

# North Herts Council Residents' Tracker Survey 2022



**North  
Herts**  
Council

Final Report

By Opinion Research Services

July 2022



# North Herts Council Residents' Tracker Survey 2022

## Opinion Research Services

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Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

This study was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252:2019 and ISO 9001:2015.

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# 1. Project Overview

## The Survey

- <sup>1.1</sup> Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by North Herts Council to undertake a survey of residents' general views and perceptions towards the Council, the services it provides, and attitudes towards the local area. Resident surveys have been undertaken in North Hertfordshire since 2008 – generally on a biannual basis – with the most recent previous survey being carried out by ORS in 2019. The questions asked in this survey were broadly the same as those asked in previous years, but there have been some minor alterations including an additional question asking about potential new methods of contact with the Council.
- <sup>1.2</sup> This report presents the findings from this survey under the following three main topic headings:
- Your Local Area
  - North Herts Council
  - Information and Communication

## Survey Response

- <sup>1.3</sup> The survey was carried out by telephone between 25<sup>th</sup> January and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Quota controls were used to ensure a representative sample and 800 responses were achieved overall.
- <sup>1.4</sup> The original aim was to achieve 1000 responses to the survey, in-line with previous surveys; however, owing to challenges obtaining interviews in the area, it was agreed to lower the target to 800. By achieving a minimum of 800 responses, the overall effect on the precision and accuracy of the results is minimal (compared with achieving 1,000 responses) – The margin of error<sup>1</sup> associated with the total achieved sample size of 800, and a confidence level of 95%, is +/- 3.45%; for a sample size of 1,000 the margin of error is +/-3.09%.

## Weighting the Data

- <sup>1.5</sup> The returned sample was checked against comparative data for area, age, gender, working status, ethnic group, tenure, and disability then subsequently weighted by area, age, gender, and tenure. The results presented here are therefore broadly representative of the population

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<sup>1.1</sup> <sup>1</sup> This means that if 50% of the sample population gave a particular response, we can be 95% confident that the actual result falls somewhere between 46.55% and 53.45%. The margin of error will vary slightly by question depending on the proportional split of responses and the number of respondents answering the question.

of North Hertfordshire. As the data is representative of the population across North Hertfordshire, the report refers to 'residents' throughout as opposed to 'respondents'.

- <sup>1.6</sup> The tables on the following pages show the profile characteristics of residents who responded to the survey. They show both the profile of residents in the returned sample (unweighted) and the profile of residents following checks against comparative data and the subsequent application of weighting (weighted). Please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding. Any value denoted by an asterisk (\*) represents a percentage which is less than 1%.

## Profile tables

**Table 1: Gender – All Residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)**

Gender	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
Male	275	42	46
Female	373	58	54
Not answered	152	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Age – All Residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)**

Age	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
16-24	11	2	7
25-34	29	4	14
35-54	145	22	38
55-64	119	18	13
65-74	168	26	14
75+	176	27	14
Not answered	152	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Working Status – All Residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)**

Working Status	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
Working	272	42	65
Retired	323	50	25
Otherwise not working	53	8	10
Not answered	152	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



**Table 4: Ethnicity – All Residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)**

Ethnicity	Unweighted count	Unweighted valid %	Weighted valid %
White	609	94	91
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	5	1	2
Asian/Asian British	16	2	4
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	13	2	2
Other ethnic group	3	*	1
Not answered	154	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5: Tenure – All Residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)**

Tenure	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
Owned with mortgage/shared	157	20	41
Own outright	443	57	31
Social rent	130	17	17
Private rent	42	5	11
Not answered	28	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6: Disability – All Residents (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)**

Disability	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %
Yes	165	21	16
No	614	79	84
Not answered	21	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## Interpretation of the data

- 1.7 It should be remembered that a sample, and not the entire population of North Hertfordshire, has been interviewed. In consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are necessarily statistically significant.
- 1.8 Where differences between demographic groups or between surveys have been highlighted as significant it means that is a 95% probability that the difference is real and not due to sampling variation. Differences that are not said to be 'significant' or 'statistically significant' are indicative only and any differences could be due to sampling variation. When comparing results between demographic sub-groups and between surveys, on the whole, only results which are significantly different are highlighted in the text.
- 1.9 Some charts and tables display the percentage point difference in results between surveys. Where figures are written in blue/red and are bold, this indicates that the difference is significantly higher/lower than the overall result at a 95% confidence level.
- 1.10 Please note that where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories, or multiple answers.
- 1.11 In some cases, figures of 2% or below have been excluded from graphs.
- 1.12 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 where:
- Blue shades represent positive responses
  - Grey 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
- 1.13 To analyse the geographic variation in the data, the report uses groups of electoral wards. The table overleaf summarises the ward groupings.

**Table 7: Ward Group Definitions**

Ward Group	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

## Comparisons

<sup>1.14</sup> Comparisons with national figures are, in the main, taken from the LGA (Local Government Association) national survey which is carried out three times a year with around 1,000 British adults via telephone. The results used in this report are taken from the most recent wave that has been published, which was carried out between 22<sup>nd</sup> of February and 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 with 1,000 residents. For consistency, where trends are shown, results shown are the results from the June wave of the corresponding year. It should also be noted that whilst the results are largely comparable, different questionnaires and sample sizes were used between surveys which may have an impact on direct comparability.

## Acknowledgements

<sup>1.15</sup> ORS would like to thank the 800 people who took part in the survey, without whose valuable input the research would not have been possible.

## 2. Executive Summary

### Summary of Main Findings

<sup>2.1</sup> The following paragraphs selectively highlight some key findings, but readers are referred to the detailed graphics for the full story. The suite of ORS reports also includes full cross tabulations.

#### Your Local Area

<sup>2.2</sup> Residents' satisfaction with the local area as a place to live remains high and significantly above the national level. 94% of residents are satisfied with the local area with only 3% being dissatisfied.

<sup>2.3</sup> A third (33%) of residents agree they can influence decisions in their local area with around half of residents (49%) disagreeing. This is in-line with 2019 results and significantly higher than the national level (Community Life Survey 2020-2021<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>2.4</sup> When residents were asked if they would like to be more involved in local decision making, three in ten (30%) said yes while around half (49%) said it depends on the issue. When compared to 2019 there has been a significant increase of 19% in the proportion of residents saying it depends on the issue.

#### North Herts Council

<sup>2.5</sup> Overall satisfaction with North Herts Council remains above the national level (64%). Nearly three quarters (73%) of residents are satisfied with way the Council runs things with 13% being dissatisfied. It does, however, remain lower than the high point of satisfaction in the early 2010s (85% in 2013).

<sup>2.6</sup> As in 2019, over half (55%) of residents agree that North Herts Council provides value for money and less than a fifth (18%) disagree. Levels of agreement are a significant 7-percentage points higher than the national level.

<sup>2.7</sup> Those that disagree that the Council provides value for money were asked how they think the overall running of North Hertfordshire could be improved. More than a third (36%) think that the Council should make improvements to the area/community, just under a third (32%) think

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<sup>2</sup> Differences between results from the Community Life Survey (self-completion online paper 'push to web') and The North Herts Residents Tracker (telephone) should be treated with caution owing to different methodologies.

the Council needs to make improvements to the refuse/recycling collections, while just under a quarter (23%) feel communication could be improved.

- 2.8 For the third consecutive survey, the percentage of residents who think the way North Herts Council runs things has worsened over the last two years is larger than the percentage who think it has improved. Just over one in ten (12%) think the way North Herts Council runs things has got better while around a fifth (21%) think it has got worse.
- 2.9 Residents were asked the extent to which they agree with four statements about the Council. Over half (56%) agree that the Council *is working to make the area cleaner and greener*. Over two fifths (42%) agree both that the Council *is efficient and well run* and that the Council *consults and engages with the local community*. A slightly lower proportion (37%) agree with the statement 'North Herts Council makes an effort to find out what local people want', while 37% say they disagree with this. All these statements have displayed a significant decline in the level of agreement since 2019.
- 2.10 Almost four fifths (79%) of residents are satisfied with general waste and recycling collection, which is in-line with the national average (82%) for satisfaction with general waste only. Around an eighth (13%) of North Herts residents are dissatisfied with general waste and recycling collection. Satisfaction with general waste and recycling collection has seen a significant 12-percentage point increase since 2019 bringing satisfaction back to the level seen in 2017 – however, as noted in paragraph 2.7 above, around a third (32%) of residents still feel that the Council needs to make improvements to refuse and recycling collections.
- 2.11 Almost two thirds (65%) are satisfied with the Council's street cleaning, which is in-line with the national average (68%); whilst a fifth (20%) are dissatisfied. Satisfaction with street cleaning has also seen a general decline since 2011, with the 2022 result sitting 6 percentage points lower than in 2019 (a significant decrease).
- 2.12 Parks and open spaces are the most used council service with over four fifths (82%) of residents using council provided parks and open spaces in the last year. Use of parks and open spaces has seen a significant 7-percentage point increase since 2019. Public car parks run by the Council and council run leisure facilities have both seen significant decreases in their use since 2019. Both the increased use of parks and open spaces as well as the decline in the use of public car parks and leisure facilities could be a product of the COVID-19 pandemic; it is expected that these will return to pre-pandemic levels, but they will be key aspects to monitor in future surveys.
- 2.13 Benefits administered by the Council have also seen a significant increase in their use.
- 2.14 Levels of satisfaction with council services, for those who have used each service, was highest for the North Hertfordshire Museum (97% satisfied) and lowest for housing services (61% satisfied). Satisfaction with North Hertfordshire Museum has seen a significant increase since 2019 increasing by 10-percentage points.

## Information and Communication

- 2.15 The Council's website is by far the most common way residents obtain information about the Council (used by 71% of residents). This is followed by local newspapers (15%), social media (15%), and 'Outlook' magazine (15%). The use of social media to obtain information about the Council has seen a large increase in the last decade (rising from 1% in 2013 to 15% in 2015).
- 2.16 Around 7 in 10 (71%) residents have seen or had a copy of 'Outlook' magazine delivered to their door in the last 12 months. This is in-line with the 2017 and 2019 surveys but lower than in surveys prior to 2017.
- 2.17 Of those that have seen or had a copy of the magazine delivered, around three in ten (31%) have read all or nearly all of it (in-line with 2019). Nearly four fifths (79%) like the way the magazine looks and is presented, just over seven in ten (72%) like the way it is written, and around two thirds (66%) find it interesting. There has been a significant 5-percentage point decline in the proportion of readers who like the way 'Outlook' is written.
- 2.18 Just under a quarter (23%) of residents have signed up to receive email bulletins from the Council. This proportion has more than doubled since 2019 when only a tenth of residents had signed up.
- 2.19 Over seven in ten (72%) residents like the way the e-bulletins are written, whilst around two thirds (66%) of residents find the information in the e-bulletins useful to them and a similar proportion (64%) agree that North Herts Council's email newsletters/e-bulletin service topics are of interest to them.
- 2.20 However, despite generally positive feedback on e-bulletins, there have been signs of a decline in the proportion of e-bulletin readers who agree that the bulletin's information is useful and that the topics are of interest since 2019. However, there has not been a corresponding rise in the level of disagreement with this statement but rather an increase in the proportion saying they neither agree nor disagree.
- 2.21 Over half (54%) of residents have contacted the Council in the last year. This proportion has remained relatively constant since 2011.
- 2.22 Of the residents who contacted the Council in the last 12 months, over a third (36%) had contacted the Council to report an issue or a problem, just under a quarter (23%) contacted the Council to ask for advice/information. The percentage of residents reporting an issue, or a problem has seen a significant 9 percentage point increase since 2017.
- 2.23 Despite the long-term decline in the proportion of residents contacting the council by phone, it remains the most popular method of contacting the council, with three fifths (60%) using telephone. The proportion contacting the council either in person (2%) or by letter (1%) has fallen to its lowest recorded level.

- <sup>2.24</sup> Around two thirds (66%) of those that contacted the council said that they were satisfied with the service they received the last time they contacted the council. Around three in ten (29%) of those that contacted the council were dissatisfied with the service. This is part of a long-term negative trend in satisfaction levels which have continuously fallen since 2011.
- <sup>2.25</sup> Of the residents who had contacted the Council and were dissatisfied with the service, around half (49%) said that they were dissatisfied because they were unhappy with the final outcome. Nearly two fifths (39%) were dissatisfied because it took too long to deal with the person they contacted. Just under a quarter (23%) felt unhappy with the information they were given.
- <sup>2.26</sup> When residents were asked how likely they would be to use various potential new methods of communication with the Council, almost half (46%) of residents say they would be likely to use a live webchat service, closely followed by SMS messaging (44%) and lastly messaging services like WhatsApp or Facebook messenger (42%).

## Council Performance

### Areas of High Performance

- <sup>2.27</sup> The survey indicates several areas where the local area and the Council are performing well:
- Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live has consistently been very high even when the national trend has been downward.
  - Overall satisfaction with the Council remains significantly above the national level and has stabilised from the downward trend observed between 2013 and 2019.
  - Agreement for that the Council provides value for money is significantly higher than the national level for the second consecutive survey after previously dipping below the national level in 2017.
  - Satisfaction with general waste and recycling collection has seen a significant increase from its low-point in 2019 bringing it back in-line with the 2017 result and the national average (for general waste collection).

### Areas for Improvement

- <sup>2.28</sup> However, the research also highlights lower performing areas which are potential areas of consideration for the Council:
- For the third consecutive survey the percentage of residents that think the running of the Council is getting worse is larger than the percentage who think it is getting better.
  - Satisfaction with street cleaning, benefits administered by the Council, and housing services have all continued a long-term declining trend falling to their lowest recorded levels.

- For those residents who contacted the Council in the last year, satisfaction with the service they received has fallen to its lowest level on record and dissatisfaction has risen to its highest level.

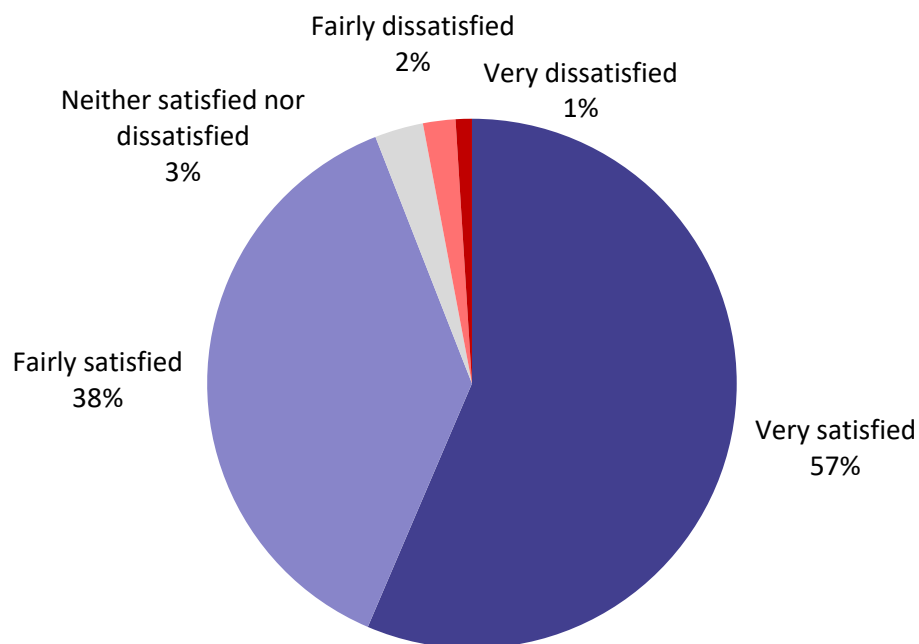


## 3. Your Local Area

### Satisfaction with local area as a place to live

<sup>3.1</sup> Over nine in ten (94%) North Hertfordshire residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (57% very satisfied/38% fairly satisfied), whilst only 3% are dissatisfied and another 3% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

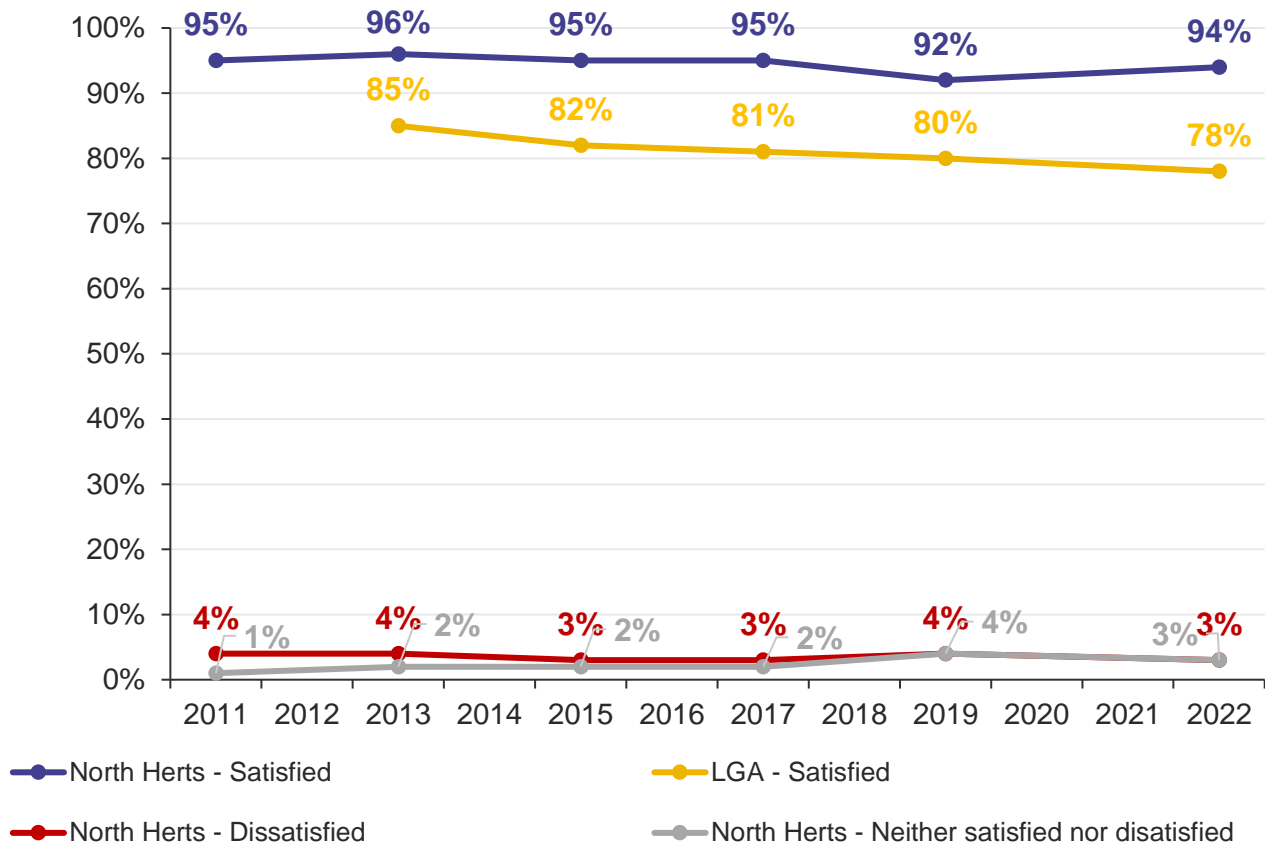
**Figure 1: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this area as a place to live?**



**Base: All Residents (800)**

<sup>3.2</sup> Figure 2 overleaf shows that satisfaction is in-line with previous years. The percentage of residents satisfied with the local area as a place to live in North Herts is also significantly higher than the national result (by 16 percentage points). The national trend also shows a gradual decline since 2013.

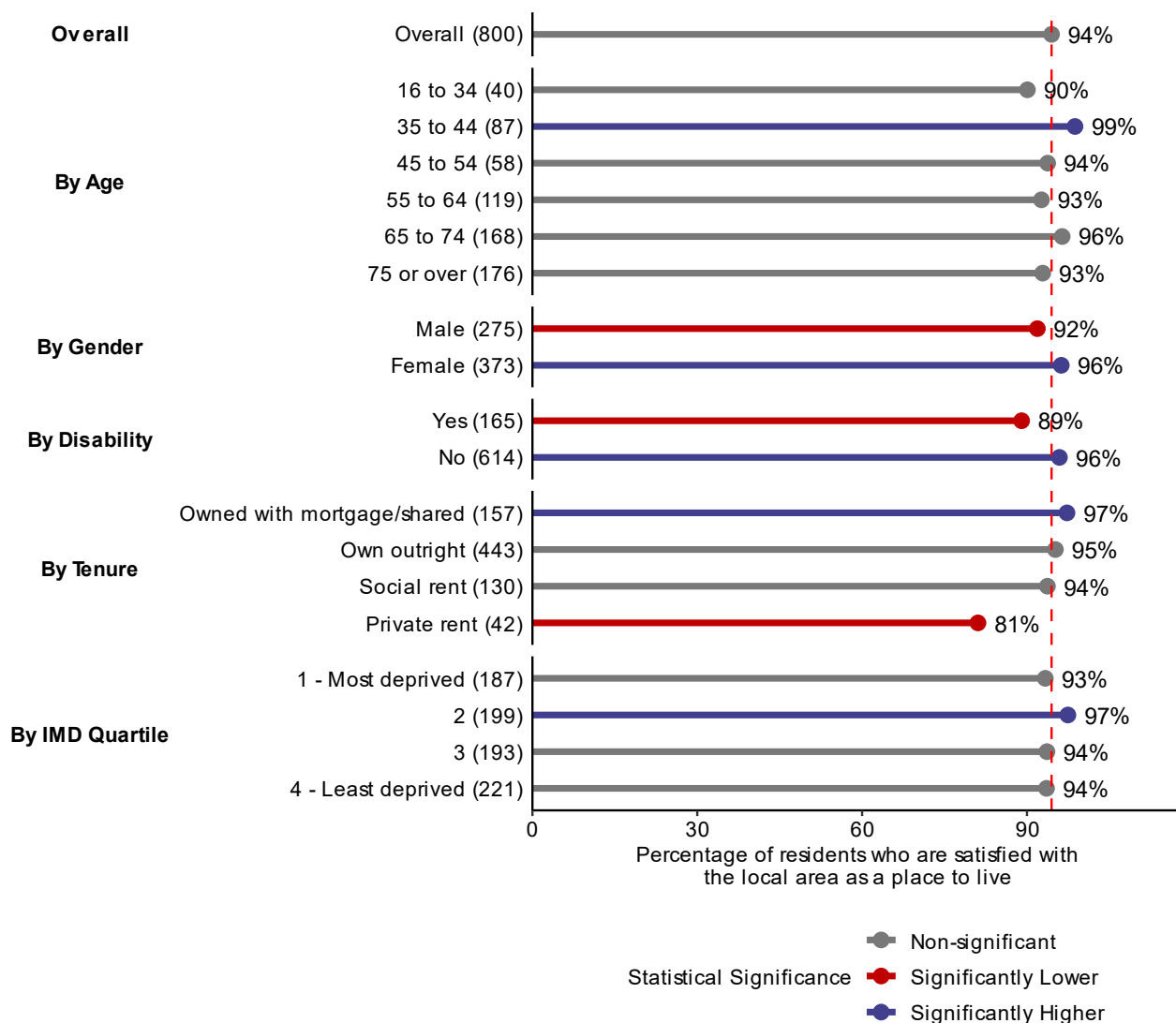
**Figure 2: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this area as a place to live? North Herts Council and National Results - trends over time.**



**Base: All Residents (Between 751 and 99; 2022 - 800)**

- 3.3 There is significant variation in the proportion of residents satisfied with the local area as a place to live by age, gender, disability, tenure, and deprivation (Figure 3 overleaf).
- 3.4 Those aged 35-44, those who are female, those without a disability, those who own their property with a mortgage/shared, and those who live in an area in the second quartile of deprivation are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the local area as a place to live.
- 3.5 Those who are male, those who are disabled, and those who privately rent are significantly less likely to be satisfied. Although it is noteworthy, that all subgroups have levels of satisfaction above the national average.

**Figure 3: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this area as a place to live? By subgroup**

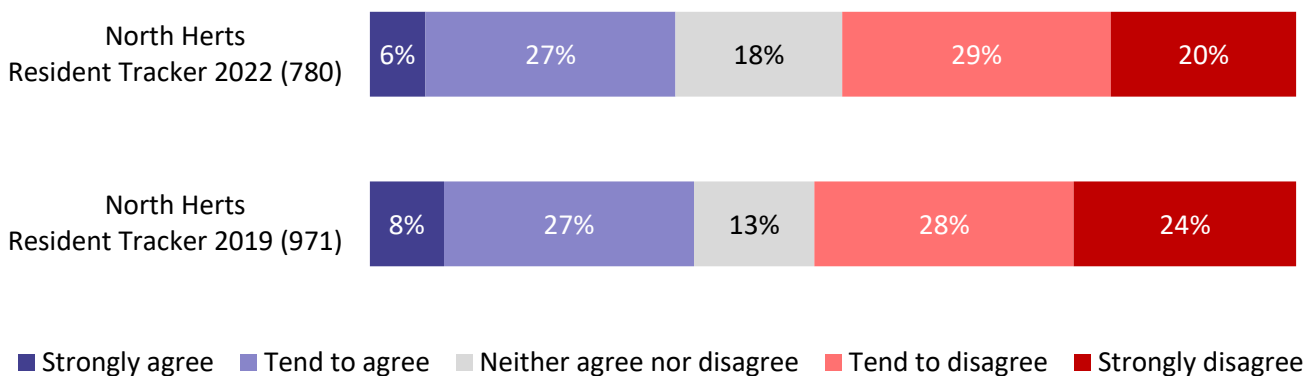


**Base: (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

## Decision-making in the Local Area

- <sup>3.6</sup> Figure 4 below shows that a third (33%) of residents agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area, whilst around half (49%) disagree, with a fifth (20%) of residents strongly disagreeing. Levels of agreement and disagreement are in-line with the results from the 2019 survey.
- <sup>3.7</sup> National data from the Community Life Survey 2020-21 indicates that 27% of residents in England feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area, which is significantly lower than the result from the North Herts Resident Tracker. However, the difference between the two results should be treated with caution owing to methodological differences between the two surveys (the Community Life survey is a self-completion online/paper 'push to web' methodology).

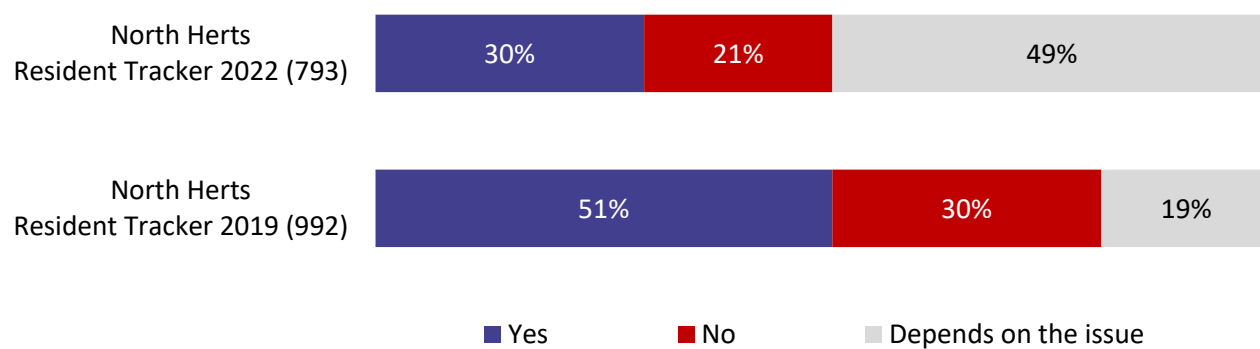
**Figure 4: Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?**



**Base: All Residents (number of residents shown in brackets)**

- <sup>3.8</sup> Figure 5 shows that three in ten residents (30%) would like to be more involved in the decisions that affect their local area. Around a fifth (21%) of residents do not want to be more involved in decisions that affect their local area, whilst around half (49%) feel that it depends on the issue.
- <sup>3.9</sup> The proportion of residents saying that they would like to be more involved in decisions affecting their local area has fallen significantly since 2019 when around half (51%) said they would like to be more involved – interestingly, a much higher proportion of residents now say it would 'depend on the issue' (49% in 2022 vs. 19% in 2019).

**Figure 5: Generally speaking, would you like to be more involved in the decisions that affect your local area?**



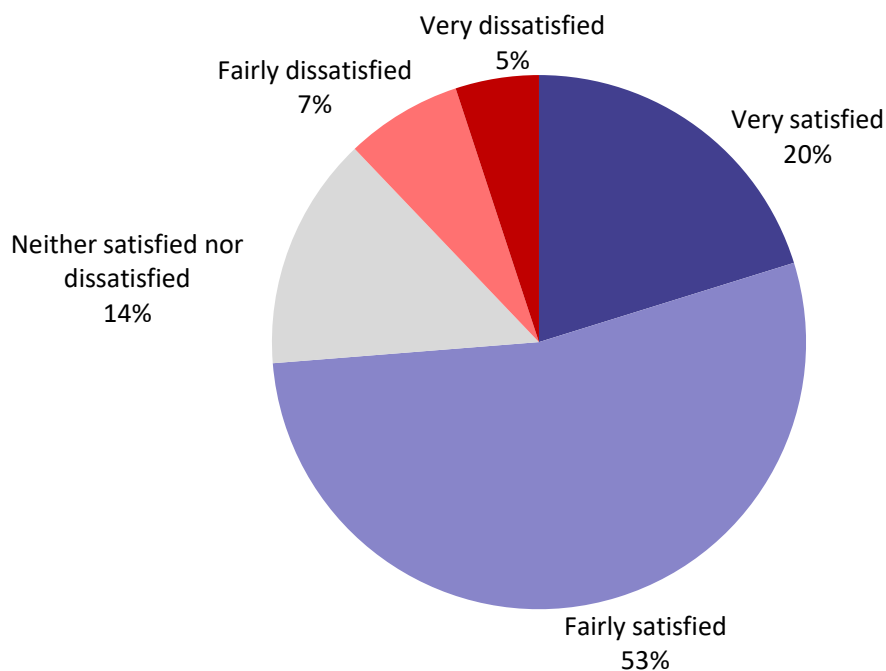
**Base: All Residents (number of residents shown in brackets)**

## 4. North Herts Council

### Satisfaction with the Council

4.1 Nearly three quarters (73%) of residents are satisfied with the way North Herts Council runs things (20% very satisfied/53% fairly satisfied), whilst 13% are dissatisfied.

**Figure 6: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Herts Council runs things?**

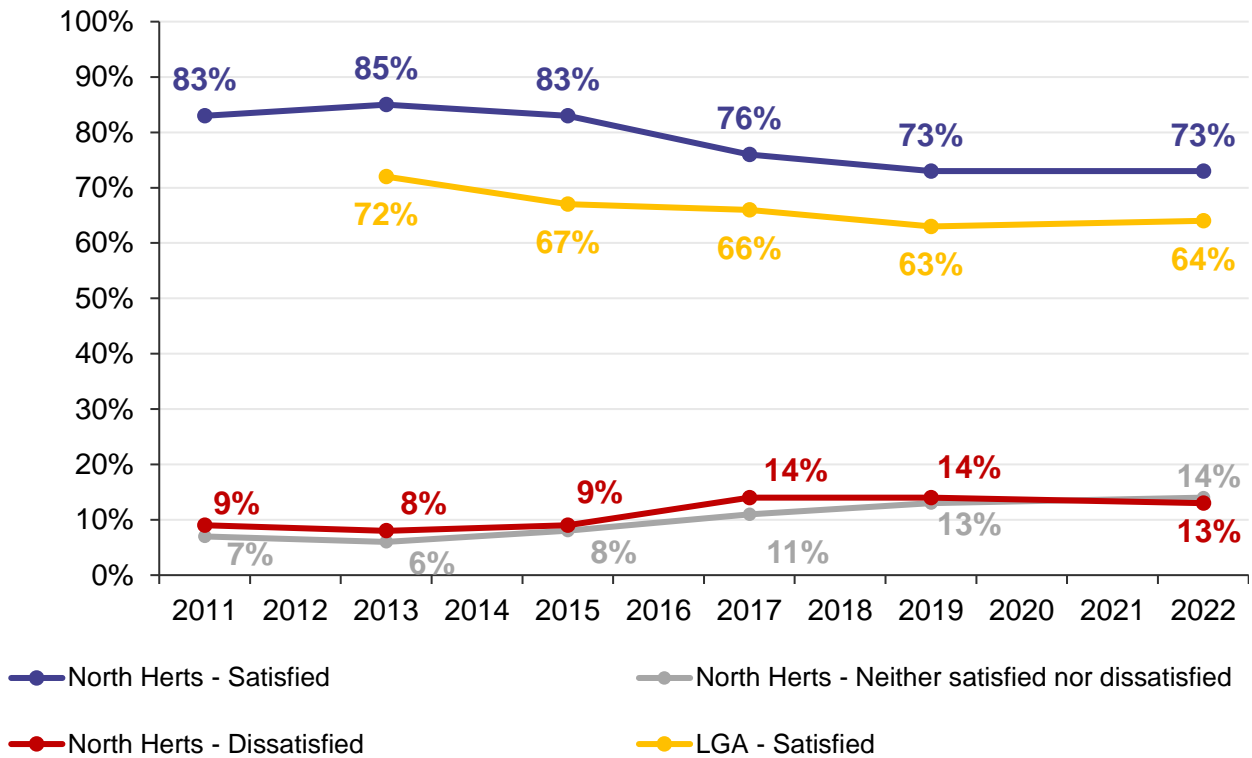


**Base: All Residents (789)**

4.2 This result is in-line with the 2019 survey but remains significantly below the level seen before 2017. Indeed, the level of satisfaction is 12 percentage points lower than its peak in 2013 (85%) (Figure 7 overleaf).

4.3 However, satisfaction with the way North Herts Council runs things remains significantly above the national level (by 9 percentage points), which has also remained consistent since 2019 following a gradual decline.

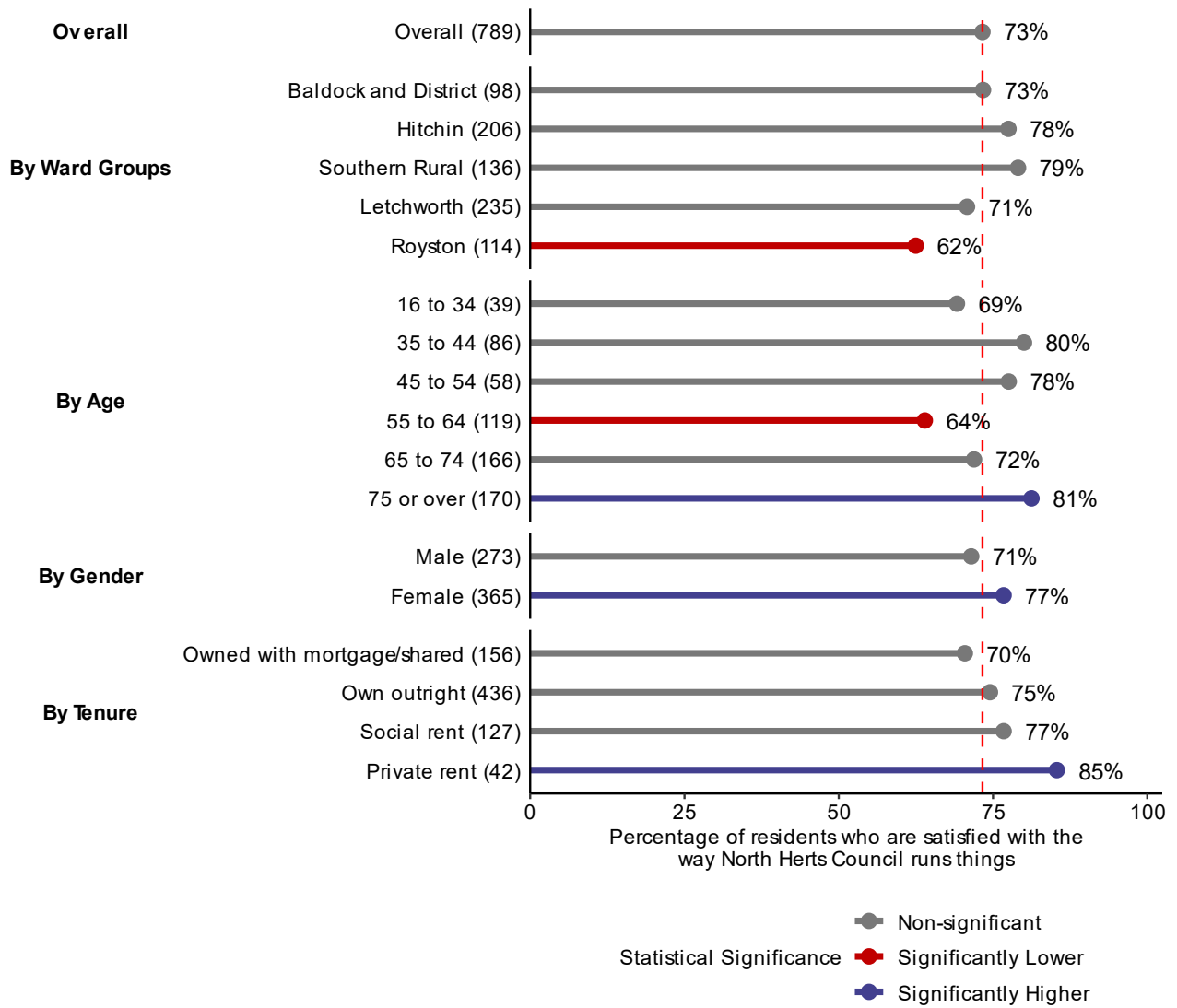
**Figure 7: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Herts Council runs things?  
North Herts Council and National Results - trends over time.**



**Base: All Residents (Between 751 and 999; 2022 - 789)**

- 4.4 Figure 8 overleaf shows significant variation in the level of satisfaction with the way the Council runs things by area, age, gender, and tenure.
- 4.5 Those who are 75 or over, those who are female, and those who privately rent are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way the council runs things. Conversely, those living in Royston and those aged 55-64 are significantly less likely to be satisfied.

**Figure 8: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Herts Council runs things? By subgroup**



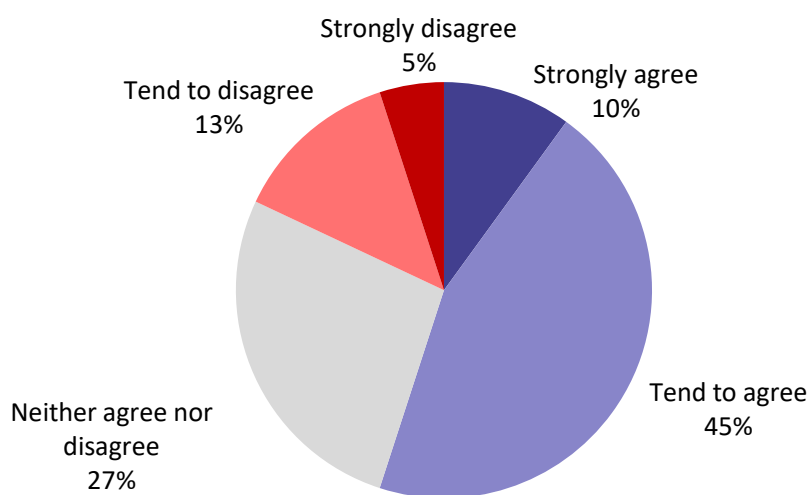
Base: (Number of residents shown in brackets)



## Value for money

- <sup>4.6</sup> Over half (55%) of residents agree that North Herts Council provides value for money, whilst just over a quarter (27%) neither agree nor disagree, and just under a fifth (18%) disagree. This result is in-line with 2019.
- <sup>4.7</sup> Agreement that the Council provides value for money is significantly higher in North Herts than at a national level. The LGA survey in February 2022 found less than half (48%) of residents agreed their council was providing value for money – 7 percentage points lower than in North Herts.

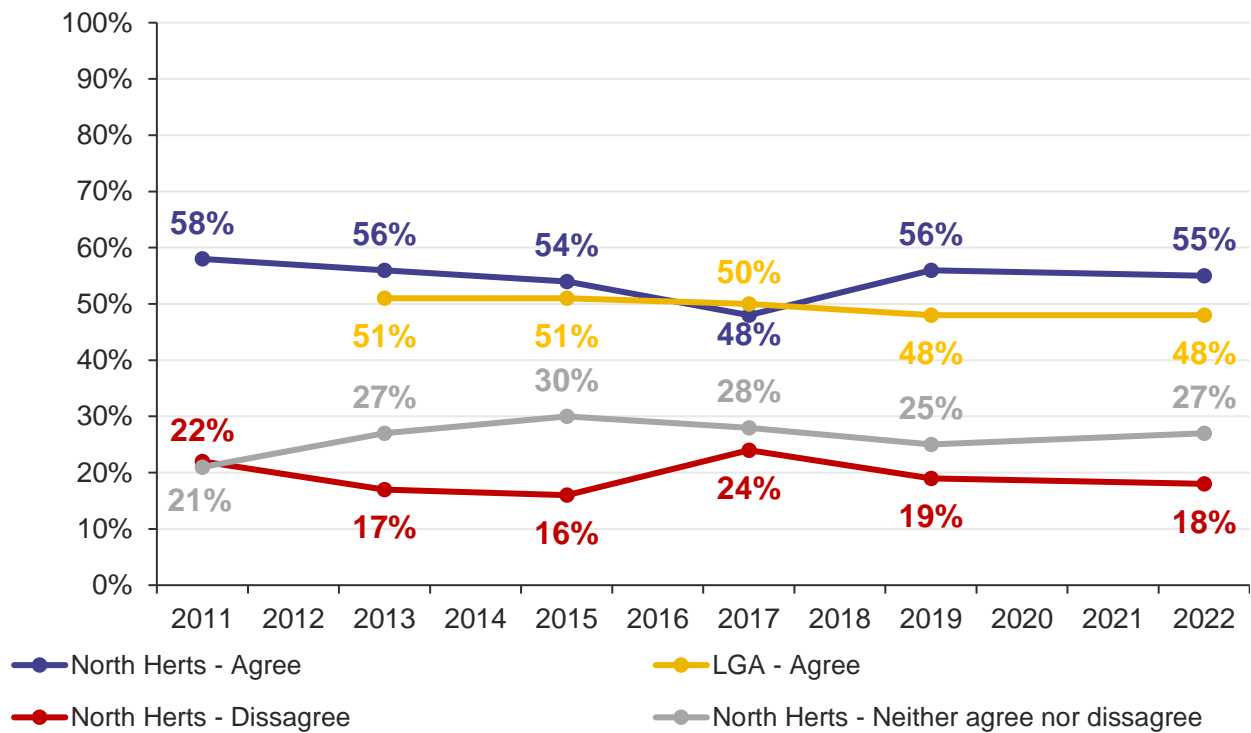
**Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree that North Herts Council provides value for money?**



**Base: (765)**

- <sup>4.8</sup> Figure 10 overleaf shows agreement that the Council provides value for money over time. As in 2019, agreement is significantly higher in North Herts than at a national level (by 7 percentage points in 2022).

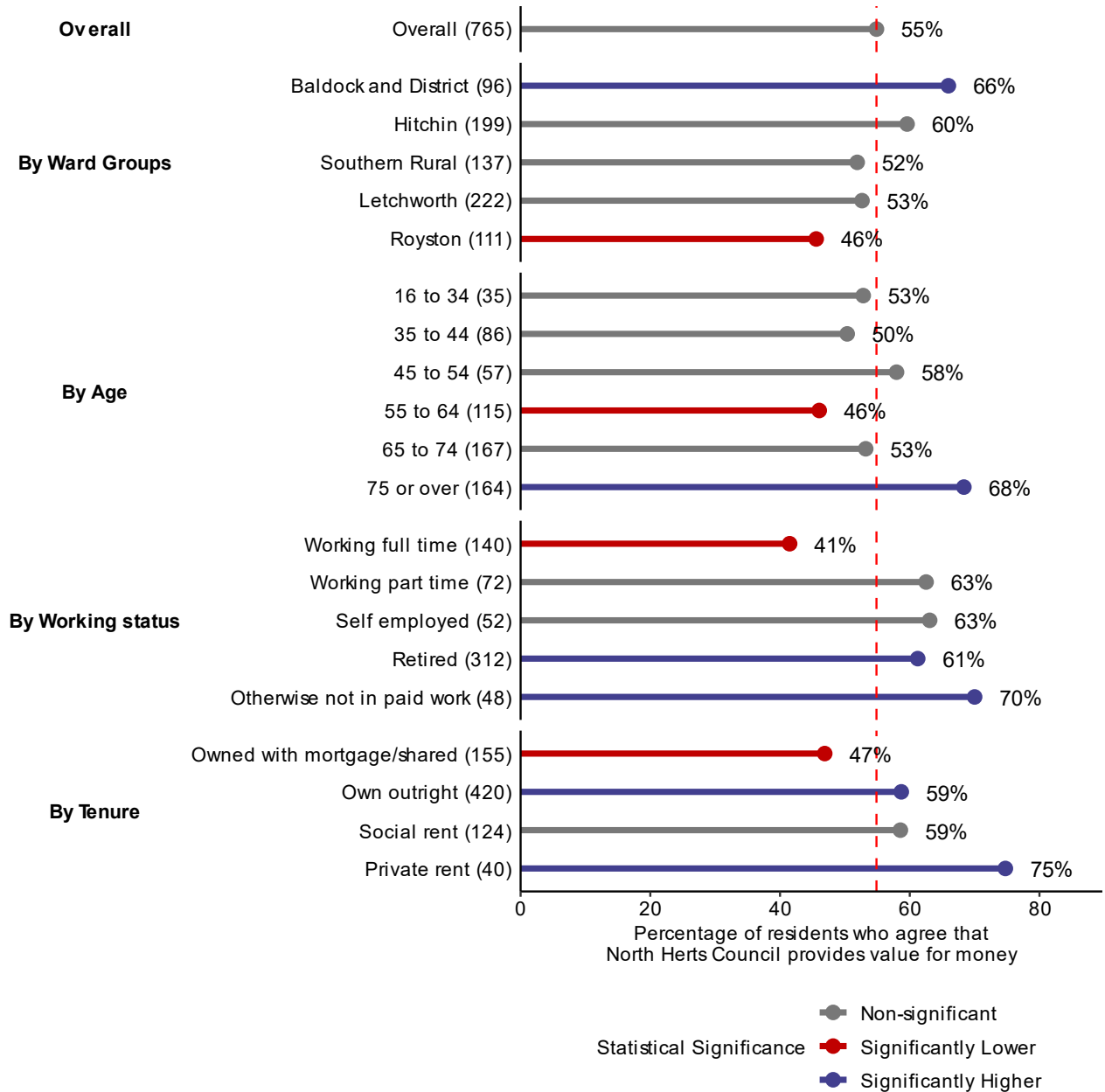
**Figure 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that North Herts Council provides value for money? North Herts Council and National Results - trends over time.**



**Base: (North Herts 2022: 765)**

- <sup>4.9</sup> Figure 11 shows significant variation in the level of agreement that the Council provides value for money. Those who live in Baldock and District, those who are 75 or over, those who are retired or otherwise not in paid work, and those who own their property outright or privately rent are significantly more likely to agree that the Council provides value for money.
- <sup>4.10</sup> Those living in Royston, those aged 55-64, those working full-time, and those who own their property with a mortgage or shared are significantly less likely to agree that the Council provides value for money.

**Figure 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that North Herts Council provides value for money? Agreement by subgroup**

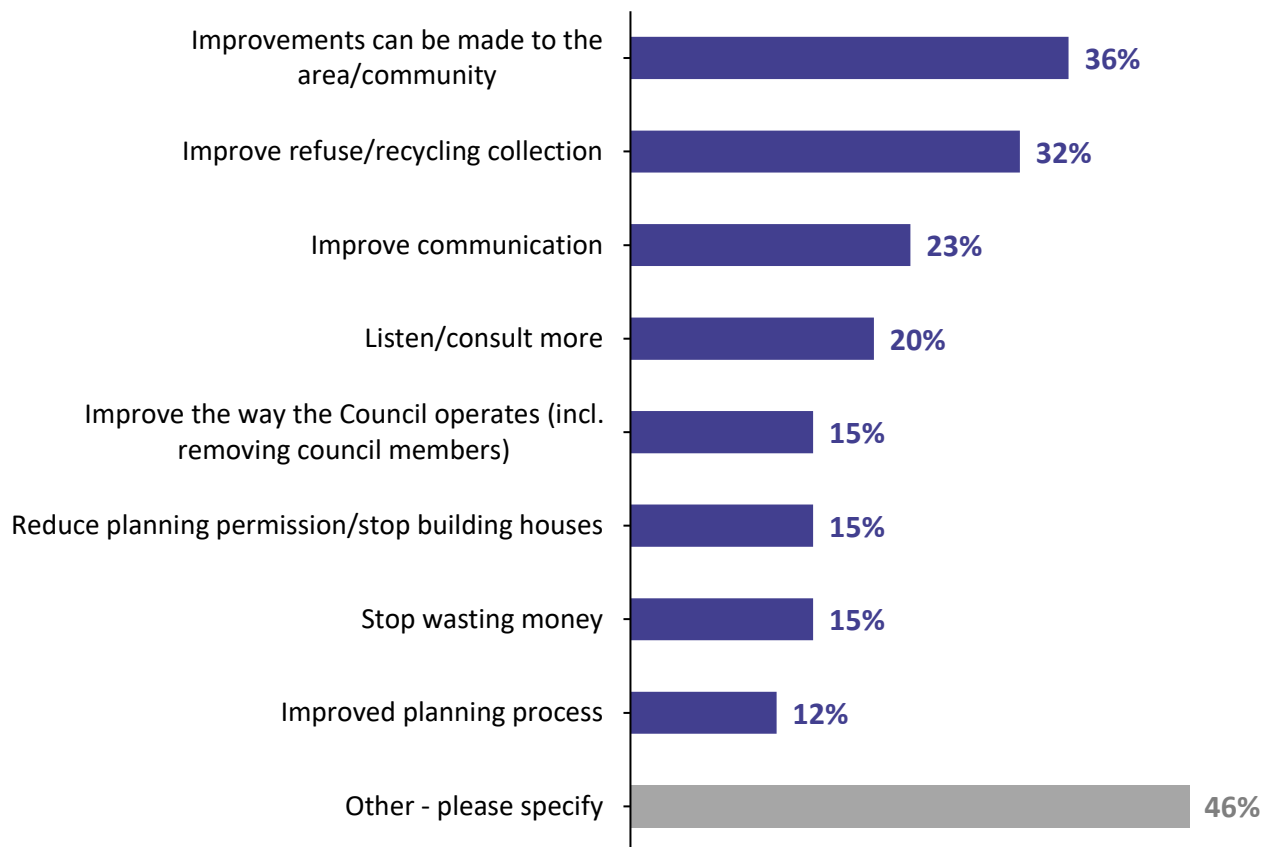


Base: (Number of residents shown in brackets)

## Improving the running of North Hertfordshire

- 4.11 Figure 12 shows the suggestions given by those residents who disagreed that North Herts Council provides value for money on how to improve the overall running of North Herts.
- 4.12 The most frequently given responses are in relation to improvements being made to the area/community e.g. fixing potholes, tackling fly-tipping, and improving footpaths (36%).
- 4.13 Around a third (32%) of residents think the council needs to improve refuse/recycling collection, whilst just under a quarter (23%) think that the Council need to improve communication.
- 4.14 Less frequently mentioned suggestions include: that the council can listen/consult more (20%); improve the way the council operates (15%); reduce the amount of planning permission granted (15%); stop wasting money (15%); and improve the planning process (12%).
- 4.15 The comments included in the 'other' category include a wide variety of topics such as dealing with potholes and lowering council tax; a full list of comments can be viewed in the results document, which is provided under separate cover.

**Figure 12: How could the Council improve the overall running of North Hertfordshire?**

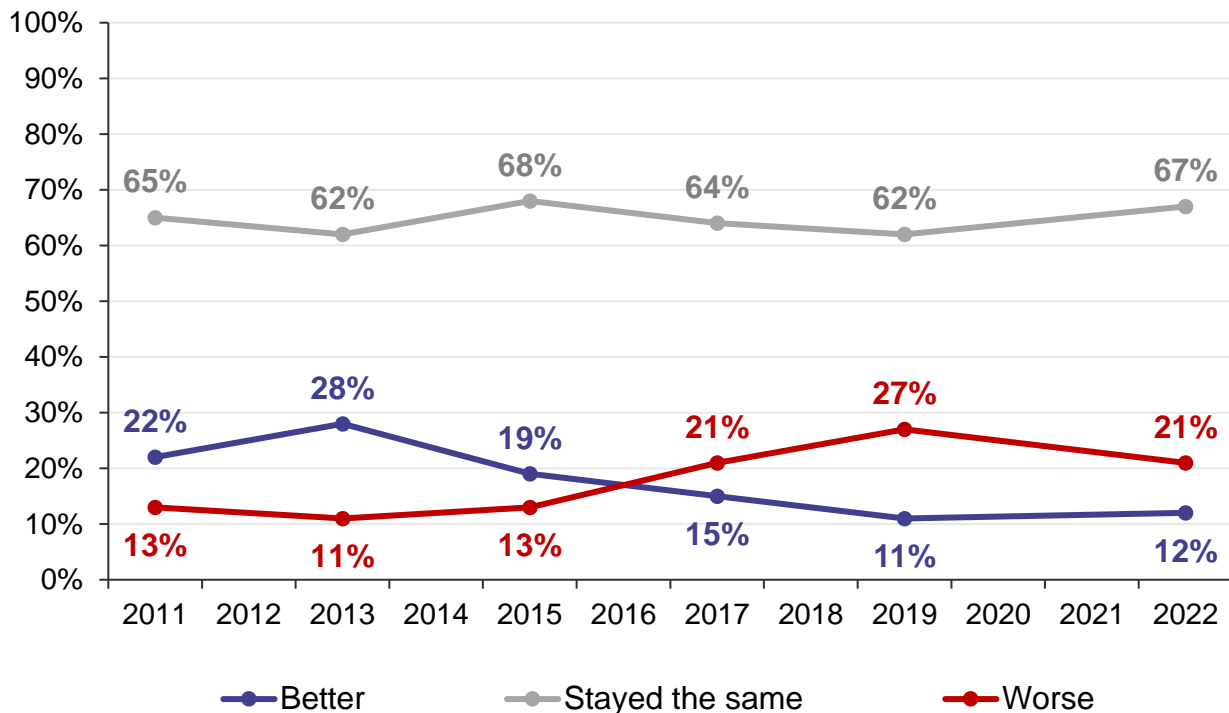


**Base: Residents who disagree the council provides value for money (114) Number of responses (256)**

## Change in how the Council runs things

- 4.16 For the third consecutive survey, the percentage of residents who think the way North Herts Council runs things has worsened is larger than the percentage who think it has improved.
- 4.17 However, while the percentage who think it has got better has remained consistent since 2019, the percentage who think it has worsened over the last two years has significantly declined since its high point in 2019, falling by 6 percentage points from 27% to 21%.

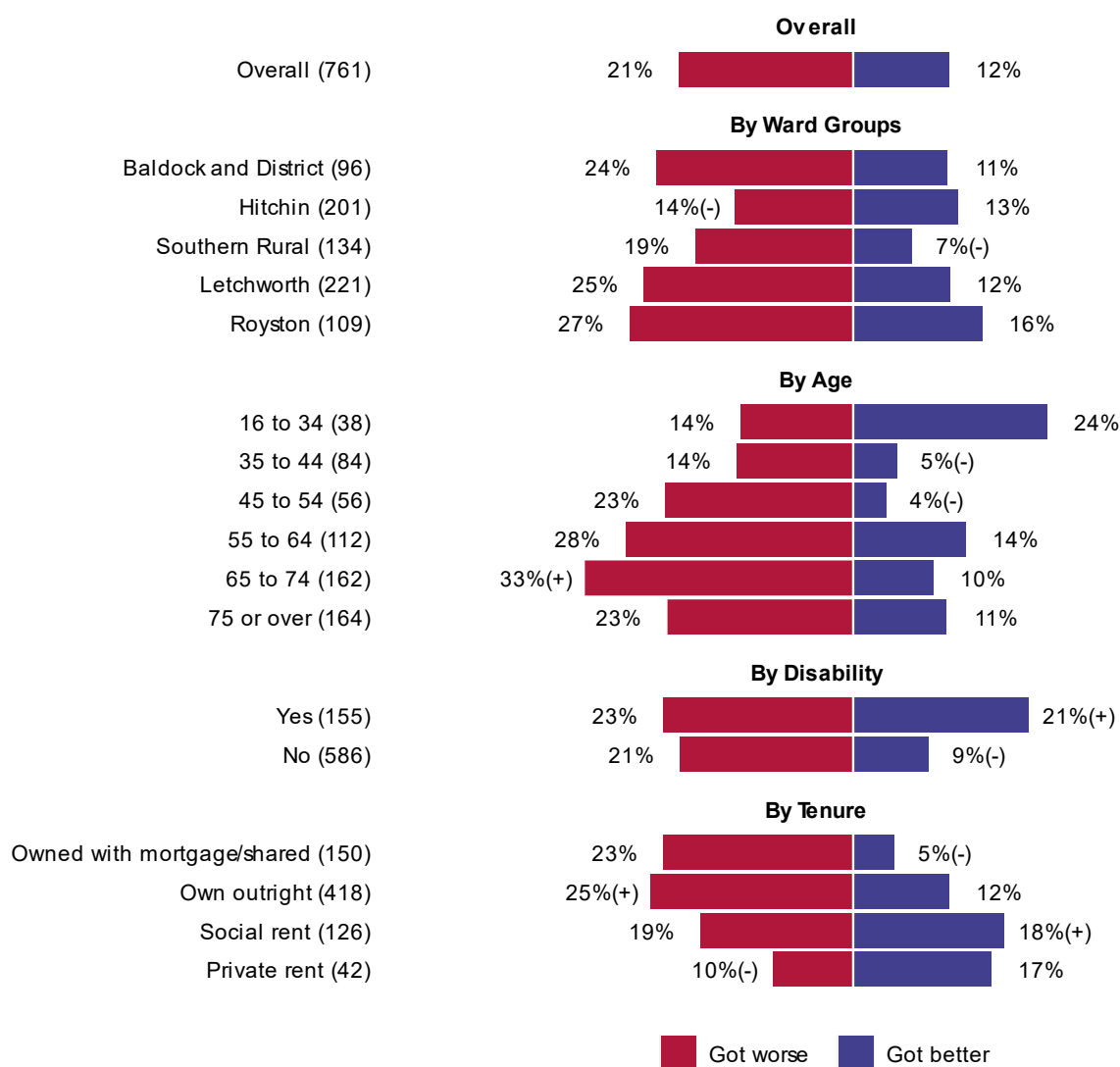
**Figure 13: Thinking about the way North Herts Council runs things, do you think it has got better, stayed the same or got worse over the last two years? Trends over time.**



**Base: All residents (2022 - 761)**

- 4.18 Figure 14 overleaf shows significant variation in the percentage of residents who think that the way North Herts Council runs things is getting better/worse.
- 4.19 Those who rent social housing and those who are disabled are significantly more likely to think how the council runs things has improved over the last two years. Those living in the Southern Rural area, those who are aged 35-54, those who are not disabled, and those who own or share their home with a mortgage are significantly less likely to think the running of the council has got better in the last two.
- 4.20 Those who are aged 65-74 and those who own their property outright are significantly more likely to think the running of the council has got worse over the last two years, while those who live in Hitchin and those who privately rent are significantly less likely to think the running of the council has worsened.

**Figure 14: Thinking about the way North Herts Council runs things, do you think it has got better, stayed the same or got worse over the last two years? By subgroup**



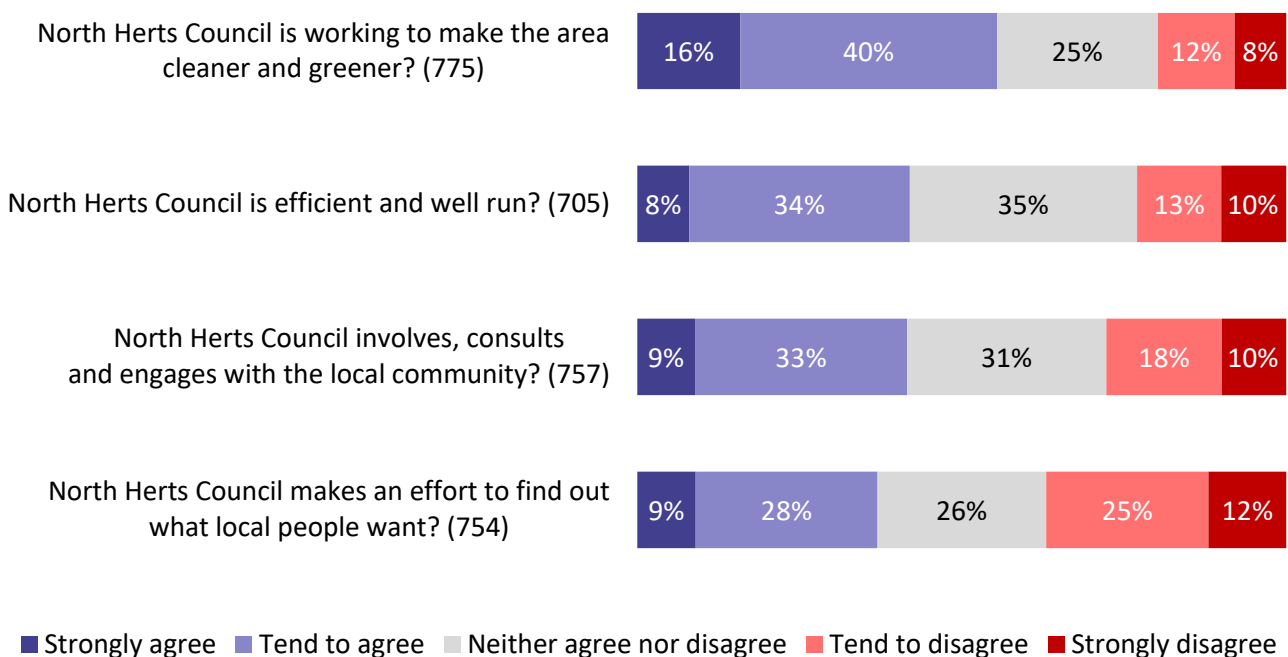
*The (+) symbol indicates the result is significantly higher than the overall and (-) indicates the result is significantly lower than the overall*

**Base: All residents (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

## Attitudes towards the Council

- <sup>4.21</sup> Figure 15 shows the level of agreement/disagreement with four statements about the Council. The statement with the highest level of agreement is that the Council '*is working to make the area cleaner and greener*' – 56% of residents agree with this statement. Just over two fifths (42%) of residents agree with the statements 'North Herts Council is efficient and well run'.
- <sup>4.22</sup> It is interesting to note that that while over two fifths (42%) agree with the statement 'North Herts Council involves, consults and engages with the local community', a slightly lower proportion (37%) agree with the statement 'North Herts Council makes an effort to find out what local people want', while 37% say they disagree with this. Further research would be required to understand why some residents have responded differently to these two statements.

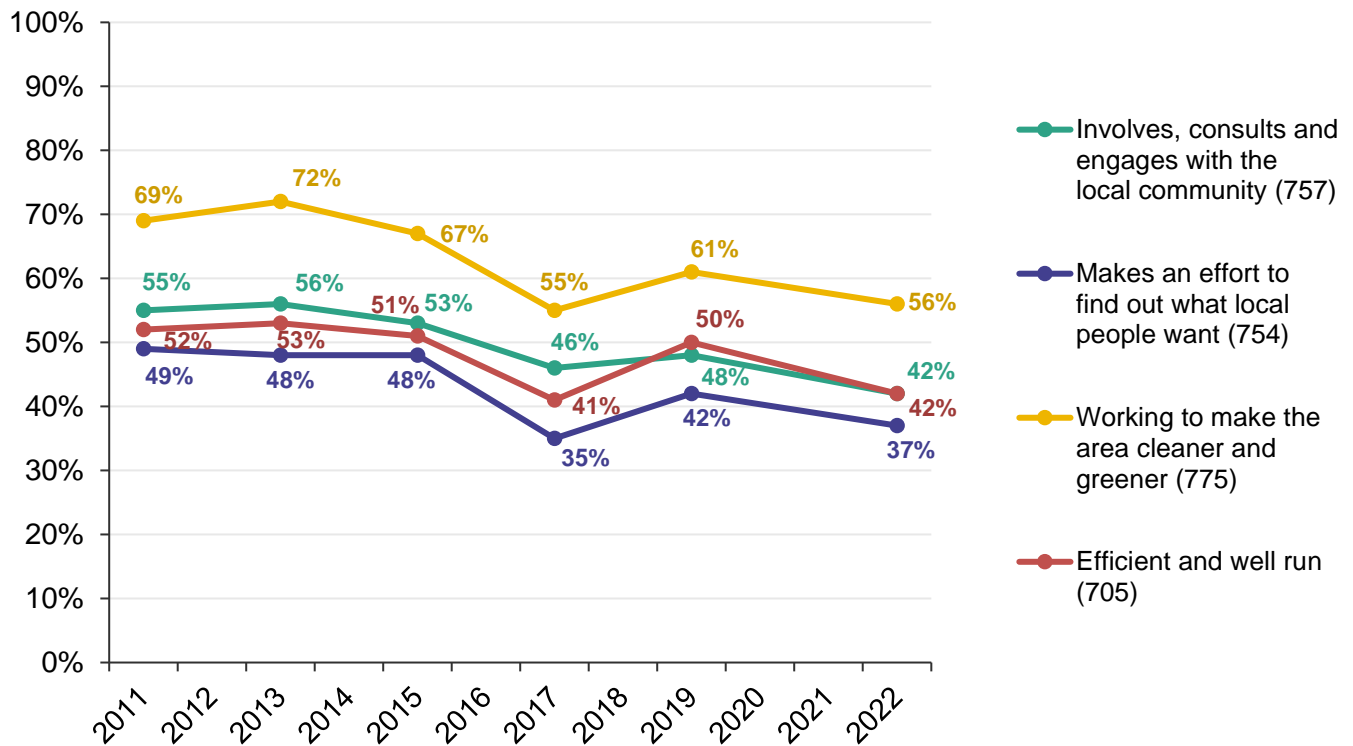
**Figure 15: Do you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following...?**



**Base: All Residents (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

- <sup>4.23</sup> Figure 16 overleaf shows the trends in agreement with these statements over time. The level of agreement for all statements has significantly declined since 2019 returning to the low levels seen in 2017.

**Figure 16: Do you agree, disagree or neither with the following statements about North Herts Council? % of residents who agree. Trends over time.**

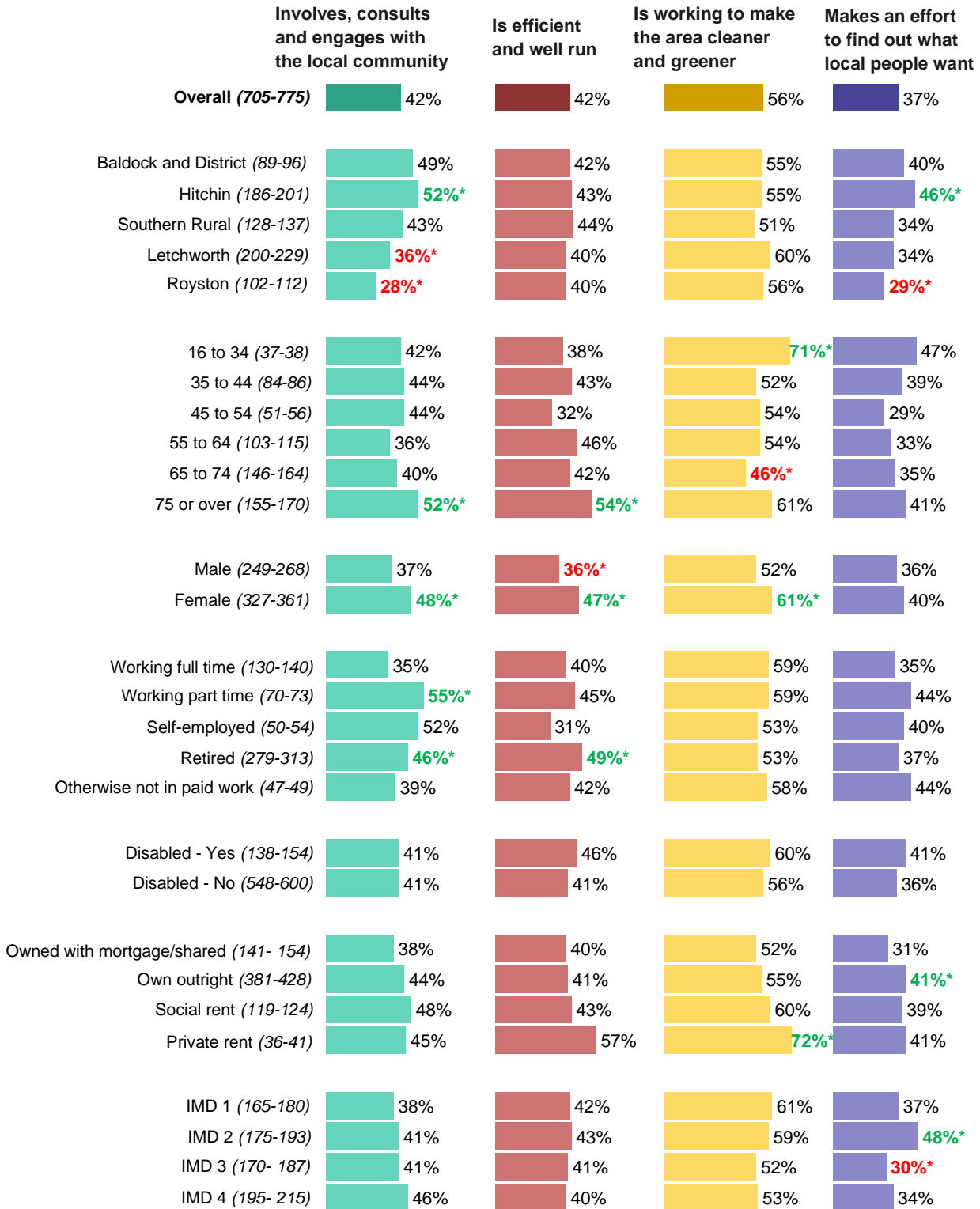


**Base: All Residents (Number of residents in 2022 shown in brackets)**

- 4.24 The chart overleaf shows how agreement with each of these statements varies by subgroup. Several subgroups display significant differences in the level of agreement across multiple statements. Those living in Hitchin are significantly more likely to agree that North Herts Council *involves, consults and engages with the local community* as well as *makes an effort to find out what local people want*. Residents of Royston are significantly less likely to agree with both these statements.
- 4.25 Those aged 75 or over and those who are retired are significantly more likely to agree that North Herts Council *involves, consults and engages with the local community* as well as *is efficient and well run*.
- 4.26 Female residents are significantly more likely to agree with three of the four statements, that the council: *involves, consults and engages with the local community*; *is efficient and well run*; and *is working to make the area greener and cleaner*.



**Figure 17: Do you agree, disagree or neither with the following statements about North Herts Council?**  
**Percentage of residents who agree by subgroup**

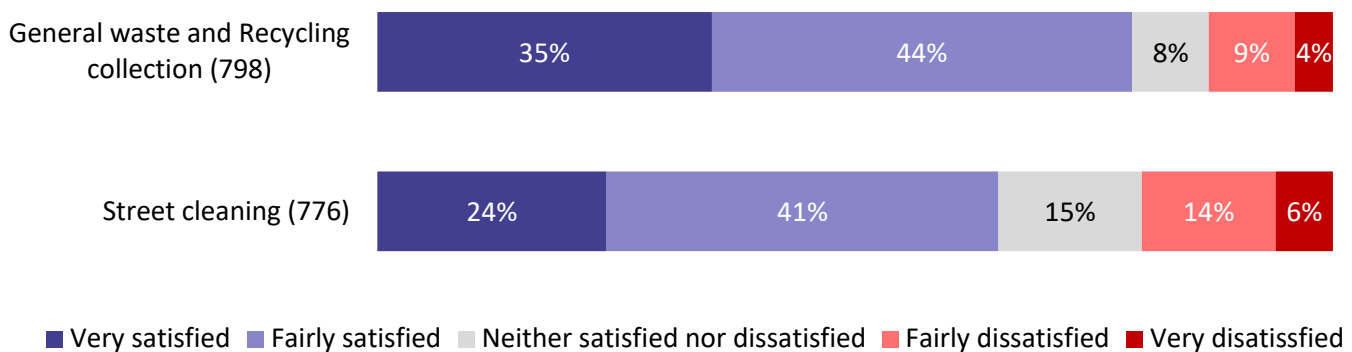


Base: All Residents (number of residents shown in brackets – this shows the range across all statements)

## Council Services

- <sup>4.27</sup> Figure 18 shows that almost four fifths (79%) of residents are satisfied with general waste and recycling collection, which is in-line with the national average (82%)<sup>3</sup>; whilst 13% of North Herts residents are dissatisfied.
- <sup>4.28</sup> Almost two thirds (65%) are satisfied with the Council's street cleaning, which is in-line with the national average (68%); whilst one fifth (20%) are dissatisfied.

**Figure 18: How satisfied, dissatisfied or neither are you with the following services provided by North Herts Council...?**



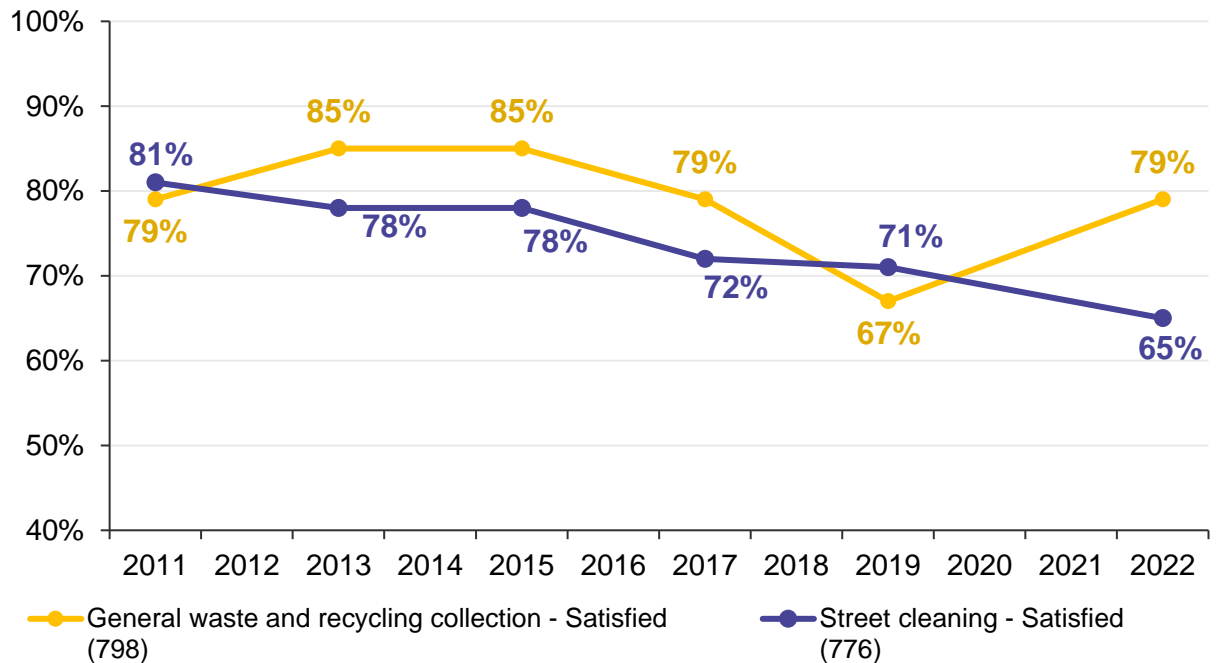
**Base: All Residents (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

- <sup>4.29</sup> When compared to previous years, it can be seen in Figure 19 overleaf that since 2019 there has been a significant increase of 12 percentage points in the levels of satisfaction regarding general waste and recycling collection - this brings it back in-line with the levels seen in 2017. However, as noted previously in paragraph 4.13, around a third (32%) of residents still feel that the Council needs to make improvements to refuse and recycling collections.
- <sup>4.30</sup> Overall satisfaction with street cleaning has also seen a general decline since 2011, with the 2022 result sitting 6 percentage points lower than in 2019 (a significant decrease).

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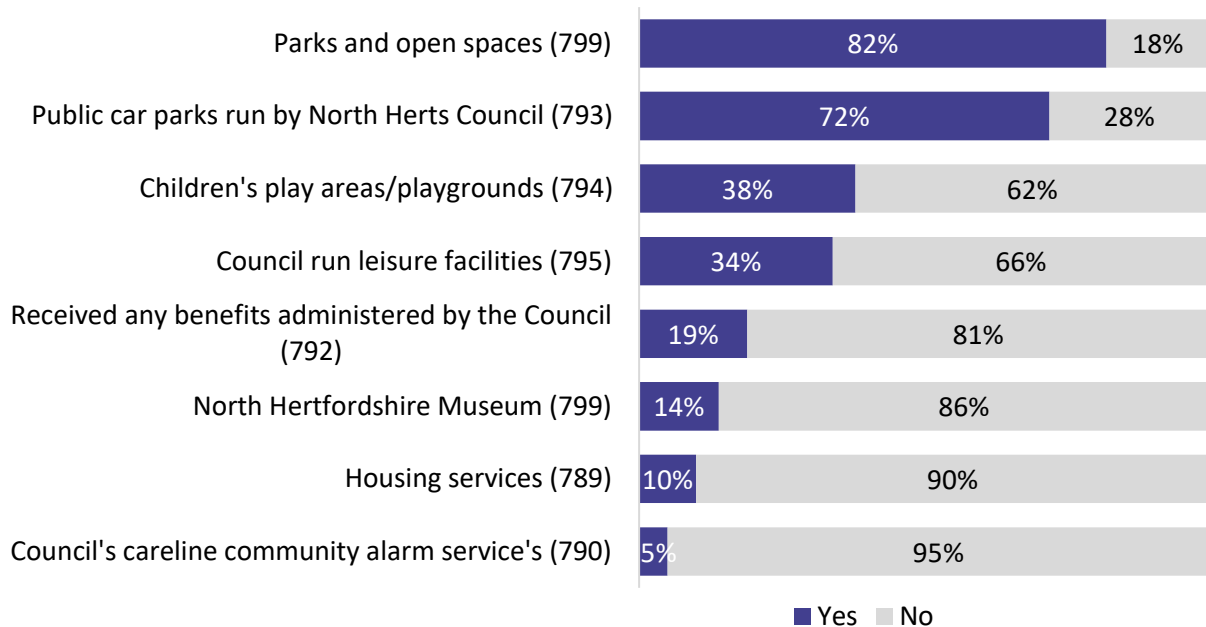
<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the LGA question does not include recycling.

**Figure 19: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the following...? Percentage of residents who are satisfied. Trends over time.**



**Base: All residents (Number of residents in 2022 shown in brackets)**

- <sup>4.31</sup> Figure 20 overleaf shows that over four fifths (82%) of residents have used parks and open spaces within the past year, while more than seven in ten (72%) have used public car parks run by North Herts Council within the past year.
- <sup>4.32</sup> Almost two fifths (38%) of residents have used children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas, whilst around a third (34%) have used council-run leisure facilities.

**Figure 20: Have you used any of the following within the past year?**

**Base: (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

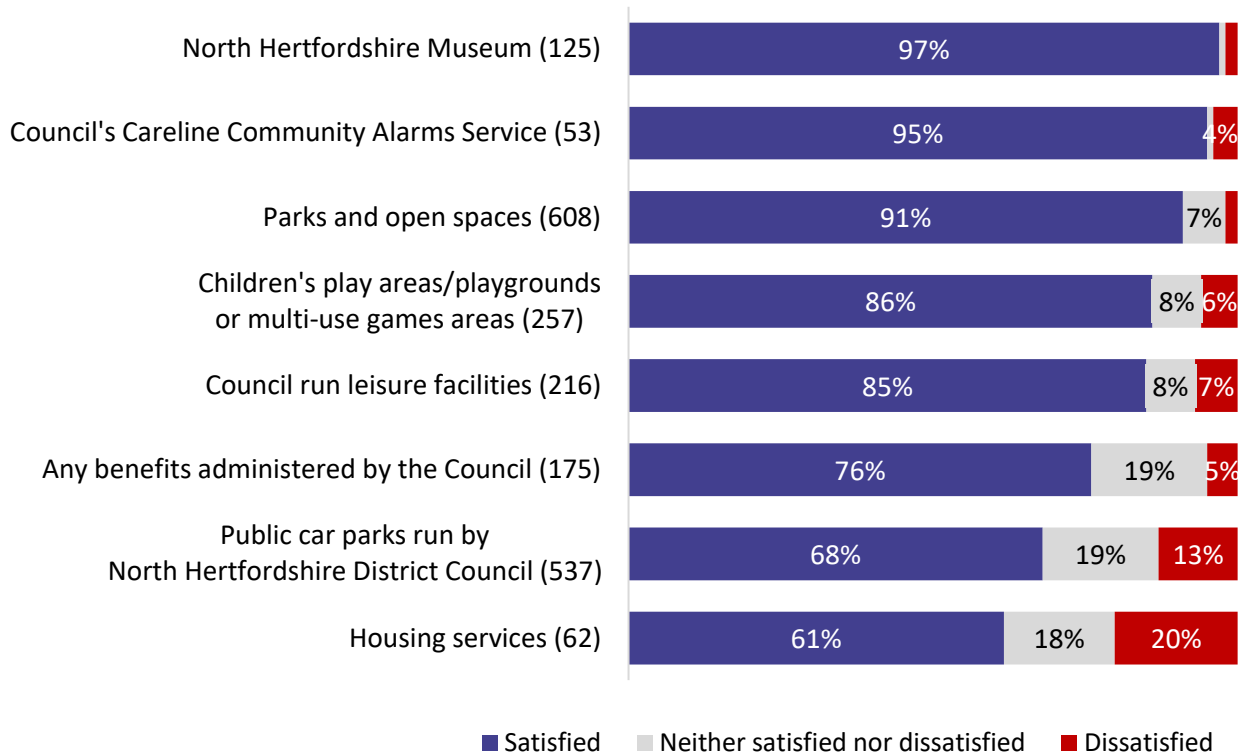
- <sup>4.33</sup> Table 8 overleaf shows that the proportion of residents who have used parks and open spaces in the past year has risen significantly by 7 percentage points. The percentage of residents accessing benefits administered by the council has also seen a significant increase.
- <sup>4.34</sup> However, the proportion of residents who have used public car parks run by North Herts Council, and Council run leisure facilities has fallen significantly by 6 and 10 percentage points, respectively, since 2019.
- <sup>4.35</sup> Many of these changes could be a product of COVID-19. COVID restrictions led a reduction in commuting for work and leisure and therefore the use of car parks in North Hertfordshire likely declined as a result. Similarly, local parks and open spaces became vital spaces for exercise and socially distanced socialising which could also explain their increased use.

**Table 8: Have you used any of the following within the past year? (Council service use from 2011 – 2022 \* indicates a significant change)**

Service/facility	% Users 2011	% Users 2013	% Users 2015	% Users 2017	% Users 2019	% Users 2022	% change 2019 to 2022
Parks and open spaces (799)	78%	79%	75%	73%	75%	82%	+7%*
Public car parks run by North Herts Council (793)	77%	78%	78%	78%	78%	72%	-6%*
Children's play areas / multi-use games areas (794)	41%	46%	41%	40%	40%	38%	-2%
Council run leisure facilities (795)	55%	48%	46%	44%	44%	34%	-10%*
Any benefits administered by the Council (792)	-	13%	15%	15%	15%	19%	+4%*
North Hertfordshire Museum (799)	-	-	-	-	15%	14%	-1%
Housing Services (789)	6%	4%	5%	7%	11%	10%	-1%
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (790)	-	2%	3%	3%	4%	5%	+1%

**Base: (Number of residents in 2022 is shown in brackets)**

- <sup>4.36</sup> It can be seen in Figure 21 overleaf that, of the residents who have used the respective service, over nine in ten residents are satisfied with the North Hertfordshire Museum (97%), while similar proportions are satisfied with the Council's Carelines Community Alarms Service (95%) and parks and open spaces (91%). Children's play areas/playgrounds (86%) and Council runs leisure facilities (85%) also achieved high levels of satisfaction from residents who have used them in the past year.
- <sup>4.37</sup> Areas with lower levels of satisfaction include Housing services (61%), public car parks run by North Herts Council (68%) and receipt of benefits administered by the Council (76%).

**Figure 21: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the following:**

**Base: All residents who have used the service (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

<sup>4.38</sup> Table 9 overleaf shows changes in the levels of satisfaction with council services since 2011. The percentage of users satisfied with the North Hertfordshire Museum has seen a significant 10 percentage point increase in satisfaction since 2019.

<sup>4.39</sup> Also of note is the longer-term decline in satisfaction with benefits administered by the Council (falling from 91% in 2013 to 76% in 2022) and housing services (falling from 79% in 2017 to 61% in 2022).

**Table 9: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the following:  
(satisfaction of services 2011 – 2022 \* indicates a significant change)**

Service/facility	Satisfied % 2011	Satisfied % 2013	Satisfied % 2015	Satisfied % 2017	Satisfied % 2019	Satisfied % 2022	% Change 2019 to 2022
North Hertfordshire Museum (125)	-	-	-	-	87%	97%	+10%*
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (53)	-	100%	100%	92%	86%	95%	+9%
Parks and open spaces (608)	89%	93%	93%	92%	89%	91%	+2%
Children's play areas / multi-use games areas (257)	87%	90%	90%	88%	83%	86%	+3%
Council run leisure facilities (216)	92%	90%	91%	91%	85%	85%	-
Any benefits administered by the Council (175)	-	91%	89%	86%	77%	76%	-1%
Public car parks run by North Herts Council (537)	75%	76%	77%	77%	71%	68%	-3%
Housing Services (62)	79%	76%	77%	79%	73%	61%	-12%

Base: All residents who have used the service (Number of residents in 2022 is shown in brackets)

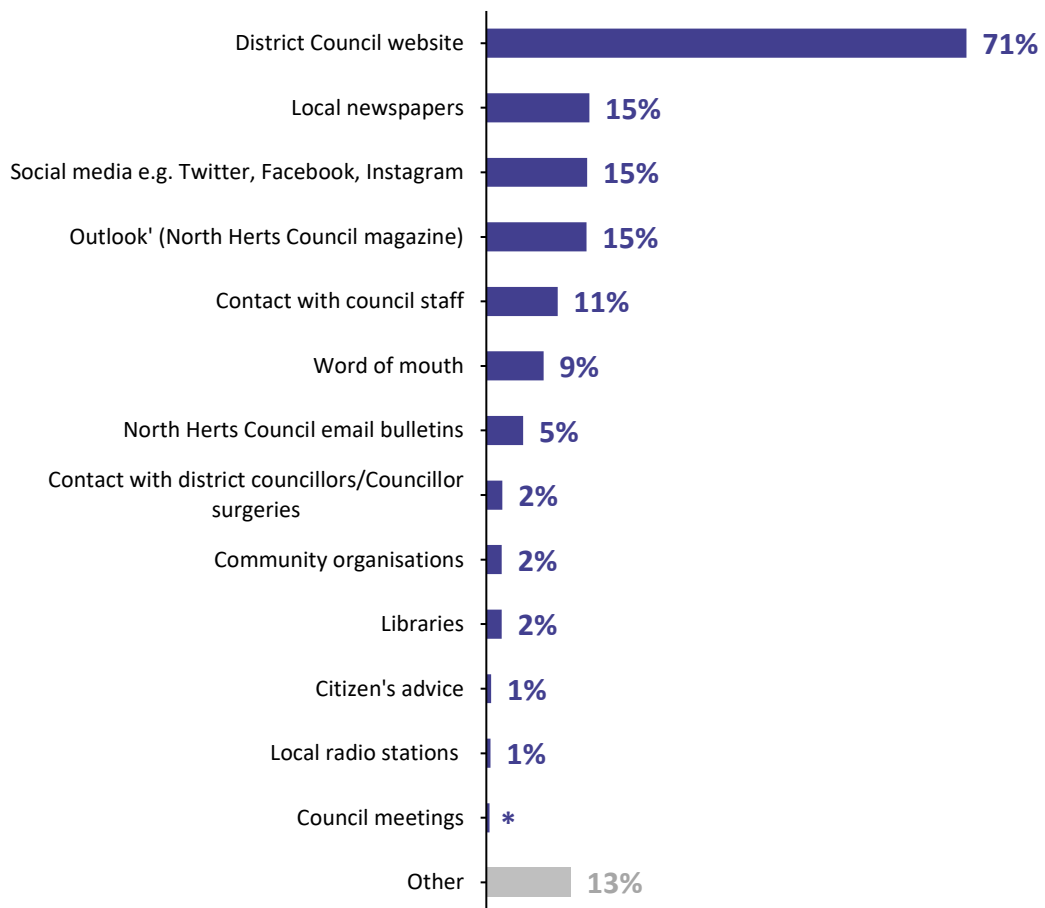
# 5. Information and Communication

## Information Channels

<sup>5.1</sup> Figure 22 shows that around seven in ten (71%) of residents normally obtain information about North Herts Council on the District Council's website.

<sup>5.2</sup> Around 1 in 7 residents (15%) said that they obtain their information from local newspapers, social media, or 'Outlook' the North Herts Council magazine.

**Figure 22: Where do you normally obtain information about North Herts Council if you need it?**

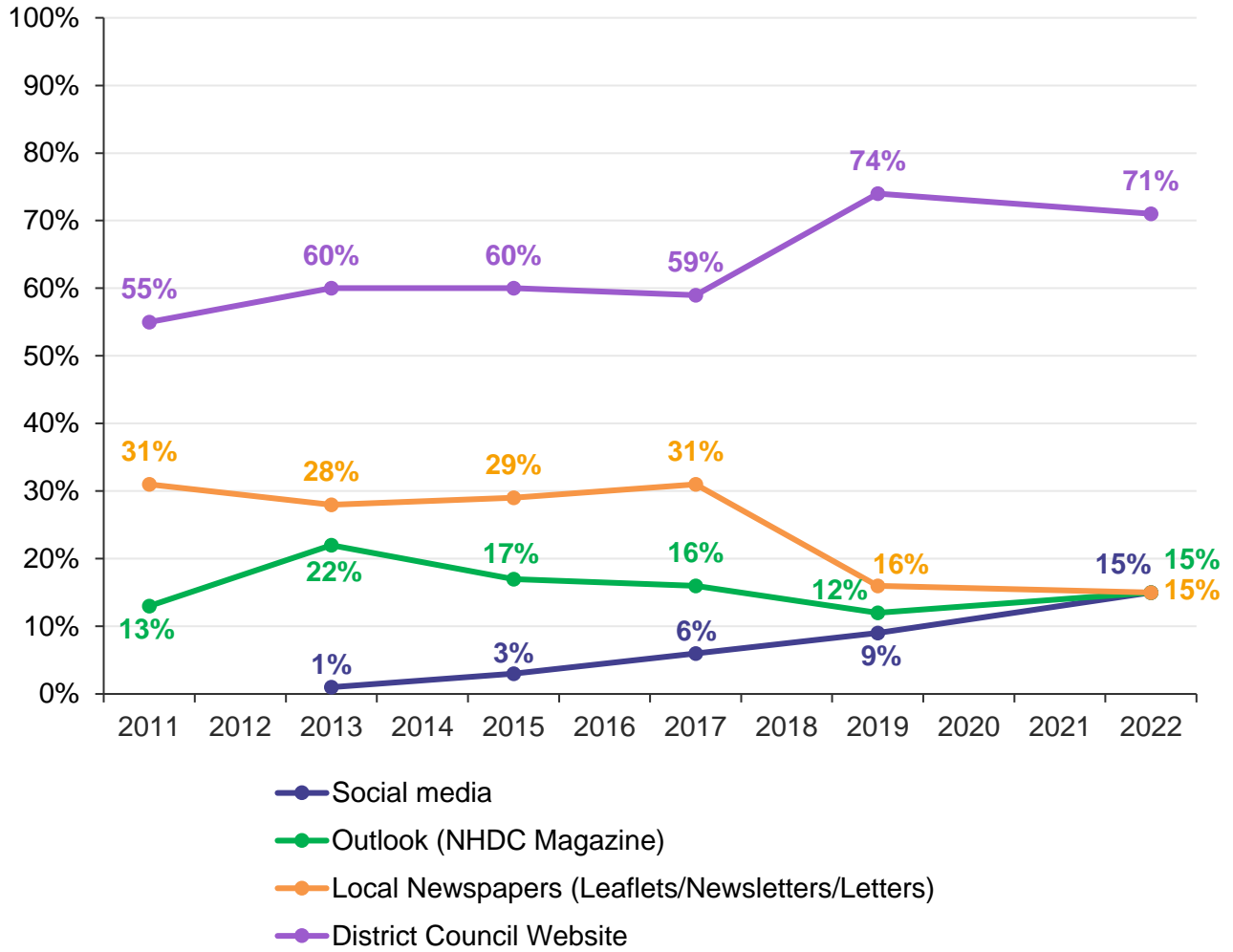


**Base: All Residents (769)**

<sup>5.3</sup> Figure 22 shows trends over time for the four channels most frequently used to obtain information about the Council. The Council website has remained the most popular, but the use of social media to obtain information about the council has seen a significant 6 percentage point increase since 2019 and a 14-percentage point increase since 2013.



**Figure 23: Where do you normally obtain information about North Herts Council if you need it? (Trends over time for the four most frequently given responses 2011-2022)<sup>4</sup>**



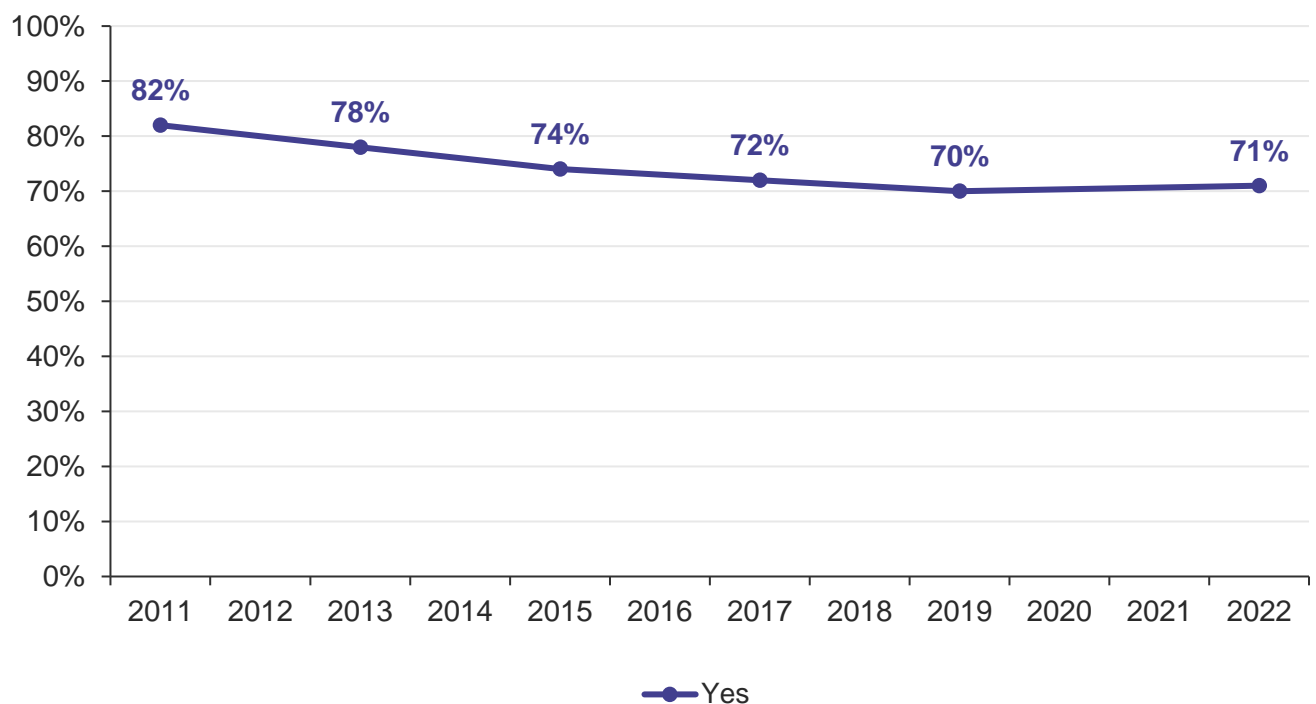
**Base: All Residents (2022 - 769)**

<sup>4</sup> In the 2022 survey the response option only included 'local newspapers', in previous surveys the response option included 'local newspaper/leaflets/newsletters/letters'.

## 'Outlook' Magazine

- 5.4 'Outlook' is the Council's magazine for residents, it provides news and information about the council's services. The magazine is delivered three times a year to all households in the area.
- 5.5 Figure 24 shows that around seven in ten (71%) residents have seen or had a copy of 'Outlook' delivered to their door in the last 12 months. This is in-line with the 2017 and 2019 surveys but lower than in surveys prior to 2017.

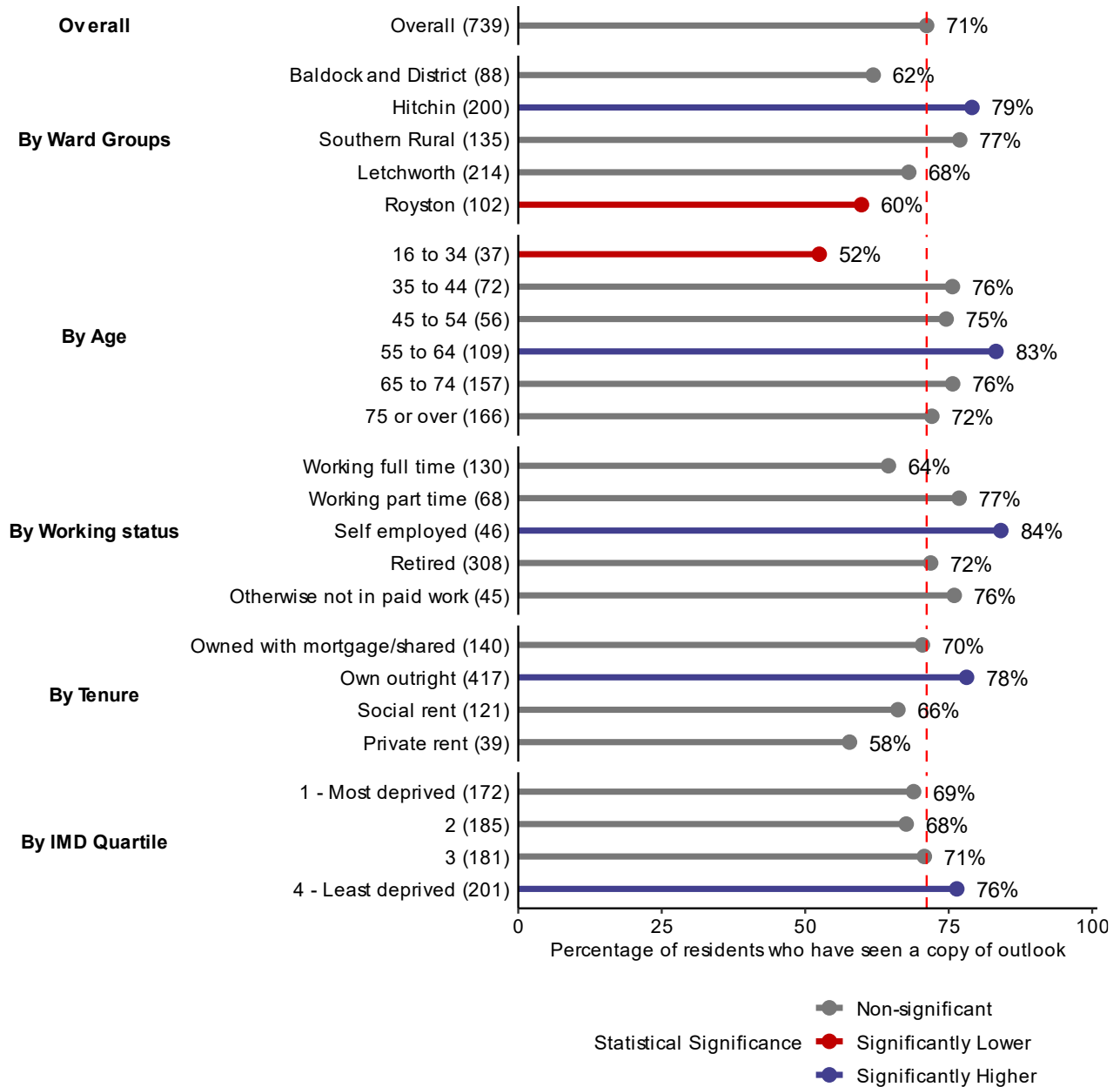
**Figure 24: Have you seen, or had a copy of 'Outlook', North Herts Council's community news magazine, delivered to your door in the last 12 months? Trends over time.**



**Base: All Residents (202 - 739)**

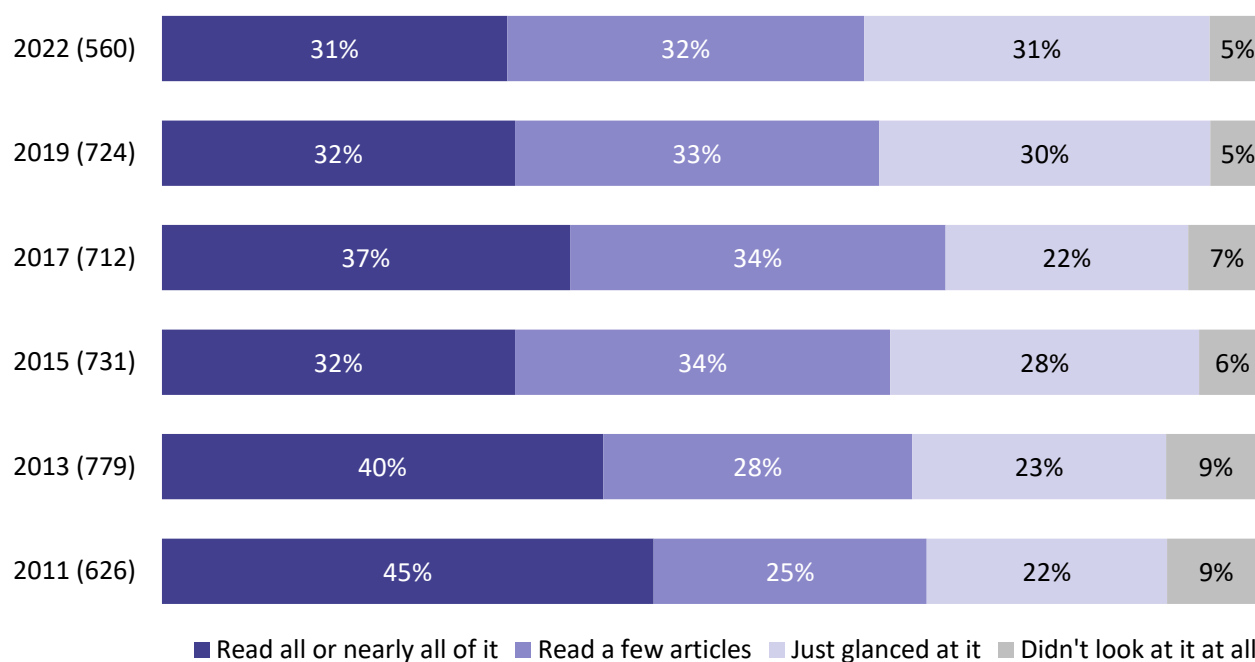
- 5.6 Figure 25 overleaf shows those that have seen or had a copy of Outlook delivered to their door in the last 12 months broken down by subgroup. Those who live in Hitchin, who are 55-64, who are self-employed, who own their property outright, and who live in the least deprived areas are significantly more likely to have seen or had a copy of Outlook delivered.
- 5.7 On the other hand, those who live in Royston and those who are aged 16 to 34 are significantly less likely to have seen or had a copy of Outlook delivered.

**Figure 25: Have you seen, or had a copy of 'Outlook', North Herts Council's community news magazine, delivered to your door in the last 12 months? Yes - by subgroup**



**Base: (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

<sup>5.8</sup> As seen in Figure 26 overleaf, of those who have seen or had a copy of Outlook magazine delivered to their door, the proportion who have read all or nearly all of 'Outlook' (31%) is in-line with 2019 (32%). Similarly, the proportion who have read a few articles is in-line with 2019.

**Figure 26: Would you say you have...?**

**Base: Residents who have seen or had a copy of Outlook (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

<sup>5.9</sup> Age is the factor that best tallies with how much of Outlook is read by a resident. Table 10 shows that residents who are under the age of 45 are significantly less likely to have read all or nearly all of Outlook, whereas residents aged 65 or over are significantly more likely to have read all or nearly all of the magazine.

**Table 10: Interaction with 'Outlook' among different age demographics (seen or received 'Outlook').**

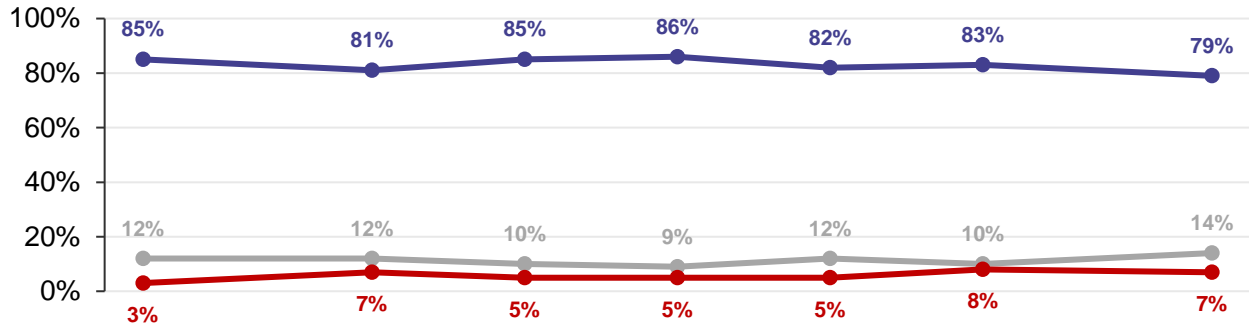
\* indicates a significant difference.

Level of interaction with 'Outlook'	Total	16 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 or over
Read all or nearly all of it	31%	12%*	14%*	33%	37%	42%*	60%*
Read a few articles	32%	28%	35%	29%	33%	34%	31%
Just glanced at it	31%	48%	46%*	27%	25%	24%*	8%
Didn't look at it at all	5%	12%	5%	11%	5%	1%*	1%*
<b>Base</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>124</b>

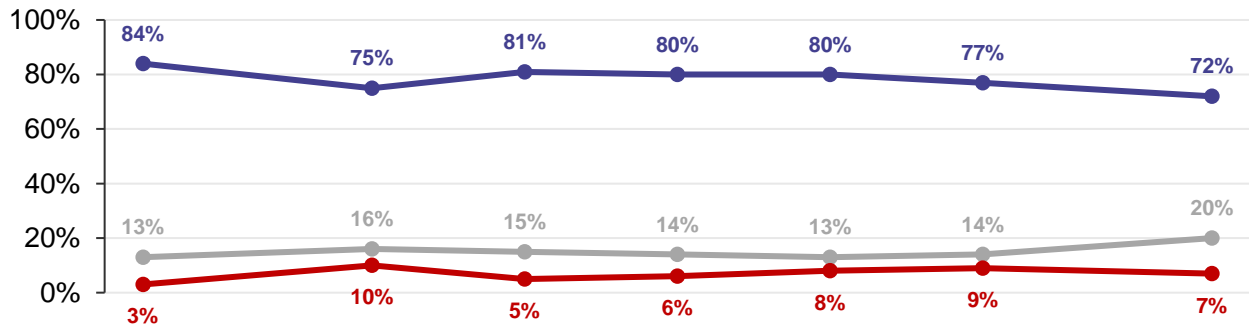
<sup>5.10</sup> As seen in Figure 27 below, around four fifths (79%) of residents like the way 'Outlook' looks and is presented, just over seven in ten (72%) like the way it is written, whilst around two thirds (66%) find 'Outlook' interesting.

**Figure 27: Do you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following...? Trends over time.**

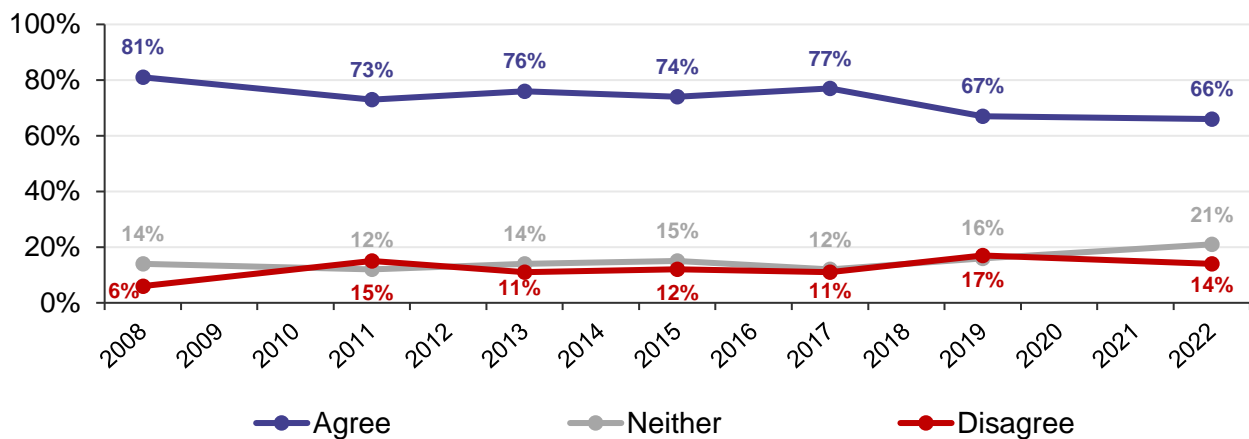
**You like the way 'Outlook' looks and is presented (540)**



**You like the way 'Outlook' is written (540)**



**You find 'Outlook' interesting (540)**

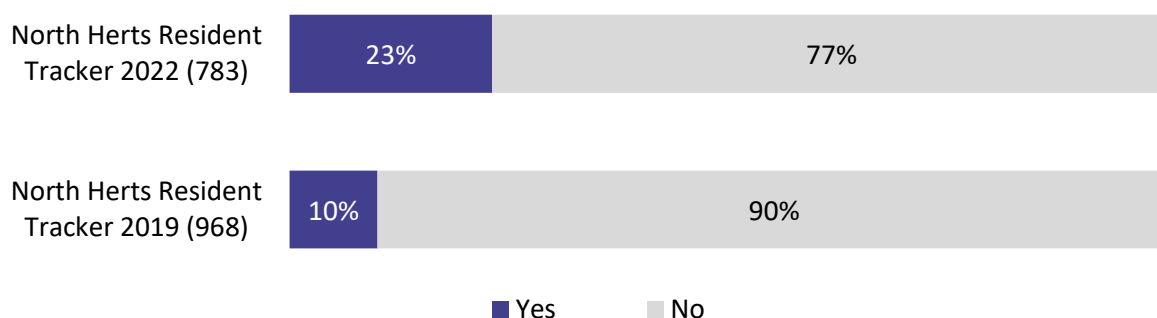


**Base: Residents who have seen or had a copy of Outlook (Number of residents in 2022 shown in brackets)**

## Council Email Newsletters/E-bulletin Service

<sup>5.11</sup> Figure 28 shows that less than a quarter (23%) of residents are signed up to the Council's email bulletins. This is a significant 13 percentage point increase in the percentage of residents receiving the council's email bulletins since 2019. This indicates the reach of the e-bulletin has more than doubled in the last 3 years.

**Figure 28: Have you signed up to receive email bulletins from North Herts Council?**

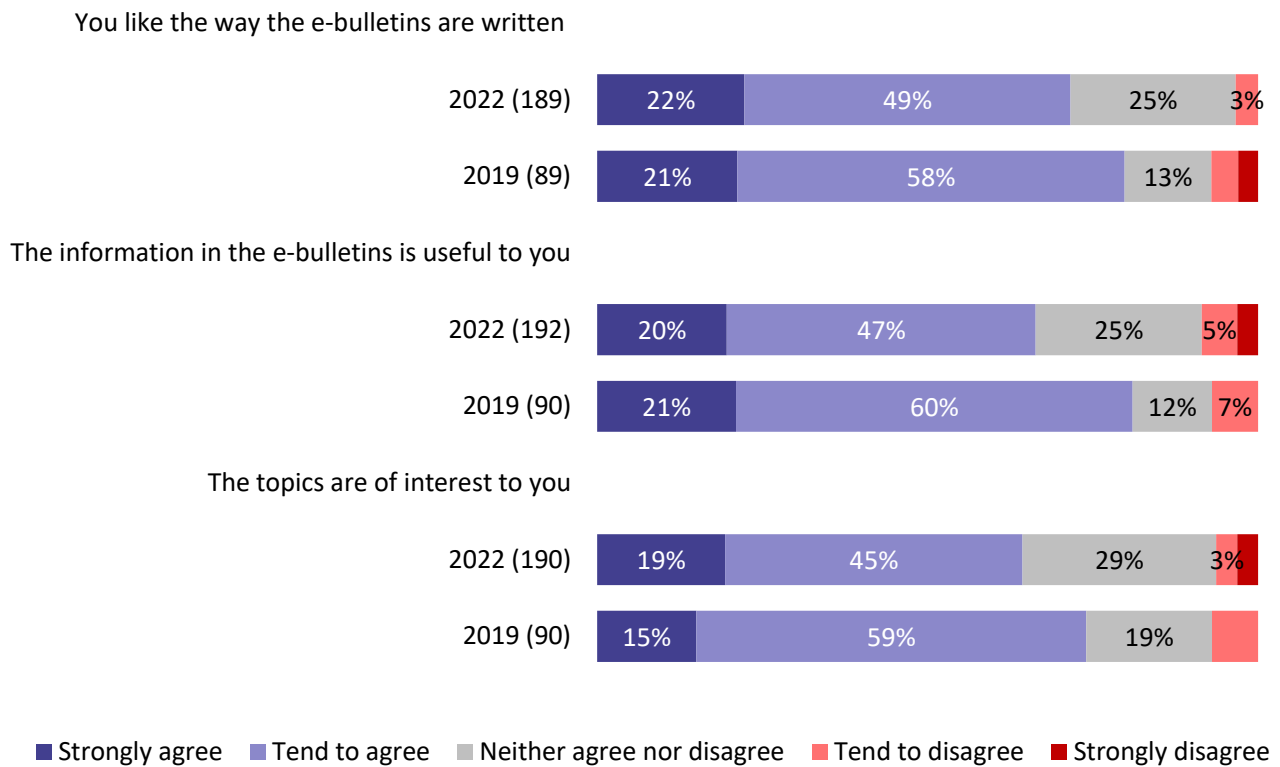


**Base: All Residents (number of residents shown in brackets)**

<sup>5.12</sup> Of those that have signed up to receive email bulletins, Figure 29 overleaf shows that just over seven in ten (72%) residents like the way the e-bulletins are written, whilst around two thirds (66%) of residents find the information in the e-bulletins useful to them and a similar proportion (64%) agree that North Herts Council's email newsletters/e-bulletin service topics are of interest to them.

<sup>5.13</sup> Figure 29, however, suggests a decline in the proportion of e-bulletin subscribers who agree that the information is useful and that the topics are of interest since 2019. However, there has not been a corresponding rise in the level of disagreement with this statement but rather an increase in the proportion saying they neither agree nor disagree.

**Figure 29: Do you agree, disagree or neither with each of the following statements about North Herts Council's email newsletters/e-bulletin service? Comparison with 2019**

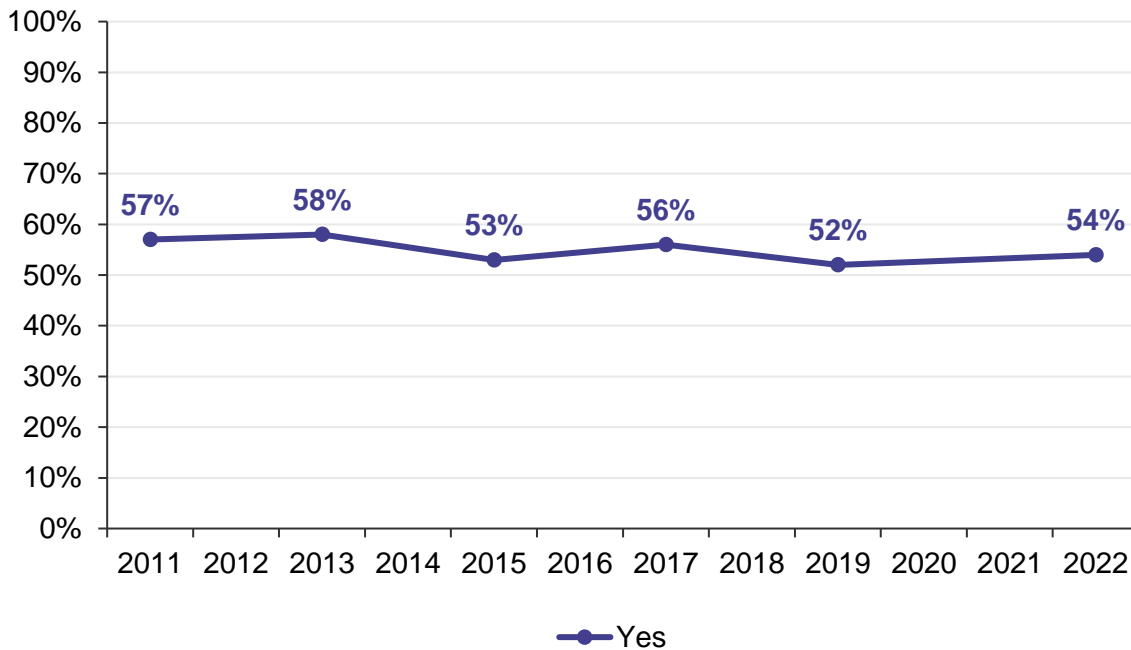


**Base: All Residents (number of residents shown in brackets)**

## Contact with the Council

<sup>5.14</sup> Figure 30 highlights that more than half of residents (54%) said they have contacted the council within the last year. This proportion has remained broadly consistent since surveying began in 2011.

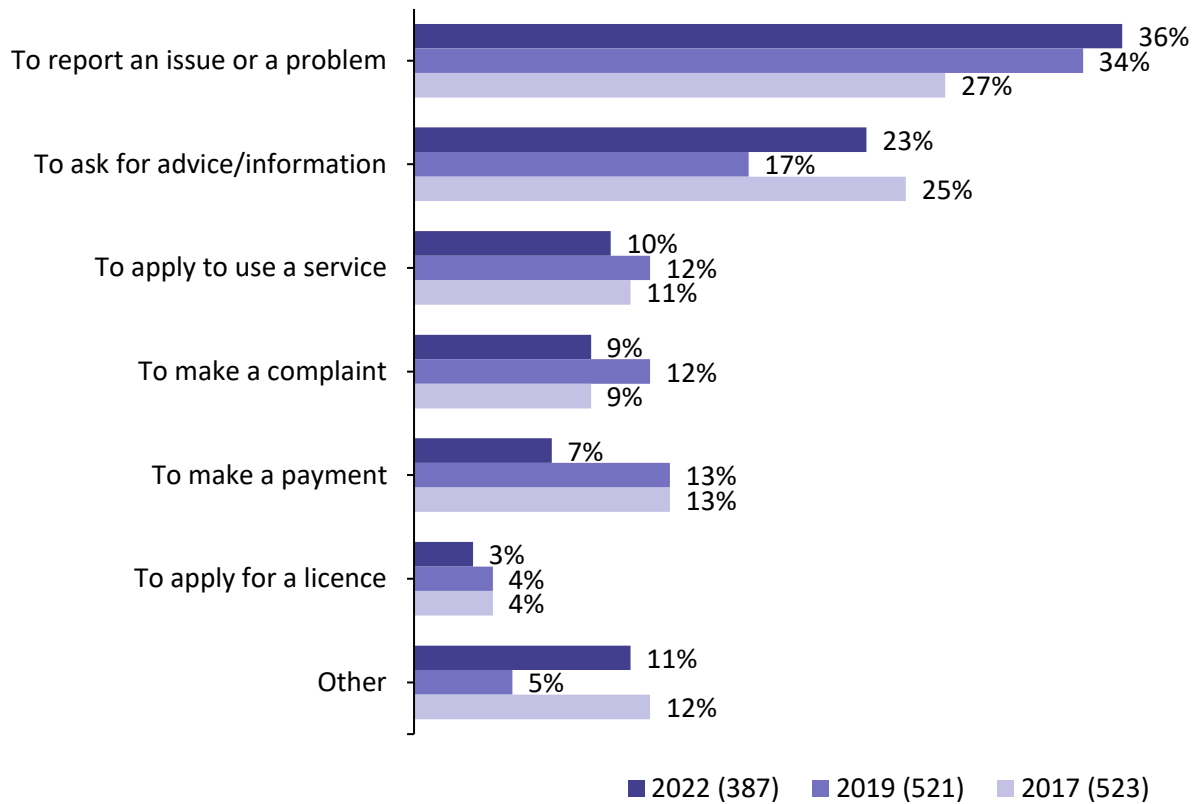
**Figure 30: In the last 12 months, have you contacted North Herts Council? Proportion who responded Yes.**



**Base: All Residents (Number of residents in 2022 is 781)**

- <sup>5.15</sup> Of the residents that contacted the Council in the last 12 months, Figure 31 overleaf shows that over a third (36%) had contacted the Council to report an issue or a problem, the percentage of residents reporting an issue or a problem has seen a significant 9 percentage point increase since 2017.
- <sup>5.16</sup> Just under a quarter (23%) contacted the Council to ask for advice/information. A tenth (10%) of residents contacted the Council to apply to use a service, while similar proportions made contact to make a complaint (9%) and to make a payment (7%).
- <sup>5.17</sup> Around a tenth (11%) contacted the council for other reasons. This included querying council tax bills, applying for single person discount, asking for replacement recycling bins and a wide variety of other topics.

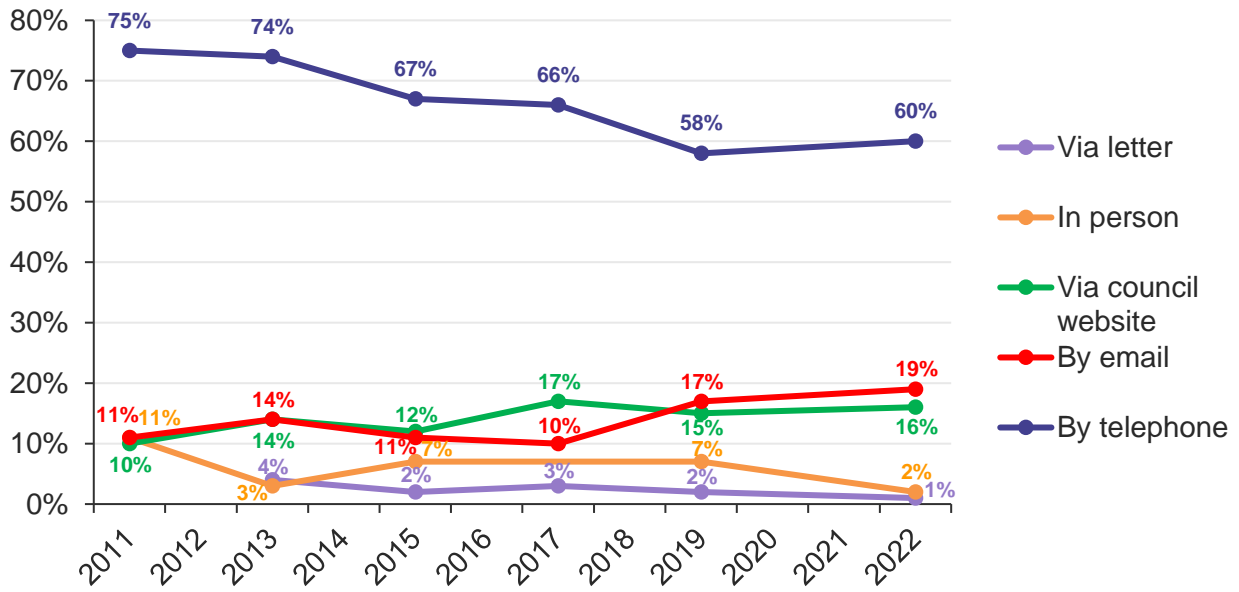


**Figure 31: Which of these describes the reason why you made your most recent contact with the Council?**

**Base: All Residents who have contacted the council in the last 12 months (Number of residents shown in brackets)**

- <sup>5.18</sup> Despite the long-term decline in the proportion of residents contacting the council by phone, it remains the most popular method of contacting the council, with three fifths of residents (60%) choosing this method.
- <sup>5.19</sup> Less than a fifth (19%) contacted the council via email, whilst a slightly smaller proportion contacted the council via its website (16%).
- <sup>5.20</sup> The proportion contacting the council either in person (2%) or by letter (1%) have fallen to their lowest recorded levels. The decline in the proportion contacting the council in person may be explained by COVID restrictions which meant people were not able to visit the Council in person for much of the period.

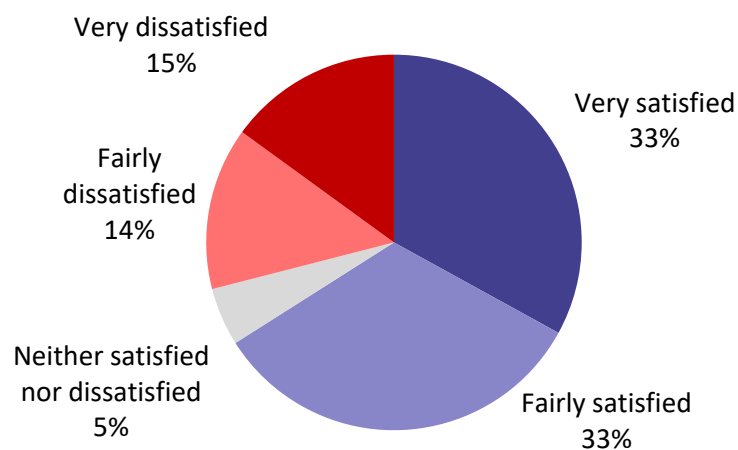
Figure 32: How did you contact the Council?<sup>5</sup> Trends over time



Base: All Residents who have contacted the council in the last 12 months (Number of residents in 2022 is 389)

5.21 Around two thirds (66%) of those that contacted the council said that they were satisfied with the service they received the last time they contacted the council, with a third (33%) saying that they were very satisfied. Around three in ten (29%) of those that contacted the council were dissatisfied.

Figure 33: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you received the last time you contacted the Council?

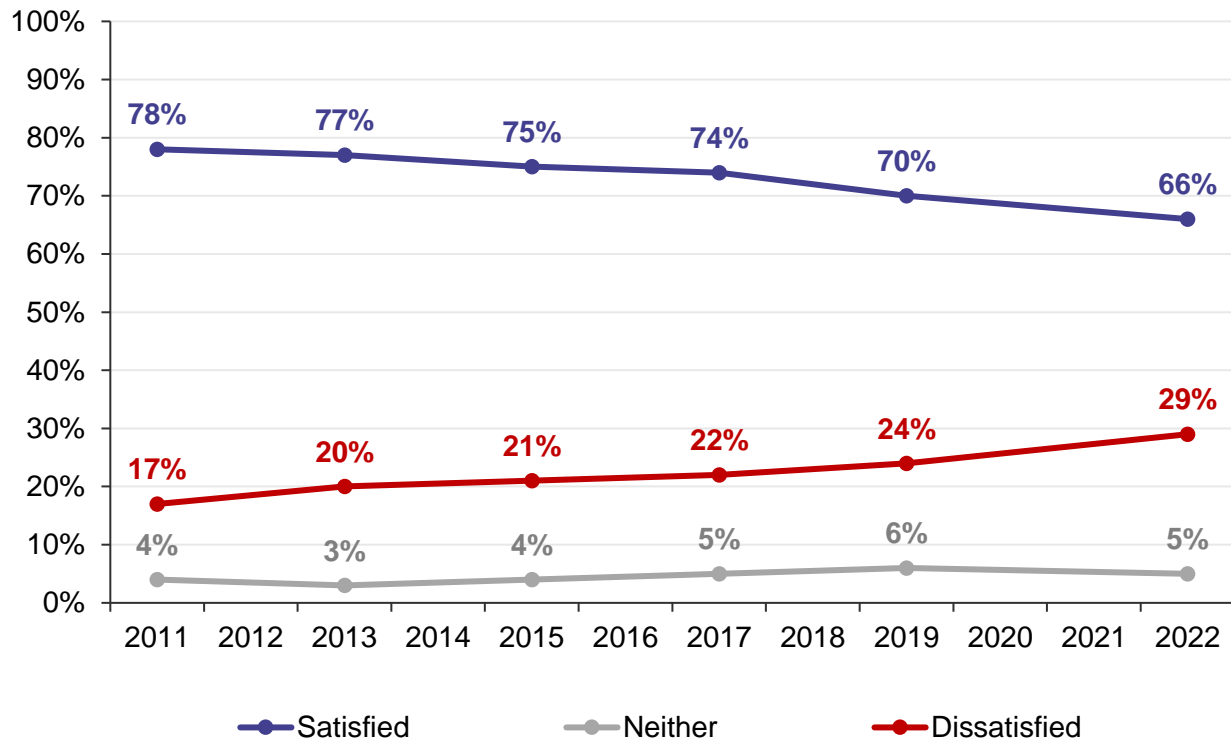


Base: All Residents who have contacted the council (391)

<sup>5</sup> Response options 'other' and 'Via social media networks' are excluded from this chart. 'via social media networks' was chosen by less than 1% of respondents.

<sup>5.22</sup> Figure 34 below shows satisfaction with the service of those that contacted the council. Since 2011 there has been a steady decline in satisfaction and a corresponding rise in dissatisfaction. Since 2011 satisfaction has fallen significantly by 12 percentage points.

**Figure 34: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you received the last time you contacted the Council? Trends over time.**

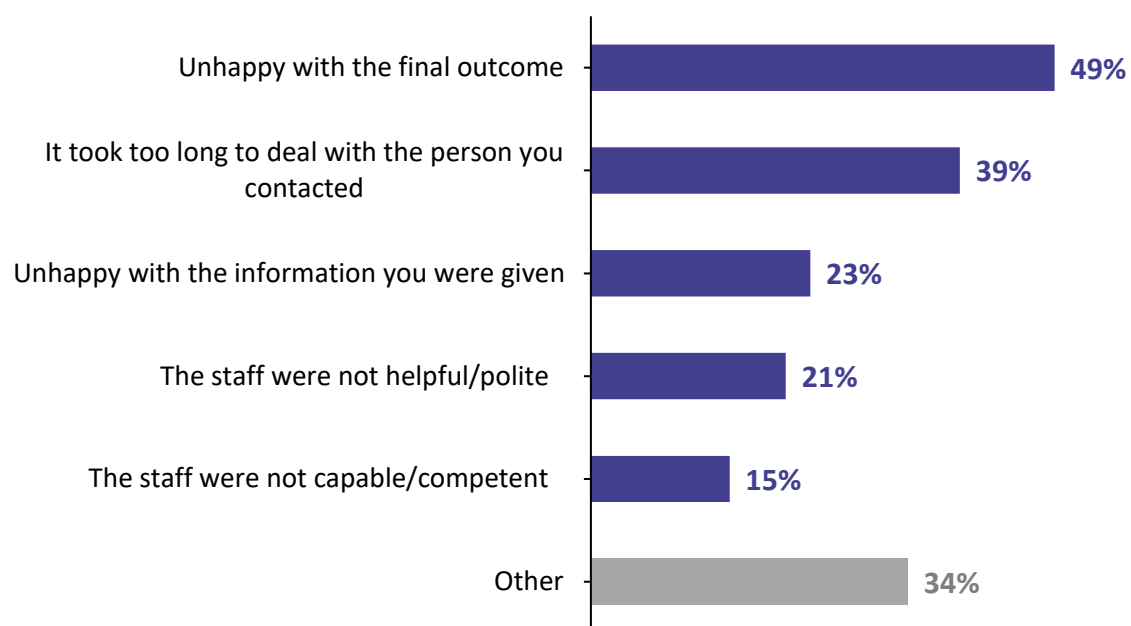


**Base: All Residents who have contacted the council (2022 - 391)**

<sup>5.23</sup> Of the residents who had contacted the Council and were dissatisfied with the service, around half (49%) said that they were dissatisfied because they were unhappy with the final outcome. Those who had originally contacted the council to make a complaint or report an issue were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied because of the final outcome.

<sup>5.24</sup> Nearly two fifths (39%) were dissatisfied because it took too long to deal with the person they contacted. Just under a quarter (23%) felt unhappy with the information they were given, around a fifth (21%) felt the staff were not helpful or polite and around one in seven (15%) were dissatisfied because they felt the staff weren't capable or competent.

**Figure 35: Why were you dissatisfied with the service you received the last time you were in contact with the council?**

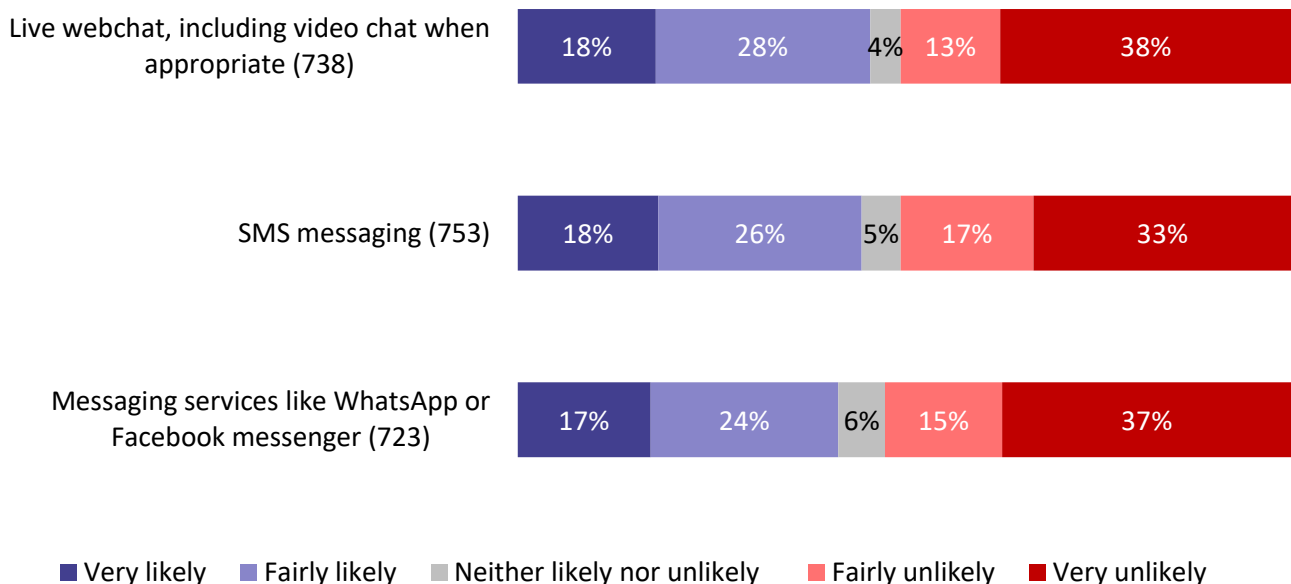


**Base: All Residents who have contacted the council and were dissatisfied with the contact they received (96)**

## New Methods of Contact

- <sup>5.25</sup> Figure 36 shows how likely or unlikely residents would be to use three potential methods of contact with the council. The method that the largest proportion of residents say they are likely to use is a live webchat, with just under half (46%) of residents saying they would be likely to use the service.
- <sup>5.26</sup> This is closely followed by SMS messaging (44%) and lastly messaging services like WhatsApp or Facebook messenger (42%).

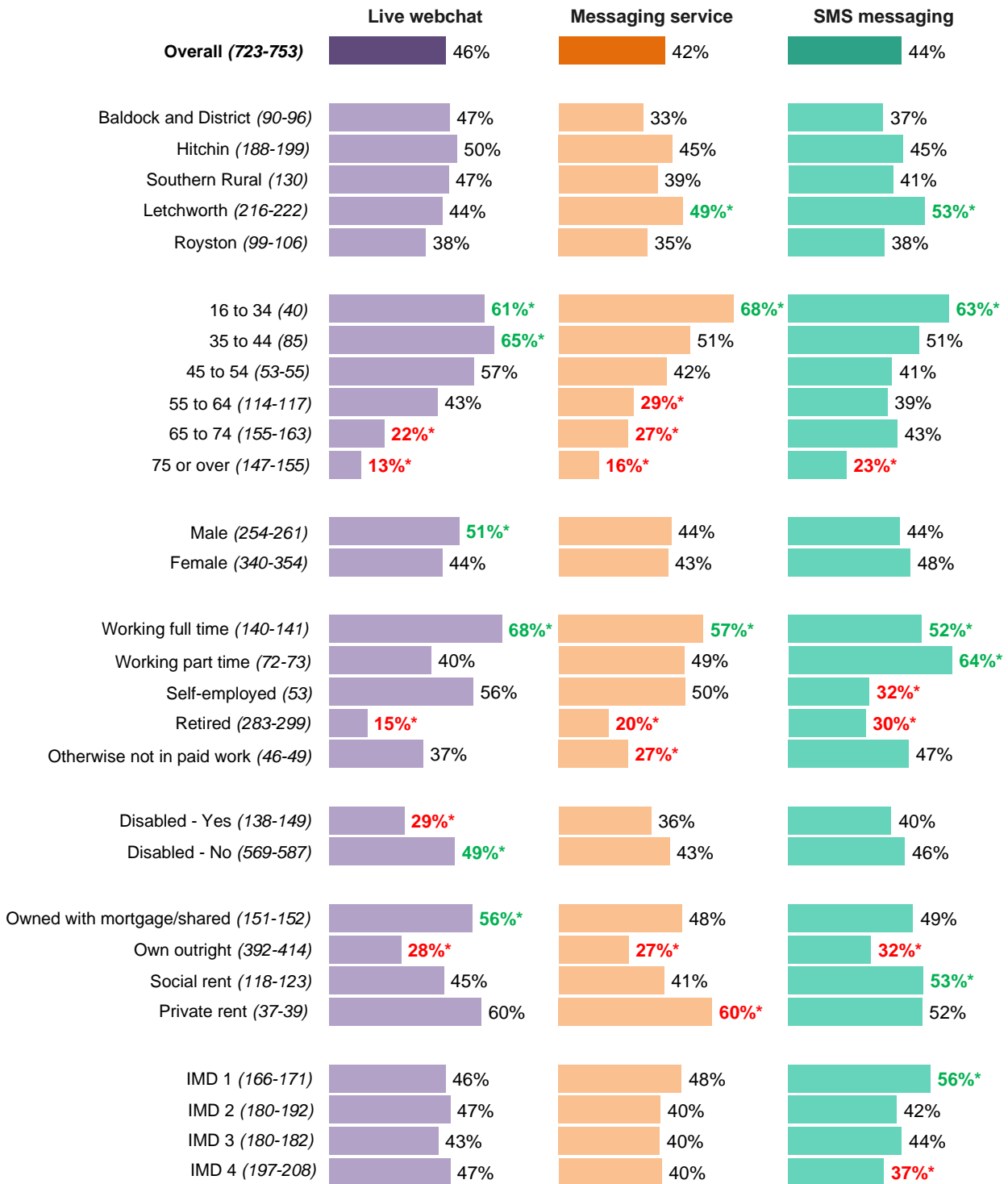
**Figure 36: If the council were to start using the following methods of contact, how likely or unlikely would you be to use them to contact the council?**



**Base: All Residents (number of residents shown in brackets)**

- <sup>5.27</sup> Figure 37 overleaf shows how the likelihood of using each of these methods of contact varies by subgroup. For all methods age is a clear and significant factor. Those aged between 16 and 34 are significantly more likely to use all the methods while those 75 or more are significantly less likely to use all the methods.
- <sup>5.28</sup> While age still has a significant impact, SMS messaging is the most popular of the three methods among older residents (65+) while messaging services such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are the most popular of the three methods of contact for those younger residents aged under 35. Live webchat is the most popular method for those between the ages of 35 and 64.

**Figure 37: If the council were to start using the following methods of contact, how likely or unlikely would you be to use them to contact the council? Percentage who are very or fairly likely.**



**Base: All Residents (number of residents shown in brackets – this shows the range across all statements)**

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