



# SANCTUARY RUNNERS - IMPACT STUDY 2020

OCTOBER 2020

[WWW.SANCTUARYRUNNERS.IE](http://WWW.SANCTUARYRUNNERS.IE)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Executive Summary Page 3



Background and Objectives Page 5



Survey Method Page 6



Survey Results Page 7 – 16



Quotes from Survey Page 17



Conclusion Page 18



Sanctuary Runners details Page 16

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Sanctuary Runners' Movement was established in January, 2018, with the aim of building bridges between local communities and people who are seeking asylum or refugee status in Ireland. A system called Direct Provision (DP) is used to accommodate and provide support to asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland and these DP centres are located right across the country - often in small towns or rural locations with limited amenities. The Sanctuary Runners has 24 groups around Ireland (as of October, 2020) with these groups intentionally established in towns/areas where there is a DP centre.

This impact study is the first examination of attitudes and perceptions of members and also allows us to gather feedback, suggestions and ideas to help the Sanctuary Runners improve, grow and develop.

A survey, distributed in August and September 2020, comprised of two questionnaires. One questionnaire was aimed at our members who live in DP centres and included questions on visibility of Sanctuary Runner information in their centre, requirements for running gear, the number of Sanctuary Runners groups they have been involved in, park run participation and concerns people had on first joining Sanctuary Runners. It also looked at what impact being a member of the Sanctuary Runners has had on their lives. The second questionnaire was directed at members who live in the local community and included questions on the impact membership has had on their connections with asylum seekers and refugees, volunteering options, activity during Covid-19 restrictions and spreading awareness of the DP system.

## Key Results

85% of our members who are asylum seekers or refugees stated that joining the Sanctuary Runners has helped them feel welcome in Ireland and 81% said that joining Sanctuary Runners has helped them feel integrated into the community. And 62% said they felt they had a better understanding of Irish society because of the Sanctuary Runners. To mirror this, 83% of our members who are local citizens feel that the Sanctuary Runners promotes integration in their community and 81% say they have forged friendships with DP residents through the Sanctuary Runners.

## CONDT.

It would appear interaction between a local community and a DP centre is not the norm, given 74% of our local community members had not spoken to a DP resident before joining the Sanctuary Runners - in fact, 52% did not know where the nearest DP centre was located.

The Sanctuary Runners is non-political and thus may be attractive to many, with 89% of respondents saying this is the first initiative involving the DP system they have been involved in.

However, once involved with the Sanctuary Runners, members seemed to engage in discussions surrounding the asylum process in Ireland. 86% of community members have had conversations with family and friends about the asylum and refugee process in Ireland and 65% had discussed community integration. 54% have brought family or friends along to a Sanctuary Runners meet-up.

In terms of the health benefits, 61% of DP members felt the Sanctuary Runners had improved their fitness levels and again 61% felt their mental health had improved as a result of membership, while 36% say they sleep better after exercising with the Sanctuary Runners, thus helping them deal with their current situation.

After our weekly runs, most groups include a social side – or the “coffee and chat” as it has become known. 90% of our DP members either love or enjoy this aspect of the run and 89% of local residents felt it was important to include this activity. In fact the suggestion of social evenings were also supported enthusiastically, with 72% of community members and 67% of DP members in favour of this idea.

All respondents were asked what three words they would associate with the Sanctuary Runners. “Fun” was mentioned by 20 respondents, while “Love” by 16 and “Community” by 15. These are all positive and appropriate to the core values of the Sanctuary Runners.

# BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Sanctuary Runners has been operating since 2018, and has 2,000 members across 24 running groups nationally. The simple concept behind Sanctuary Runners is that it brings asylum seekers, refugees and residents of Ireland together to run, jog or walk. By wearing the same blue t-shirt, labels fall away and regardless of background, we become one group, running together under the principles of solidarity, friendship and respect.

The objective of this impact study was to gauge whether the Sanctuary Runners has helped improve integration of asylum seekers into their local community and whether it has increased awareness by Irish citizens of the Direct Provision System. We also wished to assess how easily people accessed the Sanctuary Runners, what concerns they have, what aspects of our group they enjoy and gather suggestions from all members as to how we could improve our movement into the future.

# SURVEY METHOD

Our survey took the form of two online questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent directly to members via WhatsApp.

The first questionnaire comprised of 31 questions and took approximately 14 minutes to complete. The questionnaire was sent directly to all our members who are, or had been, residing in a Direct Provision setting. 62 members started the survey, with 48 members completing all questions. Member were given two weeks to access the survey.

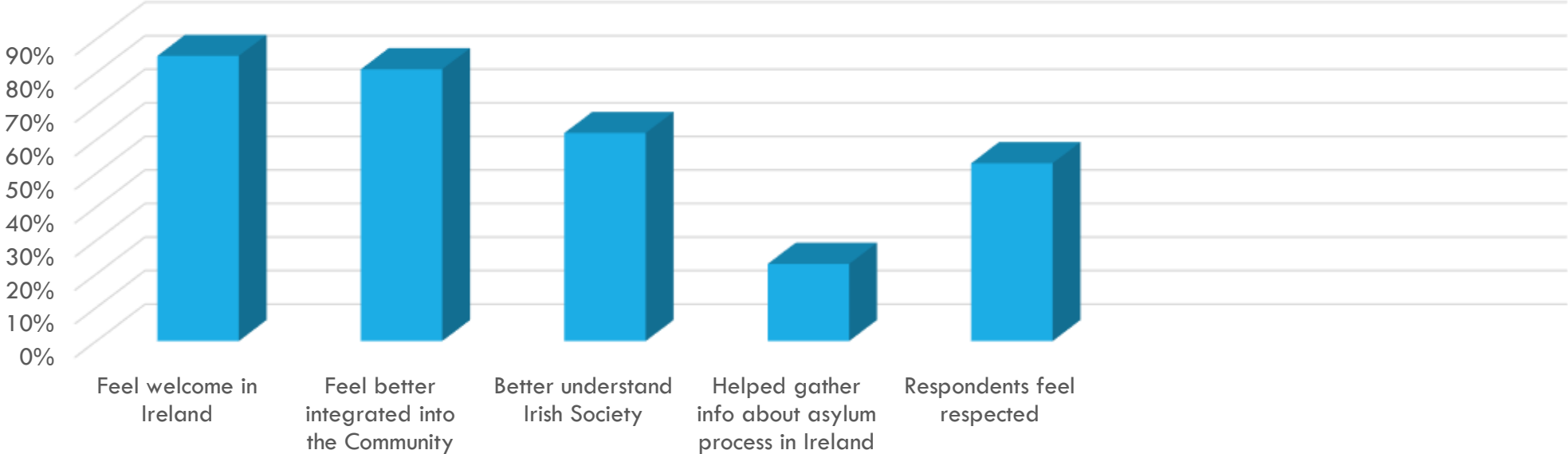
The second questionnaire was sent via our regional organisers, who were requested to send it, ideally, to 10 members who reside in the local community and had not previously been residing in a Direct Provision setting. This survey comprised of 10 detailed questions and took approximately 4 minutes for a respondent to answer. 64 members accessed the questionnaire with 64 completing all questions.

# SURVEY RESULTS

The charts and information provided on pages 8 to 11 were garnered from the survey sent to Sanctuary Runner members residing in a Direct Provision setting.

The charts and information from pages 12 to 15 were garnered from the survey sent to Sanctuary Runners residing in the local community.

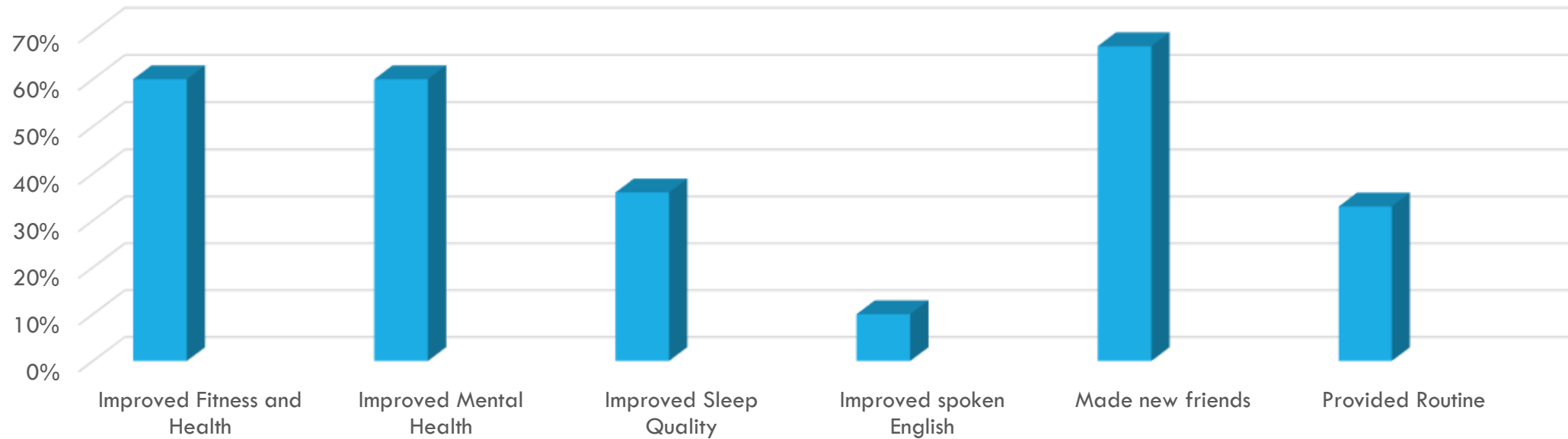
### The Impact of Joining Sanctuary Runners for DP Residents



RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED IN WHAT WAYS DID THEY FEEL BEING A MEMBER OF SANCTUARY RUNNERS HAS HELPED THEM.

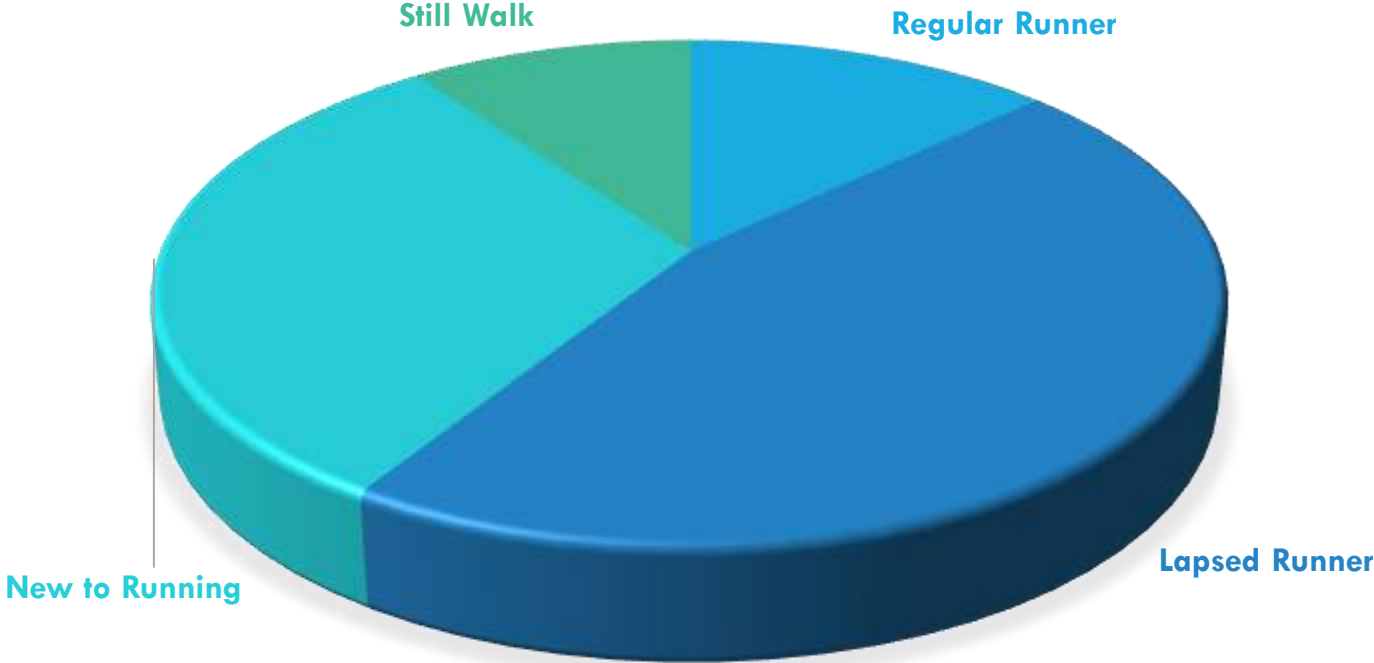


## Benefits Of Sanctuary Runners



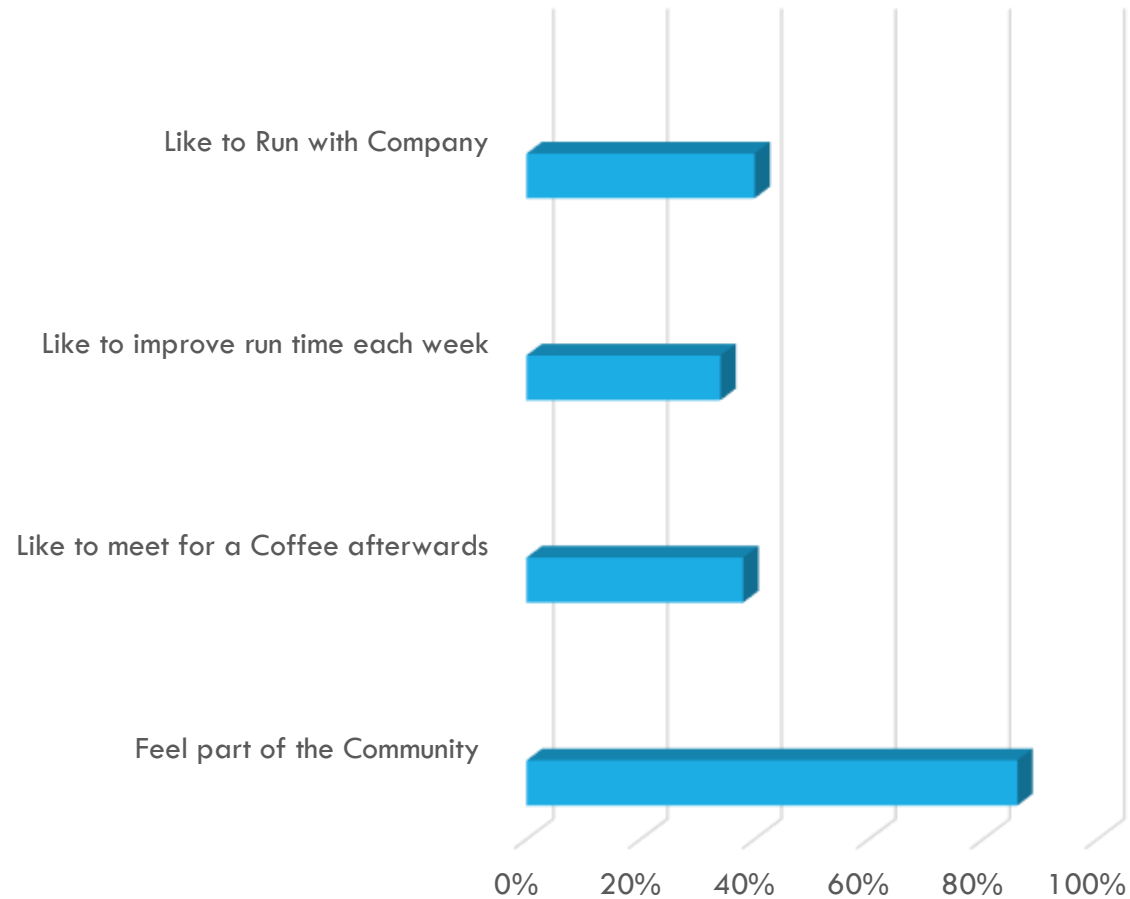
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SANCTUARY RUNNERS ACCORDING TO MEMBERS RESIDING IN DIRECT PROVISION CENTRES?

# MEMBERS RUNNING HISTORY



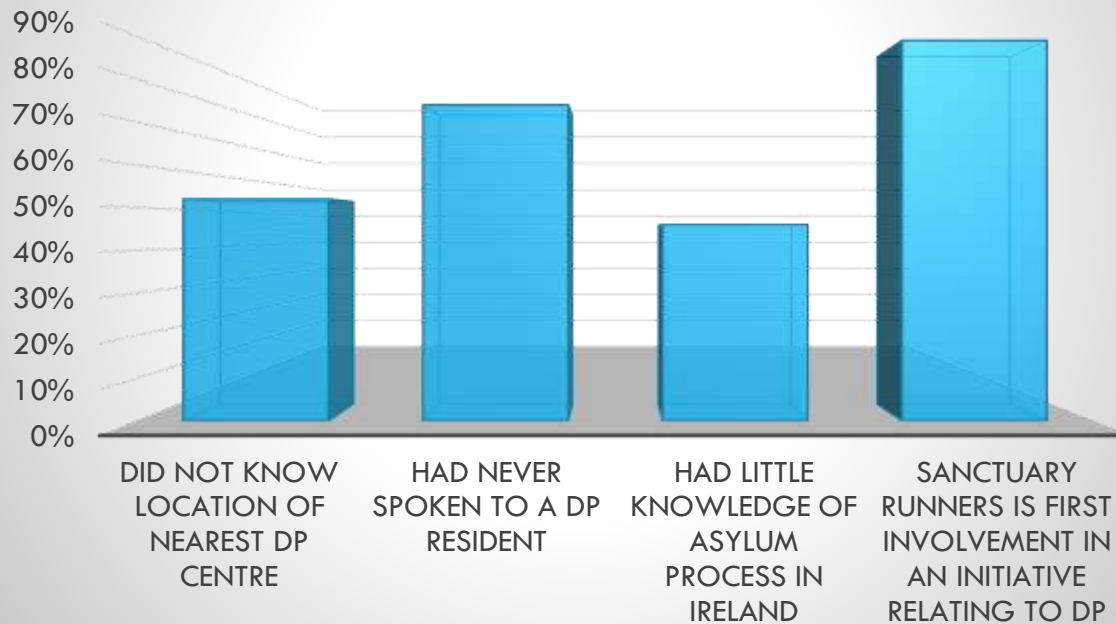
**WHAT RUNNING ABILITIES DO NEW MEMBERS HAVE?**

What aspect of Parkrun do you enjoy?



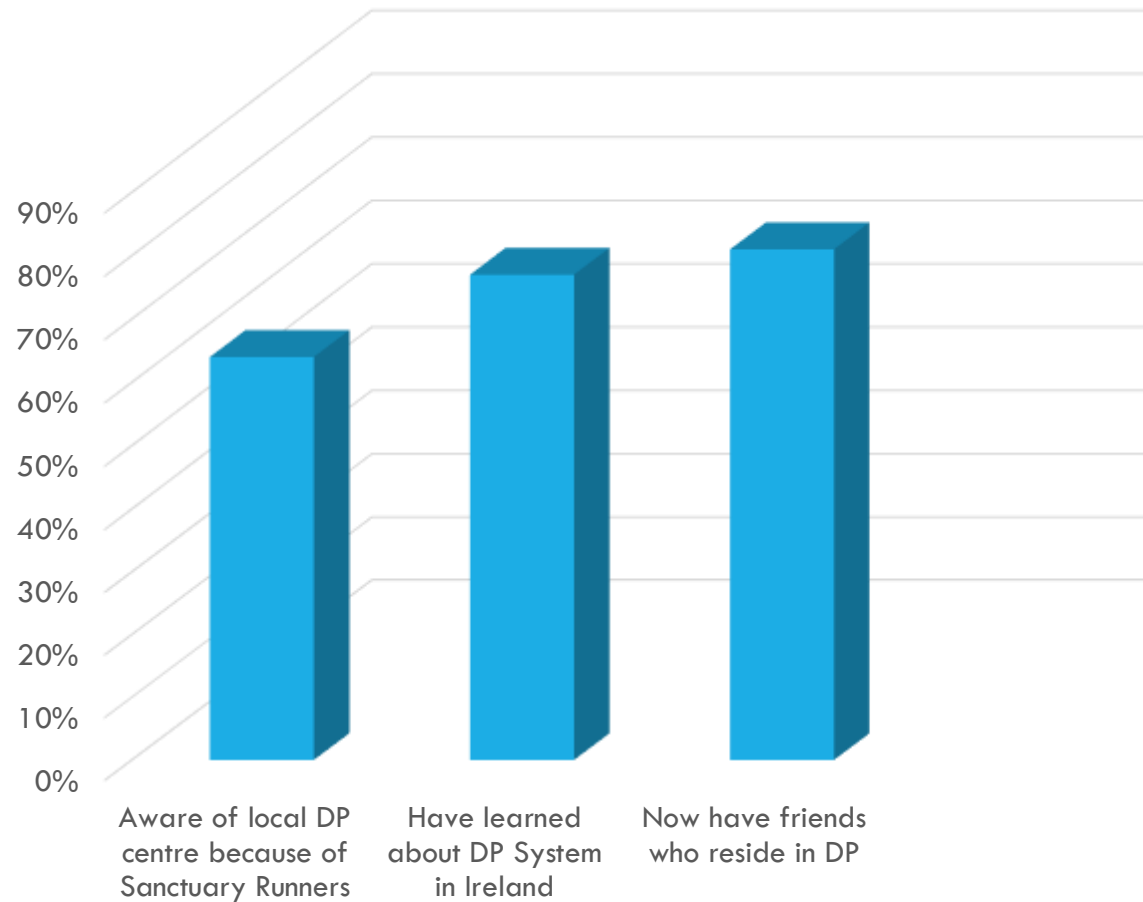
THE IMPACT OF  
ATTENDING  
PARKRUN ON  
SANCTUARY  
RUNNER  
MEMBERS

## Position of members residing in the community before they joined Sanctuary Runners



MEMBERS  
AWARENESS OF  
THE ASYLUM  
SEEKING PROCESS  
IN IRELAND  
BEFORE JOINING  
SANCTUARY  
RUNNERS

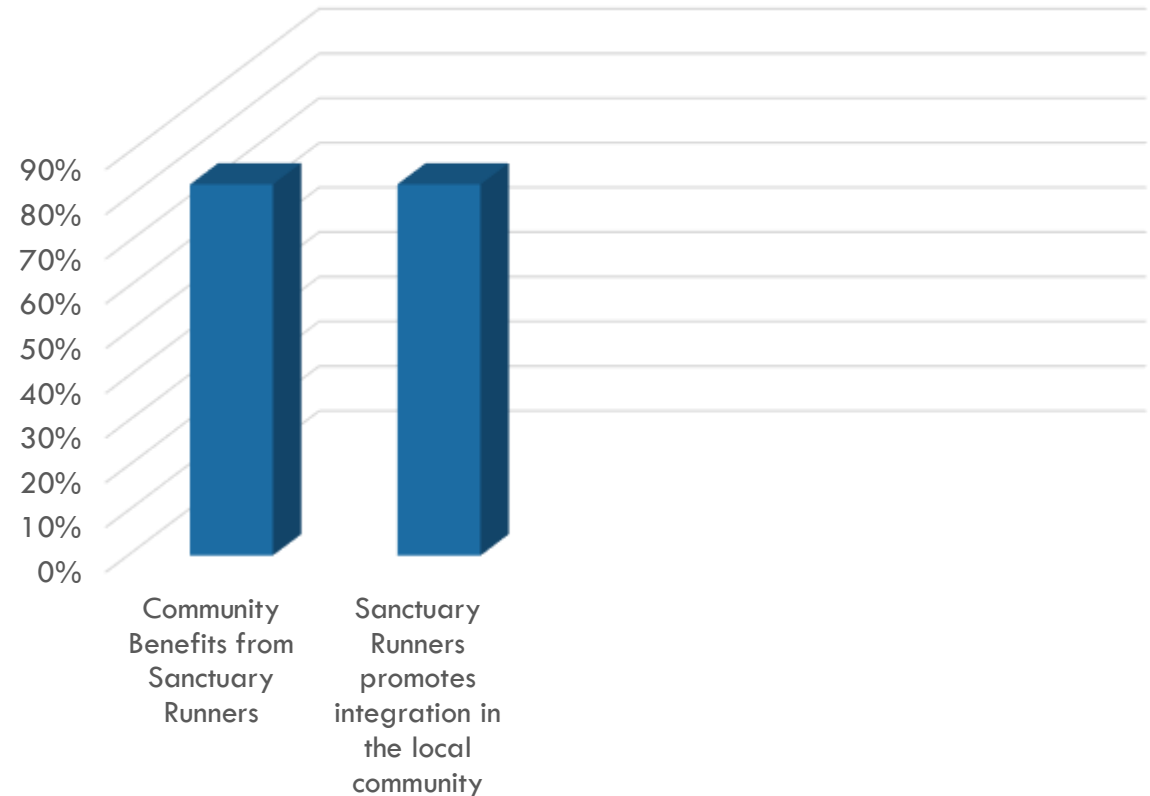
## Impact of Joining Sanctuary Runners



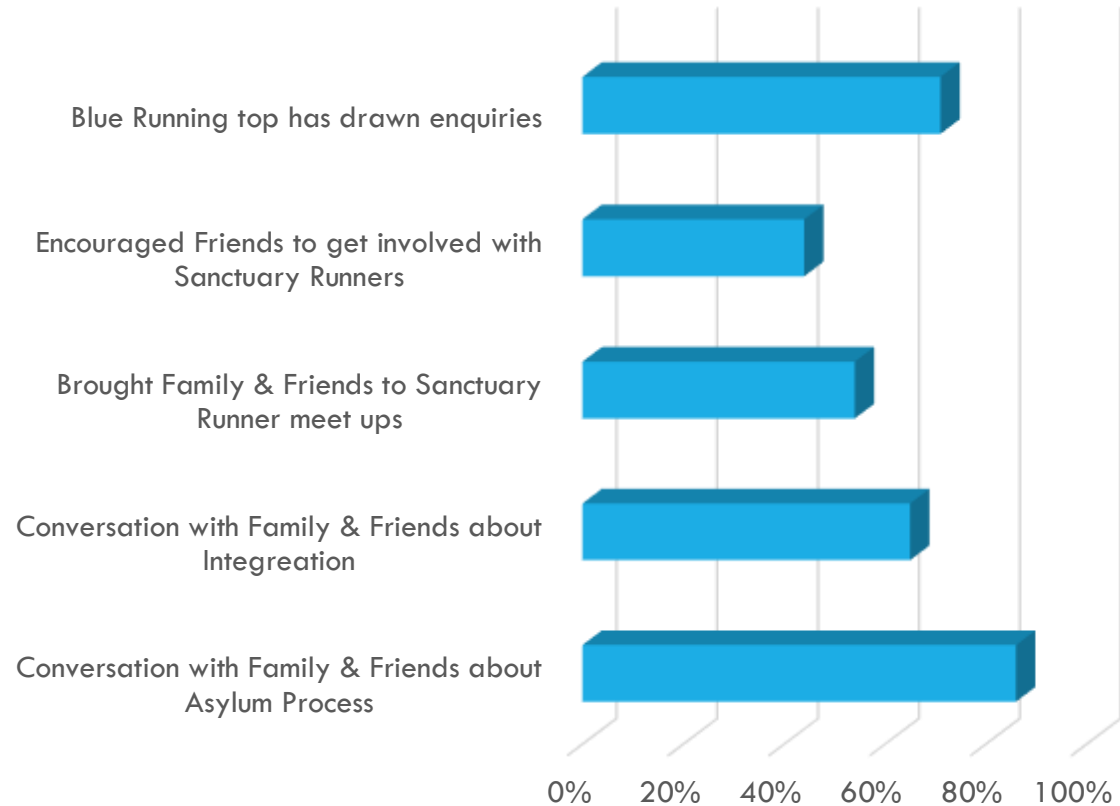
MEMBERS  
AWARENESS OF  
THE ASYLUM  
SEEKING  
PROCESS AFTER  
JOINING  
SANCTUARY  
RUNNERS

# WHAT RESPONDENTS FEEL IS THE IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY OF A SANCTUARY RUNNERS GROUP

## Community Impact

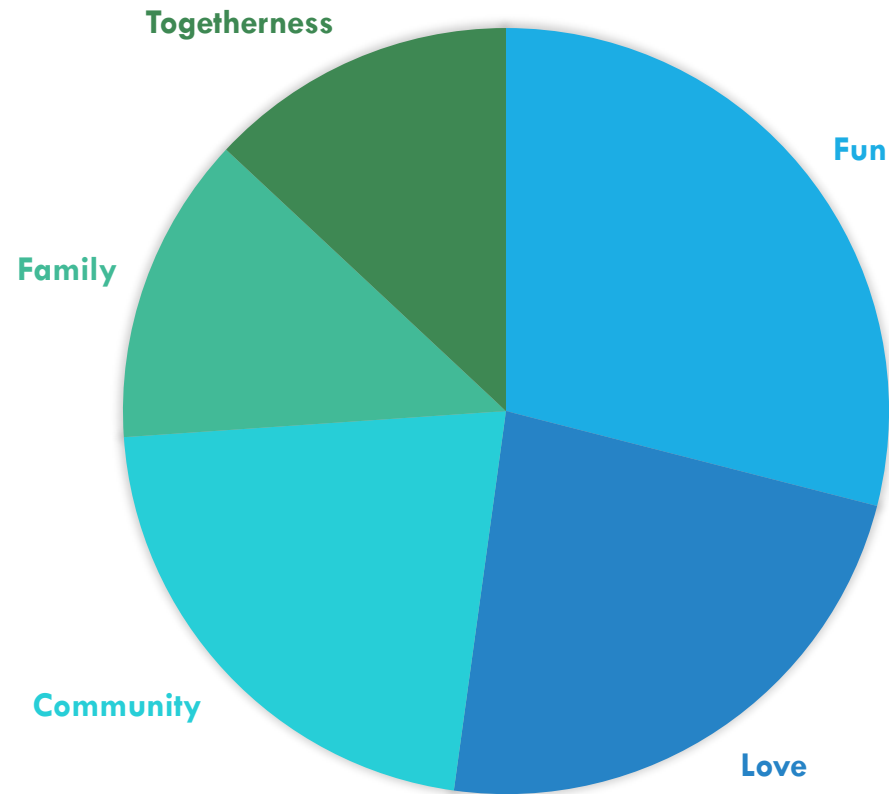


## Increased Conversation/Awareness of the Asylum/DP System



MEMBERS WERE ASKED ABOUT ANY INCREASED AWARENESS, AND INTEREST IN, THE ASYLUM SEEKING PROCESS THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED SINCE JOINING THE SANCTUARY RUNNERS

## MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS



THE SANCTUARY RUNNERS OPERATE UNDER THE PRINCIPLES OF SOLIDARITY, FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECT. ALL RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED WHAT OTHER WORDS THEY WOULD ASSOCIATE WITH THE SANCTUARY RUNNERS.



# QUOTES



"I loved the scenery of the park. It was calming and I loved that all the people I met knowingly chose to be there and it was a form of welcome, acceptance and solidarity, the significance and value I can't quite put into words"



"The coffee and chats are beautiful moments shared amongst runners. They are short and sweet and the conversations are never uncomfortable"



"Sanctuary Runners is where I get to learn, interact and seek assistance from my colleagues. It is a good thing and must be encouraged to go on"



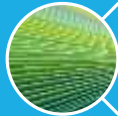
"Sanctuary Runners is team building – it's the best"



"Sanctuary Runners makes me feel secured and assured"



"Sanctuary Runners means decency and honesty – I think this is really important, we are hopefully just decent and honest people supporting each other, within and out of DP"



"Sanctuary Runners means Unity, Breaking Down Barriers and Togetherness"

# CONCLUSION

Sanctuary Runners has attracted 2,000 members since 2018 and on Saturday mornings, nationwide, residents of local communities and DP residents come together to run, have fun, chat and share a coffee. The aim, is not only to build bridges but to normalise interactions between members.

The survey has found that Sanctuary Runners contributes to the building of bridges. Friendships are formed and for many the friendship extend beyond the level of just “running buddies”. The stark figure that 74% of community members had not spoken to a DP resident before joining Sanctuary Runners should open our eyes. We clearly do not have enough channels in Ireland to encourage integration and there is a danger that many people in DP will spend many years in Ireland, where sadly the only Irish citizens they speak to are those in a work/official capacity.

The growth and continuance of Sanctuary Runners is essential. We thank all our members for the numerous suggestions on how to improve and increase awareness of Sanctuary Runners. We thank everyone for feedback on bringing Sanctuary Runners through the Covid-19 phase; we will continue to support each other and stay connected, until we can gather freely again.

Sanctuary Runners operates under the principles of Solidarity, Friendship and Respect but now we can also add togetherness, love, fun, family, community, justice, equality, openness, kindness, hope, inclusiveness, warmth, acceptance....the list goes on!

# SANCTUARY RUNNERS

## -MORE INFO

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# THE SANCTUARY RUNNERS

*— SOLIDARITY —  
FRIENDSHIP — RESPECT*

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Compiled by Ciara McCluskey

