

South West London Humanists

Survey 2012

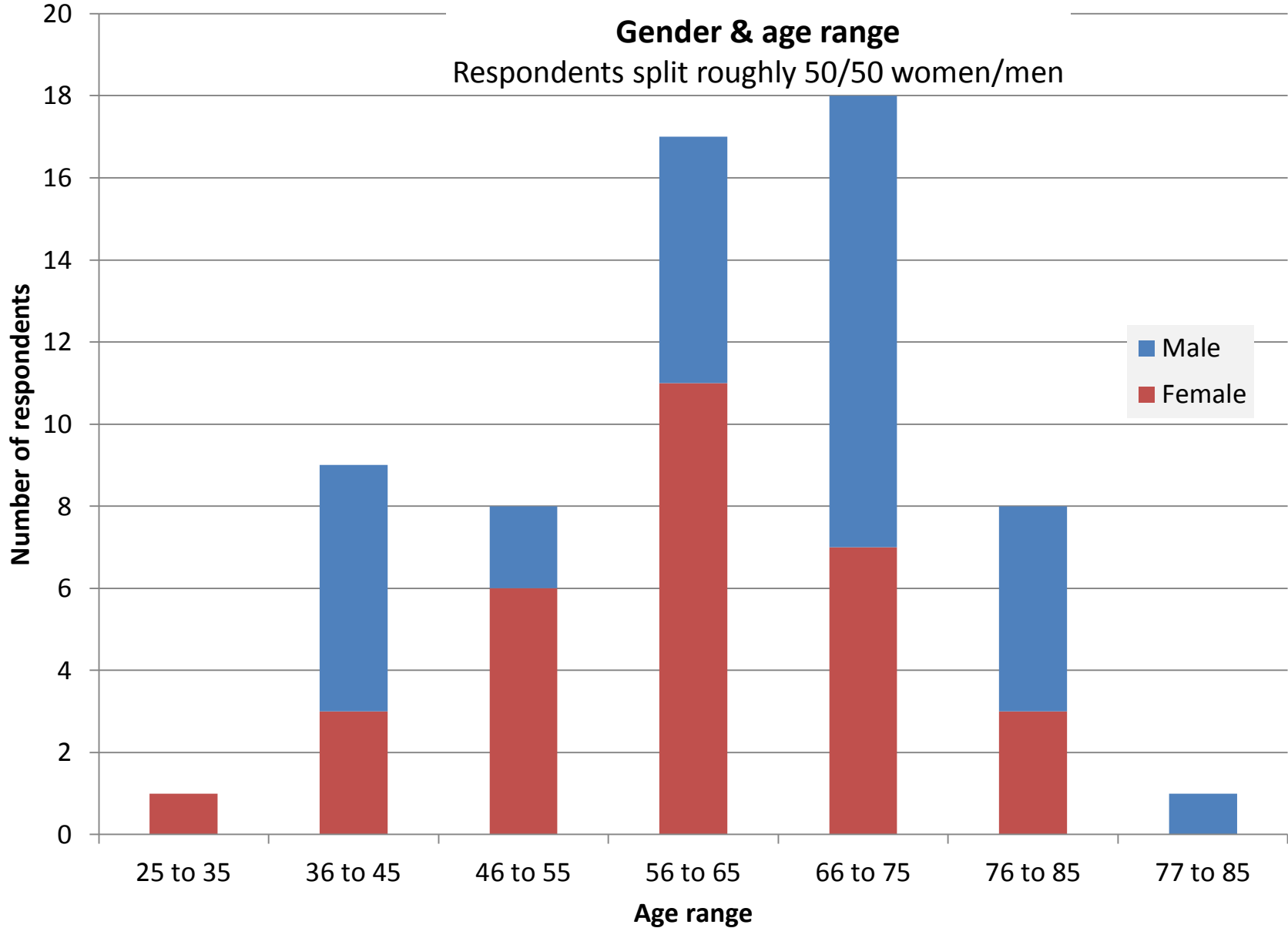
& feedback from group discussion

26th March

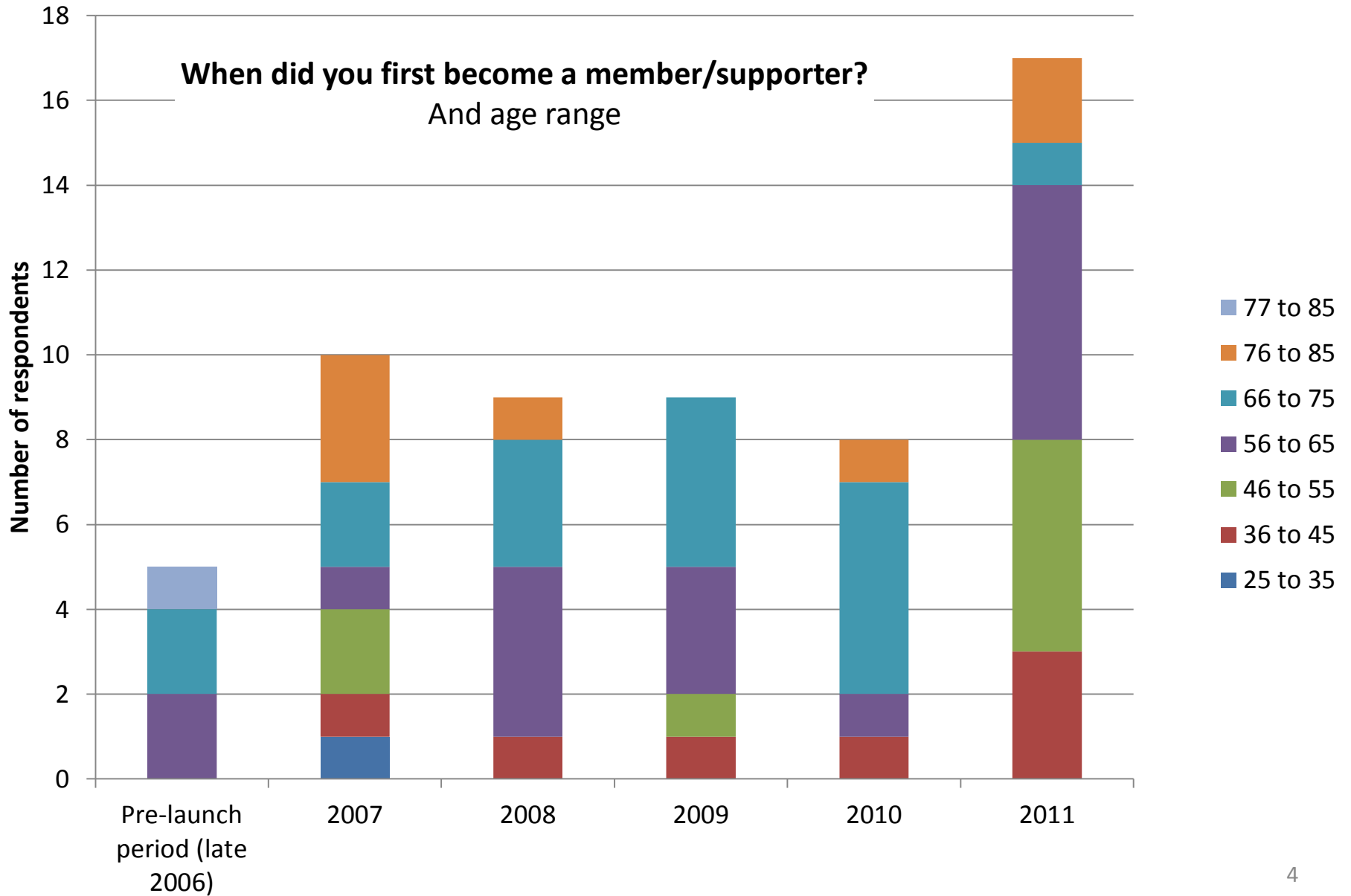
SURVEY - PART ONE

Who were the 65 respondents?

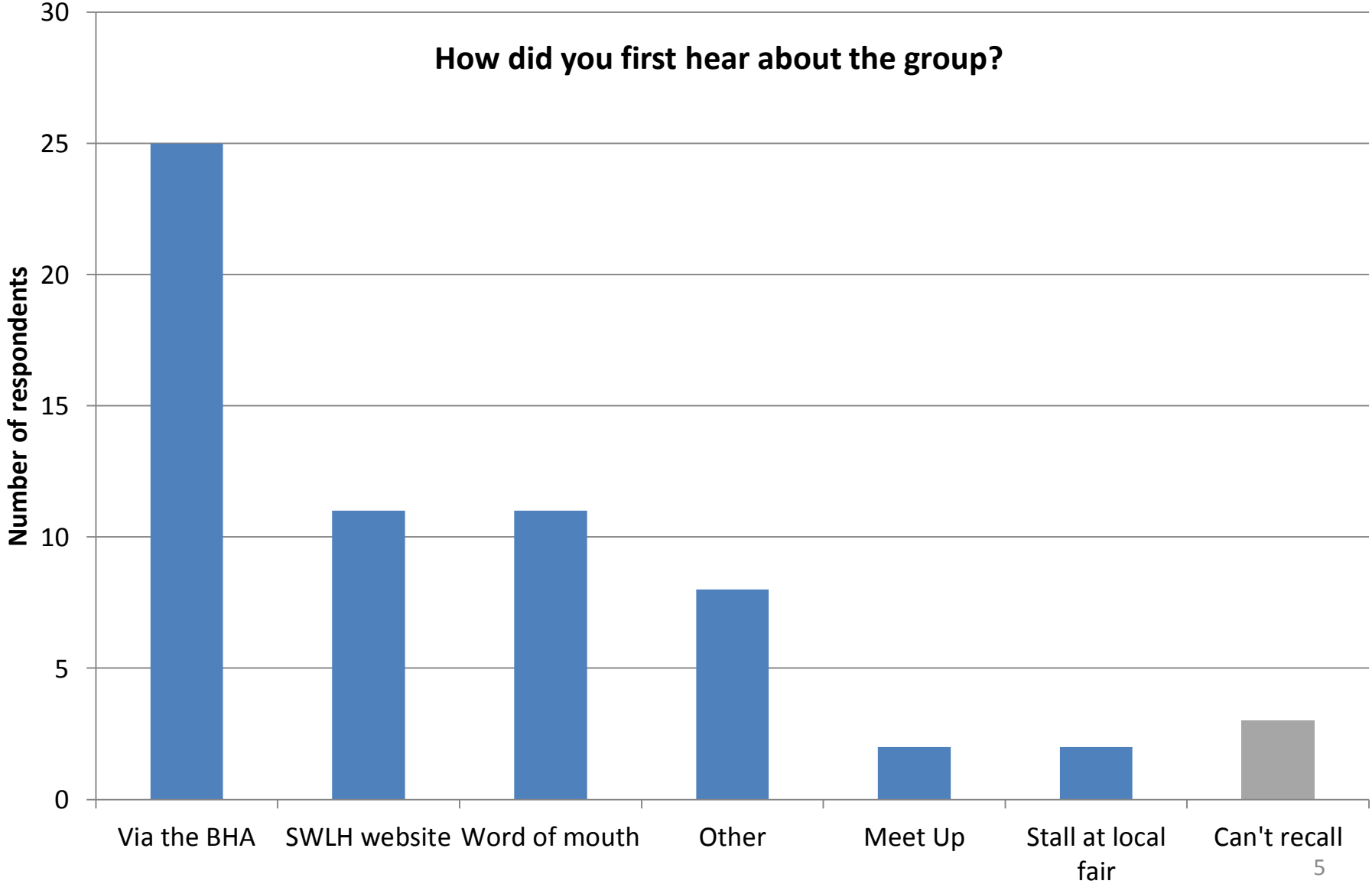
We're 50/50 women/men with a good age spread, but could benefit from more younger people....



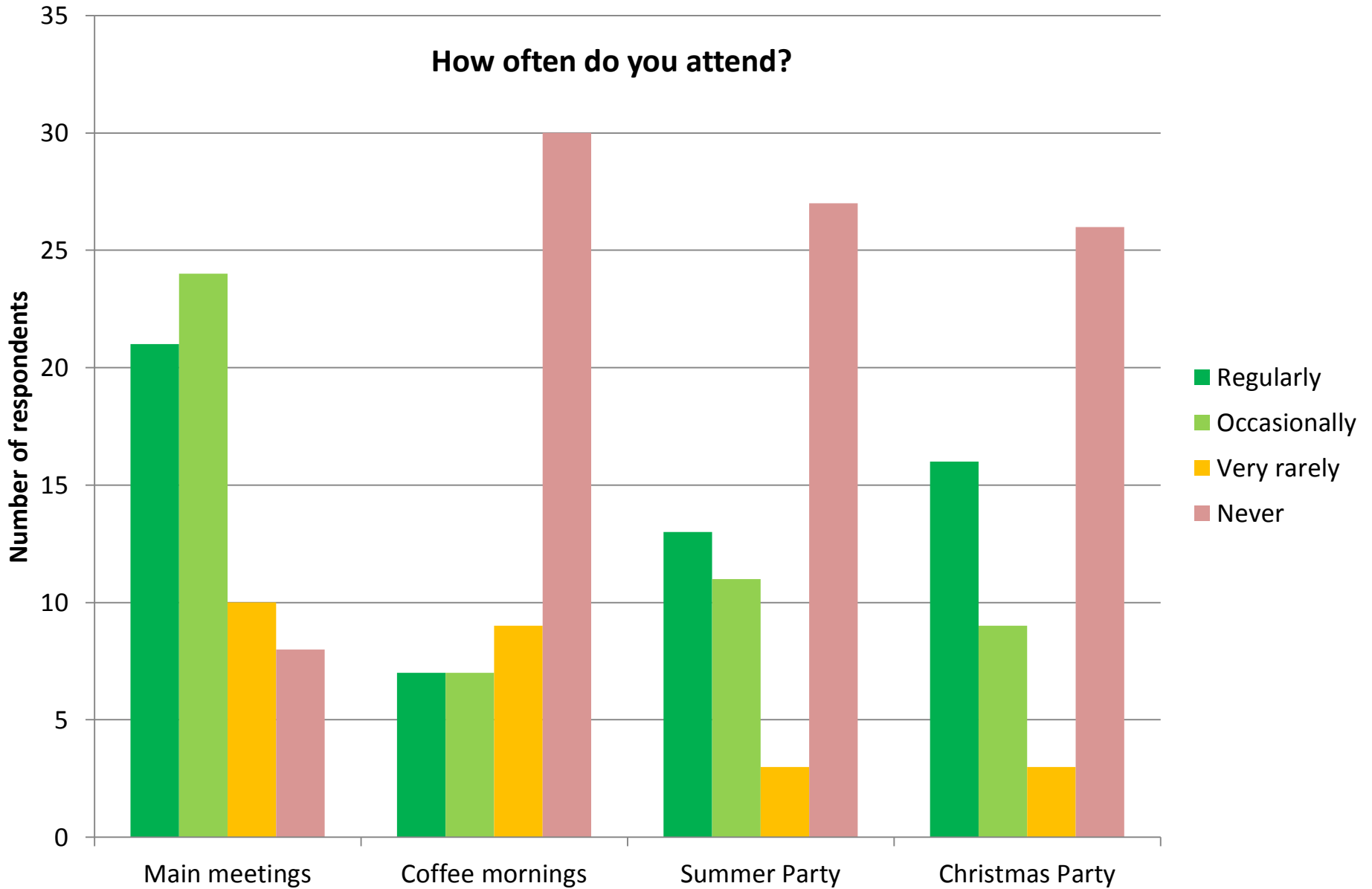
More recent supporters have on average been slightly younger....



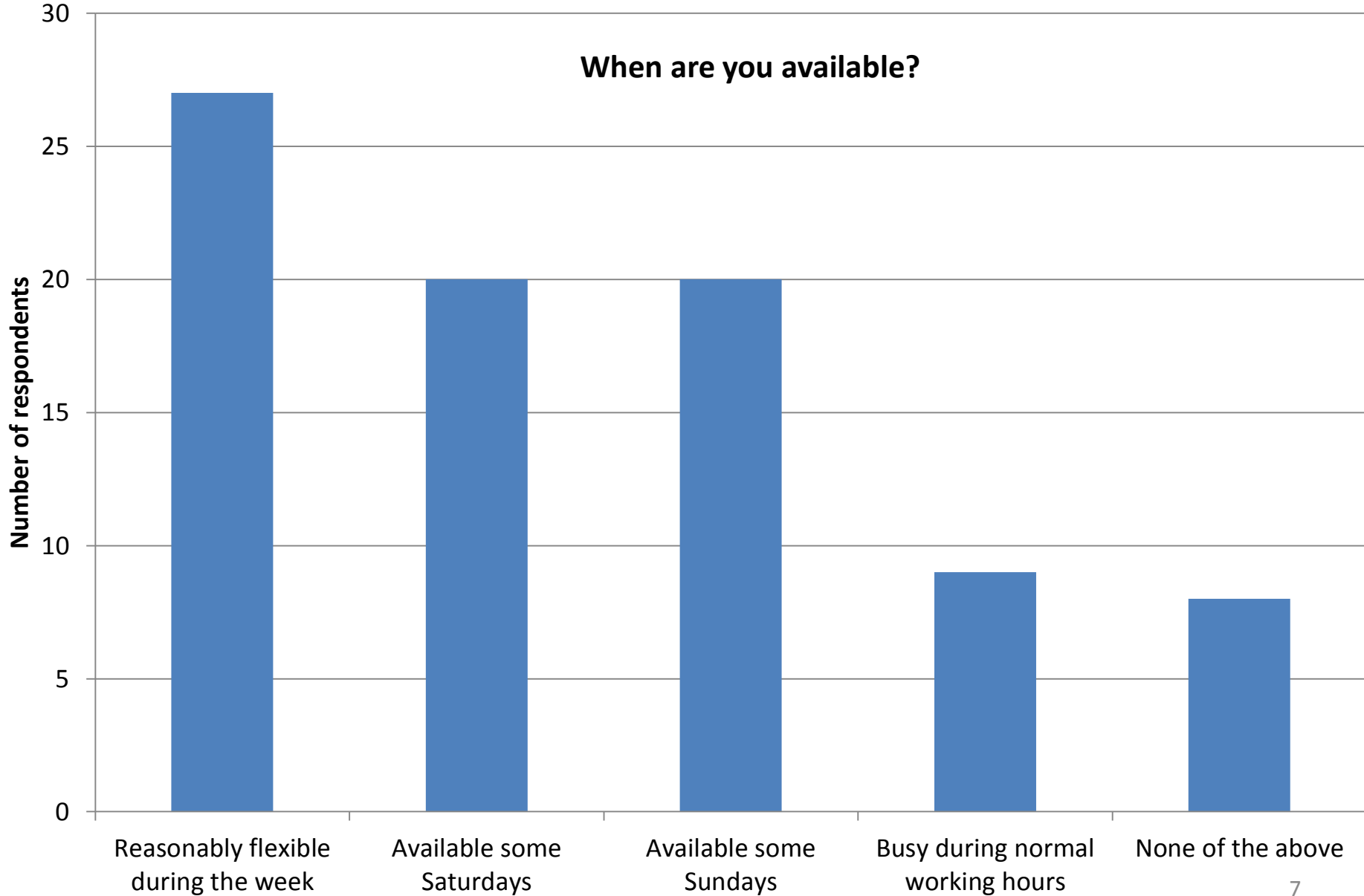
No surprise that the majority of people find us via the BHA, and our website plays an important role, but disappointing that so few of our MeetUp members responded to the survey...



How often do you attend?



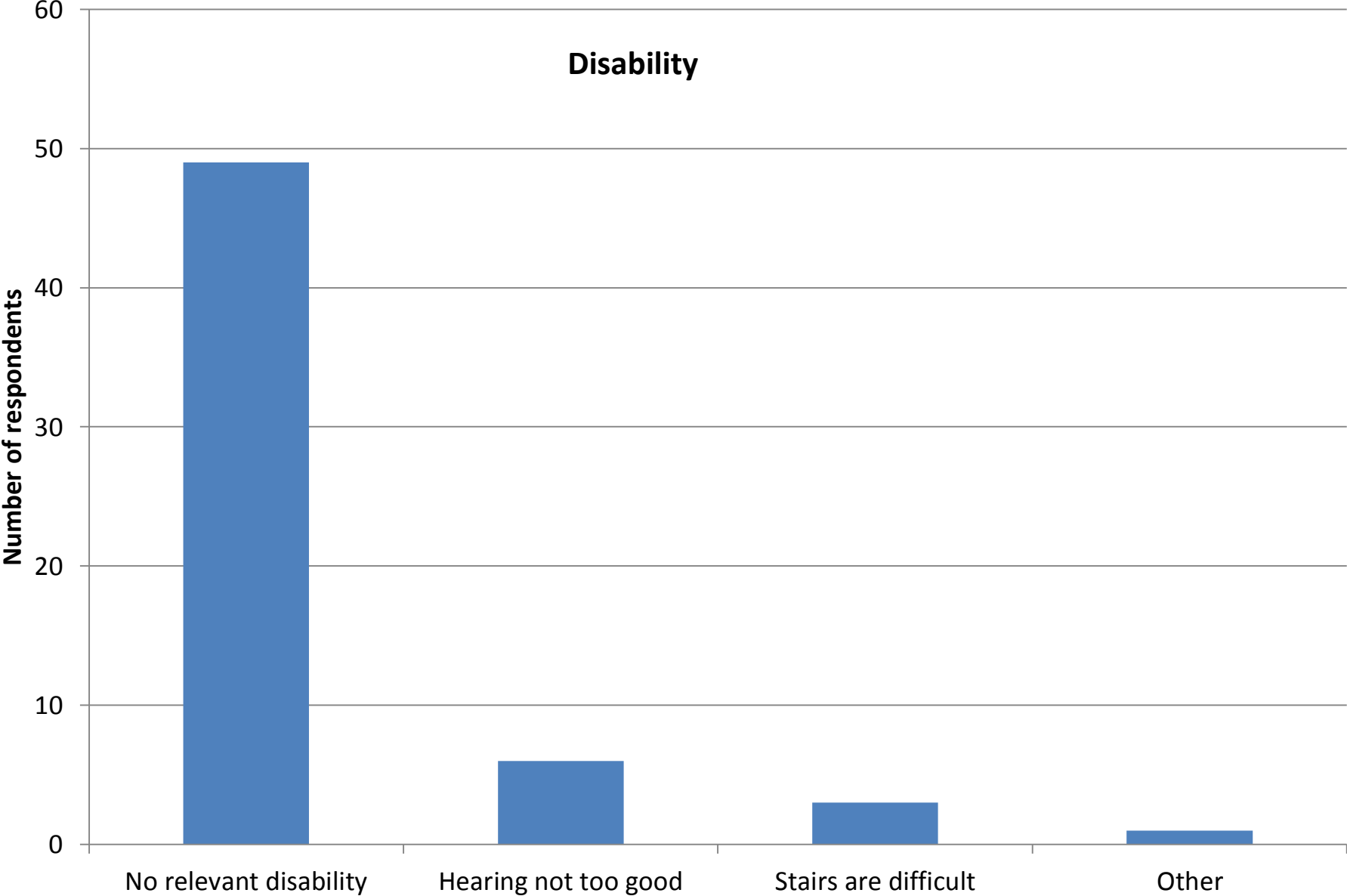
Perhaps reflecting the proportion of non-working people, there is a lot of flexibility on availability among those who responded during the week, and we could probably try events at weekends....



Comments on availability

- Varies between work, council and family commitments but not often available.
- My problem is that I have in the last 6 months or so effectively become full time employed again, even working overtime a lot,so unable to make the meetings as often as I like
- Difficult journey from Mitcham so I have only attended once
- While interested initially in coming along to an evening meeting, I was somewhat put-off by the political nature of the website content/notes of discussion etc.
- My working hours are 6am to 4pm. So i usually have to go bed early. Weekend afternoons or evenings would suit me best.
- I would like to get involved with the group however work and nonwork commitments restrict the time I have available to attend meetings.
- Part time job, plus two young children, so availability depends on husband babysitting.
- I am retired...
- I am living in the Westmidland
- I teach some evening classes, which can get in the way of social activities such as meetings.
- I do have regular commitments but so far there hasn't been a clash.
- Current timings work well for me as in my other home I try to attend mtgs of the Greter Manchester Humanists (2nd Wed of month) and Stockport Humanist Group (3rd Wed). Co-ordination to avoid clashing with other local groups seems sensible.
- I am living 100 miles away
- Being a new Mum restricts my movements at the moment! I only heard about the local meeting right after I gave birth so have not been able to commit as much as I'd have liked
- My music activities take up a lot of my evenings.
- Live in Woking, work in Kingston - hard to get over to Richmond for main meetings despite best intentions. Hard even to escape work for coffee mornings!
- What does 'available' mean?
- I work Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and often have commitments on Thurs and Fri
- I am not in the best of health and so I cannot foretell just when I'll be fit enough for any activity.
- Prefer daytime

Disability

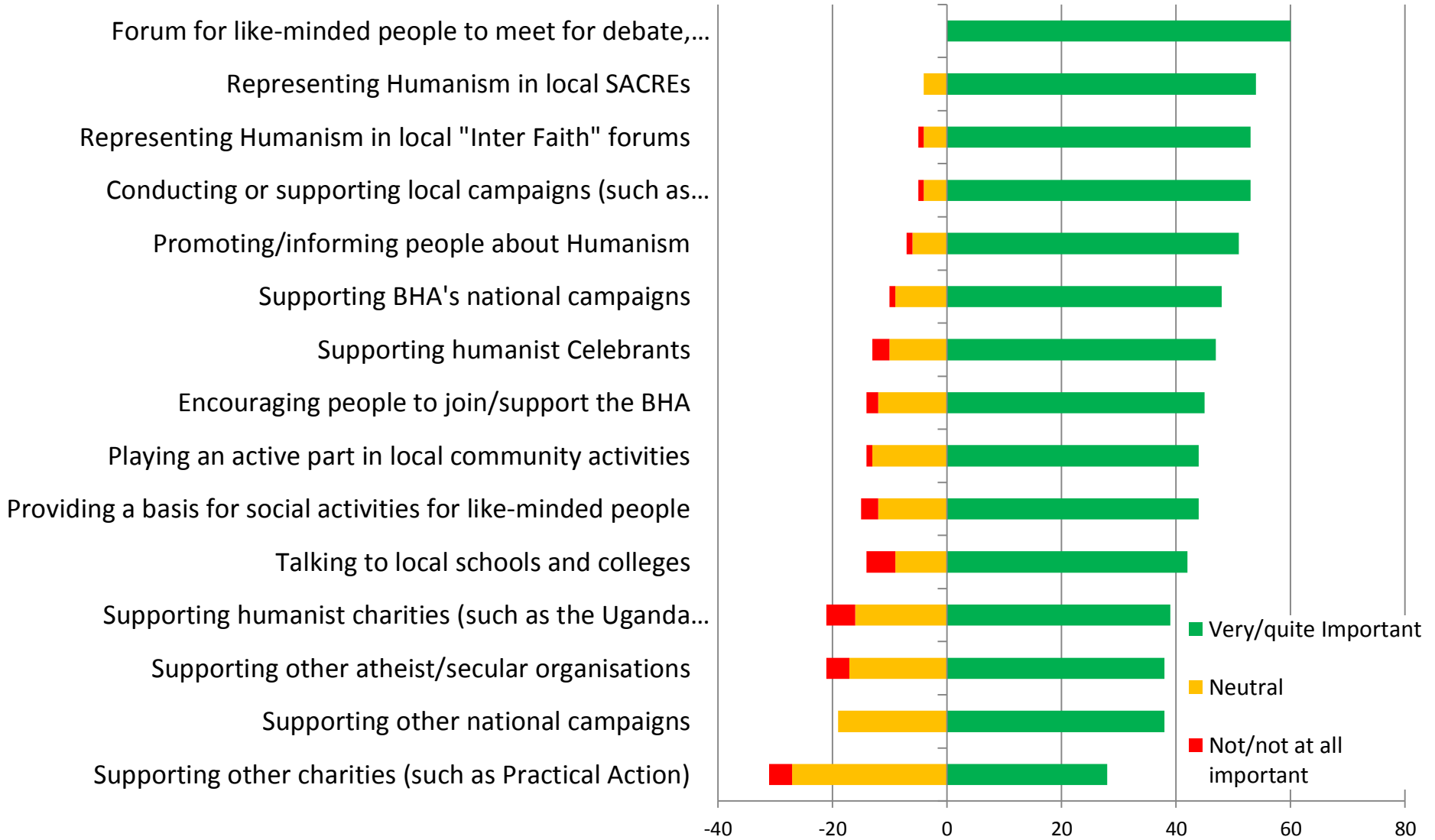


PART TWO

What were respondents' views?

Relative importance of group activities

Positive views versus neutral & negative views

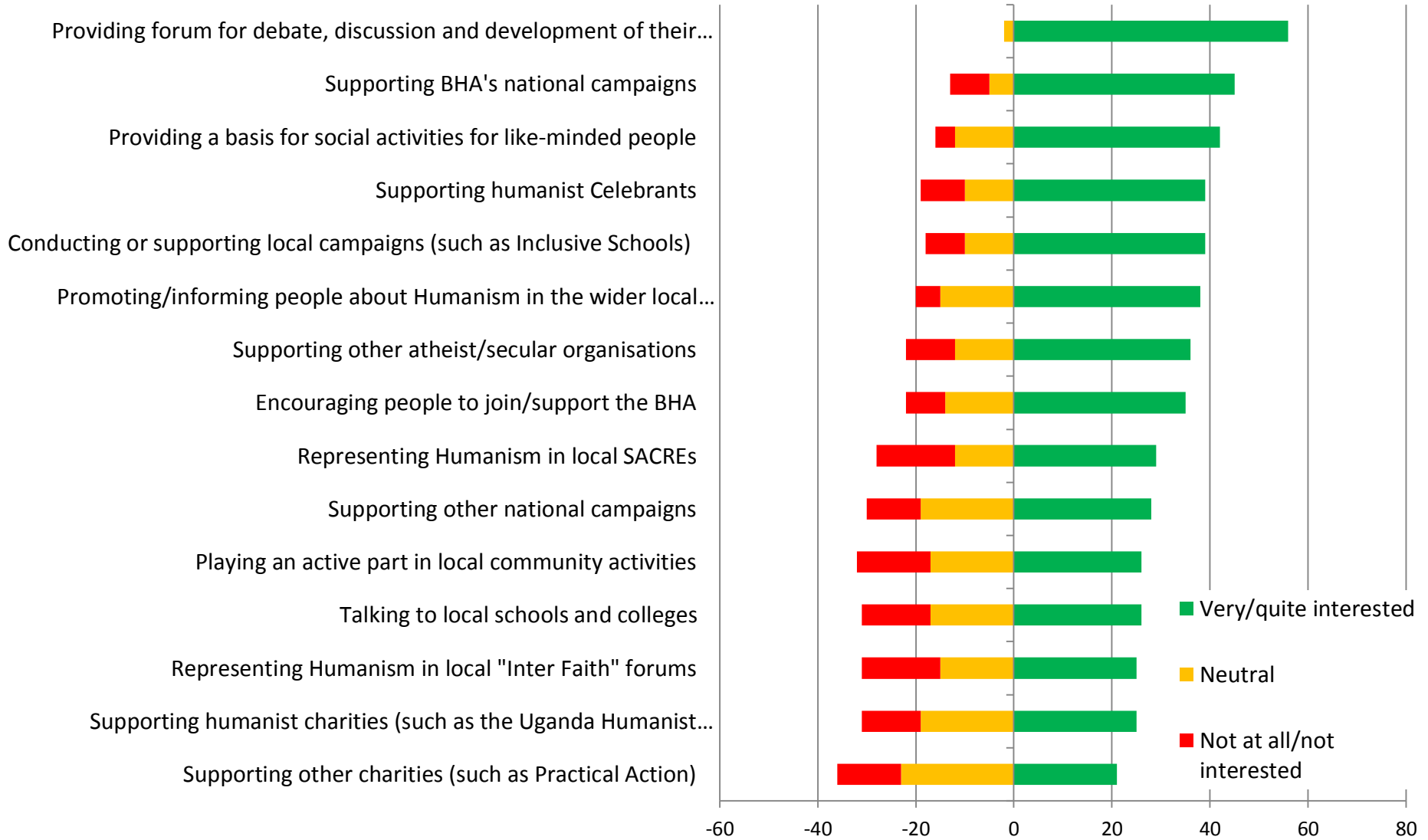


Comments on group purpose

- I am hard line as far as mixing with faith based groups: I really do not feel we should be wooly or liberal but set about casting our own nets wide (to use a biblical illiteration). I am happy to support the Vineyard group because it helps people who are in need; I would much rather it were the Humanists that were leading on such an enterprise. If there are people who are willing to give their time to the Vineyard, why can we not help 'needy' people ourselves? We have already started giving to our adopted charities, why then not take action ourselves?
- Humanists should try to build good relationship/friendship, trust and create a sense of community spirit by supporting each others emotionally & socially to live as a humanist. Once humanists have this strong foundation, humanist will be able to bringing in new members through words of mouth. Just do what a christain would do to support their members and to increase their memberships but without the supperstition or the dogmatic bits. There is some good stuff in the bible you know.
- "Why put ("while avoiding "proselytizing")? Lower down the list you have "encouraging people to join/support the BHA" which could reasonably be interpreted as "proselytizing". This bit of wording is simply unnecessary and could confuse."
- "Very many in the target audiences of potential members & supporters are involved in other campaigns & activism - much of this is on political issues [since, as Orwell said, all issues are political]. I [& many of my friends and colleagues] would welcome debates and events which acknowledged this. It would be possible to have a strategy of greater inclusion and involvement, whilst maintaining a politically neutral stance - much as churches do....."
- It would be great if humanists groups can provide emotional and social support & friendship to humanists or potential humanists to live as a humanist and to create trust and a sense of community, this is why the churches able to draw people in even they don't believe in god.
- "1 -As a non-resident in Richmond, I have limited interest/influence in local events. 2- I support my own preferred charities and don't really want to get involved in other very local ones."
- "Too many "Neutrals" and "Don't Know's". I recoil a bit from too much campaigning because I don't think of myself as or want to be seen as one of "The Humanists" just as I wouldn't want to be one of "The Catholics/Muslims/etc".
- The debates and discussions really the core interest of the local group for me.
- If individuals wish to volunteer at eg the Vineyard project or any other local group, that's terrific but I'm not sure whether it should be specifically linked to the Humanists.
- I do agree that Humanism should be discussed and debated as part of "RE" education together with all the other major religions and beliefs in the world."
- I'm happy for the group to decide to support a particular cause, but not for this to be formalised or mandatory.

Personal interest in group activities

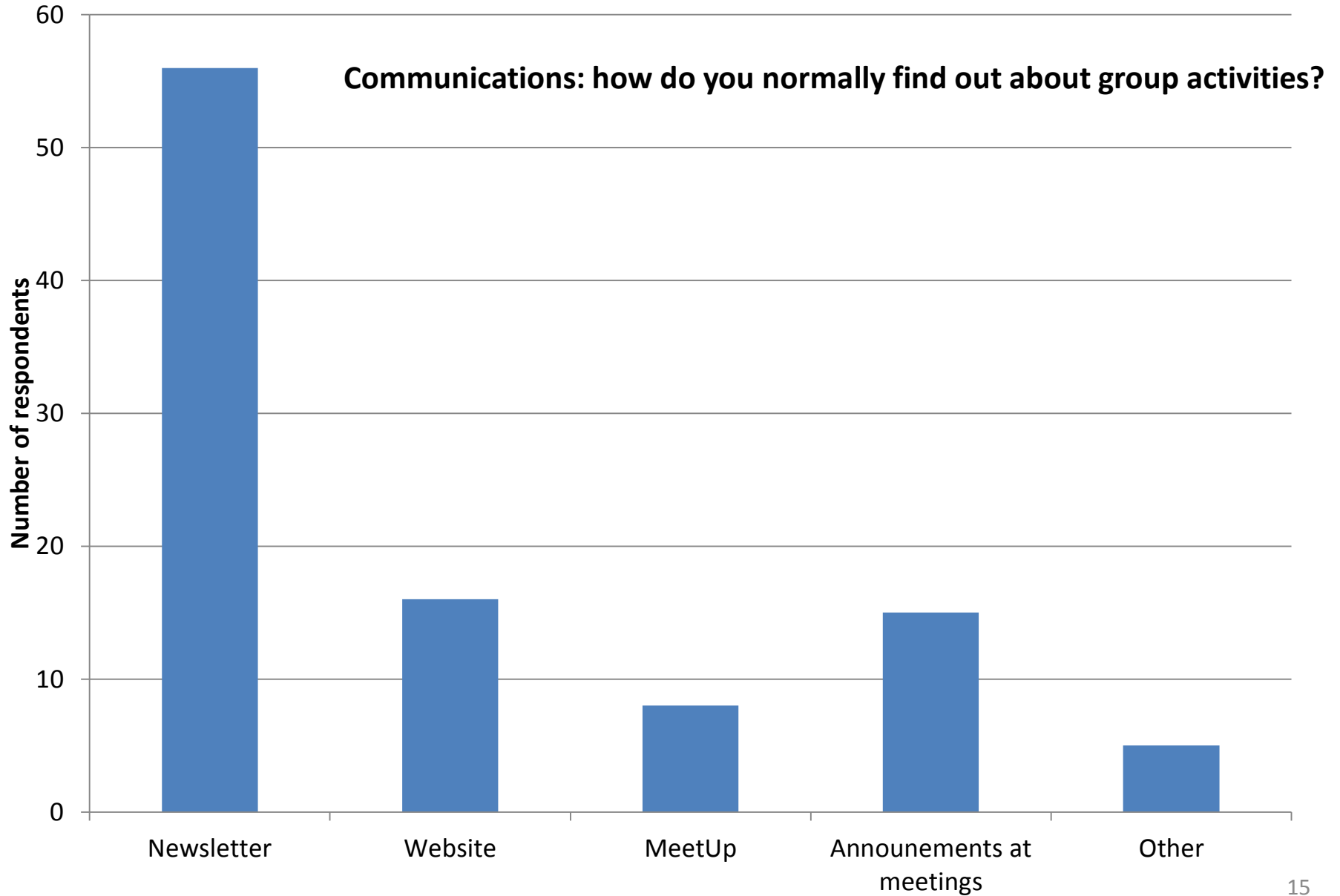
Positive views versus neutral & negative views



Comments on personal interest

- Might help with Vineyard lunches but am seldom available on Sundays because of family commitments
- "I represent the BHA on Merton's Interfaith Forum. I have been a member of Merton's SACRE for 20 years and I am now on Group A. I have been a member of the BHA for about 40 years and in the past few years have joined the NSS. I am a member of Sutton Humanist Group. I don't like speaking to schools so I am pleased to have received help from your group."
- Although I do some of the above, I'm not sure how useful it is!
- Not a Richmond resident
- I am a Humanist member of the Wandsworth SACRE and a Humanist chaplain for King's College Hospital as well as being a celebrant for 16 years.
- Would welcome feedback from those already involved, eg a short newsletter entry after a positive local event, to help convert my interest into positive action. Some of the above I wasn't aware of, so the heart is willing,,,
- "I feel very strongly that ever debate, discussion, etc., should include calls to action. e.g. we had a debate on legalisation of drugs - I'd have welcomed a list of potential actions for all of us: get regular updates on drug use & social attitudes, sign a petition, follow a Hansard debate, volunteer at a rehab project, etc. We should take care not to fall into the ""chattering classes"" trap !"
- I belong to a Unitarian church where I am very involved - our values are akin to those of the BHA
- Not sure I've ticked the right boxes e.g. I think that representing Humanism in local "Inter Faith" forums is very important but I wouldn't have the skill to do it myself. Sorry
- Sorry - think my comments at No 10 should be here
- We are not a religion - we have very different ideas about a lot of things. I am usually involved with some charities but not as a humanist
- All depends on my state of health/energy level

In general respondents were happy with the whichever communications medium they chose to use. But the new on-line Discussion Forum is not yet well-established



Comments on how people find out about group activities

- Direct e-mails from other members
- emails from the BHA
- "I keep dropping out of Meet-Up etc. - there seems to be problem with my e-mail. This is unique to SWLH - is there perhaps a rogue version of my e-mail in the works, perhaps a blank space at the end, after the o of yahoo?"
- James is my best contact - we keep bumping into each other in pubs, along the Thames, in the street: everywhere - he is my Scarlet Pimpernel but I don't have to look for him: he just pops up everywhere, even in my front garden! I usually call him 'David', though."
- Husband reminds me
- Informal conversation at meetings, which also provide positive common interest opportunities attractive to freethinkers but not SWLH sponsored as such.
- word of mouth - e.g. chatting at the Vineyard lunch
- word of mouth
- e-mail newsletter is my main source

Comments on communications

- Haven't used the Discussion Forum yet - will have a look.
- Forum is a great idea, I just haven't got around to using it yet.
- Just genuine gratitude for the commitment of a few that makes my participation possible
- "I'm happy to help! [I'm a journo by trade, & do campaigns, PR, social marketing - & don't mind proofreading!]"
- I would like to know more about SWLH Discussion Forum, can anyone help me?
- I must have a look at MeetUp and the Discussion Forum
- Discussion Forum probably needs someone (Jon?) to "seed" a fortnightly topic.
- I am a member of a political party and as such am quite happy to encourage people to join, support its campaigns and so on - but I see our group as an informal association giving members opportunities to discuss views, disagree, socialise, support other groups, arrange meetings as they wish - but not on a formal basis as evangelists. I belonged to BHA many years ago, in the Midlands, and remember great discussions but have no memory of 'MeetUps', Leaders', 'Distinguished supporters', 'Undistinguished Supporters' nor of godlike advice from the BHA executive.
- The newsletter is excellent. It just arrives too late for me to attend BHA meetings. The notice of the meetings is excellent - but doesn't give time to attend in most cases.

Comments on newsletter

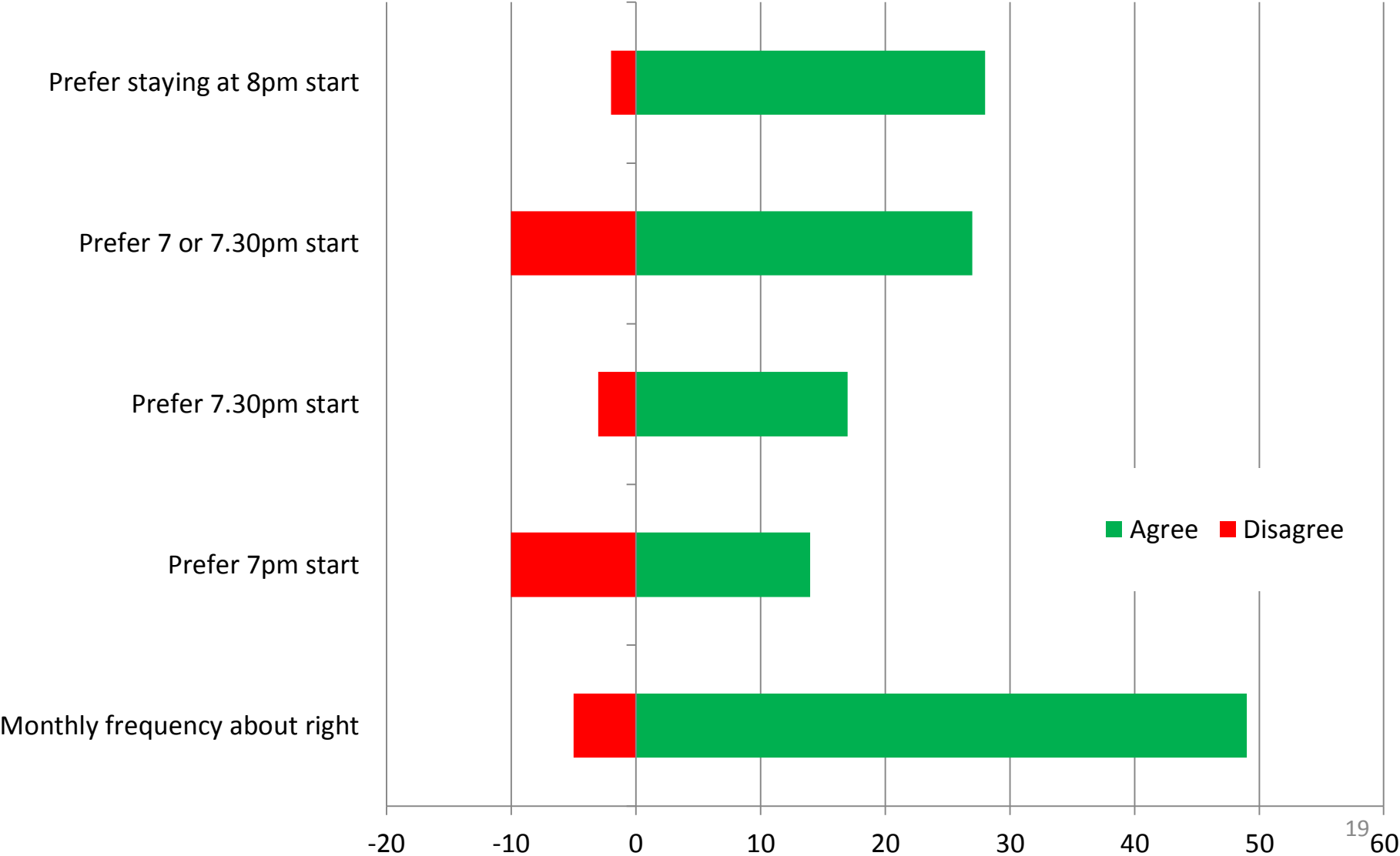
- The Newsletter is excellent! Factual, clear lay-out etc.
- "Comments from supporters on current affairs, rolling stories.....e.g. the debate last week on ""gender abortions"" Guest-authored pieces - by key members? [& send the mag to the BBC Moral Maze, etc., so that you get asked on!]"
- I just appreciate the effort that is put into producing this newsletter.

If you never (or only rarely) attend monthly meetings, what (if anything) would make you come more often? *Comments after exclusion of personal issues, such as lack of free time*

- Speakers from outside the group who have expertise in scientific, philosophical, psychological up to date research which raises questions for modern living.
- Interesting speakers
- The topic of discussion makes a difference. If it is of particular interest, that obviously provides an incentive.
- A request for members' suggestions for topics and response to a suggestion
- Topics for debate relating to what is happening in the world now -- threat of war in Iran, The UK's part in the arms trade, the "riots", a free press/ethical media.....
- Meeting at the weekend or earlier in the evening.
- Weekend afternoons/evenings
- Better venue; less vested interests of members i.e. vegetarianism
- Better venue - speakers who speak up and are lively
- There should be trusting, a sense of community spirit
- Humanists groups should concentrate building friendship and support for members' emotional needs as well as educational topics - like the churches but without the irrationality, superstition and dogma
- More time to socialise.
- Get rid of admin and notices at the start.
- Would welcome additional smaller discussion groups

No question about sticking to monthly frequency. And on balance it looks as though we should keep to our 8pm start time for the main meeting (7pm for socialising), but worth a further discussion.....

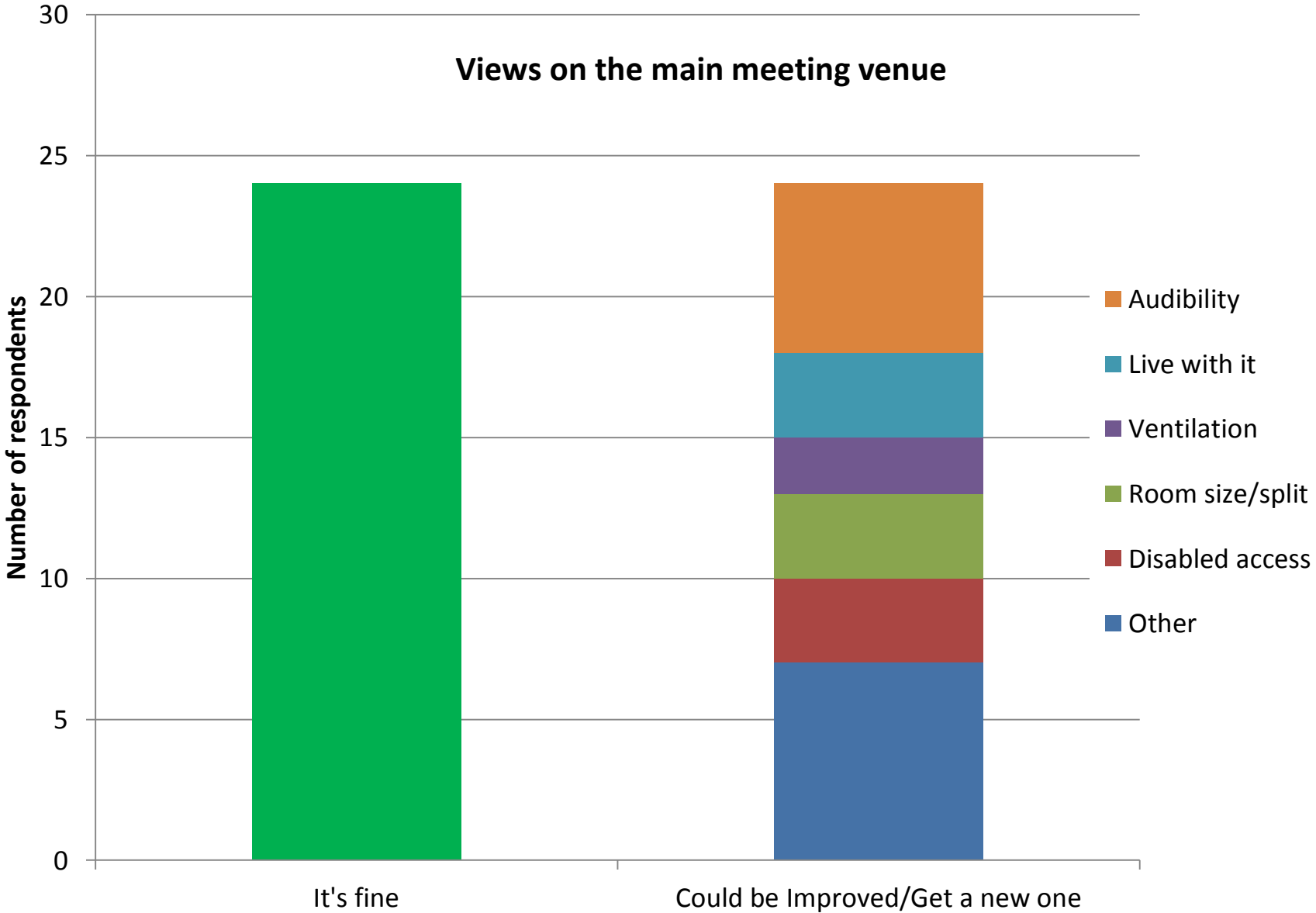
Main meeting start time & frequency



Comments on meeting timing

- If the meetings were any earlier I would not be able to attend at all
- I would miss more meetings if the meeting was earlier.
- I've been running a campaigning group for Richmond & Kingston, & have the meetings at 7-9pm.....members sometimes meet earlier for a drink - sometimes take a break, though only 25% of the time, and finish at 9pm - older members and those with a longer journey can leave,,,,,,,,,many of us stay for a drink and chat afterwards - this all gives more flexibility & more choice.
- I would be OK with 7.30 to 8 start if approved by majority.
- We've often left at the 9pm break - not good at sitting still in a stuffy room
- Not sure about the break - it seems to disrupt continuity. A shorter pause might work better
- If at all possible, the fact that about a third of the audience disappears after 9pm needs to be addressed if we can. It's demoralising for the invited speaker and for the remaining audience. I understand that the disappearances are due to "transport issues" but I'd like some clarification about what this means and if anything can be done to help the situation!
- Would love to attend every one but Monday is such a busy day at work that I am usually too tired to rush home, grab a meal, rush out to Richmond then take part in intelligent debate! Ideal night for me would be Thursday, maybe starting at 7.30 or 7.45
- Any possibility of SOME meetings to be held in the daytime.

We know we have some challenges with the venue, but.....



Comments on venue (1 of 2)

- "time for a change?"
- Trouble is that pubs are a good idea, and it is a bad policy to change regularly One possibility is the Twickenham club in Church Street Twickenham?"
- For some speakers it would help to have a microphone and loudspeakers; this would also enable some discussants to be heard better.
- If the maximum is 50 then you might need to start thinking of other premises
- It is difficult to hear because of the acoustics and noisy when windows are open. I'm not familiar with other venues but agree that the location is excellent.
- People who are hard of hearing will have problems anywhere (I speak from observation). SWLH could invest in its own AV equipment.
- Women's toilet needs repairing and cleaning (locks etc)
- I like the Ship - the only reason I think we should be on the look out for a different venue is the Ship is sometimes too small to hold us all - the division in the two rooms is a draw back.
- It's probably the best we can get, but noise can be a problem. Anything that could reduce noise would be an advantage.
- Could be larger but convenience of travel outweighs size problem.
- I have slight hearing difficulties, but find my hearing aid very helpful. I don't suppose some sort of sound system can be acquired and installed. People need to be reminded to speak up though, especially when asking questions or making comments from the floor.
- "I agree that the ""Pros"" are important and would need to be matched by any new venue. That said, I do find the venue cramped and hot. It is then noisy when the windows are opened. I'd be happy to pay a small fee for a better venue. Have you looked at the Friends Meeting House in Richmond. Not sure if it is suitable but I know that the Ealing group use a Meeting House."
- If we could find another pub which resolved the above cons. If a majority feel this way we should all make an effort to find somewhere.
- Worth all of us thinking about possible alternatives addressing the cons, especially wheelchair access. Perhaps one-off trials for added dates would indicate if we are deterring people with access needs. Might local disability groups have suggestions? That said, selfishly I like the Old Ship!
- "Actually, I think it's pretty good.....but this is the problem I face too. I use the Bell in Hampton - for the same reasons as you chose the Ship! And we have all the same problems as you do.....Should we have a small group of us who could trawl around for other venues? I've already asked my group [& two others] re criteria, and they do NOT want church halls nor community centres. Rooms tend to be upstairs, but pubs do give them to us free, so....."
- It's dirty scruffy uncomfortable perhaps if you could hire a better venue members could contribute?
- i have no comment as i live to far (100 miles away) to attend.
- One larger room would be much better (not sure where though)

Comments on venue (2 of 2)

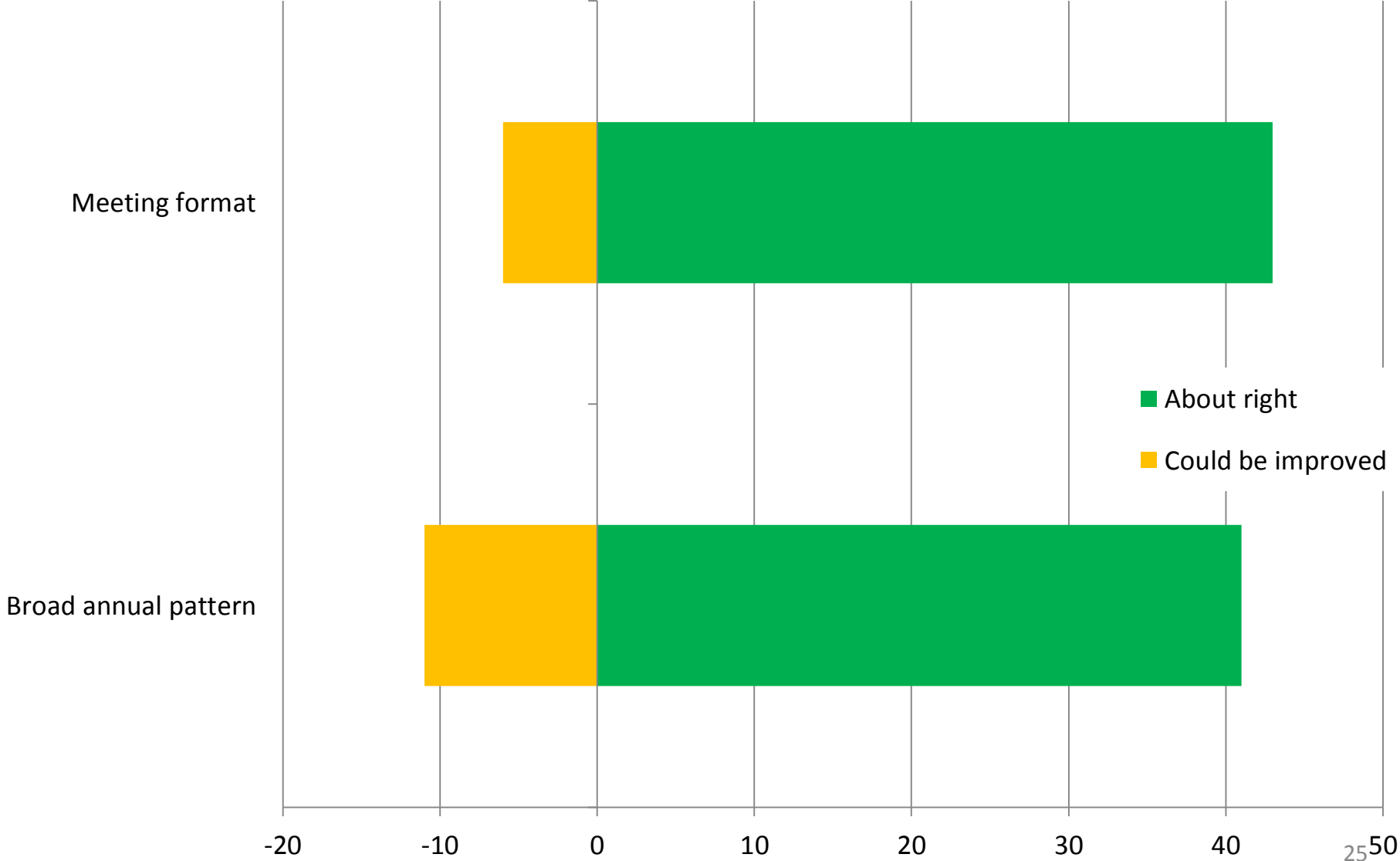
- "I agree with the ""Pros"" and ""Cons"" above although I haven't personally found it difficult to hear from the back although this is clearly important.
- A similar larger space would obviously be ideal but hard to find somewhere that wouldn't charge."
- It would help elderly people on the stairs of the Old Ship if there could be a handrail on the wall side of the stairs.
- "1- The room's OK but they need to provide better ventilation. 2- removing the big tables would give better space. 3- a simple PA box, or even domestic stereo would suffice for listening. It could be extended to the next room for overflow. 4- I approve of a neutral pub-based venue for socializing (and to get a necessary drink!) - could look at other availability."
- "1) The Committee has discussed the purchase of a PA system with radio mics; a portable screen for Powerpoint and video projection; and USB laptop speakers for enabling sound on video to be heard. 2) I don't feel that the passing round of an email list clipboard for people to sign up to right at the start of each meeting is a good idea. A) It's somewhat disruptive for both the audience and / or the guest speaker. It's a bit of an imposition to ask people who have never attended before immediately to agree to give us their email addresses! They haven't yet had a chance to decide whether or not they like us enough to be ready to do so! B) Wouldn't it be much better for the Chair to announce something at the end of the meeting like: ""Do sign up for our Newsletter via the email link on the Contact Us page on the website. Or alternatively Ian and Tina will be at the door as you leave to take your email address if you'd like to give it to us tonight"" C) There's not much point in people who've already given their email address having to sign the clipboard whenever they attend! 3) Very much hope that the airconditioning works! The heat in the room (without airconditioning) is often intolerable and has already been proven to be a health hazard with people fainting."
- A larger hall which would allow more opportunity to circulate.
- Because of the cons you have listed above -- however it is free and would be difficult to find another venue with all the pros listed above
- Could be larger.
- Fine for now, but we could be investigating other rooms in pubs to overcome the cons.
- Possibly improved with a P.A. system, but it would have to be a good quality amp./speaker.
- Realise this may be difficult but I agree with the "cons". Also the room gets very hot with full attendance and seating is a bit chaotic and uncomfortable. Suppose there might be other pubs which offer the same deal as the Old Ship - there are pubs with function rooms/halls where people have children's and other parties. Am not a great pubber so haven't much experience but think The Crown (next to Montpelier Row/Marble Hill Park in Twickenham) has such a room.
- A room better suited to outside speakers would be preferable. (It's difficult to propose an alternative location with no idea of the geographic spread of members who like to attend.)
- It's good for me...
- On the ground floor or with a lift access (or a helping hand/arm).
- The Britannia pub has a fine upper room which would probably make a good alternative venue.

Topic/speaker suggestions (incorporated in master list)

Information on the findings at the large hadron collider and its implicatins for our existence.	Geraldine Mitchell
Latest implications for the human condition, ethics and moral values from neurology.	Geraldine Mitchell
Speakers from ongoing campaigns such as One Law for All, Campaign for secularism, campaigns that question privelegde in all its forms.	Geraldine Mitchell
Authors who have interesing books on socialogal aspects of ethics, morals and integration strategies in our society.	Geraldine Mitchell
Philosopher's take on fairness in society.	Geraldine Mitchell
Alain de Botton	Allan pink
Population growth	Grant Lewison
Assisted suicide for the gravely ill	Grant Lewison
Providing jobs for young people who are not super-bright	Grant Lewison
Buddhism without belief	Bianca Marsden
The 10 commandments - are they really be basis of UK law and morality?	Marilyn Mason
Does secularism have to be atheistic?	Marilyn Mason
Religion in politics	Tony Adams
Philosophers -Ted Hondrich (Emeritus - does still lecture at UCL)	Susan Burningham
Professor Steve Jones, UCL	Susan Burningham
Terry Jones (ex Python)	Susan Burningham
Feminist/Equality topics.	Jeanne Rathbone
How to behave between humanists that would further trust and community spirit.	Thomas Ho
As an ex-university lecturer in linguistics I could talk on "Homo Loquens: humans as the animal that talks". I have done this elsewhere, before I retired	Connaire Kensit
Something on humanism/humanists in art and poetry and writing past and present	Susan Wallbank
An examination about the cultural legacy religions have provided us with - art, architecture, music, writing, even including theatre, and why and how the non-religious appreciate these things as they seem to.	Michael Ayris
Unitarianism	Richard Winter
Pioneers of freethinking, especially when it came at a cost	Richard Winter
The role/acceptability of criticism/satire etc in the light of religious sensitivities - how polite/assertive should we be in the cause of Humanism and secularism.	Richard Winter
Anything that combines a cause worth championing with the ability of an individual like me to do something practical to help.	Richard Winter
Anti-fascism - IBMT [International Brigades Memorial Trust]	Lynne Walsh
"Civil disobedience" - our provenance? From Aldermaston to Occupy St Paul's.	Lynne Walsh
Media - we get the media we deserve.....?	Lynne Walsh
How current affairs affect the humanist view	pauline walters
Belief systems	pauline walters
Philosophists	pauline walters
How to build/increase real friendship, community spirit & trusting- among humanists as well as outside/wider community.	Thomas Ho
Supernatural topics.	raphael wagner
Current affairs & politics - particularly w.r.t. the current attack on 'militant secularists'	peter hinson
MPs; Local councillors; Reps from main charities (for info on issues);	peter hinson
Humanism and Islam. How do we stand on Islam, Islamism, "Islamophobia". Can humanists engage with Muslims? Are the tenets of Islam or the content of the Koran a threat to a liberal society? For us humanists the Muslim stance on apostasy is particularly interesting. Could UK Ahamadiyya Muslim Association provide a speaker?	Johannes Fritsch
I would like to see Maryam Namazie again.	Maureen Finucane
Humanism: left or right?	Jim Trimmer
Speaker(s) from other countries/other schools (Summerhill, other such "progressive" schools).	Brian Downs
Scientists (e.g. Prof Steve Jones) could give us strong insights.	Terence Bray

No major change needed here, but some constructive ideas.....

Main meetings: annual pattern & format



Comments on broad pattern of main meetings

- Some meetings using recorded lecture/event followed by discussion - input from sources who couldn't come to Richmond.
- I am not much interested in hearing from faith-based speakers
- I believe that a Humanist agenda should incorporate more feminist/equality issues
- Perhaps there could also be debates between members - there are different views among humanists about many important issues and a lively, inter-active debate format could be entertaining and informative.
- Don't usually come to the ones from so called 'faith' traditions
- It isn't clear what the AGM does, really, so I'm not sure about the benefits of being a member - voting [on what?].
- Public meetings - i.e. with a wider audiences - would be improved by having ? 2-min presentations from a variety of supporters.....i.e. the ""I am a Humanist"" approach [see Fawcett Soc's ""This is what a feminist looks like""], so that people really understood the diversity amongst us. Let's put the Human in Humanist.....and some fun [as did the late & beloved Linda Smith]."
- I don't think it's necessary to have only a 'faith' speaker - could invite others related to current events, e.g. politicians. There is a danger of philosophical navel-gazing. I'd like to see discussions on humanism w.r.t. current affairs.
- I thought the last Buddhist speaker, David Brazier, was rather limited and introspective - I know that there are serious and current debates on Buddhism elsewhere.
- I'd like to see a specific annual "slot" (either a Speaker slot or a Discussion slot) devoted to Science. This can be seen as a counterbalance to the Religion slot which should definitely be retained !
- Maybe bi-monthly?
- I would like to see discussion of topical questions - political yes, but not party political. Education, how can we raise standards; health, how can we equalise standards of health care - how can we improve the care of the elderly? How is it that today's nurses lack compassion? And why do we have such little interaction with the BHA Humanist magazine? Why doesn't it report our meetings or group decisions or local campaigns? Why do we need to have an annual discussion with speaker from 'faith traditions' (I did enjoy the Zen Buddhist talk tho he didn't seem to suffer from faith.)
- I think a higher proportion of meetings should have outside speakers, and there should be just 6 meetings a year - AGM, 1 public meeting, and 4 meetings with an outside speaker.
- With an occasional speaker(s) from such generally "humanist" societies/nations as Denmark and Sweden (and others)
- We need some public meetings where we engage in debate/dialogue/discussion with those faith groups with opposing views. Topic: a) militant secularism is/is not a threat to society; b) creationism should/should not be taught in schools; c) the "good life" is/is not possible without God.

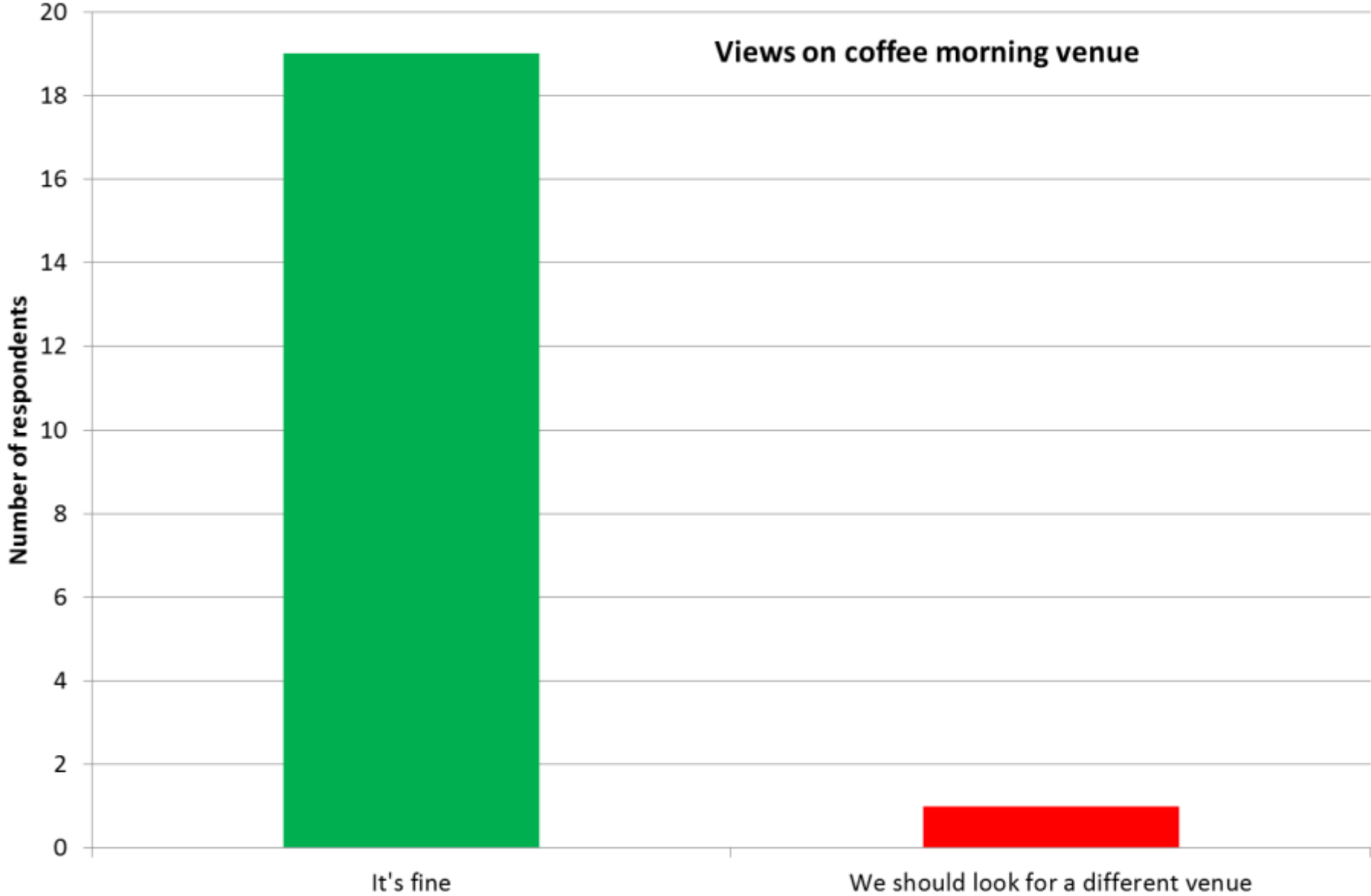
Comments on main meeting format

- It can be a bit rushed at the end as things always take longer than anticipated. The actual meeting time could be longer.
- Have only attended 2 so cannot comment
- "Move announcements to the end or cancel altogether as this just duplicates the newsletter. The opening seems to be longer than 5-10 mins or perhaps it just feels longer. Copies of announcements/newsletter could be made available. The speaker/discussion is the main reason to attend and we often seem to cut this section short which is why I would start immediately. Cut break to 5-10 mins. Homework or reading to complete prior to the meeting might add to the quality of debate. The quality of the debate is generally poor and on occasion disrespectful."
- Good thing is the clarity at the start as to what to expect, so the precious time can be efficiently used and participants kept on track.
- I haven't been at a meeting where there was a splitting into smaller groups - I think that should happen every time.
- "Never felt that welcoming (coffee morning excepted). Make it more inclusive (we're not all rocket scientists)"
- As mentioned above, we often leave at the interval - probably we have defective commitment/concentration/ability to sit still
- Approve of a speaker or panel, but could follow a clear theme open to discussion from varied opinions around the room. Depends on whether speaker is interesting or boring.! - The Chairman's job.
- "I'd say there's a tendency for the ""notices"" at the start of the meeting to be too long and to become speeches by various individuals. I think it could be made much shorter with just the Chairman doing the notices pithily. After all, the main reason people have come is for the ""main event"". I think attendees should be encouraged to send in ideas for new topics as they occur to them via the SWLH website email link, eg info@ Perhaps we need to restrict the break to just 10 mins. After all people can carry on chatting once the meeting is over!"
- An upstairs bar? chairs formally set out at start - informal socialising after the meeting. Some ventilation? Microphone and amplifier?
- About right - but I sometimes feel that more license could be given to speakers from the floor, so that they need not feel that they are something of an intrusion!

If you never (or only rarely) attend coffee mornings, what (if anything) would make you come more often?

- I went more often when it was in Richmond, but can see that if the monthly meeting is Richmond it is fair to hold the coffee morning in Kingston.
- Move them around the Borough
- Easier if some of them were in Richmond or Twickenham
- My problem is my work, which is unpredictable in terms of whether I can take the time out to attend, so it is outside your control! :)
- Problem with distance again
- I don't find that sort of set-up easy to cope with because of a hearing loss. My experience was getting stuck with one person rather than more general chat.
- I work weekdays. How about having afternoon tea occasionally
- What happens at coffee mornings? How many people attend? What is the age spread?
- They occur weekday daytimes, so I would never be able to make it due to other commitments.
- "Simply cannot come in the week. I have the same problem with the book group which meets in the daytime. I realise we may be restricted by the book group venue, but we will restrict ourselves to members who no longer have to work for their living."
- Don't know - I must try it
- Sorry, have not had much spare time. I'm sure they are lovely
- Probably if it was closer to me. I've never been to the Rose Theatre but the thought of travelling into Kingston puts me off. I see the book group is to be held in Twickenham and, realising that, may well go alone. Yes, I know I'm lazy!
- Entirely personal this one. I'm retired and should be able to come to almost every one, but other activities and commitments often prevent me!
- I can never make Mon-Fri daytime
- Being given information or ideas that I couldn't easily get from other sources.
- Haven't ever been to the present venue but its location is a problem for me
- I just live too far to attend but Coffee Mornings is a great idea and may be great one too if it is at the weekend.
- weekend meetings
- I haven't been yet but it sounds a good idea.
- Don't know anything about them, attendance or format. I may go if in the area.
- More frequent.
- I am usually tied up on that particular day.
- I work full time at the moment

Views on coffee morning venue

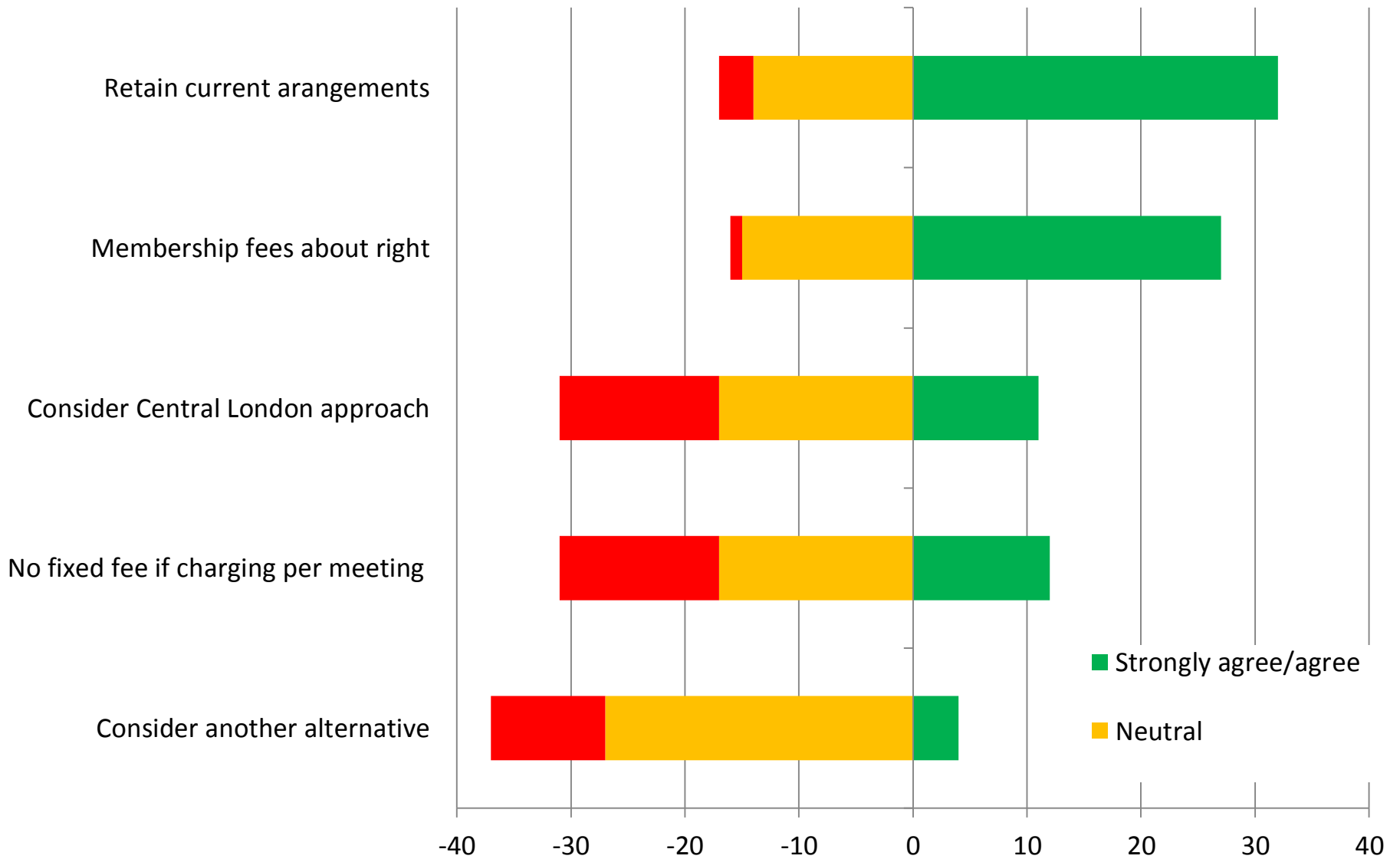


Comments on coffee morning venue

- I wouldn't go at all if it wasn't in Kingston!
- "Without belittling all the other events on offer: this is the best event (in my view). We often have newcomers 'testing' us, some come again, regularly. Would there be a gentle way of following up 'non-repeaters'? 'We ere very glad to see you at the meeting (say, 2 months ago). We haven't seen you since. Would you mind telling us whether what we could do to entice you back. No formal questionnaire, perhaps just one or two points you liked / disliked? Thank you'???"
- I do sometimes wonder if Kingston is rather far out and may not always be perceived as being south-west London. Do people from, say, Fulham, which is in south-west London, come to the coffee mornings?
- Maybe it's the marketing, but 'coffee mornings' sounds rather like a chat with no real purpose - sorry!
- I just live too far to attend.
- I haven't been so can't comment
- The atmosphere is pleasant and informal but perhaps a theme might be suggested for the meeting which members could develop if and as they wished
- I have found the seating too static, so it's not possible /easy to find a neighbour one feels the eassiest to speak with.
- The Druid's Head pub, in the market, would make a very good nearby venue.
- I preferred meeting for coffee in Richmond because I live in Chiswick. I know House of Fraser café is closed, but maybe another venue could be used every other month?
- it would be even better if you could find somewhere (like a small function room in a pub) which would be quieter, and attendees could bring up some topic or item of news which might be of interest, or we could even have a speaker now and then, and afterwards, those who wished to, could order a light lunch from the pub and we could sit around and talk some more.

No major change needed here.....

Membership set up and fees

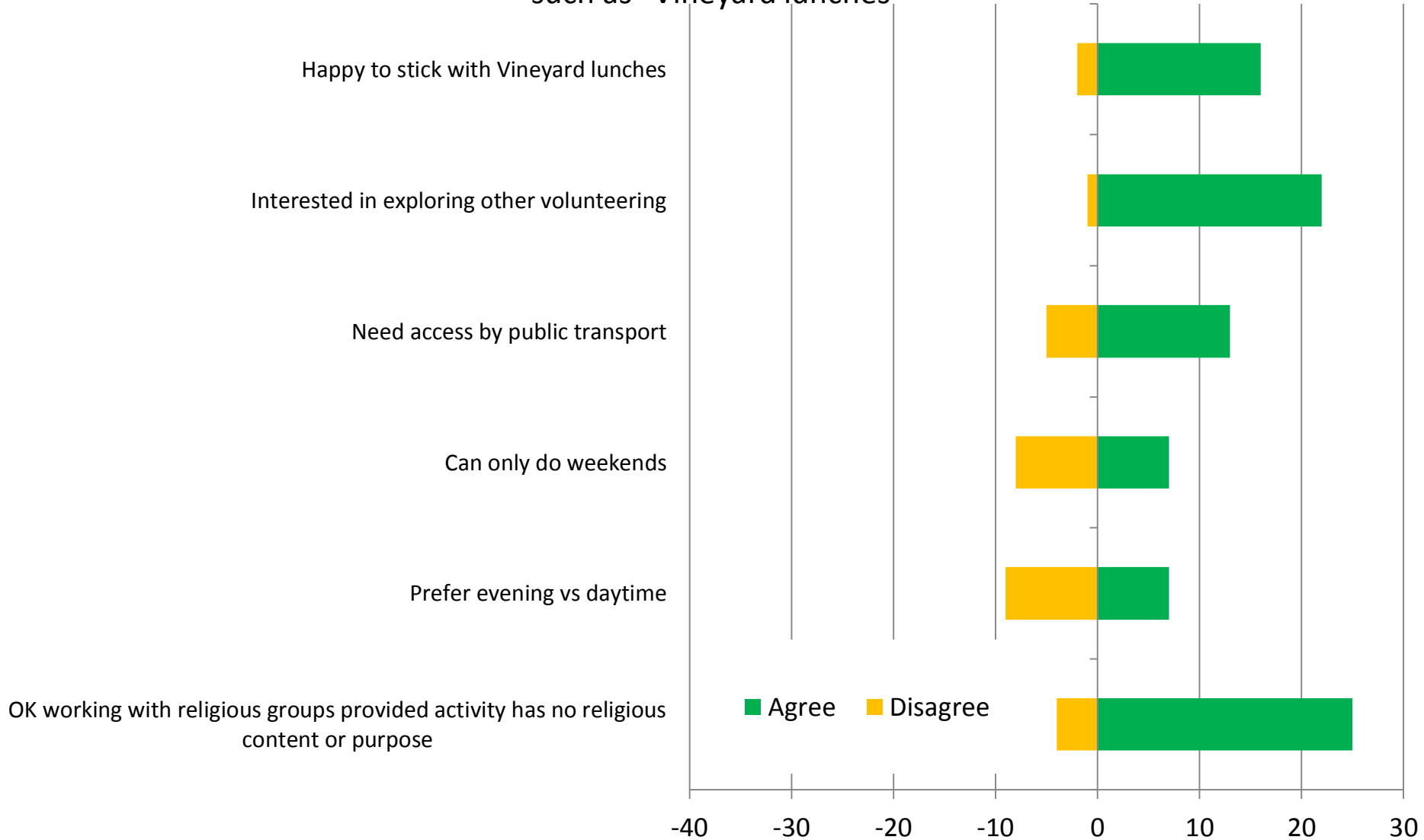


Comments on membership/money

- Optional payment for membership (the current arrangement) is a bit odd as a system, in my view. I would favour either annual or attendance payments. Annual would give people a stake/investment and so possibly encourage them to come. If it is decided to stick with the current arrangements, I would suggest a maximum number of free attendances, e.g. two.
- I think paying an annual subscription is preferable because it makes belonging more important. The level of subscription may not be enough - could non-members contribute (£1) for attending?
- It should be up to regular members to decide how to proceed
- I agree with an annual membership fee so that the Committee have a fund available for planned and unplanned activities and can claim their expenses. I hope they do!
- If we charged per meeting, this would mean another item that the monthly meetings would have to deal with and that would take time and delay the regular business and programme of the evening. I'm sure the treasurer has enough to do without having to cope with this.
- Merchandising.....several orgs I'm involved with have gone down the route of selling books, posters, badges, mugs etc., at meetings.....some groups also have people who bring in books for sale.
- See my comment regarding present venue
- All the above sound reasonable to me. I have no problem with current arrangements but others may prefer alternatives which I'd probably find equally acceptable. A bit vague as a response I fear.
- "Annual membership & fee is OK to 'belong' to a group - incentive to attend. £10 fee is quite low - could be increased, formally or voluntarily, and/or by 'concessions'.
- Free meetings is OK assuming it attracts interested public/non-members. May need to change if you get religious 'spoilors' attending.
- Maybe issue-based contributions - e.g. PA system."
- Interested to hear what others think on this. It could be worth considering asking people for a "minimum donation" of £10 as a membership fee. So people who are rich / feeling generous could give more if they wanted to. There might be some merit in also / or having a "minimum donation" of £1 per meeting. Again rich / generous people could give more if they felt like so doing. Needs discussion this issue.
- If charging a fee per meeting and bearing in mind the modest level of annual fees, what sort of level are we talking about? Must be careful not to exclude or embarrass people eg if free to those on means-tested benefits and how to check for this.
- I think they should be a trifle higher - or perhaps an annual membership fee + an attendance fee each time.
- The current arrangements are very efficient - I wouldn't wish to think of, or deal with, money whenever we have a meeting. If the membership fee needs to be adjusted, the members would sanction that at our monthly meeting.

Clear that there is interest in doing additional volunteering/community activity.....

Volunteering/community activities such as "Vineyard lunches"

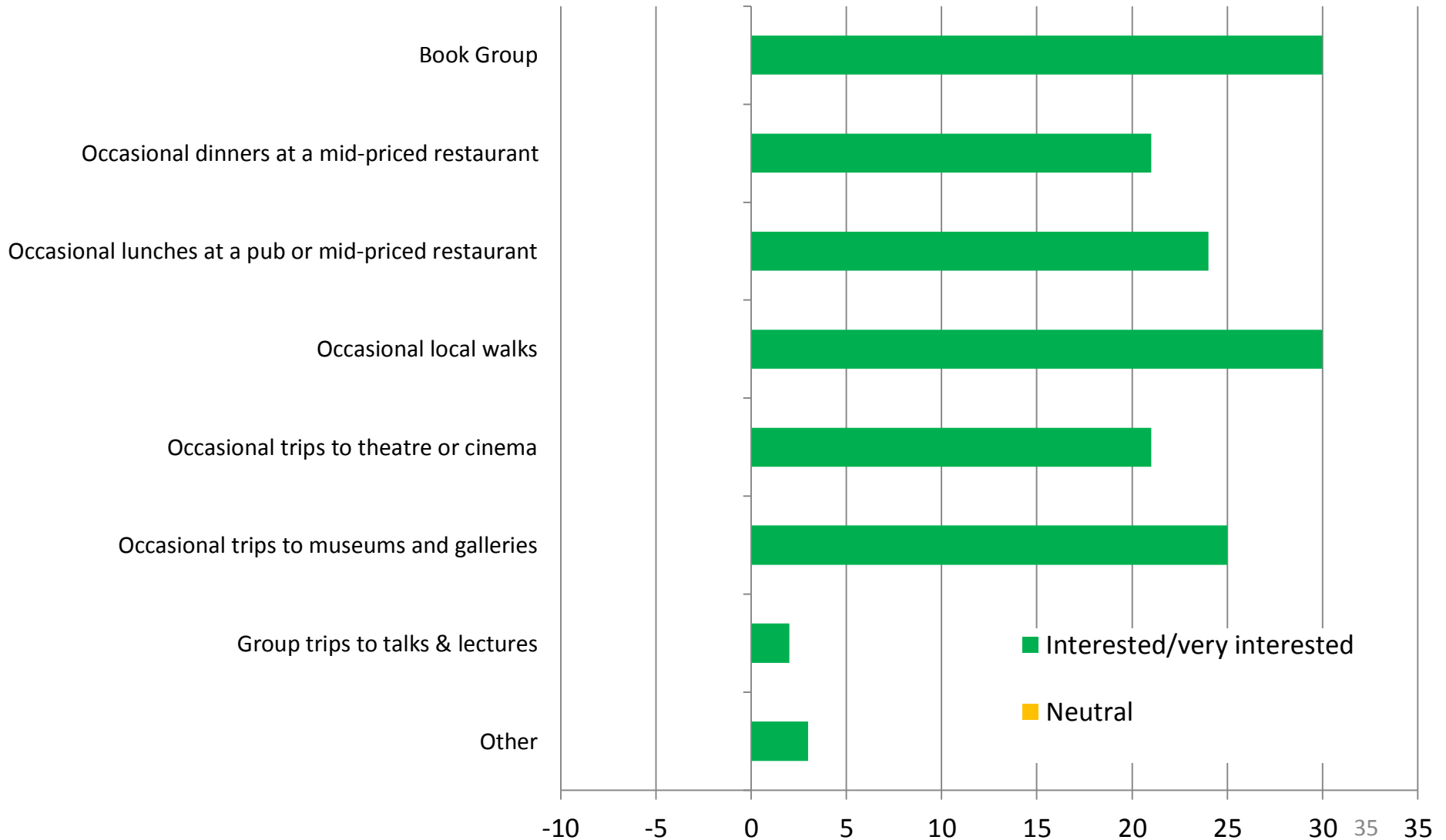


Comments on volunteering/community activities

- Actually, unaware of the Vineyard lunches until this issue of Newsletter
- Agree with volunteering in principle, but am already overextended on that front so my answers are theoretical rather than practical offers.
- I like the idea that Humanists are seen to be helping in the community.
- I don't think I have attended a meeting?
- Happy to help with the Vineyard - also think we should be doing a similar activity ourselves.
- "I'm very pleased to take part in the Vineyard lunches - but we should also publicise the fact that 'we' stepped in, as did the churches, because the council withdrew its funding. If our volunteering and 'plugging gaps' is invisible, then the public thinks all is fine. We should come up with a project idea, itemise our volunteer input [100 vol hours a year] and ask the council to 'match' that - in funding, and/or other volunteers."
- I organise the lunch on behalf of the Unitarian church
- I'm pretty heavily committed to other voluntary activities (environmental groups) but I think Vineyard lunches have been great as it has extended my range and comfort zones.
- As above, I'm not really interested in very local matters. May be worth considering if Richmond represents S.West London area.
- I'm not sure we should make a habit of working with religious groups. I don't have anything against religious charities, it's just that it's probably important to demonstrate that humanists can stand on their own two feet !
- Happy with day or evening

A lot of interest in new activities (Book Group already successfully launched), though walks previously dropped through lack of attendance....

Potential new activities

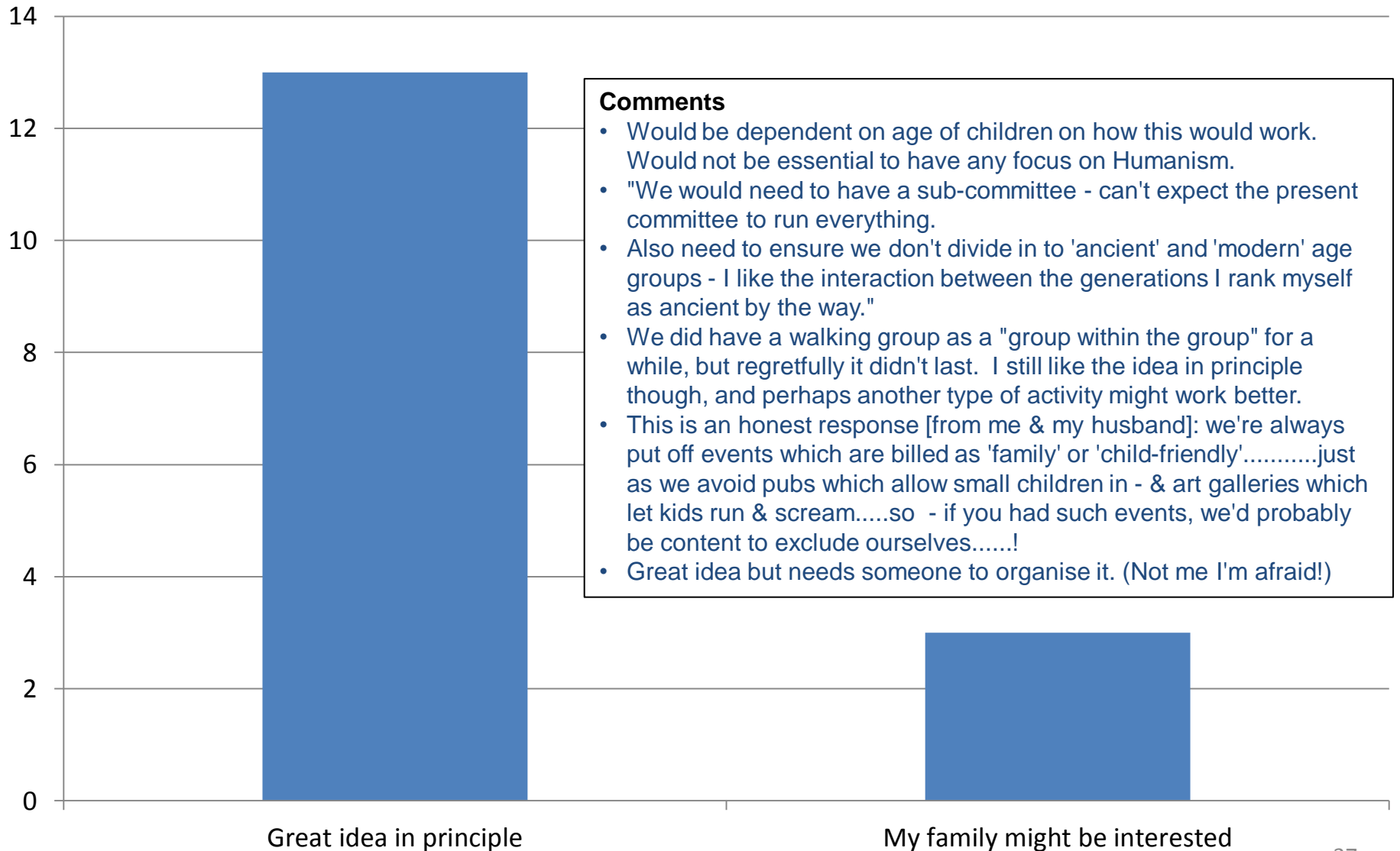


Comments on other social activities

- This would all depend on when and where and what it was proposed to visit.
- Attendance as a group at lectures or other events in central London
- I like the idea of Zizzi's because they have a gluten free menu and can cater for other diets
- Although I'm very interested in the Book Group, I can't attend because I have a regular commitment on a Tuesday morning
- I expect all of the above are worth considering, but I've run out of time and have to do the things I enjoy doing (like theatre and cinema) to fit my timetable - unlikely to be able to join many group activities.
- Prefer sat/sun afternoons and evenings
- I like museums and galleries but already visit some with U3A groups.
- "Pub lunches - these already happen at weekends, but for various reasons I've never managed to go to one yet. I can't do midweek. Walks idea sounds good - not actually related to Humanism, I just like going on walks and it's always easier to make it happen when others are involved."
- Dinners fine in the week; lunches at weekends
- I can imagine I might well become interested in these suggested activities if the circumstances of my life changed. At the moment time seems at a premium even though I am retired.
- For Zizzi's or Strada, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays would be fine for me as well as Saturdays and Sundays.
- No preference on timing but public transport access is really useful, especially for pub/restaurant enjoyment.
- "Trips to other debates.....LSE, Gresham College, Bishopsgate, perhaps Kingston Uni. Could we have some 'skills swaps' ? e.g. anyone work in publishing....? I'd swap a media class --- i.e. 1-hour masterclass/workshop.....or a public speaking class.....followed by a meal....."
- Weekday lunch
- Prefer Saturday or Sunday
- Prefer weekday evenings for dinners. The Summer and Festive Season parties seem to be very popular and a good way for people to socialise. Is there a case, I wonder, for asking if anybody wants to host other parties at other times of year? Or should one of the Monday "Ship slots" simply be for an additional party in addition to the one in December!?
- Dinners either mid week or week end --
- "Dinners weekday or weekends
- Lunches weekends"
- I am a veggie
- I would prefer a weekday - weekend locations may well be less peaceful.

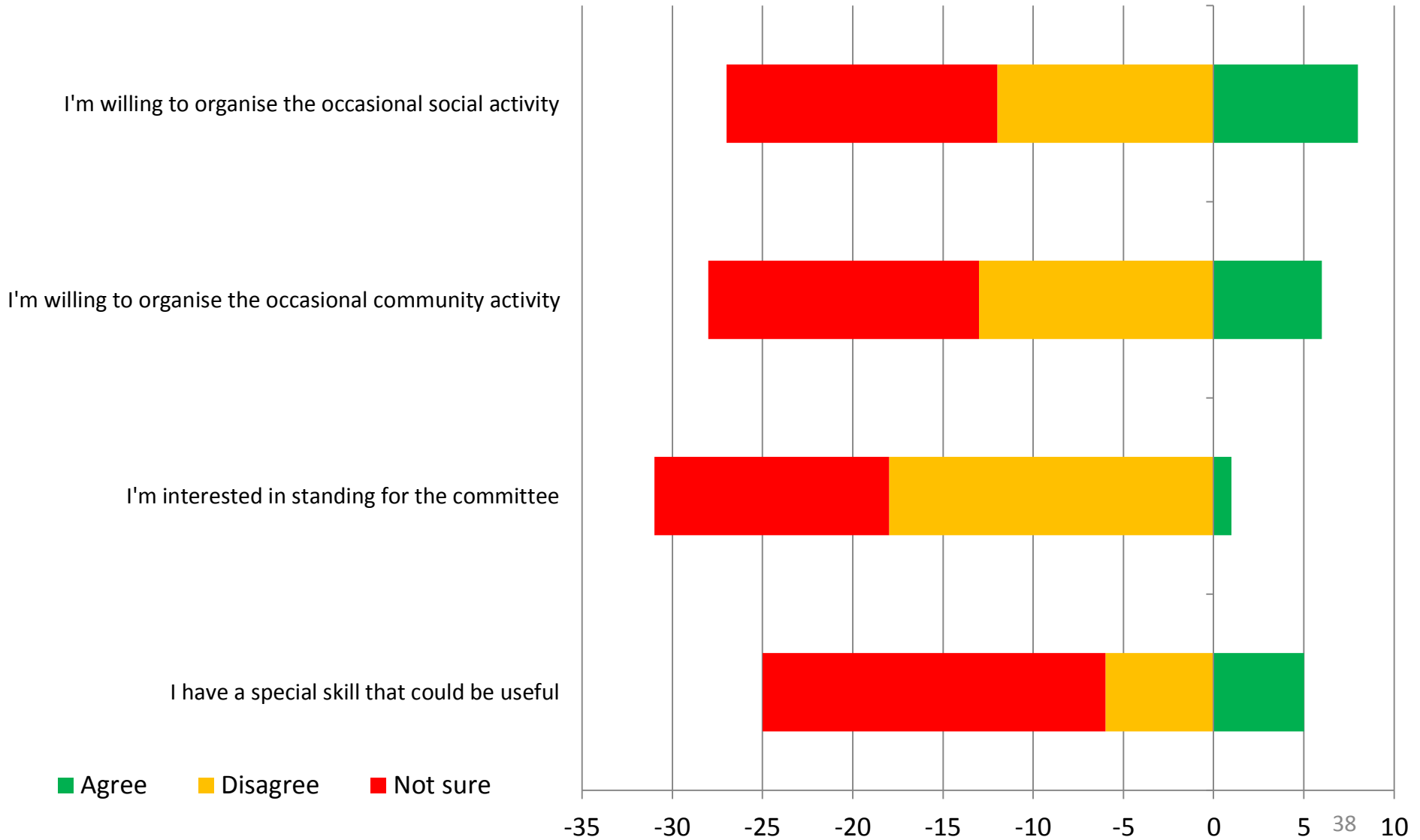
Looks like family group idea will not fly. Is that right?

Should we have a sub-group for families with children?



Things only happen because people volunteer their time/energy/skills...

Helping to make the group work



Final “anything to add” comments

- "I think the Newsletter is really excellent, and look forward to seeing it regularly. Paradoxically, or counter-intuitively perhaps, it may be a little too all encompassing for busy souls to read right through. Could we perhaps separate some of the comments out into a more obviously separate section. e.g. in the last Newsletter the discussion on atheism and religion should, I think be in a ""Comment"" section rather than part of the main Newsletter."
- I don't mind being of help in a practical way when needed but not in organising.
- Thank you
- "I enjoy the Kingston coffee mornings, and have recently attended a Richmond evening meeting. These are stimulating and enjoyable and I hope to attend more. Thank you for organising these and for seeking our views."
- "Somewhere above I think I mentioned a (sort of talk) talk I would be happy / eager to give. Working title 'I like homeopathy AND I like Wikipedia - Boy, to I have a double-problem!' Subtitle (something like): 'Communicating in the Internet - a lost cause? Collective efforts on the Web - a waste of time?' Could I test this (with slides / ppt, a modest injection of humour) on a small group of fellow SWL humanists? Reinhard"
- When asking for my sex (necessary in my case, odd name!) you put alternatives in the order male, female. Why not put them in alphabetical order?
- After 2000 years, the Christian churches have at least one invaluable asset - they have their very own premises in the form of church buildings, church halls, meeting houses, etc., as well as others with synagogues, mosques, and so on. Wouldn't it be useful if humanists, atheists, sceptics and others had more than just the Conway Hall in London!
- "The committee and founding group have done a great job. The group is a big success especially for the 60+ age group. I intend to stay a member."
- SWLH has been a wonderful find for me at the right time. It's doing a lot of really good and important work beyond the obvious, and helping me articulate a humanist perspective to an increasingly interested range of friends and contacts. Being a really lovely bunch of ethically-driven, thoughtful people is a heck of a selling point!
- Must be the longest survey I've ever participated in!
- Great questionnaires.
- I joined the group as representing part of the national need for an outlet for secularists. Would support anything that has national influence.
- Thanks for putting together this survey, Jeremy! Very useful exercise.
- Keep up the excellent job you all do.
- This is a pretty comprehensive survey: good luck with analysing the responses!
- Thanks for all the extensive work Jeremy and the other members of the Committee put into running the SW London Humanists Group.
- The group is very well run, congratulations!
- I would certainly be glad to see other humanist group members at our meetings. I would very much like to see more emphasis at our meetings on the BHA - I am a member. BHA activities must be central to our affiliated group.

FEEDBACK FROM GROUP MEETING

26 March 2012

Output from syndicate discussions 26 March

- Should we aim to attract more younger people? If so, how?
 - Link to other BHA groups
 - Target younger local BHA members via BHA [*snag: does their database contain age details*]
 - Utilise MeetUp more effectively – see how others do it
 - Run social events to draw in younger people – walks, picnics, pub meetings
 - Join with other groups – e.g. Kent & Medway visit to Science Museum with GALA (Humanist gay & lesbian association)
 - Work with AHS to link with universities – get AHS to promote our events
- Should we do more to highlight the BHA's activities & campaigns? If so, how?
 - Boost national campaigns locally
 - Run stall in support of campaign using space in central Richmond
- (*For those interested*) a) How can we engage with liberally-minded religious people b) Should we/could we engage with the harder line people who see humanists as destructive
 - Continue to attend inter faith forum and accept invitations (e.g. recent contacts with Amadi Muslims)
 - Not clear whether we can engage with harder line people
 - Local liberal Muslim group (Ahmadis) - further collaboration?

Other points from meeting 26 March

- Meeting times: consider making them more seasonal - earlier on dark winter nights...
- Venue
 - Do a post code analysis. Where do people live. If we were based somewhere else would people come?...
 - Possibility of a hand rail being installed on wall side of staircase. (No harm in asking pub. it is something that is important to others not just SWLH)
- Handling growth: could have more than one meeting a month. These could be in multiple locations. Obviously more organising needed but if we grew significantly we may be able to grow the number of people volunteering. This is already happening with sub groups like the book and schools groups.
- Richmond Society run regular local led walks. Can we link up or look at other groups doing similar things.
- Richmond Scientific society has many meetings and talks that would be of joint interest. We should at least talk to them about our/their programmes.
- Family group
 - Link with BHA Family network
 - Join with other humanist groups (W.London and C.London) for a family day out. Could easily try to arrange during this summer.
- SACRE/Inter Faith:
 - Marilyn interested in stepping down from Kingston SACRE.
 - Kingston Inter Faith Forum probably now open to us if we wish