

HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Findings

HMP Kilmarnock
April 2025

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Executive Summary

Background

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Kilmarnock on 9-10 April 2025. The questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 230 prisoners held in HMP Kilmarnock on the first day of data collection, with a response rate of 73% (168 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

- Less than one-third (32%) of respondents said they were offered an induction on arrival at HMP Kilmarnock.
- Just over half of respondents (53%) said they were treated well in reception when they arrived at the prison.

Standard 2: Decency

- Most respondents said the quality of food was poor (79%), and 36% said they always or usually got enough to eat at mealtimes.
- Most respondents said they were able to have a shower every day (88%).
- Most (90%) said they were able to have their clothes washed at least once a week.

Standard 3: Personal safety

- Just over half of respondents (57%) said they felt safe in HMP Kilmarnock all or most of the time.
- Half of respondents (50%) said they had witnessed staff members abusing, bullying, threatening or assaulting another prisoner at HMP Kilmarnock, and (32%) said that staff had abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted them.
- Two-in-five (40%) respondents reported that they had been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by another prisoner in HMP Kilmarnock.
- Most respondents said they would not, or probably would not, report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied, or assaulted by a staff member (65%) or a fellow prisoner (77%).

Standard 4: Effective, courteous and humane use of authority

- Just over a third (36%) of respondents said they were given a reasonable explanation every time they or their cell was searched by prison staff.
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents reported that the system for accessing their personal property worked badly.

Standard 5: Respect, autonomy and protection against mistreatment

- Almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) said they were treated with respect all or most of the time by staff.

- The majority of respondents (71%) reported that the prison did not consult prisoners for their opinions on issues such as food, canteen, and healthcare.
- Most respondents (85%) said that the complaints system worked quite badly or very badly.
- One-third of respondents (33%) said that they had a personal officer, while the majority either said they did not have one, or they did not know.

Standard 6: Purposeful activity

- Over half of respondents (59%) said that it was easy to access education and just over half (53%) reported that it was easy to access prison jobs.
- Fewer than half (40%) reported that it was easy to access skills training.
- Under two-thirds (63%) said they were able to access their legal entitlement to one hour outdoors in the fresh air every day during the previous week
- The majority (90%) said they could go to the gym and/or play sports at least once during the previous week, and 66% said they could visit the library at least once.
- The majority of respondents (79%) said they were able to spend more than two hours out of their cell during the previous weekday (a Tuesday), while 65% said they were able to do so on the previous Saturday.
- Of those who said they practiced a religion, just over half (53%) reported feeling well supported to do so.
- The majority of respondents (96%) said they had access to an in-cell prison-issued personal phone.
- Most (73%) said that they were able to access in-person visits every week, but only 39% reported having access to video-call visits every week.
- Of those who received visits, just over half (58%) reported that their visitors were treated with respect all or most of the time by prison staff.
- Of those who said they knew what courses/programmes they needed to undertake to progress through their sentences, most (65%) said these courses were difficult to access or unavailable at HMP Kilmarnock.

Standard 9: Health and wellbeing

- Most respondents (84%) said they were seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival at HMP Kilmarnock for an assessment of their health needs.
- Most respondents reported that it was difficult to access most health services. For example, 91% said it was difficult to access dental services, 84% said it was difficult to access medical appointments outside the prison, and 82% said it was difficult to access a GP.
- Most respondents rated most medical services as poor. For example, 84% rated the dental services as poor, 79% rated the GP services as poor, and 66% rated mental healthcare as poor.
- Of those who said they had a disability or long-term health condition, 65% said they were poorly supported to manage their condition.
- Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 37% said they had received support that had been helpful.
- Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, 47% they had been given support that had been helpful.
- Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health, 27% said they had been given helpful support.

Introduction

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Kilmarnock on 9-10 April 2025.

A random sample of 230 prisoners held in HMP Kilmarnock on the first day of data collection were asked to complete the survey, of whom 168 completed and returned the questionnaire, providing a 73% response rate.

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 Kilmarnock, 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 in the list. The prisoner list was then ordered from the lowest to highest random number, and the first 230 names on the list were selected to take part in the survey. This method ensures that the selection of participants is entirely randomised. 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 several 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 majority of respondents reported being white (95%), male (100%) and holding UK citizenship (92%). Over half (60%) reported having a religion, with the most common being Church of Scotland (21%), Roman Catholic (15%) and Other Christian (8%). One in 10 (10%) reported having a non-Christian religion.

The majority of respondents said they had been in HMP Kilmarnock for less than three years (80%). One quarter (25%) said they were on remand, 42% said they were serving a sentence of four years or more, and 28% were serving short sentences. Four per cent said they were held on an Order for Lifelong Restriction (OLR).

More than half of the sample population reported having a disability or long-term health condition (54%).

Sample representativeness

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

The sample population closely matched the whole population across most characteristics, particularly in relation to age group, gender, ethnicity and nationality. The youngest age-group – those aged 21-30 – made up 21% of the sample, and 21% of the whole population. The 31-40 age group was slightly under-represented (37% of the sample compared with 41% of the whole population). And the older age-groups were slightly over-represented, with those aged 41-50 making up 27% of the sample (and 24% of the whole population) and those aged over 50 making up 16% of the sample, compared with 14% of the whole population.

Overall, 95% of the sample population said that they were white, compared to 96% of the whole population, and 92% said they were UK citizens, compared to 93% of the whole population.

Remand prisoners were somewhat underrepresented in the sample (25% compared with 35% of the whole population), while short-term convicted prisoners were somewhat overrepresented (42% of the sample compared with 33% of the whole population). Long-term convicted prisoners were precisely represented, making up 32% of the sample and 32% of the whole population.

Characteristics of sample population compared to characteristics of whole population of HMP Kilmarnock (%)¹

	Sample population*	Whole population
Age group		
21-30	34 (21%)	127 (21%)
31-40	62 (37%)	240 (41%)
41-50	44 (27%)	140 (24%)
51 or over	26 (16%)	85 (14%)
Total	166 (101%)	592 (100%)
Sex		
Male	163 (100%)	592 (100%)
Female	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	163 (100%)	592 (100%)
Ethnicity		
White	143 (95%)	571 (96%)
Non-white	8 (5%)	21 (4%)
Total	151 (100%)	592 (100%)
Citizenship		
UK	140 (92%)	552 (93%)
Non-UK	13 (8%)	40 (7%)
Total	153 (100%)	592 (100%)
Prisoner type		
Remand	42 (25%)	206 (35%)
Short-term	70 (42%)	195 (33%)
Long-term/life/life recall/OLR	53 (32%)	191 (32%)
Total	165 (99%)	592 (100%)

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

¹ Due to rounding, totals do not always add up precisely to 100%.

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

Induction

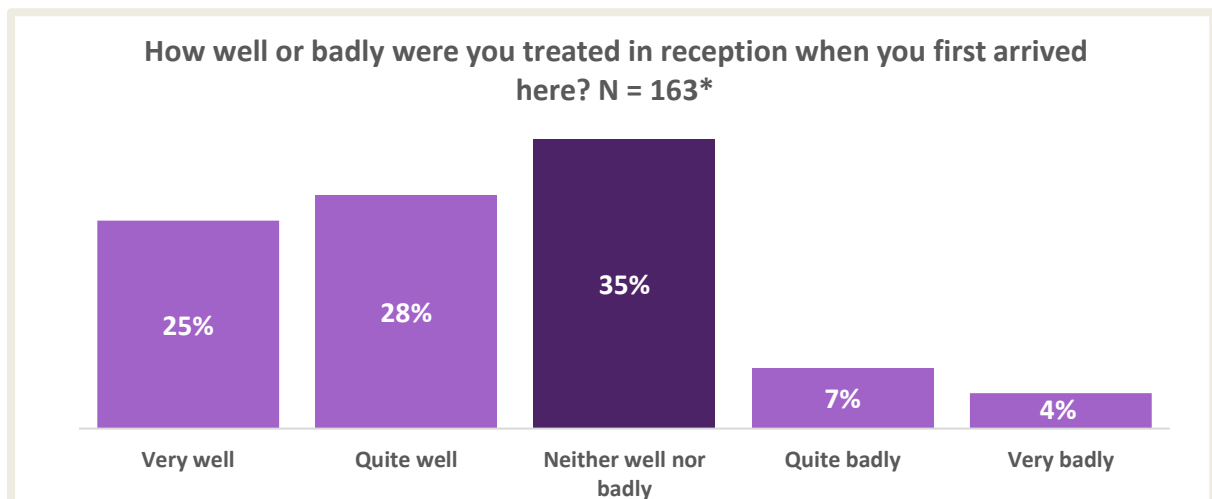
Of those who could remember, fewer than one-third respondents (32%) said they were offered an induction when they arrived at HMP Kilmarnock.



*Excluding "don't remember"

Treatment in reception

Just over half of respondents (53%) said they were treated well in reception when they arrived at HMP Kilmarnock, with a further 35% saying they were treated "neither well nor badly".

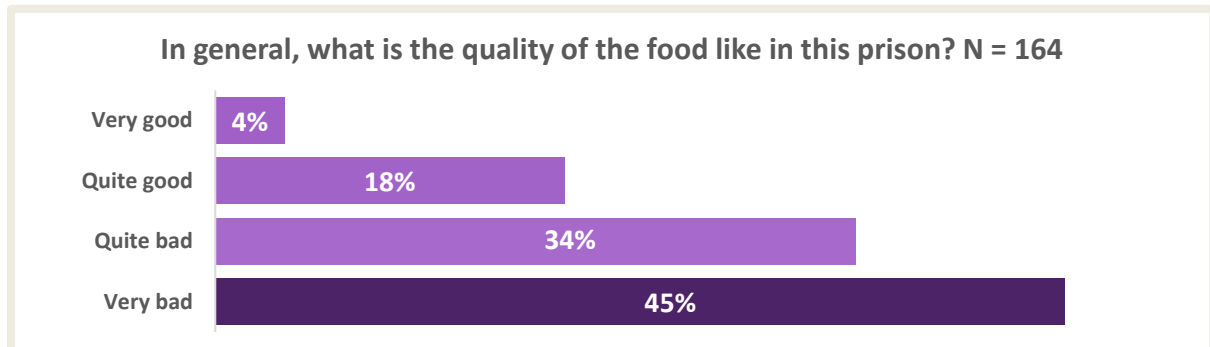


*Excluding "don't remember"

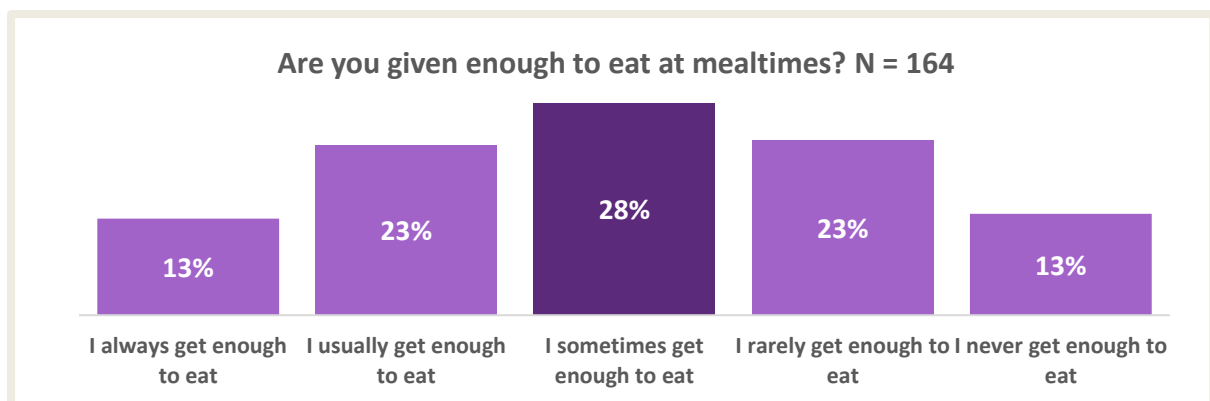
Standard 2: Decency

Food

Overall, respondents were generally negative about the quality of food available at HMP Kilmarnock, with 79% describing it as bad or very bad.

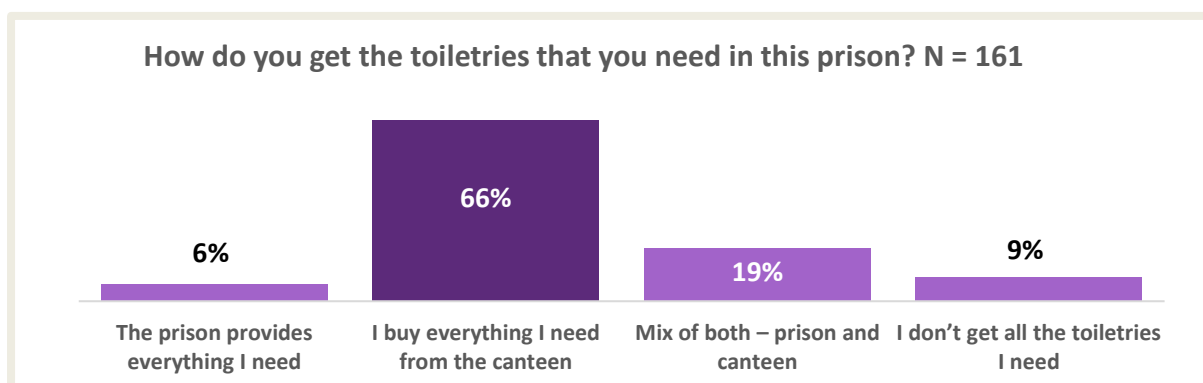


Just over one-third of respondents (36%) reported always or usually getting enough to eat, while 28% said they sometimes got enough to eat. Over one-third (36%) said they rarely or never got enough to eat.

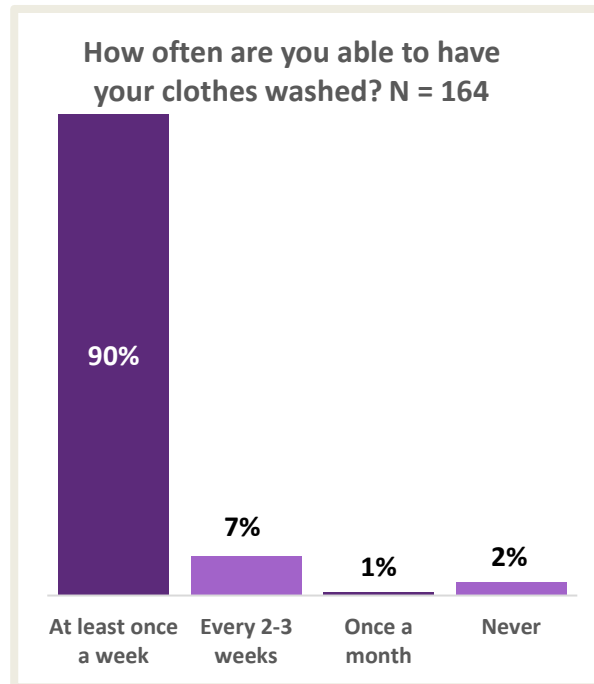
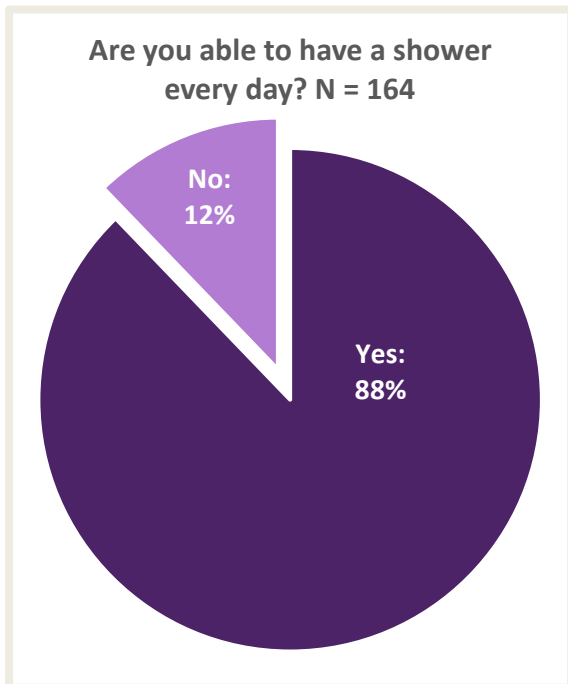


Toiletries, showering and laundry

Most respondents (66%) reported that they bought all the toiletries they needed from the prison canteen, while only 6% reported that the prison provided all the toiletries that they needed.



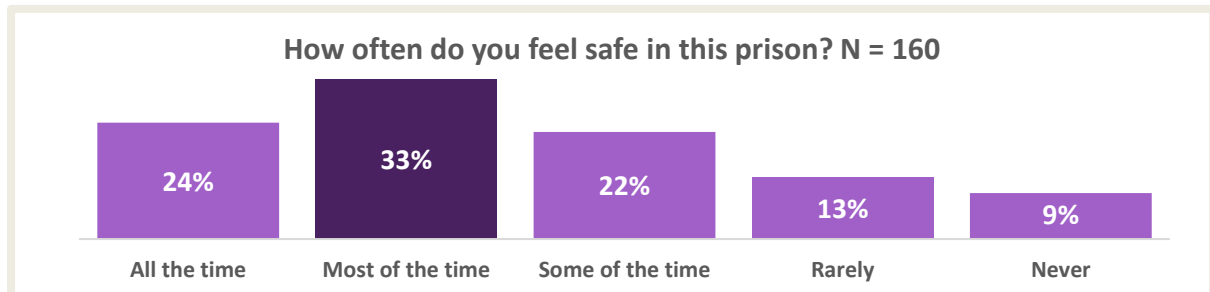
Most respondents (88%) said they were able to have a shower every day, and most (90%) said they could get their clothes washed at least once a week.



Standard 3: Personal Safety

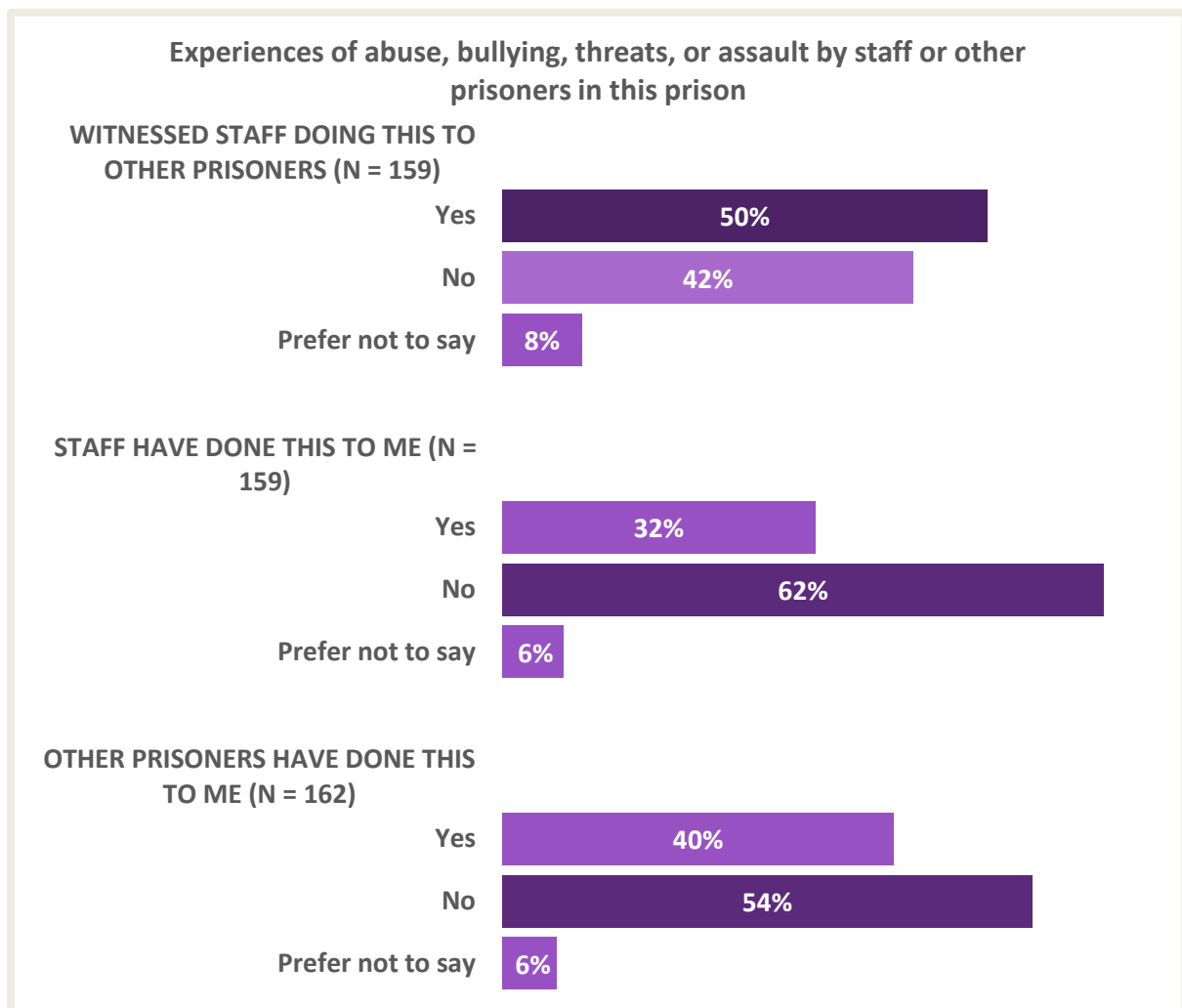
Perception of safety

Just over half of respondents (57%) said that they felt safe all or most of the time in HMP Kilmarnock. More than one-in-five (22%) said they rarely or never felt safe.



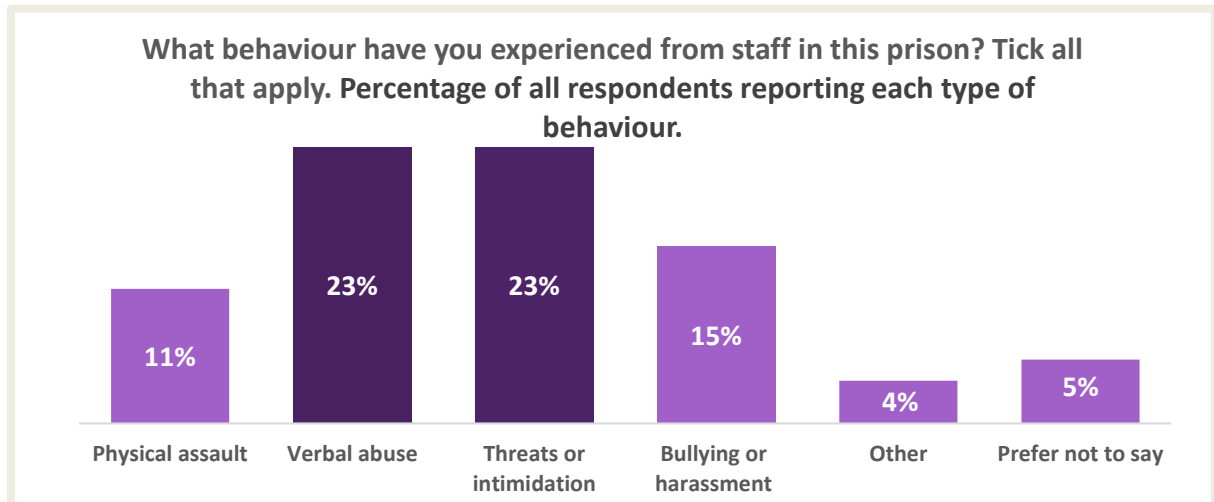
Abuse, threats, bullying or assault by staff or other prisoners

Half of respondents (50%) said they had witnessed staff members abusing, bullying, threatening or assaulting another prisoner at HMP Kilmarnock, while almost a third (32%) said that staff had abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted them.

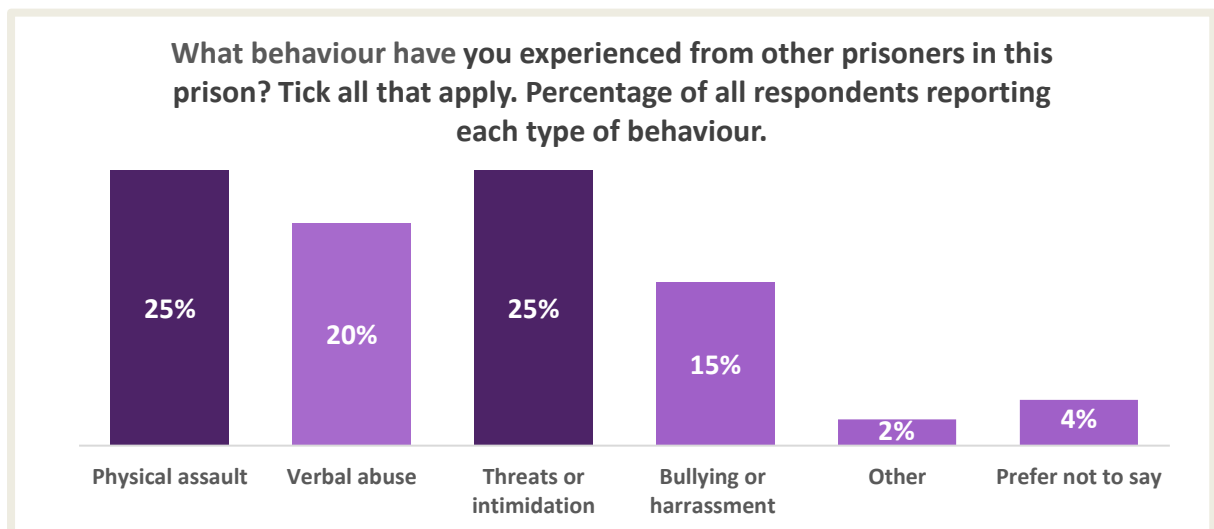


Two-in-five (40%) respondents reported that they had been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by another prisoner in HMP Kilmarnock.

When asked what type of negative behaviour they themselves had experienced from staff, the most common responses were: verbal abuse (23%), threats or intimidation (23%), and bullying or harassment (15%). Just over one-in-10 (11%) alleged being the victims of physical assault by staff, and 4% reported “other” forms of abuse.



When asked about the types of negative behaviour experienced from other prisoners, the most common responses were threats or intimidation (25%) and physical assault (25%), as well as verbal abuse (20%) and bullying or harassment (15%).



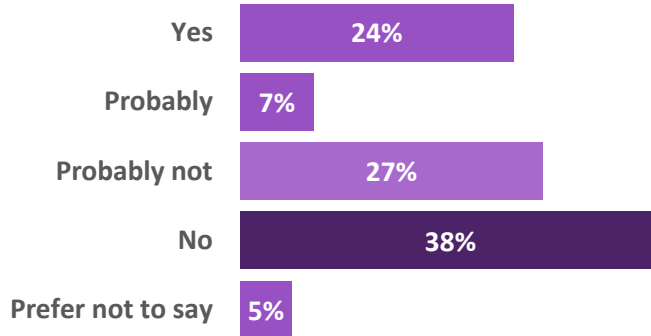
Reporting abuse, threats, bullying or assault

The majority of respondents (65%) said they would not, or probably would not, report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied, or assaulted by a staff member.

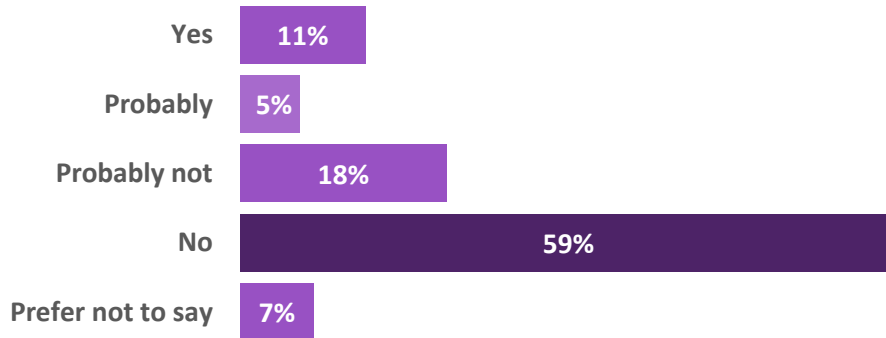
Most (77%) also said that they would not report abuse, threats, bullying, or assault by other prisoners.

Would you report it if you were abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted?

BY A STAFF MEMBER? (N = 152)



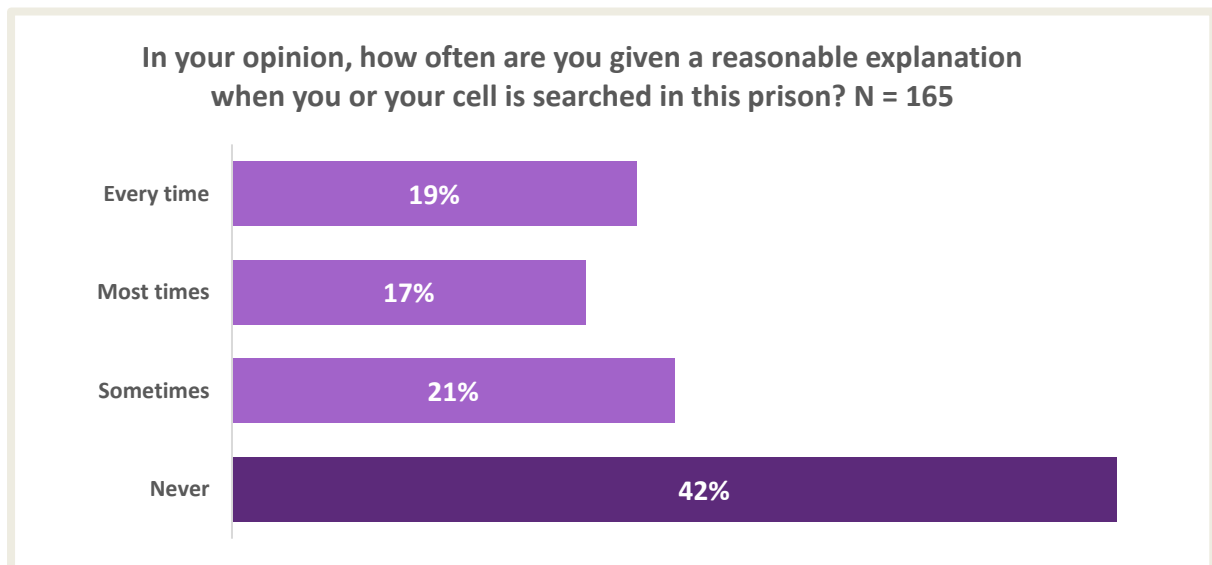
BY A PRISONER? (N = 152)



Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

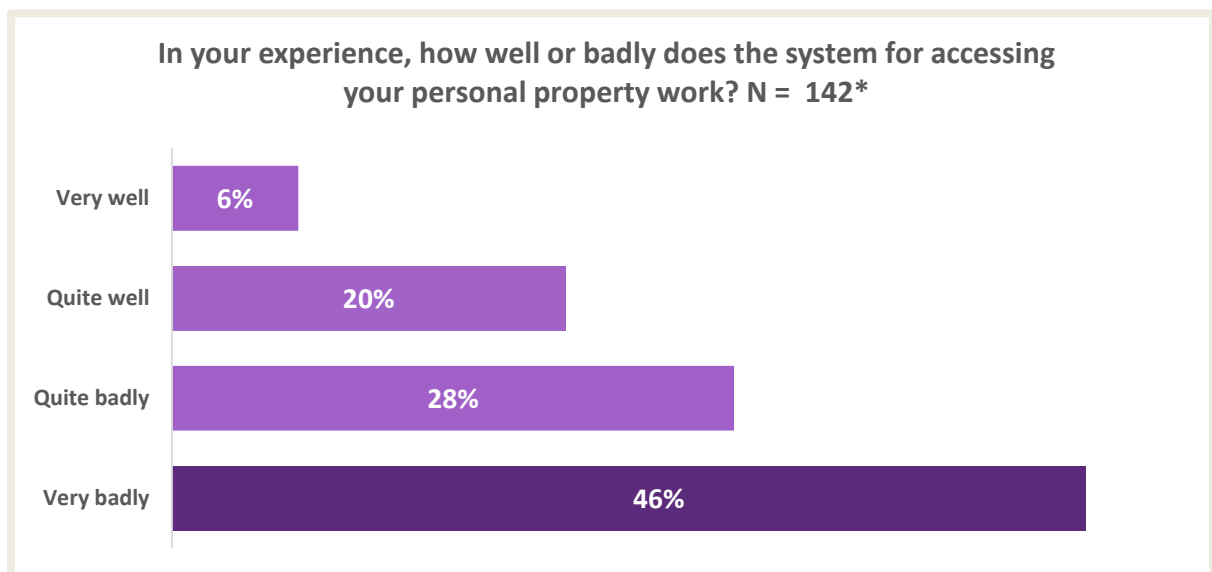
Searching

Just over a third (36%) of respondents said they were given a reasonable explanation every time or most times they or their cell was searched by prison staff. However, the most common response (42%) was that they were never given a reasonable explanation.



Accessing personal property

Almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents reported that the system for accessing their personal property worked badly.

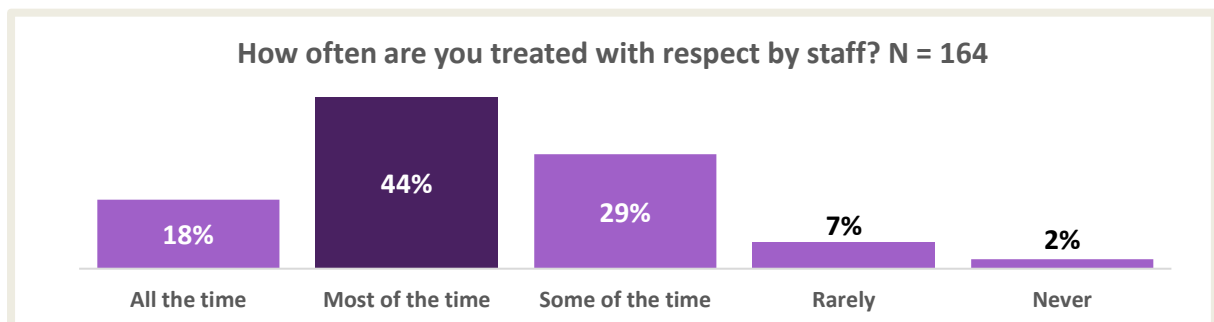


*Excludes "don't know"

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection against Mistreatment

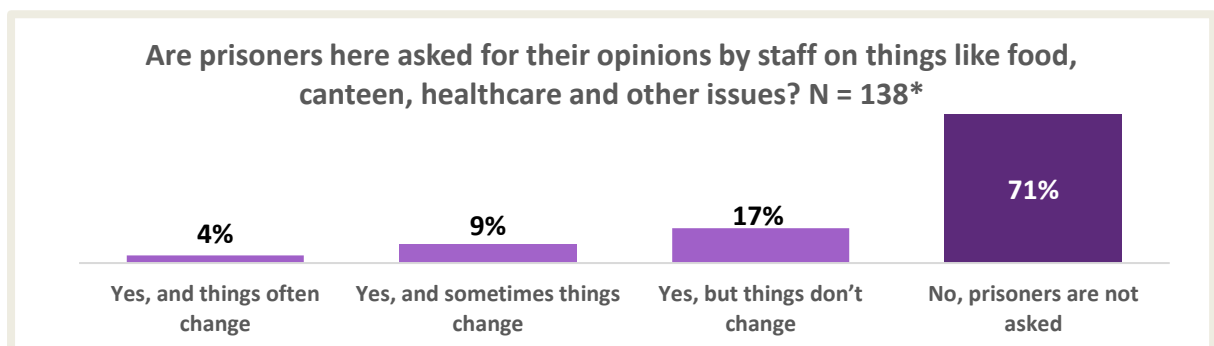
Respect

Almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) said they were treated with respect all or most of the time by staff. Fewer than one-in-10 (9%) said they were rarely or never treated with respect.



Consultation with prisoners

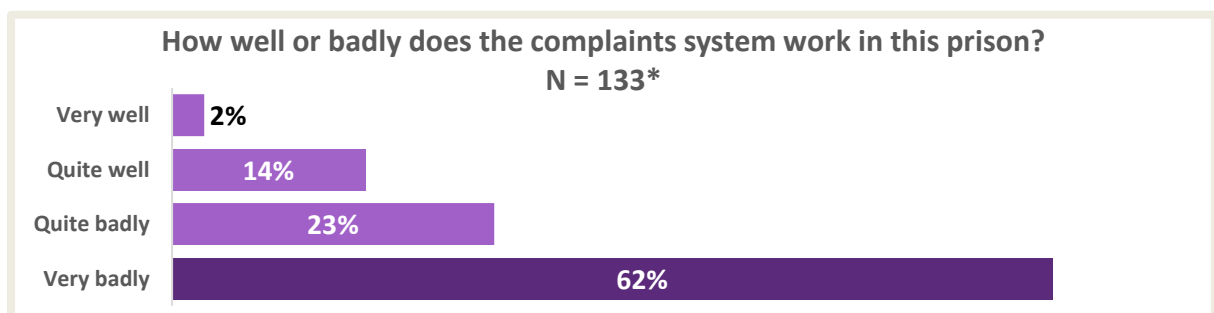
The majority of respondents (71%) reported that the prison did not consult prisoners for their opinions on issues such as food, canteen, and healthcare. Only 13% felt that the prison did ask for prisoners' opinions, and that things sometimes or often changed as a result.



*Excludes "don't know".

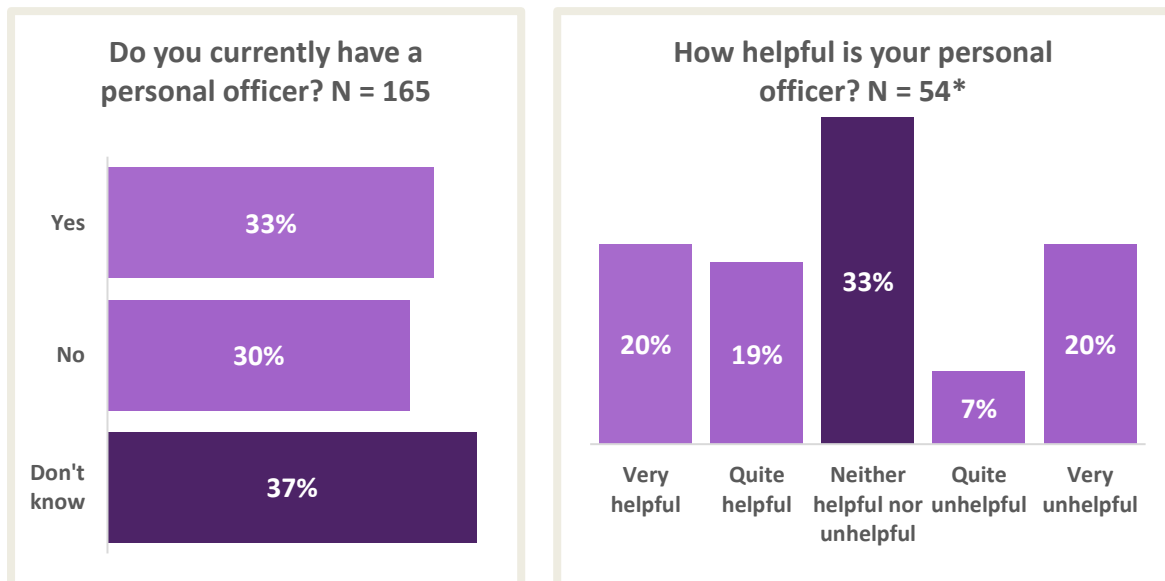
Complaints

Most respondents (85%) said that the complaints system worked quite badly or very badly.



Personal officers

One-third of respondents (33%) said that they had a personal officer, while the majority either said they did not have one, or they did not know.

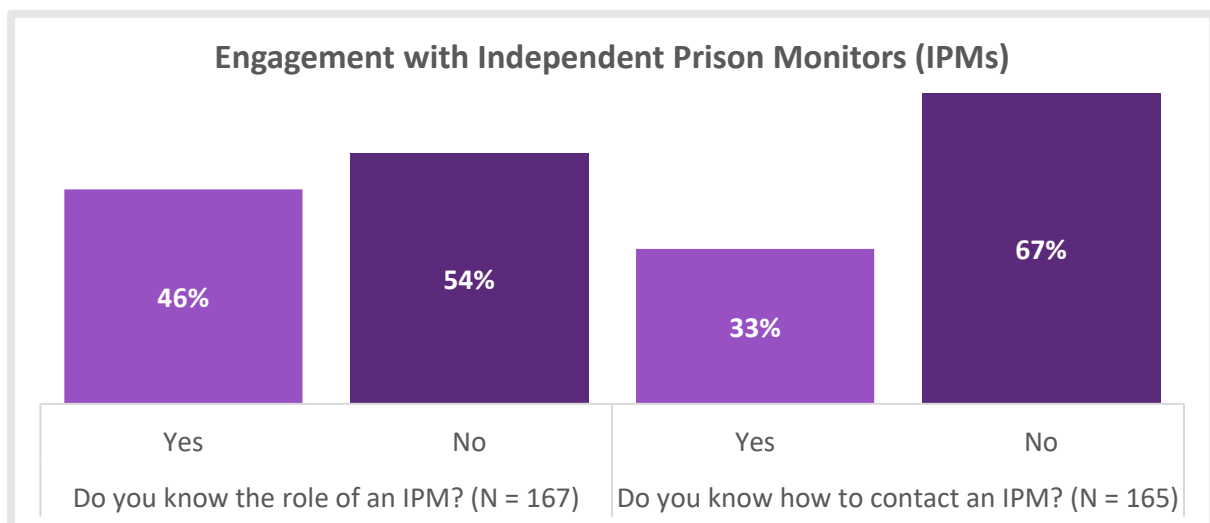


**Only responses from those who said they had a personal officer.*

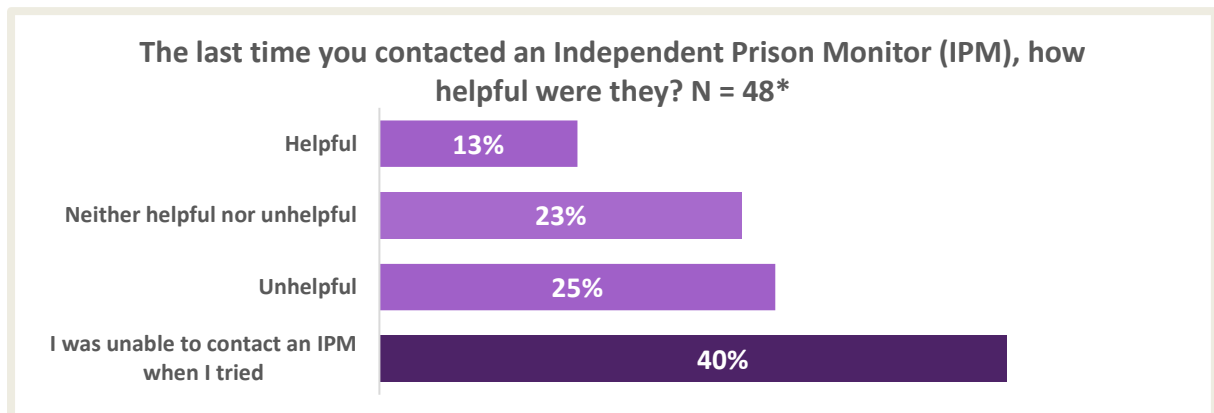
Those who said they had a personal officer were asked how helpful their personal officer was. Of the 54 people who responded, less than half (39%) said their personal officer was helpful.

Engagement with Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs)

Just under half (46%) of respondents said they knew the role of the HMIPS Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs) and one-third (33%) said they knew how to contact an IPM.



The majority of respondents had never attempted to contact the IPM service. Of those who had (48 respondents), 13% had found the service to be helpful, and 25% had found it to be unhelpful. Two-in-five (40%) reported that they were unable to contact an IPM when they tried.



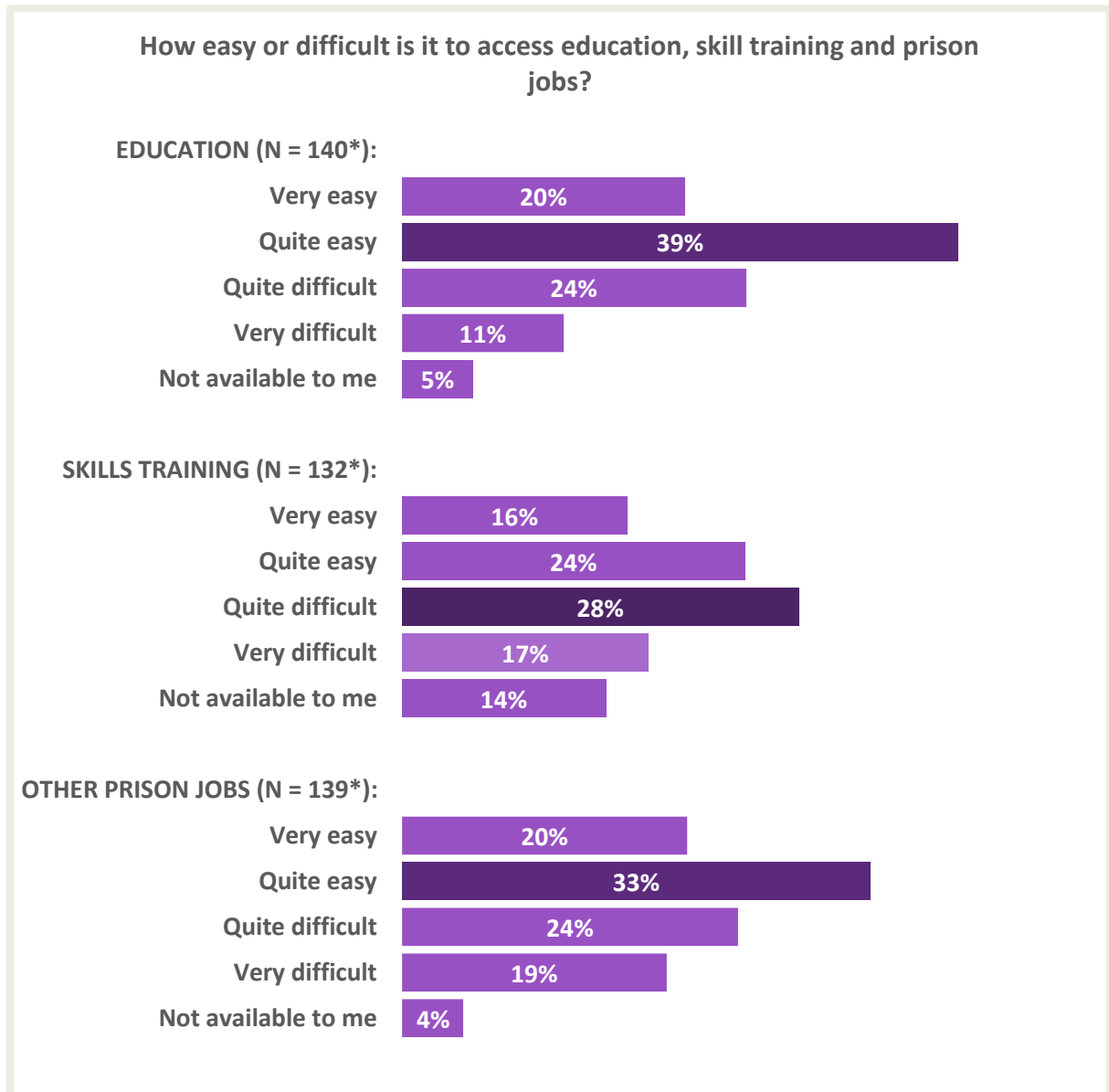
**Excludes "I have never tried to contact an IPM"*

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

Access to education, training and work

Excluding those who did not know the answer to the question, more than half of respondents (59%) said that it was easy to access education at HMP Kilmarnock. Just over half (53%) also reported that it was easy to access prison jobs.

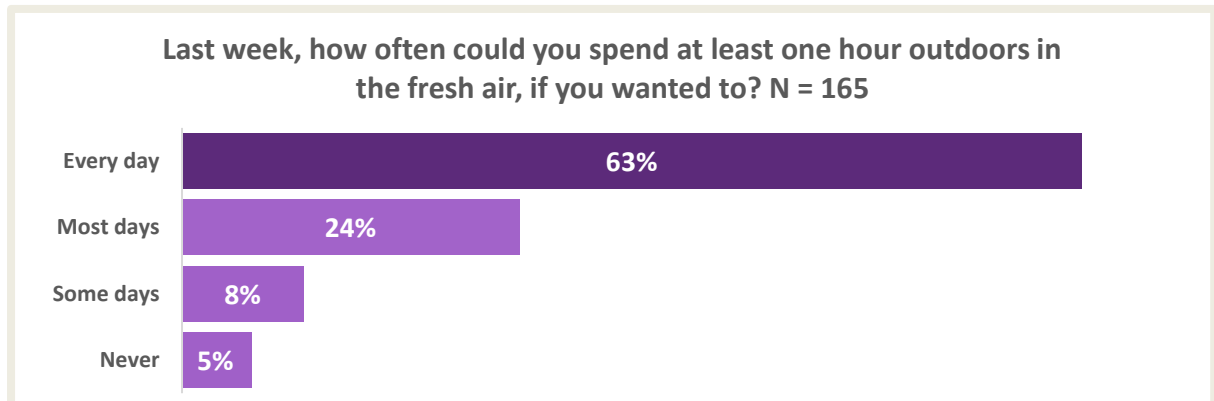
However, fewer than half (40%) reported that it was easy to access skills training.



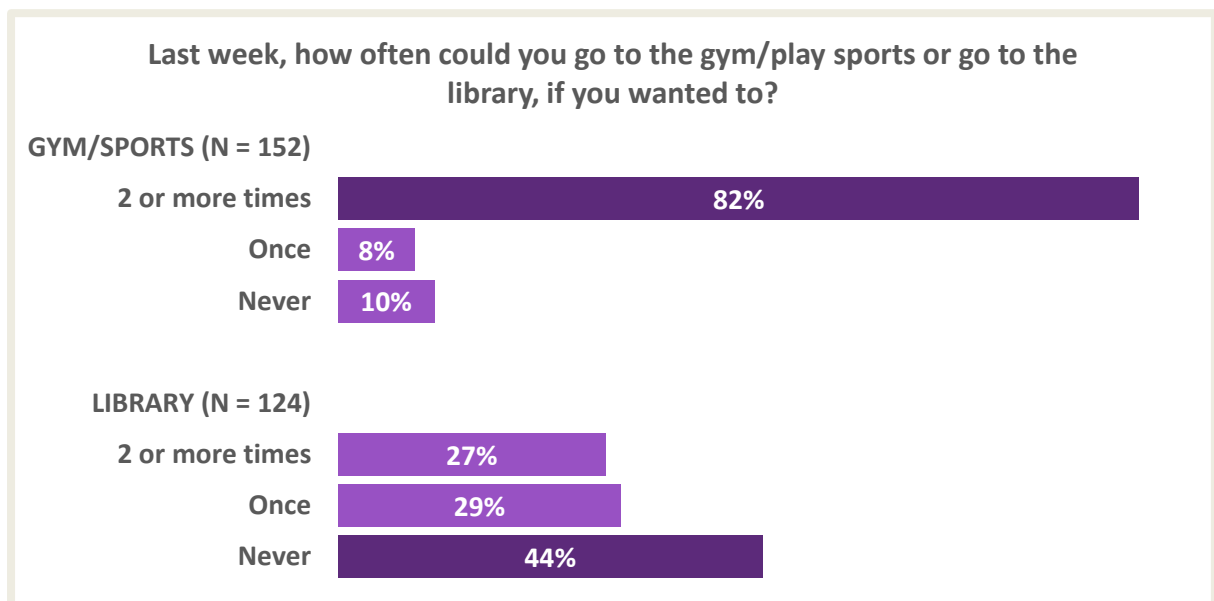
*Excluding "Don't know"

Fresh air, gym/sports and library access

Fewer than two-thirds (63%) of respondents reported that they were able to access their legal entitlement to one hour outdoors in the fresh air every day during the previous week, with a quarter (24%) reporting this was only possible on “most days”.

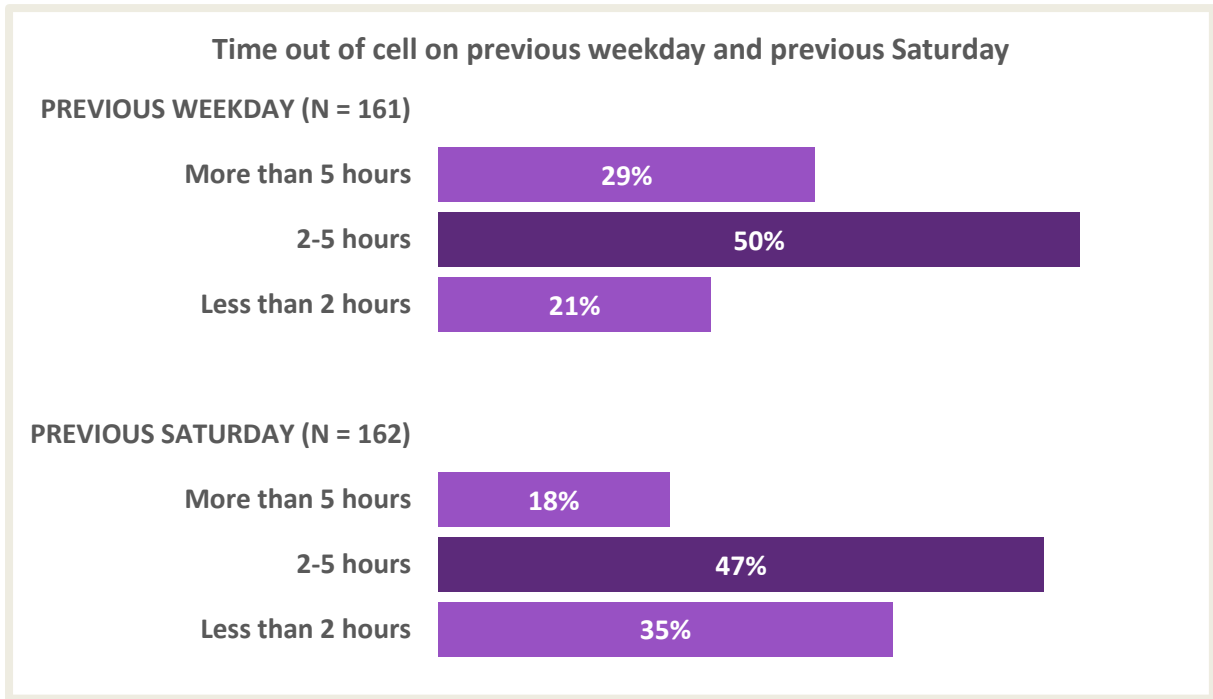


The majority of respondents (90%) said they were able to go to the gym and/or play sports at least once during the previous week, although a smaller percentage (56%) said they had an opportunity to visit the library at least once in the same week.



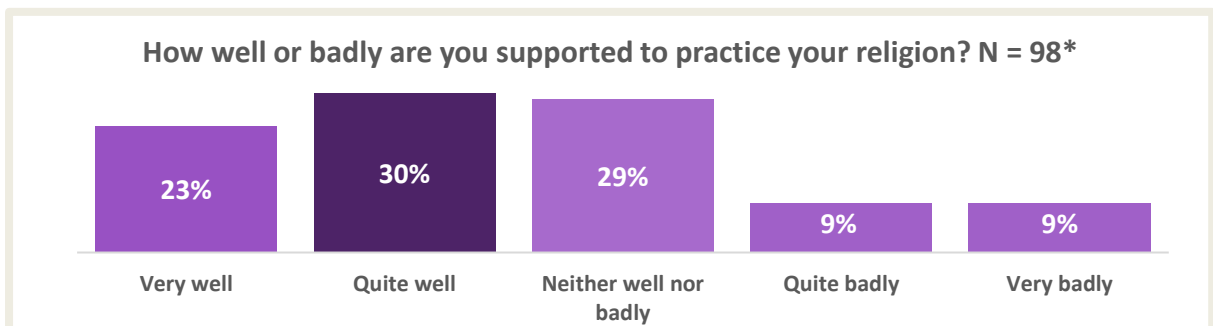
Time out of cell

The majority of respondents (79%) said they were able to spend more than two hours out of their cell during the previous weekday (a Tuesday), while 65% said they were able to do so on the previous Saturday.



Religious practice

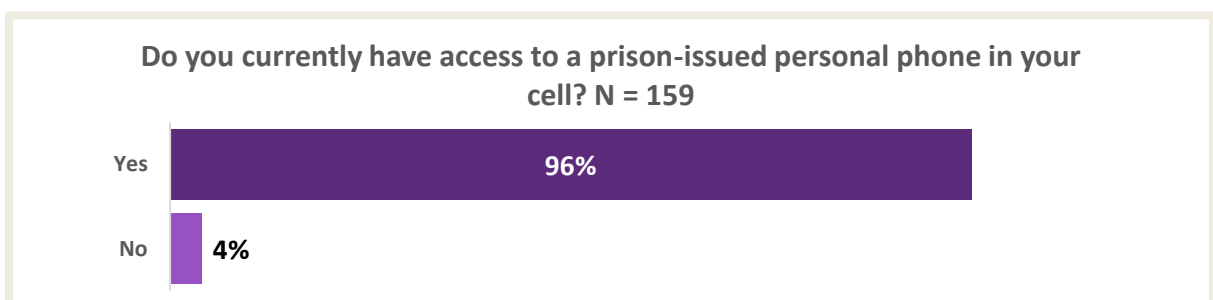
Of those who said they practiced a religion (98 respondents), more than half (53%) reported feeling well supported to do so, and a further 29% said they were “neither well nor badly” supported. Almost one-in-five (18%) reported being poorly supported to practice their religion.



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

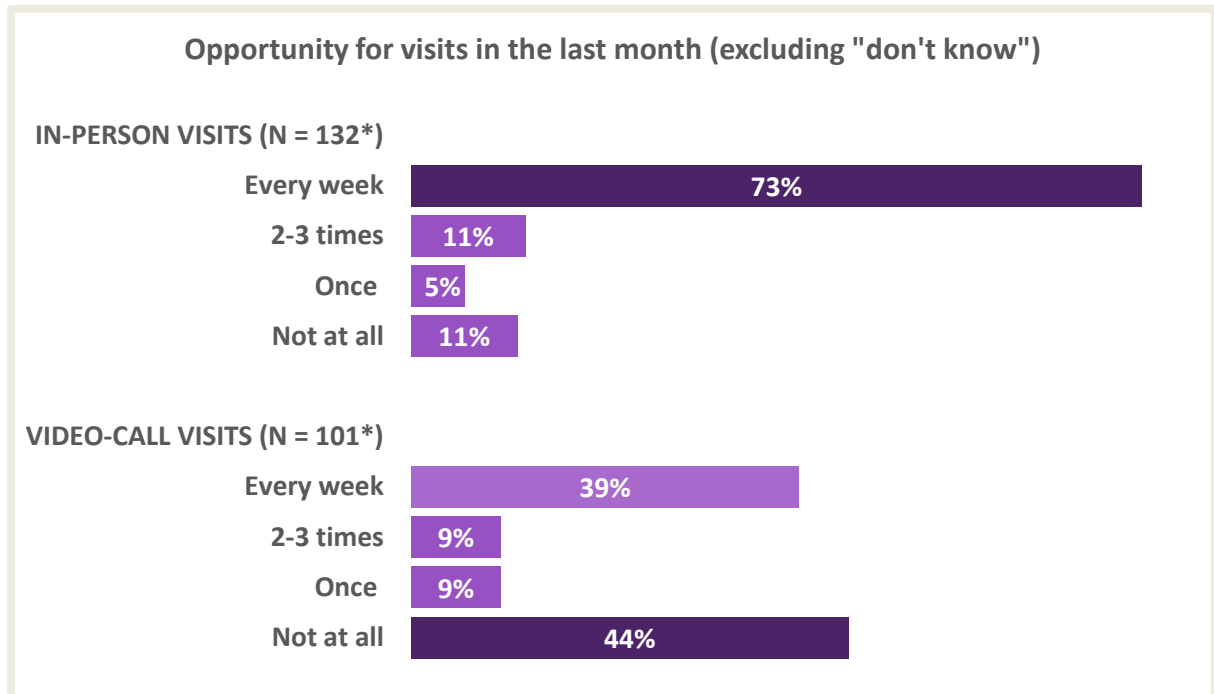
Phones

The majority of respondents (96%) said they had access to an in-cell prison-issued personal phone.

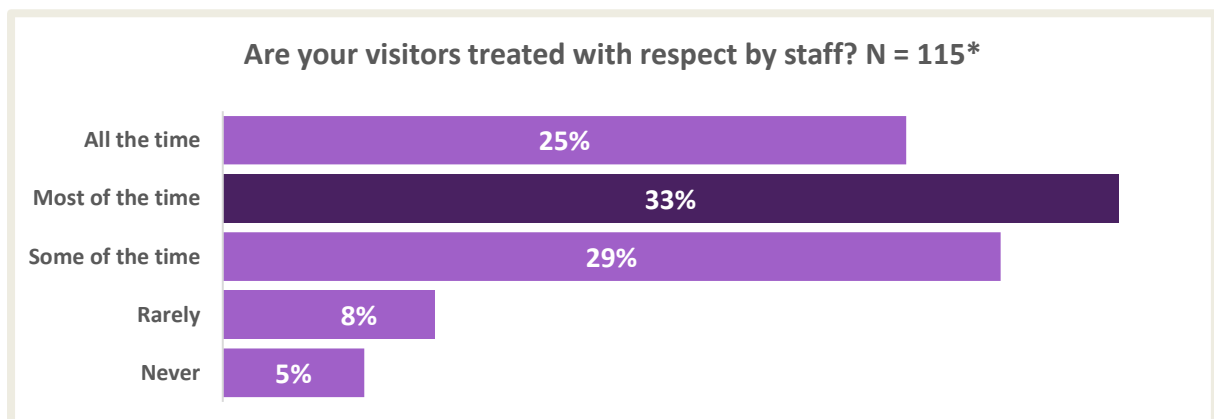


Visits

Of those who reported being aware of the availability of visits, the majority (73%) said that they were able to access in-person visits every week. However, only around two-in-five (39%) reported having access to video-call visits every week.



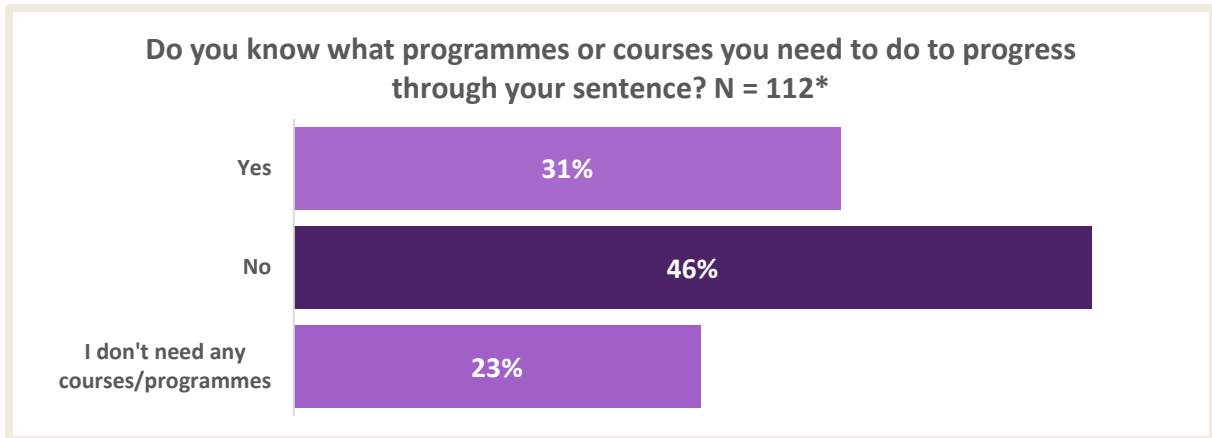
Of those who received visits, just over half (58%) reported that their visitors were treated with respect all or most of the time by prison staff. More than one-in-ten (13%) reported that their visitors were rarely or never treated with respect by staff.



**Excludes "Not applicable - I don't receive visits"*

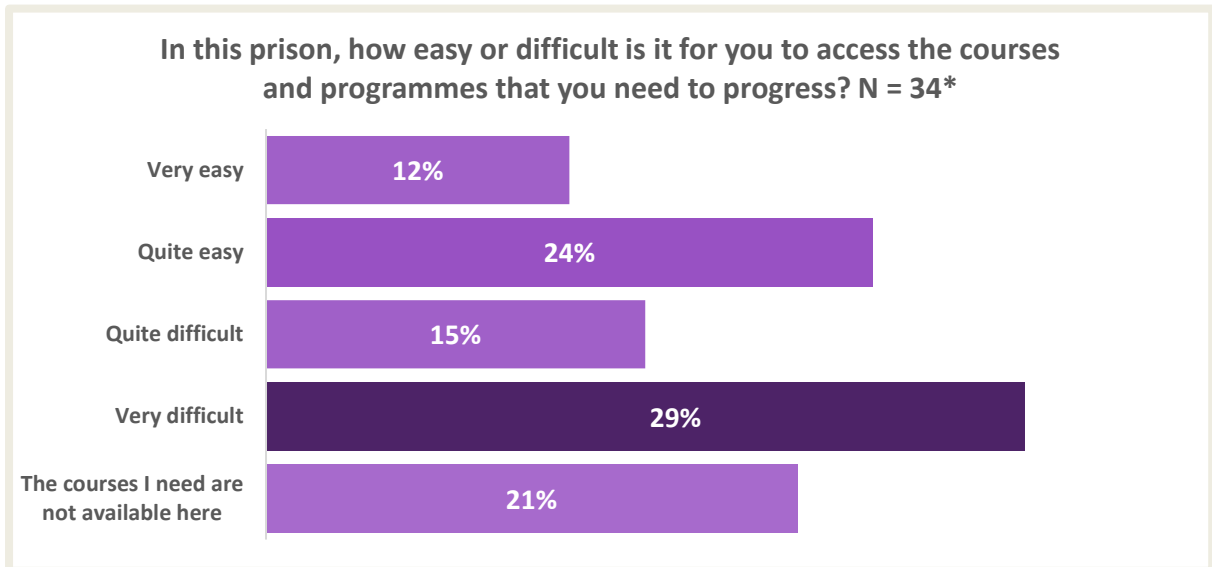
Progression and case management support

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, fewer than one third (31%) said they knew what programmes they needed to do to progress, while 46% said they did not know.



**Convicted respondents only*

Of those who said they knew what courses/programmes they needed to undertake to progress through their sentences (34 respondents), most (65%) reported that the courses they needed to do were difficult to access or unavailable at HMP Kilmarnock.



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

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

Health assessment on arrival

Most respondents (84%) said that they were seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival at HMP Kilmarnock for an assessment of their health needs.



*Excluding "don't remember".

Access to health services

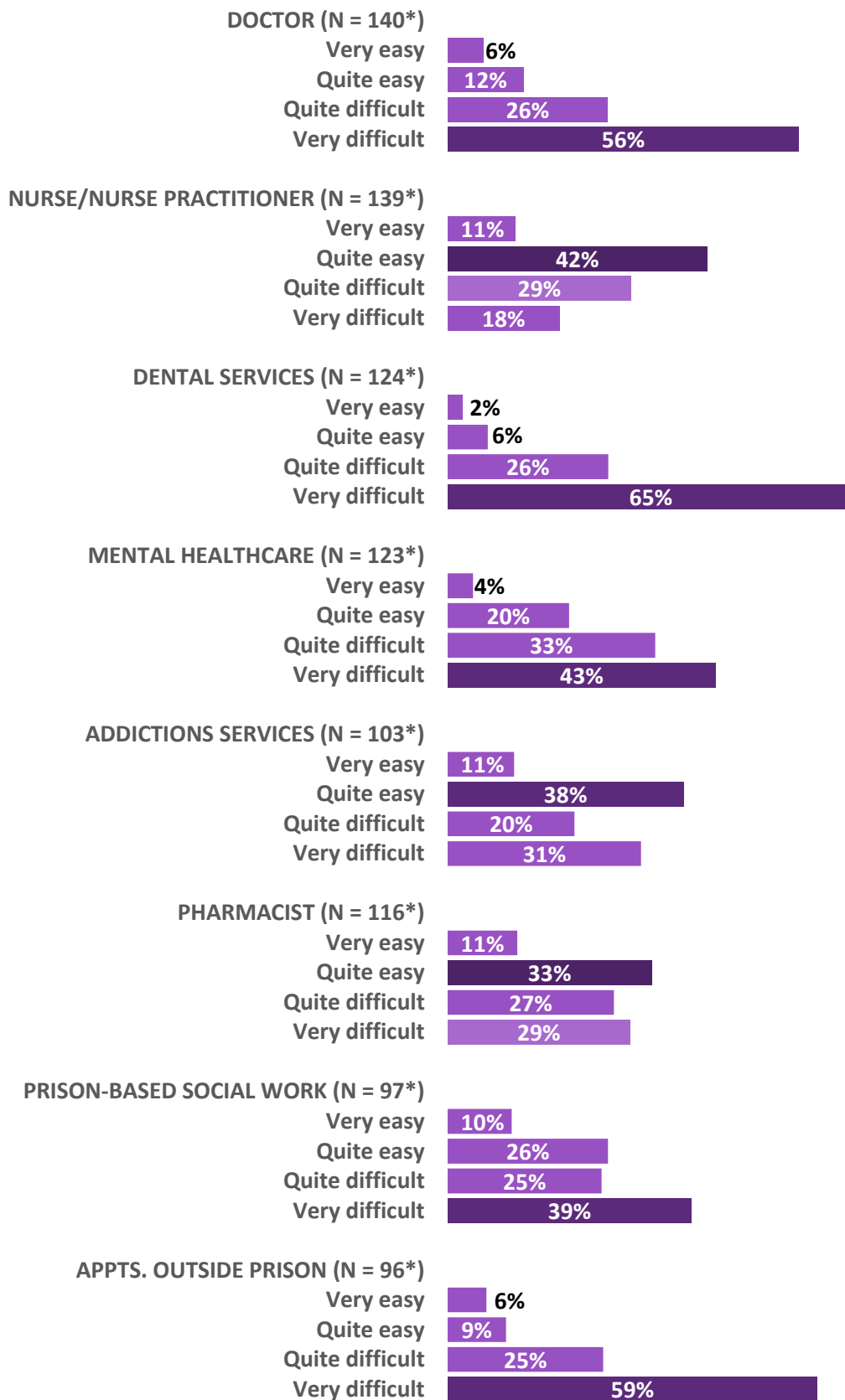
The majority (93%) of respondents said they knew how to access health services in HMP Kilmarnock.

However, as the chart below shows, most respondents reported that it was difficult to access most health services. For example:

- 82% said it was difficult to access a doctor
- 91% said it was difficult to access dental services
- 76% said it was difficult to access mental health services
- 84% said it was difficult to access medical appointments outside the prison (e.g. hospital appointments)
- 51% said it was difficult to access addictions services
- And 56% said it was difficult to access a pharmacist.

Just over half of respondents (53%) reported that it was easy to access a nurse/nurse practitioner.

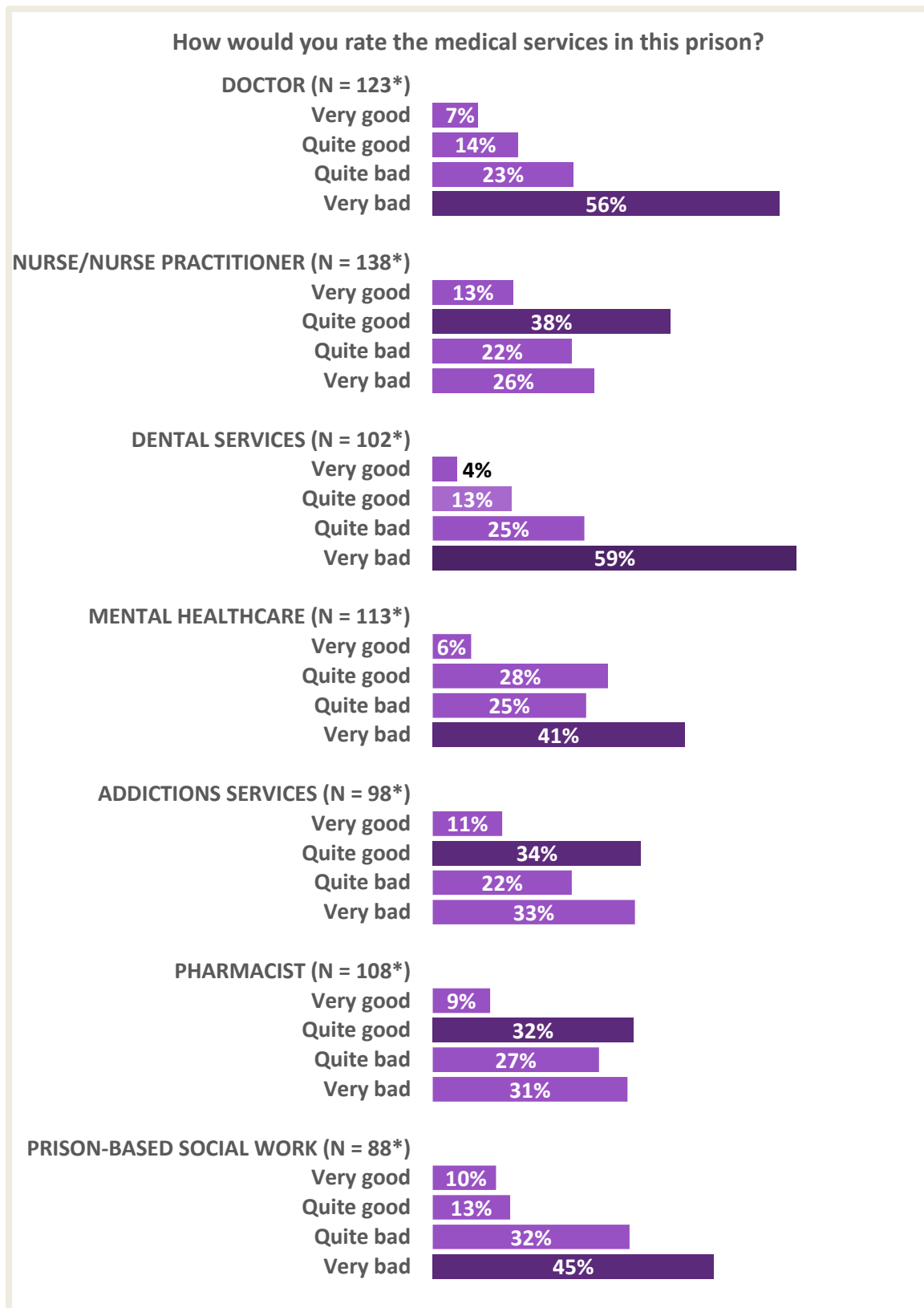
How easy or difficult is it to access health services in this prison?



*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 Kilmarnock.



*Excluding "don't know".

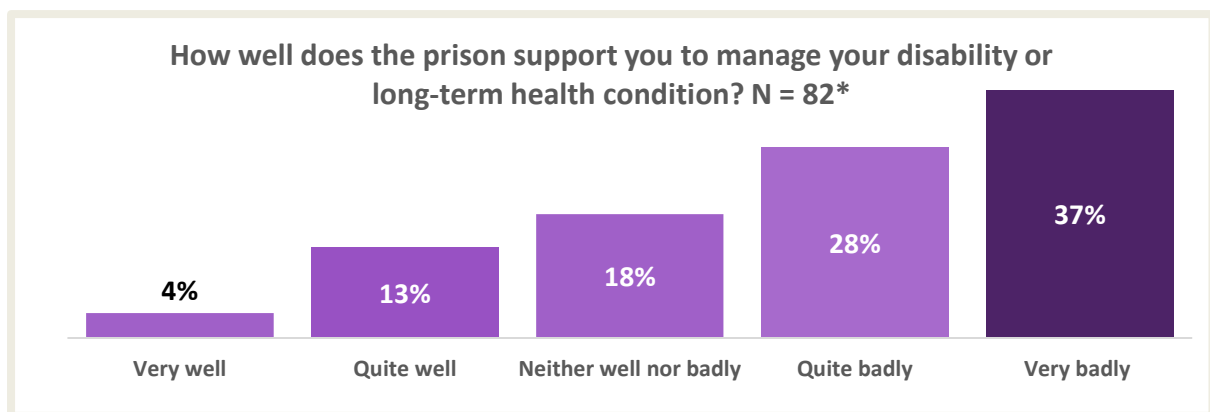
The quality of most healthcare services in HMP Kilmarnock was rated as poor by a majority of respondents. For example:

- 79% rated the quality of service from prison doctors as poor
- 84% rated the quality of service from dental services as poor
- 66% rated the quality of service from mental healthcare as poor
- 55% rated the quality of addictions services as poor
- 58% rated the quality of pharmacy services as poor.

The quality of service provided by nurses and nurse practitioners was rated positively by just over half of respondents, with 51% describing it as “quite good” or “very good”.

Support for disabilities and long-term health conditions

In total, 54% of respondents reported having a disability or long-term health condition. When asked about the support provided to help manage their conditions, the majority (65%) reported that they were poorly supported. Only 17% reported that they were well supported.



**Excluding those who did not self-report a disability or long-term health condition.*

Support for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and mental health

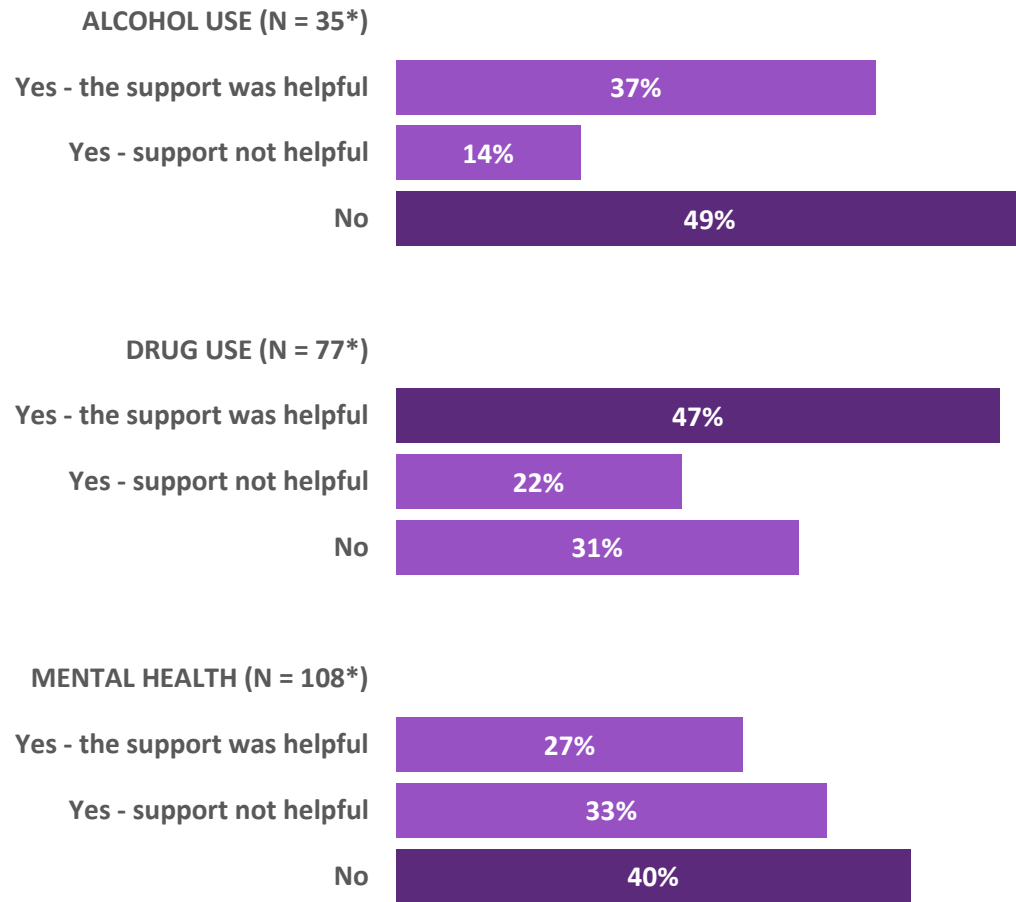
The survey asked about the support provided to those who needed help with alcohol use, drug use, and mental health issues.

Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 51% reported having been offered support, while 49% said they had not been offered support. In total, 37% said they had received support that 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, while 31% said they had not been offered support. Almost half (47%) said they had been given support that had been helpful.

Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health, 60% said they had been offered support, while 40% said they had not. Just over one-quarter (27%) said the support they had been given had been helpful.

If needed, have you received support for issues relating to alcohol use, drug use and/or mental health?



**Excluding "I have not needed this support".*

Open Question (General Comments): Thematic Analysis

In total, 96 respondents (57%) left comments at the end of the questionnaire, where participants were invited to provide open-text comments on their experience in HMP Kilmarnock. The most common issues arising from the comments related to healthcare, food, relationships with staff, the physical environment and facilities, regime and purposeful activity, progression and personal property.

Healthcare

Forty people left comments regarding healthcare generally, with a further 15 commenting on addictions and addictions support, and 11 on mental health. In-keeping with the quantitative survey responses, one of the most common issues raised was access to healthcare. Respondents particularly reported difficulties accessing GPs, mental health services, dentists and opticians, as well as failures to be taken to hospital appointments:

"I have been in 10 months [and] currently have other mental health issues and physical ones but still cannot see a doctor. If you are lucky to get to healthcare you will see a nurse."

"The healthcare right across the board is quite bad. Appointments, when awarded, always is 3 weeks late."

"Been in 1 year not seen dentist yet even after putting in 2 requests to see dentist."

"I've waited well over one year now to get work done on my teeth. They told me I would wait three weeks when I was down seeing what work I needed done, and I'm still waiting over a year now. It's terrible."

"My friend [needed hospital treatment] and 3 times in 2 weeks they failed to take him to his appointments, he never got taken."

Remand prisoners in particular highlighted the specific problem of not being able to access dental services or opticians while remanded:

"I've had terrible toothache since before I came in here this time. All they keep saying is that because I'm on remand I'm basically not entitled to any help. So basically the NHS is saying because my "status" is remand I've to suffer terrible pain all day. All because I'm an untried prisoner. Please, please let me see the dentist."

"Dental access is non-existent for remand prisoners as well as opticians."

"When I was on remand in severe pain with toothache I was simply told several times I was a remand prisoner therefore didn't qualify to see the dentist."

The second common theme among the comments on healthcare was medication. Some respondents wrote about having gaps in their prescribed medication, because

they were not immediately given their usual prescribed medication on arrival at the prison. For example, one respondent told us:

"I told [the] nurse on arrival about my daily medication but still had to wait for 8 days before I received any."

Many more respondents wrote about being taken off the medication they had been prescribed in the community on arrival at HMP Kilmarnock, and the mental and physical health consequences of this. For example:

"Being on medication coming into the prison [prescribed] by your doctor or psychiatrist on the outside... the doctor in prison takes you off them with no reason or explanation. My own experience is mental health medication being withdrawn [which] caused my mental health to spiral out of control for some time."

"Guys are coming in on meds that they have been on for 20 years. [They] don't get their proper meds [in the prison] which sends them off their heads."

"The doctor is taking me off all my normal prescriptions and [has] left me in pain for the last 10 months, and he is not willing to see me."

"People are taken off medication and given no alternative and being left in pain because certain doctors just seem to think we are all selling or abusing medication when this is not the case."

"The main problem I feel, and the whole prison population feels, is we don't ever get to see a doctor and a nurse simply takes you off important medication I need for both pain and mental health."

"Medication is being stopped for people with lifelong pain issues and basically any drugs stronger than a paracetamol is being unfairly withheld. One issue is anyone on pregabalin outside for pain (chronic) legs + back pain are taken off it and given paracetamol. Guys are suffering and there's no need. Why don't they give them daily doses with the nurse supervising them?"

Mental Health

Several respondents raised concerns about the widespread prevalence of mental health issues among prisoners, and difficulties getting access to, and support from, mental health services. One respondent described the extent to which he felt mental health was major issue for prisoners in HMP Kilmarnock:

"The one main issue prisoners have is mental health problems. There is limited mental health [support] in here and 99% of guys getting out and coming straight back to jail is because they are not coping with their own minds. Even basic counselling would stop a lot of the boys getting jailed for stupid stuff. I see the jail looking more like a mental hospital than jail sometimes."

Another respondent described the difficulty of getting access to the level of mental health support he had outside prison:

“I’ve had constant intervention from mental health and doctors all my life! However since I arrived in prison I have been on a downhill spiral as I have had no help at all in a year and have been neglected at every opportunity! It got so bad that I was afraid I was going to commit suicide! So I told staff and [the] mental health [team] yet no form of intervention came! 9 months later I’m still waiting with fresh scars all over me!”

Finally, several respondents reported instances of staff not taking prisoners’ mental health seriously, including goading, neglecting or laughing at those experiencing mental health crisis (see “Relationships with staff”). As one respondent summarised:

“I have experienced people with problems i.e. mental health, they [staff] laugh and make fun of people's problems, we are all human beings and not animals.”

Issues relating to addictions were raised by several respondents, with the general feeling being that illicit substance use was a significant problem among prisoners in HMP Kilmarnock, and that prisoners would like to see more done to combat this. On the one hand, some commented that there was a need to better police the availability and use of illicit substances:

“As a prisoner who doesn't partake in any substance abuse either in public or within the prison, I feel that a level of substance abuse on a daily basis within the prison is not monitored and more often than not goes unpunished.”

“There is no visible control of drug use on the wings... prisoners often attend the work unit under the influence of drugs with no apparent sanctions.”

On the other hand, comments also suggested a need for greater support for those with addictions:

“There needs to be more support for people battling addiction/ people with clean time meetings. 1 to 1 support etc.”

“There is no drug free hall or help for addicts.”

“There is limited support for those affected [by substance misuse]”

Food

More than one third – 37 people – left comments regarding the food at HMP Kilmarnock. The quality of food was the main concern among those who commented on it, with respondents variously describing it as “barely edible”, “shocking”, “awful”, “disgraceful” and “terrible”. As some respondents described:

“The food is absolutely shocking most of it is past its due date. Milk is nearly always curdled.”

“Food is disgraceful and always cold or barely warm”

“The food is pure disgusting and under-cooked sometimes. Just the other day I didn’t get fed at dinner due to trays full [of] grease.”

“[For] the two protection halls, the food is always cooked first then left in a hot cabinet for up to three hours before the food is served. By the time we get the food it is either overcooked or undercooked. Sometimes still frozen. And because mainstream cook and load the food trolleys for our halls, they tamper with the food.”

Several respondents commented on the range of menu options available, with the general feeling being that the range was too limited. Some also mentioned a lack of access to fresh fruit or adequate amounts of protein either in their meals or in the options available to buy from the canteen.

“It’s the same thing everyday in here and [we] have asked for a change but [it] never happens.”

“Menu choices are repetitive, limited and heavily weighted towards potatoes.”

“For protein canteen is poor range. Fresh fruit is rare and non-existent. Food served is cold or lukewarm badly made. Sometimes you don’t get what you order.”

Relationships with staff

One third (32) of those who commented wrote about relationships with prison staff. Only one of these reflected positively on his engagement with prison staff.

A common theme was a sense that it was difficult to get help from prison staff to deal with requests for help and support. This was highlighted in several of the comments, for example:

“When asking staff for help the usual come-back is ‘I’m busy, come back later’ or they don’t help.”

“When any staff member is asked for help, the mantra is ‘leave it with me’ (which means ‘forget it’ in simple terms)”

“Staff don’t care about prisoners. General requests are not carried out.”

There was particular concern among some respondents that there was a lack of care for prisoners’ safety and wellbeing among some staff, with comments highlighting concerns that staff sometimes did not take mental health issues or wellbeing concerns seriously. As several people commented:

“If a prisoner is on his call bell [asking for help from staff], there have been times when 40 minutes have passed with no care in the world”.

“The staff don’t care about prisoners, they have this understanding that if you die, you die”.

“Consistency of staff doesn’t happen so staff don’t pick up on mental health issues or people in crisis.”

“I have [multiple mental health conditions], I’ve had a life full of abuse since I was [a young child]. I tried to explain to staff about my anger triggers etc. Some listen; others just don’t give a shit.”

“It should not take prisoners to tell staff to check on prisoners’ wellbeing to save them. No duty of care.”

Finally, a small number of respondents alleged serious staff abuse, both physical and verbal. These allegations cannot be published here but have been followed up by HMIPS where possible.

Physical environment and facilities

In total, 25 respondents commented on the physical environment and basic facilities and supplies within HMP Kilmarnock. The most common concern was regarding hygiene, with several respondents describing their living areas – including the halls, showers and cells – as “dirty”. Some reported that it was difficult to get cleaning equipment to keep their cells and halls clean, and a number of respondents said they were unable to have their clothes washed as the washing machine on their hall had been broken for several weeks. As one person summarised:

“Dirty halls. Extremely dirty showers. No washing machine. Prisoners’ hygiene not encouraged/very bad.”

“Not supplied with cleaning gear for hall showers, yard or cell outside.”

“I have not been able to mop my floor for a month now as [there is] no mop anywhere. I have no clean clothes left as [the] washing machine has broken.”

Access to essentials was another cause for concern among respondents, with several reporting not being given essential items like clean clothing and bedding, or cutlery. As several people commented:

“Prison ‘essentials’ i.e. clothing, cutlery, crockery, bedding, toiletries, are not supplied in a consistent manner. For two weeks I had no fork, a pair of trainers 3 sizes too big and only one polo shirt. [The] supply of bedding is random. The best source appears to be to beg from someone who is getting out. This is not acceptable.”

“Upon arrival I wasn’t given work trousers and my pillowcase was covered in blood. Took 1 month to get work trousers and a few days to get a pillowcase.”

“When you first come in you are not given clothes or underwear. Have to get it later or get it sent in.”

Regime and Purposeful Activity

Comments about the regime and purposeful activity focused on a desire for better access to some forms of purposeful activity, and concerns about the timings of the regime. Several people commented on only being able to access the library if they were going to education, there being a limited range of books in the library, and some felt that the range and availability of training, education and work opportunities was poor.

Some noted that they were forced to choose between eating their meals or accessing their legal entitlement to one hour per day outside in the fresh air. As one person commented:

“We are supposed to get 15 minutes to eat lunch then straight onto our one-hour open exercise. Staff nearly always open us late for lunch due to either roll count being wrong or just poor time management, so more often than not we are forced to either eat our lunch then get about 40 minutes exercise or have no food at all so we can get about 50 minutes exercise but rarely the full hour.”

Similarly, another person reported having to choose between attending religious activities or working.

Personal property

Just over 10% (10) of commenters mentioned personal property. The main issue raised was the length of time it takes to receive personal property handed in by family members or ordered from outside the prison. For example:

“Getting property from reception is really bad. When property gets delivered to the prison or handed in at visits it takes weeks to get up to the hall.”

“Property and items bought via M+M, electricals or other forms take too long. If placed on day one at can take 4 weeks before ordered and then four weeks for delivery.”

“Every time I get property handed in to jail its always seems that my property takes 2-4 weeks to reach me.”

Several commenters also alleged that their personal property had been lost or stolen from reception.

Progression

Just over 10% (10) of commenters mentioned progression, all of whom highlighted difficulties with the progression system due to long waiting times and difficulty accessing programmes. Several said they had been waiting months or years for their Generic Programme Assessment (GPA) to find out what courses they needed to undertake in order to progress. For example, one respondent noted that:

"I am 2 years and 8 months into a life sentence and I need to do courses to progress. I have been asking for a generic assessment [GPA] for over a year now and had no reply from anybody".

Others who had had their GPA, reported struggling to access the courses they had been allocated. For example:

"I am one month off 13 years [into my life sentence]. They want me to do the violence course but it's almost impossible to get on it. I've been waiting five years so far."

"I am finding it hard to move towards my parole as the course waiting lists are so long. I have four years left and I will be out before I get to do the course as the list is too long".

"I was 126 on the list to do the self-change course five years ago and now I am 106. So I have jumped 20 places in five years."

Complaints

Almost 10% (9) of those who commented mentioned complaints. In line with the quantitative data which showed that 85% felt that the complaints system worked badly, the comments suggested a belief among respondents that complaints forms were not dealt with adequately, with accusations that complaints forms were not answered. As several commenters reported:

"Complaints forms going missing all the time!!!"

"Every PCF1 [Prisoner Complaints Form] I put in gets ripped up"

"I previously put eight PCF1s out... I never received a reply to any of them"

"Managers... bin PCF1s and PCF2s"

HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Comparative Data

HMP Kilmarnock in Comparison with all other closed establishments

This table shows a comparison between HMP Kilmarnock (April 2025) and all other closed establishments between 2022 and 2025.* Where results are shown as statistically significant, this means that it is unlikely that the difference between HMP Kilmarnock 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 168 respondents in the HMP Kilmarnock group, and 1,842 respondents in the comparator group.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please note that there are likely to be some minor discrepancies between the figures reported in the table below compared with the figures reported in the main survey findings report. There are two reasons for this:

1. Where there are discrepancies of one percentage point, this is due to the different rounding systems used by the two different sets of software used to run the analysis. The main report uses Microsoft Excel, which uses the “bankers’ rounding” system, which rounds .5 numbers to the nearest even number. However, the figures shown in the table below were generated using SPSS analytical software, which rounds .5 values up to the next whole number.
2. Several questions in this survey contain a “prefer not to say option” (e.g. most questions about personal safety). These are marked with a double asterisk (**) in the table below. In order to create binary categories for chi square significance testing, the “prefer not to say” option was treated as missing data for these questions. However, in the main report above, “prefer not to say” is included in the analysis. As a result, questions with a “prefer not to say” option show slightly different statistics in this table compared to the main report.

Colour coding:

No colour: No statistically significant difference between the two groups

Orange: HMP Kilmarnock significantly more negative than the comparator group

Green: HMP Kilmarnock significantly more positive than the comparator group

Question	HMP Kilmarnock		Comparator Group	
	No. of responses	% of valid responses	No. of responses	% of valid responses
Was offered an induction	49	33%	989	65%
Was treated well/neutrally in reception	144	88%	1573	89%
Able to shower every day	144	88%	1422	79%
Quality of food is good/very good	36	22%	584	33%
Always get enough to eat at mealtimes	21	13%	211	12%
Can have clothes washed at least once a week	147	90%	1638	92%
Feel safe all/most of the time	90	56%	1128	62%
**Have witnessed staff abusing, threatening, bullying or assaulting another prisoner in this prison ("Prefer not to say" has been coded as missing)	79	54%	933	57%
**Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by staff member ("Prefer not to say" has been coded as missing)	51	34%	636	38%
*Would/probably would report abuse etc. by staff ("Prefer not to say" has been coded as missing)	47	32%	584	35%
**Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by another prisoner ("Prefer not to say" has been coded as missing)	65	42%	653	38%
**Would/probably would report abuse etc. by other prisoners ("Prefer not to say" has been coded as missing)	25	18%	390	24%
Given a reasonable explanation every time/most times you or your cell is searched	60	36%	545	31%
System for accessing personal property works well	37	26%	473	30%
Treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	101	62%	1090	60%
Complaints system works well	21	16%	254	20%
Have a Personal Officer	54	33%	1048	59%
Personal officer is helpful	21	39%	626	62%
Prisoners are consulted about canteen etc. and things can change as a result	17	12%	245	16%
Know the role of an IPM	77	46%	854	47%
Know how to contact an IPM	55	33%	691	39%
Last time contacted IPM it was helpful/neutral	17	35%	262	54%
Easy to access education	83	59%	853	54%
Easy to access skills training	53	40%	430	29%
Easy to access other prison jobs	74	53%	583	37%

Able to go to the gym/play sports at least once last week	137	90%	1444	89%
Able to go to the library at least once last week	70	57%	937	64%
Able to spend at least one hour every day exercising in the fresh air last week	104	63%	1297	72%
Able to spend more than 2 hours out of cell on previous weekday	127	79%	1089	61%
Able to spend more than 2 hours out of cell on previous Saturday	105	65%	978	55%
Well/neutrally supported to practice religion	80	82%	679	78%
Able to have an in-person visit every week in last month	96	73%	937	65%
Visitors treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	67	58%	865	63%
Able to have video visit every week in last month	39	39%	576	47%
Access to in-cell prison-issued phone	153	96%	1433	89%
Know what courses need to undertake for progression (convicted only)	35	31%	438	45%
Easy to access the courses I need	12	35%	78	20%
Seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival	124	84%	1308	88%
Know how to access healthcare	143	94%	1592	93%
Easy to access a doctor	25	18%	466	28%
Easy to access a nurse/nurse practitioner	73	53%	907	51%
Easy to access a dentist	11	9%	366	24%
Easy to access mental healthcare	29	24%	404	30%
Easy to access addictions services	50	49%	526	48%
Easy to access pharmacist	51	44%	483	40%
Easy to access prison-based social work	35	36%	405	37%
Easy to access medical appointments outside the prison	15	16%	278	24%
Good quality service from doctors	26	21%	631	43%
Good quality service from nurses/nurse practitioners	71	51%	925	59%
Good quality dental services	17	17%	546	42%
Good quality mental health services	39	35%	459	38%
Good quality addictions services	44	45%	519	53%
Good quality pharmacy services	45	42%	530	46%
Good quality PBSW service	20	23%	411	41%
Good/neutral support for managing disabilities/long-term health conditions	29	35%	413	51%
Received helpful support for alcohol use (only those who said they needed it)	13	37%	159	32%

Received helpful support for drug use (only those who said they needed it)	36	47%	334	46%
Received helpful support for mental health (only those who said they needed it)	29	27%	335	29%

***Comparator prisons:**

- HMP Shotts (2022)
- HMP Inverness (2022)
- HMP Greenock (2023)
- HMP Perth (2023)
- HMP & YOI Polmont (2023)
- HMP Edinburgh (2023)
- HMP & YOI Stirling (2024)
- HMP Grampian (2024)
- HMP Addiewell (2024)
- HMP Dumfries (2024)
- HMP Barlinnie (2024)
- HMP Glenochil (2025)