

Research Report



Residents' Tracker Survey 2015

Prepared for: North Hertfordshire
District Council

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Prepared for: North Hertfordshire District Council

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1 Introduction

BMG Research was commissioned by North Hertfordshire District Council to undertake a 2015 Residents' Tracker Survey using a telephone methodology.

This survey captures residents' general views and perceptions of certain services and facilities provided by North Hertfordshire District Council, also examined in similar surveys conducted in 2013 and 2011 (by ORS) and 2008 (by BMG Research using face to face methodology).

The results in this report are based on a survey of 1,002 telephone interviews conducted from a sample of North Hertfordshire residents.

Quotas were set on area and age in order to achieve a cross-section of responses.

The survey contained questions on the following topics:

- Overall Satisfaction
- Council Services
- Information and Communication
- Contact with the Council

1.1 Weighting the data

The extent to which results can be generalised from a sample depends on how well the sample represents the population from which it is drawn. As for all surveys of this type, although a random sample of telephone numbers was selected, the achieved sample was unbalanced owing to non-response of certain profile groups.

Under these circumstances, inferences about the views of the population can be improved by calculating weights for any under or over-sampling of particular groups. Weights are assigned by comparing the sample proportions for particular groups with known population characteristics from other sources for the same groups. Each observation is then multiplied by its weight to ensure that the weighted sample will conform to the known population characteristics.

To ensure that data set is representative the data has been weighted by area, age, gender, working status and ethnicity at a district level.

1.2 Interpreting the data

On an observed statistic of 50%, a sample size of 1,002 is subject to a maximum standard error of +/-3.1% at the 95% level of confidence. This means that if all North Hertfordshire residents had responded to the survey, we are 95% confident that a figure of 50% in this report would actually have been between 53.1% and 46.9%.

Results have been presented rounded to 0 decimal places – this may mean that some totals exceed 100%. This also has implications regarding how summary percentages appear. For example, if 25.4% of residents state they are very satisfied and 30.3% of residents are fairly satisfied, these figures are rounded down to 25% and 30% respectively. However, the sum of these two responses is 55.7%, which is rounded up

to 56%, whereas the individual rounded responses suggest this total should be 55%. This explains any instances of where summary text does not match a graph or table it is referring to.

Comparisons with results from previous surveys of North Hertfordshire residents are made at appropriate points. Please note that 2013 and 2011 North Hertfordshire Residents Surveys, as well as the current Hertfordshire County Council Omnibus Survey are carried out via personal telephone interviews. However, the 2008 North Hertfordshire Residents Survey was conducted via personal face to face interviews. They also used questionnaires that differed in the order of questions and overall topics. These differences between methodologies imply that results between surveys are not necessarily directly comparable; however previous experience has demonstrated that while results of paper based surveys (such as BVPI & Place 2008) are not comparable, results obtained via personal face to face or telephone interview are typically similar and are broadly comparable.

For analysis purposes wards have been grouped into five areas as follows.

Table 1: Area definitions

Area	Ward
Baldock and District	Arbury
	Baldock East
	Baldock Town
	Weston and Sandon
Hitchin	Hitchin Bearton
	Hitchin Highbury
	Hitchin Oughton
	Hitchin Priory
	Hitchin Walsworth
Southern Rural	Cadwell
	Chesfield
	Codicote
	Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo
	Kimpton
	Knebworth
Letchworth	Letchworth East
	Letchworth Grange
	Letchworth South East
	Letchworth South West
	Letchworth Wilbury
Royston	Ermine
	Royston Heath
	Royston Meridian
	Royston Palace

2 Key findings

2.1 Council perceptions and service satisfaction

Satisfaction with the way North Hertfordshire Council run things remains extremely high among North Hertfordshire residents at 83%. Alongside this, just over half of residents (54%) agree that their Council provides value for money, and over six in ten feel that they are kept fairly or very well informed about the services and benefits North Hertfordshire Council provides (65%). While there has been only marginal movement on these indicators since 2013, all measures are higher than the Local Government Association benchmarks that are derived from polling a representative sample of British adults.

Table 2: Summary of key Council indicators

	2015	Change since 2013	LGA benchmark June 2015
% satisfied with the local area as a place to live	96%	+2	82%
% satisfied with the way the Council runs things	83%	-3	67%
% agree that the Council provides value for money	54%	-2	51%
% who feel the Council keeps them very or fairly well informed about the services and benefits it provides	65%	0	61%

When considering universal Council services, resident opinions are in line with those seen in 2013. Satisfaction with general waste and recycling collection at 86% is in line with the 85% recorded in 2013. Overall satisfaction with street cleaning is also stable (78% in both 2011 and 2013) albeit with a 5-percentage point reduction in the proportion giving the most positive response of very satisfied (26% down from 31%). The views given in relation to how Council Tax is administered are virtually identical to those seen in 2013. (85% satisfied cf. 82%).

Among users of more specific Council services, satisfaction levels are generally very high. This is particularly the case for the Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (100%), parks and open spaces (93%) and Council run leisure facilities (91%). The lowest user satisfaction is seen among users of Council car parks (77%) and housing services (also 77%).

The majority of North Hertfordshire residents feel that general waste and recycling collection (51%) is by far the most important service the District Council provides (this was also the most important service in the 2013 and 2011 Residents' Survey). The

next most commonly selected service area is housing services with 14% indicating that this is important, followed by parks and open spaces which is chosen by 12% of residents.

2.2 Information and communication

The highest proportion of residents obtain information from the District Council website (60%), followed by 'Outlook' magazine (17%) and local newspapers (17%). These three sources have consistently made up the top three in 2011, 2013 and 2015.

The extent to which residents feel informed about areas of Council activity are generally stable, with minimal variations evident since 2013. The lowest proportion of residents feel very or fairly well informed about how to get involved in local decision making (43%) and about whether North Hertfordshire District Council is delivering on its promises (50%).

When asked whether they have seen or have had a copy of Outlook delivered to their door 74% of residents answered yes, with a quarter (26%) saying no. The proportion answering positively at this question is 4-percentage points below the 78% seen in 2013 and 8-percentage points seen in 2011. There is a possibility that the individuals that were interviewed may not see this magazine before it is discarded by another member of the household. However, checks may be necessary to establish if there are any distribution issues.

Although causation cannot be proved, residents who read/receive the Council's Outlook magazine are significantly more likely to endorse the view that North Hertfordshire Council provides value for money than those who do not (56% cf. 49%). Among those who have seen or received a copy of Outlook only 6% didn't look at it all compared to 9% in both 2013 and 2011. At the other end of the scale the proportion of recipients who read all or nearly all of it has fallen from 40% in 2013 to 32% in 2015.

Agreement that Outlook is interesting (among those who read it to some extent) at 73% is marginally below the 76% observed in 2013. Agreement that residents like the way Outlook is written is unchanged (80% in both 2013 and 2015) as is agreement that they like the way Outlook looks and is presented (86% in 2015, 85% in 2013).

Just over a third (36%) of all respondents have visited North Hertfordshire District Council's new website launched in April 2015. This proportion peaks at 49% among those aged 35 to 44.

2.3 Council contact

In the last 12 months, 53% of residents have contacted North Hertfordshire District Council. While this proportion is lower than the 58% observed in 2013, this still demonstrates that high quality contact handling is imperative given that half of residents are having some form of contact. The majority of residents continue to contact the Council by telephone (67%).

When considering their satisfaction with the service they received the last time they contacted the Council three quarters (75%) were satisfied. Encouragingly the single most common response on the 5-point scale was 'very satisfied' which was chosen by 46% of residents. The satisfaction level recorded in 2015 regarding Council contact is in line with that seen in 2013 (77% satisfied, including 45% who were very satisfied).

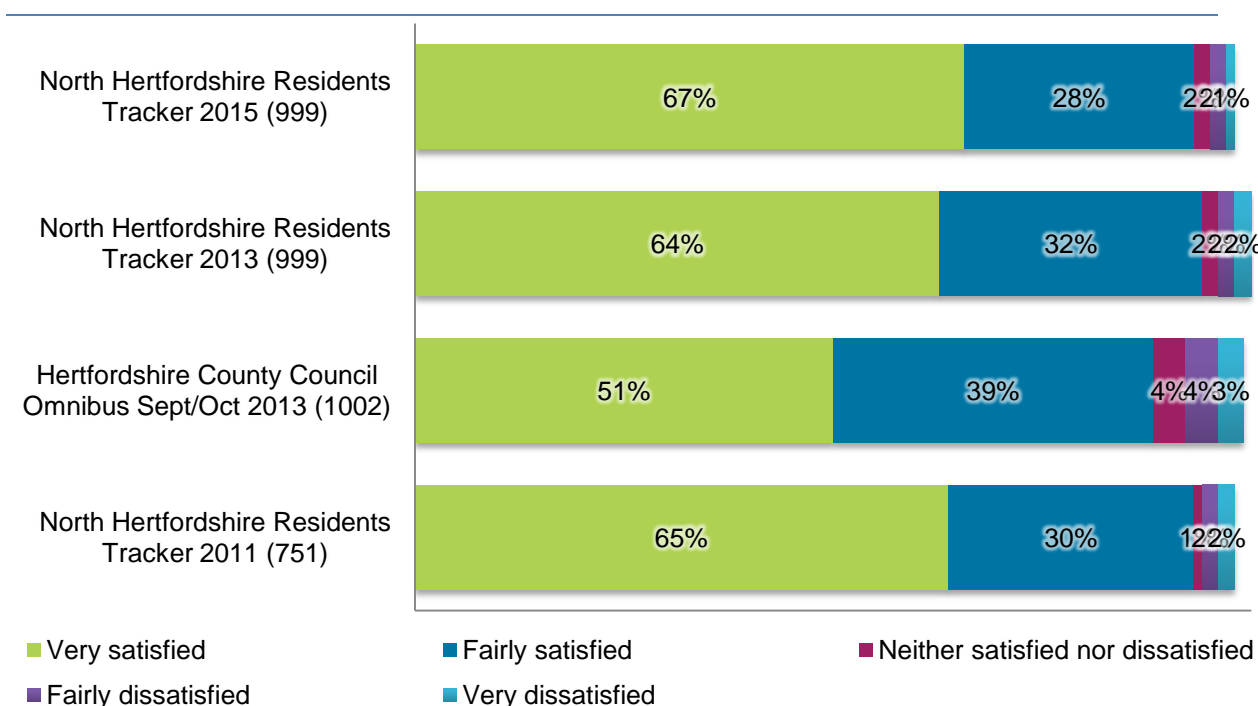
3 Overall satisfaction

3.1 The local area as a place to live

A majority of 96% of North Hertfordshire residents are satisfied with their area as a place to live, including 67% who are very satisfied. Satisfaction with the local area is 2-percentage points above the 94% seen in 2013 and within this, the proportion who are very satisfied has risen by 3-percentage points from 64% to 67%.

This question on local area satisfaction is included in regular telephone polling conducted by the Local Government Association (LGA). In its latest June 2015 poll completed among 1,008 British adults (aged 18 or over) the proportion expressing satisfaction with their local area was 82%. On this basis, the views expressed by North Hertfordshire residents in 2015 are 14-percentage points above the latest national benchmark.

Figure 1: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this area as a place to live? (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

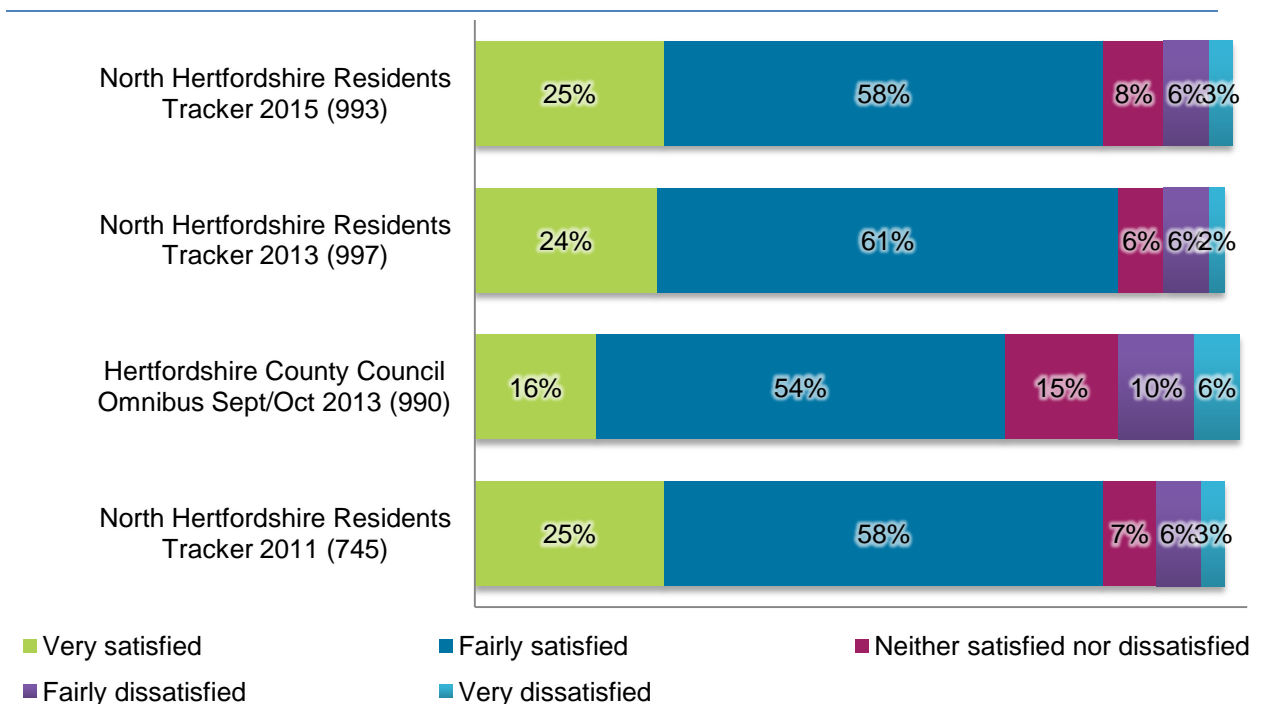
It is important to review any question that refers to the local area on a geographical basis. Analysis by area shows that at least nine in ten residents express satisfaction with their place to live, with the exception being residents of Royston where satisfaction levels are marginally lower at 89%. In the Royston area 8% of residents express dissatisfaction with their local area, a proportion that is significantly higher than seen in any other location.

3.2 The way North Hertfordshire Council runs things

All survey respondents were reminded that North Hertfordshire District Council is responsible for local planning applications, housing, building regulations, environmental health, waste collection, revenue collection, leisure and recreation.

When considering the performance of North Hertfordshire District Council in this context, more than four in five (83%) residents express satisfaction with the way they run things. This includes 25% who give the most positive response of very satisfied. In 2013 86% expressed satisfaction with the Council. While the 2015 proportion has dropped marginally, the satisfaction expressed regarding the Council in 2015 remains well above the latest LGA benchmark for this measure which is 67%.

Figure 2: Taking everything in to account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Hertfordshire District Council runs things? (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

Further analysis of the responses in relation to overall Council satisfaction show that those who have contacted the Council in the last 12 months are significantly less likely to be satisfied (80%) than those who have not (86%). However, the causation in this relationship cannot be identified, i.e. whether it was prior lower satisfaction that prompted the contact or whether the subsequent contact experience has had an impact.

It is also interesting to note that those who receive or have seen the Council’s Outlook magazine are significantly more likely than those who have not to be satisfied with the Council overall (85% cf. 77%). Interestingly, the extent to which the Outlook magazine is read (among recipients) does not produce a significant variation in overall levels of satisfaction. However, within this headline measure those who state that they read all

or nearly all of Outlook most commonly indicate that they are very satisfied with the way North Hertfordshire District Council runs things.

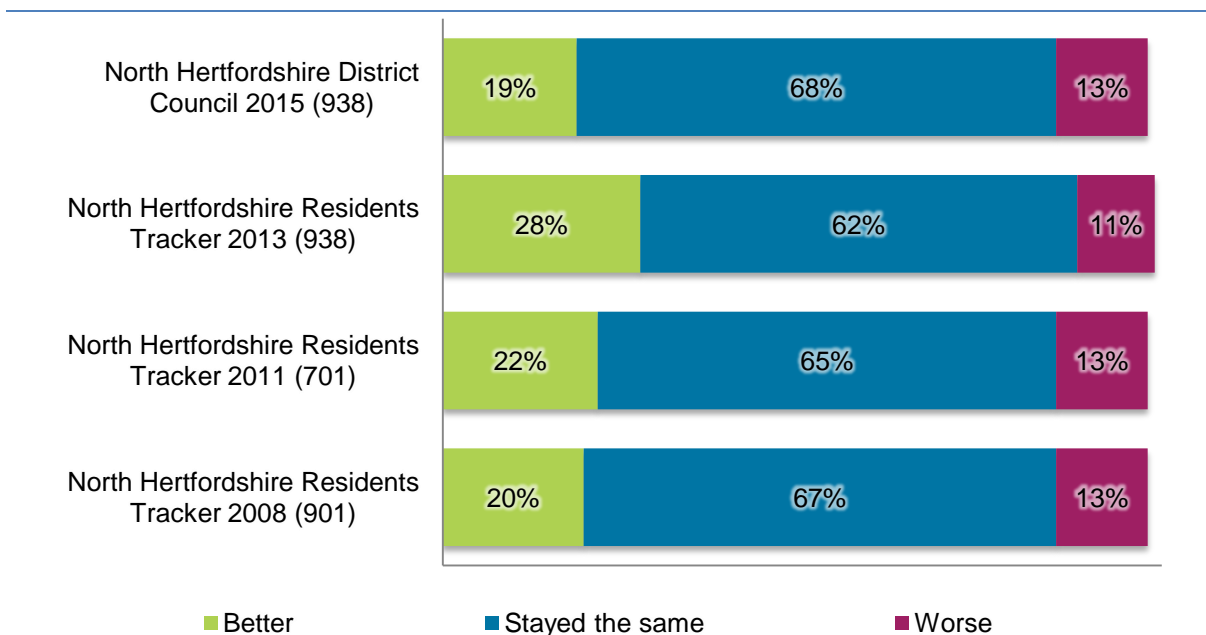
Any residents who did express dissatisfaction with the way North Hertfordshire District Council run things were asked a follow up question where they were invited to say how they feel the Council could improve their running of North Hertfordshire. Just 88 respondents were asked this question so the subsequent results should be seen as indicative rather than statistically robust. The most common suggestions/themes among the responses given were:

- Listen/consult more (22%);
- Provide more information/advice/support (15%);
- Reduce planning permissions/stop building houses (14%); and,
- Improve refuse/recycling (incl.timings/tip and recycle centre open times) (14%).

In relation to the final point, given that Household Recycling Centres are the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council, there may be confusion amongst a small cohort of residents as to what North Hertfordshire District Council are responsible for.

Given that at least four in five residents in both 2013 and 2015 expressed satisfaction with the way North Hertfordshire Council run things it is perhaps unsurprising that more than two thirds of residents (68%) feel that the Council's performance has stayed the same over the last two years. The proportion who feel the Council has got better continues to exceed the proportion who feel it has got worse (19% cf. 13%), but to a lesser extent than was seen in 2013 (28% cf. 11%).

Figure 3: Thinking about the way North Hertfordshire District Council runs things, do you think it has got better, stayed the same or got worse over the last two years? (All valid responses)



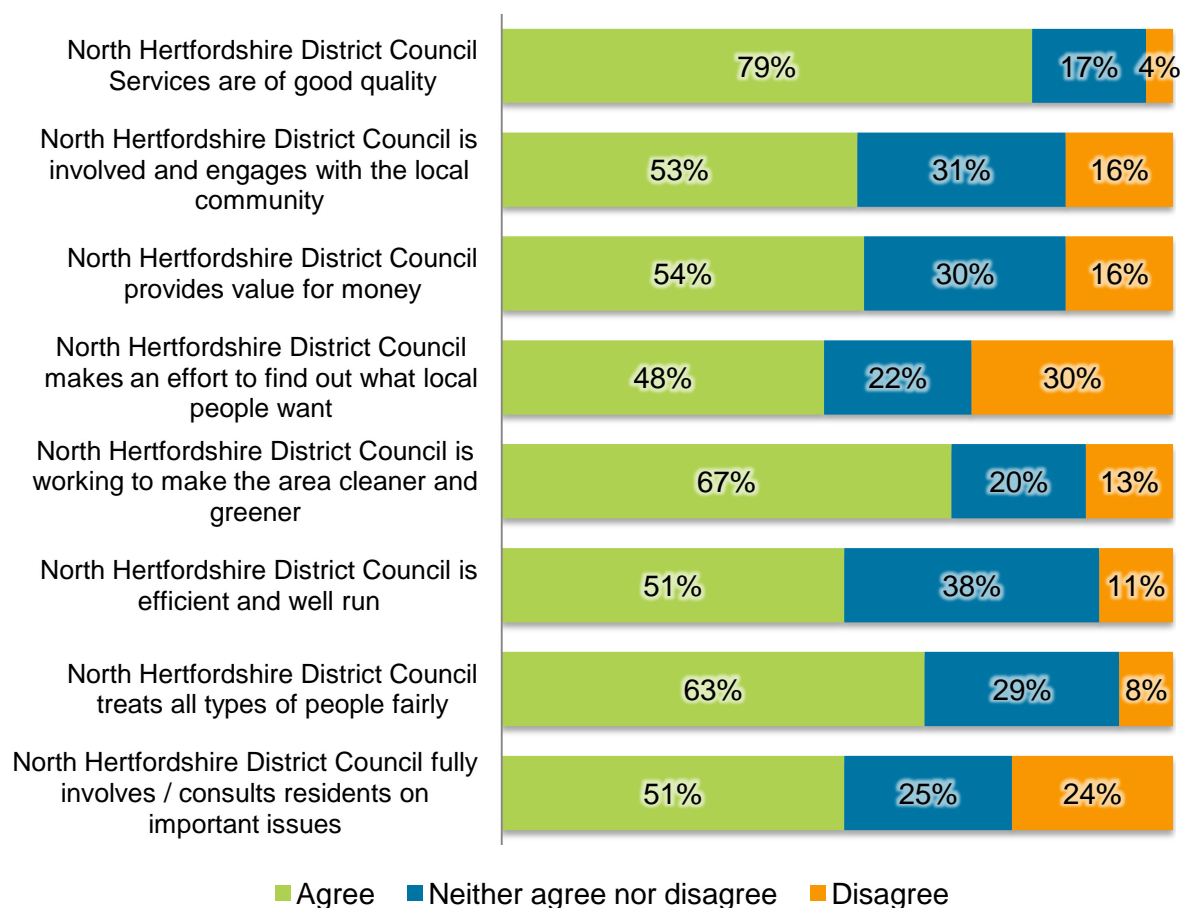
Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

Among those who are dissatisfied with the way North Hertfordshire District Council run things there is a negative balance of opinion, with 41% feeling that the way it runs things has got worse compared to 5% who feel it has got better.

3.3 General perceptions of the Council

Residents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with various perceptions of the District Council. The highest proportion of residents agree that North Hertfordshire District Council services are of good quality (79%). This was followed by more than three fifths who agree that it is working to make the area cleaner and greener (67%) and treats all types of people fairly (63%). The lowest level of agreement is found in relation to the statement North Hertfordshire District Council makes an effort to find out what local people want (48%). Three in ten residents (30%) disagree with this statement. Later in the report it will be observed that residents least commonly feel informed about how to get involved in local decision making.

Figure 4: Agreement with key statements about North Hertfordshire District Council (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample bases vary

Agreement that North Hertfordshire Council provides value for money at 54% is 3-percentage points above the June 2015 LGA benchmark of 51%.

Comparing the 2015 results to those collected in previous Residents' Surveys shows that there has been a 5-percentage point decrease in agreement that North Hertfordshire District Council are working to make the area cleaner and greener. For all other statements the difference between agreement in 2013 and 2015 is within the possible sampling error for the sample and therefore no discernible change is evident.

Table 3: Agreement with key statements about North Hertfordshire District Council 2008-2015 (All valid responses)

	2008	2011	2013	2015	% point change 2013-15
Services are of a good quality	76%	80%	81%	79%	+2%
Is working to make the area cleaner and greener	70%	69%	72%	67%	-5%
Treats all types of people fairly	64%	67%	63%	63%	0%
Provides value for money	43%	58%	56%	54%	-2%
Is involved and engages with the local community	NA	55%	56%	53%	-3%
Is efficient and well run	58%	52%	53%	51%	-2%
Fully involves/consults residents on important issues	NA	50%	49%	51%	+2%
Makes an effort to find out what local people want	NA	49%	48%	48%	0%

Comparison of agreement levels by area shows that Letchworth residents hold a markedly higher opinion of the Council than residents in other areas for involving and engaging with the local community, making an effort to find out what local people want, the Council being efficient and well run, and fully involving / consulting residents on important issues.

Table 4: Agreement with key statements about North Hertfordshire District Council by area (All valid responses)

	Baldock & District (117)	Hitchin (264)	Letchworth (260)	Royston (153)	Southern Rural (208)
Services are of good quality	79%	79%	79%	78%	77%
Is involved and engages with the local community	51%	53%	59%	46%	52%
Provides value for money	53%	57%	58%	49%	49%
Makes an effort to find out what local people want	47%	48%	53%	40%	45%
Is working to make the area cleaner and greener	69%	68%	75%	61%	59%
Is efficient and well run	51%	52%	55%	50%	44%
Treats all types of people fairly	68%	67%	65%	57%	57%
Fully involves / consults residents on important issues	47%	51%	58%	46%	49%

Although causation cannot be proved, residents who read/receive the Council's Outlook magazine are significantly more likely to endorse the view that North Hertfordshire District Council provides value for money than those who do not (56% cf. 49%). The other variations in the table below are not statistically significant.

Table 5: Council perceptions by Outlook receipt (All valid responses)

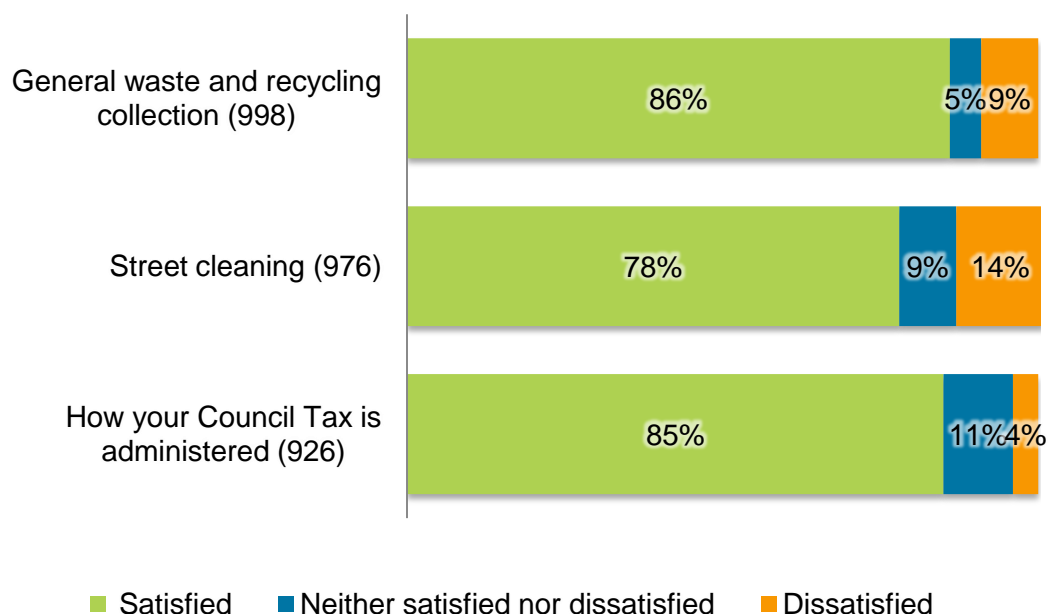
	Yes	No
North Hertfordshire District Council Services are of good quality	79%	76%
North Hertfordshire District Council is involved and engages with the local community	55%	49%
North Hertfordshire District Council provides value for money	56%	49%
North Hertfordshire District Council makes an effort to find out what local people want	49%	43%
North Hertfordshire District Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener	66%	69%
North Hertfordshire District Council is efficient and well run	51%	51%
North Hertfordshire District Council treats all types of people fairly	64%	61%
North Hertfordshire District Council fully involves / consults residents on important issues	53%	46%

4 Council Services

4.1 Universal Services

Over three quarters of North Hertfordshire residents are satisfied with general waste and recycling collection (86%), the administration of Council Tax (85%) and street cleaning (78%). Only very small proportions of residents are dissatisfied with each of these three services.

Figure 5: Satisfaction with universal Council services (All valid responses)



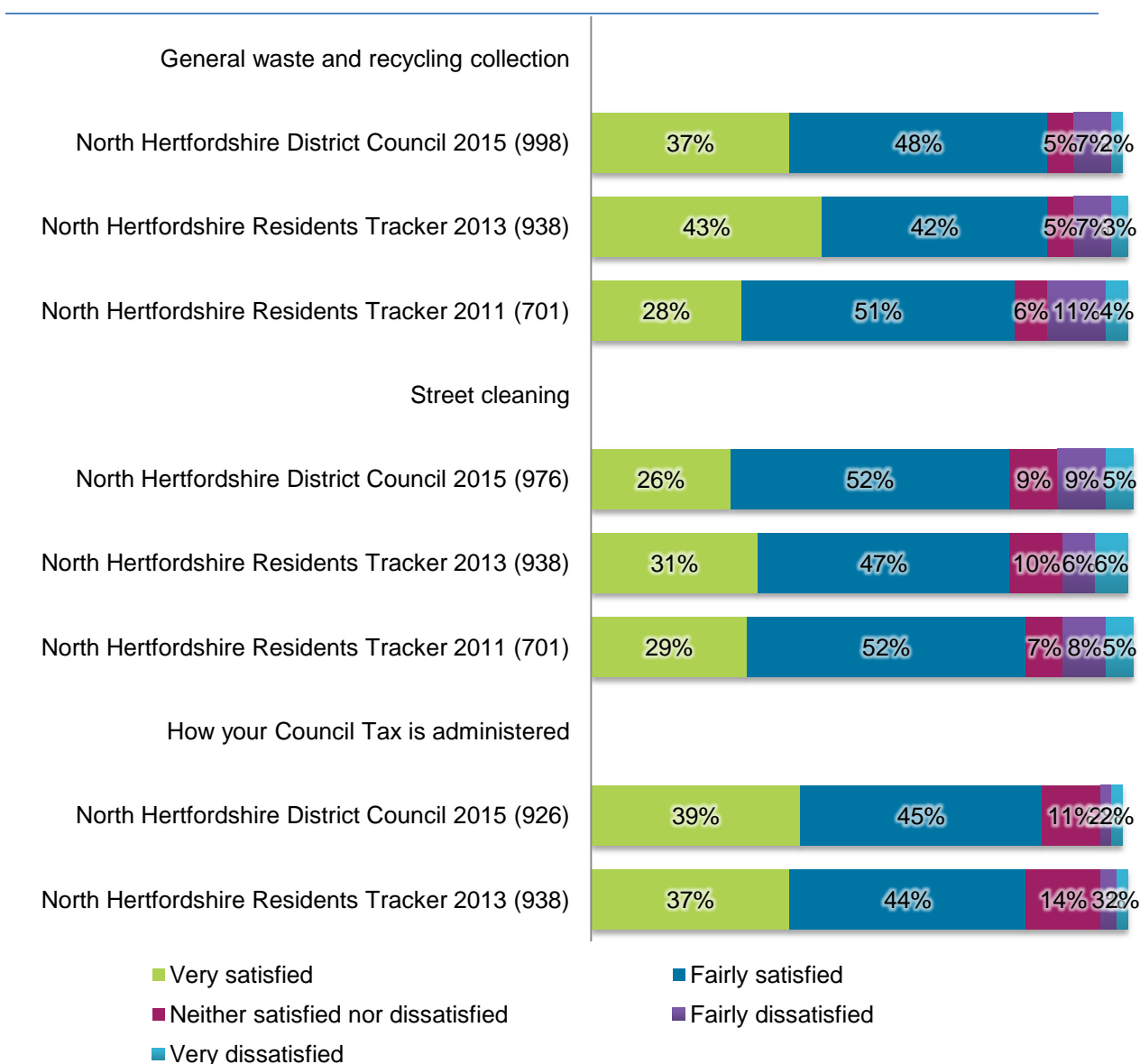
Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

Neither satisfaction with general waste and recycling nor satisfaction with street cleaning vary significantly by area, so no particular locations for further improvement are evident within the data.

The detailed responses from 2015 are shown alongside those from previous residents surveys below. Satisfaction with general waste and recycling collection at 86% is in line with the 85% recorded in 2013, but within this the proportion who are very satisfied has fallen from 43% to 37%.

Overall satisfaction with street cleaning is also stable (78% in both 2011 and 2013) albeit with a 5-percentage point reduction in the proportion giving the most positive response of very satisfied (26% down from 31%). The views given in relation to how Council Tax is administered are virtually identical to those seen in 2013 (85% satisfied cf. 82%).

Figure 6: Satisfaction with universal services 2011-2013 (All valid responses)

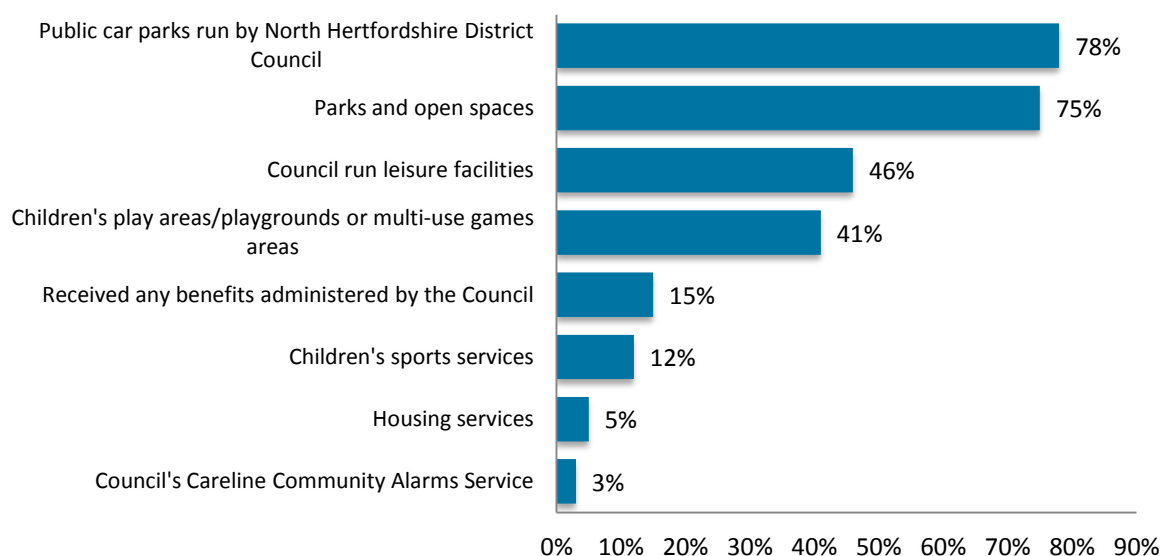


Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

4.2 Service use and satisfaction

When asked whether they have used various Council services within the last year, public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council (78%) and parks and open spaces (75%) are those most frequently used by residents. Beneath this, just under half (46%) indicate that they have used Council run leisure facilities in the last year and two in five (41%) have used children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas.

Figure 7: Can you tell me whether you have used any of the following within the last year? (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample bases vary

Comparing these usage levels to those recorded in previous iterations of this survey shows that parks and open spaces car parks are consistently the services that are most commonly used by residents. In 2015 there has been a 9-percentage point drop in the proportion who state that they have used children's and sports services, but clearly usage of such services will be dependent on the presence of children in the household.

Table 6: Service use 2011-2015 (All valid responses)

Service/facility	% users 2011	% users 2013	% users 2015	% point change 2013-15
Parks and open spaces	78%	79%	75%	-4%
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	77%	78%	78%	0%
Council run leisure facilities	55%	48%	46%	-2%
Children's Play Areas/ playgrounds or multi-use games areas	41%	46%	41%	-5%
Children's and sports services	22%	21%	12%	-9%
Housing services	6%	4%	5%	+1%

The table below shows the proportion of each age group who have used each of the listed services with significantly higher usage compared to at least one other age group shown in bold.

Table 7: Service use by age (All valid responses)

	Total	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
Parks and open spaces	75%	69%	76%	90%	75%	77%	66%	53%
Children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas	41%	23%	58%	71%	27%	32%	36%	18%
Children's sports services	12%	4%	16%	30%	11%	7%	2%	2%
Council run leisure facilities	46%	44%	48%	76%	47%	34%	29%	18%
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	78%	67%	75%	89%	85%	80%	75%	61%
Housing services	5%	5%	11%	7%	2%	3%	3%	4%
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service	3%	1%	1%	0%	3%	3%	3%	10%
Received any benefits administered by the Council	15%	6%	22%	13%	9%	14%	20%	28%

Looking at service use by area shows that:

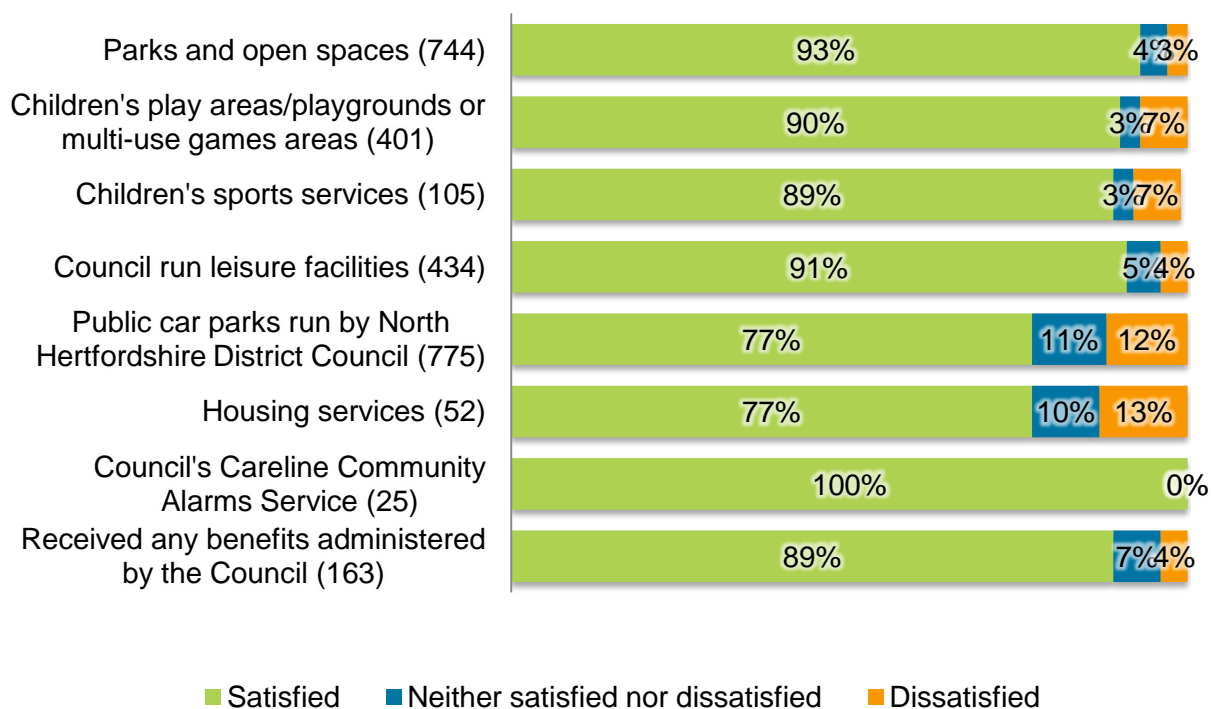
- Parks and open spaces are most likely to be used by Letchworth and Royston residents, this cohort are also most likely to use the Housing service;
- Hitchin and Letchworth residents are significantly more likely to use Council run leisure facilities than Royston and Southern Rural residents;
- Hitchin residents are also more likely than Southern Rural residents to use the public car parks.

Table 8: Service use by area (All valid responses)

	Baldock & District (117)	Hitchin (264)	Letchworth (260)	Royston (153)	Southern Rural (208)
Parks and open spaces	74%	70%	79%	80%	71%
Children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas	38%	37%	44%	44%	40%
Children's sports services	16%	11%	12%	8%	15%
Council run leisure facilities	48%	49%	49%	43%	38%
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	77%	81%	77%	81%	73%
Housing services	5%	3%	8%	7%	3%
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service	2%	2%	3%	1%	3%
Received any benefits administered by the Council	15%	15%	18%	14%	13%

Those who had indicated that they had used a listed Council service were then asked to state how satisfied they were with it. Based on the responses given which are summarised in the figure below, user satisfaction levels are generally very high. This is particularly the case for the Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (100%), parks and open spaces (93%) and Council run leisure facilities (91%). The lowest user satisfaction is seen among users of Council car parks (77%) and housing services (also 77%).

Figure 8: Service satisfaction among users (Where used in the last year)



Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

By area, Royston residents indicate higher levels of satisfaction in comparison to other residents for the parks and open spaces (97%), and children's play areas / playgrounds or multi-use games areas (95%). By contrast, this cohort indicates the highest level of dissatisfaction for the Council run leisure facilities (10%). Bladock & District and Letchworth residents are significantly more satisfied with the Council run car parks than Hitchin residents (83% cf. 69%).

The user satisfaction levels in 2015 are consistent with those recorded in 2013 as demonstrated by the table below. The 3-percentage point fall in satisfaction with children's sports services is not significant, given the low sample base commenting on this service.

Table 9: User satisfaction for listed services 2011-2015 (All valid responses)

	% satisfied 2011	% satisfied 2013	% satisfied 2015	% point change 2013-15
Parks and open spaces	89%	93%	93%	0%
Children's sports services	93%	92%	89%	-3%
Council run leisure facilities	92%	90%	91%	1%
Children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas	87%	90%	90%	0%
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	75%	76%	77%	1%
Housing services	79%	76%	77%	1%

4.3 Service priorities

The majority of North Hertfordshire residents feel that general waste and recycling collection (51%) is by far the most important service the District Council provides (this was also the most important service in the 2013 and 2011 Residents' Survey). The next most commonly selected service area is housing services with 14% indicating that this is important, followed by parks and open spaces which is chosen by 12% of residents.

The two most commonly selected services selected by each age group are shown in the table below. While general waste and recycling collections are most commonly selected as a priority by all age groups, beneath this there is some variation the proportions selecting housing, parks and open spaces, planning and car parks as important.

Table 10: Which of the following services provided by North Hertfordshire District Council do you think is the most important? (All valid responses)

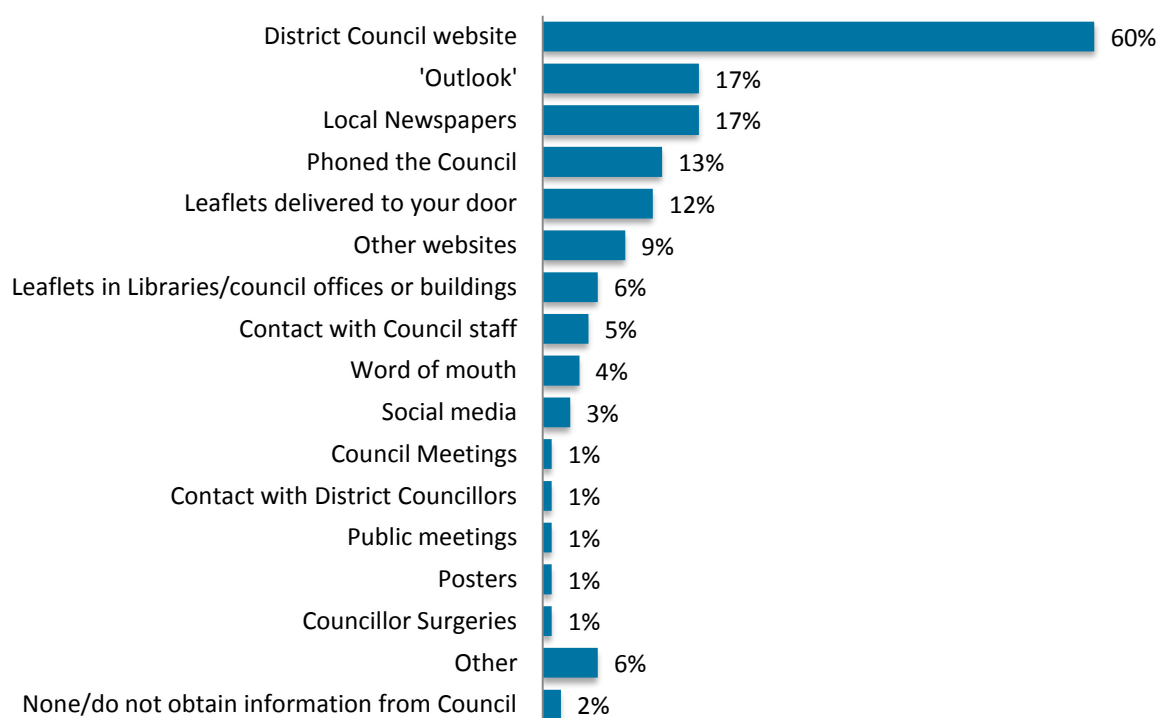
	Total	Age						
		16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
General waste and recycling collection	51%	27%	42%	47%	60%	63%	57%	59%
Parks and open spaces	12%	14%	18%	22%	6%	6%	6%	4%
Street cleaning	4%	10%	5%	3%	3%	1%	2%	7%
Public car parks	4%	7%	3%	4%	2%	2%	6%	10%
Council leisure centres	4%	8%	4%	3%	4%	2%	0%	3%
Museums	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Planning services	6%	1%	3%	5%	8%	8%	13%	3%
Housing services	14%	24%	21%	12%	10%	13%	12%	6%
Other	4%	7%	3%	3%	5%	5%	3%	7%
Unweighted Bases	966	70	207	85	195	190	123	89

5 Information and communication

5.1 Key information channels

All respondents were asked how they normally obtain information about North Hertfordshire District Council. The highest proportion of residents obtain information from the District Council website (60%), followed by 'Outlook' magazine (17%) and local newspapers (17%). Although it is worth noting that some respondents may have confused North Hertfordshire District Council with Hertfordshire County Council, given that 12% stated that they obtain information through leaflets which North Hertfordshire District Council do not send out anymore. The full range of sources mentioned are shown in the figure below, please note respondents could select more than one information source.

Figure 9: Where do you normally obtain information about North Hertfordshire District Council if you need it? (All valid respondents)



Unweighted sample base: 981

These top three sources have consistently made up the top three in 2011, 2013 and 2015 as shown by the table overleaf. It should be noted that although there has been a shift, since 2008, towards residents obtaining information online, some of the shifts in information channels used from 2008 to 2011 are due to a change in the way the question was asked from using a prompted list of information channels in 2008 to having an unprompted list in 2011.

Table 11: Top 3 ways that residents obtain information 2008-2015 (All valid responses)

2008 (990)	2011 (735)	2013 (996)	2015 (981)
Outlook (75%)	District Council website (56%)	District Council website (60%)	District Council website (60%)
Local newspapers (74%)	Outlook (23%)	Outlook (22%)	Outlook (17%)
Leaflets delivered to your door (44%)	Local newspapers (19%)	Local newspapers (16%)	Local newspapers (17%)

Given that technology usage and media consumption can vary within the population it is important to review responses to this question by age. As illustrated in the table overleaf, analysing responses in this way shows that:

- Use of Outlook as an information source increases with age. This theme will be expanded upon in questions covering the Outlook publication later in this chapter.
- Local newspapers are mentioned more commonly by residents aged 55 and over.
- Using the Council website to obtain information is most commonly done by residents aged 25-34 (72%) and 35-44 (75%).
- Those aged under 34 most commonly mention other websites as source of information on the Council.
- Social media as a source of Council information is consistently mentioned by less than 5% of all age groups.

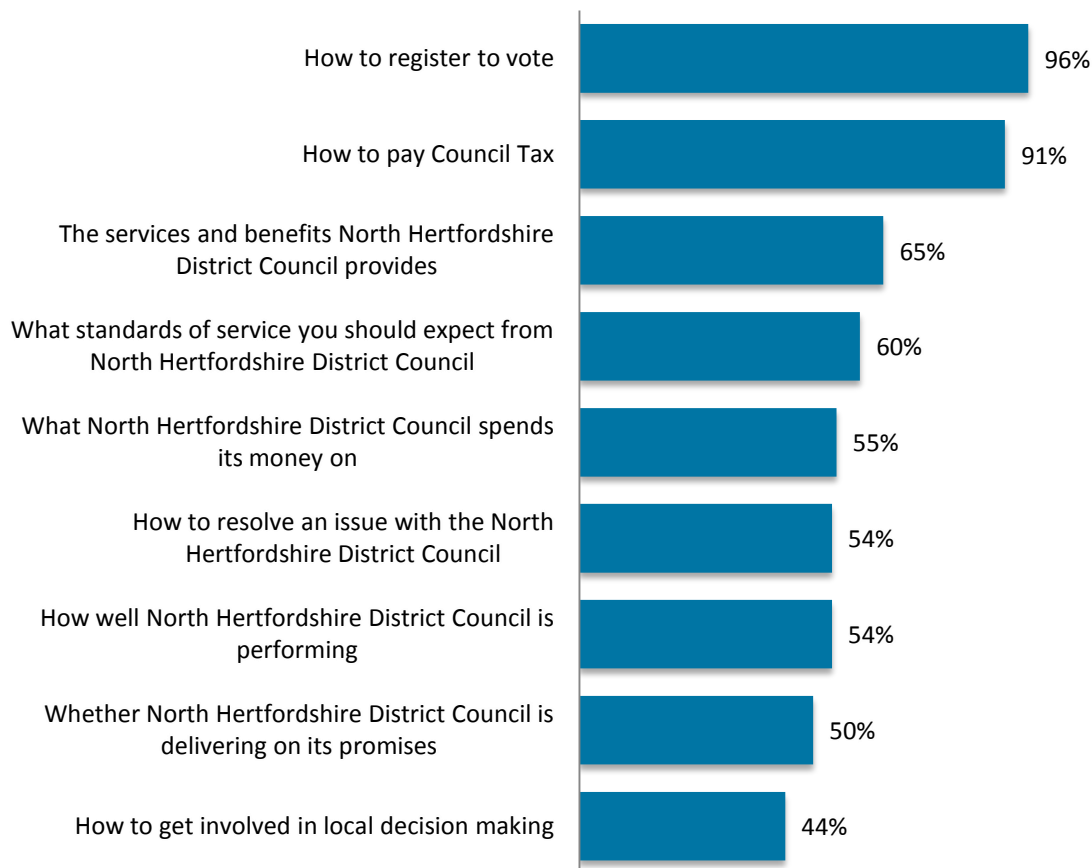
Table 12: Where do you normally obtain information about North Hertfordshire District Council if you need it? – valid responses by age

	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
'Outlook'	1%	12%	11%	21%	26%	24%	27%
Local Newspapers	13%	10%	14%	14%	21%	23%	24%
Social media	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%
Leaflets delivered to your door	10%	9%	11%	12%	14%	17%	11%
District Council website	62%	72%	75%	69%	62%	40%	12%
Other websites	24%	11%	7%	8%	8%	5%	1%
Word of mouth	7%	4%	3%	3%	1%	10%	5%
Phoned the Council	6%	6%	5%	13%	10%	28%	30%
Council Meetings	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Local radio stations	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Leaflets in Libraries/council offices or buildings	7%	2%	6%	5%	4%	9%	14%
Contact with Council staff	3%	1%	5%	4%	7%	6%	9%
Contact with District Councillors	0%	1%	0%	*%	2%	3%	2%
Exhibitions and Roadshows	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Public meetings	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	5%
Posters	1%	2%	0%	1%	*%	5%	0%
Councillor Surgeries	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Other	2%	4%	7%	4%	6%	10%	14%
None/do not obtain information from Council	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	6%
Unweighted Bases	68	209	86	199	197	124	90

5.2 Feeling informed

Around nine in ten residents feel informed about how to register to vote (96%) and how to pay Council Tax (91%), while more than three fifths feel informed about the services and benefits NHDC provides (65%) and what standards of service they should expect from NHDC (60%). At the other end of the scale the lowest proportion of residents feel very or fairly well informed about how to get involved in local decision making (43%) and about whether North Hertfordshire District Council is delivering on its promises (50%).

Figure 10: To what extent do you feel well informed or not about the following...? – very or fairly well informed (All valid responses)



Unweighted valid sample bases vary

The extent to which residents feel informed about Council services and benefits can be compared to the June 2015 polling data collected by the LGA. The 65% of North Hertfordshire residents who feel very or fairly well informed about this is 3-percentage points above the latest national benchmark of 61%.

The extent to which residents feel informed about these areas of Council activity are generally stable, with minimal variations evident since 2013.

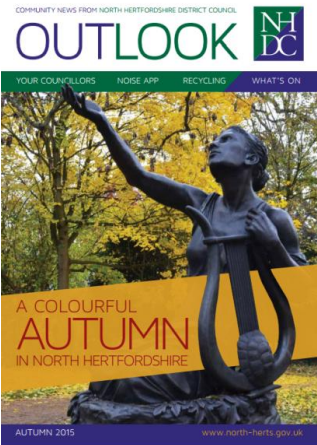
Table 13: Residents feeling informed 2008-2015 (All valid responses)

	Informed 2008	Informed 2011	Informed 2013	Informed 2015	% point change 2013-15
How to register to vote	97%	93%	93%	96%	+3%
How to pay Council Tax	97%	89%	88%	91%	+3%
The services and benefits NHDC provides	NA	64%	65%	65%	0%
What standards of service you should expect from NHDC	81%	57%	62%	60%	-2%
How well NHDC is performing	78%	51%	57%	54%	-3%
How to resolve an issue with NHDC	NA	52%	56%	54%	-2%
What NHDC spends its money on	79%	52%	54%	55%	+1%
Whether NHDC is delivering on its promises	76%	46%	49%	50%	+1%
How to get involved in local decision making	81%	37%	40%	44%	+4%

Probing the issue of involvement in decision making a little further shows that the proportion feeling informed about this ranges from 36% among those aged 25-34 and 52% among those aged 75 and over. Interest in becoming involved was not recorded in this survey, but this is often key to understanding whether the extent to which residents feel informed on this issue needs to be addressed.

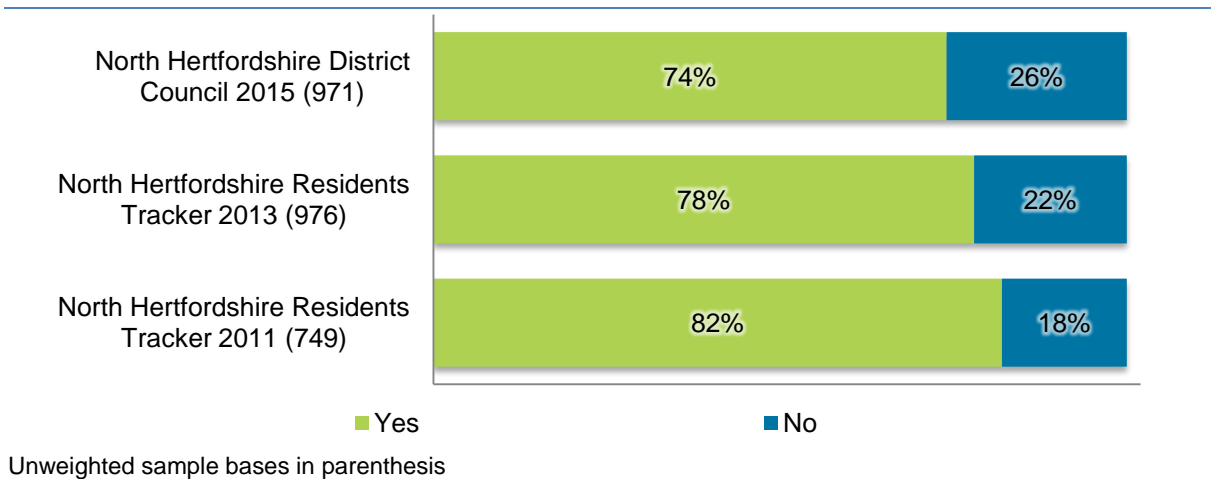
By area, Royston residents are least likely to feel informed about how to pay Council Tax (85% feel informed), how to register to vote (92%), and what standards of service should be expected from North Hertfordshire District Council (52%). Whilst Baldock & District residents are least likely to feel informed about the services and benefits North Hertfordshire District Council provides (54%).

5.3 Outlook



Outlook is the Council's magazine for residents. The magazine is delivered to all households in the area on a quarterly basis. When asked whether they have seen or have had a copy of Outlook delivered to their door 74% of residents answered yes, with a quarter (26%) saying no. The proportion answering positively at this question is 4-percentage points below the 78% seen in 2013 and 8-percentage points seen in 2015, however, checks may be necessary to establish if there are any distribution issues.

Figure 11: Have you seen, or had a copy of Outlook delivered to your door? (All valid responses)



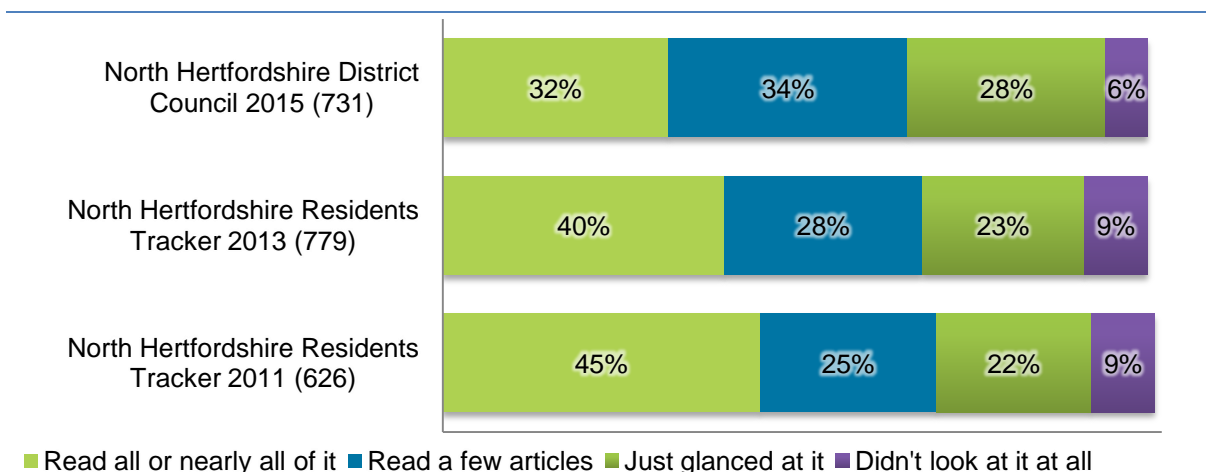
Spatially, residents of the Royston area are significantly more likely to say that they have not received or seen a copy of Outlook (35%), as shown by the table below. This should be viewed in light of the previous finding which found this cohort also less likely to feel informed with certain aspects of the Council services.

Table 14: Outlook receipt by area (All valid responses)

	Area					
	Total	Baldock & District	Hitchin	Letchworth	Royston	Southern Rural
Yes	74%	77%	74%	77%	65%	75%
No	26%	23%	26%	23%	35%	25%
Unweighted Bases	971	116	248	255	149	203

Among those who have seen or received a copy of Outlook only 6% didn't look at it at all compared to 9% in both 2013 and 2011. At the other end of the scale the proportion of recipients who read all or nearly all of Outlook has fallen from 40% in 2013 to 32% in 2015. The single most common response this year is that individuals read a few articles from Outlook (34%).

Figure 12: Interaction with Outlook among recipients (Where seen a copy of Outlook or had a copy delivered)



Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

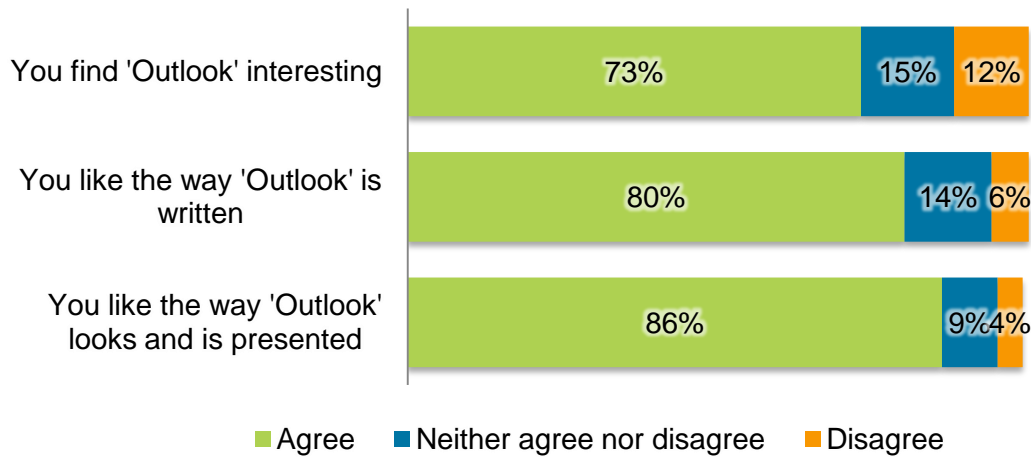
The extent which each age group engages with Outlook where received is shown in the table below. This demonstrates that there is a greater tendency for older residents to read all or most of this publication. On this basis, younger residents may well be less likely to pick up the key messages that Outlook seeks to communicate.

Table 15: Interaction with Outlook Magazine content by age (Where seen / received)

	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
Read all or nearly all of it	0%	15%	22%	25%	47%	42%	55%
Read a few articles	44%	31%	33%	40%	29%	33%	32%
Just glanced at it	43%	37%	42%	28%	19%	22%	11%
Didn't look at it at all	14%	17%	4%	7%	5%	3%	1%
Unweighted Bases	26	104	66	172	170	115	73

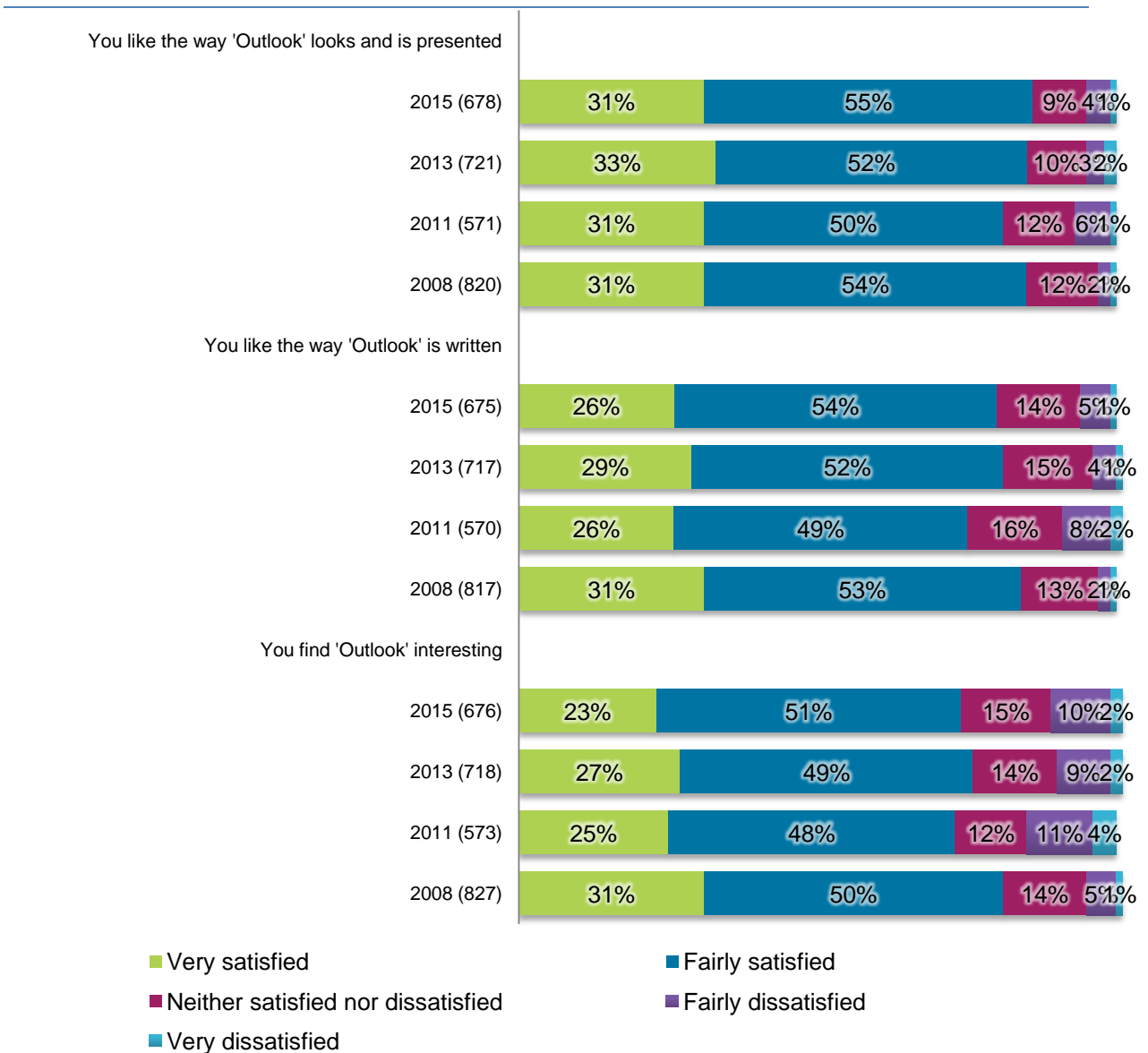
The feedback on the content and format of Outlook is positive. More than seven in ten (73%) of those who receive Outlook and read it to some extent (glance at it, read a few articles, read all or nearly all of it) find it interesting. Four in five (80%) like the way Outlook is written and 86% like the way Outlook is presented.

Figure 13: Views on Outlook content and format (Where read/receive a copy of Outlook and read it to some extent)



The agreement that Outlook is interesting at 73% is marginally below the 76% observed in 2013. Agreement that residents like the way Outlook is written is unchanged (80% in both 2013 and 2015) as is agreement that they like the way Outlook looks and is presented (86% in 2015, 85% in 2013).

Figure 14: Views on Outlook content and format 2008-2015 (Where read/receive a copy of Outlook)



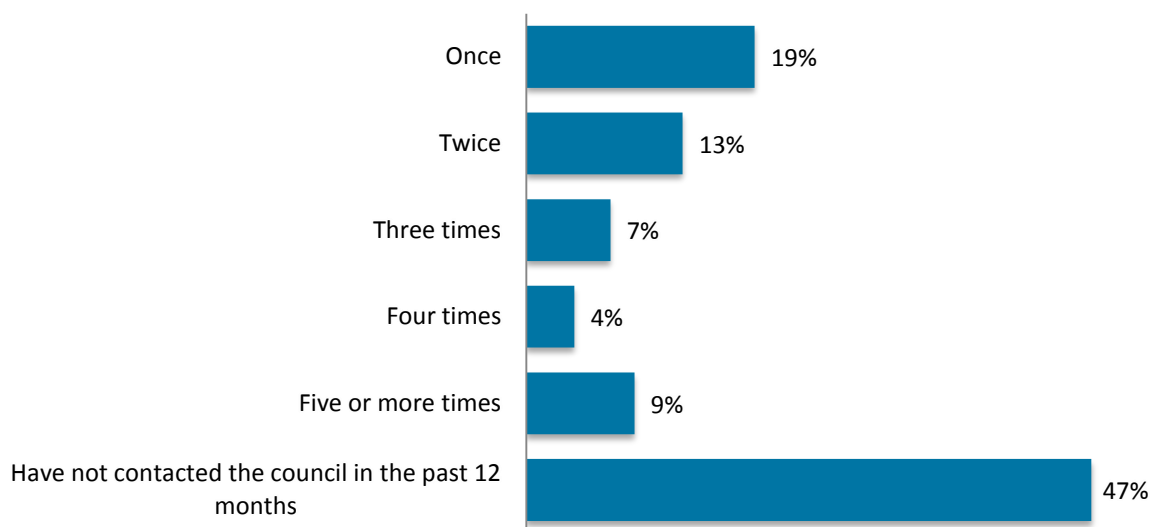
Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

Analysis by age shows that readers aged 55 and over most commonly describe Outlook as interesting (78% of those aged 55-64, 78% of those aged 65-74 and 96% of those aged 75+).

6 Contact with the Council

In the last 12 months, 53% of residents have contacted North Hertfordshire District Council. While this proportion is lower than the 58% observed in 2013, this still demonstrates that high quality contact handling is imperative given that half of residents are having some form of contact. While 19% of residents have contacted the Council once in the last 12 months and 13% have done so twice, a further 20% have made contact three or more times.

Figure 15: In the last 12 months, how many times have you contacted North Hertfordshire District Council? (All valid responses)

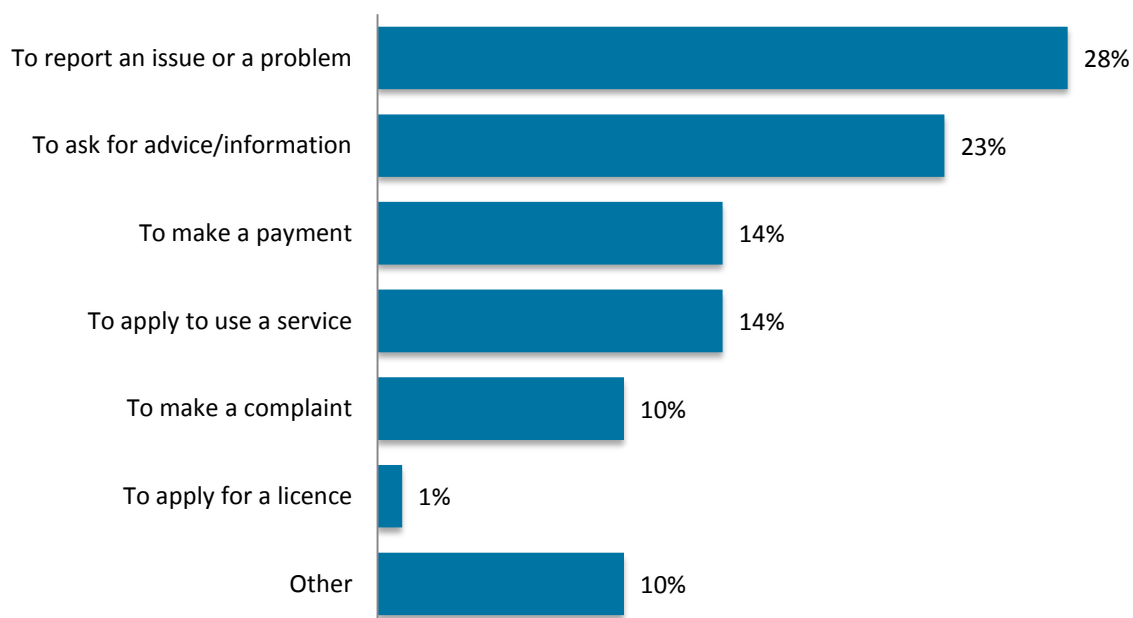


Unweighted sample base: 983

Residents at the extreme end of the age scale i.e. those aged 16-24 (69%) and those aged 75 and over (59%) are most likely to have not contacted North Hertfordshire Council in the last 12 months.

As is shown in the figure below, reporting an issue or problem is the most common reason for Council contact (28%), followed by to ask for advice/information. These were also the most common reasons for contact in 2013 (33% and 29% of residents respectively having given these reasons).

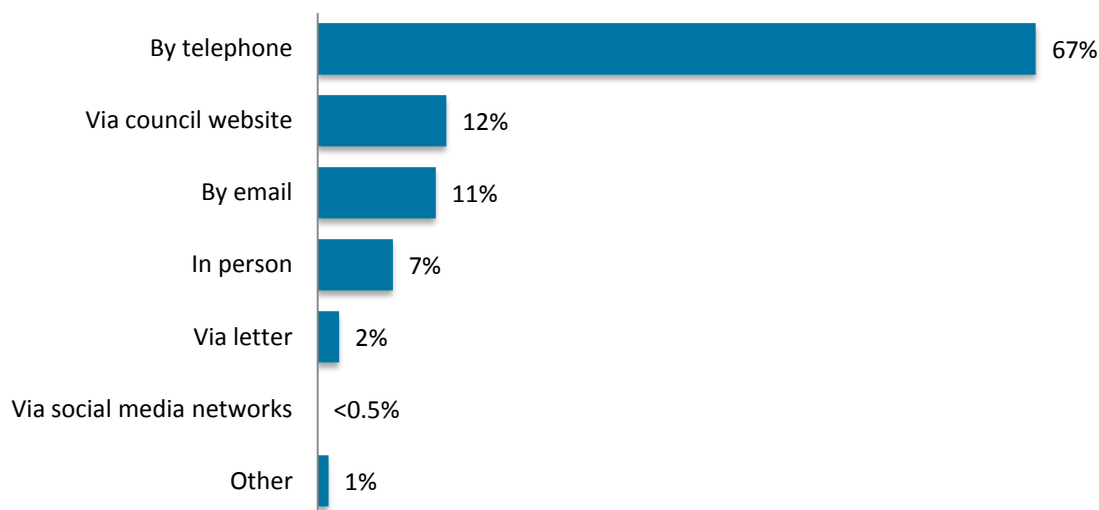
Figure 16: Which of these describes the reason why you made your most recent contact with the Council? (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)



Unweighted sample base: 523

The majority of residents contacted the Council by telephone (67%). While this has consistently been the dominant channel of contact, it is important to note that the proportion using this channel in 2015 is below the 74% seen in 2013 and the 75% recorded in 2011. However, this cannot be seen as evidence of channel shift as the question asked in 2015 was a single response question whereas more than one response was possible in previous years.

Figure 17: How did you contact the Council? (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)



Unweighted sample base: 524

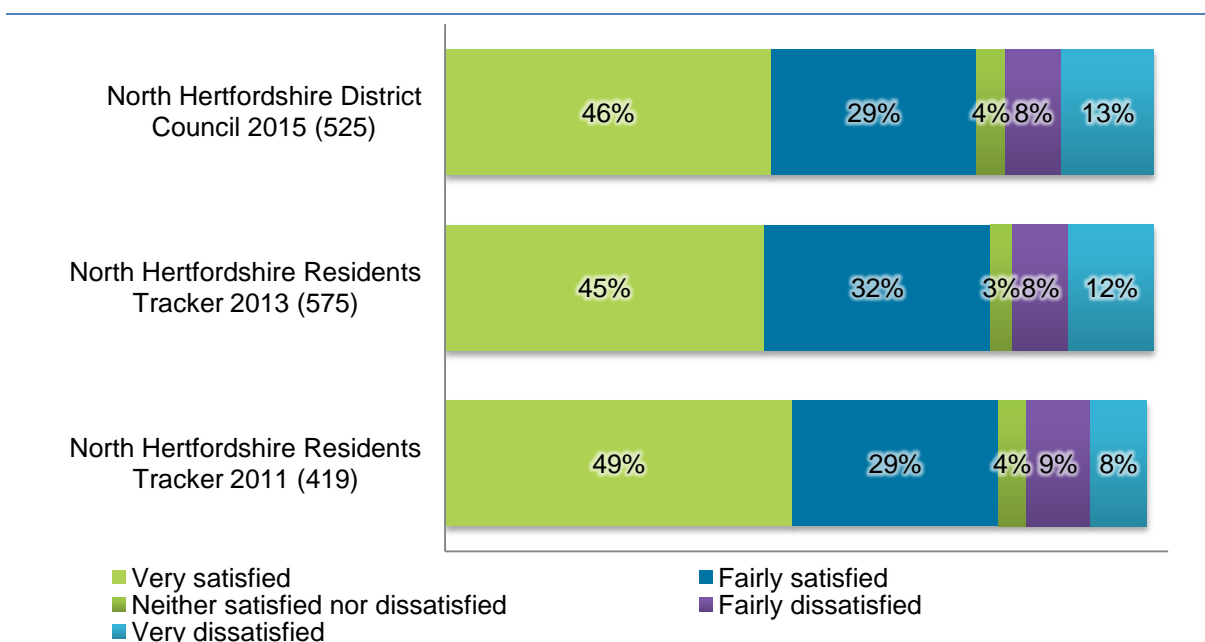
Cross referencing the contact channels used by the reasons given for contact shows how particular types of enquiry are more commonly made. Contact via the website is most commonly made for transactional activities such as making payments (21%), as well as making complaints (19%). Telephone and e-mail contact is most commonly used for reporting an issue or problem (32%) or to ask for advice/information (23%).

Table 16: Reason for Council contact by channel used (where contact made in the last 12 months)

	In person	Telephone	Email	Council website
To make a payment	15%	13%	6%	<u>21%</u>
To ask for advice/information	35%	23%	21%	18%
To report an issue or a problem	10%	<u>32%</u>	<u>28%</u>	18%
To make a complaint	3%	9%	14%	<u>19%</u>
To apply to use a service	13%	14%	18%	14%
To apply for a licence	0%	1%	1%	<u>5%</u>
Other	25%	8%	11%	4%
Unweighted Bases	32	347	58	65

When considering their satisfaction with the service they received the last time they contacted the Council, three quarters (75%) were satisfied. Encouragingly the single most common response on the 5-point scale was 'very satisfied' which was chosen by 46% of residents. The satisfaction level recorded in 2015 regarding Council contact is in line with that seen in 2013 (77% satisfied, including 45% who were very satisfied).

Figure 18: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you received the last time you contacted with the Council? (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)



Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

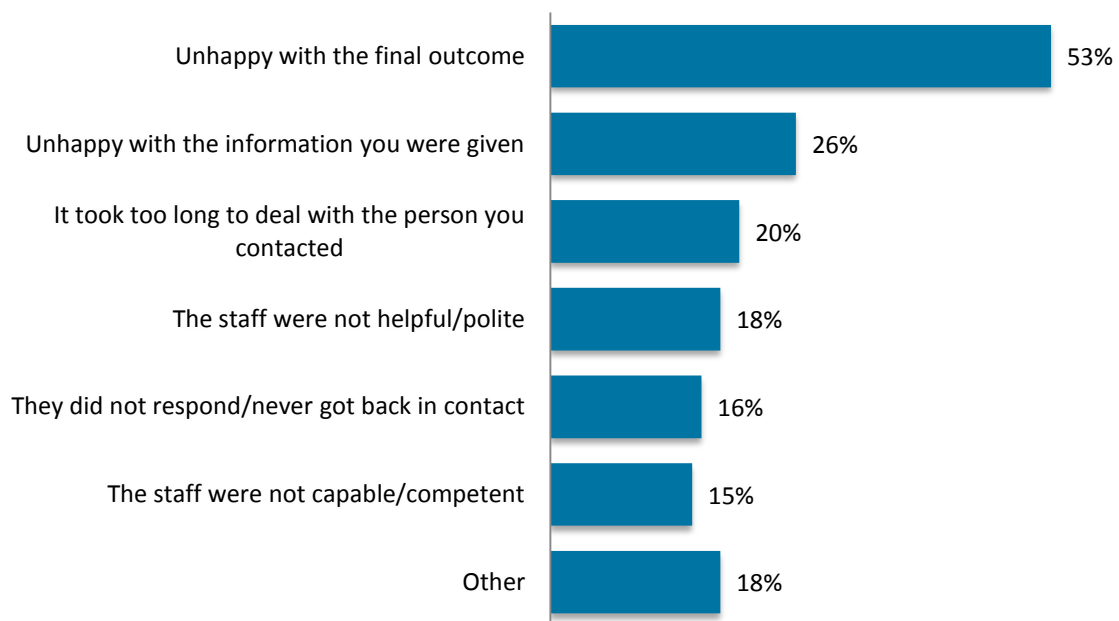
Table 15 below shows the satisfaction levels by contact channel. None of these variations is statistically significant, but this may be a consequence of the small sample sizes for the non-telephone channels.

Table 17: Satisfaction with service received upon contact by contact channel (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)

	In person	Telephone	Email	Council website
Satisfied	85%	76%	72%	70%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3%	4%	2%	8%
Dissatisfied	12%	20%	26%	21%
Unweighted Bases	33	348	58	65

Of the residents who said that they are dissatisfied with the service they received the last time they contacted the Council (21%), the highest proportion are unhappy with the final outcome 53%. Given that this response was given by twice as many of those stating that they were unhappy with the information given (26%), this suggests that managing expectations as much as possible in terms of outcomes is important. It must be recognised that residents rarely differentiate between service processes and outcome, but the mentions of speed, responsiveness and politeness issues in the reasons given suggests that some scope for improvement remains.

Figure 19: Why were you dissatisfied with the service you received the last time you were in contact with the Council? (Where dissatisfied with the service they received)



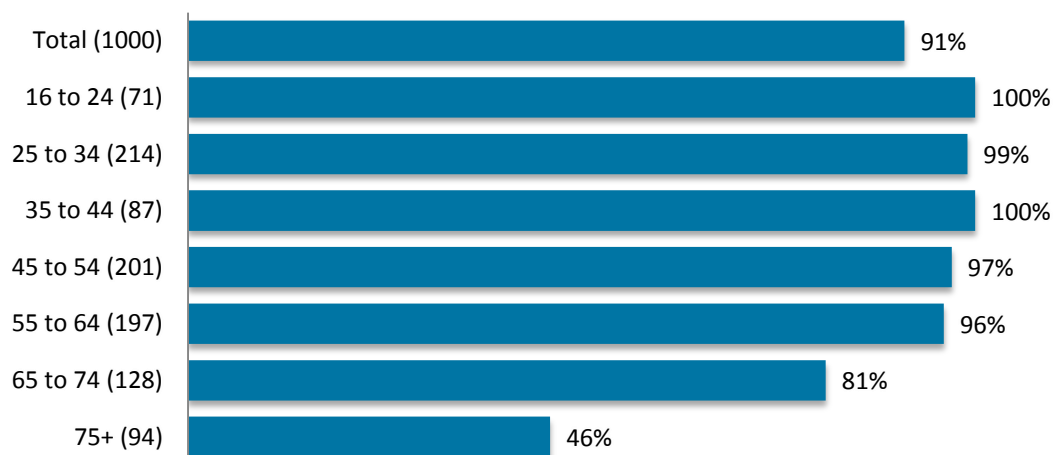
Unweighted sample base: 108

No further analysis by channel can be provided by channel at this question given that the total sample base is just 108.

6.1 Internet usage

Nine in ten (91%) North Hertfordshire residents have access to the internet. Analysis shows that for all but two age groups this nine in ten proportion is exceeded, the exceptions being those aged 65 to 74 (81%) and 75+ (46%).

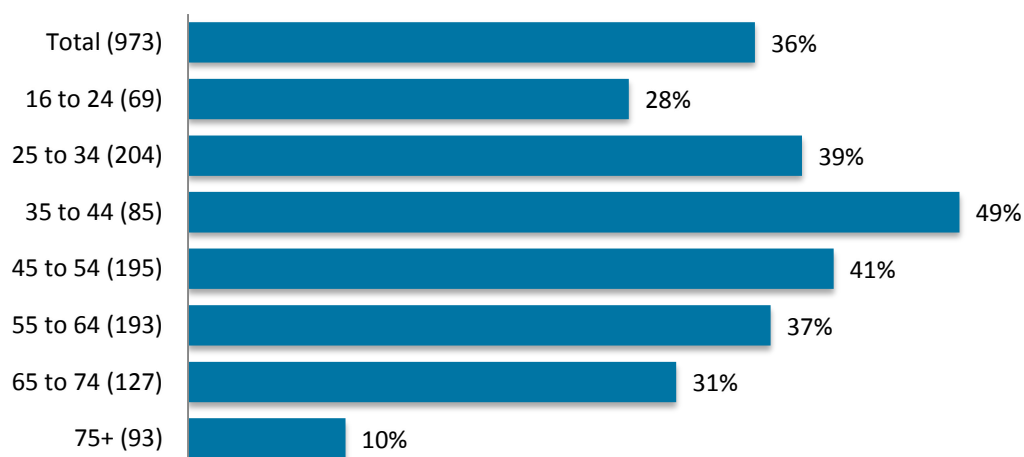
Figure 20: Do you have access to the Internet? (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

Just over a third (36%) of all respondents have visited North Hertfordshire District Council's new website launched in April 2015. This proportion peaks at 49% among those aged 35 to 44.

Figure 21: Have you visited North Hertfordshire District Council's new website launched in April 2015? (All valid responses)

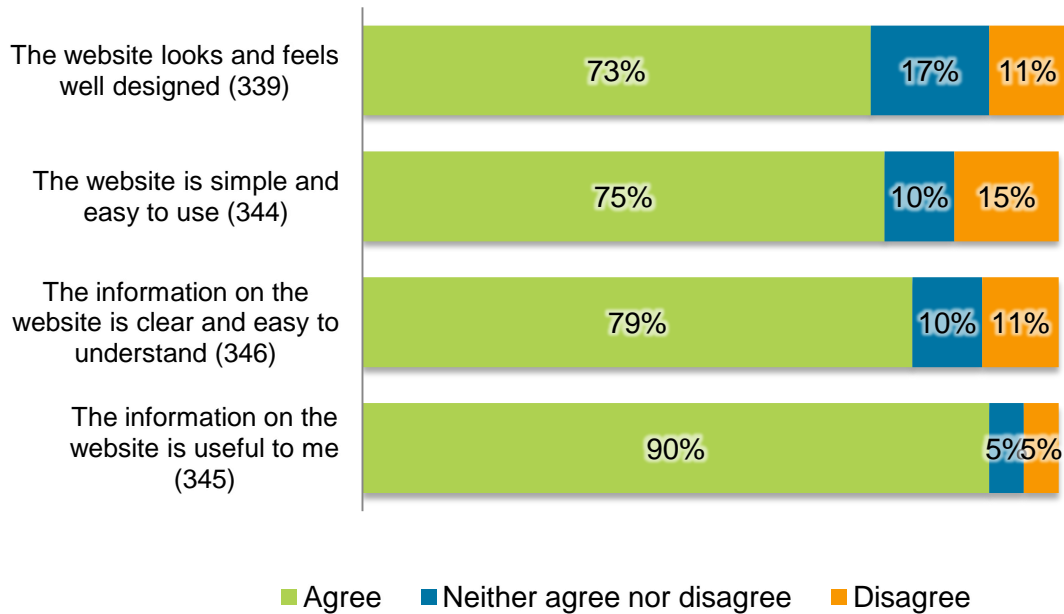


Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

Among those who have access to the internet 39% say that they have visited the new website, while 61% state that they have not.

Nine in ten visitors (90%) to the updated website suggest that the information on the website is useful to them; eight in ten (79%) agree that it is clear and easy to understand, while around three quarters feel it is simple and easy to use (75%) and feels well designed (73%).

Figure 22: Visitor views on Council website (Where visited North Hertfordshire District Council's website)



Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

7 Unweighted sample profile

	Count	%
Age		
Aged 16 to 24	71	7.1
Aged 25 to 34	214	21.4
Aged 35 to 44	87	8.7
Aged 45 to 54	201	201.1
Aged 55 to 64	198	19.8
Aged 65 to 74	129	12.9
Aged 75 or over	94	9.4
Refused	8	0.8
Gender		
Male	381	38.0%
Female	620	61.9%
Refused	1	0.1%
Economic status		
An employee in a full time job	368	36.7
An employee in a part time job	146	14.6
Self - Employed	106	10.6
On a Government supported training programme	1	0.1
In full time education	11	1.1
Unemployed and available for work	46	4.6
Permanently sick or disabled	8	0.8
Wholly retired from work	257	25.6
Looking after the home	40	4.0
Doing something else	7	.7
Refused	12	1.2
Ethnicity		
White British	882	88.0
White Irish	8	0.8
White Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	0.1
White Any other White background	30	3.0
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean	6	0.6
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups White and Black African	2	0.2
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups White and Asian	3	0.3
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups Any other mixed/Multiple ethnic background	3	0.2
Asian or Asian British Indian	12	1.2
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	3	0.3
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	4	0.4
Asian or Asian British Chinese	2	0.2
Asian or Asian British Any other Asian background	5	0.5

Unweighted sample profile

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British African	8	0.8
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British Caribbean	7	0.7
Other ethnic group Other	8	0.8
Refused	19	1.9
Long term illness or disability		
Yes	135	13.5
No	852	85.0
Don't know	1	0.1
Refused	14	1.4

8 Appendix: Statement of Terms

Compliance with International Standards

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management ISO 27001:2013.

Interpretation and publication of results

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not be publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

Ethical practice

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

