

This summary is based on two visitor surveys taken in Northernhay and Rougemont Gardens, Exeter, during July/August 2006 and November/December 2006. The surveys were designed to provide an overview of current usage to act as a benchmark for the redevelopment of the Gardens. The questions used were adapted from the GreenSTAT online questionnaire and the Exeter City Parks Survey.

822 interviews were carried out in total, 539 during July and August and 283 during November and December. The two surveys were taken over similar time periods, but the number of people in the Gardens was smaller during the winter run, hence fewer surveys were collected. Lessons learned during the summer survey led to slight changes to two of the questions for the winter run to make them easier for respondents to use.

The interviews were conducted on both weekdays (57% of all interviews) and weekends (43% of all interviews). The summer survey was carried out during school, college and university holidays. The winter survey took place during term time. The main findings of the surveys were as follows:

- A high proportion of the visitors surveyed in winter reported coming to the Gardens more often than once a week. Men seem to be more frequent visitors than women are. Surprisingly 16-19 year olds visit more regularly than other age groups.
- Of the visitors surveyed in summer, the women generally reported staying in the Gardens longer than the men. Of the visitors surveyed in winter, the men reported staying in the Gardens longer than the women, with a significantly higher proportion staying less than 15 minutes.
- 52% travel from places other than their homes, although more people travel from home than from any other single location.
- More than half of all visitors surveyed usually travel less than one mile to reach the Gardens. With the vast majority of visitors travel to the Gardens by foot.
- Over 25% of visitors interviewed live within one mile of the Gardens.
- Reasons for visiting the Gardens vary significantly between the summer and winter surveys. In summer, the most popular reasons were for peace and quiet and to relax or think. In winter, almost half of those interviewed said they were taking a shortcut.
- Women and men differ in their reasons for visiting the Gardens
- Young people are much more likely than other groups to use the Gardens to meet friends
- Most people visit the Gardens alone although a smaller proportion of women than men visit the Gardens alone
- Reasons for visiting the Gardens vary significantly between the summer and winter surveys. In summer, the most popular reasons were for peace and quiet and to relax or think. In winter, almost half of those interviewed said they were taking a shortcut.
- Over 95% reported their overall impression of the Gardens as 'good' or 'very good'.
- Ratings for other attributes were generally good, although the range of visitor facilities, facilities for children and families and safety and security might be considered weak points.
- 16-19 year olds were the least positive about the Gardens.
- In summer, respondents suggested toilet facilities and improved security as ways to encourage them to visit more often.
- In winter, a significant proportion of respondents felt improved signage and advertising would encourage more visits.