



Association for Public Service Excellence

State of the Market: Parks and Greenspaces

Matt Ellis, APSE Principal Advisor



association for public service excellence

Local Authority State of the Market 2024

Parks and greenspaces



Briefing 24/09

March 2024



Purpose:

- 🌱 Survey of UK local authority grounds maintenance teams
- 🌱 Covering a diverse range of topics – from budgets and income generation to biodiversity targets and the involvement of community groups
- 🌱 Provides a valuable snapshot of the sector
- 🌱 Identification of trends in the sector

**Aggregated figures – may not reflect the experiences of your council*

***Exceptional circumstances of the pandemic may have distorted figures 2021-23*



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Selected themes:

- 🌱 Budgets
- 🌱 Efficiencies
- 🌱 Income generation
- 🌱 Workforce
- 🌱 Training and apprenticeships
- 🌱 Biodiversity
- 🌱 Weed control
- 🌱 Community involvement



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Why the bee?

- 🐝 Bees and local parks deliver proven significant benefits to our ecosystems and yet both, currently, are in real danger and in need of our support more than ever.





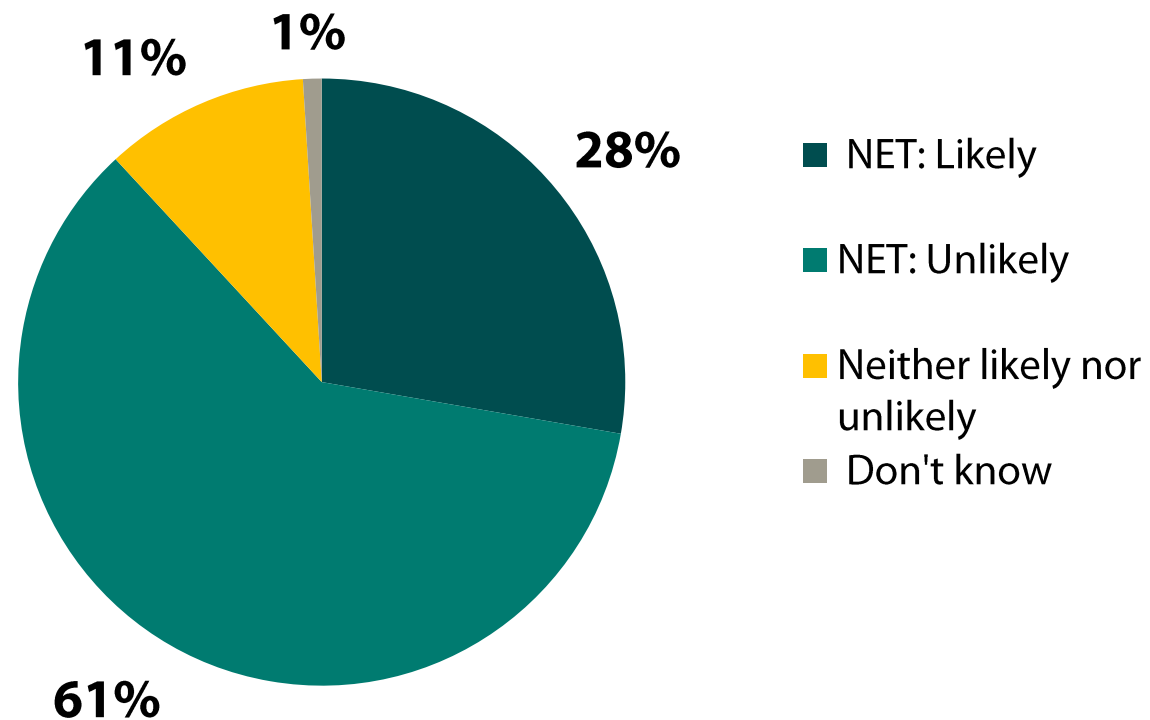
Budgets



Survation.

Poll of Local Councillors 2023

How likely, if at all, would you say it is that your local authority will issue a Section 114 Notice?





Budgets

66%

***“Agree” or
“Agree strongly”***

“The squeeze on public sector resources are affecting parks and green spaces disproportionately to other service areas.”

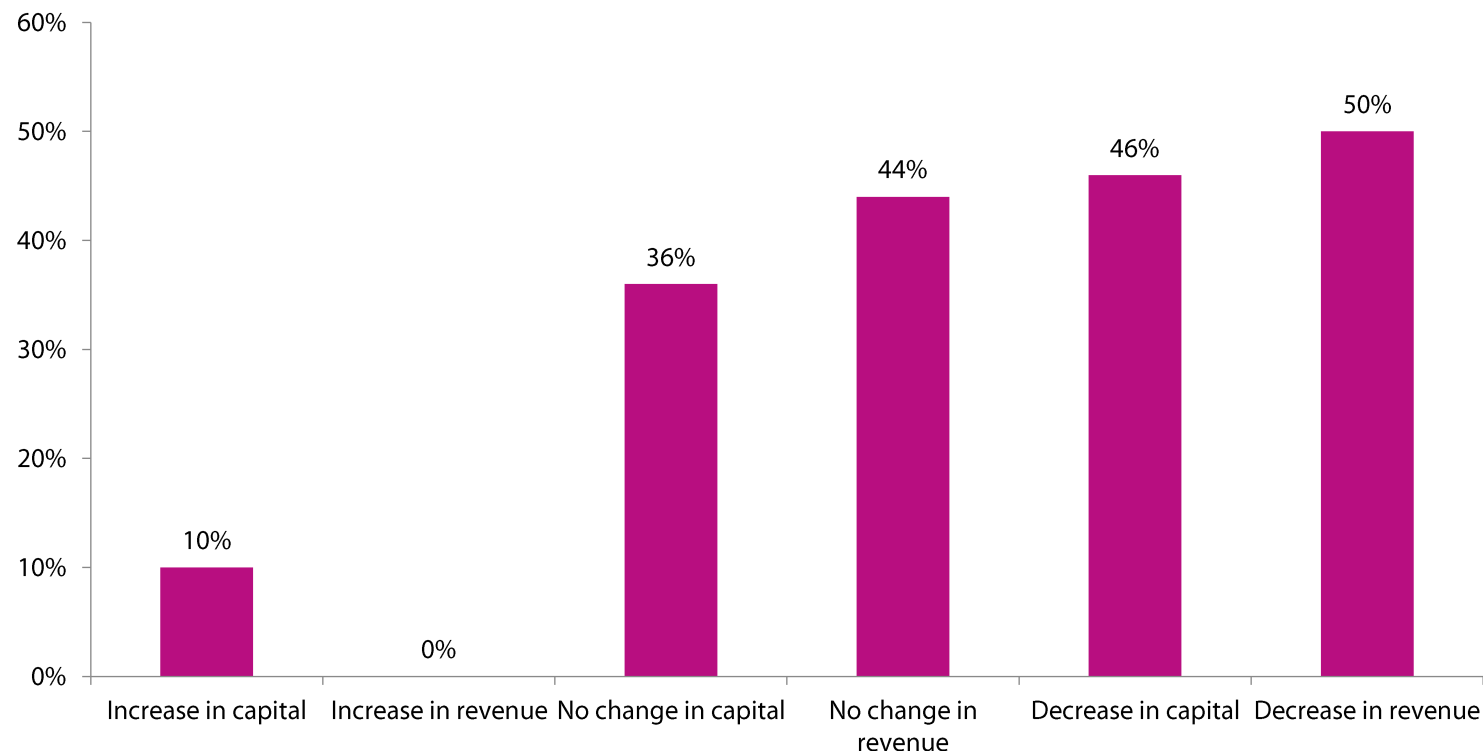


Budgets

“Little to no evidence of a much-needed cash injection into parks from central government funding”.

“Inflationary pressures mean the cost of running services has increased; parks managers can therefore expect ‘much less bang for our buck.’”

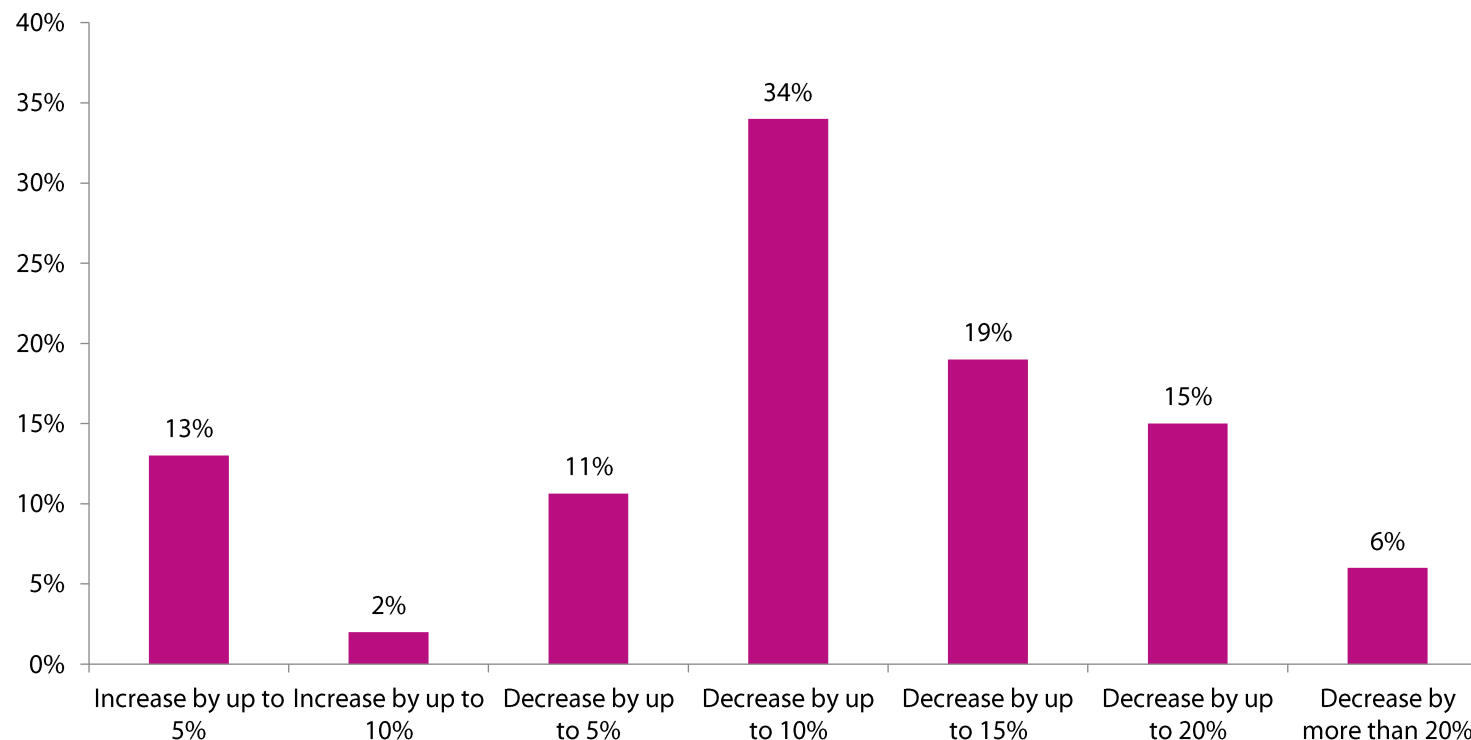
What changes do you expect to your parks and green spaces budget over the next year? [Multiple choice]



Budgets

*A couple of respondents noted their service budget is **expecting decreases in funding of up to 30% in the next five years.***

2.2 What is your expectation of the level of funding in your service budget in the next five years?





Income generation

APSE's State of UK Public Parks 2021

Report found that a total of

£690 million was lost from parks

budgets 2010-2021





Income generation

Income generating activity	2019	2024	Variation
Sports pitch lettings	83%	64%	- 19%
Fairgrounds	80%	66%	-14%
Festivals/concerts/events	77%	64%	-13%
Sale of land	9%	18%	+9%



Income generation - *Barriers*

62%

Public resistance

65%

Political resistance

33%

Lack of time

47%

**Lack of investment
funding**



Efficiencies

78%

*“Agree” or
“Agree strongly”*

“Reductions in funding has resulted in a withdrawal of maintenance from some land and an increase in unmaintained land.”

Reduced maintenance

62%

**Bedding/flower
displays**

55%

**Frequency of grass
cuts (amenity)**

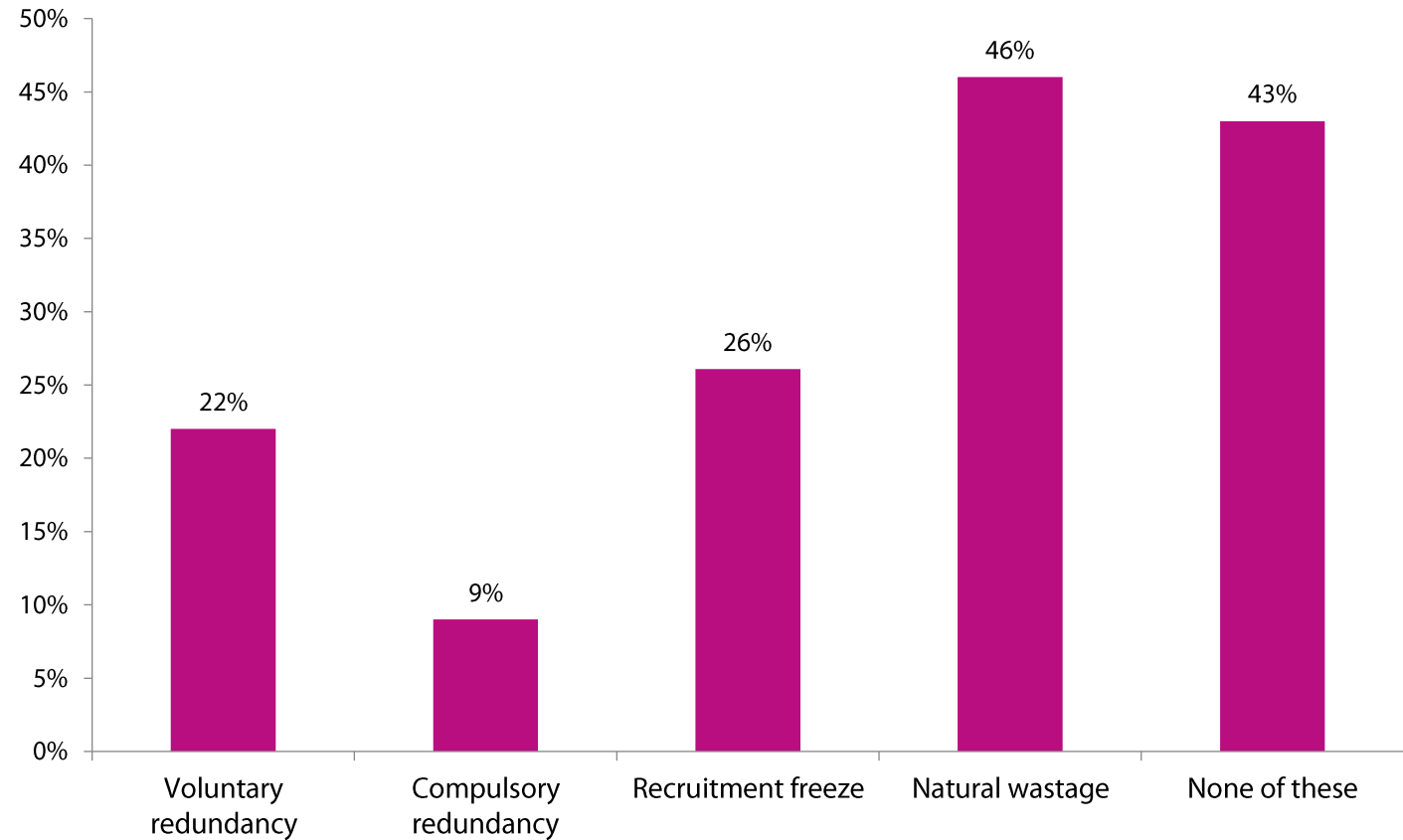
35%

**Shrub bed
maintenance**



Workforce

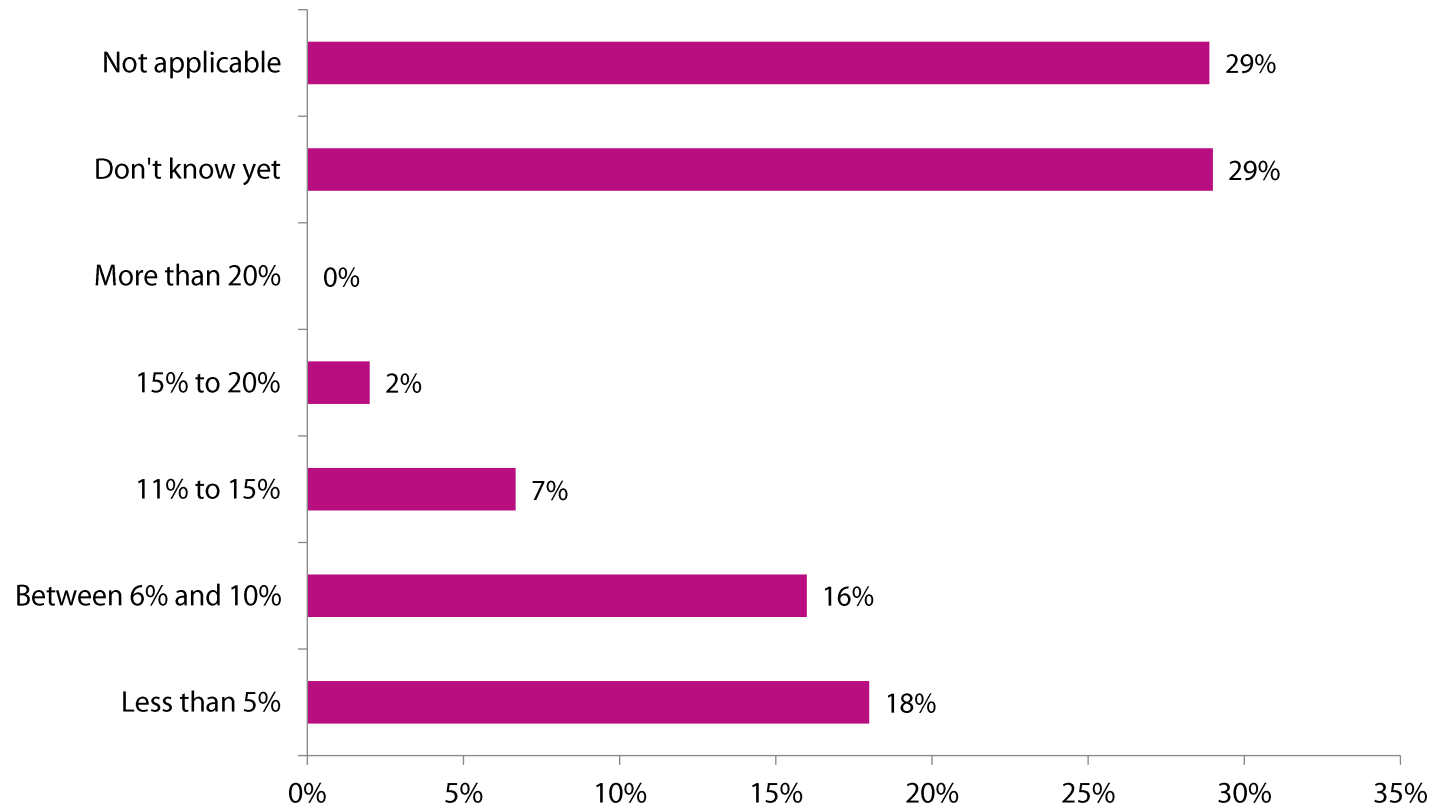
6.1 Does your service intend to implement any of the following within the next 12 months? [Multiple choice]





Workforce

6.2 If your service area is subject to workforce reductions, what percentage of staff do you expect to lose from the service?





Training

“Is the training budget over the next 12 months going to...”

71%

Stay the same

27%

Decrease

2%

Increase



Apprenticeships

“Do you have apprentices?”

44%

Yes

“Are you going to be recruiting apprentices in 2024-25?”

47%

Yes



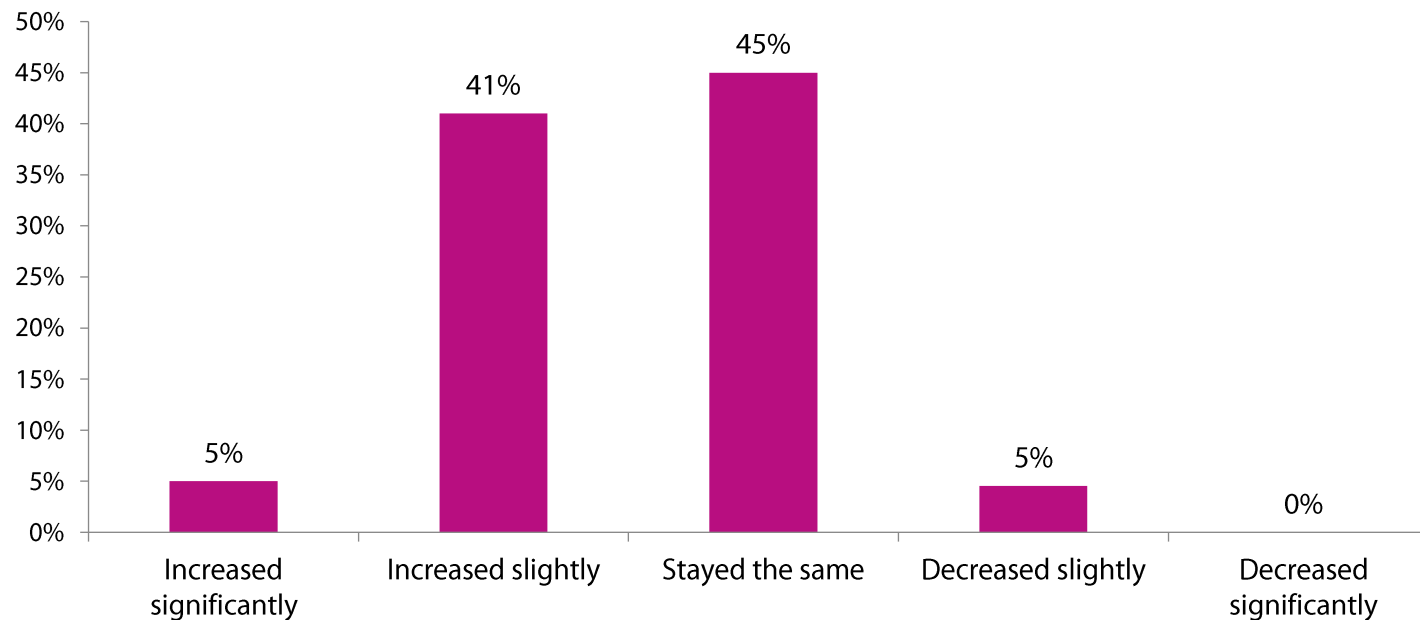
Community involvement

Do you have friends of parks groups?

86%

Yes

13.2 Has community sector involvement in parks...
[Multiple choice]





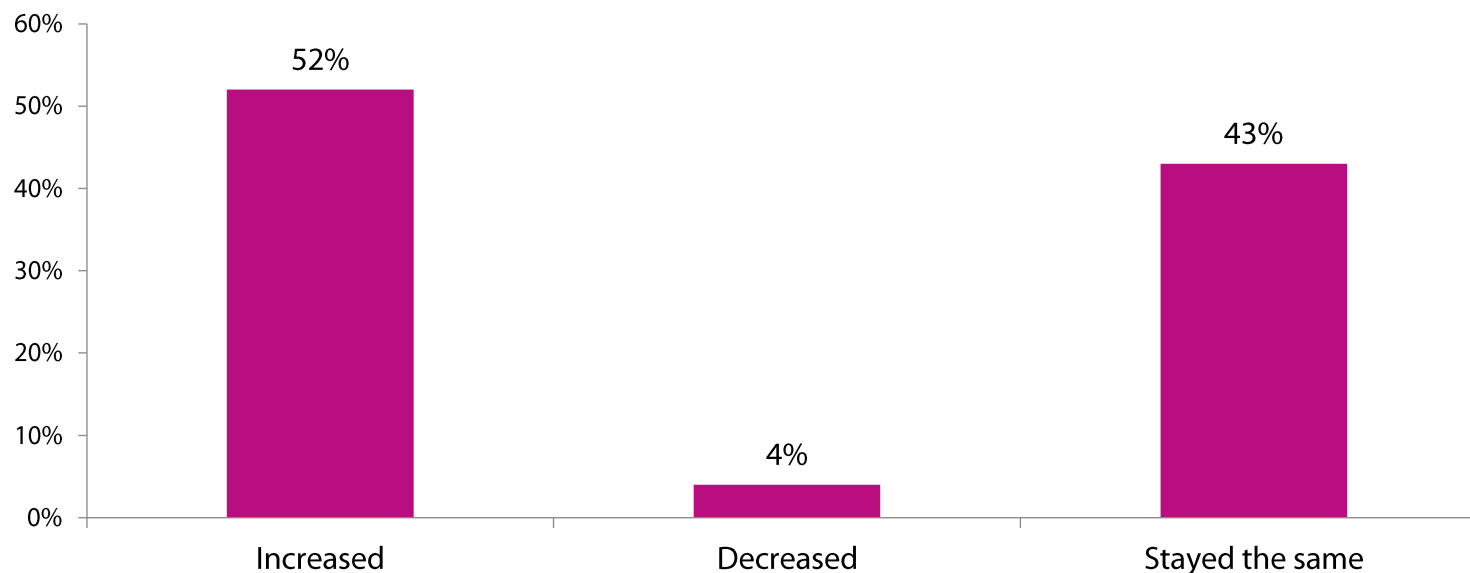
Community involvement

Do you have friends of parks groups?

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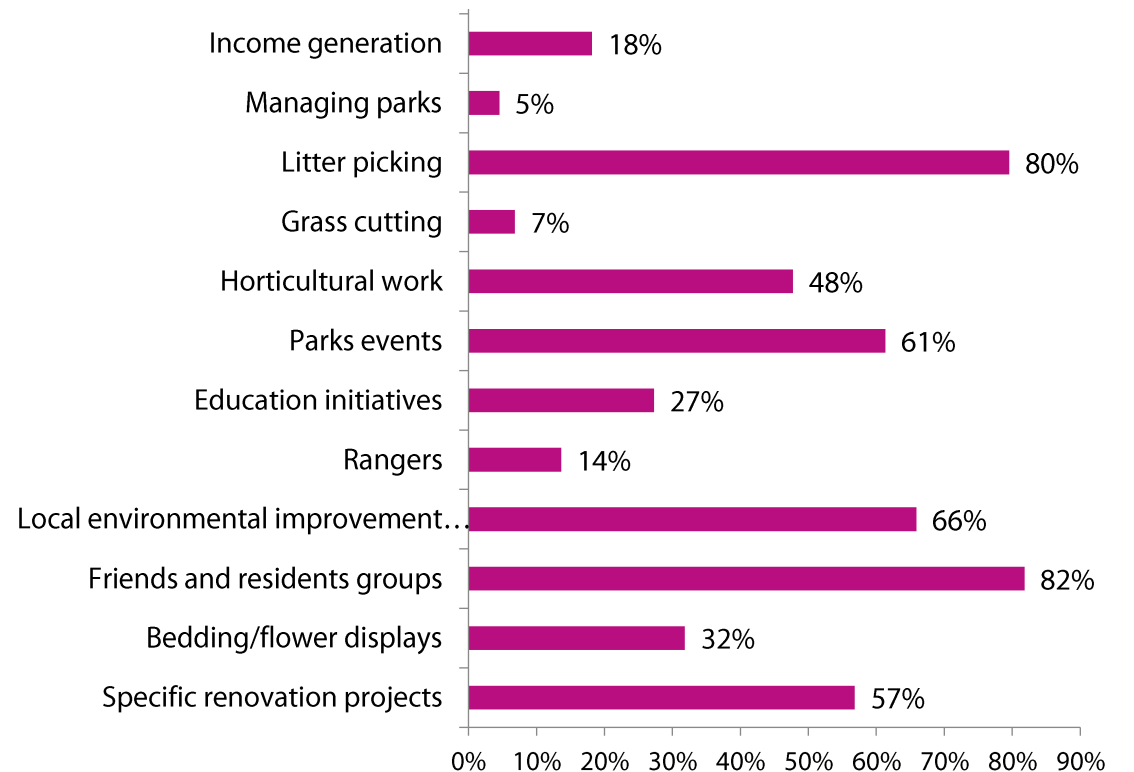
8.1 Do you think the number of visitors to your formal parks during the past year has:



Community involvement

1. Friends of Residents Groups **(82%)**
2. Litter picking **(80%)**
3. Local environmental improvement plans **(61%)**

13.1 How are volunteers involved in the parks service?
[Multiple choice]





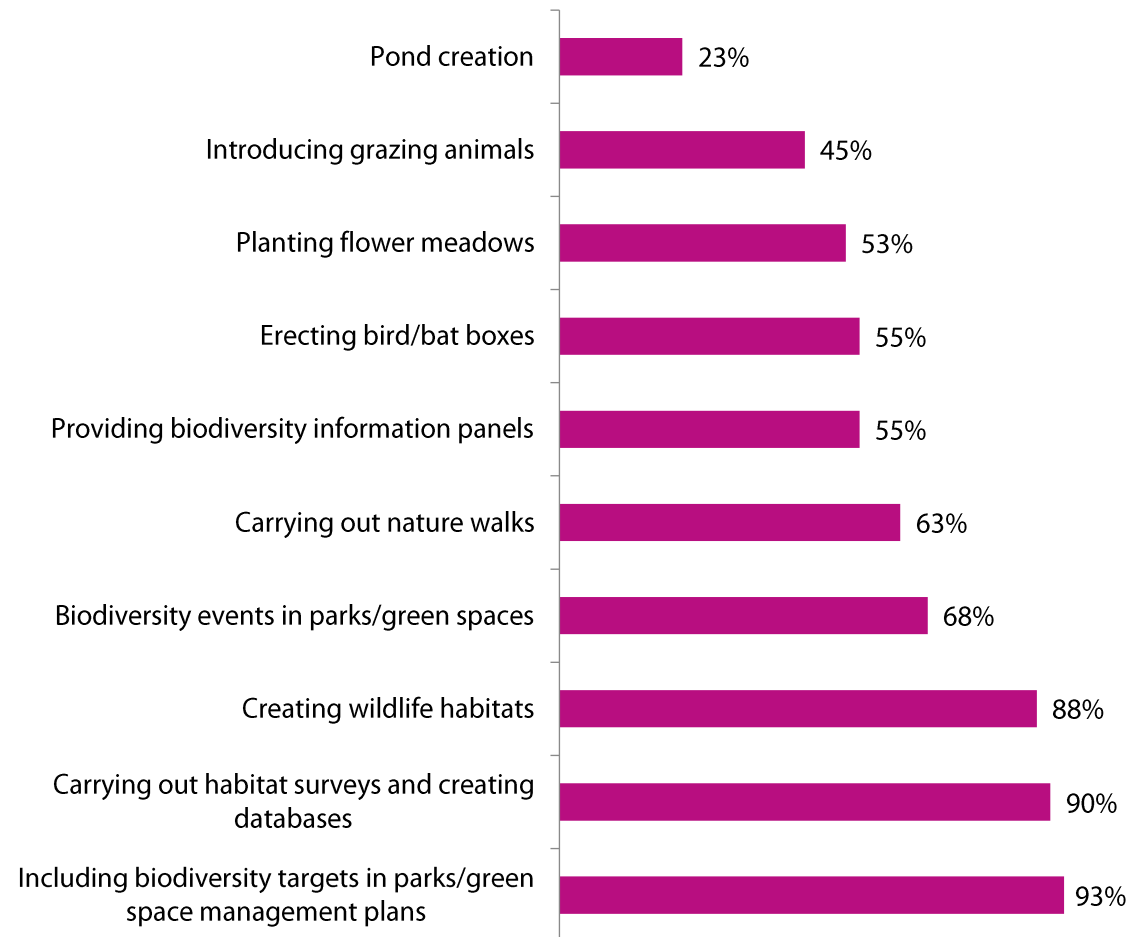
Biodiversity

Do you make specific provision for promoting biodiversity in parks and green spaces?

91%

Yes

10.1 If yes, which of the following have you carried out:
[Multiple choice]





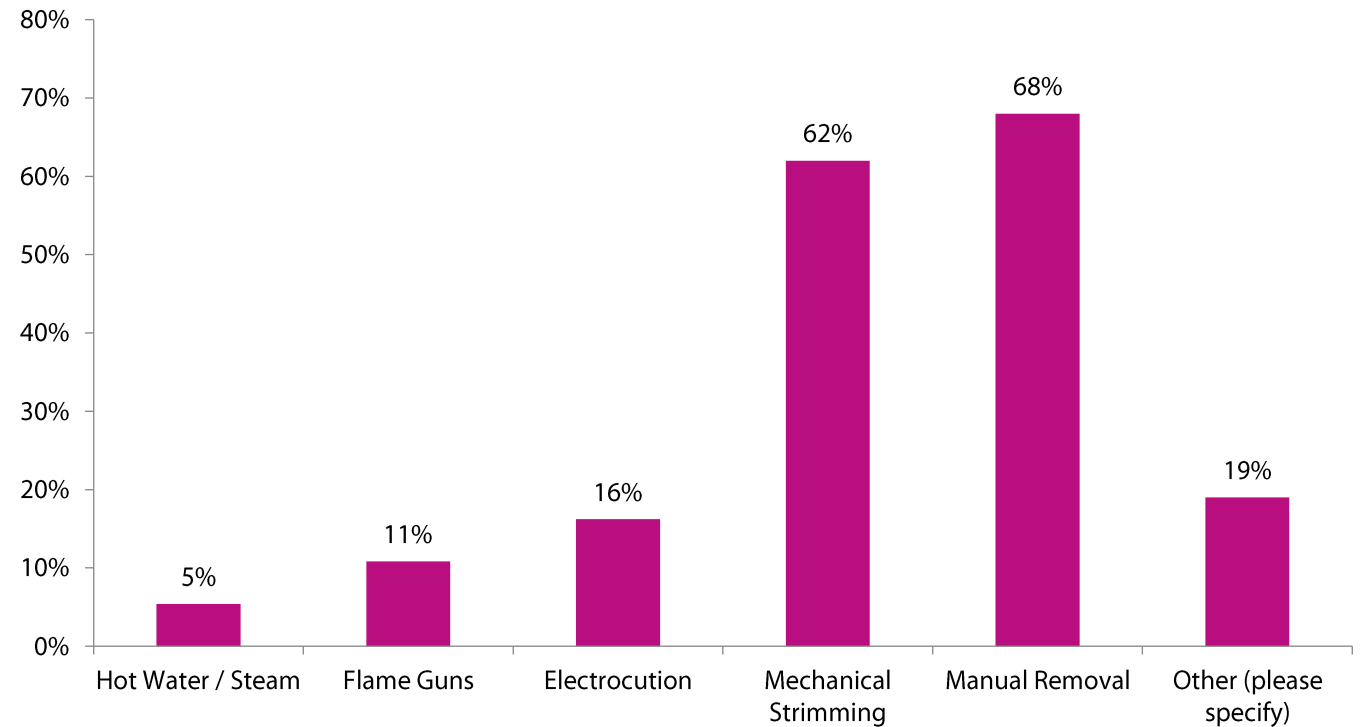
Weed Control

Are you considering reducing the amount of chemical treatment you use to eradicate weeds?

82%

Yes

11.1 What alternative methods will you be using to remove weeds?
[Multiple choice]





Other themes

- 🌿 Rangers
- 🌿 Quality measurement
- 🌿 Integrated street scene
- 🌿 Community ownership
- 🌿 Additional funding opportunities



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Why the bee?

- High levels of cohesion
- Excellent predisposition to work in groups
- The more families are numerous, the stronger they are







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