

# **HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Findings**

**HMP Perth  
April 2023**

# HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Findings HMP Perth, April 2023

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
Introduction .....	5
Method and limitations.....	5
Note on presentation of data .....	5
Participant Profile .....	7
Demographic information.....	7
Sample representativeness .....	7
Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody .....	9
Induction .....	9
Treatment in reception.....	9
Standard 2: Decency.....	10
Food .....	10
Toiletries, showering and laundry .....	10
Standard 3: Personal Safety .....	12
Perception of safety.....	12
Abuse, threats, bullying or assault by staff or other prisoners .....	12
Reporting abuse, threats, bullying or assault.....	14
Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority.....	15
Searching .....	15
Accessing personal property .....	15
Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection against Mistreatment .....	16
Respect .....	16
Consultation with prisoners.....	16
Complaints.....	16
Personal officers .....	17
Engagement with Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs).....	18
Standard 6: Purposeful Activity .....	19
Access to education, training and work .....	19
Fresh air, gym/sports and library access .....	19
Time out of cell .....	20
Religious practice .....	21
Phones .....	21
Visits .....	21
Progression and case management support .....	22

Standard 7: Transitions into the Community .....	23
Preparedness for life outside prison .....	23
Support for release .....	23
Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing.....	25
Health assessment on arrival .....	25
Access to health services .....	25
Quality of medical services .....	27
Support for disabilities and long-term health conditions.....	28
Support for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and mental health .....	28
Open Question (General Comments): Thematic Analysis.....	30

## Executive Summary

### Background

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Perth on 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The questionnaire was distributed to 270 randomly selected prisoners held in HMP Perth on the first day of data collection, with a response rate of 73% (198 responses).

The data is presented according to the HMIPS inspection standards. Standard 8 (Organisational effectiveness) is omitted as this is not addressed in the prisoner survey.

### Standard 1: Lawful and transparent custody

- Just over half of respondents (52%) reported being treated well on arrival at HMP Perth, but less than half said they were offered an induction (45%).

### Standard 2: Decency

- Most respondents (74%) rated the quality of food negatively and 36% reported rarely or never getting enough to eat at mealtimes.
- Most said they could have a shower every day (91%) and have their clothes washed at least once a week (95%).

### Standard 3: Personal safety

- Most respondents (61%) reported feeling safe most or all the time at HMP Perth; 20% reported rarely or never feeling safe.
- More than half (57%) reported having witnessed staff members abusing, threatening, bullying or assaulting another prisoner and 36% reported experiencing this type of behaviour from staff themselves.
- Two in five (40%) reported having been abused, bullied, threatened, or assaulted by another prisoner.

### Standard 4: Effective, courteous and humane use of authority

- Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) felt that they were given a reasonable explanation either every time or most times they were searched, or their cell was searched.
- Most (79%) said the system for accessing personal property worked badly.

### Standard 5: Respect, autonomy, and protection against mistreatment

- Just under two thirds of respondents (62%) reported being treated with respect by staff all or most of the time.
- The majority of respondents (86%) thought that the complaints system worked badly.
- The majority of respondents (59%) reported that they had a personal officer (PO); more than half of these reported that their PO was helpful (52%).

### Standard 6: Purposeful activity

- Just over half of respondents (57%) said that it was easy to access education. However, the majority said that it was difficult to access skills training (56%) and prison jobs (52%).

- Just under three quarters (74%) said they were able to spend at least one hour outdoors in the fresh air in the previous week.
- Most respondents (87%) said they were able to access the gym or play sports at least once in the last week. However, less than a quarter (23%) said they were able to access the library at least once in the last week.
- Two thirds of respondents (67%) said they were able to get two or more hours out of their cells on the previous weekday (a Monday), and a similar percentage (71%) said they could do so on the previous Saturday.
- Of those who said they practiced a religion (87 respondents), 38% reported that they were well supported to do so, while 30% felt poorly supported.
- Of those who were aware of visiting arrangements, 60% said they were able to access in-person visits every week in the last month, and 47% said they had access to video visits every week.
- Of those who received visits, the majority said their visitors were treated with respect by staff all or most of the time (63%). More than one in ten (14%) said their visitors were rarely or never treated with respect by staff.

### **Standard 7: Transitions from custody into the community**

- Eighteen (10%) respondents said that they were due for release in the next six weeks. Of these, more than half (56%) did not feel well prepared for life outside prison.
- In particular, 73% said they were not getting the help they needed to set up support for their mental health on their release.

### **Standard 9: Health and wellbeing**

- Most respondents (89%) said they were seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival for an assessment of their health needs.
- The majority of respondents reported that it was difficult to access all forms of healthcare.
- Two health services were rated positively by the majority of respondents: 55% rated addictions services as good, while 53% reported that service from the nurses/nurse practitioners was good.
- More than half of respondents rated the following services negatively: mental healthcare (74%), prison-based social work (65%); doctor (59%); dental services (59%); and pharmacist (56%).
- Of those with a disability or long-term health condition, 15% said that they were well supported to manage their condition, while 57% said they were badly supported to do so.
- A substantial percentage of respondents reported having needed support for issues relating to alcohol use (25%), drug use (51%) or mental health (68%) since arriving at HMP Perth.
- Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, the majority (57%) said they had received support which had been helpful.
- Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 28% said they had received support that had been helpful.
- And of the 126 who said they had needed support for their mental health, less than one in five (17%) said they had received support which had been helpful.

## **Introduction**

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Perth on 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

In total, 633 prisoners were held in HMP Perth on the first day of the survey. A randomly selected sample of 270 were asked to complete the survey, of whom 198 completed and returned the questionnaire, providing a 73% response rate.

The data is presented according to the HMIPS inspection standards. There are no results for Standard 8 as there are no questions relating to this standard in the prisoner survey.

## **Method and limitations**

The survey was conducted by HMIPS staff. The day before the survey took place, HMIPS requested a full list of prisoners held in HMP Perth, including their cell location. This was used to distribute and collect the surveys. Anonymous data on the characteristics of the prisoner population (including age group, ethnicity, sentence type, citizenship and gender) was also requested in order to understand how closely the sample of survey respondents matched those of the overall prison population (see “Participant Profile” section).

HMIPS staff sought to speak to each selected participant, to explain the survey and ask if they wished to take part. Those who wanted to take part were given a paper copy of the questionnaire along with a privacy notice, a pen and an envelope. They were also asked if they would need assistance to complete the questionnaire and provided with this assistance later in the day if required by a HMIPS staff member. Those who did not wish to take part were not given the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire, seal it in the envelope provided and to hand it back to HMIPS staff when they returned later in the day. Staff returned to each hall several times throughout the day, and the following day, to collect completed questionnaires.

The responses to each completed questionnaire were entered into a digital version of the same survey by HMIPS staff on site, and these results were analysed.

All digital data generated during the pre-inspection surveys is stored securely on HMIPS secure servers, and hard copies of completed surveys are securely held according to Scottish Government data protection guidelines. Hard copies of the surveys are destroyed after the inspection has been completed.

As with all survey data, the findings reported here are limited by a number of factors, including non-response and response bias.

## **Note on presentation of data**

For each question in the following report, any non-responses or invalid responses have been excluded from the analysis. When conducting the data entry, responses were marked as invalid where a respondent had ticked two or more answers, or

where it was not clear which answer they had selected. Where any other type of response has been excluded in this analysis, this is explained in the text.

Each chart gives a figure (N = X) to show how many responses are included in the analysis.

## **Participant Profile**

### **Demographic information**

The survey asked a series of demographic questions, the results of which are summarised below, excluding those who did not disclose their demographic information.

All respondents were over the age of 21. Of those who disclosed their age, 40% were aged 30 or younger; 35% were aged 31-40; 23% were aged 41-50, and 13% were aged 51 or over.

All respondents were male, with 95% self-reporting as white and 97% self-reporting that they were UK citizens.

Just over half (52%) of respondents said they had a religion, the most common being Roman Catholic (18%), Church of Scotland (18%) and Other Christian (6%).

Remand prisoners made up 44% of the sample population. Long term prisoners made up 33% of the sample, and short-term prisoners made up 23% of the sample.

The majority of respondents (77%) reported having been in HMP Perth for less than three years.

Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents reported having a disability or long-term health condition. Over two thirds (68%) reported having had mental health issues since arriving in HMP Perth; 51% reported needing support for issues with drug use since arriving in HMP Perth; and 25% reported needing support for issues relating to alcohol use since arriving in HMP Perth.

Excluding those who did not disclose the information, 42% reported having been in care when they were under the age of 18.

### **Sample representativeness**

HMIPS requested an anonymous breakdown of the prisoner population in HMP Perth the day before data collection for the survey took place. This included information on age group, gender, ethnic group, citizenship and sentence type. The table below shows how this data from the whole population of HMP Perth compares with the sample of prisoners who responded to the survey.

As the table below shows, the sample is highly representative of the overall population of HMP Perth at the time of the survey, in terms of demographic characteristics and prisoner type.



**Characteristics of sample population compared to characteristics of whole population of HMP Perth (%)<sup>1</sup>**

	Sample population*	Whole population
<b>Age group</b>		
21-30	30%	30%
31-40	35%	39%
41-50	23%	19%
51 or over	13%	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	100%	100%
Female	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	95%	98%
Non-white	5%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Citizenship</b>		
UK	97%	96%
Non-UK	3%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Prisoner type</b>		
Remand	44%	44%
Short-term	23%	25%
Long-term/life/life recall/OLR	33%	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

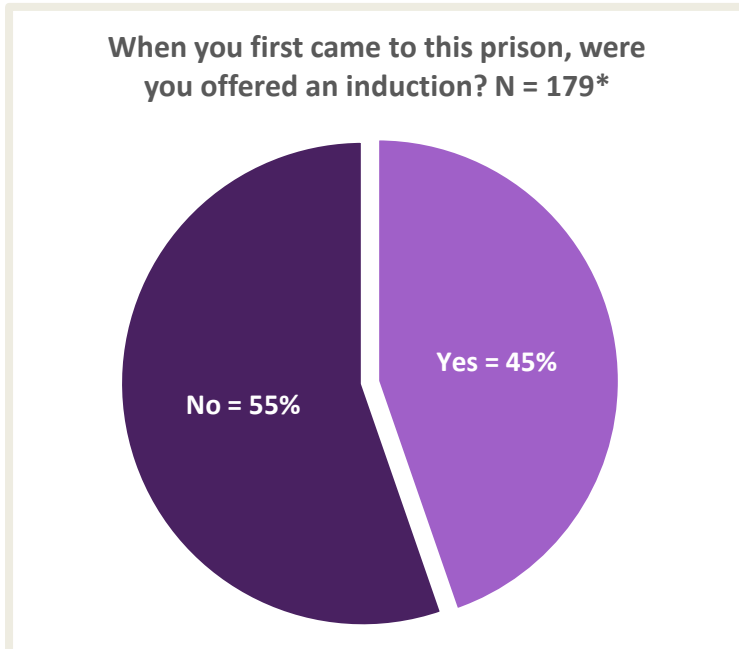
*\*Excluding those who did not disclose their demographic information*

<sup>1</sup> Due to rounding, totals do not always sum precisely to 100%

## Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

### Induction

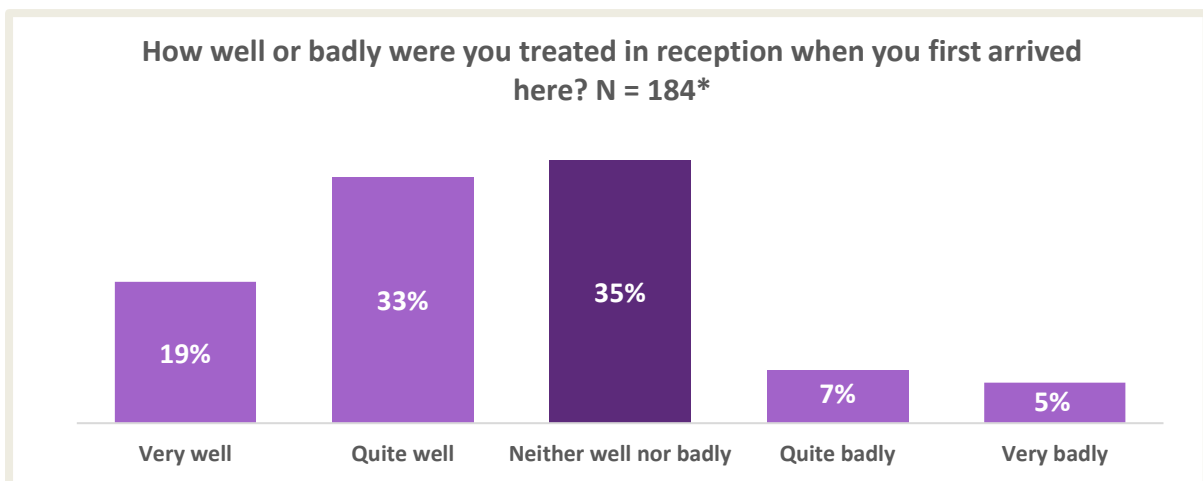
Of those who could remember, more than half of respondents (55%) said they were not offered an induction when they arrived at HMP Perth.



\*Excluding "don't remember"

### Treatment in reception

Just over half of respondents (52%) reported being treated well in reception when they arrived at HMP Perth, with a further 35% reporting being treated "neither well nor badly".

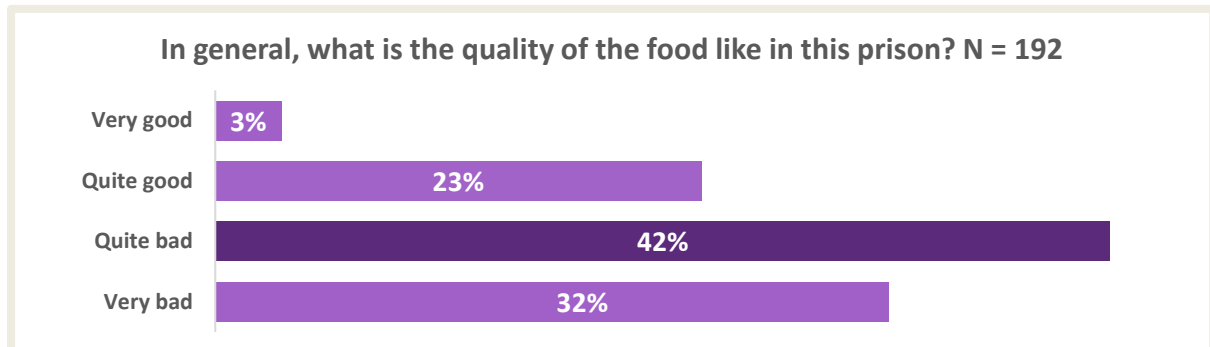


\*Excluding "don't remember"

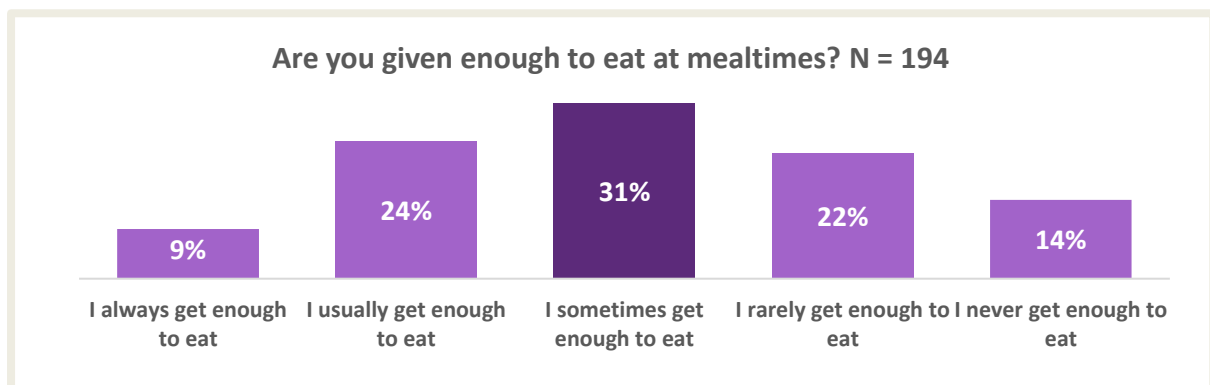
## Standard 2: Decency

### Food

Overall, respondents were relatively negative about the quality of food available, with 74% rating its quality as quite bad or very bad.

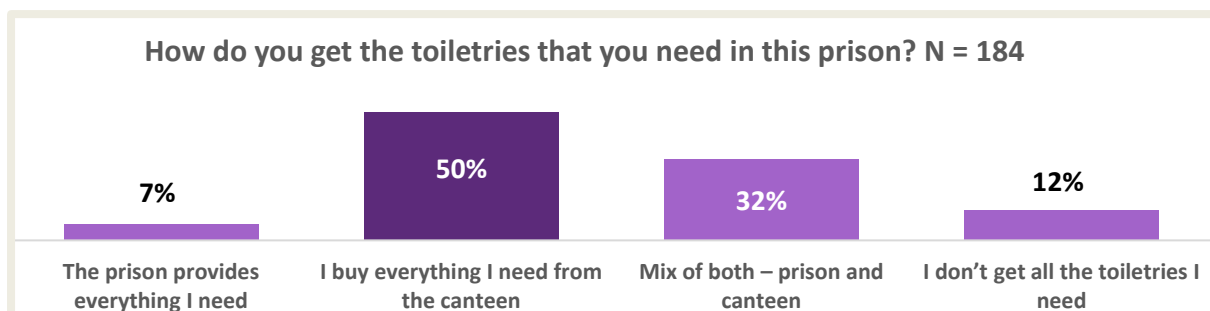


Only 33% of respondents reported always or usually getting enough to eat at mealtimes, while 36% reported rarely or never getting enough to eat.



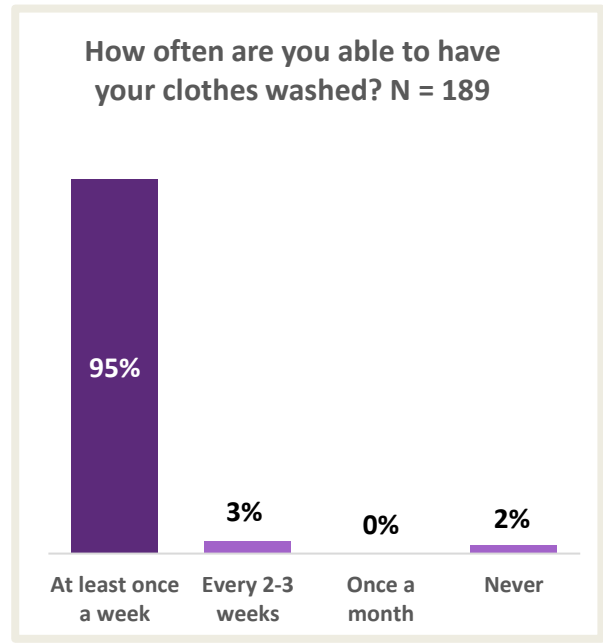
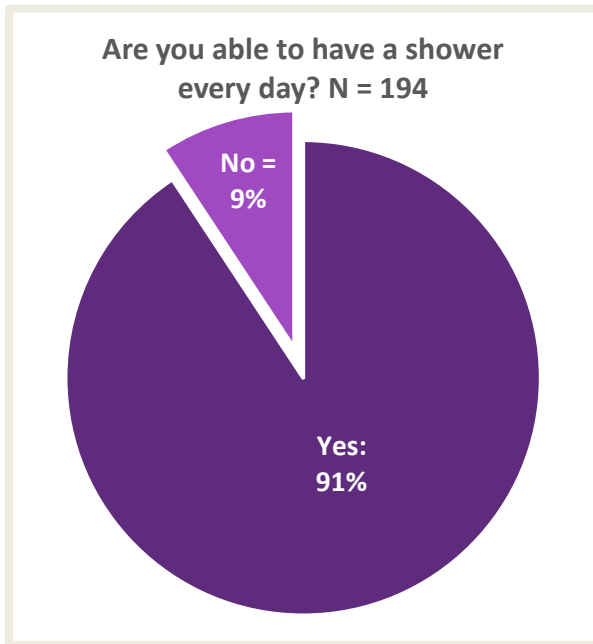
### Toiletries, showering and laundry

Half of respondents said that they got all the toiletries they need from the canteen, while 7% said that everything they needed is provided by the prison. Just over one in ten (12%) said they could not access all the toiletries that they needed.



The majority of respondents (91%) said they were able to have a shower every day. Broken down by prisoner type, short term convicted prisoners were least likely to say they could have a shower every day, while long term convicted prisoners were most likely to say they could.

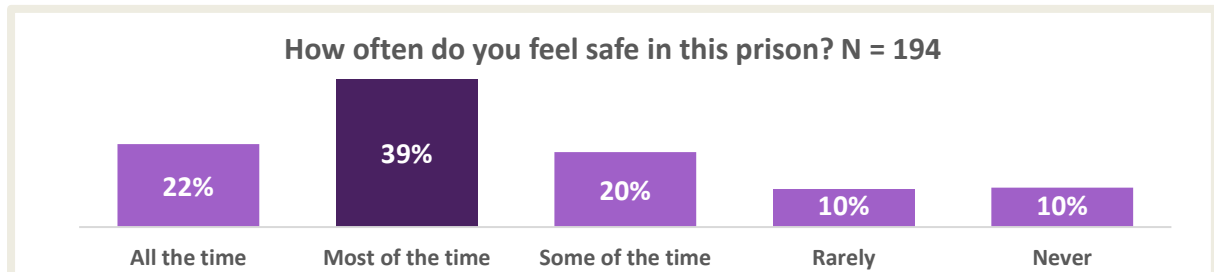
Most respondents (95%) said they were able to have their clothes washed at least once a week.



## Standard 3: Personal Safety

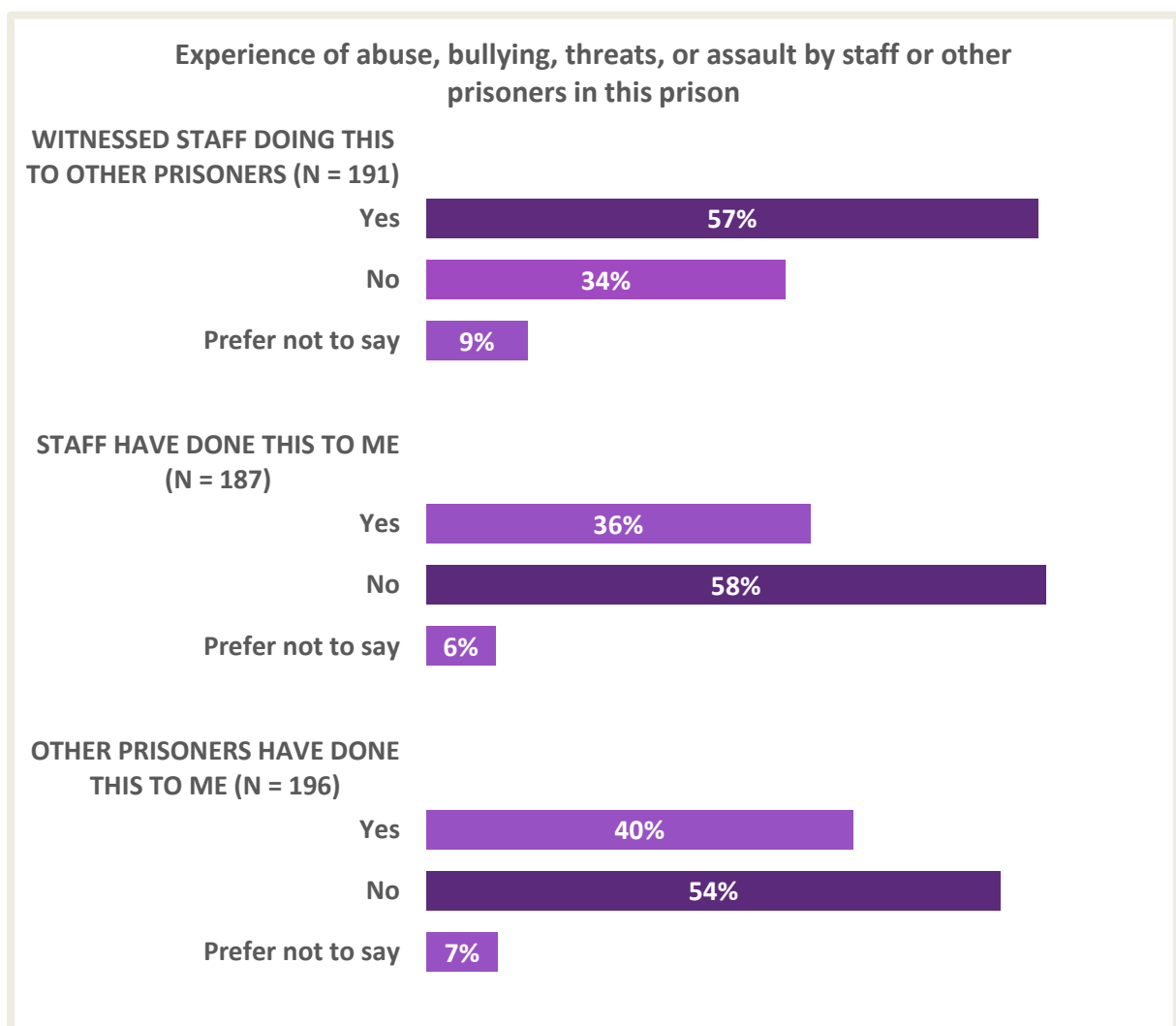
### Perception of safety

The majority of respondents (61%) reported feeling safe either all or most of the time. However, 20% reported rarely or never feeling safe at HMP Perth.



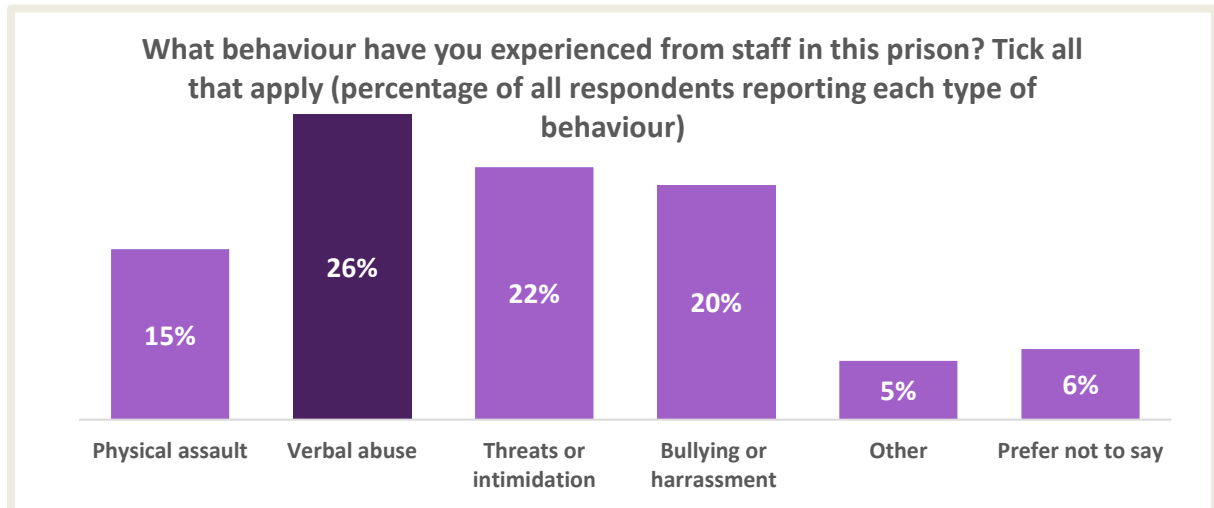
### Abuse, threats, bullying or assault by staff or other prisoners

More than half (57%) of respondents reported having witnessed staff members abusing, threatening, bullying or assaulting another prisoner in HMP Perth, and 36% said staff had done this to them.

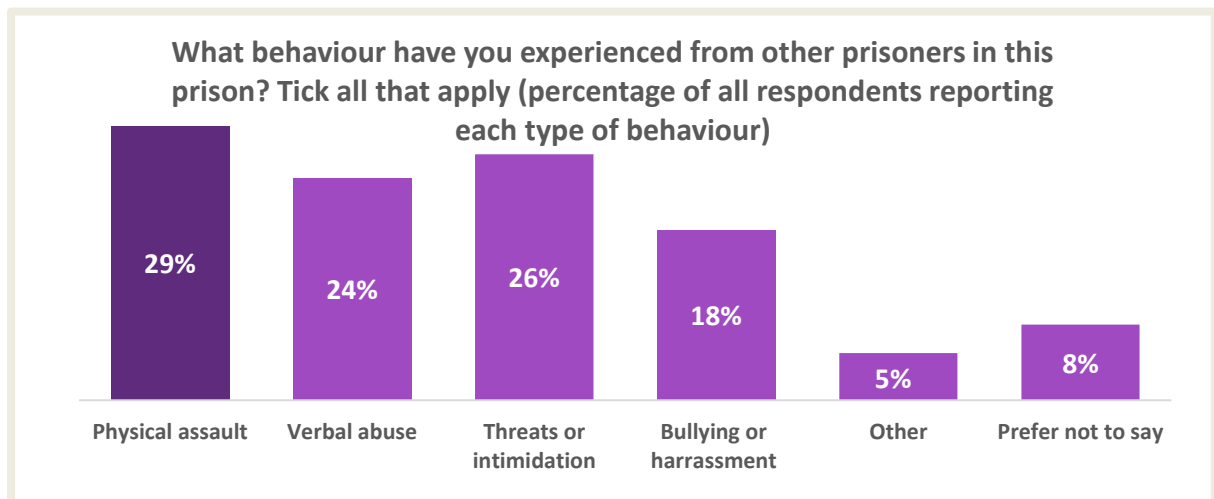


Meanwhile, 40% reported that they had been abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted by another prisoner.

When asked what type of negative behaviour they themselves had experienced from staff, the most common responses were: verbal abuse (23% reported experiencing this); threats or intimidation (22%); bullying or harassment (20%) and physical assault (15%).



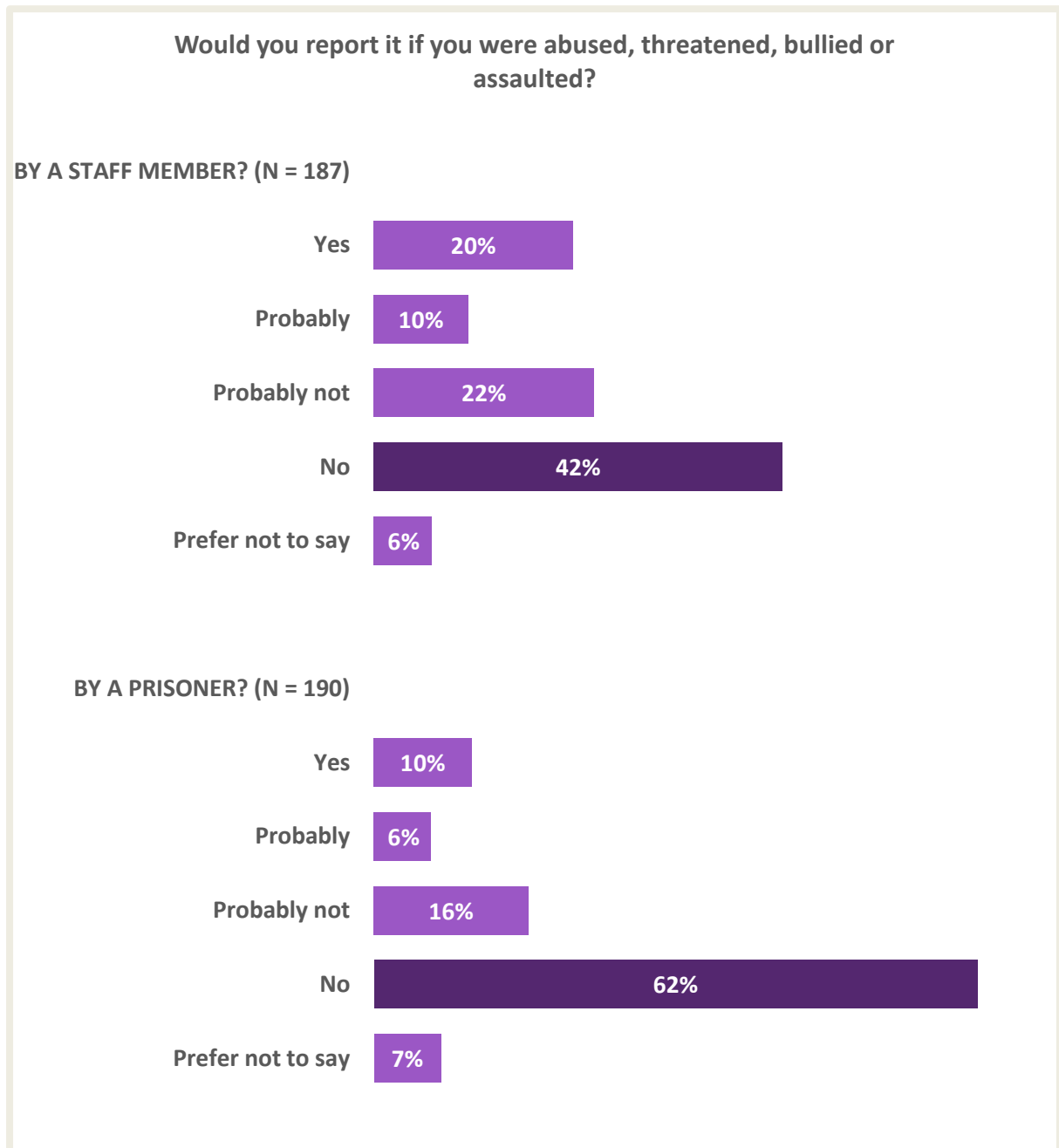
When asked what type of negative behaviour they themselves had experienced from other prisoners, almost one third (29%) of all respondents reported being physically assaulted. A further 26% reported threats or intimidation; 24% reported verbal abuse and 18% reported bullying or harassment.



## Reporting abuse, threats, bullying or assault

The majority of respondents (64%) said that they either would not or probably would not report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by a member of staff.

A larger majority (78%) said they either would not, or probably would not, report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by another prisoner.

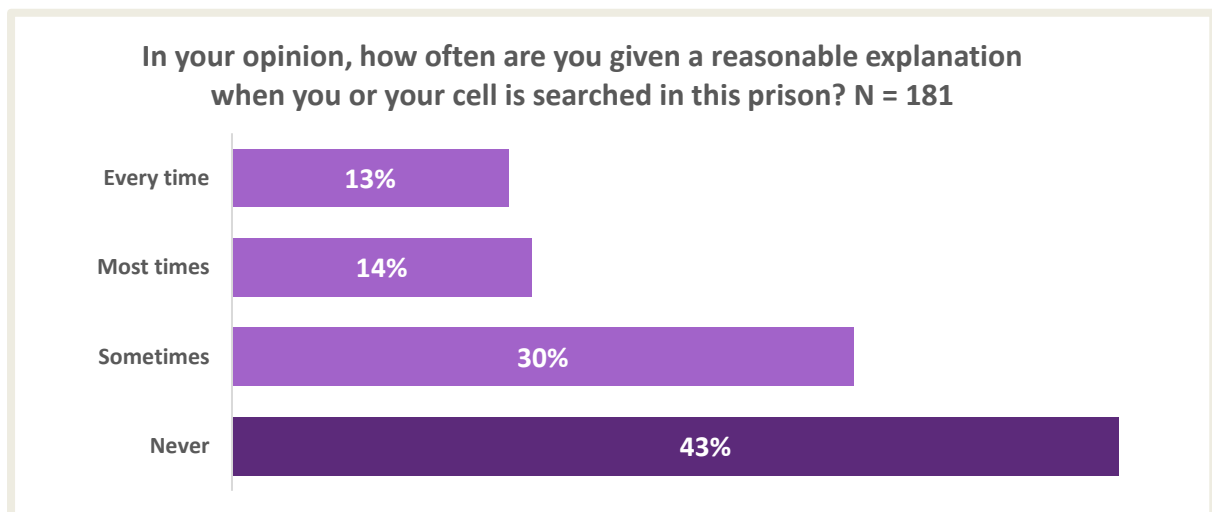


## Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

### Searching

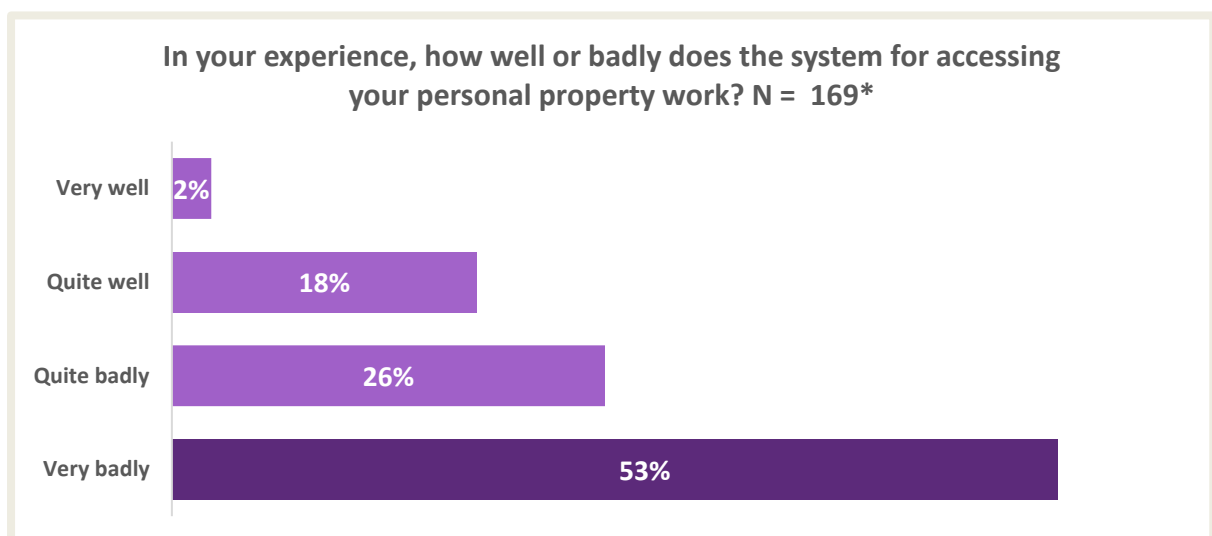
Just over one quarter of respondents (27%) felt that they were given a reasonable explanation every time or most times they or their cell was searched. The most common response was that prisoners were never given a reasonable explanation for searches (42%).

Remand respondents were least likely to say that they were given a reasonable explanation every time or most times their cell was searched, while short term convicted were most likely to say they were.



### Accessing personal property

More than three quarters (79%) of respondents said that their system for accessing their personal property worked badly, including more than half (53%) reporting that the system worked very badly.



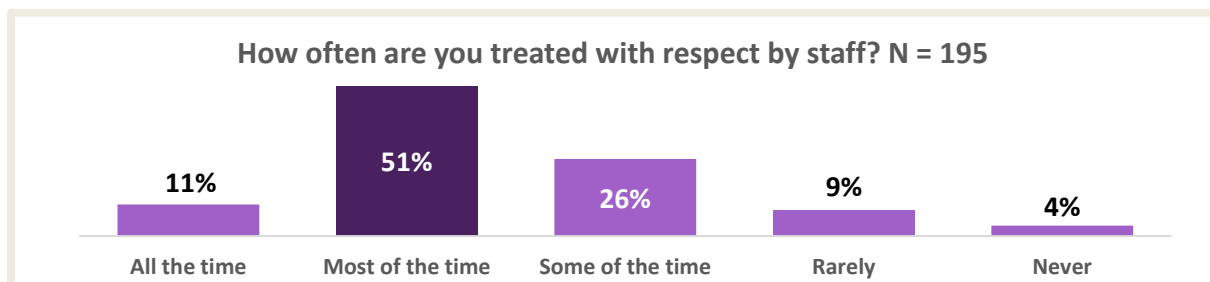
\*Excluding "don't know"



## Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection against Mistreatment

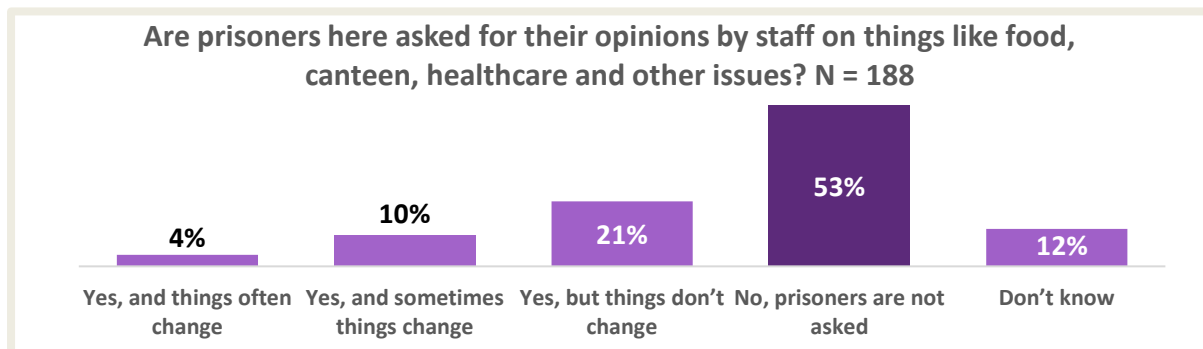
### Respect

Just under two thirds of respondents (62%) reported being treated with respect by staff all or most of the time. More than one in ten (13%) reported rarely or never being treated with respect by staff.



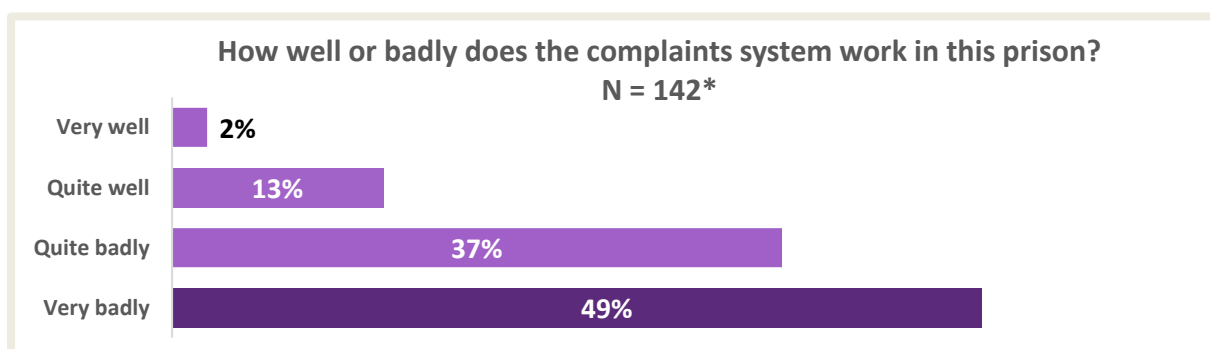
### Consultation with prisoners

Most respondents did not feel that their opinions were considered or acted upon regarding things like food, canteen and healthcare, with more than half (53%) reporting that prisoners are not consulted on such issues.



### Complaints

The majority of respondents (86%) thought that the complaints system worked badly, including almost half (49%) who reported that it worked very badly.

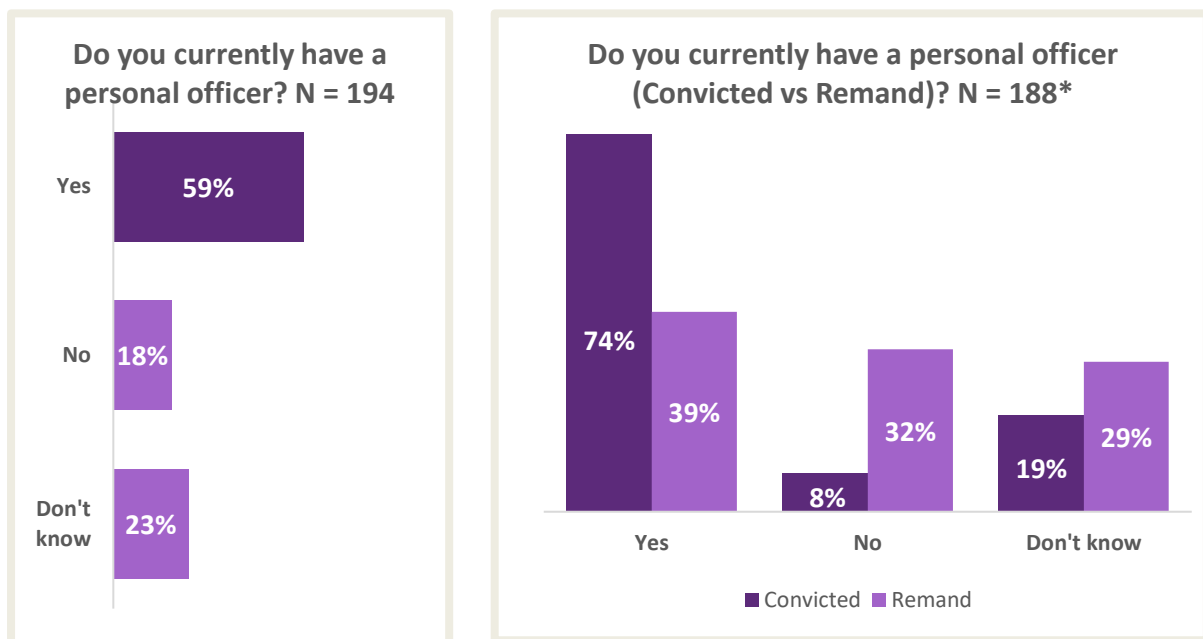


\*Excludes "don't know"

Long term convicted respondents were significantly more likely than short term or remand respondents to report that the complaints system worked badly.

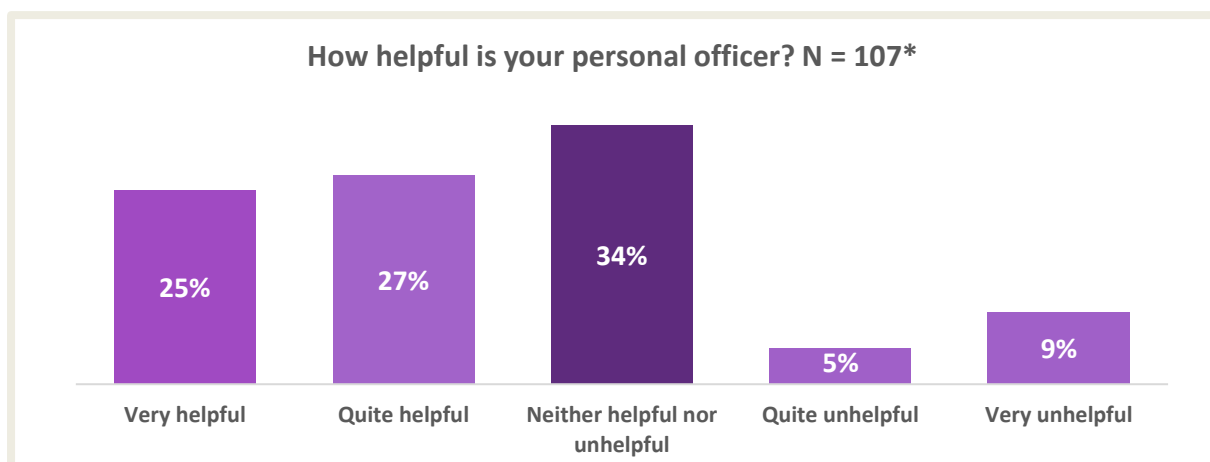
### Personal officers

The majority of respondents (59%) reported that they had a personal officer (PO). When broken down by prisoner type, 74% of convicted respondents reported having a PO, compared to 39% of remands.



*\*Excludes those who did not disclose whether they were convicted or on remand*

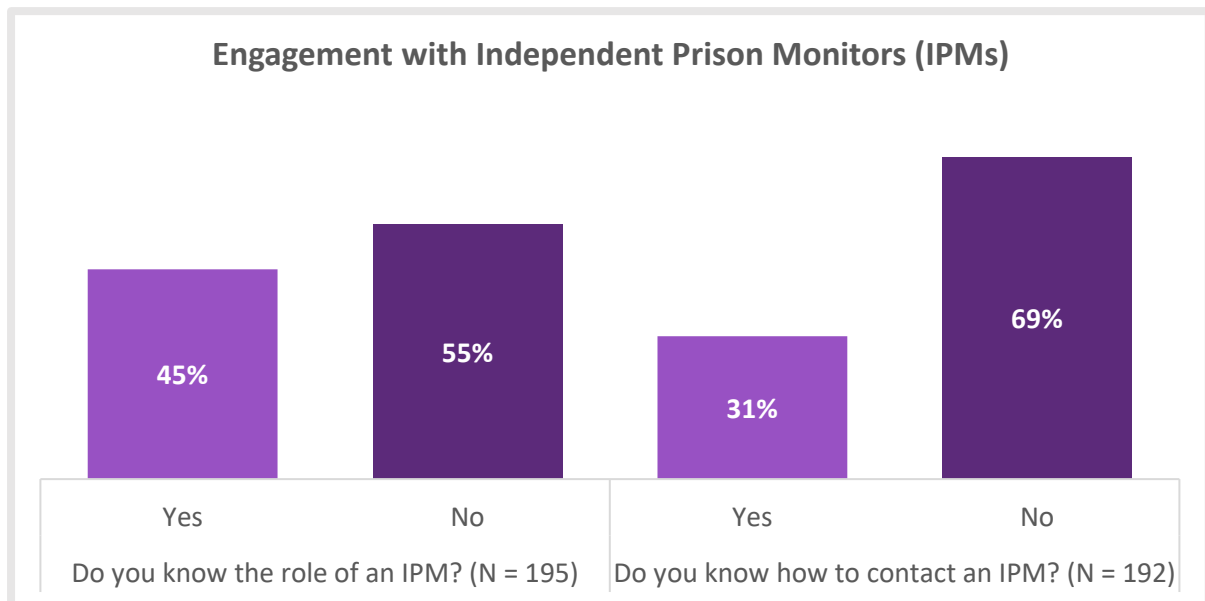
Those who said they had a personal officer were generally positive about how helpful they were. More than half (52%) reported their PO being helpful, including a quarter who said they were very helpful. A small proportion (14%) reported their PO being unhelpful.



*\*Excluding those who said they did not have a personal officer*

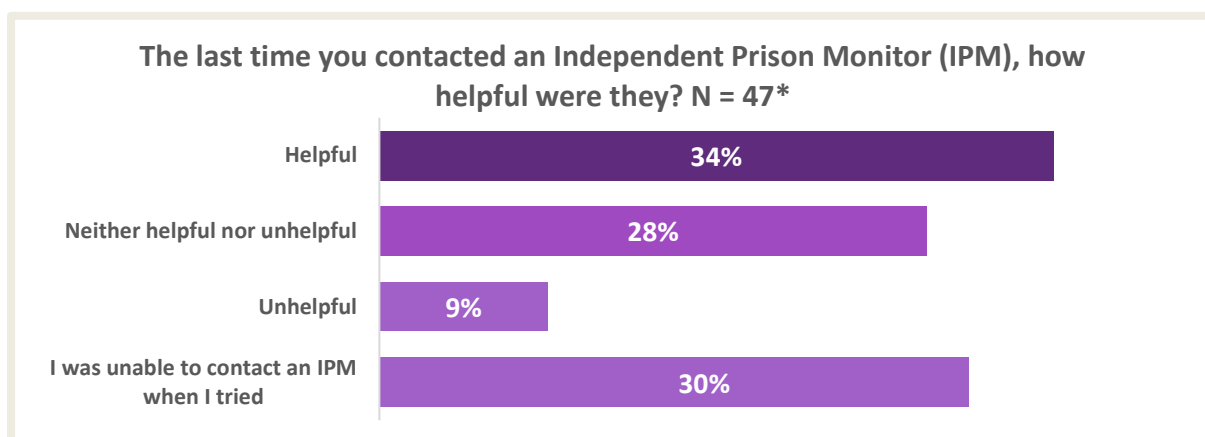
## Engagement with Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs)

Less than half of respondents (45%) said they knew the role of an Independent Prison Monitor (IPM), and less than a third (31%) knew how to contact an IPM.



Knowledge of IPMs and how to contact them was much higher among long term convicted respondents than either remand or short term convicted respondents.

The majority of respondents had never tried to contact an IPM. Of the 47 who said they had, just over a third (34%) found the experience helpful. Almost one third (30%) reported being unable to contact an IPM when they had tried.

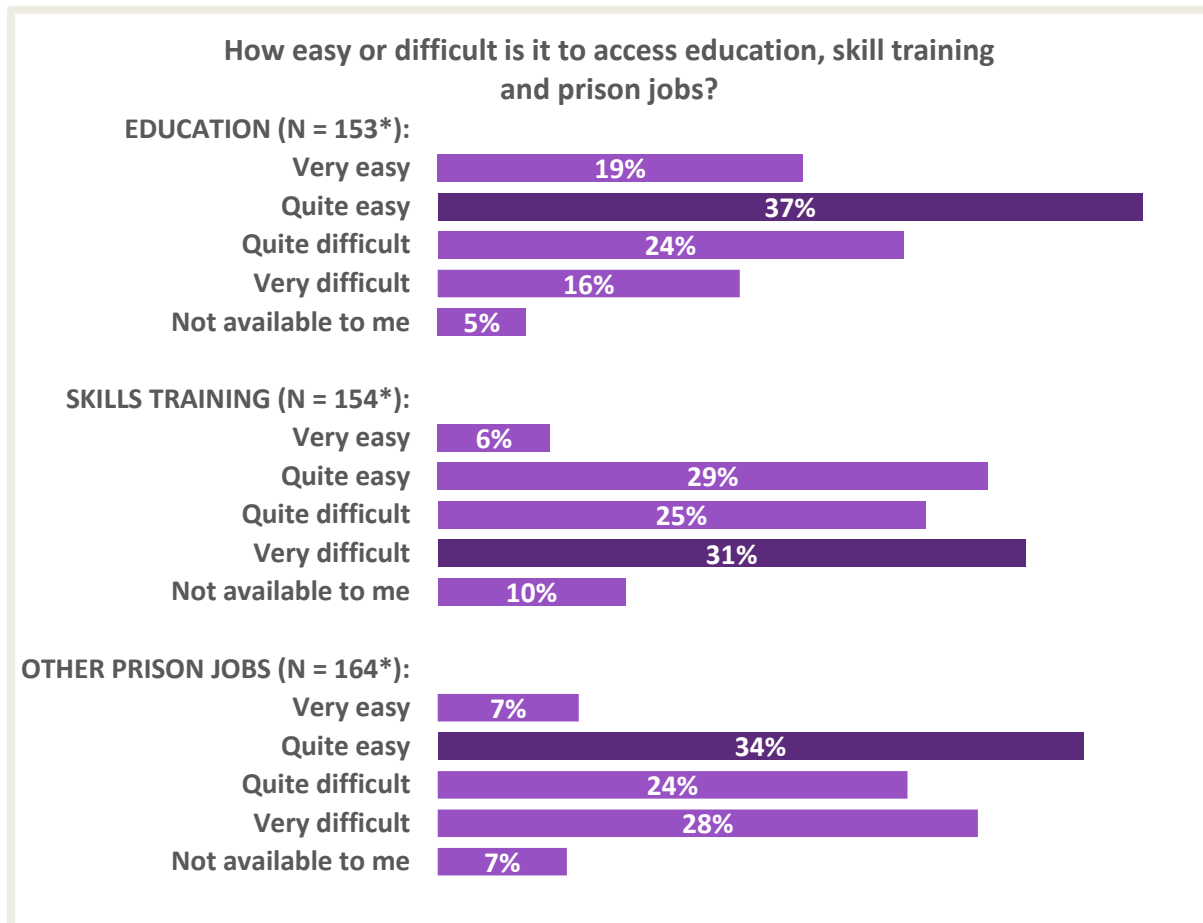


*\*Excluding those who had never tried to contact an IPM*

## Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

### Access to education, training and work

Just over half of respondents (56%) said that it was easy to access education at HMP Perth. However, the majority said that it was difficult to access skills training (56%) and prison jobs (52%).



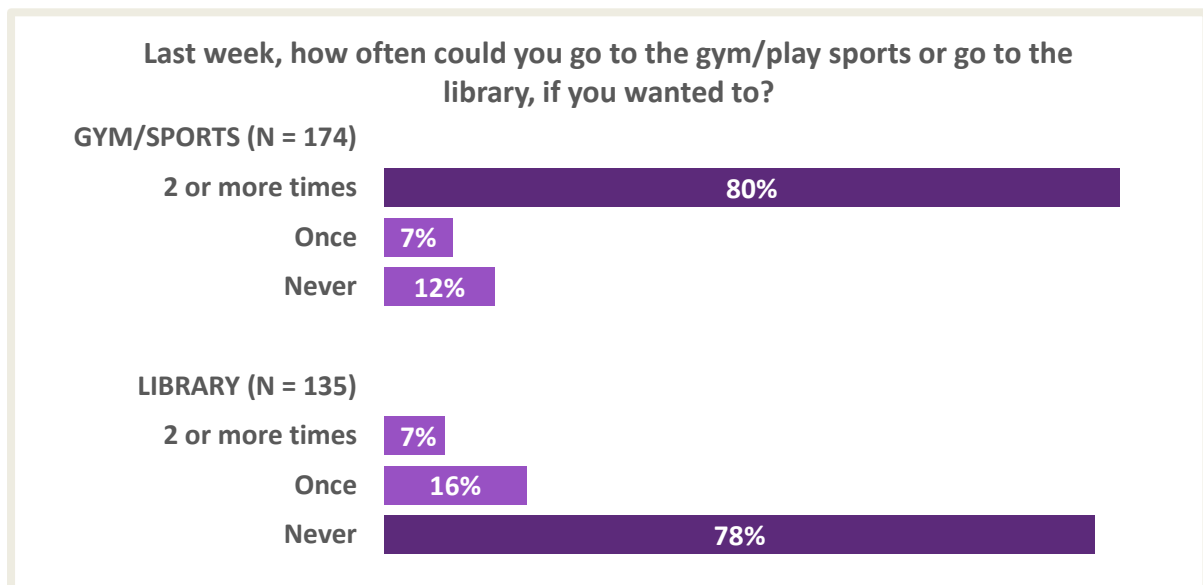
*\*Excluding "don't know"*

### Fresh air, gym/sports and library access

Just under three quarters (74%) said they were able to spend at least one hour outdoors in the fresh air every day in the previous week.



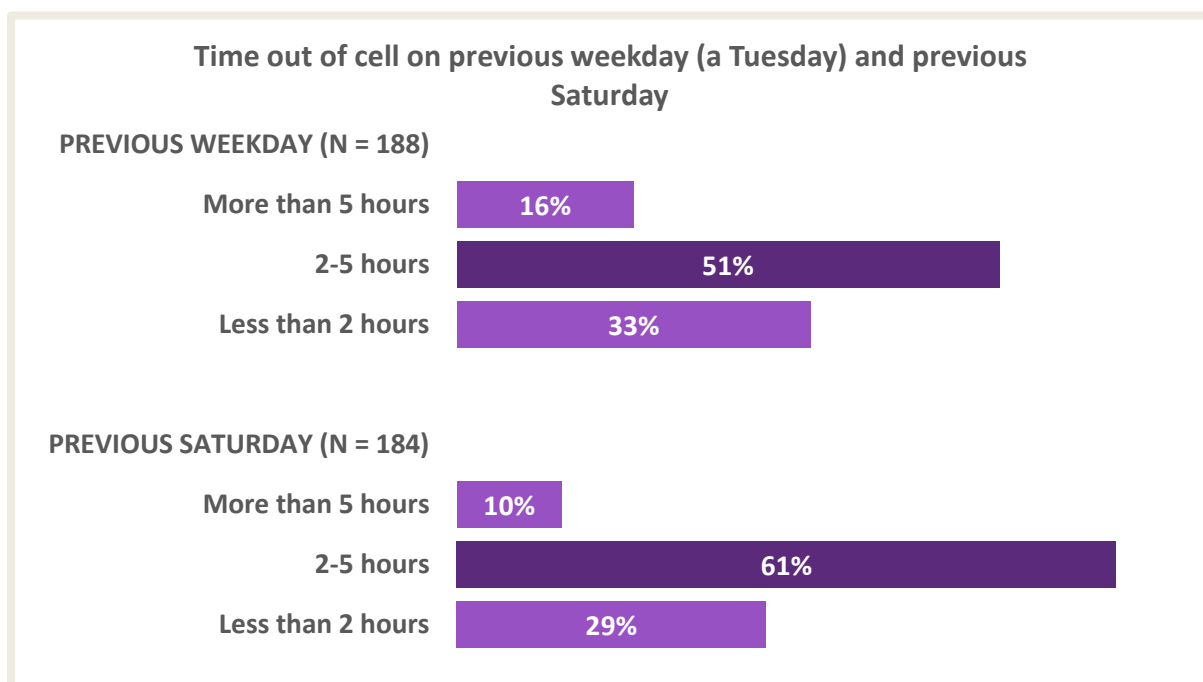
Most respondents (87%) said they were able to access the gym or play sports at least once during the previous week. However, less than a quarter (23%) said they were able to access the library at least once in the previous week.



### Time out of cell

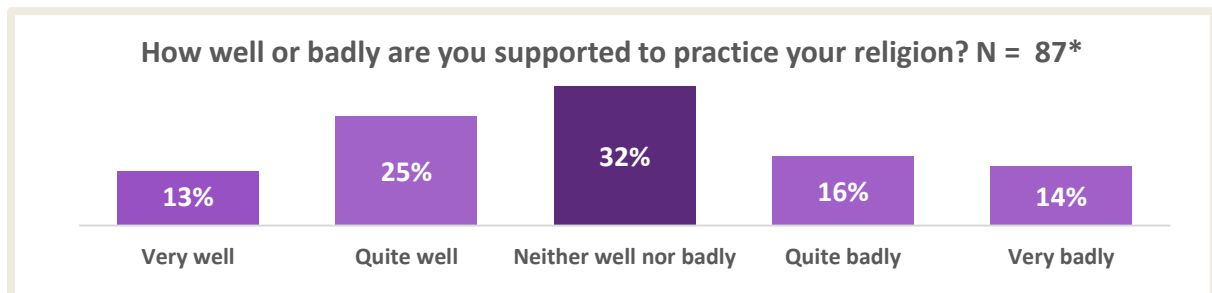
Two thirds of respondents (67%) said they were able to spend two or more hours out of their cells on the previous weekday (a Tuesday), and a similar percentage (71%) said they could do so on the previous Saturday.

Remands were much less likely to report having been able to spend more than two hours out of their cells than convicted respondents on weekdays or weekends.



## Religious practice

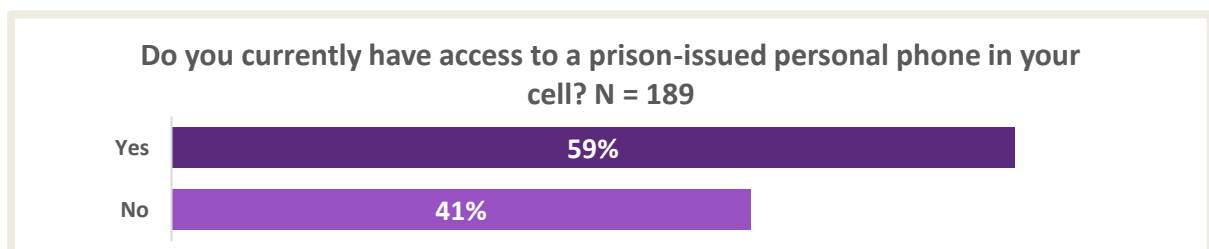
Of those who said they practiced a religion (87 respondents), 38% reported that they were well supported to do so, while 30% felt poorly supported.



\*Excludes "I don't practice a religion"

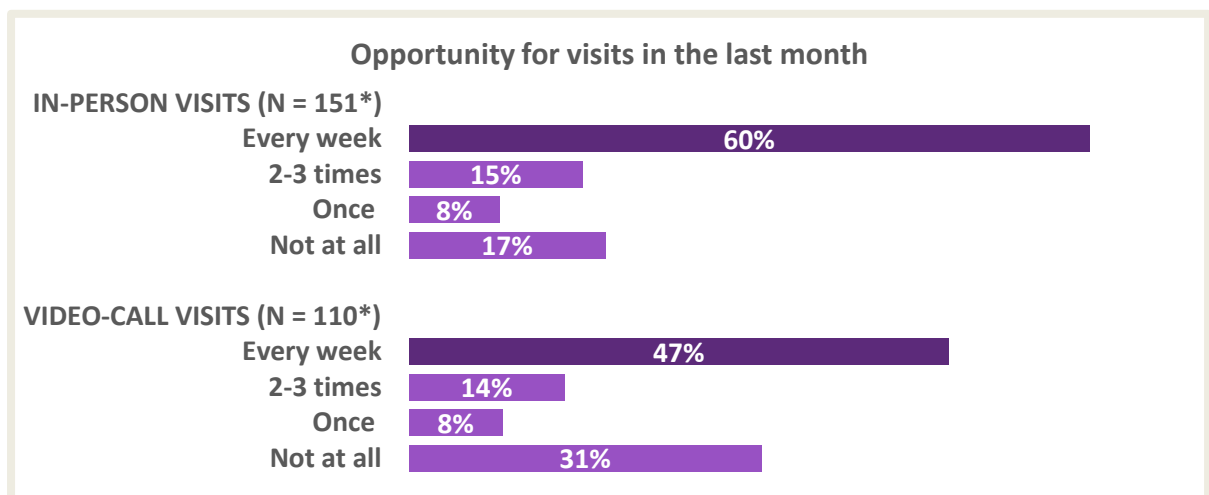
## Phones

While most respondents (59%) said they had access to a prison-issued personal phone, two in five (41%) said they did not. Less than half of remand respondents (49%) said they had access to a prison-issued personal phone.



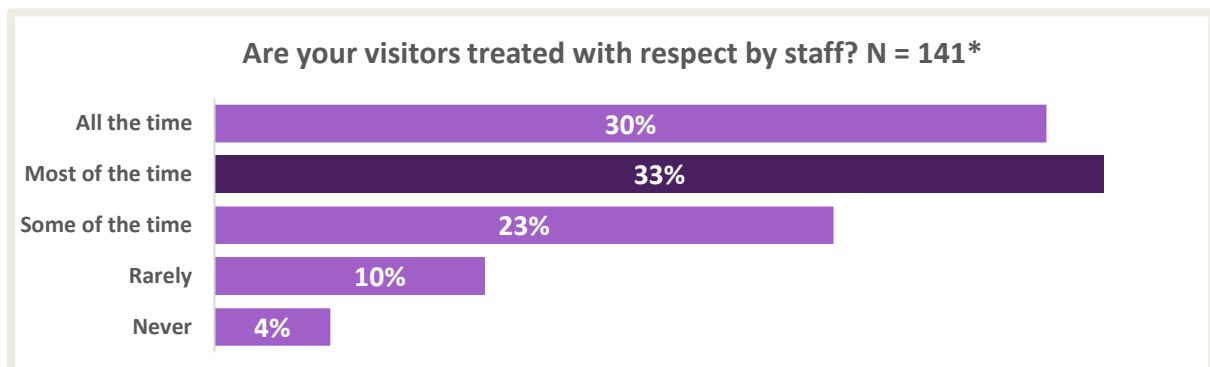
## Visits

Of those who were aware of visiting arrangements, 60% said they were able to access in-person visits every week in the last month, and 47% said they had access to video visits every week. Long term convicted were the most likely to report having to access in-person visits every week, while remands were the least likely to say they could access visits every week.



\*Excluding "don't know"

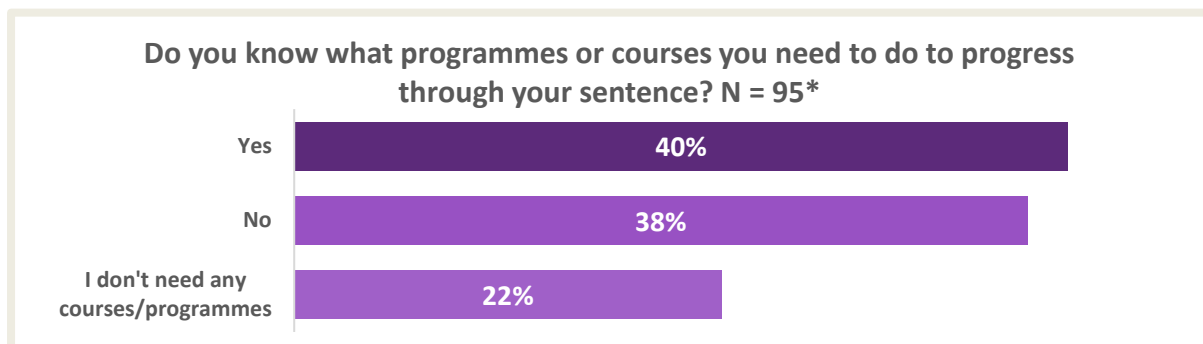
Of those who received visits, the majority said their visitors were treated with respect by staff all or most of the time (63%). More than one in ten (14%) said their visitors were rarely or never treated with respect by staff.



*\*Excludes "N/A - I don't have visits"*

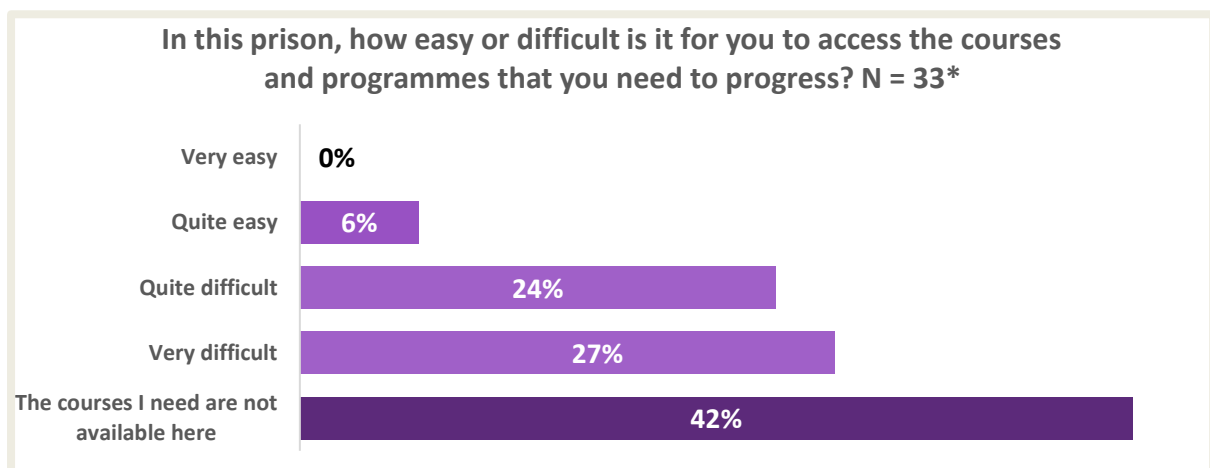
### Progression and case management support

All those serving a sentence were asked whether they knew what courses or programmes they needed to progress through their sentence. Over one third (38%) said they did not know what courses or programmes they needed to complete.



*\*Excludes prisoners held on remand*

Of those who did know what courses or programmes they needed, over half (51%) said that it was difficult to access the courses they needed, and 42% said the courses they needed were not available at HMP Perth.

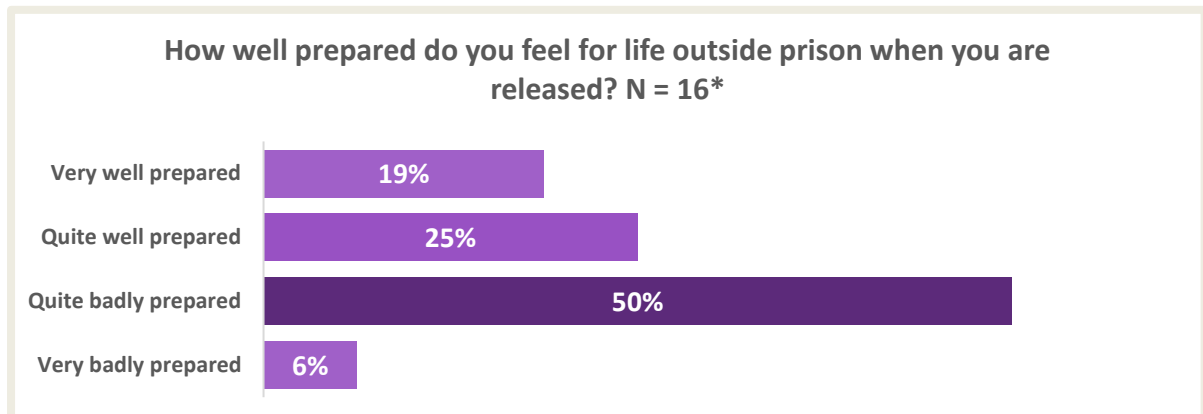


*\*Excluding those who said they did not need to do any courses or programmes*

## Standard 7: Transitions into the Community

### Preparedness for life outside prison

Eighteen (10%) respondents said that they were due for release in the next 6 weeks. Of these, more than half (56%) said that they did not feel well prepared for life outside prison.



*\*Only those due for release in the next 6 weeks*

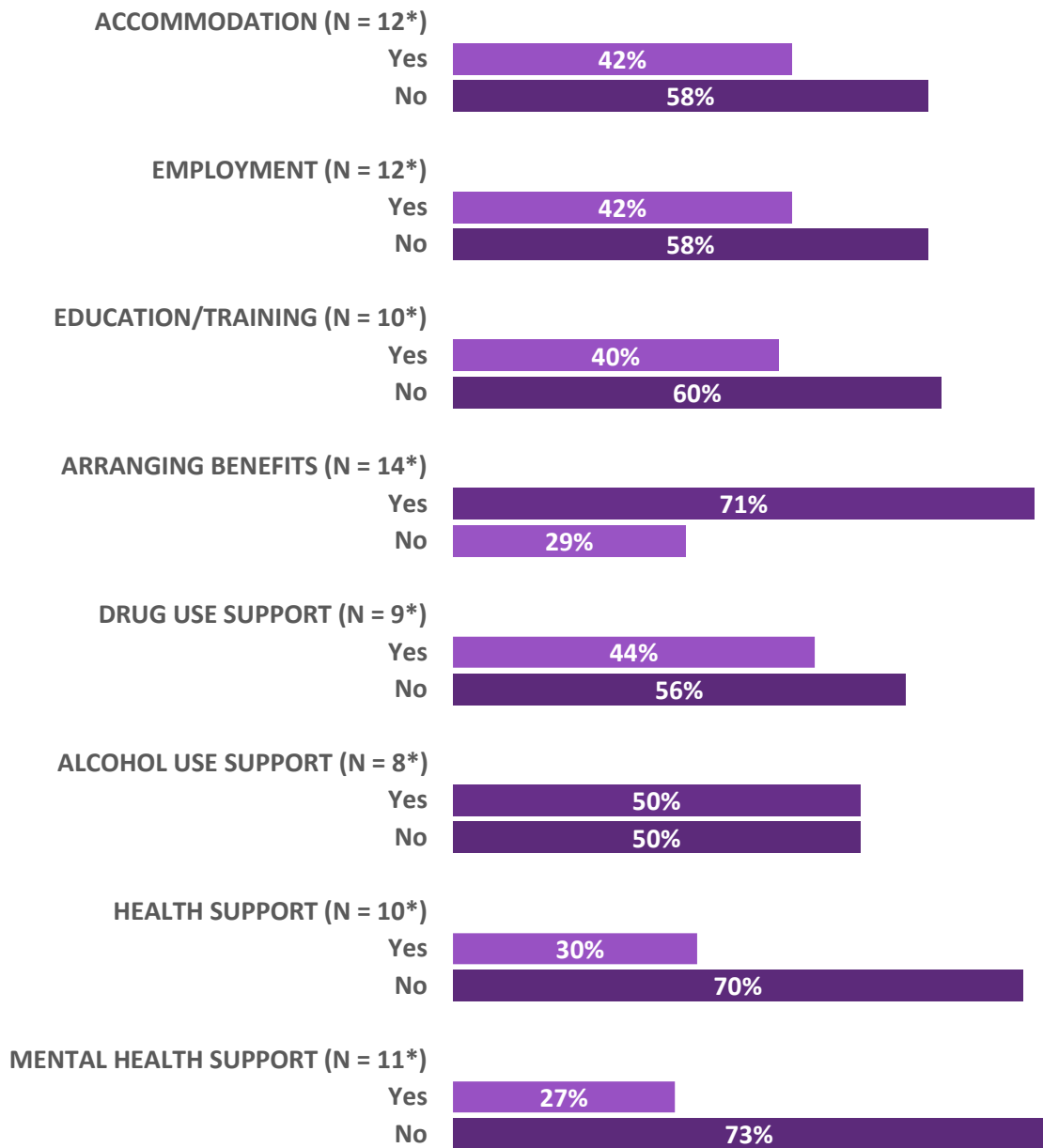
### Support for release

Those due for release were asked about the support they were receiving to organise for life outside prison. The majority of respondents reported that they were getting the support they needed to arrange benefits (71%), and half (50%) reported that they were getting support to arrange support for alcohol issues.

However in all other areas the majority of respondents indicated that they were not getting the support that they felt they needed. Most notably, 73% of those who said they needed help to arrange support for their mental health were not receiving this, and 70% of those who needed support for their physical health were not receiving this.



Of those who said they need support for their release in each of the following areas, do they feel they are getting the support they need to set up the following things?

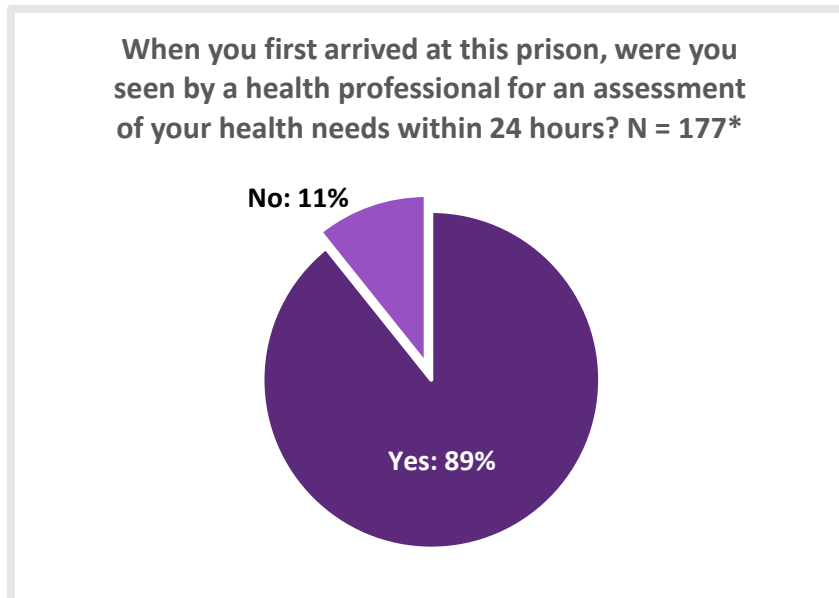


\*Excludes "I don't need this support"

## Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

### Health assessment on arrival

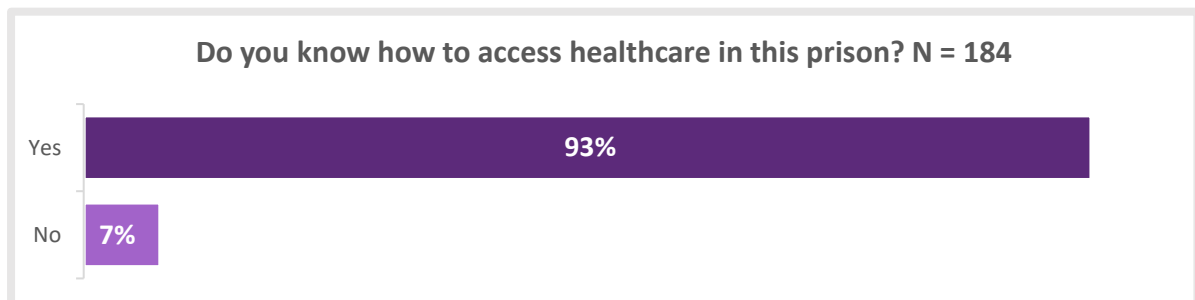
Most respondents (89%) said they were seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival at HMP Perth for an assessment of their health needs.



\*Excluding "don't remember"

### Access to health services

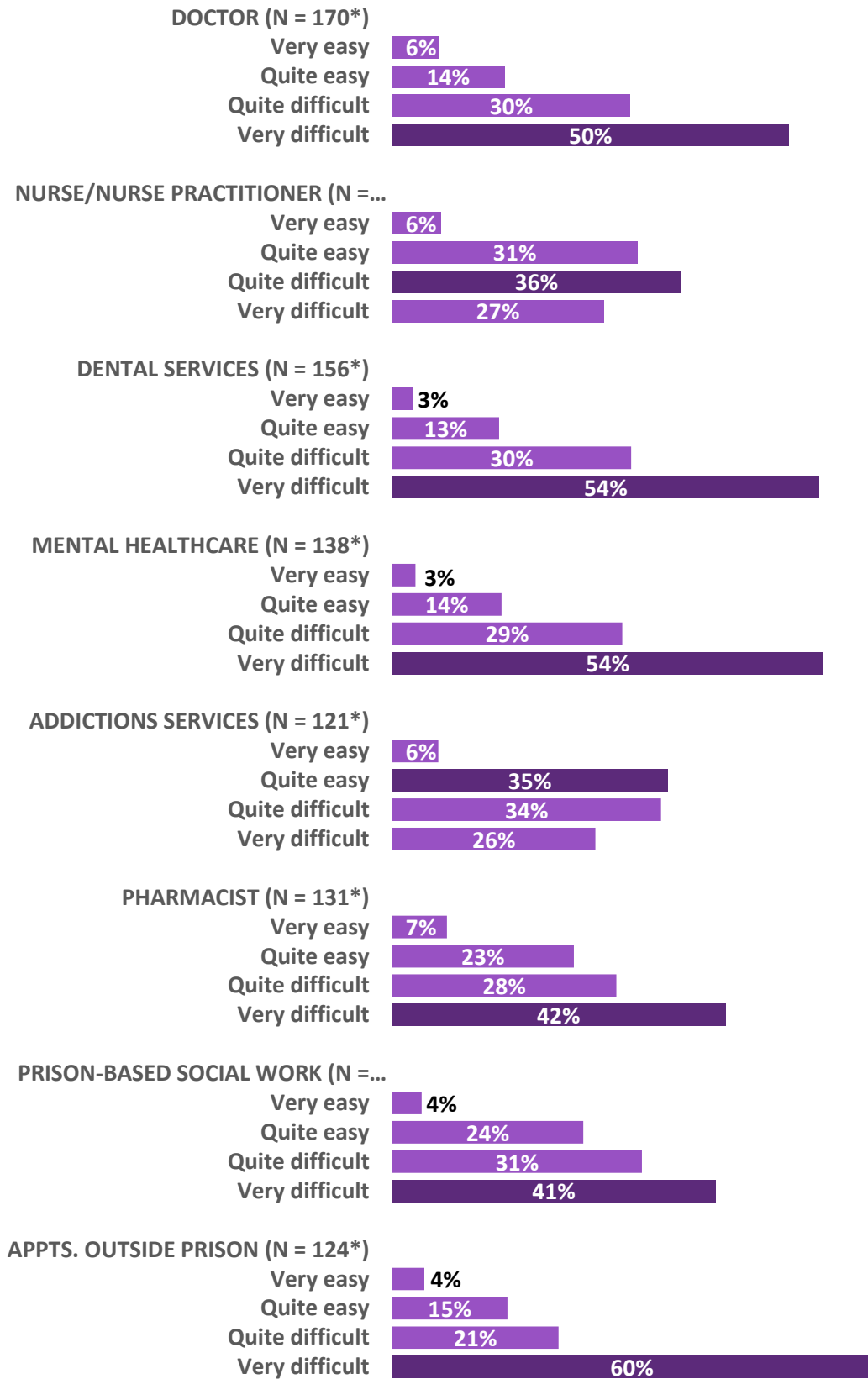
Most respondents (93%) said they knew how to access healthcare in HMP Perth.



However, the majority of respondents reported it being difficult to access all forms of healthcare:

- 84% said it was difficult to access dental services;
- 83% said it was difficult to access mental health care;
- 81% said it was difficult to access appointments outside the prison;
- 80% said it was difficult to access a doctor;
- 72% said it was difficult to access prison-based social work;
- 70% said it was difficult to access a pharmacist;
- 63% said it was difficult to access a nurse or nurse practitioner; and
- 60% said it was difficult to access addictions services.

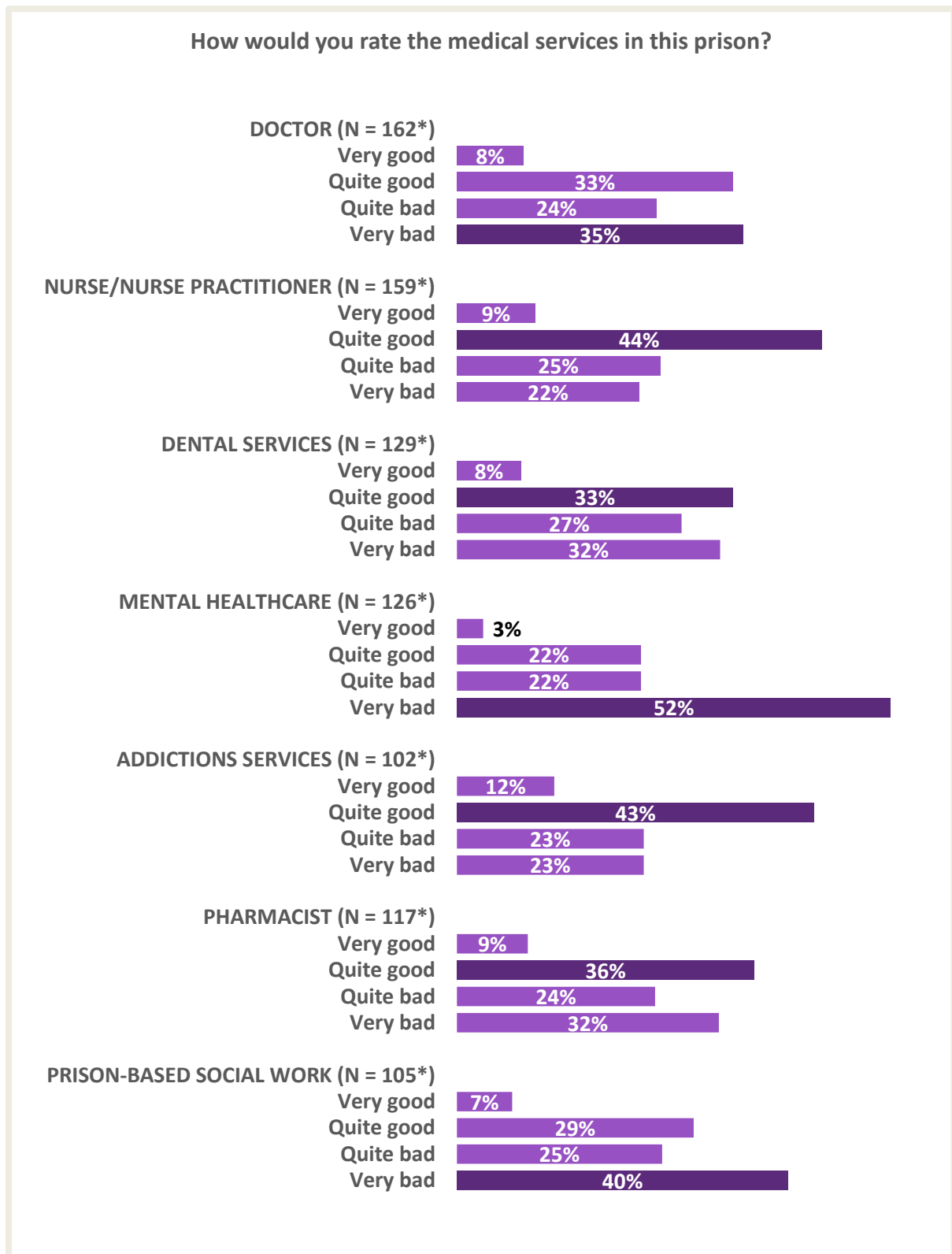
How easy or difficult is it to access health services in this prison?



\*Excluding "don't know"

## Quality of medical services

The chart below shows the responses on the quality of healthcare provided in the prison.



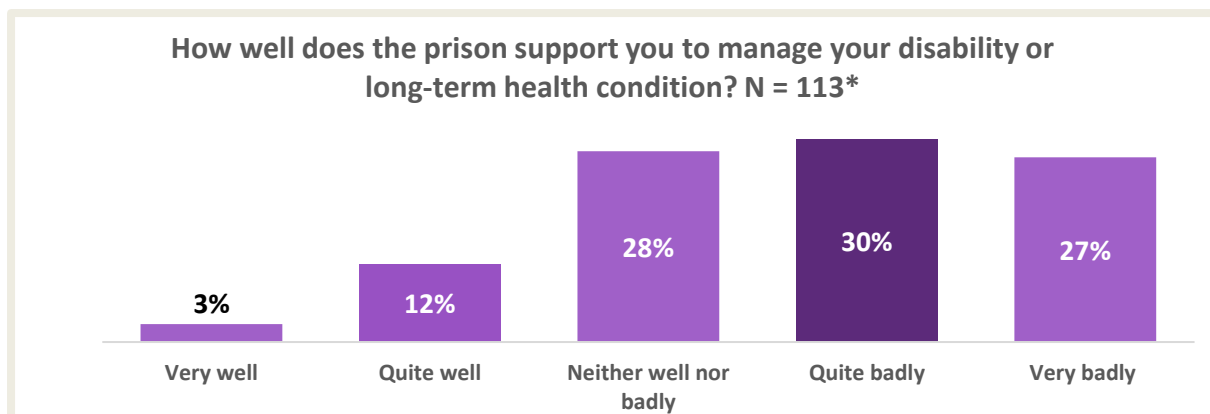
\*Excluding "don't know"

Overall, respondents were negative about the quality of healthcare offered at HMP Perth. Only two services were rated positively by the majority of respondents: 55% rated addictions services as good, while 53% reported that service from the nurses/nurse practitioners was good.

More than half of respondents rated the following services as bad: mental healthcare (74%), prison-based social work (65%); doctor (59%); dental services (59%); and pharmacist (56%).

### Support for disabilities and long-term health conditions

Almost two thirds of respondents (64%) reported having a disability or long-term health condition. These respondents were asked how well the prison supports them to manage their condition. Just 15% said that they were well supported to manage their condition, while 57% said they were badly supported to do so.



*\*Excluding those who do not have a disability or long-term health condition*

### Support for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and mental health

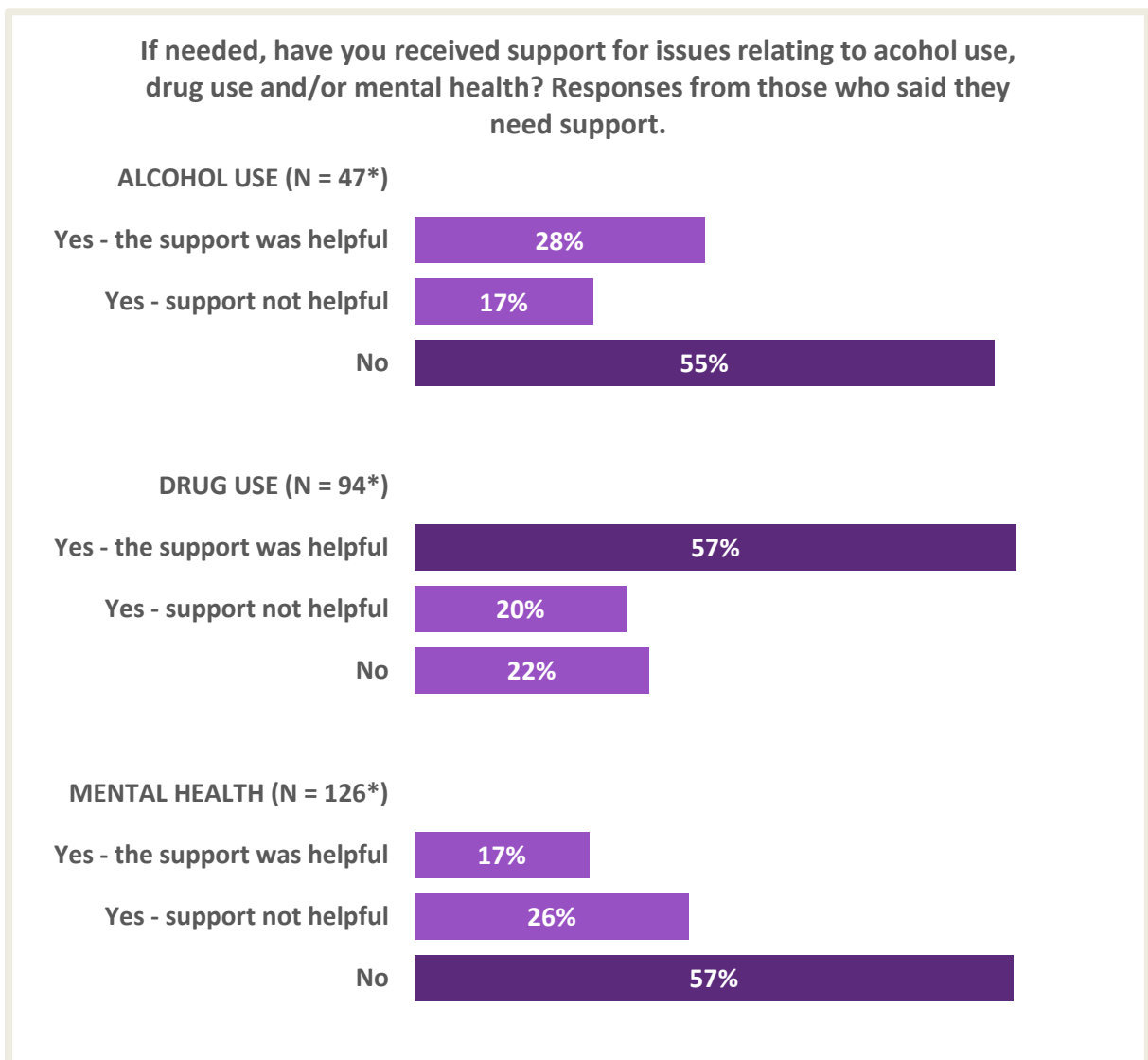
A substantial percentage of respondents reported having needed support for issues relating to alcohol use (25%), drug use (51%) or mental health (68%) while in HMP Perth.

The survey asked about the support provided to those who needed help with these issues. Of the 47 people who said they had needed support for alcohol use, 28% said they had received support and that it had been helpful. However, a further 17% had received support which had not helped, and over half (55%) said they had received no support.

Of the 94 respondents who said they had needed support for drug use, the majority (57%) said they had received support which had been helpful. However, 22% said they had not received support at all.

And of the 126 people who said they had needed support for their mental health, less than one in five (17%) said they had received support which had been helpful. The majority (57%) said they had not received any mental health support, and a further 26% said they support they had received had not been helpful. When broken

down by prisoner type, remands were the least likely to report having received support for their mental health, while long term convicted were the most likely to report having received support.



*\*Excluding "I haven't needed this support"*

## **Open Question (General Comments): Thematic Analysis**

In total, 105 respondents (53%) left comments in the final section of the survey, where respondents were given space to provide any comments on their experiences in HMP Perth relevant to the inspection. These are analysed thematically below, with the most common comments relating to: healthcare; relationships with staff; food; phone access; canteen and wages; purposeful activity, cell-sharing and progression.

### **Healthcare**

The most common comments related to accessing healthcare and mental health care (see below). Many comments highlighted that it could take months to get an appointment with GP, nurse or dentist. Some remarked that the only way to get an appointment was to “kick up a fuss” and hope that a prison officer will help facilitate an appointment. Others reported putting in numerous requests to see medical staff and/or not being seen for as long as 10 months, or not being seen at all, and not knowing if their self-referral has been received and progressed.

Moreover, some reported not being escorted to scheduled medical appointments outside the prison.

Some respondents commented that when they were eventually seen by medical staff, the treatment received was poor. For example, some described not being listened to; others described not being referred to specialists for specific conditions; and others felt that they were judged by medical staff and assumed to be “chasing medication”. Some reported that they needed specific diets to manage particular medical problems but that these had not been accommodated by the prison.

Issues were also raised regarding medication, with some respondents reporting: being taken off medication they had been prescribed outside prison or in another prison; feeling that they were not getting the medication they needed; having long-term medication reduced in a detrimental manner; or being given medication for conditions where different interventions were needed.

Some respondents raised the issue of substance misuse in HMP Perth, with reports of little or no support for alcohol addiction, and a desire for the introduction of drug-free halls to help those seeking to avoid illicit substances.

### **Mental healthcare**

A substantial proportion of comments related to mental healthcare, with respondents reporting waiting months, in some cases over a year, for appointments without hearing anything in some instances. Some respondents commented that they had not been seen by a mental health professional even after reporting thoughts of suicide or self-harm, while others reported being “desperate” to receive mental health support. As one respondents commented: “you have to be in crisis before they act”.

Several commented that a number of factors exacerbate their mental health difficulties, most commonly: sharing a cell; too little time out of cell; too few activities; a lack of green space; and insensitive handling of prisoner deaths.

## **Relationships with staff**

A large proportion of comments related to relationships between staff and prisoners. A handful of respondents provided feedback highlighting positive relationships, for example praising staff as being “helpful”, “respectful”, “friendly”, “well-meaning” and “going over and above to encourage positive behaviour”. In particular, one respondent highlighted the “fantastic” staff in education and the work sheds.

However, most comments were more negative. A number of respondents highlighted differences in the way particular prisoners were treated, including those held in offence protection areas feeling “judged” by staff, and some on remand feeling that they were treated as if they were guilty by staff, despite not having been convicted.

A number of comments related to staff on the halls having little time for prisoners. As one respondent summarised:

*“Even with our well-meaning staff, most of whom have expressed a desire to support and help everyone, [they] do not have either the time or knowledge to do so. Staff having time to interact pro-socially on the halls instead of being too busy on the other side of a locked gate would have a tremendously positive impact on quality of life in the prison as well as a positive impact on how we view ourselves. Feeling that we are worth something to non-criminals would shift the feeling of being a worthless criminal and can only have a positive impact on rehabilitation and reintroduction to society.”*

Comments highlighted issues including: staff spending most of their time behind the grill gates, rather than interacting with prisoners on the halls; requests for help going unanswered; and that it can take a long time for the intercom/emergency buttons to be answered by staff, even in an emergency. Given the widespread perception among respondents that staff lack the time to interact with prisoners, some commented that “rude, loud and aggressive behaviour” is the quickest way for prisoners to get what they want from staff on the halls, thus rewarding negative behaviour.

A small minority of respondents gave details of alleged abusive, violent and/or bullying behaviour by staff, and complaints were also raised about other prisoners being given freedom to behave abusively towards other prisoners by staff.

The issues of communication and complaints were also raised. Some comments suggested that communication between staff and prisoners can be problematic, as well as communication between different departments within the prison. And that complaints are sometimes not dealt with adequately by staff.

## **Food**

Food was a commonly raised issue. Echoing the quantitative findings, many commented that portion sizes were too small. Several respondents with specific dietary requirements commented that they were given limited variation and poor quality food. And several highlighted that the food available at mealtimes was generally unhealthy and low quality, with a large amount of processed food and few healthy options.



### **Family contact**

Issues with phone access was a common issue raised in the comments. Issues raised included: family contact being restricted because of the length of time taken to receive a phone on arrival at HMP Perth (sometimes several months); a lack of time out of cell after 5pm meaning that those without phones could not contact family members who work using a phone on the hall; and several respondents reported that their prison-issued mobile phones stopped working in the middle of each month, limiting their family contact.

A small number of respondents commented about visits, with the most common issue being that visit times were too short (45 minutes), causing difficulties for those whose families had to travel a long distance to visit.

### **Canteen and Wages**

Many respondents commented that prices for items bought on the canteen had risen substantially, without a corresponding rise in cell wages, meaning that they were able to buy less than previously. Some remand respondents noted that they did not receive a cell wage, putting them at a further disadvantage.

### **Cell sharing**

Cell sharing was a commonly raised issue. In particular, those on long-term sentences who shared cells with remands or short-term prisoners noted that this significantly affected them given the much shorter periods of time their cellmates were spending in prison.

Others highlighted mental health issues associated with sharing a cell. For example, there were reports of abusive or erratic behaviour by cell mates leading to exacerbations of existing mental health conditions. Several respondents reported that they had been given a single-cell marker by their GP for health reasons, which had been overturned by prison staff.

A number of respondents commented that the shared cells were too small for two people.

### **Progression**

Progression was highlighted as an issue for some respondents serving long-term sentences. Issues included: waiting years for a GPA and to undertake the necessary courses/programmes; not being given any information on what they need to do to progress; a lack of availability of programmes in HMP Perth; issues with paperwork delaying transfers to the Open Estate; and a lack of knowledge of progression processes among prison officers.

### **Purposeful activity/time out of cell**

Some respondents commented that there was little routine within the prison and too little purposeful activity on offer for prisoners, particularly regarding access to work sheds, qualifications, education and work. Several commented that there was too little activity in the evenings and too much time spent in their cells with little to do. Some respondents in protection and remand halls reported that they were given fewer opportunities for purposeful activity than mainstream prisoners.

**Hygiene and basic amenities**

A small number of respondents reported being moved to dirty cells and/or having cell mates who kept the cell in an unhygienic condition. Several also commented that the halls and cells can get extremely hot, with windows not opening wide enough to alleviate the heat.

Others commented on a lack of bedding and clothing available when entering the prison, and the poor quality of pillows, mattresses, towels and bedding provided.

**Property**

Some commented on the slow release of property to prisoners and/or their families, with respondents reporting it taking weeks to have property released.

**Safety**

Some protection respondents reported feeling unsafe because they were not properly protected from mainstream prisoners.

**Induction**

Two respondents commented on the induction process, describing it as “poor” and not explaining the basic things that new prisoners needed to know.