

HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Findings

**HMP & YOI Grampian
March 2024**

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Executive Summary

Background

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP & YOI Grampian on 27 to 28 March 2024. The questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 240 prisoners held in HMP & YOI Grampian on the first day of data collection, with a response rate of 63% (150 responses).

The data is presented according to the HMIPS Standards for Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons in Scotland. Standard 8 (Organisational Effectiveness) is omitted as this is not addressed in the prisoner survey.

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

- Fewer than two-thirds (64%) of respondents said they were offered an induction on arrival at HMP & YOI Grampian, and just under half (48%) said they were treated well on arrival at reception.

Standard 2: Decency

- Most respondents said that the quality of food was poor (60%), while one third (33%) said that they usually or always get enough to eat at mealtimes.
- Almost all reported being able to have a shower every day (96%) and have their clothes washed at least once a week (92%).

Standard 3: Personal Safety

- Just over one quarter of respondents said they felt safe all the time (26%).
- Three in five (61%) said that they had witnessed staff abusing, bullying, threatening or assaulting fellow prisoners, and over half (54%) said they had experienced this behaviour from staff themselves.
- Around two in five (42%) said they had been victimised by another prisoner in HMP & YOI Grampian.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

- Just over a quarter (28%) said they were given a reasonable explanation most or every time they or their cell was searched.
- The majority of respondents (70%) said the system for accessing their personal property worked badly.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection against Mistreatment

- Just over half of respondents (53%) said they were treated with respect by staff most or all of the time.
- Two-thirds (66%) said that prisoners were not consulted on issues that affect them such as food, canteen and healthcare.
- Four in five (80%) said that the complaints system worked badly.

- Around half of respondents (52%) reported that they had a personal officer. Of these, half (50%) said that their personal officer was helpful.
- Just over half of respondents said they knew the role of an IPM (56%), and half knew how to contact an IPM.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

- The majority of respondents reported it being easy to access education (56%), but a minority said it was easy to access skills training (25%) or prison jobs (31%).
- Just over three-quarters (76%) said they could access their entitlement to exercising outside in the fresh air for one hour every day.
- Most said they could access the library (91%) and the gym (93%) at least once a week.
- Two in five (40%) reported spending less than two hours out of their cell the previous weekday, and 50% reported spending less than two hours out of their cell the previous Saturday.
- Almost all respondents said they had access to a phone in their cell (98%).
- Just under one-third said they were given an opportunity for in-person visits every week in the last month, and almost half (46%) said they were given the opportunity for video visits every week in the last month.
- Of those who received in-person visits, just over half (57%) said that their visitors were treated with respect all or most of the time.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

- The majority of respondents (94%) said that they knew how to access healthcare services in HMP & YOI Grampian, and 95% said they were seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival.
- Most respondents reported that it was difficult to access: a doctor (72%); dental services (79%); mental healthcare services (78%); addictions services (54%); a pharmacist (65%); and medical appointments outside the prison (85%).
- Half of respondents (50%) reported that it was difficult to access a nurse/nurse practitioner.
- The majority of respondents rated the service from the nurses/nurse practitioners (59%) and prison-based social work (52%) as good.
- The quality of all other healthcare services was rated negatively by the majority of respondents: 66% rated the service from the doctors negatively; 64% rated dental services negatively; 63% rated mental healthcare services negatively; 54% rated addictions services negatively; and 64% rated the pharmacy services negatively.
- Of those who reported having a disability or long-term health condition, 55% said they were poorly supported to manage their condition in the prison.
- Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 35% reported having been offered support, including 13% who said the support had been helpful.
- Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, the majority (69%) said they had been given access to support, including 37% who reported that the support they received had been helpful.

- Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health, half (50%) said they had been offered support, including 28% who said the support had been helpful.
- Of the women who needed them, the majority (63%) said they had access to all the female hygiene products they needed, and 33% said they had access to some of what they needed.

Introduction

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP & YOI Grampian on 27 and 28 March 2024.

A random sample of 240 prisoners held in HMP & YOI Grampian on the first day of data collection were asked to complete the survey, of whom 150 completed and returned the questionnaire, providing a 63% response rate.

The data is presented according to the HMIPS Standards for Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons in Scotland. 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 & YOI Grampian, including their cell location. This was used to select a random sample and distribute and collect the surveys. The random sample was generated by using the random number generator function in Microsoft Excel to assign a random number to every prisoner in the list. The prisoner list was then ordered from the lowest to highest random number, and the first 240 names on the list were selected to take part in the survey. The sample size was calculated to achieve, at minimum, a 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 also 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 also asked if they would need assistance to complete the questionnaire and provided with this assistance 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 throughout the day, and the following day, to collect completed questionnaires. Those who did not speak English who wished to take part were supported to complete the questionnaire by an HMIPS staff member with the aid of a telephone translation service.

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.

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.

Just over one-quarter of respondents reported being aged 30 or under (28%), with 37% aged 31 to 40, 17% aged 41 to 50, and 18% aged 51 or over.

The majority of respondents self-reported being male (89%), white (93%) and UK citizens (93%). Just over half (51%) reported having a religion, with the most common religious affiliations being Church of Scotland (16%), Other Christian (16%) and Roman Catholic (12%).

Long-term/life prisoners made up 37% of respondents, while 27% were on short-term sentences, and 28% were on remand. Nine percent reported being held on an Order for Lifelong Restriction (OLR). The majority of respondents (72%) said they had been in the prison for less than three years.

The majority of respondents were held on mainstream halls (65%), while 32% were on protection halls, and 3% were in the Separation and Reintegration Unit (SRU).

Sample representativeness

HMIPS requested an anonymous breakdown of the prisoner population in HMP & YOI Grampian 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 & YOI Grampian compares with the sample of prisoners who responded to the survey.

As the table below shows, overall the sample closely represents the characteristics of the overall population of HMP & YOI Grampian. The four different age-groupings are closely represented, although the 51 or over age group is slightly over-represented while the 41 to 50 group is slightly under-represented.

Females and those with non-UK citizenship are slightly over-represented. The remand population is somewhat under-represented (28% of the sample population compared to 33% of the total population) while those serving long-term, life or OLR sentences are somewhat over-represented (46% of the sample population, compared to 39% of the total population).

Characteristics of sample population compared to characteristics of whole population of HMP & YOI Grampian (%)¹

	Sample population*	Whole population
Age group		
21-30	28%	29%
31-40	37%	36%
41-50	17%	20%
51 or over	18%	15%
Total	100%	100%
Sex		
Male	89%	92%
Female	11%	8%
Total	100%	100%
Ethnicity		
White	93%	92%
Non-white	7%	8%
Total	100%	100%
Citizenship		
UK	93%	90%
Non-UK	7%	10%
Total	100%	100%
Prisoner type		
Remand	28%	33%
Short-term	26%	28%
Long-term/life/life recall/OLR	46%	39%
Total	100%	100%

**Excluding those who did not disclose their demographic information (5% of all respondents)*

¹ Due to rounding, totals do not always sum precisely to 100%

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

Induction

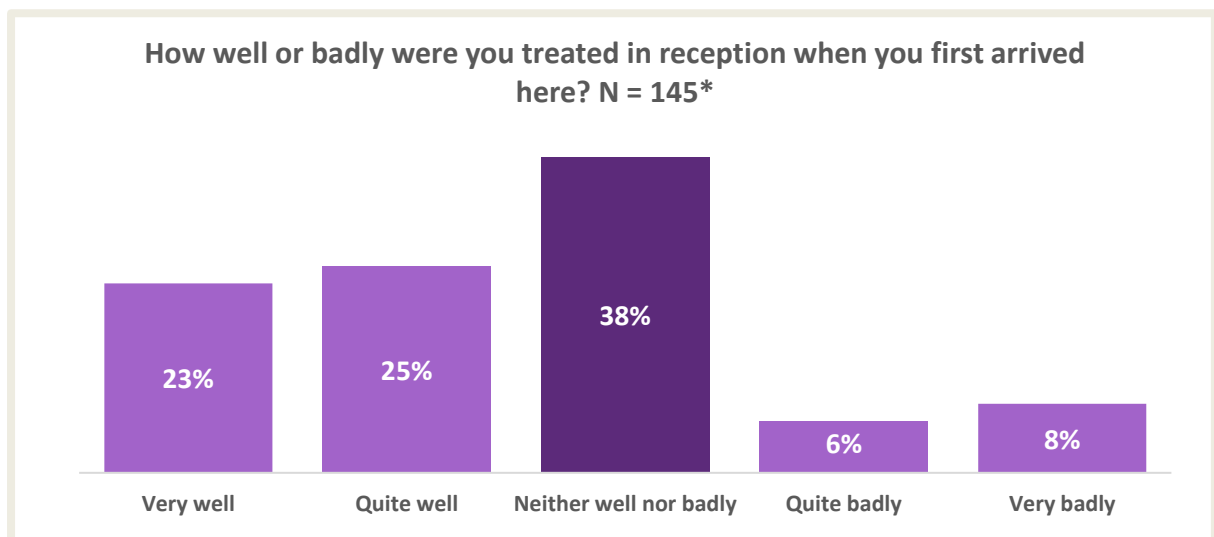
Of those who could remember, just under two-thirds (64%) of respondents said they were offered an induction on arrival at HMP & YOI Grampian.



*Excluding "Don't remember"

Treatment in reception

Just under half of respondents (48%) said they were treated well in reception on arrival at HMP & YOI Grampian, with a further 38% reported being treated "neither well nor badly". A small percentage (14%) reported being treated badly.

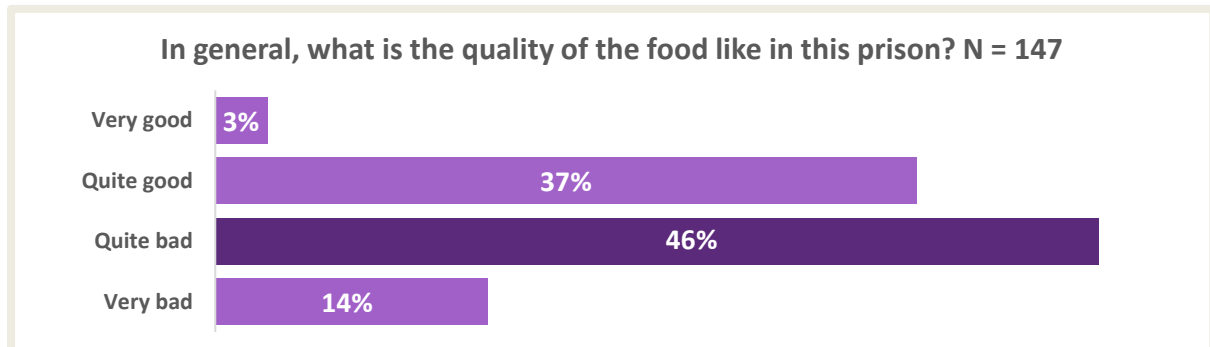


*Excluding "Don't remember"

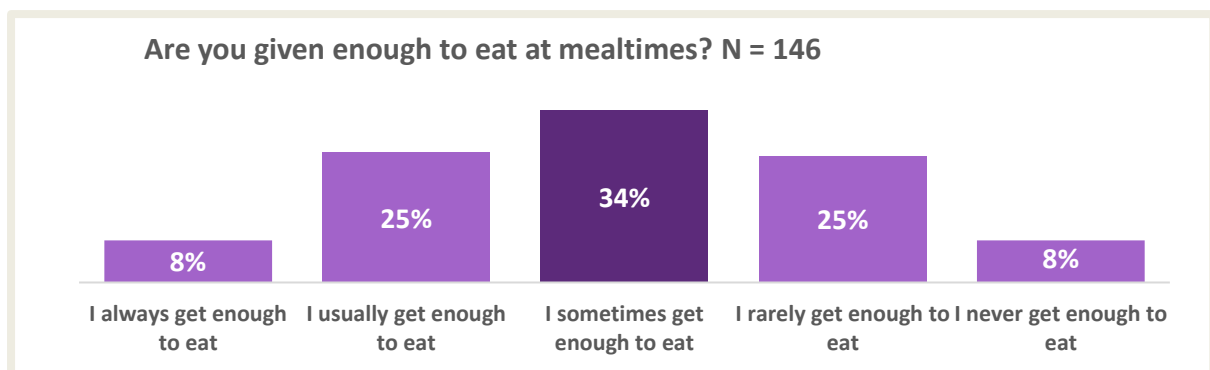
Standard 2: Decency

Food

Overall, respondents were generally negative about the quality of food available at HMP & YOI Grampian, with 60% describing it as quite or very bad.

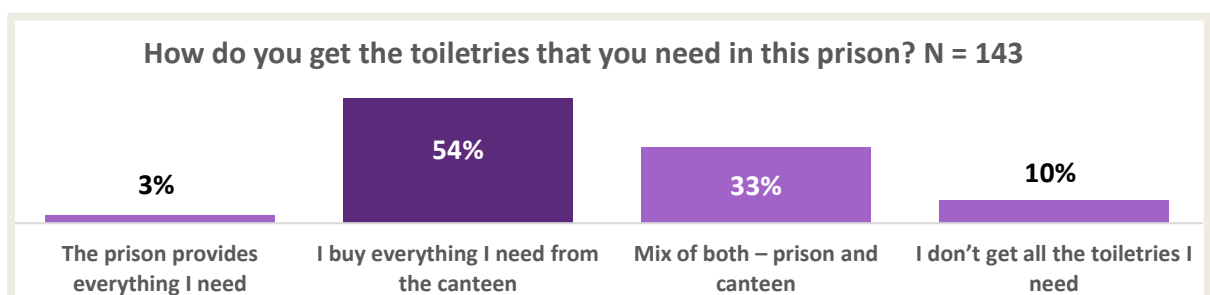


One-third of respondents (33%) reported always or usually getting enough to eat at mealtimes, a third (34%) reported sometimes getting enough to eat, and a further third (33%) reported rarely or never getting enough to eat.

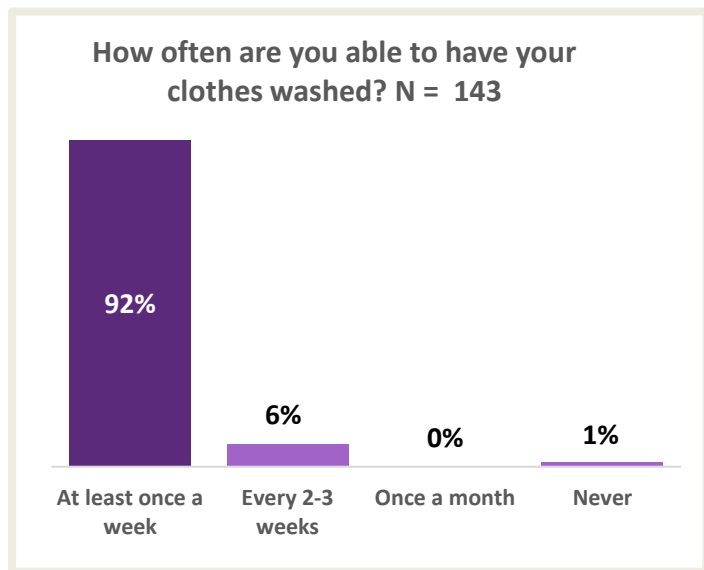
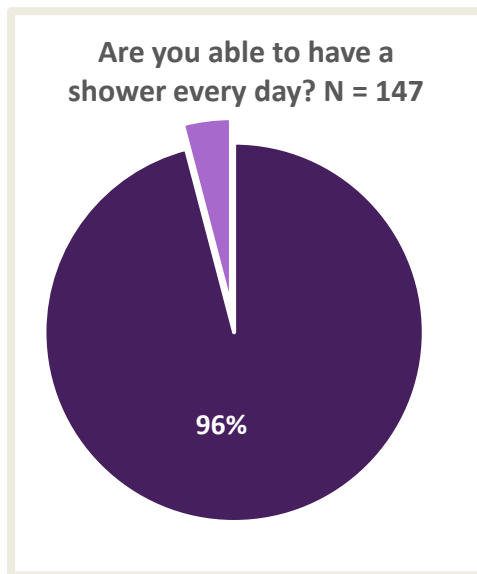


Toiletries, showering and laundry

More than half of respondents (54%) reported that they got all the toiletries they needed from the canteen, and a third (33%) said they got what they needed from a combination of the canteen and the prison. Very few said they got all the toiletries they needed from the prison (3%) and 10% said they could not access everything they needed.



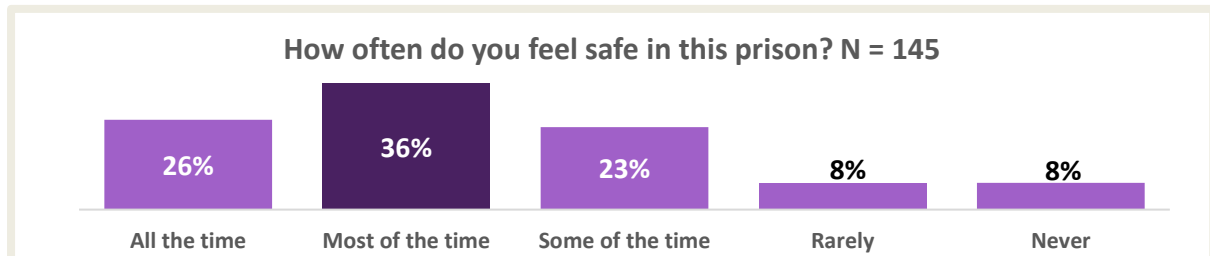
The majority of respondents (96%) said they were able to have a shower every day and that they were able to have their clothes washed at least once a week (92%).



Standard 3: Personal Safety

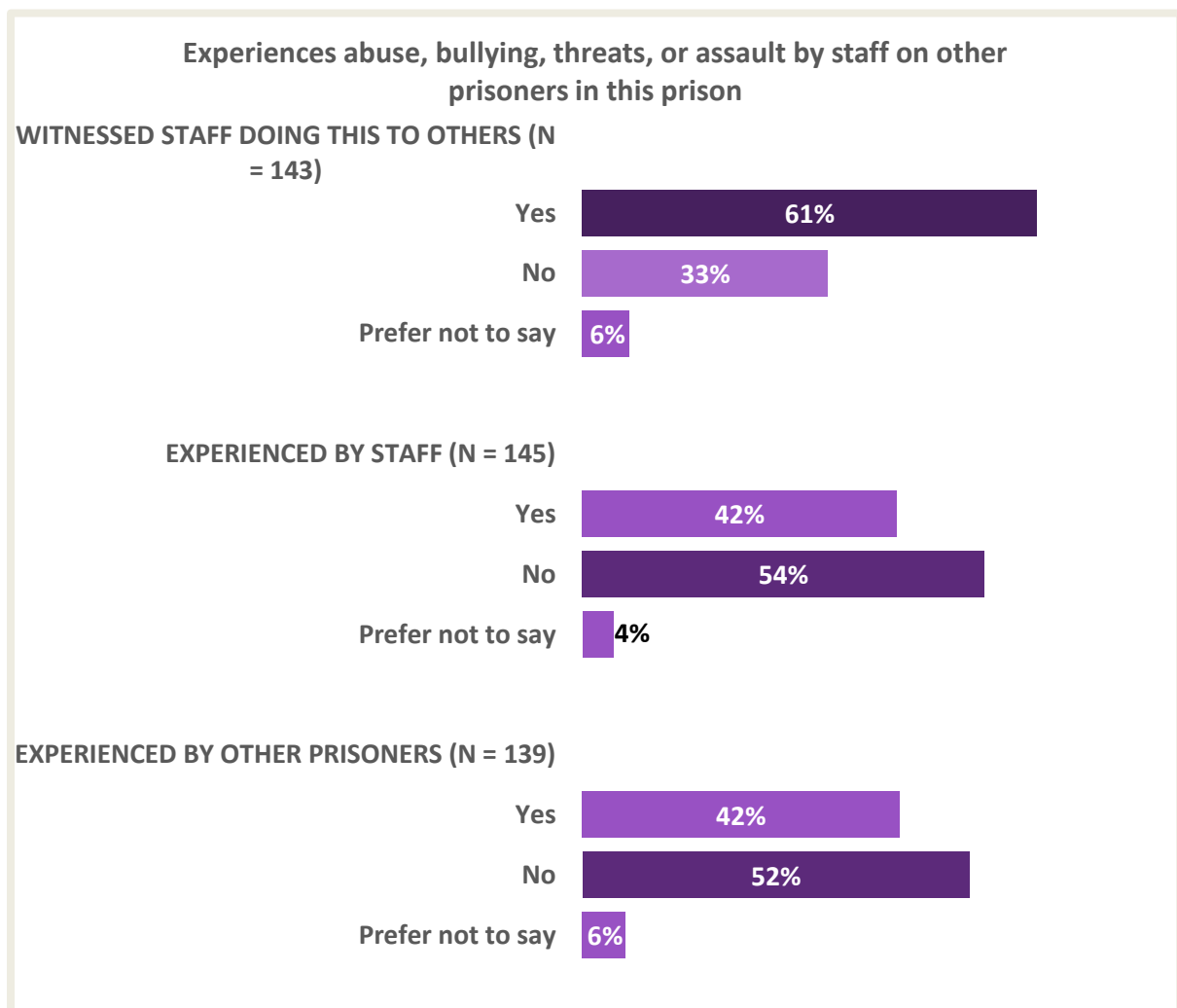
Perception of safety

Over half (62%) of respondents reported feeling safe all or most of the time in HMP & YOI Grampian, although 16% reported rarely or never feeling safe.



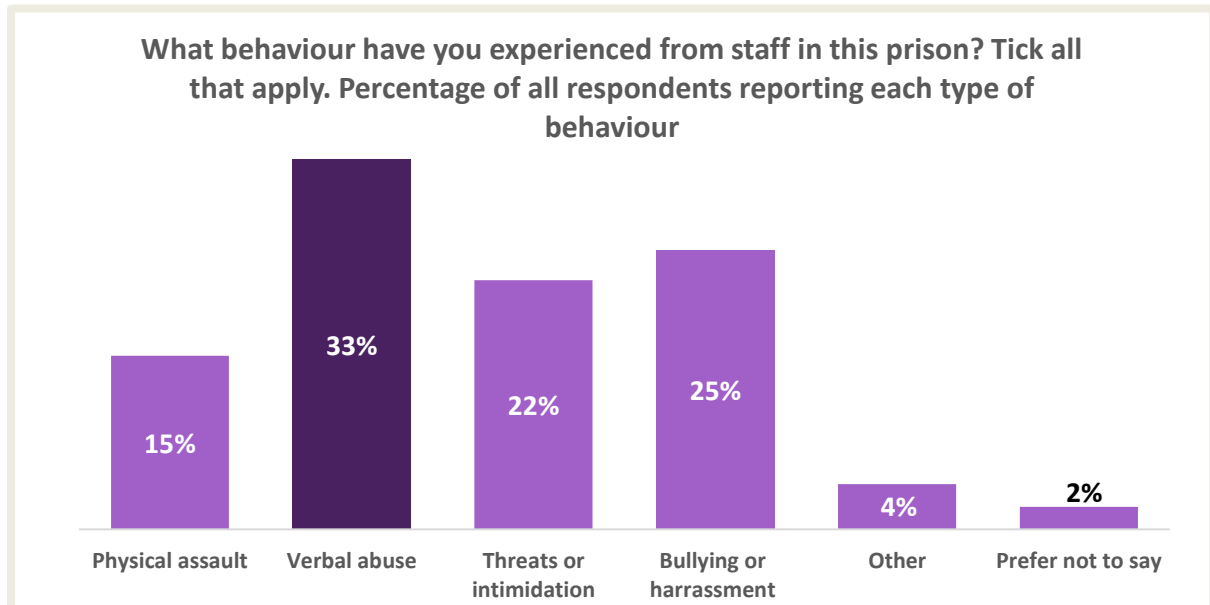
Abuse, threats, bullying or assault by staff or other prisoners

Over half of respondents (61%) reported having witnessed staff members abusing, bullying, threatening or assaulting other prisoners in HMP & YOI Grampian. Just over two in five (42%) reported that staff had abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted them.

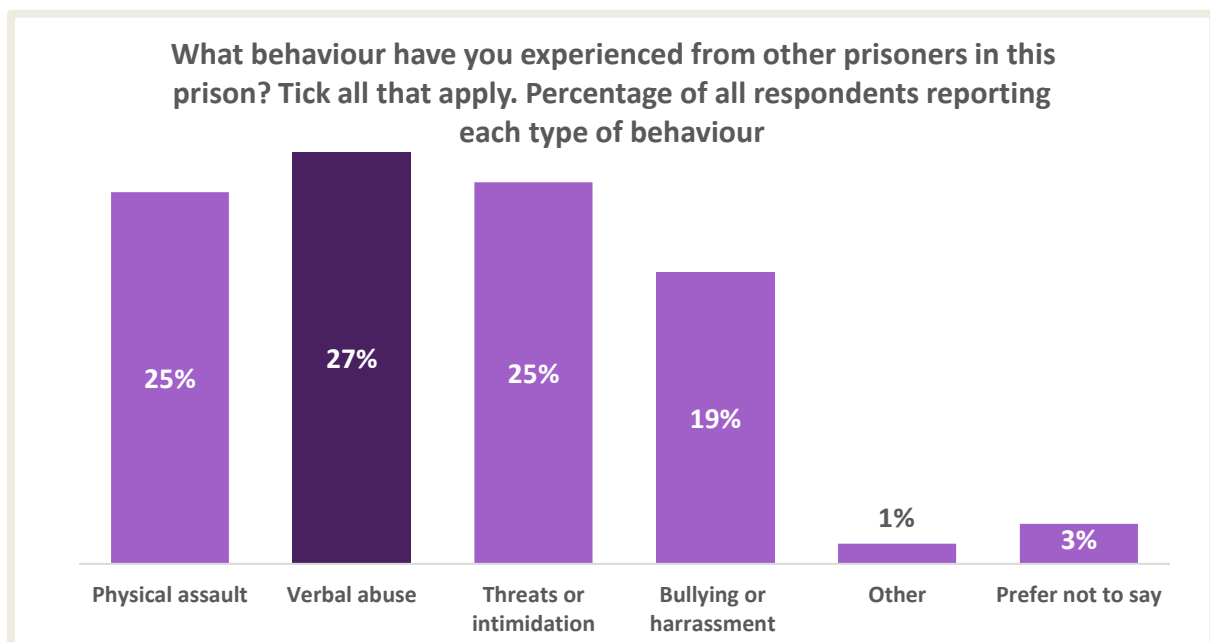


Just over two in five respondents (42%) said they had been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by a fellow prisoner in HMP & YOI Grampian.

When asked what type of negative behaviour they themselves had experienced from staff, the most common responses were: verbal abuse (33% of all respondents); bullying or harassment (25%); threats or intimidation (22%) and physical assault (15%).



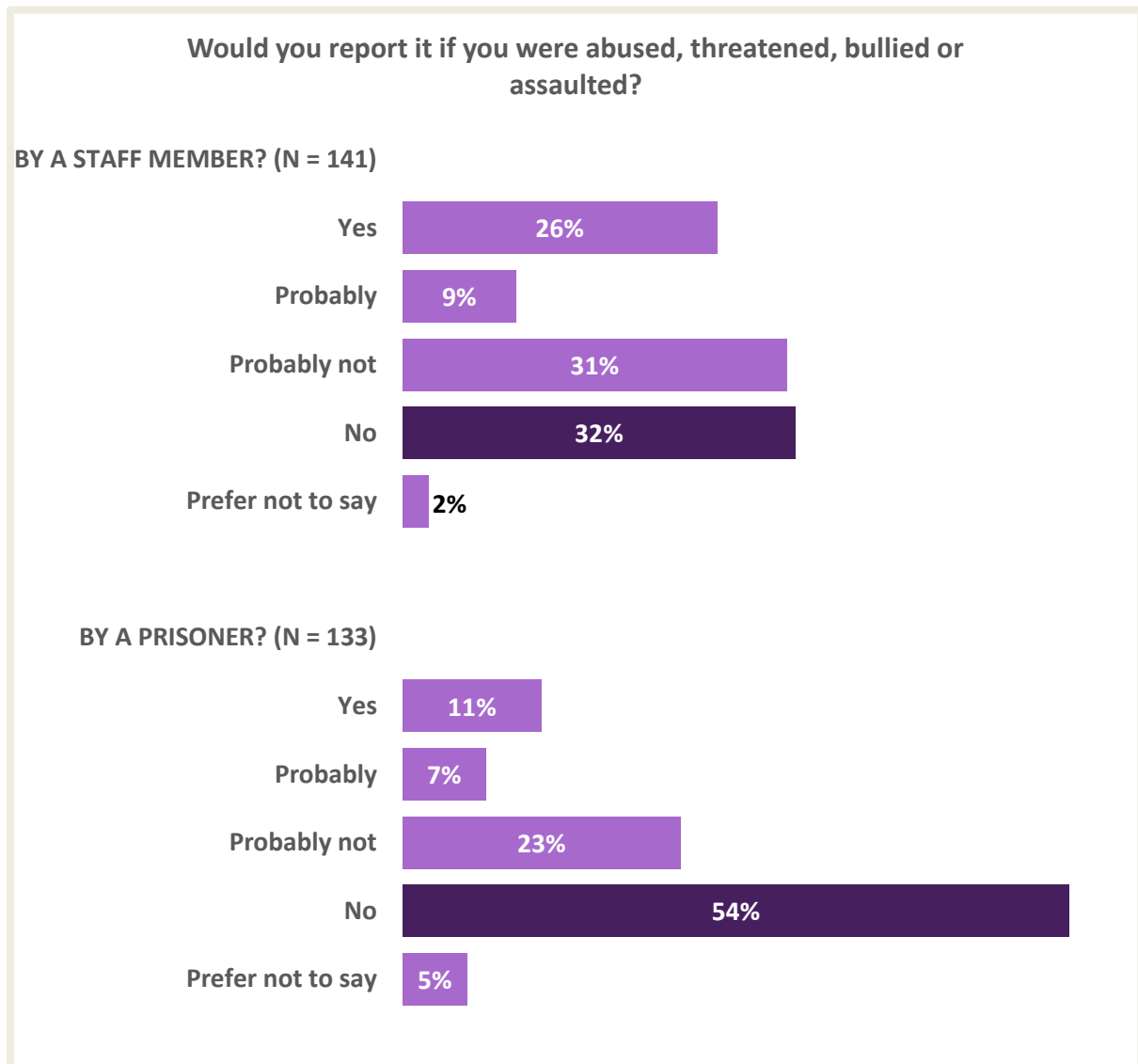
When asked what about the types of negative behaviour experienced from other prisoners, the most common responses were: verbal abuse (27% of all respondents); physical assault (25%); threats or intimidation (25%); and bullying or harassment (19%).



Reporting abuse, threats, bullying or assault

The majority of respondents (63%) reported that they would not, or probably would not, report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by a staff member.

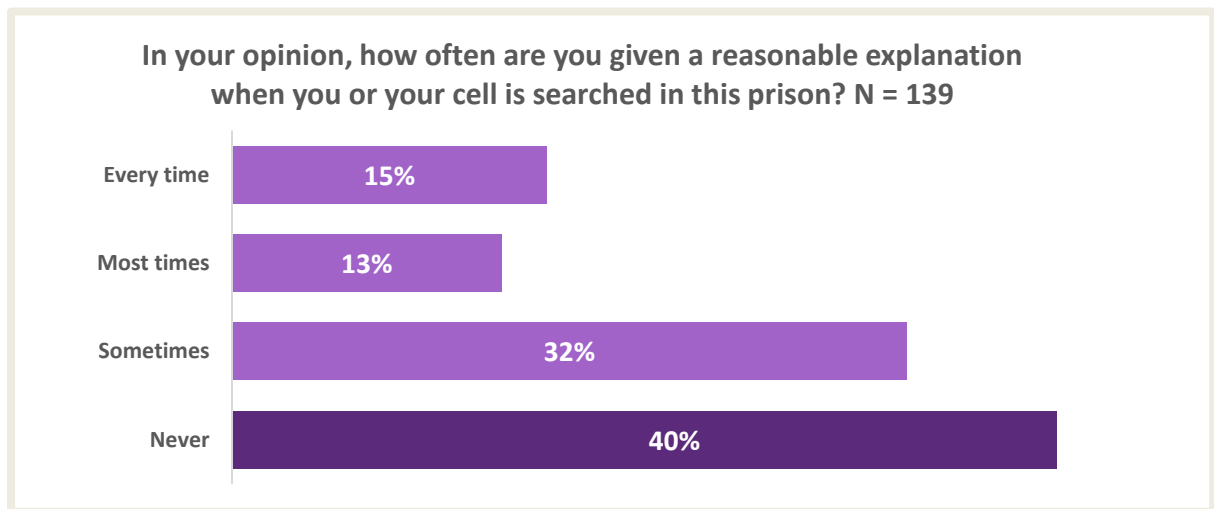
Most respondents (77%) also reported that they would not report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by a fellow prisoner.



Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

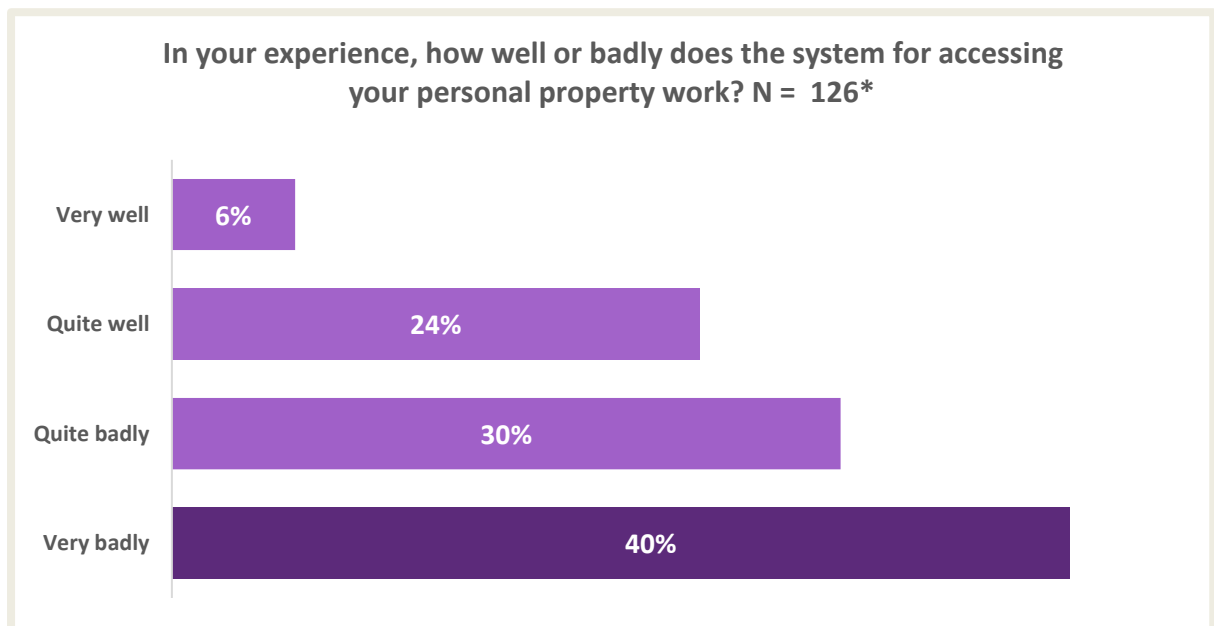
Searching

Just over one quarter of respondents (28%) reported that they were given a reasonable explanation most times or every time they or their cell was searched. However, the most common response was that they were never given a reasonable explanation (40%).



Accessing personal property

The majority of respondents (70%) reported that the system for accessing personal property worked badly or very badly, including two in five (40%) who said it worked very badly.

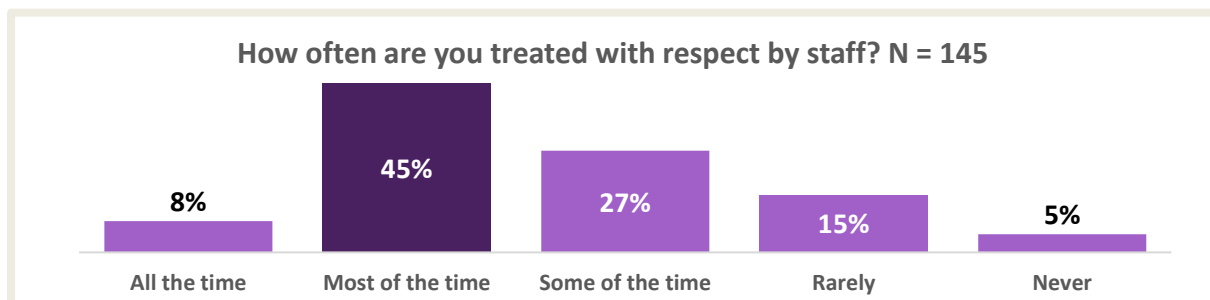


*Excludes "don't know"

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection against Mistreatment

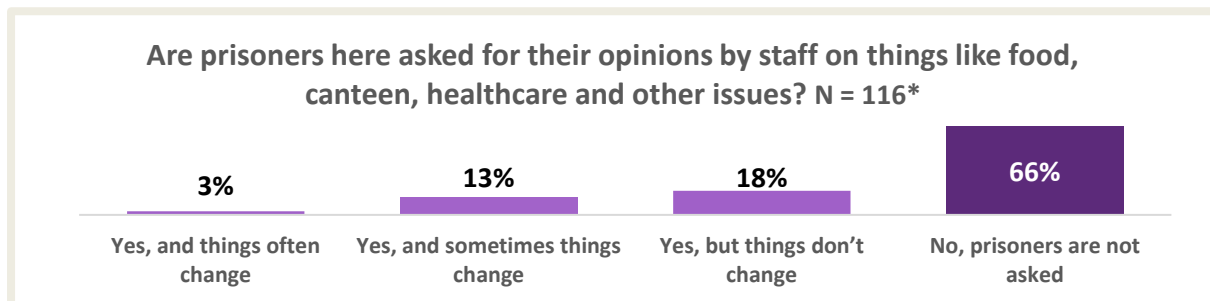
Respect

Just over half of respondents (53%) reported that they were treated with respect by staff some or all of the time. However, one in five (20%) said that they were rarely or never treated with respect by staff.



Consultation with prisoners

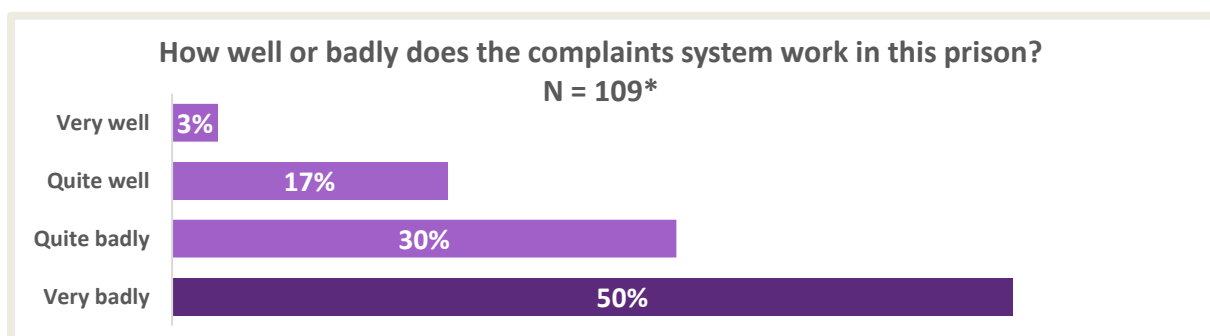
Two-thirds (66%) of respondents said that the prison did not consult prisoners for their opinions on issues such as food, canteen and healthcare. Only 16% of respondents felt that the prison did consult prisoners, and that things sometimes or often changed as a result.



*Excluding don't know

Complaints

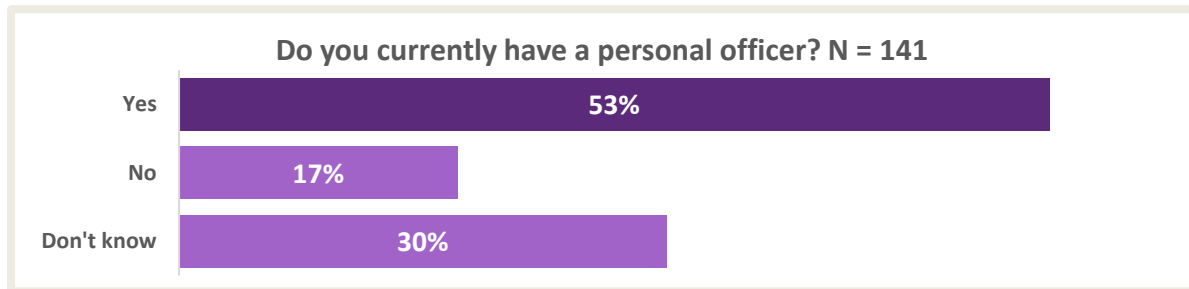
Most respondents (80%) reported that the complaints system worked quite badly or very badly.



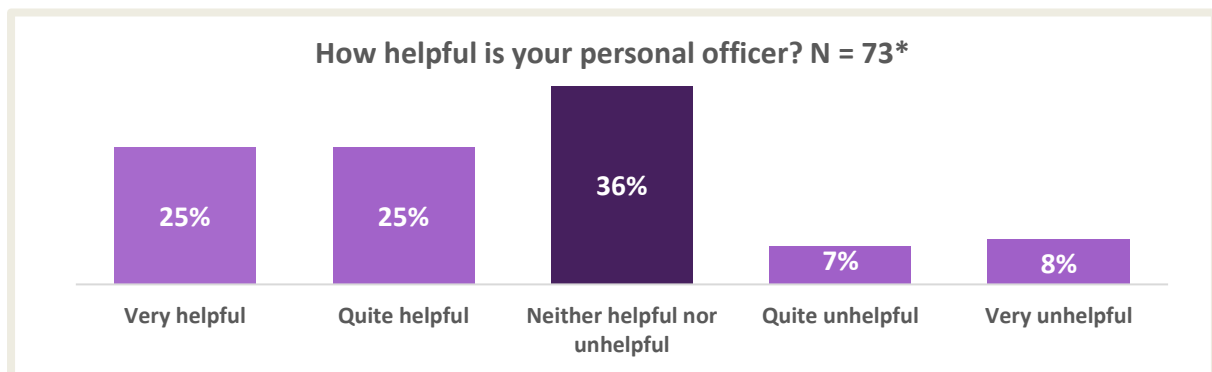
*Excludes don't know

Personal Officers

Just over half (53%) of respondents said they had a personal officer, while 17% said they did not have one, and 30% said they did not know.



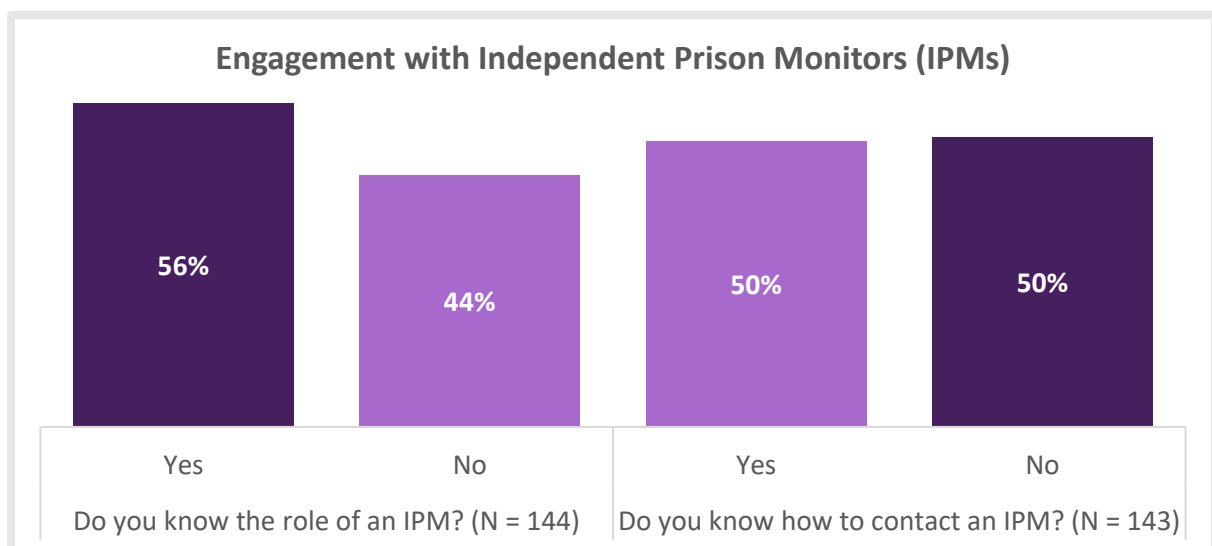
Those who had a personal officer were asked how helpful they were. Half (50%) said their personal officer was helpful, while 15% said their personal officer was unhelpful.



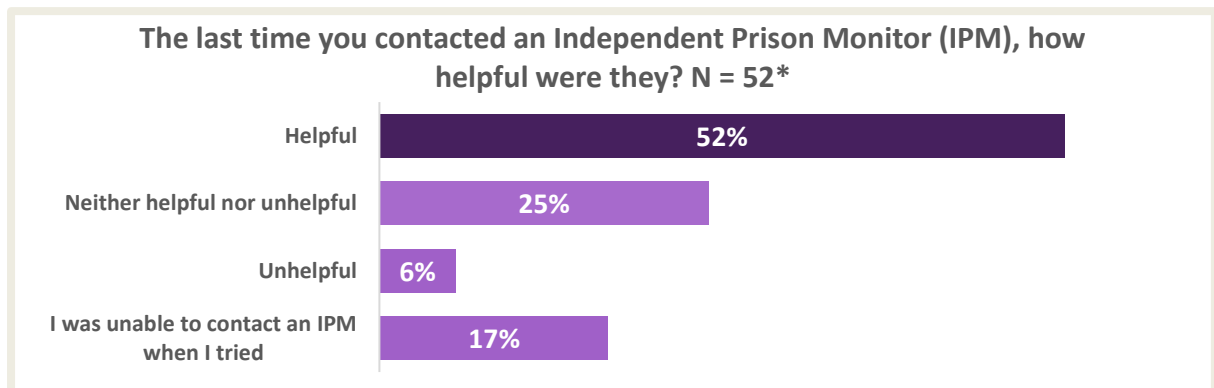
**Excluding those who did not have a personal officer*

Engagement with Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs)

More than half (56%) of respondents said they knew what the role of an IPM was, and half (50%) said they knew how to contact an IPM.



The majority of respondents (62%) said they had never tried to contact an IPM. Of those who had, just over half (52%) said the experience had been helpful, while 6% had found the experience unhelpful, and 17% said they had been unable to contact an IPM when they tried.

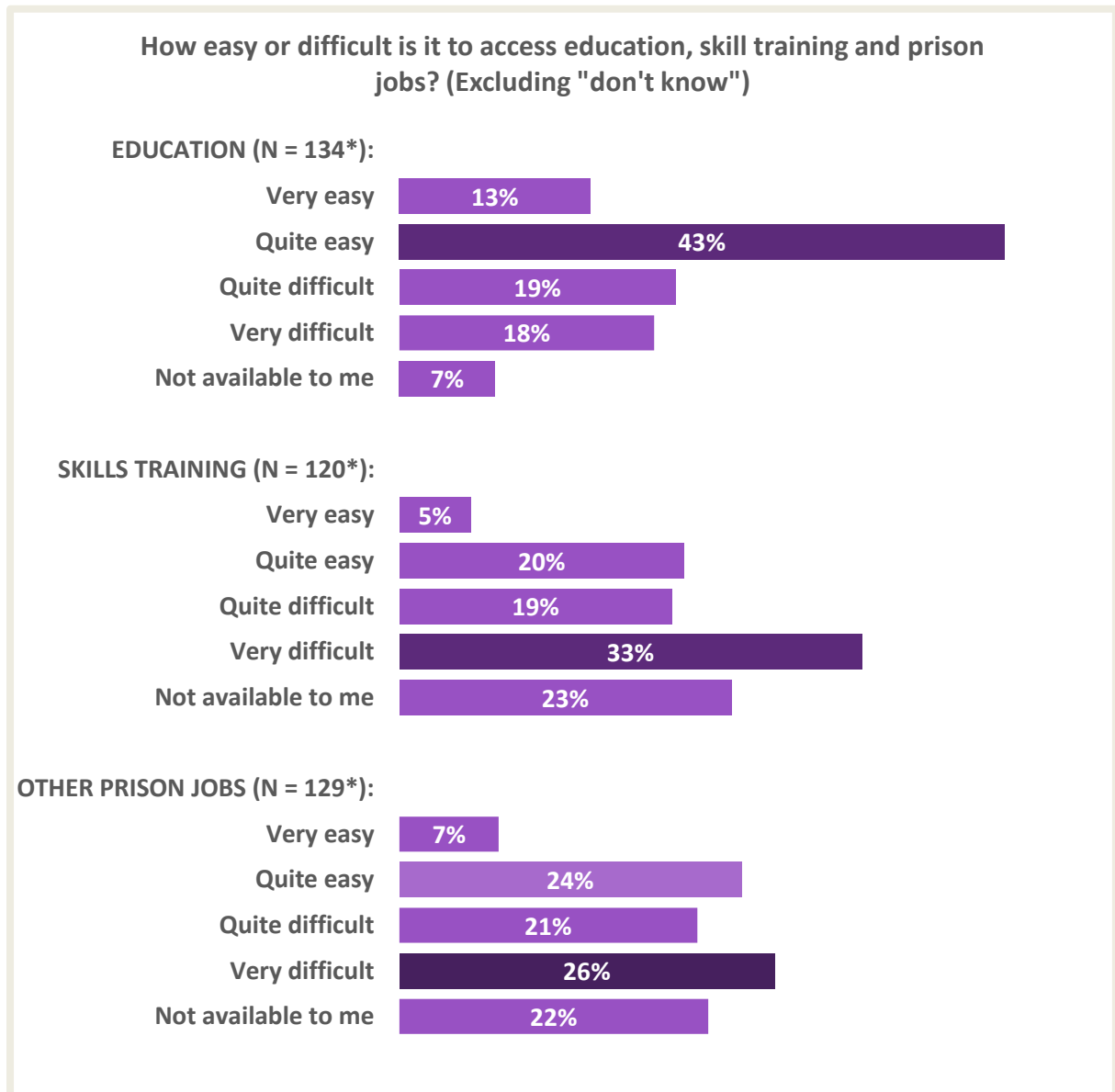


**Excluding those who had never attempted to contact an IPM*

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

Access to education, training and work

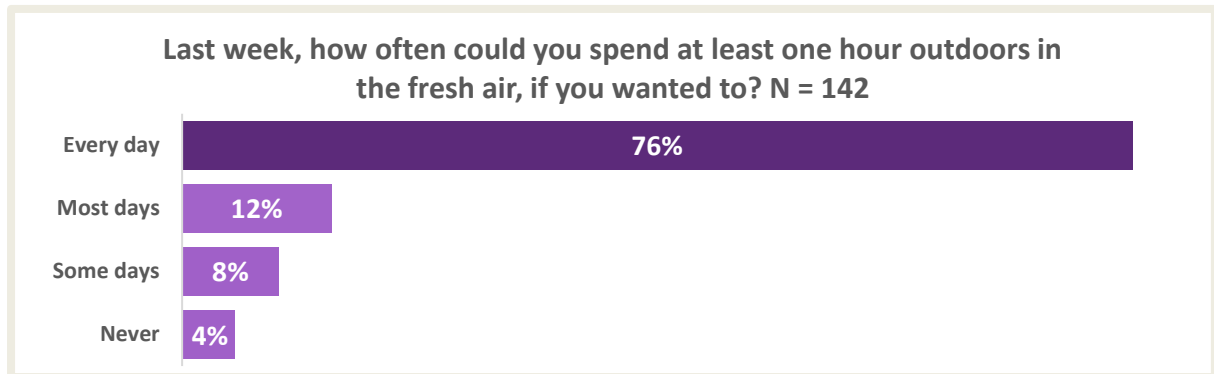
Excluding those who did not answer the question, more than half of respondents said that it was easy (56%) to access education. However, less than half said it was easy to access skills training (25%) or prison jobs (31%).



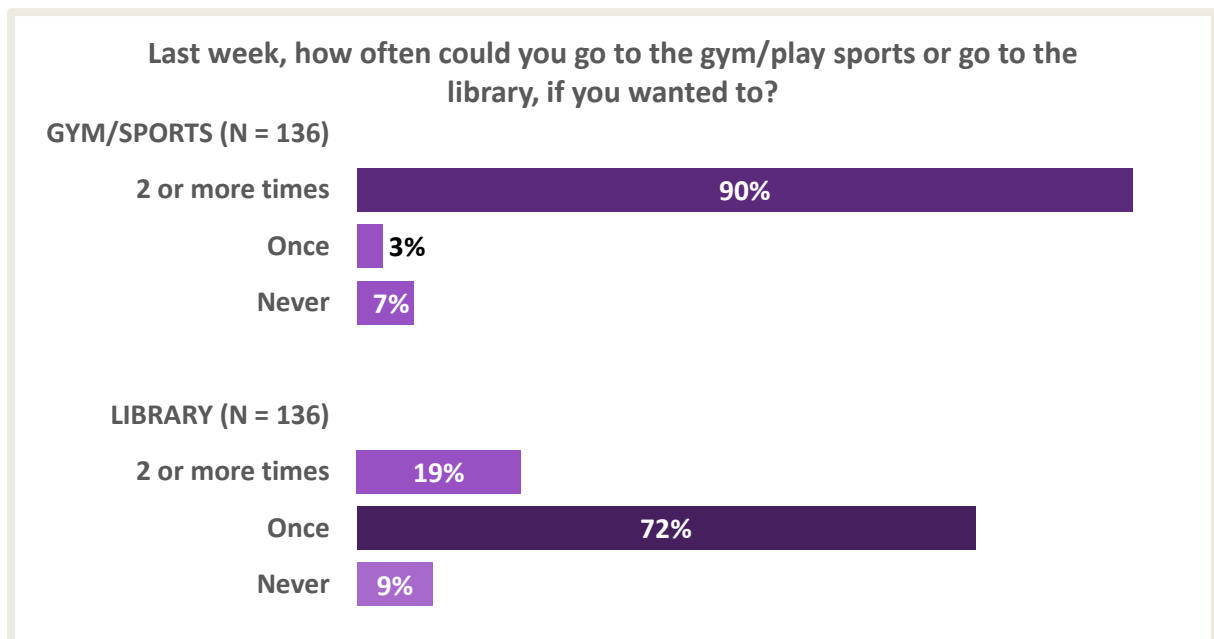
*Excluding "don't know"

Fresh air, gym/sports and library access

Just over three-quarters (76%) of respondents said that they were able to access their entitlement to spend at least one hour outdoors in the fresh air every day if they wanted to during the previous week.

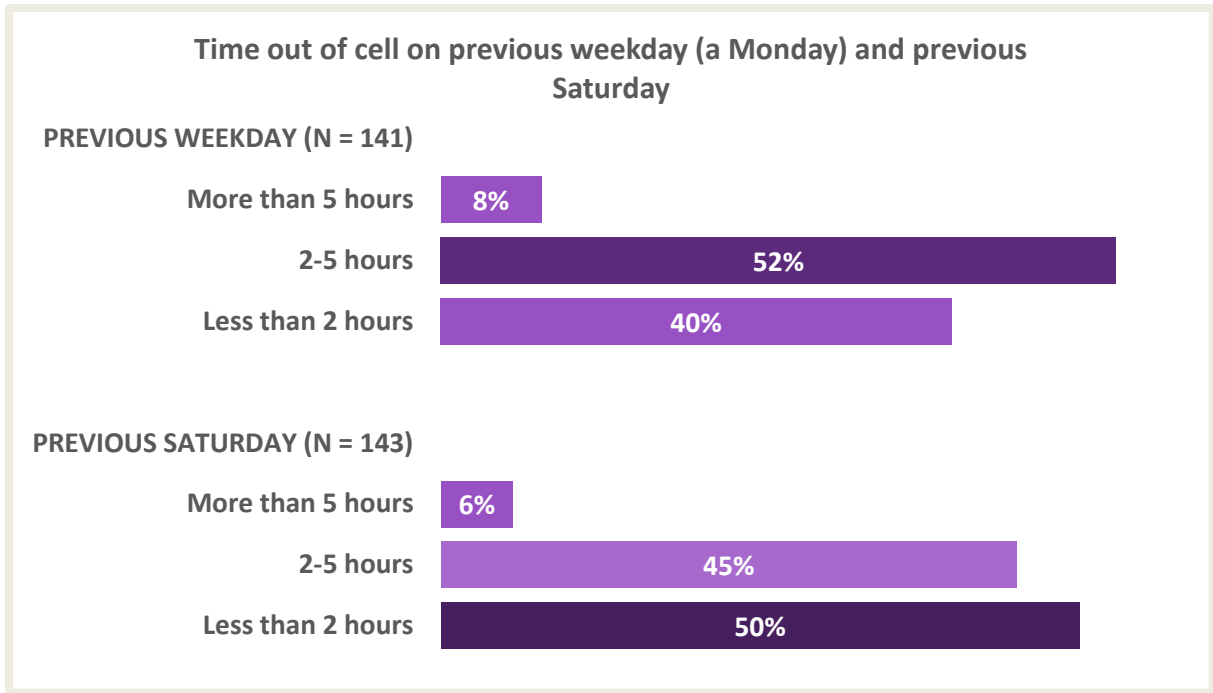


The majority of respondents said that they were able to go to the gym or play sports at least once a week (93%), and that they were able to go to the library at least once a week (91%).



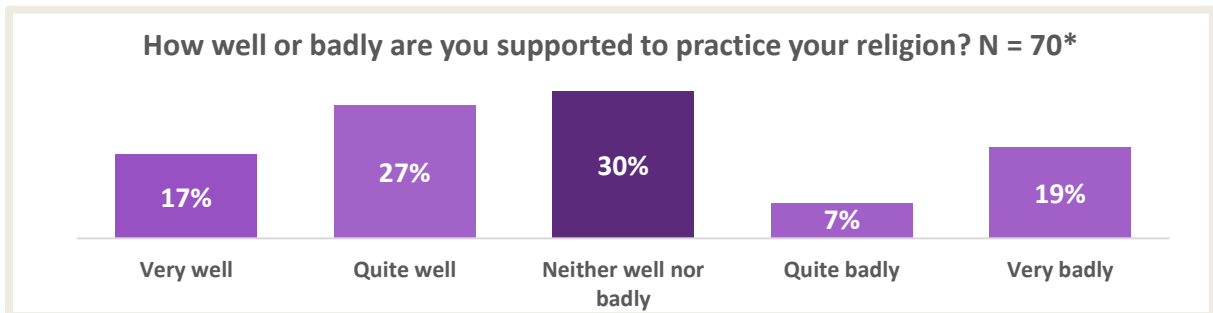
Time out of cell

Two in five respondents (40%) said they had not been able to spend more than two hours outside their cells during the previous weekday (a Tuesday), and half (50%) said they were not able to spend more than two hours out of their cells during the previous Saturday.



Religious practice

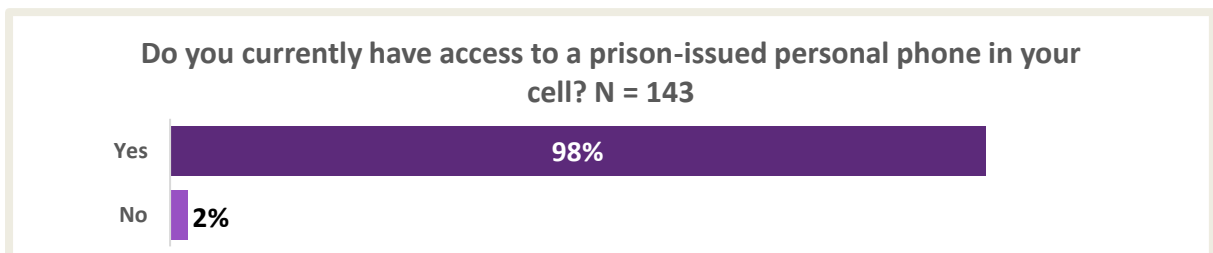
Of those who said they practiced a religion, under half (44%) said they were well supported to do so, and a further 30% said they were “neither well nor badly supported” to do so. Over a quarter (26%) said they were badly supported to practice their religion, including almost one in five (19%) who said they were very badly supported.



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

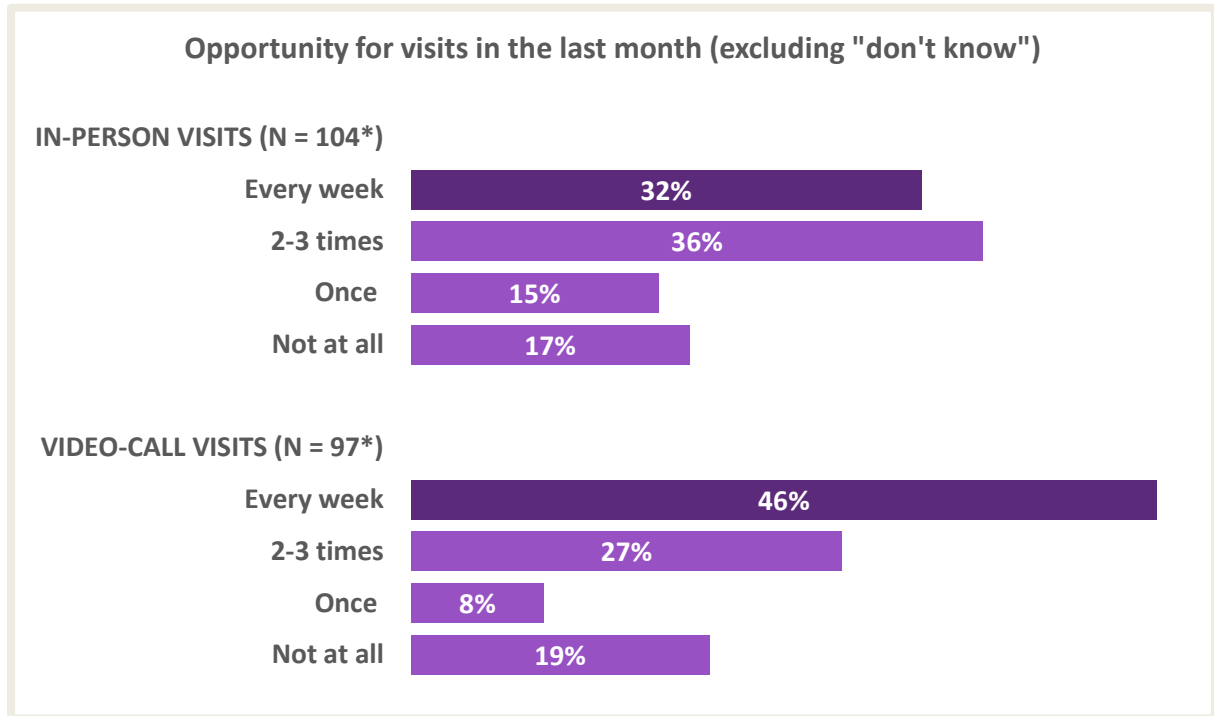
Phones

Almost all respondents (98%) reported that they had access to a prison-issued personal phone in their cell.



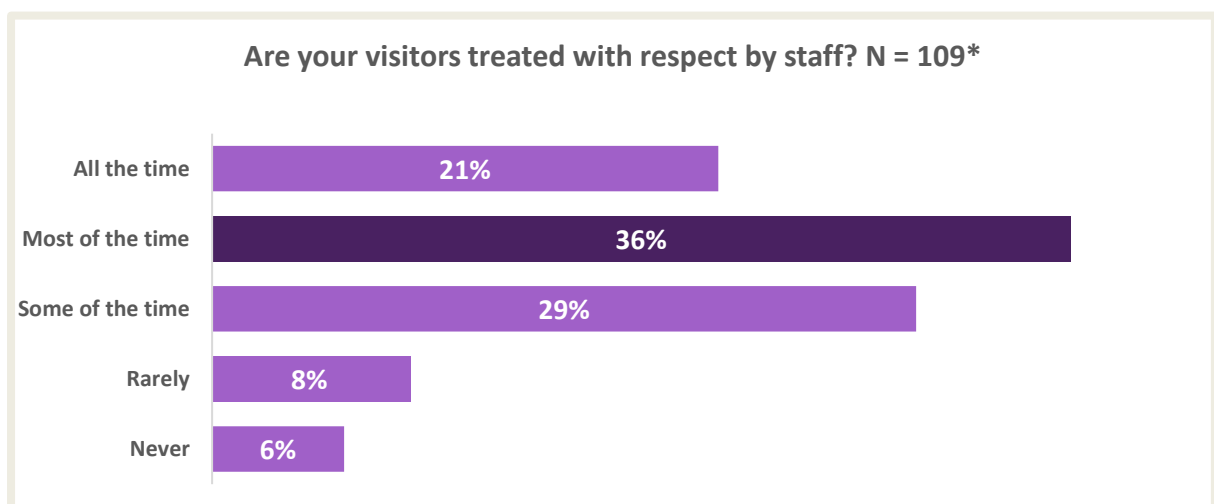
Visits

Of those who were aware of the availability of visit arrangements, just under one-third said they were given an opportunity for in-person visits every week in the last month, and almost half (46%) said they were given the opportunity for video visits every week in the last month.



**Excluding "don't know"*

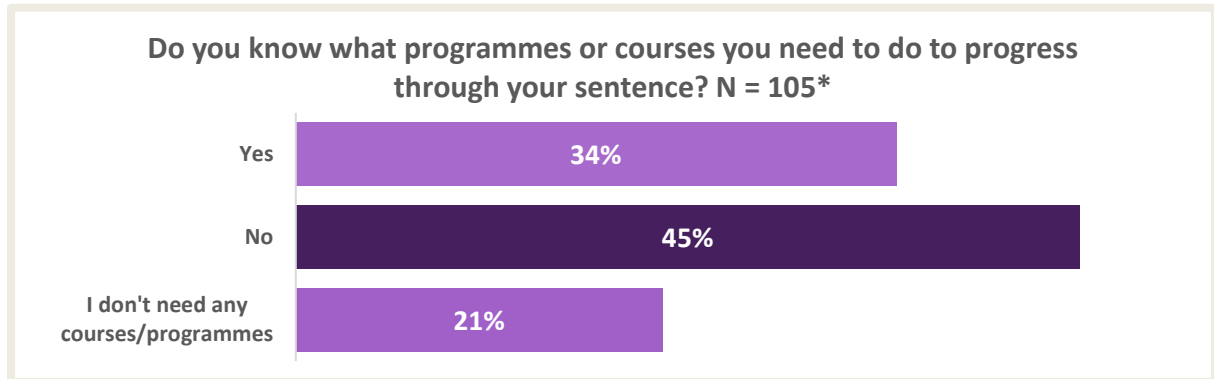
Of those who received in-person visits, just over half (57%) said that their visitors were treated with respect all or most of the time. A small proportion (14%) reported that their visitors were rarely or never treated with respect.



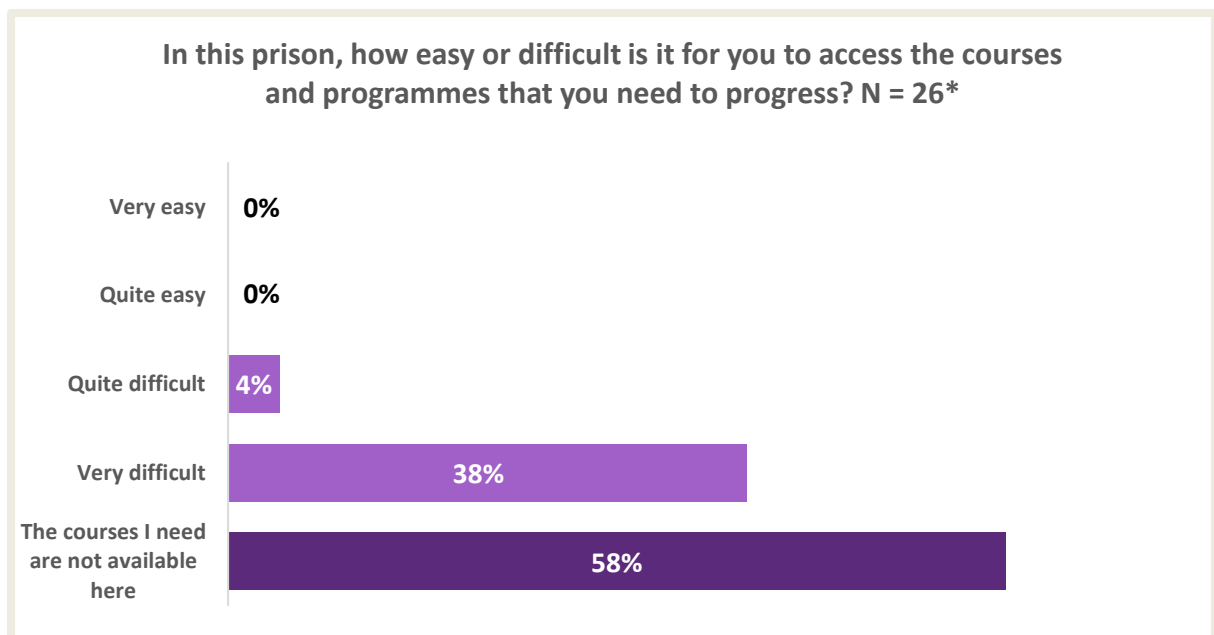
**Excluding "Not applicable - don't have visitors"*

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, just over one-third (34%) said they knew what programmes they needed to do, and 45% did not.



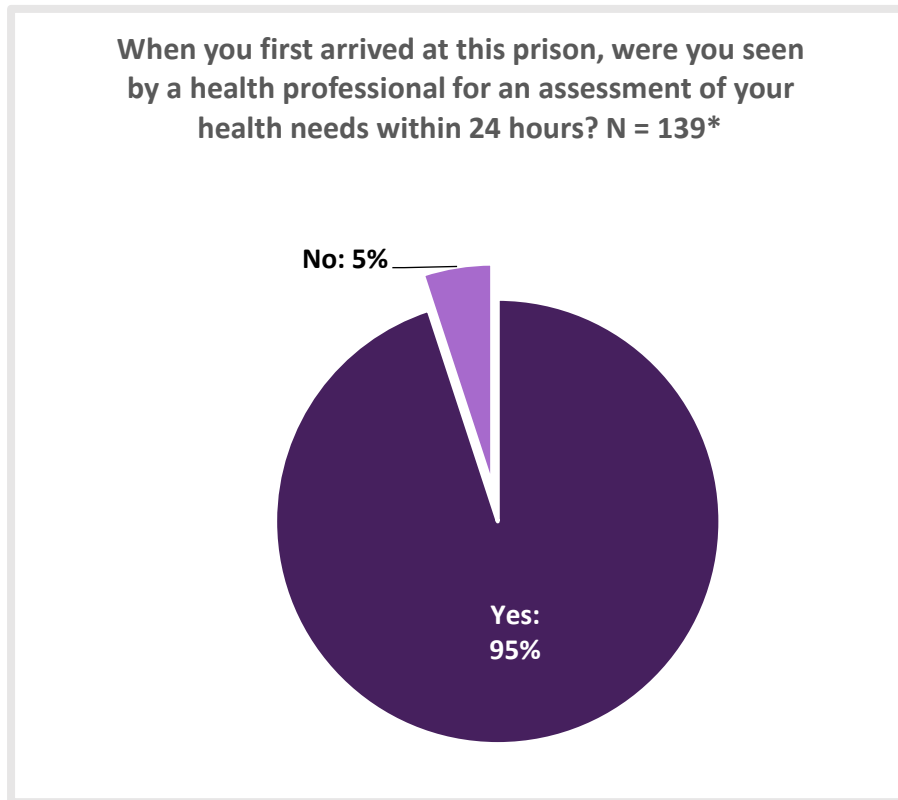
Of those who said they knew what courses or programmes they needed to undertake to progress through their sentences, all respondents said that the courses they needed to take were unavailable or difficult to access.



Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

Health assessment on arrival

The majority of respondents (95%) said they were seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival at HMP & YOI Grampian.



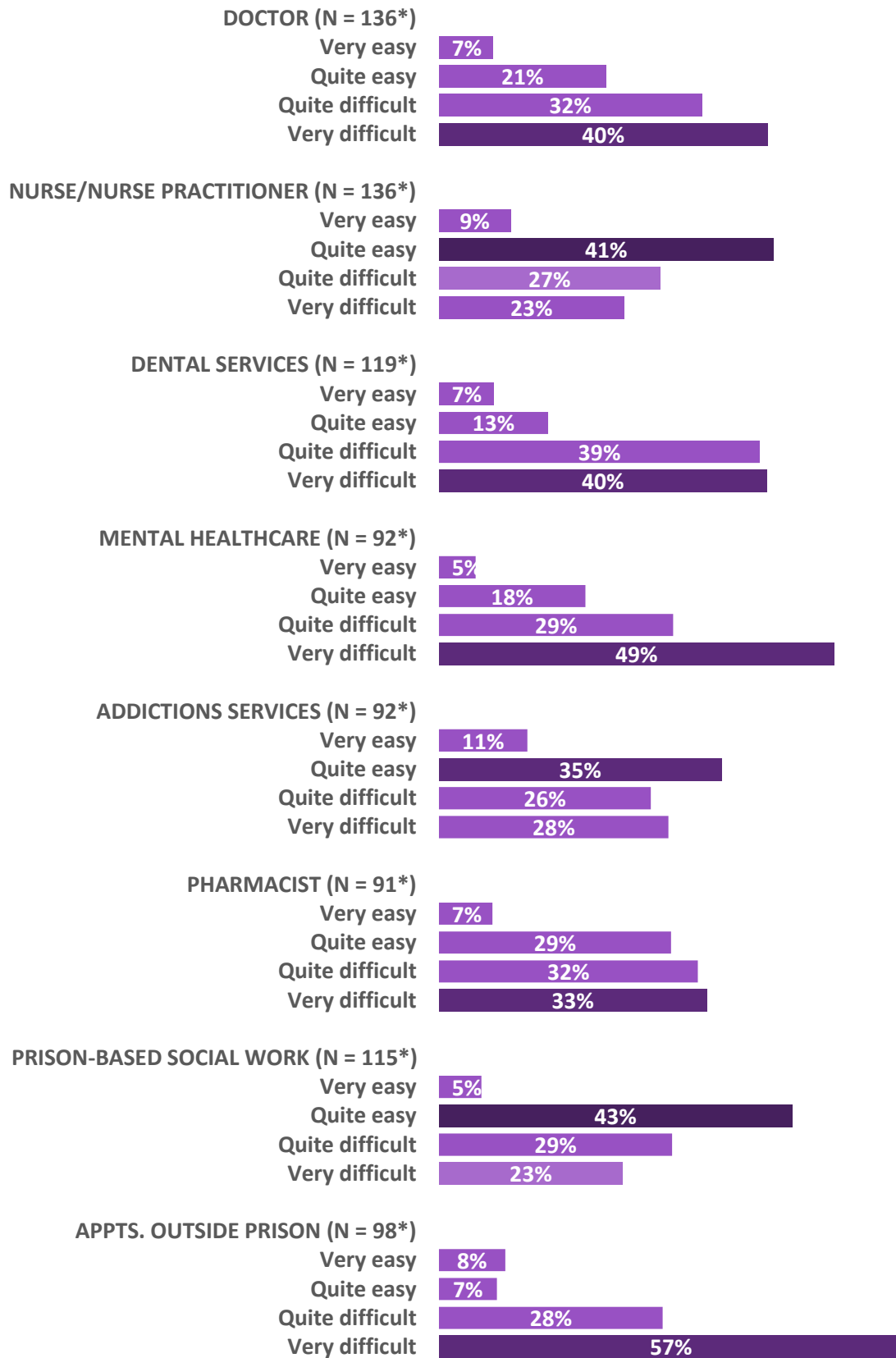
*Excluding "Don't remember"

Access to health services

The majority of respondents (94%) said that they knew how to access healthcare services in HMP & YOI Grampian.

Overall, the majority of respondents reported that it was difficult to access most healthcare services. Most respondents reported that it was difficult to access: a doctor (72%); dental services (79%); mental healthcare services (78%); addictions services (54%); a pharmacist (65%); and medical appointments outside the prison (85%). Half of respondents (50%) reported that it was difficult to access a nurse/nurse practitioner.

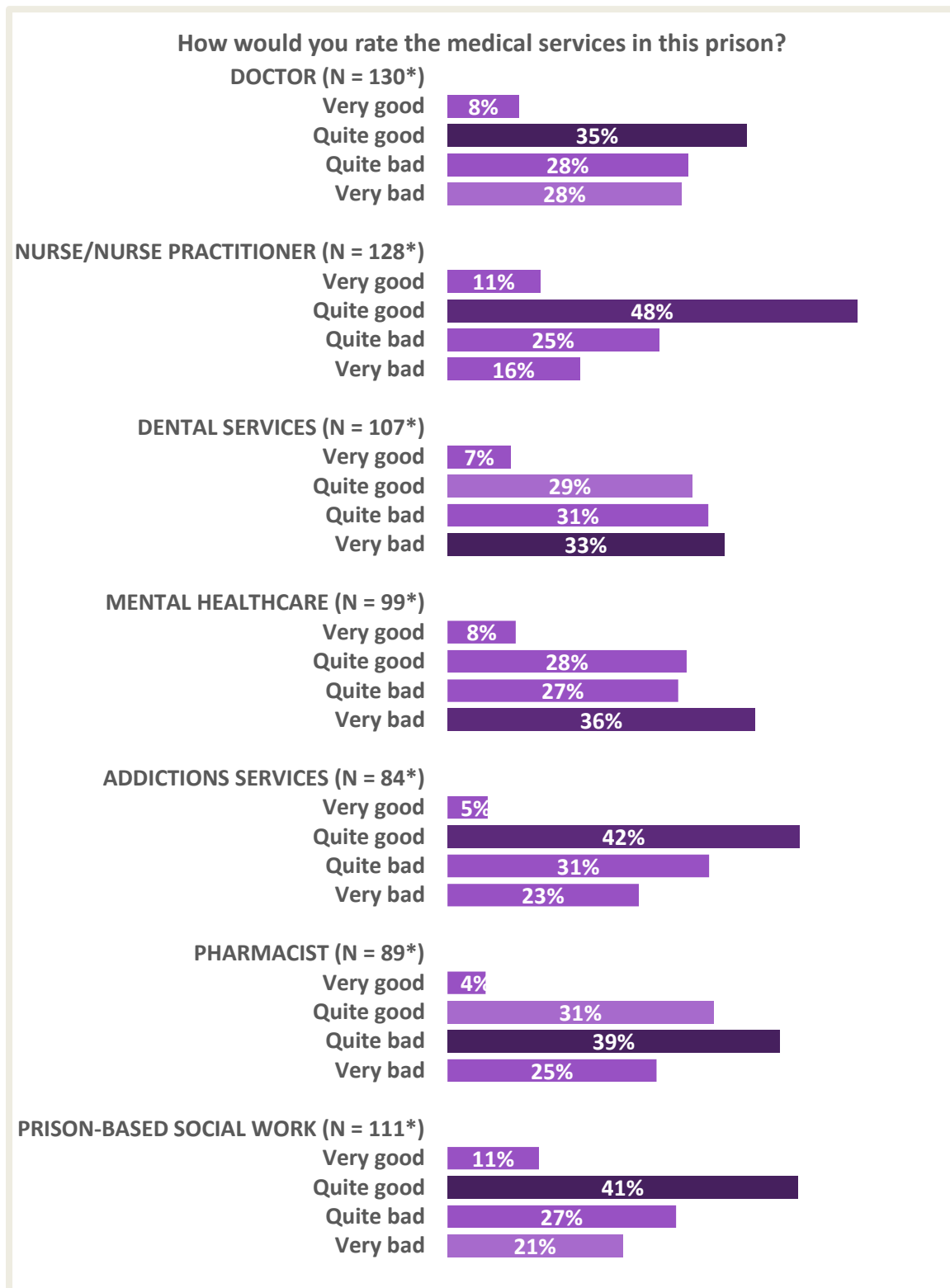
How easy or difficult is it to access health services in this prison?



*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 & YOI Grampian.



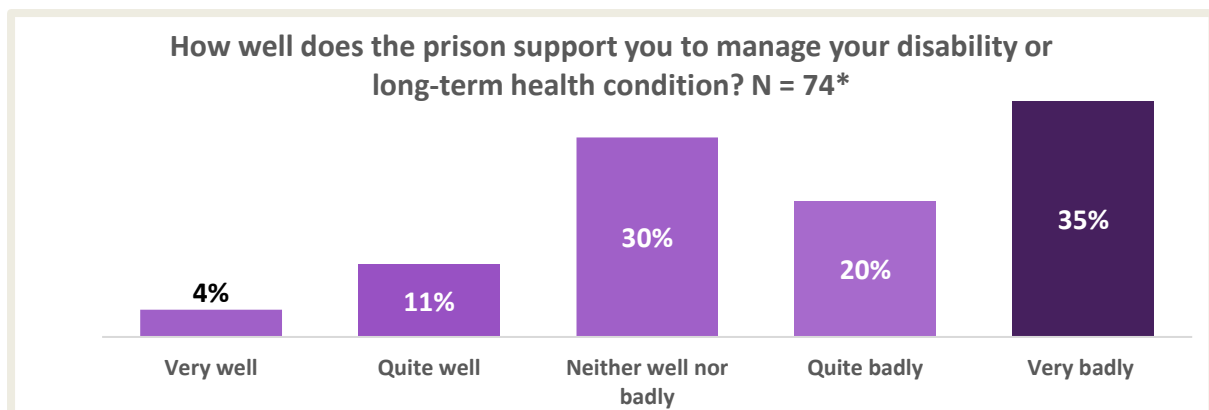
*Excluding "Don't know"

The majority of respondents rated the service from the nurses/nurse practitioners (59%) and prison-based social work (52%) as good.

The quality of all other healthcare services was rated negatively by the majority of respondents: Sixty-six per cent rated the service from the doctors negatively; 64% rated dental services negatively; 63% rated mental healthcare services negatively; 54% rated addictions services negatively; and 64% rated the pharmacy services negatively.

Support for disabilities and long-term health conditions

In total, 56% of respondents said that they had a long-term health condition or disability. When asked about the support provided to help manage their conditions, more than half (55%) said they were poorly supported, and a further 30% said they were “neither well nor badly supported”.



**Only those who said they had a long-term health condition or disability*

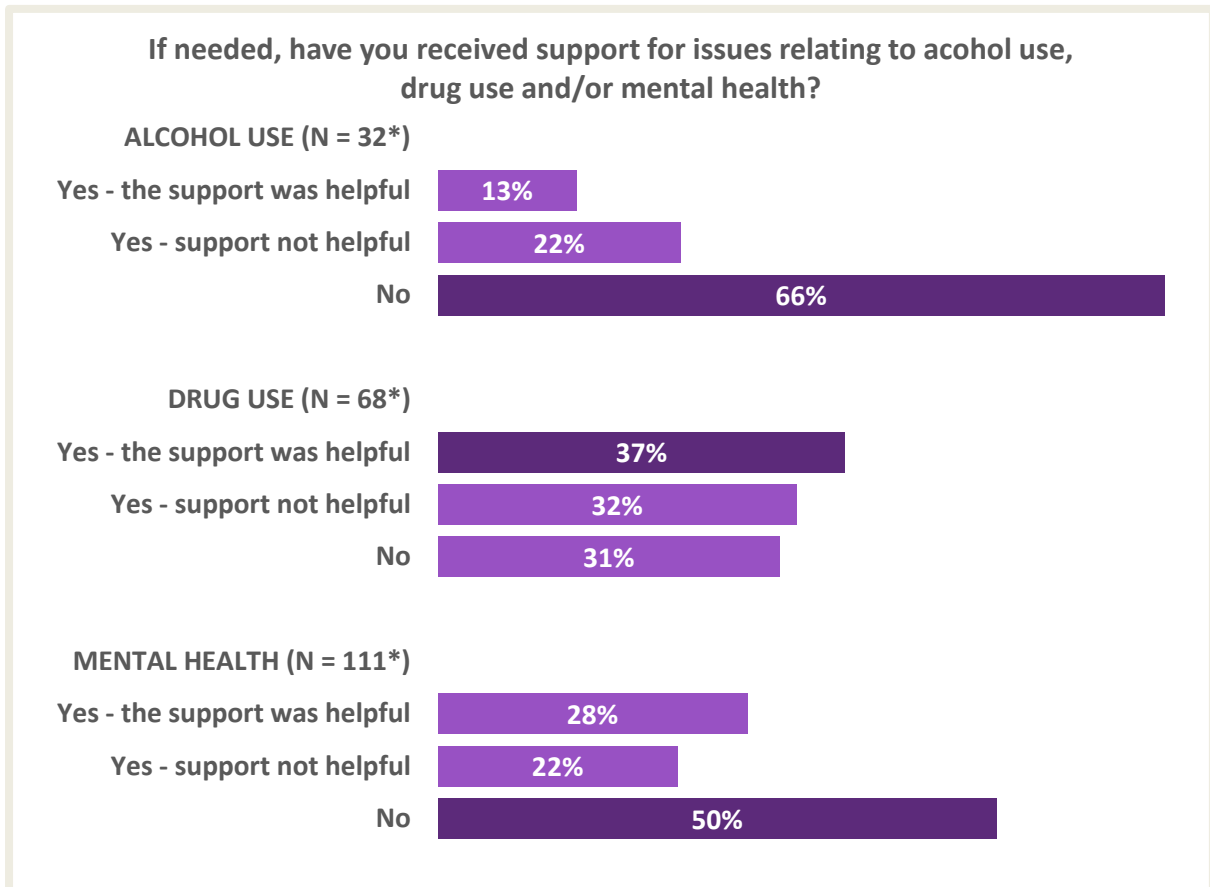
Support for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and mental health

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, 35% reported having been offered support, while 66% said they had not been offered support. In total, 13% reported that the support received had been helpful, while 22% did not find it helpful.

Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, the majority (69%) said they had been given access to support, while 31% said they had not been offered support. Over one-third (37%) reported that the support they received had been helpful while 32% had not found the support helpful.

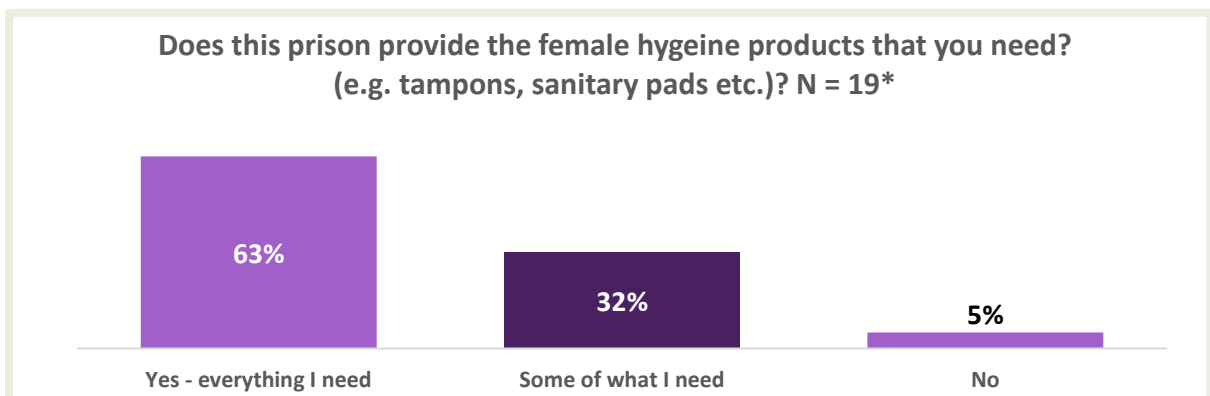
Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health, half (50%) said they had been offered support, while half (50%) said they had not. Just over a quarter (28%) of those who had needed support for their mental health had been offered support that they found helpful, while 22% received support but did not find it helpful.



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

Access to female hygiene products

Female respondents were asked whether they had access to the female hygiene products they needed (for example, tampons and sanitary pads). The majority reported that they had access to everything they needed (63%) and a further 33% said they had access to some of what they needed. A small percentage (5%) said they did not have access to the products they needed.



**Females only*

Open Question (General Comments): Thematic Analysis

In total, 96 respondents (64%) left comments in the free text space at the end of the questionnaire. The most common issues arising in the comments related to relationships with staff; purposeful activity and time out of cell; canteen and wages; mental health; healthcare; food; progression; visits; transfers; physical environment; and access to essential items. These are summarised below.

Relationships with staff

A large number (42) of those who left comments wrote about relationships between prisoners and staff. While a handful of these were positive, the vast majority were negative. Several reported that prisoners receive differential treatment from staff, with accusations of favouritism, and people getting better treatment “if their face fits”. As one respondent commented: “It is very common to see staff bend over backwards for ‘popular’ prisoners and the ones that are quiet get ignored or told what their asking for isn’t possible.”

Others felt that poor behaviour and “kicking off” was rewarded by greater staff attention and support, while those who were quiet and well-behaved did not get the support they felt they needed. As one respondent reported: “We get nothing unless we show how angry or violent we can get, then people wonder why we are so angry all the time when all we want is help.”

Some also mentioned that some staff members tended to keep some prisoners locked in their cells for longer periods than others, and that some prisoners were given more time out of their cells than others on the same hall. As one respondent reported: “Some officers allow prisoners they like to spend extra time out of their cells while the rest of us are locked up; when complaining were told they are LTPs and need a break out of the cell.”

A number of respondents highlighted instances of staff abuse and bullying, including physical and sexual abuse. Reports of bullying included staff publicly humiliating prisoners; laughing at those suffering after drug overdoses; not taking mental health issues seriously; and making racist, homophobic and other discriminatory remarks to and about prisoners. Some examples of respondents’ comments were:

“Staff bring you down in front of others and make it their job to make sure your time is hard if they don’t like you.”

“Staff close ranks and bully people, always the same staff and doing it to the same people.”

“The officers are horrible to girls; they bully girls and take advantage of having keys. I have self-harmed before due to them bullying me.”

“I’ve seen people almost dying [from overdoses] and the staff think it’s funny, standing round laughing and giggling about it. What’s funny about seeing someone not breathing taking a fit? Nothing.”

A number of respondents reported physical abuse, including physical and sexual assaults, and claims that some officers would deliberately engineer situations in which they would be able to physically restrain prisoners. Examples of prisoner comments included:

“Staff create confrontation in order to get ‘hands on’ with prisoners.”

“Staff abuse their power and are abusive to prisoners, especially with mental health issues.”

“Not all staff [do this], but I’ve seen the way certain staff floor people, coming down hard with their knee to prisoners heads, [and] getting sly hits in while they’re on the ground. There’s times when staff has either had a bad day at home or work and take it out on us.”

A number of comments reported disrespectful behaviour by staff, including speaking disrespectfully to prisoners, and spending most of their time behind their desks, forcing prisoners to shout to them if they wanted to ask for something. A handful of respondents claimed that staff took prisoners’ food.

Other comments regarding relationships with staff included several respondents noting that they had never been assigned a personal officer; poor communication between staff and prisoners; poor staff responses to mental health crisis; and staff being unavailable to prisoners, for example by not answering the intercom.

Purposeful activity and time out of cell

In total, 41 of those who left comments mentioned purposeful activity and/or time out of cell. Many reported spending too much time in their cells, with some reporting being locked up for 22 hours per day or more, leaving them bored, isolated and struggling with their mental and physical health from the lack of activity. The two comments below sum up the experience of a large number of those who left comments:

“The problem with this prison is the lack of time outside of cells. Most of us spend 21 to 22 hours locked in our cells. Recreation only last 45 minutes once a day, which is sometimes even cut short! Mental health issues are arising as a result of all this time locked away. Its inhumane!”

“Being on protection in a mainstream section makes us be stuck in our cells 22 hours a day with no opportunity for a work party! Or in hall jobs! My mental health suffers badly plus all our physical health suffers by sitting down from 12 to 16 hours a day, that’s not including sleep – surely something can be done.”

Some mentioned that there was a lack of options for in-cell activities, making it even more difficult to spend such long periods locked up.

Many respondents wrote about wanting to get jobs, skills training or education, as well as a desire for more gym and recreation time to allow them to socialise and stay fit. However, in general they tended to note that it was difficult to access as much

activity as they would like, due to long waiting lists for jobs and training, minimal access to jobs, and a strict regime with limited time for activities such as gym, recreation and the library. Some also noted that the regime timetable was not always upheld, with activities sometimes running late or being cut short.

Canteen and wages

Around one-third of those who commented (28) highlighted issues related to canteen prices and prison wages. Some of those on remand noted that it was difficult to access basic necessities because they were not entitled to a cell wage and most remands were not able to access jobs. Some remands reported having jobs as passmen but not being paid. Many noted that this meant those on remand could not afford to buy anything from the canteen unless they had family members sending money in for them. One respondent summarised the situation for remand prisoners:

“People on remand who have no family or friends to provide financial help are left with nothing, not a penny to buy basic things (especially smokers). Why can't people on remand receive a cell wage at the least? Also job allocations are only open to convicted prisoners which is extremely unfair as most people on remand are on remand for one year+, so have to borrow basic items like deodorants, shower gels, decent toothpaste, vapes, etc, then get into debt with other prisoners which just adds to stress and fear amongst the prisoners.”

Those with convictions also noted that for those unable to access jobs, it was difficult to afford many items from the canteen sheet given that canteen prices have been rising but wages, including cell wages, have not. As one person commented, echoing many other comments:

“Canteen prices have just went up but our wages have went down. I don't see the point in this; we are getting £11 to £14 a week; this is nowhere near enough to keep you going through the week.”

Other issues raised in relation to the canteen included: only being allowed to buy seven packs of vapes per week and a lack of options or variation on the canteen sheet, particularly for healthy food. As one respondent summarised:

“Wages and canteen is shocking ... it's all choc and crisps and all branded stuff; we need cheap stuff on canteen as £5.55 isn't cheap for coffee when you get £10 wages.”

Mental health

Just under one-third of respondents (26) reported issues related to mental health and mental healthcare. Respondents noted that many prisoners struggled with their mental health, but that it was difficult to access adequate mental health support. Some reported making numerous requests to see a mental health professional and waiting several months – sometimes over a year – to be seen. Some stressed the negative effect of not being able to see a mental health professional soon enough:

“Since being here all I’ve cried out for is to see a psychiatrist to be put on the right dose of medication – till this day I still haven’t been able to see one. There are days on end where I can’t sleep which then bring on hallucinations and other dark thoughts.”

Some who had accessed mental health support felt that the service was not adequate, with some commenting that they felt neglected after being seen, not having their issue dealt with effectively, or not having their medication adequately monitored. Others reported adverse effects having had the psychiatric medication they were prescribed in the community discontinued on arrival at prison.

Some respondents also reported that prison staff did not deal with mental health issues well, with allegations of discrimination and neglect of those with mental health needs. As one respondent wrote:

“There seems to be a culture of hate or even levels of discrimination amongst the staff here! Some are happy to encourage prisoners to look down on those who may struggle with mental health issues for pure entertainment.”

Similarly, another wrote that:

“[Staff] abuse their power and are abusive to prisoners, especially prisoners with mental health issues. I’ve encountered maybe five staff members who actually try help us.”

A number of respondents wrote of the environment they were living in causing or exacerbating mental health issues, for example as a result of the boredom and isolation of spending so much time alone in their cells, feeling scared and unsafe, being retraumatised or triggered by the environment they were living in, and insensitive staff behaviour. In one case, a prisoner who disclosed long-term mental health issues reported that:

“I am subject to PTSD triggers routinely and I am in an almost constant state of sensory overstimulation. If hell exists this is the entrance. I mean this is cruel and unusual treatment. Being held here is torture and I do not exaggerate.”

Another respondent noted the effect of so much time spent alone on mental health:

“This prison’s routine allows prisoners to vegetate behind their doors and destroys their mental health, forcing prisoners to self-medicate to manage mood and emotions.”

Some protection prisoners held on mainstream halls noted that the environment was particularly challenging for them because they did not feel safe, or because being kept apart from mainstream peers meant spending long periods locked up:

“Sharing with mainstream brings some issues to people on protection and a number of us do not feel safe, this also contributes towards negative mental health ...”

“The lack of time outside the cell has been massively detrimental to everyone NOP [Non-offence protection]. Almost everyone suffers from mental health and minimal association makes it worse. Having to walk through mainstream as a NOP is stressful for us all and them being around in general.”

Health and healthcare

Twenty-six respondents also mentioned other health services as an issue in HMP & YOI Grampian. A common complaint was waiting times to see a doctor or a dentist, with some respondents reporting waiting over a year to see a dentist, and weeks or months to see a GP. For example, two people described their efforts to see a dentist:

“Been trying to see the dentist for years – abscess after abscess and still no reply.”

“The dental services is terrible, if you have a tooth problem like I do, you are not a priority, you are just left and told to wait your turn. I have not been able to eat properly or even sleep properly because [of tooth pain].”

Some respondents gave examples of struggling as a result of delays in getting an appointment to see a GP. For example, one described having to have emergency hospital treatment for an issue that could have been managed easily if he had seen a medical professional in the prison sooner but was denied access despite multiple requests. Another reported that:

“I’ve also been suffering with severe headaches and dizziness and fainting and low blood pressure and the doctors still want to do nothing, it’s scary and I don’t know what to do.”

Several respondents reported difficulties accessing the medications they needed, and the effects of this. As one person explained:

“[Prison] doctors can’t prescribe [a] certain medication I would get in the community ... and had to self-medicate. In constant pain and can’t get the medication I need, overdosed [several] times. If I were to get prescribed medication I need wouldn’t have to take the risk of overdosing. No wonder people are risking their lives just to have a normal day.”

And another explained that:

“I’ve found that the worst experience in this jail is getting access to monthly medication. This is always a delay and as from today, I’m two days without my meds.”

A number of comments raised concerns about a lack of support for specific long-term health conditions and disabilities, with some commenting that HMP & YOI Grampian did not appear well set-up to cater for those with disabilities. Comments included issues such as: not being given access to food products recommended by the doctor for a specific condition; not being given access to a single cell despite having a single cell marker from a medical professional; not being

given access to appropriate equipment for particular conditions such as specific mattresses or crutches; and non-smokers sharing cells with smokers.

Food

In total, 16 of those who left comments mentioned the food provided in the prison. The most common themes were portion sizes being too small, and the quality of the food being poor. Several respondents reported that they had witnessed staff eating prisoners' food. As one respondent commented:

“We are on limited portions for meals, but staff stand picking and eating food meant for prisoners. Staff take bowls of soup burgers, etc, they have unlimited access to food on outside so shouldn't be eating food that is meant for prisoners.”

Some also felt that the food available at mealtimes was not conducive to a healthy diet. As one person commented: “The food is adequate but not great unless you want to get fat! More salads, etc, would be beneficial.”

Progression

Fourteen respondents left comments relating to progression, with the most common issue being that it was difficult to access the programmes they needed due to lack of availability and long waiting lists. As one person commented:

“The programme waiting list is so long you may do your whole sentence before you get on the programme. It also affects your parole if you've not done programmes, but it's not your fault that the SPS is so far behind with programmes.”

Others noted that the programmes they needed to do were not available in HMP & YOI Grampian for long-term and life prisoners. Respondents noted that this meant they would have to be transferred to prisons elsewhere to complete their programmes, often a long way from their families. As one respondent explained:

“[We] don't have access to programmes here in Grampian, so when you have to do them you have to move to another jail and then you don't get your in-person visits from family as it too far to travel.”

Some reported that they had not had their Generic Programme Assessment (GPA), despite being in prison for several years, and several commented on wanting more access to programmes and courses that would help them find jobs and live safely in the community when they were released.

Family Contact

Fourteen respondents mentioned issues regarding family contact. Most of those who mentioned visits did so to highlight the issue of being held in a prison far from their families. In some cases, respondents had been moved to HMP & YOI Grampian from other parts of Scotland, while others highlighting fearing being transferred away

from their families in the northeast to other prisons in other parts of the country, either as prisoner swaps or in order to complete courses and programmes elsewhere.

Some also mentioned that visits did not always last as long as they should, and that they could not access visits as often as they should. In particular, some remands commented that they did not get access to the daily visits they are entitled to under the prison rules.

A handful of respondents commented on issues relating to phone use, including one respondent reporting that he did not get access to a phone during his first week in prison, and others reporting that they could not afford enough phone credit to maintain adequate contact with their families.

Transfers

Related to family contact, several respondents (12) raised the issue of prison transfers, with a number of respondents reporting that they had been, were due to be, or were worried that they might be transferred away from HMP & YOI Grampian to a prison in the central belt, in order to make space for prisoner swaps or to undertake programmes. A common sentiment was that the SPS “keeps shipping local boys down the road”. Several respondents noted that this was a cause of significant stress. As one commented:

“When you get transferred from prison to prison it is not good for people that are so far from their family.”

Another commented that:

“I missed getting visits from my daughter and grandchildren due to having to move to another jail [to do a course] that took a year and a half to do.”

Physical environment

The physical environment of the prison was raised in a number of comments (10), with issues including the cells being “freezing cold”, the tap water tasting and smelling bad; numerous prisoners having to sleep on mattresses on the floor due to a shortage of beds; faulty bedframes and poor-quality mattresses; a lack of storage; cracks in cell walls; and damaged snooker tables in the recreation areas.

Access to essentials

Poor access to basic necessities was mentioned in 10 comments, with issues including it being difficult to access clean towels, bedding and clothing; a shortage of cutlery; lack of access to clean water; and poor-quality clothing. Examples of such comments include:

“We get clean towels every 10 days if we are lucky.”

“There is times where we could go two/three weeks without bedding or t-shirts, etc. I have seen people having to eat with their hands because staff say there isn't any cutlery.”

“When I first came to jail didn't even get a change of socks or boxers, I had to wait till I got my own sent in which was a couple of weeks. I felt as if I was a bit of dirt.”

“We are supposed to be able to change our bedding once a week but this rarely happens, it is usually once every two or three weeks and we are told it is due to lack of bedding.”

Other issues

Finally, a number of other issues were raised by fewer than 10 respondents. These included: it being difficult to access personal property from outside the prison and that process taking a long time; complaints forms being ignored; concerns about the large quantity of illicit substances available inside the prison, including several people commenting that they began taking drugs inside prison due to the widespread availability and lack of other activities; poor support to practise non-Christian religions; difficulties arising from long-term prisoners sharing cells and halls with people on much shorter sentences; poor release support; and protection prisoners feeling unsafe when on shared halls with mainstream prisoners.

Appendix: Pre-Inspection Survey Comparative Data

HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Comparative Data

HMP & YOI Grampian in Comparison with all other closed establishments

This table shows a comparison between HMP & YOI Grampian (March 2024) and all other closed prison establishments in surveyed between 2022 and 2024 (eight establishments*). Where results are shown as statistically significant, this means that it is unlikely that the difference between HMP & YOI Grampian 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, the dataset included 150 respondents from HMP & YOI Grampian, and 1145 respondents in the weighted comparator group.

Colour coding:

No colour: No statistically significant difference between the two groups

Orange: HMP & YOI Grampian significantly more negative than the comparator group

Green: HMP & YOI Grampian significantly more positive than the comparator group

Question	HMP & YOI Grampian		Comparator Group	
	Number	% of valid responses	Number	% of valid responses
Was offered an induction	86	64%	388	61%
Was treated well/neutrally in reception	124	86%	990	90%
Able to shower every day	141	96%	1065	94%
Quality of food is good/very good	58	40%	378	34%
Always get enough to eat at mealtimes	12	8%	159	14%
Can have clothes washed at least once a week	132	92%	1001	90%
Feel safe all/most of the time	89	61%	641	57%
Have witnessed staff abusing, threatening, bullying or assaulting another prisoner in this prison	87	65%	569	56%
Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by staff member	61	44%	376	36%
Would/probably would report abuse etc. by staff	49	36%	395	38%

Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by another prisoner	59	45%	418	39%
Would/probably would report abuse etc. by other prisoners	24	19%	242	23%
Given a reasonable explanation every time/most times you or your cell is searched	39	28%	321	30%
System for accessing personal property works well	37	29%	291	30%
Treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	77	53%	685	61%
Complaints system works well	21	19%	172	21%
Have a Personal Officer	75	53%	620	56%
Personal officer is helpful (only those who said they have a PO)	36	49%	367	62%
Prisoners are consulted about canteen etc. and things can change as a result	18	16%	157	17%
Know the role of an IPM	81	56%	540	48%
Know how to contact an IPM	71	50%	431	39%
Last time contacted IPM it was helpful/neutral	40	77%	180	58%
Easy to access education	75	56%	552	56%
Easy to access skills training	30	25%	290	32%
Easy to access other prison jobs	40	31%	402	41%
Able to go to the gym/play sports at least once last week	127	93%	891	89%
Able to go to the library at least once last week	124	91%	430	50%
Able to spend at least one hour every day exercising in the fresh air last week	108	76%	759	68%
Able to spend more than 2 hours out of cell on previous weekday	85	60%	779	71%
Able to spend more than 2 hours out of cell on previous Saturday	72	50%	742	68%
Well/neutrally supported to practice religion	54	74%	381	76%
Able to have an in-person visit every week in last month	33	32%	527	59%
Visitors treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	62	57%	504	59%
Able to have video visit every week in last month	45	46%	350	51%
Know what courses need to undertake for progression (convicted only)	36	43%	171	50%
Easy to access the courses I need	0	0%	29	19%
Easy to access a doctor	37	27%	291	29%
Easy to access a nurse/nurse practitioner	68	50%	496	49%
Easy to access a dentist	24	20%	236	25%

Easy to access mental healthcare	25	23%	259	30%
Easy to access addictions services	42	46%	339	48%
Easy to access pharmacist	32	35%	317	41%
Easy to access prison-based social work	56	49%	186	42%
Easy to access medical appointments outside the prison	15	15%	168	23%
Good quality service from doctors	57	44%	408	44%
Good quality service from nurses/nurse practitioners	76	59%	583	60%
Good quality dental services	39	36%	363	45%
Good quality mental health services	36	36%	313	40%
Good quality addictions services	39	46%	328	51%
Good quality pharmacy services	32	36%	372	51%
Good quality PBSW service	58	52%	195	48%
Good/neutral support for managing disabilities/long-term health conditions	33	45%	189	52%
Received helpful support for alcohol use (only those who said they needed it)	4	13%	104	33%
Received helpful support for drug use (only those who said they needed it)	25	37%	238	50%
Received helpful support for mental health (only those who said they needed it)	31	28%	218	31%

*The prisons included in the comparator group were:

HMP Addiewell (2022)
HMP Inverness (2022)
HMP Shotts (2022)
HMP Greenock (2023)
HMP Edinburgh (2023)
HMP Perth (2023)
HMP & YOI Polmont (2023)
HMP & YOI Stirling (2024)