



BMG Research Report

Leicestershire Town and Village Centres Survey:
South Wigston
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 South Wigston.

Report contents

Section 2 of this report looks at why respondents visited South Wigston, 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 South Wigston, 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 South Wigston 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

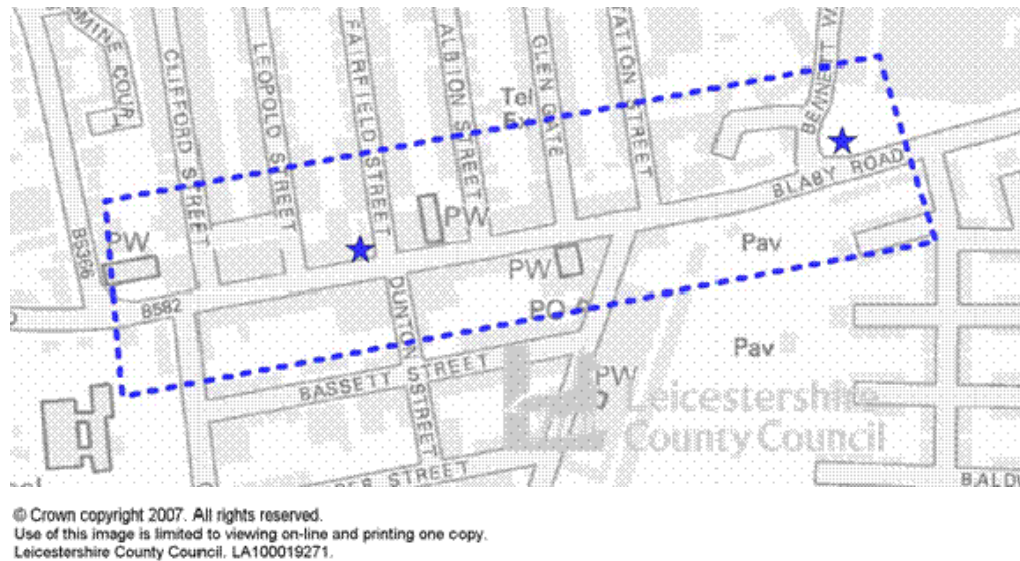
In total, 3000 interviews were planned across the 17 settlements. The sample structure called for a minimum of 100 interviews per settlement, with the remaining 1300 interviews distributed pro-rata on the basis of population size, meaning that the target for some of the villages was only a little over 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 South Wigston:

Figure 1



Source: Leicestershire County Council

Respondent Profile

Within South Wigston, 161 interviews were achieved. Of the sample, the majority of respondents were female (57%). 27% of respondents in South Wigston were aged 16-24, 29% were aged 25-44, 31% were aged 45-64, with the remaining 14% being of retirement age (65+). As reported by the 2001 Census, within South Wigston 13% of the population were aged between 16-24, 39% were aged between 25-44, 29% were aged between 45-64 and 19% were aged 65 and over.

The vast majority of respondents in South Wigston (94%) described themselves as white British, whilst 1% described themselves Irish and a further 1% said white and Black African. The remaining respondents described themselves as Indian (4%), African (1%), Caribbean (1%) and Pakistani (1%). According to the 2001 Census, 97% of the population of South Wigston described themselves as white.

By economic status, 66% of respondents in South Wigston were in work (62% employed and 1% self-employed). The largest proportion of those respondents not in work were retired (16% of the total South Wigston sample). 9% of respondents were not in work because they were claiming benefits. 5% were in education or training, 3% were looking after children or other dependents or the home and 1% were not in work due to an illness or disability.

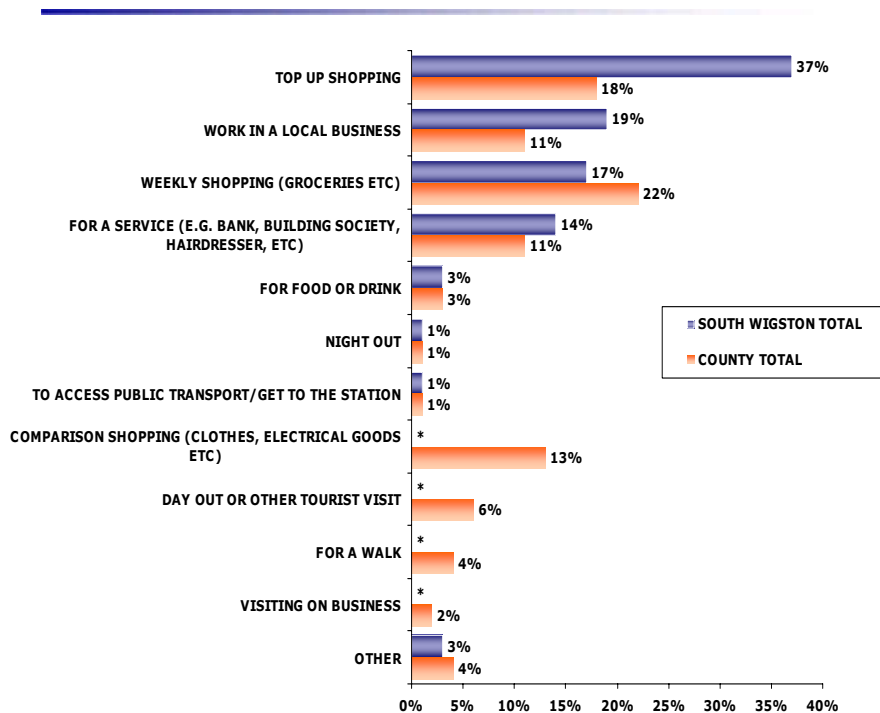
2 Visiting the Town Centre

Visits

This section looks at the reasons why people visited South Wigston, their mode of transport used to get to the centre, the frequency of visits as well as if they had visited any attractions and events in the centre.

Figure 2

MAIN REASON FOR VISITING SOUTH WIGSTON TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



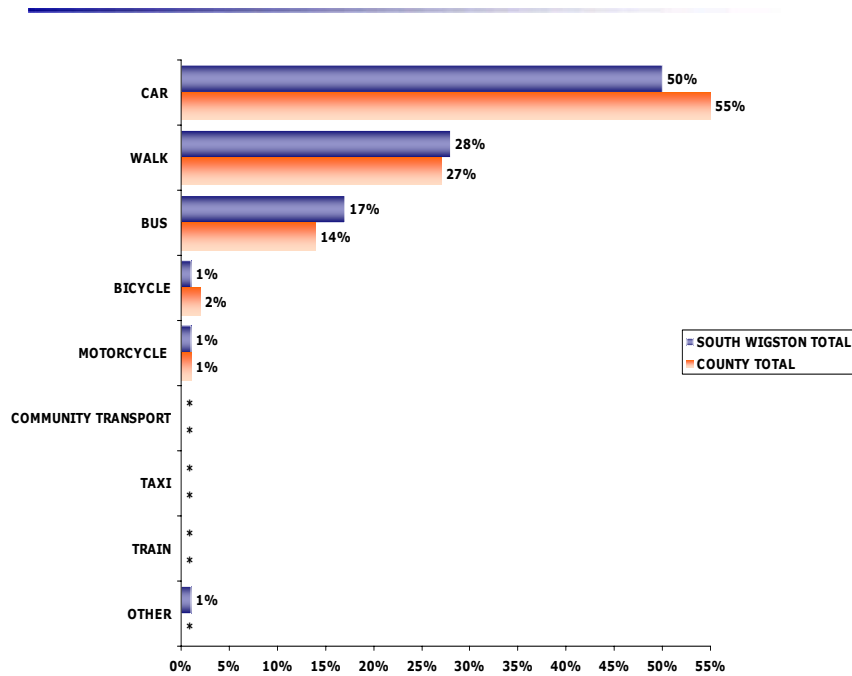
SOUTH WIGSTON SAMPLE BASE = 161
 COUNTY TOTAL = 3072
 *DENOTES FIGURE LESS THAN 0.5%

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 South Wigston (54%), which was similar to the total county figure (53%). 19% of respondents in South Wigston were present because they worked in the centre whilst 14% of respondents said that they were using a service in the centre.

Mode of transport used to get into the centre of town

Figure 3

MODE OF TRANSPORT TO SOUTH WIGSTON TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



SOUTH WIGSTON SAMPLE BASE = 161
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072
 * DENOTES FIGURES LESS THAN 0.5%

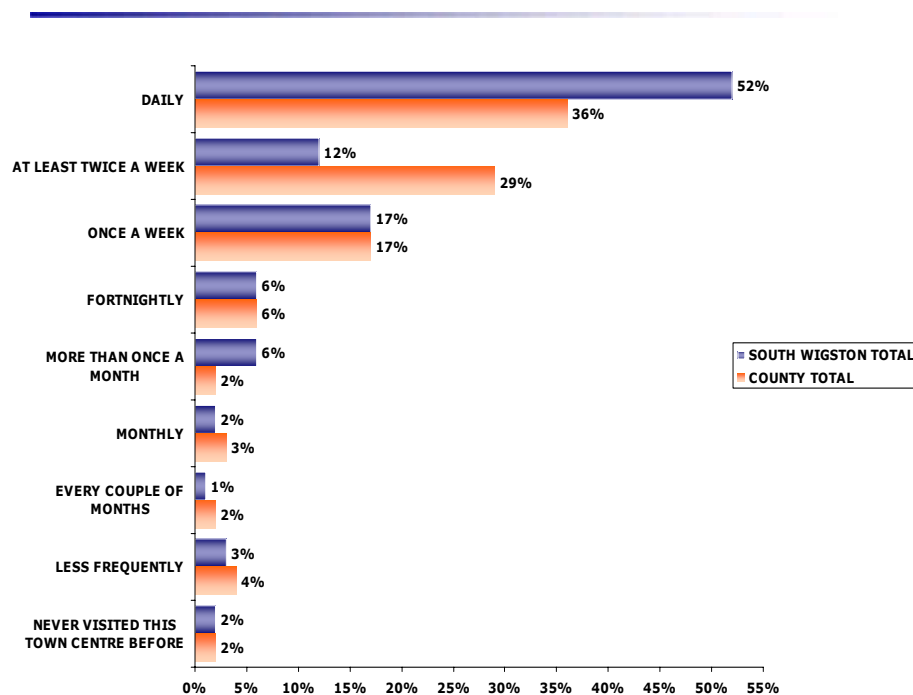
Half of the trips into the centre by respondents on the day of the survey were made by car, whilst just over a quarter of respondents walked into the centre (28%) and 17% arrived by bus (compared to the county total of 14%).

Frequency of visits

As illustrated in the graph below, just over half of respondents reported that they visited the centre daily (52%), whilst 17% visited at least once a week and 12% visited twice a week. 2% of those in South Wigston were visiting for the first time, which was the same figure for the county as a whole.

Figure 4

FREQUENCY OF VISITS INTO SOUTH WIGSTON TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



SOUTH WIGSTON SAMPLE BASE = 161
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

Just three-quarters of respondents visited South Wigston both at weekends and on weekdays (77%), whilst just under a fifth of respondents visited on a weekday whilst 4% visited at weekends.

The majority of respondents (73%) mainly visited South Wigston during the day (before 5.30pm), with 1% visiting the centre in the evening (after 5.30pm). 25% of respondents visited the town centre both during the daytime and evening.

Of those people visiting the town centre in the evening, 12% visited in the evening everyday, whilst 7% visited at least twice a week and a further 7% said monthly. Saturday or Sunday evenings proved to be popular amongst respondents to visit the centre, with 7% choosing to do so. 1% of respondents visited mainly on a Friday evening.

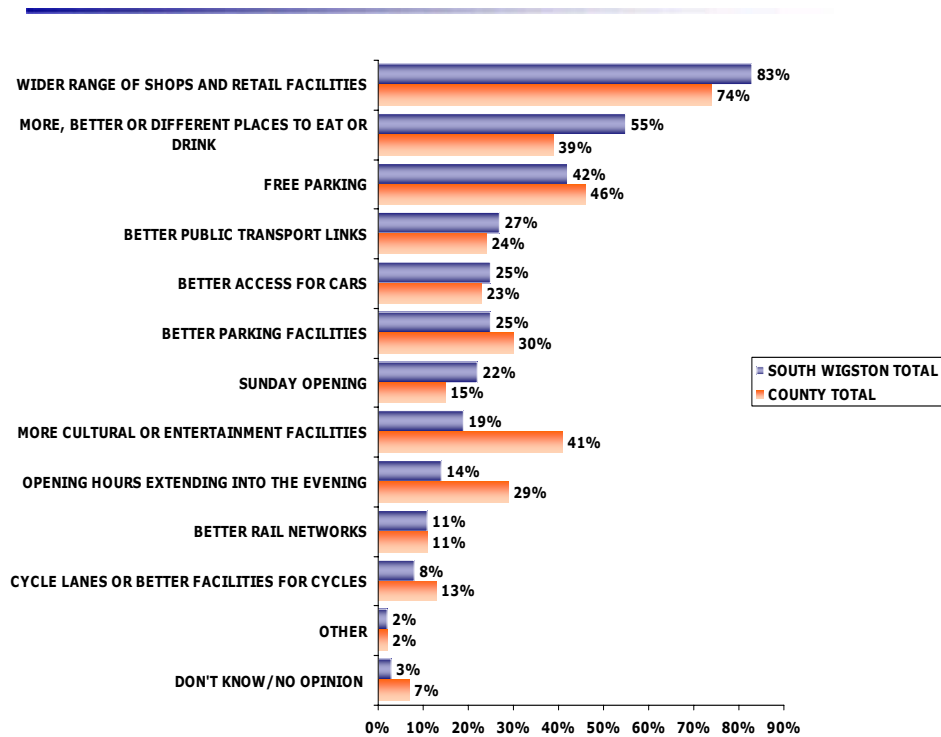
Encouraging more people to visit the centre

Respondents were asked to identify those issues which would encourage them to visit South Wigston more often. They were able to cite more than one issue. Having a wider range of shops and retail facilities (83%) and better or different places to eat or drink (55%) were cited as two areas that would encourage respondents to visit South Wigston more.

Free parking and improvements in public transport links as well as having better access for cars were also very important to some respondents.

Figure 5

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



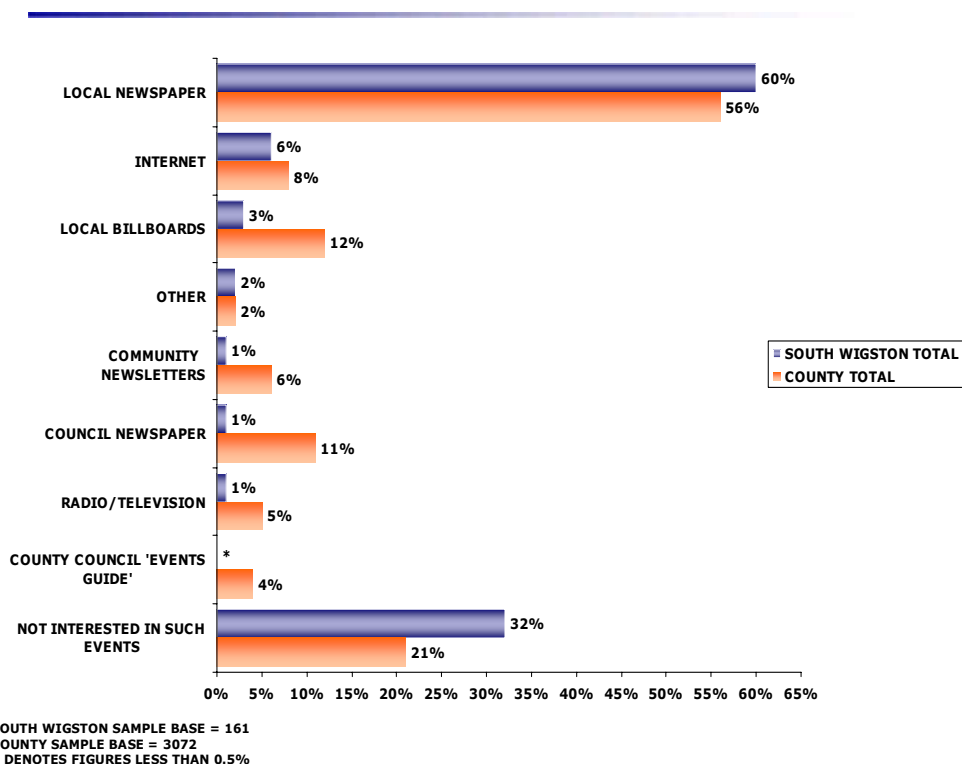
SOUTH WIGSTON SAMPLE BASE = 161
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

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 South Wigston, with other sources only modest in their importance by comparison. The least popular method was the County Council’s events guide.

Figure 6

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



When respondents were questioned about whether they had attended any events in the town centre recently, 3% said that they had compared to the county figure of 12%. Of these 3%, the most frequently cited events that were attended included the fair (2 people) and the Jurassic Park or Dinosaur event (1 person). 1 person said that they had attended another even in the centre of South Wigston.

Respondents were asked what made the centre unique, different or special in South Wigston. Overall 29% said they there was nothing and 49% that they didn’t know. 8% of respondents said it was a safe area that had low crime levels, 2% said the appearance, 2% said the history and heritage of South Wigston, whilst a further 2% said the layout. Other notable answers included:

- Architecture and buildings (1%);
- Flower displays / scenery (1%);

- Cleanliness (1%);
- Community spirit (1%);
- Good atmosphere (1%);
- Quiet and peaceful (1%);
- The market (1%); and
- The size (1%).

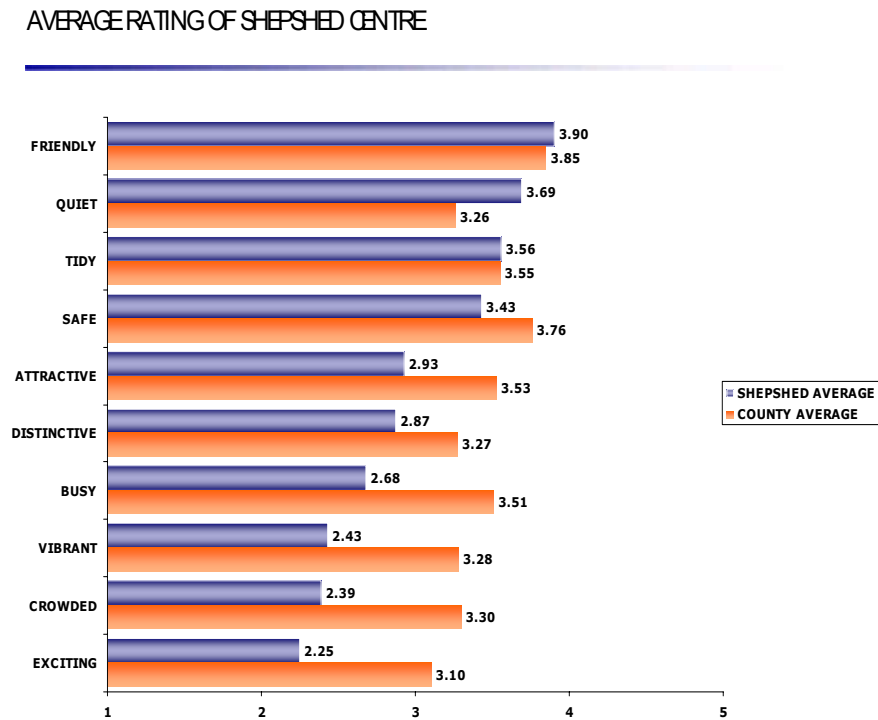
3 Attitude towards the centre

This section examines the attitudes of respondents to the different aspects of South Wigston, considering whether the centre was 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 South Wigston on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 was strongly agree. Overall, South Wigston was most likely to be described as 'friendly', 'quiet', 'tidy' and 'safe'. At the opposite end of the spectrum, South Wigston was least likely to be described as 'exciting' and 'crowded'.

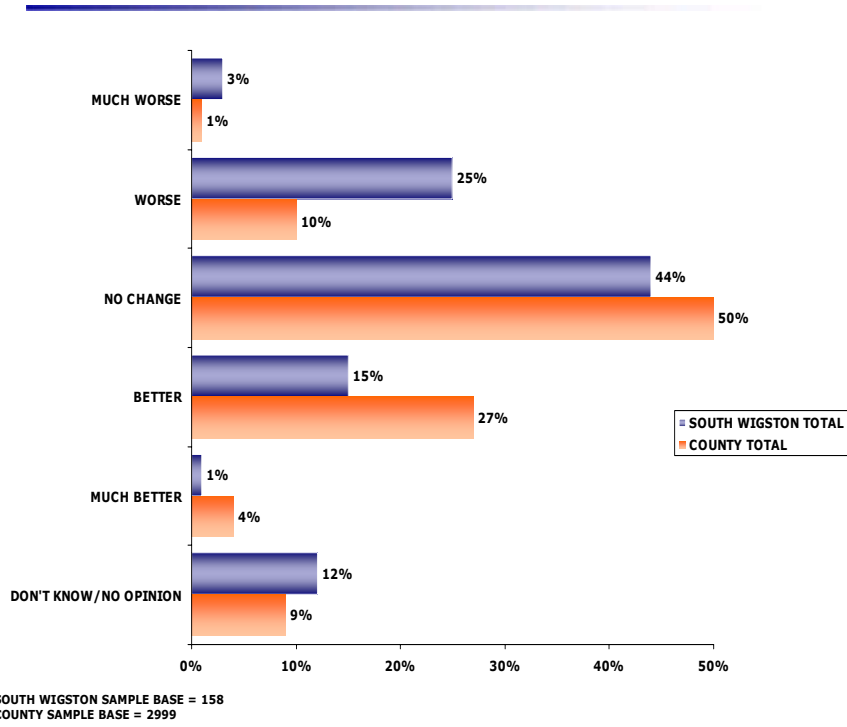
Figure 7



Whilst 44% of respondents didn't report any overall change in South Wigston, a quarter believed that it had got worse, compared to 15% who thought it had got better, as shown below:

Figure 8

WHETHER SOUTH WIGSTON TOWN HAS GOT BETTER OR WORSE WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



All respondents were asked for their view on how well South Wigston served different groups in the population. The results for each of these groups are shown in Table 1 below. Although there were mixed responses to how the centre served various groups, respondents tended to think that the best served group was elderly people and the worst was young people.

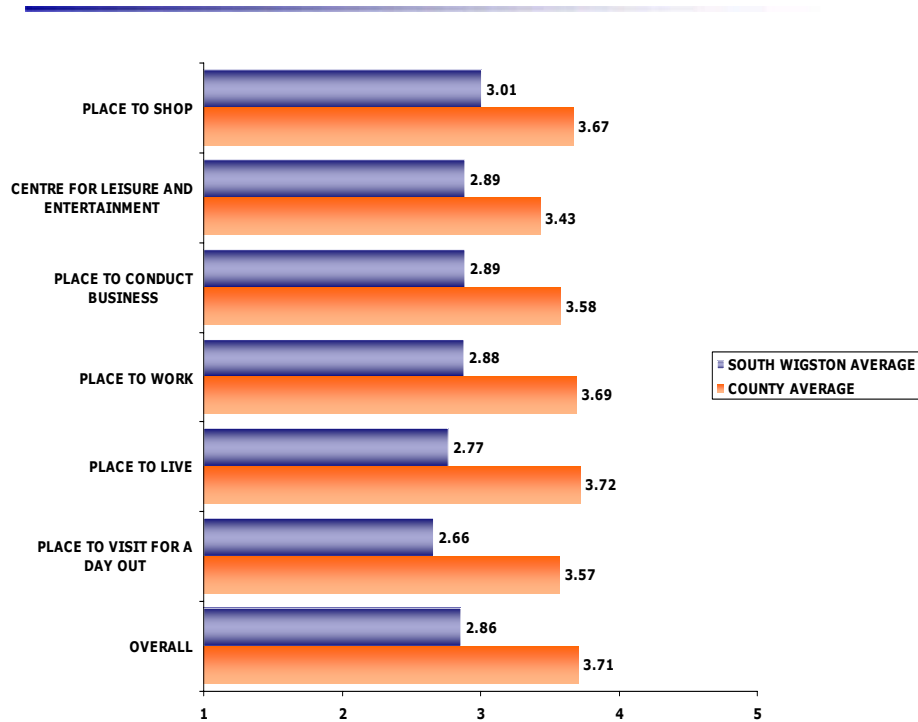
Table 1

RATING OF SOUTH WIGSTON FOR VARIOUS GROUPS							
	Very poor	Poor	Neither good nor poor	Good	Very good	DK/no opinion	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Shoppers	1	15	45	31	3	5	3.20
Elderly people	1	16	44	31	3	4	3.19
People with disabilities	1	14	60	9	11	6	3.15
Visitors	1	18	51	21	3	6	3.07
Families	2	15	55	24	1	4	3.06
Young people	4	18	67	8	0	4	2.82
SAMPLE BASE: 161							

How good are the centres as places for particular activities?

Figure 9

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

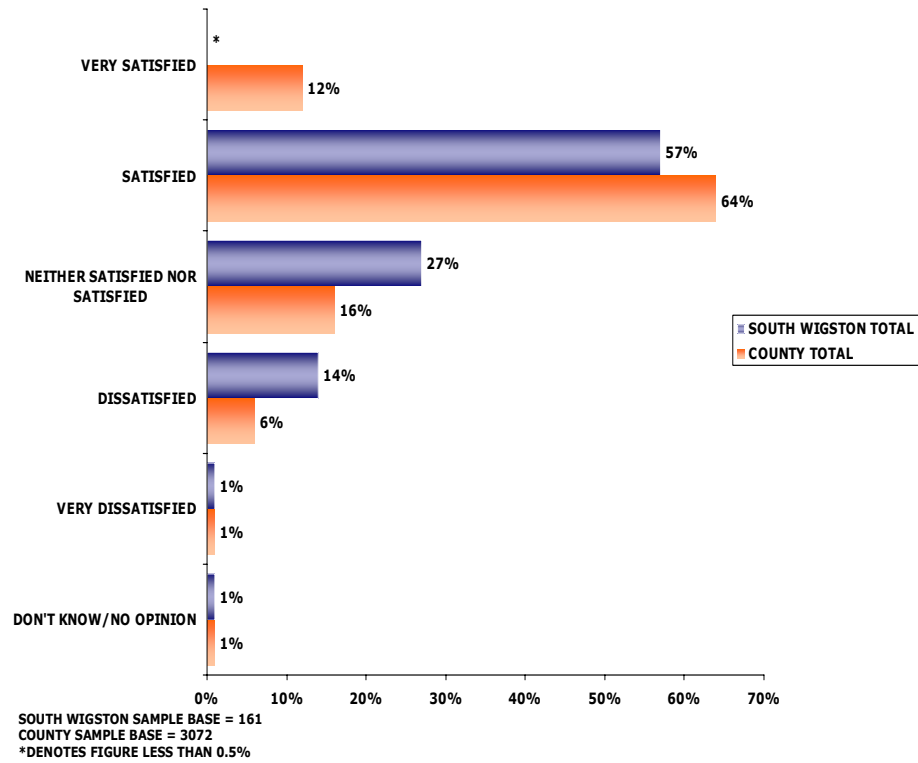


Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most positive score, South Wigston was rated 2.86 which was lower than the county average of 3.71 - that is, South Wigston was considered as well below average, whilst the county figure was considered as well above average, good but not very good. On all other accounts, South Wigston did not score very highly compared to the rest of the county as illustrated in the graph above.

Overall, just over half of respondents were satisfied with South Wigston as a good place to shop, visit and to do business. The graph below demonstrates that the overall level of satisfaction for South Wigston was lower than the county total (57% South Wigston, 76% county).

Figure 10

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

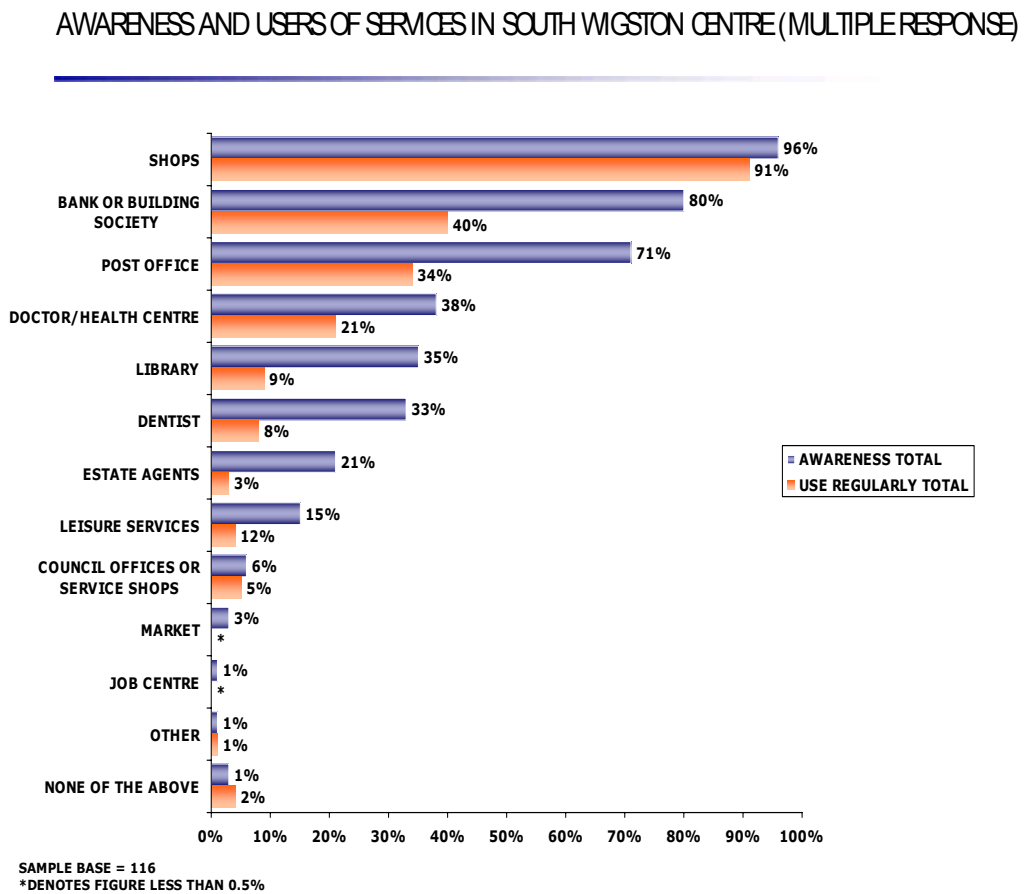


Services available in the centre

Services available in the centre of South Wigston 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 shops, banks & building societies and the post office 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 use regularly. For example, 33% of respondents were aware of a dentist within the centre of South Wigston but less people used them on a regular basis (8%).

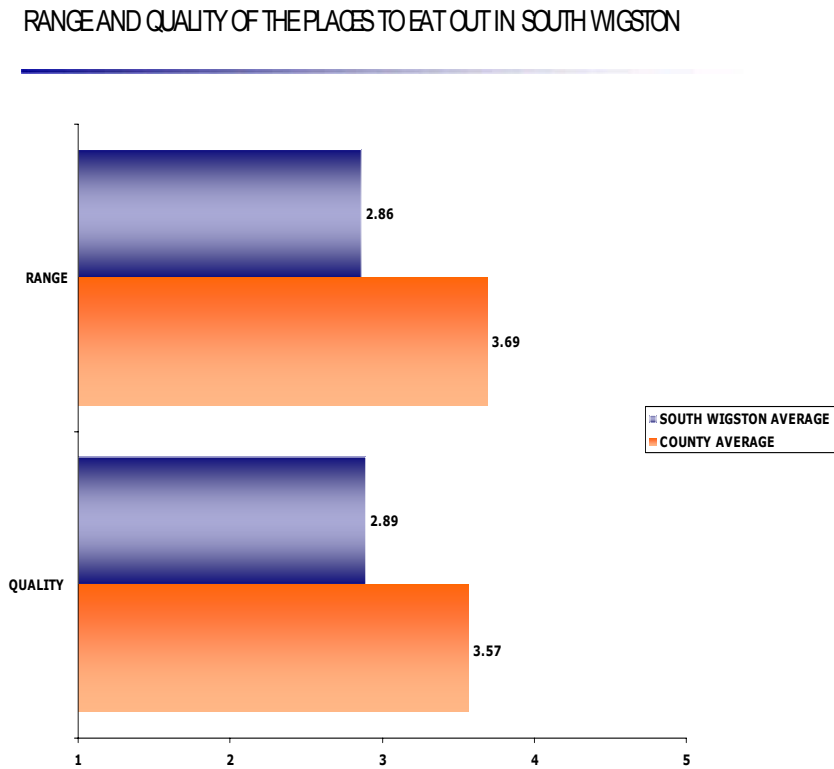
Figure 11



Respondents were questioned as to whether the retail outlets in South Wigston met their shopping needs. Just under half of respondents said that the variety of the retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs adequately (49%). 21% said the retail outlets did not meet their needs whilst 20% said it did meet their needs quite well.

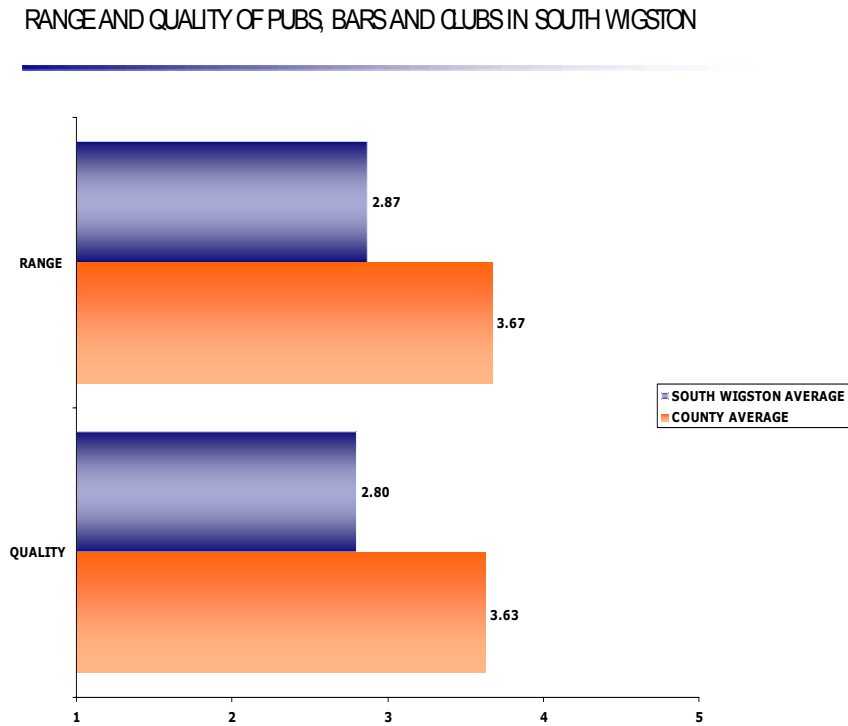
Respondents were asked to rate the quality of places to eat out in South Wigston on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very poor and 5 was very good. Respondents were slightly more positive about the quality than the range as shown in figure 12. On a county-wide level, this pattern was the opposite. However, the figures for South Wigston are well below the county averages.

Figure 12



Respondents were then asked to rate the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs in South Wigston on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very poor and 5 was very good. Respondents were more positive about the range than the quality of pubs, bars and clubs in South Wigston, as shown below. This was also the same position on a county-wide level and again the figures for South Wigston were well below the county averages.

Figure 13



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 SOUTH WIGSTON						
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
Pedestrian signage is relevant, clear and easy to understand	6	19	34	27	7	3.11
The parks are well maintained	8	21	29	34	6	3.11
Street lighting is good	9	24	23	42	2	3.04
The centre is well planted in summertime	9	24	35	26	3	2.89
Pavements and walkways are safe and well maintained	9	27	35	25	4	2.88
Shop fronts are well maintained	12	24	33	27	2	2.83
Pavements and walkways are clean and tidy	12	34	23	25	5	2.77
The design and layout of the centre is attractive	6	41	31	15	6	2.72
There are enough baby changing facilities	19	23	23	21	5	2.66
The baby changing facilities provided are clean and tidy	22	15	28	22	3	2.64
The public toilets are clean and tidy	20	21	31	19	3	2.60
Seating in and around shopping areas is well maintained	22	21	35	13	6	2.59
There are enough public toilets	14	37	29	14	4	2.55
There is sufficient seating in and around the centre	25	37	28	8	0	2.20
SAMPLE BASE: 161						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

Overall, respondents had very mixed views about the environment and facilities available in the centre of South Wigston. 62% of respondents disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement seating in and around shopping areas was not sufficient seating in and around the centre. This was followed by there were enough public toilets (51% disagreed or disagreed strongly) and the design and layout of the centre was attractive (47% disagreed or disagreed strongly). The largest proportion of respondents agreed strongly or agreed that the street lighting was

good (44%), the parks were well maintained (40%) and pedestrian signage was relevant, clear and easy to understand (40%).

Respondents were then asked to respond to a series of statements about aspects in and around the centre of South Wigston 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 SOUTH WIGSTON						
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
Pedestrians can walk around the centre without feeling threatened by traffic	6	19	30	32	12	3.28
Roads in the centre are congested	6	17	32	34	9	3.22
Road signs make it easy for cars to access the centre	8	19	27	32	11	3.18
The road network provides easy access into the centre	9	12	36	32	8	3.17
There is too much traffic noise in the centre	7	21	29	34	8	3.16
The level of service in shops is of a high standard	9	22	32	26	11	3.08
The centre could do with more high street chain stores	13	18	27	29	11	3.08
It is easy for drivers to find the car parks around the centre	11	20	29	25	11	3.05
There is too much other noise (music, pubs and clubs) in the centre	7	21	39	22	9	3.05
Roads in the centre are well maintained	8	22	39	24	6	2.97
The centre is accessible for disabled people and older people	17	19	19	36	6	2.95
The centre needs more local, independent shops	19	19	22	32	6	2.88
Car parking costs too much	17	20	26	29	4	2.81
There is enough car parking available	24	20	26	24	4	2.63
SAMPLE BASE: 161						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

As demonstrated in the above table, there were mixed views about aspects in and around the centre. 44% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly that pedestrians can walk around the centre without feeling

threatened by traffic. In descending order of agreement, this was followed by roads in the centre were congested (43%), road signs make it easy for cars to access the centre (43%) and the centre was accessible for disabled people and older people (42%). Just over two fifths of respondents (44%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that there was enough car parking available in the centre of South Wigston.

Respondents were given a list of options and asked to say which issues they thought most needed attention in South Wigston. The most frequently cited responses were a greater range of shops (56%), more specialist shops (43%) and the cleanliness and tidiness of the centre (33%). When asked to prioritise their *top three* areas of improvement, the same issues arose again. Respondents cited a greater range of shops (52%), more specialist shops (34%) and the cleanliness and tidiness of the centre (24%).

4 Crime and safety

This section looks at how respondents in South Wigston 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 lying around was seen as a big problem by the largest proportion of respondents in South Wigston (44% considered this to be a very big problem or a big problem). This was followed by dirty pavements and chewing gum (33%) and personal theft (or pick pocketing) (33%). Areas that were seen as less of a problem included racial harassment (56% considered this either not a problem, or only a small problem), vehicles being stolen (56%) and road safety or speeding (55%).

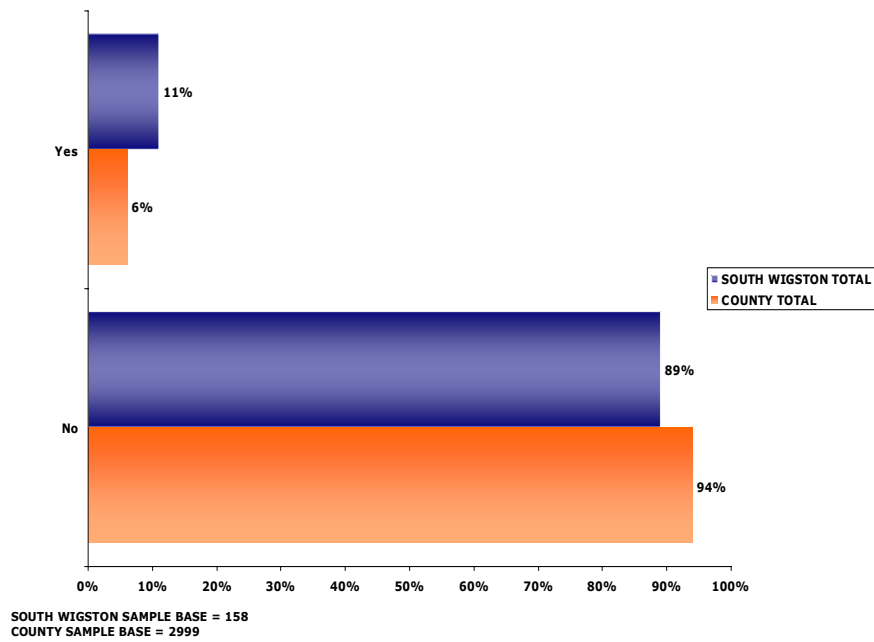
Table 4

AREAS THAT ARE SEEN AS PROBLEMS IN THE CENTRE OF SOUTH WIGSTON						
	Very big problem	Big Problem	Neither big nor small	Small Problem	Not a problem at all	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	14	14	39	10	20	3.07
Personal theft (pick pocketing)	14	19	26	21	16	3.07
Rubbish and litter lying around	31	16	32	32	8	3.1
Groups of people hanging round the streets	11	14	30	32	9	3.13
Dirty pavements and chewing gum	11	22	25	26	16	3.13
Verbal abuse or other aggressive behaviour	15	14	26	26	16	3.14
Assaults and other violent crime (personal robbery, mugging)	13	9	35	29	11	3.16
People using or dealing drugs	7	19	30	24	13	3.19
Fly tipping	8	17	26	25	20	3.33
People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces	7	14	27	34	14	3.36
Racial harassment	18	6	16	34	22	3.37
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	6	14	33	27	19	3.4
Street canvassers	8	11	31	27	19	3.4
Property being stolen from a vehicle	7	11	30	26	21	3.46
Vehicles being stolen	8	12	20	32	24	3.54
Aggressive begging	5	13	26	29	24	3.56
Road safety or speeding	8	10	22	28	27	3.58
SAMPLE BASE: 161						

Respondents were questioned about whether they had ever felt worried about being assaulted or harassed in South Wigston within the last 12 months. 89% of respondents said that they did not feel worried about being assaulted or harassed compared to the county total of 94%.

Figure 14

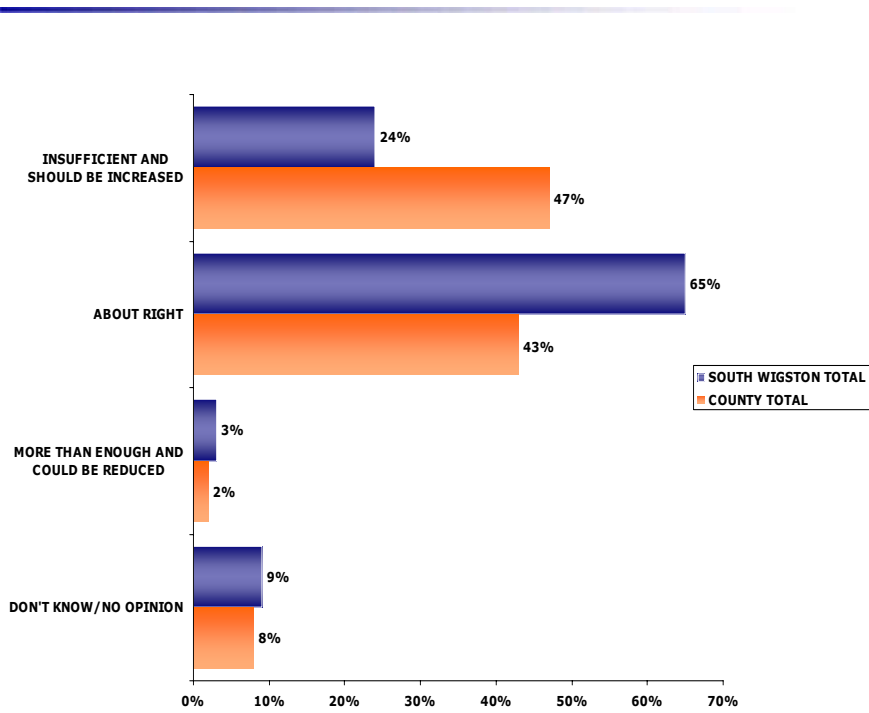
WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE EVER FELT WORRIED ABOUT BEING ASSAULTED OR HARASSED WHILST IN THE CENTRE OF SOUTH WIGSTON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Respondents were then questioned about their perceptions of police presence within South Wigston. 65% of respondents felt that the police presence was about right whilst 24% of respondents felt it was insufficient and should be increased.

Figure 15

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF SOUTH WIGSTON

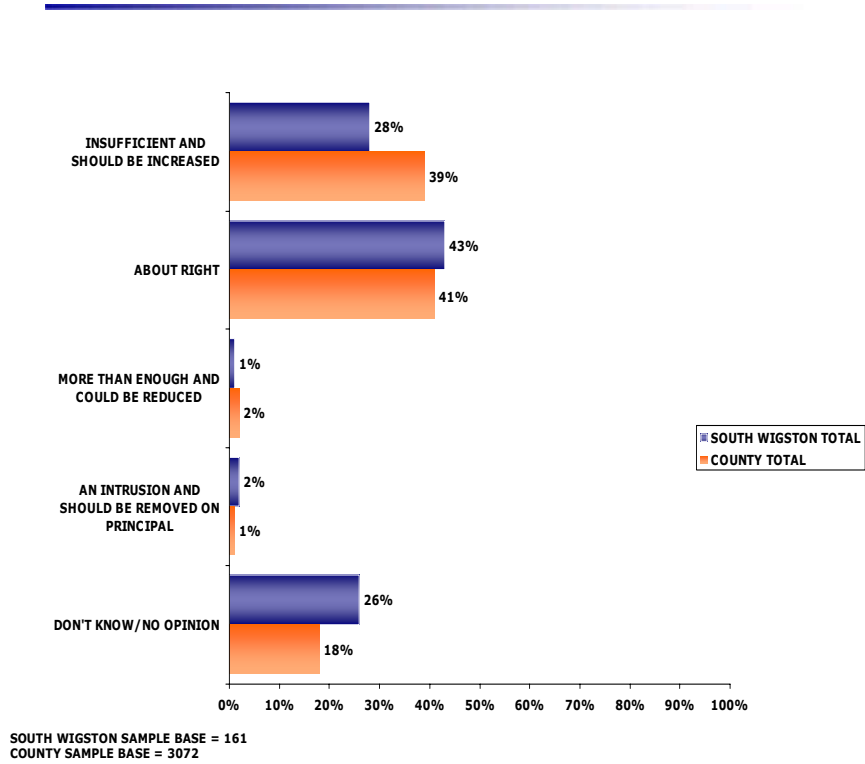


SOUTH WIGSTON SAMPLE BASE = 161
COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

When questioned about the presence of CCTV in South Wigston, 43% of respondents felt that it was about right whilst 28% of respondents felt it was insufficient and should be increased.

Figure 16

PERCEPTIONS OF CCTV PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF SOUTH WIGSTON



5 Summary

Visiting the town centre

- Shopping trips accounted for just over half of the trips to South Wigston.
- 19% of respondents worked in a local business whilst 14% were using a service in the centre of South Wigston.
- 50% of visitors arrived in South Wigston by car, with the second most common method being on foot and the third being by bus.
- Just over half of respondents visited the centre daily.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities, better or different places to eat and drink and free parking were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to South Wigston more often.

Attractions and events

- The local newspaper was identified as the most widely used method of finding out about attractions and events in the centre, whilst the least used method was the County Councils events guide.
- 3% of respondents had attended an event in the centre.

Attitudes towards the centre

- Overall, South Wigston was most likely to be described as 'friendly', 'quiet', 'tidy' and 'safe'.
- 44% of respondents reported no change in the centre of South Wigston within the last 12 months, 25% reported the centre had got worse and 15% said it had got better.
- Respondents felt that the centre catered better for elderly people than it did for young people.

Services available in the centre

- Shops, banks & building societies and the post office were the top three services that respondents were most aware of and were most likely to use on a regular basis in South Wigston.
- Just under half of respondents in South Wigston said the variety of retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs adequately.

Town centre environment

- Overall, respondents had mixed views about the environment and facilities in and around the centre.
- Respondents felt that the street lighting was good, parks were well maintained and pedestrian signage was relevant and clear.
- Having a greater range of shops, more specialist shops and the cleanliness and tidiness of the centre were seen as the areas that needed the most attention in South Wigston.

Crime and safety

- Rubbish and litter lying around, dirty pavements and chewing gum and personal theft (or pick pocketing) were seen as the most significant problems in South Wigston.
- 89% of respondents said that they had not felt worried about being assaulted or harassed while in the town centre within the last 12 months.
- 65% of respondents claimed that the level of police presence in South Wigston was about right, whereas 24% felt that it was insufficient and should be increased.
- 43% of respondents felt the presence of CCTV was about right, whilst 28% of respondents was insufficient and should be increased.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

- Overall, respondents had mixed views about South Wigston. 57% of respondents were satisfied with South Wigston as a place to shop, visit and to do business. However, although a large proportion of respondents reported no change within the last 12 months, 28% reported that the centre had got worse or much worse.
- Many respondents were aware of and users of services such as shops, the bank or building society, the post office and the doctor or health centre in South Wigston.
- Findings indicated that South Wigston catered better for elderly people than it did for young people. This shows how the centre serves different groups of people.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities, better or different places to eat and drink and free parking were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to South Wigston more often.
- Seating, public toilets and the cleanliness and tidiness of the centre were identified as aspects of the town centre with the most scope for improvement.
- Respondents felt more attention should be given to 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 personal theft were seen as the most significant issues.