

# Exercise & Physical Activity Survey 2025

A report by Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering



October 2025

“I love the music in Zumba & the opposite meditative qualities in Tai-Chi.”

Local Older Person

# Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	5
2. Background	5
3. Methodology	5
4. Strengths & Limitations	5
5. Executive Summary	6
6. Analysis of Feedback	7
7. Glossary of Terms	26
8. Distribution and Comment	26
Demographics	Appendix 1

This page is intentionally blank.

## 1. Introduction

Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham and Havering is a local charity, which has been working with older people for over 50 years. We have dedicated, trained staff who are making a positive difference to the lives of older people through a variety of services. This includes the Voices of Experience Project, giving older people in Redbridge the opportunity to give their feedback.

## 2. Background

The 10 Year Health Plan aims to deliver the 3 'big shifts' the NHS needs to be fit for the future. There will be a focus on greater use of technology, more treatment and care in the community, and staying healthy (this is known as 'prevention').

We wanted to know about the preventative habits the older population in Redbridge have in regards to keeping physically and mentally well through sport and leisure activities.

Having a snapshot of what people are currently doing, could provide insight as to the improvements, development and investment needed for the future.

This could help to secure a wider range of sports and leisure activities, for older people in Redbridge.

## 3. Methodology

Participants who could access the internet were emailed a link to an online survey. Additionally we sent paper copies in the post. Some participants even gave their feedback over the phone. We also visited supported living establishments and community groups to collect their feedback.

## 4. Strengths & Limitations

The flexibility of our approach in gathering feedback from people, and the variety of methods used are among the project's strengths.

## 5. Executive Summary of Findings

During July - September 2025, 145 older people in Redbridge completed our survey on exercise and physical activity.

This section summarises key findings - see section 6 for findings in full.

### Survey Response

#### Current Exercise & Physical Activity:

- Almost half of respondents (45%) engage daily in exercise or physical activity, while an additional 39% are active every week. For a tenth (11%) physical activity is more occasional.
- 5% of respondents indicate they 'never' undertake exercise or physical activity.
- Responses suggest that the younger you are, the more likely you are - to exercise several times a week. Interestingly however, there is a small difference between those aged 65 - 74 (77%) and 75 - 89 year olds (76%).
- Respondents in good health are much more likely than those in poor health, to exercise several times a week (88%, compared with 50%).
- There is little difference between those living alone (75%) or with others (77%).

#### Activities and Locations:

- Walking is clearly the most popular activity, with three quarters of respondents (74%) citing this. The next most-popular is exercise or dance classes (42%) with Zumba, Yoga, Tai-Chi and Pilates mentioned.
- When asking what is 'enjoyed the most', again walking is a clear favourite - at 54%.
- Around half of respondents (47%) undertake exercise or activities in their local area, this could be a visit to the park or shops. 18% travel further afield.
- 40% remain at home, while a quarter (25%) visit community or faith venues - often for classes, and 17% use their local leisure facilities.

#### Becoming More Active:

- Of those not currently exercising or undertaking physical activity, half (49%) say they would like to, and an additional 35% might consider it. Just 6% would not.
- On barriers to exercise and physical activity, the biggest issue, by far is health - with over half of respondents (56%) citing this. Transport and cost are also significant (25%) along with a lack of motivation (23%).
- Of those currently exercising, or undertaking physical activity, half (49%) would like to do more, and an additional 27% might consider it. 22% would not.
- Respondents would like more 'physically demanding' activities - such as visits to the gym or swimming pool.
- By some margin, social interaction is the greatest motivation to stay active (72%).

#### Falls:

- A quarter of respondents (24%) have had a fall within the last year.
- Likelihood significantly rises with age, or poorer health, responses suggest.

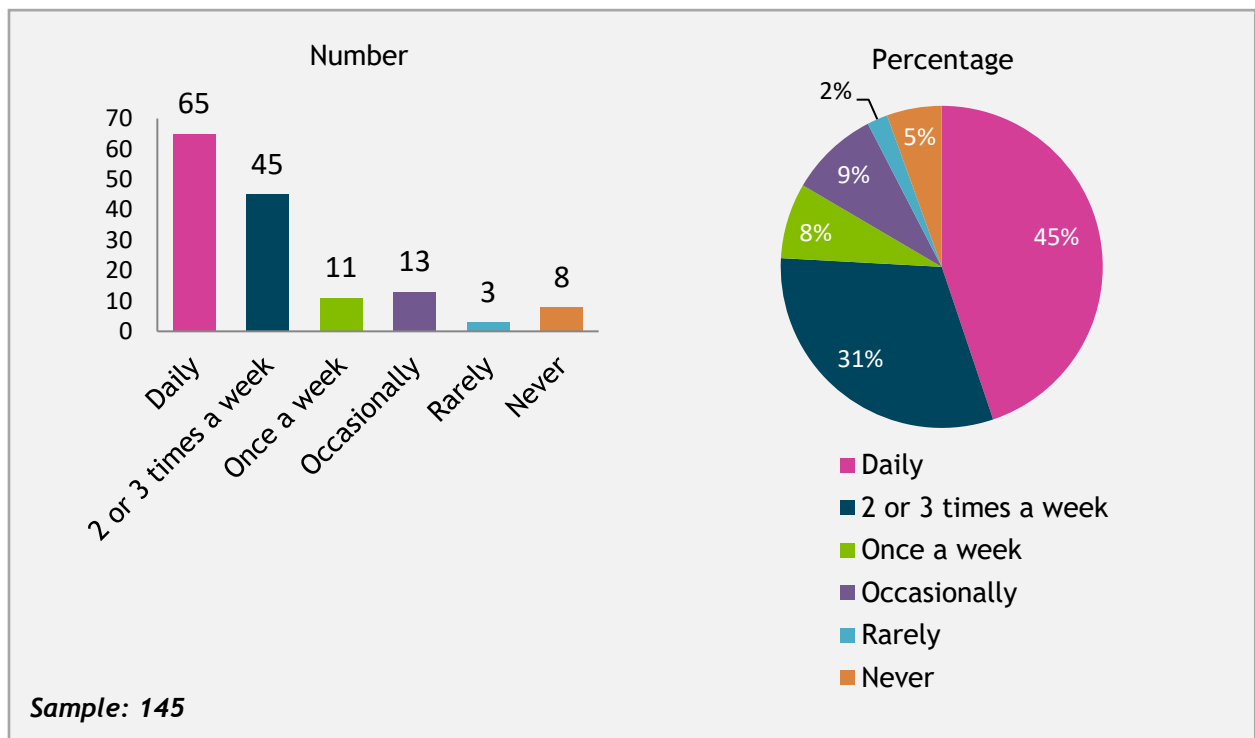
## 6. Our Survey - Analysis of Feedback

During July - September 2025, 145 older people in Redbridge completed our survey on exercise and physical activity.

Participants were asked what they currently do - to exercise and to be physically active. We also explored personal preferences, and looked at what can motivate, or deter exercise and physical activity.

The majority of questions had a free-text option, enabling participants to fully detail their opinions and experiences.

### 6.1 How often do you engage in exercise or physical activity (walking, cycling, swimming, exercise classes, sport)?



Almost half of respondents (45%) engage daily in exercise or physical activity, while an additional 39% are active every week.

For a tenth of respondents (11%) physical activity is more occasional or 'rare'. 5% indicate they 'never' undertake exercise or physical activity.

### 6.1.1 Exercise several times a week:

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	86%
Aged 65 - 74	77%
Aged 75 - 89	76%
All Respondents (Baseline)	76%
Aged 90 or over	44%

Responses suggest that the younger you are, the more likely you are - to exercise several times a week. Interestingly however, there is a small difference between those aged 65 - 74 (77%) and 75 - 89 year olds (76%).

Household - Living with others	77%
All Respondents (Baseline)	76%
Household - Just you	75%

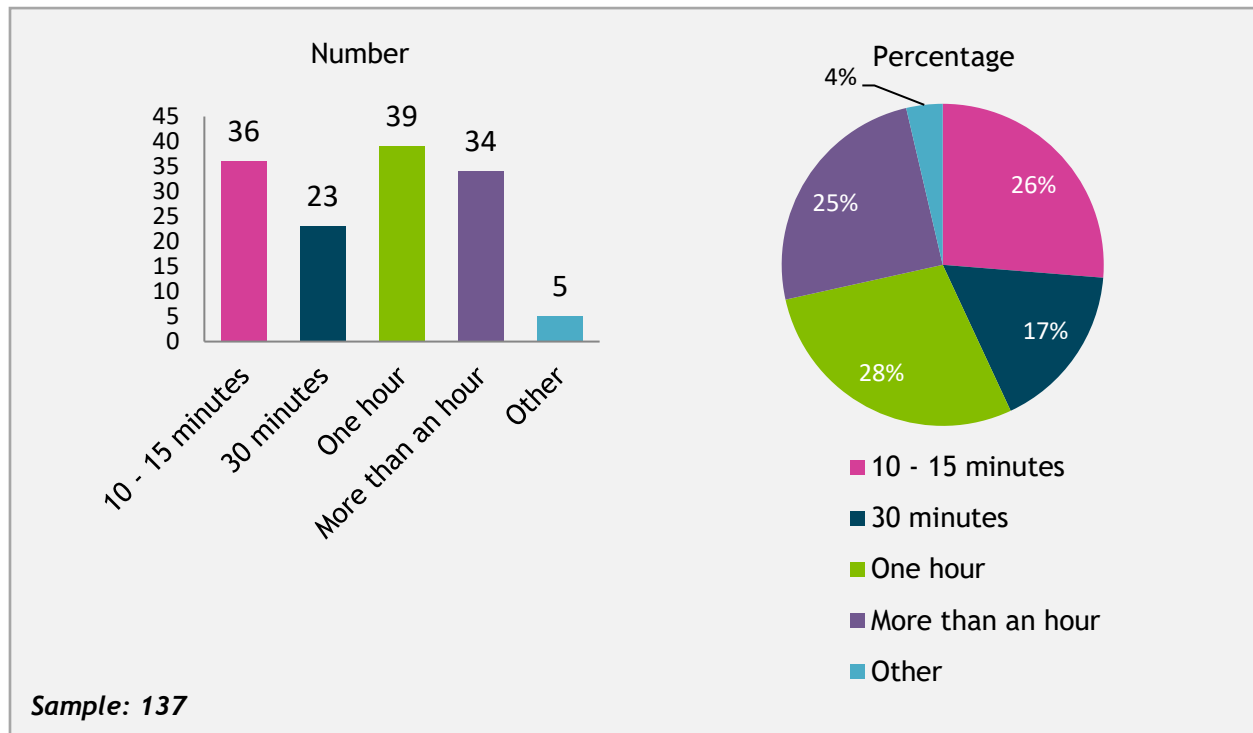
There is little difference between those living alone (75%) or with others (77%).

Good Health	88%
All Respondents (Baseline)	76%
Fair Health	72%
Poor Health	50%

Respondents in good health are much more likely than those in poor health, to exercise several times a week (88%, compared with 50%).

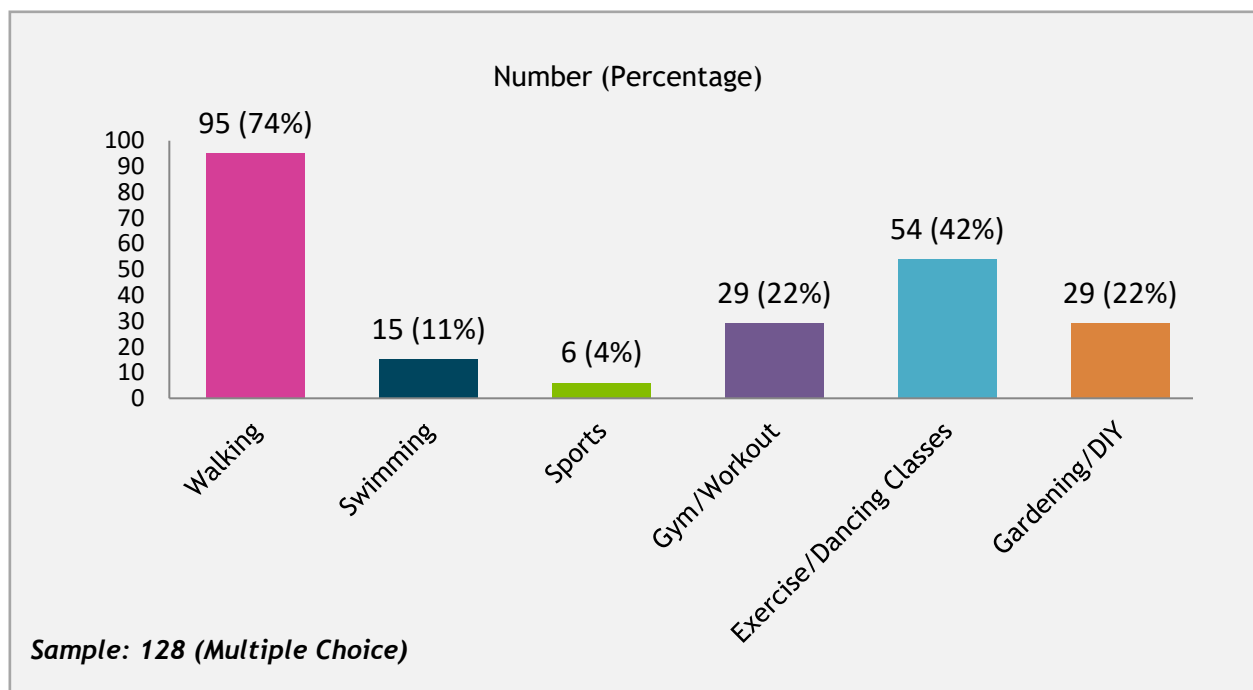


### 6.2 If you do some physical activity or exercise, how long do you do it for?



We asked about duration - whether activities are for 15 minutes, half an hour, an hour, or longer. There is no definitive trend, with respondents selecting each of the four categories - in roughly equal numbers.

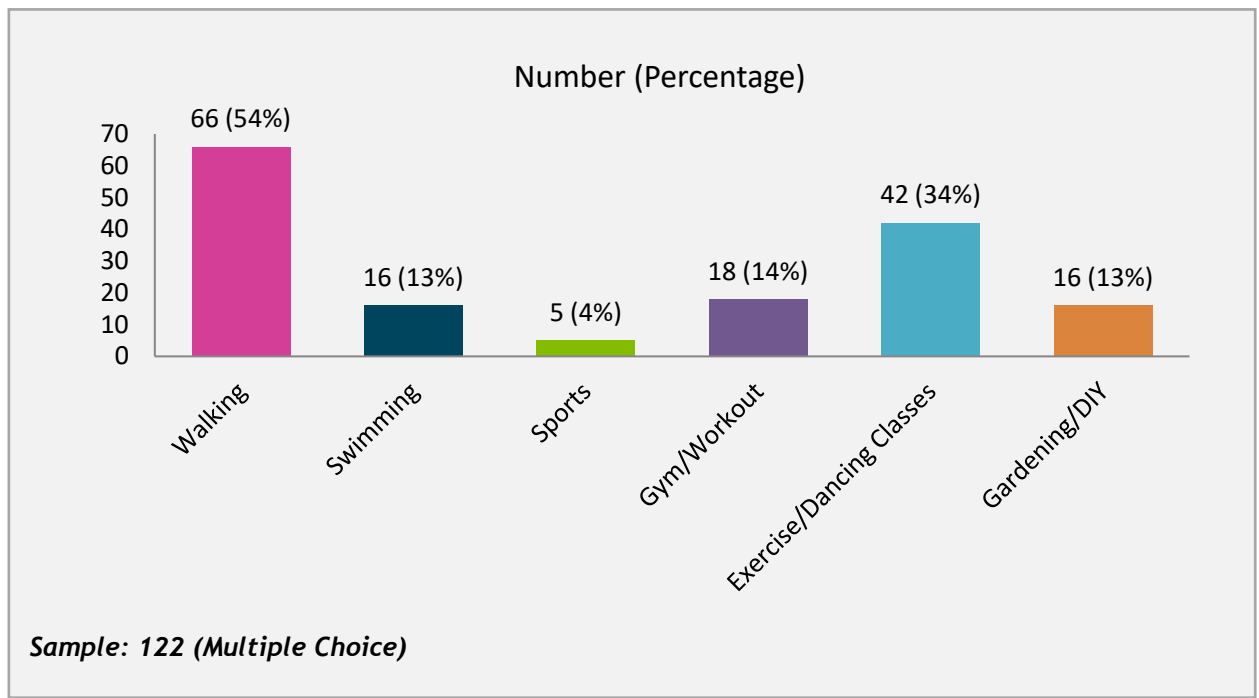
### 6.3 What types of physical activity or exercise do you do?



Walking is clearly the most popular activity, with three quarters of respondents (74%) citing this. The next most-popular is exercise or dance classes (42%) with Zumba, Yoga, Tai-Chi and Pilates mentioned.

Just under a quarter of respondents (22%) undertake workouts, such as at the gym, and the same number (22%) consider gardening or housework to be beneficial.

**6.4 What types of physical activity or exercise do you enjoy most and why?**



When asking what is ‘enjoyed the most’, again walking is a clear favourite - at 54%.

On specific benefits, we hear it is a ‘natural’ activity, with access to ‘fresh air, views and nature’. A walk is considered to be therapeutic, as well as offering exercise.

Selected Feedback: Walking

*“Walking is natural, and it’s good exercise.”*

*“I like to get out in the fresh air.”*

*“There’s so much to see and it’s always changing.”*

*“I appreciate the countryside and nature - the views, wildlife, trees and flowers.”*

*“Walking helps me to de-stress.”*

Walking can suit many abilities and paces, and be functional - when dog walking or shopping.

#### Selected Feedback: Walking

*"I'm not fit enough for the gym, but I can walk."*

*"I can go at my own slow pace."*

*"I can challenge myself, I'm motivated to walk for longer."*

*"At the end of a walk - I can go to the shops."*

*"I walk the dogs."*

It's also an opportunity to socialise.

#### Selected Feedback: Walking

*"When walking with groups of people, it's an opportunity to chat and socialise."*

A third of respondents (34%) most enjoy exercise or dance classes. The music, and group format can be enjoyable, even 'exhilarating' according to one person. There is plenty of opportunity to socialise, and even make friends, feedback suggests.

#### Selected Feedback: Exercise or Dance Classes

*"It's exhilarating, motivating and disciplinary. I feel good after."*

*"Dance is more enjoyable."*

*"I love the music in Zumba and the opposite meditative qualities in Tai-Chi."*

*"Social interaction is important. Both Zumba and Tai-Chi are communal."*

*"Group activities are always good for mental health."*

*"You can have a laugh and I've made some friends."*

There are benefits for both physical and cognitive health.

#### Selected Feedback: Exercise or Dance Classes

*"Pilates helps with aches and pains."*

*"Tai-Chi is good for balance."*

*"It keeps me fit, healthy and relaxed."*

*"Line dancing is good for the memory - you have to remember the steps."*

*"Dancing involves teamwork, which I particularly like."*

As classes are scheduled, it is easier to commit.

#### Selected Feedback: Exercise or Dance Classes

*"It's easier to allot the time - when it's a regular class."*

14% of respondents find workouts, such as at the gym, to be most enjoyable. According to one person, workouts are strengthening for the 'whole body' and relaxing.

#### Selected Feedback: Gym/Workout

*"Exercise strengthens the whole body, while relaxing the mind."*

For 13% of respondents, gardening or housework is most enjoyable. As well as giving varied exercise, there can be a sense of achievement.

#### Selected Feedback: Gardening & Housework

*"Gardening involves all muscle groups and keeps the mind active to ensure safe bending, lifting and stretching."*

*"Cleaning helps with my movements."*

*"Gardening makes me feel fit. There's also satisfaction in producing something tangible."*

*"Gardening is something that is often necessary."*

The same number (13%) find swimming to be most enjoyable. Being in water enables those with muscular conditions (such as arthritis) to exercise with minimal friction or pain.

Selected Feedback: Swimming

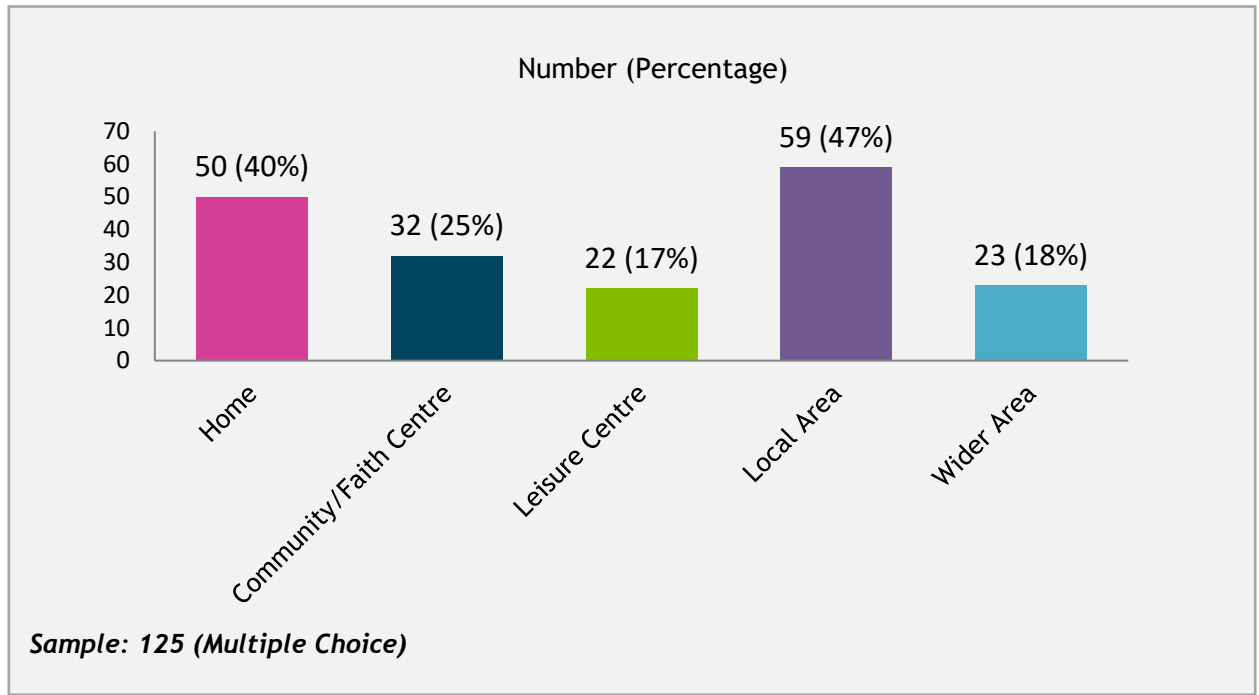
*“Being in the water allows me to move more freely without triggering arthritis, stiffness and pain.”*

Few respondents (4%) mention sports, however there is a certain passion, in comments received.

Selected Feedback: Sports

*“I simply love playing squash!”*

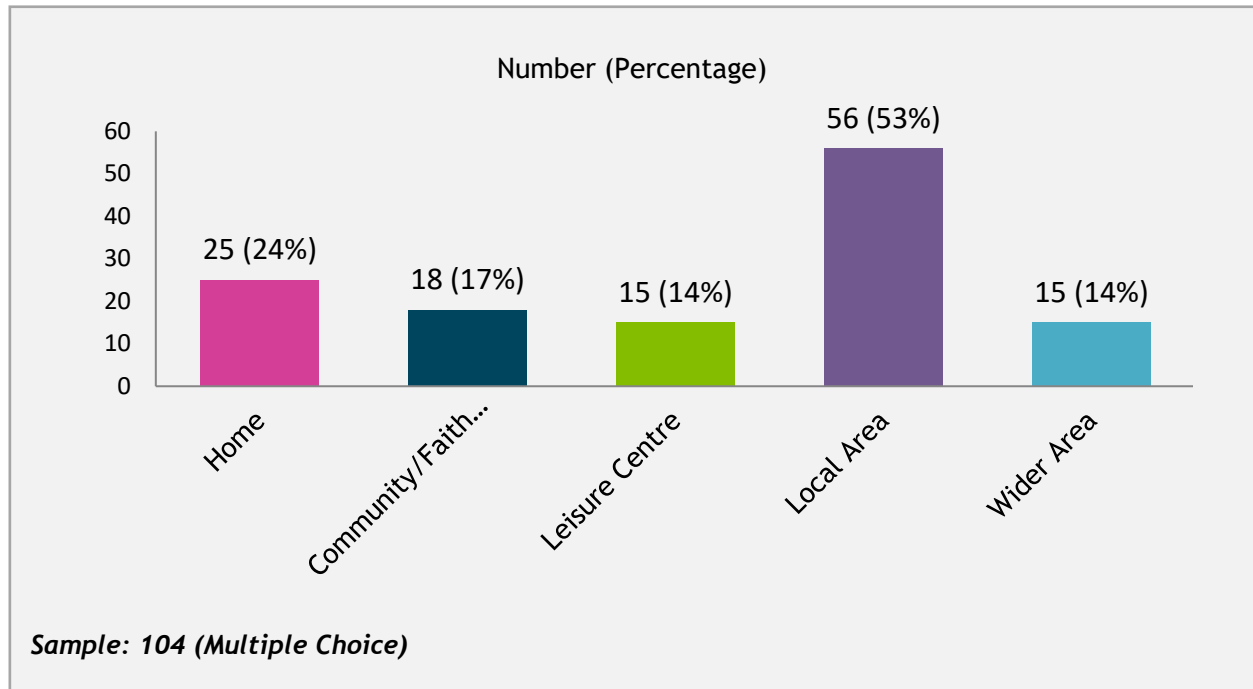
6.5 Where do you usually exercise or do physical activity?



Around half of respondents (47%) undertake exercise or activities in their local area, this could be a visit to the park or shops. 18% travel further afield.

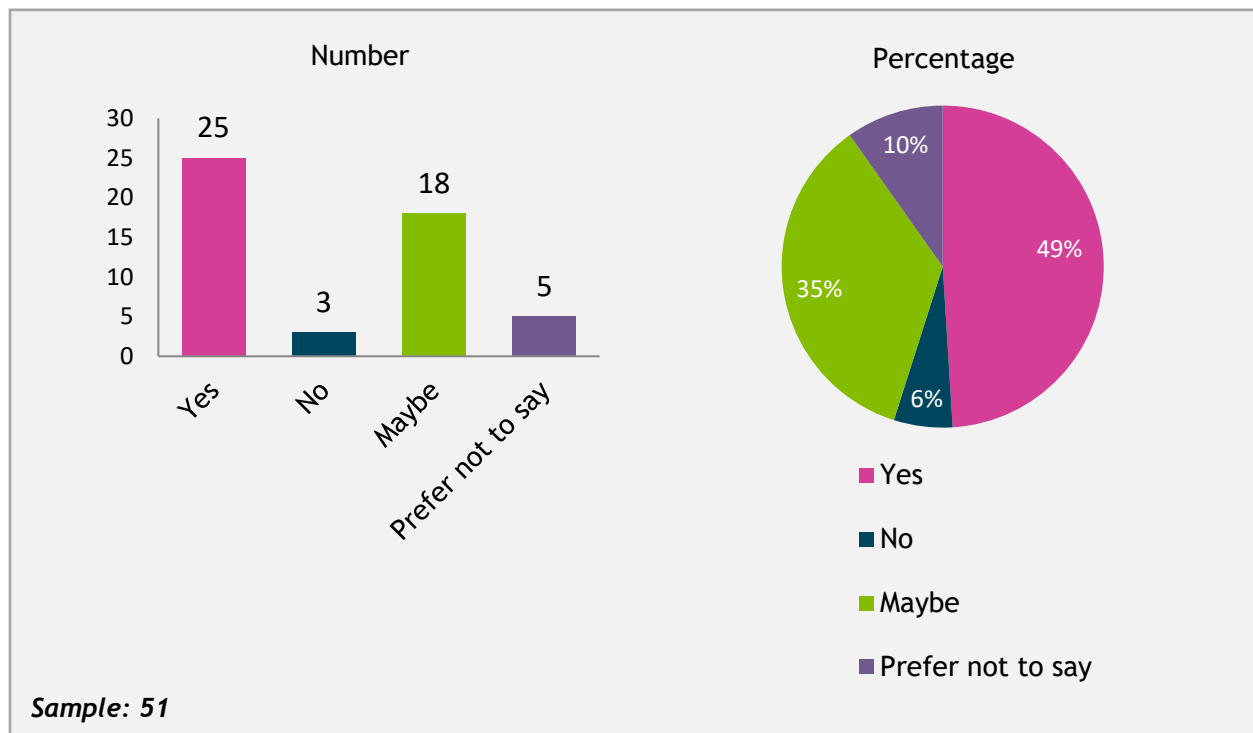
40% remain at home, while a quarter (25%) visit community or faith venues - often for classes, and 17% use their local leisure facilities.

## 6.6 Where would you prefer to do exercise or physical activity?



When asking further about preferences, it is clear that more people would like to get out of the house, and into the local area.

## 6.7 If you don't do any exercise or physical activity at all, would you like to do some?



Of those not currently exercising or undertaking physical activity, half (49%) say they would like to, and an additional 35% might consider it. Just 6% would not.

### 6.7.1 Currently do not exercise, but would like to:

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	67%
Aged 75 - 89	55%
Aged 65 - 74	54%
All Respondents (Baseline)	49%
Aged 90 or over	0%

For those not currently exercising or undertaking physical activity, 67% of 50 - 64 year olds would like to, compared with around 55% of those aged 65 - 89. Nobody aged 90 or over, would like to.

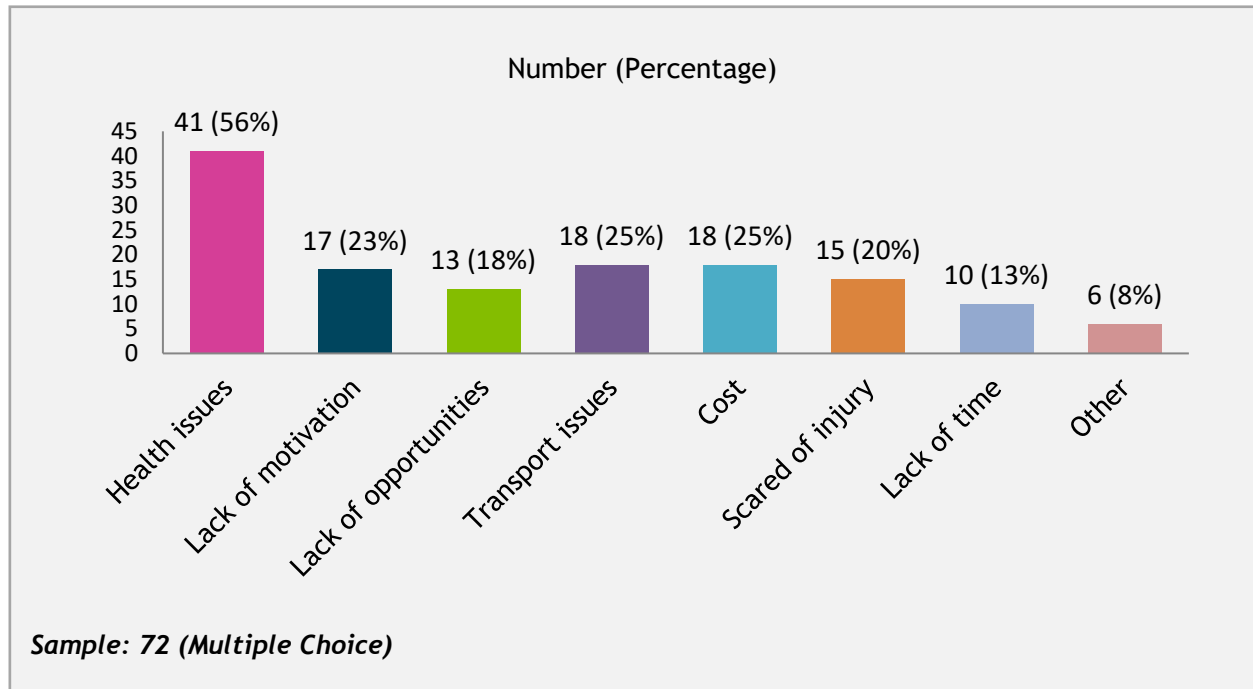
Household - Just you	55%
All Respondents (Baseline)	49%
Household - Living with others	30%

Respondents living alone are much more likely to want to exercise or undertake physical activity, than those living with others (55% compared with 30%).

Fair Health	54%
All Respondents (Baseline)	49%
Poor Health	44%
Good Health	42%

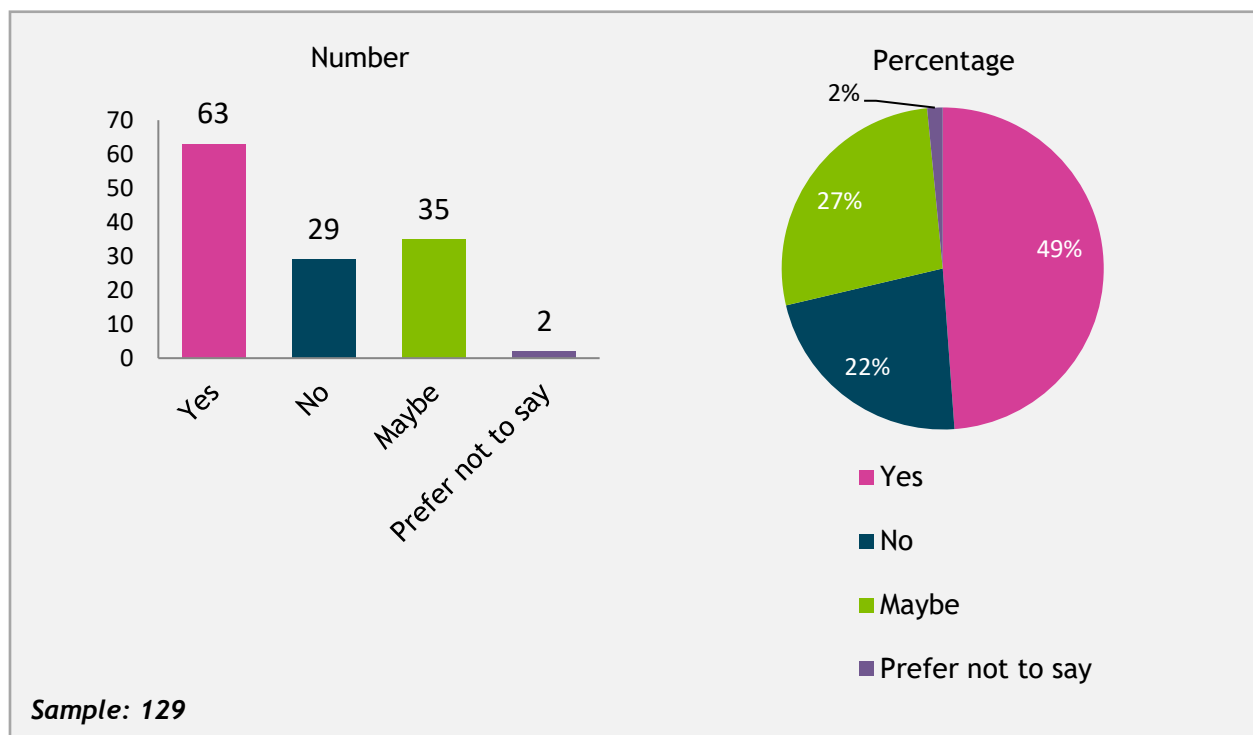
Those in 'fair health', are most keen to undertake exercise or physical activity.

## 6.8 What prevents you from doing any exercise or doing physical activities?



On barriers to exercise and physical activity, the biggest issue, by far is health - with over half of respondents (56%) citing this. Transport and cost are also significant (25%) along with a lack of motivation (23%).

## 6.9 If you do some exercise, would you like to do more physical activity or exercise?





Of those currently exercising, or undertaking physical activity, half (49%) would like to do more, and an additional 27% might consider it. 22% would not.

#### 6.9.1 Currently exercise, and would like to do more:

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	83%
Aged 65 - 74	67%
All Respondents (Baseline)	49%
Aged 75 - 89	38%
Aged 90 or over	25%

For those currently exercising or undertaking physical activity, 83% of 50 - 64 year olds would like to do more, reducing to 67% for those aged 65 - 74. This further reduces with age - with just 38% of those aged 75 - 89 and 25% of those aged 90 or over, wanting to do more.

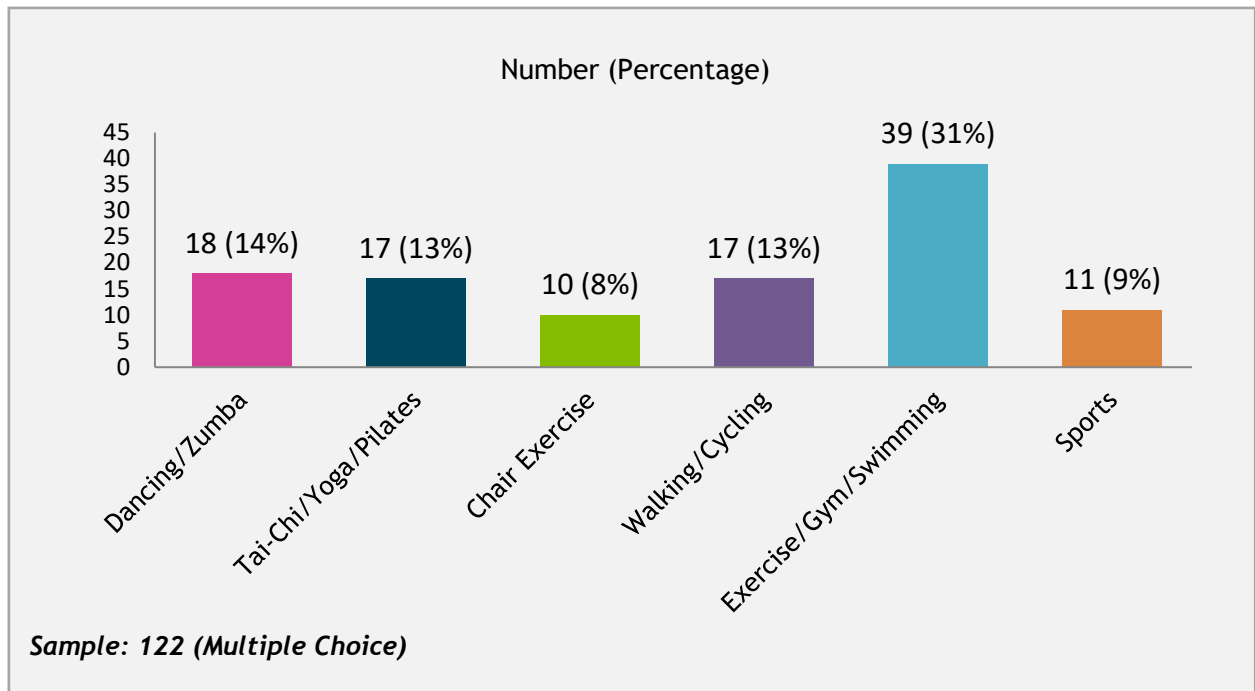
Household - Living with others	59%
All Respondents (Baseline)	49%
Household - Just you	47%

Respondents living alone are notably less likely to want to exercise more, than those living with others (47% compared with 59%).

Fair Health	58%
All Respondents (Baseline)	49%
Good Health	41%
Poor Health	40%

Again, those in 'fair health' are most keen to undertake more exercise or physical activity.

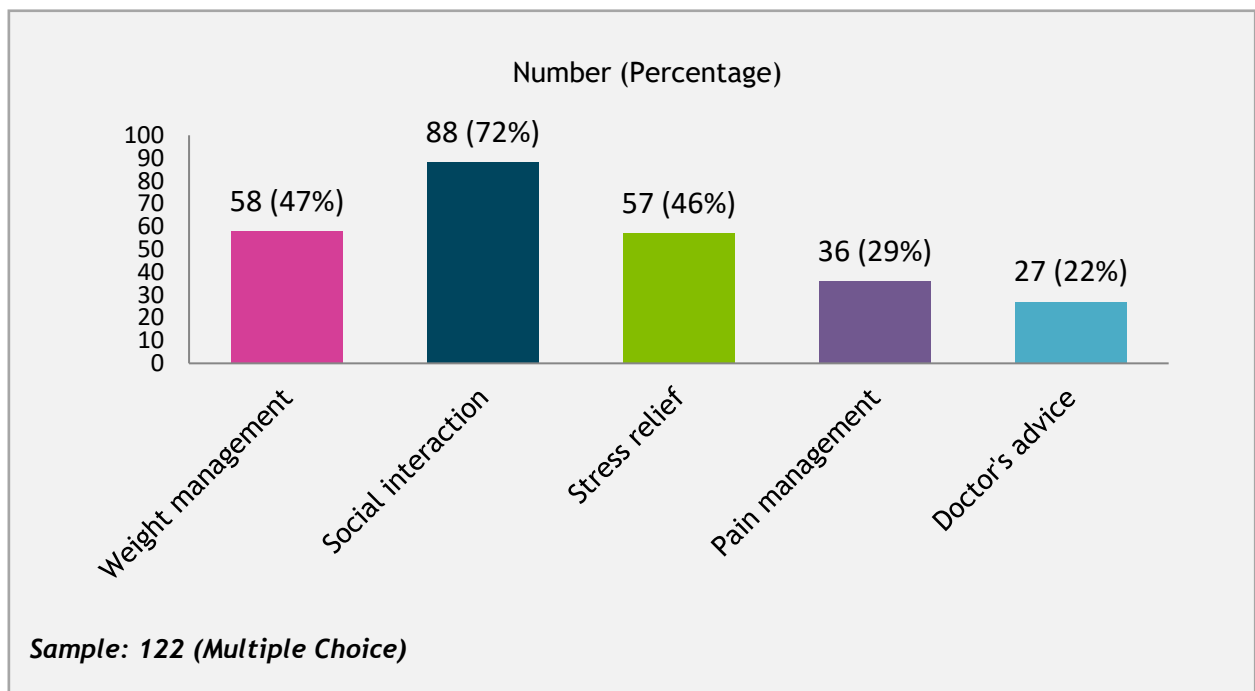
**6.10 If you had the opportunity, what type of exercise or physical activity would you like to do?**



Respondents would like more ‘physically demanding’ activities - such as visits to the gym or swimming pool. This is clearly most popular, at 31%.

Also mentioned is Zumba (14%), Tai Chi, Yoga and Pilates (13%) and walking or cycling (13%). Least popular is chair exercise, at 8%.

**6.11 What motivates you to stay active?**



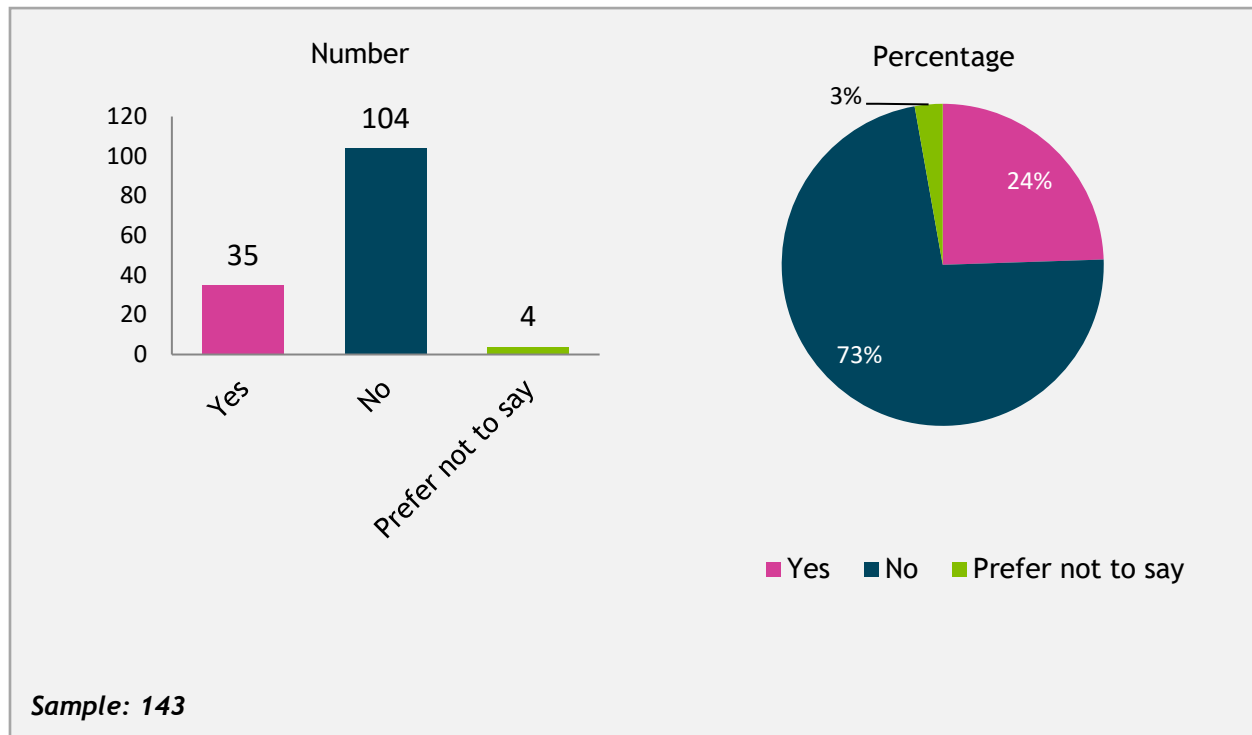
By some margin, social interaction is the greatest motivation to stay active (72%).

When grouping the feedback (in the image below), we can see that socialising enables a healthier, more enjoyable lifestyle.



Other motivators to stay active are weight management (47%), stress relief (46%), pain management (29%) and medical advice (22%).

## 6.12 Have you had a fall in the last year?



A quarter of respondents (24%) have had a fall within the last year.

### 6.12.1 Have had a fall, in the last year:

	% Yes
Aged 90 or over	56%
Aged 75 - 89	27%
All Respondents (Baseline)	24%
Aged 65 - 74	20%
Aged 50 - 64	7%

Responses suggest that the older you are, the more likely you are, to experience a fall.

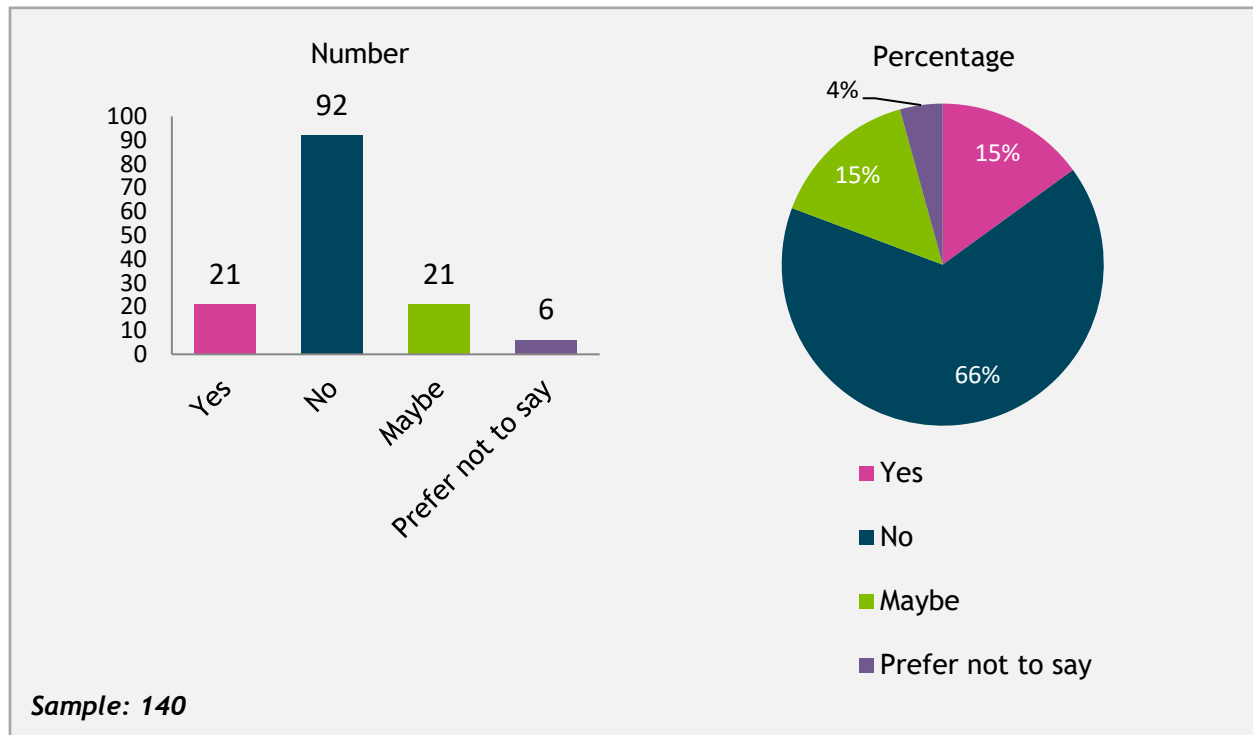
Household - Just you	26%
All Respondents (Baseline)	24%
Household - Living with others	23%

There is a marginal difference between those living alone (26%) and with others (23%).

Poor Health	75%
All Respondents (Baseline)	24%
Fair Health	20%
Good Health	18%

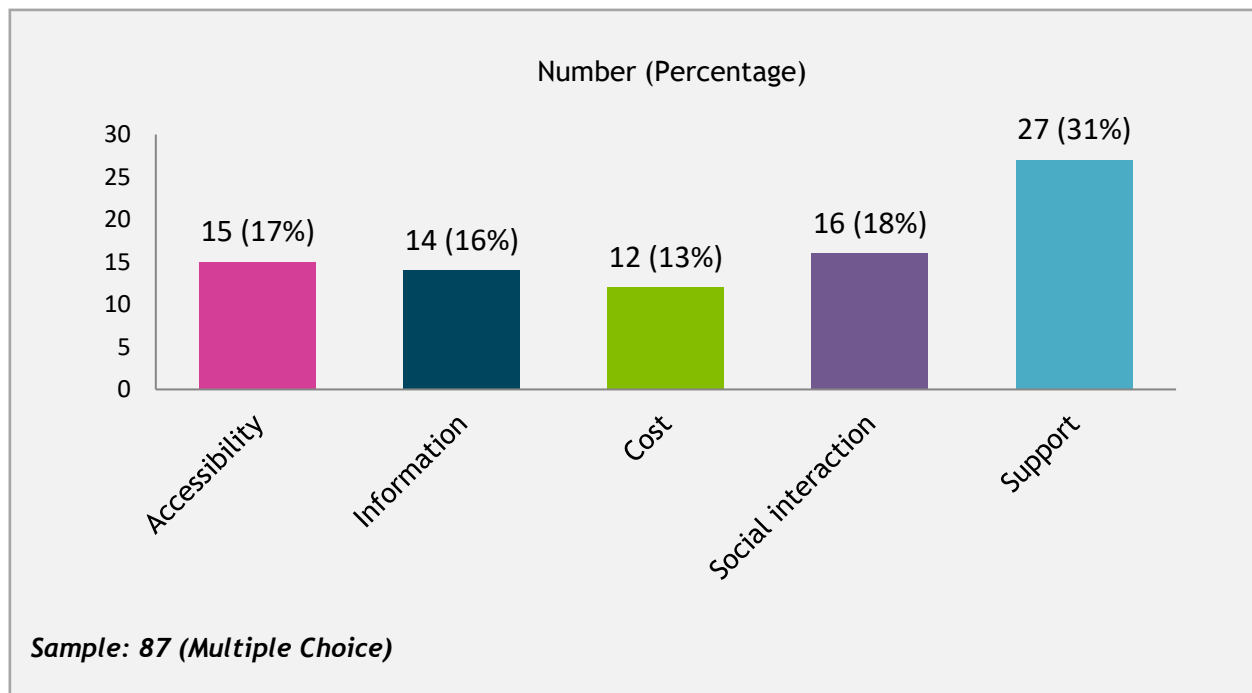
Respondents in poor health are much more likely to experience a fall.

### 6.13 Would you be interested in having a falls assessment?



15% of respondents would be interested in having a falls assessment.

**6.14 Do you have any suggestions on how we can encourage older people to exercise more?**



Respondents consider personal support (31%) to be most important, in encouraging older people to exercise more.

**Selected Suggestions: Support**

- Discussions on personal strengths, referrals if possible to help identify needs.
- Make exercises classes more fun and in short bursts.
- Make it more available and address their specific needs.
- Carrot & stick - if you walk here or do this, you get that!
- Older people have to have a routine and push themselves to go out.
- Having someone to go with.
- My mother does exercise with me every day.
- It is hard to get on your feet, but music can help.
- Smaller classes where the instructor can correct and support each individual.
- More walking groups at varied levels.
- Stress the responsibility they have to look after themselves.
- Emphasise the health benefits - especially getting out into the fresh air (when no heatwaves are imminent).
- Taster sessions so we could try out different activities.
- Take them to see what goes on.
- Ask them what they want to do.
- Advertising the benefits of exercise.
- Singing too helps people who suffer from depression or dementia.
- More activities aimed at older people such as chair exercises.
- Playing 50s music appeals to the people who attend.
- More chair-based exercise - more encouragement.

Social interaction receives 18% of suggestions.

#### Selected Suggestions: Social Interaction

- Reach out - social isolation is not good.
- Arrange a group session with a tea or coffee at the end, to encourage socialising.
- Go swimming with friends.
- Walk and talk.
- Encouragement to get out and socialise.
- Also make new friends.
- More social activities.
- Encourage them to go out. Tell them to get involved in group exercises, meet new people.
- Join a dance class locally.

17% of suggestions are about accessibility.

#### Selected Suggestions: Accessibility

- Local places and easily accessible.
- Take exercise to them, and obviously make it enjoyable. This could be done by using a bus to collect up a small number of people from a particular area.
- Visits to care homes.
- More visits to elderly accommodation by Age UK.
- If you had a bus to take you swimming and the pool was easy to get in to.
- Good public transport to the classes.
- Toilets available.
- Vary times of activities on offer.

16% are about information and communication.

#### Selected Suggestions: Information

- Advertise public walks on social media.
- Arrange for speakers to attend Senior Citizens Clubs.
- Ensure older people get to know what is available and where to go.
- Publicity other than online! Redbridge Life Newspaper for instance with more details for all ages and of course wider distribution.
- Sending out newsletters, giving them examples or exercises they could do and have maybe suggestions about where they could do their exercises in group settings.
- Ongoing communications.
- More local classes that are advertised well.
- Some exercises like slow tennis or slow football are never advertised.

Cost (13%) is also mentioned.

#### **Selected Suggestions: Cost**

- Maybe for over 65s give them free access for exercise classes and free tennis, badminton, squash and gym sessions. Please remember the more healthy they are the less visits to hospitals and doctors, less medical costs, it will save the government money.
- By making it cheap and cheerful.
- Free swimming sessions scheduled after the time that they can get there with a free bus pass.
- Set up free exercise classes and walking groups in different areas.
- Extra income for equipment and free passes for sport centres.
- Free parking.
- Discount for pensioners.
- Schemes like 'Better Gym' which offer deals.
- Have free exercise classes on prescription from GPs, not just after a stroke.

#### ***6.15 What could Redbridge Council do to help you to stay active and connected with others?***

Finally, we asked what Redbridge Council could do, to help people stay active, and connected with others.

We detect themes on accessibility, information, cost, support and social interaction.

#### **Selected Suggestions: For Redbridge Council**

##### **Accessibility**

- Better bus service. Reduce the obscene amount of traffic on the roads to make journeying normal and far less polluted.
- See that gym equipment is suitable, and not just designed for fitter people.
- Have better accessible venues.
- Have a better bus route.
- Make the area safer. Sometimes I do not feel safe when walking or waiting for a bus especially at night.
- Send a minibus to collect people who can't get to places easily.
- Offer transport to and from swimming pools.
- Do more activities in the libraries.
- Have activities local and at reasonable times.
- Open up more activity places, so people can have access without travelling too far.
- Help with more physical activity in Redbridge Library, being central for seniors to attend.
- More events in the Woodford area. Everything seems to revolve around Ilford. We are the forgotten side of the borough.



- Maintain the pavements so they are as even as the roads and safe to walk on without watching our feet.

### **Information**

- Advertise in Redbridge Life/Recorder.
- Provide leaflets with information on what is on offer in the borough for older residents. Distribute the leaflets to libraries, pensioners forums, coffee and lunchtime clubs.
- Contact and inform where activities are held.
- Specific WhatsApp group advertising events and social meetings.
- More information and posters.
- Publish more events in local libraries.

### **Cost**

- Over 60s or 65s free access to gyms.
- Free courses and taster days.
- Free Pilates for seniors.
- Make it easier to pay for classes and advertise them.
- Cost will be a main factor.
- Free swims for seniors in central Ilford.
- Reduce their prices (make it a small, nominal payment).

### **Support**

- Provide more instructors at more locations.
- Have taster classes as a beginning for those nervous of exercise, maybe due to an injury or an operation.
- Daily Tai-Chi in Valentines Park.
- Possible home help for physiotherapy.
- Swimming therapy pool.
- Fix Fulwell Cross Leisure Centre quickly.

### **Social Interaction**

- Have more social events at weekends.
- Employ community leaders or support volunteers to lead activity.
- Have more group meetings and organise outings.
- Provide some group exercises.
- Progressive community activities to lift the community spirit.

## 7. Glossary of Terms

There are no acronyms in this report.

## 8. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public, and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

Age UK Redbridge, Barking and Havering, 103 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, IG1 4PU.

Phone: 020 8220 6000

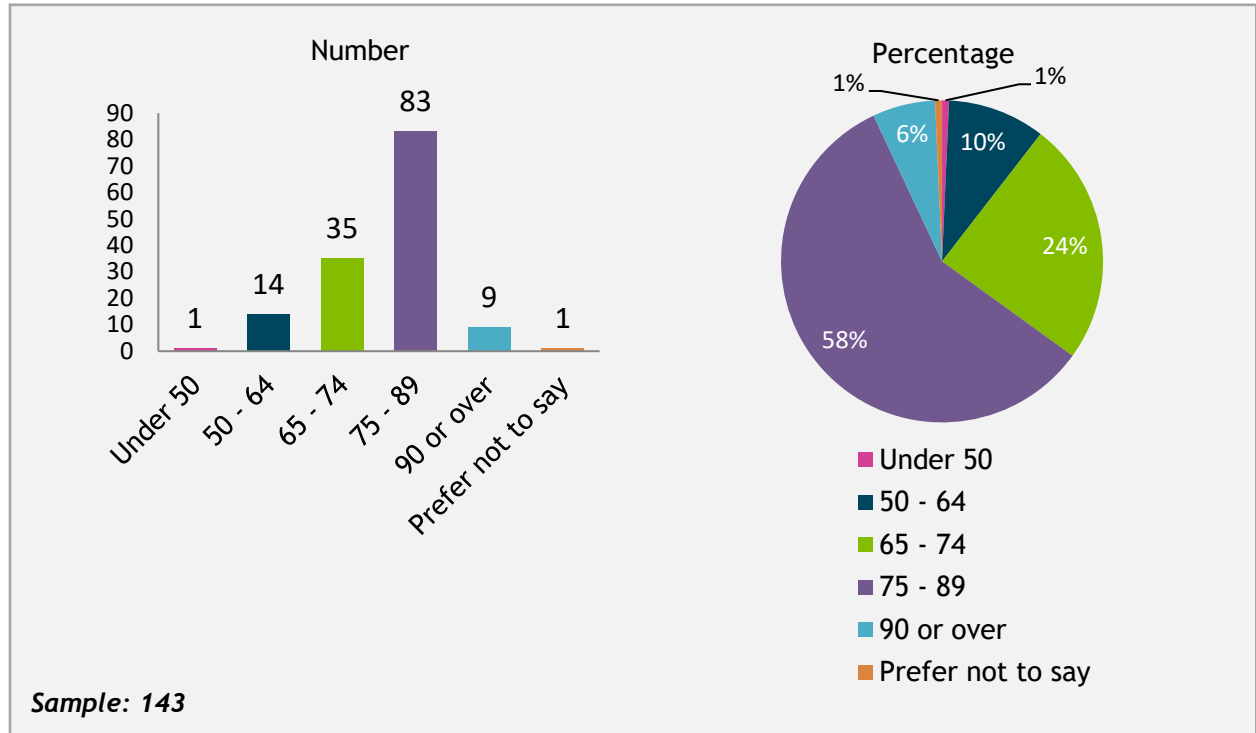
Email: [admin@ageukrbh.org.uk](mailto:admin@ageukrbh.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number: 1088435

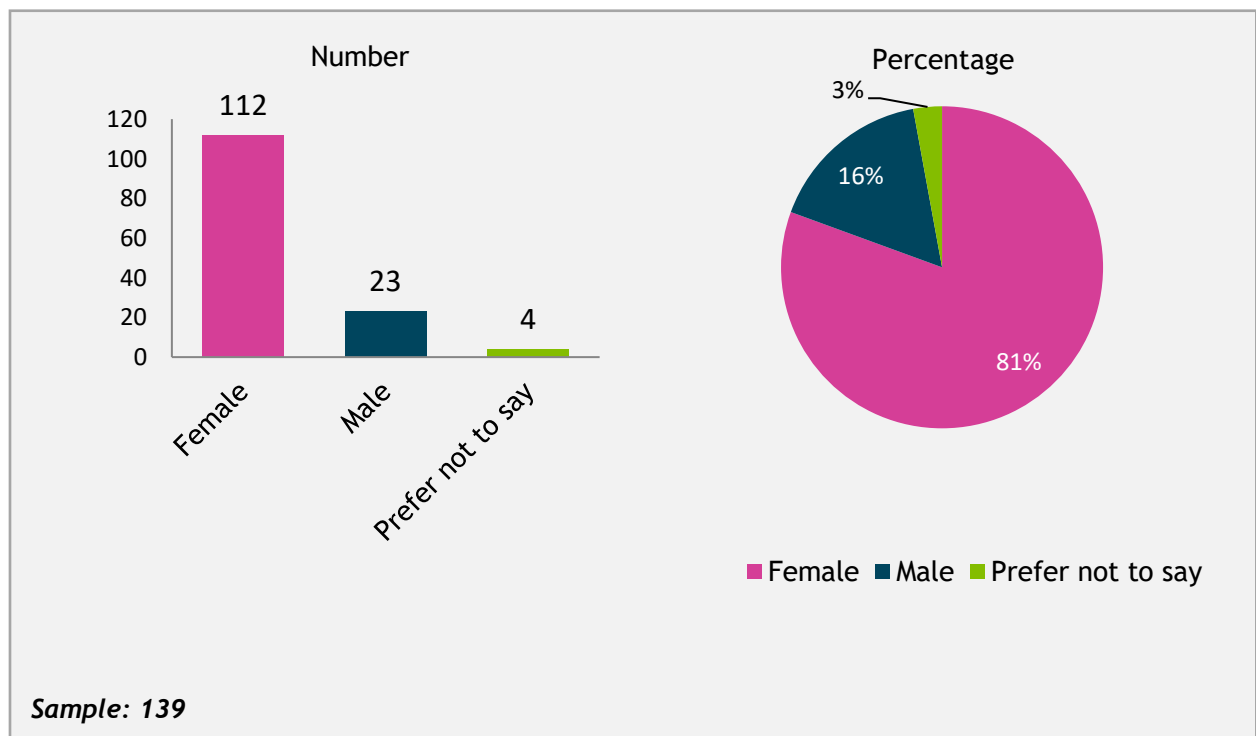
## Appendix - Demographics

The demographics of participants are stated as follows:

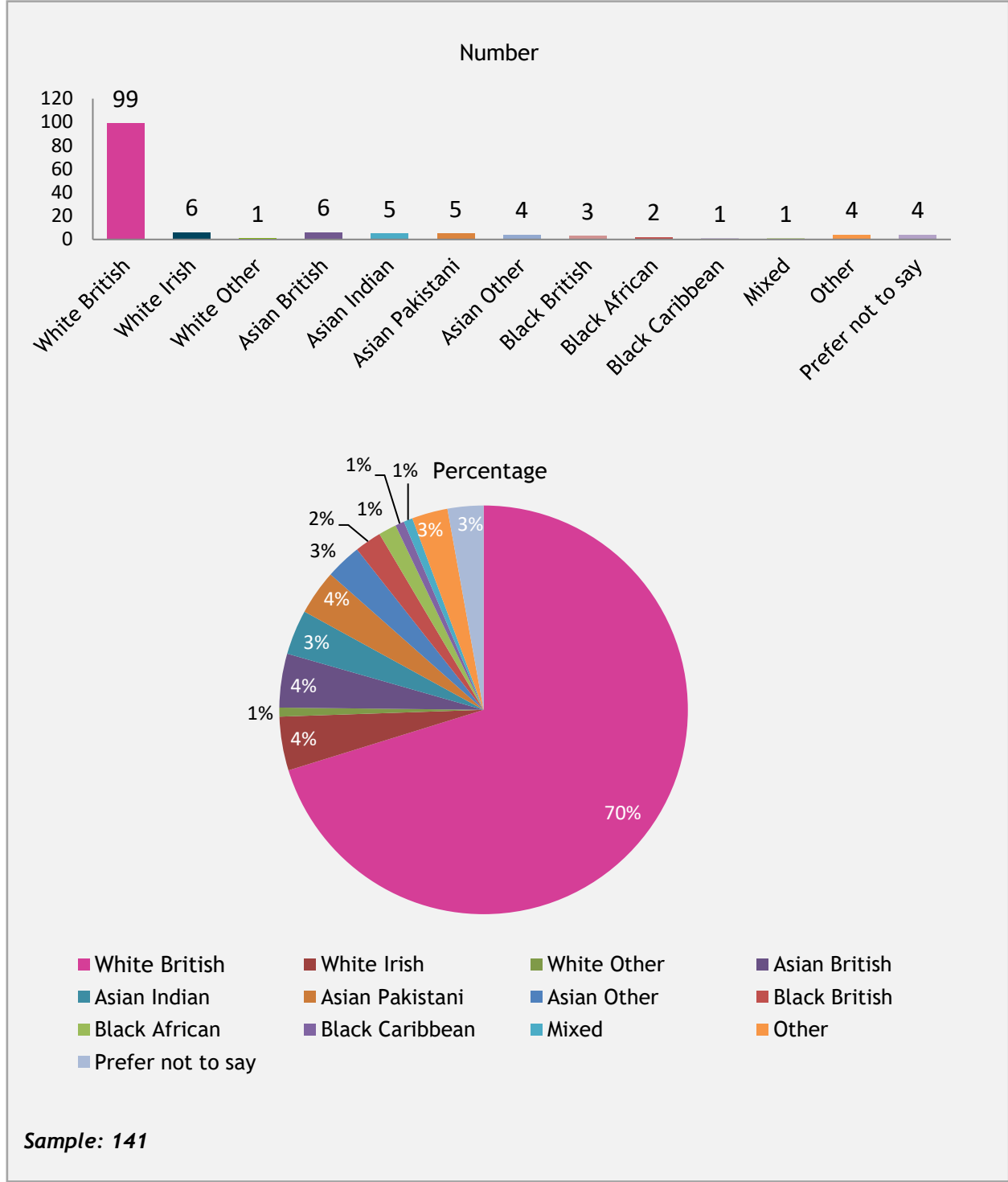
### Age



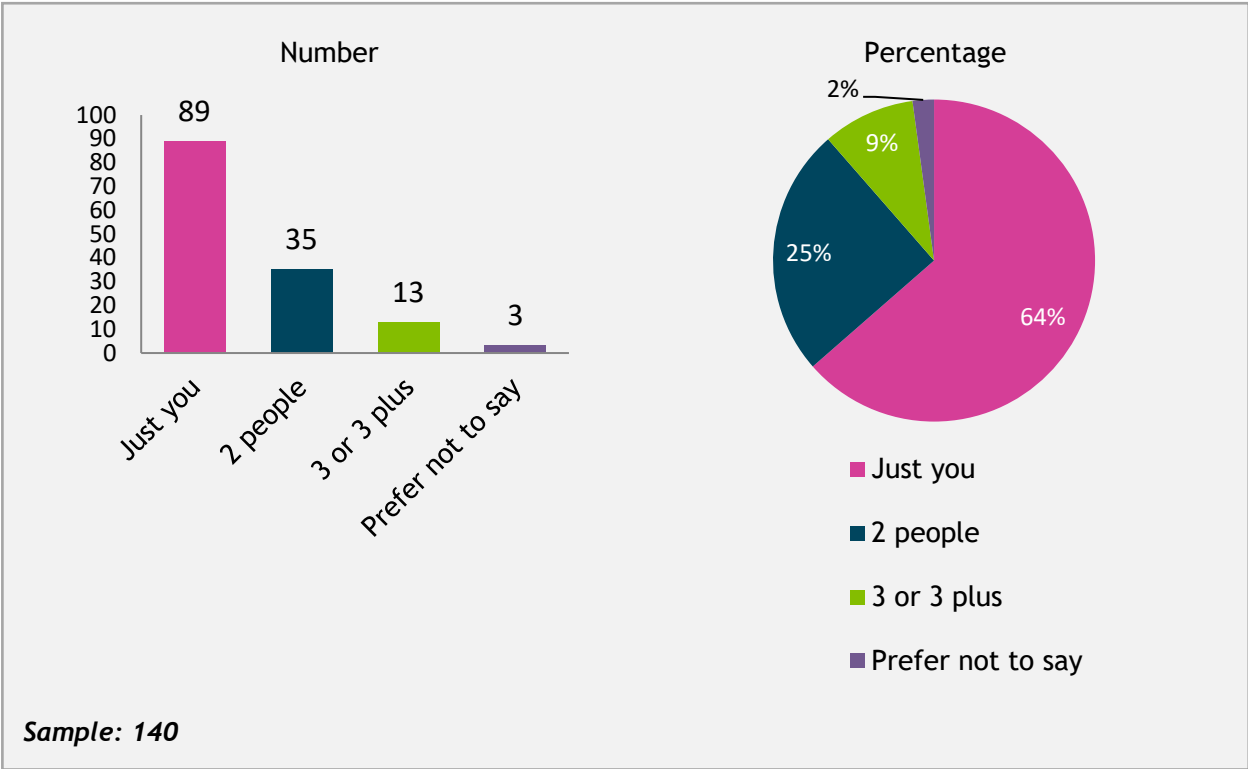
### Gender



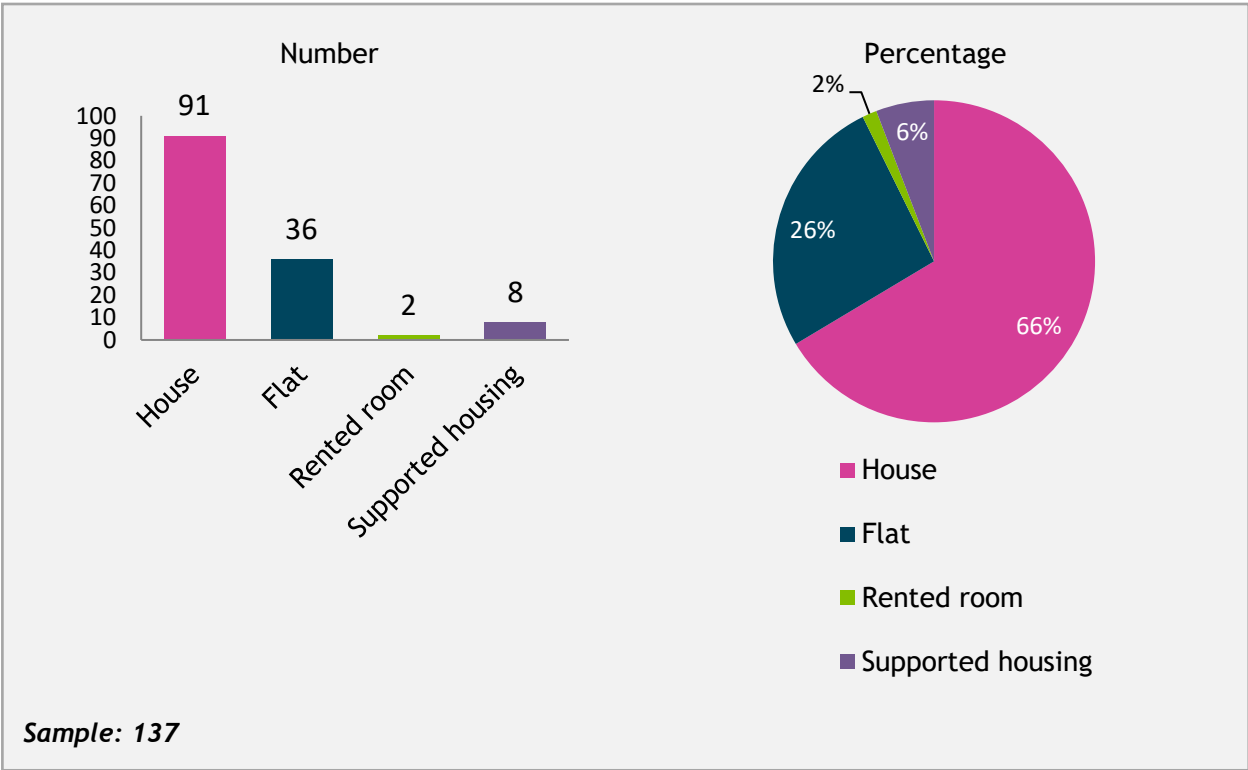
Ethnicity



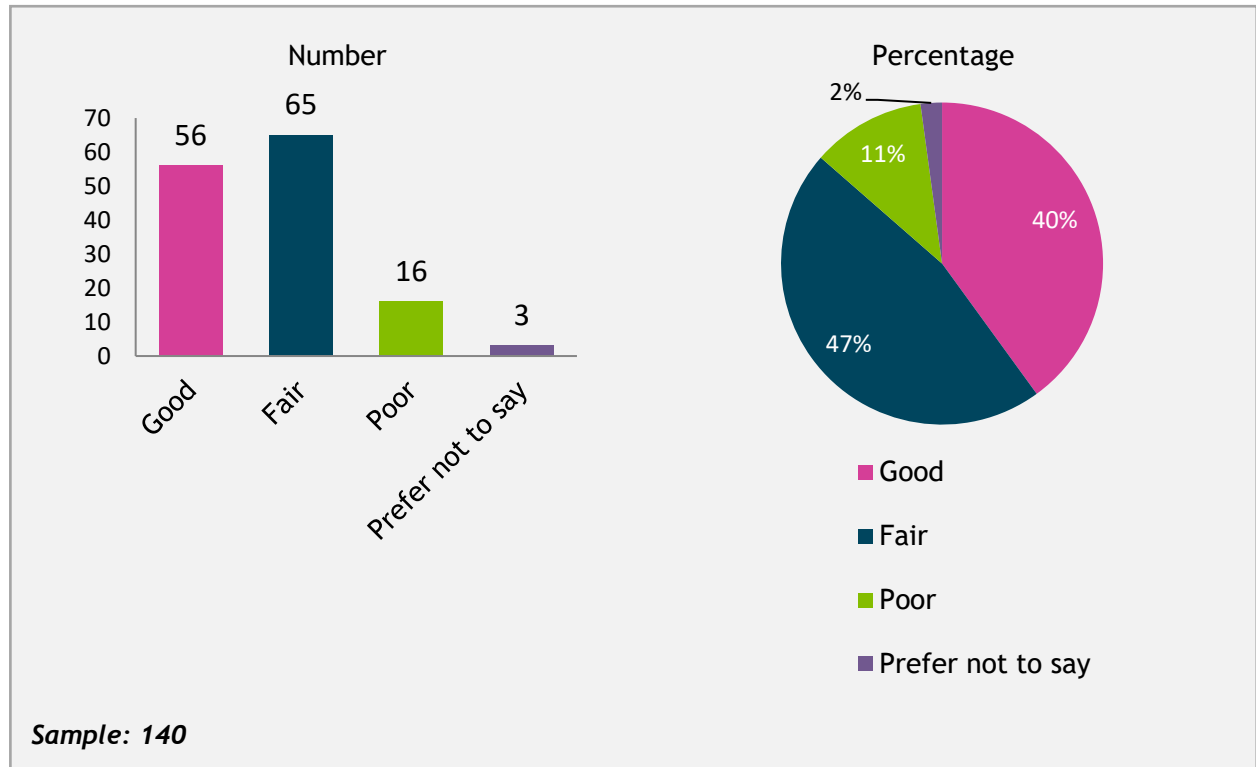
Household



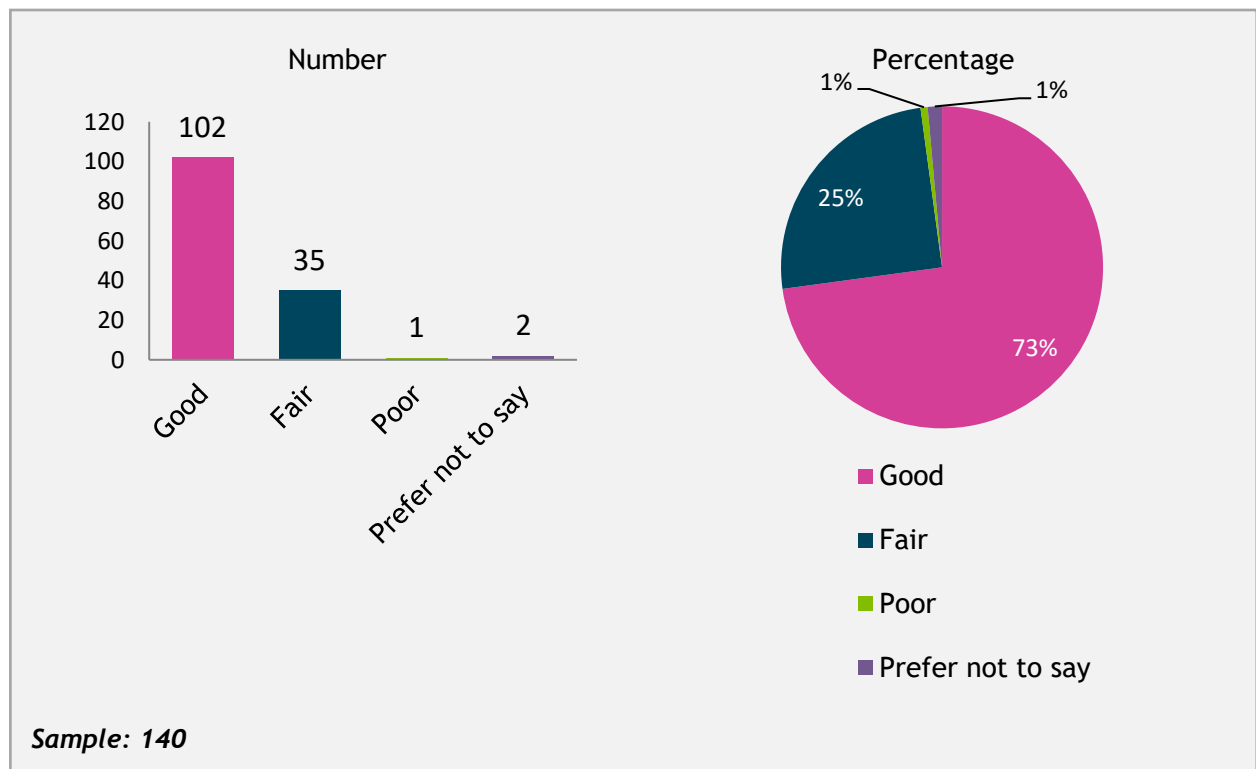
Accommodation



## Physical Health



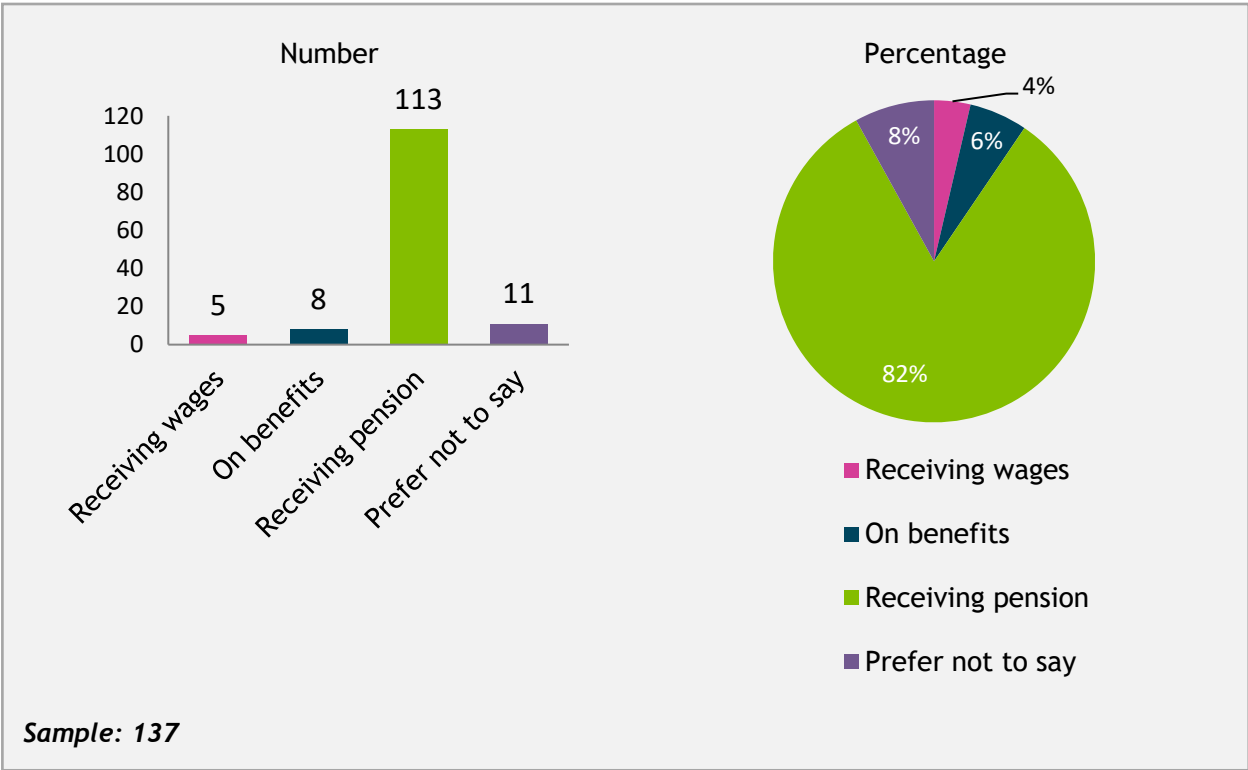
## Mental Health



Employment Status



Income



“Have more events in the Woodford area. Everything seems to revolve around Ilford.

We are the forgotten side of the borough.”

Local Older Person