

MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST



## **MOURNE & SLIEVE CROOB AONB**

### **VISITORS SURVEY** Summary Report

**November 2004**

This project was funded by



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

In 2004 Mourne Heritage Trust secured funding for the implementation of a visitor monitoring programme from the Mourne Natural Resources Rural Tourism Initiative as part of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. The visitor surveys will provide information on the profile of visitors to the Mourne and Slieve Croob Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and examine the activities they undertake whilst in the area. It will also be used to obtain their views on the tourism product on offer. The project is planned to run over three years and commenced in June 2004.

Mourne Heritage Trust commissioned Research and Evaluation Services (RES) to undertake the large-scale visitor survey and this report presents the findings from the 2004 research.

A second project implemented by Mourne Heritage Trust will install electronic counters at key visitor sites to obtain information on the number of visitors and the pattern of use of the area.

### METHODOLOGY

Working in conjunction with Mourne Heritage Trust, RES designed a questionnaire to be used in the research. When the draft questionnaire was agreed a pilot study was undertaken. A total of 20 cases were completed at three different locations. Minor changes were made to the questionnaire and a final questionnaire was agreed.

In total 1,286 surveys were completed in 14 different locations throughout Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB. All surveys were completed between July and September 2004.

In total 52% of respondents were male, 48% female and 9% were in the age group 16-24, 34% were aged 25-39, 39% were aged 40-59 and 18% were aged over 60.

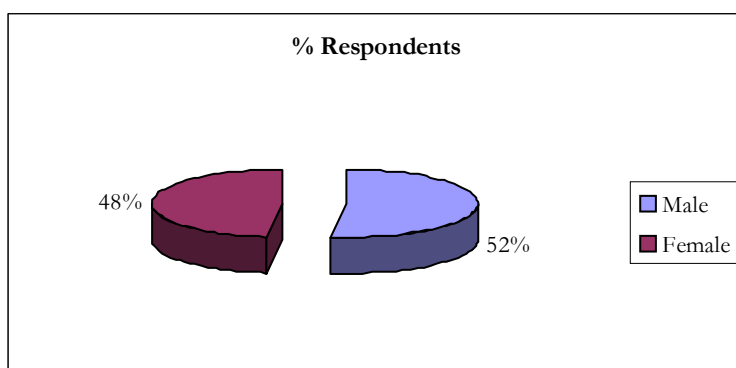


Figure 1. Gender Breakdown of the Respondents

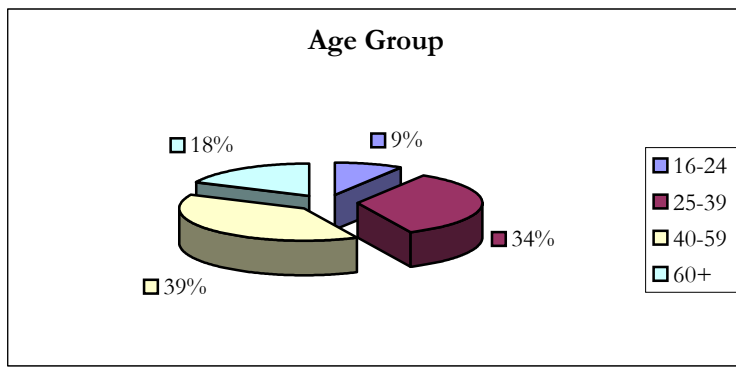


Figure 2. Age Profile of the Respondents

Three quarters of respondents (77%) were from Northern Ireland and the ethnic background of the majority of respondents (99%) was white.

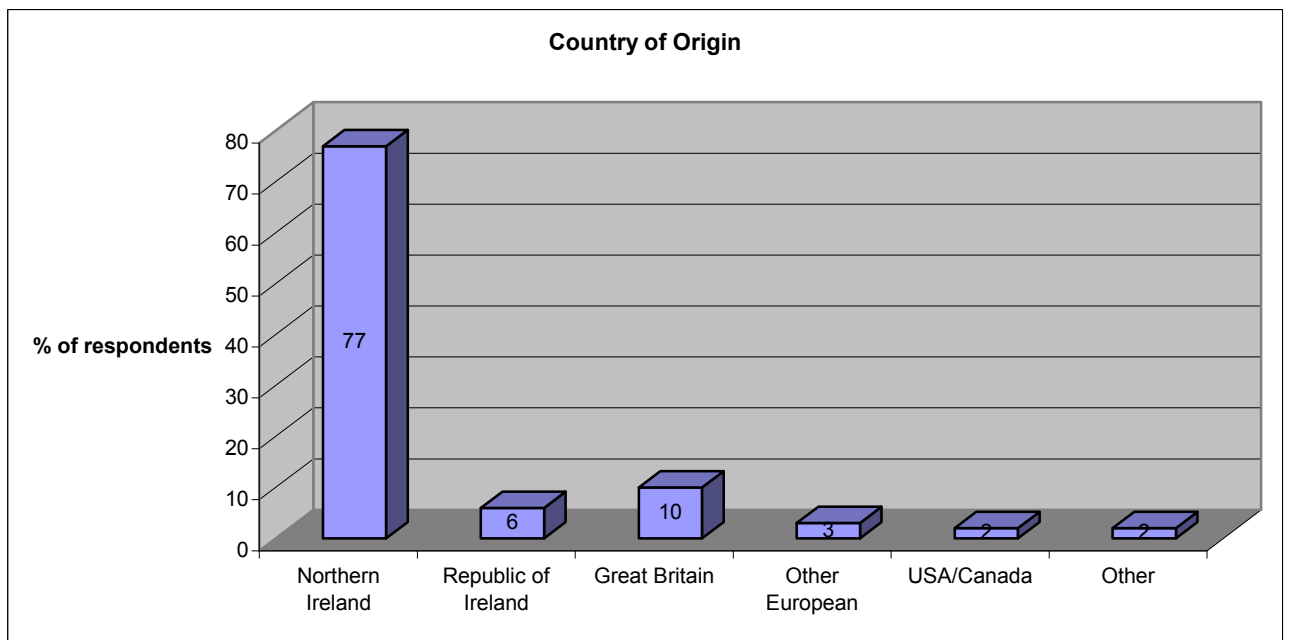


Figure 3. Origin of the Respondents

## RESULTS

Visitors were initially asked what the main purpose of their visit to Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB was. The majority (55%) stated that they were on a day trip to the area and 37% stated that they were on holiday.

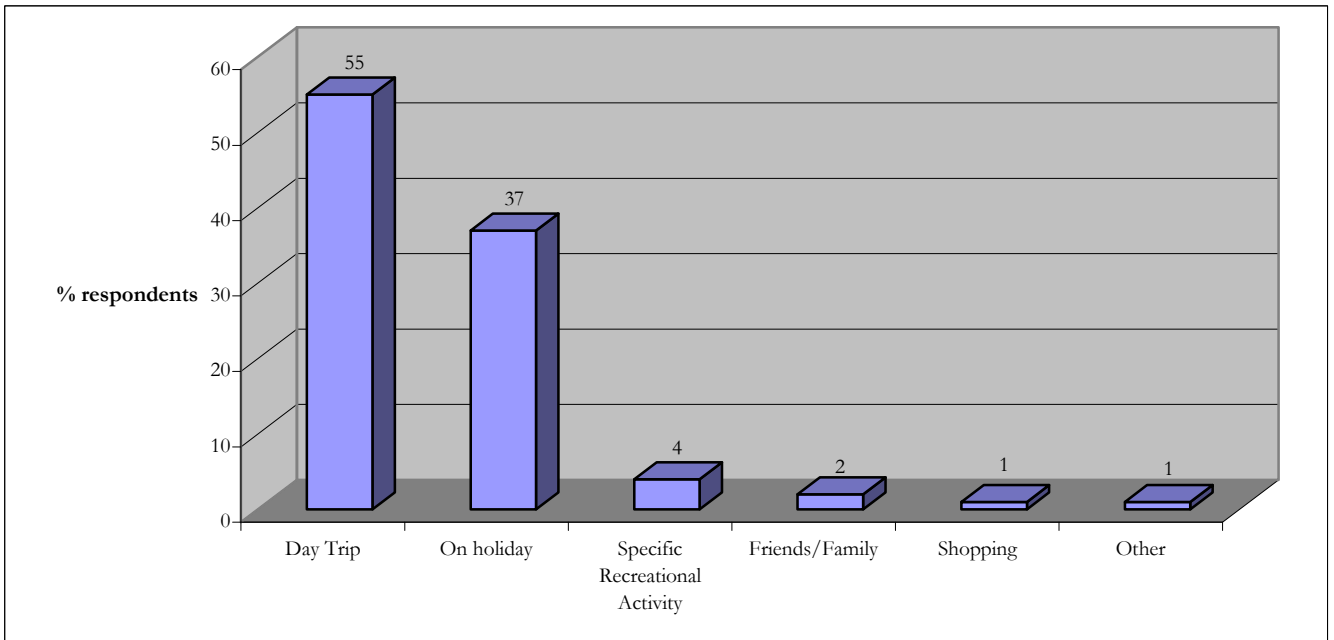


Figure 4. Purpose of visit to the Mourne Area

In total 63% of respondents stated that they would be staying in the area for up to one day. Overall 25% stated that they would be staying for up to a week and 12% stated that they would be staying in the area for more than a week.

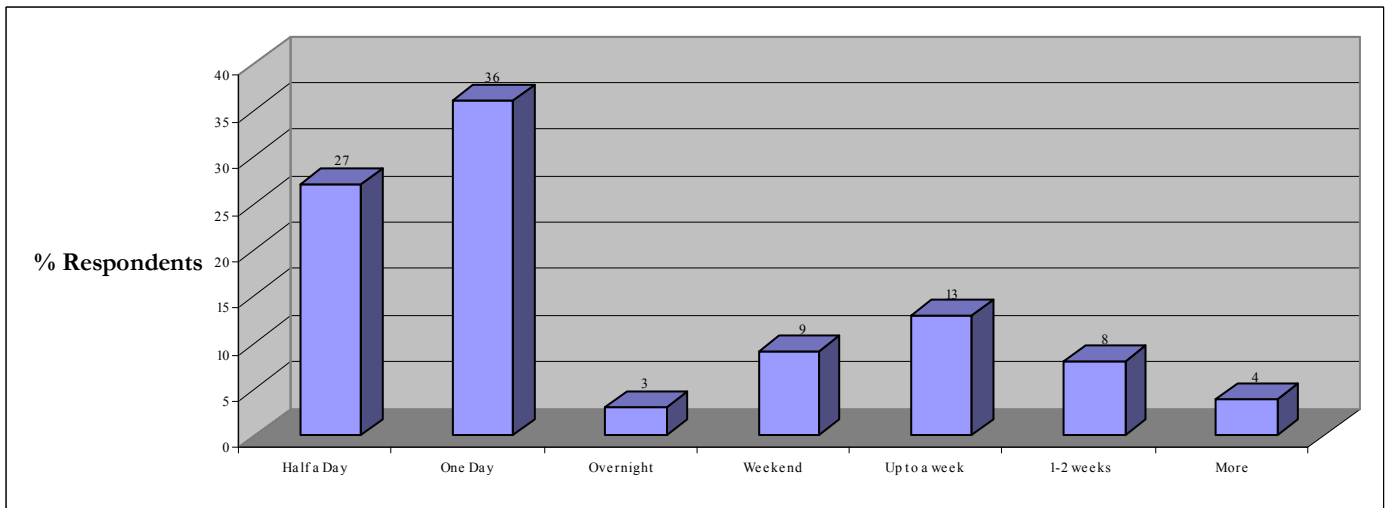


Figure 5. Length of stay within the area.

The majority of respondents (92%) either drove a car / van to the Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB that day, or were the passenger in a car. Other methods of transport used include walking, coach trip, motorcycle and bicycle.

One third of respondents (33%) stated that they would be visiting one location in the Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB on this trip and 44% stated that they would be visiting 2-3 locations. The most commonly mentioned locations were Newcastle town (57%), Warrenpoint (25%), Tollymore Forest (25%) and Silent Valley (23%).

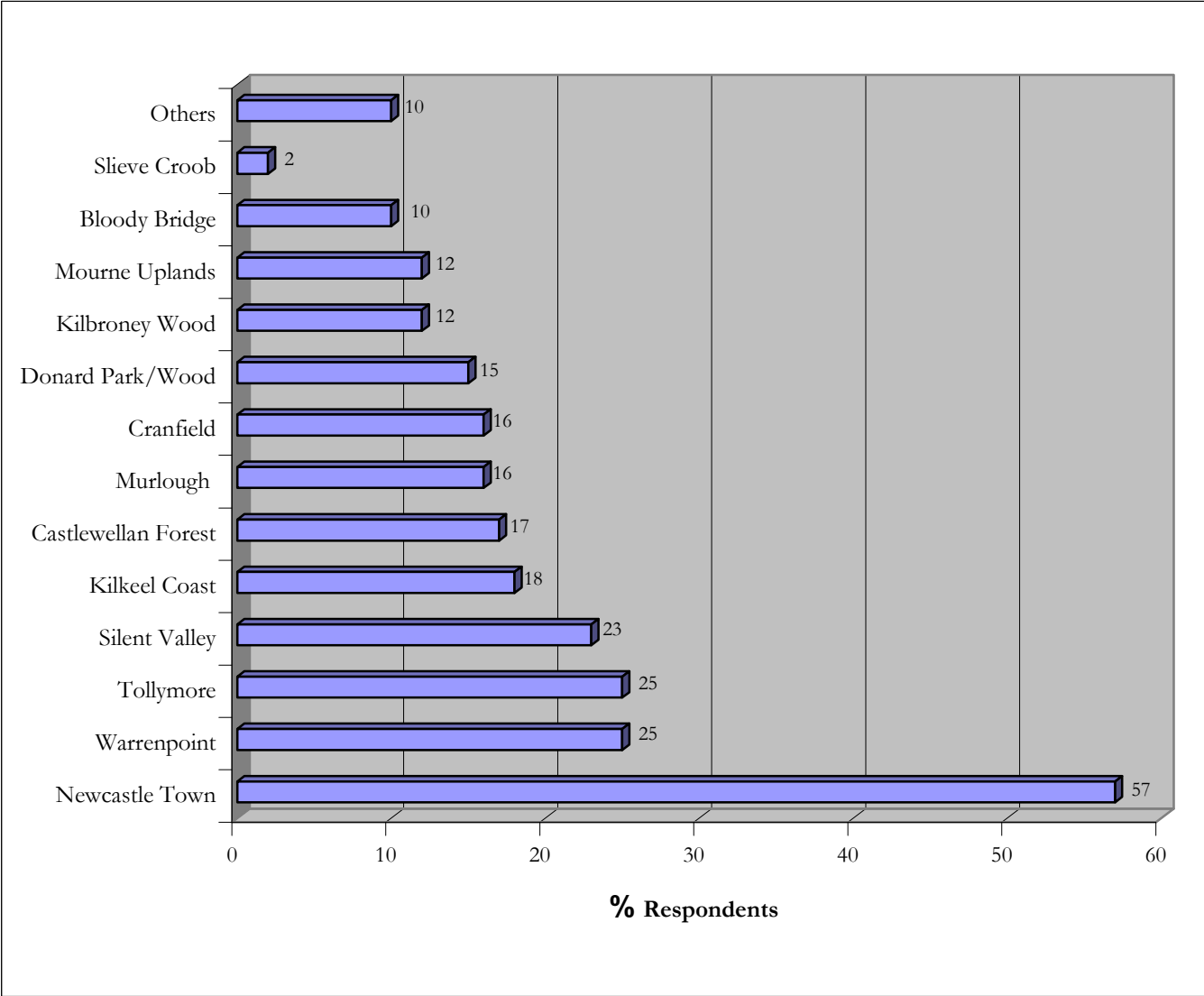


Figure 6. Places visited by the respondents during their stay. (NB figures add up to more than 100 due to multiple responses. Slieve Croob Car Park was the subject of major works during the period of this survey.)

The most commonly mentioned activities that respondents stated they would be participating in during this visit were: visiting towns / villages (50%); hill walking (47%); visiting bars / restaurants (46%); and swimming (39%).

Just under half of all respondents (47%) stated that they would be aware of how to access all activities in the area and 20% stated that they would know how to access 'most of them'.

In total 41% of respondents thought that there should be additional facilities in the area. Suggestions included: improved toilet facilities; more coffee shops, restaurants, pubs; indoor leisure facilities; and children's parks and playgrounds.

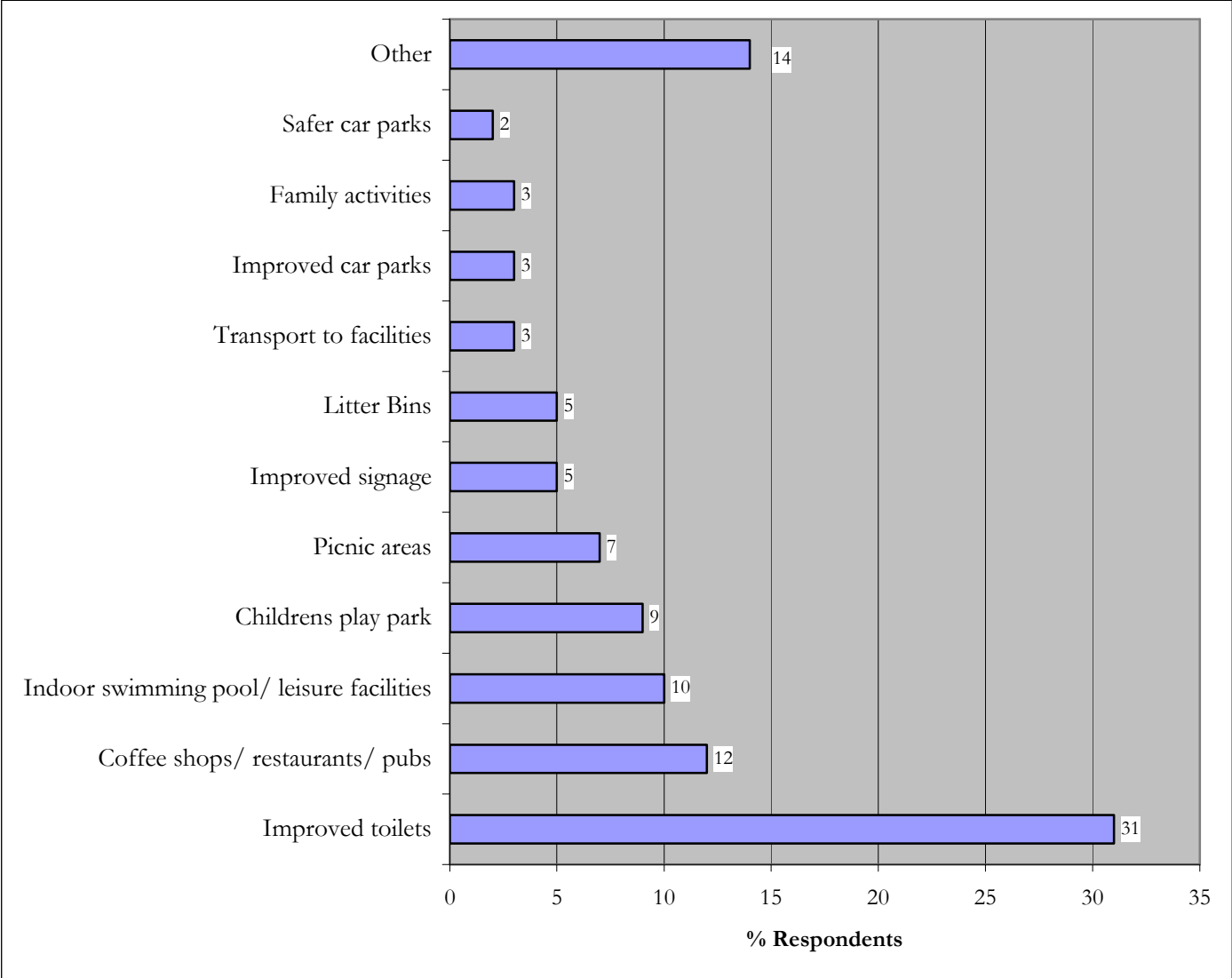


Figure 7. Additional facilities sought within the area. (NB figures add up to more than 100 due to multiple responses)

Respondents were asked to provide information regarding their estimated spend in the Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB during their visit. Most of participants (41%) stated that they would be spending up to £30 in the area. In total 17% stated that they would not be spending anything.

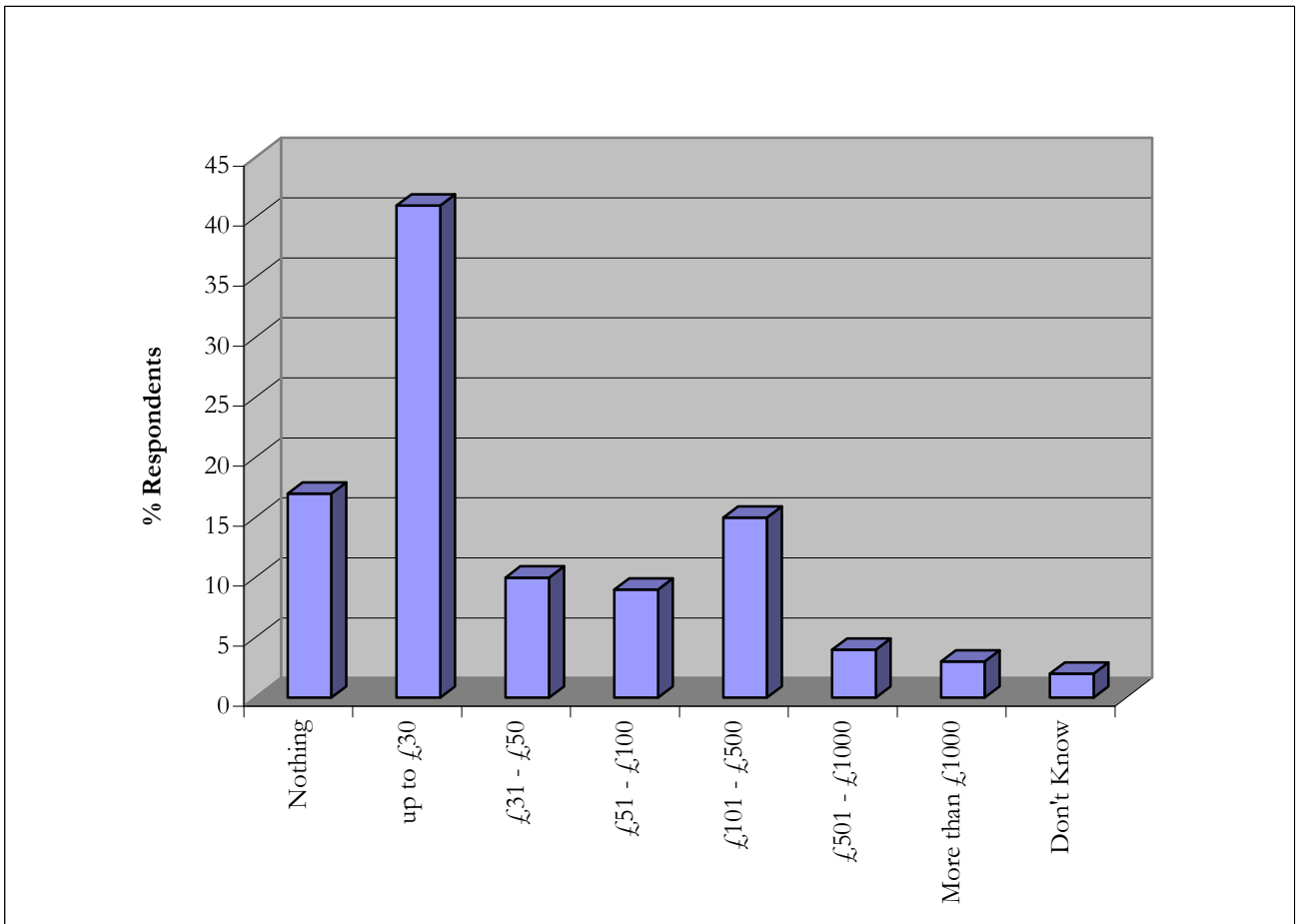


Figure 8. Visitor spend.

Respondents were then asked to state how satisfied they were with various aspects of Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB. All respondents (100%) were either 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' with the scenery in the area, 96% were satisfied with public access to the countryside and 93% were satisfied with the condition of the natural environment. Overall 93% were satisfied they were getting value for money and 91% were satisfied with car parking. Satisfaction was lowest with toilets facilities in the area (57% satisfied) and provision of tourist information (63% satisfied).

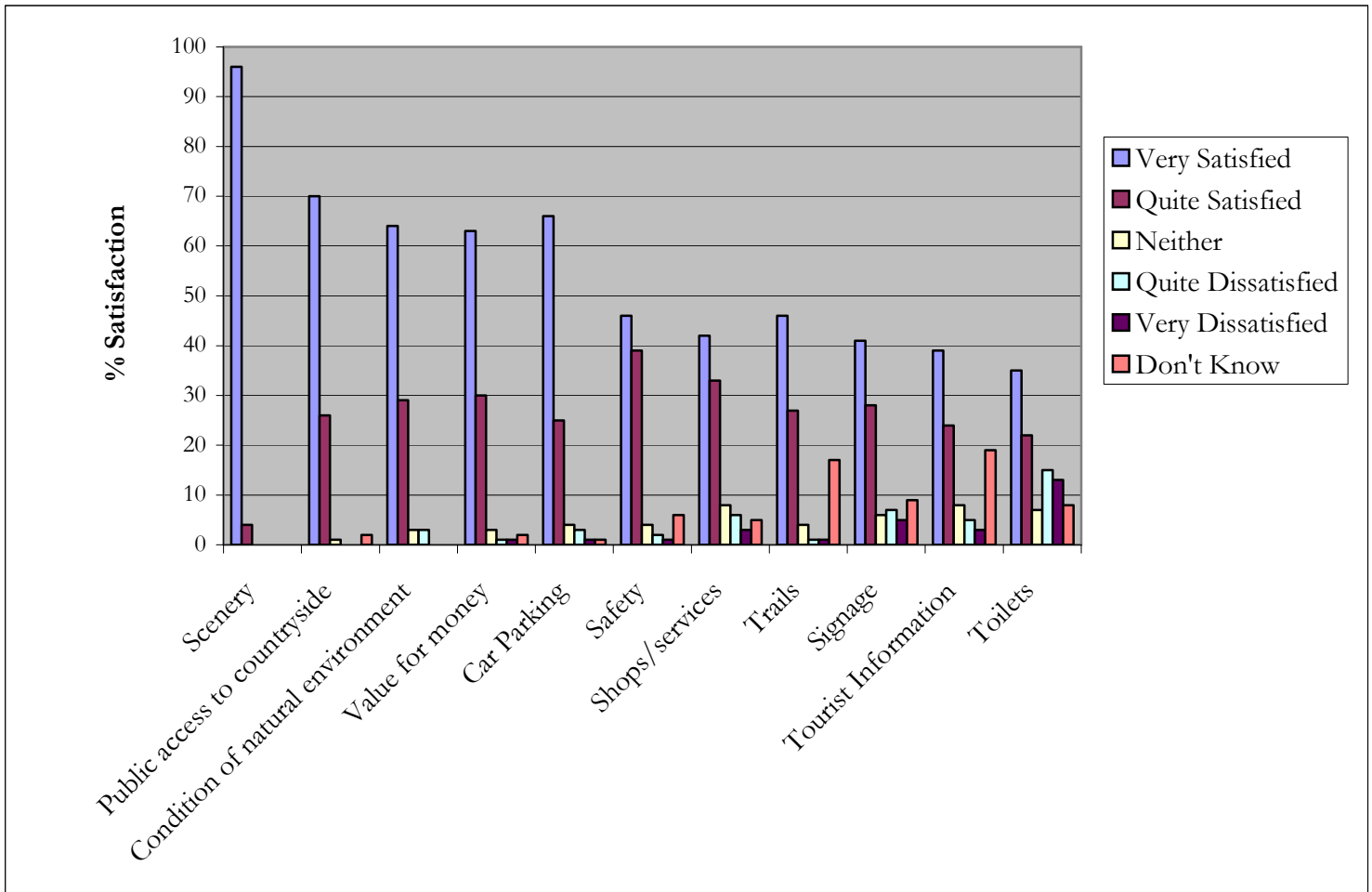


Figure 9. Visitor satisfaction with the areas features.

In total 71% of respondents stated that they would definitely return to Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB during the next 12 months and 21% stated that they would be 'quite likely' or 'very likely' to return to the area in the next 12 months.

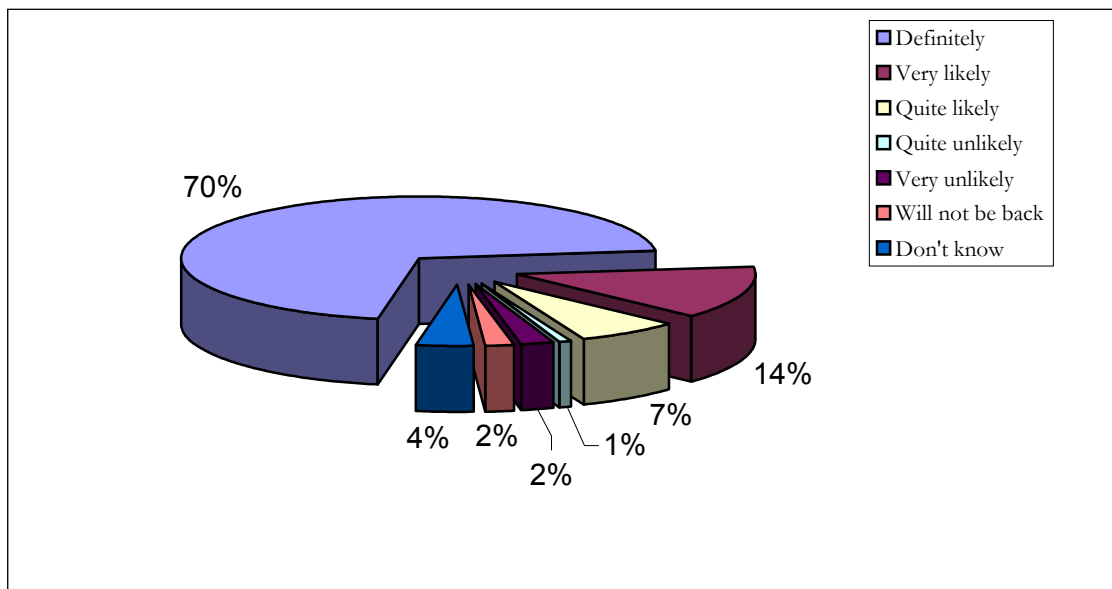


Figure 10. Likelihood of returning in the next 12 months.

Those respondents who stated that they would be unlikely to return to the area (n=57) were asked the reason for this. The main reason given (60%) was that respondents would not be in Northern Ireland again in the next 12 months.

Those respondents who stated that they would be in the area again were asked to state what activities they would be likely to participate during that visit. The main activities that would be undertaken during the next visit included visiting towns / villages (61%), visiting bars / restaurants (55%), hill walking (53%) and visiting the beach / swimming (50%).

In total 75% of respondents knew about the area because they had been before and 30% stated that they got information through 'word of mouth'. Other sources include TIC, brochures and Internet although each of these was used by less than 6% of the sample.

Overall satisfaction of the visitors to Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB was high with 93% of respondents stating that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' with the area. The main reason given for satisfaction is the natural beauty in the area.

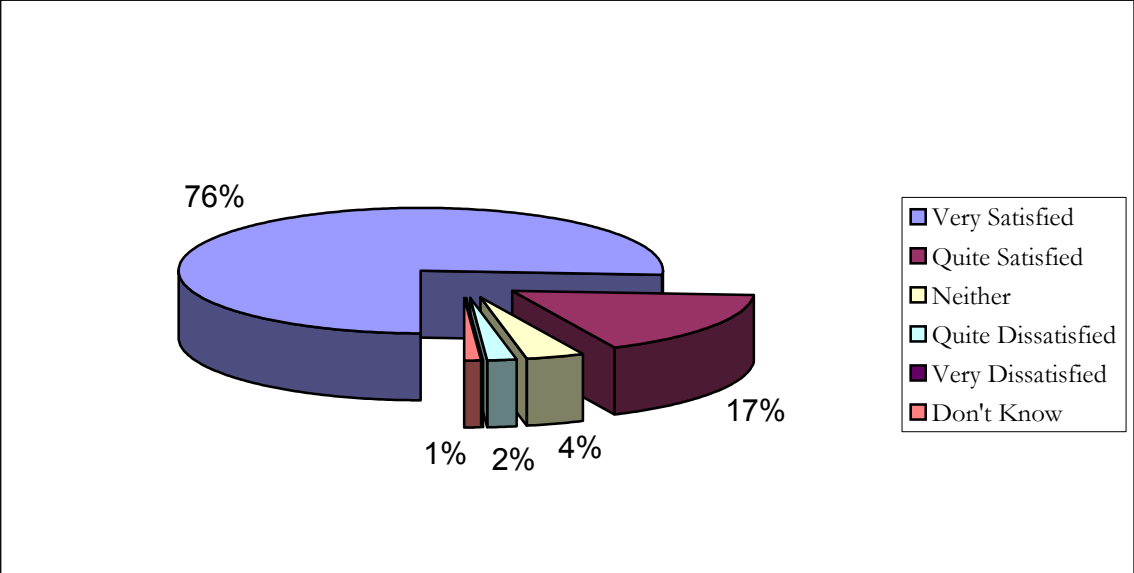


Figure 11. Overall satisfaction with the area.

Finally respondents were asked to comment on their perception of crowding at the areas they had visited in Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB. In total 60% stated that they did not think that the area was over crowded at all, 31% stated that it was 'not really over crowded', 5% stated that it was 'a little over crowded' and only 1% stated that it was 'very over crowded'.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

The results of this survey will be used by the Trust to help plan its activities and inform future policy. The results are being shared with the public, key partners, agencies, policy makers and the local tourism industry in order to help inform the future development of tourism infrastructure and services in the area.

A further follow up survey will be carried out during the summer of 2005 and 2006 which will allow a more complete picture to be developed over time.

For further information or a copy of the detailed survey results please contact:

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