



**St John Ambulance Homeless Service
Hastings**

SERVICE USER SURVEY



2020 Report

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

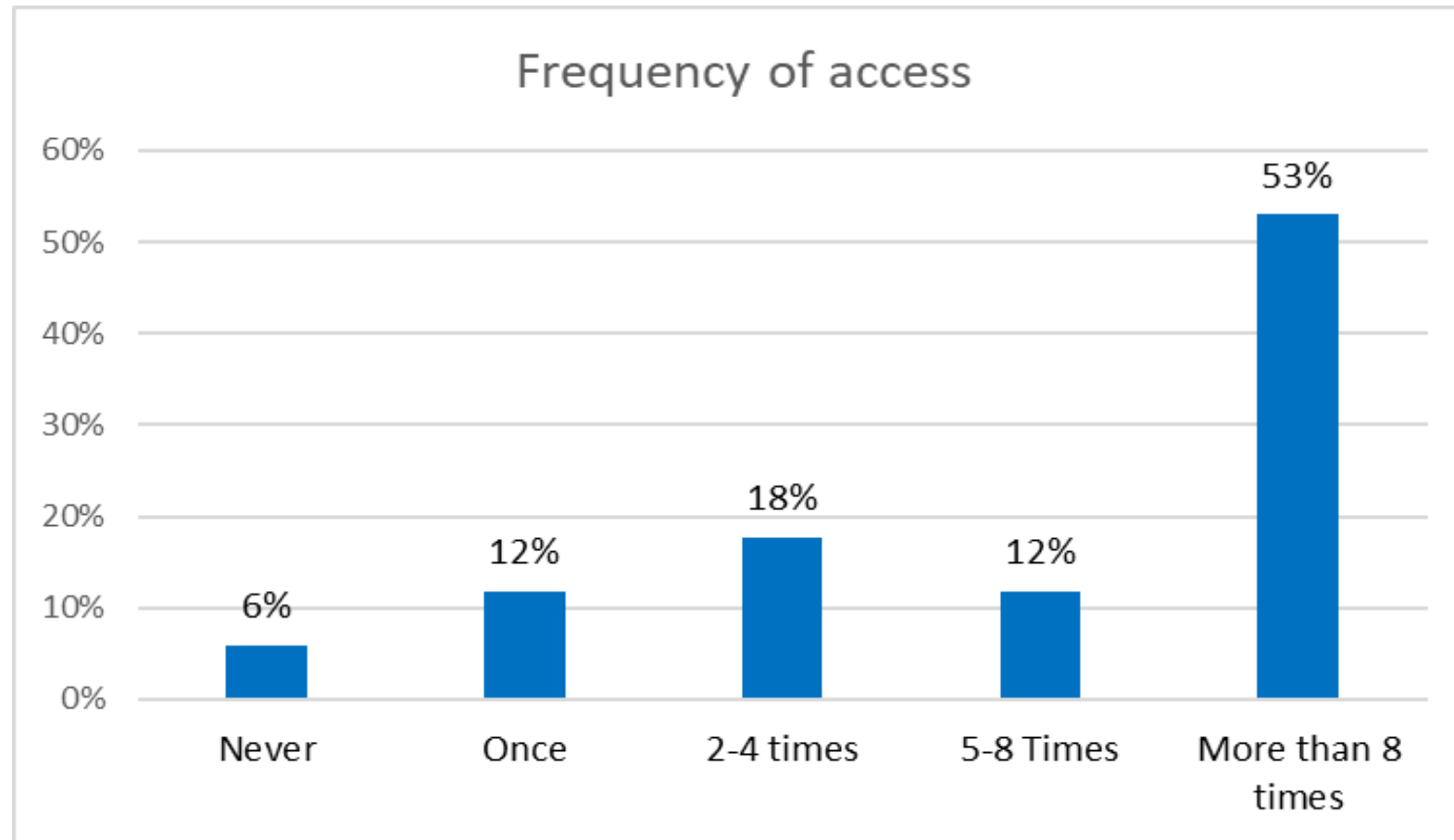
- ❑ St John Ambulance Hastings Homeless Service (SJAHS) carries out a survey each year to review the effectiveness of the Hastings Homeless Service in achieving its aims.
- ❑ Survey results are fed back to the Hastings Homeless Service Working Party, where service user responses are given careful consideration. Survey results are used to inform a range of stakeholders, including current and potential funders.
- ❑ SJAHS undertook its 2020 Service User Survey during November-December 2020.
- ❑ After reviewing the previous year's questionnaire, it was decided a slightly updated format would be used this year (see Appendix).
- ❑ Due to the restrictions in place for the COVID-19 pandemic and for the safety of SJA volunteers and its clients, it was decided that the survey would be conducted exclusively via telephone.
- ❑ Because of the small sample size, statistical significance could not be demonstrated. However, despite its limitations, this study contributes to a better understanding of the work of SJAHS and its effects on its users.

STUDY DESIGN

- ❑ Methodology: Telephone Interviews
 - ❑ Design: Mixed mode questionnaire (qualitative and quantitative)
 - ❑ Length: approximately 15 minutes
 - ❑ Quota: n=17 participants
 - ❑ Data: Content analysis in Excel, Thematic analysis for Open Ends, Descriptive statistics for quantitative questions
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- ❖ Respondents were selected at random within Seaview's Wellbeing Centre, Hope Kitchen and via a database. Of the 39 respondents contacted, 18 did not answer the phone and 21 agreed to be interviewed. Of these, 17 eventually took part.
 - ❖ All interviews were conducted and transcribed by Pierluigi Vullo and Christine Catt. Full transcripts of the interviews are stored anonymously in digital format. Reference to SJA staff were removed from the report to ensure anonymity of the participants.
 - ❖ A special thanks to Crescenzo Pinto (Social Health Researcher) who assisted in the design of the analysis format.
 - ❖ All analysis and reporting was produced by Pierluigi Vullo and reviewed by Roger Nuttall.

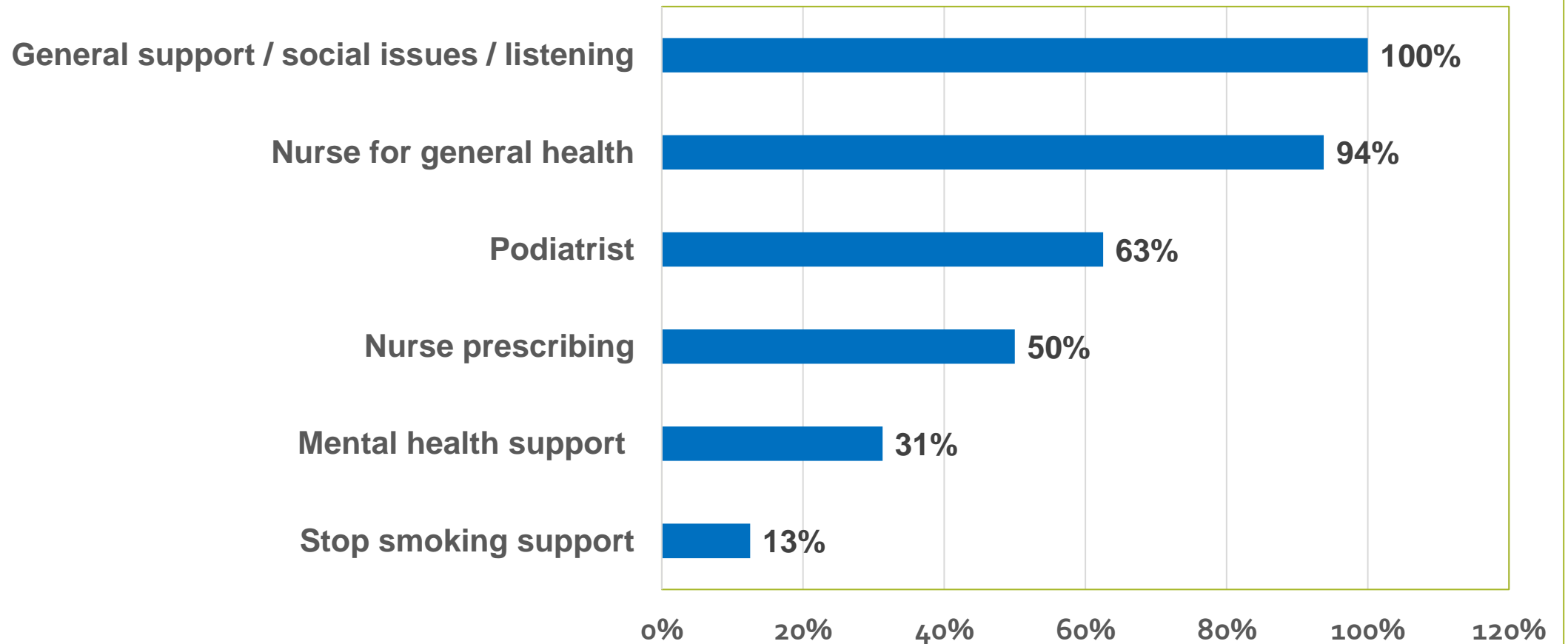
RESULTS

Accessing St John Ambulance Homeless Service



Base: n=17 respondents.

Types of service used by clients



Base: n=17 respondents.

In their own words

I go every week, several times a week. For a meal, a chat, and support.

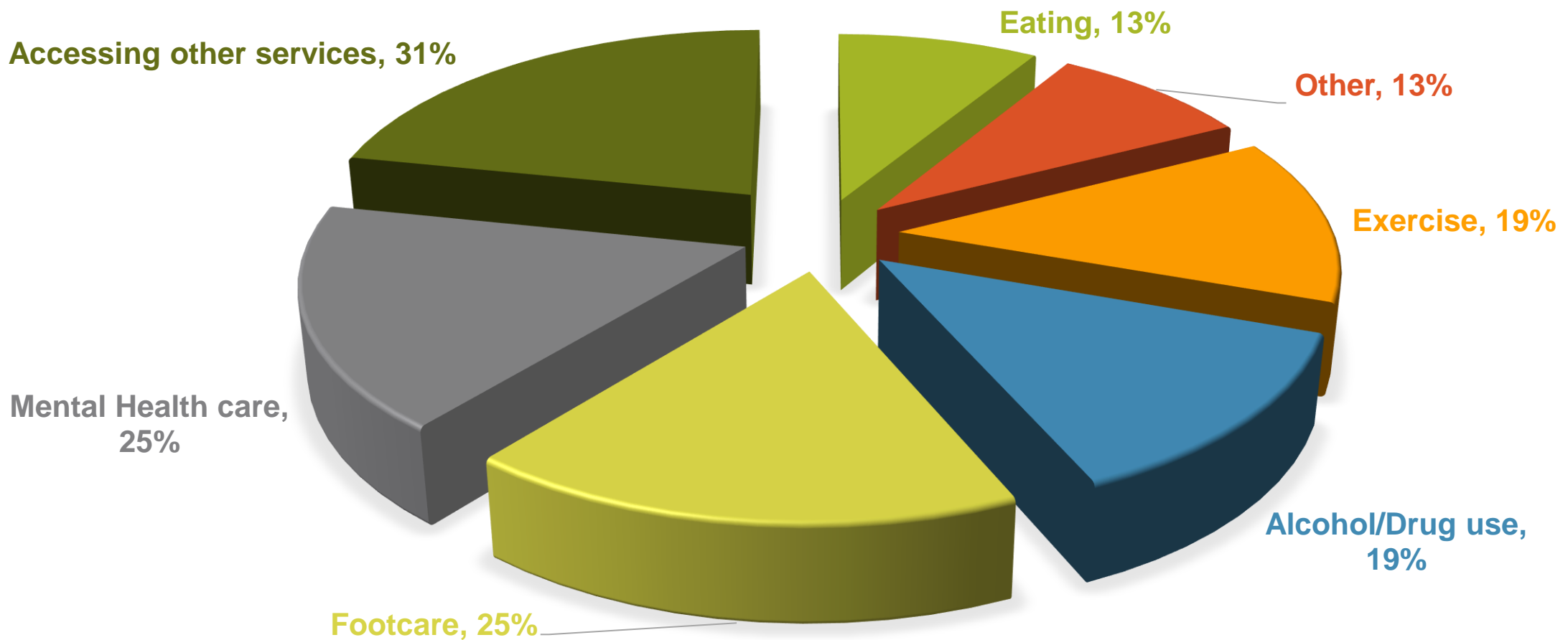
I get prescriptions for my ulcers.

I have regular support from SJA almost every week for my depression, mental health issue[s], addiction and general health.

Get my toes nails done, because I have a bad back so can't lean down.

They help with all sort of issues, food, health. They helped me get accommodation

Changes to lifestyle after accessing SJAHS



Base: n=17 respondents.

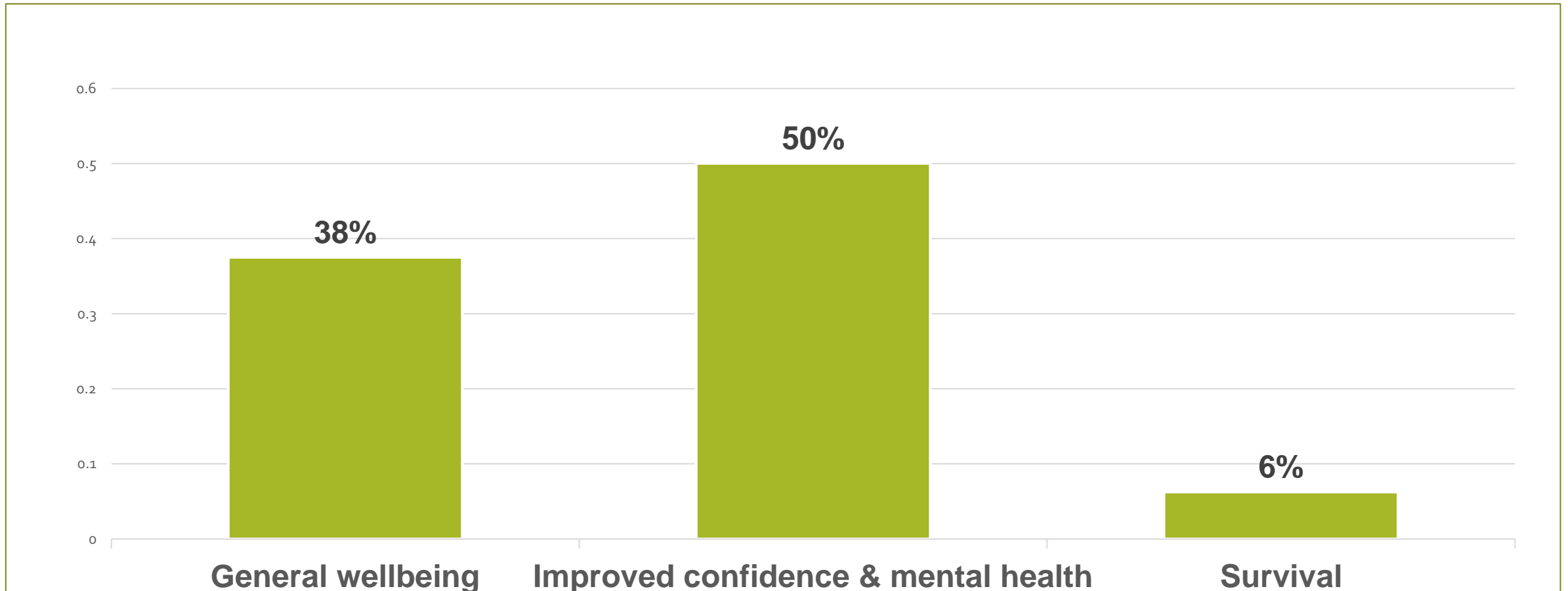
Changes in Lifestyle

I was stabbed and [have] had lots of incidents since, [SJAHS staff member] has been able to arrange all my meetings

They helped me regain trust in people

I stopped drinking

Clients' Health Improvements



Base: n=17 respondents.

In their own words

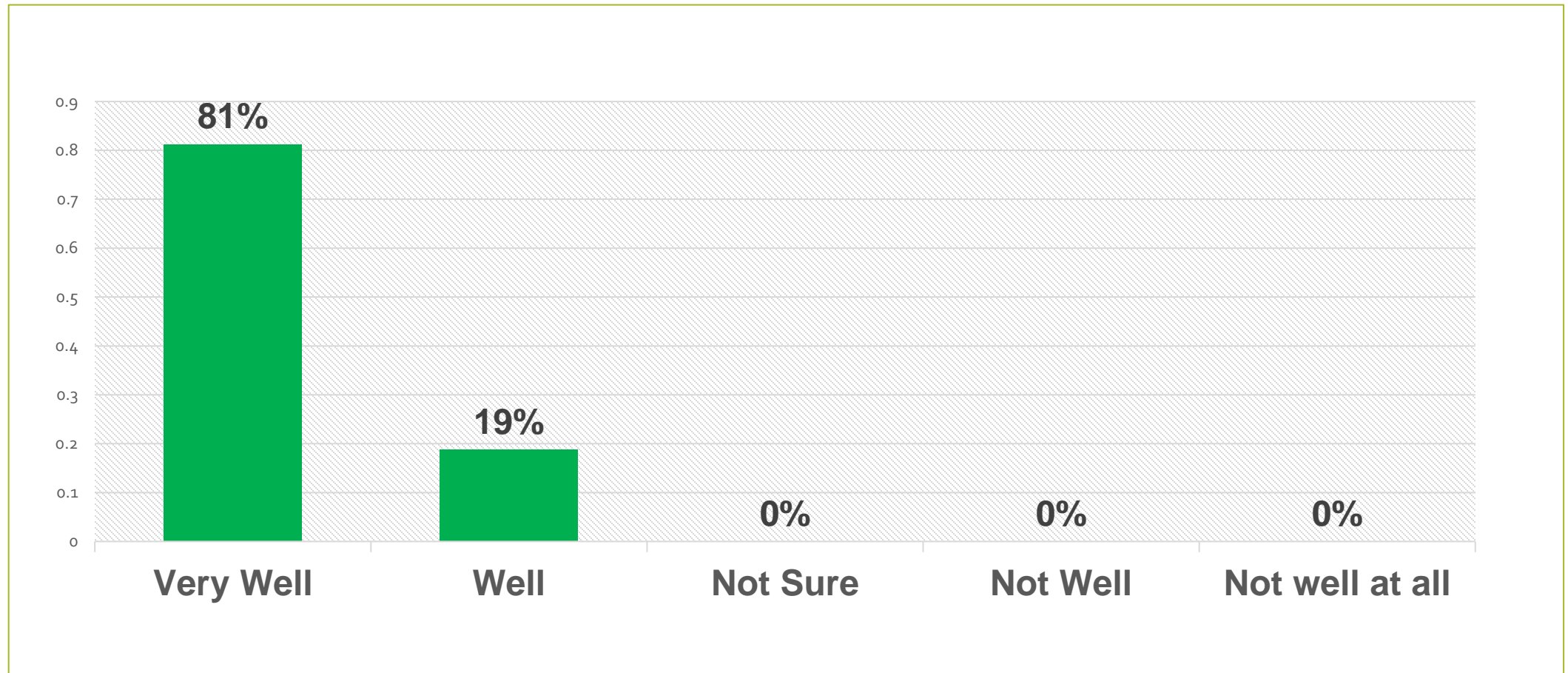
Without SJA I would be dead. Their emotional support has saved my life. I have become friends with them without ever crossing the boundaries.

Feeling supported emotionally.

They helped me get off the street, so I am no longer homeless.

I am fitter, less violent and a much more decent human being than I used to be.

SJAHS Listening & Understanding Skills



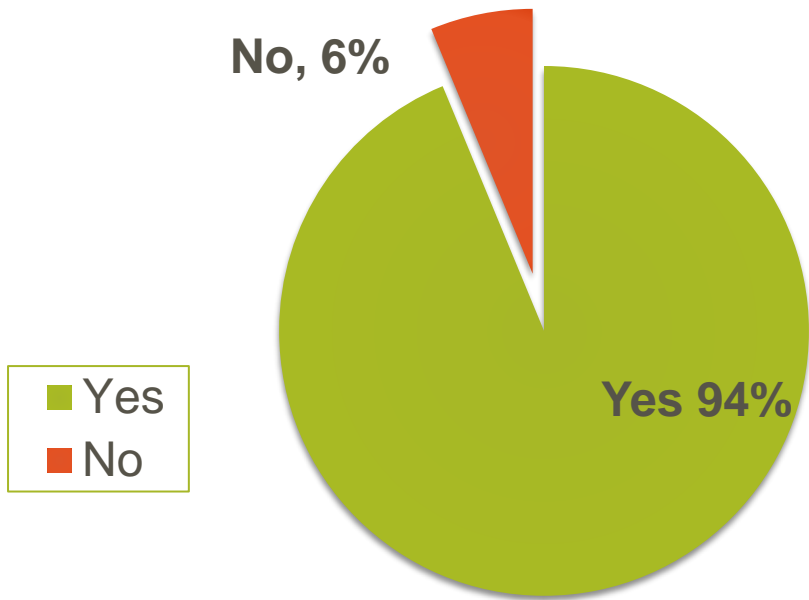
Base: n=17 respondents.

What clients say about SJAHS

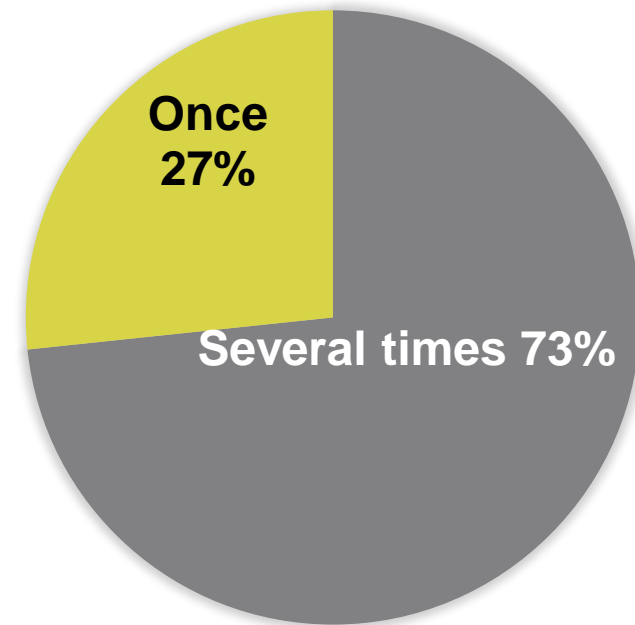
- ❖ *“They are great people, the only people who really care about me. No-one else does. I don’t know what I would do without them”.*
- ❖ *“I am humbled by their dedication. Their integrity is beyond anything. They are lifesavers and if I won the lottery, I would give the money to them as they are truly wonderful people”.*
- ❖ *“People listen to me and know I’m not making things up, they take my health issues seriously, people at hospital think I’m a time waster.”*
- ❖ *“10 out of 10. They are brilliant. Without them I would be useless”.*
- ❖ *“They are really good listeners. I have used mental health in other places but SJA is much better. I don’t feel judged by them”.*

GP services usage

ACCESSING SJAHS INSTEAD OF GP



HOW OFTEN USED SJAHS INSTEAD OF GP

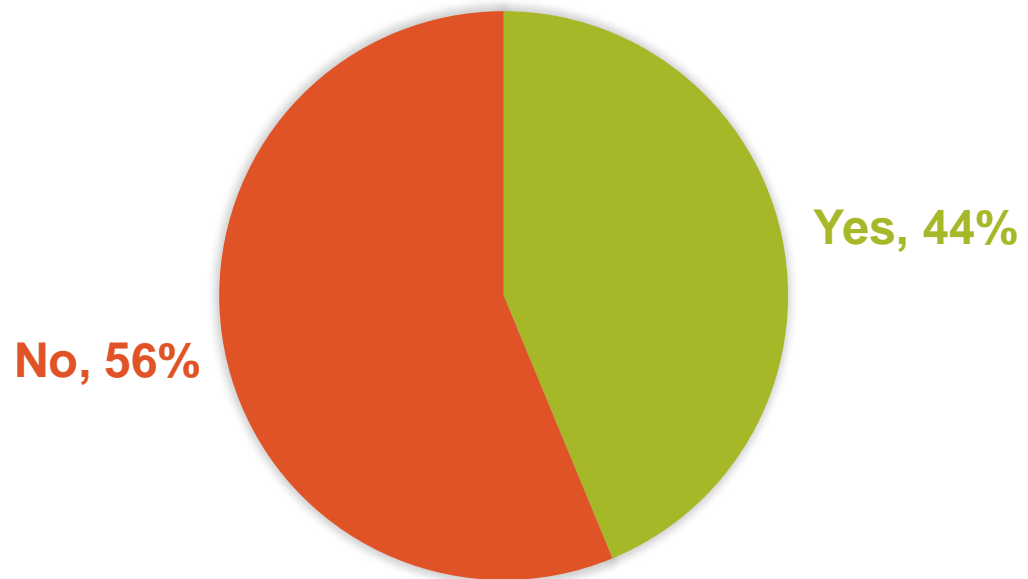


Why clients use SJAHS instead of a GP

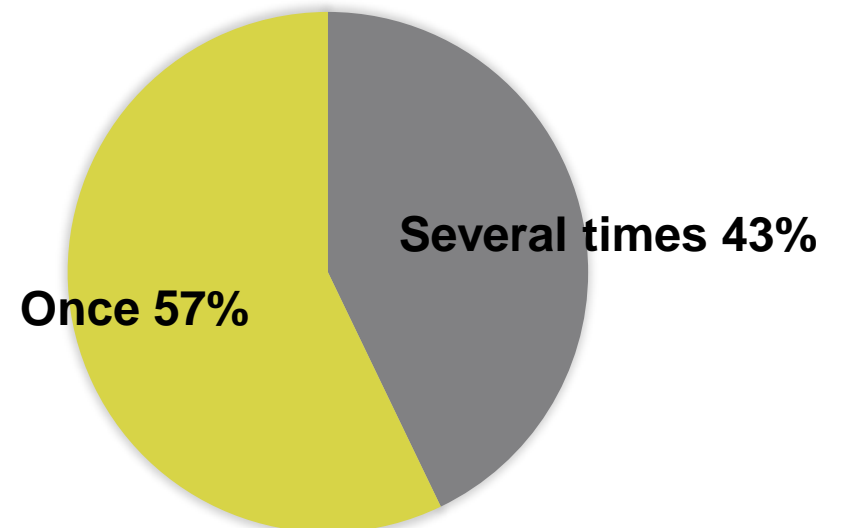
- ❑ **27% don't have a GP.**
- ❑ **67% find it too difficult to see a GP.**
- ❑ **20% find GP's surgeries unwelcoming and judgmental.**
- ❖ *"I only go to GP as a last resort, I will use SJA instead. They are more accessible because they are mobile, it's hard for me to walk around, it takes me a long time to get to places even when I get a bus. It's hard to get a GP appointment."*
- ❖ *"It's a nightmare to see a GP".*
- ❖ *"There is no waiting list".*

A&E and Walk In Centre usage

ACCESSED SJAHS INSTEAD OF A&E



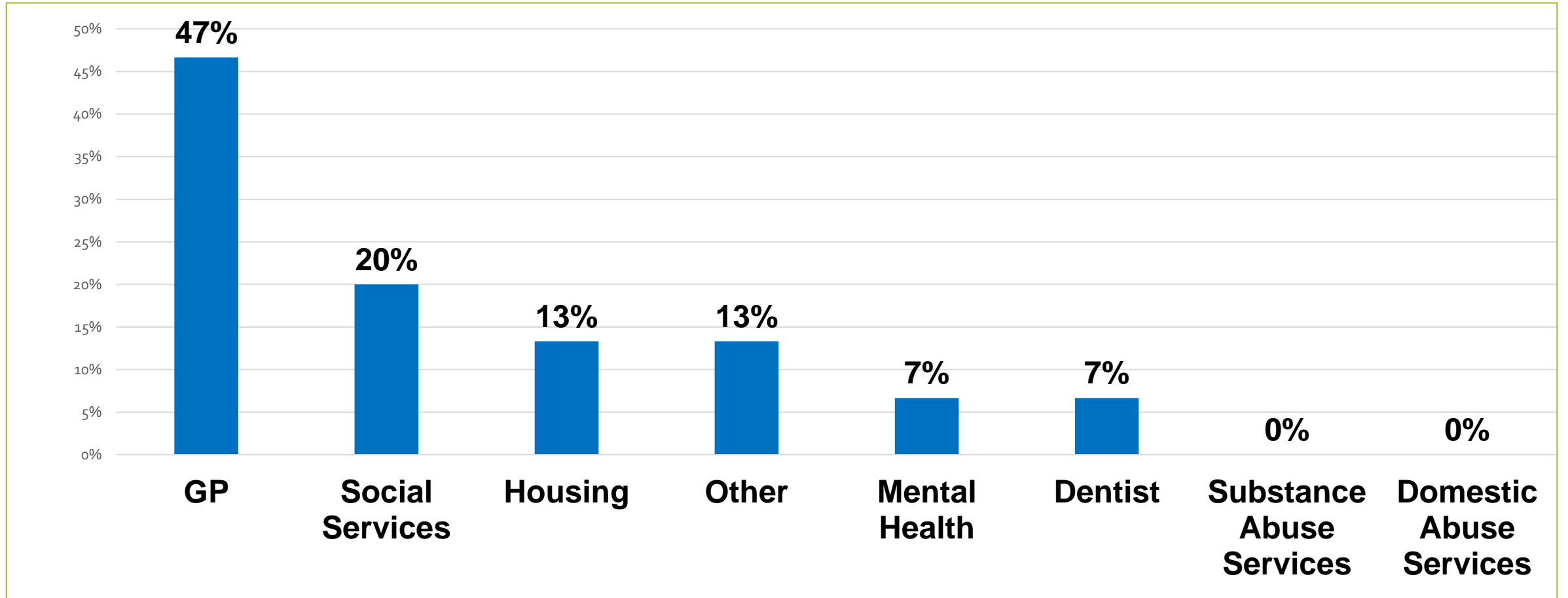
HOW OFTEN USED SJAHS INSTEAD OF A&E



Why clients use SJAHS instead of A&E

- ❖ *“Hospital says I’m putting it on. You need SJA to tell the doctors that you need them, because they don’t take me seriously. When SJA involved it proves I need it”.*
- ❖ *“SJA don’t treat me as a time waster”.*
- ❖ *“I have lots of issues with my temper, suicidal thoughts, they won't take me at the hospital. They say there is no cure for me”.*
- ❖ *“I would check with SJA first and they would advise me to go to A&E if necessary”.*

Which services has SJAHS helped access



Base: n=17 respondents.

In their own words

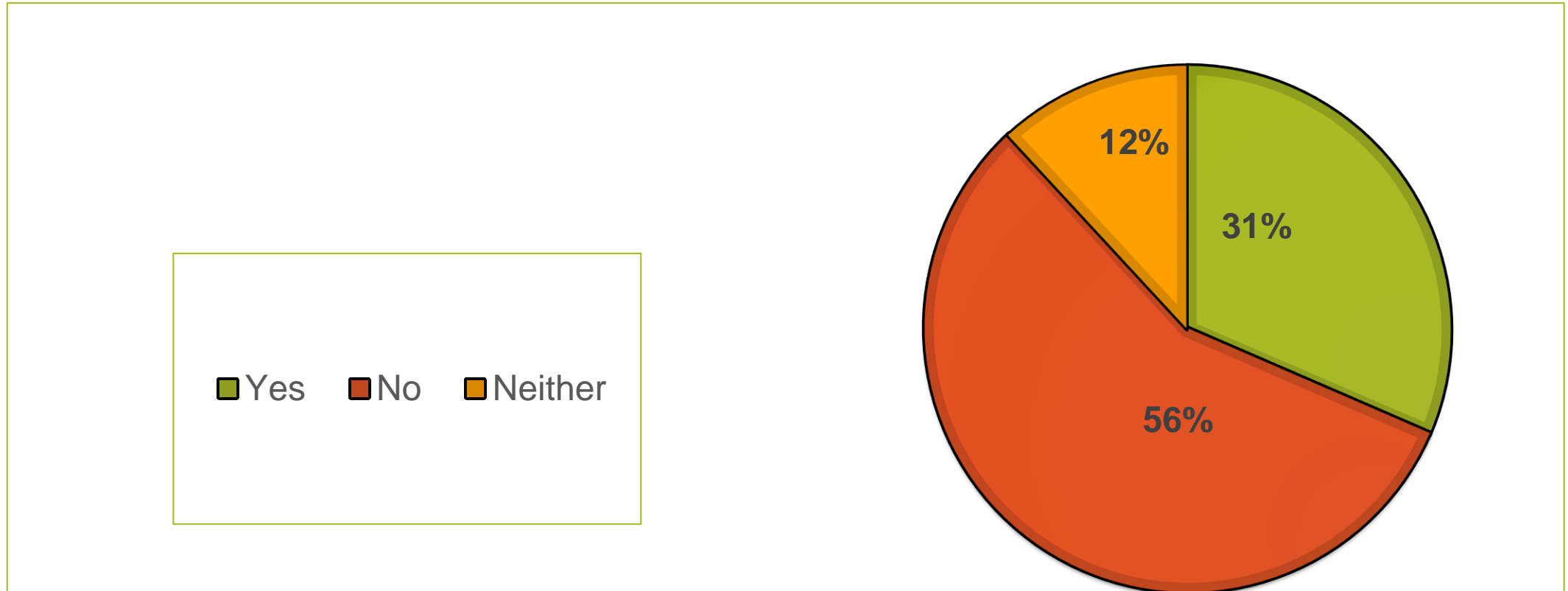
SJA tries to help me register with a GP or to go to hospitals, but I can't cope with crowds and feel safer and more comfortable with SJA.

They try to [help me access other services] but I don't trust the system.

SJA have been able to phone GP for me to get appointments and prescriptions.

I am very vulnerable, people on the streets ask me for money and I struggle to say no which leaves me more vulnerable. I am trying to get into a rest home. SJA have helped to access services .

Clients improved confidence in NHS services

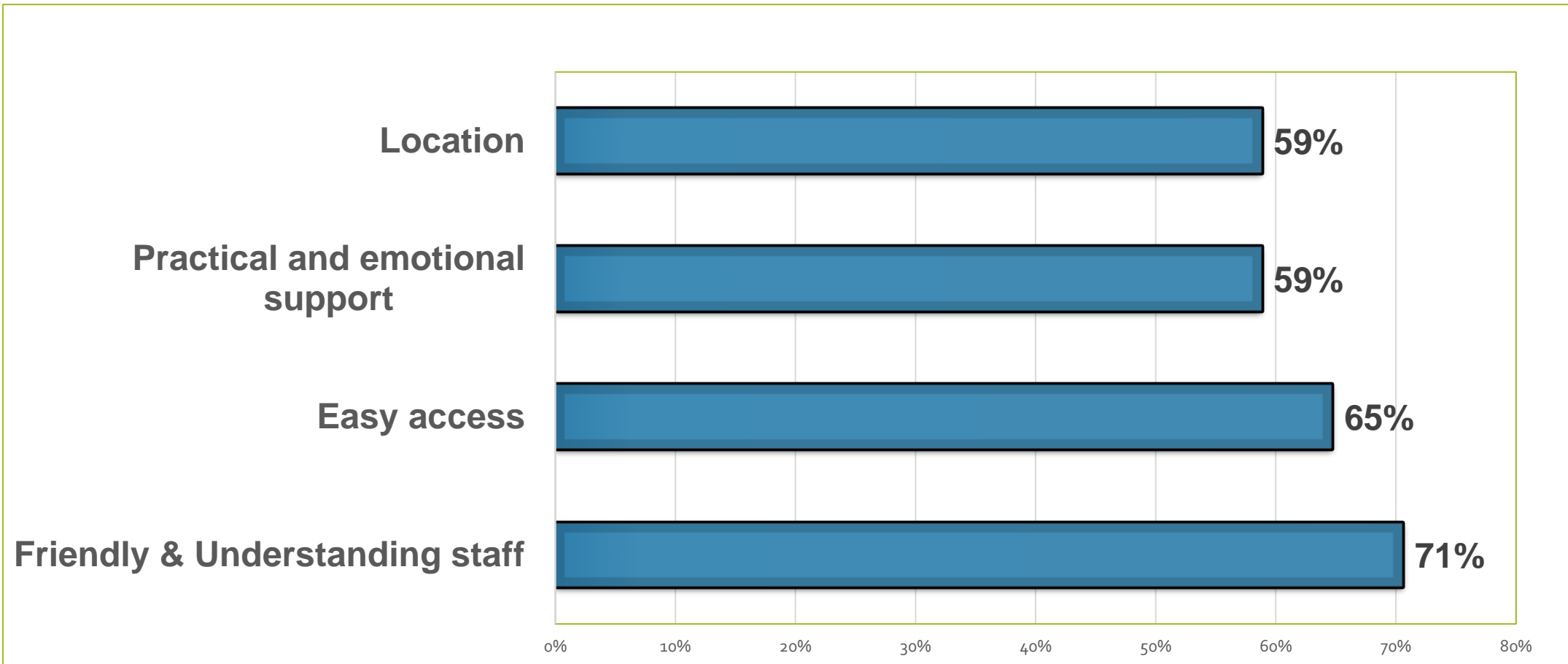


Base: n=17 respondents.

What clients say about confidence in NHS services

- ❖ *“SJA gave me confidence, guidance and help to register with a GP, which made it easier”.*
- ❖ *“I am an 'at home' person. I find it difficult to go anywhere”.*
- ❖ *“There is a never-ending waiting list, I can't get a dentist, I can't get tested for my liver. It's very difficult to be seen”.*
- ❖ *“I have been waiting for a year to learn who is my new GP (old one retired). I still don't know who they are”.*
- ❖ *“They [NHS] treat me like a nuisance and like a child. I have given up on them”.*

SJAHS MOST HELPFUL ASPECTS



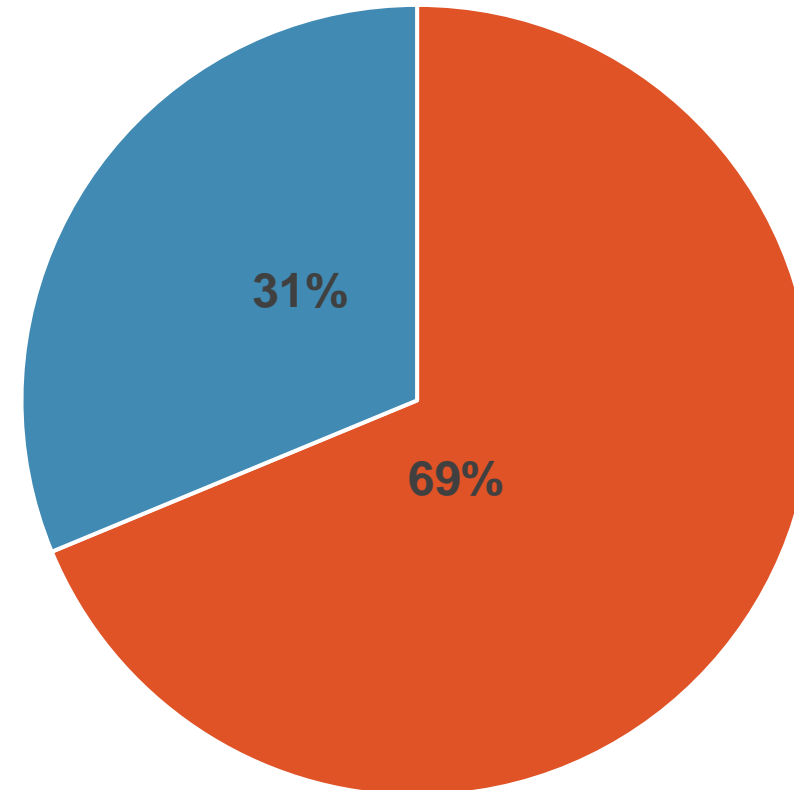
Base: n=17 respondents.

SJAHS Usefulness in the clients words

- ❖ *“Always there for you no matter what, dependable and reliable”.*
- ❖ *“Their location is great. It's always there, its easy to reach and to be seen; staff easy to talk to; staff that is very caring”.*
- ❖ *“They literally saved my life. I could not live my life without their help”.*
- ❖ *“Friendly. If they can help they will. If they can't they will try and find out and then help”.*
- ❖ *“They are understanding and give practical help”.*

COVID Pandemic's impact on clients' health

■ Negative Impact ■ No Impact



Base: n=17 respondents.

Pandemic impact in their own words

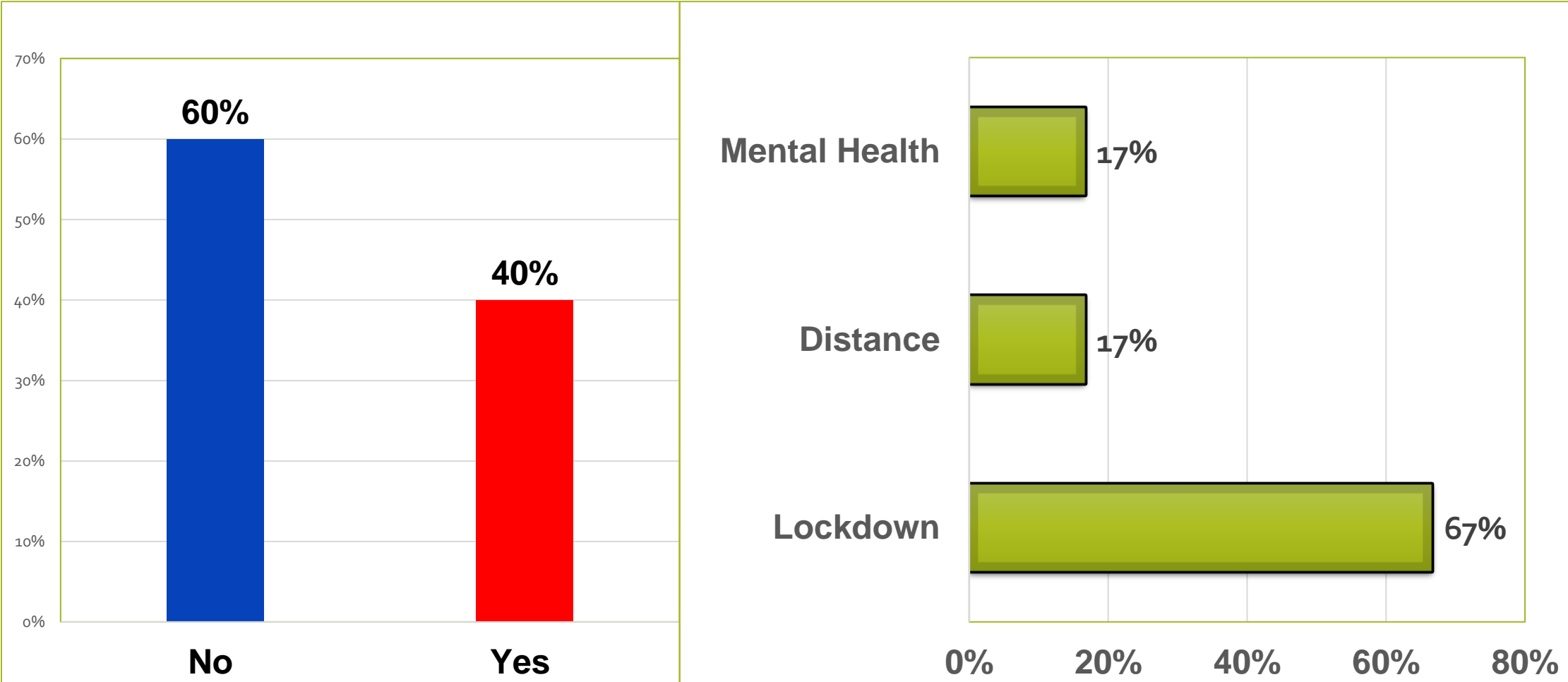
It has affected me really badly mentally. I live alone; I have no family near me. I self isolate as I cant afford to catch the virus, I have a history of respiratory problems.

Made me really scared to do anything.

Yes, badly. Find it really hard to get out now and had to have my leg amputated because I couldn't get appointments for wound dressing.

I'm worried about going to get services. I think you need to take on more staff because of COVID because people will not be coming in to work. Can't get GP appointments now .

Has anything made it difficult to access SJAHS



Base: n=17 respondents.

Suggestions to improve SJAHS

- ❑ 100 % of respondents thought SJAHS did not need improving.
- ❑ 40% used this question to commend SJAHS on their good work.
- ❑ 16% Thought SJAHS deserved more funding.

- ❖ *“SJA does a wonderful job and it moves me to see that there are people like them who help us”.*
- ❖ *“They should be allowed to prescribe medication”.*
- ❖ *“I am very happy with their services. I can't really fault them”.*

CONCLUSIONS

Key Benefits of SJAHS

- ❑ **Continued care:** Three quarters of clients access SJAHS multiple times in a year, with more than 50% visiting its premises on a monthly or weekly basis.
- ❑ **Podiatry and General Help:** Footcare remains the most widely used service among its users, whilst general support and advice is the single most common reason for visiting our premises.
- ❑ **Improved lifestyle:** The benefit to our clients health are also observed in an improvement of their lifestyle across several areas, including footcare, mental health, alcohol and drug use and the ability to access other services independently.
- ❑ **Friendliness:** A friendly, non-judgemental and understanding environment was mentioned by 100% of the participants of this study when describing their experiences with SJAHS staff.
- ❑ **Emotional Support:** The practical help seems to go hand in hand with the emotional support which they receive from our staff. It is worth mentioning that several participants broke down in tears during their interview, highlighting the need for an empathetic and understanding rapport when liaising with our clients.

Accessibility and Pandemic

- ❑ **Access:** In terms of accessibility, almost two thirds of respondents mentioned ease of access as the primary advantage of SJAHS, citing the absence of long waiting lists as well as the lack of complex bureaucratic forms as the main benefits.
- ❑ **Location:** Almost 60% mentioned the central and easy to reach locations of SJAHS premises as a real plus point and more than 75% cited the friendly and understanding attitude of our staff as a prime motivator to keep using us.
- ❑ **COVID-19:** Unsurprisingly, nearly 75% of respondents reported a negative impact of the pandemic to their mental health with several of them expressing real fears of catching the virus. Most respondents reported social isolation and inability to access support services as a direct consequence of the pandemic.

Unmet needs with the NHS services

- ❑ **Dissatisfaction:** In terms of the relationship of our clients with their own GP or with Walk In centres, the data suggests that despite SJAHS efforts to re-connect clients with NHS services such as GPs, Walk in Centres and A&E departments, the overwhelming majority of clients report a clear dissatisfaction with such services.
- ❑ **Barriers:** Stigma, prejudice, lack of understanding and excessive bureaucracy seem to be the main obstacles to accessing NHS services and/or to remain under their care. Even clients whom SJAHS helped re-connect with NHS services often dropped out from their system as a result of the above mentioned barriers.
- ❑ **Friendliness:** More discussions should be held with the NHS service providers to explore the reasons behind the distrust of homeless people and attempts should be made to understand how such barriers can be removed or at least alleviated. The systemic inability to respond to homeless people's needs by the NHS cannot be resolved without taking into account the complex, multi layered, social and psychological idiosyncrasies of the homeless community.

Conclusions

- ❑ The issues faced by the homeless community are complex, and no single approach or individual policy on its own would be sufficient to resolve them on their own.
- ❑ A multidisciplinary approach should be considered when designing health interventions, policies and initiatives which promote the wellbeing of such individuals.
- ❑ The homeless community is affected by several chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, leg ulcers and depression to name a few. Like any chronic illness, the management of these conditions is influenced and shaped by psychological, social and cognitive factors, thus health behaviors and their relationship with health outcomes should be taken into consideration when providing care to these clients.
- ❑ This study strongly suggests that homeless people heavily rely on SJAHs for the essential health care support required to meet their needs and therefore SJAHs should continue to offer its services to this vulnerable part of society.

APPENDIX

CONSENT FORM

Introduction:

Hello, my name is (____) and I am calling from St John Ambulance Homeless Service.

We are conducting a service user survey that involves interviewing individuals who have used our SJA Homeless Service in order to understand your experience with the service.

We would like to invite you to take part in a telephone interview which will last for 10-15 minutes.

I would like to assure you that your participation is completely anonymous, and your name will not be associated with your answers. I would also like to inform you that you have the right to stop from the interview at any time if you wish.

Would you be willing to participate in this study on this basis?

Record consent: Yes * No * (If no thank and close)

Assign ID number:

