

HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Findings

**HMP Low Moss
July 2025**

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HMP Low Moss, July 2025

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Executive Summary

Background

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Low Moss on 16 and 17 July 2025. The questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 250 prisoners held in HMP Low Moss on the first day of data collection, with a response rate of 74% (184 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 half (46%) of respondents said they were offered an induction on arrival at HMP Low Moss
- Just over half (51%) of respondents said they were treated well on arrival

Standard 2: Decency

- 73% said the quality of food was poor at HMP Low Moss
- Just over a third (38%) said they always or usually got enough to eat at meal times
- 95% said they were able to have a shower every day and 95% said they were able to have their clothes washed at least once a week.

Standard 3: Personal safety

- Less than two-thirds (59%) said they felt safe all or most of the time in HMP Low Moss
- Most (63%) said they had witnessed staff abusing, bullying, threatening or assaulting other prisoners, and almost half (48%) said staff had done this to them.
- 39% said they had been abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted by another prisoner.
- Most (74%) said they would not, or probably would not, report abuse by staff, and that they would not report abuse by other prisoners (77%).

Standard 4: Effective, courteous and humane use of authority

- 35% of respondents said they were given a reasonable explanation every time or most times they or their cell was searched; 40% said they were never given a reasonable explanation.
- 73% felt that the system for accessing personal property worked badly or very badly.

Standard 5: Respect, autonomy and protection against mistreatment

- Half (50%) of respondents said they were treated with respect all or most of the time by prison staff
- Most (71%) reported that the prison did not consult prisoners for their opinions on issues such as food, canteen, and healthcare.
- Most (86%) said the complaints system worked badly or very badly.
- Three-quarters (75%) said that they have a personal officer, of whom 43% said that their personal officer was helpful.

Standard 6: Purposeful activity

- Just over half of respondents (55%) said it was easy to access education.
- Most said skills training (74%) and prison jobs (63%) were difficult to access or unavailable.
- 79% said they were able to spend at least one hour outdoors in the fresh air every day if they wanted to during the previous week.
- 72% said they were able to go to the gym or play sports at least once during the previous week.
- 59% said they were able to access the library at least once during the previous week.
- 62% said they were able to spend more than two hours out of their cell during the previous weekday.
- 52% said they were able to spend more than two hours out of their cell during the previous Saturday.
- Of those who said they practiced a religion, just under half (47%) reported being well-supported to do so.
- Almost all (99%) of respondents said they had access to an in-cell prison-issued personal phone.
- 59% said they were able to access in-person visits every week, and 31% said they were able to access video visits every week.
- Just under half (49%) of respondents said their visitors were treated with respect all or most of the time.
- Over half of convicted respondents (53%) said they did not know which courses or programmes they needed to complete to progress through their sentence.
- Of those who knew which courses they needed to complete, most (71%) said that the courses they needed were either difficult to access or unavailable at HMP Low Moss.

Standard 9: Health and wellbeing

- Most respondents (92%) said they were seen by a health professional for an assessment within 24 hours of arriving at HMP Low Moss.
- 95% of respondents said they knew how to access health services.
- Just over half of respondents (51%) said it was easy to access a nurse or nurse practitioner.
- All other health services were rated as difficult to access by the majority of respondents: doctor (75%); dental services (82%); mental healthcare (70%);

addictions services (56%); pharmacist (62%); prison-based social work (77%); and medical appointments outside the prison (77%).

- The service provided by the nurses/nurse practitioners was rated as good by just over half of respondents (54%), and addictions services were rated as good by 50% of respondents.
- All other services were rated as poor by the majority of respondents: GP services (65%); dental services (56%); Mental healthcare (61%); pharmacist (53%); and prison based social work (68%).
- 57% of those with a disability or long-term health condition reported being poorly supported to manage their condition.
- Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 46% said they had received support that had been helpful.
- Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, 41% said they had been given support that had been helpful.
- Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health 28% said the support they had been given had been helpful.

Introduction

This document reports on the findings of the HMIPS pre-inspection questionnaire conducted in HMP Low Moss on 16 and 17 July 2025.

A random sample of 250 prisoners held in HMP Low Moss on the first day of data collection were asked to complete the survey, of whom 184 completed and returned the questionnaire, providing a 74% response rate.

The data is presented according to the HMIPS inspection standards. 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 Low Moss, 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 250 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 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 and sample representativeness

The survey asked a series of demographic questions, the results of which are summarised below, excluding those who did not disclose their demographic information.

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

As the table below shows, the characteristics of the sample closely matched the characteristics of the whole population of HMP Low Moss. In terms of age groups, the 21-30 and 51 or over age groups in the sample closely matched the whole population, while 31-40 was slightly under-represented and 41-50 was slightly over-represented.

The self-reported ethnicities of the sample population exactly matched that of the whole population, with the white ethnic group making up 93% of both groups, and the remaining 7% coming from non-white groups. However, those holding UK citizenship were slightly over-represented in the sample (97%) compared to the whole population (92%).

In terms of sentence type, the sample population matched the whole population relatively well, with long-term, life, life-recall and OLR prisoners making up 39% of the sample compared to 42% of the whole population. Short-term prisoners were a little over-represented in the sample (39% compared to 31% of the whole population) while remand prisoners were slightly under-represented (22% of the sample compared to 27% of the whole population).

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

	Sample population*	Whole population
Age group		
21-30	43 (23%)	181 (22%)
31-40	65 (36%)	317 (39%)
41-50	53 (29%)	195 (24%)
51 or over	21 (12%)	115 (14%)
Total	182 (100%)	808 (100%)
Sex		
Male	181 (100%)	808 (100%)
Female	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Total	181 (100%)	808 (100%)
Ethnicity		
White	159 (93%)	755 (93%)
Non-white	12 (7%)	53 (7%)
Total	171 (100%)	808 (100%)
Citizenship		
UK	166 (97%)	744 (92%)
Non-UK	6 (3%)	64 (8%)
Total	172 (100%)	808 (100%)
Prisoner type		
Remand	40 (22%)	216 (27%)
Short-term	70 (39%)	248 (31%)
Long-term/life/life recall/OLR	71 (39%)	339 (42%)
Total	181 (100%)	803** (100%)

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

***In five cases, HMP Low Moss did not provide this information.*

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

Induction

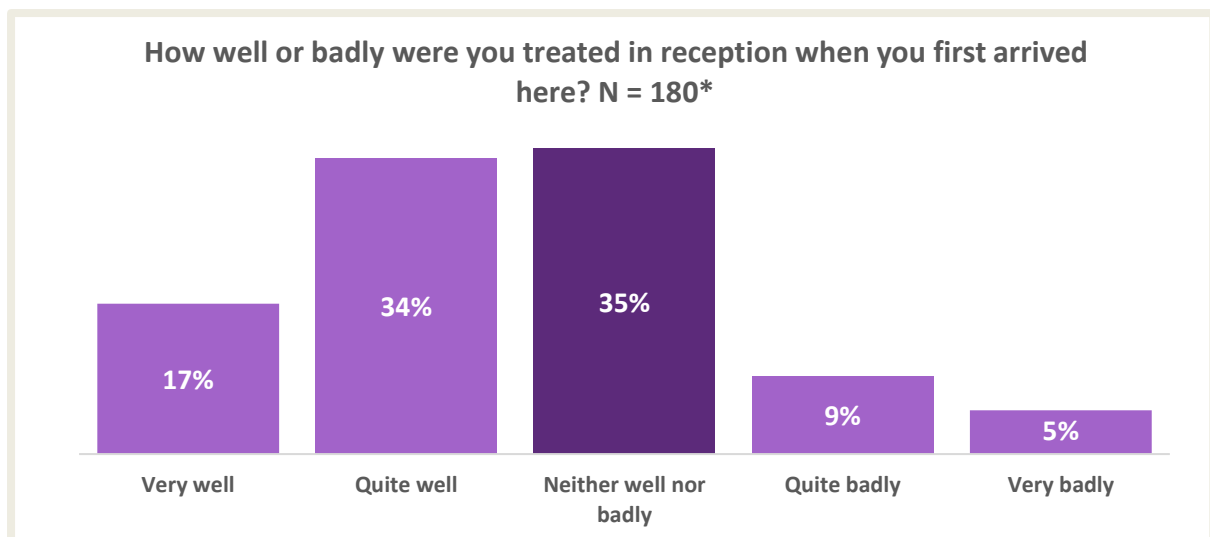
Of those who could remember, fewer than half of respondents (46%) said they were offered an induction on arrival at HMP Low Moss.



*Excluding "don't remember"

Treatment in reception

Just over half (51%) of respondents said they were treated well in reception on arrival at HMP Low Moss. A further third (35%) said they were treated "neither well nor badly" while 14% reported being treated badly in reception.

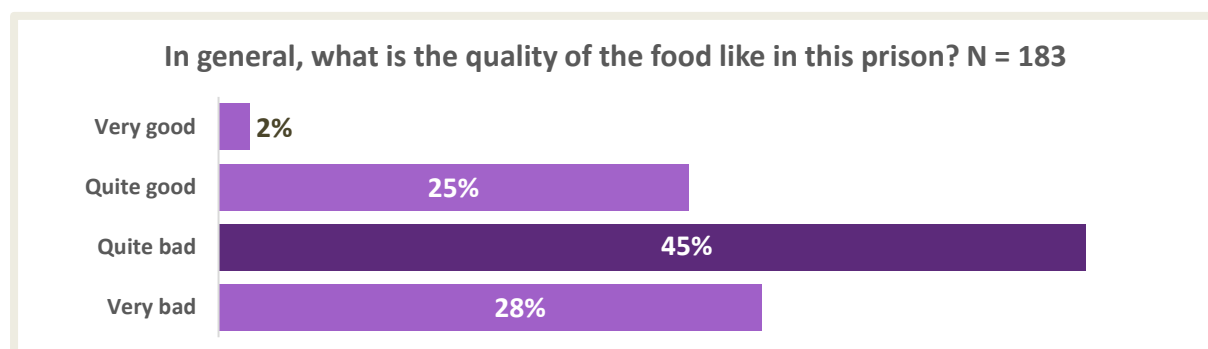


*Excluding "Don't remember"

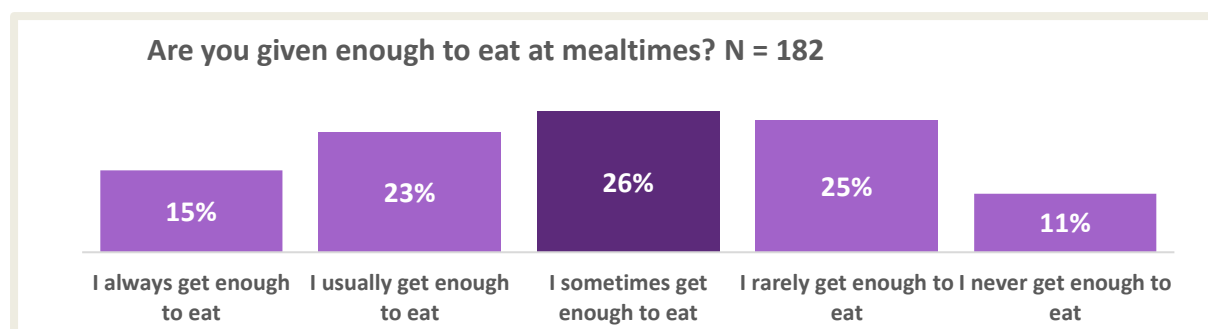
Standard 2: Decency

Food

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

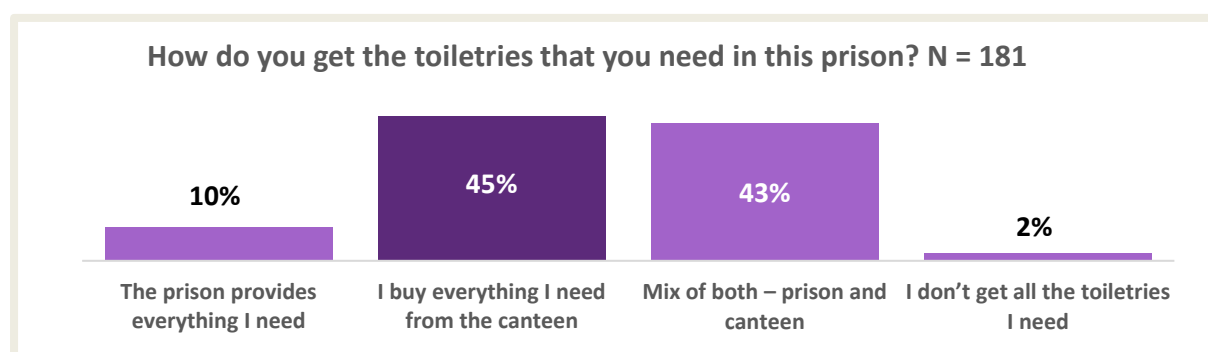


Over a third (38%) reported always or usually getting enough to eat at mealtimes, while 26% said they sometimes got enough to eat, and over a third (36%) said they rarely or never got enough to eat.

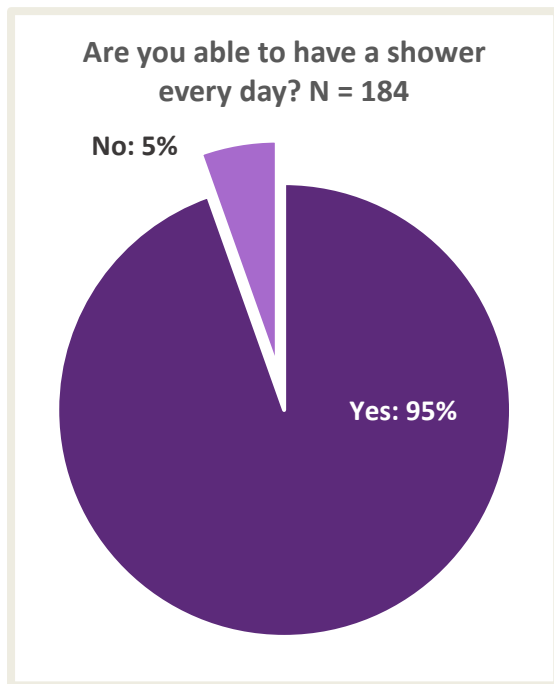


Toiletries, showering and laundry

Almost half (45%) of respondents said they bought all the toiletries they needed from the canteen, while a further 43% said they relied on both the canteen and provisions from the prison. Only 10% said the prison provided all the toiletries they needed.



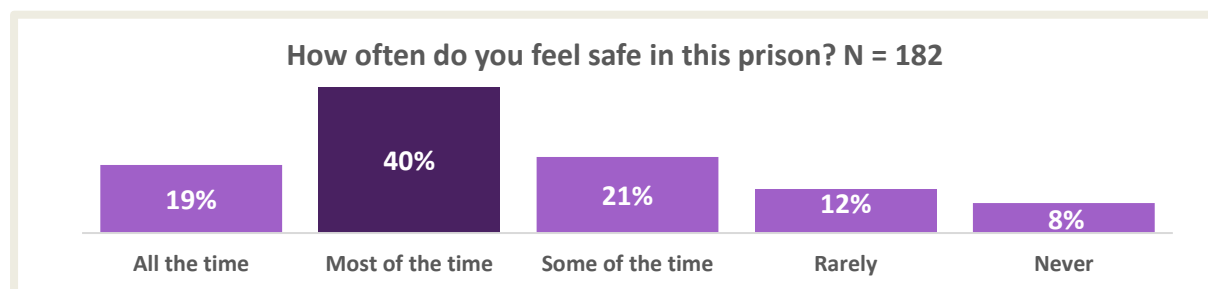
Most respondents (95%) said that they were able to have a shower every day, and most (95%) said they were able to have their clothes washed at least once a week.



Standard 3: Personal Safety

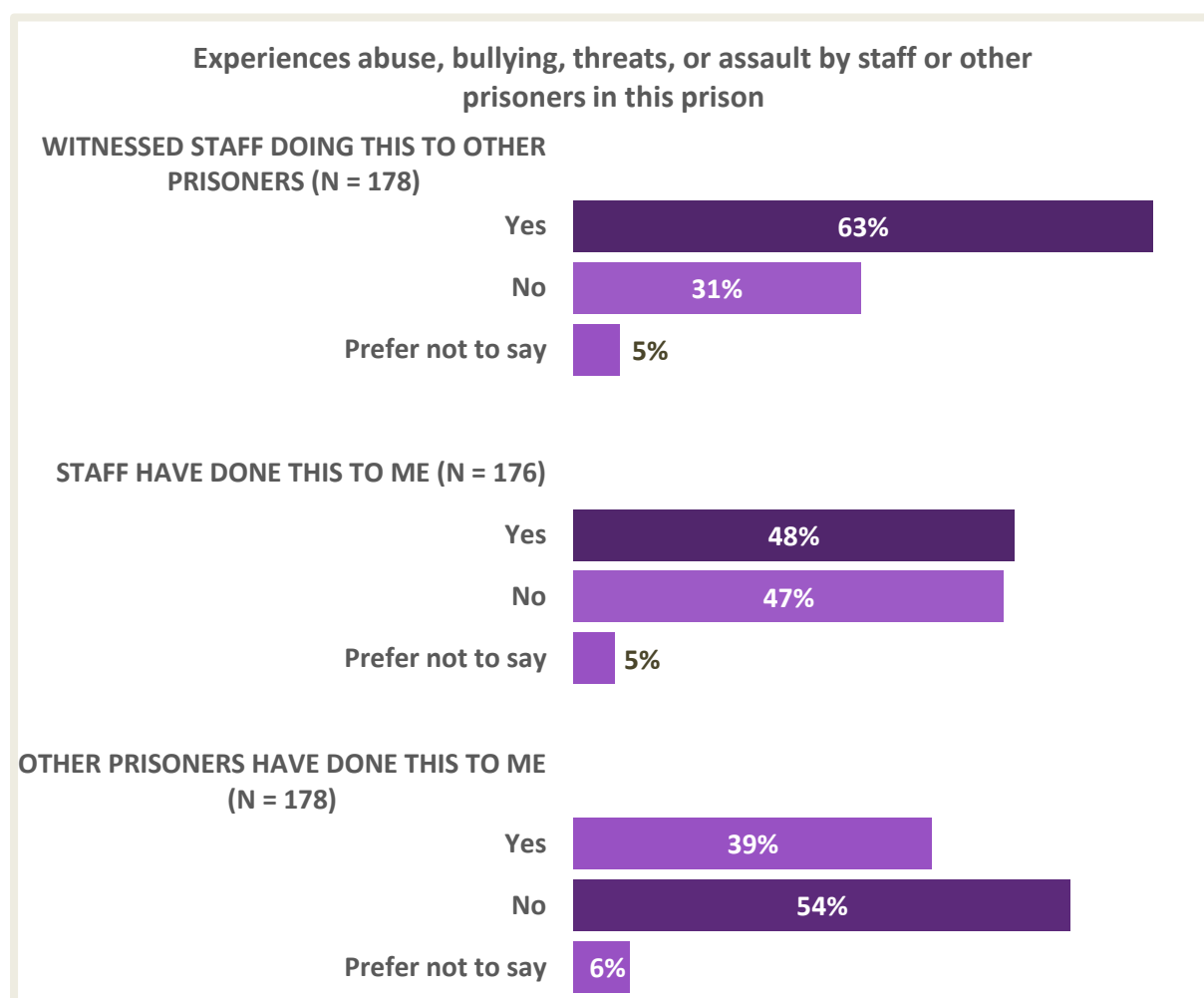
Perception of safety

Fewer than two thirds (59%) of respondents reported that they feel safe all or most of the time, with fewer than one-in-five (19%) saying they always felt safe. One-in-five (20%) said they rarely or never felt safe in HMP Low Moss.



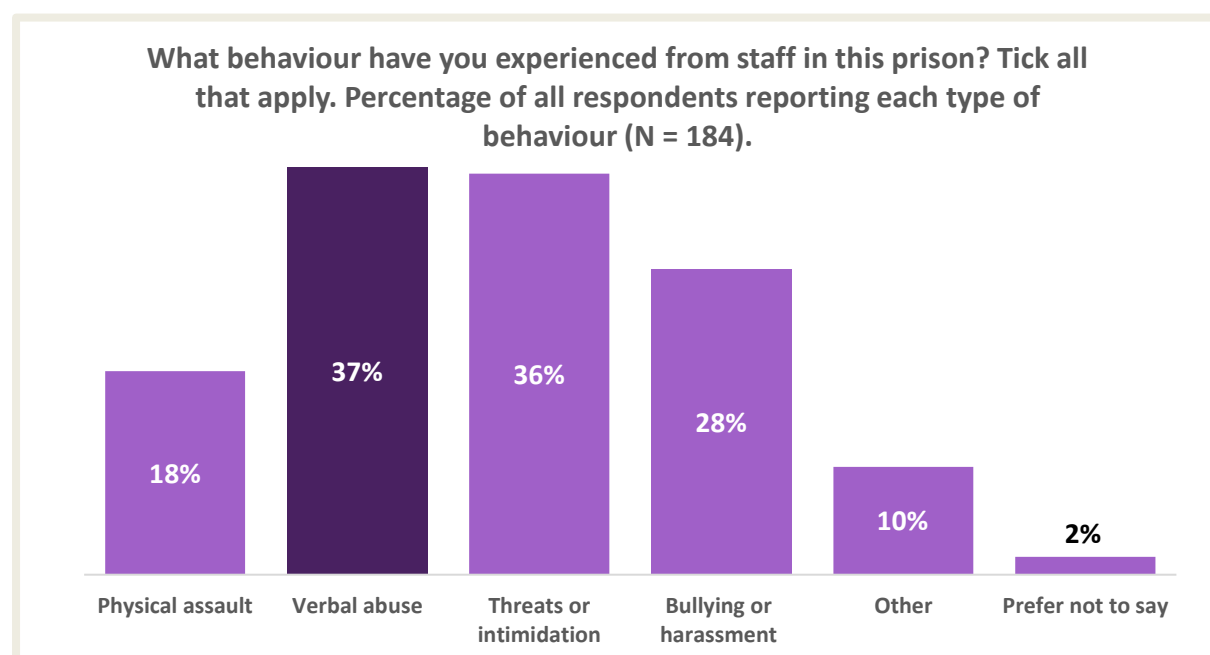
Abuse, threats, bullying or assault by staff or other prisoners

Almost two-thirds of respondents said they had witnessed staff members abusing, bullying, threatening or assaulting another prisoner at HMP Low Moss. Almost half (48%) reported that staff had abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted them.

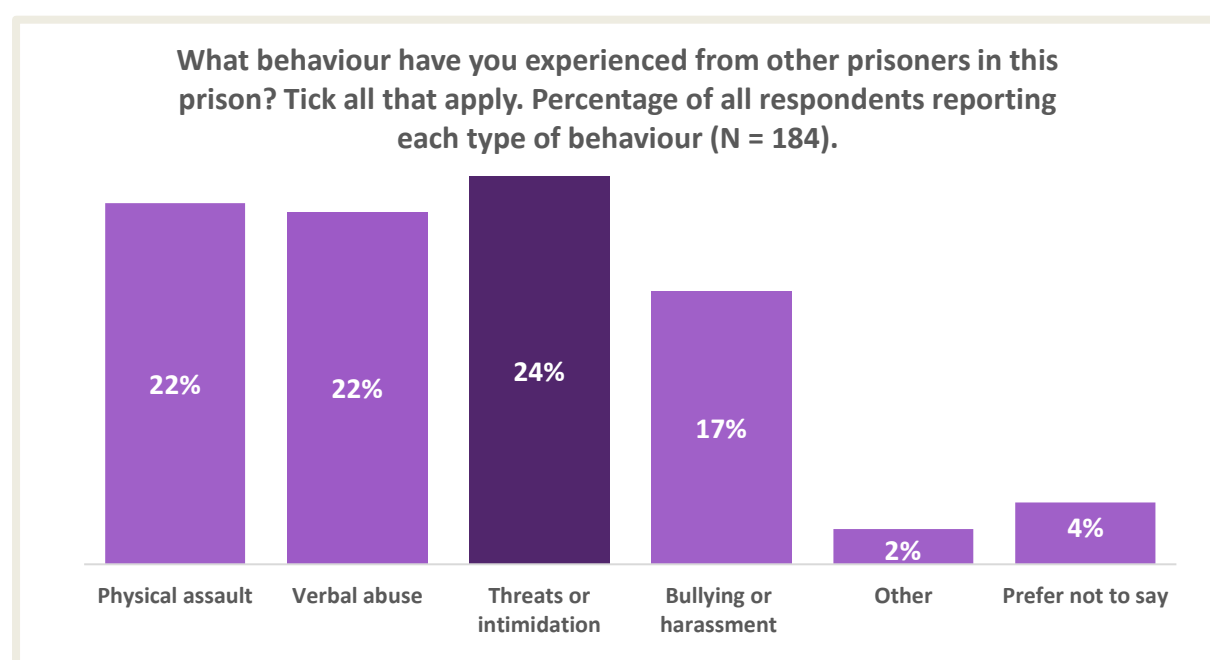


Nearly two-in-five (39%) of respondents said they had been abused, bullied, threatened or assaulted by a fellow prisoner in HMP Low Moss.

When asked what type of negative behaviour they themselves had experienced from staff, the most common responses were: verbal abuse (37%), threats or intimidation (36%), and bullying or harassment (28%), and physical assault (18%). A further 10% reported “other” forms of abuse by staff.



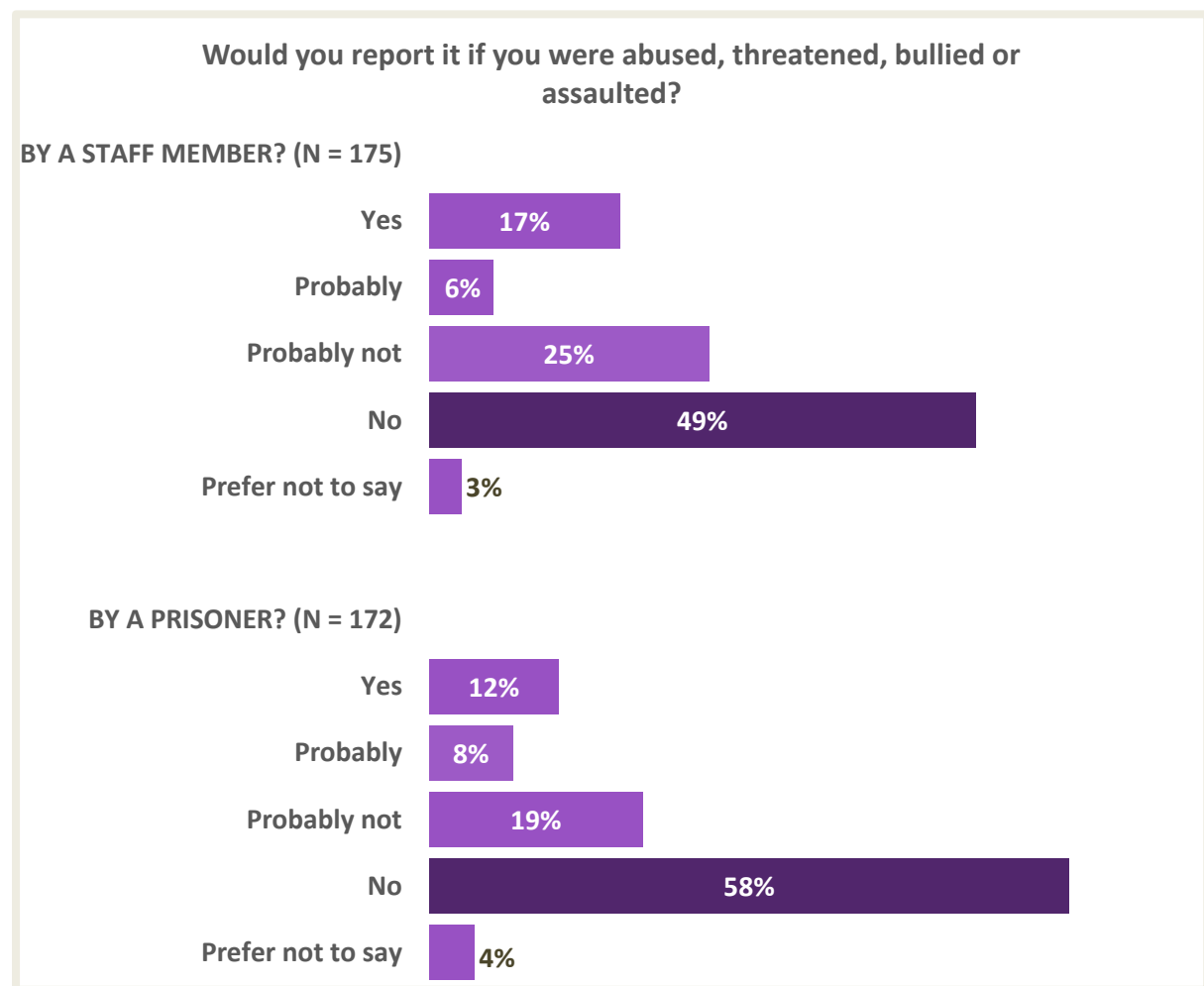
When asked about the types of negative behaviour experienced from other prisoners, the most common responses were threats and intimidation (24%), verbal abuse (22%), physical assault (22%), and bullying and harassment (17%). A further 10% reported “other” types of abuse.



Reporting abuse, threats, bullying or assault

Almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) said they would not, or probably would not, report it if they were abused, threatened, bullied, or assaulted by a staff member, including almost half (49%) who said they would not.

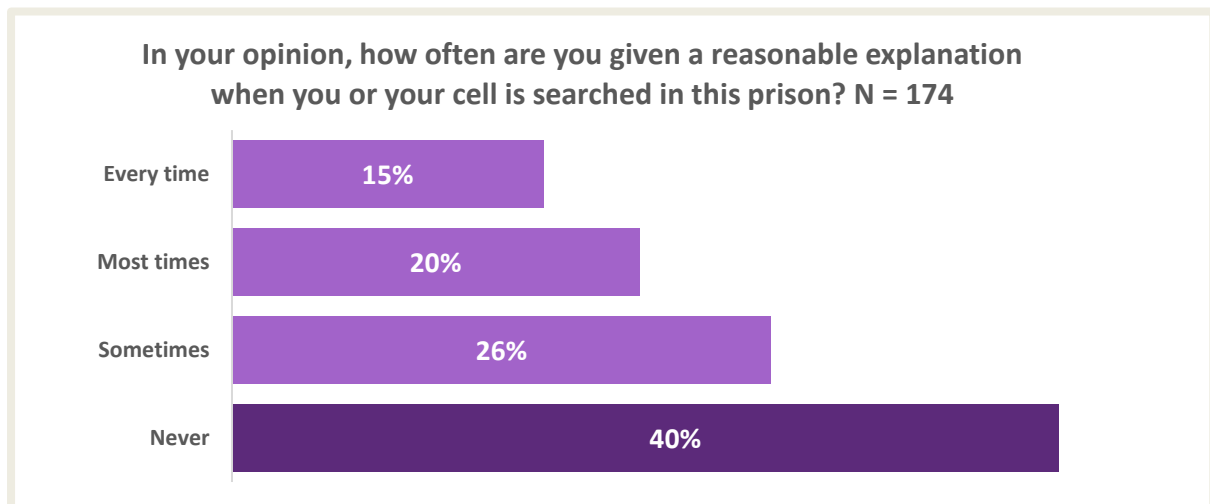
Most (77%) also said that they would not report abuse, threats, bullying, or assault by other prisoners.



Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

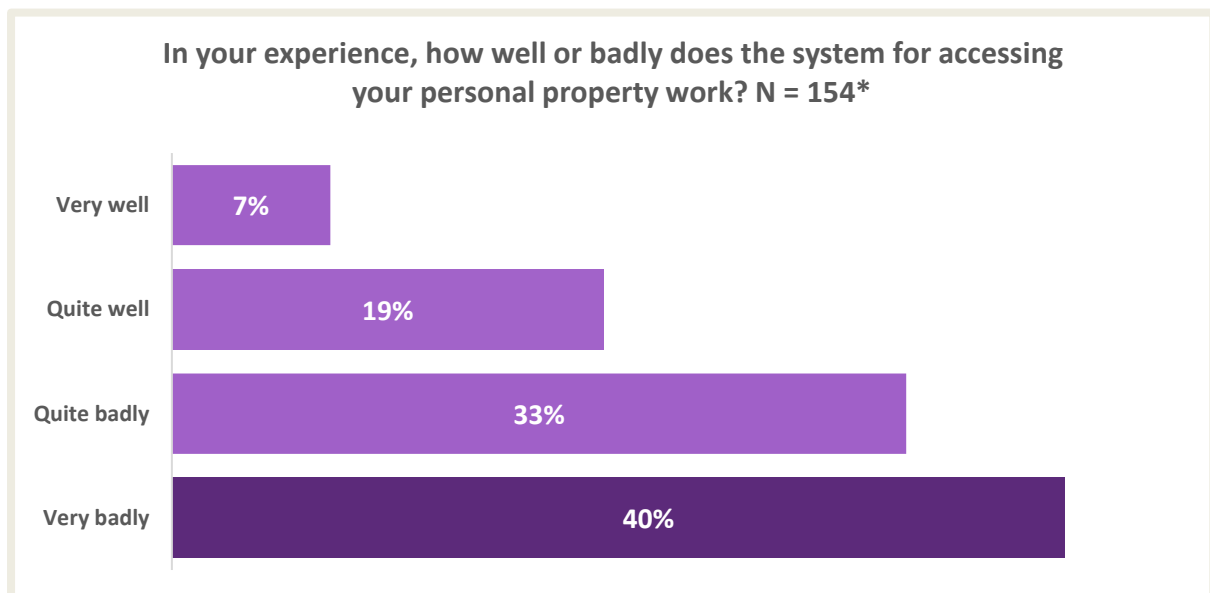
Searching

Around one-third (35%) of respondents felt that they were given a reasonable explanation every time or most times they or their cell was searched. However, the most common response was that they were never given a reasonable explanation (40%).



Accessing personal property

Most respondents (73%) felt that the system for accessing personal property worked badly or very badly.

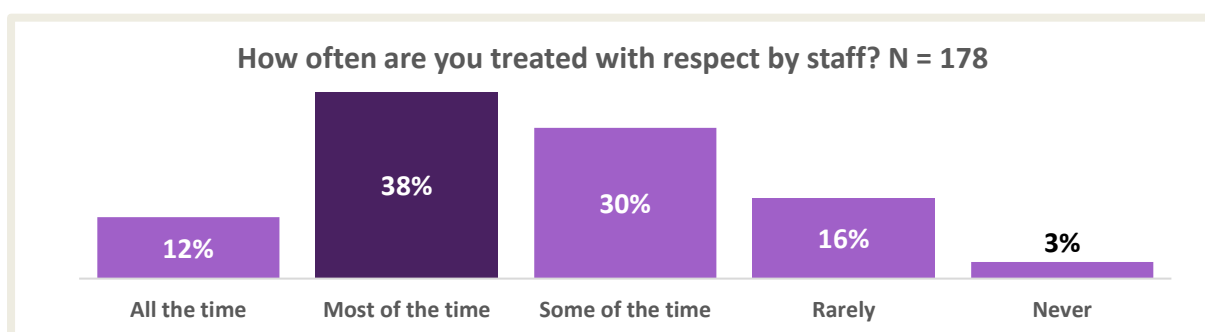


**Excludes "don't know"*

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection against Mistreatment

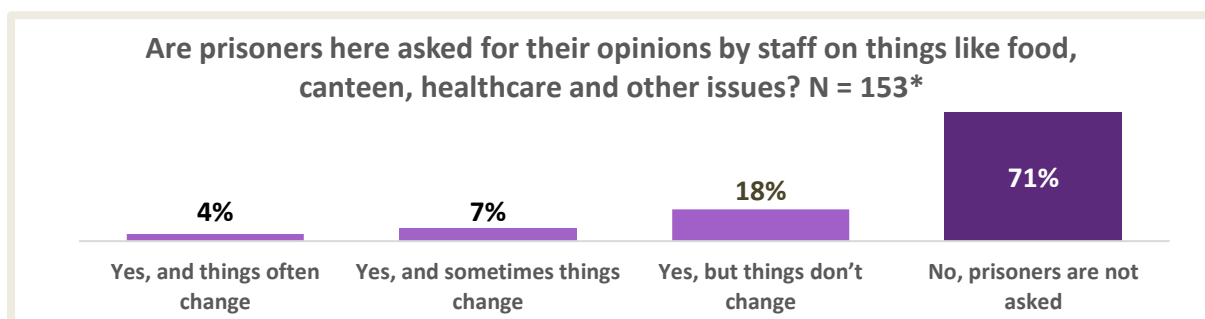
Respect

Half of respondents (50%) said they were treated with respect by staff all or most of the time in HMP Low Moss. A further 30% said they were treated with respect “some of the time”, and 19% said they were rarely or never treated with respect by staff.



Consultation with prisoners

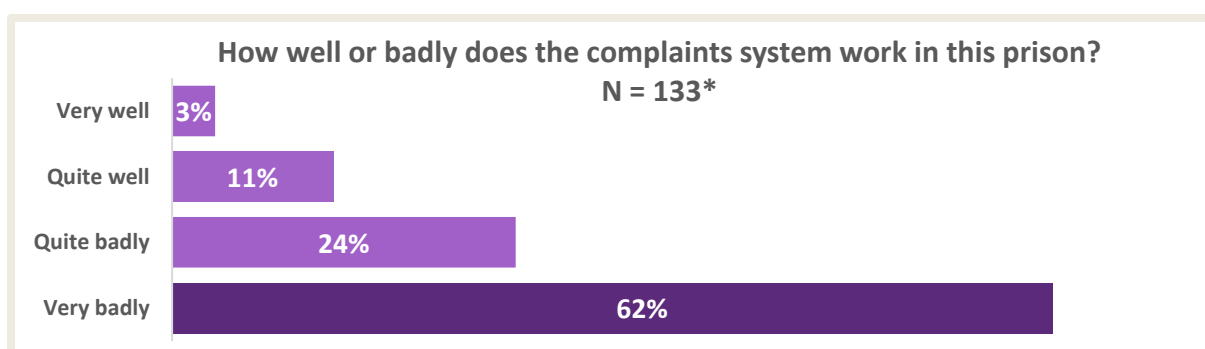
The majority (71%) of respondents reported that the prison did not consult prisoners for their opinions on issues such as food, canteen, and healthcare. Only 11% of respondents felt that the prison did ask for prisoners' opinions, and that things sometimes or often changed as a result.



*Excludes "Don't know"

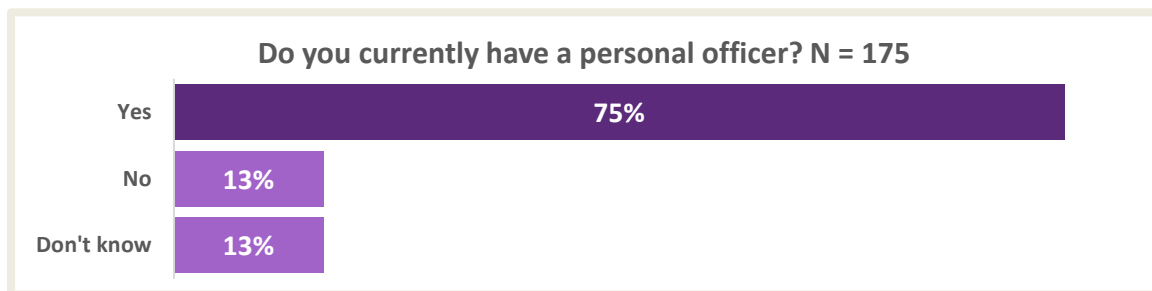
Complaints

Most respondents said the complaints system worked badly or very badly (86%).



Personal officers

Three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported that they had a personal officer.



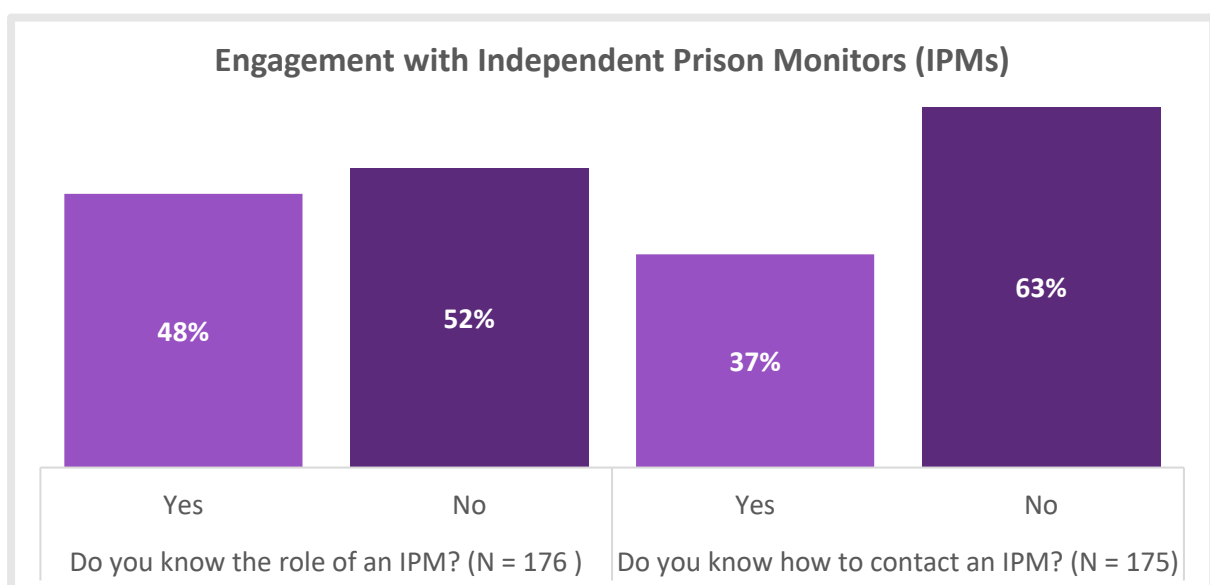
Those who said they had a personal officer were asked how helpful their personal officer was. Less than half of respondents (43%) said their personal officer was helpful, while around a third said they were “neither helpful nor unhelpful”. A quarter (25%) reported that their personal officer was unhelpful.



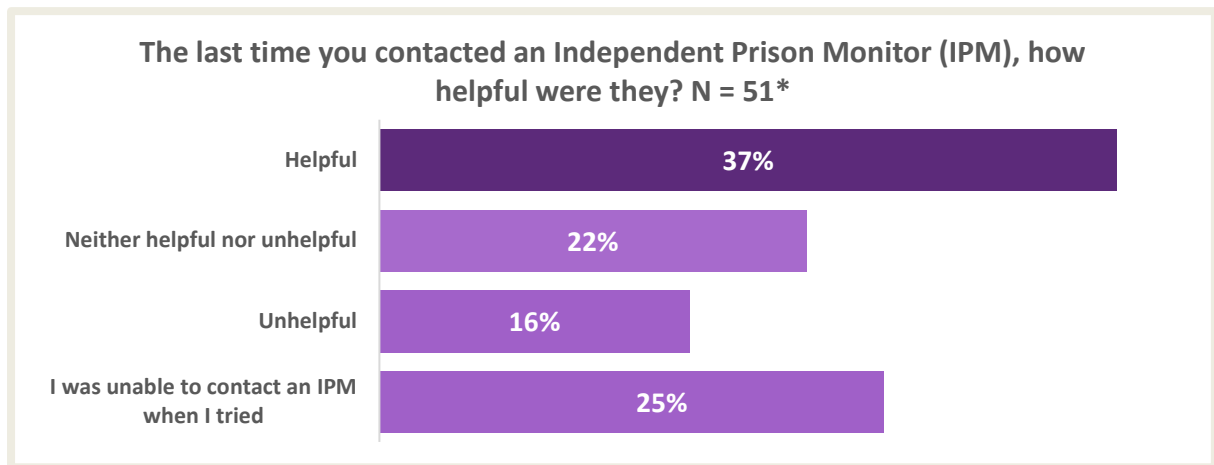
Responses only from those who said they had a personal officer

Engagement with Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs)

Just under half of respondents (48%) said they knew the role of the Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs), and just over a third (37%) said they knew how to contact an IPM.



The majority of respondents said they had never tried to contact the IPM service. Of those who had (51 respondents), 37% said they found the service helpful, while 41% either said it was unhelpful or they were unable to contact an IPM when they tried to do so.



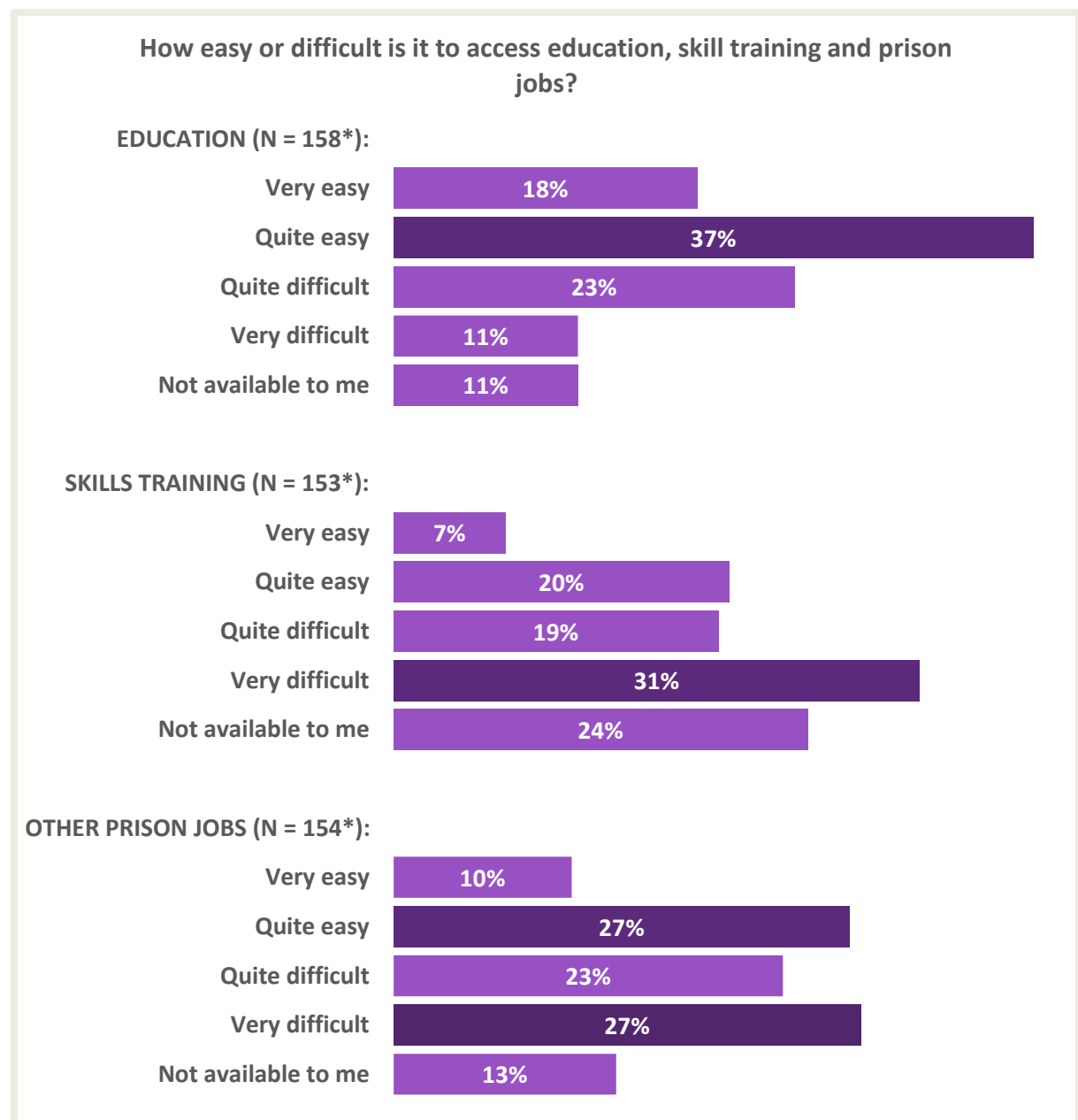
**Only those who said they had tried to contact an IPM*

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

Access to education, training and work

Excluding those who did not know the answer to the question, just over half of respondents (55%) said it was easy to access education. The remaining 45% either said it was difficult to access education or that education was not available to them.

Most respondents (74%) said it was difficult to access skills training or that skills training was not available to them. The majority (63%) also said that it was difficult to access prison jobs or that these were unavailable to them.



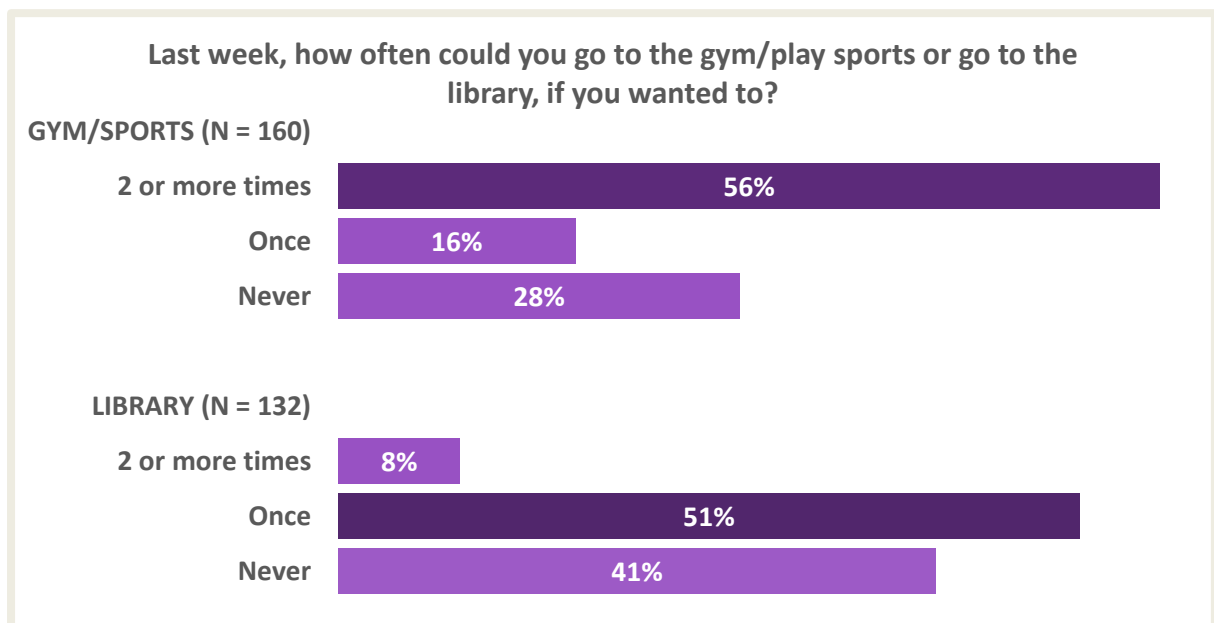
**Excluding "don't know".*

Fresh air, gym/sports and library access

Over three quarters of respondents (79%) said they were able to spend at least one hour outdoors in the fresh air every day if they wanted to during the previous week.



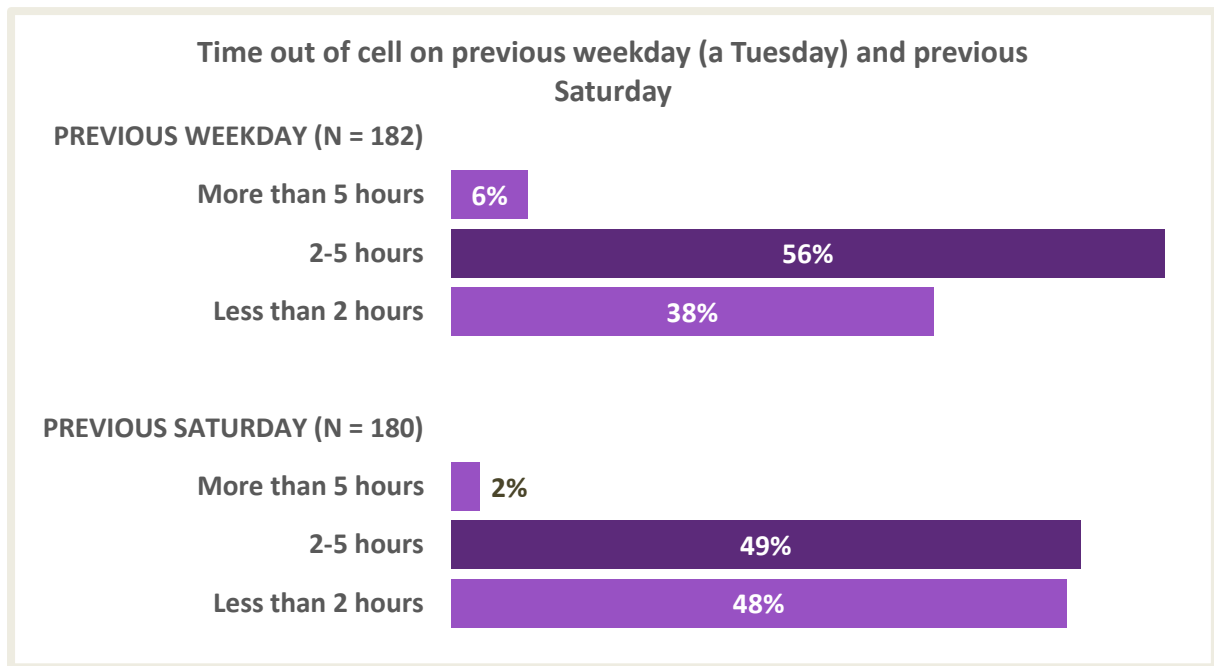
Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) said they were able to go to the gym or play sports at least once during the previous week, and 59% said they were able to access the library at least once in that time.



Time out of cell

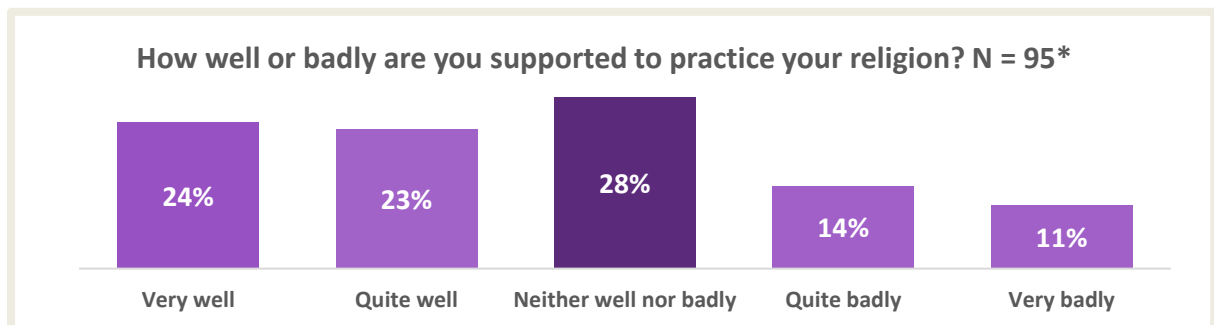
Over half of respondents (62%) said they were able to spend more than two hours out of their cell during the previous weekday (a Tuesday). This included 56% who said they were able to spend between two and five hours out of their cells. However over one-third (38%) said they were not able to spend more than two hours out of their cells.

Almost half (48%) of respondents said they were not able to spend more than two hours out of their cells during the previous Saturday, with 52% saying they were able to do so.



Religious practice

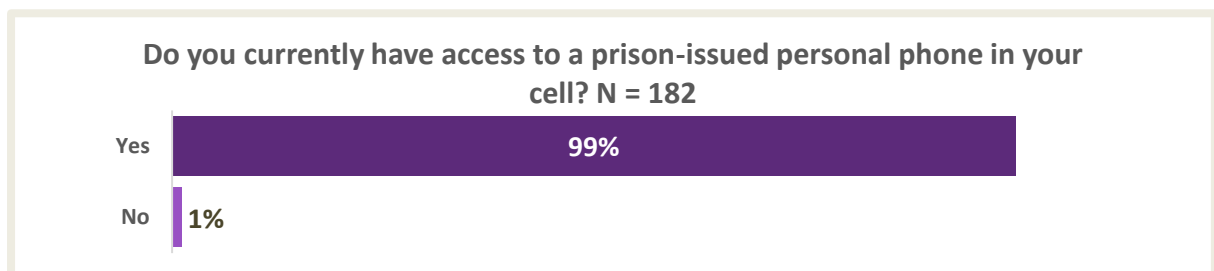
Of those who said they practiced a religion (95 respondents), just under half (47%) reported being well-supported to do so. A further 28% said they were “neither well nor badly” supported, and a quarter (25%) said they were poorly supported to practice their religion.



**Excludes "Not applicable - I don't practice a religion"*

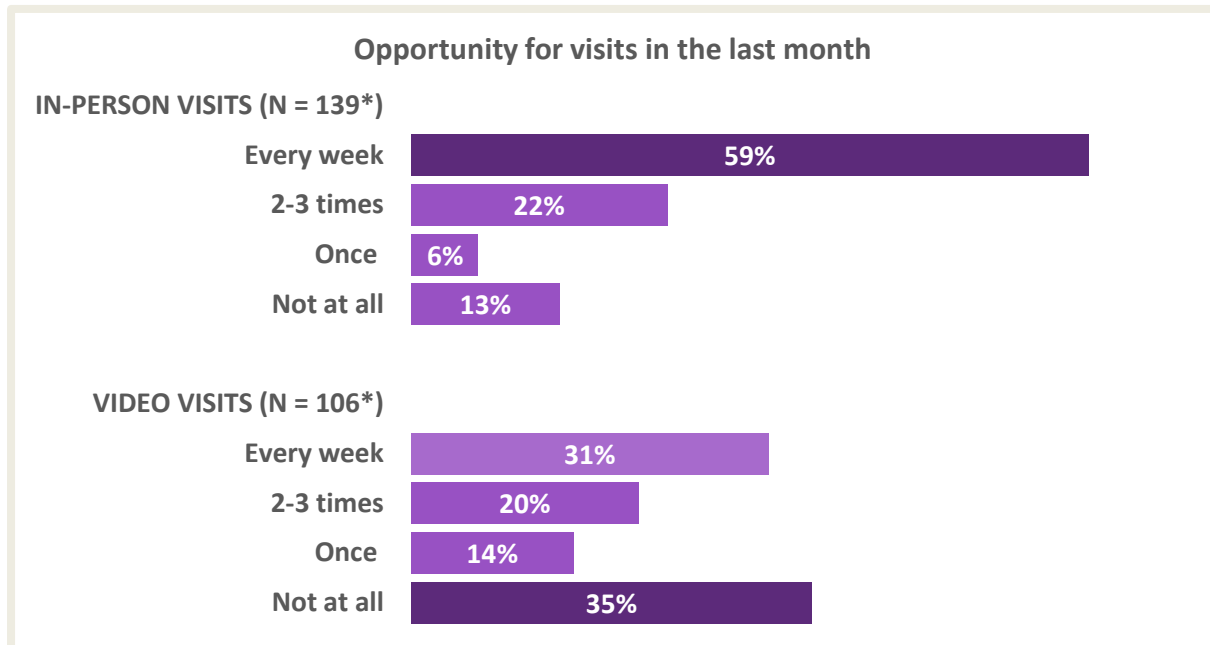
Phones

Almost all respondents (99%) said they had access to an in-cell prison-issued personal phone.



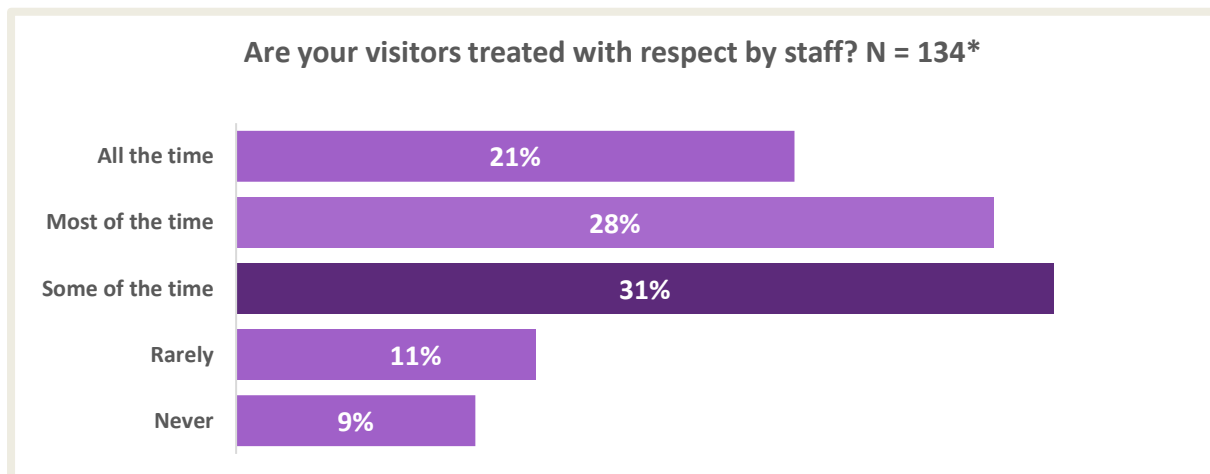
Visits

Of those who reported being aware of the availability of visits, the majority (59%) said they were able to access in-person visits every week. However, less than a third (31%) said they were able to access video visits every week.



**Excluding "don't know"*

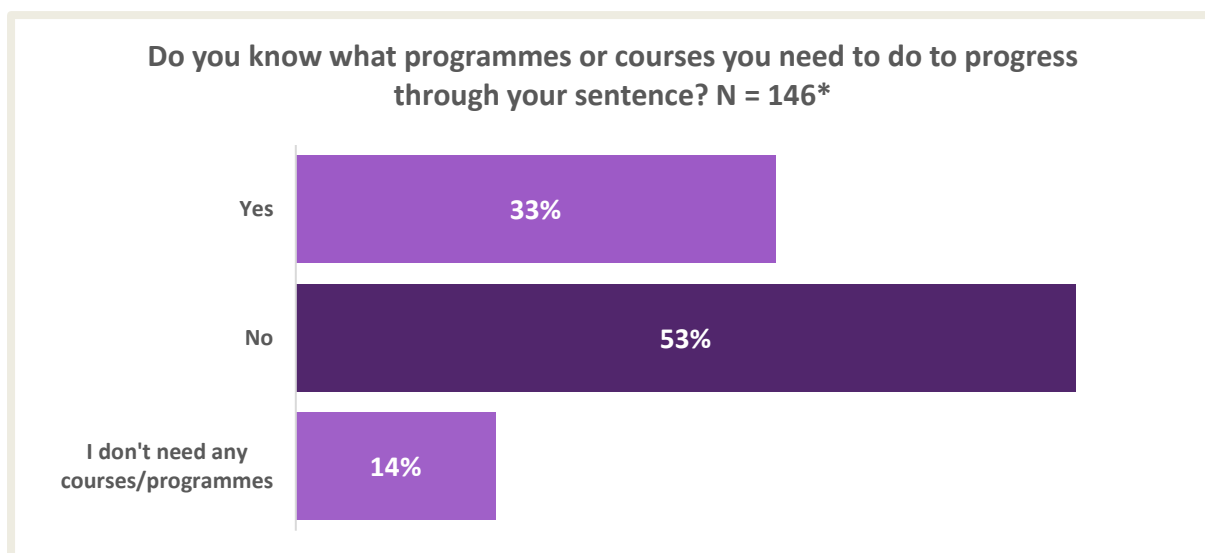
Of those who received visits, just under half (49%) said that their visitors were treated with respect all or most of the time. One-in-five (20%) said their visitors were rarely or never treated with respect by prison staff.



**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 complete to progress through their sentences. Of these, one third (33%) said they knew what courses they needed to undertake, 14% said they did not need to do any programmes, and 53% said they did not know what courses or programmes they needed.



**Convicted respondents only*

Of those who said they knew what courses/programmes they needed to complete (46 respondents), most (71%) said that the courses they needed were either difficult to access or unavailable at HMP Low Moss.

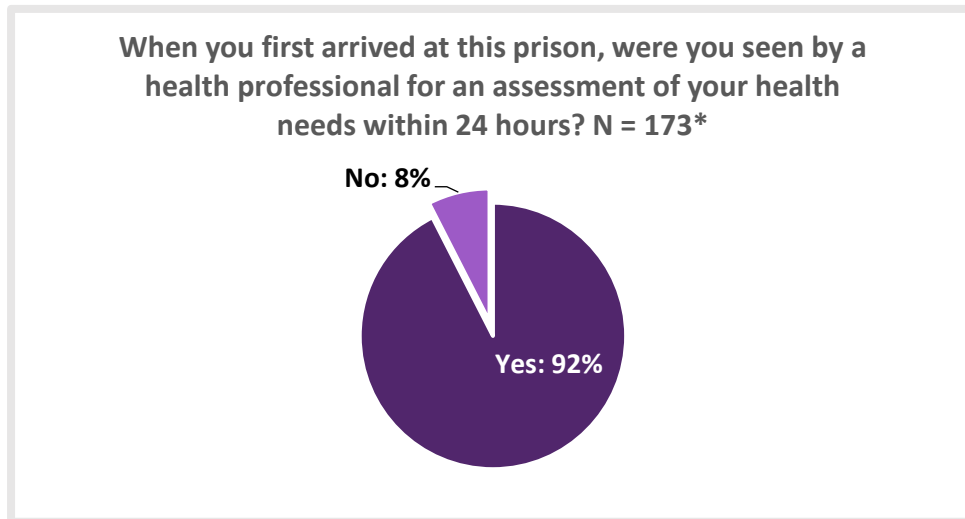


**Only convicted respondents who knew which courses they needed to complete*

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

Health assessment on arrival

Most respondents (92%) said they were seen by a health professional for an assessment within 24 hours of arriving at HMP Low Moss.



**Excluding "Don't remember"*

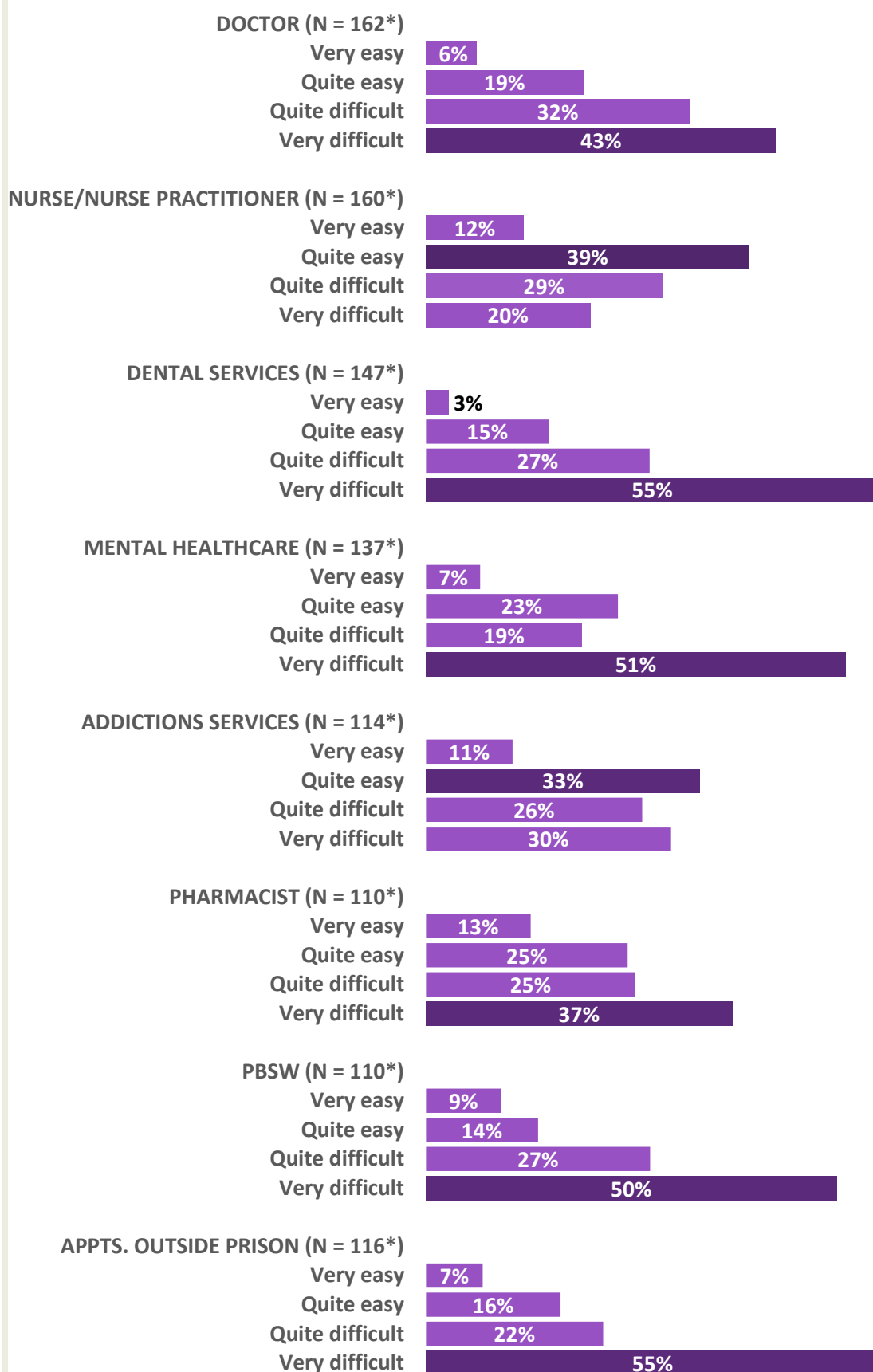
Access to health services

The majority (95%) of respondents said they knew how to access health services in HMP Low Moss.

Just over half of respondents (51%) said it was easy to access a nurse or nurse practitioner.

However, all other health services were rated as difficult to access by the majority of respondents: doctor (75%); dental services (82%); mental healthcare (70%); addictions services (56%); pharmacist (62%); prison-based social work (77%); and medical appointments outside the prison (77%).

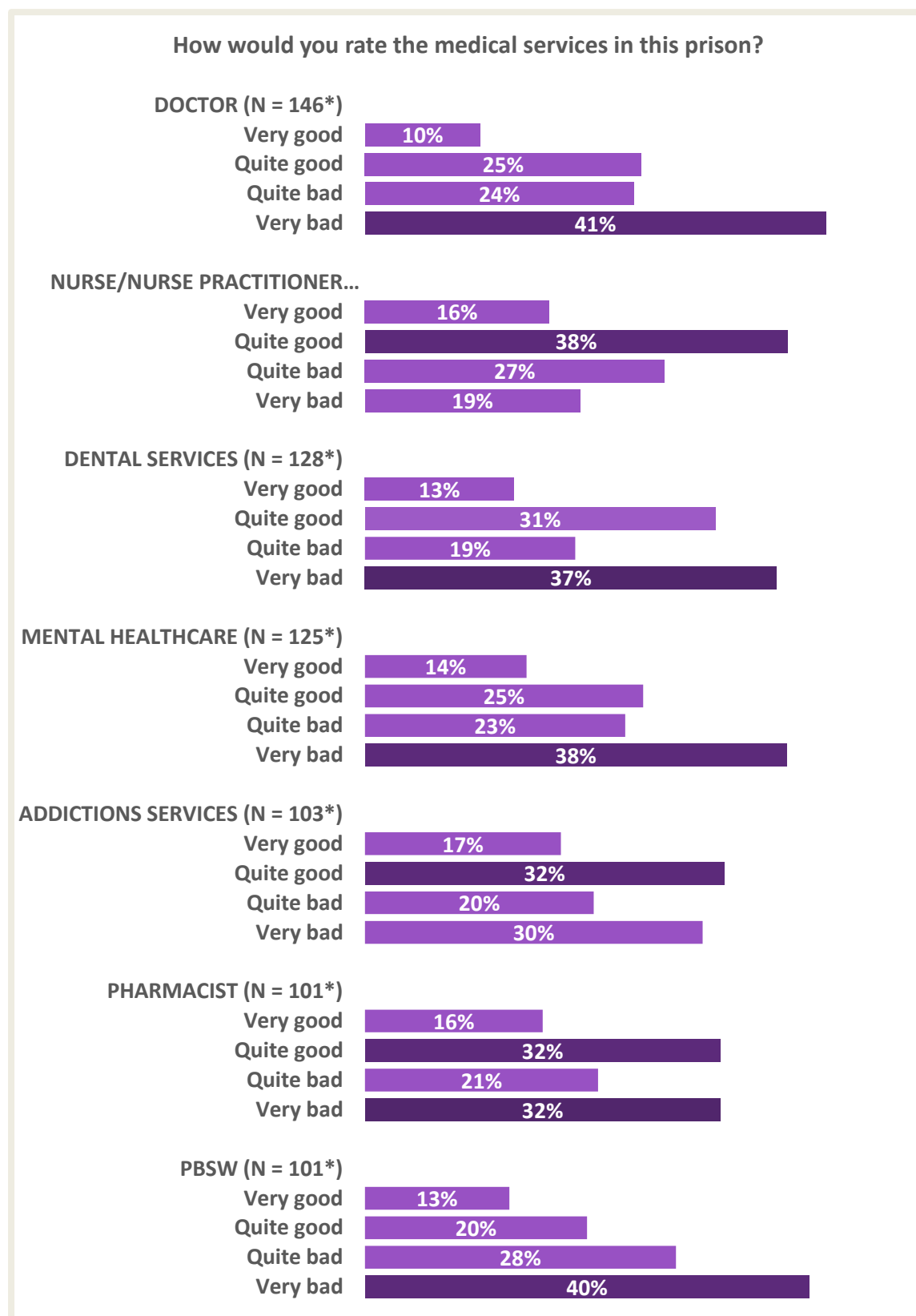
How easy or difficult is it to access health services in this prison?



*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 Low Moss.



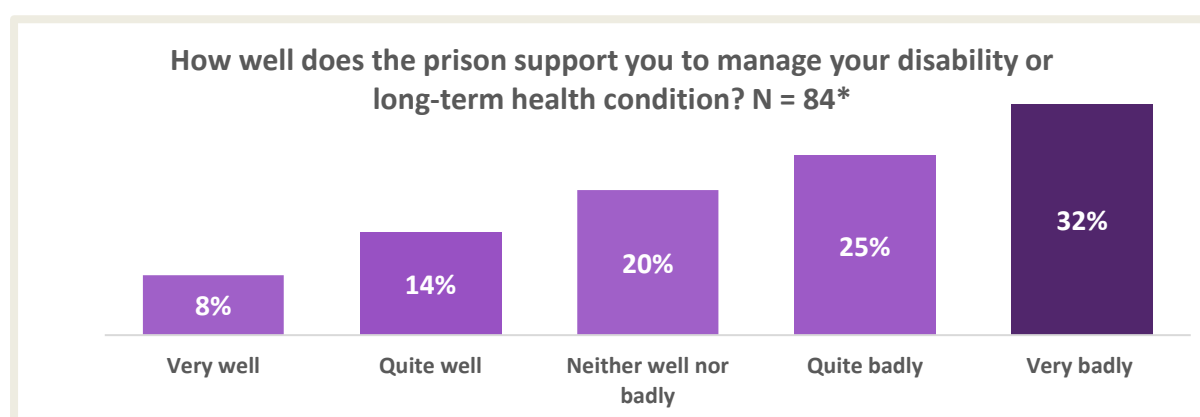
*Excluding "Don't know"

The service provided by the nurses/nurse practitioners was rated as good by just over half of respondents (54%), and addictions services were rated as good by 50% of respondents.

However, all other services were rated as poor by the majority of respondents: GP services (65%); dental services (56%); mental healthcare (61%); pharmacist (53%); and prison-based social work (68%).

Support for disabilities and long term health conditions

In total, 50% of respondents reported living with a disability or long-term health condition. Of these respondents, more than half (57%) reported being poorly supported to manage their condition. Only 22% reported being well supported to manage their condition.



**Only those who reported having a disability or long-term health condition*

Support for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and mental health

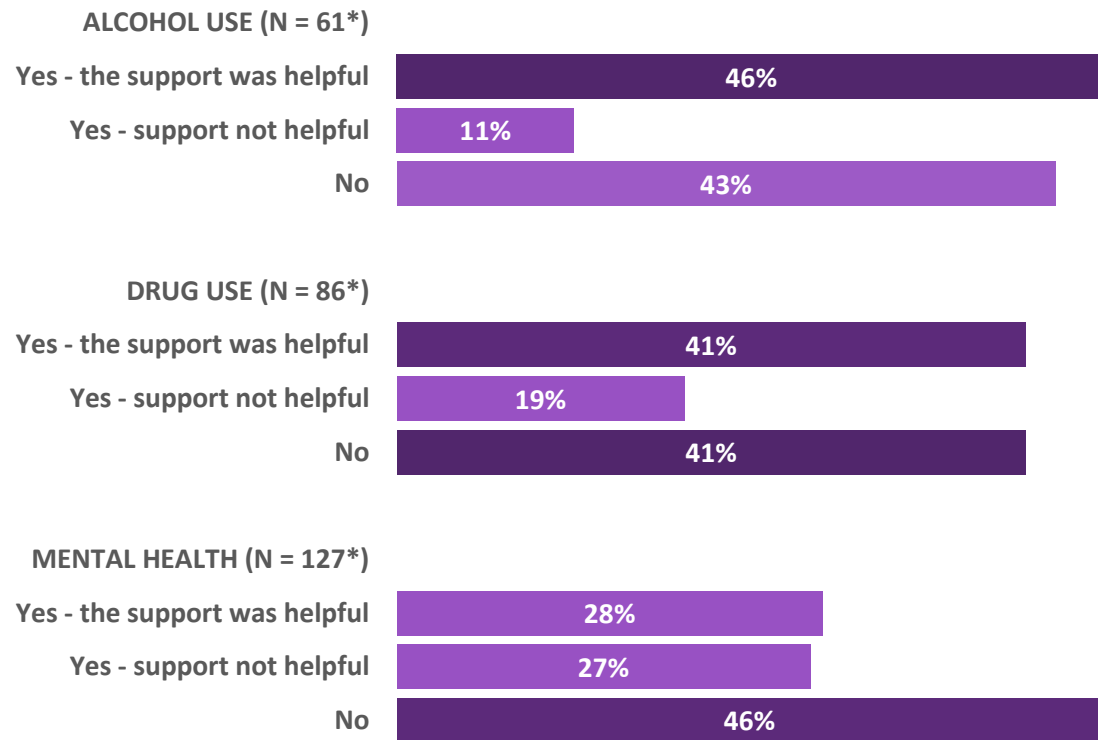
The survey asked about the support provided to those who needed help with alcohol use, drug use, and mental health issues.

Of those who said they needed support for alcohol use, 57% reported having been offered support, while 43% said they had not been offered support. In total, almost half (46%) said they had received support that had been helpful.

Of those who said they had needed support for drug use, the majority (60%) said they had been given access to support, while 41% said they had not been offered support. Two-in-five (41%) said they had been given support that had been helpful.

Of those who said they had needed support for their mental health, just over half (55%) said they had been offered support, while 46% said they had not. Just over one-quarter (28%) 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 haven't needed this support"*

Open Question (General Comments): Thematic Analysis

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide general feedback on their experience in HMP Low Moss via an open-comment question at the end of the survey. In total, 102 respondents (55%) left comments, which are analysed thematically below. The most common concerns raised regarded: relationships with staff; purposeful activity, regime and time out of cell; physical environment; healthcare; progression; wages, cost of living and canteen; and food.

Relationships with staff

More than half of those who left comments (60) wrote about relationships between staff and prisoners at HMP Low Moss. A small number of these comments were positive, with a handful of respondents reporting generally being treated with dignity and respect. For example:

“While in prison I have mostly been treated fairly and with a level of dignity.”

“[Mostly] I have been treated with respect while here, [I] could ask nothing more from the officers”

“Staff are mostly friendly and helpful.”

“The majority of staff members here are respectful, helpful and caring.”

However, most comments were negative, with concerns raised about bullying, violence, corruption, and lack of support. Some felt that they were not treated with dignity or respect:

“The care we get in Low Moss and the treatment we have to deal with on a daily basis it’s disgusting.”

“Staff they treat us like dogs, speak down to us, swear and shout at us.”

“Because I’m on protection me and most others get treated like scum.”

“There is good and bad staff. More bad than good. Most are rude or indifferent. The few good help you feel human again. The very bad are avoided.”

“I’m respectful to staff, some staff are good but most are very deliberately difficult.”

“I am new to this prison but so far it has been very negative and some staff seem to have an attitude with cons and there is a lack of respect from some staff, though not all.”

“The prison staff could be doing with people skills as their attitudes are very wrong and disrespectful which causes prisoners to react in

a negative way. And if we put a complaint its never ignored and never taken seriously.”

“[Prisoners] get ignored a lot. Guards pretend you don’t exist. A lot of them extremely rude. [They] treat people as sub-human. No compassion, empathy, or understanding for prisoners. Almost seems to me as a lot of guards in this prison went into the job to try and bully and belittle prisoners. Extremely lazy, unmotivated to help, leave you wondering all the time.”

“I regularly hear staff refer to prisoners as beasts in a threatening and intimidating manner.”

Meanwhile others reported a lack of ability and/or willingness from staff to offer prisoners help and support:

“Our requests get ignored, our complaints get binned, they are a cause of friction between prisoners and discriminate against what ethnic group you follow and what team you support. They eat the spare food from the pantry and don’t help people that are not coping with their mental health.”

“Most staff refuse or complain when asked for help. Often telling prisoners to submit all requests for help in the morning only. Staff can also outright ignore requests in the morning. Prisoners can wait weeks for a specific staff member to come on shift, knowing their best chances of being heard will lie with the good staff member.”

“The main issue I would say is the attitude of certain prison guards in Kelvin [hall] remand sections. Just asking for certain essentials like a bowl or cutlery we are shot down and left with nothing.”

“I have a personal officer however they lack any sort of motivation to help or support in anyway. I doubt he even knows my name! I was 18 months in before a staff member was appointed.”

“For prisoner complaints (CPs), the officers just rip them up and bin them.”

Over 10% of those who left comments reported experiences of staff violently assaulting and verbally abusing prisoners, and five used the words “corruption” or “corrupt” to describe some members of prison staff.

This published report will not provide details of alleged assaults, but some general comments included:

“We really need you to understand the level of bullying by staff on prisoners. The amount of serious assaults on inmates... our prisoners are being abused, bullied, even killed and then when we say or act we are silenced with intimidation through mental games or physical abuse.”

“The verbal bullying is leaving vulnerable prisoners suicidal as well as other prisoners in a state of fear and alarm. Boys are being left depressed from these sustained periods of abuse. It’s not all staff but the large amount are involved, filtering down from management. All we want is fair treatment and to go home to our families in a good state of mind and health, not a shell of a human like I am present!”

“The culturised [sic] systematic bullying by officers who are 110% corrupt and put us under fear of violence threats and constant duress and forever feeling unsafe. [I have] witnessed physical violence by numerous staff.”

“Assaults and mistreatment are a common occurrence, staff will bully and intimidate those who accept it. Those who do not are treated with brute force.”

“They bully people and assault prisoners, they lock us away in our cells if they are challenged on their behaviour.”

“The prison officers take great pride in just how much the prisoners know about the bullying and the assaults that go on in this jail.”

Purposeful activity, regime and time out of cell

Over a third of those who left comments (36) wrote about the regime, purposeful activity and the amount of time they spent locked in their cells.

Several reported that there were not enough opportunities for them to engage in purposeful activity, with reports that it was difficult to access jobs and education opportunities were minimal and frequently cancelled:

“We only get education for 1 hour in the afternoon Monday to Friday... but most of the time our classes are cancelled without any notice.”

“Difficult to get out for education or to seek a job.”

“[There is] a lack of training/courses/activities is very clearly due to understaffing even though facilities are clearly there, a lack of staff means they are unavailable.”

“Education or even access to learning material is not available to me despite being a keen learner... I have been on remand for over 2 years and feel that there is a lack of a common sense approach with an apparent generalisation of prisoners.”

“Work parties – there aren’t really any”.

Respondents also commented on the sporadic nature of other activities such as gym, sports, chaplaincy, library and recreation, with reports that these frequently clashed or were cancelled, leaving prisoners with little to do during the day:

“Gym off regularly. Education off regularly. Always short staffed so locked up.”

“Staff disruptions often cause scheduled activities e.g. library, education, church, recreation, gym... to be cancelled and not rescheduled. Many of our activities are scheduled at the same time, causing prisoners to have to choose between them. I.e. rec, church, education, gym. So prisoners must forego their recreation if they wish to do pretty much anything. Even factoring in activities, rec, exercise, and dining we are on average 20+ hours in our cells.”

“The gym is easily accessible if you have a PT card but trying to get one can be a nightmare as the PT inductions aren’t very frequent as the gym is constantly “low staff”. We also have a brilliant football pitch that hardly gets used by Kelvin [hall] prisoners because we don’t get the chance while on remand. I have been on remand for [over two years], longer than most sentenced people in Kelvin have been here but they get priority unfairly.”

“PT is during rec time. So you miss rec 1 hour a day. Exercise is at 10am Mon-Fri. 9am Sat-Sun. This is too early and it’s freezing cold, especially in the winter.”

As a result of the apparent lack of activities, many respondents reported spending most of their days locked in their cells with little to do, and highlighted the tension and difficulties this was causing for prisoners.

“The prison is often understaffed [so] gym time and education [is] cancelled and prisoners [are] locked in their cell for longer. This raises tension amongst prisoners and creates a hostile atmosphere, most of the cells shared by two prisoners are single occupancy cells with no privacy when it comes to showering, using the toilet or making personal phone calls. 23 hours per day locked in these conditions also leads to a lot of tension.”

“We are locked up all day apart from recreation and exercise [but] we used to get opened a lot more before Covid. Covid’s more or less gone and things are still the same.”

“Routine in Low Moss is poor. Frequent dine-ins and weekend schedule implemented during the week.”

“Most of a prisoner’s time is spent in his/her cell. Most watch T.V. to pass time.”

“Most days everyone [in Kelvin hall] is only out [of] their cell for a max of 2 hours a day while Clyde are open longer (about 3 to 4 hours).”

A number of respondents also reported that often a whole section would be punished with extra time in their cells for a single fight on the section:

"If there is a fight in the section, anyone involved gets put on a rule which is fair, but then the other 30 odd prisoners have to deal with "rec or snack" and dine-ins for 7 days even though they played no part. Unfairly punishing people which makes no sense."

"Everyone gets punished in a section for two other people fighting and are forced to eat in your cell for a week, people that are not involved in the fight get punished for it."

"The entire section was punished for a fight between 2 prisoners (dine in for 1 whole week)."

Healthcare and wellbeing

Over a third of those who left comments (38) wrote about issues relating to health and healthcare. The most common theme was difficulty getting access to timely healthcare appointments and interventions, with many reporting that it was difficult to access the services they needed:

"Doctors take months/weeks to reply."

"Near impossible to see a doctor for anything."

"Been trying to access an appointment with mental health. [I've] put 10 referrals in so far nothing."

"[The mental health team] take months upon months to see people and when they eventually do see people they do not assess us properly and refuse to give us the medication we get from our doctors and mental health teams outside."

"I have witnessed people taking breakdowns and they just get left locked in their cells with no help or support and nurses don't come to see them until it's too late. The chaplain comes sees us faster than healthcare professionals. When people take fits they get placed on report and punished at the orderly room for a medical matter."

"Impossible to see the mental health team. Impossible to see a nurse. NHS nurses can also be extremely unhelpful and rude."

"Every time we ask to get on something like to stop smoking we just get told we are on a waiting list but never get told how long the waiting list is."

"As a remand prisoner it can be difficult to access some services particularly with regards to health. It can be difficult to get nurses in particular to listen to health concerns which has personally resulted in delayed treatment... Also as a remand prisoner I can't access the dental service. I have been waiting 12 months to see a dentist [for a

specific dental problem]... Despite making four written requests I am still waiting."

"While support from professionals is here regarding mental health issues, sometimes the advice offered is unhelpful or the waiting times to speak to somebody is too long. In my experience the best advice and coping mechanisms have always come from fellow prisoners. We look after one another. Some prisoners need a lot of help mental health wise from professional and never receive it. Some don't want to ask for help or don't know how so they suffer in silence. Some of the best help and support comes from the prison chaplains and I couldn't sing their praises any higher. They show love and care to everyone who asks, they devote so much of their time to help others and truly do a fantastic job."

"The healthcare is that bad there is no point in asking for help. My mental health has been low to the point of hearing things and seeing things. I've reported this to prison officers and the doctor but no kind of help of any kind."

Medication was another common issue, with some respondents reporting being taken off medication they had been on in the community, and others struggling to access medication they felt they needed:

"Every time I come in [to Low Moss] they are messing with my meds leaving me without or having to buy my medication in the halls. I am never prepared for release because I'm leaving here so messed up."

"I've been taken off meds when I had arrived to this jail because I had cocaine in my system."

"After 25 years of maintained prescription [for a specific medication] outside prison, I was struck off within the month of arriving not due to a medical [issue] but because the meds are seen as currency, even though other people still get these meds maintained."

"I suffer with [a specific condition] and am unmedicated for this condition. I have asked and tried to get meds but seem to get no where with the help I need... at times I find myself stuck in intrusive thoughts of violence on staff and my peers on the wing. There's no help for me here."

Physical environment and essential items

More than a quarter (27 respondents) of those who left comments wrote about the quality of the physical environment and essential items.

Several commented on the poor quality of mattresses and other basic necessities, as well as the difficulty accessing important items such as clean towels, bedding and clothes:

"The mattresses and pillows are making my chronic pain considerably worse and my chances of any sleep at all are now very unlikely."

"Mattresses in the cells are so thin and over-used we are actually better off without them, they really need to be changed urgently."

"The clothes, if any, that you get are scruffy and don't fit. Mattresses are very worn and in major need of replacement."

"It sometimes takes a long time to get clean bedding... We also don't always get two towels or prison clothes i.e. t shirts, trousers etc. We don't all have a toilet brush or a dust pan and brush/ cell."

"[It is] difficult to get a towel... must almost beg for one."

"Never any towels – lucky to get 1 week."

"Sometimes laundry goes missing after/during laundry day. Where laundry gets done "in cell", there is no drying rack for the radiator or section laundry drying hangers."

"Laundry comes back damp/wet. This should be bone dry as in the summer the heating is hardly on to dry stuff. Clothes should come back dry to stop damp/smelling clothes."

Others commented on hygiene issues within the physical environment. Issues raised included unclean and unkept living areas, poor ventilation, and lack of access to cleaning equipment:

"The air flow is very poor. The window grills are now blocked with dirt. A scrubbing brush or nail brush or an appropriate tool to clean and fix the grills is not available. The air conditioning in the shower is very poor, little air flow... When temperatures rose outside it was very uncomfortable."

"Cleaners need to remove black mould from toilet ceiling regularly."

"Cells are rotten, mould on roofs in shower room and on outside the shower room... bad for hygiene. Even just to get things when on a rule is shocking, waiting a week for a cell cleaning mop, brush etc."

"Not allowed clothes horse for drying hand washings. No proper cleaning equipment. Need more buckets. No food separator for sink in pantry. Walls dirty, floor sticky. Bins never been washed out."

"I've been flung in cells that had broken glass on the floor and water cut off for up to 5 days, not even the toilet would flush. Do you have any idea how that affects one's mental health?"

Progression

Almost a quarter of those who commented (24 respondents) raised concerns about progression. Many long-term prisoners reported that they were still awaiting their Generic Programme Assessment (GPA) so could not yet begin to progress through their sentences:

"I have been in this prison for 4 years. My parole is less than 12 months away and still can't get a GPA done. According to the prison staff I don't need it, but yet other staff say otherwise. Went to an ICM 3 months ago and was told probably won't have a GPA before my parole so no chance of progression and no chance of getting courses done either, so [I will] be here for many more years to come, probably do rest of my sentence."

"I'm 1.5 years into an LTP and still haven't had my GPA done therefore I can't progress. Waiting to get to [HMP] Shotts."

"Need a G.P.A. Been in 2.5 years and still not had one and I have no Personal Officer."

"Progression is hard from Low Moss because of the waiting times for GPA. No one moves on their critical dates like at some other prisons."

"I have been here nearly 4 years and I have no idea of any courses etc., but I can progress [at the] end of this year 2025 but have no idea about anything I have to do."

Others who had done their GPA reported struggling to access the courses their GPA had identified for them:

"I have had the VPP-SCP [Violence Prevention Programme and Self-Change Programme] outstanding since 2010. This is my third LTP with an extension. To progress I will have to complete the SCP and that is a problem for me."

"We can't get on to 1-to-1 or 2-to-1 course work. I've been here 14 years and have been waiting for courses since I had my GPA in 2017."

"I have done 18 years on the bounce... My lib date is 2028 and I would like to try [HMP] Castle Huntly [but] unmedicated I am not fit enough to do SCP [Self-Change Programme]... I'm freaking out..."

Cost of living, wages and canteen

Nineteen respondents left comments about the cost of living, wages and the canteen. The majority of these focused on the sense that the canteen and phones were too expensive in comparison to the wages received for prison jobs, and that without a prison job it was very difficult to access adequate funds for phone calls and canteen items.

"We need more jobs as the cell wage for convicted and remand are terrible. Especially for people that don't get money sent in. I personally really struggle with my wage every week with £5.00."

"We don't get to work so if no family you are in a world of debt. Not being able to buy enough vapes to last the week causes me mental torture every week."

"Phone rates are far too expensive. Canteen is expensive. £20 limit [per week for convicted prisoners] is not adequate. Phone top ups and canteen spend should be separated from the £20 limit."

"That there is stuff on the canteen sheet that is nearly £6 and other things are too dear when we are limited to what PPC [Prisoner Personal Cash] we can use and spend on the canteen sheet we as prisoners don't get a say what happens with the canteen sheet. The wages should be going up because the price of goods on the canteen sheet are going up."

"I spend over £30 a week on my phone, and would spend higher if I could. The phone system is expensive and restrictive, especially where high contact is needed to speak to loved ones and friends. We have asked for greater PPC-to-wages allowance to assist with this with no response even when mentioned in PIAC meetings. We should be allowed minutes bundles or a better way to add call time to our phones beyond one top up point via the canteen sheet. Calls and contact is my best support through prison and equally the best support for my partner back home."

Additionally, several respondents commented on the selection available on the canteen sheet, noting that prisoners had no say in what was available, and that there was a lack of variety, and few healthy food options.

Food

Sixteen respondents left comments about the food, with the most common concern being food quality. There were reports of receiving meals that were cold, soggy, over-cooked, mouldy, unhealthy:

"I work in the cooks so I know how the food works. It's prepared far too early, the chips are undercooked at around 10 am... then put in trolleys for two hours. It kills them to be honest, soggy. The food is on a 3 week rotation so it's the same diet every 3 weeks. My cholesterol is through the roof".

"The food borders on un-eatable at times"

"There has been mould on the food they serve"

"Food is cold a lot, and over or under-cooked."

"Salad should be available every day with a meal."

Appendix

HMIPS Pre-Inspection Survey Comparative Data

HMP Low Moss in Comparison with all other closed establishments

This table shows a comparison between HMP Low Moss (July 2025) and all other closed-conditions prisons surveyed between 2022 and 2025 (13 comparator prisons*). Where results are shown as statistically significant, this means that it is unlikely that the difference between HMP Low Moss 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 184 respondents in the HMP Low Moss group, and 1,965 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 Low Moss significantly more negative than the comparator group**Green:** HMP Low Moss significantly more positive than the comparator group

Question	HMP Low Moss		Comparator Group	
	No. of responses	% of valid responses	No. of responses	% of valid responses
Was offered an induction	79	47%	996	61%
Was treated well/neutrally in reception	155	86%	1681	89%
Able to shower every day	174	95%	1543	80%
Quality of food is good/very good	48	26%	605	32%
Always get enough to eat at mealtimes	28	15%	231	12%
Can have clothes washed at least once a week	172	95%	1752	92%
Feel safe all/most of the time	107	59%	1195	62%
Have witnessed staff abusing, threatening, bullying or assaulting another prisoner in this prison**	113	67%	975	56%
Have witnessed physical assault by staff on others**	73	40%	459	27%
Have witnessed verbal abuse by staff on others**	98	53%	753	44%
Have witnessed threats or intimidation by staff on others**	87	47%	611	35%
Have witnessed bullying or intimidation by staff on others**	81	44%	575	33%
Have witnessed "other" forms of abuse by staff on others**	20	11%	132	8%
Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by staff member**	85	51%	651	37%
Have been physically abused by staff**	34	19%	227	13%
Have been verbally abused by staff**	68	37%	457	26%
Have been threatened or intimidated by staff**	67	36%	384	22%
Have been bullied or harassed by staff**	51	28%	327	19%
Have been victim of "other" abusive behaviour by staff**	18	10%	64	4%
Would/probably would report abuse etc. by staff**	40	24%	618	35%
Have been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by another prisoner**	70	42%	740	41%
Have been physically abused by another prisoner**	41	22%	416	24%
Have been verbally abused by another prisoner**	40	22%	410	24%

Have been threatened or intimidated by another prisoner**	44	24%	400	23%
Have been bullied or harassed by another prisoner**	31	17%	291	17%
Have been victim of "other" abusive behaviour by another prisoner**	4	2%	43	3%
Would/probably would report abuse etc. by other prisoners**	33	20%	406	24%
Given a reasonable explanation every time/most times you or your cell is searched	60	35%	612	33%
System for accessing personal property works well	41	27%	515	31%
Treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	89	50%	1207	63%
Complaints system works well	19	14%	273	20%
Have a Personal Officer	131	75%	1114	58%
Personal officer is helpful	56	43%	668	62%
Prisoners are consulted about canteen etc. and things can change as a result	17	11%	280	17%
Know the role of an IPM	84	48%	921	48%
Know how to contact an IPM	65	37%	745	39%
Last time contacted IPM it was helpful/neutral	30	59%	281	53%
Easy to access education	87	55%	890	53%
Easy to access skills training	40	26%	460	29%
Easy to access other prison jobs	57	37%	631	38%
Able to go to the gym/play sports at least once last week	116	73%	1564	90%
Able to go to the library at least once last week	78	59%	1039	67%
Able to spend at least one hour every day exercising in the fresh air last week	143	79%	1378	72%
Able to spend more than 2 hours out of cell on previous weekday	113	62%	1191	63%
Able to spend more than 2 hours out of cell on previous Saturday	93	52%	1098	58%
Well/neutrally supported to practice religion	72	76%	750	78%
Able to have an in-person visit every week in last month	82	59%	1006	66%
Visitors treated with respect by staff all/most of the time	66	49%	930	64%
Able to have video visit every week in last month	33	31%	550	46%
Access to in-cell prison-issued phone	180	99%	1560	90%
Know what courses need to undertake for progression (convicted only)	48	38%	451	43%
Easy to access the courses I need	13	28%	89	22%

Seen by a health professional within 24 hours of arrival	160	93%	1398	87%
Know how to access healthcare	170	95%	1563	93%
Easy to access a doctor	41	25%	476	27%
Easy to access a nurse/nurse practitioner	82	51%	869	50%
Easy to access a dentist	26	18%	361	22%
Easy to access mental healthcare	41	30%	418	29%
Easy to access addictions services	50	44%	546	47%
Easy to access pharmacist	41	37%	510	39%
Easy to access prison-based social work	25	23%	423	36%
Easy to access medical appointments outside the prison	27	23%	281	22%
Good quality service from doctors	51	35%	633	40%
Good quality service from nurses/nurse practitioners	79	54%	965	57%
Good quality dental services	57	45%	559	41%
Good quality mental health services	49	39%	473	37%
Good quality addictions services	51	50%	537	51%
Good quality pharmacy services	48	48%	545	45%
Good quality PBSW service	33	33%	415	38%
Good/neutral support for managing disabilities/long-term health conditions	36	43%	414	48%
Received helpful support for alcohol use (only those who said they needed it)	28	46%	170	33%
Received helpful support for drug use (only those who said they needed it)	35	41%	359	46%
Received helpful support for mental health (only those who said they needed it)	35	28%	368	30%

*Comparator prisons:

HMP Shotts (2022)

HMP Inverness (2022)

HMP Greenock (2023)

HMP Perth (2023)

HMP & YOI Polmont (2023)

HMP Grampian (2023)

HMP & YOI Stirling (2024)

HMP Addiewell (2024)

HMP Dumfries (2024)

HMP Barlinnie (2024)

HMP Glenochil (2025)

HMP Kilmarnock (2025)

HMP Edinburgh (2025)