



# Kent Environment Survey Research report

Prepared by Lake Market Research  
September 2020



# Background and objectives

- The Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, health and economy was published in 2016. It aims to strengthen cross-sector partnership working on environmental, health and economic agendas.
  - The strategy identifies high level, evidence-based priorities and focuses on the activities that would most benefit from partnership working. It also identifies opportunities where the environment can provide positive outcomes for health, wellbeing and the economy.
- Historically, evidence underpins the Kent Environment Strategy and a public perception survey has been the primary method to date of collecting feedback from Kent residents.
  - It seeks to understand how residents perceive, use, and prioritise different aspects of the environment as well as conduct personal activity concerning energy efficient and energy saving behaviour.
  - The last survey was conducted in 2018 and comparisons have been included where applicable.



# Methodology and sample

- 1,000 interviews were conducted with Kent residents (including Medway) in July 2020.
- This survey was designed to build on previous surveys conducted but also consider recent developments and trends that require monitoring moving forward.
- This year's survey was conducted online via an online consumer panel. This is a change to previous years whereby interviewing has been conducted by telephone.
- We have ensured that our resident sample is consistent in terms of gender, age and working status and is broadly consistent with the Kent population.
- Please note that the sum of all individual percentages for any given question may not sum 100% in the instance of multiple response being permitted or due to rounding.
- For the relevant questions in this report, net percentages are shown.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE		
GENDER	Male	46%
	Female	54%
AGE	Aged 16-24	14%
	Aged 25-44	33%
	Aged 45-64	37%
	Aged 65 and over	16%
WORKING STATUS	Working	52%
	Self employed	8%
	Unemployed	6%
	Home maker	8%
	Retired	17%
	Student	8%
	Other	2%

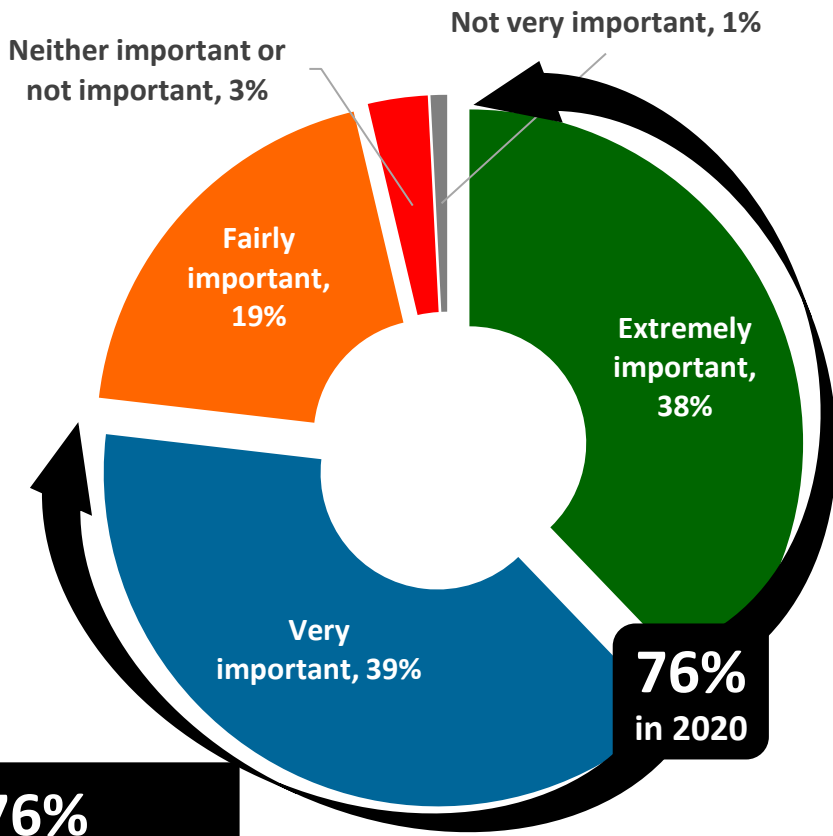
AREA PROFILE	
Ashford	9%
Canterbury	10%
Dartford	6%
Dover	6%
Folkestone & Hythe	5%
Gravesham	6%
Maidstone	13%
Medway	14%
Sevenoaks	4%
Swale	7%
Thanet	8%
Tonbridge & Malling	6%
Tunbridge Wells	6%

# Perceptions of the Kent environment



# Importance of Kent’s natural and historic countryside and environment

- Just over three quarters consider Kent’s natural and historic countryside and environment extremely or very important, consistent with 2018 levels.
- Perceived importance is significantly higher amongst residents aged 35 & over.



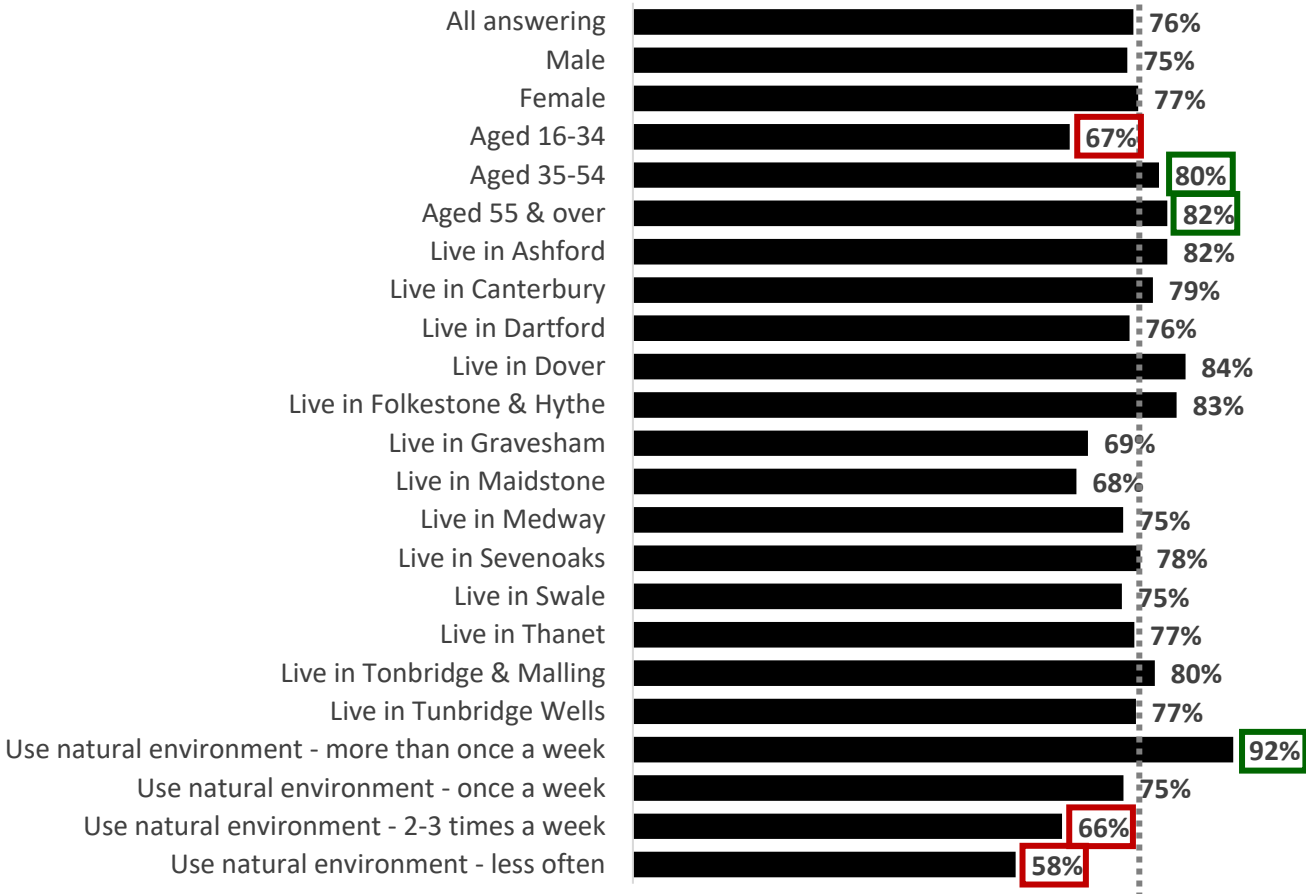
**76%**  
‘very important’ in 2018  
(scale did not include  
‘extremely important’)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

Significantly lower % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

## How important, if at all, would you say Kent’s natural environment and countryside is to you?

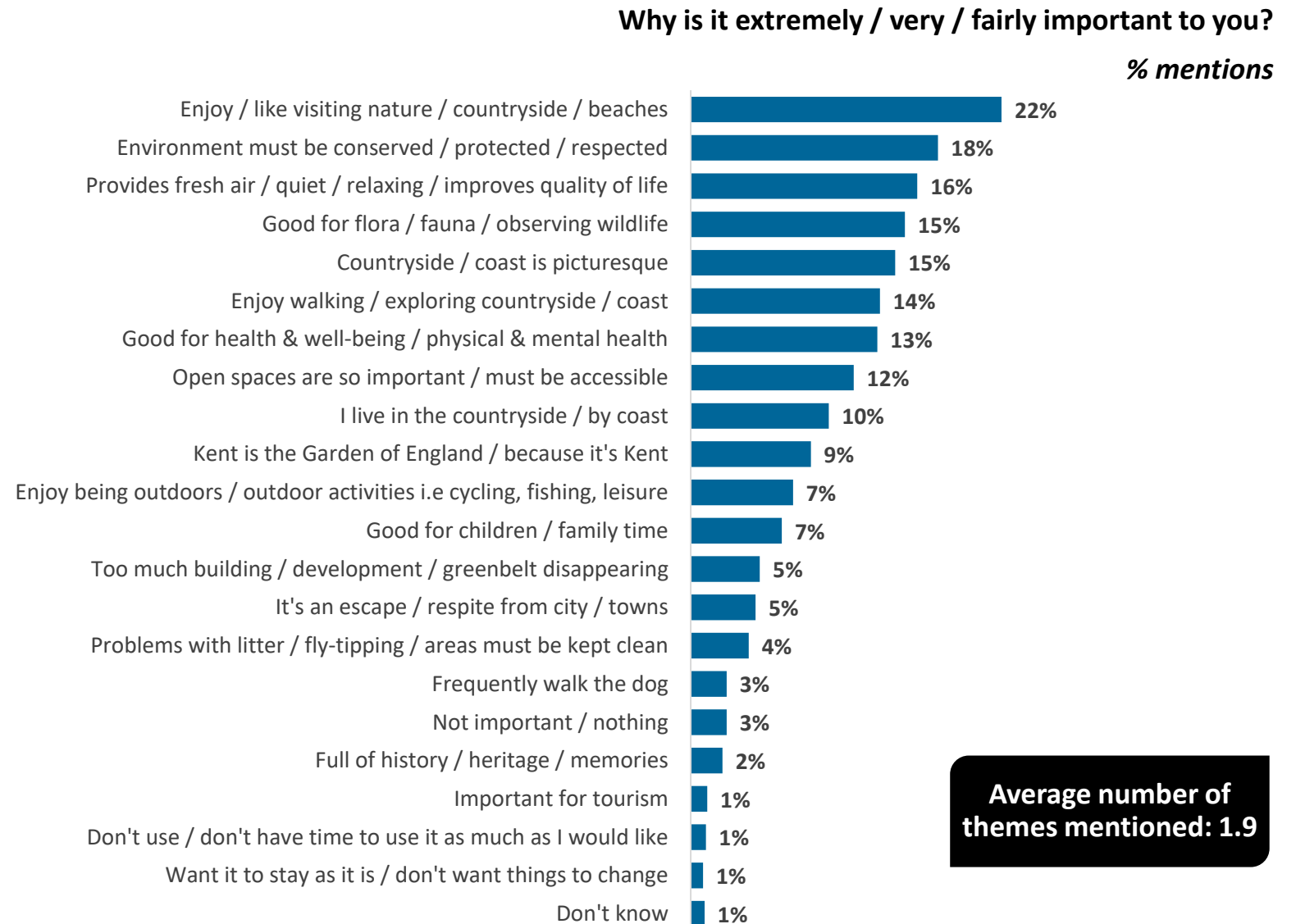
*% extremely / very important*



Base: all answering (1,008)

## Reasons residents value Kent’s natural and historic countryside and environment

- Consistent with 2018, the reasons put forward are very diverse in nature.
- The two underlying themes, however, are the enjoyment and feeling gained from visiting as well as the importance of protecting / appreciating the environment in the future.
- There is a strong feeling of perceptions of the environment contributing to quality of life in terms of relaxation, physical and mental wellbeing.
- There is little differentiation in the pattern of response themes between those rating the countryside as ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important to them.



**Average number of themes mentioned: 1.9**

Base: all answering (1,008)

## Free text comments made to explain importance of Kent's natural and historic countryside and environment

Why is it extremely / very / fairly important to you?

*Free text comments*

*"Because I love nature and, particularly during the pandemic, walking in the countryside is very important for mental health and is very therapeutic."*

*"The countryside is important, to me because I enjoy waking and within the countryside environment, there are many different flora and fauna to observe and hearing the birds singing is a joy. With the many building developments going on, which is taking away all the countryside, it is even more important that we keep as much as the countryside open for agricultural use."*

*"Kent is the garden of England and should remain so. It is lovely to walk through places like Leybourne lakes and experience nature, it is very good for mental health. Walking in the countryside is so relaxing and it is important for the wildlife to live happily. I know there must be houses built but in tune with the wonderful surroundings we are still lucky enough to live in. It is also important for our children to have somewhere unpolluted to play and learn about the natural world."*

*"I love getting out to see the wildlife, the coast and seeing the variety of country activities going on. Also without the countryside the eco diversity would be lacking. The countryside supports our living and food production due to the insect life and bees required in abundance to fertilise crops etc. Also the impact on mental health is enormous. And you cannot get that feeling in the town or city. There is less pollution in general. The parks are good to have somewhere to go without driving far. Walking without the noises in the town and city is a sensory pleasure."*

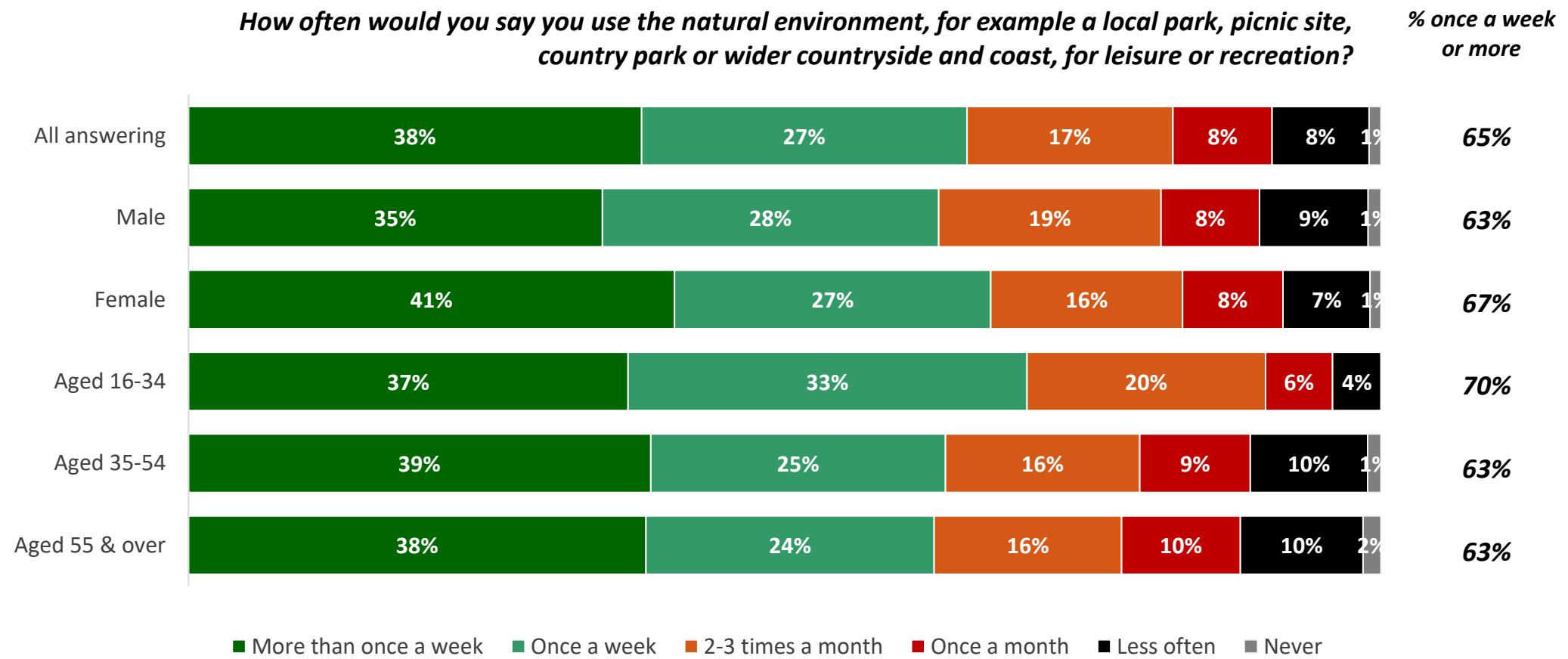
*"For somewhere for our children to play and have fun, with so many parks closed and green land being built on, keeping the countryside is imperative to people's mental health and wellbeing."*

*"I do enjoy spending time outdoors. Especially with my newborn son. Money is also tight so having somewhere nice to visit for free is always nice."*

*"Because it's important for the environment to be taken care of properly and preserved. The natural environment means a lot to me especially because I've grown up in Kent and absolutely cannot stand litter or waste."*

## Frequency of use of natural environment – total & by demographic subgroup

- Just under two thirds indicate they use the natural environment once a week or more; 38% more than once a week and 27% once a week.
- There are no significant differences by demographic subgroup but frequency of use is highest amongst 16-34 year olds.

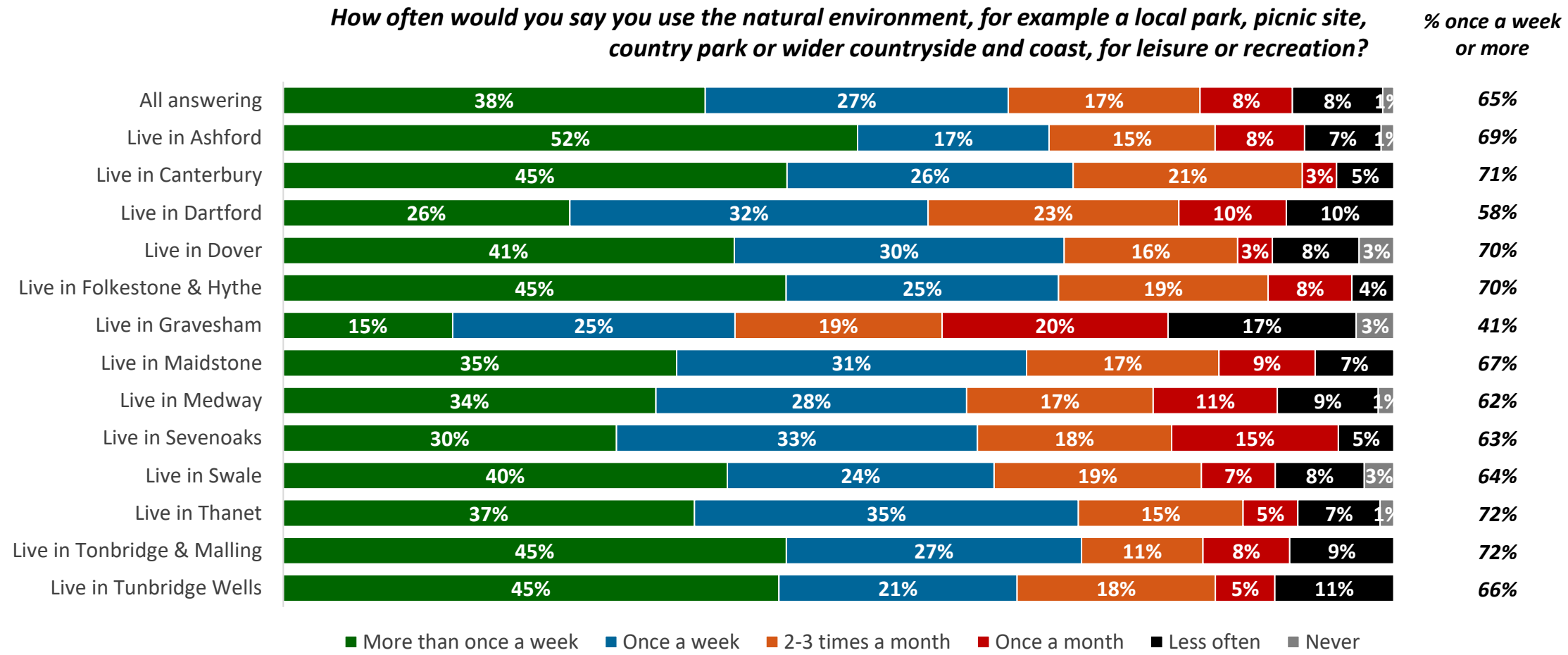


Base: all answering (1,008)



## Frequency of use of natural environment – by area

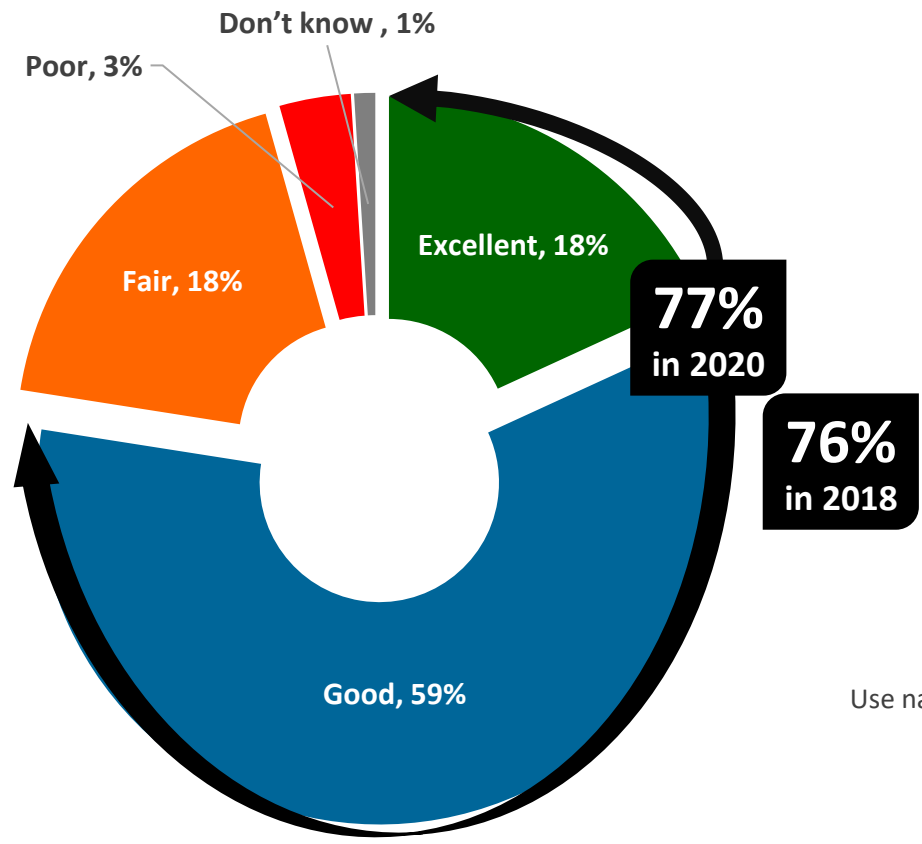
- Claimed frequency of use varies considerably by home district. Whilst base sizes are fairly low (circa 75-100) and responses are indicative at a district level, frequency of use is lower amongst Dartford and Gravesham residents.



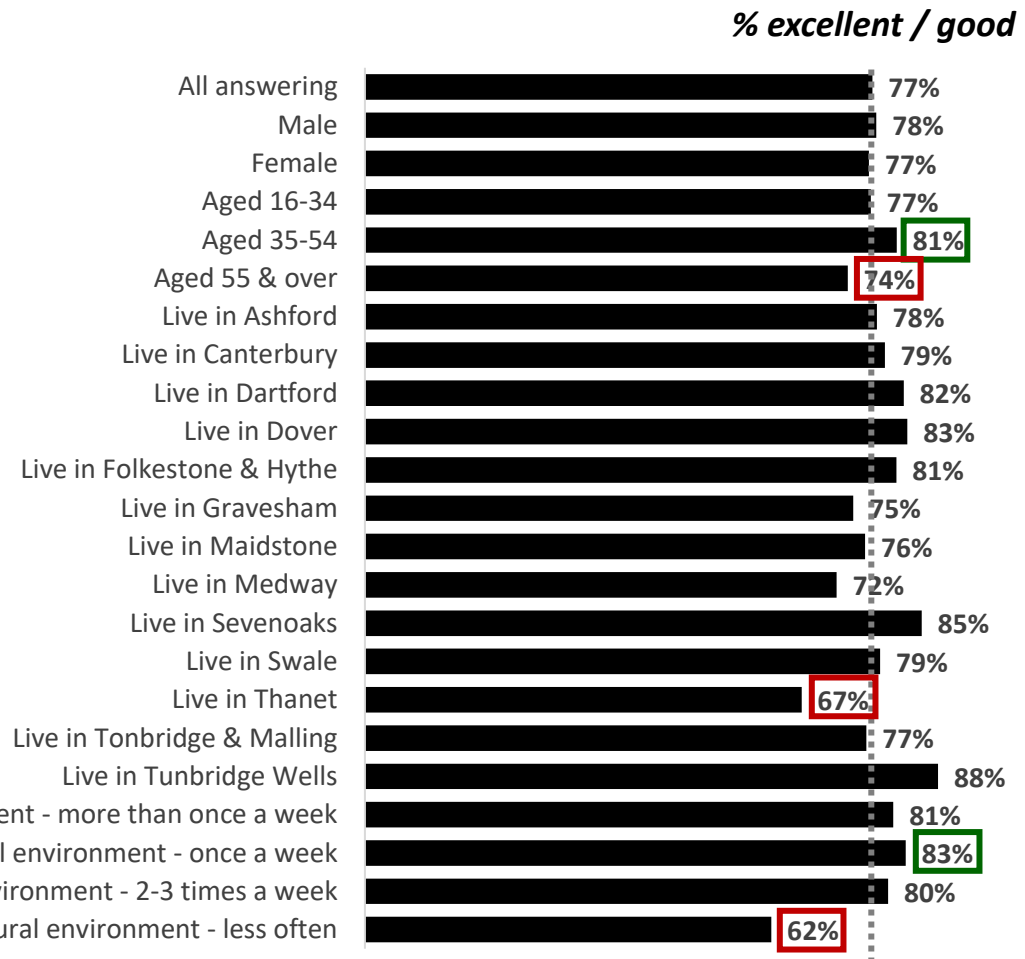
Base: all answering (1,008)

# Condition of Kent’s natural and historic countryside and environment

- Just over three quarters consider Kent’s natural and historic countryside to be in excellent or good condition, broadly consistent with 2018 levels.
- Perceived condition is significantly higher amongst residents aged 35 - 54. Perceived condition is low amongst Thanet residents.



## How would you rate the condition of Kent’s natural and historic countryside & environment?



Base: all answering (1,008)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

Significantly lower % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

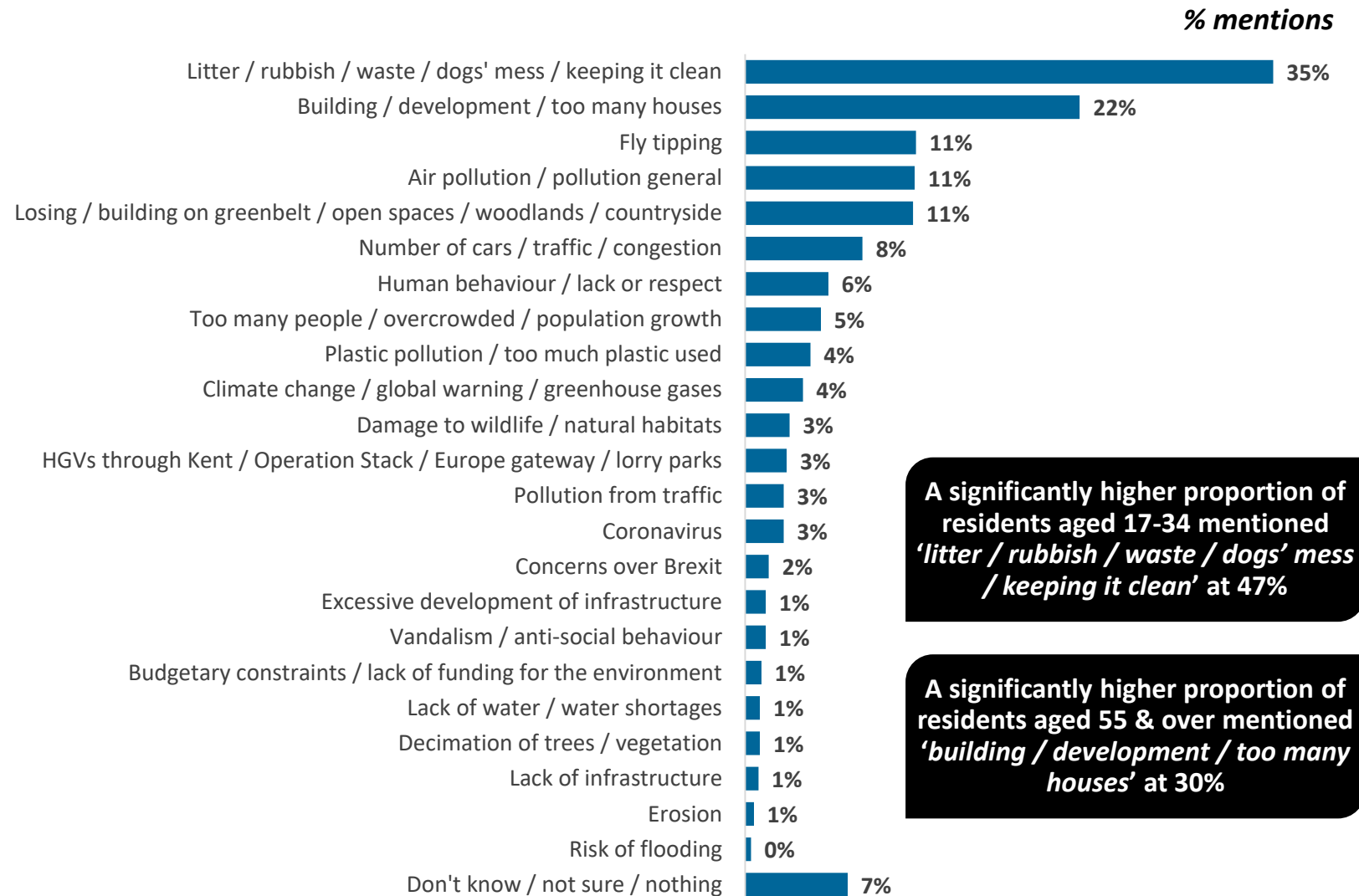
# Priorities for the future



# Biggest environmental challenge facing Kent today

- Residents consider litter / rubbish / waste (35%) and building / development (22%) to be the two biggest environmental challenges facing Kent today.
- In 2018, building / development and litter were also the two highest ranking issues. However, the proportion referencing building / development was higher than litter in 2018.
- Other concerns referenced above 10% of those answering include fly tipping, air pollution and losing / building on greenbelt / open spaces / woodlands / countryside.

What do you think is the biggest environmental challenge facing Kent today?



A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 17-34 mentioned 'litter / rubbish / waste / dogs' mess / keeping it clean' at 47%

A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 55 & over mentioned 'building / development / too many houses' at 30%

Base: all answering (1,008)

## Biggest environmental challenge facing Kent today – example comments

What do you think is the biggest environmental challenge facing Kent today?

*Free text comments*

*“The biggest environmental challenge in Kent today has to be the litter along the coast. After a hot day, all the bins are full, so people start to dump their rubbish around the surrounding areas.”*

*“Fly tipping and general litter. Since the tips were closed and they have put a price on taking certain things to the tip, more fly tipping is evident everywhere. Since the take away outlets have opened up the parks and streets are littered with take away rubbish, as well as plastic water bottles. Lots of people are visiting outdoor areas to socialise and leaving their mess behind them, this is especially dangerous when they have barbecues which can destroy woodland if not extinguished fully.”*

*“Climate change, house building and water supply. We need more good housing stock that people can live healthily in and there is not enough truly brownfield sites for that to happen without it affecting the environment. Water supplies to those houses will be scarce unless proper investment is made. Climate change will make water pressures greater and will affect every aspect of our lives unless it can be kept to somewhat manageable levels.”*

*“Too many new housing estates being built with not enough amenities in certain areas to cater for the influx of people e.g. roads, parking, GP surgeries, shops, etc. This also destroys wildlife and nature & brings more pollution. Why don't councils demolish/rebuild/refurbish all the empty houses/shops that are just sitting in towns, going to ruin, first?!”*

*“Keep building flats/ houses on our green areas that really are just not needed. Over populating small towns and reducing down the parks and fields means we are losing wildlife of all kinds.”*

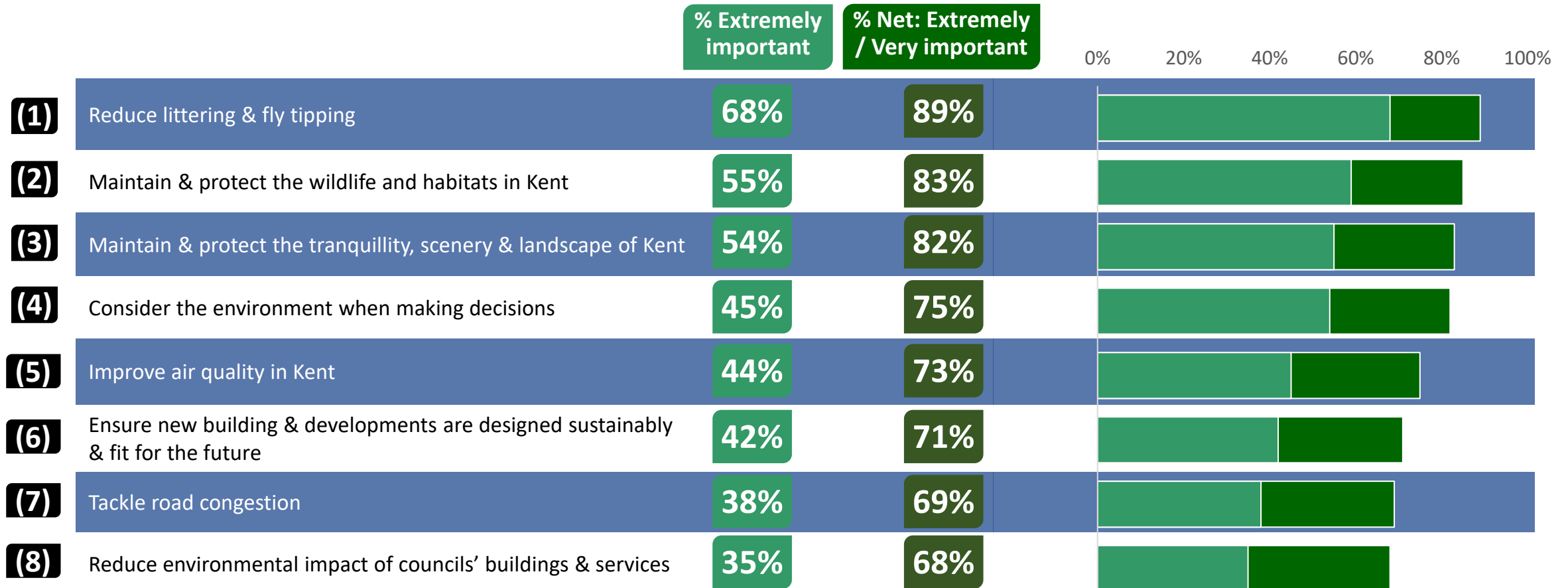
*“Fly tippers and people dropping rubbish. Just no respect for our shared outdoor spaces. Dog owners letting their dogs foul all over the place.”*

*“The growth of population and the requirement to provide yet more housing, much of which is inappropriately planned or not really planned at all. Together with this growth comes growth in traffic, coupled with what I perceive to be an increase in poor driving behaviour and poor behaviour in other contexts.”*

## Top tier importance of council priorities for the future

- Of the 14 priorities given to residents to respond to, reducing littering and fly tipping, maintaining and protecting wildlife / habitats and maintaining and protecting the tranquillity, scenery and landscape of Kent are considered the most important council priorities.
- This is followed by improving air quality, protecting wildlife and habitats and sustainable building & developments.

*How important is it to you, if at all, that your council prioritises the following actions?*

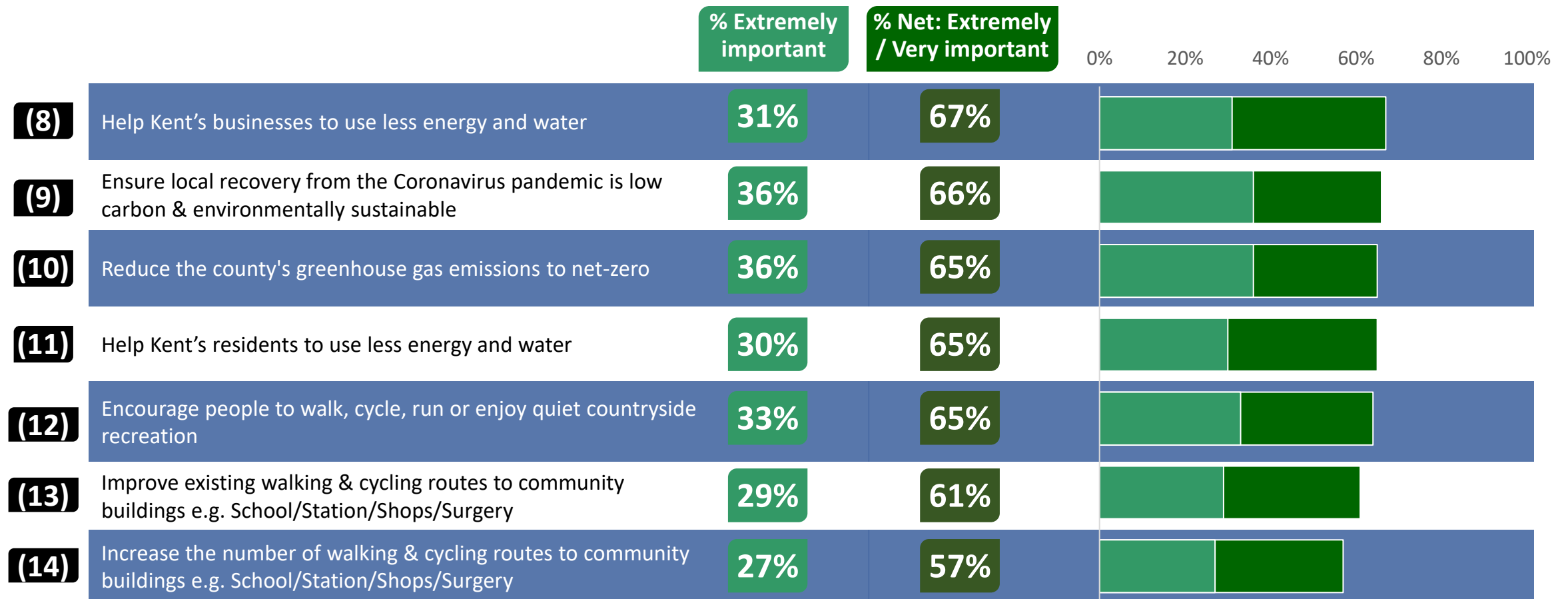


Base: all answering (1,008)

## Second tier importance of council priorities for the future

- Of the 14 priorities given to residents to respond to, the following seven priorities rank lowest in terms of importance (although remain at over half of residents indicating they are extremely or very important).
- Improving and increasing walking & cycling routes to community buildings receive the lowest proportions ranking them as extremely / very important priorities.

*How important is it to you, if at all, that your council prioritises the following actions?*



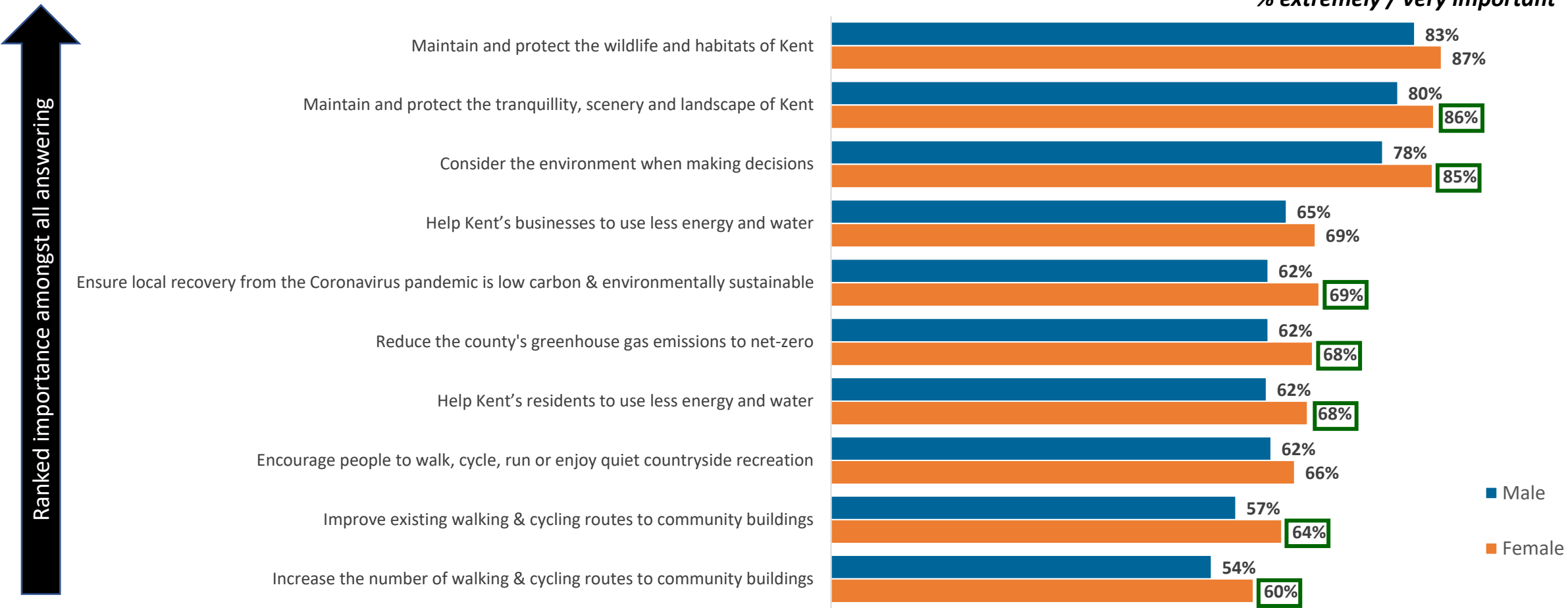
Base: all answering (1,008)

# Importance of council priorities for the future – by gender subgroup

- There are significant differences observed by gender. A significantly higher proportion of female residents rate a number of priorities as extremely / very important. The contrast is most apparent, however, for considering the environment when making decisions and ensuring recovery from the pandemic is low carbon and environmentally sustainable.

*How important is it to you, if at all, that your council prioritises the following actions?*

*% extremely / very important*



Ranked importance amongst all answering

Base: all answering (1,008)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

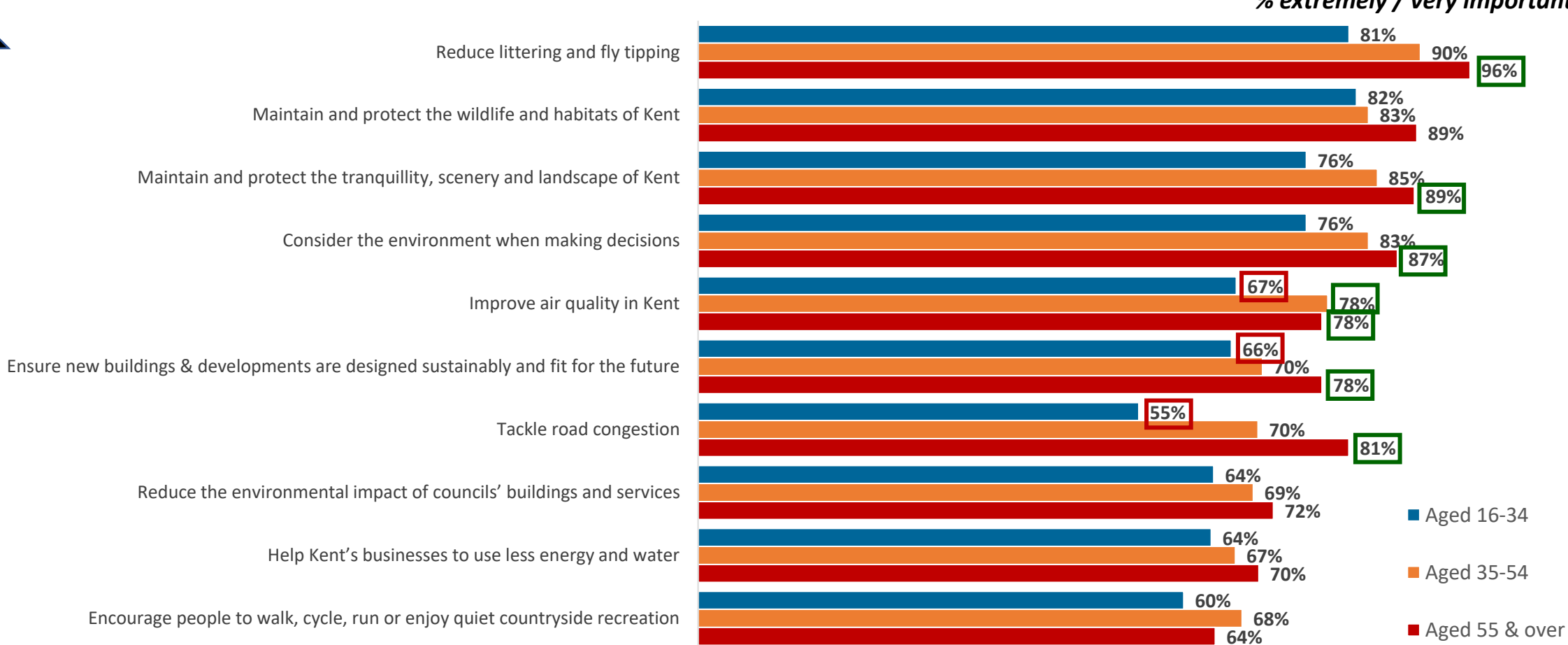


# Importance of council priorities for the future – by age subgroup

- There are significant differences observed by age group. A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 55 & over rate a number of priorities as extremely / very important. The contrast is most apparent, however, for reducing littering / fly tipping, maintaining tranquillity, scenery & landscape and tackling road congestion. These are trends Lake have observed in other resident surveys.

*How important is it to you, if at all, that your council prioritises the following actions?*

*% extremely / very important*



Base: all answering (1,008)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

Significantly lower % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

# Claimed environmental behaviours



## Frequency of behaviour – Questions posed to respondents

All respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of the following behaviours over three time periods.

- Thinking back to the beginning of the year, before the coronavirus pandemic, how often would you say you did the following?
- Between April and June, during the height of the coronavirus lockdown, how often would you say you did the following?
- Once social distancing restrictions are fully lifted, how often will you do the following?

### Energy / waste behaviour

- Correctly recycle all household waste
- Avoid single use plastic
- Throw away uneaten food, e.g. food that is stale, mouldy, past use by date

### Sourcing food / diet

- Use locally produced food
- Not eat meat
- Not eat dairy

### Transport

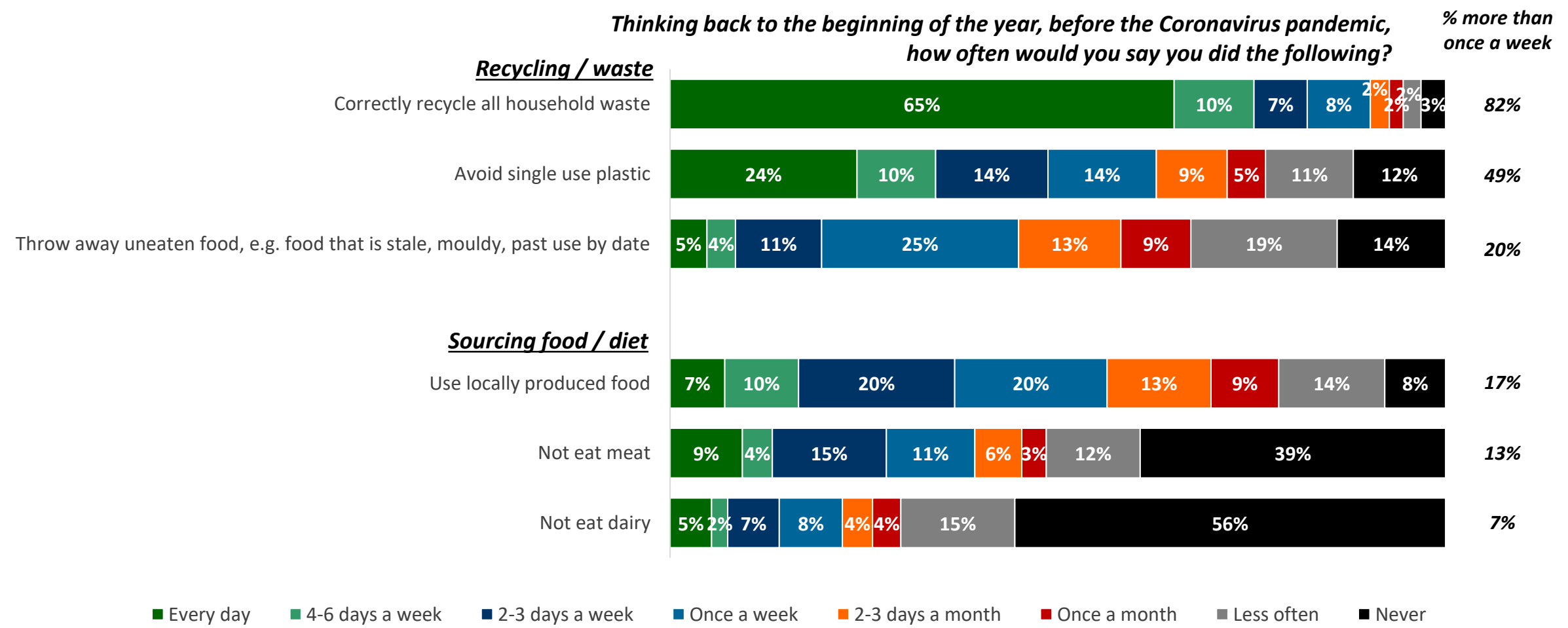
- Use a car or taxi
- Walk or cycle for journeys less than 2 miles
- Use public transport, i.e. bus / train

### Leisure / work

- Exercise outdoors
- Visit parks, woodlands or nature spots for leisure
- Work from home
- Use video conferencing

# Frequency of behaviours before pandemic – recycling / waste & sourcing food / diet

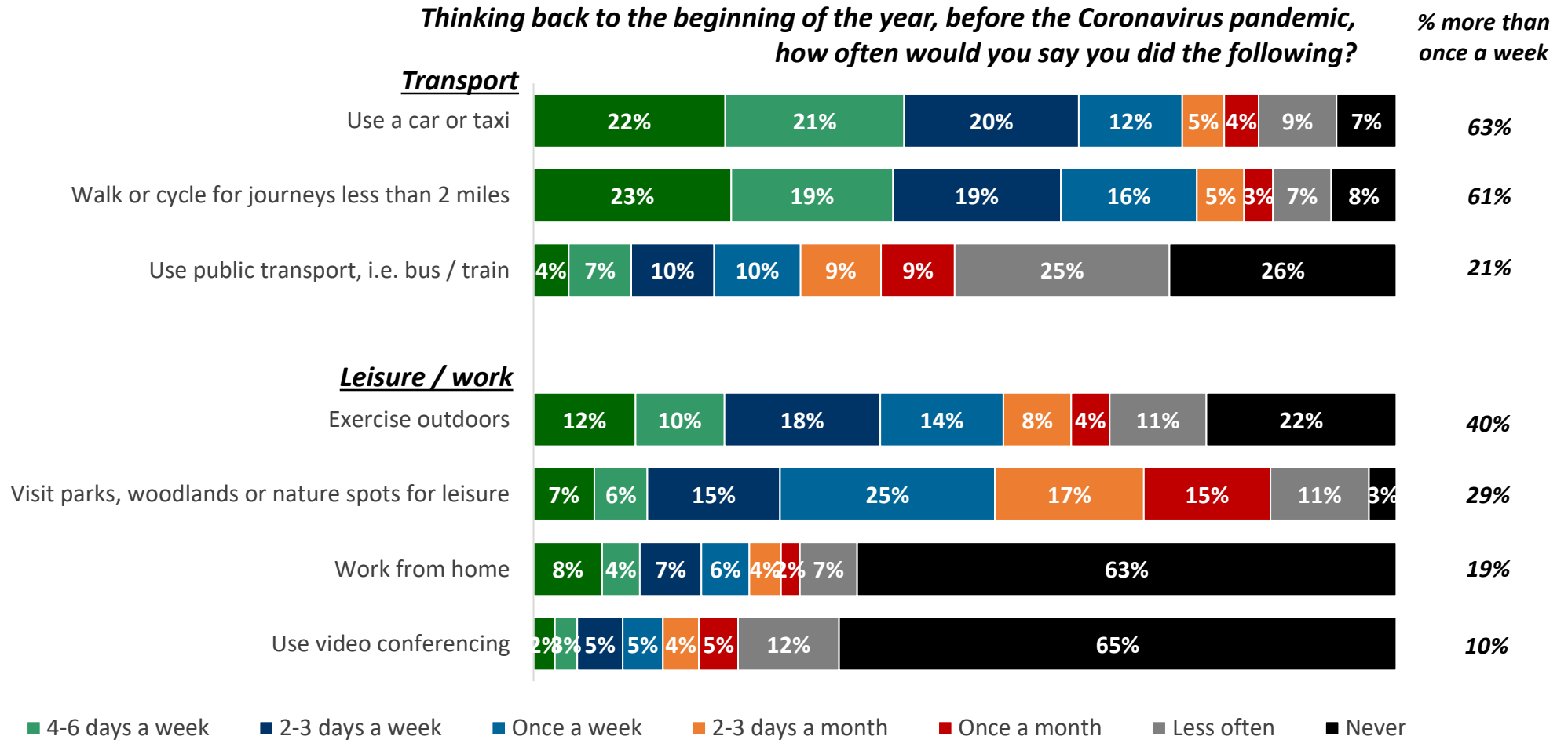
- Of the recycling / waste behaviours presented to residents, correctly recycling all household waste was the most frequent behaviour prior to the pandemic with 65% indicating they did this every day. Just under half (49%) avoided single use plastic more than once a week.
- Frequency of the food / diet behaviours was considerably lower. 17% used locally produced food more than once a week.



Base: all answering (1,008)

# Frequency of behaviours before pandemic – transport and leisure / work

- Just under two thirds indicated they used a car or taxi (63%) and/or walked or cycled for journeys less than 2 miles (61%) prior to the pandemic. 21% indicated they use public transport more than once a week.
- 19% indicated they worked from home and 10% indicated they used video conferencing prior to the pandemic more than once a week.

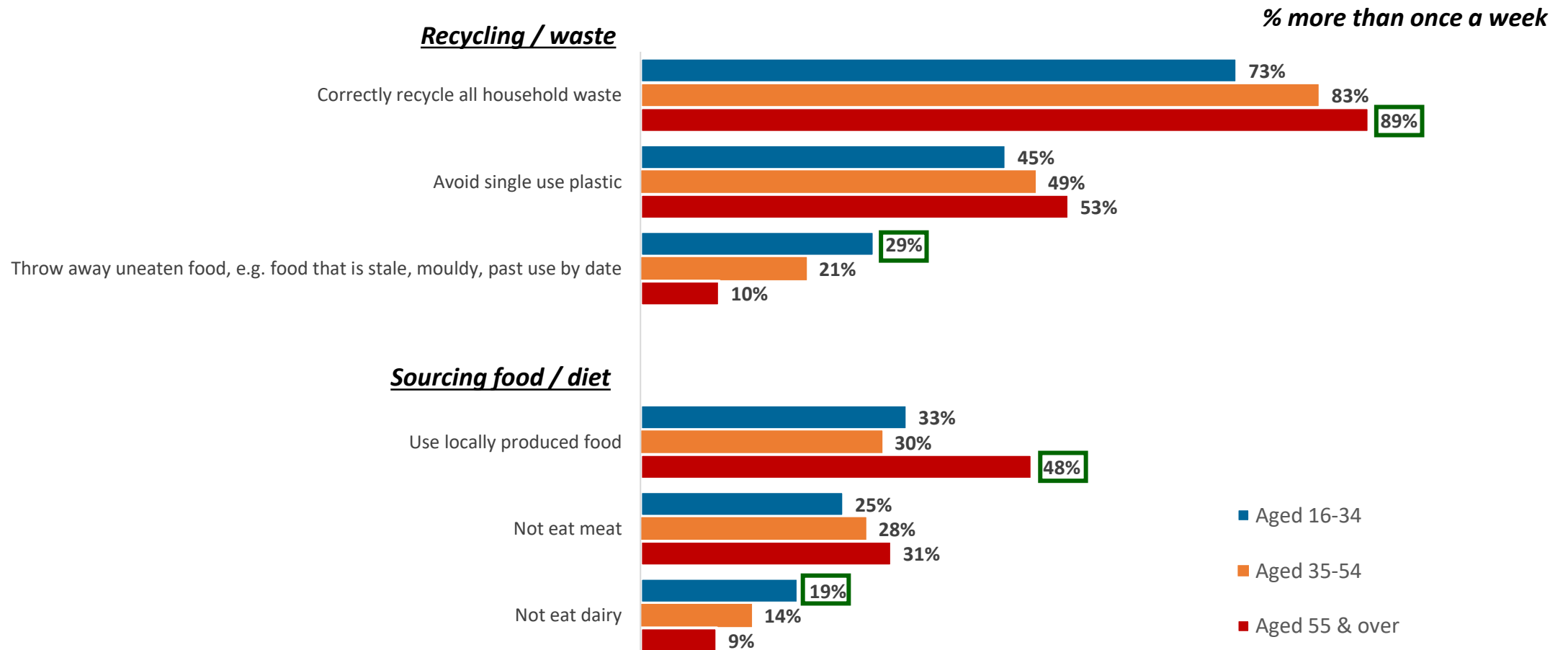


Base: all answering (1,008)

# Frequency of recycling / waste / food behaviours before pandemic – by age subgroup

- There are significant differences observed by age group. A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 55 & over correctly recycle all household waste and use locally produced food more than once a week.
- A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 16-34 throw away uneaten food more than once a week.

*Thinking back to the beginning of the year, before the Coronavirus pandemic, how often would you say you did the following?*



Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

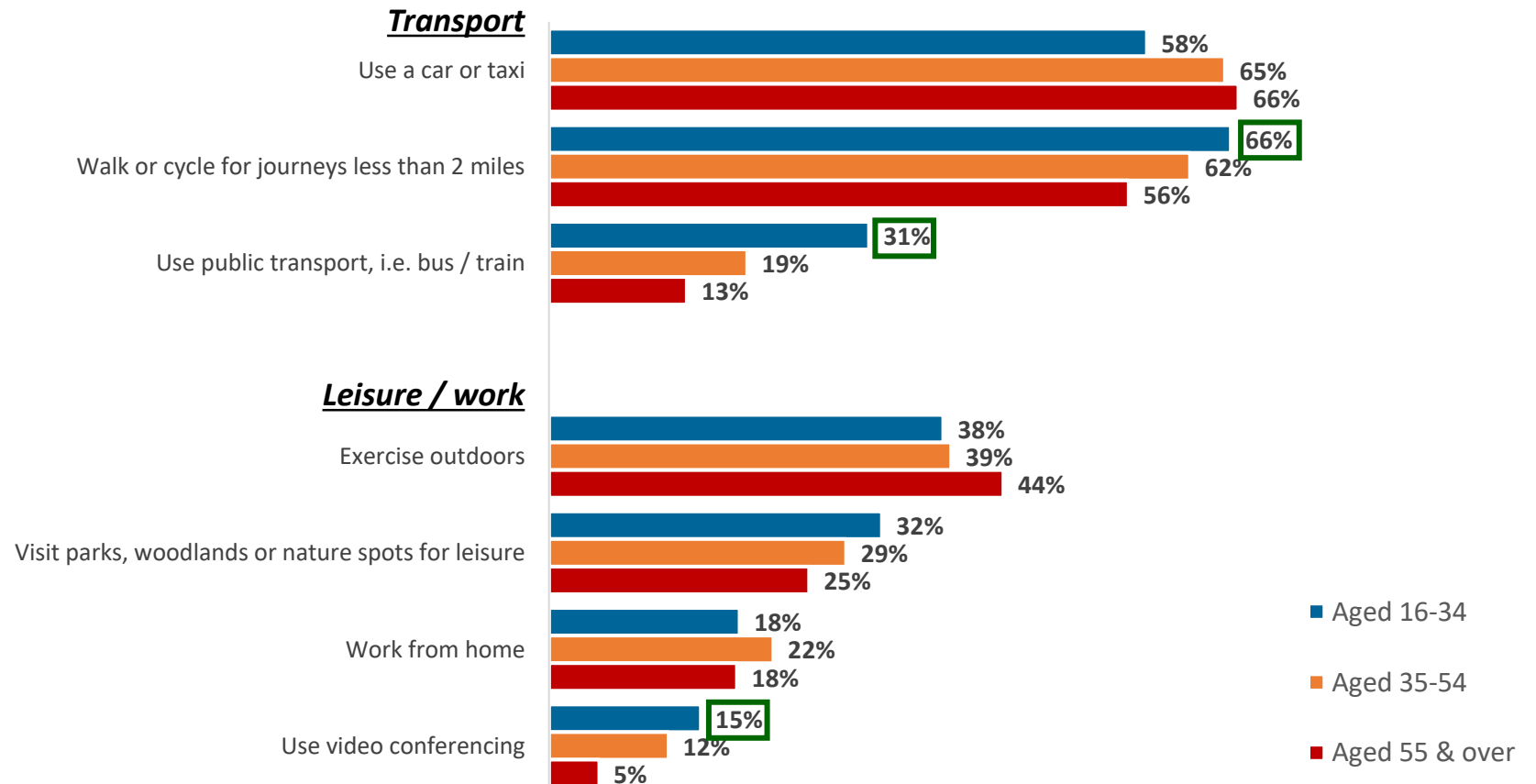
Base: all answering (1,008)

# Frequency of transport / leisure / work behaviours before pandemic – by age subgroup

- There are significant differences observed by age group. A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 16-34 walk or cycle for journeys less than 2 miles and/or use public transport more than once a week.
- A significantly higher proportion of residents aged 16-34 use video conferencing more than once a week.

*Thinking back to the beginning of the year, before the Coronavirus pandemic, how often would you say you did the following?*

*% more than once a week*



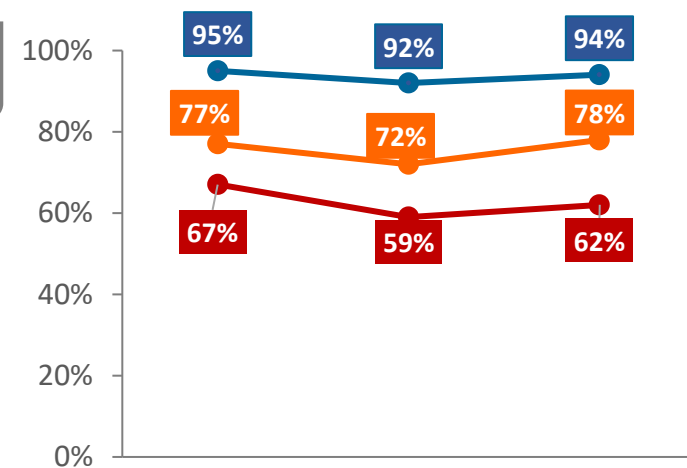
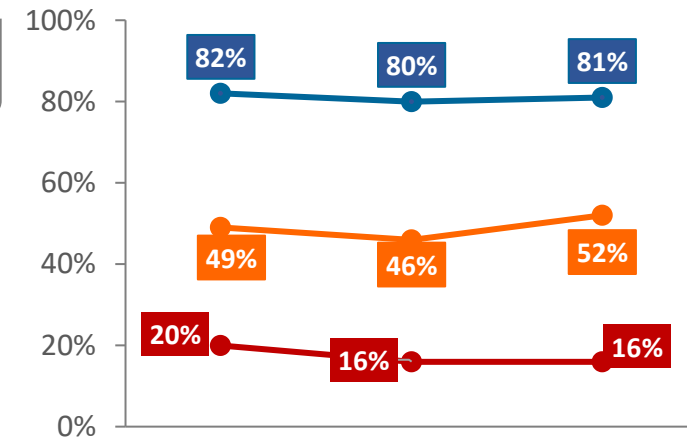
Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

# Energy / waste behaviour change – past, present and future

- Frequency of correctly recycling all household waste and throwing away uneaten food is broadly consistent across all three time periods.
- There is a slight reduction in the frequency of avoiding single use plastic during lockdown but this is planned to resume / increase slightly once restrictions have been fully lifted.

How often did you / will you do the following?

	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
<b>% more than once a week</b>			
Correctly recycle all household waste	82%	80%	81%
Avoid single use plastic	49%	46%	52%
Throw away uneaten food, e.g. food that is stale, mouldy or past use by date	20%	16%	16%
<b>% at least once a month</b>			
Correctly recycle all household waste	95%	92%	94%
Avoid single use plastic	77%	72%	78%
Throw away uneaten food, e.g. food that is stale, mouldy or past use by date	67%	59%	62%



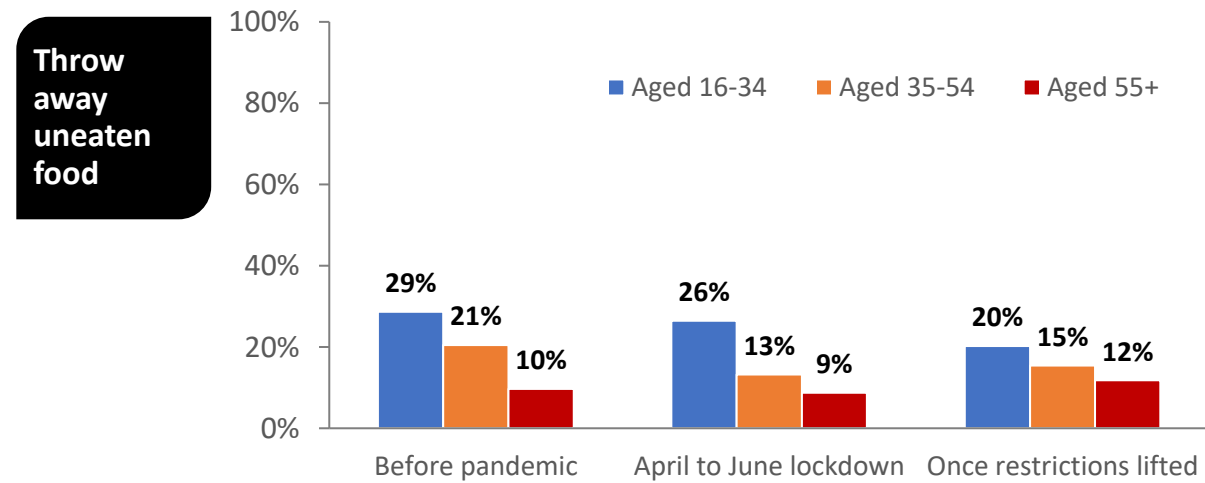
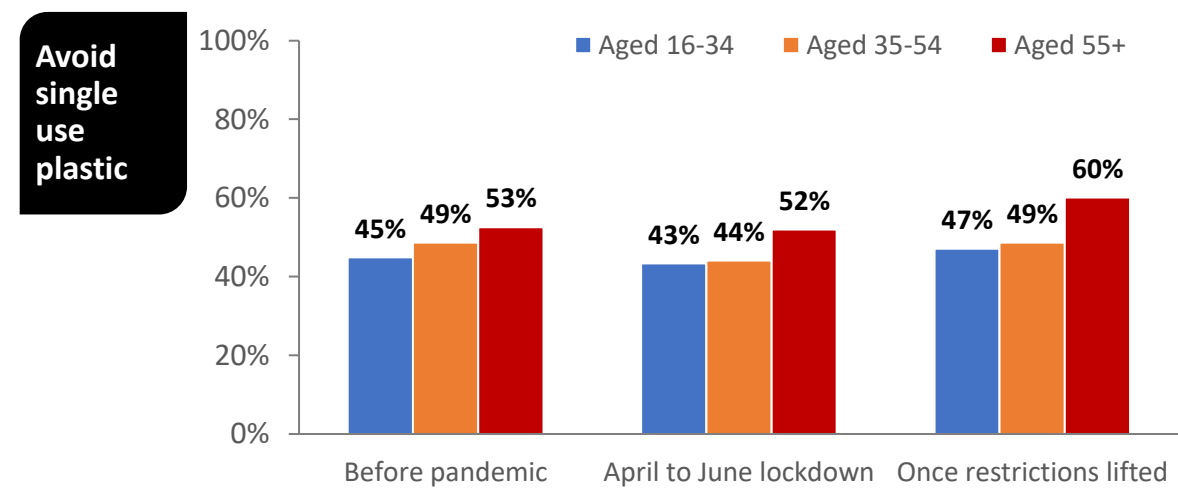
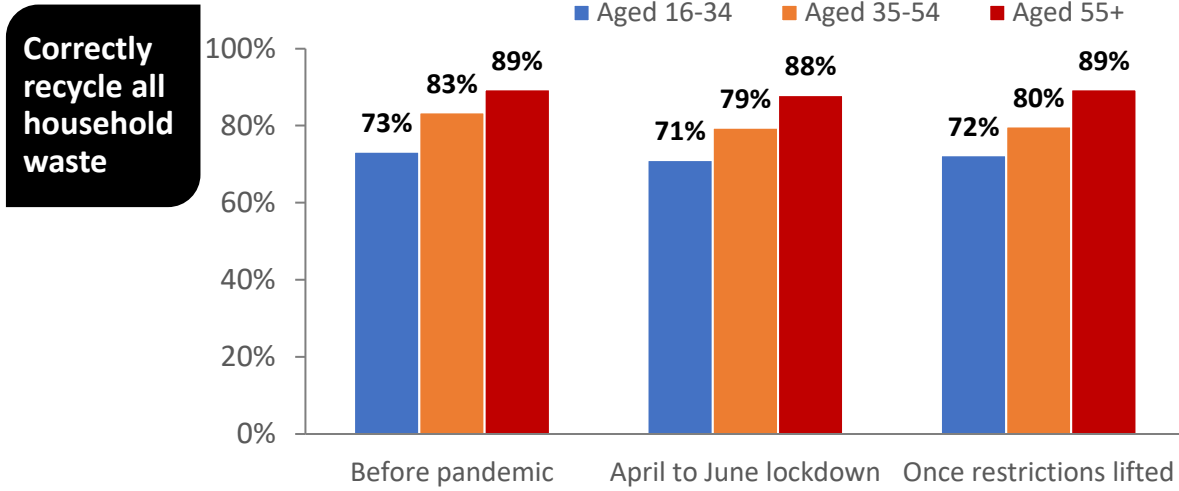
Base: all answering (1,008)



# Energy / waste behaviour change – past, present and future – by age subgroup

- When looking at trends by age, it is apparent that the planned increase in avoiding single use plastic is driven by residents aged 55 & over.
- The proportion of residents aged 16-34 looking to throw away uneaten food in the future is lower than pre lockdown levels.

*How often did you / will you do the following?  
% more than once a week*



Base: all answering (1,008)

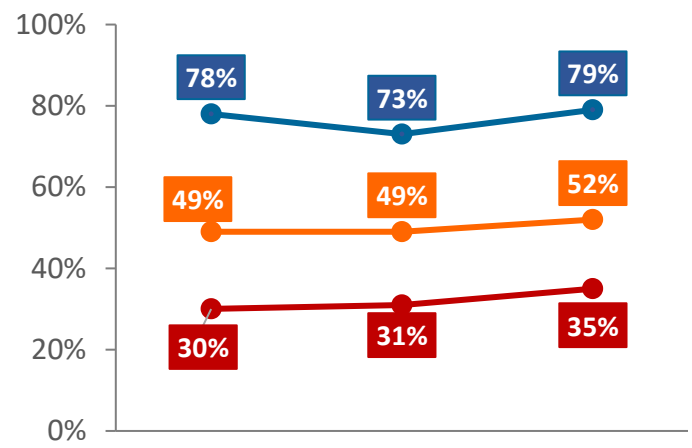
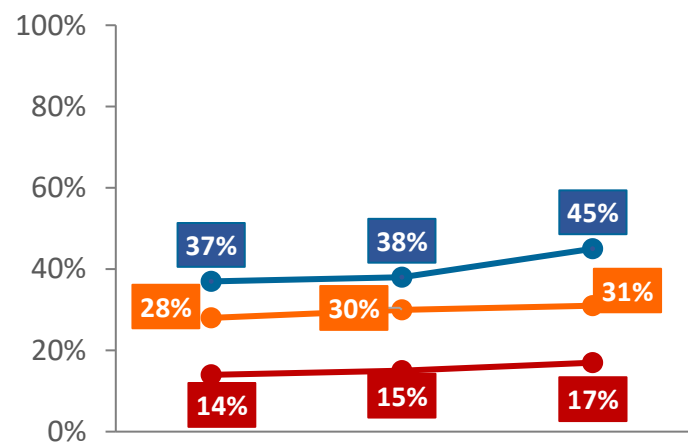
# Food purchasing / consumption behaviour change – past, present and future

- Frequency of not eating meat and not eating dairy more than once a week is broadly consistent across prior to the pandemic and during lockdown. The proportion of residents planning to avoid dairy once restrictions have been fully lifted is slightly higher.
- There is an observed increase in the frequency of residents planning to use locally produced food once restrictions have been fully lifted.

% more than once a week	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
Use locally produced food	37%	38%	45%
Not eat meat	28%	30%	31%
Not eat dairy	14%	15%	17%

% at least once a month	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
Use locally produced food	78%	73%	79%
Not eat meat	49%	49%	52%
Not eat dairy	30%	31%	35%

How often did you / will you do the following?

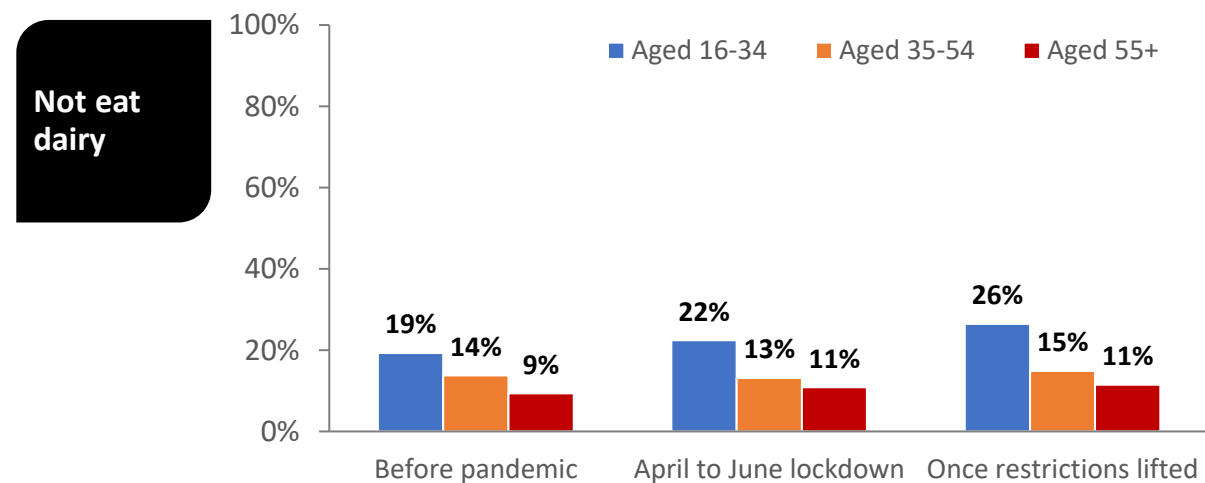
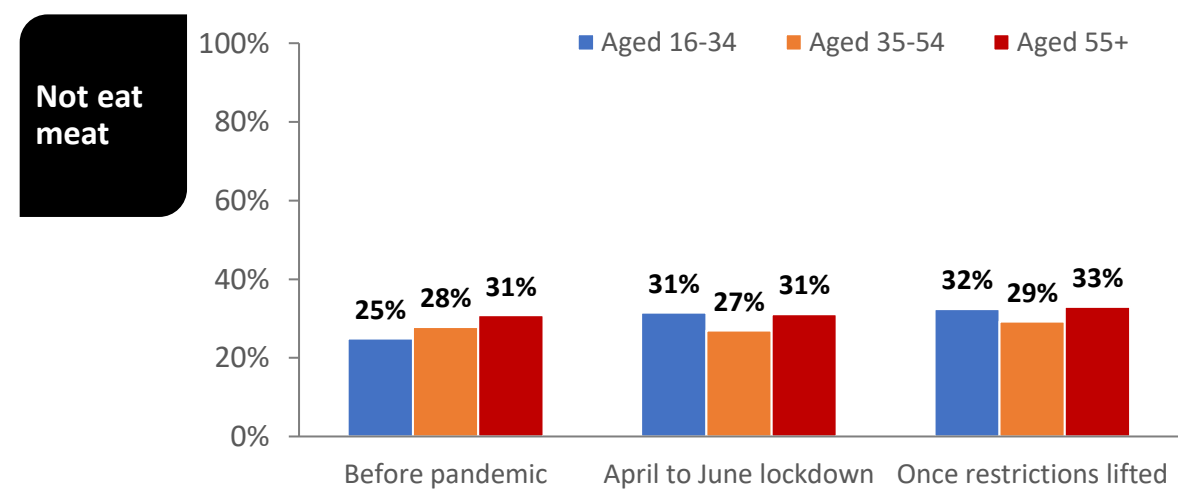
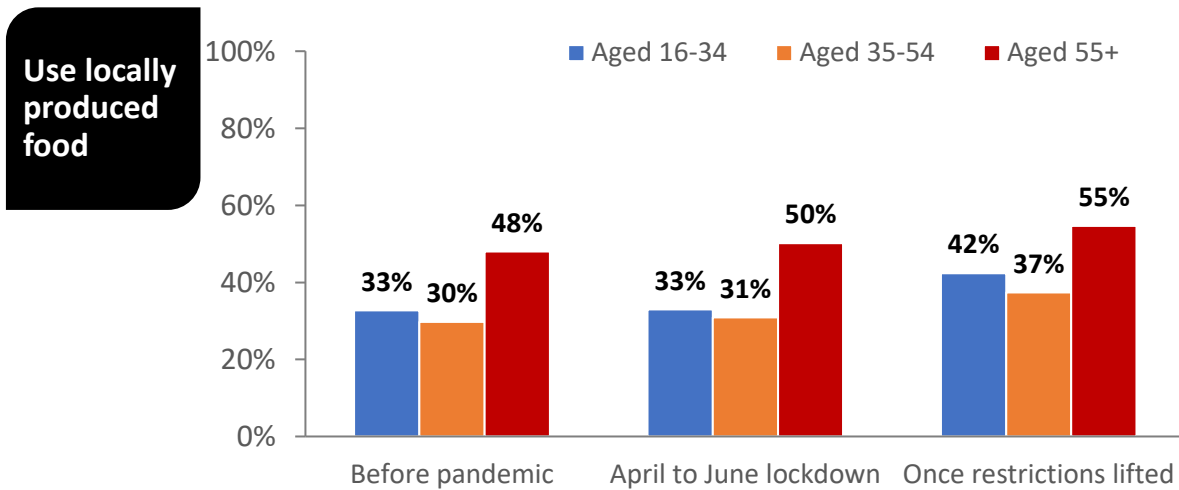


Base: all answering (1,008)

# Food purchasing / consumption behaviour change – past, present and future – by age

- A higher proportion of residents across all age groups are looking to use locally produced food in the future compared to pre lockdown.
- A higher proportion of residents aged 16-34 are planning on not eating dairy and/or meat as frequently once restrictions are fully lifted.

*How often did you / will you do the following?  
% more than once a week*



Base: all answering (1,008)

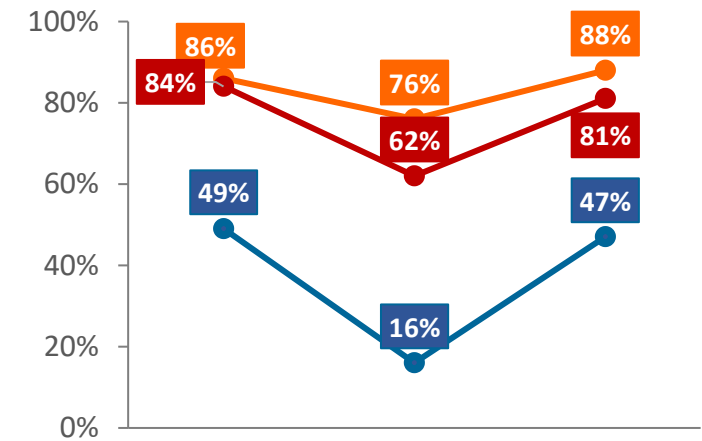
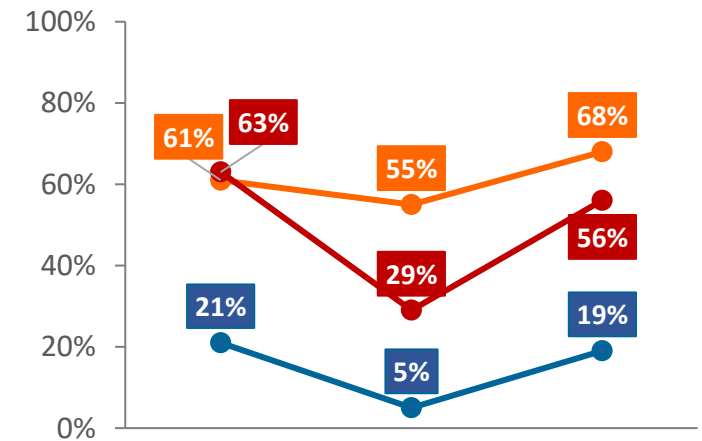
# Travel behaviour change – past, present and future

- As perhaps expected, frequency of travel behaviours changed significantly during lockdown compared to pre lockdown levels. The proportion of residents planning to use public transport over set frequencies are broadly consistent to pre lockdown levels.
- A higher proportion of residents are planning to walk / cycle for journeys more frequently compared to pre lockdown levels.

% more than once a week	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
Use a car or taxi	63%	29%	56%
Walk or cycle for journeys less than 2 miles	61%	55%	68%
Use public transport, e.g. bus / train	21%	5%	19%

% at least once a month	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
Use a car or taxi	84%	62%	81%
Walk or cycle for journeys less than 2 miles	86%	76%	88%
Use public transport, e.g. bus / train	49%	16%	47%

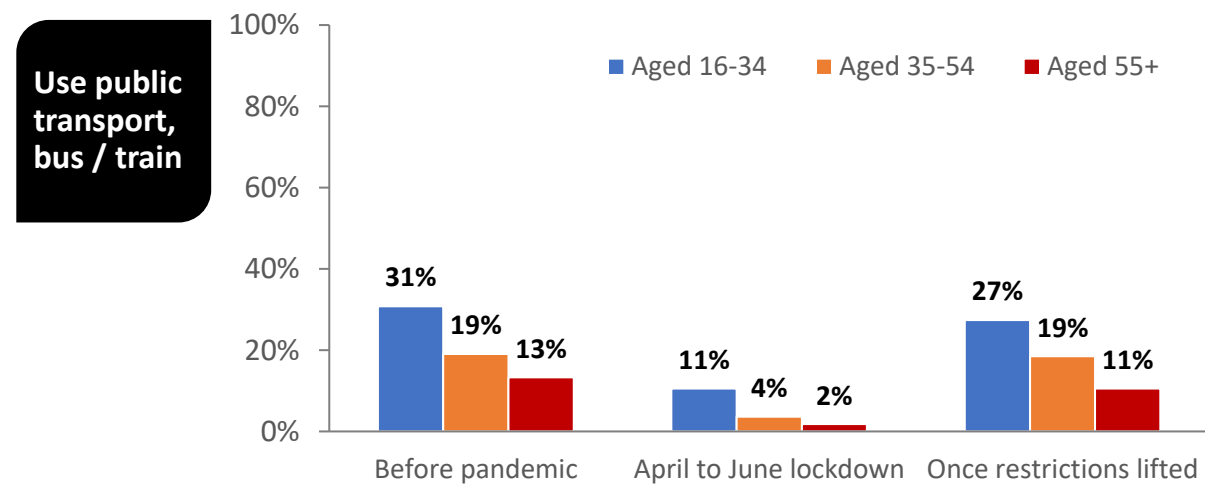
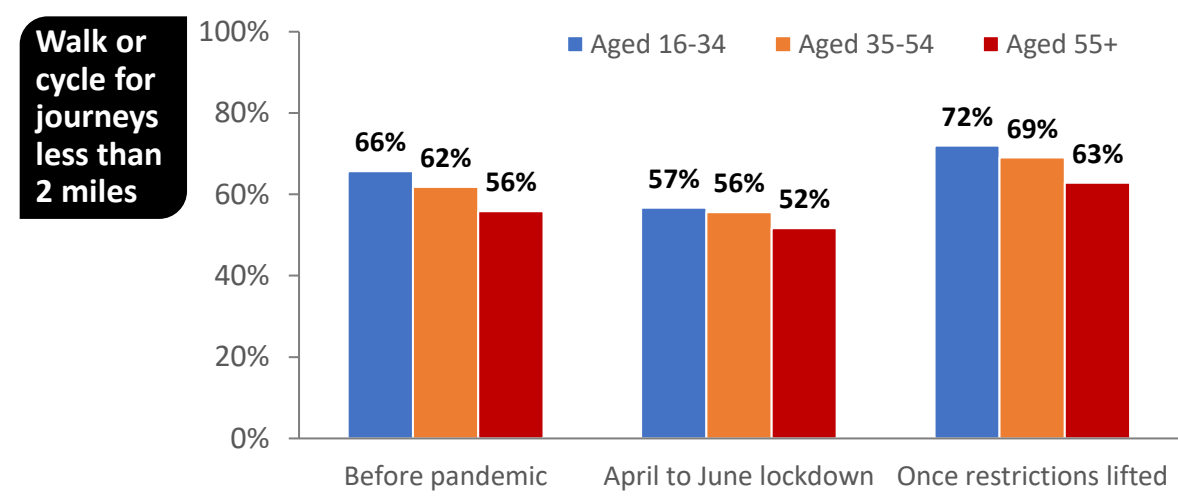
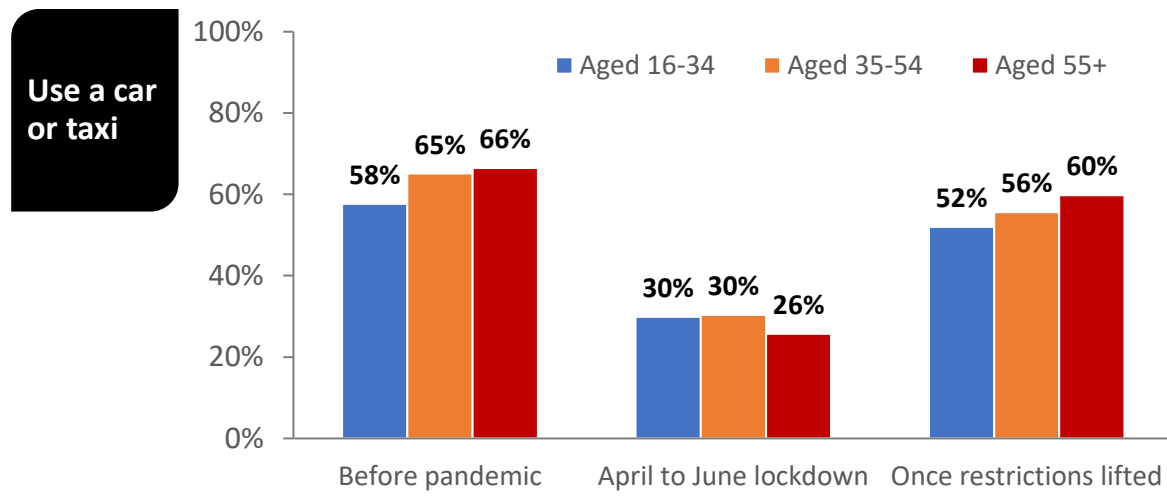
How often did you / will you do the following?



# Travel behaviour change – past, present and future – by age subgroup

- Planned frequency for using cars or taxis is lower across all age groups once restrictions are fully lifted and planned walking / cycling is higher across all age groups. There is a small decrease in the proportion of residents aged 16-34 travelling by public transport frequently compared to pre lockdown.

*How often did you / will you do the following?  
% more than once a week*



Base: all answering (1,008)

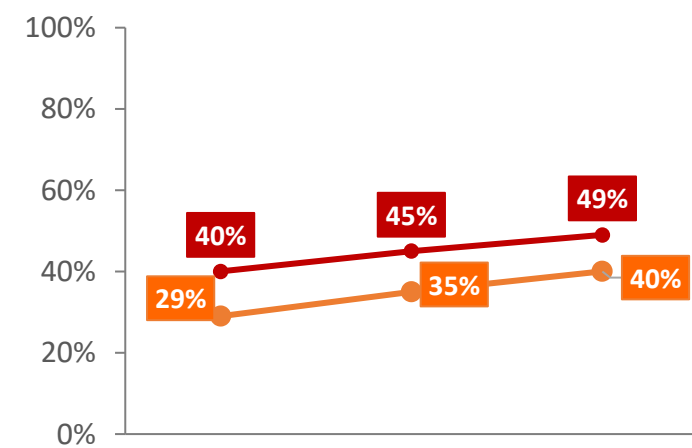
# Leisure behaviour change – past, present and future

- As perhaps expected, frequency of exercising outdoors increased during lockdown. A higher proportion are also planning to exercise outdoors more frequently compared to pre lockdown levels.
- The proportion visiting parks, woodland or nature spots for leisure decreased during lockdown but a higher proportion are planning to visit once restrictions are fully lifted.

*How often did you / will you do the following?*

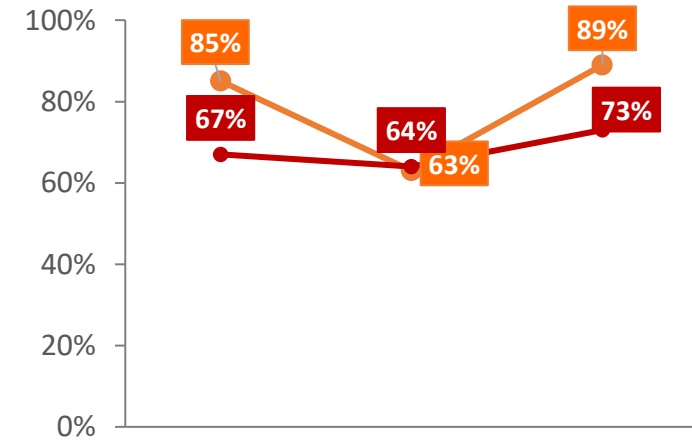
**% more than once a week**

	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
<b>Exercise outdoors</b>	40%	45%	49%
<b>Visit parks, woodlands or nature spots for leisure</b>	29%	35%	40%



**% at least once a month**

	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
<b>Exercise outdoors</b>	67%	64%	73%
<b>Visit parks, woodlands or nature spots for leisure</b>	85%	63%	89%



Base: all answering (1,008)

# Work behaviour change – past, present and future

- As perhaps expected, a higher proportion of residents worked from home and used video conferencing more frequently during lockdown.
- A higher proportion are also planning to work from home and use video conferencing more frequently compared to pre lockdown levels.

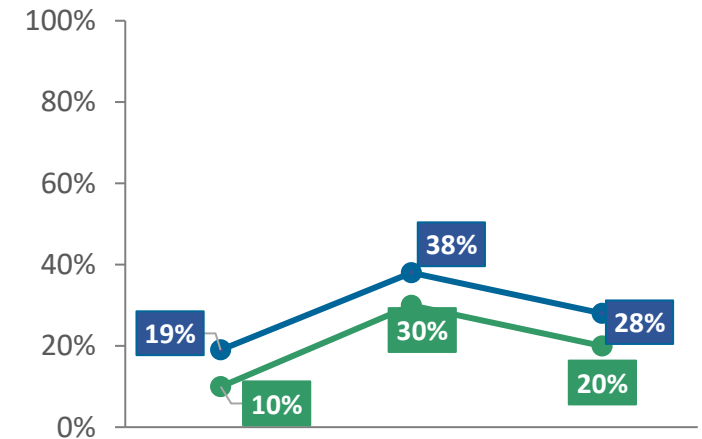
*How often did you / will you do the following?*

**% more than once a week**

Work from home

Use video conferencing

	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
Work from home	19%	38%	28%
Use video conferencing	10%	30%	20%

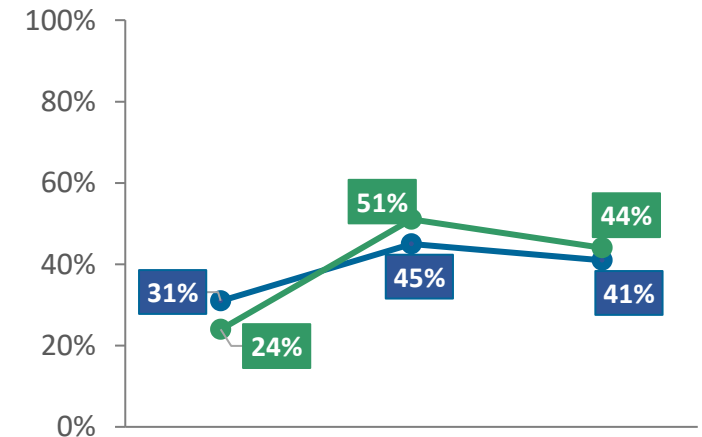


**% at least once a month**

Work from home

Use video conferencing

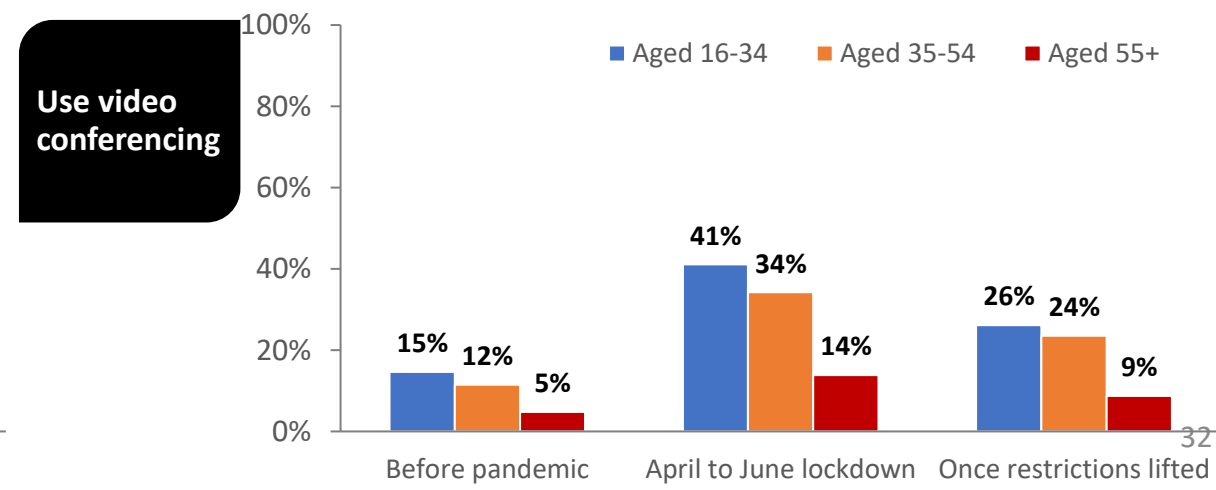
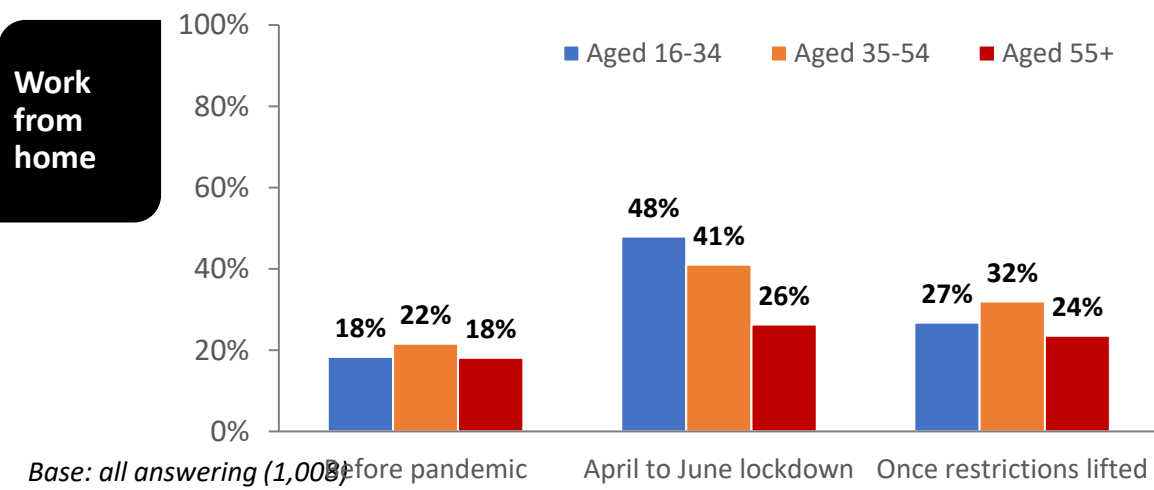
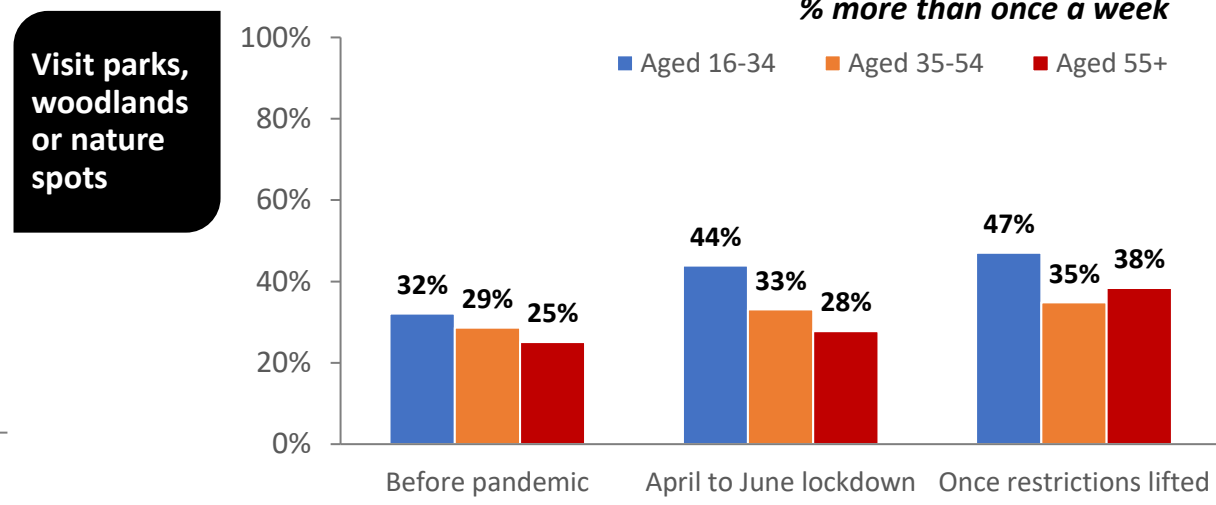
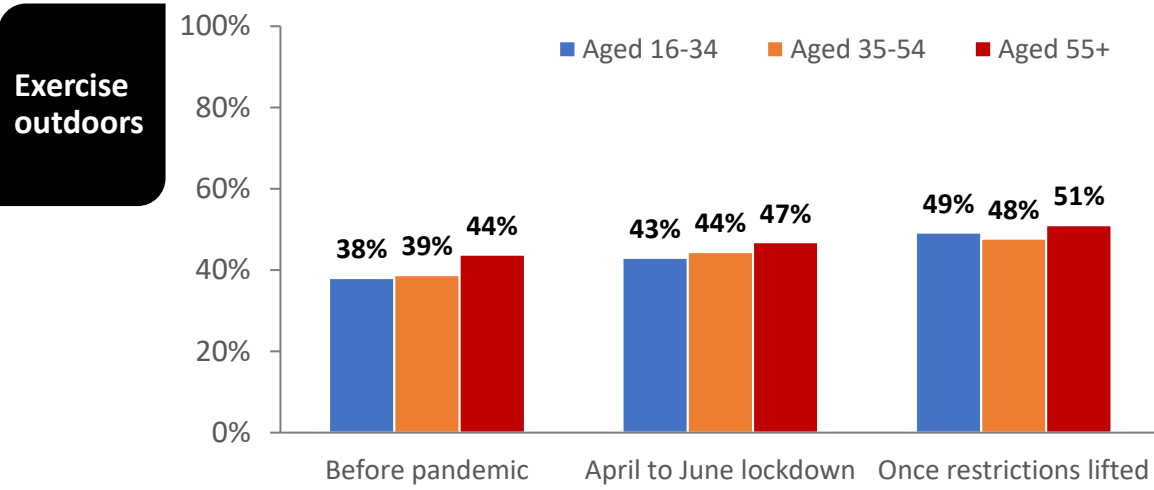
	% before the pandemic	% April to June lockdown	% once restrictions / distancing lifted
Work from home	31%	45%	41%
Use video conferencing	31%	51%	44%



Base: all answering (1,008)

# Leisure / work behaviour change – past, present and future – by age subgroup

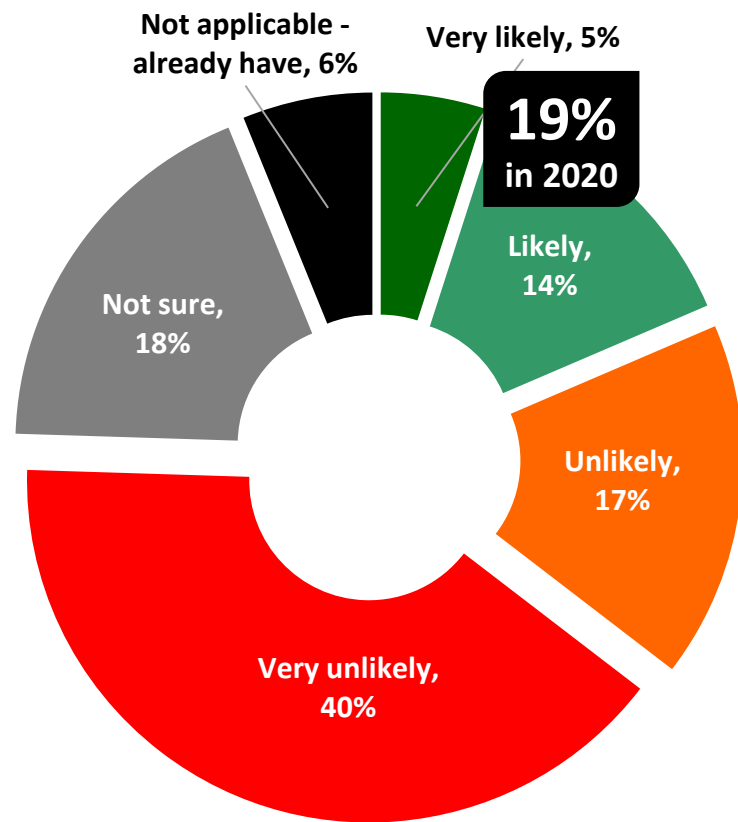
- A higher proportion of residents across all age groups are looking to exercise outdoors and visit parks, woodlands or nature spots in the future more frequently compared to pre lockdown. A higher proportion of residents across all age groups are also looking to work from home and use video conferencing more frequently in the future compared to pre lockdown.



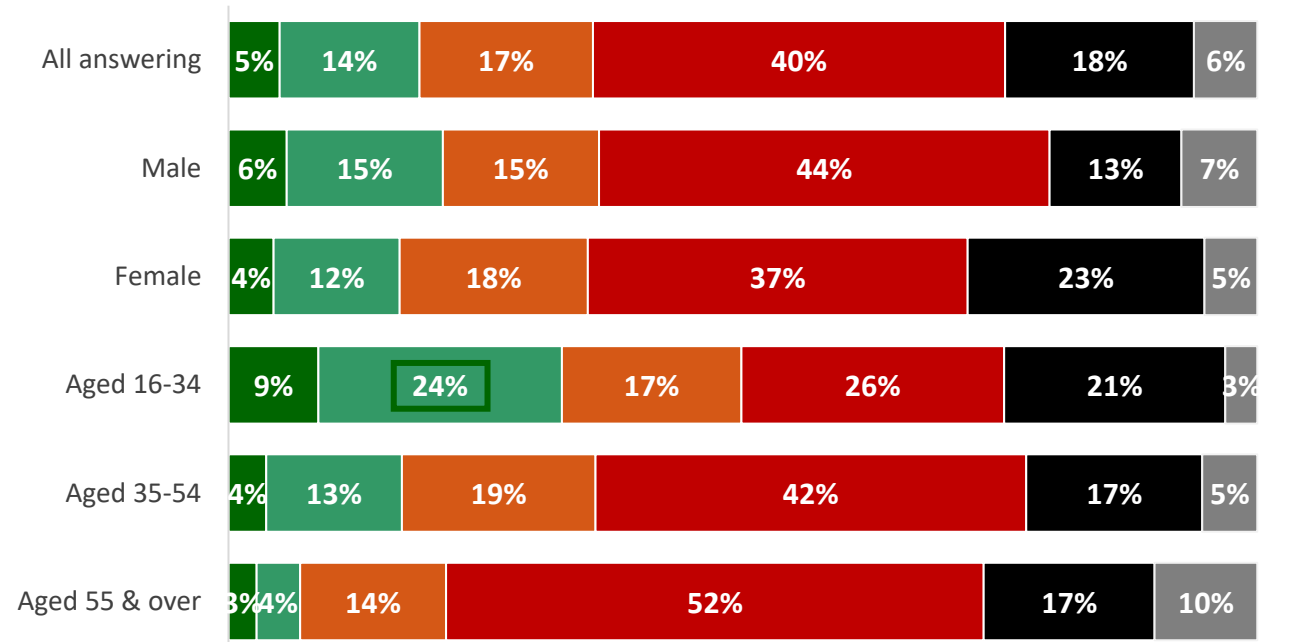


# Likelihood to install a renewable heat or energy system in next year

- Just under one in five (19%) are very likely / likely to install a renewable heat or energy system in their home in the next year.
- Likelihood to install is significantly higher amongst residents aged 16-34 at 33%.



How likely do you think you will install a renewable heat or energy system (such as solar panels or a biomass boiler) in your home in the next year?



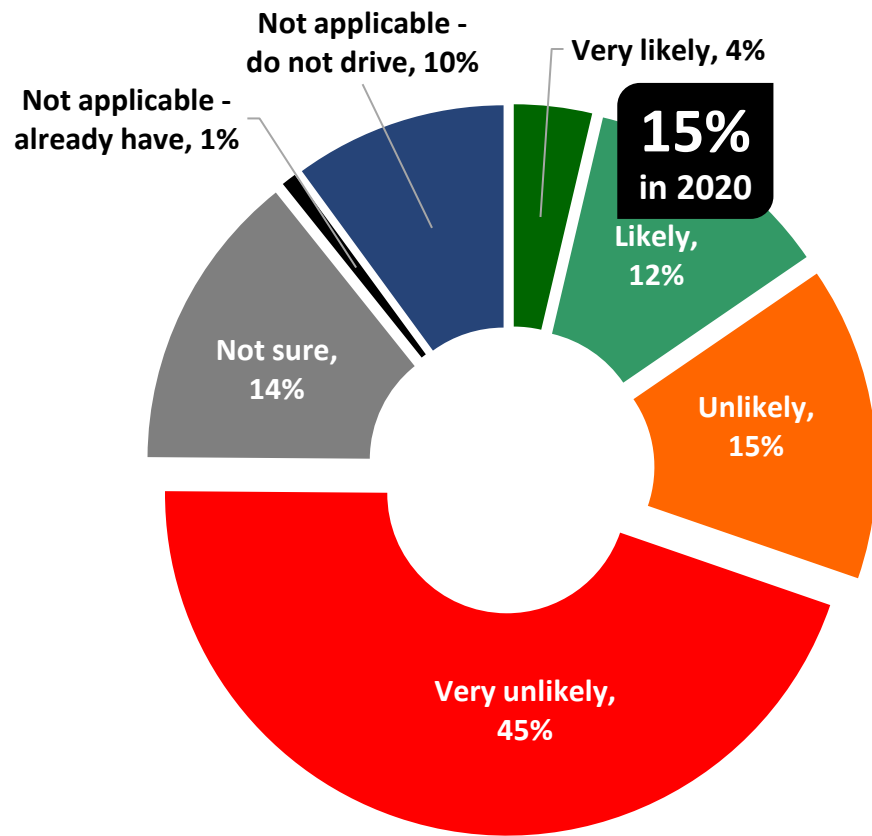
Legend: Very likely (dark green), Likely (medium green), Unlikely (orange), Very unlikely (red), Not sure (black), Not applicable - already have (grey)

Base: all answering (1,008)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

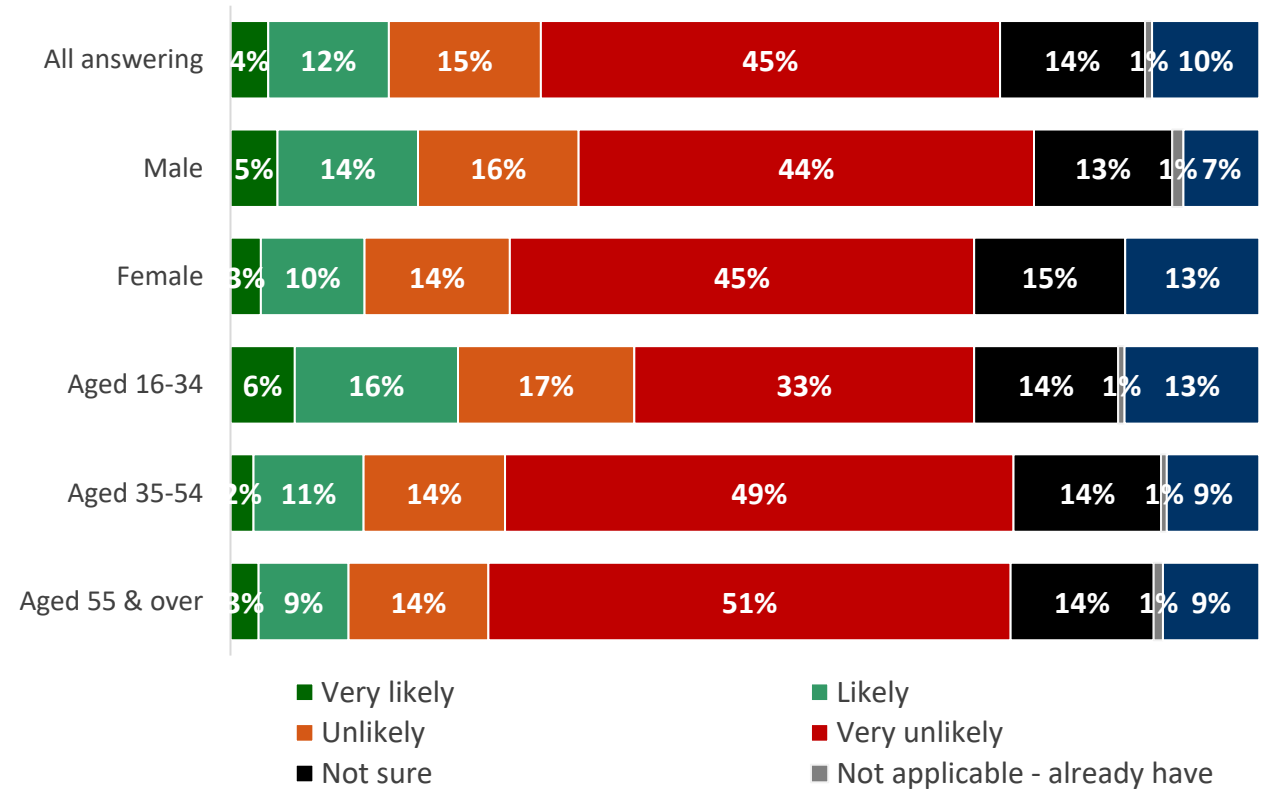
# Likelihood to purchase a full electric vehicle in next year

- Just under one in six (15%) are very likely / likely to purchase a full electric vehicle in the next year.
- Likelihood to install is significantly higher amongst male residents (19%) and residents aged 16-34 at 22%.



Base: all answering (1,008)

How likely do you think you will purchase a full electric vehicle (i.e. one that doesn't use petrol or diesel) in the next year?

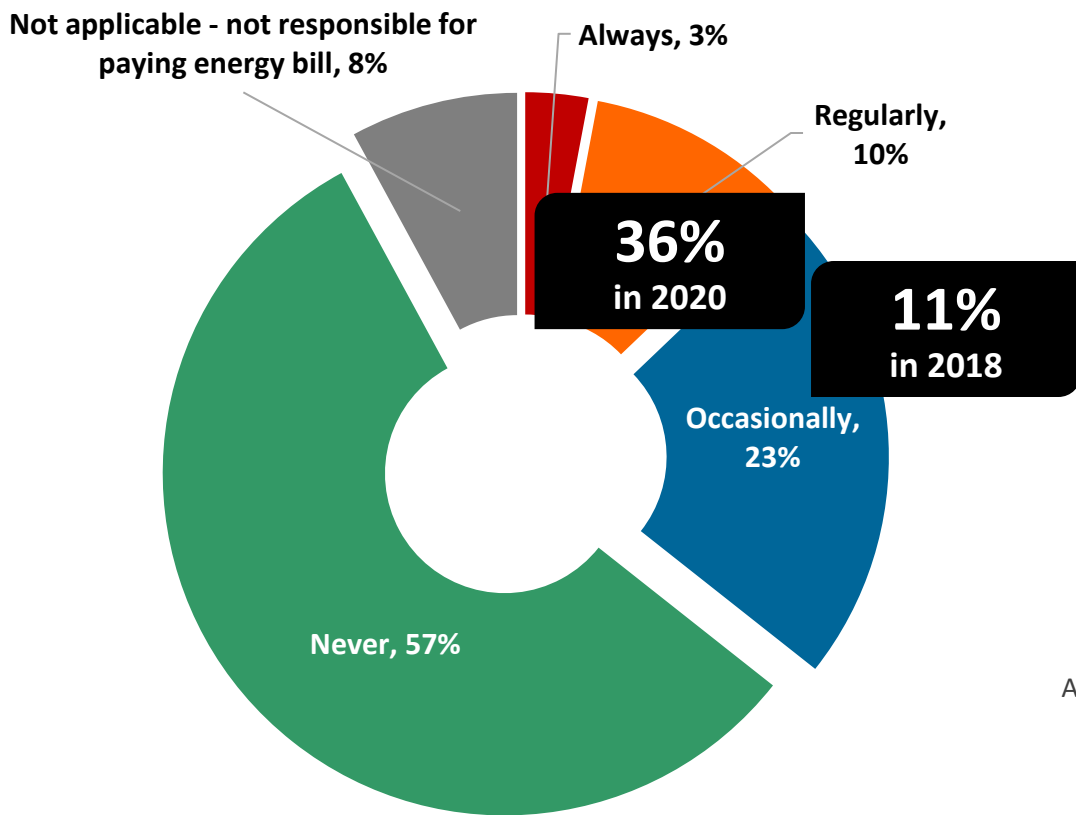


# Energy bill payments

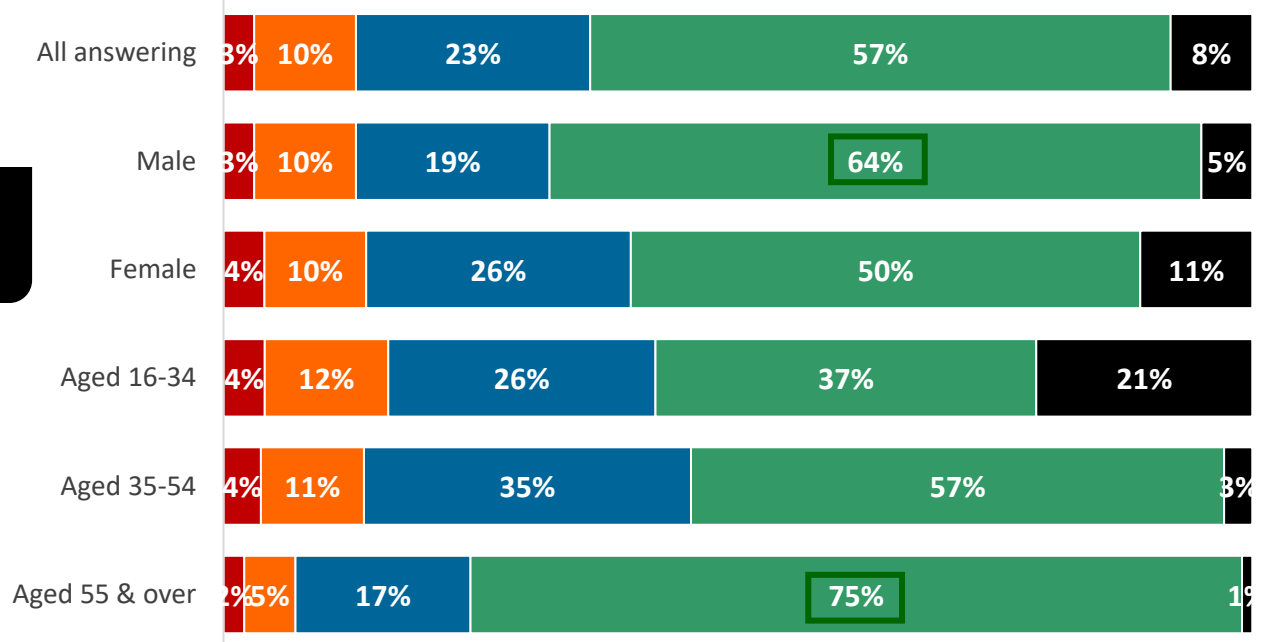


# Frequency of struggling to pay energy bills

- Just over a third (36%) struggle to pay their energy bills to some frequency; occasionally, regularly, always. This is a significant increase compared to 2018 levels (11%).
- A significantly higher proportion of male residents and residents aged 55 & over never struggle to pay their energy bills.



How often would you say you struggle to pay your energy bills?



Always Regularly Occasionally Never Not applicable - not responsible for paying energy bill

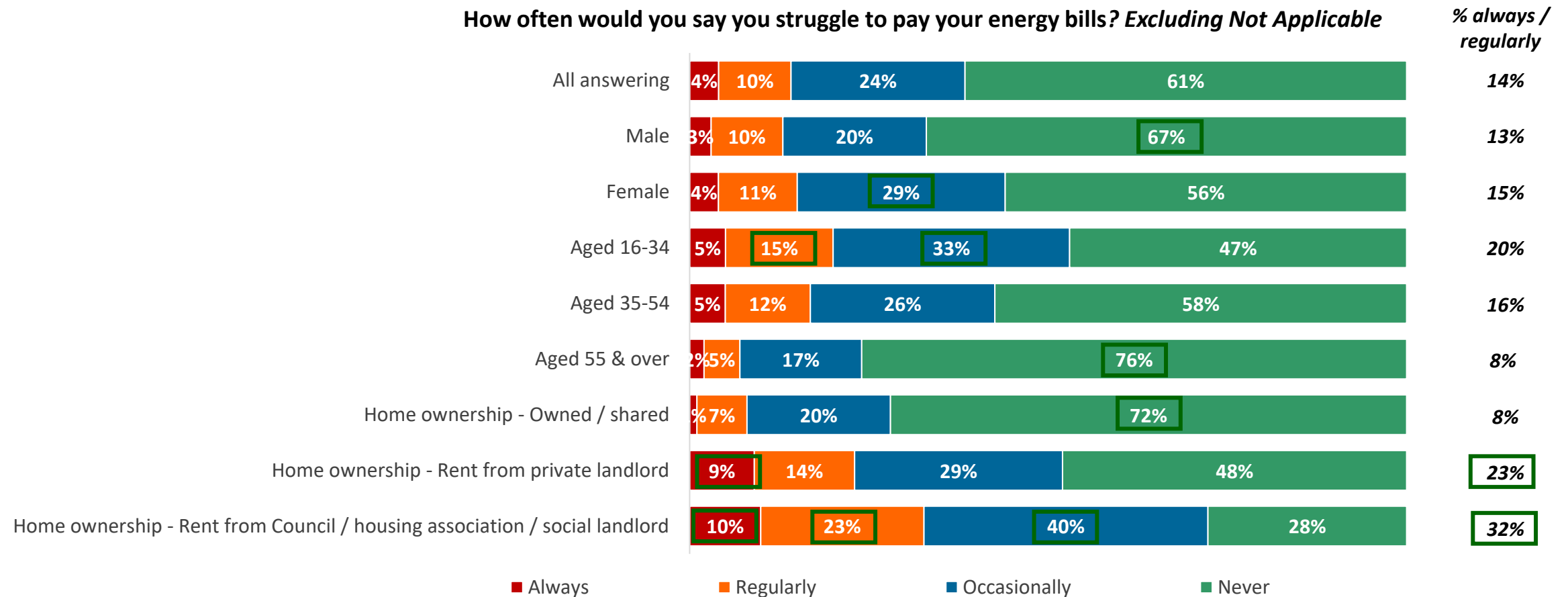
Base: all answering (1,008)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

# Frequency of struggling to pay energy bills – by subgroup, excluding Not Applicable

- A consistent pattern is observed by age when focused on those responsible for paying energy bills only.
- A significantly higher proportion of residents who rent from a private landlord or the council / housing association / social landlord struggle to pay their energy bills to some frequency.

How often would you say you struggle to pay your energy bills? *Excluding Not Applicable*



Base: all answering (1,008)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level

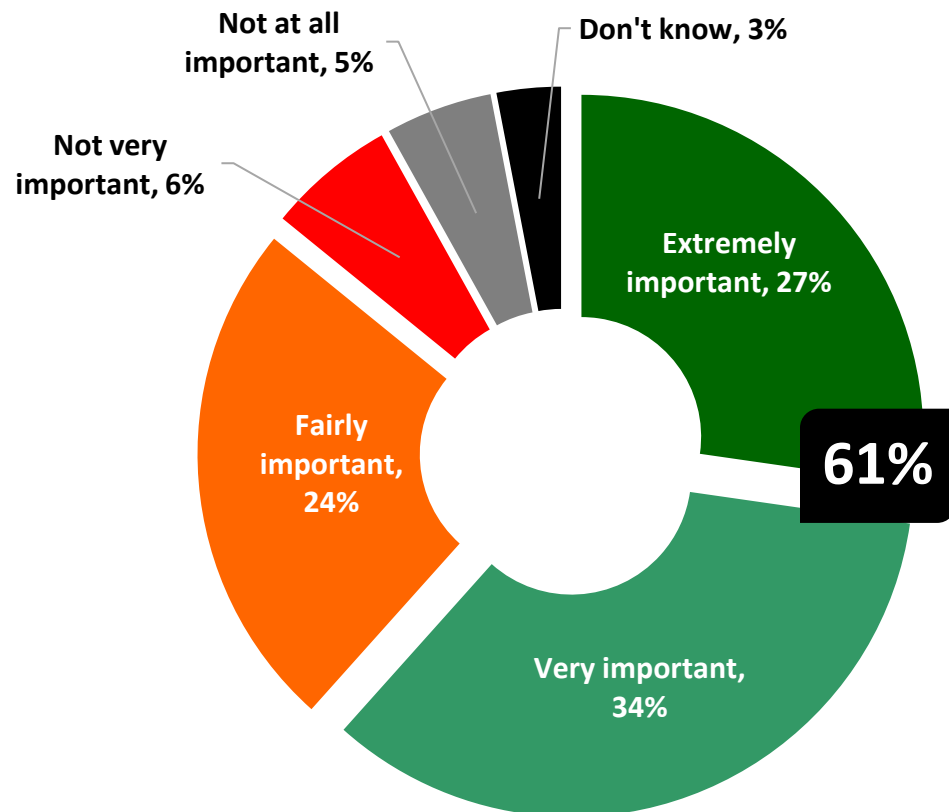
# Comparing perceptions of using less energy and waste

- When comparing the perceived importance of the council prioritising helping residents to use less energy and waste, there are no significant differences observed between those struggling and not struggling to pay their energy bills.

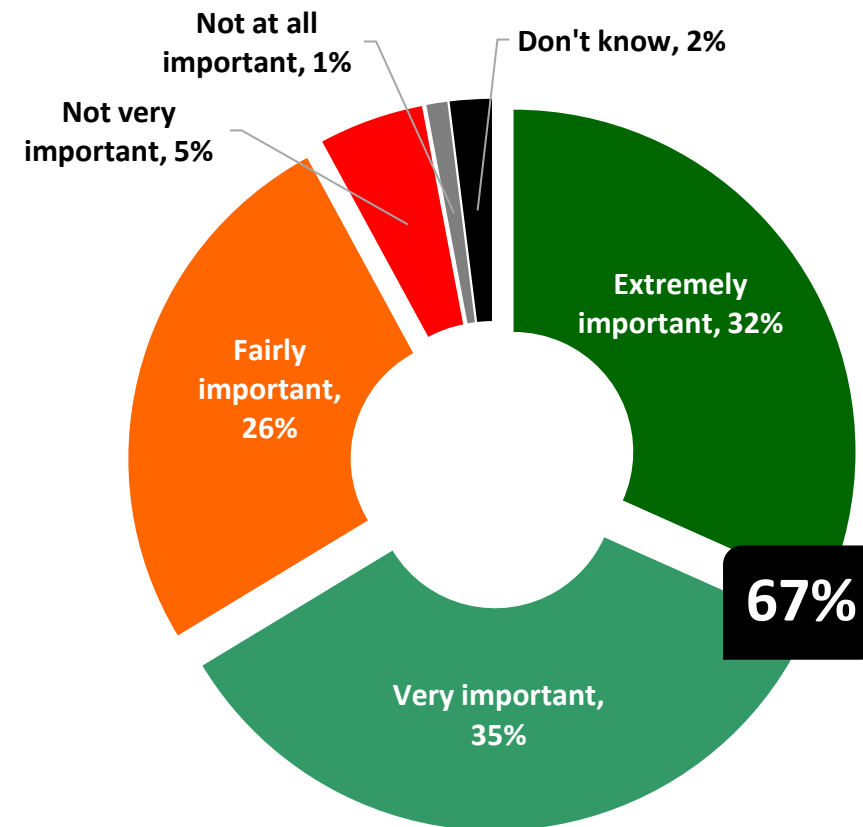
How important is it to you, if at all, that your council prioritises the following actions?

*Help Kent's residents to use less energy and waste*

Always / regularly struggling to pay energy bills



Occasionally / never struggling to pay energy bills



Base: all answering (1,008)

Significantly higher % than rest of sample at 95% confidence level