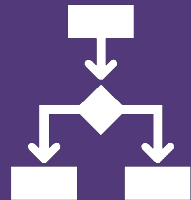


Boater Community Survey

Health Select Committee

June 2024

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Boater Survey: Background

Boaters are a seldom heard community



Wanted to build a better understanding



Around **500** boats on the K&A Canal in Wiltshire



Canal and River Trust reported **2,000** individual boat sightings in 2022-23



We wanted to find out more



The Walk

- 40 council and partner staff volunteered
- Weather was kind
- Walkers provided summaries of their conversations, highlighting:
 - The joys of the life on the water and;
 - As well as some challenges
- As a weekday, many boaters were at work
- Walkers feedback on **infrastructure** and **facilities**

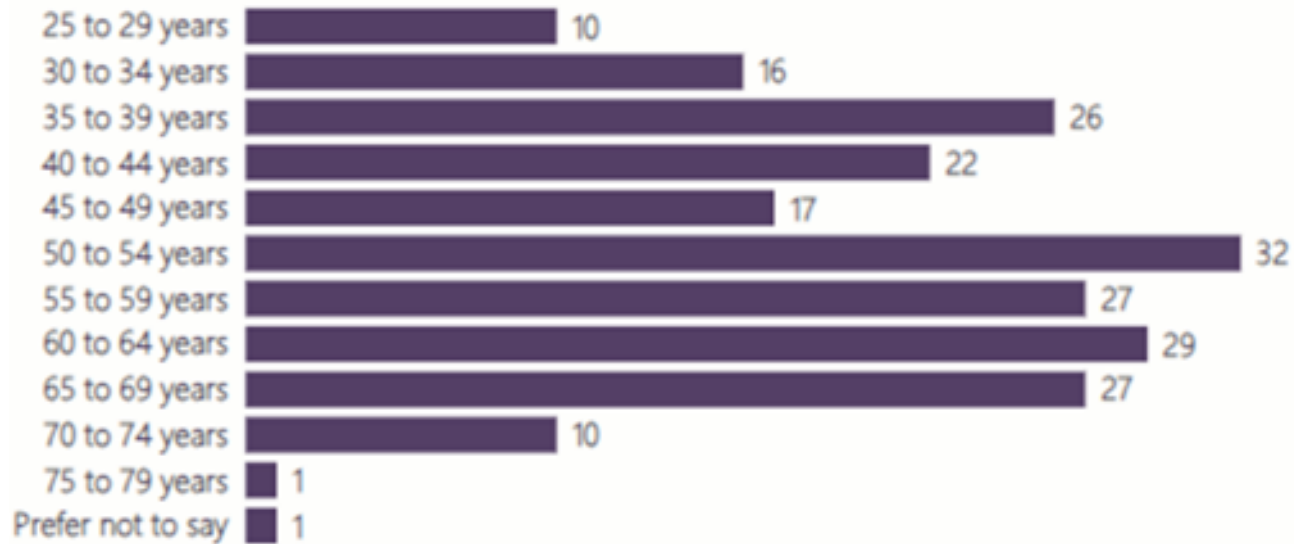


The Survey

- 68 questions across multiple topics
- **218 responses** - around 10% of estimated population
- Most completed online –
 - 8 returned by post around 20 returned to collection points



Boater Survey: Key insights



- Compared to GRT communities, those who responded were **older**
- Only 11% respondents (n=24) had children under the age of 18 on their boat



62.6%

of respondents mentioned the **benefits** of the **environment** and **community** as reasons for living on a boat

37.3%

mentioned **cost**

When asked what they liked about living on a boat, respondents portrayed a **desire** for a life integrated with **nature** and **community**, emphasising values like **freedom**, **peace**, and the **beauty** of a simpler more **affordable** lifestyle. The themes revolve around the appreciation of **natural** surroundings, community **bonds**, and a **tranquil** living environment.

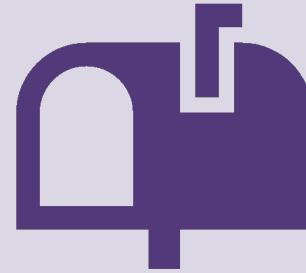
Challenges faced in boater life emphasised issues with facility **access**, mooring difficulties, **maintenance**, **cost** concerns and the particular hardship faced during **winter**.

The themes reflect the practical and logistical obstacles in maintaining a boating lifestyle.



Access to services

16% of respondents did not have a way of collecting their post



63% said accessing dentistry was either *difficult or very difficult*

40% found it *difficult or very difficult* to access mental wellbeing support



Almost **40%** of respondents said accessing clean drinking water *difficult or very difficult*



Accommodation

89% lived on their boats all year round

Almost **1/4** had been on their boat for **10 years or more**

Almost **1/4** had been on their boat for **less than 2 year**



68% had no plans to move off the canal

22.5% planned to move at some point in the future

57% said their boat needed repairs; only 14% said this was affordable

Accommodation

Challenges

Finding reliable, budget friendly tradespeople

Constant need for maintenance

General Health

28.9% rated their health as fair
13.3% rated as bad or very bad



Reasons for not registering:

- Moving in and out of the area
- No fixed address
- De-registered for moving onto a boat
- Lack of ID
- Not choosing to



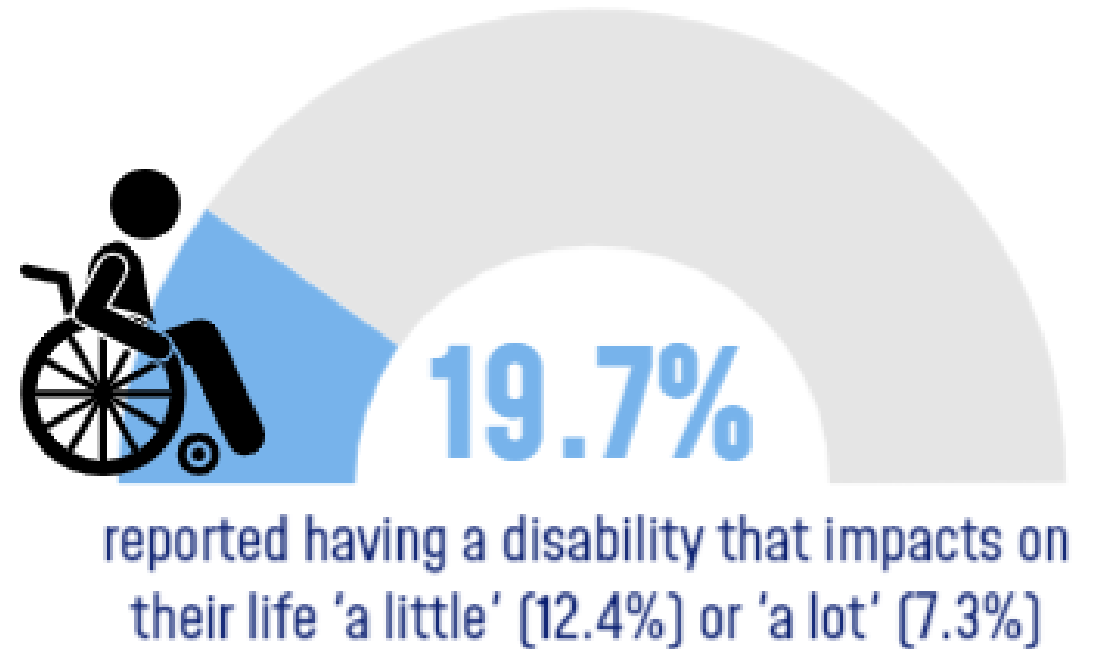
Health Screening and Invitation Barriers

- Access to postal services
- Recent closure of Post Restante in Bradford on Avon – left many without address

Disability

23.4% of respondents said they have a long term physical or mental health condition (they did not consider this to be a disability)

10.6% of these people say these conditions impact on their daily activities



Health Behaviours

26.6% reported smoking

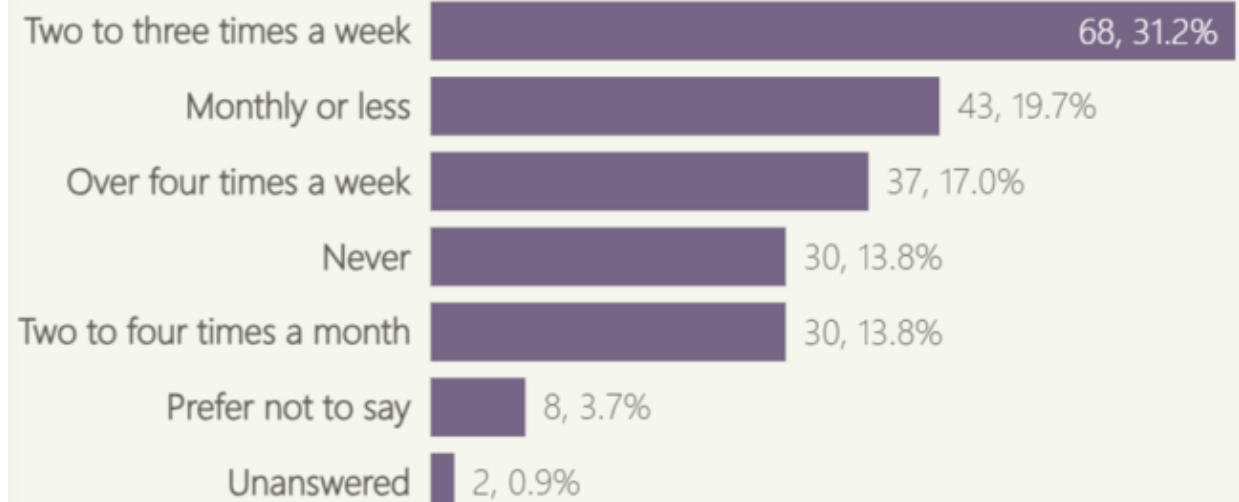
8.7% of respondents reported vaping

13.8% reported using substances

- most common - cannabis



How often do you consume a drink containing alcohol?



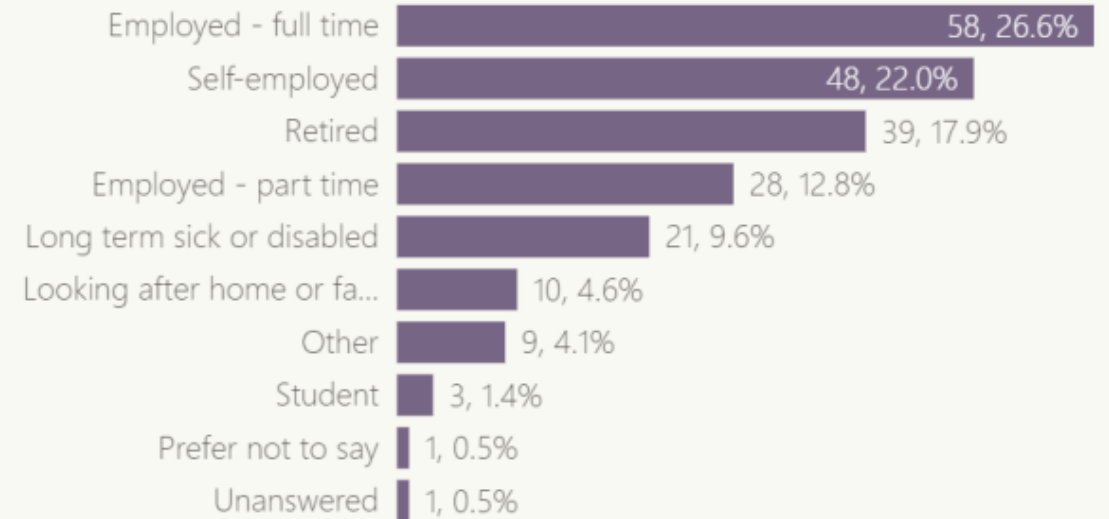
Travel and Work

Car or other motor vehicle provide main mode of transport

Majority of respondents had home based employment

Nearly two thirds are currently in employment

Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?





Wellbeing

Boaters were asked about their emotional wellbeing and how safe and supported they feel.



11.5% of boaters rated their emotional wellbeing as either 'bad' or 'very bad'.

60%

of boaters feel lonely or isolated 'some of the time' or 'all of the time'.



Safety



Stigma and Discrimination

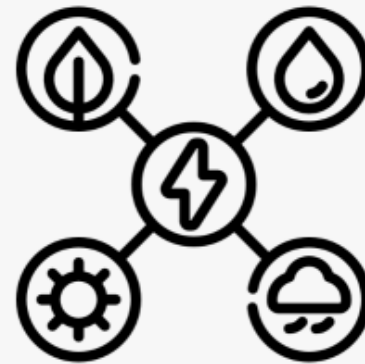
- Verbal insults
- Derogatory comments
- Challenges accessing services
- Facing prejudice from local communities
- Feeling marginalised or judge for choosing to live on a boat



Energy

Range of fuels:

- diesel
- solid fuel
- gas bottles
- electricity



Those struggling financially may forage for wood to burn – not it's without problems

Solar power and insulation: lots of good intentions but expense can be **prohibitive**



Marinas: access to (expensive) mains electricity



**Energy
Challenges**

Cost



**Engineer /
Installer
availability**

**Material
availability**

Regulatory issues

The first all-electric
powered narrow
boat has recently
been launched!

Facilities

Top 3 most important access needs



85.8%

Of respondents feel that safety and security is important



85.2%

feel that ease of access and condition of the canal bank is important



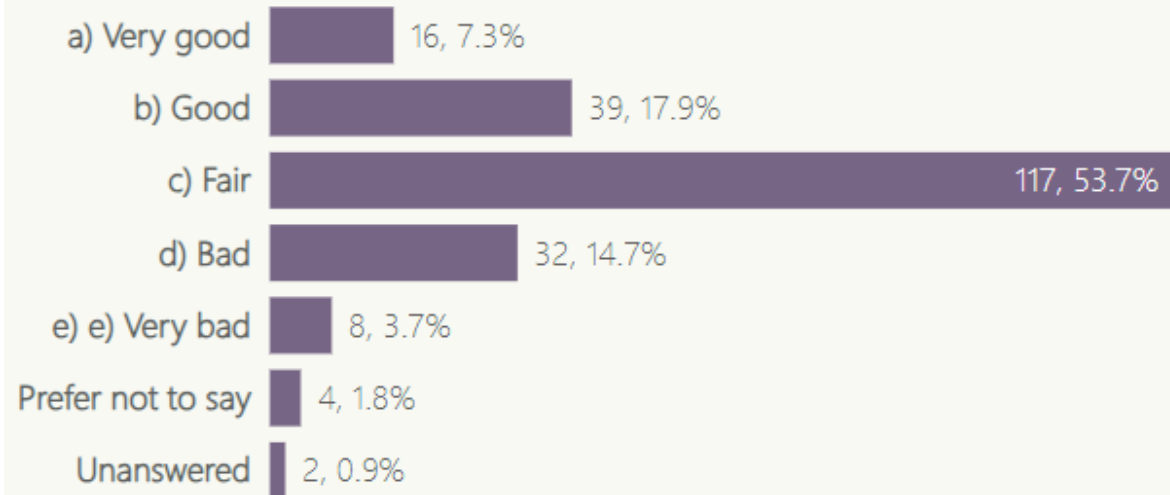
72.2%

view services such as sewerage and rubbish as important

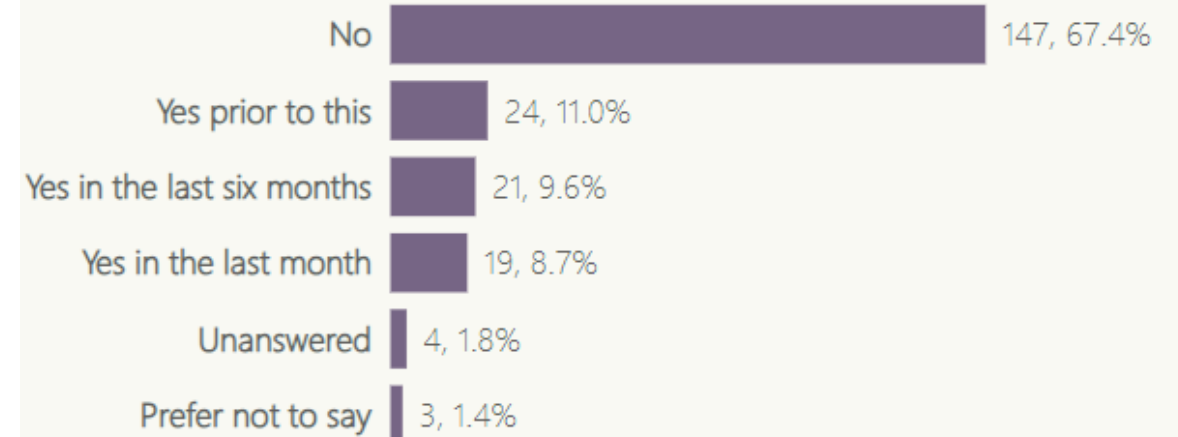
37% said that accessing clean drinking water was difficult or very difficult

Finances

How would you rate your finances?



Have you ever been hungry but not eaten because you couldn't afford or get access to food?



Challenges:

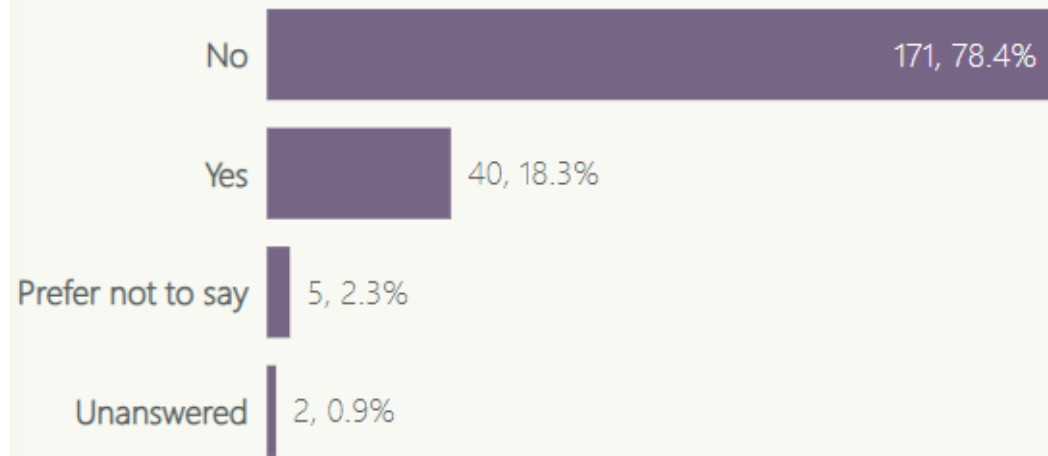
Online banking and accessing cash

Around **30%** have gone **hungry**; only **17%** used a foodbank or community fridge

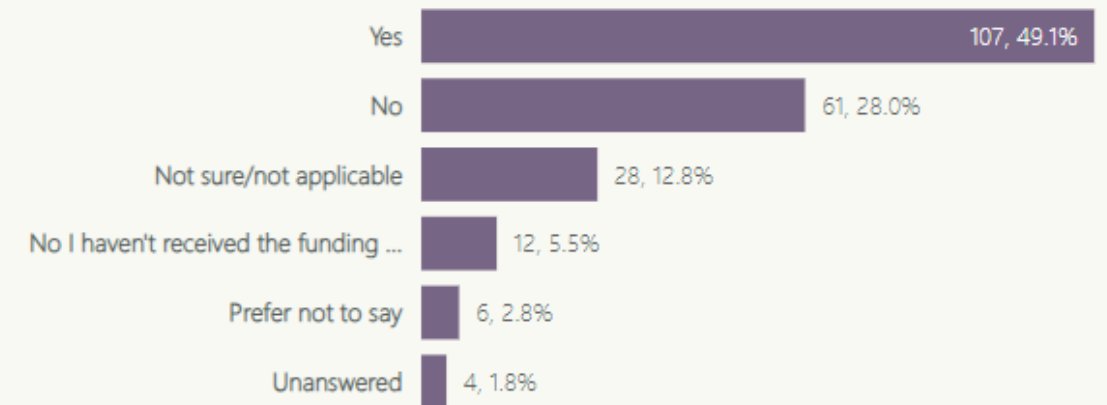
Changes to the administration of the support fund is underway

Finances

Do you receive statutory benefits?



Have you been able to apply for and receive the alternative funding versions of the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme, and £200 Alternative Fuels Payment due to your home mooring being non-residential?



201 boaters supported by HSF4 payments in 2023/24, receiving £400, topped up by a further £200

Insights from the voices of our Boater Community, is vital to our continuous improvement journey – resulting in the following recommendations:

Consider ways to enable Boaters to have improved access to clean water and waste collection

Explore opportunities for Boaters to access boat repair services or support

Increase engagement and awareness of support groups for communities to access; focus on male-based support

Understand the barriers to access dentistry services and explore development of pathways to increase accessibility

Work to increase access to foodbanks and break down barriers around the negative perception of using such services

Raise awareness of stop smoking support within the Boating community

Questions?

