



BMG Research Report

Leicestershire Town and Village Centres Survey: Loughborough
2006

Prepared for:
Leicestershire County
Council & Leicester Shire
Economic Partnership

Prepared by:
BMG Research



Because people matter.

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1 Introduction

Leicestershire County Council and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership commissioned BMG to conduct a customer satisfaction survey in 17 town and village centres across Leicestershire, to inform the establishment of baselines to support Local Area Agreement (LAA) work. The intention of the survey has been to understand the issues specific to each settlement with a view to developing action plans for intervention. This report summarises the findings from Loughborough.

Report contents

Section 2 of this report looks at why respondents visited Loughborough, frequency of visits, attractions and events and what, if anything, would encourage more people to visit the centre on a regular basis. Section 3 examines the attitudes of respondents to the different aspects of Loughborough, considering whether the centre is a good place to shop, work and live as well as discussing the various services available in the area and the surrounding environment. Section 4 looks at how respondents in Loughborough perceived crime and safety, and which issues were seen as big problem areas, whilst Section 5 summarises the key findings from the survey. Finally, section 6 concludes the main findings and provides recommendations.

Sampling methodology

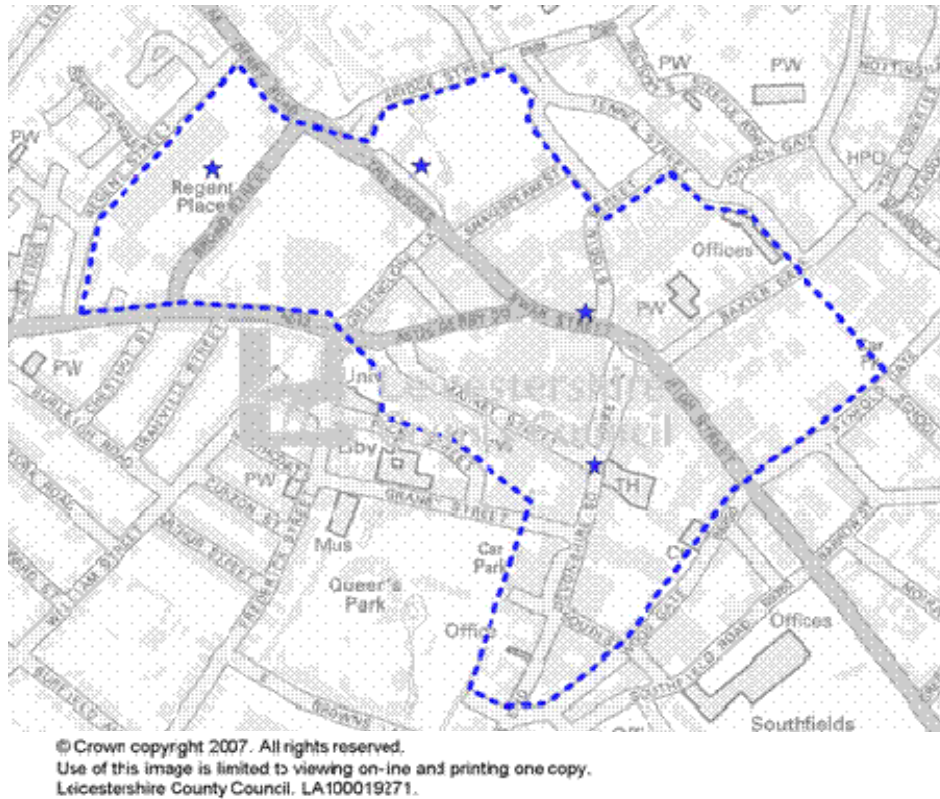
In total, 3000 interviews were planned across the 17 settlements. The sample structure called for a minimum of 100 interviews per settlement, with the remaining 1300 interviews distributed pro-rata on the basis of population size, meaning that the target for some of the villages was only a little over 100 in total, whilst for Loughborough it was over 300. Within the total sample, and for each centre, quotas were also established to control for:

- Age group;
- Ethnicity (white and non-white respondents);
- Gender;
- Interviews conducted on weekdays and Saturdays;
- Interviews conducted during the daytime and evening (after 5.30);
- Interviews conducted on market days and non-market days (where centres had a market).

The client identified a number of locations in the centre of each settlement where interviews took place – these were typically within the main shopping areas, often in or around the main market squares or retail developments. Interviews took place over a six week period through July and August 2006, following a pilot in Loughborough and Shepshed which indicated no problems in delivering the questionnaire.

Below is a map of the sampling points in Loughborough:

Figure 1



Source: Leicestershire County Council

Respondent Profile

Within Loughborough, 354 interviews were achieved. Of the sample, gender was almost evenly split; 51% being male and 49% female. 15% of respondents in Loughborough were aged 16-24, 34% were aged 25-44, 37% were aged 45-64, with the remaining 10% being of retirement age (65+). As reported by the 2001 Census, within Loughborough 29% of the population were aged between 16-24, 31% were aged between 25-44, 24% were aged between 45-64 and 16% were aged 65 and over.

The majority of respondents in Loughborough (86%) described themselves as white (84% white British and 2% other white background). 4% of respondents described themselves as Indian, 3% Bangladeshi, 1% Pakistani and a further 1% as other Asian background. According to the 2001 Census, 88% of the population of Loughborough described themselves as white.

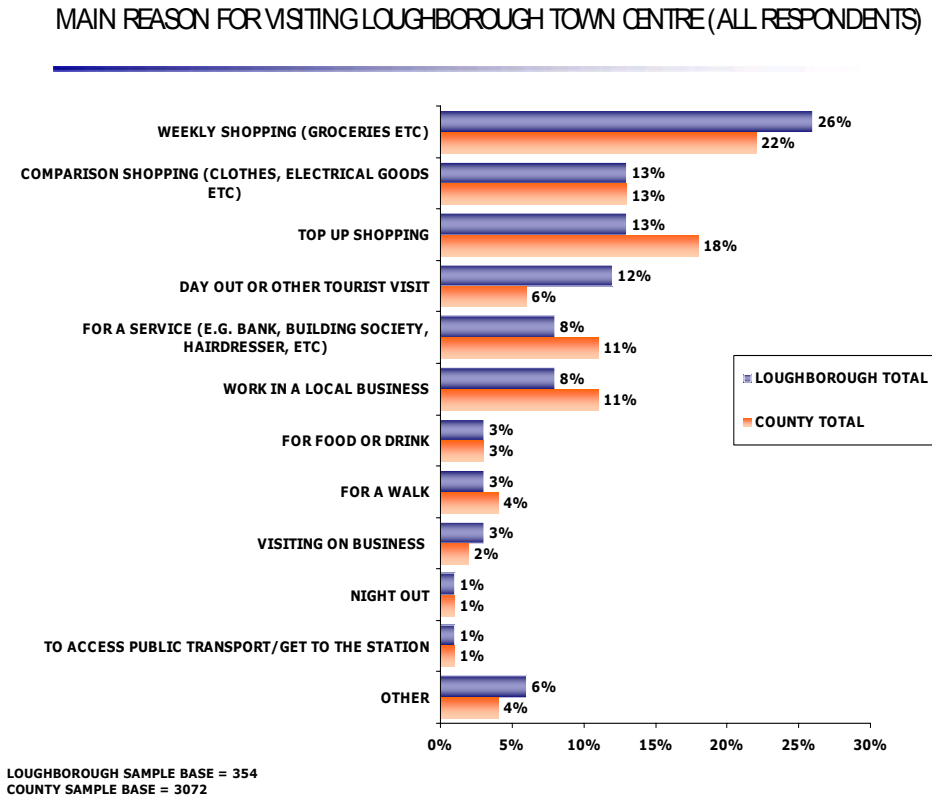
By economic status, 55% of respondents in Loughborough were in work (50% employed and 5% self-employed). The largest proportion of those respondents not in work were retired (16% of the total Loughborough sample). 12% of respondents were in education or training, 9% of respondents were not in work because they were looking after children or other dependents or the home, whilst 6% were claiming benefits. 3% were not in work due to an illness or disability.

2 Visiting the Town Centre

Visits

This section looks at the reasons why people visited Loughborough, their mode of transport for their visit, the frequency of visits as well as if they had visited attractions and events in the town centre.

Figure 2

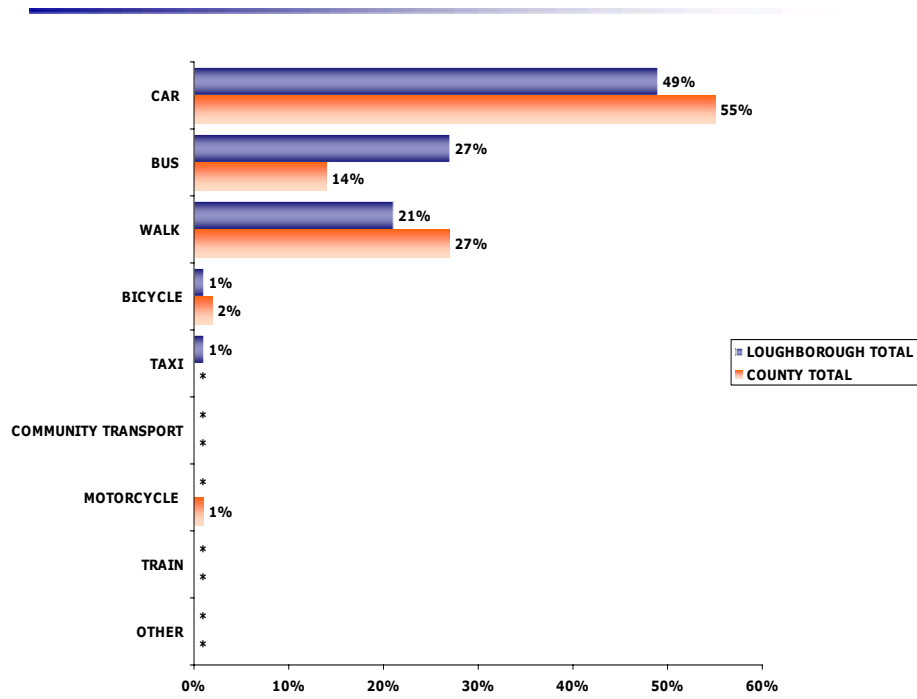


The intention of the survey was to speak to a cross-section of people present in the centres of the towns and villages, who may have been present for a whole range of purposes. Shopping trips of various sorts accounted for just over half of visits to Loughborough (52%), which was similar to the county total (53%). 12% of respondents in Loughborough were visiting the centre as a tourist and 12% were visiting services such as banking. Just less than one in ten were present because they worked in the centre, whilst only a small number of visitors were present primarily for food or drink. It is likely that this would have been a secondary reason for many of the visitors there for other reasons.

Mode of transport used to get into the centre of town

Figure 3

MODE OF TRANSPORT TO LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



LOUGHBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 354
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072
 * DENOTES FIGURES LESS THAN 0.5%

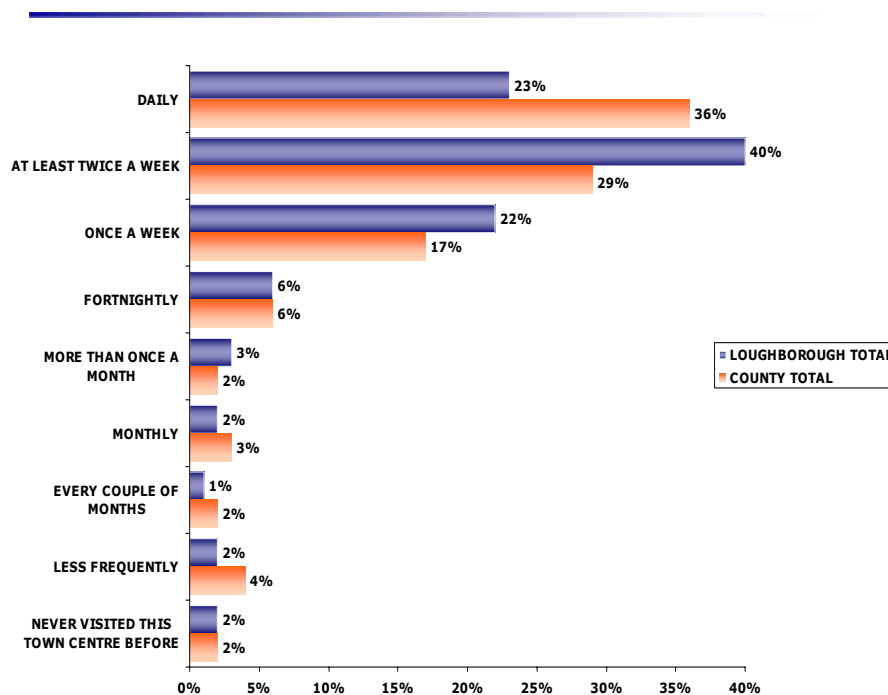
Nearly half of trips into the centre by respondents on the day of the survey were made by car. This was followed by the bus, where over a quarter of respondents used this method (this figure was higher than the county total of 14%), whilst just over a fifth of respondents walked onto the centre.

Frequency of visits

As illustrated in the graph below, two-fifths of respondents reported that they visited the centre at least twice a week (40%), whilst just over a fifth visited daily (23%) and 22% visited once a week. 6% of respondents visited the centre fortnightly whilst 3% visited more than once a month.

Figure 4

FREQUENCY OF VISITS INTO LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



LOUGHBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 354
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

Over half of respondents visited Loughborough both at weekends and on weekdays, whilst 29% visited at weekdays. 13% of respondents visited Loughborough at weekends.

The majority of respondents (65%) visited Loughborough during the day (before 5.30pm), with 32% visiting the centre both during the daytime and evening. Only 1% of respondents only visited the town centre during the evening (after 5.30pm).

Of those respondents who visited Loughborough in the evening, 15% of visited Loughborough town centre in the evening at least once a week and 11% visited at least twice a week. Saturday and Sunday evenings proved to be a popular day to visit the centre amongst respondents, with 20% choosing to do so, whilst 14% of respondents visited mainly on a Friday evening.

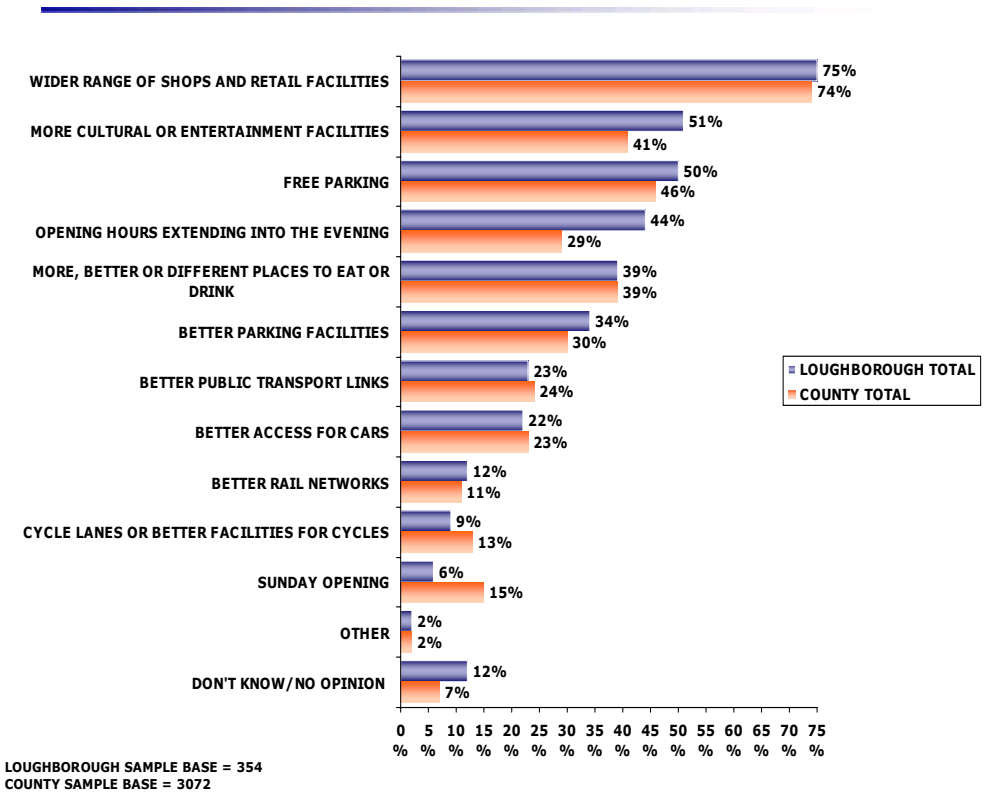
Encouraging more people to visit the centre

Respondents were asked to identify those issues which would encourage them to visit Loughborough more often. They were able to cite more than one issue. Having a wider range of shops and retail facilities was by far the most significant area that would encourage respondents to visit Loughborough more, with 75% of respondents stating this.

Improvements in cultural and entertainment venues and free parking were also very important, underlining the importance accorded to centres which offer a wider range of activity than merely retail. The extension of opening hours, particularly evening opening, was also important for some visitors.

Figure 5

AREAS THAT WOULD ENCOURAGE RESPONDENTS TO VISIT LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE MORE OFTEN (ALL RESPONDENTS)

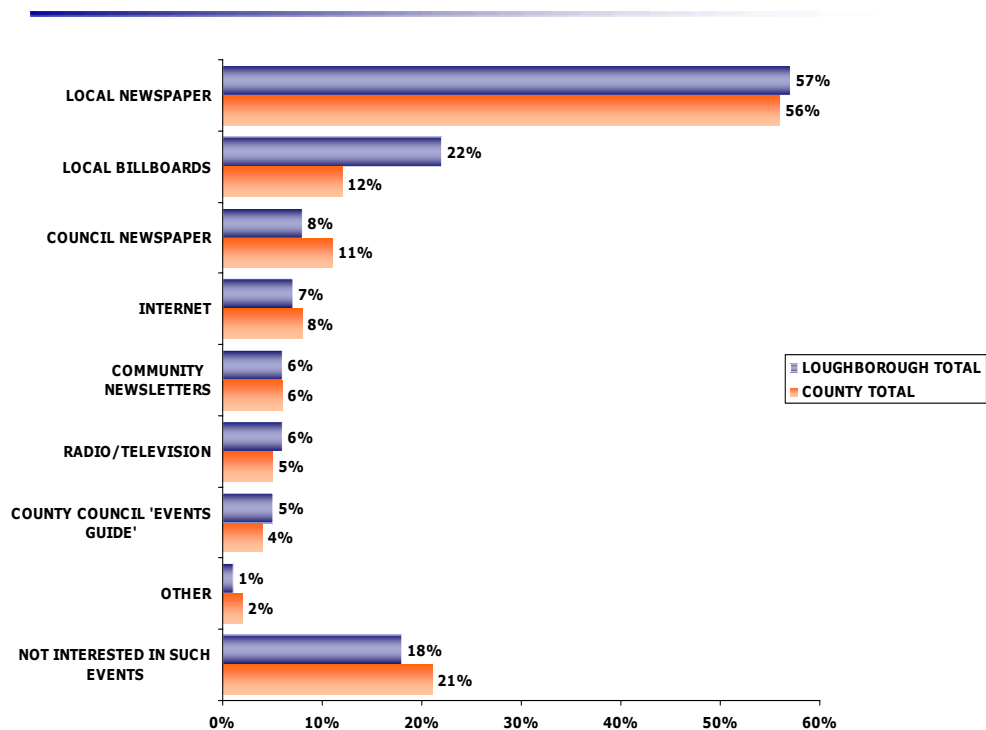


Attractions and events

As is clear from figure 6 below, local newspapers were overwhelmingly the most likely source of information about local events and attractions taking place in Loughborough, with other sources only modest in their importance by comparison. Notably, local billboards was also a popular method of finding out about events and attractions in Loughborough compared to the rest of the county (22% Loughborough, 12% county total). County Council event guides and radio or television were less likely to be used by respondents to find out about attractions and events in the centre of Loughborough.

Figure 6

METHODS USED TO FIND OUT ABOUT EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS IN THE CENTRE OF LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



LOUGHBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 354
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

When respondents were questioned about whether they had attended any events in the town centre recently, only 14% said that they had. Of these 14%, 17 people said they had attended the fair in the centre of Loughborough, 5 people said that they had attended various festivals, 6 people cited the town hall concert and a further 6 people had attended a theatre show or play. 10 people said they had attended another event in the town.

Respondents were asked what made the town centre unique, different or special in Loughborough. Just over one in ten (11%) cited the culture of Loughborough as a distinguishing feature, followed by that it was a safe area and that it has low crime levels (3%), events (2%) and that it was

quiet and peaceful (2%). 60% of people said they didn't know, other notable responses included:

- Architecture and buildings (1%);
- Attractive and pleasant appearance (1%);
- Born here or live here (1%);
- Cleanliness (1%);
- Friendly (1%);
- Melton Mowbray pork pies (1%);
- Museums (1%);
- Students and student life (1%);
- The history and heritage (1%);
- The layout (1%); and
- The size (1%).

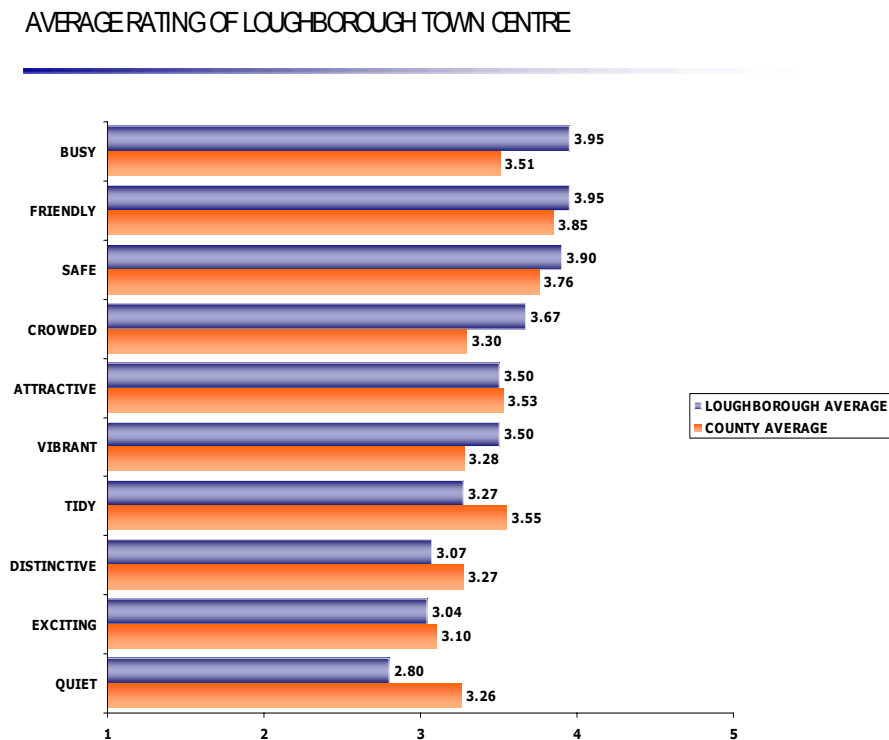
3 Attitude towards the centre

This section examines the attitudes of respondents to the different aspects of Loughborough, considering whether the centre is a good place to shop, work and live as well as discussing the different services available in the area.

Description and attitudes towards the centre

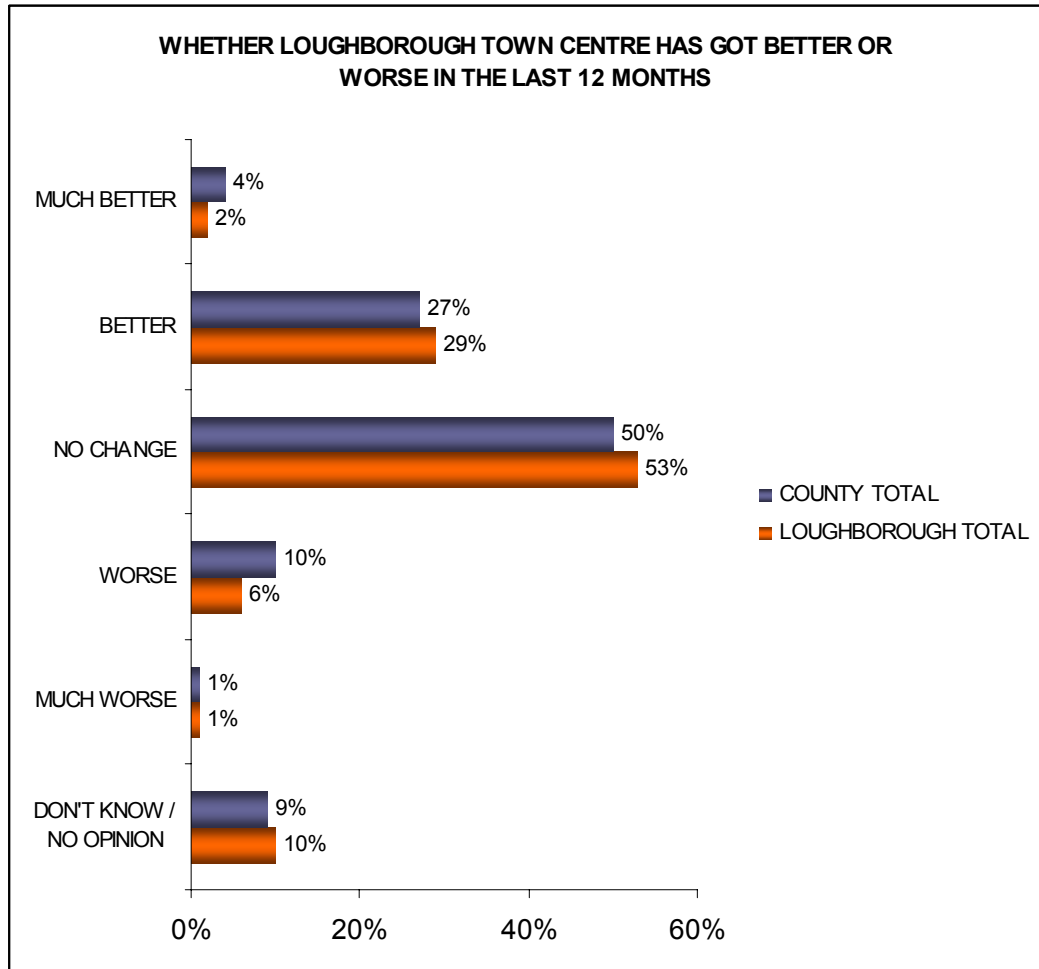
Respondents were asked to say to what extent they agreed with a series of words to describe Loughborough on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 was strongly agree. Overall, Loughborough was most likely to be described as 'busy', 'friendly', 'safe' and 'crowded' At the opposite end of the spectrum, Loughborough was least likely to be described as 'quiet' and 'exciting'.

Figure 7



Whilst 53% of respondents didn't report any overall change in Loughborough, 29% believed that it had improved compared to 6% who thought it had got worse, as shown below:

Figure 8



LOUGHBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 346

COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 2999

All respondents were asked for their view on how well Loughborough served different groups in the population. The results for each of these groups are shown in Table 1 below. It was clear that amongst the total population of respondents in Loughborough, there was greater concern about how the centre served young people than for any other group. 11% of respondents thought the centre was very poor or poor for young people. Respondents tended to think that the best served groups were shoppers and visitors.

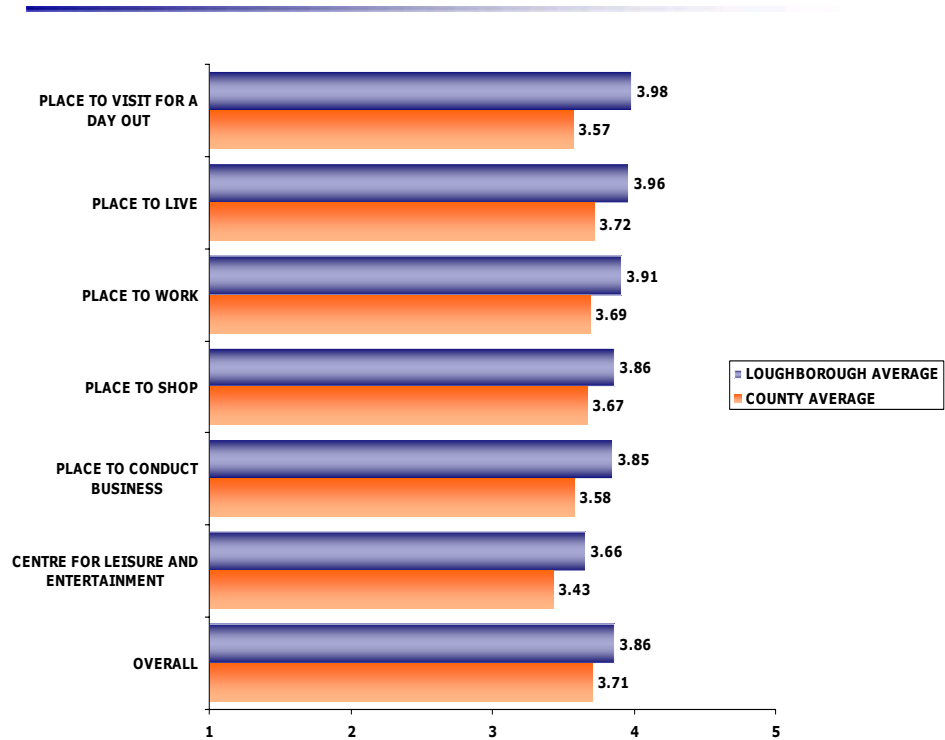
Table 1

RATING OF LOUGHBOROUGH FOR VARIOUS GROUPS							
	Very poor	Poor	Neither good nor poor	Good	Very good	DK/no opinion	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Visitors	0	4	22	62	10	4	3.80
Shoppers	0	3	22	64	8	3	3.80
People with disabilities	0	3	25	48	9	15	3.73
Elderly people	0	5	26	51	8	11	3.70
Families	0	5	26	56	8	5	3.70
Young people	1	11	22	50	6	11	3.55
SAMPLE BASE: 354							

How good are the centres as places for particular activities?

Figure 9

RATING OF LOUGHBOROUGH AS A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, SHOP, ETC (ALL RESPONDENTS)

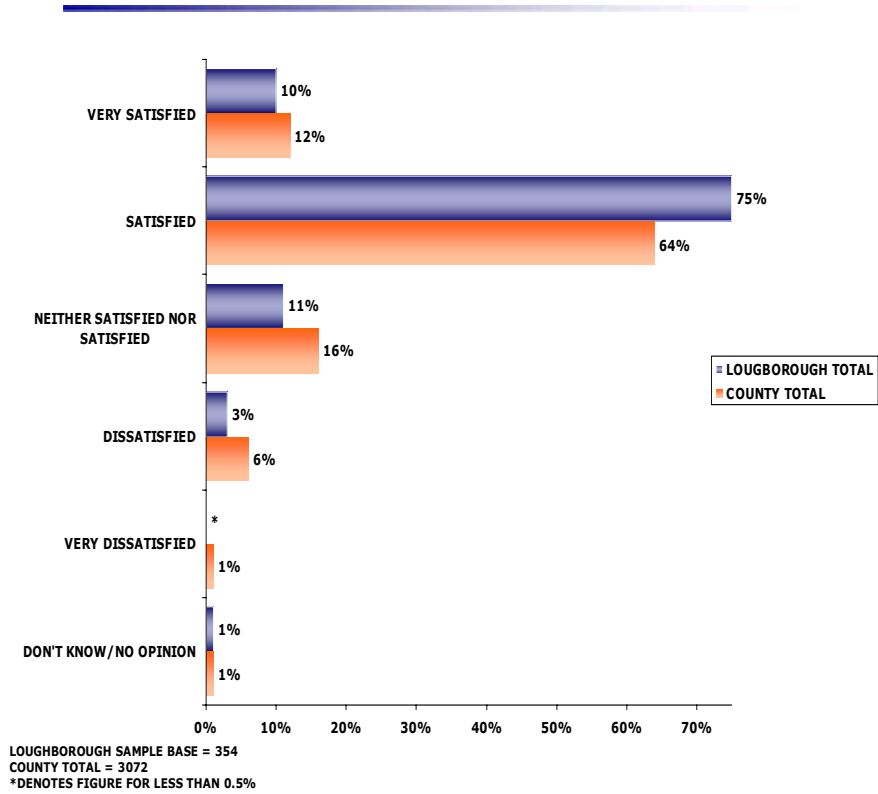


Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most positive score, Loughborough was rated 3.86, which was slightly higher than the county average of 3.71 - that is they are well above average, good but not very good. Loughborough scored very highly compared to the rest of the county on all accounts. Most notably, Loughborough was considered as a good place to visit for a day out compared to the rest of the county (3.98 Loughborough, 3.57 county).

Overall, satisfaction was very high amongst respondents as they considered Loughborough a good place to shop, visit and to do business. The graph below demonstrates that the overall level of satisfaction for Loughborough was higher than the total for the county.

Figure 10

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH LOUGHBOROUGH AS A GOOD PLACE TO SHOP, VISIT AND TO DO BUSINESS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

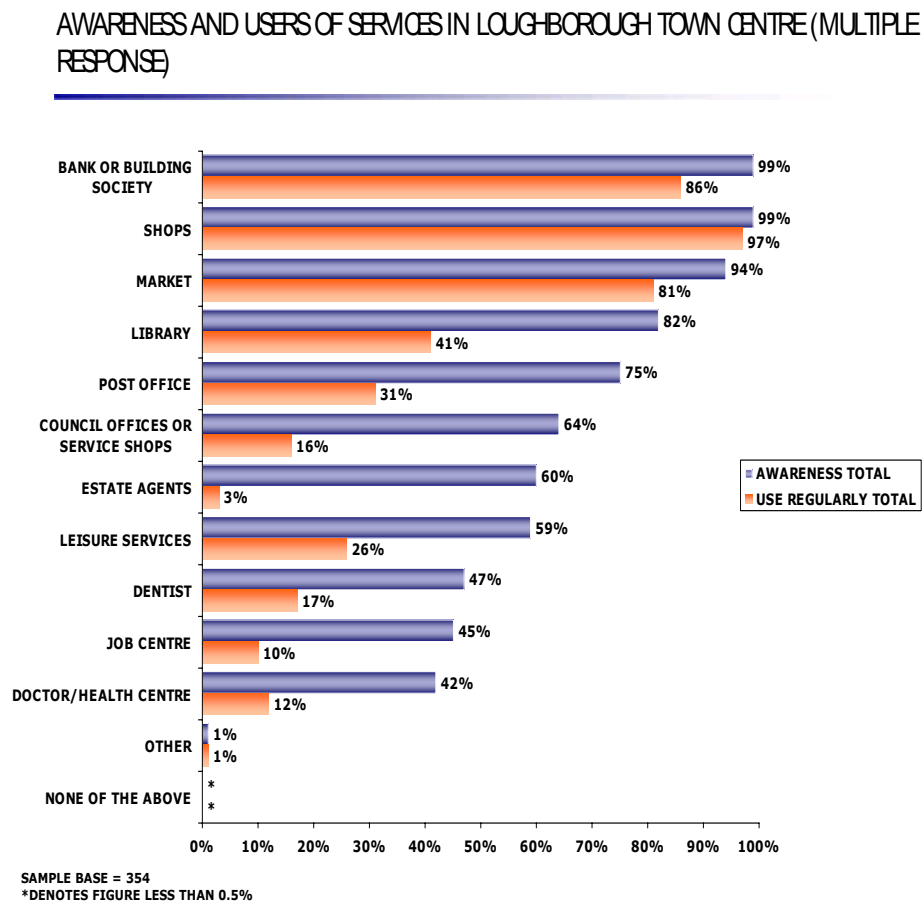


Services available in the centre

Services available in the centre of Loughborough were rated on the basis of awareness and on how often respondents used them.

As shown below respondents were more likely to be aware of services such as banks & building societies, shops and markets and these were the services which were also most regularly used. However, there were some services that people were aware of but were less likely to be regular users of. For example 82% of respondents were aware that there is a library in Loughborough but only 41% used the service. Furthermore, respondents were aware of health services within the centre of Loughborough but fewer people used them on a regular basis - 47% of respondents were aware that there was a dentist in Loughborough and only 17% were regular users, whilst 42% of respondents were aware of a doctor's or health centre in Loughborough, but 12% of respondents were regular users.

Figure 11



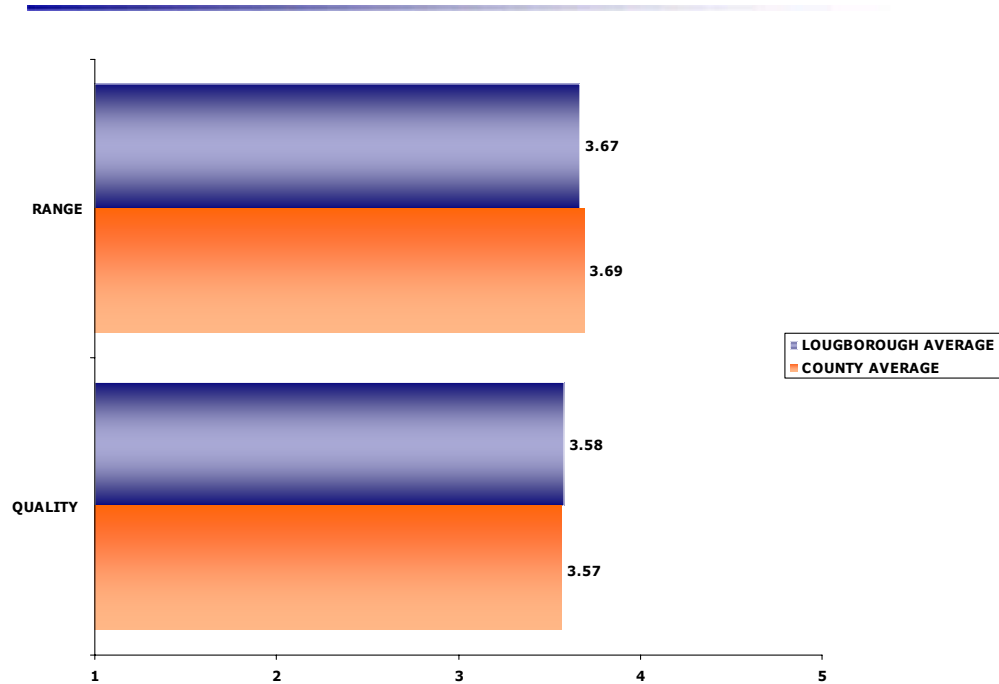
Respondents were questioned as to their opinions about the market in Loughborough. The majority (67%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there was a wide range of products available to buy in the market.

60% of respondents in Loughborough said that the variety of the retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs very well or quite well, 25% said it was inadequate whilst 11% said it did not meet their needs.

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of places to eat out in Loughborough on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was very poor and 5 was very good. Respondents tended to be more positive about the range than the quality as shown in figure 12. This was the same on a county-wide position.

Figure 12

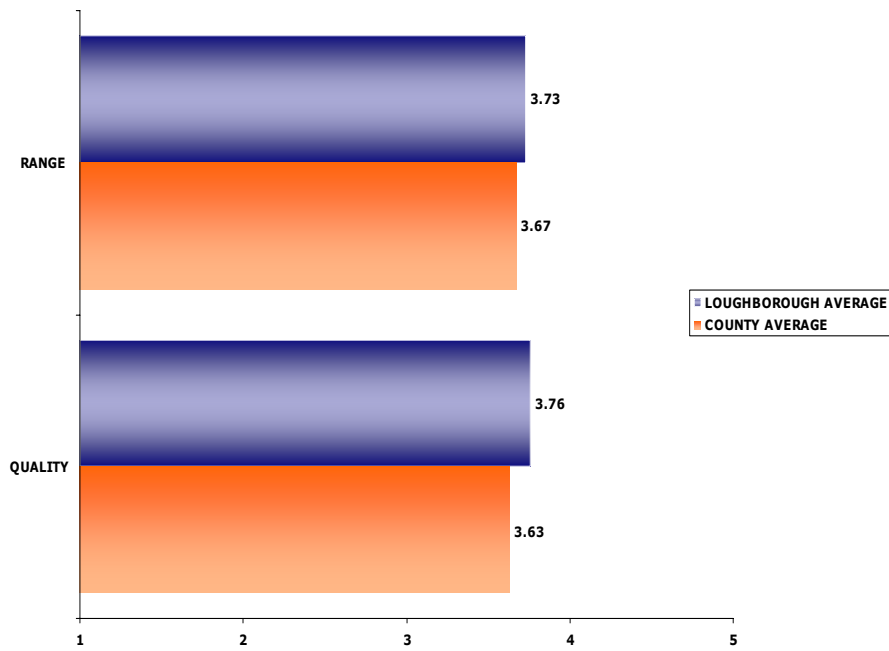
RANGE AND QUALITY OF THE PLACES TO EAT OUT IN LOUGHBOROUGH



Respondents were then asked to rate the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs in Loughborough on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very poor and 5 was very good. Respondents were slightly more positive about the quality than the range of pubs, bars and clubs in Loughborough, as shown below. This was a reversal of the county-wide position, although the real differences are small.

Figure 13

RANGE AND QUALITY OF PUBS, BARS AND CLUBS IN LOUGHBOROUGH



Town Centre Environment

Respondents were given a series of statements about the environment of the town centre and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

Table 2

WHETHER RESPONDENTS AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CENTRE OF LOUGHBOROUGH						
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
The parks are well maintained	0	5	27	53	12	3.74
Shop fronts are well maintained	0	5	27	59	7	3.70
Pedestrian signage is relevant, clear and easy to understand	0	3	34	52	9	3.68
Street lighting is good	0	4	36	46	9	3.63
The centre is well planted in summertime	0	7	35	44	10	3.58
There is sufficient seating in and around the centre	1	16	18	57	5	3.51
Seating in and around shopping areas is well maintained	1	14	30	42	10	3.49
The baby changing facilities provided are clean and tidy	1	2	26	20	2	3.40
Pavements and walkways are safe and well maintained	0	12	44	35	8	3.39
There are enough public toilets	2	7	42	32	8	3.39
The public toilets are clean and tidy	2	13	35	31	10	3.37
The design and layout of the centre is attractive	0	20	32	38	9	3.36
There are enough baby changing facilities	2	7	25	16	4	3.24
Pavements and walkways are clean and tidy	1	27	30	34	7	3.19
SAMPLE BASE: 354						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

Overall, respondents had positive views about the environment and facilities available in the centre of Loughborough. Respondents felt that the shop fronts were well maintained (66% agreed or agreed strongly), the parks were well maintained (65%) and there was sufficient seating in and around the centre (62%). Respondents were less positive that, pavements and walkways were clean and tidy in the centre of Loughborough (28% disagreed or disagreed strongly), that the design

and layout of the centre was attractive (20%) and that the public toilets were clean and tidy (17%).

Respondents were then asked to respond to a series of statements about aspects in and around the centre of Loughborough and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

Table 3

WHETHER RESPONDENTS AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT ASPECTS IN AND AROUND THE CENTRE OF LOUGHBOROUGH						
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
The centre could do with more high street chain stores	0	7	20	55	14	3.78
Car parking costs too much	2	7	18	37	14	3.69
The centre needs more local, independent shops	1	6	27	50	12	3.69
Pedestrians can walk around the centre without feeling threatened by traffic	0	8	28	51	11	3.66
Road signs make it easy for cars to access the centre	0	5	37	37	10	3.57
Roads in the centre are congested	0	11	32	38	11	3.55
The centre is accessible for disabled people and older people	1	2	48	35	6	3.48
It is easy for drivers to find the car parks around the centre	0	11	35	33	8	3.45
Roads in the centre are well maintained	0	8	43	34	7	3.43
The road network provides easy access into the centre	1	9	39	34	6	3.41
The level of service in shops is of a high standard	1	7	48	38	5	3.41
There is too much traffic noise in the centre	3	21	38	29	8	3.19
There is enough car parking available	3	23	24	26	5	3.07
There is too much other noise (music, pubs and clubs) in the centre	1	39	33	18	6	2.87
SAMPLE BASE: 354						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

As demonstrated in the above table 69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the centre could do with more high street chain stores – the statement on this list with which respondents most strongly

agreed. In descending order of agreement, this was followed by the centre needs more local, independent shops (62%), pedestrians can walk around without feeling threatened by traffic (62%) and car parking costs too much (61%). Two-fifths of respondents (40%) disagreed with the statement that there was too much other noise (music, pubs and clubs) in the centre.

Respondents were given a list of options and asked to say which issues they thought most needed attention in Loughborough. The most frequently cited responses were a greater range of shops (62%), more specialist shops (59%) and the cleanliness of the centre (51%). When asked to prioritise their *top three* areas of improvement, respondents cited a greater range of shops (52%), the cleanliness and tidiness of the centre (41%) and more specialist shops (37%).

4 Crime and safety

This section looks at how respondents in Loughborough perceived crime and safety, and which issues were seen as big problem areas.

As shown in the table below, of a series of issues on which the opinion of respondents was sought, rubbish and litter was lying around was seen as a big problem by the largest proportion of respondents in Loughborough (26% considered this a very big problem or big problem). This was followed by dirty pavements and chewing gum (25%) and street canvassers (15%). Areas that were seen as less of a problem included assaults and other violent crime such as personal robberies and muggings (85% considered this either not a problem, or only a small problem), racial harassment (85%) and vehicles being stolen (85%).

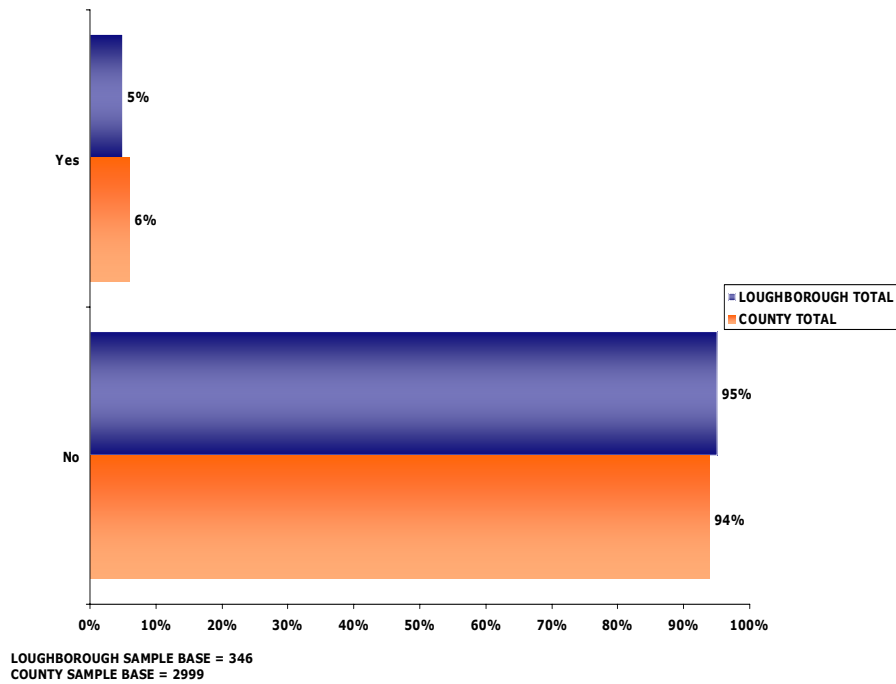
Table 4

AREAS THAT ARE SEEN AS PROBLEMS IN THE CENTRE OF LOUGHBOROUGH						
	Very big problem	Big Problem	Neither big nor small	Small Problem	Not a problem at all	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
Rubbish and litter lying around	10	17	22	25	24	3.37
Dirty pavements and chewing gum	8	17	19	29	25	3.47
Street canvassers	1	14	21	23	34	3.81
Groups of people hanging round the streets	2	10	21	33	32	3.86
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	1	4	18	35	38	4.11
People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces	1	5	14	36	40	4.15
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	1	3	14	40	38	4.18
Fly tipping	0	5	12	33	46	4.24
Personal theft (pick pocketing)	0	3	9	37	42	4.3
Aggressive begging	1	2	9	37	45	4.31
Road safety or speeding	0	1	14	33	46	4.31
People using or dealing drugs	1	3	9	29	42	4.32
Verbal abuse or other aggressive behaviour	0	3	10	34	47	4.33
Property being stolen from a vehicle	0	3	7	35	47	4.37
Assaults and other violent crime (personal robbery, mugging)	0	1	8	35	50	4.42
Vehicles being stolen	0	2	5	35	50	4.46
Racial harassment	0	0	5	31	54	4.53
SAMPLE BASE: 354						

Respondents were questioned about whether they had ever felt worried about being assaulted or harassed in Loughborough within the last 12 months. 95% of respondents said that they had not felt worried about being assaulted or harassed as figure 12 illustrates.

Figure 14

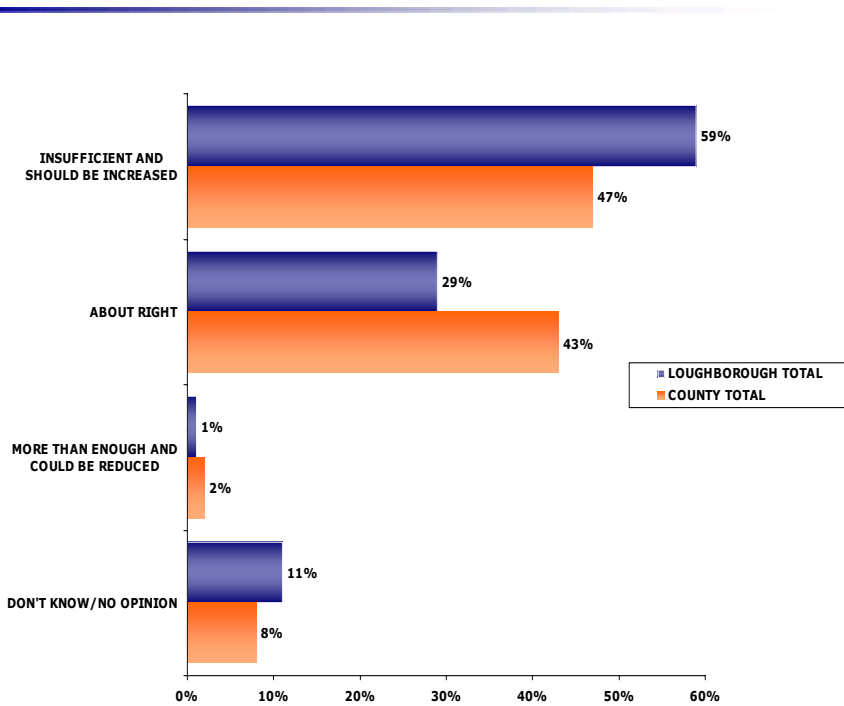
WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE EVER FELT WORRIED ABOUT BEING ASSAULTED OR HARASSED WHILST IN THE CENTRE OF LOUGHBOROUGH IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Although the majority of respondents said that they were not worried about being assaulted or harassed, 59% felt that the police presence in the centre was insufficient and should be increased, whilst 29% felt that it was about right.

Figure 15

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF LOUGHBOROUGH

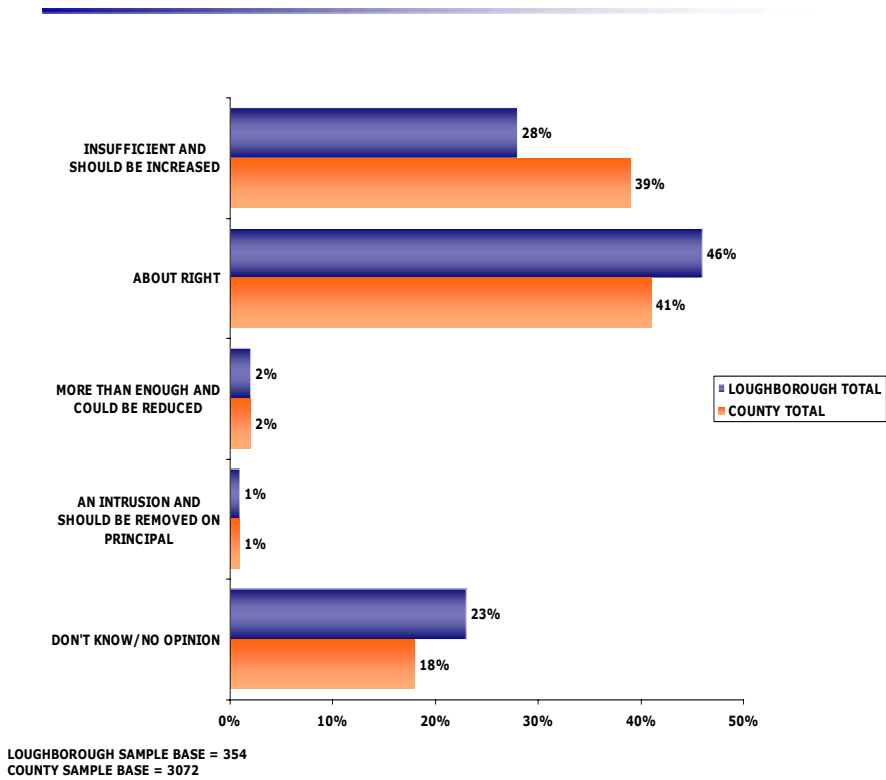


LOUGHBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 354
COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

When questioned about the presence of CCTV in Loughborough, 46% of respondents felt it was about right, which was slightly higher than the county total of 41%. 28% of respondents said the presence of CCTV was insufficient and should be increased.

Figure 16

PERCEPTIONS OF CCTV PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF LOUGHBOROUGH



5 Summary

Visiting the centre

- Shopping trips accounted for 52% of the trips to Loughborough.
- 12% of respondents were visiting as a tourist in Loughborough, this was twice as high as the county average, whilst 11% of respondents were using a service.
- A large proportion of visitors arrived in Loughborough by car, with the second most common method being by bus and the third being on foot.
- Two-fifths of respondents visited the centre at least twice a week.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities, more cultural or entertainment facilities and free parking were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Loughborough more often.

Attractions and events

- The local newspaper was identified as the most widely used method for finding out about attractions and events in the centre, whilst the least used methods were the County Council's events guide and radio or television
- Only 14% of respondents had attended an event in the centre.

Attitudes towards the centre

- Overall, Loughborough was most likely to be described as 'busy', 'friendly', 'safe' and 'crowded'.
- 53% of respondents reported no change in the centre of Loughborough within the last 12 months, whilst 29% of respondents reported the centre had got better and 6% said it had got worse.
- Respondents felt that the centre catered better for shoppers and visitors than it did for young people.

Services available in the centre

- Banks & building societies, shops and the market were the top three services that respondents were most aware of and were most likely to use on a regular basis in Loughborough.
- The majority of respondents agreed that there was a range of products available to buy in the market.

- 60% of respondents in Loughborough said the variety of retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs very well or quite well.

Town Centre environment

- Overall, respondents were positive about the environment and facilities in and around the centre.
- Respondents felt that shop fronts were well maintained, parks were well maintained and there was sufficient seating in and around the town centre.
- Having a greater range of shops, the cleanliness and tidiness of the town centre and more specialist shops were seen as the areas that needed the most improvement.

Crime and safety

- Rubbish and litter lying around, dirty pavements and chewing gum and street canvassers were seen as the most significant problems in Loughborough.
- Assaults and other violent crimes, racial harassment and vehicles being stolen were not seen as a problem, or seen only as a small problem in Loughborough.
- 95% of respondents said that they had not felt worried about being assaulted or harassed while in the centre within the last 12 months.
- Nearly three-fifths of respondents said policing in Loughborough was insufficient and should be increased whereas 29% said it was about right.
- 46% of respondents felt that the CCTV presence in Loughborough was about right whilst 28% felt it was insufficient and should be increased.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

- Overall, respondents were positive about Loughborough. 85% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with Loughborough as a place to shop, visit and to do business. Moreover, although the majority of respondents reported no change within the last 12 months, 31% reported that the centre had got better or much better.
- Many respondents were aware of and users of services such as the bank or building society, shops and the market in Loughborough.
- Findings indicated that Loughborough catered better for shoppers and visitors than it did for young people. This shows how the centre serves different groups of people.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities, more cultural or entertainment facilities and free parking were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Loughborough more often.
- The cleanliness of pavements and walkways, the design and layout of the centre and public toilets were identified as aspects of the town centre with the most scope for improvement, although most respondents were satisfied with the existing provision of these facilities.
- Respondents felt more attention should be given to having a greater range of shops, more specialist shops as well as the cleanliness and tidiness of the centre.
- In terms of crime and safety issues, rubbish and litter lying around, dirty pavements and chewing gum and street canvassers were seen as the biggest issues in Loughborough.