

Older people's wellbeing and the role of residential outdoor space

An elderly man with white hair, wearing a light blue and white striped shirt and dark trousers, is sitting on a small wooden chair on a porch. The porch is heavily decorated with numerous colorful flowers in various pots, including purple, pink, and red blooms. The porch has a black metal railing. In the background, there is a wooden door and a window with a blue curtain. The overall scene is bright and cheerful, suggesting a well-maintained and inviting outdoor space.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

WISE research unit



Wellbeing in Sustainable Environments, founded in 2004

Investigating impacts of the built environment on people's wellbeing, mental health and quality of life

Moved from Oxford Brookes University to the University of Warwick in Sept 09

A multidisciplinary research area bridging 2 Schools: Engineering, and Health and Social Studies



Focus changing from older people to all age groups

I'DGO 1

Aimed to find out how urban form affects older people's quality of life, and to identify urban design characteristics that are most positive

Findings:

- Urban form is a significant, if small, influence on older people's wellbeing
- Wellbeing seems to be best for older people in low density, green areas – usually villages and small towns



I'DGO 1



More findings:

- High densities not necessarily negative. For certain aspects of wellbeing, moderate densities appear to be more negative than high or low
- Neighbourhoods with a moderate amount of greenery seem to perform well: negative impacts stem mainly from having small amount
- A fine grain mix of uses was found to be more positive than clusters of different uses
- Residential areas with occasional other uses seem to offer significant potential, many positives but few of the negatives

I'DGO 1

It may be possible to make urban housing more attractive to older people by:

- Increasing amount of greenery – some much better than none
- Controlling non-motorised traffic effectively
- Creating predominantly residential areas that have facilities and amenities scattered within them

I'DGO TOO building on these findings to investigate how residential outdoor space (ROS) affects their wellbeing



I'DGO TOO research aims

To determine what is lost and gained in high-density developments in terms of residential outdoor space (ROS)



To determine how, and to what extent, different types of ROS contribute to older people's wellbeing

To identify how best to design the private outdoor spaces around high-density housing to deliver maximum benefits to older people



Background

Planning, housing and urban policies have attempted to provide a sustainable solution (protecting greenfield land and reducing the need to travel by car) to the problem of an ageing population and a rising number of small households

Policies are based on assumptions that higher-density housing is appropriate for the growing number of older households



Background

Some assumptions:

- Older people need and want less space
- They often struggle to cope with a large house and/or garden
- Living in urban locations allows older people easy access to public transport, shops, health facilities etc at a time when they may no longer be able to drive or afford to own a car
- Living in higher-density, urban locations provides older people with greater opportunities for social interaction, and stimulation in terms of interesting views



Background

When space is at a premium, garden space often given low priority when developing higher-density housing on urban land

Studies have shown importance of private outdoor space for older people

Implications of urban renaissance for older people not yet investigated – claimed benefits not tested

Also important to ensure these policies contribute to lifelong inclusive sustainable development which benefits everyone

What we mean by ROS

Outdoor space attached to housing developments:

- private gardens, shared gardens, balconies, terraces, courtyards, verandahs, parking areas, outdoor storage areas (for bins, gardening equipment etc.)



Aspects of design

Aspects of design to be considered:

- type/form of landscaping
- proportion of area given over to different uses
- orientation of spaces
- detailed design of different spaces
- connections between indoors and outdoors
- thresholds between public and private space
- views of space from inside housing
- relationship with street/neighbourhood



Key aspects of wellbeing

Those likely to be influenced by being able to use or see ROS:

- satisfaction from being able to use the space for practical activities, such as hanging out washing, growing food, storing property, maintaining vehicles and parking
- enjoyment from being able to use the space for leisure activities, such as entertaining visitors, sitting outside, gardening, keeping pets or feeding wildlife



Key aspects of wellbeing

Those likely to be influenced by being able to use or see ROS:

- pleasure from the appearance of the space and the way it enhances the dwelling
- relaxation and comfort
- enjoyment from social interaction with neighbours and passers-by and feeling part of the community
- wellness from gaining exercise and having access to fresh air



Methodology

Clustered samples of housing developments

- range of locations in Scotland, England and Wales
- range of location types from cities to villages
- age/non-age specific
- private/social
- range of densities
- post/pre-1999

Map/plan analysis to ascertain some ROS/housing data

Survey questionnaire to large sample

Follow-up in-depth interviews (n = 30)

Some study sites

Private, age-specific



Newman Court, Bromley



Bluecoat Pond, Horsham

Some study sites

Social, age-specific



Edmanson's Lodge, Tottenham



Glastonbury House, Pimlico

Some study sites

Post-1999

- “urban renaissance”
- private



Pepys Estate, Deptford



Port Marine, Portishead

Some study sites

Post-1999

- “urban renaissance”
- social



Mealhouse Brow, Stockport



Heskey Walk, Nottingham

Survey questionnaire

The nature of their ROS:

- private and/or shared
- type: garden, courtyard, yard, balcony, parking, storage, bin area ...
- extent of greenery
- how and how often they use their ROS
 - hanging washing, entertaining, gardening ...
 - differences between warmer and colder months

The views from their home:

- number and type: garden, countryside, park, street, buildings, dustbins ...
- extent of greenery and number of trees



Survey questionnaire



Satisfaction with their ROS

How spending time in ROS makes people feel

Do people chat to neighbours in ROS?

Is maintaining the ROS a concern?

What prevents them from using their ROS

- noise, lack of privacy, poor access, fear of falling ...

What would be their ideal ROS and what would they use it for

Survey questionnaire

How important is having a view to them

Satisfaction with their view/s

Their ideal view

- wildlife, natural landscape, garden, street, people, buildings, car park ...?



Survey questionnaire



Personal and household questions

- satisfaction with their home
- time spent in the home
- self-rated QoL, health and enjoyment of life
- tenure
- type of dwelling
- lowest floor level
- length of residence
- number of people in household
- number of visiting children
- gender
- age
- occupation



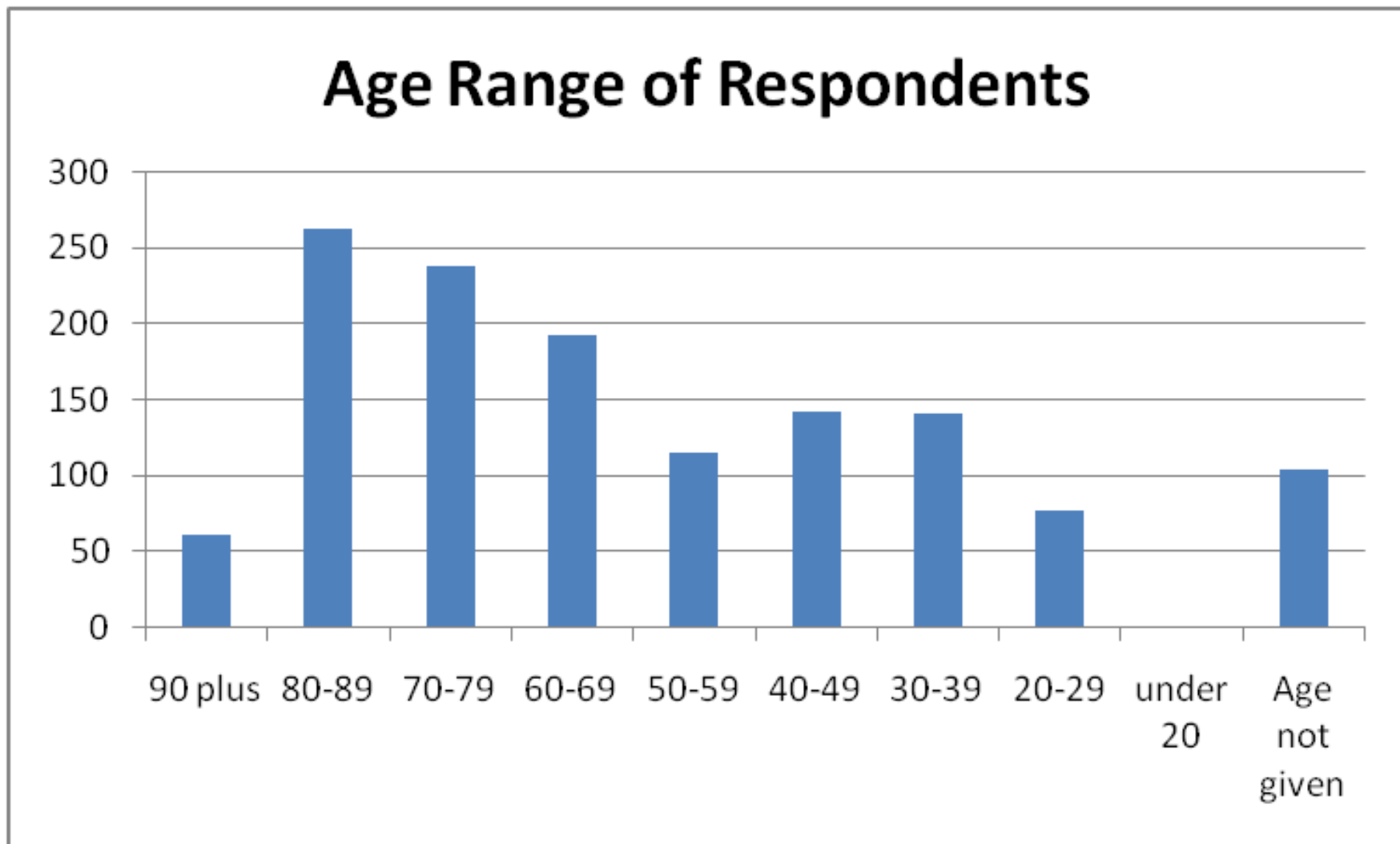
Return rates to date

15,583 questionnaires posted, about 2,500 returned to date

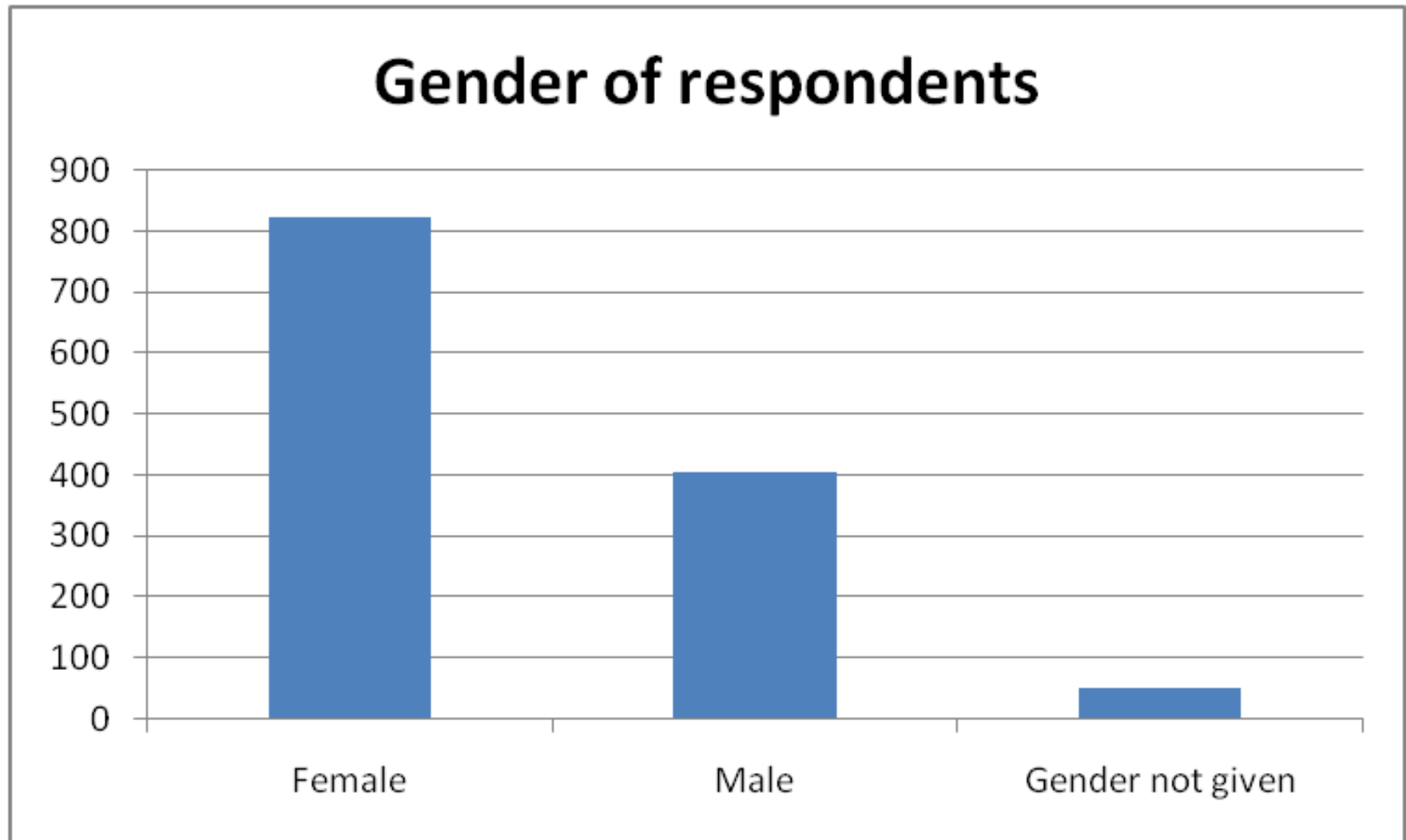
Return rates:

- Age-specific private housing 21%
- Age-specific social housing 16%
- Non age-specific private housing post 1999 18%
- Non age-specific social housing post 1999 14%
- General 'other' housing pre 1999 15%

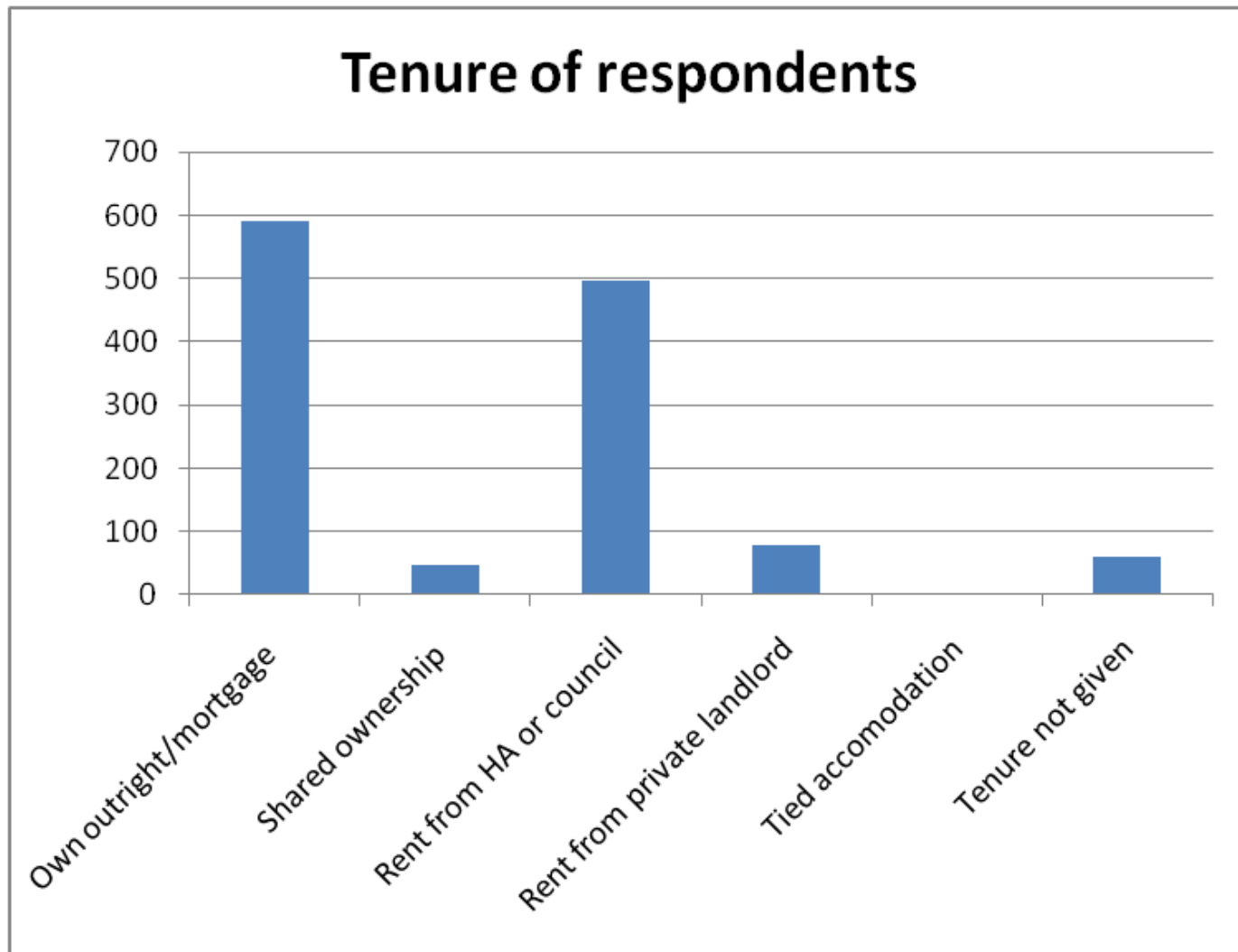
Preliminary survey findings



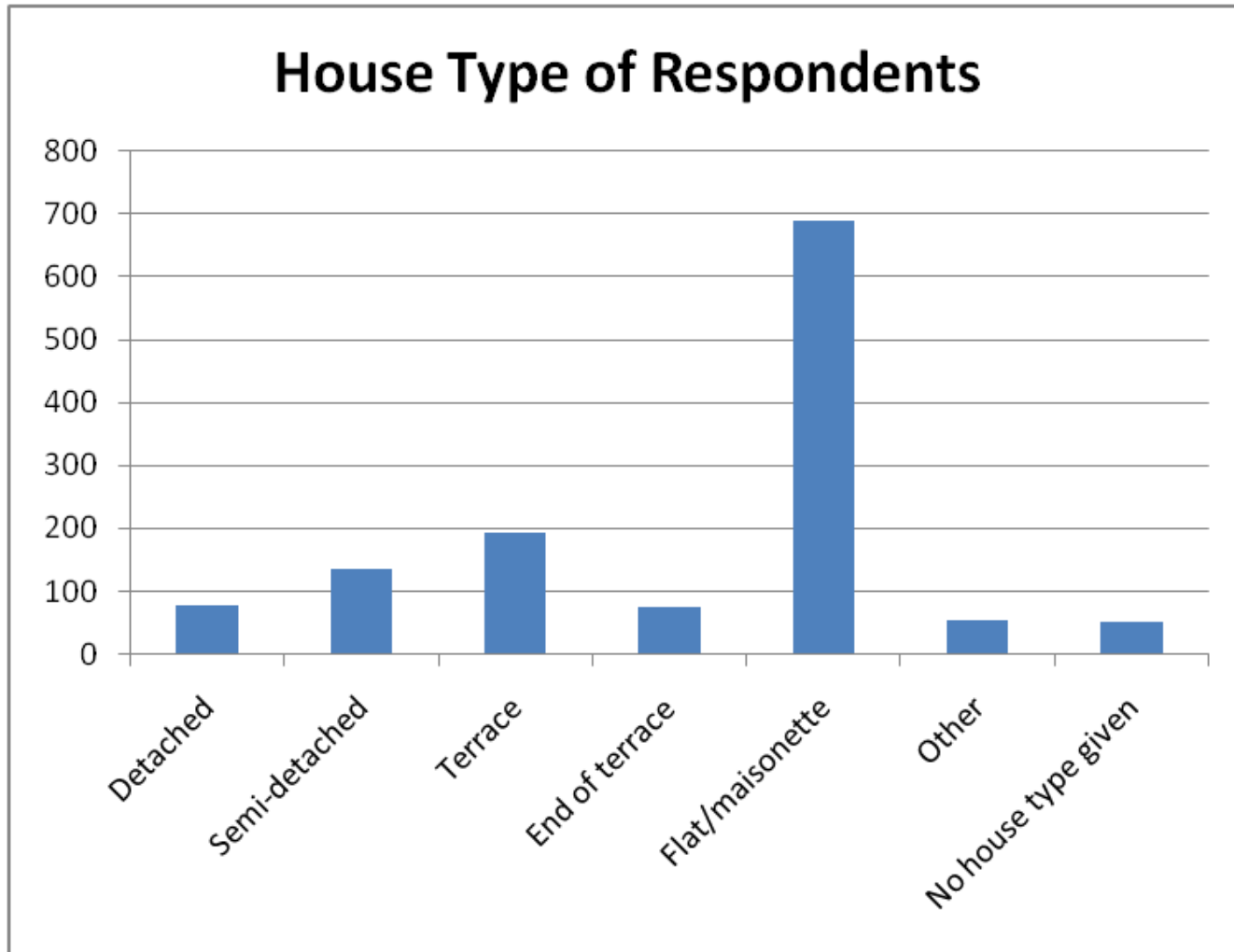
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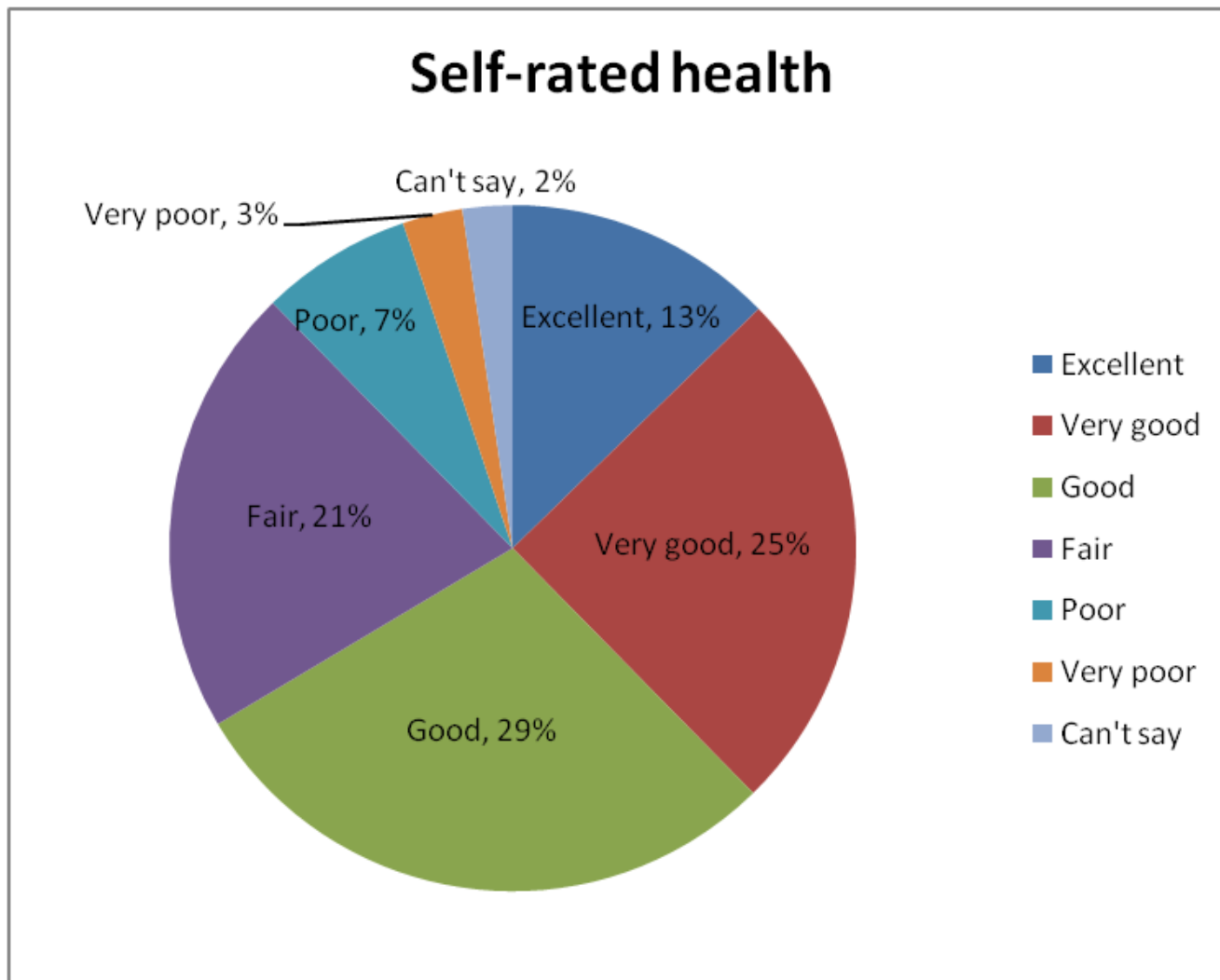
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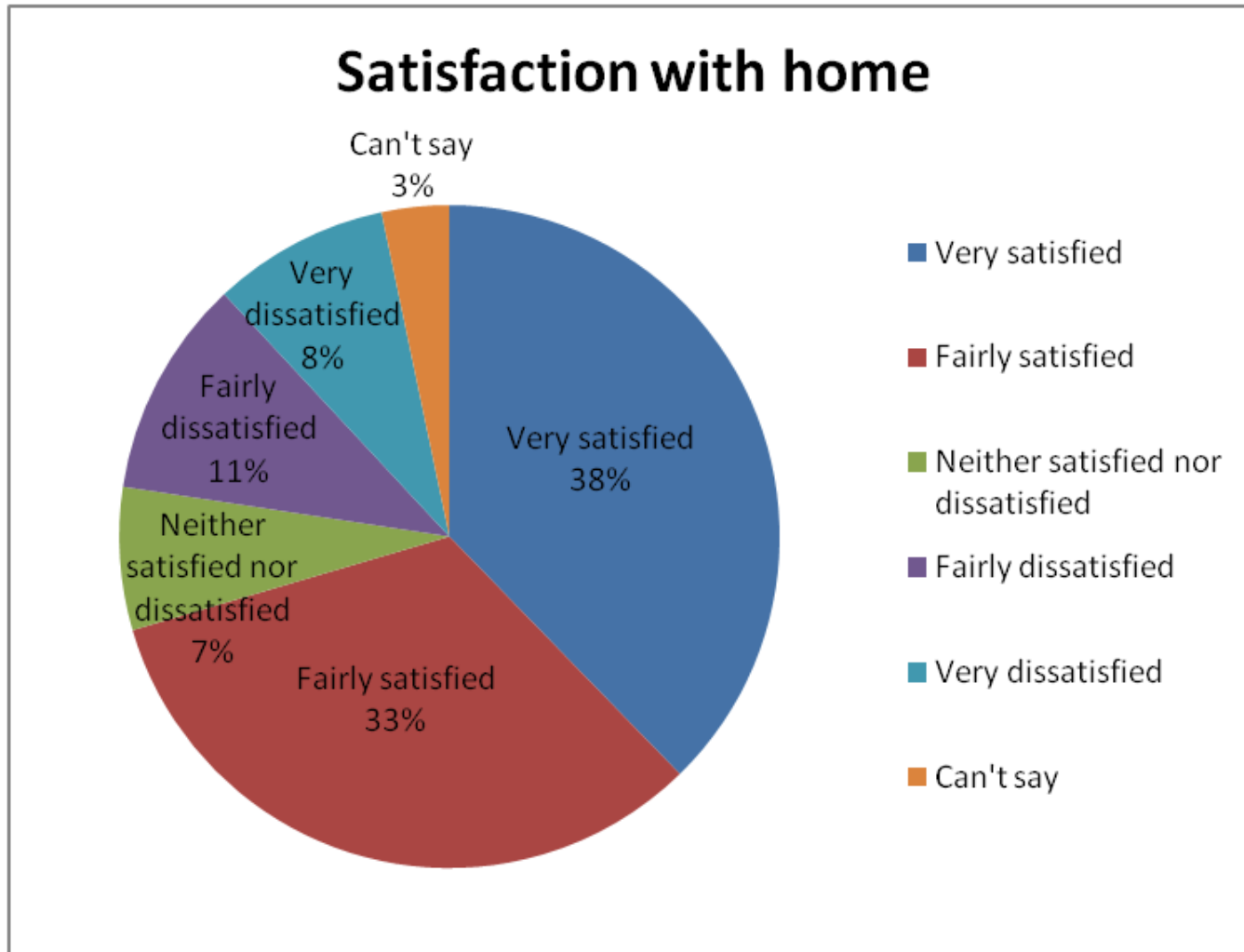
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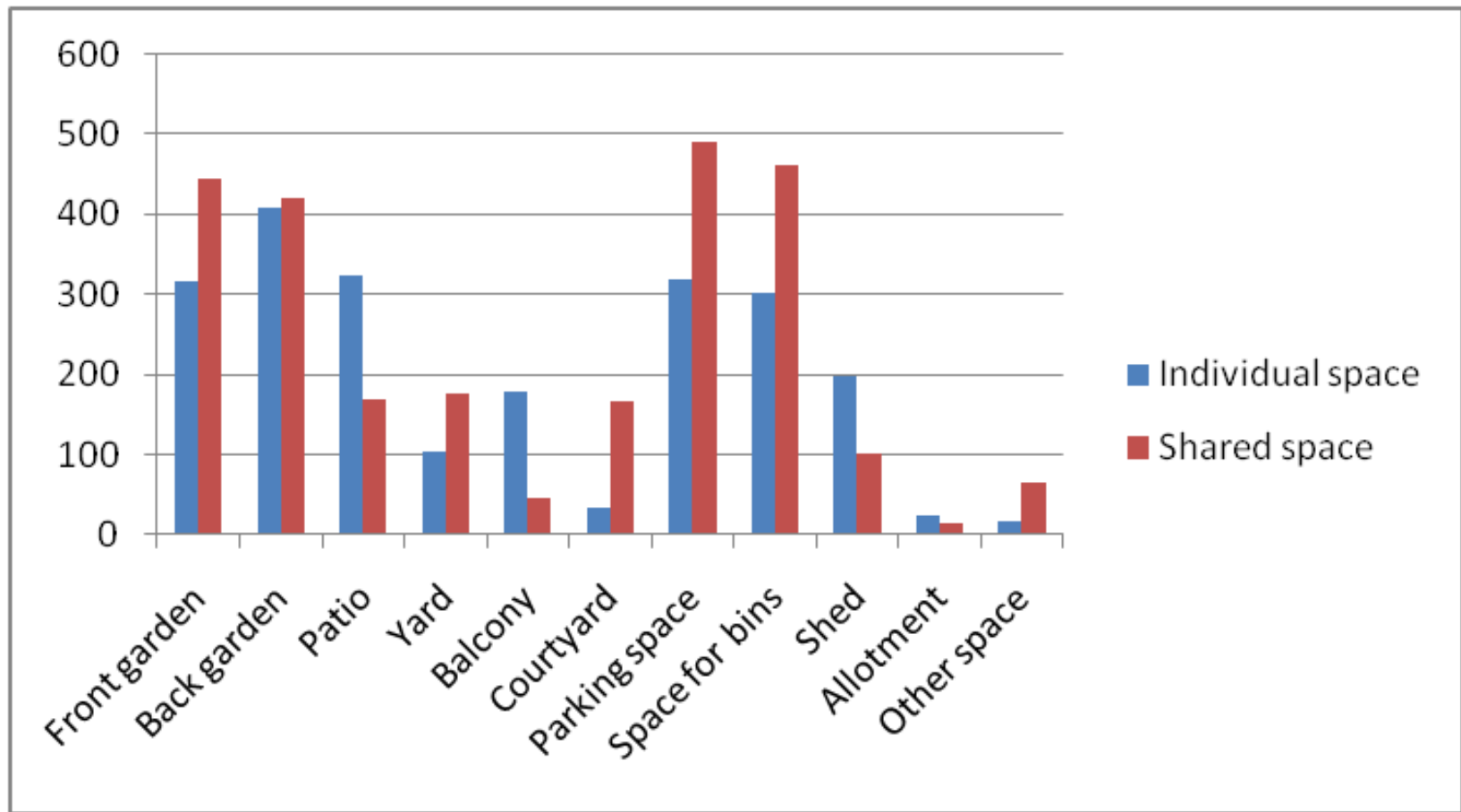


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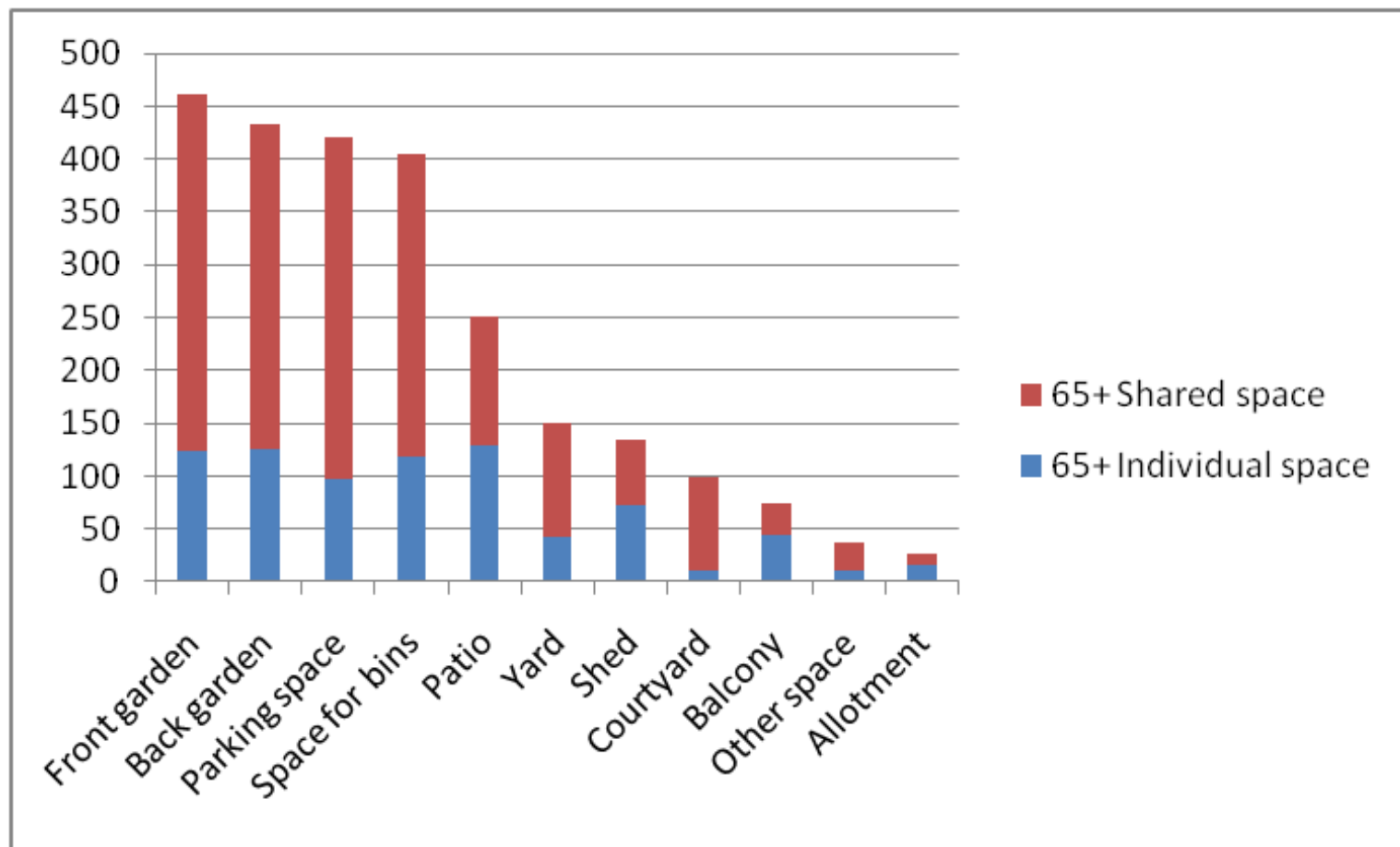
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Types of ROS



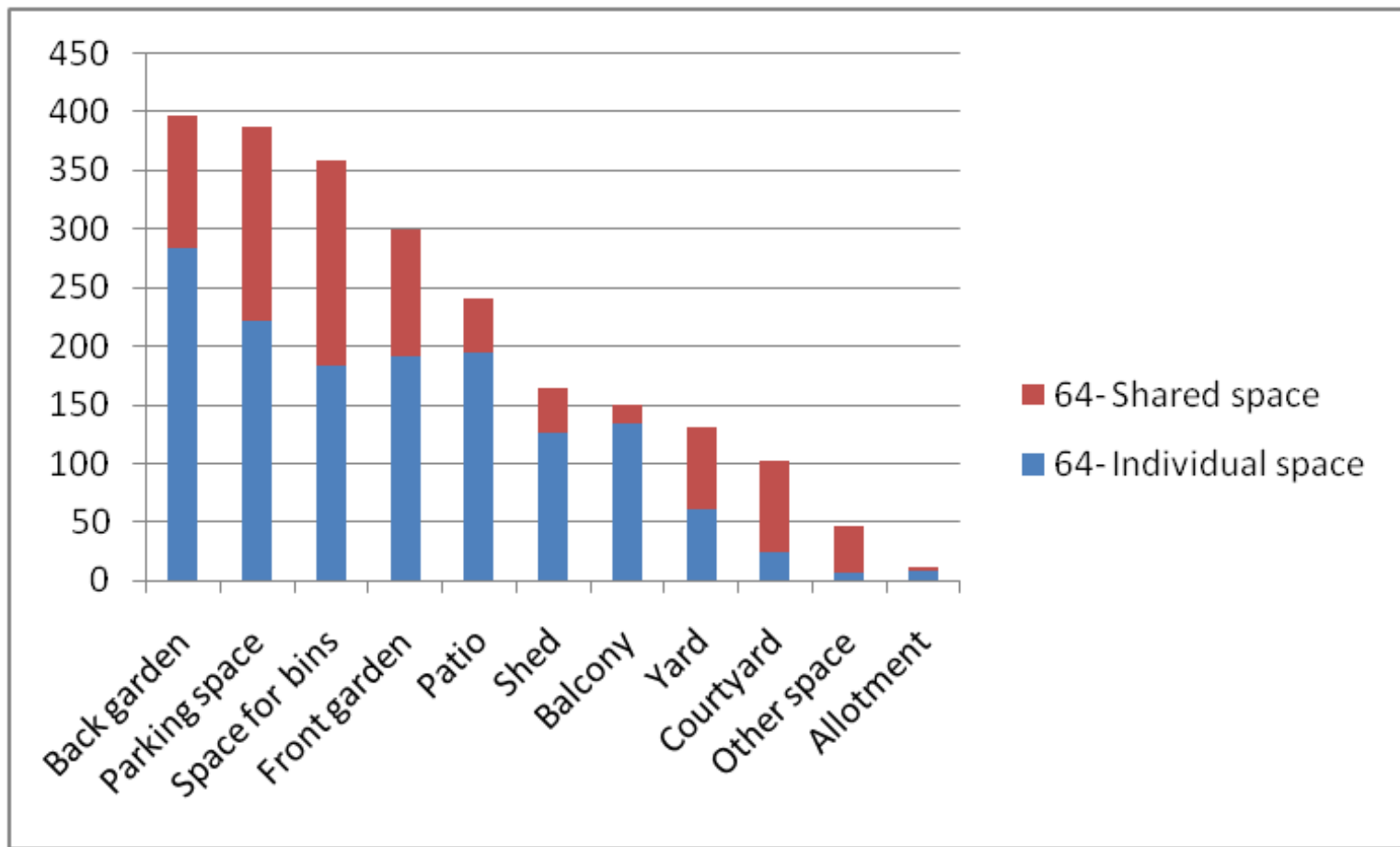
Preliminary survey findings

Types of ROS – 65 years of age and above



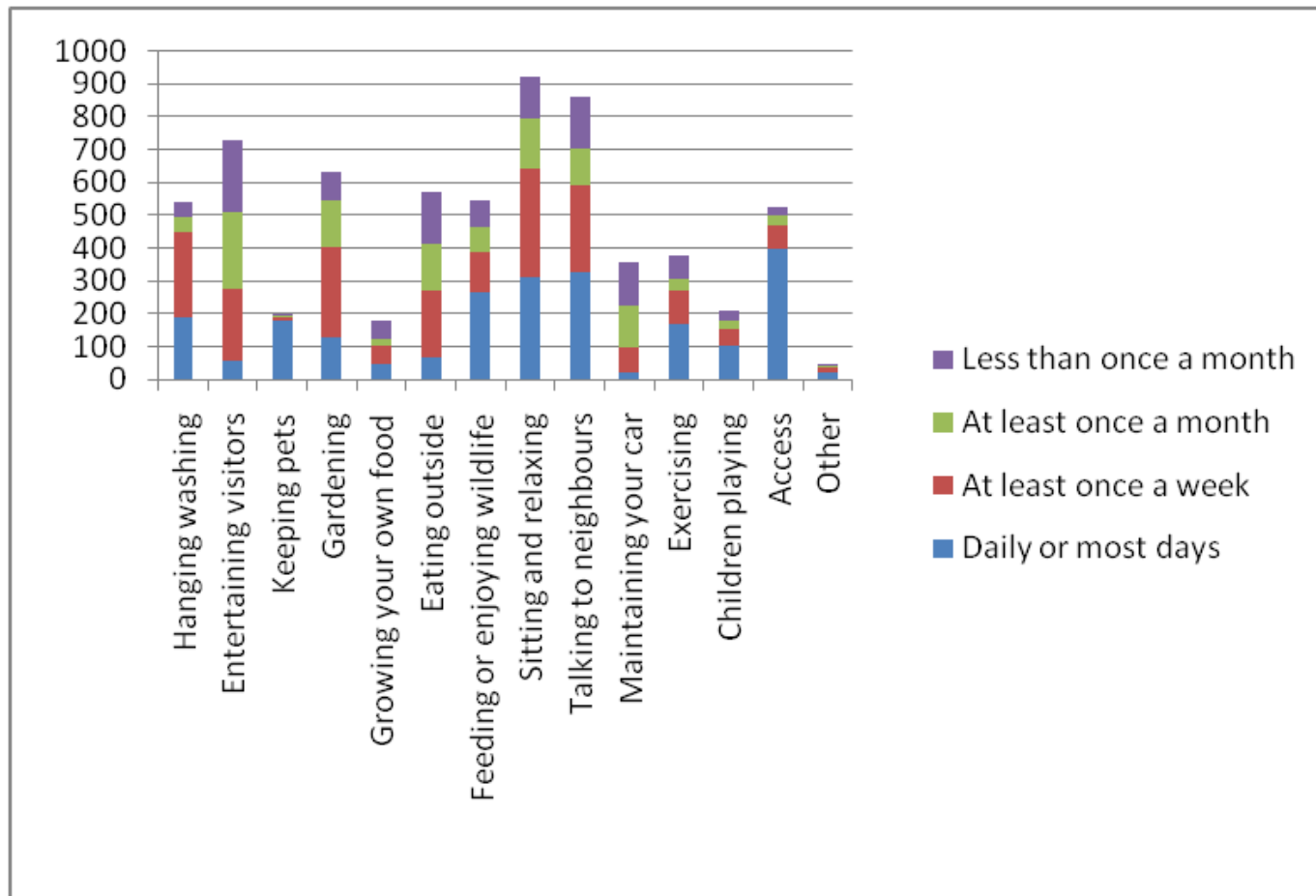
Preliminary survey findings

Types of ROS - under 65 years of age



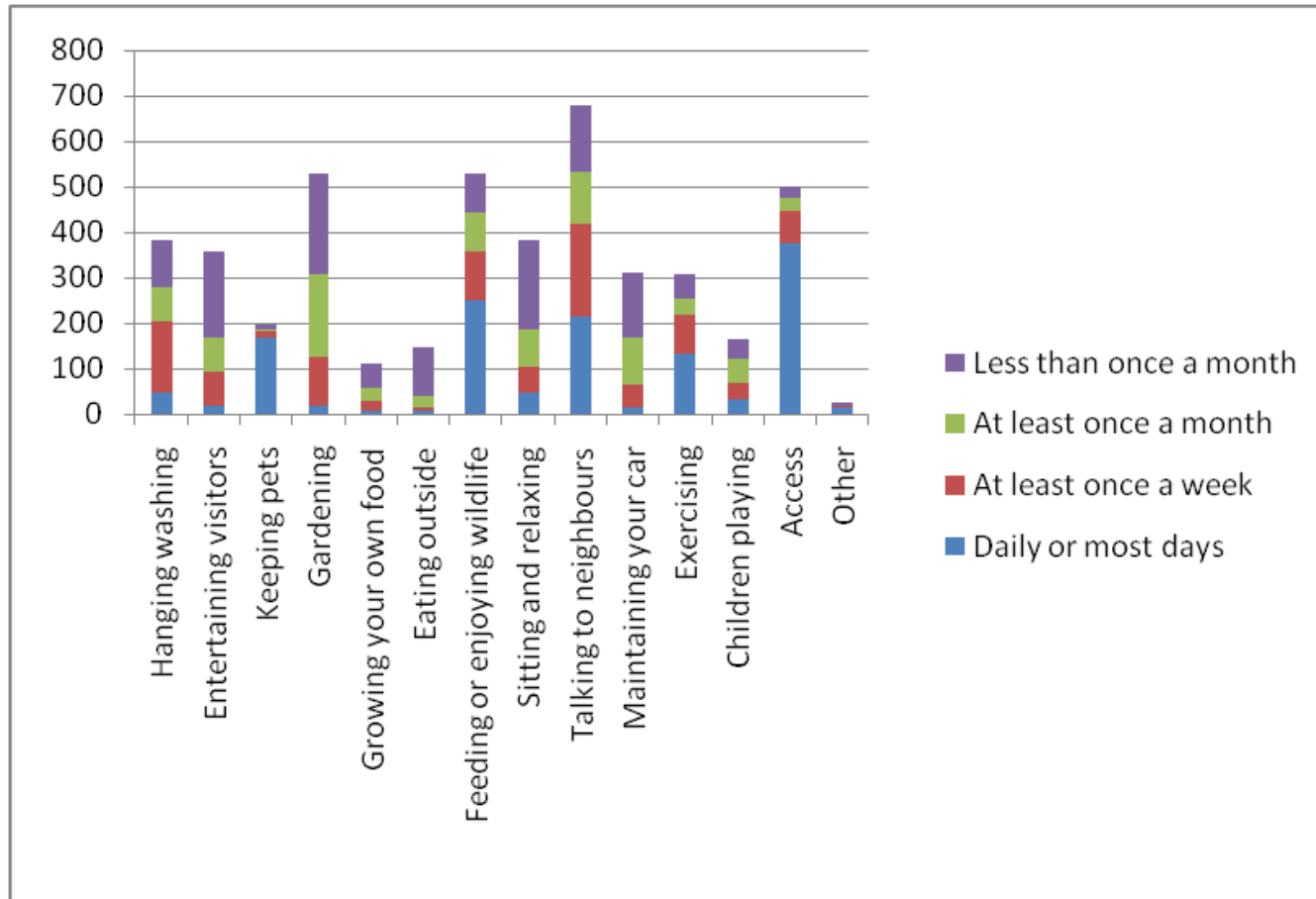
Preliminary survey findings

Activities in warmer months



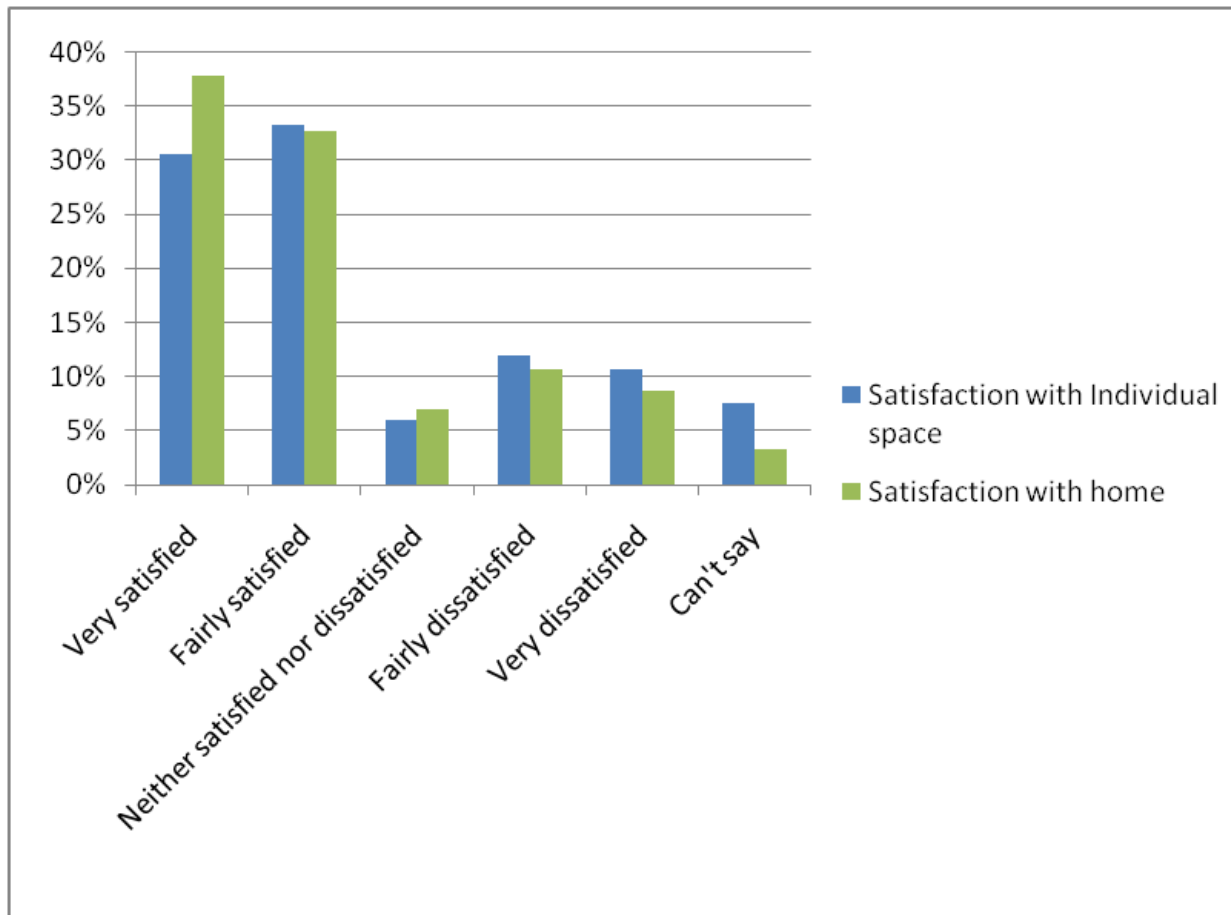
Preliminary survey findings

Activities in colder months



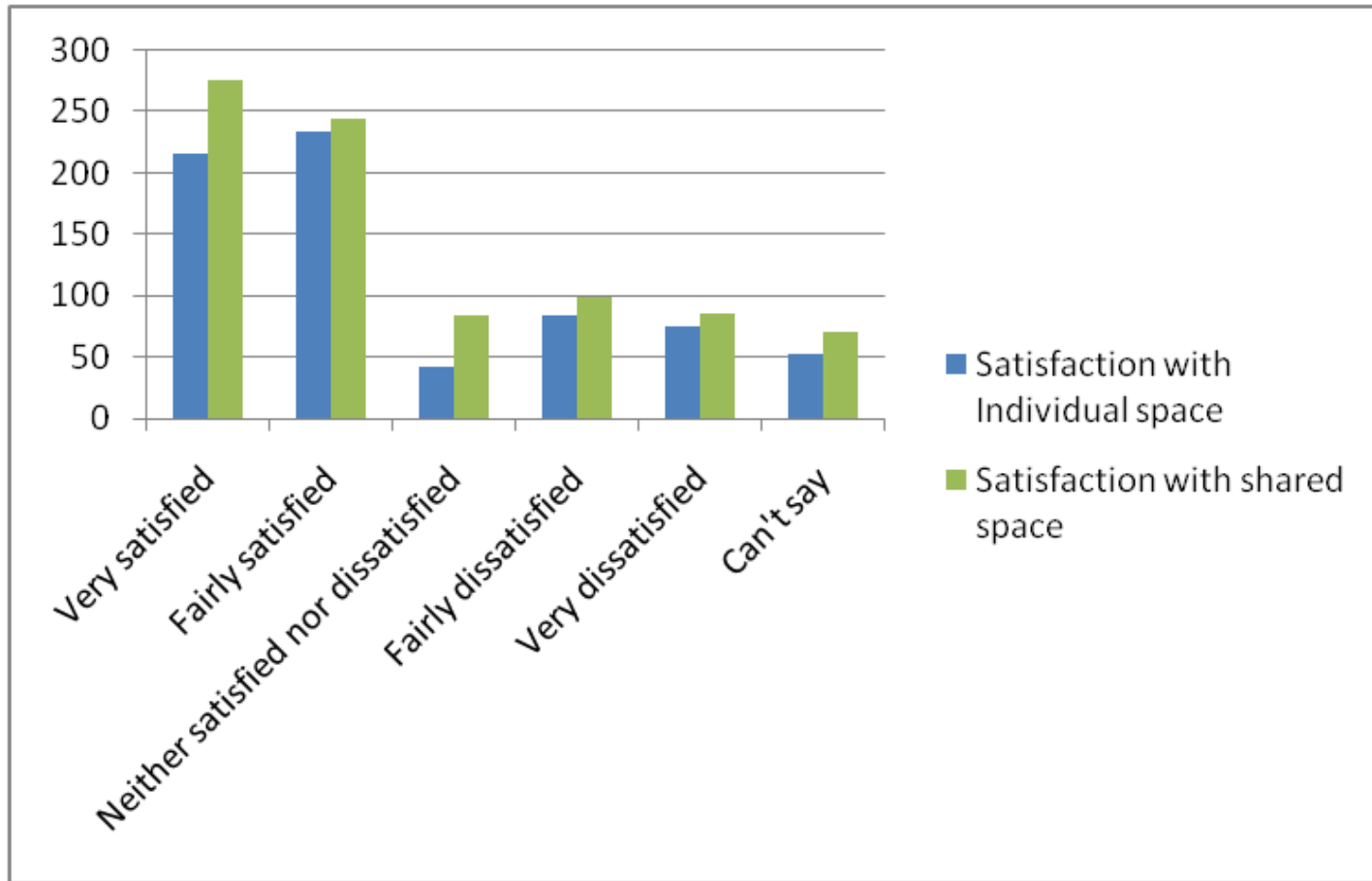
Preliminary survey findings

Satisfaction with ROS and home



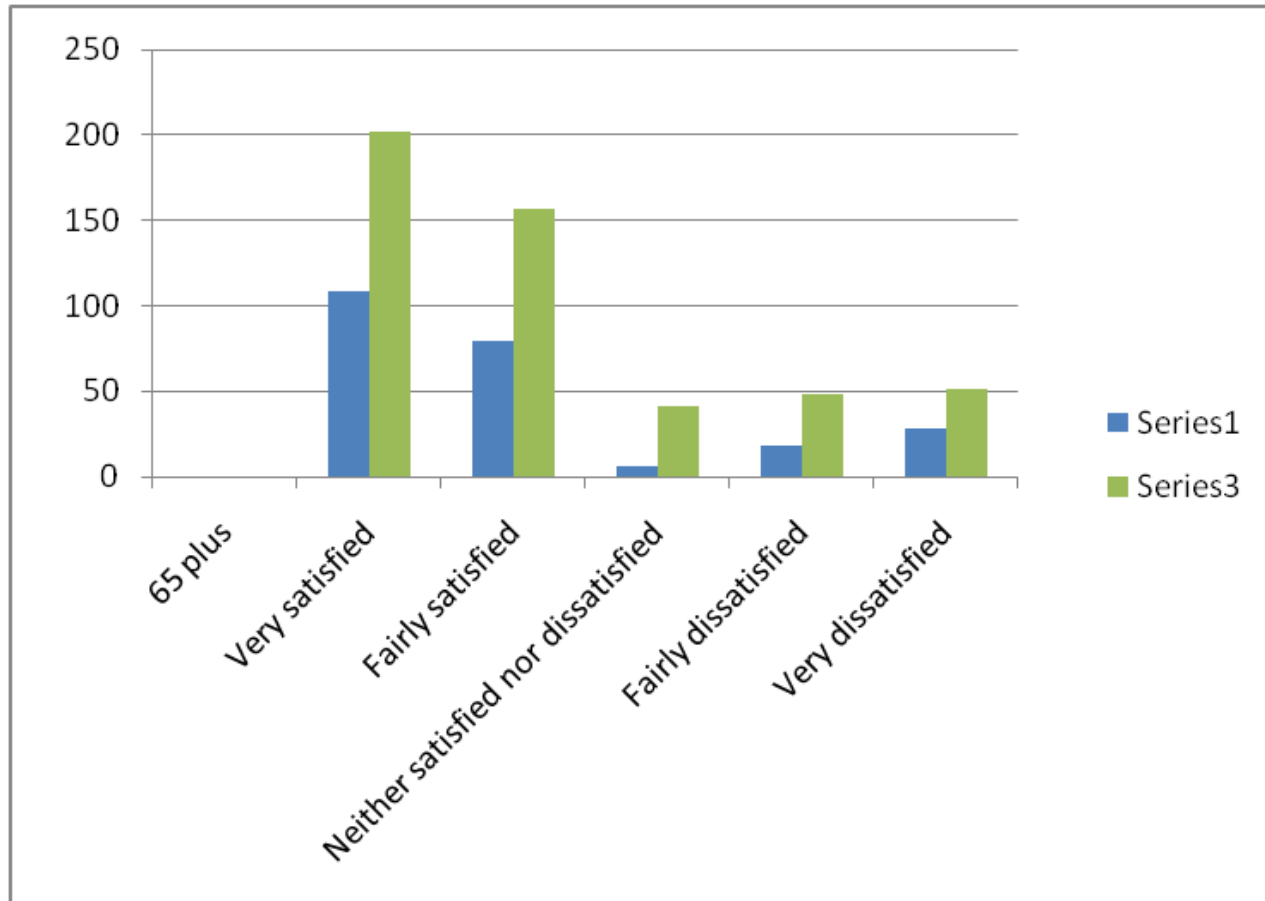
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Satisfaction with ROS



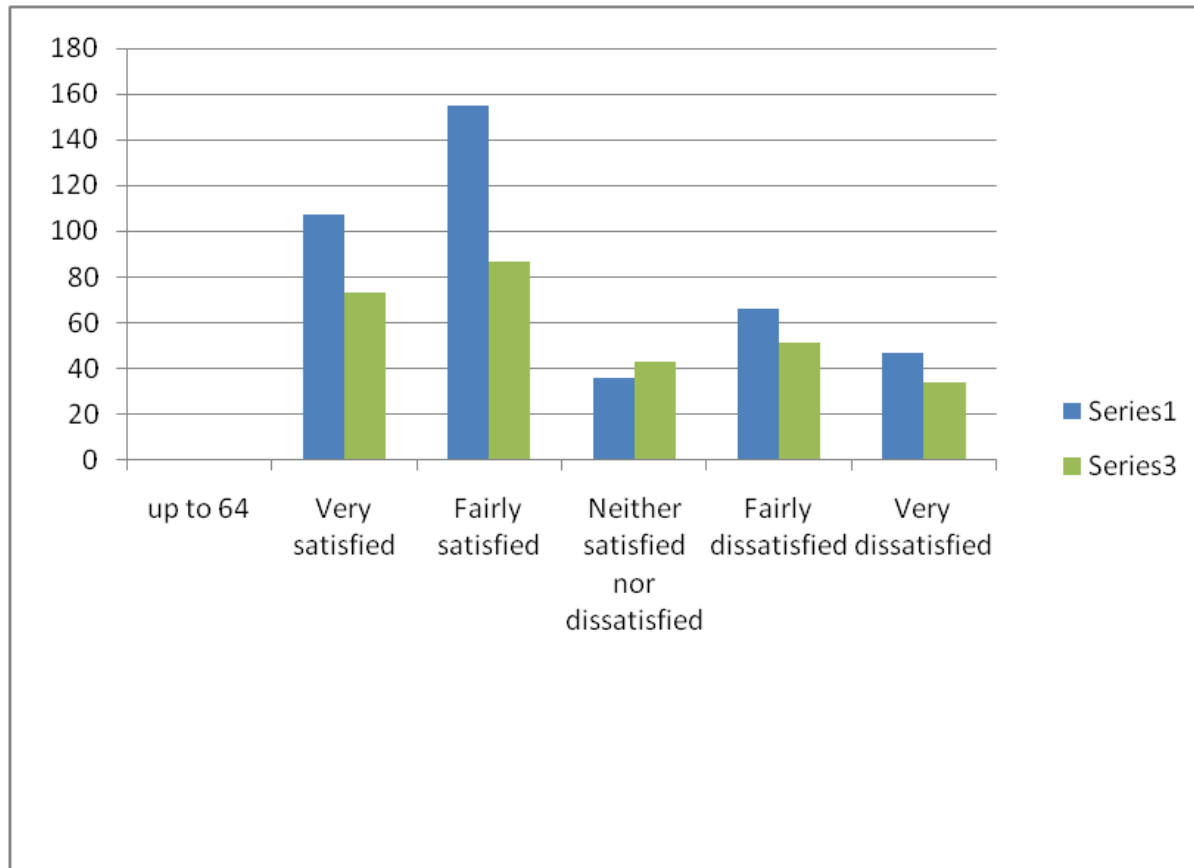
Preliminary survey findings

Satisfaction with ROS 65+



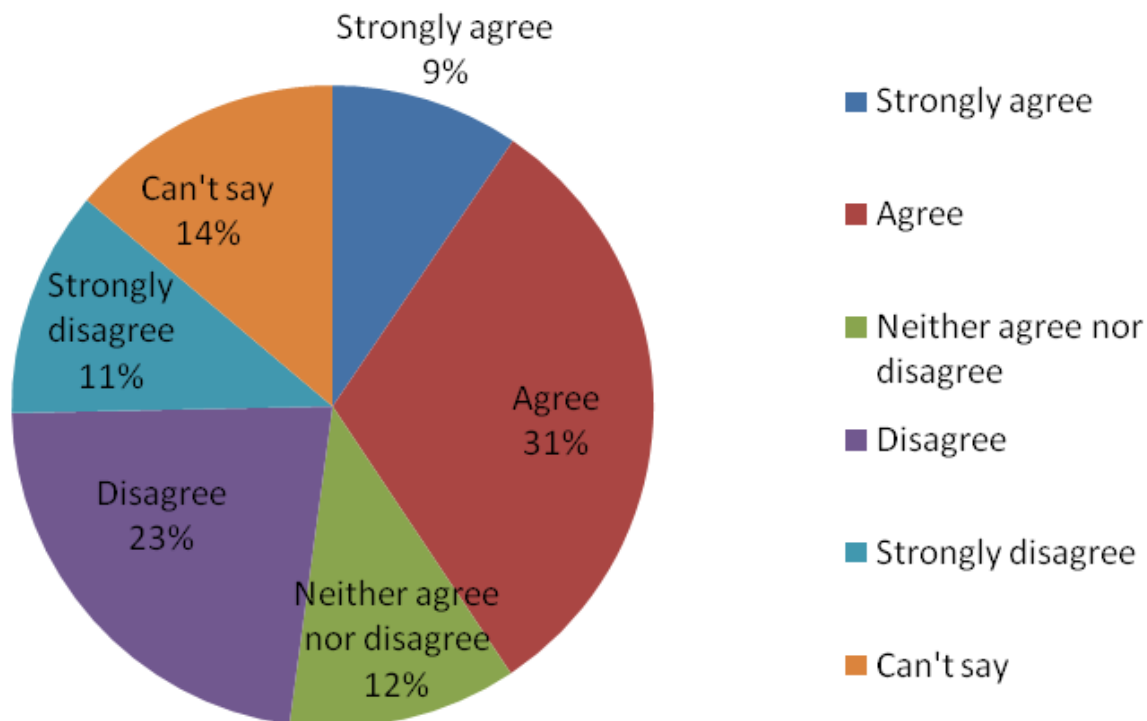
Preliminary survey findings

Satisfaction with ROS under 65

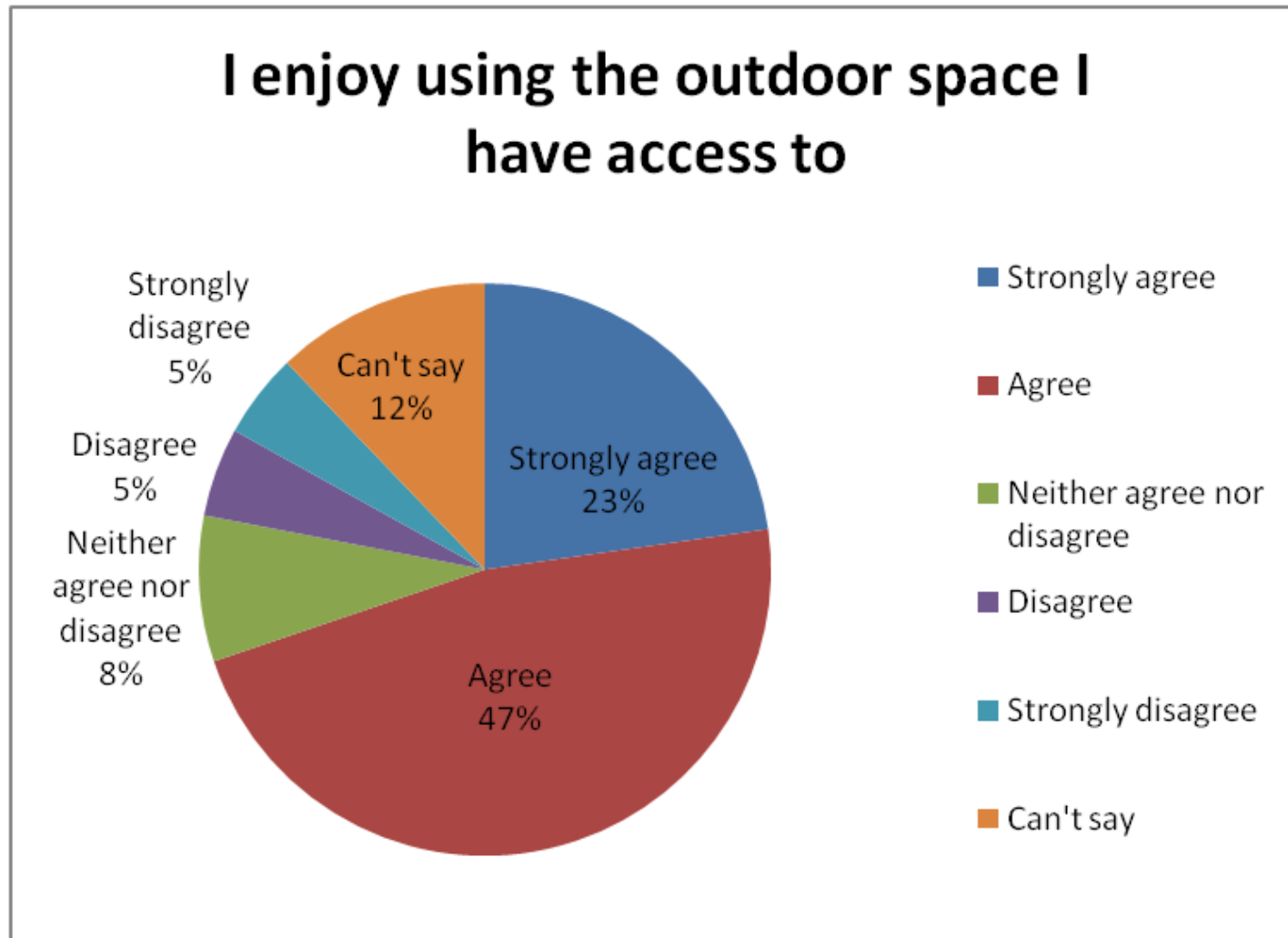


Preliminary survey findings

I am able to do everything I would like in this space

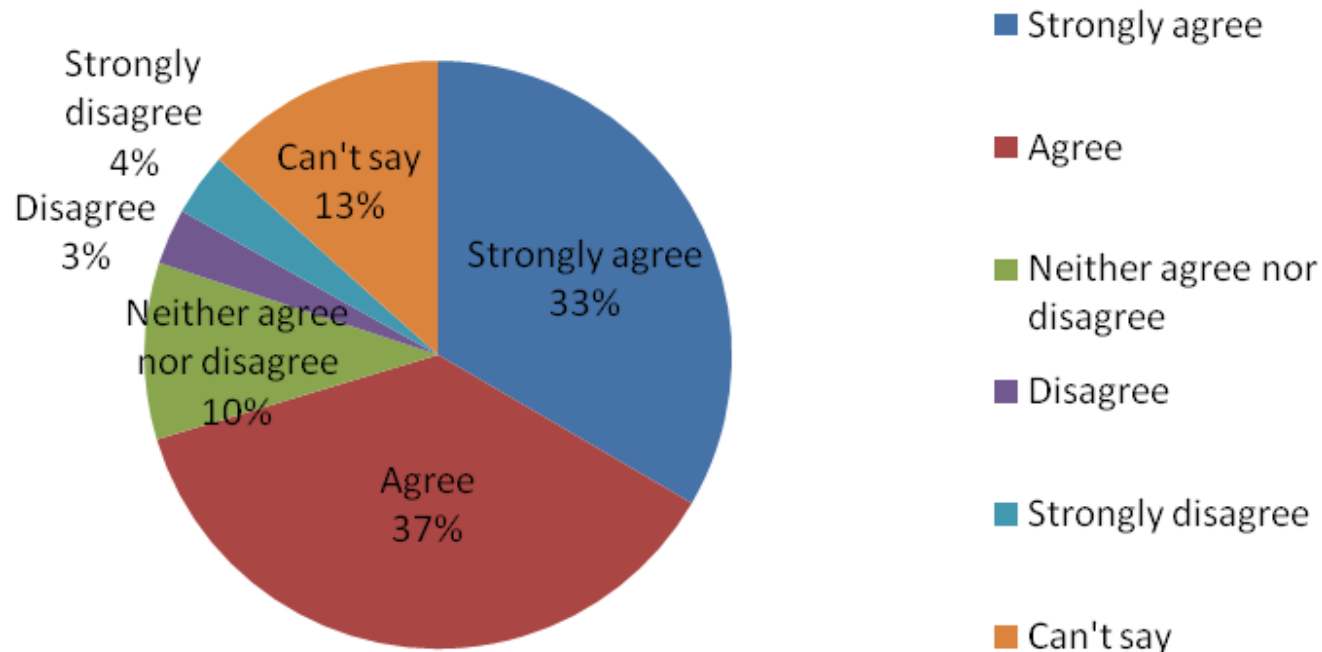


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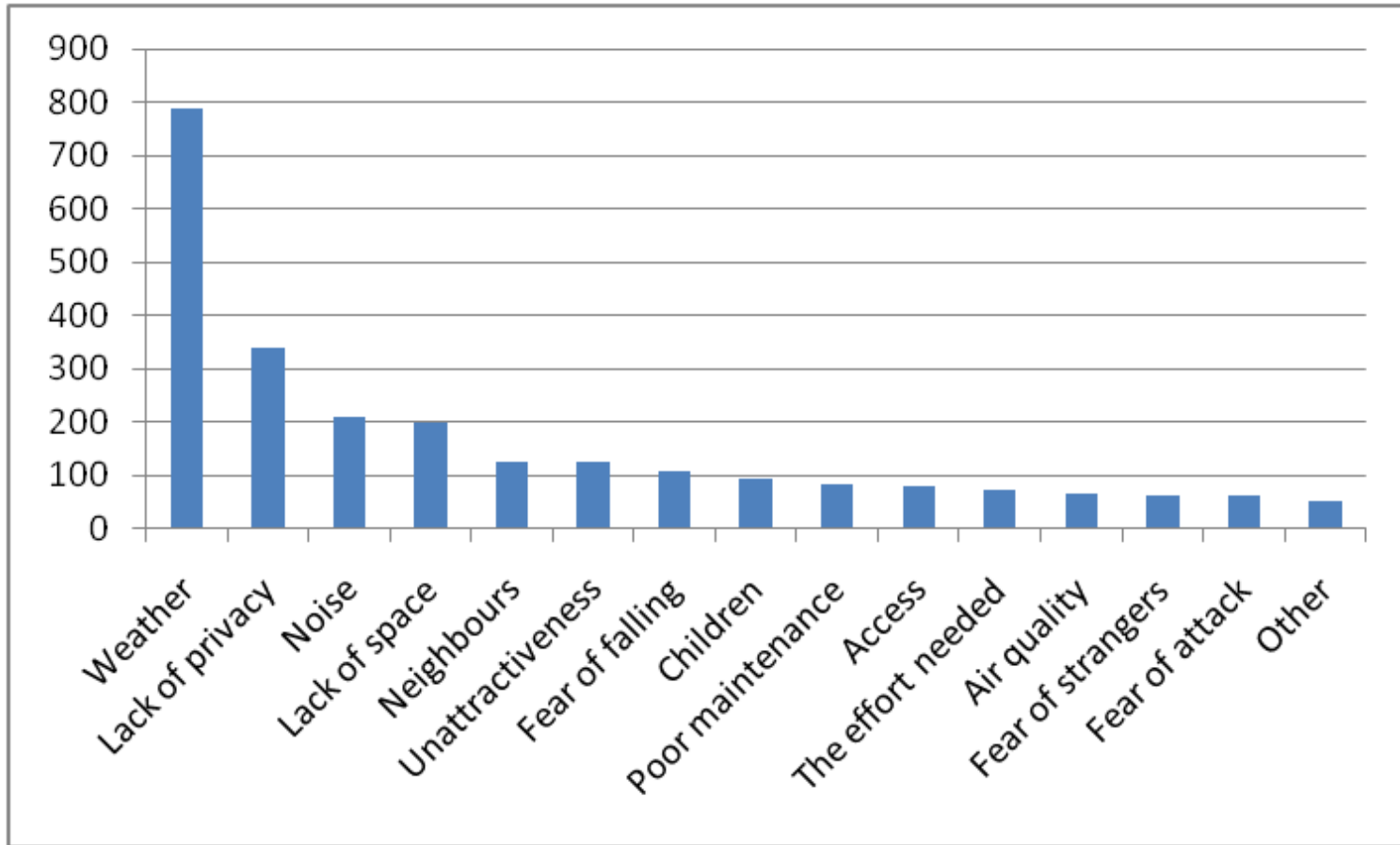
Preliminary survey findings

My outdoor space is very important to me



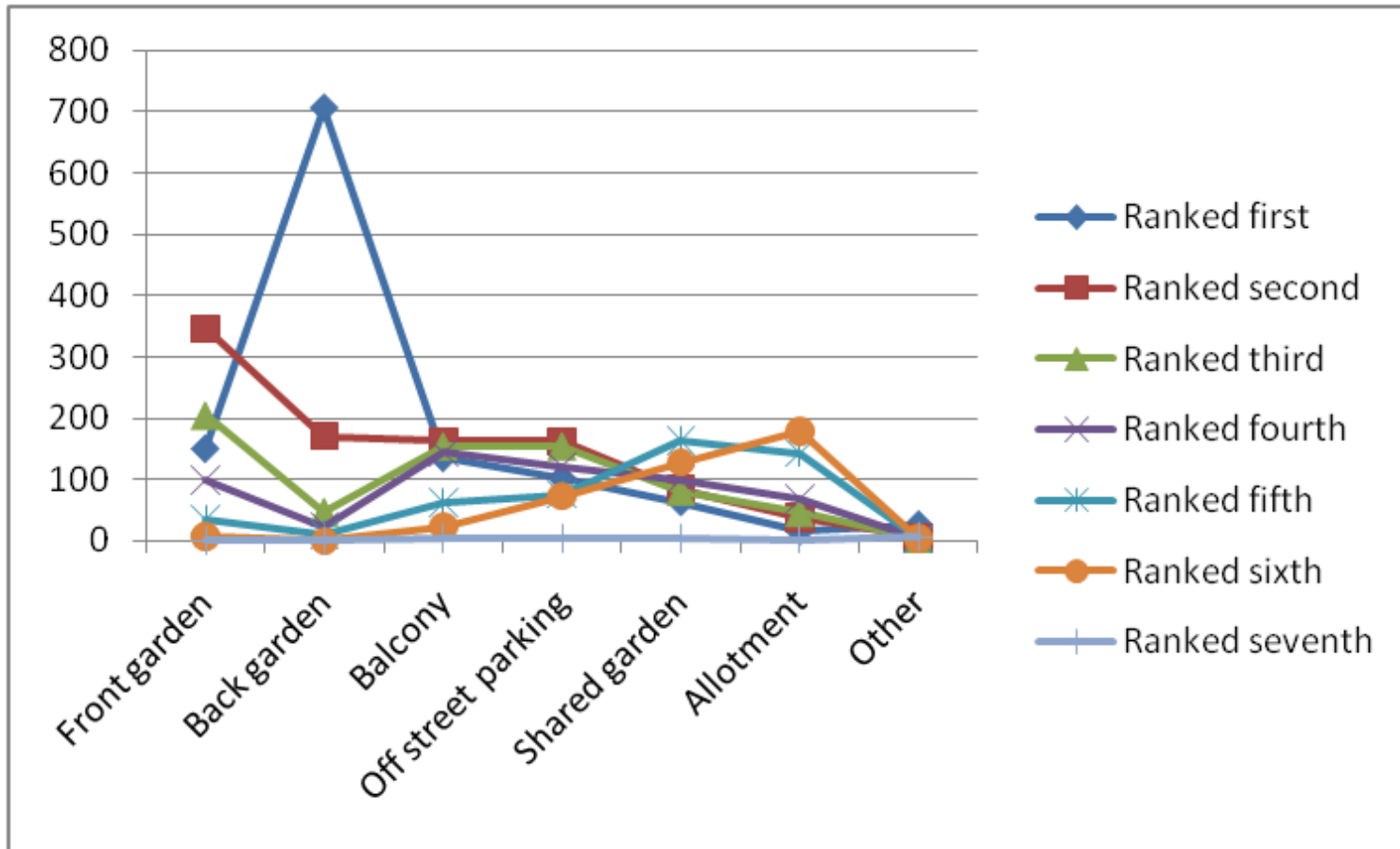
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Barriers to using ROS



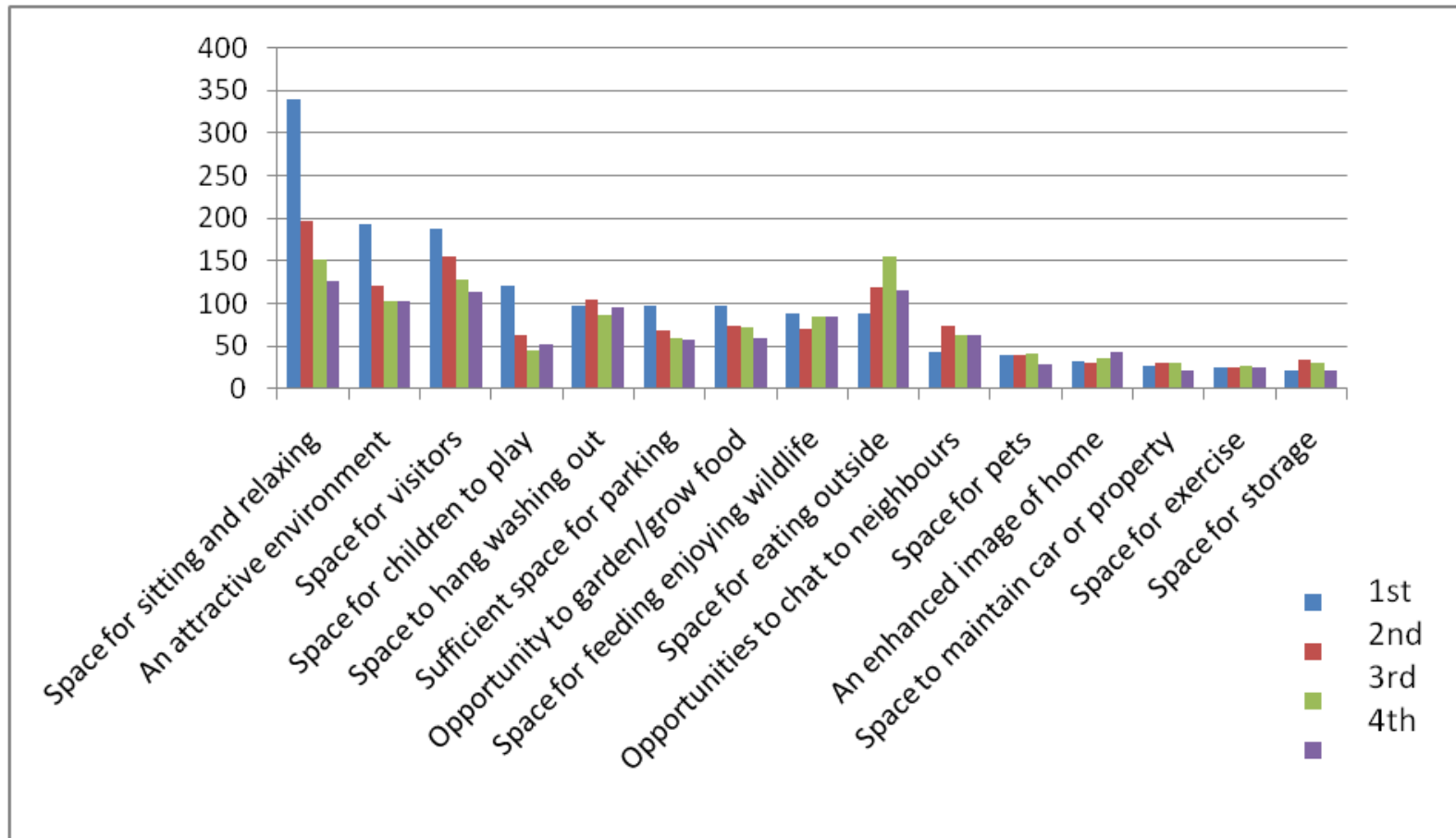
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Respondents' ideal ROS

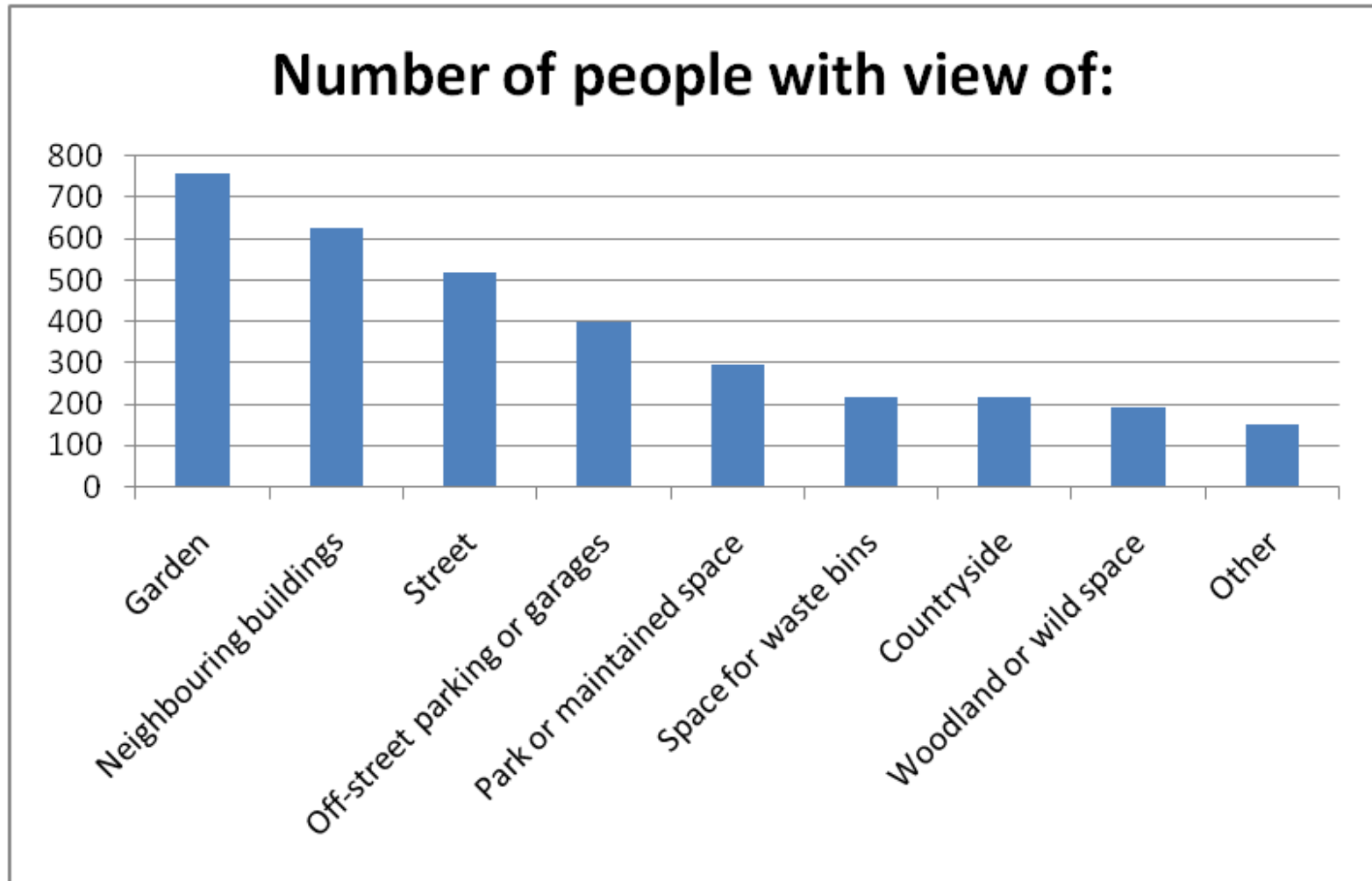


Preliminary survey findings

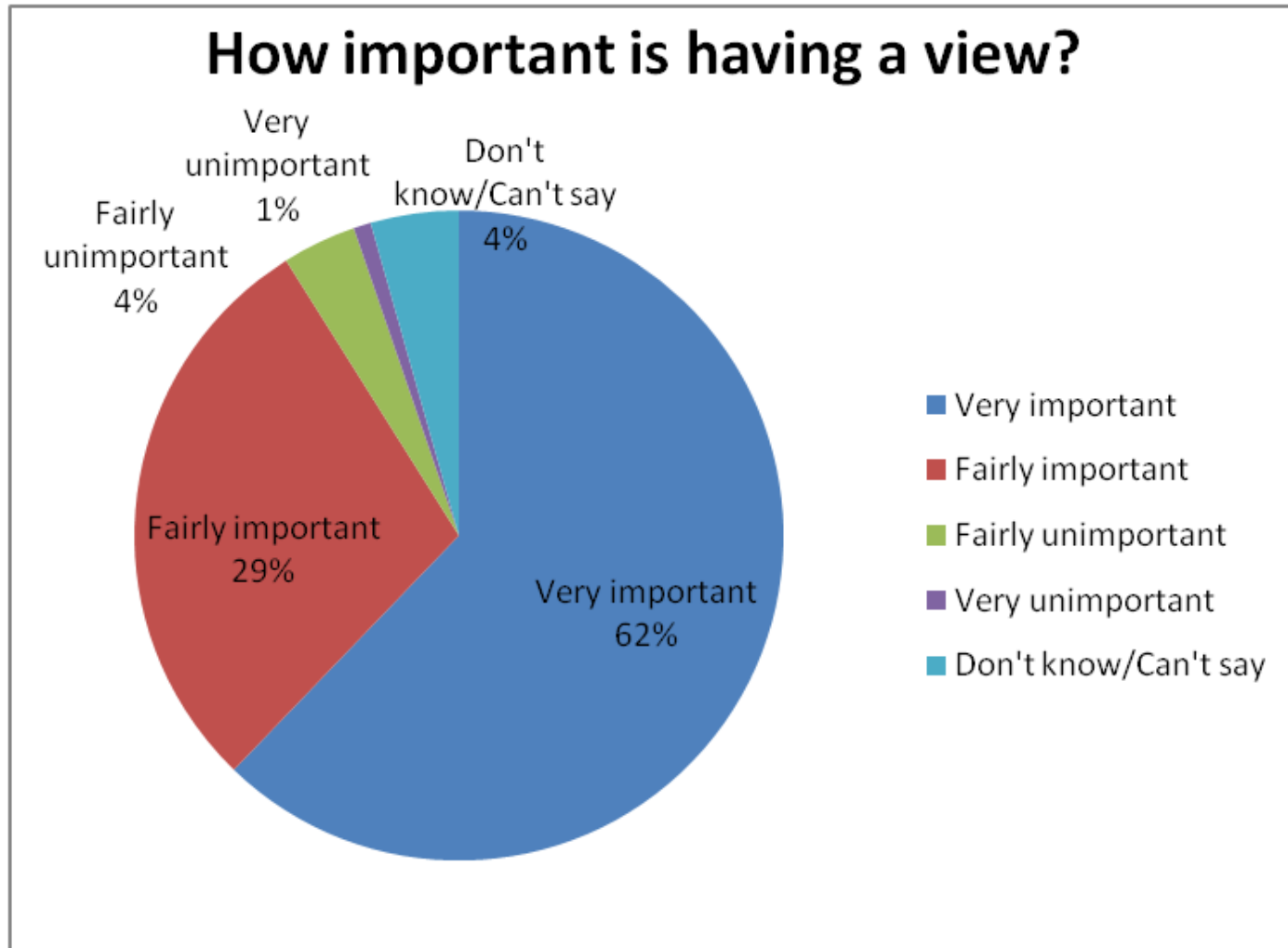
What they would use their ideal ROS for



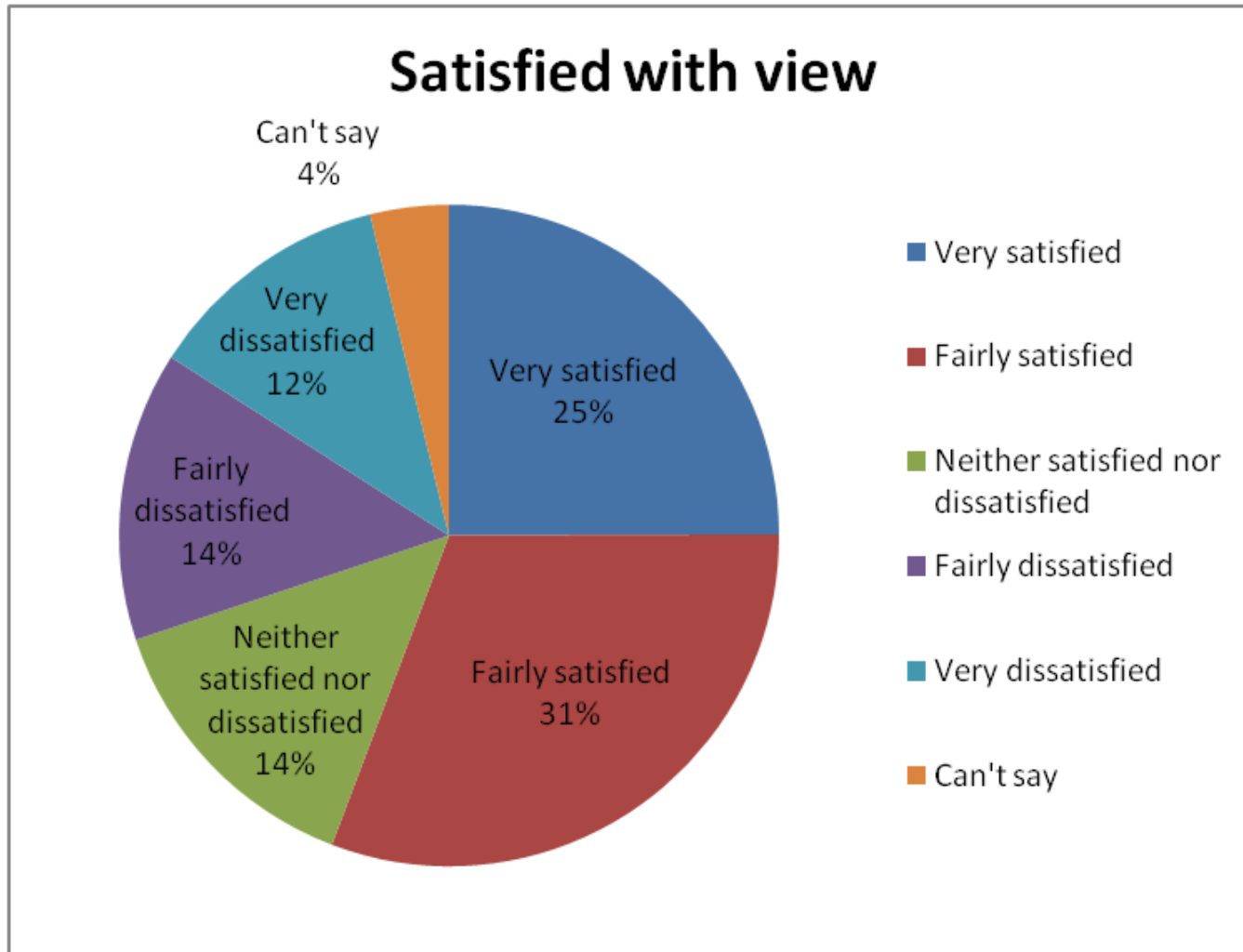
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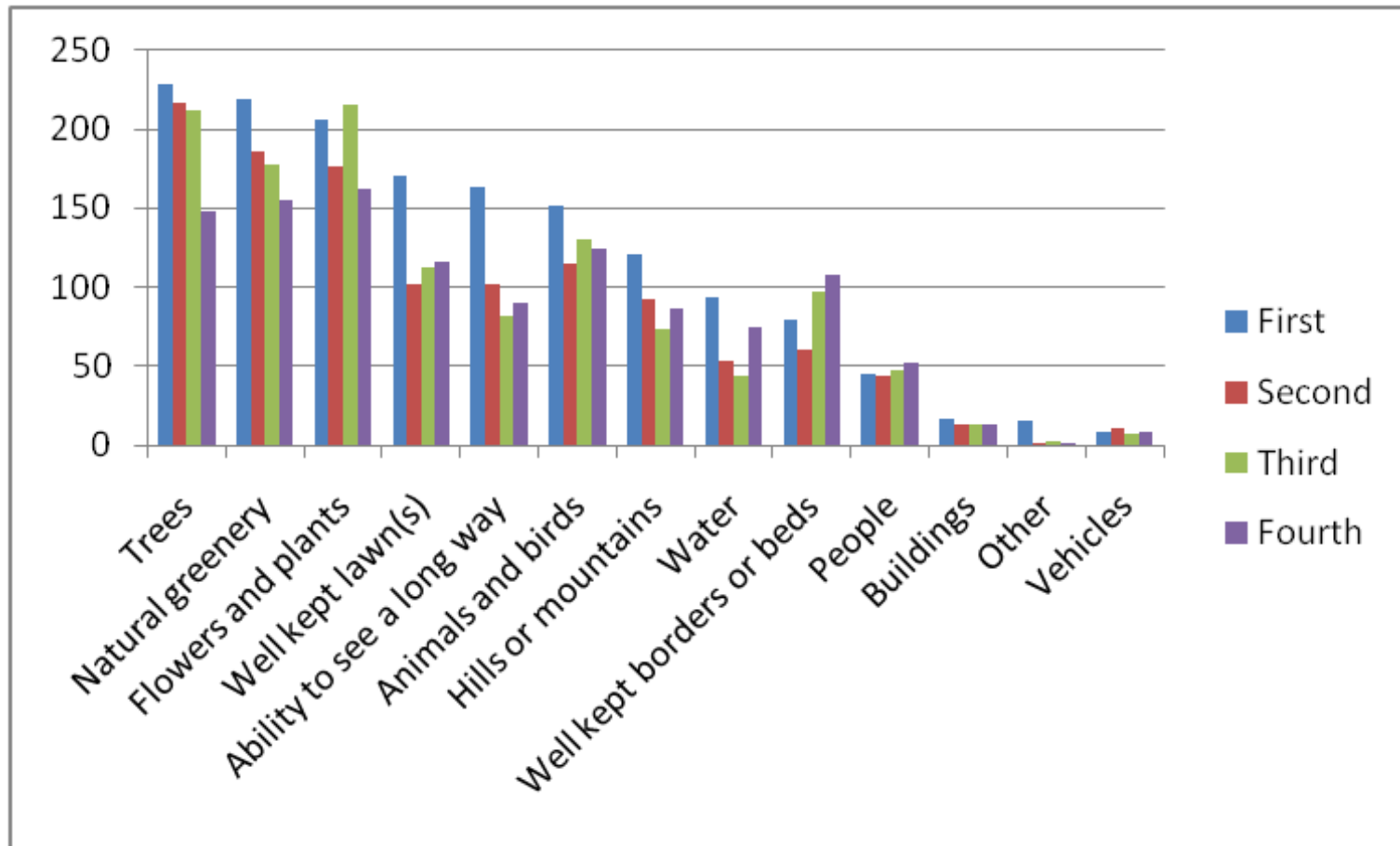


Preliminary survey findings



Preliminary survey findings

Ideal views



Next steps

In-depth interviews (N=30)

- to explore interviewees' preferences, likes, dislikes, needs and problems relating to their ROS and views from home and how these affect their wellbeing and satisfaction with their dwelling and neighbourhood
- Interviews will include
 - a walk around the dwelling and ROS with interviewee
 - plans/photographs to record type, scale, position, layout, topography, accessibility etc of ROS and view/s

