



North Hertfordshire District Council Spring Panel Survey

August 2011

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL





As with all our studies, findings from this survey are subject to Opinion Research Services Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract

Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey requires the advance approval of ORS. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation

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1. Project Overview

The Survey

- 1.1 Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by North Hertfordshire District Council to undertake a Spring Survey of their self-maintained Citizens' Panel.
- 1.2 The Citizens' Panel Survey captures panellist's general views and perceptions of certain services and facilities provided by the District Council.
- 1.3 The questionnaire was distributed in the week commencing 18th April 2011 to members of the North Hertfordshire Panel. A reminder was distributed in the week commencing 16th May. The cut-off date for returned questionnaires was 30th May. 36 of the 937 questionnaires were returned by the Royal Mail as being failed addresses reducing the effective population to 901. 306 completed postal questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 34%. A free prize draw and questionnaire reminders were used to encourage responses.

Survey Contents

- 1.4 The survey contained questions on the following topics:
 - Green Spaces
 - Food Waste Management
 - Museum Provision
 - Taxi Services
 - Customer Services

Survey Response

- 1.5 The survey was distributed to 901 residents in total; 306 questionnaires were completed yielding a 34% response rate.
- 1.6 The returned sample was checked against comparative data and was subsequently weighted by gender, age, and ethnicity. The results presented here are therefore representative of all residents in North Hertfordshire; this report thus makes reference to 'the resident', as opposed to 'the respondent'.
- 1.7 The table overleaf shows how the various wards have been grouped for the survey results.

Table 1:
Ward Groupings for Survey Responses

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

1.8 The tables on the following pages show the profile characteristics of respondents to the survey. Any value denoted by a * represents a percentage which is less than 1%.

Table 2:
Gender – All residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)

Gender	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
Male	126	41	48
Female	180	59	52
Not Known	0	-	-
Total	306	100	100

Table 3:
Age – All residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)

Age	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
16-34	35	12	26
35-44	62	20	20
45-59	71	23	25
60+	136	45	28
Not Known	2	-	-
Total	306	100	100

Table 4:
Ethnic Origin – All residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)

Ethnic Origin	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
White	293	96	96
Non-White	13	4	4
Not Known	0	-	-
Total	306	100	100

Interpretation of the Data

- 1.9 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the volume an asterisk (*) denotes any value less than half a per cent.
- 1.10 In some cases figures of 2% or below have been excluded from graphs.
- 1.11 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of residents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a ‘traffic light’ system in which:
- Green shades represent positive responses
 - Beige and blue shades represent neither positive nor negative responses
 - Red shades represent negative responses
 - The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the ‘extremes’, for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied.

Acknowledgements

- 1.12 ORS would like to thank Sarah Dobor at North Hertfordshire District Council for her help and assistance in developing the project. We would also like to thank the 306 people who took part in the survey, without whose valuable input the research would not have been possible.

2. Executive Summary

Some Main Conclusions and Recommendations

2.1 The most positive indicators have been outlined below as well as some areas for consideration. Please bear in mind that these comparisons of 'best' and 'worst' rankings are an arbitrary indication of performance.

Areas of high performance

- 2.2 The vast majority of residents (93%) visit or have visited parks and open spaces in North Hertfordshire.
- 2.3 Residents were particularly positive about the following elements of green spaces with at least four fifths rating them as *good*: *countryside sites* (88%); *parks and public gardens* (83%) and *local recreation grounds and amenity areas* (81%).
- 2.4 High proportions of North Hertfordshire residents agreed that where they live *there is a park or open space within easy walking distance* from their home (96%) and that *parks and open spaces make their area a nice place to live* (93%).
- 2.5 Over four fifths of residents rated the standard of maintenance of *grass cutting* (84%) and the *flower beds* (82%) as *good*.
- 2.6 Just under 9 in 10 residents (89%) were aware that all food waste should go into the brown bin.
- 2.7 Residents who had visited Hitchin Museum and Letchworth Museum were most *satisfied* with the *buildings being easy to get to* (95%).
- 2.8 Residents were generally positive about taxi provision with 72% or more of residents rating all of the elements as *good*.

Areas for consideration

- 2.9 A quarter of residents rated the maintenance of *dog bins* and *litter bins* as *poor*.
- 2.10 A fifth of residents feel that it is unimportant for NHDC to continue providing current standards for *paddling pools/fountains*. More than a third of residents (34%) also said that if NHDC had to make financial savings in just one area it should be *paddling pools/fountains*.
- 2.11 Over half of residents (51%) haven't visited any museums in North Hertfordshire in the last 12 months.

- 2.12 Taxi fares are perceived as being *too high* by almost three fifths (59%) of residents.
- 2.13 Over two thirds of residents (68%) did not know that they can sign up to receive their annual Council Tax bill electronically. Therefore, NHDC may want to consider promoting this facility to its residents.

Summary of Main Findings

- 2.14 The following paragraphs selectively highlight some key issues, but readers are referred to the detailed graphics for the full story. The suite of ORS reports also includes full cross tabulations.

Green Spaces

- 2.15 The vast majority of residents (93%) visit or have visited parks and open spaces in North Hertfordshire, with the highest proportion of residents having visited *town gardens/parks* (84%). However, *amenity green spaces* (e.g. *green spaces around housing, domestic gardens and village greens*) were visited the most often with half of residents frequenting these open spaces *at least once a week*.
- 2.16 Residents were positive about the various elements of green spaces, with at least 71% rating them as *good*.
- 2.17 The vast majority of North Hertfordshire residents *agreed* that where they live *there is a park or open space within easy walking distance* from their home (96%).
- 2.18 Residents rated the standard of maintenance of *grass cutting* (84%) and the *flower beds* (82%) as *good*, while a quarter rated the *maintenance of dog bins* and *litter bins* as *poor*.
- 2.19 Residents felt that it was most important that the council continue to provide the current standard of service to *litter bins* (98%), *play areas/equipment* (94%), and *dog bins* (92%). In contrast, a fifth of residents felt that maintaining the standard of service for *paddling pools/fountains* was *unimportant*; this was further backed up by the highest proportion of residents (34%) reporting that this area is where NHDC should make financial savings.

Food Waste Management

- 2.20 Just under 9 in 10 residents (89%) were aware that all food waste should go into the brown bin. However, only 39% use their brown bin for *all* of their food waste while over a fifth (22%) use it for *less than half* of their food waste.
- 2.21 When asked the reasons for not using the brown bin for all of their food waste, the highest proportion of residents said that they are *worried about smells coming from the bin* (44%) and that they *compost food waste at home* (30%). Residents stated that *weekly food waste collections* (50%) and *compostable bags* (49%) would encourage them to separate their waste and use the brown bin.
- 2.22 Over half of residents (55%) end up throwing away *a minimal amount* of the food that they buy while nearly two fifths (38%) of residents end up throwing away at least *some* of the food they buy. Residents

cited the main reason for throwing food away to be because they *don't get a chance to use the food before use by/best before date* (80%).

Museum Provision

- 2.23 Over a quarter of residents (26%) visit museums at least *once every six months*. Of the residents who visit museums (regardless of the frequency), just under half have visited one in North Hertfordshire in the last 12 months (49%). Just over half of these residents (51%) reported that they have visited Hitchin Museum and over a third said that they have been to Letchworth Museum (36%).
- 2.24 Residents said that *specific exhibitions* (42%) and *art exhibitions* (26%) were the most likely reasons for them to visit a museum.
- 2.25 *A building that is easy to get to* (43%) and *information that is easy to find and use* (39%) were listed by residents as the most *important* elements that form part of a museum service.
- 2.26 The residents who had visited Hitchin Museum and Letchworth Museum were asked to rate various elements of the museum service provided by the council; they were most *satisfied* with *buildings being easy to get to* (95%), *museum opening times* (84%) and *buildings that are easy to move around in* (84%).

Taxi Services

- 2.27 Around two thirds of residents (67%) were aware of the difference between Hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, with over 1 in 10 (11%) using a licenced North Hertfordshire taxi at least *once every fortnight*.
- 2.28 Residents were positive about the various elements of taxi provision; 72% or more of residents rated all of the elements as *good* with more than four fifths of residents (83%) rating the *safety of the vehicle as good*.
- 2.29 Almost three fifths (59%) of residents felt that taxi fares are *too high* while two fifths (40%) felt that they are *about right*.

Customer Services

- 2.30 Just under two thirds of residents (64%) stated that when they need to contact NHDC their preferred method of contact is *telephone*.
- 2.31 When taking into account their preferred method of contact, *helpfulness of staff* (38%), *speed of response to their query or complaint* (28%) and *speaking to the right person first time* (28%) were identified as being the most important factors to residents.
- 2.32 The vast majority of residents reported having regular access to the internet *at home* (86%), while over a third reported having regular access to the internet *at work* (37%).
- 2.33 Over half of residents (55%) said that they had not visited the NHDC website in the last 12 months.

- 2.34 Of the residents that had visited the NHDC website, more than four fifths of residents (83%) rated the website as being *very* or *fairly good*. Only 5% rated it as *poor*.
- 2.35 Less than a fifth of residents (19%) reported having ever accessed any of the online services. Of these residents the vast majority (86%) said that they would use these online services again.
- 2.36 More than two thirds of residents (68%) said that the fact that they would *like to be able to speak to someone over the phone or in person* would stop them from using NHDC services online, while less than a third of residents stated that *no access to the internet* (29%) and thinking that *online payments are not secure/safe* (20%) would stop them from using online services.
- 2.37 The majority of residents (68%) did not know that they can sign up to receive their annual Council Tax bill electronically.
- 2.38 When residents were asked if they would be prepared to sign up to receive their Council Tax bill electronically, over a third (35%) said *yes*. However, over two fifths (44%) of residents said that they would not be prepared to do so, and over a fifth (22%) said *maybe*.

3. Green Spaces

Results

Figure 1:

Do you ever visit/have you ever visited any parks and open spaces in North Hertfordshire?

Base: All Residents (301)

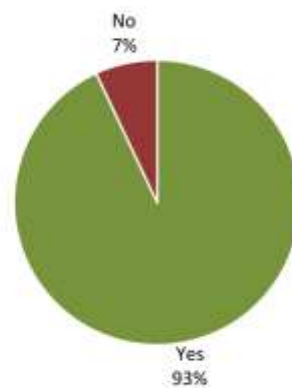


Figure 2:

Considering the parks and open spaces in North Hertfordshire that you visit: Which of the following have you visited?

Base: All Residents (281)

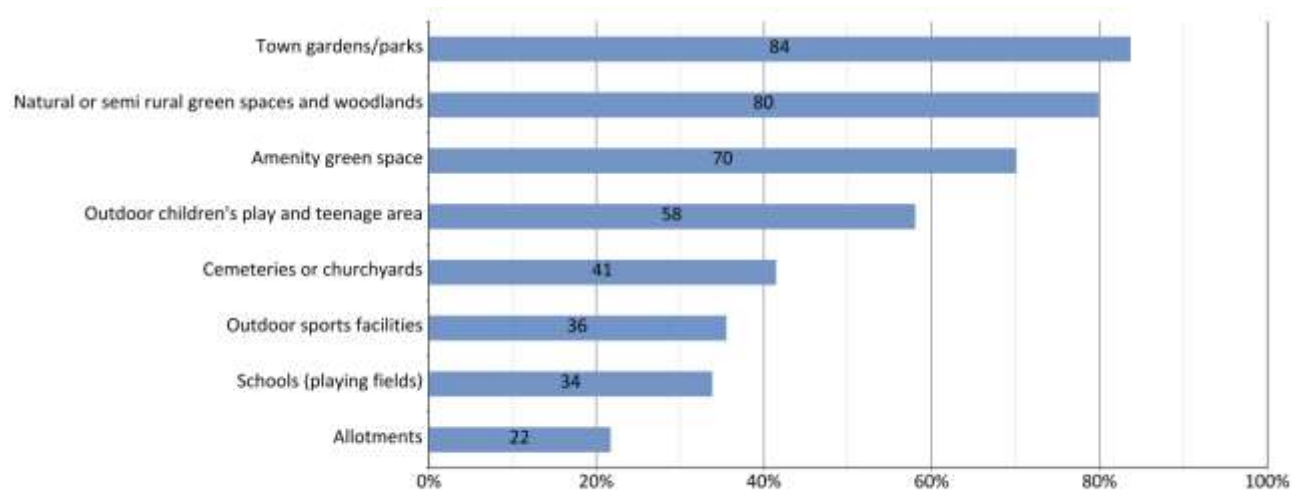


Figure 3:
Considering the parks and open spaces in North Hertfordshire that you visit: How often do you visit them?

Base: All Residents who have visited parks and open spaces in North Hertfordshire (number of respondents shown in brackets)

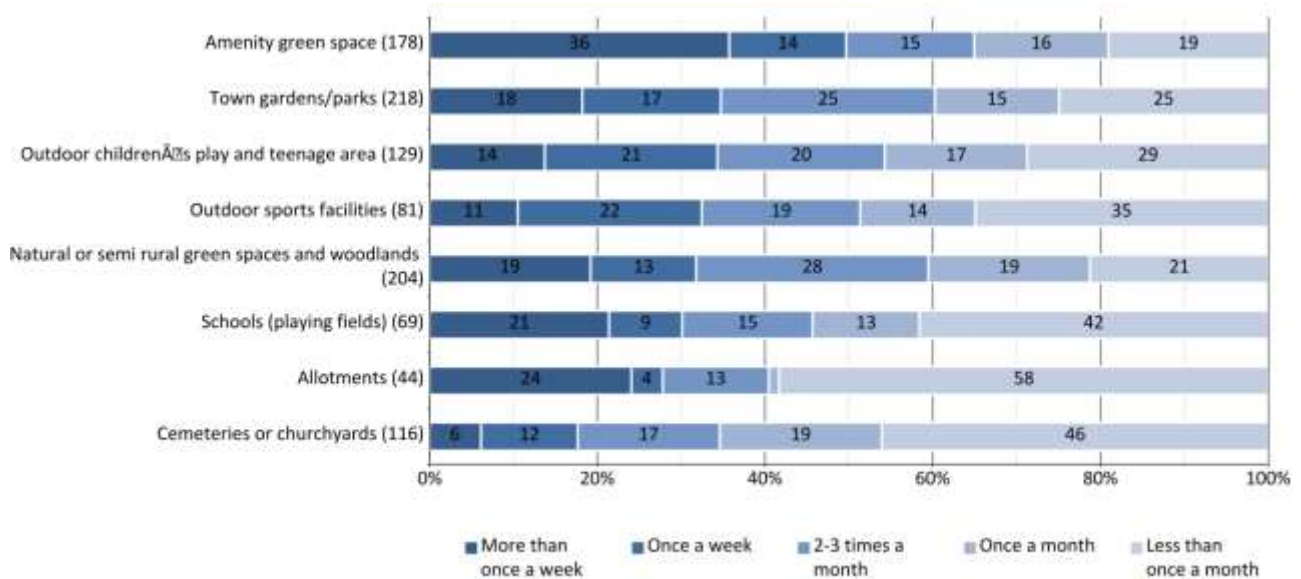


Figure 4:
Now thinking about the part of the district where you live, please rate the following elements of green spaces.

Base: All Residents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

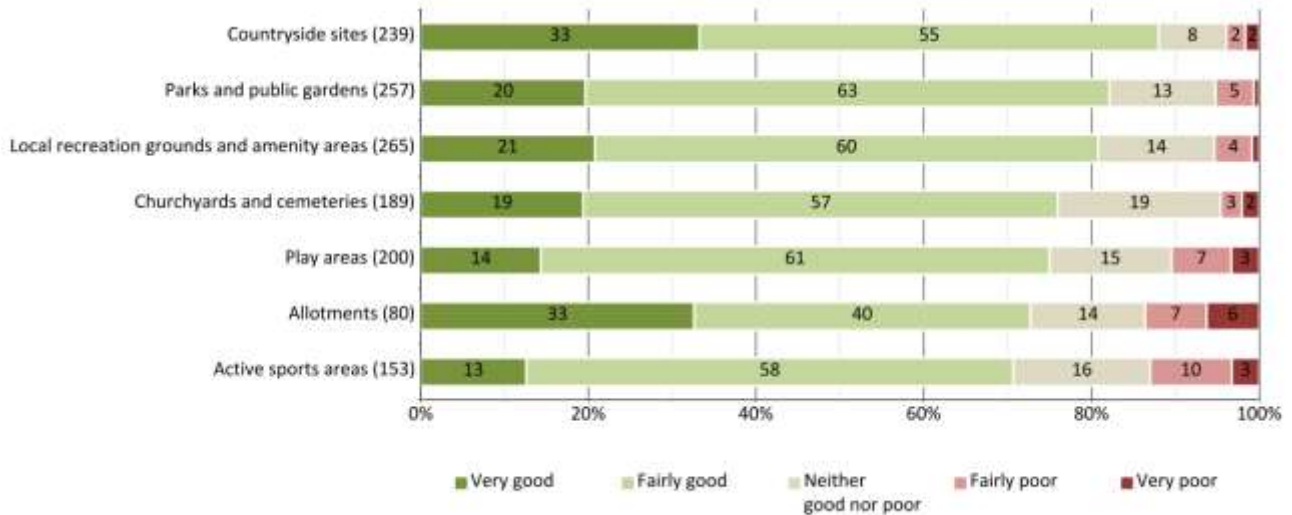


Figure 5:
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements around parks and open spaces?

Base: All Residents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

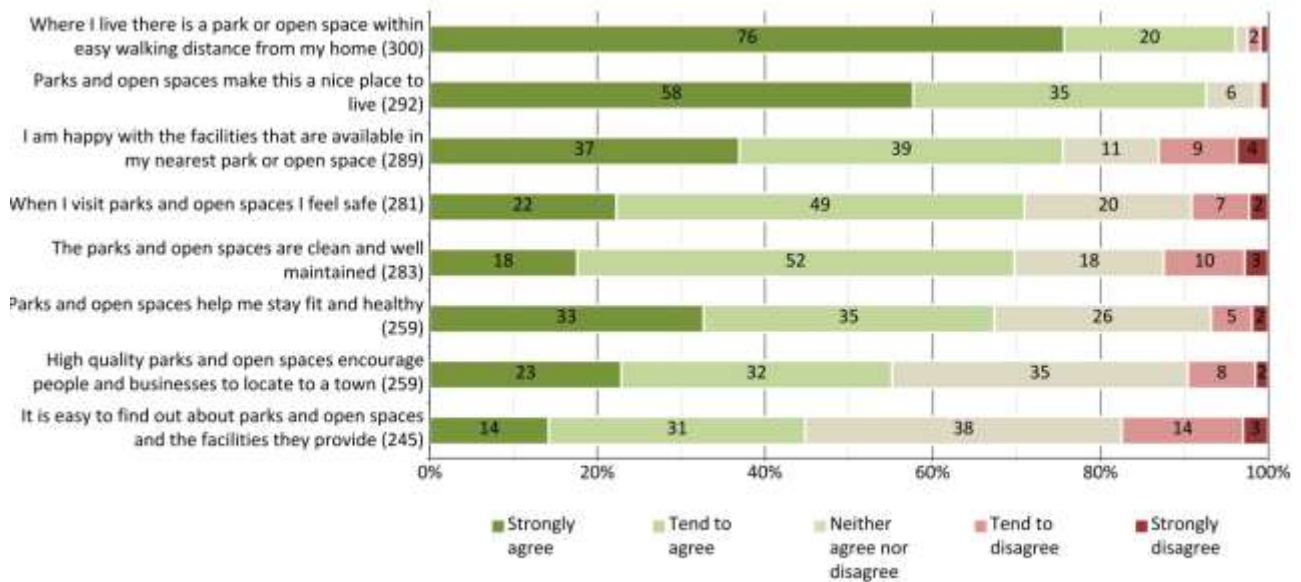


Figure 6:
Thinking about green spaces in your local area how would you rate the standards of maintenance of the following elements?

Base: All Residents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

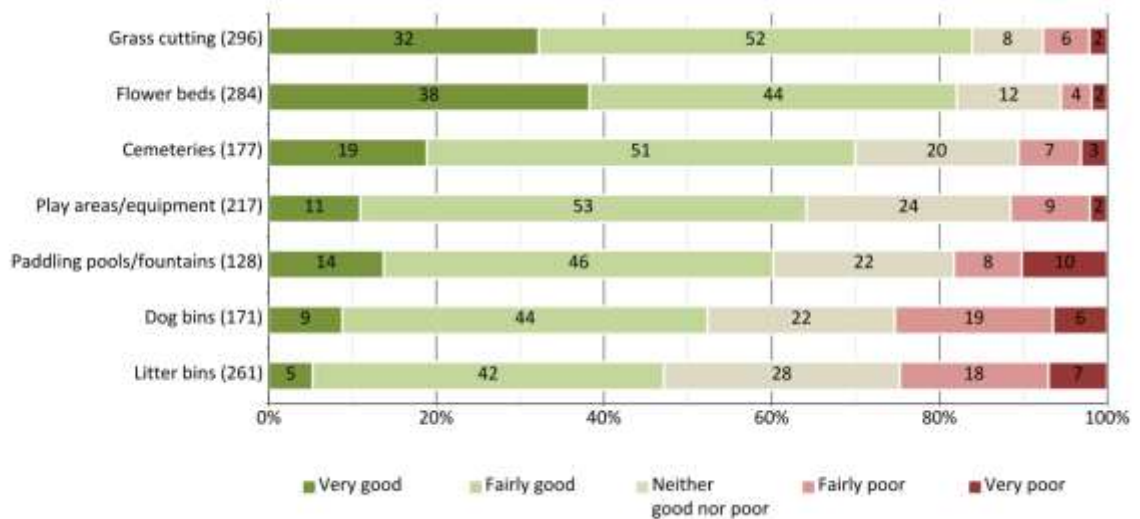


Figure 7:
How important or unimportant do you feel it is for NHDC to continue providing current standards for the following services...?

Base: All Residents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

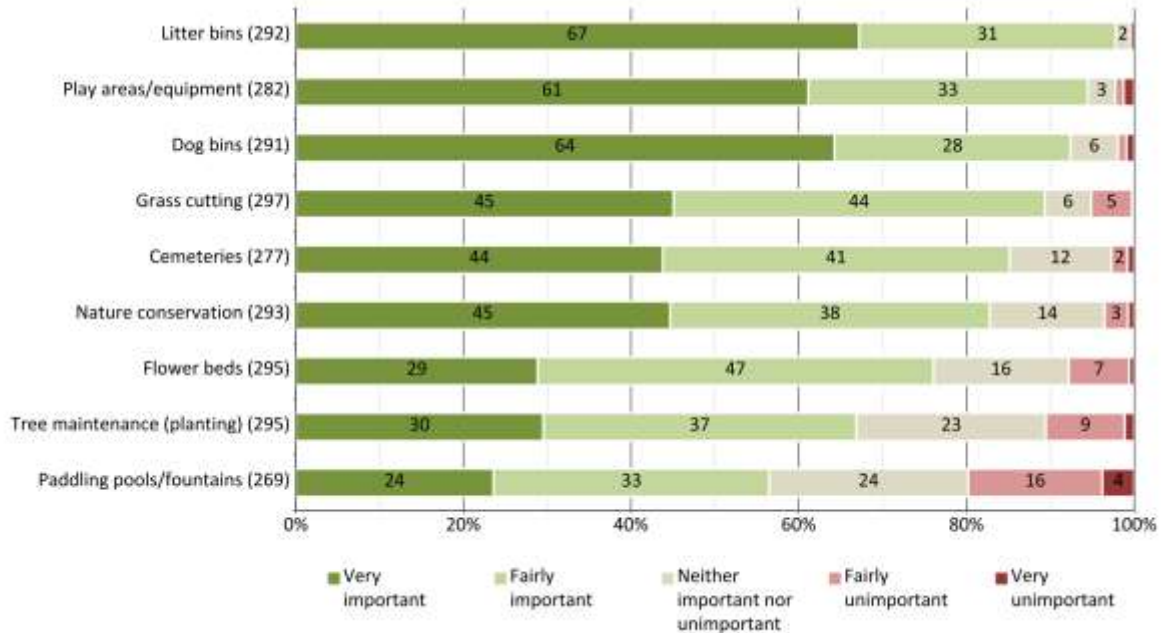
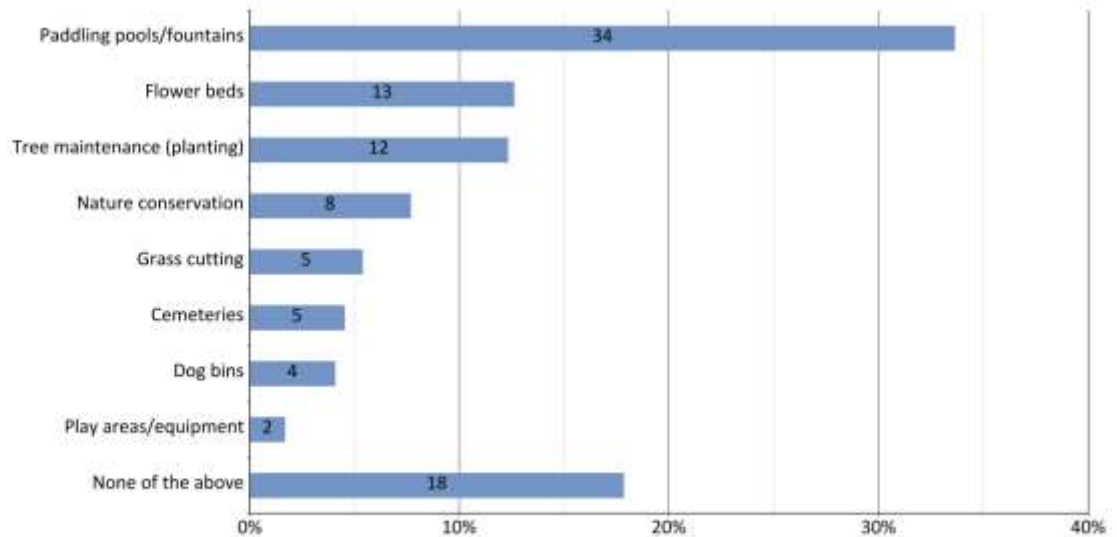


Figure 8:
If NHDC has to make financial savings in just one of the areas below, which should that be?

Base: All Residents (295)



4. Food Waste Management Results

Figure 9:
Did you know that ALL food waste should go into your brown bin?

Base: All Residents (297)

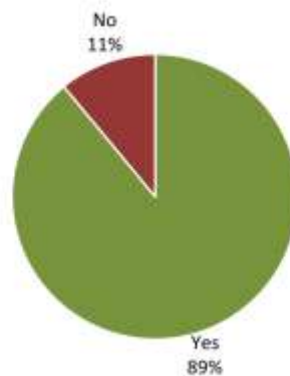


Figure 10:
Thinking about your food waste at home, what proportion currently goes into your brown bin for composting?

Base: All Residents (293)

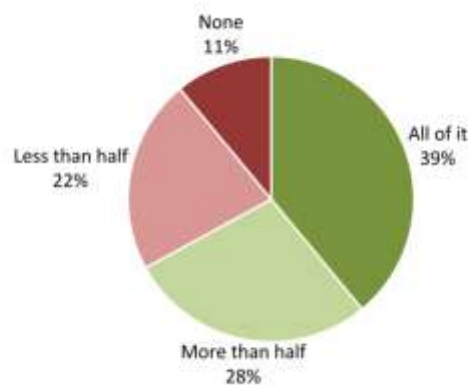


Figure 11:
What are your reasons for not putting all of your food waste into your brown bin?

Base: All Residents who do not put all of their food waste in to their brown bin (177)

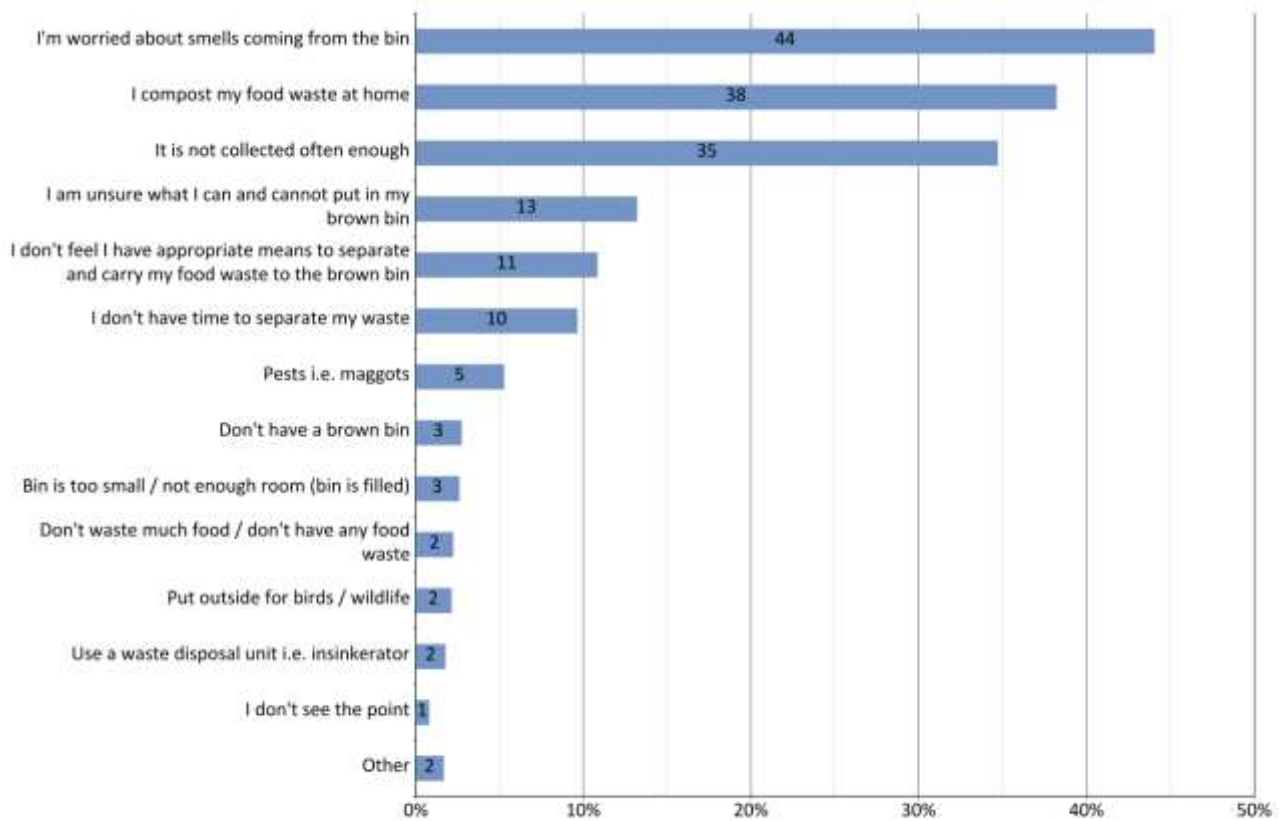


Figure 12:
What would encourage you to separate your food waste from your other waste and put it in your brown bin?

Base: All Residents who do not put all of their food waste in to their brown bin (163)

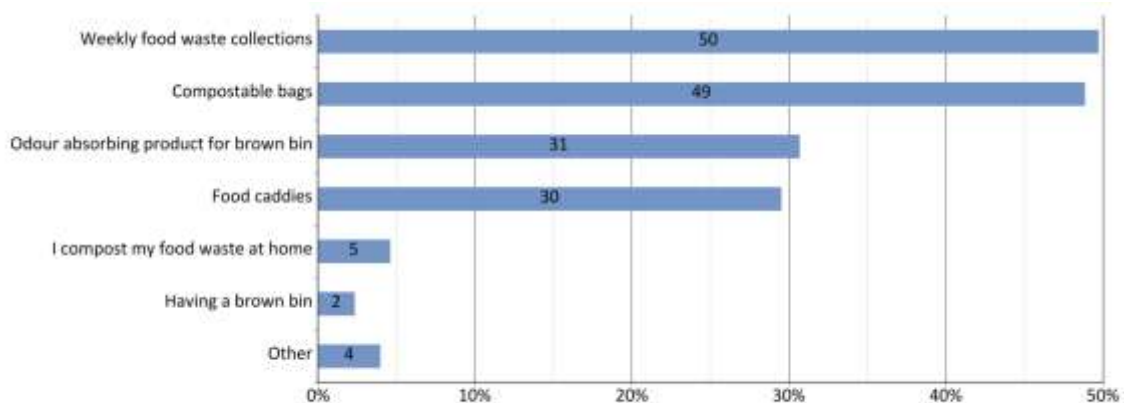


Figure 13:
Thinking about the food you buy, what proportion do you end up throwing away?

Base: All Residents (299)

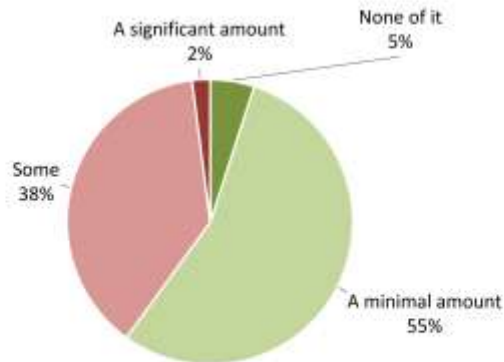
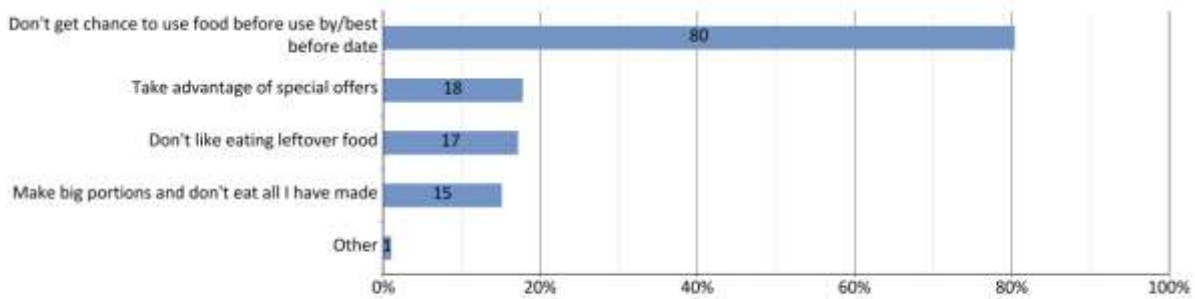


Figure 14:
What are your main reasons for not using some of the food you buy?

Base: All Residents who throw away some of the food they buy (106)



5. Museum Provision

Results

Figure 15:
How frequently do you visit museums?

Base: All Residents (302)

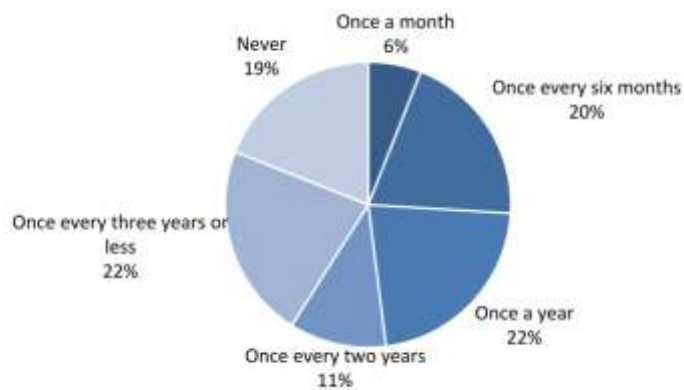


Figure 16:
Have you ever visited any museums in North Hertfordshire in the last 12 months?

Base: All Residents who visit museums (214)

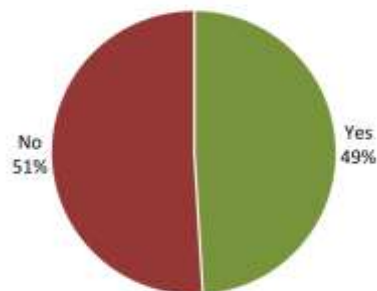


Figure 17:
Which of the following museums in North Hertfordshire have you visited in the last 12 months?

Base: All Residents who have visited any museums in North Hertfordshire in the last 12 months (119)

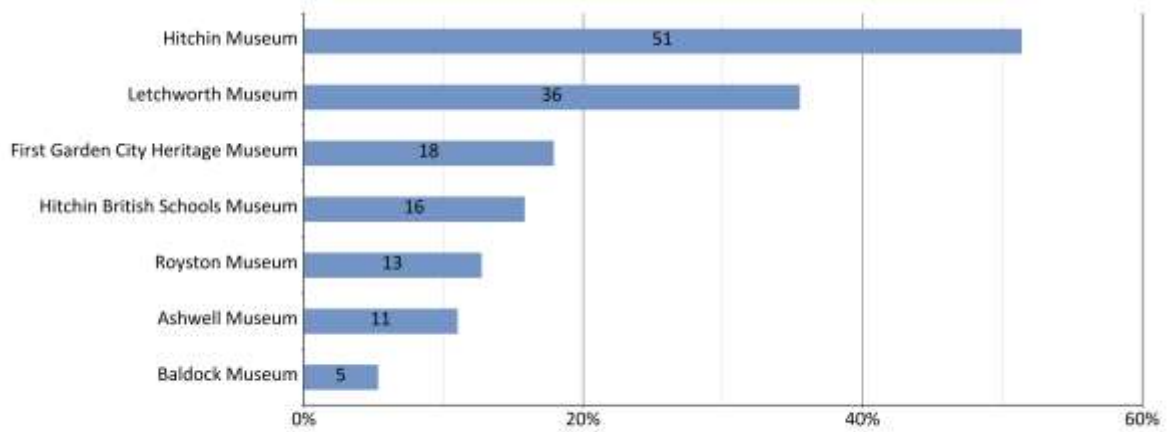


Figure 18:
For what reasons might you visit a museum?

Base: All Residents (295)

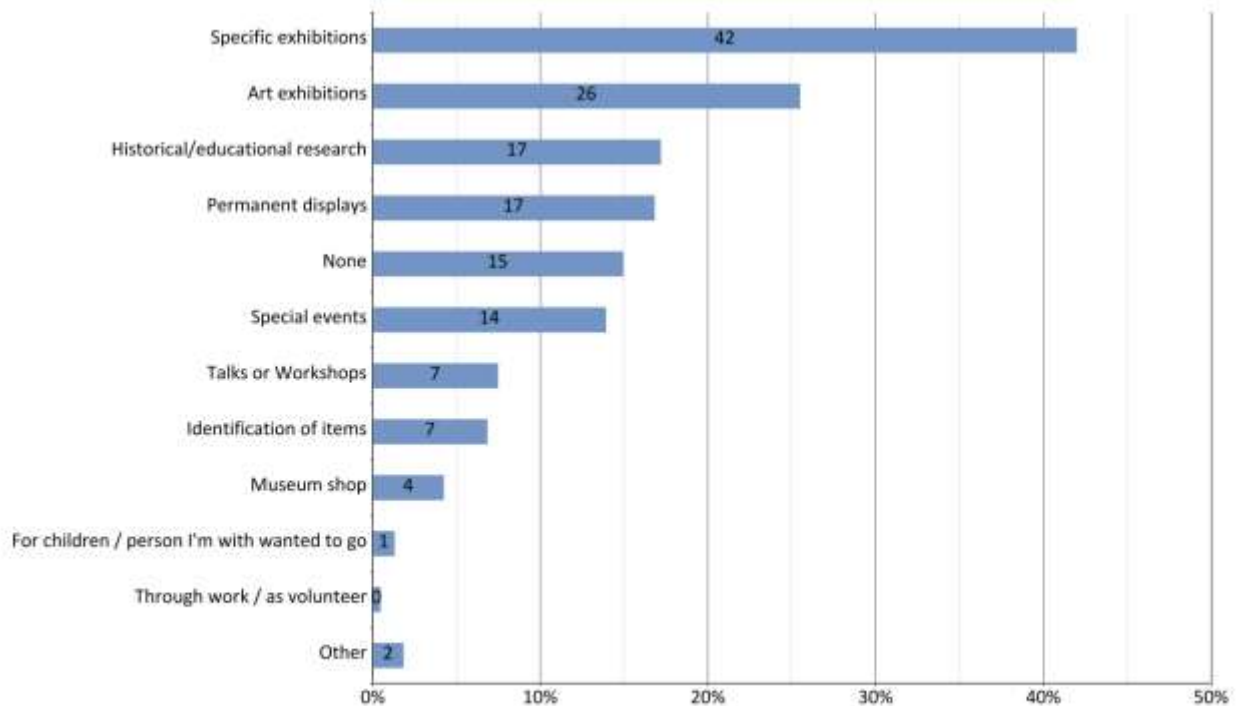


Figure 19:
How important or unimportant is it that the following elements form part of a museum service?

Base: All Residents

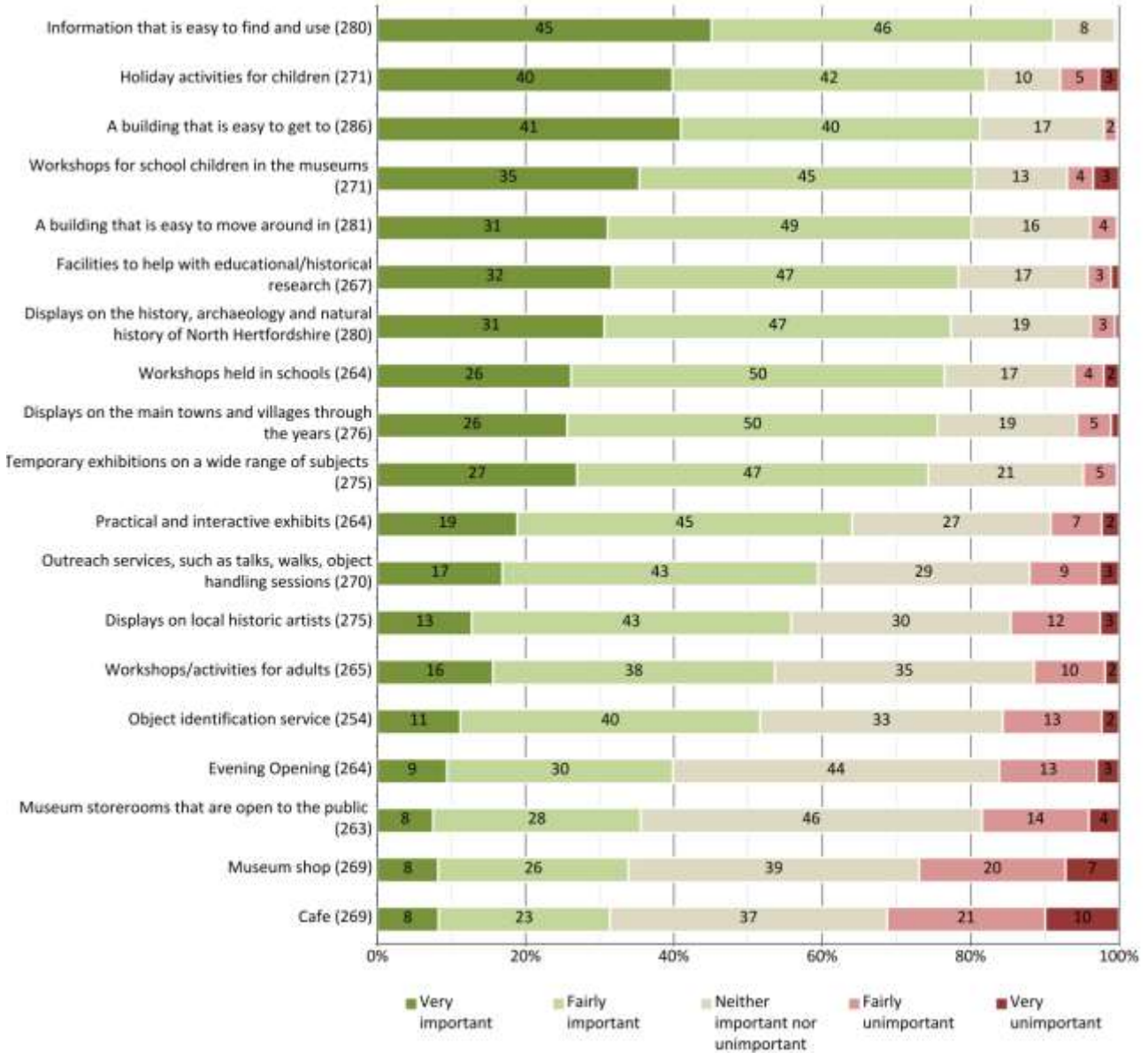


Figure 20:
Of the elements listed in C5, which 4 do you think are the most important?

Base: All Residents (280)

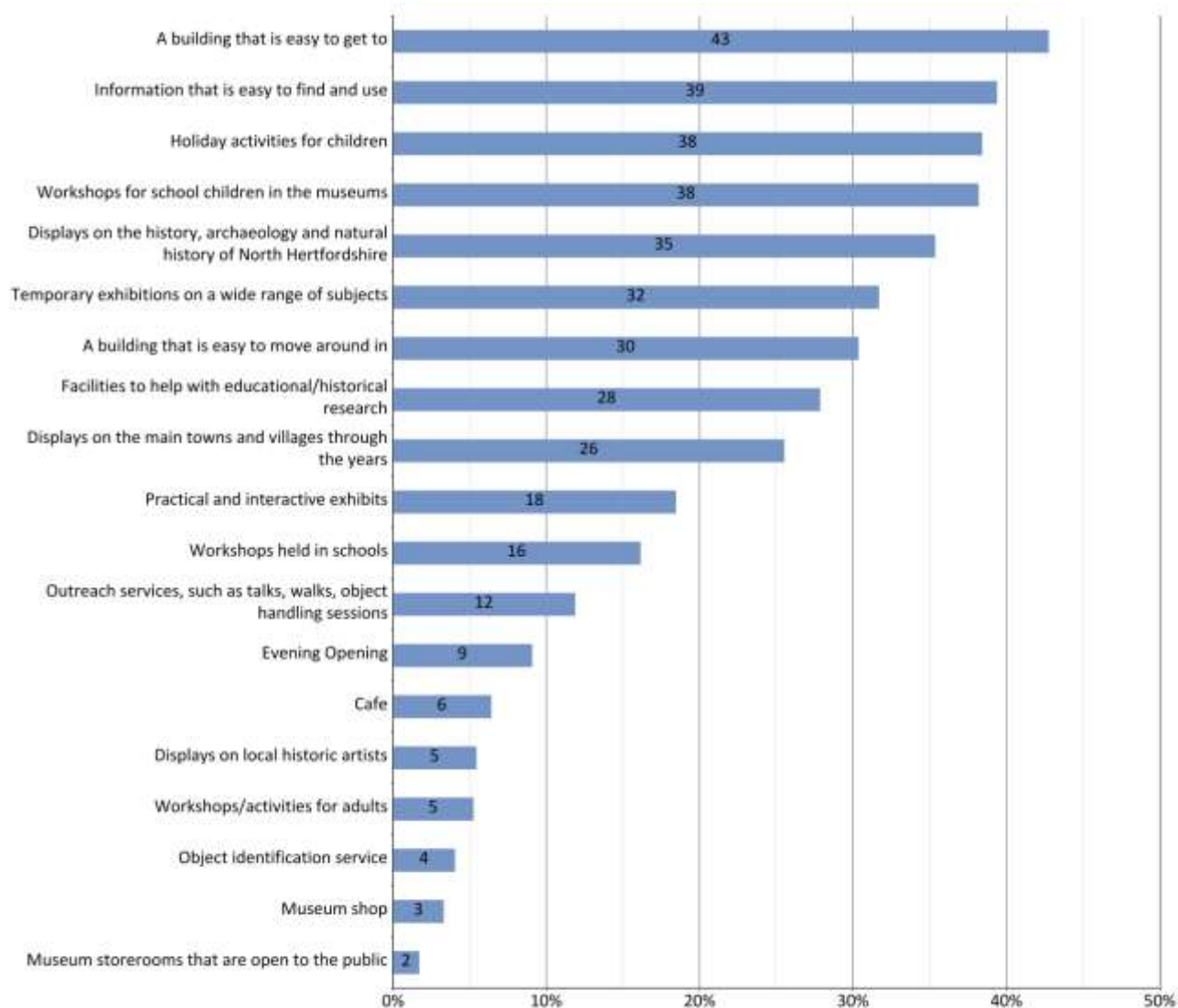
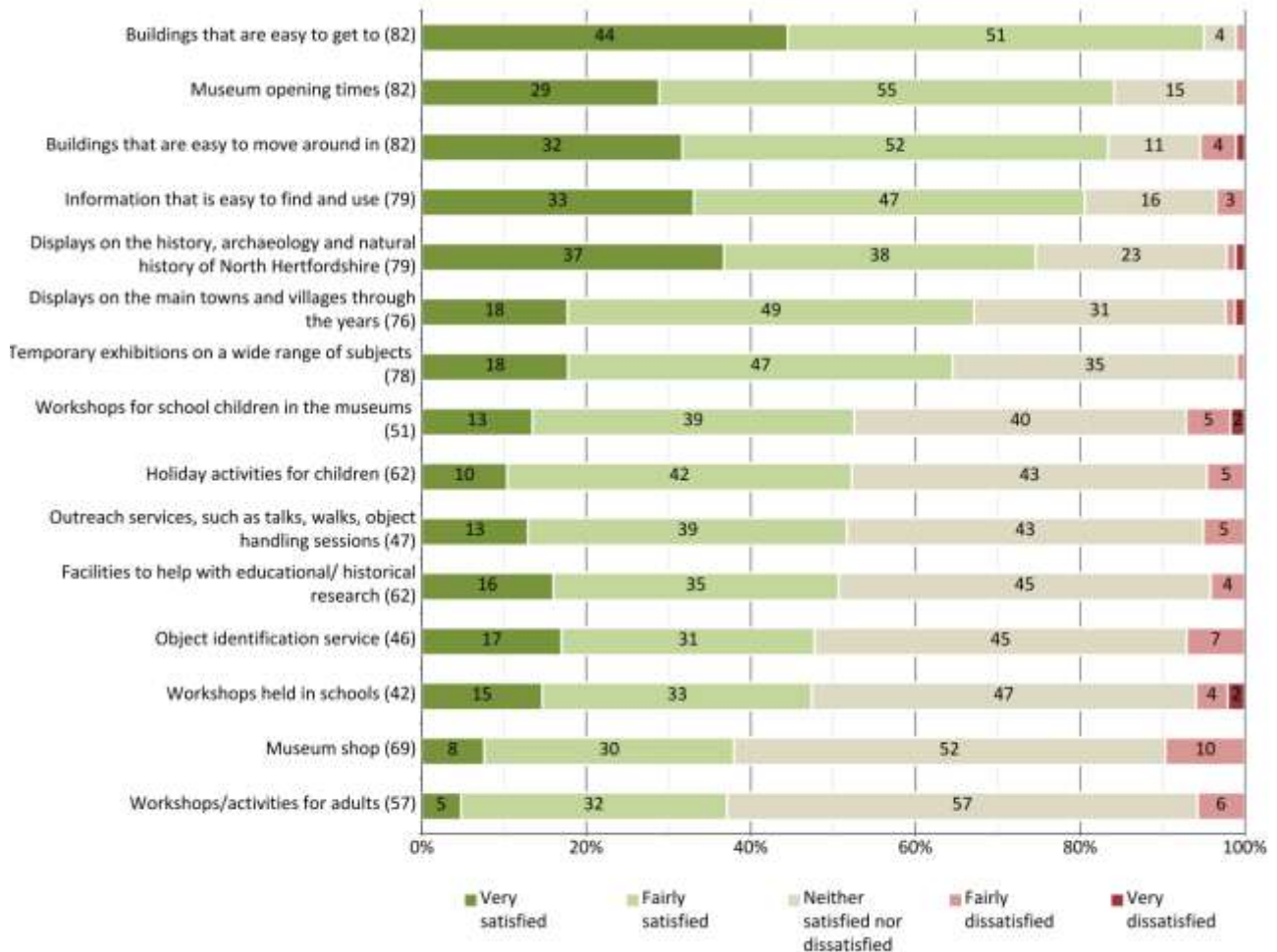


Figure 21:
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following elements of the Museum Service (Hitchin Museum and Letchworth Museum) provided by the Council?

Base: All Residents who visited have visited Hitchin Museum and/or Letchworth Museum (number of respondents shown in brackets)



6. Taxi Services

Results

Figure 22:

Were you aware of the difference between Hackney carriages (taxis) and private hire vehicles (mini cabs) prior to reading the information above?

Base: All Residents (293)

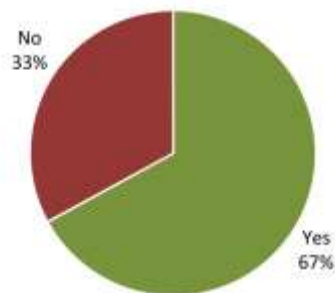


Figure 23:

How often do you use a licensed North Hertfordshire taxi?

Base: All Residents (248)

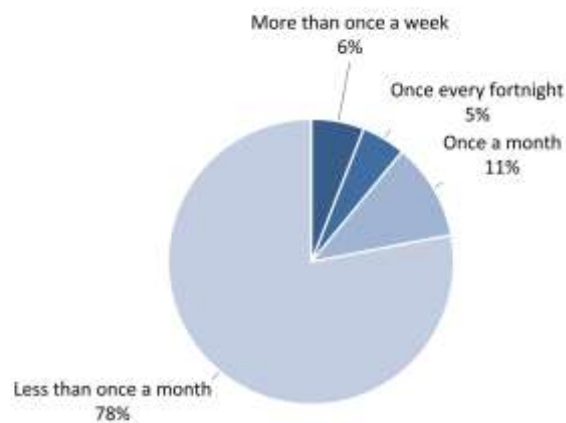


Figure 24:
Thinking about your last taxi journey in the district, how would you rate the following elements of taxi provision?

Base: All Residents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

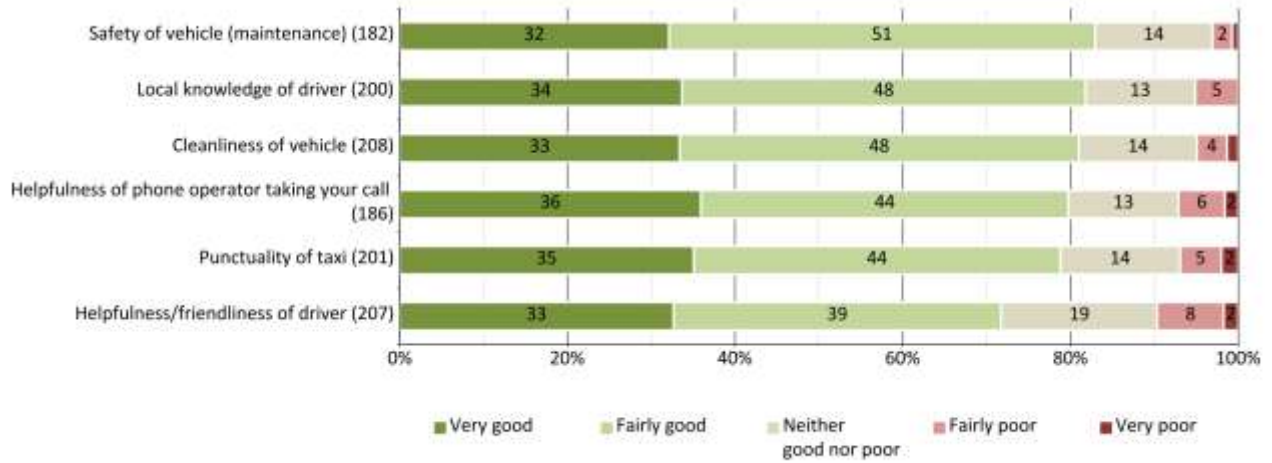
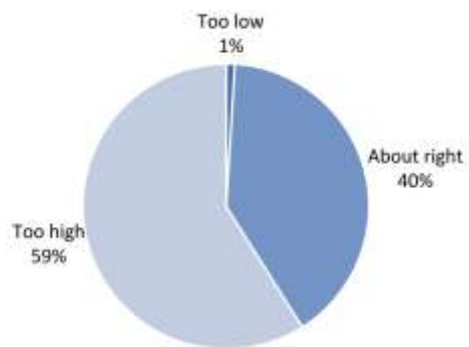


Figure 25:
Do you think taxi fare costs in the district are...?

Base: All Residents (185)



7. Customer Services

Results

Figure 26:
When you need to contact NHDC what is your preferred method?

Base: All Residents (294)

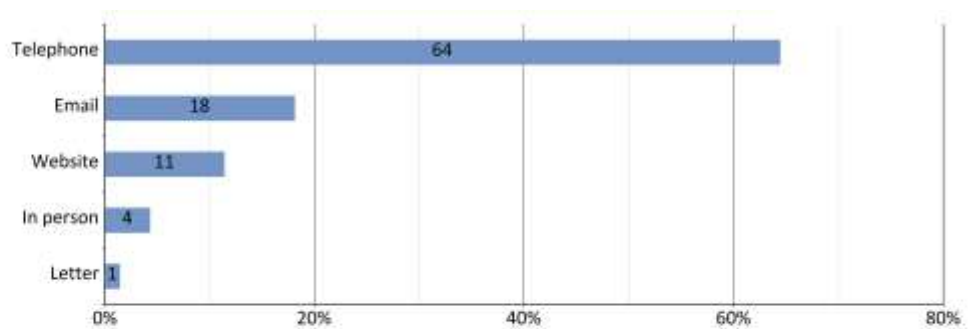


Figure 27:
Taking into account your preferred method of contact, which of the following is most important to you?

Base: All Residents (288)

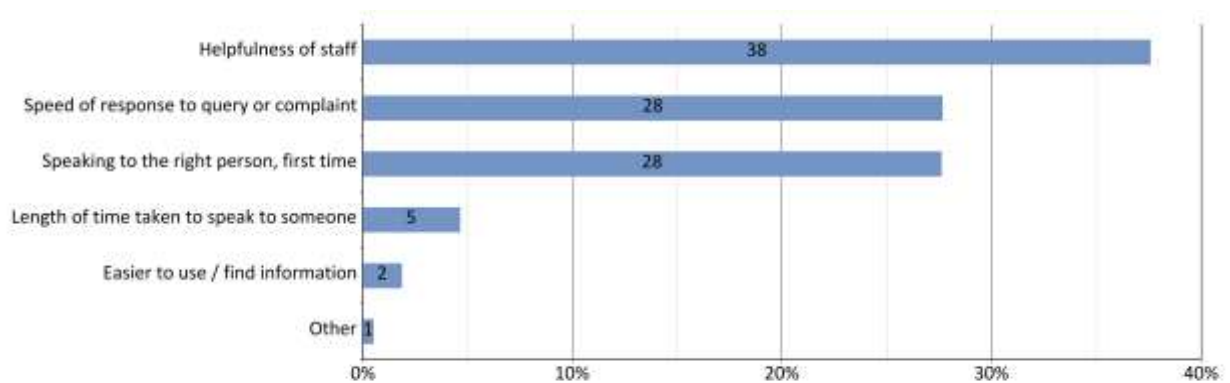


Figure 28:
Do you have regular access to the internet...?

Base: All Residents (293)

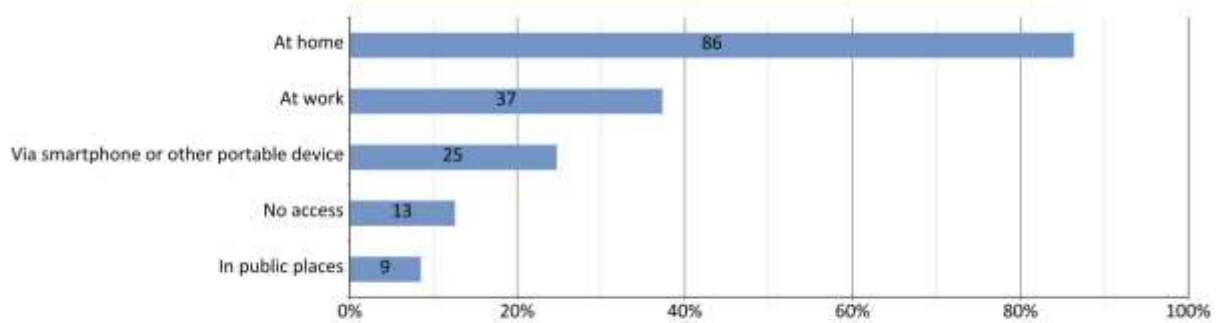


Figure 29:
Have you visited the NHDC website in the last 12 months?

Base: All Residents (289)

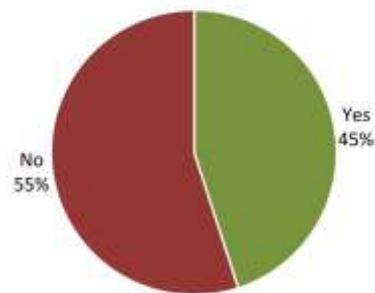


Figure 30:
How good or poor would you rate the NHDC website?

Base: All Residents who have visited the NHDC website in the last 12 months (120)

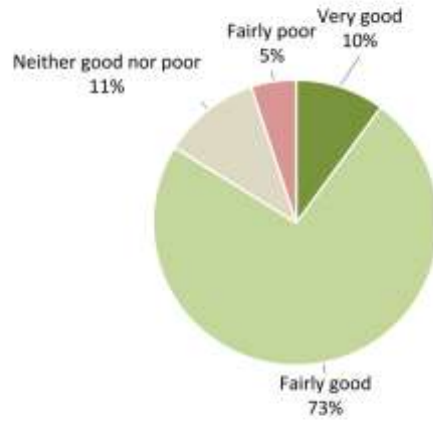


Figure 31:
Have you ever accessed any of the online services?

Base: All Residents (280)

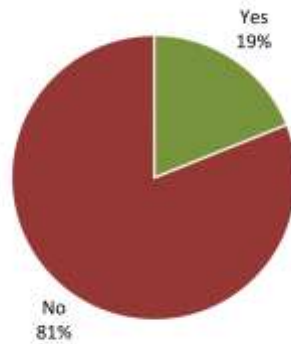


Figure 32:
Would you use these online services again?

Base: All Residents who have ever accessed any of the online services (51)

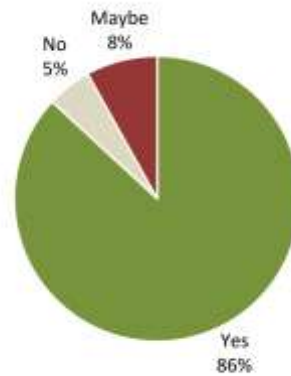


Figure 33:
Which of the following factors would stop you from using NHDC services online?

Base: All Residents (243)

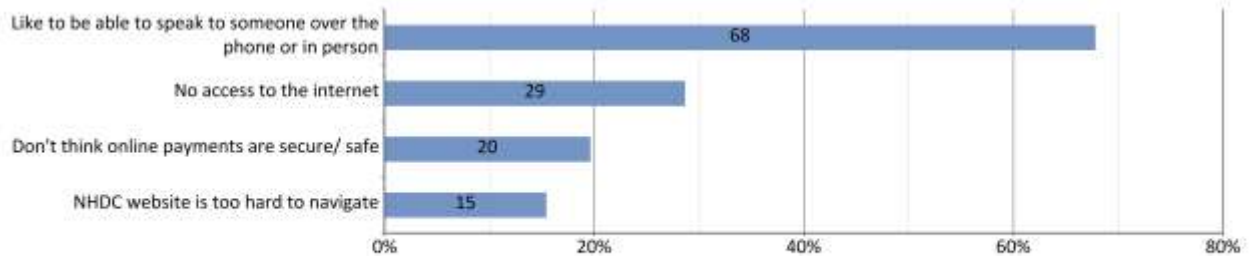


Figure 34:
Did you know that you can sign up to receive your annual Council Tax bill electronically (paperless)?

Base: All Residents (276)

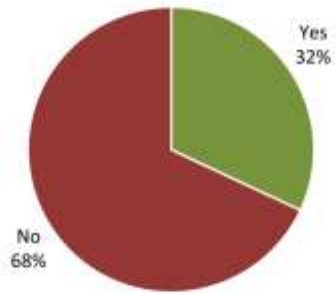
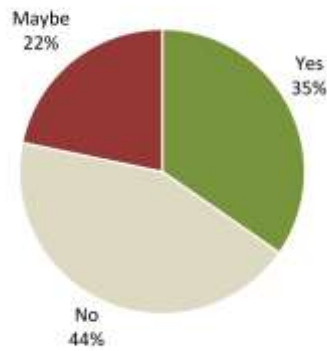


Figure 35:
Would you be prepared to sign up to receive your council tax bill electronically?

Base: All Residents (286)



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