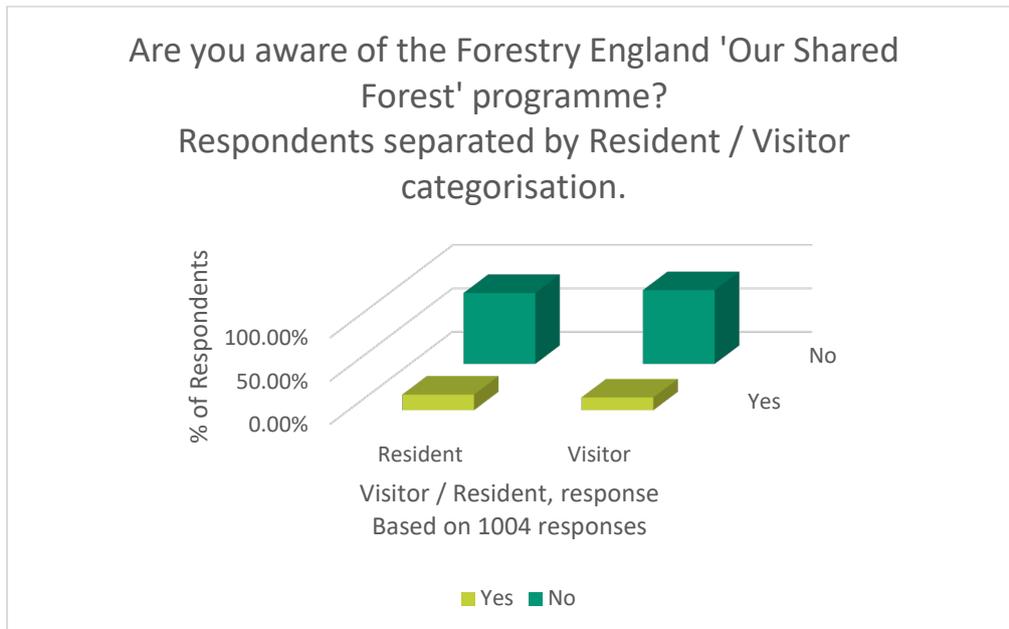


Figure 37 - Awareness of 'Our Shared Forest' by Resident/Visitor

2.9. Respondent perceptions of what is special or needs to be improved

Aspects of heritage which make the Forest of Dean Special

Respondents were asked to select one heritage characteristic that makes the Forest of Dean Special for them. The list of available characteristics based prepared from answers provided in the 2018 and 2019 surveys. Respondents were then asked, what could be improved.

Respondents were reminded that the definition of heritage for the survey is:

“anything that has originated from the historic activities of previous generations. This could be the language or dialect, music, literature, the natural environment, industry, buildings, local rights to use resources, or even the very appearance of the landscape around us”.

The single greatest characteristic that makes the Forest of Dean special for the respondents is the ‘natural environment’, including the trees and woodland, wildlife, waterways etc. with 46.8% of respondents selecting this option. The identification with the natural environment continues with two further options, which ranked third and fourth by respondents. These were :‘Open Access’ with 14% of respondents selecting this option, and ‘Landscape’ which was selected by 9% of respondents.

For around 17% of respondents, the aspect of most importance is that the Forest of dean is their home and where they were brought up. Another 6% of respondents found the Forests’ industrial heritage to be what makes it special, with smaller numbers indicating that other traditional practices and cultural creations make the Forest special (4%)

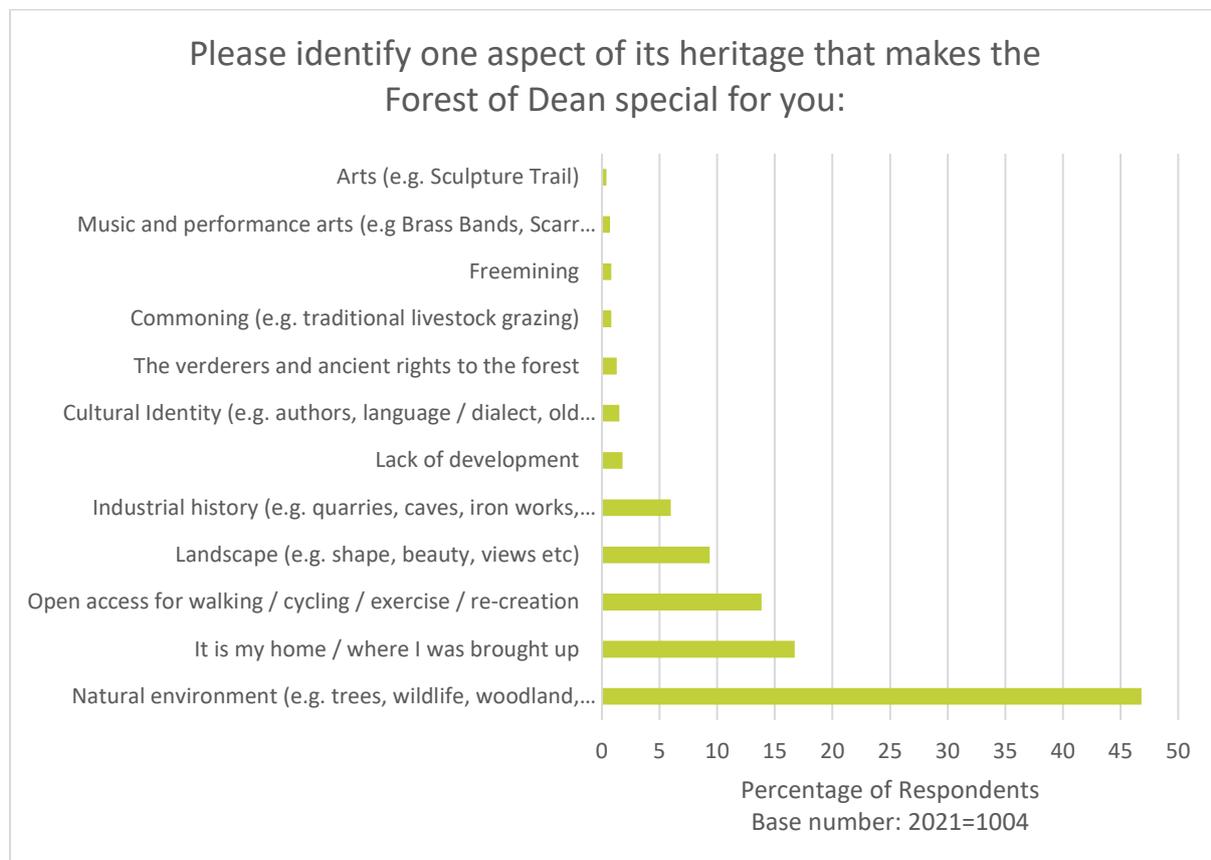


Figure 38 - Aspects of Heritage that make the Forest of Dean special

Considering all of these different aspects in broader groups of natural, built and industrial, and cultural heritage, we can see that over time aspects relating to natural heritage are selected with around three-times the frequency of the other characteristics and that cultural heritage maintains a marginal preference over built and industrial heritage.

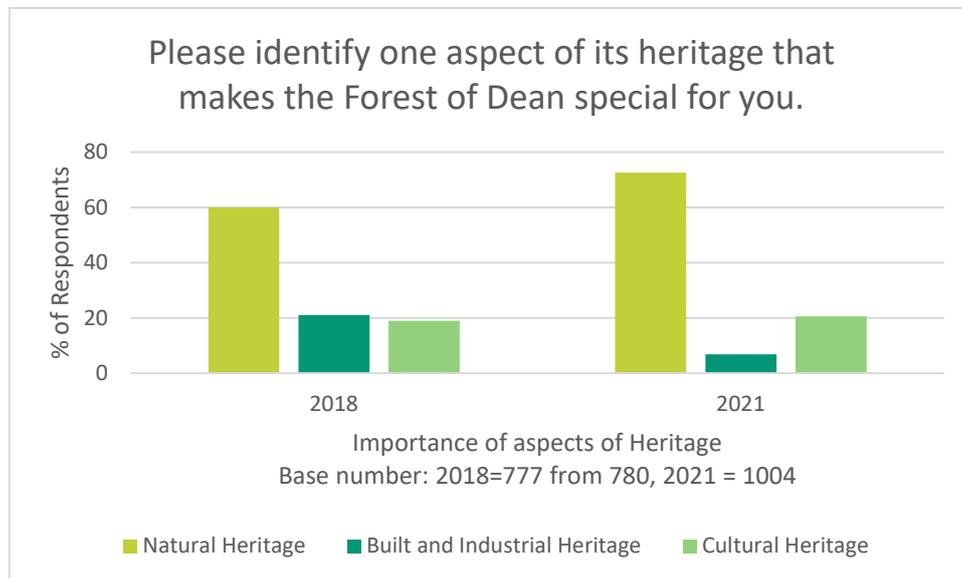


Figure 39 - Aspects of Heritage that make the Forest of Dean special (Summary)

Aspects of Heritage in the Forest of Dean which need improvement

Respondents were asked to state which aspects of heritage need to be improved. As with the preceding question, responses to previous surveys formed the basis of a list from which responses were selected. Three aspects clearly stand out from the other responses. ‘Litter and Fly-tipping’ and ‘Protection of green spaces from development (industrial, housing etc.)’ were identified by 18.6% (n=187) and 18.5% (n=186) of the respondents respectively. That ‘Litter and Fly-tipping’ is selected so frequently is notable in its degree of importance given the proportion of volunteers who have engaged in trying to clear this up, as can be seen in the Volunteering section of this Appendix.

The third most selected aspect was ‘Management of feral Wild Boar’. Management, in the context of the Forest of Dean, and consistent with other species in other locations where there is a human-wildlife conflict, refers to the control of the population by culling. However, this is not as simple as may be initially thought. Elsewhere in comments provided in this survey, there is clearly a strong view that the number of Boar that needs to be culled should be increased in order to reduce the damage to flora and fauna, but there are also those who would wish to see them left to ‘self-manage’ rather than be culled, perhaps even to be viewed as a benefit, such as a tourist attraction.

A range of other aspects were identified as important by between 1 and 10% of respondents, including: improving education, better communication, interpretation and signposting, replanting with native species, and conserving historic building and industrial features.

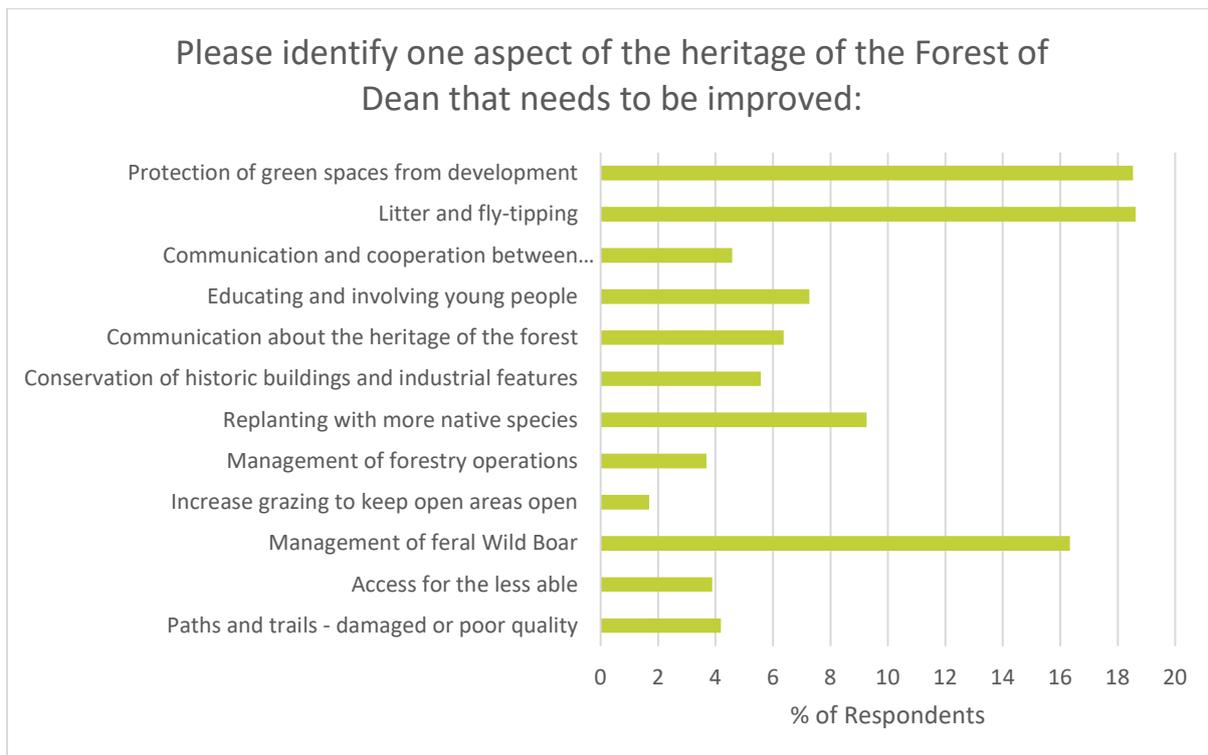


Figure 40 - Aspects of the heritage that needs to be improved in the Forest of Dean

2.10. Comments relating to the Foresters’ Forest Programme

Survey respondents were provided with the opportunity to express their views on the Foresters' Forest programme more generally. This led to 140 respondents providing 126 comments which fell within the subject of the question, with a further 10 providing feedback on the survey itself, and 19 were outside of the scope of the question.

These responses have been broadly categorised to enable reporting of what was a diverse, sometimes extensive, and occasionally very direct collection of responses.

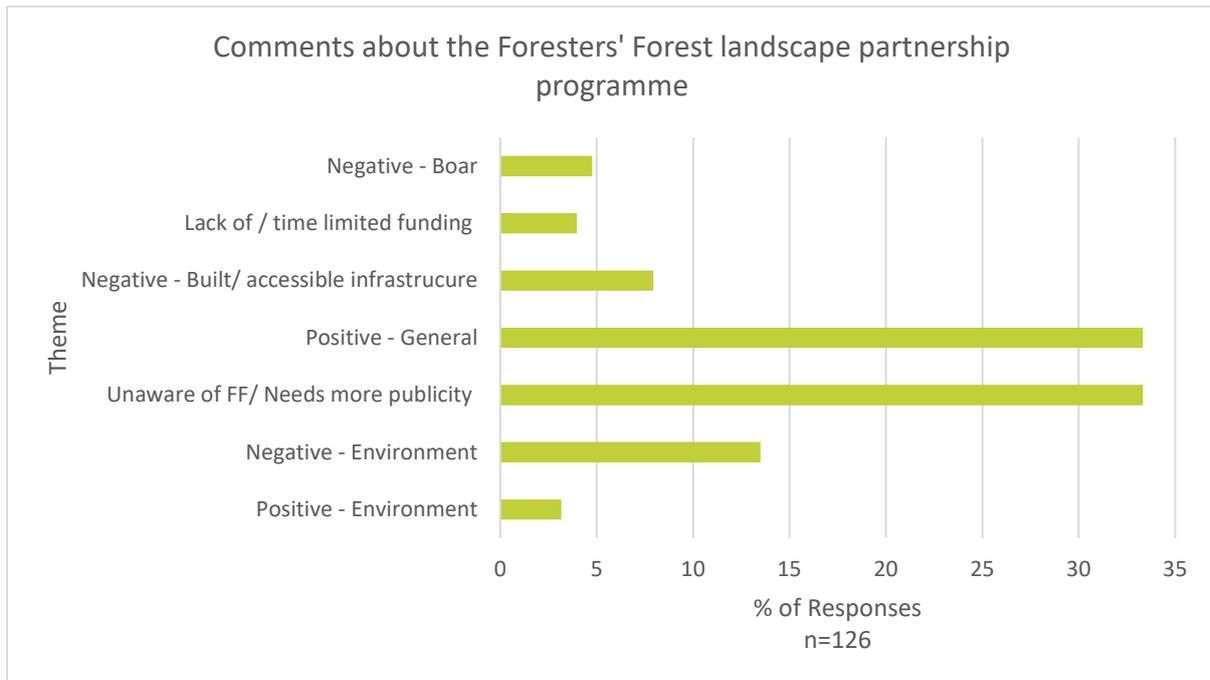


Figure 41 - Comments on the Foresters' Forest Programme

The most common responses were either ones giving positive feedback on the programme or were concerned with a lack of awareness, or need to improve publicity, each having 33% of the responses.

Positive feedback included comments such as:

“Very impressed by the commitment, ambition, vision and passion of the partnership.”

“This has been a brilliant programme. I hope the benefits will be felt by the local community and visitors for many years.”

“The programme has brought together people who had not previously been involved very much in many aspects of life within the area”

“The programme has been very valuable, engaging local communities, increasing awareness of many aspects of life in the FoD and actively providing support and information

and encouraging participation of local people to understand, conserve, promote and take pride in their wonderful heritage.”

“It has been an amazing project and incredibly good value for money. It is a real shame that the funding has to stop.”

Comments around the lack of awareness frequently revolved around respondents' aspirations to have had greater involvement had they known more:

“I would like to have been personally involved with more projects, had I been aware of them.”

“Forester's forest activities great but not well marketed to those who do not already know”

Responses about environmental concerns often reflected very specific or personal aspirations for a particular site or feature that might be difficult for the programme to engage with so specifically.

A small set of respondents continued the positive theme by noting that the programme has successfully initiated something, but that it would be appreciated if additional funding could be available to carry on the progress:

“It has been exciting and worthwhile, and would be good if it could be extended / more funding made available to continue the good work”

2.11. How respondents found out about the survey

The survey asked respondents how they learned about the survey . It should be noted that in the 2018 survey, respondents were asked which social media platform they had heard about the survey from, whereas in 2019 and 2021 they were asked simply to distinguish between Foresters' Forest social media and 'other social media'.

A total of 70% of 2021 survey respondents identified social media platforms as their source, compared to 53% of the 2018 survey sample. Social media directly attributed to the Foresters' Forest accounted for 26% of responses with 'Other Social Media' accounting for the remaining 44% of respondents, citing social media as the source. Increases in social media access to the surveys over the programme period are expected given increasing use of social media by likely sample populations, increasing use of well targeted social media by the programme team and promotion of the survey through paid marketing in 2021, which is likely to have contributed to the presence of the survey in users 'Facebook feeds' outside of Foresters' Forest direct posts.

Around 9% identified Foresters' Forest newsletters or website as their source or they were asked to complete it by staff or volunteers of the programme, compared to 12% in 2018 and 23% in 2019. Email was cited as the source of the survey by around 14% of respondents, down from 25% in 2019, although the email source is not known. It is possible that it refers to email newsletters and a number of respondents cited other organisations newsletters and communications as their source, including Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Forest of Dean Local History Society and local government, collectively accounting for 2.7% of responses.

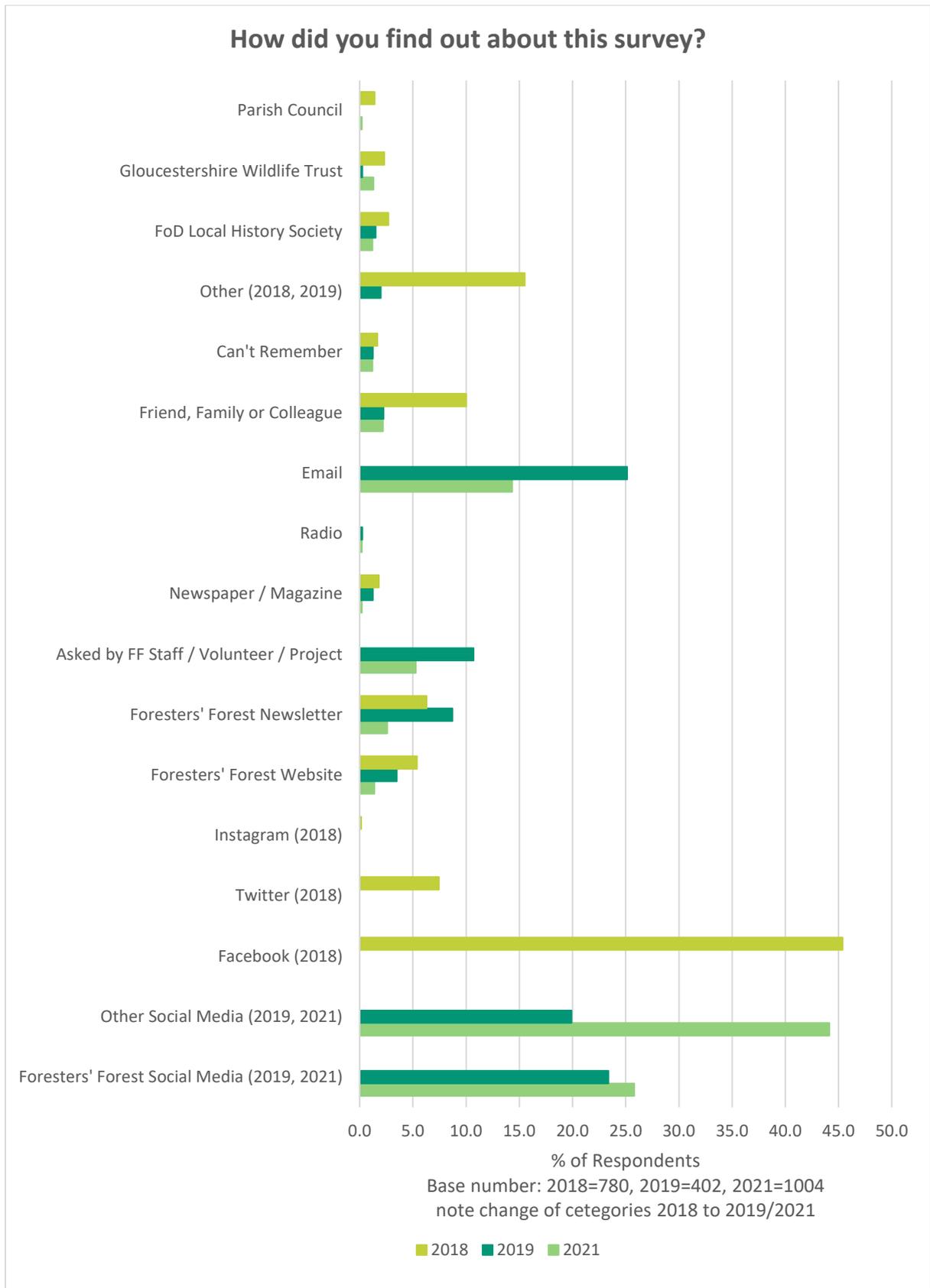


Figure 42 - How Respondents found out about the Survey

3. Volunteers and Volunteering

3.1. Volunteer Characteristics

Respondents were asked if they had carried out any volunteering activities for the Foresters' Forest programme. Volunteering was defined as being where the individual had contributed to the work of the programme or one of its projects, as opposed to being someone benefiting from attending an event organised by the programme or its volunteers. Of the 1004 respondents, 13.6% (n=137) said they had volunteered for the programme in some manner.

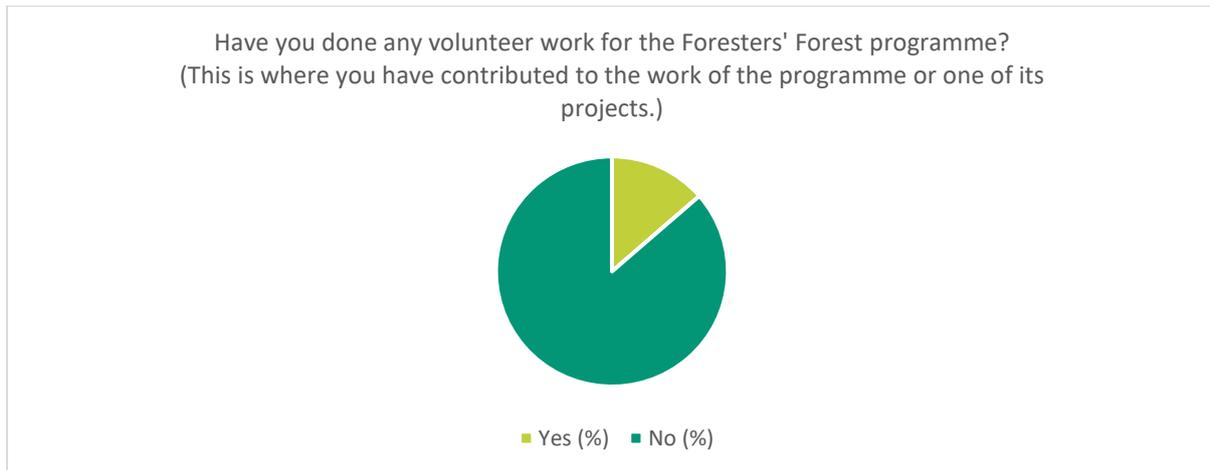


Figure 43 - Proportion of the sample undertaking Foresters' Forest volunteer work (2021)

Survey data over the course of the programme shows that the number of volunteers responding to the survey increased each year, indicating an increasing engagement with this aspect of the programme, however, the 2019 survey by proportion had three times as many volunteers than 2018 and more than twice as many than 2021. This is due to focused targeting and the high number of volunteers responding to the survey in 2019 compared to 2018 and 2021.

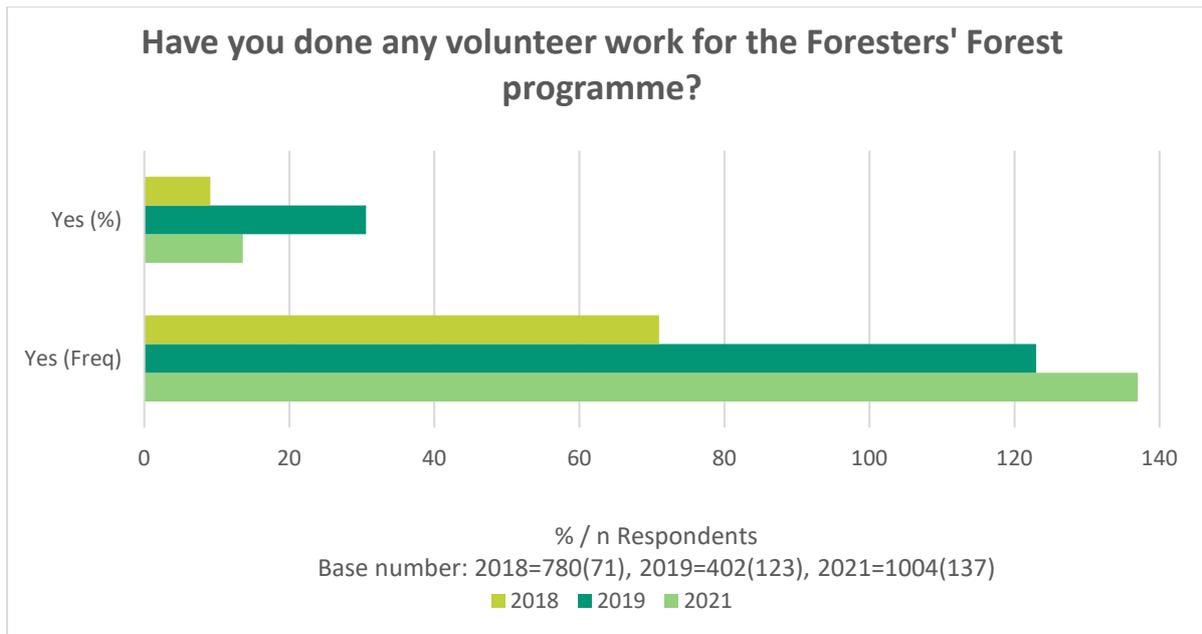


Figure 44 - Have you done any volunteer work? Comparison of survey sample responses over the programme period

When comparing the volunteer status of respondents to their residency status (resident or visitor) we can see that the vast majority of volunteers (85%) are residents and with residents being 77% of the sample, this means that they are disproportionately represented.



Figure 45 - Volunteers cross-tabulated with residency

A comparison of volunteer status with employment shows that the overwhelming majority of volunteers were either employed full- or part-time (60%) whilst 29% were retired. Other employment categories totalled only 11%, including 4% unemployed.

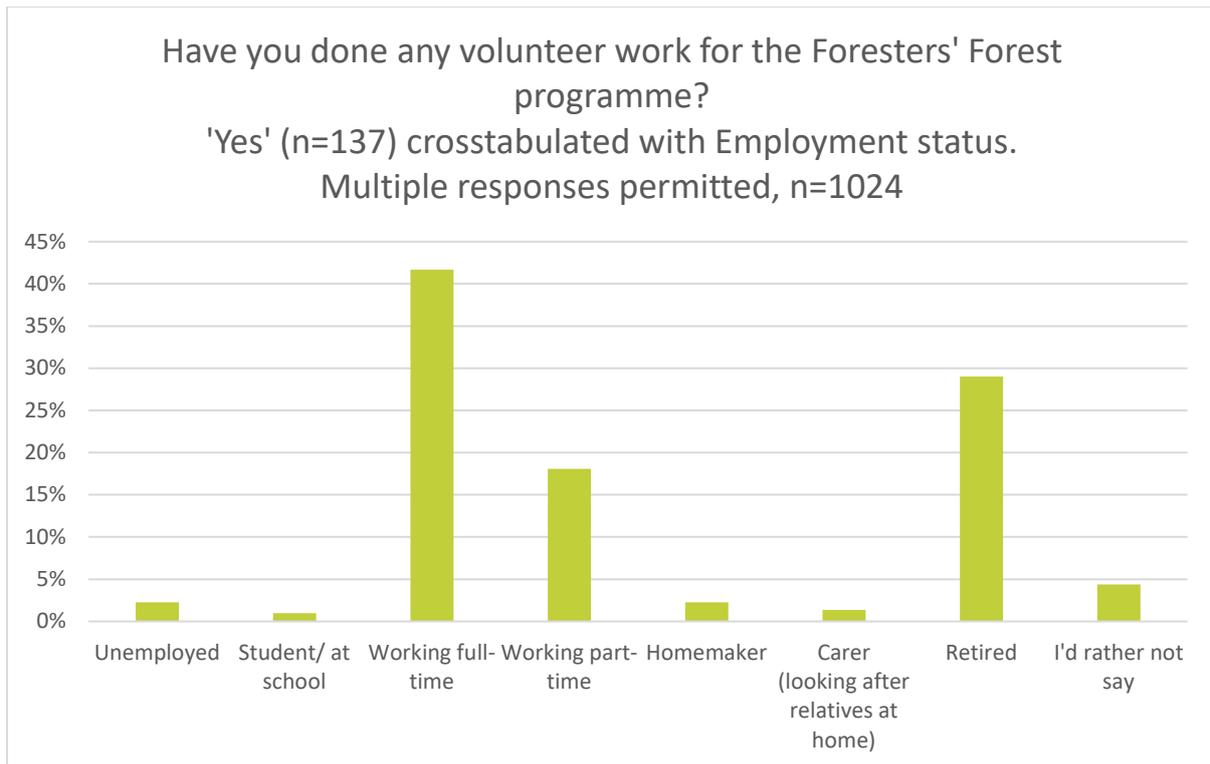


Figure 46 - Volunteer employment status

3.2. Volunteer Activity

Volunteers were asked to identify which projects they had volunteered for. Respondents were able to provide multiple answers to reflect their potential involvement in more than one project, and this data for both 2018 and 2021 is shown below. As might be expected, those activities which are best able to make use of large numbers of people scored highly, with, for example, 'litter picking and 'buried heritage (archaeology)' taking the lead.

In terms of the activities being undertaken, we can see that, even though they remain high scoring, 'conservation work on natural heritage', and 'survey and data collection activities' both saw drops in recorded participation from 2018 to 2021, also seen in the overall lower scoring 'archaeology', which is likely to be an effect of the pandemic. On the other hand, 'helping to run or organise events' and 'litter picking', both increased considerably over the programme period.

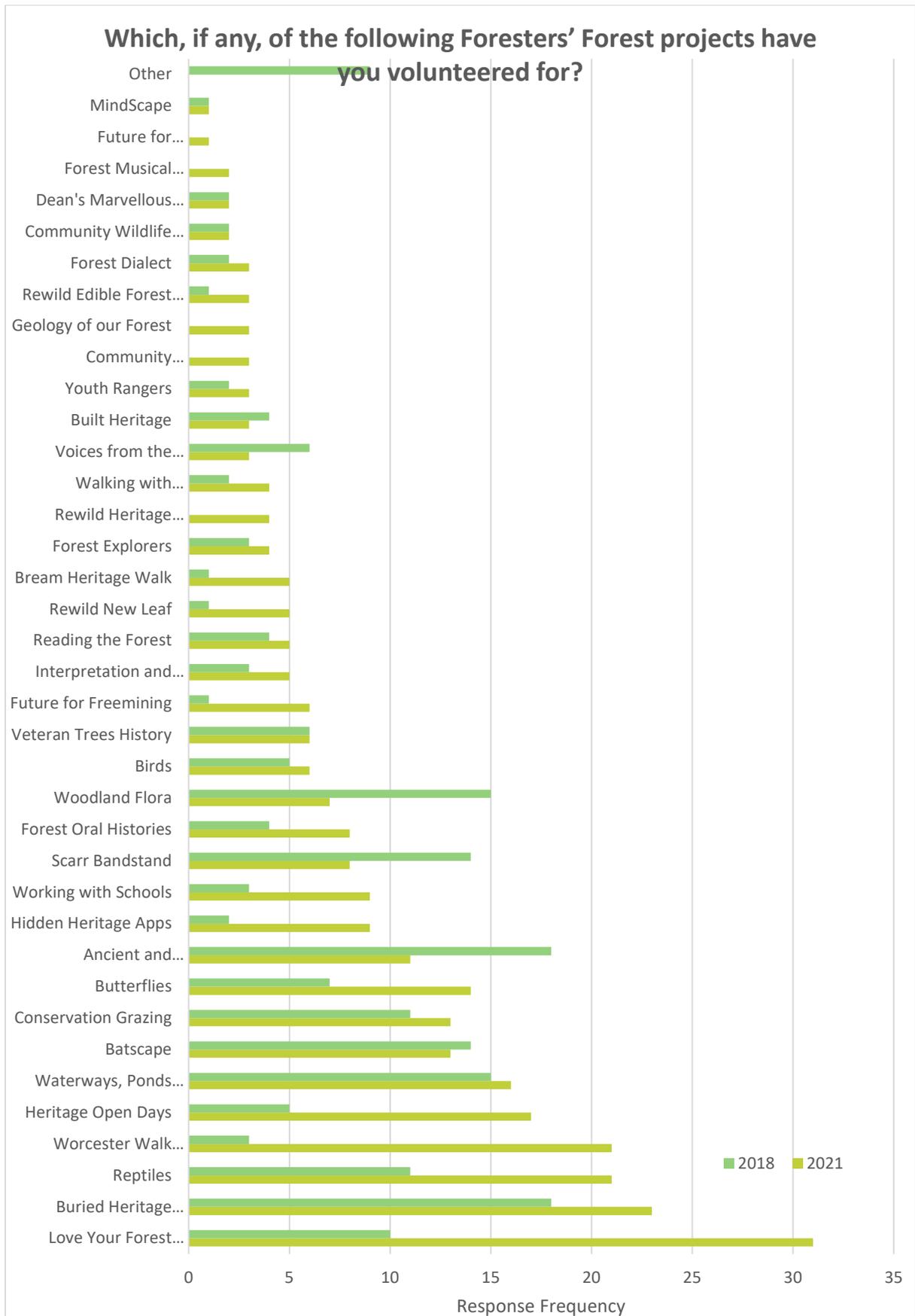


Figure 47 - Volunteer participation in projects (frequency)

Survey respondents were also asked for the type of voluntary work with which they were engaged. The largest proportion were engaged in some form of survey or data collection activities.

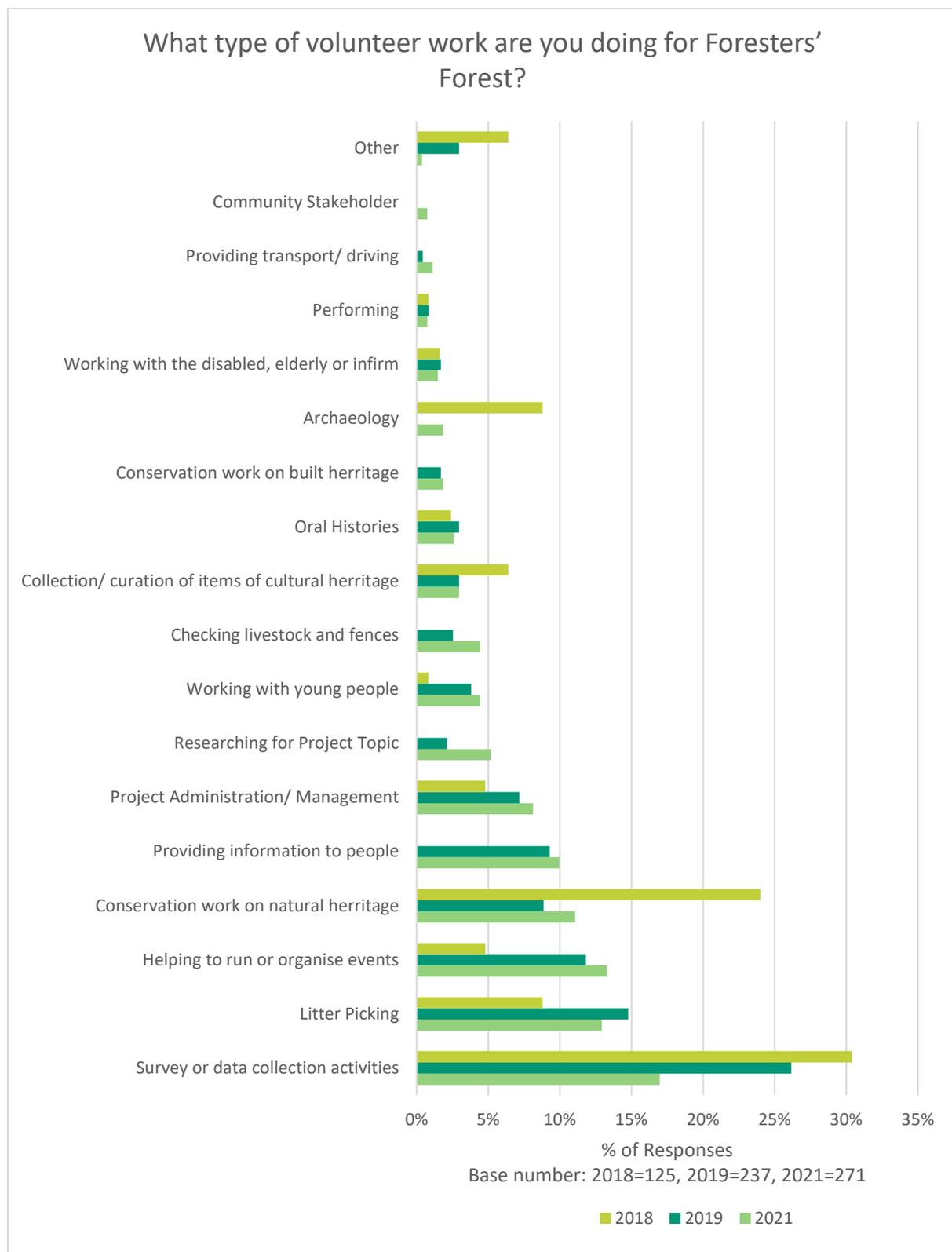


Figure 48 - Types of work engaged in by volunteers

3.3. Volunteer Motivations and Impact

Volunteers were asked to what extent the strength of their motivations for volunteering related to a number of options. The strongest motivation, with 82% of respondents indicating 'strong' or 'very strong' was to *'protect the natural environment of the Forest of Dean'* and was very closely followed at 80% of responses indicating 'strong' or 'very strong' was to *'contribute to the community where I live'*.

Mean scores compared across the 2019 and 2021 surveys indicate a very low-level of variation in motivation of volunteers.

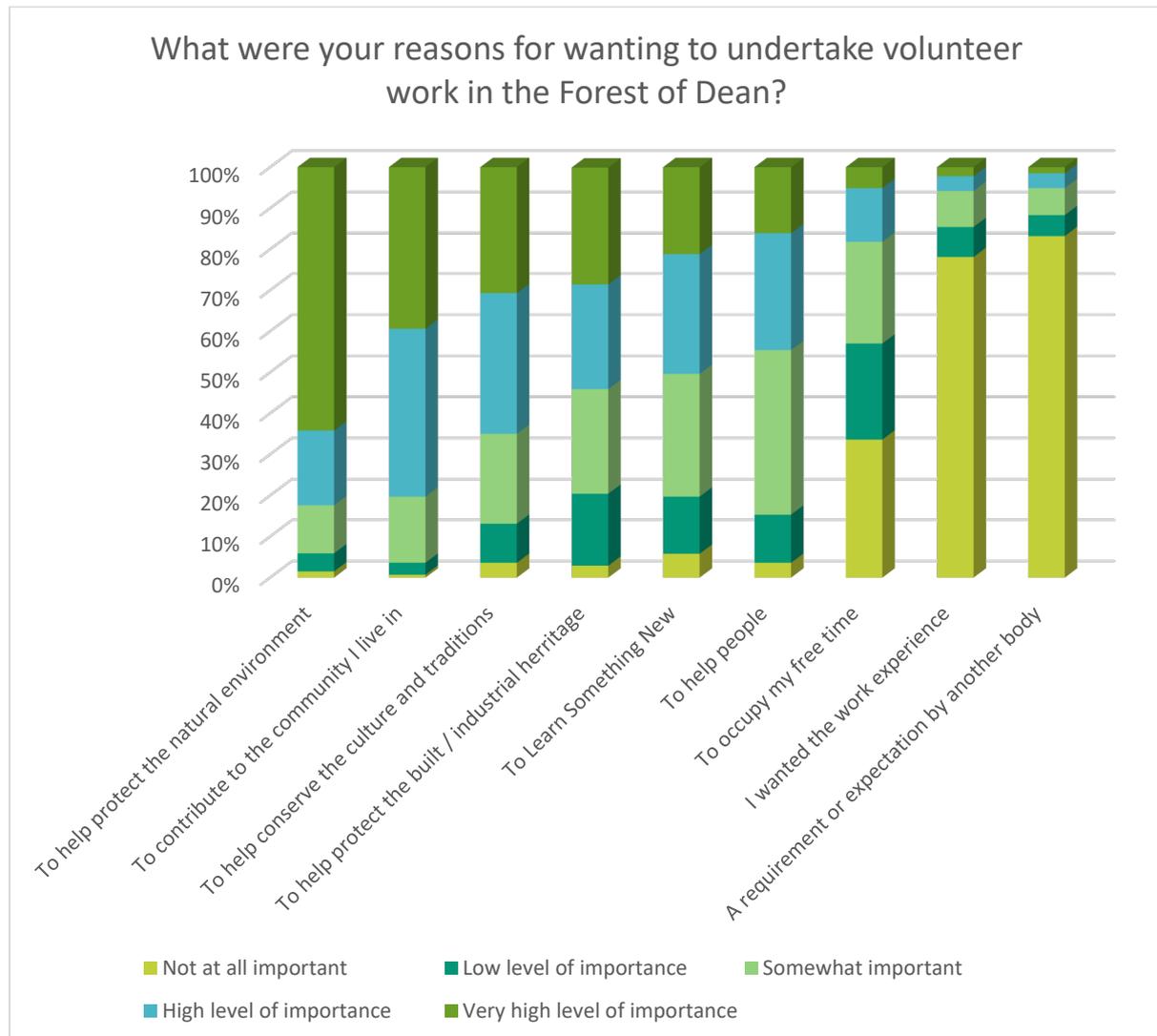


Figure 49 - What were your reasons for wanting to undertake volunteer work?

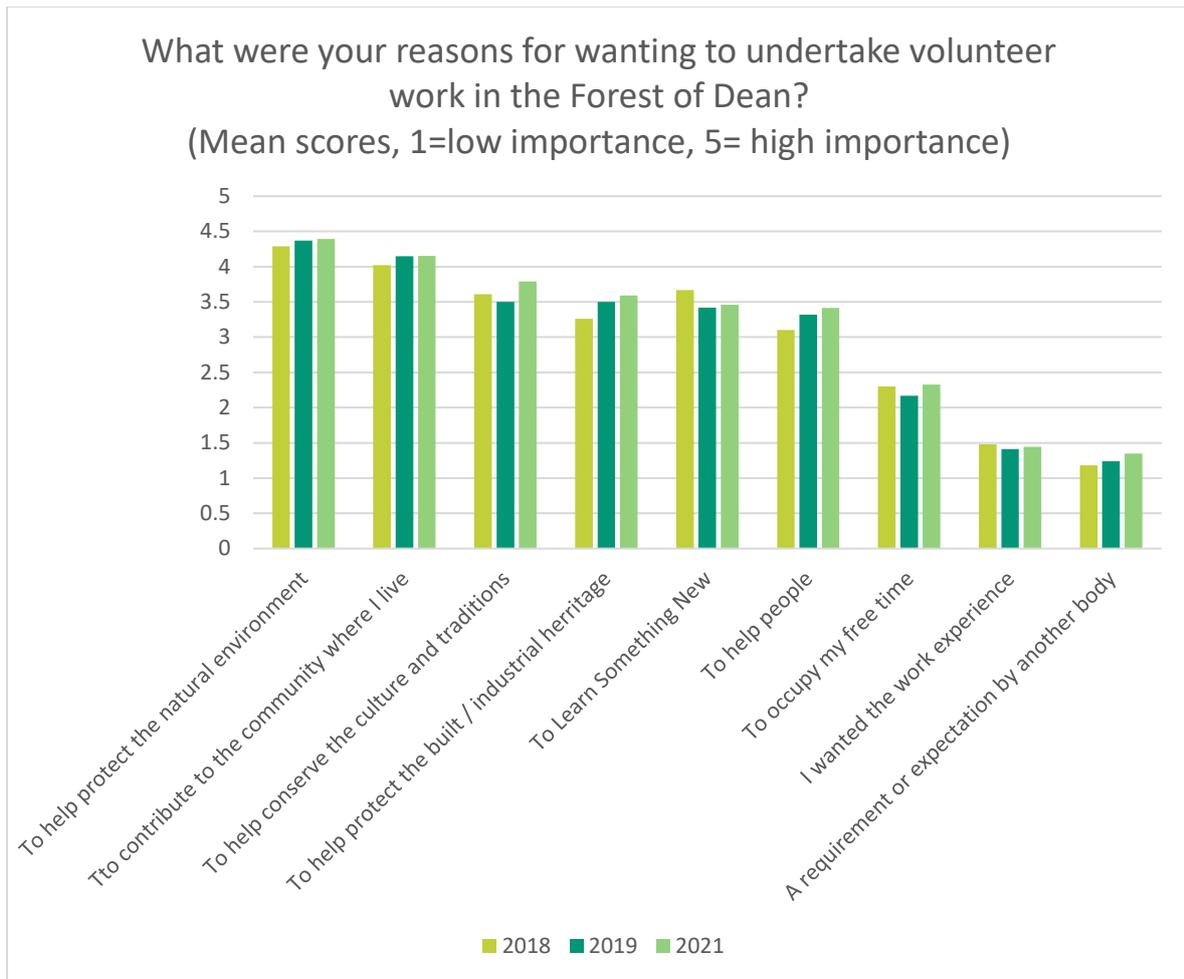


Figure 50 - What were your reasons for wanting to undertake volunteer work in? (Mean scores)

Volunteers were asked to what extent they felt they could make a difference by responding to eight different statements. Overall, a high-level of positive experience is recorded in the survey data. More than 80% of respondents agreed ‘strongly’ or ‘very strongly’ that they could make a difference to the Forest of Dean, that there is a positive climate in the team including between paid staff and unpaid volunteers, and that they are using their skills to do meaningful work. Similarly, 73% said they felt a valued member of the organisation and 77% that they were receiving the necessary support and guidance to achieve their volunteer activities. The scores for ‘gaining work experience to further my career’ were more mixed and show a shift to the middle ground, with more people disagreeing than collectively agreeing or strongly agreeing. It is worth noting that 85% of responding volunteers ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ that they were ‘taken for granted’.

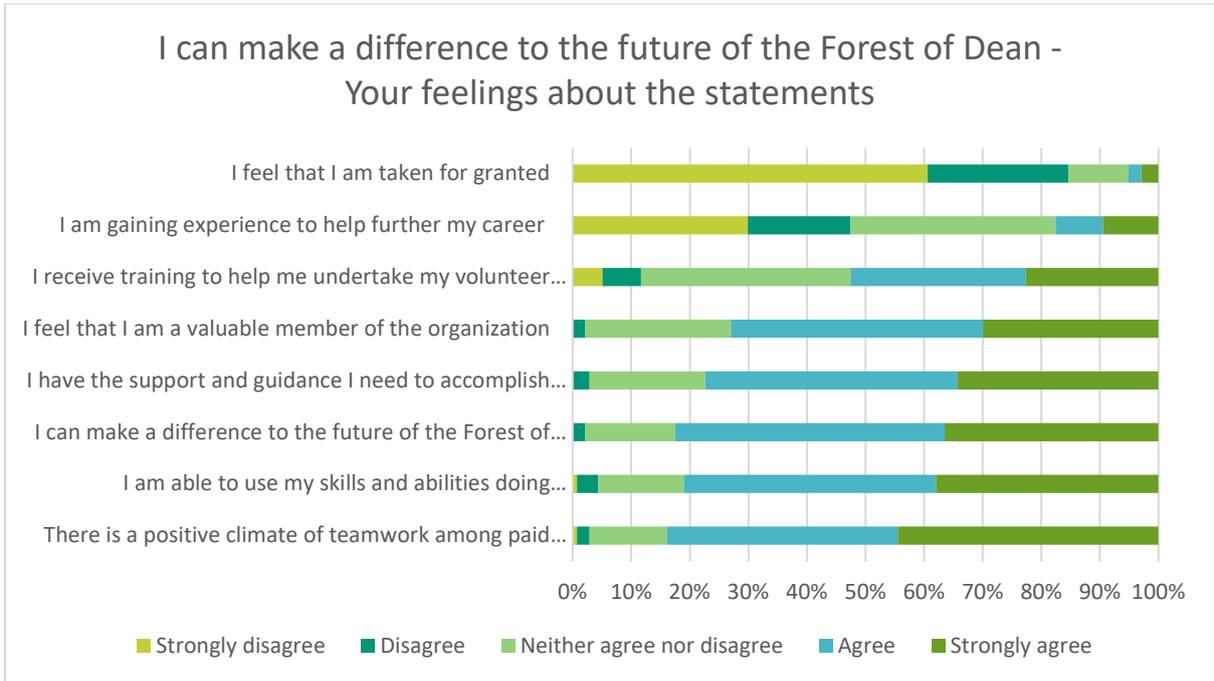


Figure 51 - I can make a difference to the future of the Forest of Dean

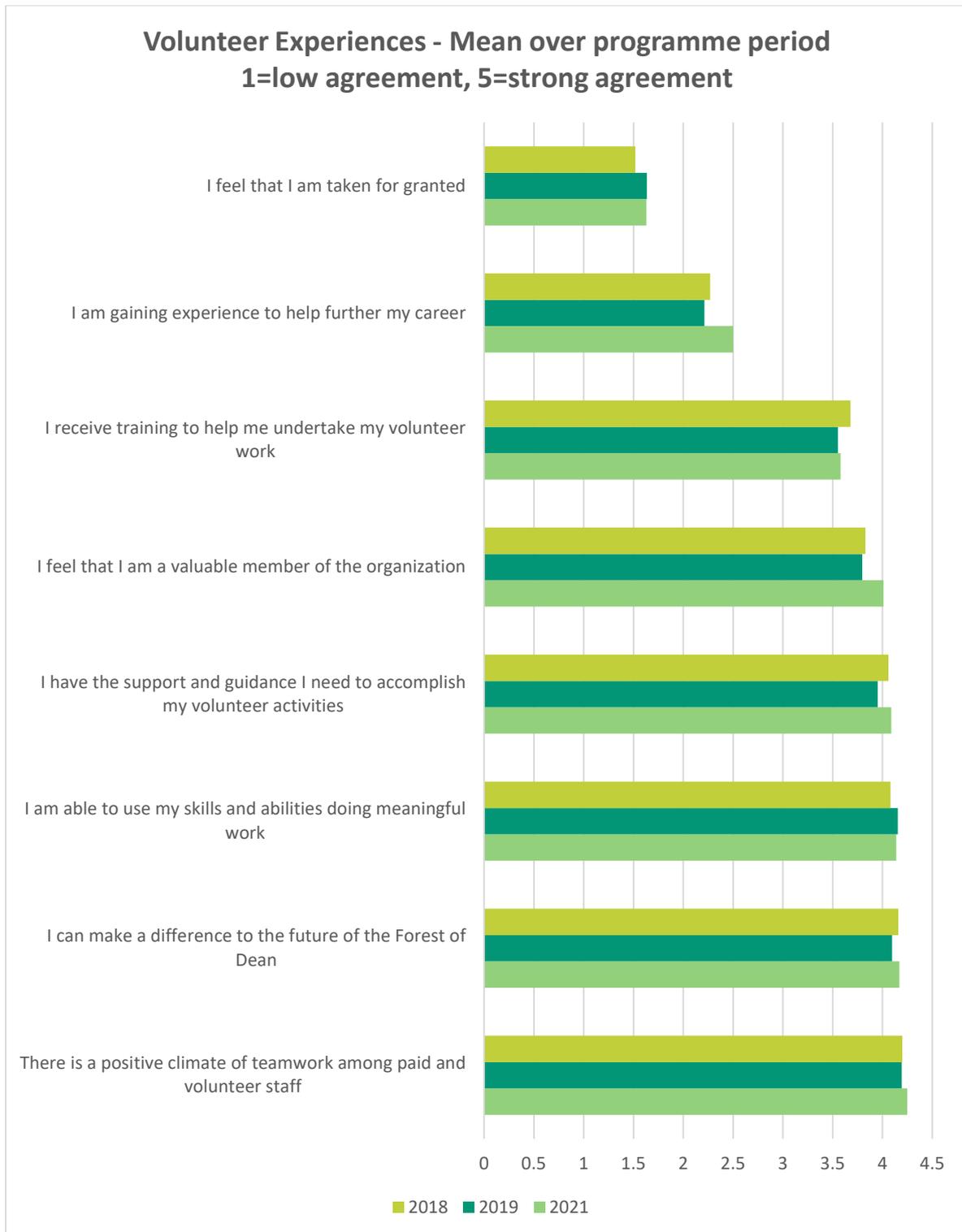


Figure 52 - I can make a difference to the future of the Forest of Dean (Mean)

Volunteers were asked the ways that volunteering for the Foresters’ Forest programme / projects had benefited them. Options presented included physical and mental health, self-confidence, skills, awareness of various aspects of heritage, and developing social networks. In each of the options, we see an improving position over the programme period, and all scoring higher than the middle point of the scale (i.e. *‘neither agree or disagree’*).

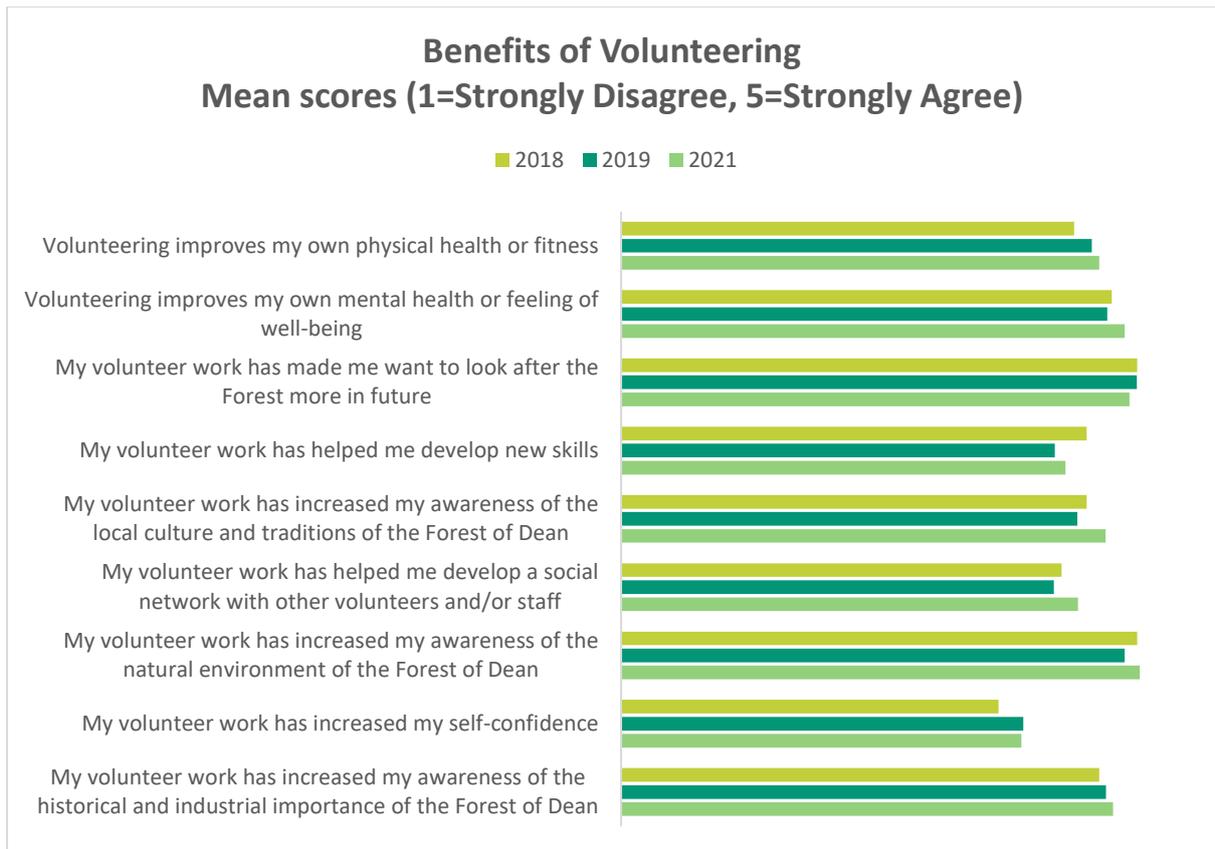


Figure 53 - Personal benefits from FF volunteering activity (comparison)

Volunteers were given the opportunity (an optional question) to propose improvements that could be made for volunteers / volunteering. Of 32 responses, 11 responses were not material to the question. The greatest single response group was in relation to ‘bureaucracy’, the need to make it easier to work in the Forest to do these activities. This was closely followed by the need for ‘better communication’, both of opportunities to volunteer and for groups asking for volunteers to respond to those who did so. Other responses included the need for ‘more training’, ‘issues with travel in the Forest’, especially on the weekend if using public transport, and the cost of travel, and lastly the need to ‘vary the time of activities’ to allow working people to access them and participate.

3.4. Volunteering and COVID-19

The arrival of COVID-19 shortly after the end of the 2019 survey could reasonably be imagined to have had a major impact on the ability of volunteers to contribute to the Foresters' Forest programme. As predicted, nearly 75% of volunteers responded that their involvement had been 'significantly reduced' (48.9%) or 'slightly reduced' (25.5%) and 21% (n=29) reported no change to their activities. Interestingly, 4.4% (n=6) reported that they had either 'increased' or 'significantly increased' their activity level.

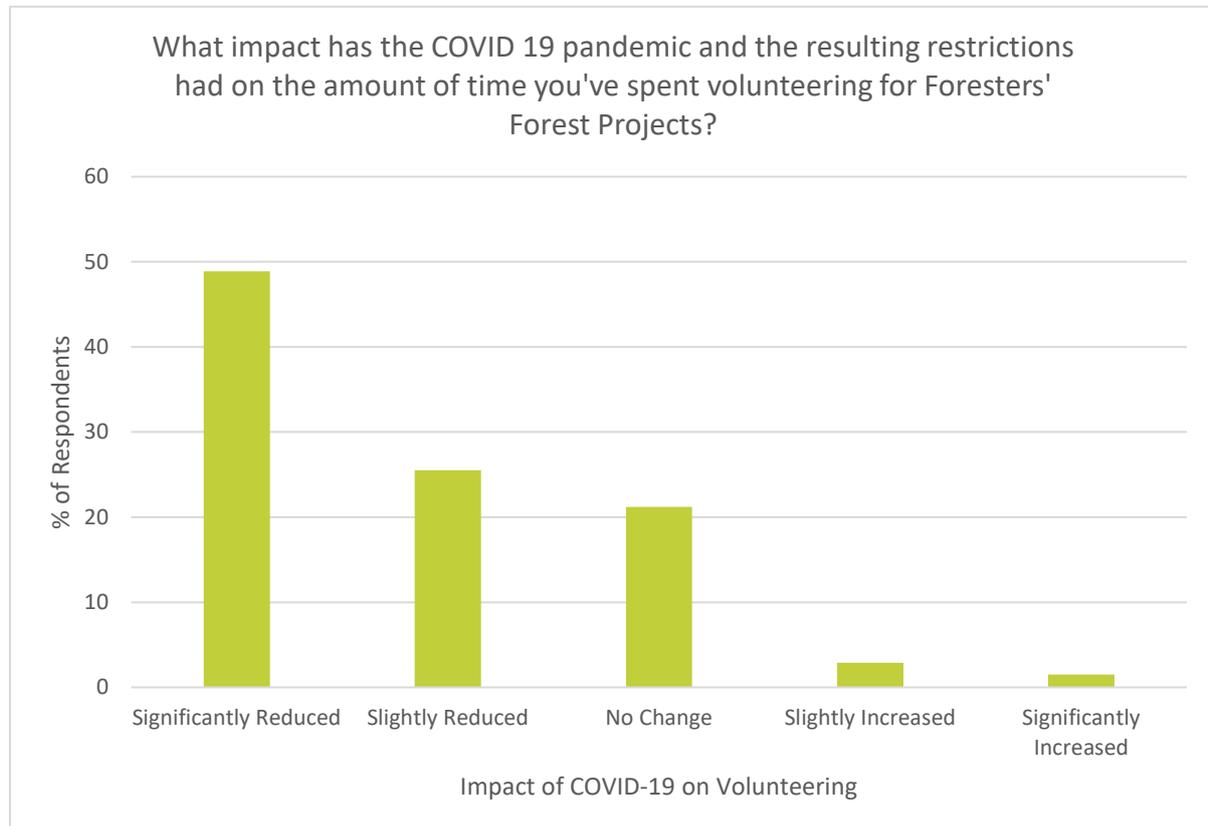


Figure 54 - The impact of COVID-19 on volunteering

Reasons for these changes, especially where the impact on projects and delivery of the programme is negative, are entirely focussed on either direct impacts of COVID-19, illness, fear of acquiring/ transmitting illness in self or others; or the consequential regulatory environment that resulted. All of which resulted in reductions in voluntary activities. Within the remaining comments in the 'other' category, two noted a reason for actually increasing their activity, one to increase stock checking with increasing visitor numbers when non-essential travel was permitted, and one had the availability of more time to carry out research.

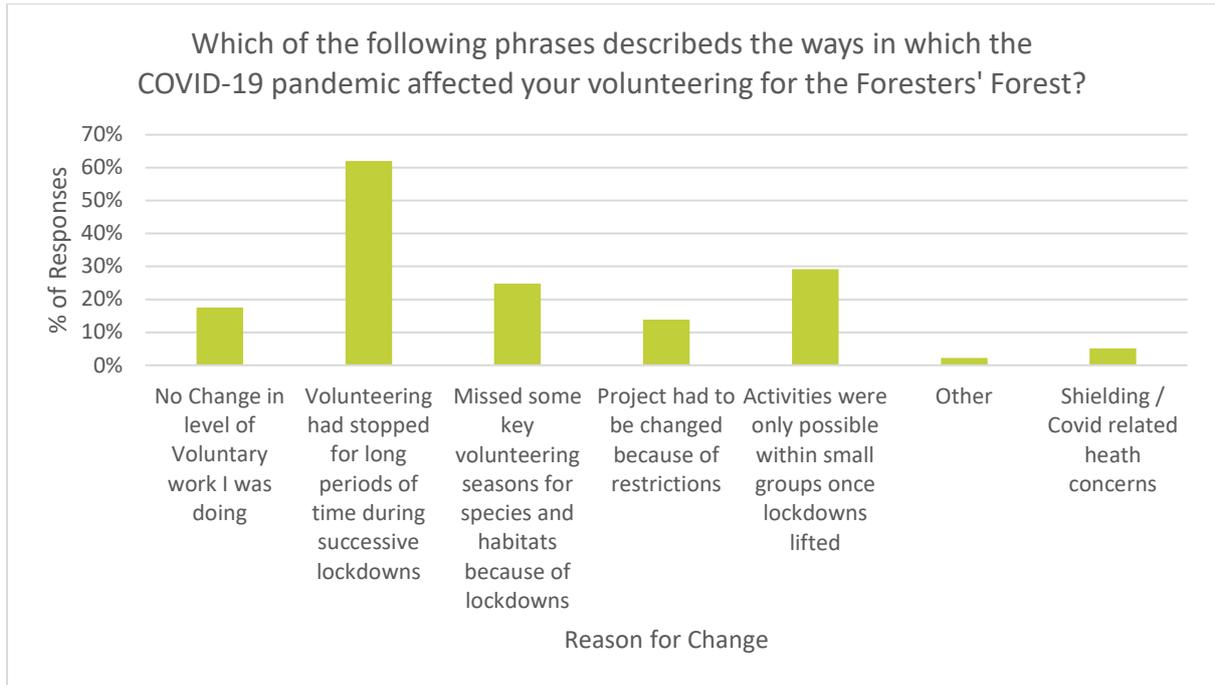


Figure 55 - How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect your volunteering?



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