

Public perceptions of local authority regulatory services

**A survey of consumers conducted for
the Local Better Regulation Office**

November 2008

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Introduction

Introduction

Ipsos MORI was commissioned by the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) to research consumers' and businesses' views and perceptions of how local councils and fire services enforce regulations for which they are responsible. The LBRO is a new, national body set up by the Government which aims to improve the effectiveness of local regulation and its impact on businesses and consumers.

The research was split into two parts to reflect the business and consumer issues separately. The consumer survey was shorter and considerably less detailed than the survey of businesses. Whereas the business survey was a bespoke survey, the consumer survey was conducted using Ipsos MORI's face-to-face omnibus survey, which takes place once a month, and is shared by a number of clients.

This report contains the findings of the consumer element.

With the consumer survey, the aims were threefold:

- To measure the extent to which consumers and citizens are aware of these services;
- To measure consumer satisfaction with the services, where they have had direct experience of them; and
- To better understand how confident and satisfied consumers and citizens are with the services in general (bearing in mind that they still get a benefit from them, even if they have not directly used them).

A further strand of research was carried out to understand the views of the business community. LBRO wanted to get a better understanding of businesses' views in relation to the way regulations are enforced by local councils and fire and rescue services, specifically in the areas of trading standards, environmental health, licensing and fire safety. The results of the business survey are presented in a separate volume.

The fieldwork for both strands of research was conducted separately between mid-June and mid-July 2008 and a description of the methodology employed can be found in the appendix.

This research will play an important role in setting the LBRO's agenda for future work and will act as a baseline measure against which future success can be measured.

Report Layout

The following pages contain a summary of the key findings from the consumer survey and the main body of the report looks at the findings for each question picking out the key themes in turn. The business survey results are covered in a separate report.

The appendices contain a technical report, guide to statistical reliability, and a marked-up questionnaire, showing the topline results of the survey.

Interpretation of the Data

When interpreting the findings, it is important to remember that the results are based on the *sample* of respondents who took part in the survey and not the entire population of Great Britain. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between subgroups will be *statistically significant*.

Throughout the report, we highlight differences between subgroups of respondents – on the basis, for example of age, gender or geographical region. Differences are only commented on where they are statistically significant. A guide to statistical significance is included in the appendices. It is important to note that caution should be exercised with results based on less than 50 respondents, as large differences between data will need to be present in order for these differences to be statistically significant.

Where percentages in the charts or tables in the report do not add up to 100%, it is due to multiple answers, computer rounding and/or the exclusion of neutral, don't know or not stated responses. In addition, where percentages in the charts vary by one percentage point from those in the text, this too is simply due to computer rounding.

In the computer tables and report, reference is made to "net" figures. This represents the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions and provides a useful means of comparing the data for a number of variables. In the case of a "net agree" figure, this represents the percentage of respondents who agree with a particular issue, less the percentage who disagree with it. For example, if 33% of respondents agree that it is

easy to comply with regulations and 54% disagree, the resulting “net agree” figure would be -21 percentage points.

Throughout the tables, an asterisk (*) denotes a value greater than zero, but less than 0.5%.

Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Ffiona Kyte and Jane Martin at the LBRO for their help and advice throughout this project as well as the respondents who gave up their time to take part in both forms of the survey. We would also like to acknowledge the input from local authority regulatory services in the design of both the consumer and business surveys. Further details of who was consulted during development of the surveys are given in Appendix A.

Publication of the Data

As with all our studies, these findings are subject to our Standard Terms & Conditions of Contract. Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey requires the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. This would only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misinterpretation of the findings.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The majority of consumers who had direct experience of the services were satisfied, and more generally consumers have confidence in the services overall. However the findings from this survey show that awareness of local authority regulatory services amongst consumers may be fairly low in relation to some issues and the information provided to consumers can be hard to understand.

Awareness of local authority regulatory services and fire and rescue services

When considering whom to go to if they are concerned about faulty goods, poor food hygiene or risks to health and safety at work, most of the respondents would consult the manager or owner of the establishment in question in the first instance. Across the local authority regulatory services, environmental health is the department that people are most likely to recognise and approach for help. This is in relation to poor food hygiene. In the scenarios relating to faulty goods and risk to health and safety at work, relevant local authority regulatory services were less well recognised. When considering where to go if concerned with fire safety, the majority would approach their local fire service in the first instance.

Contacts with local authority regulatory services and fire and rescue services

Very few of those interviewed, one in ten, had contacted their local council in relation to rules and regulations regarding consumer protection, food safety or health and safety¹. Most of these contacts were either seeking advice or making a complaint about a business. The majority, over six in ten, of these respondents are satisfied with the overall level of service provided, the speed with which their concern was dealt with and with the overall outcome. However, almost a quarter in each case are dissatisfied, so there is still work for local councils to do to improve the customer service they provide.

When asked whether the information they were given by their local council was easy to understand, a large proportion, nearly 40 per cent, found that information difficult to understand. Similarly, 45 per cent found local council staff uninformative. There were similar findings in relation to fire and rescue services.

Almost all respondents feel they were treated fairly.

The proportion who contacted their local fire and rescue service is similarly low, but overall satisfaction with the service is relatively high. Overall, 74% of the public are

¹ A description of these rules and regulations can be found on page 34.

satisfied with the way local fire services regulate businesses in order to minimise the risk of fire.

Confidence and satisfaction in general

Consumers are confident that their local council and fire and rescue service are achieving their objectives concerning the enforcement of rules and regulations in the various areas covered by this survey. Confidence is highest for ensuring fire safety arrangements are in place in public buildings, the maintenance of standards in food safety and hygiene, ensuring consumer protection, and regulating health and safety in workplaces.

Overall, just under two-thirds are satisfied with the way their local council regulates businesses to protect consumers, workers and the environment, and fewer than one in ten say they are dissatisfied. In relation to the way their local fire and rescue service regulates businesses to ensure the risks from fire are minimised, just under three-quarters are satisfied and just 2% are dissatisfied.

Drawing on other surveys of people's views of local council services gives some useful context to these findings. Local authority regulatory services and the fire service (in their regulatory role as looked at here) compare favourably with satisfaction with local authorities as a whole (53% say they are satisfied with their council's overall performance in the 2006-07 round of BVPI surveys as compared to our findings of 74% for fire services in their regulatory role and 63% for local authority regulatory services). However, some specific local council services fare better than local authority regulatory services – for example, 80% of people are satisfied with their council's local tip or recycling centre, and 73% with recycling collections when asked in the last round of BVPI surveys².

As LBRO is a relatively new body, there are few opportunities to benchmark our survey data against existing surveys. One exception is BERR's Trading Standards National Performance Framework (TS NPF) for which data have been collected annually across England, Wales and Scotland since 2005-06, although in relation to trading standards services only. Each local authority (or local council as they are referred to in this report) is required to consult with a representative sample of local residents and businesses on the service that they provide and provides indices of performance based on customer and

² CLG Best Value Performance Indicator surveys. These are surveys that each English local authority is required to carry out to measure residents' views of their local council. These figures are from the 2006/07 round of surveys. http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk/Performance/Downloads/Full_2006_07_BV_General_Survey_Data2.xls

business satisfaction. The TS NPF is collecting data for 2007-08 and will then be superseded by BERR's National Indicator 182 in England.

In this survey of consumers, we deliberately selected the same questions to those that are used to calculate the TS NPF Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) to enable comparison. However, such comparisons need to be treated with caution as the TS NPF CSI deals with trading standards only and our survey looks across all local authority regulatory services (trading standards, environmental health, licensing and fire safety). Furthermore, the fieldwork and sampling methodologies used are different, and (whilst the questions are the same) the response scales used are also not exactly the same.

With these caveats in mind, the national average NPF CSI score for all local authorities in relation to trading standards in 2006/7 was 87.2, this compares to an average of 55.0 across all LARS derived from the LBRO/Ipsos MORI survey findings.

Consumer Survey Findings

Consumer Survey Findings

Awareness of local authority regulatory services and fire and rescue services

Who do people contact when concerned about regulation issues?

In order to assess people's knowledge and awareness of local authority regulatory services, we first presented them with a number of scenarios, and asked them whom they would contact if they were faced with that situation. For each scenario, respondents were asked to answer the question *without* being shown a list of possible organisations they might contact and they were free to state as many answers as they could think of.

Overall, awareness of the role of the fire services as a key point of contact when concerned about fire safety is greatest, whilst in the rest of the scenarios such as concern about goods, services, hygiene and health and safety, the majority would approach the manager/owner of an establishment in the first instance. Of those who would contact their local council, knowledge of environmental health services is greatest, closely followed by trading standards.

Faulty, unsafe or wrongly described goods/services

The first scenario was having a problem with faulty, unsafe or wrongly described goods or services. See page 32 (marked-up questionnaire) for the actual wording used for this question.

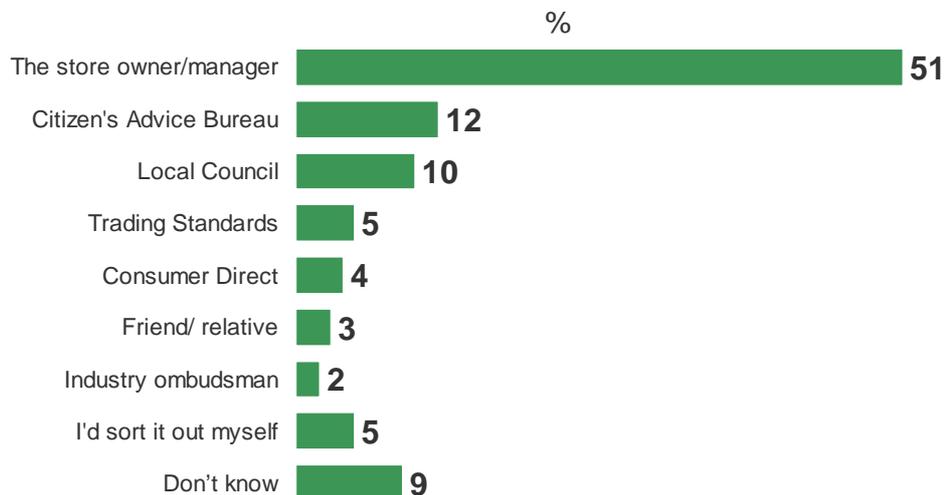
Just over half of respondents would approach the owner or store manager concerned. One in six (16%)³ say they would approach their local council, or more specifically trading standards. This is very similar to the proportion (12%) that say they would speak to the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB).

If we look at the overall number of respondents who would either approach their local council (and trading standards specifically), the CAB or Consumer Direct, roughly one in three (31%) would approach an agency in a position to give relevant advice in this scenario. Only the local council, and its trading standards department specifically, would be able to take enforcement action however.

Almost one in ten (9%) could not say who they would approach.

Scenario – Faulty, unsafe or wrongly described goods

Q1a – If you had a problem with faulty, unsafe or wrongly described good or services, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to approach for help?



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

Ipsos MORI



Men (7%) and those in the higher social grades AB (9%) are most likely to say they would resolve the problem themselves. Otherwise there are few interesting subgroup

³ This does not match the graph due to rounding.

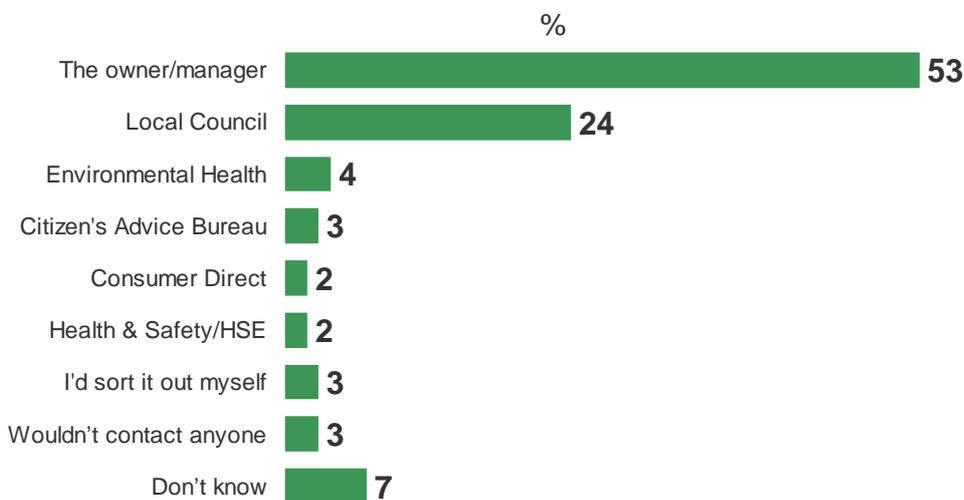
differences apart from when we consider geographical area. Those living in the East Midlands region (31%) are significantly more likely to say they would consult the CAB whilst residents of the North East (17%) and West Midlands (15%) are most likely to approach their local council⁴.

Discovering poor hygiene in a restaurant

When presented with the scenario of discovering poor hygiene in a restaurant, again just over half (53%) say that they would contact the owner or manager. However, substantially more respondents would feel that their local council is an appropriate organisation to approach in this situation than was the case with the faulty goods scenario described above. Over a quarter (28%) say they would approach their local council or, more specifically, environmental health. The local council and the environmental health department specifically, is the only agency in a position to take enforcement action in such a scenario.

Scenario – Poor hygiene in a restaurant

Q1b – If you came across poor hygiene in a restaurant, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to contact?



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

Ipsos MORI



There are few significant differences between subgroups in who respondents are most likely to contact if they discovered poor hygiene in a restaurant. One exception, however, is that those in higher social grades AB (31%) and C1 (26%) are more likely than those in

⁴ A regional breakdown of all the survey results is provided in the accompanying tables.

the lower social grade DE (15%) to say they would approach their local council in this situation.

Concern about health and safety at work

When presented with the scenario of being concerned about a risk to health and safety at work, almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents would contact either their manager or the health and safety officer within their workplace. Few would approach their local council (8%) or the Health and Safety Executive (4%). This is in line with what we would hope, given that councils would generally advise people to seek a solution from their workplace before approaching the council.

Scenario – Risk to health and safety at your work

Q1d – If you were concerned about a risk to health and safety at your place of work, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to contact?



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

Ipsos MORI



Younger people (16-24) are far more likely than older people (55-74) and the overall average to approach their boss or manager if they were concerned about health and safety at work (56% vs. 39% and 46% respectively).

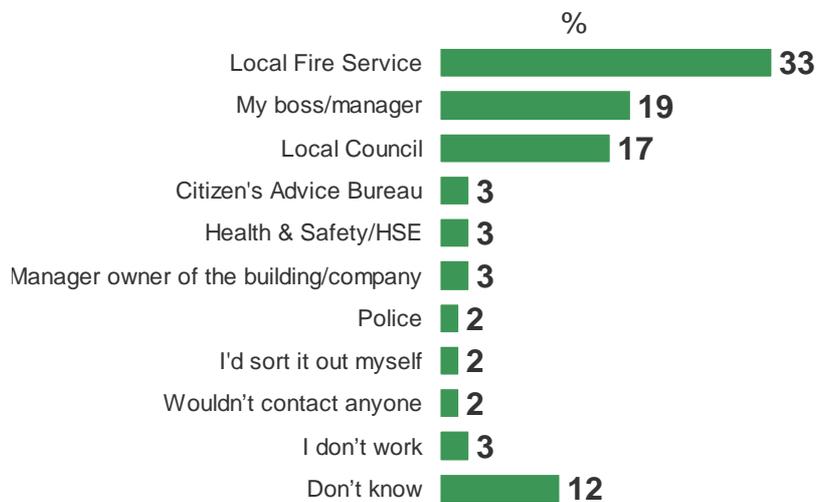
Women (14%) are twice as likely as men (7%) to not know what do to in this situation but those with no formal qualifications are even more likely to not know, with nearly one in five (19%) saying they don't know what they would do.

Concern about fire safety in a public building

The final scenario presented was about fire safety in a public building. The largest proportion, a third, say that they would approach their local fire service, although approaching the manager is again a commonly stated course of action. Just under one in five (17%) say they would speak to their local council. However, this is not surprising given most would not expect the local council to deal with a fire safety issue.

Scenario – Fire safety in a public building

Q1c – If you were concerned about fire safety in a public building, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to contact?



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

Ipsos MORI



Residents living in the South West (43%) and North East (39%) are most likely to say they would approach their local fire service.

Contacting the local council in relation to rules and regulations

Just under one in ten have personally had contact with their local council in relation to rules and regulations which protect consumers when they purchase goods and services, safeguard food safety, monitor adherence to health and safety procedures and ensure that people are protected from the risk of fire. Likelihood of making contact increases with age from its lowest (4%) among 16-24s to its highest of 19% among those aged 65-74. The same applies with ascending social grade – contact with local council is lowest among DEs (5%) and rises to its highest (14%) among ABs. Residents of the West Midlands region (15%) are the most likely to have had contact.

Recency of contact⁵

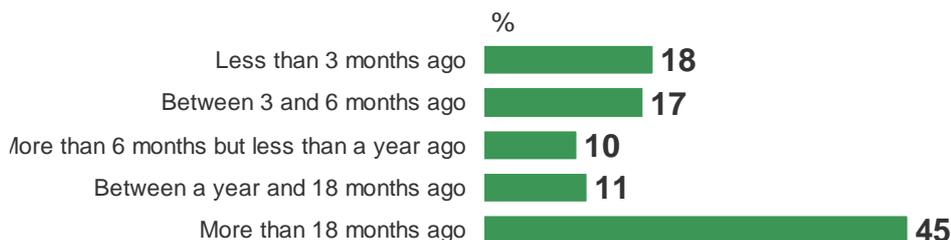
Just under a half (45%) had made this contact more than 18 months ago and the remainder who have had contact within the last 18 months are spread fairly evenly over this period.

Contact with local council

Q2a – Have you had contact in a personal capacity with your Local Council in relation to these rules and regulations?



Q2b – When was your most recent contact with the Council on an issue of this nature? (base: all who have had contact with their local Council – 81)



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

Ipsos MORI



⁵ Because of the small proportion of people who have contacted the council, results here and subsequent results relating to this group are based on just 81 respondents, and so should be treated with caution.

Reasons for contact

When those who said they had contacted their local council in relation to these rules and regulations were asked about their specific reasons for making contact, responses were fairly evenly split between making a complaint and seeking advice. One in three respondents said it was for some other reason, but the reasons given are very diverse and thus cannot be easily classified into groups (the topline on page 35 of this report provides more detail and also the full listing of verbatim responses are available as a separate file).

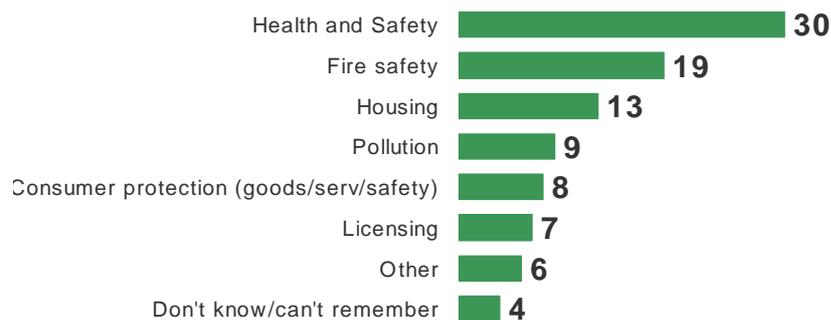
Although few in the hypothetical scenarios say they would contact the local council (or specifically its health and safety function) if confronted with a risk at their workplace, health and safety was the most common topic of concern for those who have actually contacted their council. This may be due to a broader interpretation among respondents of the issues that health and safety covers.

Reasons for contacting local Council

Q2c – What was the reason for this contact? Was it...



Q2d – And which of these broad topics did this most recent contact concern?



Base: all who have had contact with their local Council – 81

Ipsos MORI



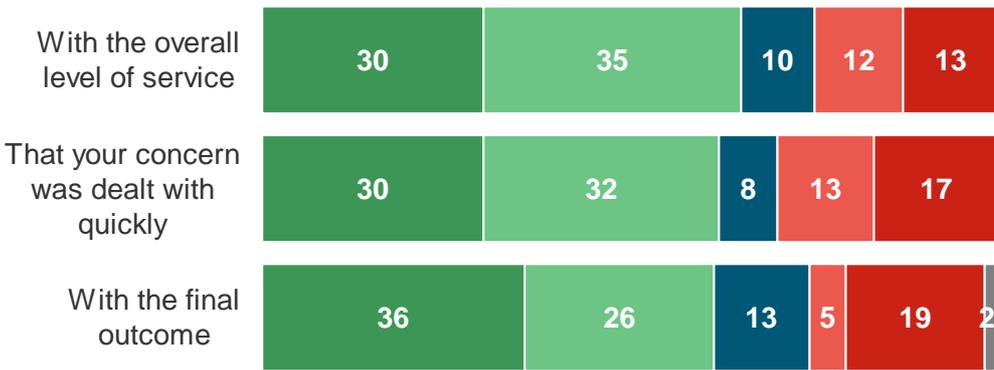
Satisfaction with contact

Over six in ten respondents who have contacted their local council are satisfied with the overall level of service, the speed with which their concern was dealt with, and the final outcome. It is important to note, however, that around one in four are dissatisfied in each case, so there is still potential room for improvement in terms of customer service provided by local councils when residents contact them regarding issues of this nature. There is potential for further interesting research following up on these results, particularly in relation to dissatisfaction with the final outcome. There are no significant differences between subgroups on these questions.

Satisfaction with most recent contact (local council)

Q3a – Thinking about your most recent contact please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you were...?

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



Base: all who have had contact with their local Council – 81

Ipsos MORI

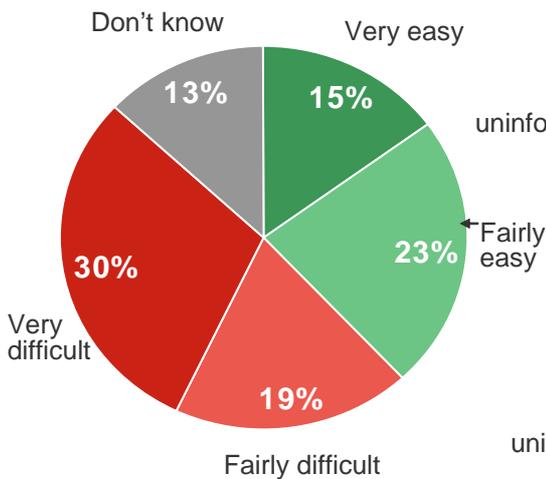


Information given

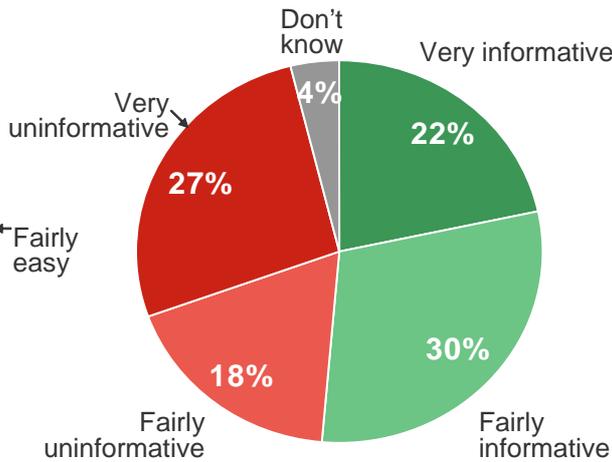
When asked for views on the information they were given when making their contact with the local council, responses are evenly balanced between positive and negative: 38% say that it was easy to understand, while 49% say that it was difficult. Similarly, 52% feel the information given was informative, but a similar proportion (45%) say the opposite. Whilst the base size for this question is low, reducing the statistical significance of differences between the answers, we can still be confident that a sizeable proportion found information difficult to understand or uninformative indicating that there could be scope for improvement in this area. Again there are no significant differences between subgroups on these questions.

Most recent contact with local council – information given

Q3b – Were you given information that was easy to understand? Was it....



Q3c – How informative did you find the staff?



Base: all who have had contact with their local Council – 81
Ipsos MORI

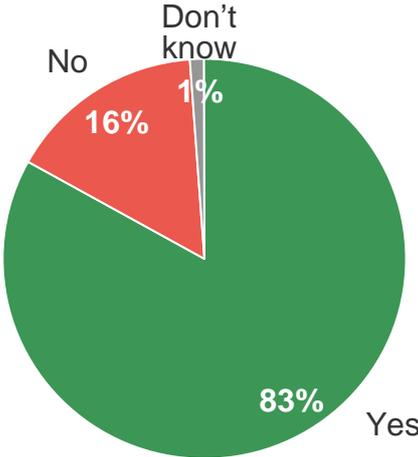


Treating customers fairly

Over eight in ten (83%) feel that they were treated fairly at all times compared with 16% who say they were not.

Treating customers fairly

Q3d - Were you treated fairly at all times?



Base: all who have had contact with their local Council – 81
Ipsos MORI



Contacting the local fire service in relation to rules and regulations

Very few people (just 7%) recall having personally had contact with their local fire service in relation to the fire safety rules and regulations that businesses have to respect. Those living in the West Midlands region (13%) are most likely to have done so. Aside from this, there are no other significant subgroup differences.

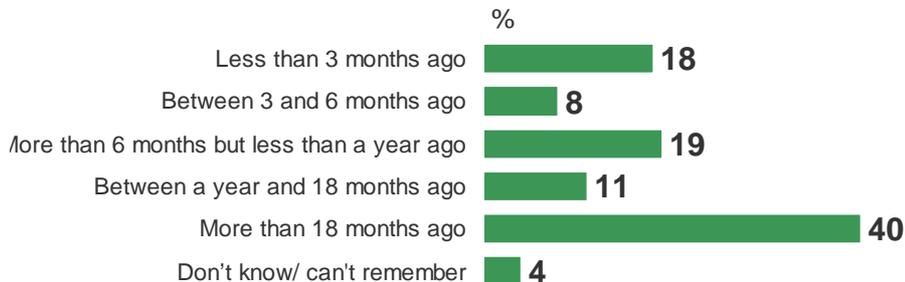
As with contacting local councils, a high proportion (40%) had made this contact more than 18 months ago, although over half had made contact within the last 18 months (56%).⁶

Contact with local fire service

Q4a – Have you had contact in a personal capacity with your local fire service in relation to the fire safety rules and regulations that businesses have to respect? Do not include contact in relation to a fire incident (base: all)



Q4b – When was your most recent contact with the local fire service on an issue of this nature? (base: all who have had contact with their local fire service – 71)



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

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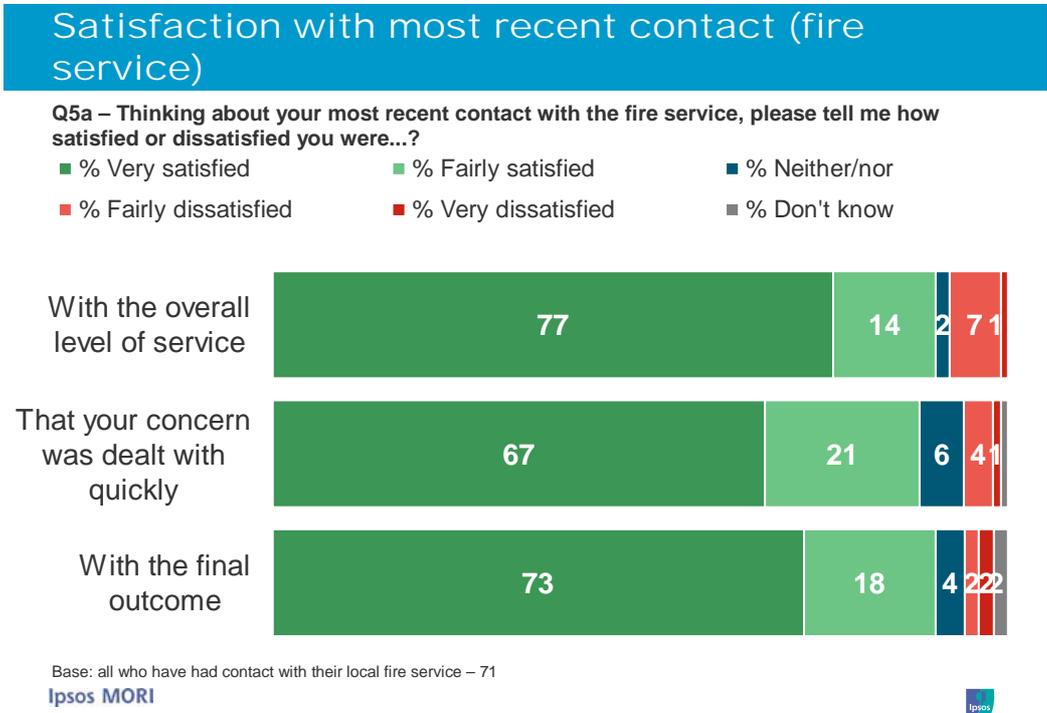


When those who said they had contacted their local fire service in relation to these rules and regulations were asked about their specific reasons for making contact, the majority of respondents (58%) said that they were seeking advice. Just 1% say they were making a complaint.

⁶ As in the previous section, these and subsequent results on those who have made contact with the fire service are based on a small number of respondents (71) and therefore should be treated with caution.

Around nine in ten respondents who have contacted their local fire service are satisfied with the overall level of service, the speed with which their concern was dealt with, and the final outcome. This is a significantly higher level of satisfaction than was shown with the service provided by local councils. There are no significant differences between subgroups in relation to how services provided are rated.

It is important to note that the fire service data should not be considered in direct comparison with that for local councils as their respective roles in terms of enforcement and monitoring of adherence to regulations are different. For example, local councils deal with enforcement in a much wider range of areas than fire and rescue services and the role of local councils in enforcing regulation in these various areas may not always be as immediately apparent to respondents as it is for the fire and rescue service.



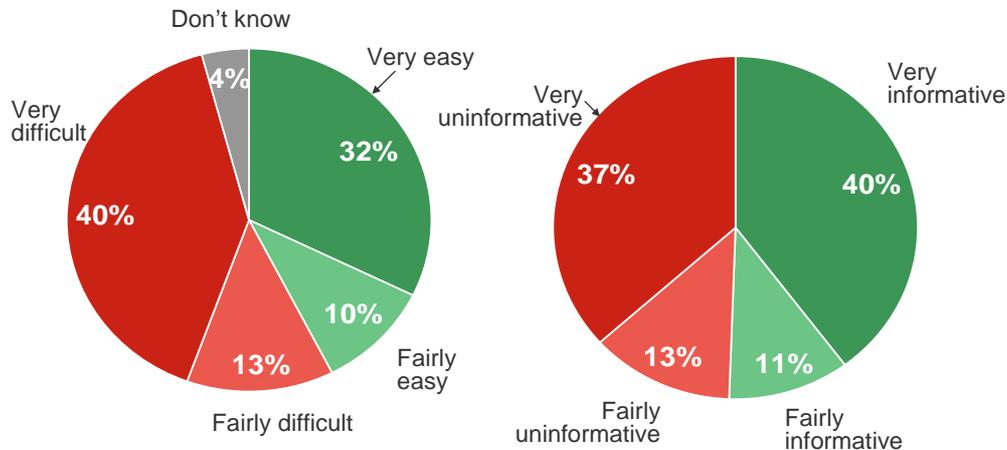
Information given when contacting fire service

In contrast, when asked about views on the information they were given when making their contact with the local fire service, the findings are similar to those in relation to local councils. Forty-two per cent say that the information they received was easy to understand, while 53% say that it was difficult. Similarly, 50% feel the information given was not informative, compared to the equivalent proportion for local councils of 45%. As is the case for local councils, and bearing in mind the low base size, there could be scope for targeted improvements here.

Most recent contact with fire service – information given

Q3b – Were you given information that was easy to understand? Was it....

Q3c – How informative did you find the staff?



Base: all who have had contact with their local fire service – 71
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Almost all respondents (94%) say they were treated fairly at all times when they were in contact with their local fire service.

Confidence and satisfaction in general

Meeting objectives

When asked about the extent to which people feel confident that their local council and fire service are achieving various objectives concerning the enforcement of rules and regulations, respondents are consistently positive. It is important to note that all respondents were asked these questions irrespective of whether they had contact with the services. One of the aims of the survey was to better understand how confident and satisfied consumers and citizens are with the services in general, bearing in mind that they still derive a benefit from them even if they have not directly used them. For each objective tested, over half of respondents say that they feel very or fairly confident in their local council or fire service. Particularly well-thought of areas of enforcement are:

- Ensuring fire safety arrangements are in place in public buildings;
- Maintaining standards of food safety and hygiene;
- Consumer protection; and
- Health and safety in workplaces.

Areas where confidence is lower are the prevention of unlicensed activities about which almost three in ten (29%) are not confident; protecting the local environment from waste or pollution (23% not confident) and maintaining minimum standards for rented accommodation (21% not confident). It is worth noting that the proportion giving a 'don't know' answer regarding confidence in maintaining standards of rented accommodation is relatively high, which inevitably lead to lower confidence ratings.

Meeting objectives for enforcement of rules and regulations

Q6 – How confident are you that the enforcement of rules and regulations by your local Council and fire service achieves the following objectives:



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

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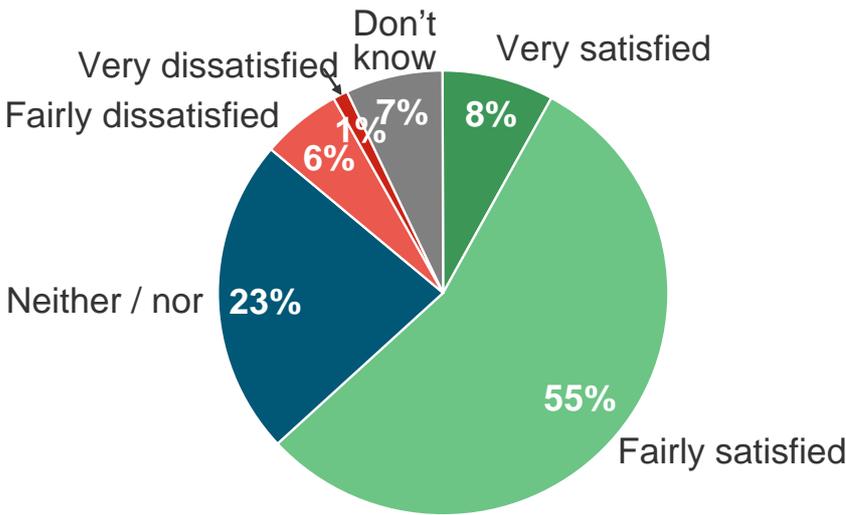
Confidence in the various areas of enforcement does not vary greatly across most groups with the notable exception of geographical area where respondents in the North West of England are consistently more likely to say they are confident that the objectives have been achieved. The exceptions to this are adequate consumer protection and ensuring fire safety (where residents of the North East are most confident).

Overall satisfaction with the way regulations are enforced

Over half (63%) are satisfied, overall, with the way that their local council regulates businesses to protect consumers, workers and the environment. Only 7% say they are dissatisfied and the same proportion are unable to provide an answer. Results do not differ significantly across subgroups. Again, all respondents were asked this question, irrespective of whether or not they had contacted their local council regarding a regulation issue. There were no significant differences in satisfaction levels between those who have had direct contact and those who have not.

Satisfaction with local council regulation

Q7 - On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your local council regulates businesses to protect consumers, workers and the environment?



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

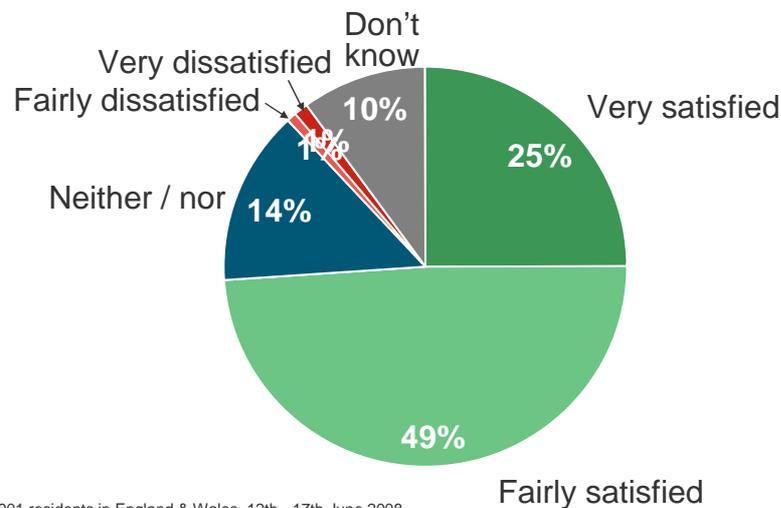
Ipsos MORI



Overall satisfaction with the way local fire services regulate businesses to ensure minimisation of fire risks is even higher than with local councils and stands at 74% (including a quarter who are very satisfied). Only 2% express dissatisfaction, and one in ten cannot provide an answer to this question. No significant difference is seen between those that have had contact and those that have not.

Satisfaction with local fire service regulation

Q8 - On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your local fire service regulates businesses to ensure the risks from fires are minimised?



Base: 901 residents in England & Wales, 12th - 17th June 2008

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It is possible to draw on other surveys of people's views of local council services in order to give these findings some context. Local authority regulatory services and fire services (in their regulatory role as looked at here) compare favourably with satisfaction with local authorities as a whole (53% say they are satisfied with their council's overall performance in the 2006-07 round of BVPI surveys as compared to our findings of 74% for fire services in their regulatory role and 63% for local authority regulatory services). However, some specific local council services fare better than local authority regulatory services – for example, 80% of people are satisfied with their council's local tip or recycling centre, and 73% with recycling collections when asked in the last round of BVPI surveys⁷.

⁷ CLG Best Value Performance Indicator surveys. These are surveys that each English local authority is required to carry out to measure residents' views of their local council. These figures are from the 2006/07 round of surveys. http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Performance/Downloads/Full_2006_07_BV_General_Survey_Data2.xls

Appendices

Appendix A – Methodology for the Consumer Survey

Ipsos MORI interviewed 901 members of the general public within England and Wales aged 16+ between 12 and 17 June 2008. The interviews took around 5 minutes and were conducted using our Public Affairs Monitor (face to face, CAPI omnibus).

Pilot stage

There was concern that many of the general public would not be able to answer some of the postulated questions due to either a lack of contact with the services mentioned or confusion over the language used.

Four questions were chosen to be tested on a prior wave of the face to face omnibus, between 9 and 15 May 2008 with 278 members of the general public being interviewed. This pilot was very valuable and enabled significant changes to be made to the final questionnaire

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed in collaboration with LBRO and incorporated questions to enable comparison with BERR's Trading Standards National Performance Framework figures. During the design of the questionnaire, LBRO consulted with representatives from local authority regulatory services in England and Wales (a cross section of environmental health and trading standards departments), the Chief Fire Officers Association, the Better Regulation Executive in BERR, CLG, Audit Commission, the Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services, National Consumer Council, Wales Consumer Council, Confederation of British Industry, Federation of Small Businesses, British Chambers of Commerce and the British Retail Consortium⁸.

Sample

The questions were placed on Ipsos MORI's Omnibus. A representative quota sample of 901 adults aged 16 and over was interviewed throughout England & Wales in 185 constituency-based sampling points. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes, using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) between 12 and 17 June 2008.

The data have been weighted by gender, age, region (Government Office Region), and social class, to reflect the known population profile of England & Wales. As can be seen

⁸ The same consultation was done on the business survey questionnaire, the results of which are available in a separate volume.

on page 39 the unweighted and weighted data on demographics match closely so the weights applied were small. Hence, the design effect, and consequently the impact on sample efficiency, is minimal.

Statistical Reliability

The respondents to this survey are only samples of the total ‘populations’ of Great Britain. 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’.

Overall statistical reliability			
<i>Size of sample on which survey result is based</i>	<i>Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels</i>		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	<i>±</i>	<i>±</i>	<i>±</i>
100	5.9	9.0	9.8
200	4.2	6.4	6.9
500	2.6	4.0	4.4
901	2.0	3.0	3.3
1,000	1.9	2.8	3.1

Source: Ipsos MORI

For example, with a sample of 901, 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. At the 95% confidence interval, the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below:

Statistical reliability between subgroups			
<i>Size of sample on which survey result is based</i>	<i>Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels</i>		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
50 vs. 50	12	18	20
100 vs. 100	8	13	14
100 vs. 250	7	11	12
100 vs. 500	7	10	11
250 vs. 250	5	8	9
250 vs. 500	5	7	8
500 vs. 500	4	6	6
1000 vs. 1000	3	4	4

Source: Ipsos MORI

For example, if 42% of respondents from the London region give a particular answer compared with 58% in the North West, both with sub-samples of around 100, the chances are 95 in 100 times that this 16 percentage point difference is significant (i.e. greater than 14 points), which could not have happened by chance.

Appendix B – Copy of marked up consumer questionnaire

LBRO Consumer Perceptions of Local Authority Regulatory Services England & Wales Representative Topline Results 24 June 2008

This topline shows results for an omnibus survey conducted by Ipsos MORI between 12th and 17th June 2008, among a representative sample of England and Wales adults aged 16+.

Results are based on responses from 901 respondents.

Where percentages do not add up to 100, this is due to computer rounding or that respondents were able to give more than one response.

An asterisk (*) indicates a percentage of less than 0.5% but greater than zero.

Data are weighted to the known profile of England and Wales.

Responses are based on all respondents, unless otherwise stated.

Q1a. **If you had a problem with faulty, unsafe or wrongly described goods or services, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to approach for help?**⁹

	%
The store owner/manager	51
Citizens' Advice Bureau	12
Local Council	10
Trading Standards	5
Consumer Direct	4
Friend/relative	3
Industry ombudsman	2
I'd sort it out myself	5
Don't know	9

Q1aa. **You mention you would go to the Local Council, which part of the Council would you go to?** Base: All those who would approach the Local Council (90)

	%
Trading Standards	67
Housing	8
Environmental Health	4
Planning	1
Other [specify]	8
Don't know	12

Total mentioning Trading Standards at Q1a or Q1aa = 12%

⁹ Please see the computer tables for all responses less than 2% at Q1 (a, b, c and d)

Q1b. **If you came across poor hygiene in a restaurant, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to contact?**

	%
The owner/manager	53
Local Council	24
Environmental Health	4
Citizens' Advice Bureau	3
Consumer Direct	2
Health & Safety/HSE	2
I'd sort it out myself	3
Wouldn't contact anyone	3
Don't know	7

Q1bb. **You mention you would go to the Local Council, which part of the Council would you go to?** Base: All those who would approach the Local Council (215)

	%
Environmental Health	76
Trading Standards	9
Planning	-
Housing	-
Other [specify]	4
Don't know	10

Total mentioning Environmental Health at Q1b or Q1bb = 22%

Q1c. **If you were concerned about fire safety in a public building, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to contact?**

	%
Local Fire Service	33
My boss/manager	19
Local Council	17
Citizens' Advice Bureau	3
Health & Safety/HSE	3
Manager/owner of the building/company	3
Police	2
I'd sort it out myself	2
Wouldn't contact anyone	2
Don't work	3
Don't know	12

Q1cc. **You mention you would go to the Local Council, which part of the Council would you go to?** Base: All those who would approach the Local Council (150)

	%
Environmental Health	27
Trading Standards	9
Planning	7
Housing	5
Other [specify]	10
Don't know	42

Q1d. **If you were concerned about a risk to health and safety at your place of work, who, if anyone, would you be most likely to contact?**

	%
My boss/manager	46
Workplace health and safety officer	26
Local Council	8
Health & Safety/HSE	4
I'd sort it out myself	3
Wouldn't contact anyone	2
Don't know	11

Q1dd. **You mention you would go to the Local Council, which part of the Council would you go to?** Base: All those who would approach the Local Council (67)

	%
Environmental Health	46
Trading Standards	14
Planning	4
Housing	1
Other [specify]	15
Don't know	20

The rules and regulations which protect consumers when they purchase goods and services, for example to ensure that weights and measures are correct or food hygiene standards are met, are mostly enforced by local councils in the UK. There are also rules and regulations about fire safety to ensure that people working in business premises and public buildings are protected from the risk of fire and would be able to safely escape should a fire break out. These are enforced by the local fire service and they do this alongside their traditional fire fighting duties. We are interested to learn about your experiences in dealing with local councils or the local fire service in their roles in relation to rules and regulations.

Q2a. **Have you had any contact in a personal capacity with your local council in relation to these rules and regulations? This does not include contact over planning regulations or social services for example.**

	%
Yes	9
No	90
Don't know	1

Q2b. **When was your most recent contact with the council on an issue of this nature?** Base: All those who have had contact with their local council (81)

	%
Less than 3 months ago	18
Between 3 and 6 months ago	17
More than 6 months but less than a year ago	10
Between a year and 18 months ago	11
More than 18 months ago	45
Don't know/can't remember	-

Q2c. **What was the reason for this contact? Was it...** Base: All those who have had contact with their local council (81)

	%
...seeking advice	36
...making a complaint about a business	30
Health & Safety	5
Vermin problems	3
Fire alarms/systems	3
Dog fouling/dog waste	2
Roads/pavements	2
Others	18 ¹⁰
Can't remember / don't know	1

Q2d. **Which of the broad topics on this card did this most recent contact concern?** Base: All those who have had contact with their local council (81)

	%
Farms	-
Animal health	-
Pollution	9
Fire safety	19
Food hygiene	4
Health and safety	30
Housing	13
Licensing	7
Consumer protection (goods and services / product safety)	8
Other [specify]	6
Don't know/can't remember	4

Q3a. **Thinking about that most recent contact, please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you were....** Base: All those who have had contact with their local council (81)

	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Neither / nor %	Fairly dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %	Don't know %
a With the overall level of service	30	35	10	12	13	-
b That your concern was dealt with quickly	30	32	8	13	17	-
c With the final outcome	36	26	13	5	19	2

Q3b. **Were you given information that was easy to understand? Was it...** Base: All those who have had contact with their local council (81)

	%
Very easy	15
Fairly easy	23
Fairly difficult	19
Very difficult	30
Don't know	13

¹⁰ The reasons given under "other" are very diverse and could not easily be classified into categories. The verbatim responses provided in a separate file provide more detail.

Q3c. **How informative did you find the staff?** Base: All those who have had contact with their local council (81)

	%
Very informative	22
Fairly informative	30
Fairly uninformative	18
Very uninformative	27
Don't know	4

Q3d. **Were you treated fairly at all times?** Base: All those who have had contact with their local council (81)

	%
Yes	83
No	16
Don't know	1

Q4a. **Have you had any contact in a personal capacity with your local fire service in relation to the fire safety rules and regulations that businesses have to respect? Please do not include any contact you've had in relation to a fire incident.**

	%
Yes	7
No	92
Don't know	*

Q4b. **When was your most recent contact with the fire service on an issue of this nature?** Base: All those who have had contact with their local fire service (71)

	%
Less than 3 months ago	18
Between 3 and 6 months ago	8
More than 6 months but less than a year ago	19
Between a year and 18 months ago	11
More than 18 months ago	40
Don't know/can't remember	4

Q4c. **What was the reason for this contact? Was it...** Base: All those who have had contact with their local fire service (71)

	%
Seeking advice	58
Fire safety check	11
Fitting smoke alarms/about fitting smoke alarms	5
Gave a talk at college/university	5
Something else	3
...making a complaint about a business	1
Reporting a fire	1
Other	14 ¹¹
Can't remember / don't know	4

¹¹ The reasons given under "other" are very diverse and could not easily be classified into categories. The verbatim responses provided in a separate file provide more detail.

Q5a. **Thinking about that most recent contact with the fire service, please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you were....** Base: All those who have had contact with their local fire service (71)

	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Neither / nor %	Fairly dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %	Don't know %
a With the overall level of service	77	14	2	7	1	-
b That your concern was dealt with quickly	67	21	6	4	1	1
c With the final outcome	73	18	4	2	2	2

Q5b. **Were you given information that was easy to understand? Was it...** Base: All those who have had contact with their local fire service (71)

	%
Very easy	32
Fairly easy	10
Fairly difficult	13
Very difficult	40
Don't know	4

Q5c. **How informative did you find the staff?** Base: All those who have had contact with their local fire service (71)

	%
Very informative	40
Fairly informative	11
Fairly uninformative	13
Very uninformative	37
Don't know	-

Q5d. **Were you treated fairly at all times?** Base: All those who have had contact with their local fire service (71)

	%
Yes	94
No	3
Don't know	4

Q8. **On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your local fire service regulates businesses to ensure the risks from fires are minimised?**

	%
Very satisfied	25
Fairly satisfied	49
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14
Fairly dissatisfied	1
Very dissatisfied	1
Don't know	10

Q6. **How confident are you that the enforcement of rules and regulations by your local council and fire service achieves the following objectives:**

	Very confident %	Fairly confident %	Not very confident %	Not at all confident %	Don't know %	Net confident
a Provides adequate protection to consumers of goods and services in this local area	13	64	10	2	11	+64
b Maintains standards of food safety and hygiene	13	66	11	2	8	+66
c Maintains minimum standards for rented accommodation	11	46	15	6	22	+36
d Monitors and takes appropriate action against animal diseases	11	47	11	4	28	+43
e Protects the local environment from hazards such as waste or pollution	11	58	18	5	9	+46
f Prevents unlicensed activities, such as selling alcohol without a license	11	48	22	7	12	+29
g Ensures agricultural products such as fertilizers and animal feed are labelled correctly	8	50	10	2	29	+46
h Fosters healthy and safe work places.	14	63	9	1	13	+66
i Ensures public buildings have the correct fire safety arrangements in place to prevent fires from occurring	24	59	6	1	10	+76

Q7. **On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your local council regulates businesses to protect consumers, workers and the environment?**

	%
Very satisfied	8
Fairly satisfied	55
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	23
Fairly dissatisfied	6
Very dissatisfied	1
Don't know	7

Demographics

Government Office Region: Base: all respondents (901)

	Weighted %	Unweighted %
South East	15	15
Eastern	10	11
London	14	13
South West	10	11
West Midlands	10	9
East Midlands	8	7
Yorkshire & Humberside	10	9
North West	13	13
North East	5	5
Wales	5	7

Gender: Base: all respondents (901)

	Weighted %	Unweighted %
Male	50	49
Female	50	51

Age: Base: all respondents (901)

	Weighted %	Unweighted %
16-24	15	14
25-34	16	13
35-44	19	18
45-54	16	16
55-64	15	18
65-74	11	12
75+	10	9

Work Status: Base: all respondents (901)

	Weighted %	Unweighted %
Working full time	45	40
Working part time	11	11
Not working	44	49

Social Grade: Base: all respondents (901)

	Weighted %	Unweighted %
AB	25	22
C1	29	31
C2	21	23
DE	24	25

Ethnicity: Base: all respondents (901)

	Weighted %	Unweighted %
White	90	92
Non-white	9	8