



# St Mary's Leisure Centre consultation, Winter 2022/23

Full results summary

**southampton**  
**dataobservatory**



Data, Intelligence & Insight, *March 2023*



Southampton City Council undertook public consultation on proposals for the long-term operation of St Mary's Leisure Centre:

- Defining the centre as mixed leisure, wellbeing and community use;
- Ensuring the centre provides a range of gym, badminton, squash, fitness classes, and sporting facilities that will be available for hire by groups and clubs;
- Provide additional health and wellbeing activities such as stop smoking clinics, general health checks and drop-in sessions;
- It will be available for private hire events such as family events, birthdays, weddings, etc, and;
- Appointing an experienced provider via a competitive tendering process to manage the centre and work with the community to ensure it has a thriving future.

The aim of this consultation was to:

- Communicate clearly to residents and stakeholders the proposals for the future of St Mary's Leisure Centre;
- Ensure any resident, business or stakeholder who wished to comment on the proposals had the opportunity to do so, enabling them to raise any impacts the proposals may have, and;
- Allow participants to propose alternative suggestions for consideration which they feel could achieve the objectives in a different way.



Southampton City Council is committed to consultations of the highest standard, which are meaningful and comply with the *Gunning Principles*, considered to be the legal standard for consultations:

1. Proposals are still at a formative stage (a final decision has not yet been made);
2. There is sufficient information put forward in the proposals to allow 'intelligent consideration';
3. There is adequate time for consideration and response;
4. Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made.



### Rules: The Gunning Principles

They were coined by Stephen Sedley QC in a court case in 1985 relating to a school closure consultation (R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning). Prior to this, very little consideration had been given to the laws of consultation. Sedley defined that a consultation is only legitimate when these four principles are met:

1. **proposals are still at a formative stage**  
A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers
2. **there is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration'**  
The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response
3. **there is adequate time for consideration and response**  
There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation. There is no set timeframe for consultation,<sup>1</sup> despite the widely accepted twelve-week consultation period, as the length of time given for consultee to respond can vary depending on the subject and extent of impact of the consultation
4. **'conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made**  
Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account

These principles were reinforced in 2001 in the 'Coughlan Case (R v North and East Devon Health Authority ex parte Coughlan<sup>2</sup>), which involved a health authority closure and confirmed that they applied to all consultations, and then in a Supreme Court case in 2014 (R ex parte Moseley v LB Haringey<sup>3</sup>), which endorsed the legal standing of the four principles. Since then, the Gunning Principles have formed a strong legal foundation from which the legitimacy of public consultations is assessed, and are frequently referred to as a legal basis for judicial review decisions.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In some local authorities, their local voluntary Compact agreement with the third sector may specify the length of time they are required to consult for. However, in many cases, the Compact is either inactive or has been cancelled so the consultation timeframe is open to debate  
<sup>2</sup> BAILLII, [England and Wales Court of Appeal \(Civil Decision\) Decisions](#), Accessed: 13 December 2016.  
<sup>3</sup> BAILLII, [United Kingdom Supreme Court](#), Accessed: 13 December 2016  
<sup>4</sup> The information used to produce this document has been taken from the Law of Consultation training course provided by The Consultation Institute



The agreed approach for this consultation was to use an online questionnaire as the main route for feedback: questionnaires enable an appropriate amount of explanatory and supporting information to be included, helping to ensure respondents are aware of the background and detail of the proposals.

Respondents could also write letters or emails to provide feedback on the proposals. Emails or letters from stakeholders that contained consultation feedback were collated and analysed as a part of the overall consultation.

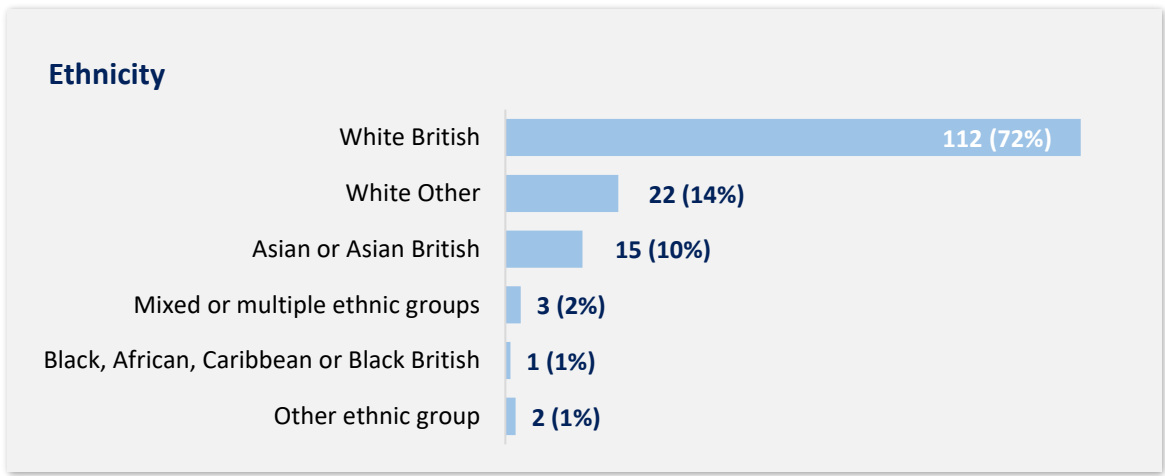
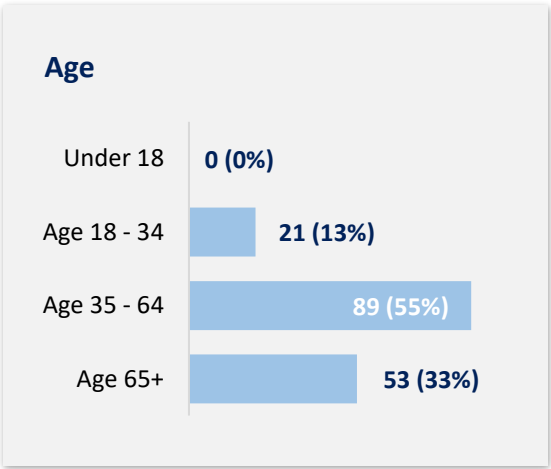
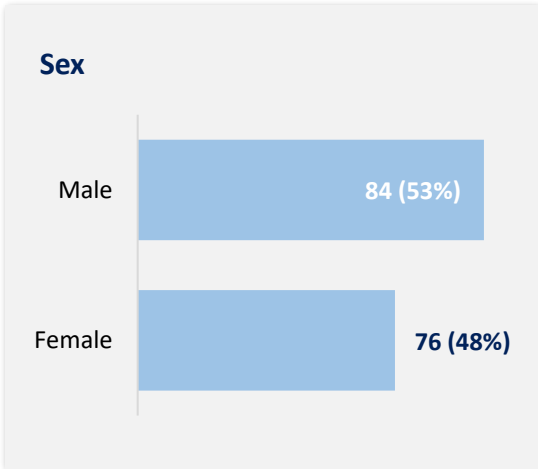
All questionnaire results have been analysed and presented in graphs within this report. Written responses and questionnaire comments have been read and then assigned to categories based upon sentiment or theme.

The consultation was live between **12 December 2022** and **06 March 2023**, and received a total of 185 responses via the online questionnaire and one response by email, for a total of **186 responses**.

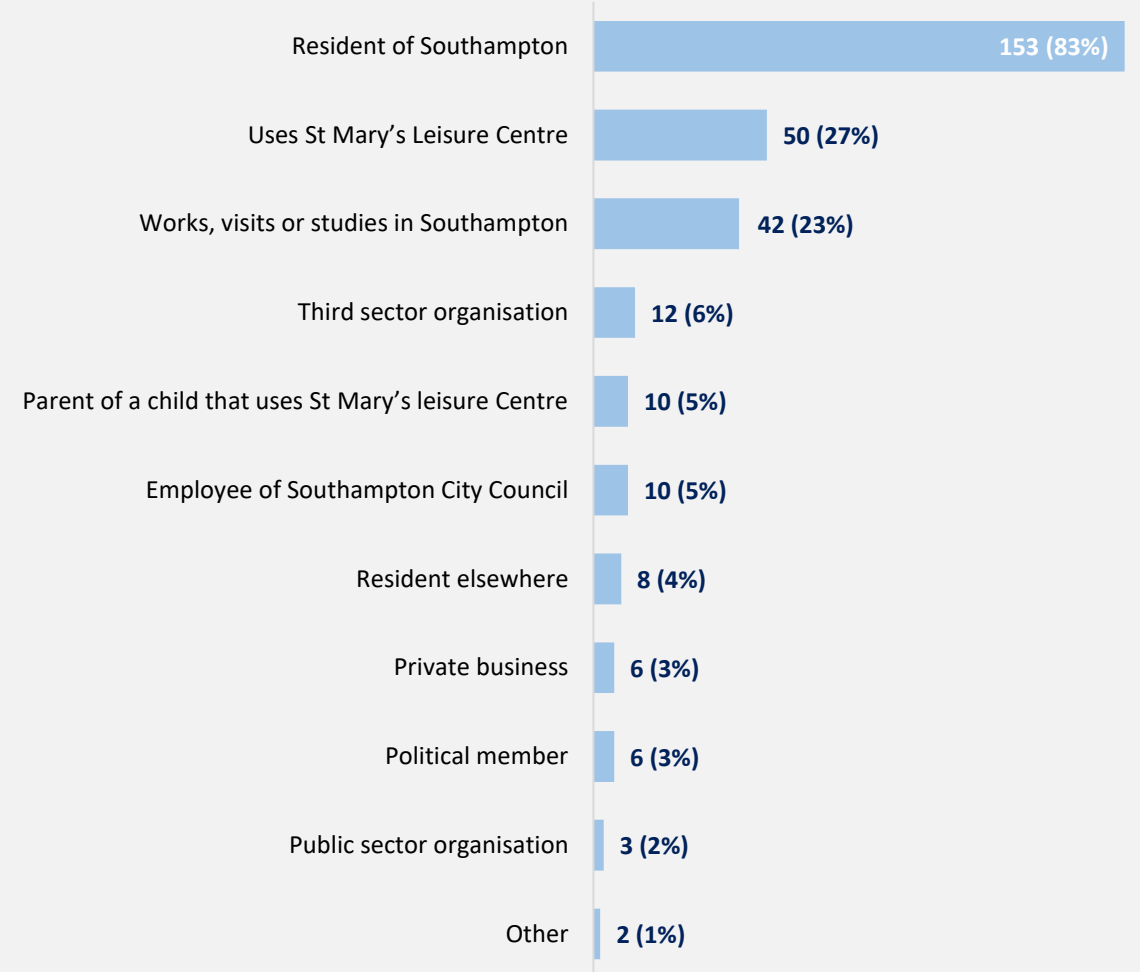


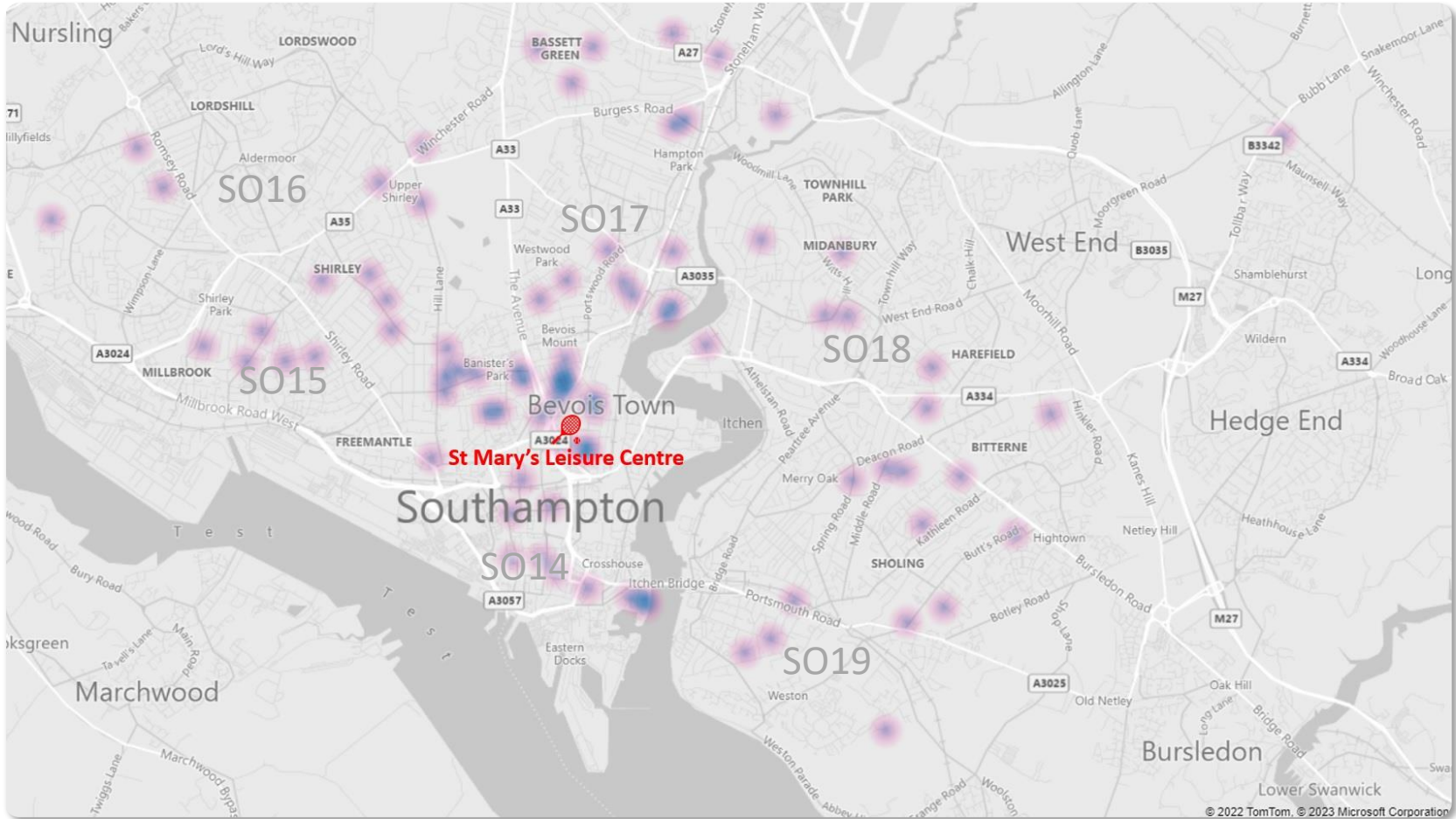
**Total responses** **186**

Graphs on this page are labelled as count of respondents and percentage.



## Interest in the consultation

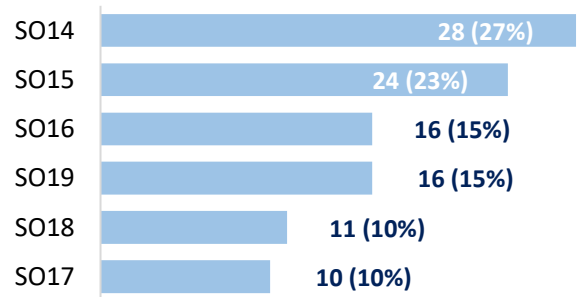




*A map of Southampton illustrating the geographic distribution of consultation responses in relation to St Mary's Leisure Centre.*

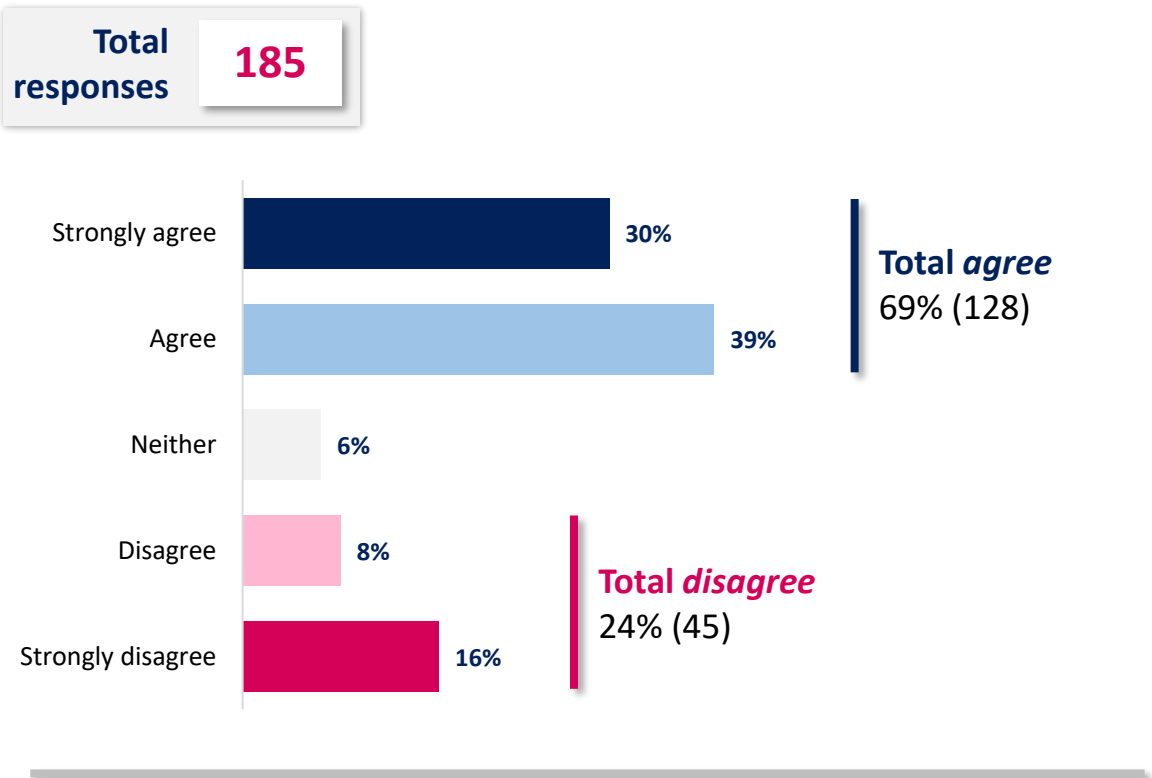
*Heat map is by number of respondents/postcode. Dark blue means a greater number of respondents, light pink means a fewer number of respondents.*

**Postcode**





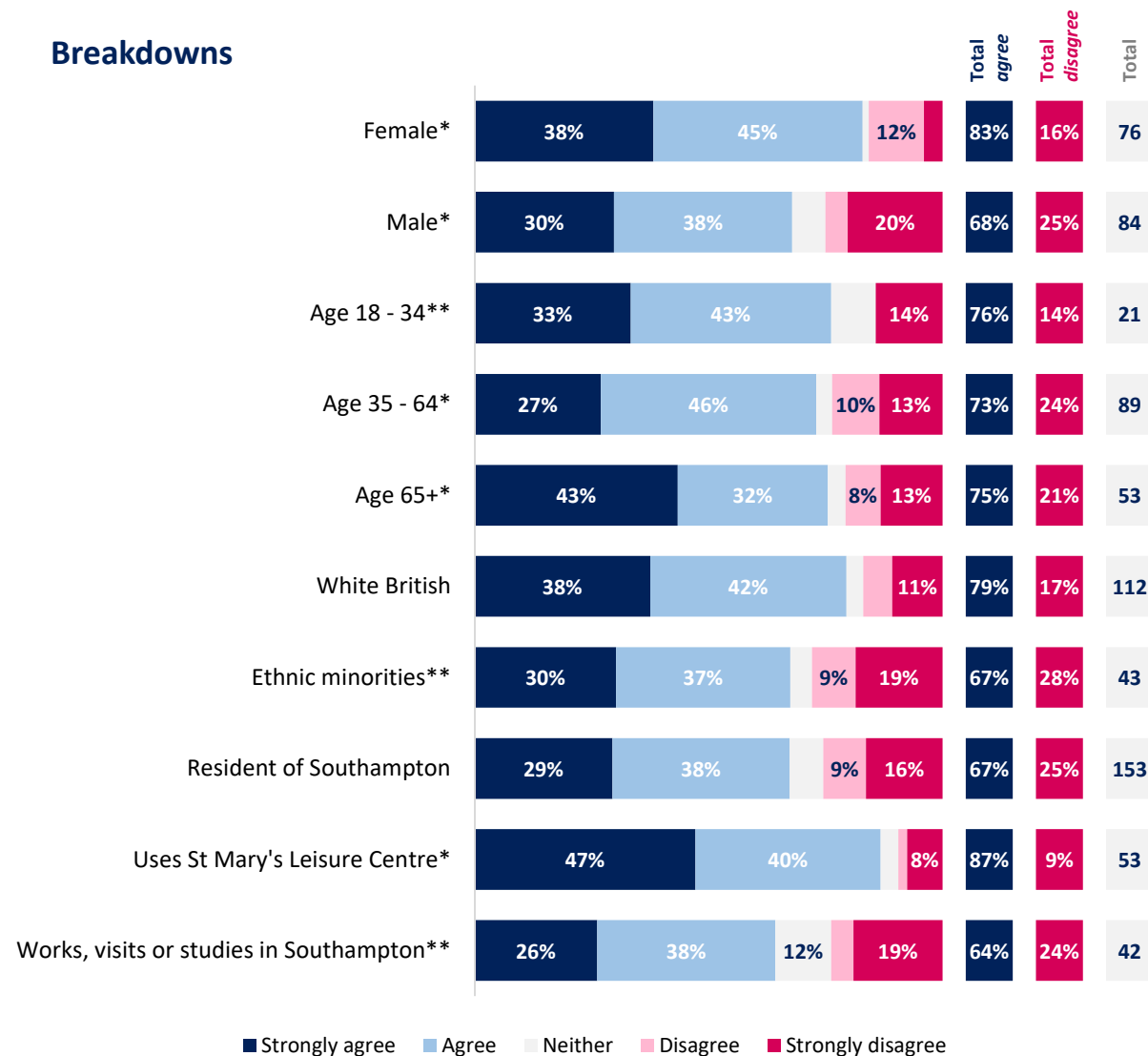
# Question 1 | To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for the future of St Mary's Leisure Centre?



## Key findings

- A majority (69%) said that they *agree* with the proposals
- Women responded *agree* (83%) to a greater extent than men (68%)
- Respondents that said they use St Mary's Leisure Centre said that they *agree* with the proposals to a greater extent than residents of Southampton generally, 87% versus 67% respectively

## Breakdowns

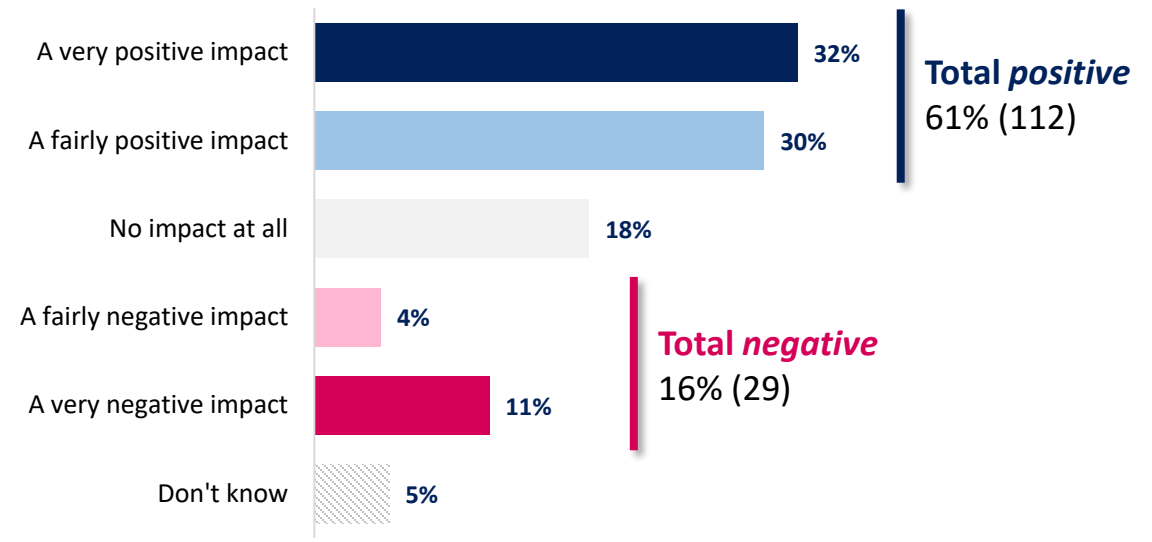


\*Fewer than 100 respondents. \*\*Fewer than 50 respondents.



## Question 2 | What impact do you feel this may have on you, your business, or the wider community?

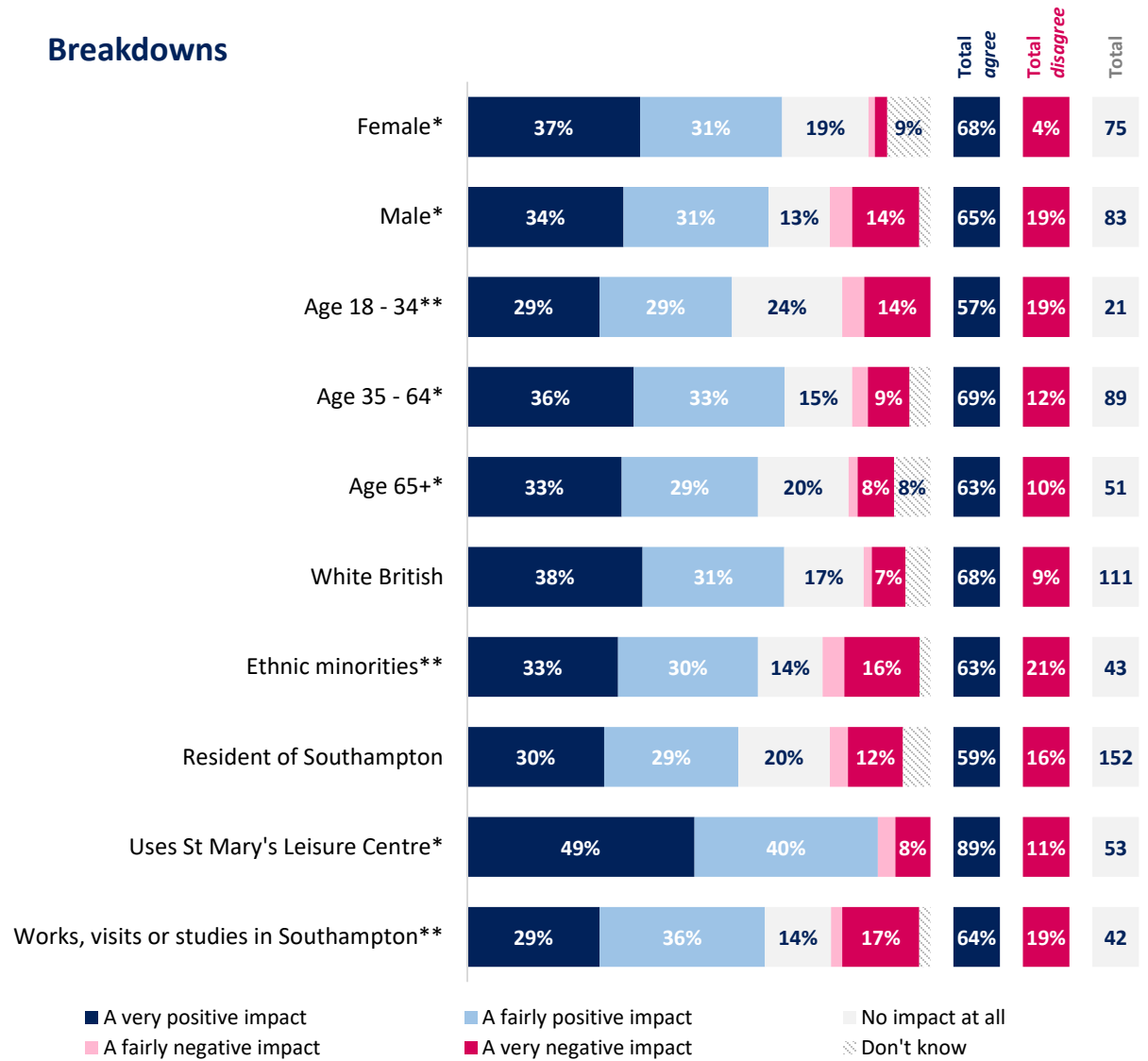
Total responses **183**



### Key findings

- A majority (61%) said that the proposals would have a *positive* impact
- More respondents (18%) said that the proposals would have *no impact at all* than those that said they would have a *negative impact* (16%)
- Again, respondents that use St Mary's Leisure Centre responded *positive* to a greater extent than residents of Southampton generally, 89% versus 59% respectively

### Breakdowns







### Question 3

If you disagree, or have any comments, impacts, suggestions or alternatives you feel we should consider, please provide details

Total responses **59**

Total comments

