

# **HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Findings**

**HMP Barlinnie  
October 2024**

## HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Findings HMP Barlinnie, October 2024

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## Executive Summary

### Background

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Barlinnie on 23 and 24 October 2024. The questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 290 prisoners held in HMP Barlinnie on the first day of data collection, with a response rate of 78% (226 responses).

The data is presented according to the HMIPS inspection standards. Standard 7 is omitted as there were not enough prisoners due for release to be able to publish anonymous data on their responses. Standard 8 (Organisational Effectiveness) is omitted as this is not addressed in the prisoner survey.

### Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

- Eighty-three per cent of respondents said that they were offered an induction on arrival.
- Forty-two per cent reported being treated well on arrival at HMP Barlinnie, while a further 46% said they were treated “neither well nor badly”.

### Standard 2: Decency

- Twenty-six per cent of respondents said they were able to have a shower every day.
- Seventy-three per cent of respondents described the quality of food as quite or very bad.
- Less than one-third (29%) said they always or usually got enough to eat at mealtimes.
- Most respondents (93%) said they could have their clothes washed every week.

### Standard 3: Personal Safety

- Most (62%) of respondents reported feeling safe all or most of the time in HMP Barlinnie. However, 20% reported rarely or never feeling safe.
- More than half (55%) reported witnessing staff members abusing, bullying, threatening, or assaulting another prisoner at HMP Barlinnie, and 42% reported that staff had abused, bullied, threatened, or assaulted them.
- One-third (33%) reported that they had been abused, bullied, threatened, or assaulted by another prisoner.

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

- Almost half (43%) said they were never given a reasonable explanation when they or their cell was searched.
- Eighty per cent felt that the system for accessing personal property worked badly.

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

- Just over half (55%) reported being treated with respect by staff all or most of the time. A minority (15%) reported rarely or never being treated with respect by staff.
- Most respondents said that the complaints system worked badly (80%).
- Just over half of respondents (52%) said they had a personal officer.
- Of those who had a personal officer, most (70%) said their personal officer was helpful.

### **Standard 6: Purposeful Activity**

- The majority reported that it was difficult to access education (72%), skills training (89%) and prison jobs (85%).
- Sixty-nine per cent said that they were able to access their legal entitlement to one hour outside in the fresh air every day, and 9% said they could never access this.
- During the previous week, most respondents said they were able to go to the gym or play sports at least once (88%) and access the library (75%).
- Only a quarter of respondents (25%) said they could spend more than two hours outside their cell during the previous weekday, and 13% the previous Saturday.
- Sixty-eight per cent said they could access in-person visits every week, while 22% said they could access weekly video visits.
- Most (61%) said their visitors were treated with respect all or most of the time.
- Most convicted respondents (60%) said they did not know what courses or programmes they need to complete to progress through their sentences; of those who did know, 81% said that the courses they needed to complete were difficult to access or unavailable at HMP Barlinnie.

### **Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing**

- Eighty-eight per cent reported being seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arriving at HMP Barlinnie for health assessment.
- The majority (92%) said they knew how to access health services in the prison.
- The majority of respondents reported that it was difficult to access the following health services: a doctor (80%); a nurse (60%); dental services (90%); mental healthcare (82%); addictions services (68%); a pharmacist (74%); prison-based social work (75%); and appointments outside the prison (82%).
- The majority of respondents reported the quality of service as poor from the following health services: doctors (74%); nursing (51%); dental services (72%); mental health services (76%); addictions services (58%); pharmacy (70%); and prison-based social work (72%).
- Just over half (54%) of those with a disability or long-term health condition said that they were badly supported to manage their condition. Seventeen per cent said they were well supported.
- Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 26% reported receiving support that had been helpful.
- Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, 33% reported receiving help that had been helpful.
- Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health, 21% had received support that they found helpful.

## Introduction

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Barlinnie on 23 and 24 October 2024.

A random sample of 290 prisoners held in HMP Barlinnie on the first day of data collection were asked to complete the survey, of whom 226 completed and returned the questionnaire, providing a 78% response rate.

The data is presented according to the HMIPS Standards for Inspection and Monitoring. 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 managed by the HMIPS senior researcher and conducted by HMIPS staff. The day before the survey took place, HMIPS requested a full list of prisoners held in HMP Barlinnie, including their cell location and primary language. This was used to select the random sample, distribute and collect the surveys, and provide translated versions where necessary. Anyone who did not speak English was provided with a copy of the survey translated into their own language.

The random sample was generated by using the random number generator function in Microsoft Excel to assign a random number to every prisoner on the list. The prisoner list was then ordered from the lowest to highest random number, and the first 290 names on the list were selected to take part in the survey. This method ensures that the selection of participants is entirely random. The sample size was calculated to achieve a minimum 95% confidence level with a 7% margin of error to ensure that the sample is sufficiently representative of the whole population of the establishment.

Anonymous data on the characteristics of the prisoner population (including age group, ethnicity, sentence type, citizenship and gender) was requested from the prison to understand how closely the sample of survey respondents matched those of the overall prison population (see “Participant Profile”).

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 asked if they would need assistance to complete the questionnaire and provided with this assistance by HMIPS staff later in the day if required. 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 over the next 24 hours to collect the 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 and the findings have been published.

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.

The most common age group in the sample was 31 to 40 (39%), followed by 21-30 (25%), 41 to 50 (21%) and 51 or over (17%).

The majority of respondents reported being white (88%) and UK citizens (91%). Two-thirds of respondents reported having a religion (66%), with the most common being Roman Catholic (22%), Church of Scotland (22%) and Muslim (9%).

Remand prisoners made up 35% of the sample, while short-term prisoners accounted for 29% and long-term prisoners and Order for Lifelong Restrictions (OLRs) accounted for 36%. Almost two-thirds (62%) reported living in mainstream halls, with the remainder in protection halls (35%) or the Separation and Reintegration Unit (SRU) (2%).

Almost half (48%) reported having a disability or long-term health condition.

### Sample representativeness

HMIPS requested an anonymous breakdown of the prisoner population in HMP Barlinnie 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 Barlinnie compares with the sample of prisoners who responded to the survey. Some of the data provided by the prison was missing (for example, there was no data on every prisoner's ethnicity), meaning that the data presented in the table below do not all sum to the same total.

As the table below shows, the sample closely represents the characteristics of the whole population of HMP Barlinnie, particularly in relation to age and citizenship. HMP Barlinnie was unable to provide full information on the ethnicity of the whole population, however the sample appears close to what would be expected based on other similar large prisons in the central belt.<sup>1</sup> Long-term prisoners are slightly over-represented in the sample (36% vs 31% of the whole population), while remand and short-term prisoners are slightly under-represented.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, HMP Edinburgh reported the population being 91% white and 9% non-white, while our sample for HMP Barlinnie reports 88% white and 12% non-white.



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### Characteristics of sample population compared to characteristics of whole population of HMP Barlinnie (%)<sup>2</sup>

	Sample population*	Whole population**
<b>Age group</b>		
21-30	54 (25%)	324 (24%)
31-40	87 (39%)	506 (37%)
41-50	46 (21%)	302 (22%)
51 or over	37 (17%)	229 (17%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>224 (100%)</b>	<b>1,361 (100%)</b>
<b>Citizenship</b>		
UK	189 (91%)	1218 (89%)
Non-UK	18 (9%)	143 (11%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>207 (100%)</b>	<b>1,361 (100%)</b>
<b>Prisoner type</b>		
Remand	77 (35%)	506 (37%)
Short-term	64 (29%)	433 (32%)
Long-term/life/life recall/OLR	79 (36%)	417(31%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,356 (100%)</b>

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

<sup>2</sup>Due to rounding, totals do not always sum precisely to 100%.

## Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

### Induction

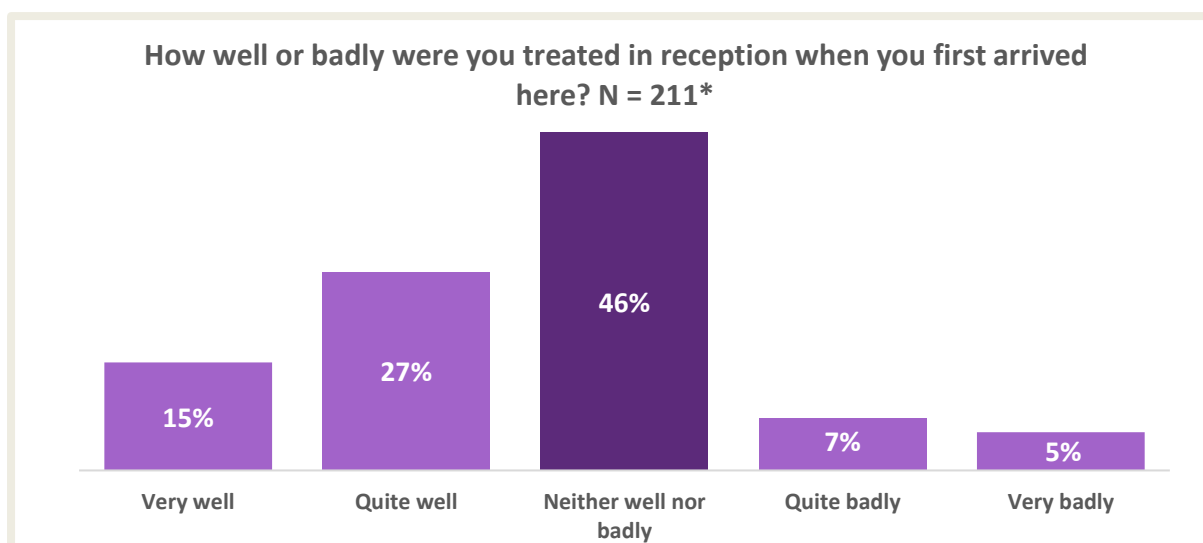
Of those who could remember, two-thirds (83%) of respondents said that they were offered an induction on arrival at HMP-Barlinnie.



\*Excluding "don't remember"

### Treatment in reception

Fewer than half of respondents (42%) reported being treated well on arrival at HMP Barlinnie, and a small percentage (12%) reported being treated badly. The most common response was that respondents were treated "neither well nor badly" in reception (46%).

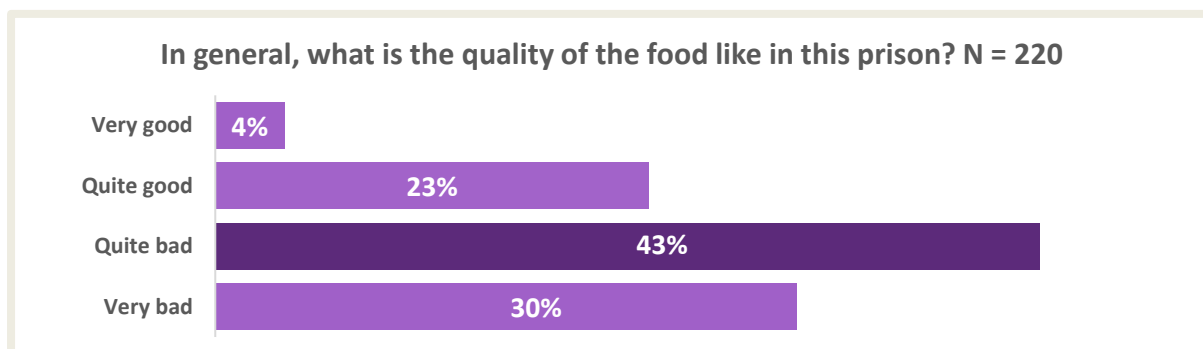


\*Excluding "don't remember".

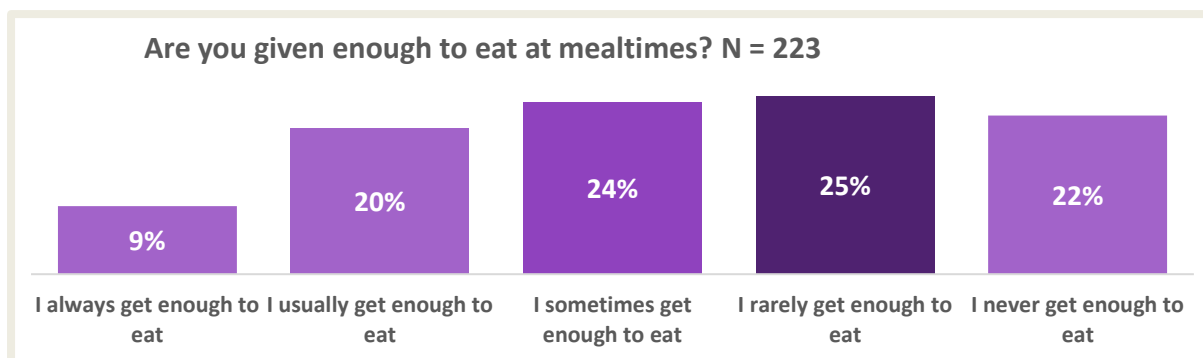
## Standard 2: Decency

### Food

Overall, respondents were generally negative about the quality of food available at HMP Barlinnie, with 73% describing it as quite or very bad.

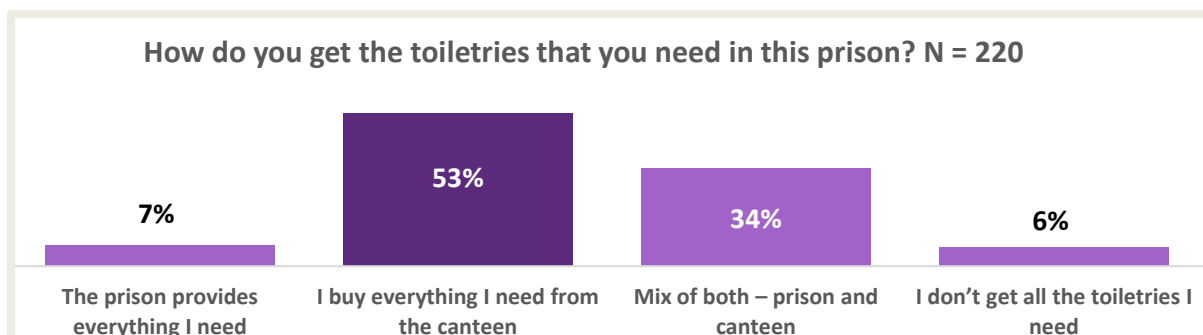


Less than one-third of respondents (29%) reported always or usually getting enough to eat, while 24% said they sometimes got enough to eat, and almost half (47%) said they rarely or never got enough to eat.



### Toiletries, showering and laundry

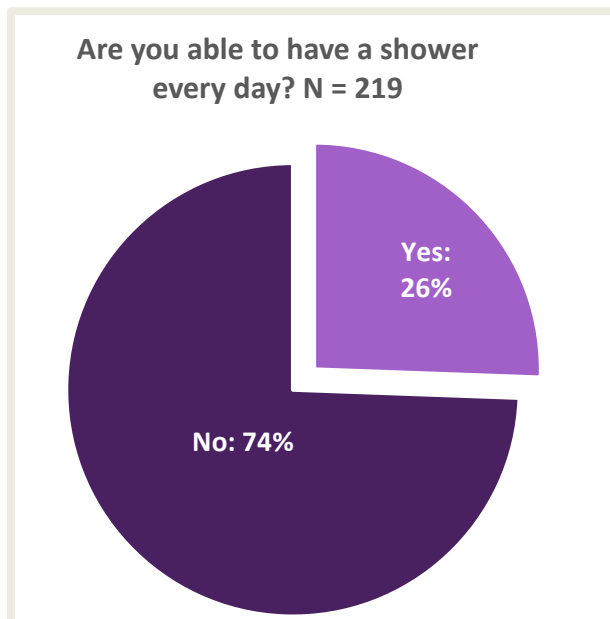
More than half of respondents (53%) reported that they got all the toiletries they needed from the canteen, while only 7% reported that the prison provided all the toiletries that they needed.



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Most respondents (74%) said that they were unable to have a shower every day.

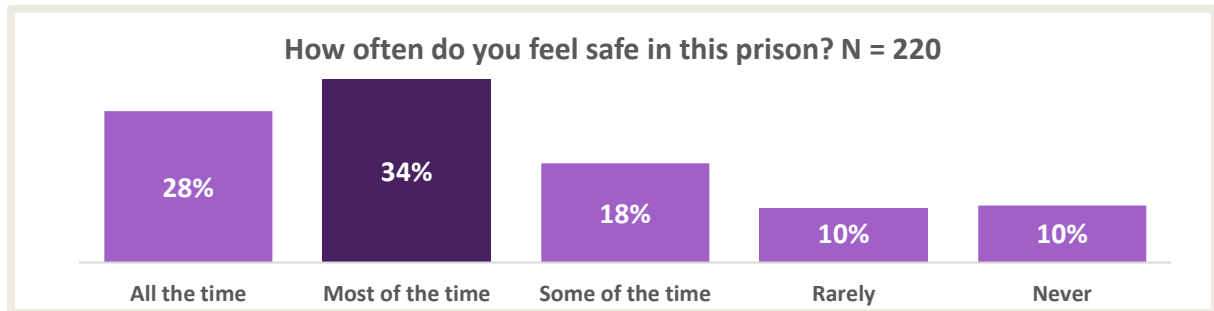
However, the majority said they were able to have their clothes washed at least once a week (93%).



## Standard 3: Personal Safety

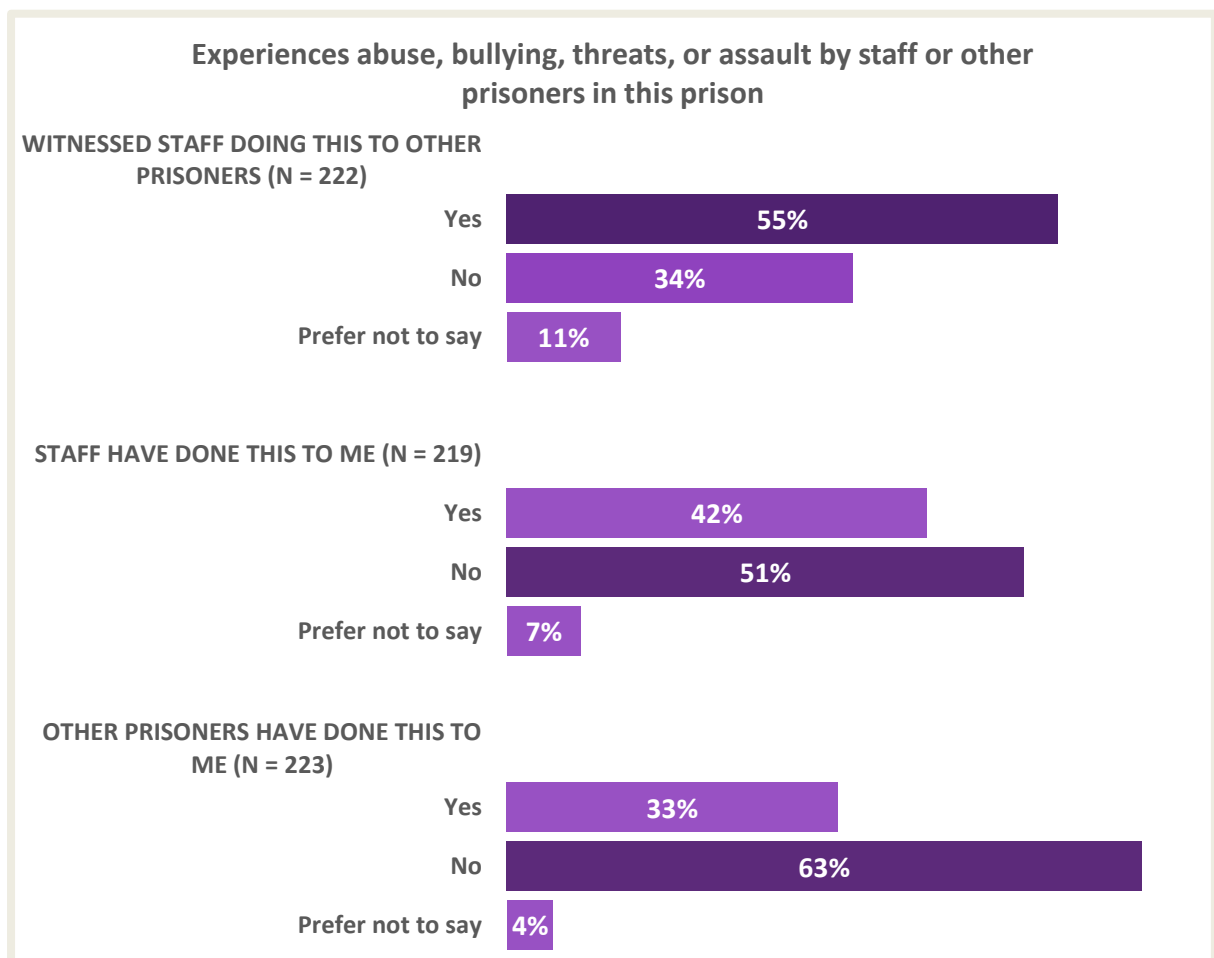
### Perception of safety

The majority (62%) of respondents reported feeling safe all or most of the time in HMP Barlinnie. However, 20% reported rarely or never feeling safe.



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

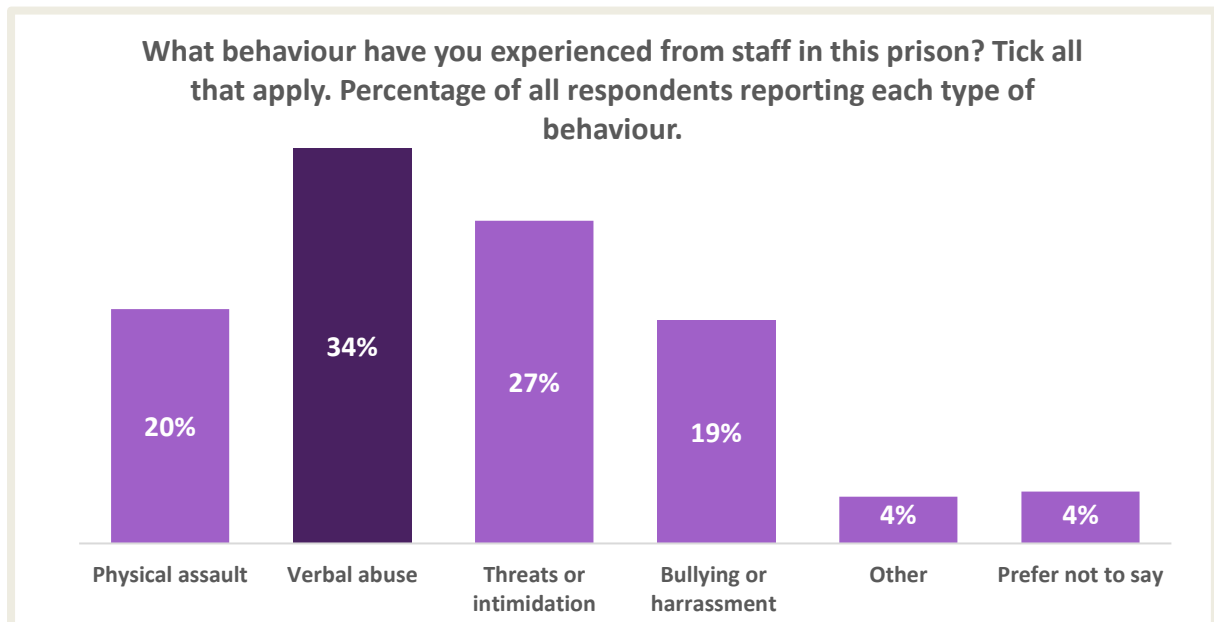
Over half of respondents (55%) said they had witnessed staff members abusing, bullying, threatening or assaulting another prisoner at HMP Barlinnie. Two in five (42%) reported that staff had abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted them.



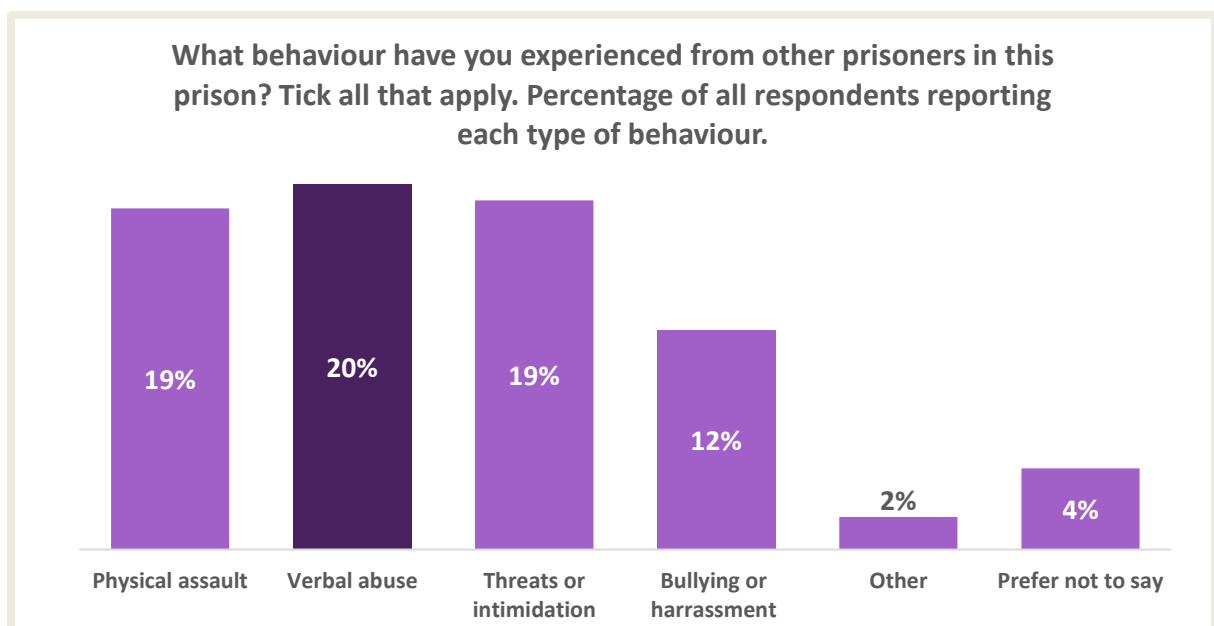
## HMP Barlinnie, October 2024 – PRE-INSPECTION SURVEY FULL REPORT

One-third (33%) of respondents said they had been abused, threatened, bullied, or assaulted by another prisoner in HMP Barlinnie.

When asked what type of negative behaviour they themselves had experienced from staff, the most common responses were: verbal abuse (34%), threats or intimidation (27%), and bullying or harassment (19%), and physical assault (20%). A further 10% reported being physically assaulted by staff.



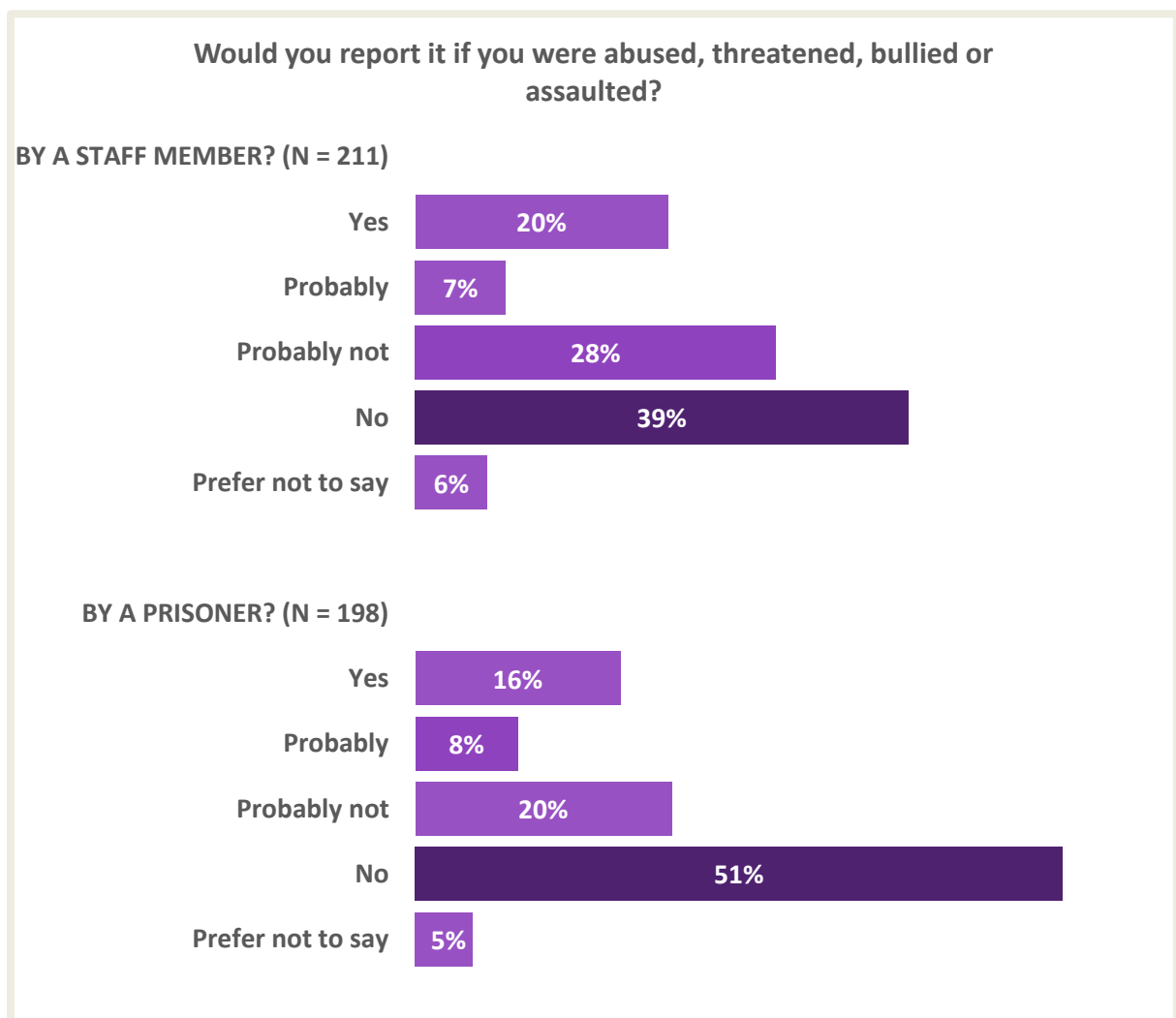
When asked about the types of negative behaviour experienced from other prisoners, the most common responses were verbal abuse (20%), threats or intimidation (19%), physical assault (19%), and bullying or harassment (12%).



### Reporting abuse, threats, bullying or assault

The majority of respondents (67%) said they would not, or probably would not, report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied, or assaulted by a staff member.

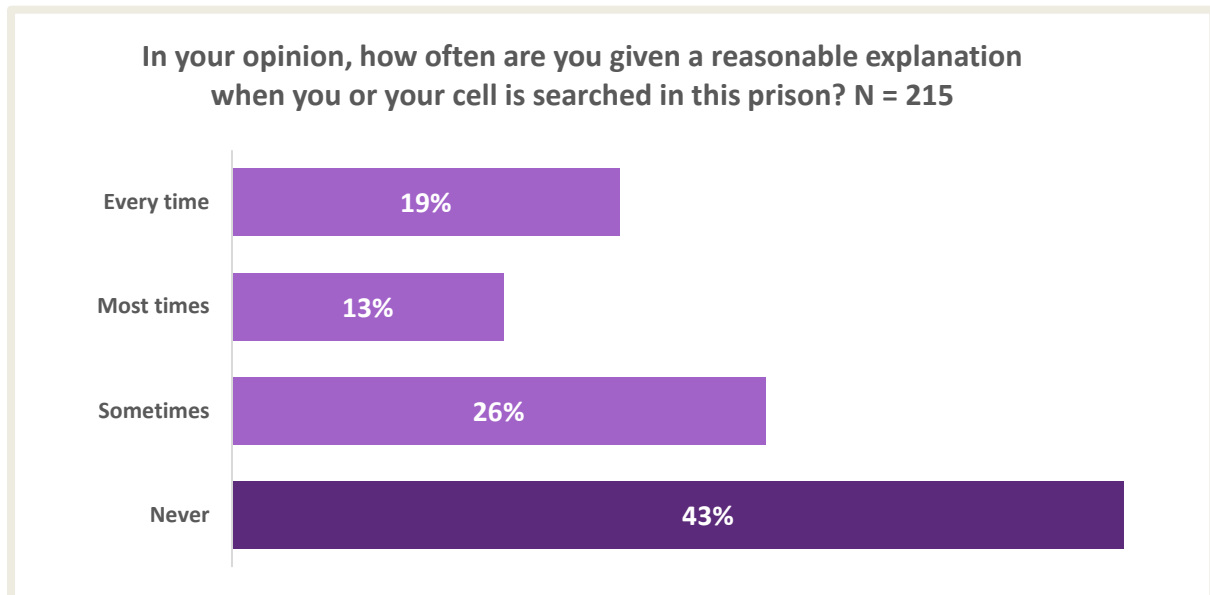
Most (71%) also said that they would not report abuse, threats, bullying, or assault by other prisoners.



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

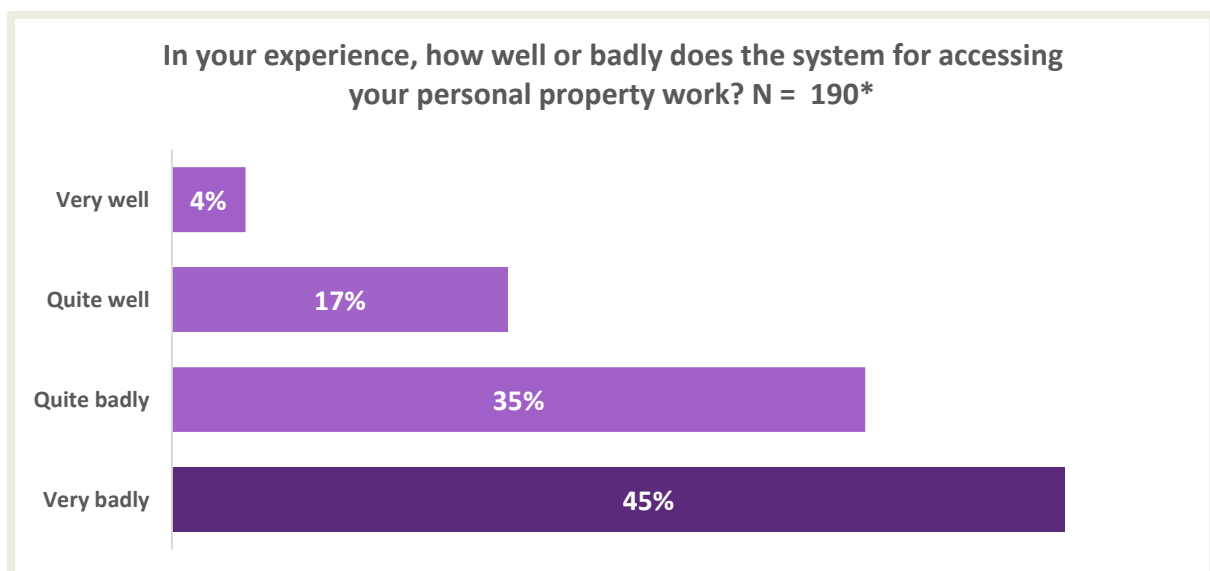
### Searching

Around one-third (32%) of respondents felt that they were given a reasonable explanation every time they or their cell was searched. However, the most common response was that they were never given a reasonable explanation (43%).



### Accessing personal property

Most respondents (80%) felt that the system for accessing personal property worked badly or very badly.



\*Excludes "don't know".



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

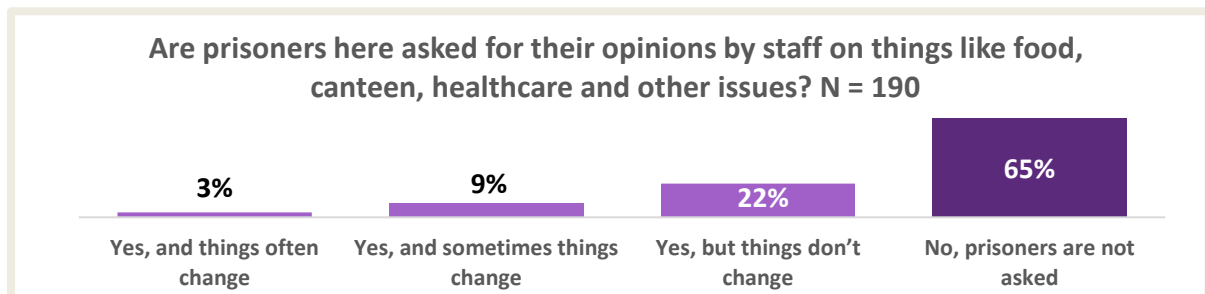
### Respect

Just over half (55%) of respondents reported being treated with respect by staff all or most of the time. A minority (15%) reported rarely or never being treated with respect by staff.



### Consultation with prisoners

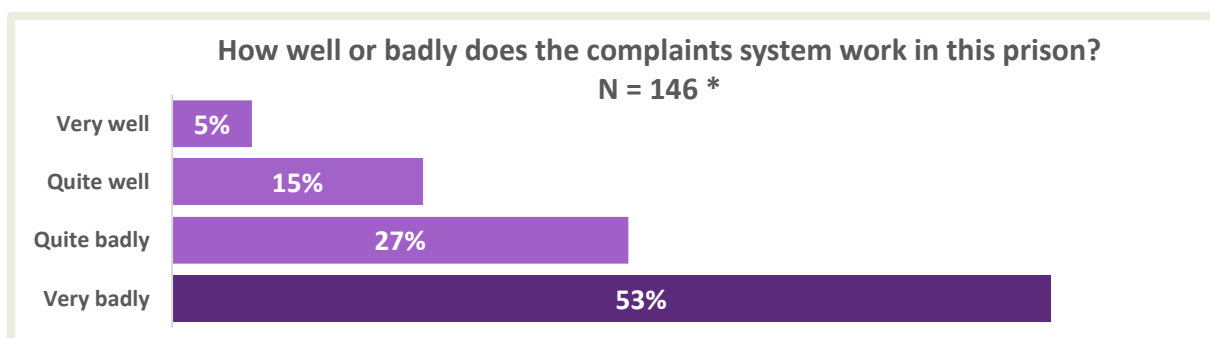
The majority (65%) of respondents reported that the prison did not consult prisoners for their opinions on issues such as food, canteen, and healthcare. Only 3% of respondents felt that the prison did ask for prisoners' opinions, and that things sometimes or often changed as a result.



\*Excludes "don't know".

### Complaints

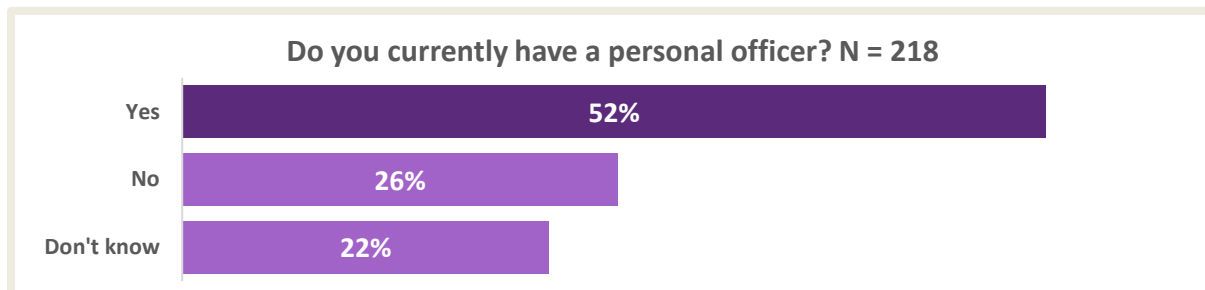
Most respondents said that the complaints system worked badly or very badly (80%).



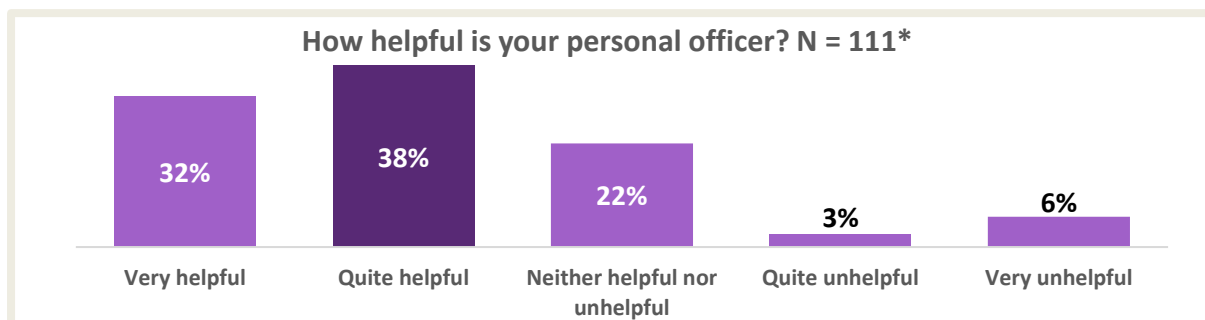
\*Excludes "don't know".

### Personal officers

Just over half (52%) of respondents said that they had a personal officer while a further 22% said they did not know. Over one-quarter (26%) said they did not know if they had a personal officer.



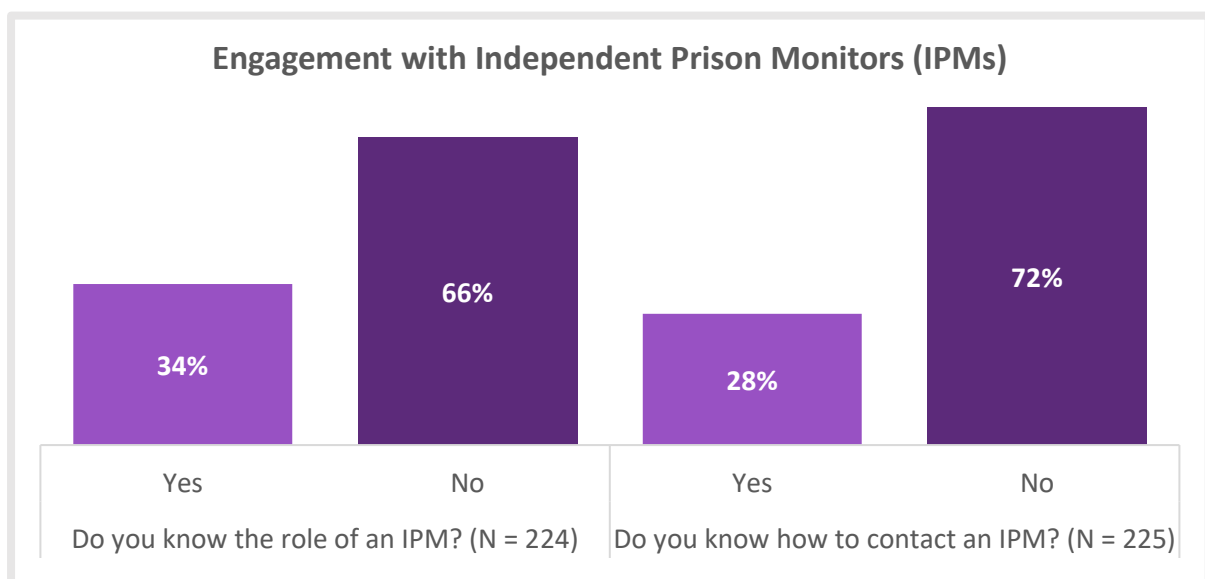
Those who said they had a personal officer were asked how helpful their personal officer was. The majority (70%) reported that their personal officer was very or quite helpful.



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

### Engagement with Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs)

The majority (66%) of respondents said they did not know what the role of an Independent Prison Monitor (IPM) was, or how to contact an IPM (72%).



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The majority of respondents had never attempted to contact the IPM service. Of those who had (42 respondents), 31% had found the service to be helpful, and 19% had found it to be unhelpful. Over one-third (36%) reported that they were unable to contact an IPM when they tried.



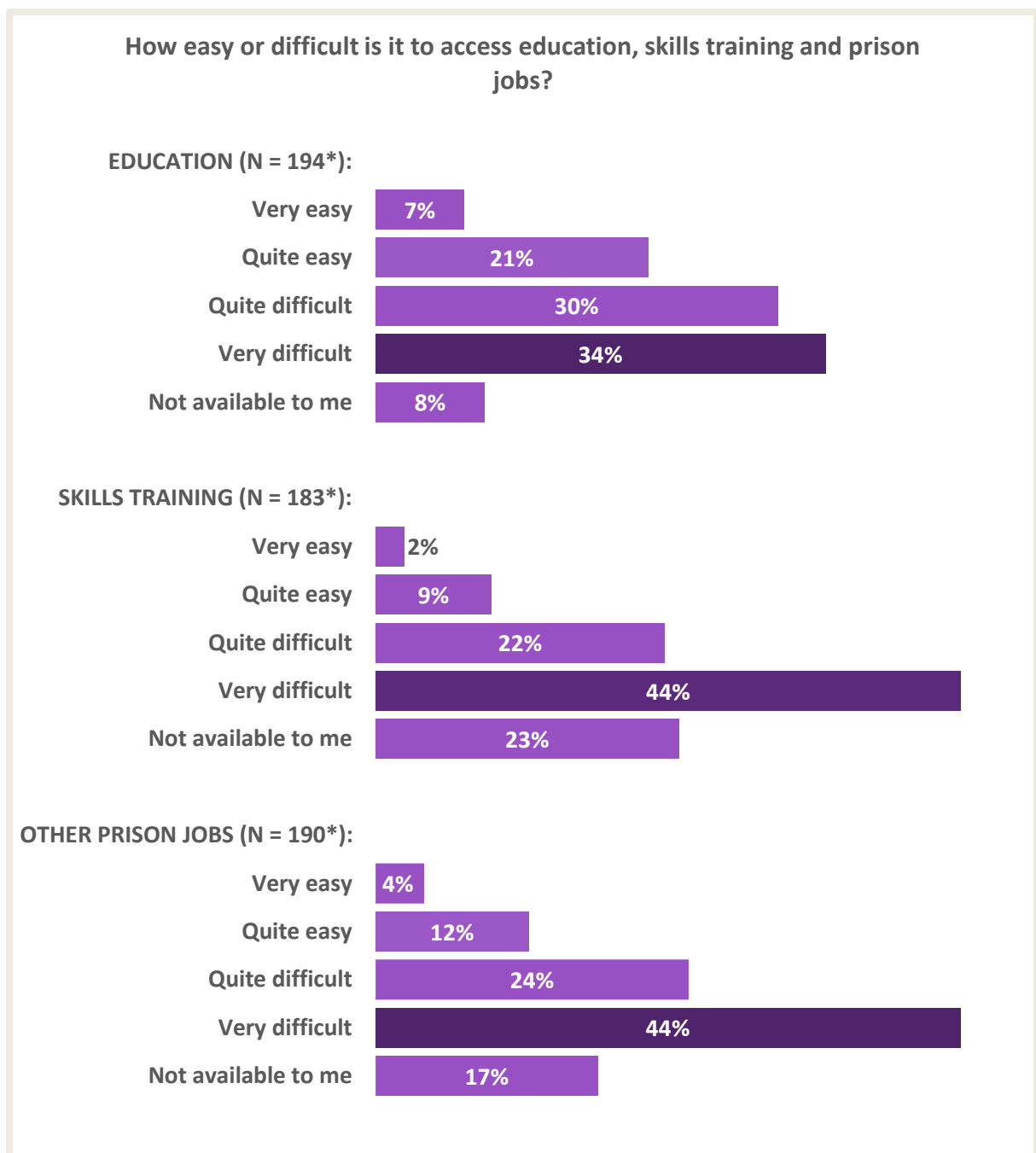
\*Excluding those who had never attempted to contact an IPM.

## Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

### Access to education, training and work

Excluding those who did not know the answer to the question, most respondents (72%) said that it was difficult to access education, or that education was unavailable to them at HMP Barlinnie.

The majority (89%) of respondents also reported that it was difficult to access skills training, or that this was not available to them, and that prison jobs were difficult to access or unavailable (85%).



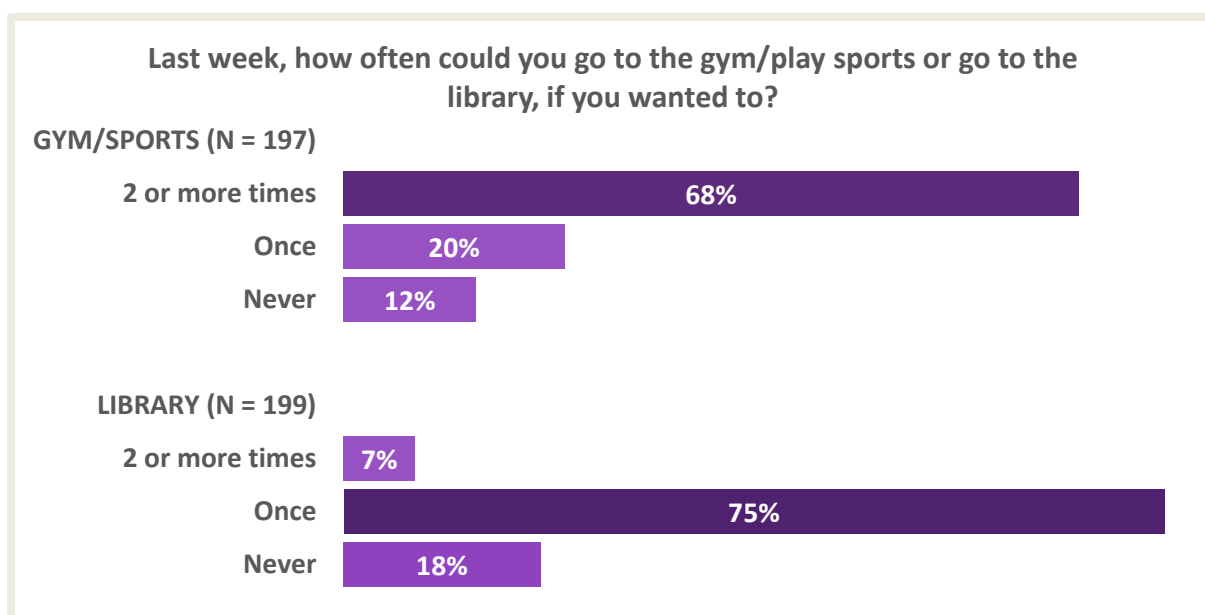
\*Excluding "don't know".

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

Just over two-thirds (69%) of respondents reported that they were able to spend at least one hour outdoors in the fresh air every day if they wanted to during the previous week. However, 9% reported never having access to this entitlement during that time, and 22% reported accessing it less than once a day.

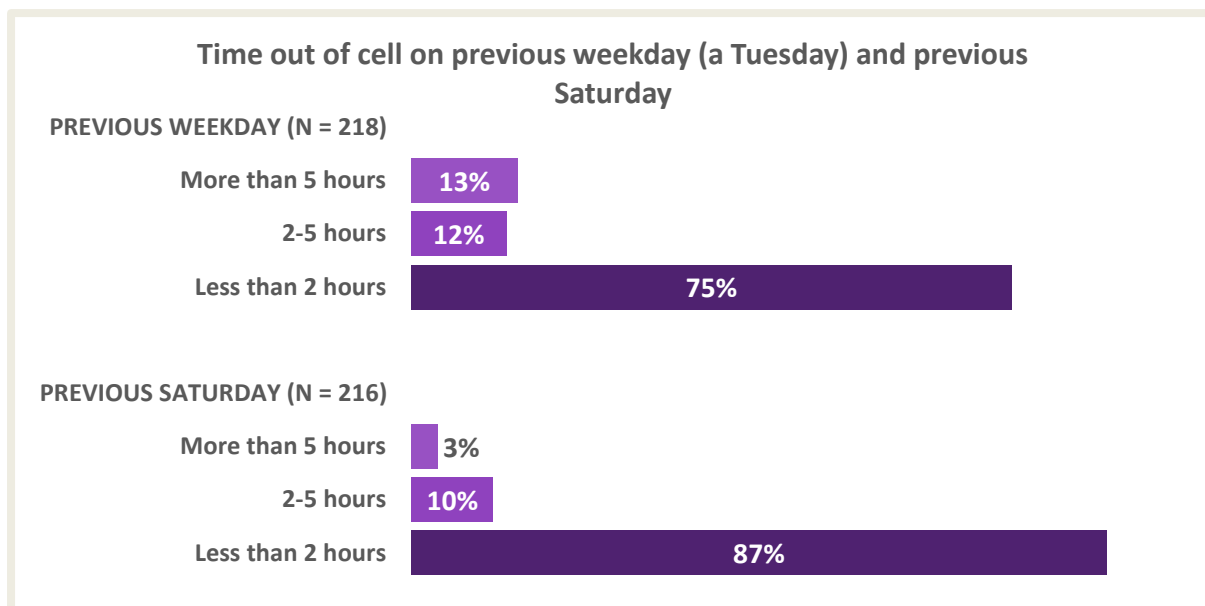


The majority (88%) of respondents said they were able to go to the gym or play sports at least once in the last week, and three-quarters (75%) reported having had access to the library during that week.



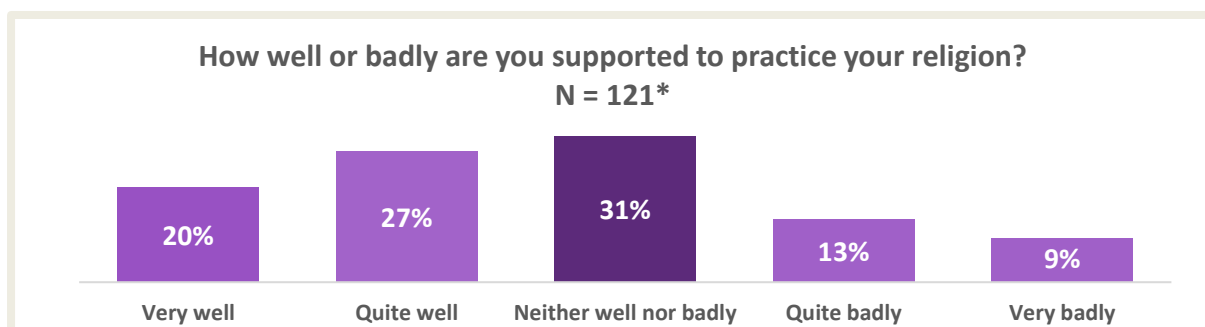
### Time out of cell

Three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported being able to spend fewer than two hours out of their cell during the previous weekday (a Tuesday). A higher percentage (87%) reported being able to spend more than two hours out of their cell on the previous Saturday. Only 13% and 3% respectively reported being able to spend more than five hours out of their cells during the previous weekday and the previous Saturday.



### Religious practice

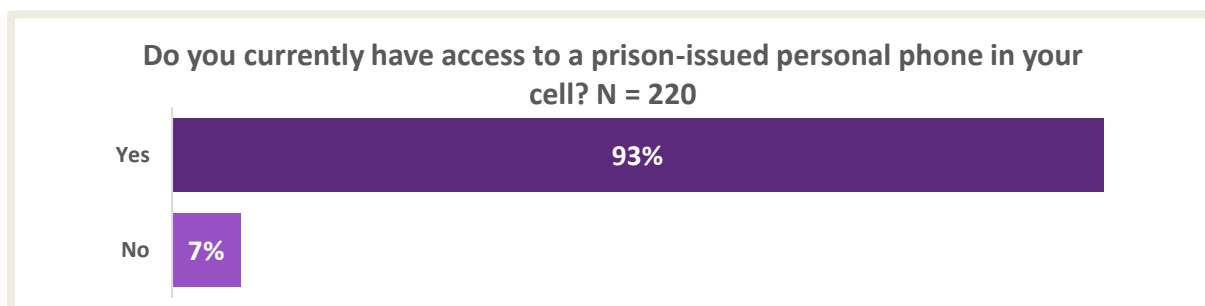
Of those who practiced a religion, almost half (47%) reported being well supported to do so, and a further 31% reported being “neither well nor badly supported”. Just under one-quarter (22%) felt they were poorly supported to practice their religion.



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

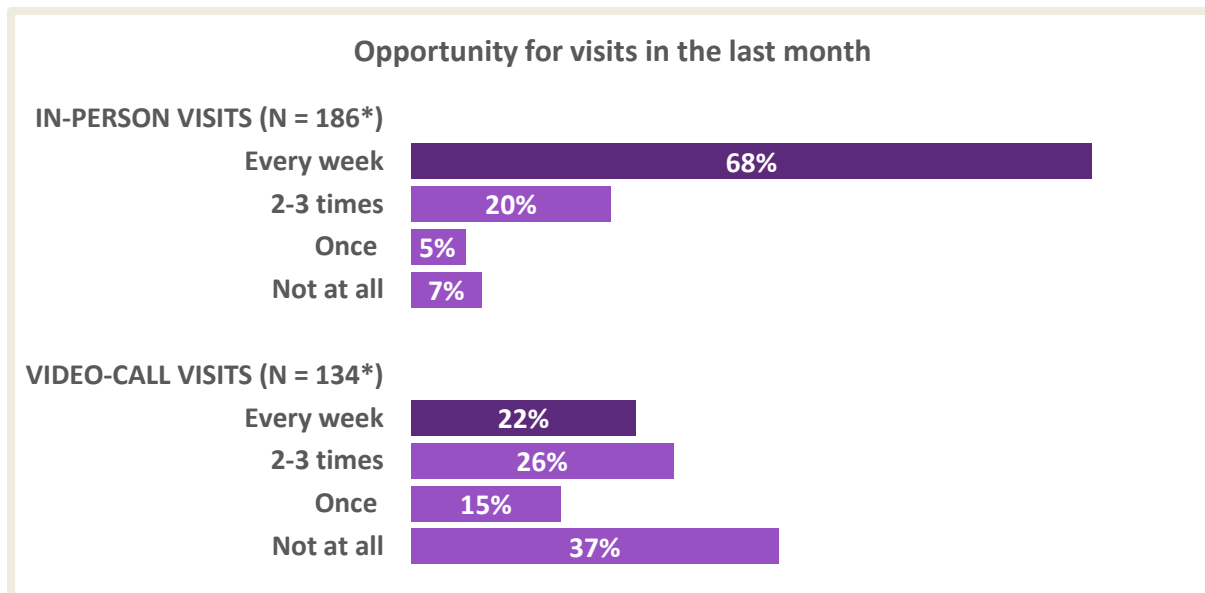
### Phones

The majority of respondents (93%) said they had access to an in-cell prison-issued personal phone.



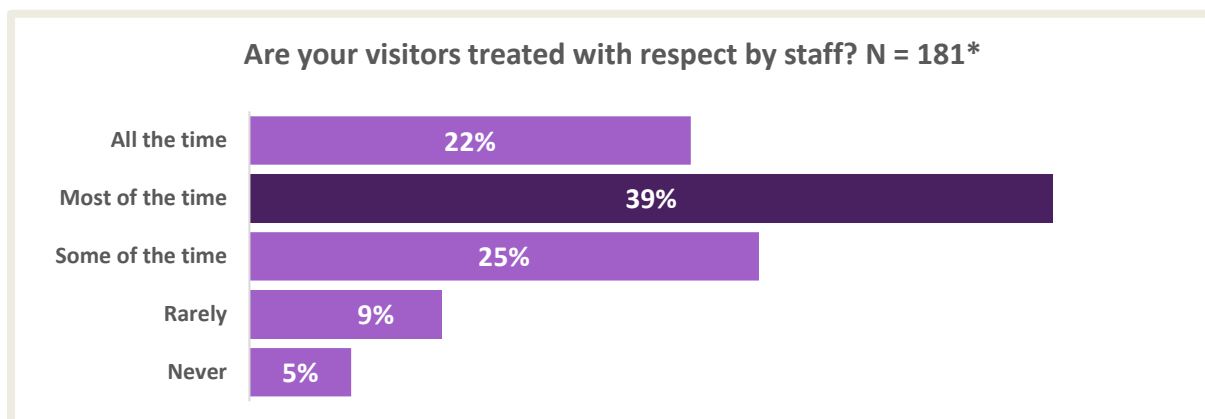
## Visits

Of those who reported being aware of the availability of visits, the majority (68%) of respondents said they were able to access in-person visits every week. However, less than one-quarter (22%) said they could access video visits every week.



*\*Excluding "don't know".*

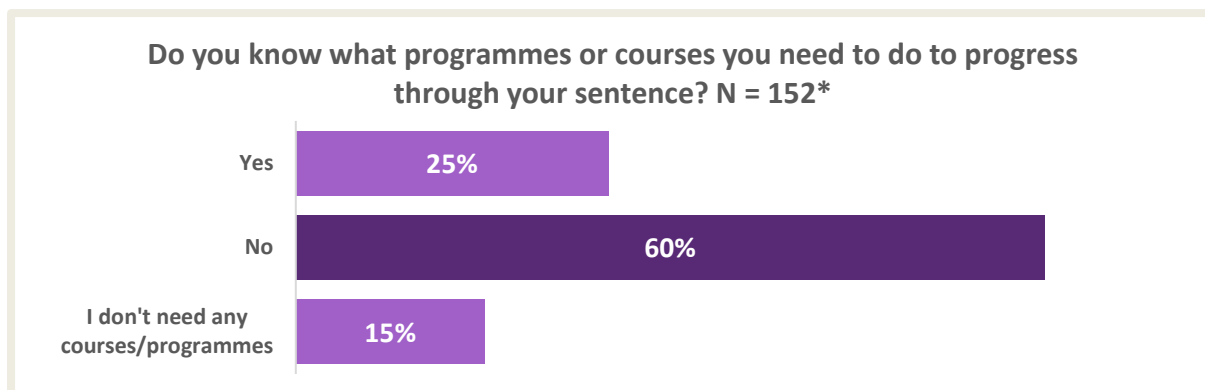
Of those who received visits, more than half (61%) reported that their visitors were treated with respect by staff all or most of the time. Fourteen per cent reported that their visitors were rarely or never treated with respect by staff.



*\*Excludes "Not applicable - don't have visits".*

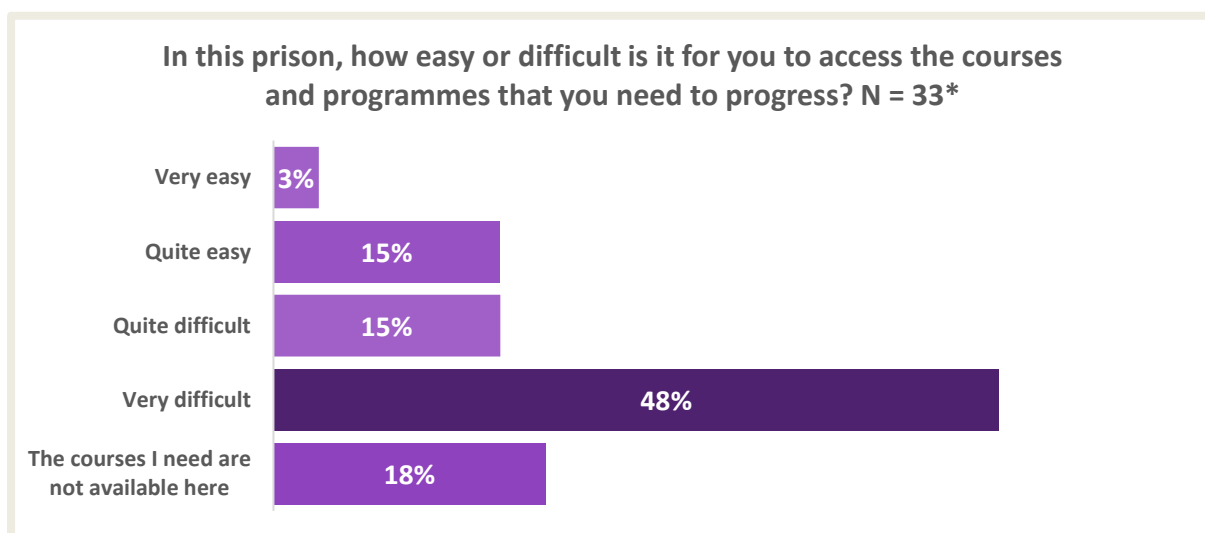
## Progression and case management support

All those serving a sentence were asked whether they knew what courses or programmes they needed to undertake to progress through their sentences. Of these, 25% reported that they knew what programmes they needed to do to progress, while 60% said that they did not know.



\*Convicted only.

Of those who said they knew what courses/programmes they needed to undertake to progress through their sentences (33 respondents), most (81%) reported that the courses they needed to do were difficult to access or unavailable at HMP Barlinnie.



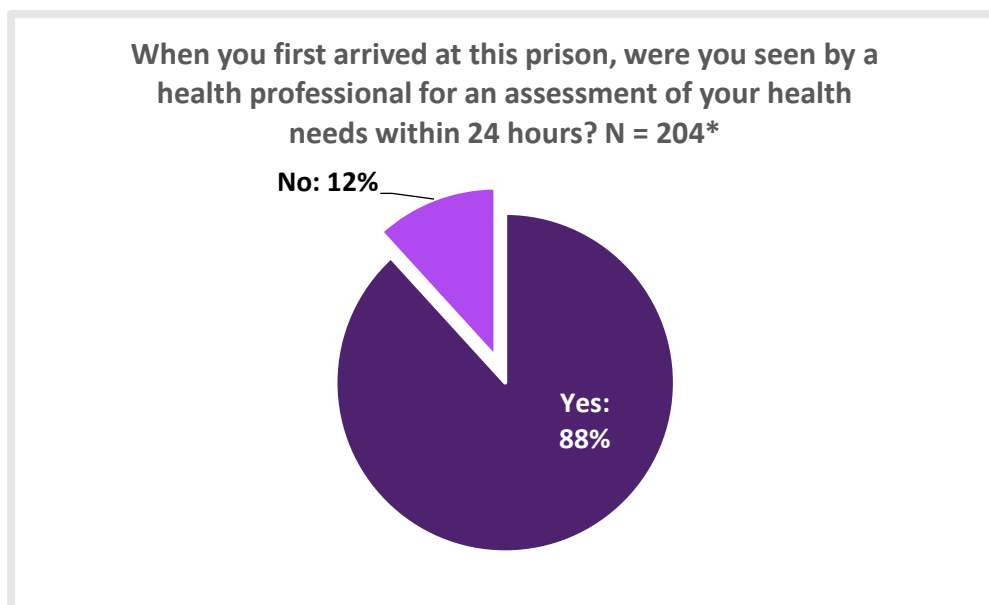
\*Only convicted respondents who knew what courses they needed to undertake.



## Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

### Health assessment on arrival

Most respondents (88%) reported that they were seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arriving at HMP Barlinnie for health assessment.

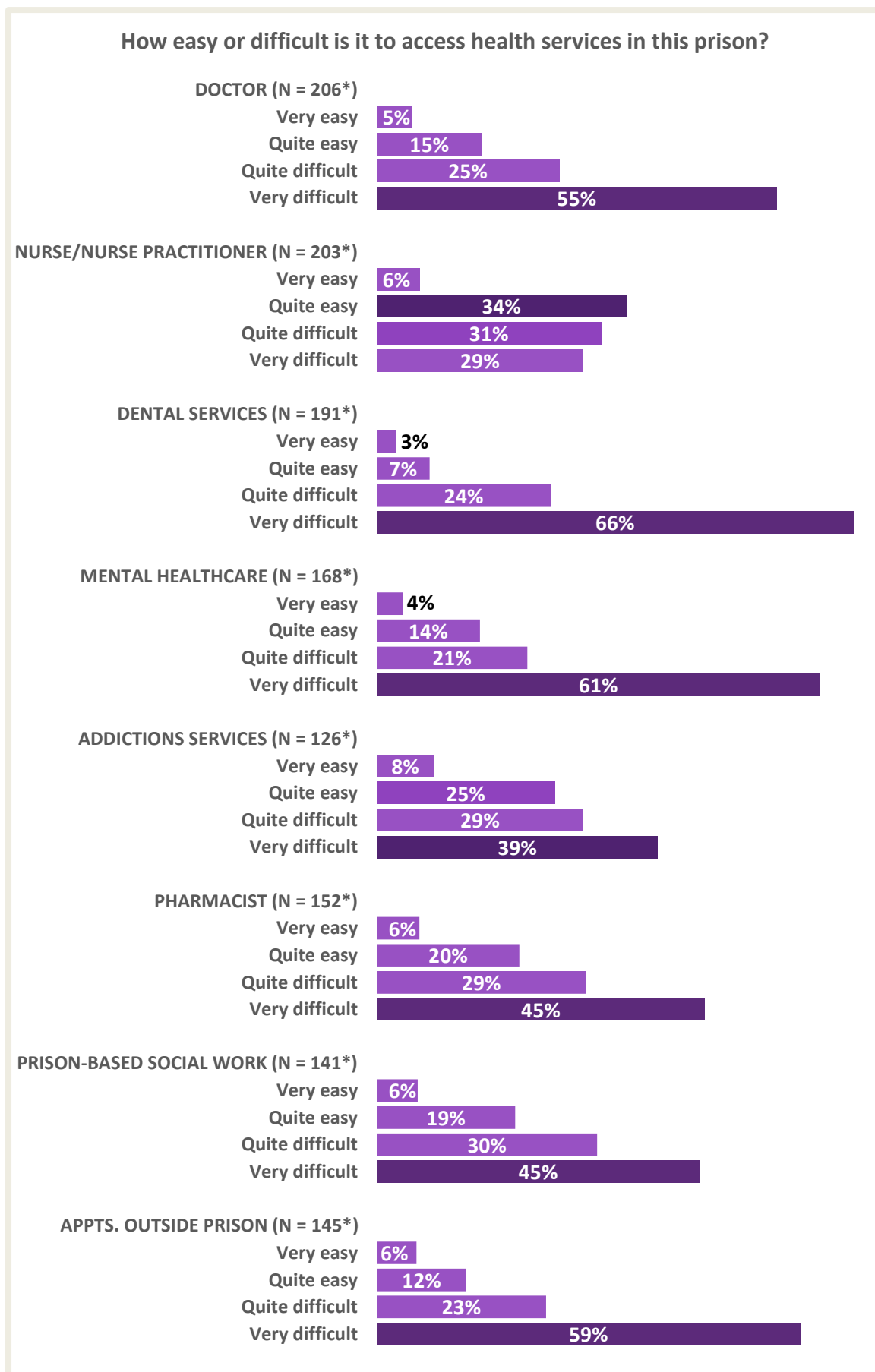


\*Excluding "don't remember".

### Access to health services

The majority (92%) of respondents said they knew how to access health services in HMP Barlinnie.

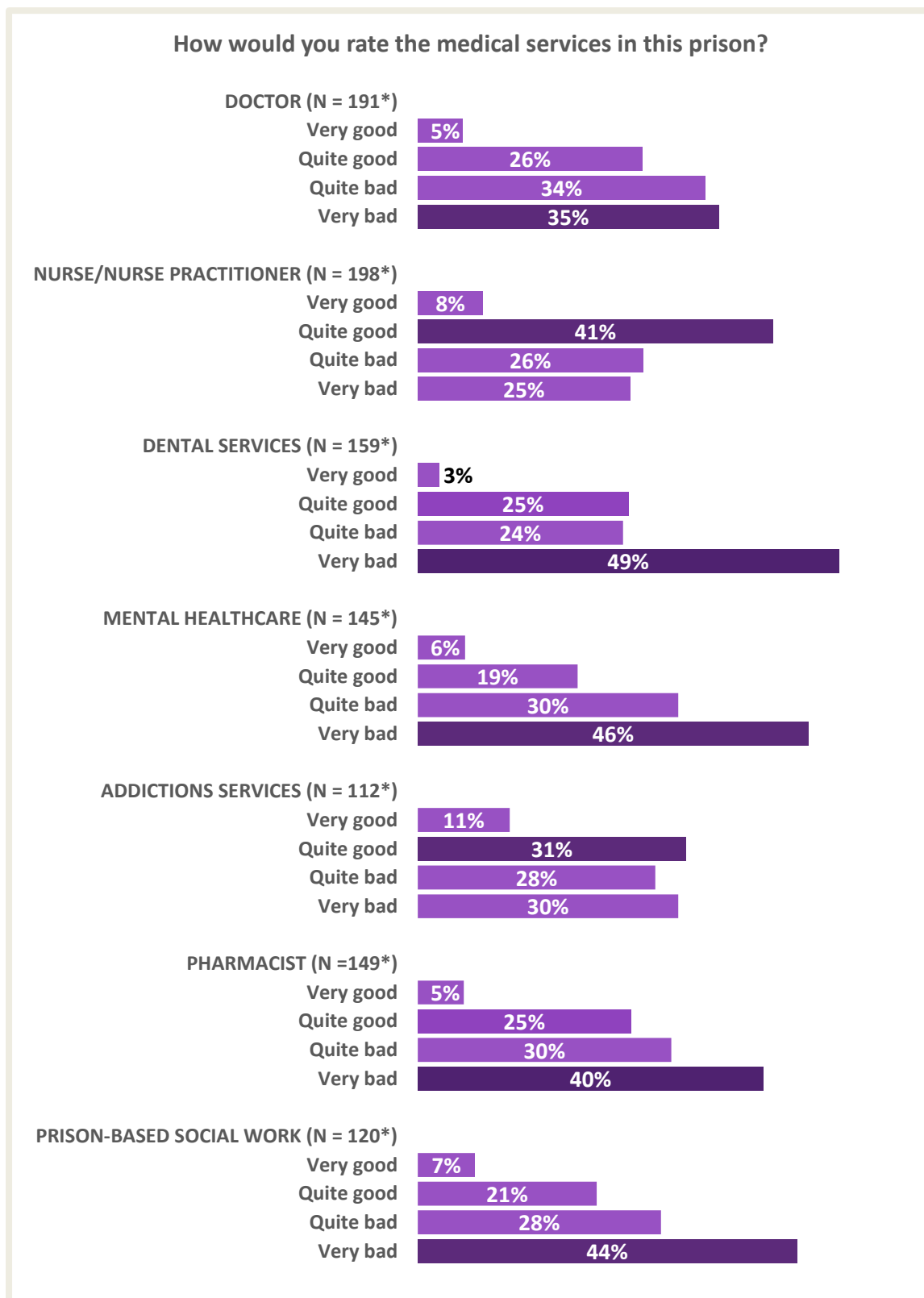
However, most respondents reported that it was difficult to access a doctor (80% said this was difficult); a nurse (60%); dental services (90%); mental healthcare (82%); addictions services (68%); a pharmacist (74%); prison-based social work (75%); and appointments outside the prison (82%). No health services were reported as being easy to access by the majority of respondents.



\*Excluding "don't know".

## Quality of medical services

The chart below shows the responses to the questions about the quality of medical services available at HMP Barlinnie.

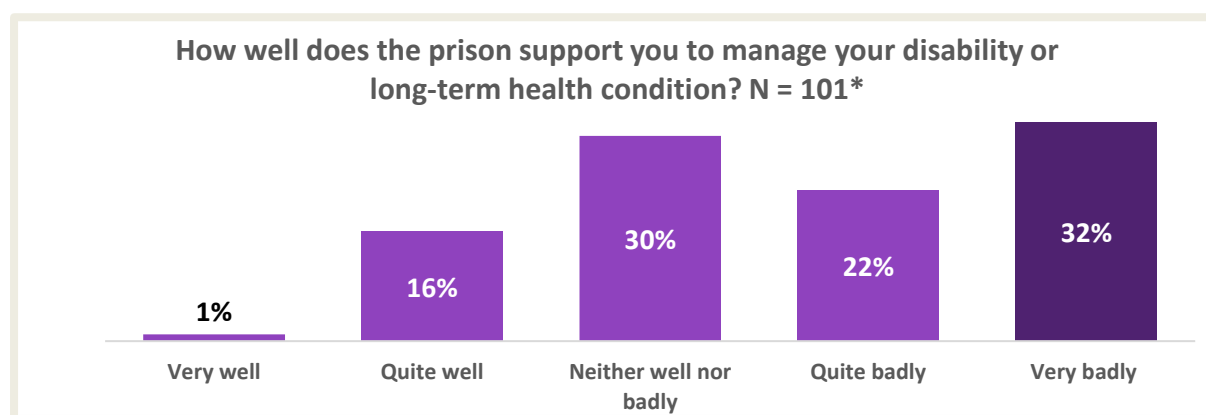


\*Excluding "don't know".

All healthcare services were rated as poor quality by the majority of respondents. The quality of the GP services was rated as poor by 74% of respondents; 51% rated the quality of nursing services as poor; 72% rated the quality of dental services as poor; 76% rated mental healthcare as poor; 58% rated addictions services as poor; 70% rated the pharmacy services as poor; and 72% rated the prison-based social work service as poor.

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

In total, 48% of respondents reported having a long-term health condition or disability. When asked about the support provided to manage their conditions, just over half reported being poorly supported (54%), while 17% said they were well supported. Almost one-third (30%) said they were “neither well nor badly” supported to manage their long-term disabilities and health conditions.



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

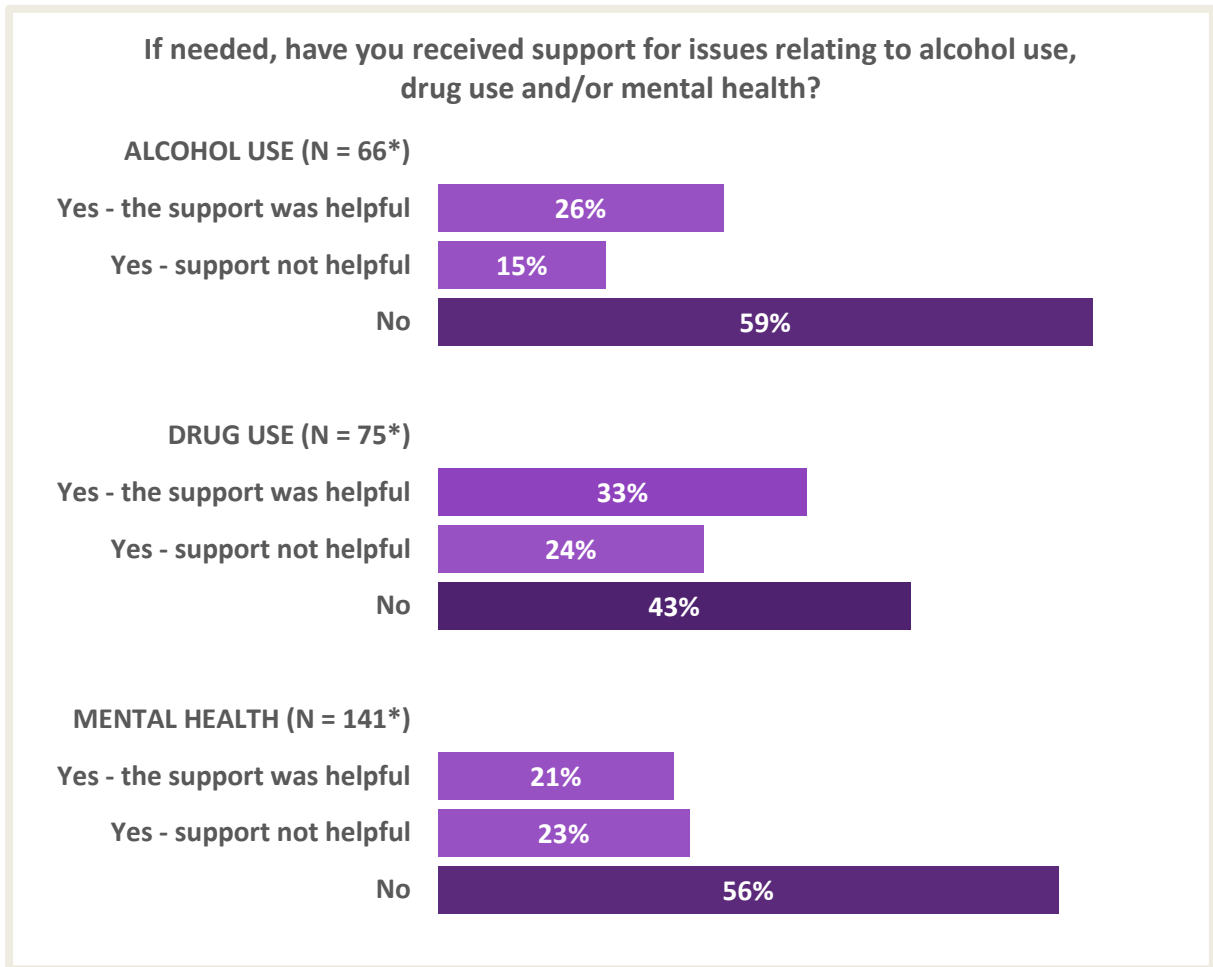
### Support for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and mental health

The survey asked about the support provided to those who needed help with alcohol use, drug use, and mental health issues.

Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 41% reported having been offered support, while 59% said they had not been offered support. In total, 26% said they had received support that had been helpful.

Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, the majority (57%) said they had been given access to support, while 43% said they had not been offered support. One-third (33%) said they had been given support that had been helpful.

Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health, 44% said they had been offered support, while 56% said they had not. Less than one-quarter (21%) said the support they had been given had been helpful.



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

## Open Question (General Comments): Thematic Analysis

In total, 128 (57%) of respondents left comments at the end of the questionnaire. The most common issues arising in the comments related to healthcare; regime, purposeful activity and time out of cell; relationships with staff; food; the physical environment and hygiene; family contact; progression; and canteen and the cost of living.

### Healthcare

Around 100 respondents left comments relating to health and health care, about half of which related specifically to mental health.

### Access to services

Many respondents reported not being able to get medical appointments and having to make multiple requests to access healthcare. Examples included waiting over a year for an optician despite needing their glasses replaced; waiting weeks or months to see doctors, nurses or dentists; missing hospital appointments due to transport failures; and putting in multiple requests and complaints to see medical practitioners and still not being seen. Several people reported needing support for drug or alcohol use but being unable to access the help they needed. Comments included:

*“The healthcare system is a joke, I have put many forms out in the last three weeks. I still have not received any sort of reply from them”*

*“Myself personally and nine out of 10 prisoners can't see a doctor, have been waiting for three months to be put on my pain medication so I have been suffering.”*

*“Healthcare in this prison is very bad and it can also take two-and-a-half to three months to see a doctor and then no help comes out of it.”*

*“As I have been taking drugs and drink outside I have not been getting help with my drug use.”*

*“I personally have been waiting a year and five months to go to the hospital... and have had seven failed GEOAmeyp pickups.”*

### Medication

Medication was raised as an issue by some respondents, with reports that repeat medications were not always provided on time, causing people to go several days without the medication they needed.

*“I often go without medication [for three chronic conditions] – between three to five days at times. I fill my request medication form correctly and hand it in as I should. [There is a] lack of communication from the pharmacist when my medication is not available to them. When I say that my medication is not there,*

*I'm told to put another slip out and that delays my medication by three to five days."*

*"Medication is not regular – I have been without some meds for days and weeks."*

*"On admission I was only given three out of five of my prescribed medications. Something needs to be done so that when you come to prison on medication you will get that medication."*

*"My medication gets messed up all of the time, missing days without antidepressants. Hall staff don't seem to care."*

## **Mental health**

Mental health was a particular cause for concern, with at least 40 people specifically mentioning this in their comments. Several people commented that the regime in the prison was having a detrimental effect on their mental health, given the long periods prisoners reported being locked up in the cells (in many cases at least 23 hours a day). As two people described:

*"A lot of us are suffering with mental health like anxiety and depression. There is no support at all and being locked up 23 hours a day is contributing to the deteriorating mental health of many prisoners."*

*"We're locked up in a tiny prison cell barely big enough for one, never mind two people, and the conditions are inhumane and can contribute to poor mental health and physical health problems".*

Some commented that this was exacerbated by disrespectful treatment by staff and a lack of understanding of mental health issues or ability to deal with them:

*"The majority of people in prison are mentally delicate and don't need the unprovoked confrontation and the deliberate ignorance by a few of the officers... it just changes my mood and feelings when spoken to like a misbehaving child and treated with ignorance for no apparent reason."*

*"I've personally pointed out guys who need serious [mental health] help and the staff are either unable to help or won't, but it's almost always that they don't have the staff equipped to deal with the guys' problems."*

As with other health services, many commented that they had struggled to access mental health services, despite requesting support (in some cases, multiple times) or reporting poor mental health. For example:

*"There is a lack of support for mental health. After sentencing I remember describing my mental health as terrible, wishing I was dead and the worst I've ever felt. However, because I said I wasn't suicidal both prison staff and NHS would say that's fine and to get back to my cell without any effort to support me whatsoever."*

*“I asked for help about my mental health and have been completely ignored”*

*“Mental health team don't do anything for months. I have cried out for some help and all I get is [told that] I am on a waiting list. No wonder people feel like there is no help.”*

*“I have been actively trying to seek mental health services since I arrived three months ago yet haven't received any.”*

*“When I arrived, I had previously attempted suicide and was told it was a six-month waiting list to speak with a mental health nurse/psychologist.”*

*“I have been waiting six weeks to see the mental health team, meaning I have to suffer on my own.”*

### **Regime, purposeful activity and time out of cell**

The majority of those who left comments (100) wrote about the regime, purposeful activity and the amount of time they spent locked in their cells. Many reported that they were spending around 23 hours per day locked in their cells, often sharing a single cell with another person. Some noted that this leads to tension - as one person reported:

*“The cells are not big enough for two people, this often causes fights, locked up in a tiny cell for 23 hours seven days a week.”*

The comments focused on the fact that there was very little to do in their cells while locked up for such extended periods, with little access to items such as learning materials, DVDs, CDs or games consoles. As one person wrote:

*“There is not currently enough to do in this prison and it has an adverse effect on people's well-being and mental health. Spending 23 hours a day behind your door and in your cell is very challenging. The fact you don't get things in this prison that others do in other prisons is an issue. For example, letting people order DVDs and CDs would help enormously... Also allowing a games console in your cell like in other prisons. All these things would improve the prisoner's everyday life and help alleviate stress.”*

Many others focused on the impact on their sense of self-worth of spending 23 hours per day locked up, with comments describing the experience as “dehumanising”, “not humane”, being treated like “animals”, “life-draining” and “awful”. As one person summed it up: “it is not living, it is surviving”. And many focused on the effect this had on their mental health. As one person described:

*“My mental health is very poor I have some disabilities that mean I have a single cell and [limited mobility]. My day is as follows: breakfast handed in 30 seconds of [human] contact, cell clean bio 10 minutes contact, lunch 30 seconds contact, dinner 30 seconds contact. That's my [social] contact for the day unless I go to PT or exercise.”*



As a result of the long periods many spent locked up, many comments focused on the need for more access to purposeful activity, such as work, education, training, recreation, and sport and exercise. Respondents highlighted that it was difficult to get access to almost all forms of purposeful activity, information was not always readily available about what was on offer or how to access it, and that waiting lists for most activities were very long. They reported this causing frustration both as it meant they were locked up for 23 or more hours per day, and because it meant they felt there were few or no opportunities to work on their rehabilitation and to improve themselves while in prison.

As some respondents described the situation:

*“There needs to be a greater access to information about what the prison offers for you to be able to get out of your cell for more than just an hour, and then to walk in circles in an empty yard. People stuck in their cells who don't work can only find out about necessary services by asking unreliable staff first thing in the morning, and that is it. Without knowing how, it becomes impossible for many prisoners to access things like education, employment, even healthcare, and all of those things have ridiculous waiting list lists attached anyway... As it is, this place will not be an effective rehabilitation tool, it will only punish and release people more likely to reoffend than when they went in.”*

*“I've been sentenced for three to four months and can't get a job no matter what I do. I've not had a report since I've been in and still can't get a job”.*

*“I am constantly being told that I am on a waiting list for everything that I have to fill in a form to achieve it, whether it is concerning health, courses, education, jobs or activities in general”*

In keeping with the statistical analysis (see Standard 6), some commented that they did not routinely have access to the minimum of 60 minutes of exercise in the fresh air that they should be entitled to. Some who worked noted that they could not exercise because the timeslot clashed with their work party, while others reported that the hour was often cut short. As two people commented:

*“Exercise is not always an hour and you hardly get extra exercise or rec but other flats do. I completely understand it is jail, it is not going to be sunshine and roses, but little things help the prisoner more than you know.”*

*“Out of cell activities are not consistent. Work parties do not get exercise Monday to Friday, if we want this we need to go to part time.”*

### **Relationships with staff**

Relationships with staff were mentioned by over 50 of those who left comments. While a small number left comments praising staff members for their support, respectfulness, professionalism and willingness to “go above and beyond”, the majority were negative.

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One issue highlighted was a lack of consistency from staff, with comments citing frustration at the fact that different staff members and managers appeared to give different information, operate by set different rules, and speak to and treat prisoners differently. As one person described:

*“The staff on the landing need to be more consistent, some say they will help, some flat-out bully/harass you for even pressing the cell buzzer. I’ve been passed pillar to post for simple things like bedding. Prisoners don’t know where they stand because each officer has their own approach to things.”*

Similarly, others commented that it was difficult to get correct information from staff about access to services and activities because of a lack of knowledge and out-of-date information. As one person commented:

*“Accessing information about services, even vital ones like healthcare, is very difficult. Staff often don’t know at all or share inaccurate info, likely since they have outdated information. The only way to get reliable help is from other prisoners.”*

Other comments relating to staff highlighted concerns about a lack of information, support and responsiveness from staff members. For example, several people commented that cell call bells often went unanswered:

*“I put my buzzer on today at 7.30 am... it is now 12.04 pm and it is still on now”*

*“I have had my intercom light on for two hours, it is now 12.20 am and my intercom has just been turned off without an officer asking why I had it on, an obvious problem I would think, considering it is the first time I have pressed it... This may seem trivial to some but should clearly be seen as a problem.”*

*“If you ring the buzzer you get “What do you want?” or “We are busy””.*

Similarly, respondents reported that requests for help and complaints forms were often not dealt with, causing frustration:

*“I put a complaint form in but never heard anything back because they just get binned, and most staff don’t remember your request in the morning.”*

*“There are a lot of staff who say they will help but don’t.”*

*“When you put a complaint form, it does not reach the governor.”*

In keeping with the statistical results which raise concerns about the number of prisoners alleging having been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by staff members, a number of comments concerned violence, threats and abuse by staff on prisoners. These included allegations of staff going beyond the use of reasonable force and hitting, kicking, beating, pushing, and strangling prisoners. Several reported seeing or hearing, as one person put it, “staff hurting [prisoners] until they are screaming”. Reports were also made of verbal abuse and threats, including staff threatening to assault prisoners and withhold medication from them, and prisoners

being verbally abused by staff, including racist abuse of ethnic minority prisoners. Some on protection halls reported being verbally abused by staff because of their protection status. As one person commented, on protection halls:

*“We are treated differently and with malice and hatred a lot of the time from staff and other prisoners which leaves us feeling less than human.”*

As three prisoners summed up the atmosphere:

*“Some staff routinely shout and swear at prisoners even when dealing with relatively minor issues.”*

*“We are badly treated in here a lot of the time. Some of the screws talk to us like shite. There has been many inmates being battered by the screws as well. Luckily it never happened to me but I have seen quite a lot of other cons getting assaulted by the screws over the years.”*

*“I think Barlinnie still feels like it's living in the '80s. The officers are bullies (some of them). I've seen things like five officers kick and punching one small boy and him screaming to stop and they didn't. This should be changed. This was not reasonable force. And then laughing about it talking about how he was screaming like a bitch and boasting... It made me feel sick and lose all trust in them.”*

### **Food**

Over 30 respondents commented on the food provided by HMP Barlinnie. Most commonly, respondents noted that the portion sizes were too small, and that the quality of food was poor. For example, some highlighted the fact that the food was generally served cold after sitting for a long time, and was often highly processed, with too little protein, fruit and vegetables. Some commented that it was difficult to supplement their meals with food from the canteen, as the majority of food items available through the canteen were unhealthy options like sweets.

A further issue was the time spent without food overnight, particularly at weekends. Some prisoners reported receiving their evening meal at around 3.30 to 4 pm at the weekend, and not being given any more food until after 9 am the following morning.

### **Physical environment and hygiene**

Hygiene was a significant source of concern for many respondents, who highlighted that they were only able to have a shower two or three times per week. Respondents commented on how this affected them, with issues such as feeling unhygienic, being unable to shower before family visits, being unable to do in-cell exercise because of the inability to shower afterwards, and not always being able to have a shower after work. Comments included:

*“Only getting three showers a week at most is a severe issue which causes bad hygiene for most prisoners.”*

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*“When I was working part-time, I had a problem with getting your shower on Saturday morning, and this meant the next time you actually get a shower was Monday midday which is way too long and unhygienic.”*

*“You are not entitled to a shower before a visit, today wasn't my shower day so I went to see my son and partner without having a shower. It is embarrassing and degrading.”*

*“I was [attending the] gym every day [outside prison] then come in here and have struggled to get it once a week. Can't do a cell workout because it showers every two days and I'm not wanting to sit smelling!!”*

Issues were also raised regarding rust and mould in the shower blocks, showers being too cold, and poor water pressure, as well as a lack of access to adequate cleaning supplies for cleaning their cells.

A number of respondents commented that they were limited to four toilet rolls per week in a shared cell, causing problems for hygiene and disagreements between cellmates.

Many respondents commented on the state of their cells, with the main issue being the small size of cells, with many sharing cells designed for one person. As several people commented:

*“The cells are not big enough for two people, this often causes fights, locked up in a tiny cell for 23 hours seven days a week.”*

*“I find it very hard sharing the cell with other people, very small space and I find it very hard sleeping while sharing the cell with other people.”*

*“The cell size in here is definitely not fit to house two people.”*

*“[There are only] two plug sockets in one area of the room, [which] means you have to cross over to your copilot's side to use the kettle or to use the radio.”*

In addition, some people commented on issues within their cells such as dirty and damaged paintwork, being given previous prisoners' bedding, broken and uncomfortable mattresses, and a lack of temperature control. As one person noted:

*“There is not adequate ventilation in the cell. During summer months the heat is intolerable, coupled with the lack of fresh air this made me feel panicked. In winter months it is extremely cold until the heating gets put on. The heating was only put on on 7th October, at which time most prisoners had been sleeping fully clothed with their fleece on such was the cold temperature.”*

### **Family contact**

Twenty-four people raised issues regarding family contact. One issue raised was the length and reliability of visits, with people commenting that visits (both video and

in-person) were very short, and sometimes cut short or cancelled. Some people with children raised issues with accessing family bonding visits.

A number of people also commented that the 200 free minutes per month was not enough to maintain strong contact with their family members, and that it was difficult to supplement this with extra phone credit due to the low wages, low cell wages and a £20 per week limit on phone and canteen spending.

### **Progression**

Nineteen respondents commented on a lack of progression opportunities at HMP Barlinnie, expressing frustration at an apparent lack of availability of programmes for long-term prisoners, extremely long waiting times to have a Generic Programme Assessment (GPA), and difficulty accessing or having meaningful engagement with prison-based social work. For example, one person commented that:

*“There’s nothing here for me to progress, it’s taking ages to do my GPA... All I want to do is progress towards open conditions and parole. My Castle [Open Estate] date has opened up but I can’t apply or move forward because I’ve not done my GPA, and if I have to do a course it’ll take a long time as there is a backlog and this jail doesn’t provide them!”*

Other long-term prisoners expressed similar frustrations, particularly with the fact that HMP Barlinnie is not well-suited to holding long-term prisoners given the lack of courses and programmes available, but that overcrowding elsewhere in the estate meant that they could not get a transfer to a more suitable establishment.

Some also commented that there was little support from prison staff to help with their progression, for example not providing information about what should be happening, what was happening, or helping with the paperwork to move forward. As one person commented:

*“I often have to make a pest of myself to get answers regarding issues with parole, ICM [Integrated Case Management], courses, etc. The buck is passed between different departments who find it hard to communicate between each other.”*

### **Canteen, wages and cost of living**

The cost of living was raised by 13 respondents. Several of these noted that they would like to work but had not been given the opportunity, and therefore were reliant only on their cell wage for income if they did not have family members able to send money into the prison for them. Several commented that while canteen prices have been rising, the wages have not, making it harder to buy what they need from the canteen. Some commented that the lack of money and expensive prices also meant that it was difficult to buy things to help keep entertained during the extended periods spent locked in your cell if you had no money coming in from family outside the prison. Items such as drawing equipment and yoga mats were mentioned as things that were difficult to afford which would help pass the time more productively.

A further common complaint was that phone credit was included in the £20 weekly canteen spending limit, meaning that people had to choose between extra time on the phone and essentials like toiletries and food.

## Annex: HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Comparative Data

### HMP Barlinnie in Comparison with all other closed establishments (2022-2024)

This table shows a comparison between HMP Barlinnie (October 2024) and all other closed establishments surveyed between 2022 and 2024 (10 establishments\*). Where results are shown as statistically significant, this means that it is unlikely that the difference between HMP Barlinnie and the comparator group is down to chance.

A chi-square test of independence was used to test for statistical significance in each result. Please note that due to the large number of measures tested, there is an increased risk of false positives within the results, meaning that some results may appear significant by chance when in reality there is no real difference.

The responses from all prisons in the comparator group were weighted by size to give a representative reflection of the responses from the group of prisons included in this group. In total, there were 226 respondents in the HMP Barlinnie group, and 1,422 respondents in the comparator group.

<b>Colour coding:</b>
<b>No colour:</b> No statistically significant difference between the two groups
<b>Orange:</b> HMP Barlinnie significantly more negative than the comparator group
<b>Green:</b> HMP Barlinnie significantly more positive than the comparator group

Question	HMP Barlinnie		Comparator Group	
	Number	% of valid responses	Number	% of valid responses
Was offered an induction	175	83%	682	62%
Was treated well/neutrally in reception	185	88%	1237	90%
Able to shower every day	56	26%	1329	95%
Quality of food is good/very good	58	26%	519	37%
Always get enough to eat at mealtimes	21	9%	181	13%
Can have clothes washed at least once a week	205	93%	1253	91%
Feel safe all/most of the time	135	61%	865	62%
Have witnessed staff abusing, threatening, bullying or assaulting another prisoner in this prison	121	61%	706	55%
Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by staff member	91	45%	458	35%
Would/probably would report abuse etc. by staff	57	29%	485	37%
Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by another prisoner	73	34%	522	40%
Would/probably would report abuse etc. by other prisoners	48	25%	299	23%



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Given a reasonable explanation every time/most times you or your cell is searched	68	<b>32%</b>	417	<b>31%</b>
System for accessing personal property works well	39	<b>21%</b>	405	<b>34%</b>
Treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	122	<b>55%</b>	877	<b>63%</b>
Complaints system works well	29	<b>20%</b>	209	<b>21%</b>
Have a personal officer	113	<b>52%</b>	809	<b>59%</b>
Personal officer is helpful	77	<b>69%</b>	479	<b>62%</b>
Prisoners are consulted about canteen etc. and things can change as a result	24	<b>13%</b>	214	<b>19%</b>
Know the role of an IPM	77	<b>34%</b>	710	<b>51%</b>
Know how to contact an IPM	63	<b>28%</b>	575	<b>42%</b>
Last time contacted IPM it was helpful/neutral	19	<b>45%</b>	236	<b>59%</b>
Easy to access education	53	<b>27%</b>	774	<b>63%</b>
Easy to access skills training	20	<b>11%</b>	401	<b>35%</b>
Easy to access other prison jobs	29	<b>15%</b>	518	<b>43%</b>
Able to go to the gym/play sports at least once last week	173	<b>88%</b>	1133	<b>90%</b>
Able to go to the library at least once last week	163	<b>82%</b>	658	<b>59%</b>
Able to spend at least one hour every day exercising in the fresh air last week	153	<b>69%</b>	988	<b>71%</b>
Able to spend more than two hours out of cell on previous weekday	55	<b>25%</b>	958	<b>70%</b>
Able to spend more than two hours out of cell on previous Saturday	29	<b>13%</b>	892	<b>66%</b>
Well/neutral supported to practice religion	94	<b>78%</b>	515	<b>79%</b>
Able to have an in-person visit every week in last month	126	<b>68%</b>	713	<b>64%</b>
Visitors treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	110	<b>61%</b>	668	<b>62%</b>
Able to have video visit every week in last month	30	<b>22%</b>	492	<b>54%</b>
Know what courses need to undertake for progression (convicted only)	38	<b>30%</b>	325	<b>48%</b>
Easy to access the courses I need	6	<b>18%</b>	66	<b>23%</b>
Seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival	180	<b>88%</b>	964	<b>89%</b>
Know how to access healthcare	194	<b>92%</b>	1051	<b>93%</b>
Easy to access a doctor	40	<b>19%</b>	388	<b>31%</b>
Easy to access a nurse/nurse practitioner	82	<b>40%</b>	647	<b>52%</b>
Easy to access a dentist	19	<b>10%</b>	332	<b>29%</b>
Easy to access mental healthcare	30	<b>18%</b>	346	<b>33%</b>



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Easy to access addictions services	41	<b>33%</b>	446	<b>51%</b>
Easy to access pharmacist	39	<b>26%</b>	395	<b>42%</b>
Easy to access prison-based social work	35	<b>25%</b>	345	<b>42%</b>
Easy to access medical appointments outside the prison	26	<b>18%</b>	219	<b>24%</b>
Good quality service from doctors	60	<b>31%</b>	510	<b>45%</b>
Good quality service from nurses/nurse practitioners	97	<b>49%</b>	728	<b>60%</b>
Good quality dental services	43	<b>27%</b>	444	<b>44%</b>
Good quality mental health services	35	<b>24%</b>	297	<b>41%</b>
Good quality addictions services	47	<b>42%</b>	432	<b>55%</b>
Good quality pharmacy services	45	<b>30%</b>	433	<b>50%</b>
Good/neutral support for managing disabilities/long-term health conditions	47	<b>47%</b>	309	<b>50%</b>
Received helpful support for alcohol use (only those who said they needed it)	17	<b>26%</b>	130	<b>34%</b>
Received helpful support for drug use (only those who said they needed it)	25	<b>33%</b>	290	<b>48%</b>
Received helpful support for mental health (only those who said they needed it)	30	<b>21%</b>	281	<b>31%</b>

### \* Comparator prisons:

Shotts 2022  
 Inverness 2022  
 Greenock 2023  
 Perth 2023  
 Polmont 2023  
 Edinburgh 2023  
 Stirling 2024  
 Grampian 2024  
 Addiewell 2024  
 Dumfries 2024