

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

2006 RESIDENTS SURVEY

GARIOCH AREA REPORT

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Overall Satisfaction

“Net Satisfaction” with the Council in Garioch is higher than that for the whole Council area at 32% compared to 25%. There has been a decrease of 7% in net satisfaction in Garioch in the past two years compared to a 2% decline in the Council as a whole.

Garioch respondents were more likely to be more positive in their responses concerning the Council’s overall performance, though some areas elicited negative responses in common with the rest of the Council area.

Garioch residents are more likely to think the Council is better, rather than worse than other Councils, and to a slightly greater extent than is the case for respondents from Aberdeenshire Council as a whole.

Customer Service and Contact Management

Telephone is typically the preferred method of contacting the Council for most service users within Garioch.

Garioch residents are in general more satisfied with their contact with the Council than for Aberdeenshire residents as a whole.

Satisfaction with complaint handling remains a concern, however, particularly with the extent to which people are kept in touch with regarding their complaint.

Home internet penetration is higher than the Aberdeenshire and UK figures at 64%, with 50% of internet users having visited the Council’s web site. There is a willingness amongst internet users to use the Council’s web site to transact a range of business, broadly in line with the rest of respondents from the Council area as a whole.

The Communities of Aberdeenshire and Garioch

Garioch residents feel the Council does as good a job of making towns and villages attractive compared to other Aberdeenshire residents.

There is a concern, however, about the extent to which the Council is perceived to be taking account of the impact of its planning decisions on local facilities and services, and this is evident to a greater extent in Garioch than elsewhere in Aberdeenshire.

Affordable housing is seen as an important issue and residents are willing to countenance house building in a variety of places although there is significant resistance to large-scale house building outwith existing settlements. It is noted that residents in Garioch are more likely to feel there is a shortage of affordable housing.

Community spirit and vibrancy in Garioch is rated significantly higher when compared to the rest of the Council area.

However, people continue to rate the availability of community facilities poorly.

There are similar levels of perceived danger when respondents' personal safety is concerned when they are outside after dark in Garioch, as compared to Aberdeenshire as a whole. However, most people's actual experience of anti-social behaviour is of the low-level, albeit persistent, kind, although Garioch residents are slightly more likely to claim to have been the victim of anti-social behaviour than the average for the Council as a whole.

There has been a substantial movement of population within Garioch in the past five years, as well as an inward migration of 18% from outwith the area.

Grocery shopping tends to be done locally (with a notable minority of shopping taking place elsewhere in Aberdeenshire or in Aberdeen) but "big ticket" items such as white goods see some leakage to the rest of Aberdeenshire and in particular to Aberdeen City. Public services and leisure facilities are, in general, accessed locally, as are employment opportunities (although dentistry is an exception to this). A significant minority have difficulty in accessing these services and opportunities due to transport issues.

Opinions on Garioch's appeal as a visitor destination are positive in the main, although ancillary facilities are rated less highly.

There is a very positive reaction to the economic impact of new workers in Garioch and the welcome they receive, although there is extensive concern over whether local services are coping with this.

There is, at present, unmet demand to participate in voluntary opportunities within Garioch.

Public Transport and Safety

Perception of the quality of public transport is higher in Garioch when compared to the rest of Aberdeenshire.

There is a strong desire for road improvements within Garioch, although this is at a similar level to that of the whole Council.

Some desire is evident for safety measures such as more restricted speed areas, pedestrian zones, driver safety education and traffic calming measures.

There is also some desire for speed cameras within towns and villages (but less demand for such speed cameras on main roads).

Parking is rated reasonably highly in Westhill and within local villages, but is less well regarded in Inverurie.

Satisfaction with Key Services

For those Council services that citizens elect to use, satisfaction ratings from Garioch are generally similar to those for Aberdeenshire as a whole, though those for sports and leisure are notably higher.

With regard to a range of “universal services”, Garioch residents rate these services slightly lower compared to the main sample of residents, with the exception of street lighting, which is rated more positively.

The level of perceived improvement in services is, in the main, lower in Garioch.

Garioch residents would prioritise winter gritting and snow clearing for attention.

A majority of Garioch residents have found the transition to the new refuse collection regime to be easy, with more than two in three respondents now recycling more of their waste as a result.

Social Responsibility

Garioch residents’ views in comparison to those in the rest of Aberdeenshire with regard to perceptions of the Council as a socially responsible organisation are generally more positive.

The view that the Council should be doing more to help communities is less prevalent in Garioch, with slightly more residents believing that individuals themselves should do more to improve their communities.

Council Decision Making, Consultation and Communications

A large majority of survey respondents claim to have voted in the most recent parliamentary and Council elections.

When people have not voted it has normally been due to a general disenchantment with politics, though this is the case to a marginally lesser extent in Garioch.

A high proportion of Aberdeenshire residents are able to name their elected representatives, although Garioch residents are slightly less likely to be able to do so.

Overall scepticism is evident with regard to individuals’ ability to influence the Council’s decision making and to have their views taken into account, though this view is not as strongly held in Garioch.

Despite this, there are strong indications of a desire on the part of many people to take part in civic life.

A notable minority of respondents are dissatisfied with the level of information they receive on Council services and express scepticism as to the extent to which the Council will take account of their views. Garioch residents are only slightly more positive than the Aberdeenshire average, in relation to these issues.

1.0 BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This 2006 Residents survey is the fourth full-scale survey of residents' views which Aberdeenshire Council has undertaken since 2000 (such surveys have now been undertaken in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006). Specific in-depth items of research have also been conducted in the intervening years (2001, 2003, 2005). The survey repeats a number of questions from the previous surveys, to allow for a tracking of changes in perceptions over time. In some cases, it has been possible to track changes back to the 2000 survey. However, as the survey questionnaire was considerably revised and updated in 2002, this has not always been possible.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.2 The original broad aims and objectives of the 2006 Residents' Survey were to:
- To identify issues of importance to Aberdeenshire residents.
 - To determine the key priorities which residents have of the Council and whether these are changing.
 - To determine perceptions of the Council's performance against these priorities.
 - To track changes over time (primarily from the 2002 and 2004 surveys).
 - To link the findings of the residents' survey to elements of the employee survey, thus identifying opportunities for improvement and associated barriers (the 2006 employee survey is now due to take place in December 2006).
 - To contextualise the findings by effective benchmarking with other Councils.
 - To provide an overall "headline" measure of public satisfaction.
 - To assist the process of setting goals, and planning actions, for future improvement.

- 1.3 In previous years, the survey process has incorporated a series of exploratory focus groups with members of the public to help identify issues of concern for the main survey. For the 2006 survey, these focus groups were replaced with a series of consultations with the Council's Area Managers and Chairs of Area Committees, in order to identify areas of current or topical interest in each area. Some of the specific local themes identified included:

Banff and Buchan	Buchan	Formartine
<p>The integration of new workers into the area</p> <p>Banff and Buchan as a tourist destination</p>	<p>Availability of parking</p> <p>The integration of new workers into the area</p>	<p>Changes to the refuse collections and recycling service</p> <p>Volunteering issues</p> <p>Awareness of local organisations</p> <p>Formartine as a tourist destination</p>
Garioch	Kincardine and Mearns	Marr
<p>The integration of new workers into the area</p> <p>Changes to the refuse collection and recycling service</p> <p>Volunteering issues</p> <p>Garioch as a tourist destination</p>	<p>Availability of parking</p> <p>Changes to the refuse collection and recycling service</p> <p>Kincardine and Mearns as a tourist destination</p>	<p>Changes to the refuse collection and recycling service</p> <p>The environment of local towns and villages</p> <p>Volunteering issues</p> <p>Marr as a tourist destination</p>

Some issues were also identified in *all* of the areas, including:

- Local shopping patterns
- Barriers to accessing services
- Usage of Council offices
- Population movements within and across areas
- Aspects of life that people would like to see improved.

These discussions helped to inform some of the “new” questions which were covered in the main survey. In addition, following these discussions, it was decided to incorporate “local inserts” to the survey for each of the Council’s six administrative areas.

This report sets out the detailed findings for Garioch both for the main survey and the “local inserts”.

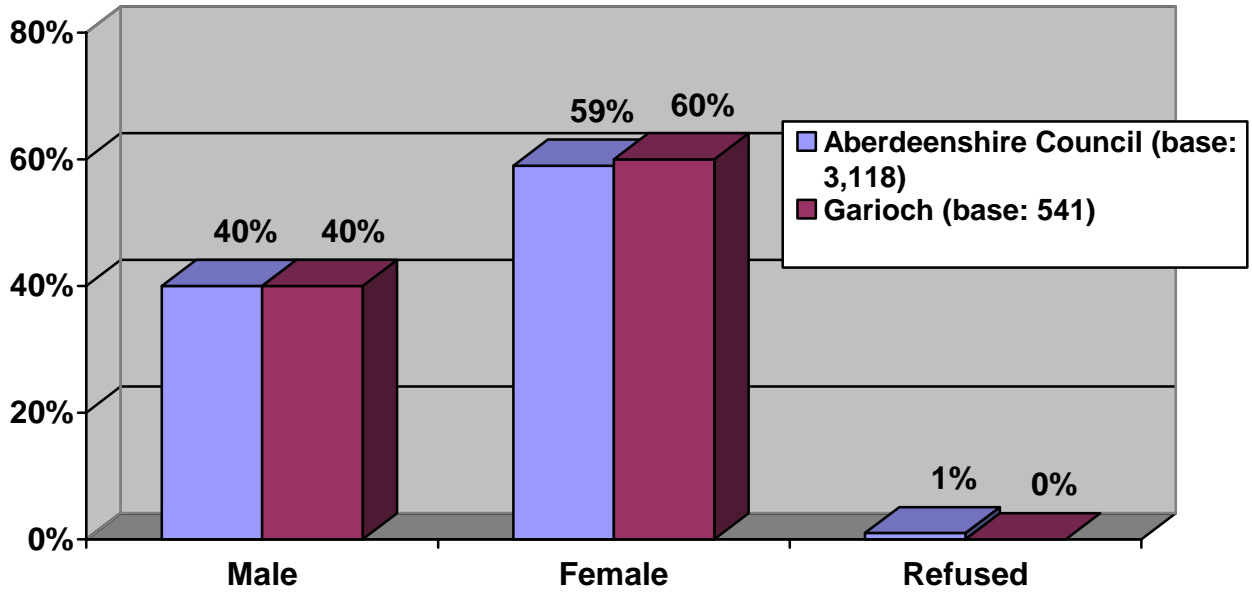
METHODOLOGY

- 1.4 The survey was conducted on a postal basis, with a total of 12,000 invitations being issued, at random, to households in Aberdeenshire, selected to be representative of the population in the Council’s six administrative areas. This approach was broadly similar to that undertaken in 2004, when 12,500 postal invitations were issued.

RESPONSE

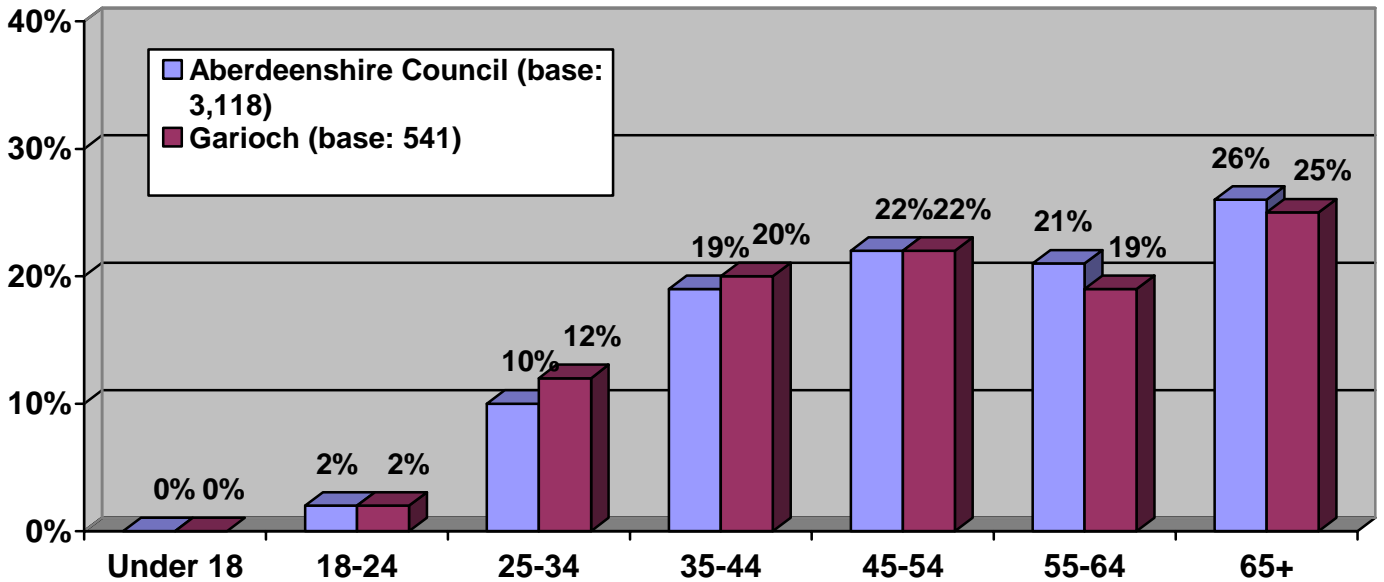
- 1.5 A total of 3,118 responses were received (including 22 responses which were completed online). This represents a response rate of 26.0%. This is within the anticipated range of response rates for surveys of this nature and compares favourably with the 18.9% response rate for the postal component of the 2002 survey and the 22.3% response rate for the 2004 survey. This continued upward trend is encouraging. Within Garioch specifically, 541 respondents were identified.
- 1.6 Figure 1.1 over the page illustrates that the gender mix of respondents in Garioch is similar to that of the overall sample for the whole of the Council area although there is a slightly more pronounced bias towards female respondents than the whole sample. It should be noted that, throughout the report, numbers may not add to 100% due to the effects of rounding.

Figure 1.1: Profile of Respondents (Gender)



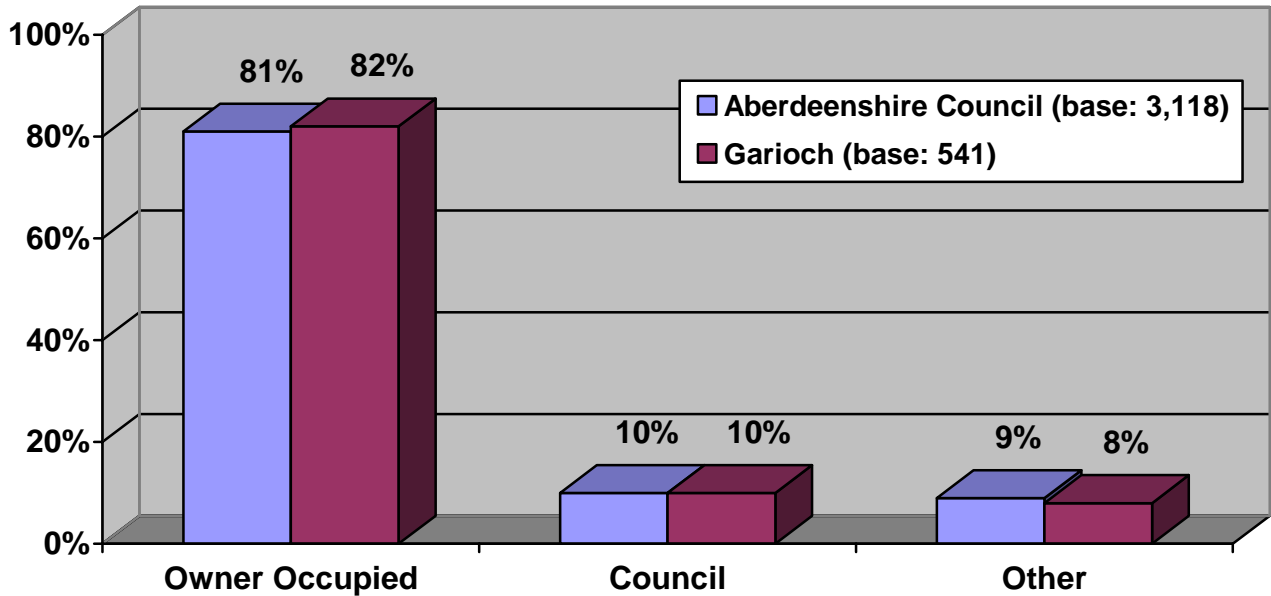
1.7 Figure 1.2 shows that the age profile for Garioch is less skewed towards an older respondent.

Figure 1.2: Profile of Respondents (Age)



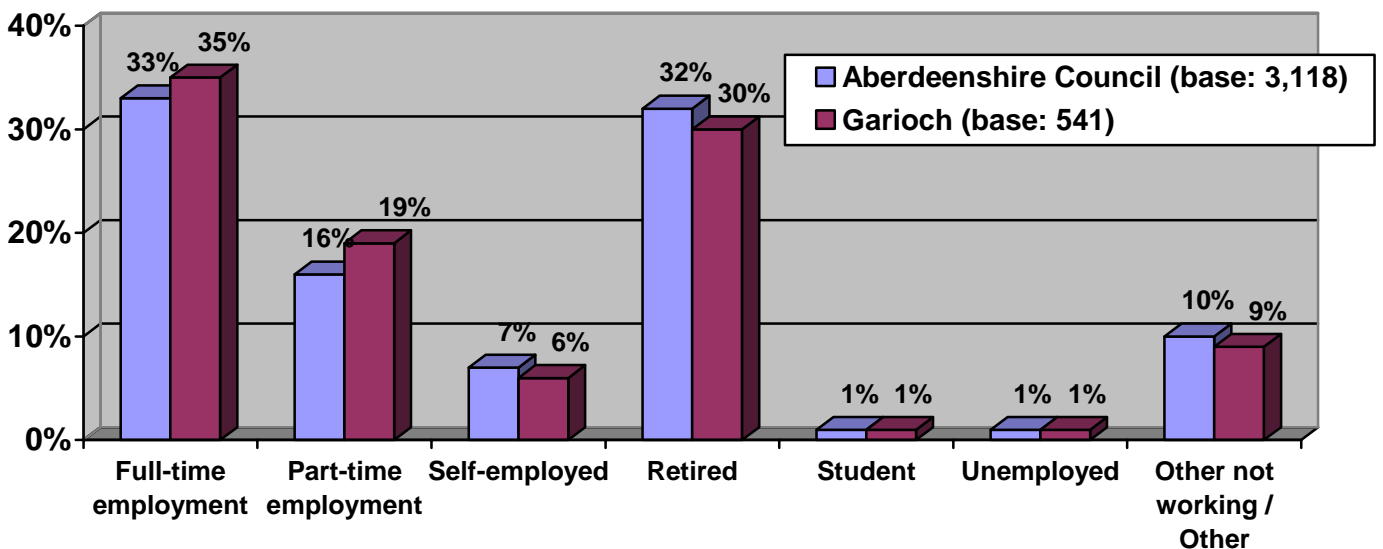
1.8 The profile of respondents in terms of housing tenure is also broadly similar.

Figure 1.3: Profile of Respondents (Housing Tenure)



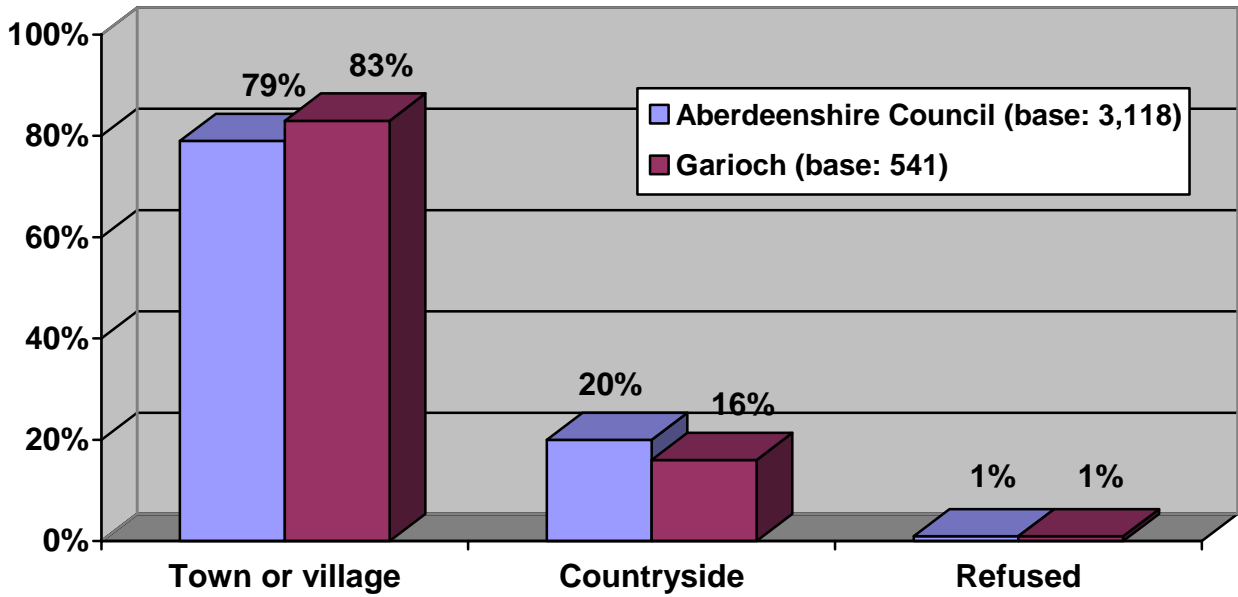
1.9 Slightly, more respondents in Garioch are in employment, with an accompanying lower level of retired respondents, reflecting the relatively younger age profile of Garioch respondents.

Figure 1.4: Profile of Respondents (Employment Status)



1.10 Garioch respondents are slightly more likely to consider themselves as resident in a town or village as opposed to the countryside.

Figure 1.5: Profile of Respondents (Rurality)



1.11 The “local insert” survey questionnaire on which this report is based is available as Appendix 1 which has been provided to the Council under separate cover. Detailed analysis of the results by gender, age, tenure and employment status is available on request. Where variations according to such criteria are of particular significance, they are noted in the analysis which follows.

2.0 OVERALL SATISFACTION

- 2.1 This section sets out patterns of overall satisfaction with Aberdeenshire Council, as identified by the quantitative survey.
- 2.2 A “headline” picture of overall satisfaction comes from levels of agreement with the statement *“I am satisfied with Aberdeenshire Council as a provider of local services”*.

The pattern in responses to this question remains fairly positive as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

Within many of the graphs in this report, “net agreement” figures will be given. That is to say, the figure quoted is the % agreeing with a statement (or expressing satisfaction) less those disagreeing (or expressing dissatisfaction). This allows for agreement and disagreement levels to be taken into account in a single figure, thus allowing for large amounts of data to be summarised easily. Further details of actual agreement and disagreement levels are set out in Appendix 2.

Figure 2.1: Overall Net Satisfaction

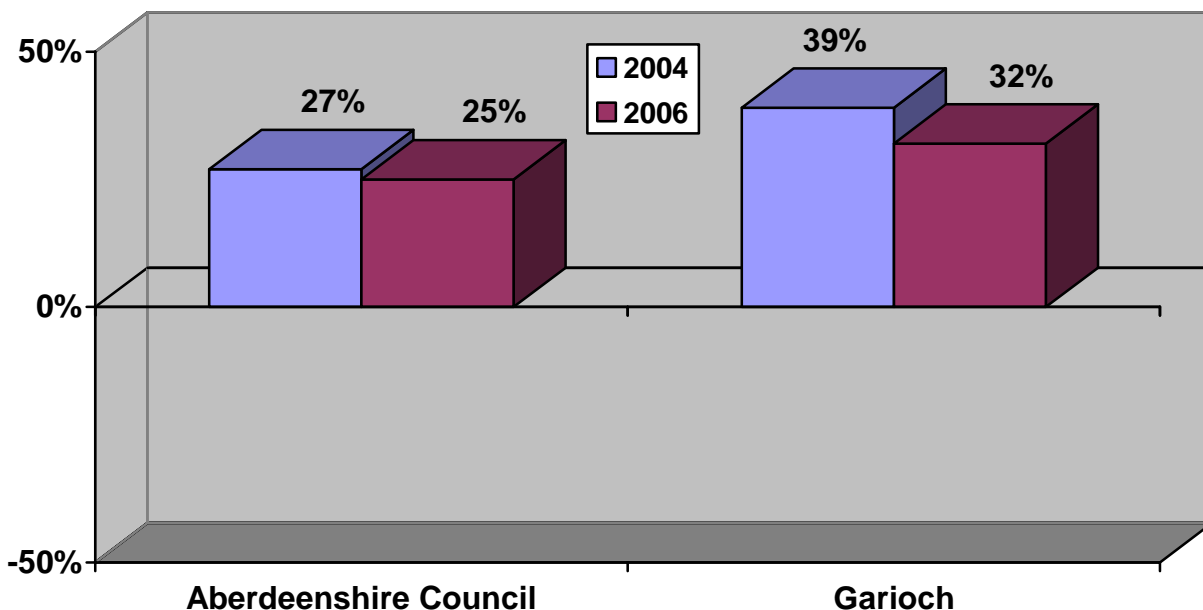
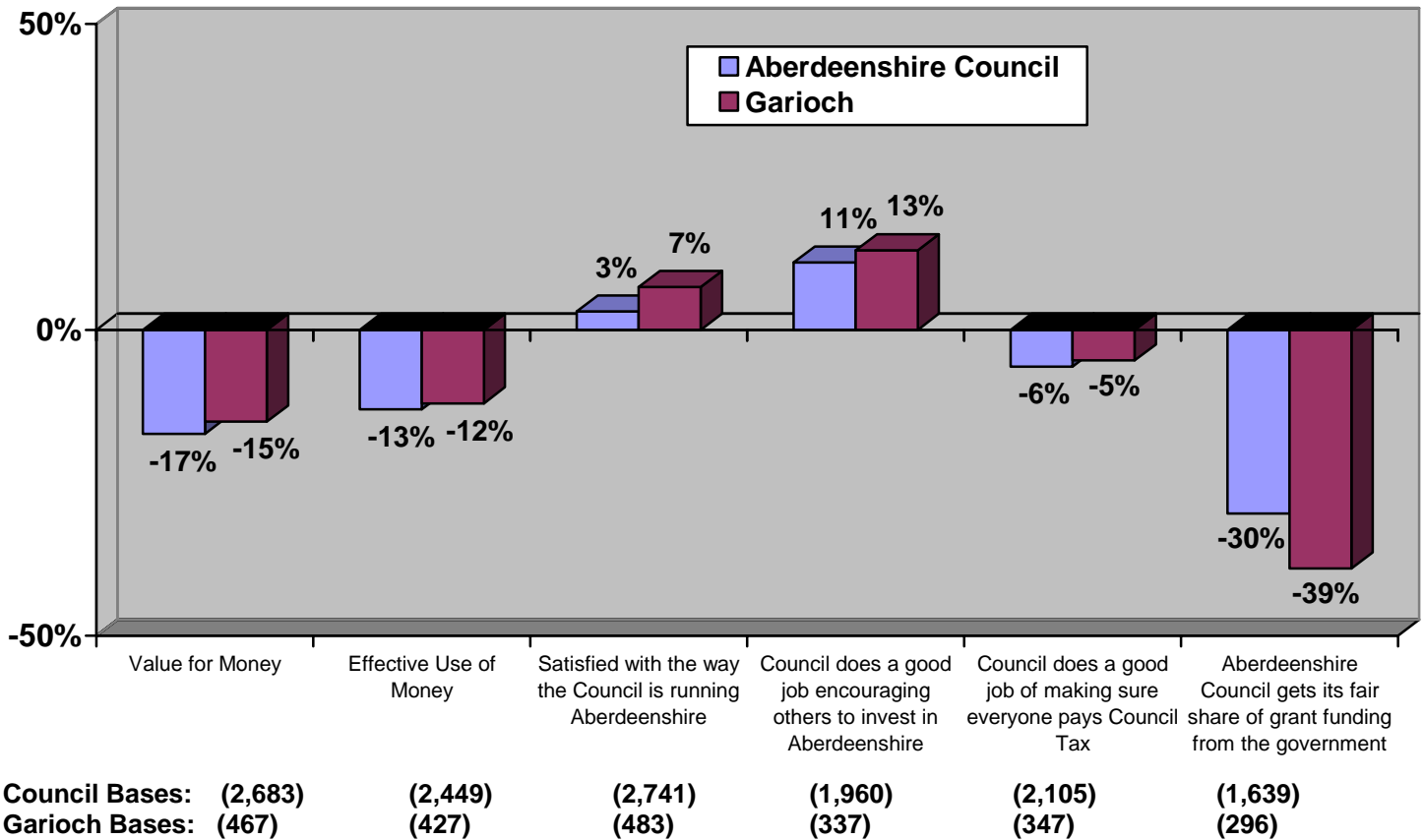


Figure 2.1 demonstrates a net agreement of 25% in 2006 compared to 27% in 2004 for the Aberdeenshire Council area as a whole. However, this moderate decline across the Council is more pronounced in Garioch where net satisfaction with the Council has declined from 39% to 32%, although satisfaction levels remain notably higher in Garioch.

Net satisfaction with the Council is markedly higher amongst urban respondents with net agreement at 36%, compared to rural respondents with net agreement at 14%.

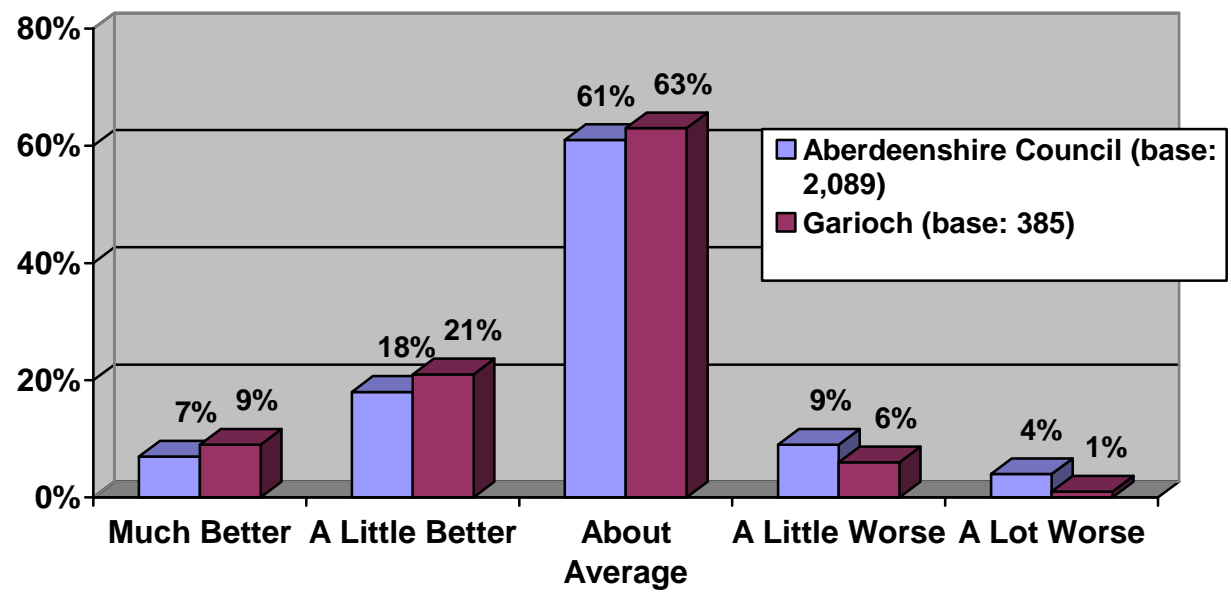
2.3 The overall views of the Aberdeenshire population were explored, with reference to a number of attitudinal statements. As can be seen below, whilst satisfaction levels are in, in the main, higher than in the Council as a whole, respondents' retained a number of negative views with respect to some of these statements. The one exception to this pattern is a more negative view of whether Aberdeenshire receives its fair share of funding from the government.

Figure 2.2: Overall Views on Key Issues



2.4 Despite respondents' net satisfaction with the Council having decreased in Garioch, they are somewhat more likely to compare the Council favourably to other Councils than the sample as a whole.

Figure 2.3: Overall Views (Comparison to Other Councils)



Summary of Key Points

“Net Satisfaction” with the Council in Garioch is higher than that for the whole Council area at 32% compared to 25%. There has been a decrease of 7% in net satisfaction in Garioch in the past two years compared to a 2% decline in the Council as a whole.

Garioch respondents were more likely to be more positive in their responses concerning the Council's overall performance, though some areas elicited negative responses in common with the rest of the Council area.

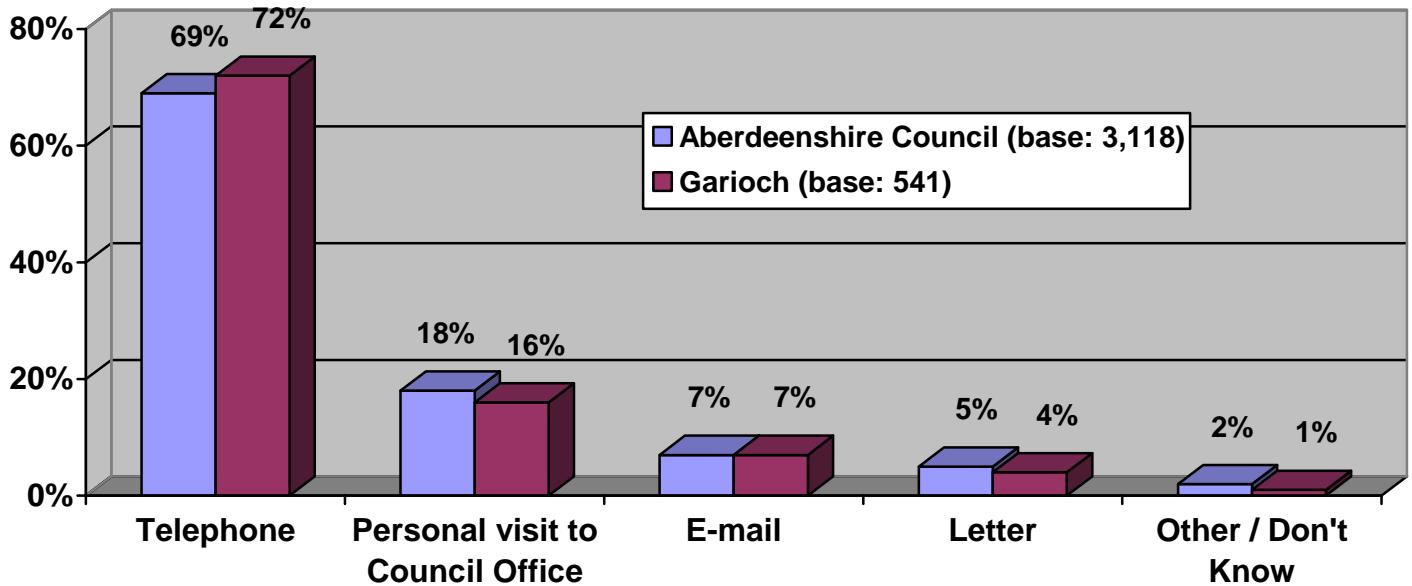
Garioch residents are more likely to think the Council is better, rather than worse, than other Councils and to a slightly greater extent than is the case for respondents from Aberdeenshire Council as a whole.

3.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CONTACT MANAGEMENT

CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

3.1 Garioch residents are slightly more likely to prefer to phone the Council than is the case for the sample of Aberdeenshire residents as a whole.

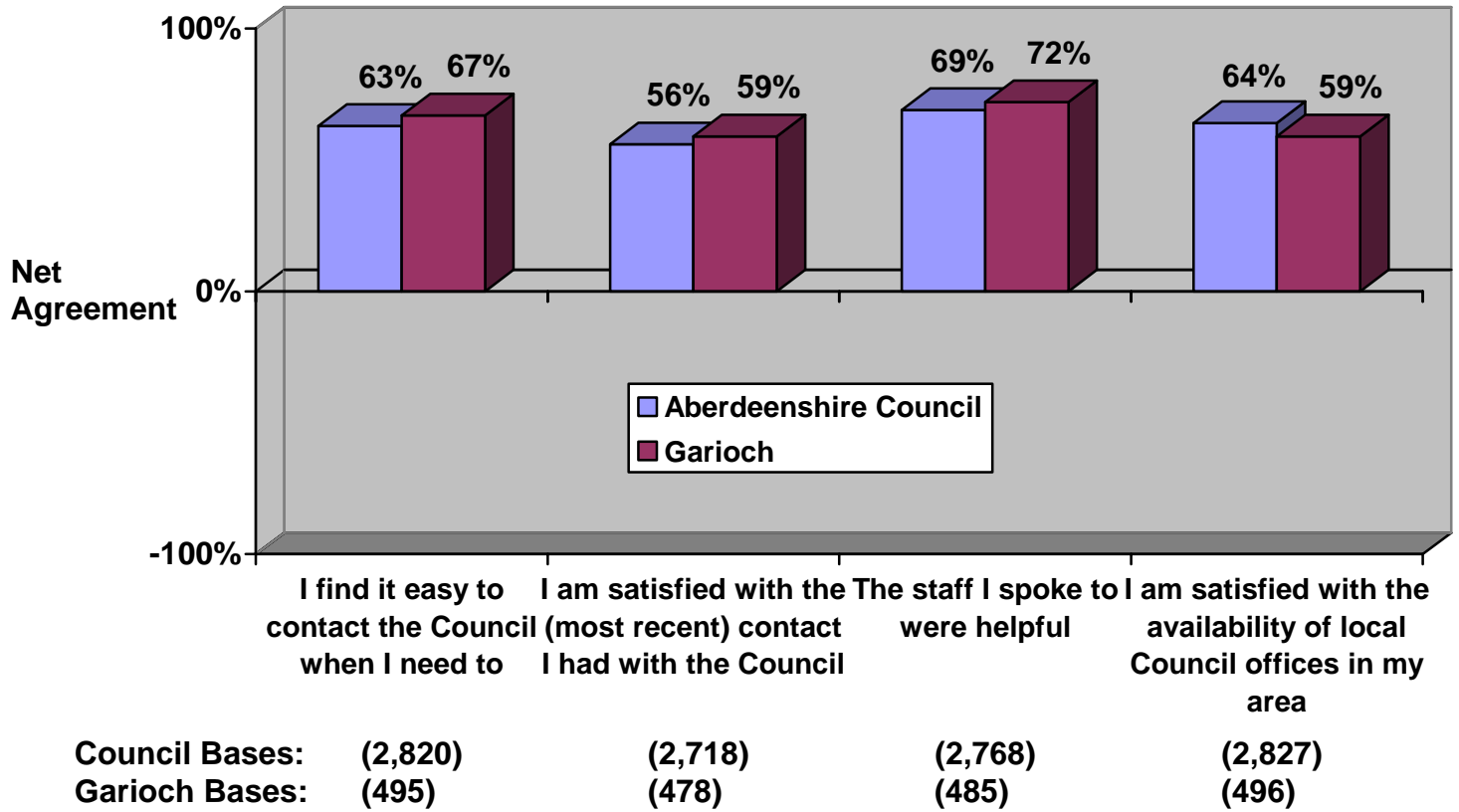
Figure 3.1: Preferred Method of Contacting the Council



Women are more likely to prefer a personal visit to the Council's offices compared to men (78% to 62%) whereas men are more likely to prefer contact the Council by e-mail compared to women (12% to 4%).

3.2 The generally positive ratings achieved by the Council with regard to the ease with which residents can contact them, and also satisfaction with their most recent contact, is higher amongst respondents from Garioch, with the exception of the availability of local Council offices.

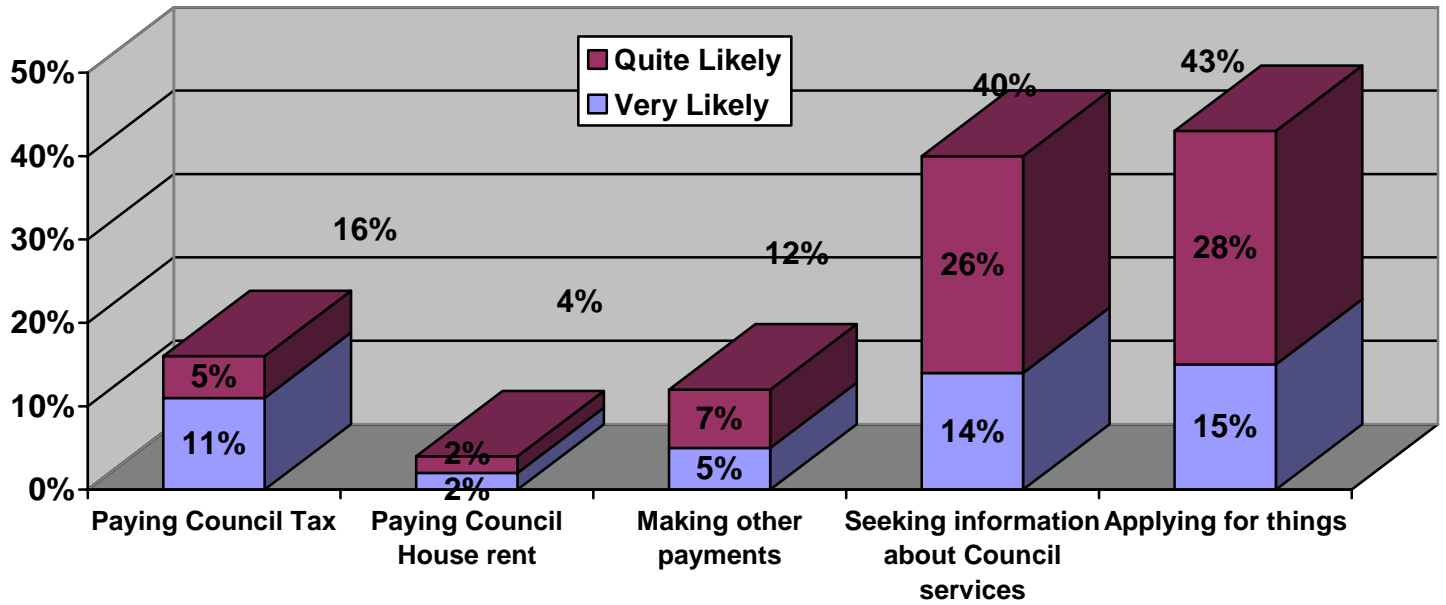
Figure 3.2: Contacting the Council



3.3 58% of Garioch respondents have used the Council's offices (in Inverurie) in the past, with 33% having used them in the past year.

Figure 3.3 shows respondents belief of how likely they would be to use the Council's offices in the future for a range of services.

Figure 3.3: Likelihood of Future Use of Council Offices



Base: 537

3.4 Figures 3.4(a) and (b) below map out net satisfaction ratings for a range of customer service attributes. These issues are arranged in the order of importance that was ascribed to them in the 2004 survey.

Figure 3.4(a): Rating of Service Attributes

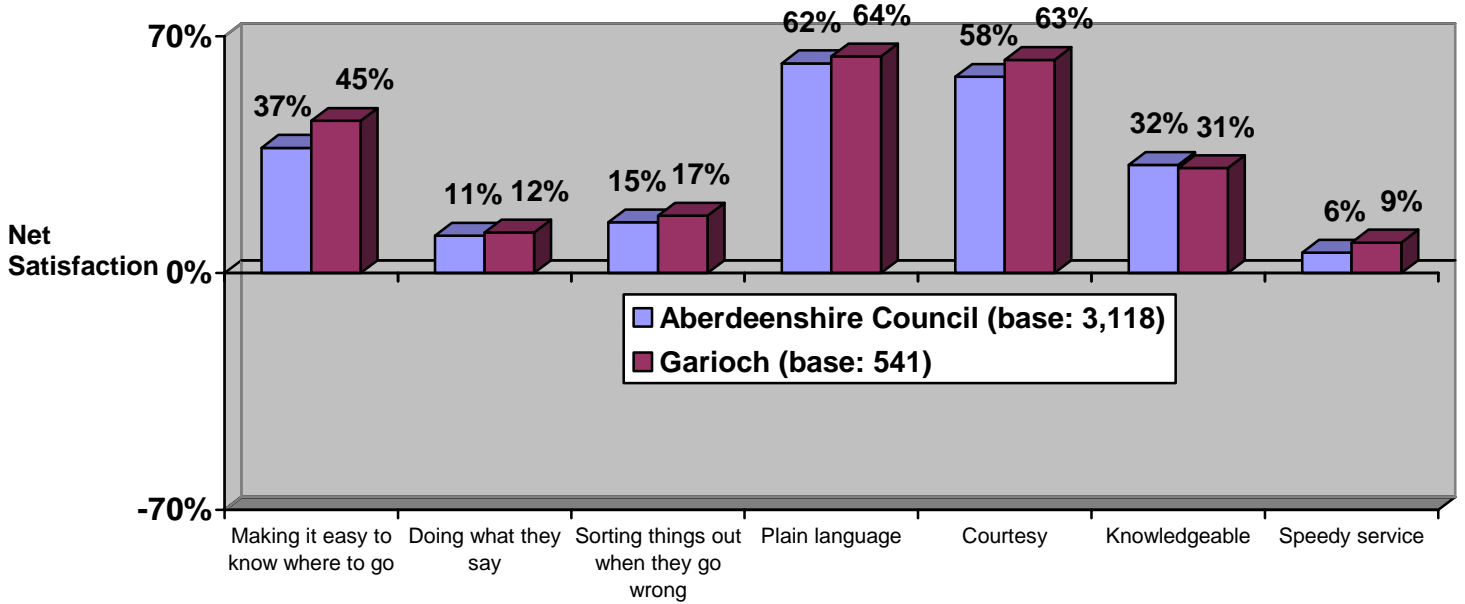
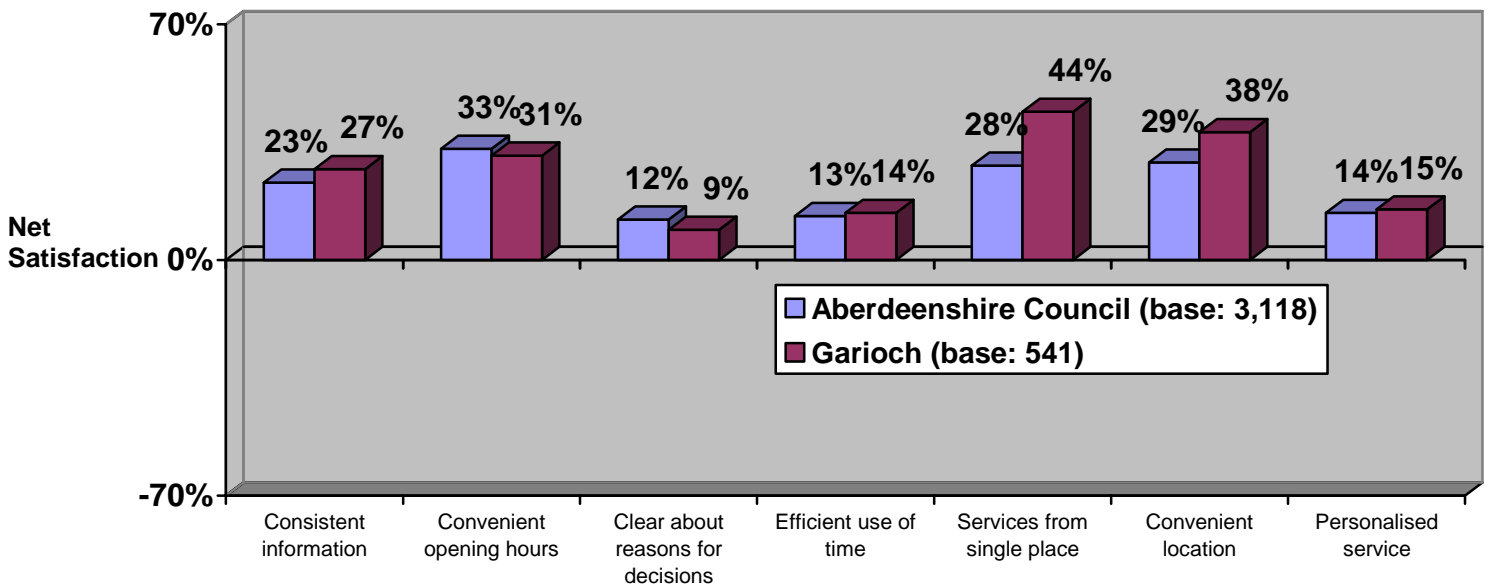


Figure 3.4(b): Rating of Service Attributes



There are no significant variations in the ratings that Garioch residents give to these attributes as compared to the whole sample, with the exception of convenience of location and being able to access services from a single place which achieve notably higher amongst Garioch respondent. Garioch residents generally rate the Council's customer service more highly than the rest of Aberdeenshire residents.

3.5 Figures 3.5(a) and (b) compares the mean ratings achieved for each of these attributes, between Garioch and for the whole of Aberdeenshire, where a five point scale from very good to very poor was utilised. For example, a very good rating receives a score of plus 2, a good rating a score of plus 1, an average rating a zero score, poor rating a score of minus 1 and a very poor rating a score of minus 2.

Figure 3.5(a): Customer Service Ratings

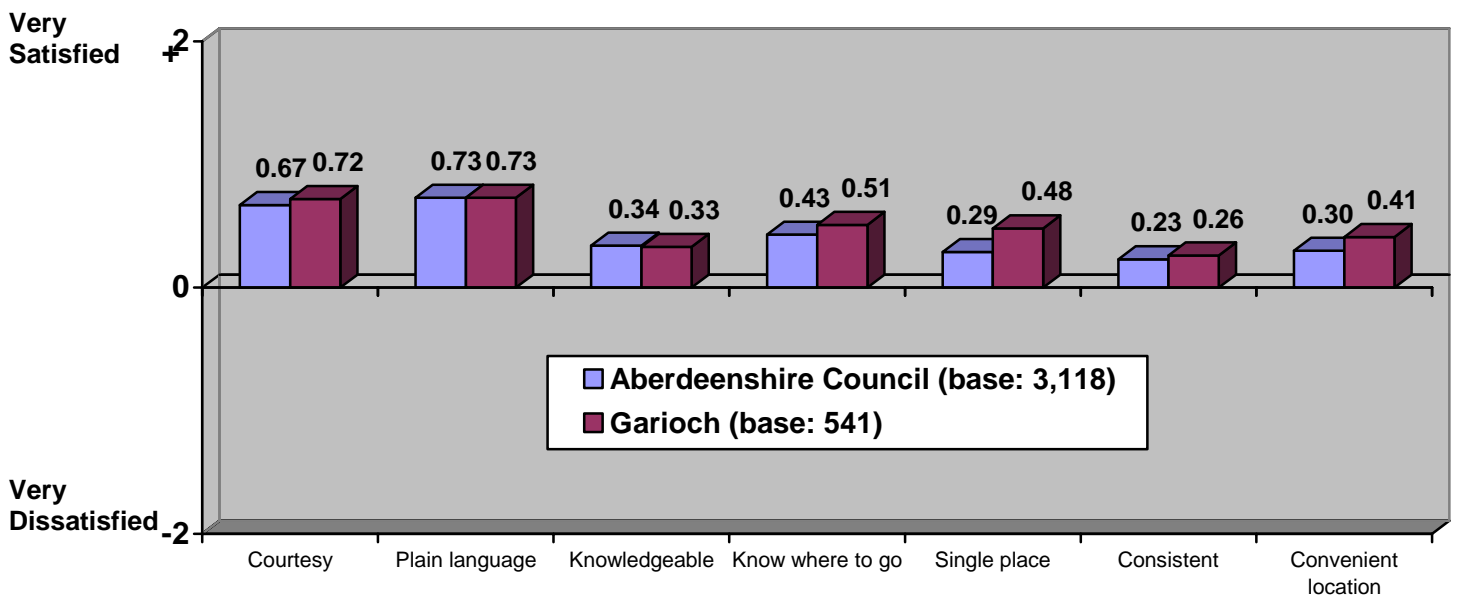
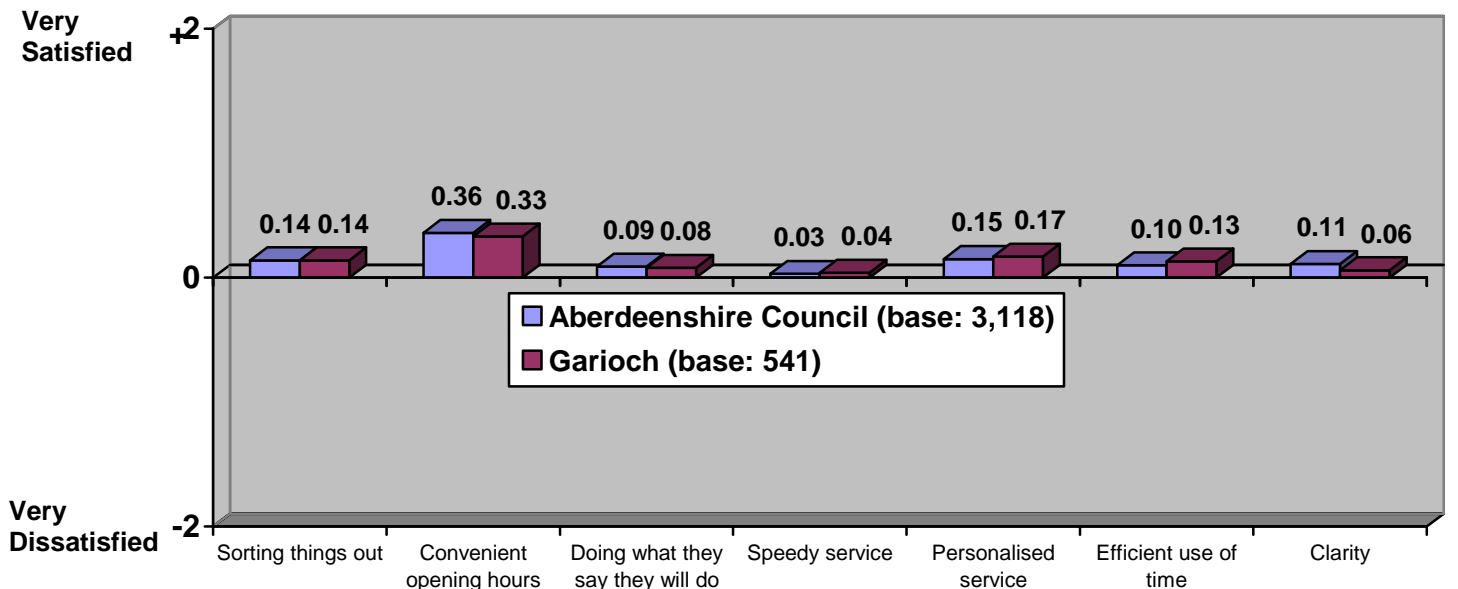


Figure 3.5(b): Customer Service Ratings

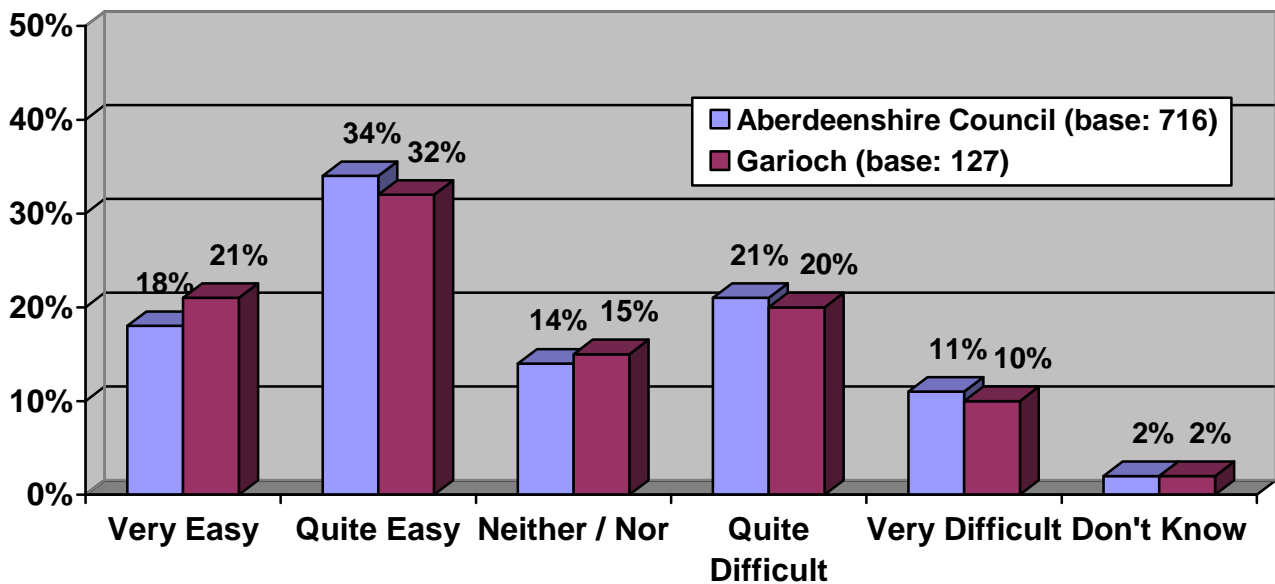


Again, the mean ratings are generally higher when comparing Garioch to the whole Council area.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

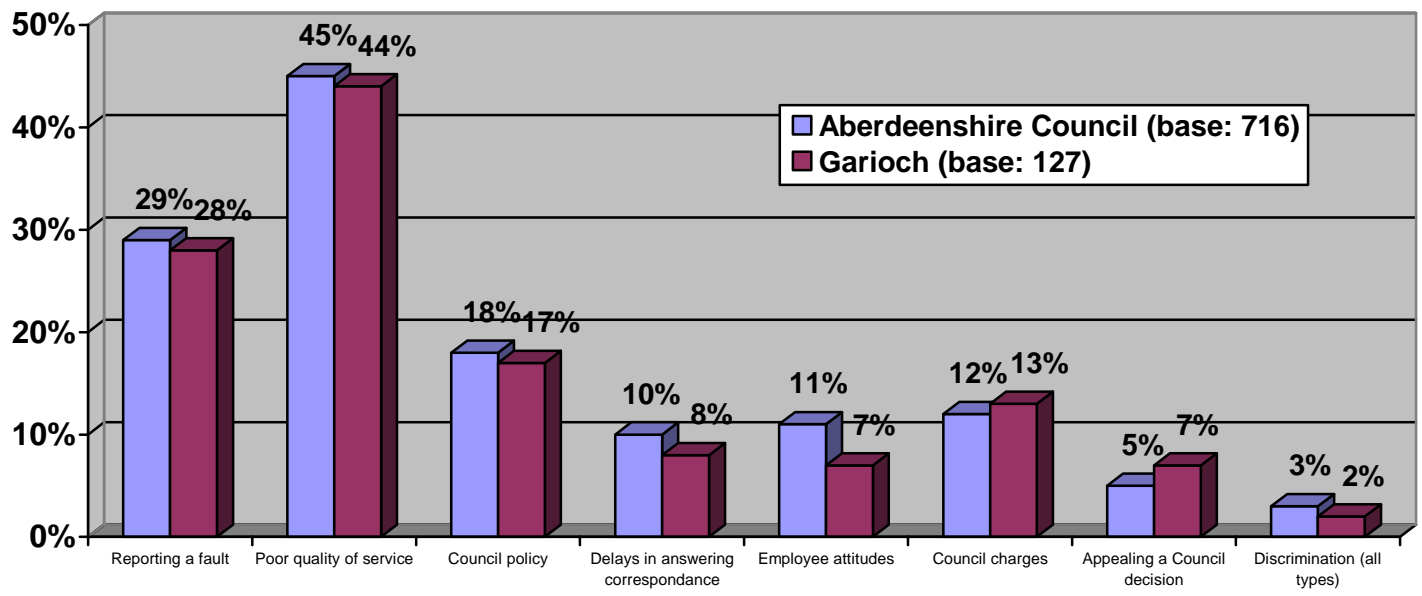
- 3.6 23% of Garioch respondents, which is the same proportion as the whole Council sample, claimed to have made a complaint to the Council “in the past 12 months”.
- 3.7 As illustrated in Figure 3.6 below, the majority of people find it easy to make their complaint, although a minority did not, with Garioch residents finding it slightly easier to make their complaint.

Figure 3.6: Ease of Making a Complaint



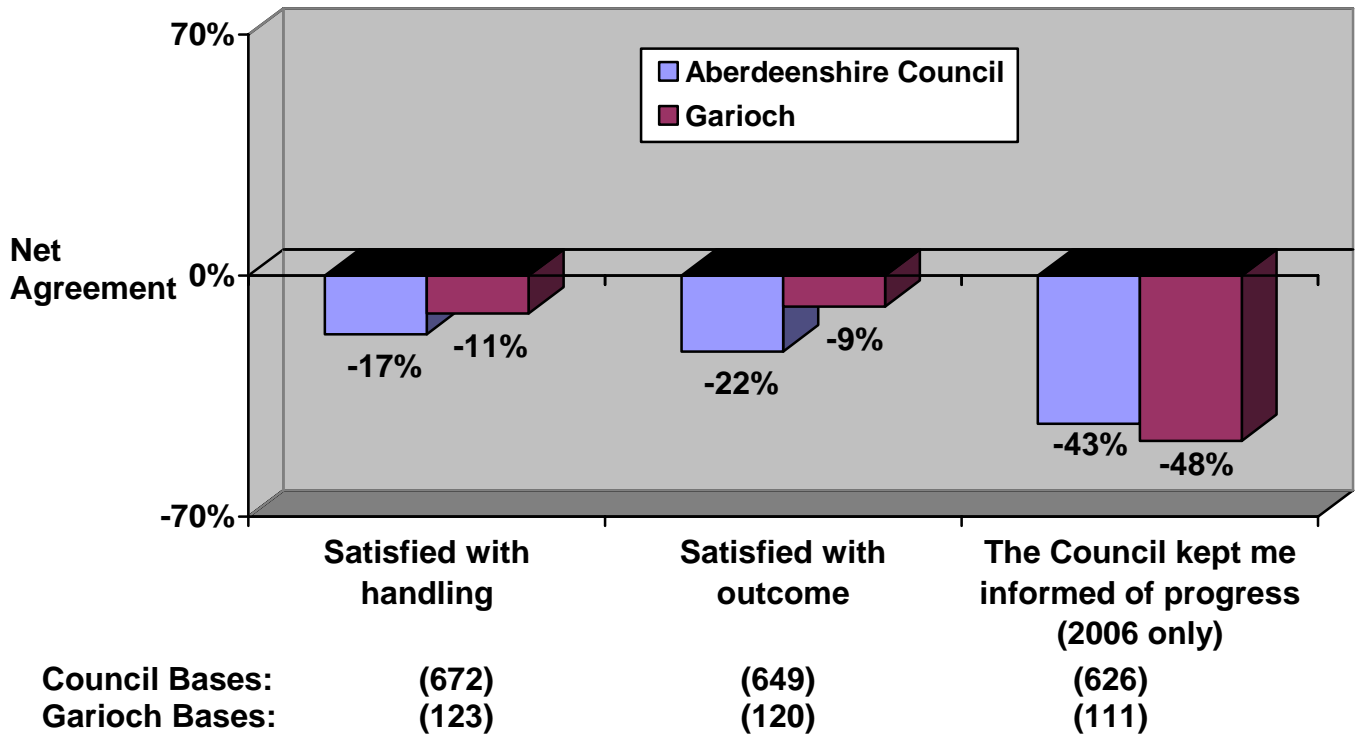
3.8 There are few differences between the reasons for complaints in Garioch when compared to Aberdeenshire as a whole.

Figure 3.7: Reason for Complaint



3.9 The high levels of dissatisfaction with complaint handling continue to persist across Aberdeenshire. The evidence from the 2006 survey is that people are particularly dissatisfied with how they are kept informed of progress (and to a greater extent in Garioch) and this is likely to be a contributory factor to the more general dissatisfaction with complaint handling. However, In Garioch, dissatisfaction with handling and outcome of complaints is slightly less apparent.

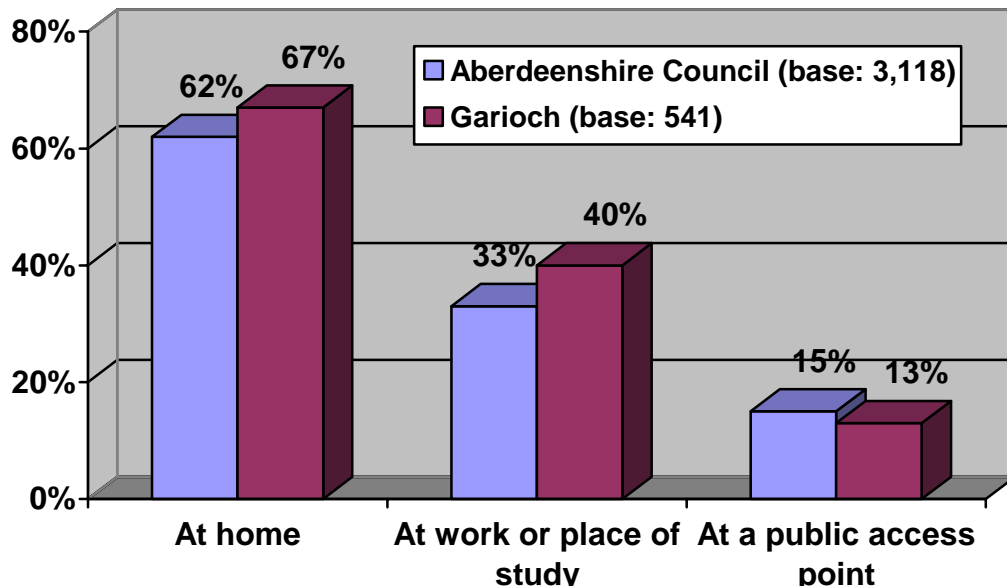
Figure 3.8: Satisfaction with Complaints



THE INTERNET

- 3.10 Significantly more residents in Garioch have internet access from the three options set out in the survey compared to Aberdeenshire Council as a whole.

Figure 3.9: Internet Access

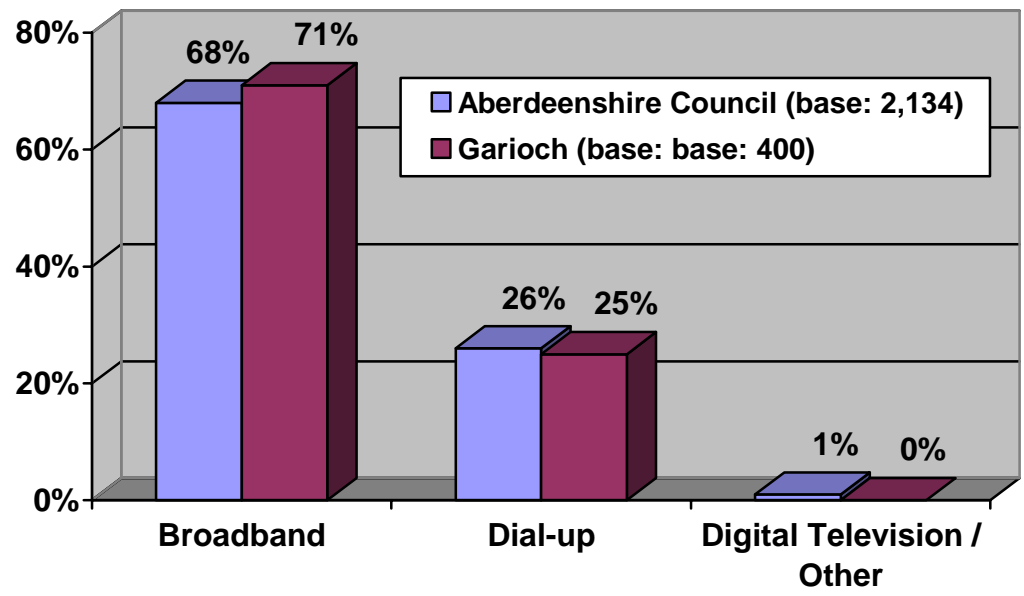


The level of home internet access is higher in Garioch when compared with the whole of Aberdeenshire, which also compares favourably with the UK-wide average (the Office of National statistics reports this as 57% for the period January to April 2006).

There is little difference in internet penetration by gender although it is closely correlated with age. 82% of 25-34 year olds and 90% of 35-44 year olds have home internet access compared to 40% of 65-74 year olds and 8% of those aged 75+. Interestingly, penetration is notably higher in the countryside (75%) than in towns and villages (66%).

3.11 As can be seen from Figure 3.10, broadband has now become much more evident within Aberdeenshire households, and to a slightly greater extent in Garioch.

Figure 3.10: Type of Connection (most commonly used for personal business)

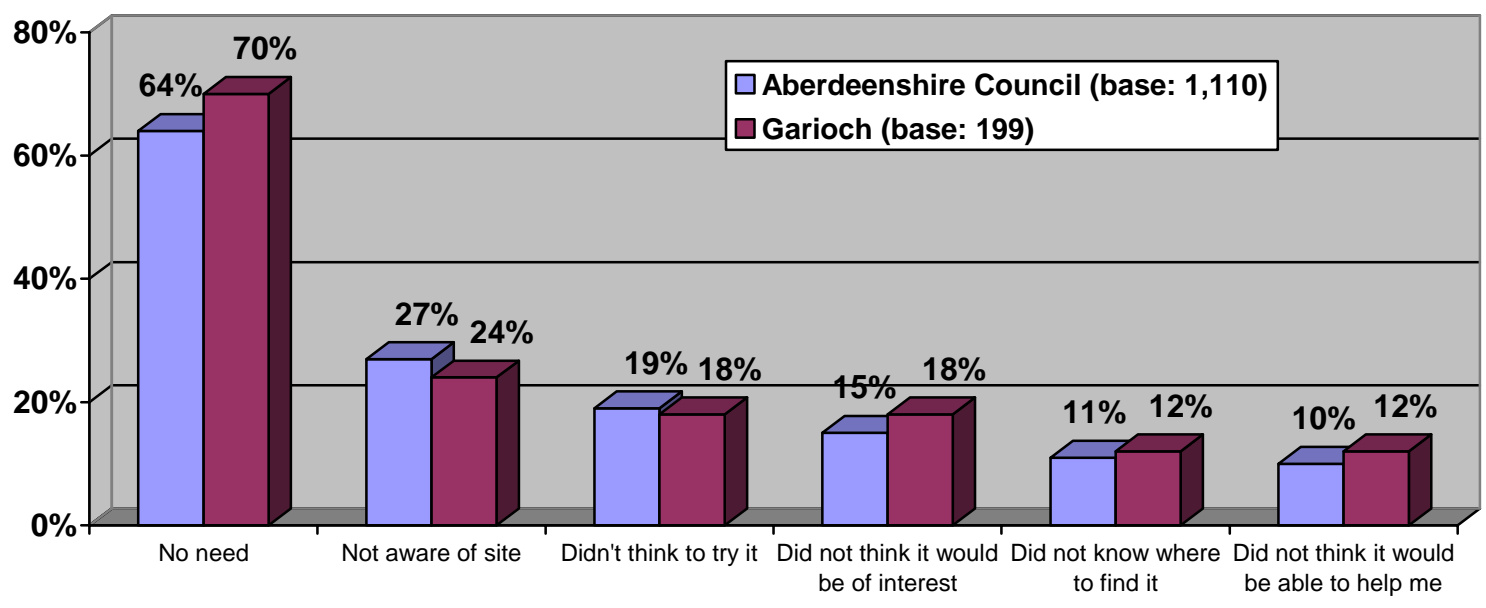


N.B. balance was "don't know" responses

3.12 In Garioch, 50% of people had previously visited the Council's web site compared to 48% in the whole Council sample.

Individuals' reasons for not visiting the site are set out in Figure 3.11

Figure 3.11: Reasons for not visiting Council Web-Site



Clearly, very many people do not consider there to be any particular need to visit the site, with no significant variation between Garioch residents and Aberdeenshire residents as a whole.

3.13 As illustrated in Figure 3.12(a) and (b) below, there is a significant minority of internet users who express a willingness to use the Council's website for a wide range of services, with reasonably similar levels of interest from Garioch residents (excepting bulk uplifts).

Figure 3.12(a): Services Willing to Transact Through Council Website

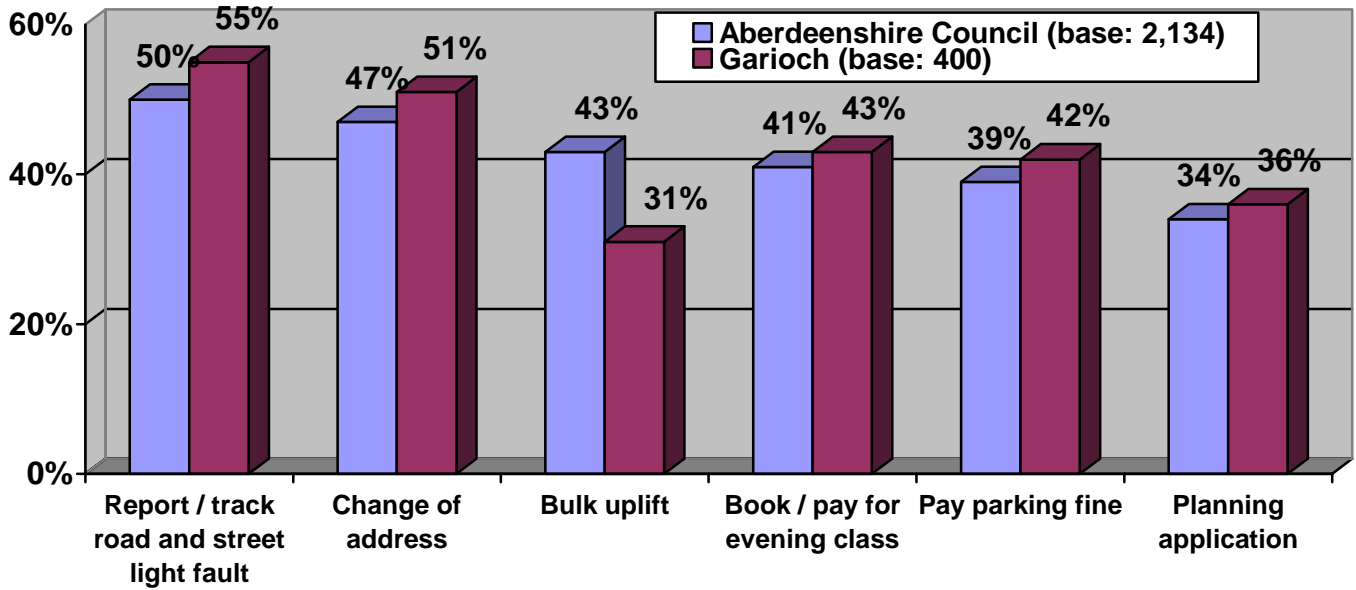
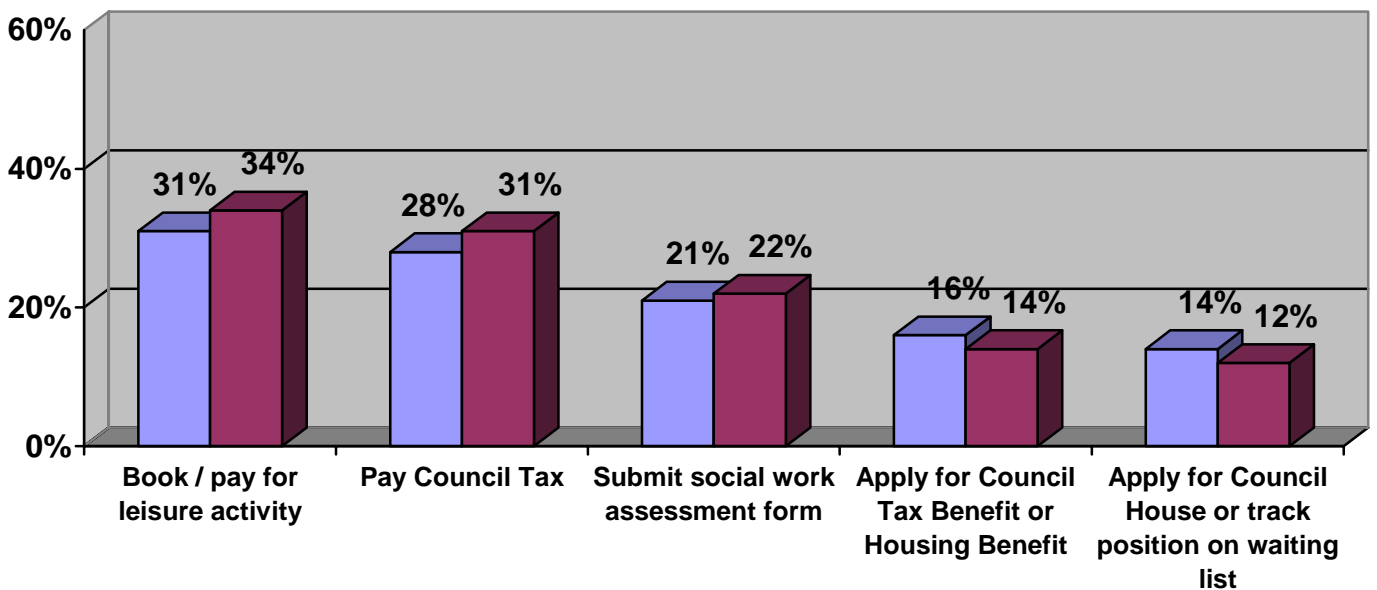


Figure 3.12(b): Services Willing to Transact Through Council Website



The implication is that there is continued scope to further enhance the functionality of the site and to continue to promote this.

Summary of Key Points

Telephone is typically the preferred method of contacting the Council for most service users within Garioch.

Garioch residents are in general more satisfied with their contact with the Council than for Aberdeenshire residents as a whole.

Satisfaction with complaint handling remains a concern, however, particularly with the extent to which people are kept in touch with regarding their complaint.

Home internet penetration is higher than the Aberdeenshire and UK figures at 64%, with 50% of internet users having visited the Council's web site. There is a willingness amongst internet users to use the Council's web site to transact a range of business, broadly in line with the rest of respondents from the Council area as a whole.

4.0 THE COMMUNITIES OF ABERDEENSHIRE AND GARIOCH

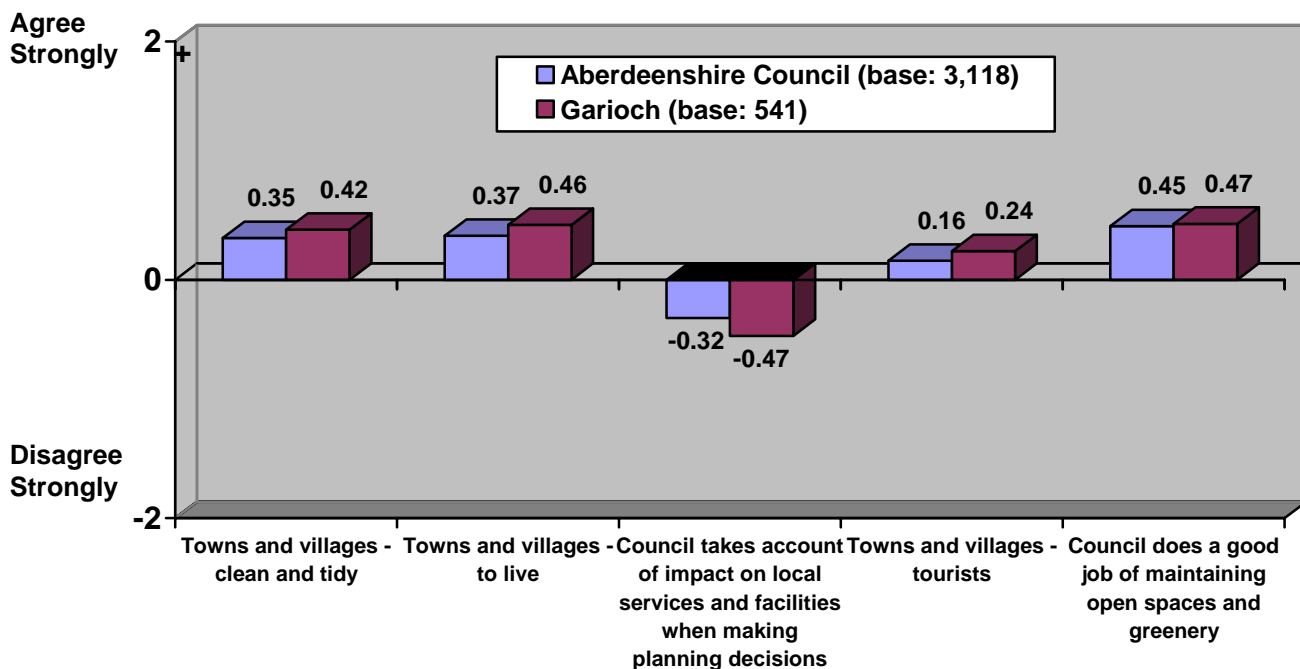
4.1 A series of agree/disagree questions were asked in relation to the impact which the Council has had on Aberdeenshire. These statements, the results to which are summarised in Figure 4.1 below, included:

- “The Council does a good job in keeping towns and villages clean and tidy”.
- The Council does a good job in making towns and villages in Aberdeenshire attractive places to live”.
- “The Council does a good job in making towns and villages in Aberdeenshire attractive places for tourists”.

Questions were also put regarding the Council’s performance in relation to planning decisions and the maintenance of open spaces and greenery.

Again, this chart is presented in the form of “mean ratings” to ensure comparability between Garioch and Aberdeenshire Council as a whole. Thus, an “agree strongly” response is accorded a score of +2, and “agree” a score of +1 and so on, with the aggregate result being expressed as a mean rating.

Figure 4.1: The Communities of Aberdeenshire – Towns and Villages

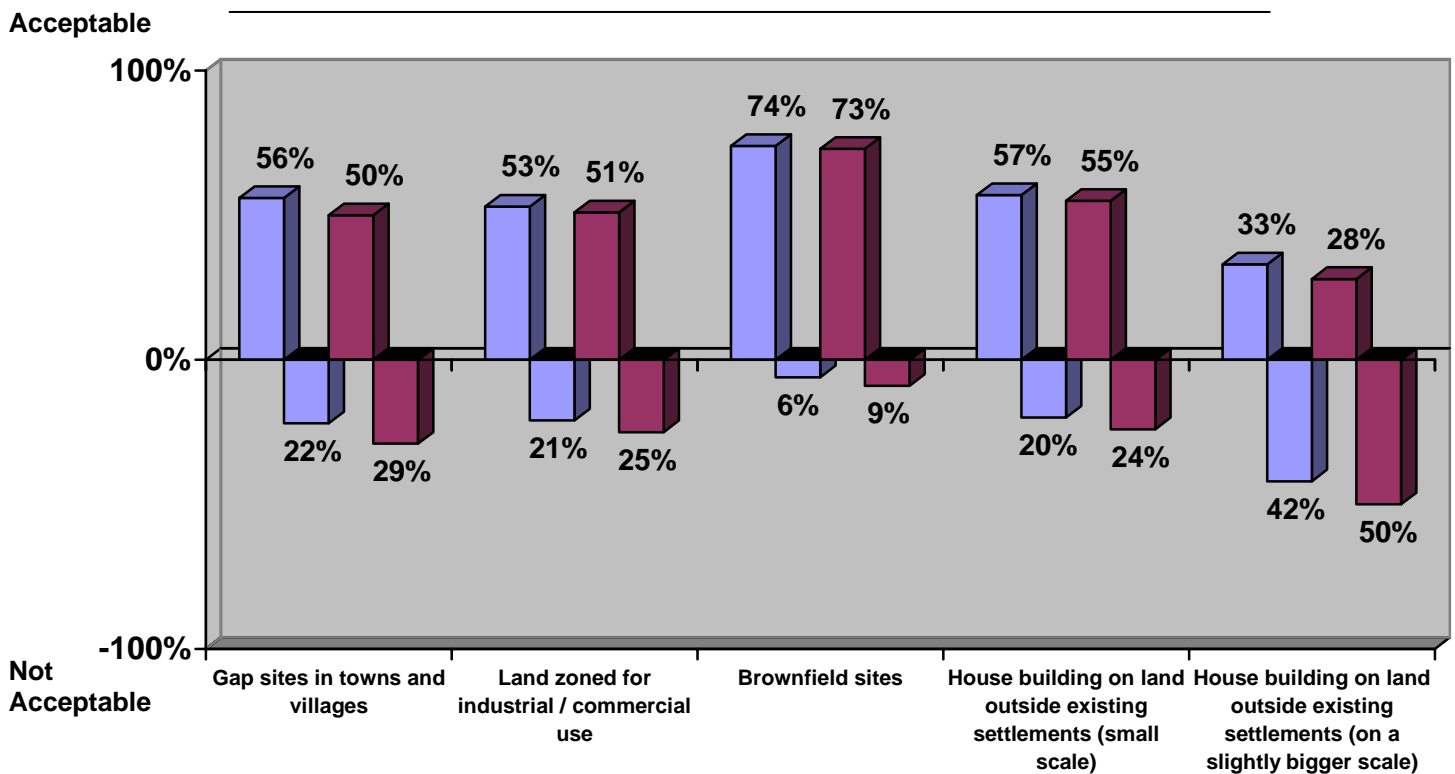


Garioch residents are notably more likely to agree on most of the issues laid out in Figure 4.1.

4.2 Clearly, however, there remains a concern as to whether the Council takes account of the impact of its planning decisions on local services and facilities, and this is more pronounced in Garioch.

4.3 The 2006 survey asked respondents to comment on the acceptability of housing developments under a range of circumstances. As Figure 4.2 illustrates, there is considerable support for housing developments to be allowed on gap sites and on land which is either zoned for industrial or commercial use or “brownfield sites”. There is also a strong consensus in support of allowing “small scale” housing developments on land outside existing developments. In Aberdeenshire as a whole and in Garioch specifically, a significant majority opposes the idea of larger scale house building on land outwith settlements.

Figure 4.2: Attitudes to Planning Decisions



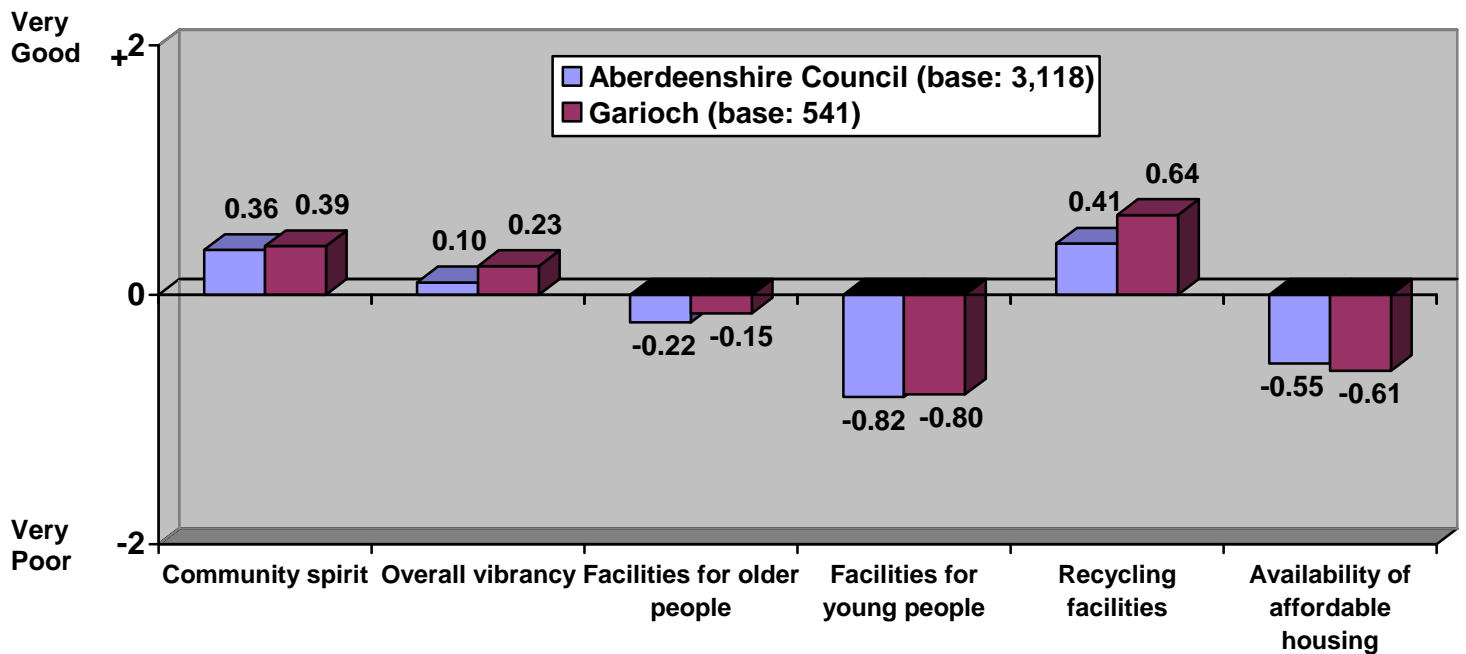
N.B. balance is “don’t know” responses

4.4 Wider questions were also repeated from the 2002 and 2004 surveys in relation to a number of community issues including:

- Sense of community spirit
- The overall vibrancy of the community
- Facilities for older people
- Facilities for young people.

The results of this are set out in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3: The Communities of Aberdeenshire – Community Issues

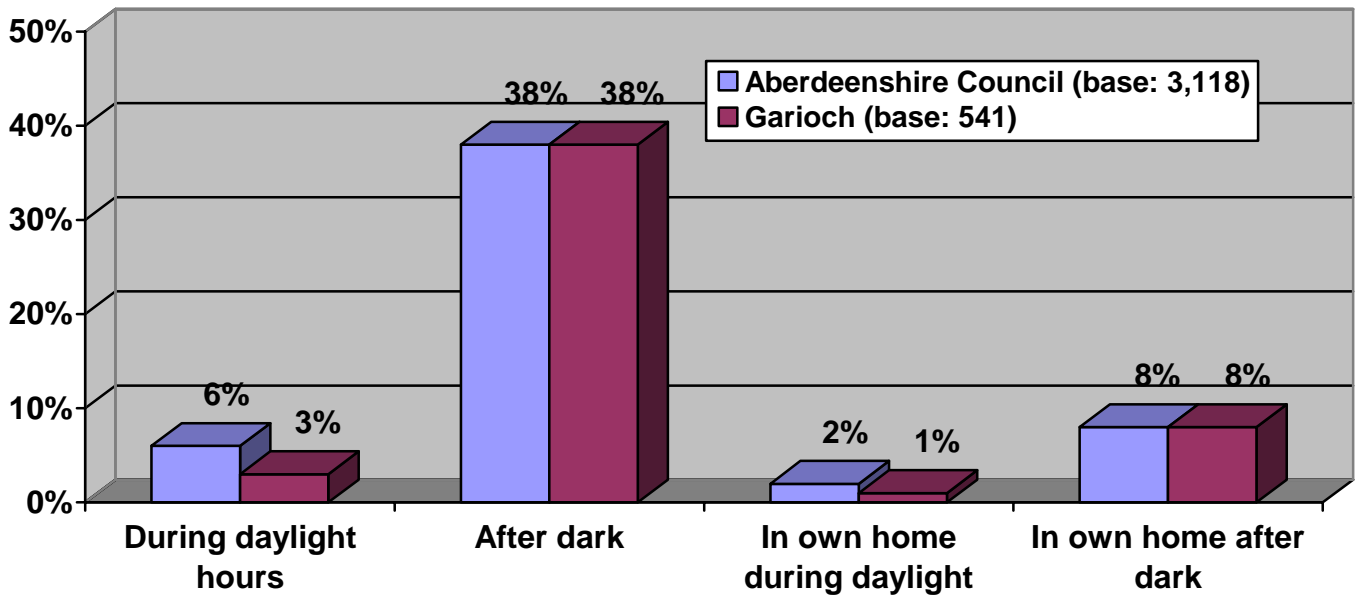


There does appear to be a generally more positive response in Garioch in comparison to the Council as a whole when the related concepts of community spirit and vibrancy are considered, and also with regard to selected facilities. There is, however, a strongly held belief that there is a lack of affordable housing in Garioch.

4.5 A further issue investigated under the “communities” theme was personal safety. As can be seen from Figure 4.4, the proportion of residents in Garioch who feel unsafe to some extent in a range of scenarios is broadly similar to that for Aberdeenshire as a whole.

Figure 4.4: Personal Safety

% feeling either a bit or very unsafe

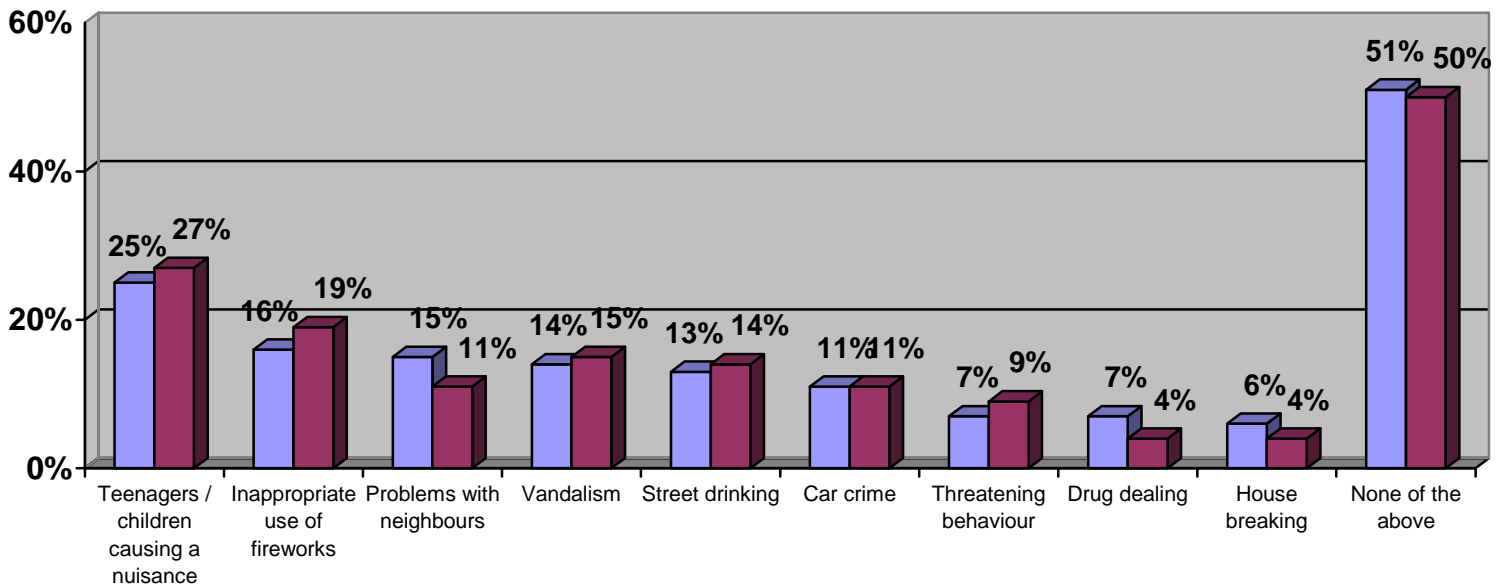


Amongst the groups of people in Garioch who were most likely to feel unsafe after dark were the following:

- Those over 65 (51%).
- Those with a disability (45%).
- Females (41%).

4.6 Figure 4.5 below summarises the extent to which respondents had been a victim of various aspects of anti-social behaviour: Experience of these forms of behaviour is, on balance, slightly higher in Garioch notably with the problem of teenagers / children causing a nuisance. However, 50% of residents had not experienced any of these forms of anti-social behaviour.

Figure 4.5: Experience of Anti-Social Behaviour (2006 only)



Other items (assault, harassment, domestic abuse) were reported by a small minority of people.

Clearly, much of people's actual experience of anti-social behaviour is of the low-level, albeit persistent, kind.

POPULATION

4.7 Table 4.1 outlines the movement of population within the Garioch area in the last 20 years.

Table 4.1: Population Movement

When did you move to.....?

	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 5 years	Between 6 and 10 years	Between 11 and 20 years	More than 20 years
Current home (base: 525)	3%	29%	20%	25%	24%
Current town or village (base: 504)	2%	23%	17%	22%	37%
Garioch (base: 453)	1%	18%	15%	20%	44%
Aberdeenshire (base: 492)	1%	13%	13%	17%	57%

4.8 This table indicates that there has been a considerable movement within Aberdeenshire and Garioch in the past 5 years, with almost a third of respondents having moved home. There has also been a reasonably high level of inward migration to Garioch, representing 18% of all respondents. Of those to move into Garioch, 23% have been non-Scottish Europeans.

4.9 Age is also a factor in the movement of population, with 34% of respondents under 45 having moved in the last 5 years, compared to only 8% of those aged over 45.

4.10 As a consequence of using the electoral register for invitations to take part in the survey, care must be taken when considering those who have moved within the past year, as an unknown number of people within Garioch will have moved since the register was last updated.

4.11 Table 4.2 gauges the level of access that respondents had to retail, leisure and public services and where they accessed these services.

Table 4.2: Access to Services

	Your Town or Local Village	Inverurie	Westhill	Somewhere else in Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen City	Somewhere outwith Aberdeenshire	Online
Main grocery shop	8%	53%	19%	4%	13%	1%	1%
'Top-up' grocery shop	32%	36%	24%	1%	4%	0%	0%
Large items like furniture, white goods	1%	21%	1%	7%	62%	2%	4%
Books, CDs, DVDs	3%	26%	3%	3%	42%	1%	17%
Using sports / leisure facilities	10%	35%	11%	6%	18%	0%	1%
Going to a doctor	27%	34%	25%	4%	9%	1%	0%
Going to a dentist	5%	32%	15%	11%	29%	2%	0%
Going to a library	26%	31%	18%	3%	5%	0%	1%
Taking part in a club / society or other interest	23%	28%	12%	6%	17%	1%	0%
Going to work	8%	14%	5%	9%	26%	1%	0%

N.B. Balance of responses occurred where respondent gave no reply

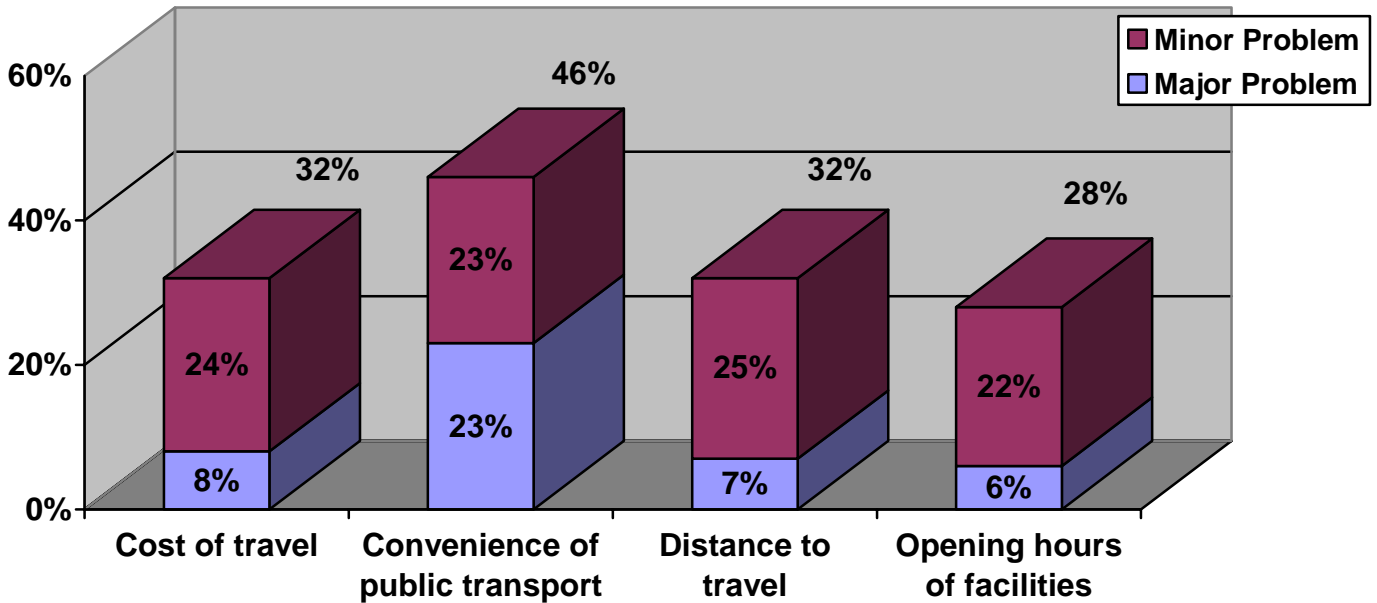
The majority of shopping on groceries takes place in Garioch itself, whether locally or in Inverurie and Westhill, though one in five respondents conduct their grocery shopping outwith Garioch. For large "big ticket" items, there is significant "leakage" to elsewhere in Aberdeenshire and, in particular, to Aberdeen City.

4.12 Although there is a notable proportion of respondents (17%) who use the internet for their purchases of Books, CDs and DVDs, there is little evidence of widespread use of the internet for other retail purposes.

4.13 For leisure activities, access to public services and employment, the majority of respondents stay within Garioch to do so, with the exception of dentistry, with over 40% of residents accessing this service outwith Garioch.

4.14 Respondents were also asked to identify whether certain factors affected their ability to access these opportunities, and this is detailed below in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: Barriers to Accessing Services

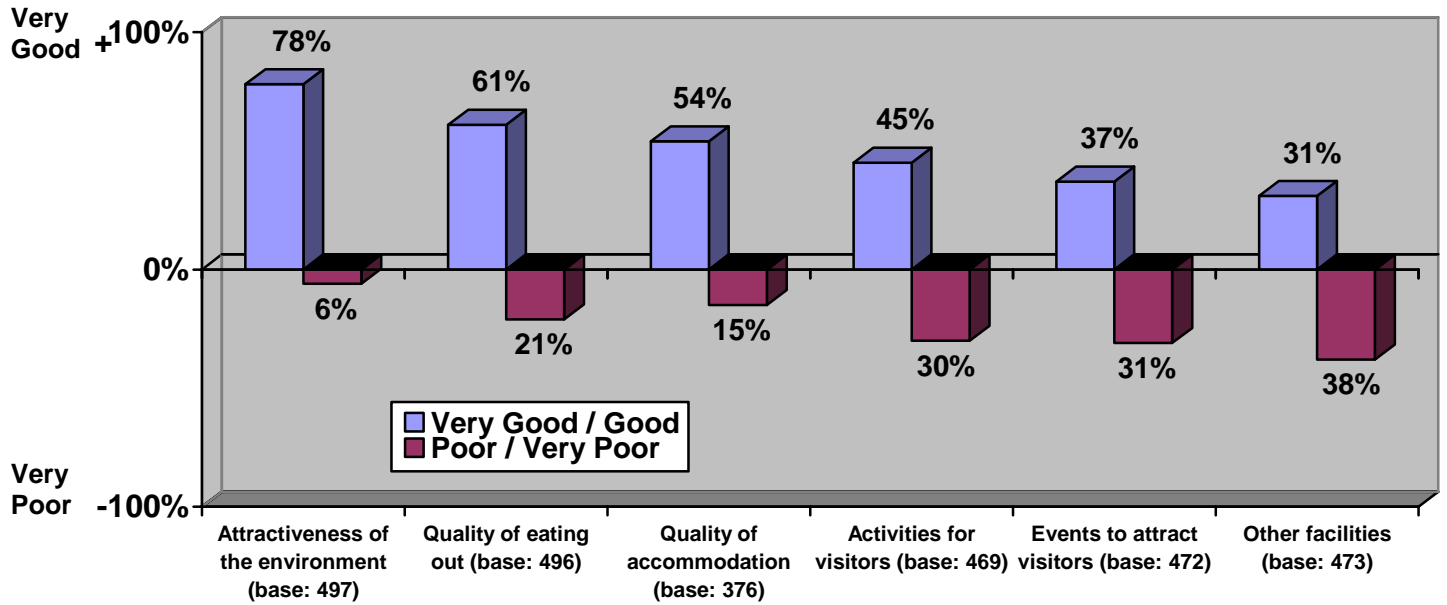


Base: 537

Clearly, there are significant minorities of residents who experience barriers to their opportunities due to their location and the ability of public transport to get them to their destination. With regard to convenient public transport, this problem is more pronounced in rural areas, with 66% believing it to be a minor or major problem, compared to 43% of urban residents.

4.15 Respondents were then asked to rate the Garioch area as a destination for visitors in relation to selected characteristics, as detailed in Figure 4.8.

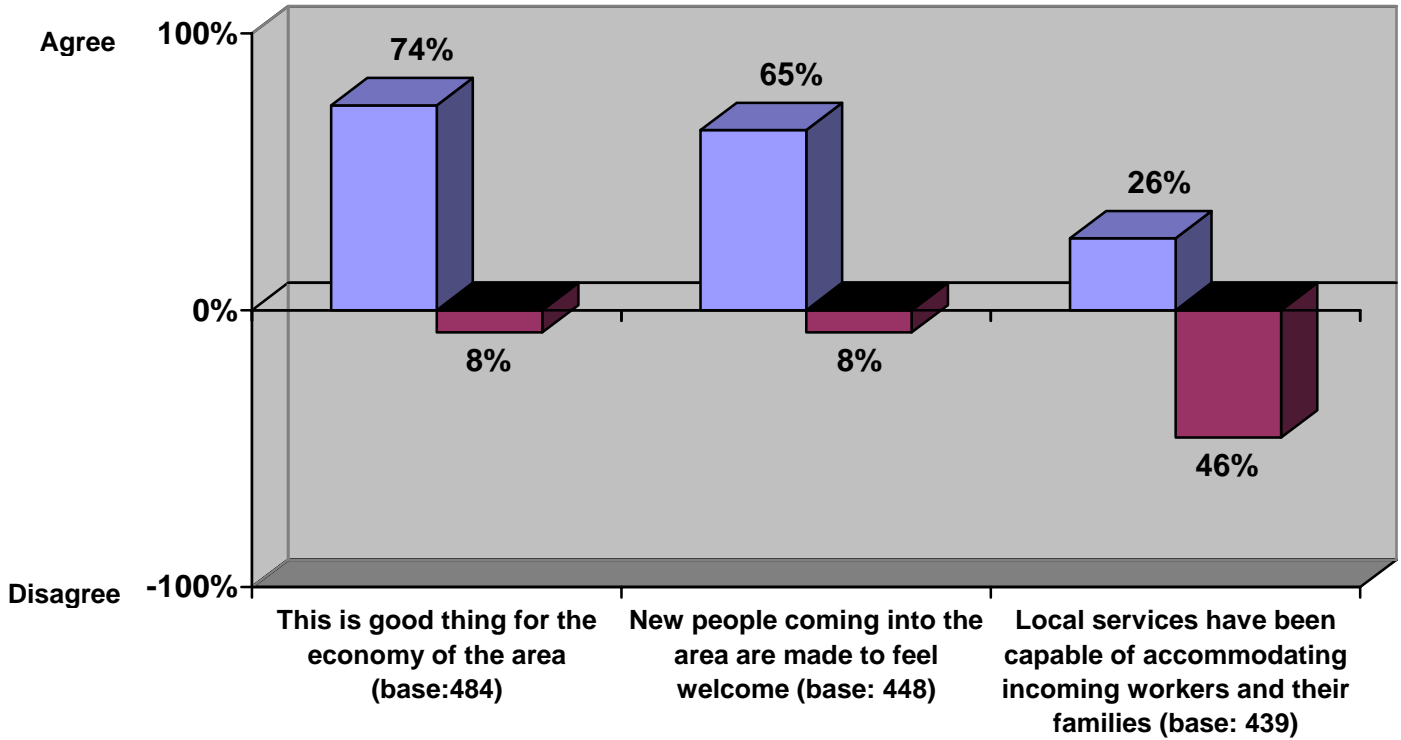
Figure 4.8: Garioch as a Visitor Destination



From the graph, it is clear that there are elements for tourists that residents view positively (the environment, eating out, accommodation and activities for visitors). However, other facilities (such as events to attract visitors public conveniences, transport, visitor attractions) are not felt to be of an acceptable standard.

4.16 In the “local survey” insert, residents were asked for their opinions on new workers moving into the Garioch area to work in local industries, and the extent to which they agreed with certain statements, the outcome of which can be seen in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: Agreement With Attitudinal Statements

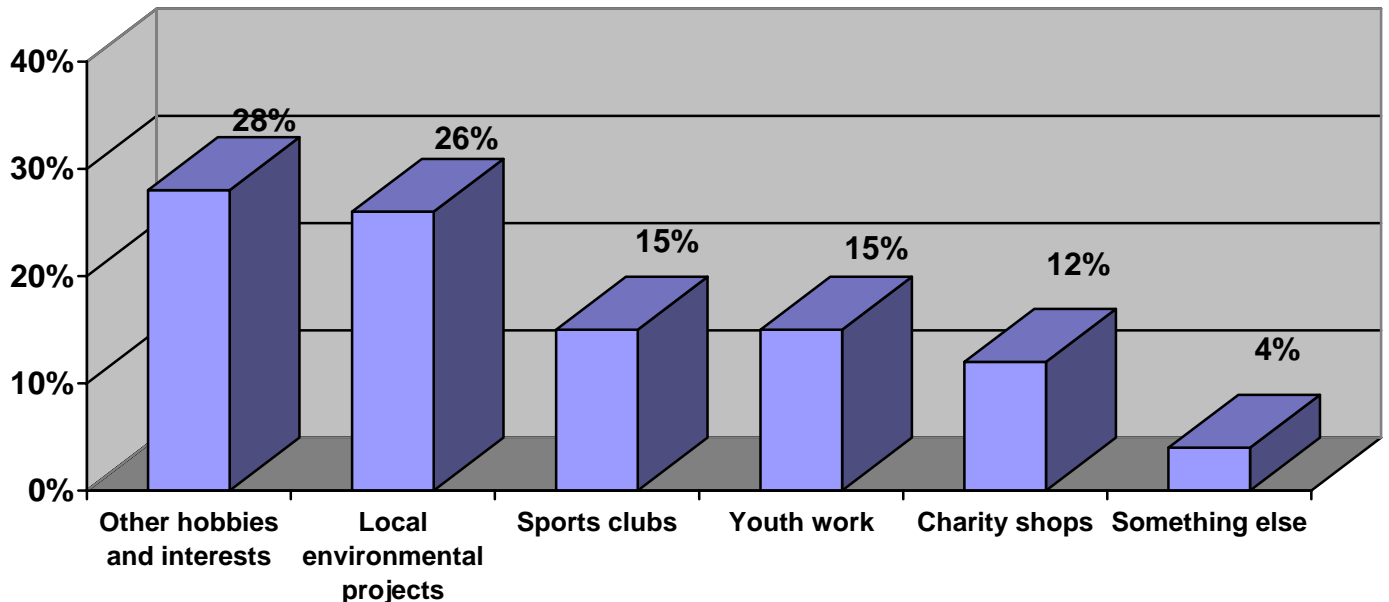


N.B. balance is “don’t know” responses

In general, it is encouraging that a clear majority of residents view the issue of incoming workers in a positive light. However, there is a widespread belief that local services have not been capable of accommodating these new workers and their families.

4.17 38% of Garioch residents had given up time in the past year for unpaid volunteer work. Figure 4.9 details the willingness of respondents to become involved in other, new forms of volunteering.

Figure 4.9: Willingness to Participate in New Volunteering Opportunities



Base: 537

Clearly, there is an unmet demand for individual pursuits (hobbies and interests), but also a willingness on behalf of residents to become involved in environmental projects in their area on a voluntary basis.

Summary of Key Points

Garioch residents feel the Council does as good a job of making towns and villages attractive compared to other Aberdeenshire residents.

There is a concern, however, about the extent to which the Council is perceived to be taking account of the impact of its planning decisions on local facilities and services, and this is evident to a greater extent in Garioch than elsewhere in Aberdeenshire.

Affordable housing is seen as an important issue and residents are willing to countenance house building in a variety of places although there is significant resistance to large-scale house building outwith existing settlements. It is noted that residents in Garioch are more likely to feel there is a shortage of affordable housing.

Summary of Key Points (continued)

Community spirit and vibrancy in Garioch is rated significantly higher when compared to the rest of the Council area.

However, people continue to rate the availability of community facilities poorly.

There are similar levels of perceived danger when respondents' personal safety is concerned when they are outside after dark in Garioch, as compared to Aberdeenshire as a whole. However, most people's actual experience of anti-social behaviour is of the low-level, albeit persistent, kind, although Garioch residents are slightly more likely to claim to have been the victim of anti-social behaviour than the average for the Council as a whole.

There has been a substantial movement of population within Garioch in the past five years, as well as an inward migration of 18% from outwith the area.

Grocery shopping tends to be done locally (with a notable minority of shopping taking place elsewhere in Aberdeenshire or in Aberdeen) but "big ticket" items such as white goods see some leakage to the rest of Aberdeenshire and in particular to Aberdeen City. Public services and leisure facilities are, in general, accessed locally, as are employment opportunities (although dentistry is an exception to this). A significant minority have difficulty in accessing these services and opportunities due to transport issues.

Opinions on Garioch's appeal as a visitor destination are positive in the main, although ancillary facilities are rated less highly.

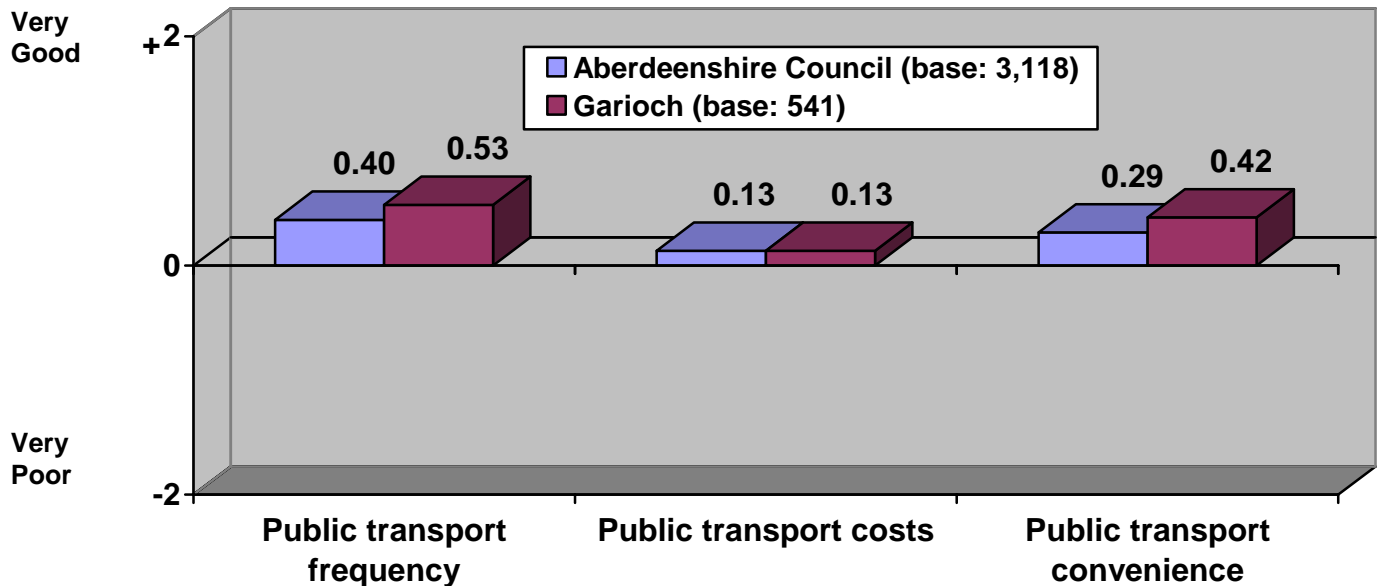
There is a very positive reaction to the economic impact of new workers in Garioch and the welcome they receive, although there is extensive concern over whether local services are coping with this.

There is, at present, unmet demand to participate in voluntary opportunities within Garioch.

5.0 TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY

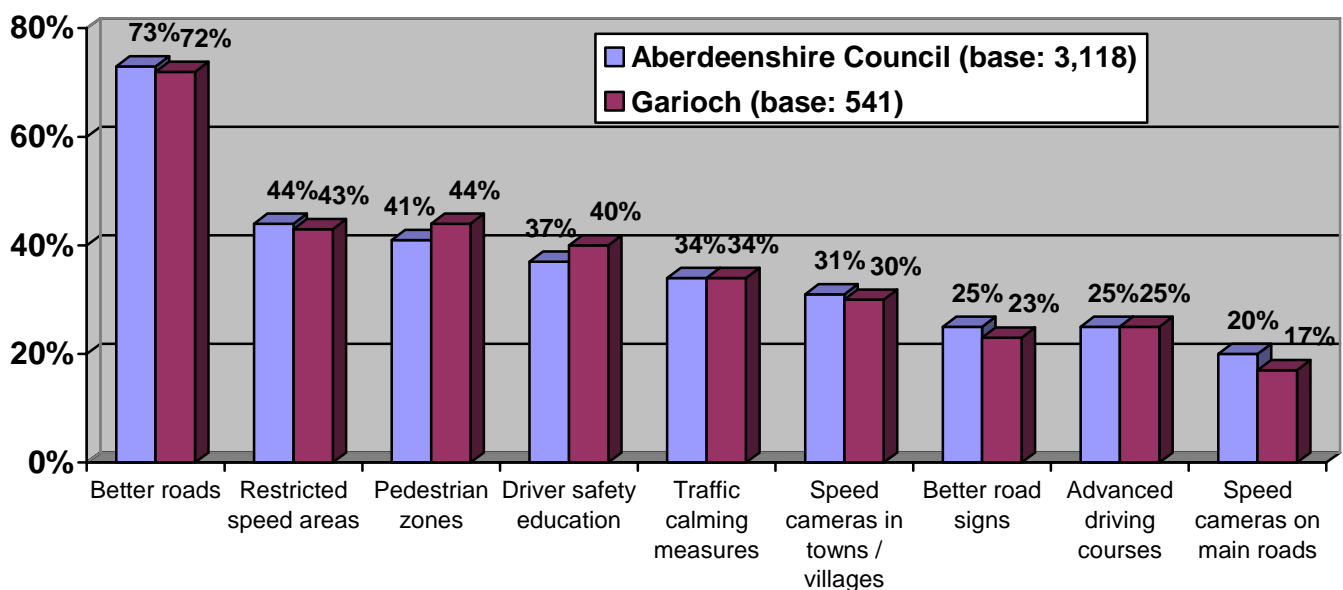
5.1 As illustrated in Figure 5.1 below, respondents in Garioch generally rate the questioned aspects of public transport more highly than Aberdeenshire residents as a whole.

Figure 5.1: Public Transport



5.3 The 2006 survey explored a range of issues around the theme of the safety measures that citizens would like to see within Aberdeenshire. The results of this are set out in Figure 5.2 below:

Figure 5.2: Preferred Road Safety Measures



Clearly, there is little difference between Garioch residents and residents in the rest of the Aberdeenshire Council area.

5.3 Less than half of respondents nominated any of the other elements (although it is worth noting that they were not asked to agree or disagree with the options, simply to state those that they would like to see.

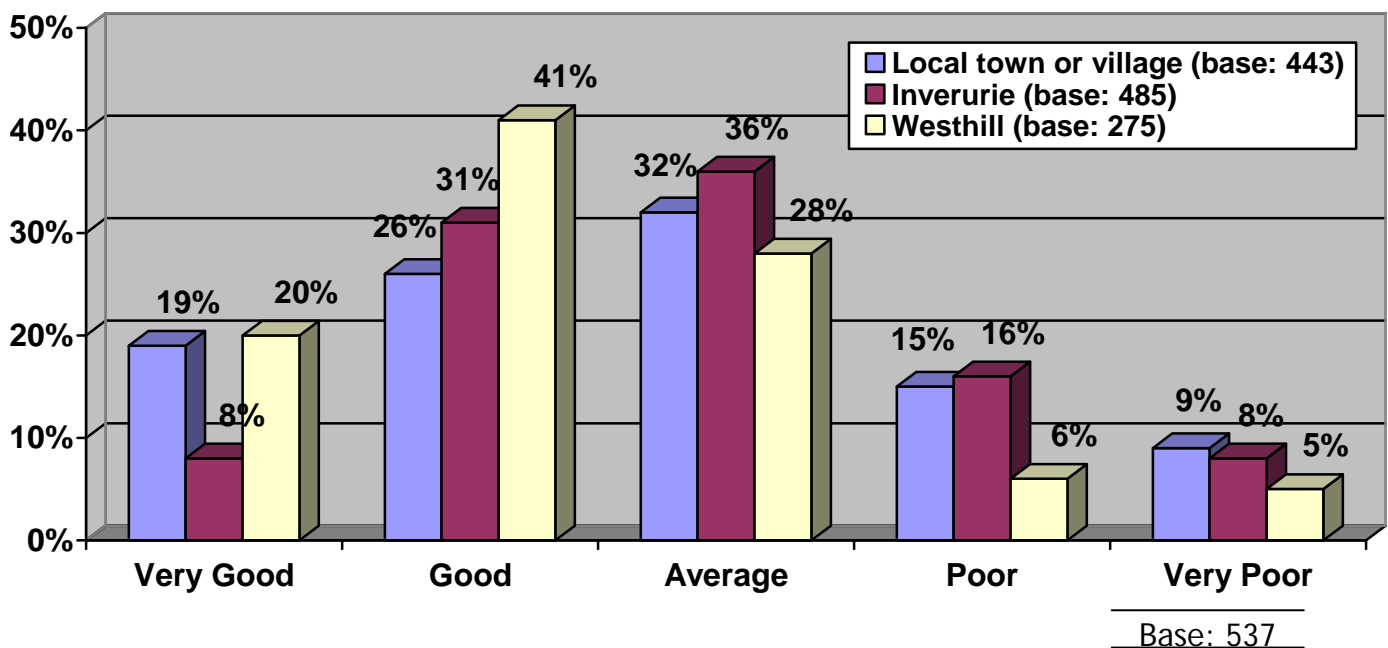
Given this, quite a number of people would like to see measures such as:

- Restricted speed areas
- Pedestrian zones
- Driver safety education
- Traffic calming measures
- Speed cameras *within towns and villages*.

There is, however, less apparent demand for improved road signage, more advanced driving courses and speed cameras *on main roads*.

5.4 In the insert questionnaire for Garioch residents, opinions on the adequacy of parking in certain areas were sought, the results of which are detailed below in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Rating of Car Parking Facilities



Generally lukewarm views on parking are evident, particularly regarding parking in Inverurie.

Summary of Key Points

Perception of the quality of public transport is higher in Garioch when compared to the rest of Aberdeenshire.

There is a strong desire for road improvements within Garioch, although this is at a similar level to that of the whole Council.

Some desire is evident for safety measures such as more restricted speed areas, pedestrian zones, driver safety education and traffic calming measures.

There is also some desire for speed cameras within towns and villages (but less demand for such speed cameras on main roads).

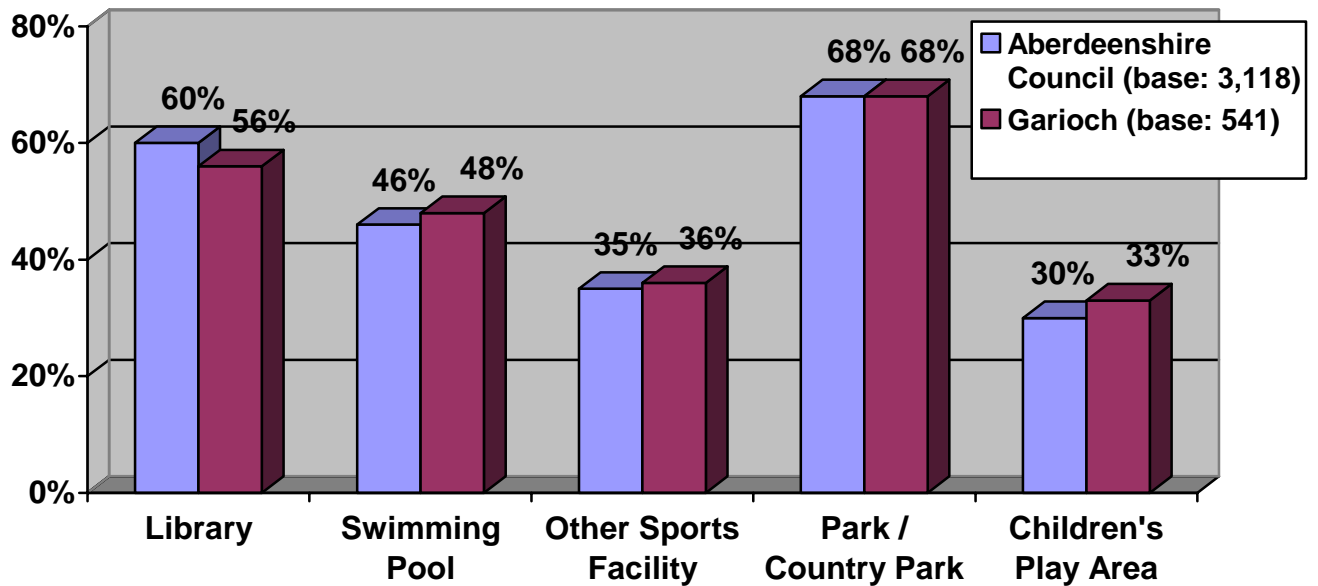
Parking is rated reasonably highly in Westhill and within local villages, but is less well regarded in Inverurie.

6.0 SATISFACTION WITH KEY SERVICES

SATISFACTION RATINGS

6.1 Figure 6.1 profiles usage of a range of Council facilities. The figures represent the aggregate figure of those who use the service either regularly or occasionally.

Figure 6.1: Service Usage



With the exception of libraries, respondents from Garioch are more likely to use these services, and clearly, such facilities continue to play an important part of individuals' lives within their communities.

SERVICE SATISFACTION

6.2 Figures 6.2(a) and (b) profile the trend in relation to levels of satisfaction with a range of specific Council services.

Figure 6.2(a): Services You Use – Specific Services

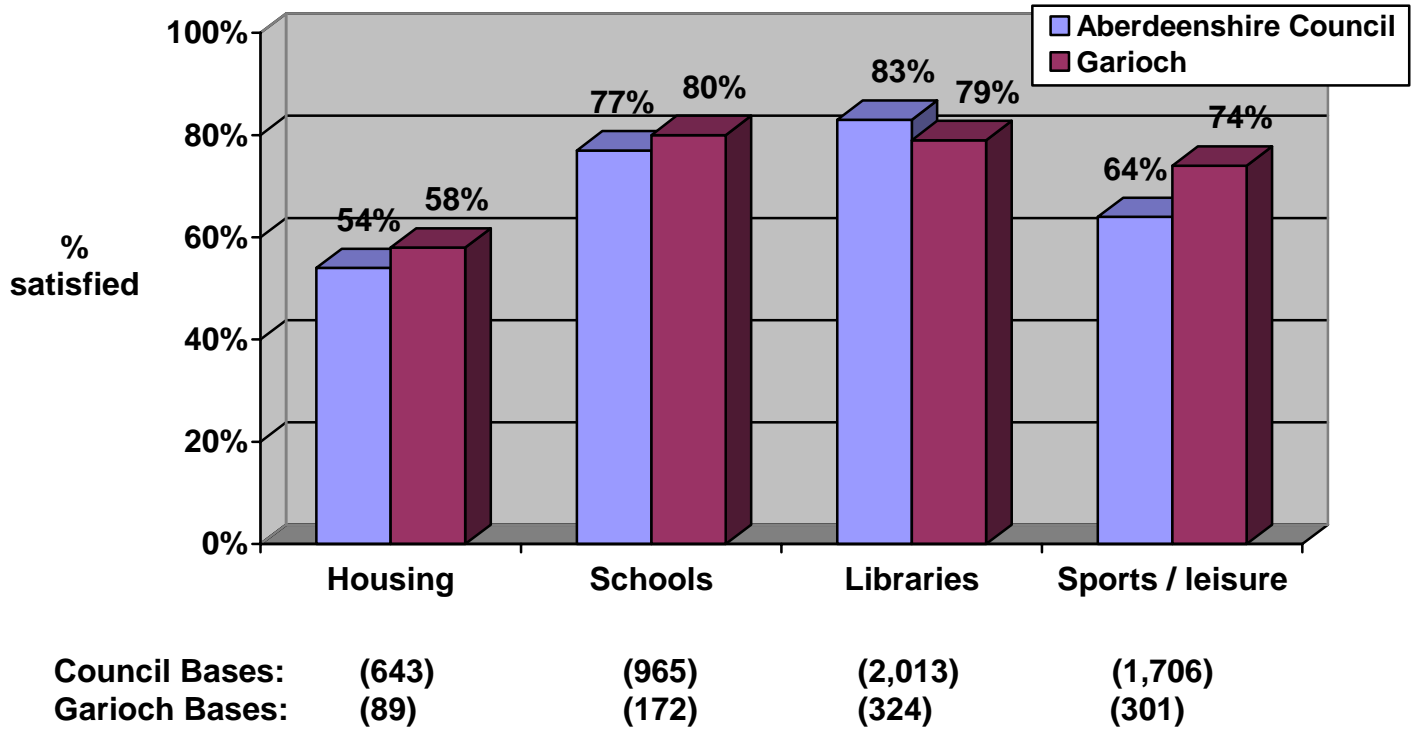
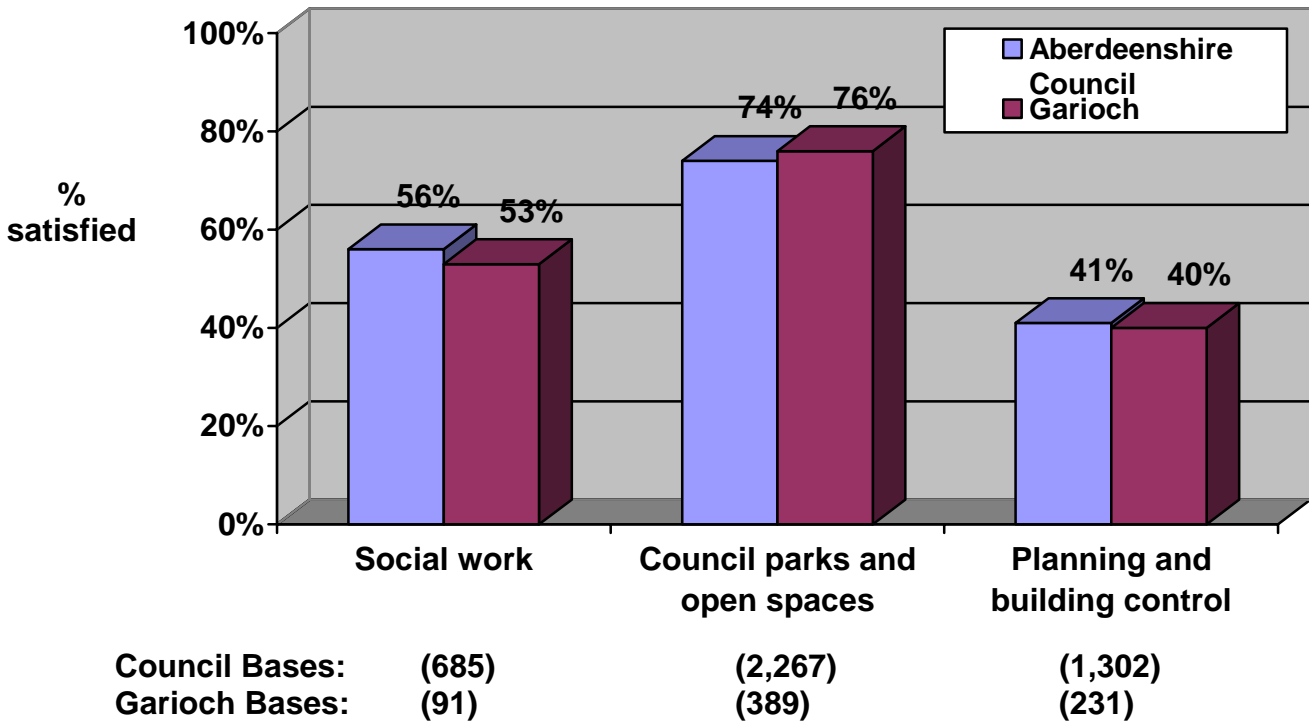


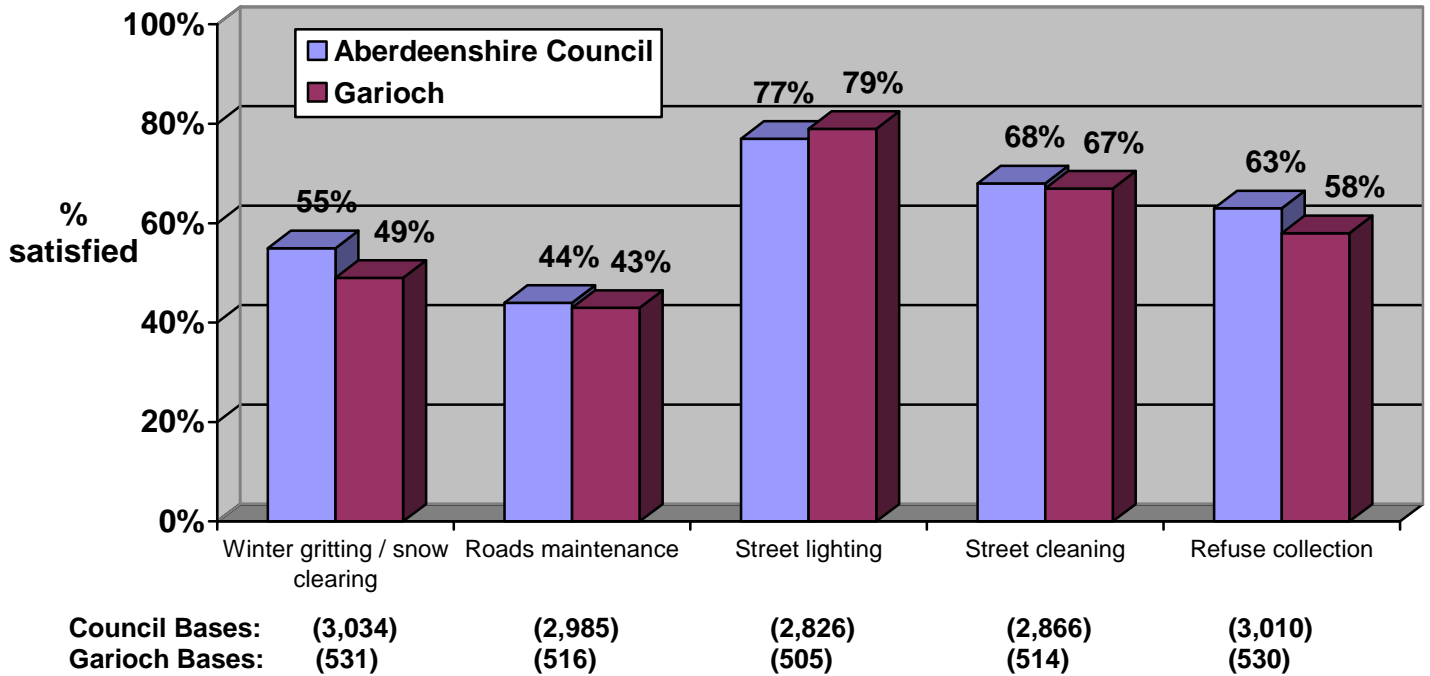
Figure 6.2(b): Services You Use – Specific Services



These results are generally positive in Garioch at a level in common with Aberdeenshire with the exception of sports and leisure which was rated significantly higher in Garioch.

6.3 In Figure 6.3, ratings for universal services that are used by all residents are shown.

Figure 6.3: Services Everybody Uses – Universal Services

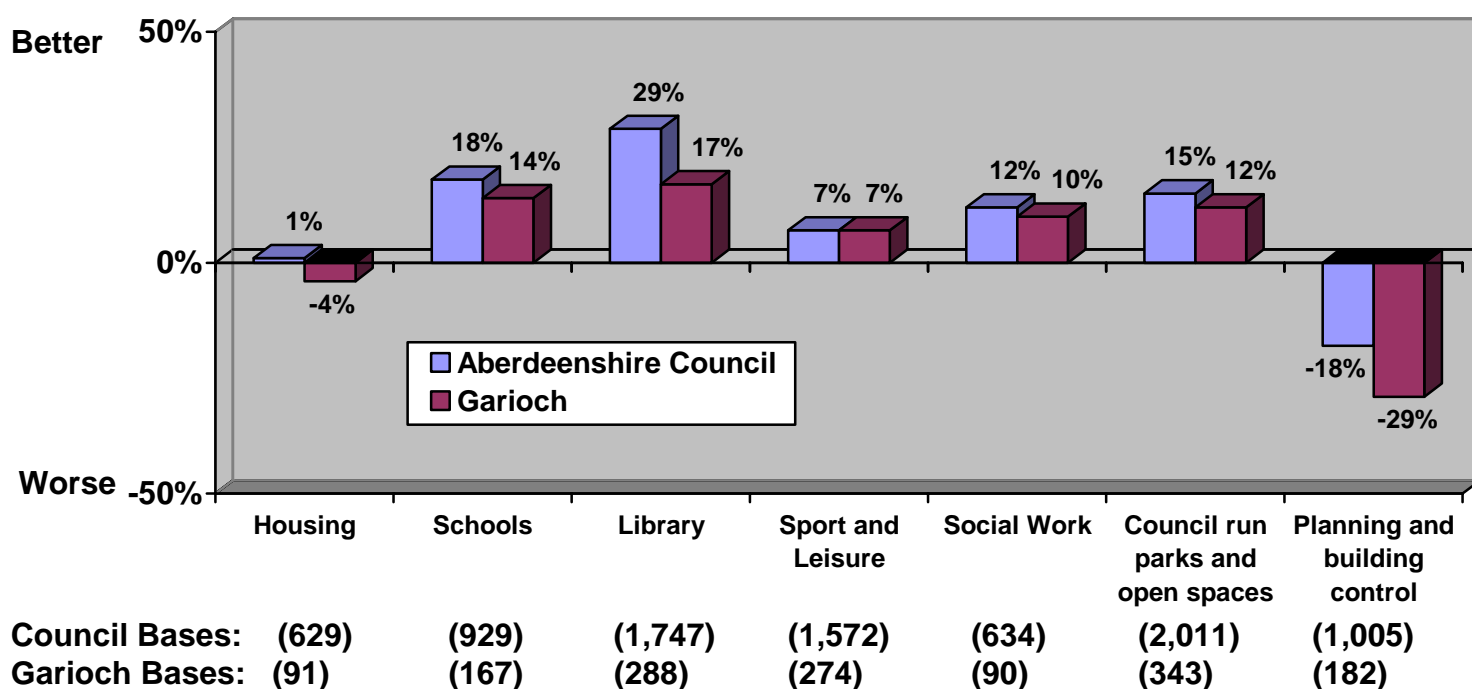


With regard to services that are used by all residents, residents in Garioch are sometimes slightly less likely to be satisfied than Aberdeenshire Council as a whole, with the exception being street lighting.

PERCEIVED CHANGES

- 6.4 The survey also asked people to comment on whether they perceived services to have got better or worse over the past three or four years. This is a robust method of measuring changes in perceptions of services, as it does not rely on the sampling methodology for previous years being identical. The calculations are based on the proportion of respondents who believe services have improved, less the proportion of respondents who believe they have got worse.
- 6.5 Results for a number of specific services are summarised below.

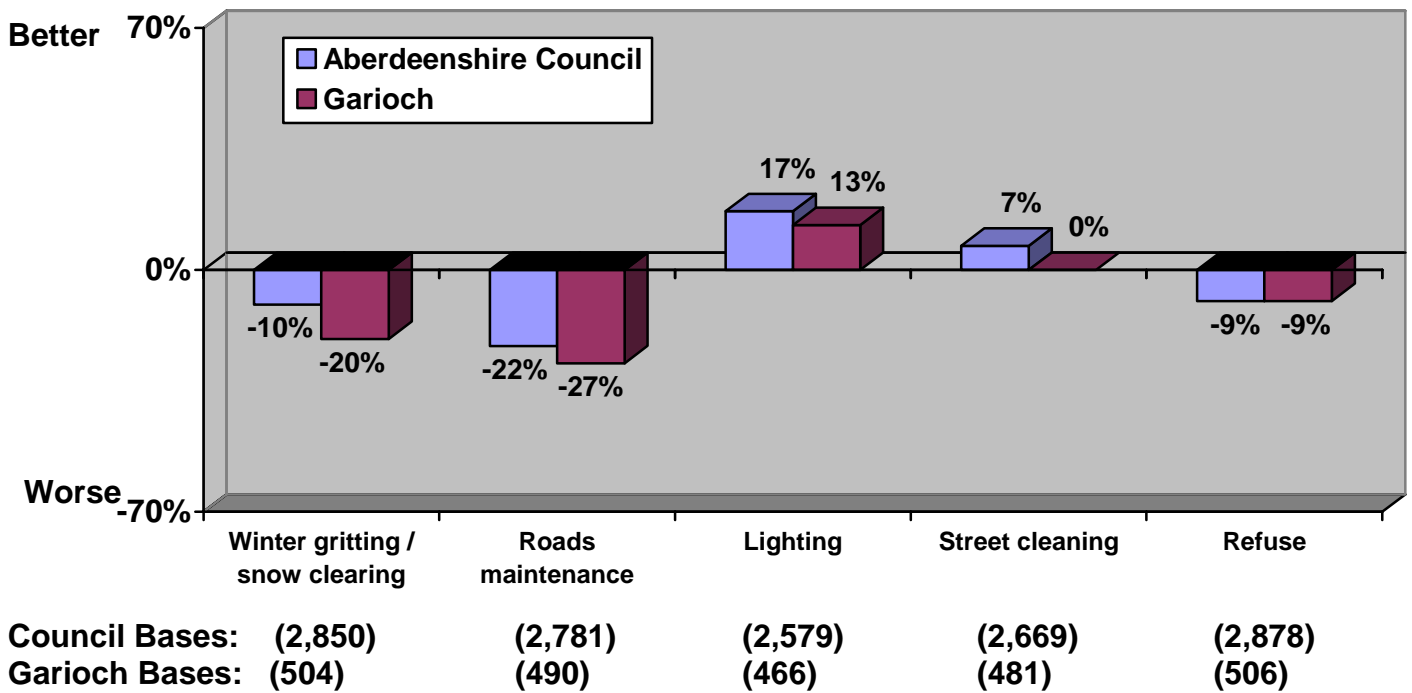
Figure 6.6: Pattern Data in Relation to Specific Services



Improvement has been perceived in all areas with the exceptions of housing and planning. As can be seen, the extent of improvement is, in the main, less evident as compared to the Council area as a whole. In relation to libraries, for example, Garioch residents are much less likely to have seen an improvement.

6.6 A similar analysis for a number of “universal services” is set out below.

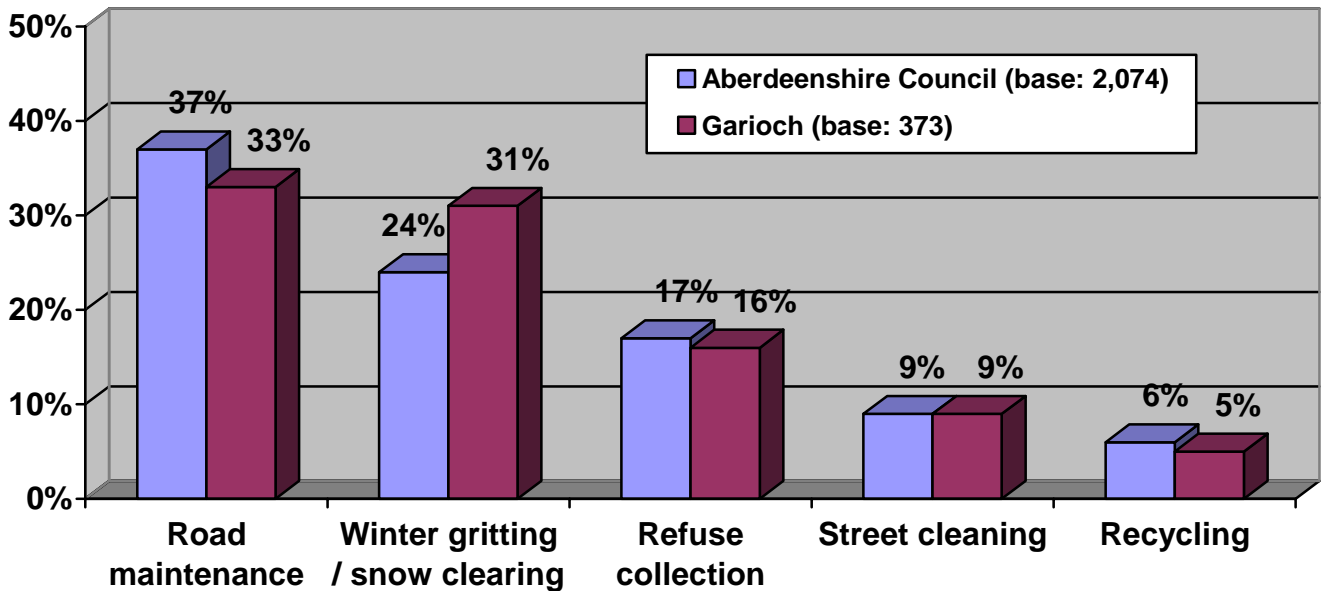
Figure 6.7: Pattern Data on Perceived Changes to Universal Services



The patterns of perceived changes is most notably different in the area of winter gritting and snow clearing, while the perception of a worsening in roads maintenance is more pronounced in Garioch. As noted previously, the new refuse collection arrangement is the most likely explanation for the perceived worsening of this particular service.

6.7 Respondents were asked to say on which services they felt the Council should have spent more money on in the past year. The selected services are the five most cited services by all survey respondents.

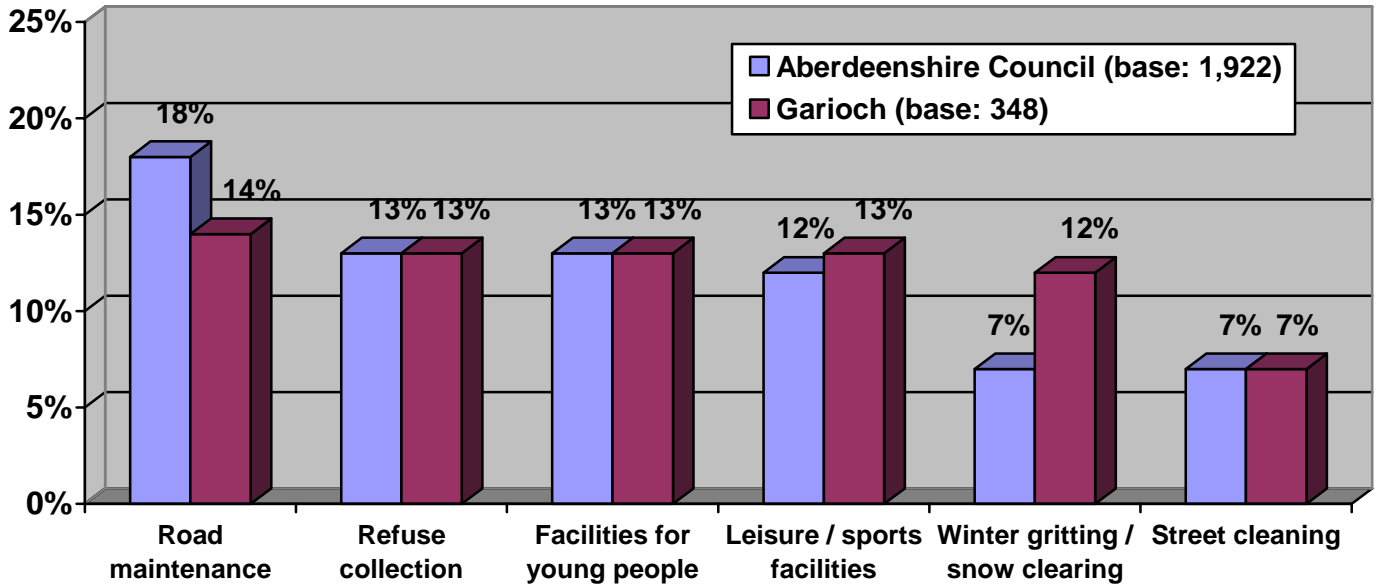
Figure 6.8: On which services should the Council have spent more money last year?



There are some variations between where Garioch residents and Aberdeenshire residents as a whole felt more money should have been spent last year, notably winter gritting / snow clearing, which reflects the perceived decline in performance in this service.

6.8 The same is true to some degree of suggestions for which services the Council should give priority (again, suggestions accounting for more than 5% of the total are included).

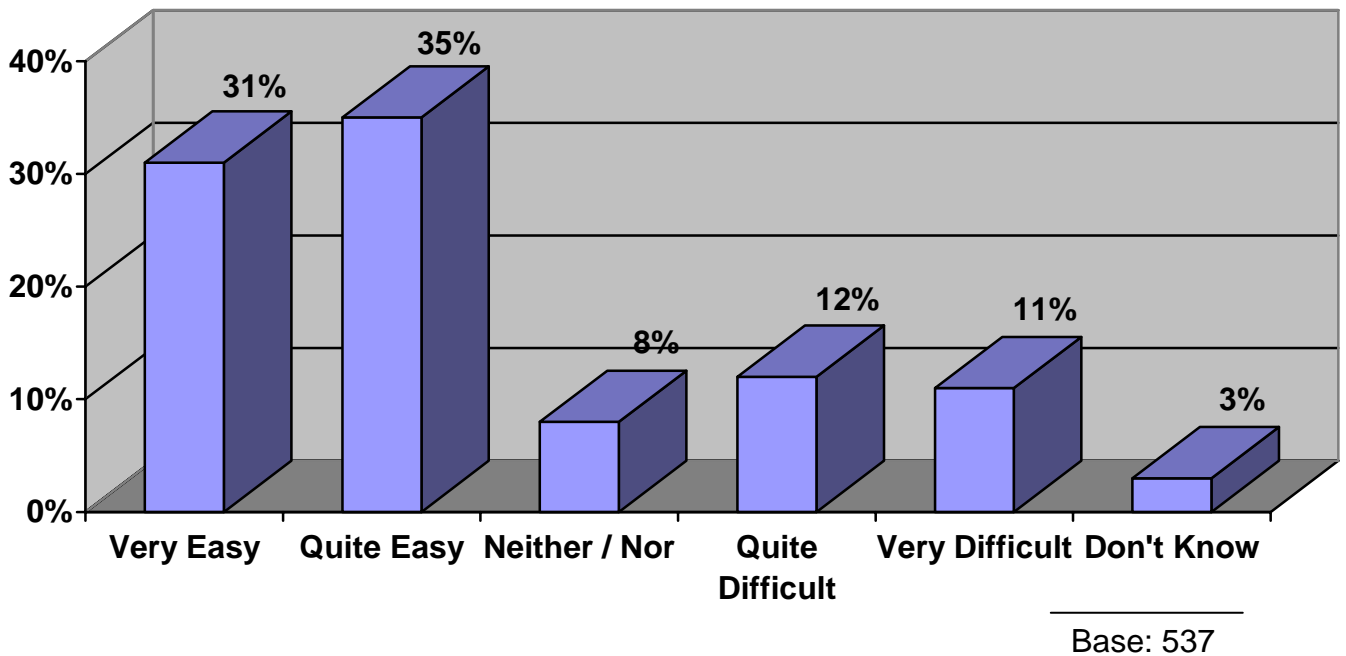
Figure 6.9: What facilities or services should be given priority?



Clearly, Garioch residents have a number of areas of priority of roughly the same importance, with no single issue being predominant.

6.9 The “local insert” questionnaire asked Garioch residents how easy or otherwise they had found it to adapt to the changes in the refuse collection regime, the outcome of this is shown below in Figure 6.10.

Figure 6.10: How Easy Have You Found it to Adapt to These Changes?



A majority of respondents have found the transition to the new refuse collection arrangements to be easy, although a notable minority (23%) have not. An impressive 69% of respondents feel that they now recycle more their waste as a result of these changes.

Summary of Key Points

For those Council services that citizens elect to use, satisfaction ratings from Garioch are generally similar to those for Aberdeenshire as a whole, though those for sports and leisure are notably higher.

With regard to a range of “universal services”, Garioch residents rate these services slightly lower compared to the main sample of residents, with the exception of street lighting, which is rated more positively.

The level of perceived improvement in services is, in the main, lower in Garioch.

Garioch residents would prioritise winter gritting and snow clearing for attention.

A majority of Garioch residents have found the transition to the new refuse collection regime to be easy, with more than two in three respondents now recycling more of their waste as a result.

7.0 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

7.1 Respondents were asked a number of questions around the themes of Corporate Social Responsibility. The results of this are illustrated in Figures 7.1(a) and (b) below:

Figure 7.1(a): Measures of Council as Socially Responsible Organisation

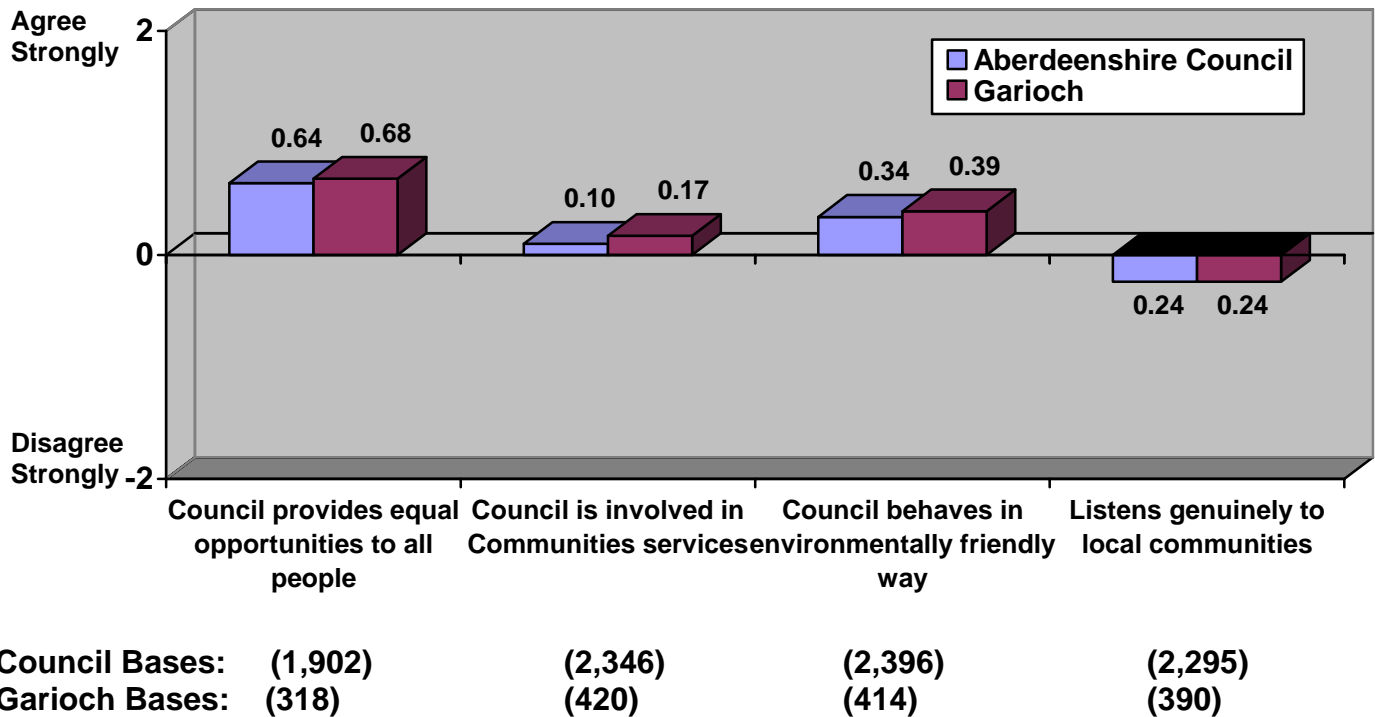
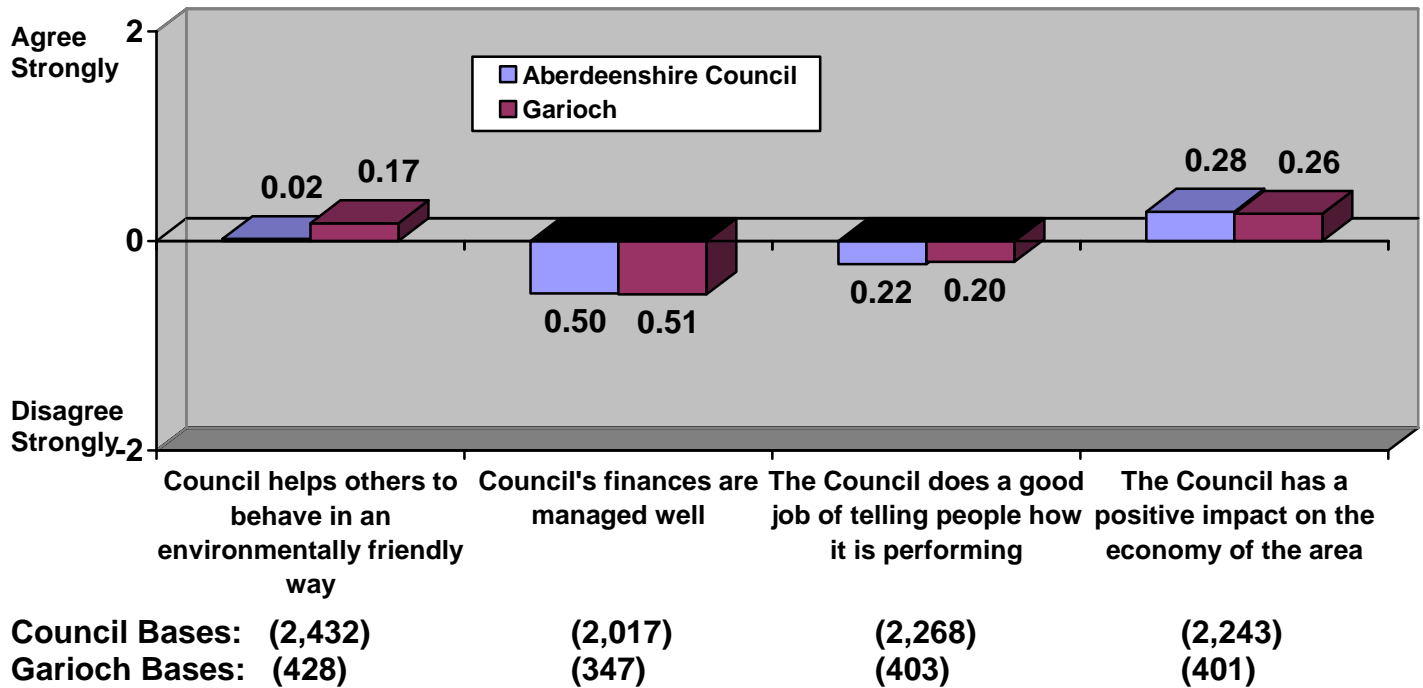


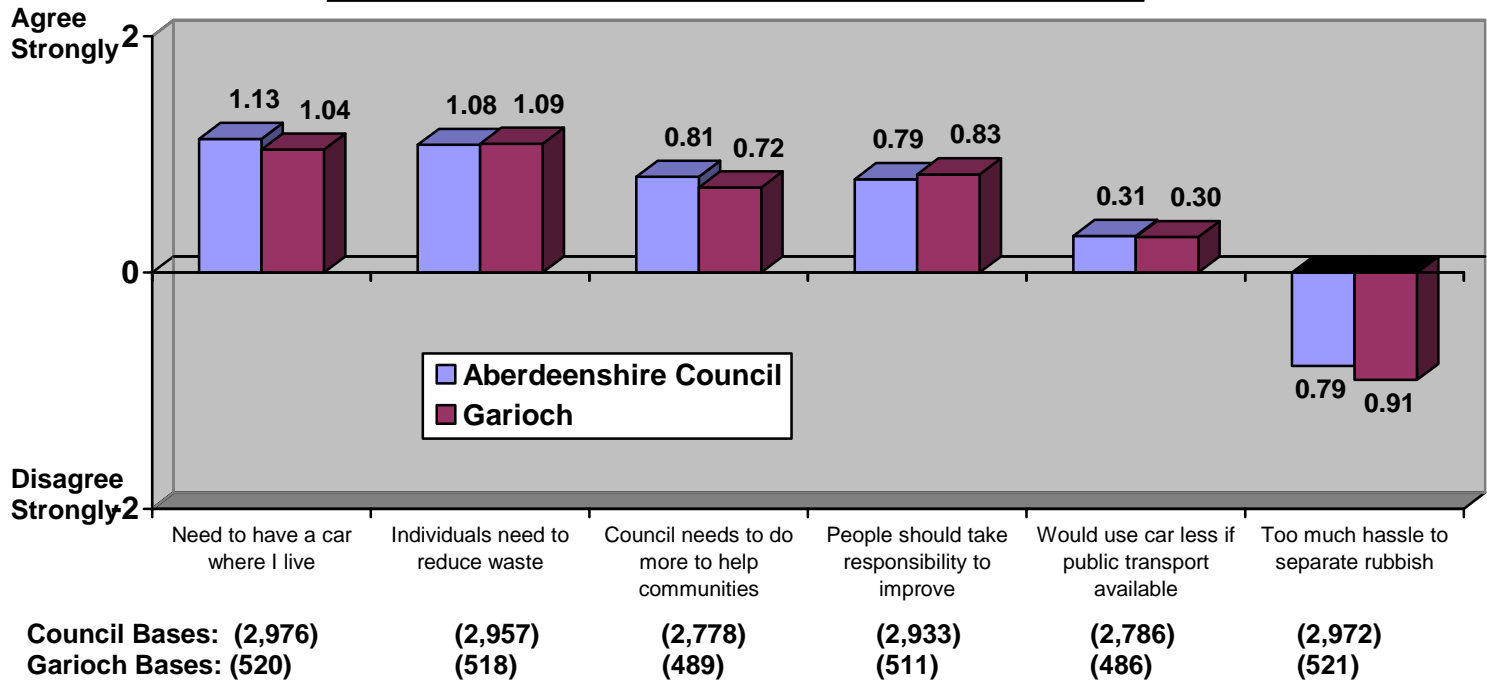
Figure 7.1(b): Measures of Council as Socially Responsible Organisation



7.2 The levels of agreement amongst Garioch residents are, in general, similar or slightly higher when compared to those for all survey respondents.

7.3 A further element of the social responsibility section related to public attitudes. Responses to a series of attitudinal statements are laid out in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: Social Responsibility – Public Attitudes



Attitudes towards personal social responsibility are broadly similar in Marr in comparison to the whole of Aberdeenshire, although there are some very slight variations worthy of note:

- Fewer Garioch residents agree that separating rubbish out is too much hassle
- Garioch residents believe less strongly that the Council needs to do more to help communities and more strongly that individuals should take more responsibility to improve their communities
- Residents in Garioch agree to a lesser extent that it is necessary to have a car, which relate to the slightly more urban character of the area.

Summary of Key Points

Garioch residents' views in comparison to those in the rest of Aberdeenshire with regard to perceptions of the Council as a socially responsible organisation are generally more positive.

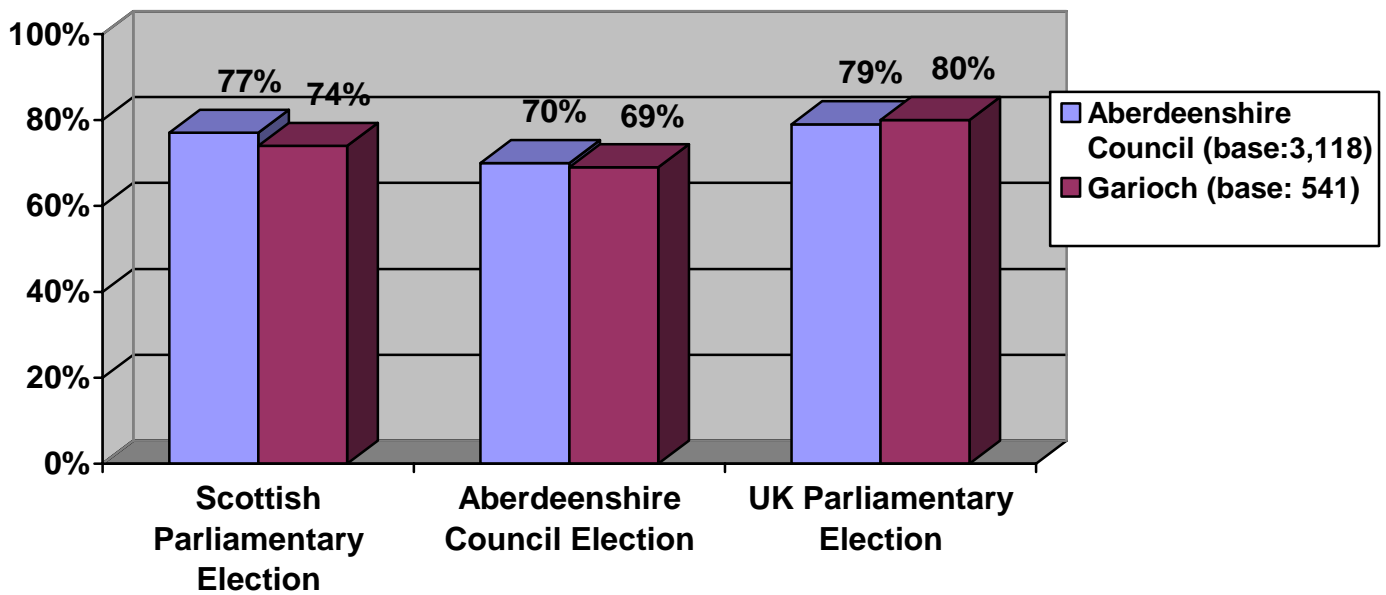
The view that the Council should be doing more to help communities is less prevalent in Garioch, with slightly more residents believing that individuals themselves should do more to improve their communities.

8.0 COUNCIL DECISION MAKING, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

8.1 A further strand of the research related to people's attitudes to Council decision making, consultation and communications.

8.2 Figure 8.1(a) provides data as to whether people voted in the last round of a number of elections

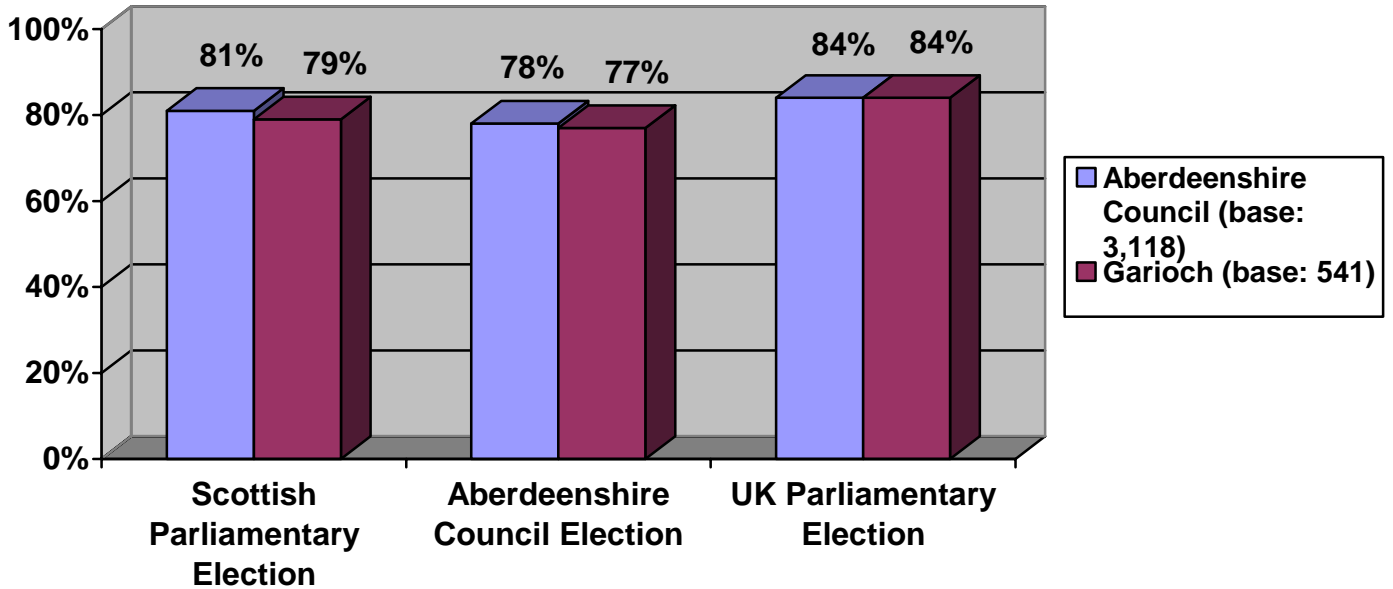
Figure 8.1 (a): Voted in Last Elections



Clearly, a high proportion of the survey samples claim to have voted in these elections, with the results for Aberdeenshire and Garioch being broadly similar.

Figure 8.1 (b) below provides information as to whether they intend to vote in these elections in the future.

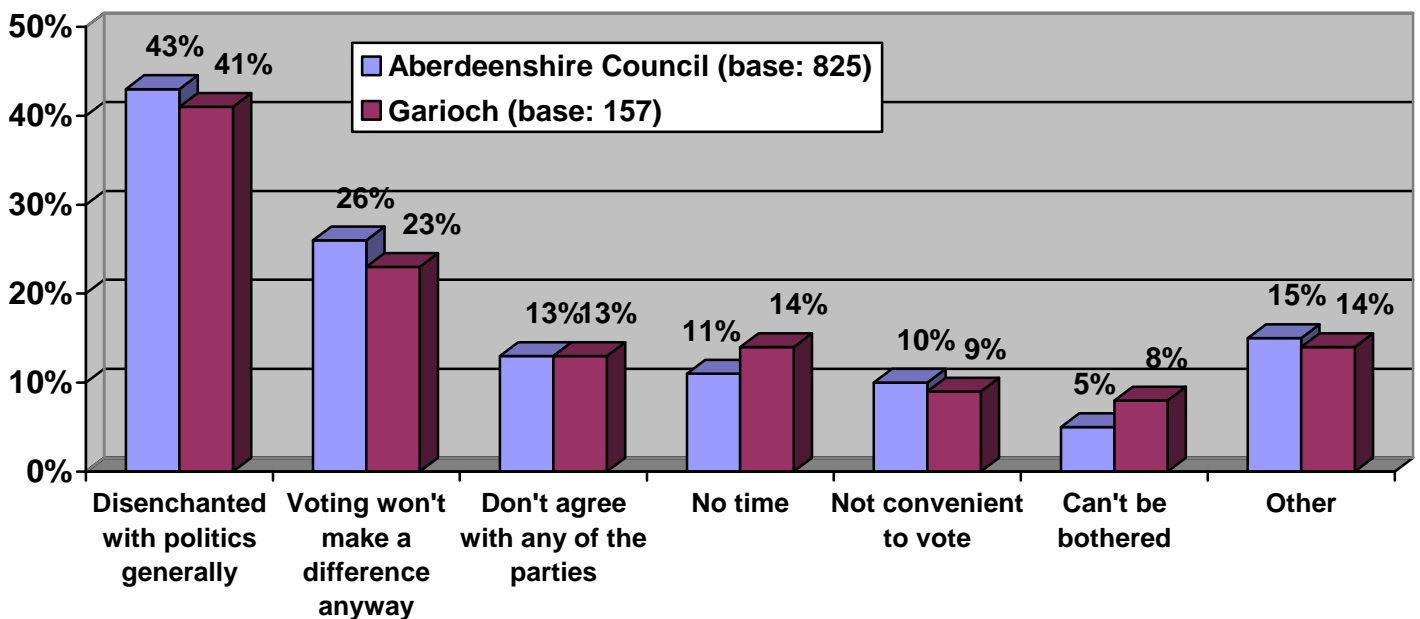
Figure 8.1 (b): Intend to Vote in Next Elections



These figures correlate closely to those who voted on previous occasions.

8.3 The main reasons why people say that they would not vote are detailed below:

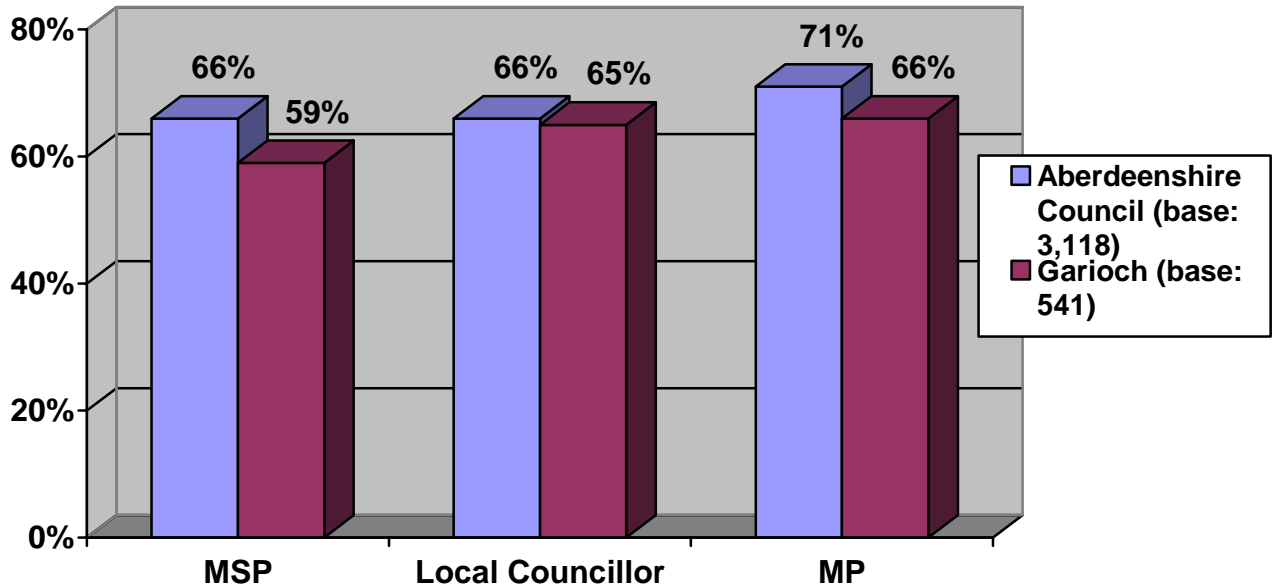
Figure 8.2: Reasons for Not Voting



Garioch voters who have not voted in at least one of the named elections are slightly more likely not to have done so due lack of time or general apathy, when compared to Aberdeenshire as a whole.

8.4 Figure 8.3 summarises individuals' knowledge of local elected representatives:

Figure 8.3: Ability to name Local Elected Representatives



8.5 Whilst Aberdeenshire residents display an impressive level of awareness of local councillors (well ahead of the 43% most recently quoted by the Scottish Household Survey) the figures are slightly less positive for Garioch residents for each category of elected representative in the survey.

8.6 Attitudes in relation to a number of dimensions of Council decision making and its consultation process are set out below:

Figure 8.4 (a): Council Decision Making and Consultation

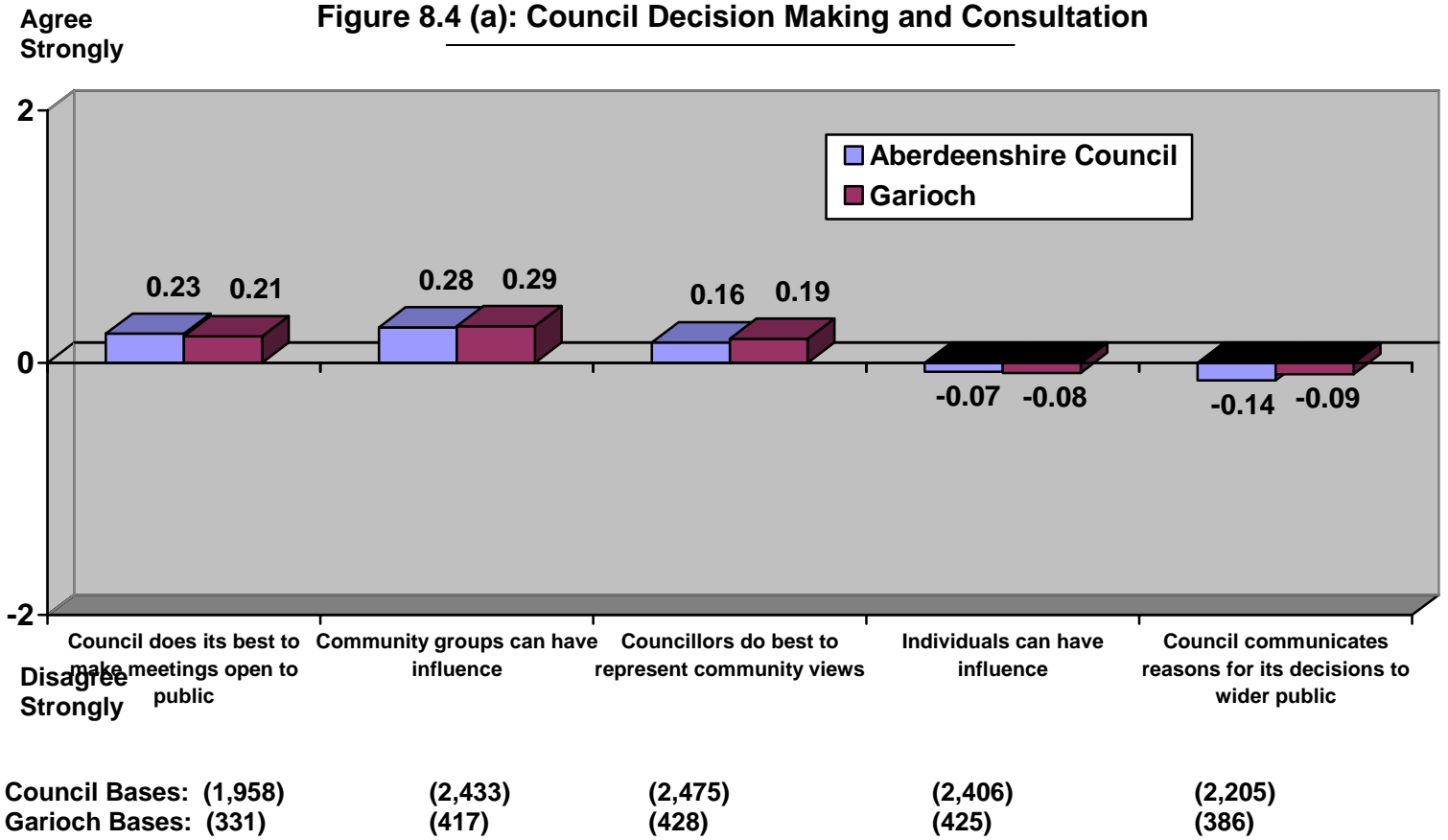
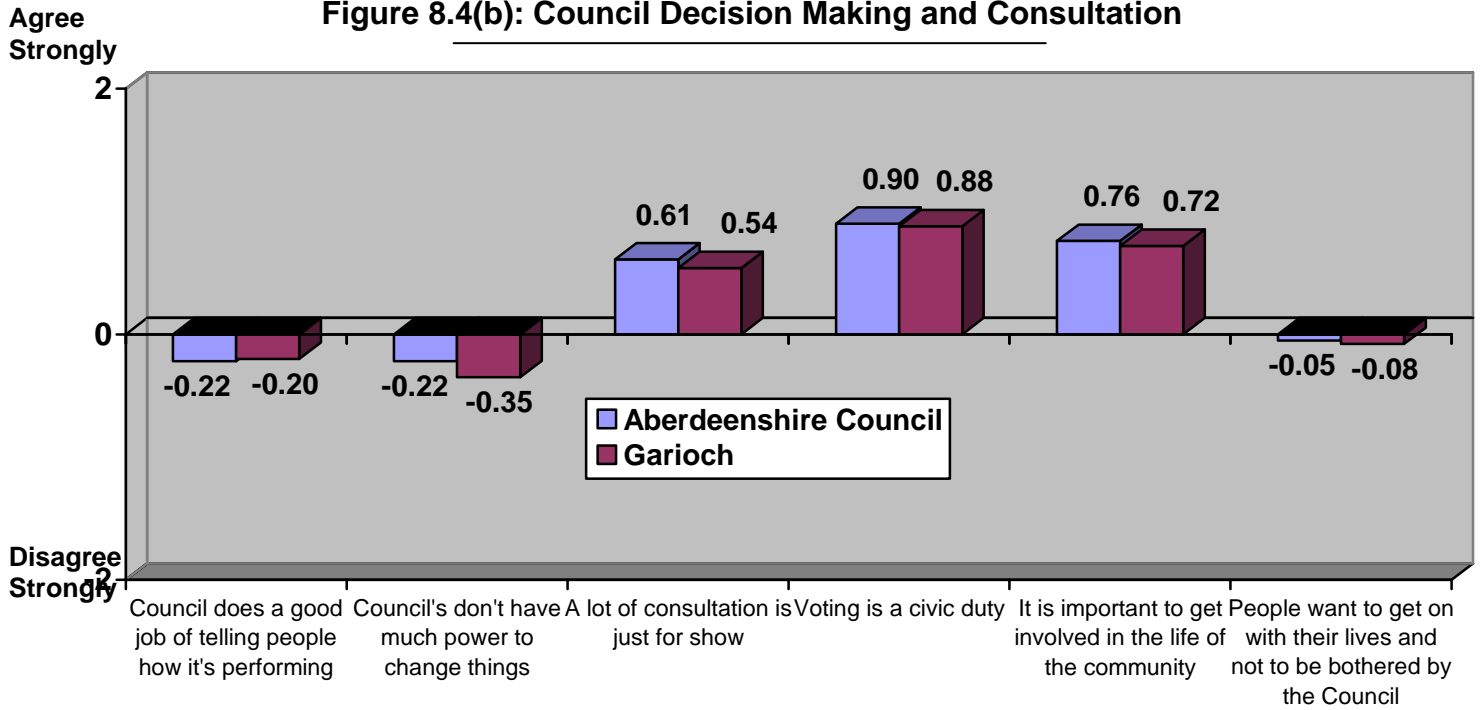


Figure 8.4(b): Council Decision Making and Consultation



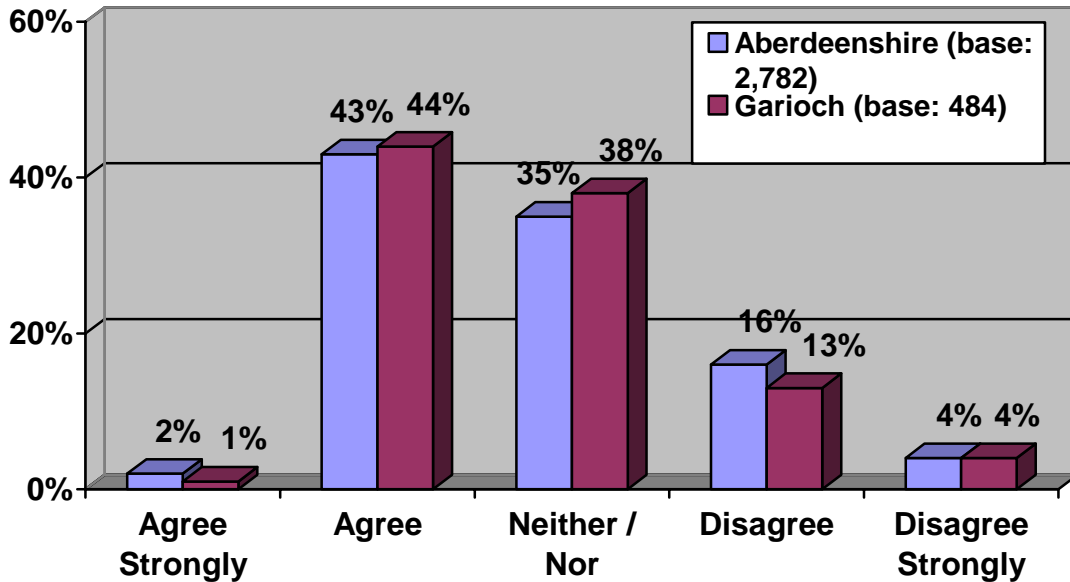
Council Bases:	(2,268)	(2,454)	(2,455)	(2,736)	(2,790)	(2,664)
Marr Bases:	(387)	(423)	(422)	(485)	(496)	(466)

8.7 Most responses in Garioch are in line with the average for Aberdeenshire Council, although there are some slight variations worth noting:

- Fewer Garioch respondents feel the Council “does not have much power to change things”
- Fewer Garioch residents feel that ‘a lot of consultation is just for show’.

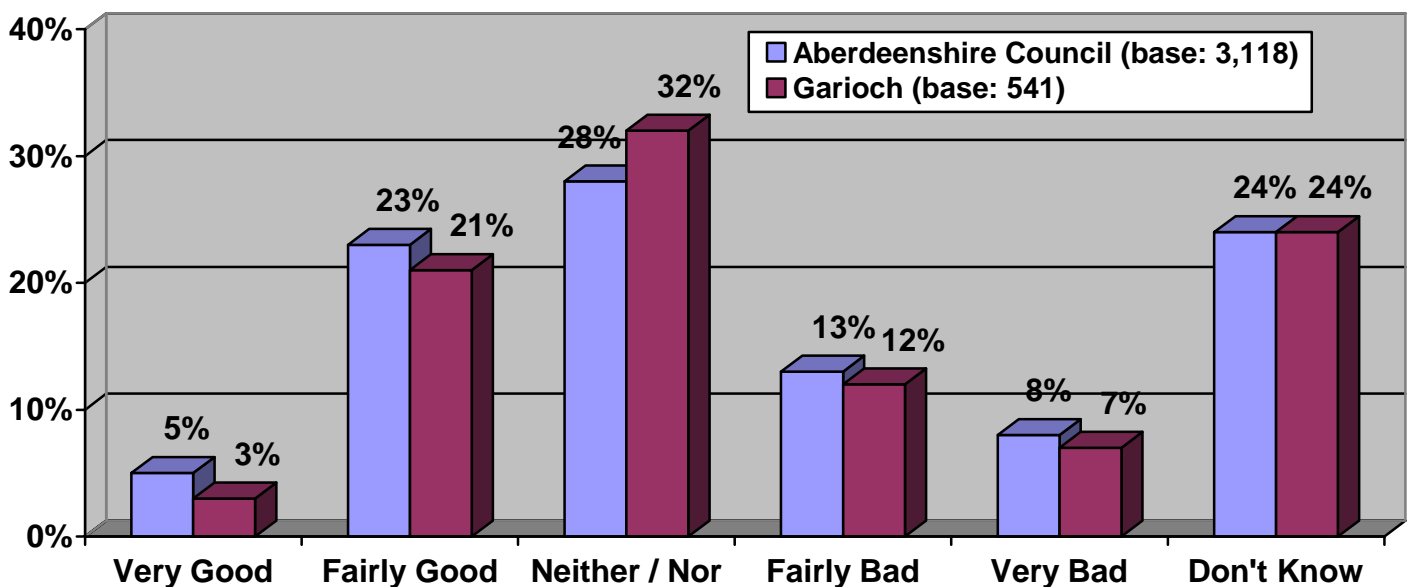
8.8 As illustrated in Figure 8.5 below, a significant minority of people (including 17% in Garioch) are not satisfied with the information that they receive on Council services.

Figure 8.5: “Overall, I am satisfied with the information I get on Council services”



8.9 There is also some scepticism as to the extent to which the Council will genuinely take account of people’s views (although this is evident in Garioch to a slightly lesser extent than is the case for the whole Council sample), as illustrated in Figure 8.6 below.

Figure 8.6: How Good Do You Think the Council is at Taking Account of Your Views over Matters Which Concern You?



The “don’t know” response should be taken into account but, even allowing for this, a significant minority of residents are sceptical as to whether the Council will take account of their view, reflecting some of the scepticism described under the “Social Responsibility” heading.

Summary of Key Points

A large majority of survey respondents claim to have voted in the most recent parliamentary and Council elections.

When people have not voted it has normally been due to a general disenchantment with politics, though this is that case to a marginally lesser extent in Garioch.

A high proportion of Aberdeenshire residents are able to name their elected representatives, although Garioch residents are slightly less likely to be able to do so.

Overall scepticism is evident with regard to individuals’ ability to influence the Council’s decision making and to have their views taken into account, though this view is not as strongly held in Garioch.

Despite this, there are strong indications of a desire on the part of many people to take part in civic life.

A notable minority of respondents are dissatisfied with the level of information they receive on Council services and express scepticism as to the extent to which the Council will take account of their views. Garioch residents are only slightly more positive than the Aberdeenshire average, in relation to these issues.