
THE CURRAGH PLAINS

Preliminary Public Consultation Findings

May 2021

the paul hogarth company

Introduction

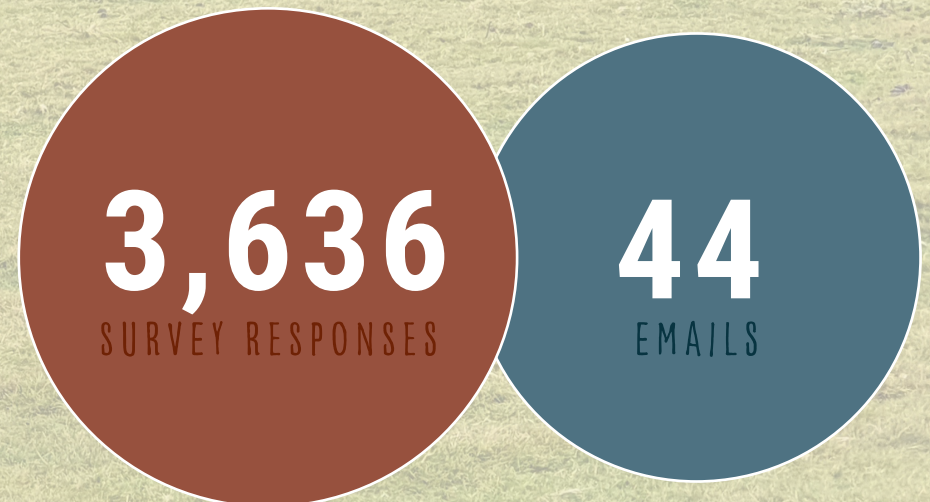
A preliminary public consultation exercise was undertaken to help establish an understanding of what aspects of the Curragh Plains are important and why.

The consultation comprised a short questionnaire that was hosted on a dedicated project website and publicised through various media platforms.

The survey was open for four weeks between Monday 15th March and Monday 12th April.

It was clear from the responses that the Curragh holds a very important place in people's hearts.

The strength of feeling, both for this project and this important place, was reflected in the number of responses submitted.



Questions & Analysis

The short questionnaire comprised a series of objective and qualitative questions.

Objective Questions

To understand more about those that responded to the questionnaire, the following questions were asked:

- *How often do you visit the Curragh?*
- *What best describes your reason for going to the Curragh?*
- *What is of interest to you when visiting the Curragh?*
- *What is your age range?*
- *How far away to you live from the Curragh?*
- *When you visit, on average how long do you stay?*

Qualitative Questions

To allow participants to share their thoughts, memories and feelings openly, the following were asked:

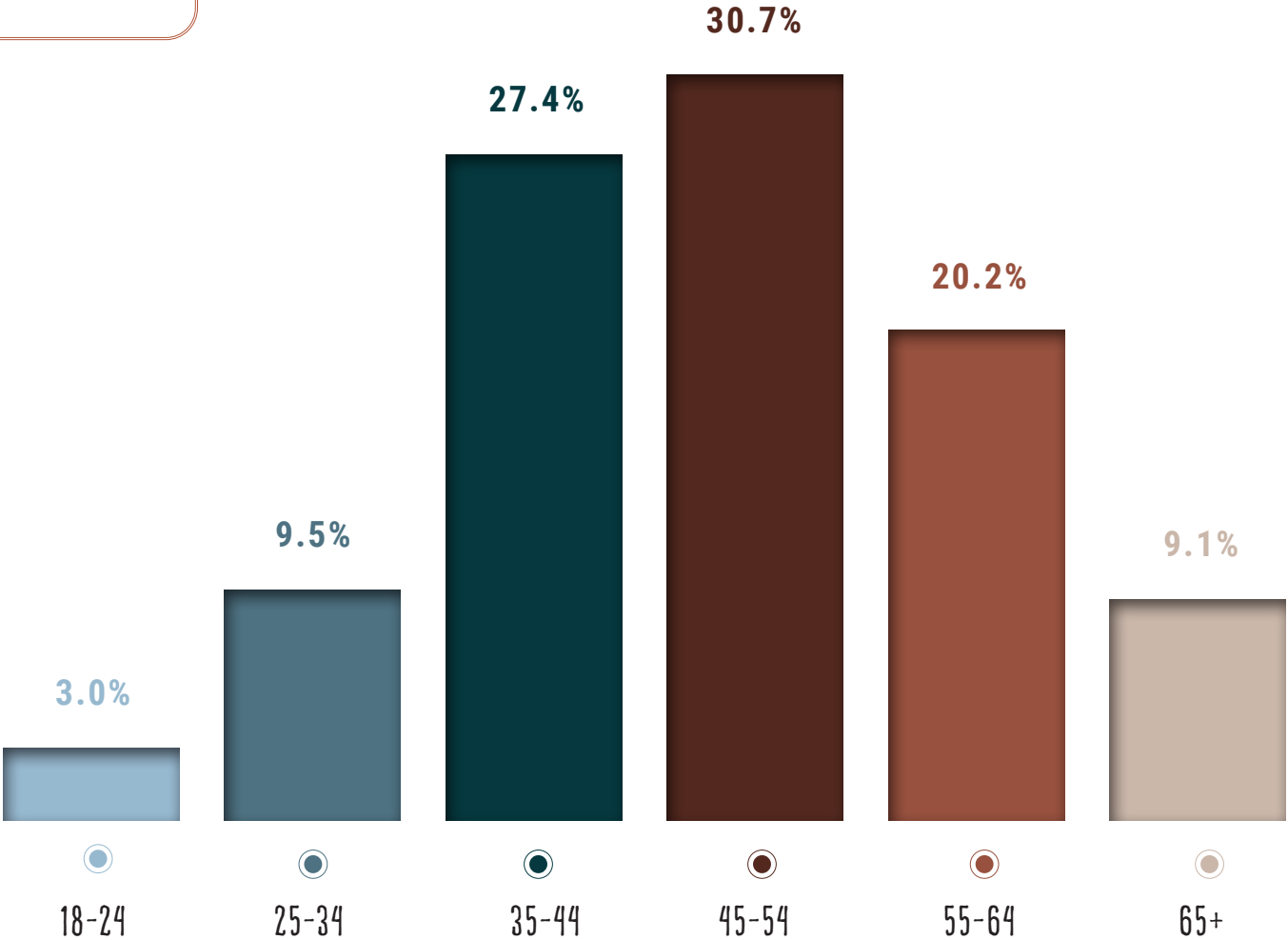
- *What aspects of the Curragh do you not like, or which you feel need improved?*
 - *What in your opinion makes the Curragh Special or Important?*
 - *Have you any ideas for the Curragh that would help make it a better place for all?*
 - *What special stories or memories do you have about the Curragh?*
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CONSULTATION FINDINGS

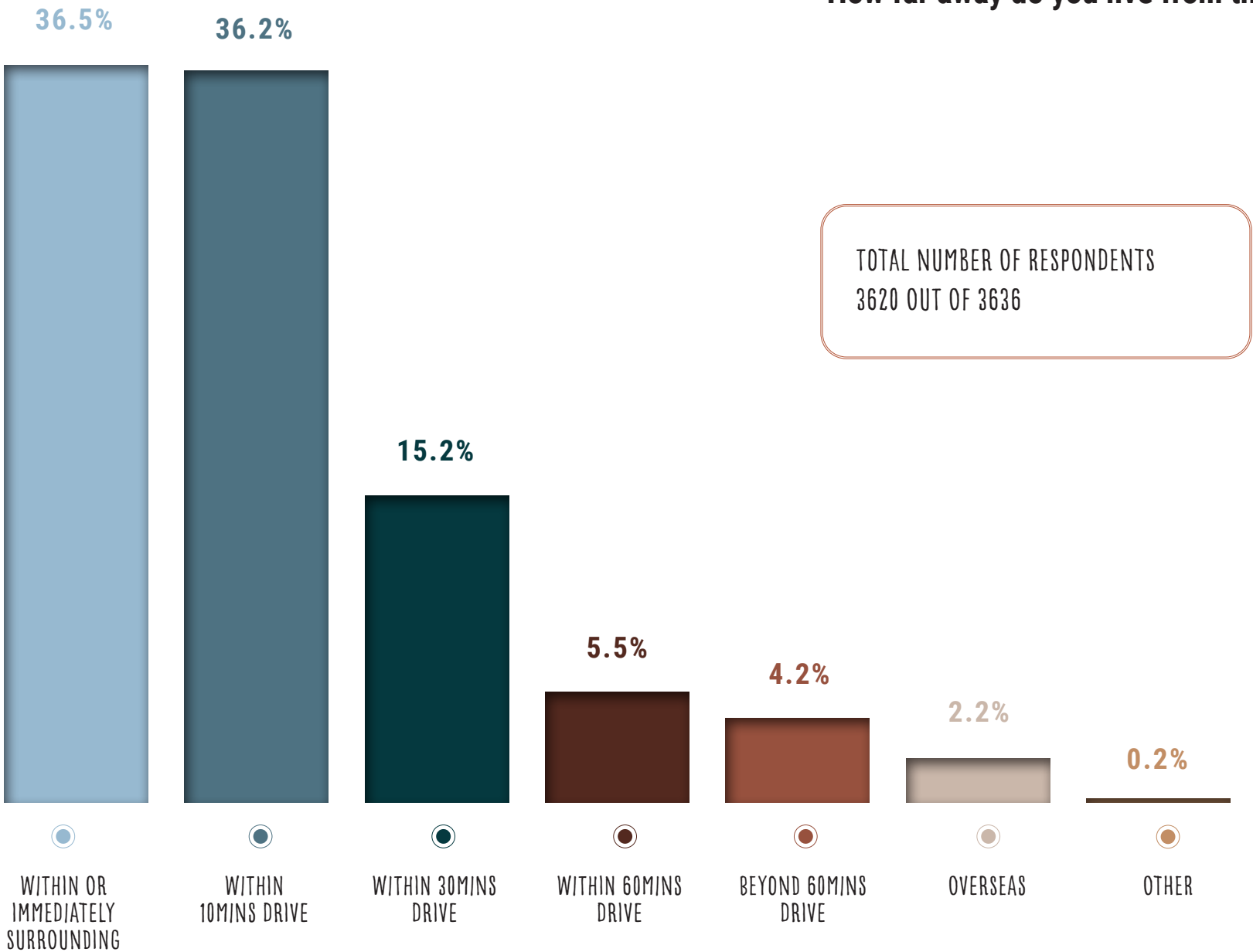


What is your age range?

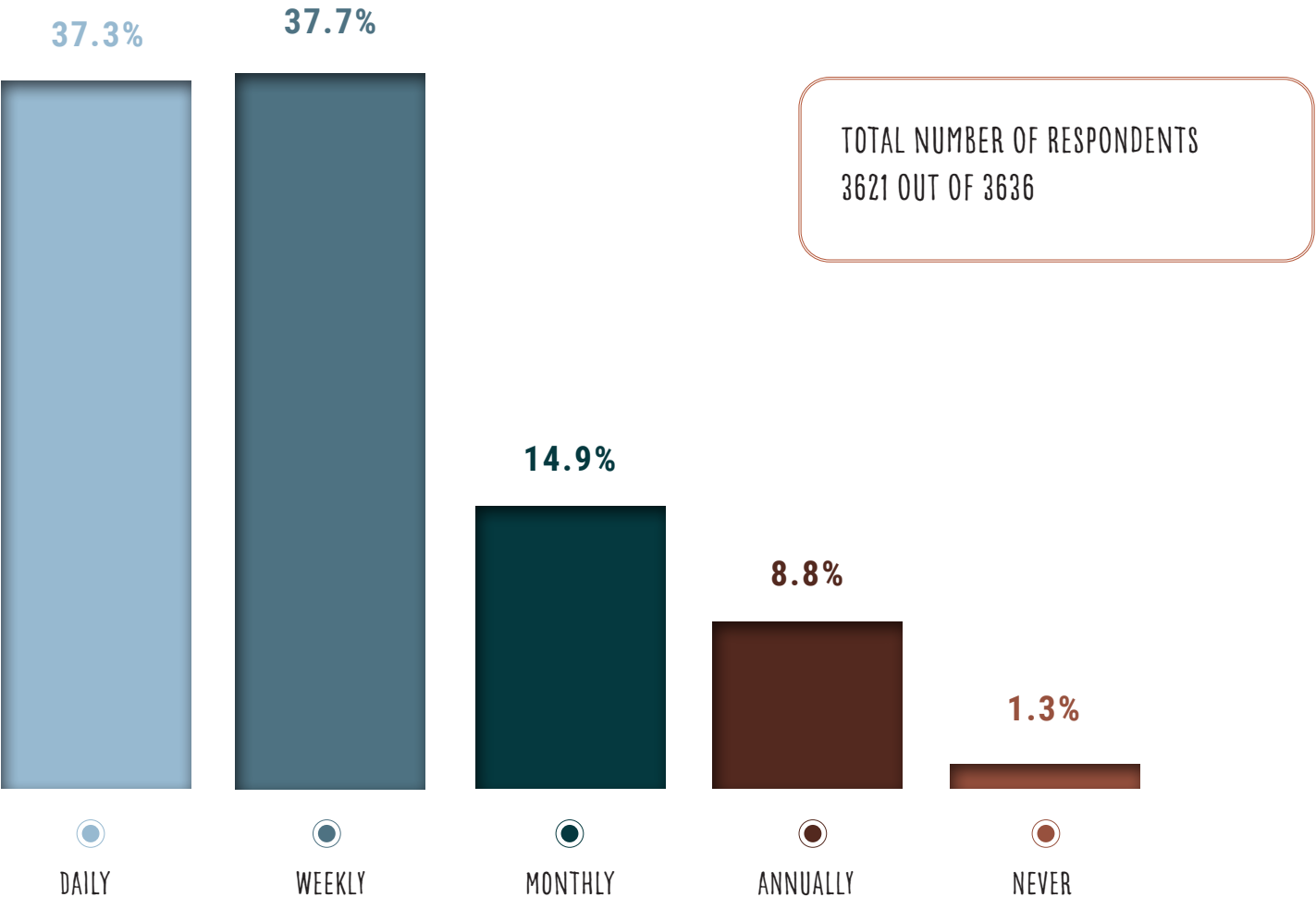
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
3627 OUT OF 3636



How far away do you live from the Curragh?

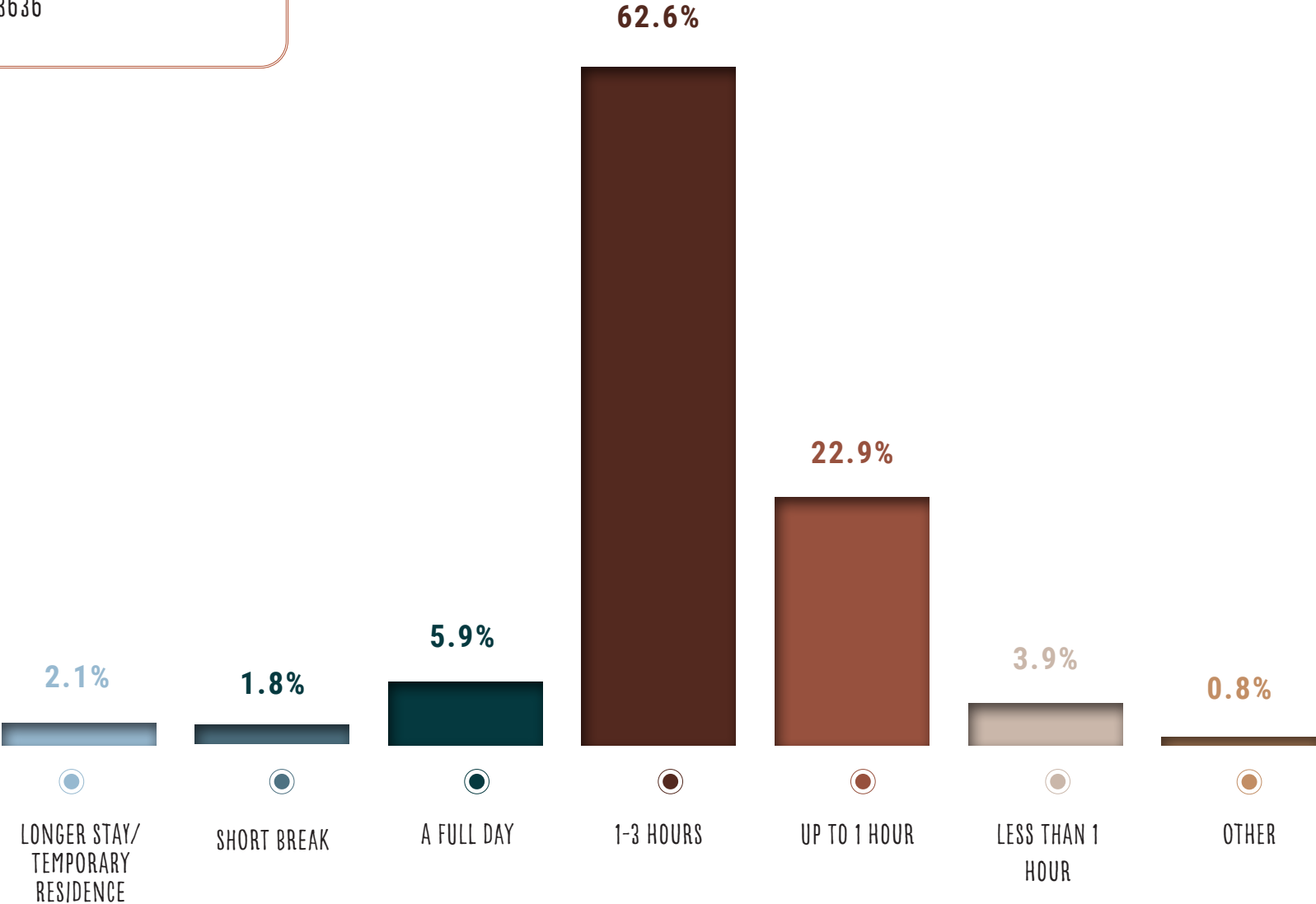


How often do you visit the Curragh?

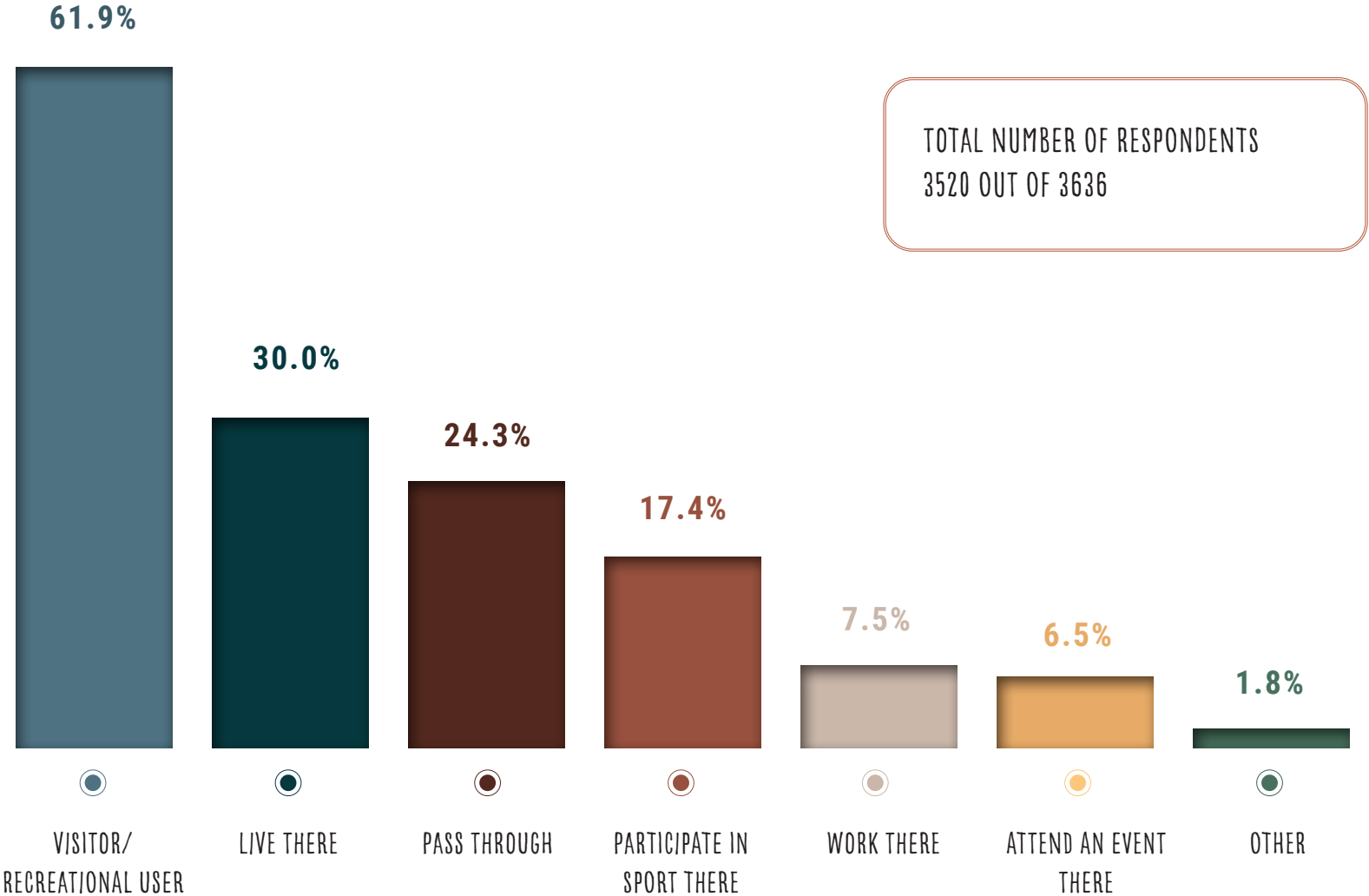


When you visit, on average how long do you stay?

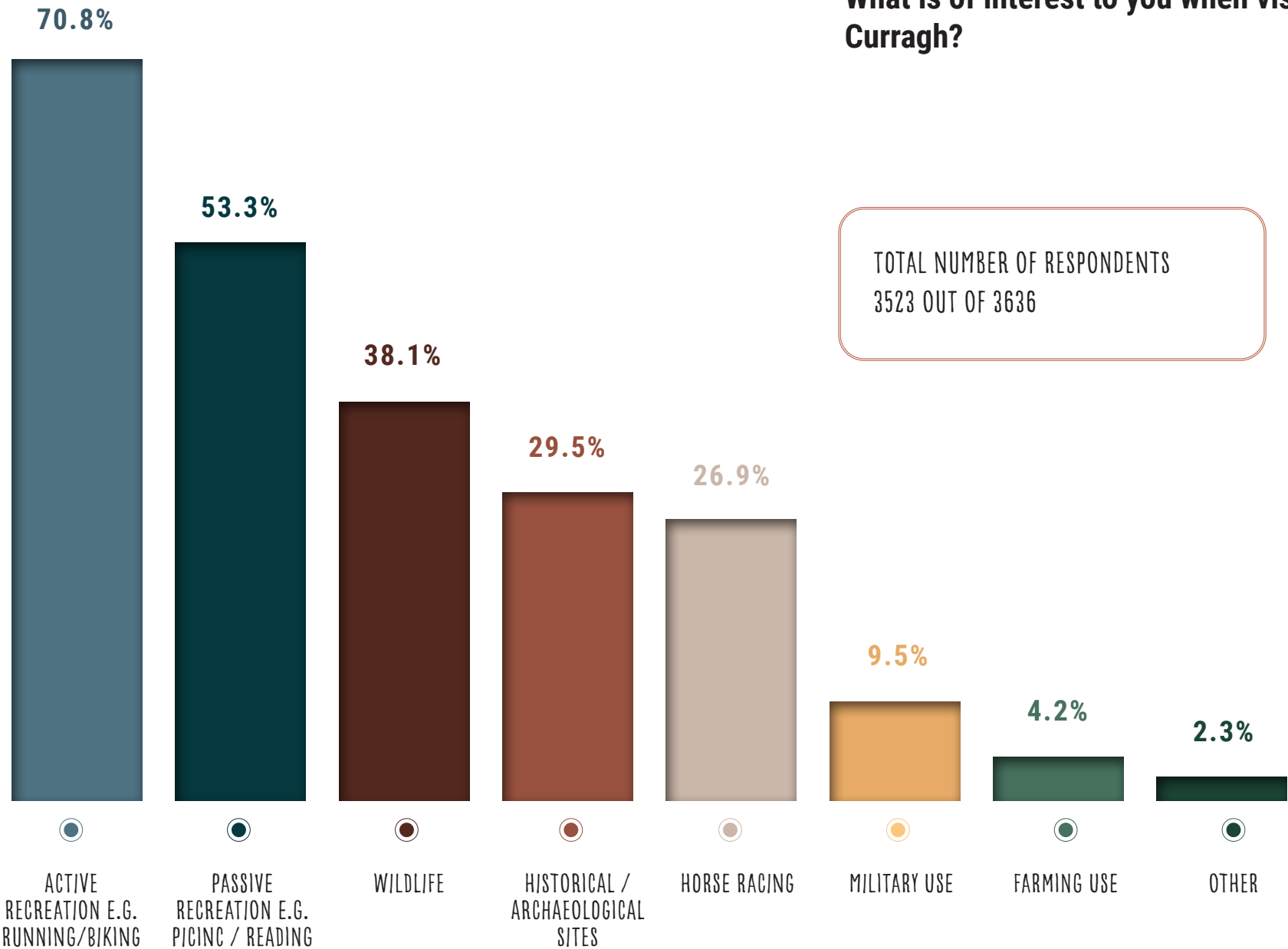
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
3624 OUT OF 3636



What best describes your reason for going to the Curragh?



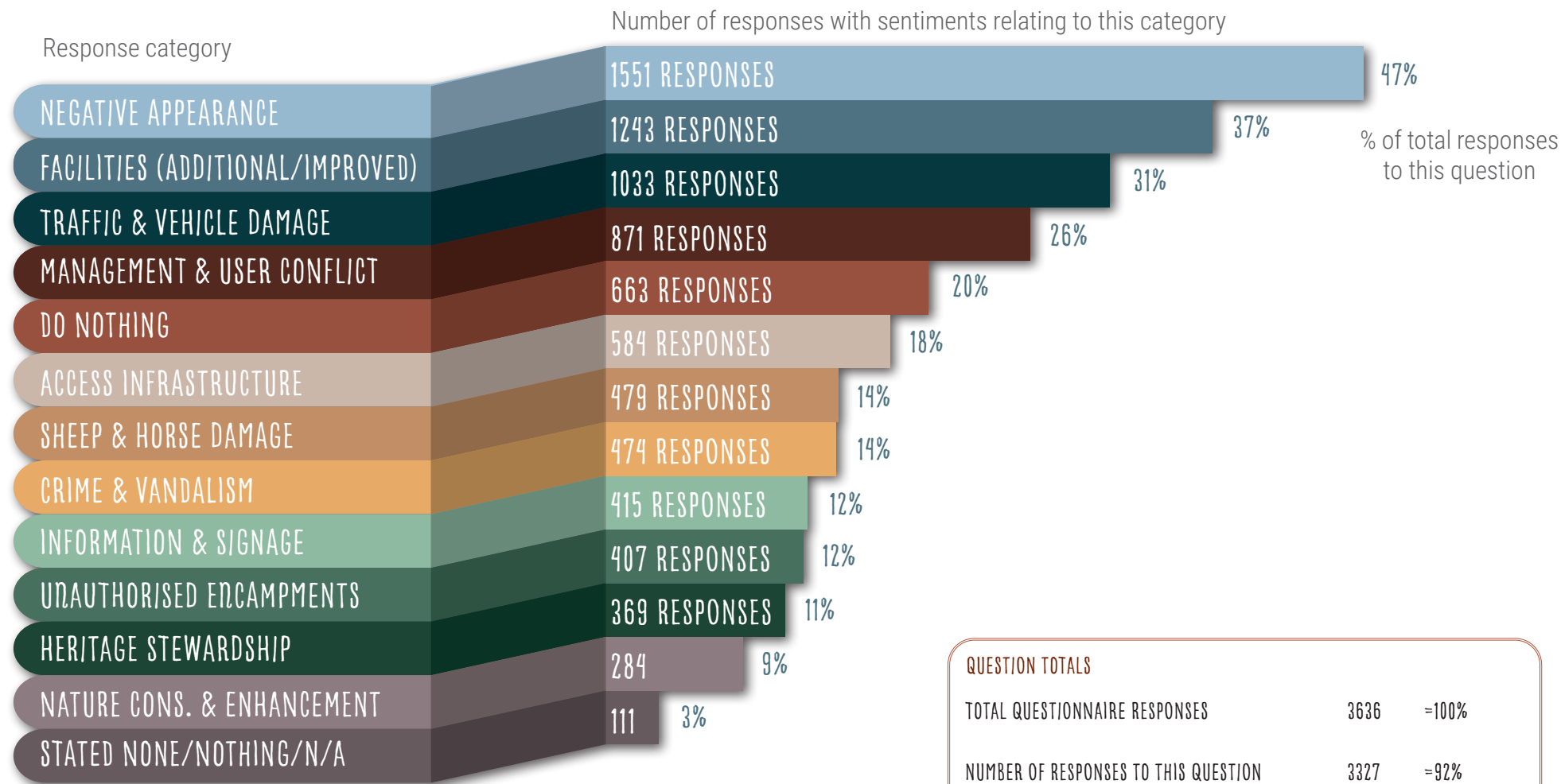
What is of interest to you when visiting the Curragh?



Key Conclusions

- Around two thirds of respondents were aged between 35 to 54 and roughly a third under or over that;
- The majority (73%) live adjacent to the Curragh Plains, with a further 21% living within an hour's drive. The response therefore is representative of the Curragh Plains' local population;
- 75% visit the Curragh Plains daily or weekly, with the majority of visits (90%) being up to 3hrs;
- The majority of respondents visit the Curragh Plains because they live or pass through it, or use them for recreation / sport. This is supported by a significant number of responses citing recreation as their main interest in the Curragh Plains, both active (70.8%) and passive (53.3%);
- The wildlife, historical and horse racing aspects of the Curragh Plains also featured prominently.

What aspects of the Curragh do you not like, or which you feel need improved?



What aspects of the Curragh do you not like, or which you feel need improved?



- "There is a general air of neglect about the place."
"I resent the people who disrespect it & use it as a dumping ground."
"The big problem....rubbish"
- "Car parking and toilet facilities"
"Bins and Seats"
- "People using scramblers or cars / jeeps off roading and damaging the grass"
- "The lack of control and legislation that currently exists for the use of the Curragh Plains.."
"The farmers and horse people treat it as if they own it."
"Scramblers are also becoming a potentially lethal nuisance."
- "Love it all. Leave it as it is."
- "Lack of equestrian bridlepaths"
"marked walking routes or trails"

What aspects of the Curragh do you not like, or which you feel need improved?

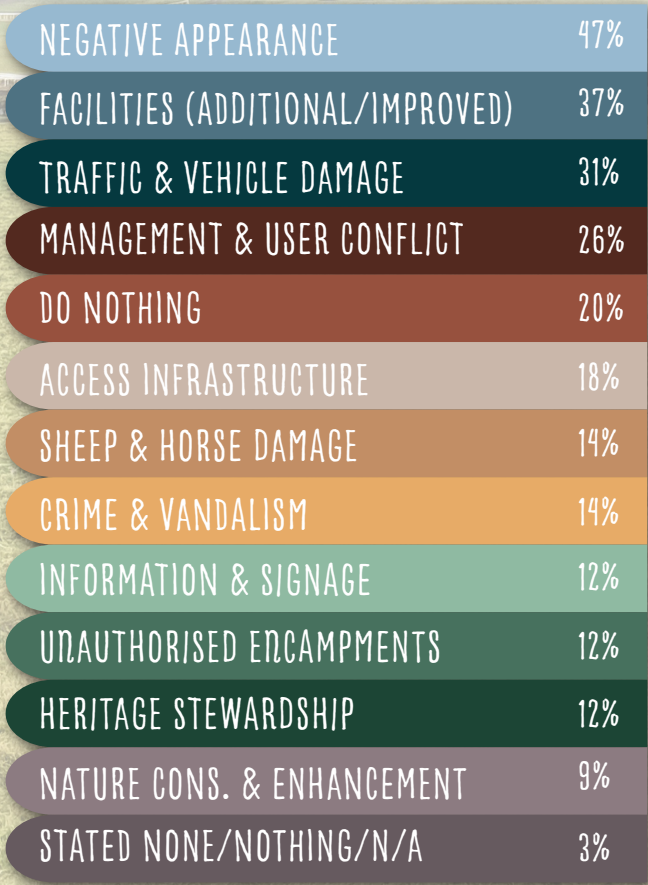


- "I feel the overuse of the plains by sheep and horses completely ruins the place"
- "Fly tipping needs to be addressed urgently"
- "Better signage. Sli Na Slainte. Plaques at areas of interest. Plaque at Donnelly's Hollow needs preserving."
- "Hordes of caravans arriving each year and leaving a terrible mess and the associated local and social problems."
- "It is sad to see a lot of the buildings falling into disrepair."
"The old bunkers are very special, they are important landmarks, they all have a story to tell, they should be restored properly."
- "I think planting more native trees would be beneficial for biodiversity."
"Areas should be set aside so grasslands can establish and wildlife."
- "It's all great, should remain untouched."

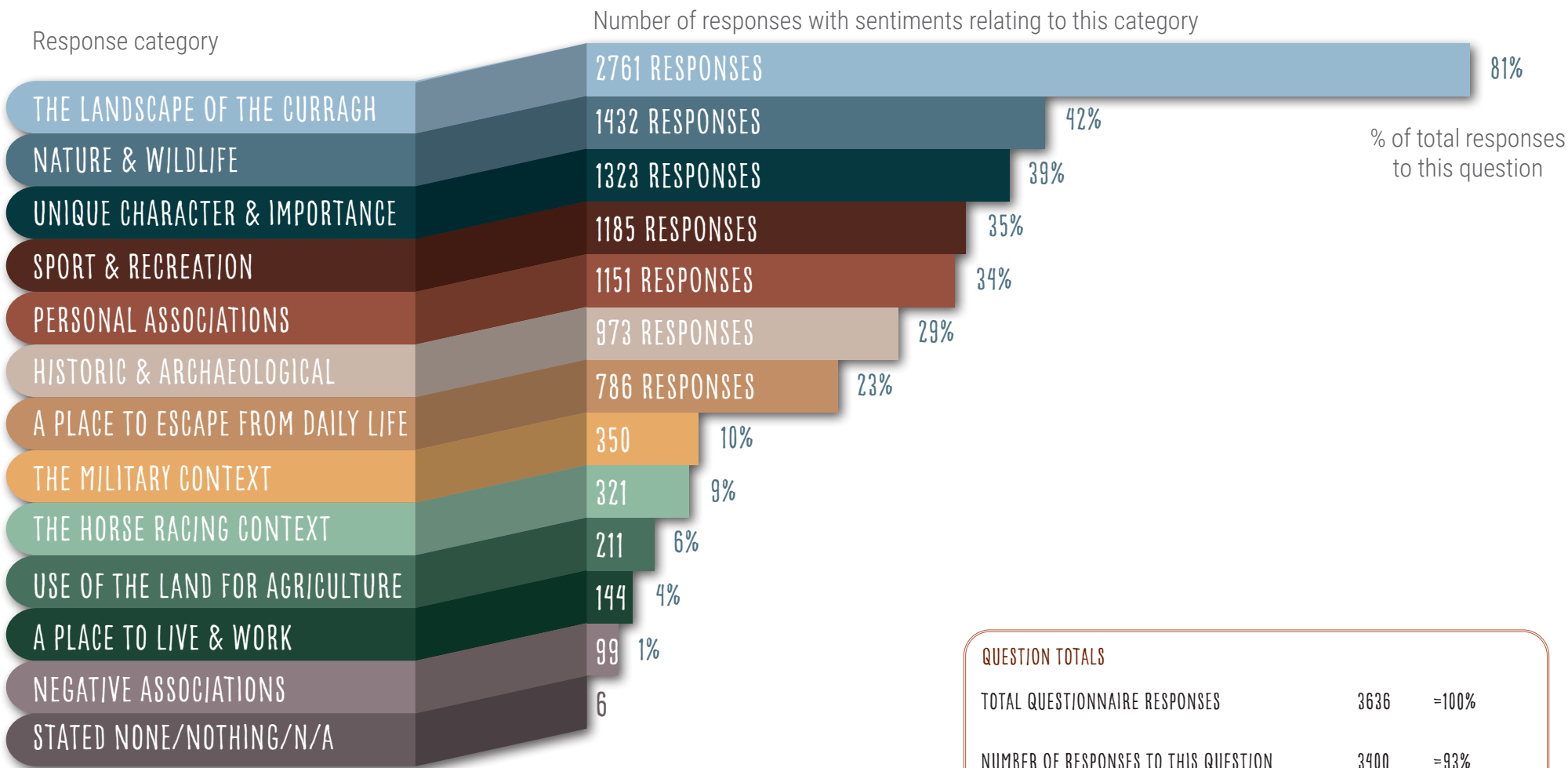
Key Conclusions

What aspects of the Curragh do you not like, or which you feel need improved?

- The most consistent response relates to its negative appearance. Littering, traffic, damage to the grasslands by vehicles & animals, and the condition of buildings and infrastructure were cited;
- A lack of facilities was also raised as a big issue, particularly in terms of parking, seating and bins;
- The management of the plains was criticised generally, in terms of litter and upkeep, and also in terms of the lack of enforcement and issues over user conflict.



What in your opinion makes the Curragh special or important?










What in your opinion makes the Curragh special or important?

- "The broad expanse of countryside and beautiful views."
- "The unique ecological environment."
"The Curragh has some of the most beautiful wildlife and fauna, Rabbits foxes, Badgers, as well as visiting migrating birds"
- "There's no other place like it in Ireland."
- "A fantastic recreational area that can be enjoyed by all."
- "Special because of the unique connection we all still have because we grew up there, worked there got married there."
- "Its wealth of history which has helped shape the country we live in."
- "The sea of green the peace and quiet."



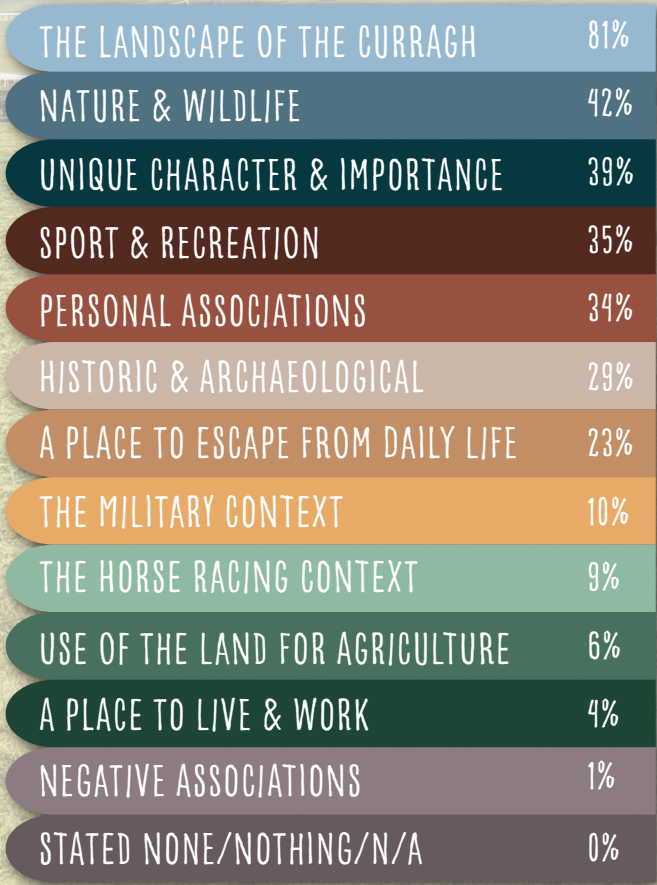
What in your opinion makes the Curragh special or important?

-  "The military presence makes the Curragh a special place."
-  "It is the most important part of the country for horse racing."
-  The vast plains and sheep being able to roam freely.
-  "The Curragh is a community of people, most lived there all their lives, and those that have moved stayed friends."
-  Unfortunately often ruined by scramblers and cars driving around the grass leading to areas becoming muddy and over used."

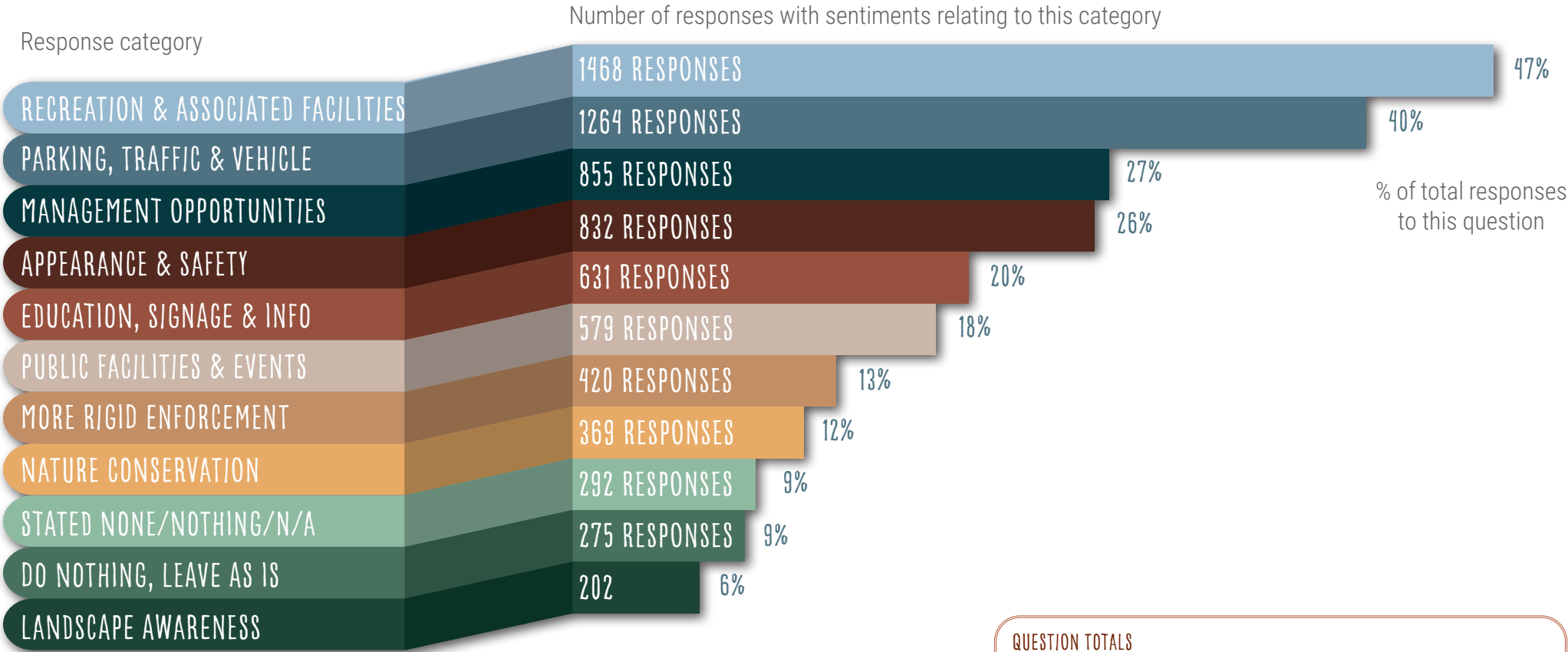
What in your opinion makes the Curragh Special or Important?

- 81% stated that it was the landscape of the Curragh that made it special, including its scale, scenery, and undeveloped nature;
- Closely linked, people cited its natural qualities, its wildlife, and the unique/ unusual aspects of the Curragh such as its diversity, vastness, and magical qualities;
- the recreational value of the Curragh Plains and the importance it plays in people’s lives socially but also in terms of mental and physical health featured heavily;
- its history and archaeology, particularly in relation to the story of the country, was recognised as important.

Key Conclusions



Have you any ideas for the Curragh that would help make it a better place for all?



QUESTION TOTALS

TOTAL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES	3636	=100%
NUMBER OF RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION	3145	=96%
NUMBER THAT DID NOT ANSWER	491	=14%

Have you any ideas for the Curragh that would help make it a better place for all?



"Developed into a proper park, with walking routes, picnic areas etc."
"play areas for children"

"Designated dry parking area that doesn't muck up the grass."
"traffic calming"

"a more organised approach with allocated times for specific uses."
"improved zonation of usage including no-graze zones"
"I would like to see the plains declared a national park"

"clean up the boarded up houses and buildings old post office"
"fines for littering"

"information signs for historical sites"
"a visitors centre"
"local signage to educate people to the importance of the curragh"

"need amenities. boot wash, cafe outdoor seating"
"large event like balloon festival in northampton uk, would be cool."

Have you any ideas for the Curragh that would help make it a better place for all?



"better stewardship. a proper warden service."
"catch and prosecute the people abusing the area"
"needs more policing between gardai and military police"



"It could be an opportunity for rewilding and improving biodiversity"
"make it more bee/pollinator friendly"



"leave it alone its beautiful just the way it is"



"just recognition of its uniqueness and importance of its ecological values and to put in place the means to ensure it can continue as a place for all to enjoy."

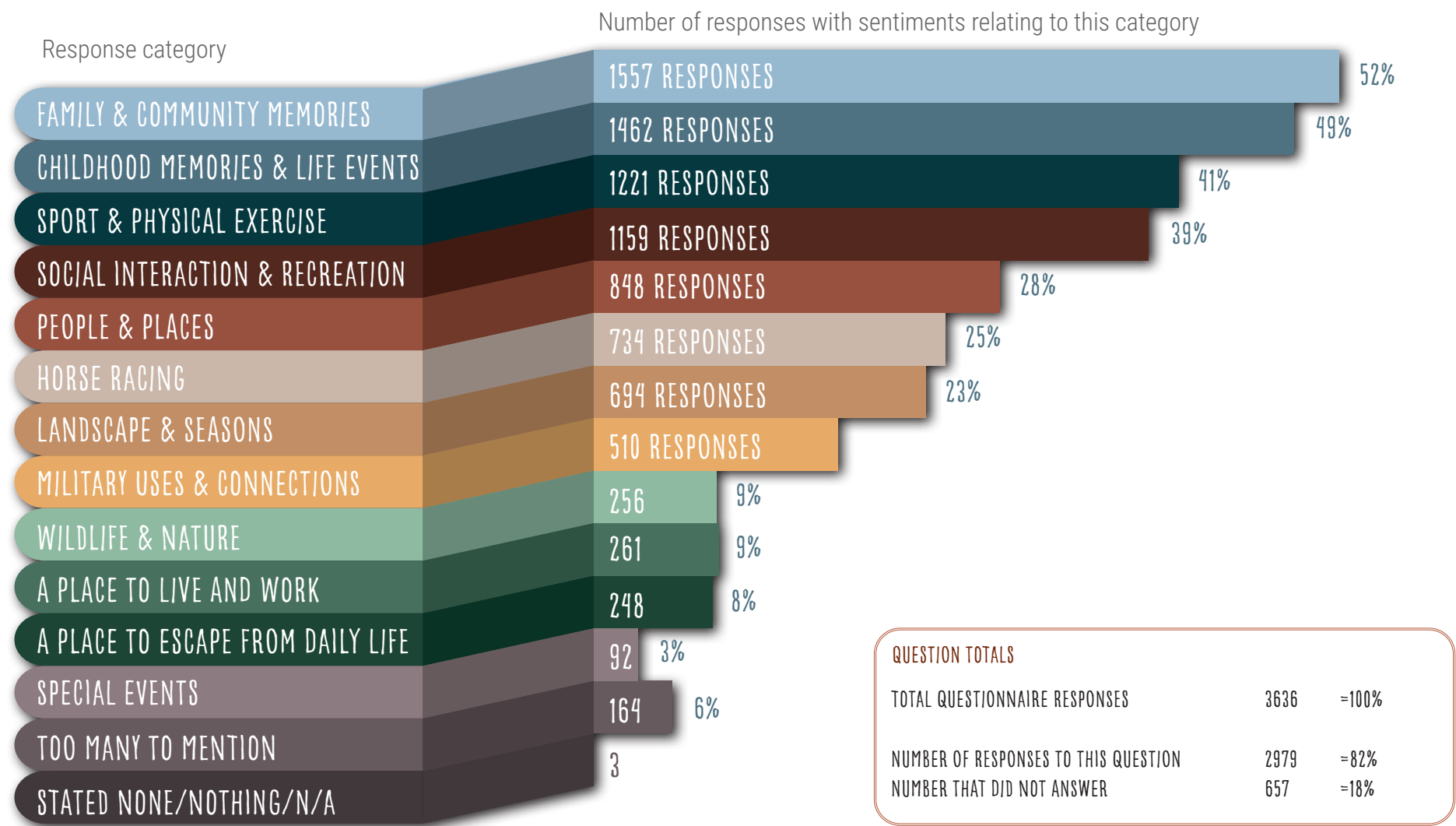
Key Conclusions

Have you any ideas for the Curragh that would help make it a better place for all?

- A significant number suggested facilities and infrastructure to enhance the recreational use of the plains, such as parking areas, bins, seating, picnic areas, toilets, coffee outlets etc. This included dedicated trails, bridleways, cycle trails and walking routes to manage some of the user conflicts;
- Control over litter and fly-tipping featured heavily as did managing sheep grazing more stringently;
- A high proportion discussed ideas for zoning uses and creating dedicated facilities / timetables for activities such as scramblers, off road vehicles etc.
- Several suggested protection through National Park status, accompanied by the benefits that management personnel such as rangers, wardens and custodians would bring.
- Signage and education such as welcome and waymarking signage and signage that communicated the importance of the landscape and heritage features.



What special stories or memories do you have about the Curragh?





What special stories or memories do you have about the Curragh?

- "I bring my grandchildren up there walking, having picnic and flying kites."
- "I spent a large chunk of my childhood playing out on the Curragh, cycling and exploring the endless trenches and hills."
- "Circuits in the Curragh... Exercising with locals in the open area was amazing."
- "Walks on the Curragh with my friends"
- "There are several historical stories associated with it from St. Bridgid's cloak, through to the Priests grave and the Gibbet Rath massacre."
- "Going to the races from an early age with my parents to see the best Thoroughbred horses in the world."
"Local man Willie Burke winning the 1964 derby on Santa Claus."
- "Beautiful sunrises on frosty mornings"



What special stories or memories do you have about the Curragh?

"Spent three and a half years in the military there in the early eighties and enjoyed every minute of it!"

"Seeing wildlife and enjoying walking amongst trees"

"Lived on the edge of it all my life, a facility that anyone would love to have."

"The Curragh is an area offering peace, space, calmness, tranquility and great beauty."

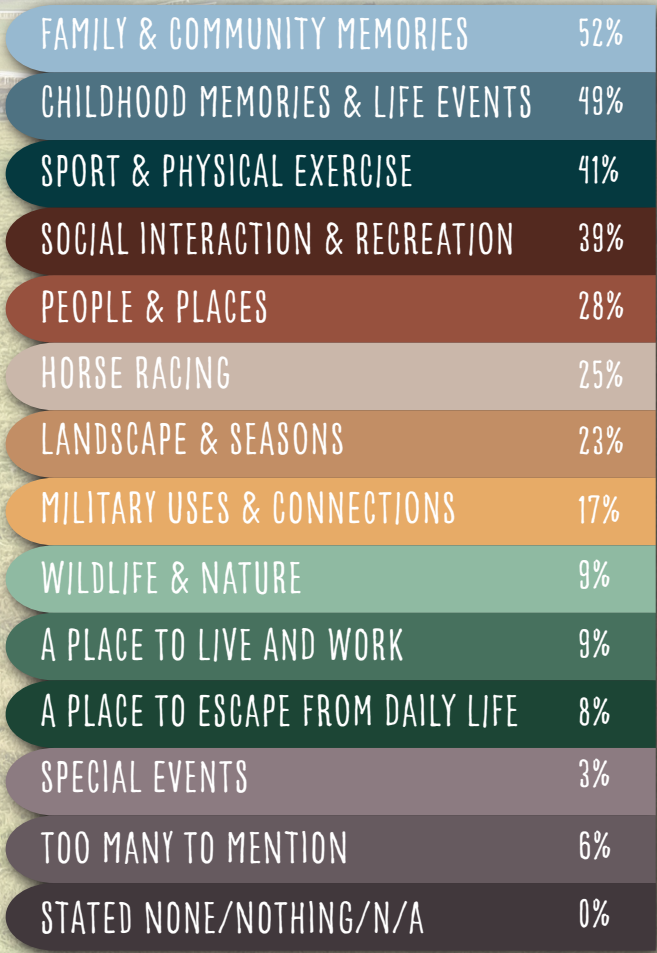
"Status quo at the racecourse. What a night!"
"Watching Braveheart being filmed"

"Too many to write down ..its just so special to me"

What special stories or memories do you have about the Curragh?

- It was clear to see from the majority of the responses how important this landscape is to the people that live around the Curragh and how much it has influenced their lives and the lives of their families, with many positive childhood memories.
- Likewise, its importance to people’s mental and physical health, and as a place to meet friends, socialise and escape modern life was clearly communicated.
- The diversity of people’s memories illustrates the diversity of this landscape in terms of use, seasonality, nature and historic significance, and many notable events were communicated.

Key Conclusions



EMAIL SUBMISSIONS



In addition to the short questionnaire, an opportunity to email through any additional information was provided via a dedicated project email address.





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