

# Public Perceptions of Ethics

A Survey of the General Public

MORI

May-July 2005

# Contents

---

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	8
Attitudes to Local Area and Local Councils	12
Engagement with Local Issues	19
Councillors: Knowledge and Contact	26
Councillors: Favourability and Trust	34
Councillors: Public Perceptions and Expectations	42
Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour	56
Awareness of The Standards Board	74

## Appendices

- A. The Standards Board's Ten Principles
- Qualitative Research
- B. Topic Guide
- Quantitative Research
- C. Statistical Reliability and Weighting Profile
- D. Location of sampling points
- E. Definitions of Social Grade and Socio-Politically Active
- F. Marked-up Quantitative Questionnaire

# Introduction

---

## Background and objectives

The Standards Board for England ('The Standards Board') commissioned the MORI Social Research Institute to investigate the public's perceptions of ethics and attitudes towards local government in order to inform future policy direction. The research study is intended to establish baselines against which The Standards Board can monitor its impact (and that of the ethical environment more generally) on public perceptions of the integrity of members and local authorities, and of The Standards Board itself. Specifically, the aims of the research are:

- (i) to establish benchmarks of public confidence in local democracy by exploring the level of public trust in members' and officers' integrity, establishing how open and transparent authorities' actions are thought to be, considering how actively engaged the public are with their local authority and their expectations and perceptions of members;
- (ii) to look into what behaviour by members the public deems acceptable and unacceptable;
- (iii) to investigate how the public develops views on members' ethical behaviour and about local government, and how critical these views are when compared to other factors; and
- (iv) to establish benchmarks of the general public's awareness and perceptions of The Standards Board, to investigate how awareness can be improved, and how confident the public are in The Standards Board's ability to expose and punish those who misbehave.

This research was conducted in two stages. The first (qualitative) stage focused in particular on what behaviour is deemed acceptable and unacceptable, and why (point (ii)) and how people form opinions on the behaviour of local officials – in their official role and in their private lives - (point (iii)). Trust in local government (point (i)) and awareness of The Standards Board (point (iv)) were also explored in the qualitative work. In addition, this stage also informed development of a quantitative questionnaire. The second (quantitative) stage focused mostly on points (i), (ii) and (iv).

## Qualitative stage

A qualitative stage was conducted initially to test out public attitudes in general towards local councillors and officials and provide a greater understanding of what underlies people's top-of-mind views. This stage also facilitated 'teasing out' how the public develop their views on ethics and what communication lessons there are for The Standards Board to consider. Above all, the qualitative stage paved the way for the quantitative research, enabling the questionnaire to be written in light of the

qualitative findings, as well as providing feedback on specifics such as content, tone and relevance.

Six group discussions were held with members of the general public in three areas across England. The three locations were chosen to represent rural and urban areas, different types of councils and also included one area where there had recently been press coverage of a Standards Board investigation into a local councillor. Participants were recruited in-home and quotas were set on gender, age, ethnicity and social grade to make sure people from a variety of demographic groups were included. We also screened for whether participants were satisfied or dissatisfied with their local council to ensure people with different attitudes towards their local authorities were represented. Details of the groups are shown in the table below.

<b>Leeds (Metropolitan Authority)</b>		<b>Mid-Suffolk (Rural District Authority)</b>		<b>Peterborough (Urban Unitary Authority)</b>	
<b>Satisfied with local council</b>	<b>Dis-satisfied with local council</b>	<b>Satisfied with local council</b>	<b>Dis-satisfied with local council</b>	<b>Satisfied with local council</b>	<b>Dis-satisfied with local council</b>
- 18-39 years - broad mix of gender, ethnicity and social grade	- 40+ years - broad mix of gender, ethnicity and social grade	- 40+ years - broad mix of gender, ethnicity and social grade	- 18-39 years - broad mix of gender, ethnicity and social grade	- 18-39 years - broad mix of gender, ethnicity and social grade	- 40+ years - broad mix of gender, ethnicity and social grade

Attendance was good with between seven and ten people attending each discussion. Participants were given £25 as a ‘thank-you’ for their contribution. Fieldwork took place in February 2005. Focus groups were moderated by members of the MORI project team.

### Quantitative stage

Following the initial qualitative stage and some cognitive testing<sup>1</sup> of the questionnaire, face-to-face interviews were conducted in 104 randomly selected sample points<sup>2</sup> (based on Census Output Areas) representative across England with members of the general public aged sixteen or older. The sample was stratified by region to ensure a proportionate number of interviews in each government office region (GOR) and

<sup>1</sup> Cognitive interviewing involves testing the meaning of and reaction to questions among a small sample of the public (we spoke to ten individuals of different ages and backgrounds in three locations across England). This cognitive stage was undertaken to assess the public’s interpretation of words, phrases and questions, to ensure question topics are meaningful and relevant, and to check the survey is not burdensome on people’s time. It also allowed us to see whether people felt any other aspects should be covered in the survey.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix D shows where these sample points are located.

some 1,027 interviews were achieved in total. Interviews were conducted in-home using paper-based questionnaires; the average interview length was 20 minutes. Fieldwork was carried out using MORI's own fieldforce between 31 May and 18 July 2005.

It had originally been intended that fieldwork would take place in the early spring. However, it was postponed following the announcement that the general election would take place on 5 May and local councillors, the subject of some of the research, would have a greater presence in the area than normal, which could influence responses. A period of four weeks was left after the election before fieldwork was allowed to commence.

Quotas were set for each sampling point according to the profile of the area by gender, age, ethnicity and working status. Data were weighted by the same variables plus social grade and region to the true profile of the English population. Further details regarding weighting can be found in the appendices. To avoid falsely raising or biasing awareness of The Standards Board, respondents were not told who the survey was being conducted for until the end of the survey.

## Report layout

Following this introduction, the report contains:

- An **executive summary** outlining some of the main themes to emerge from the research;
- A **main report** detailing the findings from the quantitative stage, exemplified by references to the qualitative research. This breaks down as follows:
  - the public's **attitudes towards their local area and local council**;
  - people's **engagement with local issues**;
  - the public's **knowledge about and contact with councillors**;
  - the public's **favourability towards and trust of councillors**;
  - the public's **perceptions and expectations of councillors**;
  - what behaviour the public regard as **acceptable or unacceptable**;
  - awareness and experience of **making a complaint about a councillor**;
  - and awareness and favourability of **The Standards Board** and other bodies.

## Interpretation of the data

For the *quantitative element*, it should be remembered that a sample, and not the entire population, has been interviewed. In consequence, all quantitative results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. A guide to statistical reliability is appended.

Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the report an asterisk (\*) denotes any value less than half a per cent but above zero.

Reference is made to 'net' figures. This represents the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions, and provides a particularly useful means of comparing the results for a number of variables. In the case of a 'net agree' figure, this represents the percentage agreeing with a statement, less the percentage disagreeing. For example, if a statement records 40% agreeing and 25% disagreeing, the 'net agree' figure is +15 points.

*Qualitative research* involves an interactive process between the moderators carrying out the research and those being researched. It provides a way of probing the underlying attitudes of participants, and obtaining an understanding of the issues of importance. The real value of qualitative research is that it allows *insight* into attitudes, and the reasons for these, which could not be probed in as much depth with a structured questionnaire.

However, it must be remembered that qualitative research is designed to be **illustrative rather than statistically representative**. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with *perceptions* rather than *facts*, though to the general public these perceptions *are* facts.

Throughout the report, use is made of verbatim comments from group participants. These have been selected to illustrate a particular view of a body of participants, although it is important to remember that the views expressed do not always represent the views of the focus groups as a whole.

## Acknowledgements

MORI would like to thank Dr Gary Hickey, Tim Bogan, Paul Hoey and James Harrigan (from The Standards Board) and Dr Richard Jarvis (from The Committee on Standards in Public Life) for their help and advice in the design of the study. Finally, we would like to thank the members of the general public for giving up their time to take part in this research.

# Publication of the data

As The Standards Board has engaged MORI to provide an objective and representative programme of research, it is important to protect The Standards Board's interests by ensuring that it is accurately reflected in any press release or publication of the findings. As part of our standard terms and conditions, the publication of the data in this report is therefore subject to the advance approval of MORI. This would only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misinterpretation of the findings.

---

©MORI/J23706

Checked & Approved:

*Mark Gill*

---

*Caroline Simpson*

---

*Gary Welch*

---

# Executive Summary

---

To understand how The Standards Board can most effectively have an impact on the perceptions of the public, it is important that we develop an understanding of how the public develops opinions on the ethical behaviour of members and how important the public rate this issue in comparison to other factors, for example to the quality of services.

This research increases understanding of public perceptions of ethics and provides baseline data against which The Standards Board can monitor its influence.

## Expectations and perceptions of councillors' behaviour

Qualitative participants mention a range of areas where they would expect councillors to have high standards of conduct and the majority of these approximate to the principles of conduct in local government. Some believe councillors should be judged by how they behave in their personal as well as professional lives, whereas others think how councillors behave in their personal lives should remain largely private.

There is a mismatch between what the public regard as most important for councillors to do and perceptions of most councillors' behaviour at present. When asked to choose from a list of twelve, the most important types of behaviour that the public expects from councillors are to:

- Make sure that public money is spent wisely (54%);
- Be in touch with what the general public thinks is important (47%);
- Work in the interests of the neighbourhood (44%); and
- Do what they are promised when they were elected (39%).

Of the other eight types of behaviour, between 10% and 22% of the public selected each as being one of the most important for councillors to do, with the exception of *setting a good example for others in their private lives* where just 4% of people say that this is most important.

For all of these types of behaviour, the public were also asked whether they felt they currently applied to all, most, about half, to a few or to none of their local councillors at the moment. For just four of the twelve do more of the public believe the behaviours apply to all or most councillors rather than to a few or to none. These are:

- Treat people with respect (+27% net apply<sup>3</sup>);
- Work in the interests of the neighbourhood (+15%);
- Do not take bribes (+10%); and
- Treat everyone equally (+2%).

It is noteworthy that with the exception of *do not take bribes* fewer than one in ten people felt each applied to all councillors. For this exception, 18% of people felt that this applied to all councillors. In addition, with regard to three of the four most important behaviours referred to above, the public are sceptical about the extent to which they apply to their local councillors:

- Make sure that public money is used wisely (-23%<sup>2</sup>);
- Be in touch with what the general public thinks is important (-13%); and
- Do what they promised when they are elected (-35%).

## Acceptability of different behaviours (scenarios)

Six qualitative scenarios were developed to explore in detail how people decide what activities are acceptable and unacceptable. Some scenarios were also tested in the quantitative stage.

Even where there appears to be strong public agreement on specific scenarios, the focus group discussions revealed that views are very much dependent on the context and background of the actions. Very rarely do the public see ethical scenarios in clear-cut terms: they want to know the context in which events take place and the background of the councillor before forming a view on the acceptability of the behaviour.

The quantitative results indicate most people (over 90%) believe it is *unacceptable* for councillors to:

- Be involved in decisions on planning applications from which they may benefit financially
- witness a racial assault and do nothing to stop it
- drive 50 mph in a 30 mph zone whilst on holiday

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Net apply' is worked out by subtracting '% do not apply' from '% apply' to give a 'net apply figure' which can be a positive or negative figure.

And it is *acceptable* to accept an invitation to a football match from the local football team. However, opinion is divided in some other cases.

## Knowledge and contact with councillors

Part of the reason for any mismatch between expectations and perceptions of councillors' behaviour may be because many people lack an understanding of what their councillors do. Around four out of five people know little or nothing at all about their local councillor's work – and knowledge of local MPs' work is similarly low. Indeed, more people feel they know about the work of their local council than the work of their local councillors.

This lack of knowledge is reflected in the low levels of contact people have with their local elected representatives. Only one in seven people have met a local councillor within the last six months – despite the fact that the survey fieldwork took place shortly after the General Election and some local elections in May 2005.

## Favourability and trust

This level of disconnection is also apparent when people are asked to rate their local councillors in terms of favourability. Public views of local councillors are by a ratio of two to one positive. That is, 26% of the public have a favourable opinion and 14% have an unfavourable opinion. However, by far the biggest group are the 46% who have neither a favourable or unfavourable opinion.

The survey findings also demonstrate a distinction in the public's mind between favourability towards local councillors (26% favourable) and politicians generally (19% favourable) even though with the latter many more people express an opinion.

In terms of telling the truth, local councillors are rated more highly than MPs, but less highly than either senior employees in local councils or doctors. And on balance, more people say that local councillors only sometimes or rarely tell the truth (53%) than do always or most of the time (36%).

These relatively poor ratings of trust in councillors are consistent with more general scepticism about whose interests councillors are seen to put first. Just one in four people say that in general councillors put the interests of their local area first. Instead, more people believe councillors put their own interests (27%) or their party's interests (32%) first.

## Engagement with local issues and councillors

It is not the case that poor ratings for councillors are simply down to disinterest in what they do. True, one in four people (25%) are not interested in what councillors do. However, many more say they like to know what councillors are doing but are happy to let them get on with it (44%) or would like to have more of a say in what councillors do (23%). Just 5% of the public currently believe they already know what councillors do and feel able to get across their views.

More widely, the public say they are interested in local issues and want to be engaged with their local area. However, there is a gap between people's desire to have a say or take part locally and what people do or feel they can do in practice. More than eight in ten people say it is their duty to vote in local elections but turnout frequently falls below 50%. Two in three want to have a say in how their local area is run but fewer than three in ten feel they actually have a say.

## Making a complaint about a councillor

The vast majority of the public have never made a complaint about their local councillor to the council, though one in ten have wanted to. Asked which organisation they would most like to deal with complaints, people are most likely to say an independent body, followed by the council or local MP.

The majority of people have never heard of The Standards Board for England - reflecting its position as a non-public-facing organisation. This low level of awareness of The Standards Board is also apparent among people who have wanted to make a complaint about a councillor but haven't done so.

# Attitudes to Local Area and Local Councils

---

*This introductory chapter looks at the general public's attitudes towards their local area and their local council to set the context for how the public view their councillors.*

## Key Findings

- The vast majority of the public are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (84%) and over half are satisfied with the way their council is running the area (53%).
- Of those who are dissatisfied with their council, only 3% cite councillor behaviour as a reason for their dissatisfaction. This backs up previous evidence<sup>4</sup> suggesting that dissatisfaction tends to be more commonly linked to perceptions of service quality, value for money and the level of public consultation, rather than councillor behaviour.
- Nevertheless, those who have more contact, or have a favourable opinion of their councillors, are much more likely to be satisfied with their council.
- The most common method the public use to obtain information about their council is local newspapers (61%) which vindicates the Board's usage of local newspapers as a main method of informing the public of the outcome of its investigations.

## Local area and local council

The majority of the general public are happy with the area in which they live. Over eight in ten (84%) are satisfied, with four in ten (40%) saying they are very satisfied. One in ten members of the public (10%) however feels dissatisfied with the area in which they live.

A lower proportion (53%) are satisfied with the way the council is running the area compared to those who are satisfied with the area in general (84%), as shown in the following chart.

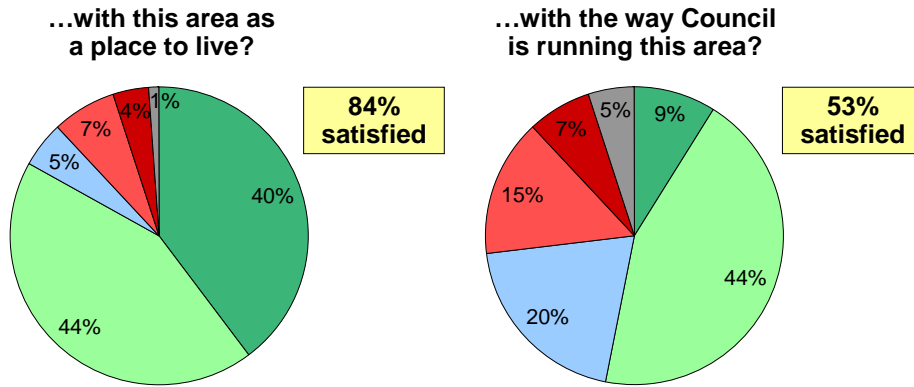
---

<sup>4</sup> *What drives public satisfaction with local government?*, Local Government Association/MORI Social Research Institute, November 2004

## Satisfaction with area and council

Q How satisfied or dissatisfied are you...

■ % Very dissatisfied   
 ■ % Fairly dissatisfied   
 ■ % Neither/nor   
 ■ % Fairly satisfied   
 ■ % Very satisfied   
 ■ % Don't know

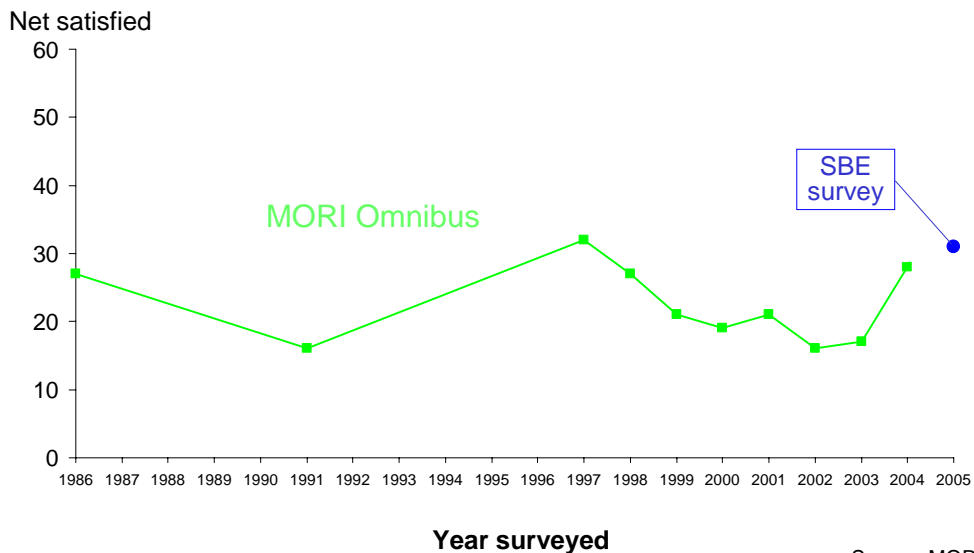


Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

This level of satisfaction reflects national trends which MORI tracks in its Omnibus surveys. Overall net satisfaction<sup>5</sup> with local authorities has recovered from a low point in around April 2003, and is now back to almost where it was at the time of Tony Blair's first election in 1997.

## Satisfaction with Council - Trends



Source: MORI

<sup>5</sup> 'Net satisfaction' is worked out by subtracting '% dissatisfied' from '% satisfied' to give a 'net satisfied figure' which can be a positive or negative figure.

The levels of satisfaction with people's area and local council vary across sub-groups, notably by social grade<sup>6</sup>, geographic area and deprivation levels. ABC1s are more likely than C2DEs to be satisfied with the area (86% vs. 78%), although there is no difference by social grade in levels of satisfaction with the council.

Those in the Midlands appear most happy living in the area – nine in ten (89%) are satisfied compared to around eight in ten in the South (82%) and North (78%). Some three quarters (75%) of those who live in a deprived area are satisfied living there compared to nine in ten (89%) people who live in an affluent area<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, people in deprived areas (47%) are less likely than those in affluent (57%) or mid-level areas (56%) to be satisfied with the way the council is running the area, although there is little difference by region.

Those who feel they know a great deal or a fair amount about the work of their local councillor are more likely than those who know not much or know nothing to be satisfied with the council (60% vs. 51%).

There is a correlation between satisfaction with the area in general and satisfaction with the way the council is running the area, and a similar relationship between dissatisfaction with the area and dissatisfaction with the council. Three in five (60%) people satisfied with the area are also satisfied with the way the council is running it. The same proportion (60%) of people dissatisfied with the area are dissatisfied with the way the council is running it.

## Reasons for dissatisfaction with council

Dissatisfaction with the way the council is running the area is often linked to perceptions of the quality of the services rather than how councillors are viewed. In the survey, the main reasons spontaneously given for being dissatisfied with the council are:

- litter, poor street cleaning (17%);
- poor refuse collection (11%);
- poor maintenance of roads and pavements (11%); and
- rarely seeing much service for the amount of council tax paid (10%).

Few people (3%) who are dissatisfied with their council spontaneously cite councillors' behaviour as the reason for being dissatisfied. A fuller list of reasons given for dissatisfaction with the Council can be found in the table opposite.

---

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the definition of Social Grade and ABC1s/ C2DEs, please refer to the Social Grade definition in the appendices.

<sup>7</sup> 'Deprived' and 'Affluent' areas comprise the bottom 25% and top 25% of wards when ranked by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

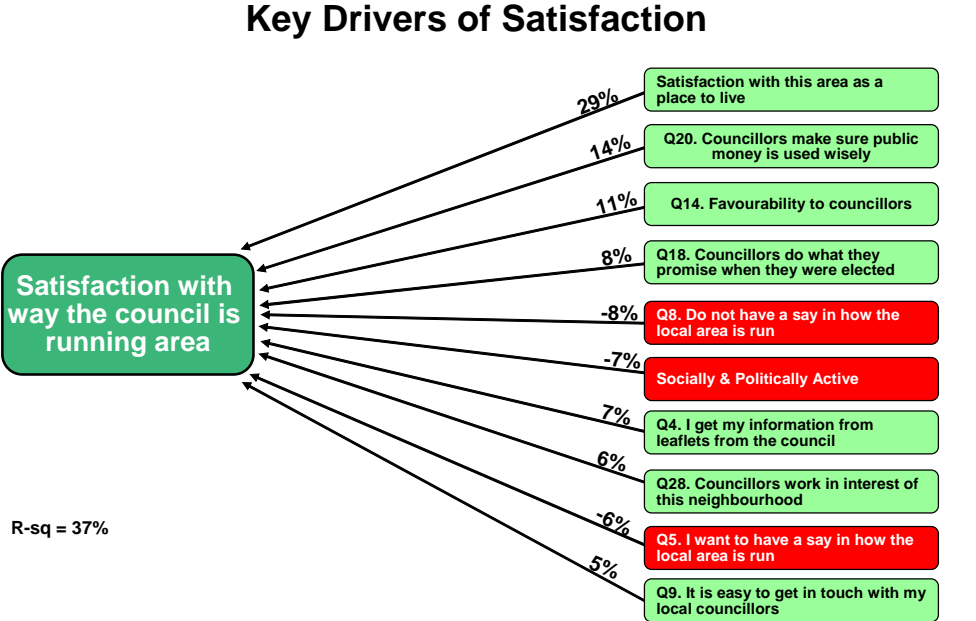
<b>Table 1. Reasons for dissatisfaction with the Council</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Base: All respondents dissatisfied with the council</i>	(237)
	%
Poor road sweeping/street cleaning/too much litter	17
Poor refuse collection service	11
Poor maintenance of roads/pavements	11
No service for what you pay in council tax/nothing ever gets done	10
Parking problems/lack of residents parking/disabled parking	9
Poor maintenance of trees/greenery	9
Poor/slow repairs service	7
Lack of consultation/they don't listen to what people want	7
Traffic problems/poor traffic schemes	6
They waste money	5
They make bad choices/spend money on the wrong things	4
Lack of facilities for children/youths nowhere for them to play/congregate	4
Poor town planning	4
Problems with drug taking/dealing	4
They (councillors) don't do what they promise/are elected to do	4
High council tax/increased council tax	4
Councillor behaviour	3
<i>NB: answers below 4% (apart from councillor behaviour) are not shown</i>	<i>Source: MORI</i>

As the table shows, dissatisfaction with the Council is often linked to liveability factors/“clean green space” issues, and this has also been highlighted in much of MORI’s previous research<sup>8</sup> as the service of most importance to residents overall. We have seen evidence from different authorities of how increases or decreases in the ratings of these key services have had a significant impact on overall image ratings of the authority.

<sup>8</sup> *The Rising Prominence of Liveability*, MORI Social Research Institute, September 2002; and *Physical Capital: Liveability in 2005*, MORI Social Research Institute, June 2005

# Key drivers of satisfaction with councils

We have looked at the answers to questions in this survey to see how they relate to people’s satisfaction with their council<sup>9</sup>. The most prominent factors (negative and positive) are termed ‘key drivers’. The following chart displays the key drivers of satisfaction with the way the council is running the area.



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005  
 For a definition of ‘Socio-Politically active’, please see Appendix E  
 Source: MORI

The factors in this survey which are most strongly linked to a person’s satisfaction with the council are:

- satisfaction with the area as a place to live (this re-iterates the strong link between satisfaction with the area and the council);
- the belief that councillors are spending public money wisely (which is also seen as the most important thing for councillors to do – see page 40);
- feeling favourable towards councillors; and
- believing that councillors do what they promised when they were elected (again, one of the top four most important requirements of councillors, from the public perspective).

<sup>9</sup> Key Drivers’ Analysis identifies how a set of independent variables relates to another variable of interest or dependent variable (in this case, satisfaction with the way the council is running the area). It tells how well these independent variables predict each dependent variable, and also the effect of each ‘independent’ variable on the ‘dependent.’ The strength of each independent variable at predicting the dependent variable (relative to all the other independent variables) can then be calculated.

The most important factors covered in this survey which can drive people to be dissatisfied with their council are believing that they do not currently have a say in how the local area is run, and wanting to have a say in how the local area is run. In addition, those who are more socio-politically active are also more likely to be dissatisfied.

### Sources of information about councils

The most common method the public use to obtain information about their council is local newspapers (61%). Other popular sources include: council leaflets (45%); friends and family (21%) and local TV news (20%). Around half (49%) of the general public cite one or more council sources, which indicates that independent sources (i.e. non-Council sources) play a large role in distributing information about the council among residents. The full range of sources is shown in the table below, together with a breakdown of use by different ages.

**Table 2. Sources from which people get most of their information about the council**

	Total	Age		
		16-34	35-54	55+
<i>Base:</i>	(1,027)	(277)	(384)	(366)
	%	%	%	%
Local newspapers	61	48	66	67
Leaflets from the council	45	40	48	47
Friends and family	21	32	17	15
Local TV news	20	16	21	22
Grapevine/Rumour	10	8	11	12
Local radio	10	10	9	11
Local council website	8	10	9	4
Civic centre/libraries	6	6	6	5
Posters/hoardings	6	8	4	5
Citizens Advice Bureaux	2	1	3	2
Other	5	3	5	6
None of these	3	3	2	3
Don't know	1	1	1	-

Source: MORI

Younger people (aged 16-34) are less likely to get information about the council from local newspapers (48% compared to 66% of those aged over 35) and more likely to rely on family and friends (32% compared to 16% of people over 35 years).

ABC1s generally rely on a wider selection of sources than C2DEs, such as local newspapers (65% vs. 56%), council leaflets (48% vs. 41%) and the council website (11% vs. 3%).

# Engagement with Local Issues

---

*In this chapter we look at how engaged the public feels with local issues and the local area.*

## **Key Findings**

- Local issues and local councils matter to people. The vast majority of the public says they are interested in local issues (79%) and there is much evidence that most people want to have a say in what is happening in their local area.
- That said, there is a clear gap between people's desire to have a say or take part locally and what people do or feel they can do in practice. For example, as many as 84% say it is their duty to vote in local elections but turnout in these elections frequently falls below 50%. In addition, a high proportion claims to want to have a say in how their local area is run (68%) but less than half this proportion feels they do have a say (28%).
- As previous MORI research<sup>10</sup> shows, it seems local *issues* rather than local *politics* are of more interest to residents. This shows that people do not always make a conscious link between the issues they are concerned about and how politics can have an impact on these.

During the interviews a series of statements were read out to gauge the public's level of involvement with local issues and to ascertain how important local issues are to people's lives. People were asked to consider and agree or disagree with the statements detailed in the chart below. Results are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

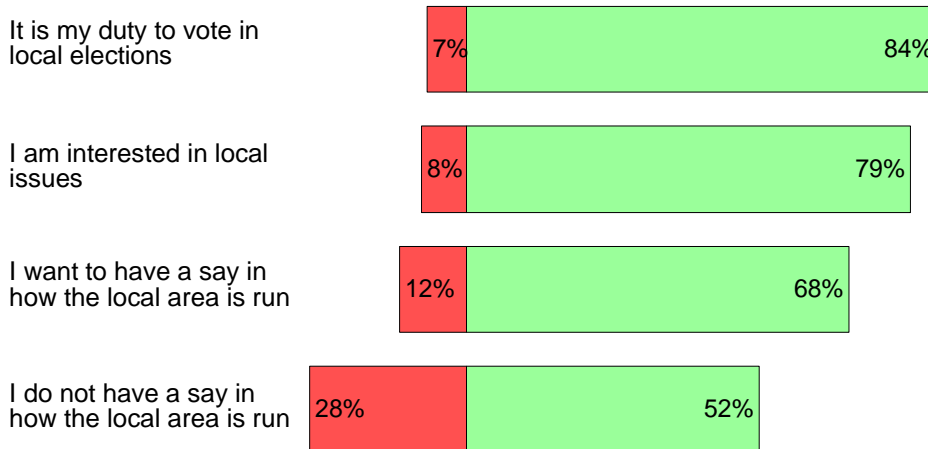
---

<sup>10</sup> *Audit of Political Engagement 2004*, Electoral Commission/Hansard Society

## Engagement with local issues

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ % Disagree ■ % Agree



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

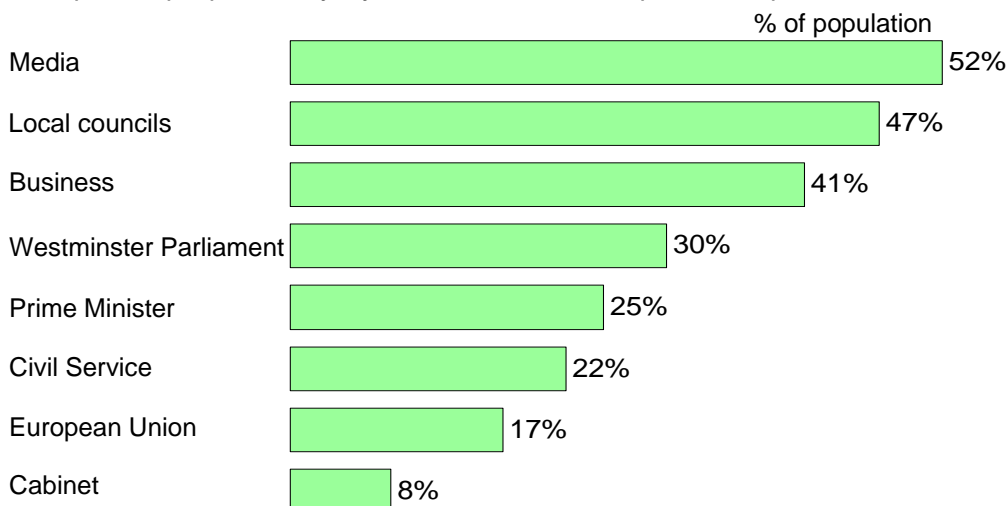
Source: MORI

These results show that there is much interest and belief in the importance of local issues among the public.

This is supported by MORI's 2003/04 Audit of Political Research<sup>11</sup> which found that of eight institutions, people thought local councils had the most impact on their everyday lives, apart from the media. The results for all institutions asked about are displayed in the chart below.

## Impact on people's lives

Q From this list, which two or three of the following do you believe have most impact on people's everyday lives. You can select up to three options.



Base: All respondents (1,064) General Public 18+, UK, 11-17 December 2003

Source: MORI/ The Electoral Commission/ Hansard Society

<sup>11</sup> *Audit of Political Engagement 2004*, Electoral Commission/Hansard Society

It is also worth keeping in mind that despite the interest in local issues and a large majority of the public wanting to have a say in how their local area is run, most people are turned off by local politics, as illustrated in the table below.

**Table 3. Interest in local politics compared to politics generally**

%	A great deal/quite a lot	Some	Not very much/not at all
Interest in local politics	11	28	61
Interest in politics generally	29	36	35

*Source: BSA 1999/2000*

Although not directly comparable, it is noteworthy that just four in ten (39%) members of the public (in the BSA survey) express at least some interest in local politics, while as many as eight in ten (79%) in the MORI *Public Perceptions* survey are interested in local issues. These findings (i.e. that people are interested in local *issues* to a much greater extent than they are local *politics*) are important to keep in mind when considering the role that the public expect from their councillors. Previous MORI research<sup>12</sup> also indicates that people are more interested in local *issues* rather than local *politics*. This shows that people do not always make a conscious link between the issues they are concerned about and how politics can have an impact on these.

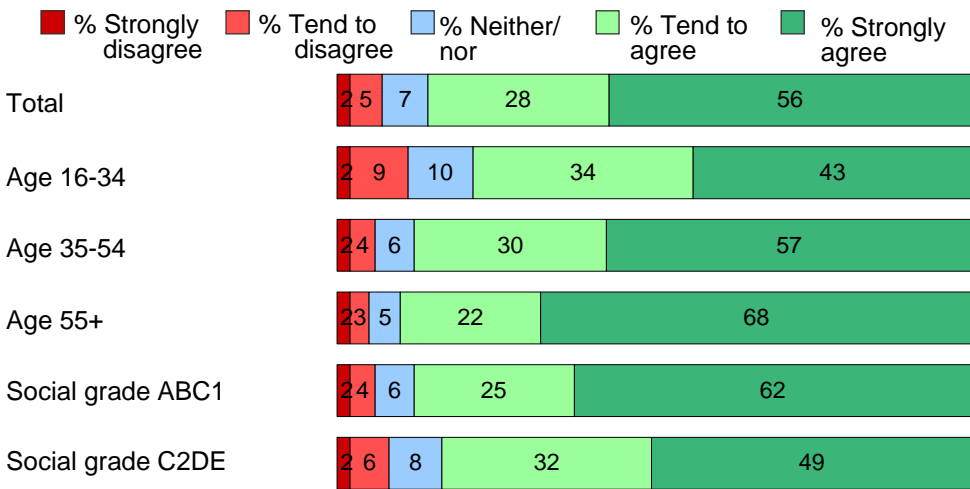
### Duty to vote

There appears to be a gap between people’s ‘desire’ for engagement and their actual levels of engagement at the local level. Over four in five members of the public (84%) feel it is their **duty to vote** in local elections, and over half (56%) agree strongly with this. However, turnout in local elections tends to be low (often below 50%).

<sup>12</sup> *Audit of Political Engagement 2004*, Electoral Commission/Hansard Society

## Duty to vote

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'It is my duty to vote in local elections'



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

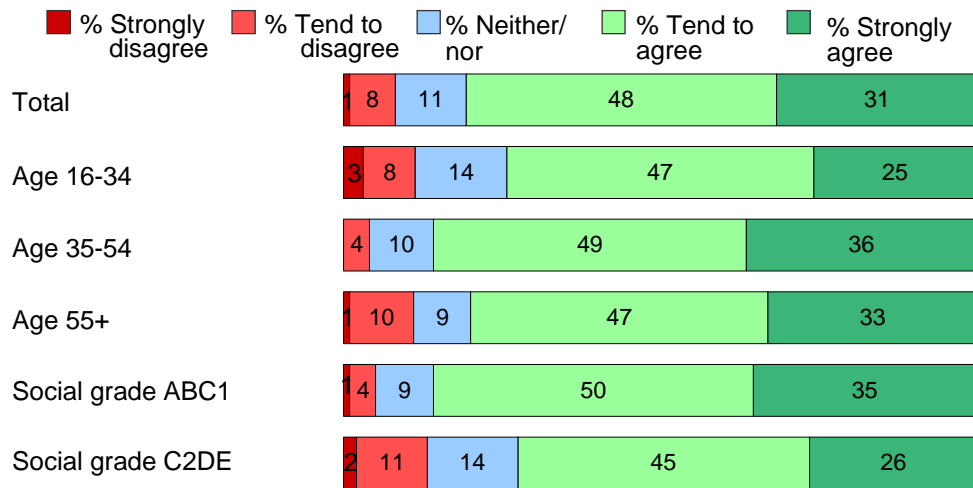
People under 35 are less likely than older ones to believe they have a duty to vote in local elections and a greater proportion of ABC1s than C2DEs say it is their duty to vote in local elections. The differences are particularly marked among those who strongly hold these views: 43% under 35s vs. 62% of those aged 35+ and 62% ABC1s vs. 49% C2DEs. These differences are consistent with those found when people were asked about duty to vote at any type of election.

## Interest in local issues

The vast majority of people are **interested in local issues**: eight in ten people (79%) say they are and one in eleven (9%) are not interested.

### Interest in local issues

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'I am interested in local issues'



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

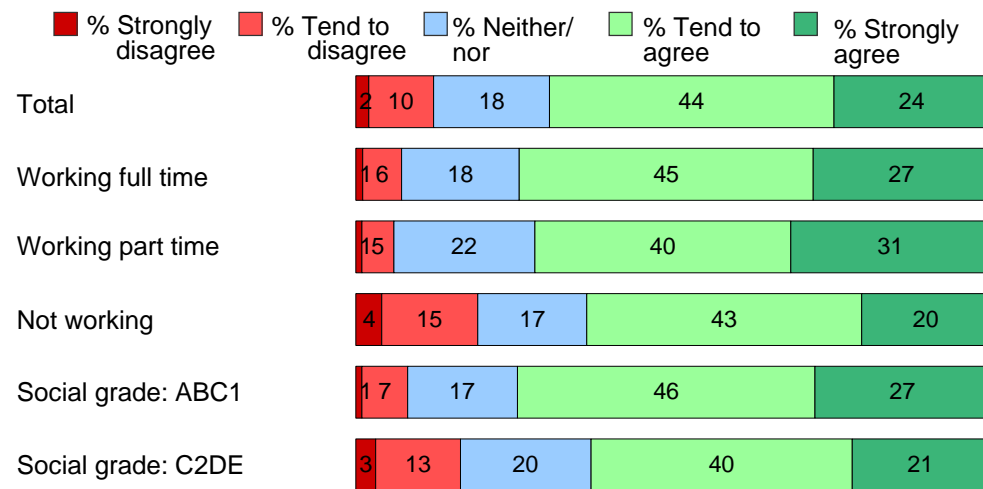
The mid-age group (35-54) are most likely to be interested in local issues (85%) – younger (72%) are less likely to say they are interested in local issues. A greater proportion of ABC1s than C2DEs are interested in local issues (85% vs. 71%).

## Having a say in how the local area is run

Over two thirds of the public (68%) agree that they **want to have a say in how the local area is run**, with around a quarter (24%) agreeing strongly with this statement. Only one in nine (12%) disagree with this.

### Wanting to have a say in how the area is run

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'I want to have a say in how the local area is run'



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

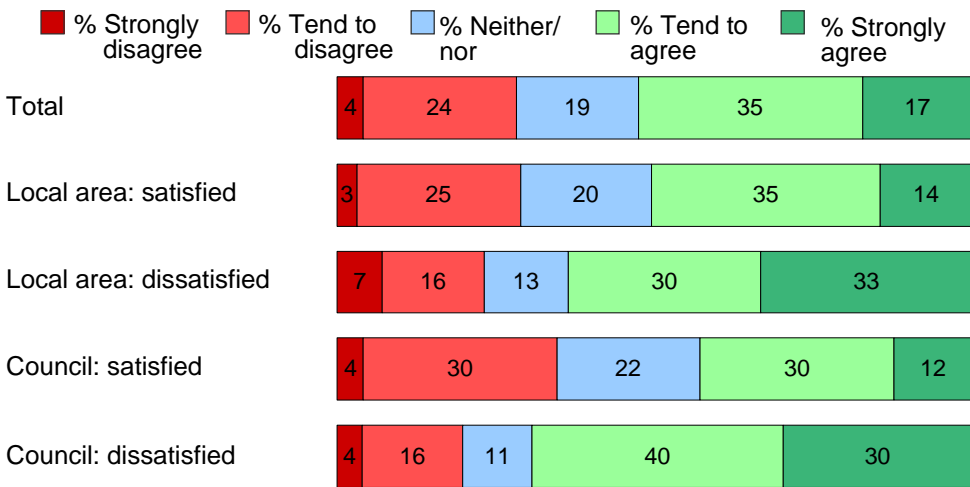
People who work (whether full-time or part-time) are more likely than those who do not work to want a say in how the local area is run (72% workers vs. 63% non-workers). A greater proportion of ABC1s than C2DEs want a say in the running of the local area (73% vs. 61%) although this is likely to be linked to working status.

There is no difference in the proportions of those satisfied or dissatisfied with the local area who want a say in how the area is run (68% vs. 66%), but a greater proportion of those dissatisfied with the way the council is running the area say they want a say in how the local area is run, than those who are satisfied (74% vs. 67%). People living in deprived areas are less likely than others to want a say in how the local area is run (63% compared to 70% of those in affluent areas).

Although 68% of the public *want* to have a say in how the local area is run, only just over a quarter (28%) feel they *do* have a say in how the local area is run and around half (52%) feel they *do not*.

## Having a say in how the area is run

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'I do not have a say in how the local area is run'



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

Dissatisfaction with the area, and in particular with the council, is linked to the feeling of not having a say in how the local area is run. Over six in ten (63%) of those dissatisfied with the area feel they do not have a say in how the local area is run compared to half (49%) of those who are satisfied with the area. Seven in ten (70%) people who feel dissatisfied with the way the council is running the area believe they do not have a say in how the local area is run compared to around four in ten (42%) of those who are satisfied with the council.

# Councillors: Knowledge and Contact

---

*This chapter examines the extent of the public's knowledge of and interaction with councillors to find out how engaged people feel with their local authorities, as well as how involved they would like to be.*

## **Key Findings**

- Four out of five members of the public say they know little or nothing at all about their local councillor's work. This level of unfamiliarity is similar to people's level of knowledge of the work of their local MP.
- More people feel they know at least a fair amount about their local councils (38%) than do about the work of their local councillor (19%). This reflects the fact that most people say they have never met their local councillor in person (65%).
- Overall, only 15% of the public say they have met any of their local councillors within the last six months – this is despite the fact that the survey fieldwork took place shortly after the General Election and some local elections in May 2005.
- However, it does not appear that a key reason for this low level of contact relates to councillors' accessibility since only a quarter (23%) say it is not easy to contact a councillor, and two fifths (41%) say it is easy.
- Lack of interest in the work of councillors also does not seem to be a major reason for low levels of contact. Just 3% of people say they are not interested in what councillors do or how they do their job, although a larger proportion (22%) say they are not interested in what councillors do, as long as they do their job. For the remainder, most are happy to let councillors get on with their jobs as long as they are kept informed (44%), although a quarter (23%) would like a greater say in what councillors do.

## Knowledge of councillors

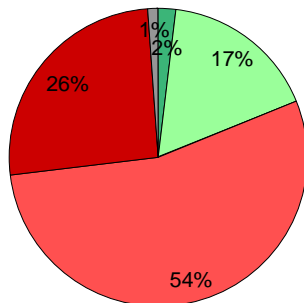
Very few people feel they know much about the work of their MP or their local councillors. Only one in five (19%) people say that they know at least a fair amount about the work of their local councillors. Just over half (54%) know not very much and a quarter (26%) know nothing at all.

### Knowledge of councillors/MP

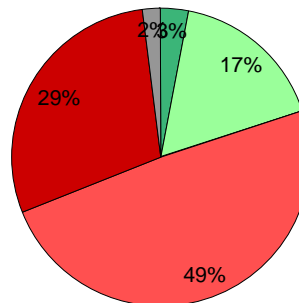
Q How much, if anything, would you say you know about the work of your...?

% Don't know
  % A fair amount
  % Not very much
  % Nothing at all
  % A great deal

Local councillors



Local MP



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

Those aged 55+ are more likely than their younger counterparts to say they know a great deal/fair amount about the work of local councillors (24% vs. 17%). Levels of satisfaction with their council has little impact on an individual's perceived knowledge about their local councillors' work, but personal contact with a councillor *does* make a difference. Close to half (48%) of those who have met their local councillor within the last six months know a great deal/fair amount about their councillors' work compared to around a quarter (28%) of people who have met their councillor longer than six months ago and one in ten (10%) of those who have never met their local councillor.

The public were asked how much they feel they know about their local MP's work and levels of knowledge were similar to those for councillors' work. One in five people (20%) feel they know a great deal or fair amount about their MP's work (and 19% think they know a great deal or fair amount about their local councillors' work).

Again, it is older respondents who are most likely to feel they know a great deal/ fair amount about their MP's work (26% vs. 17%). ABC1s are more likely than C2DEs to say they know a great deal or fair amount about their MP's work (25% vs. 15%).

The low levels of familiarity people have with local *councillors* is consistent with MORI's research about public familiarity with local *councils*, as illustrated in Table 4 below. In a survey for The Electoral Commission/Hansard Society in December 2003, MORI found that only 4% of the public claim to know a great deal about their

local council and 34% a fair amount. In contrast the majority know not very much (49%) or nothing at all (12%). Familiarity with local councils (38% know at least a fair amount) is higher than that of the Westminster Parliament (33%) or the European Union (24%).

Nevertheless, it is quite instructive that twice as many people feel familiar towards their local council (38%) than they do about the work of their local councillors (19%).

**Table 4. How much people feel they know about...**

%	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Nothing at all	Don't know
The European Union	2	22	55	20	1
Your local council	4	34	49	12	1
The Westminster Parliament	3	30	50	17	1

*11-17 December 2003, UK Adults aged 18+ Source: MORI/Electoral Commission (1,064)*

### Contact with councillors

Two thirds (65%) of people say they have never met any of their councillors, as is illustrated by some quotes below from the qualitative stage.

*There doesn't seem to be a way for me to contact somebody about how to make things better.*

Female, 18-39

*Sometimes I wonder what they actually do because there's a big splash in the newspaper when they've been elected and then you hear about them three times a year if that!*

Female, 18-39

One in eight (13%) people have met a councillor more than a year ago and one in five (20%) have met a councillor within the last year. Three quarters of under 35s (77%) have never met a councillor compared to two thirds (66%) of 35-54 year olds and just over half (54%) of those aged over 55. Those who are socio-politically active are also more likely than those who are not to have met a councillor in the last year (40% vs. 18%).

### Getting in touch

Despite the low levels of contact, four people in ten (41%) believe it is easy to get in touch with their local councillors and just under a quarter (23%) do not. A large proportion (36%) do not express an opinion.

The focus group quote below demonstrates how removed some feel councillors are from the lives of residents, although there are also some positive experiences of contacting councillors, as the second quote suggests.

*They are so far removed normally from the people they're representing. I mean they might represent the ward, but they don't actually live in that ward or area... if you represent any area you should live in it or at least know the people.*

Male, 18-39

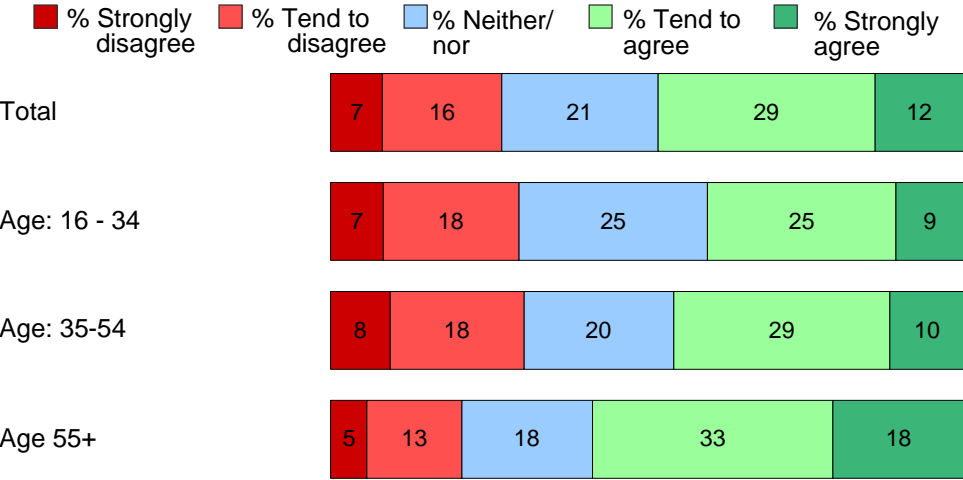
*If they were all like [her], I don't think there'd be any grumbles at all. If you go and tell her something, or ask her something, you get a note through the door the next day, and a follow-up call.*

Female, 40+

Reflecting actual levels of contact, older people (aged 55 or above) are most likely to think it is easy to get in touch (51%) – this is in contrast to around four in ten (39%) of those aged 35-54 and a third (34%) of 16-34 year olds.

**Getting in touch with councillor**

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'It is easy to get in touch with my local councillors'



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005 Source: MORI

More (49%) of those people satisfied with the way their council is running the local area say it is easy to get in touch with their councillors than those dissatisfied with their council (32%).

People who feel they have a say in how their local area is run are more likely than those who do not to agree that it is easy to get in touch with local councillors (54% of those who disagree with the statement *I do not have a say in how the local area is run* compared to 34% of those who agree with the statement).

Only a third (31%) of the public who have never met a local councillor believe it is easy to get in contact with local councillors in comparison with well over half (57%) of

those who have met a councillor more than six months ago and two thirds (66%) of people who have met a councillor in the last six months.

## Relationship with councillors

The public were asked to choose a statement that best represents their feelings about councillors, and the results are displayed in table 5. Reflecting a degree of engagement with local issues (as discussed previously), few members of the public (3%) are totally uninterested in their councillors' actions. A further one in five (22%) are not interested in what councillors do and are content to leave them to get on with their work, as long as they do their jobs.

The largest group of people like to know what activities councillors are involved in but are happy for councillors to get on with it (44%), which is consistent with results from MORI's research on public attitudes to their preferred relationships with local authorities.

Approximately half this proportion (23%) would welcome the chance to have more input into councillors' activities. Few people, one in every twenty, are confident they already know about and are able to express their views to councillors. There is little consistent difference by age when analysing by sub-groups.

**Table 5. Attitudes towards councillors**

	Total	Age		
		16-34	35-54	55+
<i>Base:</i>	(1027) %	(277) %	(384) %	(366) %
I'm not interested in what councillors do, or how they do their job	3	5	3	2
I'm not interested in what councillors do as long as they do their job	22	22	19	27
I like to know what councillors are doing but I'm happy to let them get on with it	44	44	43	46
I would like to have more of a say in what councillors do	23	25	28	16
I already know about councillors and feel able to get across my views	5	3	5	6
None of these/ Don't know	2	1	2	2

*Source: MORI*

The following table compares the demographic composition of the 23% of the public who would like to have more say in what local councillors do and the 25% who are uninterested<sup>13</sup> in what councillors do.

<sup>13</sup> This is derived from those who are not interested in what councillors do or how they do their job (3%) and those who are not interested in what councillors do as long as they do their job (22%)

**Table 6. Sub-analysis of those who would like more say in what local councillors do and those who are uninterested**

	Those who would like more say in what local councillors do	Those uninterested in what councillors do
	(238) %	(265) %
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	53	51
Male	47	49
<b>Age</b>		
16-34	35	34
35-54	42	29
55+	23	37
<b>Working status</b>		
Full time	52	34
Part time	10	9
Not working	38	56
<b>Social grade</b>		
ABC1	61	43
C2DE	39	57
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
BME <sup>14</sup>	10	12
White	89	87
<b>Socio-politically active</b>		
Yes	16	2
No	84	98
<b>Deprivation</b>		
Deprived area	39	52
Neither/ nor	48	36
Affluent area	13	12

Source: MORI

<sup>14</sup> BME stands for 'Black and Minority Ethnic' people.

The key differentiating factors for these two groups (those who would like more say and those who are uninterested in what councillors do) are shaded in the previous table and detailed further in table 7.

**Table 7. Sub-analysis summary of those who would like more say in what local councillors do and those who are uninterested**

	<b>Those who would like more say in what local councillors do</b>	<b>Those uninterested in what councillors do</b>
<b>Age</b>	More likely to be 35-54	More likely to be 55+
<b>Working status</b>	More likely to be full time workers	More likely to be not working
<b>Social grade</b>	More likely to be ABC1s	More likely to be C2DEs
<b>Socio-politically active or not</b>	More likely to be socio-politically active	More likely not to be socio-politically active
<b>Deprivation of area</b>	More likely to live in an area that is neither deprived nor affluent	More likely to live in a deprived area

*Source: MORI*

# Councillors: Favourability and Trust

---

*This chapter looks at people's ratings of local councillors in terms of overall favourability and trust.*

## Key Findings

- Reflecting people's low levels of knowledge about the work of their councillors, the larger proportion have neither a favourable nor unfavourable opinion (43%) or simply don't know (14%) how they would rate their local councillors. Among those who do express an opinion, they are by a ratio of two to one positive about their councillors – and this is consistent with results for local MPs.
- In contrast, the public are much more likely to have an opinion about politicians generally and government ministers, and they are by a ratio of two to one *negative*. These findings illustrate the distinction people make when rating *local* politicians compared with politicians nationally or as a collective group.
- Local councillors are seen as more truthful than MPs and certainly more so than estate agents or car salespeople. However, compared to senior employees in local councils or doctors, local councillors do not fare so well.
- Perhaps part of the explanation for public scepticism about councillors lies in the belief by many that most councillors put the interests of either their party or their own interests before those of their local area.

## Favourability

A quarter (26%) of people have a favourable opinion towards their local councillor(s) and 14% an unfavourable one. The qualitative quotes below have been selected to show the range of both favourable and unfavourable attitudes towards councillors. In each of the qualitative locations, people mention individual councillors who they feel have 'gone the extra mile' and given individual cases their personal attention and achieved the desired result – although this tends to reflect well on the individual councillor rather than the council overall.

*My councillor came round on a Saturday morning to see me, which was quite impressive and something was done about the boy racers, but not fully. Both councillors I've had to deal with have been pretty good so far. I've probably been lucky.*

Male, 18-39

*[Councillor X] is somebody that if you speak to her, and it's all fairly minor things like there's a lay-by and it's free-for-all parking for the local residents but people would park strangely and so you couldn't get many people in. And we just wanted white lines put in there to mark out the parking bays, and it was done. You ask her and you get those kind of things.*

Female, 18-39

*I must say that since he started that, we see every year the hedges are kept, they're trimmed and it's not as bushy and so I think it's cutting down a little bit on crime because the kids can't hide out there so he does try and when he does speak up, he was speaking about the unkempt houses, the empty houses and things like that.*

Female, 40+

*They've [councillors] got an ASBO order out now haven't they? Kids aren't allowed to hang about out there and I think one of the councillors pushed for that and they were pushing for that to go through because the kids are a nightmare, my mum had her windscreen smashed, they jumped up on the bonnet and just kicked the windscreen in. Car opposite hers, a couple down the road and it was all made a state of Saturday night and the community centre also got smashed up but the councillor pushed for the children stopped being allowed to hang about there, so it stopped it being a kind of a meeting ground for them [teenagers].*

Female, 18-39

However, there are also some negative views of councillors which emerged during the discussions. A couple of respondents mention councillors with undesirable personal qualities, and another common complaint is that of councillors being 'out of touch' with their electorate. A few also feel that some councillors take people's political allegiances into account when this should not be an issue.

*I know one councillor, thinks he's above everybody else, horrible bloke... he's arrogant, ignorant, he's everything you can imagine a person to be that you wouldn't expect in that power to be and he absolutely ignores you. You go to him with your problems and he doesn't seem to be that bothered about them or you'll have to wait an hour longer... somebody you'd expect to be polite but he's arrogant and so rude, really vulgar.*

Female, 18-39

*Where I used to live there was a chap there, again, who became a councillor. On the face of it a very nice bloke but he did like his booze a bit too much and he'd spent quite a lot of time in the local police station. Unfortunately he wasn't visiting to see what good work they were doing. But when he actually carried out his job, he was a councillor, and when he actually carried out those duties he seemed to do quite a good job...but he did seem, unfortunately, to have a few too many mentions in the headlines.*

Male, 18-39

*He [a councillor] said all these things about foreigners and also he said to a pensioner who had her benefits taken away that if he dropped a £5 note she'd be able to walk, to pick it up, and that was totally out of order in my opinion... He gives you the impression that he's got as far as he wanted to get and now he can do as he likes.*

Female, 40+

*Many years ago, about 30 years ago, he used to be my boss, and we get on fine together, we did when we were working together, and we get on fine together now, but as far as being a councillor's concerned, he's a very bright, intelligent man, but if you're not a Conservative then you don't exist.*

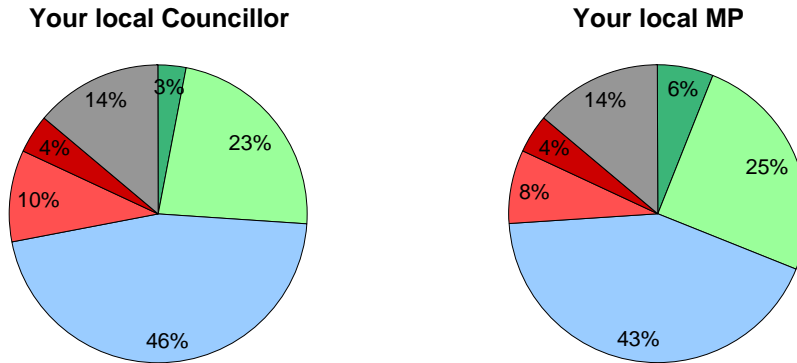
Male, 40+

Perhaps the most significant implication of the findings is the high proportion, close to half (46%), who feel neither favourable nor unfavourable toward councillors, and the 14% who do not know how to rate their local councillor(s). This ambivalence reflects people's low levels of knowledge about the work of their local councillors.

## Attitudes to Councillor/MP

Q Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of the following...?

■ % Very favourable   
 ■ % Mainly favourable   
 ■ % Neither/nor   
 ■ % Mainly unfavourable   
 ■ % Very unfavourable   
 ■ % No opinion/Dk



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

Ratings of favourability towards councillors are in line with those for MPs. Three in ten (31%) people feel favourable towards their MP, with one in eight (12%) unfavourable but again, a significant proportion (43%) rate their MP neither favourably nor unfavourably, and 14% do not express a view.

People over 55 are more likely than the younger age group to view MPs (42% vs. 25% of under 55s) and councillors favourably (32% vs. 23% of under 55s).

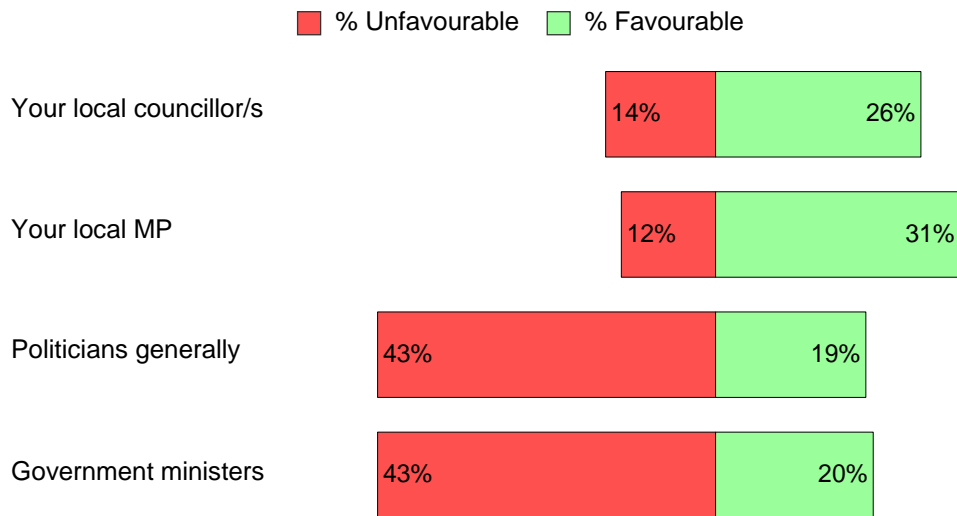
Whereas there is little difference in views of MPs by ethnicity, when asked about local councillors, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are more likely than white ones to feel favourable (35% vs. 25%).

Satisfaction with the local area and with the way the council runs the area also impacts on how favourable people feel about their local councillors (as well as the local MP). Over a quarter (27%) of those satisfied with the area are favourable towards the local councillors compared to one in five (19%) of those who are dissatisfied with living in the area. More than a third (35%) of the public who say they are satisfied with the way the council is running the area have a favourable opinion of their local councillor(s) compared to 16% who are dissatisfied with the local council's running of the area.

The following chart shows favourability towards local councillors and MPs alongside favourability towards politicians generally and government ministers.

## Attitudes to public figures

Q Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of the following...?



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

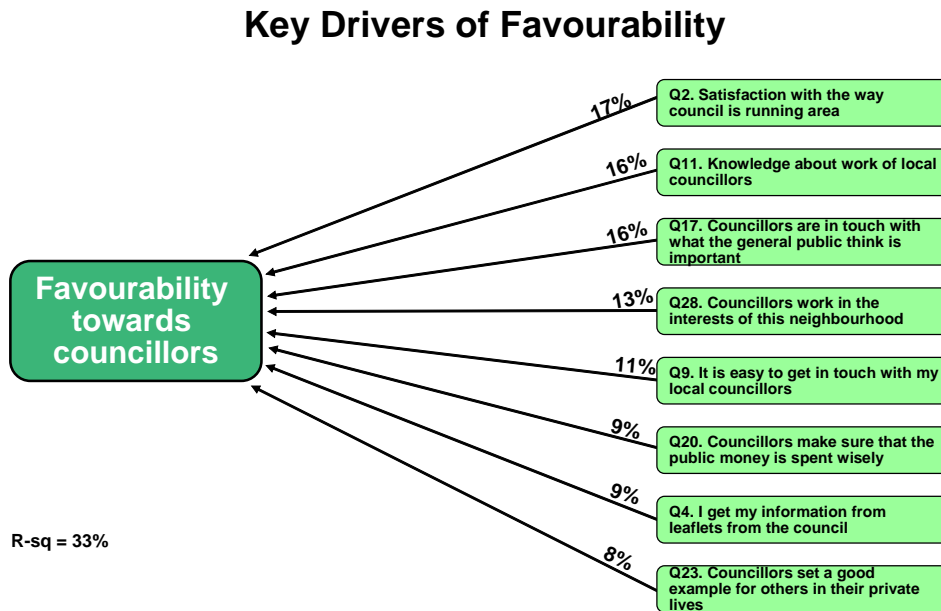
Source: MORI

The public are much more likely to express a view about politicians in general and government ministers – and they are more likely to be negative (by a ratio of more than two to one). So one in five people regard politicians generally (19%) and government ministers (20%) favourably in comparison with two in five who view politicians and government ministers unfavourably (both 43%).

Thus, the public do draw a distinction when rating local politicians compared with politicians nationally or as a collective.

## Key drivers of favourability towards councillors

The following chart depicts the key factors that impact on a person's satisfaction with their local councillors.



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

Satisfaction with the council's running of the area is the strongest driver of favourability along with knowledge about the work of the local councillor(s) and how in touch councillor(s) are with what the general public think is important.

These three drivers are almost twice as strong as making sure the public money is used wisely, setting a good example to others in their private lives and how information about the council is gathered.

Some of the key drivers of favourability with councillors are closely linked with the types of attributes the public think are most important for councillors to possess (see page 40). For example, one of the key drivers of favourability is the belief that councillors are in touch with what people think. This attribute is seen as the second most important for a councillor to have (47% select this).

## Trust

The public were asked how often they believe different types of people tell the truth. The responses are shown in table 8.

**Table 8. How often people feel different professions tell the truth**

	Always/ most of the time	Sometimes / rarely	Never
<i>Base: All respondents (1.027)</i>	%	%	%
Doctors	88	9	1
Senior employees in local councils	40	46	3
<b>Local councillors</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>3</b>
MPs	23	68	5
Estate agents	18	59	12
Car salespeople	9	64	17

Source: MORI

More of the general public feel that local councillors only tell the truth sometimes or rarely (53%) rather than always or most of the time (36%). Levels of trust are higher than for MPs (23% always/ most of the time), although not as high as senior employees in local councils (40% always/ most of the time). This is reflected in the quote from one of the focus groups, shown below.

*At a local level, we know the people, and on the whole what they say is true. At national level, what people say is not true, it's disguised.*

Male, 40+

Ratings of trust among local councillors are also some way behind trust among GPs, but we would expect this given that much research has previously shown that the public are much more positive about frontline staff and those they regard as more visible than officials or politicians. MORI's regular survey of attitudes towards doctors consistently records trust rates for local doctors of around nine in ten (91% February 2005) compared with 20% for politicians generally<sup>15</sup>.

Four in ten ABC1s (41%) feel local councillors tell the truth always or most of the time compared to three in ten (31%) C2DEs. Those who are satisfied with living in the area (39%) are more likely than those who are not (22%) to say that local councillors tell the truth always or most of the time.

<sup>15</sup> MORI's annual survey for the BMA. For full results see <http://www.mori.com/polls/trends/truth.shtml>

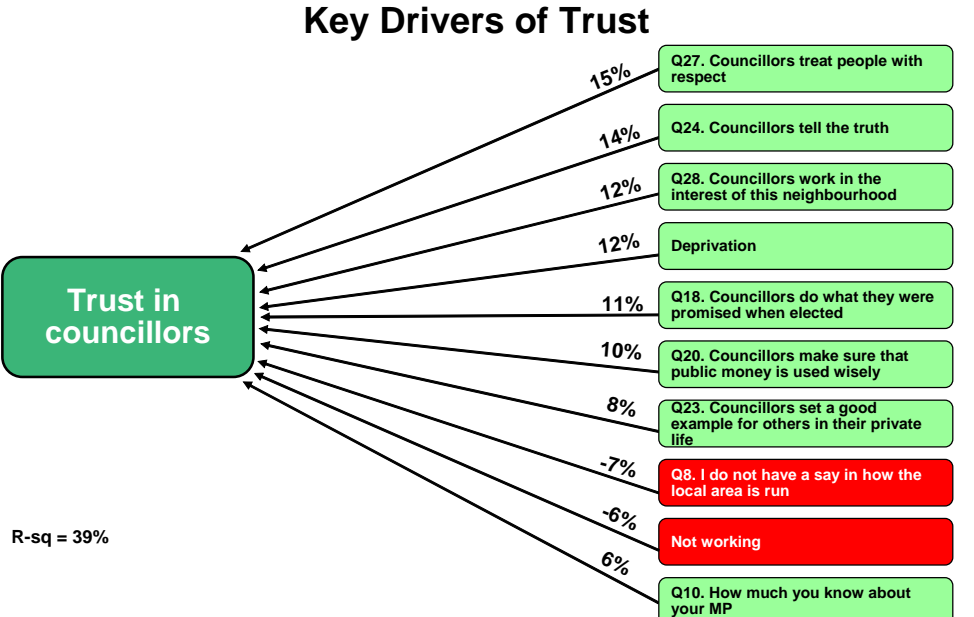
People who are satisfied with the way the council runs the area are twice as likely as those who are not to feel councillors tell the truth always or most of the time (44% vs. 21%). Similarly, those who have a favourable opinion of local councillors are substantially more likely than those who have an unfavourable opinion to believe they tell the truth always or most of the time (56% vs. 17%).

### Key Drivers of Trust

The following chart shows the independent variables covered in this survey which impact most on people’s trust in local councillors. It is interesting to note that the most important key drivers are not necessarily regarded as the most important attributes for councillors (see page 46).

The most significant key driver – *treating people with respect* – is not seen as an important councillor attribute compared to other factors, but has a strong impact on the level of trust people feel in councillors. Similarly, *telling the truth* and *setting a good example* are not regarded as very important attributes, but are key drivers of underlying trust in local councillors.

Many other key drivers of trust do relate to councillor attributes which are regarded as important, such as *working in the interests of the neighbourhood*, *doing what they promised when elected* and *making sure public money is used wisely*.



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

# Councillors: Public Perceptions and Expectations

---

*This chapter discusses differing interpretations of people's understanding of the phrase 'high standards of conduct', as discussed during the focus groups. It also details findings from the quantitative stage about the public's attitudes and expectations of councillors: which attributes or behaviours are most important for a councillor, and whose interests they put first.*

## Key Findings

- Focus group participants mention a range of areas in which they would expect 'high standards of conduct' to apply to councillors. Some feel councillors should only be held accountable in their professional roles, whereas others believe their behaviour in their personal lives should also be taken into account.
- The four attributes and behaviours the public think are most important for councillors are to *make sure that public money is used wisely* (54%), *be in touch with what the general public thinks is important* (47%), *work in the interests of their neighbourhood* (44%) and *do what they promised when elected* (39%).
- Just 4% of the public say *setting a good example for others in their private lives* is one of the three or four most important things for councillors to do.
- However, very few of the public believe that *all* councillors live up to any of these standards. Looking on balance<sup>16</sup>, the public think that only four of the twelve characteristics actually apply to most or all councillors. These are treating people with respect (+27 net apply), working in the interests of the neighbourhood (+15), not taking bribes (+10) and treating everyone equally (+2).
- For eight attributes, the public believe they do not currently apply to councillors on balance. In particular, owning up when they make a mistake (-46 net apply), doing what they promised when elected (-35), and explaining reasons for decisions and actions (-29).

---

<sup>16</sup> We calculate this by working out a "net apply" measure, which is derived from the difference between the proportions saying "all or most" apply and "a few or none" apply.

## High standards of conduct

The focus groups explored what participants understood by the phrase “standards of conduct”. A variety of factors were mentioned, the majority of which correspond to some of the Principles of conduct in local government.

- Trustworthiness

*If they're breaking the rules then it means you can't trust the council and if you can't trust them, then what's the point?... you can't really trust then what they're saying they're achieving either can you?*

Male, 18-39

- Honesty

*Anything you do hopefully should be beyond reproach. You should conduct yourself in a way that, well honest, so whatever it is can't be taken in any other context... avoid giving the wrong impression.*

Female, 40+

- Acting on behalf of the community as a whole (and not just certain groups)

*It's all about working for people, representing people. So if you're dishonest once, even if you make them happy in the end, they might not trust you again.*

Male, 18-39

*He's got time for a certain few people that he visits now and again, do you know what I mean... It's not treating everyone equally, which is what everybody deserves really. You've got a right to be treated equally no matter where you are from and no matter what you do, whether you've just joined the community, you've got a right and he just seems to take that away straightaway and it's really annoying.*

Female, 18-39

- Caring about other people

*They've got to care about other people, haven't they? And their views, and try and represent them.*

Female, 40+

- Making sure the community gets to see things that are being done on their behalf

*Just like, it's better to say "we're fighting for funding" as opposed to "we're going to have more of this, more of that" in a kind of general way.*

Male, 40+

- Integrity

*I think honesty and integrity are obviously very important, how they live their private lives, I'm not so worried about...if they were an honest person that you could look up to then that's what you've elected them to do, you've elected them to set rules and laws and you expect them to stick by those rules and laws.*

Male, 18-39

- Delivering on promises (i.e. doing what they said when elected) is viewed as especially important

*Actually carrying through what you're going to say, your plans, what you're actually going to do, being honest and not really, you know, putting you from pillar to post trying to find out what's going to be happening.*

Male, 18-39

- Being competent
- Working within the budget available

*They are supposed to do the best they can with the budget.*

Male, 18-39

- Commitment to the work
- Approachability/ personability

*Just, if you've got any issues, you can feel like you can talk to them and they'll take notice and you'll get results from it.*

Male, 18-39

- Role models

*They're the person that is going to hopefully do the things in the community that you want to happen, so therefore they are role models, hopefully to you and your family.*

Female, 18-39

Some participants draw a distinction between misconduct and corruption – misconduct is reprehensible, but corruption is more serious.

*Misconduct, it's still possible for you to do your job to a level but you're just not conducting yourself as well, whereas with corruption you're breaking rules. But I think misconduct isn't as bad... Corruption is taking money to get somebody further up the housing list. Misconduct is probably putting a friend higher up the housing list because you know them. So there's probably commercial gain in corruption and some sort of emotional or relationship issues in misconduct.*

Male, 18-39

Some people also make reference to the standards to which council services are delivered as impacting on councillors' standards of behaviour. There are also indications that the perceived standard of services subconsciously affects how well some feel their councillors behave.

## Who standards should/ do apply to

Poor standards of conduct are regarded as occurring more in national than local politics – and some feel this is because national politicians are more out of touch with people and they do not think the public can see when they are feeding them *lies*. Some also feel that the local councillors are most likely to interact with the electorate one on one and this motivates them towards higher standards of conduct.

*At a local level, we know the people, and on the whole what they say is true. At national level, what people say is not true, it's disguised.*

Male, 40+

*You're not likely to bump into Tony and Cherie in your local post office and therefore they don't have that interface where you can actually say you lied at such and such a point.*

Female, 40+

Common types of behaviour some would think of as inappropriate are accepting 'perks' such as foreign holidays and trips, local dinners and general 'freebies' which the average person is not offered or where officials are seen to take advantage of their position.

A few feel high standards of conduct should apply more to councillors than the public in general.

*They're representing a community and I think it's respecting the community that have voted you in.*

Female, 40+

*What you're saying is: I'm here to represent these people, I'm here to show a public face for these people. So the public face that I show should be the right one.*

Male, 18-39

*No one's perfect but you do expect more from a person like that [a Councillor], in that type of position.*

Male, 40+

*They're figureheads. They're representing you and if they do something wrong they shouldn't be doing that job, basically. They should be squeaky clean, highly professional, no matter what they do or whatever, they should be absolutely towing the line with what should be done. They shouldn't be doing something behind everyone's back for their own benefit.*

Male, 18-39

When discussing council scandals, some voice the view that councillors (and other officials) ought mainly to be judged on their behaviour "in role" and not in their personal lives.

*Half the time, all these scandals, it's to do with people's private lives, it's got nothing to do with their public or civic duty, their private lives are their own, if it doesn't affect them, why should it worry us? Let them get on with it.*

Male, 40+

*Perhaps [an ex-councillor] should have thought about his public office a bit more and the face he was presenting, but at the same time, if you're doing a good job, then why does it matter?*

Male, 18-39

*Everybody's got their own private lives, if it's going, if it stays behind closed doors...as long as they don't take it past their front door and it doesn't affect the way they work and the way they do things.*

Male, 18-39

However, others disagree, and feel there is also a crossover to an individual's personal life, particularly if a problem behaviour is becoming a pattern.

*Well I don't think a councillor who gets drunk and is banned from driving three times is showing integrity.*

Male, 40+

*How they carry out their life in private as well, I think that is important. I don't care if the guy's having or lady's having an affair, I would be concerned if they were hanging about outside the school gates. I'm not necessarily concerned if they're sitting smoking wacky baccy in the living room at night but I would be concerned if they were selling heroin while they were doing it. So obviously, you've got to have a balance there with this conduct – I don't necessarily want to know about all that sort of goings-on but I would like to think that they're not upsetting their local neighbourhood, that they are a genuinely nice person.*

Male, 18-39

*I think if they're elected to public office, they do have a duty in their private life to continue a certain level of conduct...I remember [one ex-councillor] really pushing public transport which coincided with him losing his license for drink-driving – that is the sort of private life that he shouldn't have.*

Male, 18-39

*Let's say, if you are dishonest or something in your private life, you are a Councillor, you're handling money and things, so you will do the same thing on the job.*

Female, 40+

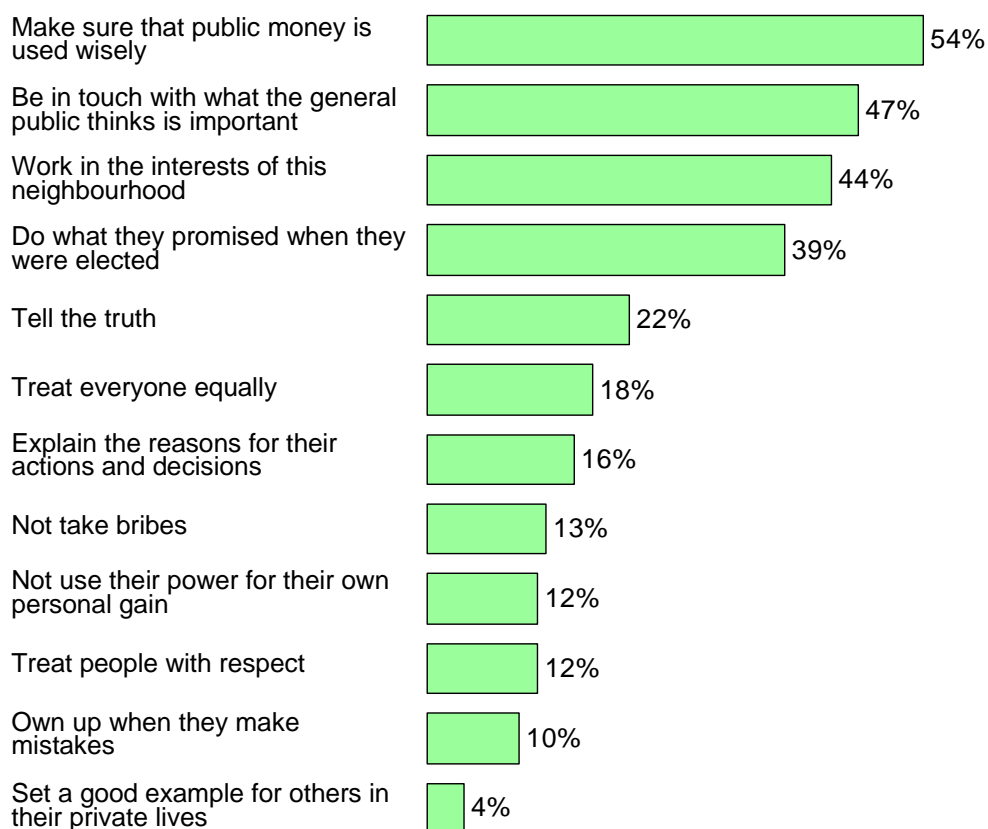
## Important behaviour attributes and behaviours

Leading on from the qualitative discussions about standards of councillors' behaviour, the quantitative stage asked people to choose (from a list) which attributes and behaviours they feel are most important for local councillors to exhibit.

The most commonly chosen responses are: making sure public money is used wisely (54%); being in touch with what the general public regards as important (47%); working for the interests of the neighbourhood (44%); and doing what was promised when they were elected (39%). The results are displayed in the chart overleaf.

## Councillor attributes and behaviours

Q Which three, if any, of the following do you think are the most important for local councillors to do?



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005 Source: MORI

The behaviours were chosen as they were felt to correspond with much of the sentiment behind the ten Principles of conduct in local government<sup>17</sup>. However, it is important to bear in mind that the statements presented to respondents are not exact matches for the Principles – that is to say that sometimes, more than one statement applies to a Principle, and sometimes a statement covers more than one Principle. The statements are approximations but do not explore every facet of a Principle. Views about these attributes can however offer some insights into the areas where the public feel councillors are adhering to the Principles, as well as where they feel there are failings.

Thus it appears that characteristics such as financial accountability and honesty (making sure that public money is used wisely, doing what they promised when they were elected) and representing those living in the local area effectively (being in touch with what the general public thinks is important, working in the interests of this neighbourhood ) are prized most amongst the public. These are proxies for the Principles of stewardship, selflessness and honesty/integrity. Only one in twenty-five (4%) think one of the top three or four priorities for councillors is to set a good example in their private lives.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix A for details on which Principles statements correspond with.

These results can be compared with the recent Committee on Standards in Public Life survey about attitudes towards MPs<sup>18</sup>. In this survey, the most important attributes for MPs are not taking bribes (88%), telling the truth (75%), making sure public money is used wisely (73%) and not using power for their own personal gain (72%). Interestingly, the only trait people view as important (i.e. in the top four) for councillors and for MPs is making sure public money is spent wisely.

With regard to MPs<sup>19</sup>, the public appear more concerned about issues of corruption (taking bribes, using power for own personal gain). People think it is more important for councillors to operate on a more local level (being in touch with what the public thinks is important, working in the interests of the neighbourhood). It could also be the case that people's priorities are affected by issues they perceive to be problems – i.e. people may believe corruption and abuse of power are more common at a national than a local level.

## Perceptions of current behaviour

As well as seeking views on the relative importance of different types of behaviour, the public were asked to estimate how many local councillors they believe each of the attributes actually applies to, i.e. how many councillors actually behave in a certain way or carry out a specific action. The results are displayed in the following table.

---

<sup>18</sup> Survey of public attitudes towards conduct in public life, Committee on Standards in Public Life, 2004

<sup>19</sup> It is also important to bear in mind that the questions about MPs and about councillors were asked slightly differently, so the results cannot be directly compared.

**Table 9. How many councillors different actions/ behaviours apply to**

	All	Most	About half	A few	None	Net apply <sup>20</sup>
<i>Base: All respondents (1,027)</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Treat people with respect	7	41	15	18	3	+27
Work in interests of the neighbourhood	7	36	17	21	7	+15
Do not take bribes	18	14	6	11	11	+10
Treat everyone equally	4	31	16	22	11	+2
Set a good example for others in their private lives	2	25	14	19	8	0
Do not use their power for their own personal gain	4	24	14	24	9	-5
In touch with what the general public thinks is important	2	24	19	30	9	-13
Tell the truth	2	24	18	28	12	-14
Make sure public money is used wisely	2	19	18	28	16	-23
Explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	2	17	15	30	18	-29
Do what they promised when elected	1	14	19	34	16	-35
Own up when they make mistakes	1	11	14	35	23	-46

*NB. 'Don't know' responses are excluded from this table so totals will not always sum to 100%*

*Source: MORI*

On balance<sup>21</sup>, the public feel that councillors:

- Treat people with respect;
- Work in the interests of their neighbourhood;
- Do not take bribes; and

<sup>20</sup> 'Net apply' is worked out by subtracting '% do not apply' from '% apply' to give a 'net apply figure' which can be a positive or negative figure

<sup>21</sup> We calculate this by working out a "net apply" measure, which is derived from the difference between the proportions saying "all or most" apply and "a few or none" apply.

- Treat everyone equally.

This indicates that people believe that the principles of respect, selflessness, honesty & integrity, and objectivity are typically being met, at least to some extent.

However, the public do not agree that on balance councillors:

- Own up when they make mistakes
- Do what they promised when elected
- Explain the reasons for their actions and decisions
- Make sure public money is used wisely
- Tell the truth
- Are in touch with what the general public thinks is important

And they feel that councillors do on balance:

- Use their power for their own personal gain

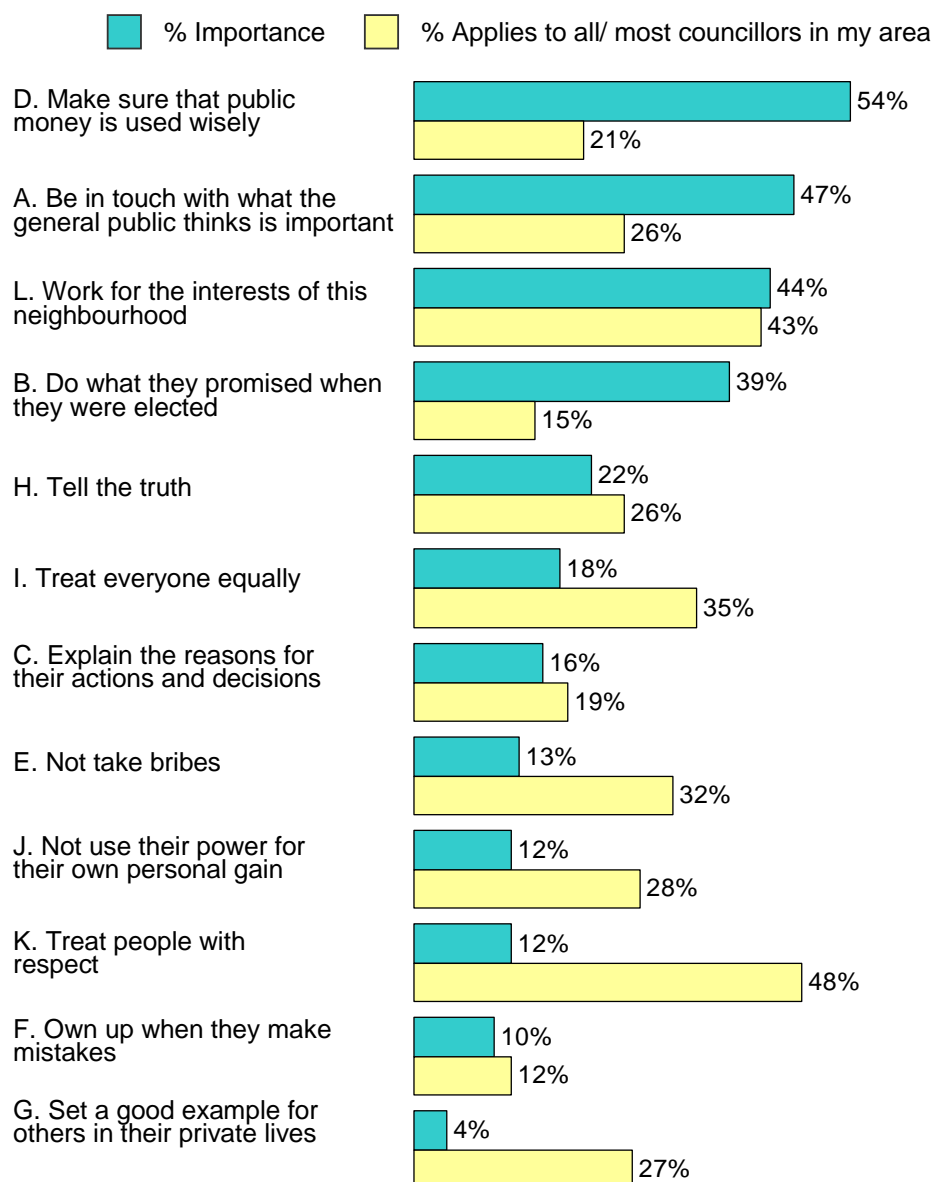
With the exception of *do not take bribes*, fewer than one in ten people felt each way of behaving applied to *all* councillors (18% of people felt that this applied to *all* councillors).

These findings indicate that there is a perception that the Principles of accountability, honesty/ integrity, openness, stewardship, and selflessness are not being considered as high a priority as they could be by councillors.

The following chart displays how important the public thinks different characteristics are for councillors against the proportion who think 'all/most' of their local councillors fulfil this criteria. Results demonstrate that there is little alignment between principles the public are most likely to rate as important and the proportion of councillors perceived as behaving in these ways.

## Councillor responsibilities

- Q Which three, if any, of the following do you think are the most important for local councillors to do?
- Q Of all the local councillors in your area, how many do each of the following statements apply to ?



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

With the exception of *working in the interests of this neighbourhood*, there is a large gap between the proportion of the public who say each of the top four is most important and the proportion who believe they apply to all or most councillors.

Only a fifth (21%) believe that all/ most councillors *make sure public money is used wisely* even though this is the characteristic most frequently mentioned as being important (54%). Similarly, *being in touch with what the general public thinks* is most frequently mentioned in terms of importance (47%) but only a quarter (26%) feel all/ most councillors are in touch. Around four in ten (39%) believe it is important

councillors *do what they promised when they were elected* – but fewer than half this number (15%) feel this applies to all/ most councillors.

In contrast, characteristics that the public are less likely to regard as important but that a substantial number feel all/ most councillors fulfil are:

- Treating everyone equally (18% importance, 35% applies);
- Not taking bribes (13% importance, 32% applies);
- Not using their power for their own personal gain (12% importance, 28% applies);
- Treating people with respect (12% importance, 48% applies); and
- Setting a good example for others in their private lives (4% importance, 27% applies).

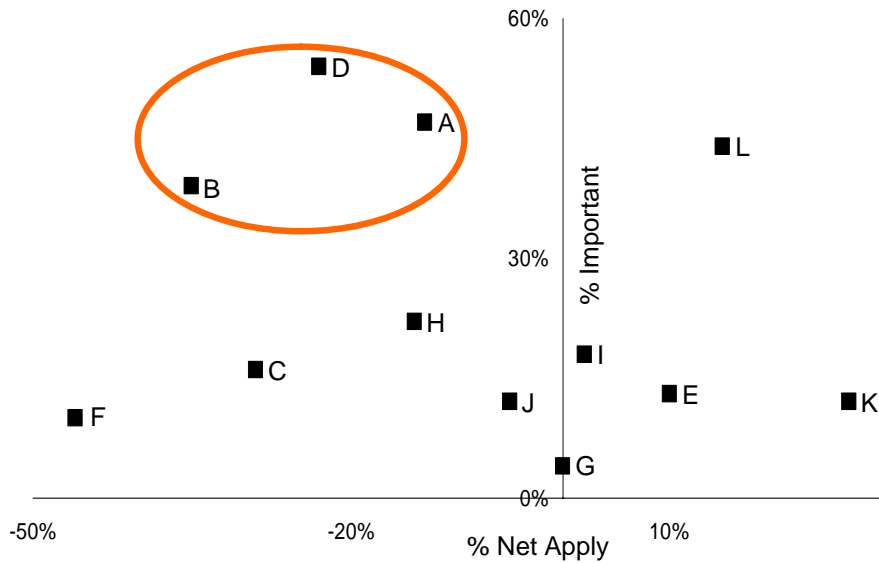
An alternative way of interpreting these results is shown in the following chart which shows importance against the net proportion of the public who feel their local councillors fulfil each of the attributes relating to the conduct of members<sup>22</sup>. Each of the letters in the chart below relates to the relevant statement, shown in full on the chart on the previous page.

The higher an attribute is vertically up the chart, the more important it is perceived to be for councillors to do. Statements on the right hand side of the chart depict those which the public feel on balance apply to the majority of councillors; those in the left hand side illustrate attributes that the public feel councillors on the whole are not meeting. The three statements circled are those which are regarded as important, but that the majority of councillors are not seen to be meeting, and could be considered priorities for the future. These are *being in touch with what the general public thinks is important* (A), *doing what they promised when they were elected* (B) and *making sure that public money is used wisely* (D).

---

<sup>22</sup> We calculate this by working out a “net apply” measure, which is derived from the difference between the proportions saying “all or most” apply and “a few or none” apply.

## Councillor characteristics



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

To see which letter corresponds with an attribute, please refer to the chart on the previous page

## Working for whose interests?

Just one in four people (25%) believe that in general councillors put the interests of their local area above considerations of their party (32%), their own interests (27%) or the interests of their family or friends (9%).

Yet when asked whose interests councillors should put first, the public are virtually unanimous in saying their local area's (94%), which reflects the high importance the public place on councillors' role as working for the interests of their local neighbourhood (as explored in the 'Councillors: Public Expectations' chapter).

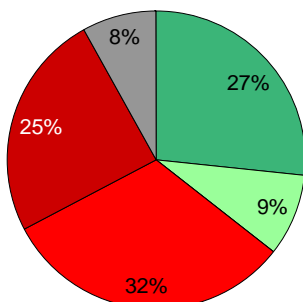
## Councillors' interests

Q In general, whose interests do you think councillors put first?

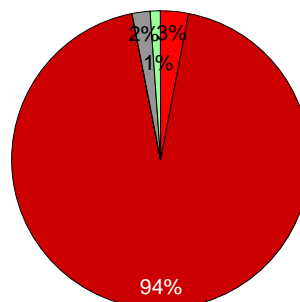
Q In general, whose interests do you think councillors should put first?

■ % Local area's   
 ■ % Party's   
 ■ % Their friends and families'   
 ■ % Own   
 ■ % Don't know

Do put first...



Should put first...



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

ABC1s are more likely than C2DEs to believe councillors put party interests first (38% vs. 24%) whereas C2DEs are more likely than ABC1s to think councillors prioritise their own interests (33% vs. 22%) or their friends' and families' (11% vs. 7%). BME groups are more likely than white groups to think councillors put their local area's interests first (37% vs. 24%).

A greater proportion of those who are satisfied with the area as a place to live think councillors put their local area's interests first than those who are dissatisfied with the area (26% vs. 17%). Those who are satisfied with the way the council runs the area are also more likely than those who are dissatisfied to believe councillors prioritise the interests of the local area (33% vs. 15%). Those with a favourable opinion of local councillors are more likely than those who feel unfavourably towards them to believe councillors put the local area's interests first (38% vs. 13%).

People satisfied with the council or those with a favourable opinion of local councillors, those who think councillors tell the truth always or most of the time and those who have met a councillor in the last six months are more likely to believe that councillors put the local area first rather than their own, friends and families' or party interests.

However, councillors' motives are seen as relatively better than those of MPs, as measured by a MORI survey in 2003<sup>23</sup>. In that survey, 56% of the public said that MPs put their own interests first, ahead of their party's (27%), constituents (7%) or the country's (5%).

The impact the public believe that parties should have on politicians was also explored in the 2004 Committee on Standards in Public Life research. This showed that while 58% of the public think it is reasonable for MPs to take account of what local party members want when voting in Parliament, fewer (just 32%) think it is reasonable to take into account what the party leadership thinks. The two most important considerations, however, were what would benefit the country as a whole (94%) and what was mentioned in the election manifesto (85%).

These two considerations correspond closely with two of the most important behaviours people want from councillors – working in the interests of the neighbourhood and doing what they promised when elected.

---

<sup>23</sup> "Why politics needs marketing", Roger Mortimore, *MORI Social Research Institute*, 2003.

# Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour

---

*This chapter investigates what the public regard as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour from local councillors in instances that some may regard as ethically unclear. Six qualitative scenarios were developed to explore in detail how people decide what activities are acceptable and unacceptable. Some scenarios (those which could be condensed into a short, clear description) were also tested in the subsequent quantitative stage, albeit in much less detail, just gauging what proportion of the public believes different behaviours to be acceptable or not.*

## Key Findings

- Even where there appears to be strong public agreement on specific scenarios, the focus group discussions revealed that views are very much dependent on the context and background of the actions. Very rarely do the public see ethical scenarios in clear-cut terms: they want to know the context in which events take place and the background of the councillor before forming a view on the acceptability of the behaviour.
- The quantitative results indicate most people (over 90%) believe it is *unacceptable* for councillors to:
  - be involved in decisions on planning applications from which they may benefit financially
  - witness a racial assault and do nothing to stop it
  - drive 50 mph in a 30 mph zone whilst on holidayand it is *acceptable* to accept an invitation to a football match from the local football team. However, opinion is divided in some other cases.

## Case Studies

Focus group discussions were used to find out how the people develop their attitudes about what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. To discover how people judge ethics in reality and what they feel is acceptable/ unacceptable, the focus group facilitators explained a series of scenarios to the group (the scenarios were presented one by one) and asked them whether it was acceptable or not for a Councillor to act in this way, and why. For the topic guide, see Appendix B.

## Scenario 1: Speeding

A councillor is caught speeding by the police whilst on holiday in the Lake District. The councillor is also a member of her authority's road safety committee.

Participants generally feel the councillor should be punished for breaking the speed limit; she should accept the same punishment as everyone else, as she is no different to others.

*It's not one rule for you and another rule for someone else.*

Female, 18-39

*She knows if she gets caught speeding, she gets fined, exactly the same as somebody else... and she shouldn't be let off because she's a Councillor.*

Female, 40+

However, many believe factors such as the extent of her speeding, how well she knows the area, how repentant she is, would also need to be taken into account when deciding whether or not she ought to keep her role as councillor.

*I do care if she was doing 80 in a 40 mile an hour; if she was doing 35 in a 30 mile an hour, I don't think she should lose her job over it.*

Female, 40+

*Well it depends on the speed. If she's just gone over, say 30 miles an hour and she's doing 37, OK, we all slip, but if she was doing like 50 in a 30 zone, that's not. You know she knows she's speeding.*

Female, 40+

*Maybe she has slipped up while she's on holiday, she's in an area she doesn't know. She's slipped up and when she does come back she should say: yes, I got caught speeding and I'm very sorry and I'm going to do some retraining.*

Male, 18-39

*If you were, say, caught speeding and no matter what any job you are in, you are not going to lose your job over it, if you're caught speeding, so she shouldn't lose her position either.*

Female, 40+

*If it turns into a habit, speeding, like if she's caught more than once speeding, then I think yeah she should [be asked to leave the committee]. If it only happens once, then it's no big deal. But she should be fined like everyone else.*

Male, 18-39

Opinion is more divided over whether the councillor should be able to keep her position on the road safety committee. Some feel she should be asked to leave the committee straightaway as she is not practicing what she preaches.

*If she's got the job what she's got, she should be aware of what she's doing. If she's in a car, she knows it's wrong to be speeding... she's got authority, she's got a job and people will be looking up to her for that and what she does.*

Female, 40+

*I think if she's on a road safety committee and she's caught speeding, then she shouldn't be on it.*

Female, 40+

*I don't think you can really hold that position with any respect within the committee, then she or he has to go.*

Male, 18-39

Others feel that a one-off incident ought not to lead to her losing her position as "everyone makes mistakes".

*This woman might have put so much in [to the community] and got so much done and then she's gone five miles over the speed limit on a dual carriageway or something, I don't think that's right [that she is asked to leave the committee].*

Female, 40+

*If she comes across as, yeah, it's a mistake, shouldn't have done it and that and it's genuine, I don't think that she should [have to leave the road safety committee].*

Male, 40+

Many feel they would need to know further details such as the speed the councillor was travelling and whether she had done it before, how well she knows the roads, before making a final decision on whether such behaviour is acceptable or not. Some believe if she faces up to her crime and accepts the punishment, she should be allowed to stay on the committee, but if she tried to 'wriggle out of it', she ought to be asked to leave as she would be showing little respect for the laws of the road and for safety.

## 2. Scenario 2: Sex Aids

A local councillor runs a website that sells sex aids.

A member of the public complains that the website is offensive and immoral and brings the council into disrepute.

Most participants do not view it as a problem that a local councillor runs such a website in their own free time. The Councillor should not be asked to resign or to close down the website, as long as it is legal.

*They're there to make people happy in their job, not their private life. Their private life is nothing to do with anyone, as far as I'm concerned.*

Female, 18-39

*He might be running a perfectly legitimate business from home and what's it got to do with anybody else? ...providing what he's doing is legal, then I can't see how it's wrong.*

Male, 40+

*Personally, I don't think it's a big deal. As long as it doesn't affect his normal work.*

Female, 18-39

*It's a legitimate business, selling legal goods and you are entitled to trade in these goods and presumably the interest has been declared. If this person was on a family values committee or something where they had poo-pooed all that sort of thing... then maybe that would be different, but generally if it's a legitimate business, then it's not a problem.*

Female, 40+

Some do not go as far as saying he ought to resign, but question to what extent they might feel comfortable dealing with a person they knew ran such a website.

*Everybody's morality's different isn't it, but I think he should be told on the side, you know, just be careful of what you're doing.*

Male, 40+

A small minority do not believe that a councillor should take part in something like this which might cause offence to his or her public.

*If that's something offending then that person might not trust that councillor as a person. So he won't trust the councillor doing his other job, which is the council.*

Male, 18-39

Some sections of the community might find it offensive – different cultures and sexualities.

Male, 40+

*If you're on the Council and it's representing child issues and activities for children, then I don't think your local community are going to have perhaps the faith in yourself and they would if you were running a different kind of business...People know them as a Councillor and they look at them in that role.*

Female, 18-39

*I think the older generation might find it more offensive that I think the younger generation, probably not bothered by it. But I expect the older generation would be.*

Male, 18-39

Some acknowledge the influence the press play in how situations are portrayed

*If the media portray it as a councillor doing this, as opposed to picking him out and saying this person is doing it. It depends how they portray it and what people read of it as well.*

Female, 18-39

*With me, if I do something wrong probably nobody would notice or not take much notice but if you are in the public eye, people are looking at you and every little thing you're doing grows out of proportion, so you should try to conduct yourself very well.*

Female, 40+

The general feeling is that provided it is legal to run such a website and this is done in a councillor's own time, it is not an ethical issue. However, a few people do point out that it is something some sections of the community may not be comfortable with – as well as being something the media may use against that individual.

### 3. Scenario 3: Political campaigning

A councillor is preparing for the upcoming local elections by sending emails and letters to constituents from his council office.

Another candidate standing in the elections complains that the councillor has misused council resources.

This case is not as cut and dried as the previous ones, and the participants express a variety of views about how acceptable this is.

For some sending emails and letter to constituents from a council office is totally unethical, as it could give them an unfair advantage over other candidates.

*An unfair advantage if the other councillors couldn't, didn't have the opportunity to do it [send emails]. If they could also do it and they don't want to or hadn't thought about it.*

Female, 18-39

*I think that's disgraceful, quite honestly... everybody should be on the same level, same footing, when they are putting up for election, whether it's for a council or MP or whatever. It's not your paper to use for a start, or your machine to duplicate these messages. No you're using the general public's money and their time as well. I'm dead against it.*

Male, 40+

For others, the main factor is the cost involved in sending out such messages – they do not believe council money (public money) should be spent on this.

*Council light bulbs sitting in his council office, all that sort of thing, however you look at it, he's sitting in their office using their resources.*

Male, 18-39

*It's stealing isn't it? If you're not using the stuff for what it's supposed to be used for.*

Female, 18-39

*I think that's unethical. He should use his own office, his own budget – basically he's using our money....I think they should charge him for whatever he used, it's coming out of public funds, isn't it? Misuse of public funds!*

Female, 40+

*You've got public money, you've got to be so careful, anything you spend, whether you use private phone calls, whatever it is, you've got a responsibility to be whiter than white when you're using other people's money.*

Male, 18-39

Others draw a distinction between sending out letters and emails. Sending out letters is felt to be particularly unethical as they cost more to send, and if sent on council letterheaded paper, they could look more official.

*Emails I don't have an issue with 'cos there's no cost involved in that.*

Female, 18-39

A few felt that sending a couple of emails or letters might be forgivable but that sending an entire flood of email was pushing things a bit too far.

Again, some feel the need to know more about the case before deciding whether this behaviour is acceptable or not, for example more details about the council's email policy or whether the relevant political party are willing to reimburse the council for the cost of the paper, electricity, etc.

*Some companies have a policy that you can only use the email for work. If that's the case, the policy, then no, he shouldn't do it. If the policy is that you can use your email for pretty much anything, it's not a problem.*

Male, 18-39

However, a small minority of people do not believe the councillor has acted unethically at all.

*It's just like they're asking for your vote and I don't see nowt wrong with it.*

Male, 18-39

*It's like everybody does it if they've got access to a computer at work, email friends the other side of the office – do you fancy a beer at lunch? And that's all wasting the company's time.*

Male, 18-39

Many who disapprove of this councillor's behaviour feel that he or she deserves a "rap across the knuckles" but not dismissal from their role or the future election – this time.

*Maybe a verbal warning just to say don't do it again, do it in your own time or you'll have to accept the consequences.*

Female, 18-39

#### 4. Scenario 4: Racist behaviour

Councillor Rees and his wife witnessed a racial assault and did nothing to assist. Furthermore, the wife shouted racial abuse at the victim. Councillor Rees did nothing to stop her.

The police have investigated but have not brought any charges.

This scenario is seen as unacceptable by many. All feel the racist attack is unacceptable and many find it difficult to understand why the councillor did nothing.

*Surely they should have called the police or something. He didn't have to actually get physically involved because that's not his job.*

Female, 18-39

*He is guilty by association though. If he hasn't said "darling, I think that's enough and we must phone the police", then he's just as bad.*

Female, 40+

The level of violence carried out is not as important as "an attack's an attack", and witnesses to such a crime should report it to the police. Some feel he should be fired from the council for not reporting the attack as it indicates a lack of honesty in general.

*It's showing he's dishonest. What else is he letting people get away with? You know what I mean? If he's keeping that quiet and he's not reporting that.*

Male, 18-39

*He's not fully supporting the community as a whole and that's what he should be doing... [Not stopping the abuse] is just as bad in some ways.*

Male, 18-39

*If he's in the public eye, his wife's in the public eye as well and really and truly she shouldn't say things like that, he should have stopped her. It affects him as well, he should have stopped it, yeah.*

Female, 40+

The racist abuse the councillor's wife shouted is viewed a little less seriously, although still frowned upon by many.

*She should know better being there, a councillor's wife with racial equality and all, so she shouldn't shout. They're nasty, these people.*

Male, 40+

*If the person's husband doesn't do anything about his wife saying what she did and that, then that person who she said it to should take her to the Race Relations Board and get that Councillor taken off.*

Male, 40+

As with the speeding scenario, some cite the need to know further information before deciding how acceptable or unacceptable the councillor's own behaviour is.

*I'd find out what his, whether he shares the views of his wife and if he does and they do break the council code of conduct, then boot him out.*

Male, 18-39

*You never know, he may have gone home and said to his wife what the hell was going on, what was that all about? This could have been a side to her that he'd never really seen before and, you never know, three months down the line he could be saying oh sod this, I can't live with a racist, I'm out of here.*

Male, 18-39

*I don't blame him for not getting involved in fighting, that's fine. But I'd want to know whether he did report it or whether the police had turned up. If he hadn't [reported it], we don't know why he hadn't, maybe his phone didn't work in that particular area, maybe there wasn't a payphone nearby.*

Female, 18-39

Others regard not stopping his wife's verbal racism as more of a transgression as that is something he could have done without placing himself at much risk.

*In relation to not stopping his wife, I think he should take responsibility for that. I'm not saying that he's, you know, racist, she does have a right to say whatever she wants but I also think he should say that behaviour is unacceptable.*

Female, 40+

Even if he was not able to stop her verbal abuse, some would have concerns as to the influence of living so close to a person who holds such views. However, others are a little more lenient and do not feel any action should be taken against the councillor as he was not involved directly.

*I don't think that any kind of racial abuse is acceptable at all. But I don't think you can, you can't make an example of him – it's his wife, she should be reported.*

Male, 18-39

*As long as he didn't break the law, he's a representative of the community, not the community's action man, he isn't supposed to go and stop muggers... You can't pin a bloke up because his wife necessarily believes something.*

Male, 18-39

*Is he responsible for what she thinks? Is a man responsible for his spouse if she has her own mind?*

Male, 40+

Many feel that this was the worst of the scenarios discussed as it involved violence and because it could lead to an escalation of problems between different ethnic groups in the area. It also involved deliberate actions against another person. However, a few do caution that it would be important to know further details of the case before making a final decision – for example the level of violence involved in the attack, the relationship with his wife – rather than making a knee-jerk reaction.

## 5. Scenario 5: Closure of local school

Councillor Smith and Councillor Jones are members of the Education Committee. The Council is reviewing the provision of school places at local high schools because of surplus capacity. Both members are governors at one of the schools (East High School).

The Education Committee is considering closing West High School (the school with the greatest number of surplus places), with the extra student places and funding going to East High School.

There is considerable local opposition to the closure of West High School, and the local action group complains that there is a conflict of interest for Councillor Smith and Councillor Jones.

Participants believe the councillors should declare their interest in the issue and not take part in the vote.

*Happens all the time. As long as they declare their interest and don't participate in the vote [it's ethical to sit on the committee]. If they had a casting vote, very difficult, but as long as they declare their interests.*

Female, 40+

This situation was generally perceived to be very much clear-cut and people believe councils already have appropriate mechanisms in place to deal with such situations.

## 6. Scenario 6: Gay councillor and AIDS drop-in centre

The planning committee receives an application to refurbish a derelict building in order to establish an AIDS drop-in centre. The local community opposes the application and the issue has been covered extensively in the local press. The committee approves the application by 5 votes to 4.

The local press then prints a report from an anonymous source that Councillor Bowden is gay and voted on the planning application. Further reports allege that the councillor is a member of the Terence Higgins Trust and in the past has undertaken fundraising work for AIDS charities.

Councillor Bowden responds that he did support the application, is gay and has undertaken work for AIDS charities though not the one that is setting up the drop-in centre. He asserts that the issue of his sexuality is not an interest and should not be registered as such but is a private matter and that his work for AIDS charities did not influence his vote as the drop-in centre was in the public interest.

None of the participants find the councillor's sexuality an issue and they feel sexuality is irrelevant with regard to the AIDS drop-in centre.

*You do not go round saying 'I'm straight' so why do you have to go around saying 'I'm gay'?*

Male, 18-39

They also do not find it unethical that he supported the application and has undertaken work for other AIDS charities – and accept the councillor's argument that the drop-in centre was in the public interest. People generally believe councillor Bowden behaved in an acceptable manner and there was no ethical issue to answer here.

### General discussion of ethics

As is clear from the discussion of various scenarios above, there can be a range of reactions to a situation and there are no 'hard and fast' rules as to when something is ethical or not. In many cases, it depends on complex details of individual cases.

Participants tend to believe it is important for councillors to operate inside the rules and codes of conduct, even if this means they are not able to achieve as much. It is more important to adhere to the rules and achieve what one can inside those rules.

*You've got to be accountable, haven't you? Even if you haven't achieved it, at least you know you've done everything and gone the right way about it. Even though you haven't reached your target.*

Female, 18-39

*That way [breaking rules] you're going to lose people's trust. It's all about working for people, representing people. So if you're*

*dishonest once, even if you make them happy at the end, they might not trust you again.*

Male, 18-39

*If they're breaking the rules then it means you can't trust the council and if you can't trust them then what's the point? You can't really trust what they're saying they are achieving either can you?*

Male, 18-39

*I think as long as they're honest and try to achieve what they want to do, you can't ask for anymore than that... to be dishonest and that, it's just not acceptable for a Councillor.*

Female, 40+

A small minority feel it is more important to get results than be honest all of the time

*If you're doing good stuff for people, even though you're not being totally honest, 'cos sometimes you need to be un-honest, sometimes to get stuff done.*

Male, 18-39

*Working at the Jobcentre, I know I've had to cut corners to get someone's claim done...If you think you can get away with it. Just you and the person dealing with it, fair enough, if it won't come back to haunt you.*

Male, 18-39

Some do point out that if there are problems achieving results within a system, it may be that the rules or codes need looking at.

*Always stick to the rules but if you can't achieve results within the rules, there's something wrong with the system.*

Male, 18-39

The general view appears to be that the majority of councillors are good and behave in an acceptable way, but there are a handful who are less ethical.

*In practice, I suspect that there are both crooks and geniuses who go by a wing and a prayer and bend rules and some do it and achieve fantastic results – and some are just crooks.*

Female, 40+

## Qualitative overview

During the focus groups, it became clear that many people found it difficult to come to clear conclusions about whether an action was acceptable or not, as so much depended on the context in which events happened – and at times, how the councillor reacts after the event.

When discussing the qualitative speeding scenario, for example, people feel they would need to take into account the extent of the speeding (i.e. how much over the speed limit the car was travelling), how well the councillor knows the area, whether it is their first speeding offence, and how repentant they are afterwards, before judging how acceptable such behaviour is.

The requests for extra contextual information were taken on board when adapting scenarios for the quantitative stage, so that people would be likely to make a decision based on the information available to them. The quantitative results are discussed in more detail below.

# Quantitative scenarios

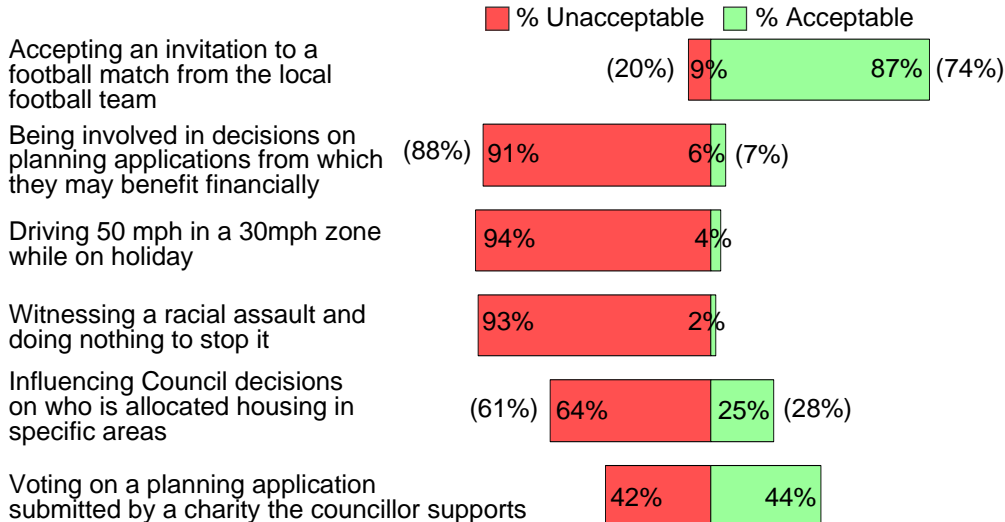
The following scenarios that a councillor may face were explored during the quantitative stage, with respondents being asked whether they would view each as acceptable or not. These were adapted from the qualitative scenarios and three had been asked in previous MORI research for The Standards Board in 2001/02<sup>24</sup>.

- Accepting an invitation to a football match from the local football team\*
- Influencing council decisions on who is allocated housing in specific cases\*
- Driving 50 miles/hour in a 30 miles/hour zone while on holiday
- Witnessing a racial assault and doing nothing to stop it
- Being involved in decisions on planning applications from which they may benefit financially\*
- Voting on a planning application submitted by a charity the councillor supports

It is generally regarded as acceptable for a councillor to accept a football invitation from the local football team. It is seen as unacceptable to be involved in planning decisions one might benefit from financially; drive 50 miles per hour in a 30 miles per hour zone; and to witness a racial assault and do nothing to stop it. Views were more divergent regarding the other two scenarios. The results are displayed in more detail in the chart below.

## Ethical scenarios

Q Can you tell me if you would consider such behaviour acceptable or unacceptable?



Note: comparable 2001 data provided in brackets where appropriate  
 Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

<sup>24</sup> The Standards Board included some questions on the MORI Omnibus 4-9 October 2001. 962 face to face interviews were conducted in-home in 192 sampling points across Britain.

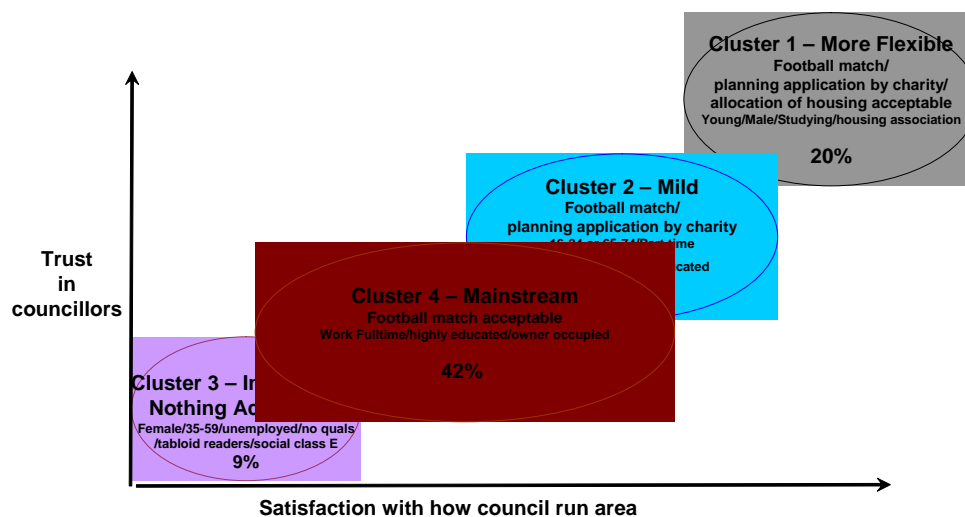
## Cluster analysis

As a further step to understanding the quantitative results, we have clustered the population according to which of the above scenarios they think are acceptable or not (any respondents who do not know have been excluded from this analysis which leaves 722 respondents from a possible 1,027<sup>25</sup>).

Cluster Analysis is a technique which involves identifying groups (or “Clusters”) of respondents. People within a cluster respond to questions in similar ways, and ways which are different from those of other clusters.

The chart below displays the four clusters and demonstrates their relative levels of trust in councillors and level of satisfaction with how the council is running the area. Cluster 1 are the most trusting and satisfied and Cluster 3 are least trusting of councillors and least satisfied with their running of the area.

### Segmentation on Acceptable behaviour



Base: All respondents included in cluster analysis (722) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005 Source: MORI

A more detailed profile of each of the four clusters is provided below.

#### Cluster 1: (“the more flexible ones”)

This cluster believes it is acceptable for councillors to:

- accept an invitation to a football match;
- vote on a planning application submitted by a charity they support; and

<sup>25</sup> The reason behind this is that we would have to have assigned a value to the respondents who said don't know to any question to include them in the analysis, and it is standard practice to exclude them and so not recode them as acceptors or unacceptors.

- influence decisions on who is allocated housing in specific cases.

The sample size of this cluster is 150 respondents, which represents about 20% of the total population.

This group is more likely to be made of males, between 16 and 24 years of age, who are still studying. They are more likely than the general population to read the Metro and the Sunday Times and to rent a home from a Housing Association. They are more likely than the general population as a whole to vote for the Liberal Democrats.

These “more flexibles” are more likely to have a positive opinion about their area as a place to live, about their council and their councillors. They tend to be interested in local issues, and feel they know a fair amount about the work that local councillors do. They are more likely than the general population to believe that a fair amount of councillors explain the reasons for their actions and decisions, that most councillors make sure that public money is used wisely and that they treat everyone equally and with respect, and to believe councillors work for the interest of the neighbourhood. When asked which attributes are most important for councillors, their responses do not vary especially from the norm, although they are more likely than clusters 2 and 4 to feel it is important for councillors to tell the truth.

### **Cluster 2: (“the mild ones”)**

In this cluster we find respondents who believe it is acceptable for councillors to:

- accept an invitation to a football match; and
- vote on a planning application submitted by a charity they support.

The sample size of this cluster is 222 respondents (29% of the total population).

These people are more likely to be working part time, not to be the chief income earner and to belong to social grade B. Their highest qualifications tend to be GCSEs/O-levels/ CSEs and are likely to be aged between 16 and 24.

These “mild ones” tend to agree it is their duty to vote in local elections. They think that most councillors are in touch with what the general public think is important and that they set a good example for others in their private lives. They believe that councillors prioritise party interests, rather than those of the local area. The “mild ones” think it is important for councillors to explain the reasons for their actions and decisions, and are less likely than other clusters to say it is important for councillors to treat everyone equally.

### **Cluster 3: (“intransigent ones”)**

This cluster contains respondents who believe all the scenarios are unacceptable.

The sample size of this cluster is 70 people (9% of the total population).

This cluster is more likely to be comprised of females aged between 35 and 59, who are unemployed, with no formal qualifications. They are more likely to only read tabloids and belong to the social grade E. They are the most likely of any cluster to vote Labour, although they are more likely not to vote.

They have a very negative opinion of the council and their councillors, as well as of their area. They are more likely to believe that they don't have a say in how the local area is run, but less likely to believe it is their duty to vote in local elections. They are more likely than the others not to know anything about what their local MP or council do and least likely to think it is easy to get in touch with councillors.

Regarding councillors, these "intransigents" are most likely to have an unfavourable opinion of their councillors. This cluster are more likely to think that none of them do what they promised they would do, they do not explain their actions or treat everyone equally, they rarely or never tell the truth and they don't set a good example for others in their private lives. In addition, these respondents believe half of councillors would take bribes and most of them would put the interests of their friends and families above those of the local area. They also believe councillors use power for their own personal gain.

They also comprise those who are most likely to be uninterested<sup>26</sup> in what councillors do. The priorities this cluster would set for councillors' behaviour are telling the truth and treating everyone equally (they are less likely than others to say it is important for councillors to explain the reasons for their actions or to make sure public money is used wisely).

#### **Cluster 4: ("mainstream")**

This cluster consists of people who believe that it is acceptable for councillors to accept an invitation to a football match only, out of all the scenarios.

The size of this cluster is 324 individuals (42% of the total population).

These "mainstreamers" mainly work full time, have a Bachelor Degree, own their property outright and they are more likely to vote Conservative.

The attitudes and opinions of this group are very similar to the average of the population in total. This is due to the fact that this group represents almost half of our sample.

Their views towards the council and councillors are very similar to those in cluster 2 ("mild ones"). However they are more likely than cluster 2 to think councillors put the interests of the local area first ("mild ones" feel that councillors put Party interests first).

---

<sup>26</sup> This cluster is more likely to say they are not interested in what councillors do, or how they do their job and more likely to say they are not interested in what councillors do as long as they do their job

This “mainstream” cluster is less positive overall about councillors and the council than cluster 2. This group is less likely to think that councillors set a good example for others in their private lives and more likely to think that councillors would take bribes. These people feel it is important councillors work for the interests of their neighbourhood and treat everyone equally.

# Awareness of The Standards Board

---

*This chapter investigates where people would turn to if they had a complaint to make about a local councillor. We also look at awareness of, and favourability towards, The Standards Board and similar organisations.*

## Key Findings

- The vast majority of the public has never made a complaint about their local councillor to the council, though one in ten have wanted to. Only a third of the public would know who to contact if they did want to make a complaint about a local councillor (down from 39% in October 2001).
- An independent body (46%) is by far the most popular choice of organisation to deal with a complaint, followed by the council (28%) or local MP (13%).
- Knowing the complaint will be dealt with *thoroughly*, that the investigators keep you *informed* and knowing the investigation will be *independent* are the three most important factors people would value if they were to make a complaint.
- Three quarters of the public have never heard of The Standards Board for England which reflects the organisation's position as a non-public-facing organisation. Even amongst those who have wanted to make a complaint but haven't, the same proportion say they have not heard of The Standards Board.

## Experience of making a complaint

When asked whether they have ever made a complaint to the local council about a councillor, just 3% of the public say they have, which is consistent with the findings from MORI's research for The Standards Board in October 2001/02<sup>27</sup>.

Those who have not made a complaint against a councillor were asked whether they have ever wanted to and one in ten (10%) said that they have wanted to complain about a councillor. ABC1s were more likely than C2DEs to say they have wanted to complain but have not (12% vs. 8%).

People who are dissatisfied with the way the council is running the area are four times more likely to have ever wanted to make a complaint than are those satisfied with their council (23% vs. 6%). Those with unfavourable rather than favourable opinions of local councillors are even more likely to have ever wanted to complain (26% vs. 5%).

---

<sup>27</sup> For further details, please see *Standards of Conduct in Local Government in 2002*.

## Knowing who to complain to

About a third (32%) of people say they would know who or which organisation to contact if they want to make a complaint about a local councillor – and two thirds (66%) do not. This compares to close to four in ten (39%) who felt they knew where to complain to as recorded in the 2001/02 MORI survey for The Standards Board.

Older respondents (aged over 55) are most likely to say they know who to contact if they wish to make a complaint (38% compared to 31% of 35-54 year olds and 25% of those aged under 35). A greater proportion of ABC1s than C2DEs believe they know who to contact (35% vs. 27%). White people are more likely than BMEs to say they know who they would contact (33% vs. 18%).

Socio-politically active people are also more likely than those who are not to say they know who to contact if they want to make a complaint about a councillor (55% vs. 29%). Those with a favourable view of local councillors are also more likely than those with an unfavourable view to say they know who they should contact to complain (45% vs. 34%). People who have ever met a councillor are more likely than those who have never done so to say they know who they should contact with a complaint about a local councillor (44% vs. 25%).

## Who should deal with a complaint?

The focus groups discussed whether a local or a national body is best placed to deal with complaints against councillors. Participants tend to feel issues are best resolved on a local level, with the option of taking things up to a national level if they are not resolved.

Some feel judging cases at a local level is necessary to ensure ethnic and cultural characteristics of an area are taken into account.

*Something might be acceptable to one ethnic community, might not be acceptable to another one.*

Male, 18-39

*People locally should be responsible for the ethics, the people running the party, the political parties and if somebody has behaved badly, then they should deselect that candidate...you seem to read about it in the newspapers, about certain people.*

Female, 40+

However, others point out that when an external group is involved in “policing” an organisation, people tend to have more faith as they do not feel that the members are just ‘watching each others’ backs’.

*You get a broader view, make comparisons, and it [a national body] would be broader...If their main purpose is to maintain a code of conduct...I would still be happier to think that there was a national standard.*

Female, 40+

*Surely if you left the council to deal with this sort of thing themselves [racial assault scenario], they’d try and cover it up, coz they don’t want to be bad in the public eye. So you need somebody outside to come in and well say, right, you’ve done wrong.*

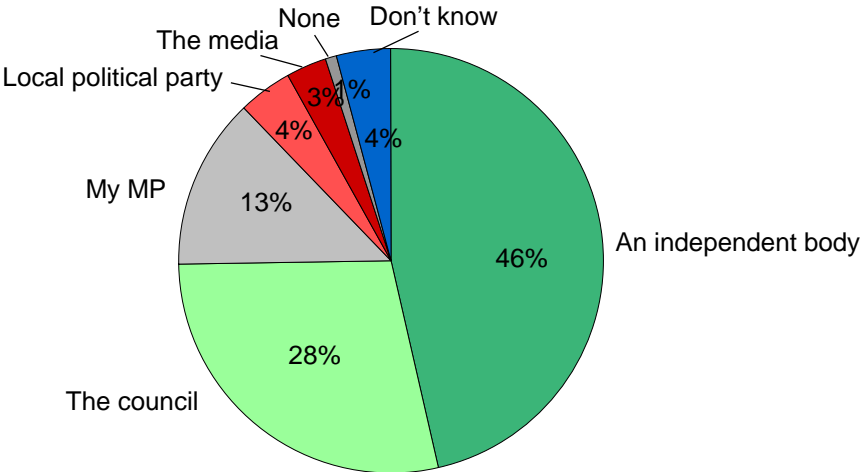
Female, 18-39

The general belief is that it is important to have a national body to oversee how complaints are dealt with on a local level. It is also useful as a place people can turn to if they do not feel a complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily on a local level.

During the quantitative stage, the public were asked to choose from a list the organisation or body they would prefer to deal with a complaint about a councillor. (We had not at this point mentioned The Standards Board by name or described what it does). The results can be seen in the chart below.

**Complaints about councillors**

Q If you ever wanted to complain about a local councillor who would you prefer to deal with your complaint?



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

The most popular organisation or individual charged with dealing with complaints about local councillors, chosen by almost half (46%), is an independent body. The

council is another relatively popular choice, being chosen by close to three in ten (28%), with the local MP in third place, being chosen by one in eight (13%).

People aged under 35 are less likely than older respondents to want to complain to an independent body (37% vs. 51% of over 35s) and more likely to say the council (33% vs. 26% of older respondents). ABC1s are more likely than C2DEs to prefer an independent body (51% vs. 40%) whereas a greater proportion of C2DEs say they would prefer to report a complaint to their MP (16% vs. 11% of ABC1s).

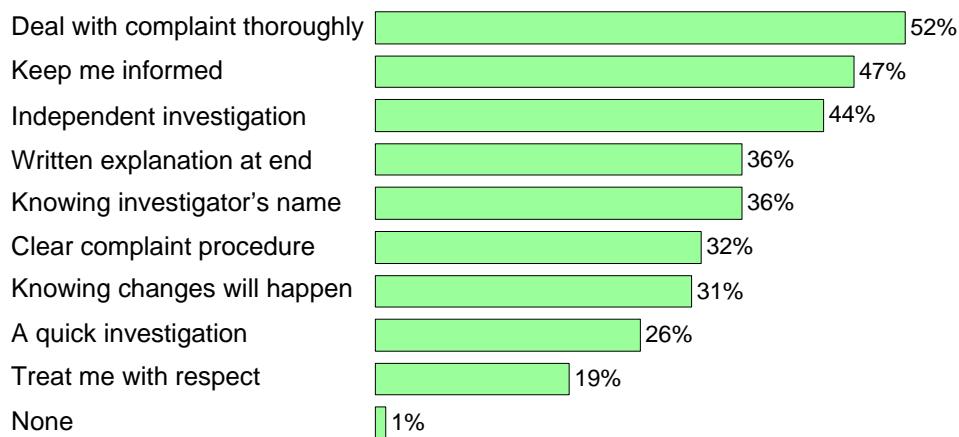
Unsurprisingly, people dissatisfied with the way the council runs the area are more likely than those who are satisfied to want to report a complaint to an independent body (58% vs. 42%), whereas those who are satisfied are more likely to choose to report a problem with a councillor to the council itself (35% vs. 18% people dissatisfied with the council's running of the area).

## Factors most important when making a complaint

The public were asked to choose from a list which factors would be most important to them if they were to make a complaint about a local councillor. The results are displayed in the chart below.

### The complaints process

Q If you were to make a complaint about the way in which you were treated by a local councillor, which three or four of these would be most important?



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

The most frequently mentioned factors are: knowing the complaint will be dealt with thoroughly (52%); being kept informed about the progress of the complaint (47%); and knowing that the investigation will be independent (44%).

## Attitudes towards and awareness of the Standards Board

The focus groups were used to gauge awareness of The Standards Board for England. Few participants have heard of The Standards Board and those who have, have often just heard of the name. When a brief description of the Board was handed round, many respond positively to the idea, although show surprise that they have not heard of the organisation.

*I haven't heard of it, I didn't know that The Standards Board existed. I think it's a very good idea because at least the Councillors will have some, you know a group or body that they're accountable to.*

Female, 40+

*I think The Standards Board is necessary and, whatever their budget, it's probably cheaper than each area having their own watchdog and presumably these people have then been trained and it takes it away from being a personal thing.*

Female, 18-39

*I would say it's very important but I'm surprised we've not heard of it. If the idea is that they get complaints or whatever, then how do you complain if you've never heard of it?*

Male, 40+

Some liken the Board to “a watchdog” and point out that many other industries have “watchdog organisations”. Reaction toward the Board is generally positive, with people supporting the idea of a body having knowledge and time to investigate complaints. Some also express the thought that the existence of such a watchdog will make councillors watch their behaviour more.

*It gives you an opportunity to, you know, if you don't feel that you've had your issue resolved by a council, you've got the opportunity to escalate it. You've got a body that will take ownership. I think that's a good thing.*

Male, 18-39

*I can see the point of them [The Standards Board]... but I think the whole business [councils] as a whole, is viewed by many people as life with abuse from the centre, and I think generally it would be wonderful if the whole thing was completely open and transparent nationally so we could actually gain some confidence for what was happening [in Councils].*

Female, 40+

However, some are more negative about the Board – mainly linked to frustration at the lack of awareness of such an organisation, concerns about the cost implications of running such an organisation and lack of belief that a watchdog organisation could really wield much power over councillors.

*Just looks like a toothless tiger really... a quango... another waste of taxpayers' money... There's nothing new here, we don't know if it's doing anything or not and it doesn't appear to have any power as such, does it?*

Male, 40+

*It just comes across as another talking shop doesn't it really. Coz where's the power? It says they can't secure financial recompense for complaints, they don't look at issues of corporate administration, so they're not really going to look at corruption or anything like that.... It doesn't sound like they've got any really, teeth.*

Male, 18-39

*I think the only thing this Board can do is really, when they find out there's a ne'er do well, is give full details to the Sun and the Mirror and let them take over.*

Male, 40+

People generally would like to see greater awareness of the Board. Some fear that without greater public awareness of the Board, it will not be effective in holding councillors to account. Others are uncertain how much power such an organisation would actually wield, or even suspicious of the fact that there has been so little publicity of The Standards Board.

*If they don't advertise and make themselves heard more, there's not point in having them [Standards Board] is there?*

Male, 40+

*If it's funded by the Government, perhaps that's their ulterior motive. If they kept it as secret as possible, so no one complains and then they save money.*

Female, 40+

However, some are also mindful that too much publicity of the Board could also lead to too many cases being referred to the Board, and so the increased caseload might

make it more difficult to uphold standards (and also impact on the cost of running such an organisation).

*The problem with making it [Standards Board] advertised so much is that people might go straight to them with complaints rather than going straight to the council.... I don't think it [a complaint] should be able to go straight there [Standards Board] otherwise they'd be bogged down.*

Female, 18-39

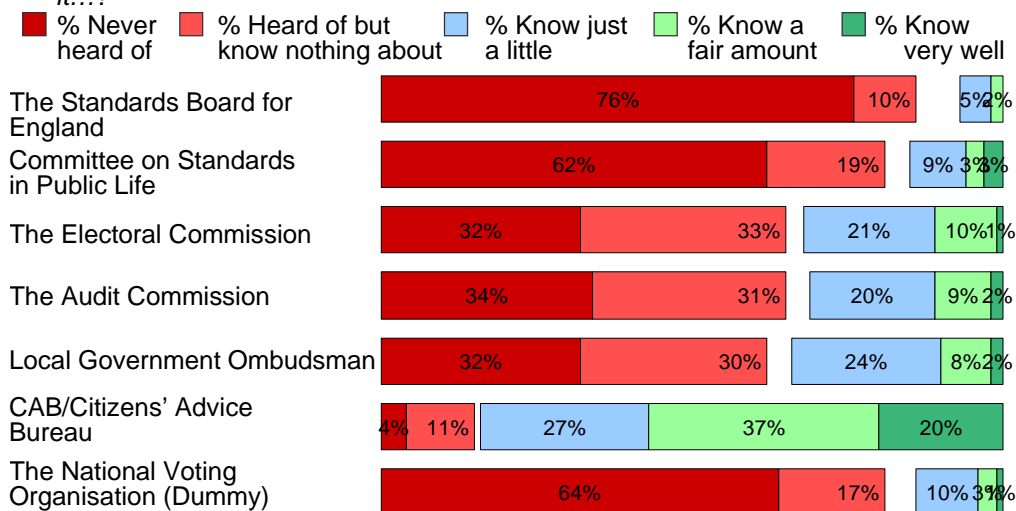
## Awareness of different organisations

During the quantitative survey, a list of different organisations (including The Standards Board for England) was read out to survey respondents to gauge how well-informed the public are of each. The list also included a 'dummy' organisation, the National Voting Organisation, to demonstrate levels of over-claiming.

As the following chart shows, the vast majority of the public (76%) say they have never heard of The Standards Board, and only 77% say they know at least a little. Given that The Standards Board is not a public facing body, these results are not surprising. Even so, among people who feel they know who to contact to make a complaint about a councillor or who work for a council, a few claim to know at least a little about The Standards Board (14% and 12% respectively).

## Knowledge of organisations

Q For each different organisation, please tell me how well you feel you know it...?



Base: All respondents (1,027) General Public 16+, England, 31 May–18 July 2005

Source: MORI

Awareness of the Committee on Standards in Public Life is slightly higher than of The Standards Board, although still not high. Around one in eight (13%) feel they at least know a little about the Committee compared to around 7% who know at least a little

about The Standards Board. Recognition of the name *Committee on Standards in Public Life* (even if nothing is known about the organisation) is also higher than that of *The Standards Board for England* – almost a third (32%) have at least heard of the Committee which is twice the proportion (17%) who have at least heard of The Standards Board.

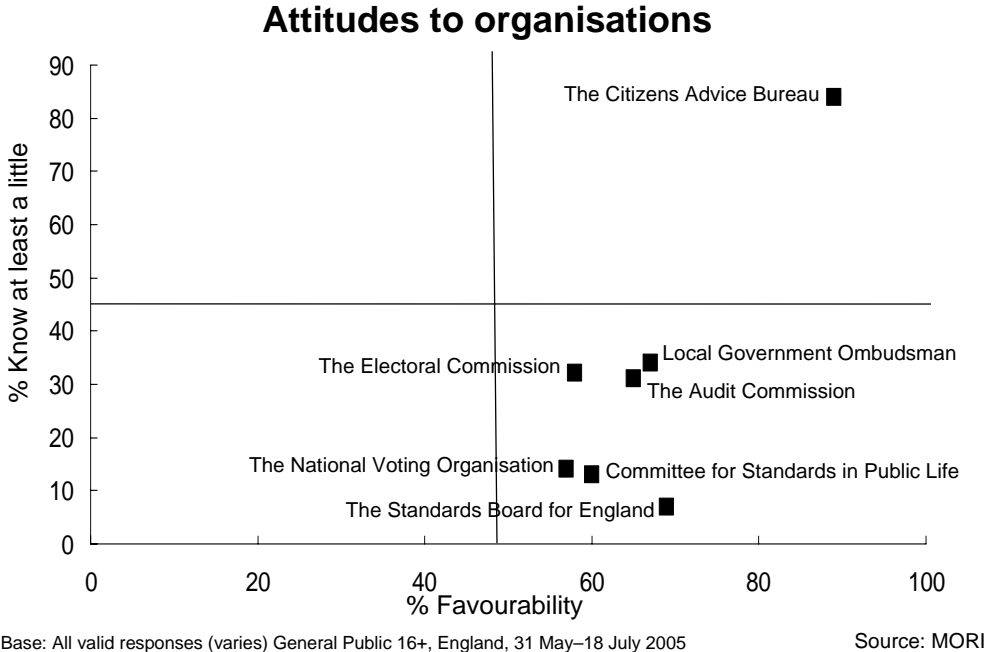
Regarding awareness of three organisations, the Electoral Commission, the Audit Commission and the Local Government Ombudsman, the public is split into three roughly equal groups. Around a third say they know at least a little about each of these bodies, a third have heard of each but know nothing about it, and the remaining third have never heard of each organisation.

The Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) is the most well-known organisation covered in the survey. A fifth (20%) feel they know it very well and over a third (37%) know a fair amount about it. More than a quarter say they know a little about the Bureau. One in nine (11%) recognise the name but know nothing about it and one in twenty-five (4%) have never heard of it.

### Favourability towards The Standards Board

All those who said they know an organisation very or fairly well were also asked how favourable they feel towards it. However, with only 24 respondents saying that they know The Standards Board very or fairly well, it means that the base size is really too small to draw any meaningful conclusions from the responses.

The results for all of the organisations can be seen in the chart below, which plots the level of awareness against favourability towards each organisation.



The CAB is the only organisation with a good level of awareness and high favourability. All other organisations have much lower levels of recognition. Favourability ratings tend to be good but these are often based on small sample sizes (due to low recognition levels).

---

# Appendices

---

## Appendix A – The Ten Principles of Conduct in Local Government

People were asked about councillors' behavioural attributes as a 'loose' proxy for some of the ten Principles of conduct in local government, as it was felt that these would be easier for people to understand and apply to their own experiences of councillors.

The letter next to each statement refers to the order it appeared on the showcard people were shown when answering the question. Two showcards were used alternately – one in alphabetical order, one in reverse alphabetical order – to minimise any possible order effect on answers provided.

---

### The Ten Principles of Conduct in Local Government

---

Behavioural attribute	Which of ten Principles attribute approximates to
A. They are in touch with what the general public thinks is important	Personal judgement Selflessness
B. They do what they promised they would do when elected	Honesty & integrity
C. They explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	Openness
D. They make sure that public money is used wisely	Stewardship
E. They do not take bribes	Honesty & integrity Duty to uphold the law
F. They own up when they make mistakes	Accountability
G. They set a good example for others in their private lives	Leadership
H. They tell the truth	Honesty & integrity
I. Treat everyone equally	Objectivity Respect for others
J. They do not use their power for their own personal gain	Selflessness
K. They treat people with respect	Respect for others
L. They work for the interests of this neighbourhood	Selflessness

*Source: MORI*

---

## Appendix B – Topic Guide

### Core Aims and Objectives

- (i) to investigate the level of public trust in members' integrity, how open and transparent the authorities' actions are thought to be, and how actively engaged the public are with their local authority;
- (ii) to look into what behaviour the public deems acceptable and unacceptable from members;
- (iii) to investigate how the public develops views on members' ethical behaviour and about local government, and how critical these views are compared to other factors; and
- (iv) to explore the general public's awareness and perceptions of the Board, to investigate how awareness can be improved, and how confident the public is in the Board's ability to expose and punish those who misbehave.

Interview Areas	Timing/ Notes
<b>1. Welcome and Introduction</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank participants for coming; mention should take up to 1 ½ hours/ what time group should finish.</li> <li>• Introduce self + MORI (and any observers) and explain available to answer any questions at end of discussion. Explain MORI is speaking to people in different Council areas across England about how people in public office act and behave.</li> <li>• Explain how the group discussion will work (informal discussion, no right + wrong, all opinions important/ talk one at a time/ a lot to cover so if discussion is moved on, not to feel offended/ turn off mobile phones).</li> <li>• Anonymity of respondents and MRS (Market Research Society) code of conduct.</li> <li>• Permission to audio-record.</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Interviewee introduction</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First name</li> <li>• What do you do for a living?</li> <li>• Where do you live? Who with?</li> <li>• How long have you lived there?</li> </ul>	

<b>3. Attitudes towards local Council</b>	<b>10 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can you tell me about the local area? What are the most important issues facing the area?</li> <li>• How much do you know about the local Council? What kind of things are they responsible for? What else do they do? WRITE ON FLIPCHART</li> <li>• What words or phrases would you use to describe the Council? And which words or phrases would you use to describe the members of the Council? WRITE ON FLIPCHART</li> <li>• How much contact have you personally had with the Council (if necessary, add: within the last year or two)? EXPLORE BRIEFLY REASON FOR CONTACT + WHO INITIATED IT. How do you feel about the amount of contact you have with the Council? How engaged do you feel with your local Council? Why? How engaged would you like to be?</li> <li>• How satisfied would you say you were with the Council and the work it has done over the last few years? Why do you say that? What thing(s) have the Council done that you have thought especially good/ bad? Why?</li> <li>• How do you find out about what actions the Council has planned? Where would you go to find out more about the Council?</li> </ul>	
<b>4. How local Council compares to others</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do(es) your local Council(s) differ from other councils generally? Why? PROBE POSITIVE/ NEGATIVE</li> <li>• What are the main issues facing your Council? How are these different from issues that other Councils face?</li> <li>• What do you think (briefly) of the services your local Council provides? PROBE FOR POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Thoughts on Councillors (individuals, not Council services)</b>	<b>15 mins</b>
<p>Moving on now to thinking about Councillors (thinking about the individuals rather than the services the Council provides)....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know who your local Councillors are? How about your local MP? Where would you go/ have you gone to find out information about your local Councillor(s)/ MP?</li> <li>• What do you think of your local Councillor? And how about your local MP? How do their roles differ? Why? Are there any similarities between what they do? What are they?</li> <li>• How, if at all, do the roles of local officials (bureaucrats) differ from Councillors? Why?</li> <li>• What responsibilities do Councillors have? And what responsibilities should they have? PROMPT WITH</li> </ul>	

<p>SHOWCARD A (GREEN CARD). Is there a gap here – why? Does it matter? Why? How can we overcome this gap?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do people become Councillors? What motivates them?</li> <li>• How necessary are Councillors? Do we need them? Why/ not?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6. Behaviour &amp; Standards</b></p>	<p><b>10 mins</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking generally, what does the term “high standards of conduct” mean to you? What kind of things are covered by this phrase? Has the meaning behind this phrase changed at all over time? How?</li> <li>• Now thinking about Councillors in your authority, what does the term “high standards of conduct” mean to you? What are you basing that on? How about local government/ national government – how do the standards that Councillors might operate by compare with these? EXPLORE REASONS FOR ANY DIFFERENCES</li> <li>• Do you think “high standards of conduct” should apply to Councillors more than other types of people? Who? Why?</li> <li>• What are your thoughts about the standards of conduct of local councillors in your authority?</li> <li>• Have you heard of any examples of local Councillors not meeting “high standards of conduct”? IF YES, PROBE FULLY.</li> <li>• Is it important that people such as Councillors behave ethically? Why?</li> <li>• How can people judge what is or is not acceptable behaviour/ conduct for a Councillor? What type of things should be borne in mind? Should a Councillor’s behaviour in his/ her personal life be taken into account, or just behaviour when they are ‘in role’? Why? PROBE FOR REASONING</li> <li>• How do you determine if a Councillor is behaving acceptably or not? Who ought to make that decision? Is that something that should be decided at local level or by a central/ national body? Why?</li> <li>• How can we identify when standards are not being met? Who should be responsible for doing that?</li> </ul>	

<b>7. Case Studies</b>	<b>20 mins</b>
<p>READ OUT SCENARIOS (CREAM CARD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Here are a number of ethical scenarios. Which of these activities do you consider are acceptable? And which are unacceptable? PROBE FULLY (RANK – IMPORTANCE / SEVERITY). IMPORTANT</li> </ul> <p>PROBE FOR ANY THEMES RUNNING THROUGH ANSWERS WHICH EXPLAIN HOW THEY DECIDE ON ISSUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which of the statements on this showcard do you feel reflects your views best:</li> </ul> <p>“It is more important Councillors get results even if this means not always being honest”</p> <p>“It is more important for Councillors to follow the rules set out even if this means they do not achieve the results”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why? Why is that important? PROBE FULLY FOR REASONING</li> </ul>	
<b>8. The Standards Board</b>	<b>10 mins</b>
<p>PICK UP ON ANY REFERENCE MADE EARLIER TO WHO OUGHT TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICING THE BEHAVIOUR OF COUNCILLORS/ LOCAL AUTHORITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who or what organisation do you think is responsible for ensuring high standards of conduct in your local Council?</li> </ul> <p>INFORM GROUP THAT THIS IS THE JOB OF THE STANDARDS BOARD. Introduce Standards Board (showcard B – BLUE CARD)...</p> <p>The Standards Board for England – formally established in March 2001 - is an independent body which works to help build confidence in local democracy. It promotes the ethical behaviour of people who serve on a range of authorities, such as: Local Authorities, Parish Councils, Fire &amp; Civil Defence Authorities, Police Authorities Transport Authorities and the Greater London Authority. The Board is not responsible for the conduct of staff who work for any of these authorities, just councillors, members and co-opted members (i.e. people serving on their boards).</p> <p>The Board's main tasks are a) to ensure that standards of ethical conduct are maintained across authorities (i.e. through working with authorities to help them provide support and guidance to members regarding ethical behaviour) and b) to deal with complaints of misconduct against individual members (i.e. it receives and investigates any allegations that representatives may have breached the Code of Conduct). It's different to an Ombudsman, as the Board does not deal with issues of corporate maladministration nor seek to secure financial recompense for complainants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you heard of this organisation (SBE)? Where/ when did you hear about it? What do you know about it? Can you give me any examples that it's been involved in?</li> <li>IF AWARE OF SBE: How satisfied are you with the work of the</li> </ul>	

<p>Standards Board? Why do you say that? What are you thinking of?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How important, if at all, do you feel the role of the Standards Board is? Why do you say that? What would happen if the Standards Board did not exist?</li> <li>• If you wanted make a complaint to the Standards Board about a Councilor's standards of conduct, how would you go about it? [IF HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF SBE: Where would you go/ who would you speak to?]</li> <li>• How do you feel complaints would be best handled - at local level or by a central/ national body, such as the Standards Board? Why?</li> <li>• How could the Standards Board make people more aware of their role and how to contact them? What else?</li> <li>• What impact do you think the Standards Board has on the behaviour of Councillors? What should the Standards Board do/ not do? Why?</li> <li>• How should we judge how successful the Standards Board is? What makes you say that?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>9. Final message, wrap-up and thanks</b></p>	<p><b>5 mins</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finally, what key message(s) about Councils/ Councillors and judging standards of acceptable non-acceptable behaviour would you like us to take back to the Standards Board?</li> <li>• Is there anything else you would like to add?</li> </ul> <p>THANK AND CLOSE</p>	

# Appendix C - Statistical Reliability and Weighting Profile

The respondents to this survey are only a sample of the total 'population' of the general public. This means that we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the 'true' values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted range for different sample sizes and percentage results at the '95% confidence interval'.

<b>Overall statistical reliability</b>			
<i>Size of sample on which survey result is based</i>	<i>Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels</i>		
	<b>10% or 90%</b>	<b>30% or 70%</b>	<b>50%</b>
	$\pm$	$\pm$	$\pm$
400	3	5	5
500	3	4	4
800	2	3	4
1,000	2	3	3
<b>1,027</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
1,500	2	2	3
2,000	1	2	2

*Source: MORI*

For example, with a sample of 1,027 where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the 'true' value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of plus or minus 3 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be 'real', or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is 'statistically significant', we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume the '95% confidence interval', the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below:

---

**Weighting profile**

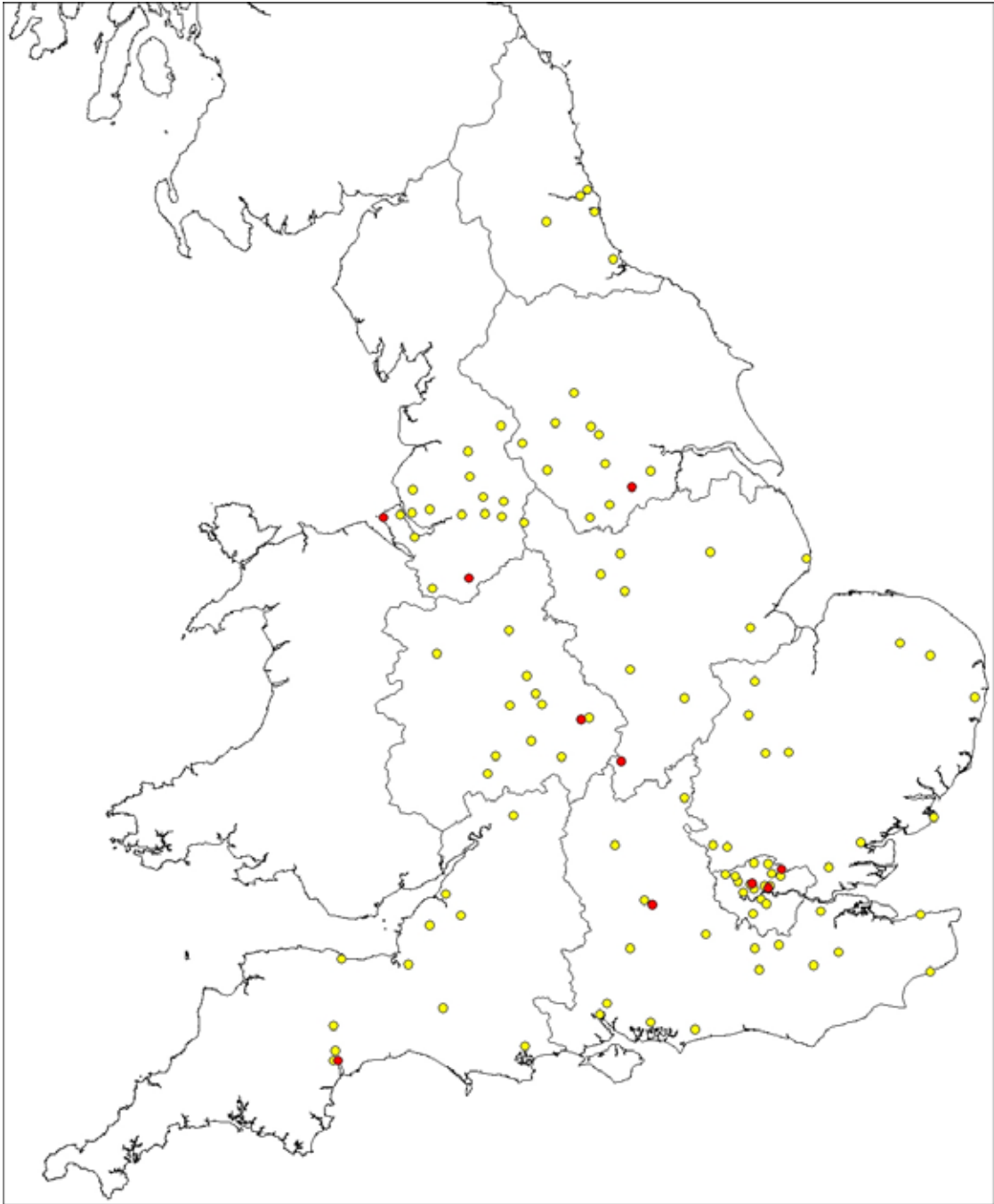
---

	<i>Number of people Unweighted</i>	<i>Unweighted</i>	<i>Weighted</i>
		%	%
<b>Total</b>	1,027	100	100
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	499	49	48
Female	528	51	52
<b>Age</b>			
16-34	277	27	32
35-54	384	37	35
55+	366	36	33
<b>Social grade</b>			
AB	228	22	25
C1	295	29	30
C2	206	21	18
DE	292	28	27
<b>Working status</b>			
Full-time	423	41	43
Part-time	111	11	10
Not working	490	48	46
<b>Region</b>			
North	287	28	29
Midlands	314	31	31
South	426	41	40

*Source: MORI*

---

Appendix D - Location of sampling points



NB. Light points indicate standard sampling points. Dark points indicate reserve sampling points – some of which were used in the survey.

## Appendix E - Definitions of Social Grade and Socio-Politically active

### Social Grade

The table below contains a brief list of social grade definitions as used by the Institute of Practitioners of Advertising. These groups are standard on all surveys carried out by MORI.

- A** Professionals such as doctors, surgeons, solicitors or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high ranking grades of the Services.
- B** People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, hospital matrons, head of local government departments, middle management in business, qualified scientists, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades of the Services.
- C1** All others doing non-manual jobs; nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions, police sergeants/constables, and middle ranks of the Services.
- C2** Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprentices; foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long distance lorry drivers, security officers, and lower grades of the Services.
- D** Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and people serving apprenticeships; machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, door-to-door and van salesmen.
- E** Those on the lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners, casual workers, and others with minimum levels of income.

## Socio-Politically active

Respondents were asked to state which, if any, of the activities below they had done in the last two or three years. Those who had done five or more of the activities in the last two or three years were classed as Socio-Politically active and those who had done fewer or none of the activities in the last year were classified as Not Socio-Politically active.

- Presented my views to a local councillor or MP
- Written a letter to an editor
- Urged someone outside my family to vote
- Urged someone to get in touch with a local councillor or MP
- Made a speech before an organised group
- Been an officer of an organisation or club
- Stood for public office
- Taken an active part in a political campaign
- Helped on fund raising drives
- Voted in last general election

# Appendix F – Marked-up Quantitative Questionnaire

- MORI interviewed 1,027 members of the general public in England via a face-to-face in-home survey
- Interviews were conducted across the nine English regions, proportionate to the population in the each area
- Fieldwork took place between 31 May – 18 July 2005
- Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated
- Results are based on all respondents (1,027) unless otherwise stated
- An asterisk (\*) represents a value of less than one half or one percent, but not zero
- Poll conducted on behalf of The Standards Board for England (SBE)

**Q1. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this area as a place to live?**

	%
Very satisfied	40
Fairly satisfied	44
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5
Fairly dissatisfied	7
Very dissatisfied	4
Don't know	1

**Q2. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the Council is running this area?**

	%
Very satisfied	9
Fairly satisfied	44
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20
Fairly dissatisfied	15
Very dissatisfied	7
Don't know	5

**Q3. Why are you dissatisfied with the Council?**

*Base: All who said Very/Fairly dissatisfied (237). Top 10 mentions* %

Poor road sweeping/street cleaning/too much litter	17
Poor refuse collection service	11
Poor maintenance of roads/pavements/the prom	11
No service for what you pay in Council Tax/nothing ever gets done	10
Parking problems/lack of residents parking/ disabled parking	9
Poor maintenance of trees/greenery/the lake area	9
Poor/slow repairs service	7
Lack of consultation/they don't listen to what people want	7
Traffic problems/poor traffic schemes	6
They waste money	5

**Q4. From which of these sources do you get most of your information about the council?**

	%
Local newspapers	61
Leaflets from the Council	45
Friends and family	21
Local TV news	20
Local radio	10
Grapevine/ Rumour	10
Local council website	8
Posters/ hoardings	6
Civic Centre/ libraries	6
Citizens' Advice Bureaux/ CAB	2
Other	5
None of these	3
Don't know	1

**Q5-Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Q5.	I want to have a say in how the local area is run	24	44	18	10	2	2
Q6.	It is my duty to vote in local elections	56	28	7	5	2	2
Q7.	I am interested in local issues	31	48	11	7	1	1
Q8.	I do not have a say in how the local area is run	17	35	19	24	4	2
Q9.	It is easy to get in touch with my local Councillors	12	29	21	16	7	15

**Q10. How much, if anything, would you say you know about the work of your local MP?**

	%
A great deal	3
A fair amount	17
Not very much	49
Nothing at all	29
Don't know	2

**Q11. How much, if anything, would you say you know about the work of your local councillors?**

	%
A great deal	2
A fair amount	17
Not very much	54
Nothing at all	26
Don't know	1

**Q12. When, if ever, did you last meet any of your local councillors in person (in his/ her role as a Councillor)?**

	%
Within the last week	3
Within the last month	5
Within the last six months	7
Within the last year	5
More than one year ago	13
Never	65
Don't know	1

**Q13-Q16 Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of the following...?**

		Very favourable	Mainly favourable	Neither/nor	Mainly unfavourable	Very unfavourable	No opinion
Q13.	Your local MP	% 6	25	43	8	4	14
Q14.	Your local councillor/s	% 3	23	46	10	4	14
Q15.	Politicians generally	% 1	18	32	30	13	6
Q16.	Government ministers	% 1	19	29	25	18	7

**Q17-Q28 Thinking of all the Councillors in your area, please look at this showcard and say how many local Councillors each of the following statements applies to.**

		All	Most	About half	A few	None	Don't know
Q17.	They are in touch with what the general public thinks is important	% 2	24	19	30	9	15
Q18.	They do what they promised they would do when elected	% 1	14	19	34	16	17
Q19.	They explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	% 2	17	15	30	18	17
Q20.	They make sure that public money is used wisely	% 2	19	18	28	16	17
Q21.	They do not take bribes	% 18	14	6	11	11	41
Q22.	They own up when they make mistakes	% 1	11	14	35	23	18
Q23.	They set a good example for others in their private lives	% 2	25	14	19	8	32
Q24.	They tell the truth	% 2	24	18	28	12	17
Q25.	Treat everyone equally	% 4	31	16	22	11	17
Q26.	They do not use their power for their own personal gain	% 4	24	14	24	9	25
Q27.	They treat people with respect	% 7	41	15	18	3	15
Q28.	They work in the interests of this neighbourhood	% 7	36	17	21	7	12

**Q29. Which three, if any, of the following do you think are the most important for local Councillors to do? Just read out the letters which apply**

	%
Make sure that public money is used wisely	54
Be in touch with what the general public thinks is important	47
Work for the interests of this neighbourhood	44
Do what they promised when they were elected	39
Tell the truth	22
Treat everyone equally	18
Explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	16
Not take bribes	13
Not use their power for their	12

own personal gain	
Treat people with respect	12
Own up when they make mistakes	10
Set a good example for others in their private lives	4
None	*
Don't know	1

---

**Q30-Q35 How often do you think the following types of people tell the truth?**

			Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Q30.	Members of Parliament	%	1	22	43	25	5	5
Q31.	Local Councillors	%	1	35	40	13	3	8
Q32.	Estate Agents	%	2	16	34	25	12	11
Q33.	Doctors	%	33	55	8	1	1	2
Q34.	Car Salespeople	%	1	8	33	31	17	10
Q35.	Senior employees in local Councils	%	3	37	35	11	3	12

**Q36-Q41 I am going to read out some things your councillor might do in the course of their duties. For each one, can you tell me if you would consider such behaviour acceptable or unacceptable?**

			Acceptable	Unacceptabl e	Don't know
Q36.	Accepting an invitation to a football match from the local football team	%	87	9	4
Q37.	Being involved in decisions on planning applications from which they may benefit financially	%	6	91	3
Q38.	Driving 50 miles an hour in a 30 mile an hour zone while on holiday	%	4	94	3
Q39.	Witnessing a racial assault and doing nothing to stop it	%	2	93	5
Q40.	Voting on a planning application submitted by a charity the councillor supports	%	44	42	13
Q41.	Influencing Council decisions on who is allocated housing in specific cases	%	25	64	10

**Q42. In general, whose interests do you think Councillors put first – their own, their friends and families', their party's or their local area's?**

	%
Own	27
Their friends and families'	9
Party's	32
Local area's	25
Don't know	8

**Q43. And, in general, whose interests do you think Councillors should put first – their own, their friends and families', their party's or their local area's?**

	%
Own	*
Their friends and families'	1
Party's	3
Local area's	94
Don't know	2

**Q44. Which one of these statements best represents your feelings about your Councillors?  
Just read out the letter which applies.**

	%
I'm not interested in what Councillors do, or how they do their job	3
I'm not interested in what Councillors do as long as they do their job	22
I like to know what Councillors are doing but I'm happy to let them get on with it	44
I would like to have more of a say in what Councillors do	23
I already know about Councillors and feel able to get across my views	5
None of these	1
Don't know	1

**Q45. If you wanted to make a complaint about a local councillor, would you know who or what organisation to contact or not?**

	%
Yes	32
No	66
Don't know	3

**Q46. Have you ever made a complaint to your local Council about a councillor?**

	%
Yes	3
No	97
Don't know	-

**Q47. Have you wanted to make a complaint to your local Council about a councillor?**

*Base: All who have not or do not know if they have made a complaint about a councillor (991)*

	%
Yes	10
No	89
Don't know	1

**Q48. If you wanted to complain about a local councillor who would you prefer to deal with your complaint?**

	%
The Council	28
An independent body	46
Local political party	4
The media	3
My MP	13

None	1
Don't know	4

Q49. If you were to make a complaint about the way in which you were treated by a local councillor, which three or four, if any, of the following would be most important for you (as the person making the complaint)?

	%
Knowing the complaint will be dealt with <b>thoroughly</b>	52
That the investigators keep you <b>informed</b> about what is going on	47
Knowing the investigation will be <b>independent</b>	44
Knowing the <b>name</b> of the person/people dealing with your case	36
Receiving a <b>written explanation</b> after the investigation	36
Having a clear <b>procedure</b> for dealing with complaints	32
Knowing the investigation will lead to <b>changes</b>	31
That the investigation will take place as <b>quickly</b> as possible	26
Knowing the investigators will treat you with <b>respect</b>	19
Don't know	3
None	1

Q50-Q56 I am going to read out the names of a number of different organisations. For each, please tell me how well you feel you know it.

		Know very well	Know a fair amount	Know just a little	Heard of but know nothing about	Never heard of	Don't know
Q50.	CAB/ Citizens' Advice Bureau	% 20	37	27	11	4	1
Q51.	Local Government Ombudsman	% 2	8	24	30	32	4
Q52.	The National Voting Organisation	% 1	3	10	17	64	6
Q53.	Committee for Standards in Public Life	% 1	3	9	19	62	5
Q54.	Standards Board for England	% *	2	5	10	76	6
Q55.	The Electoral Commission	% 1	10	21	33	32	4
Q56.	The Audit Commission	% 2	9	20	31	34	4

**Q57-63 And how favourable or unfavourable do you feel towards each of the following organisations?**

*Base: All who know very well/know a fair amount about the organisation*

				Very favourable	Fairly favourable	Neither favourable nor unfavourable	Fairly unfavourable	Very unfavourable	Don't know
		<i>Base</i>							
Q 57.	CAB/ Citizens' Advice Bureau	(586)	%	53	36	6	1	1	2
Q 58.	Local Government Ombudsman	(102)	%	19	48	20	3	1	5
Q 59.	The National Voting Organisation	(38)	%	17	40	27	3	-	13
Q 60.	Committee for Standards in Public Life	(40)	%	19	41	30	-	-	7
Q 61.	Standards Board for England	(24)	%	22	47	22	-	-	5
Q 62.	The Electoral Commission	(106)	%	8	50	27	2	1	7
Q 63.	The Audit Commission	(108)	%	19	46	21	2	1	9

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Male	48	49
Female	52	51

### Age

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
16-24	13	11
25-34	19	16
35-44	19	20
45-54	16	17
55-59	7	7
60-64	6	6
65-74	11	12
75+	10	11

### Working Status of Respondent

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Working – Full time (30+)	43	41
- Part-time (9-29)	11	11
Unemployed	4	5
Not working – retired	24	26
- looking after	8	8
- invalid/disabled	3	4
Student	5	4
Other	1	1

### Social Grade

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
A	4	3
B	21	19
C1	30	29
C2	18	20
D	13	13
E	14	15
Not stated	1	1

### Chief Income Earner:

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Chief Income Earner	61	62
Not Chief Income Earner	36	35
Not stated	3	3

### Educational qualifications

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
GCSE/O-level/CSE	22	22
Vocational quals	10	10
A level or equivalent	16	15
Bachelor Degree or equivalent (=NVQ4)	17	16
Masters/PhD or	5	5
Other	7	7
No formal qualifications	22	24
Still studying	2	2
Don't know	1	1

Which of these daily newspapers do you read regularly? By regularly, I mean three out of every four issues.

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Local daily morning	4	4
Local daily evening	10	11
Daily Mail	14	14
Daily Mirror	12	12
Daily Record	*	*
Daily Sport	1	*
Daily Star	2	2
The Daily Telegraph	6	6
The Express	5	5
Financial Times	2	1
The Guardian	6	5
The Independent	3	3
The Sun	17	17
The Times	7	6
Metro	4	3
Evening Standard	3	3
Other	3	3
None of these	34	35

Regular weekly or Sunday newspaper readership (three out of four issues)

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Local weekly paper	12	12
The Independent on	2	2
The Mail on Sunday	13	13
News of the World	12	13
The Observer	5	5
Sunday Express	5	4
Sunday Mirror	9	9
Sunday People	3	3
Sunday Post	1	1
Sunday Sport	*	*
The Sunday Telegraph	4	4
The Sunday Times	10	10
Sunday Business	*	*
Other	3	3
None of these	41	42

### Tenure

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Owned outright (including leasehold)	31	33
Buying a mortgage	37	36
Rented from Council	12	12
Rented from housing association	5	5
Rented from private landlord	12	11
Other	1	1
Not stated	2	2

## Ethnicity

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
British	83	84
Irish	2	2
Any other white background	4	4
White and Black	1	*
White and Black African	*	*
White and Asian	*	*
Any other mixed background	*	*
Indian	2	1
Pakistani	2	2
Bangladeshi	1	*
Any other Asian background	1	1
Caribbean	2	1
African	1	1
Any other black background	*	*
Chinese	*	*
Any other background	1	1
Refused	*	*

## Which, if any, of the following apply to you? I am the parent or legal guardian of child/children...

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Under the age of 16 who does/do live with me	31	30
Aged under 16 who does not/do not live with me and to whose upbringing I do not contribute financially	2	1
Aged under 16 who does not/do not live with me and to whose upbringing I do not contribute financially	*	*
Aged 16 to 19, who is/are currently in full time education	6	7
None of the above	64	64
Not stated	1	1

## How would you vote if there was a general election tomorrow? (IF AGED 16-17: If you were old enough to vote)

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Conservative	21	21
Labour	33	33
Liberal Democrats (Lib Dem)	16	16
Green Party	3	3
UK Independence Party	2	2
Other	1	1
Would not vote	7	7
Undecided	12	12
Refused	5	5
Not stated	1	1

## Which party would you be most likely to support if there were a General Election tomorrow?

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Conservative	6	6
Labour	12	13
Liberal Democrats (Lib Dem)	11	11
Green Party	1	1
UK Independence Party	1	1
Other	*	1
Would not vote	4	4
Undecided	34	33
Refused	27	26
Not stated	5	5

## Voting Intention – Summary

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Conservative	22	22
Labour	35	35
Liberal Democrats (Lib Dem)	18	18
Green Party	3	3
UK Independence Party	2	2
Other	1	1
Would not vote	8	8
Undecided/refused	12	12

**Which, if any of the things on this list have you done in the last two or three years?**

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Voted in last general election	67	67
Urged someone outside my family to vote	26	26
Helped on fund raising drives	25	24
Presented my views to a local councillor or MP	15	15
Made a speech before an organised group	14	13
Urged someone to get in touch with a local councillor or MP	12	12
Been an officer of an organisation or club	12	12
Written a letter to an editor	7	7
Taken an active part in a political campaign	3	3
Stood for public office	1	1
None of these	21	21
Not stated	1	1

**Do you or anyone in your household work for a local council?**

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
Yes – personally	4	4
Yes – someone else in household	3	3
No	92	92
Don't know	*	*
Not stated	2	2

**Government region**

	% Wtd	% Unwtd
<b>North</b>	29	28
Yorks & Humberside	10	10
North East	5	5
North West	14	13
<b>Midlands</b>	31	31
East Midlands	9	9
West Midlands	11	10
East of England	11	12
<b>South</b>	41	41
London	15	14
South East	16	17
South West	10	11