

# Creating More Accessible Green & Blue Spaces

Understanding the experiences of people with visual impairments that visit green and blue spaces

October 2023

Natural England Joint Publication JP050

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## Foreword

Natural England commission a range of reports from external contractors to provide evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England.

This report was commissioned by Natural England to build knowledge and understanding of experiences that people who have visual impairments encounter when visiting green and blue spaces. The findings from the report will help inform future initiatives and improve equitable engagement, recreation, and access to natural spaces. The final report presents the results from the survey and focus groups and gives insight into how people use green and blue spaces, what it means to access these spaces, and the challenges and barriers to access. The report also outlines improvements that can be made and provides a set of recommendations that would enhance the accessibility of green and blue spaces for visitors with visual impairments and for people with various forms of disabilities more generally.

## Executive summary

This research report, based on findings from focus groups and a large scale survey, examines the barriers that people with visual impairments face when attempting to access and enjoy green and blue space (GBS). Despite the numerous benefits that GBS can offer, including improvements to mental health, physical wellbeing, and social relations, many individuals with visual impairments feel uncertain about visiting such spaces.

Five key headlines emerge from the research:

1. The lack of accessible information about GBS and the difficulty of anticipating weather and crowds can make planning a visit challenging. Where individuals with visual impairments depend on others to accompany them, this raises additional barriers such as cost or finding someone to accompany them on a walk.
2. The absence of accessible public transportation as well as convenient parking or drop-off facilities and the availability of step-free or wheelchair-accessible routes were identified as significant barriers.
3. Respondents reported struggling with locating entrances and exits, using gates and turnstiles, and understanding signage, while uneven terrain, potholes, overhanging trees, bushes, and other obstacles were also challenging. Bench seating, cafes or pubs, toilets, picnic areas, and bins were identified as important facilities, but often difficult to access.
4. Accessing maps was frequently mentioned as a challenge, with many respondents noting that they rely on Google Maps or similar apps but issues arise due to poor signal/internet connections.
5. Fear of getting lost or becoming a victim of crime, falling, or encountering negative attitudes from others were important concerns for those visiting GBS.

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations would enhance the accessibility of GBS for visitors with visual impairments but also for visitors with disabilities more generally:

- Provide accessible information in various formats, such as audio, large print, and/or braille, tactile mapping and colour schemes.

- Improve transportation options, such as providing accessible public transport and parking or drop-off points.
- Enhance physical access by ensuring uneven terrain, potholes, overhanging trees, bushes and other barriers are addressed.
- Increase availability of facilities, such as benches, toilets, cafes or pubs, picnic areas, and bins including dog bins.
- Address safety concerns, such as getting lost, falling or becoming a victim of crime or negative attitudes from others by improving signage, lighting and staff presence.
- Offer organised activities, such as walks or tours, and walking groups to provide social interaction and help overcome challenges of visiting GBS alone.

The report concludes that equitably improving accessibility to GBS for individuals with visual impairments requires a multifaceted approach that includes better information, transport options, facilities, and physical access. Organised activities, such as walks and tours, and walking groups were identified as important ways to facilitate access.

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## Introduction

Access, engagement, and connection with nature are well understood to be important determinants of physical and mental wellbeing, yet some groups face significant barriers in accessing natural spaces (Public Health England, 2020). While there is ongoing research to support access for minority groups, a key subgroup Natural England have not systematically supported are people who have visual impairments.

UK wide, currently 79% of people who have a visual impairment are over 65 and by 2050 one in five people will start to live with sight loss in their lifetime. Across England, every day there are 57 new registrations with local authorities by people who are blind or partially sighted, and 1 in 3 of those people registered also have an additional disability (NHS Digital, 2021). Oxfordshire is home to 21,900 people living with a visual impairment (mild to severe sight loss) of which 2,360 individuals are registered blind or partially sighted. It is anticipated by 2030 those living with sight loss will increase by 32% largely due to an ageing population (Royal National Institute of Blind People, 2023).

The Care Act 2014 (UK Public General Act, 2014) requires local authorities (or commissioned agencies) to put in place structured support to maximise independence and quality of life for people with visual impairments. Additionally, the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies and organisations performing public functions to have due regard to actively work towards eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities, and fostering positive relations among individuals with protected characteristics, such as individuals with visual impairments. This includes actions such as reducing disadvantages faced by people with protected characteristics, meeting their specific needs, and encouraging their participation in various aspects of public life or activities where their involvement might be limited (Government Equalities Office, 2013).

This research explores steps that can be taken at a county level to improve green and blue space access for individuals who have visual impairments.

The outputs from this project will be relevant for local work in counties and can help to inform policies across England on how to reduce inequalities in access and use of greenspaces among people with visual impairment.

## Background

The Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC) is a national UK charity and research agency which specialises in user-centred research involving disabled and older consumers. In February 2023, RiDC was commissioned by Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council to conduct research on the accessibility of green and blue space (GBS) for people with visual impairments. We are using 'green spaces' as a broad term to refer to spaces that also include blue spaces in urban and rural areas such as parks, allotments, forests, lakes, rivers, canals, mountains, beaches, nature reserves, and the countryside.

### Research objectives

The overall aim of the research is to understand the needs and preferences for GBS access for individuals with visual impairments.

The three research objectives are:

1. To understand current use of GBS and extent to which access opportunities (including the physical and social infrastructure supporting engagement in nature-based activities) meet the needs and preferences of people with visual impairment.
2. To gain insights into the local barriers and enablers that influence access to, engagement with and connection with GBS for people with visual impairments (including navigation and use of technology).
3. To generate information that can be used to equitably and sustainably increase GBS access and nature engagement based on the needs and preferences of people with visual impairments.

## Methods

This research took a mixed methods approach to gather insight into the experiences, barriers, and expectations of people with visual impairments when visiting GBS. A survey of both open and closed questions was completed by 756 people with disabilities. The survey helped inform two online focus groups which involved 13 people chosen from the survey responses.

### Survey

Researchers at RiDC, together with Oxfordshire County Council, Natural England and the University of Oxford, designed a survey to gather information on people's experience of using GBS. The team consulted various literature to identify potential questions and met with representatives from the Reading Association for the Blind's walking group, Fight for Sight/Vision Foundation, Guide Dogs and MyVision Oxfordshire, to gain an understanding of people's experiences of using GBS to inform the design of the survey. The survey defined 'green spaces' as a broad term to refer to spaces that also included blue spaces, e.g., parks, allotments, forests, nature reserves, beaches, lakes, rivers. The survey had 42 questions and was comprised of the following five sections:

1. Types of GBS and visit frequency
2. Assistance
3. Challenges when visiting GBS
4. Concerns when visiting GBS
5. Navigating GBS with technology, sound, smell and touch

The survey was open between Tuesday 7 March – Tuesday 21 March 2023. We anticipate that fewer people would have used GBS in colder weather during these weeks, which may have impacted the results to some questions.

### Recruitment

The survey was sent to RiDC panel members who have a visual impairment, and it was circulated to the public via an anonymous link. The survey was designed to be accessible for people with a visual impairment. People could

take part either online or by phone. The survey was passed to the partner organisations to circulate to their networks.

### Who took part?

756 people gave their consent to take part in the survey. Out of those who gave consent, 209 were from the RiDC panel and 547 were from the public using the anonymous survey link. Tables 1-3 highlight the age, gender and impairment(s) of the respondents to the survey.

**Table 1: Age range of survey respondents**

Age	Percentage of survey respondents
Under 18	1%
18-39	35%
40-59	19%
60-79	18%
80+	3%
Prefer not to say	24%

**Table 2: Gender of survey respondents**

Gender	Percentage of survey respondents
Male	37%
Female	51%

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percentage of survey respondents</b>
<b>Non-binary</b>	7%
<b>Other</b>	1%
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	4%

**Table 3: Impairment of survey respondents**

<b>Impairment</b>	<b>Percentage of survey respondents</b>
<b>Sight</b>	77%
<b>Hearing</b>	26%
<b>Cognitive</b>	41%
<b>Mobility</b>	33%
<b>Invisible</b>	10%
<b>Getting older</b>	9%
<b>Other</b>	25%

## Focus groups

After the survey closed, two focus groups of 90 minutes each explored the findings from the survey in more detail. The focus group was comprised of the following three sections:

1. Barriers to visiting GBS in general
2. Challenges when exploring/using GBS
3. Use of assistance aids and safety concerns

## Recruitment

At the end of the survey, the RiDC panel members who took part were asked if they would like to take part in a follow up focus group. RiDC invited 14 people to two online focus groups. During recruitment there was a focus on ensuring an inclusive sample was selected according to gender, age, ethnicity, type of visual impairment, and assistance aids used. This means that compromises were made concerning geographic representation. Many of the participants in the focus group had disabilities in addition to a visual impairment.

## Who took part?

A total of six people took part in the first focus group, and seven took part in the second focus group. Tables 4-7 show a breakdown of age, gender, visual impairment and assistance aids used by the focus group participants.

**Table 4: Age range of focus group participants**

Age	Count focus group 1	Count focus group 2	Total
Under 18	0	1	1
18-39	1	2	3
40-59	5	1	6
60-79	1	3	4

Age	Count focus group 1	Count focus group 2	Total
80+	0	0	0

**Table 5: Gender of focus group participants**

Gender	Count focus group 1	Count focus group 2	Total
Male	4	3	7
Female	2	4	6

**Table 6: Sight impairment of focus group participants**

Sight impairment	Count focus group 1	Count focus group 2	Total
Blind	2	3	5
Partially sighted	3	3	6
Sight getting worse	1	1	2

**Table 7: Assistance aids used by focus group participants**

Assistance aids	Count focus group 1	Count focus group 2	Total
Guide or assistance dog	3	1	4

<b>Assistance aids</b>	<b>Count focus group 1</b>	<b>Count focus group 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Cane</b>	2	6	8
<b>Mobile phone apps</b>	2	2	4
<b>Powered wheelchair</b>	3	1	4
<b>Mobility scooter</b>	1	0	1
<b>Walking stick / crutches</b>	1	1	2

## Findings

The following section reports on the survey responses and uses insights from the focus groups to further clarify points of interest. The findings are presented as a series of understandings gathered from the data about GBS:

1. How people with visual impairments use GBS.
2. What it means to people with visual impairments to access GBS.
3. What the challenges are for people with visual impairments in accessing GBS.
4. What improvements can be made to help people with visual impairments access GBS.

For clarity we have combined the assistive aids people use into three overarching categories as seen in Table 8. A more detailed look within these categories is provided in the Appendices with differences within reported on, as and where necessary.



**Table 8: Assistive aids categories**

<b>Assistive aid category</b>	<b>Includes</b>
<b>Sticks</b>	Cane, Walking stick, Crutches
<b>Wheels <sup>1</sup></b>	Manual wheelchair, Powered wheelchair, Mobility scooter, Offroad wheelchair or mobility scooter, Rollator
<b>Dogs</b>	Guide or assistance dogs

## **Understanding how people with visual impairments use GBS**

### **Using assistive aids in GBS**

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the distribution of the particular assistive aids used by the respondents to the survey when visiting GBS and is provided as an insight into the more detailed data available for analysis. As previously stated, in this report we have primarily used the three overarching assistive aids categories of sticks, wheels, and dogs, for ease of reading.

We asked respondents if they use assistance aids when visiting GBS. 13% of people with a visual impairment use a cane and 23% use a guide or assistance dog. Some respondents have multiple impairments, including mobility impairments and use a manual wheelchair (23%), powered wheelchair (27%), mobility scooter (25%), off-road wheelchair or mobility scooter (13%), a walking frame / trolley / rollator (10%), or a walking stick / crutch (23%). 19% of respondents said they use mobile phone apps as an

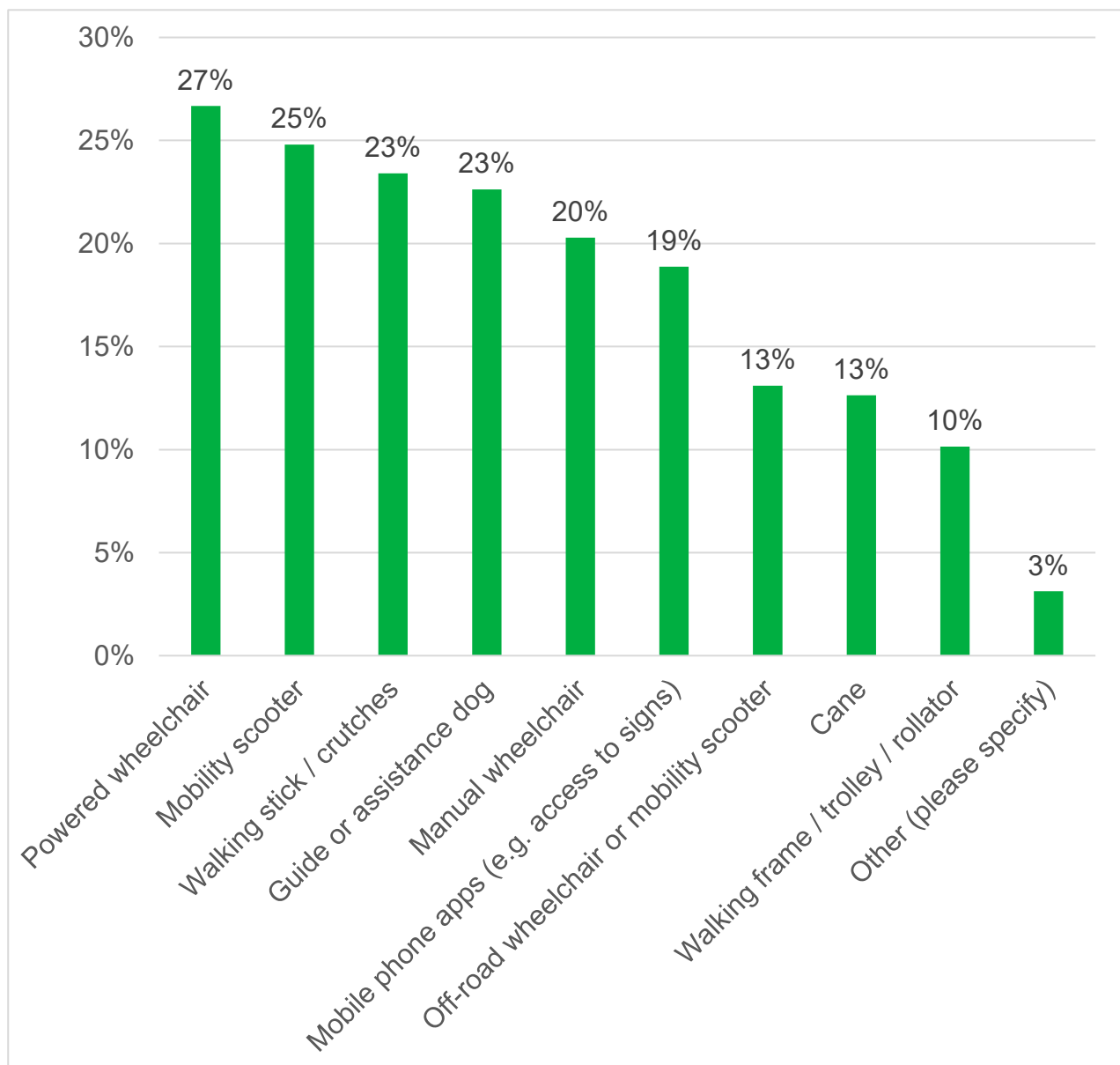
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<sup>1</sup> The Wheels category includes any assistive aid where wheels are the point of contact across the ground.

assistance aid. Those who selected 'Other' noted that they visit GBS with a sighted guide or use Google maps to aid navigation.

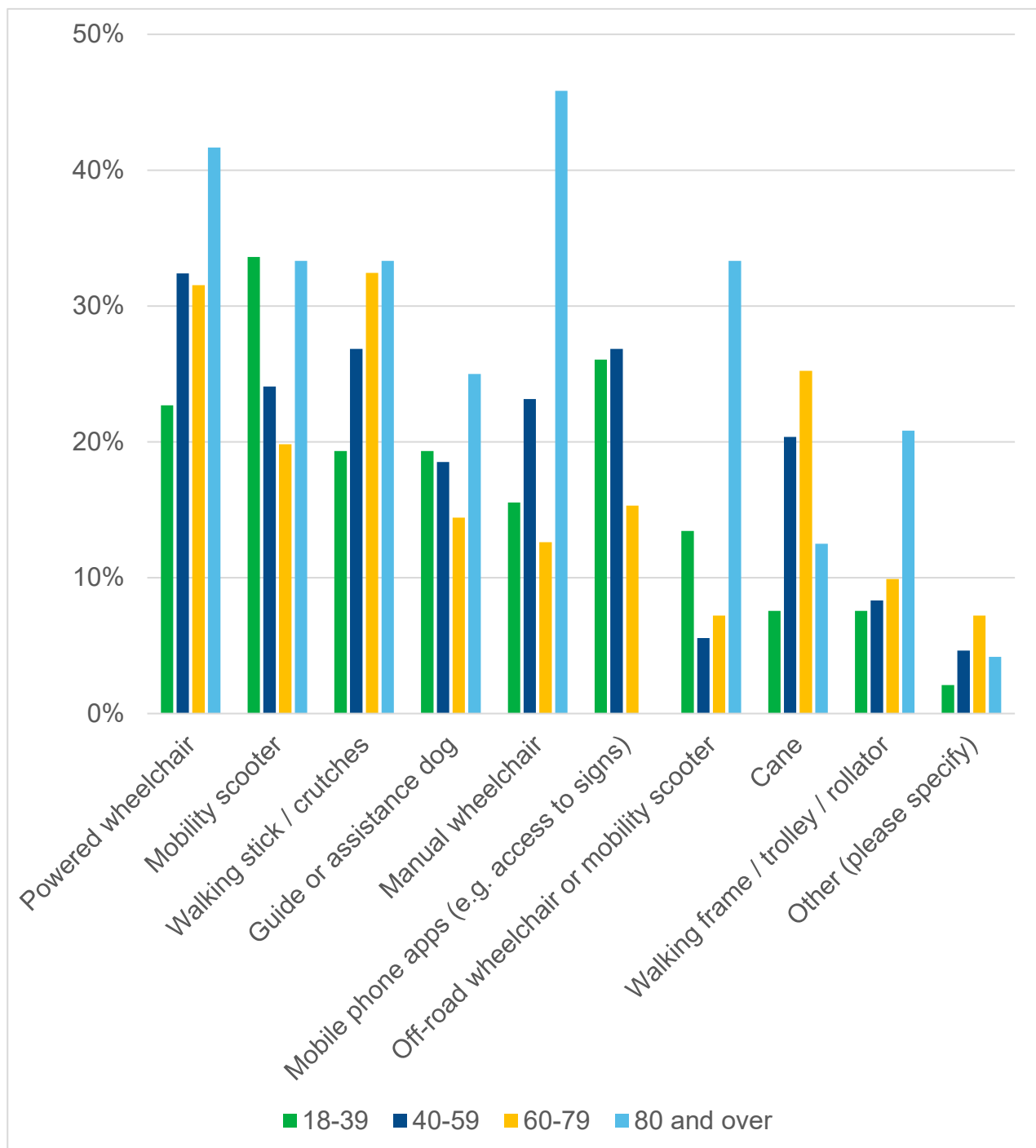
**Figure 1: Responses from survey question 'Do you use any of the following assistance aids when visiting green spaces?'**

Bar graph shows the overall percentages of different assistance aids used by the respondents when visiting GBS.



**Figure 2: Responses from survey question ‘Do you use any of the following assistance aids when visiting green spaces?’ Answers by age.**

Bar graph shows response percentages of the different assistance aids used by the respondents, broken down by age when visiting GBS.

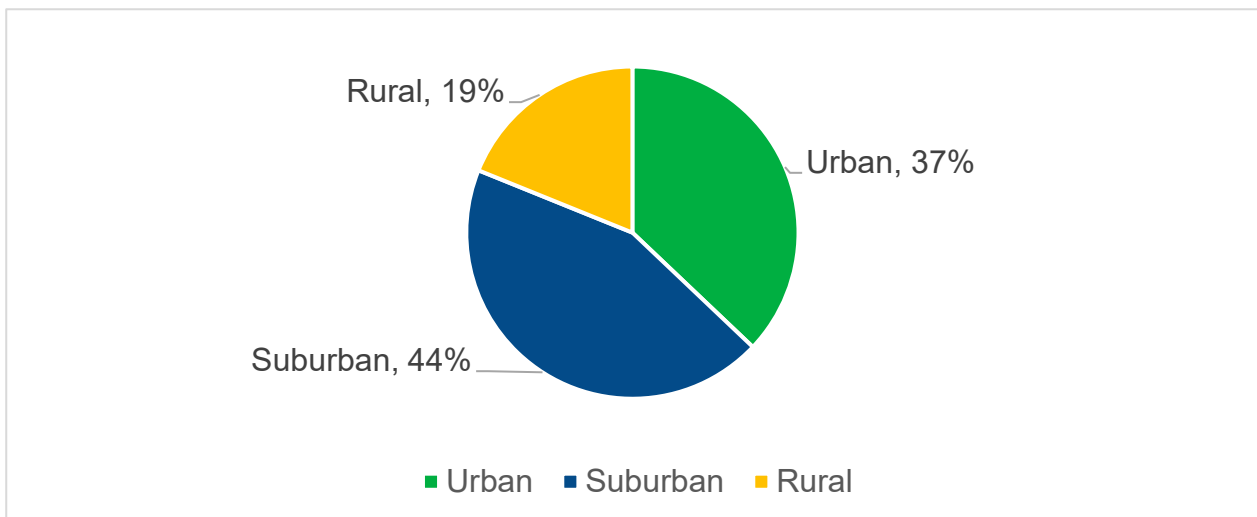


## Where do people go?

Through the survey we gained an understanding of the area people live in, the types of GBS they would like to visit, and the types of GBS they know of in their area. Many respondents live in a suburban area (44%), followed by urban (37%) and rural (19%) areas. This is illustrated in Figure 3. Almost half of the respondents (48%) would like to visit both rural and urban areas (Figure 4).

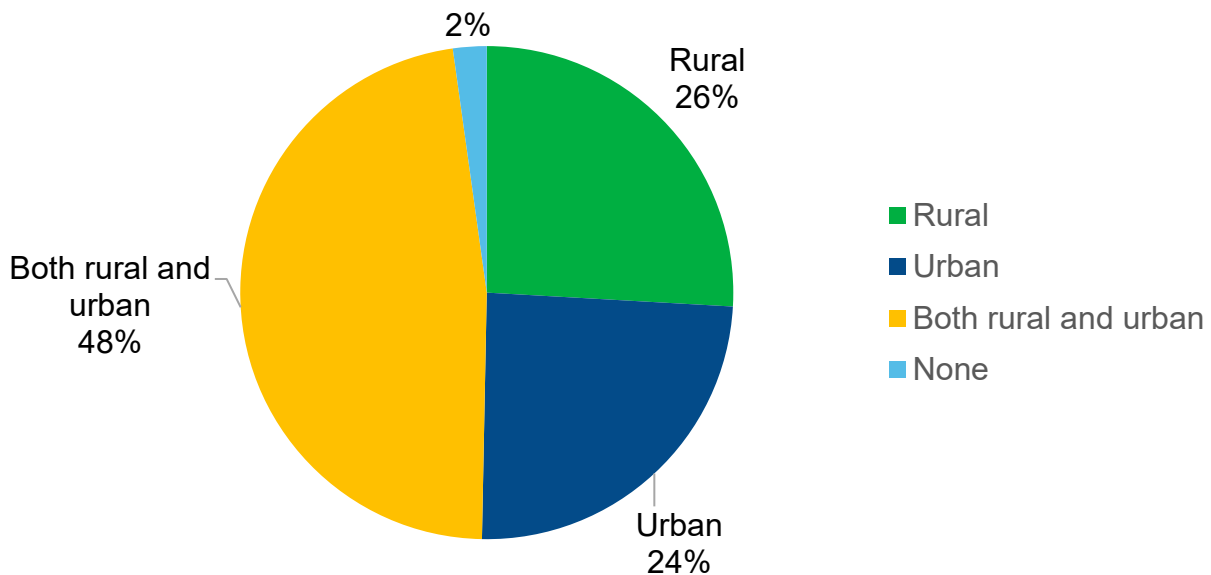
### Figure 3: Survey responses to 'What best describes the area you live in?'

Pie chart showing total percentages of participants living in rural, urban, and suburban areas.



### Figure 4: Responses from the survey question ‘What type of green spaces do you visit or would like to visit?’

Pie chart with total percentages of GBS visited in rural, urban, and suburban areas.

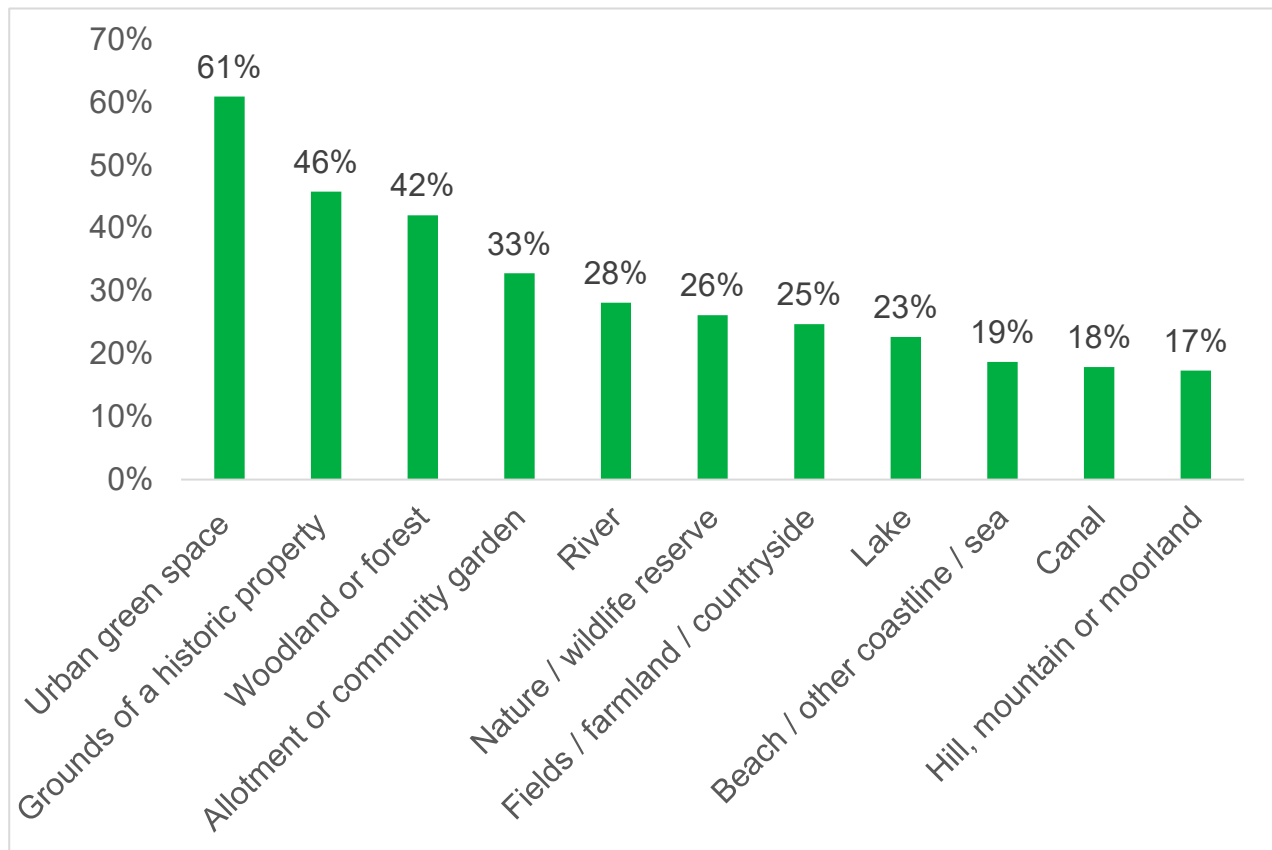


The top five GBS that respondents know of in their area are (Figure 5):

1. Urban green space such as a park, field, or playground
2. Grounds of a historic property or country park
3. Woodland or forest
4. Allotment or community garden
5. River

## Figure 4: Responses from survey question ‘What types of green spaces do you know of in your area?’

Bar graph shows total percentages of the different GBS known to respondents.



Given some areas are less likely to feature in suburban areas where the majority of respondents live, there are areas that fewer respondents know of, including beaches or other coastlines; canals; and hills, mountains, or moorlands. Some respondents told us of other spaces they visit, such as the cemetery, their own garden, meadows, and urban farms.

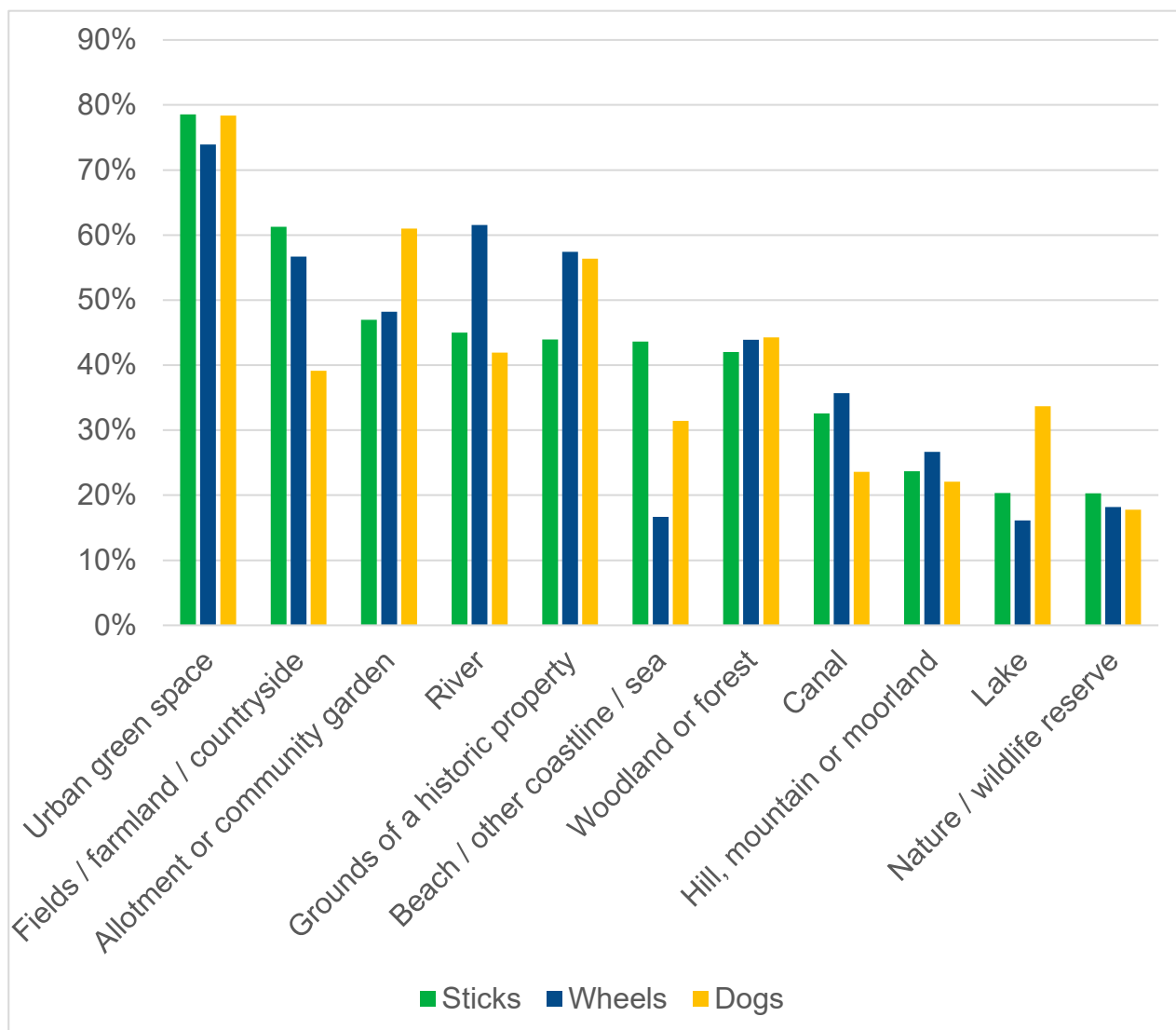
We asked respondents if they had visited the GBS which they said they knew of in the last month. The overall results for the top five spaces are:

1. 76% visited an urban green space such as a park, field, or playground.
2. 54% visited grounds of a historic property or country park.
3. 50% visited a woodland or forest.
4. 55% visited an allotment or community garden.
5. 48% visited a river.

This is further explored by the assistive aid used category and can be seen in Figure 6.

**Figure 5: Responses from survey question ‘You said you know of the following green spaces. Which of these areas have you visited during the last month?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of different GBS visited, broken down by assistive aid category.



### When do they go?

We asked respondents how often they have **wanted to visit** GBS and how often they have **actually visited** GBS in the last 12 months. Comparing the most popular ‘wanted to visit’ frequency response for each space, we can see

that respondents have **actually visited** these spaces fewer times than they have **wanted to visit** them.

Although it might be expected that a person's aspirations to visit GBS is typically higher than their actual achievement to do so, the size of these differences could give insight into barriers and inequalities experienced by people with visual impairments.

The four most frequented spaces which are available to our respondents were:

- **Urban green space such as a park, field, or playground:**  
34% of respondents have wanted to visit these spaces at least twice a week, however only 20% have actually visited at least twice a week.
- **Grounds of historic property:**  
65% of respondents wanted to visit at least once or twice a month, but only 57% have actually visited at least once or twice a month.
- **Woodland or forest:**  
Almost half (49%) of the respondents wanted to visit a woodland or forest at least once a week with approximately one third (32%) achieving this.
- **Allotment or community garden:**  
56% of respondents have wanted to visit an allotment or community garden at least once a week, with 50% actually visiting one.

The tables containing the full results for these two questions of intent and reality in visiting GBS can be seen in Appendix A.

### **How do they get there?**

We asked respondents what transport they take to get to the GBS they visit. On the understanding that people may take a different mode of transport depending on the space they are visiting, respondents could select multiple options (Figure 7).

- Over a third of respondents use a car (37% driven by someone else and 31% driven by themselves).
- 26% take a taxi.
- 25% go by foot.

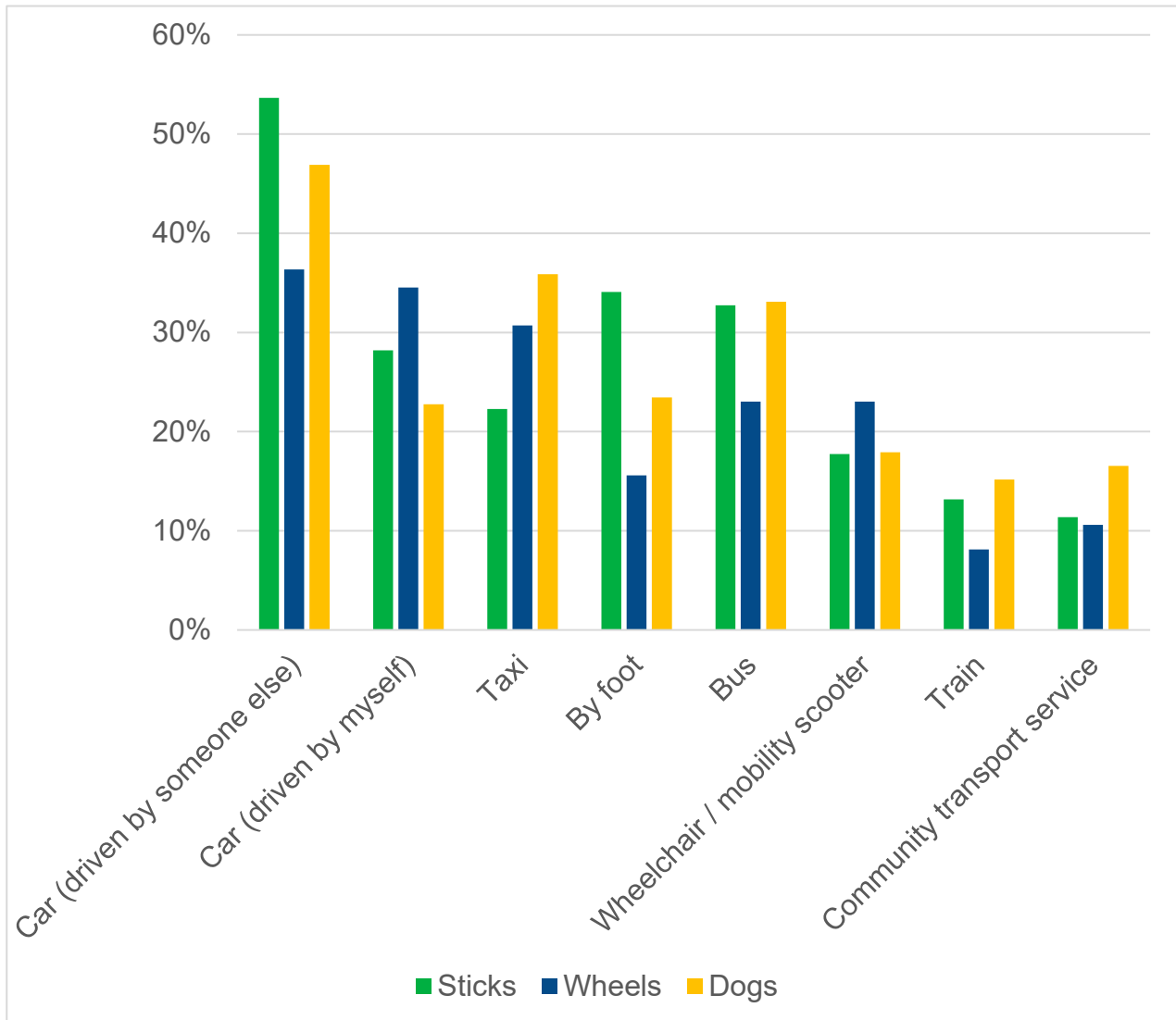


- 25% take a bus.
- 16% go using their wheelchair or mobility scooter.
- 10% take a train.
- And 9% use a community transport service.

For users of all categories of assistive aids, travelling by car driven by someone else is the most frequent mode of transport. For people who use sticks, the most popular mode of transport is a car driven by someone else (54%), followed by going by foot (34%), and taking the bus (33%). For people who travel accompanied by a guide or assistance dog, almost half (47%) travel in a car driven by someone else, followed by taking a taxi (36%), and a bus (33%) and by foot (23%). For people who travel using wheels, travelling by a car (driven by someone else- 36%, driven by themselves- 35%) or taxi (31%) were most popular.

**Figure 7: Responses from survey question ‘Thinking about the green spaces you visit, what transport do you take to get there?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of different transportation used to visit GBS, broken down by assistive aid category.

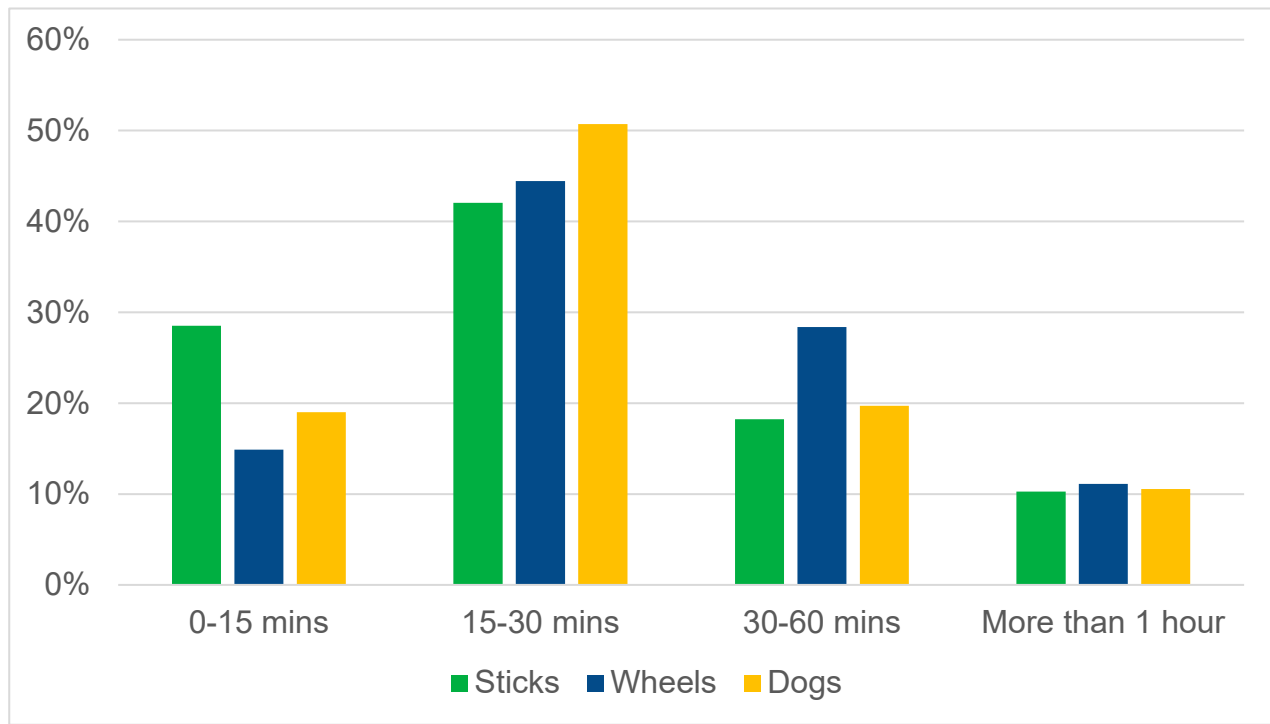


**How long does it take?**

We asked respondents how long it took them to travel to the GBS they visit most often. 43% of respondents said that it takes them between 15-30 minutes, which was also the majority response for respondents travelling across all assistance aids. Only 10% of respondents travel for more than one hour (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Responses from survey question ‘How long does it take you to travel to the green space you visit most often?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of the time taken to travel to visit GBS, broken down by assistive aid category.

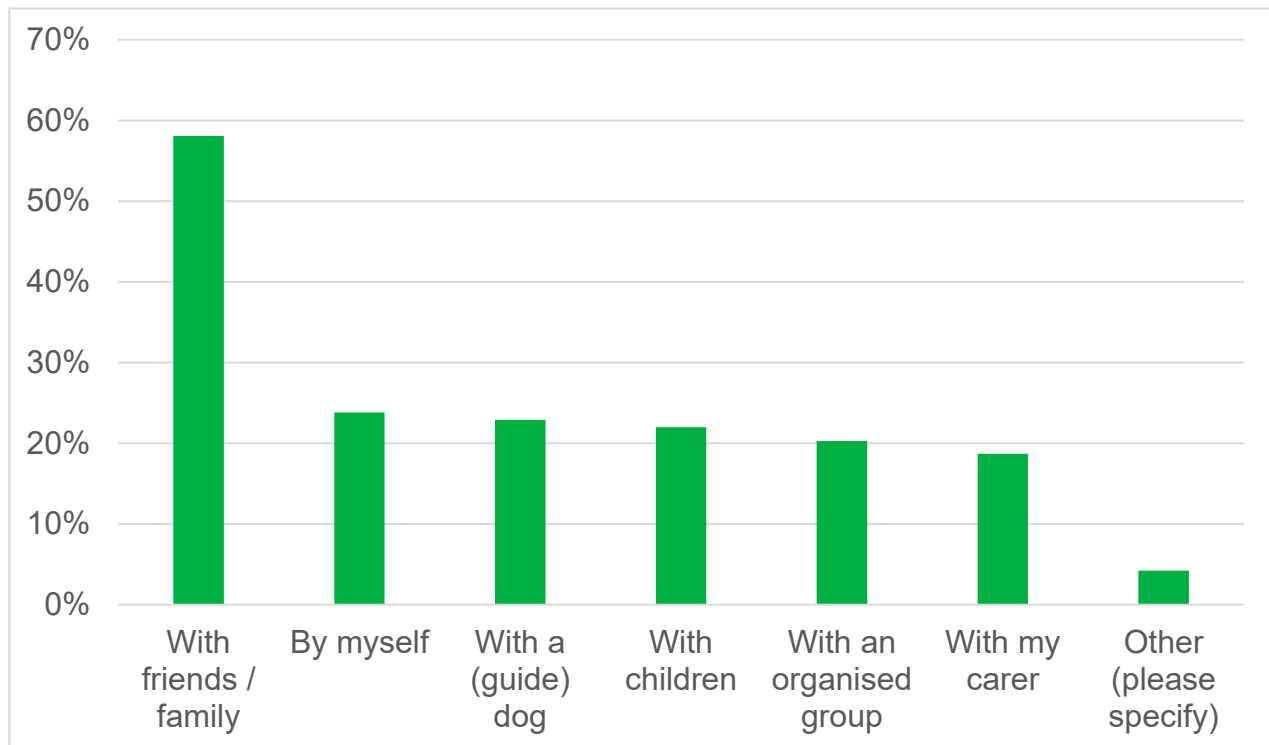


## Understanding what it means to access GBS

We asked respondents who they typically visit GBS with. 58% visit GBS with friends or family, followed by people visiting by themselves (24%), with guide dogs (23%), with children (22%), with an organised group (20%), and 19% said they visit with a carer. Those who selected ‘Other’ told us they visited with their partner, friend, dog, or with a volunteer group (Figure 9).

## Figure 9: Responses from survey question ‘Who do you typically visit green spaces with?’

Bar graph shows response percentages of who people with visual impairments visit GBS with.



We asked respondents what having access to GBS mean to them. The top three responses were:

1. It improves my mental health (55%)
2. I feel more connected to nature (46%)
3. It improves my social life (43%)

People also said that having access to GBS improves their physical health (38%), allows them to take part in activities such as social groups, societies, and festivals (38%), and helps them feel more connected to their community (33%). Many people felt that being outside was good for their mental wellbeing (Figure 10).

One person said...

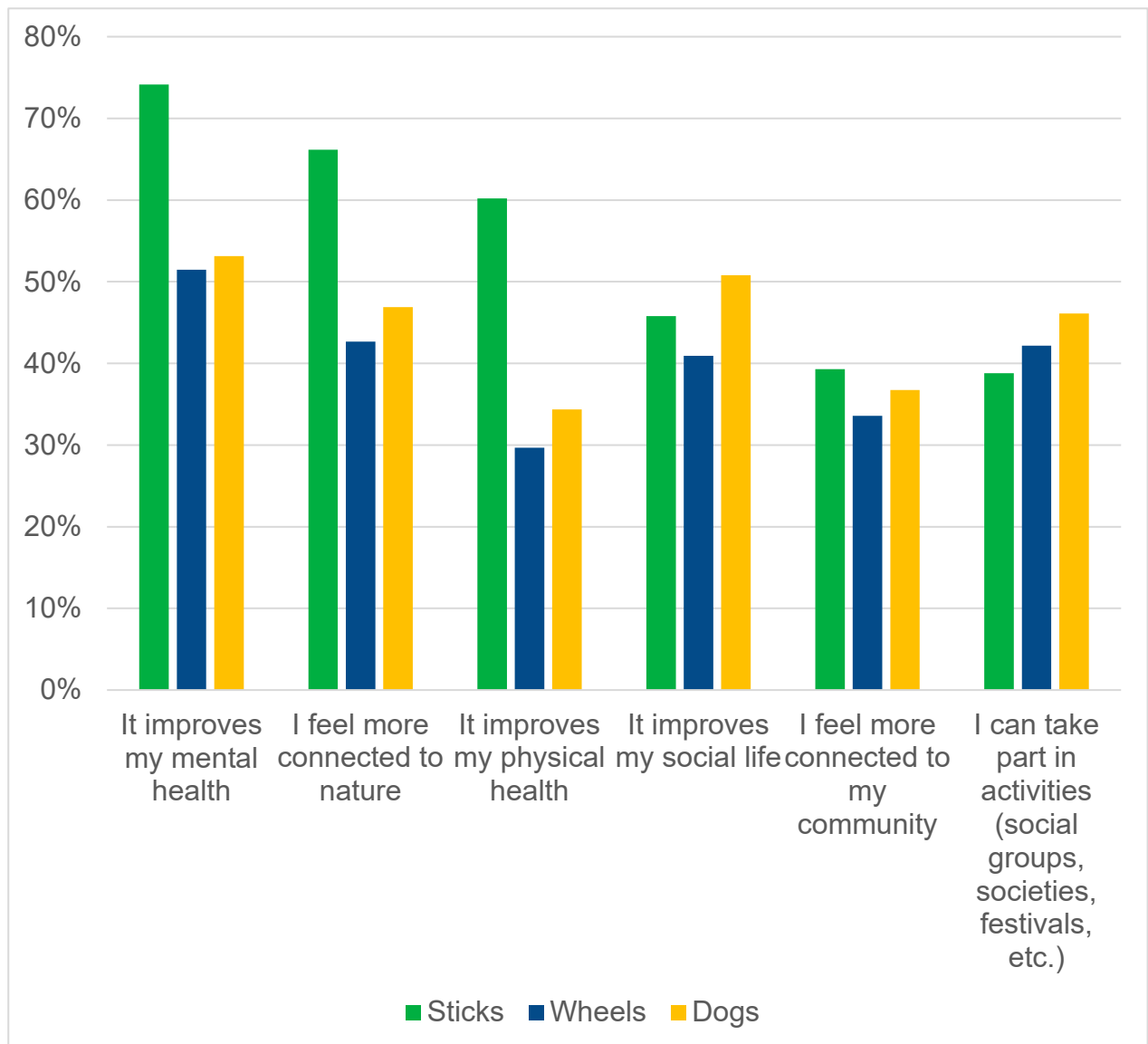
“Especially now in our digital age, I enjoy just walking around parks and going down paths with my mother and even myself. I think it calms you down from the hustling bustling world.”

And another described as...

“Part of my wellbeing programme.”

**Figure 10: Responses from survey question ‘What does having access to green spaces mean to you?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of what it means for people with visual impairments to have access to GBS.



In the focus groups, respondents discussed the importance of being able to access GBS. A common theme was being able to socialise and connect with others, especially family. One person explained that her daughter is autistic, and she loves nature; exploring the outdoors is a place that they can talk to each other. Another parent said...

“When you have children, you really want to connect with nature..., go to the beach with footballs, sports, canoeing...”

We also asked people, aside from visiting GBS, what other activities they engage in to feel well or happy. Many people enjoy outdoor activities such as gardening, growing vegetables and contributing to a community garden; sports such as archery, fishing, swimming, and wheelchair dancing. Other hobbies and activities included knitting, crafting, gaming, listening to music, going to the pub, reading, and listening to audio books, and going to church.

## Understanding the challenges

### Barriers to visiting GBS

To better understand the general challenges of visiting GBS, we asked respondents which barriers prevent them from visiting GBS. 38% of respondents said that the GBS they would like to visit more often are not accessible to them. Barriers to accessing GBS include, being overwhelming (25%), taking too much time and energy (25%), lack of facilities (25%), the journey to and from the GBS being too difficult (24%) and not feeling safe being on their own (24%) (Figure 11).

One participant described how they feel when overwhelmed...

“How you see the world is totally different... Your spatial awareness, you're missing things all the time, getting run over... You can't really tell people how you feel. Now that the summer is coming, it'll be dusk, you're just running into danger zones because I can't see that well. And you slow down, and you want to be with people, but then your heart rate goes faster.”

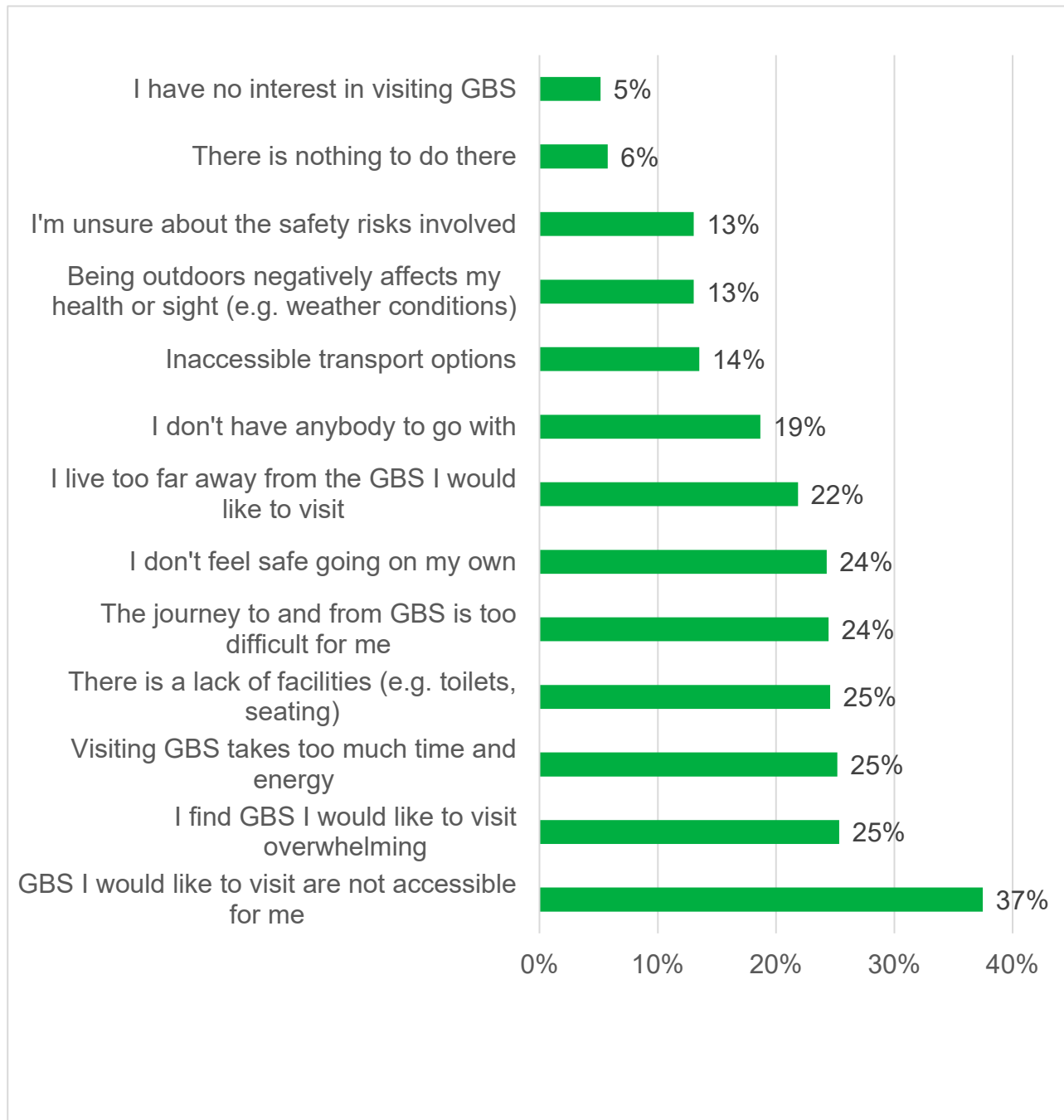
Some respondents told us of other barriers that were not listed in the survey question such as:

- Fear of being hit by cyclists.
- Shared pathways dominated by cyclists / electric scooters.
- Lack of pedestrian crossings.
- People trying to play with guide or assistance dogs.
- People trying to steal guide or assistance dogs.
- Too many urban paths to navigate before reaching a GBS.

- Pathways being too rough for mobility scooters to travel on.

**Figure 11: Responses from survey question ‘Generally, do any of the following barriers prevent you from visiting green spaces more often?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages to the barriers that prevent people with visual impairments from visiting GBS.



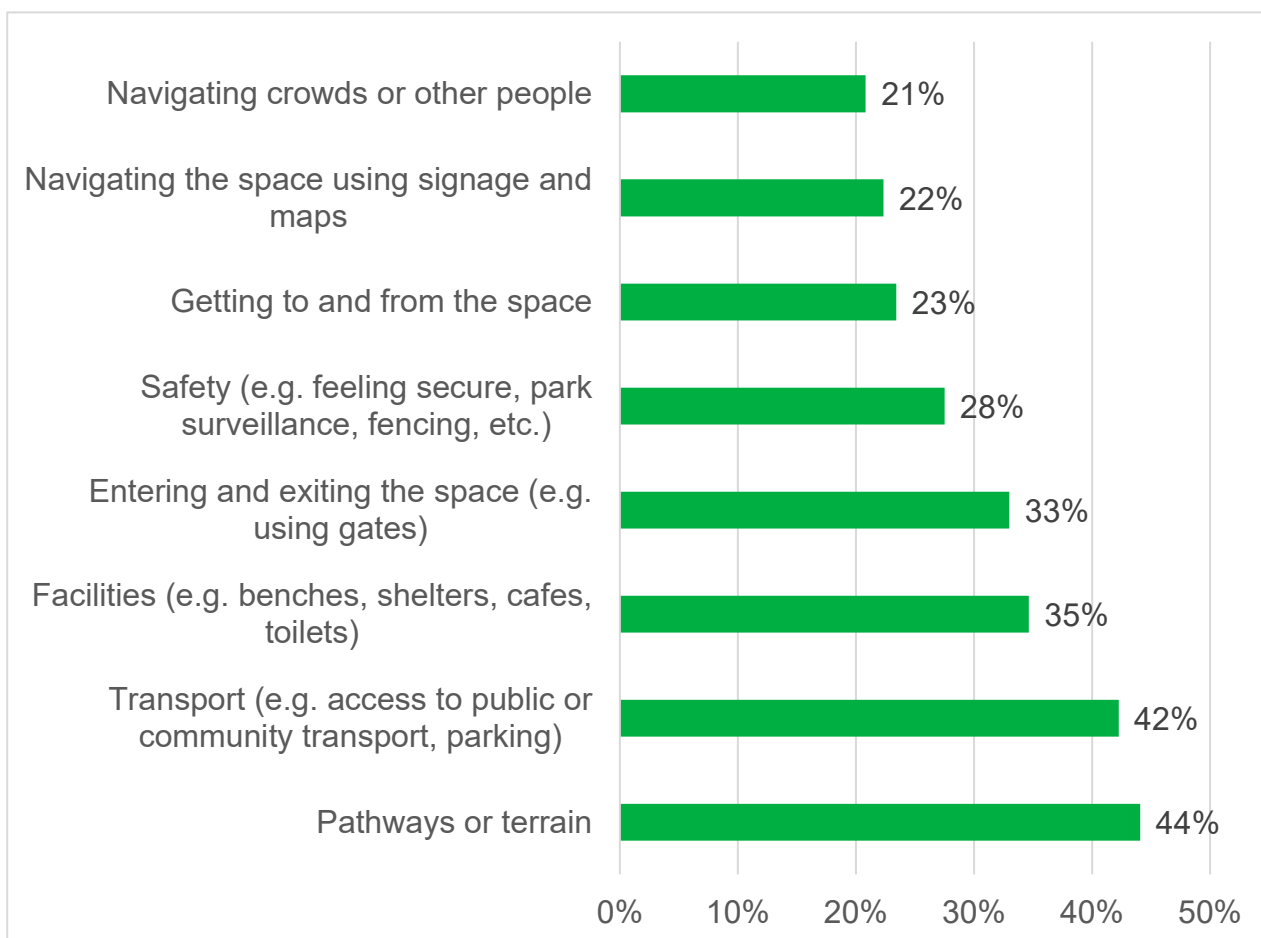
## General challenges

We gained insight on the specific aspects of GBS that respondents find inaccessible or challenging, which include the journey to and from the GBS, navigating the space, using facilities, and interacting with others (Figure 12). The top five inaccessible or challenging aspects were:

1. Pathways or terrain (44%)
2. Transport (access to public or community transport, parking) (42%)
3. Facilities (benches, shelters, cafes, toilets) (35%)
4. Entering and exiting the GBS (33%)
5. Safety (feeling secure, park surveillance, fencing, etc) (28%)

**Figure 62: Responses from survey question ‘What aspects of green and blue spaces do you find inaccessible or challenging?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of what aspects of GBS people with visual impairments find inaccessible or challenging.





## General challenges and assistance aids

Figure 13 highlights the challenges people using different assistance aids face. People who use sticks (walking stick and crutches) find GBS more inaccessible or challenging than people who use other assistance aids. The top three areas that **stick users** find inaccessible are consistent with the broader survey response, i.e.:

1. Navigating pathways or terrain (49%)
2. Transport (48%)
3. Facilities (42%)

The top three areas that people who use **guide or assistance dogs** find inaccessible or challenging are:

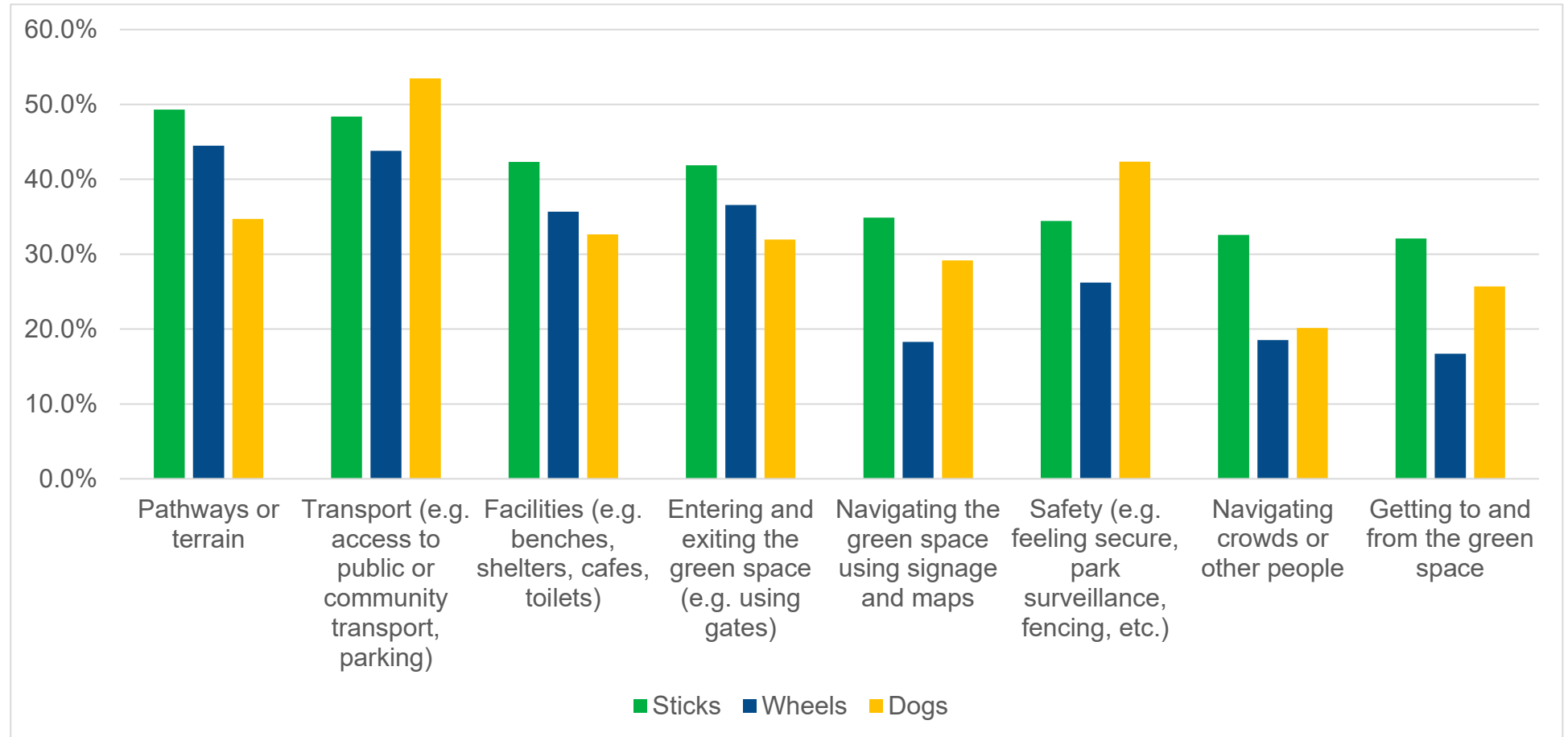
1. Access to transport (54%)
2. Safety (42%)
3. Navigating pathways or terrain (35%)

The top three areas that people with a visual impairment that also use some form of **wheeled assistive aid**, such as a wheelchair, mobility scooter or rollator, find inaccessible or challenging are:

1. Navigating pathways or terrain (45%)
2. Access to transport (44%)
3. Entering and exiting the space (37%)

**Figure 13: Responses from survey question ‘What aspects of green spaces do you find inaccessible or challenging?’ by assistive aid category.**

Bar graph shows response percentages of the barriers that prevent people with visual impairments from visiting GBS broken down by assistive aids used



## **Planning visits to GBS**

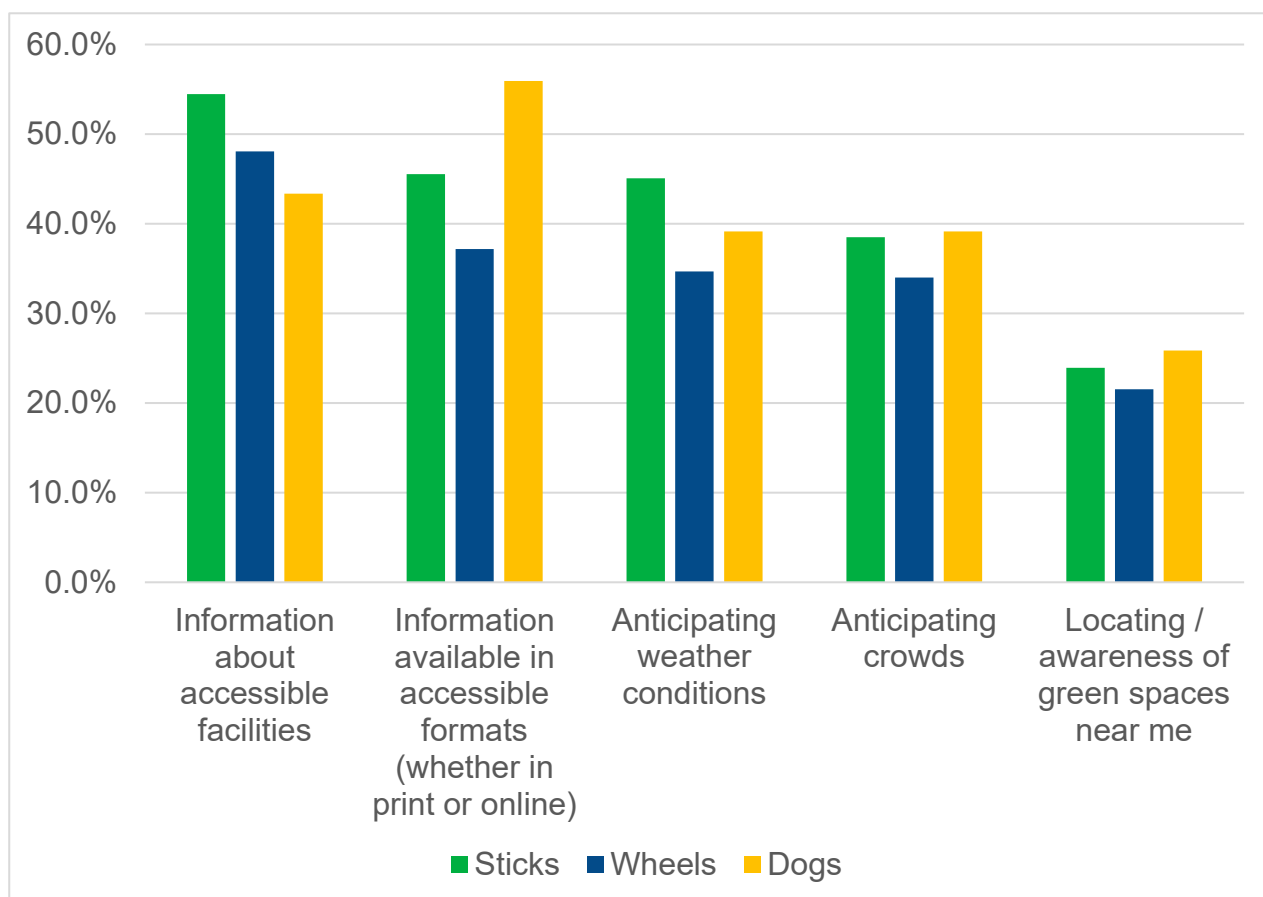
After gathering information on what respondents generally find inaccessible or challenging, we focused the survey on the challenging aspects of the complete customer journey. From the experience of planning to visit a GBS; to arriving, exploring the space, and using the facilities; through to leaving the space (Figure 14).

When planning to visit a GBS, almost half of respondents (45%) said that finding information about accessible facilities is challenging, followed by information not being in accessible formats (40%), and anticipating weather conditions (35%). A third of respondents (33%) said that anticipating crowds is a challenge, and almost a quarter (23%) said that locating or having awareness of GBS near them is a challenge.

Stick and wheeled assistive aids users both found finding information about accessible facilities the most challenging (55% and 48% respectively), whereas people who use assistance dogs said information not being available in accessible formats to be most challenging (45%).

**Figure 14: Responses from survey question ‘If any, what aspects of planning to visit a green space do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages to the aspects of planning a visit to GBS that people with visual impairments find inaccessible or challenging, broken down by assistive aids used.



### Getting to and from GBS

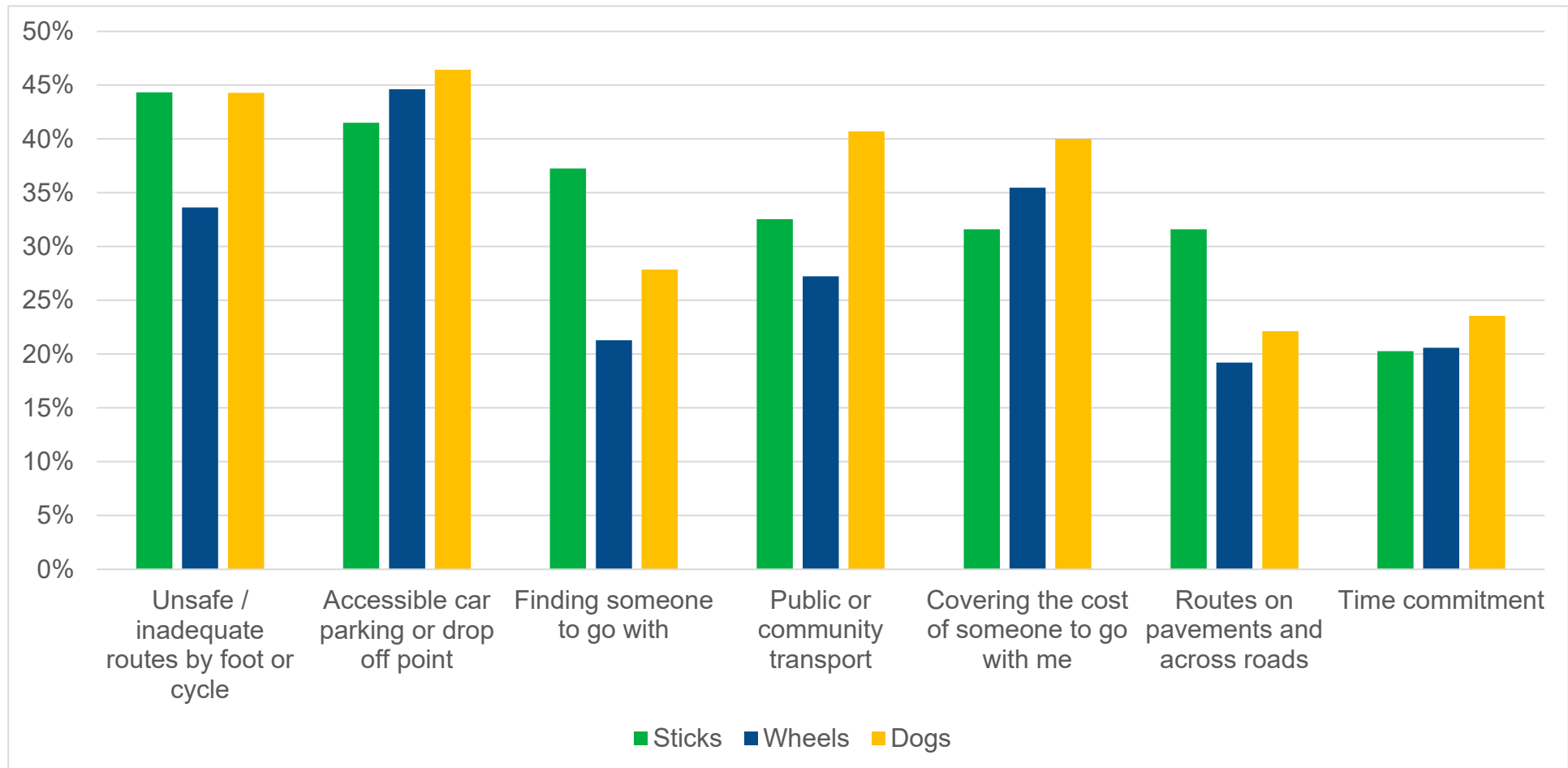
When getting to and from GBS, 40% of respondents find that ‘accessible parking or the drop off point’ to be a challenge. This was followed by ‘unsafe or inadequate routes by foot or cycle’ (33%), ‘public or community transport’ (32%), and (where applicable) ‘covering the cost of someone to accompany them’ (31%). A quarter said that ‘finding someone to go with’ is a challenge, a fifth said that ‘routes on pavements and across roads’ (21%), and lastly 20% said ‘time commitment’ to be a challenge (Figure 15).

When comparing these results to assistance aids used, there is a more varied opinion on the most inaccessible or challenging aspect when getting to

and from GBS. Stick users finding 'unsafe / inadequate routes by foot or cycle' as their most inaccessible or challenging aspect, wheeled aids users and assistance dog users finding 'accessible car parking drop off point' to be their biggest challenge (Figure 15).

**Figure 75: Responses from survey question ‘If any, what aspects of getting to and from the green space do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages to the aspects of getting to and from a visit to GBS that people with visual impairments find inaccessible or challenging, broken down by assistive aids used.



Respondents gave insight into the fact that inaccessible pavements, paths and roads are another common barrier when getting to and from GBS. Some respondents expressed difficulty with “uneven paths and trails”, “crossing cycle lanes and roads”, and not having “dropped curbs or access points”. “Not having pavements or other wheelchair access” was also noted as a challenge. One participant detailed their experience when navigating roads:

“My rural area has many narrow roads with no pavements. I have to scoot along these and hope to find a space to get off road when a vehicle comes along. I know many local places I can go but I know many other wheelchair users who do not and are very nervous about getting out.”

Others told us that their health is “often not good enough to leave the house”, and the weather can be a contributing factor to getting to and from spaces as for some people it negatively affects their health. One participant told us that they “try to avoid rain and wind, but cold is the worst.”

### **Access to transport**

Access to transport is a top-three barrier across all respondents. Half of all respondents said the infrequent service made it inaccessible, followed by ‘navigating bus stops’ (39%), and ‘unsafe or inadequate connections by foot or cycle’ (35%). A third of respondents said that a ‘lack of or no car parking’ made using transport to get to and from a green space inaccessible. Other issues include ‘navigating train stations’ (32%), ‘cost of transport’ (31%), ‘arranging passenger assistance’ (22%), and ‘finding a wheelchair or priority space’ (17%) (Figure 16).

Respondents who use **sticks as** assistive aids find the following inaccessible:

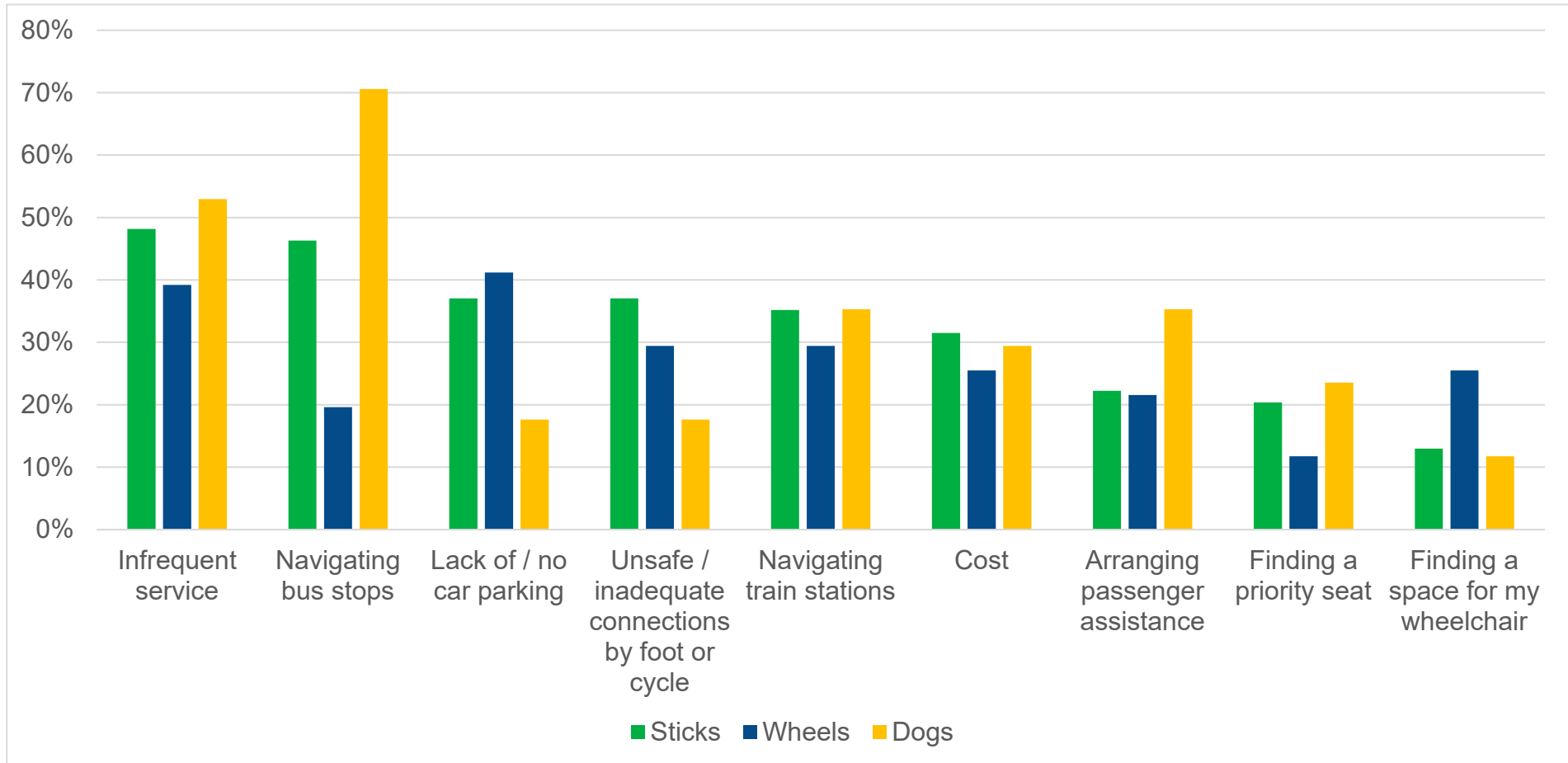
- Infrequent service (48%)
- Navigating bus stops (46%)
- ‘Lack of or no car parking’ and ‘Unsafe / inadequate connections by foot or cycle’ (both 37%)

**Assistance dog users** find the following inaccessible:

- Navigating bus stops (71%)
- Infrequent service (53%)
- ‘Navigating train stations’ and ‘passenger assistance’ (both 35%)

**Figure 86: Responses from survey question ‘You said that inaccessible transport options prevent you from visiting green spaces. What makes it inaccessible?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages to the aspects of transport that are inaccessible when visiting GBS, broken down by assistive aids used.





Some respondents told us what makes train and bus transport inaccessible. One participant noted some challenges when using trains:

“Unstaffed railway stations, lack of audio announcements on local trains and buses, lack of knowledge on how to get from the final railway station to the green space on my own, lack of audio guidance information within green spaces, so easy to get lost if I am not already familiar.”

Another participant shared the challenges involved with using a bus:

“Often there just isn't any service at all and what is available in my city isn't reliable, which can be an issue for those of us who live alone and don't have anyone we can call for in an emergency. Lack of accessible timetables... there is no audio announcement at my central bus station, so no idea if a bus is at a different stand, no audio announcements on the bus to confirm each stop. The usual travel frustrations the visually impaired people have been banging on about for decades is worse when trying to get to out of the way places.”

## Entering GBS

When entering GBS, 35% of respondents find ‘Understanding or reading entrance signage’ to be inaccessible or challenging, alongside ‘Using gates or doors to enter’ (35%). ‘Finding the entrance’ (34%), ‘Using turnstiles’ (31%) and ‘Using stiles’ (30%) were all recorded as negatively affecting one third of the respondents. One quarter of respondents find that not being able to get an idea of the space before entering is challenging, and one fifth said locating entrance signage and visitor information points is challenging (Figure 17).

For respondents who use assistance aids, **stick users** find the following inaccessible or challenging:

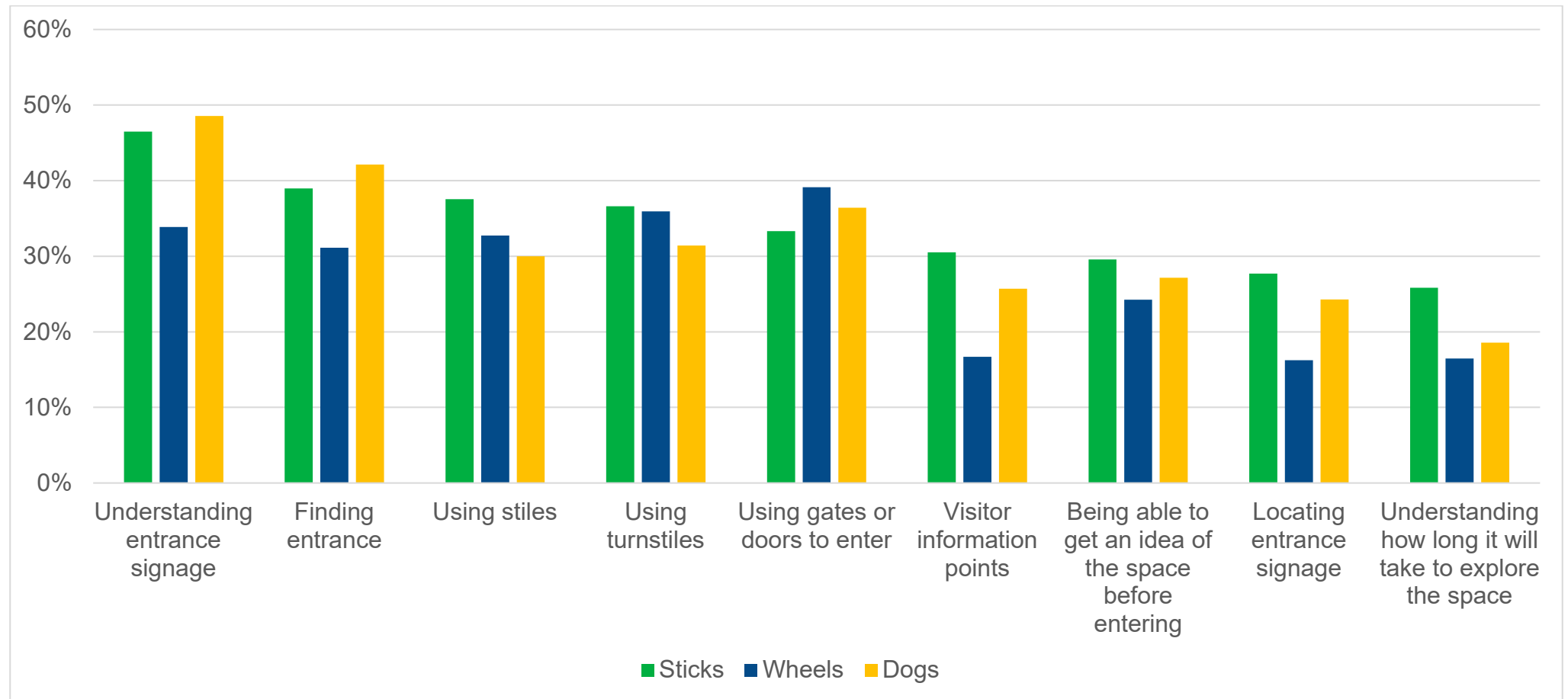
- Understanding or reading entrance signage (47%)
- Finding the entrance (39%)
- Using stiles (38%)

**Guide or assistance dog users** find the following inaccessible or challenging:

- Understanding or reading entrance signage (49%)
- Finding the entrance (42%)
- Using gates or doors to enter (36%)

**Figure 97: Responses from survey question ‘If any, what aspects of entering the green space do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages to the aspects of entering a GBS that people with visual impairments find inaccessible or challenging, broken down by assistive aids used.



Participant insights show that using transport, facilities and paths/roads prove challenging when entering GBS. When entering GBS, some respondents find that they cannot find a way in due to lack of wheelchair access. One participant said “[there is] simply no wheelchair access”. Another noted...

“Often gates are too narrow for mobility scooters to fit through. Finding a way into greenspace other than a gate or kissing gate which blocks mobility scooter.”

For people who travel to and from GBS by car, the ‘location, availability and proximity of parking’ can be a challenge. A mobility scooter user who is also visually impaired told us that...

“Often car parks have earth bunds around them preventing mobility scooter access.”

Safe routes are needed for people who do not travel by car. Some respondents noted that they “have arrived and access is only by road”. Other respondents commented on the availability of facilities upon entering GBS. One participant mentioned “toilet availability” near the entrance, and another noted the availability of audio tours...

“Audio tours suitable for [visually impaired] people [not standard tours] headsets not being found by staff, or not charged up because staff don't know about them.”

Lack of level access is also a challenge for people with visual impairments when entering a GBS. A participant told us of their experience of this...

“No pathway [...], only steps to get up into the green space which is raised above the pavement on the street which has no dropped curbs, and no tarmac/concreted areas to access it or get around it or stop to allow for the carer or family member to sit and rest.”

## **The on-site experience**

When navigating pathways or terrains, the top five things that make the space inaccessible or challenging are (Figure 18):

1. Uneven terrain or potholes (51%)
2. Overhanging trees or bushes (42%)

3. Identifying the condition of pathways or terrains (35%)
4. Lack of tactile wayfinding (30%)
5. Paths that are too narrow (29%)

Navigating paths shared by pedestrian and cycle access (27%) and paths with turns (26%) are also found to be a challenge.

The results also show that respondents have some safety concerns when navigating pathways or terrains due to barbed wire (22%), stiles (18%), and fear of dogs not on leads (15%).

When navigating pathways, **stick users** find the following inaccessible or challenging:

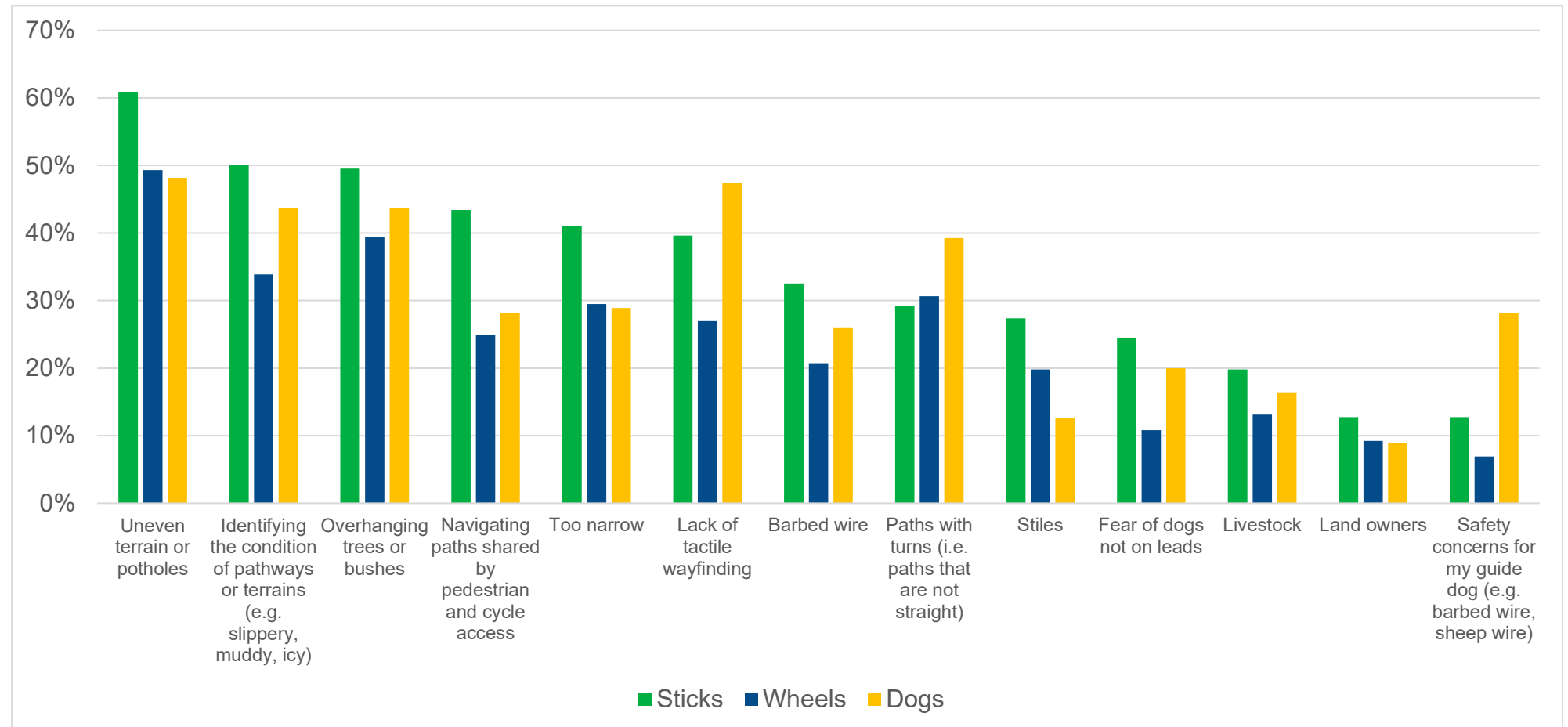
- Uneven terrain or potholes (61%)
- Identifying the condition of pathways or terrains (e.g., slippery, muddy, icy) (50%)
- Overhanging trees or bushes (50%)
- Navigating paths shared by pedestrian and cycle access (43%)

**Guide or assistance dog users** find the following inaccessible or challenging:

- Uneven terrain or potholes (48%)
- Lack of tactile wayfinding (47%)
- Overhanging trees or bushes and identifying the condition of pathways or terrains (both 44%)

**Figure 108: Responses from survey question ‘If any, what aspects of pathways or terrains do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages to the aspects of pathways or terrains that people with visual impairments find inaccessible or challenging, broken down by assistive aids used.



Further participant insights highlight the condition and texture of paths, lack of level access, and lack of signage, which make navigating pathways and terrains inaccessible. There is a consensus that mud, cobbles, sand, stones, and gravel create difficulty for people with visual impairment. The uneven ground and changing surfaces prove challenging for people with a visual impairment who also use wheelchairs or mobility scooters. One participant described the challenge they experience...

“Gravel pathways, as many are either deep and my chair sinks into them or it's made from hard materials and my chair cannot move across it as it's too big...”

Another participant explained that...

“Stone or gravel paths [is off putting] because it's too uncomfortable for wheelchair users.”

Uneven terrain appears to affect people who cannot see past the footplates of their wheelchair...

“The problems that I get even going to wildlife parks or open areas is that a lot of the tracks they try and keep them as natural as possible, which I totally agree with. But they still are very, very dangerous [even when you're not visually impaired]. And then when you're using a wheelchair, you've got sight excluded, where you can't see past your footplates, and I can't turn properly.”

Pathways that are not straight can cause challenges for people with visual impairments, especially if water is nearby. One participant said...

“Paths that wind all over the place and connect with other paths randomly, large concrete areas where it is easy to get lost, bridges over rivers without sides, overgrown bushes, trees, nettles, bridges where there is a drop not protected by barriers. Inability to find accessible toilets.”

Lack of level access means that people cannot fully explore GBS. Some respondents noted that there are “too many steps” and that there are “no pathways or access for disabled individuals who need to climb stairs to access the green space.”

Lack of accessible signage also poses difficulty for people with visual impairments as some people cannot identify or read the signs.

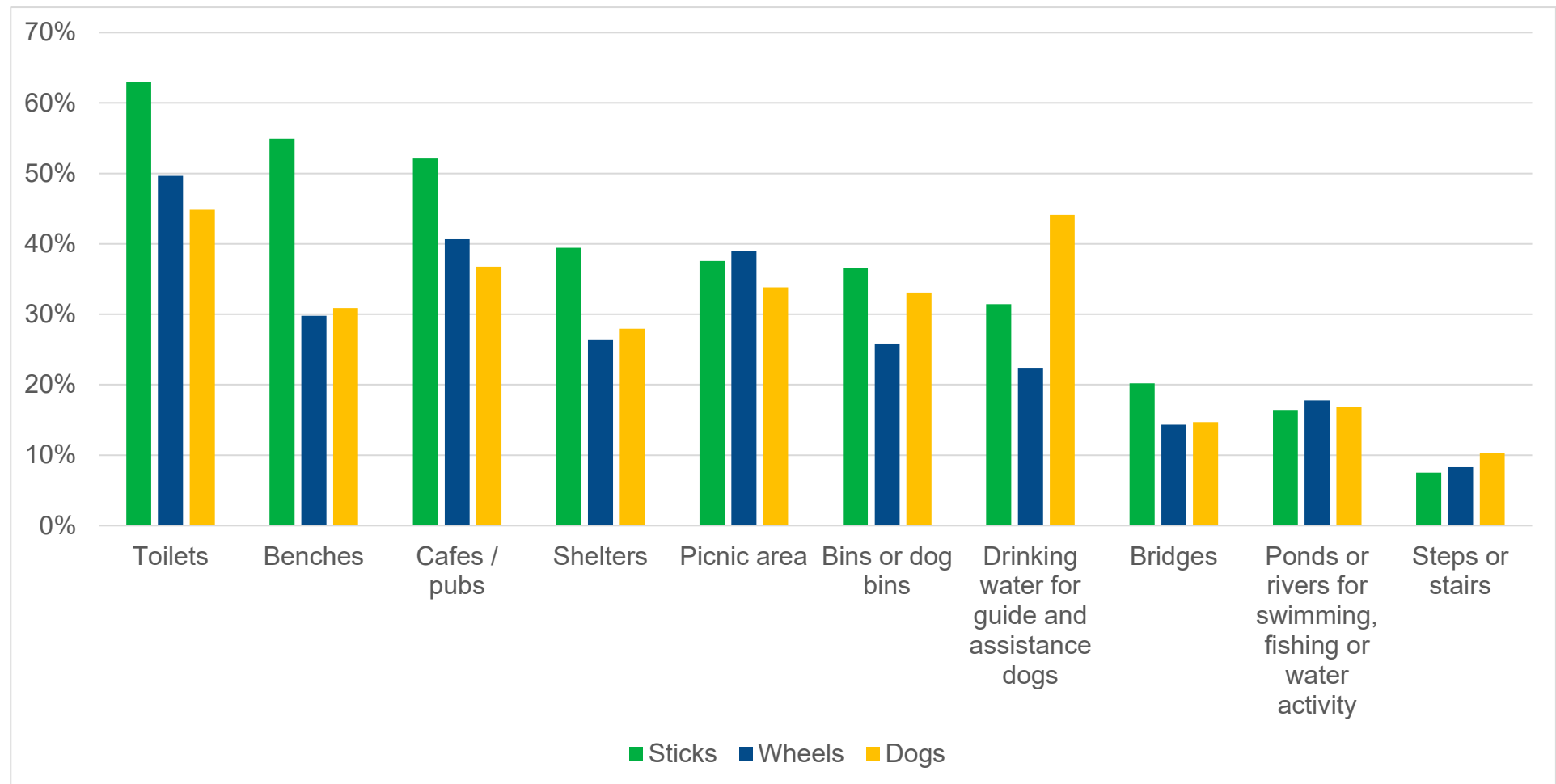
## Using facilities in GBS

Half of respondents said that they generally like to have toilets in GBS, followed by cafes / pubs (40%), benches and picnic areas (37%), shelters (28%), bins or dog bins (28%), drinking water for guide and assistance dogs (25%), ponds or rivers for swimming, fishing or water activity (16%), bridges (14%), and steps or stairs (8%) (Figure 19).



**Figure 119: Responses from survey question ‘What facilities do you generally like to have in a green space?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages to the facilities that people with visual impairments generally like to have when visiting GBS, broken down by assistive aids used.

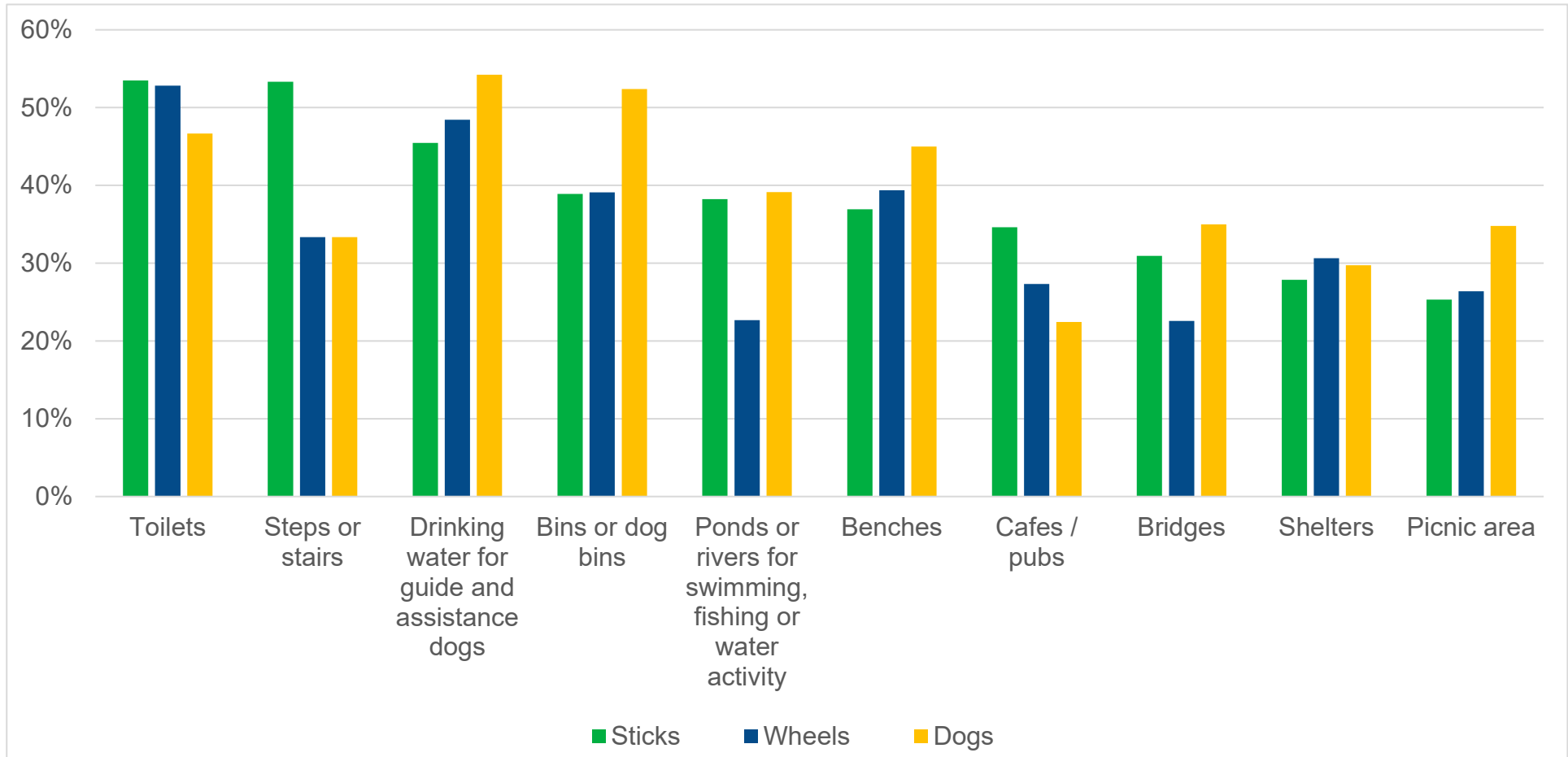


When the respondents were asked to rate the importance of their facility choices, between somewhat, very, or extremely important, elements rated as extremely important were as follows (Figure 20):

1. Toilets (50%)
2. Drinking water for guide and assistance dogs (45%)
3. Bins or dog bins (39%)
4. Benches (36%)
5. Steps or stairs (36%)

**Figure 20: Responses from survey question ‘You told us what facilities you generally like to have in a green space. Please tell us how important they are to you.’ Answers from ‘extremely important’ only.**

Bar graph shows response percentages that people with visual impairments rate as extremely important to have when visiting GBS, broken down by assistive aids used.



We also asked the respondents to rate how easy or difficult they find facilities to use. Figure 21 shows the facilities where the respondents have indicated the accessibility to be very difficult or difficult and is compared across the assistive aids used.

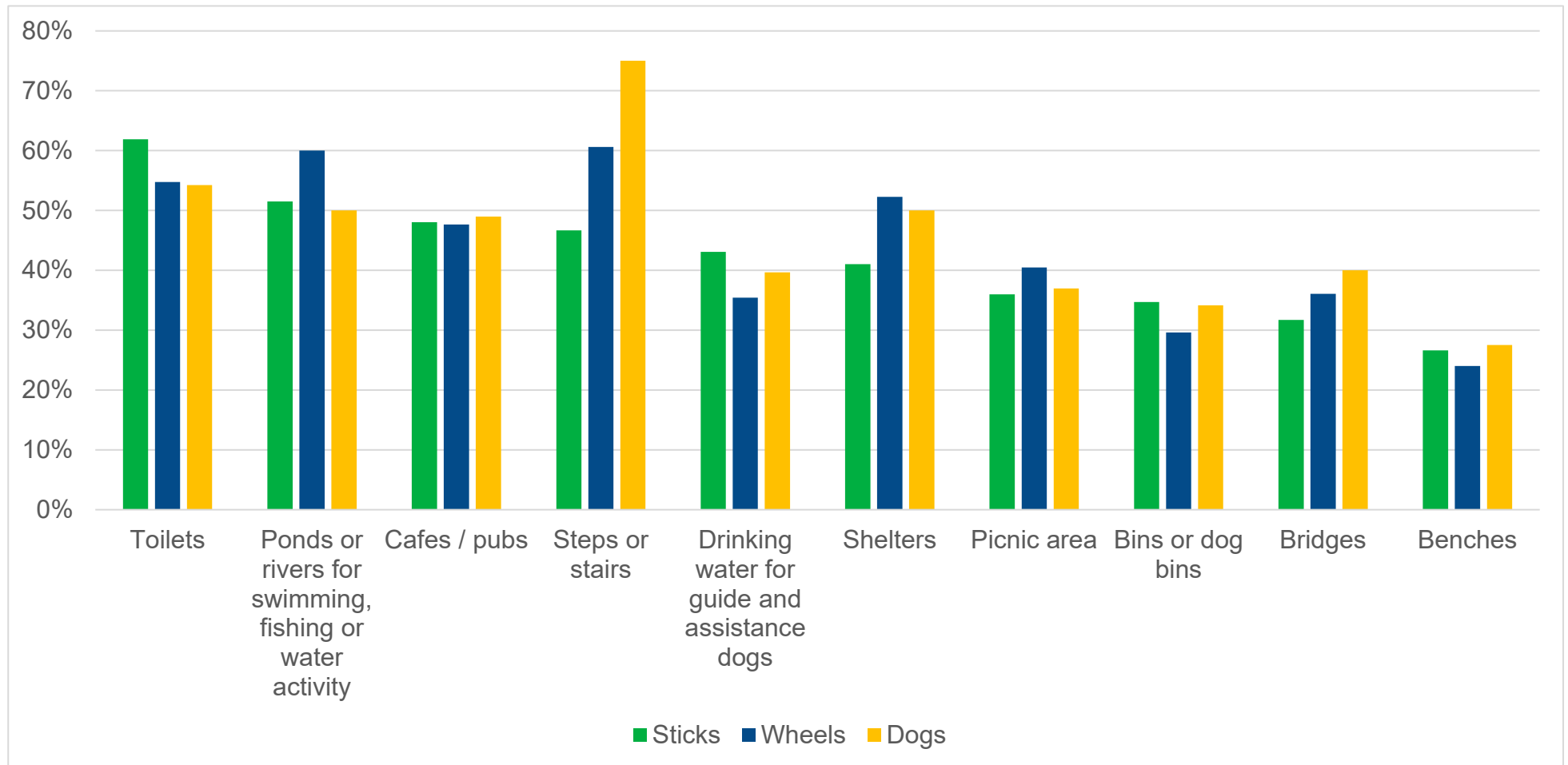
These responses were collected only from the respondents who said they like to have these facilities in GBS which in some cases returned low counts as seen in dog responses to 'steps and stairs', i.e., 12 responses.

However, when looking across the results, the accessibility of some important facilities is seen as a problem.

- Toilets are problematic for all assistive aid users.
- Steps and stairs with over half (58%) of the respondents saying these were difficult to use.
- Ponds or rivers for swimming, fishing or water activity was also recorded as difficult to access. Approximately 60% of users of wheeled assistive aids having difficulty.
- Cafes, Pubs, Picnic areas, Shelters, and Drinking water for assistance dogs had similarly high difficulty scores of between 40% to 45%.

**Figure 121: Responses from survey question ‘In terms of accessibility, how easy or difficult do you find the following facilities to use?’ Answers from ‘very difficult or difficult’ grouped together.**

Bar graph shows response percentages of the facilities that people with visual impairments find very difficult or difficult to use broken down by assistive aids used.



During the focus groups the respondents commented on the importance of level access. Many respondents noted that “level access throughout” is needed, and that having “wheelchair ramps instead of steps” would make the space more accessible. Some people also said that “slopes on bridges and paths” can make a space difficult to use.

They also made suggestions as to the type of facilities they would like to see in GBS. These included “a separate dog space”, “safe areas to leave mobility scooters”, “accessible bird hides, audio trails, hedgerows, wild and cultivated flowers, and sensory gardens.” A participant also suggested:

“A path that circuits the entire space and is easy to locate exits and entrances.”

## **Navigating GBS**

When navigating GBS, the top five things that respondents find inaccessible or challenging are (Figure 22):

1. Accessing information about the space (37%)
2. Accessing maps (36%)
3. Engaging in organised activities to explore the space (33%)
4. Understanding / reading signage (30%)
5. Step-free access (26%)

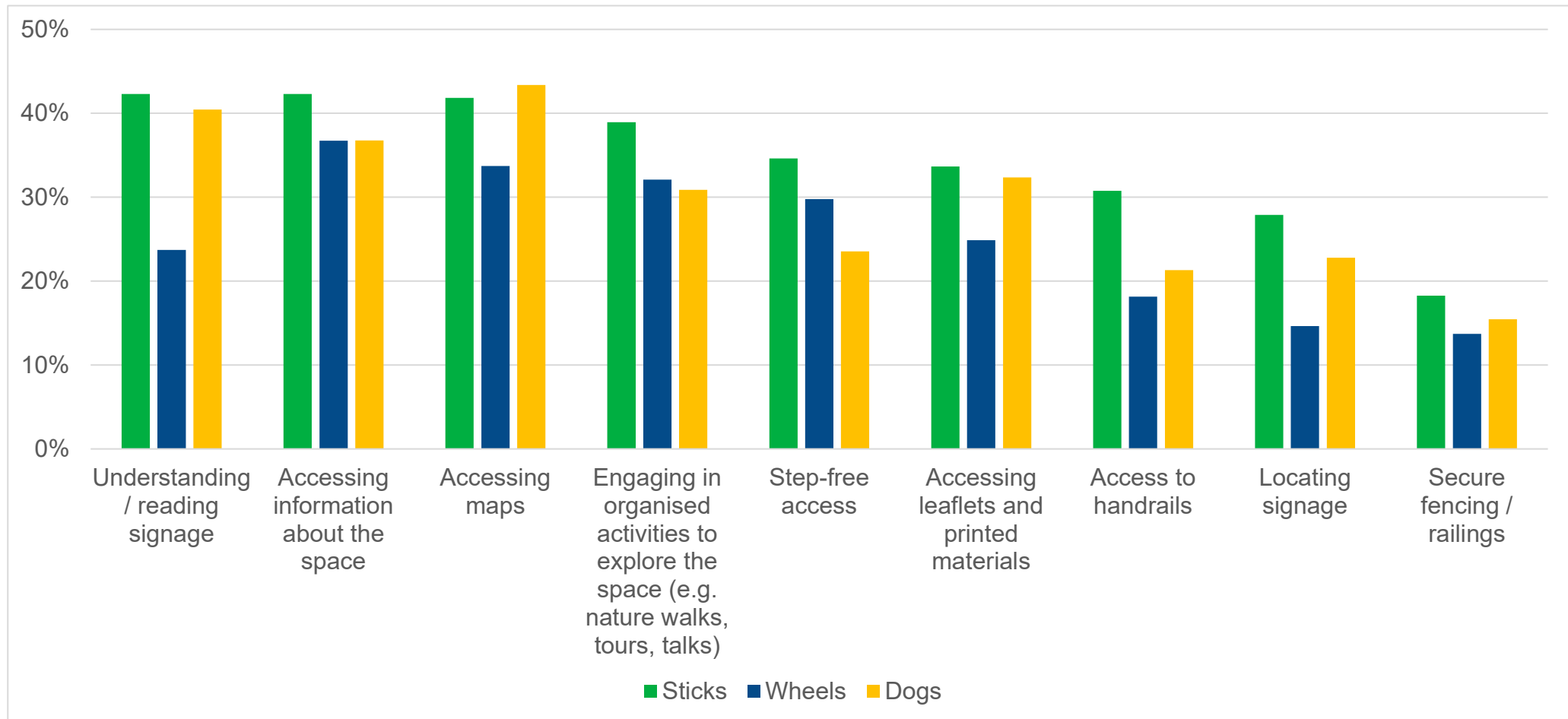
People also find challenges in accessing leaflets and printed materials (26%), locating signage (21%), access to handrails (19%), and secure fencing / railings (15%).

Although the points above would be applicable across all assistive aid users, there are some interesting differences in the aspects of navigation people find inaccessible or challenging:

- 39% of stick users say ‘Engaging in organised activities to explore the space’ is inaccessible or challenging whereas this is only true for approximately 30% of wheel and dog users.
- Accessing maps, Understanding or reading signage, Accessing leaflets and printed material, and Locating signage, are all more difficult for people using sticks or dogs rather than wheeled assistive aids.

**Figure 132: Responses from survey question ‘If any, what aspects of navigating the space do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of aspects of GBS navigation that people with visual impairments find inaccessible or challenging broken down by assistive aids used.



When discussing navigation in the focus groups, respondents reiterated the importance of level access, and the difficulties posed by uneven terrain. In terms of accessing information about a space, one participant mentioned that...

“Many organisations now put the information online and you have to read it on your mobile phone. This is a challenge if you are not good at using a phone.”

Respondents mentioned how roads surrounding or in GBS can be inaccessible. Being able to “cross the road” and “knowing if there is a safe route” are essential for people. A participant also mentioned their worry of having...

“Too many exits to roads which a guide dog could escape out of.”

Some respondents explained that they would find aspects of GBS to be inaccessible but being accompanied by someone else removes certain barriers. One participant said...

“Being blind means, all of these things would be difficult for me, so I’d always be with someone else.”

and another told us...

“I can't see signage/way markers, but I have a friend with me, so it doesn't make the walk inaccessible.”

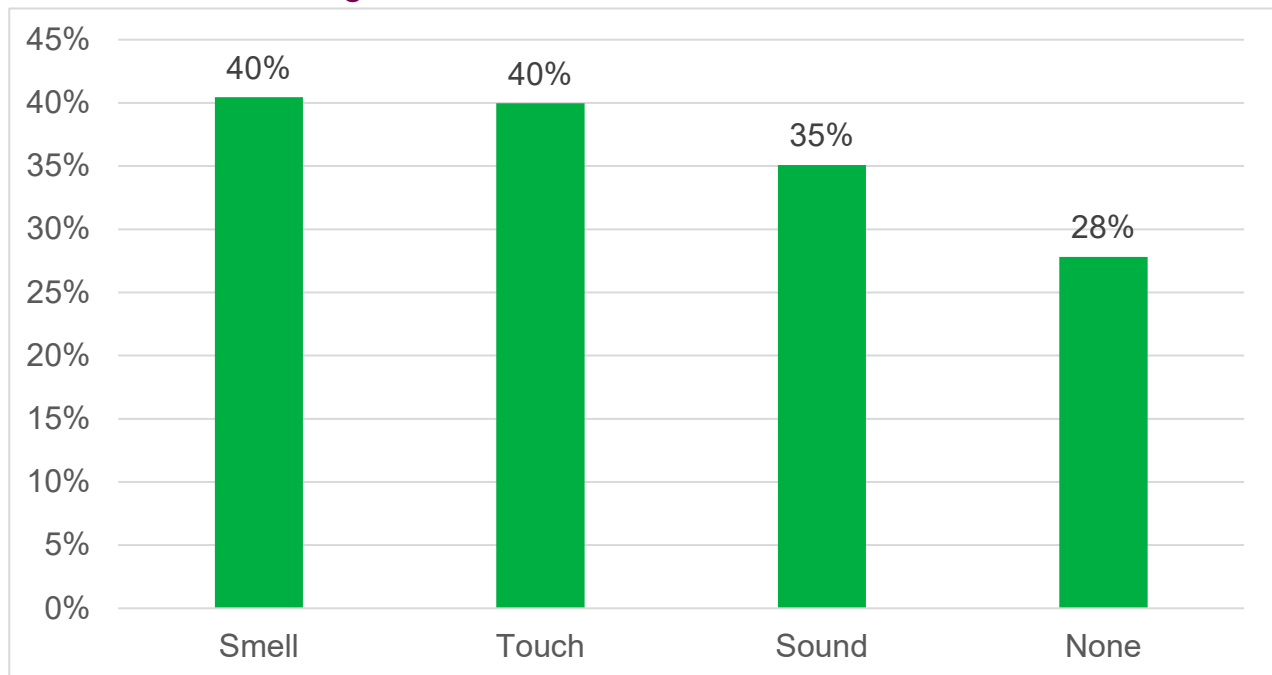
### **Navigating with sound, smell, and touch**

We asked respondents if they navigate GBS with sound, smell, or touch. The results are fairly evenly split across the different methods, with 40% of respondents saying they navigate using smell and touch, and 35% using sound. 28% of respondents do not navigate GBS with these senses (Figure 23).



**Figure 23: Responses from survey question ‘Do you navigate green spaces with sound, smell or touch?’**

Bar chart showing the proportion of people with visual impairments who use their senses for navigation in GBS.



We asked people how sound, smell and touch help them to navigate GBS.

### **Sound**

Many people said that the sound of water aids orientation and helps them to know when they are near a river, canal, or lake. Some people noted that sounds help them to hear danger from cars or nature. One person said...

“You can [...] hear trouble, hear hazards such as cars, hear e.g., trees moving to avoid them”.

Another told us that the sound of birds helps them to identify hedgerows and sound of waves or running water to navigate around coastlines and water bodies. We found that for some people the sound of cars also helps to identify car parks, when they’re nearing an exit, a main road, and places to avoid. Lack of sound poses some challenges, such as when cyclists do not use bells when they are approaching others. Many people told us that sound also helps them to enjoy GBS, such as listening to the birds in the trees, and being able to appreciate the sound of nature.

## **Smell**

Interestingly, often people navigate GBS by identifying very different smells and scents. Herbs and flowers tend to signify entrances to spaces and woodland and help people to locate their proximity. Some people use smells to know how to manage their guide or assistance dog.

The smell of food means they need to keep the dog close by, and the smell of livestock helps to identify areas to stay away from. The smell of coffee and cooking usually signifies that people are close to facilities such as a café or pub. As with sound, there are some smells that help people to identify danger, such as drugs and the smell of exhaust fumes and vehicles which helps people to gauge how close they are to a road. Damp smells and the smell of water or the sea help people identify how close they are to water.

## **Touch**

People also use touch to aid navigation and identify hazards. People who use a cane told us that they use both the cane and their hands to identify handrails, benches, and boundaries. Touch is used not only with hands but underfoot too, to identify tactile paving and follow pathways, to feel the terrain underfoot, and to remember different gradients and use them as landmarks to help with navigation.

Some people told us that they use touch to decide if it is safe to go somewhere or do something, for example, by checking how stable the ground is by gently placing their foot on it before putting any weight on it. Some people use touch to check that facilities are free from danger, such as benches, tables, and toilets. Tactile maps are also useful for navigating a space and understanding where facilities are located, whether paths are straight or curved, and the incline of hills. Touch is also helpful for identifying boundaries and gauging risk, such as barbed wire and stinging nettles. Many people told us that touch helps them to enjoy the space, such as enjoying the feel of tree bark, leaves, and petals.

## **Exiting GBS**

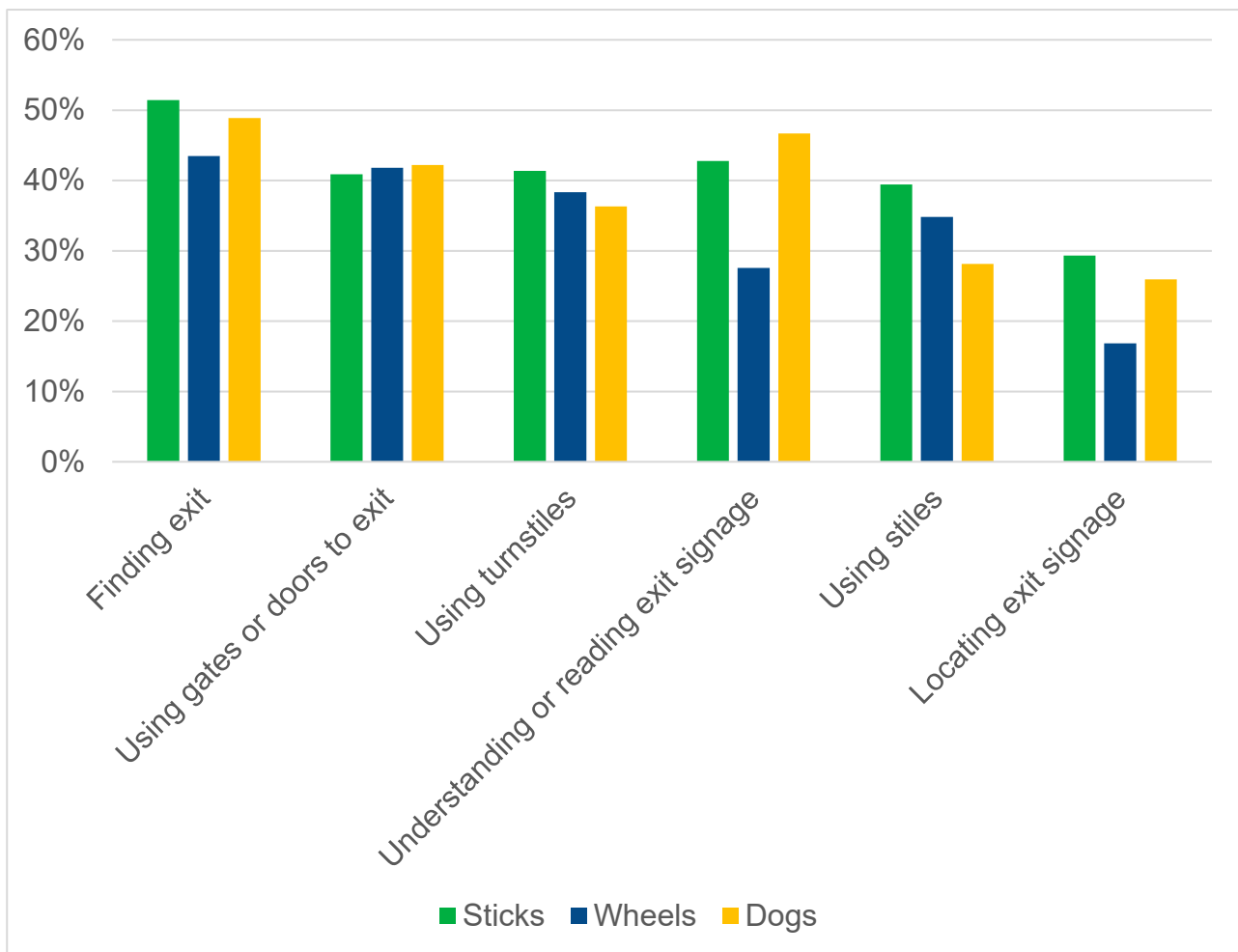
When exiting GBS, the top five things that respondents find inaccessible or challenging are (Figure 24):

1. Finding the exit (46%)
2. Using gates or doors to exit (38%)
3. Using turnstiles (34%)
4. Understanding or reading exit signage (32%)
5. Using stiles (30%)

Finding the exit is more challenging for people who use sticks (51%) than people who use wheeled assistance aids (43%).

**Figure 144: Responses from survey question ‘If any, what aspects of exiting the green space do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of aspects of exiting GBS that people with visual impairments find inaccessible or challenging, broken down by assistive aids used.



Respondents told us about further barriers that can be challenging when exiting a space. Access restrictions for people who use a mobility scooter make locating an exit difficult...

“Many locations have access restrictions for mobility scooters. This means finding alternative routes into and out of green space. Kissing gates are a big exit problem.”

Some GBS have a final stop at the end, such as a gift shop or café. A participant told us about the challenges this poses...

“Quite often you have to go through a building/shop at organised places and by the time I have been around my chair has got into a bad state (muddy, wet & sliding wheels).”

Other respondents noted that “an easy way out” is essential and one showed the need to have the entrance and exit in the same place...

“If [the] exit is in a different place from the entrance, how [do I get] back to the route I came in by, so I can get home safely?”

## **Using technology in GBS**

When the respondents were asked the broader question about the use of any apps when navigating GBS, 40% said they did.

The main problem people told us about using technology in GBS was having poor network coverage, especially in rural areas and some were concerned about their phone running out of battery. A common worry about using mobile devices was not wanting to get a phone out due to fear of theft. Some respondents also mentioned that seeing their phone screen can be a challenge due to lighting.

We asked about apps with useful features that people use in urban areas which could also be used in GBS. Many respondents told us that they use Google maps to navigate, some mentioned that they like the step-by-step direction and that the app mostly takes wheelchair access into account. Google Earth has also proved useful for some people to calculate inclines. Some respondents use [What 3 Words](#) – an app that allows users to find, share and save exact locations to remember parking locations accurately. Some people use OS maps – the [Ordnance Survey app](#) shows routes for

walking, hiking, running and cycling. One person mentioned [Kent Connect](#) – a regional app with a journey planner.

Many people also use apps that have been designed specifically for visually impaired people, including:

- [Be My Eyes](#): an app that connects people with sighted support.
- [Navilens](#): an app that reads out signs.
- [Seeing AI](#): a Microsoft app that uses the device camera to identify people and objects, and audibly describes them.
- [Lazarillo](#): an app to safely guide people through busy and cluttered streets.

### **Concerns and worries when visiting GBS**

We asked respondents whether they have any concerns or worries about their accessibility needs when visiting GBS (Figure 25). The top five responses were:

1. Getting lost (40%)
2. Visiting after dark (35%)
3. Lack of facilities (e.g., toilets, benches) (32%)
4. Being on my own / isolated (32%)
5. Getting help (30%)

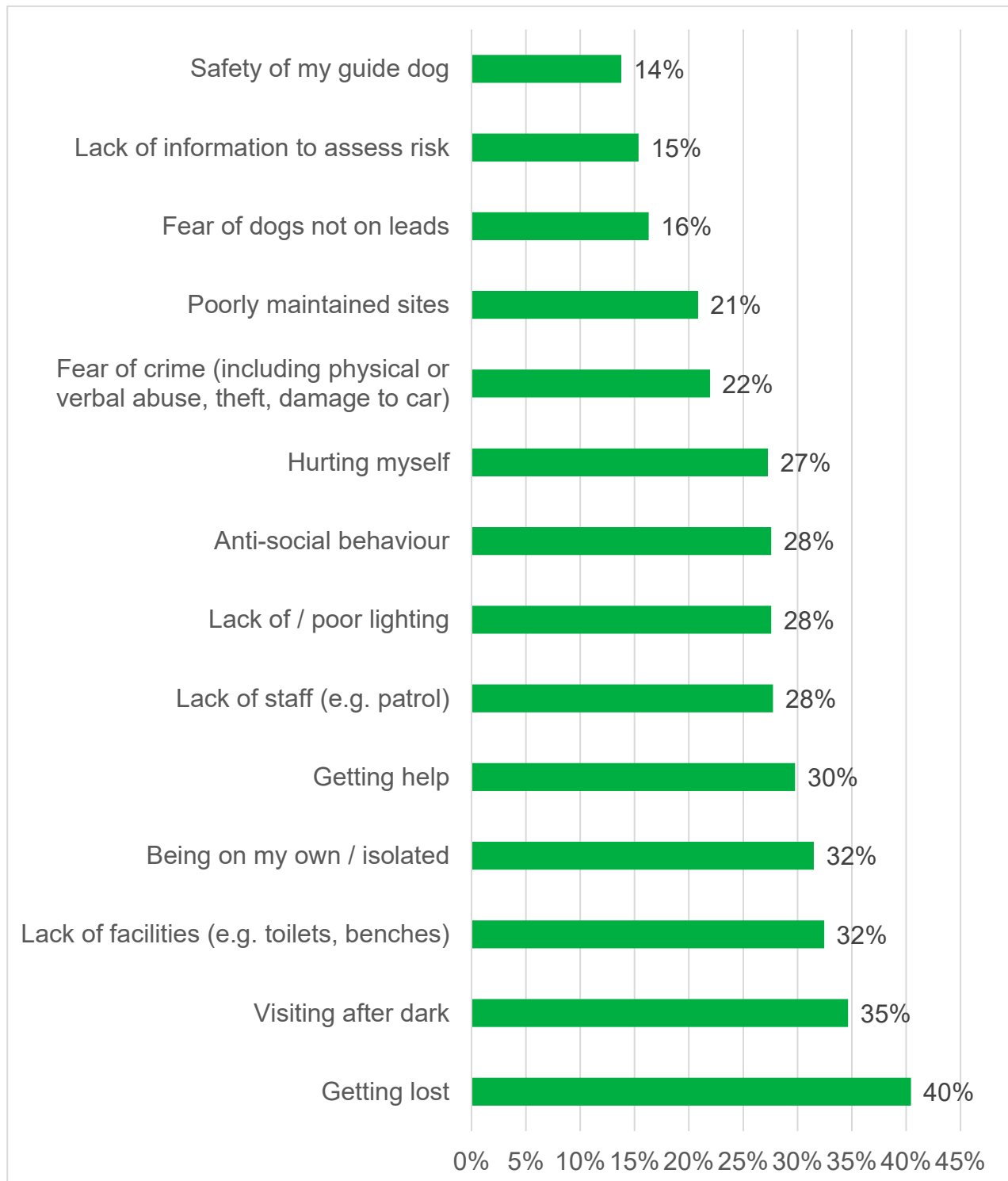
Respondents' comments further highlight concerns about personal safety...

*"I feel very vulnerable when I am alone and away from cafe or visitor's centres. I worry I might be attacked or mugged by someone."*

Others worry about getting lost or stuck: "Getting stuck in inaccessible places, not judging the distance between places." Some respondents who cannot access signage expressed concern about getting lost due to not being able to read the signage and navigating an unfamiliar environment.

**Figure 25: Responses from survey question ‘thinking about your accessibility needs while visiting green spaces, are you concerned or worried about any of the following?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of concerns or worries that people with visual impairments have when visiting GBS.



There is a notable concern regarding accessible facilities, such as people “not knowing if the toilets are going to be accessible” or there being a “lack of accessible toilets”. Respondents also mentioned the need to rest and shelter: “even bushes round a bench helps on a windy day.”

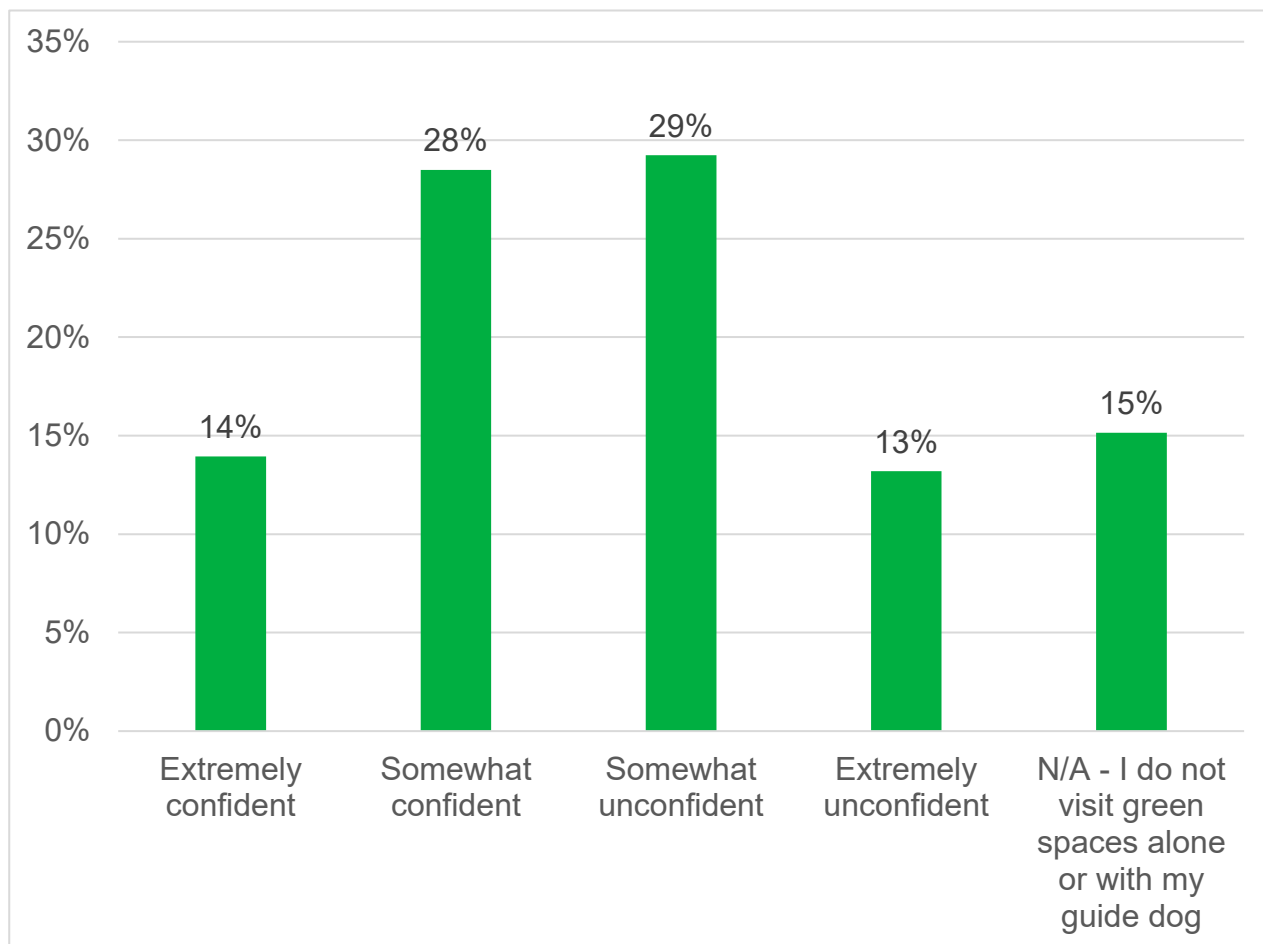
For people who use an assistance or guide dog, the safety of their dog can cause worry. One participant told us that “not all dog owners are responsible” and expressed concern about other people who let their dogs off the lead.

### **Confidence when visiting GBS**

We asked respondents how confident they feel when visiting GBS alone or accompanied by their guide dog. The results are split evenly: 42% of respondents feel either somewhat or extremely unconfident and 42% feel either somewhat or extremely confident (Figure 26). 15% of people do not visit GBS alone or with their guide dog.

**Figure 156: Responses from survey question ‘Generally, how confident are you visiting green spaces alone or with your guide dog?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of the confidence level that people with visual impairments have when visiting GBS.



Familiarity with the GBS is a common theme among people who feel confident visiting alone or with a guide dog. Some respondents noted that knowing the geography and routes help them to feel confident, and others noted that they only visit areas they know are safe and accessible. One participant told us...

“I know my local urban green spaces [river and parks] well. They are easy to walk or get public transport to. I in fact live by the river, which has a relatively good [though varying] quality of path, all the way from near my flat, to the city centre. Because I have lived in this area for nearly ten years, my mobility and confidence is in a very good place with these amenities. My mobility skills are very strong generally speaking, which supports this acclimatisation. I cannot give total confidence, because there are a high number of



inconsiderate cyclists and e-scooter users, who regularly give me concerns for personal safety, because they often do little or nothing to give pedestrians a wide berth, space and respect.”

Others told us that their assistance aids help them feel confident when going out alone...

“Because I live in a low crime area, with roads and pavements that my mobility scooter can navigate easily, so as long as I am in my local area, I am confident to go out alone!”

Many respondents credited their guide dog saying that they are “trusted partners”, “loyal” and “reliable”.

Respondents who do not feel confident visiting GBS alone or with a guide dog worry about getting lost or stuck. Some people with multiple impairments (such as visual and mobility impairments) and use a manual or powered wheelchair or mobility scooter, worry about getting the wheels stuck in the ground. Some respondents shared their past experiences of getting stuck...

“I have been stuck in mud and sand before when visiting the woods and the beach and have had to phone family to help.”

“I am scared of my wheelchair getting stuck or breaks down; it happened on a wet field once; I was stuck for about an hour before someone passed who could call for help for me. So embarrassing.”

“The chair I have is a mid-wheel drive so has less power. The venues I would like to enjoy driving around with my dog are often too muddy for the chair to navigate. I was bogged down in a muddy dip only yesterday and had to wait for rescue. Often the venues are not busy which is lovely for me and [my dog] but does make me nervous about getting stuck.”

A common theme for people who do not feel confident exploring GBS alone is sharing the space with cyclists. Some respondents told us of times they felt scared or intimidated by bikes and scooters whizzing towards or past them:

“Because I am intimidated by people on bikes and scooters who power along behind me and scare me into moving out of their way. They seem to deliberately choose to ignore my stick/wheelchair and assume because they are faster/bigger/more powerful that I am the one to give way/move. In my

honest opinion, it should be the other way round - the powerful should respect and support the more vulnerable. I love the scenery and the view of water but sometimes I come home more stressed than I was when I went out. People pushing children in buggies can also be quite intimidating.”

“For me being a chair user, sort of like joint cycle walkways are very good. But I feel so unsafe when I'm in them because of the speed people can be on their bikes. And one minute they're there and the next minute, you know, they're gone, or they're in the distance next minute, they're on top of you. And they don't necessarily even take any distance away from you. The amount of times I've been clipped by handlebars is phenomenal. And that really, really petrifies me. If they actually had a defined path where you could try and encourage people. This is a bike space; this is a walking space.”

The perceived attitudes of other people using the space also contributes to people with a visual impairment not feeling confident to explore GBS alone:

“I am afraid of being harassed or otherwise hurt by others, [like] men. I do not know the woods enough to make an escape. The woods are not clearly signposted enough.”

“Green spaces attract drug dealers and others, so are not always safe. You are isolated in spaces like that if there is trouble and people know from your white cane that you are vulnerable.”

## **Improvements to GBS access**

We asked respondents what is the one thing that would significantly improve their personal experience of GBS. The common themes include improvements to navigation, pathways, facilities, and attitudes towards disabled people.

Better signage was noted by many as an improvement to be made, including the use of a larger font and better colour contrast...

“My issue is, that it's very hard trying to find your way around. Sometimes these signposts are so small, or they're imprinted in like wooden signs. And then it's trying to find a kind of accessible map that isn't posted either in a bush or on some grass. I can't go on to the grass to go and have a look. Trying to read it from a distance because the map is already small, is really

hard. I would rather have it where they would have maybe something like an accessible map that you could kind of basically take or a shop where you could go to and get an accessible map. Some of the English Heritage sites do that. But a lot of the country parks around here are quite inaccessible.”

Colour contrast is not only reserved for signage. One participant told us that “brushed stainless steel bollards may look very tasteful, but they don’t reflect light and often match the colour of the surrounding area” making it difficult to navigate.

Some respondents also noted that having more signage would be helpful...

“More signage regarding the map of the area clearly showing cafes and toilets.”

Another navigation aid that respondents positively mentioned was having someone to visit GBS with. Not everyone has someone they can go with, but one participant came up with an interesting solution...

“It would be amazing if a guide was provided who knows the place well and could explain things well. Then I’d be more likely to visit more frequently.”

Technology was a common theme when thinking about improvements to navigation. Respondents suggested audio descriptions, “accessible maps via phone or other accessible device” and “an audible guide, maybe an app on the phone, would be of help.”

A participant who finds depth perception a challenge told us of an interesting solution that she has spotted in a green space in the north of England which helps her navigate the space:

“I know one place I went up North, I can’t remember the name of it now, but they had their bollards they’d put up the stakes they put in the ground, and they actually had really bright contrasting paint on top of them. They did fluorescent orange for one walkway. Then there was another one with like a fluorescent yellow for another walkway. [...] You could actually almost guide yourself around and look for the next marker to follow the pathway, if you had any sight at all.”

Improvements to pathways were also suggested. They include:

“Tactile paving at the gates, having good contrast, edging on edge of grass so you can tap it with your stick, light concrete so if it is white, you can find it between the green [grass] and the path.”

“Better pathways and accessible places to park my chair next to a bench or picnic table so I can sit with the family without getting the chair covered or stuck in mud.”

“I am surrounded by fields, have a nature park just a few miles away, lots of country lanes. The only negative is no foot paths, so we battle with main road traffic to access.”

Improvements to the planning stage of accessing GBS were suggested, including “improved information on council/county websites about accessible green spaces” and making it “easier to find comprehensive and accessible information online.”

In the focus groups, some respondents discussed that they would not know where to go to find accessibility information. One person highlighted that...

“So often, the people doing the access information are non-disabled people and their concept of access is often inaccurate or at best inadequate.”

In response, another person shared that they...

“Would want to know there was meaningful involvement and representation of disabled people with a range of impairments.”

Some respondents also noted the barriers to entering GBS, such as challenges with stiles and when using kissing gates, which a participant suggested to replace with “a 1.5m wide footpath gate.”

Many respondents expressed that they feel vulnerable when exploring GBS due to sharing the space with others. Some suggested improvements could be made in the form of...

“More security to ensure as many people as possible can enjoy them.”

“Separating pedestrian pathways and cycle/scooter tracks.”

“Separate 'walker only' pathways that are enforced so cyclists/scooters are forced to behave.”

“Not having dogs off leads.”

Throughout the research, some people told us that they would like more opportunities to access GBS and to feel equal to others:

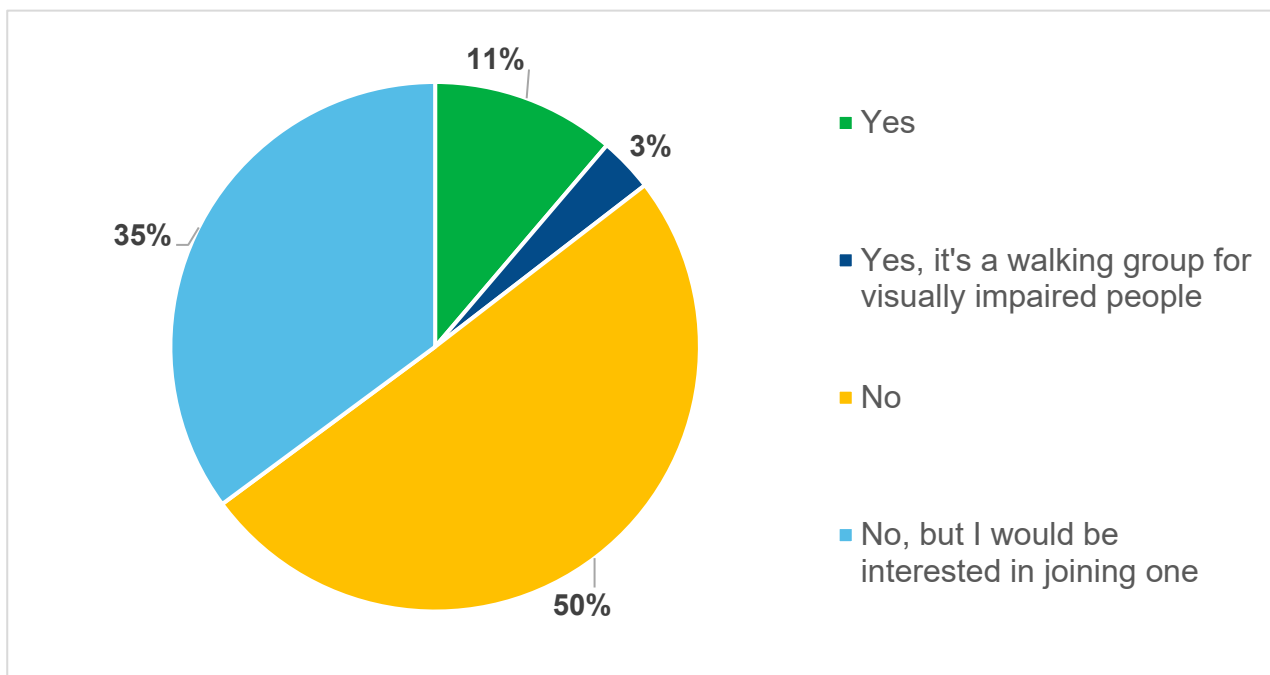
“There's no easy solution to everything but I'd love to feel more equal when taking the kids out and chair accessible picnic benches or chair places next to benches would help.”

### The role of walking groups

We asked respondents if they are a member of a walking group (Figure 27). 14% said they are a member of a walking group, which included 3% who are a member of a group specifically for visually impaired people. 35% of the respondents who are not a member of a walking group indicated they would be interested in joining one.

**Figure 27: Responses from survey question ‘We would like to explore the role of walking groups when accessing green spaces. Are you a member of a walking group?’**

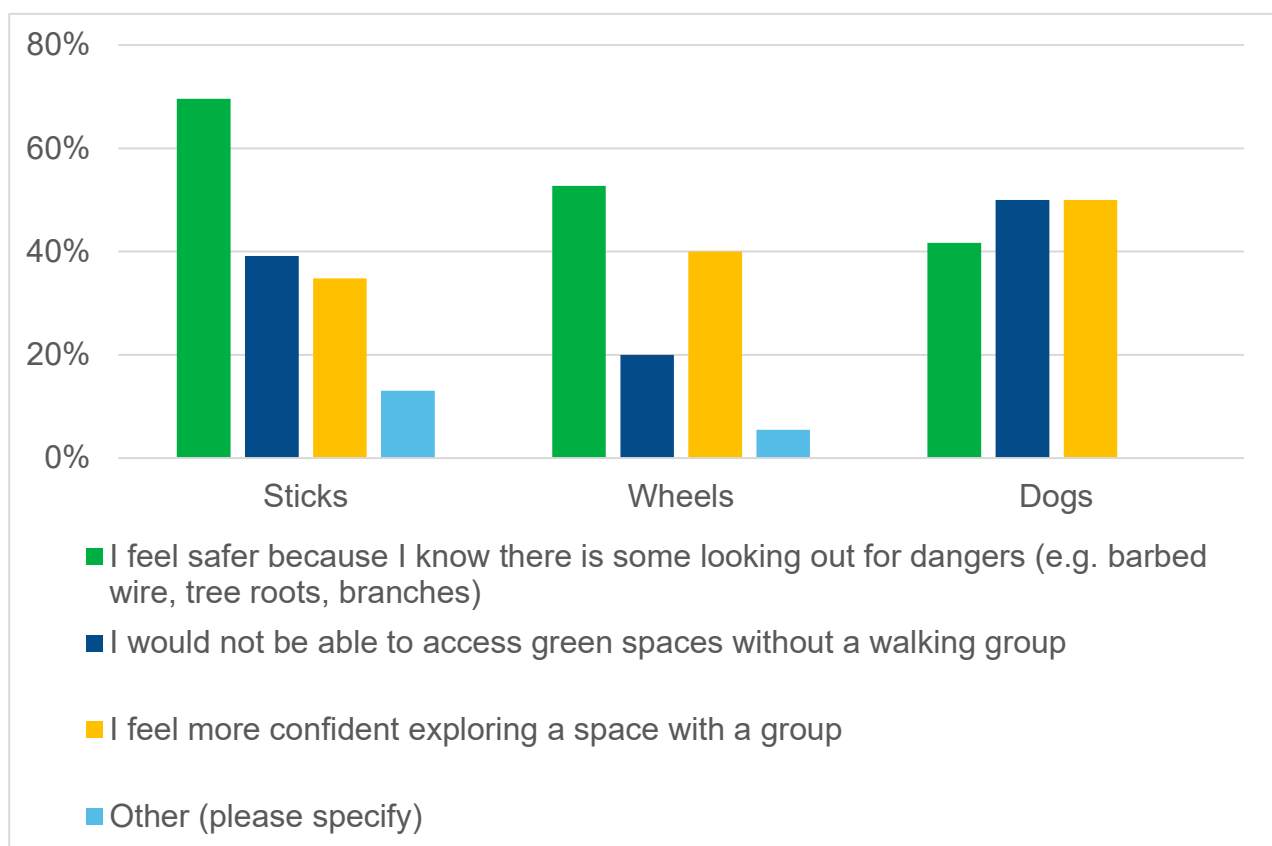
Pie chart showing total percentages of participants living in rural, urban, and suburban areas.



Respondents told us what having access to a walking group means to them (Figure 28). 55% of respondents feel safer because they know there is someone looking out for dangers. 36% feel more confident exploring a space with a group. 30% said they would not be able to access GBS without a walking group.

**Figure 168: Responses from survey question ‘What does having access to a walking group mean to you?’**

Bar graph shows response percentages of what it means for people with visual impairments to have access to walking groups when visiting GBS, broken down by assistive aids used.



39% of people who use sticks and 50% of people who are accompanied by a guide or assistance dog would not be able to access GBS without a walking group.

Some people told us how important the social interaction of walking groups is to them. Some people enjoy the social aspect of walking with other people...

“I enjoy rambling with other like-minded people and enjoy the social interaction.”

or find it fun...

“It's more fun with a group and you get to meet old and new friends.”

Whilst other people feel safer when walking in a group because they get help with buying a drink or going to the toilet.

## Challenges with walking groups

Some respondents highlighted the challenges they find in their walking groups...

“I'm part of different walking groups. So, if I want to access the countryside, I'd join a different walking group and they'd have volunteers to help when I'm on the walks. I think that the issue that I normally face is that because a lot of the members in the groups are older members. So, the walks have to be worked around their fitness levels, so they'd be quite short, so maybe three miles or four miles. But I would like to do 10-mile walks. So doing longer and more challenging walks can be very difficult here.”

“I'm the opposite way round, that I hold back the group who want to be zooming off, but I can't zoom off at the same pace as them because I'm unsure of where I am. Especially when they are going across fields. That really is quite an obstacle to come over finding a group that says, well we're prepared to go a bit slower because you need the extra time to be able to assess the area that you're in.”

## Recommendations

Accessibility of GBS is important to promote physical and mental wellbeing, social interaction, and overall quality of life. Based on findings from this research, the following recommendations would enhance the equitable accessibility of GBS for visitors with visual impairments but also for all visitors with disabilities more generally:

- Provide accessible **information**: To make GBS more accessible for individuals with visual impairments, it is essential to provide accessible



information in various formats, such as audio, large print, and/or braille, tactile mapping that highlights areas that are easy and difficult to reach, and colour schemes. This information should include details about accessible facilities, directions, and maps. Ensure information about the accessibility of GBS is available on websites, signage, and leaflets, and is frequently updated. Visitor sites such as parks should consider creating an [accessibility guide](#). Consider the use of navigational software designed for people with visual impairments such as [Navilens](#), on signs and ensure accurate information is available on Google maps and [OpenStreetMap](#).

- Improve **transportation** options: Improving transport, such as providing accessible public transport and accessible parking or drop-off points, can help individuals with visual impairments to visit GBS more easily. Consideration should also be given to creating wheelchair accessible routes and facilities.

**Tip: Consider making drop-off points more accessible so that they are close to the entrance and well signposted.**

- Enhance **physical access**: Ensuring GBS are physically accessible by addressing obstacles such as uneven terrain, potholes, overhanging trees, bushes, and other barriers can enhance the physical accessibility of green spaces and blue. Furthermore, entrances and exits, gates, turnstiles, and signage should be designed with the needs of individuals with visual impairments in mind. Consideration should also be given to providing separate routes for cyclists.

**Tip: Consider providing real-time information on websites about the condition of pathways.**

- Increase the availability of **facilities**: Facilities such as benches, toilets, cafes or pubs, picnic areas, water for assistance dogs and bins, including dog bins, are essential for the comfort and convenience of visitors to GBS. Consideration should be given to ensuring these



facilities are accessible for individuals with visual impairments and could also be navigated with the use of senses.

**Tip: It can be difficult for people with visual impairments to know about or pick up after their guide dog. Consider dedicated areas for dogs to relieve themselves.**

- Address **safety** concerns: Safety concerns, such as getting lost, falling, or becoming a victim of crime or negative attitudes from others, can be addressed by providing clear paths, high contrast signage, improving lighting, and increasing staff presence in GBS.

**Tip: Consider providing information on websites and signage about which areas are lit up at night and where there are dog free and bike free zones.**

- Offer **organised activities**: Organised activities, such as walks or tours, and the availability of walking groups can offer visually impaired individuals an opportunity to experience and enjoy green spaces with others. An example is the Guide Dogs 'My Sighted Guide' initiative where volunteers help people with visual impairments by guiding them around and describing the surroundings. These activities can also provide social interaction and help to overcome the challenges of visiting GBS alone.

**Tip: Consider supporting those who organise walking groups to access training opportunities or funding to ensure these groups are accessible to visually impaired members.**

Putting these recommendations into practice will require considerations on trade-offs and resource (time, money, space) constraints. It is best for these recommendations to be considered from the start when designing new GBS and involving people with visual impairments and other disabilities more generally in both planning stages. Review of existing GBS on a regular basis

is recommended to also ensure that GBS are designed, maintained and used in ways that can be equitably accessed and enjoyed by all people. Where early engagement is not possible and when retrofits are needed, discussions with local stakeholders will help to identify the changes that would yield the greatest return for the resources needed to implement these changes. Alignment with other sectors such as education and healthcare can also help in creating integrated approaches to addressing priorities and appropriately resourcing these changes.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Survey Data

## Appendix B: Survey Questions

## Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

### Appendix A

#### Survey data

**Table 9: Total percentages of green spaces respondents wanted to visit and actually visited during the last month.**

Space or Place	Visits	Every day	More than twice a week, but not every day	Twice a week	Once a week	Once or twice a month	Once every 2-3 months	Less often
Urban green space	Wanted to visit	8%	26%	14%	18%	19%	8%	4%
	Actually visited	4%	16%	16%	18%	20%	12%	7%
Grounds of a historic property	Wanted to visit	2%	13%	12%	14%	24%	21%	12%
	Actually visited	2%	10%	11%	13%	21%	15%	20%
Allotment or	Wanted to visit	5%	16%	15%	20%	17%	8%	10%

Space or Place	Visits	Every day	More than twice a week, but not every day	Twice a week	Once a week	Once or twice a month	Once every 2-3 months	Less often
community garden	Actually visited	2%	15%	15%	18%	19%	9%	10%
Woodland or forest	Wanted to visit	6%	11%	12%	20%	20%	18%	8%
	Actually visited	2%	9%	8%	13%	23%	15%	19%
Hill, mountain, or moorland	Wanted to visit	1%	7%	19%	17%	18%	18%	12%
	Actually visited	1%	6%	10%	14%	23%	22%	13%
Nature / wildlife reserve	Wanted to visit	5%	6%	7%	11%	26%	26%	15%
	Actually visited	2%	5%	5%	10%	16%	21%	27%
Fields / farmland / countryside	Wanted to visit	7%	9%	13%	17%	19%	18%	11%
	Actually visited	5%	7%	10%	8%	27%	15%	16%

**Table 10: Total percentages of blue spaces respondents wanted to visit and actually visited during the last month**

<b>Space or Place</b>	<b>Visits</b>	<b>Every day</b>	<b>More than twice a week, but not every day</b>	<b>Twice a week</b>	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>Once or twice a month</b>	<b>Once every 2-3 months</b>	<b>Less often</b>
<b>River</b>	<b>Wanted to visit</b>	5%	11%	8%	18%	22%	22%	8%
	<b>Actually visited</b>	3%	5%	9%	11%	21%	20%	19%
<b>Lake</b>	<b>Wanted to visit</b>	4%	8%	7%	12%	23%	26%	10%
	<b>Actually visited</b>	1%	4%	8%	21%	17%	15%	23%
<b>Canal</b>	<b>Wanted to visit</b>	1%	11%	5%	13%	25%	17%	16%
	<b>Actually visited</b>	2%	1%	6%	15%	19%	19%	23%
<b>Sea</b>	<b>Wanted to visit</b>	4%	7%	15%	12%	24%	22%	14%
	<b>Actually visited</b>	2%	4%	5%	10%	25%	28%	20%

## Appendix B

### Survey Questions

Q3 In the following questions, we would like to know a bit more about you.

Can you tell us who's completing this survey?

- I am filling it in for myself
- I am a carer/support worker filling it in on behalf of the person I support

Q4 Which gender do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

Q5 Which ethnicity are you?

- White (British/Irish/Other)
- Asian / British Asian
- Black / Black British
- Mixed race
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

Q6 What is your date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy)?

---

Q7 Which of these impairments, if any, impact or limit your daily activities or the work you can do? Please tick all that apply.

	Yes
Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sight	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dexterity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Memory	<input type="checkbox"/>
Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-visible disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am just getting older	<input type="checkbox"/>



Q8 What best describes the **area** you live in?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

Q9 What **type** of green spaces do you visit, or would you like to visit?

- Rural
- Urban
- Both rural and urban
- None

Q10 What types of **green or blue spaces** do you know of **in your area**?  
(please tick a maximum of five options)

- Urban green space (e.g. park, field, playground)
- Grounds of a historic property or country park
- Allotment or community garden
- Woodland or forest
- River
- Lake
- Canal
- Hill, mountain or moorland
- Beach / other coastline / sea
- Nature / wildlife reserve
- Fields / farmland / countryside
- Other (please specify)

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I don't know of any green spaces in my area

Carry Forward Selected Choices from "What types of green or blue spaces do you know of in your area? (please tick a maximum of five options)"

Q11 You said you know of the following green spaces. Which of these areas have you **visited during the last month**? (please tick all that apply)

- Urban green space (e.g. park, field, playground)
- Grounds of a historic property or country park
- Allotment or community garden
- Woodland or forest
- River
- Lake
- Canal
- Hill, mountain or moorland
- Beach / other coastline / sea
- Nature / wildlife reserve
- Fields / farmland / countryside
- Other (please specify)

---

I don't know of any green spaces in my area

Q12 In the **last 12 months**, how often have you **wanted to** visit?

- Every day
- More than twice a week, but not every day
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Once every 2-3 months
- Less often
- I have not visited this green space in the last 12 months

Q13 In the **last 12 months**, how often have you **actually** visited?

- Every day
- More than twice a week, but not every day
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Once every 2-3 months
- Less often
- I have not visited this green space in the last 12 months

Q14 Thinking about the green spaces you visit, what **transport** do you take to get there? (please tick all that apply)

- By foot
- Car (driven by myself)
- Car (driven by someone else)
- Taxi
- Bus
- Train
- Community transport service
- Wheelchair / mobility scooter
- Other (please specify)

Q15 How long does it take you to travel to the green space you visit most often?

- 0-15 mins
  - 15-30 mins
  - 30-60 mins
  - More than 1 hour
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Display This Question:

If In the last 12 months, how often have you wanted to visit: Everyday

Q16 Generally, do any of the following barriers prevent you from visiting green spaces more often? (please tick all that apply)

- I have no interest in visiting green spaces
  - The green spaces I would like to visit are not accessible for me
  - I find the green spaces I would like to visit overwhelming
  - Visiting green spaces takes too much time and energy
  - The journey to and from green spaces is too difficult for me
  - I live too far away from the green spaces I would like to visit
  - Being outdoors negatively affects my health or sight (e.g. weather conditions, temperature, sunlight)
  - I don't have anybody to go with
  - I don't feel safe going on my own
  - There is a lack of facilities (e.g. toilets, seating)
  - There is nothing to do there
  - I'm unsure about the safety risks involved
  - Inaccessible transport options
  - Other (please specify)
-

Display This Question:

If generally, do any of the following barriers prevent you from visiting green spaces more often? Inaccessible transport options

Q17 You said that **inaccessible transport options** prevent you from visiting green spaces. What makes it inaccessible? (please tick all that apply)

- Lack of / no car parking
  - Infrequent service
  - Cost
  - Navigating bus stops
  - Navigating train stations
  - Arranging passenger assistance
  - Finding a priority seat
  - Finding a space for my wheelchair
  - Unsafe / inadequate connections by foot or cycle
  - Other (please specify)
- 

Q18 **Who** do you typically visit green spaces with? (please tick all that apply)

- By myself
- With children
- With friends / family
- With a (guide) dog
- With an organised group
- With my carer



Other (please specify)

---

Q19 Do you use any of the following **assistance aids** when visiting green spaces?

Cane

Guide or assistance dog

Manual wheelchair

Powered wheelchair

Mobility scooter

Off-road wheelchair or mobility scooter

Walking stick / crutches

Walking frame / trolley / rollator

Mobile phone apps (e.g. access to signs)

Other (please specify)

---

Q20 Generally, how confident are you **visiting green spaces alone** or with your guide dog?

- Extremely confident
  - Somewhat confident
  - Somewhat unconfident
  - Extremely unconfident
  - N/A - I do not visit green spaces alone or with my guide dog
- 

Display This Question:

If Generally, how confident are you visiting green spaces alone or with your guide dog? = Extremely confident

Or Generally, how confident are you visiting green spaces alone or with your guide dog? = Somewhat confident

Q21 Please tell us **why you feel confident** visiting green spaces alone or with your guide dog.

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Display This Question:

If Generally, how confident are you visiting green spaces alone or with your guide dog? = Somewhat unconfident

Or Generally, how confident are you visiting green spaces alone or with your guide dog? = Extremely unconfident

Q22 Please tell us **why you do not feel confident** visiting green spaces alone.

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Q23 What aspects of green spaces do you find inaccessible or challenging?

- Getting to and from the green space
  - Entering and exiting the green space (e.g. using gates)
  - Transport (e.g. access to public or community transport, parking)
  - Pathways or terrain
  - Facilities (e.g. benches, shelters, cafes, toilets)
  - Navigating the green space using signage and maps
  - Navigating crowds or other people
  - Safety (e.g. feeling secure, park surveillance, fencing, etc.)
  - Other people's attitudes towards disabled people
  - Other (please specify)
-

## Q24 Planning to visit the green space

If any, what aspects of **planning to visit the green space** do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?

- Locating / awareness of green spaces near me
  - Information about accessible facilities
  - Information available in accessible formats (whether in print or online)
  - Anticipating crowds
  - Anticipating weather conditions
  - Other (please specify)
- 
- None

## Q25 Getting to and from the green space

If any, what aspects of **getting to and from the green space** do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?

- Finding someone to go with
  - Covering the cost of someone to go with me
  - Public or community transport
  - Accessible car parking or drop off point
  - Time commitment
  - Unsafe / inadequate routes by foot or cycle
  - Routes on pavements and across roads
  - Other (please specify)
- 

- None

## Q26 Entering the green space

If any, what aspects of **entering the green space** do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?

- Locating entrance signage
  - Understanding or reading entrance signage
  - Finding entrance
  - Using gates or doors to enter
  - Using turnstiles
  - Using stiles
  - Visitor information points
  - Being able to get an idea of the space before entering
  - An understanding of how long it will take to explore the space
  - Other (please specify)
- 
- None

### Q27 On-site experience of the green space

If any, what aspects of **pathways or terrains** do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?

- Too narrow
  - Lack of tactile wayfinding
  - Uneven terrain or potholes
  - Overhanging trees or bushes
  - Paths with turns (i.e. paths that are not straight)
  - Navigating paths shared by pedestrian and cycle access
  - Identifying the condition of pathways or terrains (e.g. slippery, muddy, icy)
  - Stiles
  - Barbed wire
  - Livestock
  - Land owners
  - Fear of dogs not on leads
  - Safety concerns for my guide dog (e.g. barbed wire, sheep wire)
  - Other (please specify)
- 
- None



Q28 What **facilities** do you generally like to have in a green space?

- Benches
  - Shelters
  - Cafes / pubs
  - Toilets
  - Picnic area
  - Drinking water for guide and assistance dogs
  - Bins or dog bins
  - Ponds or rivers for swimming, fishing or water activity
  - Bridges
  - Steps or stairs
  - Other (please specify)
- 
- None

Carry Forward Selected Choices from "What facilities do you generally like to have in a green space?"

Q29 You told us what facilities you generally like to have in a green space. Please tell us how important they are to you.	Somewhat important	Very important	Extremely important
Benches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shelters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cafes / pubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toilets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnic area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drinking water for guide and assistance dogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bins or dog bins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ponds or rivers for swimming, fishing or water activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bridges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Steps or stairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

None

Carry Forward Selected Choices from "You told us what facilities you generally like to have in a green space. Please tell us how important they are to you."

Q30 In terms of accessibility, how easy or difficult do you find the following facilities to use?	Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Somewhat easy	Very easy
Benches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shelters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cafes / pubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toilets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picnic area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drinking water for guide and assistance dogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bins or dog bins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ponds or rivers for swimming, fishing or water activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Bridges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Steps or stairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> None	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q31 If any, what aspects of **navigating the space** do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?

- Locating signage
  - Understanding / reading signage
  - Accessing maps
  - Accessing information about the space
  - Accessing leaflets and printed materials
  - Engaging in organised activities to explore the space (e.g. nature walks, tours, talks)
  - Access to handrails
  - Step-free access
  - Secure fencing / railings
  - Other (please specify)
- 

None

**Q32 Exiting the green space**

If any, what aspects of **exiting the green space** do you generally find inaccessible or challenging?

- Locating exit signage
  - Understanding or reading exit signage
  - Finding exit
  - Using gates or doors to exit
  - Using turnstiles
  - Using stiles
  - Other (please specify)
- 

None

**Q33** What is the one thing that would significantly **improve your personal experience** of green spaces?

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**Q34** What is your **biggest worry or concern** when accessing green spaces?

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Q35 Thinking about your accessibility needs while visiting green spaces, are you **concerned or worried** about any of the following?

- Being on my own / isolated
  - Hurting myself
  - Getting lost
  - Getting help
  - Visiting after dark
  - Lack of / poor lighting
  - Lack of staff (e.g. patrol)
  - Anti-social behaviour
  - Other people that may be there
  - Fear of dogs not on leads
  - Safety of my guide dog
  - Poorly maintained sites
  - Lack of facilities (e.g. toilets, benches)
  - Lack of information to assess risk
  - Fear of crime (including physical or verbal abuse, theft, damage to car)
  - Other (please specify)
-





None

End of Block: Concerns when visiting green spaces

Start of Block: Navigating green spaces with tech, sound, smell and touch

Q36 Do you use any **Apps** when accessing and navigating green spaces?  
(E.g. Google maps, Navilens, Be my eyes)

Yes, namely

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No

Display This Question:

If Do you use any Apps when accessing and navigating green spaces? (E.g. Google maps, Navilens, Be my eyes = Yes, namely

Q37 Do you have any challenges using your technology in green spaces?

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Q38 Please tell us about any Apps with useful features that you use in urban areas that could be used in green spaces.

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Q39 Do you navigate green spaces with **sound, smell or touch**? (please tick all that apply)

- Sound
- Smell
- Touch
- None

Display This Question:

If Do you navigate green spaces with sound, smell or touch? (please tick all that apply) = Sound

Q40 Please tell us how **sound** helps you to navigate green spaces.

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Display This Question:

If Do you navigate green spaces with sound, smell or touch? (please tick all that apply) = Smell

Q41 Please tell us how **smell** helps you navigate green spaces.

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Display This Question:

If Do you navigate green spaces with sound, smell or touch? (please tick all that apply) = Touch

Q42 Please tell us how **touch** helps you navigate green spaces.

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Q43 We would like to explore the role of **walking groups** when accessing green spaces. Are you a member of a walking group?

Yes, namely:

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Yes, it's a walking group for visually impaired people, namely:

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No

No, but I would be interested in joining one

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Display This Question:

If We would like to explore the role of walking groups when accessing green spaces. Are you a member... = Yes, namely:

Or We would like to explore the role of walking groups when accessing green spaces. Are you a member... = Yes, it's a walking group for visually impaired people, namely:

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Understanding the experiences of people with visual impairments that visit green and blue spaces. JP050

Q44 What does having access to a walking group mean to you?

- I would not be able to access green spaces without a walking group
  - I feel safer because I know there is some looking out for dangers (e.g. barbed wire, tree roots, branches)
  - I feel more confident exploring a space with a group
  - Other (please specify)
- 

None

Q45 What does having access to green spaces mean to you?

- It improves my physical health
  - It improves my mental health
  - It improves my social life
  - I can take part in activities (social groups, societies, festivals, etc.)
  - I feel more connected to my community
  - I feel more connected to nature
  - Other (please specify)
- 

None

Q46 Aside from visiting green spaces, what other activities do you engage in to feel well / happy?

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Q47 Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about when navigating green spaces?

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# Appendix C

## Focus Group Questions

### 1. Explore barriers to visiting in general

We'd like to start by asking you whether visiting (or being able to visit) green spaces and increasing your connection with nature is important to you?

We're going to talk about the barriers to visiting green spaces in general.

- If any, what areas would you like to visit but do not visit due to accessibility challenges?

Prompt:

Explore specific barriers that come up, why they're barriers and what would work better.

- Generally, what type of information do you look for before deciding whether to visit a green space?

Prompts:

What information would you need to know about the space to make an informed decision to visit or not?

Can you think of any good examples of green spaces that provide helpful information? Online or print?

If there are observers:

- Do the observers have any questions they would like to ask the group?

Short comfort break

### 2. Explore challenges when exploring/using green spaces

Now we're going to talk about the challenges you face when exploring/using green spaces.

- What challenges do you come across when navigating green spaces? How could these challenges be overcome? (Probe for solutions where possible)

Prompts:

Using board walks, gates, stiles

Locating, understanding, and reading signage

Using pathways

- How could your experience of navigating green spaces be improved?
- Do weather conditions have an impact on how accessible green spaces are for you? How could these challenges be overcome? (Probe for solutions where possible)

Prompt:

e.g., Not being able to identify icy or slippery pathways or terrain.

If there are observers:

- Do the observers have any questions they would like to ask the group?

### **3. Explore use of assistance aids and safety concerns**

#### **Assistance aids**

- Do you come across any challenges when using assistance aids in green spaces?

Prompt:

Explore use of white cane, guide dogs, assistance dogs, mobile phone apps, sighted guide

Are there any aspects of green spaces that limit the use of your assistance aids? In what way? How could this be overcome?

- What things allow you to access and use green spaces?

Prompt:

Explore guide dogs, use of technology, other people, etc.

### Safety concerns

- If anything, what makes you feel unsafe when visiting green spaces?

Prompt:

e.g., Strangers, dogs off leads, barbed wire

- What would make you feel safer when visiting green spaces?

If there are observers:

- Do the observers have any questions they would like to ask the group?



