

# Troopers Hill Surveys

## 2002 & 2022



## Comparison Report

### Introduction

This report compares two surveys carried out 20 years apart of residents around Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve in east Bristol.

[The 2002 survey](#) was carried out by Sally Oldfield, Local Nature Reserves Officer for Bristol City Council, as part of the Bristol Wildspace Project, funded by English Nature's Wildspace Grant (through the New Opportunities Fund) and Bristol City Council's Inclusive Parks Fund. English Nature was merged with the Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service to form Natural England in 2006.

[The 2022 survey](#) was carried out by Friends of Troopers Hill. Friends of Troopers Hill was formed in 2003 by a group of local residents who had responded to the survey and had subsequently been contacted by Sally Oldfield and encouraged to form the group.

Friends of Troopers Hill aim to:

- Provide a friendly community focus for people who care about Troopers Hill.
- Carry out practical conservation work to help look after Troopers Hill.
- Organise public events such as walks and talks.
- Work with Bristol Parks to make sure Troopers Hill is well looked after.

Both surveys were aimed primarily at local residents and carried out in November. In 2002 the funding allowed 1,000 questionnaires to be printed and distributed to local houses along with pre-paid envelopes for the replies, 192 were received. 20 years on Sally says “20 years?!? Can it really be true?! It feels like yesterday- I can remember walking up and down all those streets putting questionnaires through letterboxes.”

In 2022 with most residents having internet access (certainly not the case in 2002) the survey was run online through Google Forms. 2,000 flyers with the URL link were printed and distributed by the group. The survey was also promoted on social media, through posters on the Hill and via the group’s mailing list. The flyers also included a contact phone number for requests for paper copies. 221 replies were received, including two paper copies, which were then entered on to Google by the group.

The aim of both surveys was to gain local people’s views of the site, what they liked and disliked and what they would like to see improved. Questions were also asked about how often people visited and why. The 2022 survey included many of the same questions, so that a comparison could be made.

The 2002 survey was used in putting together the management and action plans for the site. Friends of Troopers Hill have worked closely with the Council over the years to address many of the issues raised in the survey. In that time over £350,000 has been spent with most raised in grants by the group. The last major part of this work was to install a new path across the muddy Field which was completed in 2020.

A full report on work undertaken to address issues raised in 2002, can be seen here:  
[www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2002SurveyWeDid.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2002SurveyWeDid.pdf)

While the main focus of Friends of Troopers Hill is the [Local Nature Reserve](#), the adjacent areas of [Troopers Hill Field](#) and [Troopers Hill Woods](#) are also considered by residents to be part of Troopers Hill and comments about both were made in both surveys.

In 2016, the Council Ward boundaries were changed and a new ‘St George, Troopers Hill’ ward created, as such ‘Troopers Hill’ is now often used to refer to an area, rather than just the above green spaces. This was highlighted by the fact that some respondents gave Troopers Hill as where they lived.

The full reports on responses received can be seen via the links below.

2022 [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2022SurveyReport.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2022SurveyReport.pdf)

[www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2022SurveyResponses.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2022SurveyResponses.pdf)

2002 [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/2002VisitorSurvey.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/2002VisitorSurvey.pdf)

[www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/2002Responses.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/2002Responses.pdf)

## **Who Replied**

There were 192 responses to the 2002 survey and 221 to the 2022 survey.

In 2002 1,000 were delivered to local houses and it could be seen from the addresses of respondents that these generated most of the replies, some questionnaires were also available from the local library and local schools. 192 therefore represented a return rate close to 20% which was excellent, the offer of a Christmas Hamper in a prize draw of respondents may have helped encourage people to respond.

In 2022 221 responses were received, with 2,000 flyers distributed and some social media posts plus emails, this was a lower rate of return, but still at around 10% still good – no prizes were on offer.

Addresses of respondents weren't collected in 2022, but people were asked where they lived and the vast majority were from the local area, with only 3 being from outside Bristol. In 2002 94.3% of respondents travelled to Troopers Hill on foot, this was 96.4% in 2022, confirming that in both cases most respondents were very local.

In both cases more respondents described themselves as female than male, but the difference was less pronounced in 2022.

The age profiles were also broadly similar, with 35-44 being the largest age range in each case (25% in 2002, 33.9% in 2022). Those over 65 were 23% in 2002 compared with 15% in 2022. In both cases there were very few responses from those under 20.

The St George Troopers Hill Ward Profile produced by Bristol City Council shows that based on 2011 Census data for ethnicity 91.6% of the residents of the ward are 'white'. The results of both surveys are not therefore a surprise with 96.4% of respondents in 2002 and 94.6% in 2022 being white. Given numbers of ethnic minorities are increasing, the 2002 survey seems to have been more representative and in 2022 ethnic minorities appear to be underrepresented, though sample numbers are small.

In 2002, 10.4% of residents considered themselves to be disabled, this figure was 8.1% in the 2022 survey.

Overall it can be seen that both surveys elicited responses from a group with similar demographics living in broadly the same area. Direct comparisons between the responses and views expressed in the two surveys appear therefore to be legitimate and likely reflect changes in people's views and perceptions of Troopers Hill.

## **Use of Troopers Hill**

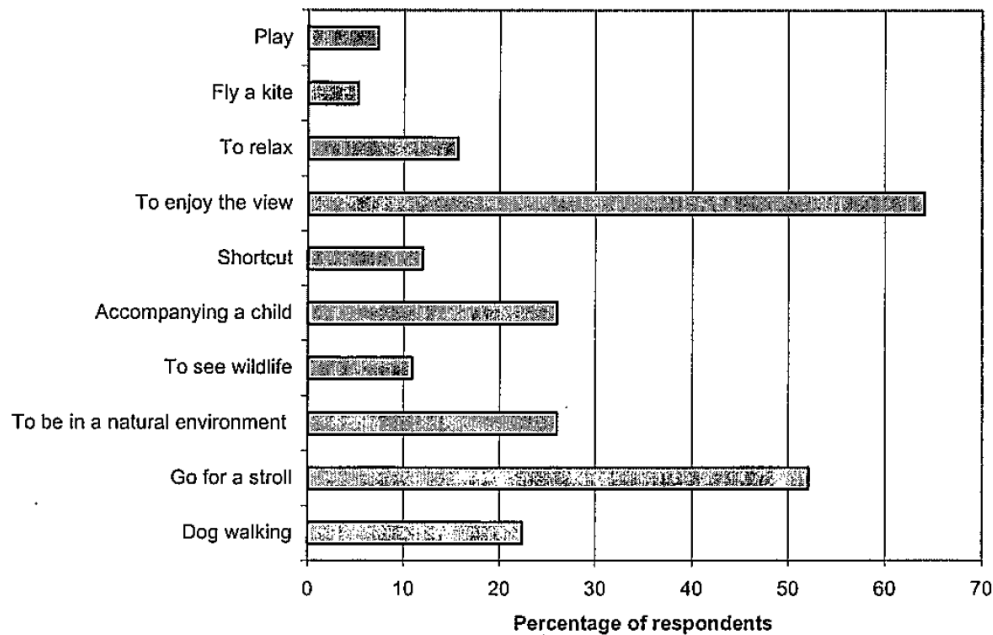
In 2002 43.7% of respondents visited once a week or more, in 2022 this was similar at 46.6% but in 2022, 27.1% said they visited one to four times a month, this was only 1.6% in 2002. In 2002 8.3% visited less than once a year, while by 2022 this had dropped to 1.8%.

So the numbers of very regular visitors (presumably including dog walkers) seems to have stayed the same while the number of visits from those who visit less frequently seems to have increased.

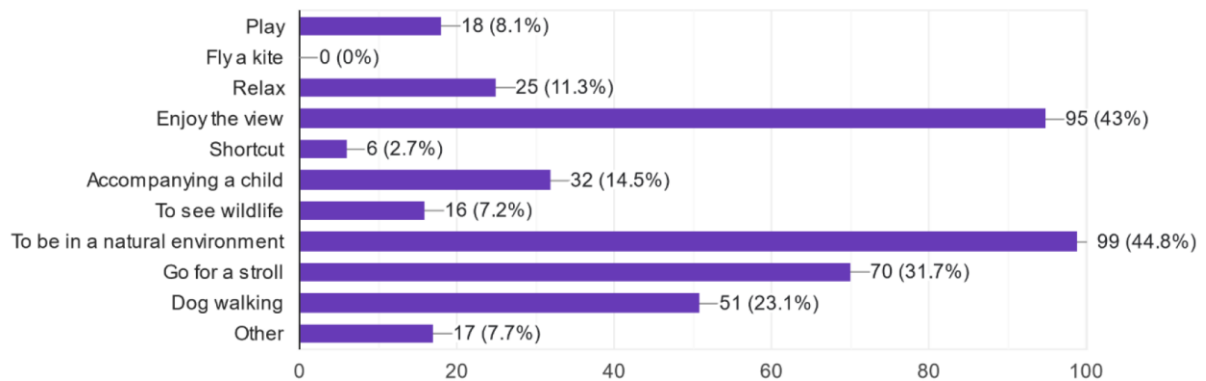
## Reasons for Visiting Troopers Hill

In both surveys respondents were asked to give two reasons why they visited Troopers Hill.

**2002:**



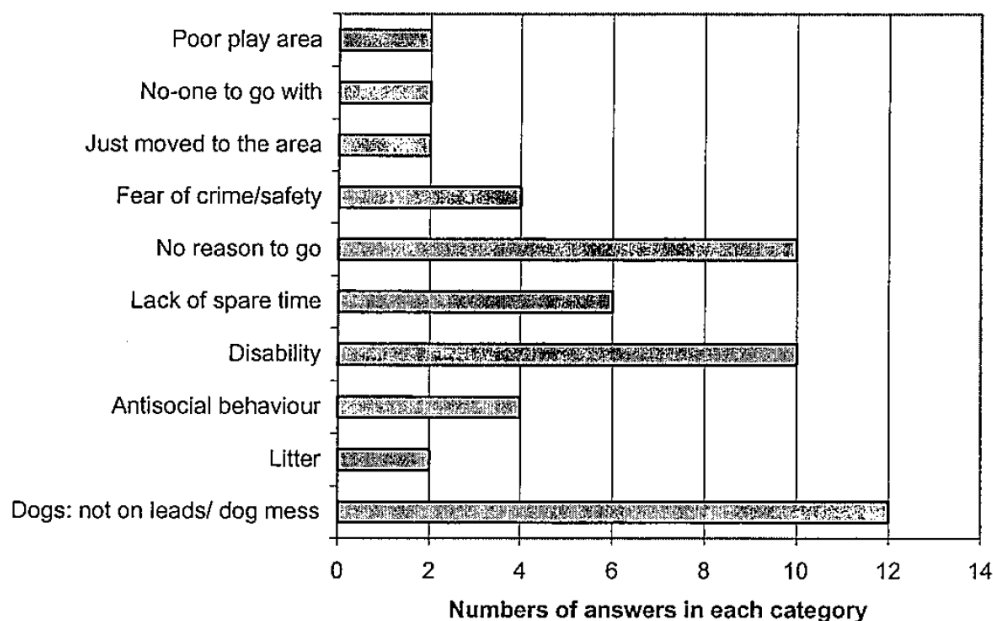
**2022:**



It can be seen that 'To be in a natural environment' has jumped from 27% to 45% and 'To enjoy the view' has dropped. Perhaps this reflects a greater appreciation of the natural environment generally but it could also show an increased awareness of Troopers Hill as a natural space. Other categories are similar, though kite flying seems to have disappeared as a reason to visit, but it is still enjoyed occasionally.

## Reasons for Rarely Visiting

The chart below shows the 2002 results with 54 replies.



Only 28 replies were received in 2022, reflecting that fewer respondents visited rarely:

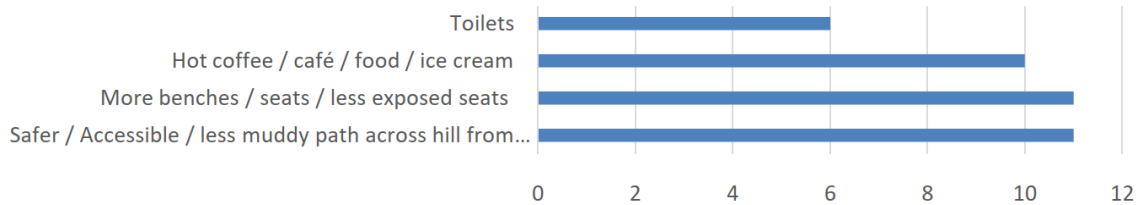
Number of replies	Category
5	<b>Dogs</b> - In total there were 3 possibly negative references to dogs and 2 positive. One reply was just the single word "Dogs" to "We used to visit every day when we had a dog". One person referred to their dog being attacked but another person was waiting for their puppy being old enough to walk that far
4	<b>Health and mobility</b>
3	<b>Moved away</b>
2	<b>No café/drinks</b>
2	<b>Benches</b> – not enough or not in a sheltered spot
2	<b>Too busy</b>
2	<b>Seasonal</b> – go more frequently in summer than winter
2	<b>Prefer other nearby green spaces</b>

The most significant change is a drop from 12 to 3 of people quoting dogs or dog mess as a reason, anti-social behaviour is also now not mentioned. Disability also didn't feature as a reason not to visit in 2002, perhaps due to the improved paths and added benches at the top of the Hill.

It is interesting that 'too busy' was given as a reason by 2 people and the desire for a café drinks is something that was repeated in later questions.

## Changes to encourage you to visit more often

The most popular responses in 2022 were:



More seats were also mentioned in 2002 but with 31 replies this has dropped significantly. Also in 2002 'reduction of dogs and dog mess' was mentioned 27 times, while only 4 responses mention this in 2022.

Neither toilets or cafés were mentioned in 2002.

## Liked and Disliked

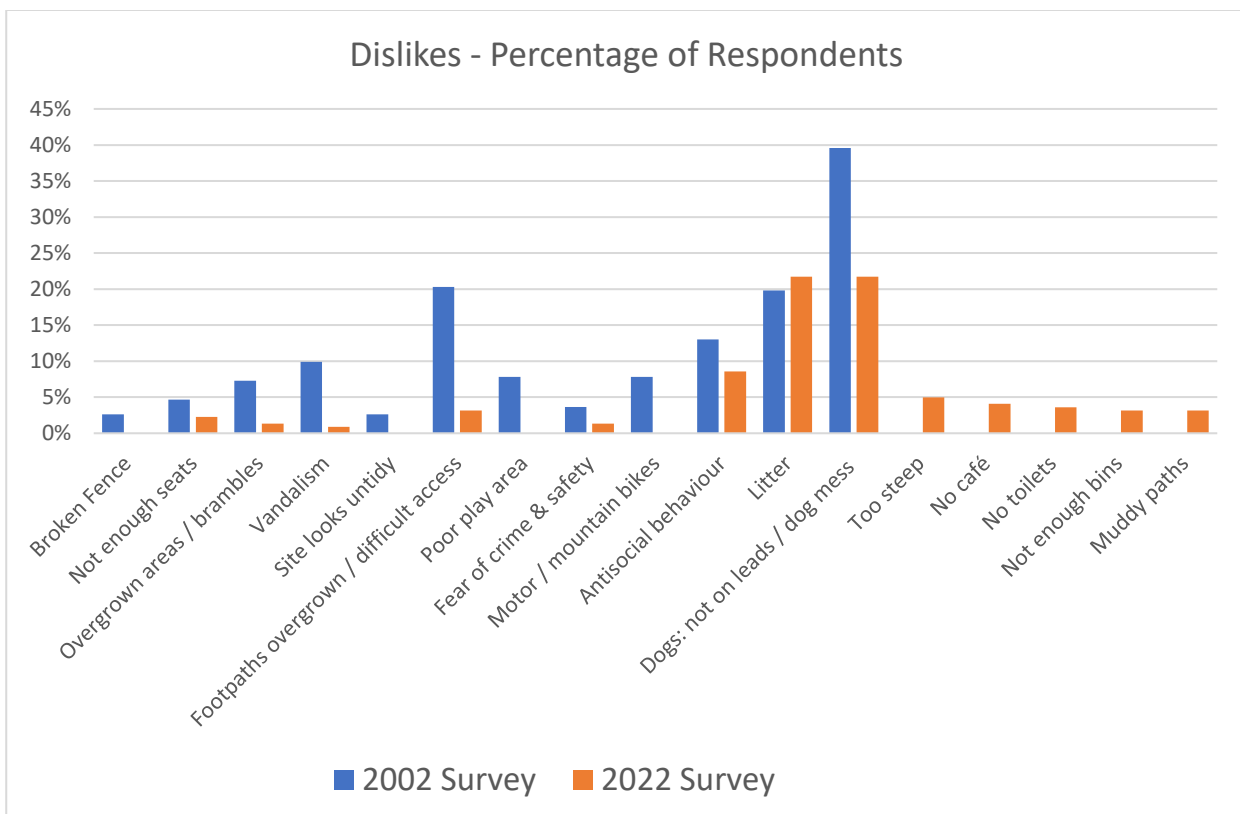
Both surveys asked for two things you liked and two things you disliked about Troopers Hill.

For likes in 2022 out of the 221 respondents 198 (90%) listed 2 (or more) 14 listed only one and 9 didn't respond, similarly 87% of respondents in 2002 had listed two or more things.

It is no surprise that both in 2002 and 2022 'the view' and 'natural open space/ wildness / nature & beauty' were overwhelming the two that most people chose as likes. All others fell well behind.

**66% of respondents in 2002 could list two of more things they disliked but this had reduced to only 36% of respondents in 2022.**

The chart below compares the top categories of dislikes between the two surveys.



It can be seen the issue of dog behaviour and dog mess, while still featuring, are mentioned much less frequently, as are anti-social behaviour and access issues.

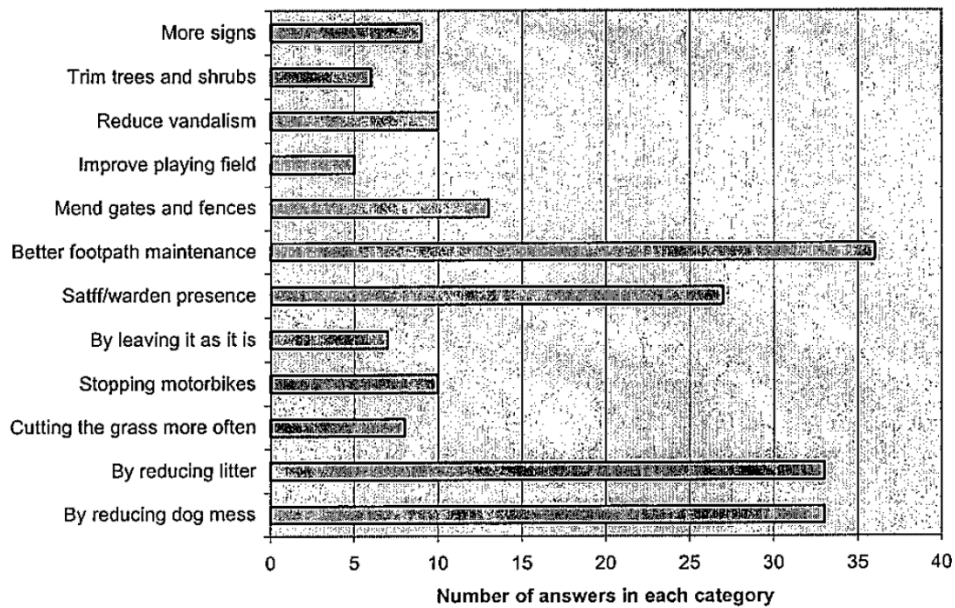
Litter is mentioned by 22% of respondents in 2022 (20% in 2002) but some people added 'occasionally' to their comment and some also specifically mentioned fireworks (this being a November survey). There was certainly more litter in 2002, but perhaps other problems knocked it out of people's list of two dislikes, it may also be the generally improved appearance means that litter is more noticeable.

Again the lack of a café or toilets are new for 2022. The poor play area mentioned in 2002 was replaced in 2016.

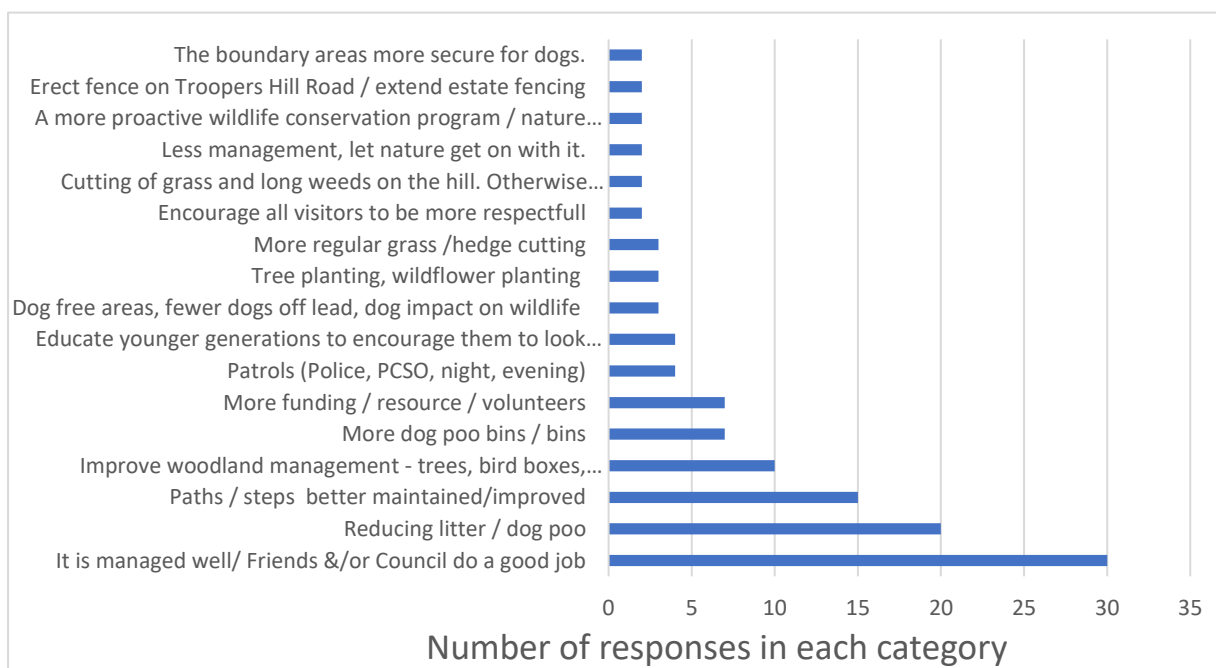
### Looking after Troopers Hill

Both reports asked how Troopers Hill could be better looked after.

2002:



2022:



Again issues around dogs are significantly reduced and requests for some form of warden or site presence were also significantly down.

**Wildlife**

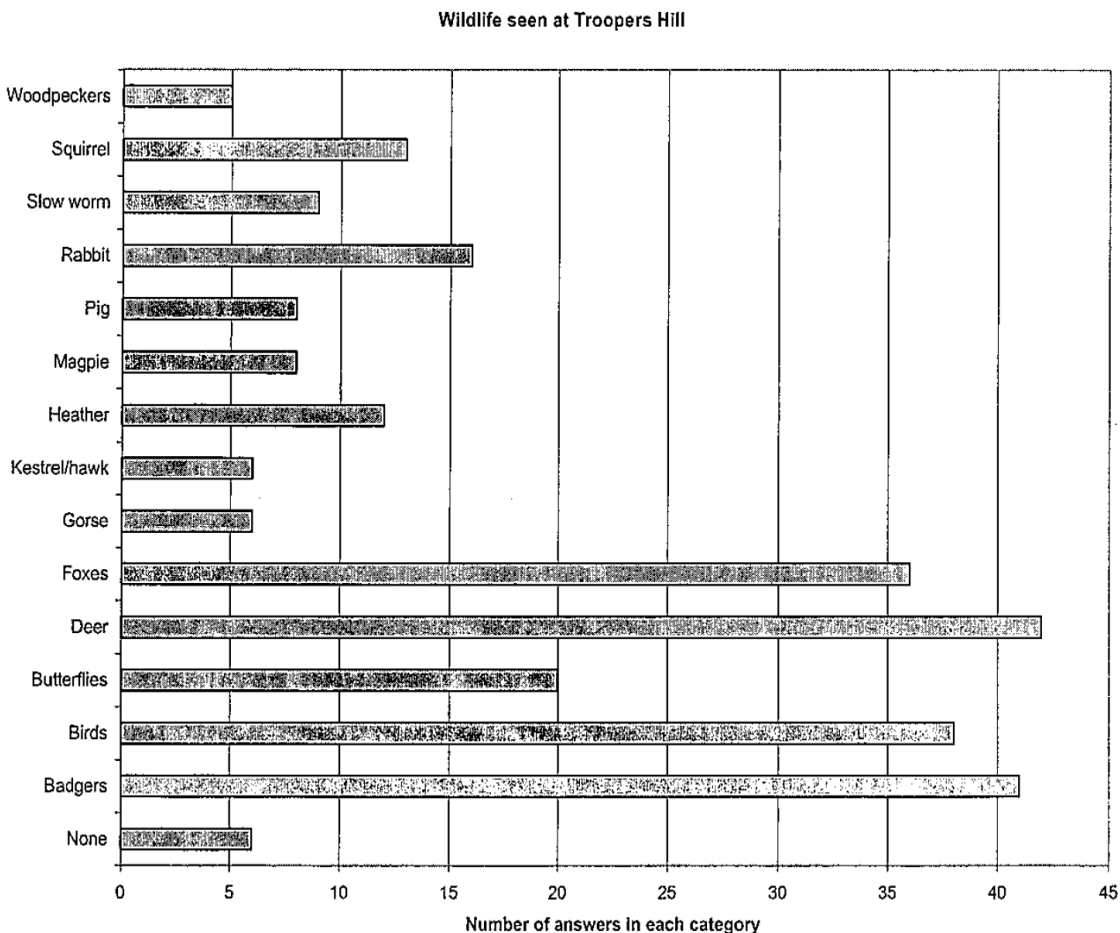
Three questions were asked where respondents could reply stating whether they agreed or disagreed, the chart below shows the answers to the two surveys:

Statement	Strongly agree or agree 2002	Strongly agree or agree 2022
Troopers Hill is an important place for wildlife in Bristol	90.7%	97.7%
Living near Troopers Hill is important to me	78.7%	91.8%
I enjoy seeing wildlife on Troopers Hill	81.3%	94.1%

It can be seen that the number of positives increased in each case from an already high base.

In 2002, 56.8% of people knew that Troopers Hill had been designated as a ‘Local Nature Reserve’ – the designation had taken place only 7 years earlier in 1995. By 2022 this had increased to 88.2% of respondents.

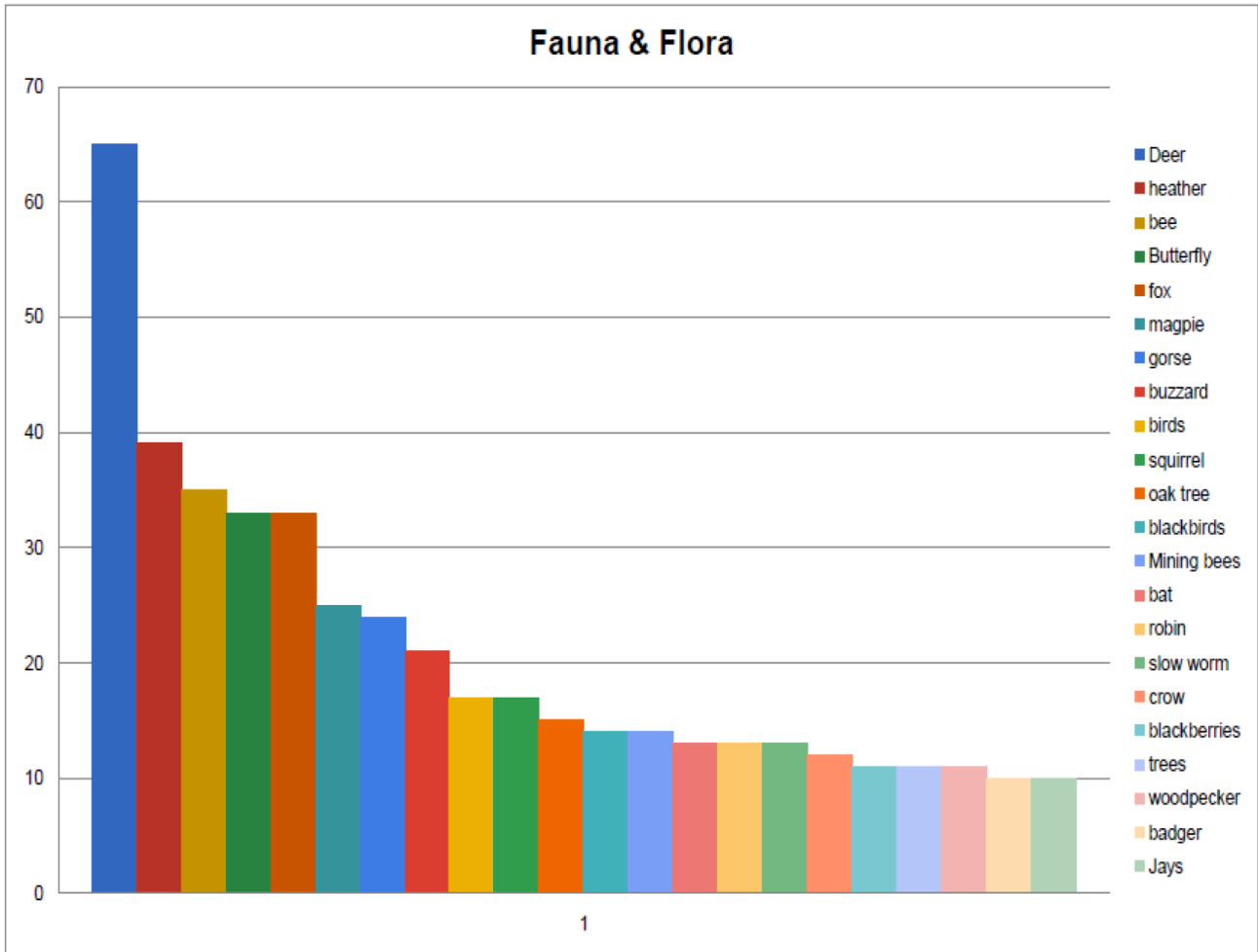
Both surveys asked people to list wildlife they had seen on Troopers Hill, the most popular answers from 2002 are shown below (62% of respondents answered):





In 2022 the question was rewritten to try and highlight the large range of flora and fauna that could be considered to be 'wildlife' – "Please list up to 10 plants, animals, birds, reptiles, fungi, insects, invertebrates or other wildlife you have seen on Troopers Hill"

59% of respondents listed at least one thing, and there were 168 different 168 different things ranging from birds to resin weevils. The full range is listed in the appendix to the 2022 report, the most common are shown below.



Troopers Hill is an important habitat for mining bees, so it is good to see them now listed.

### Signs, leaflets and other information

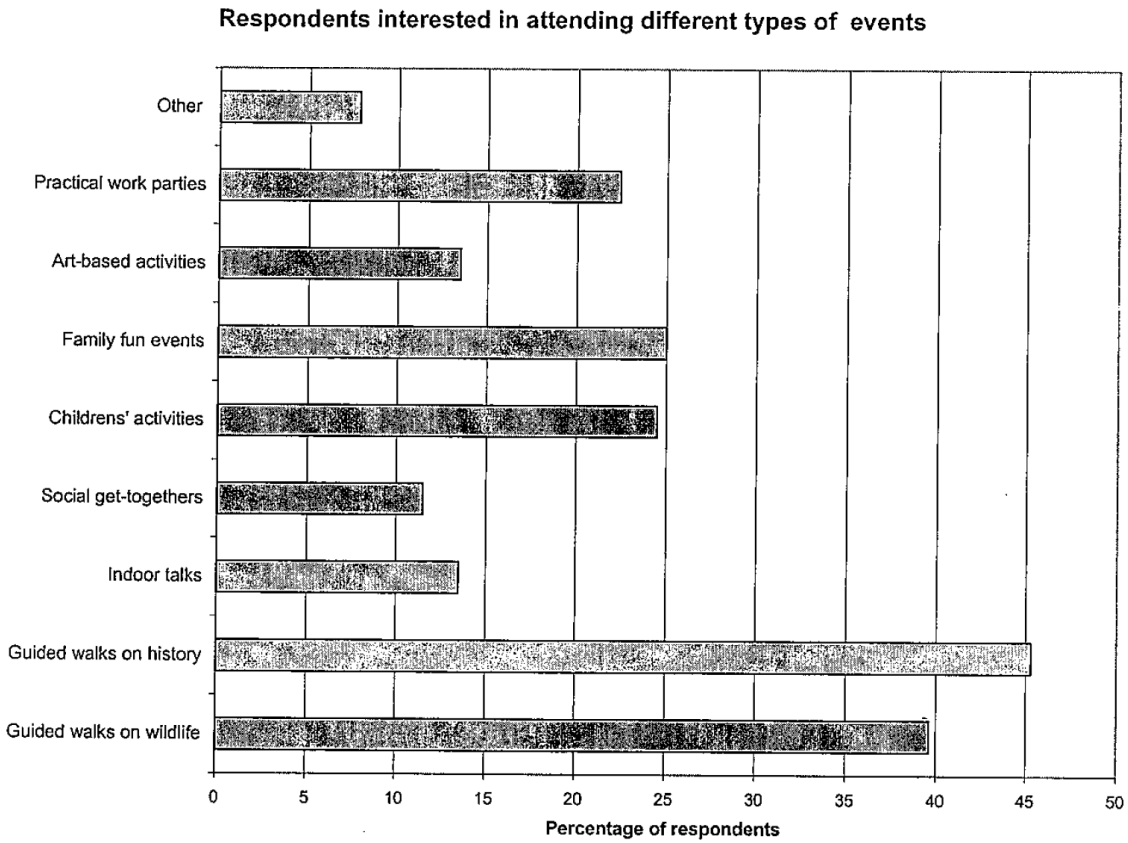
Both surveys had questions asking whether people had seen information about the Hill. In 2002 there were only two information signs, while there are now five, with additional 'welcome' signs at most entrances. In 2002 there was no social media and very little other information on the internet, with very few people having access in any case.

Comparison between the two sets of answers is therefore of little value but the response can be seen in the two reports.

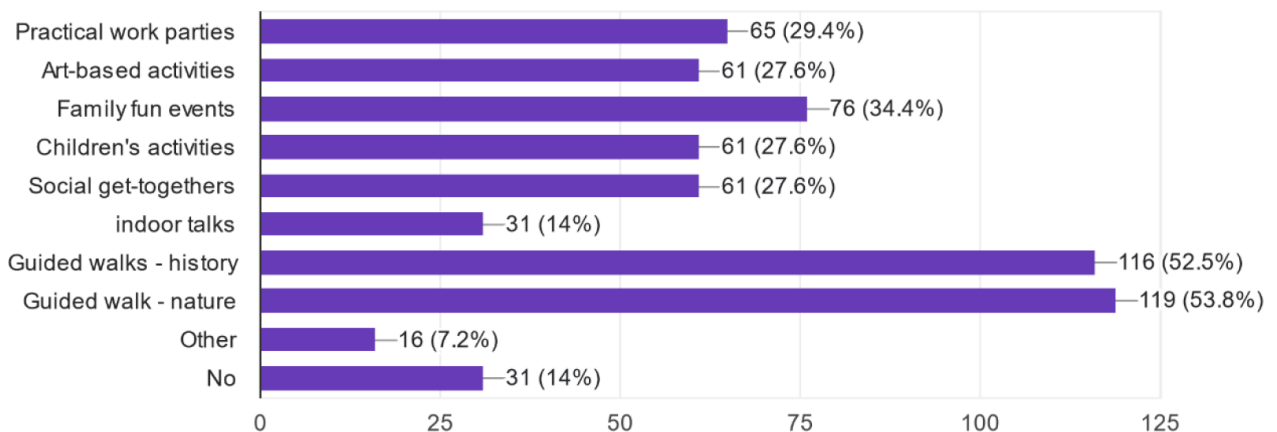
## Events

Since being formed in 2003, Friends of Troopers Hill have held many events on the Hill, the type of events responded in part to those asked for in the 2002 survey as shown below. The 2022 also what events people would be interested in and received similar results, with guided walks again being most popular.

2002:



2022:



## Additional Comments and Conclusions

For both survey reports there are appendices with all the text responses listed.

2022 [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2022SurveyResponses.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/2022SurveyResponses.pdf)

2002 [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/2002Responses.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/2002Responses.pdf)

Reading through these the overall impression from 2002 is that Troopers Hill is a place you might not want to visit, there are lots of comments about dogs and dog mess, anti-social behaviour and fires etc.

The 2022 responses, while still showing some concerns, are overwhelmingly positive with many people making a point to praise the work of Friends of Troopers Hill and the Council.

While a minority, a significant number suggest the need for refreshments, especially coffee to be available (as well as toilets). As well as reflecting a change in people's expectations, this indicates that people want to be able to spend time at the site. However, it must also be remembered that the Hill's natural beauty is highly valued and there were some comments about there being too many visitors.

The 2002 survey generated a list of actions that were needed to improve the site, many of these have been implemented over the last twenty years. One of the aims of the 2022 survey was to set the agenda for the next 20 years, it seems that there are no major issues to address and that the focus needs to be on protecting the site to 'keep Troopers Hill as it is', especially in the light of the Ecological and Climate Emergencies that are now impacting all wildlife.

At the time this report is being written there are serious concerns about Council funding for future maintenance and repairs. It is hoped that this does not lead to a decline and that in 20 years' time a future survey will also receive such a positive response.

