



# Know Northumberland Research Summary – Northumberland Residents' Survey 2015

January 2016

## Headline Results

### Satisfaction with the Council

Between 2012 and 2015 resident's views of the Council in terms of overall satisfaction, trust, value for money and that the Council acts on residents' concerns have improved significantly.

- Over half (53%) of residents are satisfied with the Council, an increase of ten percentage points from 2012.
- More than a third (36%) of residents feel the Council provides value for money (an increase of seven percentage points on 2012).
- 45% of residents feel the Council acts on residents' concerns (up six percentage points).
- Half (50%) of residents trust the Council, an increase of four percentage points on 2012.

### Attitudes to the Local Area

Attitudes towards the local area have remained consistent since 2012.

- Three in four residents (77%) are satisfied with their local area (an increase of two percentage points).
- A quarter of residents (25%) feel their local area has got worse over the past 12 months, a fall of four percentage points.
- 76% feel they belong to their local area compared to 74% in 2012.
- Three fifths (62%) of residents agree that people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well.

### Geographical Differences

- Residents in the South East of the County are consistently less positive about their local area, their health and their general quality of life.
- Residents in West Northumberland are more likely to be critical of the Council in terms of the way it runs things and its value for money.

This research summary is produced by the Northumberland County Council Corporate Research Team. It provides a summary of the findings from the Northumberland Residents' Perception Survey 2015 undertaken on behalf of the Council by Ipsos Mori.

The survey examined resident's perceptions on:

- Satisfaction with the local area and Council Services;
- How people get involved in their local area and whether they feel they belong;
- The economy and the impact on household finances; and
- General health and feelings of well-being.

The full report from Ipsos Mori is available [here](#).

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## Background and Methodology

The research took place through a self-completion postal questionnaire during September and October 2015 which was delivered to 8,140 randomly selected addresses. 2,522 valid responses were received; a rate of 31%. This return is such that comparisons can be made across the Council's four operating areas (Central, North, South East and West).

The survey questionnaire includes questions drawn from the previous 2012 survey which was carried out in a consortium with six North East authorities. This allows (for comparable questions) the "direction of travel" for Northumberland to be compared. The full Ipsos Mori report also includes comparable results where possible for Darlington Borough Council (2012 / 13 postal residents' survey) and for "Council A" (an anonymous North East Authority whose survey was carried out by Ipsos Mori over the same time period as Northumberland).

A full detailed report produced by Ipsos Mori and topline results tables can be viewed on the Northumberland Knowledge website [here](#).

## Overview of the Findings

For ease of comparison, the following table presents a digest of the key findings from the Survey.

### Direction of Travel

Since 2012, overall resident satisfaction with their local areas as a place to live has increased from 75% to 77%. Satisfaction is higher across the Central (86%), North (83%) and West (84%) areas but lower within the South East (69%). Residents who feel strongly that they belong to their local area has risen 2 percentage points (from 74% to 76%).

In terms of satisfaction with the Council, more residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things (rising from 43% to 53%) and more believe the Council provides value for money (an increase of 7 percentage points from 29% to 36%). Over a half of residents feel that the Council keeps them informed about the services and benefits it provides (rising from 49% to 51%) and 50% of residents feel they trust the Council (an increase of 4 percentage points on 2012).

### Benchmark with neighbouring authorities

Compared with the 2012 NE consortium average, some attitudes towards the Council are still lower in Northumberland. For example speaking positively of the Council (28% compared to 36%) and feeling informed (51% compared to 57%). However results in Northumberland are generally in line with or better than the more recent 2015 results for Council A. With respect to how people get involved in their local area and whether they feel they belong,

Northumberland has slightly higher outcomes than other local authorities. Satisfaction with the Council is generally in line with Darlington and Council A, but higher than the Council Consortium average in 2012.

### Area breakdown

In terms of attitudes towards and involvement with the local area satisfaction is highest in the Central, North and West of the County, This includes satisfaction with the area as a place to live, sense of belonging and a feeling that residents pull together. Residents in the South East of the County are consistently less positive about their community, their health and their general quality of life. They are less satisfied with the local area (69% compared to 77% overall) less likely to say that local people pull together to improve things in the area (38% compared to 52% overall) and they are less likely to rate their quality of health as good (58% compared to 63% overall).

However residents in South East Northumberland are better disposed towards the Council. They are more likely than average to speak highly of it (32% compared to 28% overall), to say it acts on residents' concerns (48% compared to 45% overall) and to trust it (53% compared to 50% overall). It is residents in West Northumberland who are particularly critical of the Council. They are more likely than average to be dissatisfied with the way it runs things (35% compared to 27% overall), more likely to disagree it offers value for money (39% compared to 32% overall) and more likely to be critics (36% compared to 28% overall).

		Northumberland Areas				Nland	NE Council Consortium
		Central	North	South East	West		
Attitudes to the Local area	Residents who overall are satisfied with their local area as a place to live	86% 85%	83% 81%	69% 66%	84% 84%	77% 75%	73%
	Residents who think over the past 12 months that their local area has got better	8% 9%	11% 6%	15% 6%	5% 4%	12% 6%	9%
	Residents who feel safe outside in the local area						
	During the day After Dark	95% 77%	95% 85%	88% 56%	92% 82%	91% 68%	
Involvement in the area	Residents who feel strongly that they belong to their local area	80% 78%	80% 79%	71% 66%	87% 84%	76% 74%	68%
	Residents who agree that their local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together	72% 72%	62% 69%	58% 53%	67% 69%	62% 62%	58%
	Residents who agree that people in their local area pull together to improve the local area	63% 61%	66% 59%	38% 27%	68% 65%	52% 45%	36%
	Residents who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area	33% 31%	33% 32%	26% 24%	28% 28%	29% 27%	28%
Satisfaction with the Council	Residents who are satisfied with the way the council runs things	57% 50%	54% 47%	55% 40%	40% 44%	53% 43%	50%
	Residents who agree that the council provides good value for money	38% 30%	40% 34%	37% 28%	28% 26%	36% 29%	37%
	Residents who speak positively about the council	25% 32%	26% 32%	32% 27%	21% 28%	28% 29%	36%
	Residents who trust the council a great deal or to some extent	50% 53%	49% 49%	53% 42%	42% 46%	50% 46%	53%
	Residents who feel the council keep them informed about the services and benefits it provides	57% 54%	56% 52%	48% 43%	45% 56%	51% 49%	57%
	Residents who think the council acts on the concerns of its local residents	47% 45%	43% 42%	48% 36%	32% 36%	45% 39%	45%
Communication	Residents who do not feel confident in accessing the internet	9%	10%	9%	6%	9%	
	Residents who have been unable to do something on the Council's website	23%	20%	21%	23%	22%	
The Economy	Residents who are positive about the economy of their local area	50% 24%	34% 14%	28% 12%	41% 16%	35% 15%	n/a
	Residents who they think their personal financial circumstances will get worse over the next 12 mths	18% 37%	21% 42%	24% 41%	24% 40%	22% 40%	38%
Health	Residents who feel their health is good	65% 72%	67% 69%	58% 62%	72% 71%	63% 66%	67%
	Residents who support a minimum price on alcohol	53%	51%	46%	47%	48%	

The figures shown in blue are the equivalent findings from the 2012 Northumberland Residents Perception Survey.

## Overall attitudes to the local area

Residents were asked a number of questions to do with their local area (defined as the area within 15-20 minutes walking distance from their home).

### Headline Findings

- Three in four residents (77%) are satisfied with their local area, compared with only one in eight (13%) who are dissatisfied with it. These results have changed little since 2012.
- The key drivers of local area satisfaction include the council providing value for money, feeling safe, residents pulling together and the local economy.
- Residents are more likely to say their area has got worse (25%) rather than better (12%) over the last 12 months, although most perceive no change (63%). However opinion has improved since 2012, with fewer residents saying the area has got worse (down 6 percentage points) and more who say it has got better (up 6 percentage points).
- The great majority of residents feel safe outdoors (91%) and most feel safe after dark (68%).
- The aspects of the local area that are most often thought to need improvement are roads and pavements (56%), job prospects (38%) and street cleaning (34%).

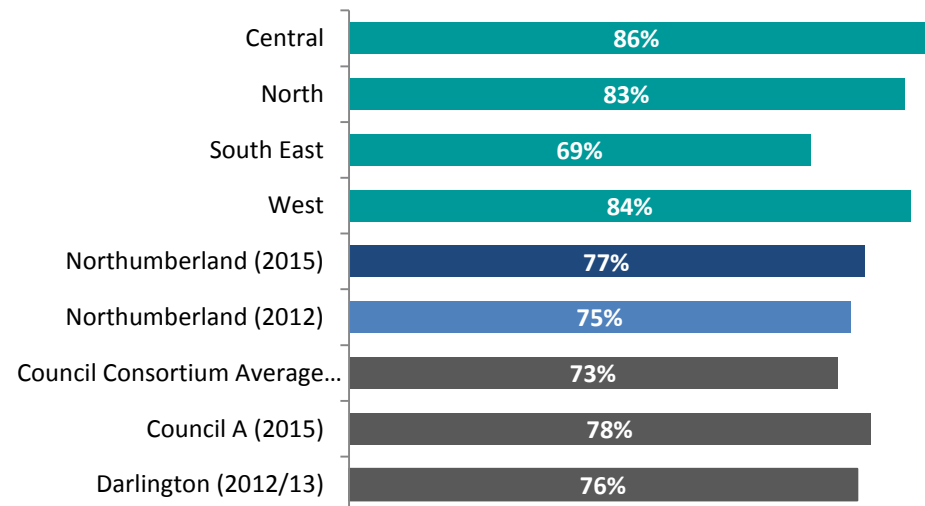
## General satisfaction with the local area

Three in four residents (77%) are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, compared with only one in eight (13%) who are dissatisfied with it. These results have changed little since 2012 and are in line with the benchmark for Darlington (76%) and Council A (78%).

Within the County the

percentage of residents satisfied is significantly higher in the North (83%), Central (86%) and West areas (84%). Only 69% of respondents from the South East feel satisfied with their local area. Satisfaction levels increase with age (79% of those 65+ were satisfied), if the respondent is retired (79%), a homemaker (79%) or in good health (79%).

### Residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live



*Adapted from Ipsos MORI charts*

The key drivers of local area satisfaction include the council providing value for money, feeling safe, residents pulling together and the local economy. Key negative drivers of satisfaction include poor health, not feeling able to influence decisions in the local area and personal finances.

### Changes in the local area in the last 12 months.

The majority of residents (63%) had noticed no change in their local area over the last 12 months. A quarter (25%) of residents feel their area has got worse with 12% feeling it has got better. When compared to 2012 there has been a reduction in those saying the area has got worse (down 6 percentage points) and an increase in those feeling it has got better (up 6 percentage points).

Residents in South East Northumberland are most likely to say the area has improved (15% compared to 12% overall). For those who say the area has worsened (25%), this figure is higher among owner-occupiers (28%), people aged 35-64 (27%) and carers (28%).

### What issues are most important?

Residents were presented with a list of 22 factors that are thought to impact on the quality of life of an area, from this they selected the following as being the most important in making somewhere a good place to live:

- Health Services (54%)
- Education/schooling (46%)
- Clean streets (42%)
- Affordable / Decent Housing (39%)

While the least important as:

- Cultural Facilities (6%)
- High profile events and tourist attractions (7%)
- Wage levels (13%)

Of the same 22 factors road and pavement repairs (56%) and job prospects (38%) were felt to be the most in need improvement in the local area.

When the most important factors in making an area a good place to live are set against the local issues that need improvement, the priorities are shown to be road and pavement repairs, clean streets, job prospects and affordable housing. Health services and local schools are important but are comparatively less urgent local priorities. The lowest priorities (low importance and low need for improvement) include the cost of living, cultural facilities, and leisure facilities.

The factors seen as most in need of improvement differ across the County. Whereas the focus in the rural areas is on road and pavements repairs residents in the South East feel improvement should be focused on street cleanliness and anti-social behaviour:

<p><b>North:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road &amp; pavement repairs (61%)</li> <li>• Job prospects (48%)</li> <li>• Affordable decent housing (34%)</li> <li>• Public transport (30%)</li> <li>• Health services (28%)</li> <li>• Wages levels &amp; local cost of living (23%)</li> <li>• Education provision/schools (17%)</li> </ul>	<p><b>South East:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean streets (42%)</li> <li>• The level of anti-social behaviour (32%)</li> <li>• Shopping facilities (31%)</li> <li>• Facilities for teenagers (29%)</li> <li>• Facilities for young children (24%)</li> <li>• The level of crime (21%)</li> <li>• Sports and leisure facilities (16%)</li> <li>• Parks and green spaces (15%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>West:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road &amp; pavement repairs (68%)</li> <li>• Care and support for older people (31%)</li> <li>• Education provision/schools (19%)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Central:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road &amp; pavement repairs (65%)</li> <li>• The level of traffic congestion (37%)</li> <li>• Sports and leisure facilities (18%)</li> </ul>

*Adapted from Ipsos MORI table*

**Feeling Safe**

The majority of residents feel safe outdoors during the day (91%) and most do so after dark (68%). Feeling safe after dark is higher in Northumberland than for Council A and for Darlington. Residents most likely to feel unsafe after dark are women (22% compared to 13% of men), older residents aged 65+ (20% compared to 16% of those aged 35-64), disabled residents (23% compared to 16% of those who are not disabled) and those who live in South East Northumberland (28% compared to 18% overall).

## Involvement in your area

### Headline Findings

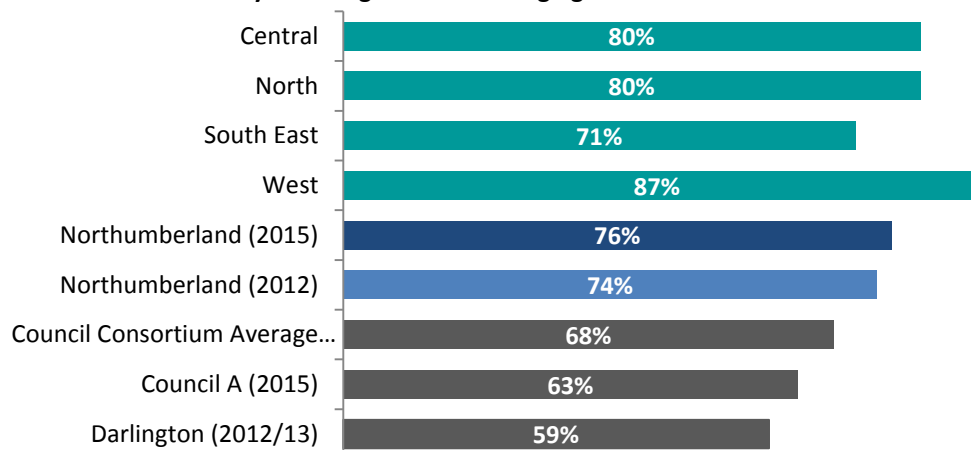
- 76% feel they belong to their local area, in line with the result for 2012 (74%).
- Three fifths (62%) agree that people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well, in line with the 2012 results.
- A quarter of residents (25%) does regular formal voluntary work with groups, clubs and organisations in the local area, which is much the same as in 2012 (26%).
- Over half of residents (52%) agree that local people pull together to improve things in the area, a significant improvement since 2012 (up from 45%).
- 29% agree they can influence decisions which affect the local area, consistent with results from 2012 and 2008. The proportion not having any formal involvement with the Council has risen from 22% in 2012 to 30% in 2015.
- Residents in the South East are more negative; with fewer feeling they belong to the area, feeling able to influence decisions or who agree that local people pull together.
- Comparisons with other areas are generally positive, with Northumberland residents more likely to feel a sense of belonging to the locality, to say that different ethnic groups get along, and to think that local people pull together.

### Strength of Belonging

Three in four residents (76%) feel a strong sense of belonging to the local area, which is in line with results from 2012. It is also better than the comparisons with other local authorities, especially Darlington. The sense of belonging is highest

in West Northumberland (87%) and lowest in the South East (71%). Compared with the Northumberland average (76%), it is also higher among older residents aged 65+ (79%).

#### Residents who feel a fairly or strong sense of belonging to their local area



*Adapted from Ipsos MORI charts*

### Community Cohesion

Three fifths (62%) agree that people from different ethnic groups get on well in their local area. Residents from Central Northumberland are more likely to agree (72% compared to 62% overall). Agreement is also greater amongst women than men (66% compared to 58%) and older residents aged 65+ (65% compared to 60% of those aged 35-64).

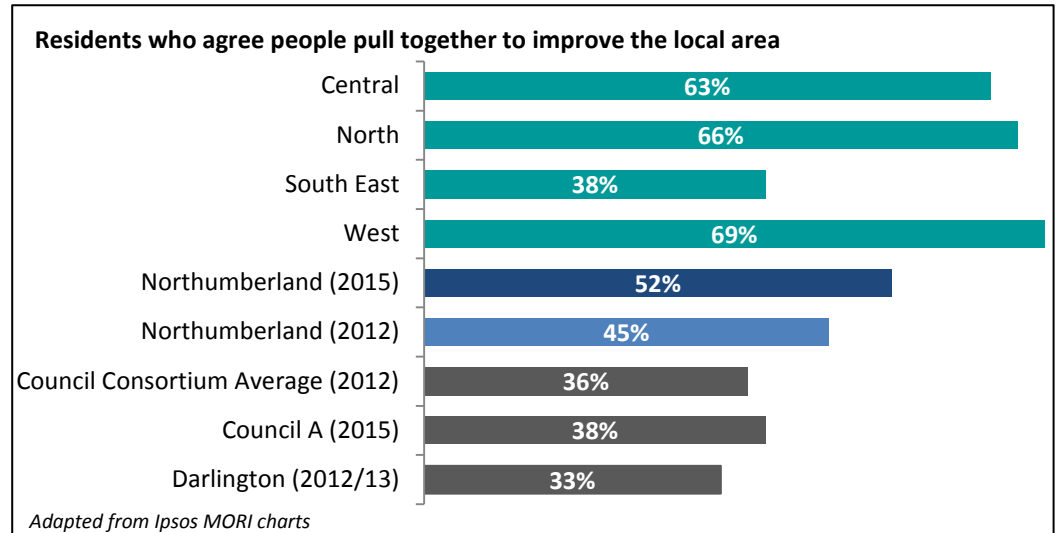


### Dealings with other people

Most residents have friendships with other locals (81%) and regularly stop and talk to others in the area (80%). 74% would be willing to ask a neighbour for help and 71% would work with other locals to improve the area. Only 43% currently borrow or exchange things with other local people, down 6 percentage points on the 2012 survey.

### People pull together to improve the local area

Just over half of residents (52%) agree that local people pull together to improve the area, significantly more than in 2012 (up 7 percentage points). Residents in the South East are much less likely to agree (38% compared to 52% overall). Younger residents aged 18-34 and owner-occupiers are also more likely to disagree (30% and 22% respectively, compared to 21% overall).



### Willingness and knowledge to make a difference

When asked about involvement with local services, residents are most likely to say they have completed a questionnaire (51%), followed by petitioning (27%), contacting a Councillor or MP (27%) and contacting the Council (26%). The proportion who say they have not been involved has gone up significantly since 2012 (increase of 8 percentage points from 22% to 30%).

### Participation in regular volunteering

A quarter of residents (25%) do regular formal voluntary work and just over a third (35%) volunteer regularly but informally. These results are generally in line with benchmarks for other local authorities, although the proportion who do regular informal voluntary work has fallen in Northumberland since 2012 (down 5 percentage points). Doing regular formal voluntary work is less common in South East Northumberland (20% compared to 25% overall).

### Ability to influence decisions

29% of residents agree they can influence decisions which affect their local area, in line with results from previous surveys. Residents in the South East are most likely to say they cannot influence decisions (74% compared to 71% overall).

## Health

### Headline Findings

- Almost two thirds of residents (63%) say they have good health overall, down 3 percentage points from 2012 (66%). 10% feel their health is bad, a significant increase on 2012 (up from 8%).
- 36% of residents has a limiting health condition or disability. A similar proportion of residents (34%) also provides care and support to somebody else.
- When asked about their recent state of mind, most residents have felt able to make up their mind about things (78%), to think clearly (62%) and have felt close to others (57%). They are less likely to have felt optimistic about the future (36%) or to have felt relaxed (36%).
- Residents' overall mental wellbeing score is 24.7 (on a scale that runs between 7 and 35). This is unchanged from the average score in 2012.
- Older residents (65+), social tenants and those who live alone are generally in worse health and more likely to have limiting conditions / disabilities. Residents in South East Northumberland have lower levels of physical and mental wellbeing.
- Almost half (48%) of residents would support minimum unit pricing of alcohol, 22% are neutral, while three in ten (30%) would oppose the idea.

### Residents' perceived health

63% of residents say they have good health, highest in West Northumberland (72%) and lowest in the South East (58%). Bad health is more common among older residents aged 65+ (13% compared to 5% of those aged 18-34), and those in rented housing (19% of social renters and 16% of private renters compared to 7% of owner-occupiers). Bad health is more frequent among those who live alone (14% compared to 10% overall).

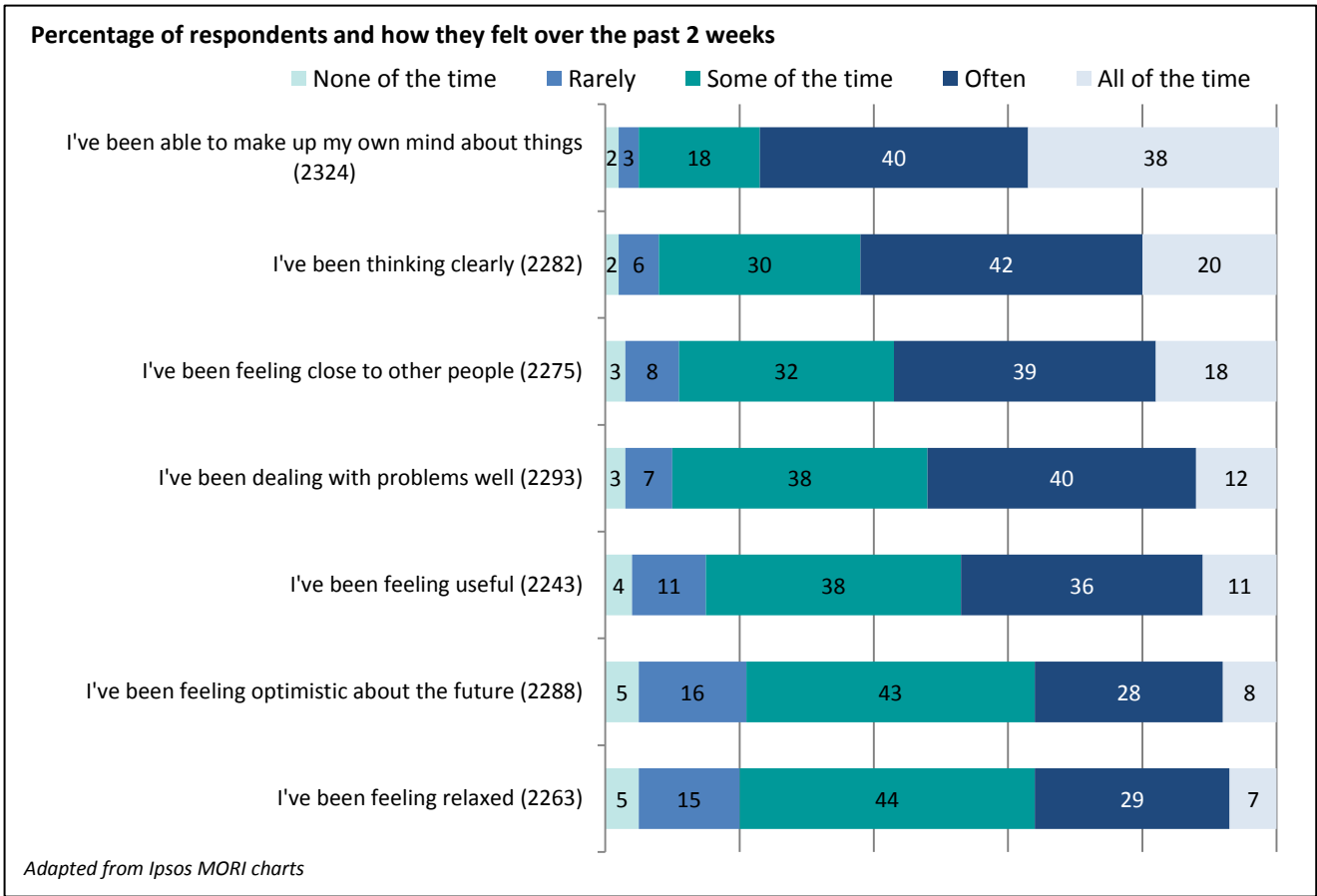
Over a third of residents (36%) has a limiting long-term health problem or disability, which is significantly more than in 2012 (up 4 percentage points). The proportion is highest among older residents aged 65+ (58%), social tenants (54%), those who live alone (50%) and residents who also care for someone else (39%).

### How do health and mental well-being vary?

Residents were asked to consider the three most important factors in maintaining the health and wellbeing of their family. The most important issues are considered to be diet / healthy eating (41%), exercise / keeping fit (29%), access to health services (29%), financial stability (22%) and job security (13%).

Residents were asked about their thoughts and feelings on seven factors over the past two weeks. Nearly four fifths of residents (78%) felt able to make up their mind about things, were able to think clearly (62%) and have felt close to

others (57%). They are less likely to have felt optimistic about the future (36%) or to have felt relaxed (36%). The results are generally in line with those for Northumberland in 2012.



Using a scale ranging from 0 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time) to rate answers across these seven factors an average mental wellbeing score could be calculated. A high score indicates a respondent has good mental health and well-being, with the maximum score being 35 points.

The average score for mental wellbeing across Northumberland is 24.7, the same as 2012. It is significantly higher in Central and West Northumberland, (25.4 and 25.6 respectively), but significantly lower in the South East (24.1). It is also higher among older residents aged 65+ (25.1 compared to 24.5 for those aged 35-64) and owner-occupiers (25.4 compared to 23.3 for private tenants and only 22.4 for social tenants).

**Care given to others**

A third of residents (34%) provide care for someone else, although only one in ten (10%) provides 20 hours or more each week. The proportion who are carers is above average among those aged 35-64 (39%), those who are themselves disabled (39%) and owner-occupiers (36%).

### Support for a minimum price on alcohol

Residents are more likely to support the idea of a minimum price for alcohol (48%) than to be against it (30%). Support for the idea is greater among women than men (52% compared to 44%) and is also above average among older residents aged 65+ (51% compared to 48% overall). For those that support minimum pricing of alcohol the main reasons given were to prevent underage / binge drinking in the young, prevent alcoholism and reduce ill health relating to drinking. For those that oppose the proposal residents felt that people would drink regardless of price, that it would be unfair to penalise responsible drinkers and that it should be the individual's choice if they want to drink.

## The Economy

### Headline Findings

- Residents are much more likely to say the UK economy is doing well (48%) than to say the same about the economy of their local area (35%) or the North East (29%).
- Economic optimism has increased since 2012. The proportion feeling the economy is thriving or on the way up has increased for the the UK economy by 41 percentage points, up 20 percentage points for the local area and by 20 percentage points for the North East.
- Residents are most likely to say the economic climate has made it difficult to afford a holiday (24%), reduced job security (16%) and has made it more difficult to pay fuel and energy bills (14%).
- A higher percentage of residents feel they have not been affected in any way by the economic climate (57% compared with 41% in 2012).
- More residents expect their economic circumstances to get worse (22%) rather than better (13%) over the next 12 months however fewer residents now expect things to deteriorate (down 18 percentage points from 40%).

### The state of the economy

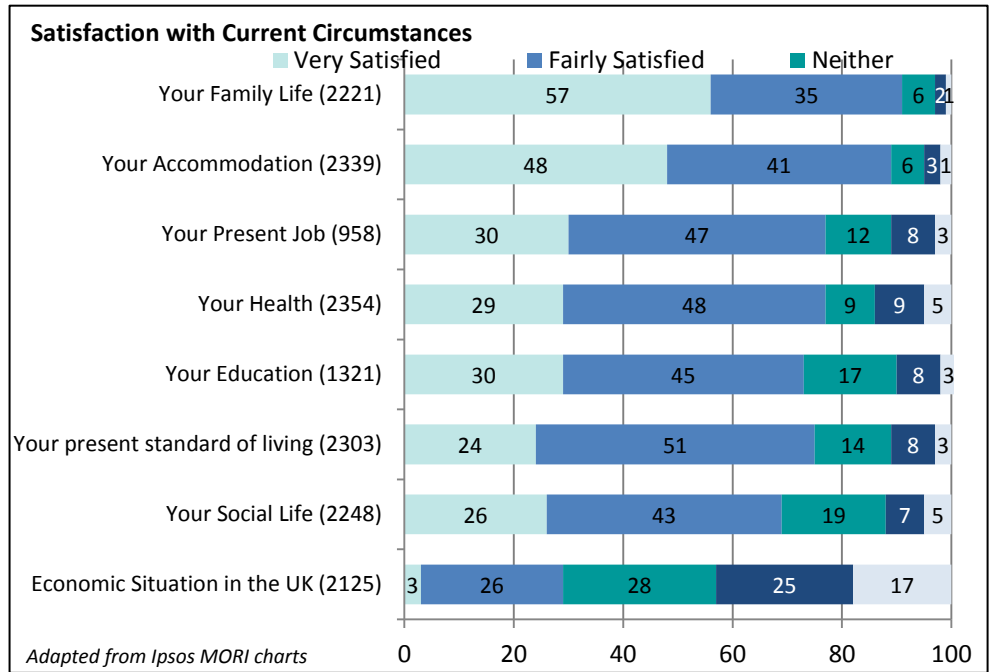
Over a third of residents are positive about the economy of the local area (35%), and the North East (29%), but they are more likely to be positive about the UK economy as a whole (48%). Residents are consistently more positive than in 2012. Those in Central Northumberland are the most positive about the local economy (50% compared to 35% overall) and those in the South East are the most likely to be negative (72% compared to 65% overall).

### Personal effects of the Economy

Residents are most likely to say they have not been able to afford a holiday (24%), to feel they have less job security (16%) and to have difficulties paying energy bills (14%). 57% of residents say they experience no economic problems which is an increase of 16 percentage points on 2012. Residents are more likely to expect their personal economic circumstances to get worse (22%) rather than better (13%).

### Satisfaction with life

The majority of residents are satisfied with their family life (91%) and accommodation (89%), and three quarters are satisfied with their work, health, education and standard of living. Satisfaction is lowest of all with the economic situation of the country as a whole (30%). Satisfaction varies by demography for example people with a disability are more likely to be dissatisfied with their education and job.



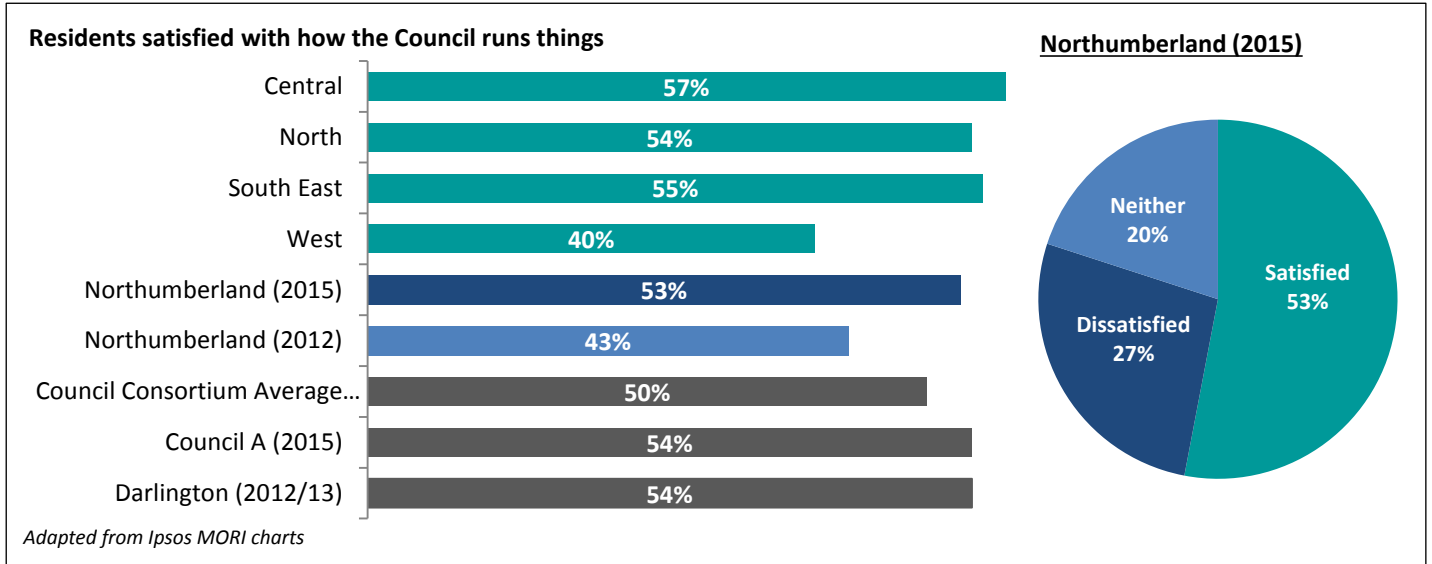
### Overall satisfaction with the Council and its services

#### Headline Findings

- Just over half of residents (53%) are satisfied with the Council which is significantly more than in 2012 (43%).
- Compared with 2012, more residents agree the Council gives good value for money (up from 29% to 36%), believe it acts on residents' concerns (up from 39% to 45%) and trust it (up from 46% to 50%).
- Fewer residents who would speak critically of the Council than in 2012 (down from 46% to 28%).
- Feeling informed about what the Council does and the services it provides is similar to 2012 (51% now compared with 49% in 2012).
- Perceptions of environmental services have improved significantly since 2012 – particularly street cleaning (up from 50% to 55%) and the upkeep of green verges and vegetation in public places (up from 45% to 56%). However, satisfaction with local tips has fallen significantly from 77% in 2012 to 73% in 2015.
- Satisfaction with leisure and cultural services has increased significantly since 2012 including parks and green spaces (up from 64% to 68%). However satisfaction with libraries has fallen from 62% to 59%.
- Satisfaction with sport and leisure facilities has flat-lined since 2008, which is perhaps of concern given satisfaction with such services is a key driver of local area satisfaction.
- Four fifths of those with children attending state schools would recommend that school to another parent (83%).
- Residents in the West are generally more negative towards the Council, with lower levels of overall satisfaction, trust, advocacy and perceived value for money. Residents in the South East are most likely to trust the Council, to be advocates of it, and to say it responds to residents' concerns.

**General satisfaction with the council**

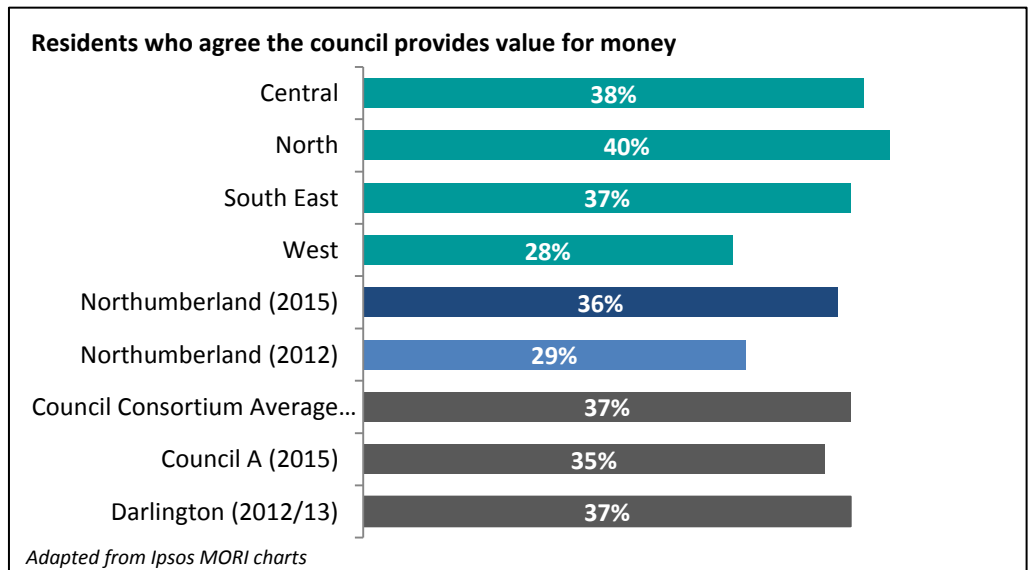
Over half of residents are satisfied with how the County Council runs things (53%), a significant improvement on 2012 (up 10 percentage points from 43%). Satisfaction is higher among older residents aged 65+ (58% compared to 44% of those aged 18-34) and among those who live alone (59% compared to 53% overall). Dissatisfaction is higher in West Northumberland (35% compared to 27% overall) and among owner-occupiers (29% compared to 19% of social tenants).



The most significant drivers of Council satisfaction are perceived value for money and a sense that the Council acts on residents' concerns. Other factors include satisfaction with services affecting the appearance of an area (e.g. street cleaning, refuse collection), feeling safe in the local area, and thinking that people pull together to improve things. Negative drivers include a sense of poor community cohesion and not feeling able to affect decisions.

**Value for money**

Over a third of residents (36%) agree the Council provides value for money, an increase of seven percentage points on 2012. This is in line with the benchmark results for other local authorities. Older residents are most likely to agree (45%), followed by social tenants (44%) and those who



live alone (44%). Residents living in the West of the County are most likely to disagree (39% compared to 32% overall). The key drivers of value for money are trust in the Council, feeling they act on residents' concerns and being kept

informed. Satisfaction with the local area is also important, as well as feeling able to influence decisions. Other positive drivers include street cleaning, refuse and waste collection, road maintenance, and parks and green spaces.

**Advocacy, trust and acting on local concerns**

Residents are as likely to be advocates of the Council (28%) as to be critics (28%), although the proportion who are critics has fallen since 2012 (down 18 percentage points). The highest level of advocacy is found among social tenants (39%), those who live alone (34%), disabled residents (33%) and those aged 65+ (34%). Those living in West Northumberland and owner-occupiers are more likely to be critics of the Council (36% and 31% respectively).

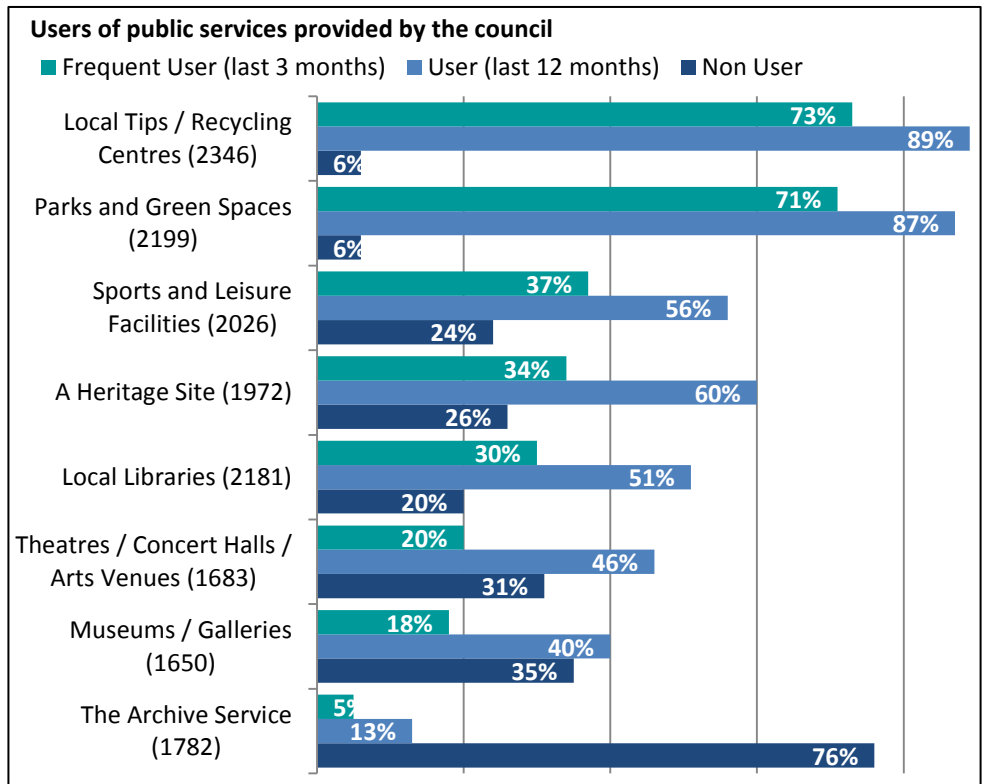
Just under half of residents think the County Council acts on residents' concerns (45%), which is an increase on 2012 (39%). This is comparable with the council consortium average (45%) and Council A (47%), but lower than Darlington 2012-13 (51%). Those most likely to say the Council takes action are social tenants (58%), those who live alone (52%), residents aged 65+ (49%) and those in the South East (48%). West Northumberland residents are again most likely to say the Council does not take action (68% compared to 55% overall).

Residents are as likely to trust the Council (50%) as to distrust it (50%), with trust increasing since 2012 (46%). Trust is highest in the South East (53%) but lowest in the West (42%). Distrust of the Council is greater among residents aged 35-64 (52%) and owner-occupiers (54%) compared to 50% overall.

**Information provision**

Just over a half of residents (51%) feel well informed about what the Council does, in line with 2012 results. It is significantly better than findings for Council A in 2015 (42%), although below the proportion for Darlington in 2012 (66%). Feeling informed is highest in Central Northumberland (57%), as well as among social tenants (63%), those who live alone (58%) and older residents aged 65+ (57%).

**Use of local services**

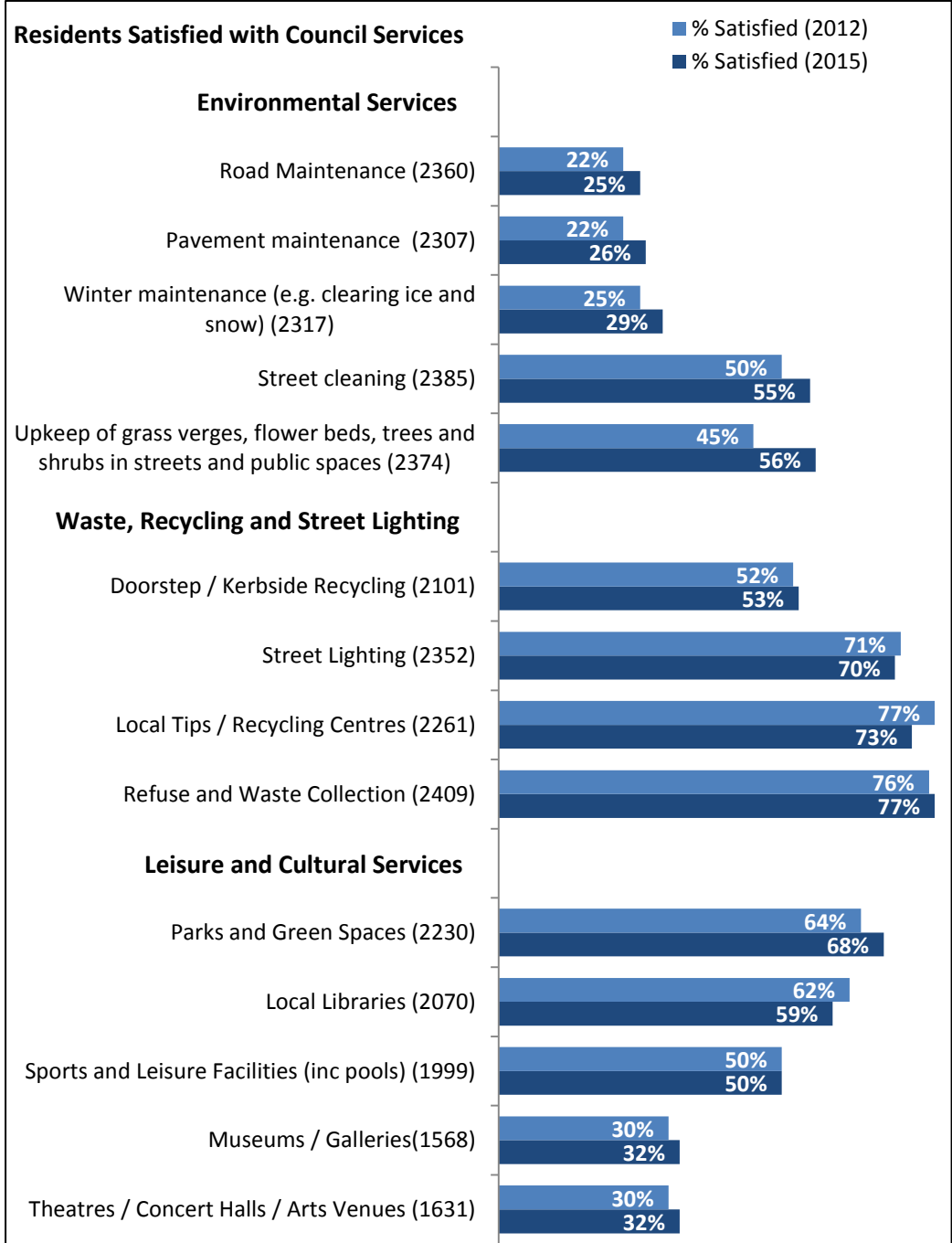


Local tips, parks and green spaces are the most widely used local services, followed by sports and leisure facilities, heritage sites and libraries. Usage is generally comparable with results from 2012.

**Satisfaction with local services**

Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with some of the key services provided by the Council.

For environmental services satisfaction is highest with the upkeep of grass verges and vegetation in public places (56%) and with street cleaning (55%). It is much lower with the repair and upkeep of roads (25%), pavements (26%) and winter maintenance (29%). However satisfaction has increased across all areas of environmental services since 2012 – particularly with the upkeep of grass verges and vegetation in public areas (up 11 percentage points), street cleaning (up 5 percentage points) and winter / pavement maintenance (both up 4 percentage points).



For waste, recycling and street lighting satisfaction is highest with refuse collection (77%), and local tips (73%), followed by street lighting (70%). Just over half (53%) are satisfied with doorstep recycling. Satisfaction with refuse collection, doorstep recycling and street lighting has changed little since 2012, although satisfaction with local tips/recycling centres has decreased significantly (by 4 percentage points).

For leisure and cultural services, parks and green spaces have the highest satisfaction (68%) followed by local libraries (59%) and sport and leisure facilities (50%). Only a third of residents are satisfied with local museums/galleries and with theatres/concert halls (32% in both cases). Satisfaction with parks and green spaces has increased significantly



since 2012 (up 4 percentage points), while satisfaction with libraries has decreased over the same time period (down 3 percentage points).

### School Satisfaction

Local schools are consistently rated very positively. The great majority of residents say their child feels safe (95%) and is happy there (92%). Similarly, nine in ten say their child makes good progress at the school and is looked after well there (90% in both cases). Residents are least likely to say their child is well taught at the school, but the great majority still agree this is the case (87%).

More than 4 in 5 residents would recommend the school their child attends to another parent (83%). This proportion is particularly high in Central Northumberland (92%). Across other groups of residents, willingness to recommend the school is higher among women than men (87% vs. 76%).

### Contacting the Council and Communications

#### Headline Findings

- 81% of residents have some form of internet access, most often through a personal computer (64%). Two in five residents access the internet through a mobile phone (41%) or a tablet (40%).
- 91% of residents feel confident about using the internet.
- Just over half of residents (52%) have contacted the Council in the last 12 months. They are most likely to have done so by telephone (45%) or electronically via the internet (29%).
- Reporting a problem is by far the main reason that residents have contacted the Council (58%). This is followed by obtaining advice or information (30%), applying for a service (16%) and making a payment (15%).
- The most commonly used source of information on the Council is local media (e.g. newspaper, radio and TV) (54%). This is followed by the Council's own website (41%) and Northumberland News (39%). These are also the sources of information that residents would most often prefer to use to find out about the Council.

### Using and accessing the internet

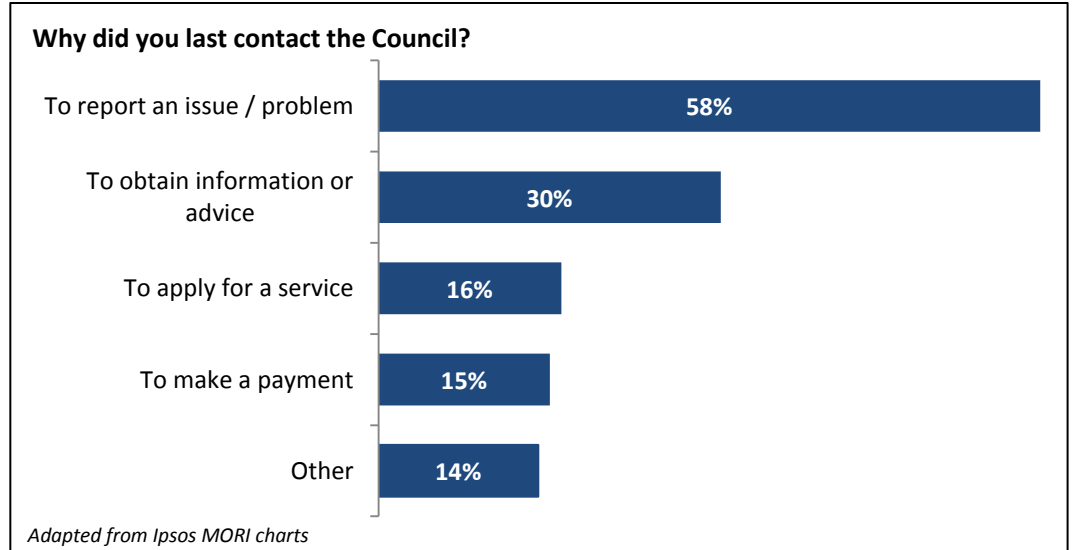
81% of residents use the internet through some means, most often by a computer (64%). The proportion who are internet users is significantly lower among older residents aged 65+ (57%), social tenants (62%), disabled residents (65%), those who live alone (65%), and also those who live in South East Northumberland (78%).

Almost all those who use the internet say they do so at home (97%), followed by almost half who say they use the internet at work or their place of study (46%). 14% use the internet via a friend or relative. Only 6% of residents use a library or other council building to access the internet.

Of those who use the internet, almost all (91%) feel confident about accessing the internet, with 60% feeling very confident. People aged 65+ (38%); retired (44%), workless residents (46%), social tenants (43%) and those with a disability (49%) are less likely than average to feel confident on the internet. Lack of access to a computer is the most common reason why residents do not use the internet (41%), although this is closely followed by simply not wanting to use it (37%). Over a quarter (28%) of residents say they get someone else to use the internet on their behalf.

**Contacting the Council**

52% of residents have contacted the Council in the last 12 months. This proportion is greatest among social tenants (59%), carers (59%) and those aged 35-64 (56%). Telephone is the most common means by which residents contact the Council (45%), and this figure is particularly high



among social tenants (56%). 29% overall used the internet to contact the Council, highest among those aged 35-64 (34%) and owner-occupiers (36%). Residents who have recently contacted the Council mostly did so to report an issue or problem (58%) or to get advice or information (30%).

**The Councils' website and communication**

One in five (22%) residents has been unable to do something they wanted to do on the Council's website. Common problems included the planning portal not working, the website being down and not being able to find the information they were looking for (bin collections, school timetables etc.).

Local media (e.g. newspapers, radio) are the most widely used sources of information on the County Council (54%), followed by the Council website (41%), and Northumberland News (39%). These are also the sources that residents would most prefer to use.



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