

# Polling on resident satisfaction with councils

## Regional trends 2016-2021



## Acknowledgements

The Local Government Association (LGA) Research and Information Team would like to thank Yonder Data Solutions for their input to this work. We would also like to thank all the participants who took part in the polling.

To view more research from the Local Government Association Research and Information team please visit: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research>

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## Summary

The Local Government Association (LGA) measures resident satisfaction with councils every three to four months. This report presents the results of our public polling for the years 2016 to 2021, based on financial years, broken down by English regions. Six key indicators are used to measure residents' views of their local council in the report, and satisfaction with nine council services are also explored. Other questions focusing on perceptions of safety and trust in politicians and government are also included.

## Key messages

On average for the five years observed, across the regions, most people are satisfied with the way their local council runs things, with the highest levels of satisfaction being reported by respondents in the South West. Five of the six key measures of satisfaction were rated positively by the majority of those polled in each region; value for money was the exception. Most people across the five years, regardless of region, said they trusted their local council 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' – the highest result was in the East of England and London. On average, seven out of ten respondents reported that they trusted their local councillors the most, compared with national politicians, to make decisions about how services are provided in their local area.

## Results

- At least 75 per cent of respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with their local area as a place to live over the five financial years across all regions.
- Looking at satisfaction with how one's council operates, average satisfaction scores for each region over the five years were consistently over 60 per cent, with the highest levels of satisfaction being reported by respondents in the South West.
- Five in ten respondents 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' that their local council provides value for money, when looking at the average score over the five years. This figure does not vary considerably across years or regions.
- Overall, the satisfaction levels with council responsiveness were highest for most regions in the period 2020/21 with the highest levels recorded in Yorkshire, London and the South West.
- At the England level, respondents' satisfaction with the information received from councils about services and benefits was highest in 2020/21 at 67 per cent with the highest level records in the East of England.
- Across all regions and over the five years of polling, respondents were much more likely to indicate that they trusted their local council, as opposed to the government, to make decisions about how services are provided in their local area.

- Consistently, across regions and years, at least nine in ten respondents reported feeling 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' during the day in their local area, and at least seven in ten said the same when asked about night-time safety in their local area.
- Overall, of the services delivered by councils, waste collection, and parks and green spaces, received the highest levels of satisfaction among respondents across the five years.

## Introduction

This report outlines the results of a series of public polls on residents' satisfaction with local councils for the period 2016 to 2021, commissioned by the Local Government Association (LGA). We routinely report on our website the findings of each poll for the whole sample without disaggregation. However, for this report, we have pooled the samples from each financial year (three rounds of polling) to produce sample sizes large enough to explore regional trends. The full set of data tables outlining results for each region can be found at Annex A.

## About the survey

Ten years ago, the LGA published [Are You Being Served](#) – a set of resident satisfaction questions that councils can choose to use in their local surveys. We did this in order to respond to demand from the sector for more intelligence in this area.

Our polling is intended to complement councils' own work by looking at national and regional trends in the public mood over time. We take the view that tracking changes in satisfaction with councils and local services, alongside opinions about 'place' and community life, can provide valuable information on what is driving resident perceptions and, therefore, what councils can do to serve their local communities better.

Of course, many factors will influence resident views of councils at a local level, including local demographics, economic factors, and social circumstances. Councils, in their own local surveys, may include questions outside of our question set and conduct other engagement activities. Analysis of this information might help diagnose what other factors are driving satisfaction levels locally.

It is important, therefore, that any benchmarking against the results of our opinion polling is viewed as complementary to a wider approach aimed at understanding and responding to communities at a local level.<sup>1</sup>

## Methodology

Every four months, the LGA conducts an opinion poll using a representative random sample of approximately 1,000 British adults aged 18 or over.<sup>2</sup> The polling process is conducted by telephone by Yonder Data Solutions. The same set of questions is

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<sup>1</sup> Also please note that the mode of data collection can have a marked impact on results; therefore, our results are only truly comparable with surveys conducted via telephone.

<sup>2</sup> For each wave, quotas are set on age, gender and region and the data weighted to the known British profile of age, gender, region, social grade, taken a foreign holiday in the last three years, tenure, number of cars in the household, working status, and mobile only households. The polling is conducted by Yonder Data Solutions, formerly Populus Data Solutions.

asked in the same order each round to allow for the reporting of any changes in the overall views of the general public about the reputation of local government.<sup>3</sup>

The findings of each opinion poll are reported on the LGA's website every four months for the whole sample without disaggregation. This report takes a different approach; we have combined the samples achieved each financial year to allow for regional disaggregation. The sample size for each year is approximately 3,000 British adults. We have reported in budget years, as this is the time interval in which much of council business operates.

## Weighting

Each financial year is made up of three waves to provide adequate regional sample sizes. The results for regions are weighted to bring them in line with what is known about each population in terms of gender and age (six age bands for males and six age bands females), and approximated social grades in the case of English regions (ABC1 and C2DE). This is a smaller number of variables than used when adjusting the national results for two reasons: regional samples are smaller than the national sample, and the quota controls used in national polling are set to match the British general population, not regional profiles.

Overall, the weighting efficiencies<sup>4</sup> for the regional samples are mostly within the acceptable range, which enables councils who have conducted a telephone survey and followed the *Are You Being Served* guidance to make a broad comparison of their results against their region. Table 1 shows the weighting efficiencies for each region per year.

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<sup>3</sup> Where the questions cover the same topics as the *Are You Being Served* question set, the same question ordering, wording, definitions and preamble have been used to allow comparability.

<sup>4</sup> Each financial year is made up of three waves to provide adequate regional sample sizes. The results for regions are weighted to bring them in line with what is known about each population in terms of gender and age (six age bands for males and six age bands females), and approximated social grades in the case of English regions (ABC1 and C2DE). This is a smaller number of variables than used when adjusting the national results for two reasons: regional samples are smaller than the national sample, and the quota controls used in national polling are set to match the British general population, not regional profiles. Overall, the weighting efficiencies for the regional samples are mostly within the acceptable range, which enables councils to make a broad comparison of their results against their region.

Table 1: Weighting efficiencies					
	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
	%	%	%	%	%
East of England	66.4	79.4	74.2	56.2	60.4
East Midlands	80.0	79.5	85.8	85.4	67.7
London	81.9	87.4	90.7	85.7	87.8
North East	80.1	81.0	62.5	89.1	72.9
North West	86.7	84.0	91.5	89.1	74.6
South East	89.0	91.6	92.2	92.3	91.6
South West	83.4	93.8	94.3	90.6	88.8
West Midlands	78.1	86.8	79.8	84.1	73.8
Yorkshire and Humber	80.6	82.8	72.1	65.5	64.2

## Question set

Respondents were given the following preamble at the outset:

*“I would like to ask you some questions about your local council. Local councils are responsible for a range of services such as refuse collection, street cleaning, planning, education, social care services and road maintenance.*

*If you live in an area with more than one council, please think about the way in which they deliver services to you overall. This would include district and county councils. We are doing this to keep the survey simple as it is part of a national study.”*

A full set of interview questions is included in Annex B for information. This report does not include questions asked in our polling about the media’s coverage of local government, as these do not tend to feature in councils’ own work on resident satisfaction.

## Notes

Where tables and figures report the base, the description refers to the group of people who were asked the question. The number provided refers to the unweighted number of respondents who answered each question.

Please note the following when reading the report:

- Throughout the report percentages in figures and tables may add to more than 100 due to rounding.
- The following conventions are used in tables: ‘\*’ - less than 0.5 per cent; ‘0’ – no observations; ‘-’ – category not applicable/data not available.



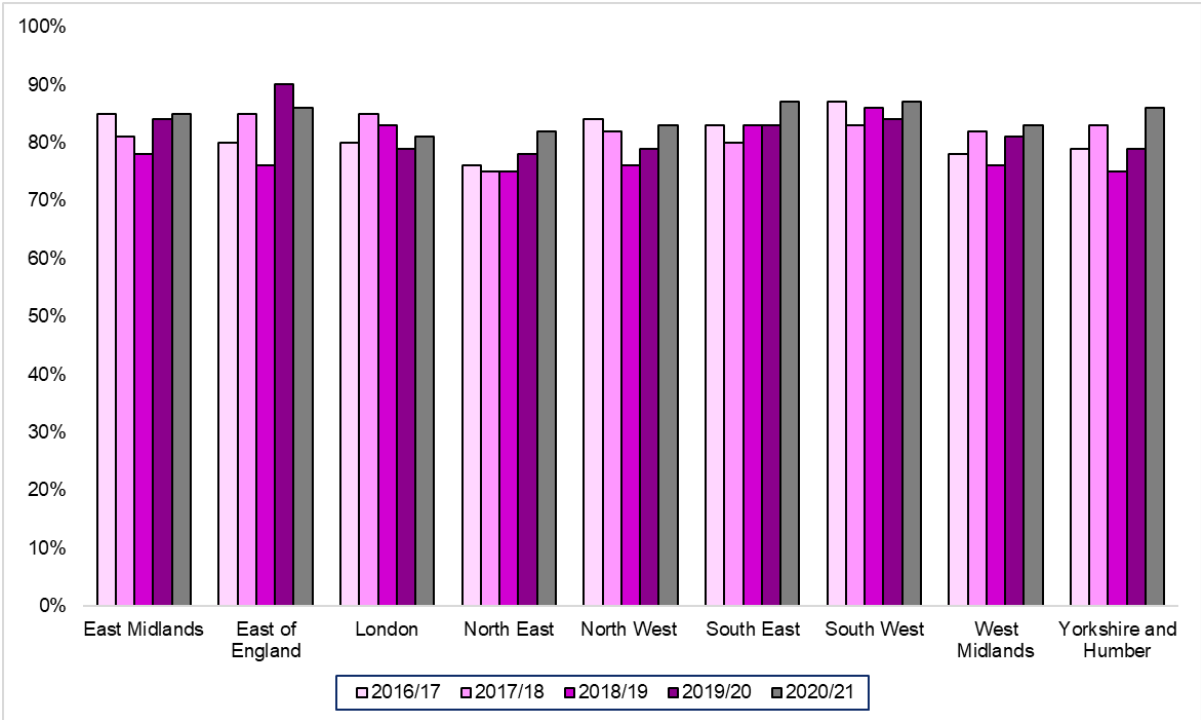
# Polling on resident satisfaction with councils

This section outlines the regional polling trends for the financial years 2016/17 to 2020/21.

## Overall satisfaction with local area

Figure 1 shows a set of summary results for ‘satisfaction with local area’ for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Across the five years, levels of satisfaction are high for each region – at least 75 per cent of respondents were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live. Respondents in the North East tended to report lower levels of satisfaction across the five years, and those in the South West the highest levels. Satisfaction levels were highest for most regions in the period 2020/21.

**Figure 1: Proportion of people who are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live**



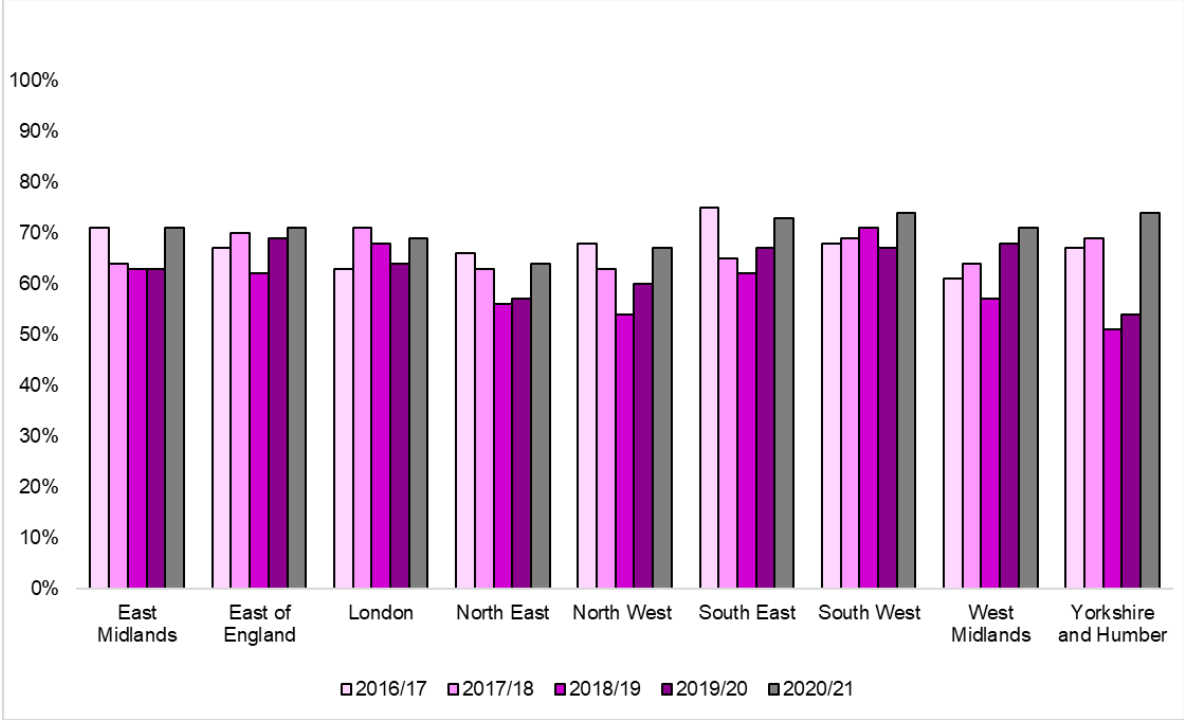
Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

## Overall satisfaction with local council

Figure 2 shows a set of summary results for ‘satisfaction with local council’ for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Some large differences in satisfaction can be observed across regions, for example, a difference of 20 percentage points in 2018/19 between Yorkshire and Humber (51 per cent of respondents were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’) and the South West (71 per cent of respondents were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’).

Looking at an average of the satisfaction scores for each region over the five years, these were consistently over 60 per cent, with the highest levels of satisfaction being reported by respondents in the South West.

**Figure 2: Proportion of residents very or fairly satisfied with the way their local council runs things**

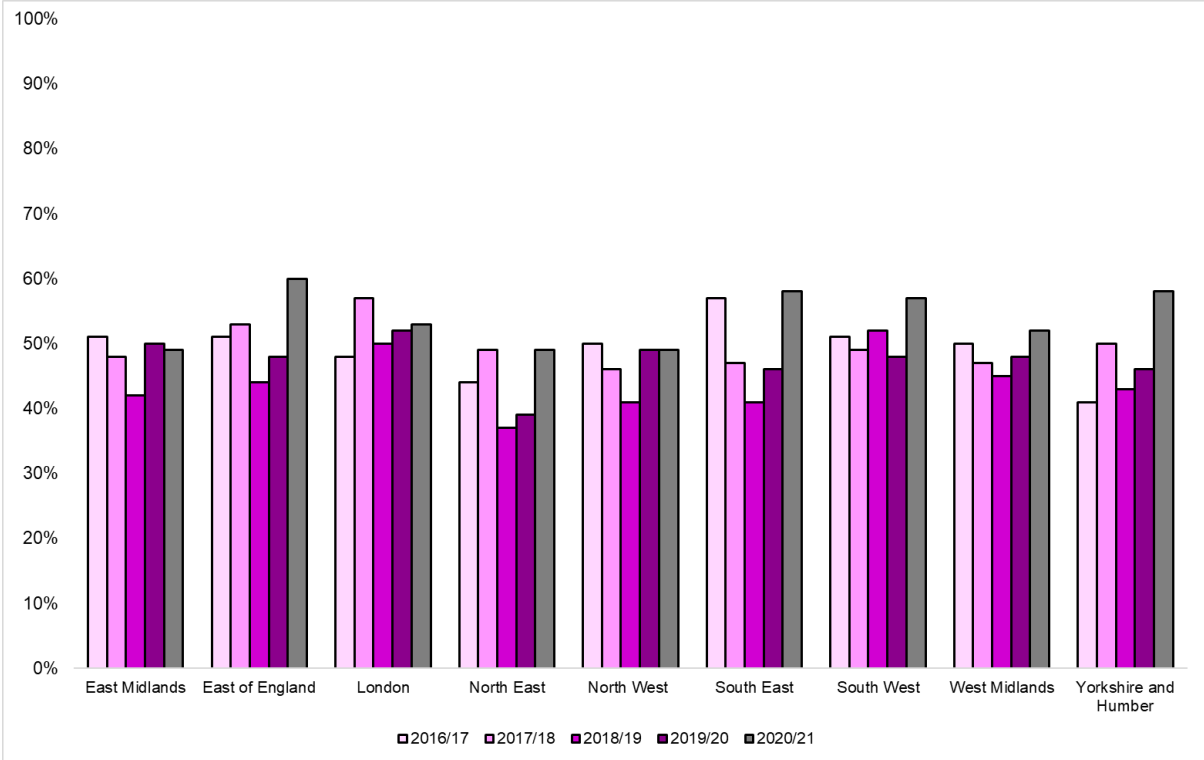


Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

**Value for money**

Figure 3 shows a set of summary results for ‘value for money’ for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. In terms of the average for each region over the five years, the proportion of respondents who either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘tend to agree’ that their local council provides value for money does not vary considerably across the regions, but there are some larger in-year differences. For example, in 2018/19 15 percentage points separated positive responses given by respondents in the North East (37 per cent of respondents agreed their council offered value for money) and the South West (52 per cent of respondents agreed that value for money was offered.) Of the six indicators of resident satisfaction, perceptions about value for money have always received much lower positive ratings than the other measures.

**Figure 3: Proportion of residents who strongly or tend to agree their local council provides value for money<sup>5</sup>**



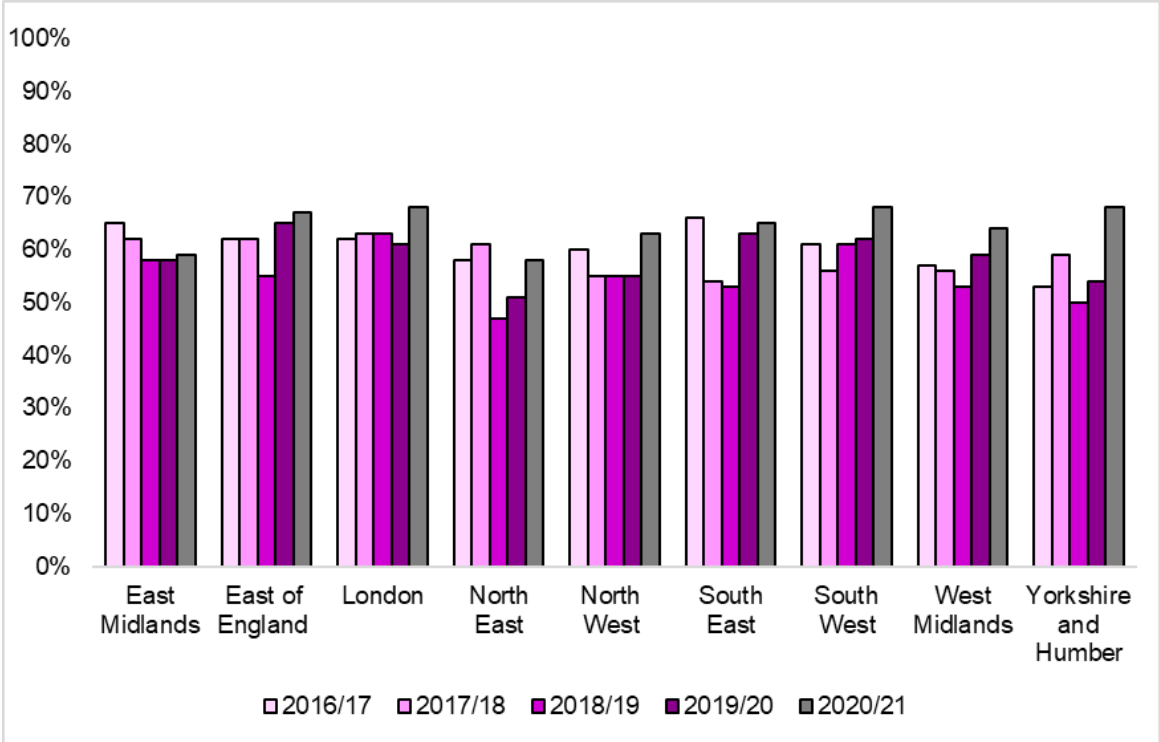
Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

**Council responsiveness**

Figure 4 shows a set of summary results for ‘council responsiveness’ for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Some large in-year differences can be observed such as in 2018/19 where 16 percentage points separated positive responses given by respondents in the North East (47 per cent of respondents agreed their local council acts on the concerns of local residents) and London (63 per cent of respondents agreed their local council acts on the concerns of local residents). Overall, the satisfaction levels with council responsiveness were highest for most regions in the period 2020/21, with the highest levels in Yorkshire and Humber, London and the South West.

<sup>5</sup> The following preamble was used: “In considering the next question, please think about the range of services your local council(s) provides to the community as a whole, as well as the services your household uses. It does not matter if you do not know all of the services your local council(s) provides to the community. We would like your general opinion.”

**Figure 4: Proportion of residents who think their local council acts on the concerns of local residents a great deal or fair amount**

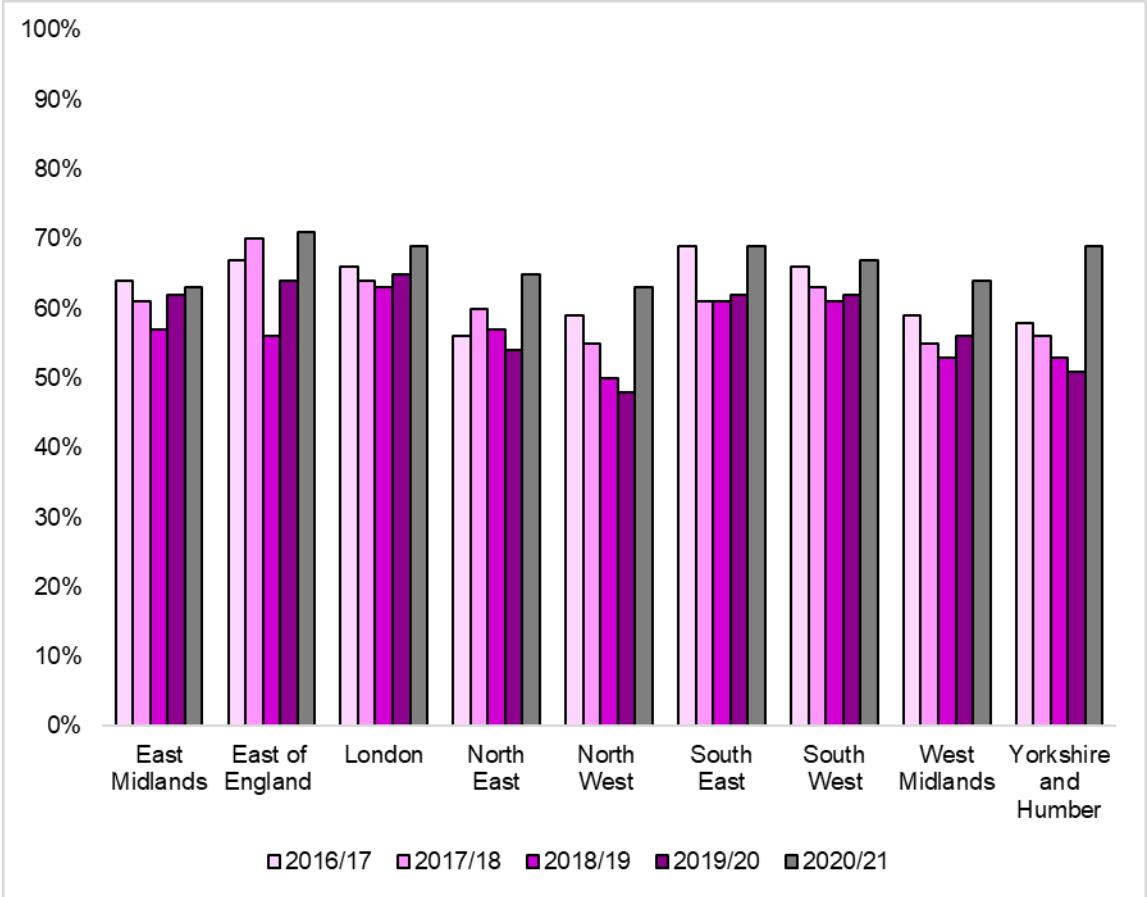


Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

**Informed about the council**

Figure 5 shows a set of summary results for the extent to which residents think their council keeps them ‘well informed’ for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Some large differences in satisfaction can be observed across regions, for example, a difference of 17 percentage points in 2019/20 between the North West (48 per cent of respondents were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’) and London (65 per cent of respondents were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’). At the England level, respondents’ satisfaction with the information received from councils about their services and benefits was highest in 2020/21 at 67%.

**Figure 5: Proportion of residents who think their local council keeps residents very or fairly well informed about the services and benefits it provides**

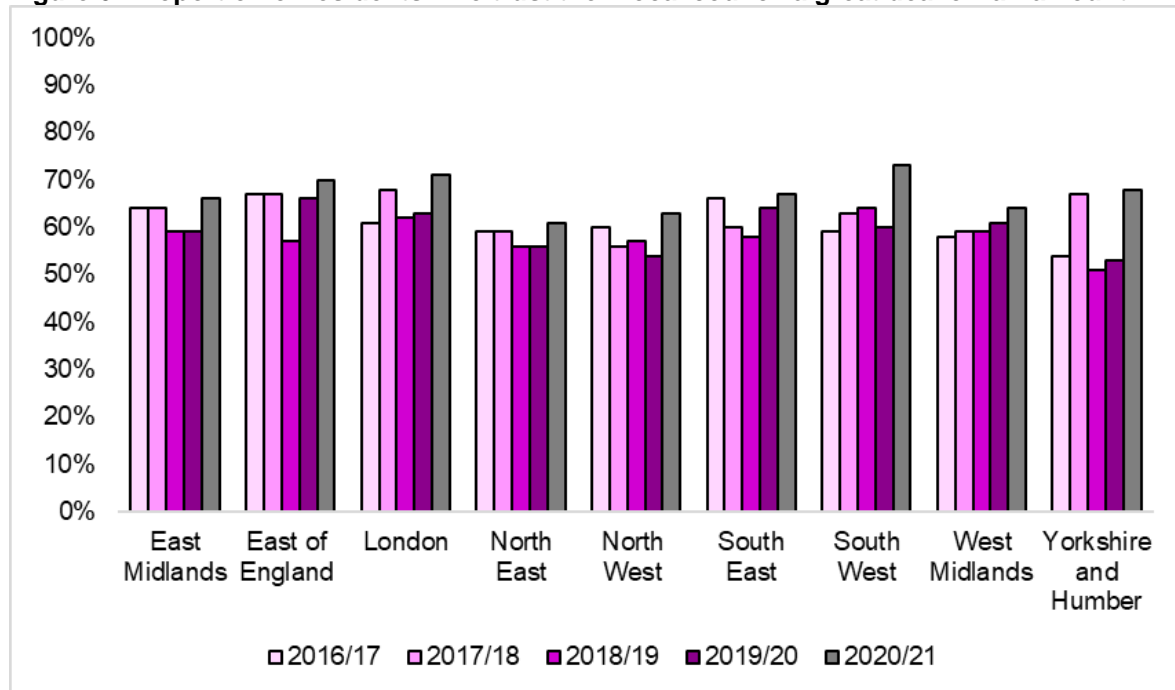


Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

**Trust in forms of government**

Figure 6 shows a set of summary results for the extent to which residents ‘trust their local council’ for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. On average over the five years, the proportion of respondents who trust their local council either ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’ does not vary considerably across the regions – there is a difference of seven percentage points between the regions with the lowest and highest average proportions. Overall, the most positive results were observed in 2020/21 across all regions; at the England level, 67 per cent of respondents trusted their local council either a ‘great deal’ or ‘fair amount’ in this year.

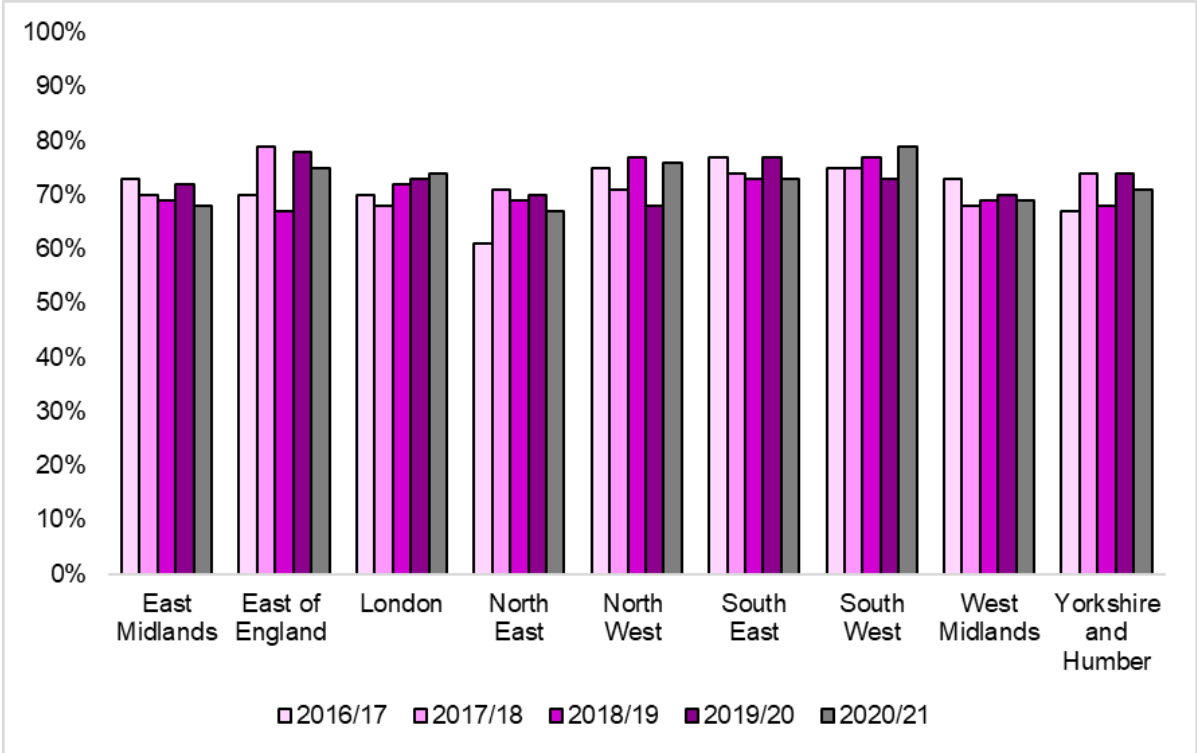
**Figure 6: Proportion of residents who trust their local council a great deal or fair amount**



Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

Figure 7 shows a set of summary results for the extent to which residents said they trusted their local council most (as opposed to national government) to make decisions about how services are provided in their local area, for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Across all regions and over the five years of polling, respondents were much more likely to indicate that they most trusted their local council. The most positive result in recent years was observed in the South West in 2020/21 where 79 per cent of respondents said they most trusted their local council to make local decisions.

**Figure 7: Proportion of residents who trust their local council most (as opposed to the government) to make decisions about how services are provided in their local area<sup>6</sup>**

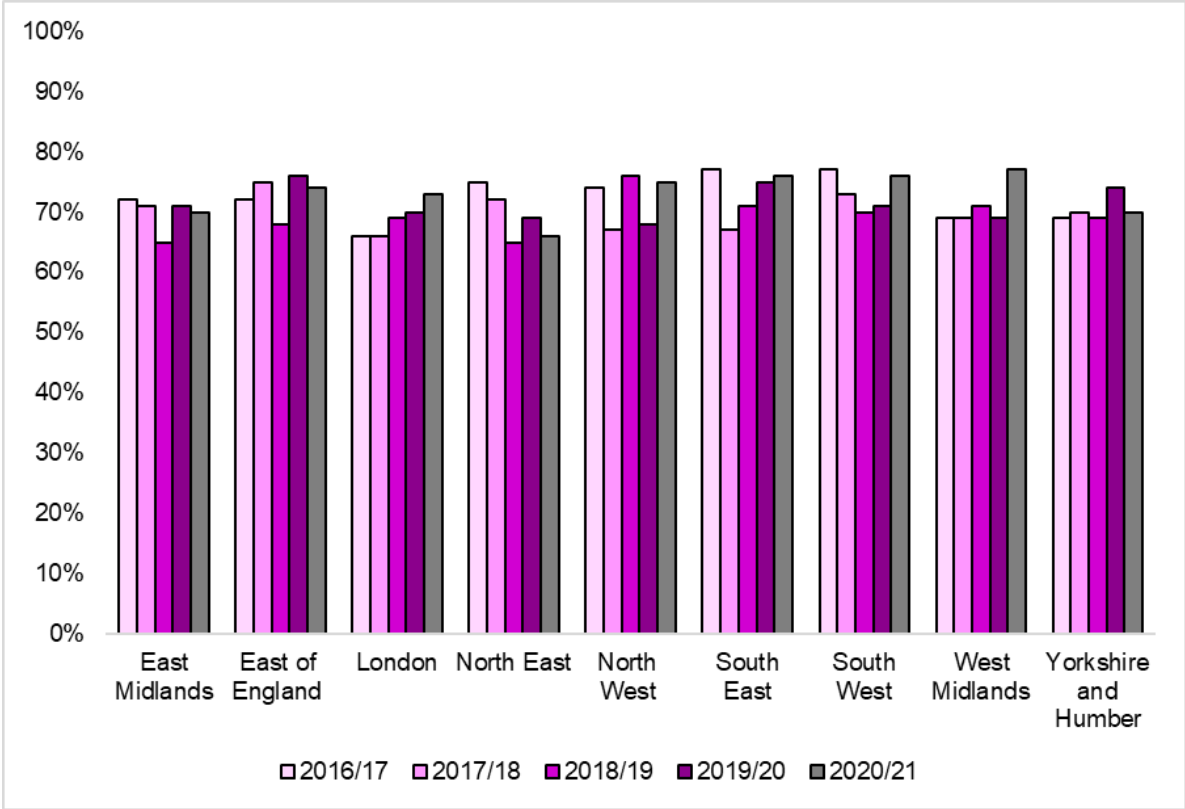


Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

Figure 8 shows a set of summary results for the extent to which residents ‘feel local councillors are the individuals they trust most (as opposed to members of parliament or government ministers) to make decisions about how local services are provided in their area’ for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Across all regions, respondents were far more likely to select local councillors as the individuals they most trusted to make decisions about how services were provided in their local area. Across England, the proportion saying they most trusted their local councillors to make decisions was highest in 2020/21 at 73 per cent.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Neither’ was not read out to respondents as an answer option but the interviewer could code it if it was given spontaneously.

**Figure 8: Proportion of residents selecting local councillors as the individuals they trust most to make decisions about how services are provided in their local area**



Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

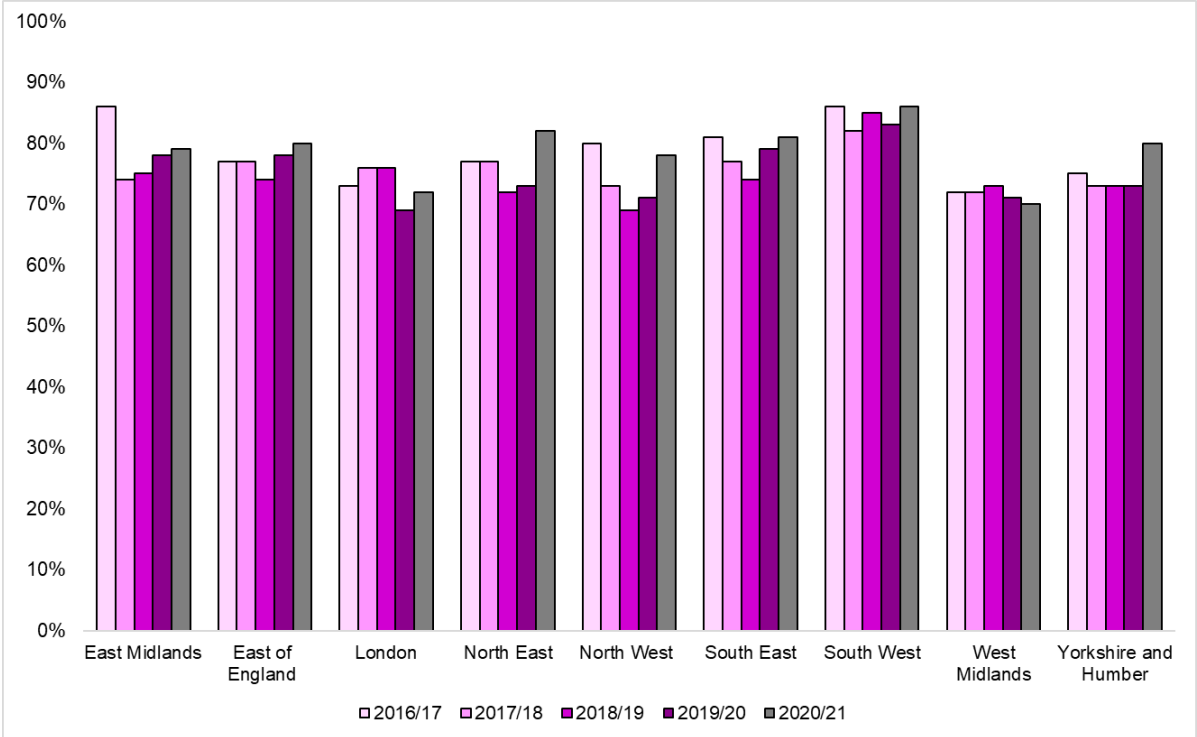
**Community safety**

Figure 9 shows a set of summary results for the extent to which residents feel ‘very safe’ or ‘fairly safe’ outside in their local area after dark for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Perceptions of feeling safe after dark were broadly consistent over the five financial years, with only four percentage points separating the lowest all-region average (75 per cent feeling ‘very safe’ or ‘fairly safe’ in 2018/19 and 2019/20) and the highest results (79 per cent in 2016/17 and 2020/21).

At a regional level, the highest results were recorded in the South West (across the five financial years an average of 84 per cent of respondents felt ‘very safe’ or ‘fairly safe’) and the lowest in the West Midlands (72%).



**Figure 9: Proportion of residents who feel very or fairly safe outside in their local area after dark<sup>7</sup>**

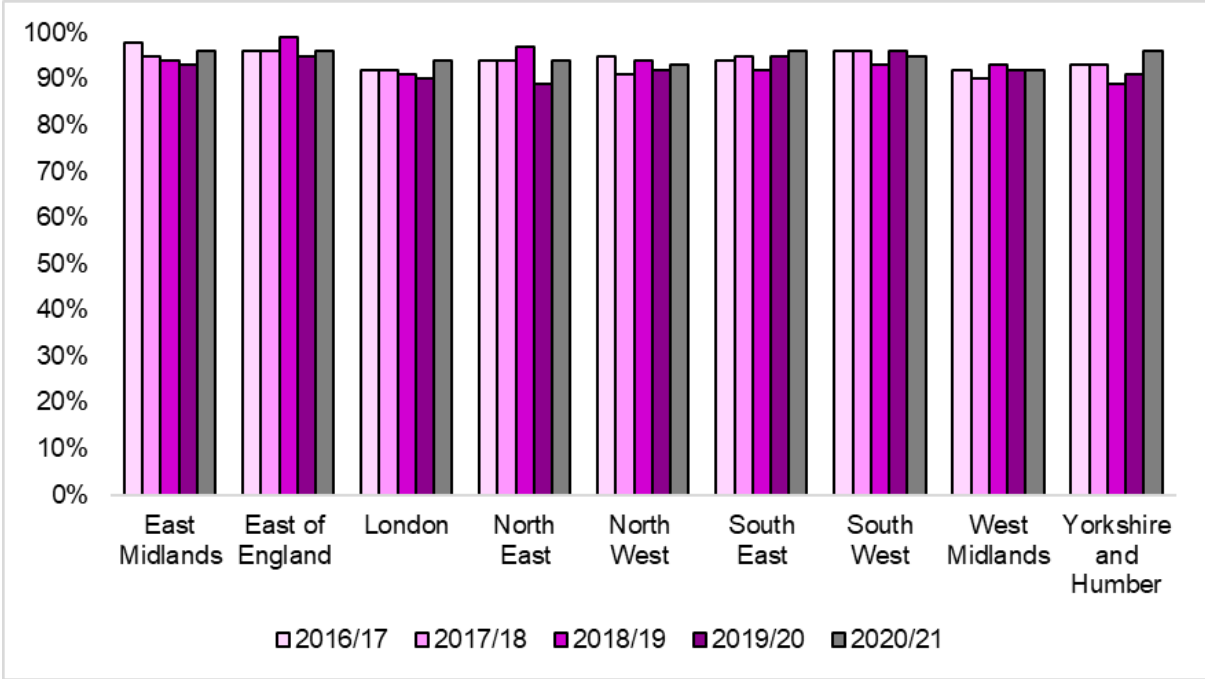


Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

Figure 10 shows a set of summary results for the extent to which residents feel ‘very safe’ or ‘fairly safe’ outside in their local area during the day for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21 by region. Perceptions of feeling safe during the day are high across all regions. Ninety-nine per cent of respondents in the East of England felt ‘very safe’ or ‘fairly safe’ during the day in their local area in 2018/19, the highest of all regions and years.

<sup>11</sup>Local area was defined as “the area within 15 to 20 minutes walking distance from your home”.

**Figure 10: Proportion of residents who feel very or fairly safe outside in their local area during the day<sup>8</sup>**



Base (all respondents): Between 3005 and 3012 British adults per round from 2016 to 2021.

**Service-specific satisfaction**

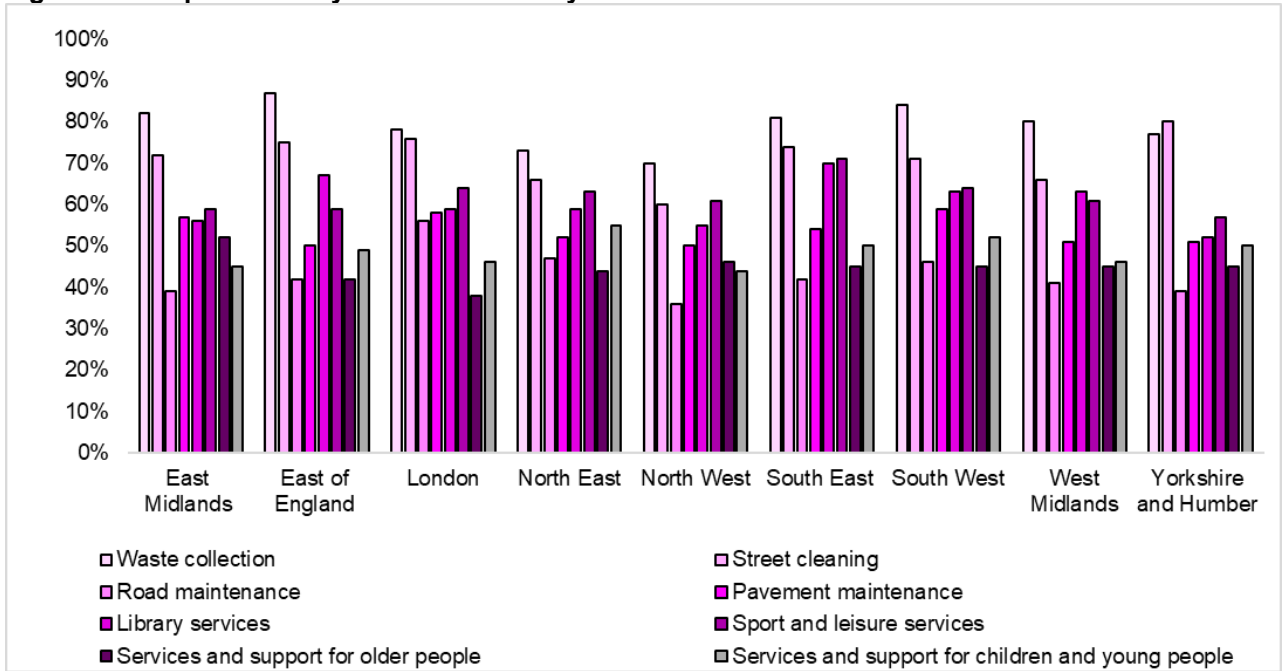
Respondents were invited to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the following council services<sup>9</sup>: waste collection; street cleaning; road maintenance; pavement maintenance; library services; sport and leisure services; services and support for older people; and services and support for children and young people. A ninth service, parks and green spaces, was introduced in October 2019.

Across the five financial years, the highest levels of satisfaction were with waste collection and (more recently) parks and green spaces among all regions. The highest level of satisfaction was 87 per cent which was given by respondents in the East of England describing satisfaction with waste collection in 2016/17 and 2017/18 and respondents in the West Midlands describing satisfaction levels with parks and green spaces in 2020/21.

Overall, road maintenance has the highest level of dissatisfaction of all services across all regions over the five financial years.

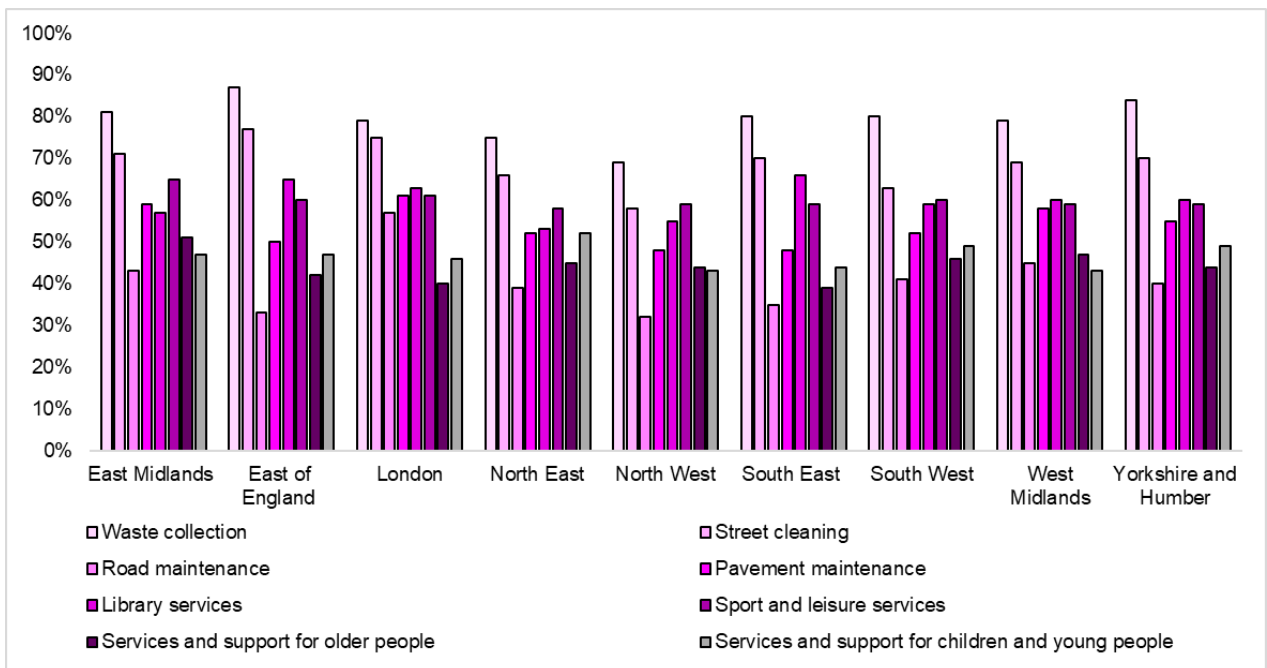
<sup>8</sup> Local area was defined as “the area within 15 to 20 minutes walking distance from your home”.  
<sup>9</sup> Note that these questions were asked of all respondents, and the bases include those who may not have used particular services.

**Figure 11: Proportion 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with each service – 2016/17**



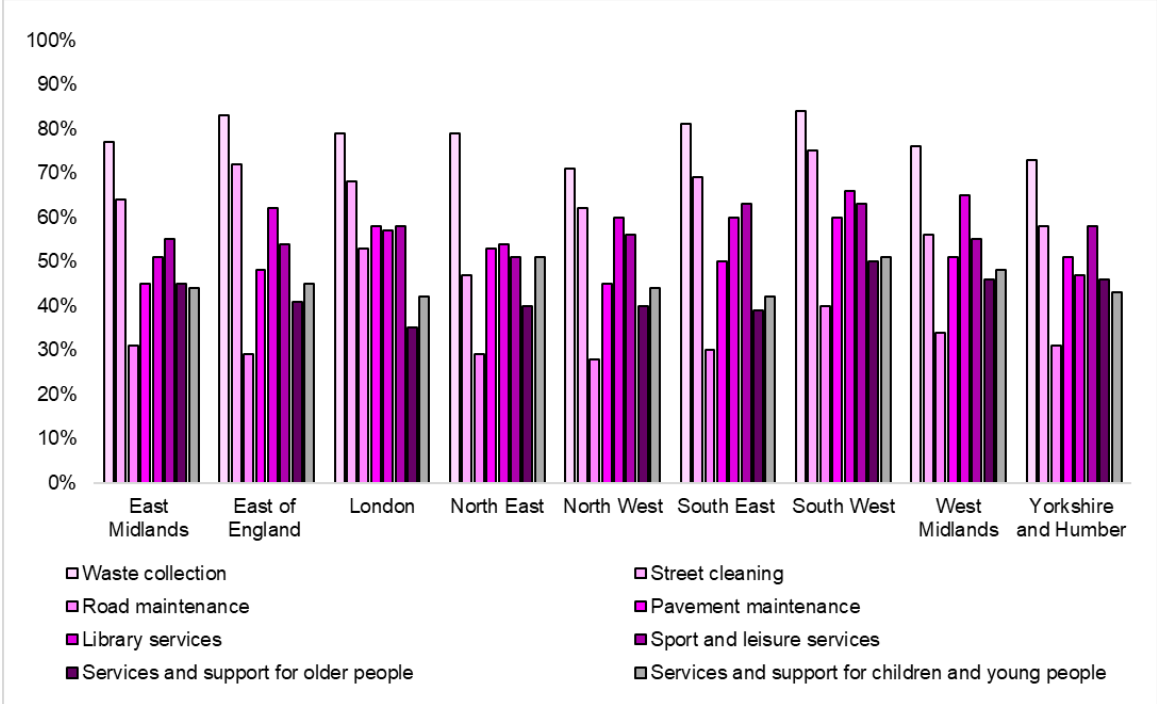
Base (all respondents): 3010 British adults in 2016/17

**Figure 12: Proportion 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with each service – 2017/18**



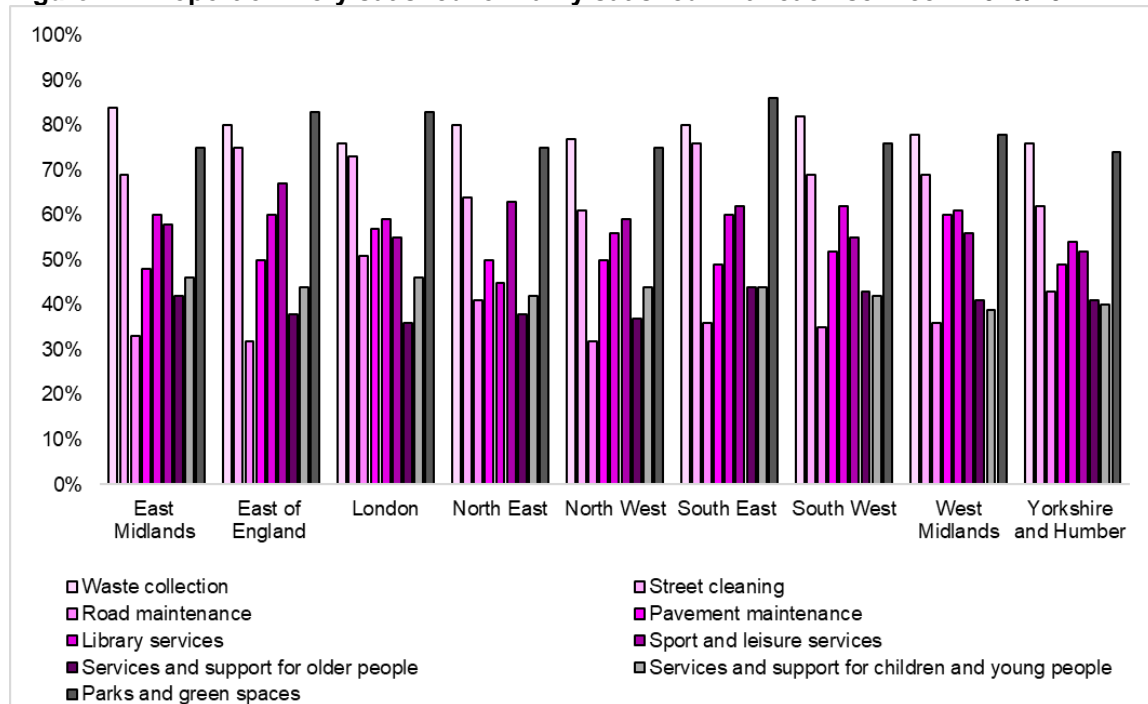
Base (all respondents): 3006 British adults in 2017/18

**Figure 13: Proportion 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with each service – 2018/19**



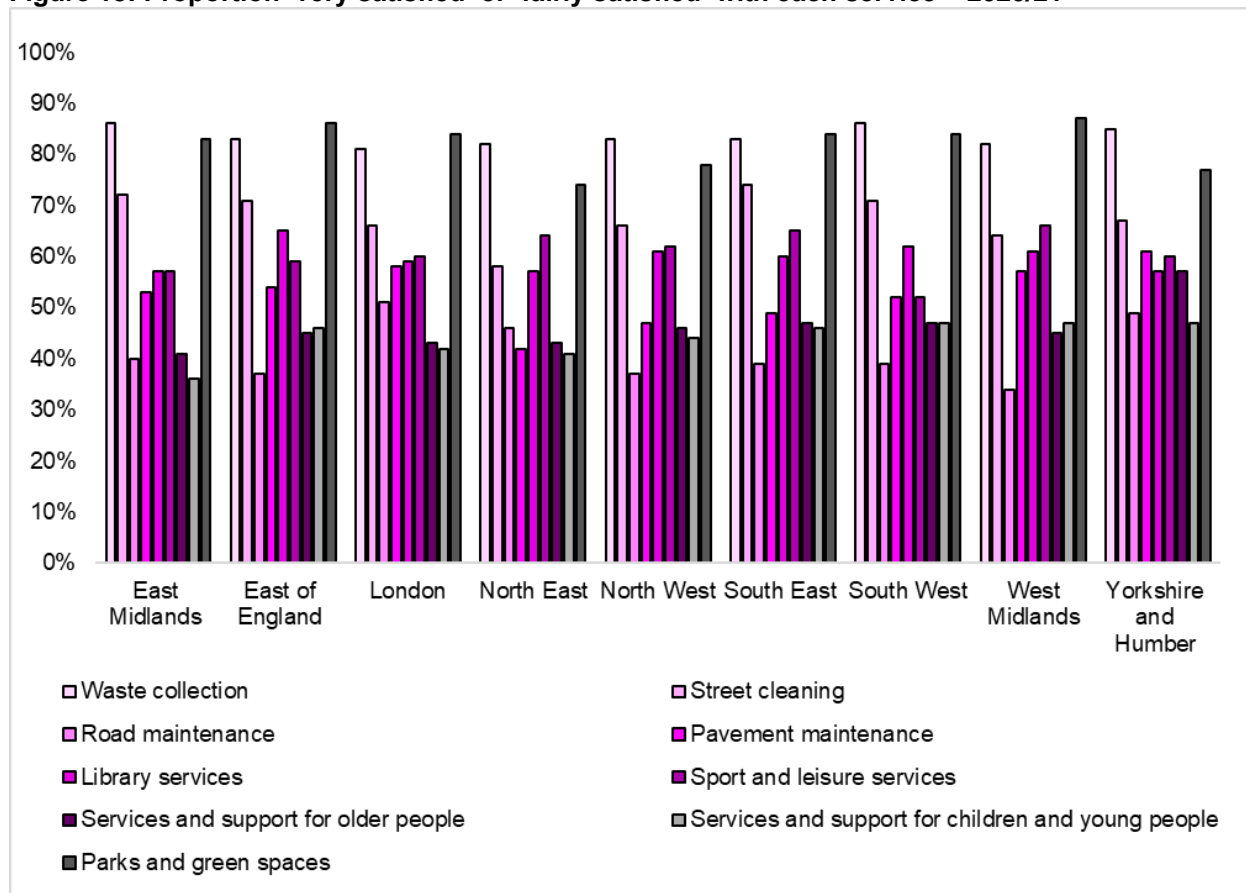
Base (all respondents): 3006 British adults in 2018/19

**Figure 14: Proportion 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with each service – 2019/20**



Base (all respondents): 3012 British adults in 2019/20

**Figure 15: Proportion 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with each service – 2020/21**



Base (all respondents): 3005 British adults in 2020/21

## Annex A: Full data tables

Full data tables can be viewed via these links:

- [2016 to 2017 data tables](#)
- [2017 to 2018 data tables](#)
- [2018 to 2019 data tables](#)
- [2019 to 2020 data tables](#)
- [2020 to 2021 data tables](#)

## Annex B: Polling questions

*NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: On treatment of 'don't know' throughout the survey: a specific reference to 'don't know' should not be included in the answer lists. The interviewer can, however, code this answer if it is given spontaneously.*

### INTRODUCTION

I would like to ask you some questions about your local council. Local councils are responsible for a range of services such as refuse collection, street cleaning, planning, education, social care services and road maintenance.

If you live in an area with more than one council, please think about the way in which they deliver services to you overall. This would include district and county councils. We are doing this to keep the survey simple as it is part of a national study.

#### **1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?**

Please consider your local area to be the area within 15–20 minutes walking distance from your home.

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

#### **2. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your local council(s) runs things?**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

In considering the next question, please think about the range of services your local council(s) provides to the community as a whole, as well as the services your household uses. It does not matter if you do not know all of the services your local council(s) provides to the community. We would like your general opinion.

#### **3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local council(s) provides value for money?**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree

**4. To what extent do you think your local council(s) acts on the concerns of local residents?**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Not very much
- Not at all

**5. Overall, how well informed do you think your local council(s) keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- Very well informed
- Fairly well informed
- Not very well informed
- Not well informed at all

**6. How much do you trust your local council(s)?**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Not very much
- Not at all

**7. Who do you trust most to make decisions about how services are provided in your local area?**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY  
RANDOMISE ORDER

- Your local council(s)
- The government
- Neither (not read out but the interviewer can code if given spontaneously)

**8. And which individuals do you trust most to make decisions about how services are provided in your local area?**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY  
RANDOMISE ORDER

- Local councillors
- Members of parliament
- Government ministers
- None of the above (not read out but the interviewer can code if given spontaneously)

**9. How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area after dark?**



Please consider your local area to be the area within 15–20 minutes walking distance from your home

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- Very safe
- Fairly safe
- Neither safe nor unsafe
- Fairly unsafe
- Very unsafe

**10. How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area during the day?**

Please consider your local area to be the area within 15 – 20 minutes walking distance from your home

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY

- Very safe
- Fairly safe
- Neither safe nor unsafe
- Fairly unsafe
- Very unsafe

**11. I am going to read out a number of different types of services that are provided by your council(s) in your area. I would like you to tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are overall with your council's...**

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY PER OPTION

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

RANDOMISE ORDER

- Waste collection
- Street cleaning
- Road maintenance
- Pavement maintenance
- Library services
- Sport and leisure services
- Services and support for older people
- Services and support for children and young people
- Parks and green spaces

**End and thanks.**



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