

**GATESHEAD COUNCIL RESIDENTS'  
SURVEY 2005/2006**

**Main Report**

**OCTOBER 2005**

**Prepared For: Gateshead Council**

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## Executive Summary

- The majority of residents in Gateshead are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live and this is reflected across the five Neighbourhood Management Areas and the Pathfinder area. There has been a slightly upward trend since 2002 which is accompanied by a similar downtrend in the number of residents who claim to be dissatisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.
- The highest % of residents who are satisfied with their neighbourhood, live in South Gateshead NMA, whilst the lowest number of satisfied residents are in the Inner West and West NMAs. However, overall, residents across the Borough are more satisfied than dissatisfied with their neighbourhoods as places to live.
- Most people feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood both during the day (93%) and after dark (57%).
- When asked to provide their views of the police and the service they provide in their neighbourhood, residents in 2005 generally register much higher levels of satisfaction, and lower levels of dissatisfaction, than they did in 2000 and 2002.
- However, residents are more dissatisfied than satisfied with the number of police on the beat in their area, particularly in Central and East Gateshead NMAs. The exception is South Gateshead where residents are more satisfied than dissatisfied with the number of police on foot patrol
- But residents also feel less threatened by crime than in previous years.
- A higher % of residents across Gateshead consider the police provide a good value for money service, than those who don't. These figures have changed little since 2002 but still show a continuing upward trend since 1997. People in South Gateshead NMA agree most with the view that the police provide a good value for money service but the residents of the East NMA and the Pathfinder HMR disagree with the overall view.
- More residents agree the police have a good understanding of their local community than disagree. Once again there has been an upward trend since 2002. And once again residents in South Gateshead NMA showed a higher % in agreement with the statement than in the other NMAs. In Inner West NMA, however, almost a quarter of residents **do not** consider the police to have a good understanding of their local community.
- Trust in the police across Gateshead has fallen since 2002, although there are still more residents who trust the police than those who do not. Levels of trust in the Pathfinder area are considerably higher than they are in the West Gateshead NMA

- Most residents believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their neighbourhood. This is particularly strongly felt in South Gateshead and is less strongly felt in West Gateshead. Fewer people in 2005 consider that racial prejudice is more evident today than it was five years ago. Mostly they consider the situation has stayed the same. However, the views of some residents in some areas differ from the overall picture in Gateshead. For example in the Pathfinder area 40% of residents stated that they consider that there is **more** racial prejudice in Britain today than there was five years ago. Opinion in the Central NMA was divided with 26% of residents in the area claiming that there is more prejudice now and 24% saying that levels of prejudice has stayed the same.
- Across the Borough residents value most: friendly neighbours; good access to local transport and good local shops.
- When residents were asked to choose from a list of problems in their neighbourhood it is clear there have been improvements across the Borough in some categories since previous surveys, although there are some less positive messages.
- Where there have been improvements on previous years is in: burglaries/break ins which are now considered less of a problem than in 1997 and 2002; street lighting; stray dogs and mess in the streets is less of a problem; speeding motorists are down by a third; theft from/damage to parked cars is down; theft of cars/joy riding is also down
- There has been an increase in the % of residents across Gateshead who consider the following to be bigger problems in 2005 than was the case in previous surveys though: disturbances from teenagers/youths (this has fluctuated up and down since 1997); teenagers hanging around the streets in groups; racist attacks/racial harassment is now considered a problem by 3% more residents than in previous years
- The two biggest problems identified by residents across the Borough were teenagers hanging around the streets in groups and disturbances from teenagers or youths.
- However, despite the problems highlighted, most residents consider their area has stayed the same over the past five years: fewer residents consider their area has got better or worse since 2002. But of those who did say their neighbourhood had got better they cited nicer neighbours/friendlier people and less crime as the two positive improvements. Of those who said their neighbourhood had got worse the main concern, in every area across Gateshead was rowdy teenagers/kids.
- Once again the majority of residents are satisfied and have a more positive than negative view of their Council. They generally consider they get good value for money; that the Council does a good job of attracting funds for high profile projects and buildings; that they can easily contact the Council when they need to and they generally agree that the Council is clear about what it is trying to achieve. They do not agree that the council is too remote and impersonal but opinion is divided about whether Gateshead Council is out of touch with people in the Borough.

- However, although residents surveyed in 2005 are generally happy with their local authority the % of residents who expressed a positive viewpoint has dropped in every one of the categories provided, to a greater or lesser extent since the last residents' survey in 2002, with the exception of the comment that the Council is too remote and impersonal where figures have stayed the same.
  
- The biggest decline has been in the % of residents surveyed who consider the Council does a good job attracting funding for high profile projects and buildings and with ease of contact with the Council when required.
  
- On a more positive note, residents very clearly consider the Council does its job in:
  - Consulting residents about issues which affect them – in previous years opinion was very divided about whether the Council did a good job with this
  - Listening to residents views - in previous years opinion was very divided about whether the Council did a good job with this
  - Treating residents fairly and without discrimination
  - Providing high quality services
  - Responding to complaints promptly - in previous years opinion was very divided about whether the Council did a good job with this
  - Allowing residents to participate in making decisions - in previous years residents did not agree that the Council did its job with this
  - Providing plenty of information about its services However, there has been a downward trend in the % of residents who consider the Council is doing its job in providing plenty of information about its services in a way that is easy to understand, in comparison to previous years
  - Providing information that is easy to understand
  - Managing its finances well
  
- Despite the positive responses from residents in 2005 in relation to whether they consider the Council to be doing its job, levels of satisfaction with the way Gateshead Council is considered to be running the Borough have declined. This continues a downward trend since 1997. However, this might be explained by an increase in the number of residents who recorded they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied than had been the case in previous years, rather than an increased level of dissatisfaction.
  
- When those who expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough were asked to specify why they were dissatisfied, the reasons were varied and individual. The two reasons that attracted the highest collective responses were:

the Council does not respond and the Council has a poor repair centre but the figures were still quite low.

- Residents were more positive in 2005 than in previous years when asked if they thought the Council was: inefficient; bureaucratic; impersonal; secretive; inflexible; formal; behind the times; too cost conscious; overstaffed; an uncaring employer and understaffed. A smaller % of residents consider that these words apply to Gateshead in 2005 than was the case in 1997 and 2002. There has been an obvious improvement particularly in perceptions of the council being bureaucratic, with only 9% of residents recording this as a word that applies to the Council in 2005, in comparison to 16% of respondents to the 1997 survey.
- In contrast, residents in 2005 also feel the following applies less to Gateshead than in previous years: cares for its staff; friendly; fast moving; innovative; provides good public services; provides good training; is responsive to local residents; is appreciative; has clear goals and is efficient. Some of these responses appear to contradict earlier findings, however.
- There has been a particularly obvious downtrend in residents' views of the Council being efficient. However, this seems to contradict the respondents who consider that the word inefficient is less relevant in 2005.
- Friendly is another word that is considered to be less applicable to Gateshead Council in 2005 than in previous years.
- When asked to what extent they were satisfied with Council services a clear majority of resident's state they are satisfied. However, when the figures for 2005 are compared with those from previous years there is a downtrend in levels of satisfaction with some services. However, these figures should not be taken at face value as the declining levels of satisfaction are not matched by a corresponding rise in levels of dissatisfaction. In 2005 more residents recorded 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', or 'no opinion' than in previous years.
- Also, on a more positive note, levels of satisfaction with the following services have risen (with a corresponding decline in the levels of dissatisfaction): repairs to roads; road gritting/ice clearing; repairs to pavements; keeping pavements/grass clear of dog mess; public car parks; accessibility of recycling; provision of recycling facilities overall; facilities for cyclists to travel safely in Gateshead.
- And in the four new categories included in the 2005 survey, for which no comparative data is available:

53% of residents are satisfied with the choice of housing in Gateshead

3% of residents are satisfied with street cleanliness

64% are satisfied with sports and leisure facilities

64% are satisfied with countryside facilities

- When it comes to using sports and leisure facilities in Gateshead in the last year 59% of residents said neither they nor a family member had used the facilities at all. In Central Gateshead the figure for non usage was 70%. About 25% of residents across the Borough claim to use these facilities at least once per week, with the highest use being in the Pathfinder area.
- In fact, regular exercise is not generally a feature in many residents' lives, with 49% claiming never to take even moderate exercise for 30 minutes. Residents in the Pathfinder area and West Gateshead exercise the least of all areas of the Borough and have the highest % of residents who never take moderate exercise. Just under one quarter of residents admit to taking moderate exercise once or twice per week.
- When asked what the Council's three main policies should be, more residents opted for reducing crime to make Gateshead a safer place to live, ensuring high standards of affordable housing and improving the lives of children and young people. These were the main choices in every area across the Borough, with the exception of residents in the West NMA, who choose improving their local environment/keeping it clean and tidy over ensuring high standards of housing and residents in the Central NMA who chose helping to improve health standards for all over improving the lives of children and young people.
- The top priority for all residents across Gateshead in 2005 is crime reduction.
- When asked how easy it is to access health services in Gateshead, residents record they find it easy to access the GP, dentist, local hospital and mental health services. Most residents registered 'don't know' against ease of access to a chiroprapist
- Nearly three quarters of residents recorded that they do not smoke. The highest % of non smokers is in the East NMA and the highest % of smokers live in the Central and Inner West NMAs.
- Of those who smoke 62% have tried to quit (although 78% of residents in East Gateshead say they have tried to stop smoking).
- The majority of smokers consider that willpower is what has helped/encouraged them to try and stop smoking (54%), along with the encouragement of family and friends (25%). Smokers in Central Gateshead also recorded that factors other than those listed were what helped/encouraged them to try and quit smoking (37%).
- All residents were asked if they had heard of Gateshead and South Tyneside Stop Smoking Service and 75% recorded they had not. More people in South Gateshead were aware of the initiative than anywhere else in the Borough (48%) and those in East



Gateshead were the least aware (84%). This is also the area with the lowest % smokers.

- Another major initiative in Gateshead, GOAL: the exercise referral scheme also has a low awareness rating, with 94% of respondents saying they had never heard of it
- Less than 50% of the Borough's residents use the libraries (43%), with residents in South and West being the lowest users of the library services. Of those who do use the libraries, their main purpose is to access books and information and they are generally aware of, and happy with, library opening times.
- Most residents don't know, or have no opinion about childcare in the Borough and this is particularly the case in the Pathfinder area where 95% of residents recorded 'don't know', or 'no opinion' against this category. Of those who did comment on childcare, however, more were satisfied than dissatisfied, particularly in the South NMA. The same applies to pre-school nurseries, pre-school playgroups and childminders: the majority of residents either didn't know or had no opinion on the availability and ease of access to these services. However, of those who are aware of these services the majority are satisfied, particularly in South Gateshead.
- There has been a decline in the % level of residents who are satisfied with availability and ease of access to the following services: primary schools; secondary schools; community centres; youth clubs; parks and open spaces; swimming pools; sports facilities; libraries; council housing; council house repair and maintenance. However, as with the questions relating to satisfaction with Council services, this apparent decline in levels of satisfaction with the availability/ease of access to services can be explained by an increase in the number of people recording 'don't know', or 'no opinion', rather than an increase in the % levels of dissatisfaction.
- The only increase in % levels of satisfaction was with children's playgrounds and play facilities since 2002 but the % levels of satisfaction with this category in 2005 are still lower than they were in 2000 and in 1997.
- More residents stated they had benefited from parks and open spaces; swimming pools and sports facilities/leisure centre in the past year. This was reflected across all areas in the Borough.
- Of those who use social services in Gateshead (only 5% of residents), the vast majority recorded they were satisfied with the help they receive and the majority considered that they received help quickly after a decision was made to improve social services.

- Most residents have not provided voluntary help/care or assistance for someone not a relative in the past 12 months, and of those who did help there is no clear means of assistance that stands out as being more prevalent than the rest. And only 10% of residents had received any voluntary help/care or assistance from someone not a relative in the past year. Once again the methods of assistance were varied.
  
- Resident's views of Council housing in the Borough are divided. Most people **do not** consider that council estates are a good place to live, or that Council tenants get a good repair service. However, most residents do not consider that council houses are in poor condition; that council tenants are on low income/benefits; that there is a long waiting list for housing, or that rent levels are too high. And 96% would consider renting from the Council. Just over one third of residents didn't know what impression they had of Council housing in the Borough.
  
- Of those residents who rent their property, both from public sector, private sector and Registered Social Landlords:
  - Almost three quarters of them are satisfied with its general condition
  - Most consider it easy to contact their landlord
  - Most consider there are opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services, although this applies primarily to Council residents. Residents of rented properties in Inner West registered a higher % of satisfaction to this question than in the rest of Gateshead
  - Most are satisfied with the speed of response to concerns and problems
  - Most are satisfied with the quality of their repairs
  - Most are satisfied with the speed with which repairs are carried out
  - Most are satisfied with the overall services provided by their landlord
  
- There has been an increase in the % levels of satisfaction with the speed with which problems and concerns are dealt with by the Council. Where satisfaction levels have dropped since previous surveys have been carried out this can once again be explained by an increase in don't know and no opinion responses rather than a rise in dissatisfaction.
  
- When asked directly if there was anything Gateshead Council could do to make the biggest difference to residents' and their families' quality of life the majority of residents stated there was nothing the Council could do, or that they didn't know. In South Gateshead 13% of the areas respondents suggested better play areas but other suggestions were too varied to be meaningful.

- Most residents in 2005 consider the Council keeps them informed about the services and benefits it provides. The figures in 2005 are similar to those in 2002 but show an improvement on figures in 1997 and 2000.
- In 2005 the major sources of information about Gateshead Council and the services provided are: the Council News; local newspapers and family and friends. This is similar to results in previous years.
- Only 1%, or less than 1%, of residents cited the Annual Performance Plan, the Breakthru magazine for young people, the Summary Performance Plan, or the Children's Information Service as sources of Council information. All of these are new categories for 2005.
- The Council's website is used less as a source of information in 2005 than it was in 2002 and very few residents use the facility to make payments or request services. The vast majority of people never use the website and the reasons they give for this are that they do not have computer/internet access, or they don't need to use the facility
- As far as the issues that residents would like more information about, more people in the Borough would like: to know what the Council spends its money on; get more information about who to contact in the Council; planning developments and transport issues. This differs from previous years when the top four issues people wanted more information about were: what the Council spends its money on; services for younger people; planning developments and leisure activities and entertainment.
- As well as existing methods of communication with Gateshead Council, residents would appreciate a 24 hour telephone service; Council offices that open in the evenings and a local office which provides help/advice with queries.
- More people in 2005 are aware they can attend a Council meeting than in 2002 but there are still 50% of residents who were not aware they could attend a Council meeting in Civic Centre
- Fewer people in 2005 have contacted the Council in comparison to 2002 but of those who have contacted the authority more contact was to make a complaint about a service, and to make an enquiry/seek information than was the case in previous years. Considerably fewer people have contacted the Council to use a service than in previous years.
- The most favoured method of contacting the Council was by phone and in person. Generally residents consider that it is easy to contact the right person and that Council staff are helpful. This follows a similar trend to previous years. Most people consider that the Council was able to deal with their problem/query and were, overall, satisfied with the way the matter was dealt with on their most recent contact with the Council.

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- Just under one third of respondents made a complaint to the Council in the past twelve months. This is an increase on previous years. However, more people are satisfied with the way in which their complaint was dealt with in 2005 than was the case in previous years. Two thirds of residents have not made a complaint.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Gateshead Council commissioned **mruk** research in July 2005 to undertake their 2005/06 Residents' Survey. Fieldwork was conducted between 25 July and 15 September 2005 and involved 2920 residents across Gateshead. The data was gathered in such a way as to permit sub analysis of the overall data by the five Neighbourhood Management Areas and the Bridging Newcastle Gateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area. Further sub analysis was also requested by age, gender, ethnic group, housing tenure and socio economic groups. The sample also included boost samples for Jewish and BME residents to ensure the views of these particular groups were more clearly visible than would have been the case from the main sample alone.

This report presents the main findings to emerge from the survey of residents across Gateshead. Where relevant, comparisons have been drawn with the constituent areas and over time.

This is the fifth residents' survey that Gateshead Council has commissioned to seek the views of its residents.

### 1.2 Objectives

The aim of the overall survey is to establish residents' perceptions of the Council and their views on the quality and standard of the services they use in the context of the Government's principles of Best Value. The results of the survey will be used to inform a number of the Council's plans, strategies and reviews, including:

- Children's and Young People's Plan
- Older Persons Strategy
- The Gateshead Partnership Community Strategy
- The Community Cohesion Strategy

The survey has also collected and monitored the Audit commission's performance indicators regarding public satisfaction with Council services and quality of life in the area.

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## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Survey Sample

The survey data was gathered by face to face in-home interviews with a representative sample of residents across Gateshead, plus boost samples for BME and Jewish residents and the Pathfinder (HMR) area, at the Council's request. The main sample of 2000 residents was drawn by working out quotas of the adult population of the Borough based on age, sex, gender, socio-economic group and housing tenure. The main sample was distributed equally between the five NMA areas in order to achieve meaningful comparisons of the survey results between areas against the background of a common degree of statistical accuracy.

The 2001 Census shows that less than 2% of Gateshead's population is made up of ethnic minority residents. The estimation was that the Council's requirement for a sample of 2000 residents would only include circa 30 minority ethnic residents and 50 Jewish residents, so these numbers were boosted to 170 for BME residents and 150 for Jewish residents to ensure their views were clearly visible in the overall data. Although an estimated 20% of the main sample (i.e. 400) would include residents living in the nine Gateshead wards or parts of wards that are found in the Pathfinder HMR area, the Council also requested a boost sample of an additional 600 residents in the Pathfinder area to ensure their views were clearly available for evaluation, monitoring and reporting purposes. As a result the overall survey sample size was 2920 residents.

Once the sample size and complexion was drawn up a set of sampling point addresses was calculated from the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF) to enable interviewers to randomly select residents in a geographic area around these points, from which they could undertake 8 interviews before moving on to the next sampling point. At least five addresses were left between each successful interview. Each interview was completed in accordance with the set of pre determined quotas. Only one person per household took part in each interview. Interviews were conducted during the daytime and in the evenings, including weekends to ensure a spread of both working and non-working respondents.

Interviews lasted 30 minutes on average, based on a structured questionnaire designed by **mruk** research and Gateshead Council.

### 3. Research Findings

#### 3.1 Section One: Residents views of their neighbourhood

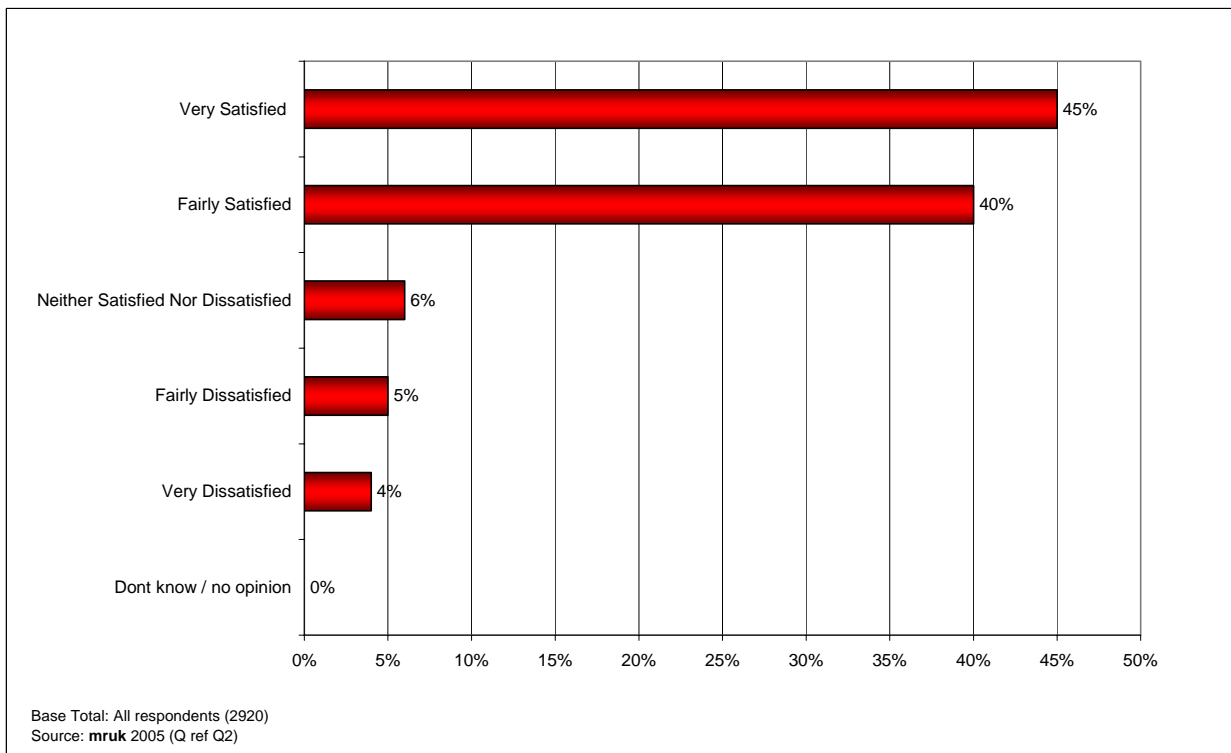
The majority of residents in Gateshead (86%) are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, and this is reflected across the five Neighbourhood Management Areas and the Pathfinder area. There has been a slightly upward trend since 2002 (up 2%) which is accompanied by a similar downtrend in the number of residents who claim to be dissatisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. The highest % of residents who are satisfied with their neighbourhood live in South Gateshead NMA (93% satisfied), whilst the lowest number of satisfied residents are in the Inner West and West NMAs (83% satisfied). The most satisfied residents are over 55 years old (42%) and are particularly in the over 65 category (26%).

When these results were compared with other local authorities Gateshead compared well. For example in Leeds 88% of residents recorded they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

BME residents recorded slightly lower levels of satisfaction with their neighbourhoods as places to live (78% satisfied) but they are still significantly more satisfied than dissatisfied.

A higher % of women than men are satisfied with their neighbourhoods.

**Figure 1: Satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live**

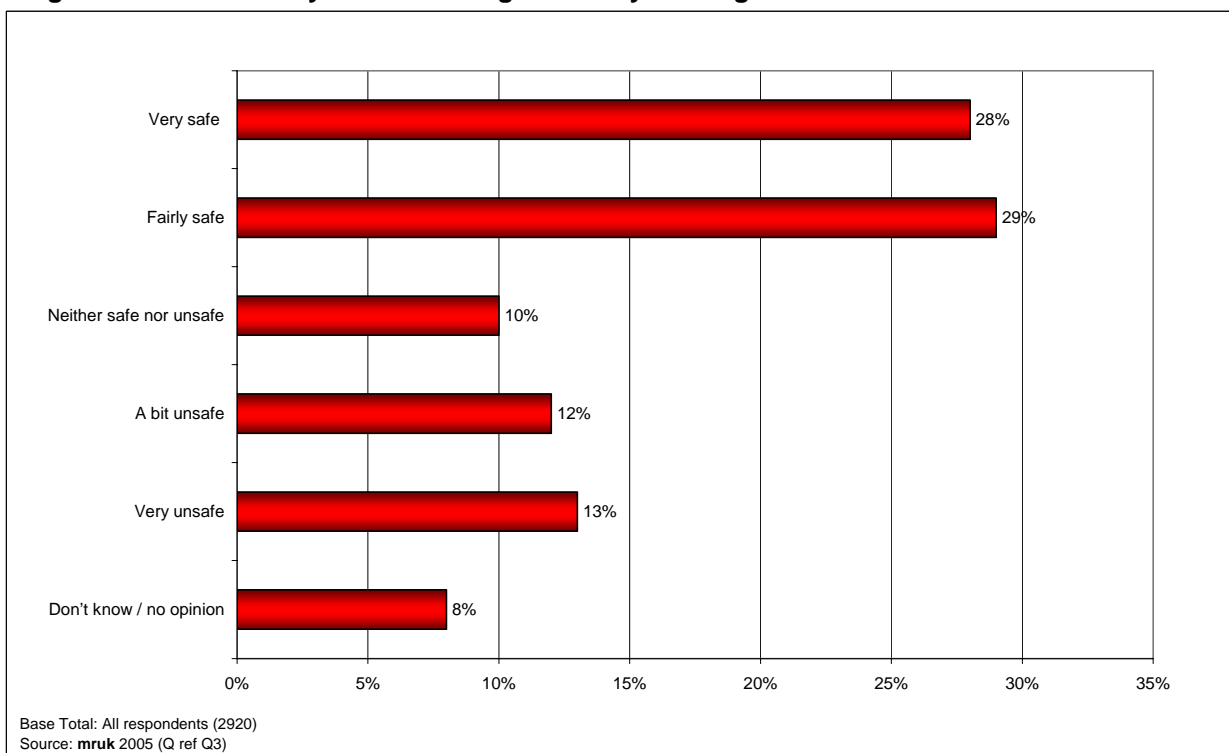


And most people feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood both during the day (93%) and after dark (57%), particularly the over 65s. This compares well once again with other local authority areas. Residents in North Tyneside recorded 93% feeling safe during the day and 52% after dark, which is almost identical to the figures for Gateshead.

The 65+ age group feels the least safe (92% during the day, 47% after dark).

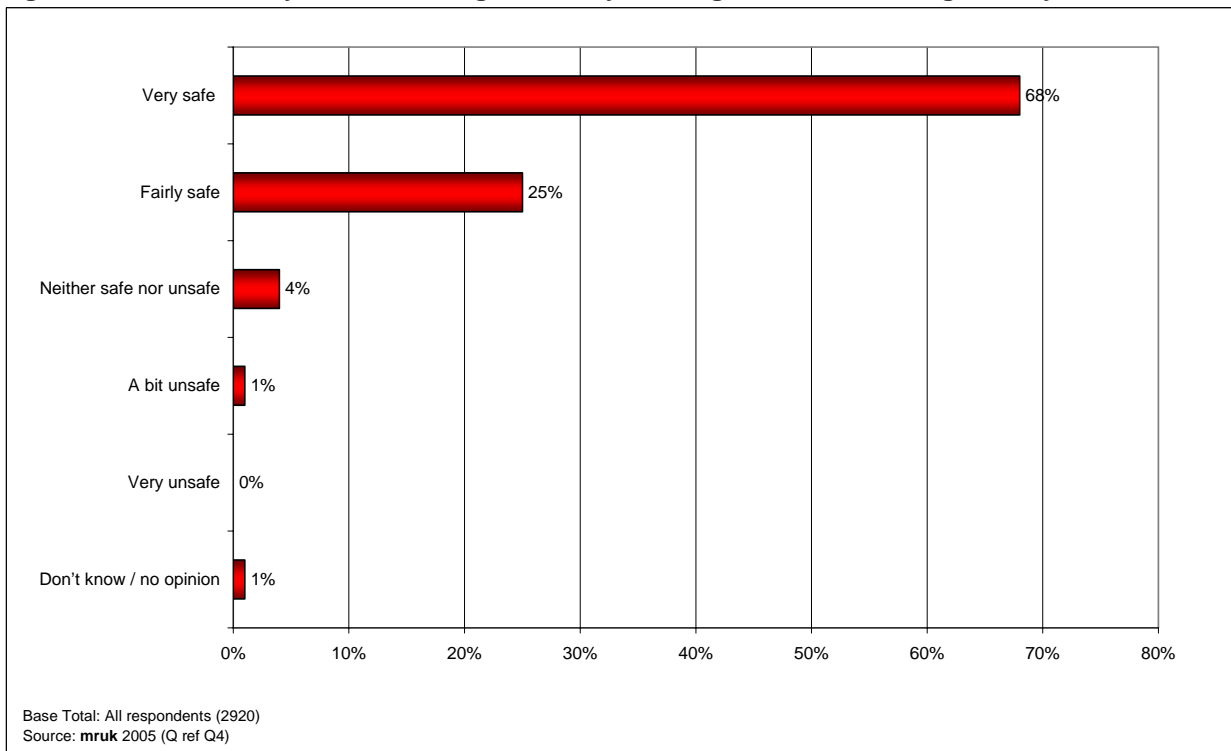
Of the ethnic groups, Jewish residents feel least safe walking alone in their neighbourhood both during the day and after dark.

**Figure 2: How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark?**





**Figure 3: How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood during the day?**

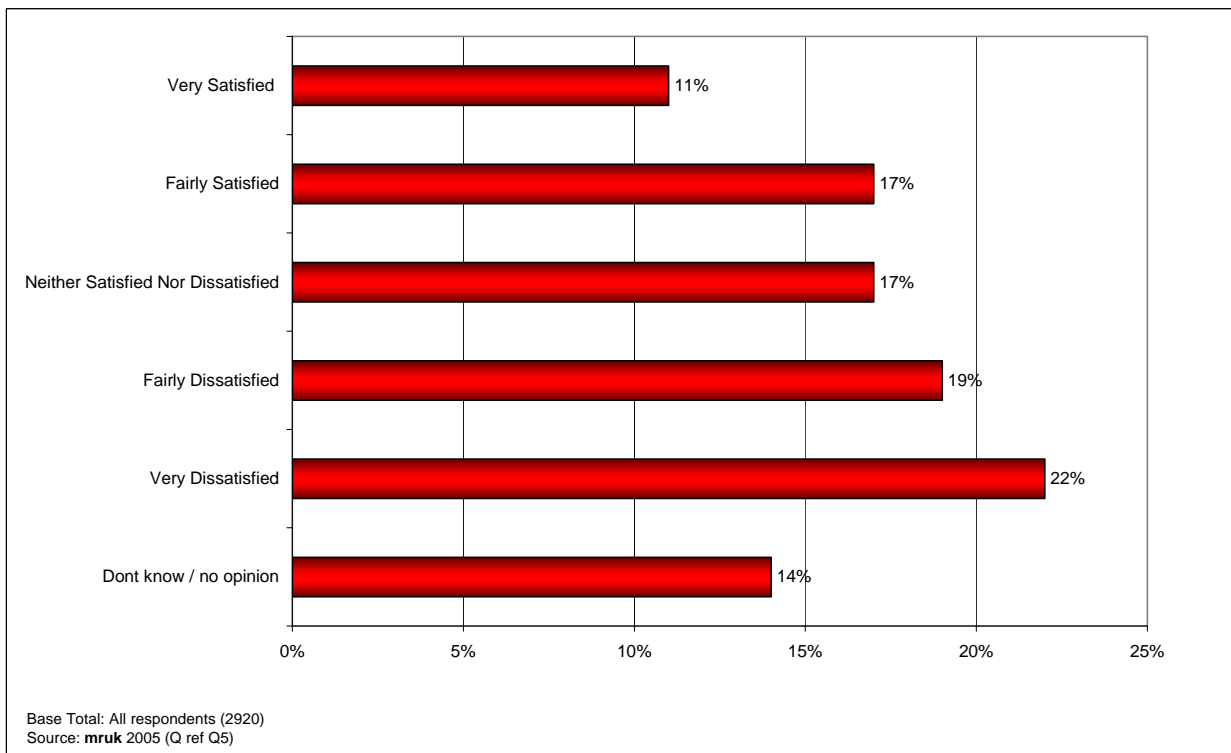


### 3.1.1 Police and Service Provided

When asked to provide their views of the police and the service they provide in their neighbourhood, residents in 2005 generally register much higher levels of satisfaction, and lower levels of dissatisfaction, than they did in 2000 and 2002.

However, they are still more dissatisfied than satisfied with the number of police on the beat in their area, particularly in Central and East Gateshead NMAs. The exception is South Gateshead where residents are more satisfied than dissatisfied with the number of police on foot patrol, as are the BME and Jewish residents.

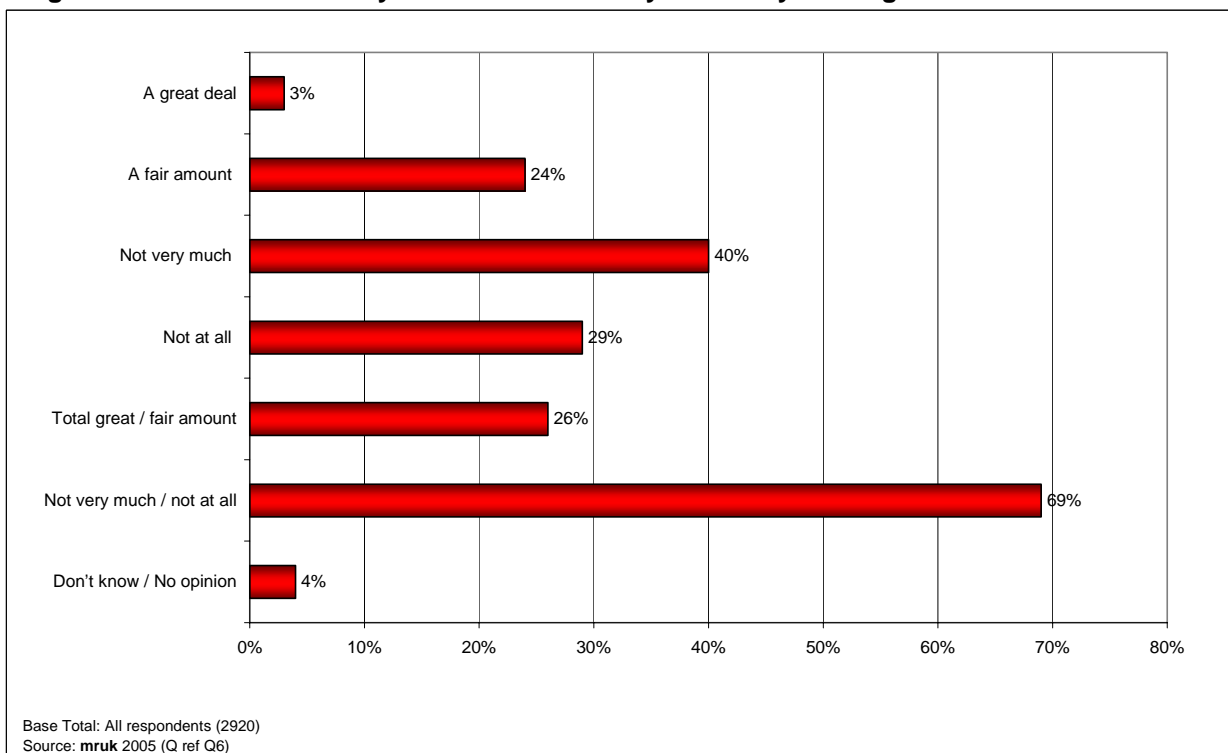
**Figure 4: Satisfaction with the number of police on the beat, that is, foot patrols, in your neighbourhood?**



But residents also feel less threatened by crime than in previous years. Only 26% feel threatened while 69% don't feel threatened much, if at all. In 2000 and 2002 40% of residents recorded feeling threatened by crime and only 15% did not feel threatened. Those who feel most threatened by crime are women, Jewish residents and residents in the 45-64 age range.

However, reduction of crime is still a key priority for residents and not just in Gateshead. The same results were found in North Tyneside, Leeds and Thurrock District where similar questions were asked of residents.

**Figure 5: To what extent do you feel threatened by crime in your neighbourhood?**

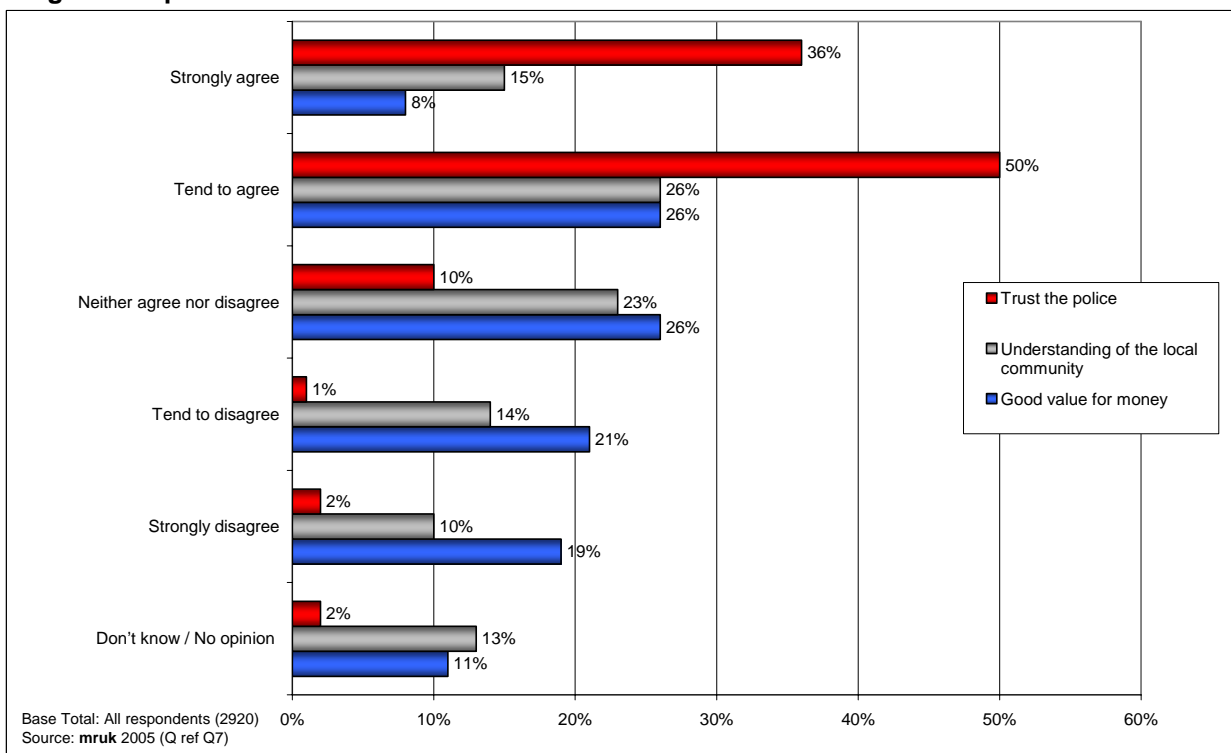


A higher % of residents across Gateshead consider the police provide a good value for money service (37%), than those who don't (27%), particularly among Jewish and BME residents. These figures have changed little since 2002 but still show a continuing upward trend since 1997. People in South Gateshead NMA agreed most with the view that the police provide a good value for money service, as do residents in the 25-44 age range but the residents of the East NMA and the Pathfinder HMR disagreed with the overall view. There was little difference between male and female responses.

More residents agree the police have a good understanding of their local community (43%) than disagree (19%). Once again this represents an upward trend since 2002. And once again residents in South Gateshead NMA showed a higher % in agreement with the statement than in the other NMAs, as did women, Jewish and BME residents and residents in the 25-44 age groups. In Inner West NMA, however, almost a quarter of residents **do not** consider the police to have a good understanding of their local community.

Trust in the police across Gateshead has fallen since 2002 (from 77% in 2002 to 69% in 2005). Levels of trust in the Pathfinder area are considerably higher (86% of residents in that area) and among women, over 65s and Jewish residents than they are in the West Gateshead NMA (46% of residents in that area).

**Figure 6: Opinion of Police in area**

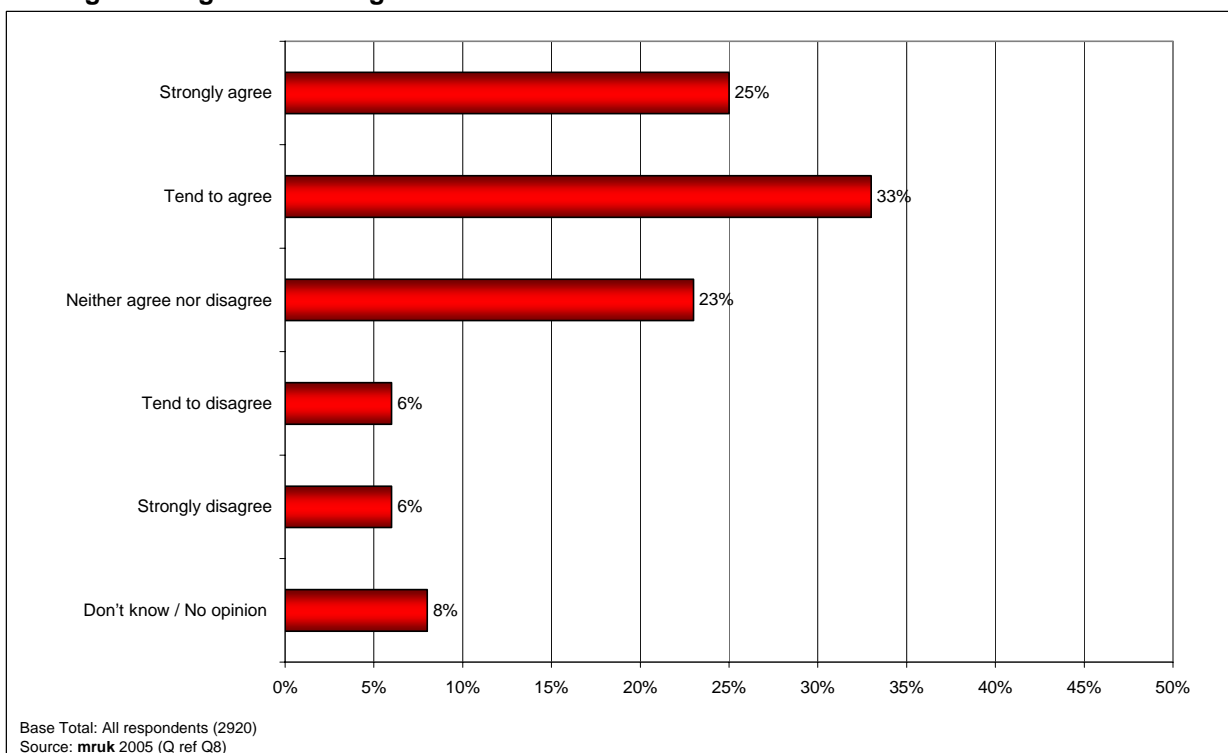


### 3.1.2 Equality

Most people believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their neighbourhood (57% agree, 12% disagree) and this is particularly strongly felt in South Gateshead (74%), among BME residents and the over 65s. This is less strongly felt in West Gateshead (40%) and by Jewish residents.

The Gateshead figures compare well with North Tyneside, where 53% of residents agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their area. However, in Leeds City 88% of residents believe they live in an area where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

**Figure 7: Agree that your neighbourhood is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?**

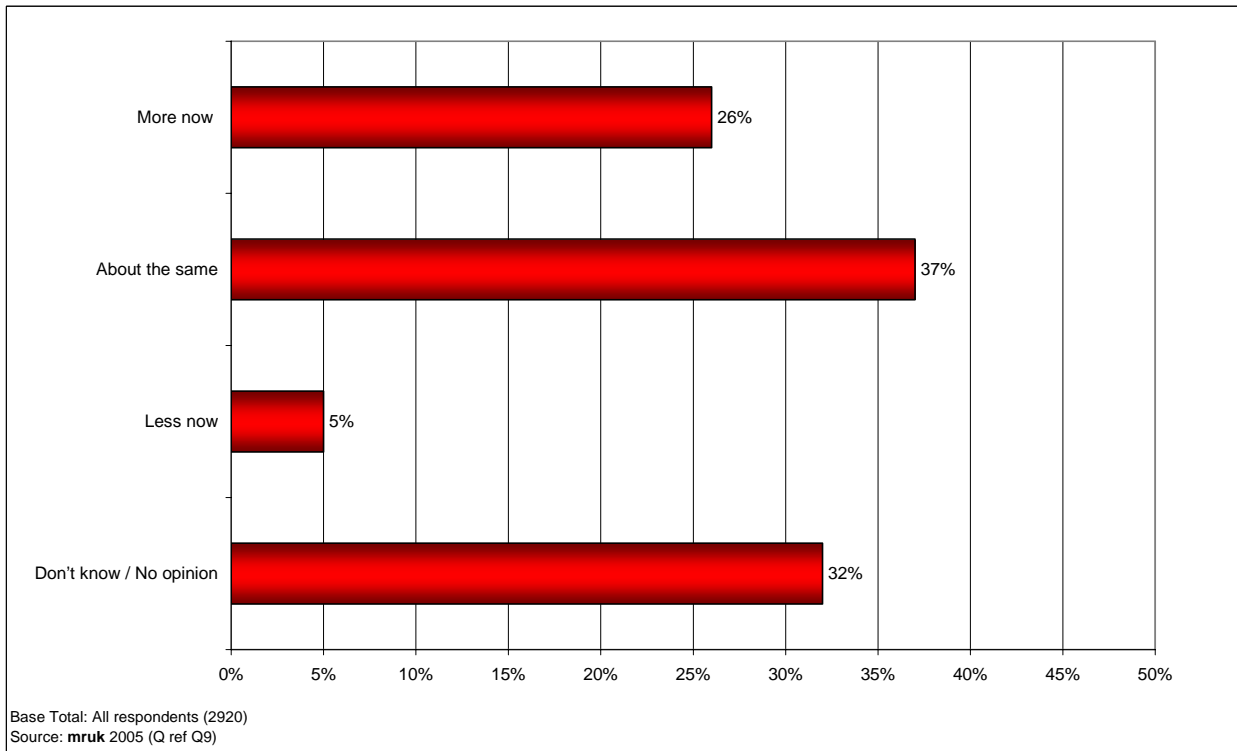


And fewer people in 2005 consider that racial prejudice is more evident than it was five years ago. Mostly, however, residents consider the situation has stayed the same. This compares well with 2002 when the majority of residents surveyed considered there was more racial prejudice in Britain since 1997. Considerably more people registered 'don't know' when asked this question in 2005 (32%) than was the case in 2002 (5%).

However, the views of some residents in some areas differ from the overall picture in Gateshead. For example in the Pathfinder area 40% of residents stated that they consider that there is more racial prejudice today than there was five years ago and the same % of Jewish residents consider the same to be true. Younger people also considered racial prejudice to be more evident now, when compared to the older age ranges. There was little difference in opinion between men and women.

Opinion in the Central NMA was divided with 26% of residents in the area claiming that there is more prejudice now and 24% saying that levels of prejudice has stayed the same.

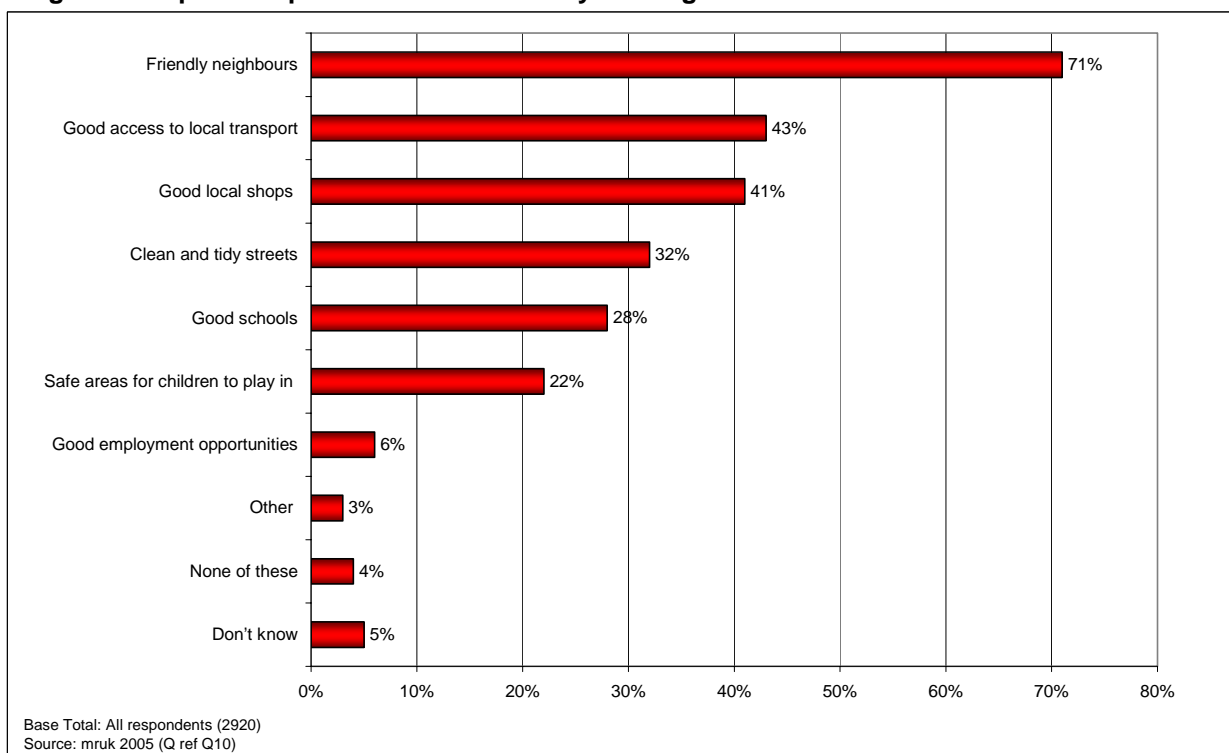
**Figure 8: Do you think there is generally more racial prejudice in Gateshead now than 5 years ago, less, or about the same amount?**



### 3.1.3 Things most valued about neighbourhood

Across the Borough residents value most: friendly neighbours; good access to local transport and good local shops.

**Figure 9: Aspects of particular value within your neighbourhood**

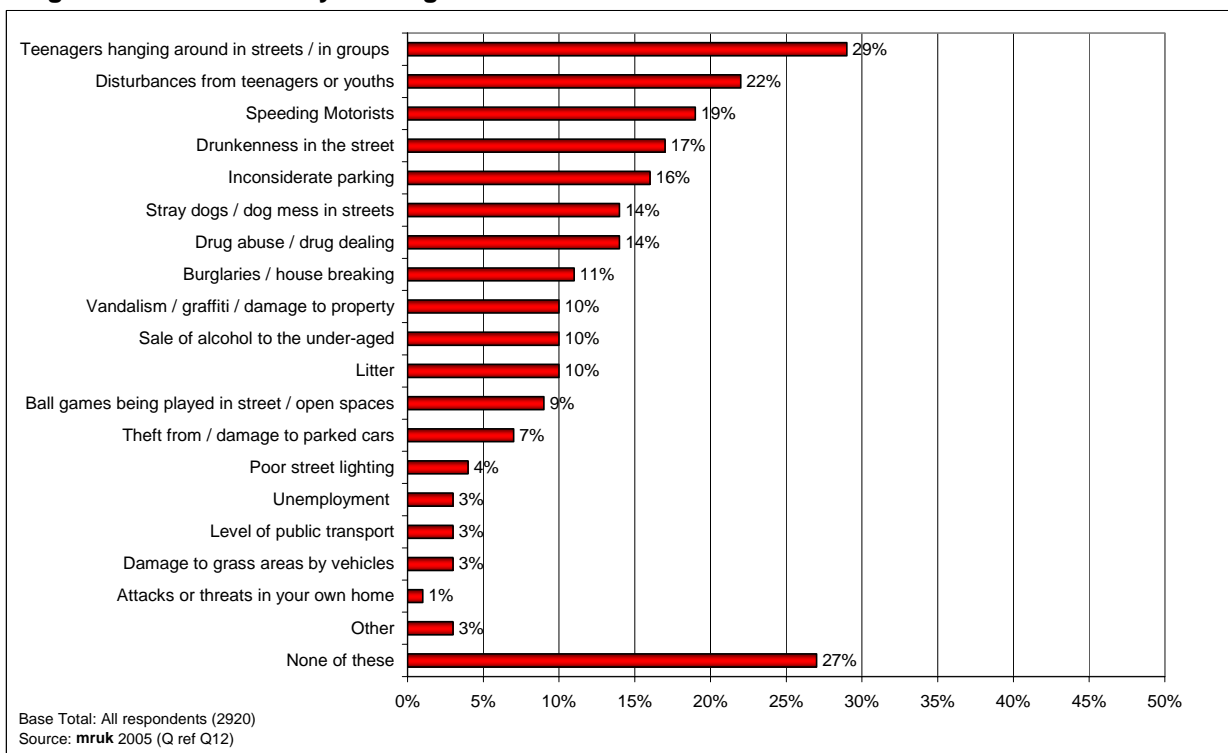


Best Points			
1st		2nd	
Friendly neighbours	57%	Good access to local transport	18%
Good local shops	9%	Good local shops	17%
Good access to local transport	9%	Clean and tidy streets	10%
Biggest Problems			
1st		2nd	
Teenagers hanging around in streets / in groups	11%	Teenagers hanging around in streets / in groups	8%
Speeding Motorists	7%	Disturbances from teenagers or youths	5%
Disturbances from teenagers or youths	7%	Speeding Motorists	5%
Drug abuse / drug dealing	6%		
Inconsiderate parking	6%		
Base: Total respondents (2920)			
Source: mruk 2005 (Q ref: Q11 and q13)			

### 3.1.4 Problems in the neighbourhood

When residents were asked to choose from a list of problems in their neighbourhood it is clear there have been improvements across the Borough in some categories since previous surveys, although there are some less positive messages.

**Figure 10: Problems in your neighbourhood**



Where there have been improvements on previous years is in:

- Burglaries/break ins which are now considered less of a problem than in 1997 and 2002 (Only 11% of residents in 2005 consider this to be a problem; in 2002 the figure was 17% and in 1997 29% of residents considered burglaries and break ins to be a problem)
- Street lighting
- Stray dogs and mess in the streets has dropped by 50% since 2002
- Speeding motorists is down by a third
- Theft from/damage to parked cars is down from 13% in 2002 to 7% in 2005
- Theft of cars/joy riding is also down from 10% to 3% since 2002. In 1997 the figure was 21%



As far as inconsiderate parking; lack of personal safety on public transport and sex attacks are concerned the figures have hardly changed. As far as the latter two problems are concerned the figures are still very low at 2% and 1% respectively.

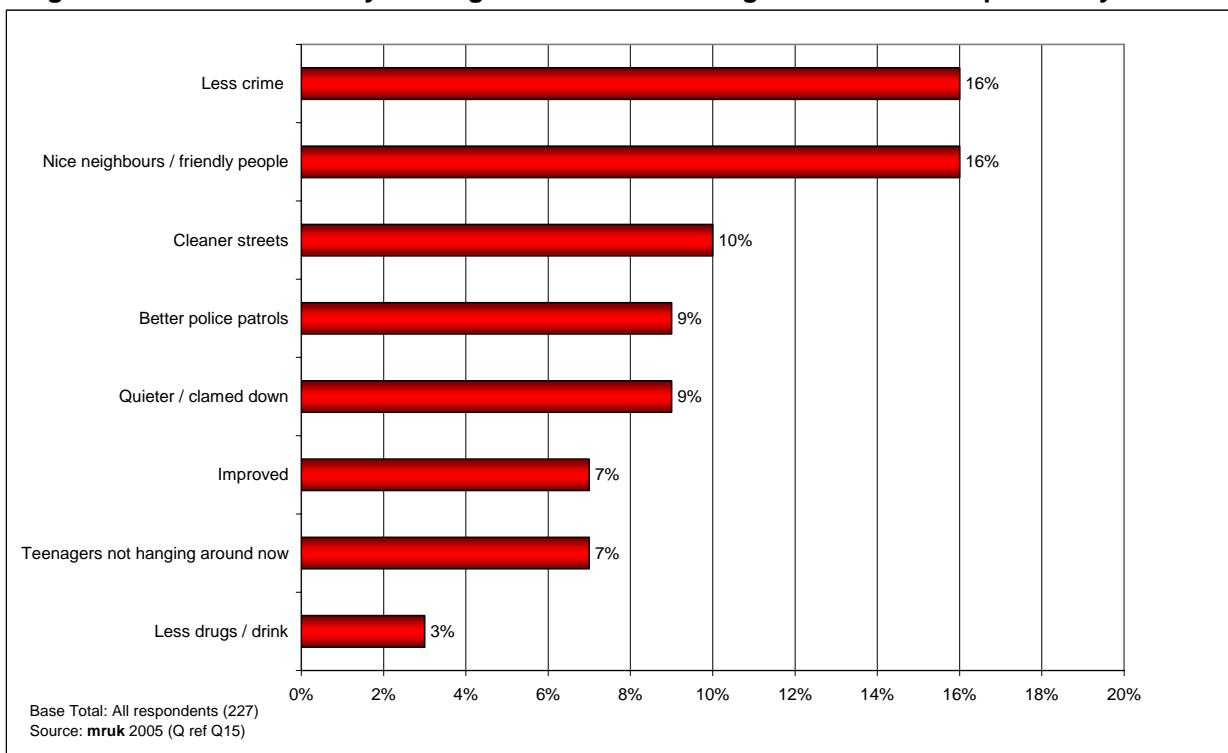
There has been an increase in the % of residents across Gateshead who consider the following to be bigger problems in 2005 than was the case in previous surveys, though:

- Disturbances from teenagers/youths but this has fluctuated up and down since 1997
- Teenagers hanging around the streets in groups, although there is only a 1% difference since 2002, the figures are still down on 1997
- Racist attacks/racial harassment is now considered a problem by 3% more residents in 2005 than in previous years, primarily among the Jewish community

The two biggest problems identified by residents across the Borough were ‘not represented on the list of options’, and ‘teenagers hanging around the streets in groups’.

However, despite the problems highlighted most residents surveyed consider their area has stayed the same over the past two years (74%): fewer residents consider their area has got better or worse since 2002. But of those who did say their neighbourhood had got better they cited nicer neighbours/friendlier people and less crime as the two positive improvements. BME residents recorded the highest % agreement that their neighbourhood had got better. Of those who said their neighbourhood had got worse the main concern, in every area across Gateshead was rowdy teenagers/kids. Although Jewish residents cited racism and racist attacks as having got worse over the past two years.

**Figure 11: What is it about your neighbourhood that has got better over the past two years?**



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The factors that relate to whether residents consider their area has improved or got worse differs from Council area to Council area but generally residents across the local authority areas compared for the purposes of this report consider their area has stayed the same/has not changed much over the past three years.

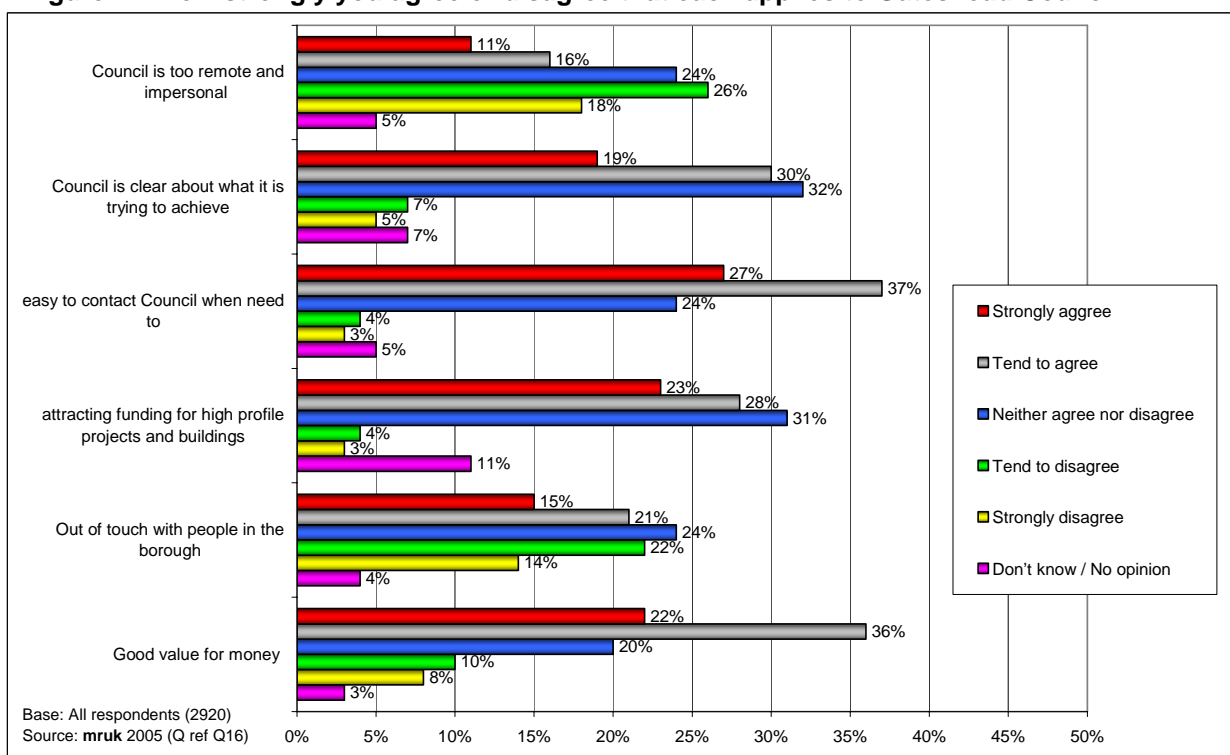
Problems with teenagers hanging around the streets/in groups features as a problem in most neighbourhoods.

## 3.2 Section Two: Residents views of Gateshead Council

### 3.2.1 Statements that apply to Gateshead Council

Once again the majority of residents are satisfied and have a more positive than negative view of their Council. They generally consider they get good value for money; that the Council does a good job of attracting funds for high profile projects and buildings; that they can easily contact the Council when they need to and they generally agree that the Council is clear about what it is trying to achieve. They do not agree that the council is too remote and impersonal but opinion is divided about whether Gateshead Council is out of touch with people in the Borough. The Jewish and BME residents recorded a higher % agreement that the Council is out of touch with people in the Borough.

**Figure 12: How strongly you agree or disagree that each applies to Gateshead Council**



However, although residents surveyed in 2005 are generally happy with their local authority the % of residents who expressed a positive viewpoint has dropped in every one of the categories provided, to a greater or lesser extent since the last residents' survey in 2002, with the exception of the comment that the Council is too remote and impersonal where figures have stayed the same. BME and Jewish residents are more positive in most categories than other residents in the Borough.

If the Gateshead findings are compared with other local authorities, for example Leeds City and North Tyneside, Gateshead residents record a lower level of satisfaction with the way their Council runs things. Residents in North Tyneside and Leeds recorded satisfaction levels of 73% and 77% respectively which compares with 59% in Gateshead.

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The biggest decline has been in the % of residents surveyed who consider the Council does a good job attracting funding for high profile projects and buildings (fallen from 70% in 2002 to 52% in 2005); the ease of contact with the Council when required (fallen from 79% in 2002 to 64% in 2005).

### 3.2.2 Does the Council do its job?

On a more positive note, residents very clearly consider the Council does its job in:

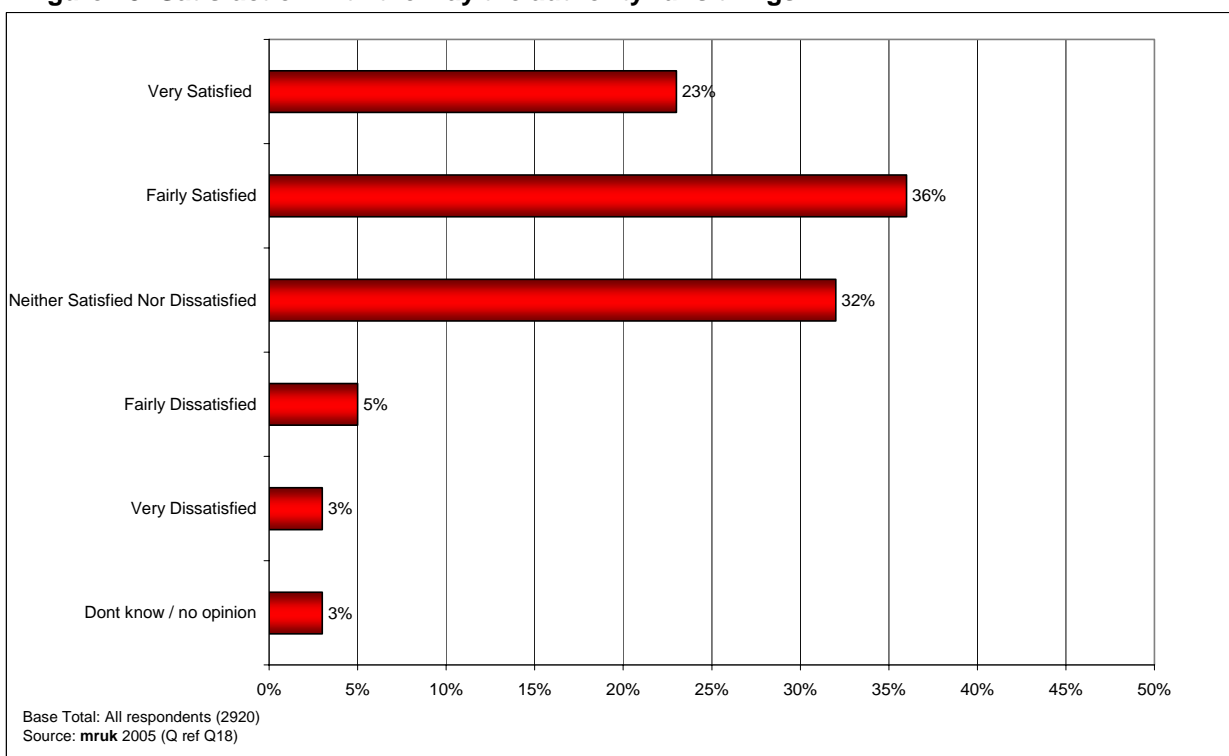
- Consulting residents about issues which affect them – in previous years opinion was very divided about whether the Council did a good job with this
- Listening to residents views - in previous years opinion was very divided about whether the Council did a good job with this
- Treating residents fairly and without discrimination
- Providing high quality services
- Responding to complaints promptly - in previous years opinion was very divided about whether the Council did a good job with this
- Allowing residents to participate in making decisions - in previous years residents did not agree that the Council did its job with this
- Providing plenty of information about its services
- Providing information that is easy to understand – BME groups recorded a lower level of approval than other residents to this option
- Managing its finances well

However, there has been a downward trend in the % of residents who consider the Council is doing its job in providing plenty of information about its services in a way that is easy to understand. In 2002, 77% of residents considered the Council provided plenty of information and 77% of them considered the information was easy to understand. These figures were slightly up on the 2000 figures. But in 2005 only 68% of residents believed the Council provides plenty of information and only 69% of them consider it to be easy to understand.

### 3.2.3 Satisfaction with the way the Council runs the Borough

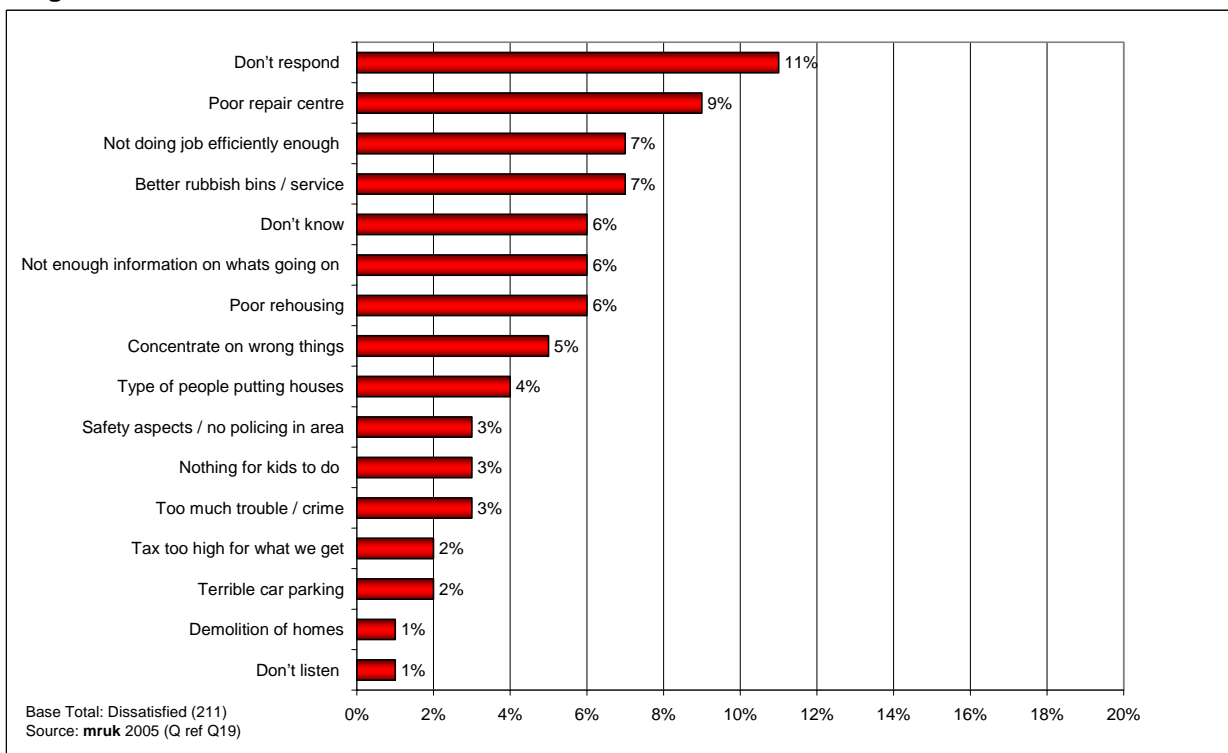
Despite the positive responses from residents in 2005 in relation to whether they consider the Council to be doing its job, levels of satisfaction with the way Gateshead Council is considered to be running the Borough have declined. This continues the downward trend since 1997 when 73% of residents said they were satisfied with the way in which the Council was running the Borough. In 2005 this figure has dropped to 59% (the exception was in South Gateshead NMA where residents there registered 81% satisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough). However, this might be explained by an increase in the number of residents who recorded they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied than had been the case in previous years.

**Figure 13: Satisfaction with the way the authority runs things?**



When those who expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough were asked to specify why they were dissatisfied, the reasons were varied and individual. The two reasons that attracted the highest collective response were: the Council does not respond (11% of those dissatisfied) and the Council has a poor repair centre (9% of those who were dissatisfied).

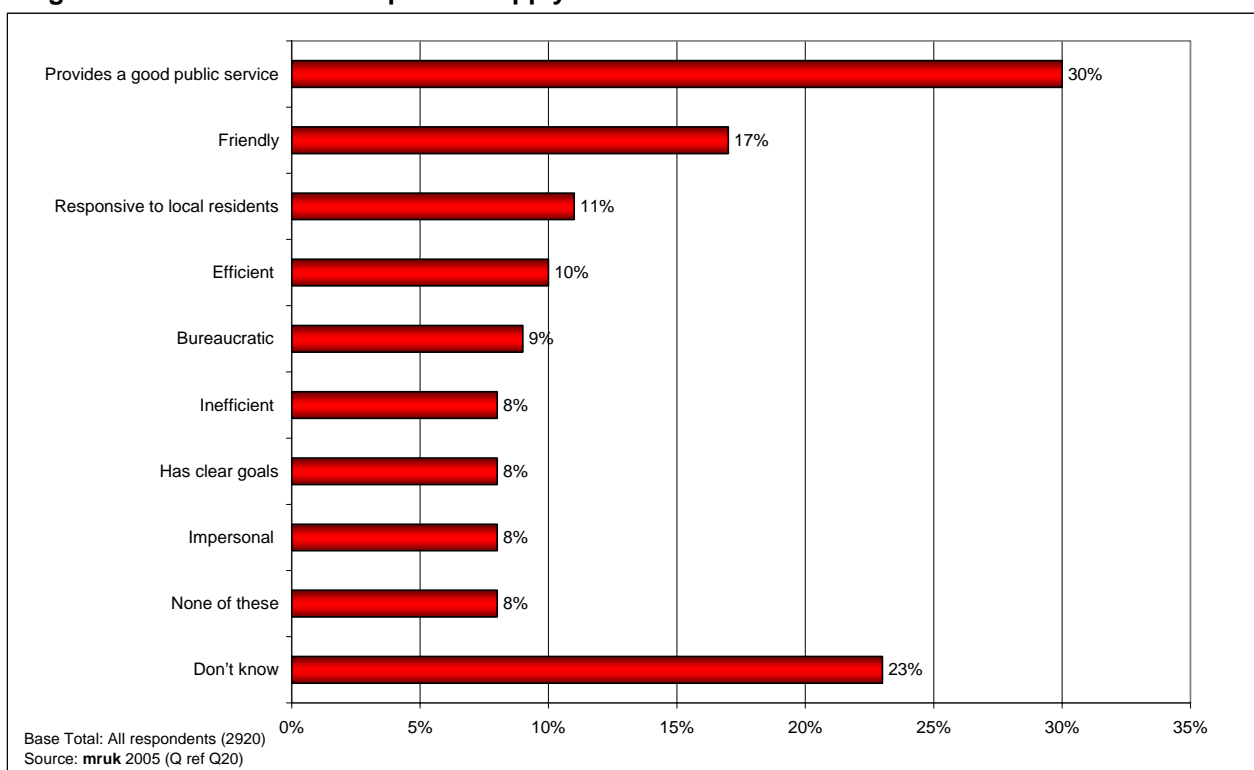
**Figure 14: Reasons for dissatisfaction**



### 3.2.4 Words and phrases that apply to Gateshead Council

Residents were more positive in 2005 than in previous years when asked if they thought the Council was: inefficient; bureaucratic; impersonal; secretive; inflexible; formal; behind the times; too cost conscious; overstaffed; an uncaring employer and understaffed. A smaller % of residents consider that these words apply to Gateshead than in 1997 and 2002. There has been an obvious improvement particularly in perceptions of the council being bureaucratic, with only 9% of residents recording this as a word that applies to the Council in 2005, in comparison to 16% of respondents to the 1997 survey.

**Figure 15: Which words and phrases apply to the Council?**



In contrast, residents in 2005 also feel the following applies less to Gateshead than in previous years: cares for its staff; friendly; fast moving; innovative; provides good public services; provides good training; is responsive to local residents; is appreciative; has clear goals and is efficient. Some of these responses appear to contradict earlier findings.

There has been a particularly obvious downtrend in residents' views of the Council being efficient, except among the Jewish community. In 1997 23% of residents considered the Council to be efficient, which dropped to 14% in 2002 and to 10% in 2005. However, this seems to contradict the respondents who consider that the word inefficient is less relevant in 2005.

Friendly is another word that is considered to be less applicable to Gateshead Council in 2005 (17%), than in 2002 (32%) and 1997 (24%), although Jewish and BME residents

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consider the Council to be friendlier than other residents in the Borough. They also consider the Council to be more formal than other residents.



### 3.3 Section Three: Policies and Services

#### 3.3.1 Satisfaction with Council services

When asked to what extent they were satisfied with Council services a clear majority of resident's state they are satisfied. However, when the figures for 2005 are compared with those from previous years there is a downtrend in levels of satisfaction with some services, particularly:

- Street lighting - a gradual decline since 2000. Fewer Jewish residents are satisfied with street lighting.
- Street sweeping – satisfaction levels down on 2002
- Using road humps as traffic calming – gradual decline since 2000, although BME residents are satisfied with these measures
- Maintenance of flower beds and grass cutting – satisfaction levels down on 2002
- Providing/maintaining cemeteries/crematoria - satisfaction levels declined since 2000
- Monitoring and controlling pollution – gradual decline since 2000, although the BME residents recorded a high level of satisfaction with this service
- Public conveniences – gradual decline although once again the BME residents expressed a higher level of satisfaction with these than other residents
- Reliability of waste collection – gradual slow decline since 2000 with levels of dissatisfaction higher among BME residents
- Collection of bulky household waste – down on 2002
- Making sure food and goods sold are safe – down considerably since 2002, although BME residents are satisfied with this service
- Clarity of signs to help pedestrians and car drivers – down considerably since 2002
- Number of litter bins in Gateshead – slight decline in satisfaction levels, particularly among Jewish residents
- Council run events – considerably down on 2002 – BME residents were dissatisfied with this service
- The arts in Gateshead – considerably down on 2002, with BME residents recording the highest level of dissatisfaction

However, these figures should not be taken at face value as the declining levels of satisfaction are not matched by a corresponding rise in levels of dissatisfaction. In 2005 more residents recorded 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', or 'no opinion' than in previous years.

Also, on a more positive note, levels of satisfaction with the following services have risen (with a corresponding decline in the levels of dissatisfaction):

- Repairs to roads
- Road gritting/ice clearing
- Repairs to pavements – levels of satisfaction have risen from 48% in 2002 to 60% in 2005
- Keeping pavements/grass clear of dog mess – satisfaction levels up by 10% since 2002
- Public car parks
- Accessibility of recycling facilities – up to 79% from 57% in 2002
- Provision of recycling facilities overall – up to 78% from 55% in 2002
- Facilities for cyclists to travel safely in Gateshead – up to 45% from 32% in 2002 - although Jewish residents recorded a lower level of satisfaction for this service

The services where levels of satisfaction have not changed are:

- Controlling stray dogs – although BME groups are more dissatisfied than other residents in the Borough
- Waste collection service overall – except among BME residents who registered higher levels of dissatisfaction than other residents in Gateshead

And in the four new categories included in the 2005 survey, for which no comparative data is available:

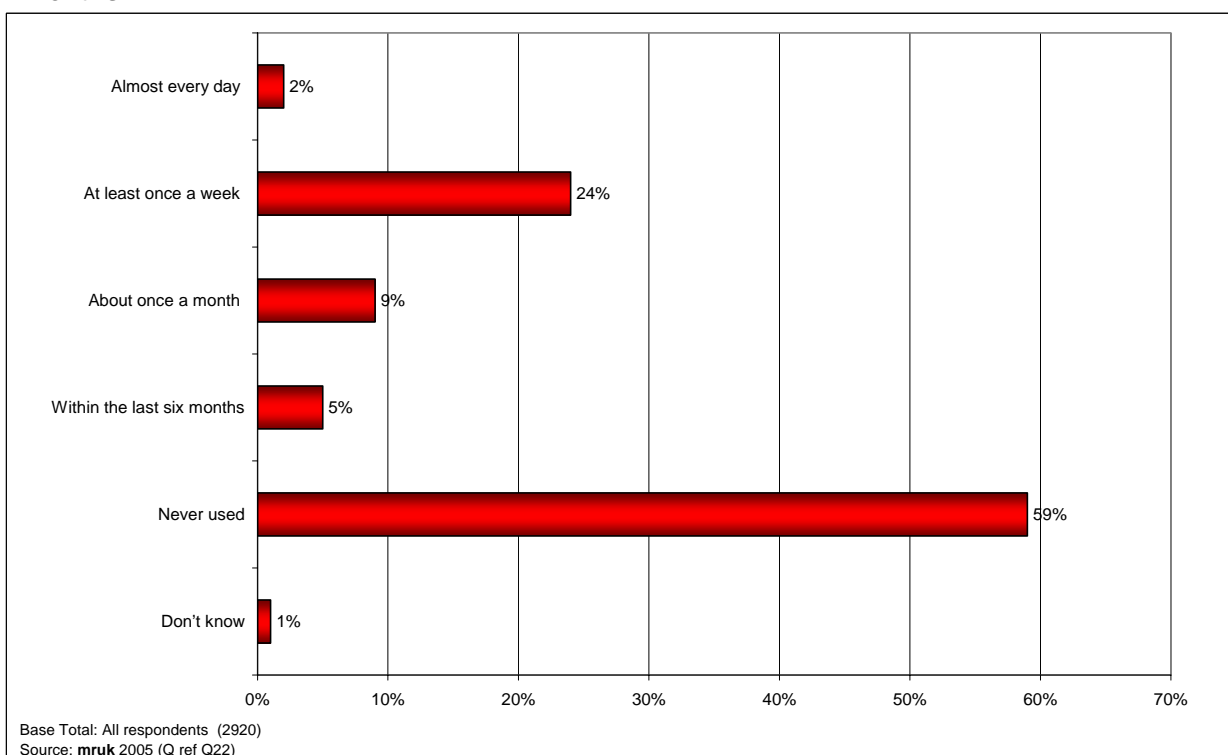
- 53% of residents are satisfied with the choice of housing in Gateshead
- 73% of residents are satisfied with street cleanliness
- 64% are satisfied with sports and leisure facilities, particularly Jewish residents
- 64% are satisfied with countryside facilities

**Figure 16: Satisfaction with following services and activities that the Council provides in your local area?**

	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Dont know / no opinion
Repairs to roads	10%	53%	15%	14%	4%	4%
Road gritting / ice clearing	13%	52%	14%	15%	3%	4%
Repairs to pavements	8%	51%	15%	18%	6%	3%
Street lighting	18%	58%	10%	10%	3%	1%
Street sweeping	15%	56%	11%	11%	3%	3%
Keeping pavements / grass areas clear of dogs mess	9%	45%	14%	20%	6%	6%
Controlling stray dogs	9%	40%	21%	11%	3%	17%
Using road humps / traffic calming measures	8%	35%	22%	16%	5%	14%
Public car parks	6%	36%	22%	14%	4%	18%
Maintenance of flower beds and grass cutting	20%	56%	12%	4%	1%	6%
Providing / maintaining cemeteries and crematoria	14%	39%	14%	2%	1%	29%
Choice of housing in your area	10%	43%	19%	11%	4%	13%
Monitoring and controlling pollution	5%	24%	22%	6%	2%	42%
Inspecting shops, restaurants and factories	5%	22%	20%	2%	1%	50%
Public conveniences	4%	16%	18%	23%	11%	28%
Street cleanliness	12%	61%	9%	12%	3%	3%
The reliability of waste collection	37%	55%	4%	2%	1%	1%
The collection of bulky household waste	31%	48%	12%	3%	1%	5%
The waste collection service overall	36%	57%	4%	2%	1%	1%
The accessibility of recycling facilities	26%	53%	11%	4%	1%	5%
The provision of recycling facilities overall	25%	52%	12%	4%	1%	5%
Making sure food and other goods sold are safe	9%	29%	19%	1%	1%	41%
Clarity of signs to help pedestrians and car drivers travel in Gateshead	13%	48%	16%	3%	1%	19%
The number of litter bins in Gateshead	10%	39%	18%	16%	3%	14%
Facilities for cyclists to travel safely in Gateshead	9%	35%	18%	5%	1%	30%
Council run events, such as the Flower Show, Christmas Parade and Fireworks display	21%	48%	14%	2%	1%	14%
The arts in Gateshead	18%	41%	16%	2%	1%	21%
Sports and leisure facilities	18%	46%	15%	5%	1%	16%
Countryside facilities e.g. Thornley Woodlands Centre, Derwenthaugh Park	19%	45%	15%	1%	0%	19%
Base: Total All respondents (2920)						
Source: mruk 2005 (Q ref Q21)						

When it comes to using sports and leisure facilities in Gateshead in the last year 59% of residents said neither they nor a family member had used the facilities at all, with a higher % of men than women never using the sports and leisure facilities (64% of men and 56% of women). In Central Gateshead the figure for non usage was 70%. About 25% of residents across the Borough claim to use these facilities at least once per week, with the highest use being in the Pathfinder area. A higher % of Jewish residents use sports and leisure facilities regularly and they are the most satisfied with the services provided.

**Figure 18: Use of sport and leisure facilities within Gateshead Borough in the last six months?**

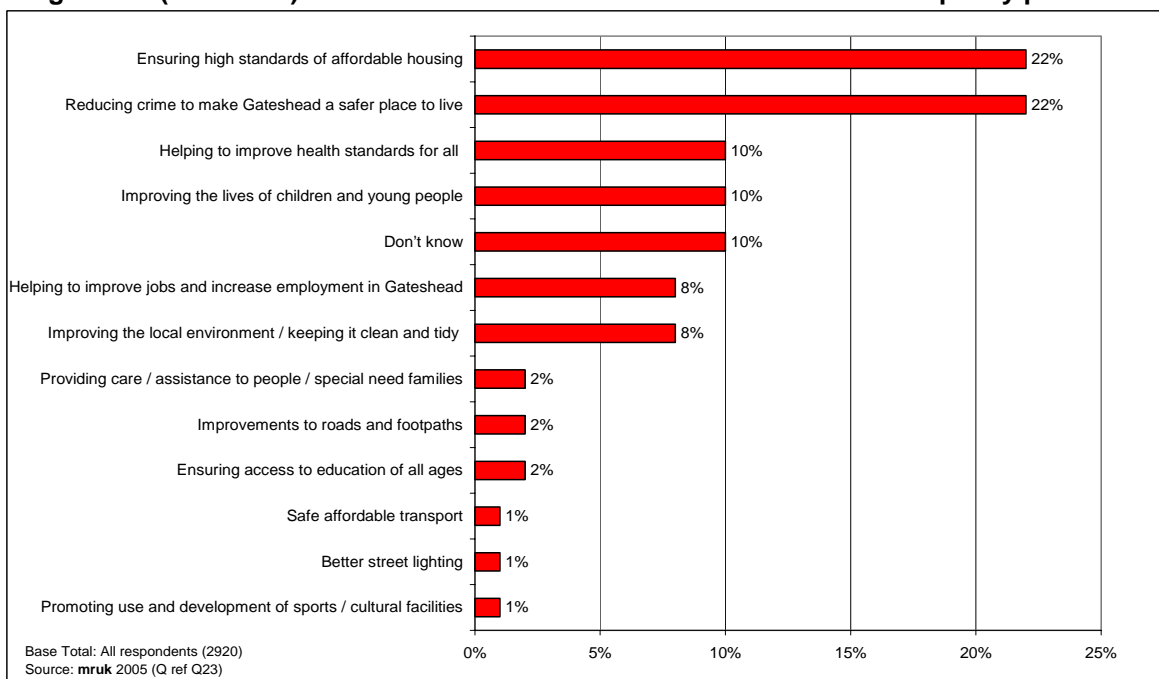


### 3.3.2 Policy priorities

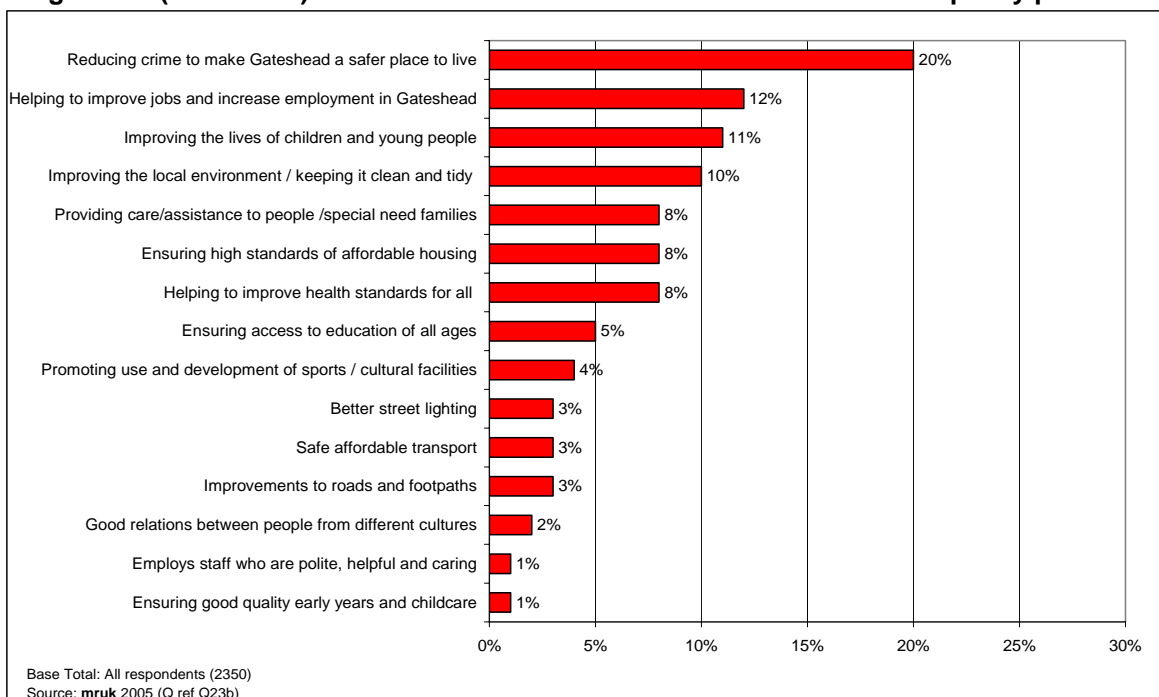
When asked what the Council's three main policies should be, more residents opted for reducing crime to make Gateshead a safer place to live, ensuring high standards of affordable housing and improving the lives of children and young people. These were the main choices in every area across the Borough, with the exception of residents in the West NMA, who choose improving their local environment/keeping it clean and tidy over ensuring high standards of housing and residents in the Central NMA who chose helping to improve health standards for all over improving the lives of children and young people.

The 25-54 age groups were also concerned about improving the lives of children and young people and BME residents wanted the Council to improve jobs and increase employment in Gateshead.

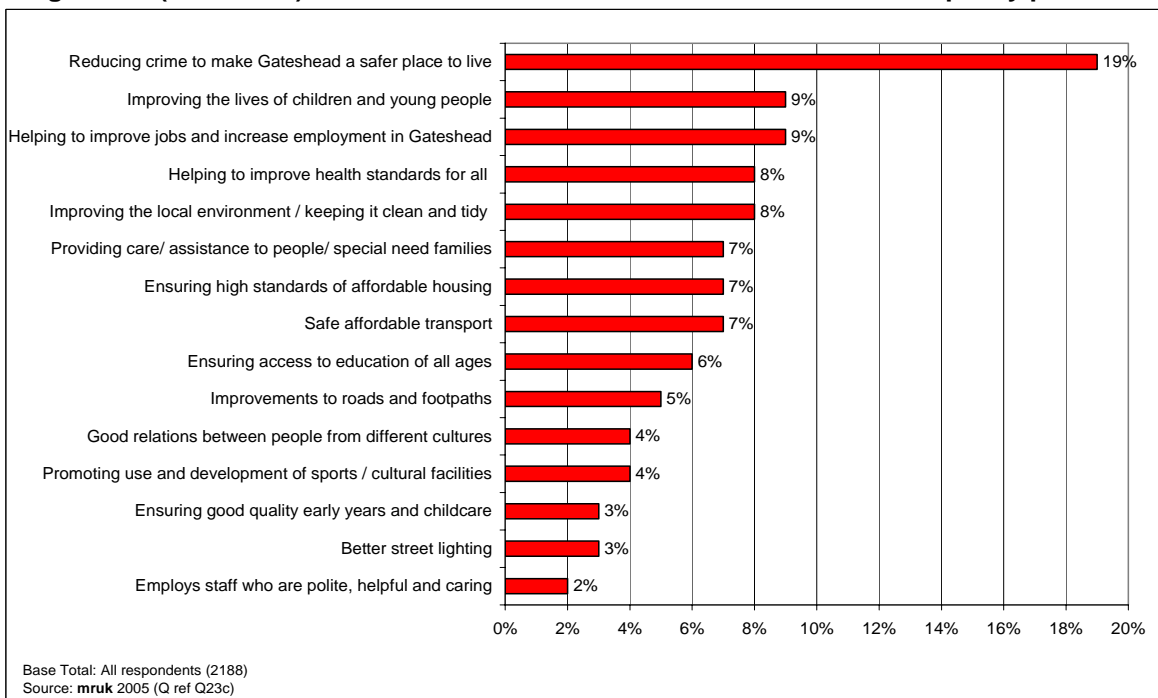
**Figure 19: (1<sup>st</sup> choice) What do residents think should be the three main policy priorities?**



**Figure 20: (2<sup>nd</sup> Choice) What do residents think should be the three main policy priorities?**

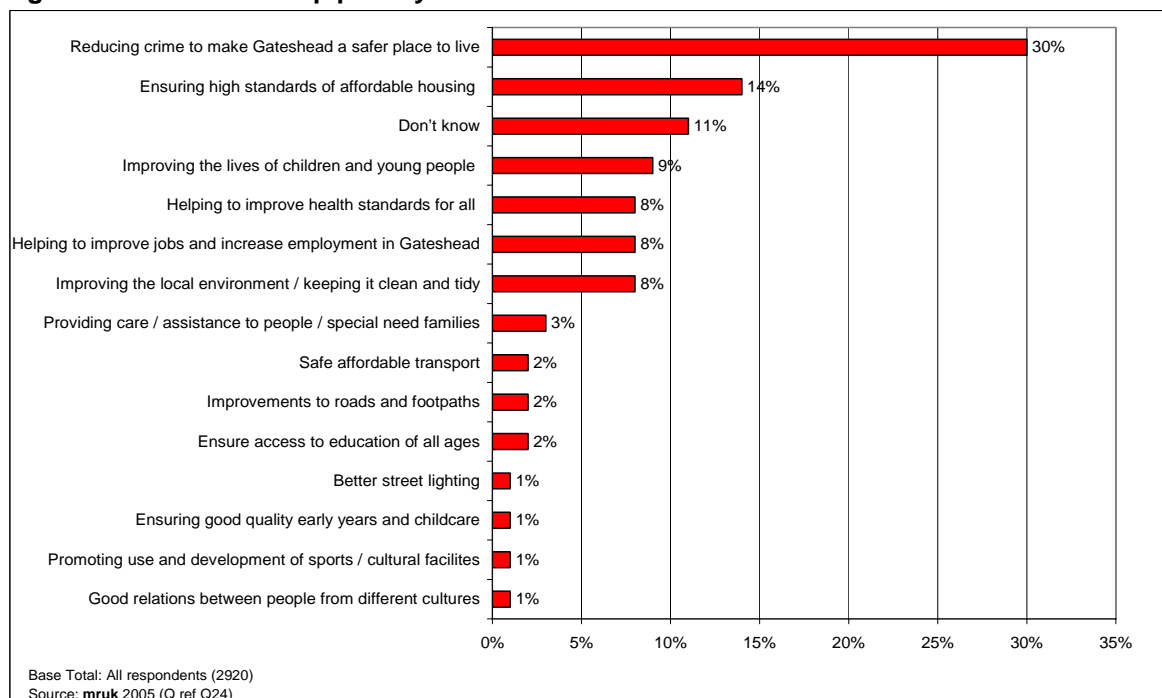


**Figure 21: (3<sup>rd</sup> Choice) What do residents think should be the three main policy priorities?**



The top priority for all residents across Gateshead in 2005 is crime reduction. BME residents are more concerned with improving employment. All genders, age groups and NMAs agree. The exception is BME residents who consider improving jobs and increasing employment in Gateshead to be their top priority.

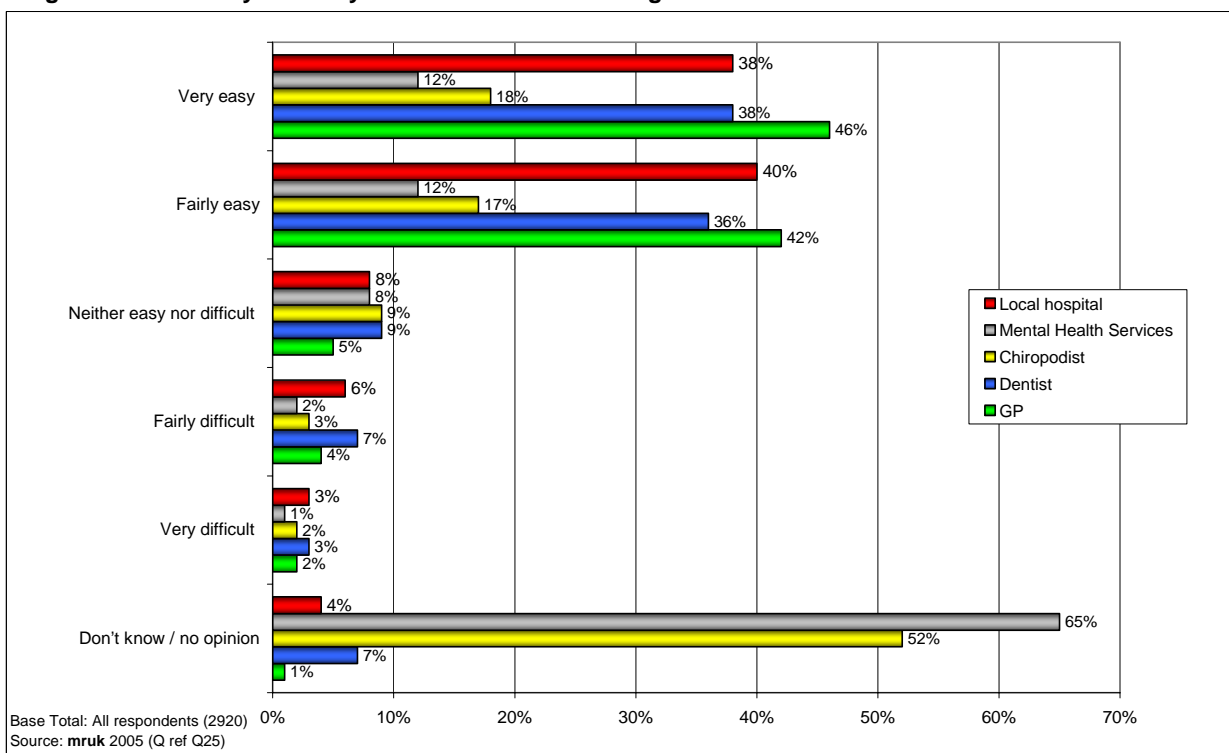
**Figure 22: Resident's Top priority**



### 3.3.3 Ease of access to health services

When asked how easy it is to access health services in Gateshead, all age groups and genders and ethnic minorities record they find it easy to access the GP, dentist, local hospital and mental health services. More people registered don't know against ease of access to a chiroprapist. Jewish residents stated they found it less easy to access the dentist and BME residents find it easier than other residents to access mental health services.

**Figure 23: How easy is it for you to access the following health care services?**



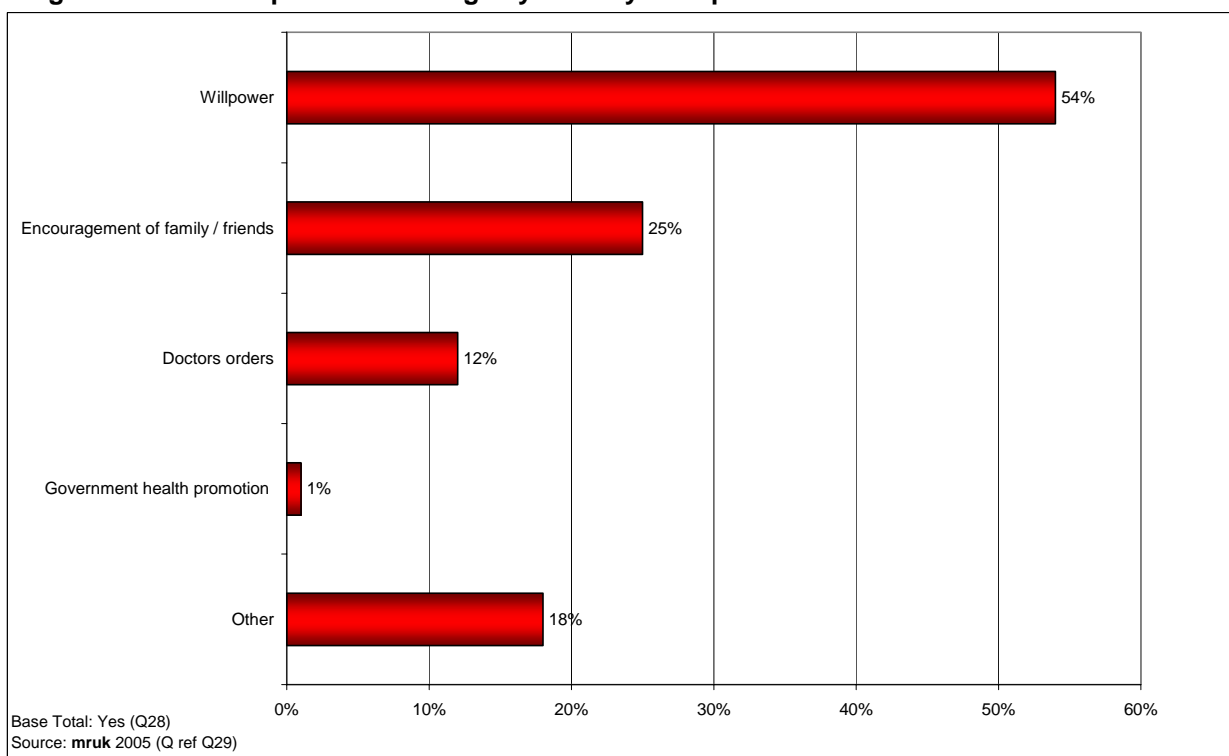
### 3.3.4 Smoking

Nearly three quarters of residents recorded that they do not smoke. The highest % of non smokers is in the East NMA and among Jewish and BME residents. The highest % of smokers live in the Central and Inner West NMAs.

Of those who smoke 62% have tried to quit (although 78% of residents in East Gateshead say they have tried to stop smoking).

The majority of smokers consider that willpower is what has helped/encouraged them to try and stop smoking (54%), along with the encouragement of family and friends (25%). Jewish smokers stated that their main influence to stop smoking was their doctor. Smokers in Central Gateshead also recorded that factors other than those listed were what helped/encouraged them to try and quit smoking (37%).

**Figure 24: What helped or encouraged you to try and quit?**



All residents were asked if they had heard of Gateshead and South Tyneside Stop Smoking Service and 75% recorded they had not. More people in South Gateshead were aware of the initiative than anywhere else in the Borough (48%) and Jewish residents and those in East Gateshead were the least aware. This is also the area with the lowest % smokers. A higher % of smokers in the 45-64 age ranges were aware of the initiative.

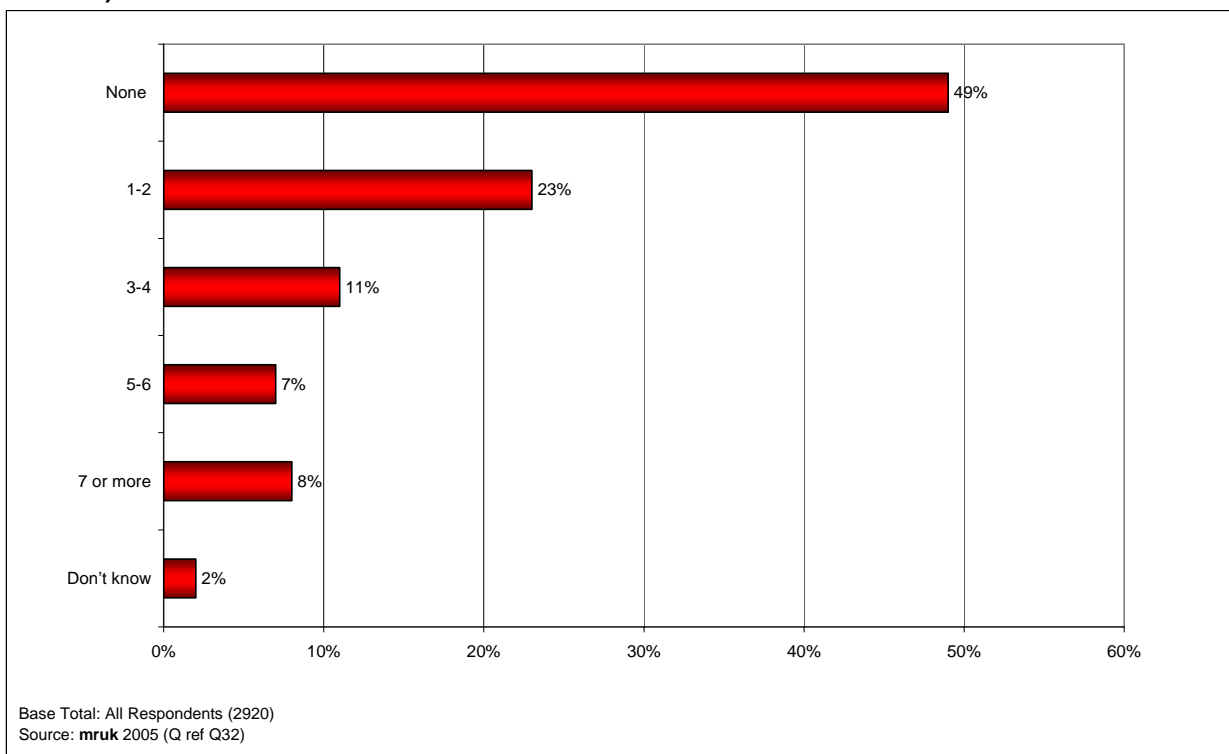


### 3.3.5 Exercise

Another major initiative in Gateshead, GOAL: the exercise referral scheme also has a low awareness rating, with 94% of respondents saying they had never heard of it. Jewish residents recorded 99% not having heard of the initiative. In fact, regular exercise is not generally a feature in many residents' lives, other than among Jewish residents, with 49% claiming never to take even moderate exercise for 30 minutes. Residents in the Pathfinder area and West Gateshead exercise the least of all areas of the Borough and have the highest % of residents who never take moderate exercise. Just under one quarter of residents admit to taking moderate exercise once or twice per week.

It is clear from the findings that the older a person gets the less often they exercise and that women exercise more often than men, marginally.

**Figure 24: How many times per week are you moderately physically active (slightly out of breath) for 30 minutes?**



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### 3.3.6 Library use

Less than 50% of the Borough's residents use the libraries (43%), with residents in South and West being the lowest users of the library services.

Of those who do use the libraries, their main purpose is to access books and information and they are generally aware of (91%) and happy with (93%) library opening times.

A higher % of Jewish and BME residents use the library, particularly to access books and information.

There is no significantly higher use by any particular age group, or between the genders.

### 3.3.7 Satisfaction with availability or access to services

Most residents don't know, or have no opinion about childcare in the Borough (76%) and this is particularly the case in the Pathfinder area where 95% of residents recorded 'don't know', or 'no opinion' against this category. Of those who did comment on childcare, primarily those in the 25-34 age groups, more were satisfied than dissatisfied, particularly in the South NMA.

The same applies to pre-school nurseries, pre-school playgroups and childminders: the majority of residents either didn't know or had no opinion on the availability and ease of access to these services. However, of those who are aware of these services the majority are satisfied, particularly in South Gateshead.

Jewish and BME residents registered a higher% satisfaction with pre school nurseries, pre school playgroups, primary schools, secondary schools, community centres, youth clubs, children's playgrounds and play facilities and adult education and lifelong learning.

**Figure 25: Satisfaction with the availability or ease of access to each of these in your local area?**

	Total					
	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Dont know / no opinion
Out of school care	6%	7%	9%	1%	1%	76%
Pre-school nurseries	10%	11%	7%	1%	0%	71%
Pre-school playgrounds	9%	11%	7%	1%	0%	72%
Childminders	4%	5%	9%	0%	0%	80%
Primary schools	18%	18%	6%	1%	0%	58%
Secondary Schools	16%	19%	6%	1%	1%	57%
Community centres	12%	13%	12%	4%	3%	56%
Youth clubs	6%	8%	13%	5%	4%	65%
Parks and open spaces	25%	34%	9%	7%	3%	21%
Childrens palyground and play facilities	11%	18%	14%	10%	5%	43%
Swimming pools	20%	28%	11%	4%	3%	34%
Sports facilities / leisure centres	19%	26%	12%	4%	3%	36%
Libraries	29%	31%	8%	1%	1%	30%
Adult education / lifelong learning	13%	18%	12%	2%	1%	54%
Council housing	12%	15%	15%	5%	4%	50%
Council house repairs and maintenance	9%	12%	14%	5%	4%	56%
Base: Total All respondents (2920)						
Source: mruk 2005 (Q ref Q37)						

There has been a decline in the % level of residents who are satisfied with availability and ease of access to the following services:

- Primary schools
- Secondary schools
- Community Centres
- Youth Clubs
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Swimming Pools
- Sports Facilities
- Libraries
- Council Housing
- Council House Repair and Maintenance

However, as with the questions relating to satisfaction with Council services, this apparent decline in levels of satisfaction with the availability/ease of access to services can be

explained by an increase in the number of people recording 'don't know', or 'no opinion', rather than an increase in the % levels of dissatisfaction.

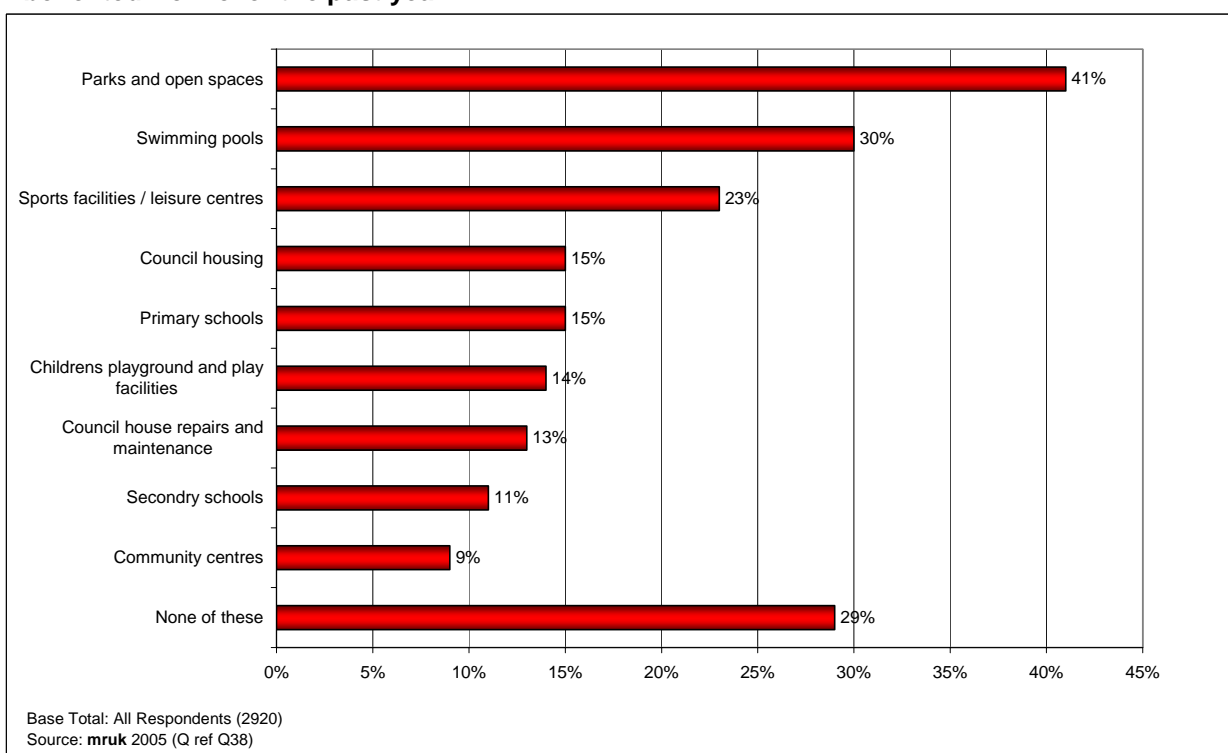
The only increase in % levels of satisfaction was with children's playgrounds and play facilities since 2002 but the % levels of satisfaction with this category in 2005 are still lower than they were in 2000 and in 1997.

Availability and ease of access to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning was a new category in the 2005 survey so there is no comparative data for this. The majority of people either didn't know or had no opinion once again but of the 34% who did comment, the majority were satisfied with the availability and ease of access.

### 3.3.8 Services residents and their families have benefited from in the past year

More residents stated they had benefited from parks and open spaces (41%), an option with a higher % of over 65s; swimming pools (30%), particularly in the 35-44 age group; none of the categories provided in the list (29%) and sports facilities/leisure centre in the past year (23%), particularly among the 35-44 age group and less so among the over 55s. This was reflected across all areas in the Borough.

**Figure 26: Which of these services have you or other members of your family used or benefited from over the past year?**



BME and Jewish residents stated that they and their families had benefited from all the services which they had registered high levels of satisfaction for in the previous category.

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### 3.3.9 Social Services

Of those who use social services (only 5%) in Gateshead and primarily the over 65s, 92% recorded they were satisfied with the help they receive and the majority considered that they received help quickly after a decision was made to provide social services (73%). The lowest % of residents who use these services are in the BME and Jewish communities.

### 3.3.10 Voluntary Help

Most residents have not provided voluntary help/care or assistance for someone not a relative in the past 12 months (77%), although a higher % of Jewish residents stated they had provided voluntary help to non family members in the past year. Of those who did help there is no clear means of assistance that stands out as being more prevalent than the rest.

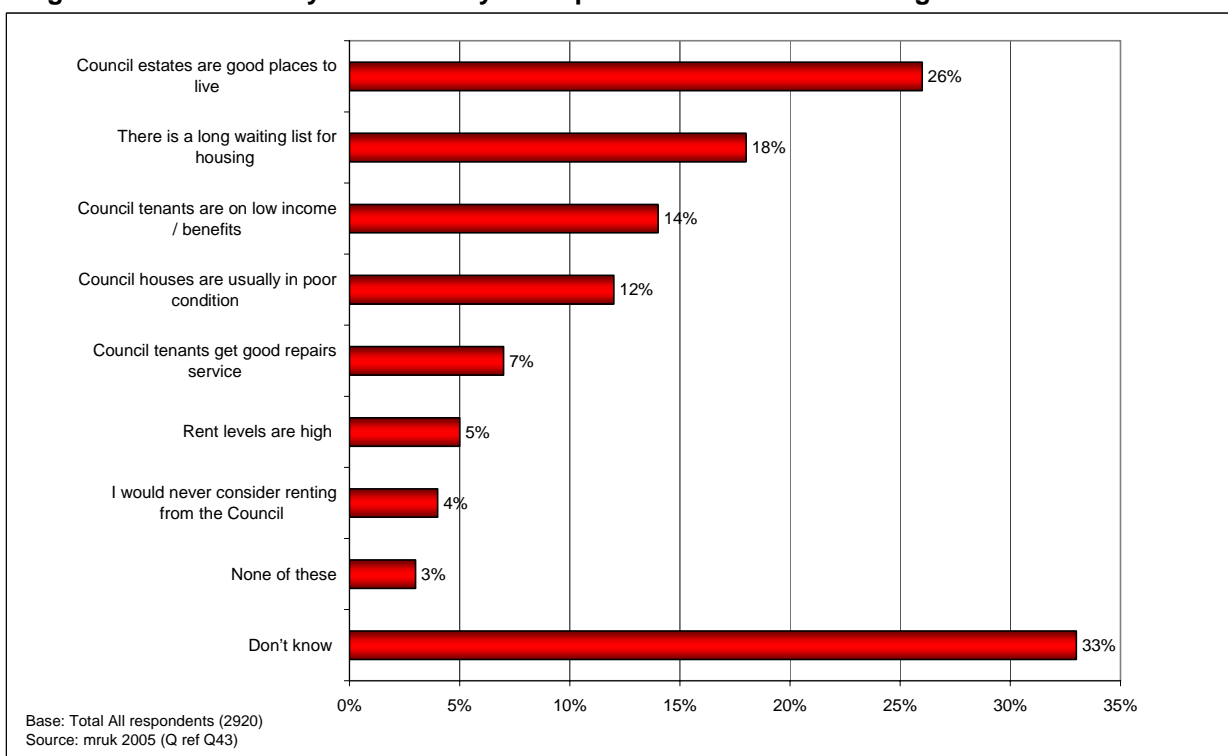
And only 10% of respondents had received any voluntary help/care or assistance from someone not a relative in the past year. Once again the methods of assistance were varied. The Jewish residents recorded higher levels of voluntary assistance but they did not receive the corresponding level of voluntary assistance themselves

### 3.3.11 Council Housing

Residents' views of Council housing in the Borough is divided. Most people **do not** consider that council houses are in poor condition; that council estates are a good place to live (with the exception of BME residents and older people who have a higher % of residents who consider Council estates are good places to live); that council tenants are on low income/benefits (with the exception of BME residents who have a higher % of people who think that those in Council houses are on low income/benefits); that there is a long waiting list for housing; that rent levels are too high; that Council tenants get a good repair service (except among BME residents where a higher % do think the Council provides a good repair service).

And 96% of residents generally would consider renting from the Council. Just over one third of residents didn't know what impression they had of Council housing in the Borough.

**Figure 27: How would you describe your impression of council housing in Gateshead?**



### 3.3.12 Rented Property

Of those residents who rent their property:

- Almost three quarters of them are satisfied with its general condition (74%), particularly among BME residents
- Consider it easy to contact their landlord (82%)
- Consider there are opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services (47%) although this applies primarily to Council residents. Residents of rented properties in Inner West registered a higher % of satisfaction to this question than in the rest of Gateshead
- Are satisfied with the speed of response to concerns and problems (60%)
- Are satisfied with the quality of their repairs (68%)
- Are satisfied with the speed with which repairs are carried out (59%)
- Are satisfied with the overall services provided by their landlord (67%). Jewish residents are the least satisfied with this option.

**Figure 28: Satisfaction with aspects of rented accommodation**

	TOTAL					
	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Dont know / no opinion
The general condition of your property	32%	42%	12%	6%	5%	3%
How easy it is to contact your landlord	40%	41%	9%	3%	2%	4%
The opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by your landlord	18%	29%	28%	6%	3%	17%
The speed of response to concerns and problems you raise with your landlord	25%	35%	20%	8%	6%	6%
The quality of repairs carried out on the property	30%	38%	16%	6%	5%	5%
How quickly repairs are carried out	25%	34%	19%	8%	8%	5%
The overall service provided by your landlord	28%	39%	19%	6%	4%	4%

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There has been an increase in the % levels of satisfaction with the speed with which problems and concerns are dealt with by the Council. Where satisfaction levels have dropped since previous surveys have been carried out this can once again be explained by an increase in don't know and no opinion responses rather than a rise in dissatisfaction.

### **3.3.13 Quality of Life**

When asked directly if there was anything Gateshead Council could do to make the biggest difference to residents' and their family's quality of life the majority of residents stated there was nothing the Council could do (44%), or that they didn't know (25%). In South Gateshead 13% of the areas respondents suggested better play areas but other suggestions were too varied to be meaningful.



## 3.4 Section Four: Contact and Communication with the Council

### 3.4.1 Sources of information and residents information priorities

In 2005 the major sources of information about Gateshead Council and the services provided are: the Council News (68%), particularly among older people; local newspapers (28%) and family and friends (13%). These were also the major sources of information in 2000 and 2002 but in 1997 local newspapers were a greater source of information on Council services than the Council News but friends and neighbours were still the third most popular source. Only 1% or less than 1% of residents cited the Annual Performance Plan, the Breakthru magazine for young people, the Summary Performance Plan, or the Children's Information Service as sources of Council information, all of which are new categories for 2005.

The Council's website is used less as a source of information in 2005 (only 1%) than it was in 2002 (4%), with very few residents using the facility to make payments or request services (7%). The majority of people never use the website (93%) and the reasons they give for this are that they do not have computer/internet access, or they don't need to use the facility.

A higher % of BME residents get their information about Council services from notices and leaflets in the library and it is this group that is less satisfied with the way information is provided to residents. Jewish and BME residents would like to have more information about services for ethnic minorities.

As far as the issues that residents would like more information about, more people in the Borough would like: to know what the Council spends its money on (15%); to get more information about who to contact in the Council (14%); more information on planning developments (11%) and transport issues (11%).

This differs from previous years when the top four issues people wanted more information about were: what the Council spends its money on; services for younger people; planning developments and leisure activities and entertainment.

As well as methods of communication with Gateshead Council, residents would appreciate a 24 hour telephone service; Council offices that open in the evenings and a local office which provides help/advice with queries. Jewish and BME residents particularly would appreciate the latter method.

More people in 2005 are aware that they can attend a Council meeting than in 2002 (risen to 47% from 15%) but there are still 50% who are not aware that they can attend a Council meeting in Civic Centre. BME residents and younger people, particularly 18-24 were the least aware that they could attend Council meetings.

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Most residents in 2005 consider the Council keeps them informed about the services and benefits it provides (75%), which is similar to figures in 2002 but an improvement on figures in 1997 and 2000. Older people feel better informed than younger people.

### **3.4.2 Contact with the Council**

Fewer people in 2005 have contacted the Council in comparison to 2002 but of those who have contacted the authority (more over 65s than 18-24s) more contact was to make a complaint about a service (35%), and to make an enquiry/seek information (45%) than was the case in previous years. Considerably fewer people have contacted the Council to use a service than in previous years (12% in 2005 and 35% in 2002), except by members of the Jewish Community.

The most favoured method of contacting the Council was by phone (81%) and in person (15%), particularly for BME residents who are less likely to make contact by telephone.

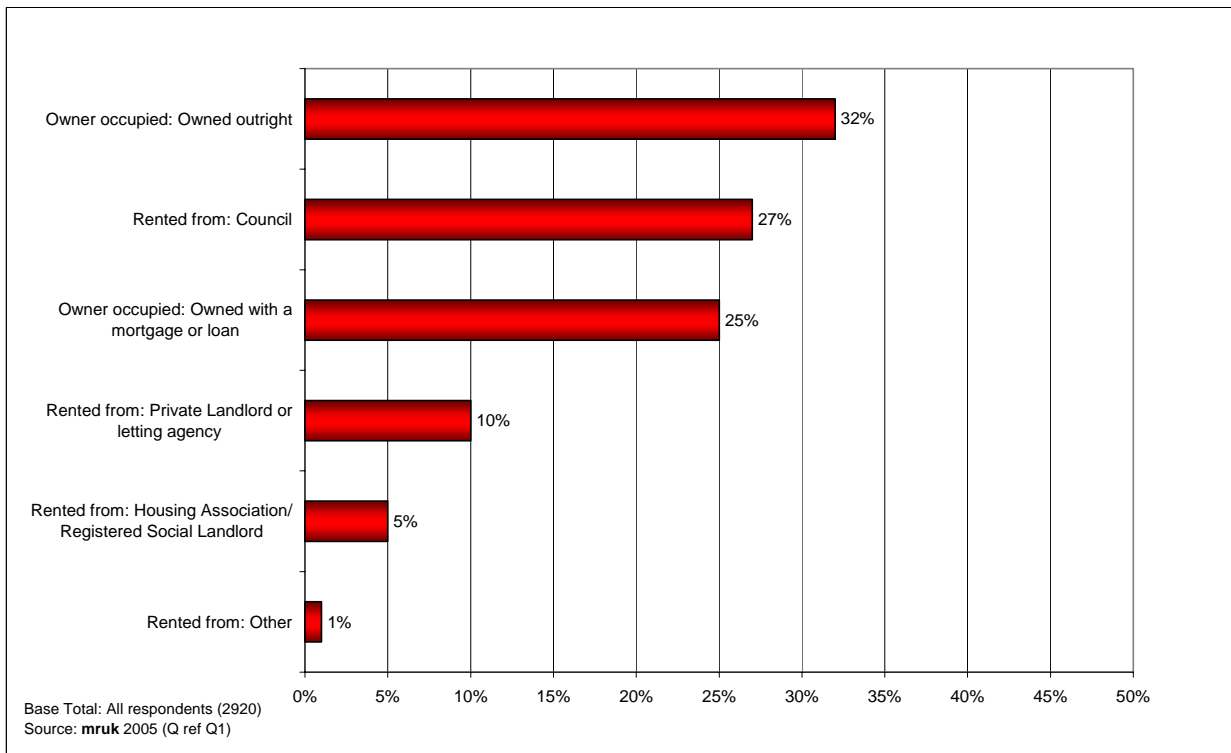
Generally residents consider that it is easy to contact the right person and that Council staff are helpful (79%). This follows a similar trend to previous years. Most people consider that the Council was able to deal with their problem/query (75%) and were, overall, satisfied with the way the matter was dealt with on their most recent contact with the Council.

Two thirds of respondents had not made a complaint to the Council in the past twelve months with 31% having complained. This is an increase on previous years (13% in 2002 and 11% in 2000). However, more people are still satisfied with the way in which their complaint was dealt with in 2005 than in previous years.

## 4. Respondent Characteristics

### 4.1 Housing Tenure

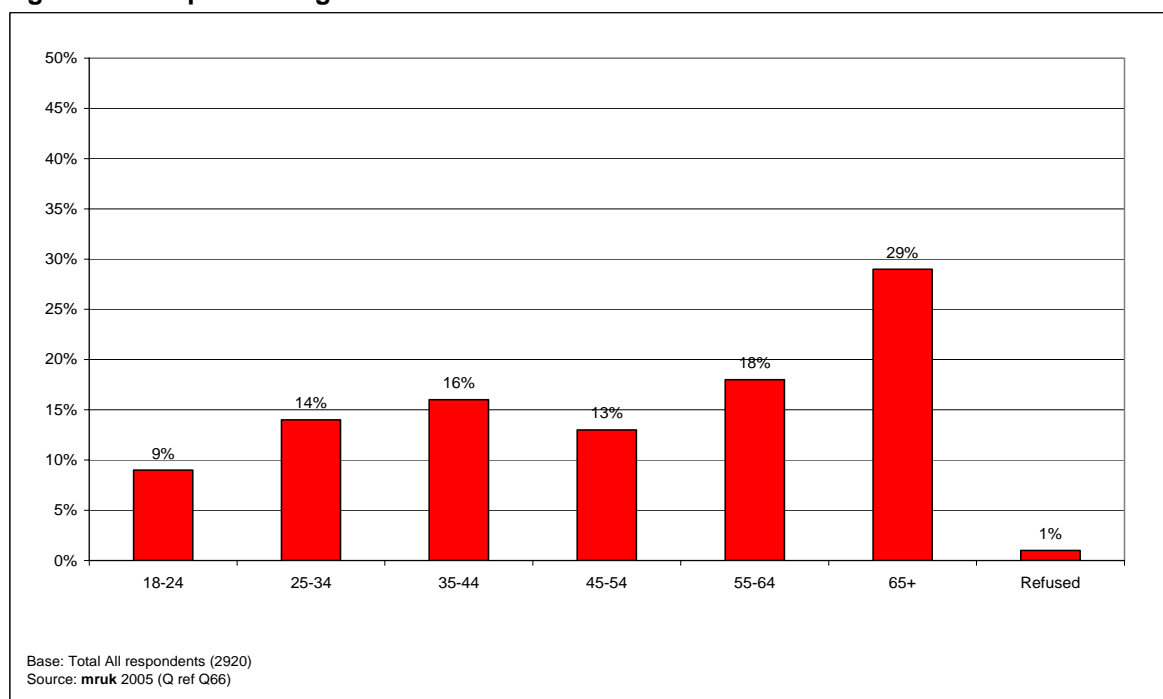
Figure 29: Tenure



## 4.2 Age bands

18-24	9%
25-34	14%
35-44	16%
45-54	13%
55-64	18%
65+	29%
Refused	1%

**Figure 30: Respondent age band**



## 4.3 Ethnic Group

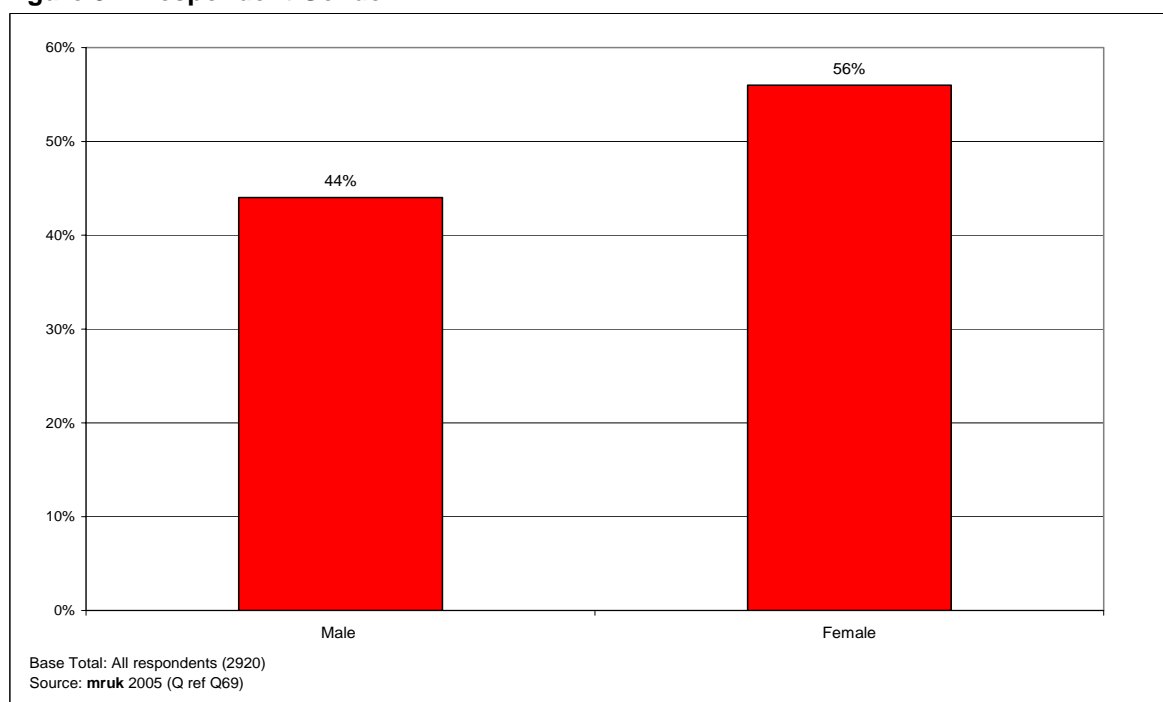
The majority of residents in Gateshead are white (91%), 2% of respondents state their ethnicity as Black or Black British African and a further 2% responding state ethnicity as being Asian or Asian British Pakistani.

## 4.4 Religion

Over two thirds (69%) of Gateshead residents are Christian. The remaining respondents are made up of 17% stating “no religion”, a further 6% state Jewish and 2% are of Muslim faith.

## 4.5 Gender

**Figure 31: Respondent Gender**



## 4.6 Socio Economic Group

**Figure 32: Respondent Socio economic group**

