



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 13th March, 2024**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue: **Rooms 18.01-03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP**

Members: **Councillors:**

Angela Piddock (Chair)	Jason Williams
Concia Albert	Paul Swaddle
Paul Fisher	Caroline Sargent
Tim Mitchell	



Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion Part 1 of the Agenda

Admission to the public gallery is by ticket, issued from the ground floor reception. If you have a disability and require any special assistance please contact the Committee Officer (details listed below) in advance of the meeting.

If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Clare O'Keefe, Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor.

**Email: cokeefe@westminster.gov.uk
Corporate Website: www.westminster.gov.uk**

Note for Members: Members are reminded that Officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting. With regard to item 2, guidance on declarations of interests is included in the Code of Governance; if Members and Officers have any particular questions they should contact the Head of Committee and Governance Services in advance of the meeting please.

AGENDA

PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)

MEMBERSHIP

To note any changes to the membership.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations by Members and Officers of the existence and nature of any pecuniary interests or any other significant interest in matters on this agenda.

MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

(Pages 5 - 12)

WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

To discuss and shape the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2024-2025.

(Pages 13 - 24)

POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATES

To receive verbal updates from the Chairs of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees.

LEADER'S UPDATE

To receive and consider a written update from the Leader of the Council.

(Pages 25 - 28)

WESTMINSTER AFTER DARK

To consider the progress of Westminster After Dark and feed into its strategic direction.

(Pages 29 - 58)



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 14th December, 2023**, rooms 18.01-03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Concia Albert, Paul Fisher, Angela Piddock (Chair), Tim Mitchell, Rachael Robathan, Caroline Sargent and Jason Williams.

Also Present: Councillor Geoff Barraclough (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development), Mark Chalmers (Interim Head of Community Safety and Specialist Services), Libby Harris (City of Sydney), Adam Hug (Leader of the Council), Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning), Michael Kill (Night Time Industry Association), Philip Kolvin (Night Time Industry Association), Councillor Aicha Less (Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection), Amy Lane (Mayor of London's Night Czar), Stuart Love (Chief Executive), Frances Martin (Executive Director of Climate, Environment and Public Protection), Clare O'Keefe (Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor), Kerry Simpkin (Head of Licensing, Place, and Infrastructure Policy), Ezra Wallace (Director of Policy and Projects), Mark Williams (Heart of London Business Alliance) and Mark Wiltshire (Director of Public Protection and Licensing).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Paul Swaddle had sent apologies and Councillor Caroline Sargent was attending as substitute.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting on 5 October 2023.

RESOLVED:

- 3.2 That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4 WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

- 4.1 The Committee considered the work programme of the Committee for the final meeting of the municipal year 2023-24 and noted that the City Plan Review item will no longer be suitable for the scheduled meeting on 14 March due to Councillor Barraclough not being in the country at the time, as well as delays to the project timeline.
- 4.2 The Committee noted that at the Budget Scrutiny Task Group meeting on 27 November, it was recommended that the relevant scrutiny committee should scrutinise digitisation and automation.
- 4.3 The Committee noted that the discussions during the Westminster After Dark item included a recommendation to revisit the topic after the consultation has ended and the Committee should focus on hearing from a range of residents and other key stakeholders to ensure a balance of interests is considered in the development of an Evening and Night Time Plan.
- 4.4 The Committee noted that if Members had any other items to suggest, they are welcome to do so at any time.

5 POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATES

- 5.1 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Climate Action, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Williams. The Committee was updated on the following:
- The Committee heard a Call-In to scrutinise the Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality's decision on the Parking Fee Structure Review. The Committee voted to take no further action.
 - The next meeting of the Committee on 16 January 2024 will receive items on CCTV policy and Highways contract procurement.
- 5.2 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Fisher. The Committee was updated on the following:
- At the last meeting of the Committee, Compensations Policy and Allocations Policy was examined.
 - The Committee discussed the opportunities and risks posted by the policies and it was felt to be helpful to have an opportunity to scrutinise this.
- 5.3 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Vulnerable Adults, Health and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Albert. The Committee was updated on the following:
- The next meeting had been postponed to 18 January 2024.
 - The Committee heard a Call-In to scrutinise the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector's decision on increasing

home care workers' pay for a Fairer Westminster. The Committee voted to take no further action.

- The Chair of the Committee also chairs the Inner West London Mental Health Services Reconfiguration Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which first met on 11 December and heard from the NHS, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, HealthWatch, Professor Manthorpe and residents. There are a number of actions to follow up from this.

5.4 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Young People, Learning and Employment Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Piddock. The Committee was updated on the following:

- The Committee examined the Early Help Strategy and made some useful recommendations.
- Committee Members were able to visit Family Hubs which are something Westminster can be proud of.
- The item was found to be valuable and demonstrated that whilst good work is being undertaken, complacency should not set in.

6 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

6.1 The Committee received an overview of the Emergency Preparedness report from Frances Martin (Executive Director of Climate, Environment and Public Protection), Mark Chalmers (Interim Head of Community Safety and Specialist Services) and Mark Wiltshire (Director of Public Protection and Licensing).

6.2 The Committee asked questions on the following:

- Service development: the recruitment and training of volunteers and whether there is a minimum level of acceptable staffing and resilience.
- Communication: the importance of direct communication with residents to reassure them as much as possible when needed. The role of local Councillors when communicating with residents and ensuring that they receive the information and tools they need to do this.
- Frequency of review: how often Emergency Preparedness is reviewed, and how this is carried out.
- Costs: ensuring that the budget across the Council enables a robust and timely response where necessary.
- Equalities impact: the absence of an Equalities Impact Assessment regarding Emergency Preparedness, and why this is the case.

6.3 The Committee commended the excellent work undertaken in regard to Emergency Preparedness and recognised the importance of this especially in the current climate.

ACTION:

6.4 That the Committee will receive more information about the new Humanitarian Assistance Lead role in due course when appropriate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 6.5 The Committee recommended that Emergency Preparedness remains a bi-annual item on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.
- 6.6 The Committee recommended that communication strategies are refined as much as possible to ensure promptness, clarity and consistency in all channels, and that Councillors are included in the strategy to recognise the key role they play in disseminating information.

7 WESTMINSTER AFTER DARK

- 7.1 The Committee received an overview of the Westminster After Dark report from Councillor Geoff Barraclough (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development), Councillor Aicha Less (Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection) and Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning).
- 7.2 The Committee heard from local, regional and international examples of promoting or developing an evening and night time strategy as well as engagement with stakeholders, including challenges, outputs and learning. The Committee was pleased to welcome and hear from Libby Harris (City of Sydney), Michael Kill (Night Time Industry Association), Philip Kolvin KC (Night Time Industry Association), Amy Lame (Mayor of London's Night Czar) and Mark Williams (Heart of London Business Alliance).
- 7.3 The Committee asked questions on the following:
- Collaboration: the challenges that have been experienced when working with a range of stakeholders and managing the balance of interests between them.
 - Trust: the trust of stakeholders, particularly that of residents, in the engagement process. Acknowledging that there is a power inequality early on could help foster trust and buy-in for a thriving and dynamic night time economy.
 - Honest brokers: the importance of having feedback from consultees and an honest broker to convene meetings. That broker should be nominated by a majority of stakeholders.
 - Inclusive and diverse stakeholders: whether the City of Sydney managed to achieve the most impact possible by engaging and hearing from an inclusive and diverse range of stakeholders, and if so, how. How have underrepresented groups in London been represented in other night time strategies.
 - Evening offer: increasing the diversity of the offer in the evenings, how this is encouraged and the regulatory, and other, burdens that may be associated with this.
 - Homogeneity: how it can be assured that the Council is not making assumptions about homogeneity of the economy across the City of Westminster as the difference between areas can be distinct, despite being so close in distance.

- Evidence-base for policy decisions: the importance of ensuring that assumptions beyond the impact of COVID-19 and the Cumulative Impact Assessment, which is constrained by regulations, lead to a policy that is appropriate and relevant, and represents a wide range of data-based evidence.
- Balance: the balance of resident's views with those views of non-residents should be carefully considered. The City of Westminster has a lower population than the number of visitors it receives, and these visitors are likely to have a different view, and needs, to residents. How this balance has been achieved in Sydney, how residents' voices have been enabled and finding the appropriate balance.
- Marginalised voices: what is being done to proactively engage with those the Council often does not hear from, particularly the number of those engaged in the LGBTQ+ community.
- Provisions: the market not being the sole determiner of what is being provided and the extent to which the curation of provisions will meet the consultation objectives in the final strategy.
- CCTV: proactive monitoring of CCTV, the areas which the City of Sydney have prioritised, and the buy-in for this monitoring.
- Engagement: the importance of engaging appropriately with residents and key stakeholders.

7.4 The Committee thanked those who attended to speak for their time and noted that it was an extremely productive and interesting discussion.

ACTION:

7.5 That the Committee will receive a list of different channels and organisations that the Council is using to reach out to stakeholders in the consultation and engagement process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

7.6 The Committee recommended that targeted outreach efforts to sectors that may not have been adequately engaged, including marginalised voices, should be considered.

7.7 The Committee recommended that a wide range of stakeholders should be actively sought and involved to ensure they are well-represented.

7.8 The Committee recommended that communication during the process should be considered in-depth.

7.9 The Committee recommended that Westminster After Dark comes back after the consultation has ended and the Committee should focus on hearing from a range of residents and other key stakeholders to ensure a balance of interests is considered in the development of an Evening and Night Time Plan.

8 LEADER'S UPDATE

8.1 The Committee received an overview of the Leader's Update report from Councillor Adam Hug.

8.2 The Committee asked questions on the following:

- Short-term lets: the importance of doing more to make owners responsible for waste dumping and lobbying for this to be considered in a registration scheme. Whether the Council have considered lobbying to keep a percentage of the registration fees if they are significant.
- Regeneration schemes: regeneration schemes, particularly relating to housing developments, can take a long while to come into fruition. The new schemes, including major ones, to continue the pipeline of works.
- Paddington Recreation: the stage the Council is currently at on the Paddington Recreation development site.
- The Gordon Hospital: the formal consultation ongoing at various levels, and whether a meeting with local residents in the immediate area has been arranged, and if the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust does not do this, can the Council organise one. The out-patients facility which stopped before COVID-19 and whether this could be brought back.
- The Middle East conflict: the impact this is having on residents and whether the Council is tracking what is being done to support residents, whether this is working, and acknowledging the limitations of what some institutions can do for residents and how they are feeling.
- Cost of Living: how the Council's spend compares to other neighbouring local authorities, whether the Council learns from others and how the impact of the spend is monitored.
- Housing repairs: ensuring that a focus is on making systems work more effectively and efficiently, especially to reduce the number of reoccurring repairs, and improving contractor performance.

ACTIONS:

8.3 That the Committee will receive a briefing note on new regeneration schemes from the Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters, with a view to sitting down with the relevant Executive Director and Director to discuss these further if required.

8.4 That the Committee will receive information on the stage the Council is currently at on the Paddington Recreation development site.

8.5 That the Committee will receive granular details on the support the Council is providing for those impacted by the Middle East conflict.

The meeting ended at 21:13.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Wednesday 13 March 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	2024/2025 Work Programme
Report of:	Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Clare O'Keefe, cokeefe@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report asks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (“the Committee”) to discuss topics for its work programme.
- 1.2 This report also considers the work of the Committee since its last meeting on 14 December 2023.

2. Formal Meeting Dates for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year

- 2.1 The Committee is advised that this is the last scheduled meeting date for the 2023/2024 year.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Policy and Scrutiny team supports the Committee in creating the work programme and the Committee considers items on those areas where the Council is currently working to develop new policy, where policies previously implemented are ready for strategic review or where scrutiny plays an overall role in assurance. The overall emphasis is to provide scrutiny with maximum opportunity to have impact and influence Council policy.
- 3.4 When drawing up work programmes, the Committee considers the vision and purpose of scrutiny at Westminster.

Scrutiny is a vital function to promote transparency and accountability. On behalf of Westminster’s communities and stakeholders, local non-Executive

Councillors will endeavour to ensure services in the City not only meet people's needs but enhance lived experiences by:

- 1. Championing the best possible outcomes for communities and stakeholders.*
- 2. Holding the Council, its partner organisations and external bodies to account for decisions taken and the impacts on our communities.*
- 3. Examining Council priorities, actively engaging in policy development and offering constructive challenge prior to decisions being taken.*
- 4. Working strategically across the city to focus our efforts on policy and service areas where scrutiny can make the biggest impact.*
- 5. Demonstrating integrity and commitment by adhering to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.*

4. Work Programme for 2024/25

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to discuss and propose topics of interest for the next municipal year's work programme in 2024/25.
- 4.2 The Committee's attention should be drawn to the Terms of Reference, set out in Appendix 1, which may assist the Committee in identifying issues to be included in the work programme.
- 4.3 The Committee is due to meet on 9 May 2024 to discuss items for its work programme after the Cabinet Member Annual Updates held between Monday 15 April to Tuesday 30 April. The Committee will use the Updates to help identify possible issues for future investigation by scrutiny.
- 4.x When considering the work programme, and agreeing an overall programme of scrutiny activity, the Committee should have regard to whether the work programme is achievable in terms of both Officer and Member time, taking into account that the Committee is scheduled to meet four times per year. Members are also reminded that it is advisable to hold some capacity in reserve for any urgent issues that might arise.

5. Task Groups and Single Member Studies

- 5.1 Each Committee has discretion to establish Task Groups and Single Member Studies to examine key issues in more detail. The Committee is asked to consider whether they would like to establish a Task Group or commission a Single Member Study. The Committee should be advised that both Members and Officers will only be able to successfully take part in and support a finite number of Task Groups at any one time.

6. Monitoring recommendations and actions

- 6.1 The recommendations and actions arising from each meeting are recorded in the Committee Tracker attached as Appendix 2. Members are invited to review the work undertaken in response to those recommendations and actions.

7. Committee activity

- 7.1 Since the previous meeting of the Committee on 14 December 2023, and the meeting on 13 March 2024, the Committee will have been on two site visits in preparation for the Westminster After Dark item.
- 7.2 On Friday 1 March, through to Saturday 2 March, the Committee visited Soho along with: the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development (Councillor Barraclough), Cabinet Member for Communities, Children and Public Protection (Councillor A Less), the Nighttime Champion (Councillor I Less), the Lead Member for Soho (Councillor Lilley), as well as colleagues from Westminster After Dark, Public Protection and Licensing and Policy and Scrutiny. The visit included meeting the Night Stars volunteers, the HOLBA security team, the Head of Security at Kingly Court from Shaftesbury Capital and the police. The visit took in the diverse needs of busy areas in the early night time, viewed well-run premises and also areas of concern.
- 7.3 At the time of writing, the Committee is due to visit, on Thursday 7 March, areas in the City which have different needs to Soho, including where residential areas are often not well-lit, there is ASB, litter, rough sleeping, noise disturbances. The Committee is due to visit Marylebone, Marble Arch and Edgware Road, Queensway, Westbourne Park and Harrow Road. The visit will include participants including the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development (Councillor Barraclough), Cabinet Member for Communities, Children and Public Protection (Councillor A Less), the Nighttime Champion (Councillor I Less), the Lead Member for Edgware Road (Councillor Chowdhury), as well as colleagues from Westminster After Dark, Public Protection and Licensing and Policy and Scrutiny.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact Clare O’Keefe.

cokeefe@westminster.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference
Appendix 2: Committee Tracker

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMPOSITION

7 Members of the Council (4 nominated by the Majority Party and 3 by the Opposition Party) but shall not include a member of the Cabinet.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1) To provide overall leadership to the Policy and Scrutiny function, coordinating across work programmes and requesting that other committees investigate particular issues where appropriate and necessary.
- 2) To scrutinise cross-cutting or corporate areas of policy and/or service delivery, including but not limited to:
 - Corporate strategy
 - Crime and disorder
 - Emergency planning
 - The local economy
 - Overall Local Development Framework (Planning Policy)
 - Overall licensing policy
 - Overall financial management (to the extent that this is not handled by the Audit and Performance Committee)
 - Corporate Property
 - Commercial Services and Procurement
 - Staffing/HR
 - Legal
- 3) To approve the Annual Report of Policy and Scrutiny activity and submit this to Full Council where necessary.
- 4) To exercise call-in provisions for issues within the scope of this terms of reference or for any matter which does not fall within the scope of the terms of reference for any other Policy and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5) To discharge the Council's statutory responsibilities under Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006, thus acting as the Council's crime and disorder committee and fulfilling all the duties that entails.

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Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tracker

This tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress against the recommendations it has made, requests for information and actions to be completed.

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation / Information Request/ Action	Detail	Political Lead and Officer Lead	Status
14 December 2023	Item 6: Emergency Preparedness	Information	That the Committee will receive more information about the new Humanitarian Assistance Lead role in due course when appropriate.	<i>Executive Director of Climate, Environment and Public Protection</i>	In progress
		Recommendation	The Committee recommended that Emergency Preparedness remains a bi-annual item on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.	<i>Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor</i>	In progress – this will be considered when the cttee decides its work programme for 24/25
		Recommendation	The Committee recommended that communication strategies are refined as much as possible to ensure promptness, clarity and consistency in all channels, and that Councillors are included in the strategy to recognise the key role they play in disseminating information.	Leader of the Council <i>Executive Director of Climate, Environment and Public Protection</i> <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i>	Received on 19 February. Response on page 3 of Appendix 2.
	Item 7: Westminster After Dark	Information	That the Committee will receive a list of different channels and organisations that the Council is using to reach out to stakeholders in the consultation and engagement process.	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i> Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i>	Received on 19 February. Response on page 5 of Appendix 2.
		Recommendation	The Committee recommended that targeted outreach efforts to sectors that may not have been adequately engaged, including marginalised voices, should be considered.	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i> Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i>	Received on 19 February. Response on page 4 of Appendix 2.
		Recommendation	The Committee recommended that a wide range of stakeholders should be actively sought and involved to ensure they are well-represented.	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i> Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i>	Received on 19 February. Response on page 4 of Appendix 2.
		Recommendation	The Committee recommended that communication during the process should be considered in-depth.	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i> Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i>	Received on 19 February. Response on page 5 of Appendix 2.
		Recommendation	The Committee recommended that Westminster After Dark comes back after the consultation has ended and the Committee should focus on hearing from a range of residents and other key stakeholders to ensure a balance of	<i>Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor</i>	Completed. It was included in the work programme for 13 March 2024.

Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tracker

			interests is considered in the development of an Evening and Night Time Plan.		
	Item 8: Leader's Update	Information	That the Committee will receive a briefing note on new regeneration schemes from the Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters, with a view to sitting down with the relevant Executive Director and Director to discuss these further if required.	Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i>	
		Information	That the Committee will receive information on the stage the Council is currently at on the Paddington Recreation development site.	Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i>	
		Information	That the Committee will receive granular details on the support the Council is providing for those impacted by the Middle East conflict.	Leader of the Council <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i>	

Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tracker

<p>Recommendation (Item 6: Emergency Preparedness)</p>	<p>The Committee recommended that communication strategies are refined as much as possible to ensure promptness, clarity and consistency in all channels, and that Councillors are included in the strategy to recognise the key role they play in disseminating information.</p>	<p>Leader of the Council <i>Executive Director of Climate, Environment and Public Protection</i> <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i></p>
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At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 December 2023, the committee recommended that communication strategies are refined as much as possible to ensure promptness, clarity and consistency in all channels, and that Councillors are included in the strategy to recognise the key role they play in disseminating information.

In light of this recommendation, the Resilience Team has reviewed the current processes for communication following a Major Incident or Emergency, in conjunction with the Council’s Media and Communications team. Added emphasis will be placed on early communications in the Council’s emergency response, and will be reflected in the advice and guidance to the council’s command team during such a response. This will include both internal (including Leader, portfolio holders and impacted ward councillors) and external (media and social media) communications considerations.

The Communications team will be regularly reviewing pre-prepared communications lines for use in Major Incidents and Emergencies, ensuring that they can be used during the initial onset of an emergency where information is limited, in order to provide reassurance that the council is responding and working with emergency services and partners to support our affected communities. This will be emphasised in training for resilience advisors, media officers and officers within the council’s command team. During an emergency response the duty Gold officer approves all communications in relation to the council’s emergency response. Training has been arranged for ‘Gold’ officers in May 2024 and an emphasis will be placed on prompt, clear and consistent messaging.

During incidents where other agencies (typically the Metropolitan Police Service or London Fire Brigade) are the lead responding agency and have primacy over emergency communications, the Communications team will continue to echo appropriate emergency response messaging from the appropriate lead agency. Additionally, the Resilience Team will be working with partner agencies and in order to highlight the importance of public communications during an emergency.

Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tracker

<p>Recommendation (Item 7: Westminster After Dark)</p>	<p>The Committee recommended that targeted outreach efforts to sectors that may not have been adequately engaged, including marginalised voices, should be considered.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i> Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i></p>
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We have actively targeted marginalised voices through our outreach efforts including through paid ads, engagement sessions and the make-up of the participants and experts. We have worked with BIDs and other partners such as the NHS to identify opportunities to engage with businesses and night-workers and have worked with organisations such as the Residents Associations, the London Chinese Community Association and local schools and universities to engage a wide range of residents.

<p>Recommendation (Item 7: Westminster After Dark)</p>	<p>The Committee recommended that a wide range of stakeholders should be actively sought and involved to ensure they are well-represented.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i> Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i></p>
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The programme’s different strands of engagement are all targeting a wide range of stakeholders. The Stakeholder Assembly has drawn from residents, businesses, workers and visitors and the experts have included LGBTQ+ and disability advocates.

Discussion groups and other engagement sessions have been held with a wide range of stakeholders.

Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tracker

<p>Recommendation (Item 7: Westminster After Dark)</p>	<p>The Committee recommended that communication during the process should be considered in-depth.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development <i>Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy and Planning</i> Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection <i>Executive Director of Innovation and Change</i></p>
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The programme’s communications plan is extensive to try and generate as much engagement as possible. A number of different communication methods have been utilised to date, including:

- Commonplace - Our engagement platform, Common Place, serves as the primary hub for all online interactions within the Westminster After Dark program. Designed for user-friendliness, it offers comprehensive insights into the engagement process across its different phases. Its feature allowing the inclusion of information and new discussion items encourages broader engagement and interaction. Users can register to receive timely updates on the platform's latest news and information, prompting them to revisit, review new content, and contribute their perspectives. The engagement platform can be viewed via this link <https://westminsterafterdark.commonplace.is/>
- Promoting Westminster After Dark through the council’s usual channels as well as paid targeted ads for key groups including young people, visitors from other London boroughs and local businesses, with a focus on sectors and industries that operate between 6pm and 6am. We are also promoting our survey through including a competition with West End tickets as a prize.
- Posters in libraries, leisure centres, community centres and family hubs to promote the programme to digitally excluded individuals.
- Westminster After Dark was also featured in a number of newsletters including Housing, MyWestminster, Faith Exchange, Active Westminster, Licencing and Business Network Newsletter.
- Westminster After Dark team attended in-person groups such as Kulan Somali Organisation, Mosaic Trust, the Tuesday Club, Pimlico Women’s Group, Marylebone Library Coffee Morning to make sure that harder to reach voices are engaged in the programme and all voices are heard.
- We also engaged with stakeholders through other council initiatives such as Cycleway Consultation and North Paddington Programme to target residents in north of the borough.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting:	Wednesday 13 March 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Leader's Update
Report of:	Councillor Adam Hug, Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Leader of the Council
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Fairer Westminster
Report Author and Contact Details:	Amy Just ajust@westminster.gov.uk

1. Budget

Council tax

- 1.1. On 19 February, the Cabinet agreed details of its proposed budget for 2024/25 that will be voted on at Full Council on 6 March
- 1.2. In recognition of challenging financial circumstances, the Council is proposing a 2.99% increase in the general element of the council tax and a 2% increase ringfenced to support adult social care, which will provide £3.3m of additional funding for the council year on year.
- 1.3. For residents in Band D, this would result in a weekly increase of 46p, or £23.85 a year for the Westminster Element, excluding the Greater London Authority precept.
- 1.4. Cabinet also recently approved continuation of the council's 100% Council Tax Support scheme for 2024/25 which means households that are most in need can apply for full relief. 13,000 households accessed the scheme in 2023/24.

Temporary Accommodation

- 1.5. The demand for temporary accommodation (TA) in Westminster has risen by 24% since 2022/23, and the Council will need to find an additional £38m in the next financial year to prevent an increasing number of households becoming homeless. The provision of TA is a significant financial risk for council, because of the gap between the costs of TA currently and the income received through the government's TA subsidy regime.
- 1.6. Since April 2022, there has been an over 40% increase in approaches due to homelessness, applications for support and placements in TA. The total number of households in TA has risen from 2699 in April 2022 to 3347 in December 2023 with 39% placed in borough, and 61% out of borough. 86 households have been placed outside of London.
- 1.7. In the absence of central government funding, the Council has already invested an additional £85m to purchase an additional 270 properties for temporary accommodation, with over 65 properties purchased this financial year (2023/24).
- 1.8. This year's budget will invest a further £1.4m to expand the council's capacity to tackle homelessness, which includes resource towards administering the Temporary Accommodation acquisitions programme.
- 1.9. The Council is also concentrating additional effort on alleviating the spend, by finding alternative suitable accommodation to replace the most expensive nightly booked units and finding more cost-effective private sector homes.

Investments and Delivery Plan

- 1.10. As part of the proposed budget of 2024/25, the Cabinet agreed upon the following investments:
 - an additional £1m in financial aid to foodbanks, charities and residents struggling with high costs of food and accommodation, and a £1.05m top-up to the Rent Support Fund for Housing tenants, bringing the Council's Cost of Living Support Fund to £21m.
 - £450k to tackle the ecological emergency in Westminster.
 - £1.2m to increase the hourly rate for social care staff by an additional £1.50 per hour
 - £1m to establish a new mobile CCTV network to address anti-social behaviour, waste and nuisance noise.
- 1.11. The Council published its first Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan in March 2023, and following the Budget a revised version will be published, with a focus on the delivery of affordable housing, support for vulnerable residents, building a strong and sustainable economy, and protecting the environment.

- 1.12. The Delivery Plan for 2024/2025 will build upon the successes of the first year's 2023/24 plan while recognising the need to do more in light of challenges continuing to face the City, such as the climate emergency, housing pressures and inequality.

2. Public Affairs

Household Support Fund

- 2.1. The Council is concerned about the future of the Household Support Fund (HSF) which has been vital in supporting Westminster residents during the cost-of-living crisis, with 31,000 households in the City classed as vulnerable.
- 2.2. In 2023/24 the funding was allocated towards the following:
- £2.1m towards food for free school meals for eligible pupils during school holidays
 - £1.3m in supermarket food vouchers for residents in difficulty but not qualifying for the government's £900 support
 - £0.5m - other support through a hardship fund, food charities and advice
 - Direct funds for over 1,000 households through partners, and supermarket voucher support to 2,4000 low-income households including 1,000 pensioners and 700 people with disabilities.
- 2.3. The end to the HSF will result in families having a direct reduction to their food budget of £238 per year, per child; for an unemployed person over 25, an annual reduction of 15% of entitlements or around £853 per year; and for a couple with three children this will mean a 6.1% reduction of around £932 per year.
- 2.4. The Council wrote to the Chancellor on 28 February 2024 in a letter co-signed by Abbey Centre, Citizens Advice Westminster, and Age UK to set out the risks in the event that the HSF is not continued.
- 2.5. At the time of publication, the government had not made any announcements on the future of the HSF.

Short term lets

- 2.6. Westminster has the highest number of short term lets in the country – around 12,000 which has continued to climb following the end of the pandemic.
- 2.7. The Council is currently receiving an unprecedented 30 complaints a week relating to short term lets, with 86 planning contravention notices recently served on houses and flats suspected to have operated a short term let for

more than 90 nights in a year, and 500 active investigations Housing officers.

- 2.8. Details of the mandatory registration scheme, to make sure hosts are accountable for any illegal activity from excessive noise to dumping waste, are yet to be shared by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) but the proposal that properties which are already used for short-term letting will be automatically exempt from the need for planning permission is extremely concerning.
- 2.9. Council data suggests that at least 10,500 homes would meet the proposed definition of short-term letting and would be permanently removed from the residential market, should the proposal be brought forward in their current form.
- 2.10. It is crucial that the new powers for councils exercise planning controls via an Article 4 Direction, as well as the new registration scheme, and can come into effect before the introduction of any new permitted development rights.

3. Future of the Gordon Hospital

- 3.1. Consultation ended on 16 February following a three week extension. A further extension requested by Westminster (WCC) and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) was refused by Central North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL).
- 3.2. Throughout, the Council sought additional consultation events, in particular in the area around the Gordon, as well as encourage wider participation.
- 3.3. The consultation did not include an option for the Council's preferred option (restoration of acute beds at the Gordon and/or an alternative site in South Westminster) and concerns were raised about some of the wording of the consultation e.g. an inference that care in the Gordon didn't meet national standards or was inadequate.
- 3.4. The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, formed of WCC and RBKC councillors, has been leading on much of the investigative work, and held its last meeting on 26 February. A formal response with recommendations has been issued to CNWL and ICB to form part of their decision-making.
- 3.5. Cabinet Members and officers have continued to meet and engage with CNWL throughout the consultation process, with Cllr Butler-Thalassis writing to the Secretary of State and Mayor of London to express concerns about the consultation.
- 3.6. A decision is expected from CNWL in the summer, delayed due to pre-election period, and the JHOSC will then have another opportunity to meet and make recommendations. Therefore, a final decision is likely in late 2024.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting:	Wednesday 13 March 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Westminster After Dark – Progress Update and Next Steps
Report of:	Parveen Akhtar, Executive Director Corporate Services. Debbie Jackson, Executive Director of Regeneration, Economy, and Planning, and, Frances Martin, Executive Director for Environment, Climate and Public Protection,
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, and, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development.
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Fairer Westminster
Report Author and Contact Details:	Mr Kerry Simpkin, Head of Licensing, Place, and Infrastructure Policy, Corporate Services. Email: ksimpkin@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the Committee with an update on the current progress of Westminster After Dark, while also highlighting actions taken in response to recommendations from the previous hearing.
- 1.2 Since the inception of Westminster After Dark, the Council has initiated engagement efforts using its Common Place Platform. With over 10,000 visitors and more than 500 specific contributions since its launch, the platform has facilitated significant participation. An assessment of the current survey responses via the Common Place platform is provided in Appendix 1. The Council has further conducted targeted engagement exercises with numerous stakeholders to gather their perspectives on the key issues and opportunities within Westminster's evening and night-time environment. Additionally, a

Stakeholder Assembly convened with 46 participants representing residents, businesses, visitors, and night-workers has recently concluded. The report associated with the Stakeholder Assembly findings will be published later in the year.

- 1.3 The project is now transitioning into its subsequent phases, which entail detailed analysis of the received responses, Stakeholder Assembly findings, relevant research, and other pertinent information. Workshops will soon be established with stakeholder representatives to review the findings and explore potential options that could be further developed into a mission-oriented strategy.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1 The Committee is invited to consider:

- 2.1.1 the balance between the globally renowned night-time economy and everyone's, particularly residents', right to quality of life.

- 2.1.2 the current challenge of the competing pressures on the night-time environment including crime, ASB, light and noise disturbances, the environment and ecology.

- 2.1.3 the current engagement approach for Westminster After Dark and the overall engagement process, including the Stakeholder Assembly, surveys and online map tool comments.

- 2.1.4 the needs of stakeholders including those who work, visit and own businesses and the wide variety of activities and functions across the evening and night-time that enable the wider West End economy.

- 2.1.5 the opportunities for the night-time environment in terms of employment and skills.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the Committee's previous meeting, held on the 14th December 2023 a report on Westminster After Dark was provided explaining the approach to developing the Council's first evening and night-time strategy and the approaches being taken to enable engagement on this subject.

- 3.2 To assist the Committee in comprehending the broader benefits that an evening and night-time strategy can offer to the city, along with the current challenges and opportunities faced by Westminster's evening and night-time environment, several witnesses provided their perspectives on these matters. The presentation included examples of nighttime strategies and stakeholder engagement from local, regional, and international viewpoints, emphasising challenges, outcomes, and lessons learned.

- 3.3 During the discussion, the Committee raised important questions concerning collaboration challenges among stakeholders, emphasising the need to manage diverse interests effectively. Trust-building emerged as a crucial aspect, particularly in ensuring residents' confidence in the engagement process. The necessity of honest brokers to facilitate meetings and gather feedback was also emphasised, aiming for representation from a majority of stakeholders to ensure inclusivity.
- 3.4 Furthermore, the Committee delved into topics such as fostering inclusive engagement with diverse stakeholders, enhancing the diversity of evening offerings while addressing associated regulatory burdens, and avoiding assumptions about economic homogeneity within Westminster. They also stressed the significance of evidence-based policymaking beyond COVID-19 impacts and Cumulative Impact Assessments, ensuring a broad range of data informs decision-making. Additionally, attention was drawn to balancing residents' and non-residents' perspectives and actively engaging marginalised voices, including the LGBTQ+ community.

4. Committee Recommendations and council response

- 4.1 The Committee at its last hearing outlined several actions and recommendations for officers associated with engagement around the Westminster After Dark programme. These recommendations are listed in the below along with the response in terms to addressing them.
- 4.2 The Committee recommended that targeted outreach efforts to sectors that may not have been adequately engaged, including marginalised voices, should be considered. The council has actively targeted marginalised voices through our outreach efforts including through paid ads, engagement sessions and the make-up of the participants and experts. We have worked with BIDs and other partners such as the NHS to identify opportunities to engage with businesses and night-workers and have worked with organisations such as the Residents Associations, the London Chinese Community Association and local schools and universities to engage a wide range of residents.
- 4.4 The Committee recommended that a wide range of stakeholders should be actively sought and involved to ensure they are well-represented. The Westminster After Dark programme's different strands of engagement are all targeting a wide range of stakeholders. The Stakeholder Assembly has drawn from residents, businesses, workers and visitors and the experts have included LGBTQ+ and disability advocates. Discussion groups and other engagement sessions have been held with a wide range of stakeholders.
- 4.4 The Committee recommended that communication during the process should be considered in-depth. The programme's communications plan is extensive to try and generate as much engagement as possible. A number of different communication methods have been utilised to date, including:
- Commonplace platform serves as the primary hub for all online interactions within the Westminster After Dark program. Designed for

user-friendliness, it offers comprehensive insights into the engagement process across its different phases.

- Promoting Westminster After Dark through the council's usual channels as well as paid targeted ads for key groups including young people, visitors from other London boroughs and local businesses, with a focus on sectors and industries that operate between 6pm and 6am. We are also promoting our survey through including a competition with West End tickets as a prize.
- Posters in libraries, leisure centres, community centres and family hubs to promote the programme to digitally excluded individuals.
- Westminster After Dark was also featured in a number of newsletters including Housing, MyWestminster, Faith Exchange, Active Westminster, Licencing and Business Network Newsletter.
- Westminster After Dark team attended in-person groups such as Kulan Somali Organisation, Mosaic Trust, the Tuesday Club, Pimlico Women's Group, Marylebone Library Coffee Morning to make sure that harder to reach voices are engaged in the programme and all voices are heard.
- We also engaged with stakeholders through other council initiatives such as Cycleway Consultation and North Paddington Programme to target residents in north of the borough.

5. Online evening and night-time engagement survey

- 5.1 When the council initiated the engagement and consultation process for Westminster After Dark, we launched an online survey to solicit feedback and perspectives on the evening and night-time experience. The survey was actively promoted to residents, businesses, workers, visitors, and other stakeholders who frequent Westminster after dark.
- 5.2 As of the drafting date of this report (16th February), we have received 376 responses to the survey. Among these, 248 responses were from residents, 80 from visitors, and the remaining 48 from workers or other stakeholders. The council continues its efforts to promote the survey, particularly targeting underrepresented stakeholders such as businesses, to gather further responses.
- 5.3 A detailed analysis of the consultation survey responses received thus far has been conducted. Given the relatively small sample size of responses from visitors and those representing the global majority, their findings should be considered indicative. Additionally, responses from daytime workers and other stakeholders were not included in the analysis due to the limited number of responses received.
- 5.4 Appendix 1 of this report provides a detailed analysis of the survey responses for residents and visitors. However, some key findings from the analysis are highlighted below:

Key findings to date from survey responses (Residents and Visitors)

1.	Residents and visitors are generally positive about Westminster after dark and appreciate the wide range of things to do.
2.	Around a third (3 in 5) residents go out in Westminster in the evening and night-time at least once a week. Visitors mostly visit at least once a month.
3.	Just under two thirds of respondents have reduced their evening and night-time activities due to cost-of-living pressures, mostly by a small amount. Over a third have made no changes.
4.	Residents and visitors are attracted to similar activities in Westminster in the evening and night-time, with restaurants, theatres, cultural activities, and pubs/bars the most popular activities. Visitors are more likely than residents to go to pubs/bars, listen to live music, or go clubbing.
5.	Cost of activities, booking activities and personal safety are most important considerations for going out after dark in Westminster. Personal safety is significantly more important a consideration for residents than for visitors.
6.	People would like to see more arts and cultural activities in Westminster in the evening and night-time, followed by places to eat and live music. Compared to residents, visitors see more restaurants, live music, pubs/bars, and clubs as an attractive proposition. On the other hand, residents are more likely than visitors to want more educational classes at night.
7.	Overall, greater safety would most encourage people to stay and go out in Westminster after dark, followed by cheaper activities and places to wait before performances or for transport home. Residents and visitor's priorities differ in some areas, better late-night transport is more important to visitors whilst residents are more considered about improving street lighting.
8.	Matching the findings contained within the Council's Cumulative Impact Assessment for licensed alcohol, entertainment and late-night refreshment premises under the Licensing Act 2003 anti-social behaviour is the biggest safety issue in Westminster in the evening and night-time, followed by theft and robbery. Visitors are less concerned than residents about a range of issues, such as anti-social behaviour, drug dealing/misuse, and violence and disorder.
9.	Just over 1 in 4 do not feel safe after dark in Westminster, residents are more likely to feel unsafe in the evening and night-time than visitors. Within the responses there is no significant different in how safe men and women feel in the evening and night-time in Westminster.

10.	Despite no significant difference in how safe women and men feel in the evening and night-time in Westminster, women are more concerned about a range of safety concerns than men, particularly anti-social behaviour, theft and robbery, gender-based violence and drink spiking.
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5.5 Residents and visitors experience a range of issues in Westminster after dark that they would like addressed:

What do residents and visitors dislike about Westminster after dark	Changes that would improve resident and visitor experience.
<p>Safety Concerns: Despite many people saying they feel safe after dark in Westminster, many people feel unsafe, particularly women.</p> <p>Anti-Social Behaviour: Concerns about anti-social behaviour, rowdy patrons, noise, and the impact of alcohol-led venues on the streets are often mentioned. Issues include harassment, aggression, and feeling unsafe.</p>	<p>Safety and Security: Desire for increased police presence, better lighting, and measures to address anti-social behaviour, drug use, and crime. Concerns about feeling unsafe, particularly for women, are noted.</p>
<p>Traffic and Congestion: Many respondents express frustration with traffic congestion, unsafe driving practices, and a lack of pedestrian-friendly areas. Some suggest pedestrianising certain streets, particularly in Soho.</p>	<p>Transportation: Requests for better and more frequent night bus services. Desire for the night tube to operate beyond Fridays and Saturdays. Concerns about the availability and cost of late-night transportation, including taxis.</p>
<p>Early Closing Times: People complain about early closing times for pubs, bars, and other venues. Uniform closing times seen as contributing to congestion and limiting late-night options. Some feel that there is a limited variety of late-night options for entertainment, food, and activities.</p>	<p>Extended Opening Hours: Requests for businesses, including pubs, bars, and restaurants, to have extended opening hours.</p>
<p>Pedicabs and Noise Pollution: Pedicabs are a source of annoyance, with mentions of noise</p>	<p>Reduced Noise and Crowds: People emphasise the need for reduced noise, both from traffic and late-night activities. Complaints</p>

pollution, aggressive behaviour, and the need for stricter regulations.	about crowded streets, especially in areas like Soho, are frequent.
Dirty and Unkempt Streets: The cleanliness of streets is an issue, with complaints about rubbish, graffiti, and an overall sense of neglect. The smell of urine in certain places is also noted with people mentioning insufficient availability of public toilets as an issue contributing to this problem.	Public Facilities: Requests for more public toilets, especially during the night. Suggestions for creating safe spaces and facilities for women, families, and vulnerable individuals.
	Affordability: Some respondents mention the cost of going out as a consideration, suggesting more affordable options.

6. Online engagement mapping tool

- 6.1 Over the past six months, Westminster After Dark Common Place received over 10,000 visits to the website and nearly 500 contributions, including approximately 300 individual comments. The feedback came from a diverse range of stakeholders across the borough, including residents, visitors, business owners, and individuals working in the area. Here's a breakdown of the main themes and concerns expressed by each group.

Residents

- 6.2 Residents expressed a predominant concern for safety, citing crime and anti-social behaviour as significant issues. Many feel unsafe due to the lack of lighting, which increases feelings of intimidation, especially for those walking alone or with children. Additionally, residents raised concerns about the misuse of pavements by bars and pedicabs, leading to difficulties for pedestrians, particularly wheelchair users. The ambiance of some area such as Soho, was noted to be negatively affected by disturbances at night, driven in part by commercial interests, and exacerbated by unclean streets and littering. Residents proposed diversifying nighttime activities, improving street cleanliness, and reducing noise pollution from vehicles and pedicabs.

Visitors

- 6.3 Visitors provided a mixed perspective on Soho, with many appreciating its vibrant atmosphere but expressing concerns about safety, cleanliness, and overcrowding. Safety emerged as a primary issue, with visitors citing instances of drug use, gangs, and homelessness, decreasing the overall feeling of safety. Infrastructure deficiencies, such as a lack of lighting and inadequate pedestrian space due to vehicle congestion, were also highlighted. Some visitors highlighted the commercialisation of Soho, noting

its transformation from an LGBTQ hub to a tourist attraction. Calls for pedestrianisation, increased safety measures, and diversification of nighttime activities were common among visitor feedback.

Businesses

- 6.4 Business owners echoed sentiments about Soho's vibrant atmosphere but emphasised the need for cleaner spaces and pedestrian-friendly initiatives. Meanwhile, individuals working in Westminster raised similar concerns regarding safety highlighting anti-social behaviour as the most important issues, infrastructure, and availability of evening activities across the borough.

North of the City

- 6.5 In the North of the borough, the main concerns were around ASB, crime and lack of lighting in areas like Westbourne Park and Edgware Road and its surrounding residential areas. Residents and businesses mentioned its impact on the general feelings of safety in the area. Many individuals shared the need for an increased presence of police, which could increase the feeling of safety in the area. Comments also highlighted the need for an increased number of activities for teenagers in the north of the borough, as well as a greater variety of hot food available for night workers in the area.

The West End

- 6.6 West End received a relatively even split of positive and negative comments focusing on its history and ambiance, which is attractive for businesses and visitors to Westminster. However, concerns have been raised that the West End has become overcrowded with tourists and that there is an overabundance of candy shops. Many individuals raised the need to pedestrianise certain areas, such as Greek Street, as well as the interest in increasing number of al-fresco dining across Soho.

South of the City

- 6.7 Areas like Victoria and Pimlico have been highlighted for lacking late-night activities that would be affordable or not focused on alcohol. Comments also reported the need to focus on the issue of homelessness in the area and providing the individuals with the right support. Based on the comments around the south of Westminster, crime, ASB and noise from local establishments make the area feel intimidating. A greater police presence may reduce the feeling of being intimidating. What is more, the lack of social activities for young people as well as families has been raised as an issue further evening and night-time.

7. Stakeholder Assembly

- 7.1 The council ran the Westminster After Dark Stakeholder Assembly over three consecutive Saturdays, from 27th January to 10th February 2024, bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders including residents, workers, visitors, and business owners. Of the 50 people who were selected via the sortition

process 46 attended the assembly and were there for each of the consecutive weeks. Throughout the assembly, participants engaged in lively and productive conversations, exchanging ideas, and formulating recommendations concerning Westminster After Dark.

- 7.2 The central question driving the discussions was: "How can we transform the evening and night-time to create a more diverse and inclusive Westminster for residents, businesses, workers, and visitors alike?" Delving into this question, participants focused on four key themes:



Assembly Day One

- 7.3 The first day of the assembly, themed "Setting the Scene - Breaking Barriers, Building Bonds, and Creating Context," featured enlightening presentations and discussions on crucial topics. Representatives from various organisations, including the Greater London Authority and the Metropolitan Police, shared insights on ensuring safety and security during Westminster's night-time hours. Paraprize, the Westminster LGBTQ+ Forum, and the Westminster Youth Council contributed invaluable perspectives on inclusivity and community engagement. Additionally, industry leaders provided insights into navigating challenges and fostering sustainable growth in the night-time economy.

Assembly Day Two

- 7.4 Day Two, themed "Piecing the Jigsaw - Bringing it all Together to a Coherent Whole," saw participants engaging in thorough deliberations, synthesising information from previous sessions, and gaining a comprehensive understanding of pertinent issues. Best practices were shared, with Sam Mathys from Hackney Council offering valuable insights.

Assembly Day Three

- 7.5 On the Final Day, themed "Initial Vision - Evaluating and Constructing a Set of Fundamental Principles," participants collaborated to evaluate and refine the recommendations generated throughout the assembly, ultimately constructing a set of guiding principles to inform the Evening and Night-time Strategy. A presentation from James Hulme from the New South Wales Government at the beginning of the day provided the context on how an evening and night-time strategy, with a clear vision and recommendations guided by the community who live, work and visit it has helped shape a more diverse, enriched and successful evening and night-time environment within New South Wales cities, such as Sydney.
- 7.6 Throughout the assembly, participants had the opportunity to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, engage with insightful speakers, and deliberate on key topics in small groups facilitated to ensure inclusivity and equitable participation.
- 7.7 The inclusive nature of the assembly, with applications open to individuals aged 16 and above residing, working, visiting, or operating businesses in Westminster, underscored its commitment to ensuring diverse voices were heard and considered in the decision-making process.
- 7.8 The stakeholder assembly was facilitated by SixtillSix on behalf of the council. SixtillSix forthcoming report, detailing the Assembly's findings, viewpoints, vision, and recommendations, will be reviewed by the council in the spring. The intention is to release the Westminster After Dark Stakeholder Assembly report in May.
- 8. Next steps in developing our Westminster After Dark Strategy**
- 8.1 The Common Place online platform for comments and survey responses will remain accessible until Sunday 17th March. The council will actively promote this platform through social media and other channels. Targeted social media ads, funded by dedicated resources, have proven effective in driving traffic to the Common Place Westminster After Dark webpages. These ads will specifically aim to boost engagement with underrepresented groups such as businesses, night-workers, and those from marginalised communities.
- 8.2 The Stakeholder Assembly report is scheduled to be submitted to the council in early March. Assembly members will be invited to an event in late March/early April where the findings and report will be presented for their input and feedback. Once finalised, the report's insights, vision, and recommendations, alongside other evidence streams like survey and mapping tool findings, will be thoroughly considered.
- 8.3 Moving forward, the project will transition into the next phase, which involves developing a Westminster After Dark Strategy based on the gathered findings and research. To facilitate key stakeholders' involvement in this process, the research, information, and findings will be organised into the thematic areas used during the stakeholder assembly: Safety and Security, Economic

Development and Opportunities, Community and Culture, and Accessibility and Positive Places.

- 8.4 Several workshops will be organised, inviting relevant stakeholders to participate in reviewing the information, opinions, and findings gathered throughout the Westminster After Dark engagement process. These stakeholder workshops will align with the vision and principles established during the Stakeholder Assembly and will focus on how the council can formulate a strategy to address the issues or opportunities identified during this process. These thematic workshops are currently being scheduled to take place between March and May.
- 8.5 The timeline aims to finalise the Westminster After Dark Strategy by June, with the draft Strategy set for agreement and sign-off by July, initiating a public consultation period lasting 10 weeks. Following the consultation period, the final Strategy will be ratified and published. It is anticipated that this strategy will come into effect in Autumn 2024.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 Funding for Westminster After Dark primarily draws from the existing budgets and resources allocated within the Council's Corporate Services, Regeneration, Economy and Planning, and Environment, Climate and Public Protection Directorates. In cases where additional financial support is required for specific activities related to public engagement, the Council has actively pursued external grants.
- 9.2 The Council has secured £20,000 through the Greater London Authority's (GLA) London Recovery Programme which has part funded the delivery of the Westminster After Dark Stakeholder Assembly. The council has further matched this grant with £40,000 sourced from the 'Thriving Economy' budget under the purview of the Economy and Skills department. This funding will ensure that the costs associated with delivering this project can be met through grant funding and existing resources budgets.

10. Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 There are no legal or governance implications because of this report.

11. Environmental, Ecological and Carbon Impact

- 11.1 The Council is committed to becoming a zero-carbon city by 2040 whilst also meeting the World Health Organisation levels of pollution and achieving the ecological emergency ambitions. The evening and night-time environment can significantly impact the ecological landscape, pollution, and carbon footprint. As the development of the Westminster After Dark Plan is in its preliminary stages, a specific assessment of its environmental, ecological and carbon impact is currently unfeasible due to the absence of defined measures or approaches.

11.2 However, acknowledging the potential surge in the utilisation of the evening and night-time environment by residents, visitors, workers, and businesses, it's crucial to anticipate these associated risks. The following highlights areas where extended usage of the evening and night-time environment, as integral parts of any future Westminster After Dark Plan, could pose potential carbon-related risks:

11.2.1 Transportation Emissions: Extended operating hours often lead to increased transportation activities during late hours. This can result in higher emissions from vehicles, particularly if public transport options are limited, leading to a rise in carbon emissions due to increased traffic. However, if extended operating hours evens out demand for non-public transport related vehicle movements then congestion could potentially be eased. Consideration should be given to freight, servicing and delivery movements that could change depending on the outcome of evening activity changes.

11.2.2 Energy Consumption: Extended hours of operation for businesses, entertainment venues, and nightlife establishments can lead to increased energy consumption. Cooking, lighting, heating, cooling, and other operational requirements contribute to higher energy usage, potentially increasing carbon emissions and air pollutants if not managed sustainably/offset though improving efficiency of operating systems e.g., changing from gas to electric cooking methods; servicing A/C units regularly, putting lighting and heating onto specific timers.

11.2.3 Waste Generation: An increase in evening economic activity will result in increased waste generation, including disposable packaging, food waste, and single-use items. Lack of participation in food and dry recycling schemes has a negative environmental impact and lack of storage in central areas can result in more waste being placed out on the streets for longer periods of time and risks unsightly streets as well as increased littering/dumping issues.

11.2.4 Habitat Disturbance: Extended operating hours, can disrupt natural habitats and ecosystems. Noise, light pollution, and increased human activities during late hours can disturb wildlife, affecting their behaviour, nesting patterns, and feeding habits.

11.2.5 Biodiversity Loss: Further development associated with a bustling evening and night-time environment might lead to habitat loss or fragmentation. This can result in reduced biodiversity as areas are repurposed for commercial or recreational use, impacting local flora and fauna. This should be mitigated wherever possible through improving quieter habitats elsewhere in the vicinity.

11.2.6 Pollution: Increased human activities during the evening and night-time can contribute to various types of pollution. For instance, light pollution can affect nocturnal animals and disrupt their natural rhythms. Moreover, if waste management practices are inadequate, it can lead

to littering and pollution in surrounding areas, affecting ecosystems and water bodies. Increases in indoor and outdoor pollution are a likely outcome of increased economic output and this should be offset wherever possible.

11.3 Though a comprehensive evaluation of carbon impact is pending, it's imperative to pre-emptively address these areas to mitigate potential environmental repercussions associated with an increased utilisation of the evening and night-time environment in the Westminster After Dark Plan's future phases. Early consideration of these issues through consultation and scrutiny gives maximum opportunity for mitigating and minimising the impacts.

11.4 We are committed to evaluating the environmental and ecological impacts associated with any actions within that plan as it is being developed. Removal or mitigation of increased carbon will be a priority to support our aims to become a zero-carbon city by 2040 and to meet World Health Organisation levels of pollution, as well as meeting our ecological emergency ambitions. For example, the following are areas that will be considered as part of the potential options for mitigation or removal for those impacts:

11.4.1 Sustainable Practices: Encouraging businesses to adopt energy-efficient technologies, promoting sustainable transportation options, considering freight, and servicing delivery efficiencies, and implementing waste reduction and recycling programs can minimise environmental impacts. The Council supports a Westminster Sustainable City Charter which can help and support businesses participation in this agenda.

11.4.2 Legislative Powers and Council Policies: Utilising existing legislative powers and utilising Council policies around noise levels, waste management, and emissions control can help mitigate the negative effects of the evening and late-night environment.

11.4.3 Community Engagement: Involving local communities in decision-making processes and ensuring their concerns are addressed can help balance the economic benefits of an evening and night-time environment with social and environmental considerations.

11.4.4 Innovation and Technology: Exploring innovative solutions such as smart lighting, efficient waste management systems, and alternative transportation options including low carbon servicing and delivery can help reduce the carbon impact of late-night activities.

11.4.5 Green Infrastructure: Implementing and investing in additional or alternative green spaces, such as parks and gardens or on rooftops, within urban areas can offset habitat loss and provide refuges for wildlife and support wildlife corridors to help nature adapt to changing human environments.

11.4.6 Lighting and Design: Employing responsible lighting designs and technologies to minimise light pollution and its impact on nocturnal animals. This can be as simple as avoiding upwards lighting focusses.

11.5 Balancing the economic benefits of a vibrant evening and late-night environment with the need to mitigate its environmental, ecological and carbon impacts is crucial for sustainable urban development. Collaborative efforts involving the Council, businesses, residents, other stakeholders, and partners are essential to achieving a more sustainable and responsible evening and night-time environment.

12. Equalities Impact

12.1 The reach of the Westminster After Darks engagement and final plan is city-wide. It will have impacts for all residents, businesses, workers, and visitors in the city. If Westminster has a strong, sustainable, and resilient evening and night-time economy, all those who live, work, run a business or visit in the city stand to benefit. However, impacts will be differently felt by individuals and groups within Westminster's communities, depending on their needs and circumstances.

12.2 We know that Westminster has significant wealth disparities across different geographic areas and sections of the community. Indeed, Westminster is unique in that it contains LSOA's that are rated among both the most deprived and least deprived in the country. These considerable disparities in affluence relate to inequalities in opportunity, wellbeing, and quality-of-life outcomes for residents. We have completed an Equality Impact Assessment, and our understanding of these existing disparities shapes the Westminster After Dark Plan and will be the driving force behind it.

13. Consultation and Engagement

13.1 The Council's consultation and engagement approach associated with Westminster After Dark is detailed within the body of this report.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Kerry Simpkin, Head of Licensing, Place and Infrastructure Policy via email: ksimpkin@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Analysis of the Common Place Westminster After Dark Surveys received between October 2023 and February 2024.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Westminster City Council's Fairer Economy Plan 2023

Westminster After Dark

Research & Insight, Strategy & Intelligence

February 2024

Methodology and limitations

- **Method:**

- Online survey disseminated via methods – including on WAD commonplace platform, communication emails, and adverts. Data in this report represents responses gathered between 1 October 2023 and 14 February 2024.
- Since the previous report in January, the survey has remained open to boost the number of responses. **The findings in this report remain consistent with the previous report in January, with no major changes occurring in the data.** Overall, 376 people have responded to the survey so far, made up for 248 residents and 80 visitors, with the remainder being day-time workers and other respondents.

- **Limitations:**

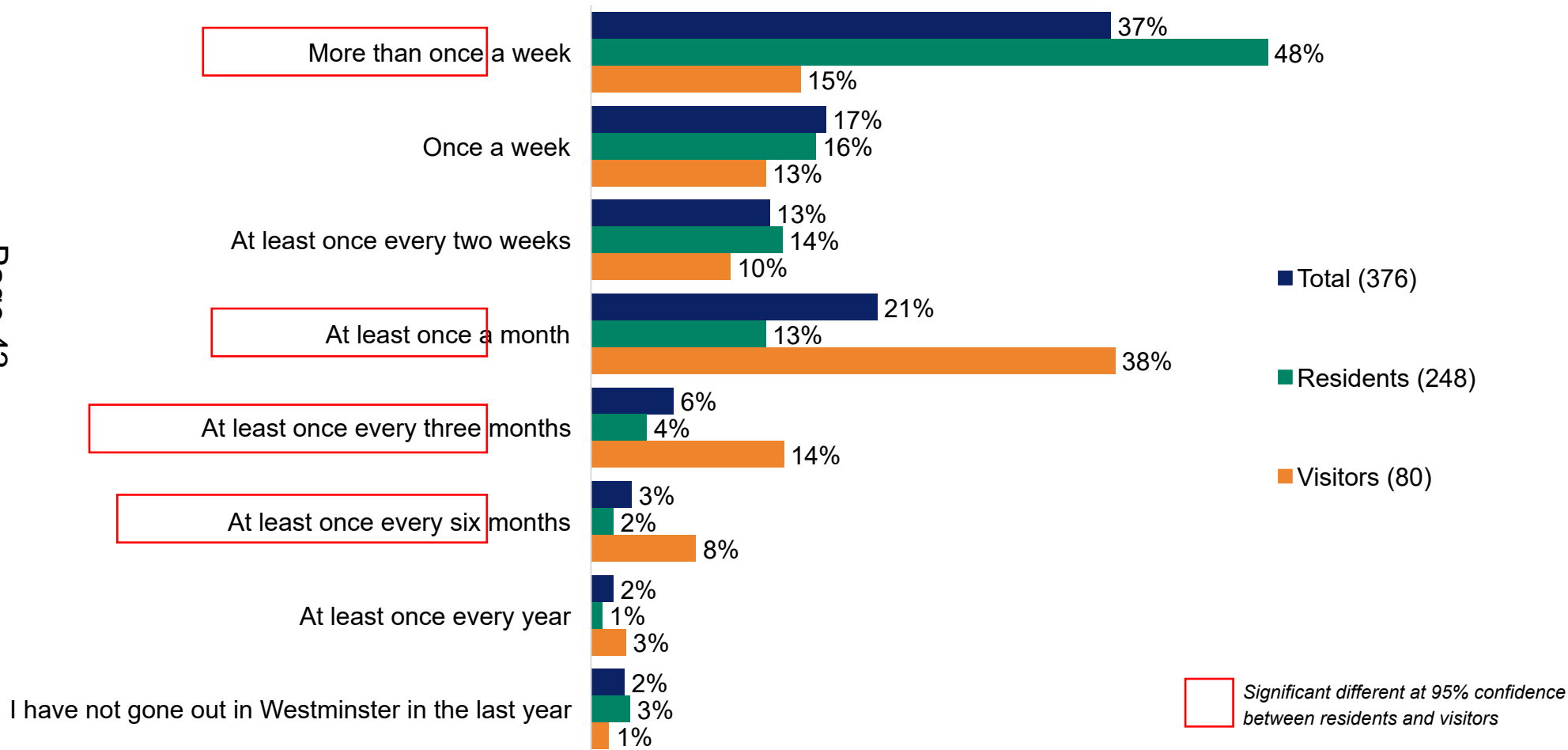
- **The sample size of visitors is still relatively small (80 in total) so findings for this group should still be considered indicative.** Additionally, despite leaving the survey open for a longer period, sample sizes of some sub-groups remain relatively small, limiting our ability to conduct detailed analysis of some groups – for example, we only received 27 responses from black residents or visitors, meaning we are unable to look at how responses from this group differ other ethnicities, if at all. **Where indicated with a star (*) subgroup analysis should be considered indicative.**
- The demographic data gathered in this survey was changed after 2 October 2023 to gather more detailed demographic information, such as religion, sexual orientation, and disability status. Thus, we do not have full demographic data for all responses, various questions were added after some respondents had already taken the survey.
- Responses relating to night-time workers and businesses have not been analysed in this report, due to the small number of responses received (47 night-time workers / 31 businesses).

- **Significant difference:**

- Statistical significance helps us decide if differences in the data, for example between the views of residents and the views of visitors, are likely to be a real difference or just coincidence. Statistical significance helps to determine if the patterns or differences we see in the data are due to a genuine effect or if they could have happened by chance.
- A red box indicates that a difference between two specific samples (e.g. between residents and visitors, or men and women) is significant – and therefore likely to be real rather than a coincidence. **However, it remains the case that any differences between residents and visitors are indicative.**

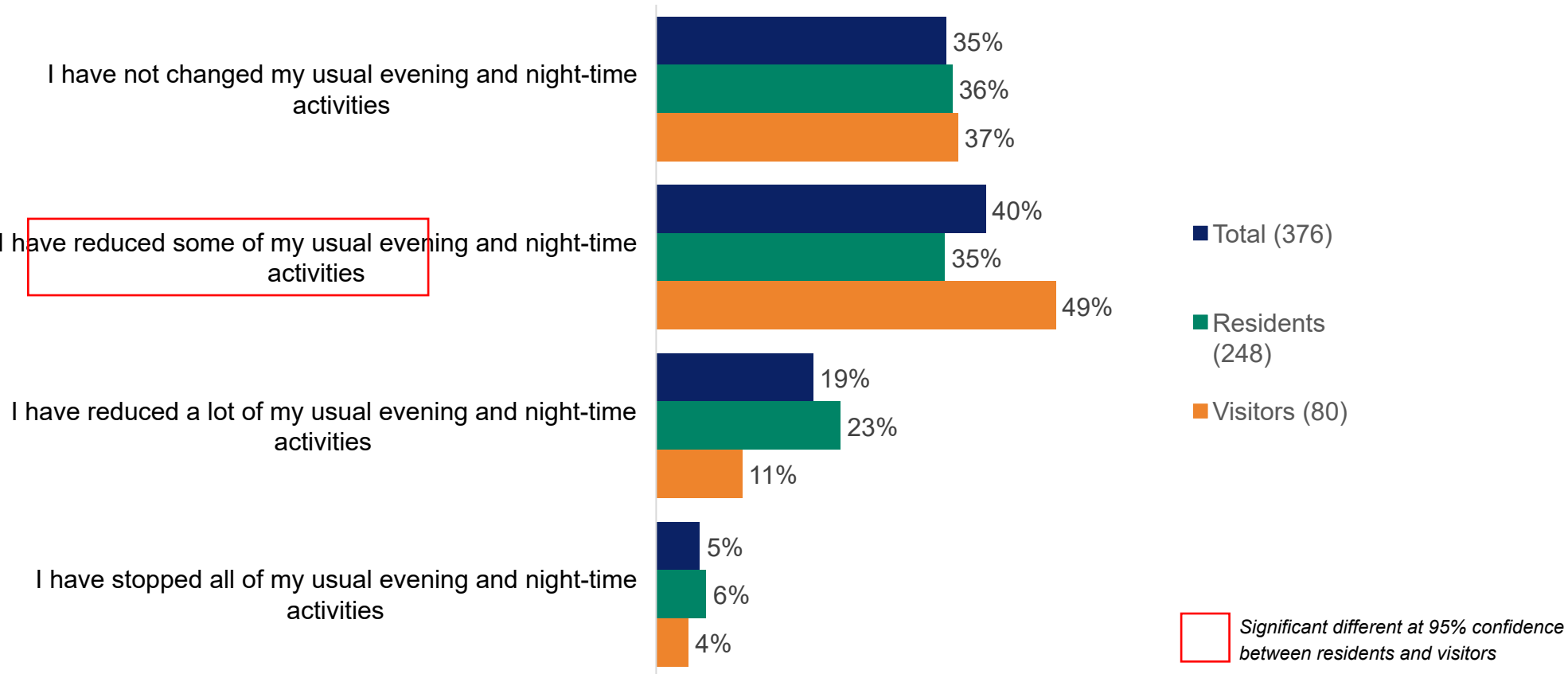
Around a third 3 in 5 residents go out in Westminster in the evening and night-time at least once a week. Visitors mostly visit at least once a month.

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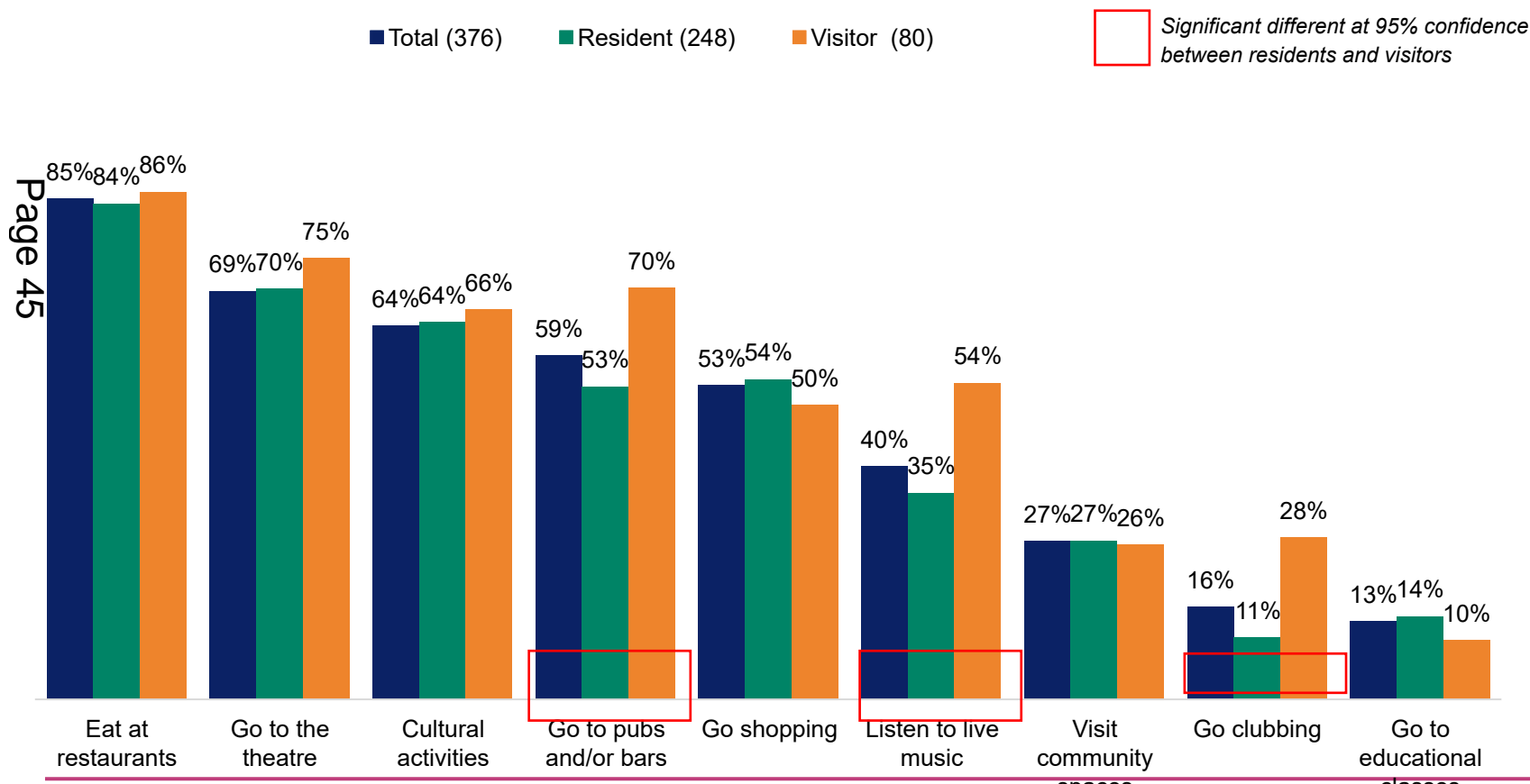


Just under two thirds have reduced their evening and night-time activities due to cost of living pressures, mostly by a small amount. Over a third have made no changes.

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Residents and visitors are attracted to similar activities in Westminster in the evening and night-time – with restaurants, theatres, cultural activities, and pubs/bars the most popular activities. Visitors are more likely than residents to go to pubs/bars, listen to live music, or go clubbing.

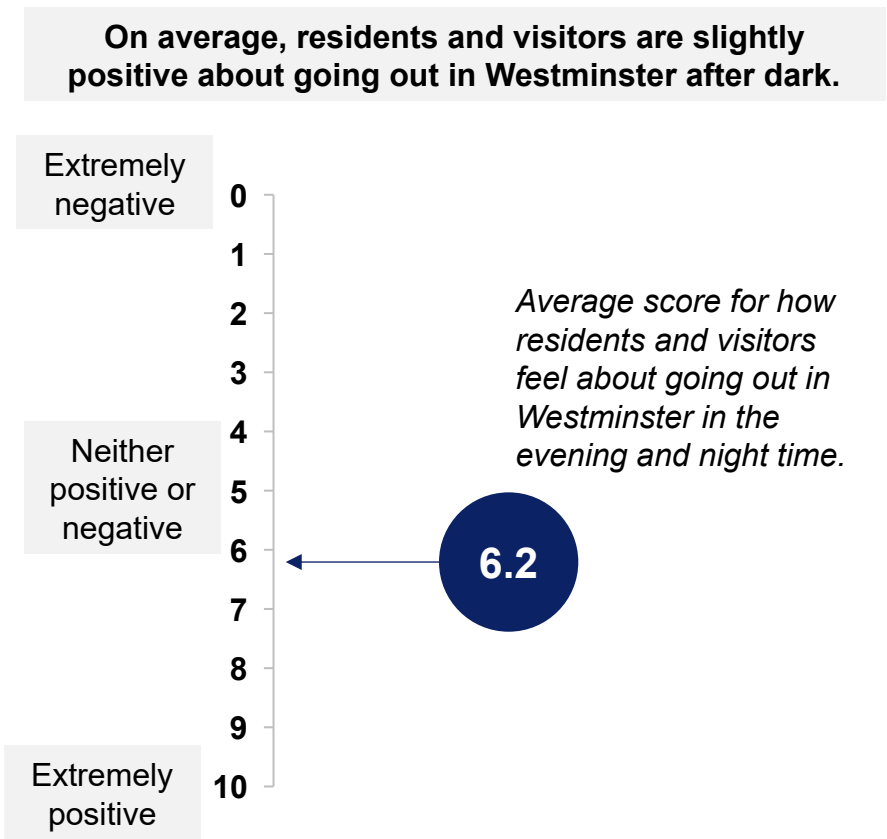


Subgroup analysis:

- Men are more likely to listen to live music, go to pubs/bars, go clubbing than women.
- Those aged 65+ are more likely to attend cultural activities than other age groups.*
- Those 65+ are less likely than other age groups to go to pubs and/or bars, as well as to go clubbing.*
- Those from a Global Majority background are less likely than white people to go restaurants, the theatre, cultural activities, pubs/ bars, live music and clubs.*

Residents and visitors are generally positive about Westminster after dark and appreciate the wide range of things to do.

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What do residents and visitors like about Westminster after dark?*

People are generally positive about going out in Westminster in the evening and night time, particularly in areas like Soho, Chinatown, and the West End. Respondents appreciate the vibrant and diverse atmosphere, with a wide range of options for restaurants, pubs, theatres, and cultural activities.

The variety of entertainment choices, including live music venues, LGBTQ+ establishments, and late-night options, contributes to the appeal.

Safety is a theme and many people say they generally feel safe going out in Westminster after dark, with some referencing the volume of people and the crowds as contributing to a feeling of safety. It is worth nothing that a similar number of people also feel unsafe.

However, some express concerns about noise, traffic, and a shift towards fast-food outlets.

Overall, the responses highlight the dynamic and lively nature of these urban areas, where people enjoy the convenience, cultural richness, and social opportunities

Residents and visitors experience a range of issues in Westminster after dark that they would like addressed.

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What do residents and visitors dislike about Westminster after dark?*

Safety Concerns: Despite many people saying they feel safe after dark in Westminster, many people feel unsafe, particularly women.

Traffic and Congestion: Many respondents express frustration with traffic congestion, unsafe driving practices, and a lack of pedestrian-friendly areas. Some suggest pedestrianizing certain streets, particularly in Soho.

Early Closing Times: People complain about early closing times for pubs, bars, and other venues. Uniform closing times seen as contributing to congestion and limiting late-night options. Some feel that there is a limited variety of late-night options for entertainment, food, and activities.

Anti-Social Behaviour: Concerns about anti-social behaviour, rowdy patrons, noise, and the impact of alcohol-led venues on the streets are often mentioned. Issues include harassment, aggression, and feeling unsafe.

Dirty and Unkempt Streets: The cleanliness of streets is an issue, with complaints about rubbish, graffiti, and an overall sense of neglect. The smell of urine in certain places is also noted with people mentioning insufficient availability of public toilets as an issue contributing to this problem.

Pedicabs and Noise Pollution: Pedicabs are a source of annoyance, with mentions of noise pollution, aggressive behaviour, and the need for stricter regulations.

Changes that would improve resident and visitor experience*

Safety and Security: Desire for increased police presence, better lighting, and measures to address anti-social behaviour, drug use, and crime. Concerns about feeling unsafe, particularly for women, are noted.

Reduced Noise and Crowds: People emphasize the need for reduced noise, both from traffic and late-night activities. Complaints about crowded streets, especially in areas like Soho, are frequent.

Traffic and Pollution: People call for reduced traffic, better cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian-friendly zones. Concerns about air pollution and noise from vehicles are mentioned.

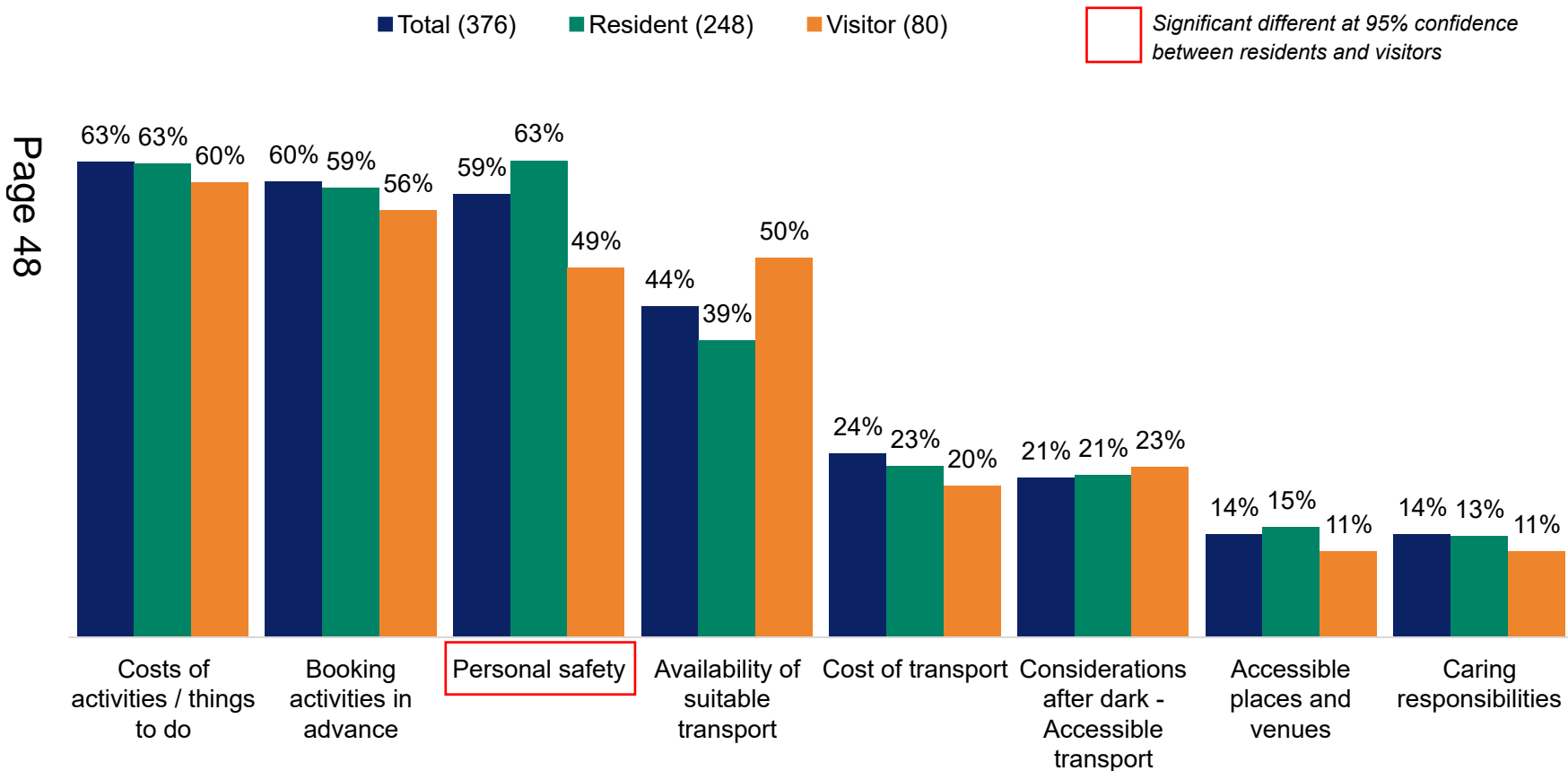
Extended Opening Hours: Requests for businesses, including pubs, bars, and restaurants, to have extended opening hours.

Public Facilities: Requests for more public toilets, especially during the night. Suggestions for creating safe spaces and facilities for women, families, and vulnerable individuals.

Affordability: Some respondents mention the cost of going out as a consideration, suggesting more affordable options.

Transportation: Requests for better and more frequent night bus services. Desire for the night tube to operate beyond Fridays and Saturdays. Concerns about the availability and cost of late-night transportation, including taxis.

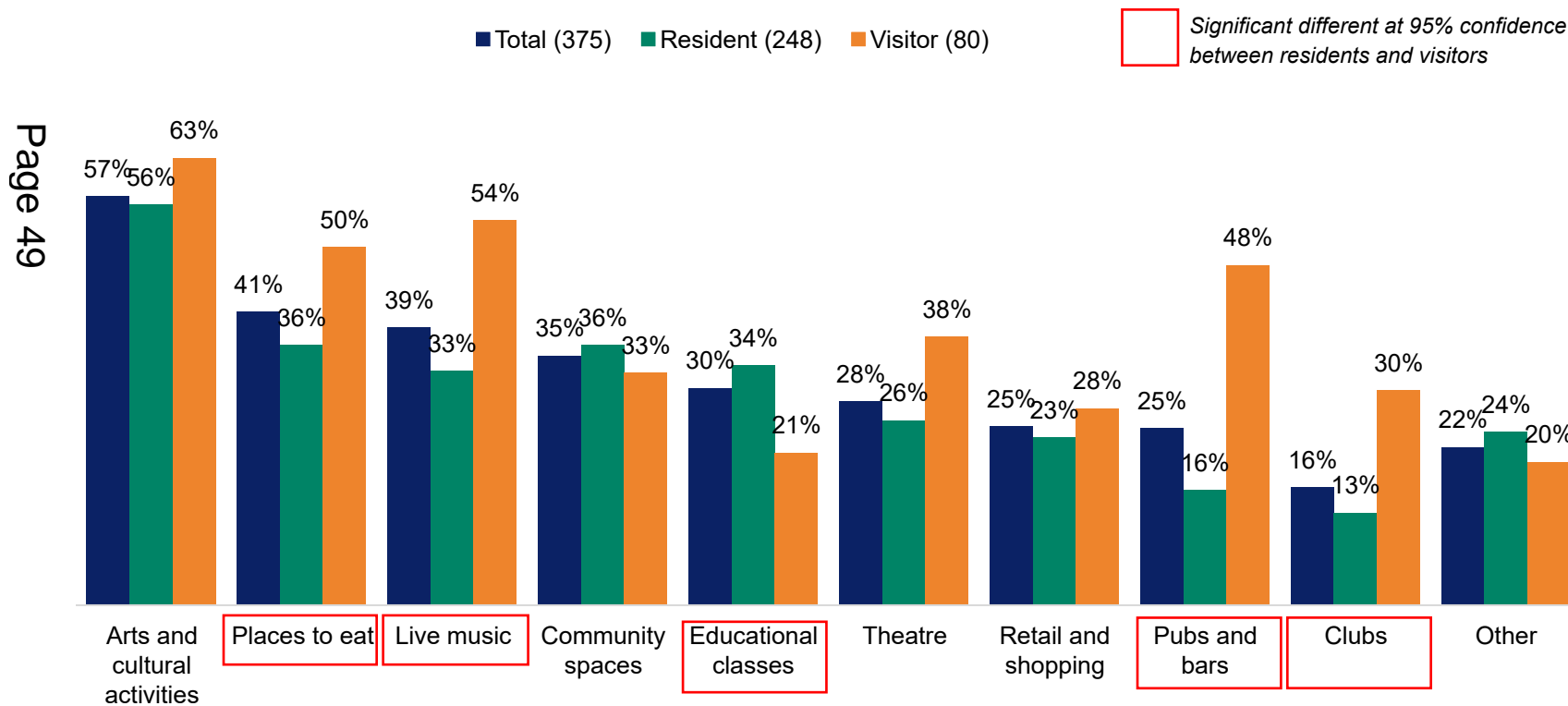
Cost of activities, booking activities, and personal safety are most important considerations for going out after dark in Westminster. Personal safety is significantly more important a consideration for residents than for visitors.



Subgroup analysis:

- Women more likely than men to consider personal safety (69% vs 44%).
- People from a Global Majority background more likely to consider personal safety and the cost of transport than white people.*
- People aged 65+ less likely to be concerned about cost of transport than other ages.*
- Those aged 35-54 more likely than other ages to consider caring responsibilities.*

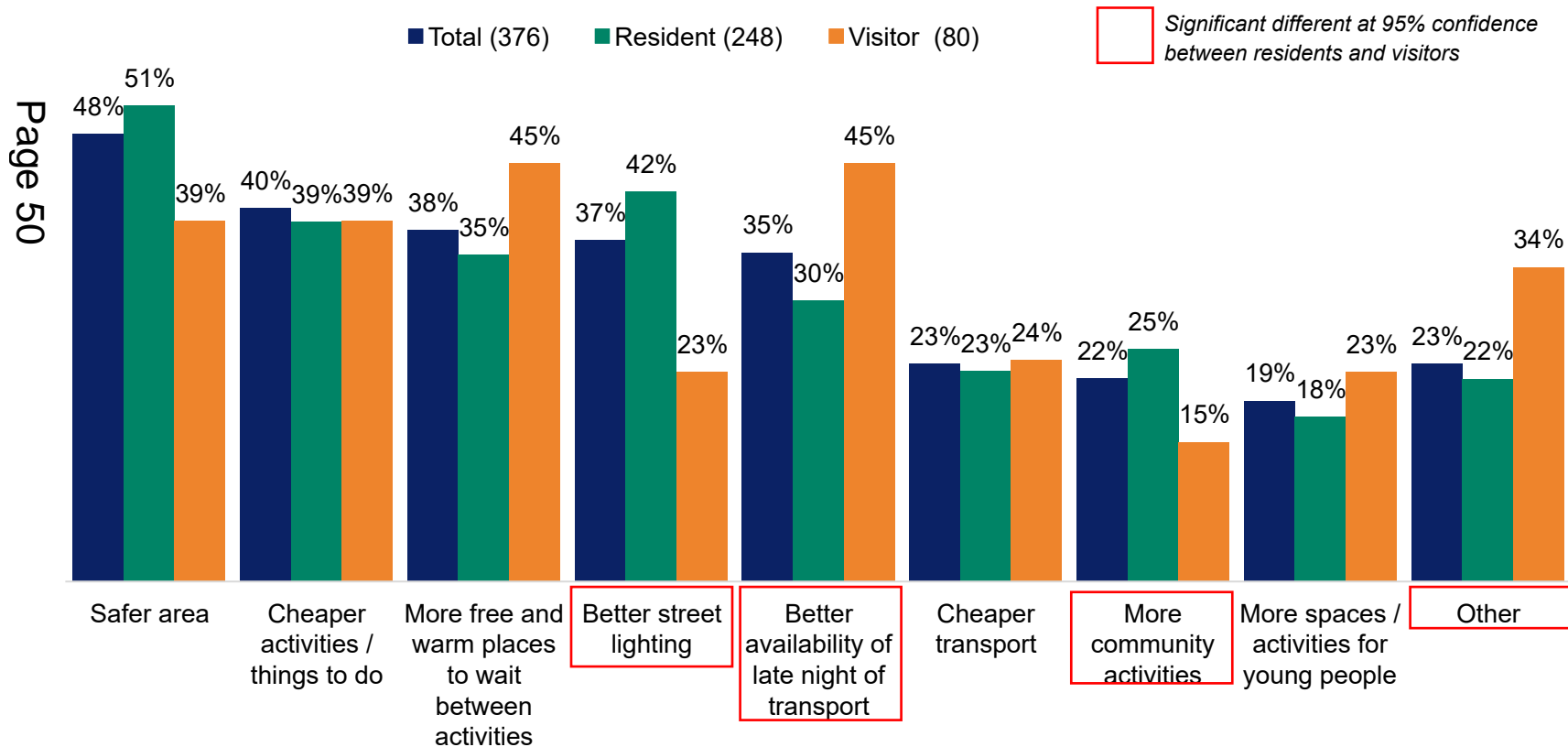
People would like to see more arts and cultural activities in Westminster in the evening and night-time, followed by places to eat and live music. Compared to residents, visitors see more restaurants, live music, pubs / bars, and clubs as an attractive proposition. On the other hand, residents are more likely than visitors to want more educational classes.



Subgroup analysis:

- Men are more likely than women to want to see more pubs/bars and clubs. Women are more likely to want to see more educational classes.
- People from Global Majority backgrounds are more likely to want to see more educational classes and community spaces than white people.*
- White people are more likely to want to see more live music and pubs and bars than other ethnicities.*

Overall, greater safety would most encourage people to stay and go out in Westminster after dark, followed by cheaper activities and places to wait. Resident and visitor priorities differ in some areas – better late night transport is more important to visitors, whilst residents are more concerned about improving street lighting.

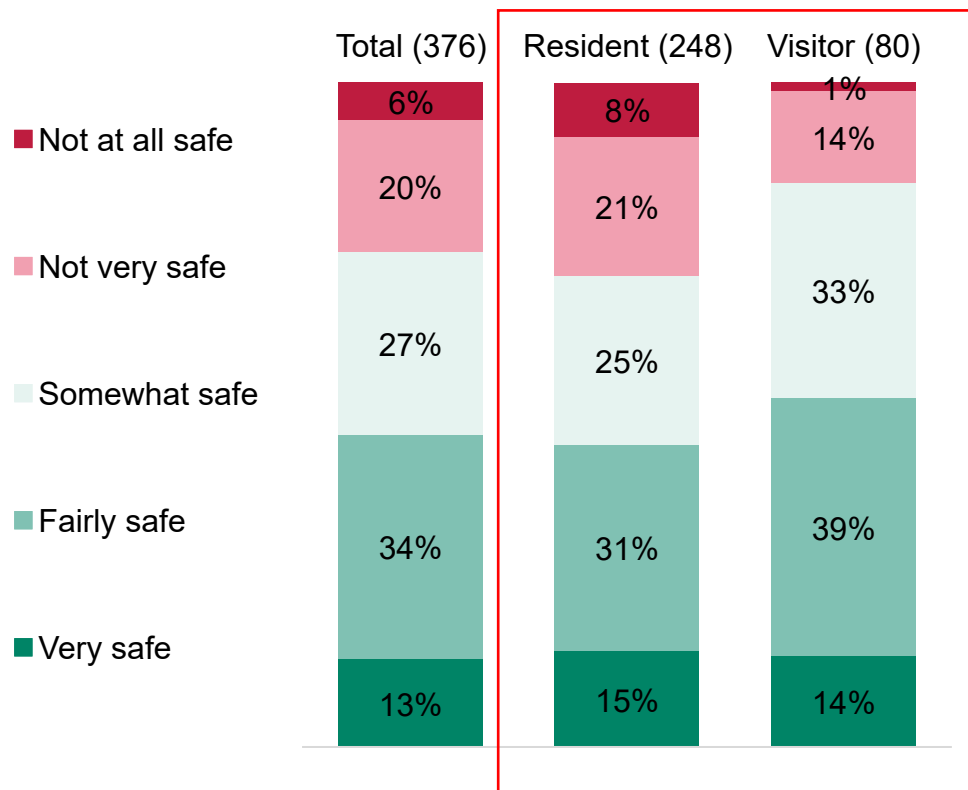


Subgroup analysis:

- Women are more likely than men to say that a safer area and better street lighting would encourage them to stay and go out in Westminster after dark.
- People from a Global Majority background are more likely than white people in all areas to say that specific change or improvement would encourage them to say and go out in Westminster in the evening and night-time.*

Just over 1 in 4 do not feel safe after dark in Westminster – residents are more likely to feel unsafe in the evening and night-time than visitors. There is no significant difference in how safe men and women feel in the evening and night-time in Westminster.

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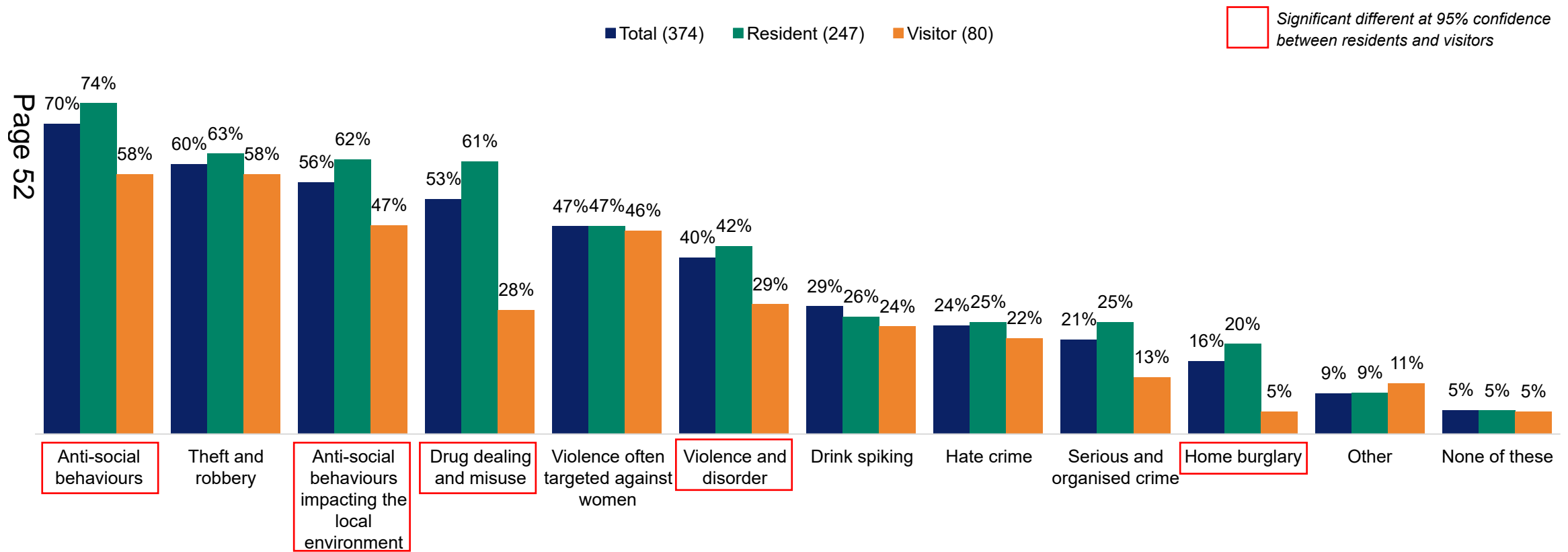


Significant different at 95% confidence between residents and visitors

Subgroup analysis:

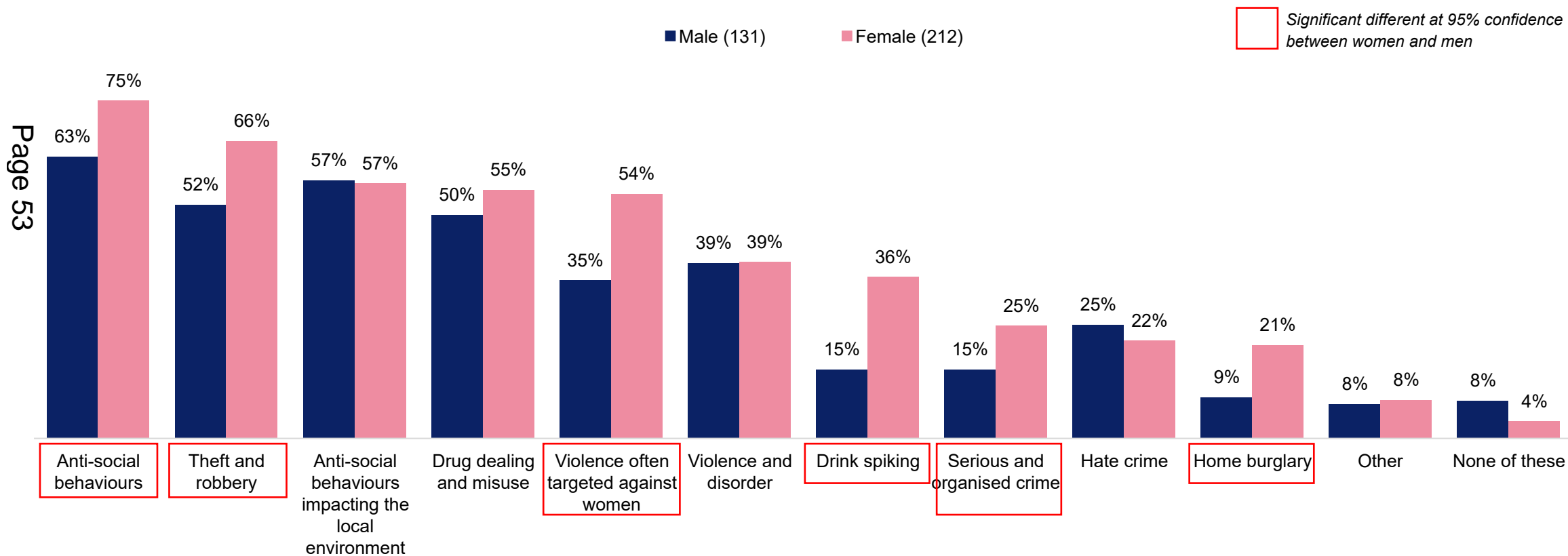
- Women are more likely than men to be concerned about theft and robbery, gender-based violence, and drink spiking.
- People from a Global Majority background are more likely to be concerned about hate crime than white people.*
- People aged 64+ are more likely than other age groups to be concerned about anti-social behaviours (both social and environmental).*

Matching the CIA findings, ASB is the biggest safety issue in Westminster in the evening and night-time, followed by theft and robbery. Visitors are less concerned than residents about a range of issues, such as ASB, drug dealing / misuse, and violence and disorder.



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Despite no significant difference in how safe women and men feel in the evening and night-time in Westminster, women are more concerned about a range of safety concerns than men – particularly anti-social behaviour, theft and robbery, gender-based violence, and drink spiking.



Women highlight a complex set of issues related to public safety, ranging from social behaviour problems to environmental factors and a perceived lack of law enforcement presence.

Feeling unsafe after dark:

- Feeling unsafe due to disorderly and anti-social behaviour linked to alcohol and drugs. Women express concerns about aggression, fights, shouting and rowdy behaviour.
- Fear of safety when walking alone at night, with inadequate lighting contributing to this feeling.
- Several provided specific instances of crime and street harassment, such as being chased, robbed, or curbside crawled.
- Presence of drug users and dealers, with drug taking in public spaces contributes to feelings of insecurity.

Homelessness and Begging:

- Issues related to the presence of rough sleepers, homeless encampments, and begging contribute to feeling unsafe.

Diminished Police Presence:

- Women feel there has been a decline in visible policing, which has negatively impacted their sense of safety. As a result, there are requests for more police presence on the streets in the evening and night time.

Inadequate Lighting:

- Poorly lit areas contribute to feelings of insecurity with requests for better street lighting to enhance safety.

Street Environment:

- Concerns about cleanliness, including litter, graffiti, and unpleasant smells. Notable mention of urine in certain areas and the lack of cleanliness contributing to an unsafe atmosphere.

Transportation-related Concerns:

- Specific mentions of feeling unsafe due to bicycles, e-scooters, and pedicabs.

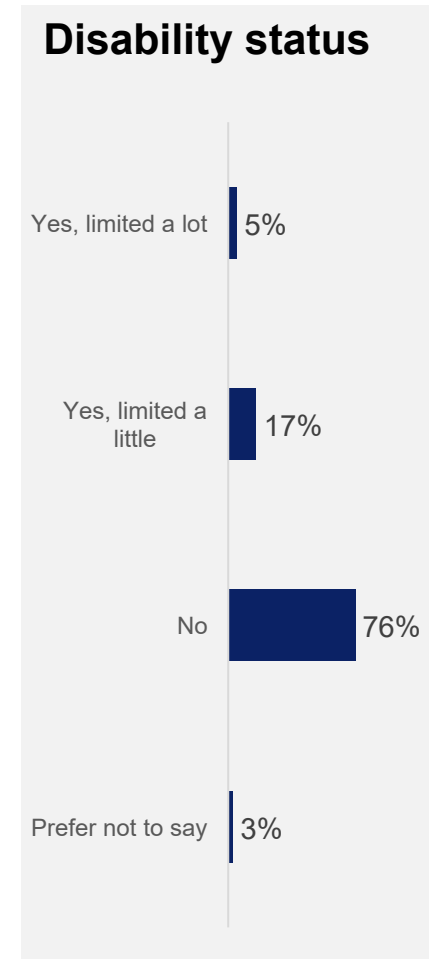
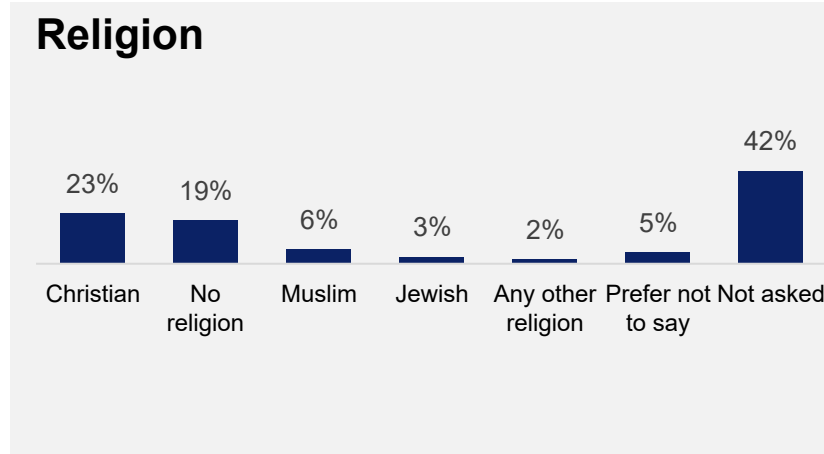
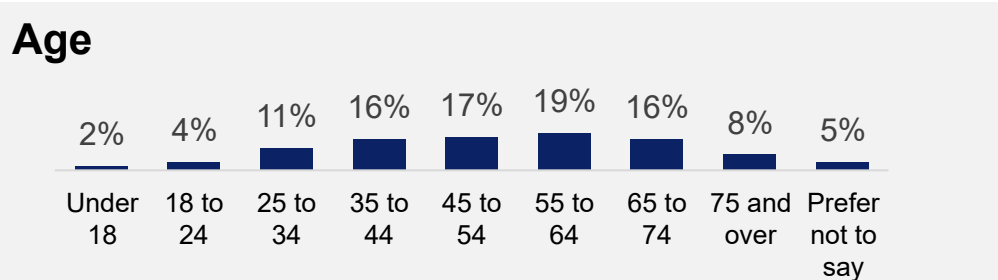
By comparison, fewer men identify safety concerns, but these are similar to those identified by women.

Anti-social behaviour: some concerns about drunkenness and rowdiness, particularly in areas with high concentrations of bars and pubs.

Homelessness and Begging: homeless people and begging lead some men to feel unsafe after dark.

Traffic and transport: several mention safety concerns about traffic and cars, particularly with regards to speeding and bad driving at night.

Sample demographics (residents and visitors combined)



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