

Air Quality Strategy Consultation Report

December 2024

1. Executive summary

Although air quality has improved in England over recent decades it continues to be the biggest environmental risk to public health, with children, the elderly and the already vulnerable most affected. Poor air quality also has consequences for crop yields and, particularly in the case of ammonia and oxides of nitrogen (NOx), significant impacts for the natural environment and biodiversity.

Local government has an essential role to play in delivering cleaner air for communities and nature right across England as we along with the county council have many of the powers and local insight to tackle issues that cause pollution locally. The Council already has a duty to address air quality exceedances in our area which includes declaring Air Quality Management Areas and publishing Air Quality Action Plans setting out the measures they will take to come back into compliance.

Earlier this year, the government directed all local authorities to produce an Air Quality Strategy. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (the Council) 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 objective levels.

The Government has set out the following priorities in its framework guidance for local authorities:

1. Planning reforms
2. Building capacity in local councils through training, guidance and knowledge sharing
3. Reducing emissions from industrial sources
4. Reducing pollution from domestic burning
5. Raising awareness within local communities of air quality
6. Boosting active travel and public transport to improve air quality



The Council is leading on the development of the Air Quality Strategy for the borough. This has been informed by discussions with partners and stakeholders from across the borough and county, and having regard for government guidance to identify key priorities aimed at improving air quality for our residents, workers and visitors.

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

All the findings will be used to develop a draft strategy which will be presented for consideration at the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on 6 March 2025.

2. Key findings

This section summarises the key findings from the consultation survey. Further detail can be found in Section 3.

- 52 people responded to the survey which ran through November 2024, all through the online portal.
- Overall, most people (63%) felt they had an awareness of air quality, 46% felt they were 'aware' and 17% 'very aware'.
- Most people, 98% felt that having good air quality in Oadby and Wigston was important, 65% felt it was 'very important' and 33% 'important'.
- Respondents were asked to rank five priorities proposed for the draft Air Quality Strategy from least important to most important. The priority that was overall ranked as being the most important was to 'Reduce emissions from transport' with an average ranking of 3.77 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 **3.94***
2. Reducing associated health conditions e.g. asthma – average score **3.83**
3. Improving the health of Oadby and Wigston residents, workers and visitors – average score **3.77**
4. Improving the life expectancy of Oadby and Wigston residents, workers and visitors – average score **3.65**
5. Helping to tackle climate change – average score **3.37**

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

- Respondents were asked to indicate how important each of the actions below 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 (improving public transport fleets and access to services) – average score **3.81**
 2. Benefits for the environment (e.g. climate) – average score **3.44**
 3. Improving road safety (e.g. school street schemes, more cycle lanes) – average score **3.4**
 4. Creating opportunities for walking, cycling etc. – average score **3.33**
 5. Improving housing (solar panels, EV charging, greener heating systems) – average score **3.2**
 6. Reducing motor vehicle traffic (encouraging people to actively travel) – average score **3.29**

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

- 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 benefits were:
 1. Better and more pleasant environment **29%**
 2. Improved air quality in and around schools **26%**
 3. Better mental health and wellbeing **18.5%**
 4. Lower healthcare costs **14.8%**
- Respondents were asked to describe any other ways in which to make a difference to Oadby and Wigston's air quality. The most common comments made were:
 1. Improved road networks **25%**
 2. Better bus links with settlements **16%**
 3. Closer control of wood burners and other domestic appliances **12%**
 4. Greener housing e.g. grants for solar PV, cavity and loft insulation, double glazing etc. **8%**
 5. Education of the public and access to information **7%**
- The top three preferred sources and channels of information about air quality were:
 1. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council website (**24%**)
 2. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council email subscription service (**19%**)
 3. Through partner organisation's such as NHS, local transport providers (**16%**)

3. Methodology

The consultation sought Oadby and Wigston resident views on the importance of air quality, the effects of poor air quality and what actions would have the most impact on improving air quality.

The consultation was carried out between 1 November to 2 December 2024. The approach used was an online consultation. Useful information was provided on the site including links to further information on the subject.

Respondents were also able to request paper copies, with an offer to help complete the questionnaire.

Following the consultation, which also included partner organisations, the findings will be presented to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on 6 March 2025.

3.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed around understanding 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 air quality.

To enable further understanding and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free text comments to expand on their ideas and 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 data was collected on reoccurring themes and summarised in the report.

3.2 Analysis of respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different groups.

3.3 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 opinions of those residents who engaged.
- For some questions, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a statement, on a scale of 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, 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 the fifth the least. The average score out of five for each statement was calculated to enable us to identify those statements that were most agreed with. Again, the higher the score, the higher the level of importance.
- Free text questions that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. The free text was therefore categorised according to the number of occasions a respondent mentioned the theme.
- For some questions, respondents were asked to select one or more options. The percentages given reflect the percentage of respondents who selected the options.

3.4 Communication

The consultation was promoted through residents' forums, with partners and through the Council's digital communication channels. This included:

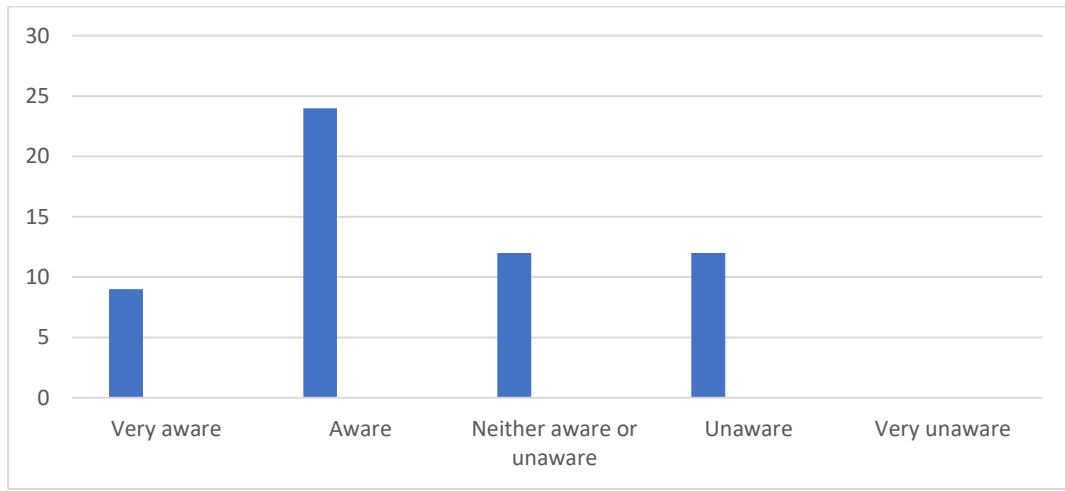
- Social media
- Staff and elected member bulletins
- Website consultation page

4. Results

The questionnaire was responded to by 52 people.

Question 1

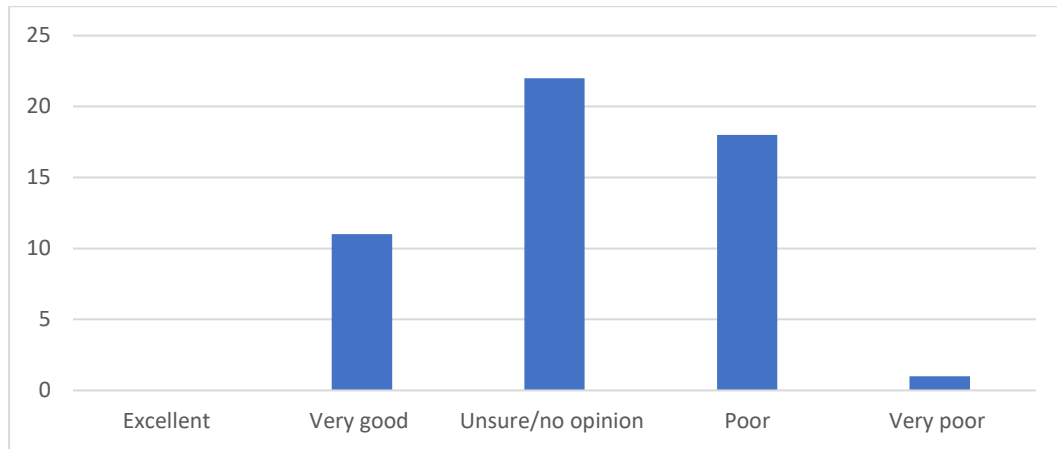
How much awareness do you have about air quality in Oadby & Wigston?



Question 1	Total	Percentage
Very aware	9	17.3
Aware	24	46.1
Neither aware or unaware	12	23
Unaware	7	13.6
Very unaware	0	0
Total	52	100

Question 2

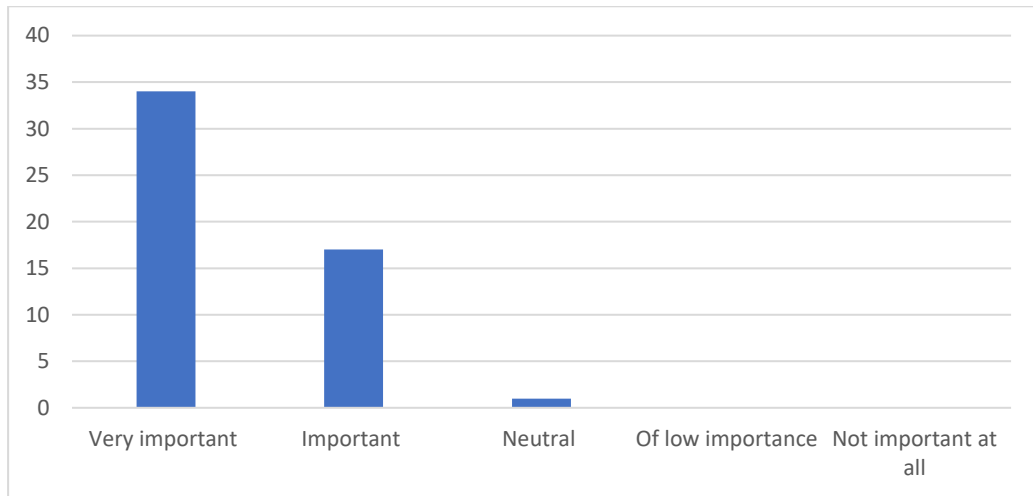
How good do you feel that air quality is in Oadby & Wigston?



Question 2	Total	Percentage
Excellent	0	0
Very good	11	21.2
Unsure/no opinion	22	42.3
Poor	18	34.6
Very poor	1	1.9
Total	52	100

Question 3

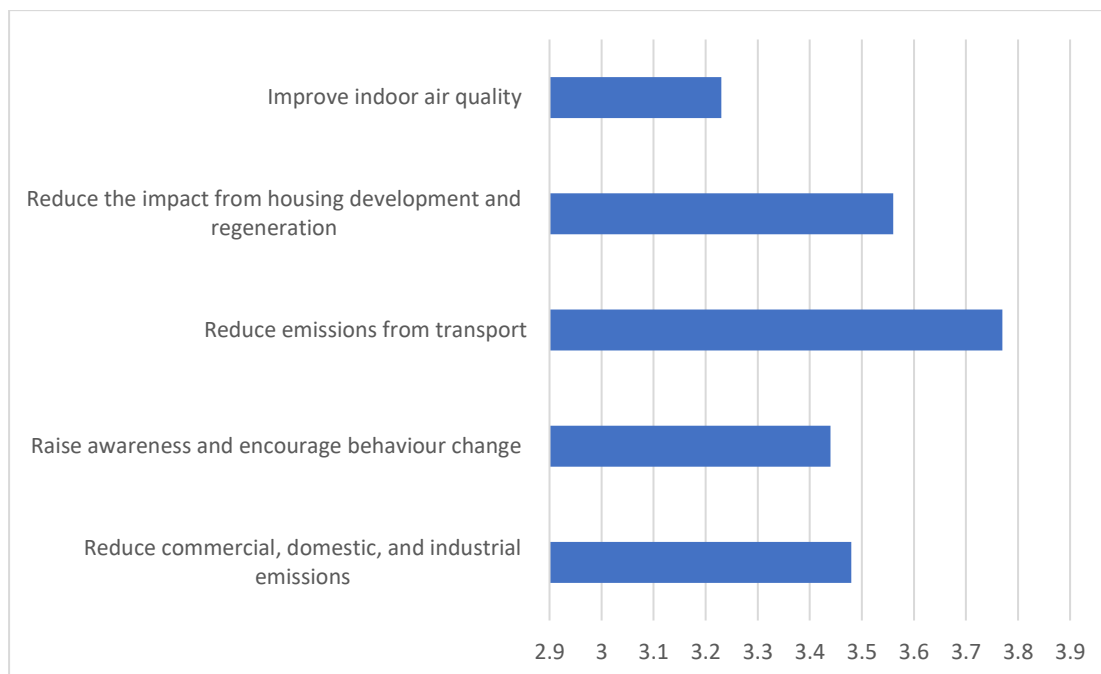
How important do you think having good air quality in the borough is?



Question 3	Total	Percentage
Very important	34	65.4
Important	17	32.7
Neutral	1	1.9
Of low importance	0	0
Not important at all	0	0
Total	52	100

Question 4

Please help us to draft our strategy by telling us which of the below five priorities you think is most important in improving air quality. Rank each from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).

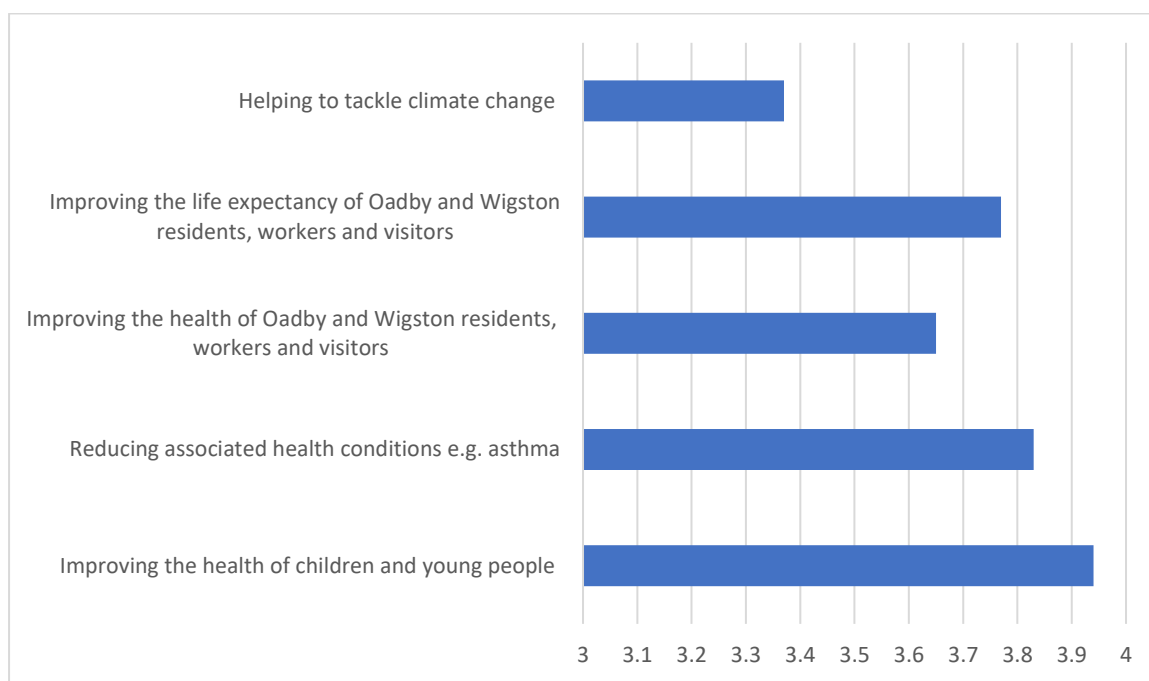


Question 4	Very important	Important	Neutral	Of low importance	Not important at all	Average score
Reduce commercial, domestic, and industrial emissions	21	14	6	3	8	3.48
Raise awareness and encourage behaviour change	20	13	6	4	9	3.44
Reduce emissions from transport	26	15	3	1	7	3.77
Reduce the impact from housing development and regeneration	18	14	9	5	6	3.56

Question 4	Very important	Important	Neutral	Of low importance	Not important at all	Average score
Improve indoor air quality	16	11	10	5	10	3.23

Question 5

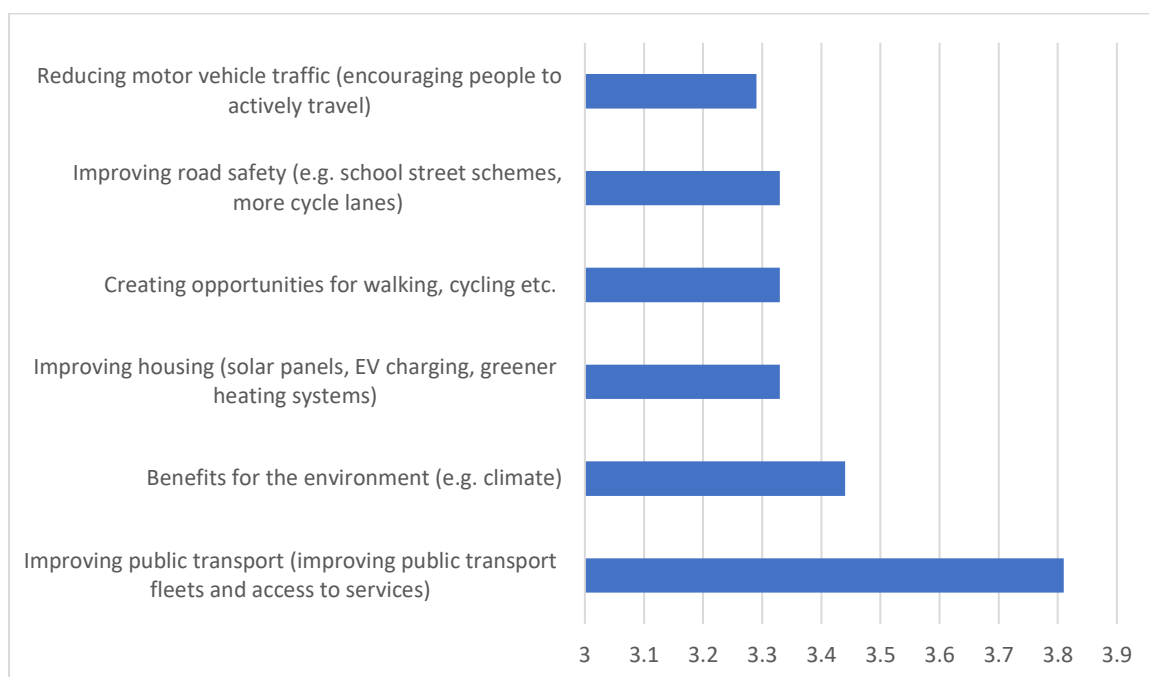
*How important to you are the below benefits of taking action to improve air quality?
Rank each from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).*



Question 5	Very important	Important	Neutral	Of low importance	Not important at all	Average score
Improving the health of children and young people	35	7	2	0	8	3.94
Reducing associated health conditions e.g. asthma	29	11	2	0	8	3.83
Improving the health of Oadby and Wigston residents, workers and visitors	26	11	5	1	8	3.65
Improving the life expectancy of Oadby and Wigston residents, workers and visitors	27	8	4	2	11	3.77
Helping to tackle climate change	23	7	9	2	10	3.37

Question 6

Improving air quality can also have additional benefits. How important are each of the following to you? Rank each from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).



Question 6	Very important	Important	Neutral	Of low importance	Not important at all	Average score
Improving public transport (improving public transport fleets and access to services)	25	13	3	2	8	3.81
Benefits for the environment (e.g. 24climate)	24	8	7	6	6	3.44
Improving housing (solar panels, EV charging, greener heating systems)	16	18	6	3	9	3.33
Creating opportunities for walking, cycling etc.	17	10	13	4	7	3.33
Improving road safety (e.g. school street schemes, more cycle lanes)	21	11	7	6	6	3.33

Question 6	Very important	Important	Neutral	Of low importance	Not important at all	Average score
Reducing motor vehicle traffic (encouraging people to actively travel)	20	10	10	4	7	3.29

Question 7

What other benefits of improved air quality, if not listed, are important to you?

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 27 people provided a response.

Below are the top themes that emerged from this question as a percentage of the number of people who provided a response.

1. Better and more pleasant environment **29%** (comments included reference to improved quality of life, fresh air, better enjoyment of being outside and flora and fauna).
2. Improved air quality in and around schools **26%** (comments about school drop offs and pick ups, greater enforcement of road restrictions, engines idling, encouragement of other more active ways of travel).
3. Better mental health and wellbeing **18.5%** (greater productivity, enjoyment of outdoor spaces).
4. Lower healthcare costs **14.8%** (reduced disease such as asthma, COPD).

21% of respondents felt the air quality in Oadby and Wigston was very good so they felt action to improve air quality was therefore not necessary.

Question 8

Do you have any other thoughts or ideas about how air quality in Oadby and Wigston's might be improved?

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 previously.

The question was not mandatory and 31 people provided a response.

Below are the key themes expressed as a percentage of those who provided an answer.

1. Improved road networks **25%** (less congestion).
2. Better bus links with settlements **16%** (villages in particular to reduce the reliance on the car).
3. Closer control of wood burners and other domestic appliances **12%**

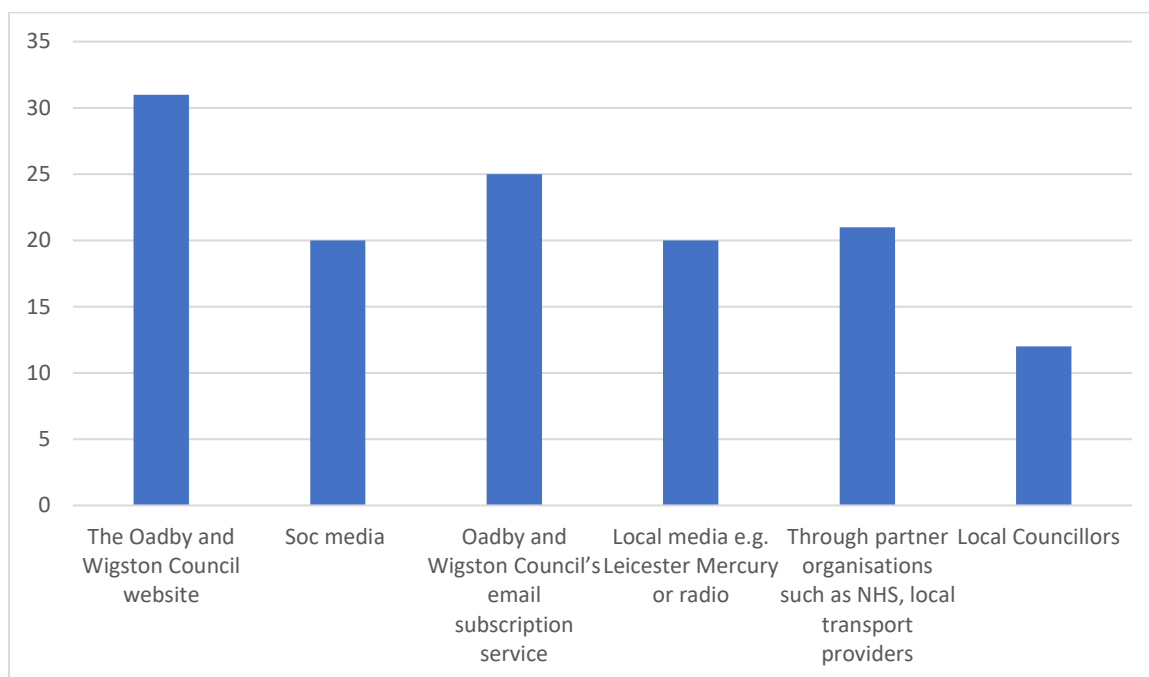
4. Greener housing e.g. grants for solar PV, cavity and loft insulation, double glazing etc. **8%**
5. Education of the public and access to information **7%**

Question 9

If you wanted to learn more about work to improve air quality, which three sources or channels would you be most likely to look to get this information from?

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

1. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council website **(24%)**
2. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council email subscription service, My Account **(19%)**
3. Through partner organisation's such as NHS, local transport providers **(16%)**

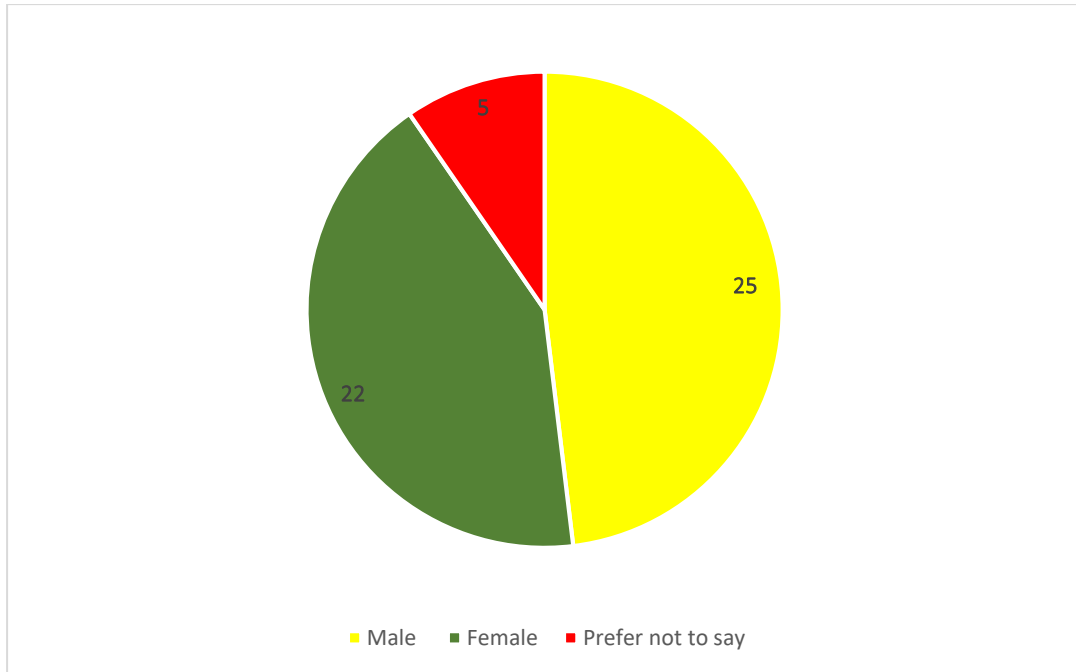


Question 9	Total	Percentage
The Oadby and Wigston Council website	31	24
Soc media	20	15.5
Oadby and Wigston Council's email subscription service	25	19.3
Local media e.g. Leicester Mercury or radio	20	15.5
Through partner organisations such as NHS, local transport providers	21	16.2
Local Councillors	12	9.5

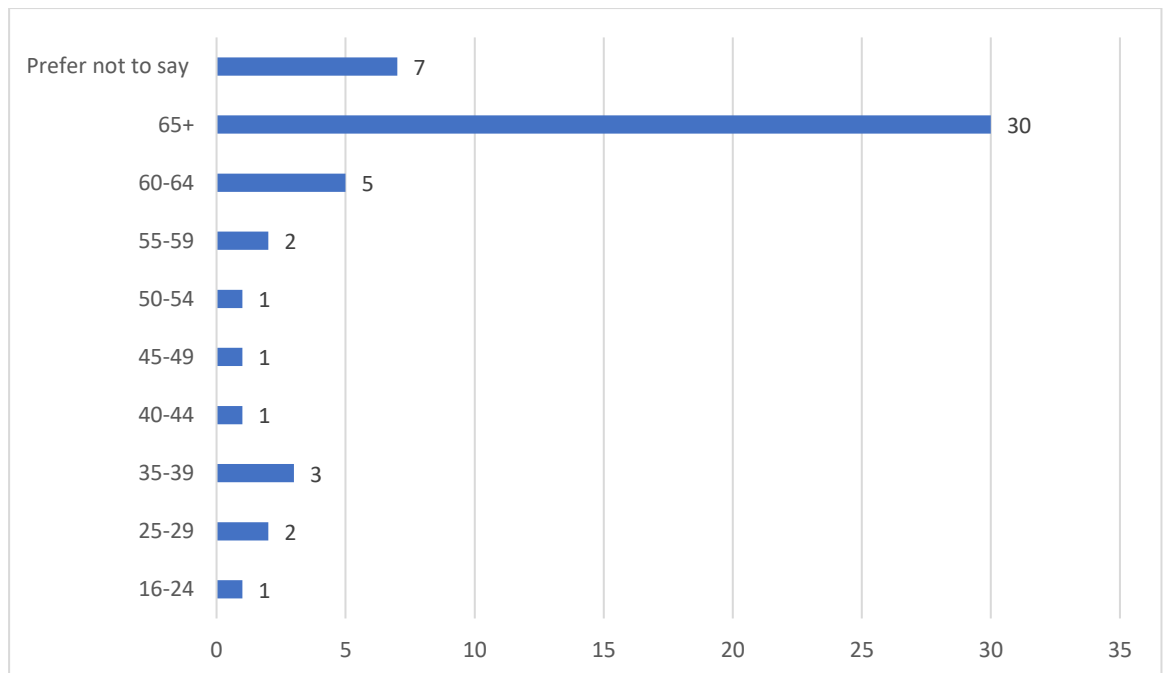
5. Demographics

The consultation form included questions relating to demographics. Not all respondents provided some of the information as they opted to prefer not to say. The results are summarised below.

1. Gender



2. Age range



3. Ethnicity

