



BMG Research Report

Leicestershire Town and Village Centres Survey:
Thurmaston
2006

Prepared for:
Leicestershire County
Council & Leicester Shire
Economic Partnership

Prepared by:
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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 Thurmaston.

Report contents

Section 2 of this report looks at why respondents visited Thurmaston, 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 Thurmaston, 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 Thurmaston 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

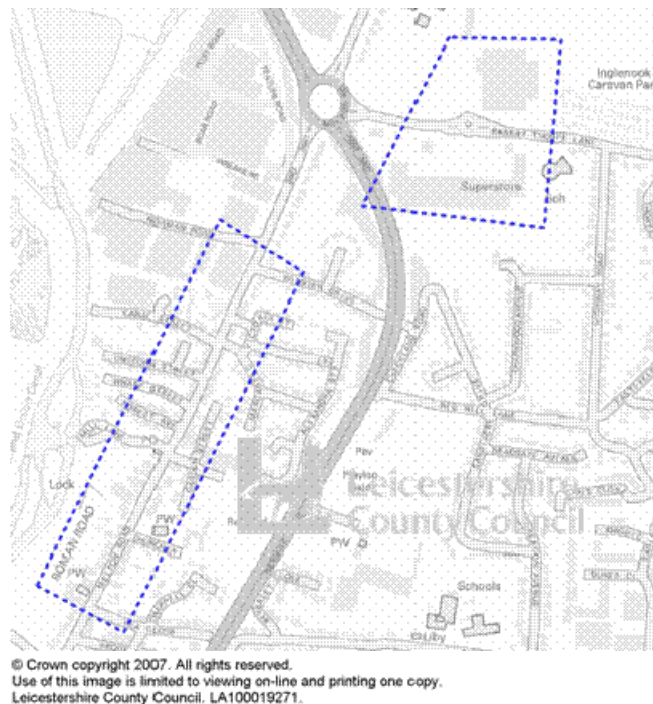
In total, 3000 interviews were planned across the 17 settlements. The sample structure called for a minimum of 100 interviews per settlement, with the remaining 1300 interviews distributed pro-rata on the basis of population size, meaning that the target for some of the villages was only a little over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

Figure 1



Source: Leicestershire County Council

Respondent Profile

Within Thurmaston 180 interviews were achieved. Of the sample, there were more female respondents than male (61% female, 39% male). 17% of respondents in Thurmaston were aged 16-24, 42% were aged 25-44, and 28% were aged 45-64, with the remaining 14% being of retirement age (65+). As reported by the 2001 Census, within Thurmaston 12% of the population were aged between 16-24, 35% were aged between 25-44, 32% were aged between 45-64 and 22% were aged 65 and over.

The vast majority of respondents in Thurmaston (91%) described themselves as white British and 1% described themselves as other white and a further 1% as white and Black Caribbean. 8% of respondents described themselves as Indian, 2% as Pakistani, 1% as other Asian background and 1% as Caribbean. According to the 2001 Census, 83% of the population of Thurmaston described themselves as white.

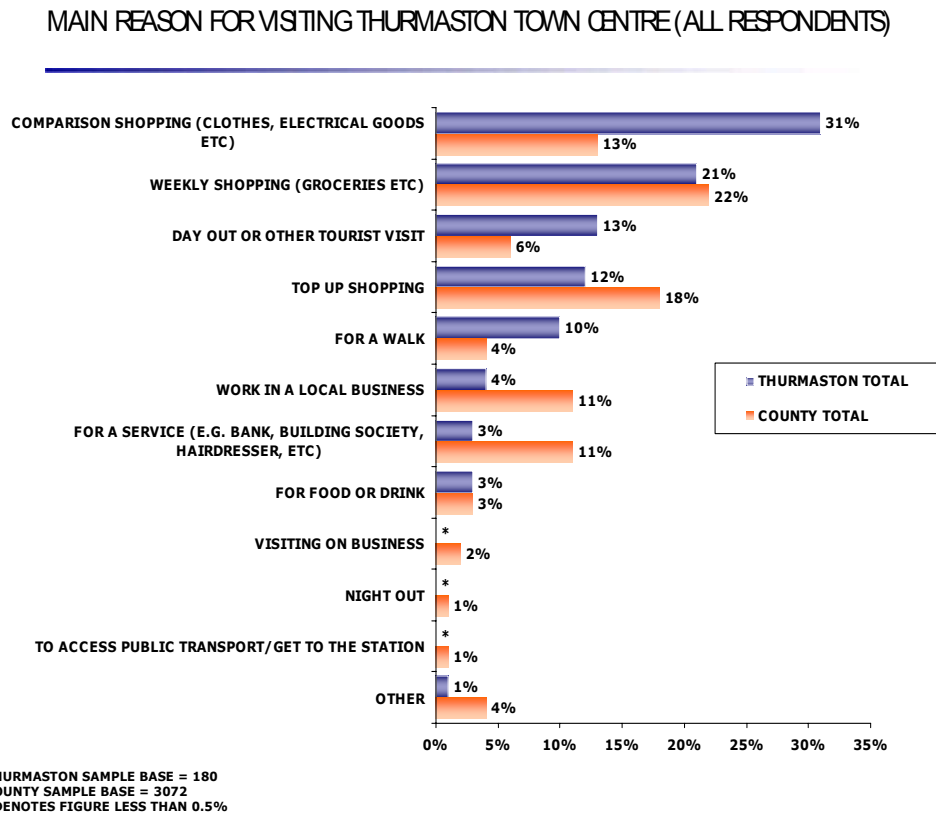
By economic status, 64% of respondents in Thurmaston were in work (59% employed and 4% self-employed). The largest proportion of those respondents not in work were retired (17% of the total Thurmaston sample). 8% of respondents who were not working were in education or training, 7% were looking after children or other dependents or the home, 2% were claiming benefits, whilst 1% of respondents 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 Thurmaston, their mode of transport used to get to the centre, frequency of visits as well as if they had visited any attractions and events in the centre.

Figure 2

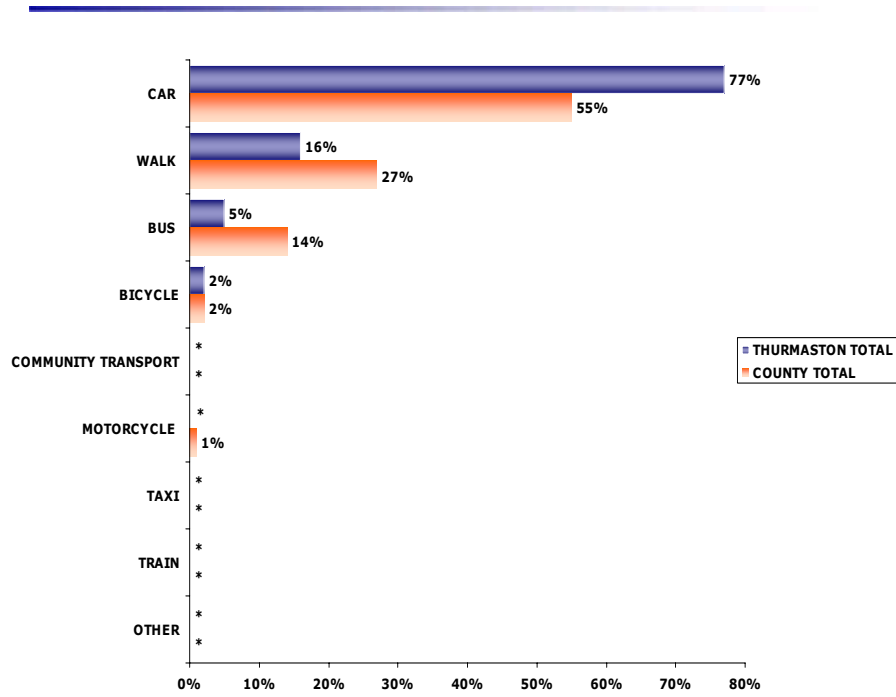


The intention of the survey was to speak to a cross-section of people present in the centres of the towns and villages, who may have been present for a whole range of purposes. Shopping trips of various sorts accounted for over three-fifths of visits to Thurmaston (64%), which was slightly higher than the county figure (53%). 13% of respondents were in Thurmaston for a day out or as a tourist, 4% were out for a walk and a further 4% worked in a local business.

Mode of transport used to get into the centre

Figure 3

MODE OF TRANSPORT TO THURMASTON TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



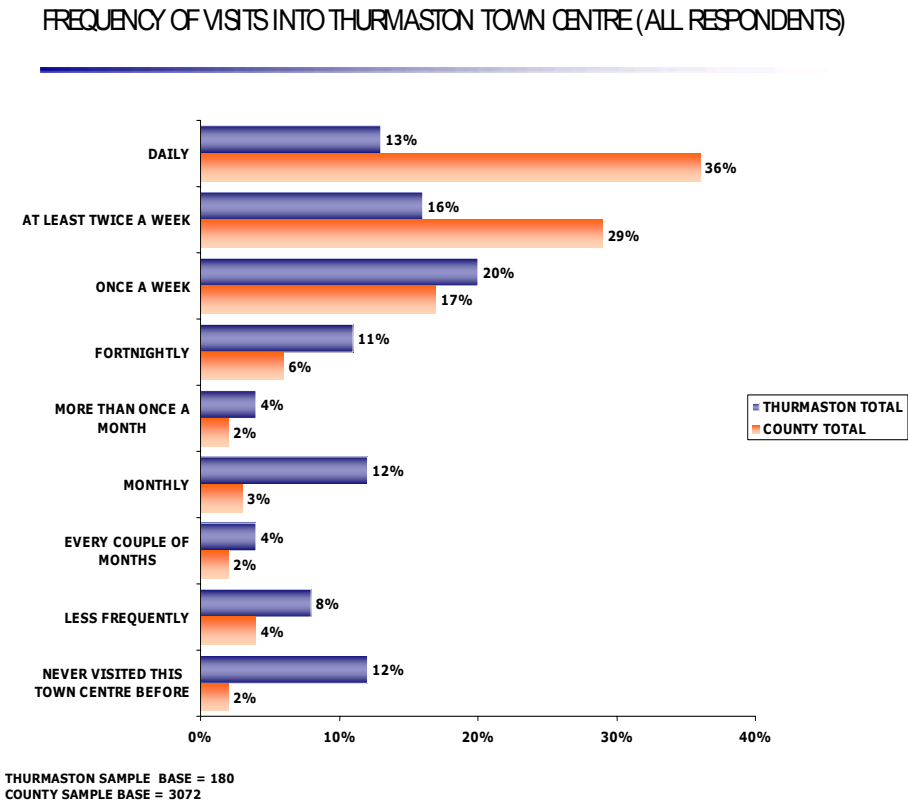
THURMASTON SAMPLE BASE = 180
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072
 * DENOTES FIGURES LESS THAN 0.5%

Just over three-quarters of trips into the centre by respondents on the day of the survey were made by car whilst 16% of respondents walked into the centre. 5% of respondents arrived by bus (which was lower than the county total of 14%) and 2% arrived by bicycle (which was the same as the county total).

Frequency of visits

As illustrated in the graph below, nearly a fifth of respondents reported that they visited the centre at least twice a week (20%), whilst 16% of respondents at least once a week and 13% visited daily.

Figure 4



Just under half of respondents visited Thurmaston both on weekdays and at weekends (47%). 30% of respondents visited Thurmaston on a weekday whilst 23% visited at weekends.

The majority of respondents (63%) visited Thurmaston during the daytime (before 5.30pm), whilst 33% visited both during the daytime and evening. Only 3% visited Thurmaston during the evening (after 5.30pm).

Of those people who visited Thurmaston town centre in the evening, 13% visited in the evening every day, whilst 9% visited once a week. Of the respondents who visited Thurmaston in the evenings, 6% of respondents visited on a Saturday or Sunday evening whilst nobody visited the centre on a Friday evening.

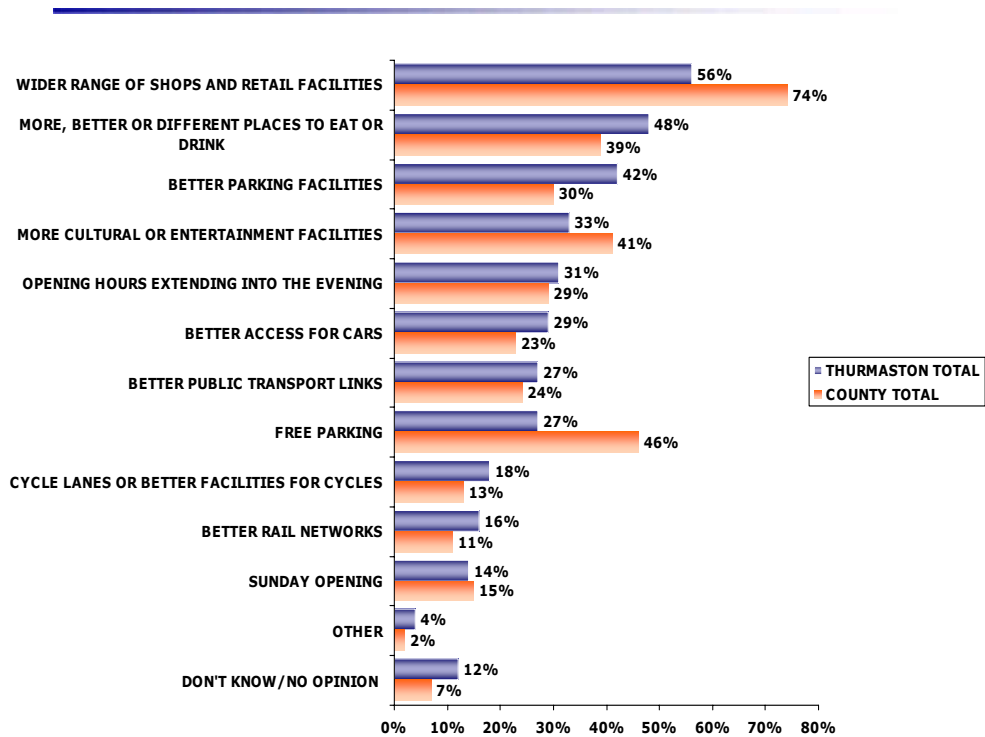
Encouraging more people to visit the centre

Respondents were asked to identify those issues which would encourage them to visit Thurmaston more often. They were able to cite more than one issue. Having a wider range of shops and retail facilities and better or different places to eat or drink were the two most frequently cited areas that would encourage respondents to visit Thurmaston more.

Better parking facilities, better cultural and entertainment venues as well as extended opening hours, particularly evening opening, were also important for some visitors.

Figure 5

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



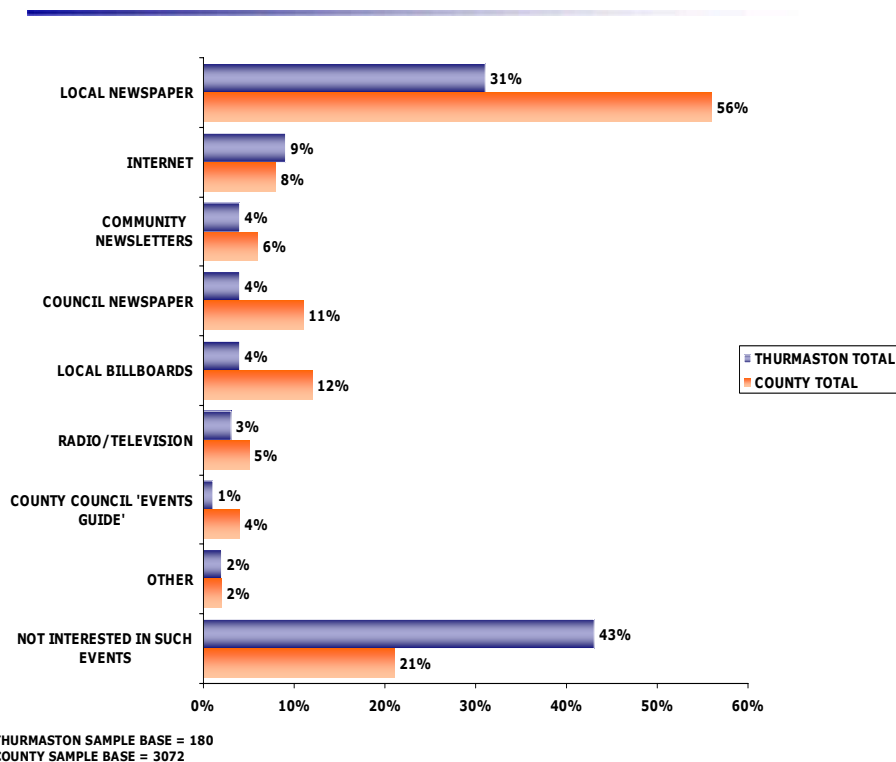
THURMASTON SAMPLE BASE = 180
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

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 Thurmaston, with other sources only modest in their importance by comparison. Radio or television and the County Council’s events guide were least likely to be used in order to find out about attractions and events in the centre of Thurmaston.

Figure 6

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



When respondents were questioned about whether they had attended any events in the centre recently, only 3% said that they had. Of these 3%, 1 person said that they had attended the carnival, another person said that they had attended the Jurassic Park or Dinosaur event and two people said that they had attended another event in the centre.

Respondents were asked about what made the centre unique, different or special in Thurmaston. 42% of those asked said there was nothing and 23% said that they didn’t know. 15% said it was a safe or low crime area, 4% said the attractive or pleasant appearance and 4% said the size. Other notable answers included:

- The layout (3%);
- The market (2%);
- Community spirit (1%);

- Convenience (1%);
- Friendly people (1%);
- Good atmosphere (1%);
- Location (1%);
- New or modern (1%);
- Quiet and peaceful (1%); and
- Shops and shopping centre (1%).

3 Attitude towards the centre

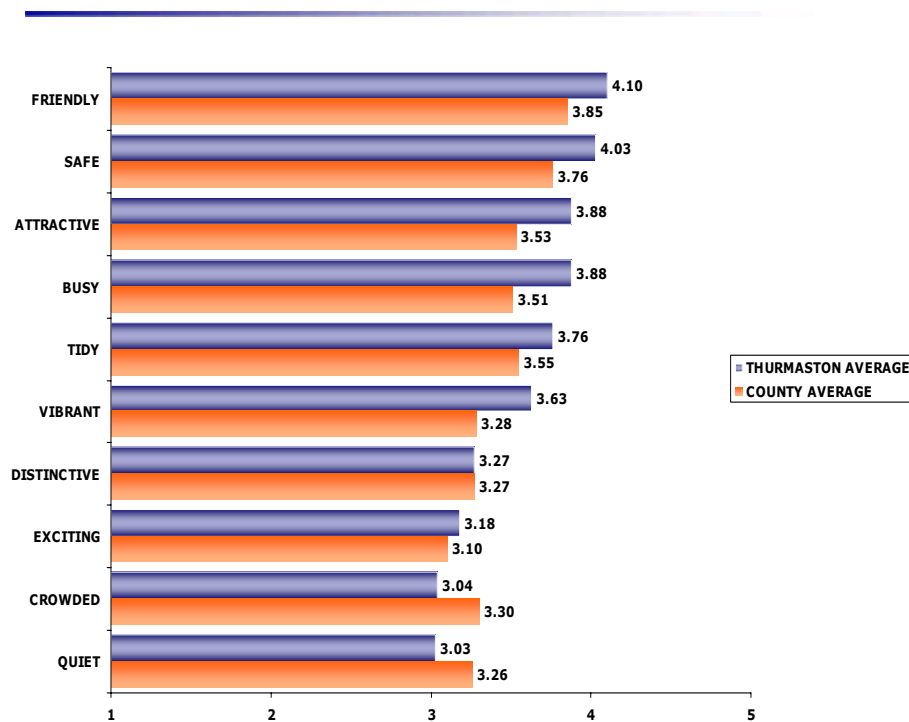
This section examines the attitudes of respondents to the different aspects of Thurmaston, considering whether the centre is a good place to shop, work and live as well as discussing the different services available in the area.

Description and attitudes towards the centre

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

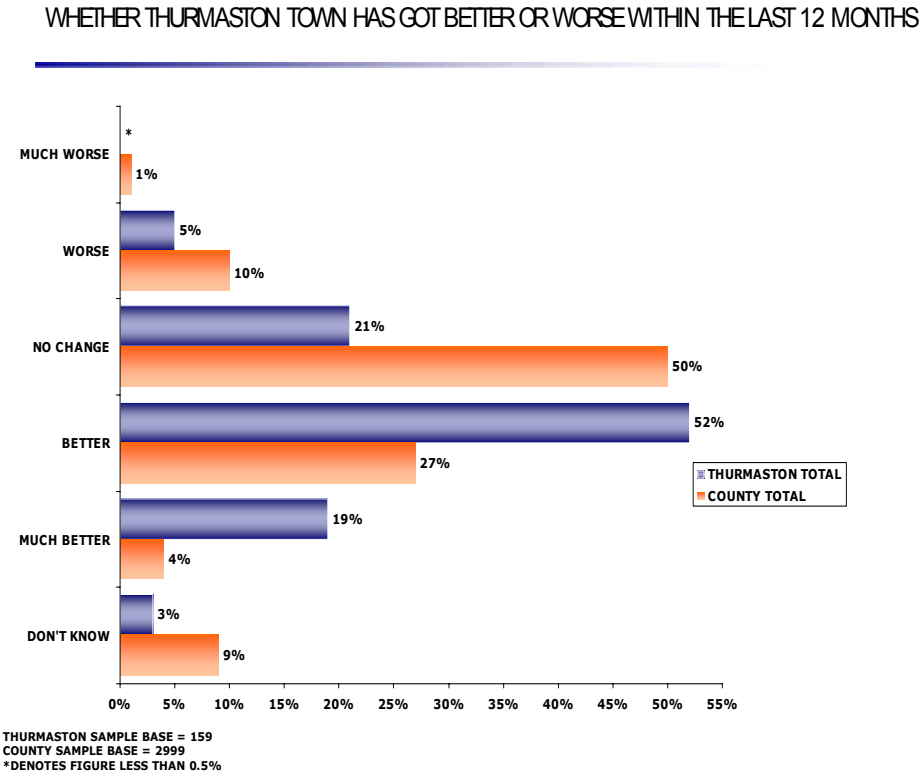
Figure 7

AVERAGE RATING OF THURMASTON TOWN CENTRE



Just over half of respondents reported that Thurmaston had got better over the last 12 months. 21% reported no change, whilst 5% of respondents said it had got worse.

Figure 8



All respondents were asked for their view on how well Thurmaston served different groups in the population. The results for each of these groups are shown in Table 1 below. It was clear that respondents in Thurmaston felt that the best served group were shoppers and visitors. However, there was concern about how the centre served young people than for any other group. 10% of respondents thought the centre was very poor or poor for young people.

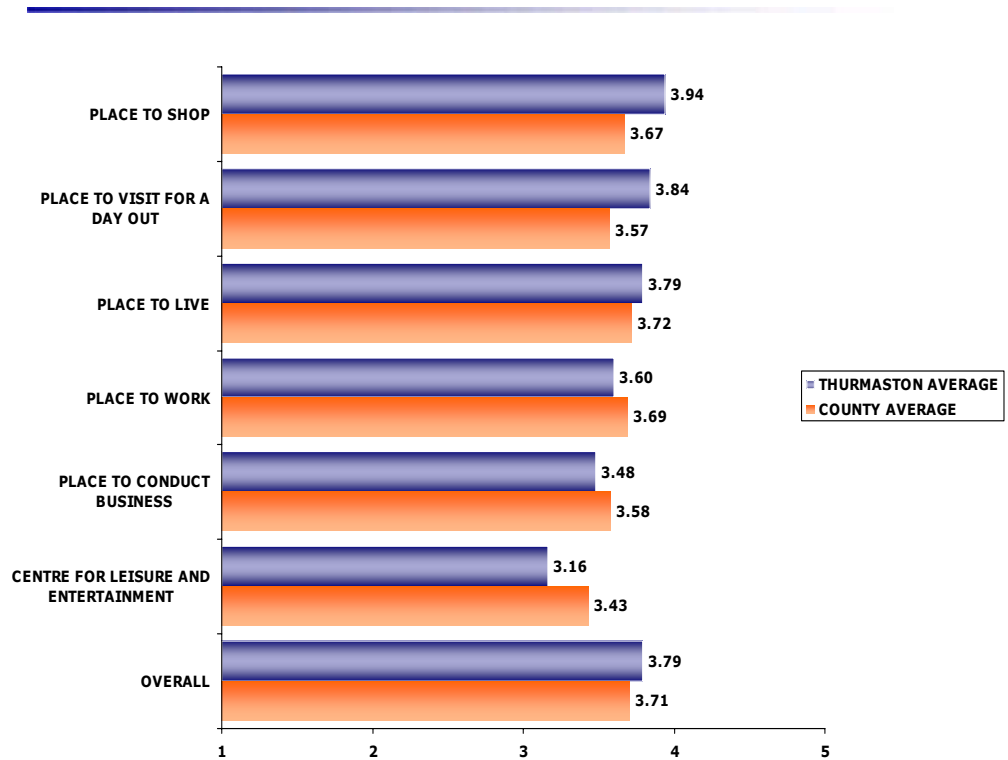
Table 1

RATING OF THURMASTON FOR VARIOUS GROUPS							
	Very poor	Poor	Neither good nor poor	Good	Very good	DK/no opinion	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Families	0	3	22	55	18	2	3.90
Visitors	0	0	22	66	12	1	3.84
People with disabilities	1	4	25	55	9	6	3.72
Elderly people	1	4	31	48	14	3	3.71
Shoppers	0	1	18	69	11	1	3.67
Young people	2	8	33	43	10	4	3.55
SAMPLE BASE: 180							

How good are the centres as places for particular activities?

Figure 9

RATING OF THURMASTON ASA PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, SHOP, ETC (ALL RESPONDENTS)

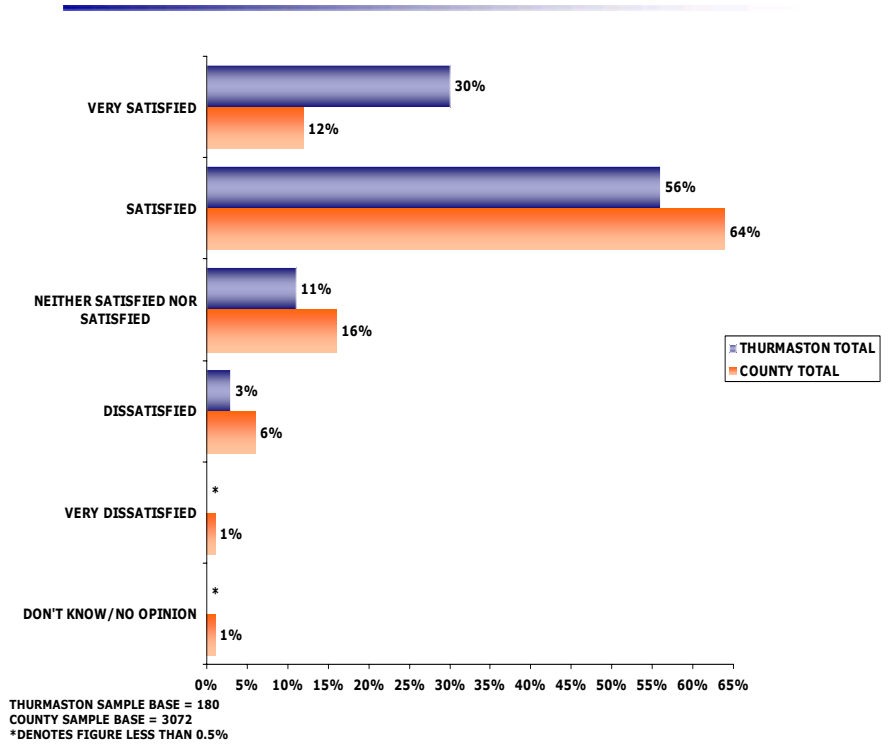


Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most positive score, Thurmaston was rated 3.79 which was slightly higher than the county average of 3.71 - that is, they were considered as well above average, good but not very good. Thurmaston was seen as a good place to shop (3.94), a good place to visit for a day out (3.84) and a good place to live (3.79). However, Thurmaston was scored lower compared to the county as centre for leisure and entertainment (3.16 Thurmaston, 3.43 county) as well as a good place to conduct business (3.48 Thurmaston, 3.58 county).

Overall, satisfaction was very high amongst respondents as they considered Thurmaston a good place to shop, visit and to do business. The graph below demonstrates that the overall level of satisfaction for Thurmaston (86% Thurmaston, 76% county).

Figure 10

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THURMASTON ASA GOOD PLACE TO SHOP, VISIT AND DO BUSINESS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

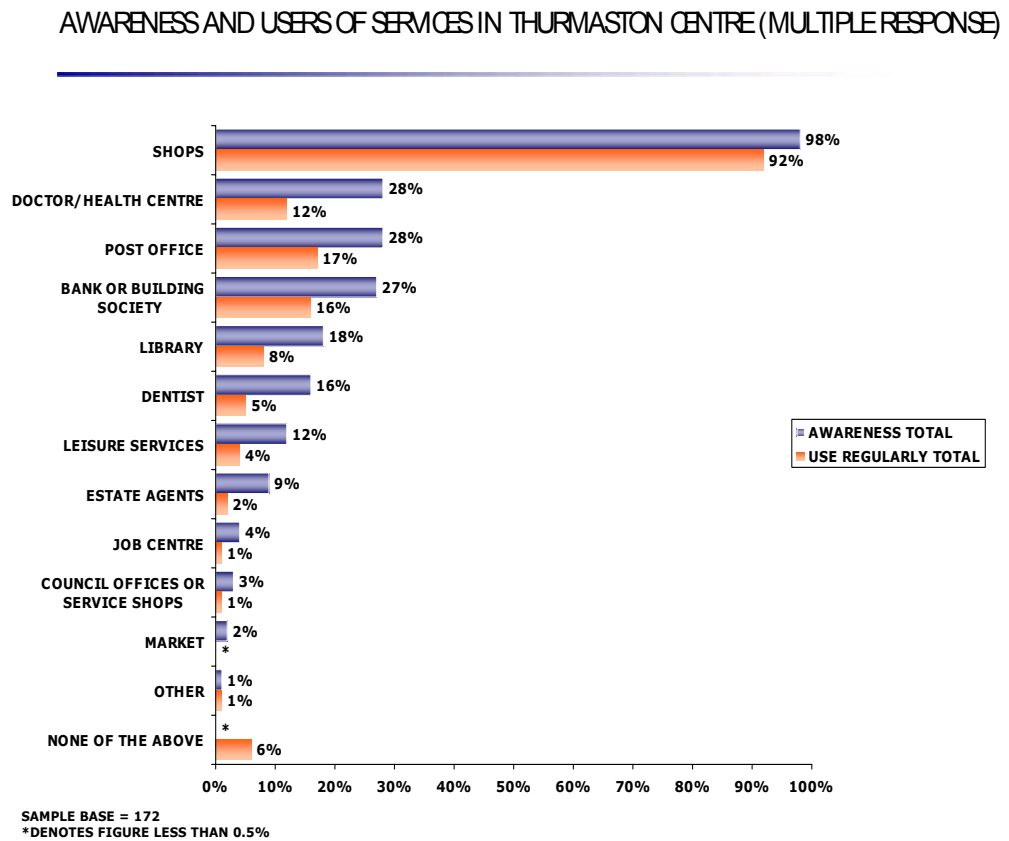


Services available in the centre

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

As shown in the graph below respondents were more likely to be aware of and use shops compared to any other service in Thurmaston. Furthermore, respondents were aware of health services within the centre of Thurmaston but less people used them on a regular basis - 28% of respondents were aware of a doctor's or health centre in Thurmaston, but 12% of respondents were regular users whilst 16% of respondents were aware of a dentist in Thurmaston whilst only 5% were regular users.

Figure 11

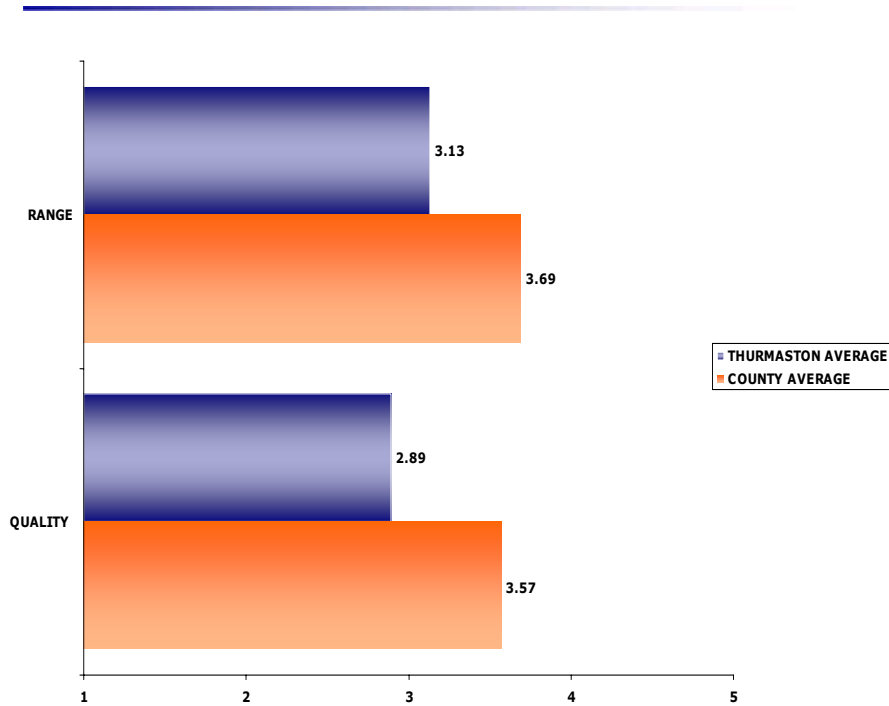


Respondents were questioned about whether or not Thurmaston met their retail needs. 62% of respondents in Thurmaston said that the variety of the retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs, whilst 14% said it did not.

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of places to eat out in Thurmaston 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 as shown in figure 12, a pattern which reflected the position across the county as a whole. However, the figures for Thurmaston were lower than the county averages.

Figure 12

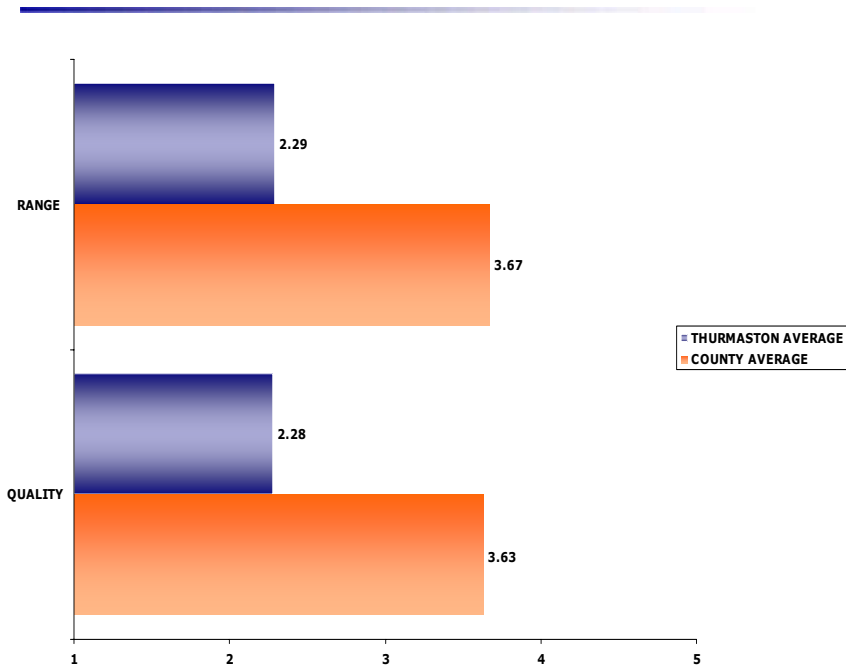
RANGE AND QUALITY OF THE PLACES TO EAT OUT IN THURMASTON



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

Figure 13

RANGE AND QUALITY OF PUBS, BARS AND CLUBS IN THURMASTON



Town Centre Environment

Respondents were given a series of statements about the environment of the 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 THURMASTON						
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
Shop fronts are well maintained	1	8	16	41	34	3.99
Pavements and walkways are safe and well maintained	2	6	13	53	25	3.93
Pedestrian signage is relevant, clear and easy to understand	1	9	16	46	23	3.88
Street lighting is good	2	3	21	39	22	3.87
Pavements and walkways are clean and tidy	3	6	18	57	16	3.75
The parks are well maintained	3	5	18	36	14	3.69
The design and layout of the centre is attractive	8	9	15	44	22	3.64
The centre is well planted in summertime	3	8	22	34	13	3.58
Seating in and around shopping areas is well maintained	31	19	22	20	2	2.39
There is sufficient seating in and around the centre	45	26	12	12	1	1.94
The baby changing facilities provided are clean and tidy	38	15	12	5	3	1.90
The public toilets are clean and tidy	49	14	14	7	3	1.85
There are enough baby changing facilities	39	17	9	7	2	1.83
There are enough public toilets	49	26	7	7	2	1.76
SAMPLE BASE: 180						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

Overall, respondents had positive views about the environment and facilities available in the centre of Thurmaston. Respondents felt that pavements and walkways were clean and tidy (78% agreed or agreed strongly), shop fronts were well maintained (75%) and pavements and walkways were clean and tidy (73%). Respondents tended to disagree with the statement that there were enough public toilets (75% disagreed or disagreed strongly). This was followed by there was sufficient seating

in and around the centre (71% disagreed or disagreed strongly) and the public toilets were clean and tidy (63% disagreed or disagreed strongly).

Respondents were then asked to respond to a series of statements about aspects in and around the centre of Thurmaston 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 THURMASTON						
	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
Road signs make it easy for cars to access the centre	4	6	15	49	25	3.87
It is easy for drivers to find the car parks around the centre	1	9	16	51	23	3.87
Roads in the centre are well maintained	1	5	18	62	13	3.82
Pedestrians can walk around the centre without feeling threatened by traffic	4	13	13	43	27	3.75
The road network provides easy access into the centre	3	7	16	59	14	3.74
The level of service in shops is of a high standard	3	9	21	49	17	3.70
The centre is accessible for disabled people and older people	2	14	24	43	13	3.53
The centre could do with more high street chain stores	6	23	18	22	31	3.47
The centre needs more local, independent shops	8	26	14	23	27	3.37
Roads in the centre are congested	5	22	24	40	9	3.27
There is enough car parking available	25	24	6	22	22	2.92
There is too much traffic noise in the centre	20	28	17	28	7	2.73
There is too much other noise (music, pubs and clubs) in the centre	36	23	18	15	8	2.36
Car parking costs too much	59	21	8	10	2	1.74
SAMPLE BASE: 180						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

As demonstrated in the above table 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the centre were well maintained. In descending order of agreement, it was easy for drivers to find the car parks around

the centre (74%), road signs made it easy for cars to access the centre (74%) and the road network provided easy access into the centre (73%). Four-fifths of respondents (80%) disagreed with the statement that car parking costs too much.

Respondents were given a list of options and asked to say which issues they thought most needed attention in Thurmaston. The most frequently cited responses were providing more facilities such as seating and toilets (56%), a greater range of shops (48%) and providing more parking (45%). When asked to prioritise their *top three* areas of improvement the same issues arose again. In descending order, respondents cited providing more facilities such as seating and toilets (41%), providing more parking (33%) and a greater range of shops (28%).

4 Crime and safety

This section looks at how respondents in Thurmaston 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, dirty pavements and chewing gum was seen as a problem in Thurmaston (13% of respondents considered this to be a very big problem or big problem). This was followed by rubbish and litter lying around (12%) and road safety or speeding (9%). Areas that were seen as less of a problem included racial harassment (89% considered this either not a problem or only a small problem), aggressive begging (88%) and assaults and other violent crime such as personal robberies and muggings (86%).

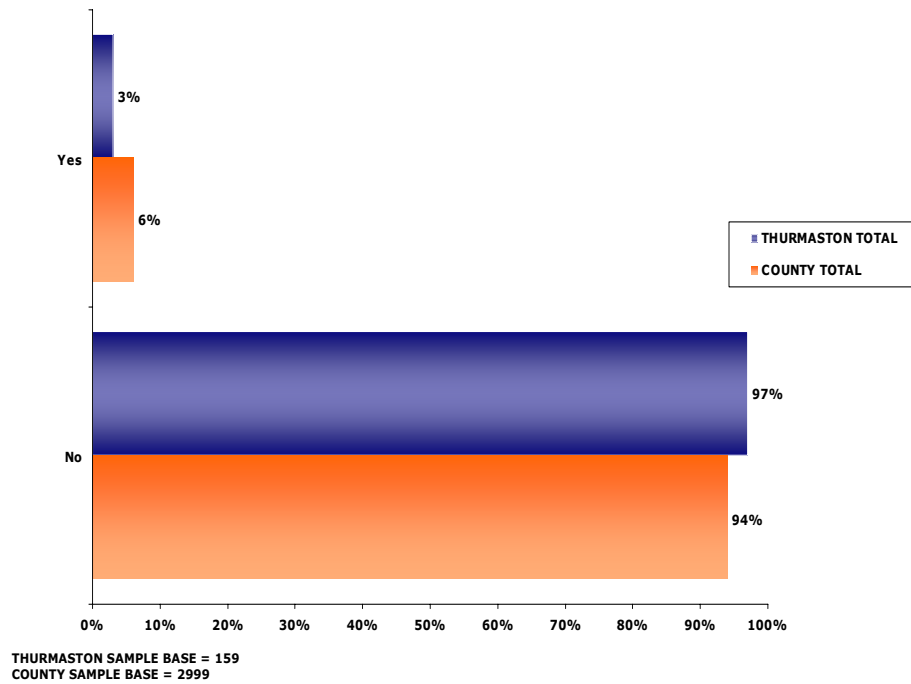
Table 4

AREAS THAT ARE SEEN AS PROBLEMS IN THE CENTRE OF THURMASTON						
	Very big problem	Big Problem	Neither big nor small	Small Problem	Not a problem at all	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
Racial harassment	1	3	6	7	82	3.9
Dirty pavements and chewing gum	6	7	11	20	56	4.14
Rubbish and litter lying around	3	9	11	18	57	4.19
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	2	4	12	8	70	4.46
Road safety or speeding	3	6	6	11	72	4.46
Groups of people hanging round the streets	4	4	6	8	73	4.47
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	3	3	7	13	73	4.53
Vehicles being stolen	3	4	7	7	76	4.54
Verbal abuse or other aggressive behaviour	2	4	6	10	75	4.55
Property being stolen from a vehicle	1	5	8	8	75	4.56
Street canvassers	0	4	9	9	77	4.61
Personal theft (pick pocketing)	1	7	21	35	30	4.61
People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces	1	6	4	8	78	4.64
Assaults and other violent crime (personal robbery, mugging)	1	3	7	8	78	4.64
Fly tipping	1	2	8	11	72	4.66
People using or dealing drugs	0	4	6	9	77	4.66
Aggressive begging	1	2	7	7	81	4.69
SAMPLE BASE: 180						

Respondents were questioned about whether they ever felt worried about being assaulted or harassed in Thurmaston within the last 12 months. 97% of respondents said that they had not felt worried compared to the county total of 94%.

Figure 14

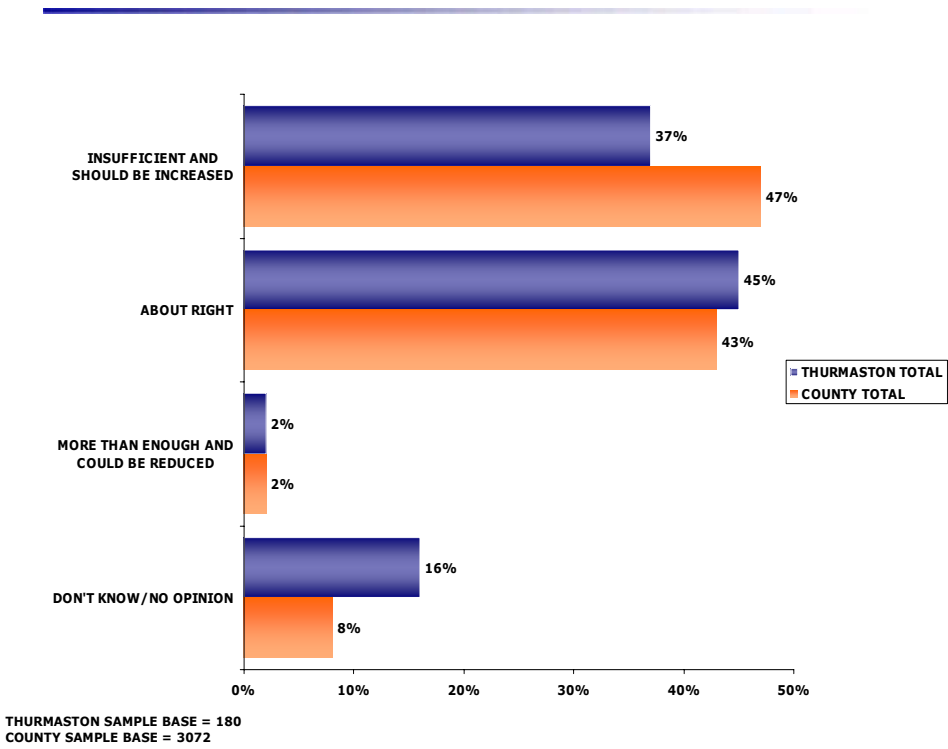
WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE EVER FELT WORRIED ABOUT BEING ASSAULTED OR HARASSED WHILST IN THE CENTRE OF THURMASTON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



When respondents were asked about what they thought about the police presence in Thurmaston 45% felt it was about right, whilst 37% said it was insufficient and should be increased.

Figure 15

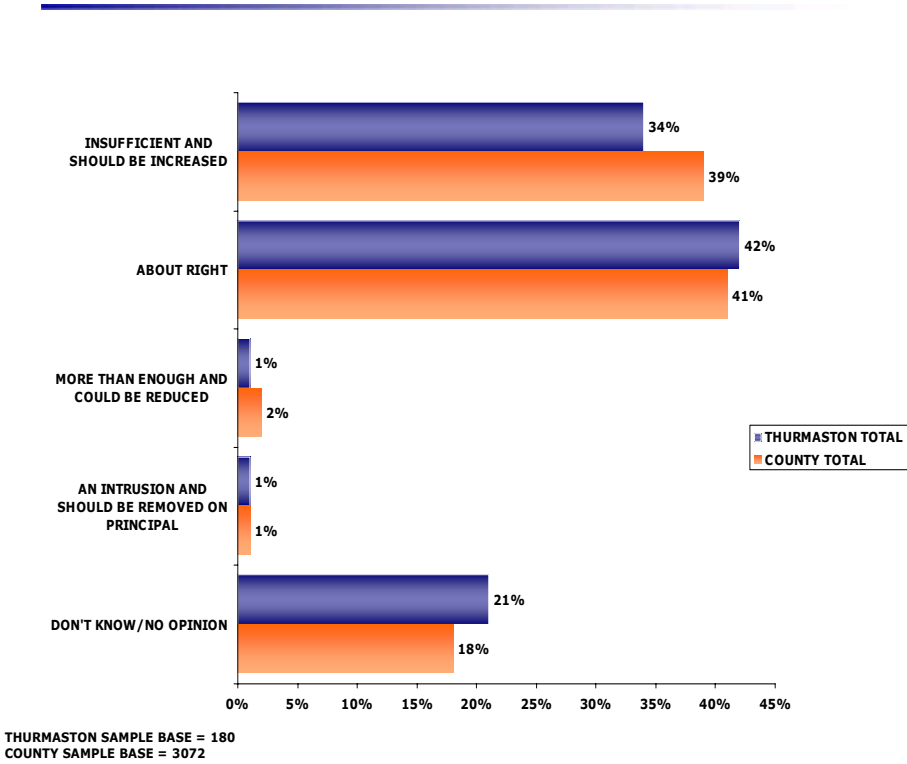
PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF THURMASTON



When questioned about the presence of CCTV in Thurmaston, 42% of respondents felt it was about right, whilst 34% said it was insufficient and should be increased.

Figure 16

PERCEPTIONS OF CCTV PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF THURMASTON



5 Summary

Visiting the centre

- Shopping trips accounted for 64% of the trips to Thurmaston.
- 13% of respondents were in Thurmaston as a tourist or on a day out, 4% were out for a walk, whilst 4% of respondents worked in a local business.
- The majority of visitors arrived in Thurmaston by car, with the second most common method being on foot and the third being by bus.
- Nearly two-fifths of respondents visited the centre at least twice a week.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities, better places for food and drink and better parking facilities were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Thurmaston 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 3% of respondents had attended an event in the centre.

Attitudes towards the centre

- Overall, Thurmaston was most likely to be described as 'friendly', 'safe', 'attractive' and 'busy'.
- 52% of respondents felt that Thurmaston had got better within the last 12 months, whilst 21% of respondents reported no change and 5% 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

- Shops were overwhelmingly the top service that respondents were most aware of and were most likely to use on a regular basis in Thurmaston.
- Just over two-fifths of respondents in Thurmaston said the variety of retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs.

Town Centre environment

- Overall, respondents were positive about the environment and facilities in and around the centre.
- Respondents felt that the design and layout of the centre was attractive, pavements and walkways were clean and tidy and shop fronts were well maintained.
- Having more facilities such as seating and toilets, more parking and a greater range of shops were seen as the areas that needed the most attention.

Crime and safety

- Dirty pavements and chewing gum, rubbish and litter lying around and road safety and speeding were seen as the most significant problems in Thurmaston.
- Racial harassment, aggressive begging and assaults and other violent crime were not seen as a problem, or seen only as a small problem.
- 97% of respondents said that they had not felt worried about being assaulted or harassed while in the centre within the last 12 months.
- Just over three-fifths of respondents said policing in Thurmaston was about right whilst 37% said it was insufficient and should be increased.
- 42% of respondents felt that the CCTV presence in Thurmaston was about right whilst 34% said it was insufficient and should be increased.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

- Overall, respondents had positive views about Thurmaston. 86% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with Thurmaston as a place to shop, visit and to do business. Moreover, 69% reported that the centre had got better or much better within the last 12 months.
- Overwhelmingly, many respondents were aware of and users of services such as the shops in Thurmaston.
- Findings indicated that Thurmaston 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, better places for food and drink and better parking facilities were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Thurmaston more often.
- Public toilets and seating were identified as aspects of the town centre with the most scope for improvement, with most people thinking these facilities were inadequate.
- Respondents felt more attention should be given to facilities such as seating and toilets, more parking and a greater range of shops within Thurmaston.
- In terms of crime and safety issues, dirty pavements and chewing gum, rubbish and litter lying around and road safety and speeding were seen as the most significant issues.