About your local area

- The most important things that people thought made an area a good place to live included the level of crime (cited by 61 per cent of people), clean streets (45 per cent), health services (44 per cent), affordable decent housing (33 per cent) and public transport (32 per cent).

- The things that people thought most needed improving in their local area included activities for teenagers (cited by 46 per cent of people), road and pavement repairs (41 per cent), the level of traffic congestion (36 per cent), the level of crime (31 per cent) and clean streets (28 per cent).

Your local public services

- 71 per cent of people agreed local public services treat all types of people fairly. 64 per cent agreed that local public services are working to make the local area safer and 66 per cent agreed they were working to make the area cleaner and greener.

- 42 per cent of people agreed that local public services promote the interests of local residents and 44 per cent agreed that local public services act on the concerns of local residents.

Information

- 39 per cent felt very well or fairly well informed about local public services.

- The highest levels of awareness related to how to register to vote (90 per cent) and how council tax is spent (62 per cent).

- The lowest levels of awareness related to what to do in a large-scale emergency (15 per cent) and how to get involved in local decision-making (32 per cent).
Getting involved

- 4 per cent of people have been involved in decision-making groups relating to education or health in the previous 12 months and 3 per cent involved with groups relating to regeneration, crime, tenants, or young people.

- 6 per cent of people have been a member of other groups making decisions on services in the local community in the previous 12 months.

Community Safety

- 51 per cent of people feel very safe or safe after dark when outside in their local area.

- Of all the different types of anti-social behaviour, teenagers hanging around the streets caused the most concern with 43 per cent of people thinking that this was a very big or fairly big problem in their local area.

- 37 per cent of people think that rubbish or litter lying around was a very big or fairly big problem in their local area.

- 33 per cent of people think vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles was a very big or fairly big problem in their local area.
Introduction

The 2008 Place Survey provides information on people’s perceptions of their local area and the local services they receive. A first set of results from the survey were released by the Department in June 2009. The previous release\(^1\) focussed on results relating to the 18 National Indicators for local government and questions relating to satisfaction with local services, perceived value for money and overall satisfaction with local services.

This release summarises the remaining data from the survey, such as citizens' priorities for their local area, further information on the perceived quality of local services and more information about crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Place Survey was designed primarily for use at the local level. National and regional figures are provided here for benchmarking purposes.

The accompanying tables cover all the Place Survey data.

About your local area

The earlier release showed that, overall, 80 per cent of the population in England were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live. When asked about their home as a place to live 89 per cent were very or fairly satisfied.

The survey collects information on what local citizens consider as priorities in their local area and what should be priorities for improvement. Respondents were asked to select up to five priorities and five areas for improvement. Among the most important factors that make somewhere a good place to live were the level of crime (cited by 61 per cent), clean streets (45 per cent), health services (44 per cent), affordable decent housing (33 per cent) and public transport (32 per cent).

The five factors most often seen as requiring improvement include activities for teenagers (cited by 46 per cent), road and pavement repairs (41 per cent), the level of traffic congestion (36 per cent) and two factors also seen as most important in making somewhere a good place to live - crime (31 per cent) and clean streets (28 per cent).

What is most important in making somewhere a good place to live; and what needs improving in the local area, England

![Bar chart showing the most important and needs improving aspects in local areas, with percentages for each category.]

Your local public services

The previous release reported that, overall, 45 per cent of people were either satisfied or fairly satisfied with their local council.

As well as asking about specific services, the Place Survey asks whether local public services are working to improve the local area in specific ways. 71 per cent of people agreed that local public services either to a great deal or some extent treat all types of people fairly and around two-thirds thought that local public services were working to make their area cleaner and greener and safer. Less than half of people agreed that local public services act on the concerns of local residents or promote the interests of local residents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Who think that local public services, either a great deal or some extent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…are working to make the area safer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey also asks about satisfaction with five other public sector bodies - the local Police force, the local Fire & Rescue Service, GP (family doctor), local hospital and local dentist. For the three health-related services the percentage of people very satisfied or satisfied varied between 69 per cent and 81 per cent.

There were marked differences in satisfaction levels for the two emergency services, with 81 per cent of people very or fairly satisfied with their local fire and rescue services compared to 56 per cent of people satisfied with the local police service.

Caution is needed when comparing satisfaction rates across different services. The drivers of satisfaction are likely to be complex, reflecting the inherent nature of the public service being provided. For example, people's interactions with the police are more varied and complex than with, for example, the fire service.

Looking at regional differences within different services, satisfaction with the local police force was lowest in the East Midlands (51 per cent) and highest in the North East (61 per cent). For all three health-related services, satisfaction was lowest in London.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>North East</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>Yorkshire &amp; the Humber</th>
<th>East Midlands</th>
<th>West Midlands</th>
<th>East of England</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>South East</th>
<th>South West</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your local Police force</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your local Fire &amp; Rescue Service</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your GP (Family doctor)</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your local hospital</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your local dentist</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The earlier release asks about levels of satisfaction for specific local services. For most services relating to the environment (refuse collection, doorstep recycling and local tips and waste recycling centres) satisfaction levels were 70 per cent or more. With the exception of libraries (69 per cent), satisfaction levels were below 50 per cent for sports, leisure and cultural services that local councils provide (sports and leisure facilities, museums and galleries and theatres and concert halls).
For a number of services the survey asks about frequency of use. Parks and open spaces were the most frequently used - 81 per cent had used their local park or open space in the previous six months - with 77 per cent having used local tips/household waste recycling centres over the same period. The least often used services related to sports and cultural facilities, in particular theatres and concert halls (32 per cent) and museums and galleries (26%).

**Frequency of use of public services, England**

![Graph showing frequency of use of public services, England](image)

Information

The survey asked a number of questions about how well informed people feel about access to specific information. Overall, 39 per cent of the population feel very well or fairly well informed about local public services. People feel most informed about how and where to register to vote (90 per cent) followed by how council tax is spent (62 per cent). People were less informed about how to complain about local services (35 per cent), how to get involved in local decision making (32 per cent) and what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency (15 per cent).
Getting involved

The survey asked people about participation in decisions that affect the local community, for example by serving as a local councillor or being part of some decision-making body relating to local services. The previous release showed that, overall, 14 per cent were engaged in some sort of civic participation.

For most of the specific groups identified in the survey (e.g. education, health, regeneration, crime) the percentage of the population involved in the last 12 months varied between 3 and 4 per cent, with a higher proportion (6 per cent) for a generic 'other group' category.

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2 The Place Survey asked about awareness of what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency, including human pandemic flu. Since the survey was undertaken in late 2008 the results will not have been influenced by the 2009 swine flu pandemic and associated news stories and awareness campaigns. The results presented here are therefore unlikely to reflect the current level of awareness among the general population.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% In the last twelve months who have been…, England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A local councillor (for local authority, town or parish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of a group making decisions on local health or education services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of a decision-making group set up to regenerate the local area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of a decision-making group set up to tackle local crime problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of a tenants’ group decision making committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of a group making decisions on local services for young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of another group making decisions of services in the local community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community safety

The Place Survey collected detailed information on peoples’ perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour in their local area and the extent to which they felt that the police and other local services were dealing with these problems.

The previous release reported that 20 per cent felt that anti-social behaviour was a problem in their local area with a higher proportion in London (26 per cent) and lower levels in the South East (16 per cent) and the South West (15 per cent). The survey asks more general questions, about perceived safety when outside in your local area after dark and during the day. People in the South West felt the safest compared to other regions when outside in their local area both after dark (60 per cent) and during the day (92 per cent). People in London felt the least safe when outside in their local area both after dark (44 per cent) and during the day (85 per cent) compared to other regions. Unsurprisingly, citizens in regions that reported greater problems with anti-social behaviour felt less safe after dark.
% Agreed that anti-social behaviour is a very big or fairly big problem
% Feel very safe or fairly safe after dark; and during the day, by Government Office region and England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% agreed that anti-social behaviour is a very big or fairly big problem</th>
<th>% feel safe or fairly safe After dark…</th>
<th>During the day…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humber</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>England</strong></td>
<td><strong>20%</strong></td>
<td><strong>51%</strong></td>
<td><strong>88%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous release reported levels of concerns with two specific forms of anti-social behaviour – people using or dealing drugs (31 per cent) and people being drunk or rowdy in public places (29 per cent). The survey asks about five other forms of crime or anti-social behaviour. Of these, 'teenagers hanging around the streets' was perceived as the most problematic (43 per cent felt this to be a very big or fairly big problem). As noted in the earlier question about what needs improving in your local area, 46 per cent of people think 'activities for teenagers' to be a top priority that needs improving. People felt noisy neighbours (14 per cent) and abandoned or burnt out cars (7 per cent) were less of a problem in their area compared to other types of anti-social behaviour.
Use of survey data for local and national performance measurement

Some of the results of the Place Survey inform the measurement of the performance of local government.

The survey collected information on 18 national indicators for local government, used to monitor performance in 152 local authorities (county councils, metropolitan district councils, London boroughs and unitary authorities). 2008 was the first year that the Place Survey was run, and therefore its primary purpose was to supply baseline figures. A further survey is due to be run in Autumn 2010.

The Place Survey is designed primarily for use at the local level. Other government surveys, such as the Citizenship and British Crime Surveys, should be used at the national and regional level where identical questions are asked.

The results of the Place Survey can also be used to measure some indicators in Public Service Agreements (PSAs) 15, 17, 21, 23 and 25 and the Department Strategic Objectives (DSOs) for Communities and Local Government, Cabinet Office, Home Office and the Department of Health.

Figures aggregated across certain deprived local authority areas are to be used to measure Communities and Local Government’s Department Strategic Objectives (DSO) indicators 3.4 (overall satisfaction) and 3.9 iv (perceptions of anti-social behaviour).

Figures for these indicators will be published in due course.

Data source

The Place Survey was run between September and December 2008 but designed to reflect the structure of local government from 1st April 2009, when five new county and four new unitary authorities were established. For example, in the North West, the survey was designed to cover the new Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester unitary authorities, rather than the former district councils that existed until 1st April 2009.

In total, 329 local authorities ran the survey. Twenty four county councils chose to conduct a survey in partnership with their districts - their results are based on weighted aggregates of Place Surveys conducted within constituent districts.

Each individual council was responsible for running the survey in their local area, using a core questionnaire supplied by Communities and Local Government. A copy of the questionnaire and a copy of manual supplied to local authorities can be found on the Department's website: http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/placesurveymanual0809

Local authorities had the option of adding additional questions (from the “question bank” in the above link). These were not collected centrally so are not included in this statistical release or the accompanying tables.

543,713 questionnaires were completed. Unweighted data were supplied by councils to the Audit Commission. Following a review of the survey conducted by Communities and Local Government, adjustments were made to the provisional data results and confidence intervals. The review and the changes to the data are discussed in the following section.

Each questionnaire should have been completed by any resident aged 18 or over living at an address.

Data quality

Unlike other surveys (e.g. the Citizenship Survey), the Place Survey was not run by a single contractor under a single contract - each local authority was responsible for running its own survey. Ensuring data quality was complicated, given the large number of separate surveys. Quality was assured in a number of ways.

The Place Survey manual detailed eight common standards that needed to be followed when conducting the survey: following the timetable, using the questionnaire template, using the appropriate sampling method, using a correct sampling frame, using a common method of data
collection (postal), maximising response rates, achieving a sufficient sample to enable statistically reliable data, and submitting results using templates and tools provided on a dedicated Place Survey website.

Communities and Local Government conducted a quality review of the survey, involving an independent academic statistician as well as members of the Government Statistical Service (GSS). The review was based around the principles in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics:


The CLG review considered the impact of low response rates in some areas. There is no evidence that either specific sections of the population or any particular localities have been systematically under-represented. Furthermore an inflation factor was applied to the confidence intervals following the review that has improved the robustness of the results.

A technical report detailing the review's findings and recommendations will be made available on the Communities and Local Government website.

An earlier version of this release was published on 23 September 2009, which contained incorrect results for the clean streets option of q1 - which things are most important in making somewhere a good place to live and q2 - which things most need improving in your local area.

Notes on analysis and data presentation

The tables in this statistics release summarise the findings at Government Office and England level, in order to draw out the general headline figures. The primary purpose of the Place Survey is to collect information at local authority level, to inform performance monitoring. The data in the accompanying tables will therefore be of use for local and central government as well as citizens interested in their local area and the services they receive.

Some of the questions asked in the Place Survey are also asked in the Citizenship Survey and the British Crime Survey. Because of methodological differences between the surveys, results at national and government office level may differ for some questions. The Citizenship and British Crime Surveys are National Statistics and should be used for national level results.

All reported differences between regions in this release are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level. The level of change required to observe a statistically significant difference varies depending on the number of respondents the percentage is based on; and the observed percentage itself.

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3 The main difference is that the Citizenship Survey and British Crime Surveys use face-to-face interviews whereas the Place Survey is a postal survey.
Accompanying tables

Section 1 - 4 Results about your local area; your local public services; information and local decision making for England, Government Office Regions and 353 local authorities

Section 5 - 8 Results about helping out; getting involved; respect and consideration and community safety for England, Government Office Regions and 353 local authorities

The tables cover all the information summarised in both the June 2009 and this current release.

For information on National Indicator results for England, Government Office Regions and 353 local authorities, please see the table that accompanied the previous release in June 2009⁴.

Background notes

Definition of Terms

“Your local area” – when completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to consider “local area” as the area within 15-20 minutes walking distance from your home.

“Civic participation” – the ‘Getting involved’ section defines civic participation as being involved in any of the following in the preceding 12 months:

Being a local councillor (for the local authority, town or parish)

Being a member of a group making local decisions relating to any of the following: local health or education services; regeneration of the local area; to tackle local crime problems; a tenants group; services for young people; and other group making decisions on services in the local community

Other

Details of officials who received pre-release access to the Communities and Local Government Place Survey up to 24 hours before release can be found at:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/statistics/recentreleases

Enquiries

This Statistical Release can be accessed and all text, tables and charts downloaded electronically, from the Communities and Local Government website at:


Further details on this Statistical Release are available from Dan Howard, Communities and Local Government, Zone 4/F6, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU. Telephone 020 7944 5305. E-mail: dan.howard@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

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Information on Official Statistics is available via the UK Statistics Authority website:

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