



Results of BVPI 2006 General Survey in North Somerset

November 2007

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SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The overall picture

Public satisfaction with most North Somerset Council services covered in this survey, especially waste (recycling, rubbish removal etc.), sports, leisure and culture are high and many have increased since last measured (2003).

Against this generally positive picture of service-use, there are less positive messages about how the council is perceived in terms of community leadership, customer care and corporate image. This reflects a national picture though there are some specific issues for North Somerset Council to consider, which are drawn out in the report.

Satisfaction 'with the way the council runs things' has decreased from 50% to 47%. The national median figure has also decreased over this period from 55% to 53%. North Somerset is now in the bottom quartile of English councils on this overall satisfaction figure.

Reflecting the national pattern, North Somerset residents feel less well-informed about the council than in 2003. Satisfaction with complaints handling is also down. Majorities view the council as untrustworthy, remote, not acting on public concerns, inefficient and not providing good value for money.

This shows, as previous research, the apparent mismatch between satisfaction with most council services and dissatisfaction with 'the council'. North Somerset residents' perceptions of most areas of 'traditional' service delivery have kept up with improving national standards. But our image, as an organisation is low and, in common with the broad national picture, has fallen.

As in previous years, and in line with the national pattern, the better-informed people are about the council, the more likely they are to be satisfied with the council. Satisfaction also correlates clearly with perceptions of value for money and opportunity to participate in council decision-making. North Somerset scores at well-below national medians in terms of informed-ness and opportunities to participate. It seems likely that this goes some way to explaining the slippage on the overall satisfaction figure.

Public priorities

'Activities for teenagers' emerge as the only clear increasing priority for improvement. 'Traffic congestion' has increased marginally.

Among the other **issues asked about**, there are no other issues of growing concern. However, it is clear from the 'open questions' that other issues not directly covered in this national survey (council tax levels, council management and Weston seafront) are seen as priorities.

Crime levels are still seen as a key factor in making somewhere a good place to live. However, in North Somerset, concern with the level of crime has reduced. Perceptions of anti-social behaviour (ASB) as problematic have also fallen, except the issue of teenagers hanging around which is now the most widely mentioned ASB 'problem'.

It is clear that North Somerset residents, as nationally, see improving the situation for young people as a priority.

Service areas – headlines

Satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities, libraries and parks has increased at around or slightly more than the national rate of increase.

Satisfaction with museums, galleries, theatres and concert halls has fallen both nationally and in North Somerset. As a result, North Somerset's position in the national 'league table' is stable.

Results for waste management issues are mixed. Most have remained steady at high levels of satisfaction. However, nationally the satisfaction scores have increased - partly powered by some dramatic increases in London boroughs.

Satisfaction with general cleanliness remains above the national median. Household waste collection has improved so North Somerset is now above the median. In terms of fixed-site recycling (bottle banks etc) our score remains steady and high but we have slipped into the bottom quartile.

In terms of household waste recycling centres (i.e. tips or dumps), we have dropped from the top to the bottom quartile and have among the lowest satisfaction levels in the country. This problem is concentrated in the Clevedon/Nailsea/Portishead 'triangle' and reflects temporary issues over the summer of 2006 with Black Rock and Cheston Coombe sites. Among respondents from Weston-super-Mare, satisfaction figures remain as high as in 2003. The Weston-super-Mare region figures would be in the top quartile nationally.

Satisfaction with local bus services remains (as in 2000 and 2003) in the bottom quartile of councils nationally. 2006 has seen improvements for North Somerset. However, nationally the bar has been raised such that our relative position remains mainly unchanged. In 2006 we are in the bottom 10% of councils nationally in terms of satisfaction with 'the local bus service overall' and 'public transport information'. Demand for improvement in public transport is in the top quartile nationally. There are clearly lower levels of satisfaction among young people and in Clevedon and Portishead and some rural areas.

One area of progress on transport is that, **among those who have seen** public transport information, satisfaction levels have increased, absolutely and in relative terms, such that we are now on the national median.

Looking at people who complain to the council, complainants' satisfaction with the way their complaint was handled was down in 2006. In 2003 we were on the national median, but in 2006 we have slipped into the bottom quartile. Small movements on this measure can have a large impact on 'league position', and all changes are within margins of error. However looking at results since 2000, satisfaction with complaint handling does appear to have gone down, or at least not kept pace with expectations.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the North Somerset Council's 2006 Local Government User Satisfaction Survey, more commonly known as the BVPI General survey.

Each council in England is required to run the survey every three years according to a strict timetable and methodological specification set out by central government.

The survey is the source of several 'Best Value Performance Indicators' (BVPIs). These are measures of public satisfaction with aspects of the council's services, which form part of the way government assesses councils¹.

The appendix to this report provides a summary of some key measures (BVPIs) showing changes over time in the national context.

The survey deals with residents' perceptions at a particular point in time. It covers a small number of services, mainly those provided by the development and environment directorate (e.g. recycling, parks, libraries) and does not touch on many of the statutory services which other parts of the organisation provide (e.g. education, social services).

North Somerset Council also conducted three other 'BVPI surveys' in late 2006/early 2007. These are:

- Survey of people who have had a housing benefit or council tax benefit application decision (BVPI Benefits survey)
- Survey of people who have had a planning application decision. (BVPI Planning survey)
- Survey of library users (Adult Plus survey).

These three surveys are reported elsewhere.

This report covers only the BVPI General survey. This survey was conducted from 4 September to 19 December 2006. The method was postal, self completion. The sample was of adults (aged 18 and over) from a random selection of households across North Somerset. The 18-and-over population of North Somerset at the time of the survey was 159,600 people².

The response rate to this survey was 61%, the second highest of any council nationally, yielding 1,996 respondents from a sample of 3,300 addresses. The national median response rate was 44%. Nationally, response rates fell 2003 to 2006, though North Somerset response rates increased from 48% in 2003 to 61% in 2006.

Fieldwork was conducted by Snap Surveys Ltd. Data were verified and weighted by the Audit Commission.

Summary data from English councils was only published by the Audit Commission on 29 September 2007, hence the long time period between the end of fieldwork and the publication of these results. North Somerset Council management team were briefed on the North Somerset results in March 2007.

¹ Results feed into the 'Comprehensive Performance Assessment'

² Office of National Statistics 2006 Mid Year Estimate, rounded for publication.

Information about the surveys and their role in the Best Value performance framework can be found on the Department for Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk>.

The Audit Commission website provides more detail including a summary of results for all English councils, at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance>. This includes, for selected results, the median scores and quartile boundaries of all English councils and specific types of councils (e.g. district councils, unitary councils). These medians and quartiles allow us to set North Somerset results in the context of other councils' scores.

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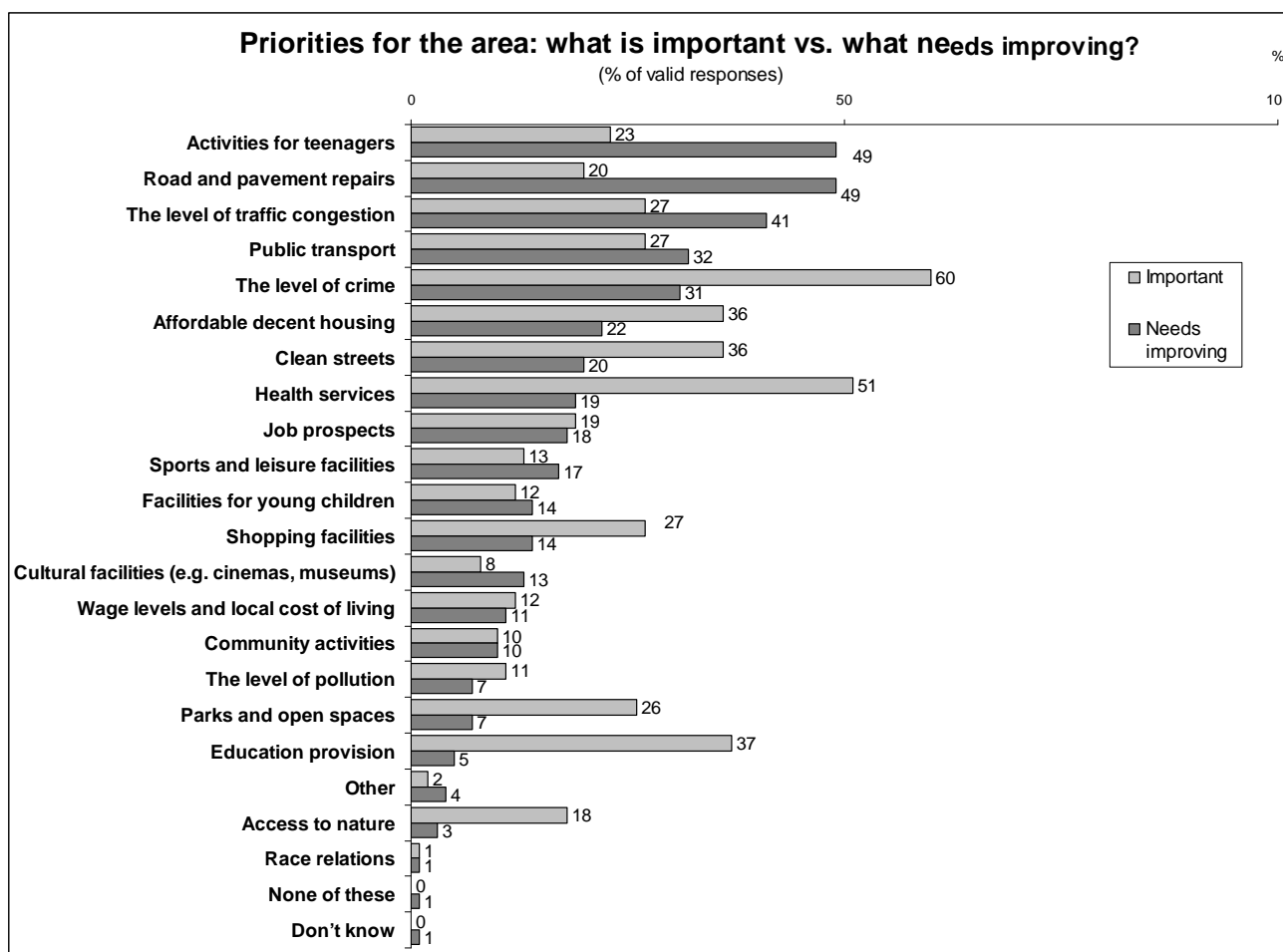
2. PRIORITIES FOR THE AREA

The research provides a wealth of information, comparable to 2003, about what people value and want for “this local area”.

Obviously this does not all relate to the council’s activities, but most relate to some aspect of the North Somerset Partnership’s activity.

Respondents stated what is most important in “making somewhere a good place to live”, choosing up to five topics from a pre-set list of 20. They then selected which five “most need improvement”. This ‘needing improvement’ can be seen as a proxy measure of dissatisfaction.

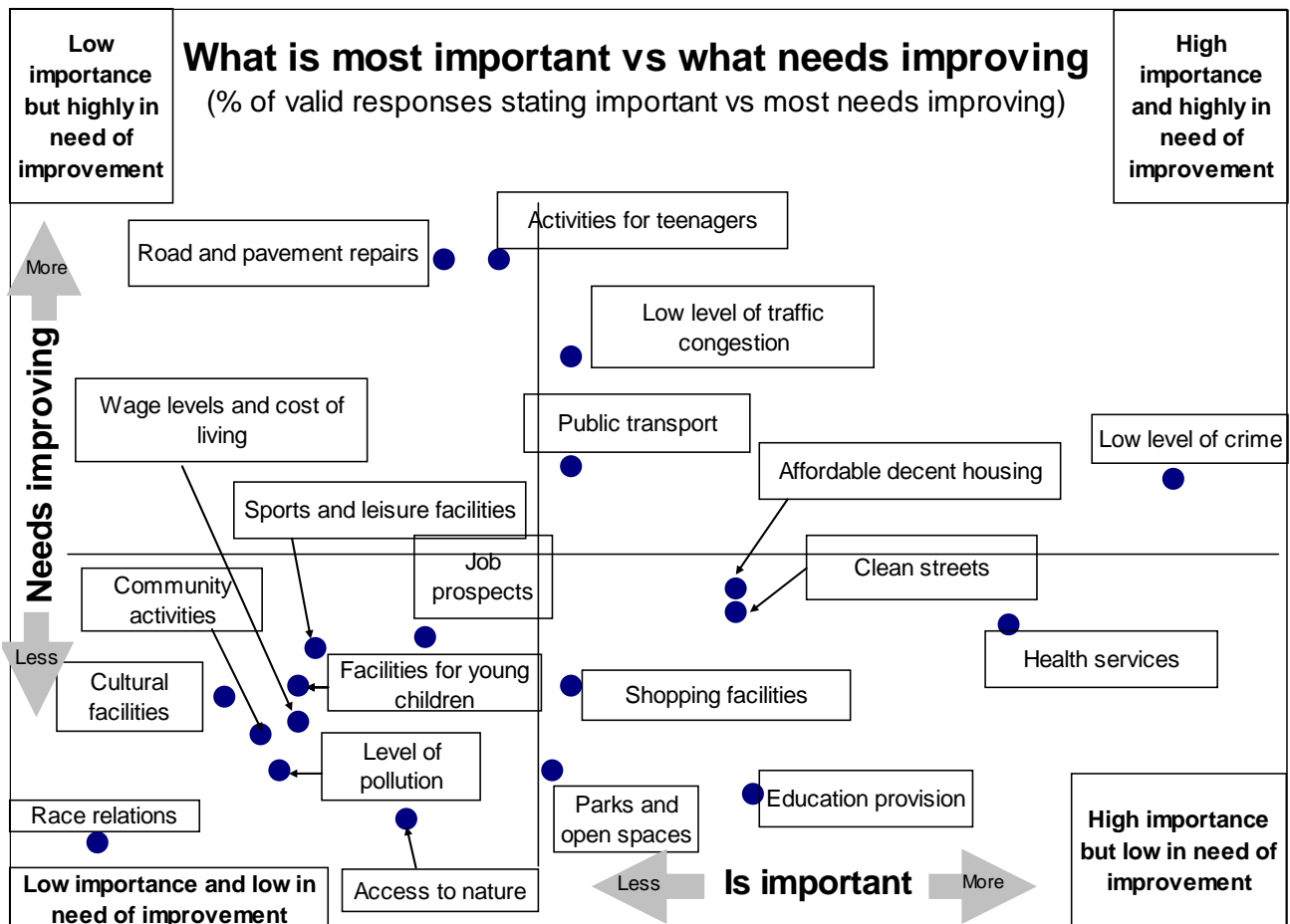
The most important things in making somewhere a good place to live are (low) ‘level of crime’, ‘health services’ ‘education’, ‘affordable housing’ and ‘clean streets’ (see pale bars in chart below). However, the things most needing improvement (dark bars) are mostly different: ‘road and pavement repairs’, ‘activities for teenagers’ ,‘low level of traffic congestion’, public transport and ‘level of crime’.



So while ‘road and pavement repairs’ may not be seen as that important, they are an area of relatively low satisfaction. Conversely, ‘health services’, while vital, are performing relatively well.

This 'two-pronged' analysis is best shown in the next type of chart, which uses exactly the same data. The more **in need of improvement** something is, the higher up the vertical axis it sits. So for example, 'activities for teenagers' is slightly more in need of improvement than 'traffic congestion'.

The more **important** something is, the farther to the right on the horizontal axis. So for example, 'health services' are more important than 'clean streets'.



Crudely the chart can be read as follows:

Top right quadrant: urgent priorities for action, i.e. things that are important and that people are not satisfied with.

Top left quadrant: non-urgent priorities, i.e. things people are not satisfied with but which are not so important.

Bottom right quadrant: important things which are already done well, i.e. they are important and people are generally satisfied.

Bottom left quadrant: less important things which are done well.

Overall, there are few things in the 'urgent priorities for action' quadrant. Even those things which are in the top right quadrant are not clustered in the top-right corner of it. In other words, people are not massively dissatisfied with any listed issue. For example, while people clearly see low level of crime as very important, the level of satisfaction with 'crime' is relatively high. In this sense, North Somerset is in line with the national picture.

Another interpretation could be that, only five things have above-average need-of-improvement scores (i.e. are in the top half of the chart). But all of these are relatively important.

The only three items in the top right quadrant ('important and need improving') are squarely covered by three of the council's seven corporate improvement priorities (2006-2008)³, namely:

- Improve transport infrastructure
- Reduce alcohol and drug misuse and violent crime
- Reduce anti-social behaviour.

This analysis so far has focused on the relative scores. We might alternatively look at it in absolute terms and ask whether or not the fact that 32% of the sample says public transport needs improvement is a 'good' or 'bad' result.

Another limitation of this analysis is that respondents answered in terms of a pre-set list of issues. Previous research⁴ suggests that this list does not capture some of the key concerns people have, notably council tax levels, major developments (especially on Weston-super-Mare seafront) and council management.

Respondents to this survey were able to write in their own issues of importance/improvement.

2% chose non-listed issues as **important**. In most cases these were issues that were actually covered by the list.

4% of respondents chose to highlight non-listed issues as most **in need of improvement**. These cover a wide range of subjects, with no single issue dominating. Again, as with the matrix chart (above) this suggests there is no overwhelming issue exercising the public.

Responses to the 'any comments' section at the end of the questionnaire generated over 700 comments, many of which do suggest priorities, including council tax levels, major developments (especially on Weston-super-Mare seafront) and council management and strategic leadership. No quantitative analysis of these comments is attempted as it is a notoriously tricky area. For example, the survey indicates very high levels of satisfaction with doorstep recycling, yet many of the 'any comments' refer to recycling, especially the demand to be able to recycle plastics as well as specific detailed issues with respondents' collection.

³ See 'Aiming for Excellence, Corporate Plan 2005-2008', page 4.

⁴ August 2005 compared to December 2005 North Somerset Citizens' Panel surveys.

2.1. North Somerset priorities in the national context

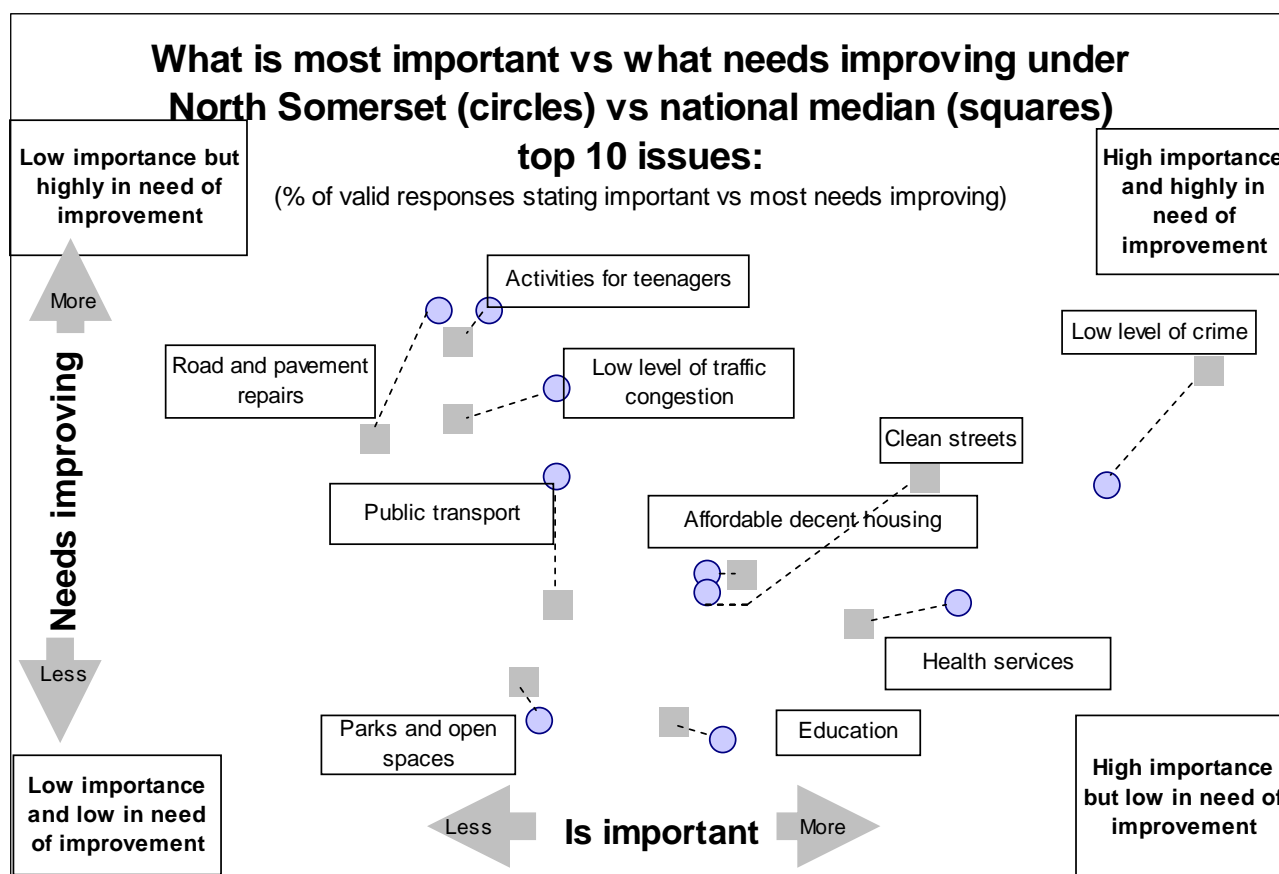
It is also possible to compare the priorities of North Somerset residents with the national picture⁵. The following chart shows this comparison, with North Somerset scores represented by circles, and the national median figures by squares.

In terms of what ‘makes somewhere a nice place to live’, North Somerset figures are very similar to the national median figures⁶. There are some minor exceptions:

- ‘Clean streets’ are rated as slightly less important (6%) by North Somerset residents
- ‘The level of traffic congestion’ is seen as slightly more important (5%) by North Somerset residents.

In terms of what needs improving (a proxy for dissatisfaction), again North Somerset figures are very similar to the national figures, with the following exceptions. North Somerset residents are clearly less satisfied with:

- ‘Road and pavement repairs’ (11% ‘less satisfied’). North Somerset is in the top 10% of councils in terms of demand for improvement.
- ‘Public transport’ (6%). North Somerset is in the top 15% of councils in terms of demand for improvement.
- ‘The level of traffic congestion’ (5%). The councils with the highest levels of demand for improved traffic are almost all small cities/towns in the south of England (e.g. Christchurch, Gosport, Epsom).



This comparison can be made with any other authority or group of authorities.

⁵ The analysis uses national median figures from all local authorities in England.

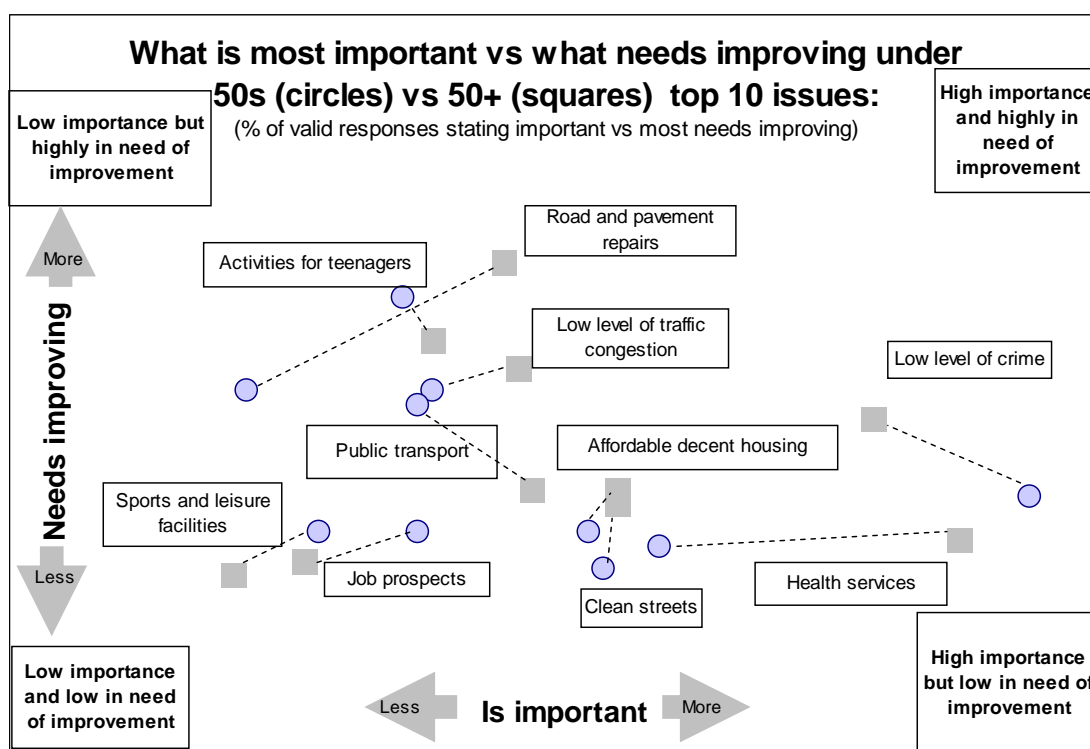
⁶ North Somerset figures are within $\pm 5\%$ of the national medians on all but two issues.

Such comparative analysis has its merits but an eye should be kept on the absolute figures. For instance less than half of the sample chose to mention 'road and pavement repairs' as one of the five issues most in need of improvement locally.

2.2. Who wants what

Within North Somerset, priorities are fairly homogenous across main socio-demographic groups. There are many minor variations and a few major variations, but overall the picture is fairly consistent.

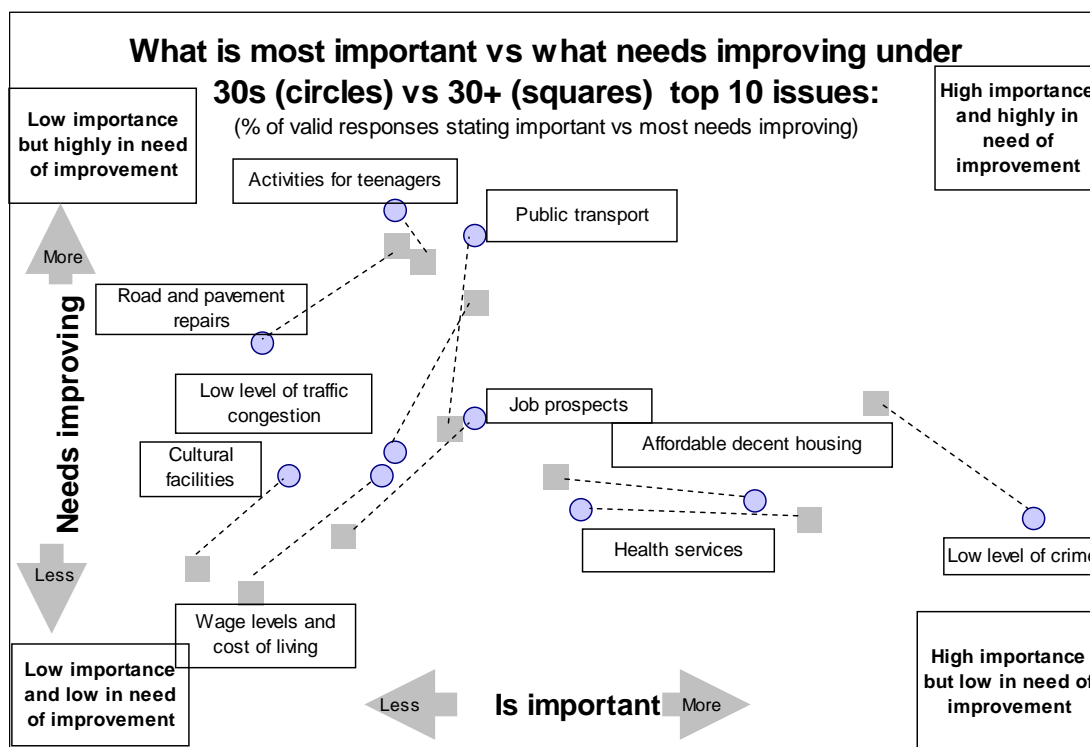
The chart below is an illustration of the differences in some 2006 priorities between those aged under 50 (circles) and those aged 50 or more (squares). Generally, the longer the dotted lines, the more difference in views between 'young' and 'old'. The main issues on which the two groups differ are: health services, road and pavement repairs, public transport and crime.



Compared to over-50s, the under-50s feel that:

- 'health services' and 'road and pavement repairs' are less important
- 'level of crime' is more important
- 'level of crime' and 'road and pavement repairs' are less in need of improvement.

Applying the same analysis to under 30s vs. over 30s, there are clear differences, clearer than the previous chart, on almost all the main priorities. Affordable housing and health swap places. Wage levels, job prospects and public transport are seen as much higher priorities for the under 30s. Road and pavement repairs and traffic congestion are much less prioritised by under 30s.



These charts are provided to illustrate the variety that lies behind all-sample statements about public priorities. Priority setting involves trading off different group interests. Managing the effect of such trade-offs implies clear roles for communications/information services.

It is possible to compare priorities between any two such groups, or to profile areas or groups according to their concerns.

This would be tedious to set out here in full. Below are a few selected cases where an issue is particularly important to a specific group.

Activities for teenagers: seen as particularly in need of improvement by respondents in Nailsea.

Affordable housing, wage levels, job prospects and public transport: especially important for 18-29s.

Clean streets: more important for residents of more deprived wards and for ethnic minorities.

Cultural facilities: Seen as especially in need of improvement by under 30s and by respondents from Nailsea and the north of the district.

Education: Seen as in need of improvement especially by 'home-makers'⁷ in the 30-49 age group (i.e. parents).

Facilities for young children: especially important for home-makers and Weston-super-Mare respondents.

Low levels of crime: seen as particularly important by under 30s, but as being in need of improvement by the over 70s.

Traffic: seen as especially in need of improvement by respondents from 'outer' Weston-super-Mare (Worle, St. Georges etc) and Portishead – these having greater concentration of out-commuters.

Public transport: seen as a top priority for improvement by under 30s.

Sports and leisure: seen as especially in need of improvement by respondents from Nailsea.

⁷ Taken from the census-derived occupation category "Looking after the home". They are a distinct group in many of their responses and are referred to as home-makers in this report.

2.3. Changes in public priorities 2003 to 2006

Looking at ‘what needs improving’, since 2003, only one issue has clearly moved up the agenda: activities for teenagers (up from 39% to 49% identifying this as a top five issue in need of improvement).

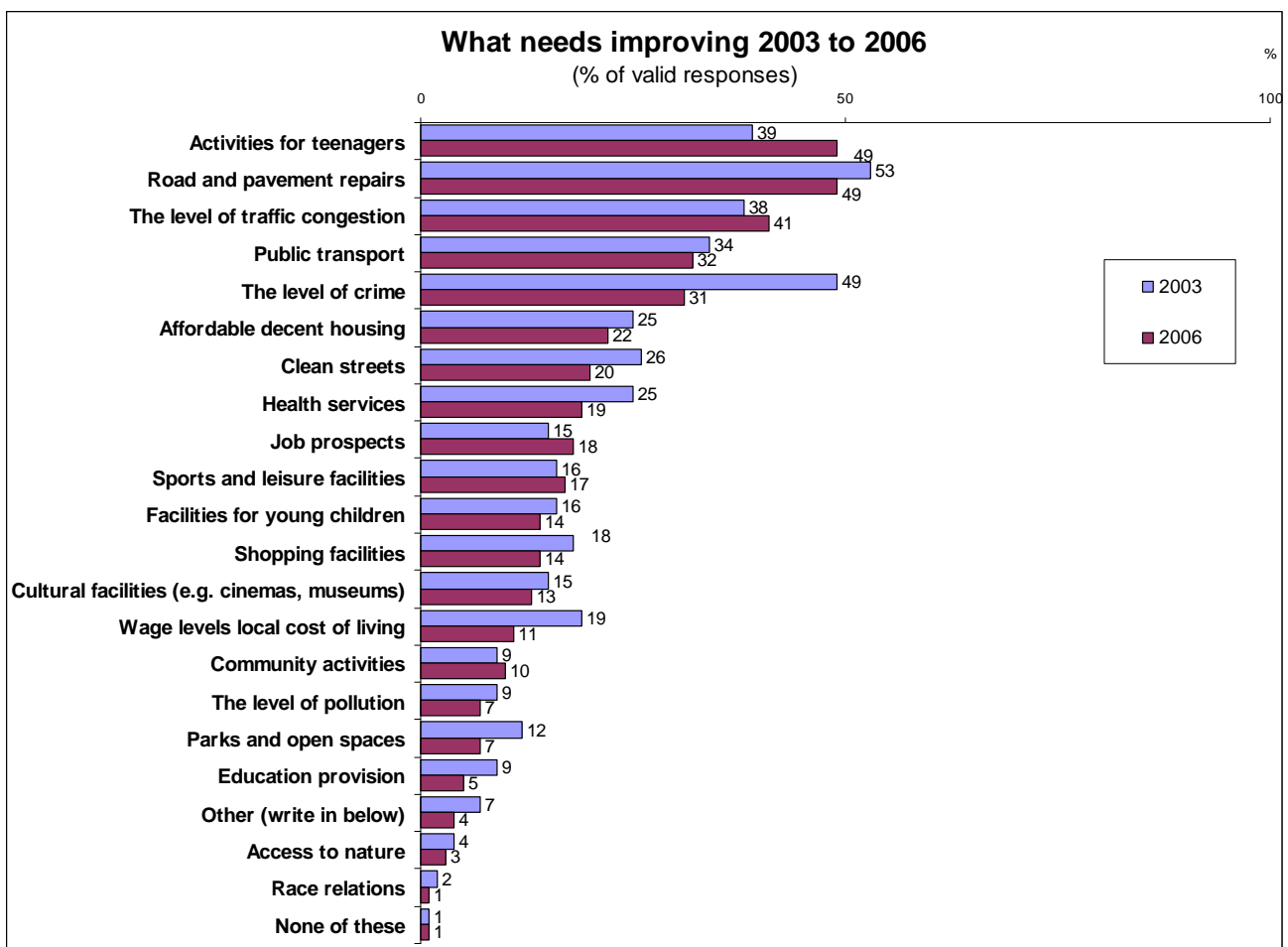
It is particularly a priority for respondents aged 18 to 29 and for respondents in towns other than central Weston-super-Mare. The increasing importance of activities for teenagers appears to be shared broadly across other English councils.

Traffic congestion has also moved up the agenda, albeit only by 3%. However, as in 2003 North Somerset respondents demand improvement in traffic congestion at well above the national average rates.

Otherwise, respondents seem ‘more satisfied’ in 2006 with all subjects **asked about**, compared to 2003. This pattern does not seem to be shared by the few other councils for whom data are available, and so appears to reflect real improvement in services (or at least a shift in perception).

Issues which are less clearly pressing since 2003 are:

- Crime
- Wage levels and cost of living.

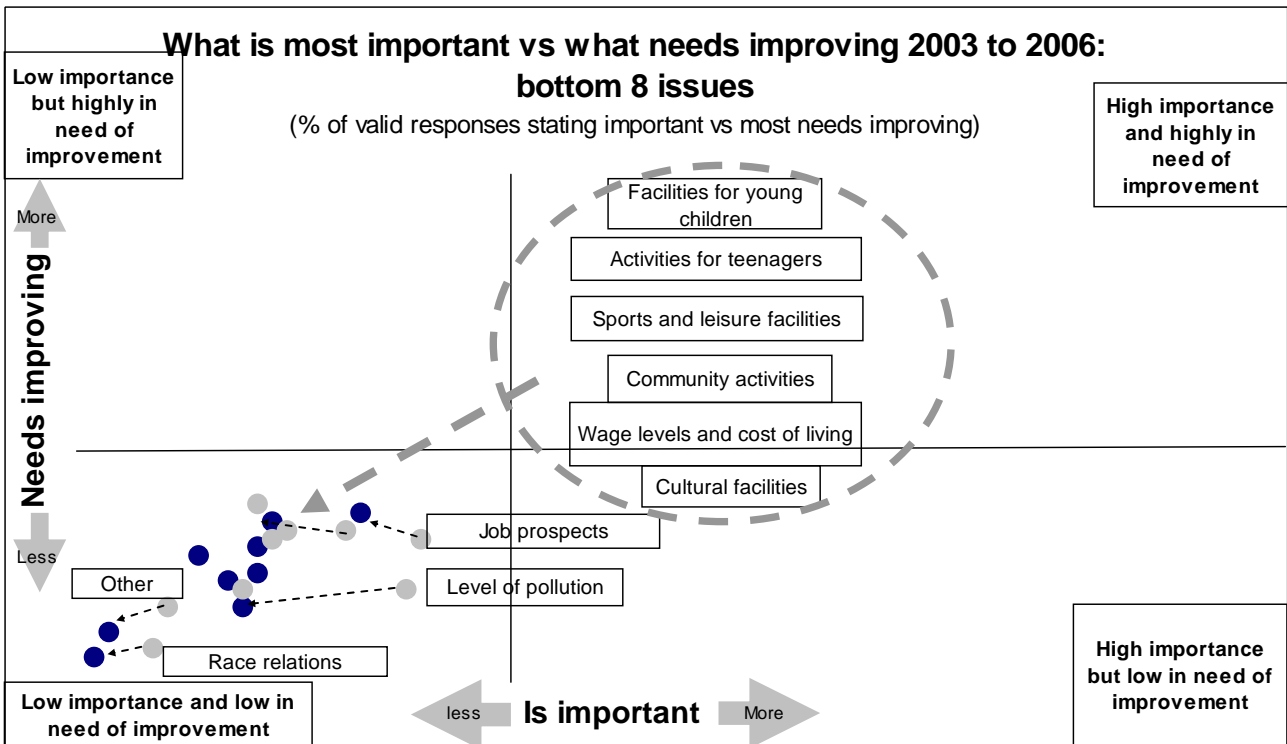
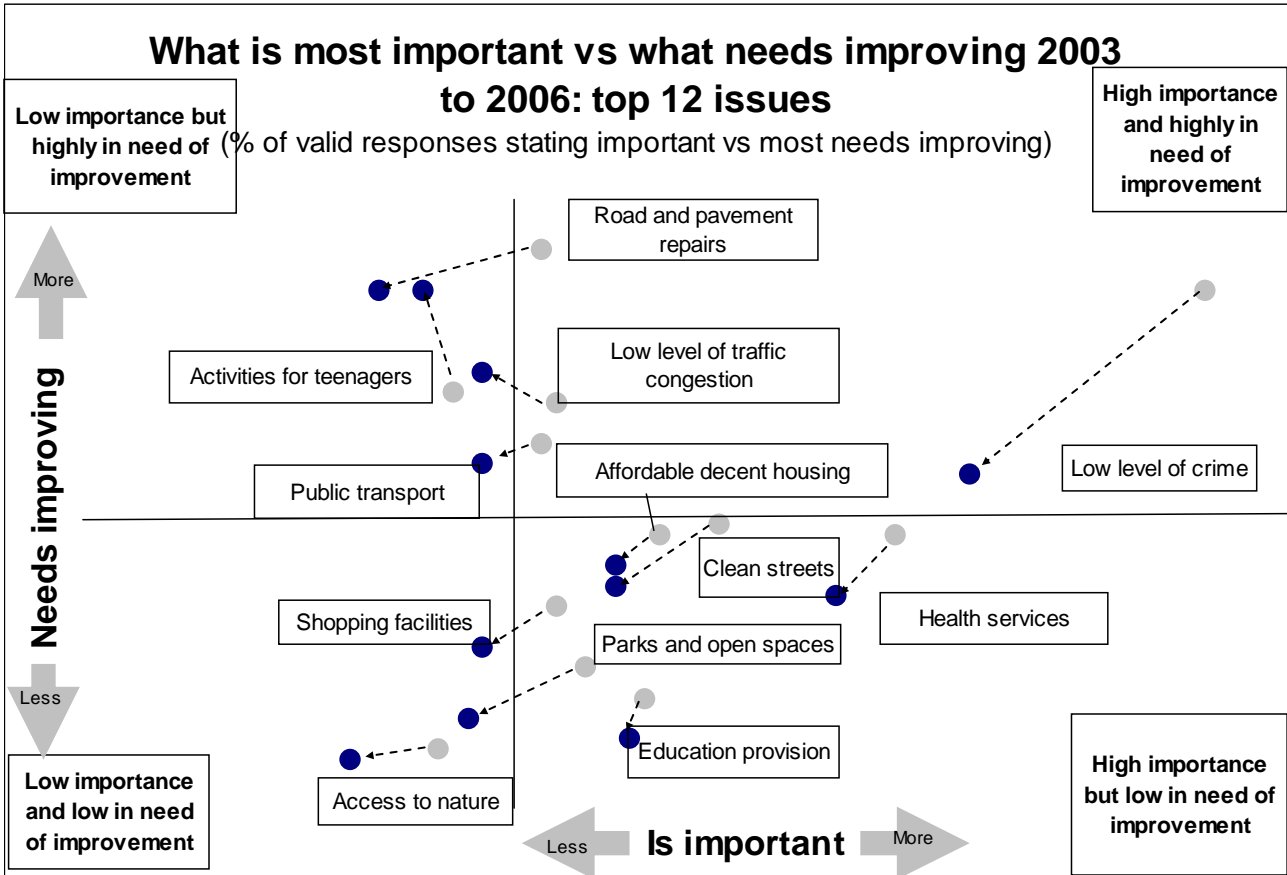


Overall, across the sample, crime as an issue is dramatically less critical than in 2003. The decrease in salience of crime is shared by some but not all councils for whom data are available.

Certain groups feel that improving the crime situation in North Somerset is a top priority: particularly respondents from Weston-super-Mare and retired people. The under 30s were relatively less concerned with crime levels.

As before though, it is best to consider the relative importance of issues simultaneously with what is seen as in need of improvement. So, while there has been progress on crime, it is still the single most important issue in making somewhere a nice area to live. In addition, as mentioned in Section 2.2. , there is considerable variation in how different groups see the importance of tackling crime.

In the charts below, 2003 figures are represented by the pale dots, 2006 by the dark dots.

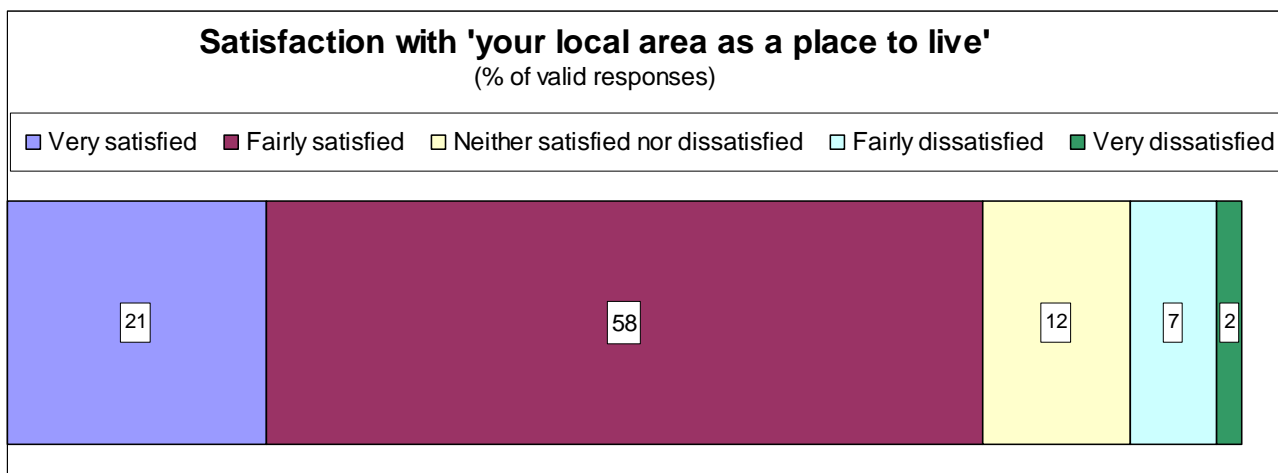


Again this chart illustrates that no issue has become **both** more important **and** more in need of improvement (i.e. none moving towards the top right). This suggests that no single issue is critical and that there has been a general relaxation, at least regarding the issues asked about here, in public concern. 'Traffic congestion' and, especially, 'activities for

teenagers' are virtually the only issues asked about which are seen as more in need of improvement. Several issues, including 'road and pavement repairs' and 'the level of crime' have become lower priority issues since 2003.

3. COMMUNITY COHESION

Most people in North Somerset are satisfied, overall, with their “local area as a place to live”⁸. 79% are very or fairly satisfied, including 21% very satisfied. The national median for this figure is 72% satisfied, which puts North Somerset in the second-from-top quartile of English councils.



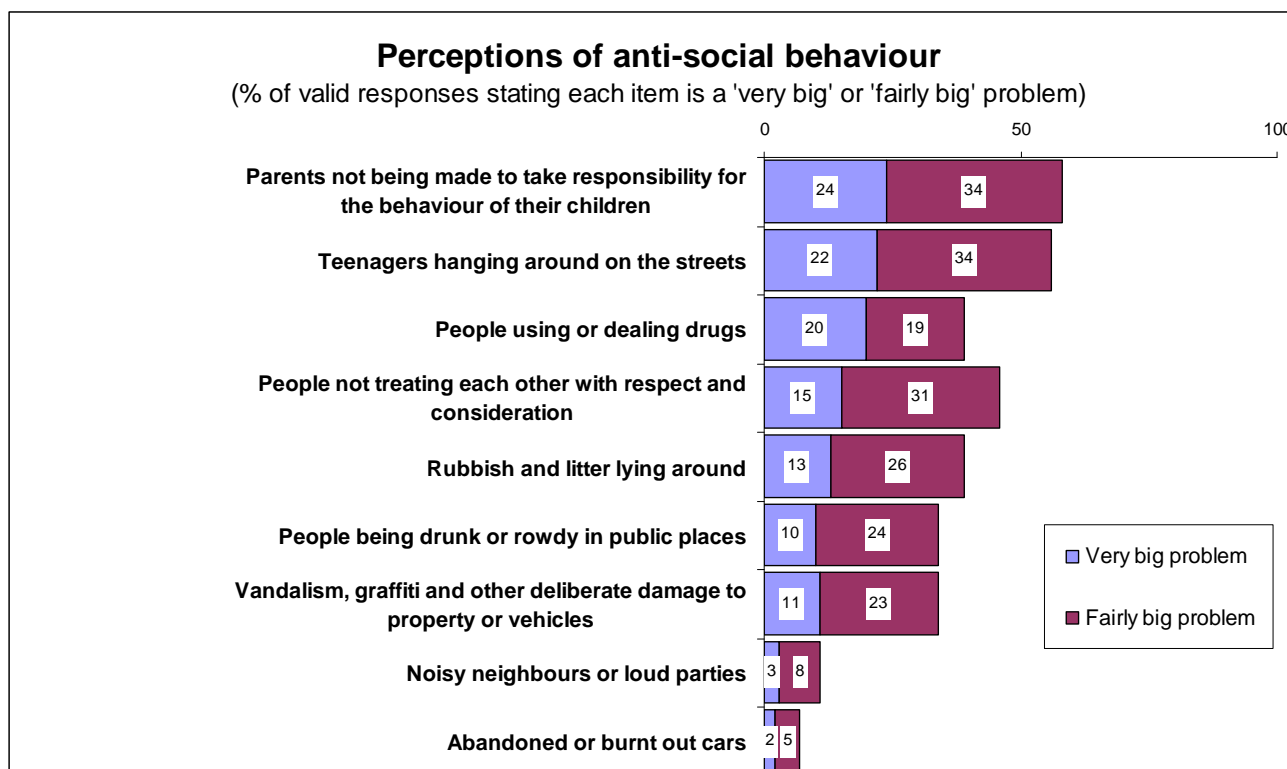
Satisfaction is higher among older people (70+), home-makers and respondents from Clevedon. Satisfaction is lower in Weston-super-Mare and Nailsea, and among respondents under 30.

⁸ The term “local area” was not further defined in the questionnaire or methodological guidance. Some respondents did take the trouble to call the council and ask for a definition, suggesting there may be some variation in interpreting the term.

3.1. Anti-social behaviour

Focussing specifically on anti-social behaviour (ASB), respondents said how much of a problem they consider nine aspects of ASB to be.

Only two issues are seen as problems by over 50% of respondents: both concerning parenting and younger people (top two bars in chart).



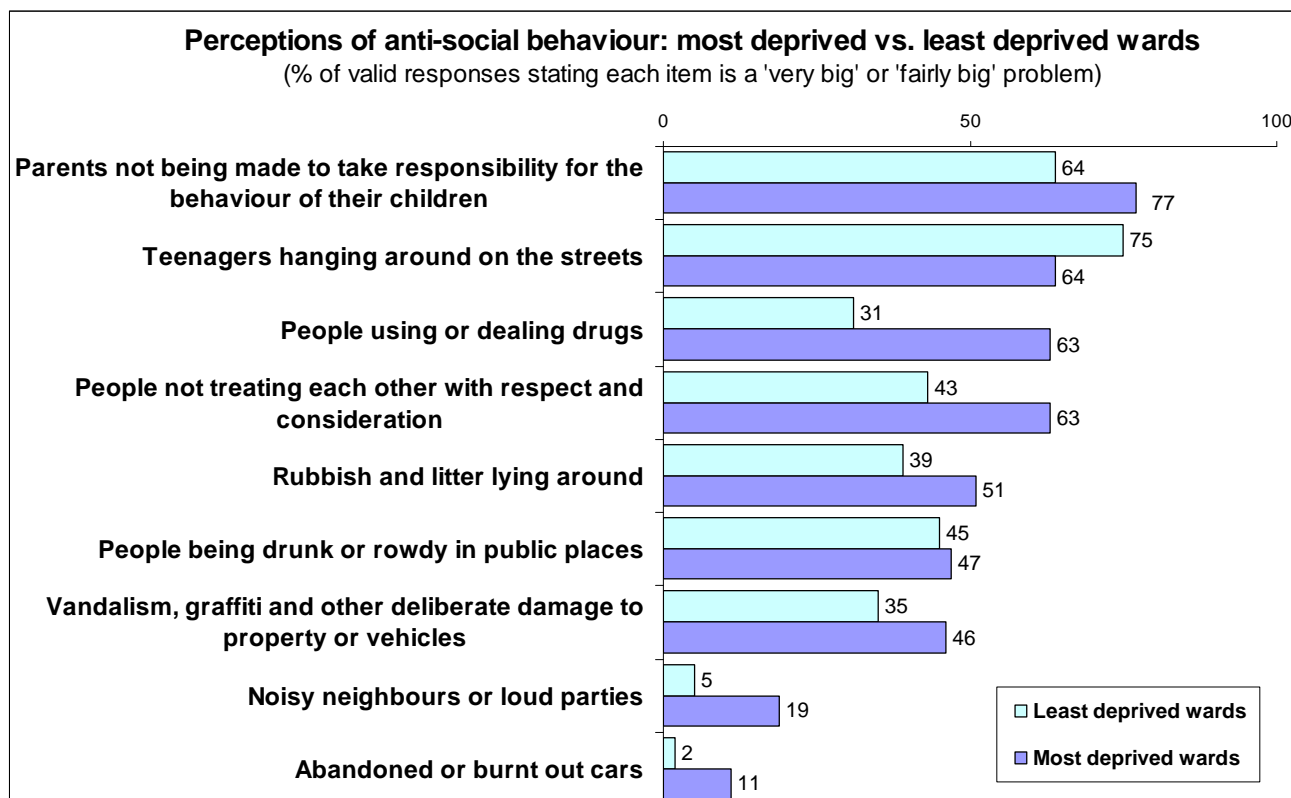
In general, the 50-70 age group are most concerned about most ASB issues. The exception is 'teenagers hanging around'. For this issue, the younger the respondent, the more likely they are to see it as problematic.

The perception of litter as a problem is especially acute among retired people.

Respondents from Weston-super-Mare are generally more likely to be concerned about these issues, though there are other variations (for instance, as seen in previous research, Clevedon respondents are especially concerned about litter).

There is a very clear correlation with length of residence. The longer a respondents has lived in "this area", the more of a problem they are likely to find each issue. This is particularly true of: vandalism, drugs, parenting and treating people with respect.

The data do not allow for direct profiling of respondents by income, wealth or deprivation. However there is a correlation between how problematic ASB is and the deprivation of the electoral ward⁹. Respondents from more deprived wards are more likely to find the aspects of ASB asked about problematic. The one exception is the 'top' ASB issue ('teenagers hanging around') which is relatively slightly less problematic to respondents from deprived wards.

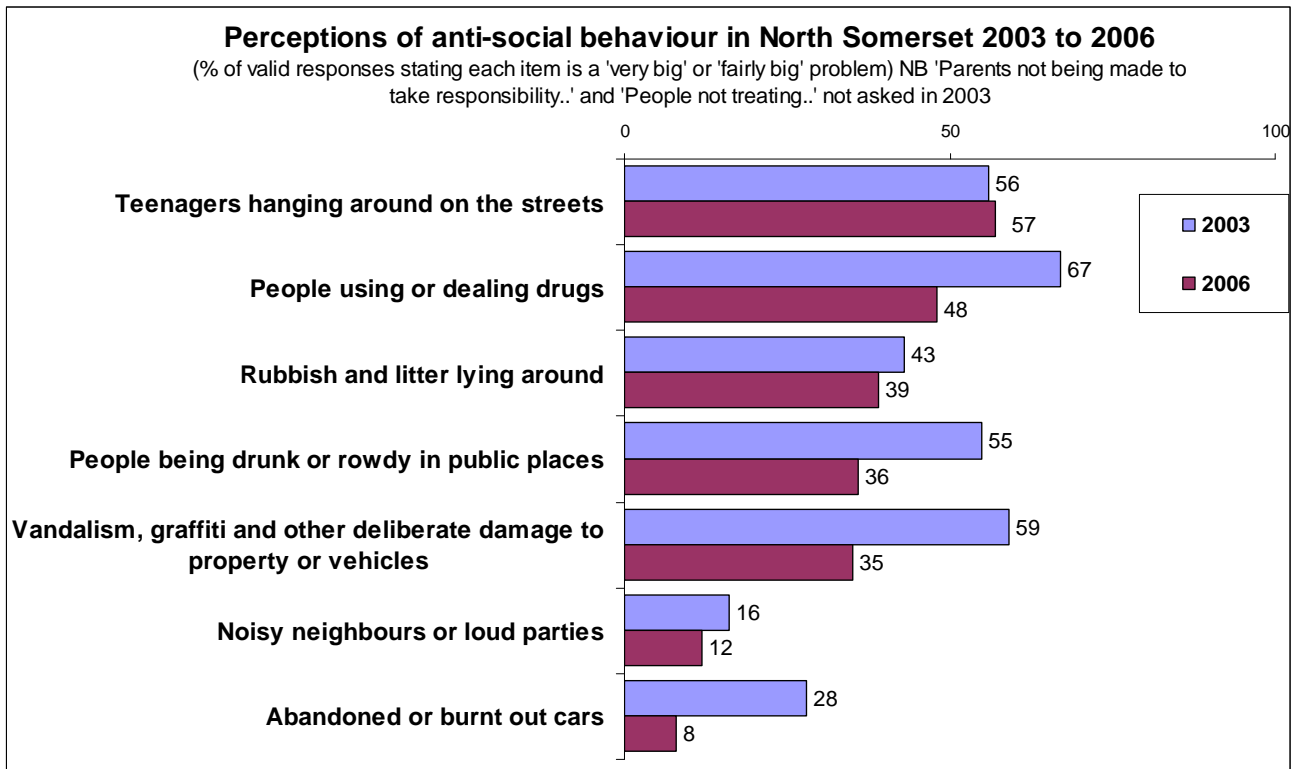


Renters are much more likely to identify these issues as problematic than home-owners or home-buyers. Ethnicity is also a correlating factor, with non-white respondents more concerned about these issues.

⁹ The source of this analysis is a proxy based on Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 figures, modelled into ward-level data by Local Futures. As sample sizes at ward level are small (n=22 to 127), respondents from the five 'most deprived' wards are grouped and respondents from the five 'least deprived' wards are grouped and their responses compared.

3.1.1 ASB in North Somerset in context and over time

Four aspects of ASB appear to be much less problematic in 2006 than in 2003, namely: drug use, public drunkenness, vandalism and abandoned cars.

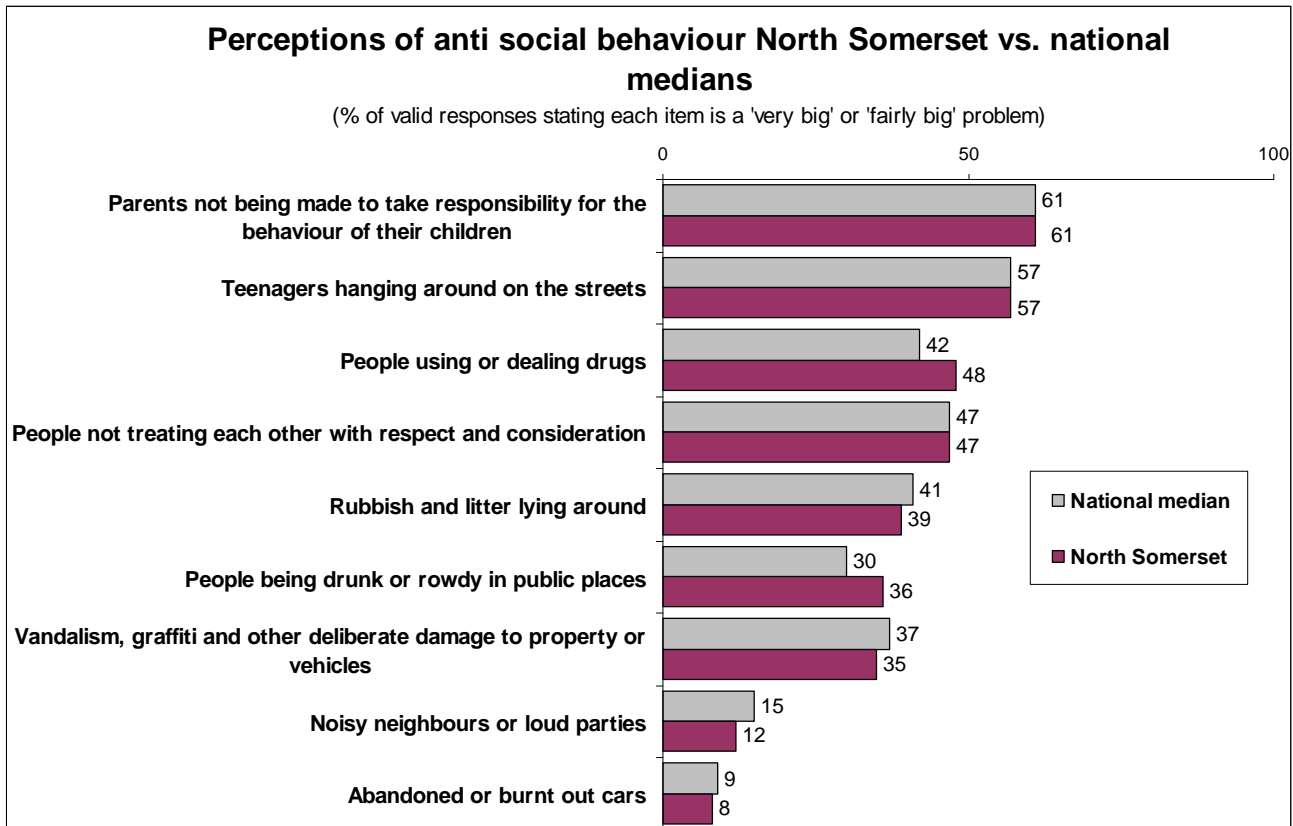


Two other aspects have declined slightly. Only the top issue ('teenagers') remains as problematic in 2006 as in 2003. In 2003 this was the third or fourth worst problem, whereas it is the top problem in 2006. This ties in with the information on priorities (Section 2), which showed increased public concern for the situation for young people, shared widely across the population.

Has ASB really improved that much? While there have been major improvements in some services (e.g. dealing with abandoned cars), the scale of some of these improvements, covering complex social problems like drug use goes against common sense. However, this pattern is shared across many other local authorities, practically all for which data are available at time of printing. As these figures are official currency of the Home Office's Respect taskforce, their views are awaited on what lies behind this apparent near across-the board relaxation in perceptions of ASB.

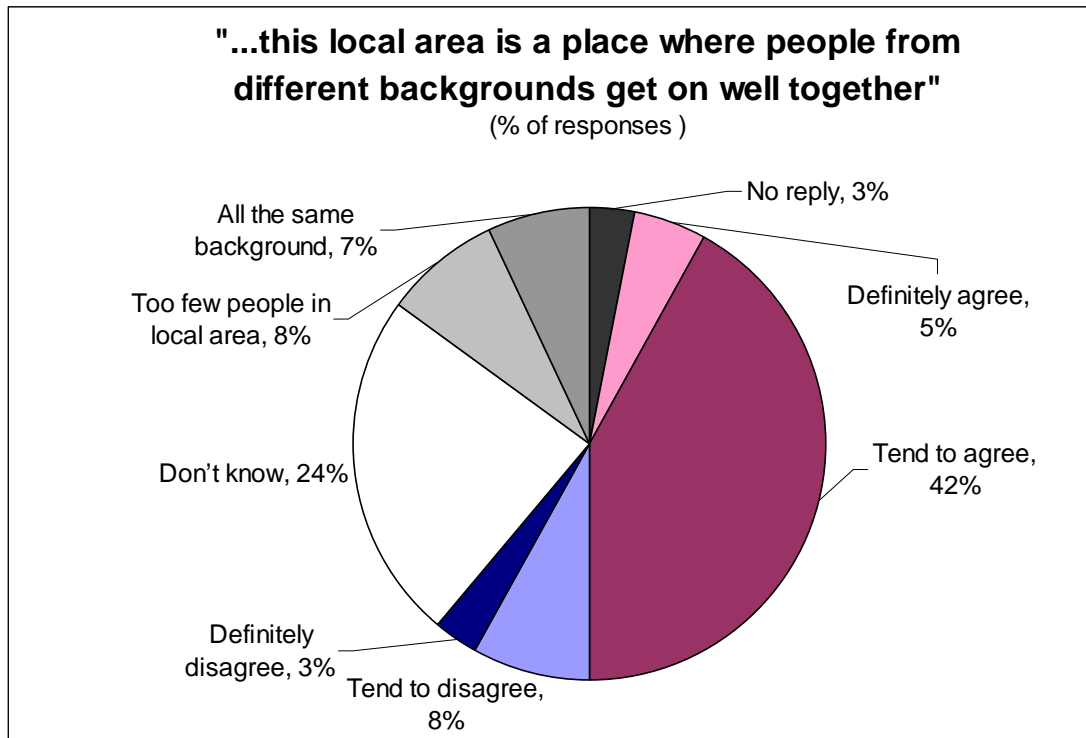
When comparing North Somerset against the national picture (see chart below), there are two main points.

1. On most issues North Somerset figures are very similar to the national median
2. The two main areas of difference are that 'drunkenness/rowdiness' and 'drug dealing /use' are (perceived as) slightly more problematic in North Somerset.



3.2. Other aspects of community cohesion

Various other ways are used to quantify health or cohesion of the community. One is the perception of how well diverse types of people get on.



Those agreeing that 'diversity is respected' outnumber the disagree-ers by nearly five to one.

Respondents from ethnic minorities are far less likely to share the general assessment of harmony and as many disagree as agree with the statement¹⁰. Other groups more likely to disagree are: people in Weston-super-Mare, renters and residents of more deprived wards.

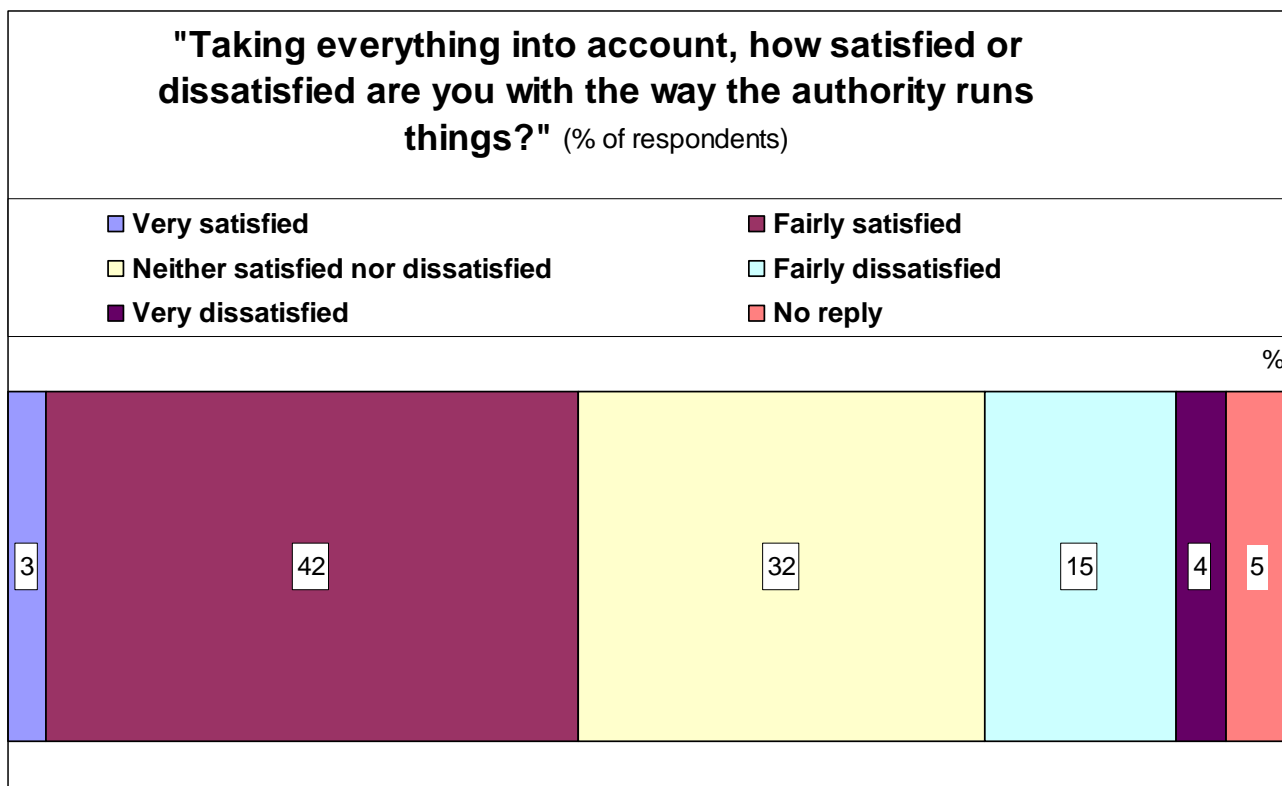
When 'don't knows and 'no replies' are excluded (to enable comparison with other councils), 82% agree that this is an area where people from different backgrounds get on well together, putting North Somerset above the national median (of 80%).

¹⁰ Although data are weighted to achieve 'representative-ness' by ethnicity, this analysis is still based on only about 20 non-white respondents.

4. THE COUNCIL

4.1. Overall satisfaction with the way the council runs things

45% of respondents are satisfied with the way North Somerset council runs things.



This question is used as the source of Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) BV3. For the purposes of calculating BVPIs, 'don't knows' and 'no replies' are excluded from analysis.

Rebased in this way, 47% are satisfied (very or fairly satisfied)¹¹, 20% dissatisfied and 34% 'neither/nor'.

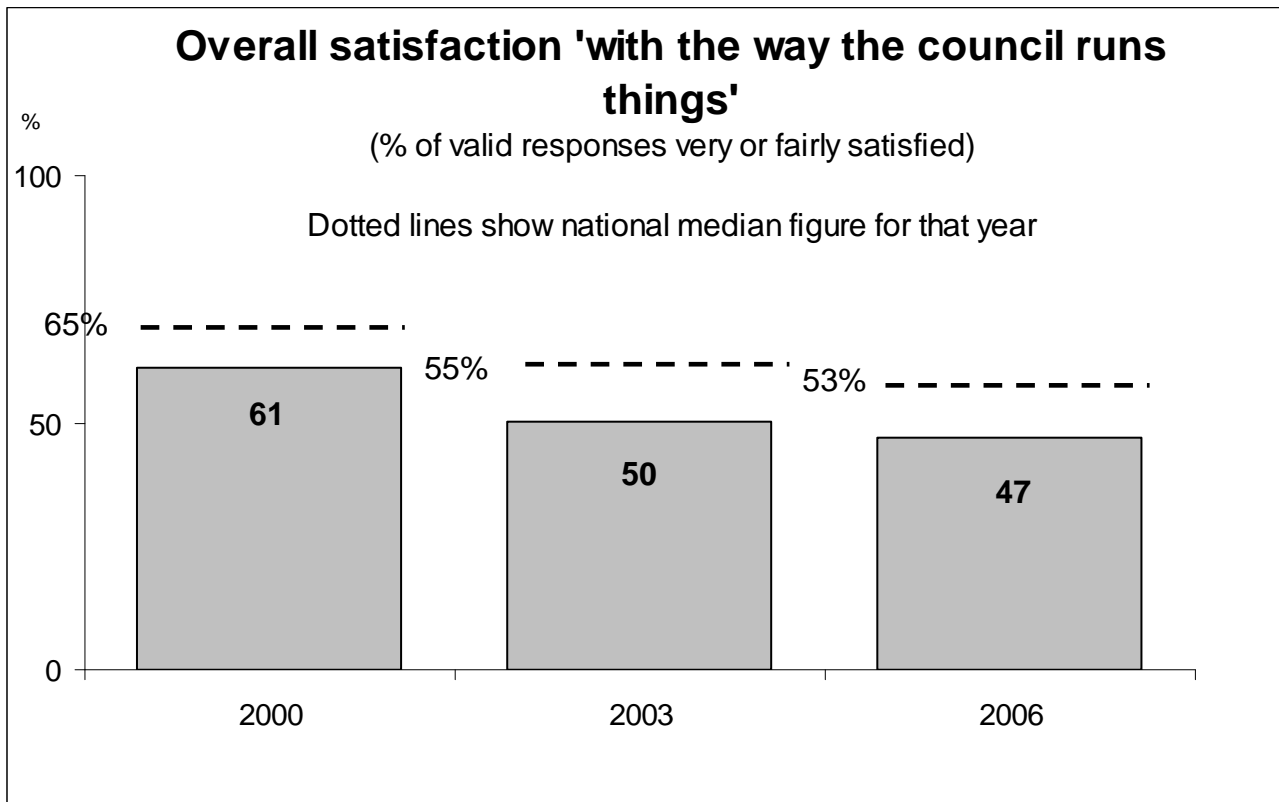
Of the 387 councils across England constituting the data set, the range of this 'satisfied' score was 34% to 79%. North Somerset, on 47%, is in 302nd place out of 387.

In 2003, we were below the median score but not in the bottom quartile. In 2006 we have slipped into the bottom quartile.

¹¹ 46.86%. The margin or error (confidence interval at 95%) on this measure is $\pm 2.24\%$.

Nationally and for North Somerset this 'overall satisfaction' figure has fallen each time the BVPI survey has been done, with most of the fall 2000 to 2003. The rate of decrease was much slower in 2003 to 2006.

Compared to 2003, the North Somerset figure has fallen from 50% to 47%. In the following chart, the national median figure for the year is shown by the dotted line.



The national median figure has decreased, from 55% in 2003 to 53% in 2006. In fact 77 councils (20% of total) recorded a statistically significant increase in their 'overall satisfaction' score 2003 to 2006, versus 121 (31%) recording a decrease. London boroughs were the group most likely to record an increase in this figure.

Nationally, there is a clear positive correlation between CPA overall rating and levels of public satisfaction 'with the way the council runs things'.

Also, there is known to be a positive correlation between overall satisfaction and some aspects of the local area/population, notably:

- Lack of deprivation
- Ethnic homogeneity.

However these are not particularly strong correlations and apply in complex ways, with smaller effects for councils like North Somerset. Nevertheless there has been some national statistical modelling looking at the question: "given the type of area/population what 'overall satisfaction' score should council X expect?"¹² Using this model North Somerset

¹² See 'Frontiers of Performance IV: Place shapers or Shaped by Place', Ipsos-Mori Social Research Institute 2007. This analysis highlights those councils over- and under-performing, given their area/population mix.

'should' expect an overall satisfaction score of 51%. That is, using this model, North Somerset 'underperforms' on this measure by 4%.

Interestingly, level of council tax does not correlate strongly with overall satisfaction 'with the way the council runs things', though there is some evidence of correlation with level of council tax increases.

Nationally, levels of overall satisfaction correlate most clearly with the following **survey** variables (in order of strength of correlation):

- Feeling well-informed. Those who feel well-informed are much more likely to be satisfied (see Section 4.3. below)
- Feeling they have opportunities to participate in council decision making
- Feeling their council provides 'value for money'.

Looking at the North Somerset data, those most likely to be satisfied with North Somerset Council are:

- Women (as per the national pattern)
- Over 70s (as per the national pattern)
- Under 30s (unlike the national pattern)
- Home-makers
- Nailsea respondents
- and, especially renters.

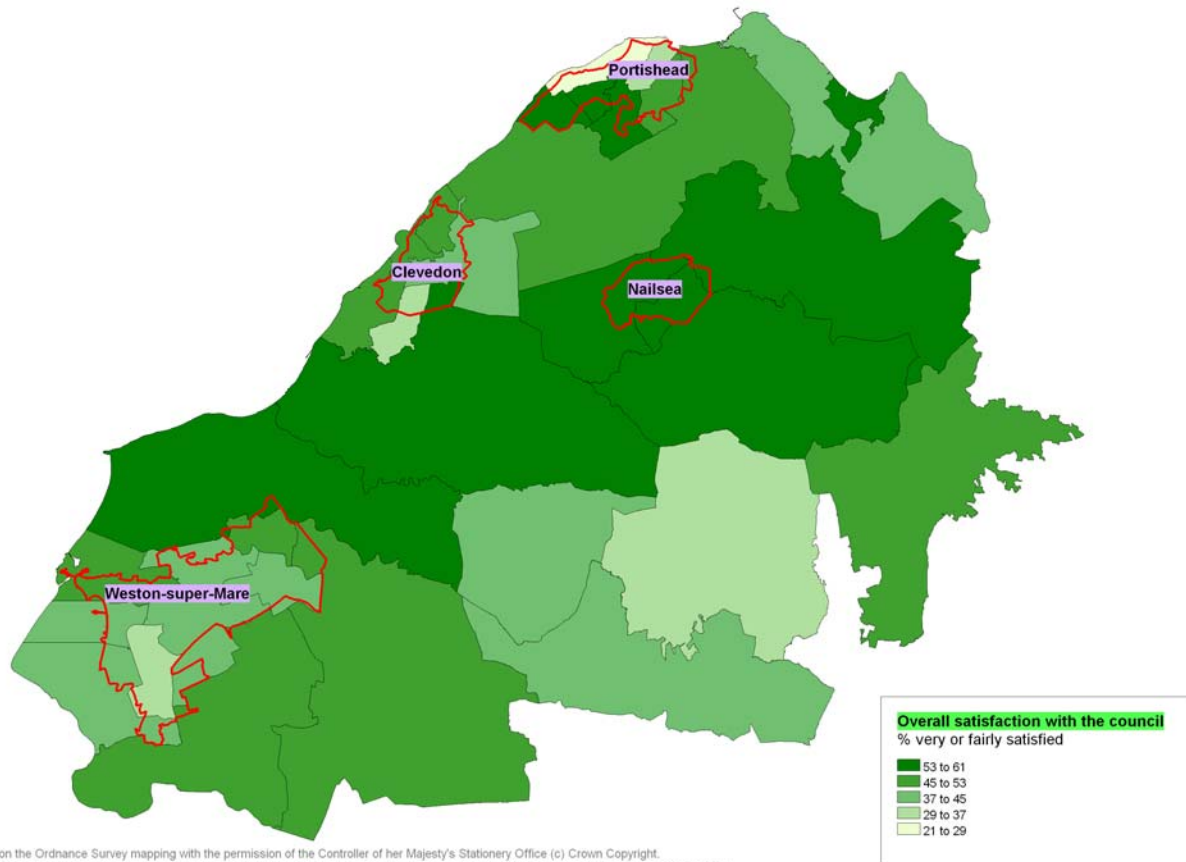
Those least likely to be satisfied are:

- Ethnic minorities
- Respondents from some parts of Portishead, Clevedon and from some of the more deprived wards Weston-super-Mare.

In line with the national picture and as in previous years there is a strong correlation between feeling informed and being satisfied. So, looking just at people who think the council keeps people feel very or fairly well informed, 70% are satisfied with the council overall. Conversely only 33% of those who do not feel well informed are satisfied with the council. Consequently, regular readers of North Somerset Life¹³ are slightly more likely than non-readers to be satisfied.

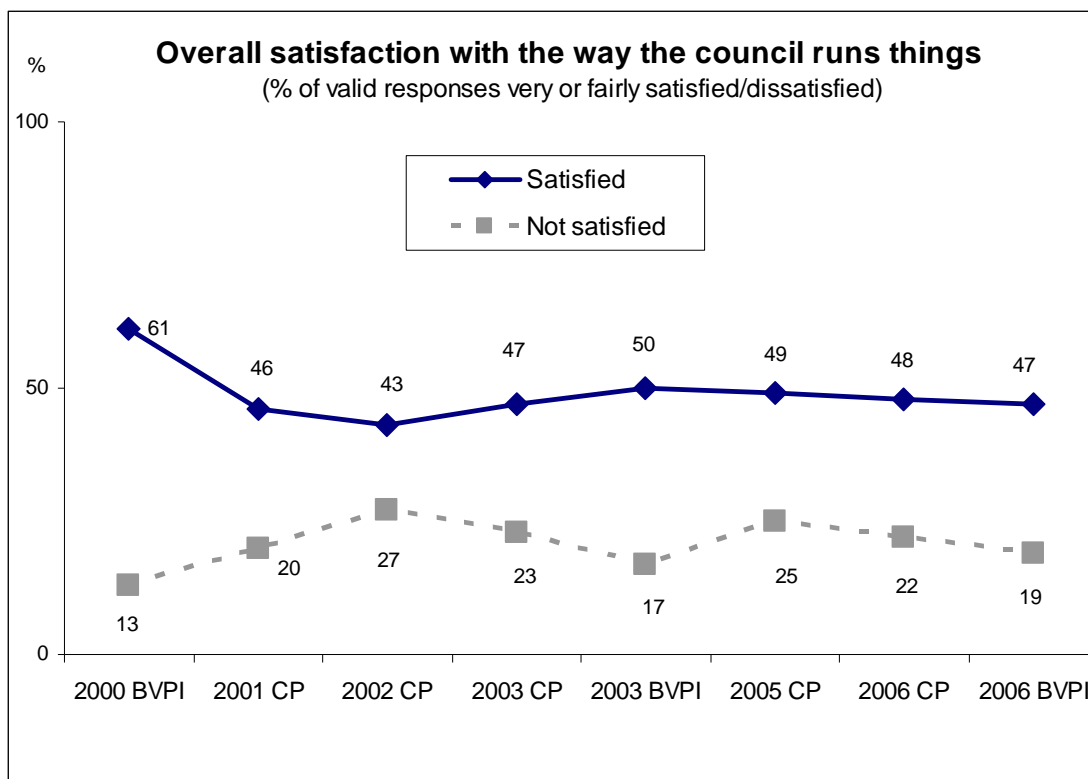
¹³ The council's free monthly magazine delivered to all households.

This map shows the distribution of 'satisfaction with the way the council runs things' over the district. The darker the shading, the more satisfied.



Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office (c) Crown Copyright.
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (North Somerset Council, 100023397, 2007)

It is also interesting to compare the council's own interim Citizens' Panel survey results (marked CP on the chart).

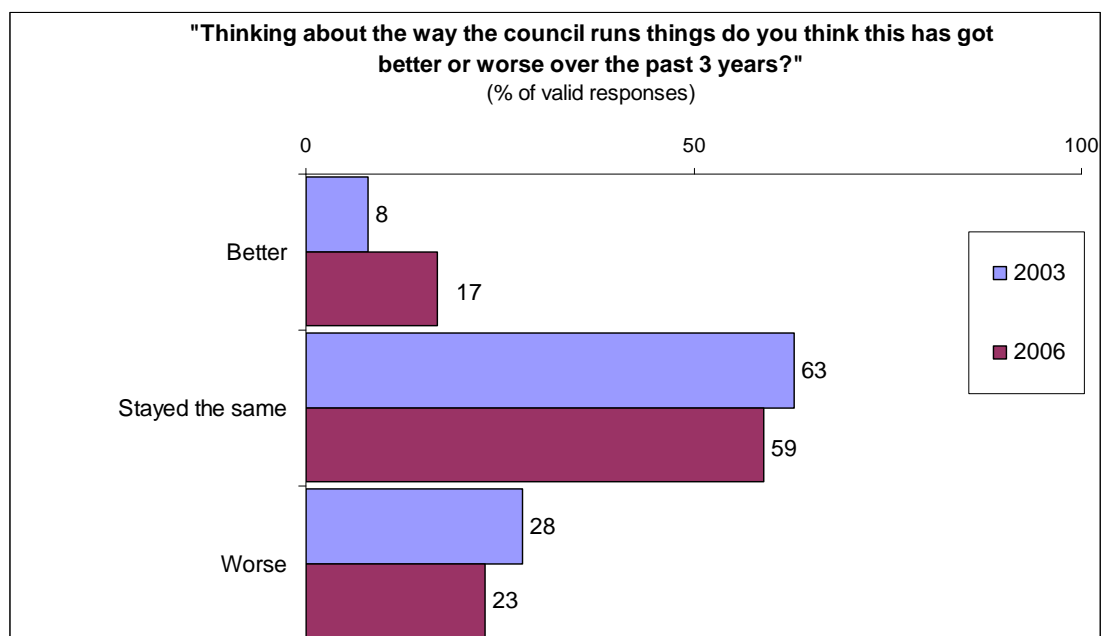


This view suggests the analysis that there has been a broadly stable picture for the past several years, with the satisfaction figure around 47% to 50% and the dissatisfaction figure around 20% to 25%.

4.2. Image

More respondents think the way the council runs things has got worse over the past three years than think it has got better.

However, compared to 2003 the 'betters' have increased (more than doubled) and the 'worses' decreased.

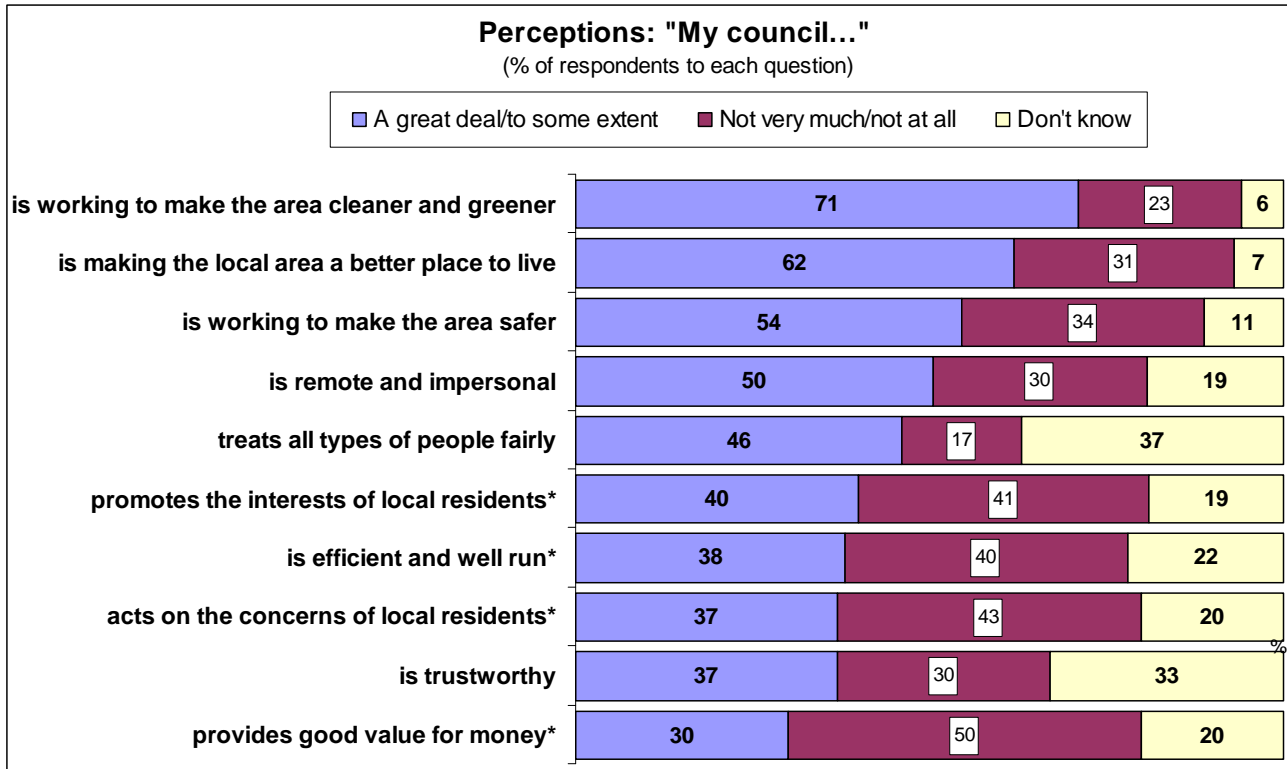


Those most likely to say 'better' are: renters, ethnic minorities and younger people.

Again, those feeling better-informed are more likely to think the council has improved.

The national median 'got better' score is 17%, the same as North Somerset.

Part of the disconnect between generally rising satisfaction with services but no improvement in perceptions of 'the council' is explained by perceptions of mismanagement and remoteness. This is clearly shown in the following chart. It is clear that the council's reputation as a service provider (top three items) is far better than its reputation as a community leader/budget setter. Note that the statement 'is remote and impersonal' is the only 'negative' statement in the group.

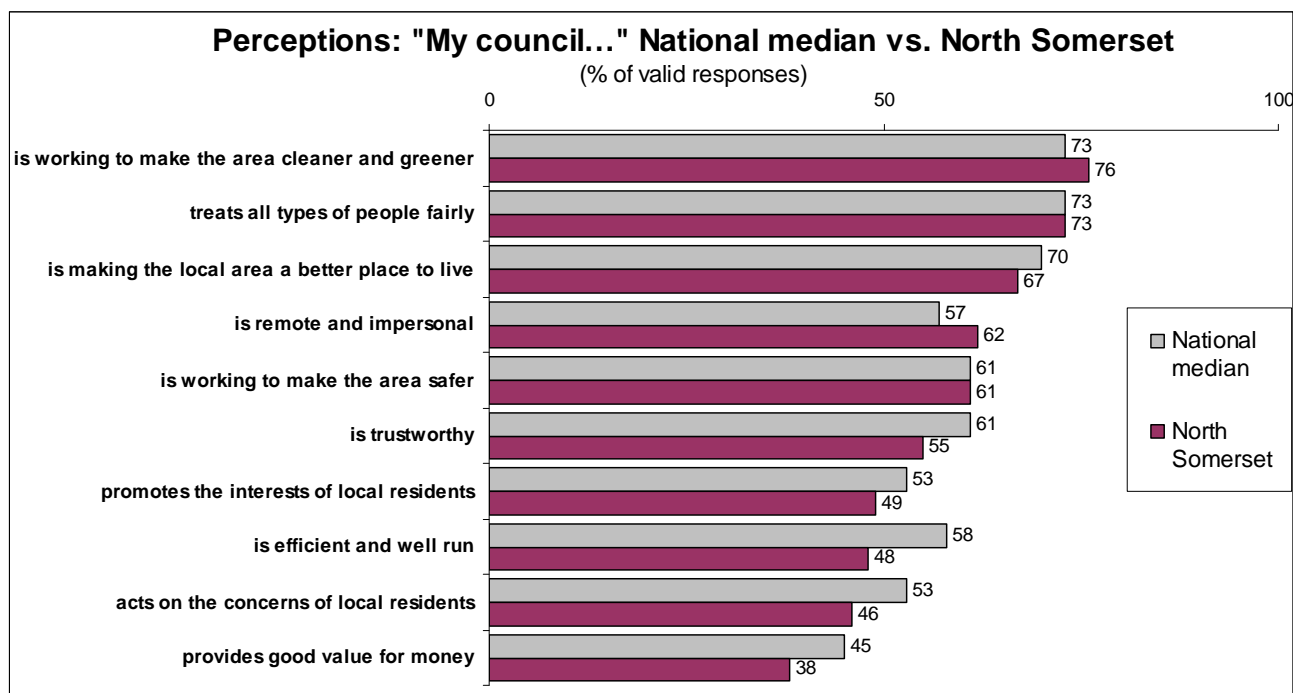


The council is generally seen as treating all types of people fairly. However, ethnic minority respondents are less likely to agree with this statement. Disabled respondents tend to agree at average levels.

Note the large percentage of 'don't know' responses. In only four of these statements (asterisked) do the 'negative' responses outnumber the 'positives'. And in only one case ('provides good value for money') is this a clear majority disagreeing.

This is a new question in 2006, so comparisons with previous years are not available.

To compare North Somerset figures with national median figures, we must rebase the calculation of North Somerset figures to exclude the 'don't know' replies.



North Somerset is below the national median on all issues except 'is working to make the area cleaner and greener' (for which North Somerset is in the top quartile).

North Somerset is in the bottom quartile on the following issues

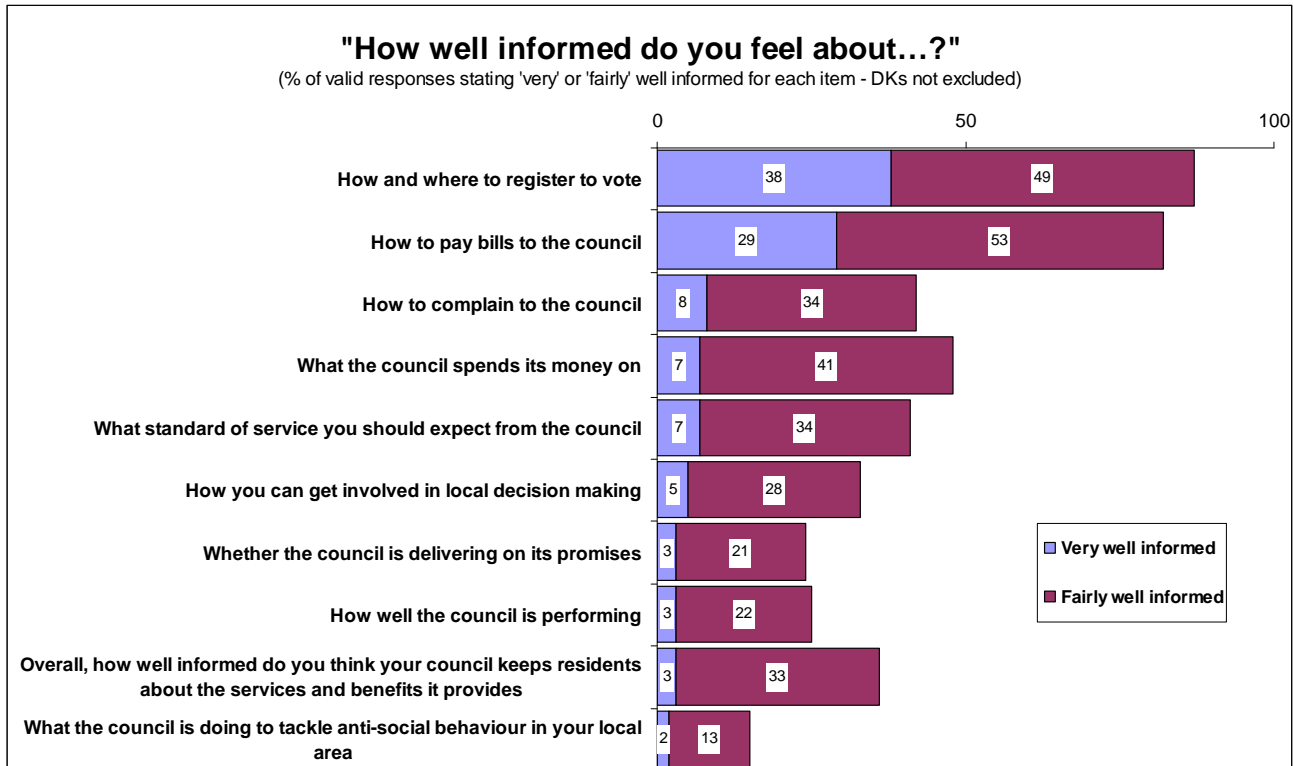
- Is trustworthy (in the bottom 20% of all councils)
- Acts on the concerns of local residents (in the bottom 17% of all councils)
- Provides good value for money (in the bottom 14% of all councils)
- Is efficient and well run (in the bottom 12% of all councils)
- Is remote and impersonal (in the bottom 6% of all councils).

As mentioned in section 4.1. (above), perception of value for money is one of the variables which correlates most strongly with overall satisfaction with the way the council runs things.

It is worth bearing in mind that this section particularly is about people's perceptions. It does not take into account issues like the amount of money per head received from central government to provide services. North Somerset gets less per head than most councils in the region. Nor can it take into account the assessment of the quality of services provided by North Somerset, many of which are rated highly in inspection. Indeed the perception measures presented above may be saying more about things like local media coverage than quality of services. Nevertheless perceptions do count for much and there is clearly cause for concern.

4.3. Information

Focussing on how well-informed people feel about a range of issues, respondents feel fairly well-informed on two ‘mechanical’ aspects of the council: how to pay bills and how to register to vote. Although it is worth noting that one in nine respondents don’t know how to register to vote (rising to one in every three respondents under 30).



However, fewer than half respondents feel informed about any of the other aspects asked about. Fewer than one in ten feel *very* well informed.

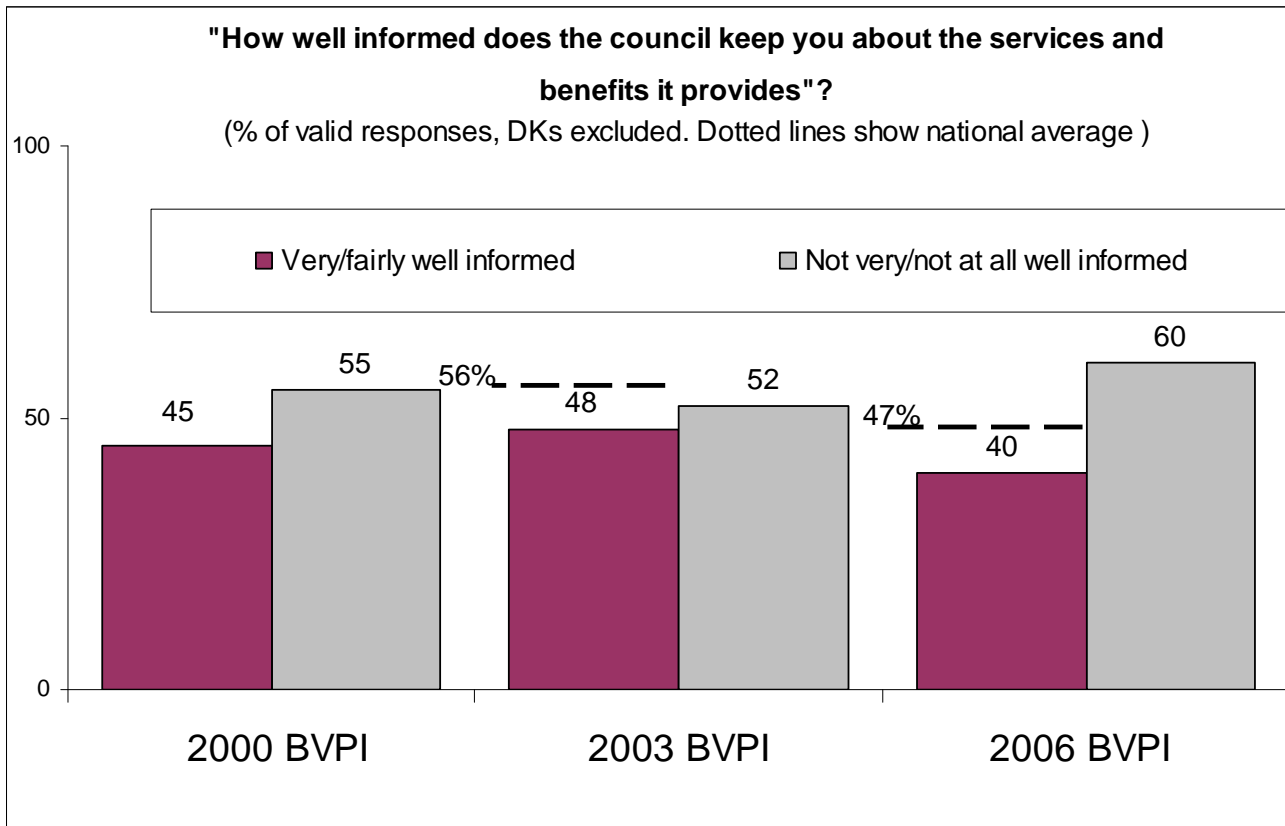
Such generally low scores may go some way to explaining the disconnect between overall satisfaction with most services, yet lower satisfaction with ‘the council’.

It would seem that many of these issues are best tackled via improved communications with and access for residents. Two of the council’s continuous improvement priorities (2006 to 2008) squarely cover these areas, namely:

- continue to improve customer services across the council
- continue to improve communications and community involvement in council decision-making.

The headline satisfaction measure 'overall, how well-informed does the council keep you about the services and benefits it provides' has fallen significantly. North Somerset is down from 48% in 2003 to 40% in 2006.

Nationally the **average** score in 2003 was 56%, falling to 47% in 2006.



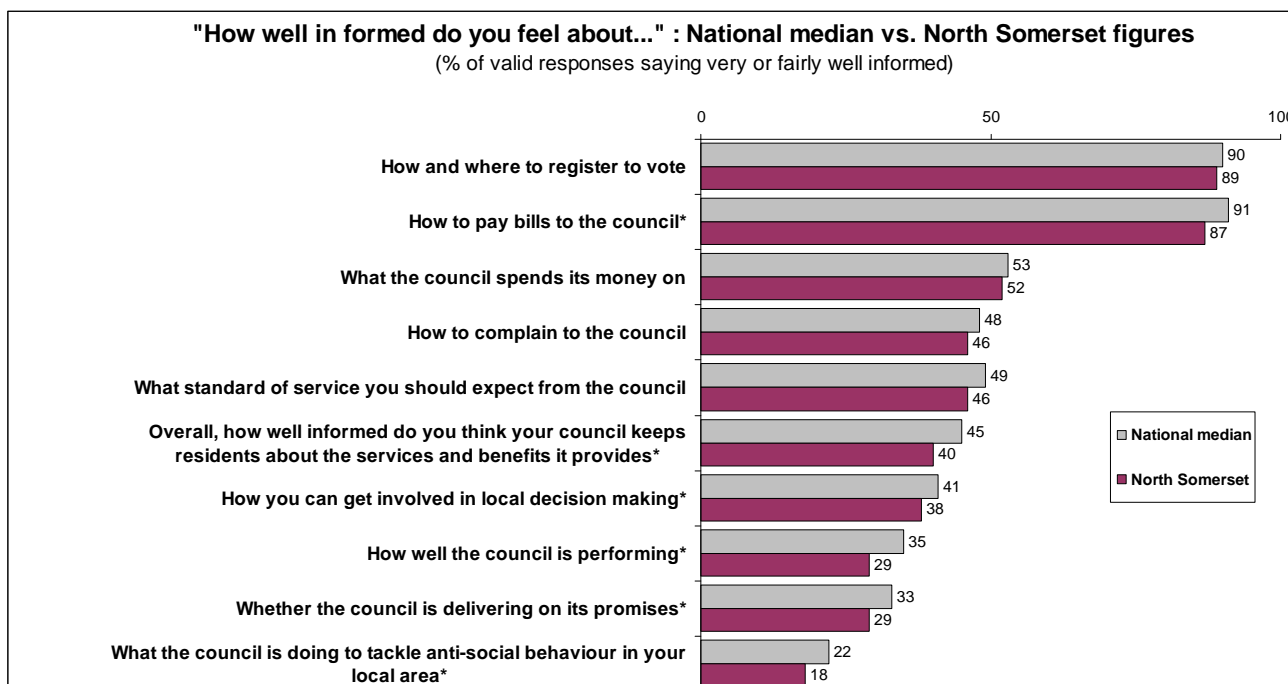
In North Somerset, under 30s are clearly the least well-informed age group. And 'informed-ness' generally increases with age.

Apart from that, informed-ness is lower:

- in the outskirts of Weston-super-Mare (BS22 6, 7 and 8)
- among ethnic minorities. This is true except for informed-ness about 'how to get involved in local decision making', for which BME respondents are among the best-informed groups¹⁴.

¹⁴ BME = Black or ethnic minority. The fieldwork period for this survey coincided with a survey of BME residents (Housing Needs Survey 2006) and with the establishment of the BME forum – a council-sponsored advisory panel.

North Somerset figures are below the national median on all these aspects of informed-ness.

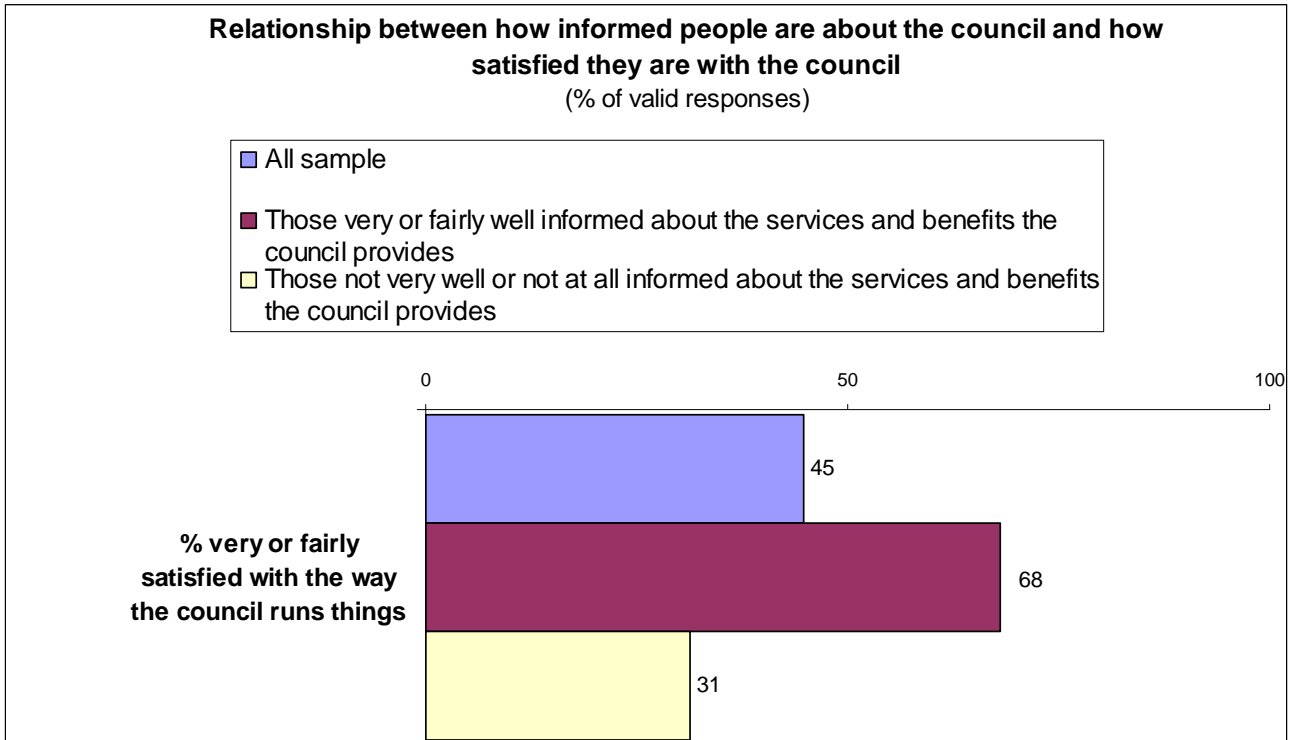


In fact, North Somerset is in the bottom quartile for 6 out of 10 of these measures (asterisked in chart) and in the bottom 10% of all councils for:

- What the council is doing to tackle anti-social behaviour
- What the council spends its money on.

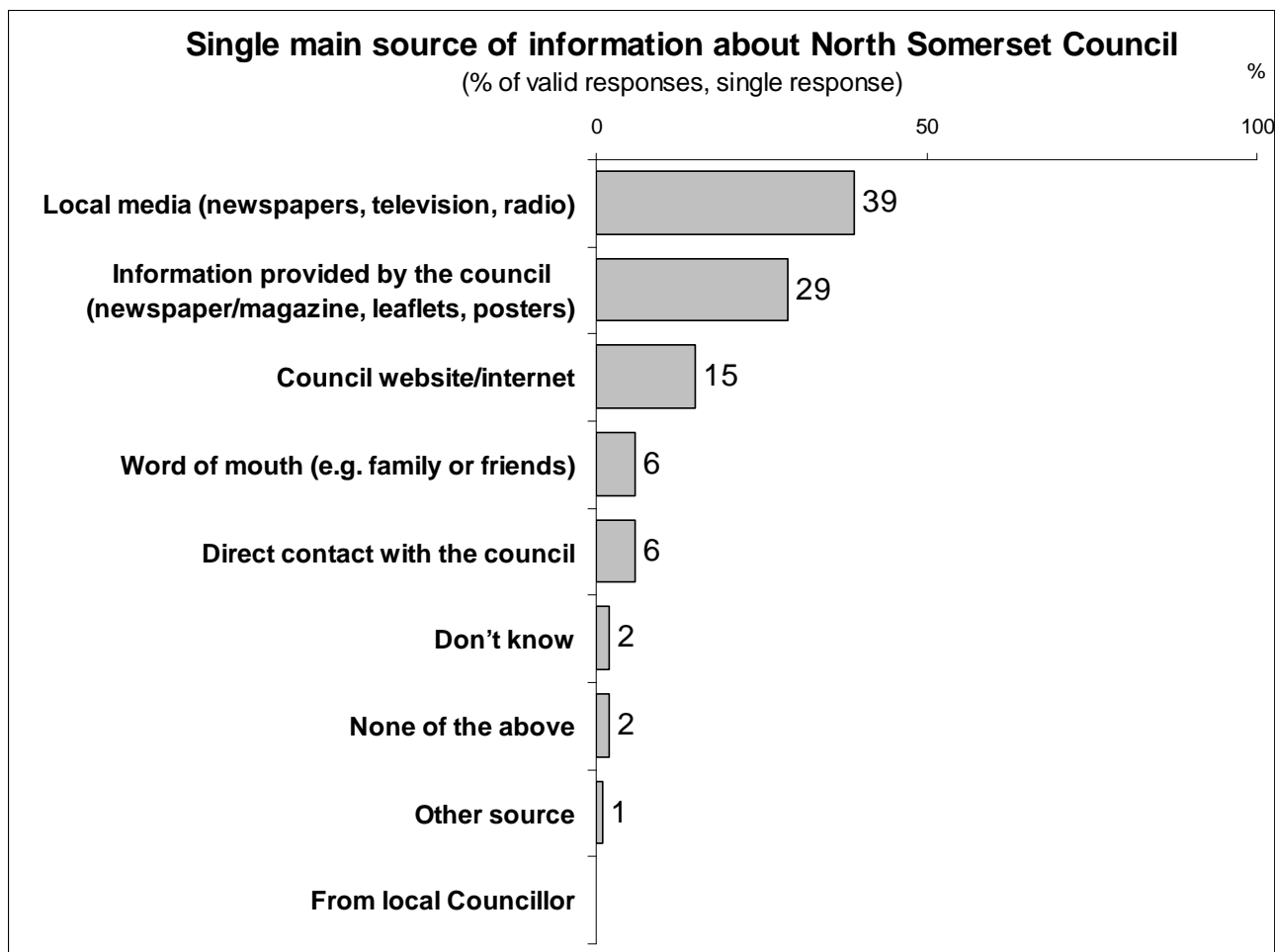
North Somerset Life (NSL) is the council’s free monthly magazine delivered to all homes within the district. NSL readers are clearly better informed than non-readers on all aspects asked about. See Section 4.3.2 for more details.

Informed-ness clearly correlates with higher overall satisfaction (‘with the way the council runs things’). So, looking at those very/fairly well informed about the council, 68% are satisfied with the council, vs. 31% of those who are not well informed.



4.3.1. Sources of information¹⁵

The main source of information about the council is the local media, followed by council publications. The council website is in third place.



Age plays an important part: Under 30s, are much less likely to use 'traditional' council media (magazines, leaflets, posters etc.). And they are far more likely than average to use the council's website. Indeed for under 30s the website is the single main source of information about the council.

Employment status affects sources of information in complex ways. As does location across the district with, basically, town-dwellers even more reliant on the local mass media.

Ethnic minority respondents are clearly less likely to use council sources though as we will see, this does not apply to North Somerset Life (NSL).

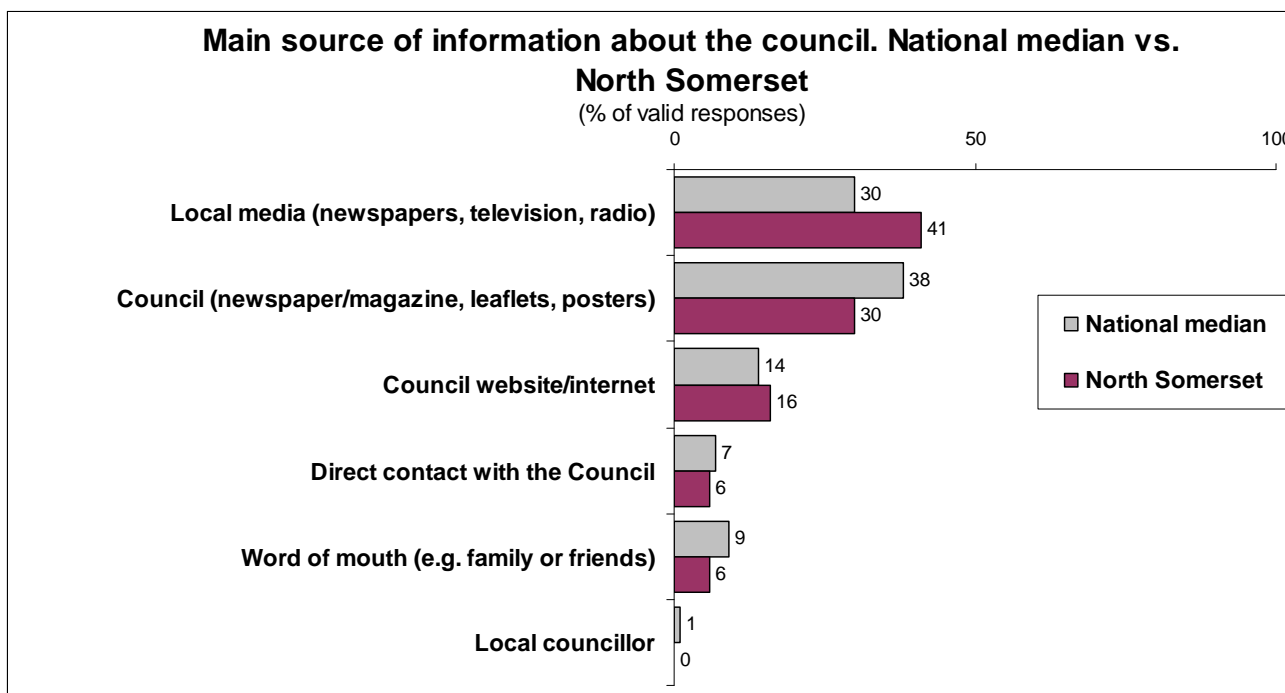
For monthly NSL readers, council sources (presumably including NSL) are their single main source, ahead of the local media.

Ward deprivation has no clear impact on source of information, except that word-of-mouth is relatively more important in more deprived wards.

¹⁵ There has been other recent research looking at the use and credibility of sources of information about North Somerset Council in much more detail, November 2006 Citizens' Panel survey.

Source of information seems to correlate little with respondents' priorities for improvement for the area.

Compared to national 'averages', North Somerset residents rely particularly heavily on the local media for information.

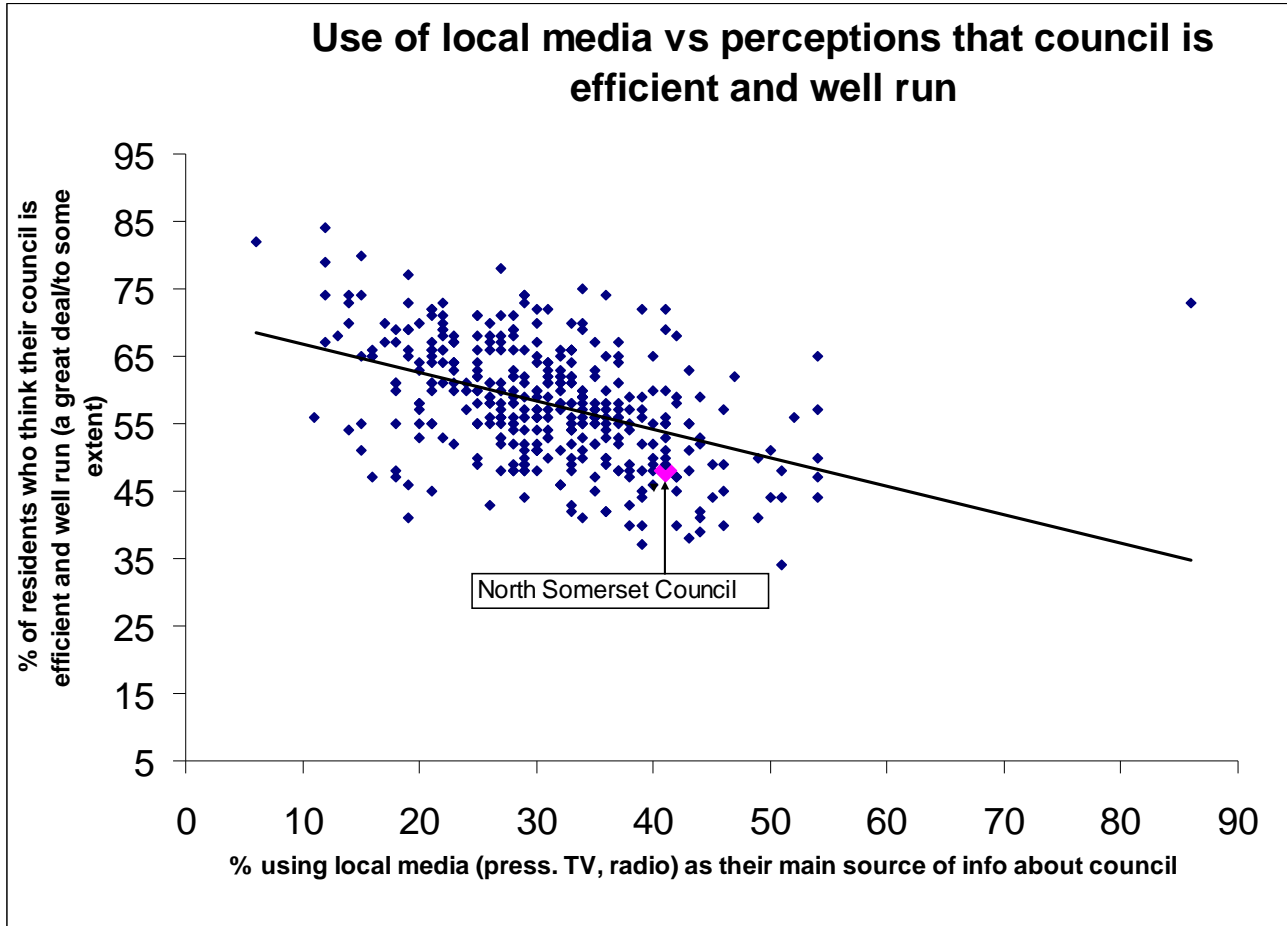


The percentage using local media as the main source varies nationally from 6% (City of London) to 86% (Tandridge District Council).

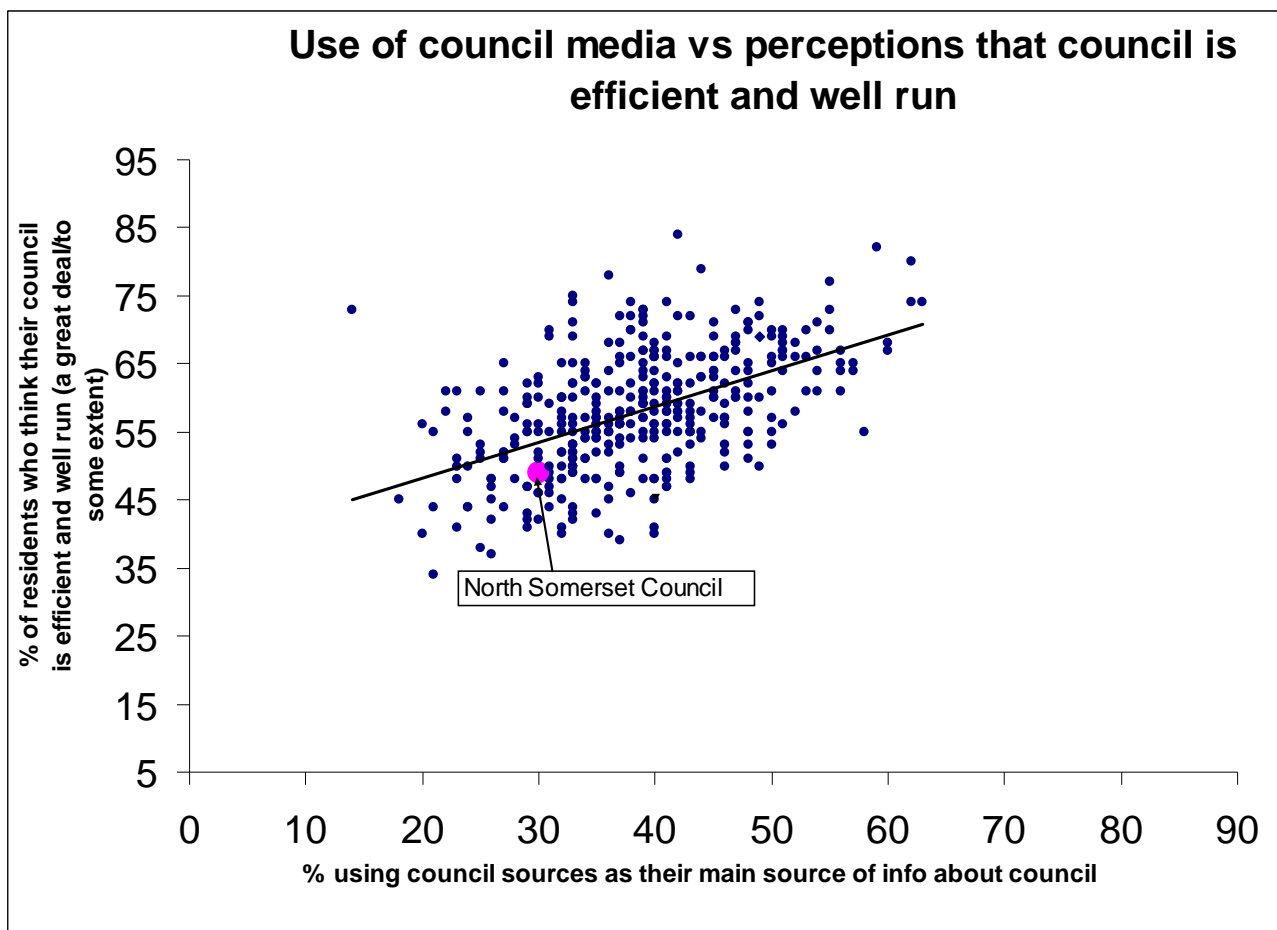
North Somerset residents are in the top 12% of populations relying on the local press for information about the council. And are in the bottom 10% of areas using council sources for their main source of information about the council.

This is particularly important as there is a clear positive correlation between reliance on the local media and poor image scores for the council. In other words, in those areas where people rely more on the local press, radio and TV (and less on council sources of information) the image of the council tends to be worse.

In the following chart, each of the 387 English councils is represented by a dot. The farther to the right of the chart a dot is, the more people in that district use the local media (press, radio and TV) as their main source of information about the council. The higher up the chart, the higher the percentage of residents saying their council 'is efficient and well run'. There is a clear relationship: the more important the local press, the worse is the council's 'is efficient and well run' image.



The chart below shows that the opposite also holds true. The more people use ‘information provided by the council (newspapers/magazines/leaflets, posters) the better the image is of that council.



The strength of this relationship is measurable statistically. This can be expressed thus, that 27% of the ‘perceptions of efficiency’ can be explained by the use of council media¹⁶.

North Somerset, as we saw in Section 4.2., has some low image ‘ratings’. The suggestion here is that this is linked to the high reliance North Somerset residents have on local media for information about the council.

4.3.2. North Somerset Life

North Somerset Life (NSL) is the council’s free monthly magazine delivered to all homes within the district.

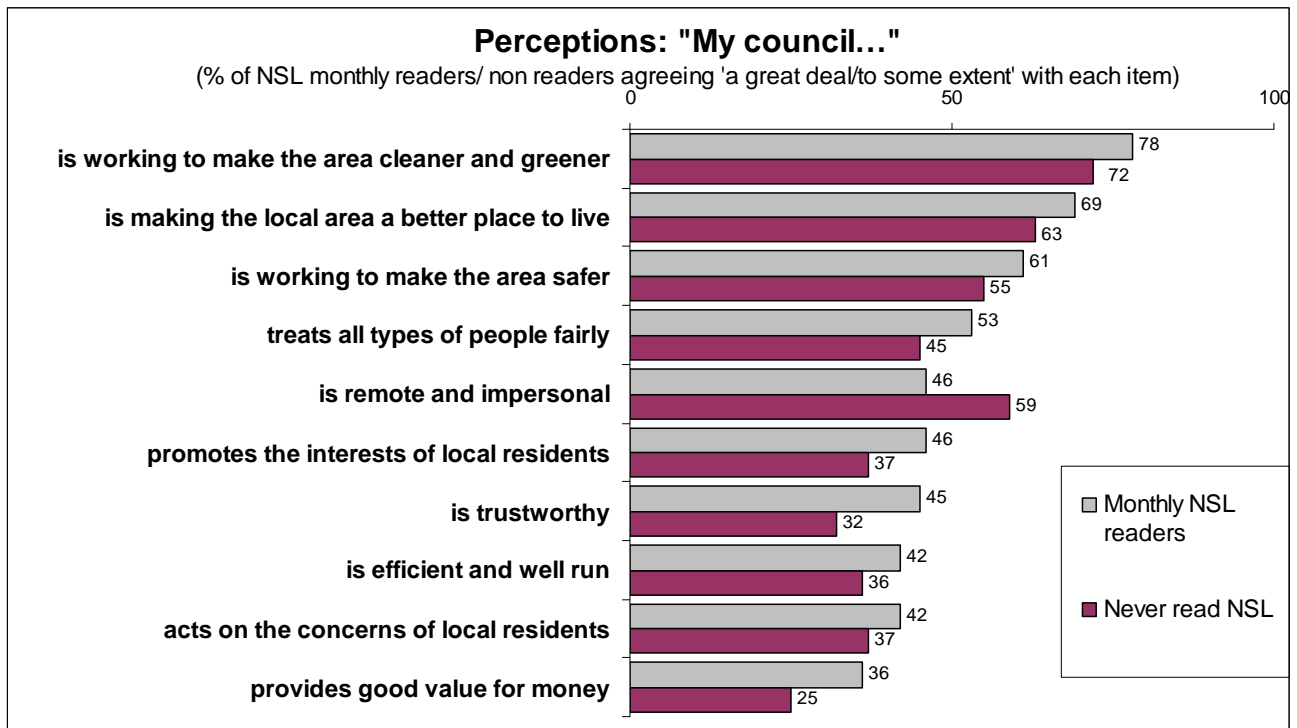
26% of respondents read NSL monthly. A further 34% have read it or read it occasionally. 36% either do not read it or did not reply (and hence can be counted as non-readers).

NSL readership increases with age. 14% of under 30s are monthly readers compared to 39% of over 70s. Home-makers and disabled respondents are also particularly likely to read NSL.

While NSL readership levels are fairly even regardless of ward-deprivation, there is above average readership among renters and ethnic minorities.

¹⁶ Pearson coefficient value for these data is 0.52.

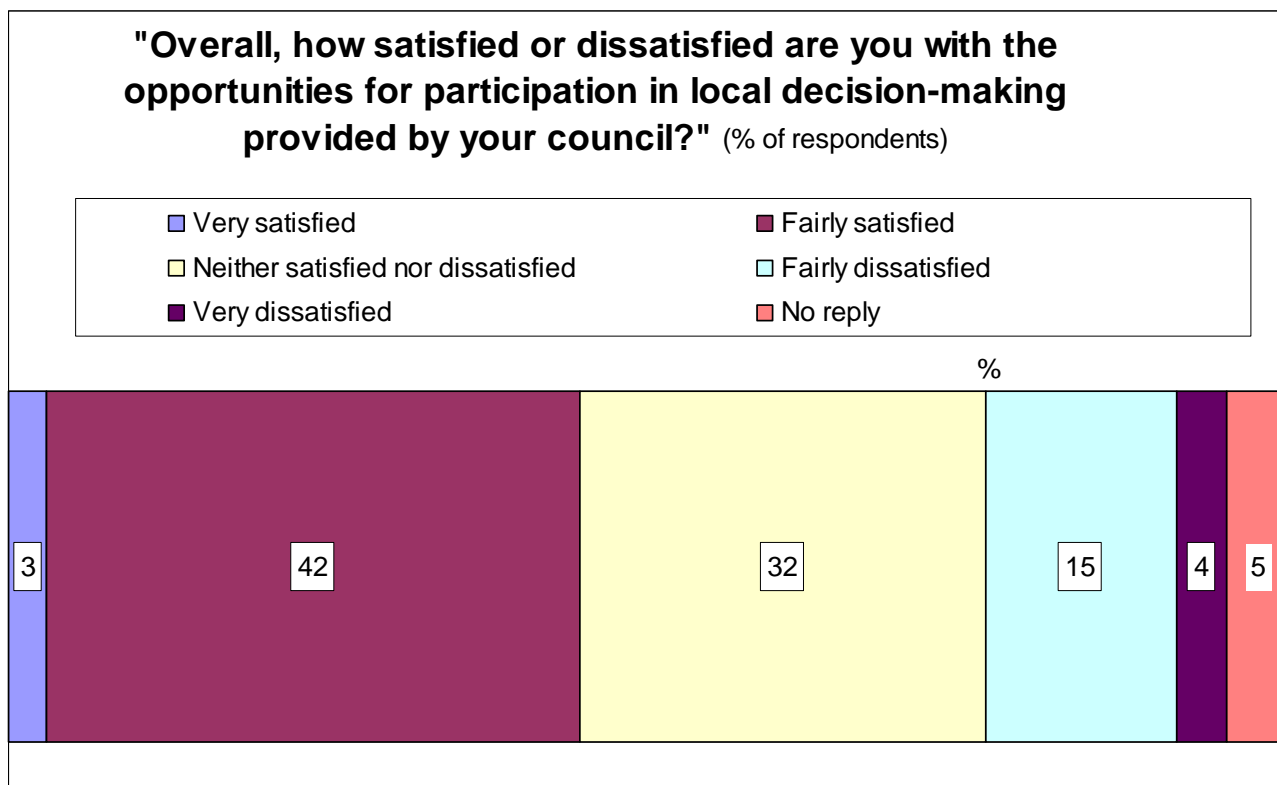
As mentioned before, readership of NSL correlates positively with feeling informed about the council and being satisfied with the council. More broadly, it is associated with a range of positive views about the council.



This NSL effect is not accounted for by other factors, i.e. it remains even when things like age are taken into account.

4.4. Participation and involvement

2006 was the first year that the survey asked about people's satisfaction with and demand for involvement in council decision-making. The overall picture is that over half of respondents either don't know, didn't reply or replied neutrally, suggesting the question is not easily answerable. 14% are satisfied versus 21% dissatisfied.



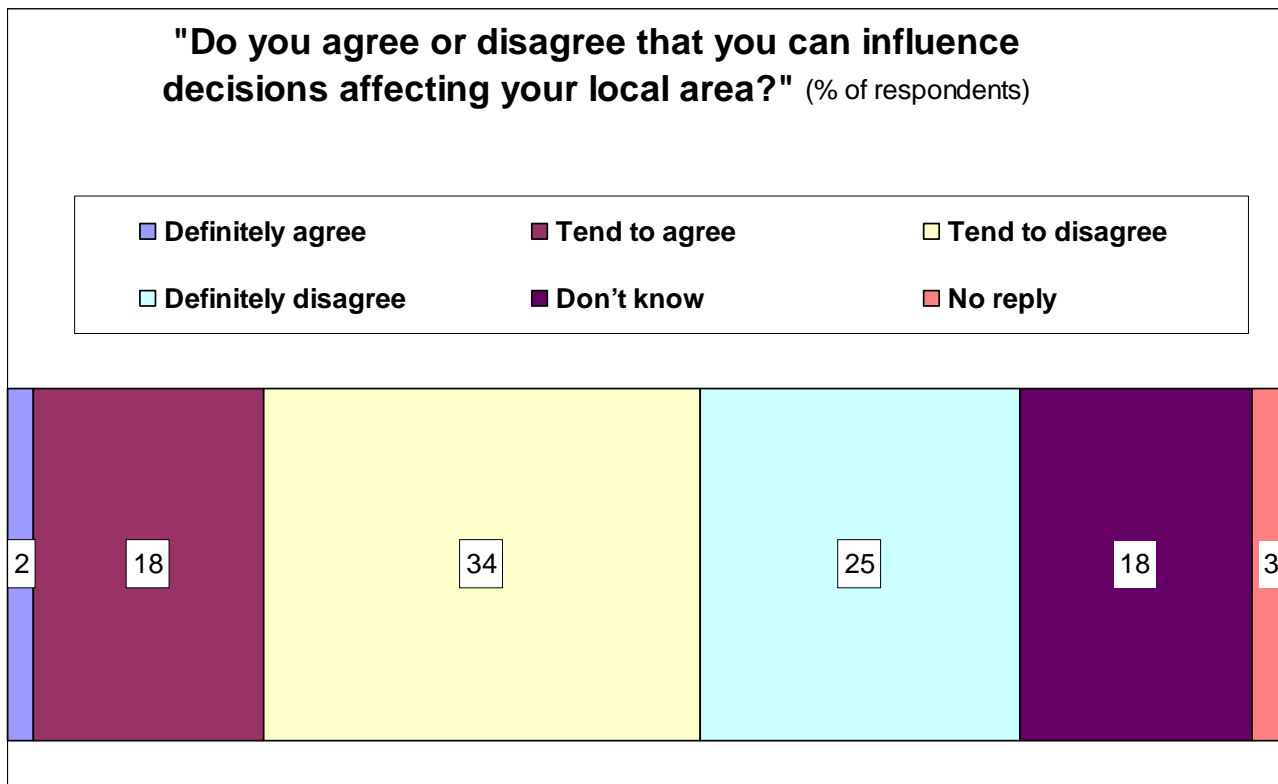
In North Somerset those most likely to feel satisfied are those most likely to be home-based: the over 70s, retired, disabled and home-makers. Renters are also particularly likely to be satisfied, though deprivation level of ward is not a factor. This pattern may be partly explained by the fact that these groups are precisely those most likely to be well-informed. Those who feel well-informed (and to a lesser degree North Somerset Life readers) are clearly more likely to be satisfied with opportunities for participation.

Men, ages 30-70, in full time-work and living in 'outer Weston-super-Mare' are especially likely to be dissatisfied on this measure. The other category less likely to be satisfied on this count is BME respondents.

Across the country, the range of satisfied scores is from 18% to 57%. North Somerset, on 20%, is one of the lowest-scoring council's nationally on this measure, ranking in 378th place out of 387 English councils¹⁷. Neighbouring councils West Somerset, Bath & N E Somerset and Bristol are also in the bottom 10 councils nationally. National research has shown that satisfaction on this measure correlates positively with overall satisfaction with the council.

¹⁷ These figures (e.g. North Somerset on 20%) use Audit Commission base (exclude don't knows and no replies from the calculation).

On a related question, 20% of respondents think they can “influence decisions affecting your local area”, versus 58% who disagree. Again, don’t knows/no replies account for about one in five respondents.



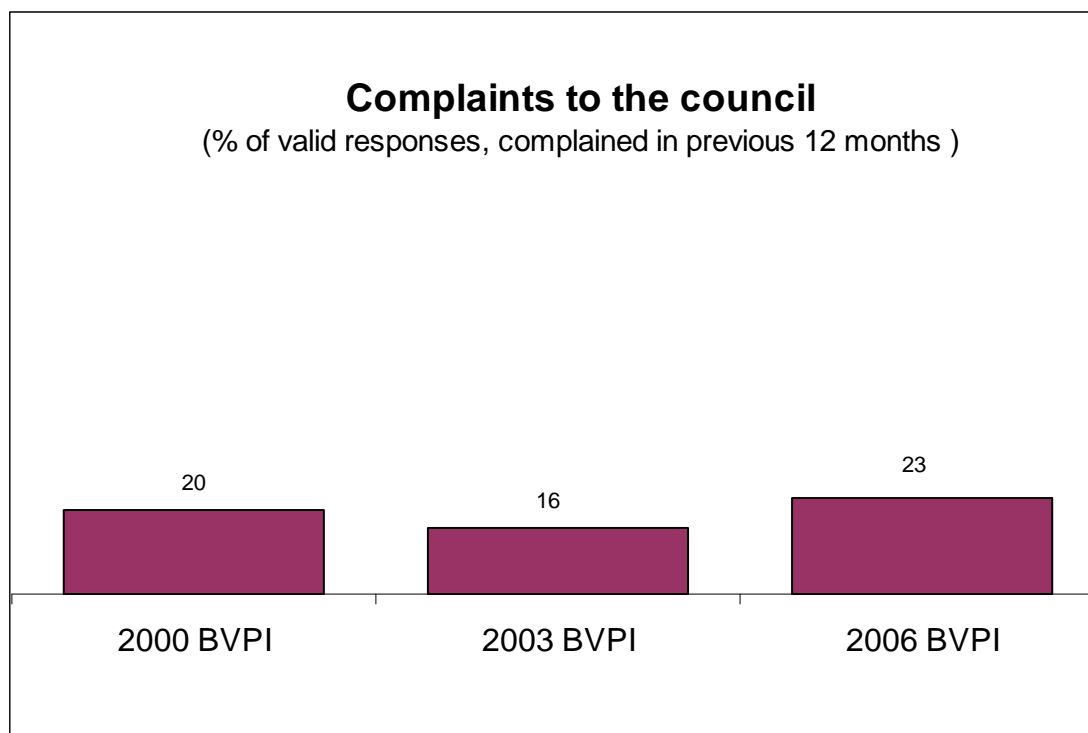
Rebasing this figure to allow comparison with national scores (excluding don't knows/no replies) 25% in North Somerset agree they can influence decisions. This compares to a national median of 32% agreeing. On this measure, North Somerset is in 146th place out of all 149 councils for which data are available (i.e. all single-tier and unitary councils). The spread of scores on this measure is from 23% up to 51%, the top ten all being London boroughs.

Of those dissatisfied with opportunities to participate, half would like to be more involved with 'decisions your council makes that affect your local area' and half would, depending on the issue. Groups with highest levels of demand are men in full time employment from Weston-super-Mare, BME respondents and those in the more deprived wards.

4.5. Complaining to the council

23% of respondents had complained to the council within the past year. These include things that the council would not class as complaints (e.g. can we have more park benches in a certain place). In fact only 11% of these 'complainants' are raising what the council would call a complaint¹⁸.

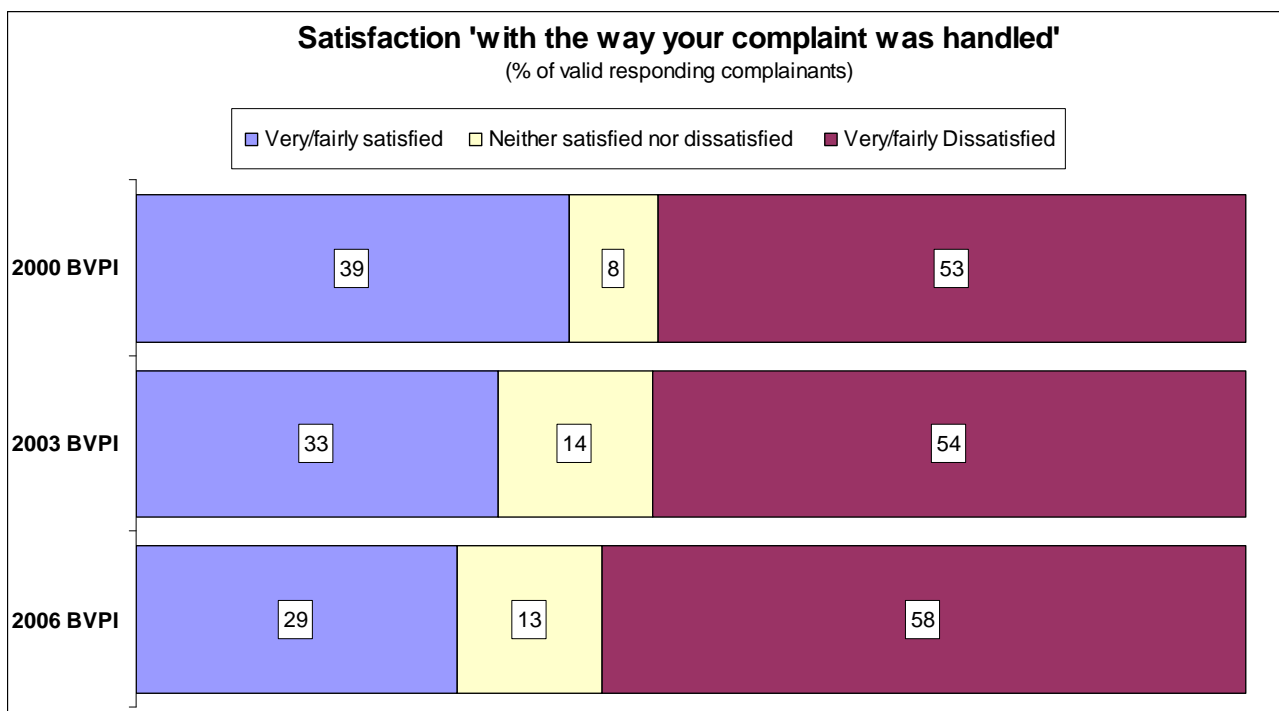
The 2006 figure of 23% complaining is a statistically significant increase from 16% in 2003.



The incidence of complaining is fairly evenly spread among all groups. The only two groups who are especially likely to have complained are: ethnic minorities and those in rented accommodation. Whether this is to do with ethnicity or the experience of renting is not clear.

¹⁸ This would include a service request which has not been responded to, reports of rudeness etc.

The percentage of those satisfied with the way their complaint was handled has declined, since 2003, from 33% to 29% and the proportion of dissatisfied complainants has gone up from 54% to 58%. These changes are at the edge of statistical significance. However looking at the responses since 2000, a pattern of declining satisfaction, or at least satisfaction not keeping pace with expectations, does look very likely.



Nationally, the picture is also one of declining satisfaction. The median satisfaction figure decreased from 34% in 2003 to 33% in 2006. In 2003 North Somerset was around the median. In 2006, at 29%, North Somerset has moved into the bottom quartile.

In anticipation of this issue the council conducted its own research aimed at understanding what complainants want¹⁹. It suggests that there are several drivers of satisfaction. One is obviously whether or not the complainant gets the outcome they want. Another key driver, which we can perhaps have more influence over and where we still have much room for improvement on, is communicating better with complainants. For example a better system to inform complainants what is going on with their complaint, what the status is and when it is closed.

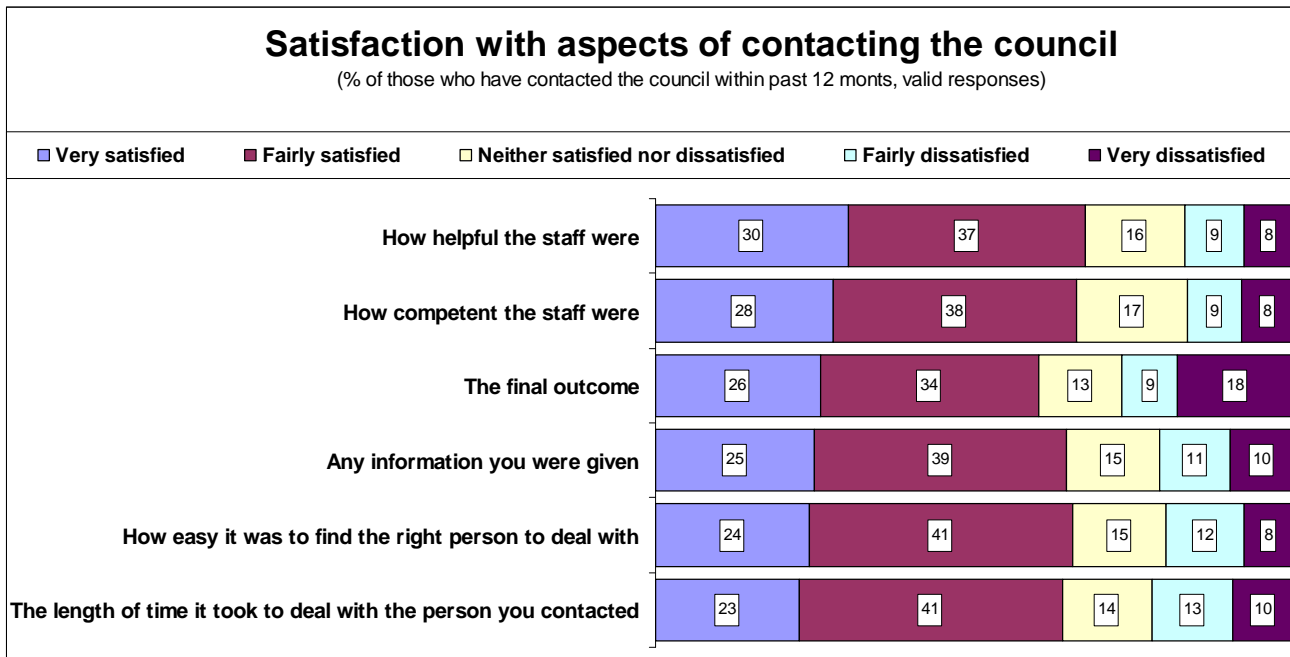
The council's complaints procedure has been reviewed and simplified since this survey was conducted, partly as a result of these findings from complainants.

¹⁹ Citizens' Panel December 2005.

4.6. Contacting the council

72% of respondents had contacted the council (other than for making a complaint) over the previous 12 months.

Most people who contacted the council were satisfied with each aspect of how they were dealt with which was asked about. For each aspect, around one in five contacters were not satisfied. It is also worth noting the high levels of very satisfied: about one in four contacters were very satisfied.



The council has recently conducted much more detailed and better-designed research on methods, reasons, times of contact etc. So it is not proposed to report the BVPI survey findings in detail here²⁰.

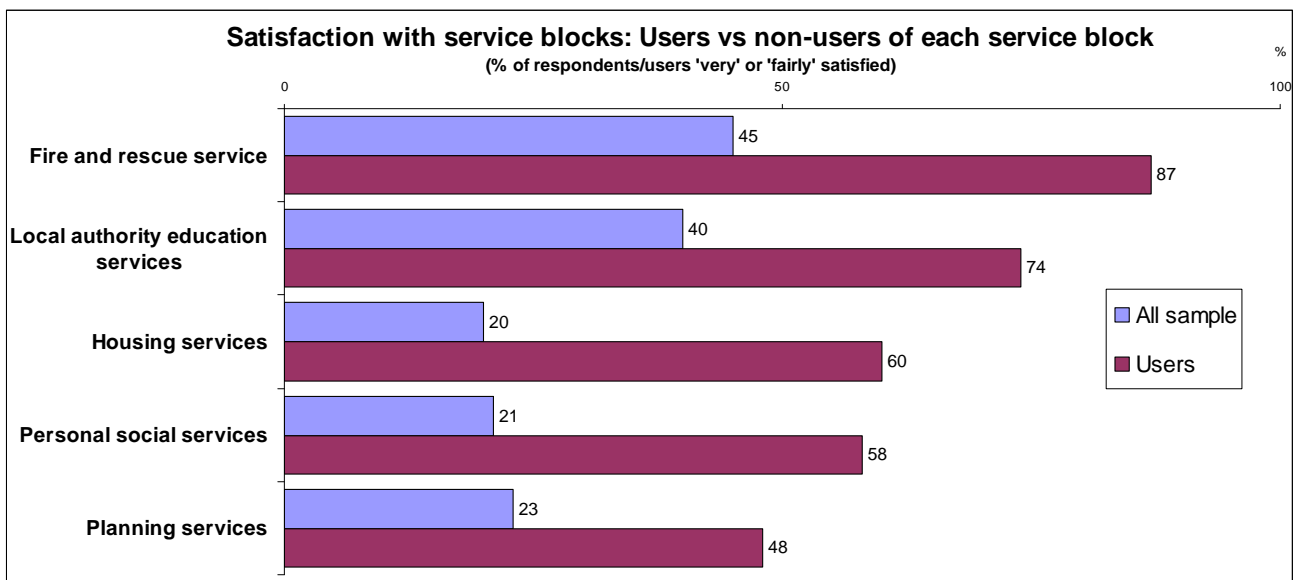
²⁰ See February 2006 Citizens' Panel.

5. USE OF AND ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES

5.1. Service use overall

The survey measures whether or not respondents have used some named services 'provided or supported by North Somerset Council', in the past year. This measure is not reported in detail here for two main reasons: it is an unclear question (such that half the sample do not answer it at all) and it has no purpose as a stand-alone-measure.

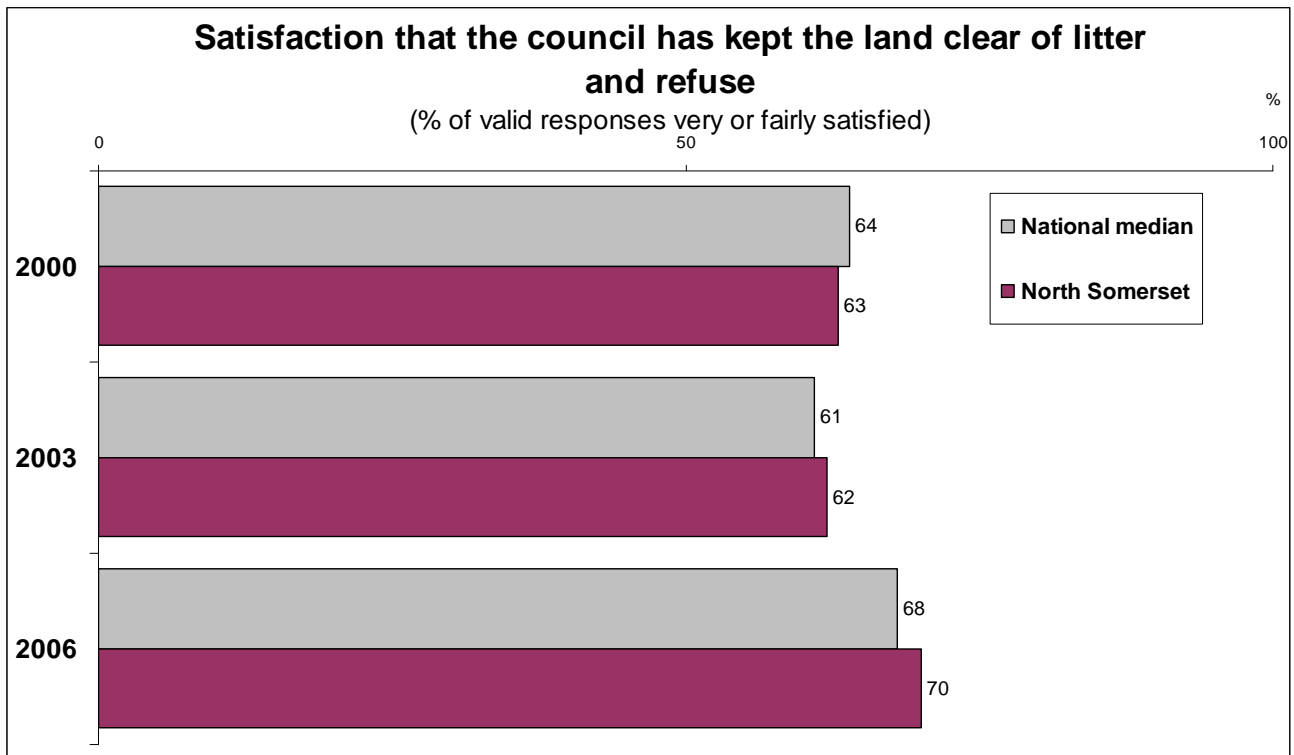
However respondents also state how satisfied they are with these same services. This shows that people who use, or are aware that they use, services are much more likely to be satisfied with that service – around twice as likely – as the sample in general. There is no comparison with 'non-users' as the large proportion of 'no replies' makes the calculation of 'non-users' problematic.



There is no relation between use of services and readership of North Somerset Life (i.e. readers use services at the same level as non-readers). However readers are slightly more likely than non-readers to be satisfied with each of the services.

5.2. Waste services

Overall 70% are satisfied that “North Somerset Council has kept this land clear of litter and refuse”. This figure is fairly consistent across all main population groups.



The North Somerset figure of 70% is an increase on the 2003 figure (62%). The national median has also increased, partly driven by large improvements in London boroughs. North Somerset remains above the median figure, in the second quartile.

The survey asked about several areas of waste management in detail (see below). In general, satisfaction levels are higher among older people and those more likely to be in the house in the day. Satisfaction is lower among ethnic minorities though this is almost certainly due to other associated variables, e.g. housing type. As for most issues, North Somerset Life readers are more satisfied than average.

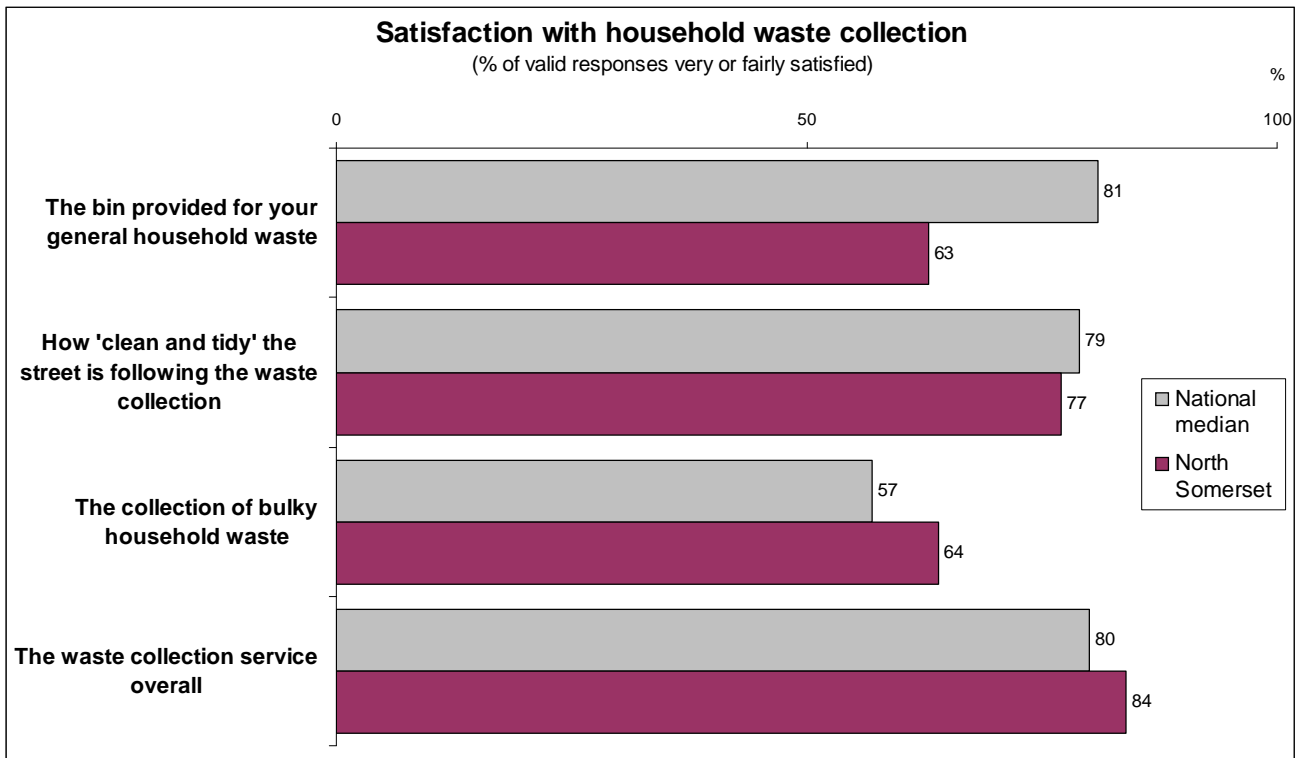
5.2.1. Household waste collection (rubbish collection)

5.2.1.1. North Somerset in national context

The survey shows that 28% of North Somerset residents are very satisfied with the waste collection service overall, and 56% fairly satisfied. Combined, this yields the 84% satisfied figure in the chart below. 10% are dissatisfied and 6% neutral.

The level of satisfaction with the service overall in North Somerset is fairly evenly spread across the sample.

North Somerset is below the national median on the 'bin provided' and just below the median on 'how clean and tidy the street' is after the rubbish collection. It is above the median on 'bulky waste' and satisfaction with the service overall.



The apparently lower satisfaction figures for 'the bin provided' and the 'bulky waste' questions are deceptive.

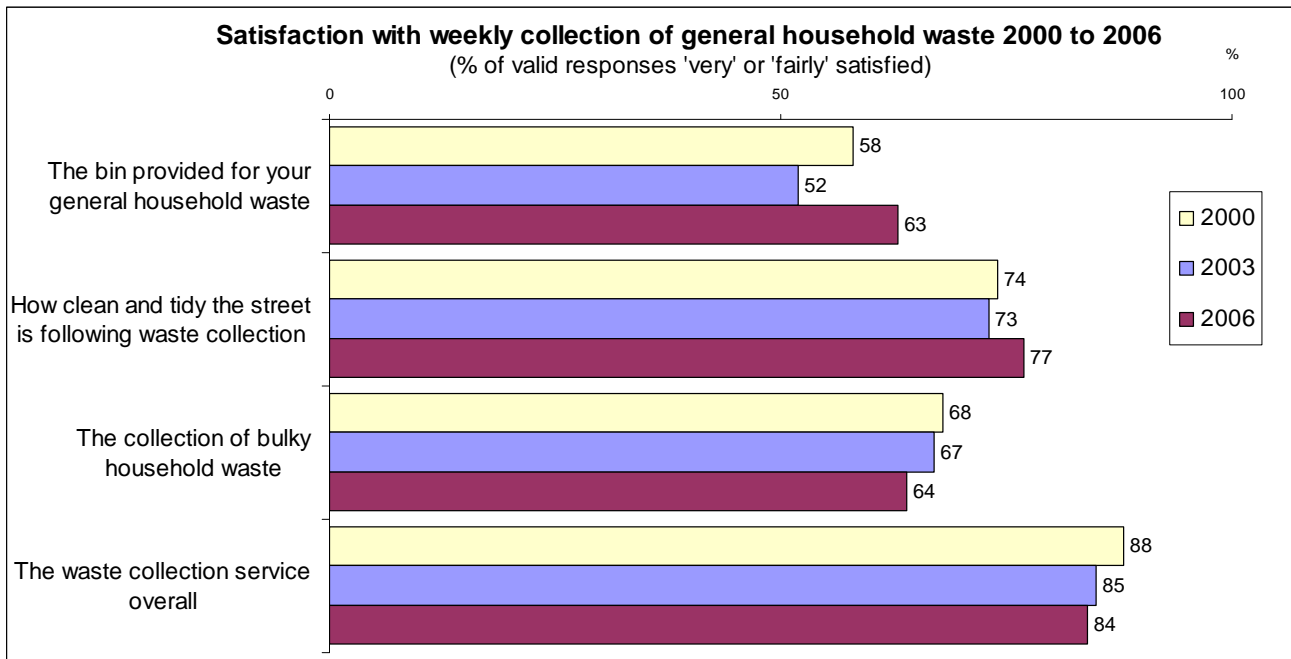
North Somerset Council does not provide a bin to residents. So, 65% of respondents answered 'does not apply/don't know' and the satisfaction figure in the chart above is based on only a minority of respondents. It is likely that some of these will have answered in terms of the green recycling box.

Collection of bulky waste is a service which many respondents will have had no experience of. So nearly one in three respondents answered 'does not apply/don't know'.

The 'clean and tidy' question does not have such problems. 77% are satisfied, compared to 18% dissatisfied.

5.2.1.2. North Somerset over time

Overall satisfaction is down from 85% in 2003 to 84% in 2006. Nationally there has been greater slippage. So North Somerset has moved up from the third into the second-from-top quartile.



The 'bulky waste' and 'bin provided' questions are prone to more fluctuation as they are based on only a minority of respondents (and they may generate confusion).

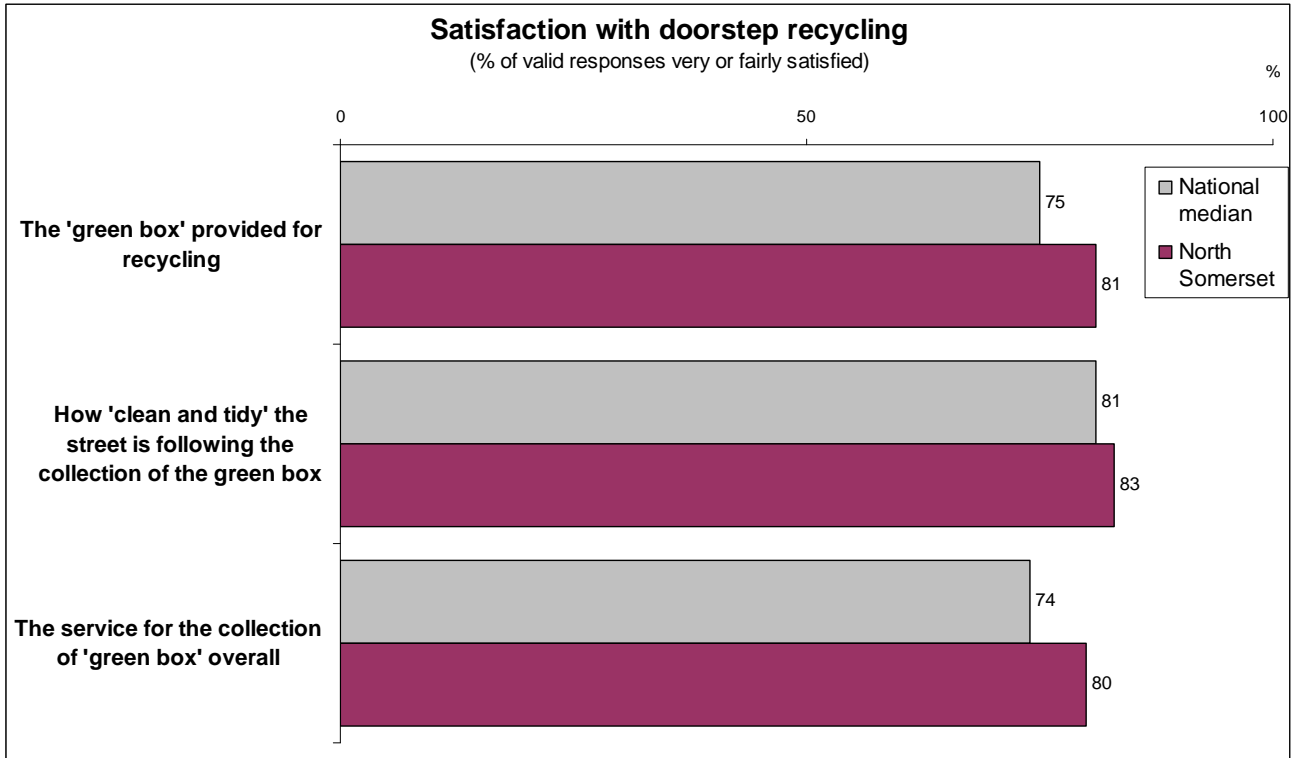
Satisfaction with 'clean and tidy' issue has improved 2003 to 2006 and this is a statistically significant change.

5.2.2. Doorstep recycling

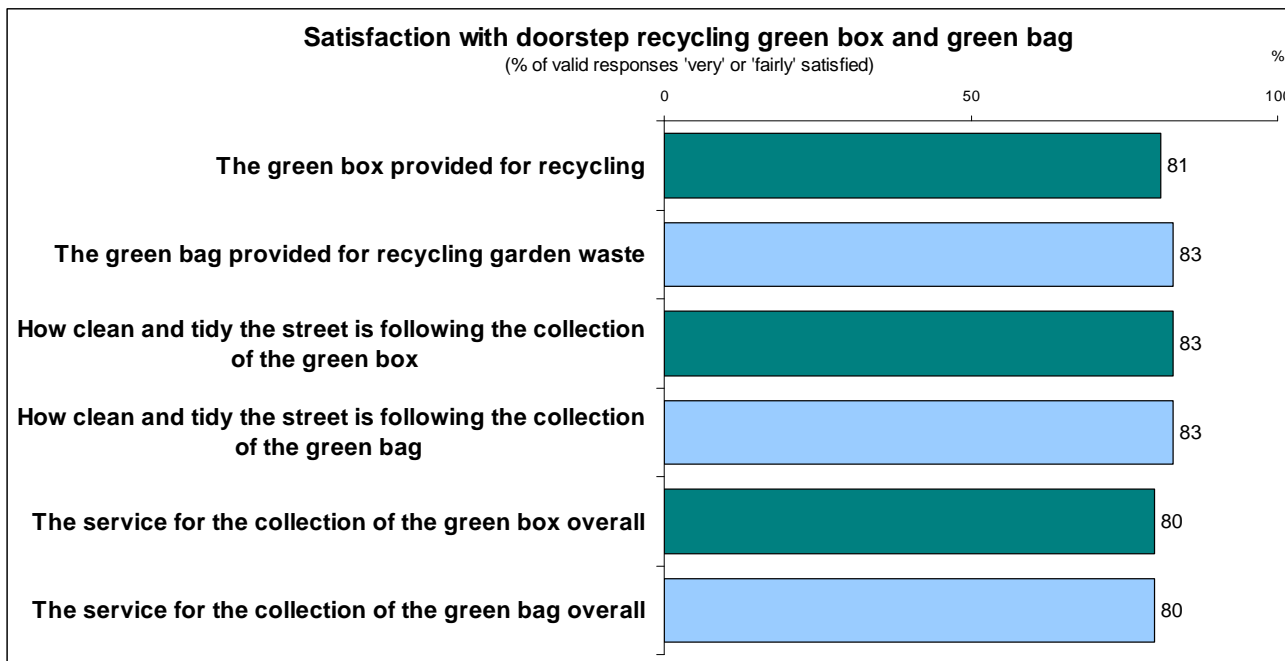
The satisfaction level with each aspect of the green box scheme asked about is over 80%. Around half of those satisfied are very satisfied – an unusually high proportion.

Dissatisfaction levels are around 10% of the sample.

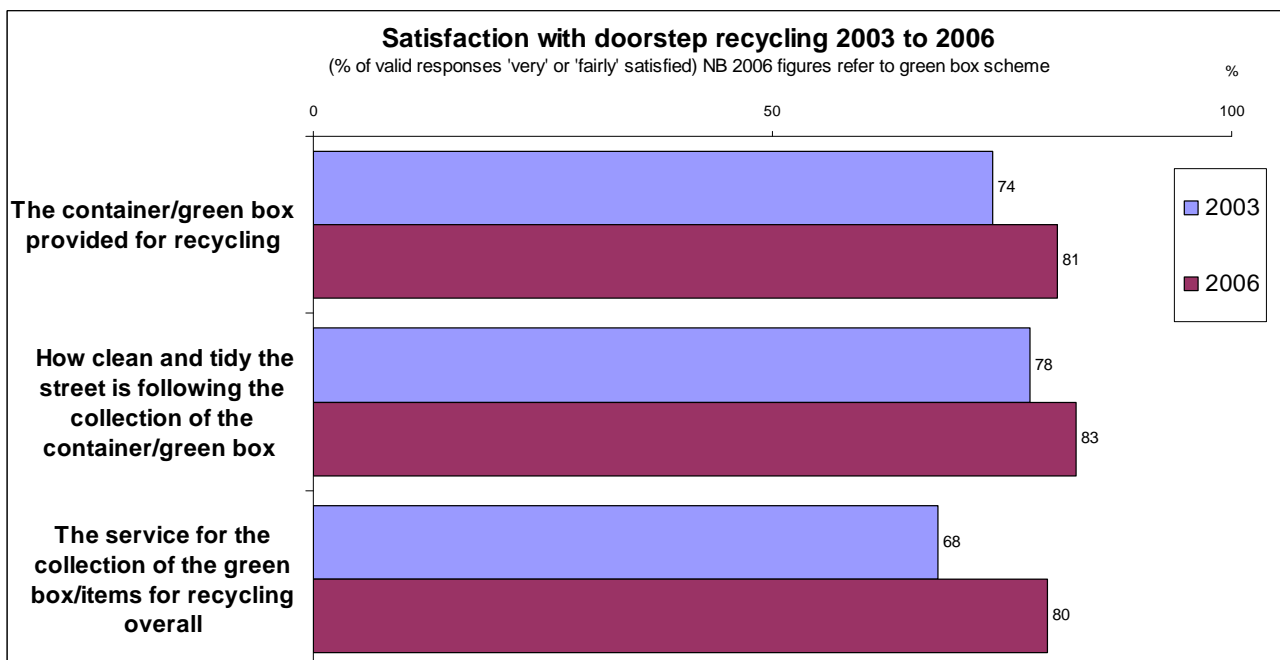
North Somerset satisfaction levels are above the national median and for overall satisfaction North Somerset is in the top quartile.



In North Somerset, uniquely in the country, this survey measured satisfaction with the green bag separately from the green box scheme²¹. The green bag scheme was introduced in North Somerset in February 2006. The survey period was preceded by problems in the supply of green bags, much covered in the local media. Despite this, satisfaction with the each aspect of the green bag scheme is around 80%, matching that of the longer-established green box scheme.



Satisfaction with the green box scheme has increased since the only other time it was measured, in 2003²².



²¹ The green box is provided for recycling of glass, newspaper, corrugated cardboard etc. The green bag, is provided for recycling leaves, grass and other garden waste.

²² In 2006 the question specified 'green box' whereas in 2003 the question referred to 'the container'. There were other minor changes in question structure 2003 to 2006.

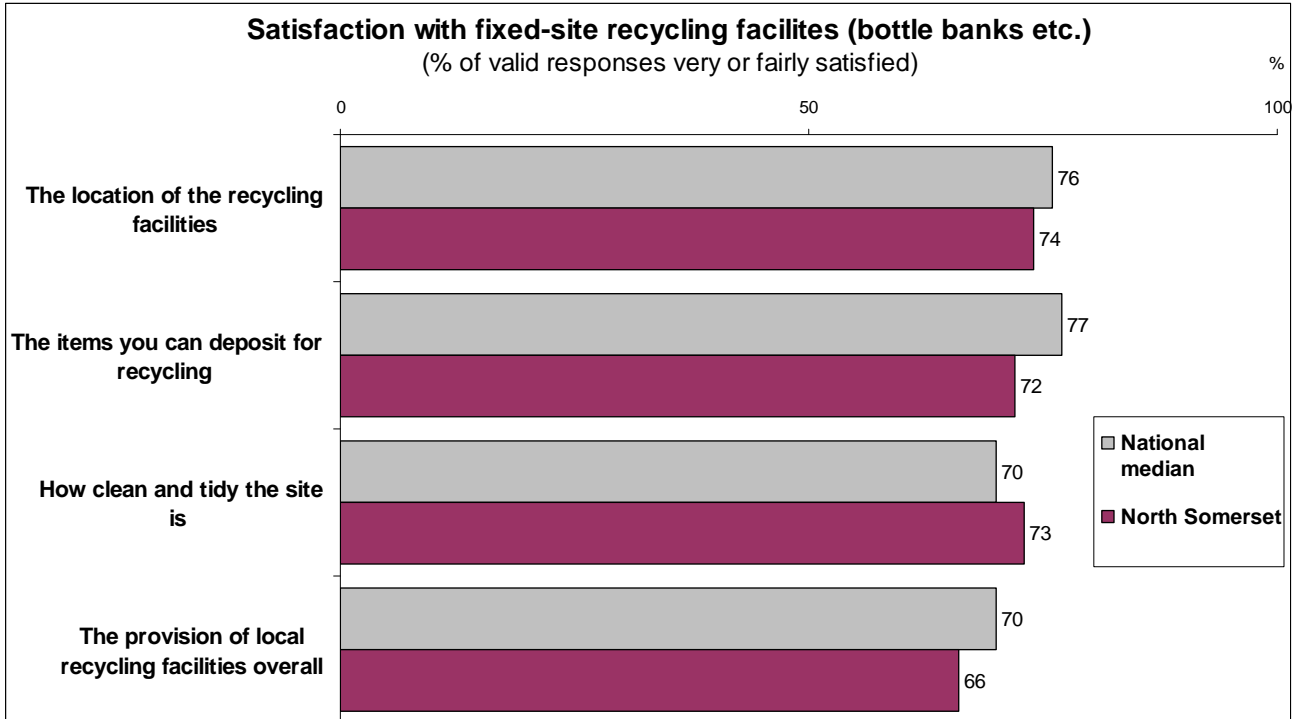
5.2.3. Fixed-site recycling centres

This section refers to sites such as bottle banks in supermarket car parks.

5.2.3.1. North Somerset in national context

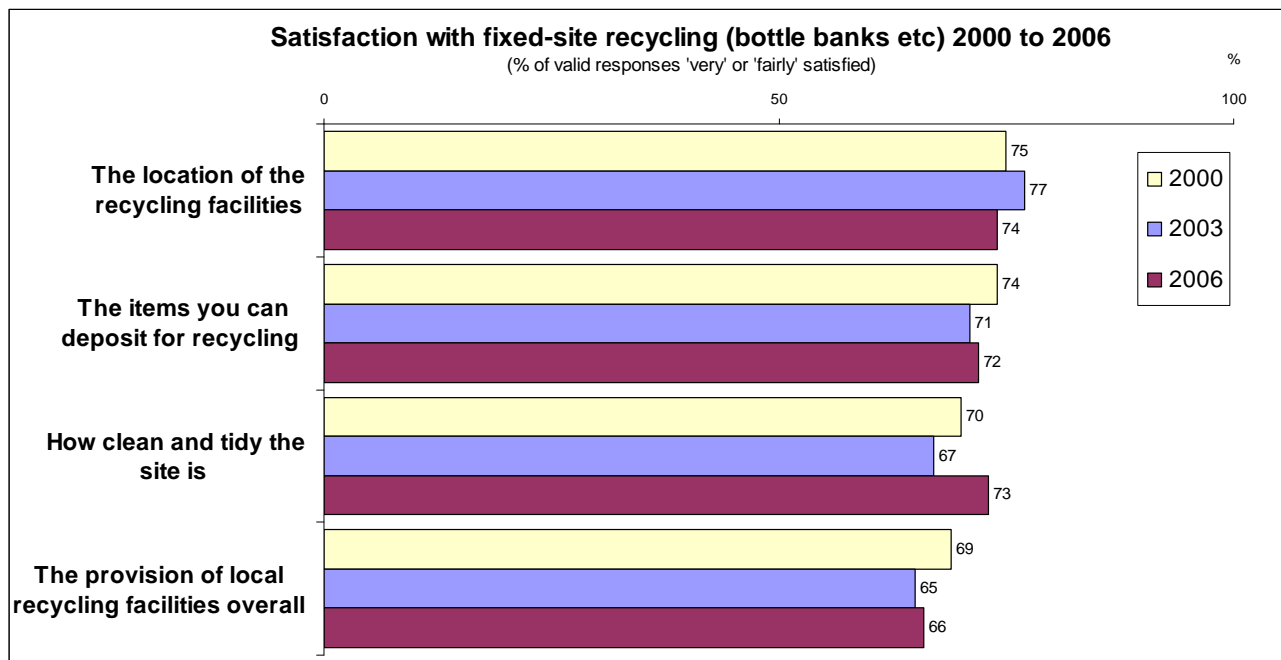
North Somerset is just below the national median on three of the four aspects asked about, and just above the median on how 'clean and tidy the site is'.

The 66% satisfaction level for the service overall puts North Somerset just into the bottom quartile. Satisfaction levels are highest in Weston-super-Mare and clearly lower in Nailsea and Clevedon.



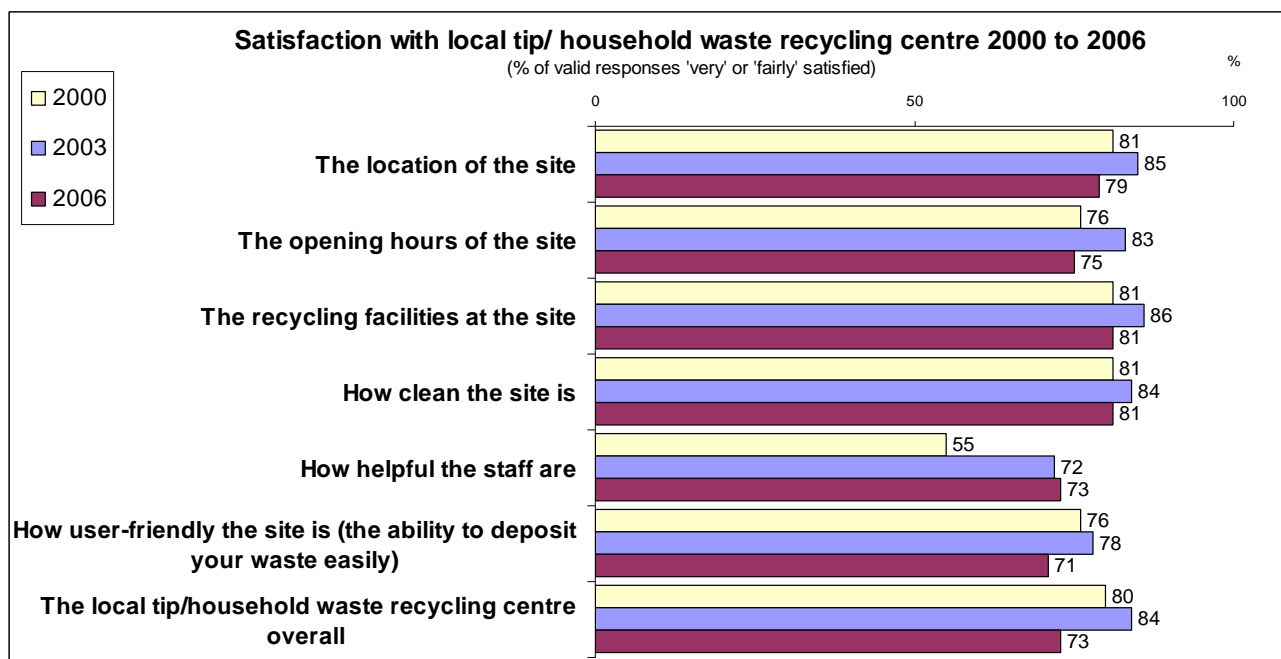
5.2.3.2. North Somerset over time

There have been minor changes since 2000, but all are within margins of error and no clear pattern emerges.



5.2.4. Local tip/Household waste recycling centre (HWRC)

Satisfaction with most aspects of HWRCs, after increasing from 2000 to 2003 fell back again in 2006. The exception to this is the helpfulness of staff issue, which has stayed high.

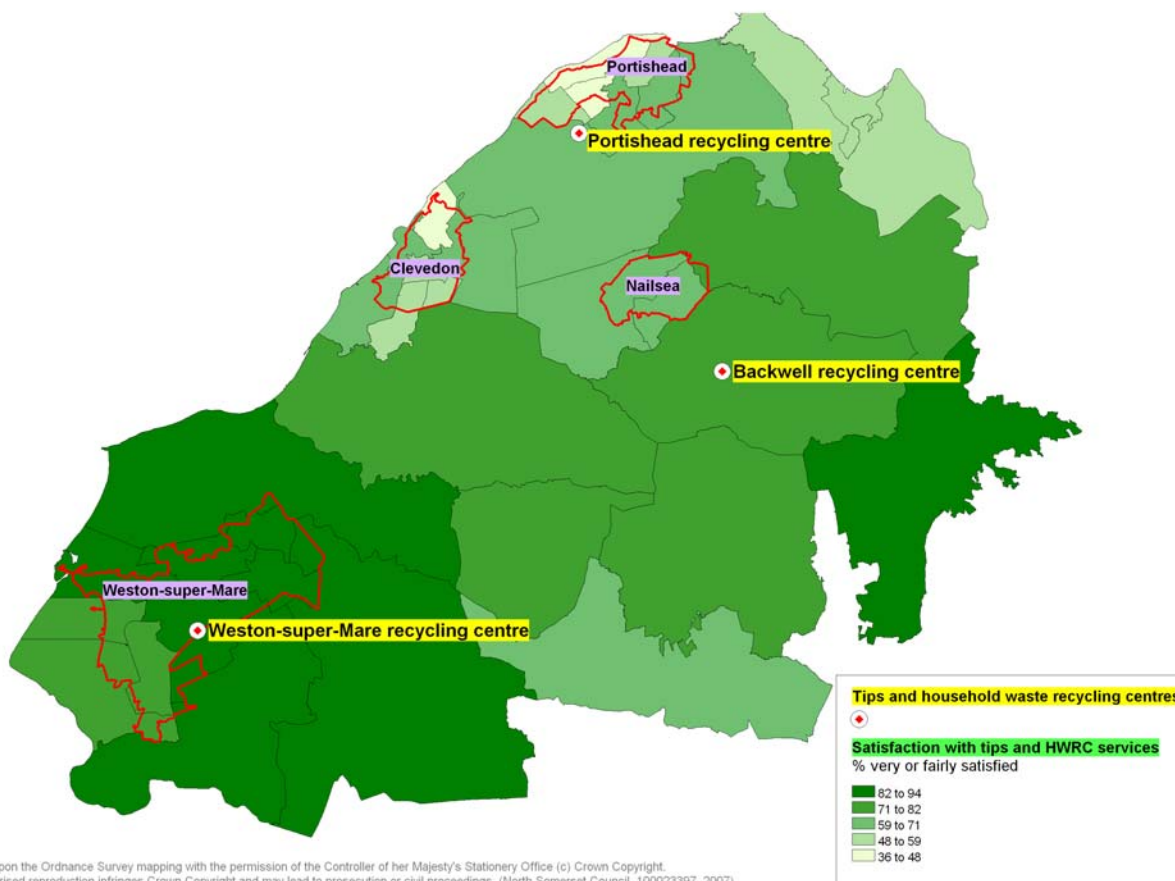


The HWRC at Portishead (Black Rock) was closed from April 2006, right through the fieldwork period for this survey and there were simultaneously problems with the Cheston Coombe site near Backwell. These were high-profile problems, attracting much unhappy coverage in the local media, over many months.

Nailsea, Portishead and, especially Clevedon respondents were clearly less satisfied than the average. In Clevedon the overall satisfaction figure was 50% compared to 86% for 'greater Weston-super-Mare'. Residents in the north of the district, especially those bordering on Bristol also showed somewhat lower levels of satisfaction.

Among respondents from Weston-super-Mare, satisfaction figures remain as high as in 2003.

This map shows the pattern of satisfaction with 'the local tip overall' across the district. Again, the darker the shading, the more satisfied.

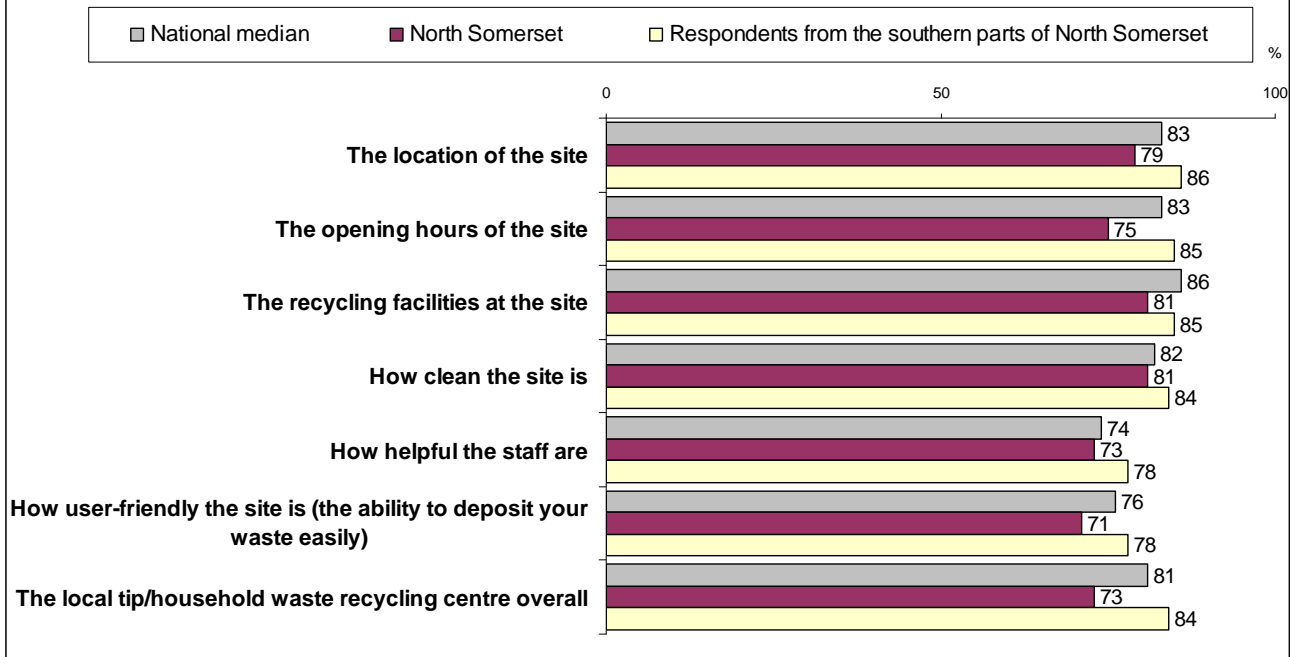


When we compare North Somerset with national medians, North Somerset is clearly below par on all measures. To illustrate the regional effect, the chart below also shows the satisfaction levels of those respondents from the southern part of North Somerset district²³. The logic being that the only household waste recycling centre fully operational at the time of the survey was in the south. Their satisfaction levels are clearly above national medians. Their scores are in the second quartile on all aspects except helpfulness of staff, which is a top quartile score.

²³ Postcodes beginning BS22, BS23, BS24, BS25 1, BS26 2, BS 40 5, BS40 7, BS40 8, BS49 4, BS 49 5.

Satisfaction with local tip/ household waste recycling centre)

(% of valid responses very or fairly satisfied)



The overall satisfaction figure, at 73% is well below the national average. In fact, North Somerset is in 128th place out of the 149 councils in England. Almost all those scoring lower than North Somerset are inner city councils.

5.3. Public transport

5.3.1. Use of local buses

About one in five North Somerset respondents (19%) use the local buses at least weekly.



Bus use is clearly higher among the following type of respondents: older, disabled and retired people, renters, BME people and residents of poorer wards.

North Somerset residents use local buses at far below English average levels. The median 'weekly use' figure for England is 37%. North Somerset, on 19% records among the lowest levels of usage in England: 136th out of 149 councils²⁴. Yet as we saw in Section 2.1. North Somerset is in the top 15% of council-populations demanding improvement in public transport.

Measuring levels of use of local buses is not done for its own sake, but to enable satisfaction information to be calculated separately for bus users. In the following analysis, bus user is defined as someone who uses the local bus service at least once a year.²⁵

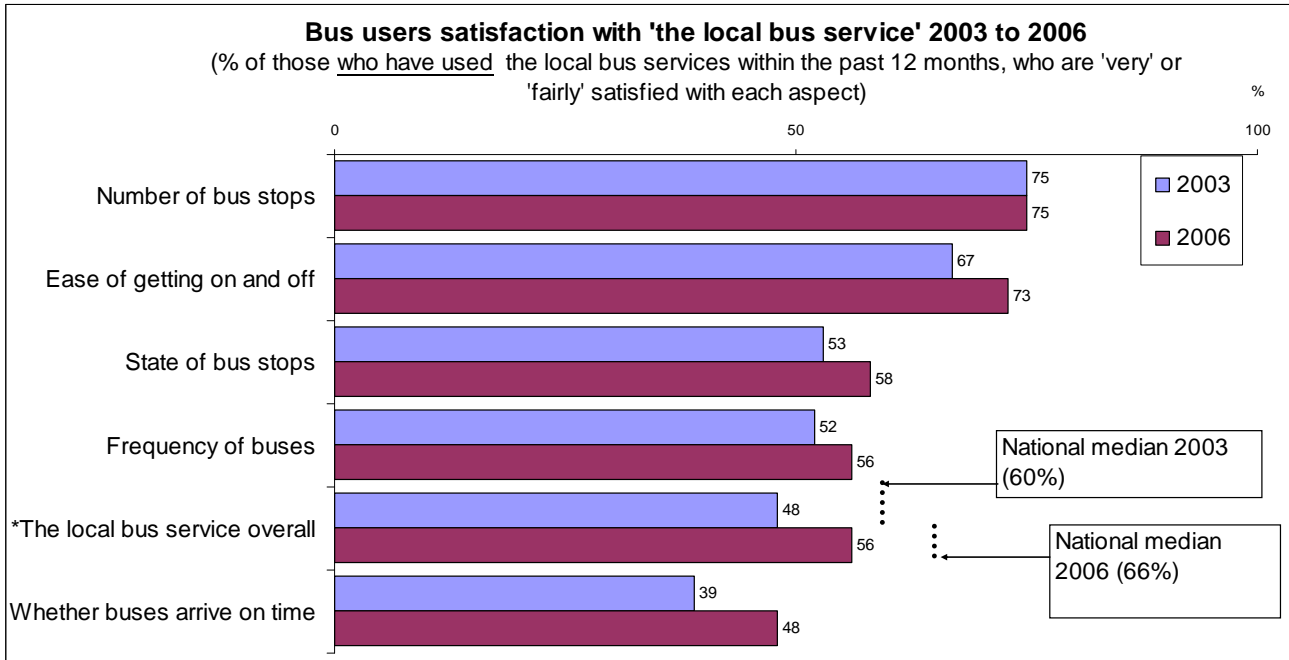
²⁴ Questions on public transport were not included on District council questionnaires, so the base for comparison is all 149 single tier and county councils.

²⁵ This is standard Best Value definition of a service user. It may be argued that yearly is too infrequent to count as usage. However, the figures are very similar regardless of frequency of usage. Other analyses are available on request. Note that, uniquely, the transport analyses and BVPI calculation do not exclude 'Don't know/does not apply' values.

5.3.2. Satisfaction with local bus service among users

Satisfaction with bus services is not an area over which the council has a huge influence, as most services are run commercially by privately-owned operators who fix fares, routes and frequencies.

Among those who use the local bus service at least once a year ('users'), satisfaction with almost all aspects of the bus service is clearly higher in 2006 compared to 2003.



The overall satisfaction figure (asterisked in the chart) has increased, up from 48% to 56%. However, nationally this figure has also improved, raising the bar. North Somerset has thus not improved its relative position and remains in the bottom quartile of English councils.

In North Somerset, satisfaction with the service overall is clearly higher among...

- the over 50s (and retired and disabled respondents)
- respondents from Weston-super-Mare.

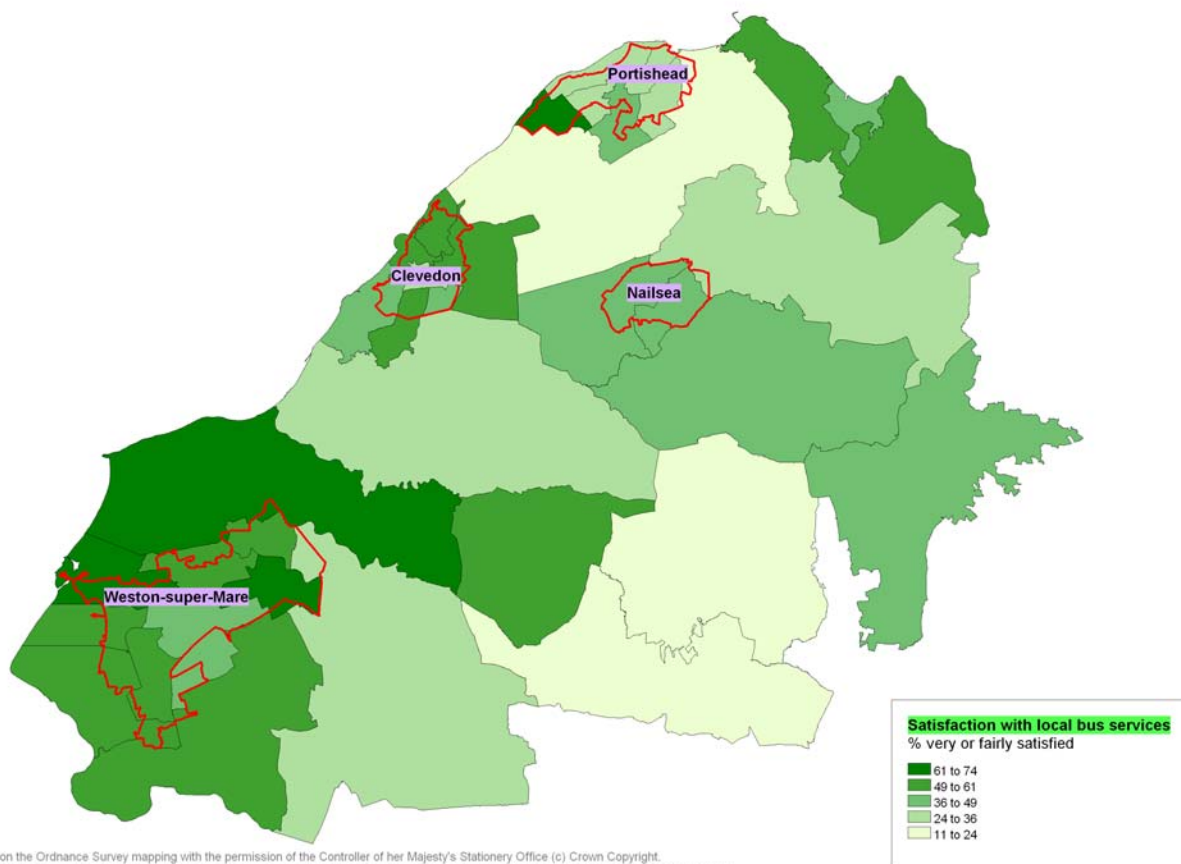
The age effect may be partly due to the fact that the Diamond Travel Card was introduced in April 2006, providing free bus travel to everyone over 60.

Satisfaction with the service overall is clearly lower among...

- under 30s
- full-time workers
- respondents from Clevedon and Portishead and some rural areas.

This map shows the pattern of satisfaction with the local bus service overall across the district, highlighting some clear variations. This is based on satisfaction among users.

The darker the shading, the more satisfied.

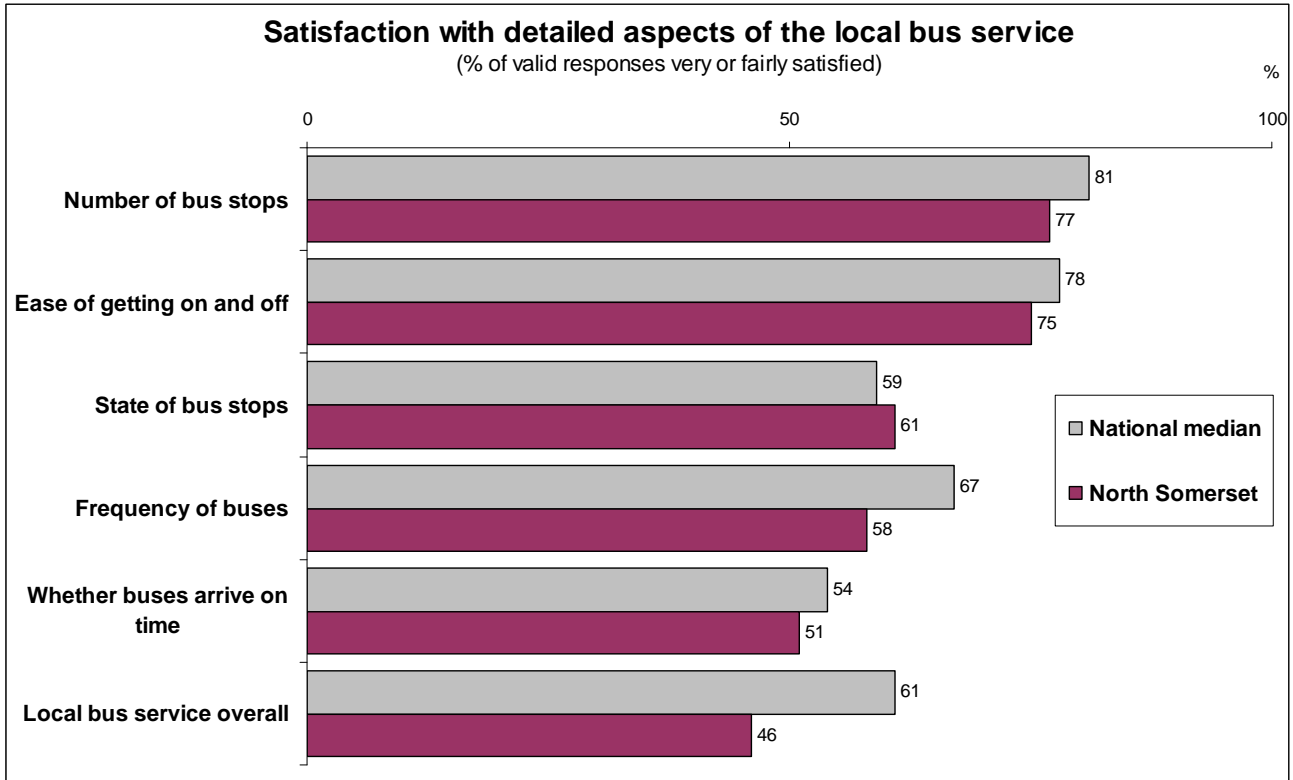


Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office (c) Crown Copyright.
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5.3.3. Satisfaction with local bus service among the total sample (including non users)

Satisfaction among all respondents, including those who do not or have never used a local bus is reported here for two reasons:

1. non-users may have views based on past experience, or they may not be users precisely because of dissatisfaction with aspects of the service.
2. data allowing for comparison with other councils are only available at the all-sample level.



North Somerset is below the median on all aspects measured except one (state of bus stops) and in the bottom quartile on two of these six measures, including satisfaction with the service overall. On this measure North Somerset, is among the lowest scoring councils, in 137th position out of all 149 councils.

The gap between North Somerset and national medians is particularly noticeable for the 'overall' measure and less clear for the other measures, the 'components' of the service overall. This suggests that the 'explanation' for the poor overall satisfaction may well involve other components apart from those measured (e.g. routes available, cost or other issues).

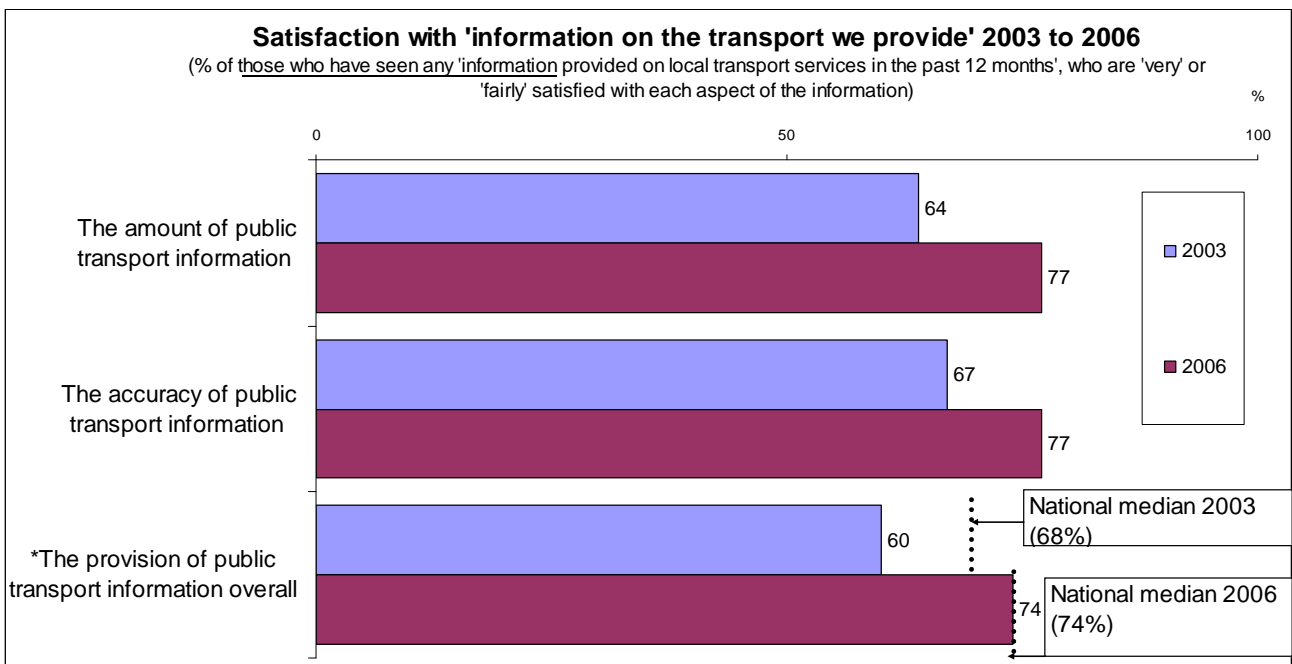
5.3.4. Satisfaction with transport information among users

This section looks at the “information on transport we [i.e. the council] provide”.

As with satisfaction with the bus service we analyse results for both users of that information and the sample as a whole.

A user, in this context, is someone who has ‘received or seen any of the information provided on local transport services, in the last 12 months’. Based on this definition, 26% of the sample are users of transport information. This is the same percentage as in 2003.

Among users, satisfaction with ‘the provision of public transport information overall’ rose from 60% in 2003 to 74% in 2006.

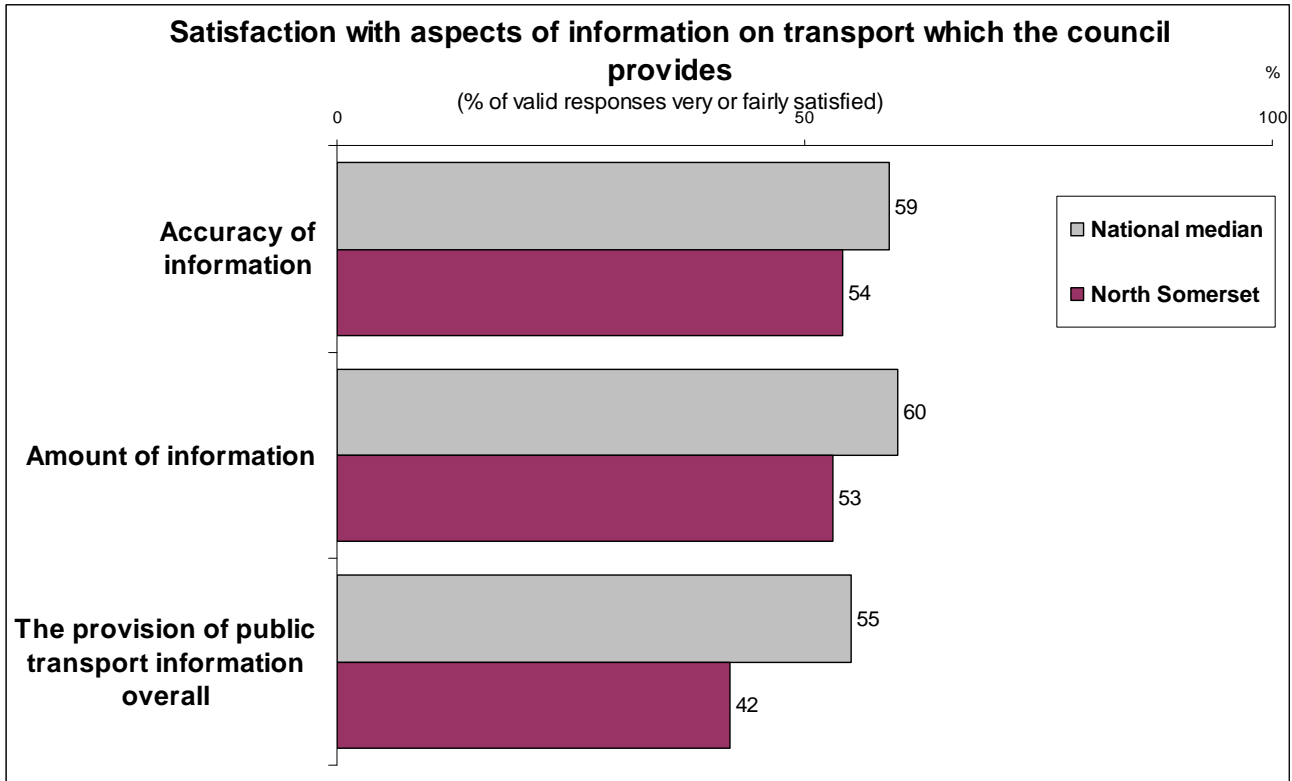


In 2003 North Somerset was far below the national median, in fact in the bottom quartile of councils. In 2006 North Somerset has moved up to right on the national median at 74%, improving our relative position.

Although all transport measures have shown improvement 2003 to 2006, this is the only transport measure which has shown improvement at above the national rate, improving our position in the ‘league table’.

5.3.5. Satisfaction with transport information among the total sample (including non users)

North Somerset is below the national median on all three of these indicators and in the bottom quartile on two of them (and on the bottom quartile border for 'accuracy of information').



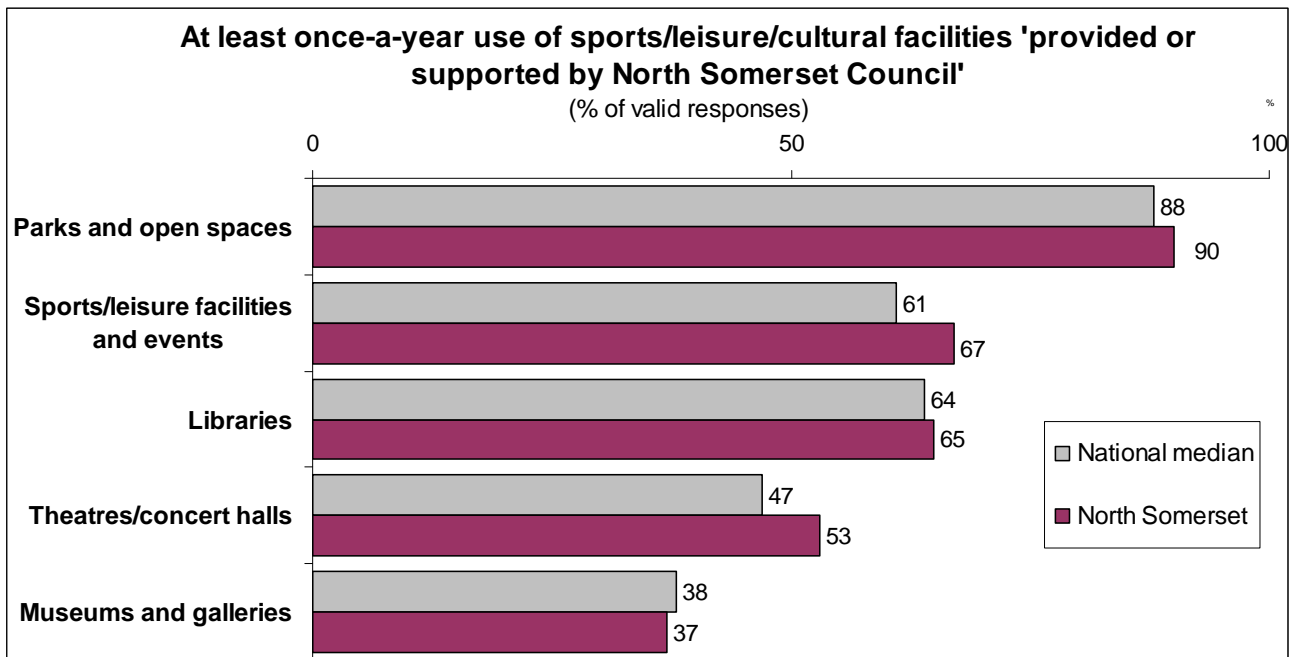
For 'overall provision' North Somerset is 137th out of 149 councils. This issue is the one where we see improvement among users of the transport information. It seems that this improvement has not filtered down to be recognised by non-users.

Again, it would seem that the components of this indicator (amount and accuracy of information) do not 'show enough dissatisfaction' to account for the large gap in satisfaction with overall provision of transport information.

5.4. Cultural/leisure/sports services

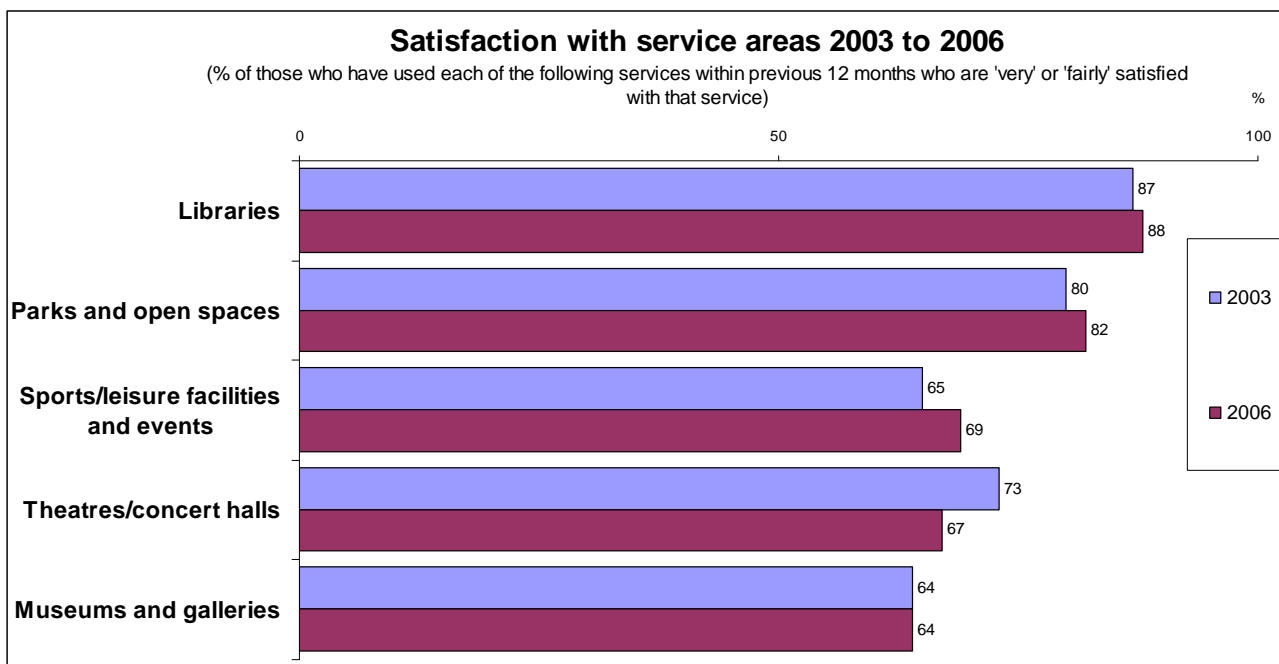
This survey measures frequency of usage of some sports/leisure and cultural facilities “provided or supported by North Somerset Council”. This allows estimates of the percentages of residents – or sub groups of residents (e.g. older people, residents of Weston-super-Mare) who use these services daily, weekly, monthly, six-monthly or annually (or never use).

North Somerset residents use these facilities, except for museums/galleries, at levels above the national median, except for museums/galleries. The following shows the annual usage figures for North Somerset compared to the national median.



In North Somerset, annual use of such services has remained similar from 2003 to 2006. The only change which is statistically significant is a small increase in the use of ‘sports/leisure facilities and events’. Again, the main reason for measuring this is mainly to be able to express satisfaction among service users.

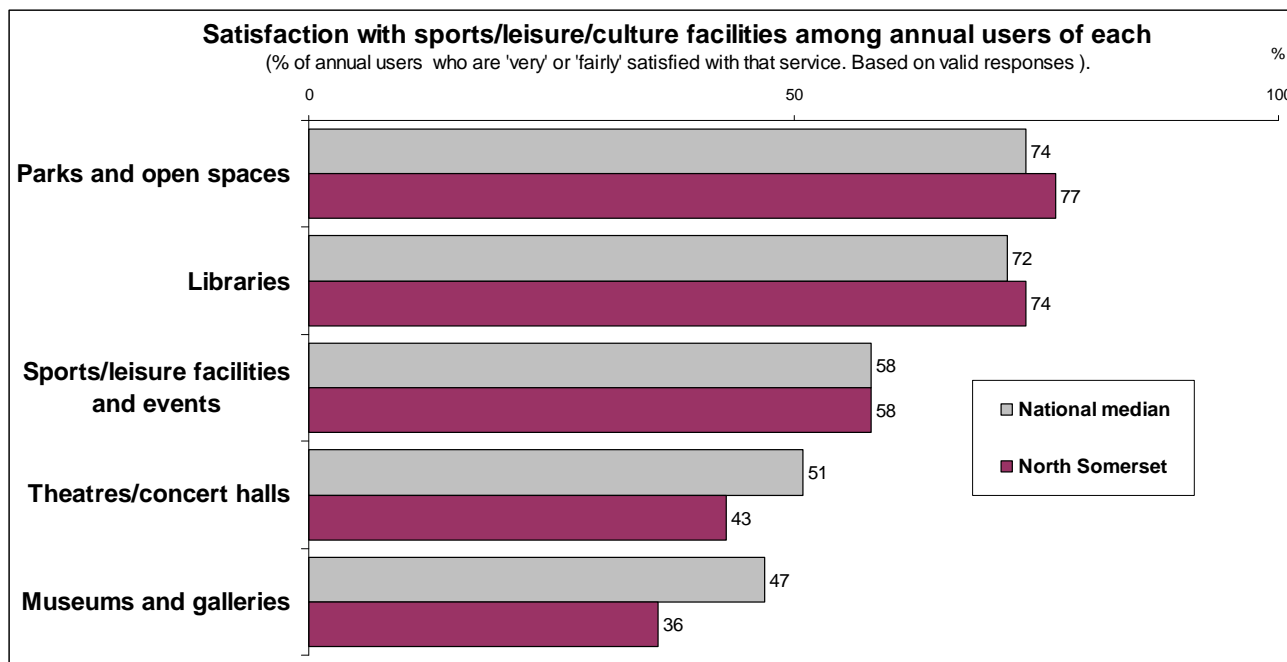
Satisfaction levels among annual users are broadly similar to 2003, except for a drop in satisfaction with theatres/ concert halls. This question has always been controversial as North Somerset Council supports only one such facility (Playhouse Theatre) and it is much debated whether respondents answer in terms of other facilities (e.g. those in nearby Bristol or private facilities).



Satisfaction levels vary so that, for example, satisfaction with 'sports/leisure facilities and events' is highest among the under 30s, those in the north of the district and the most well-off wards (all of which are in the north). Satisfaction with this is clearly lowest in Weston-super-Mare.

These satisfaction measures are the source of five BVPIs (BV119a to e). These are calculated from the percentage of the total sample satisfied with each service, regardless of whether they use that service or not.

The chart below shows the percentage of users satisfied for North Somerset and the equivalent national medians. So, nationally 74% of those who had used at least one council 'provided or supported' park/open space within the past year were very or fairly satisfied, compared to 77% in North Somerset.



Satisfaction figures for parks and open spaces, libraries, and sports/leisure are fairly close to the national medians but clearly below the median for 'theatres/concert halls' and 'museums and galleries'

The satisfaction figures for 'theatres/concert halls' and 'museums and galleries' vary widely across the country, with some metropolitan areas (e.g. City of London Liverpool) scoring in the high 70s while other areas (mainly suburban areas of big cities) scoring in the teens. The suggestion is that comparing satisfaction levels with these two types of cultural facilities across councils is inherently problematic, or at least unlike comparing more universal services.

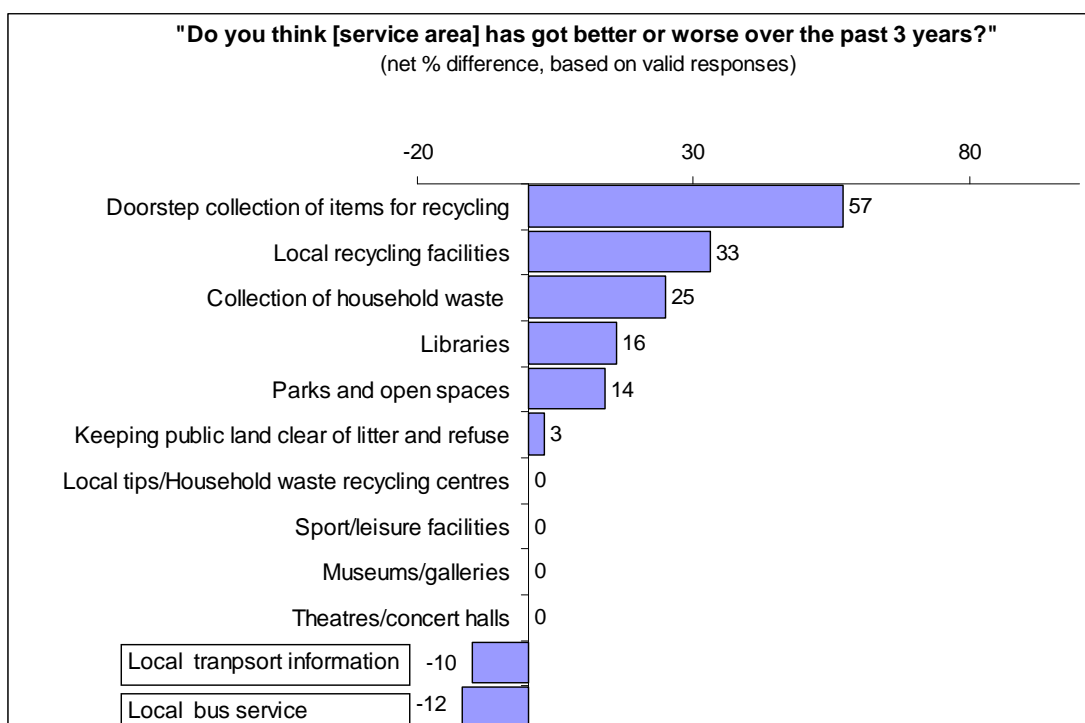
The library service conducted its 'own' on-site BVPI survey which showed a marginal decrease in overall satisfaction, from 91% in 2003 to 88%, against a pattern of generally rising satisfaction (PLUS survey 2006). The higher satisfaction figures from the PLUS survey is not surprising as face-to-face surveys often yield higher satisfaction figures than do self-completion surveys.

5.5. Changes over time

Respondents state whether named service areas have 'got better or worse over the last three years or stayed the same'. This is probably best understood as a rough indication of the feelgood factor around the 'direction of travel' of the service, rather than an accurate measure of change.

As we have seen earlier, the waste management services generally achieve high and stable satisfaction levels. The following chart shows the difference between the percent saying the service has improved and the percent saying it has got worse. So 64% said doorstep recycling has improved. 7% said it has got worse. 64 minus 7 is 57, the figure in the chart²⁶.

The figure for 'Local tips' reflects the tip closure issue referred to in section 5.2.4 (above). If we excluded Portishead/Clevedon/Nailsea respondents from this calculation, the tip figure would be much more positive (+13%, just behind parks and open spaces).



The negative transport figures stand out. While we have seen increased satisfaction with public transport 2003 to 2006, this has been from a very low base and within an environment of other councils' figures rising faster. So even where 'snapshot' satisfaction figures have kept pace with national figures, not enough respondents are feeling enough positive momentum to generate a positive 'three year' figure.

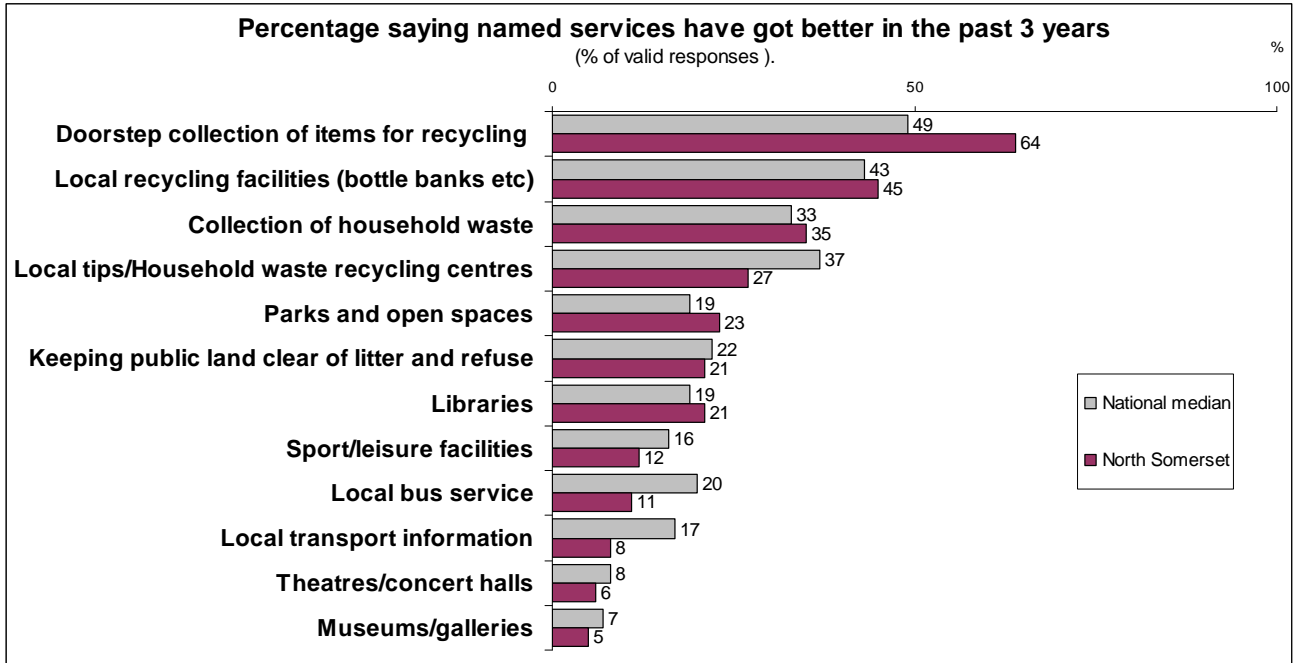
The figures for the 'local bus service' improve slightly among bus users but even among weekly users, the 'three year' net score is -8%.

The 'local bus service' scores are particularly poor among under 30s and respondents from Nailsea and Clevedon.

²⁶ 'Stayed the same' and 'don't know' values were simply not included as part of this calculation.

The 'transport information' score is better among people who have seen such information in the previous 12 months. Among this group, the net score is +7%.

Compared to the national picture, North Somerset residents are less likely than 'English residents on average' to say that the local bus service and provision of public transport information have improved in their area



What is not shown in this chart is that North Somerset is in the bottom 10 councils (out of all 149 single tier and counties) in terms of seeing improvement in these two aspects of public transport.

The areas where North Somerset residents are more likely than average to have seen improvement are:

- Doorstep recycling (green box) – a very clear improvement from 39% to 49% seeing improvement
- Local recycling facilities (bottle banks etc)
- Collection of household waste
- Parks and open spaces
- Libraries.

North Somerset Council
November 2007

APPENDIX A: Summary of best value performance indicator results over time and in national context.

The table below summarises results of selected key (BVPI) results from North Somerset Council (labelled 'NSC scores') over the three surveys for which data are available (2000, 2003, 2006). These are compared against the national median figures provided by the Audit Commission and Department for Communities and Local Government.

Satisfaction with... (figures show % of valid responses very or fairly satisfied)	BVPI label	2000		2003		2006	
		NSC score	National median	NSC score	National median	NSC score	National median
The way the council runs things	BV3	61	66	50	55	47	53
The way your complaint was handled	BV4	37	40	33	33	29	33
Cleanliness standards	BV89	63	64	62	61	70	68
Household waste collection	BV90a	88	88	85	86	84	80
Recycling facilities	BV90b	70	68	64	69	66	70
Local Tip (household waste recycling centre)	BV90c	80	72	84	78	73	81
Transport information (all)	BV103	40	48	34	49	42	55
Transport information (12 month users)	BV103f	62	65	59	67	74	74
Bus service (all)	BV104	43	51	41	55	46	61
Bus service (12 month users)	BV104f	49	55	48	61	56	66
Sports/leisure facilities	BVPI 119a	55	53	51	54	58	58
Libraries	BVPI 119b	69	70	67	67	74	74
Museums/galleries	BVPI 119c	45	49	38	42	36	40
Theatres/concernt halls	BVPI119d	55	52	50	47	43	41
Parksand open spaces	BVPI 119e	68	63	74	72	77	74

The next table shows the position of North Somerset BVPI scores in terms of the national median, where a:

- 1 means in the top quartile (i.e. top 25%) of councils on this measure
- 2 means in the 2nd quartile (i.e. between the 50% and 75% mark)
- 3 means in the 3rd quartile (i.e. between the 25% and 50% mark)
- 4 means in the bottom quartile.

In short, the higher the number, the worse the position.

North Somerset Council quartile postions over time	BVPI label	2000	2003	2006	2006 Quartile thresholds (%)
The way the council runs things	BV3	3	3	4	48/53/58
The way your complaint was handled	BV4	3	2	4	30/33/38
Cleanliness standards	BV89	3	2	2	62/68/73
Household waste collection	BV90a	2	3	2	74/80/85
Recycling facilities	BV90b	2	3	4	66/70/75
Local tip (household waste recycling centre)	BV90c	1	1	4	77/81/85
Transport information (all)	BV103	4	4	4	48/55/60
Transport information (users)	BV103f	3	4	2	69/74/77
Bus service (all)	BV104	4	4	4	54/61/68
Bus service (Users)	BV104f	3	4	4	59/62/66
Sports/leisure facilities	BVPI 119a	2	3	2	54/58/63
Libraries	BVPI 119b	3	3	2	70/74/77
Museums/galleries	BVPI 119c	3	3	3	29/40/51
Theatres/concernt halls	BVPI119d	2	2	2	29/41/53
Parks and open spaces	BVPI 119e	2	2	2	68/74/78

NB the quartile positions in this table may differ from the Audit Commission official figures due to rounding issues at the 'borders' of quartiles.