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Holyrood Park – Traffic Management Survey

REPORT FEBRUARY 2022

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INTRODUCTION

1. Background

In 2020, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) took the decision to implement road closures to facilitate use of the Park during the Covid-19 pandemic. There were two main elements to the closures – The High Road and Weekend Road Closures.

2. The High Road

In spring 2020, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) took the decision to close the section of the Queen's Drive known as the 'High Road' to public vehicles, marked in yellow on the image below. This closure also prevented public vehicle access to Dunsapie car park.



Prior to the pandemic, this route and car park were accessible to public vehicles 24/7 during late April until end of September and 6/7 October until late April with road closures only put in place to allow for maintenance, incident management, annual toad migration, public events, icing, and overnight during winter months.

From Tuesday 6 July 2021, HES partially reopened the High Road to vehicles on Tuesdays – Thursdays between 9.30 – 3.00pm to facilitate access for less able users.

The initial decision was taken during the Covid-19 pandemic, allowing for more space for social distancing and in recognition that the High Road was a popular route for families, cyclists, runners and walkers, particularly during lockdown while travel was limited.

3. Weekend closures

A decision was taken in summer 2020 to expand the long-standing Sunday daytime Park road closures to include both Saturdays and Sundays from 8:15am until 4:00pm-7:00pm depending on the time of year.

A trail extension to the hours of closure on weekend days was introduced in summer 2021. At its peak this resulted in the road network not being re-opened to vehicle traffic prior to 9:45pm.

Recognising that the Park was becoming increasingly popular at weekends with families, cyclists, runners and walkers during Covid-19 lockdowns, especially while travel was limited, the decision was taken to close the Park road network to improve the space available for exercise and encourage physical distancing. These closures applied to the road sections marked in yellow in the image below.



4. Public feedback

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) ran a public survey to seek feedback on these temporary measures introduced in Holyrood Park during the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of the survey was to understand the impact these measures had had on the public during the pandemic, and to gather views on the potential to retain these measures in the future.

METHODOLOGY

5. Data collection

A formal online survey was run to gather feedback on the measures in place in Holyrood Park. Comprising a mix of closed and open questions designed by HES, the survey was administered using the Citizen Space consultation portal.

The survey ran between 28th June and 30th September 2021 and a total of 3,956 responses were received from individual members of the public, organisations, businesses and community groups.

A copy of the survey questions can be found in the appendix.

6. Data analysis

Data was passed to independent research consultancy, Jump Research, for analysis. The analysis process was on two core elements:

1. Quantitative analysis of responses to closed questions
2. Qualitative analysis and coding of responses to open questions / comments

Quantitative analysis

All quantitative data was imported into Snap Surveys. Initial data checks were run to:

- Identify duplicate responses
- highlight areas within the dataset with missing responses, allowing reporting to be based on the total number of respondents, with non-response shown
- examine questions where 'other' responses were allowed to upcoded where possible.

During this process, 30 duplicate IP addresses were discovered within the dataset. Responses from these duplicate IP addresses were closely examined, and as none of the responses were identical, and no evidence could confirm that responses were not valid, a decision was taken not to remove any responses from the dataset.

Cross-tabulations were generated to form the basis of the analysis of closed questions, enabling differences in response between different demographic groups and types of Park users to be identified.

Qualitative analysis

All open comments were gathered in a separate spreadsheet for analysis. Comments were firstly spell-checked and sense checked which involved removing any comments which included profanities, instances where respondents typed 'no comment' or 'don't know' into the comments box, and those where no sense can be made of the wording.

An initial codeframe was developed for each question, based on a review of the first 100 responses. These codeframes were then used as the basis for coding all other open comments, with additional codes added as relevant during the process.

General themes were identified in this way, and are included in the overall analysis, with verbatim comments used to illustrate findings.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

7. Respondent type

Almost all respondents (99%) were providing feedback as an individual. A small number of respondents provided feedback as a private business, such as a taxi driver, coach driver or tour guide (27 responses), on behalf of an organisation, public body, or charity (9 responses), as representation for a community group (5 responses), or in another capacity (4 responses).

Unless otherwise specified, all figures shown in this report are based on the total - 3,956 responses.

Permissions

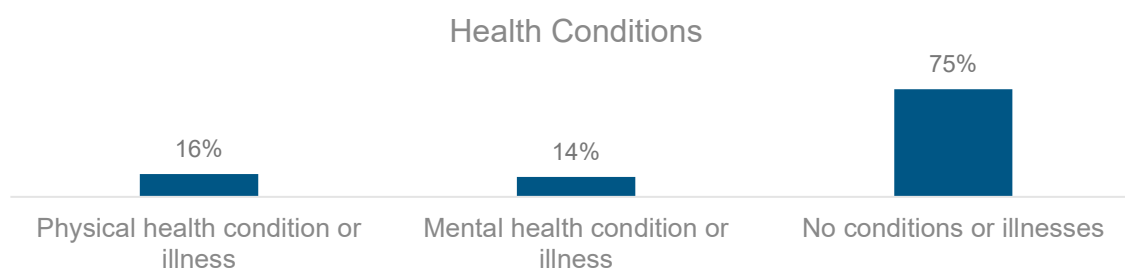
Most of the respondents that provided feedback on behalf of an organisation or community group gave permission for their response to be published, with attribution to the organisation or community group (90%). A small proportion (10%) did not give this permission.

8. Respondent location

Almost all respondents (99%) were based in Scotland, although small number of respondents reported being based in the rest of the UK (22 responses), the rest of Europe (6 responses), or the rest of the world (1 response).

9. Disabilities and conditions

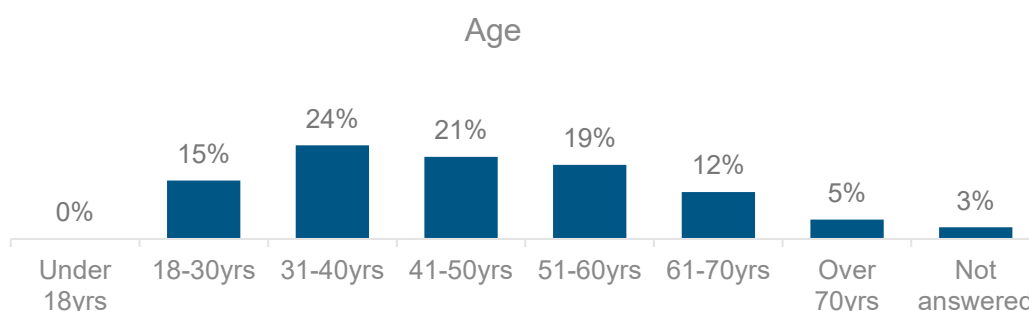
Most respondents reported having neither a physical nor mental health condition or illness (75%). 16% of respondents had a physical health condition or illness, and 14% had a mental health condition or illness.



Just under three quarters (73%) of respondents do not look after or provide help or support to anyone with a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness, or because of problems related to old age. Around a fifth of respondents (22%) do provide help or support to someone.

10. Age

Responses were received from a spread of age groups, from under 18 years to over 70 years old, with most respondents being between 31 and 60 years old (64%).



The largest proportion of respondents were in the 31–40-year-old age category (24%). Around a fifth (21%) were aged 41-50 (21%) or 51-60 years old (19%). Smaller numbers of respondents were aged 18-30 (15%), 61-70 (12%) or over 70 years old (5%). Only a very small number – 7 respondents – were under 18 years old.

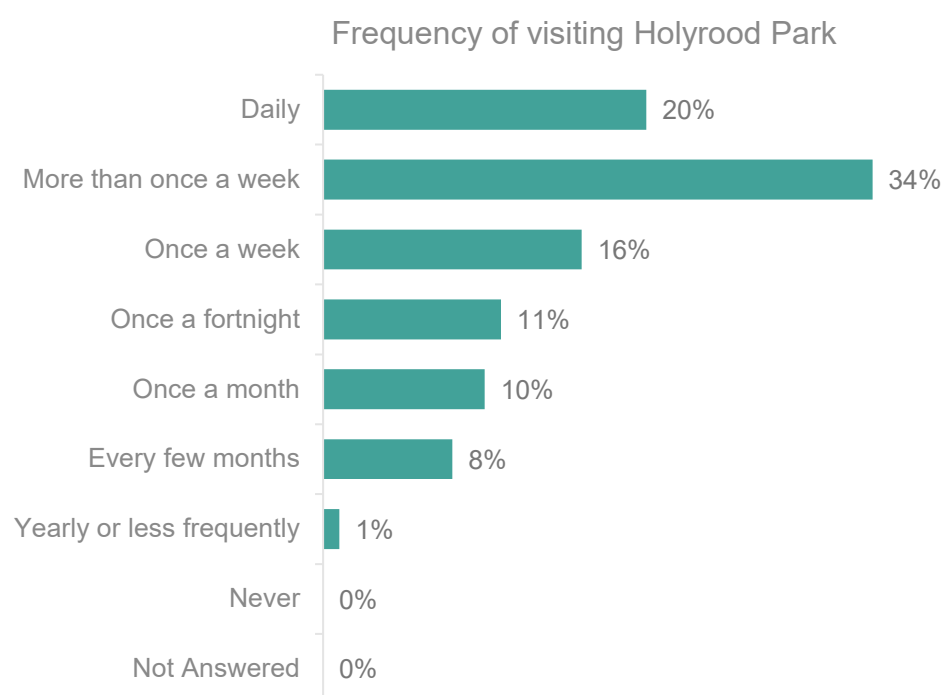
FINDINGS: PARK USAGE HABITS

Respondents had a variety of visiting habits in relation to their use of the park.

11. Frequency of visits

Regarding frequency of visits, most respondents visit the park at least once a week. Around a third (34%) reported that they visit the park more than once a week, a fifth were visiting daily (20%), and 16% visit once a week.

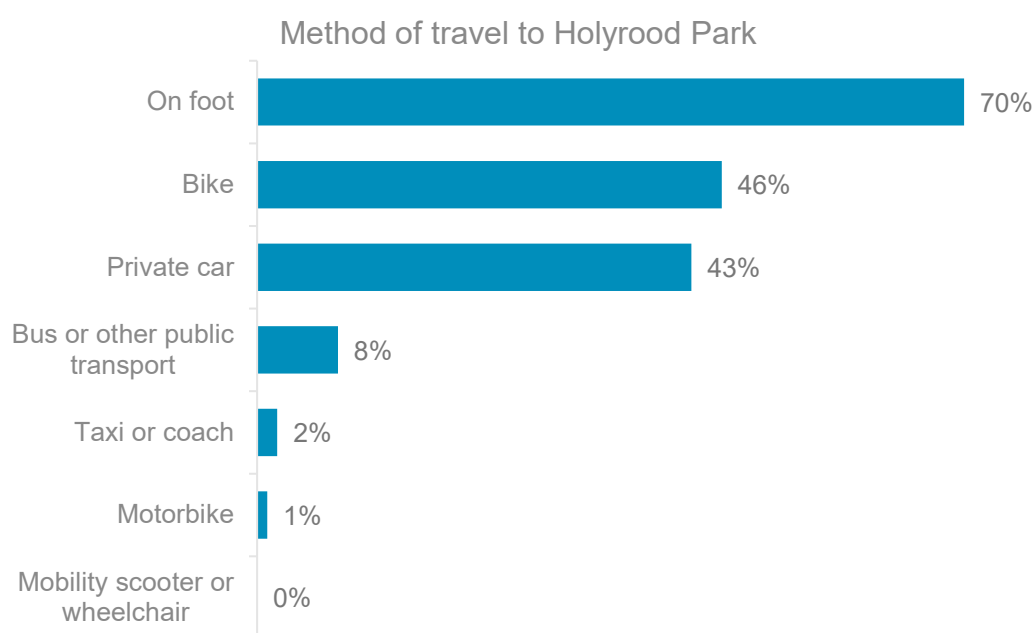
A small number of respondents said they never visit Holyrood Park (3) or did not answer this question (7).



Those in younger age groups were the most frequent park users with almost a quarter (23%) of 31-40 year old respondents visiting daily and a fifth (20%) of 18-30 year olds visiting once a week. Conversely, a fifth of those aged over 70 years visit once every few months.

12. Method of travel

Respondents were asked about how they travel to Holyrood Park, with the option to select more than one option. It was most common for respondents to say they travel on foot (70%). Just under half of respondents also travel by bike (46%) or by private car (43%). A small proportion (8%) use public transport, come by taxi or coach (2%), or use a motorbike to travel (1%). Only 13 respondents travel to the park using a mobility scooter or wheelchair.



Walking and cycling were the most common methods of travel to the park for those in younger age groups - 83% of 18-30 year olds travel on foot, and 58% by bike; 79% of 31-40 year olds travel by foot and 55% on bikes. While many of those in older age groups also walk to the park, travel by private car was also prevalent – 58% of 61-70 year olds travel on foot and 60% by private car; 48% of over 70s walk and 67% travel by private car.

Respondents with a physical health condition or illness were significantly more likely than those with a mental health condition or no health conditions to travel to the park by private car (62%). As were those with caring responsibilities (61%).

Many respondents travel to Holyrood Park using several different methods, for example half of those who travel on foot, also travel by bike (51%), and 30% of those who travel on foot also use private cars.

13. Park activities

Respondents were asked about what they do when they visit Holyrood Park, and they were able to select as many as they wanted from a list of activities.

Activity	% respondents
Leisurely walking	82%
Get some fresh air and for mental wellbeing	71%
Meeting friends or family	51%
Hiking, jogging or running	47%
Cycling	45%
Commuting to another destination without stopping	37%
To enjoy or explore wildlife, archaeology or geology	34%
Picnic	22%
Walking my dog	20%
Leisure drive/sit in car	11%
Attend events	8%
Other exercise	7%
Rock climbing	3%
I use the park for work ¹	3%

The most commonly selected activity was undertaking a leisurely walk, which an overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) indicated they do when visiting the park. This was the activity most selected across all age groups.

Following this, a large proportion of respondents (71%) indicated that they use the park to get some fresh air and for mental wellbeing. Whilst commonly selected amongst all age groups, those between 18 and 40 years old were significantly more likely to select this activity (76%) than those aged 51 or older (69%). Those with a mental health condition or illness were also significantly more likely (84%) to use the park for this reason than those with a physical health condition or illness (76%) or those without any conditions or illnesses (68%).

Around half (51%) of respondents use the park to meet friends or family. Those in younger age groups (between 18 and 50 years old) were significantly more likely to do this than those in older age groups (60% compared with 38%). Those with a mental health condition or illness were also more likely to report using the park to meet friends or family (62%) than those with a physical health condition or illness (47%) or those with no conditions or illnesses (50%). Just under half of respondents use the park for exercise – with 47% hiking, jogging, or running in the park, and 45% cycling. Those between 18 and 40 years old were the most likely to use the park in these ways, being significantly more likely to hike, jog or run (65%) or cycle (55%) than those aged 41 or older (35% of whom hike, jog or run, and 39% of whom cycle). Those with a physical health condition were significantly less likely to use the park in these ways (with 28% hiking, jogging or running, and 27% cycling) than those with a mental health condition (55% and 42% respectively) or no health conditions (49% for both types of exercise).

¹ No further details or examples were given and therefore various interpretations of this option could be made

Only small numbers of respondents use the park to exercise in other ways – with 3% of respondents mentioning rock climbing, and 7% undertaking other forms of exercise not listed.

Around a third of respondents (34%) like to enjoy or explore wildlife, archaeology, or geology in the park, with those between 31 and 40 years old being the most likely to use the park for this reason (39%).

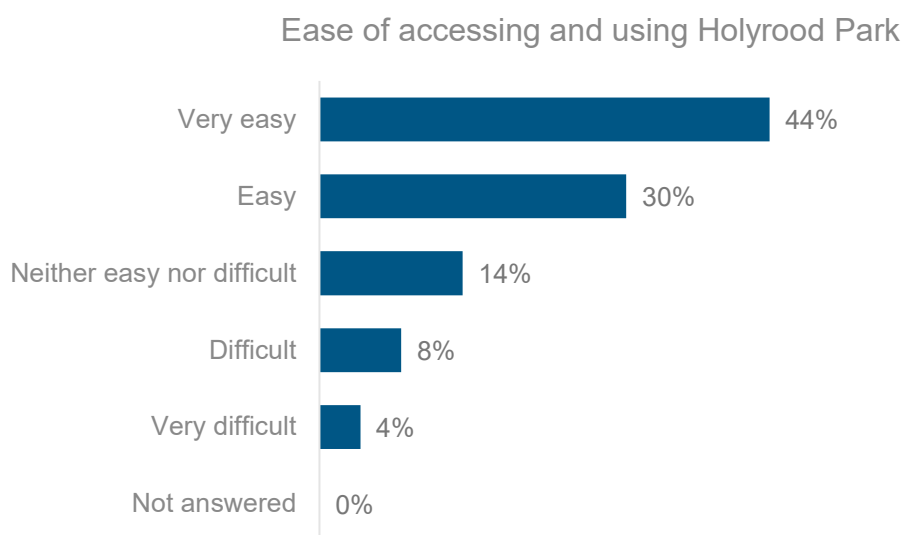
Around a fifth of respondents use the park as a destination for a picnic (22%), and 20% walk their dog in the park.

Smaller proportions of respondents use the park for a leisure drive or sit in their car in the park (11%), attend events in the park (8%) or use the park for work (3%). Those aged over 70 years old were significantly more likely to use the park to drive or sit in their car (25%) than any other age group, and those with physical conditions or illnesses were also more likely than others (30%) to do this.

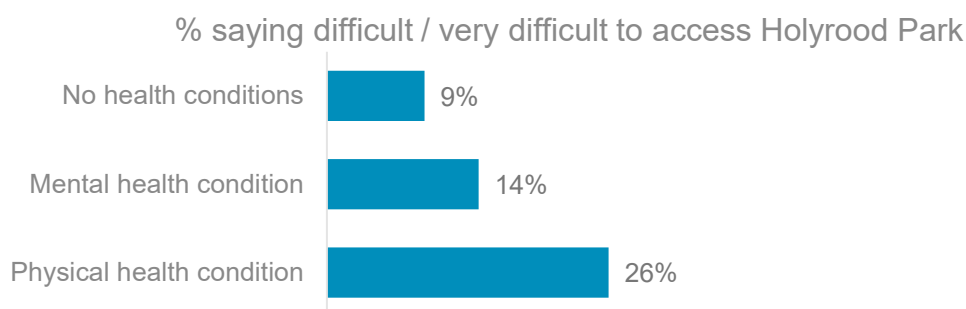
Additionally, nearly two fifths of respondents (37%) use the park as a mode of travel to commute to another destination without stopping. Those over 40 were more likely than younger age groups to be using the park in this way (40% compared with 33%).

14. Ease of access and use

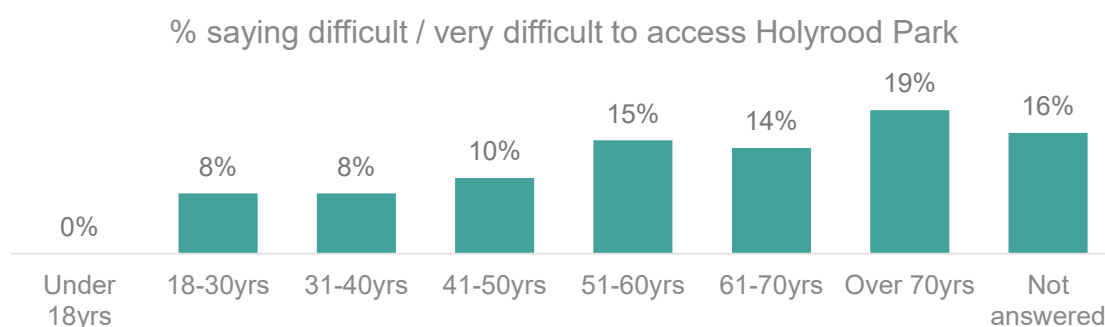
When asked how easy it is for them to access and get around the park, the majority of respondents felt it is easy – with three quarters (75%) selecting 'very easy' or 'easy' in response to this question. A smaller proportion of respondents (8%) reported finding it difficult to get around the park, and 4% felt it is very difficult. Just over 1 in 10 respondents (14%) said they find it neither easy nor difficult.



Those with a physical health condition were significantly more likely than others to find it difficult or very difficult to access and get around the park (26% compared with 10%).



Those aged over 60 (15%) were more likely than younger ages (10%) to feel it was difficult to access and get around Holyrood Park.



15. Further comments on ease of access and use

Respondents were asked to further explain their answer to how easy or difficult they find it to access and get around the park. A total of 1299 respondents left comments relating to this.

Those that selected 'easy' or 'very easy' commonly highlighted that they are fit and able bodied, and live locally, making it easy for them to travel to and from the park on foot.

A number of respondents also highlighted that the road closures have had a positive impact on their ease of accessing the park in general. Having no traffic on the roads has made it feel safer for pedestrians to walk around and access different areas of the park, and easier to take children who can play more freely.

"Access for walkers and cyclists has been improved by the closure of the High Road."

However, a number of respondents do experience some issues with accessing and using the park. The most common issue is around safety for pedestrians due to the volume of traffic at times the roads are open, and the speed of vehicles on the roads. Several respondents highlighted their apprehension using the park at these times as vehicles are found to dangerously overtake pedestrians and cyclists. This is made worse by the paths and pavements, which respondents feel are too narrow to service the volume of users when the roads are open.

"When I'm walking the high levels of traffic are a hinderance to getting about the park easily and safely."

"Hugely easier and safer by bike and by foot when the roads are shut off from cars, who overtake dangerously around the roads."

"Footpaths are good but pavements are too narrow. Cycle paths are unusable and traffic is unacceptable. Narrow pavements are a particular problem when the ground is wet."

In addition, the lack of pedestrian crossings was mentioned as another safety concern for those on foot, and something that hinders their easy use of the park. Some respondents feel that motor traffic is prioritised above pedestrians, and the lack of safe places to cross is compounded by vehicles not adhering to the speed limit. Whilst it is felt that all pedestrians are put at risk by this, children, the elderly, and those with mobility issues are felt to be most impacted by the lack of safe places to cross.

"There are no options to cross the busy roads for pedestrians including children. The roundabout and drivers are dangerous."

Safety concerns for cyclists were commonly mentioned – generally in relation to traffic on the roads, and vehicles not adhering to the speed limit. Some respondents also feel that the cycle paths are not wide enough to meet current design guidance to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe, especially when vehicles are allowed on the road.

"As a confident cyclist I find it easy however this was much more dangerous when the High Road was open to cars. I now avoid times when it is open to cars. Can get quite congested at commuter times which makes it less pleasant to visit and exercise. Seems to be little compliance with trade vehicles or 20mph speed limit."

"Cycling round it when there are cars there isn't very pleasant. Walking is ok, just wish there was more space on the pavements."

"Cycle paths do not meet (current) design standards in terms of width and protection of pedestrians."

Regarding access and travel to the park, some respondents noted that there being no direct public transport to the park from where they live is a hindrance. This is particularly difficult for

those taking elderly relatives or those with limited mobility. It was also felt that the current parking provision is inadequate.

"Buses don't go near, can't park easily, and it's pretty steep to get to central part."

A number of commenters also highlighted that the road closures have caused them some difficulty in accessing and using the park. For a number of less mobile users, the road closures have made certain parts of the park inaccessible to them, as they are not in a position to walk the distance. A small number of respondents also highlighted that lack of knowledge about when the road closures happen and where this has made access more difficult, as they have unexpectedly found roads closed when they intended to use them.

"The High Road has been closed for months and is still closed every time I get to the park, which is often after 3pm due to medication (Parkinsons)."

"Top road is shut very difficult to find parking and too far a distance to walk for disabled."

Additionally, many respondents highlighted the increased difficulty in driving around the city when the roads are closed as the traffic congestion in other areas is a challenge.

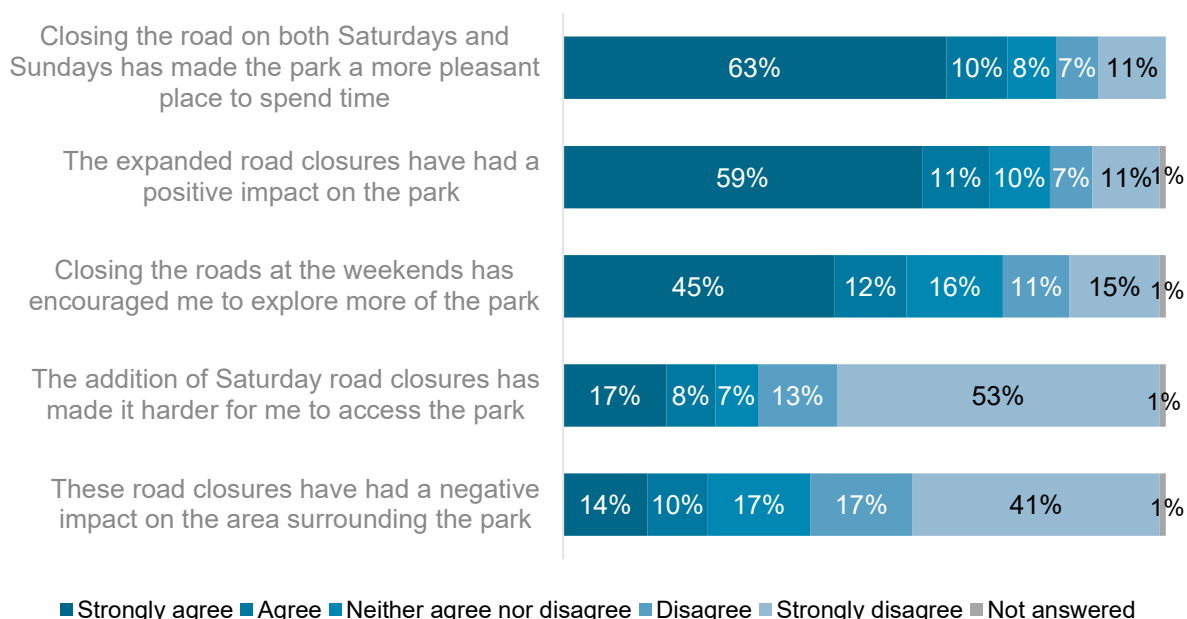
"Weekend road closures cause difficulties moving around the city while driving my elderly grandparents around."

FINDINGS: IMPACT OF ROAD CLOSURES

16. Views on the weekend road closures

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements to understand the impact of road closures.

Views on the weekend road closures



For the statement 'Closing the roads on both Saturdays and Sundays has made the park a more pleasant place to spend time', the majority of respondents strongly agreed (63%) or agreed (10%). Less than a fifth (18%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this.

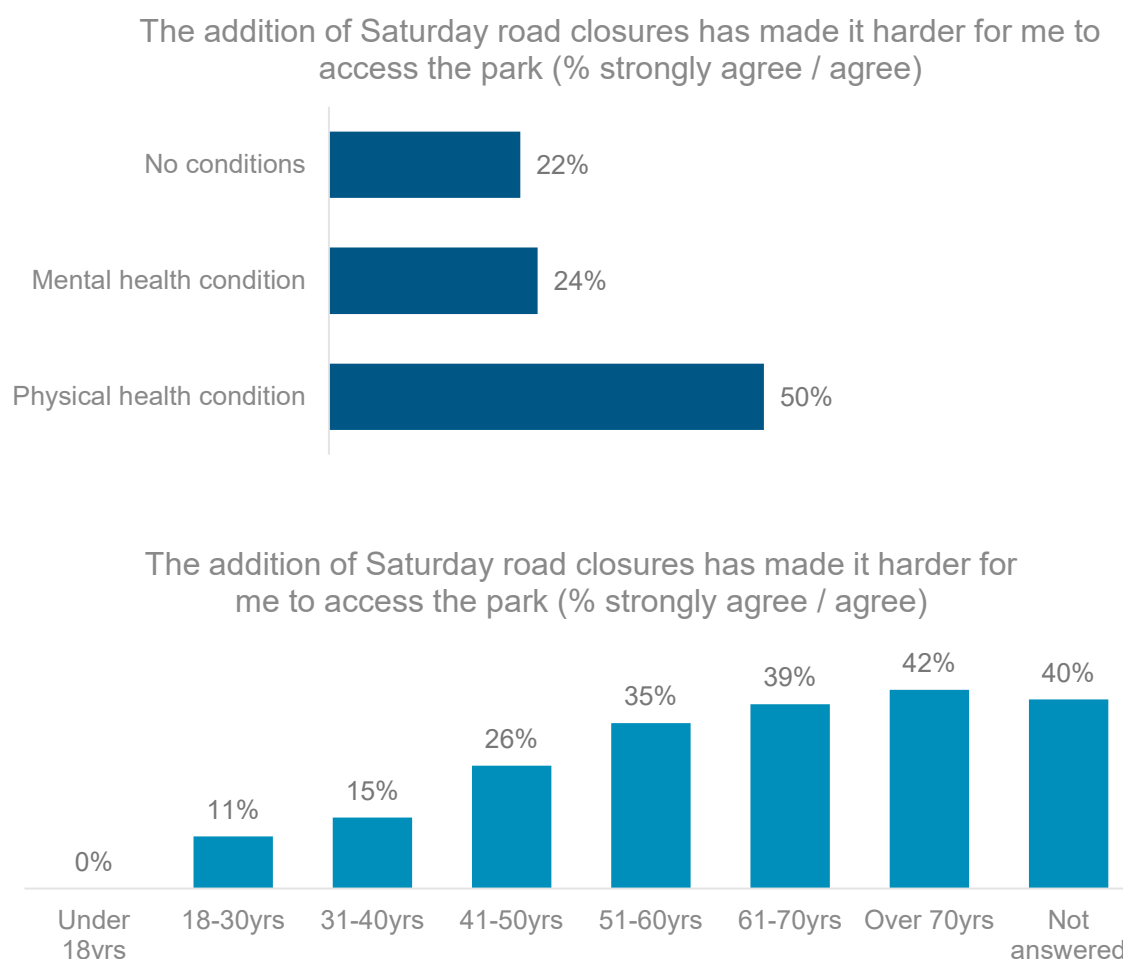
A larger proportion of respondents also strongly agreed (59%) or agreed (11%) with the statement that 'The expanded road closures have had a positive impact on the park', compared with the proportion of respondents disagreeing (7%) or strongly disagreeing with this (11%).

Over half (57%) agreed or strongly agreed that closing the roads at weekends encouraged them to explore more of the park, with around a quarter disagreeing (11%) or strongly disagreeing (15%) that this is the case. However, agreement with this statement did vary by age – with significantly fewer respondents aged over 61 agreeing or strongly agreeing with this (36%) compared with respondents aged 60 or under (62%).

Most respondents disagreed (17%) or strongly disagreed (41%) that the road closures have had a negative impact on the areas surrounding the park. Only 24% reported feeling that there has been a negative impact from this.

Around a quarter of people strongly agreed (17%) or agreed (8%) with the statement 'the addition of Saturday road closures has made it harder for me to access the park', compared

with two thirds (66%) of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this. Of respondents with a physical or mental health condition or illness, half (50%) strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Additionally, two fifths (40%) of those aged 61 or older also agreed or strongly agreed that that the addition of Saturday road closures had made it harder to access the park



17. Further comments on the weekend road closures

Respondents were invited to provide any additional comments or feedback on the weekend road closures. A total of 2460 respondents left further feedback. Overall, in line with the quantitative data, more comments expressed general support for the road closures than opposition.

It was common for respondents to highlight that closing the roads increased their feeling of safety in the park, especially when walking or cycling, as they often feel 'pushed to the side' when cars are also using the road. Many highlighted often feeling anxious when the road is in use, as cars do not always adhere to the speed limit. Some respondents also pointed out that it is safer to let children walk and play more freely when the roads are not open to traffic.

"The 20mph speed limit in the park is seldom obeyed so this makes the park much safer for those walking, cycling or running."

"Please keep all the roads closed in Holyrood Park at all times. I want to let my 2 and 4 year old run around without fear of being hit by cars, give them space to scoot and trike, we can ride them into town on the bike safely. We can walk without stress of being too close to others."

"It totally transforms the experience of visiting the park for me and my two children. It creates a safe and peaceful environment where I don't have to worry about the danger of speeding cars."

Another key theme that emerged was the perceived benefit to wildlife and plants within the park that came from the road closures. It was frequently noted that otters had been spotted in Dunsapie Loch, which respondents considered only possible because of the road closures and subsequent impacts on the environment (e.g. less pollution, increased safety, and less noise).

Generally, a number of respondents also felt that the closure of the roads made visiting the park a more enjoyable experience, which also delivered benefits to their health and wellbeing. The reduced noise pollution, increased space for pedestrians, and tranquil atmosphere were all felt to contribute to this. For some, the use of the park as a place for recreation is more achievable with the reduction of vehicles.

"It has made it easier to enjoy nature, which was especially important during lockdown when travel was restricted within Scotland."

"The weekend road closures are a good step towards allowing for a more pleasant environment for pedestrians, runners and cyclists to all enjoy the park without the noise and pollution of motor traffic."

"I love the longer road closures - the park becomes a much more relaxed, safer, and more enjoyable environment. It massively increases the usable space for recreation."

In addition, a number of respondents suggested that the benefits of the road closures were so great that the hours of closures should be extended to, for example, weekdays.

"I think this should be further expanded to include weekday closures or in the least congestion charges or low emission zones should be implemented."

However, not all comments were positive, with several respondents expressing a general opposition to the road closures for a number of reasons.

An important aspect for many people is the impact that closing the roads has on disabled, elderly and vulnerable people – whose access to the park is felt to be decreased without open roads. For many respondents this is an unacceptable drawback of closing the roads, and felt to be discriminatory towards the population groups who are not fit and healthy enough to access the park on foot. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that the road is open at some times during the week (providing access for those who need it during these periods), many point out that those who work standard hours are unable to access the park during these times.

"Unless you walk or cycle you cannot access these wonderful views. It's nothing short of discrimination against the elderly and disabled."

"Dunsapie Loch is my favourite spot as a pensioner I cannot access the car park due to road closures."

"People like my mum are being excluded from one of Edinburgh's most rewarding, free features as she can only travel there if I take her by car, and I work through the week."

"This action again discriminates against residents and visitors who are not able bodied to run, cycle or walk in the park!"

An additional drawback highlighted in the feedback was the inconvenience to drivers, and increased travel time that results from the closures. Many who are used to using the road to travel through Edinburgh point out that the closures require them to take lengthy detours, and force traffic into already congested areas of the city. Some also point out the perceived increased pollution and impact on the environment of having heavily congested areas with slow-moving traffic. For some Edinburgh residents, there is a feeling that the road closures prioritise visitors to the park over residents of the city, who expect a robust road network and transport infrastructure to allow them to live in the city easily.

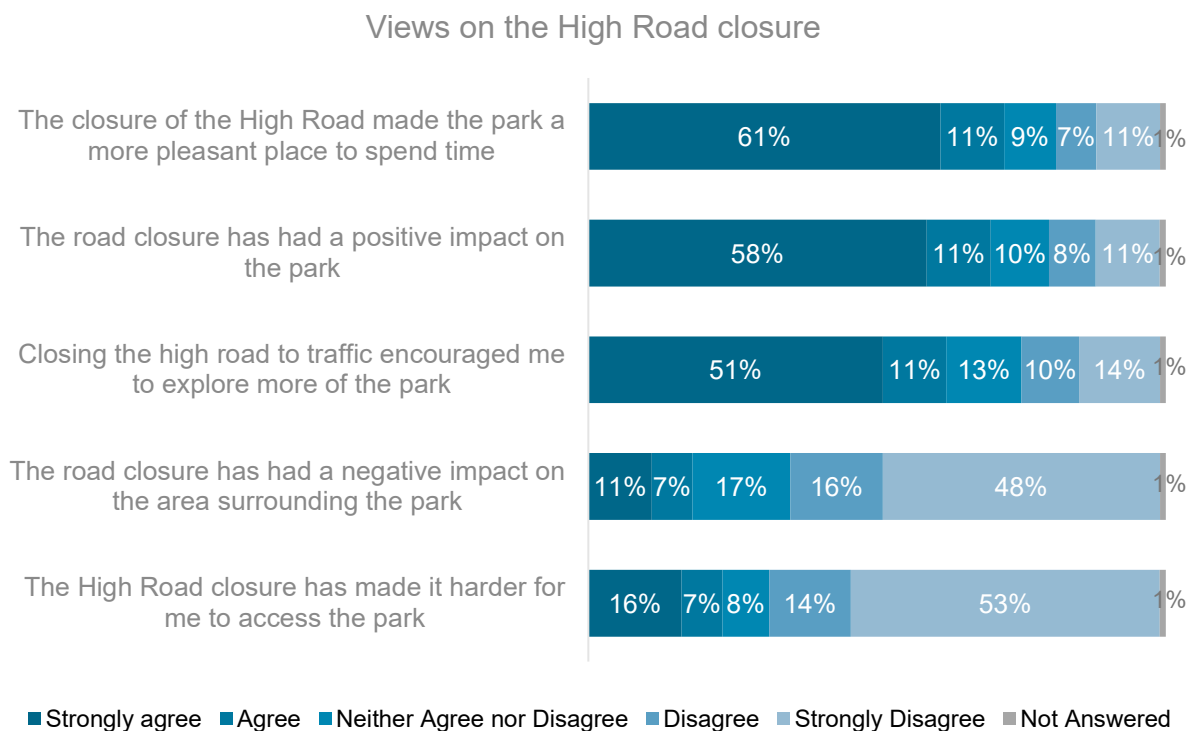
"The closures involve some inconvenience to local residents but undoubtedly make being in the park more pleasant. I do not see a good reason to extend the closures beyond late afternoon."

"Closing the roads makes travelling from parts of the city much more difficult as the volume of traffic is always heavier at weekends."

FINDINGS: IMPACT OF THE HIGH ROAD CLOSURE

18. Views on the High Road closure

Respondents were also asked about their agreement with a number of statements to understand the impact that the closure of the Queen's Drive – colloquially known as the 'High Road' – specifically has had on them.

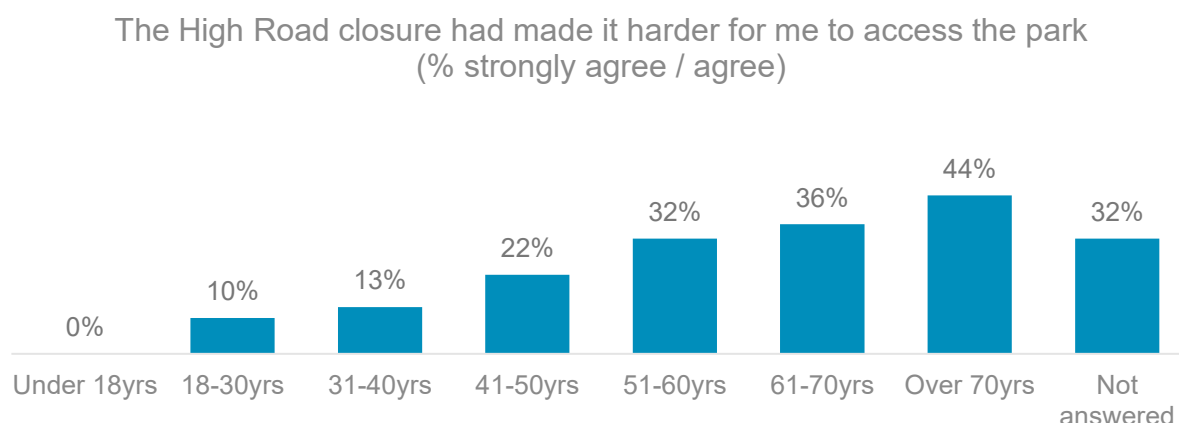


Almost three quarters of respondents – 72% - agreed or strongly agreed that the closure of the High Road made the park a more pleasant place to spend time. Those aged 51 years or older were significantly more likely to disagree or strongly disagree (30%) with this statement, compared with those under 51 years of age (23%).

For the statement 'the road closure has had a positive impact on the park', a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (69%). A similar proportion (64%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that the road closure has had a negative impact on the area surrounding the park. Comparatively, only around a fifth of respondents felt that the road closure had not had a positive impact on the park (19%) or that it had negatively impacted the area surrounding the park (18%).

Around two thirds of respondents (62%) strongly agreed or agreed that closing the High Road to traffic encouraged them to explore more of the park. Those aged 61 years or older (42%) and respondents with a physical or mental condition or illness (37%) were significantly more likely to strongly disagree or disagree with this statement, compared with those aged under 61 (20%) or those without a condition or illness (21%).

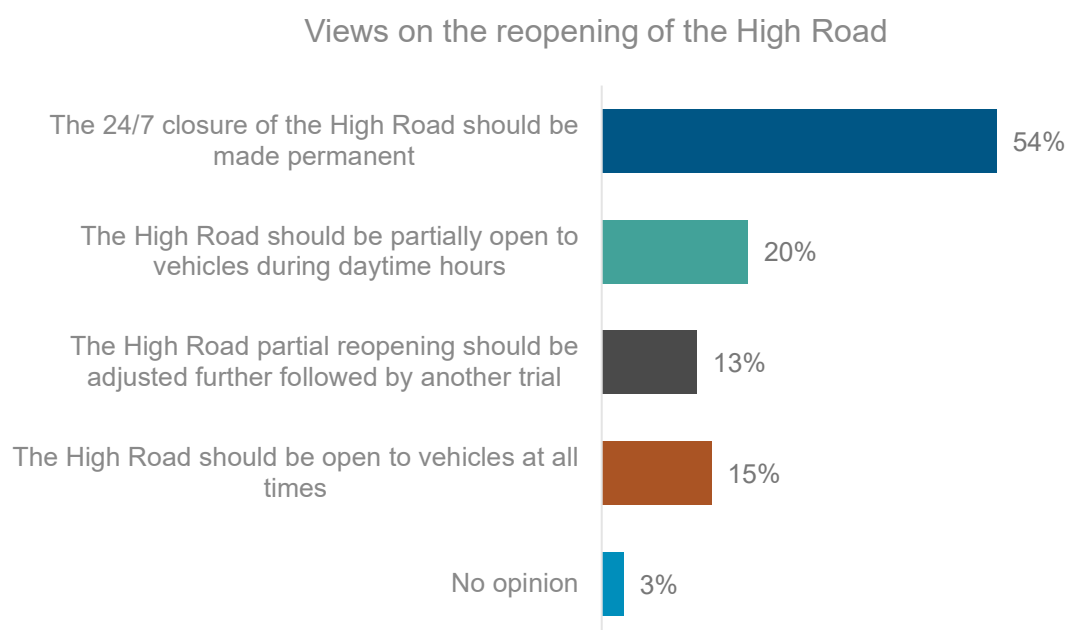
Just under a quarter (23%) of respondents reported feeling that the High Road closure has made it harder for them to access the park. Those aged 51 or older (35%) were significantly more likely than those under 51 years old (15%) to feel this way as shown in the chart below.



19.Views on the partial reopening of the High Road

Respondents were also asked about their views on the partial reopening of the High Road, with a list of options from which they could select one or more.

The majority of respondents supported the closure of the High Road either some or all of the time. Over half (54%) supported the permanent closure of the High Road 24/7, whilst a fifth (20%) felt that the High Road should be partially open to vehicles during daytime hours, and 13% felt that the partial reopening should be adjusted further followed by another trial. However, 15% of respondents opposed the closure, saying that the High Road should be open to vehicles at all times.



Those who felt that the partial reopening should be adjusted and followed by another trial provided some suggestions for what this adjustment should be. Suggestions focussed on

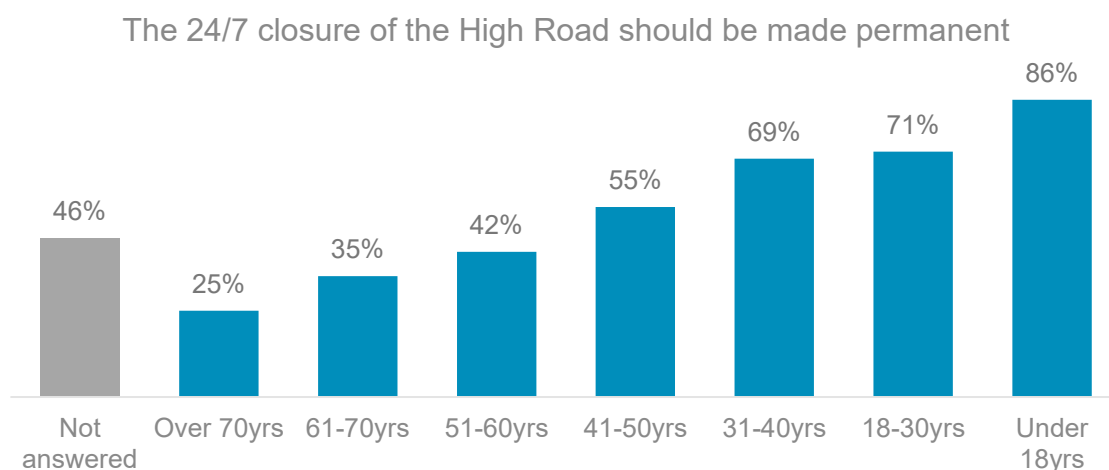
trailing the general admittance of vehicles for the disabled/vulnerable, or trailing different periods of opening hours for vehicles at the weekends, to ensure that those who are less able and work during the week can still access the park.

“The trial of vehicles to make accessibility easier for those who desire it seems like the best compromise.”

“I wonder if the proposed hours are either sufficient or the best times, but I can understand that this should be trialled first. For example, for someone who is less able but still working conventional hours 9-5, the proposed hours would likely not be helpful.”

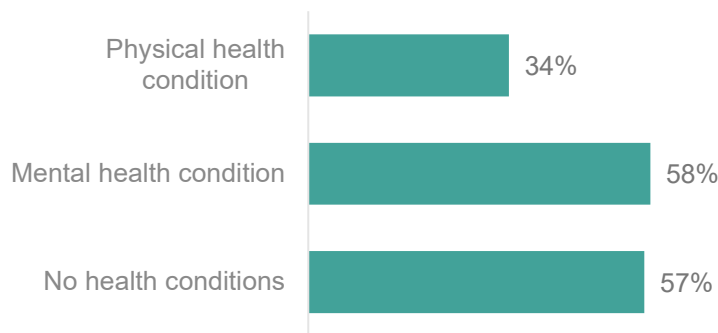
“After a trial run - say 3 months - extend the hours to 5pm or dusk if earlier, Monday to Friday, as a compromise for blue badge holders. 3pm closure and only open three days a week is unnecessarily restrictive. It is a welcome start though!”

Younger respondents (18-50 years old) were significantly more likely to support the permanent closure of the High Road (64%) compared with respondents aged over 50 years (37%).



Additionally, those with a physical health condition were significantly less likely to support the permanent closure of the road (34%) than those with a mental health condition (58%) or those without any physical or mental health conditions (57%).

The 24/7 closure of the High Road should be made permanent



Around a third of those with physical health conditions (34%) and just under half of those aged 61 or older (47%) felt that the High Road should be open to vehicles at all times.

20. Further comments on the High Road closure

Respondents were invited to provide further comments on their views about the opening or closing of the High Road. A total of 2507 respondents left comments. Of these, a larger number were generally in favour of the closure of the High Road than were opposed.

A number of respondents suggested they see no need for the High Road to be open as there are other roads in Edinburgh that provide access to same areas the High Road can be used for, and therefore the closure of the road would not prevent travel to any areas in the city. Many expressed their opinion that the park is safer and more pleasant without cars, and they see there being no place for traffic in a park.

"There is no reason to open the High Road to car traffic. It connects two areas within the park, already well served by road access."

Most commonly, those in support of the High Road closure cite the park feeling safer as a key benefit. This is generally in relation to pedestrians and cyclists being able to travel on the road more freely without having to worry about vehicles travelling behind or alongside them, with many suggesting the current footpaths are too narrow to facilitate safe travel for the volume of users. Some also note the increased safety for children, as they have witnessed cars driving very close to playing children previously. Some respondents also highlighted the increased ability to socially distance as a safety benefit of the road closure.

"Opening them to cars will make it very dangerous for park users, especially younger children."

Further to this, the park being generally more enjoyable to visit was also seen as a benefit of the High Road closure. The absence of vehicles is felt to make the park a more scenic and tranquil place to visit, and the lack of pollution – both air pollution and noise pollution – was felt to contribute to this.

"This road without traffic is an extremely pleasant place with loads of room for all sorts of users to use the park safely without conflict. Car traffic completely ruins this, and adds pollution and noise."

"The High Road is purely for scenic enjoyment, not a connecting route. I see no justification for opening it to regular traffic."

Similarly, benefits to the health and wellbeing of visitors were also noted as an impact of the road closure. The reduction of noise and air pollution was felt to be particularly impactful for those who use the park to clear their head or manage their mental health – a mechanism many adopted during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Some also note that they have been motivated to exercise in the park due to the increased safety and space.

"It has encouraged more people to exercise in the park."

"This was the most positive change made throughout the pandemic. It allowed people to safely social distance without the threat of any traffic. It gave people a tranquil spot to wander around and helped our mental health. The reintroduction of traffic to the High Road can only be seen as a negative."

The positive impact on the environment was also noted as a benefit of the closure – with respondents again pointing to the otters seen in Dunsapie Loch as an example of how the environment has benefitted from the reduction of traffic.

"I have never seen an otter before and believe the closure made it possible for many people to experience this first hand in a peaceful setting."

However, many of those who expressed general support for the closure of the road also highlighted the impact on disabled and elderly people, and suggested ensuring that disabled access is provided.

Suggestions for how this could be implemented varied. Suggestions included opening the road for private vehicles of disabled/elderly people only, or facilitating access through a mini-bus or other vehicles (e.g. e-bikes) provided by HES. A number of respondents suggested this should be an electric vehicle.

"I can see a rationale for limited access for disabled people but there is no good reason for anyone else to be using a motor vehicle on the High Road."

"E-bike and e-trike hire could be considered where commercially viable to aid green access to the High Road by those less abled."

However, there were some concerns about the approach to and policing of policies such as opening the road to the private vehicles of disabled/impaired people. Firstly, whilst some respondents suggested allowing access for blue badge holders, others pointed out that not all disabled, elderly, or impaired people have a blue badge, and therefore to avoid discrimination an alternative system such as having a specific 'pass' for this road would have to be considered instead. Some respondents also raised concerns about how strictly the policing of such policies would be, worrying that without stringent policing ineligible people would simply start using the road again.

"Access for less able users" - how exactly are you going to stop everyone from driving up the High Road? People park in spaces for the disabled all the time. I'm sorry, but unless this is policed really forcibly, it will be totally ignored."

Not all further comments supported the closure of the High Road however with 241 respondents expressing general opposition to the closure in their feedback. Some pointed out that the road is there to be used as a road – not a footpath – and therefore a closure does not make sense to them. Others suggested that the road was built in such a way as to ensure space for vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists, so there is no need to close the road as they have never experienced any issues with vehicles travelling through. A number of respondents highlighted their belief that the road should be open at all times to allow everyone to enjoy the scenic location, on the basis it is a public park.

"This is such a beautiful road and way to see Edinburgh, closing it is prohibiting locals and visitors enjoying the scenery."

"Yes this scenic road should be open at all times for everyone's enjoyment."

The most commonly highlighted drawback of shutting the road is the impact on accessibility for disabled and older people, many of whom would be prevented from accessing parts of the park if the road is fully pedestrianised. Some respondents commented that certain areas of the park, that are only accessible for them by the High Road, are favourite spots of theirs to visit – and that closing the road would be denying them access to a pleasure they have been enjoying for years. A number of these comments also highlight the challenge around providing

blue badge access, as not all people who are unable to walk up the road have a blue badge (e.g. the elderly, children, and generally those not fit or healthy enough to sustain the walk).

In some cases, respondents accused HES of being ableist or discriminatory by closing the road. Whilst it is recognised that some access would be available, some feel that the restriction on times is still discriminatory as many people in the population will be unable to access the park during those times.

"Open it...it's a favourite of mine to show co-workers from abroad, friends and family who do not have the ability to walk up the hill. I know you want to think about pedestrians but think about pedestrians with disabilities!"

"It seems that access for less physically able people has been limited in order to allow better access for cyclists. I see very few runners or pedestrians use the road. Frankly it seems like a very ableist policy."

"I feel that a lot of people are missing out on the views of our city due to the fact they cannot access the High Road. Opening it for a few hours during the week does nothing to help those that have jobs and can only access the park at weekends."

A further drawback highlighted by respondents is the increased inconvenience and travel time for drivers as a result of the road closure. Some have experienced more difficulty driving in the city due to increased congestion in other areas, as those who would normally travel on the High Road are being forced to use alternative routes.

"Closure has a direct effect on local streets as people search for parking in an already busy area."

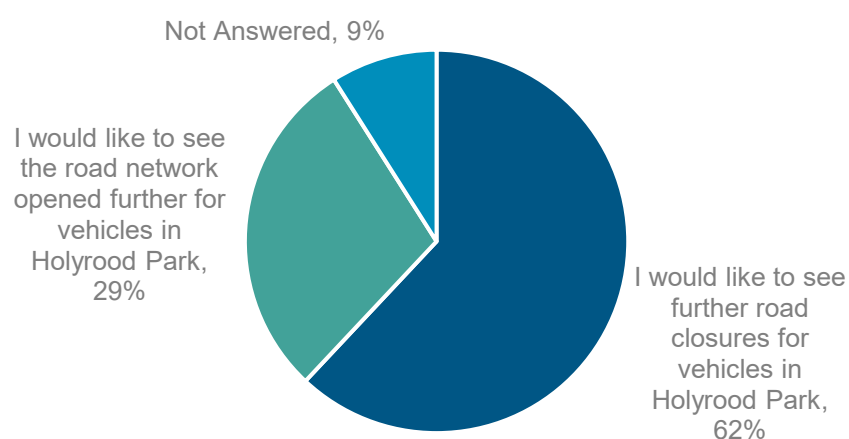
"Closure of the High Road seems rather unnecessary. It creates congestion elsewhere which could increase pollution in some areas, and makes commute times longer which is inconvenient for people who need to drive."

FINDINGS: VIEWS ON FURTHER ROAD CLOSURES

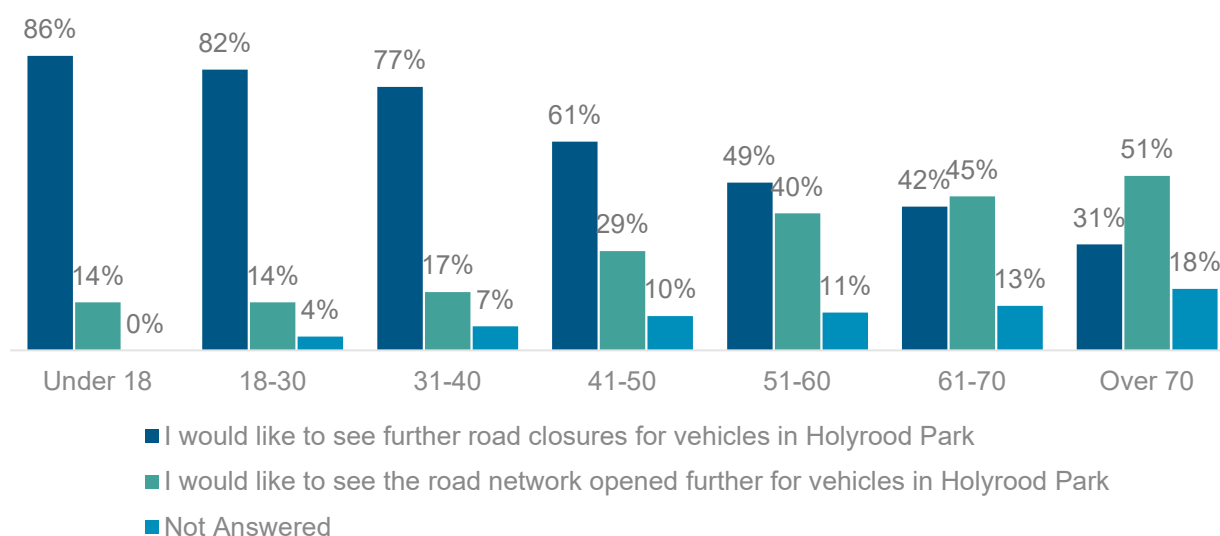
21. Support and opposition for road closures

Nearly two thirds of respondents (62%) reported that they would like to see further road closures for vehicles in Holyrood Park. Comparatively, 29% of respondents reported wanting the road network opened further for vehicles in the park. Those aged 51 or older were significantly more likely than younger ages to want the road network opened up further (51% compared with 20%), and those responding as a private business were significantly more likely than other groups to want this (78%).

Views on further road closures in Holyrood Park



Views on further road closures



22. Further comments on potential road closures

Respondents were invited to further explain their answers, and 2398 respondents left more feedback. Those who supported further road closures commonly expressed that their view was related to a general feeling that the park is a park – a location they see as having no place for traffic. Pedestrianising the area even further than has already been done is felt to be the best way to ensure that this green space remains an escape for residents of the busy city.

"There should not be cars in Holyrood park at all. Yes, I regularly drive through the park and the road closure would significantly inconvenience me but it still needs to be done. It's a park after all!"

"The park is a unique space for both leisure and nature. The quality and safety of the entire space is just so radically better during closures! I feel very strongly that the Park should be a space free from regular vehicle traffic."

Additionally, many highlighted the need to make changes to tackle the ongoing climate crisis. Removing vehicle access from the park is seen as a step towards this, as removing the option for private vehicles to travel is thought likely to motivate people to travel in more sustainable ways. A number of respondents expressed the view that access for pedestrians and cyclists should be prioritised over drivers, and closing the roads is their preferred way to do this safely.

"The climate crisis demands we move away from private vehicles rapidly. Any opportunity should be taken especially where it creates a high-quality active travel route with little to no investment."

"In a downward spiral towards climate catastrophe, should we really be encouraging more cars?"

"One pedestrian crossing in the entire park. Either close the roads or put in the infrastructure to make it easier for people to navigate."

However, even amongst those who support further road closures, there is a strong belief that disabled access should be provided in some way. Whilst this may be allowing the private vehicles of disabled people through, many respondents urged HES to look at alternative ways of providing access – e.g. through electric bikes or a mini-bus service. This was felt to be a way to ensure that those unable to travel on the High Road by foot are not being excluded, but that the road remains safer and more pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists, and a more climate-positive method of access is used.

"There is no Plan B. Let's provide a mobility train to take the less able around the top like some other national parks across the world - cars really not needed."

Amongst those who would like to see the road network opened further, feedback focused on two aspects: the need to ensure that access for disabled, vulnerable and impaired people is maintained; and the increased inconvenience to drivers as a result of road closures.

Whilst some respondents noted that some closure of the High Road could be maintained, there is a feeling that the proposed closures are too much, and would be too restrictive for both disabled people and drivers.

"I think to have access for young, old and less able bodied there is a need for some vehicle access."

"Closing roads just puts cars onto other road/car parks/residential streets. You used to be able to go up and park on the High Road and walk from where you had parked...Maybe only have it open certain days but don't shut it at 3pm! If you have to shut it on Sunday at least have it open on Saturday...I have a disabled friend from London and she has always visited me at weekends. I was able to drive her round the park so that she could appreciate it. The restricted reopening is not going to work for (a) visitors only here for a couple of days (b) a destination to take my mother at weekends."

A number of respondents did provide some further comments expressing the view that current closing hours should be maintained, rather than closing or opening the road further. There is some feeling that the balance of the current closures is sufficient. Additionally, some respondents suggested that rather than focusing on further closures/openings, focus should be redirected to ensuring that the current speed limit is adhered to for safety reasons.

"My actual answer would be neither: the enhanced weekend closures of the low road combined with the continued 24/7 closure of the High Road seem to provide sufficient balance to me."

"We do however need to look at enforcing the low speed limit and supposed limits on commercial vehicle as I frequently see abuses of both those rules."

FINDINGS: EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Respondents were asked to provide further feedback to help inform HES's Equalities Impact Assessment on the road network. They were asked to give any further information about the impacts of the road closures on people with protected characteristics, and a total of 688 respondents left comments relating to this.

The largest proportion of these comments related to ensuring that policies adopted by HES around the road closures would not be discriminatory towards those with protected characteristics – including the disabled, elderly, children, and people with mental health conditions. Some comments expressed that road closures disproportionately affect those who are less able to walk or cycle, which they feel is unfair. Some respondents emphasised their belief that the road remaining open is fairer for everyone as it ensures access is provided for all, whilst still providing ample space for walkers and cyclists. Others expressed concern around defining 'disabled' if 'disabled access' is to be maintained – as many feel that those with 'hidden disabilities' or other conditions will be outwith any criteria, making them an excluded group.

"The closure of the park roads discriminates against the elderly, infirm and those of limited mobility in favour of the vociferous pressure groups who would like it to be the preserve of cyclists. The road only borders the park."

"Please DO NOT discriminate against people who have had Cancer, long Covid, MS, ME, heart, lung disease, COPD, foot and leg problems and so many other hidden disabilities. We all need access to the park and the High Road for mental health and wellbeing."

However, some comments expressed an opposing view, which suggested that closing the roads can be more beneficial and safer for those with certain protected characteristics. This includes children, those with visual impairments, people on the autism spectrum, and those with mental health conditions. For these groups, respondents believed that closing the road can create a more peaceful environment where they can enjoy the park with worrying that vehicles will injure them, and without being overstimulated by the noise and movement of traffic.

"I have seen all kinds of people come and use the park since there were extended road closures. I pass and speak to all kinds of people including people with significant physically challenging disabilities and even visually impaired being able to exercise in safety. I myself am deaf (well, very hard of hearing) and the park feels safer now and more accessible."

"As someone with mental health conditions, the lack of vehicles in the park at weekends really helps me get to walk and relax, without worrying about cars speeding through."

Several comments also related to additional measures that respondents feel should be put in place to protect those with protected characteristics, beyond potential road closures. Generally, these commenters believe that to make the park truly accessible, HES must implement a number of things, including more toilets, more pedestrian crossings, dropped kerbs, and park rangers who could potentially facilitate/assist with access for those who need it. It is felt that whether roads are open or closed, without these measures the park cannot be called truly accessible.

"Improving trails for wheelchair users is something all parks and recreation organisations should consider."

"There is a severe shortage of safe pedestrian crossing places in the park."

"It needs good, clean, well maintained public toilets. This can be a deciding factor on whether a place is accessible for certain disabilities."

APPENDIX – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Holyrood Park and the Road Network

Overview

Over the past year, we've trialled different hours of vehicle access for the road networks in Holyrood Park to help facilitate social distancing and support for wellbeing. To help understand the balance of needs for all park users, we've opened a survey to gather people's feedback on the road networks. We'd be very grateful for you to spend 5 - 15 minutes responding to this survey and sharing it with your friends, family and colleagues who use Holyrood Park.

About You

1 Data Protection

We believe you should always know what data we collect from you, why we need it and how we look after it.

What data will you be sharing?

To help us understand who we are engaging with and whether we're involving a wide range of individuals and organisations. To better understand the impact of our decisions around the Holyrood Park road network, especially on those with protected characteristics, we'll be asking you about some personal data and special category information. This includes:

- the country you are based in
- your postcode
- your age range
- whether you have a disability
- whether you have caring responsibilities

Aside from which country you are based in, all of these answers are optional.

If you opt in for a copy of your response or for updates when the survey results go live, we will also ask for your email address. This is held separately to your other responses.

Why do we need this data?

We want to gather feedback to inform our future decision making on Holyrood Park. Your responses will help us to understand who we are currently engaging with and to help us to improve engagement with the Park.

If you provide your email address, it will only be used in relation to updating you on the survey and held within Citizen Space, separately to your other responses.

What will we do with your data?

Our **Privacy Notice** [explains your rights and our role in protecting the information that you share with us](#). We will process your Personal Data in strict accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

I agree to the privacy notice

(Required)

2 Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- As an individual
- On behalf of an organisation, public body or charity
- On behalf of a local authority
- As a private business, such as a taxi driver, coach driver or tour guide
- Representing a community group
- Other

Please select only one item (Required)

3 Where are you based? (please select one)

- Scotland
- Rest of UK
- Rest of Europe
- Rest of World

Please select only one item (Required)

4 If you are based in Scotland, please tell us your postcode. By providing your postcode, we can better understand your feedback in the context of a local or a visitor to Edinburgh (Optional)

Postcode _____

5 If responding on behalf of an organisation, business or a community group, please tell us its name. (Optional)

Enter the name of your organisation, business or community group

6 Permission to publish

Historic Environment Scotland would like your permission to publish your response to this survey so we can quote it in reports and analysis. You can retract your permission by emailing us at rangers@hes.scot

7 Do you give us permission to publish the response from your organisation or community group, with attribution to your organisation or community group?

- Yes
- No

Please select only one item (Required)

You and Holyrood Park

8 How often do you visit Holyrood Park?

- Daily
- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once a fortnight
- Once a month
- Every few months
- Yearly or less frequently
- Never

Please select only one item

9 How do you travel to Holyrood Park? (please select all that apply)

- On foot
- Bike
- Mobility scooter or wheelchair
- Motorbike
- Private car
- Bus or other public transport
- Taxi or coach
- Other (please specify)

Please select all that apply

10 When you visit, what do you in Holyrood Park? (please select all that apply)

- Leisurely walking
- Hiking, jogging or running
- Cycling
- Rock climbing
- Other exercise
- Get some fresh air and for mental wellbeing
- To enjoy or explore wildlife, archaeology or geology
- Meeting friends or family
- Picnic
- Walking my dog
- Attend events
- Commuting to another destination without stopping
- Leisure drive/sit in car
- I use the park for work
- Other (please specify)

Please select all that apply

11 How easy is it for you to access and get around the park?

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult

Please select only one item

Please tell us a bit more

Weekend closures

In the summer of 2020, Historic Environment Scotland took the decision to expand our long-standing Sunday daytime Park road closures to include **both Saturdays and Sundays**.

Recognising that the Park was becoming increasingly popular at weekends with families, cyclists, runners and walkers during Covid-19 lockdowns, especially while travel was limited, we took the decision to close the Park road network to improve the space available for exercise and encourage physical distancing.

We have decided to extend the Park road closures on Saturdays and Sundays from around 8am until dusk.

From July, that means that the roads will not begin reopening until 9pm onwards. From September, that means 8pm onwards.

The Park road network is closed to public vehicles at other times for various annual occasions, such as Christmas and New Year, to allow for maintenance and assist with the management of incidents or events.

The part of the road network this applies to is highlighted below in yellow.



12 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

- Closing the roads on both Saturdays and Sundays has made the park amore pleasant place to spend time
- Closing the roads at weekends has encouraged me to explore more of the park
- The expanded road closures have had a positive impact on the park
- These road closures have had a negative impact on the area surrounding the park
- The addition of Saturday road closures has made it harder for me to access the park

13 Do you have any comments or feedback on the weekend road closures?

The High Road

In spring 2020, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) took the decision to close the section of the Queen's Drive known as the 'High Road' to public vehicles. This closure also prevented public vehicle access to Dunsapie car park.

Prior to the pandemic, this route and car park were accessible to public vehicles 24/7 with road closures only put in place to allow for maintenance, incident management, events and overnight during winter months.

From Tuesday 6 July 2021, **HES will be partially reopening the High Road to vehicles on Tuesdays – Thursdays between 9.30 – 3.00pm** to facilitate access for less able users. Our initial decision was taken to during the Covid-19 pandemic, allowing for more space for social distancing. We recognised that the High Road is a popular route for cyclists, runners and walkers, particularly during lockdown while travel was limited.



14 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

- The closure of the High Road made the park a more pleasant place to spend time
- Closing the High Road to traffic encouraged me to explore more of the park
- The road closure has had a positive impact on the park
- The road closure has had a negative impact on the area surrounding the park
- The High Road closure has made it harder for me to access the park

15 What are your views on the partial reopening of the High Road?(please select all that apply)

- The 24/7 closure of the High Road should be made permanent
- The High Road should be open to vehicles at all times
- The High Road should be partially open to vehicles during daytime hours
- The High Road partial reopening should be adjusted further followed by another trial
- No opinion

Please select all that apply

16 Do you have any comments or feedback on the High Road?

Equalities and You

To help us understand who is responding to this survey and whether we're hearing from a wide range of individuals and organisations, we'd like to learn a little more about you. All the following questions are optional.

Our **privacy notice** <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/privacy-notice/> explains your rights and our role in protecting the information that you share with us. We will process your Personal Data in strict accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

17 Would you like to see further road closures or further opening of the road network in Holyrood Park to public vehicles?

- I would like to see further road closures for vehicles in Holyrood Park
- I would like to see the road network opened further for vehicles in Holyrood Park

Please select only one item

Please explain your answer

18 We will be using the results from this questionnaire to inform our Equalities Impact Assessment on the road network. Is there anything you wish to add about access to Holyrood Park and the impacts on people with protected characteristics that you have not already mentioned?

19 Disabilities

We would like to understand the benefits the park has on people with disabilities and mental health conditions. This could include:

- sensory conditions, for example, sight and hearing loss
- mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression
- developmental conditions, for example, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

20 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? (optional, please select all that apply)

- Yes, a physical health condition or illness
- Yes, a mental health condition or illness
- No

Please select all that apply

21 Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age? (optional)

- Yes
- No

Please select only one item

22 What is your age? (optional)

- Under 18
- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- Over 70

Please select only one item



HISTORIC
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