

Summary of Allotment Survey Feedback

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Introduction

Background

Newbury Town Council recently asked all of its 509 allotment tenants across the 6 sites in Newbury to complete a survey regarding their allotment.

Tenants were asked to provide their ideas and suggestions for future considerations and on how their sites could be improved. In addition, tenants were asked to list their top 3 things they enjoy about their allotments.

The response rate for the survey, which was distributed in October was close to 23%. This is actually a very high rate of response for council surveys. Generally typical survey response rates can vary between 5% and 30%, so the 23% achieved here is more than acceptable, given the nature of the survey.

At the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on Monday 11 December, it was agreed that a dedicated task group will be completing the analysis of the survey, with the results published in the Spring of 2024.

This document delivers the outputs from the task group, providing summaries of our allotment usage, followed by assessments of the survey comments on a site by site basis. Then it provides graphic summaries for all the yes/no questions. Finally, it summarises the recommended actions for the council, as outputs from the survey.

We'd like to thank all who gave their time to respond to this survey. This feedback is helping us to formulate future plans where it makes sense to adjust our service provision.

Response rates

The overall response rate was 22.8% .

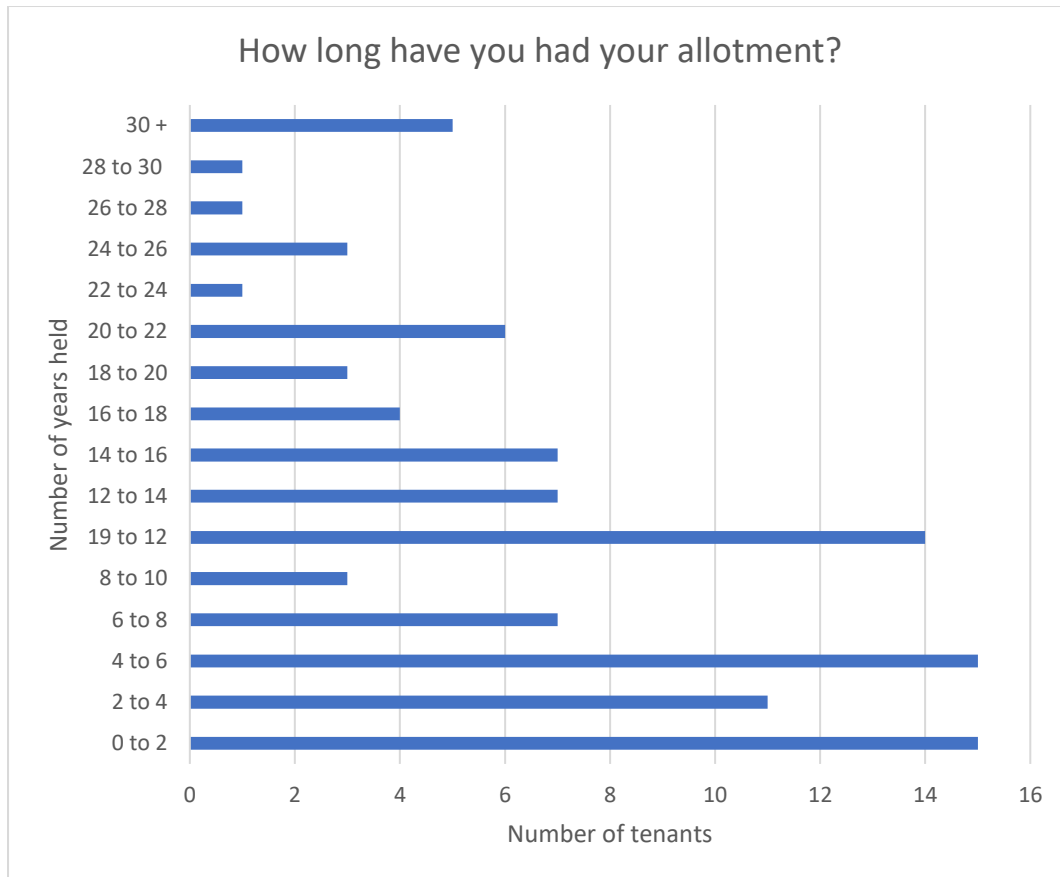
The response rates together with the number of tenants for each of the six sites was as follows:-

Site	Responses	Number of tenants	Rate
Dairy Farm	9	49	18.4%
One Tree Park	8	47	17.0%
Parsons	9	36	25.0%
Southby's	30	167	18.0%
Wash Common	30	98	30.6%
West Mills	30	112	26.8%
Total	116	509	22.8%

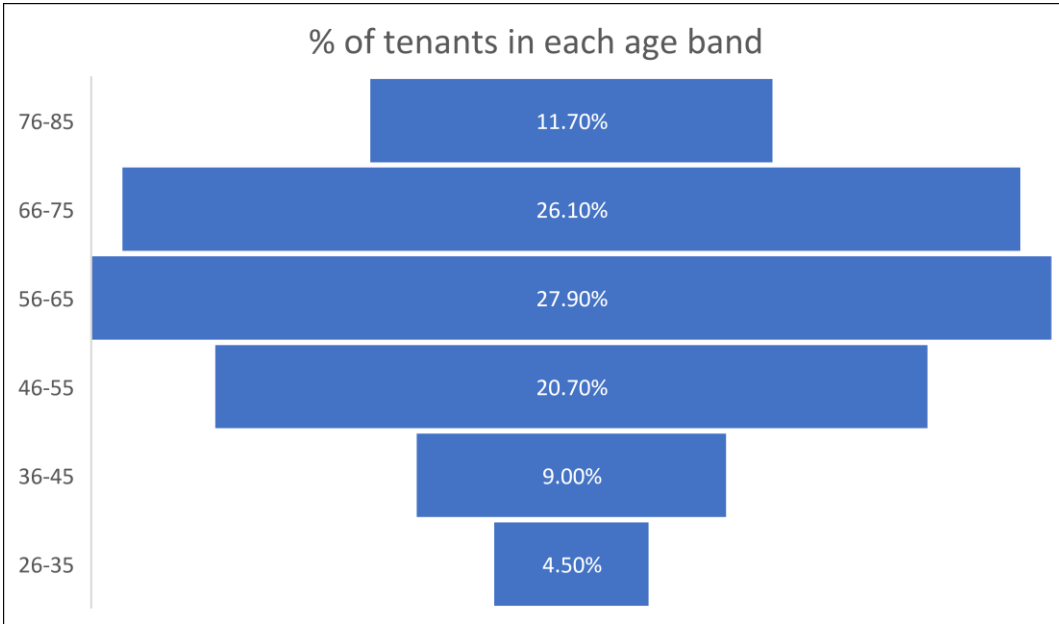
Allotment Usage

The questionnaire provided some basic information on the typical usage of our allotments. Bear in mind the following is based on a sample of our allotment holders, however it is included as it does provide some interesting feedback.

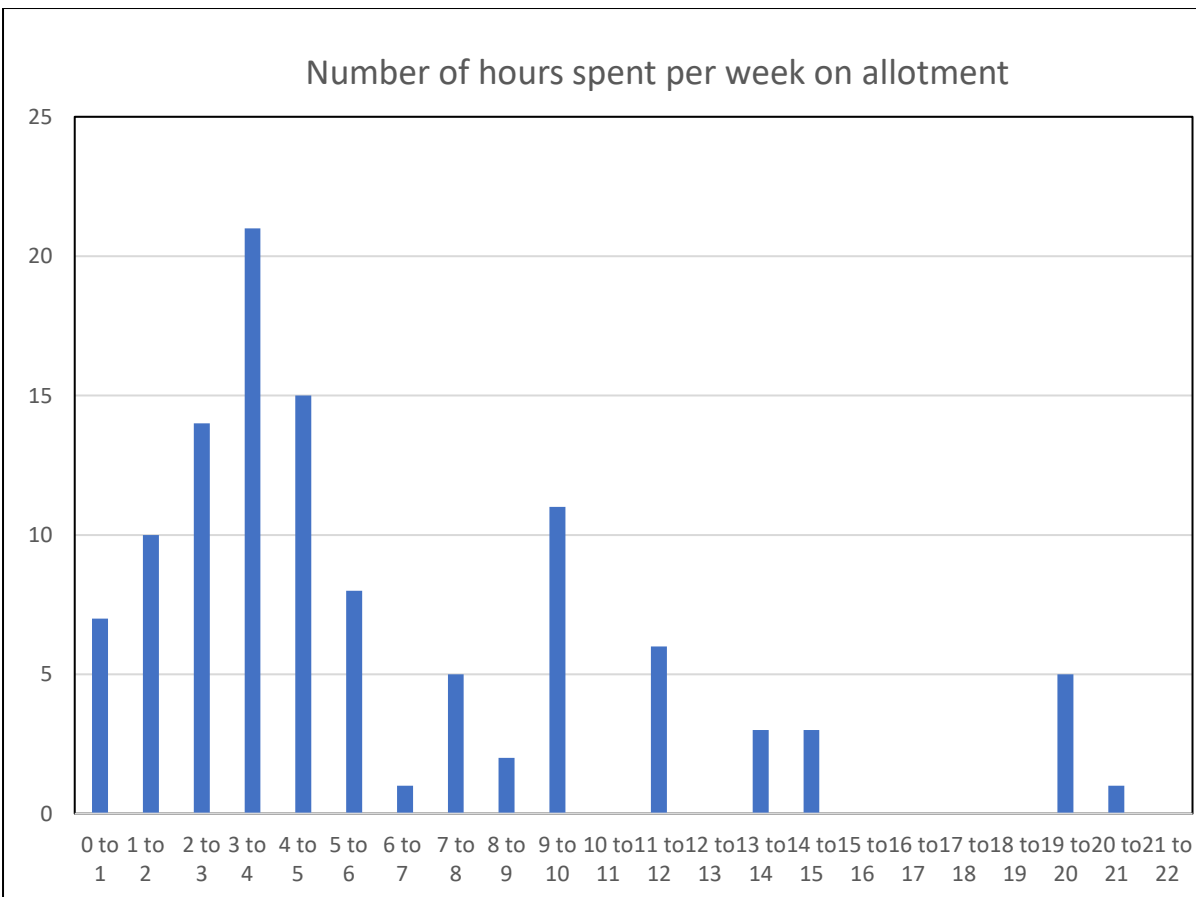
Question 1. How long have you had your allotment? All Sites



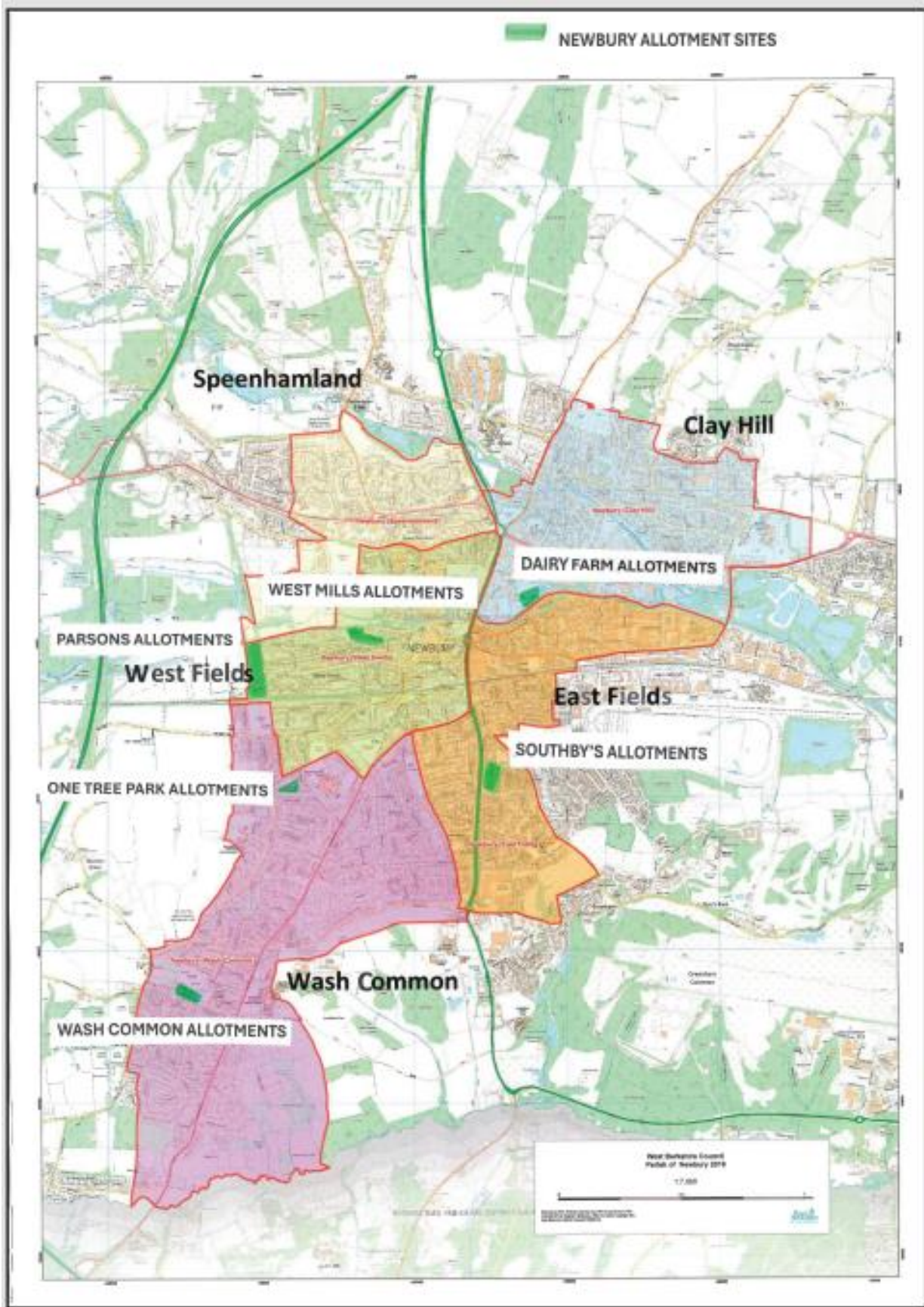
Question 2. Age of Tenant? All sites



Question 3. Number of hours spent on your allotment per week? All sites



Allotment Map



Survey Comments by Site

Dairy Farm

Positives

- Enjoying fresh air and meeting friends at the allotment.
- Access to fresh produce for the table.
- Friendship and social interaction with other allotment holders.
- Availability of fresh vegetables.
- Peaceful and quiet environment.
- Walking distance accessibility.
- Friendly and relaxed atmosphere among allotment community.
- On-site water supply.
- Convenient location with easy access and parking.
- The opportunity to keep bees.
- Friendly and supportive community of allotment holders.
- Good parking facilities.
- Sense of security within the allotment space.
- Proximity to home.
- Access to compost and wood chip on-site.
- Cheaper rent compared to other alternatives.

Suggested Improvements

- Maintenance of paths between plots to improve accessibility.
- Clearing old rubbish along fences for a cleaner environment.
- Installation of eco-toilet facilities for convenience.
- Improved security measures to prevent theft.
- Better provision of information to all plot owners.
- Easier access from the canal for some plot holders.
- Assistance with removing trash left by previous tenants.
- Regular upkeep of the track and enforcement of plot attendance.
- Management of overhanging trees to maintain safety.

One Tree Park

Positives

- Friendly community atmosphere, fostering helpfulness and cooperation among members.
- Engagement in joint activities like fundraising, Christmas, and summer gatherings, promoting social interaction and camaraderie.
- Convenient location within a 10-minute walk, enhancing accessibility for regular visits and gardening activities.
- Enjoyment of peace and tranquillity, complemented by fantastic facilities and onsite composting.
- Appreciation for fresh air and peaceful surroundings conducive to gardening and relaxation.
- Opportunities for growing produce, promoting self-sustainability and healthy living.
- Presence of a supportive community at One Tree Park, contributing to a sense of belonging and shared interests.
- Enjoyment of organic food, physical exercise, and social interactions with friends at the allotment.
- Pleasure derived from producing crops, engaging in conversations with fellow allotment holders, and experiencing good soil quality.
- Benefit of a quiet location, friendly neighbourhood, and well-organized facilities for a pleasant gardening experience.

Suggested Improvements

- Address concerns related to water supply, such as proximity to water troughs, water pressure, and empty troughs during high-demand periods.
- Improve fencing and overall site security to enhance safety and protect allotment areas.
- Ensure efficient delivery of manure or soil improver to support gardening activities and soil health.
- Explore opportunities for increased engagement with young families and children, including the creation of a community plot and partnerships with local charities.
- Implement measures to address overgrown plots, promote composting practices among tenants, and optimize resource allocation for allotment sites.

Parsons

Positives:

- Proximity to home, providing convenience and easy access for regular visits.
- Well-run management of the allotment site, ensuring smooth operations and organization.
- Health benefits derived from gardening activities, including physical exercise and mental relaxation.
- Social aspects of allotment gardening, fostering connections with neighbours and promoting community interaction.
- Spacious plots offering ample room for gardening and experimentation.
- Enjoyment of the semi-rural setting, providing a peaceful environment to connect with nature.
- Outlet for physical exercise and creative stimulation, contributing to overall well-being.
- Satisfaction of producing food for oneself and family, enhancing self-sufficiency and culinary enjoyment.
- Ease of access to the allotment site, coupled with reliable water supply and regular grass mowing.
- Sense of security, pleasant interactions with fellow tenants, and convenient access to water.

Suggested Improvements

- More frequent cutting of border hedges to maintain site aesthetics and prevent overgrowth.
- Improvement of toilet facilities, more frequent mowing of main pathways, and availability of manure for plots.
- Control measures for weed management, particularly addressing the spread of mare's tail to prevent further proliferation.
- Better maintenance of plots by individual tenants to prevent nuisances for neighbouring allotment holders.
- Improved communication from the council regarding site maintenance plans, especially for disused plots.
- Enhanced general maintenance by the council, including grass cutting, tree upkeep, clearance of disused plots, and regular waste disposal.
- Promotion of community activities to enhance the overall environment, establishment of an allotment shop for convenience.

Southby's

Positives

- Proximity to home within a short walking distance, offering convenience for regular visits.
- Tranquil environment with distant sounds, creating a sense of solitude conducive to relaxation.
- Enjoyment derived from harvesting one's own crops, fostering a connection to food production and self-sufficiency.
- Accessibility to water troughs, promoting efficient irrigation and gardening practices.
- Positive impact on mental health due to social interactions with fellow allotment holders.
- Opportunity for outdoor exercise and fresh air, contributing to physical well-being.
- Satisfaction from growing fruits, vegetables, and other produce, as well as engaging in conversations with like-minded individuals.
- Overall well-managed site by council and stewards, providing a conducive environment for gardening activities.
- Space for children to learn and explore nature, contributing to their education and outdoor experiences.
- Ability to grow a variety of produce, including vegetables, berries, fruits, eggs, and flowers, while enjoying scenic views of the surroundings.
- Community atmosphere, friendly interactions among tenants, and well-organized facilities and activities.

Suggested Improvements:

- Enhanced management of the access gate to prevent unauthorized entry and ensure security for allotment holders, Closure of perimeter tracks during specified times to prevent unauthorized access.
- Enforcement of plot cultivation standards to prevent neglect and weed infestation, ensuring a pleasant environment for all users.
- Collaboration with Greenham Parish council to provide financial support for plot charges and site maintenance.
- Addressing concerns related to overgrown plots, dead trees, and grass cutting frequency to maintain site aesthetics and functionality.
- Implementation of measures to control weed growth, ensure proper waste disposal, and manage vegetation along the perimeter.
- Consideration of tenant limits to prevent excessive plot hoarding and ensure equitable access for all interested individuals.
- Enhancement of roadway infrastructure and provision of amenities such as toilets and mulch deliveries for user convenience.
- Promotion of responsible dog ownership and enforcement of leash regulations to prevent damage to allotments and ensure safety for users.

Wash Common

Positives:

- Friendly site atmosphere with a relaxed environment, fostering a sense of community among allotment holders.
- Opportunity for sharing advice and learning from fellow allotmenters, creating a supportive environment for successful crop cultivation.
- Convenient location close to home, allowing for easy access and frequent visits.
- Enjoyment derived from growing healthy organic food and benefiting from a good water supply for gardening needs.
- Access to ample space for growing produce, experimenting with gardening techniques, and contributing to initiatives like the national seed library.
- Peaceful surroundings, conducive to gardening activities and relaxation in nature.
- Opportunities for engaging with nature, enjoying the presence of wildlife, and appreciating the site's good location.
- Positive community interactions, including the exchange of seeds, plants, tools, and produce among allotment holders.
- Therapeutic benefits of gardening, including stress relief, creativity, and pleasure derived from cultivating flowers and vegetables.
- Satisfaction from contributing to a sustainable lifestyle by growing fresh fruits, vegetables, and flowers.
- Sense of camaraderie among allotment holders, shared hobbies, and mutual enjoyment of harvesting crops.

Suggested Improvements:

- Installation of reliable locks and gates at the site entrance to enhance security and prevent unauthorized access.
- Supervision of contractors to ensure sensitivity to wildlife issues and timing of hedge cutting to protect nesting birds.
- Implementation of a ban on chemicals and pesticides to promote environmentally friendly gardening practices.
- Improvement of drainage across the entire site to prevent waterlogging and ensure optimal growing conditions.
- Creation of shared facilities like communal bonfire areas and composting sites to encourage waste management and community engagement.
- Enhancement of communication channels between the council and allotment holders to provide timely updates and address concerns effectively.
- Introduction of measures to address parking issues, facilitate access to hard standings, and provide electricity supply for convenience.

Appendix 7

- Collaboration with the council and volunteers to organize community-building activities, promote shared interests, and foster a sense of belonging among allotment holders.
- Establishment of communal facilities such as sheds, seating areas, and composting toilets to enhance user experience, Formation of allotment association.

West Mills

Positives:

- Friendly and diverse community of plot holders.
- Effective management by NTC and site stewards, seen as a partnership.
- Affordable pricing structure, with lower rates for locals and accessibility for those with limited means.
- Good location and security measures in place.
- Allotments provide exercise, relaxation, and access to fresh produce.
- Convenient proximity to home and town.
- Availability of water troughs and taps.
- Supportive and engaging steward.
- Sunny plot positions and peaceful surroundings contribute to enjoyment.
- Opportunity for outdoor activity and interaction with neighbours.

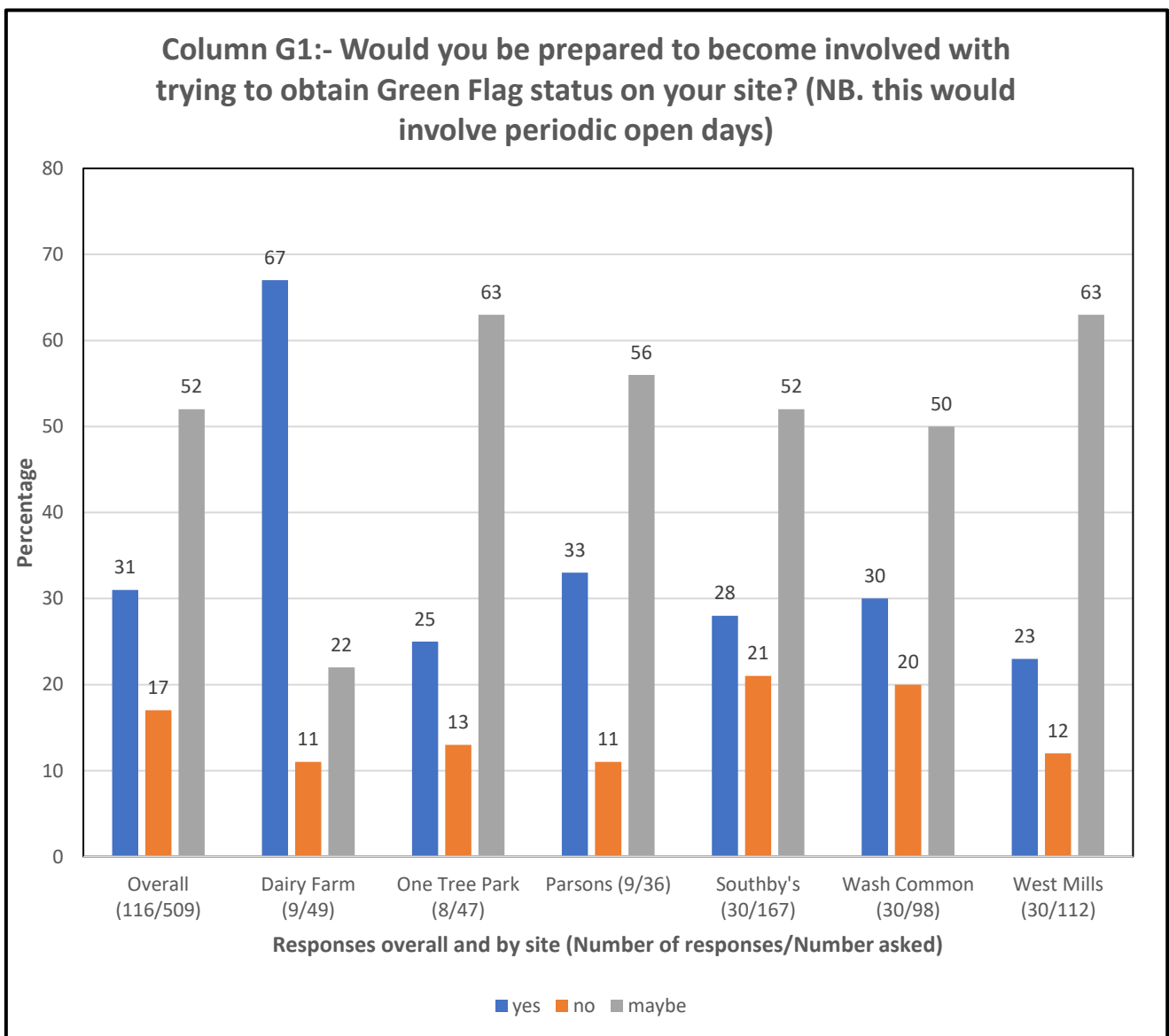
Suggested Improvements:

- Organised system for resource sharing among plot holders.
- Encourage diverse gardening styles to promote wildlife diversity and sustainability.
- Enhance communication channels between NTC, stewards, and plot holders.
- Better organization and maintenance of communal areas.
- Address neglected plots promptly.
- Develop communal spaces for social activities and resource sharing.
- Resolve issues with overgrown vegetation encroaching on plots.
- Provide more waste disposal options and a communal compost area.
- Improve pathways, access gates, and overall site infrastructure.
- Increase accessibility for individuals with mobility issues, including single female plot holders.
- Ensure regular maintenance of the site, including grass cutting and tree management.
- Considerations for safety, such as improved roadway conditions and waste disposal practices.

Survey Questions

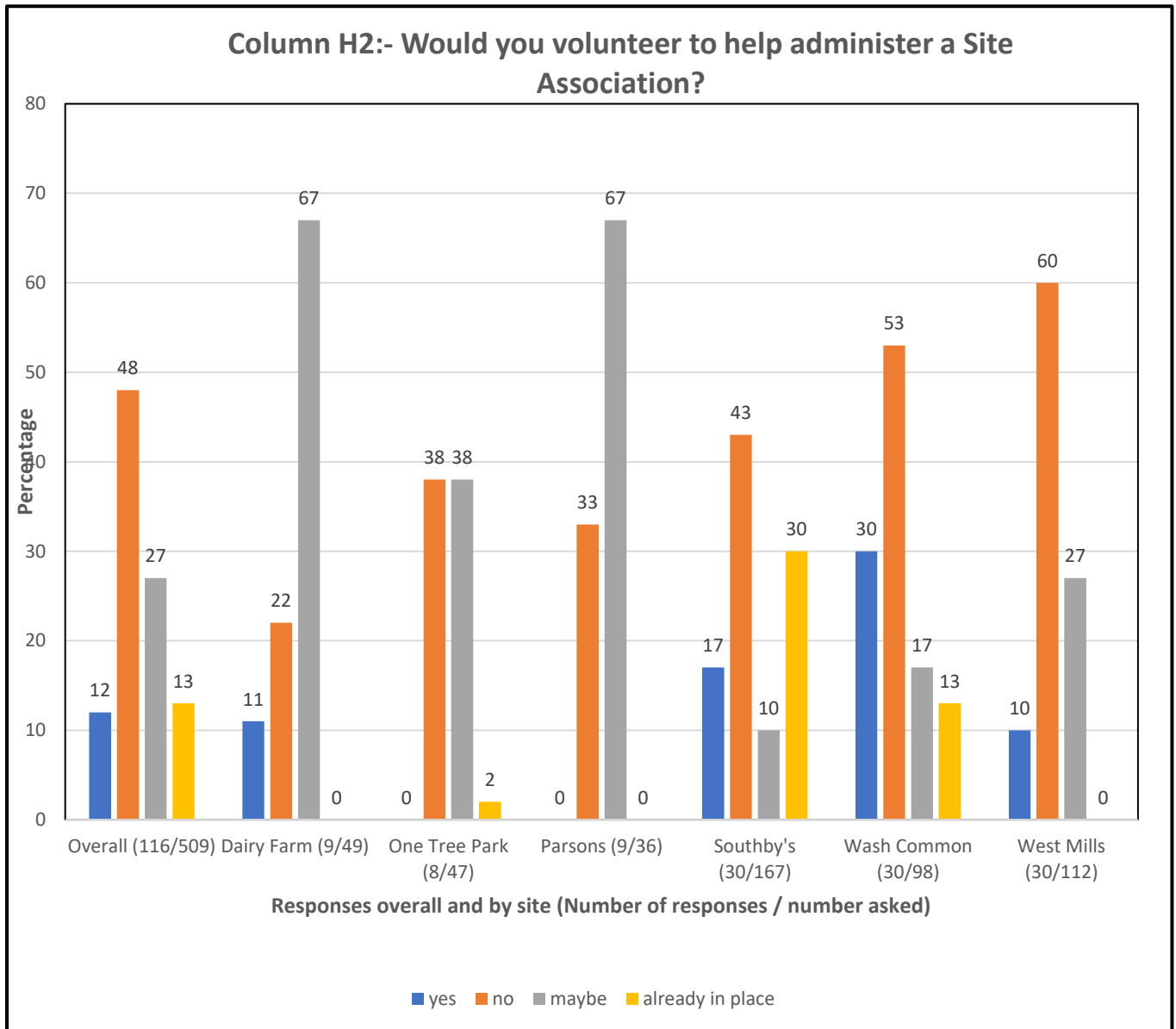
Column G1:- Would you be prepared to become involved with trying to obtain Green Flag status on your site? (NB. this would involve periodic open days)

	Overall	Dairy Farm	One Tree	Parsons	Southby's	Wash Common	West Mills
	(116/509)	(9/49)	Park (8/47)	(9/36)	(30/167)	(30/98)	(30/112)
response							
yes	31	67	25	33	28	30	23
no	17	11	13	11	21	20	12
maybe	52	22	63	56	52	50	63



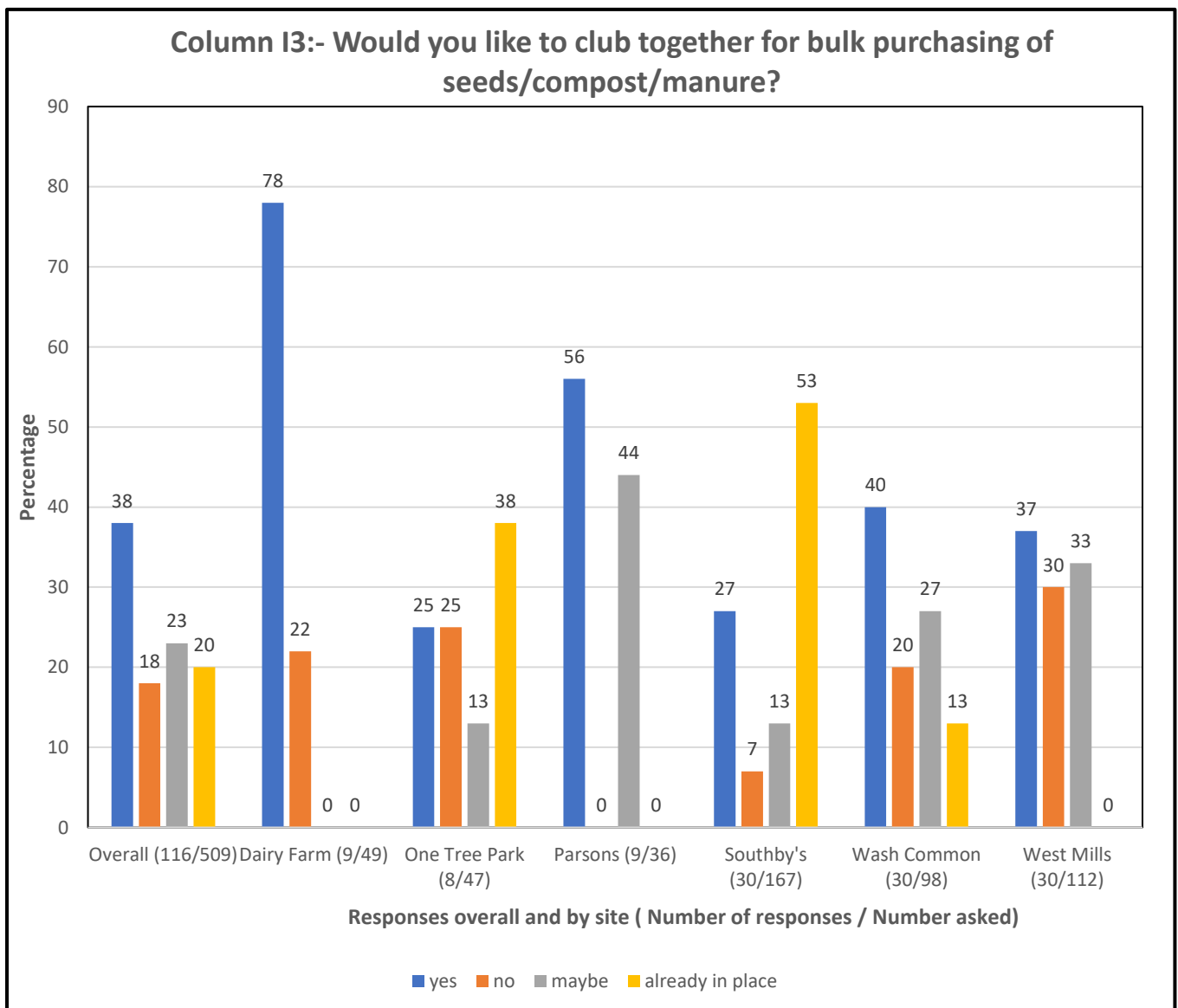
Column H2:- Would you volunteer to help administer a Site Association?

response	Overall (116/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (8/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (30/167)	Wash Common (30/98)	West Mills (30/112)
yes	12	11	0	0	17	30	10
no	48	22	38	33	43	53	60
maybe	27	67	38	67	10	17	27
already in place	13	0	2	0	30	13	0



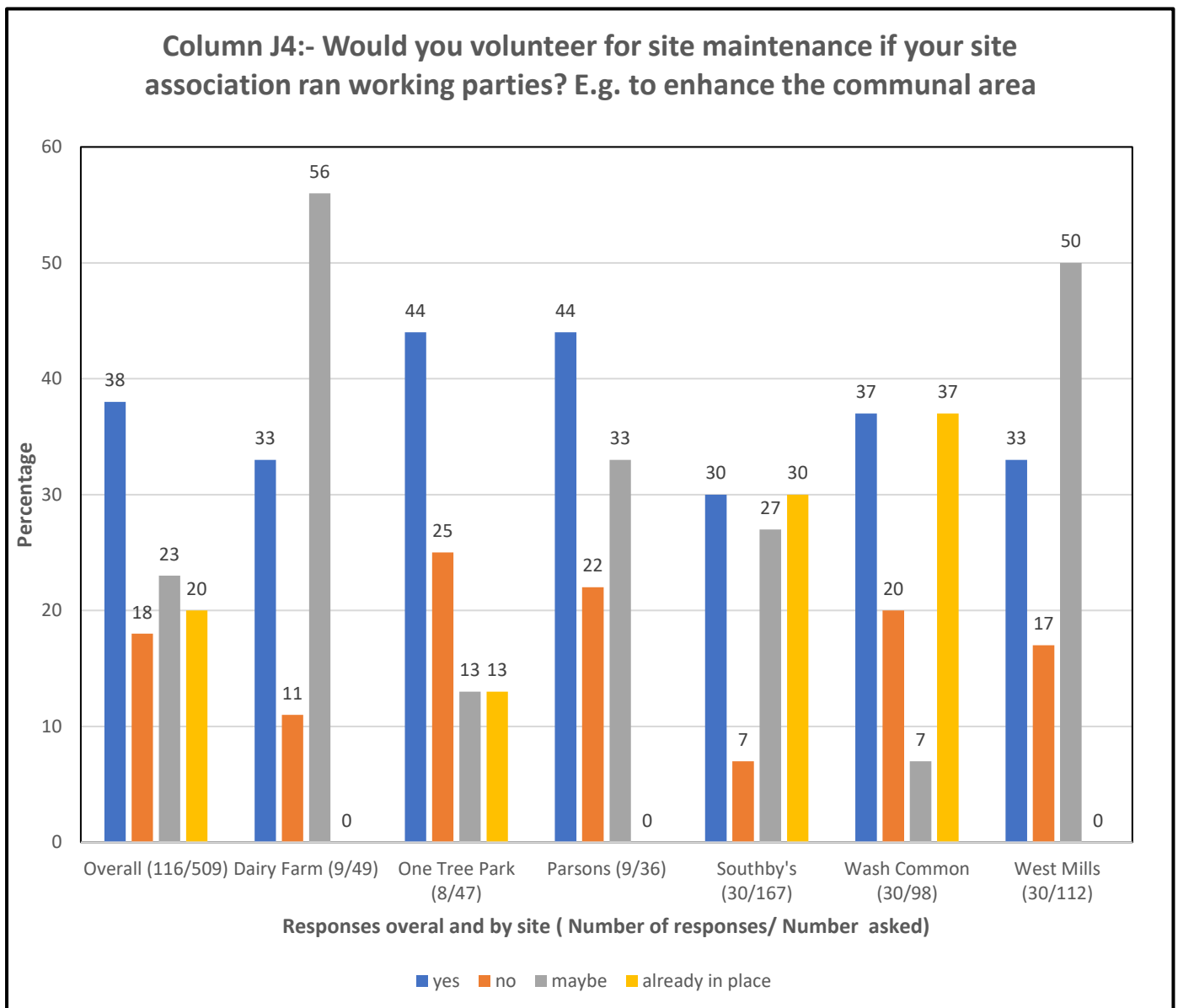
Column I3:- Would you like to club together for bulk purchasing of seeds/compost/manure?

response	Overall (116/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (8/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (30/167)	Wash Common (30/98)	West Mills (30/112)
yes	38	78	25	56	27	40	37
no	18	22	25	0	7	20	30
maybe	23	0	13	44	13	27	33
already in place	20	0	38	0	53	13	0



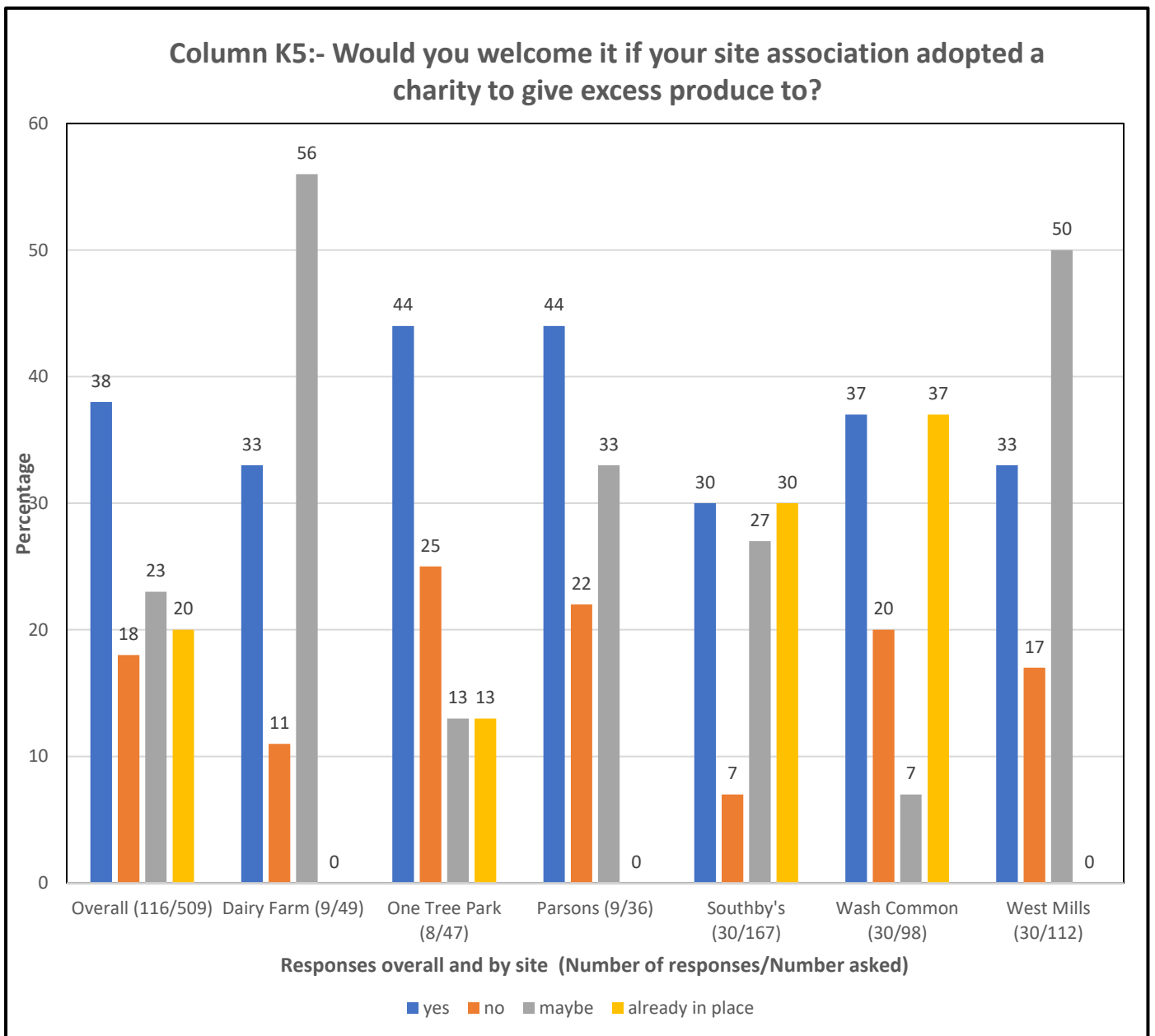
Column J4:- Would you volunteer for site maintenance if your site association ran working parties? E.g. to enhance the communal area

response	Overall (116/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (8/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (30/167)	Wash Common (30/98)	West Mills (30/112)
yes	38	33	44	44	30	37	33
no	18	11	25	22	7	20	17
maybe	23	56	13	33	27	7	50
already in place	20	0	13	0	30	37	0



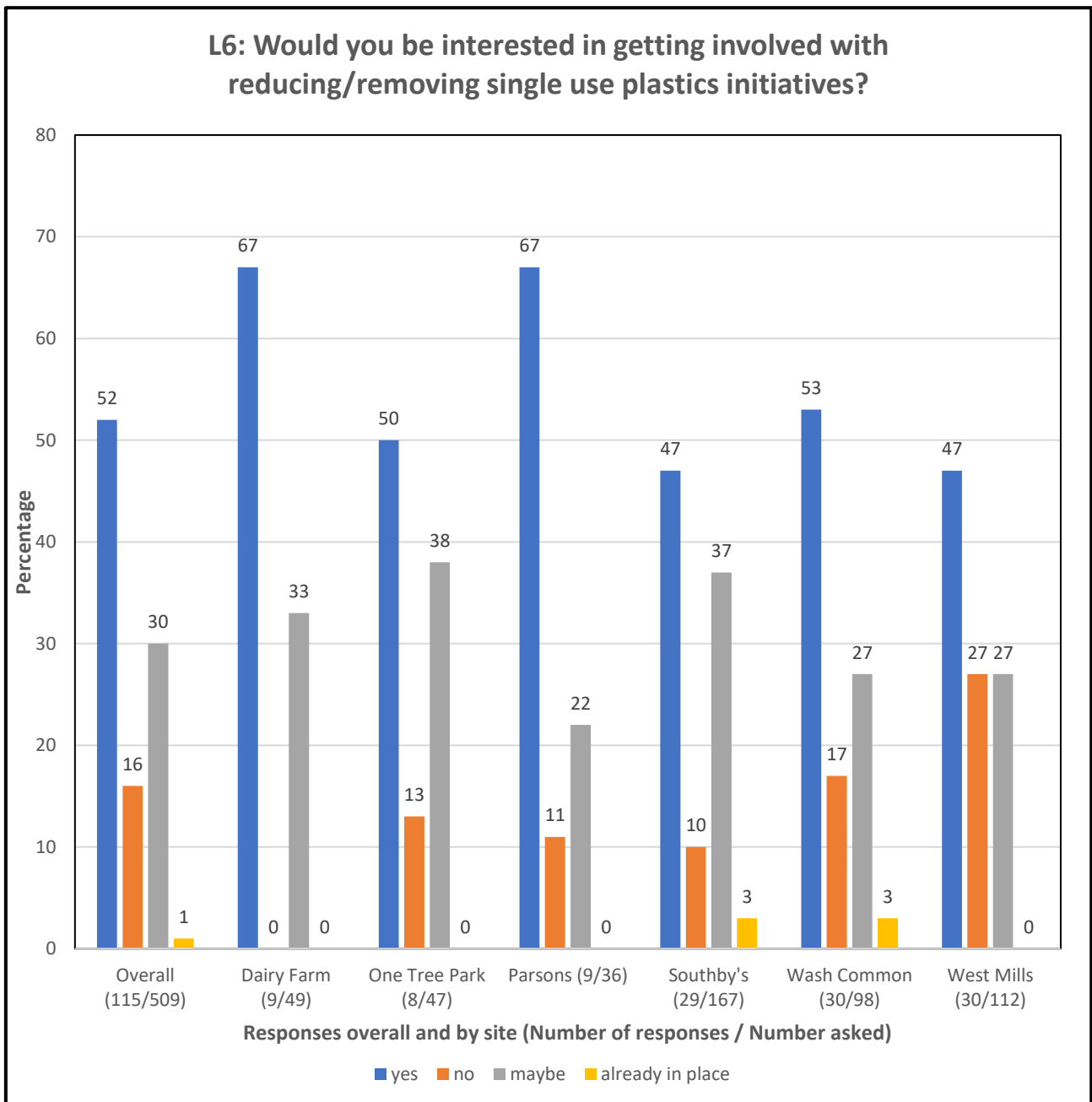
Column K5:- Would you welcome it if your site association adopted a charity to give excess produce to?

response	Overall (116/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (8/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (30/167)	Wash Common (30/98)	West Mills (30/112)
yes	38	33	44	44	30	37	33
no	18	11	25	22	7	20	17
maybe	23	56	13	33	27	7	50
already in place	20	0	13	0	30	37	0



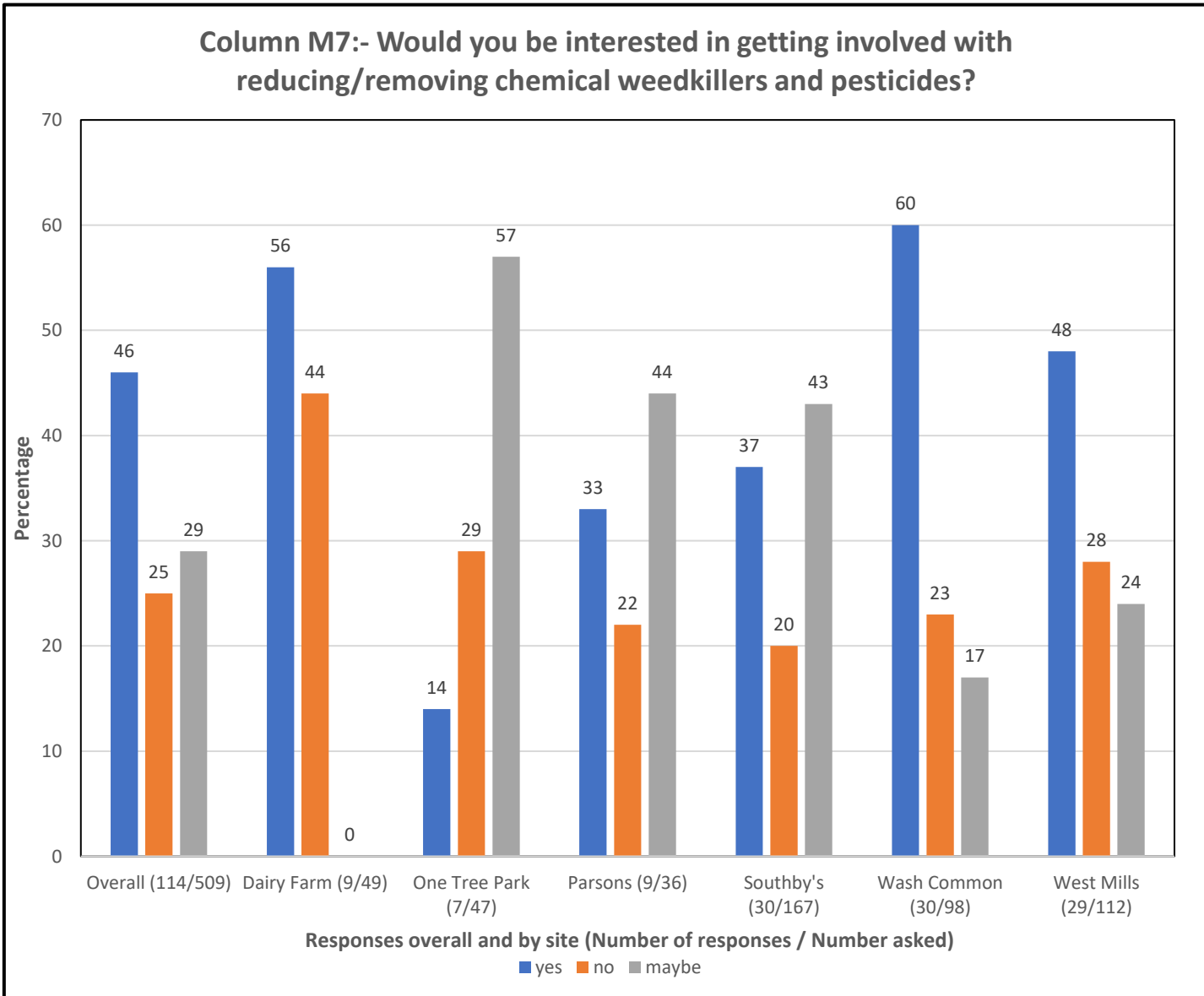
Column L6:- Would you be interested in getting involved with reducing/removing single use plastics initiatives?

response	Overall (115/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (8/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (29/167)	Wash Common (30/98)	West Mills (30/112)
yes	52	67	50	67	47	53	47
no	16	0	13	11	10	17	27
maybe	30	33	38	22	37	27	27
already in place	1	0	0	0	3	3	0



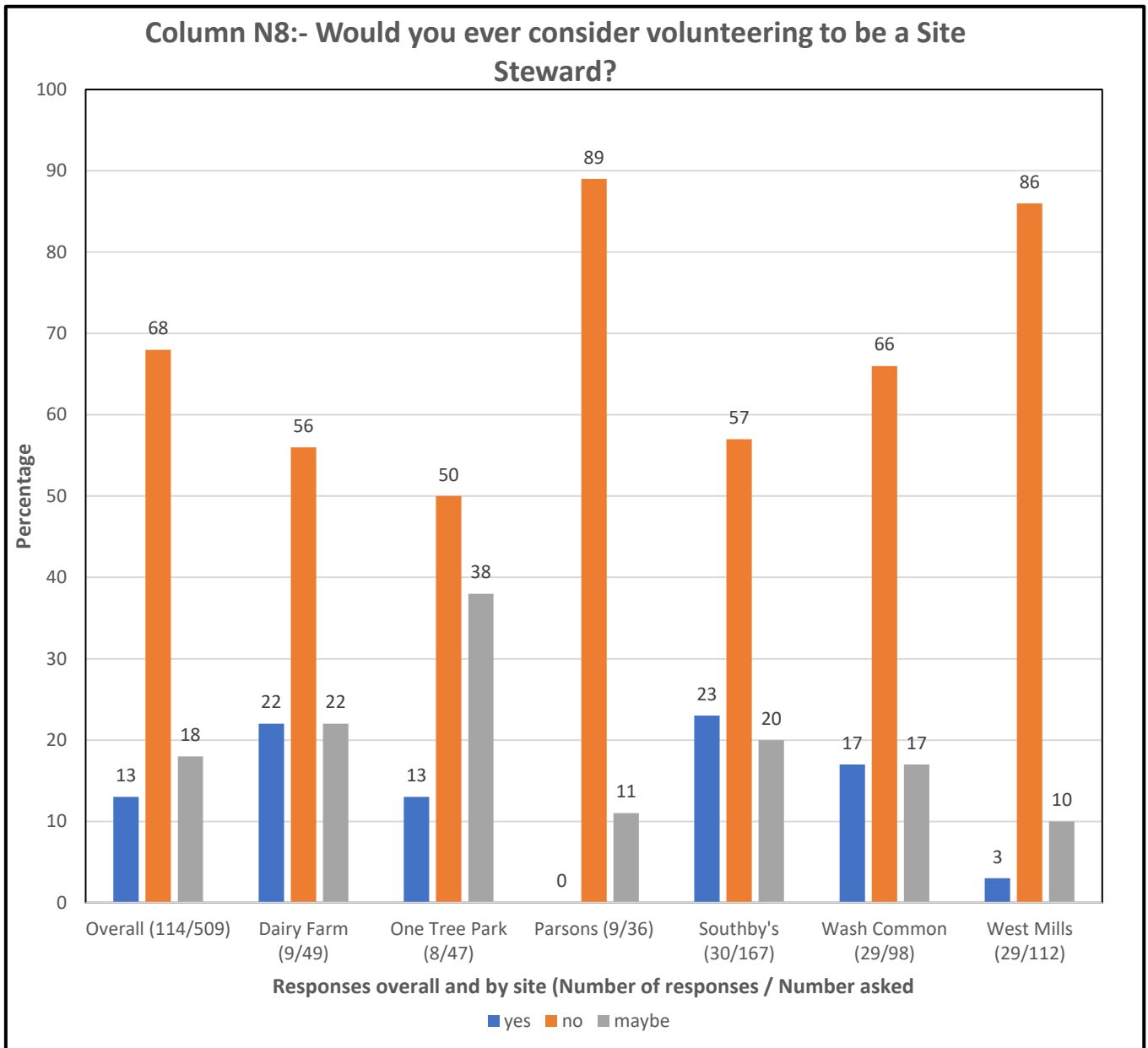
Column M7:- Would you be interested in getting involved with reducing/removing chemical weedkillers and pesticides?

response	Overall (114/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (7/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (30/167)	Wash Common (30/98)	West Mills (29/112)
yes	46	56	14	33	37	60	48
no	25	44	29	22	20	23	28
maybe	29	0	57	44	43	17	24



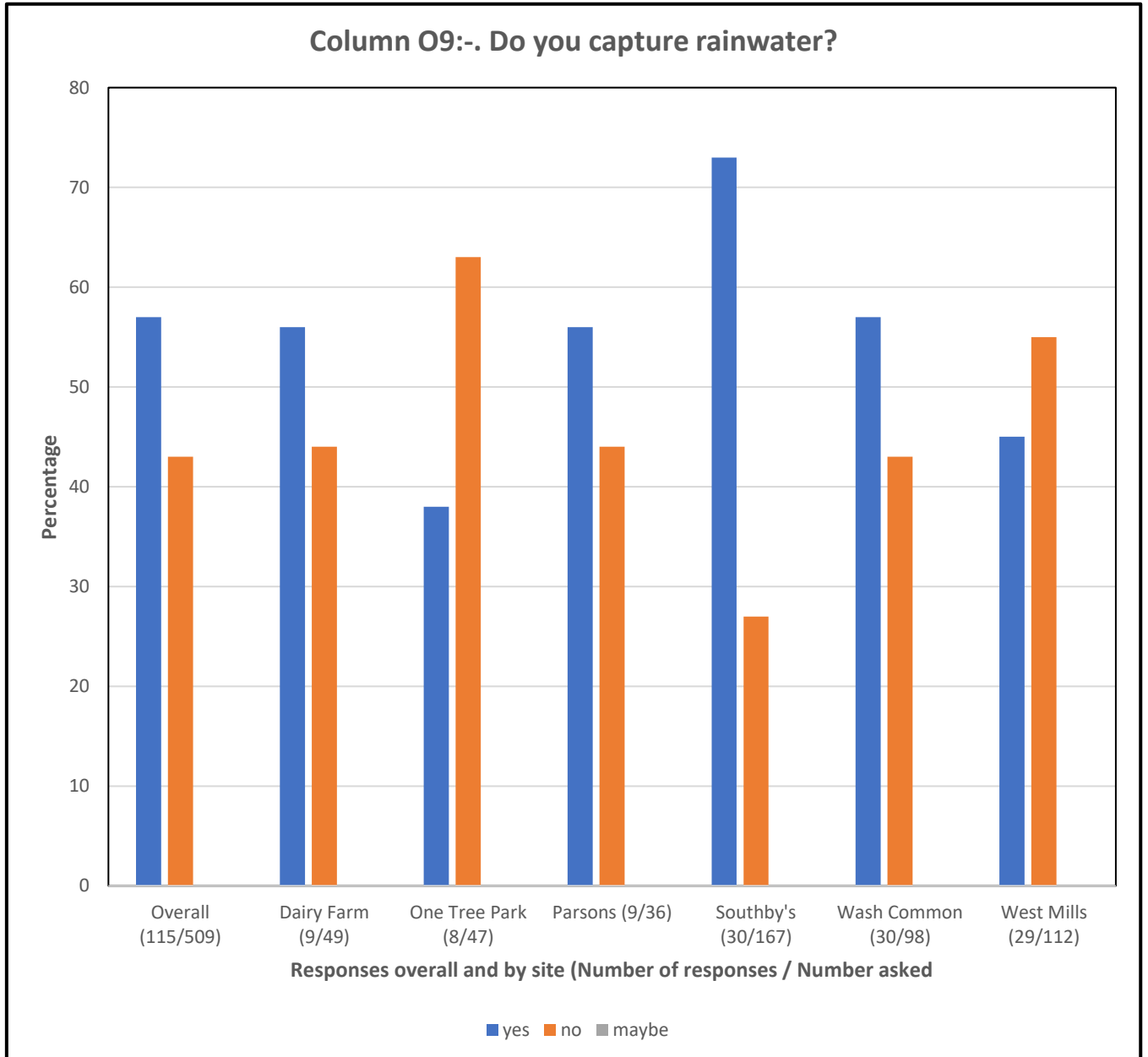
Column N8:- Would you ever consider volunteering to be a Site Steward?

	Overall (114/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (8/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (30/167)	Wash Common (29/98)	West Mills (29/112)
response							
yes	13	22	13	0	23	17	3
no	68	56	50	89	57	66	86
maybe	18	22	38	11	20	17	10



Column 09:- Do you capture rainwater?

	Overall (115/509)	Dairy Farm (9/49)	One Tree Park (8/47)	Parsons (9/36)	Southby's (30/167)	Wash Common (30/98)	West Mills (29/112)
response							
yes	57	56	38	56	73	57	45
no	43	44	63	44	27	43	55
maybe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Recommendations for Council

1. All allotments to be encouraged to create associations:
 - a. An allotment association could apply to NTC Grants Committee for set up costs.
 - b. Associations could also apply for capital projects (e.g. an eco-toilet).
2. More frequent grass cutting – already in new grounds maintenance contract.
3. Number and location of Water points:
 - a. Assess need by allotment.
 - b. Promote rain-water collection where possible.
4. Frequency of skips for non-compostables:
 - a. Budgeted for 1 skip per year per site (on request).
5. More frequent hedge cutting:
 - a. Contract to do once per year (November through mid-Feb).
 - b. Council to inform users on our policy and legal requirements through notice boards and with allotment renewal letters.
6. Drainage issues:
 - a. Particularly affecting Wash Common.
 - b. Council is aware and taking some steps for improvements and trying to work around some limitations by Historic England.
 - c. Work is ongoing to improve the situation, but the nature of the geology makes full mitigation almost impossible.
7. More regular communication from the council:
 - a. Annual meeting with stewards.
 - b. Reinstate open meetings for all (Late September/Early October).
 - i. Propose workshop style with representatives from each site (Stewards plus 5 allotment holders).
 - ii. Each group to review the feedback from their allotment as presented in this document.
 - iii. Each site to present their conclusions to whole group to aid cross learning.
 - c. Allotment visit day for allotment holders to meet their ward councillors.
8. Review process for managing neglected plots:
 - a. Reinstate 6 weekly allotment inspections during growing season.
 - b. Bring forward to next committee a proposal for revision to the Council's process for management of neglected plots.
9. Use of pesticides/herbicides – council to promote acceptable methods via notice boards and in renewal letters.
10. Review accessibility:
 - a. Add as question to each allotment group to consider in workshop.
 - b. Publicise to groups and charities to use an allotment or accessible area.
 - c. Possibly look at one site initially which has the best vehicle accessibility.