

Ku-ring-gai Council Recreation Needs Study Engagement Report

Phase 1



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Engagement Report

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We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners,
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We recognise the strength, resilience and
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eternal and spiritual connection held in the lands,
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and beliefs.

Our team is proud to live, learn and thrive in
the place we now call Australia, and recognise
sovereignty has never been ceded by First Nations
Peoples of this continent.

As embedded in our values, we are committed
to building connected, healthy and resilient
communities and creating purposeful outcomes that
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Executive Summary

Cred Consulting was engaged by Ku-ring-gai Council to develop a Recreation Needs Study for the Ku-ring-gai local government area (LGA).

The aim of this consultation was to understand community and stakeholder needs and priorities for recreation now and into the future for Ku-ring-gai LGA.

This report summarises findings from a Community Telephone Survey, Online Community Survey, Stakeholder Surveys and 10 Stakeholder Interviews.

For the purposes of this Executive Summary, what we heard will be divided by type: Community Engagement, and Stakeholder Engagement.

Type	Dates	Details	# Participants
Community engagement			
Community telephone survey (statistically valid)	17 to 27 June 2022	Conducted by Micromex	402 responses
Online community survey	29 June to 30 July 2022	Available on Council website	946 responses
Stakeholder engagement			
Stakeholder survey	30 June to 27 July 2022	Available on Council website	51 responses
Stakeholder interviews	July and August 2022	Held online via Zoom across August 2022	10 interviews
			Total: 1,409 engaged



Key findings from Community Engagement

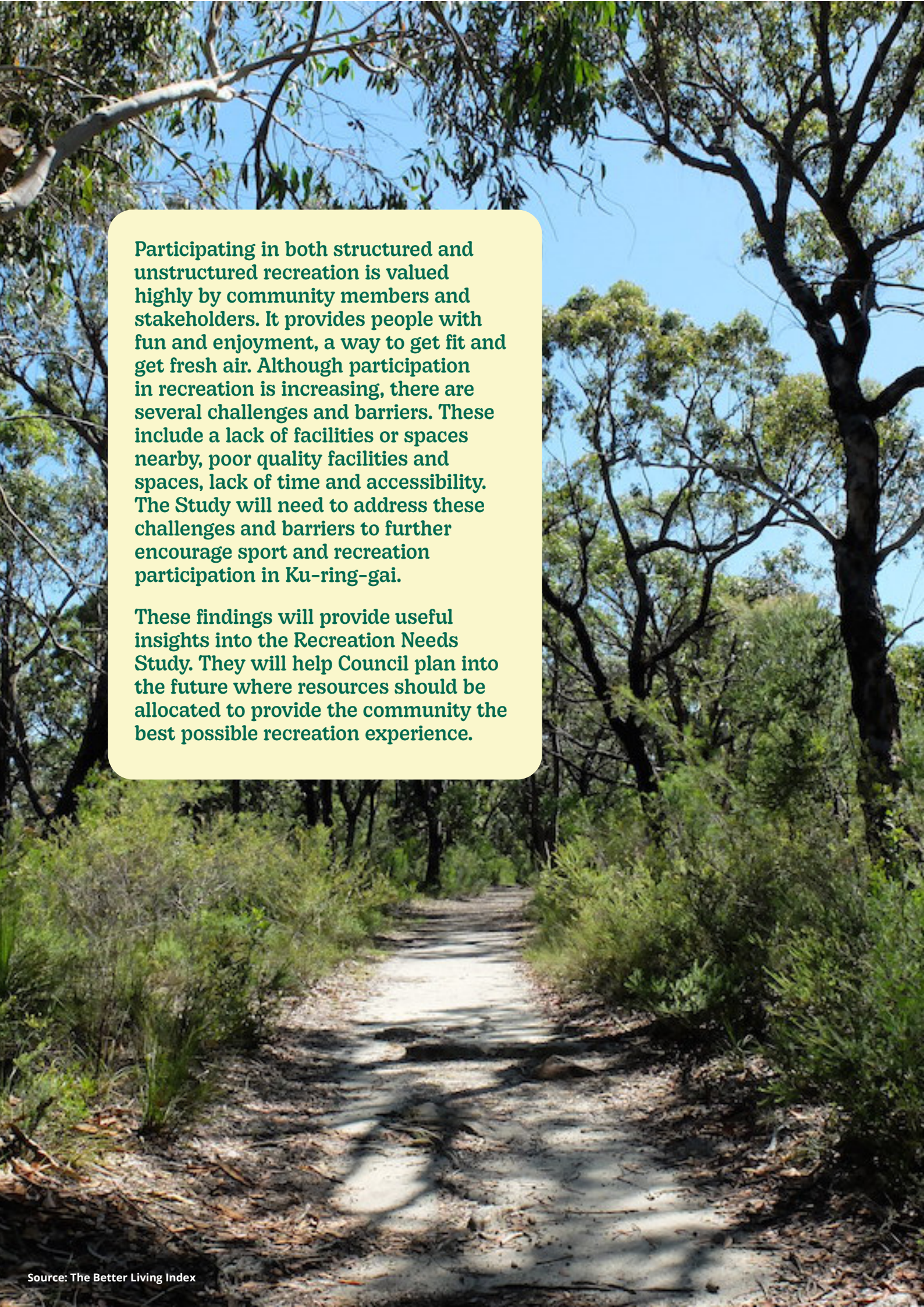
- Fun and enjoyment, fitness, and exercise, and getting fresh air are the main reasons people use recreation spaces in Ku-ring-gai.
- Walking (87%) and bush walking (75%) are the most common recreation activities people in Ku-ring-gai LGA undertake in a normal year.
- The least popular recreation activities that people in Ku-ring-gai LGA undertake in a normal year include cycling off road (20%), organised sports on courts (25%) and cycling on road (28%).
- One in three residents in Ku-ring-gai LGA are interested in trying new recreational activities. 67% of respondents indicated that they would not be interested in trying new recreation activities.
- Of those people who said they wanted to try a new recreation activity, swimming (5%), rock climbing (3%) and fitness activities (3%) were the most popular choices.
- Of those people who said they would be open to trying a new recreation activity, the main barriers preventing people from taking part were having limited time (38%), not having facilities close by (23%), family commitments (13%) and safety concerns (9%).
- Ku-ring-gai LGA residents want parks (81%), natural and bush areas (79%) and walking tracks and trails (76%) to be the main priority for future recreation planning.
- Spaces ranked as a priority for future recreation planning, tended to rank higher for level of desired investment. Spaces where residents wanted more investment included walking tracks and trails (46%), natural and bush areas (46%), parks (43%) and play spaces for children (40%).
- Spaces where residents felt there was less of a need for investment included clubs (15%), outdoor gyms (20%) and waterways (23%).



Key findings from Stakeholder Engagement

- 90% of responses to the stakeholder survey came from sporting organisations in the Ku-ring-gai area. Of these respondents, 41% came from netball organisations, 20% from football, 15% from rugby and 7% from cricket.
- The stakeholder survey found that 94% of stakeholders have been operating in the Ku-ring-gai LGA for over 10 years.
- Most stakeholders offer specific programs that cater for children, adults, females, males and those with intellectual and physical disabilities.
- Participation has typically increased over the last five years, with 41% of respondents noting that participation levels have increased, and 38% saying that participation levels have stayed relatively the same. Participants in stakeholder interviews shared different experiences of membership growth or decline, depending on the sport. Although many have experienced short term declines during the COVID-19 pandemic, most reported experiencing a growth in the number of members over the past five years.
- 56% of respondents in the stakeholder survey felt that their organisation participation levels would increase in the next five years, and 33% expected them to stay the same. Only 10% were expecting a decrease.
- Reasons for the current and expected increase in growth were similar in both the stakeholder survey and interviews, citing a growing population, the increase in female and adult/older persons participation in sports programs and high levels of engagement with professional sporting competitions.
- Barriers for growth included the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, limited number of facilities available in the LGA and the wet weather experienced in the 2021-2022 season. In the stakeholder interviews, participants overwhelmingly reported that poor quality of sport and recreation facilities across the LGA are the biggest barrier to participation.
- 95% of respondents in the stakeholder survey use Ku-ring-gai Council's recreation facilities to meet their sporting needs. The most popular facilities include sports fields, ovals and courts (73%).
- 59% of respondents cited quality of sport and recreation facilities as a challenge within their organisation. This was followed by level of volunteering (22%), member participation, recruitment and retention (20%) and cost of facilities (16%). This was similar to what we heard in stakeholder interviews, with participants also citing a lack of safe and appropriate female friendly facilities, leasing and renting arrangements and availability of grounds as key challenges and barriers to participation.
- Access to more sports fields across the LGA and maintenance of sports facilities are the most common stakeholder needs. We also heard in the stakeholder interviews that participants want better and increased collaboration with Council.
- Stakeholders expressed that the role of Council in providing for and supporting recreation activities in the LGA involves better maintenance and safety of fields, provision of sports fields to meet the needs of the LGA, working better with sporting organisations and improving parking access at recreation fields.





Participating in both structured and unstructured recreation is valued highly by community members and stakeholders. It provides people with fun and enjoyment, a way to get fit and get fresh air. Although participation in recreation is increasing, there are several challenges and barriers. These include a lack of facilities or spaces nearby, poor quality facilities and spaces, lack of time and accessibility. The Study will need to address these challenges and barriers to further encourage sport and recreation participation in Ku-ring-gai.

These findings will provide useful insights into the Recreation Needs Study. They will help Council plan into the future where resources should be allocated to provide the community the best possible recreation experience.

Chapter 1: Introduction



1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Ku-ring-gai Council engaged Cred Consulting to prepare a Recreation Needs Study for the Ku-ring-gai Local Government Area (LGA). This Recreation Needs Study will help Council and others to plan for public open space and recreation facilities that are needed to support the community now and into the future.

The term recreation includes a broad range of activities from unstructured activities like walking, running, picnics, walking the dog and playing in parks, to structured activities such as organised sport. Participating in and having access to a range of recreation opportunities brings significant physical and mental health and social benefits for individuals, results in improved developmental outcomes for children and young people and has social benefits for the broader community.

An important part of this Study is consulting with the community, including the public and sporting and similar groups. Engaging with the community will help Council understand the needs and expectations for sport and recreation in Ku-ring-gai.

1.2. Background

The purpose of the engagement was to:

- Capture the views of a wide range of community members and stakeholders
- Explore a vision with community that reflects the needs and aspirations for sport and recreation in the area
- Discover community and stakeholder current and future priorities for sport and recreation in the area
- Understand the importance of recreation for community members
- Understand the challenges and barriers associated with participating in sport and recreation, and
- Communicate with the community about planning and how the Recreation Needs Study can address recreation needs.

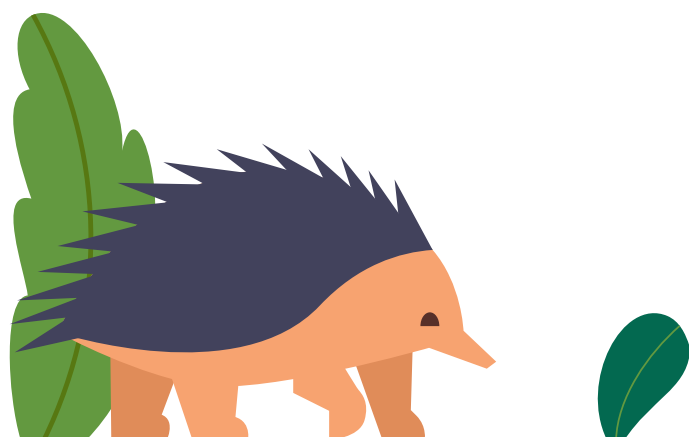
This report summarises findings from community and stakeholder engagement undertaken. The engagement findings along with other detailed technical studies, including sports participation and utilisation data, will help inform the Recreation Needs Study.

Findings in this report are summarised by engagement activity, with an overview of key findings from community engagement in Section 2 and an overview of stakeholder findings in Section 4.

1.3. Engagement methodology

From June 2022 to August 2022, Cred engaged with community members and stakeholders across Ku-ring-gai LGA, including:

- Community telephone survey (statistically valid), conducted by Micromex from 17 to 27 June 2022, with 402 responses received.
- Online community survey, conducted by Micromex and available on Council's website from 29 June to 30 July 2022, with 946 responses received.



Chapter 2: What community members said



2. What community members said

Residents in Ku-ring-gai prefer using recreation spaces that involve the natural environment:

- Parks
- Sports grounds
- Natural bush areas
- Walking tracks and trails

About 1 in 3 Ku-ring-gai residents are open to trying new recreation activities in the LGA. Barriers they face in doing so include:

- Lack of time
- No facilities close by

People in Ku-ring-gai prefer to use recreation spaces for fun and enjoyment, fitness and exercise and to get fresh air. The most popular recreation activities for residents include:

- Walk
- Bush walk
- Have picnics and BBQs
- Relax and sit down
- Walk the dog

Ku-ring-gai residents' priorities for the future of recreation in the LGA include:

- Parks
- Natural bush areas
- Walking tracks and trails
- Sports grounds
- Play spaces for children



Chapter 3: Community telephone and online survey



3. Community telephone and online survey

3.1. About the community telephone survey

A community telephone survey of Ku-ring-gai LGA residents was conducted between 17 June to 27 June 2022. The survey was conducted by Micromex - an independent market research company engaged by Cred Consulting.

This survey was completed by 402 residents from across the Ku-ring-gai LGA. The aim of the community telephone survey was to:

- Identify priorities for recreational spaces in Ku-ring-gai LGA
- Identify community usage of recreational facilities
- Explore interest in recreational activities going forward.

We consider this telephone survey to be statistically representative of the demographic make-up of the Ku-ring-gai LGA community.

3.2. About the online community survey

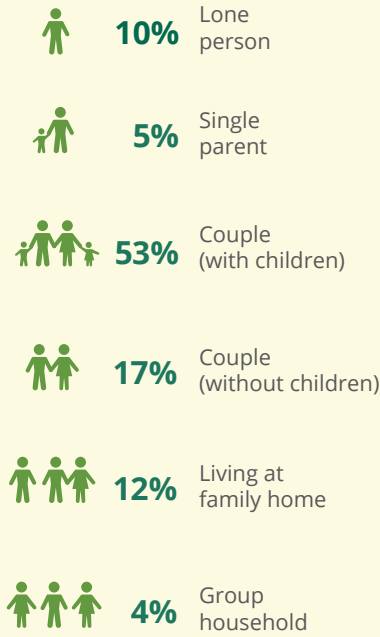
An online community survey of Ku-ring-gai LGA residents was conducted between 29 June to 30 July 2022. The survey was available on Council's website and was conducted by Micromex - an independent market research company engaged by Cred Consulting.

This survey was completed by 946 residents from across the Ku-ring-gai LGA. The aim of the online community survey was to:

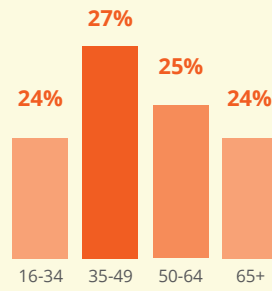
- Identify priorities for recreational spaces in Ku-ring-gai LGA
- Identify community usage of recreational facilities
- Explore interest in recreational activities going forward.

3.3. About the community members who participated in the community telephone survey

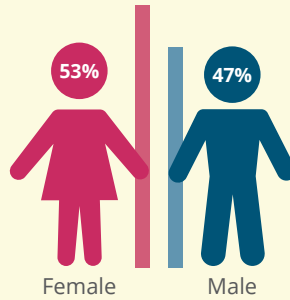
Household Type



Age



Gender



Speak a language other than English at home



Have a disability or care for someone with a disability

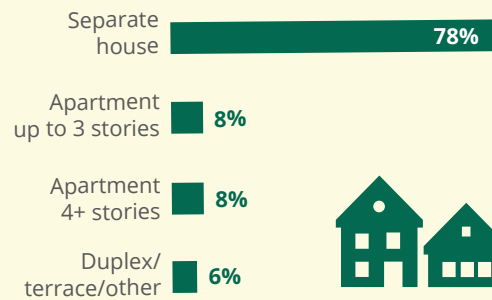


Are a member of a sports club



Own a dog

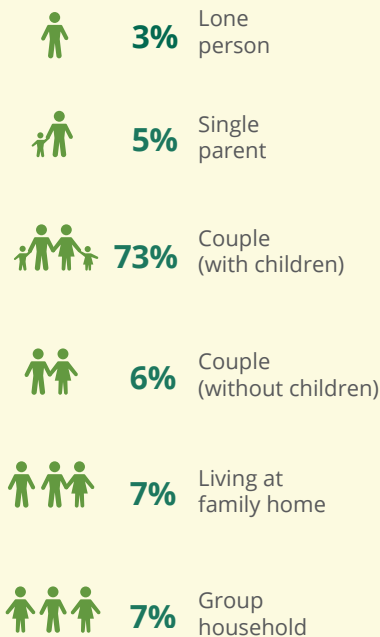
Dwelling type



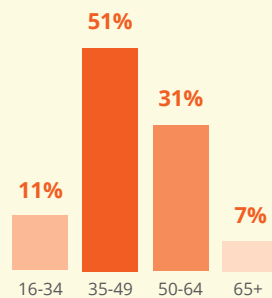
The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2016 ABS community profile of Ku-ring-gai Council

3.4. About the community members who participated in the online community survey

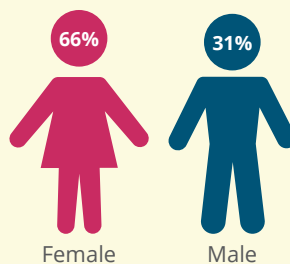
Household Type



Age



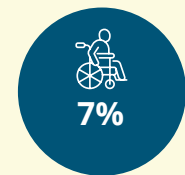
Gender



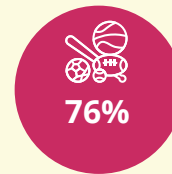
Other/prefer not to say: 2%



Speak a language other than English at home



Have a disability or care for someone with a disability



Are a member of a sports club



Own a dog



Live in a free standing house

The average online survey respondent was a female, aged 35-49, who lives in a house in St Ives, Pymble or Lindfield. They are married with children, are a member of a sports club and own a dog.

3.5. What we heard

How often, if at all, do you visit these areas in the Ku-Ring-Gai LGA?

Survey respondents were asked how often they used different recreation spaces in Ku-ring-gai LGA. They were asked if they used them weekly, or if they had ever used them. Weekly use includes anything from using recreation spaces once a week to using recreation spaces three or more times a week.

As shown in Figure 1, telephone survey respondents primarily used parks (51%), sports grounds (38%) and natural and bush areas (32%) on a weekly basis in the LGA.

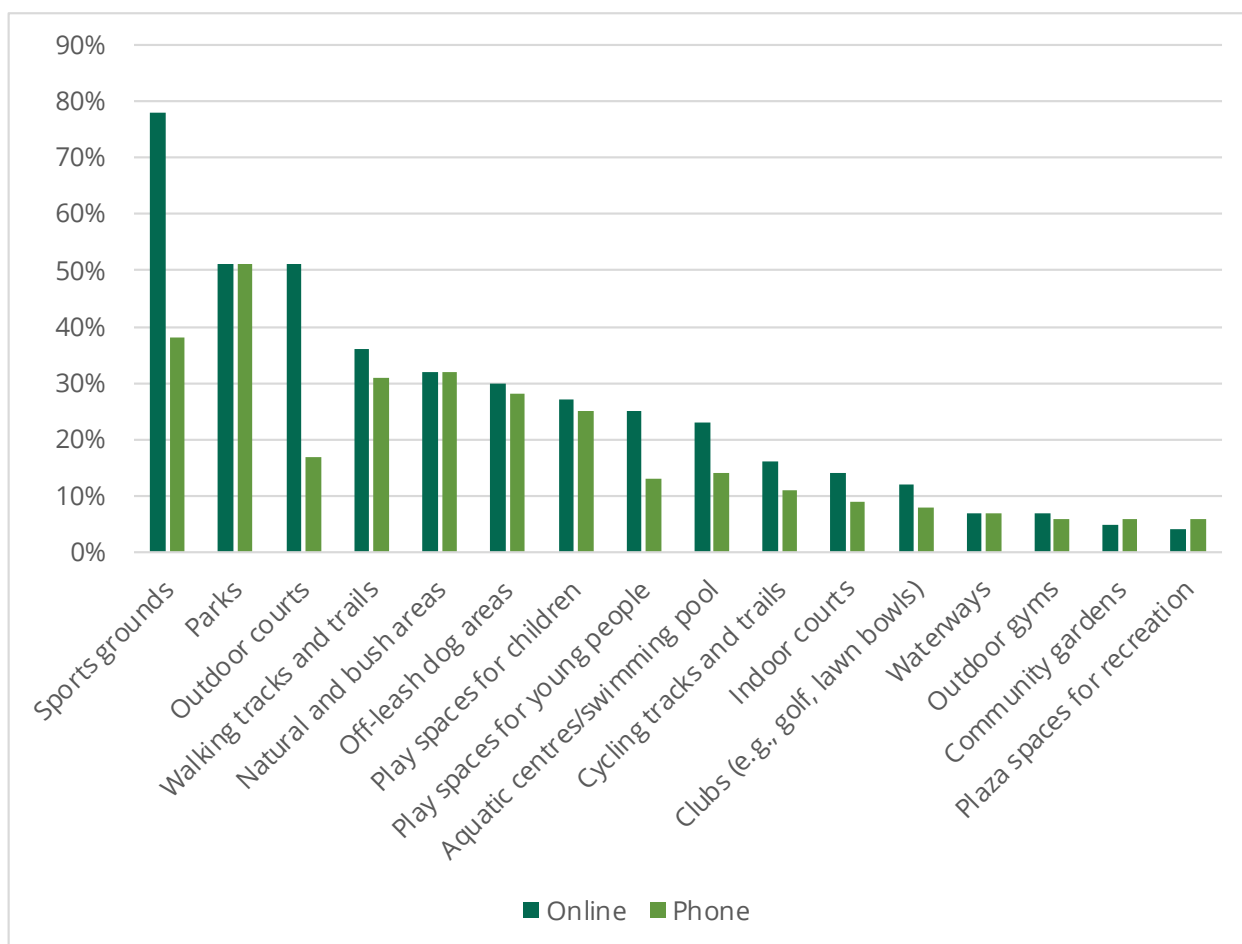
Online survey respondents primarily used sports grounds (78%) and outdoor courts (51%) on a weekly basis.

Whilst the use of parks remains relatively similar across both groups, online survey respondents use sports grounds and outdoor courts much more regularly than the telephone survey respondents.

The least used recreation spaces on a weekly basis across both groups include plaza spaces (4% online and 6% telephone), community gardens (5% online and 6% telephone), outdoor gyms (7% online and 6% telephone) and waterways (7% for both groups).

When asked if they had 'ever used' different recreation spaces, a high proportion of respondents across both groups indicated that they had used parks (96% online and 90% telephone), natural and bush areas (94% online and 85% telephone) and walking tracks and trails (96% online and 83% telephone).

Figure 1: For each of these, could you please state if you visit these areas weekly in the Ku-ring-gai LGA.



What are your reasons for spending time in these recreation spaces?

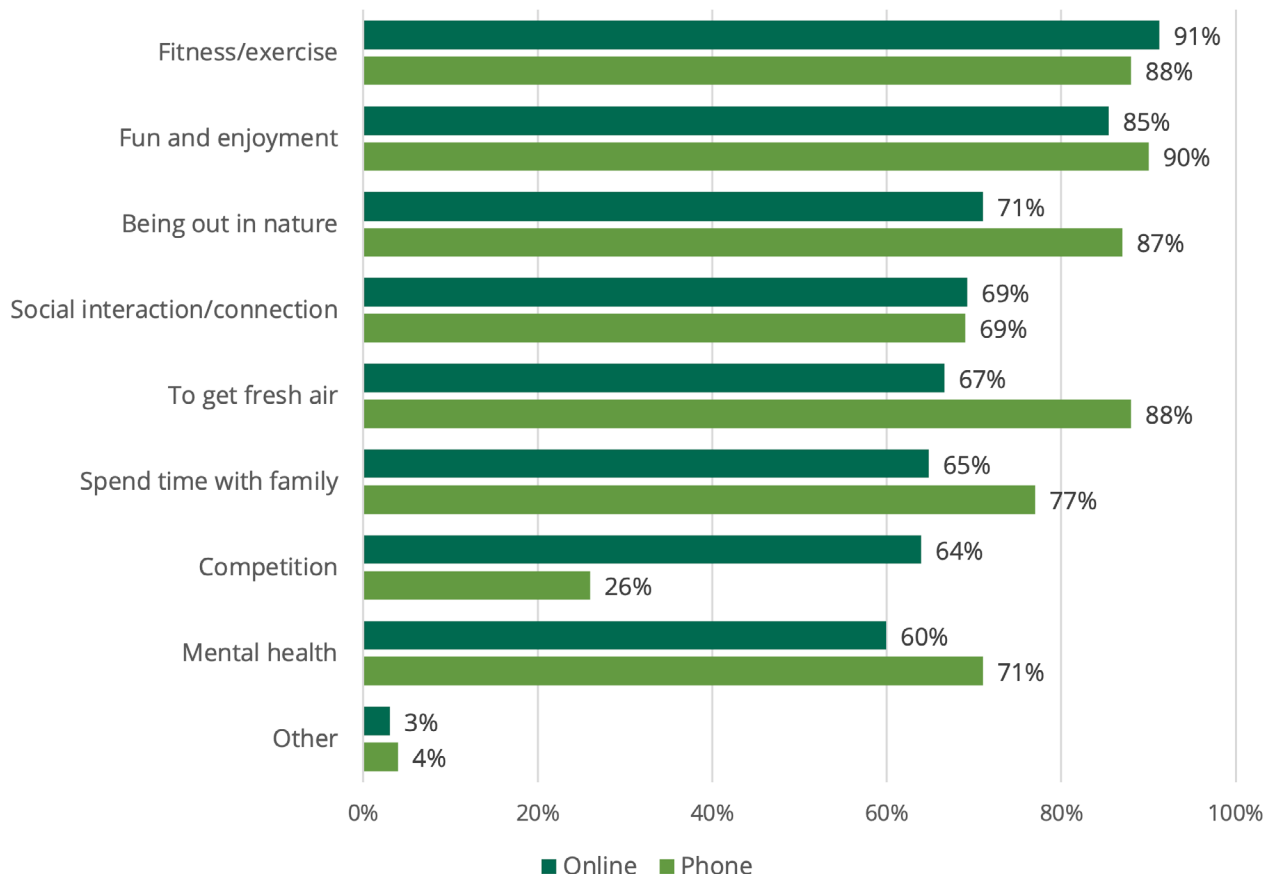
Survey respondents were asked about their reasons for spending time in recreation spaces. As shown in Figure 2, telephone survey respondents said their main reason for using recreation spaces was for fun and enjoyment (90%). This was followed by fitness and exercise (88%), getting fresh air (88%), being out in nature (87%) and spending time with family (77%).

Online survey respondents said their main reason for using recreation spaces was fitness and exercise (91%). This was followed by fun and enjoyment (85%), being out in nature (71%) and social interaction and connection (69%).

The least likely reason for telephone survey respondents to use recreation spaces is competition (26%). The least likely reason for online survey respondents to use recreation spaces is mental health (60%).



Figure 2: What are your reasons for spending time in these recreation spaces?



What recreation activities do you undertake in Ku-ring-gai in a normal year?

As shown in Figure 3, walking and bush walking are the most common recreation activities for both telephone survey respondents and online survey respondents to undertake in a normal year. 87% of telephone survey respondents and 66% of online survey respondents selected walking, and 75% of telephone survey respondents and 75% of online survey respondents selected bush walking.

Other common activities for telephone survey respondents include picnics (64%), relaxing (58%) and walking the dog (48%).

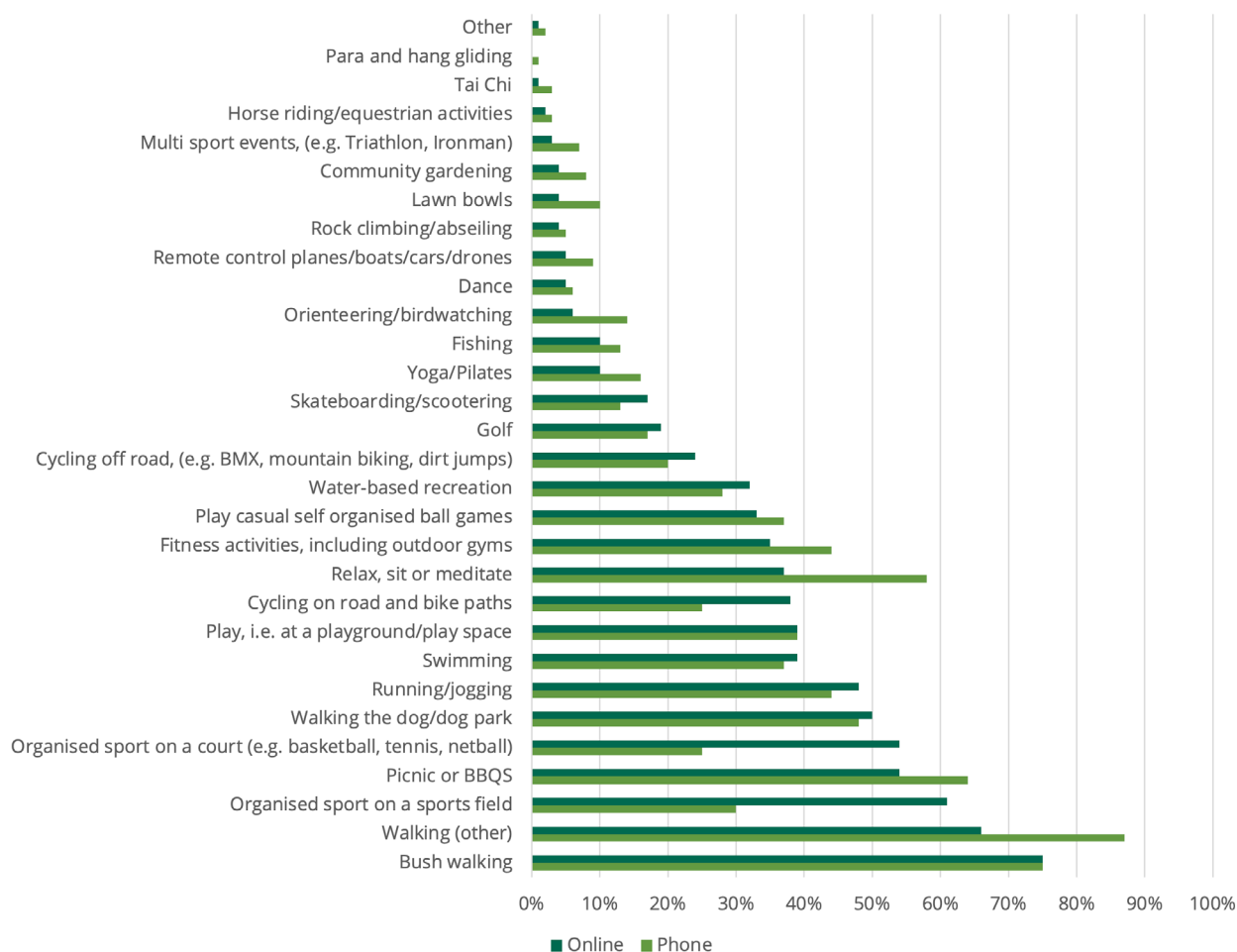
Other common activities for online survey respondents include organised sport (61%), picnics or bbqs (54%) and organised sport on a court (54%).

The least popular recreation activities for both groups include para and hang gliding (0% online and 1% telephone) and

telephone), Tai Chi (1% online and 3% telephone) and horse riding/equestrian activities (2% online and 3% telephone).



Figure 3: What recreation activities do you undertake in Ku-ring-gai in a normal year?



Are there any new recreation activities that you would like to try in the Ku-ring-gai LGA in the next 12 months? Which one recreation activity would you most like to try?

33% of telephone survey respondents and 65% of online survey respondents indicated that they would be interested in trying new recreation activities.

Of this group, we asked which specific recreation activities they were interested in trying.

As shown in Figure 4, swimming (5%), rock climbing (3%) and fitness activities (3%) were the most popular for telephone survey respondents.

Organised sport on a court (16%), cycling (15%), bush walking (13%) and fitness activities (13%) were the most popular for online survey respondents.

67% of telephone survey respondents and 35% of online survey respondents indicated that they would not be interested in trying new recreation activities.



Figure 4: Are there any new recreation activities that you would like to try in the Ku-ring-gai LGA in the next 12 months?

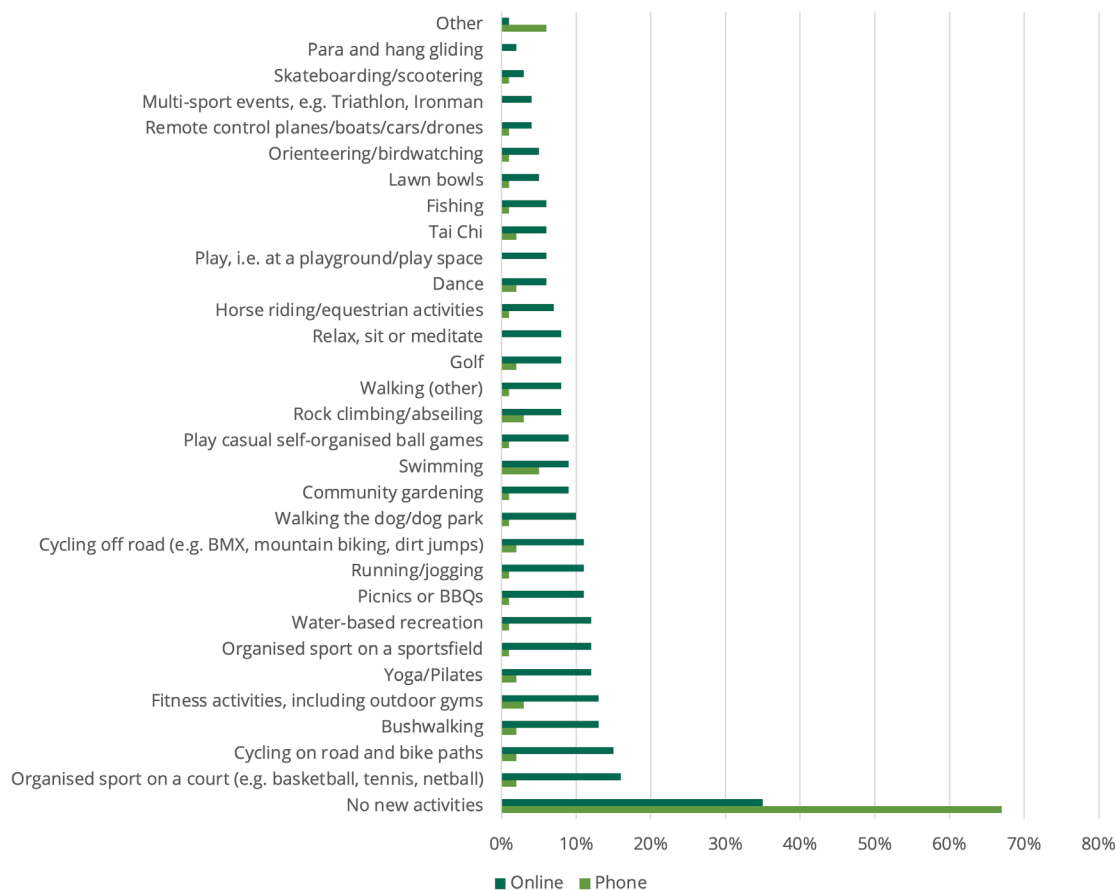
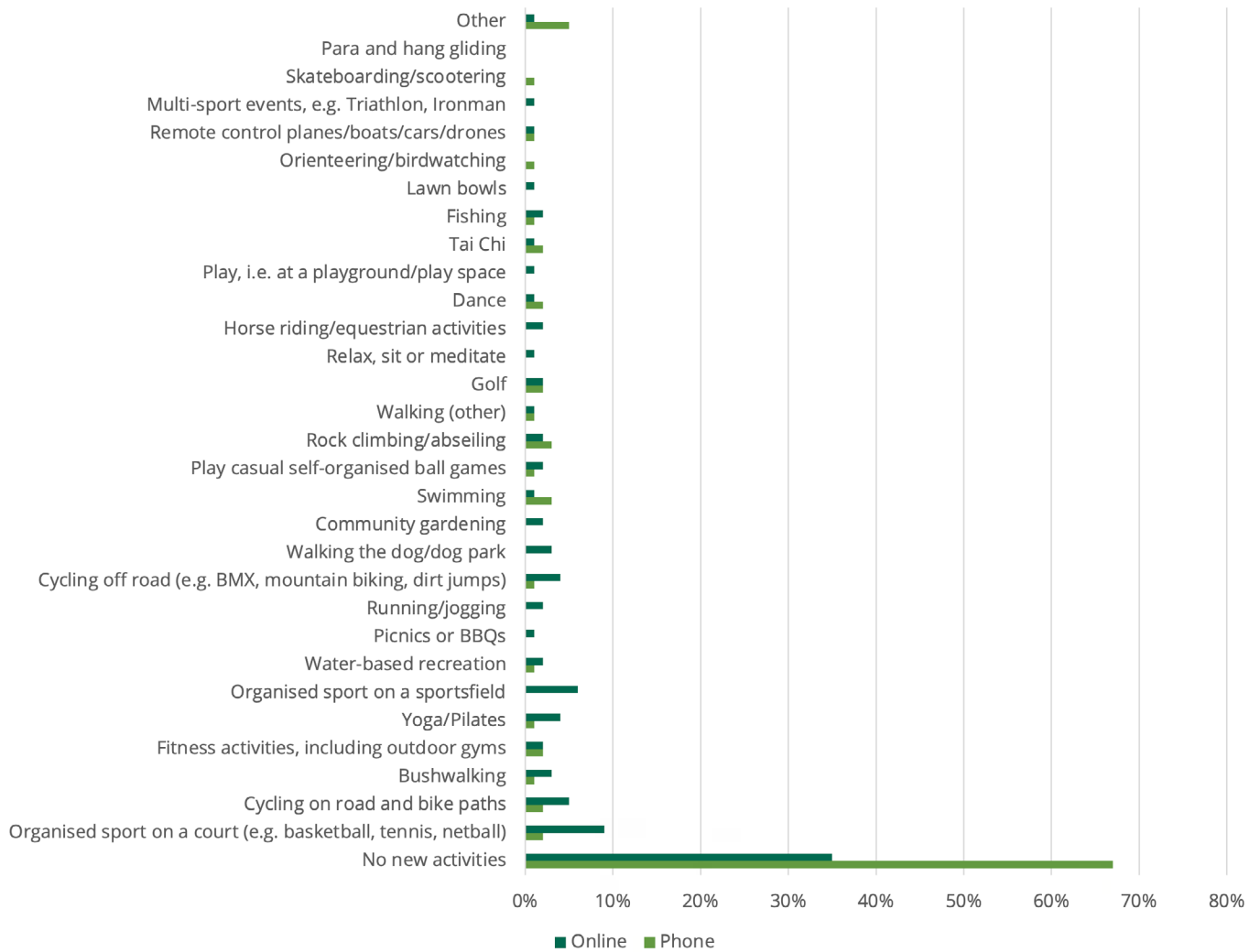


Figure 5: Which one recreation activity would you most like to try in the Ku-Ring-Gai LGA in the next 12 months?



What are the main barriers preventing you from taking part in more recreation activities in the Ku-ring-gai LGA?

As a follow up, the 33% of telephone survey respondents and 65% of online survey respondents who stated that they were open to trying new recreation activities were asked what the barriers were for them pursuing this interest.

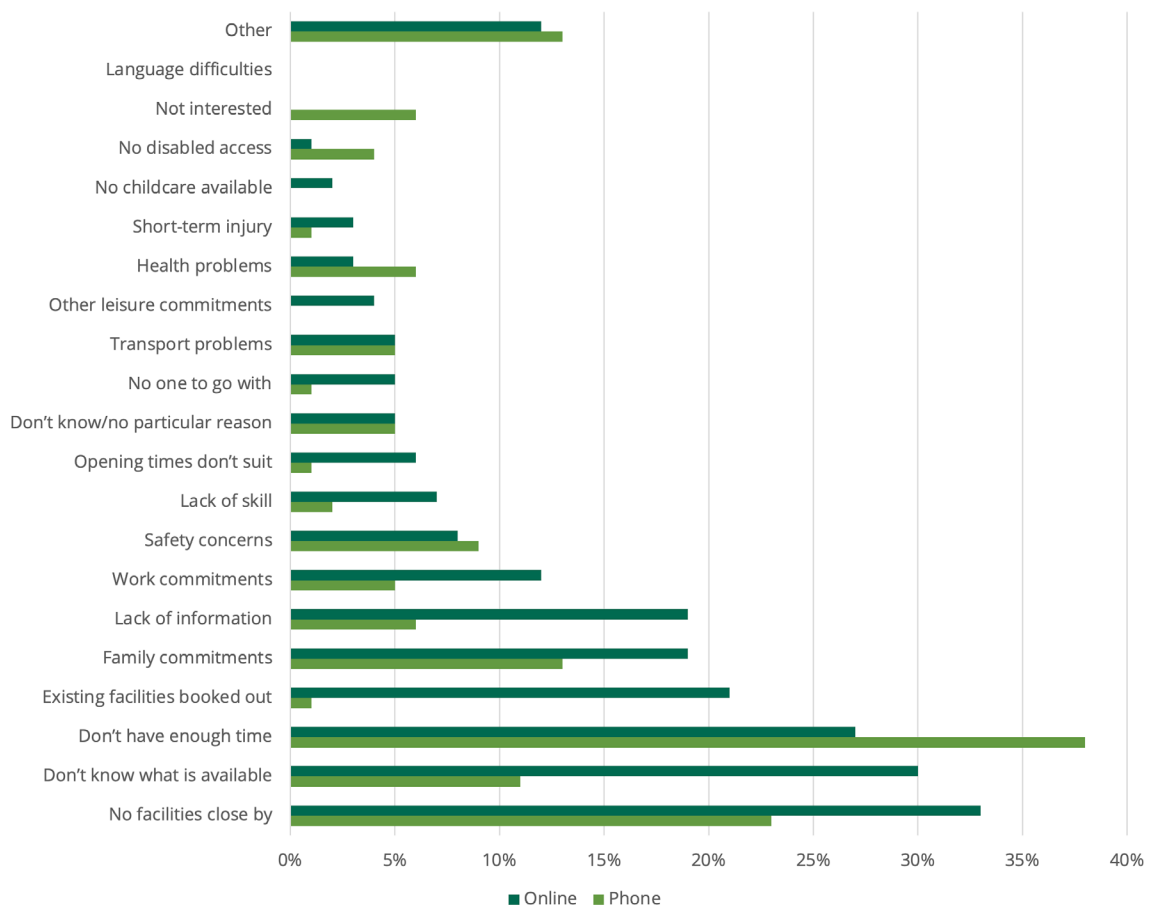
As shown in Figure 6, not having enough time was stated as the biggest barrier (38%) for telephone survey respondents. Other barriers for telephone survey respondents included not having facilities close by (23%) and family commitments (13%).

The biggest barrier for online survey respondents was not having facilities close by (33%). Other barriers for online survey respondents included not knowing what is available (30%) and not having enough time (27%).

Respondents who selected 'other' provided barriers including poor infrastructure and maintenance of recreation facilities, cost, accessibility, parking and poor weather.



Figure 6: What are the main barriers preventing you from taking part in more recreation activities in the Ku-ring-gai LGA?



Which of these recreational spaces are a priority to you? Should the future focus and level of planning for these facilities be more, the same, or less in the Ku-ring-gai area?

Survey respondents were asked which recreation spaces were a priority to them for future recreation planning. They were also asked whether there should be more, the same or less investment in these spaces in the future.

As shown in Figure 7, the top priority recreational spaces for telephone survey respondents included parks (81%), natural and bush areas (79%) and walking tracks and trails (76%).

The top priority recreational spaces for online survey respondents included sports grounds (78%), walking tracks (76%) and parks (74%).

Spaces ranked as a priority tended to rank higher for the level of desired investment. As shown in Figure 8, the top spaces where telephone survey respondents wanted more investment included walking tracks and trails (46%), natural and bush areas (46%) and parks (43%).

The top spaces where online survey respondents wanted more investment included sports grounds (66%), outdoor courts (57%) and indoor courts (43%).

Figure 7: Priority recreational spaces

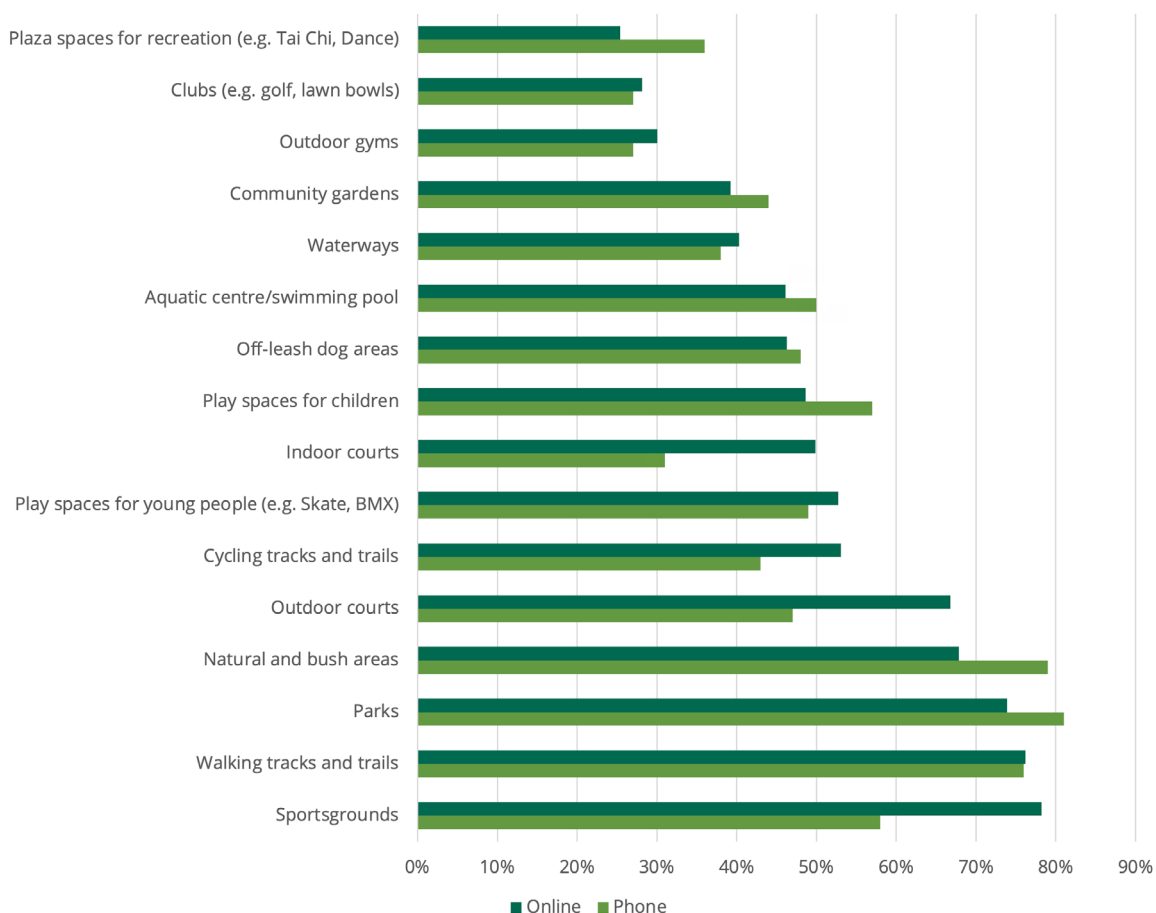
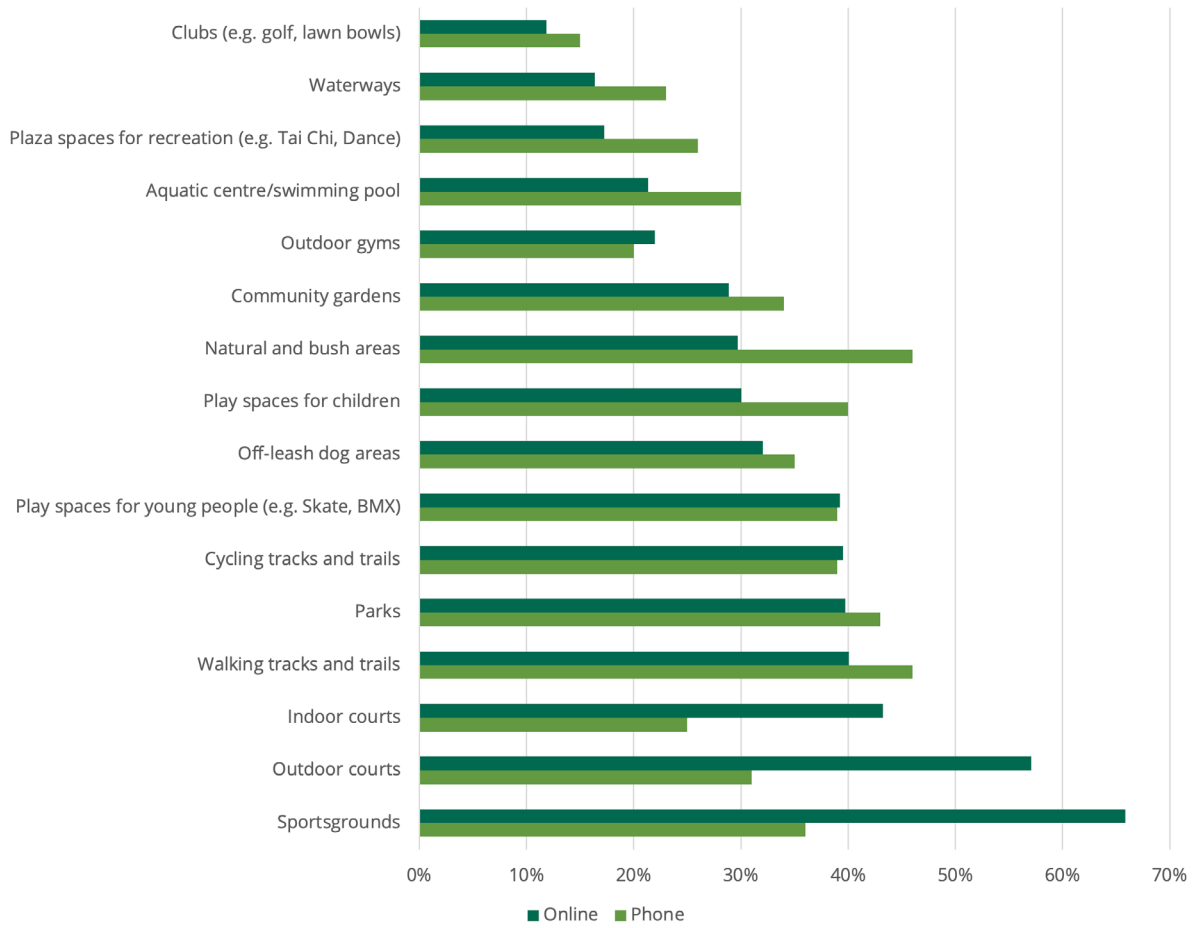


Figure 8: Recreational spaces where respondents wanted more investment



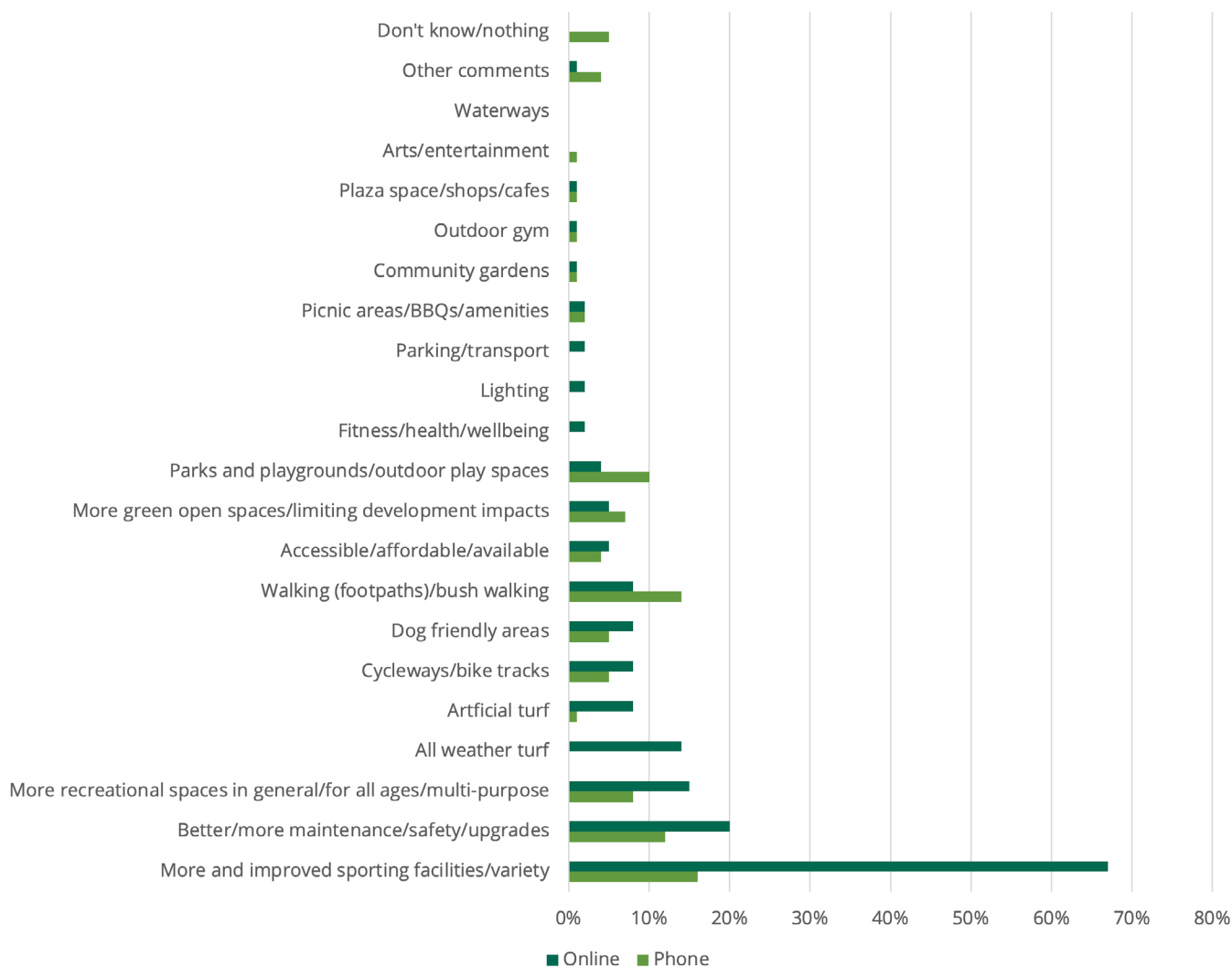
Survey respondents were also asked, unprompted, to talk about their main priority for future recreation facilities in Ku-ring-gai LGA. Figure 9 shows the key themes that emerged from this question.

For telephone survey respondents, the main priorities for future recreation facilities included more and improved sporting facilities/variety (16%), better/more maintenance/safety/upgrades (12%) and more recreational spaces in general/for all ages/multi-purpose (8%).

For online survey respondents, the main priorities for future recreation facilities included more and

improved sporting facilities/variety (67%), better/more maintenance/safety/upgrades (20%) and all weather/artificial turf (21%).

Figure 9: What is your main priority for future recreation facilities in the Ku-ring-gai LGA?



Chapter 4: What stakeholders said





4. What stakeholders said

The quality of facilities is the biggest barrier for participation in sport and recreation activities across the LGA.

- 59% of survey respondents cited quality of sport and recreation facilities as a challenge within their organisation.

Key issues around quality include:

- Lighting
- Quality of amenities
- Maintenance and safety.

Female participation in sports is growing, but facilities and amenities across the LGA are still not fit for purpose.

Stakeholders want increased communication with Council around sport and recreation in the LGA.

- Interviewees expressed interest in two meetings per year with Council between seasons to discuss needs/expectations
- Improving relationships with Council was a big theme across the survey and interviews.

Partnerships between Council, sporting organisations and schools was often referenced as a 'big' idea by respondents.

Concerns around renting, leasing and booking sport and recreation facilities was a key theme.

- Stakeholders have different experiences around renting and leasing facilities.

Having diverse voices heard was considered a benefit of planning for recreation and sport facilities

- Stakeholders want to feel heard and engage better with Council around recreation in the LGA.



Chapter 5: Stakeholder survey



5. Stakeholder survey

5.1. About the survey

The aim of the stakeholder survey was to understand how stakeholders use sport and recreation facilities. The survey was open from 30 June to 27 July 2022 and was available on Ku-ring-gai Council's website.

51 stakeholder organisations from across Ku-ring-gai LGA completed the survey.

Figure 10: Type of stakeholder organisations

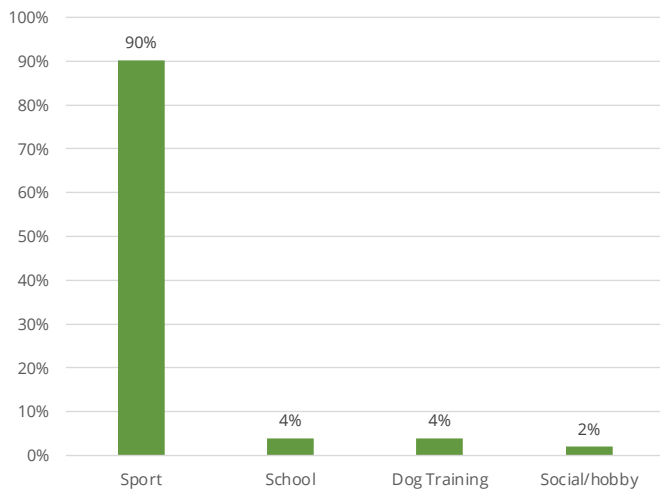
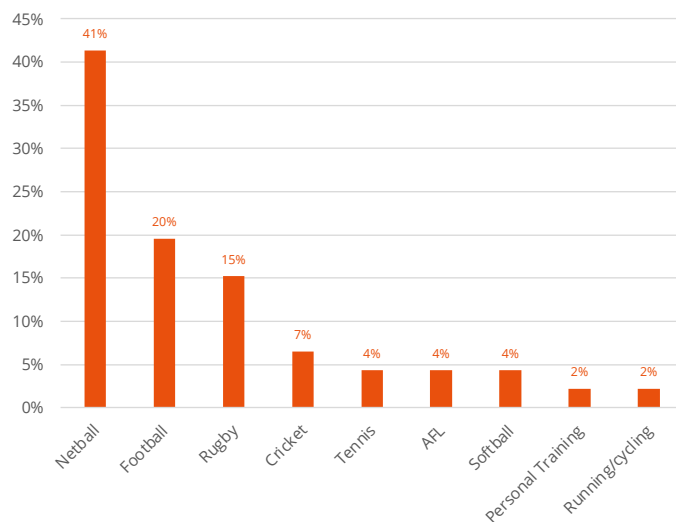


Figure 11: Type of sporting organisation



5.2. About the stakeholders

Sporting organisations made up the majority of stakeholder responses

As shown in Figure 10, 90% of responses to the stakeholder survey came from sporting organisations in the Ku-ring-gai area. This was followed by schools (4%), dog training clubs (4%) and social/hobby groups (2%).

Respondents who indicated that they represented a sporting organisation came from a wide array of sports. As highlighted in Figure 11, 41% came from netball organisations, 20% from football organisations, 15% from rugby organisations and 7% from cricket organisations.



Most stakeholders have been operating for over 10 years in Ku-ring-gai LGA.

The majority of the stakeholders (94%) have been operating for over 10 years. As shown in Table 1, many operate across the Ku-ring-gai LGA area, with the most popular suburbs for operation including South Turramurra (59%), Turramurra (57%), Pymble (57%), West Pymble (55%), Warrawee (53%) and Wahroonga (53%).



Table 1: Suburbs where stakeholders operate

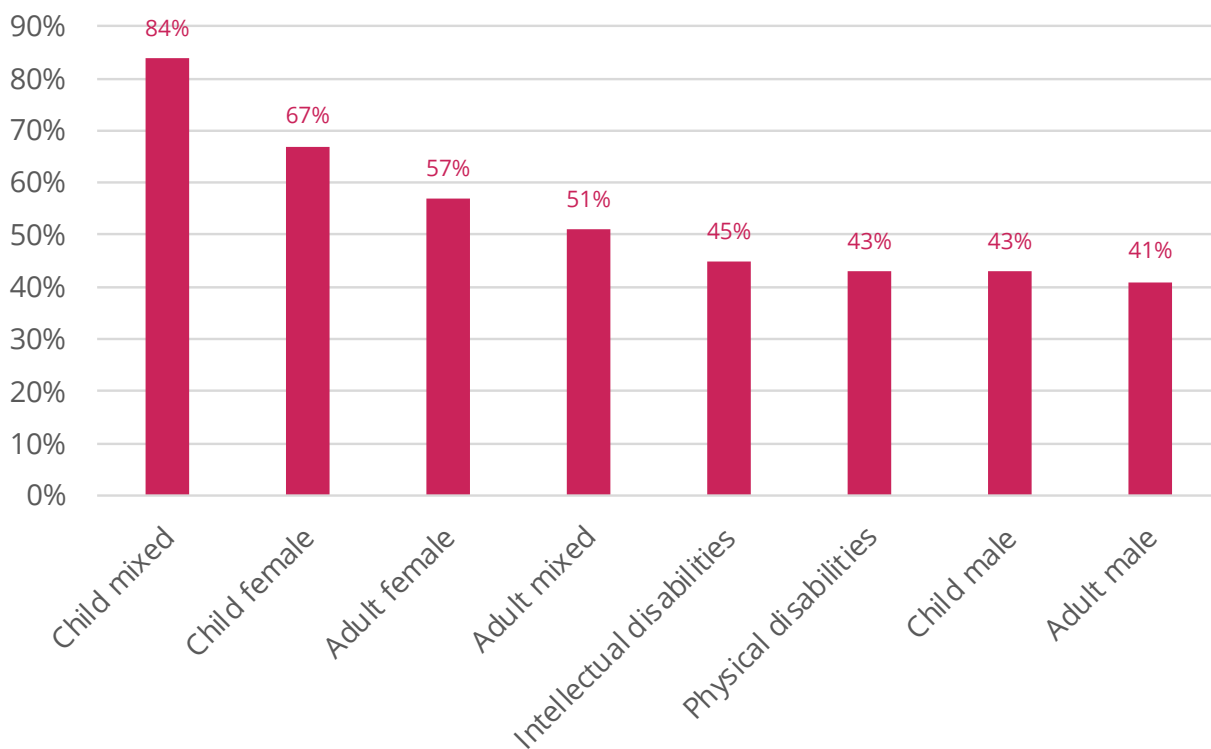
Suburb	# of respondents	% of respondents
South Turramurra	30	59%
Turramurra	29	57%
Pymble	29	57%
West Pymble	28	55%
North Turramurra	28	55%
Warrawee	27	53%
Wahroonga	27	53%
Outside of Ku-ring-gai LGA	26	51%
Gordon	25	49%
Lindfield	25	49%
St Ives	25	49%
East Lindfield	24	47%
Killara	24	47%
Roseville	23	45%
East Killara	22	43%
St Ives Chase	22	43%
North Wahroonga	22	43%
Roseville Chase	19	37%

Stakeholders offers programs that cater to people of all ages, genders and abilities.

Most stakeholders offer specific programs that cater to children, adults, females, males and those with intellectual and physical disabilities. As shown in Figure 12, the most common programs offered by stakeholders in Ku-ring-gai LGA include mixed children (84%), female child (67%), adult female (57%) and adult mixed (51%). Just under half of the stakeholders offer programs for people with intellectual (45%) and physical disabilities (43%).



Figure 12: Types of programs offered by stakeholders



5.3. What we heard

Participation has typically increased over the last five years

We asked survey respondents whether the participation levels in their organisation had increased, stayed relatively the same or decreased over the past five years. 41% of respondents noted that participation levels had increased, and 38% said they had stayed relatively the same. 21% found there had been a decrease in participation levels.

"We are a high-quality community club with great spirit. The increased population density in the area (development along the highways), coupled with growth of female participation, and higher participation with older players (walking football etc.) is only going to increase participation. Demand for football over summer, and training facilities in winter preseason is also increasing."

- A local club

Participation is expected to increase in the next five years

We then asked about expectations for participation levels in the next five years. 56% of respondents felt that their organisation participation levels would increase in five years, 33% expected them to stay the same, while only 10% were expecting a decrease.

Reasons for the current and expected increase in growth included the growing population density in Ku-ring-gai LGA, the increase in female and adult/older persons participation in sports programs and high levels of engagement with professional sporting competitions. For example, a local club spoke to how the Rugby World Cup 2027 being hosted in Australia will likely lead to an increase in membership.

Barriers for growth included the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, limited number of facilities available in the LGA, and the wet weather experienced in the 2021-2022 season. Local netball organisations spoke about challenges surrounding the availability of netball courts, particularly around evening games and training, which impacts the ability of clubs to attract and retain members. Local clubs experiencing a decrease in growth talked about their plans to promote the club, including their ideas of various methods to try and attract and retain new members going forward.

"There is opportunity to increase participation, but it is restricted by the limited number of netball courts within Ku-ring-gai. While the local courts at Canoon Rd are excellent in daylight hours, the severe restrictions on when the lights, which are only on nine courts, can be used, limit us from using these most of the year."

- A local club

"Our younger players decreased during COVID. As a result, we are putting on fun afternoons at the end of the calendar year to excite these players to sign up the following year. Girls entering high school and girls aged over 15 are places where we lose players. All clubs struggle with this. We try to put age groups together and keep a fun and friendly environment. Netball is vulnerable to other sports; however, we find that many girls return once they have tried other sports, such is the strength of netball"

- A local club

Most stakeholders use council facilities to meet their sporting needs

95% of respondents use Ku-ring-gai Council recreation facilities to meet their sporting needs, with Table 2 showing that the most popular facilities are sports fields, ovals and courts (73%). Other facilities used by stakeholders include school facilities (20%), roads and paths (16%), parks (14%), national parks (12%) and community halls (12%).

Table 2: What Council facilities stakeholders use

Council facility	# of respondents	% of respondents
Sports field, oval, courts	37	95%
Roads/paths	8	21%
Parks	7	18%
Community hall	6	15%
National Park areas	6	15%
Indoor recreation centre	3	8%
Aquatic centre/pool	3	8%
Golf course	2	5%
Other	13	34%

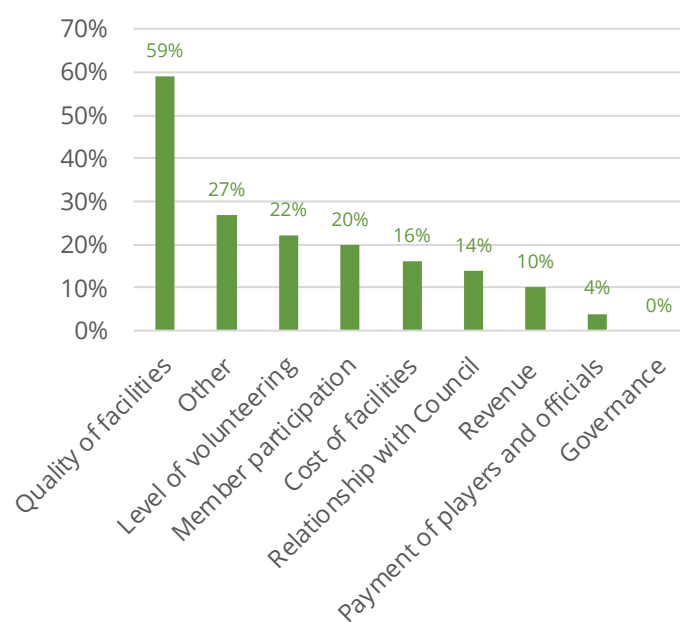
Of those stakeholders who use other facilities, a high proportion (26% of respondents), noted that they use recreation facilities within schools. However, it is noted that these facilities are not managed by Council,

For the 5% who do not use council facilities, a local club stated that the reason for this was that there were no council facilities nearby. Instead, the club uses school netball courts.

Quality of facilities is a huge challenge for stakeholders

As shown in Figure 13, 59% of respondents cited quality of sport and recreation facilities as a challenge within their organisation. This was followed by the level of volunteering (22%), member participation, recruitment, and retention (20%) and the cost of facilities (16%).

Figure 13: Types of programs offered by stakeholders



Access to more sports fields across the LGA and maintenance of sports facilities are the most common stakeholder needs

We asked stakeholders what their current needs to support participation in sport and recreation activities are, and whether they are being met. Table 3 shows the key needs that emerged from the survey, along with select comments.

Table 3: What are your current needs to support participation in sport and recreation activities in Ku-ring-gai, and are they being met?

Theme	#	Summary of comments	Select comments
Access to more sports fields across Ku-ring-gai LGA	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders need access to more open spaces and sports fields that support their needs Sports fields need to be accessible during the week for training and for games on the weekends Open spaces and sports fields should be designed for multi-purpose use 	<p>“Our main requirement is having access to sport fields that support our club for training during the week (with lights and adequate drainage) and for the scheduling of games on the weekend. Greater access to grounds outside of winter season.”</p> <p>“Our current needs are the number of venues available. To really facilitate sport in our council area, it would be wonderful to see an area as Manly and Hornsby do where there is more than one sports field together e.g. soccer and netball within the same precinct.”</p> <p>“Facilities that meet the growth of the club, the demands of players and parents to not only play on a weekend but train more than 1-2 hours a week.”</p>
Increased maintenance and upgrading of facilities and amenities in Ku-ring-gai LGA	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public amenities at sports fields in the LGA are in poor condition and require upgrades and regular maintenance Council needs to address safety concerns at several sports fields. This includes the quality of the surfaces and the availability of lighting 	<p>“More widely our public amenities at Auluba are in a poor state (toilets stink etc.). This is subject to slightly upgraded clubhouse facilities design by KMC currently.”</p> <p>“The surface at Lofberg courts is dangerous. It desperately needs a proper resurface with a material that is friendly for impact sports. There are no indoor facilities, which means we have to pay exorbitant fees to the local wealthy private schools that are not good corporate neighbours.”</p> <p>“We need grounds that are well presented and cut short during summer. It is no fun hitting a cricket ball along grass that is halfway up to your knee. Many of the grounds are not level. Many have holes/dangerous undulations in them. Lofberg is a very had surface and we tend to get a lot of knee injuries playing on it. We had 1 guy last year who needed very serious surgery due to the uneven surface.”</p>

Theme	#	Summary of comments	Select comments
Improved drainage	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports fields have poor drainage, which is an issue particularly given the recent wet weather 	<p>“Council’s limited responsiveness to the state of grounds / safe playability of grounds given this year’s wet weather has meant that volunteers within our association have been required to give countless hours of their own time, using ours and their own equipment, to mitigate the lack of drainage and make repairs to the diamonds. Even so, we have needed to modify our standard competition at the beginning of the season to accommodate the reduced number of diamonds (softball fields) available to us.”</p> <p>“Grounds that have drainage and irrigation have been able to cope, such as Wellington and Koola, others that haven’t had a recent upgrade have really been offline for most of the season.”</p>
Provision of gender neutral/ female friendly facilities	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council needs to ensure facilities are female friendly to meet with growing demand by females in sport and recreation in the LGA 	<p>“Transition of amenities to become gender neutral to support female participation.”</p>
Increased marketing of sports clubs and events	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council can help sporting organisations by promoting club events 	<p>“More activity on social media sharing posts promoting our club events. The more who attend, the more money our club can make to work towards finding a larger scale project that will benefit our members in cricket training.”</p>
Working closely and cohesively with stakeholder organisations	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council needs to work with sporting organisations to make grounds playable Sporting organisations should partner with Council to grow participation 	<p>“Council’s limited responsiveness to the state of grounds / safe playability of grounds given this year’s wet weather has meant that volunteers within our association have been required to give countless hours of their own time, using ours and their own equipment, to mitigate the lack of drainage and make repairs to the diamonds.”</p> <p>“We need to partner with Council to grow and improve both participation and the level of facilities offered. We are extremely keen to talk further to create the best outcome for the Ku-ring-gai community.”</p>

Council plays an important role in providing and maintaining sports facilities

We asked stakeholders what they thought the role of Council was in providing for and supporting sport and recreation activities in Ku-ring-gai. Table 4 shows the key themes that emerged from the survey, along with select comments.

Table 4: What do you think is the role of Council in providing for and supporting sport and recreation activities in the LGA?

Theme	#	Summary of comments	Select comments
Better maintenance and safety of recreation fields	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council plays an important role in upgrading and maintaining facilities 	<p>"The role of Council is to provide maintained and safe sports grounds and facilities that support and encourage sport and rec participation. Council has a key role in the delivery, management, maintenance and upgrade of sport facilities in local communities, for community involvement and wellbeing. These opportunities for sport promote an active and healthy lifestyle throughout all life stages."</p>
Provision of sports fields to meet the needs of the LGA	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council plays an important role in maintaining and improving the safety of facilities 	<p>"As the population of the LGA continues to increase, there is pressure on the already small number of sporting facilities. These need to be upgraded to reflect both the change in demographics (especially female participation), but also the standard of the existing facilities, both the sporting grounds themselves and also the clubroom facilities (especially relevant to Acron Oval)."</p> <p>"Maintaining currently used sporting facilities and planning for more facilities in the future to keep up with expected increases in demand."</p>
Working better with sporting organisations	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council should provide sports fields to meet the needs and changing demographics of the LGA 	<p>"Work with sporting organisations to proactively plan facility upgrades for the future to meet trends of participation."</p>
Improve parking access at recreation fields	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council should improve access to parking at sport and recreation facilities 	<p>"Be proactive to ensure roads are not blocked and there is enough parking."</p>

There are a number of opportunities for new and upgraded open space and recreation infrastructure within the LGA to support stakeholders

We asked stakeholders if they had identified opportunities for new open space and recreation infrastructure to support their organisation's needs in or around the LGA. Table 5 shows the key themes that emerged from the survey along with select comments.

Table 5: Have you identified any opportunities for new open space and recreation infrastructure to support your organisations needs in or around Ku-ring-gai LGA?

Theme	#	Summary of comments	Select comments
Upgrades to existing sport and recreation facilities in the LGA	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing facilities need to be upgraded to be fit for purpose Specific upgrades include synthetic fields, lighting, drainage upgrades, storage and safety upgrades Explore the possibility of partnerships with schools for facility sharing 	<p>"Arrangements between Council and schools for field sharing."</p> <p>"St Ives Showground has two full playing fields, if it were possible to convert the trotting track to grass, it could potentially fit a third or fourth new space. There is space behind the old nursery that could potentially be used to create a playing field."</p>
Increase opportunities for more netball facilities in the LGA	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More netball facilities in the LGA Expansion of current netball facilities Provide indoor netball facilities 	<p>"At North Turramurra, in the recreation area, the netball courts that were promised have not been built. Two proper netball courts could be built there. The NTRA could be expanded by Council purchasing the house for sale which is adjacent to the current recreation area. This would also allow netball courts to be built here."</p> <p>"More netball courts and indoor netball courts."</p>
Development of multi-purpose open space and recreation infrastructure	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for Council to develop multi-purpose shared facilities Explore the possibility of St Ives Showground as new multi-purpose recreation hub 	<p>"There may be some options for shared facilities with other sports in the area (e.g. Auluba ground 3 baseball). We have a consultant Otium who is currently investigating the various options in more detail; and we'd like to work with Council to prioritise these once complete."</p>

Many respondents also spoke about opportunities for specific facilities or sport codes. These include:

- Indoor cricket nets with bowling machines
- Create a multi-purpose facility at the bowling club at 4 Pennant Avenue (2)
- Consideration of Bryce Oval for softball use
- Reallocation of dog off leash areas such as Pymble water retention site
- New infrastructure is needed at the following facilities:
 - Primula Oval – install hybrid surface
 - Kent Oval – floodlights are needed
 - Warrimoo Oval – improved lighting and synthetic fields
 - George Christie Oval has not been used all year due to safety concerns – lighting and drainage. However, an aircraft club notes that if floodlights were installed it would render the end of the club as airspace approval is specific.
 - Bannockburn Oval – upgrade playing surface, drainage, better seating lighting and upgrades to the car park
 - Roseville Park – lighting.

Stakeholders have big ideas for open space and recreation in Ku-ring-gai

We asked stakeholders if they had one 'big idea' for the future of open space and recreation within Ku-ring-gai LGA. Table 6 shows the key themes that emerged from the survey, along with select comments.

Table 6: What are your current needs to support participation in sport and recreation activities in Ku-ring-gai, and are they being met?

Theme	#	Summary of comments	Select comments
Upgrade facilities to make them more appealing and usable to the community	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade facilities to make them accessible for both male and female community members Upgrade facilities to make them more adaptable to weather scenarios Include more synthetic/ all-weather fields across the LGA Ensure upgrades reflect all user needs, not just one sporting code 	<p>"Increased and improved drainage to sports fields, and the laying of artificial turf where possible for sports fields. The big idea for softball and the softball community within the Ku-ring-gai LGA would be building dugouts at the existing diamonds."</p> <p>"One big idea is to ensure that when upgrades to sporting and recreation ovals occur, that the proposed field configuration and markings are for more than one sporting code. Norm Griffiths is an example where the upgrade is designed solely to suit the soccer club. The ground should be configured so that cricket, AFL and soccer can play on it. Primarily used by soccer of course, but markings to include the ability to reorient to the two other sports via different coloured markings on the synthetic surface if need be. Clubs are happy to work and do the legwork with council in order to jointly apply for state and federal government infrastructure grants to upgrade facilities. It's in all of our interests to see that facilities are in the best state that they can be in."</p>
Create more multi-purpose recreation hubs across the LGA	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council should explore locations for multi-purpose recreation hubs that cater to a wide variety of sports and recreation needs Council should create indoor recreation hubs as well as outdoor ones 	<p>"St Ives Showground has a vast amount of unused space that has seen significant improvement since the playground opening alone - this should be a major hub of recreation with space for parking, netball courts, improved soccer facilities with two all weather fields, other grass pitches, specific off leash dog space, cafes - the one located has remained unopened for many months."</p> <p>"An indoor/outdoor facility that homed many different sports."</p> <p>"To create a facility like Abbott Road, Curl Curl-Manly where all sports such as softball, soccer, netball, and rugby along with recreational facilities are provided. St Ives Showground or the area next to the driving school opposite have always been places I look at and see potential."</p>

Theme	#	Summary of comments	Select comments
Provide more opportunities for netball clubs in the LGA	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an indoor netball facility 	<p>“Building of a facility in the LGA which could include four indoor netball courts.”</p> <p>“Indoor netball facility to be the home of netball. Providing new facilities for the organisation of KNA as well as ensuring the growth and success of teams and players.”</p>
Land zoning is an opportunity for open space and recreation facilities in the LGA	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council should seek to acquire land near current recreational facilities to expand recreational zones 	<p>“Council has recently divested recreational zoned land in Ku-ring-gai. Where opportunities arise, Council should be seeking to acquire land adjacent to existing recreational zoned land to expand recreational zones. CSIRO at West Lindfield are on Commonwealth owned land (approx. 20 ha). Much of the land on this site is under-utilised. Council could investigate leasing part of this land. NSW Office of Sport grants may be available for construction of courts.”</p>
Equitable opportunity for all sports across the LGA	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council should treat all sports fairly and equally 	<p>“More fairness and equity of distribution for female sport.”</p> <p>“Equal opportunity for all sports - currently heavy on soccer and cricket fields.”</p>



Best practice case studies

We asked stakeholders to provide ideas around best practice case studies both from within and outside the LGA that could be used as inspiration for Ku-ring-gai open spaces and recreation. Some examples mentioned include:

Lindfield Soldiers Memorial Park East Lindfield (Ku-ring-gai Council)



Source: Ku-ring-gai Council

- Car park, dog off leash, lights, playground, seating, toilets, cricket net and pitch, rock climbing, rugby/ touch football field and tennis courts
- Multi-purpose sports facility with turf and synthetic wickets plus two practice nets for cricket, floodlit tennis course, rugby fields and a playground. Bushland surrounds provides rock climbing and abseiling locations.

Bruce Percer Reserve and Kanebridge Oval Kellyville (The Hills Shire Council)



Source: The Hills Shire Council

- Major sporting complex home to many local sporting groups including AFL and cricket.
- Full size cricket pitch or AFL field – including turf wicket, turf, and synthetic cricket wickets
- Amenities building
- Floodlights, car parking and podium seating.

Kellyville Netball Courts, Wellgate Avenue Kellyville (The Hills Shire Council)



Source: Kellyville Netball Club

- Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association, Kellyville Netball Club
- This is a good example of netball courts in good condition, with appropriate amenities and parking
- 33 bitumen-based courts.

Lionel Watts Reserve Frenches Forest (Northern Beaches Council)



Source: Bijl Architecture

- This space has an off-leash dog area, synthetic pitches, netball courts, bike and walking paths, grass pitches, bathroom, playground and skate park
- Synthetic sports field delivering premier all-weather facilities which caters for most sports including combination of two senior football fields, separate junior field, senior AFL and two junior AFL all permanently marked. Four new cricket nets and a centre cricket wicket covered in winter. Caters to local schools for futsal, oz tag and touch.

Sydney Park Alexandria (City of Sydney)



Source: City of Sydney

- Off-leash, rolling hills, playground, children cycle track, skate park, wetlands, sports oval, and outdoor fitness.

The Ridge Sporting Complex

Barden Ridge (Sutherland Shire)



- Soccer, cricket, oztag and rugby union.

Blackman Oval

Lane Cove (Lane Cove Council)



- A well-maintained sports field
- Includes sports grounds, picnic areas, large open spaces and river foreshore bush walks
- BBQ, play equipment, cricket pitch, cricket nets, fitness equipment, flying fox, parking, ping pong, snack, sport oval toilets
- Synthetic grass field, turf and half basketball court.

Eastwood Ryde Netball Association

Meadowbank (City of Ryde)



- Developed a new indoor facility with the local PCYC (City of Ryde).

Christie Park

Macquarie Park (City of Ryde)



- Under cover seats and office space
- New all-weather synthetic sports fields – new tiered seating for 500 people, cork used to provide cooler playing conditions, netting at the rear to prevent balls entering Lane Cove National Park.

Rawson Park

Mosman (Mosman Council)



- Seating, netball courts, toilets and change rooms.



Chapter 6: Stakeholder interviews



6. Stakeholder interviews

6.1. About the interviews

Cred Consulting undertook stakeholder interviews during July and August 2022. A total of 10 interviews with stakeholders from across Ku-ring-gai LGA were conducted.

6.2. About the stakeholders

The stakeholders interviewed came from a range of sporting organisations, hobby groups, dog training clubs and schools.

6.3. What stakeholders said

Changing demographics in sporting organisations reflect overall changes to Ku-ring-gai LGA demographics

Stakeholders observed that the changing demographics of their membership tend to reflect demographic changes occurring within the LGA. Many organisations spoke to having a high proportion of Caucasian membership, with increasing East and South Asian membership. Stakeholders also reported that membership of sporting organisations is a reflection on the popularity of sports in countries of origin and ancestry. For example, cricket is seeing a growth in members from the sub-continent and rugby is seeing a growth in members from Ireland and South Africa.

“Cricket is very popular in the sub-continent, so the sub-continent player group has grown a lot over the last 10 to 15 years. Back when I played it was a very Anglo based club, but this probably reflects demographic changes of the North Shore.”

- A local club



Participation trends vary across sports

Stakeholders shared different experiences of membership growth or decline. Although many have experienced short-term declines during the Covid-19 pandemic, overall, most stakeholder organisations reported experiencing a growth in the number of members in the past five years. Stakeholders also reported that they expect this increase in participation to continue in the next five years. For example, a local club spoke about the role council can play in encouraging children to participate in community sports. Those organisations who have experienced declines in membership such as netball and rugby, noted challenges such as the weather, Covid-19, and the quality of facilities, as key barriers to improving membership. A local club spoke to issues around lighting and parking as big barriers to membership retention. Some local clubs reported putting increased efforts into programs for younger children to try and improve their membership over the next five years. For example, one local club is putting resources towards promoting Net Set Go, a program for children aged 6 to 8 years old. Another local club is trying to grow their under 5s program.

“We can’t use some of the courts for anything but training, and they have limitations up to 8pm at night. It has denigrated our sport, because 9 year olds can’t be there until 8pm at night. We are not getting registrations like we used to. Our growth is declining. Our seniors have a natural attrition rate, so we are losing at top and bottom end. We work very hard and are trying to put resources towards Net Set Go which is for 6, 7 and 8-year-olds. We picked up a lot this year, but lighting problems are still an issue restricting our growth. Problems with parking as well is also contributing to our decline in growth.”

- A local club

“We have seen a declining trend... we think we have hit the bottom and think we will start to see a growth trajectory... A lot of parents and kids have picked up other activities over the Covid lockdown... We are trying to win some of these kids back. We are trying to grow our program for under 5 kids, which is just a little bit of fun and games for kids to try and see what rugby is about.”

- A local club

“Participation has dropped. We are super concerned about that as kids are becoming sedentary, spending too much time on their screens and not engaging in community sport. There is a great role for Council to play in that as we move forward with long term strategy around increasing kids’ participation in any sport of any kind.”

- A local club

Quality of infrastructure is the biggest barrier to participation in sport and recreation and a significant challenge for stakeholders

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders reported the poor quality of sport and recreation facilities across the LGA as being the biggest barrier to participation. Stakeholders' main concerns relating to quality were that facilities are poorly maintained, not safe and in need of upgrades to be fit for purpose. Other key issues with facilities include poor quality of amenities and surrounding buildings such as toilets, change rooms and clubhouses.

Stakeholders' main concerns relating to safety were:

- The increased wet weather combined with poor drainage has led to safety issues around slippages, and that poor drainage often leaves fields unusable for long periods of time during wet weather.
- Poorly maintained facilities often have numerous trip hazards, which create safety problems for playing sport on the fields or courts.
- Poor lighting at sport and recreation facilities. Stakeholders spoke to the need for better lighting across a wide range of sporting and recreation facilities in the LGA.



“The state of the grounds is a big barrier. A lot of them are not kept very well, they are not safe, or they get closed a lot which influences a person’s experience with football. Some of our fields have been closed this whole season, meaning people must travel a lot further to train or take part in competitions. There are also concerns around whether they are safe enough... There are problems with drainage. The soil is too slippery and hazardous for us to play on.”

- A local club

“The quality of the playing surface is a challenge for our club. When Killara Park is not being used for cricket, it is an off-leash dog area... For example, one year the grounds staff laid new turf on wicket square, and dogs got on there. They ripped it up and we lost that wicket square for the whole season... Off leash dog walking opportunities are fantastic, and facilities must work harder in this day and age to meet different demands. However, we think there is an opportunity for Council to explore here.”

- A local club

“The world is changing. People have got less time to engage in these things and the quality of facilities enhances these experiences. People coming with higher expectations and come into our club house and change rooms, and they are outdated and dirty and it is not a pleasant space to be in.”

- A local club

Multi-purpose spaces are important, but can have negative impacts on sports organisations

Stakeholders appreciate the value and importance of multi-purpose spaces to community recreation and sport. However, there were concerns that multi-purpose spaces can sometimes have a negative impact on the ability of sports clubs to use the grounds effectively. For example, fields that are used for sports and dog-off leash areas can cause numerous trip hazards if dogs dig up the grounds. Ku-ring-gai Little Athletics suggested that Ku-ring-gai Council explore the idea of creating multi-purpose spaces that cater to co-users who do not impede on each other's needs.



"From a broad stroke approach, in Ku-ring-gai we have I think 48 playing fields. We try to make most of them multi-use because that's the buzzword these days... I think sometimes that shoots us in the foot and sometimes it can increase maintenance costs for Council because of the multi-use nature, as a lot of user groups are not good co-habitants. If there was better cooperation between the different clubs, then clubs could stick to a few grounds for rugby and make sure they are purpose built for rugby. If we are going to have an athletics track we should make it so that the co-group activities don't cross over where tracks are. In Ku-ring-gai, we need to get in a room, sit down and have a good think about what we do and how we do it. There isn't space to get a whole lot of new ovals, but the ovals we do have could be better utilised if there was better cooperation. Instead of focusing on all the wants we should look at needs and come up with a good solution."

- A local club

"A number of our grounds are shared with off-leash dog areas. One of the grounds, it got to the stage where we stopped booking it on the weekends because we didn't think it was safe for competition games. The dogs dig holes, and even if we fill the hole, it attracts the dogs to re-dig it. There are a couple of fields like that which we think are too dangerous to play at."

- A local club

"The big idea for me is I would love to see this council really nail the juggle and complexities around how we create multi-use spaces efficiently. How do we fully utilise the spaces we have for the sports we have and the demand? It's a complex issue. I hate to see a ground that is dormant and not being used and equally hate to see clubs thinking they don't have enough space to accommodate all the kids. Multi-use spaces for me are the big idea."

- A local club

Stakeholders state that female participation is growing, yet report that many facilities remain unsafe and unfriendly

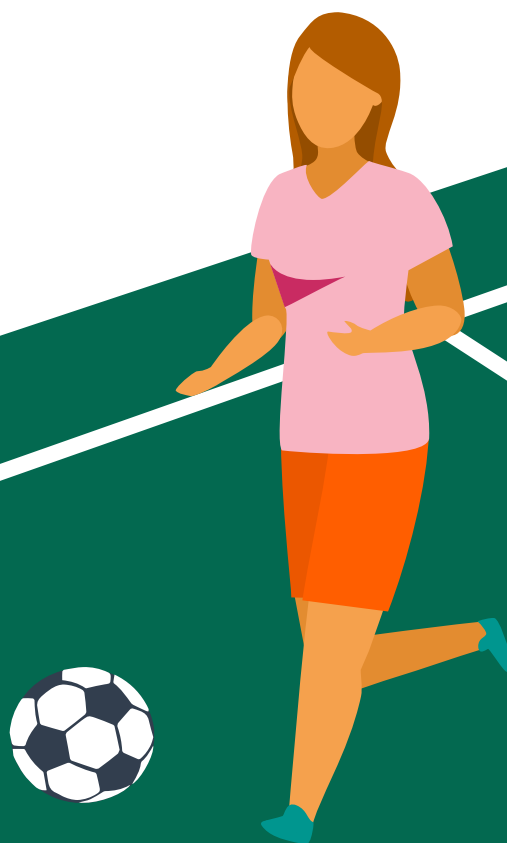
Most stakeholders discussed to growth of female participation in their sport. However, they also shared concerns that the facilities in Ku-ring-gai LGA did support this growth. The majority of sporting groups interviewed stated that facilities need to be upgraded to be female friendly and safe for female users. One local club shared that they had brought these concerns to Council previously but felt the response was that there was no desire to fix this issue.

"Another barrier is the lack of change rooms that are female friendly or gender neutral. There's been a big push over the last few years to get rid of urinals, corridor showers and all things like that to make it more friendly for kids and females."

- A local club

"The ground floor of our club house has change rooms which were designed and built in an era when male was dominant, and they don't really cater to females. We need to work with Council around how we re-look at these to make them more inclusive. We have many more girls playing rugby and quite a few female district teams training at Hassall Park. We need to look at change rooms to make more appropriate for demographic that use these facilities. Working with Council with that would be fantastic and a good outcome for everyone."

- A local club



Leasing and renting arrangements are often a challenge for clubs

Stakeholders spoke to the challenges they face around the leasing and renting of facilities. One local club spoke to the cost of lease being a challenge and others noted that the cost of renting or leasing the facilities does not necessarily reflect the quality of the facilities hired in Ku-ring-gai LGA. There are also discrepancies in the experience of local clubs around funding and delivering facility upgrades. One local club also expressed their concern around their ability to make upgrades, and noted that they have found that Council will not allow them to make upgrades, despite the club having the funds available via grants. Another local club reported a different experience, where they stated they were told by Council that they had to upgrade the facility themselves, with their own funding.

We also heard that some sporting clubs also rely on other clubs to rent and lease the fields, and work in partnership with them.



“Going through licensing arrangements is a challenge. Ku-ring-gai seems to have a different model to other Councils, which makes it challenging. We want to continue to use that facility given our strong historical connection. We have played cricket there for a long time, and it is named after Burt Oldfield who played for Australia and our club. I find it difficult for Council to sit back and go this ground is performing at the level it should be. It should be a jewel in the crown of Ku-ring-gai, and reality is it is not at the moment. Council doesn’t have resources to find all improvements that we would like to see. But without Council support, we can’t go and do grant applications that would contribute. The club would make contributions as well as grants, but if they don’t support an application, makes you sit back and think why am I bothering? Would be a shame to get to the point where we say we can’t hire / don’t want to hire ground because Council is not prepared to work with us.”

- A local club

“Women’s sport is forgotten in the area; the boys and their facilities are really well looked after and ours aren’t. We have facilities with patches from vandalism. We try to get them resurfaced because they are dangerous, and Council just won’t do it. Everything they want to do at Ku-ring-gai they want us to pay 100%. They say go and get a grant, but we don’t want to be seen as cash cows. Council can at least maintain things a little better than they are right now. We rent for season; we can’t get a lease as if you lease you have to maintain them 100% yourself.”

- A local club

Availability of grounds is reported as another barrier to participation

Some stakeholders mentioned that the availability of grounds was both a barrier to participation and a challenge for clubs. Many told stories of how ongoing ground closures from wet weather made it hard to retain members. Stakeholders suggested that Ku-ring-gai Council could be more transparent around the closure of grounds during wet weather, but stakeholders also understood the need for balancing the prevention of damage and allowing facilities to be used for their intended purposes. One local club spoke to their need to have access to grounds before the season commences, in order to give members a 'taste' of what their sport entails. The club expressed that this is an important part of their recruitment, but that the grounds are highly booked by summer sports in the lead up to the winter season. Another club also spoke to the lack of facilities available for netball being a barrier for membership. This was echoed by a local association who said there were not enough fields available for the demand of football in the LGA. A local club also noted that scheduling around other sports can sometimes be a challenge.

“Ground availability around the weather events we have just had. It’s a big struggle. We have had a lot of rounds and practices washed out. One thing that impacts us is that we make money through canteen at the Clubhouse and Friday is a big drawcard to make money. If training is washed out or ground is closed... If the sun is out, Hassall Park is still closed. Council needs to look at being more open to what we can do to relax policies around opening the grounds. The primary reason for them to be used is for recreation needs and the reason Council wants to close is to prevent damage, which we understand but there needs to be a balance between preventing damage and allowing Clubs to use the facilities for their intended purpose.”

- A local club



Stakeholders want greater collaboration with Council

Across all interviews, stakeholders expressed an interest in better and increased collaboration with Council. There was a general sentiment across interviews that Ku-ring-gai Council has a reactive, rather than proactive mindset towards recreation. Stakeholders reported that this often means upgrades and new facilities are not created with long-term planning needs in mind. Stakeholders also spoke to feeling as though there are too many people at Council who they have to liaise with, which can be confusing and ineffective as they often do not talk to each other. One idea expressed was for Council to have two meetings per year before each season, with sporting organisations and other stakeholders to discuss needs and to get on the same page.

"Biggest problem we have is the majority is not being listened to, the minority are. Council is bending over too easily to personal needs of Councillors and public members which is a handful of people, as opposed to a full community. We have 80% of our members from Ku-ring-gai Shire. We have 3,000-4,000 people saying we need more help, and then you have a minority of 2-3 and they are the voice that is listened to. It is very upsetting."

- A local club

"If we want to look at getting some improvements done, talk to one person. If we want to talk about the licence agreement, talk to another person. But it seems like they don't talk together."

- A local club

"What we are asking for from Council is an attitude change. We want to see them change from being reactive to proactive in both the short and long term."

- A local club

"From an operational point of view, the lines of communication with Ku-ring-gai Council are good. The maintenance people and booking people we have a positive experience with. From a more strategic perspective, we don't have much engagement. This is one of the first engagements they have asked for Football's opinions, even though we spend four or five hundred grand of fields per year. It would be good for us to not dictate what we want as we understand there are other sports, but to have a seat at the

table to try and help. As an example, two years ago Council was going to upgrade a field that only catered for young children and we only used on Saturday mornings. We asked them to not upgrade that field and instead use that pot of money on a full-sized field which then gets usage throughout the whole weekend. That kind of engagement meant they spend their money better, but it only came from us pushing. If it had been more proactive and they were willing to hear our ideas, we would be receptive to it."

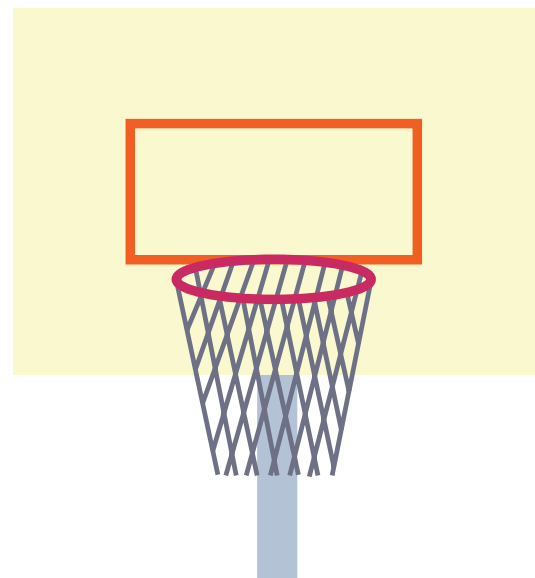
- A local club

Synthetic fields were recognised as an alternative to natural turf fields, but were regarded as not appropriate for all sports

A local association spoke to the role synthetic fields can play in reducing wash out from ongoing wet weather. They noted they would like to see more synthetic fields across the LGA, recognising they can't all be synthetic. However, other sport codes such as rugby and cricket shared their preference for natural grass as synthetic fields often generate a lot of heat, lead to greater injury, and are not as developmentally appropriate for children and young people.

Accessibility is a barrier to participation

Stakeholders reported that some facilities in the LGA have a way to go before they are accessible to people with physical disabilities. One local organisation noted there are children with physical disabilities who would be interested in joining, yet could not, as the field is not accessible and too unsafe for their use.



"One of our biggest barriers is for multi-class athletes, so those who may have a vision impairment or mobility issue. We're very restricted in what we can offer them because of the surface they are on. The surface is very uneven, for anyone with a vision impairment it would be very hard to run at Bannockburn Oval. Getting around facility there, no proper access for kids in wheelchairs or even though with a running frame. We can't offer those, and it is disappointing. There are a large proportion of multi-class athletes in the area, but they cannot participate at Bannockburn."

- A local club

"Unfortunately, our Clubhouse would not be accessible to someone in a wheelchair. One toilet may be able to be used, but it would not be up to modern standards at all."

- A local club



Stakeholders appreciate that Council plays an important role in upgrading and maintaining sport and recreation facilities

Stakeholders agreed that Council should play a more active role in upgrading and maintaining all sport and recreation facilities in the Ku-ring-gai LGA. Many stakeholders also spoke to issues around parking at facilities, and that if community members are unable to easily park or access the facility, they will not sign on to join that club. Stakeholders encouraged Council to look at facilities where parking is a problem and explore innovative solutions. Other stakeholders spoke around the importance of facilities being upgraded to ensure safety for all users. Some stakeholders mentioned that volunteers are starting to feel like “full-time employees” as they try to make the fields usable for their members, particularly after wet weather. Stakeholders believe that Council should play a more active role in this upkeep. Many stakeholders expressed an interest in having more all-weather facilities across the LGA, particularly in light of the recent bout of rainy weather.

“There is a feeling amongst the committee that Council could be doing more for the upkeep of the outer field [at Golden Jubilee] and general areas where people might sit. The back diamond has a lot of trip hazards, and many things that need upkeep. The back diamond looks out over Ku-ring-gai National Park and I would love to take more people out there to play, but it’s just not safe enough, especially older players in the club... Our current clubhouse doesn’t meet the fire safety requirements, it can be locked from the outside and no way out if you’re locked inside. We have tried raising this with Council for them to fix, and they haven’t yet.”

- A local club

Stakeholders feel that having their voice heard benefits planning for recreation and sport facilities

Stakeholders were thankful that Council had given them the opportunity to have their voices heard during this round of engagement. Many spoke about the benefits of recreation planning, including better engagement between Council and sporting organisations, being able to give feedback and getting clarity around Council plans. They also spoke to the importance of Council speaking to community members and organisations on the ground, who have different experiences and insights than those at Council.

“Thank you for valuing our voices as clubs. I think that often as clubs we feel we are in a silo, we are in control of x, y, z. By engaging with us, Council can get a larger cross-section and better understanding of what’s happening.”

- A local club

Partnerships between Council, sporting organisations and schools was often referenced as a 'big' idea by stakeholders

Stakeholders spoke to the role partnerships have, and can play in improving the experience of residents, sporting clubs and other stakeholders in the LGA. Some spoke about their current partnerships with other sporting clubs, that allow for shared space of sporting facilities and reduces the stress of having to book and organise leases themselves. Others spoke to the potential to work with schools and the Department of Education to lease school grounds on weekends. Stakeholders suggested that there is a current program called Share Our Space run by the Department of Education that Council could investigate. A local school spoke about their partnership with a local sporting club, where they share their lease, and in return allow them access to their grounds on a Sunday.

"One of the reasons we play on Sunday is so kids can do school sport on Saturday and come play with us on Sunday. Every season we go to a number of schools, get someone to speak, put up advertisements and contact the sporting department and say we can enhance your kid's sporting experiences through this club."

- A local club

"Why can't there be a secondary dog off leash area, where people can have dog off leash areas while sporting fields are in use? Beautiful forest areas, not about cutting trees but looking at the opportunities. The playground is average, so could you create an area at the opposite end of the pavilion so there was a playground and dog off leash area so people with children and animals can use it. This would provide better balance."

- A local club

"I would love to see spaces created for kids and adults to all feel like they are kids again. That could be through organized sport, bush walks or play... Recreation areas are areas of play and play is about creativity."

- A local club

"From a school perspective, partnerships is something that is very big for us. At the moment, it's a complicated booking process but for example for AFL and the use of Acron Oval, we actually utilise the local junior AFL Club – St Ives Junior AFL Club. They book it for Saturday and Sunday, and we work with them to tap into their booking. Council are aware, but we don't book it with Council. Similarly, with football, on Saturday when we use Council grounds, it's booked in association

with junior football association. That opportunity for partnerships... We are Saturday only sport, so occasions where we use Council ground through junior clubs and in return they can use our grounds for Sunday use. Need to still be conscious of use and overuse, but there are opportunities there for more partnerships. It is working quite well at the moment. They are currently informal, not sure if easier to do this through Council."

- A local club

Best practice case studies

We asked stakeholders to provide ideas around best practice case studies both from within and outside the LGA that could be used as inspiration for Ku-ring-gai open spaces and recreation. Some examples mentioned include:

Pennant Hills Park

Pennant Hills (Hornsby Shire Council)



Source: Hornsby Shire Council

- Tennis, netball courts
- Lots of work has been put into building facilities.

Koola Oval

East Killara (Ku-ring-gai Council)



Source: Ku-ring-gai Council

- Rugby, soccer, cricket, walking and lots of natural grass
- Example of what a great multi-use facility could be in Ku-ring-gai LGA.

Charles Bean

Lindfield (Ku-ring-gai Council)



- A good example of synthetic fields
- The area has two change rooms, a referee change room, disabled toilet and a second level for the community room
- It is multi-purpose and all-weather.

North Turramurra Arena

North Turramurra (Ku-ring-gai Council)



- Repositioned two golf courses to rebuild into soccer fields.

Boronia Park

Hunters Hill (Hunters Hill Council)



- The president of the junior cricket club in this area worked with the Hunters Hill rugby club to get a new community facility at the grounds, there was no financial contribution from Council. The area has change facilities for men and women and a community space Council can rent during the week
- Range of leisure and recreation activities as well as organized sporting uses
- Three full sized sports fields with floodlights, turf cricket wicket and practice nets, sealed and grass netball courts, playground, picnic.

Magdala Park

North Ryde (City of Ryde)



- This area has a football field with an attached baseball area, recently updated the drainage so after the rain baseball can still happen.

Flatrock Reserve

Northbridge (Willoughby City Council)



- A premier baseball facility with a home run fence.

Auluba Oval

South Turramurra (Ku-ring-gai Council)



- An example of how much people care about their grounds, Kissing Point Baseball Club looks after this oval almost 100%.

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