BMG – draft report
North Hertfordshire District Council

Prepared for:
Ashley Hawkins

Table of contents

1 Executive Summary

1.1.1 Outlined below is a summary of the key BV Indicators over time. To comply with Audit Commission requirements, the figures are based on those providing a valid response (i.e. excluding 'don't know' and non-respondents).

Best value user satisfaction performance indicators General survey			
	2006 %	2003 %	2000 %
BV3: The way the authority runs things			
BV3: % satisfied with the way the Authority runs things	54	54	66
BV4: Complaints handling			
BV4: % satisfied with the handling of complaints	32	32	36
BV89: Litter			
BV89: % satisfied that the Authority has kept the land clear of litter and rubbish	74	62	71
BV90: Waste			
BV90a: % satisfied with the waste collection service overall	90	89	89
BV90b: % satisfied with the provision of local waste recycling facilities	71	64	61
BV119: Cultural and recreational services			
BV119a: % satisfied with sports and leisure facilities and events	66	51	52
BV119b: % satisfied with libraries	77	71	N/A
BV119c: % satisfied with museums and galleries	52	49	49
BV119d: % satisfied with theatres and concert halls	43	46	N/A
BV119e: % satisfied with parks and open spaces	75	72	60

1.1.2 Satisfaction with 'the way that the local authority runs things' and 'the handling of complaints' is consistent with the level achieved in 2003, but remaining slightly lower than the figures achieved in 2000.

1.1.3 Satisfaction that 'the authority has kept the land clear of litter and rubbish' now stands at 74%, representing an improvement on the 2003 level (62%) and exceeding the higher 2000 level (71%).

1.1.4 Overall satisfaction with the waste collection service remains consistently high at 90%. Satisfaction with the provision of waste recycling facilities has climbed steadily since 2000, and now stands at 71%.

1.1.5 Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities has increased to 66% since 2003 (51%) and 2000 (52%). There are similar increases in relation to libraries (risen from 71% in 2003 to 77%); museums and galleries (risen from 49% in 2000 and 2003 to 52%) and parks and open spaces (risen from 60% in 2000 to 75%).

1.1.6 Satisfaction with theatres and concert halls has fallen slightly since 2003 (46%), and now stands at 43%.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background and method

2.1.1 This report summarises the results of the North Hertfordshire District Council's Best Value General Survey, conducted amongst 1,532 local residents, via a self-completion postal survey carried out between September and December 2006.

2.1.2 It also provides comparisons with previous BVPI results for 2003 and 2000.

2.1.3 The target population for the survey was the adult population (18+) of North Herfordshire, and the sample was drawn from the Postcode Address File (PAF) sample frame as supplied by Audit Commission.

2.1.4 The methodology was implemented according to ODPM guidelines and as such included two reminder mailings.

2.1.5 The initial mailing of 3,200 North Hertfordshire residents took place on 27th September 2006, and following this, those respondents who had not returned a completed questionnaire were re-mailed.

2.1.6 The second mailing was sent on 25th October 2006, and the third mailing on 17th November 2006. The final cut off for return of surveys was 2nd December 2006.

2.1.7 In total 1,532 usable completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 48%. Once the 'deadwood' in the sampling frame has been removed (i.e. post office returns), the response rate remains at 48%.

2.1.8 On an observed statistic of 50%, a sample size of 1,532 is subject to a maximum standard error of +/-2.5% at the 95% level of confidence.

2.2 Report contents

2.2.1 This report contains a written summary of the findings of the survey, highlighting those statistics required to be reported to Audit Commission. Indicators are calculated 'where provided a response', thus excluding respondents who 'don't know' or simply do not answer the relevant question. This reduces sample bases in most instances.

2.2.2 Graphs and tables are used throughout the report to assist explanation and analysis. Although occasional anomalies appear due to 'rounding' differences, these are never more than +/-1%. These occur where rating scales have been added to calculate proportions of respondents who are satisfied at all (i.e. either very or fairly satisfied).

2.2.3 All the data included in this report have been weighted by household size, age and gender in order to provide a sample that is representative of the area. The weighting process was carried out by the Audit Commission's sub-contractors, Cobalt Sky.

2.3 Data reporting

2.3.1 A separate data report is available, containing cross-tabulations by the following:

- Gender;
- Age;
- Employment status;
- Disability status;
- Ethnicity;
- Length of time lived in area;
- Overall satisfaction (BV3);
- Tenancy

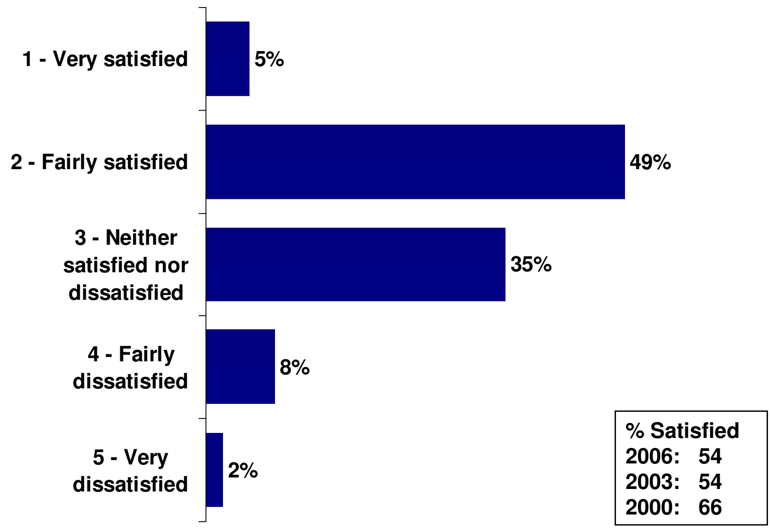
3 Corporate health

3.1 Overall satisfaction with the way the authority runs things

3.1.1 Respondents were asked, taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the way the authority runs things.

3.1.2 Over half (54%) of all respondents rate themselves as satisfied, which is consistent with 2003, but remains 12% down on the 2000 figure. The proportion of respondents rating themselves as dissatisfied is at 11%.

(Q15 – BV3) Overall satisfaction with the way the authority runs things (valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1439/1447

3.1.3 The levels of satisfaction is the similar for men (52%) as it is for women (55%), but appears to increase with age, with 63% of those aged over 65 years satisfied compared to 48% of those aged 25-44 years.

3.2 How the way the authority runs things has changed

3.2.1 Respondents were also asked, thinking about the way the authority runs things, whether they think this has got better or worse over the last three years, or whether it has stayed the same.

3.2.2 Whilst one in eight (12%) of those responding felt that things had improved over the last 3 years, a similar proportion (14%) felt that things have got worse over this period. The majority of respondents (75%) however felt that the way things are run remained the same.

3.2.3 A higher proportion of women (13%) than men (10%) are of the opinion that things have improved over the past 3 years.

4 How the council performs overall

4.1.1 Respondents were asked to consider a number of things other people have said about their council, and to rate the extent to which they think each one applies to their council.

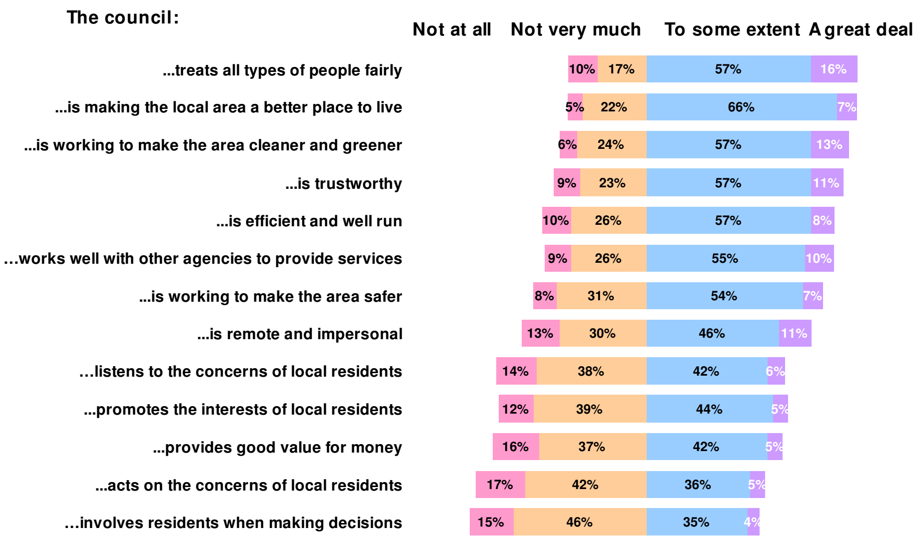
4.1.2 Overall, almost three quarters of respondents express agreement that the council treats all types of people fairly (73% a great deal/to some extent), is making the local area a better place to live (73%), and is working to make the area cleaner and greener (70%).

4.1.3 However, perceptions are less strong in relation to providing value for money (47% a great deal/to some extent, compared to 53% not very much/not at all).

4.1.4 Opinions are divided in relation to promoting the interests of local residents (49% a great deal/to some extent, compared to 51% not very much/not at all) in terms of acting on the concerns of local residents (42% a great deal/to some extent, compared to 58% not very much/not at all), and is efficient and well run (64% a great deal/to some extent, compared to 36% not very much/not at all).

4.1.5 Similarly, opinions are divided in relation to whether or not the council involves residents when making decisions (40% a great deal/to some extent, compared to 60% not very much/not at all), listens to the concerns of residents (48% a great deal/to some extent compared to 52% not very much/not at all) and whether the council works well with other agencies to promote services (65% to some/a great extent, compared to 35% not very much/not at all).

(Q27) How the council performs overall (valid responses only)



Bases vary

5 Contact with the council

5.1 Satisfaction with complaints handling

5.1.1 One in six respondents (17%) report that they have contacted the authority with a complaint in the last twelve months.

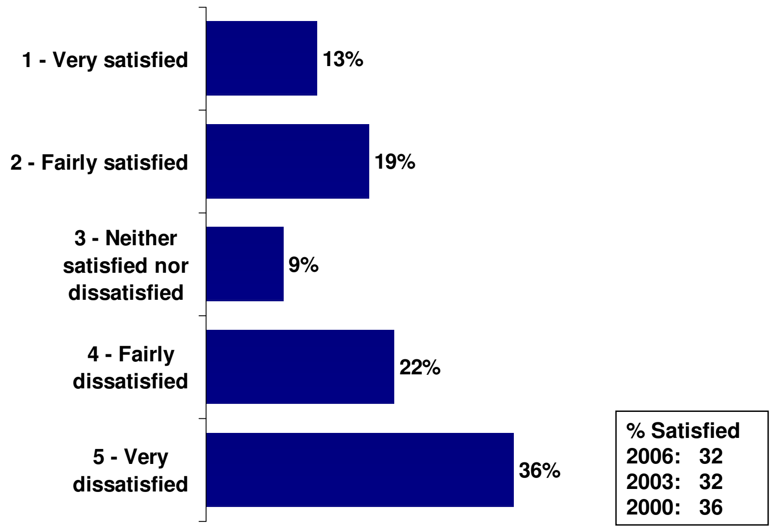
5.1.2 This figure is higher amongst those with a disability (22% compared to 16% of those without).

5.1.3 Those who have made a complaint were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the way in which their complaint was handled. Responses to this question should be viewed with some caution, as experience shows us that satisfaction with the way a complaint is handled can be significantly affected by the outcome of the complaint, rather than purely how it was handled.

5.1.4 Amongst all complainants providing a valid response, a third (32%) rate themselves as satisfied with how their complaint was handled, which is consistent with 2003 (32%), but remaining slightly down on 2000 (36%).

5.1.5 Three in five (59%) rate themselves as dissatisfied with how their complaint was handled.

(Q20 – BV4) Satisfaction with complaints handling (complainants valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 258/256

5.2 Satisfaction with other types of contact with council

5.2.1 Over half (54%) of respondents report that they have contacted the council other than to complain in the last twelve months.

5.2.2 This figure is higher amongst Council tenants 69% compared to 53% of owner/occupiers and 56% of non-council tenants).

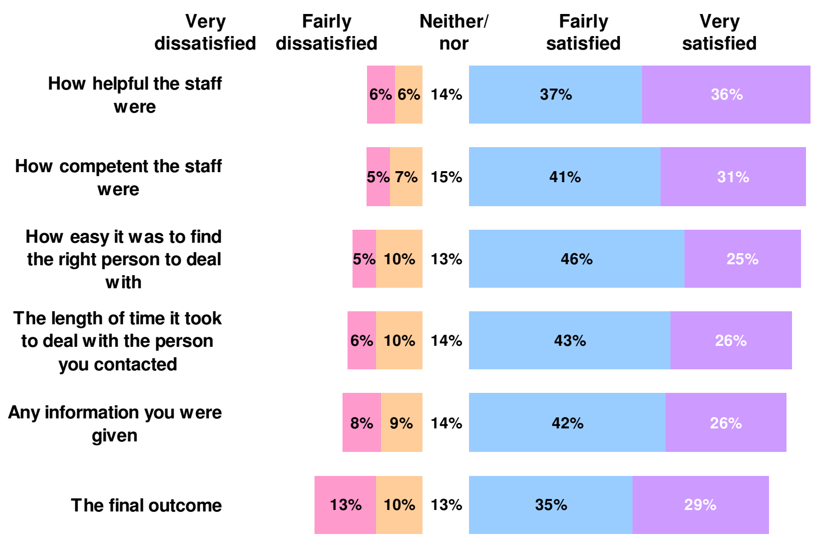
5.2.3 When asked the reason for their most recent contact with the council, a higher proportion said it was to ask for advice/obtain information (19%) than said it was to report an issue or problem (17%) or to apply to use a service (13%).

5.2.4 When asked how they made contact with the council on their most recent contact, the highest proportion said they made contact by telephone (42%), one in nine (11%) in person (and the same proportion made contact by letter), 5% by email, and 3% via the website.

5.2.5 (Question 23). Those respondents who have contacted the council other than to complain in the last twelve months were asked to rate their satisfaction with a range of aspects of the service received.

5.2.6 In general, responses are positive, with a majority satisfied to some degree with each of the aspects, and less than a fifth dissatisfied, with the exception of 'the final outcome'. Apart from the final outcome, most dissatisfaction was shown with 'the information given' (17%).

(Q23) Satisfaction with aspects of service received (valid responses only)



Bases vary

5.2.7 Within this battery of questions, respondents were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the final outcome of their contact with the council.

5.2.8 While almost two thirds (64%) of those who have made contact with the council for reasons other than to complain, and who provide a valid response, are satisfied with the final outcome of their contact, almost a quarter (23%) are dissatisfied, including one in eight (13%) who are very dissatisfied.

6 Information provision

6.1 How well informed residents feel

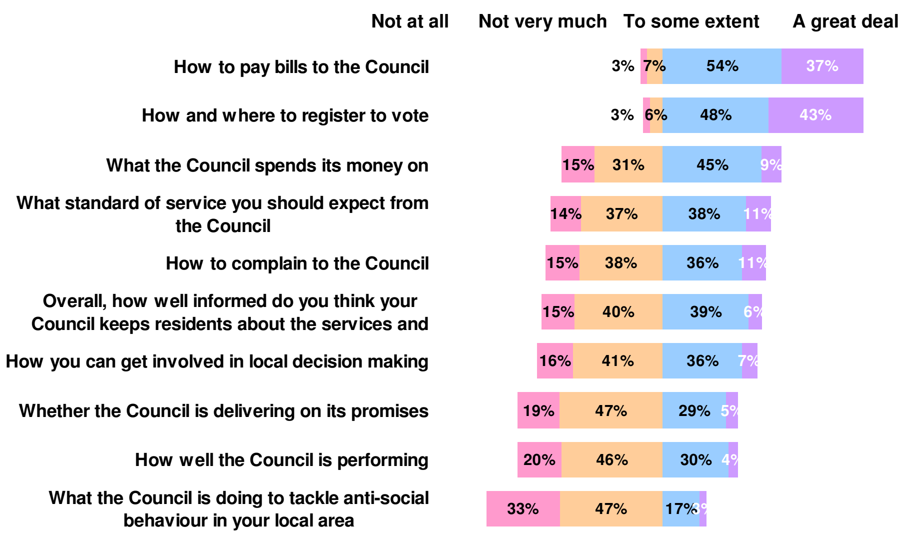
How well informed residents feel about specific aspects of services

6.1.1 All respondents were asked to rate how well informed they feel about a range of aspects of council service provision.

6.1.2 The aspects fall into three clear groups:

- Those where a majority of residents feel fairly or very well informed, which focus around actions required by residents: e.g. how and where to register to vote and how to pay bills to the council;
- Those where views are more balanced: e.g. what standard of service you should expect, how to complain, what the council spends its money on and how they can get involved in local decision making.
- Those where a large majority do not feel well informed, which relate to more abstract aspects of council performance, and its role in tackling anti-social behaviour: how well it is performing, whether it is delivering on its promises, and what it is doing to tackle anti-social behaviour.

(Q16) How well informed residents feel about specific issues (valid responses only)



Bases vary

6.1.3 Within this section of the questionnaire, residents were also asked to rate overall how well informed they feel the council keeps them about the services and benefits it provides.

6.1.4 Reflecting how well informed they feel about the specific aspects discussed above, while 45% feel the council keeps them very or fairly well informed, the remainder, over half (55%) feel they do not keep them well informed, including 15% who feel they do not keep them well informed at all.

6.1.5 Feeling that the council keeps them very or fairly well informed is higher than average amongst women than men (47% compared to 42%) and amongst older people (62% of those aged 65 or more feel well-informed compared to 51% of those aged 45-64 and 35% of those aged 25-44 years).

6.2 Sources of information about the council

6.2.1 Respondents were asked the main source they use for finding out about the council.

6.2.2 Slightly more respondents say they use information provided by the council (34%) as use the local media (25%). Relatively few respondents (10%) currently use the council website and word of mouth is used by 7%. Only 5% say they have direct contact with the council, and just 1% consider their local Councillor to be their main source of information.

6.2.3 Not surprisingly, the council's website is largely a source consulted by younger respondents (13% of 18 to 34 year olds compared to 8% of 35 to 54 year olds and 1% of 55+ year olds).

6.2.4 Council tenants are most likely to find out about the council from information provided by the council (47%).

7 Refuse and recycling services

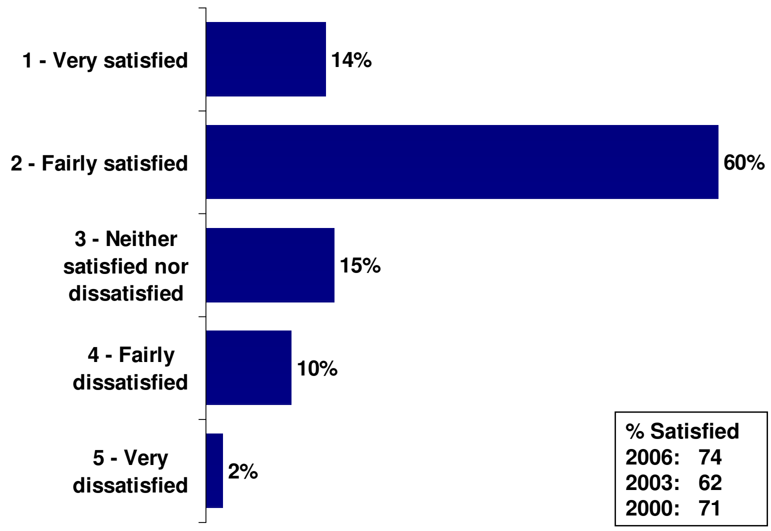
7.1 Keeping land clear of litter and refuse

BV89 – Satisfaction with keeping land clear of litter and refuse

7.1.1 Respondents were reminded that the council has a duty to keep all open public land that it controls clear of litter and refuse, and asked to rate their level of satisfaction that the council has done so.

7.1.2 Results show an increase in levels of satisfaction from those reported in 2003 (62%), with 74% now expressing a level of satisfaction. This is also slightly higher than the level reported in the 2000 results (71%).

(Q6 – BV89) Satisfaction with keeping this land clear of litter and refuse (valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1495/1497

7.1.3 Of those providing a response, one in six (17%) of respondents feel the council's keeping land clear of litter and refuse has improved over the last three years, while around one in seven (15%) feel it has got worse.

7.2 Household waste collection

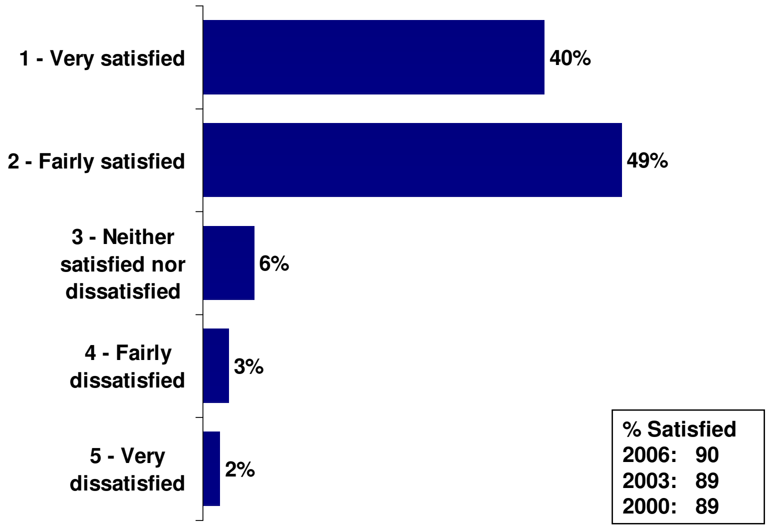
BV90a – Satisfaction with household waste collection overall

7.2.1 Respondents were reminded that the council undertakes a weekly collection of general household waste, and were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a number of elements of the service, as well as the service overall.

7.2.2 In terms of overall satisfaction with the household waste collection, the vast majority (90%) of respondents who provided a response report that they are either very or fairly satisfied. This is consistent with satisfaction ratings achieved in the 2003 and 2000 BVPI surveys, 89% and 89% satisfaction levels respectively. Only 4% expressed a level of dissatisfaction.

7.2.3 This is supported by the fact that amongst respondents providing a response, two thirds (66%) feel the household waste collection service has stayed the same over the last three years, while a third (30%) feel it has got better.

(Q7 – BV90a) Satisfaction with waste collection service overall (valid responses only)



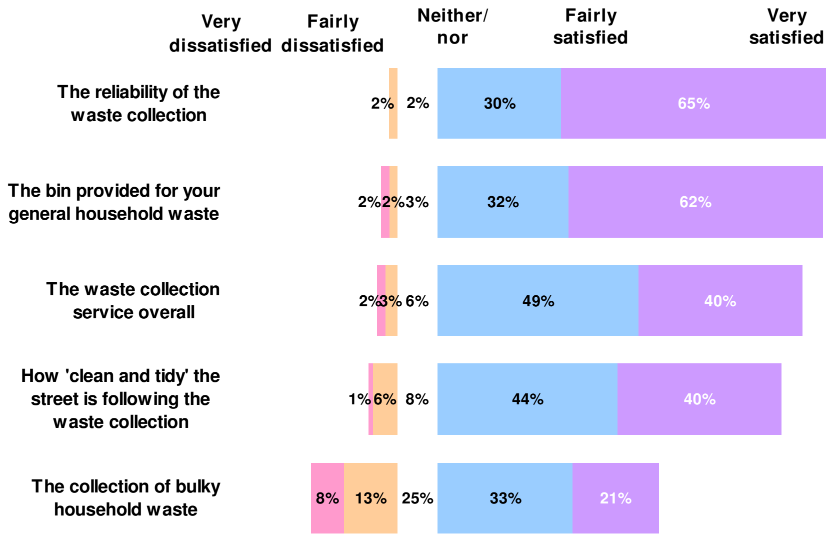
UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1466/1480

Satisfaction with aspects of household waste collection

7.2.4 Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with specific aspects of the household waste collection service.

7.2.5 Satisfaction ratings are generally positive. However, just over a fifth (22%) of respondents providing a rating express dissatisfaction with 'the collection of bulky household waste'.

(Q7) Satisfaction with aspects of household waste collection (valid responses only)



Bases vary

7.3 Provision of local waste recycling facilities

BV90b – Satisfaction with provision of local waste recycling facilities

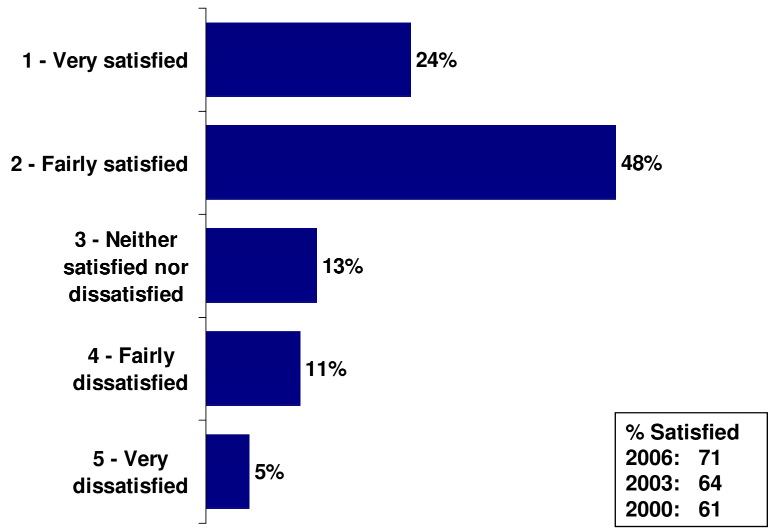
7.3.1 Respondents were reminded that the council provides a range of local recycling facilities.

7.3.2 They were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a number of elements of the service, as well as the service overall.

7.3.3 In terms of overall satisfaction with the provision of local waste recycling facilities, seven in ten (71%) of respondents who provide a response report that they are either very or fairly satisfied. This represents an increase on the ratings achieved in the 2003 (64%) and 2000 (61%) BVPI surveys. Just over one in ten (16%) express dissatisfaction with the service overall.

7.3.4 Encouraging, just over two fifths (43%) of respondents feel that the service has improved over the last three years, and only 5% are of the view that it has got worse.

(Q9 – BV90b) Satisfaction with the provision of local recycling facilities overall (valid responses only)

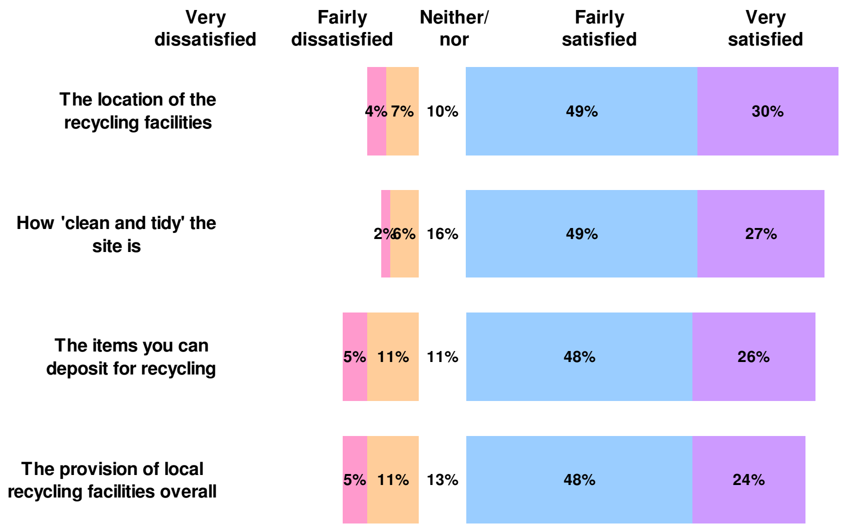


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1379/1404

Satisfaction with aspects of local recycling facilities

7.3.5 Levels of satisfaction with the location of the facilities, the cleanliness and tidiness of the site, the items that can be deposited, and the provision of facilities overall are all relatively high (78%, 76%, 74% and 71% respectively).

(Q9) Satisfaction with aspects of local recycling facilities (valid responses only)



Bases vary

7.4 Doorstep recycling collection

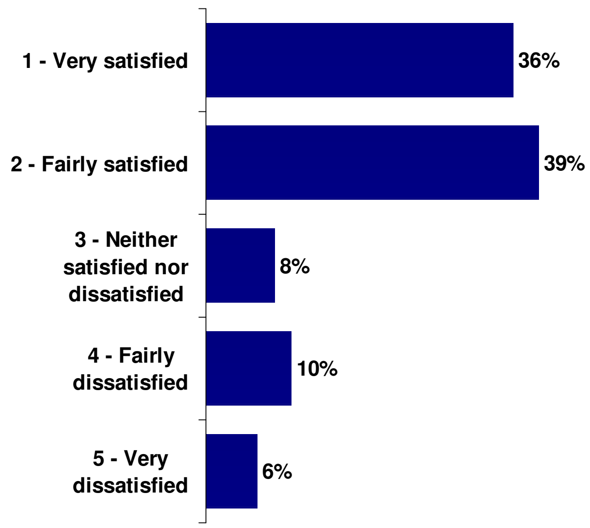
Satisfaction with doorstep recycling collection

7.4.1 Respondents were reminded that the council undertakes a regular collection of waste for recycling, and were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a number of elements of the service, and the service overall.

7.4.2 In terms of overall satisfaction with the doorstep recycling collection, three quarters of respondents (75%) who provide a response report that they are either very or fairly satisfied.

7.4.3 It is very encouraging to note half (50%) of respondents providing a response feel the service has improved over the last three years, and only 5% feel it has got worse.

(Q8) Satisfaction with the service for collection of items for recycling overall (valid responses only)



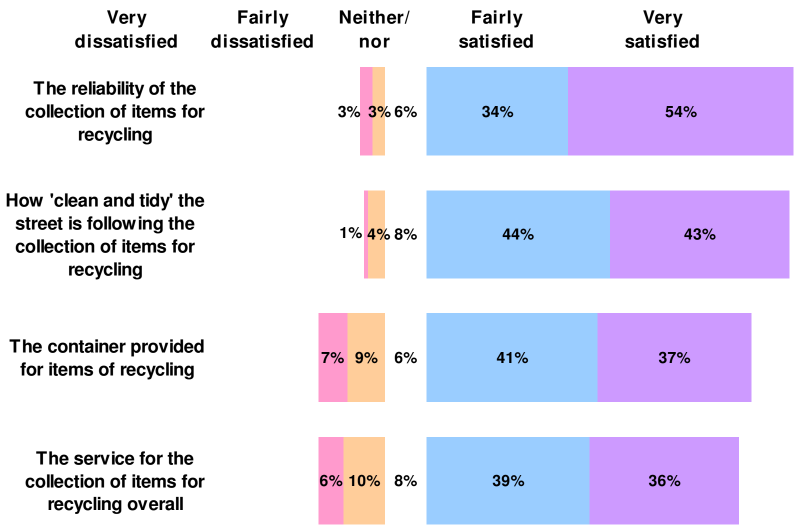
UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1419/1432

Satisfaction with aspects of doorstep recycling collection

7.4.4 By considering satisfaction with specific aspects of the doorstep recycling collection demonstrates the high level of satisfaction that exists with ‘the reliability of the collection of items for recycling’, ‘the provision of a container for items of recycling’ and ‘cleanliness of the street after collection’.

7.4.5 88% are satisfied with the reliability of the service and just 6% are dissatisfied. 87% are satisfied with the cleanliness of the street after collection and only 6% dissatisfied, while 78% are satisfied with the container provided and 16% dissatisfied.

(Q8) Satisfaction with aspects doorstep recycling collection (valid responses only)



Bases vary

8 Cultural and recreational facilities

8.1.1 Respondents were informed that the council directly supports cultural and recreational activities and venues, and that its licensing and planning responsibilities also make a difference to the level of private and voluntary cultural provision. They were then asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a range of cultural and recreational activities and venues.

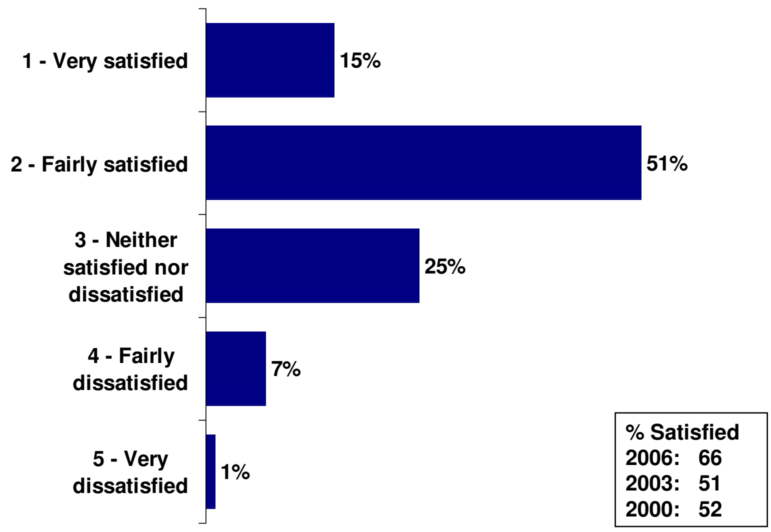
8.2 Sports and leisure facilities

BV119a – Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities

8.2.1 The level of satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities at 66% is higher than that achieved in 2003 (51%), and just 8% are dissatisfied.

8.2.2 In line with the above finding, though almost two thirds (64%) of respondents providing a response feel that sports and leisure facilities have stayed the same over the last three years, more do feel that they have improved (27%) than feel they have deteriorated (9%).

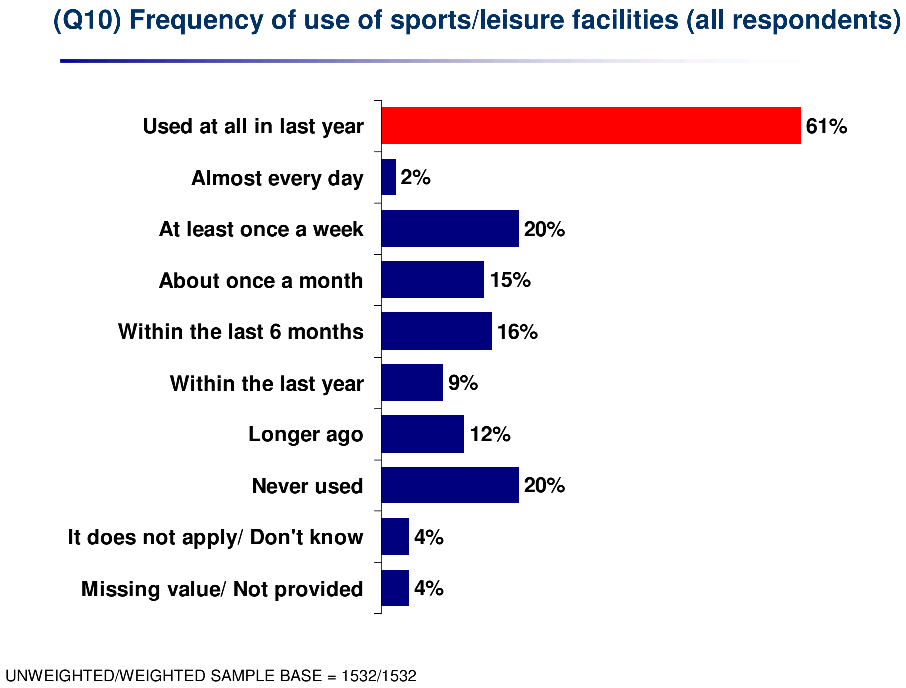
(Q10 – BV119a) Satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities (valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1423/1451

Frequency of use of sports and leisure facilities

8.2.3 Three fifths (61%) of all respondents report that they have used sports and leisure facilities in the last twelve months, including a fifth (20%) who report using such facilities at least weekly.



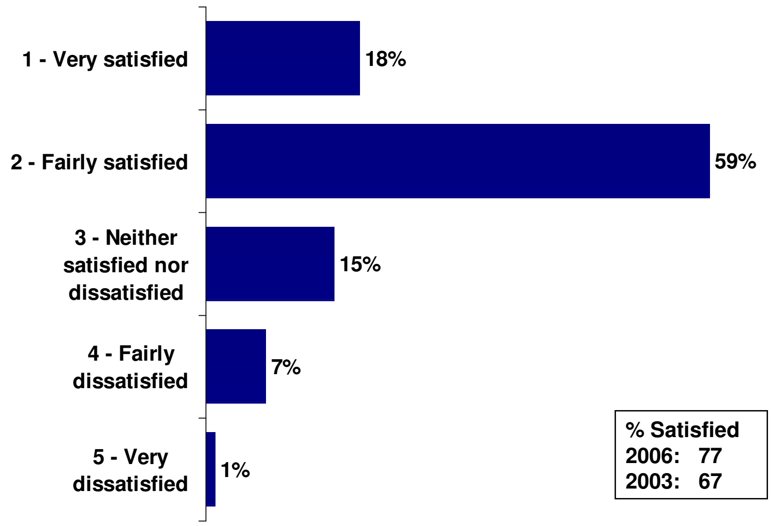
8.2.4 Levels of use of sports and leisure facilities are higher amongst the following respondent groups:

- Those aged 25-44 years (29% using at least once a week compared to 12% of 45 to 64 year olds and 8% of those aged 65 and over);
- Those in work (23% using at least once a week compared to 9% of those who are retired);
- Those without a disability (23% using at least once a week compared to 9% of those with a disability).

BV119au – Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities – users

8.2.5 Amongst users providing a response, over three quarters (77%) are either very or fairly satisfied, with one in twelve (8%) expressing a level of dissatisfaction.

(Q10 – BV119au) Satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities (users valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 817/928

`

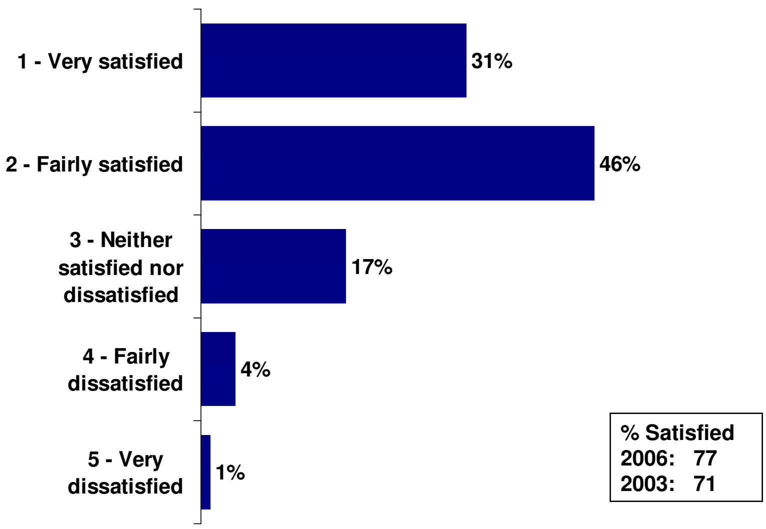
8.3 Libraries

BV119b – Satisfaction with libraries

8.3.1 The level of satisfaction with libraries at 77% is high and represents a small increase on the level reported in 2003 (71%).

8.3.2 Consistent with the above finding, slightly more respondents providing a response feel that libraries have got better over the last three years (13%) as compared to those who believe they have got worse (7%).

(Q10 – BV119b) Satisfaction with libraries (valid responses only)

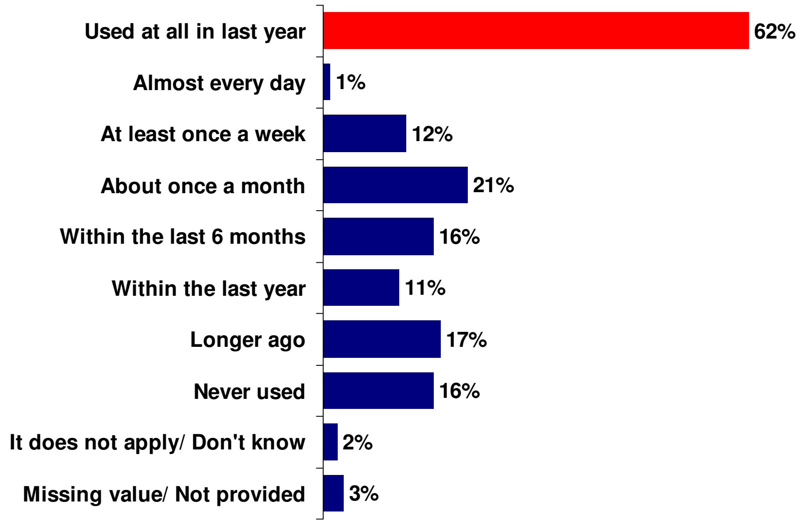


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1452/1471

Frequency of use of libraries

8.3.3 Just over three fifths (62%) of all respondents report that they have used library facilities in the last twelve months, including a third (34%) who report at least monthly use.

(Q11) Frequency of use of libraries (all respondents)

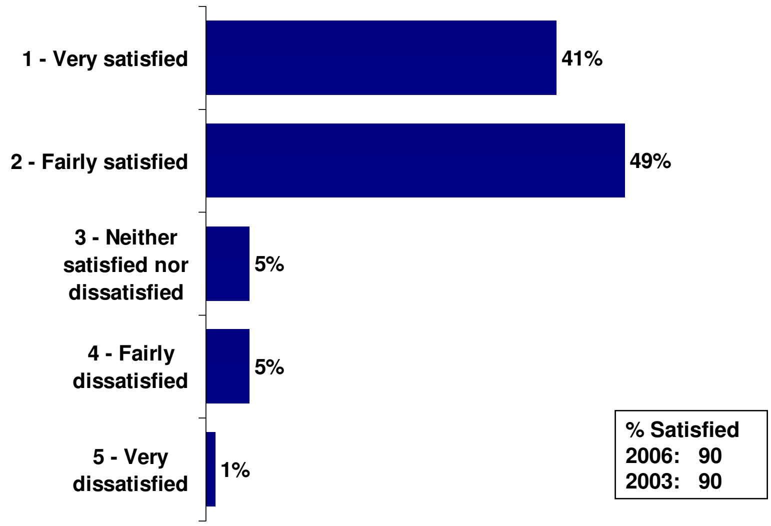


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1532/1532

BV119bu – Satisfaction with libraries – users

8.3.4 Amongst users providing a response, the vast majority (90%) are either very or fairly satisfied, with only one in twenty (5%) expressing a level of dissatisfaction.

(Q10 – BV119bu) Satisfaction with libraries (users valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 927/932

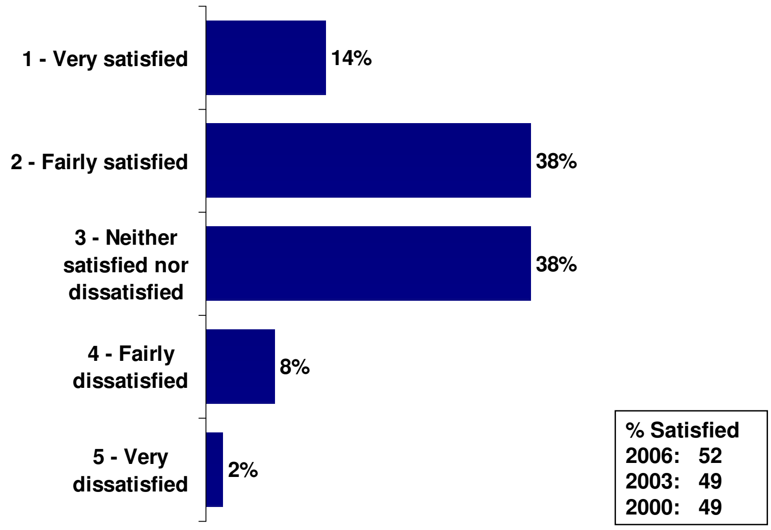
8.4 Museums and galleries

BV119c – Satisfaction with museums and galleries

8.4.1 With 52% satisfied and 10% dissatisfied, the level of satisfaction with museums and galleries is similar to that recorded in 2003.

8.4.2 While the majority (91%) of respondents providing a response feel that museums and galleries have stayed the same over the last three years, views amongst the remainder are equally split as to whether they feel that they have deteriorated (5%) or that they have improved (5%).

(Q10 – BV119c) Satisfaction with museums and galleries (valid responses only)

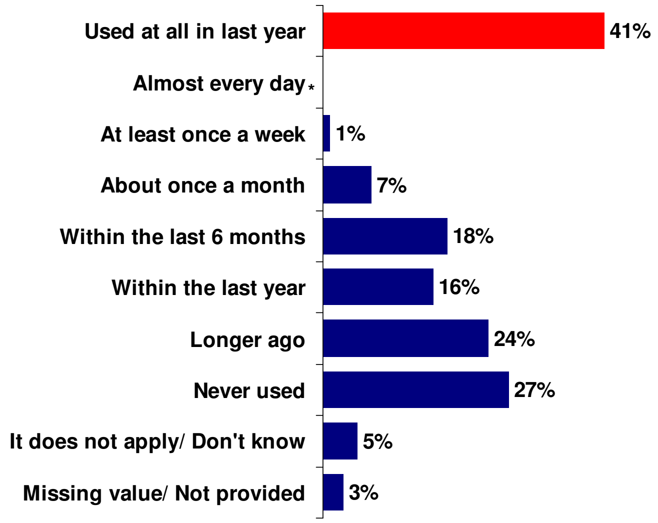


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1429/1455

Frequency of use of museums and galleries

8.4.3 Two fifths (41%) of respondents report that they have visited a museum or gallery in the last twelve months, with a quarter of these having visited within the last six months (26%).

(Q11) Frequency of use of museums and galleries (all respondents)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1532/1532

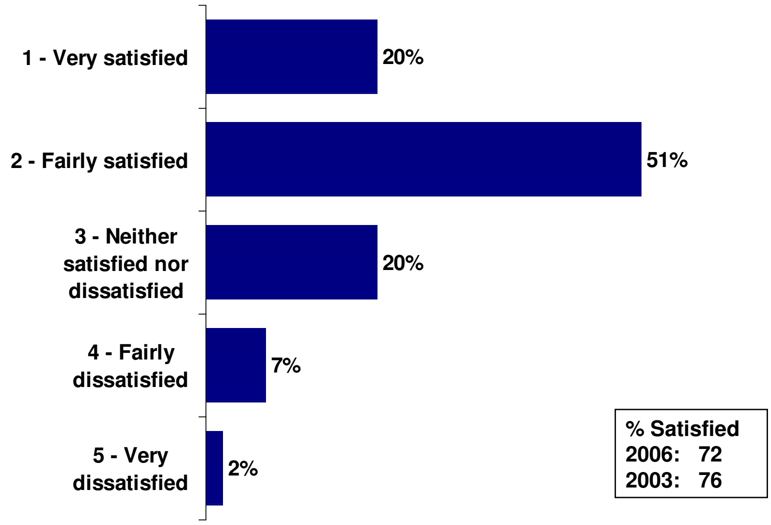
8.4.4 Levels of use of museums and galleries are higher amongst the following respondent groups:

- Middle age groups (49% of those aged 45-64 years, compared to 38% of those aged 25 to 44 and 36% of those aged 65 or over);
- People without a disability (42%, compared to 36% of those with a disability.

BV119cu – Satisfaction with museums and galleries – users

8.4.5 Amongst users providing a response, just over seven in ten respondents (72%) are satisfied to a degree, whilst just 8% express a level of dissatisfaction.

(Q10 – BV119cu) Satisfaction with museums and galleries (users valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 619/612

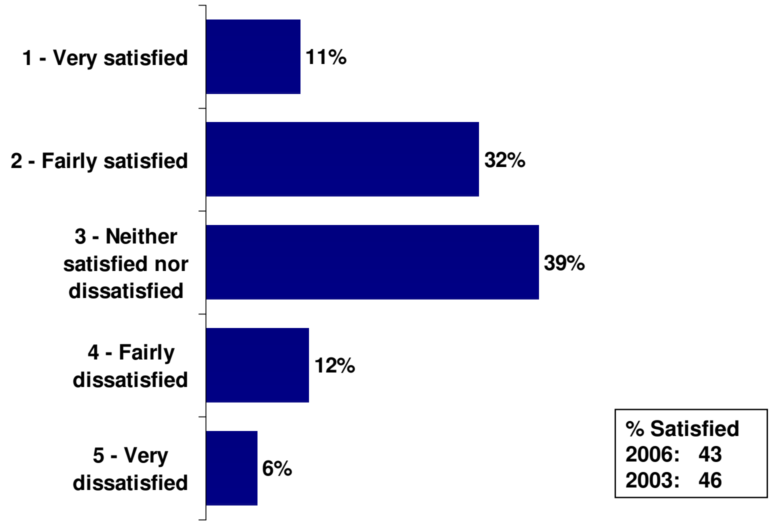
8.5 Theatres and concert halls

BV119d – Satisfaction with theatres and concert halls

8.5.1 Satisfaction levels with the theatres and concert halls are divided with just over two fifths (43%) satisfied and almost one fifth (18%) dissatisfied. Satisfaction levels are very slightly on 2003 (46%).

8.5.2 Certainly, while the majority (85%) of respondents providing a response feel that theatres and concert halls have stayed the same over the last three years, more do feel that they have deteriorated (10%) than feel they have improved (5%).

(Q10 – BV119d) Satisfaction with theatres/concert halls (valid responses only)

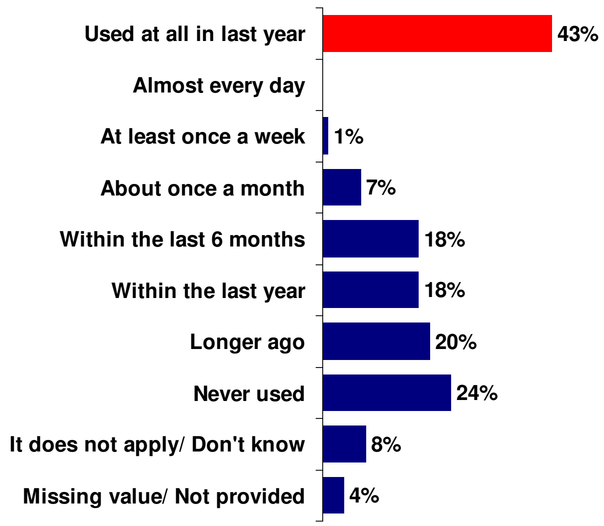


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1437/1466

Frequency of use of theatres and concert halls

8.5.3 Just over two fifths (43%) of all respondents report that they have visited a theatre or concert hall in the last twelve months, with most of these having visited within the last six months (26%).

(Q11) Frequency of use of theatres/concert halls (all respondents)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1532/1532

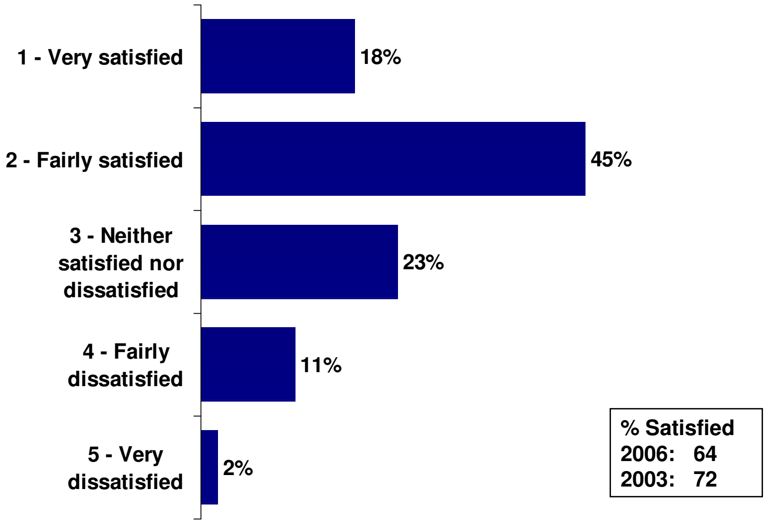
8.5.4 Levels of use of theatres and concert halls are higher amongst the following respondent groups:

- Middle age groups (51% of 45-64 year olds compared to 41% of 25-44 year olds and 37% of those aged 65 plus).

BV119du – Satisfaction with theatres and concert halls – users

8.5.5 Amongst users providing a response, almost two thirds (64%) are satisfied to a degree, including almost one fifth (18%) who are very satisfied. One in eight (13%) express a level of dissatisfaction.

(Q10 – BV119du) Satisfaction with theatres/concert halls (users valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 623/653

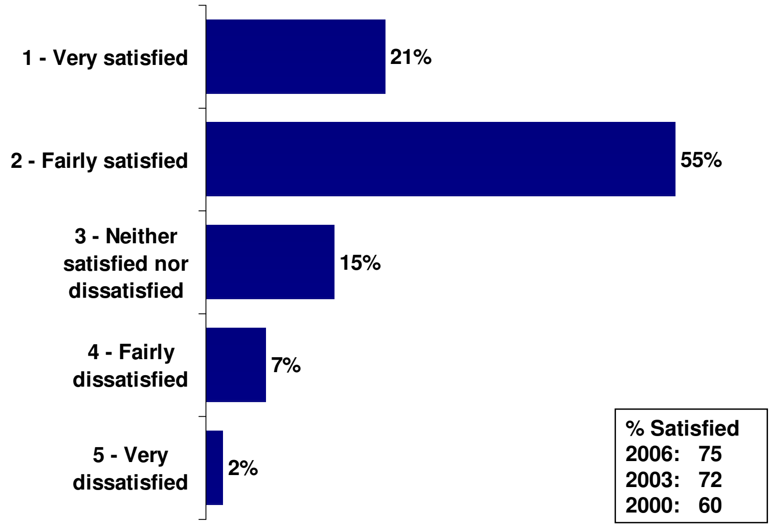
8.6 Parks and open spaces

BV119e – Satisfaction with parks and open spaces

8.6.1 Satisfaction with parks and open spaces is relatively high at 75% of all respondents, with just 10% dissatisfied. This is slightly up on the results from 2003 (72% satisfaction).

8.6.2 While the majority (77%) of respondents providing a response feel that parks and open spaces have stayed the same over the last three years, the proportion feeling they have improved (15%) is slightly greater than the proportion (9%) that feel they have deteriorated.

(Q10 – BV119e) Satisfaction with parks and open spaces (valid responses only)

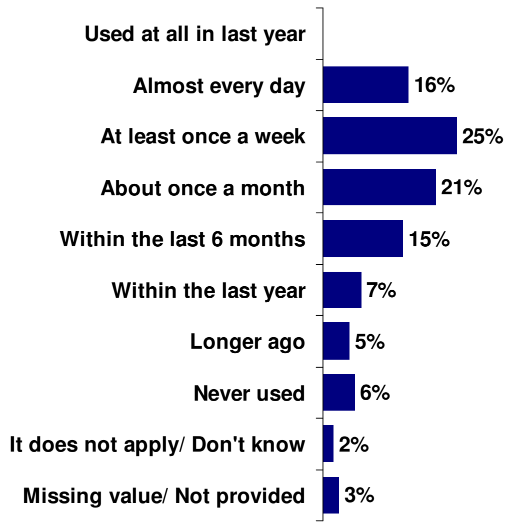


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1467/1485

Frequency of use of parks and open spaces

8.6.3 Over four in five (84%) respondents report that they have visited a park or open space in the last twelve months, including two in five (41%) who report at least weekly use.

(Q11) Frequency of use of parks and open spaces (all respondents)

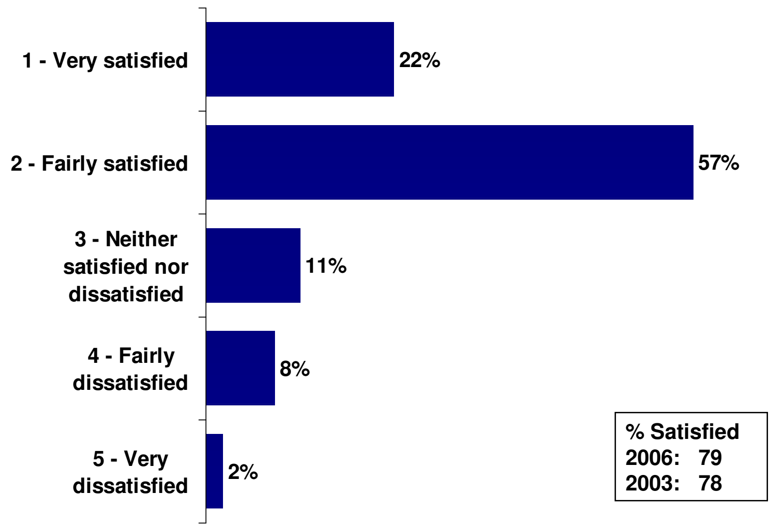


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1532/1532

BV119eu – Satisfaction with parks and open spaces – users

8.6.4 Amongst users providing a response, four fifths (79%) are satisfied to a degree, including over half (57%) who are fairly satisfied. This compares with the 10% of respondents who have expressed a level of dissatisfaction.

(Q10 – BV119eu) Satisfaction with parks and open spaces (users valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1228/1281

9 Housing services

Use of housing services

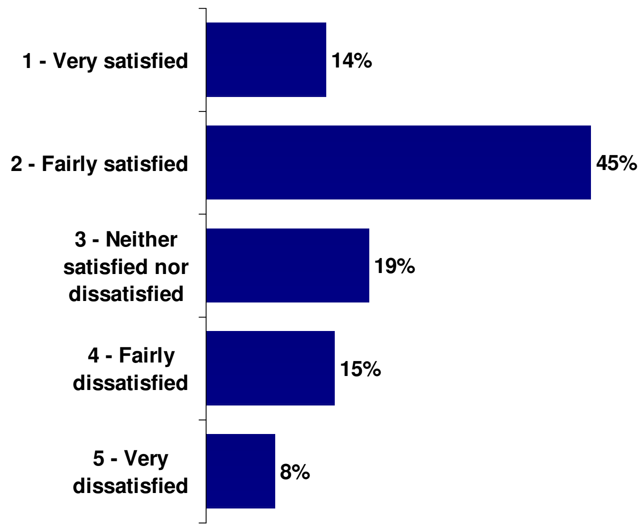
9.1.1 One in seven (15%) of respondents report using the housing services provided by the council in the last twelve months.

Satisfaction with housing services – users

9.1.2 Amongst users of housing services, over half (59%) of those providing a response are either very or fairly satisfied, and one in five (19%) are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

9.1.3 However, over one fifth (22%) express a level of dissatisfaction, including 8% who are very dissatisfied.

(Q13) Satisfaction with Housing services (users valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 261/230

10 Planning services

Use of planning services

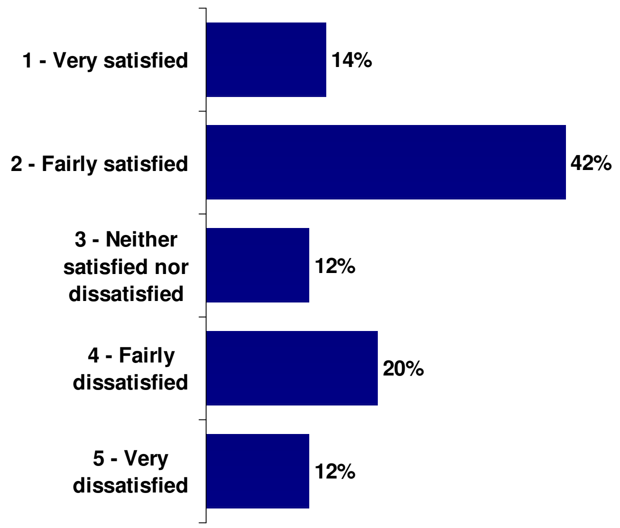
10.1.1 One in six (17%) of all respondents report using the planning services provided by the council in the last twelve months.

Satisfaction with planning services – users

10.1.2 Amongst users of planning services, almost three fifths (56%) of those providing a response are either very or fairly satisfied, with one in seven (14%) very satisfied. One in eight (12%) are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

10.1.3 A third (32%) express a level of dissatisfaction, with one in eight (12%) being very dissatisfied.

(Q13) Satisfaction with planning services (users valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 243/253

11 Quality of life and community cohesion

11.1 Most important factors in making somewhere a good place to live

11.1.1 All respondents were asked to specify from a list the five aspects that are most important in making somewhere a good place to live. The table overleaf summarises the responses, and reveals that the level of crime (58%), health services (48%), clean streets (38%), education provision (37%) and affordable decent housing (32%) are the issues mentioned most often.

(Q1) Most important factors in making somewhere a good place to live (all respondents)

	2006 %
The level of crime	58
Clean streets	38
Health services	48
Affordable decent housing	32
Public transport	24
Shopping facilities	26
Education provision	37
Parks and open spaces	27
Activities for teenagers	17
The level of traffic congestion	24
Road and pavement repairs	19
Job prospects	16
Facilities for young children	11
Wage levels & local cost of living	9
Access to nature	20
The level of pollution	13
Race relations	3
Sports & leisure facilities	12
Community activities	8
Cultural facilities (e.g. cinemas, museums)	11
Other	2
None	*
Don't know/not provided	*
Weighted/unweighted base	1532/1532

* Statistically insignificant

11.2 Factors that most need improving

11.2.1 All respondents were then asked to specify from a list five aspects that most need improving in the local area. The table overleaf summarises the responses, and reveals that road and pavement repairs (48%), activities for teenagers (47%), the level of traffic congestion (35%), the level of crime and public transport (both 28%), and affordable decent housing and shopping facilities (both 25%) are the factors identified as priorities for improvement.

(Q2) Factors that most need improving (all respondents)

	2006 %
The level of crime	28
Clean streets	18
Activities for teenagers	47
Road and pavement repairs	48
The level of traffic congestion	35
Facilities for young children	13
Affordable decent housing	25
Job prospects	12
Shopping facilities	25
Community activities	12
Public transport	28
Sports & leisure facilities	11
Health services	21
The level of pollution	9
Parks and open spaces	9
Wage levels & local cost of living	11
Education provision	7
Cultural facilities (e.g. cinemas, museums)	16
Race relations	2
Access to nature	3
Other	4
None	1
Don't know/not provided	1
Weighted/unweighted base	1532/1532

11.3 Priorities for improvement

11.3.1 When these two measures – aspects that are most important in making somewhere a good place to live, and aspects that most need improving – are plotted against each other it is possible to identify those areas that are perceived by respondents to be the Council's key strengths, and also those that are regarded as priorities for improvement, i.e. that are both important and in need of improvement (see chart overleaf).

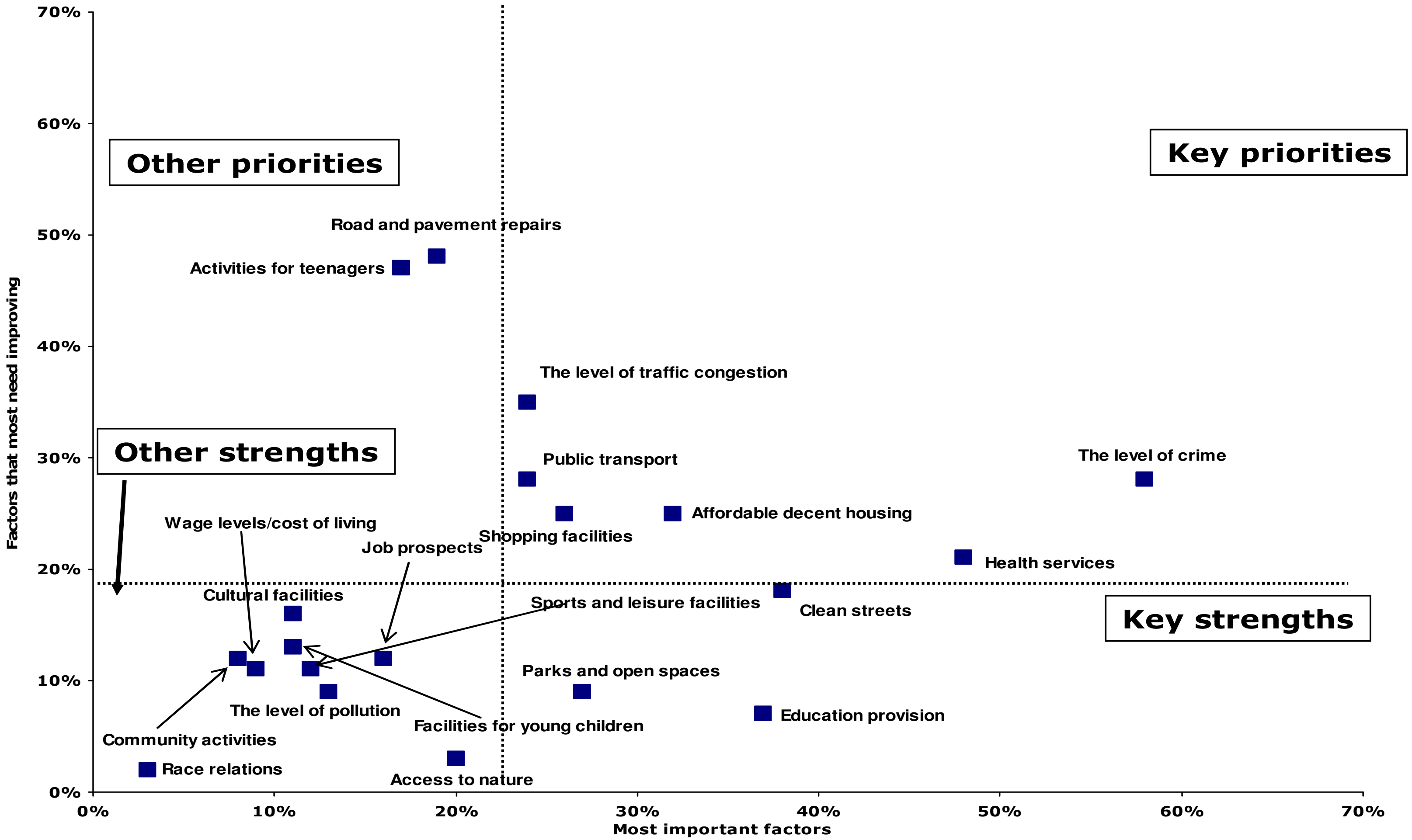
11.3.2 Key strengths are:

- Clean streets
- Parks and open spaces
- Education provision

11.3.3 Factors identified as priorities for improvement are :-

- Level of crime
- Level of traffic congestion
- Affordable decent housing
- Health services
- Public transport
- Shopping facilities

(Q1/2) Comparison of important factors in making somewhere a good place to live vs factors that most need improving (all respondents)



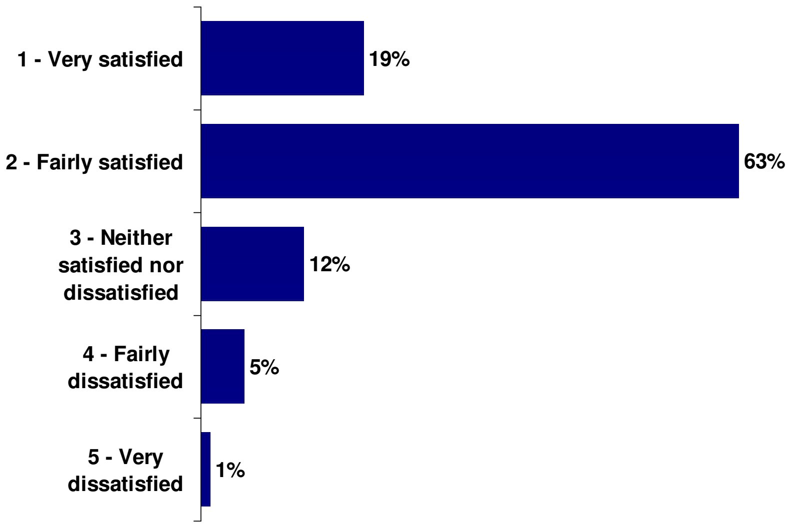
BASES VARY

11.4 Satisfaction with local area as a place to live

11.4.1 Just over four fifths (82%) of respondents providing a valid response rate themselves as satisfied with their local area as a place to live, including one fifth (19%) rating themselves as very satisfied.

11.4.2 Just 6% have said they are dissatisfied with the local area as a place to live.

(Q3) Satisfaction with local area as a place to live (valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1497/1505

11.4.3 Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live is higher amongst the following respondent groups:

- Women (84% compared to 79% of men);
- Owner occupiers (84% compared to 72% of Council tenants);
- Older respondents (86% of those aged 65 plus compared to 79% of 25 to 44 year olds).

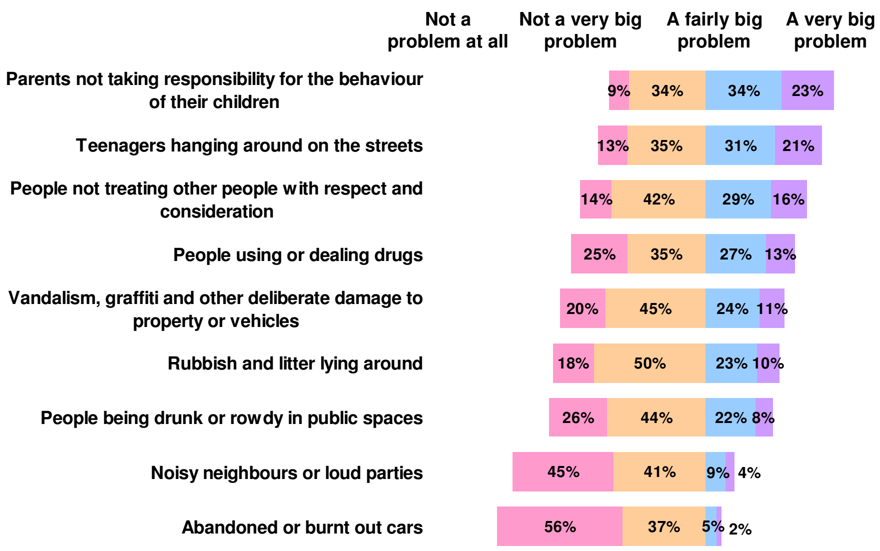
11.5 Anti-social behaviour

11.5.1 Respondents were asked to think about their local area and rate the extent to which they feel specific types of anti-social behaviour are a problem.

11.5.2 The types of behaviour fall broadly into three groups:

- Those which a majority regard as a very or fairly big problem: parents not taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children; and teenagers hanging around on the street
- Those where views are relatively balanced: people not treating other people with consideration and respect; people using or dealing drugs and vandalism/graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles; and rubbish & litter lying around
- Those which a majority of respondents do not regard as being a particular problem: noisy neighbours or loud parties; abandoned or burnt out cars; people being drunk or rowdy in public places.

(Q4) Extent to which anti-social behaviour is regarded as a problem (valid responses only)



Bases vary

11.6 Perceptions of safety

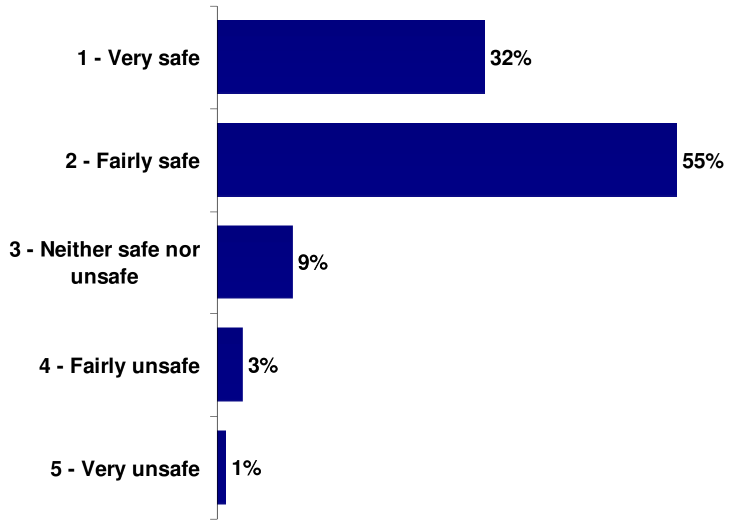
11.6.1 Respondents were asked to think about their local area and rate the extent to which

11.6.2 Respondents were asked about perceptions of safety, when outside in North Hertfordshire during the day and also after dark.

11.6.3 During the day 87% feel safe, with just 4% feeling unsafe. During the day, feelings of safety are highest amongst the following groups:

- Men (90% compared to 85% of women);
- Owner occupiers (88% compared to 77% of Council tenants).

(QB8) Perceptions of safety when outside in North Hertfordshire during the day (valid responses only)

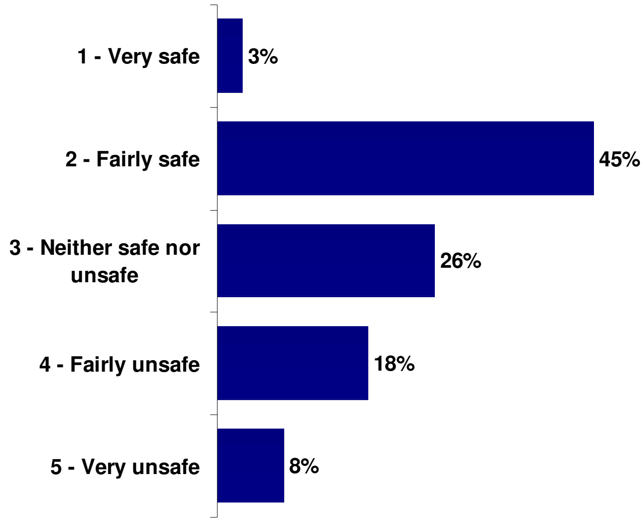


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1514/1514

11.6.4 After dark, 48% feel safe with 26% feeling unsafe. Feelings of safety are highest amongst the following groups:

- Men (54% compared to 41% of women);
- Middle age groups as compared to older people (49% of 25-44 year olds and 49% of 45-64 year olds, compared to 35% of those aged over 65 years);
- Working people (53%).

(QB7) Perceptions of safety when outside in North Hertfordshire after dark (valid responses only)



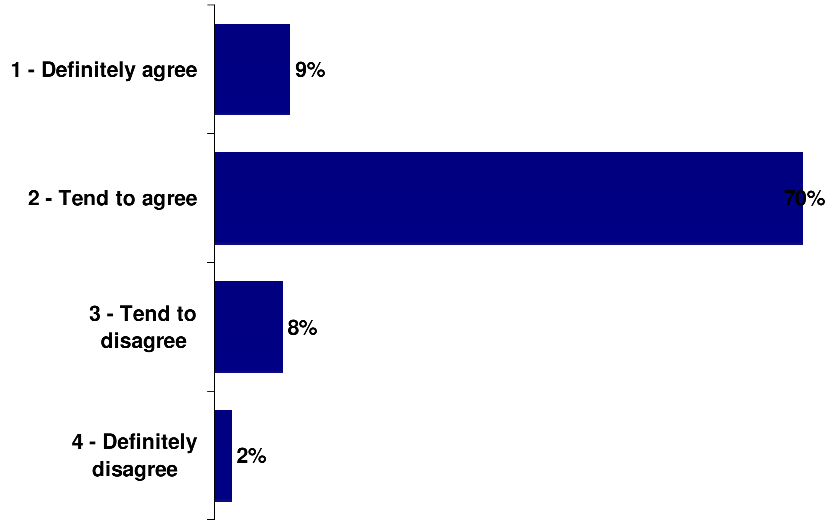
UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1496/1502

11.7 Extent to which people from different backgrounds get on well

11.7.1 Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

11.7.2 Four fifths (79%) of respondents providing a response agree to an extent that this is the case, while one in nine (11%) disagree.

(Q5) Agreement that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds to get on well together (valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1194/1209

12 Local decision making

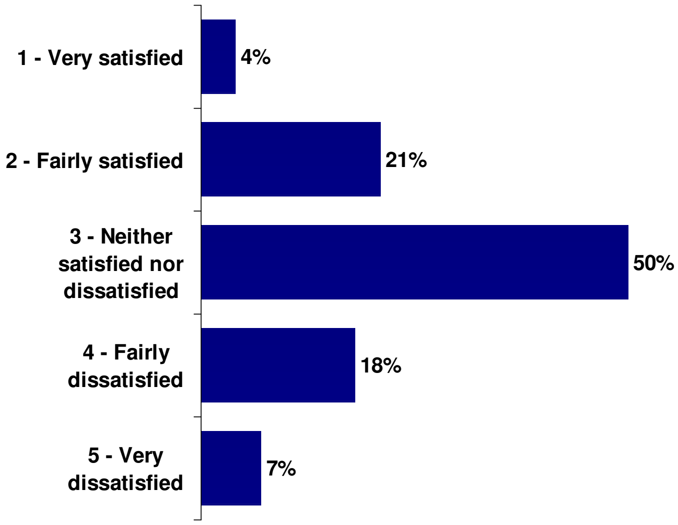
12.1 Satisfaction with opportunities for participation

12.1.1 Respondents were informed that the council provides opportunities to participate in decision making.

12.1.2 Amongst respondents providing a response, views are relatively balanced, with a quarter (25%) satisfied, and a quarter (25%) dissatisfied with the opportunities for participation in local decision making provided by the council.

12.1.3 A significant proportion (50%) do not express a strong opinion one way or the other.

(Q24) Satisfaction with opportunities for participation in local decision-making (valid responses only)

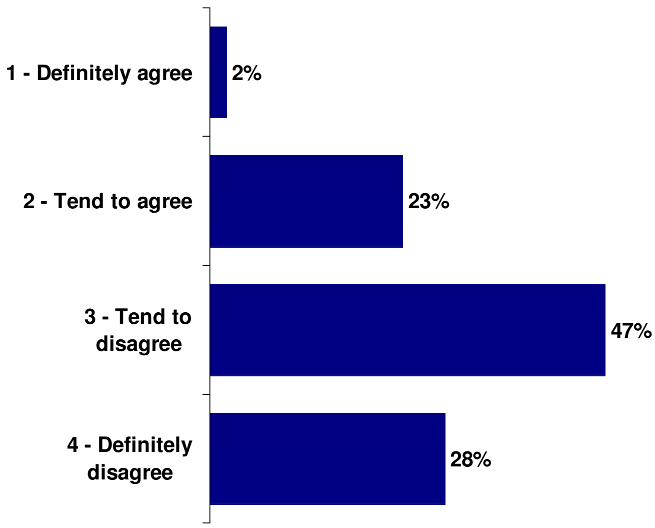


UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1104/1110

12.2 Influence over local decisions

12.2.1 Of all respondents providing a response, the majority (75%) believe they cannot influence decisions affecting the local area, while a quarter (25%) believe they can.

(Q25) Agreement that can influence decisions affecting the local area (valid responses only)



UNWEIGHTED/WEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE = 1156/1158

12.3 Desired level of involvement

12.3.1 Almost a quarter (23%) of all respondents report that they would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes that affect their local area, and a further 56% say that it would depend on the issue in question. One in nine (11%) report that they would not like to be more involved in such decisions.

12.3.2 The proportion of respondents who would like to be more involved is higher amongst the following respondent groups:

- Men (28% compared to 21% of women);
- Younger respondents (28% of 25 to 44 year olds compared to 14% of those aged 65 or over);
- Owner occupiers (26% compared to 19% of council tenants);
- Those in work (27% compared to 15% of those who are retired).

Appendix 1 – Sample profile

12.3.3 The following tables show a breakdown of the key respondent profile details, showing both unweighted and weighted figures.

Unweighted and weighted sample profile (all respondents)

	Unweighted %	Weighted %
SEX		
Male	48	47
Female	49	50
Unspecified	3	3
AGE		
18 to 24	1	2
25 to 34	11	23
35 to 44	17	18
45 to 54	15	18
55 to 64	20	15
65+	30	18
Unspecified	6	6
TENURE		
Owned outright	38	30
Buying on mortgage	36	45
Rent from Council	8	7
Rent from Housing Association/Trust	10	7
Rented from private landlord	5	6
Other	1	4
Unspecified	4	4

Unweighted and weighted sample profile (all respondents)

	Unweighted %	Weighted %
WORKING STATUS		
Working	52	63
Not Working	44	34
Unspecified	5	4
DISABILITY		
Yes	24	19
Yes – limiting	70	70
Yes – not limiting	27	27
No	70	77
Unspecified	6	4
ETHNICITY		
White	93	91
Mixed	*	1
Black/Black British	1	1
Asian/Asian British	2	3
Other	*	1
Unspecified	4	4

*Indicates less than 0.5%

Appendix 2 – the questionnaire

`