

Cherwell District Council

Place Survey

Report

Prepared For:



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1. Introduction

mruk research were commissioned by the Oxfordshire Consortia to conduct the 2008/2009 Place Survey. Oxfordshire Consortia consists of Oxfordshire County Council and the five district authorities in Oxfordshire – South Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, Vale of Whitehorse and Oxford City.

This report presents the findings from the Place Survey conducted by **mruk** research on behalf of Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

The Place Survey is a statutory exercise that Central Government has specified must be undertaken by all local authorities every two years. The Survey replaces the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey that local authorities were previously required to undertake.

The new performance framework for local government includes a new National Performance Indicator set introduced from April 2008. This provides a single set of indicators common to all areas reflecting national priorities across government and replaces the former Best Value Performance Indicators. The national indicators have been designed to measure how well Government's priorities are being delivered and within the set are 18 indicators (relating to citizen's perspectives) that are to be collected through the new single Place Survey. Four of these indicators are also Local Area Agreement (2) targets in Oxfordshire.

The Place Survey has been designed to capture local people's views, experiences and perceptions, so that any proposed solutions and interventions for an area reflect local views and preferences. The Survey is considered to be a key tool to track people's changing perception, as a way of determining whether interventions made in an area result in the right outcome for local people.

The Government prescribed in detail what it believes to be the minimum requirements for the conduct of the Survey and can be found in the *Department of Communities and Local Government Place Survey 2008-09 Manual*. The minimum requirements are in place to ensure direct comparability of data across all local authorities, while allowing some flexibility on the contents of the questionnaire.

Included in this report are the following:

- Section 2 provides an overview of the methodology prescribed including a detailed description of the sampling method employed, questionnaire design, fieldwork and data processing procedures
- Section 3 presents the response rates achieved
- Section 4 presents the demographic profile of the Cherwell who participated in the Place Survey
- Section 5 provides a summary of the key findings
- Section 6 presents the main survey findings

In addition to the report, other project outputs consist of:

- Data tabulations to include cross-breaks by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, rural/urban classification, housing tenure, sub-area, working status and long terms illness/disability.
- Geo-coded excel data file to enable the survey outcomes to be mapped

2. Methodology

A postal self completion methodology was the prescribed methodology.

2.1 Sampling

The sample was drawn from the small users Postcode Address File (PAF) using a random probability sampling selection process. This selection process ensures that every member of the target survey population has a known and non-zero chance of inclusion in the sampling frame making it possible to quote the survey results within known confidence levels.

A random sample of 6,000 addresses from the PAF covering the Cherwell District Council area was downloaded from the Audit Commission's website and then **mruk** research randomly selected 2,688 addresses for inclusion in the sampling frame.

2.2 Questionnaire

A designated 12 page questionnaire (excluding covering letter) template that had been subjected to rigorous development, pilot testing and validation was provided by CLG. For comparability purposes with other authorities and for measuring performance indicators, no changes to the template (including the layout or words) were permitted unless where indicated in the template itself e.g. to insert the name of the Council Q7 – Q11.

In order to collect more detailed information on services and issues relevant to a local authority, additional questions were permitted although authorities were urged to do so with caution as a longer questionnaire could potentially have adverse effects on response rates.

The Audit Commission recommended that any additional questions were taken from the Place Survey Question Bank that had been carefully selected in consultation with key stakeholders and had been used in previous BVPI surveys. It was also recommended that in most cases, any additional questions were inserted after Q26 of the core questionnaire template so that responses to the core questions were not affected by differential question ordering between local authorities.

Included on the first page of the questionnaire booklet were the County Council and Cherwell District Council logos and 'helpful hints' for completing the questionnaire. The outer envelope also included the same branding.

Each questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter and freepost envelope to ensure potential respondents were not deterred by the financial cost of returning a completed questionnaire.

2.3 Covering Letter

A covering letter template was also provided by the CLG using a standard form of words that met with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. The covering letter was signed by Keith Mitchell, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council and Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of Cherwell District Council.

In the covering letter (and reminder letters) residents were instructed to complete the questionnaire as soon as possible or by the 19th December 2008.

The covering letters were addressed to 'Dear local resident' as the PAF doesn't provide household names.

The County Council and Cherwell District Council logos were included in the covering letter.

The key features of the covering letter were:

- A brief introduction of the purpose of the Survey
- Telephone and email helpline for residents with any questions or concerns about the Survey
- Information in other languages about the survey and how residents could obtain translated copies of the questionnaire
- Closing date

2.4 Questionnaire Reminders

Two reminder letters were sent to non-respondents during the fieldwork period. Each reminder included a copy of the questionnaire and another prepaid envelope.

The covering letter sent as part of the reminder was adjusted accordingly to reflect the fact that it was a reminder whilst still meeting data protection requirements.

2.5 Fieldwork

Fieldwork took place between 29 September 2008 and 19 December 2008. Detailed below in Table 2.1 are the dates of when the questionnaires were mailed out and how many were mailed out at each stage:

Table 2.1: Mailing

Mailing	Date of Mailing	Number of mailings sent out
First mail out	25 September 2008	2,688
First reminder mail out	15 October 2008	2,291
Second reminder mail out	12 November 2008	779

2.6 Booking In

Returned questionnaires were returned directly to **mruk's** Mailing House (AMS) and booked in on a daily basis. Questionnaires were booked in according to the agreed specifications. A total of 1289 questionnaires were booked in for Cherwell District Council (see section 3 – Response Rate).

2.7 Data Processing

Each week returned questionnaires were sent to **mruk's** Analysis Services Department where they were checked, edited and any fully or partially open questions coded.

Questionnaires were then passed for data processing. A minimum of 10% of keyed data was checked on screen using the relevant hard copy questionnaires.

2.8 Understanding the Findings

2.8.1 Confidence Intervals to Address Sampling Error

The minimum sample size requirements for the Survey as prescribed by the Audit Commission and Communities and Local Government (CLG) was 1,100 completed questionnaires. This sample size yields a maximum sampling error of $\pm 3\%$ at the 95% confidence level which is required to calculate the National Indicators collected in the Survey.

This level of sampling error means that if 50% of the sample answer 'yes' to a question, results can be expected to be accurate to within $\pm 3\%$ of 50%, that is between 47% and 53%.

The total usable sample for Cherwell was 1237 – this would yield a sampling error of 2.8% (for a response of 50%), therefore meeting the Audit commissions requirements.

2.8.2 Base Sizes

In accordance with guidance, the base for questions is valid responses or all those providing an answer. Those stating don't know or who did not complete the questions are excluded from the calculations. This is with the exception of certain National Indicators where it has been specified that don't know should be included. . The base size may, therefore, vary from question to question, and from the total sample size.

Where the level of don't know and or non-response was greater than 10% this has been stated.

2.8.3 Rounding

Where percentages do not equate to 100 this may be due to rounding or because the question may have given the opportunity for multiple answers. An asterisk (*) denotes any value that is less than half a percent but greater than zero.

At least one chart has been produced for each question asked in the questionnaire. Text accompanies each chart and any differences between sub-groups of residents are highlighted.

2.8.4 Comparisons with previous results

As this is the first time the place survey has been conducted, there is no previous place survey data available for the purpose of comparing findings over time. However, where possible, we have compared the current findings to previous BVPI survey results of which there have been 3 rounds – 2000/1, 2003/4 and 2005/6. Please note this was only possible for a small number of questions.

There are no issues with comparing findings from this place survey to previous BVPI surveys as, to the best of our knowledge, both the sampling and weighting protocols for both surveys followed the same principles. Please note, we have only compared questions where the wording was identical. The following table shows what questions we believe to be comparable to previous survey and have been included in this report.

Question number from place survey	NI	2006/7	2003/4	2000/1
1	-	No	No	No
2	-	Yes	Yes	No
3	5	Yes	No	No
4	-	No	No	No
3 & 4	138	No	No	No
5	2	No	No	No
6	-	No	No	No
7	-	No	No	No
8	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	-	No	No	No
10a	-	Yes	No	No
10b	-	No	No	No
11	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
12g	37	No	No	No
12	-	No	No	No
13	4	Yes	No	No
14	-	Yes	No	No
15	6	No	No	No
16	3	No	No	No
17	22	No	No	No
18	1	No	No	No
19	23	No	No	No
20	140	No	No	No
21	139	No	No	No
22		Yes	No	No
23		Yes	No	No
24e	42	No	No	No
24f	41	No	No	No
24	-	No	No	No
24	17	No	No	No
25	27	No	No	No
26	21	No	No	No
29	119	No	No	No

2.8.5 Calculations of National Indicators

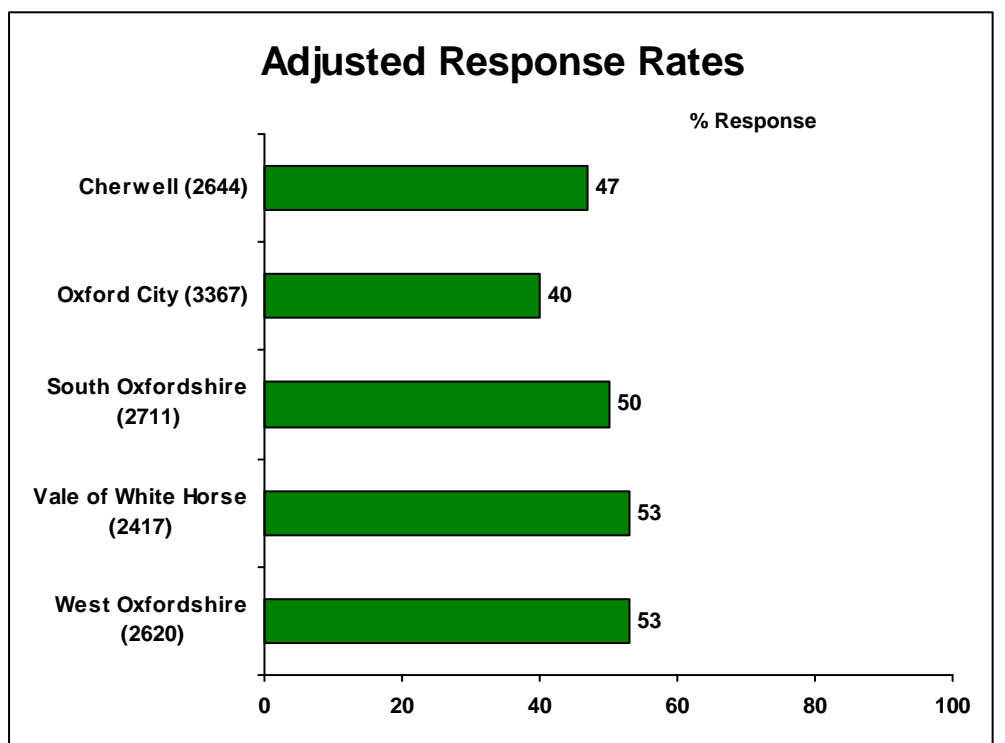
For the majority of the National Indicators, the base is “All valid responses” which excludes don’t know and missing responses. This means that the base will vary for each National Indicator. However, these are a small number of indicators that require “don’t know” responses to be included in the base, and where this is the case, this has been specified. Further, a small number of indicators also require calculations to be made across a number of questions. Again where this is the case, this is fully explained in the relevant section.

3. Response Rates

In total 1289 questionnaires were returned from the 2,688 households of Cherwell that received a questionnaire. This represents an overall *unadjusted* response rate of 48%.

Once the total number of blank, incomplete or duplicate questionnaires (52) received are removed from the returned sample this fell to 1237. Removing the undeliverables (44) from the original sample, the response rate known as the *adjusted* response rate, decreases slightly to 47%

As demonstrated in the chart below, the response rate for Cherwell District Council was broadly consistent with the other Districts in the Oxfordshire Consortium.



Base: (valid sample i.e. original sample excluding undeliverables)

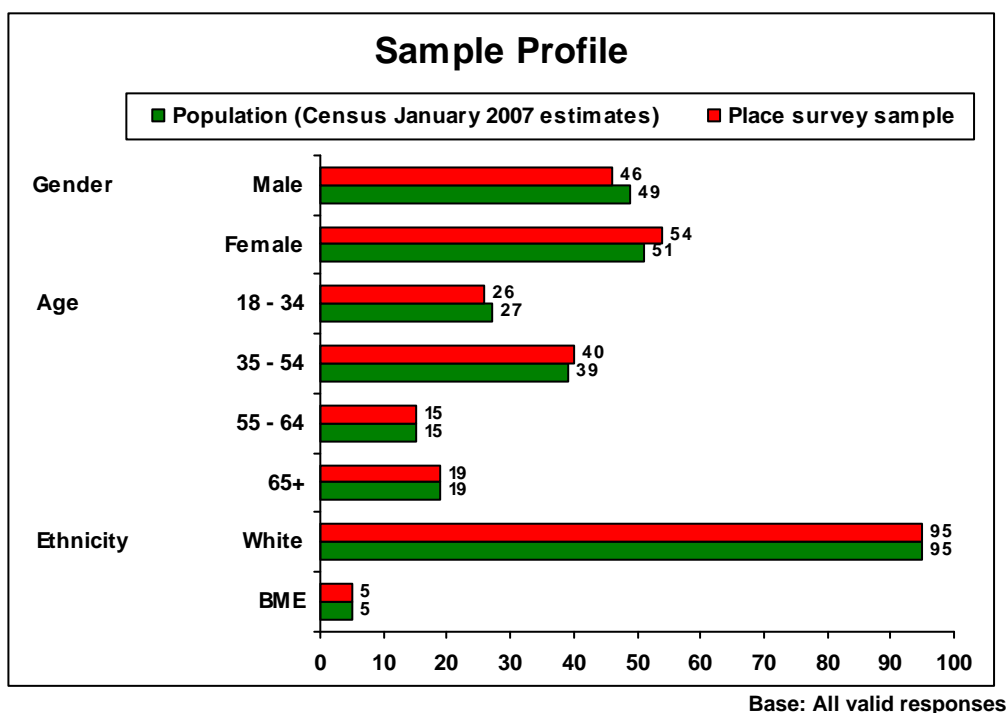
4. Sample Profile

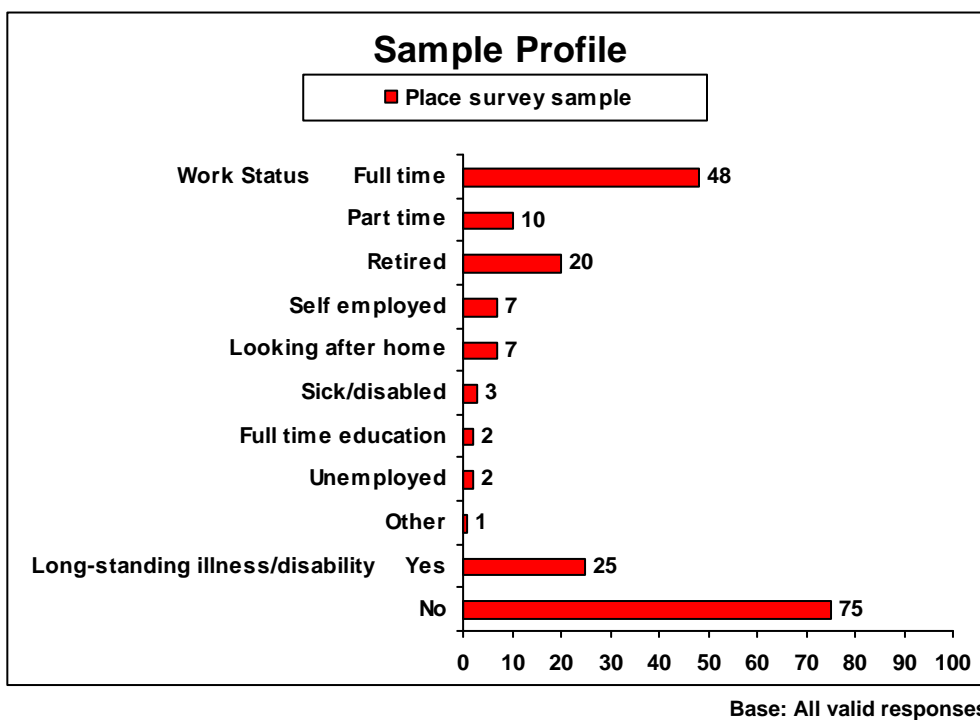
In accordance with the timescales set out by the Audit Commission, the final unweighted data (including data on how the Survey was carried out i.e. metadata) was formatted and applied to the Place Survey data template by **mruk** research. This data was then uploaded onto the Audit Commission’s website by Cherwell District Council’s Primary Contact. In return the Council received the weighted data and their NIS scores from the Audit Commission.

Detailed information regarding weighting procedures is available at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/880078.pdf>

The chart below shows the weighted demographic profile of those residents in Cherwell District Council who completed a questionnaire compared with the general population of the area for gender, age and ethnicity.

It can be seen that where population figures are available, the weighed sample reflects the demographics of the population very closely.





5. Executive Summary

5.1 Introduction

mruk research were commissioned by the Oxfordshire Consortia to conduct the 2008/09 Place Survey. The Place Survey is a statutory exercise that Central Government has specified must be undertaken by local authorities every two years.

5.2 Methodology

A postal self completion survey was the prescribed methodology for the place surveys. A sample of 6000 addresses was drawn from the Postcode Address File (PAF) using a random probability sampling selection process. This sample was downloaded from the Audit Commissions Website. mruk randomly selected 2688 addresses for inclusion in the sampling frame.

A designated 12 page questionnaire template was provided by CLG. No changes were permitted to the template. A covering letter template was also provided by CLG.

Both were personalised with the County and the District logos and were sent to our households in the sampling frame along with a pre-paid envelope for return.

Two reminder letters were sent out during the fieldwork period and included another copy of the questionnaire and another pre-paid envelope.

Fieldwork took place between the 29th September 2008 and the 19 December 2008.

Questionnaires were returned to directly to mruk and booked in on a daily basis. A total of 1289 questionnaires were booked in for Cherwell. The number of completed questionnaires received was 1237 – resulting in a response rate of 47%.

5.3 National Indicators

The national indicators are summarised in the table below:
(please note don't know responses are excluded unless otherwise specified)

National Indicator Definition	Section Name	Result	Confidence Interval
NI1: Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area % of respondents who say they 'tend to agree', or 'definitely agree' that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well. (don't knows/too few people/all same background to be excluded)	Local Area	75%	+/-2.92%
NI2: Percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood % of respondents who feel 'fairly strongly', or 'very strongly' that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood	Local Area	57%	+/-2.84%
NI3: Civic participation in local area Participation will be counted if the respondent signals taking part in at least one of any of the listed activities in the last 12 months	Getting Involved	13%	+/-1.92%
NI4: Percentage of people who feel they can influence decision in their locality % of respondents who agree that they feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area	Local Decision Making	31%	+/-2.85%
NI5: Overall/general satisfaction with local area % of respondents who say they are 'satisfied', or 'very satisfied' with the area as a place to live	Local Area	84%	+/-2.05%
NI6: Participation in regular volunteering Formal volunteering is defined as giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations, which support social, environmental, cultural or sporting objectives at least once a week or less than once a week but at least once a month	Helping out	27%	+/-2.61%
NI17: Perceptions of anti-social behaviour % of respondents with a high level of perceived anti-social behaviour combines responses to seven questions about anti-social behaviour problems.	Community Safety	13%	+/-2.07%
NI21: Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police Percentage of respondents who either strongly agree or tend to agree that the police and other local public services are successfully dealing with anti-social behavior and crime issues in your local area (valid answers to include don't knows)	Community safety	27%	+/-2.53%
NI22: Perceptions of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area % of respondents that definitely agree or tend to agree that in their local area, parents take enough responsibility for the behaviour of their children.	Respect and Consideration	33%	+/-2.74%
NI23: Perceptions that people in the area treat each other with respect and consideration % of respondents who perceive people not treating one another with respect	Respect and Consideration	24%	+/-2.39%

and consideration to be a very big or a fairly big problem in their area (valid answers to include don't knows)			
NI27: Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police % that strongly agree or tend to agree that the local council and police seek people's views about crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter in the area (valid answers to include don't knows)	Community Safety	25%	+/-2.45%
NI37: Awareness of civil protection arrangements in local area % who feel very well or fairly well informed of what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency (valid answers to include don't knows)	Communications	18%	+/-2.18%
NI41: Perceptions of drunk or rowdy behaviour as problem % of respondents who perceive drunken or rowdy behaviour in public places to be a very big or a fairly big problem	Community Safety	21%	+/-2.42%
NI42: Perceptions of drug use or drug dealing as a problem % of respondents who perceive drunken or rowdy behaviour in public places to be a very big or a fairly big problem	Community Safety	24%	+/-2.66%
NI119: Self reported measure people's overall health and wellbeing % of respondents who believe their health is general is very good or fairly good	General Health	78%	+/-2.33%
NI138: Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood % of those over 65 who were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with both their home and their neighbourhood	Local Area	89%	+/-3.23%
NI139: The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently % who believe that older people receive the support they need to live independently (valid answers to include don't knows)	Respect and Consideration	32%	+/-2.62%
NI140: Fair treatment by local services % of respondents who stated that they are fairly treated by public services all of the time or most of the time	Local Public Services	75%	+/-2.61%

5.4 Local Area

The top three things that make somewhere a good place to live were *the level of crime* (56%), *health services* (48%) and *clean street* (41%). Some differences were evident by age with older respondents more likely to choose health services than younger respondents. Younger respondents were more likely to state the level of crime.

The main improvement required to the local area was activities *for teenagers* (53%). This was followed by the *level of traffic congestion* (38%) and *road and pavement repairs* (30%).

Whilst there were no immediate areas for improvement identified by correlating both the above questions, this exercise did identify a number of key factors which needed to be

maintained – these were, affordable decent housing, public transport, clean streets, level of crime, health service and education provision.

Over 8 in 10 (83%) were satisfied with their local areas as place to live. The most satisfied residents were those living in Cherwell Villages North (97%). Whilst there was no differences by gender, satisfaction with the local area increased with age from 78% of 18 – 34 year olds to 94% of those over 75.

A very high proportion (90%) were satisfied with their home as a place to live, of which 50% were very satisfied. Overall satisfaction was highest amongst those living in Cherwell Villages North (96%).

When asked how strongly they felt they belonged to their neighbourhood, over a half (57%) stated that they strongly feel that they belong to their neighbourhood. Those living in Cherwell Villages North were more likely to feel that they belong to their neighbourhood (71%). The sense of belonging to their neighbourhood increased with age from 42% of those aged 18 – 34 to 86% of those aged over 75.

5.5 Local Public Services

Respondents were asked to what extent they felt that a list of statements applied to public services in their area:

- 72% stated that local services treat all types of people fairly either a great deal or to some extent
- 72% agreed that local services are working to make the area cleaner and greener a great deal or to some extent
- 67% felt that public services were working to make the area safer
- 47% felt that public services act on the concerns of local residents
- 43% stated that local services promote the interests of local residents

Those who were satisfied with the way Cherwell District Council runs things and those who felt informed about public services in their local areas were much more likely to agree with all of the above statements than those who were dissatisfied or did not feel informed.

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with a list of public services in their area:

- 84% were satisfied with the GP service
- 83% were satisfied with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- 80% were satisfied with local hospital
- 68% were satisfied with the local dentist
- 58% were satisfied with Thames Valley Police

Overall, those over 75 were more satisfied with most of the services than other age groups.

Respondents were provided with a list of environmental services provided by the District Council and were asked how frequently they used each one.

The proportion of respondents stating that they never use the service was highest for theatres/concert halls (32%) museums and galleries (29%) and libraries (24%).

Amongst users of the services, the most frequently used service was parks and open spaces (68% - frequent), most likely by females, those aged 18 to 34 and 35 – 54. Other services were used frequently by the following proportions:

- Local bus service – 50%
- Local tip/household waste recycling centre – 48%
- Sports and leisure facilities – 43%
- Libraries – 39%
- Local transport information – 36%
- Museums and galleries – 15%
- Theatres/concert halls – 11%

Respondents were provided with a list of environmental services provided by the District Council and were asked how satisfied they were with each. Respondents were most satisfied with *Local tips/household waste recycling centres* and *refuse collection* rated highest in terms of satisfaction (both 70%). Satisfaction with other services was rated as follows:

- 66% were satisfied with *doorstep recycling*
- 58% were satisfied with *keeping public land clear of litter and refuse*.

Generally, older respondents, those who were not in employment and those who felt informed about public services were more likely to be satisfied with most of the environmental services provided than other respondent groups.

Respondents were provided with a list of cultural and recreational services provided by or supported by the District Council and were asked how satisfied they were with each. Satisfaction was highest with the libraries (62%). Satisfaction with other services was rates as follows:

- 60% were satisfied with parks and open spaces
- 57% were satisfied with local bus services
- 46% were satisfied with local transport information
- 43% were satisfied with Sports and Leisure Facilities
- 40% were satisfied with museums and galleries
- 27% were satisfied with theatres and concert halls

In most cases frequent users of the services were more likely to be satisfied with the service provided than non-frequent users.

Other groups identified as being more satisfied with the services provided in most cases were: older respondents, those living in Kidlington, Kirtlington, Water Eaton & Otmoor, those who felt informed about public services.

Just over a third (37%) were in agreement that Cherwell District Council provides value for money. A lower proportion (30%) agreed that Oxfordshire County Council provides value for money. Those aged over 65, those who were not employed, those who felt informed about public services and those who were satisfied with the way the District Council runs things were most likely to agree with both statements.

Over a half (53%) were satisfied with the way Cherwell District Council runs things. A lower proportion (41%) were satisfied with the way Oxfordshire County Council runs things. For both the District and the County those most satisfied were those aged over 65, those who are not in employment and those who feel informed about public services.

5.6 Communications

Overall, over 4 in 10 respondents (42%) feel either very well or fairly well informed about public service. Looking at specific issues:

- 88% felt informed about how to vote
- 70% felt informed about how their council tax is spent.
- 42% felt informed about how public services are performing
- 39% felt informed about what services they should expect from local public services.
- 36% know how to make a complaint about a public service
- 33% know how to get involved in local decision making.
- 20% felt informed about what to do in a large scale emergency, this fell to 18% when don't know responses were included.

Across all issues, those groups less informed were those aged 18 – 35 and those in employment.

5.7 Local Decision Making

Just under a third (31%) agreed that they can influence decision affecting their local area and just over a quarter would like to get more involved in decisions locally. Men were more likely to say that they would like to get involved than women.

5.8 Helping Out

Just over a quarter (27%) had given unpaid help through a group or organisation at least once a month over the past 12 months. The highest levels of participation in regular volunteering were in Cherwell North and South and the lowest were in Bicester and Banbury.

5.9 Getting Involved

Respondents were shown a list and asked which of them they had been involved in over the past 12 months. Just 13% had been involved in at least one group or organisation concerned with making decisions locally. The most popular individual group or organisation, mentioned by 6% of respondents was *a group making decisions on services in the local community*. Those aged 65 – 74 and those living in Cherwell Villages North were more likely than other residents to have engaged in any civic participation activities. The least likely were those aged 18 – 34 and those living in Banbury and Bicester.

5.10 Respect and Consideration

A third of respondents (33%) agreed that parents take responsibility for the behaviour of their children. Those more likely to agree were females, those aged over 65 and those living in Cherwell Villages North and South.

Just under 7 in 10 respondents (69%) agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well together. Removing “too few people in local area” and “all the same background” from the base the percentage agreeing increases to 75%. Residents living in Banbury were much more likely to disagree than residents in other areas (39%).

When asked whether they felt there was a problem in their area with people not treating each other with respect and consideration, 26% felt that there was a problem. Including don't know responses (7%) decreases the percentage who think it's a problem to 24%. Those aged 18 – 34 and those living in Banbury and Bicester were most likely to agree that it was a problem.

Three quarters (75%) felt that they were treated with respect and consideration by local public services either all or most of the time.

70% agreed that older people in their local area are able to get the support and services they need to continue to live at home for as long as they want to. Including don't know responses this proportion fell to just 32%.

5.11 Community Safety

When asked about safety both during the daytime and at night, most people (89%) felt safe outside during the day time, but this fell to 59% outside after dark. During the dark, females were more likely to feel unsafe than males. Those living in Banbury and Bicester were also more likely to feel unsafe at night.

From a list of anti-social behaviour issues the biggest problem in the local area was perceived as teenagers hanging around the street (36%). Perceptions of other problems were:

- Rubbish or litter lying around – 31%
- Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage – 25%
- People using or dealing drugs in a problem – 24%
- People being drunk or rowdy in public places in a problem – 21%
- Noisy neighbours or loud parties – 12%
- Abandoned or burnt out cars – 7%

The proportion answering fairly or very big problem to any of the seven anti-social behaviour issues listed was 13%. Those living in Banbury and Bicester were more likely to consider anti-social behaviour to be a problem.

Just under 3 in 10 (29%) agreed that the police and other public services are seeking people's view about anti-social behaviour issues in their local area. Excluding don't know responses this decreases to 25%.

A third (33%) agreed that the police and other public services were successful in dealing with anti-social behaviour issues in their local area. Excluding don't know responses this decreases to 27%.

5.12 General Health

Over three quarters (78%) felt that their health was good and just 4% felt it was bad. Younger respondents, those in employment and those without a long term illness or disability were more likely to rate their health as good than other groups