

Dartmoor National Park Visitor Survey 2023

November 2023



Introduction

This report outlines the findings of the 2023 Visitor Survey carried out by Dartmoor National Park Authority.

The main objectives of the survey were to gain an understanding of visitor profiles to the National Park and develop a greater awareness of visitor attitudes towards a range of issues facing Dartmoor.

The survey results support our understanding of Dartmoor and will contribute to the evidence the Authority uses to plan for Dartmoor's future.

This is the first Visitor Survey carried out by the Authority in this format, however where possible results are compared to the 2017 DNPA Visitor Survey. We will look to re-do the survey every 2-3 years.

Thank you to those who helped to facilitate this survey and to all of those who gave their valuable time to share their views.



Methodology

Surveys were conducted between July and October 2023 at a variety of locations across Dartmoor National Park, including key towns and areas popular with visitors.

409 survey responses were received. The research data was gathered using face-to-face interviews in the locations detailed below, with the data recorded on tablets. Tablets were also stationed within the 3 National Park Visitor Centres (Princetown, Postbridge and Haytor). Surveying was carried out before, during and after the peak school holiday season on weekdays and weekends. A random selection of people were approached and interviewed (no quotas set), with each survey taking approximately 20 minutes to complete. Interviews were only conducted with people who were visiting the National Park for leisure or recreational reasons, regardless of whether they live in the National Park. This excluded those visiting the National Park for work or business.

The sample size of 409 provides a confidence level of 95%, with a confidence interval/margin of error of 5%.

It should be recognised that the results reported refer to actual responses received. Not all the questions were mandatory and therefore the number of respondents for some is less than 409 which subsequently changes the confidence levels for certain questions. This has been noted on the questions which this relates to.

It should also be noted that on some questions, respondents were able to select multiple answers meaning the number of responses for these questions was higher than 409.

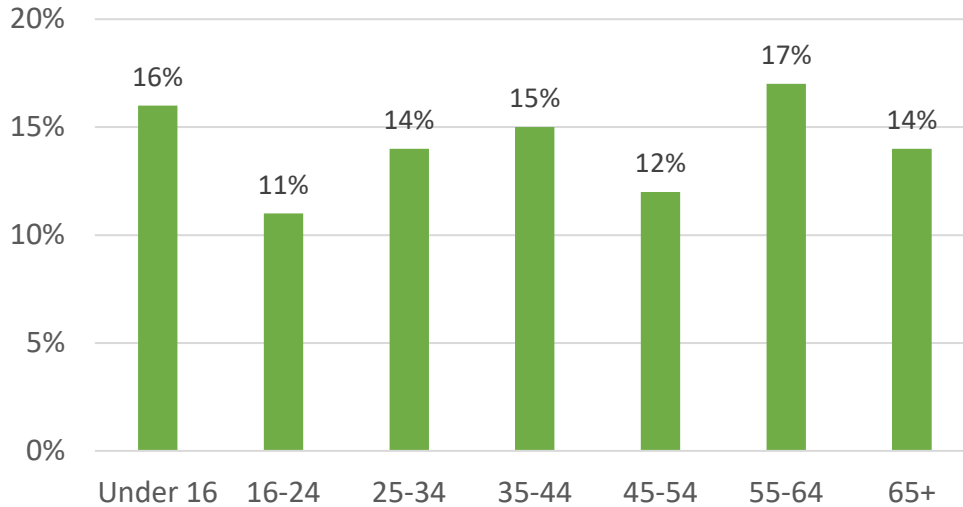
There are elements of unavoidable bias within this survey which are important to recognise:

- The number of surveys collected in each location significantly varied.
- Those who were surveyed had chosen to visit Dartmoor, generally in visitor 'hotspots' and are therefore likely to already have a positive attitude towards the National Park, particularly if they had visited before.

Survey location	Sample proportion
Ashburton	1%
Bellever Forest	14%
Burrator Reservoir	5%
Cadover Bridge	5%
Castle Drogo	5%
Chagford	8%
Dartmeet	18%
Haytor top car park	6%
Haytor Visitor Centre	3%
Newbridge	17%
Postbridge Visitor Centre	4%
Princetown Visitor Centre	8%
Spitchwick	1%
Two Bridges	1%
Venford Reservoir	3%

Demographics

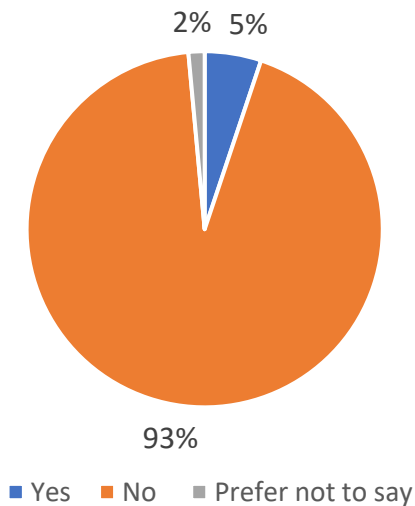
Age profile of respondents



The survey collected the ages of every individual within each group surveyed.

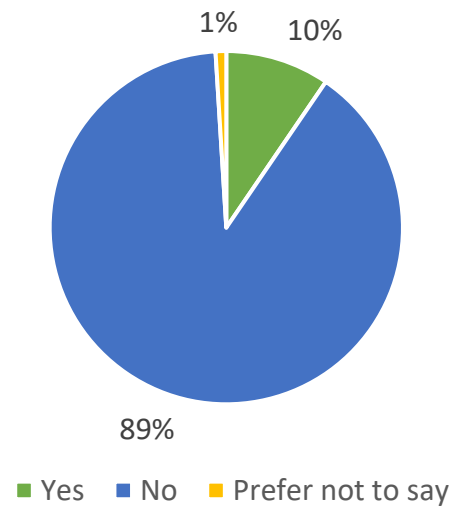
There was a relatively even spread of ages across the respondent groups, with each age group representing between 11% – 17% of the total.

Ethnicity



5% of respondents consider themselves to be a member of an ethnic minority, compared to 3% of visitors in 2017.

Disability/long-term health condition



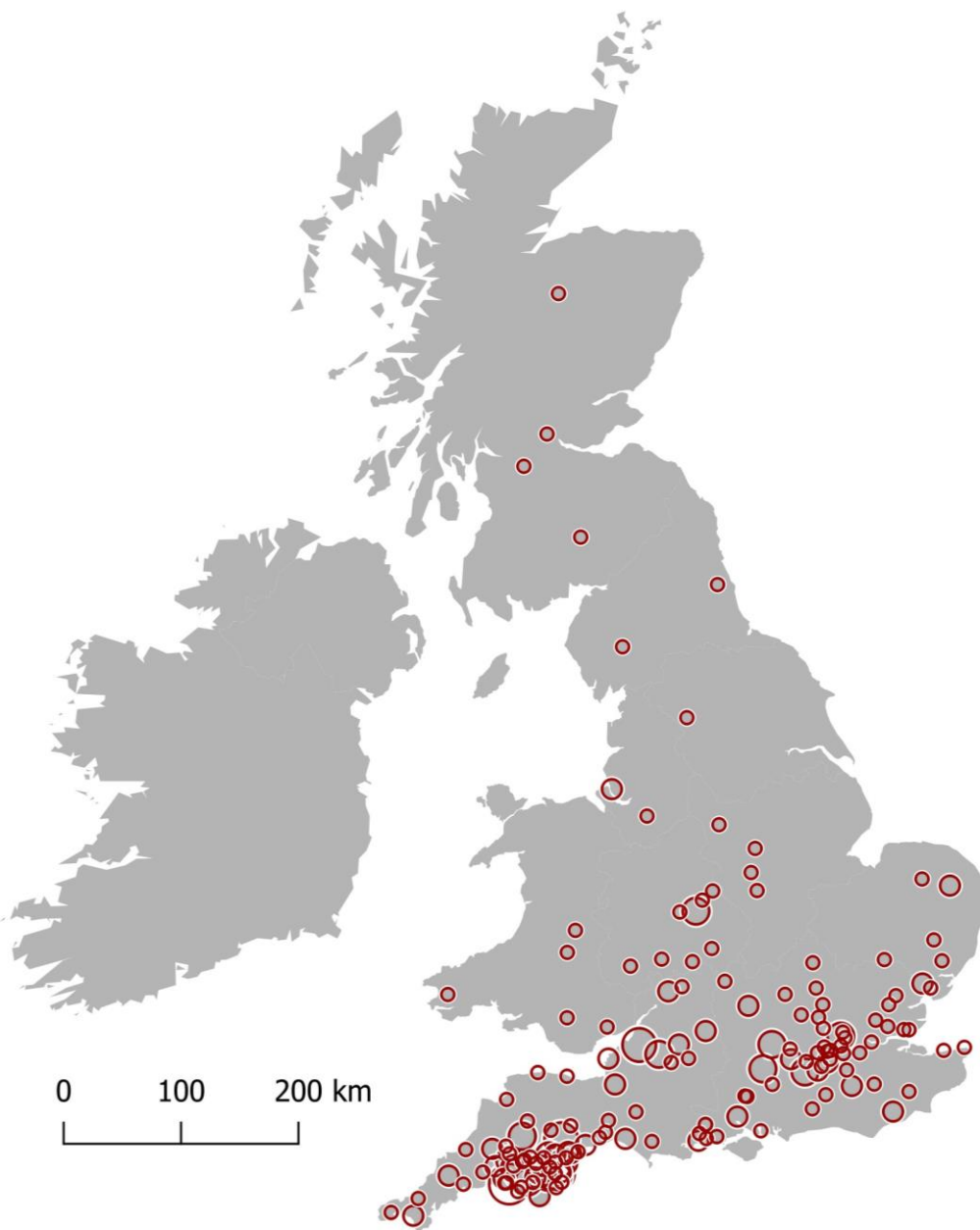
One in ten (10%) respondents reported health conditions or disabilities which they consider affects their ability to access and explore Dartmoor, compared to 7% in 2017.

Origin of Visitors

Surveyed visitors to Dartmoor came from a variety of regions within the UK, with the largest proportion (including day and overnight visitors) from the South West, particularly within and around Dartmoor and the nearby urban centres of Plymouth and Exeter.

Many respondents were also visiting from major UK cities including London, Bristol and Birmingham.

9% of surveyed visitors visited from overseas.

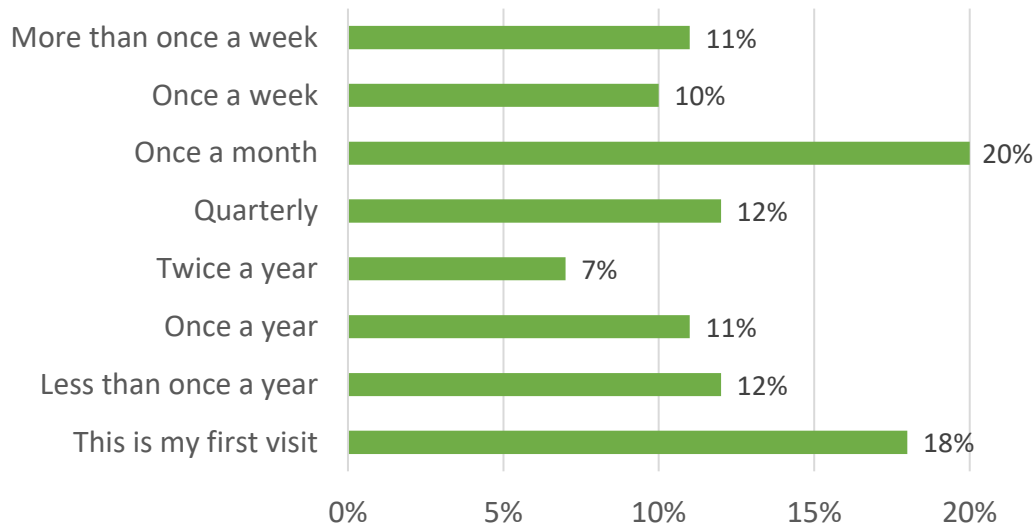


Home address of visiting groups

- 1 respondent group
- 2 - 3 respondent groups
- 4 - 8 respondent groups
- 9 - 15 respondent groups
- 16 - 47 respondent groups

Visitor Types

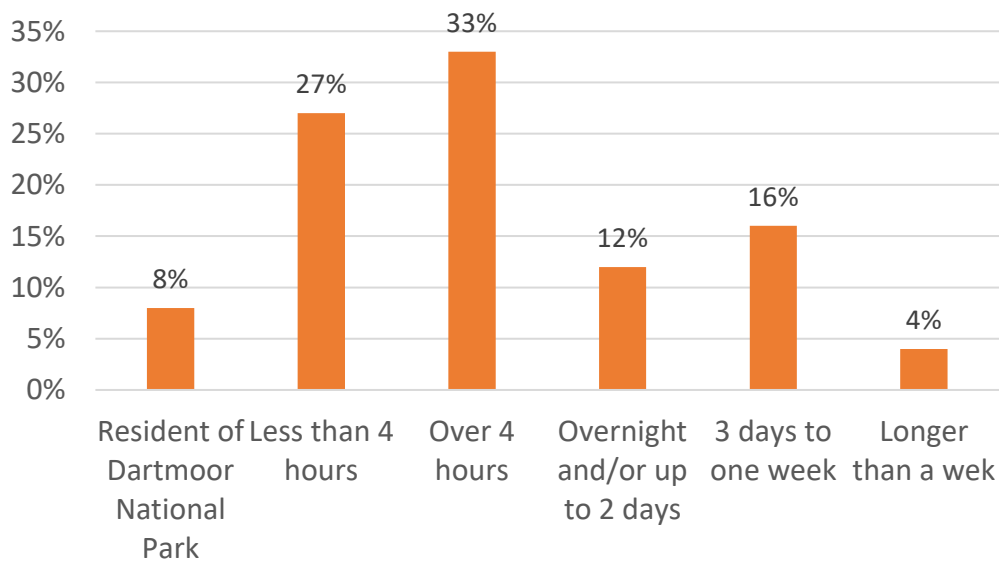
Frequency of visits



18% of respondents reported that it was their first visit to Dartmoor National Park.

Of those who had visited before, 11% visit the National Park once a year and 20% were more regular visitors, visiting once a month. 11% of respondents visit Dartmoor more than once a week.

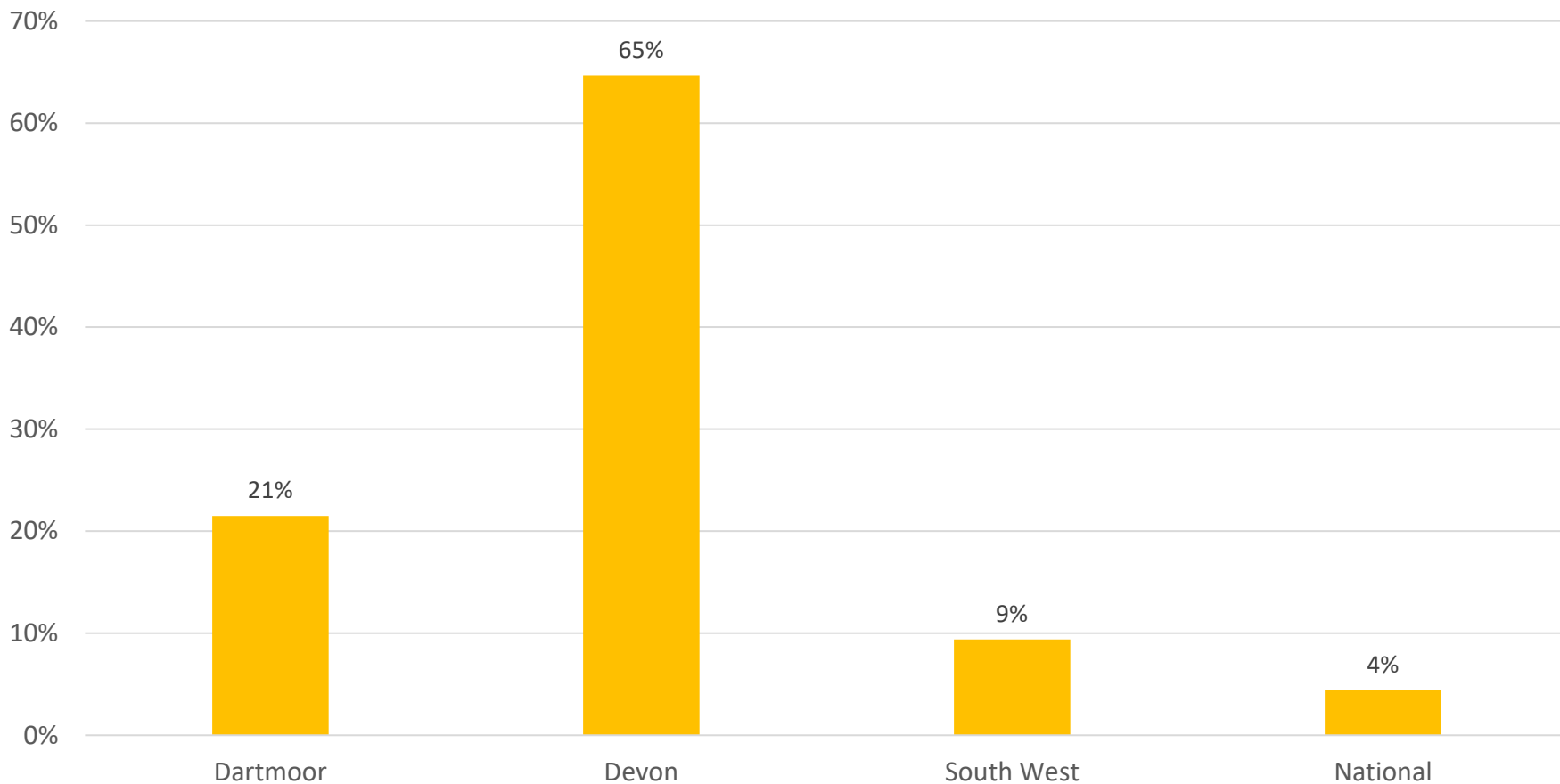
Length of Stay



The majority of respondents were day visitors to the National Park (60%), with 32% of visitors staying in Dartmoor for one night or more. This is similar to 2017, where 70% were day visitors and 26% staying for one night or more.

Only 4% of those overnight visitors were visiting Dartmoor for longer than a week which is fewer than in 2017, where 8% were staying for over a week.

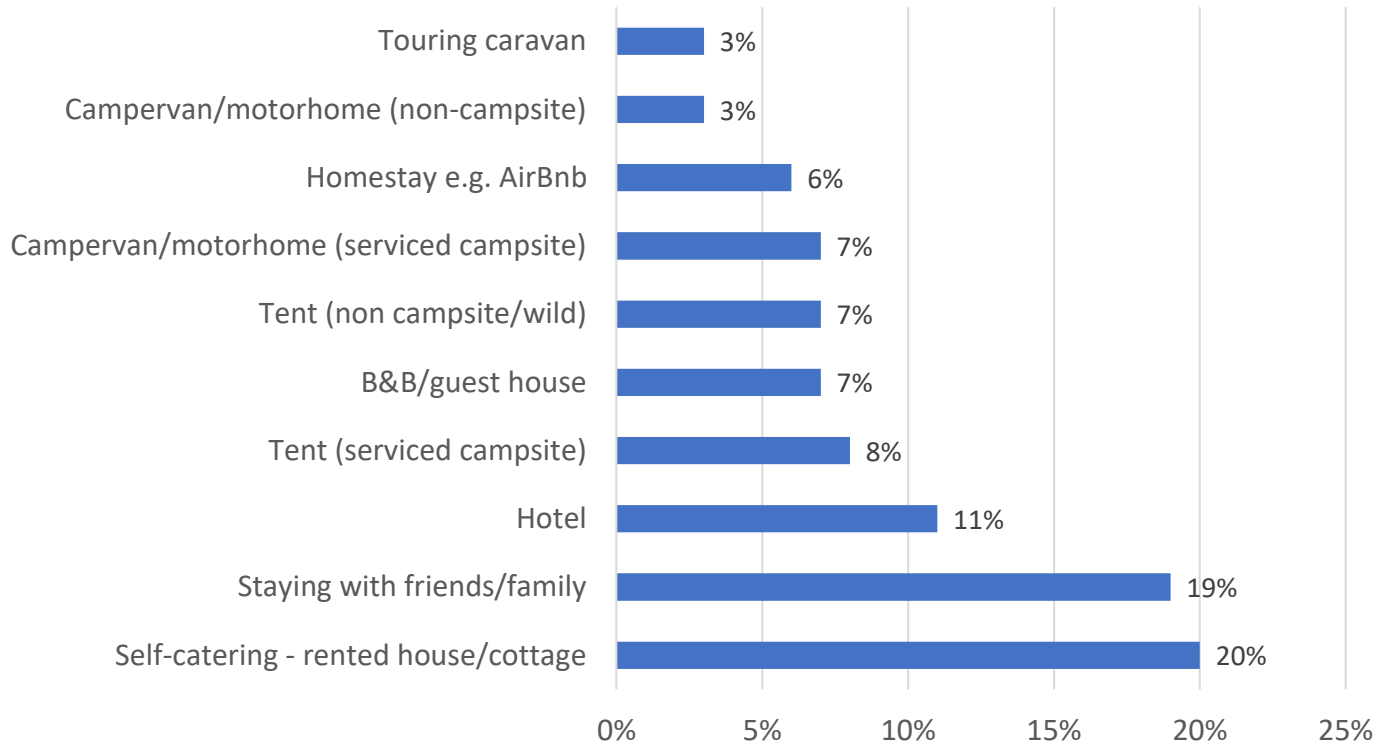
Locations travelled from



When asked where they had travelled from on the day they were surveyed, the majority had travelled from within Devon but outside the National Park (65%), with 21% who had travelled from within the National Park. 9% had travelled from within the South West and 4% from locations further afield within the UK.

Accommodation (Top 10)

Accommodation of Overnight Visitors



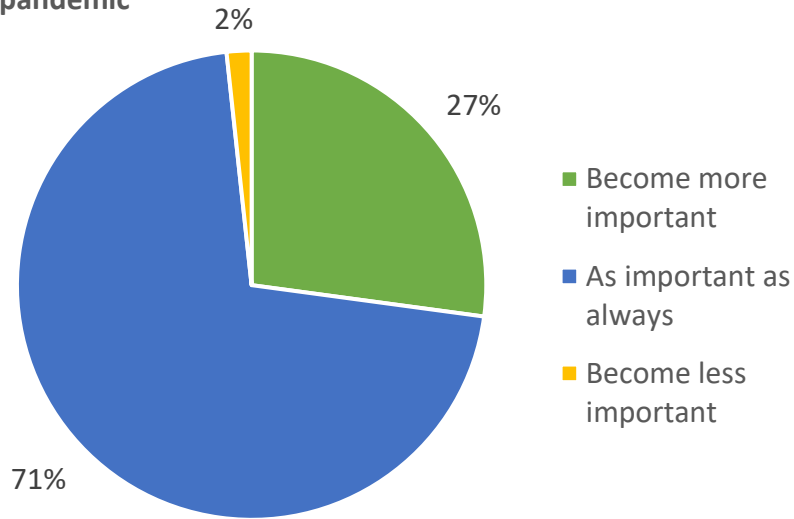
Responses: 162 (overnight visitors)

Of those visitors who were staying in Dartmoor overnight, self-catering accommodation (20%) and staying with friends and family (19%) were the most popular types of accommodation used. This is similar to 2017, where 24% used self-catering accommodation and 15% stayed with friends and family.

Other than these, the survey results indicate there is generally an even spread of accommodation types used by overnight visitors, with 11% staying in hotels, 8% camping in a serviced campsite and 7% in non-campsite/wild camping. A significantly lower proportion of visitors stayed in B&B/guesthouses in 2023 (7%) compared to 21% of visitors in 2017.

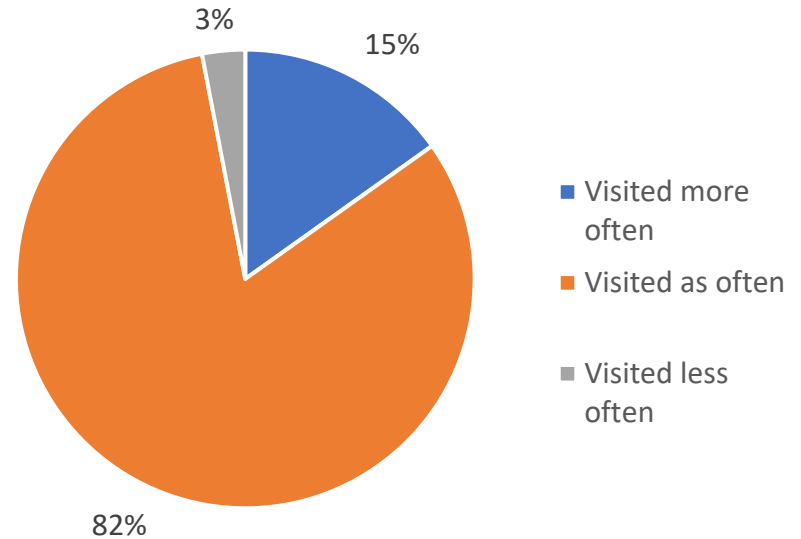
Impact of Covid-19

Impact of being outside in a natural environment since the pandemic



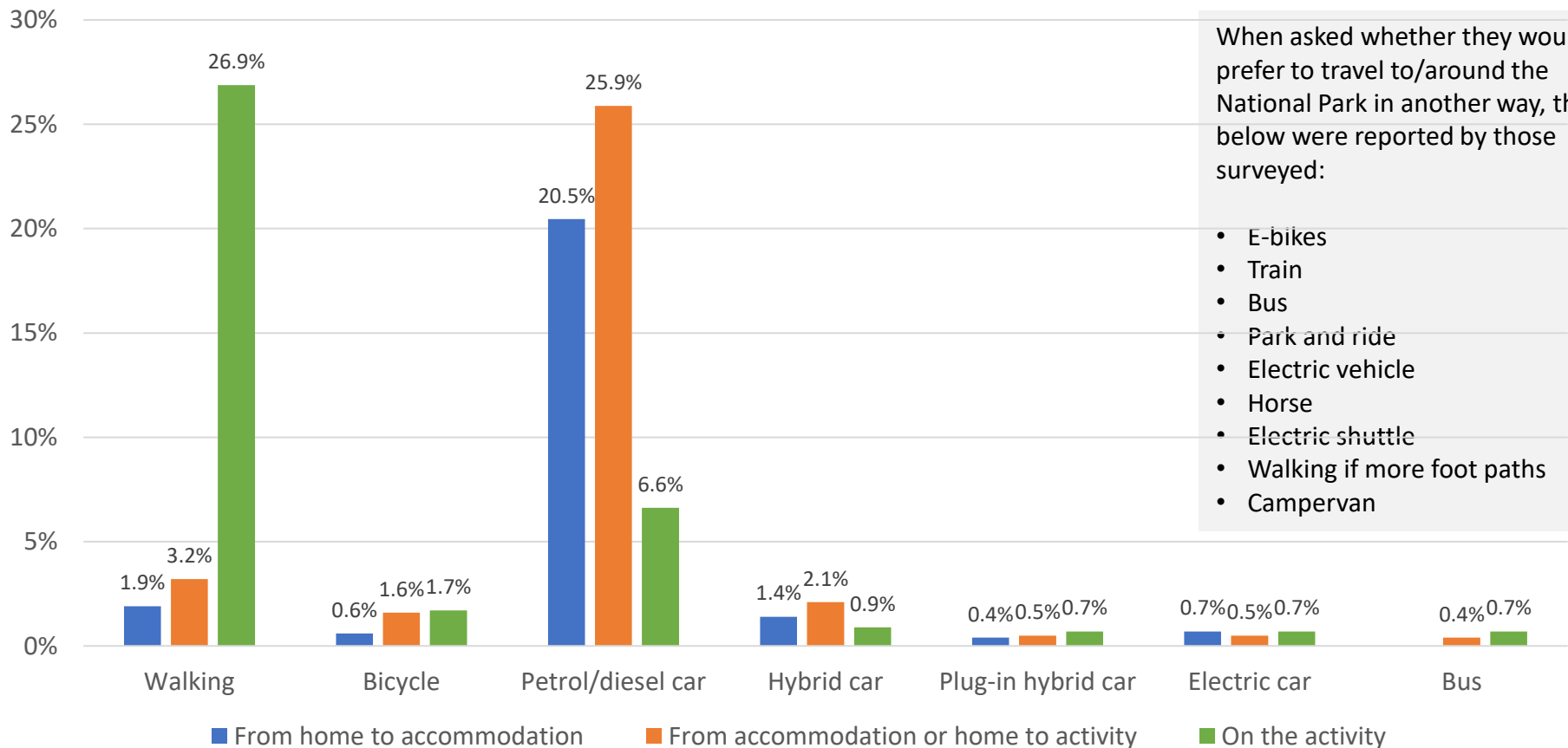
When asked whether the importance of being outside in a natural environment has changed since the outbreak of Covid-19, 27% reported this has become more important, with 71% answering that this remained as important as always.

Frequency of visits to Dartmoor since the pandemic



82% of visitors reported that they have visited Dartmoor as often as before the pandemic and 15% have visited more often since the pandemic.

Type of Transport Used (Top 7)

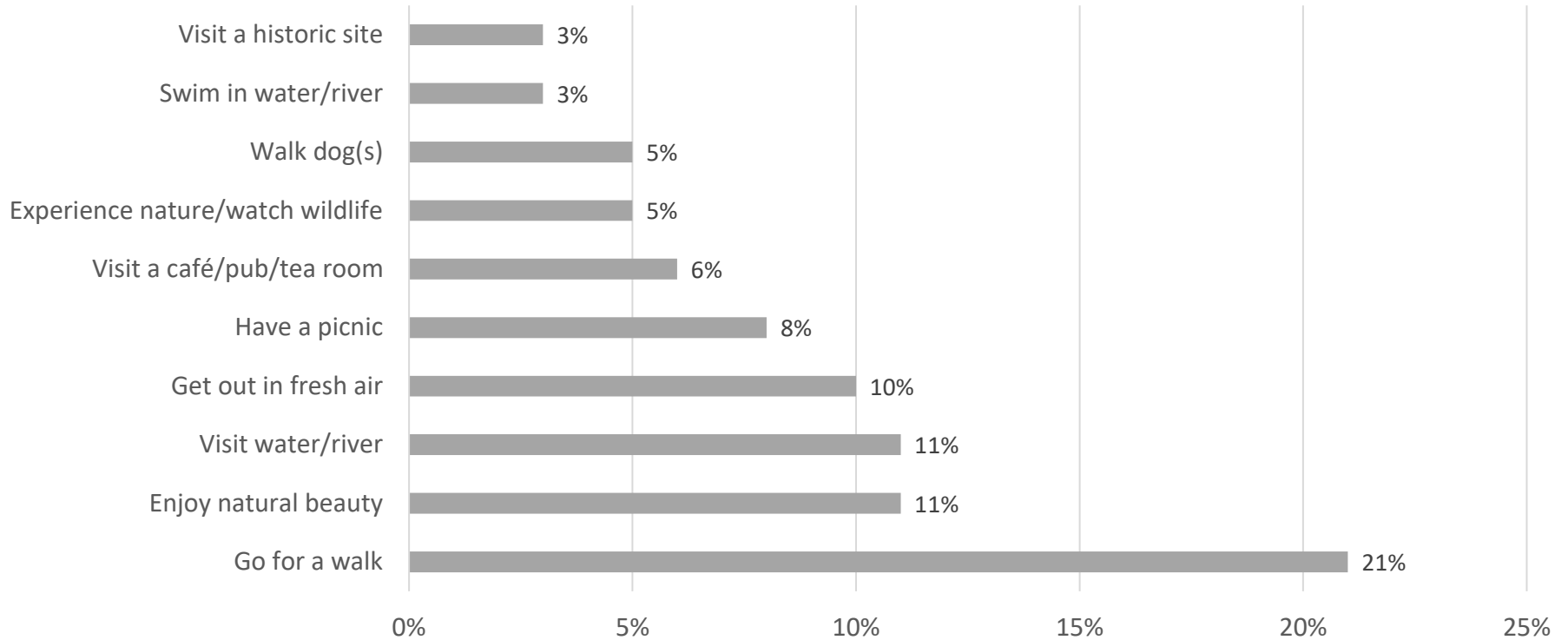


Responses: 7-268 per option (multiple choice allowed) NON-MANDATORY QUESTION

Petrol/diesel car was the most common transport type used from home to accommodation and from accommodation or home to activity. Only 0.4% of respondents used the bus to get to their activity and 0.7% used a bus on their day's activity.

Active travel was much more common within the National Park whilst on the activity, with 26.9% of respondents reporting that they travelled by walking.

Activities Undertaken (Top 10)

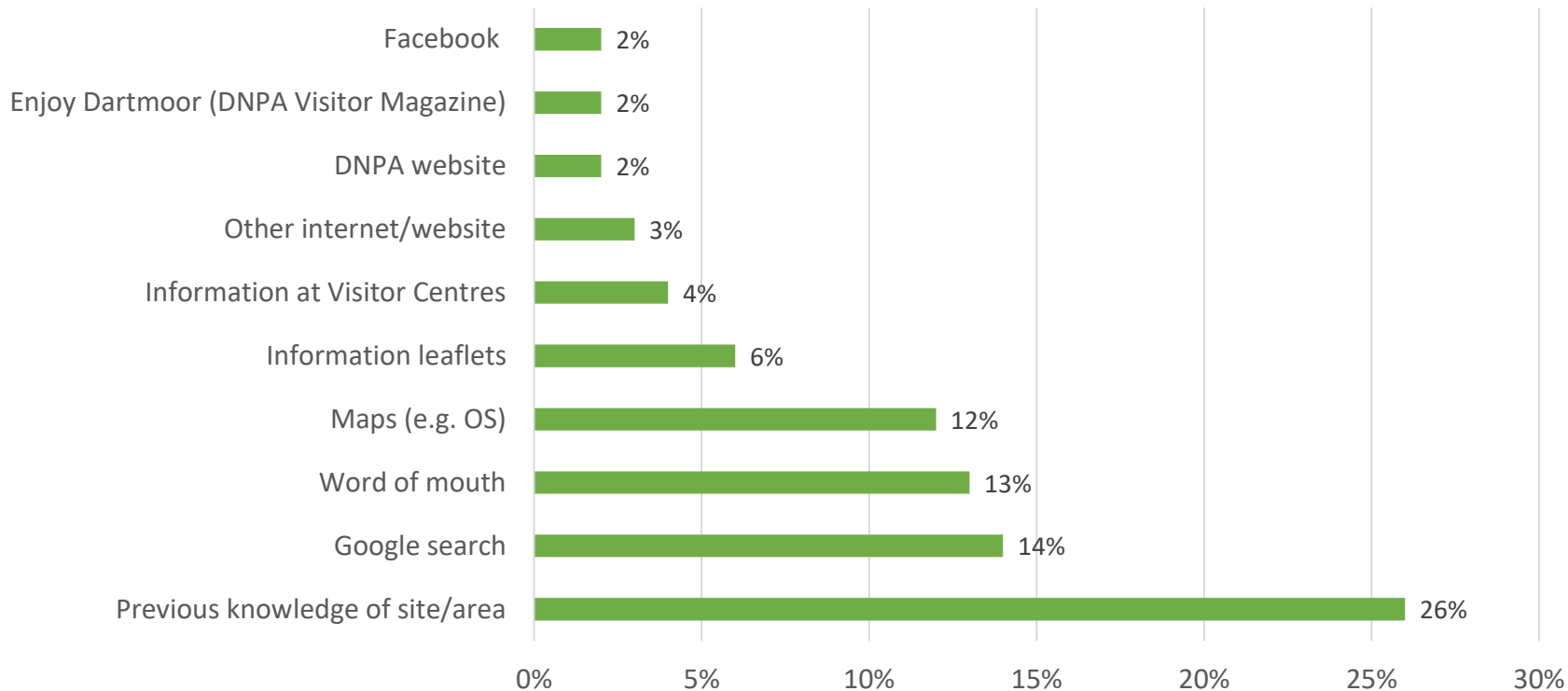


Responses: 53-338 per option (multiple choice allowed)

When asked what activities they had partaken in or will partake in during their visit, the highest proportion (21%) gave the response of going for a walk which is similar to that in 2017, where 18% stated their main reason for visiting was going on a walk.

Enjoy natural beauty (11%), visit water/river (11%) and get out in fresh air (10%) were also popular activities. 8% of visitors had or were planning on having a picnic and 6% responded that they had or were visiting a café/pub/tearoom.

Information Sources Used Prior to Visit (Top 10)



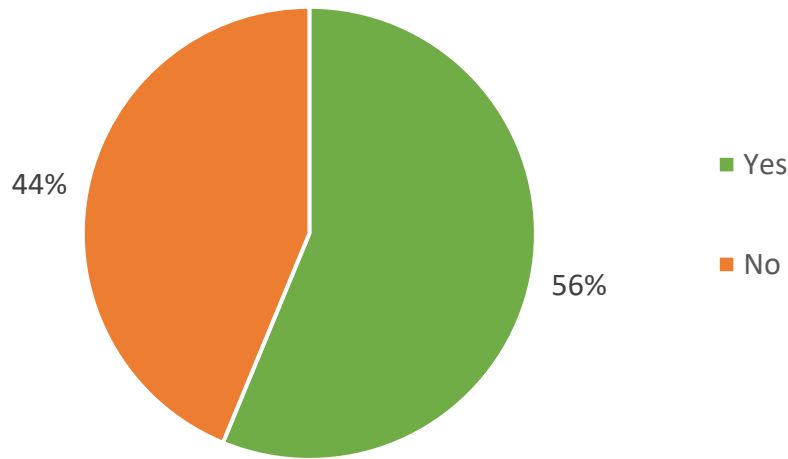
Responses: 13-226 per option (multiple choice allowed)

As well as understanding what activities visitors undertake on their visit, it is also important to understand the information sources used to plan their trip. The most used information source prior to visit was previous knowledge of the site/area (26% of respondents). Other key sources of information included Google (14%), maps (12%) information leaflets (6%) and DNPA Visitor Centres (4%).

These results are broadly comparable to those of 2017, where 25% of respondents used the internet to plan for their trip, 11% used knowledge of friends and family and 4% used the Enjoy Dartmoor magazine. 3% of visitors used social media to plan their trip, which is comparable to that of 2017, at 2%.

Information Guide

Would you find an app or guide which collated places of interest across Dartmoor useful on your trip?



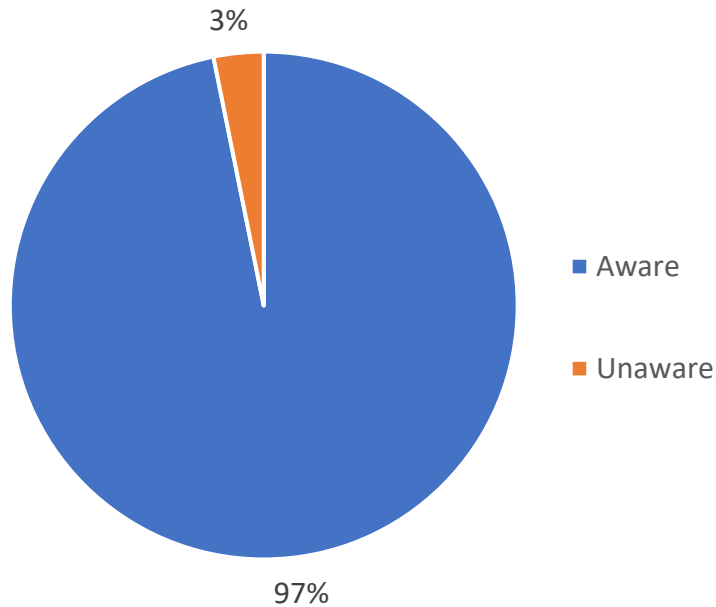
56% of respondents reported that they would find an app or guide which collated Dartmoor's places of interest (e.g. shops, places to stay and places of historic and environmental interest) useful on their visit.

Visitors suggested that the below could be included in an app or guide:

- Accommodation
- Car parking information
- Tea rooms, pubs and restaurants
- Places for wild swimming
- Beauty spots
- Picnic areas
- Information on quieter areas
- Camping sites with toilets
- Bus timetables
- Locations of EV charging points
- Circular walk guides
- Local wildlife information
- Local events
- Information about tors and forests
- Information on ancient sites
- Areas for dogs
- Recommended walks for those with limited mobility
- Public telephone locations
- Walking routes
- Water level quality information
- Places to refill water

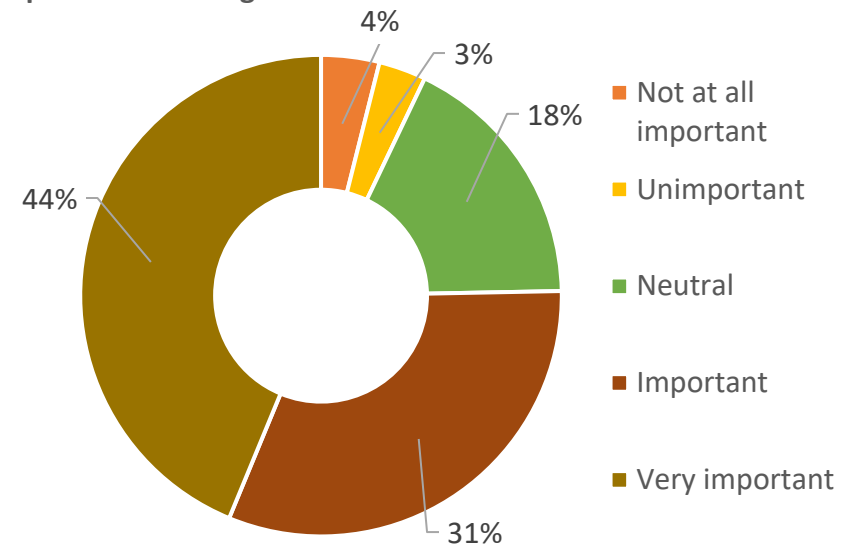
National Park designation: awareness and influence

Awareness of National Park designation



Respondents were asked if they were aware that the area they were in was a part of Dartmoor National Park. The majority (97%) were aware, with 3% unaware. This is similar to 2017, where 98% were aware of Dartmoor's designation, and 2% unaware.

Importance of designation

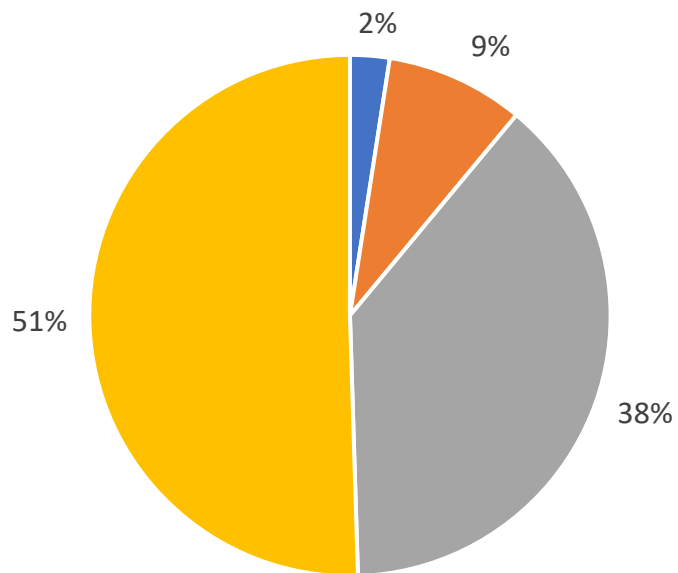


Three-quarters (75%) of respondents stated that Dartmoor's designation as a National Park influenced their decision to visit, with 31% stating this was important and 44% stating very important.

Only 7% of respondents reported that the designation was not at all important or unimportant.

Condition of Dartmoor's Special Qualities

Agreement as to whether Dartmoor is well conserved

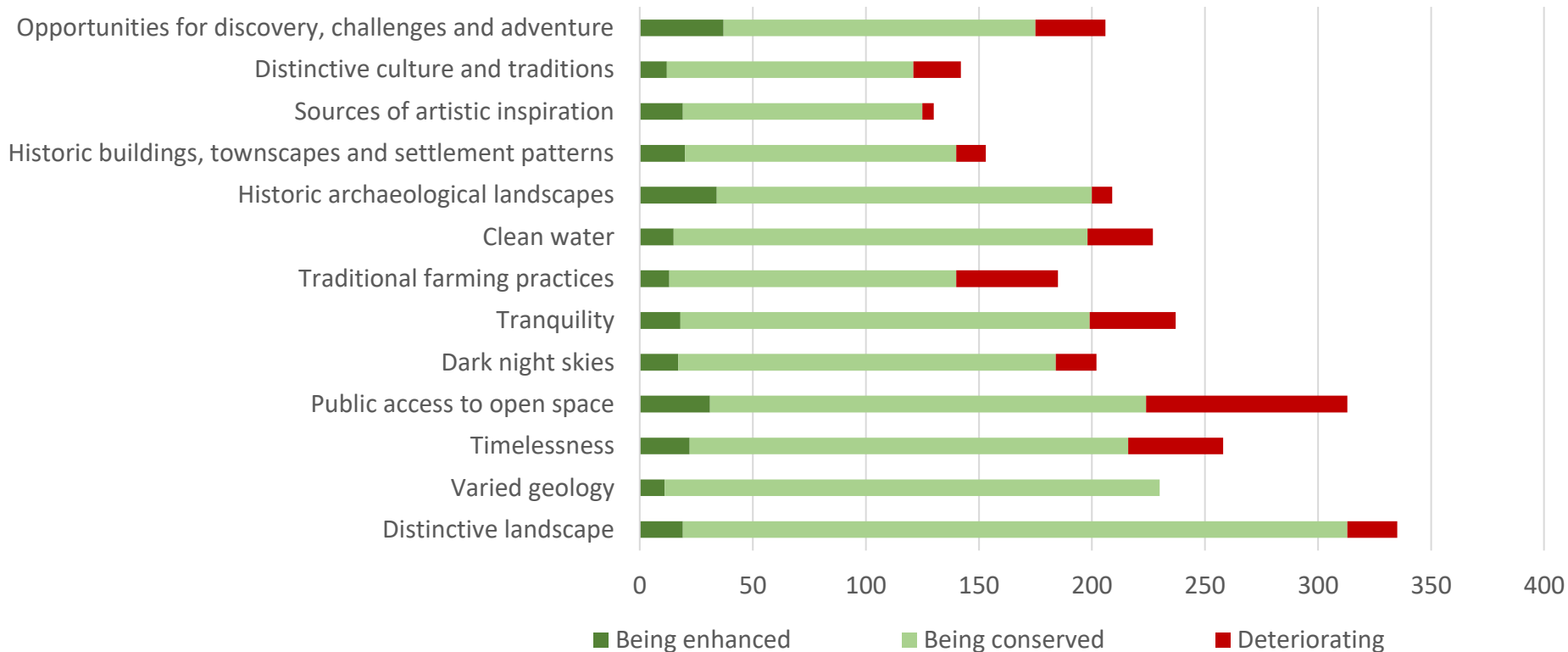


■ Slightly disagree ■ Neutral ■ Slightly agree ■ Strongly agree

89% of respondents agree that Dartmoor is well conserved (51% strongly agree and 38% slightly agree). Only 2% disagree that Dartmoor is well conserved.



Condition of Dartmoor's Special Qualities



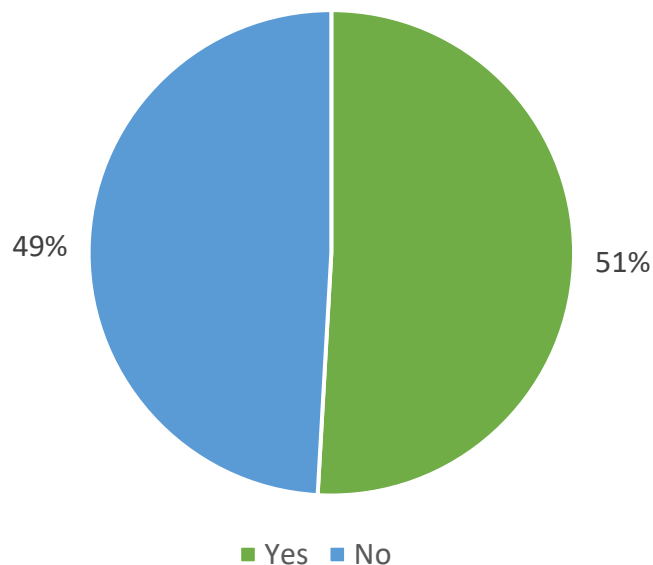
Responses: 130-335 per option (multiple choice allowed) NON-MANDATORY QUESTION

Attitudes towards Dartmoor's features were largely positive. In particular, a large number of respondents reported that they consider Dartmoor's distinctive landscape is being conserved.

The features which visitors consider are deteriorating the most are public access to open space and traditional farming practices.

Condition of Dartmoor's Special Qualities

Are there other features of Dartmoor National Park you think should be conserved and / or enhanced?

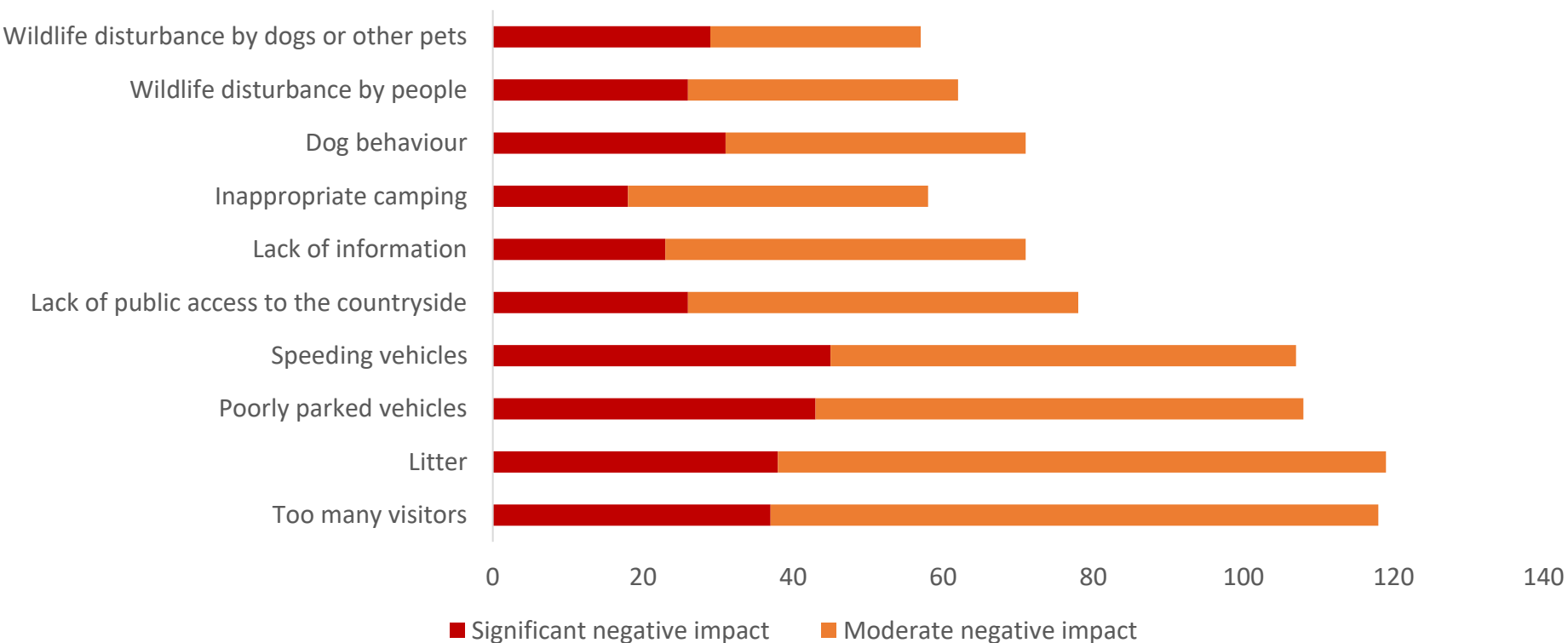


Approximately half (51%) of respondents consider there are other features of Dartmoor National Park which should be conserved and/or enhanced.

Suggestions for this include:

- Better signage
- Cycle route marking
- Keeping everything as natural as possible
- Hedges cut
- Pull-in areas for motorhomes
- Leats
- Better footpaths and public access
- Wistmans Wood
- Ability to wild camp and roam
- Woodland
- Litter control
- Slower cars on narrow roads
- Landscape
- Wildlife
- The atmosphere
- Army firing range
- Water quality
- Relationships between different user groups
- Reduction in fly tipping
- Tree management and protection
- Riverbank conservation
- Archaeology
- Controlling aggressive species e.g knotweed
- Peat bogs
- Control of run-off from rivers
- River pollution
- Traditional farming practices
- Dry stone walls
- Protect paths from erosion
- Access to historic buildings
- Surfacing of roads
- Limit animal grazing

Issues impacting visitor experience (Top 10)



Responses: 57-119 per option (multiple choice allowed) NON-MANDATORY QUESTION

When asked whether anything had negatively impacted the enjoyment of their visit to Dartmoor National Park, 119 respondents reported litter and 118 stated too many visitors. Speeding vehicles was reported as causing the most significant negative impact.

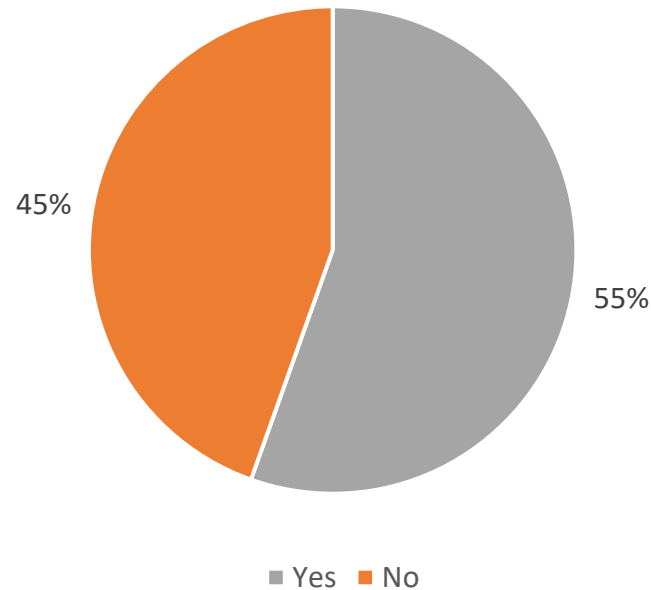
67% of respondents consider more should be done to manage the issues listed above.

Suggestions for managing these issues were:

- Better signage
- Card payment at car parks
- Better management of footpaths
- Dog poo and litter bins
- Better speeding enforcement
- Lower speed limit
- More public access
- BBQ ban
- More information on protecting the area
- Reduce extent of grazing

Conserving and enhancing the National Park

Do you think more should be done to conserve and enhance the National Park?



55% of respondents consider more should be done to conserve and enhance the National Park.

Suggestions for this include:

- Easier parking
- Less signage
- More tree management
- Protect river banks
- Grazing control
- Controlled public access
- More litter bins
- More information on entry to the National Park
- Woodland regeneration
- Protection of bird habitats
- Mend potholes
- Increase areas of wild camping
- Increased monitoring of water quality
- More education for young people
- Traffic management
- Plant more native trees
- More dog control
- Ban fires and barbeques
- Overnight parking for motorhomes
- More education on protecting the environment and landscape
- Designated cycle paths
- Reduce speed limits

Climate emergency response

When asked what they would like to see from the Authority with tackling the climate emergency, visitors suggested the below:

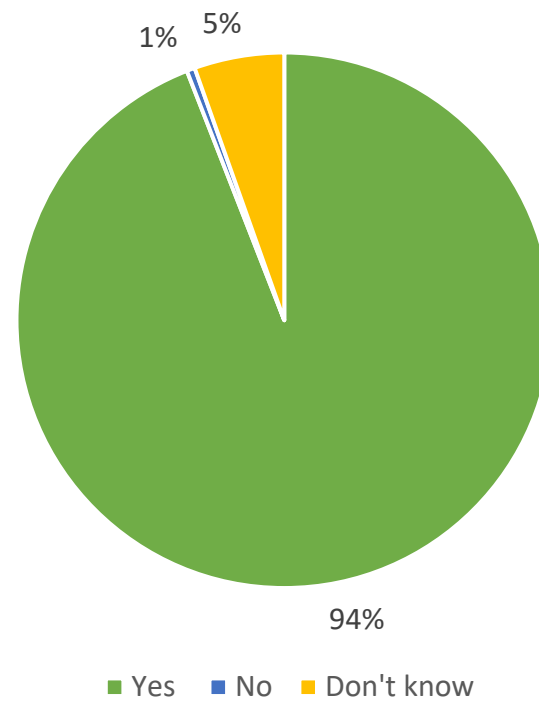
- More solar equipment
- Better public transport
- Less tree felling
- Control water erosion
- Plant more trees
- Encourage green transport
- Ban barbeques
- Protect peat bogs
- More education
- Less commercial forestry
- Less cattle grazing
- Ban plastics
- More EV charging points
- Restrict access to vulnerable areas
- Address water pollution
- Solar panels and heat pumps on all new development
- Address fire risks
- More bins to reduce litter
- Lower speed limits
- Plant more native tree species
- More fire prevention advice



Repeat visitors



Will you visit Dartmoor again after this visit?



The majority (94%) of respondents reported that they will visit Dartmoor again after their visit, with only 1% stating that they would not and 5% unsure.

Summary

Key points on the profile of visitors include:

- There was a relatively **even spread of visitor age groups**
- 5% of visitors consider themselves to be a member of an **ethnic minority**
- 10% reported **health conditions/disabilities** which was higher than that of 2017 (7%)
- There was a high number of **repeat visitors** (82%) to the National Park
- The proportion of **day visitors (60%) and staying visitors (32%)** has remained similar since 2017
- The proportion of those staying on Dartmoor for **over a week** has declined since 2017
- **Self-catering accommodation** was the most popular accommodation type used
- **Petrol/diesel car** was the most popular transport option to travel to Dartmoor, with very few using public transport
- As found in 2017, **walking is a key activity** which attracts visitors to Dartmoor
- Other than existing knowledge of the area, **web-search through Google** was very common when planning a trip.

Key points on visitor attitudes include:

- Most visitors had an **awareness of Dartmoor National Park's designation**, with this influencing 75% of visitors in their reason to visit
- Condition of Dartmoor's special qualities was generally rated high, with **public access to open space** reported as deteriorating the most
- Main issues affecting visitor experience included **litter, too many visitors** and **poorly parked vehicles**
- Many visitors consider **more can be done** to tackle issues impacting visitors
- The survey showed the majority of visitors (94%) will **visit again**



