



Malvern Hills Trust Public Consultation

Report of overall findings

31st July 2024

Prepared for:



Malvern Hills Trust





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Objectives and the approach



Measuring attitudes towards the work of the Malvern Hills Trust

The Malvern Hills Trust are a charity governed by statute who own and manage a significant area of the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire. Their objectives are to provide a space for public access/recreation and to care for the “natural aspect” of the land under their jurisdiction. Since the organisation was established by Act of Parliament in 1884, many things have changed.

There have been 4 more Acts of Parliament, the land under the Trust’s care has increased, it registered as a charity in 1984 and the environment in which it operates has transformed. For example, the invention of the motor vehicle, changes in farming practices and population growth were not anticipated when the first Act was passed.

The Trust needs to monitor and evolve its constitution, to reflect modern best practice in relation to its governance and to manage the landscape more effectively in the 21st century. A public consultation was undertaken in 2019 and this process was repeated in early Summer 2024. **56 Degree Insight**, a research agency and consultancy who specialise in measuring consumer views on leisure, tourism and outdoor recreation were appointed to assist the Trust in this exercise.

This report provides an overview of the whole process – from consultation design to analysis – and it provides a summary of the key results to emerge.



*Jim Eccleston and Duncan Stewart,
Managing Partners at 56 Degree Insight*



Broad overview of the requirement

Malvern Hills Trust wished to undertake an online consultation to gather public responses to proposed changes to the Malvern Hills Acts. This followed on from a previous consultation exercise in 2019. In that previous consultation, questions focused on various aspects of the role of the Trust and its responsibilities. A similar range of questions were required for the consultation this summer and hence there was a need for some consistency in the approach.

The questionnaire included a mix of pre-coded questions (Yes/No, Importance scales etc.) and open-ended, 'free text' questions. The 56 Degree Insight team have many years' experience in the design of questionnaires and this was important in this project: the order of questions, the precise wording used, and ensuring it was relevant to the respondent were key when trying to achieve representative and robust findings.

In summary, a partnership approach was adopted for this project: MHT provided input regarding the areas to be included within the consultation, 56 Degree Insight then designed the questionnaire, scripted it for hosting online on the 56 Degree Insight server and undertook all of the analysis and reporting of the survey results. The Trust played a key role in publicising and promoting the survey – directing respondents to the survey website.

The following pages detail the process and the approach used to undertake this study – illustrating the extent to which an objective and fair approach was taken to the whole process.



A staged approach was taken to manage the consultation as summarised below. Further details follow over the next few pages.



Project Inception

LATE APRIL:
A virtual session via Zoom to discuss and align on the survey approach, information priorities, questionnaire content, the sampling approach, final deliverables and timings.

Questionnaire design

EARLY-MID MAY:
An iterative process which began with an initial draft produced by 56DI following the inception meeting.

Where questions were repeats of the 2019 survey, we ensured that questions are asked consistently to ensure direct comparisons can be made.

Once the questionnaire was agreed, it was scripted and then hosted online on the 56 Degree Insight server.

Survey fieldwork

22 MAY – 16 JULY:
The Trust promoted and publicised the survey and respondents were directed to the survey URL. 56 Degree Insight also provided a unique QR code and help with other survey promotional text to market f the survey.

The survey was 'live' for a seven week period '. Quality control will ensure that multiple responses from the same IP address can be identified and removed.

Data cleaning

17-24 JULY:
As is commonplace in all opinion surveys and consultation, there was a key requirement to check the data and responses thoroughly - in particular, ensuring that multiple responses from the same IP address could be identified and removed (this process is covered in detail overleaf).

Analysis and Reporting

25-29 JULY:
The survey responses were analysed in our analysis software, Q, and the data was exported in 'client-friendly' Excel format.

Open ended responses are being analysed separately, as are responses from organisations. This report focuses on the pre-coded questions contained in the survey and is an analysis based on the 483 individual respondents.

Approach to the consultation

Having been appointed to undertake the consultation process for Malvern Hills Trust, as a Market Research Association affiliated company, the team at 56 Degree Insight ensured that the whole approach – from survey design to analysis and reporting was all undertaken to the professional standards required. 56 Degree Insight’s objectivity in this area and their professional approach to the whole process was a key reason for their appointment – ensuring that the approach and process followed could not be questioned in terms of any biases or imbalances.

Firstly, the consultation document/questionnaire was designed to be as objective and comprehensive as possible to ensure that all consultees would be able to provide detailed responses within open-ended text boxes as well as pre-coded questions. The format largely followed that which was used in the previous consultation, however improvements were made to ensure complete objectivity in the wording of the questions across all of the areas to be covered.

Pre-coded questions were largely asked in the form of ‘attitude statements’: respondents were provided with a statement about the topic/issue and asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement. This is a standard approach in opinion-based questionnaires of this nature with a ‘balanced scale’ of possible responses from ‘Agree Strongly’ to ‘Disagree Strongly’.

Malvern Hills Trust

Malvern Hills Trust Public Consultation

The Malvern Hills Trust owns and manages the Malvern Hills and Commons, an iconic and nature-rich landscape.

Established by an Act of Parliament in 1884, we are proud to be celebrating our 140th anniversary in the next 140 years and beyond, our current governance arrangements are stifling our ability to open up the organisation caring for the Hills and Commons.

The world has changed dramatically over the last 140 years and our governance arrangements, our Act and four subsequent Acts, are difficult to follow, out of date and often inconsistent.

To continue to safeguard this iconic landscape for people and nature for years to come, we are proposing changes to our governance to bring our charity into the 21st century and ensure we are fit for the future.

We want you to have your say on these changes. The full detailed proposals are outlined in the consultation document. Please read the background to the proposals and the changes we would like to make before you respond. We encourage everyone to take part and submit their comments.

You may wish to answer all the questions or only comment on the proposals that interest you.

Hard copies of the consultation document and questionnaire are available on request.

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Malvern Hills Trust is the working name of Malvern Hills Conservators (registered charity)

NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE APPOINTMENT & REMOVAL OF BOARD MEMBERS

Please read pages 11-22 of the consultation document before responding

Q3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know / No Opinion
There should be a maximum of 12 trustees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Half the board should be elected and half selected for their skills and experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The electoral area should be defined by parish, to link the voting area to the levy paying area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Given that elected trustees are required to serve the best interests of the charity rather than "represent" an area, combining the electoral current disparities in the size of the electorates	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People who live in or within 1 mile of the boundary of a parish/where the Trust has land under its jurisdiction should be able to stand for election to the board, subject to them being nominated by people living within the electoral area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When an interim vacancy is created by the departure of an elected trustee, that vacancy could be temporarily filled until the next scheduled election by a candidate put forward by the selection panel and appointed by the Board	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q4: Please rank (1-3) the following - where 1 is your most preferred option and 3 is your least preferred option.

Drag each statement to your preferred position

	Drag your choices here to rank them
Senior staff run a trustee recruitment and selection process	
Trustees (or a committee of trustees) make the selection themselves subject to criteria specified in the Act.	
An independent panel be appointed to run a trustee recruitment and selection process	

MOST PREFERRED →

← LEAST PREFERRED

Ensuring Accessibility

Once the questionnaire was agreed, the task was then to ensure that the questionnaire document was as accessible as possible to ensure that all interested parties – individuals and organisations – could respond with relative ease. This was achieved by making it available online in a format where it could be completed by any internet-connected device – not just desktop and laptop computers, but also tablets and mobile phones. The nature of the device that accessed the survey meant that the respondent was automatically served the appropriate questionnaire format for that device. However there was also a recognition that not all potential respondents would have immediate access to an online option and indeed there remains a proportion of the population who still prefer to complete consultations of this nature by pen and paper. Consequently, 56 Degree Insight provided a paper version of the questionnaire which was used by around 20 respondents and the responses then entered onto the online script by the team to ensure they could be analysed alongside online completions.

Another important feature was to ensure that there was a sufficient amount of time available for interested parties to provide their responses. Therefore, the survey was ‘live’ and available for completion for an 8-week period from May 22nd 2024 until midnight on July 16th. With the General Election taking place in early July, this ensured that all interested parties could provide their response either beforehand, or afterwards as appropriate.

The survey was promoted widely by Malvern Hills Trust across all online and offline channels that were available to them. There was a simple survey address that took respondents directly to the survey – but it was also supported by a QR-code which also directed respondents to the survey by this means.



When the survey closed on 16th July, some 583 respondents had completed the survey. Some 13 of these responses were from a range of organisations. These responses are being analysed separately along with other organisations' responses provided in different formats (e.g. by letter). This document is therefore based on the 570 responses received from individuals only. Standard procedure in all of the surveys we undertake is to examine the data thoroughly to ensure that it is of the appropriate quality and integrity. Indeed analysing data quality and integrity is crucial in public consultations to ensure that it accurately reflect the views and opinions of the population. Below are the key considerations and practices we followed, drawing from standard survey research guidelines and adapting them to the context of public consultations:

Key Considerations:

Data Integrity:

Ensuring that each response is genuine and reflects individual opinions is vital. This prevents skewed results that could misrepresent public sentiment.

Transparency:

Clearly documenting the methods used to handle duplicate responses and being transparent about these practices builds trust in the consultation process.

Legal and Ethical Standards:

Adhering to legal standards, such as GDPR for data protection in the EU, and ethical guidelines set by professional bodies like the Market Research Society.

Actions taken:

Identify Duplicate Responses:

As with any survey data, identify duplicate responses from the same IP address. This can be flagged for further review or filtered automatically. In this case, around 160 of the 570 individual responses were duplicates from the same IP address

Context Evaluation:

Evaluate the context to determine if multiple responses from the same IP might be valid, such as different individuals in a household or shared workspace. In this case, 67 of those responses from the same IP addresses appeared to be valid – responses were not identical and were often very different, suggesting they were indeed valid. This left n=93 responses where there were concerns. In these cases, they represented multiple responses from a small number of IP addresses – 20, 18, 16, 14, 11 and 10. In each case, the responses were identical or 95% identical in nature – clearly completed by one individual. They also failed to provide a name for follow-up contact. Although this was not a specific requirement, in most other cases, respondents provided this.

Filtering Criteria:

Apply specific criteria to decide which responses to keep, such as the first, most complete, or last response. In this case, we kept the first completed response from the multiple IP address completions but have removed the other 87 responses from the analysis. Thus, the sample analysed for the consultation is n=483 and it is deemed to be of sufficient quality and integrity for this purpose.

By adhering to these practices, we are confident that the analysis of public consultation responses accurately reflects the true sentiment of the participants and maintains high data quality standards.

Respondent characteristics



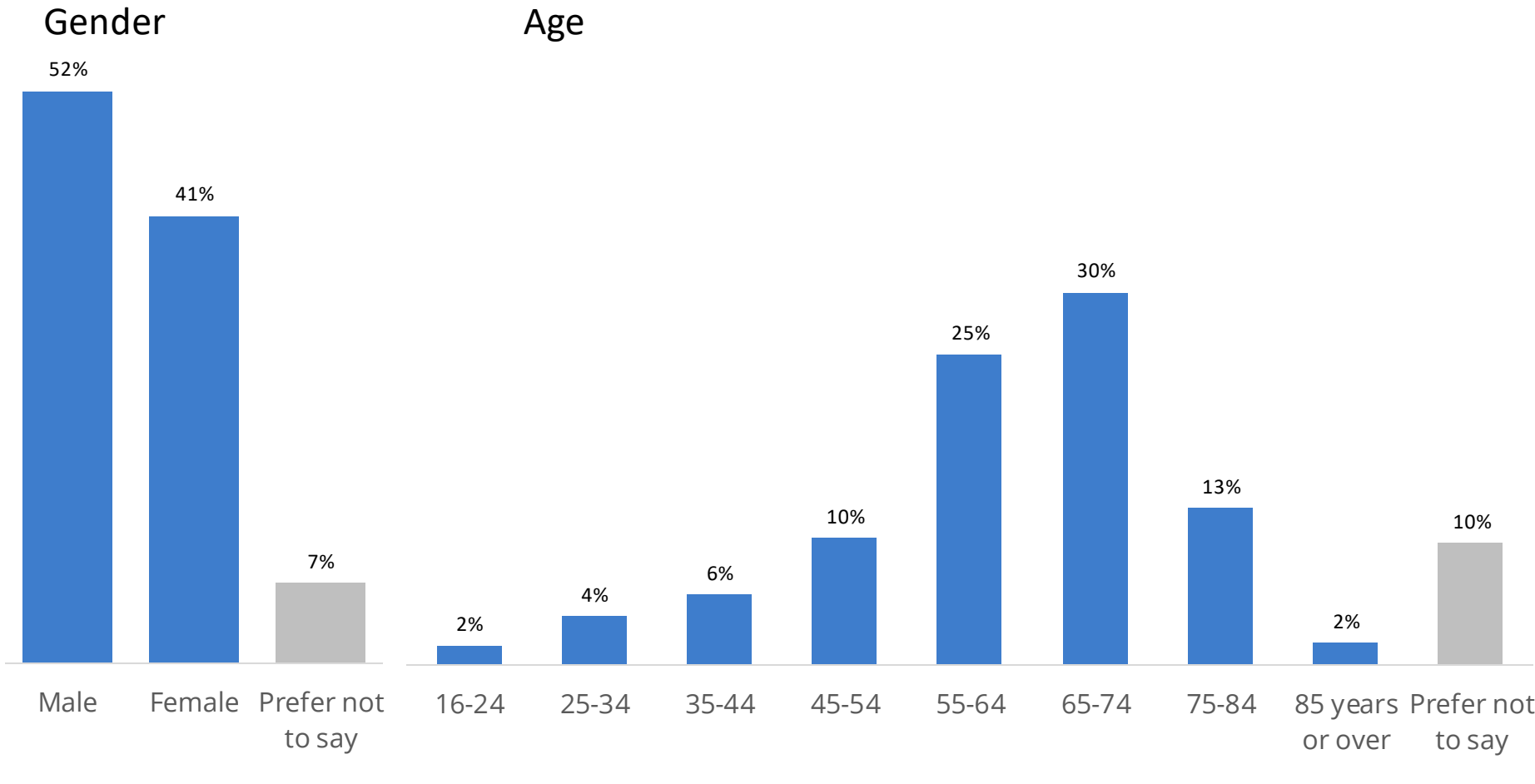
RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Gender and Age breakdown

A slight majority of respondents were male whilst, in terms of age, the majority were aged 55+ years.

Just over half of the individuals responding to the consultation were male (52%), with 41% female; some 7% did not reveal their gender.

In terms of age, consultees were older than the population average: only 22% were aged under 55 years, with two thirds aged 55+ years (67%). In terms of ten year age bands, the largest proportion were aged 65-74 years (30%)



Unweighted; base n = 469; total n = 481

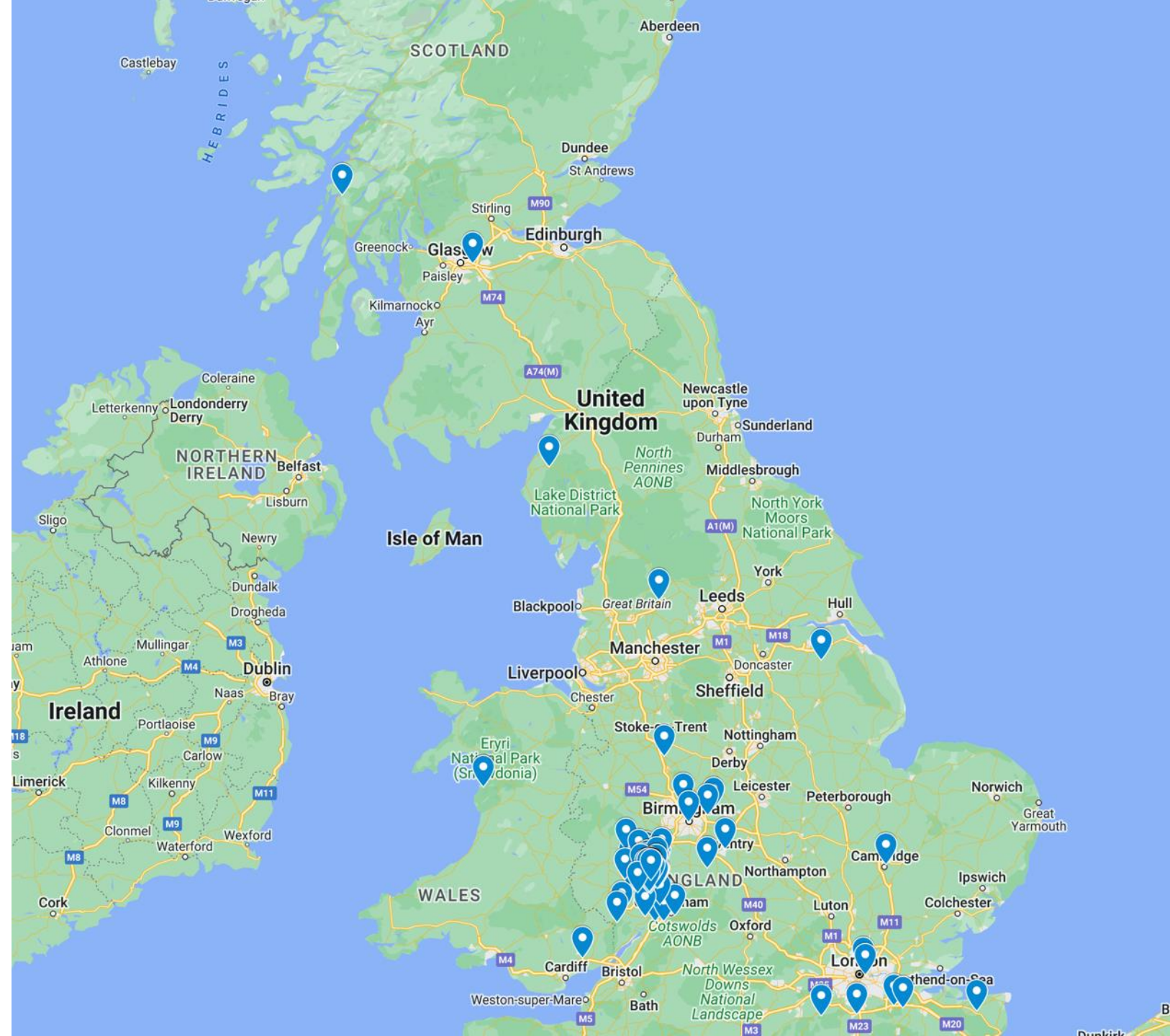
483 respondents in total

- 2 based overseas
- 16 in other parts of the UK
- 465 in the Malvern Hills area

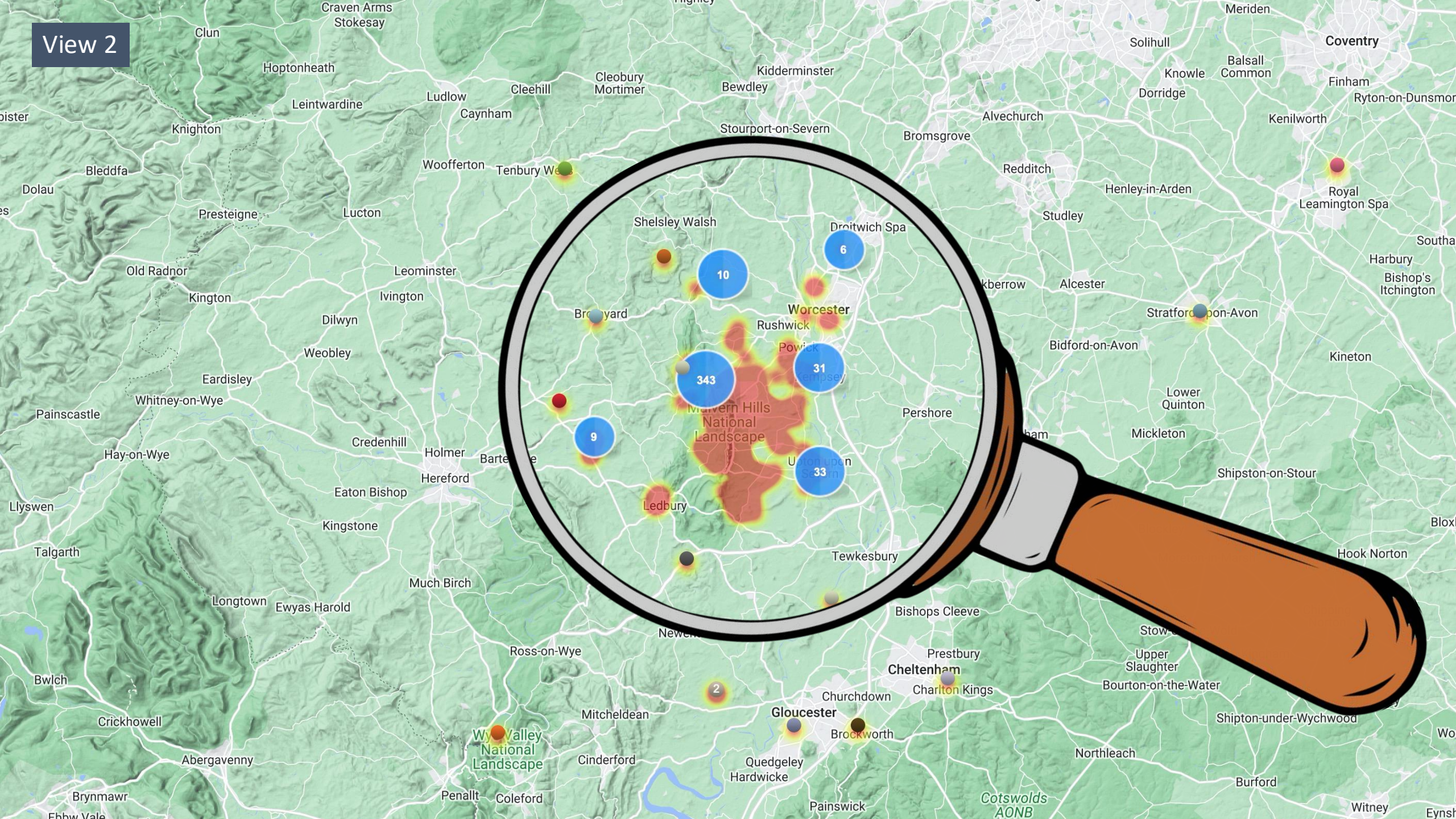
Location of
individual
respondents –
based on home
postcode

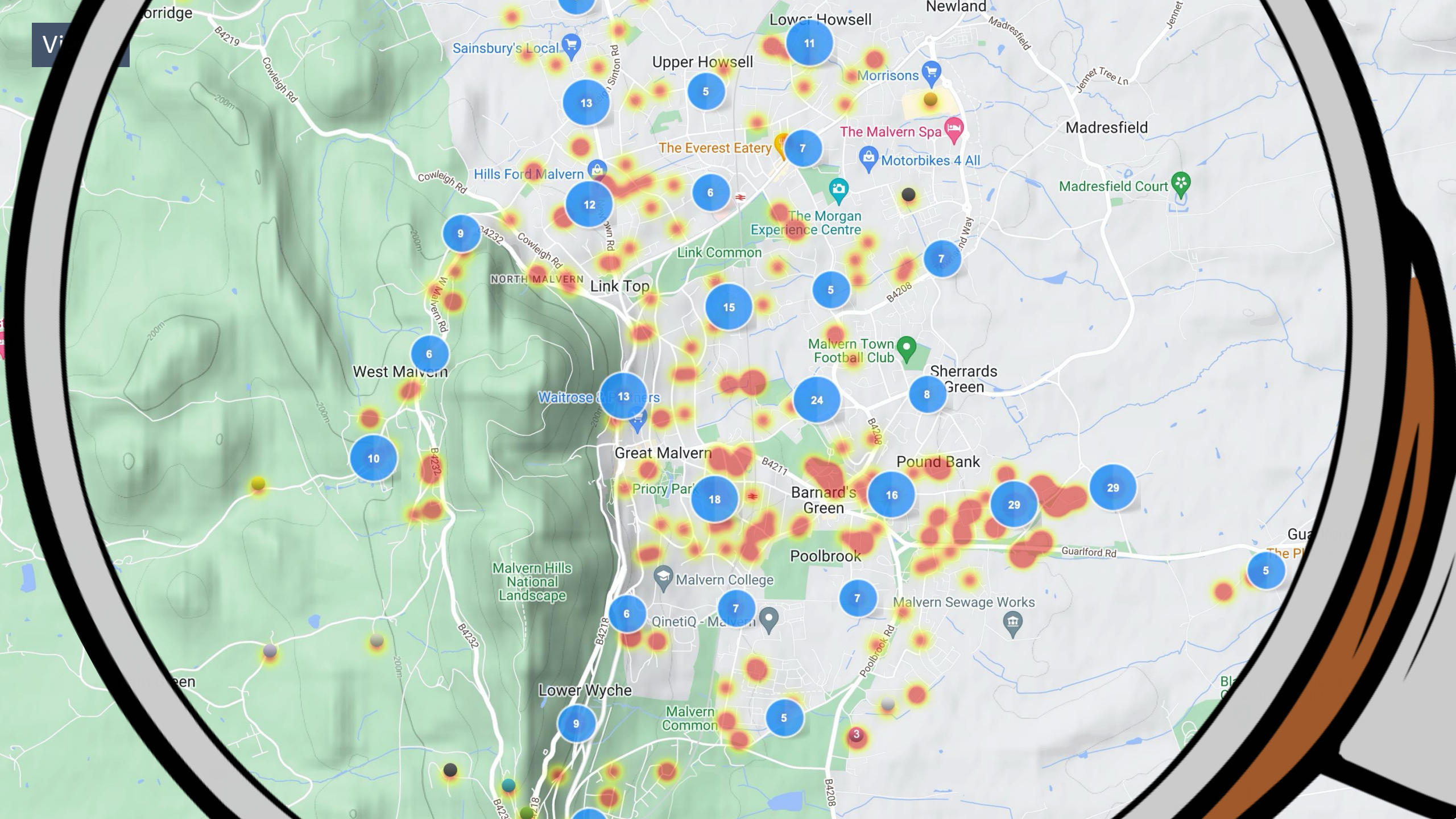
View 1

The following three pages
progressively zoom to the
Malvern Hills area.....



View 2





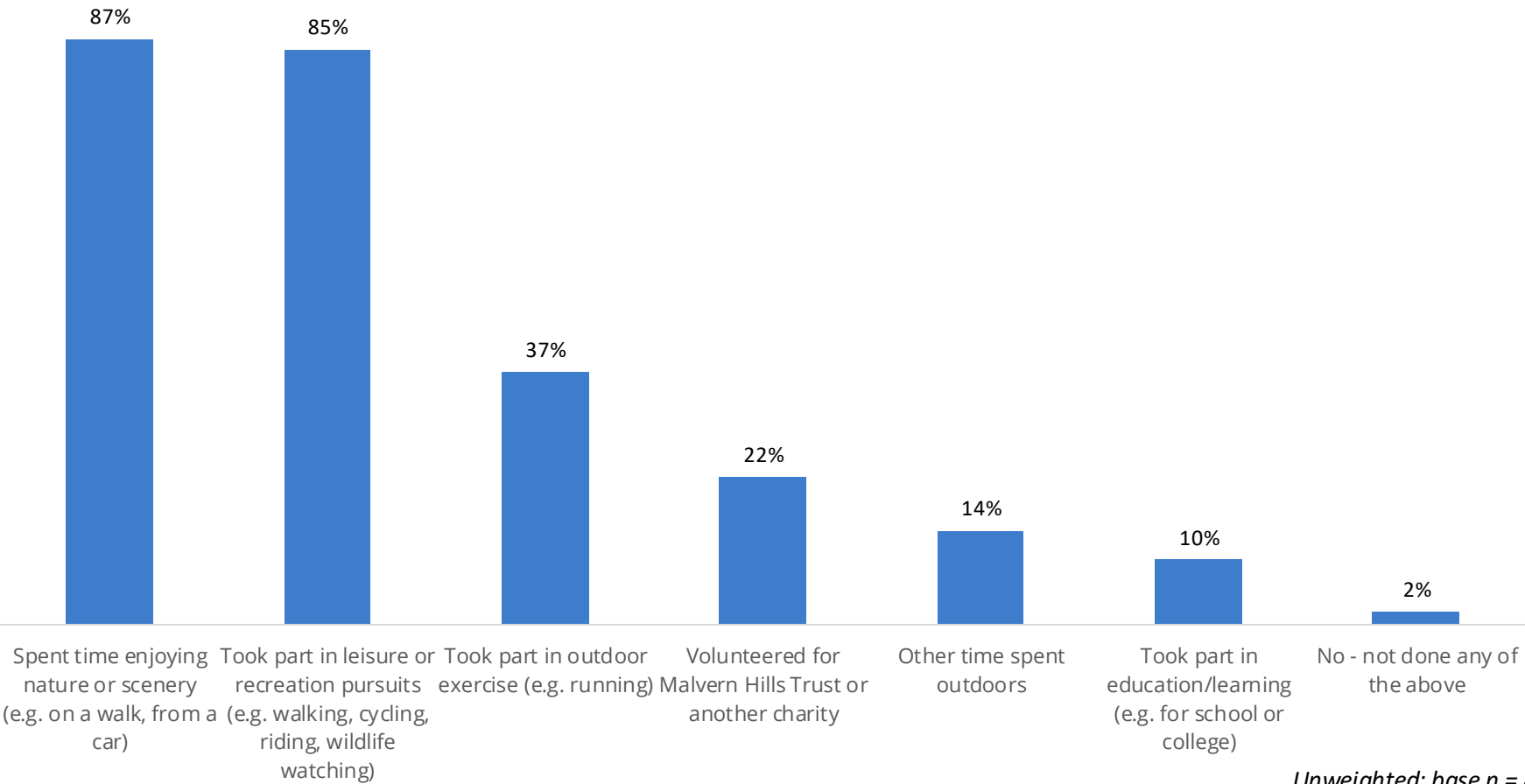
RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Thinking about the last 12 months, have you done any of the following on land managed by the Malvern Hills Trust?

Nearly all respondents had spent time engaging in activities on land managed by the Malvern Hills Trust over the past year.

Two activities were each taken part in by just under nine in ten respondents – enjoying nature and scenery either on a walk or from a car (87%) and leisure and recreation pursuits such as walking, cycling, riding and wildlife watching (85%).

Just under four in ten took part in outdoor exercise (37%), whilst over two in ten volunteered for Malvern Hills Trust or another charity (22%)



Unweighted; base n = 481;

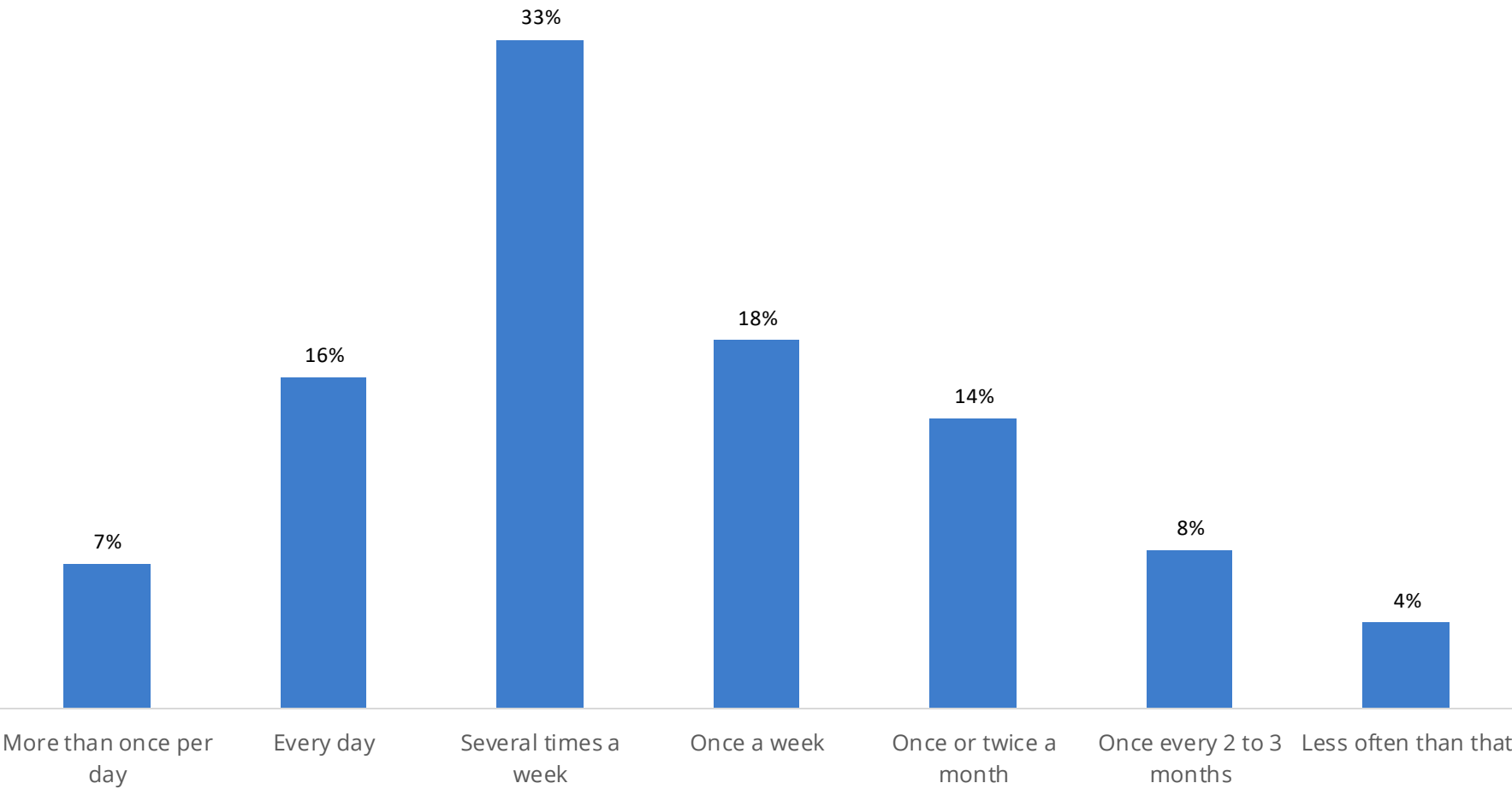
RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Thinking back over the last 12 months, roughly how often do you spend time on the Malvern Hills?

Respondents were generally very frequent visitors to the Malvern Hills.

Over the last 12 months, just under a quarter visited at least once a day (23%), whilst a further 33% visited several times each week. Some 18% visited once a week.

Only a quarter visited the Malvern Hills less frequently than that (26%).



Unweighted; base n = 451; total n = 481

Key consultation responses



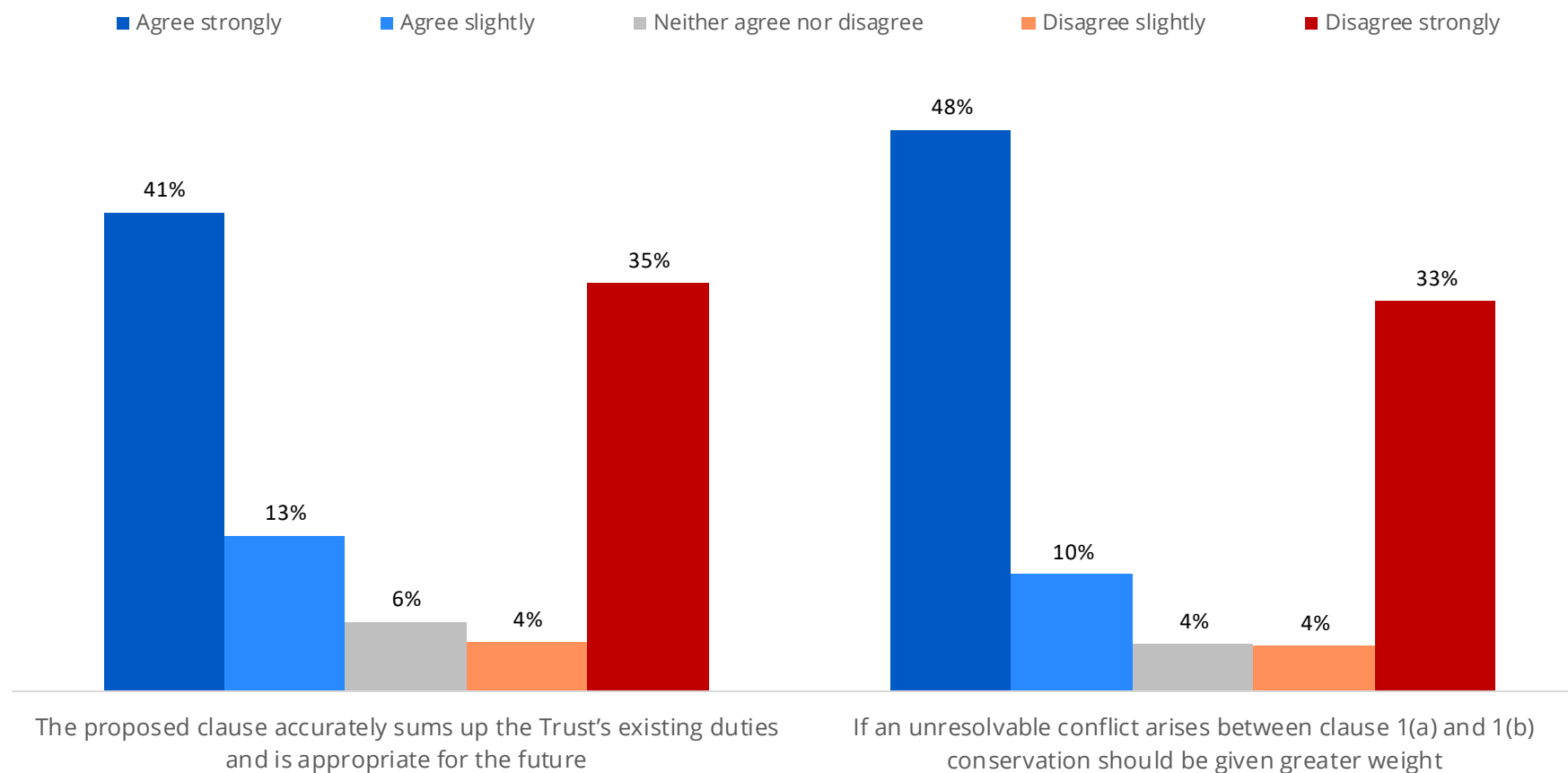
OBJECTS (The Trust's charitable purposes)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

Across all respondents, a majority were in support of the Trust's charitable purpose.

If an unresolvable conflict arises between clauses 1a and 1b, 58% agreed that conservation should be given greater weight. Some 37% disagreed.

A majority also agreed that the proposed clause accurately sums up the Trust's existing duties and that it is appropriate for the future (54%). Some 39% disagreed.



Unweighted; base n = from 461 to 467; total n = 481

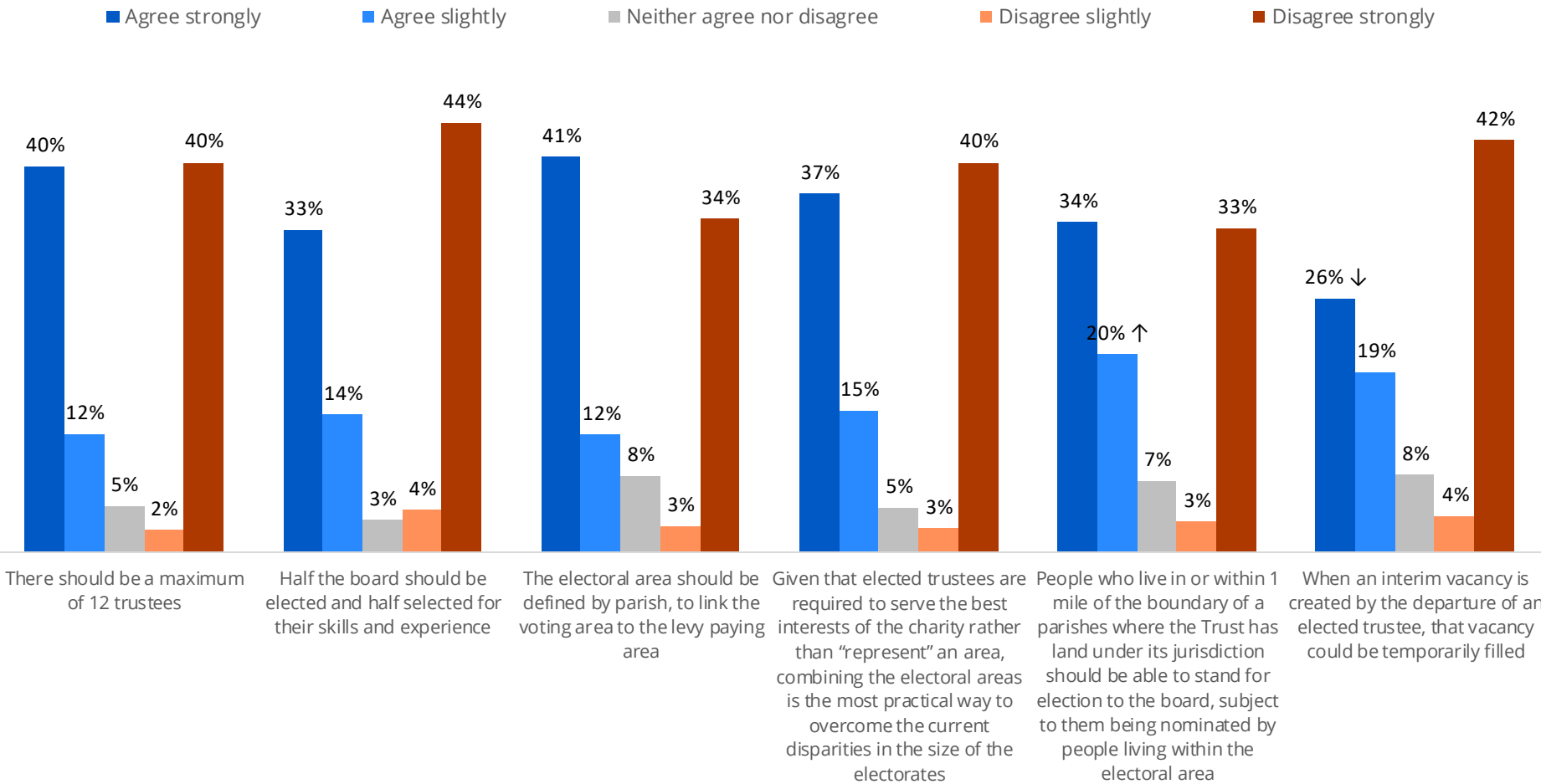
NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE APPOINTMENT & REMOVAL OF BOARD MEMBERS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

In terms of the appointment and removal of board members, there was more of a mixture of agreement and disagreement.

In terms of agreement, strongest support was provided to “The electoral area should be defined by parish, to link the voting area to the levy paying area” (53% agreed vs 37% disagreed) and “People who live in or within 1 mile of the boundary of a parish where the Trust has land under its jurisdiction” (54% vs 37%).

In terms of disagreement, a slight majority disagreed with two statements: “Half the board should be elected and half selected for their skills and experience” (48% disagreed vs 47% agreed), and “When an interim vacancy is created by the departure of an elected trustee, that vacancy could be temporarily filled until the next scheduled election by a candidate put forward by the selection panel and appointed by the Board” (46% vs 45%).



Unweighted; base n = from 469 to 476; total n = 481

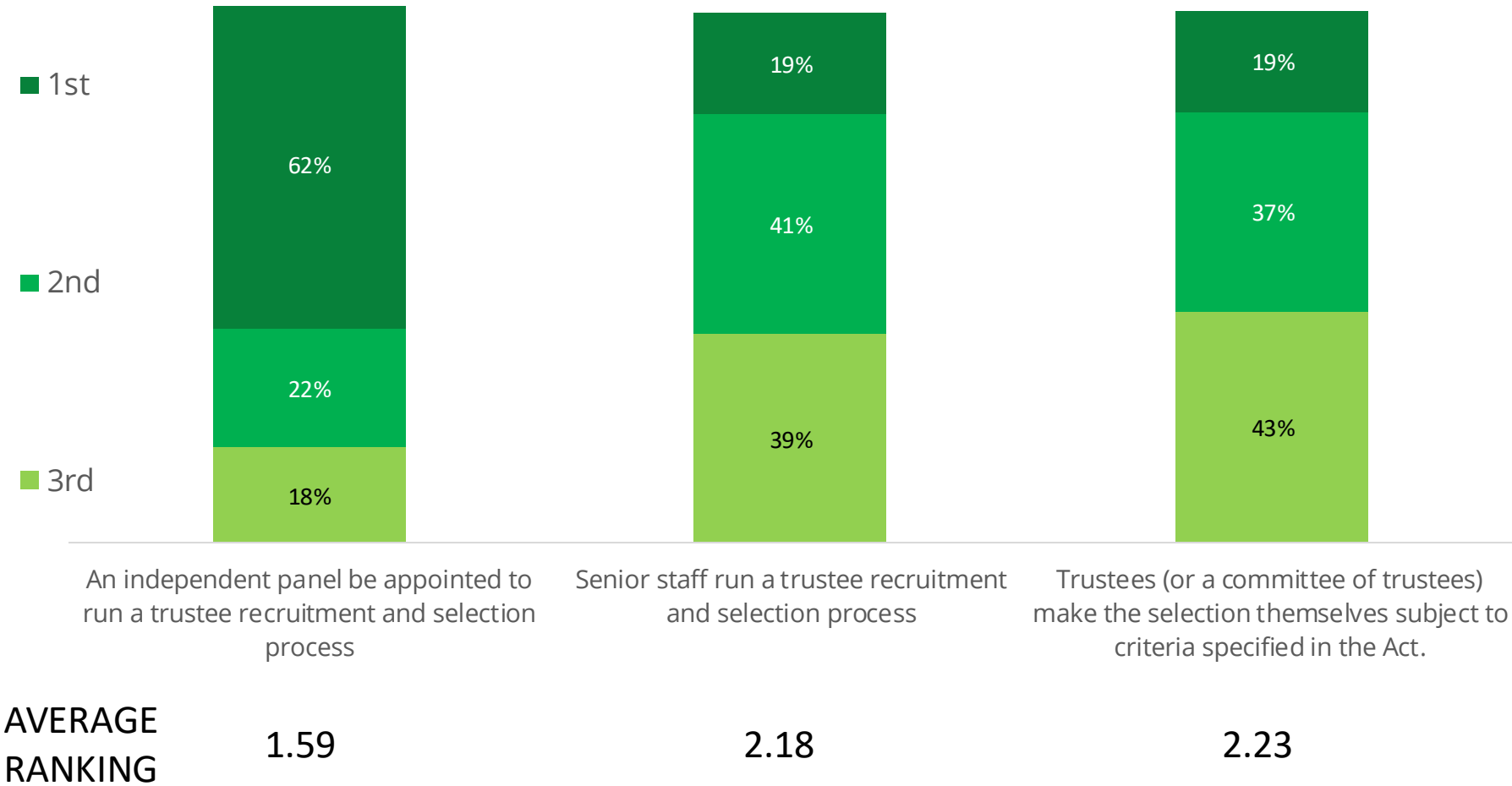
NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE APPOINTMENT & REMOVAL OF BOARD MEMBERS

Please rank (1-3) the following - where 1 is your most preferred option and 3 is your least preferred option.

Respondents were asked to rank their preferences for the appointment of trustees:

The most popular option was for an independent panel to be appointed to run a trustee recruitment and selection process – 62% indicated this was their preferred option.

The other two options were less popular and received similarly lower levels of support.



Unweighted; base n = from 280 to 333; total n = 481

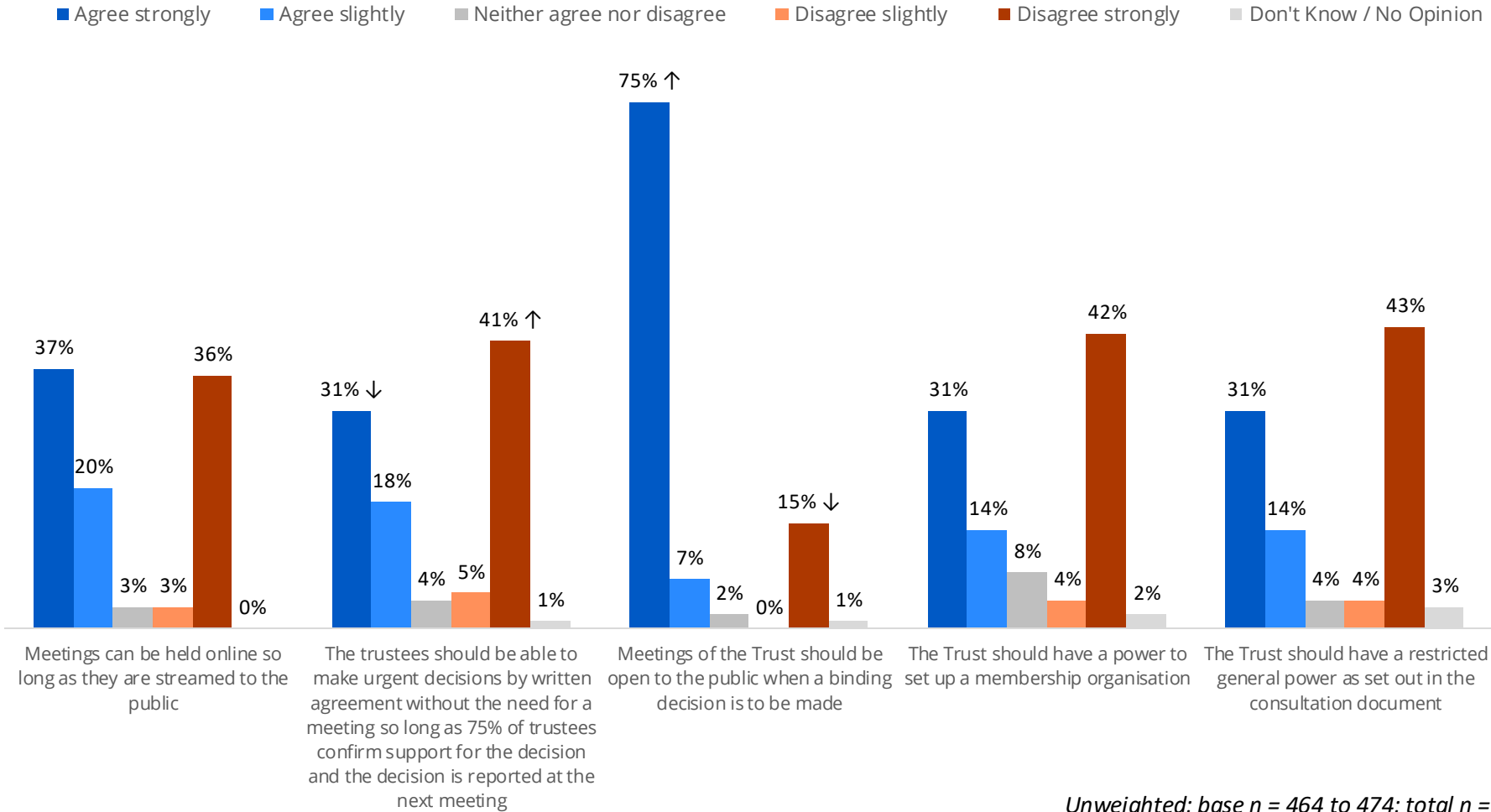
MEETINGS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

In terms of meetings, there was again a mixture of agreement and disagreement.

In terms of agreement, strongest support was provided to “Meetings of the Trust should be open to the public when a binding decision is to be made” (82% agreed vs 15% disagreed) followed by “Meetings can be held online so long as they are streamed to the public” (57% vs 39%).

In terms of disagreement, a slight majority disagreed with two statements: “The Trust should have a restricted general power as set out in the consultation document” (47% disagreed vs 45% agreed), and “The Trust should have a power to set up a membership organisation” (46% vs 45%).



Unweighted; base n = 464 to 474; total n = 481

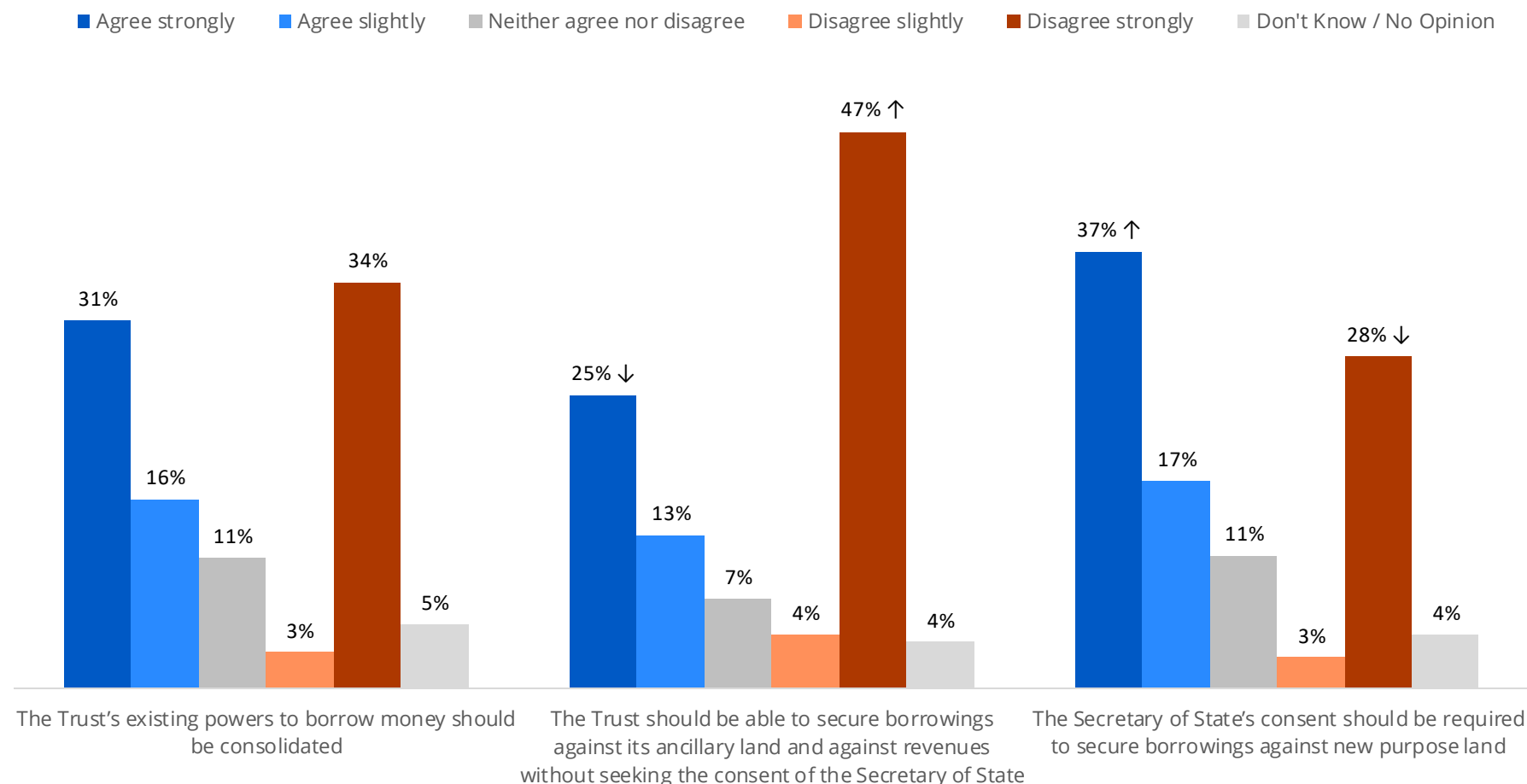
POWER TO BORROW

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

There was a mix of views regarding the Trust's powers to borrow:

The largest proportion agreed that "The Secretary of State's consent should be required to secure borrowings against new purpose land" (54% agreed vs 31% disagreed. A larger proportion also agreed that "The Trust's existing powers to borrow money should be consolidated" than disagreed (47% vs 37%).

However, the majority disagreed that "The Trust should be able to secure borrowings against its ancillary land and against revenues without seeking the consent of the Secretary of State" (51%); only 38% agreed.



Unweighted; base n = 467; total n = 481



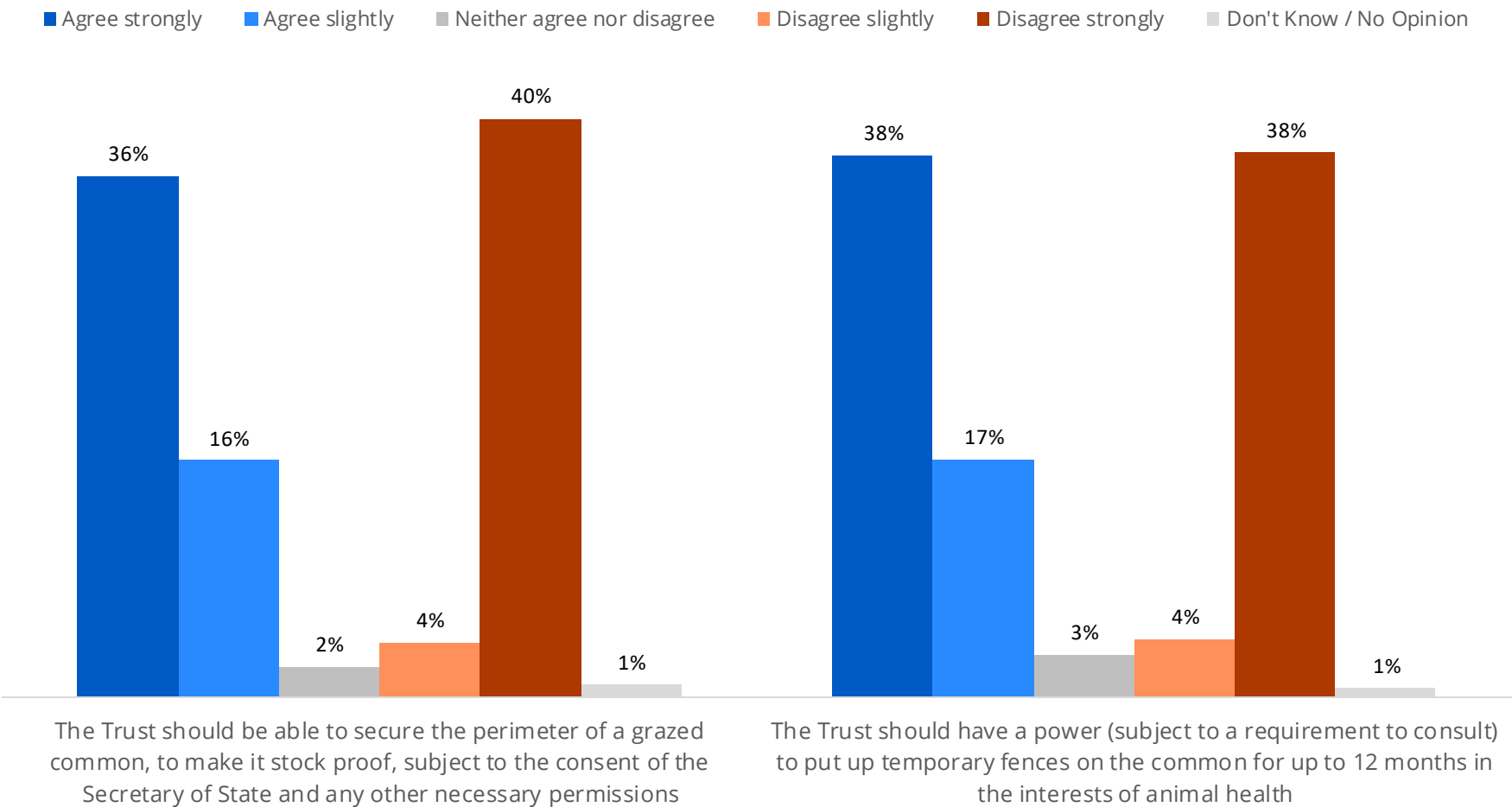
LOOKING AFTER LIVESTOCK

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following ?

Across all respondents, a majority were in support of the statements relating to looking after livestock.

In particular “The Trust should have a power (subject to a requirement to consult) to put up temporary fences on the common for up to 12 months in the interests of animal health” – 55% agreed vs 42% who disagreed.

A majority also agreed that “The Trust should be able to secure the perimeter of a grazed common, to make it stock proof, subject to the consent of the Secretary of State and any other necessary permissions” (52% vs 44% who disagreed).



Unweighted; base n = from 471 to 473

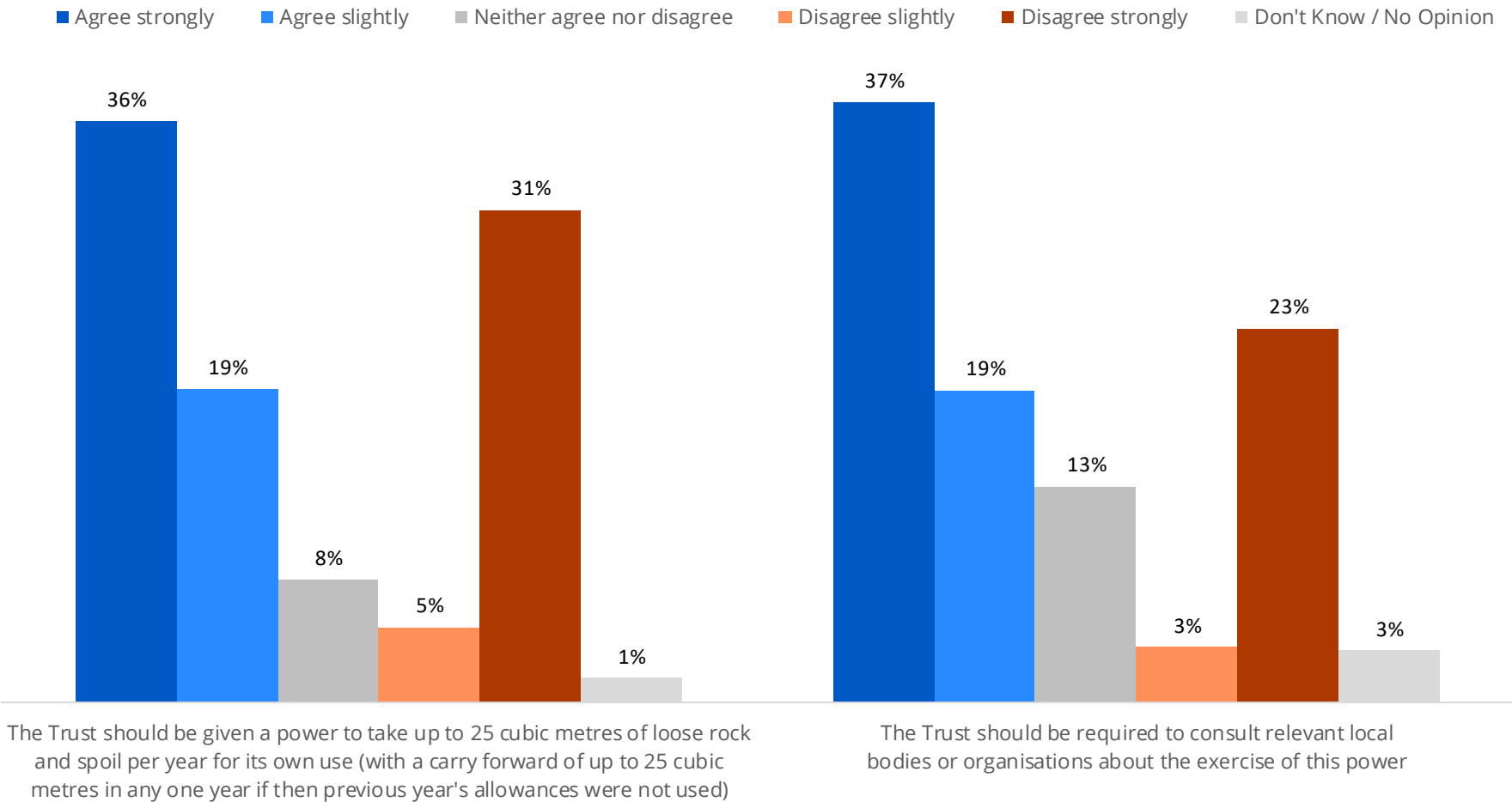
POWER TO TAKE SPOIL AND LOOSE ROCKS FOR THE TRUST'S OWN USE

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

When it comes to powers to take spoil and loose rocks for the Trust’s own use, again, a slight majority agreed with the two specific statements.

Some 55% agreed that “The Trust should be given a power to take up to 25 cubic metres of loose rock and spoil per year for its own use (with a carry forward of up to 25 cubic metres in any one year if then previous year's allowances were not used)” whilst 36% disagreed.

However a majority also agreed that “The Trust should be required to consult relevant local bodies or organisations about the exercise of this power” (56% vs 26% who disagreed).



Unweighted; base n = from 469 to 473; total n = 481

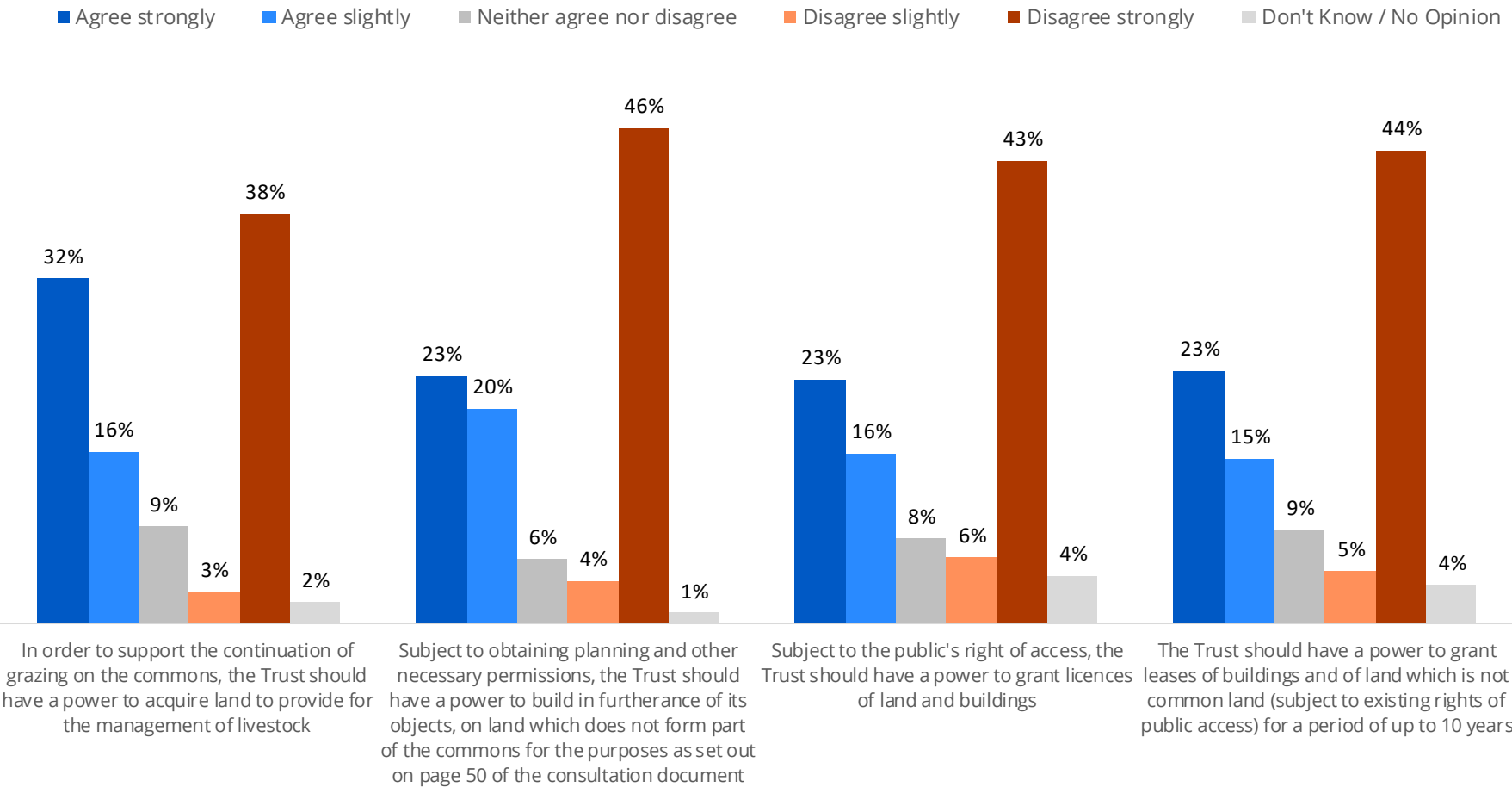
ANCILLARY LAND AND BUILDINGS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

In terms of ancillary land and buildings, there was a greater amount of disagreement with the statements presented.

One statement was slightly more likely to gain agreement than disagreement – “In order to support the continuation of grazing on the commons, the Trust should have a power to acquire land to provide for the management of livestock ” (48% agreed vs 41% disagreed)

For each of the other 3 statements however, there was more disagreement than agreement – typically around 50% disagreed with each whilst 38-43% agreed.



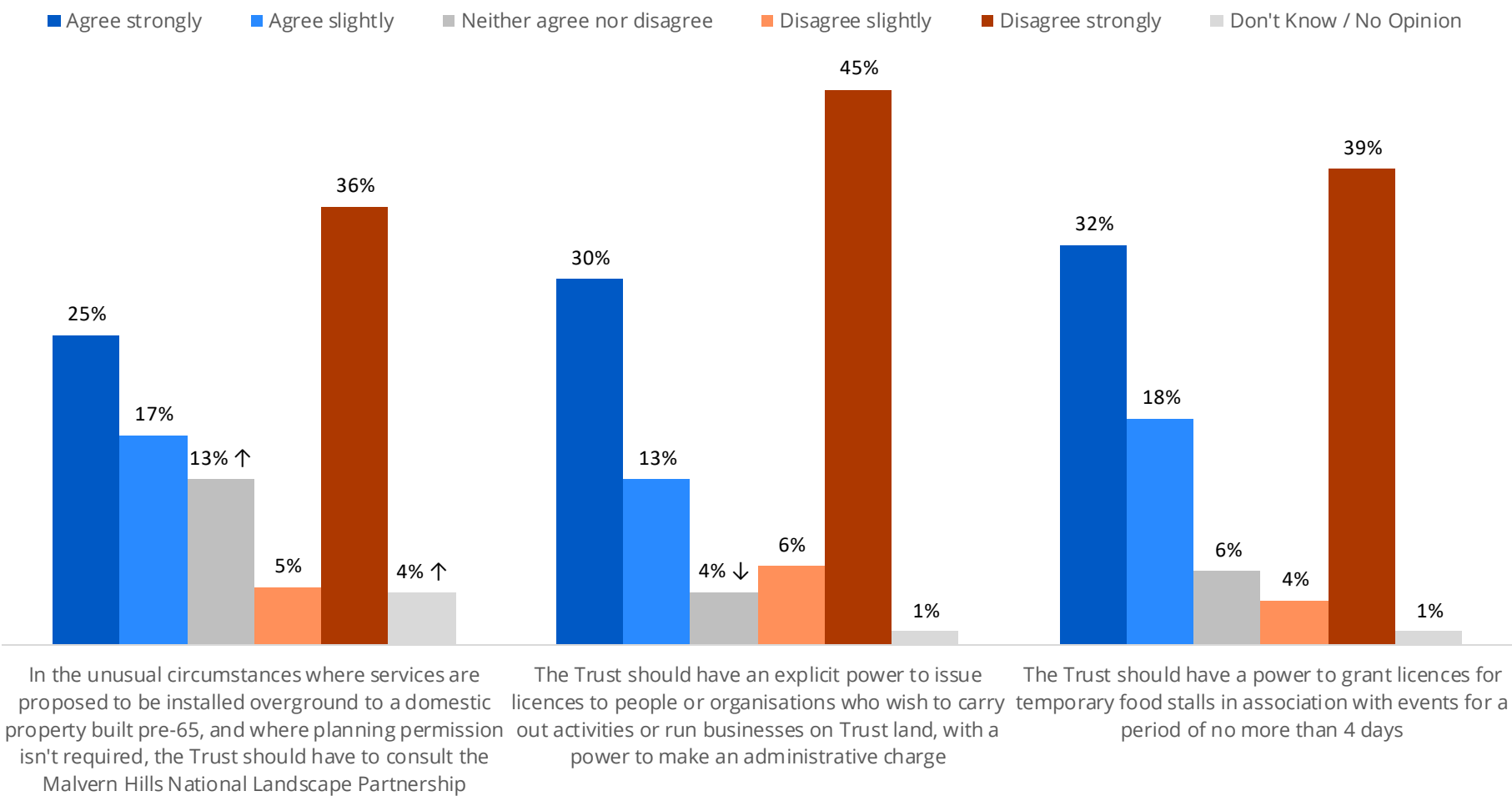
Unweighted; base n = from 468 to 473; total n = 481



There were a mix of views regarding licences:

A slightly larger proportion agreed rather than disagreed that in appropriate circumstances “The the Trust should be required to consult the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership, rather than seek the views of the local planning authority” (42% vs 41%). And half (50%) agreed that the Trust should have a power to grant licences for temporary food stalls for events of up to 4 days (43% disagreed).

However, over half disagreed that “The Trust should have an explicit power to issue licences to people or organisations who wish to carry out activities or run businesses on Trust land, with a power to make an administrative charge” (51%); only 43% agreed.



Unweighted; base n = from 468 to 470; total n = 481

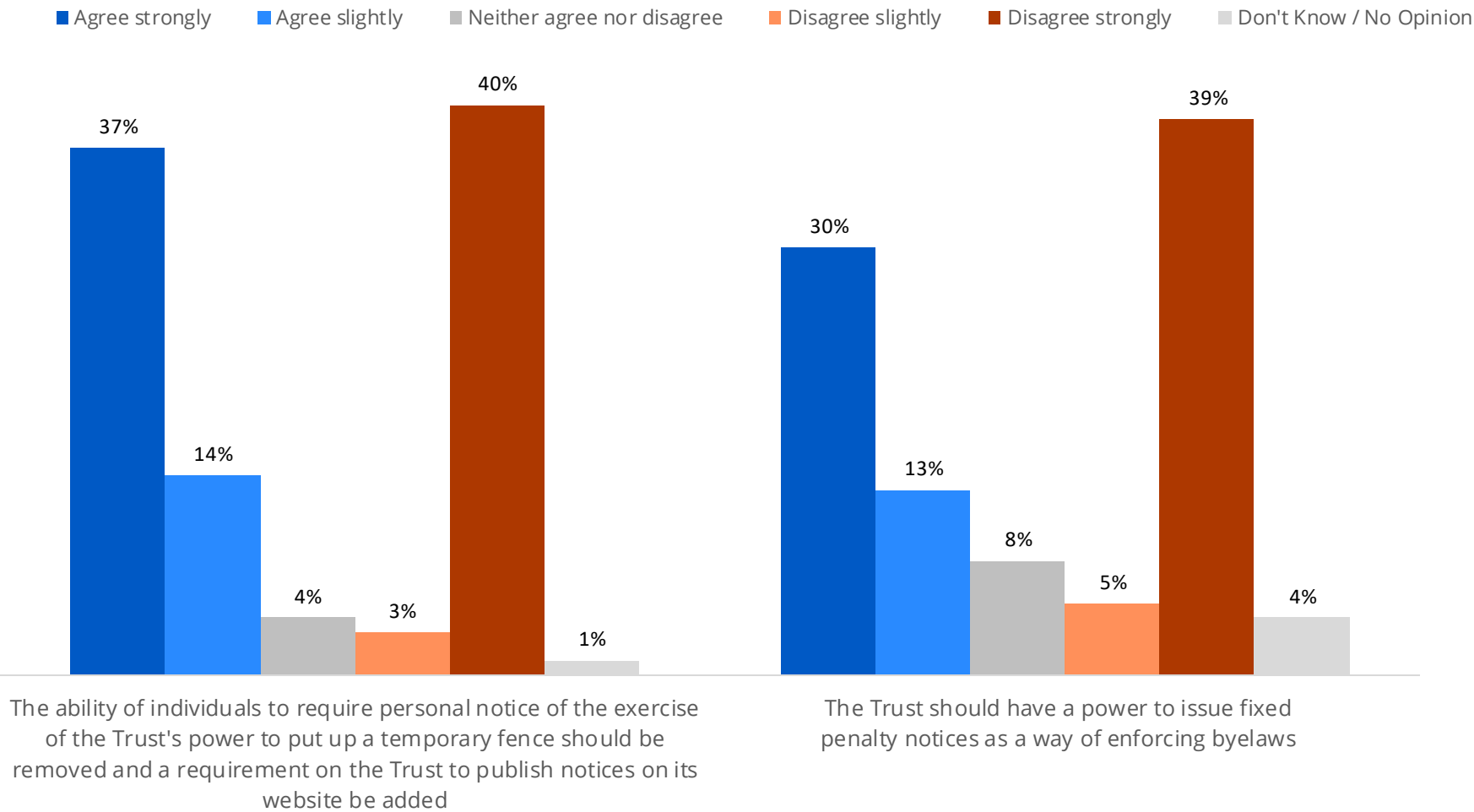
PROTECTION OF THE MALVERN HILLS, PUBLIC SAFETY AND BYELAW ENFORCEMENT

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

When it comes to public safety and byelaw enforcement, there were mixed views in response to the two statements

Some 51% agreed that “The ability of individuals to require personal notice of the exercise of the Trust's power to put up a temporary fence should be removed and a requirement on the Trust to publish notices on its website be added” – 43% disagreed.

However there was more of an even split in response to “The Trust should have a power to issue fixed penalty notices as a way of enforcing byelaws” – 43% agreed whilst 44% disagreed.



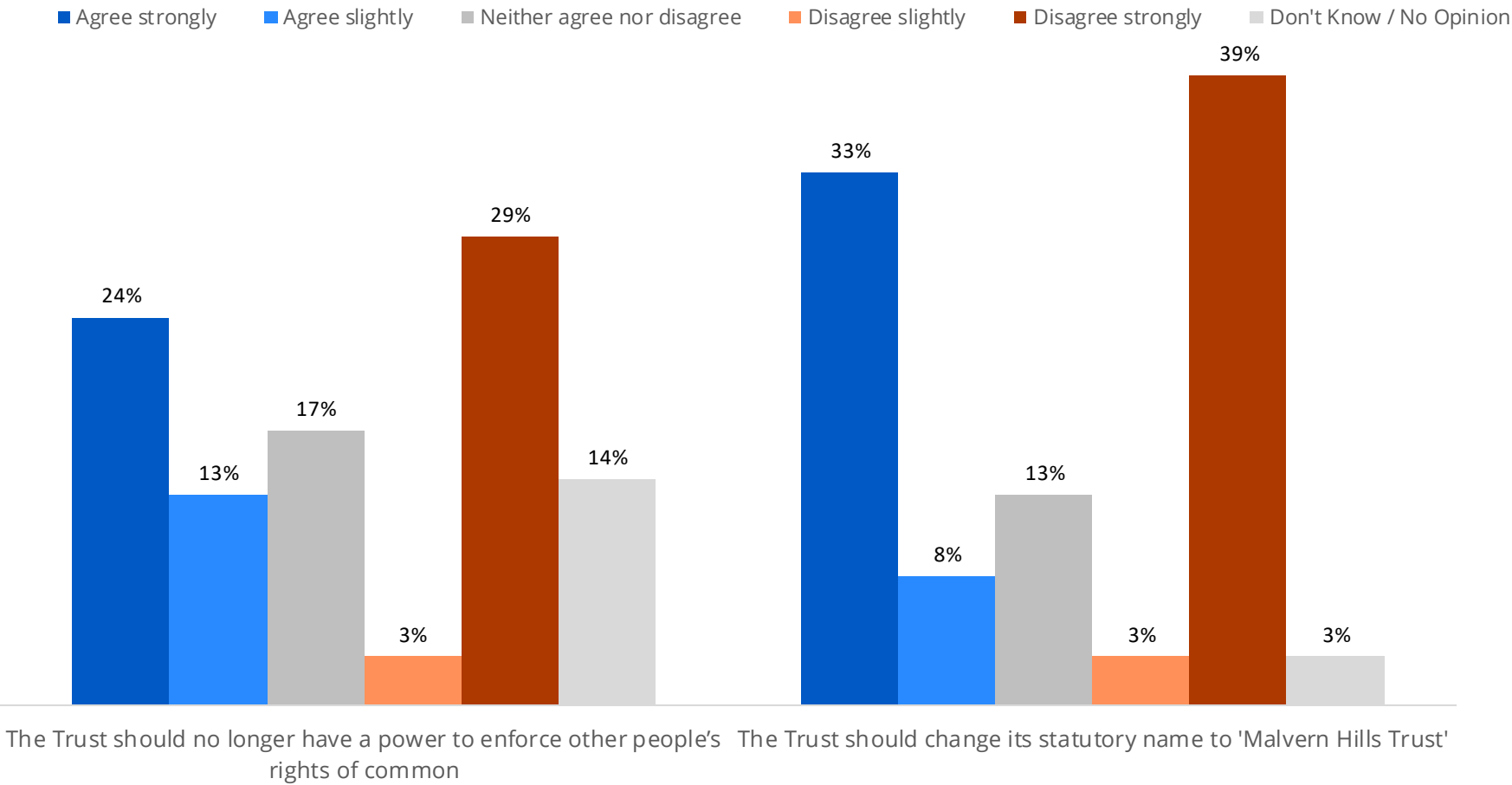
Unweighted; base n = from 470 to 471; total n = 481

MISCELLANEOUS ELEMENTS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

“The Trust should no longer have a power to enforce other people’s rights of common” – there was less polarisation of opinion on this statement. Whilst 37% agreed and 32% disagreed however 31% were unsure or had no opinion.

“The Trust should change its statutory name to 'Malvern Hills Trust'” – whilst 41% agreed, 42% disagreed and 16% had no opinion or were unsure.

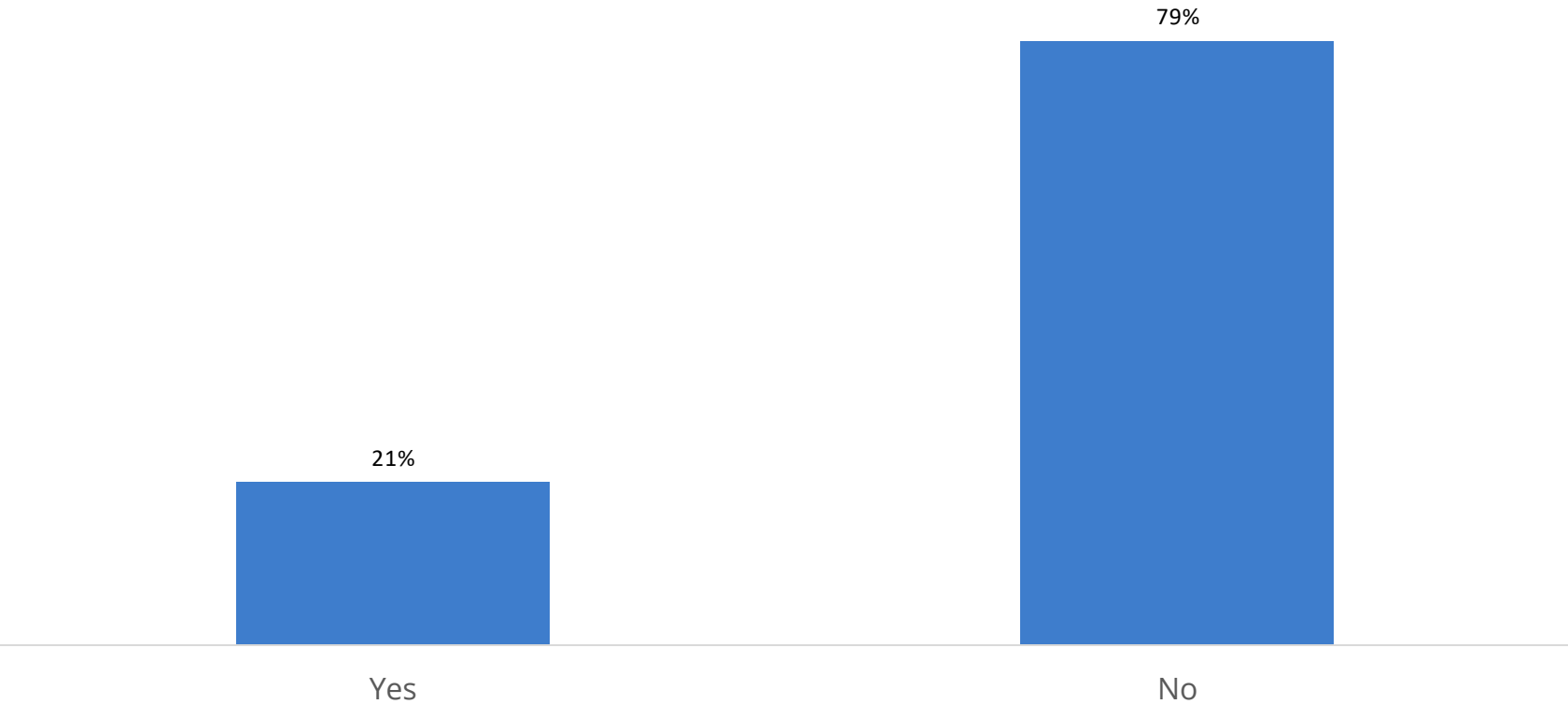


Unweighted; base n = from 470 to 471; total n = 481

EQUALITY ACT & UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Do you think that any of the proposals in the consultation document might interfere with the objectives of the Equality Act

Whilst just under four in every five did not think there were any proposals in the consultation document which might interfere with the objectives of the Equality Act (79%), just over one in five did think there were some issues (21%)

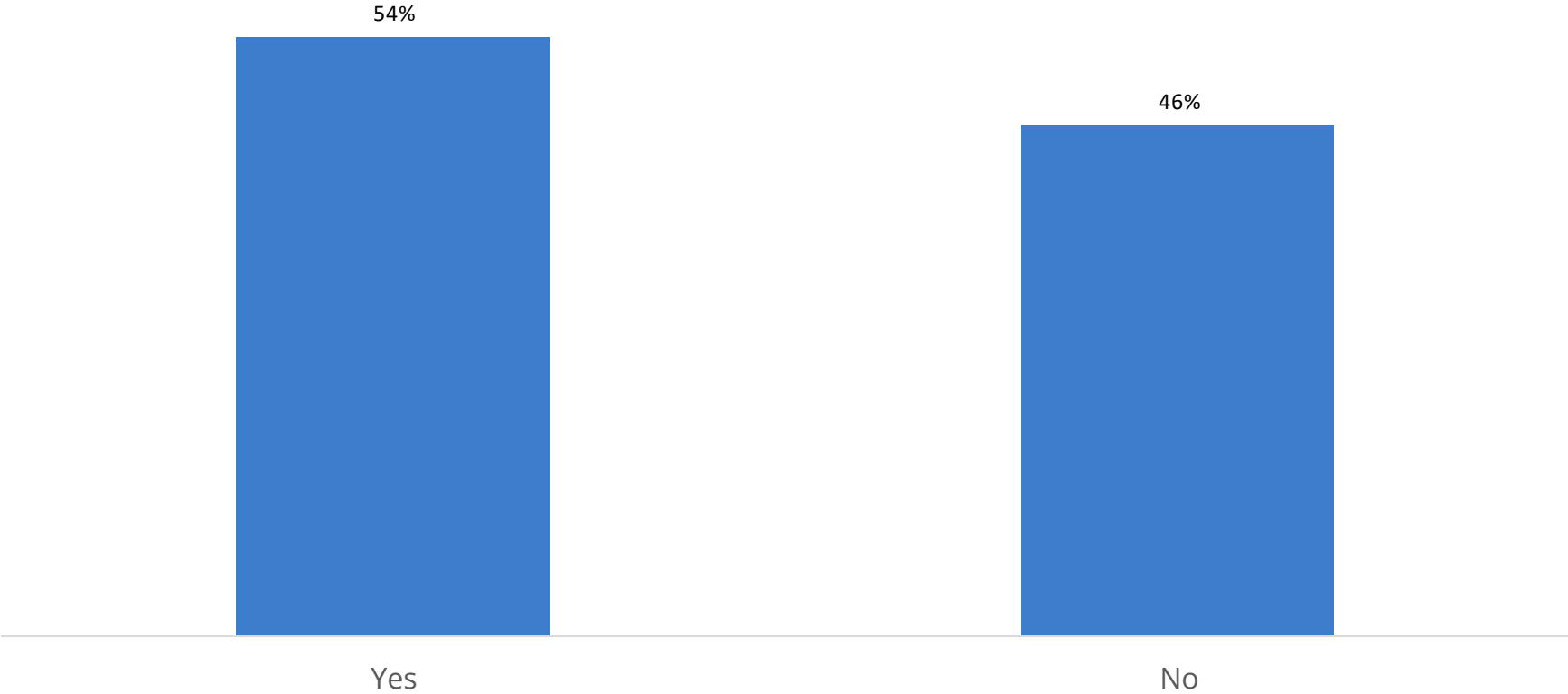


Unweighted; base n = 363; total n = 481

EQUALITY ACT & UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Can you foresee any possible unintended consequences of the proposed changes?

Just over half could foresee some possible unintended consequences of the proposed changes (54%)

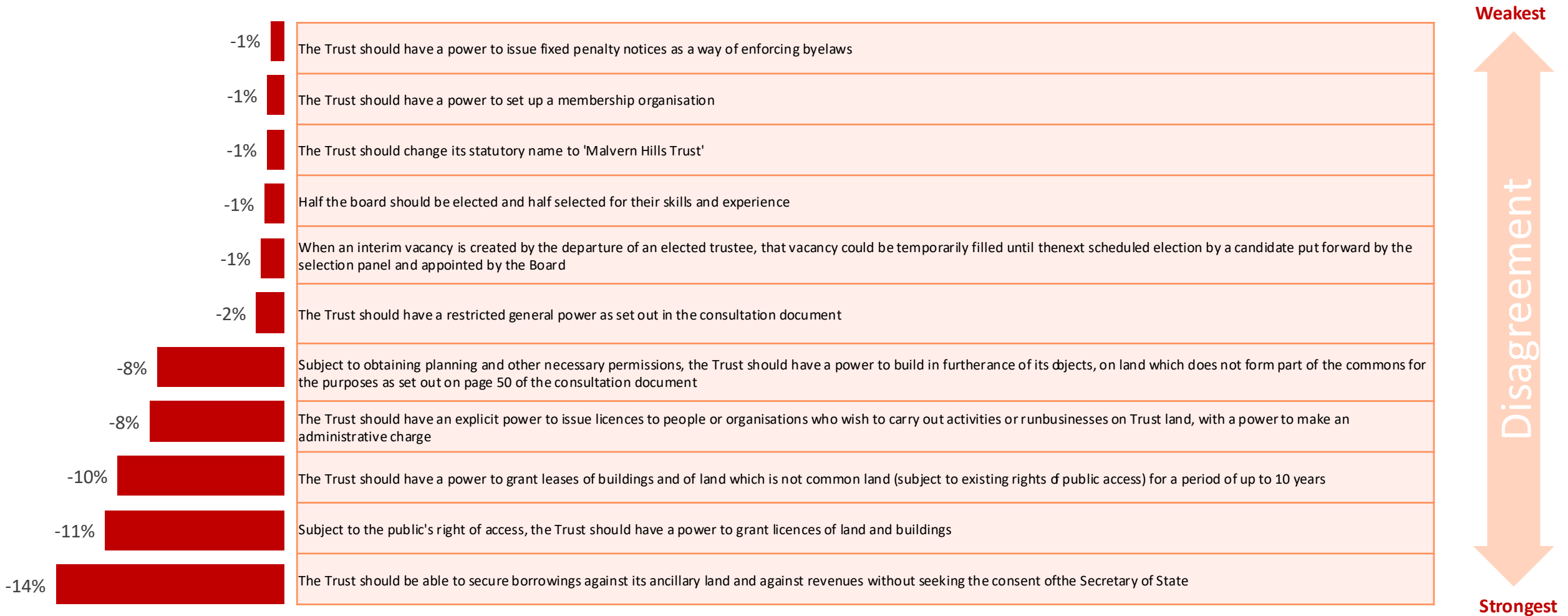


Unweighted; base n = 439; total n = 481

IN SUMMARY (1): Consultation proposals – where there is net agreement (% who agreed minus % who disagreed)



IN SUMMARY (2): Consultation proposals – where there is net agreement (% who agreed minus % who disagreed)





**DEGREE
INSIGHT**