



Have your say

**Wirral's Air Quality Strategy
Consultation Report**



Consultation: 04 September 2023 – 01 October 2023

Report: 02 October 2023



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1.0 Executive Summary

The World Health Organisation and the UK Health Security Agency both state that air pollution is the greatest environmental threat to people's health. Air pollution affects human health from before birth, in the very young, and through to older age adulthood. Although air pollution is harmful to everyone, vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, children and those with pre-existing health conditions are more susceptible to its effects. Air pollution affects people living in more heavily populated areas, which are often areas of higher deprivation. Improvements to air quality will therefore have positive effects on our health.

Earlier this year, the government directed all local authorities to produce an Air Quality Strategy. Wirral has not previously been required to have a strategy in place, as we have not identified the levels of pollution locally that breach legally set limits.

Wirral Council is leading on the development of the Air Quality Strategy for the borough. A workshop was held with relevant partners and stakeholders from across the borough and City Region, to identify key priorities aimed at improving air quality for Wirral residents.

Following this, the views of Wirral residents were sought about air quality and which priorities are most important.

The findings will be used to develop a draft strategy which will be presented for consideration at Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 05 December 2023.



1.1 Key Findings

This section summarises the key finding arising from the survey. Further detail for each question is provided in Section 3.0.

- 150 people responded to the survey, all through the online Have Your Say portal.
- Overall, most people (70%) felt they had an awareness of air quality on Wirral, 46.0% felt they were 'aware' of air quality, and 24.0% felt 'very aware'. (Question 1)
- Most people, 82.0%, felt that having good air quality in Wirral was important, 51.3% felt it was 'very important' and 30.7% 'important'. (Question 2)
- Respondents were asked to rank five priorities proposed in the draft Air Quality strategy from least important (1) to most important (5). The priority that was overall ranked as being most important was to "Reduce domestic, commercial, and industrial emissions" with an average ranking on 3.42 out of 5. (Question 3)
- Respondents were asked to indicate how important they thought each of the stated benefits of improved air quality were.

Below the benefits are listed in order of how important survey respondents felt them to be:

1. Improving the health of children and young people (average score* **4.08**).
2. Reducing associated health conditions, e.g. asthma (**4.00**).
3. Improving the health of Wirral's residents, workers, and visitors (**3.99**).
4. Improving the life expectancy of Wirral's residents, workers, and visitors (**3.85**).
5. Helping tackle climate change (**3.47**).

*An average score for each statement was calculated, based on the level of importance indicated by respondents, with 5 being 'Very important' and 1 being 'Not important at all'. The higher the average score the more important respondents felt the benefit was (Question 4).

1. Respondents were asked to indicate how important each of the below actions would be in impacting air quality, they are listed below in order of how important survey respondents felt them to be:
 1. Improving public transport (average score * **4.09**).
 2. Benefits for the environment (**3.66**).
 3. Improving housing (**3.45**).
 4. Creating opportunities for walking, cycling etc (**3.43**).

5. Improving road safety **(3.23)**.
6. Reducing motor vehicle traffic **(2.99)**.

An average score for each action was calculated, based on the level of importance indicated by respondents, with 5 being 'Very important' and 1 being 'Not important at all'. The higher the average score the more important respondents felt the action was (Question 5).

2. Respondents were asked to describe any other benefits of improved air quality that were important if not already mentioned in the preceding questions (Question 6).

The other benefit mentioned most often was that better air quality would create a more pleasant environment in Wirral (6.0%) (Question 6).

3. Respondents were also asked to describe any other ways in which to make a difference to Wirral's Air Quality. The most common comment was that Wirral's air quality is already good (10.0%); in terms of other potential actions to improve air quality, the most popular suggestion was to target private industry polluters (8%) (Question 7).

4. The top three most preferred sources and channels of information about air quality were:

1. Local media - Wirral Globe, Echo, local radio (23.5%).
2. Wirral View email newsletter (19.4%).
3. Through partner organisations such as NHS, local transport providers (16.3%) (Question 8).

2.0 Methodology

The consultation sought Wirral resident's views on the importance of air quality, and the effects of poor air quality, and which actions would have the most impact on improving air quality.

The consultation was carried out between 04 September 2023 – 02 October 2023. The approach used was an online public consultation through the 'Have your say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk with a page dedicated to Wirral's Air Quality Strategy consultation. Useful information was provided on the site including links to further information on the subject, and a PDF outlining the council's proposed priorities for improving air quality.

An online questionnaire was provided for residents to engage with. Respondents were also able to request paper copies, with an offer to help complete the questionnaire, or submit additional comments via a dedicated email address, which was published on the 'Have your say' website alongside the online questionnaire.

Following the consultation, the findings will be used to develop a draft strategy which will be presented for consideration at Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 5 December 2023.

2.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed around understanding stakeholder views on the following key areas:

- Awareness and understanding of air quality and the importance of good air quality.
- Which proposed activities are most and least important in improving air quality.

To enable further understanding and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free-text comments to expand on their ideas or concerns. Following closure of the consultation, the responses to each of the direct questions were collated and the responses included in this report. For the free-text comment questions, a text coding approach was used based on the reoccurring themes. This data was then collated and summarised in the report.

2.2 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

2.3 Interpretation of Results

In terms of the results, it is important to note that:

- The public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information on the opinion of those residents who engaged.
- For some questions, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a statement, on a scale of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The average score out of 5 for each option was calculated to enable us to identify those statements that were most agreed with. The higher the average score, the higher the level of agreement with the statement.
- For some questions, respondents were asked to rank a series of statements, with first being the most important and fifth the least important. The average score out of five for each statement was calculated to enable us to identify those statements that were most agreed with. The higher the average score, the higher the level of importance.
- Free-text questions that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. Therefore, free-text responses were categorised using a coding system. The percentages given, reflect the percentage of respondents who made the comment. As they may have made more than one comment, the total percentage may exceed 100%.
- For some questions, respondents were asked to select one or more options. The percentages given, reflect the percentage of respondents who selected the options. As they may have made more than one options, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

2.4 Communication

The consultation was promoted through the council's corporate digital communication channels. This included:

- Organic social media (video and photographic content shared across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter)
- Media release issued to local print and digital media (covered in Birkenhead News and Wirral Globe)
- Wirral View news article
- Targeted newsletters to subscribers of Wirral View.
- Inclusion in the Climate Newsletter and to attendees of a climate workshop.
- Inclusion in a briefing to Councillors.

3.0 Results

3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was responded to by 150 people, all responses were received through the online portal.

All except the 2 free text questions (questions 6 and 7) were mandatory.

Question 1: How much awareness do you have about air quality in Wirral?

70.0% of respondents were aware of air quality in Wirral, 24.0% very aware, and 10.7% were unaware, 6.0% very unaware.

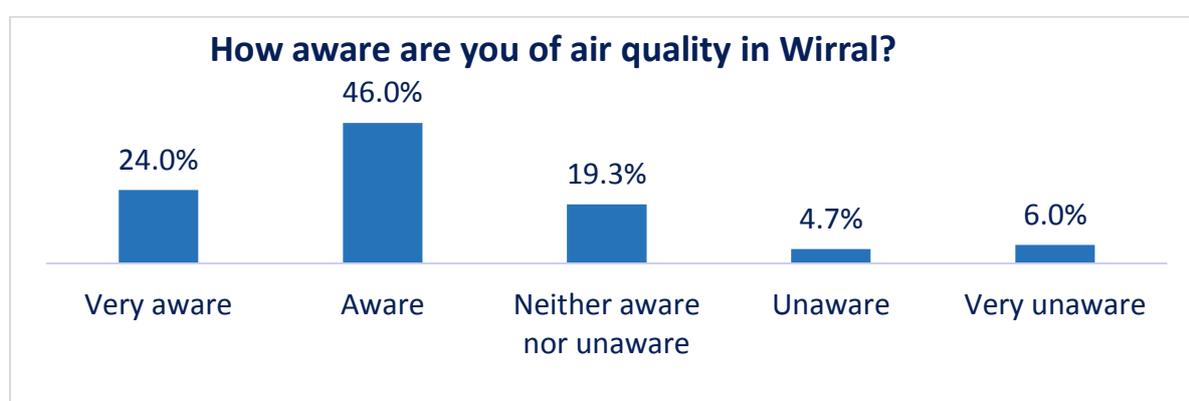


Figure 1: How much awareness do you have about air quality in Wirral?

How much awareness do you have about air quality in Wirral?	Total	%
Very aware	36	24.0%
Aware	69	46.0%
Neither aware nor unaware	29	19.3%
Unaware	7	4.7%
Very unaware	9	6.0%
Total	150	100.0%

Table 1: How much awareness do you have about air quality in Wirral?

Question 2: How important do you think having good air quality in Wirral is?

82.2% of respondents thought air quality in Wirral was important, 51.3% very important, and 7.3% thought it was of low importance (3.3%) or not important at all (4.0%).

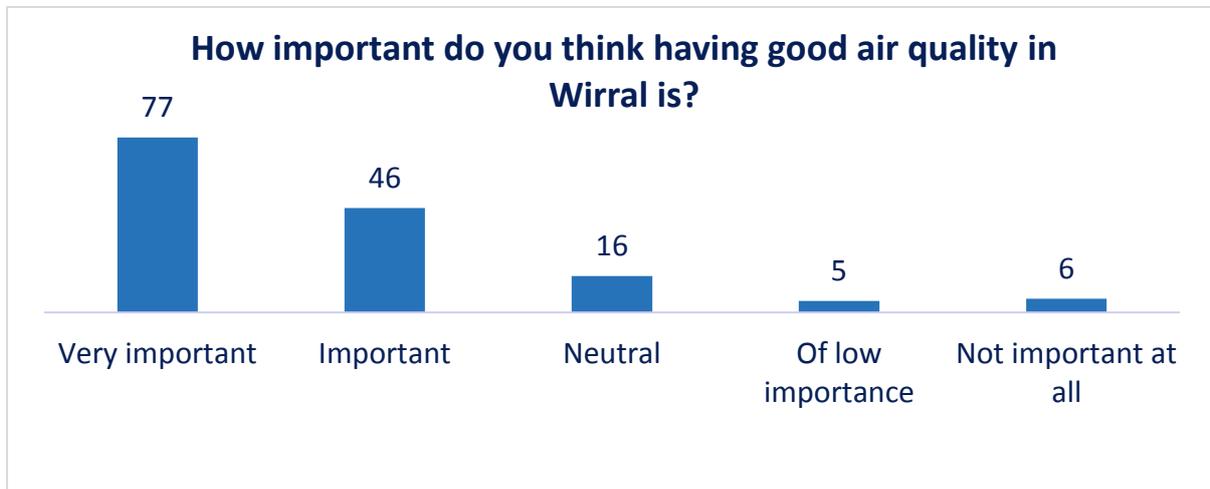


Figure 2: How important do you think having good air quality in Wirral is?

How important do you think having good air quality in Wirral is?		
Answer	Total	%
Very important	77	51.3%
Important	46	30.7%
Neutral	16	10.7%
Of low importance	5	3.3%
Not important at all	6	4.0%
Total	150	100.0%

Table 2: How important do you think having good air quality in Wirral is?

Question 3: Please help us shape our draft strategy by telling us which of the below five priorities you think is of most importance:

Respondents were asked to rank the 5 proposed priorities, with first being the most important and fifth the least important. The average score out of five for each statement was calculated to enable us to identify those statements that were most agreed with. The higher the average score, the higher the level of importance.

The priority ranked as being most important was to reduce domestic, commercial, and industrial emissions, with an average score of 3.42 out of 5. Ranked as being least important was to improve indoor air quality with a score of 2.37.

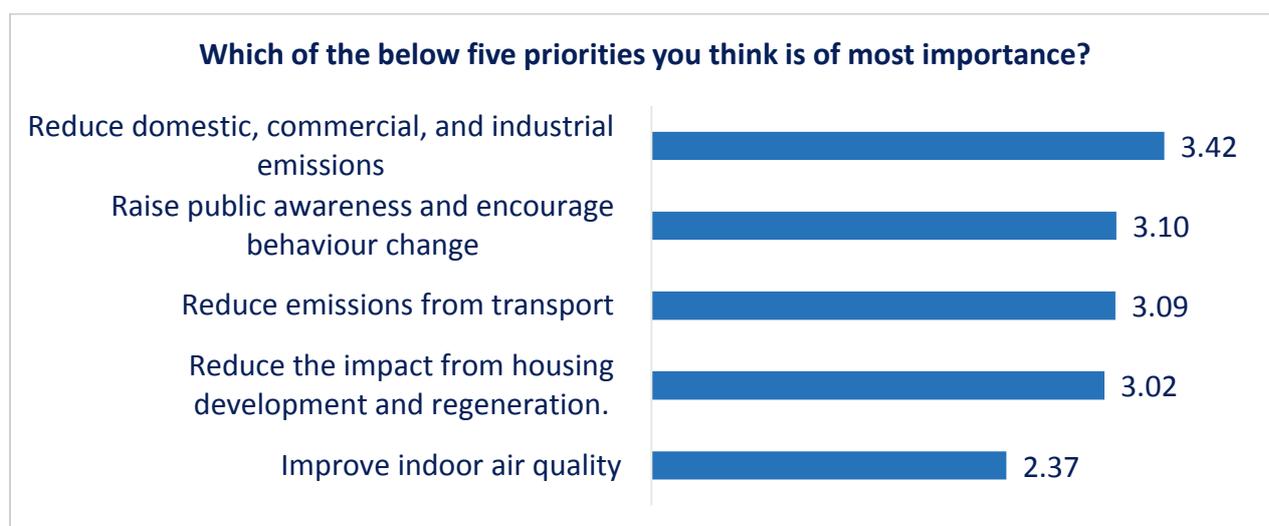


Figure 3: Which of the below five priorities you think is of most importance?

Please help us shape our draft strategy by telling us which of the below five priorities you think is of most importance:	Ranking					Avg. Score
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
Reduce domestic, commercial, and industrial emissions	32	48	32	27	11	3.42
Raise public awareness and encourage behaviour change	35	29	24	40	22	3.10
Reduce emissions from transport	48	17	24	23	38	3.09
Reduce the impact from housing development and regeneration.	18	39	45	24	24	3.02
Improve indoor air quality	17	17	25	36	55	2.37

Table 3: Which of the below five priorities you think is of most importance?

Question 4: How important to you are the below benefits of taking action to improve air quality?

For some questions, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a statement, on a scale of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The average score out of 5 for each option was calculated to identify those statements that were most agreed with. The higher the average score, the higher the level of agreement with the statement.

The benefit indicated as being of most importance was improving the health of children and young people with an average score of 4.08 out of 5. Ranked as being least important was helping to tackle climate change with a score of 3.47.

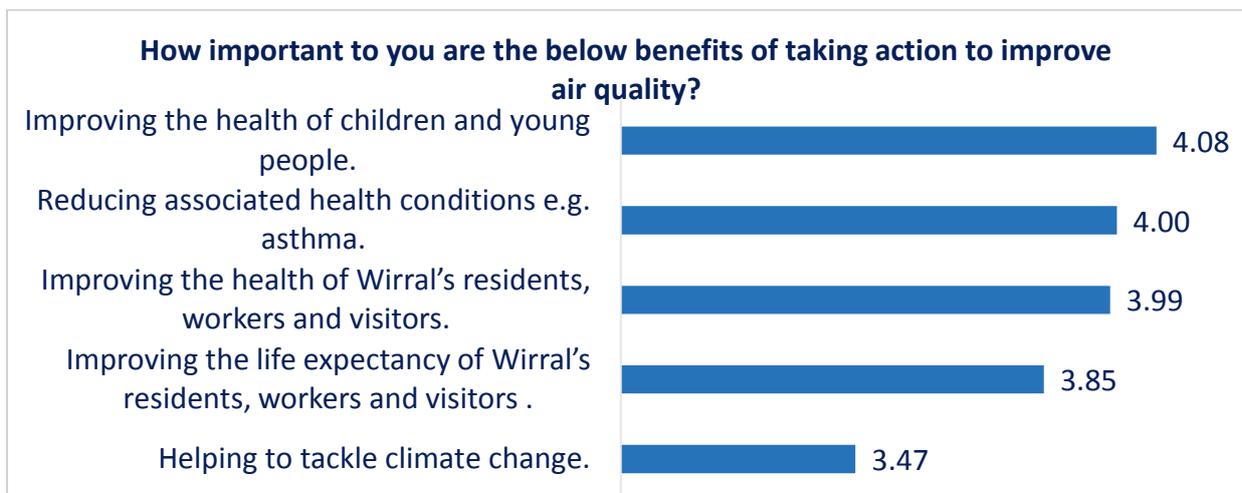


Figure 4: How important to you are the below benefits of taking action to improve air quality?

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Of low importance	Not important at all	Avg. Score
Improving the health of children and young people.	84	27	20	5	14	4.08
Reducing associated health conditions e.g. asthma.	75	33	21	9	12	4.00
Improving the health of Wirral's residents, workers and visitors.	74	36	18	8	14	3.99
Improving the life expectancy of Wirral's residents, workers and visitors .	69	32	24	8	17	3.85
Helping to tackle climate change.	66	18	21	11	34	3.47

Table 4: How important to you are the below benefits of taking action to improve air quality?

Question 5: Taking action on the following matters, will have an impact on air quality. How important are these matters to you?

The action ranked as being most important in impacting air quality was Improving public transport with an average score of 4.09 out of 5. Ranked as being least important was reducing motor vehicle traffic with a score of 2.99.

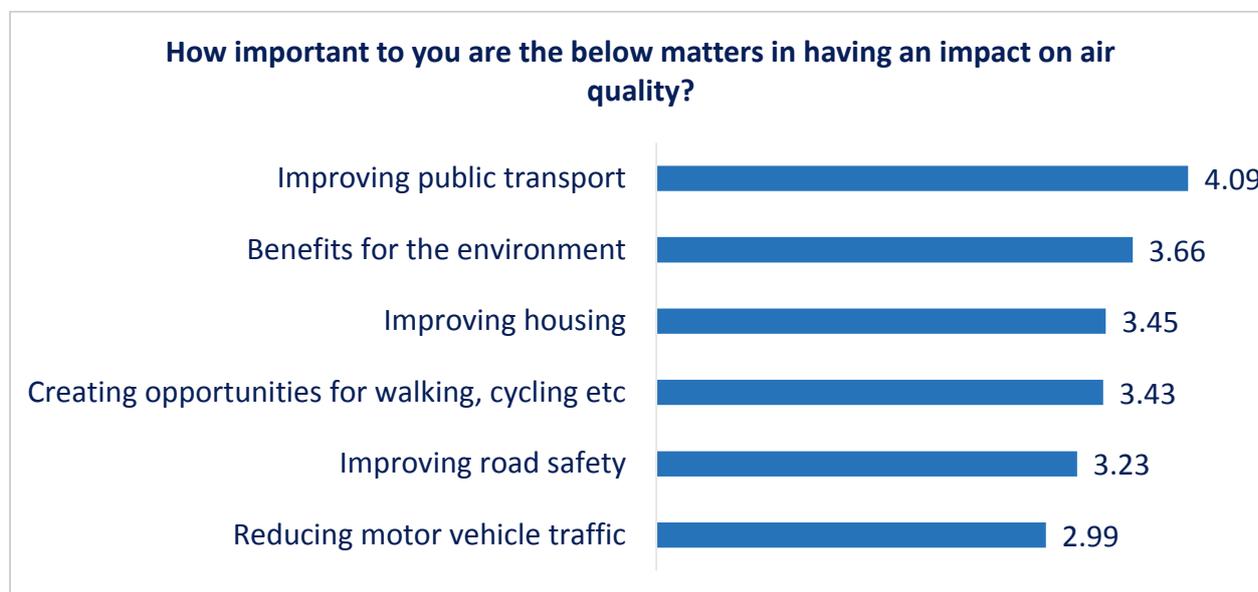


Figure 5: How important to you are the below matters in having an impact on air quality?

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Of low importance	Not important at all	Avg. Score
Reducing motor vehicle traffic e.g. by encouraging people to actively travel	75	44	13	5	13	4.09
Improving road safety e.g. school street schemes, reducing traffic as more people are encouraged to actively travel by bike, walking scooting etc:	61	32	22	15	20	3.66
Improving housing e.g installation of EV charging points or greener heating sources:	45	45	19	15	26	3.45
Improving public transport e.g improving public transport fleets and	53	29	25	16	27	3.43

access to services:						
Creating opportunities for walking, cycling etc:	46	32	16	23	33	3.23

Table 5: How important to you are the below matters in having an impact on air quality?



Question 6: What other benefits of improved air quality, if not listed above, are important?

This is a free text question where respondents were asked to describe any other benefits to improved air quality not mentioned in the preceding survey.

The question was not mandatory, and 68 people provided a response.

Below are the top themes that emerged from the free-text comments as a percentage of the number of people who provided an answer to the question. As the percentage reflects the proportion of respondents who made the comment and that respondents may have made more than one comment in their answer, the total percentages may exceed 100%.

The top themes (benefits) that emerged from the free text comments are illustrated in the below chart.

The most common theme, that 13.2% of respondents to this question mentioned, was that improved air quality would create a more pleasant environment. Comments included reference to improved quality of life, fresh air, better enjoyment of being outside and more flora and fauna.

11.8% of respondents noted that air quality is already good in Wirral and many of these people felt that action to improve air quality was therefore not necessary.

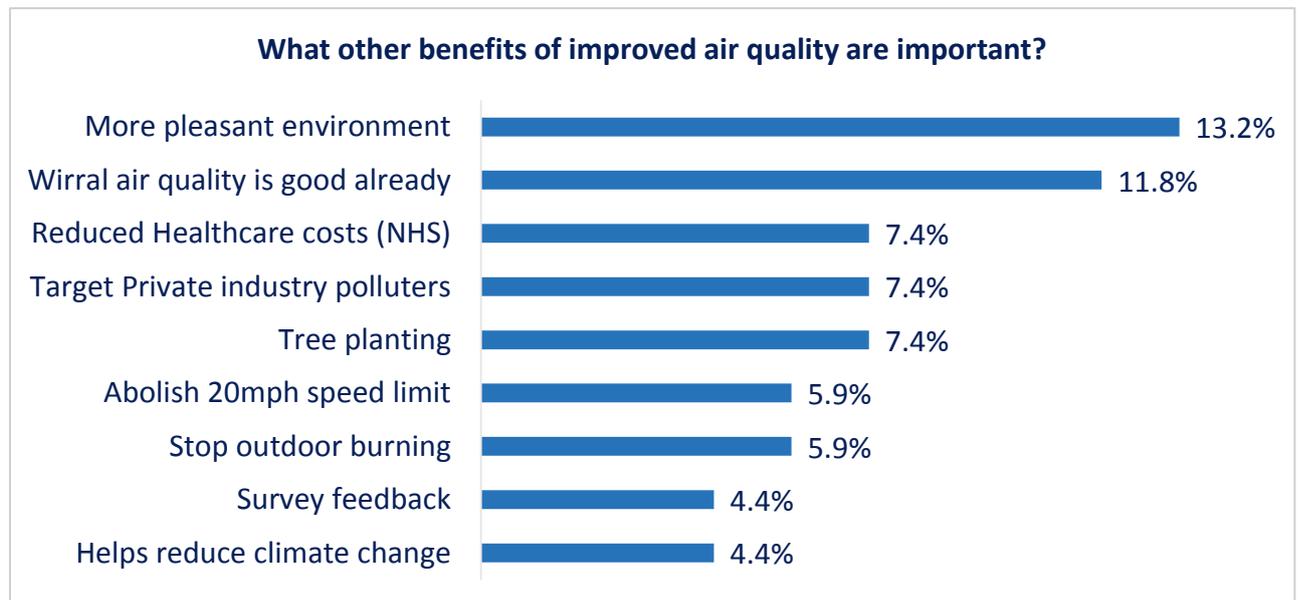


Figure 6: What other benefits of improved air quality are important?

Top themes	Number of comments mentioning this theme	% of question respondents
More pleasant environment	9	13.2%
Wirral air quality is good already	8	11.8%
Reduced Healthcare costs (NHS)	5	7.4%
Target Private industry polluters	5	7.4%
Tree planting	5	7.4%
Abolish 20mph speed limit	4	5.9%
Stop outdoor burning	4	5.9%
Survey feedback	3	4.4%
Helps reduce climate change	3	4.4%

Table 6: What other benefits of improved air quality are important?

Question 7: If you feel the above priority areas do not reflect the issue sufficiently, can please tell us how else we can make a difference with Wirral’s Air Quality?

This is a free text question where respondents were asked to describe any other actions which may lead to an improvement in air quality not mentioned in the preceding survey.

The question was not mandatory, and 90 people provided a response.

Below are the top themes that emerged from the free-text comments as a percentage of the number of people who provided an answer to the question. As the percentage reflects the proportion of respondents who made the comment and that respondents may have made more than one comment in their answer, the total percentages may exceed 100%.

The top themes (actions) that emerged from the free text comments are illustrated in the below chart.

The most common theme amongst the comments, that 16.7% of respondents to this question mentioned is that air quality is already good in Wirral and many of these people felt that action to improve air quality was therefore not necessary.

13.3% of respondents felt that targeting private industry polluters would have a positive impact on air quality. Specific industries mentioned were maritime industries, gas and oil companies, industries based in Eastham and Ellesmere Port and aviation.

12.2% felt that the abolition of the newly introduced 20mph speed limits would improve air quality, due to the belief that slower vehicles and driving in lower gears causes more emissions.

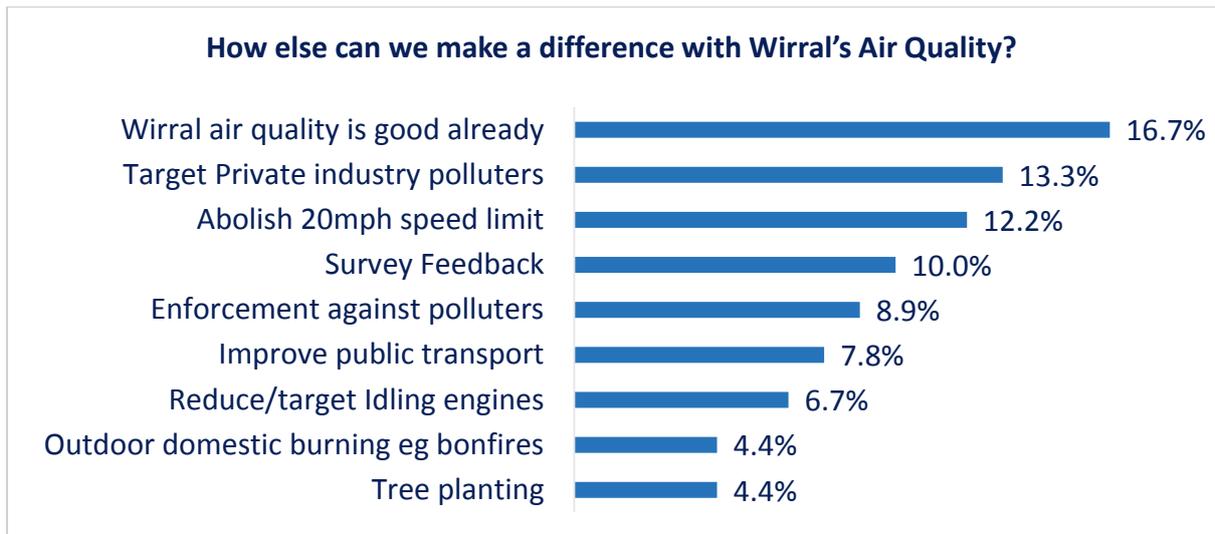


Figure 7: How else can we make a difference with Wirral's Air Quality?

Top themes	Number of comments mentioning this theme	% of question respondents
Wirral air quality is good already	15	16.7%
Target Private industry polluters	12	13.3%
Abolish 20mph speed limit	11	12.2%
Survey Feedback	9	10.0%
Enforcement against polluters	8	8.9%
Improve public transport	7	7.8%
Reduce/target Idling engines	6	6.7%
Outdoor domestic burning eg bonfires	4	4.4%
Tree planting	4	4.4%

Table 7: How else can we make a difference with Wirral's Air Quality?

Question 8: If you wanted to learn more about work to improve air quality, which three sources and channels would you most prefer to get this information from?

The top three most preferred sources and channels of information about air quality were:

1. Local media - Wirral Globe, Echo, local radio (23.5%).
2. Wirral View email newsletter (19.4%).
3. Through partner organisations such as NHS, local transport providers (16.3%) (Question 8).

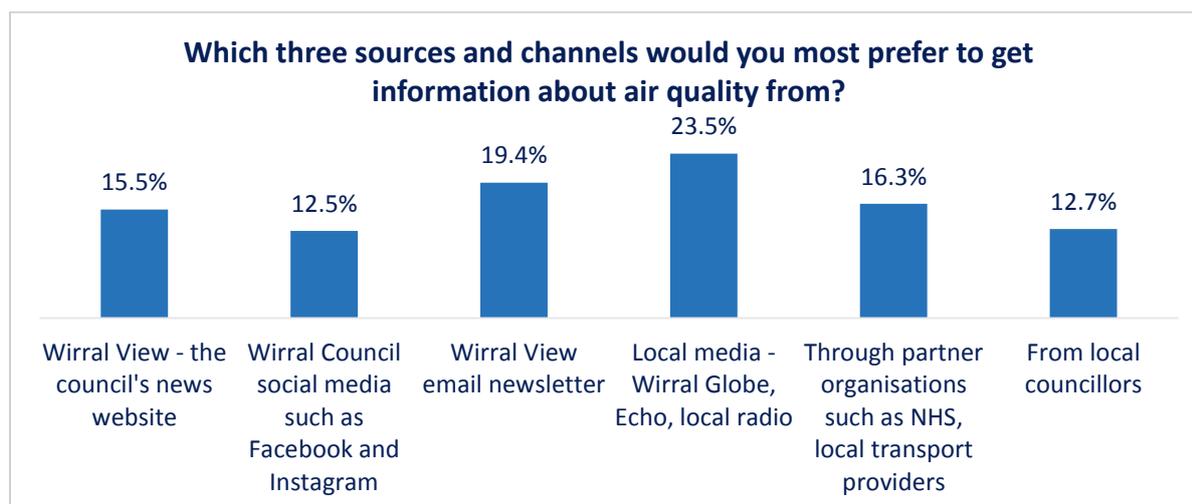


Figure 8: Which three sources and channels would you most prefer to get information about air quality from?

Preferred source/channel of information	Total	%
Wirral View - the council's news website	56	15.5%
Wirral Council social media such as Facebook and Instagram	45	12.5%
Wirral View email newsletter	70	19.4%
Local media - Wirral Globe, Echo, local radio	85	23.5%
Through partner organisations such as NHS, local transport providers	59	16.3%
From local councillors	46	12.7%
Total	361	100.0%

Table 8: Which three sources and channels would you most prefer to get information about air quality from?

4.0 Demographics and Site Traffic

4.1 Demographics

Registration was required to engage in the online Air Quality Strategy consultation. The registration form included questions regarding demographics including gender, age group, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, however not all questions in the registration form were compulsory and respondents could choose to select 'prefer not to say' or skip the question. The demographics results are summarised below. The same questions were included on the paper-copy questionnaires.

Most respondents (89.7%) classed themselves as a local resident.



Figure 9: Are you registering as:

The age group profile is illustrated below with the most common age groups being 55-54 years (28.2%), followed by 65-74 years (23.2%) and 45-54 years (19.7%). 16-24 years only made up 1.4% of respondents, and no under 16s responded.

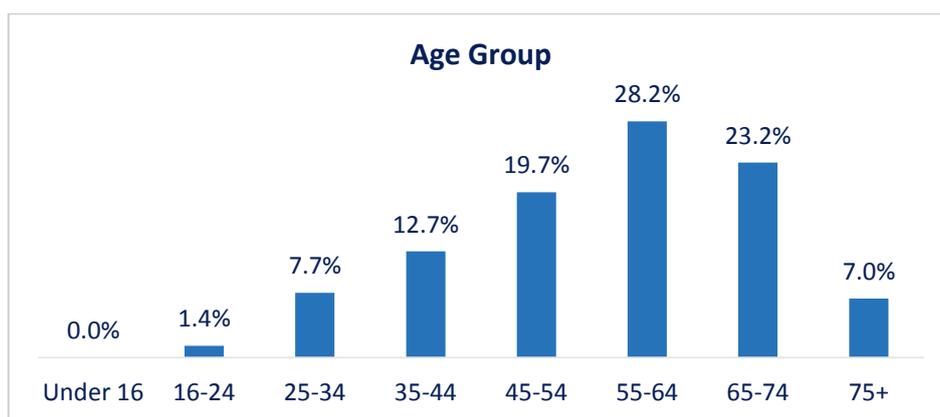


Figure 10: Chart displaying age groups

50% of respondents identified as male and, 40.7% female. 8.6% preferred not to say and 0.7% preferred to use their own term.

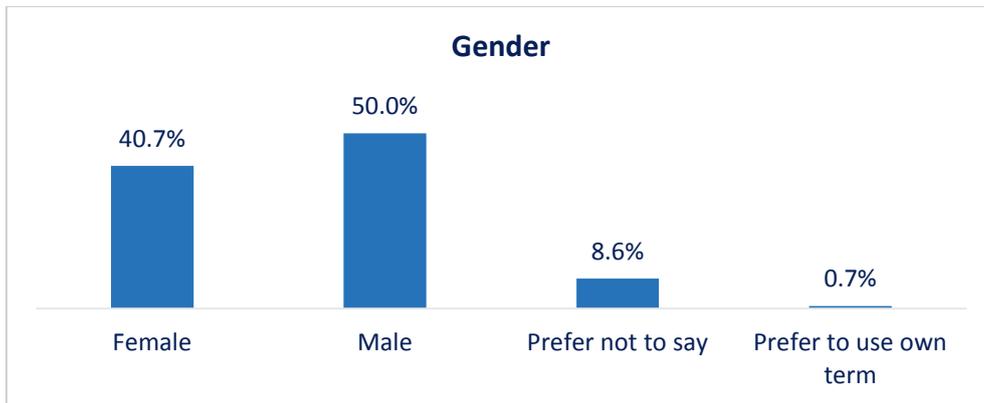


Figure 11: Chart displaying gender

72.7% of respondents were heterosexual, 5.0% were gay/ lesbian, 2.2% bisexual and 20.1% preferred not to say.

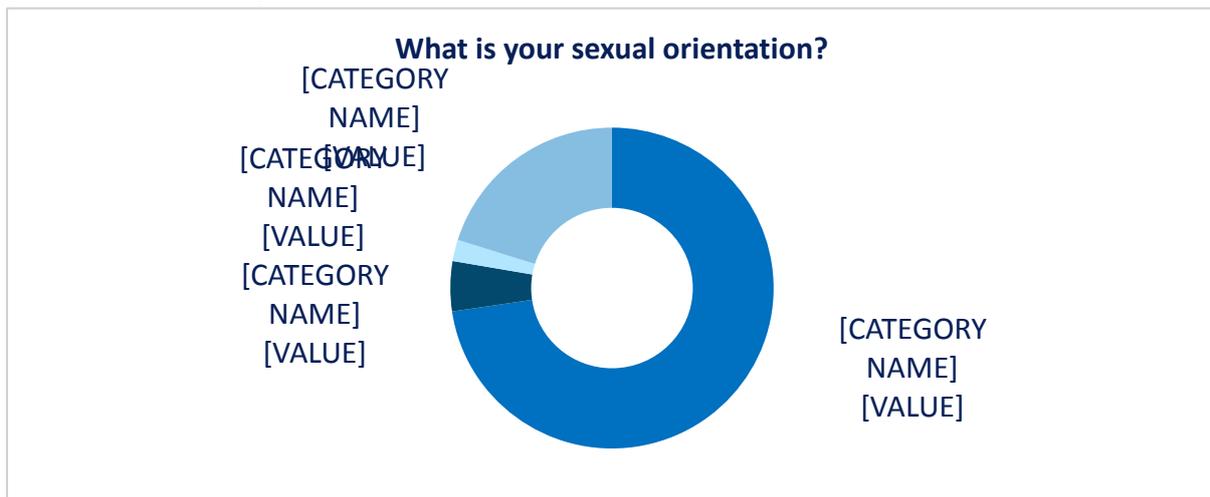


Figure 12: Chart displaying sexual orientation

75.4% said they did not have a disability whilst 11.6% of respondents said that they had a disability. 13.0% preferred not to say.

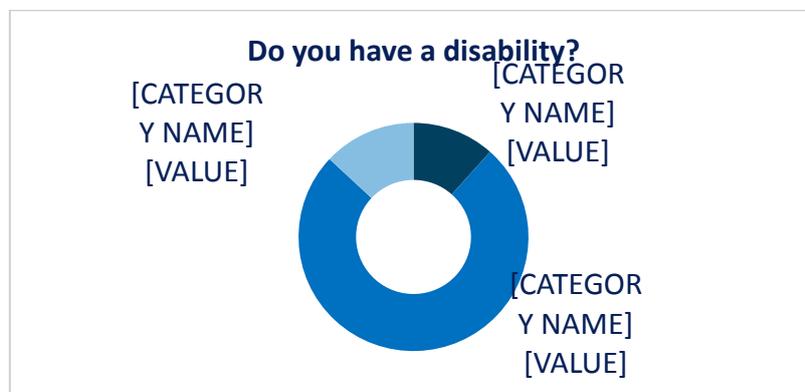


Figure 13: Chart displaying disability

The majority (95.1%) of respondents identified as White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British.

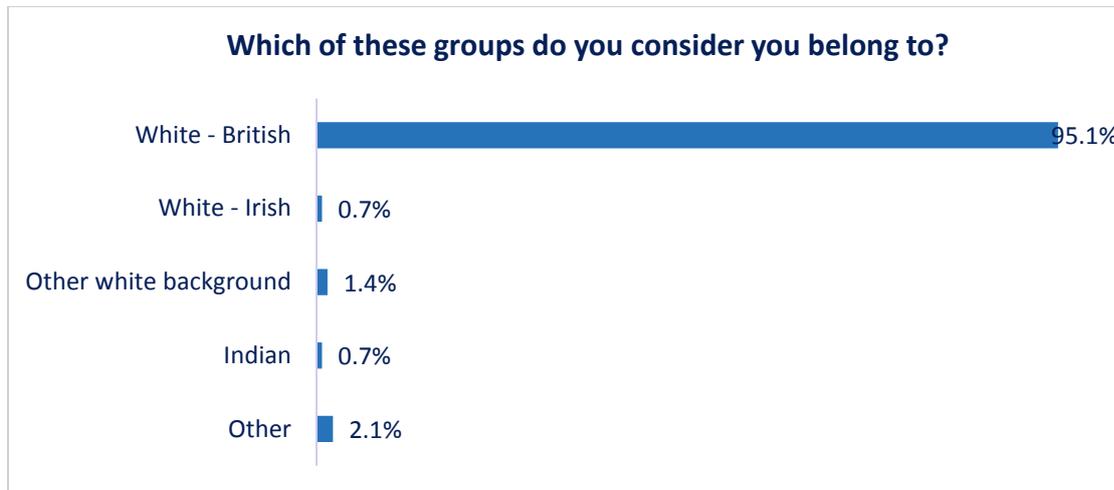


Figure 14: Chart displaying ethnicity groups

The most represented ward was Wallasey (8%) followed by Heswall, Greasby Frankby and Irby and Eastham (7.7% each).

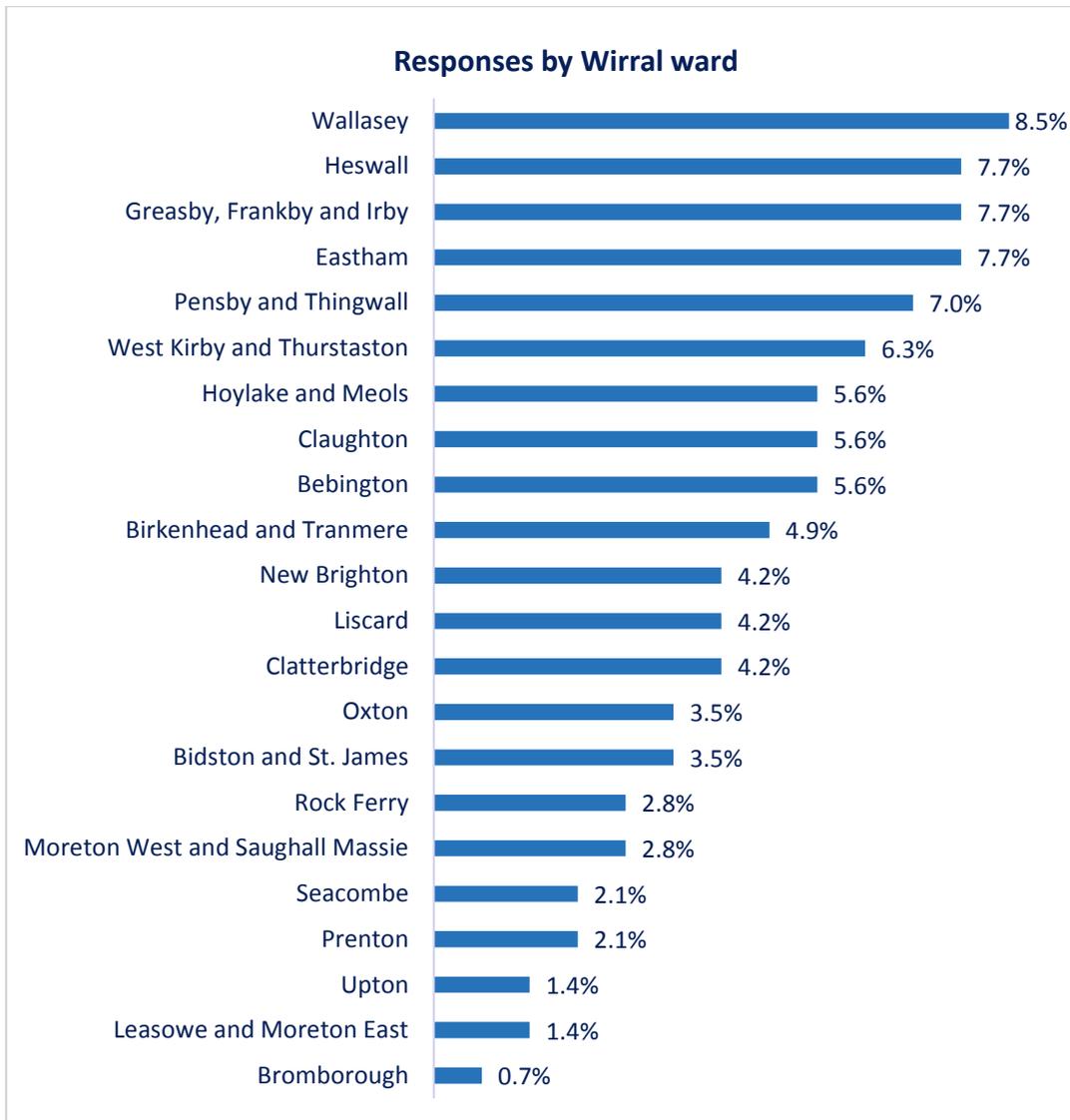


Figure 15: Chart displaying Wirral Ward representation

4.2 Have Your Say - Site Traffic

Reviewing the site activity, visits, and how people visit the site can be useful to evaluate if people are aware of the site, as well as to ensure engagement activities are deployed effectively, and to a wide range of different people – enhancing public engagement in the future. 778 unique visitors viewed the Air Quality Strategy consultation of the Have Your Say site. Of these, 72 downloaded a document and 150 people in total completed the questionnaire.

These figures cannot be viewed as definitive as they are based on site tracking through ‘cookies’ and there are a number of factors that can impact on this. These include that cookies may be disabled or deleted, individuals may access the site multiple times through different devices or different browsers. However, the figures can be used to gauge how much interest has been generated in individual projects through the rate of engaged participants.

The route that people access the site is known as the traffic source. The ‘Have your say’ portal allows analysis to be carried out on traffic source, and if they lead to engagement in the site tools such as the questionnaire. This analysis allows a greater understanding of which communication and promotional tools to use to optimise engagement.

For this project a range of traffic sources have been reviewed and summarised in the table below. Most visits to the site were from referrals (335), this is where the link to survey has been placed on an external website. Wirralview.com and wirralglobe.co.uk were the top sources of referrals. Direct visits where people typed the internet address into their web browser accounted for 185 visits, and visits from links sent out in emails 156 visits.

Traffic Source	Aware Visits	Informed Visits (%)	Engaged Visits (%)
DIRECT	185	94 (50.8%)	37 (20%)
EMAIL	156	64 (41%)	18 (11.5%)
.GOV SITES	2	1 (50%)	0 (0%)
SEARCH ENGINE	43	23 (53.5%)	10 (23.3%)
SOCIAL	57	40 (70.2%)	11 (19.3%)
REFERRALS	335	242 (72.2%)	74 (22.1%)

Table 9: Site traffic sources