

South Australian Parks Visitation Survey 2023 : Summary and Trends

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1 Purpose

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) initiated the South Australian Parks Visitation Survey to monitor and understand the trends in visitor use and attitudes to parks of South Australian residents. The visitor use market information will inform the management South Australian National Parks and Reserves.

This survey was initiated in 2012 and is conducted annually in May-June to report on the respective financial year.

All surveys can be found on Enviro Data SA.

This summary and trend report highlights the key findings from the 2023 survey and compares the current years findings with past survey results.

2 Aims and objectives

The objectives of the research were to assess the South Australian visitor use, values of and behaviours in National Parks and Reserves and the trend over time. The survey also collects information on survey participant's demographics, (as a broader reflection of the South Australian population) that can be further used to divide the visitor market into subsets of common responses and characteristics.

This summary and trend report highlights the following key measures from the report:

- the number of times they have visited National Parks, Conservation and Recreational Parks over the last twelve months
- which parks they have visited
- the value they place on parks
- their familiarity with, and attitudes towards marine parks
- whether they had a disability or long-term health condition
- activities and experiences undertaken within parks over the previous 12 months

The full suite of measures can be found in the annual Survey reports and the data (including demographic information) is also available for further analysis.

3 Methodology

3.1 Survey Design

McGregor Tan conducted the survey between May and June 2023 and assessed the survey participants experience over the financial year period 2022-23. The desired survey sample size (cost effectiveness and accuracy) is 1000 people, representative of the state population demographics (ABS 2021). This survey recorded the views of 1014 South Australian residents.

For the 2022-23 surveys, an online questionnaire was used. Previous years have used telephone and mobile phone surveys. The approach to use online questionnaire was designed to improve accuracy and engagement in the survey, with respondents having more time to complete and consider survey questions.

The participants survey results are weighted by age group and gender by benchmarks delivered from the 2021 ABS census figures to ensure that the surveys were completed by a representative sample of South Australian residents and minimizes additional weighting of the data.

3.2 History of survey modifications

An outline of survey question and park changes are outlined below to enable transparent assessment of results.

- The South Australian Parks Survey question regarding the percentage of visitors to parks was presented differently from 2014 to previous year's surveys.
- The 2012-2014 surveys identified 10 parks that included iconic parks in SA as well as some parks within the Landscape Region that the survey respondent is located and a query about other parks visited.
- The 2015- onwards surveys identified 10 parks which are within the Landscape Region that the survey respondent is located, but only named an iconic park if it was within the same region and a query about other parks visited. As a result, the figures for iconic parks may be slightly higher in the 2012-2014 surveys.
- For the 2017 survey, due to the requirement for increasing the accuracy of parks visitation data in response to the Connecting Residents with Nature initiative the following Parks in the Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges region were specifically identified in the survey list Para Wirra, Anstey Hill, Black Hill, O'Halloran Hill and Cobbler Creek.
- The 2017 survey also identified Port Gawler in conjunction with the International Bird Sanctuary and Marino in conjunction with Hallett Cove as the walk between the two parks is the major visitation activity.
- In 2019 survey a question was added to understand park visitor use by those in the community that had a disability and / or a long-term health issue.

3.3 Change in Regional boundaries

On 1 July 2020 new Landscape regions replaced the old Natural Resource Management regions, to enable data consistency across the years of survey postcodes attributed to Landscape regions have remained the same as for NRM regions. In nearly all cases boundary changes for the new regions should not affect the results except for the Adelaide Mount Lofty region which has been split into the Hills and Fleurieu and Green Adelaide Landscape regions. For reasons of consistency these two regions will be lumped together under Adelaide Mount Lofty region from the 2020-21 year.

4 Results

4.1 Survey Summary

This summary highlights the key questions and findings from the 2023 survey (financial year period 2022-23) and compares the current years findings with past survey results. The full suite of measures can be found in the annual Parks Visitation Survey reports.

4.2 In 2022-23 what proportion of South Australians visited parks, and how does this compare to previous years?

2022-2023 results

- 77% of South Australians visited a national park and reserve last financial year

Trend

- Between 2014-2015 and 2022-23, there is a small increasing trend in the percentage of South Australians visiting Parks.
- Statistically this trend can be considered as stable
- The peak in 2019-20 was the result of increased visits in the Adelaide region due to COVID restrictions on South Australian travel.
- The drop in 2020-21 was the result of reduced visits in the Adelaide region but increased visits to regional parks.
- The reduction in visitor numbers for 2021 is the subject of additional report Covid Impacts on Visitation of MLR Parks

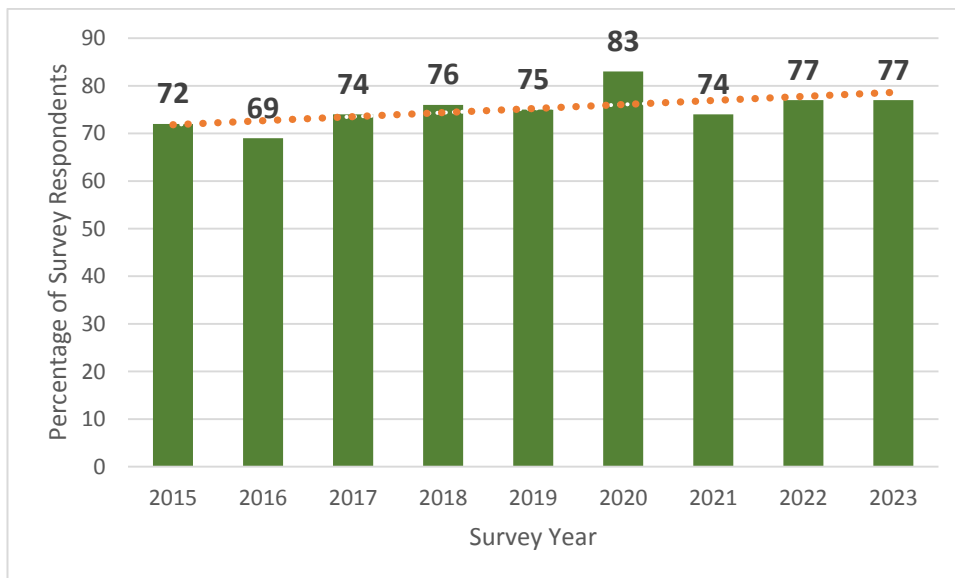


Fig.1 The percentage of South Australians visiting a National Park or Reserve in S.A.

4.3 Is this proportion of visitation similar across all Landscapes regions?

2022-2023 results

- Kangaroo Island, Murray Lands and Riverland and Adelaide & Mount Lofty regions have the highest proportions of residents that visit parks.
- Approximately half of all respondents (58%) visited a national park or reserve in the Adelaide & Mt Lofty Ranges region (Green Adelaide and Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Regions).

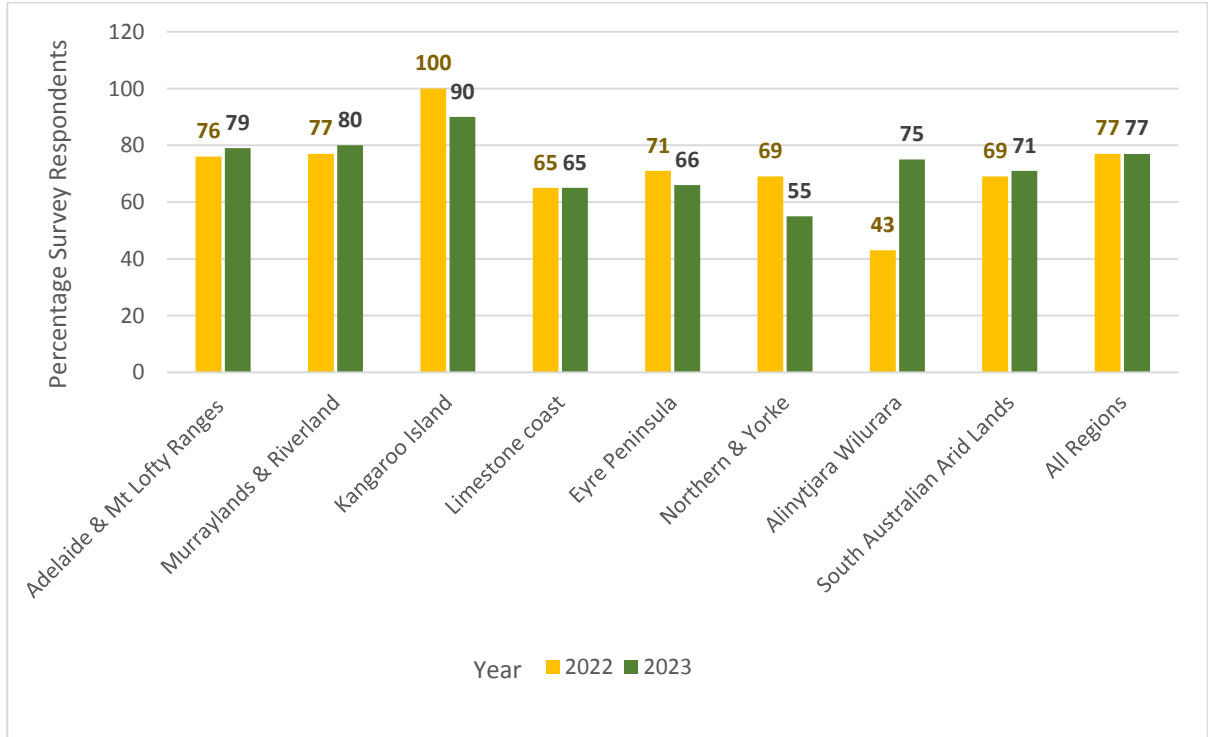


Fig.2 Percentage of regional residents that visit a National Park or Reserve

4.4 Of those people who visit parks how often did they visit?

2022-2023 results

- The median number of times respondents visited a park is 4 times per year

Trend

- Over the period of 2020-21 to 2022-23 there has been a decrease in the number of times people visit parks (1 to 11 visits).
- There has been an increase in the low visitor frequency (1 to 3 visits)
- The high frequency park users who visit 12 times or more has remained stable.

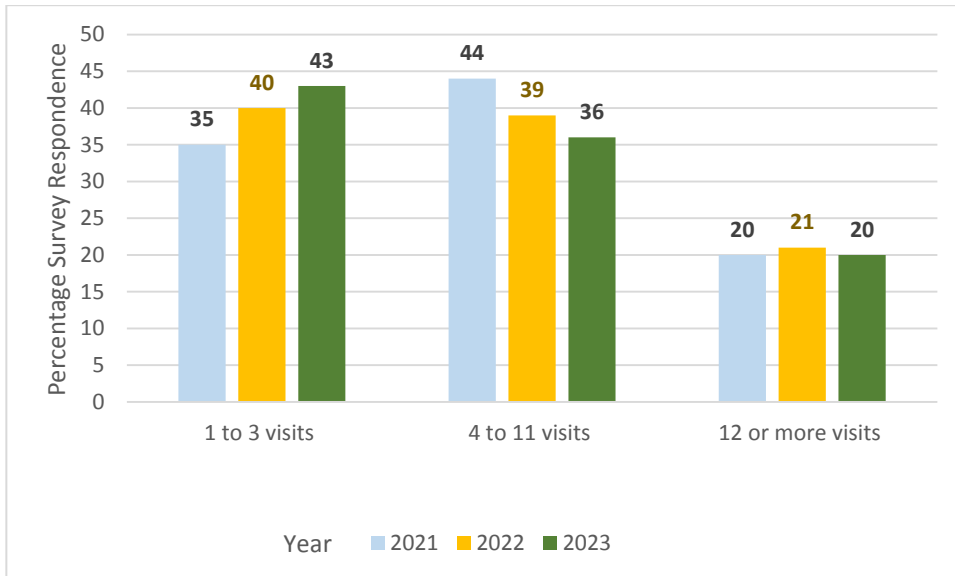


Fig.3 The number of times survey respondents visited a National Park or Reserve over the financial year.

4.5 What Parks values most directly reflect those of the community?

2022-2023 results

- Most survey respondents (59%) value parks primarily for the protection of native plants and animals and cultural heritage
- 39% value parks primarily as community spaces for recreation, enjoyment, and health
- Only 1% believe parks are not important to them

Trend

- Over the period of 2020-21 to 2022-23 there has been an increasing trend in people valuing parks primarily for the protection of native plants and animals and cultural heritage

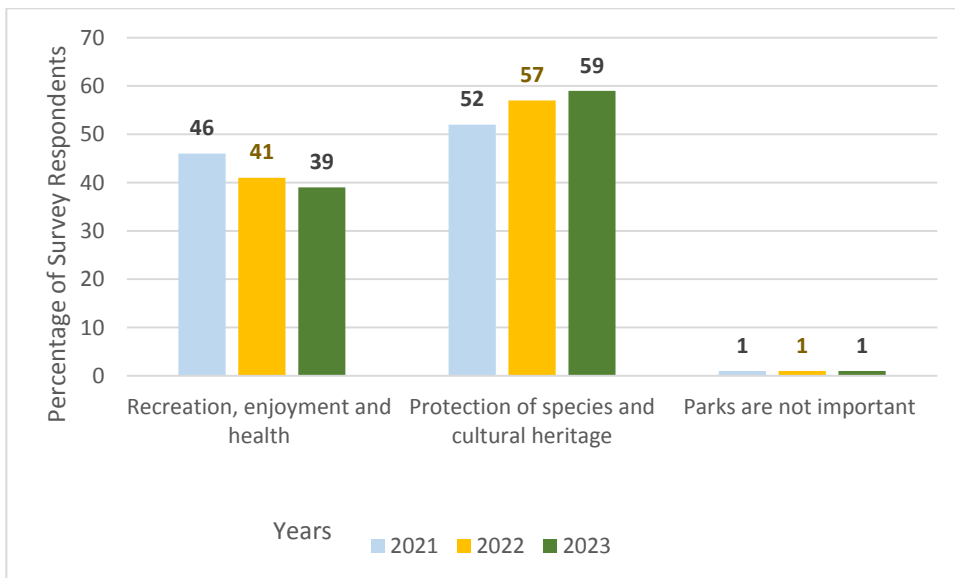


Fig.4 Survey respondents' primary values for National Parks and Reserves

4.6 What were the top fifteen most popular Parks in SA?

2022-2023 results

- The three most popular parks in South Australia are Belair (27%) Cleland (21%) and Morialta (17%)

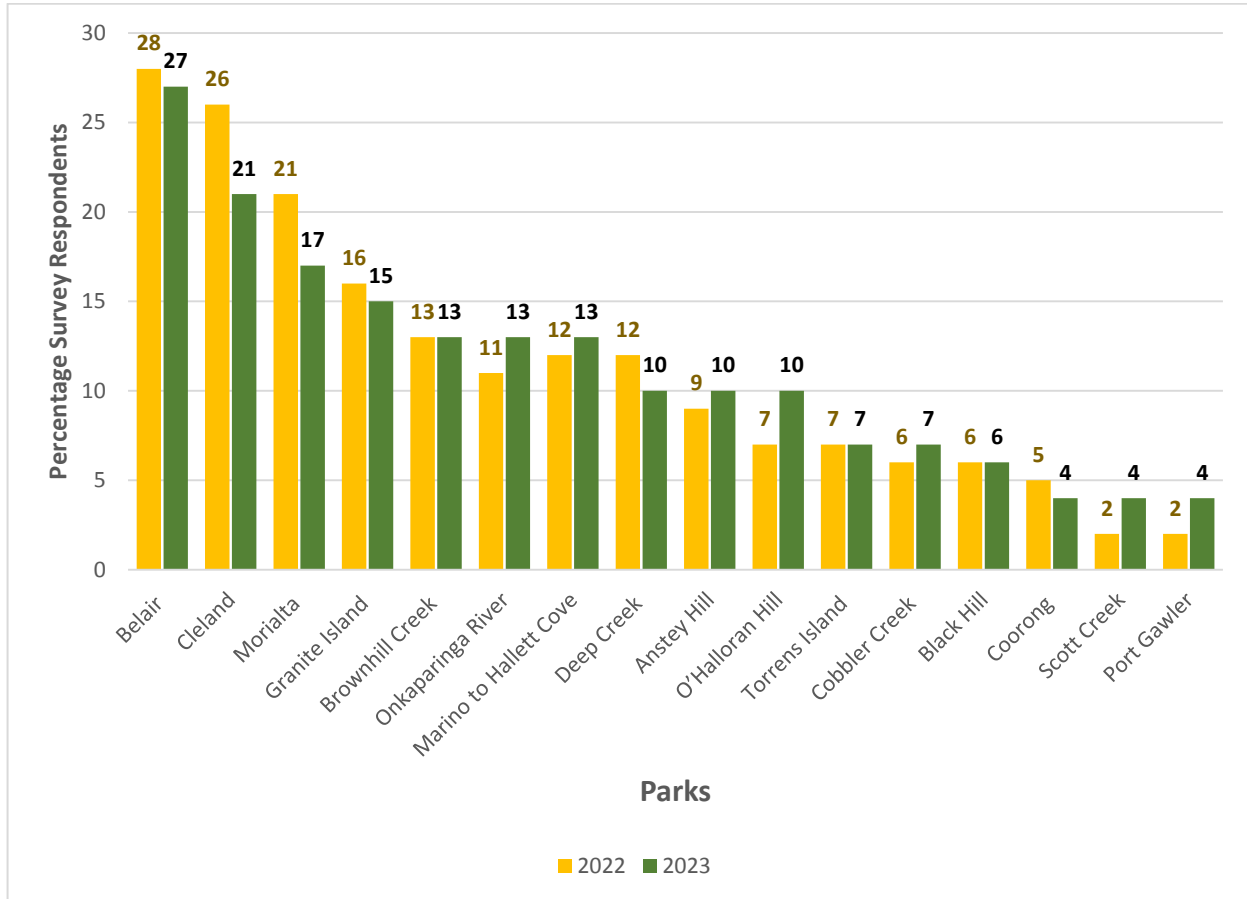


Fig 5. The most popular parks in South Australia visited by survey respondents.

4.7 What has been the community’s attitude to marine parks from 2012 – 2023?

2022-2023 results

- 58% of respondents are positive about marine parks.
- 3% of respondents are negative about marine parks.
- 38% of respondents are neutral (or don’t know) about marine parks.

Trend

- Since 2016-17 there has been an increasing trend in positive attitude to marine parks
- Since 2016-17 there has been a decreasing trend in negative attitude to marine parks
- Since 2016-17 there has been a decreasing trend in those who are neutral to marine parks

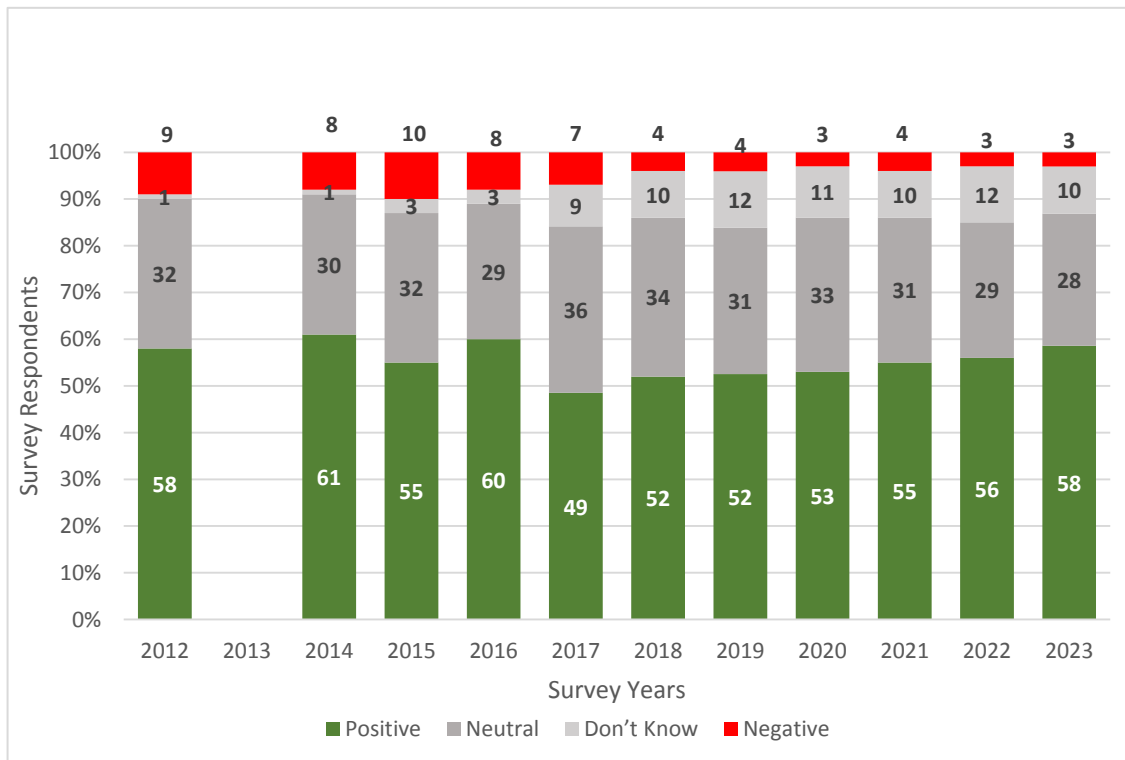


Fig.6 Attitude towards marine parks (South Australia’s marine parks were established in 2015)

4.8 How does the community’s familiarity with marine parks relate to their attitude to marine parks?

2022-2023 results

- Of the 33% of respondents who are **not familiar** with marine parks, 68% have a neutral or unsure position on marine parks compared to only 24% of those who **are familiar** with what a marine park is.
- Of the 66% of respondents who are familiar with marine parks, 72% are positive about marine parks

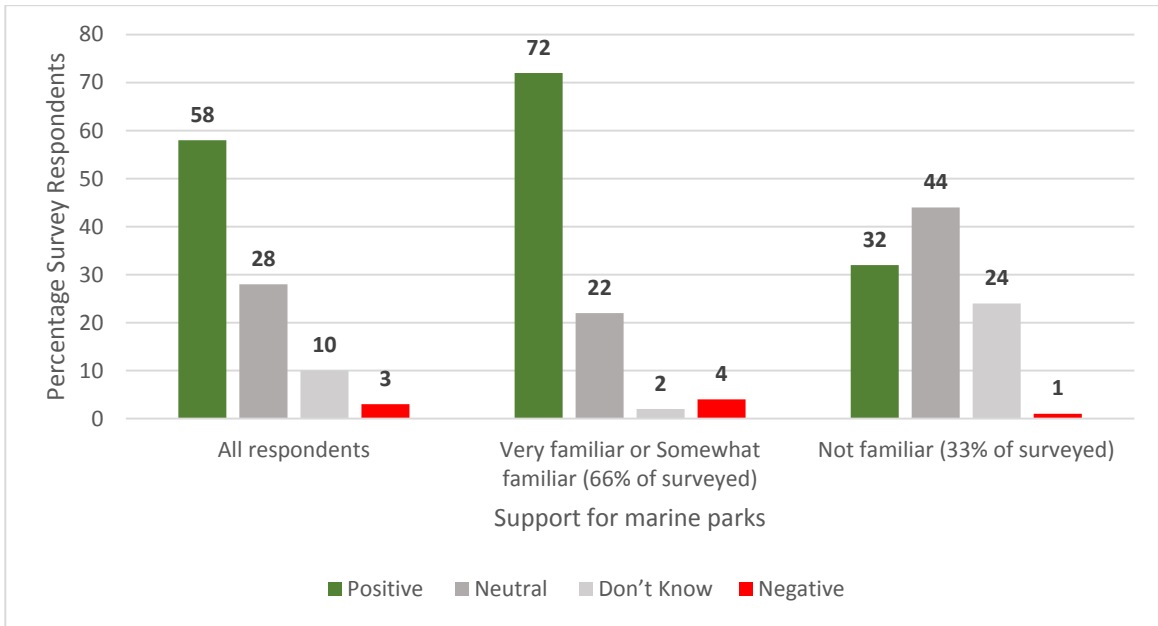


Fig.7 Community support of marine parks based on their familiarity with marine parks

4.9 Do South Australians who have a disability or long term health issue engage with parks less?

2022-2023 results

- 27% of South Australians identify with having a disability or long-term health issue.
- Of those people with a disability or long-term health issue, 34% did not visit a park, compared to only 21% of those without a disability or long-term health issue.

Trend

- Trends show consistently that people with a disability or long-term health issue engage with parks less than those without a disability or long-term health issue.
- These results highlight the importance of parks design for to improve accessibility facilities and equitable use.

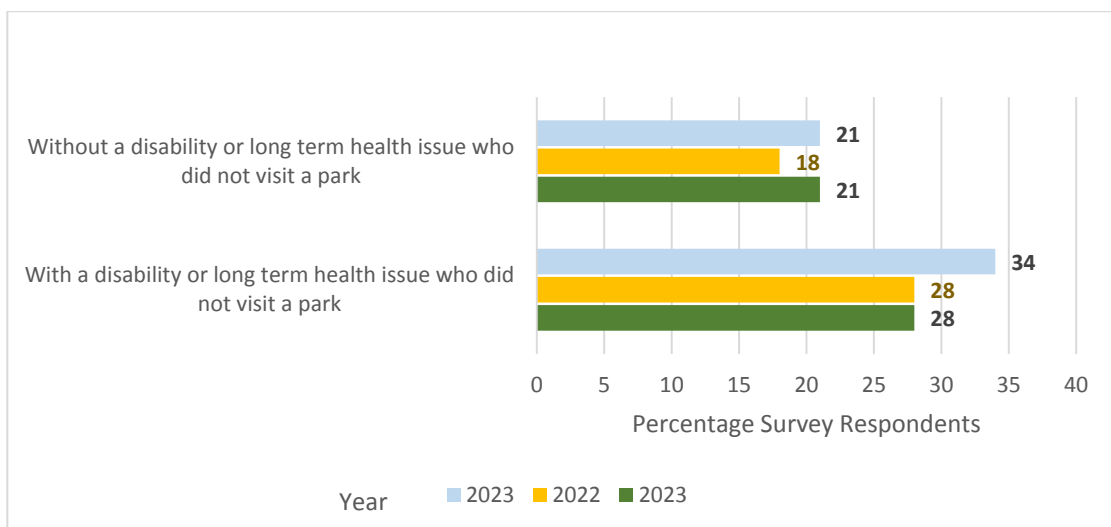


Fig.8 People who did not visit a park based on disability and long-term health issue

4.10 What activities and experiences did South Australians participate in when visiting parks in the last 12 months?

2022-2023 results

- Experiencing nature and scenery and walking are the primary activities in parks enjoyed by 87% of visitors
- Engaging with parks as a place to connect with family and friends (66%) and for personal time (58%) are important activities that provide wellbeing and mental health benefits for parks visitors
- Parks provide an important opportunity as a place to connect with and learn about nature (56%)

Trend

- Percentage of respondents engagement in the various activities and experiences in parks remains consistent across the surveys

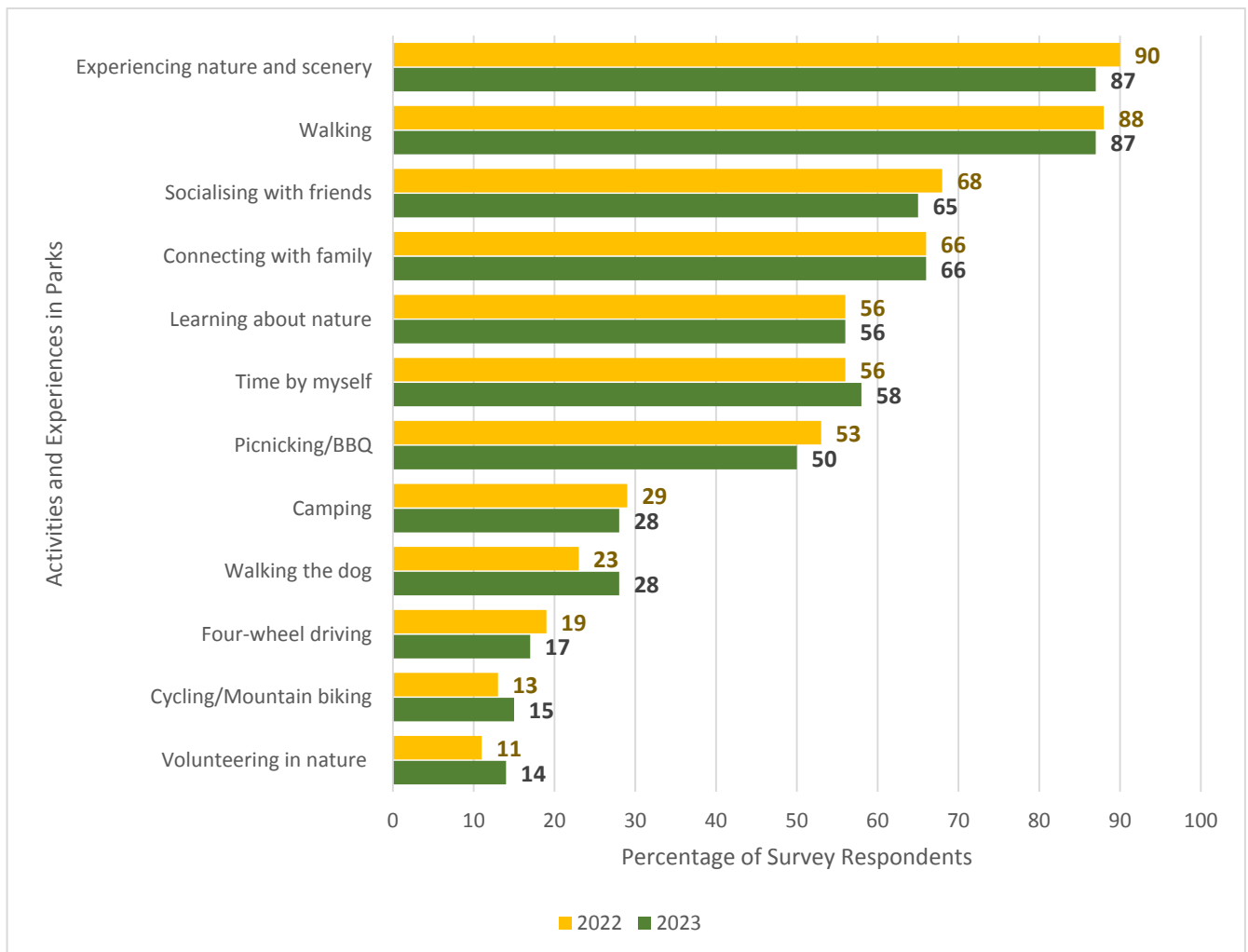


Fig.9 Activities and experiences respondents enjoyed when visiting parks over the last 12 months.

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