

Leicester City Council Residents Survey

**Research among Leicester City
residents**

11 December 2008

Research conducted on behalf of:



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Executive Summary

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This robust and representative survey of Leicester residents provides encouraging findings for the Council as well as identifying clear priorities which, if addressed successfully, can help to improve public satisfaction in the future.

There are a number of positives to be taken from the long-term picture – most specifically what has been achieved in reducing fear of crime and improving confidence in community safety. Substantial positive shifts have been made between 2005 and 2008 in this area. Additionally, residents are much more likely to be satisfied with their Council than in 1998, and are more likely to say it treats people fairly. Furthermore, public confidence in key liveability services such as street lighting, pavement maintenance and street cleaning has increased. Particular service areas that have seen a significant increase in satisfaction amongst their users since 2005 are: arts, culture & entertainments, museums, primary and secondary schools and social services for children.

However, there are also areas for improvement. Residents are less likely to feel they belong to their street or local area as they were in 2005. Additionally, residents still feel that the Council needs to make more of an effort to obtain their views, and only a minority feel informed about its services and activities. This perhaps may feed into the increase in the number of residents saying they feel the Council is too remote and impersonal.

In light of these findings, communicating effectively to residents will play a key role in changing perceptions. Residents will want to understand why change happens and often instinctively assume the worst or that nothing has changed if they aren't informed. The fact that few residents feel informed about Council services and activities highlights the need for communication, and as fewer residents are proactively finding out about the Council, effective, targeted communication becomes even more important to reaching residents.

Satisfaction with the Council and area

A majority of residents are satisfied with the Council, with 61% satisfied and 19% dissatisfied. Encouragingly, satisfaction with the Council has improved significantly since 1998.

When delving into resident perceptions of different aspects of the Council, however, a more mixed picture emerges. Since 2005, more now agree that the Council treats all types of people fairly (49%), and while perception of the Council providing value for money is relatively unchanged, slightly more agree than disagree that it does (37% versus 35%). Increasingly residents believe the Council does not play a part in improving the quality of life in their local neighbourhood (41%, up from 31% in 2005). While over half (57%) believe the Council provides good quality services, slightly more say it does not than in 2005 (21% in 2008 versus 18% in 2005). Additionally, the number saying the Council is remote and impersonal has increased from 38% in 2005 to 47% today. Finally, as in previous years, residents overwhelmingly believe the Council needs to make more of an effort to find out what local people want: 78% agree while just 7% disagree.

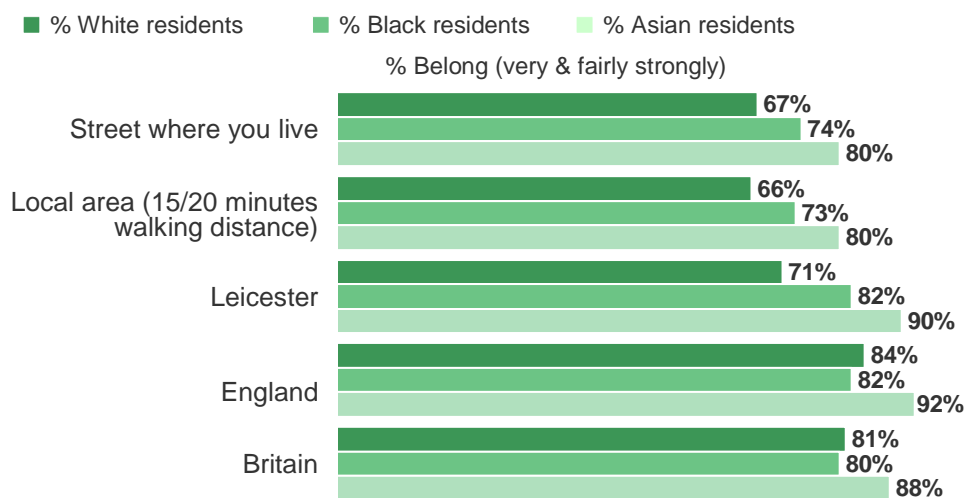
Satisfaction with Leicester as a place to live stands at nearly four in five (79%), which is level with 2005 but a drop from 1998 (81%). Residents are also slightly less satisfied with their neighbourhood than 2005, and significantly less satisfied than 1998.

Community cohesion and local decision-making

Residents are less likely to identify strongly with their street, local area, Leicester or Britain than they were in 2005. They are, however, more likely to identify strongly with England. The chart below illustrates how, generally, BME residents are more likely to identify with all areas than their White counterparts, with Asian residents particularly more likely to do so.

Sense of belonging

Q How strongly do you feel you belong to each of the following?



Base: 2,305 Leicester City Council residents, fieldwork dates: 2 July - 24 September 2008
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Three quarters (77%) agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along. The vast majority of Leicester residents will interact with someone from a different background: 95% say they regularly meet and talk with someone from a different ethnic origin, and 86% say this for someone from a different social class. The most commonly-cited place where different backgrounds meet are local shops, in the neighbourhood, at work, at a place of study or at public focal points such as restaurants and pubs.

One in five (21%) has given unpaid help in the past year, with children's education and activities, faith groups and community groups being the largest recipients.

Few have been involved in groups that make decisions in their local area. Only 8% of residents state that they have been involved in groups that make decisions in their local area, and these tend to be residents from more affluent backgrounds.

The overwhelming majority of Leicester residents are actively working to decrease their impact on the environment, with only six percent saying they do nothing. The most commonly mentioned is switching off appliances when not in use (73%), recycling waste (70%) and saving water (50%).

Service satisfaction

Broadly, residents are satisfied with their local public services and facilities, and in many areas are more likely to say they are satisfied than in 2005. Residents are particularly satisfied with Leicester Market (89% of users), street lighting (86%), waste and refuse collection (80%), primary schools (81% of users), and family centres and nursery schools (79% of users). Improved services include not only arts, culture and entertainment and museums, social services for children and primary and secondary schools but also key areas such as street lighting, street cleaning, and pavement maintenance. However, council housing is one service that has declined significantly from 2005, with a significant increase in tenants expressing dissatisfaction.

Neighbourhood and community safety

Positively, residents are less concerned about being a victim of crime and anti-social behaviour than in 2005. More people stated that they were not worried than those said they were worried in each of the areas about crime and anti-social behaviour asked. Residents are most concerned about having their home broken into (44% at least fairly worried), followed by teenagers hanging around the street (43%) and their car being stolen (33%). Residents are less likely to be worried about noisy or inconsiderate neighbours, being the victim of attack or abuse because of their skin colour, ethnic origin, religion, or gender.

More people feel that public drunkenness and rowdiness, people not treating others with respect and consideration, and the dealing and using of drugs are not problems in their local area. Residents are split on whether parents not taking responsibility for their children is a problem or not.

A majority feel that the police and local public services seek residents' views about issues surrounding crime and anti-social behaviour. This perception can increase goodwill as residents feel more empowered about these issues.

Communication needs

While few feel informed about the services and actions of the Council, more people do feel informed about how to complain and environmental issues in Leicester than in 2005. However, significantly fewer now feel the Council keeps them well informed about the standards, services and benefits the Council provides than was the case in 2005 (38% in 2008 versus 45% in 2005). Few residents are likely to feel well informed about how the Council spends its budget (27%), why it makes the decisions it does (26%), or how well the Council is performing (33%). In tandem with the decrease in the proportion of residents who feel informed by the Council, between a quarter to a third of residents would like more information in these areas, with the most commonly-cited areas of information need being: who to contact at the Council about services and benefits provided (35%) and festivals and events occurring in the local area (35%).

Half of residents receive information about the Council from their local newspaper (53%), followed by LINK magazine (43%). Most sources of information are used less than in 2005, though a notable exception is the growing popularity of the Council website (18% now use it, compared to 4% in 2001 and 9% in 2005). In line with current use, residents say they prefer to hear their Council news from LINK magazine (41%) and their local newspaper (38%). For those who use the Council website, the vast majority (85%) found it easy to find the information they were looking for. Finally, nearly four in five (77%) have ever seen a copy of LINK magazine, and of those nearly half (48%) have read all or most of it.

