

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

2006 RESIDENTS SURVEY

**KINCARDINE AND MEARN'S
AREA REPORT**

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Overall Satisfaction

“Net Satisfaction” with the Council in Kincardine and Mearns is markedly lower than that for the whole Council area at -2% compared to 25%. There has been a decrease of 17% in net satisfaction in Kincardine and Mearns in the past two years compared to a 2% decline in the Council as a whole.

Kincardine and Mearns respondents were notably more likely to be less positive in their responses concerning the Council’s overall performance.

Kincardine and Mearns residents are less likely to think the Council is better, rather than worse, than other Councils and to a 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 Kincardine and Mearns.

Kincardine and Mearns residents are in general notably less 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 and the outcome of their complaint.

Home internet penetration is higher than the Aberdeenshire and UK figures at 64%, with 52% 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, in the vast majority of cases to a greater extent than the rest of respondents from the Council area as a whole.

The Communities of Aberdeenshire and Kincardine and Mearns

Kincardine and Mearns residents feel the Council does not do as good a job of making towns and villages attractive compared to other Aberdeenshire residents.

There is also concern 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 Kincardine and Mearns 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 Kincardine and Mearns are more likely to feel there is a shortage of affordable housing.

Community spirit and vibrancy in Kincardine and Mearns is rated slightly lower when compared to the rest of the Council area.

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

There are lower levels of perceived danger when respondents' personal safety is concerned when they are outside after dark in Kincardine and Mearns, 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 Kincardine and Mearns 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 Kincardine and Mearns in the past five years, as well as an inward migration of 17% from outwith the area.

Less than half of grocery shopping tends to be done locally (with a notable minority of shopping taking place elsewhere in Aberdeenshire, in Aberdeen or Angus) 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 Kincardine and Mearns' appeal as a visitor destination are positive in the main, although ancillary facilities are rated less highly.

Public Transport and Safety

Perception of the quality of public transport is lower in Kincardine and Mearns when compared to the rest of Aberdeenshire.

There is a strong desire for road improvements within Kincardine and Mearns, 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 given a reasonable rating in within local villages, but is less well regarded in Stonehaven.

Satisfaction with Key Services

For those Council services that citizens elect to use, satisfaction ratings from Kincardine and Mearns are generally lower than those for Aberdeenshire as a whole.

With regard to a range of “universal services”, Kincardine and Mearns residents rate these services lower compared to the main sample of residents and in some cases significantly lower.

The level of perceived improvement in services is lower in Kincardine and Mearns.

Kincardine and Mearns residents would prioritise refuse collection for attention.

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

Social Responsibility

Kincardine and Mearns 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 less positive.

The view that the Council should be doing more to help communities is slightly more prevalent in Kincardine and Mearns, with slightly fewer 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, and this is apparent to a greater degree in Kincardine and Mearns.

A high proportion of Aberdeenshire residents are able to name their elected representatives, with Kincardine and Mearns generally just as 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, and this view is more strongly held in Kincardine and Mearns.

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. Kincardine and Mearns residents are more negative 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 Kincardine and Mearns both for the main survey and the “local inserts”.

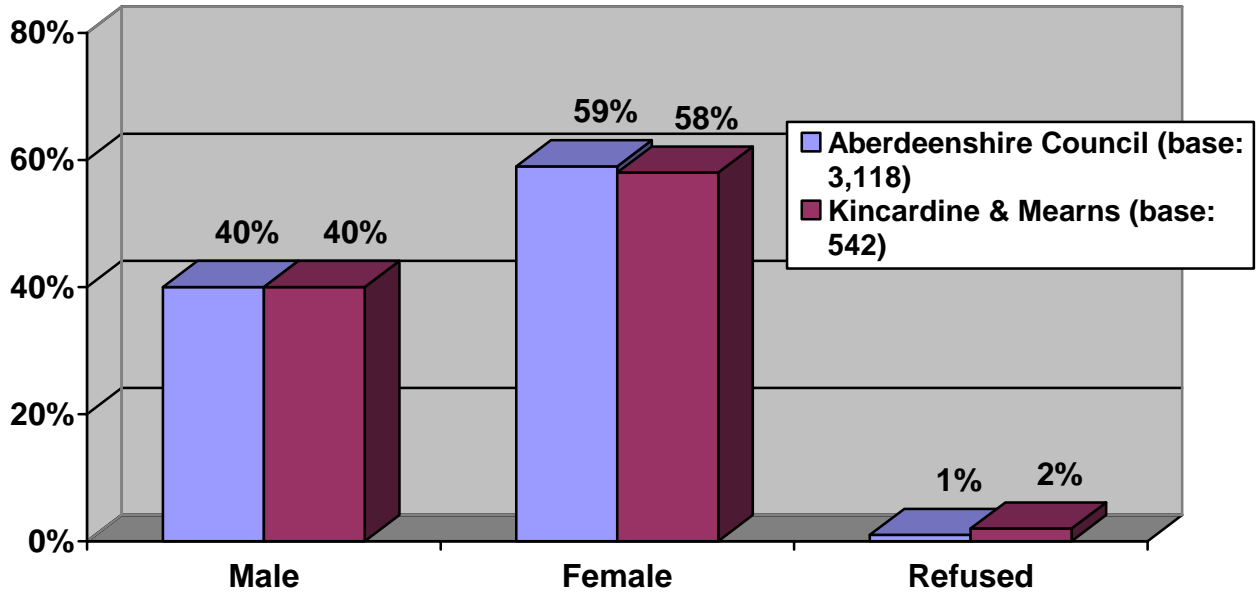
METHODOLOGY

- 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

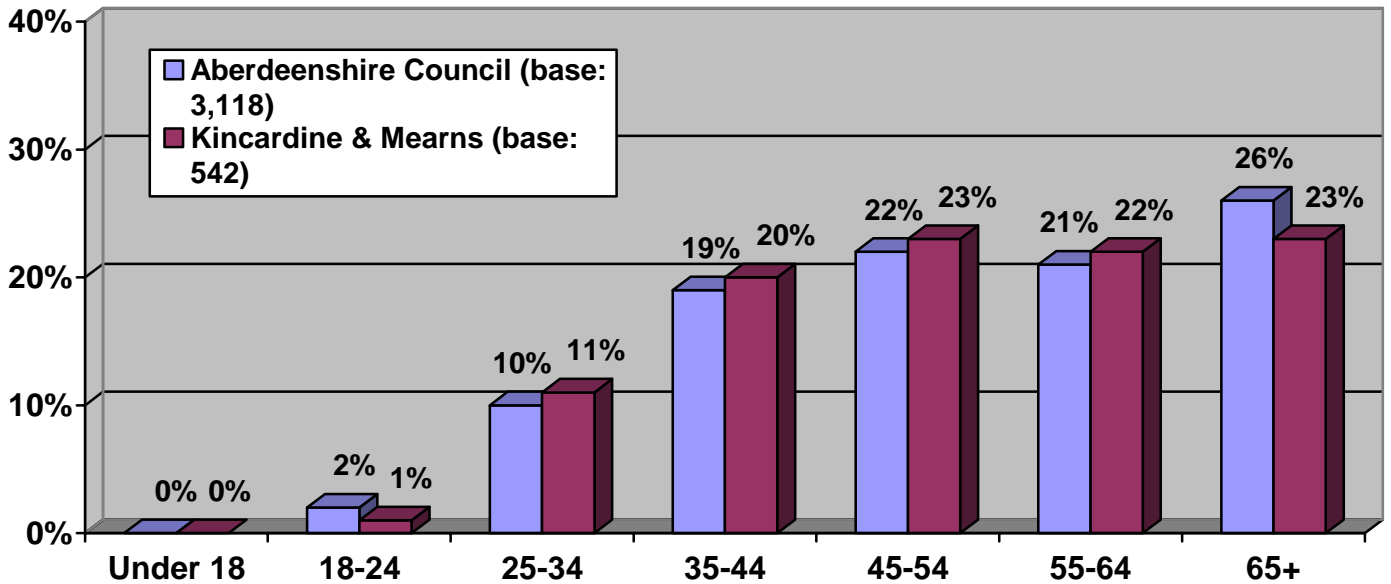
- 1.5 A total of 3,118 responses were received (including 22 responses which were completed online). This represents a response rate of 26.0%. This is within the anticipated range of response rates for surveys of this nature and compares favourably with the 18.9% response rate for the postal component of the 2002 survey and the 22.3% response rate for the 2004 survey. This continued upward trend is encouraging. Within Kincardine and Mearns specifically, 542 respondents were identified.
- 1.6 Figure 1.1 over the page illustrates that the gender mix of respondents in Kincardine and Mearns is similar to that of the overall sample for the whole of the Council area although there is a slightly less 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)



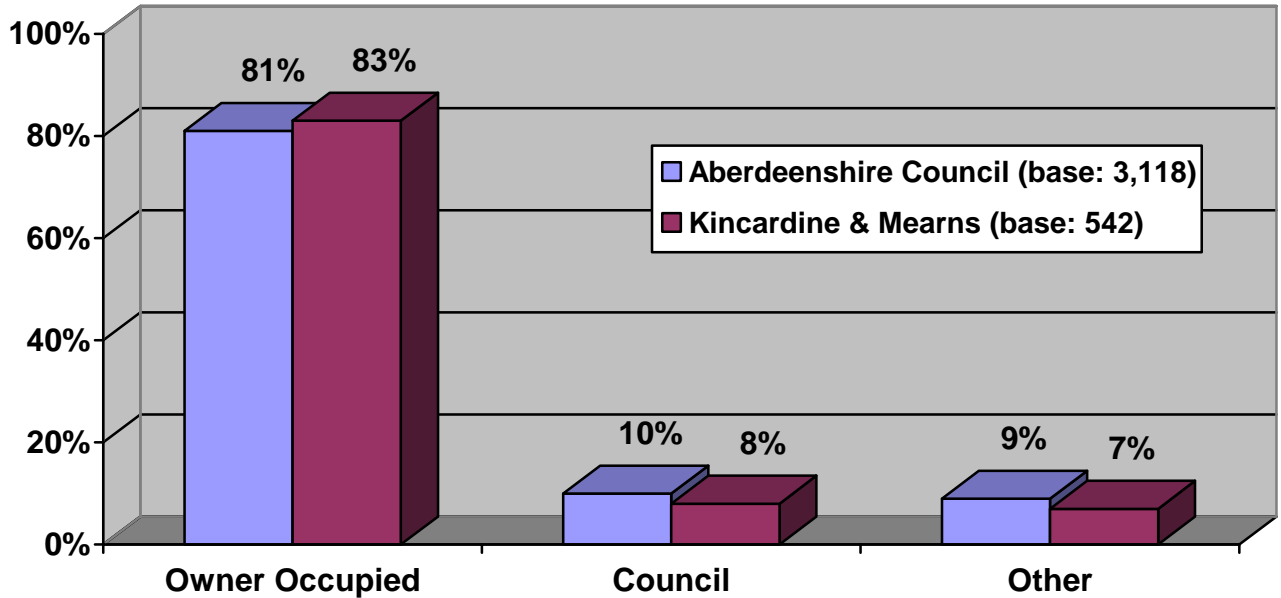
1.7 Figure 1.2 shows that the age profile for Kincardine and Mearns is less skewed towards an older respondent.

Figure 1.2: Profile of Respondents (Age)



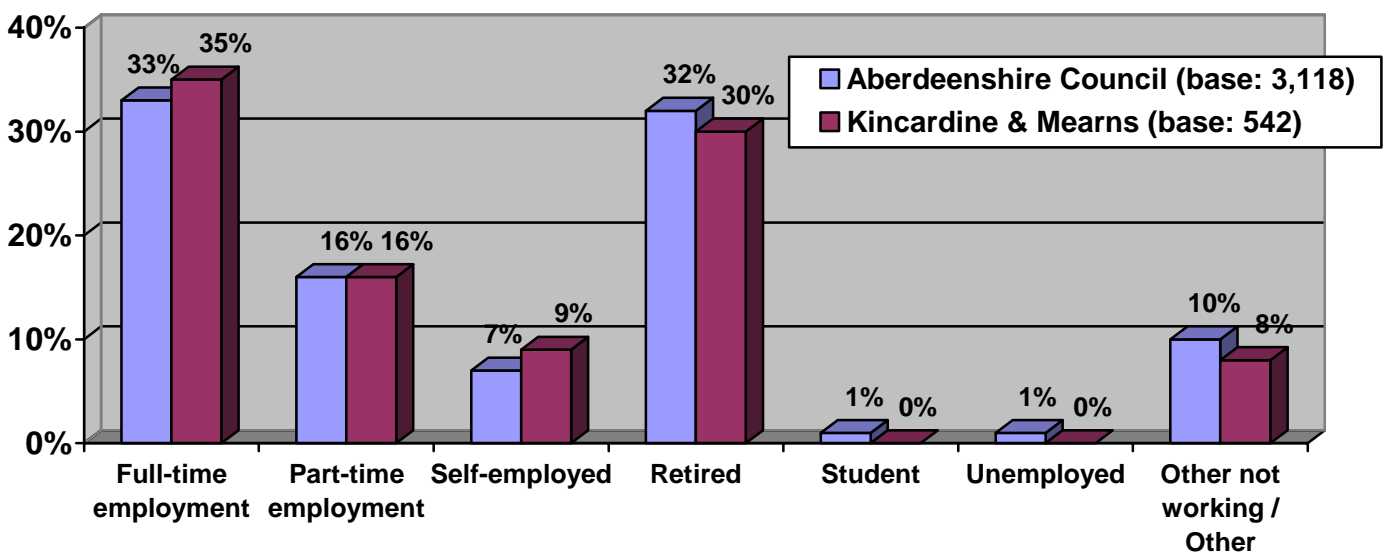
1.8 The profile of respondents in terms of housing tenure is also broadly similar, with slightly higher levels of home ownership in Kincardine and Mearns.

Figure 1.3: Profile of Respondents (Housing Tenure)



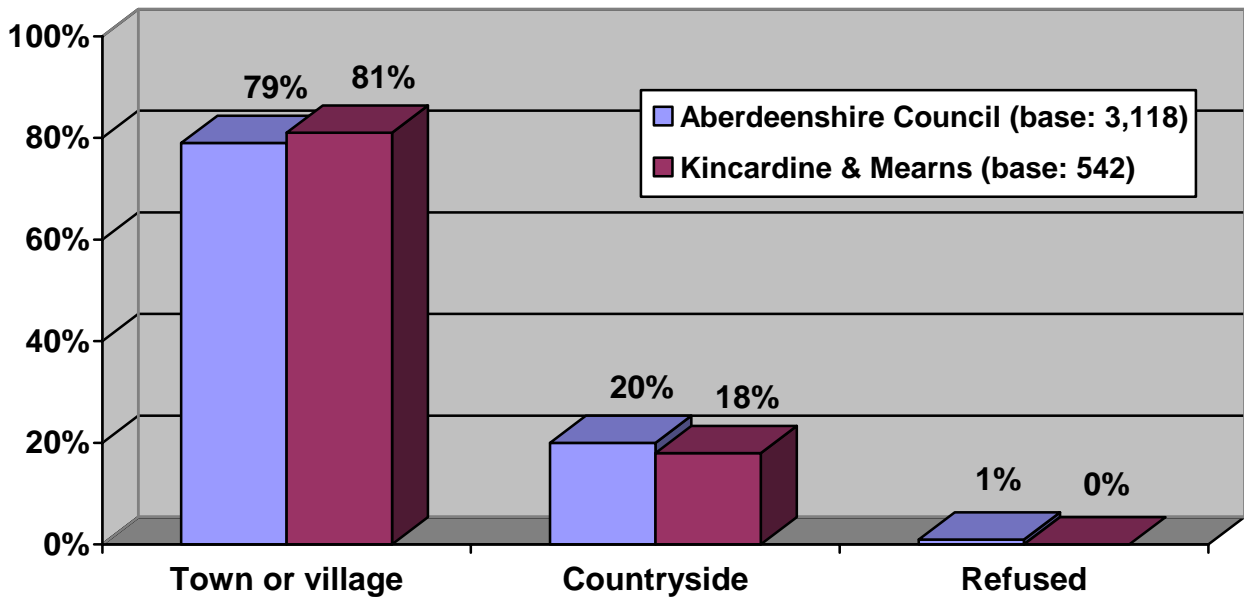
1.9 Slightly, more respondents in Kincardine and Mearns are in employment, with an accompanying lower level of retired respondents, reflecting the relatively younger age profile of Kincardine and Mearns respondents.

Figure 1.4: Profile of Respondents (Employment Status)



1.10 Kincardine and Mearns 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

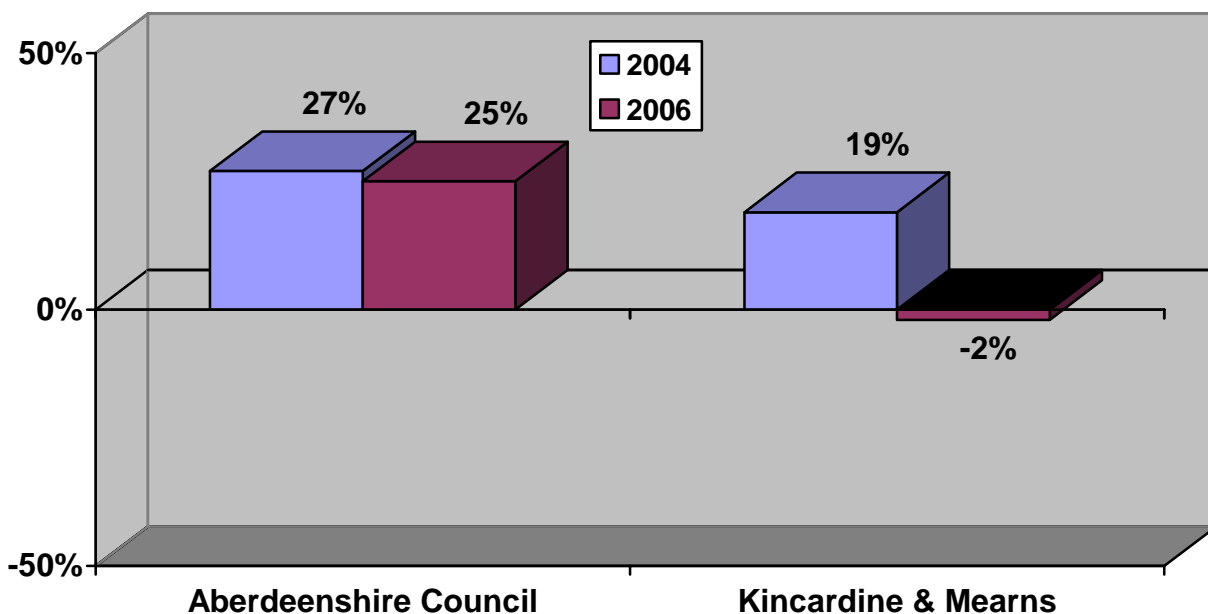
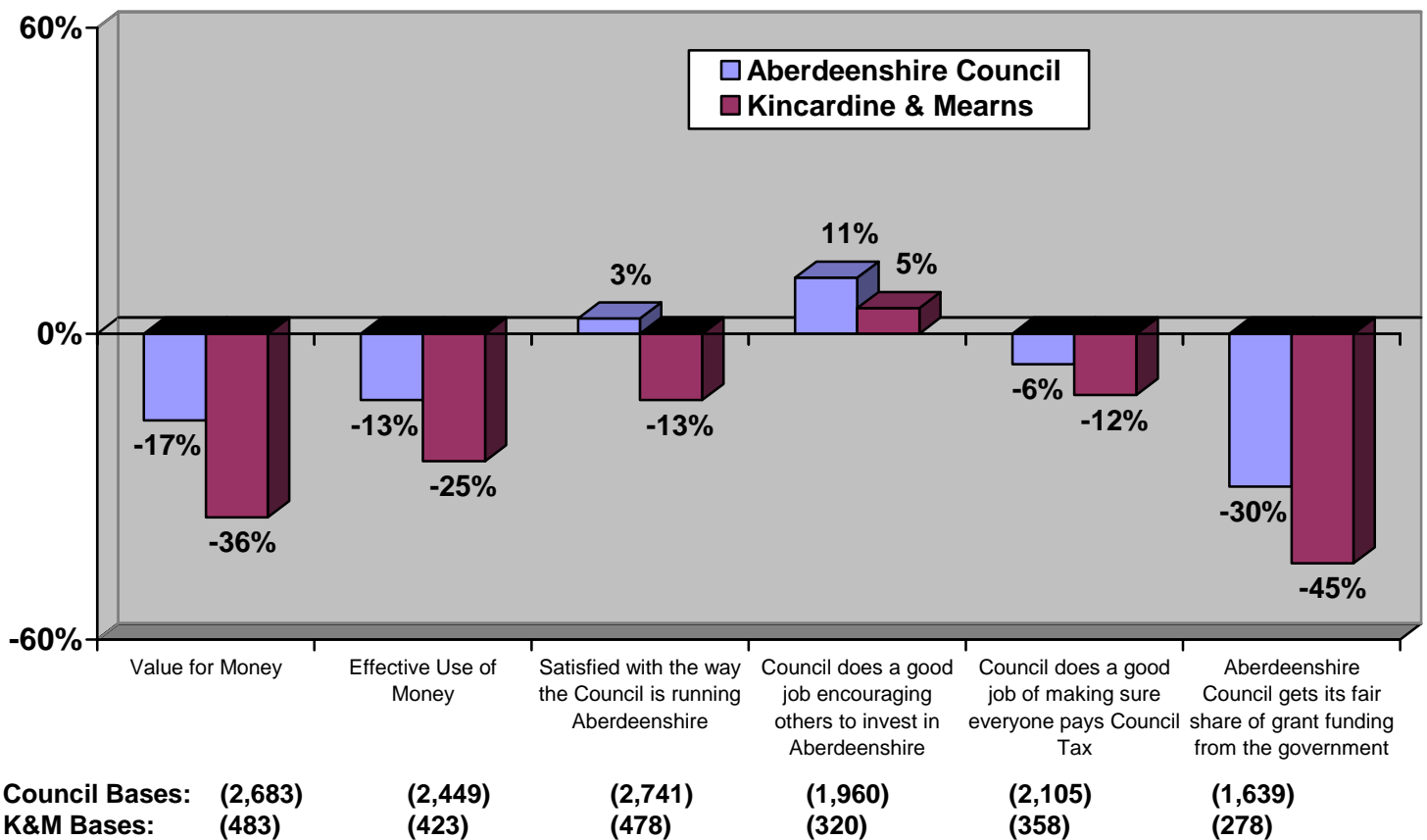


Figure 2.1 demonstrates a net agreement of 25% in 2006 compared to 27% in 2004 for the Aberdeenshire Council area as a whole. However, this moderate decline across the Council is very much more pronounced in Kincardine and Mearns where net satisfaction with the Council has actually declined from 19% to -2%. Effectively, this indicates that an overall majority of respondents in Kincardine and Mearns are dissatisfied with the Council.

Net satisfaction with the Council is markedly lower amongst those in employment with net agreement at -9%, compared to retirees with net agreement at 17%.

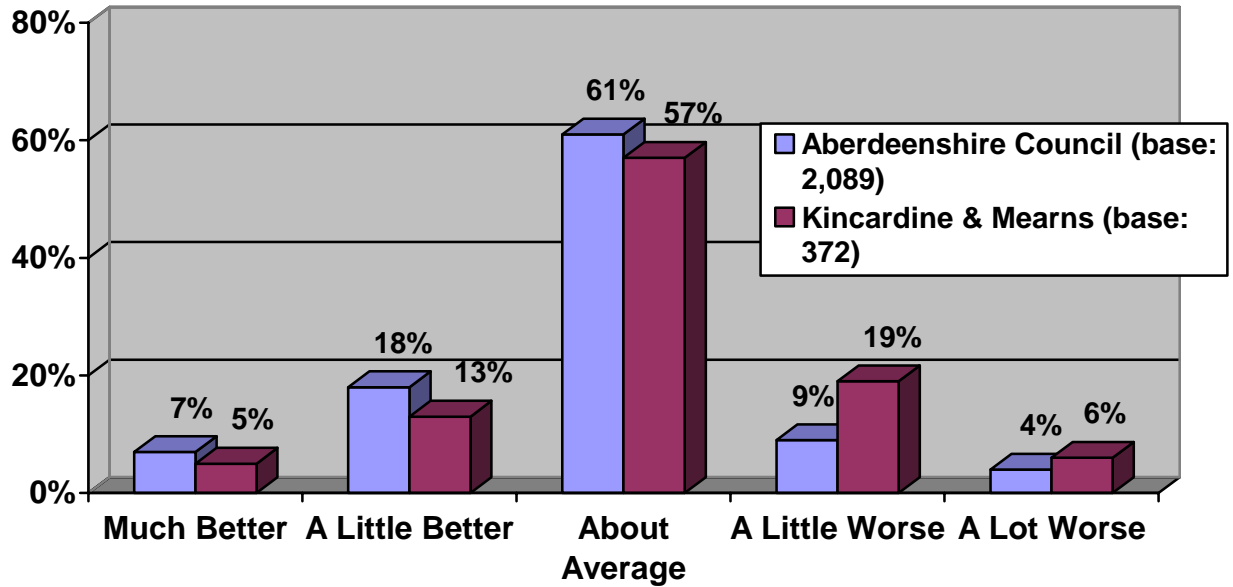
2.3 The overall views of the Aberdeenshire population were explored, with reference to a number of attitudinal statements. As can be seen below, satisfaction levels are, in all aspects (and in some cases considerably), lower than in the Council as a whole, respondents' retained a number of negative views with respect to some of these statements.

Figure 2.2: Overall Views on Key Issues



2.4 Unsurprisingly, given that overall net satisfaction with the Council is negative in Kincardine and Mearns, more respondents consider the Council to compare unfavourably with other Councils than those who feel it compares favourably.

Figure 2.3: Overall Views (Comparison to Other Councils)



Summary of Key Points

“Net Satisfaction” with the Council in Kincardine and Mearns is markedly lower than that for the whole Council area at -2% compared to 25%. There has been a decrease of 17% in net satisfaction in Kincardine and Mearns in the past two years compared to a 2% decline in the Council as a whole.

Kincardine and Mearns respondents were notably more likely to be less positive in their responses concerning the Council’s overall performance.

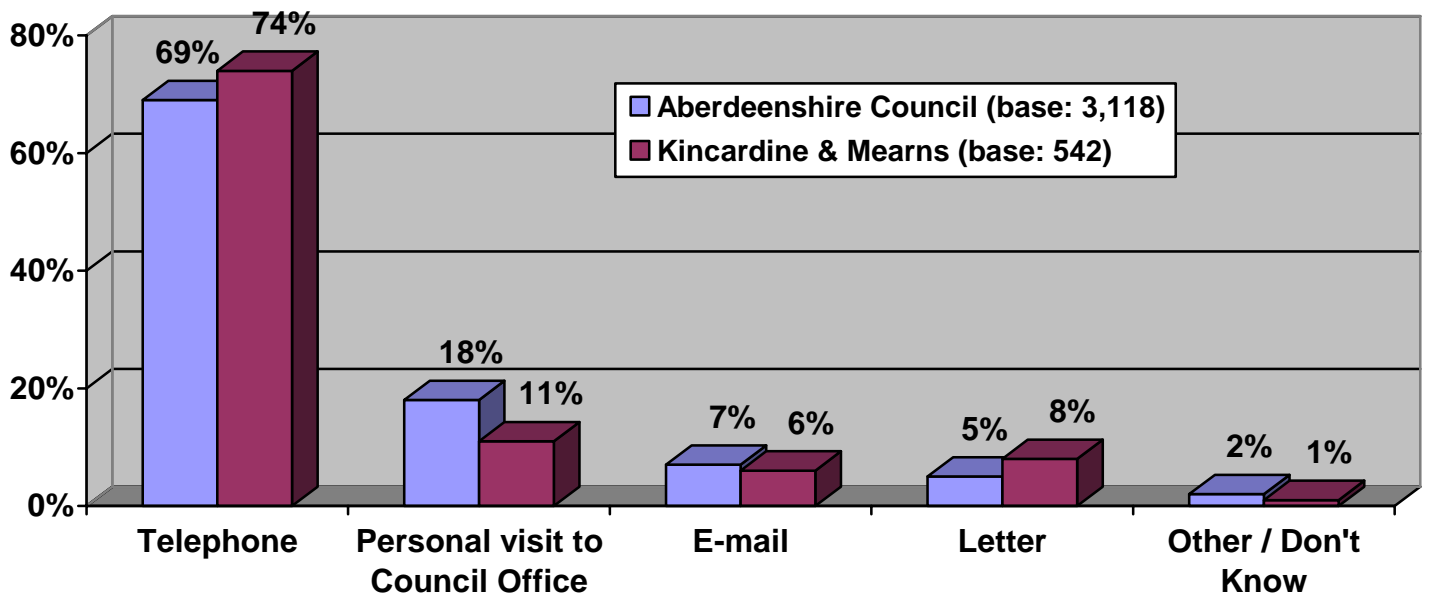
Kincardine and Mearns residents are less likely to think the Council is better, rather than worse, than other Councils and to a greater extent than is the case for respondents from Aberdeenshire Council as a whole.

3.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CONTACT MANAGEMENT

CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

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

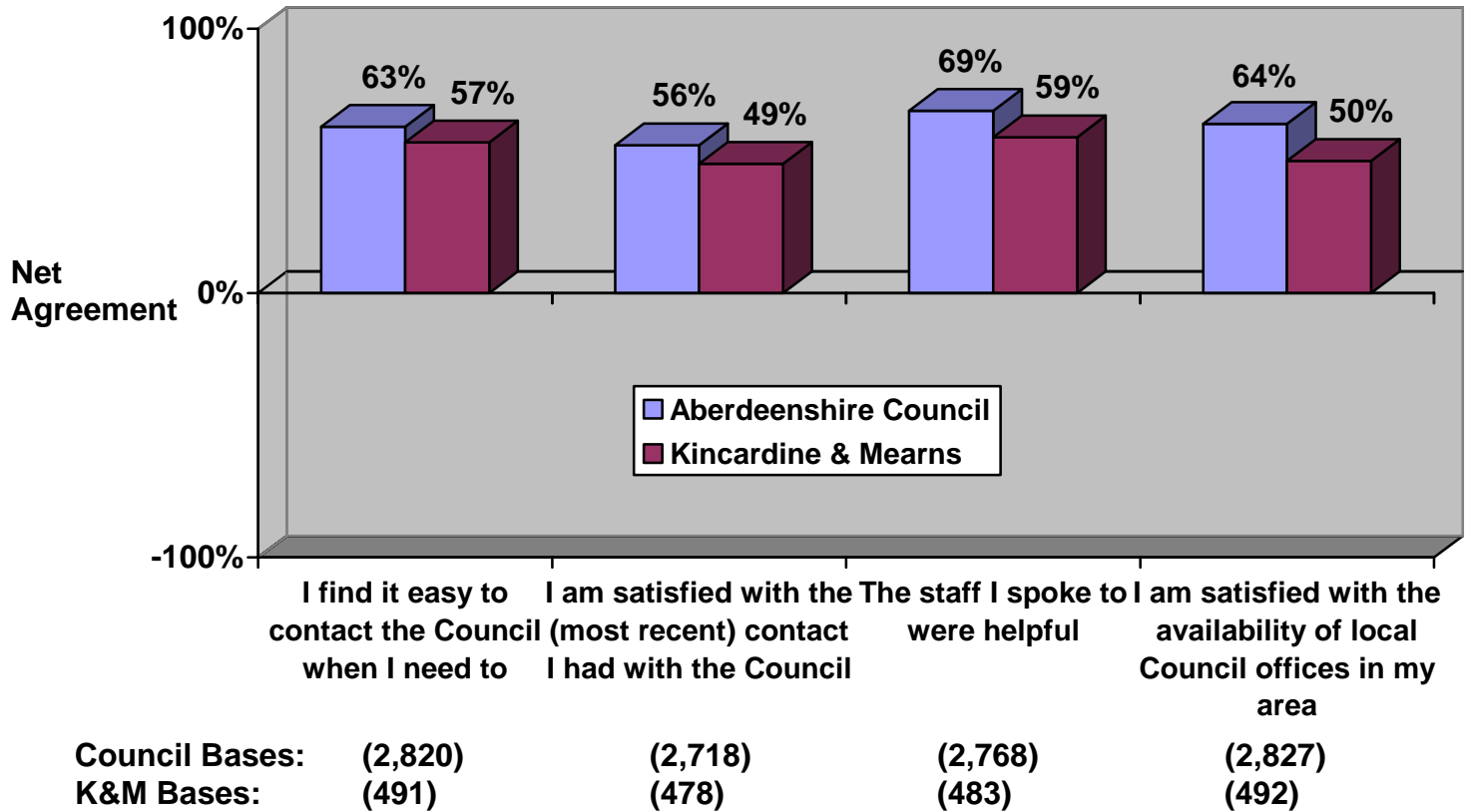
Figure 3.1: Preferred Method of Contacting the Council



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 lower across the board amongst respondents from Kincardine and Mearns, as demonstrated below.

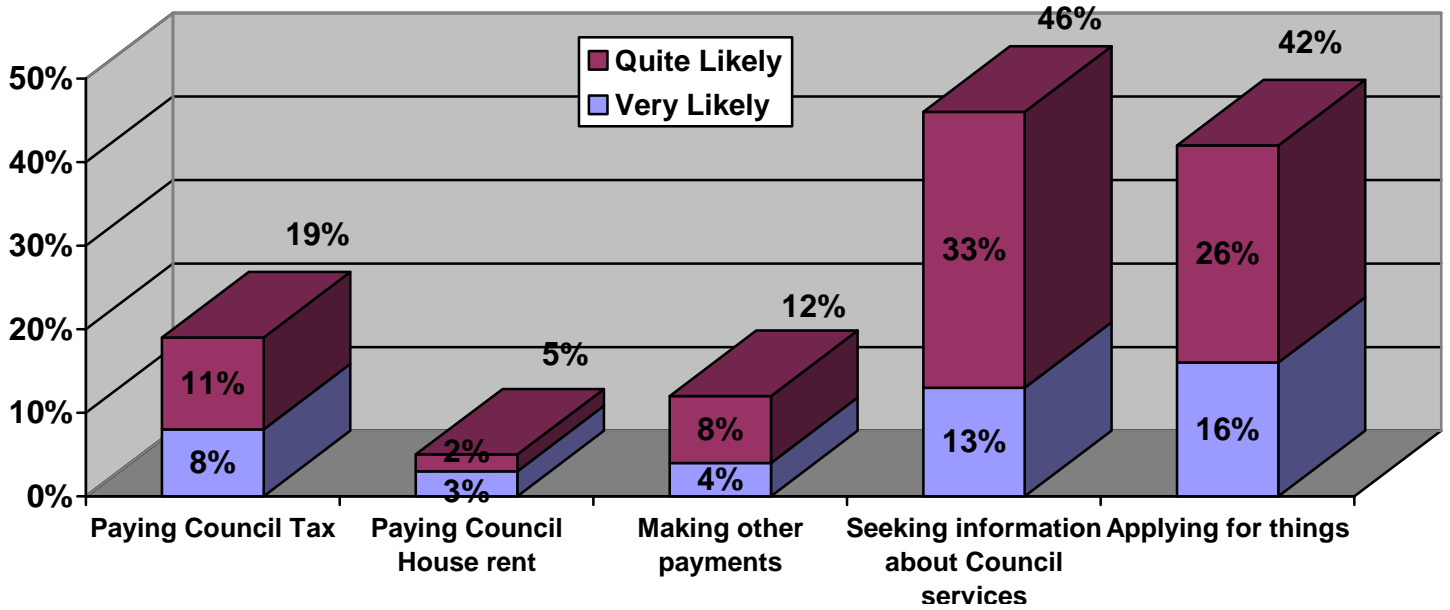
Figure 3.2: Contacting the Council



3.3 61% of Kincardine and Mearns respondents have used the Council's offices (in Stonehaven) in the past, with 36% 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: 534

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

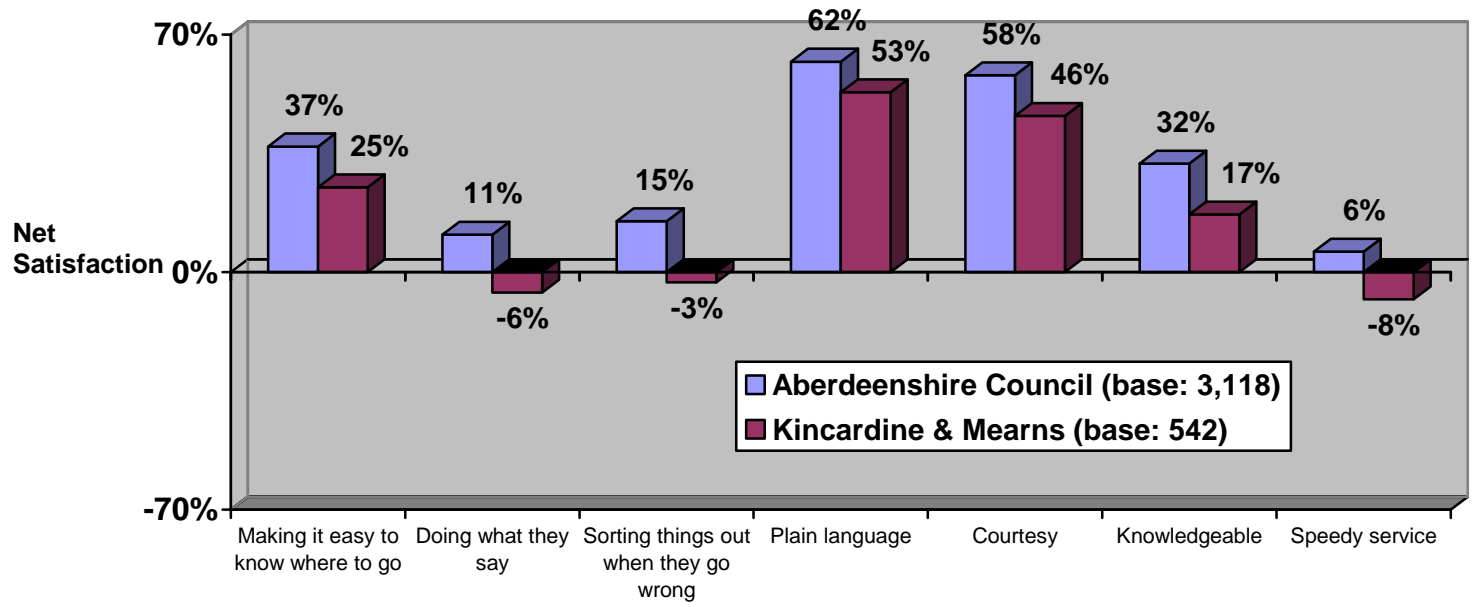
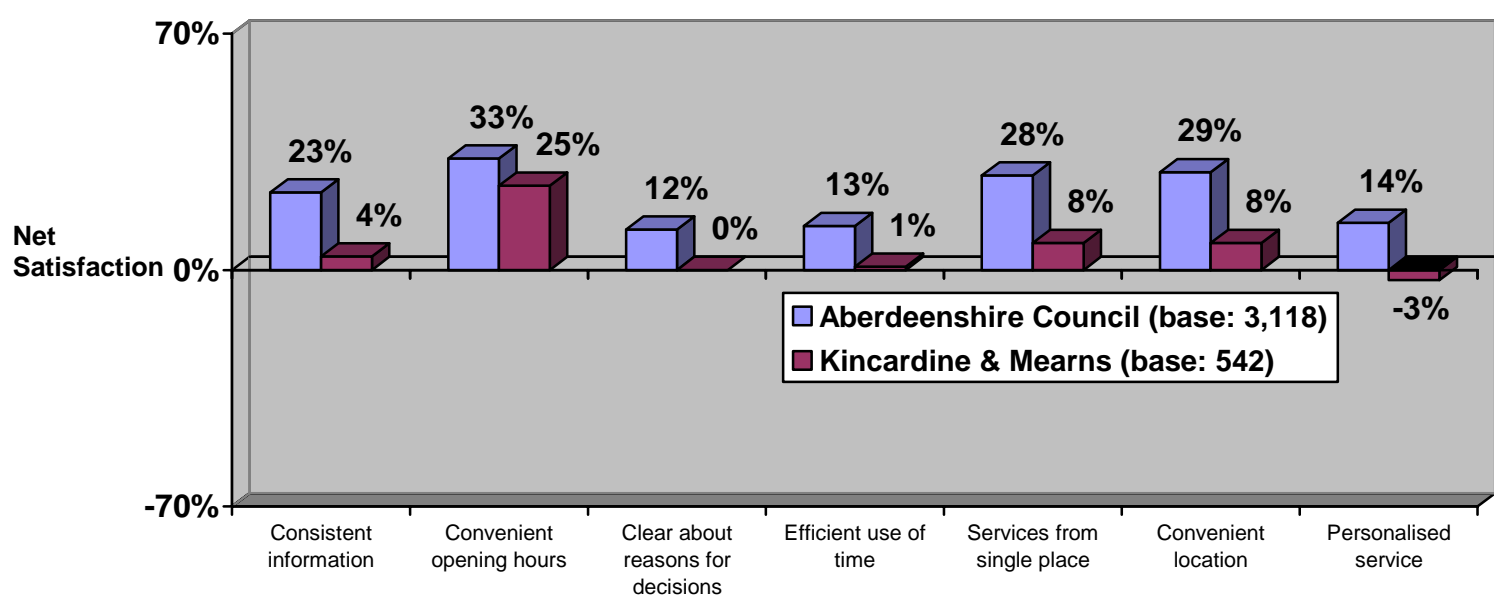


Figure 3.4(b): Rating of Service Attributes



For each of the attributes that respondents were asked to rate in the survey, Kincardine and Mearns received lower levels of net satisfaction than those ratings for the Council as a whole, with some attributes given a negative net satisfaction.

3.5 Figures 3.5(a) and (b) compares the mean ratings achieved for each of these attributes, between Kincardine and Mearns 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

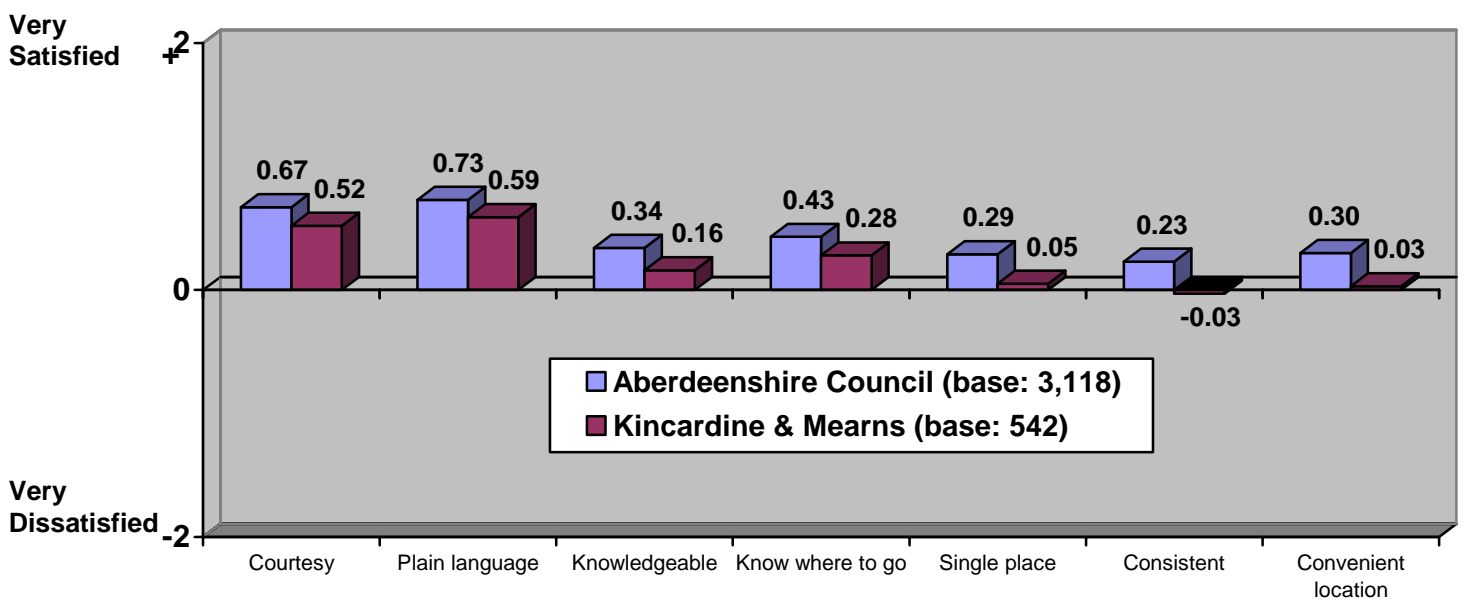
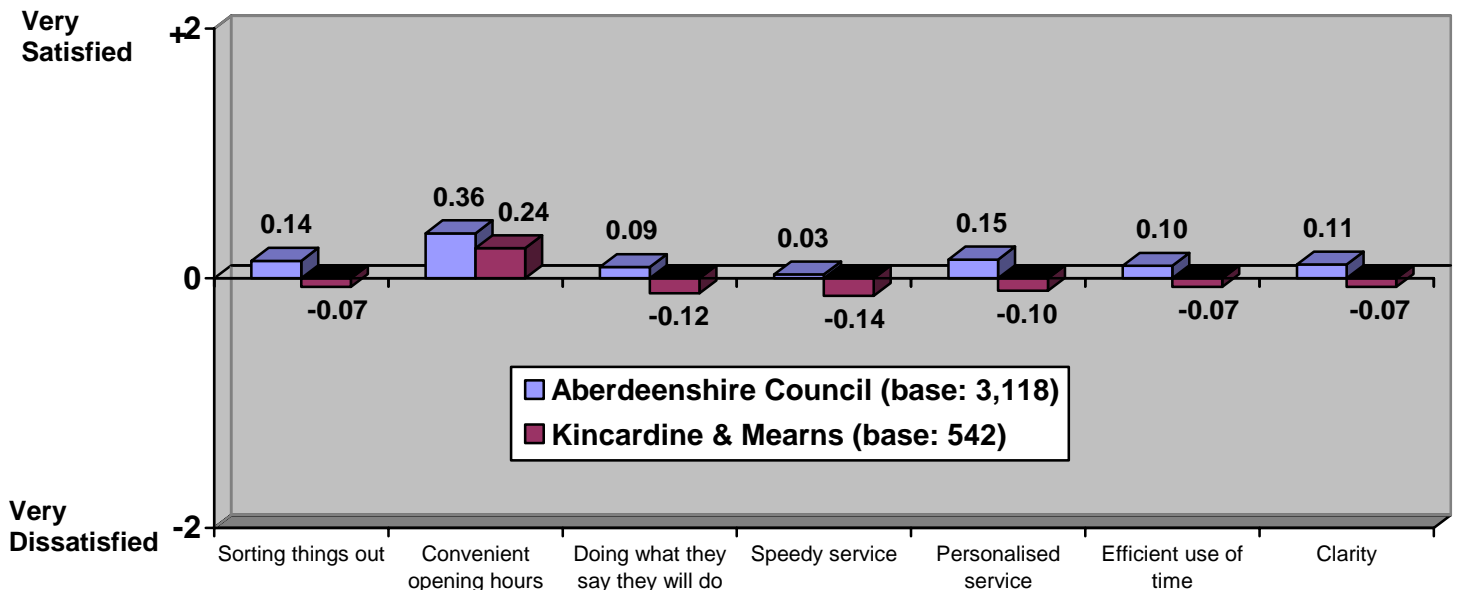


Figure 3.5(b): Customer Service Ratings

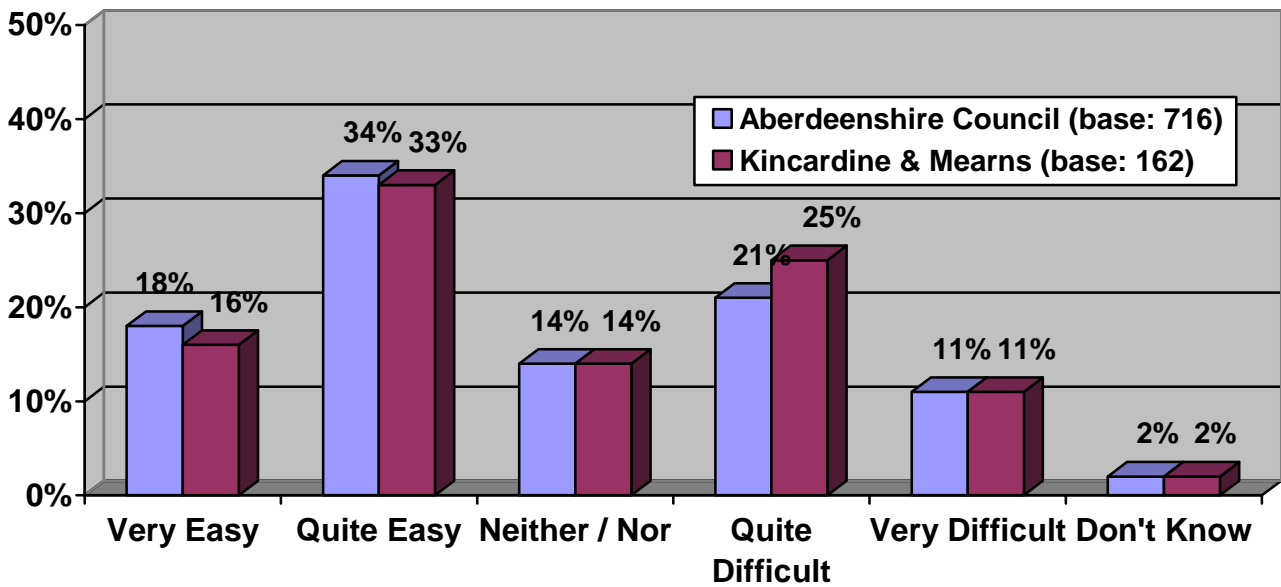


Again, the mean ratings are lower when comparing Kincardine and Mearns to the whole Council area.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

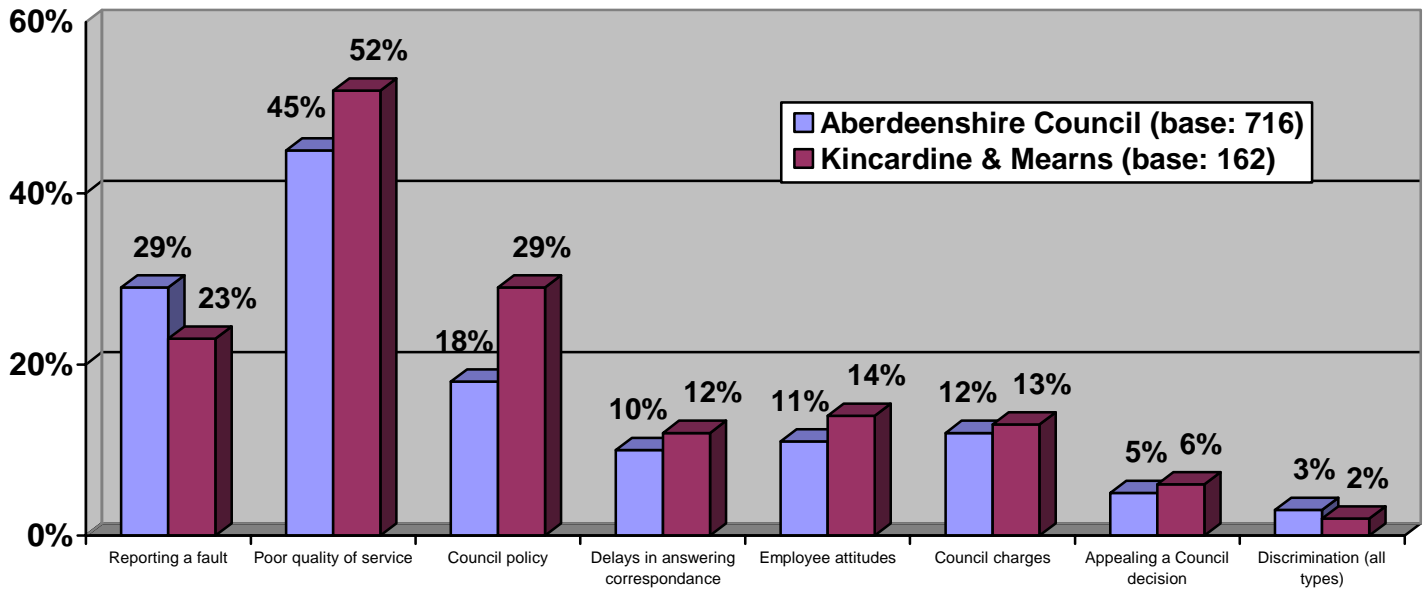
- 3.6 30% of Kincardine and Mearns respondents, compared to 23% of the whole sample, claimed to have made a complaint to the Council “in the past 12 months”.
- 3.7 As illustrated in Figure 3.6 below, the majority of people find it easy to make their complaint, although a significant minority (36%) did not, with Kincardine and Mearns residents finding it slightly more difficult to make their complaint.

Figure 3.6: Ease of Making a Complaint



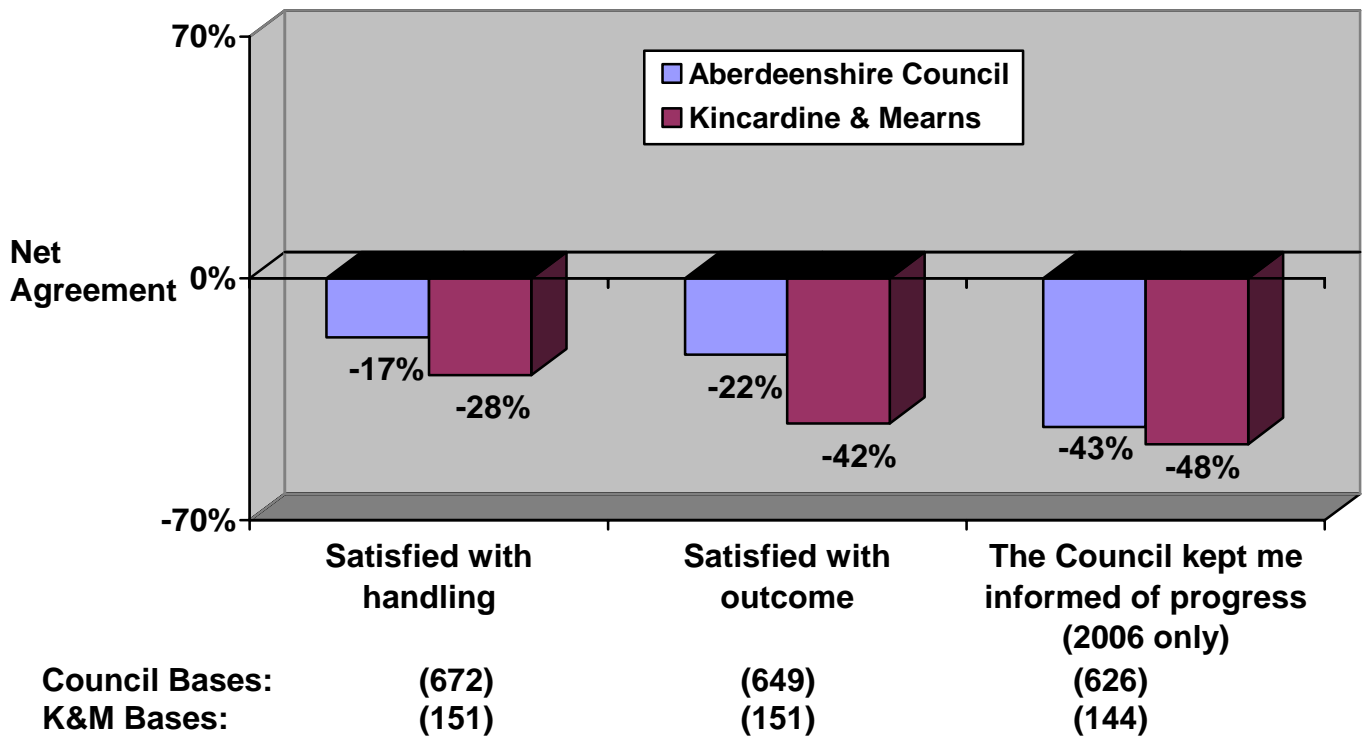
3.8 Kincardine and Mearns residents were notably more likely to complain about poor quality of service received and Council policy when compared to the Council as a whole.

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 Kincardine and Mearns) and this is likely to be a contributory factor to the more general dissatisfaction with complaint handling. Also, in Kincardine and Mearns there exists strong dissatisfaction with the outcome of the complaint and to a lesser extent with its handling, although satisfaction with the handling of complaints is notably worse than that for the rest of the Council area.

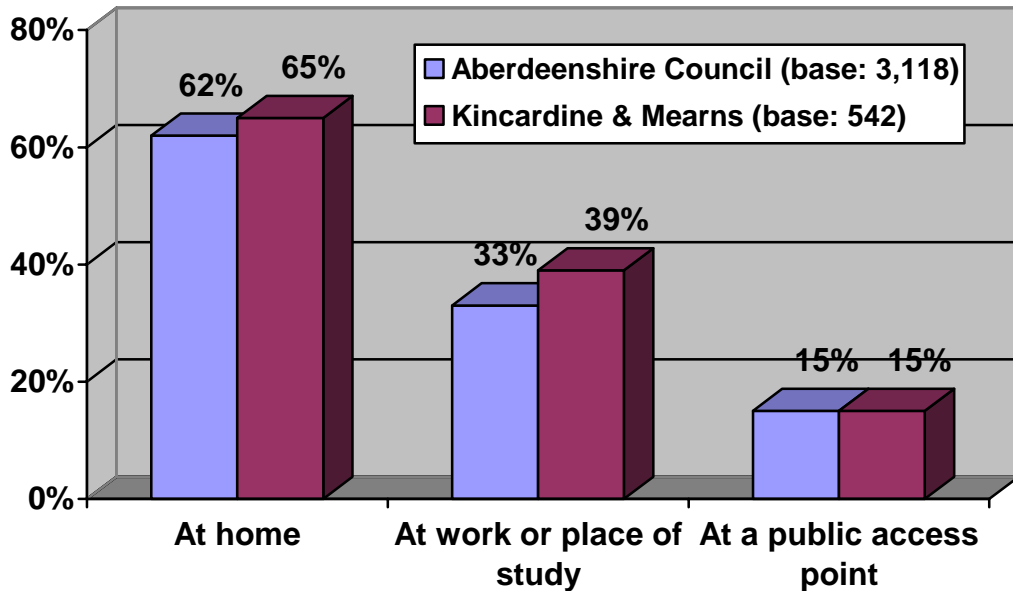
Figure 3.8: Satisfaction with Complaints



THE INTERNET

3.10 More residents in Kincardine and Mearns have internet access from the three options set out in the survey compared to Aberdeenshire Council as a whole.

Figure 3.9: Internet Access

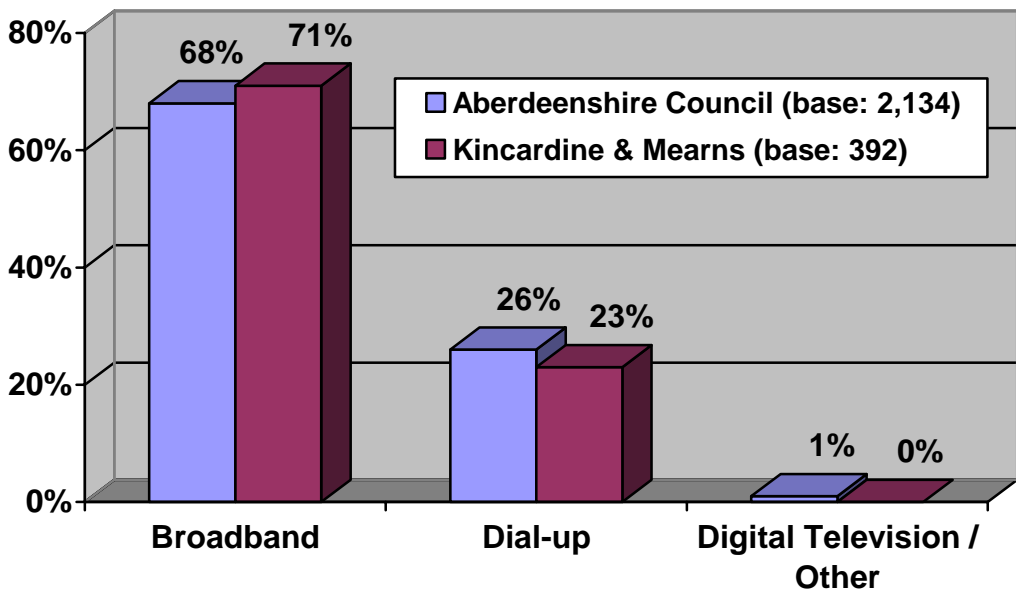


The level of home internet access is higher in Kincardine and Mearns when compared with the whole of Aberdeenshire, which also compares favourably with the UK-wide average (the Office of National statistics reports this as 57% for the period January to April 2006).

There is little difference in internet penetration by gender although it is closely correlated with age. 84% of 25-34 year olds and 83% of 35-44 year olds have home internet access compared to 41% of 65-74 year olds and 12% of those aged 75+.

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 Kincardine and Mearns.

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

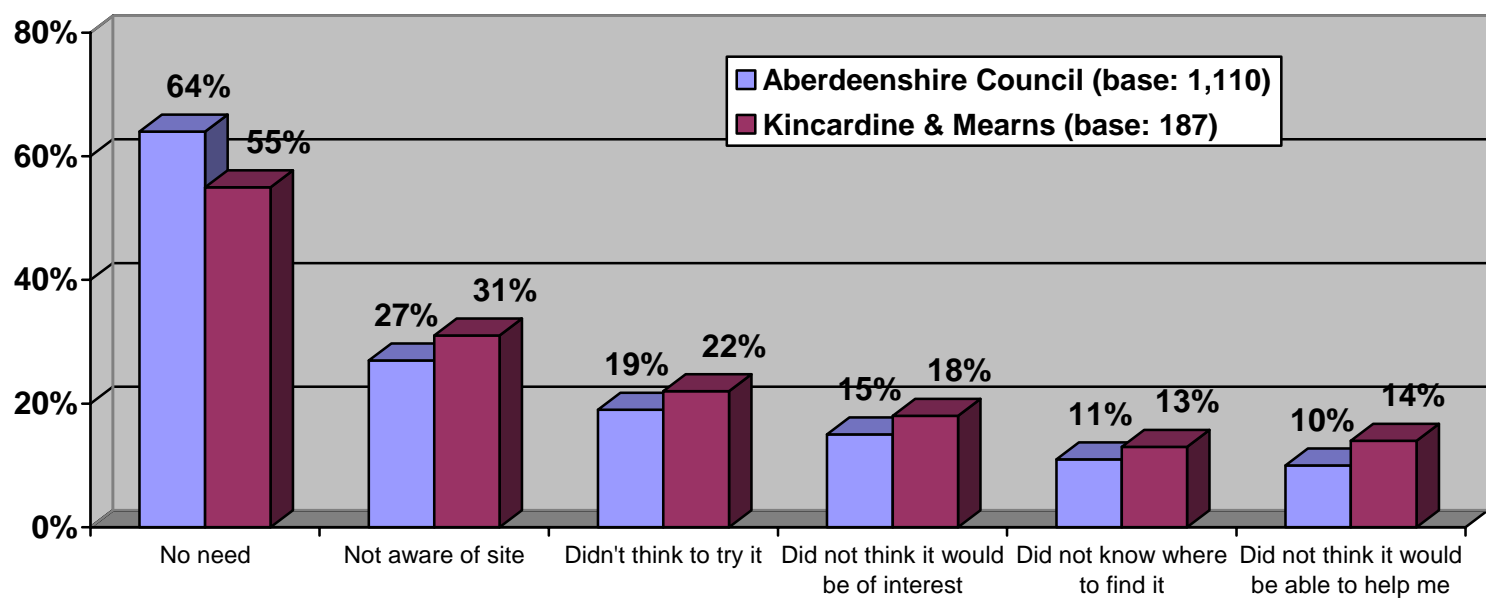


N.B. balance was "don't know" responses

3.12 In Kincardine and Mearns, 52% 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 Kincardine and Mearns residents and Aberdeenshire residents as a whole, the exception to this being those who feel there is no need (fewer Kincardine and Mearns residents hold this opinion).

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 generally higher levels of demand from Kincardine and Mearns residents (excepting the payment of Council Tax).

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

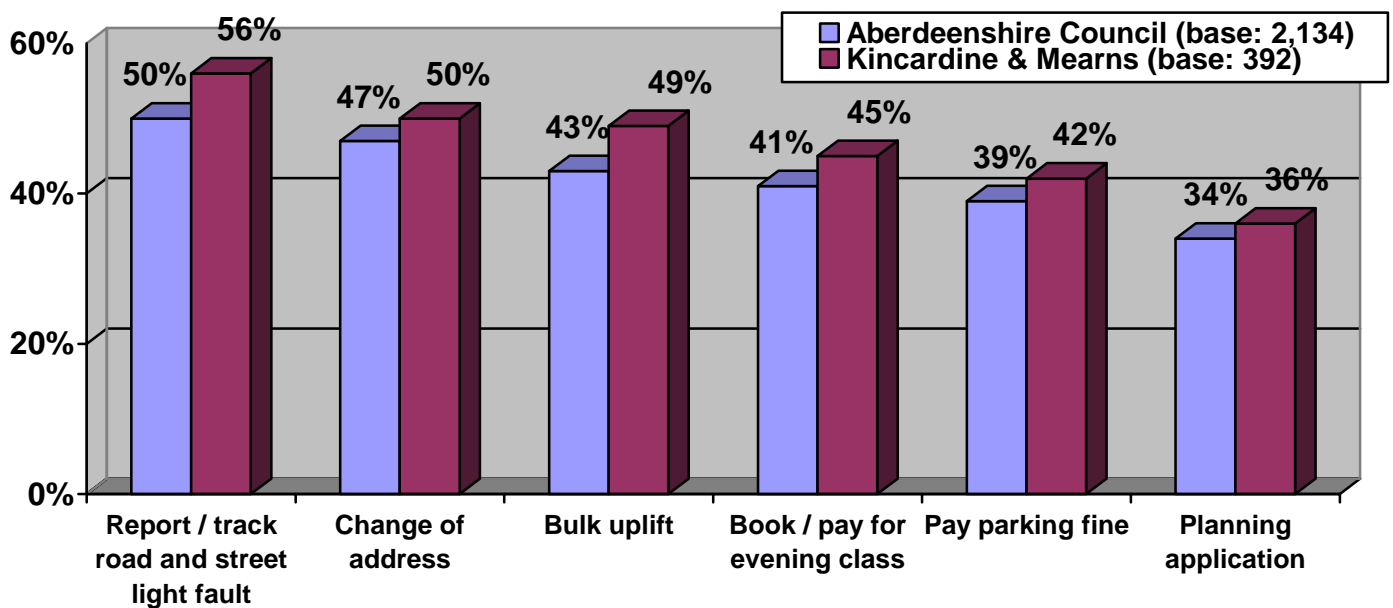
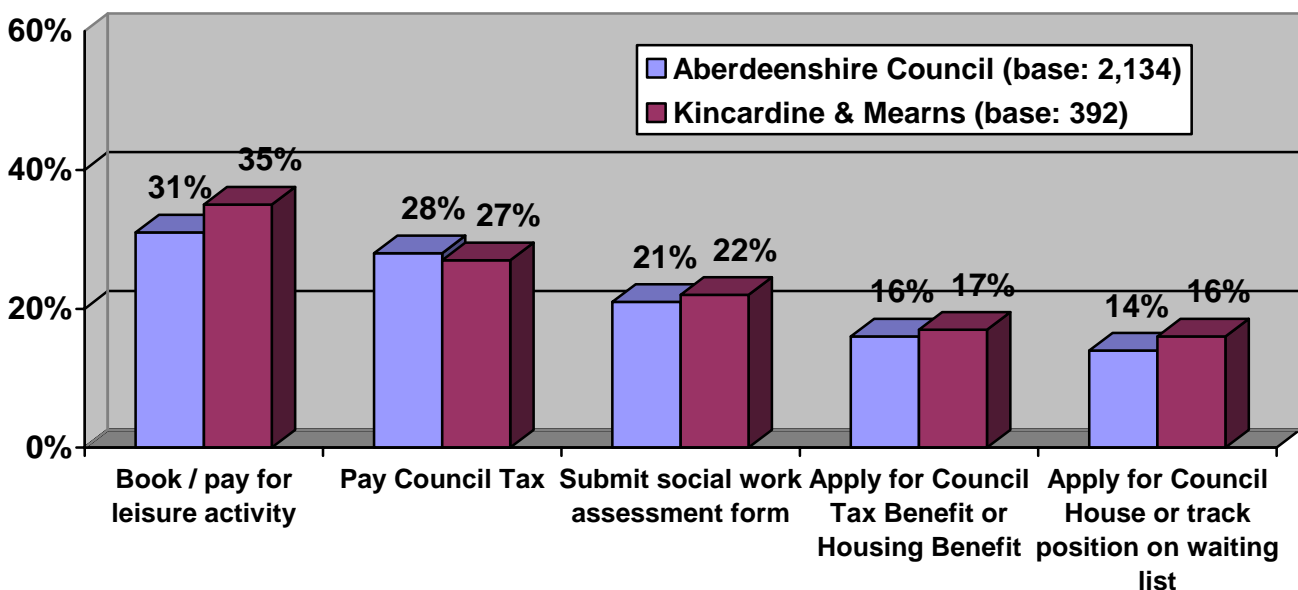


Figure 3.12(b): Services Willing to Transact Through Council Website



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 Kincardine and Mearns.

Kincardine and Mearns residents are in general notably less 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 and the outcome of their complaint.

Home internet penetration is higher than the Aberdeenshire and UK figures at 64%, with 52% 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, in the vast majority of cases to a greater extent than the rest of respondents from the Council area as a whole.

4.0 THE COMMUNITIES OF ABERDEENSHIRE AND KINCARDINE AND MEARNS

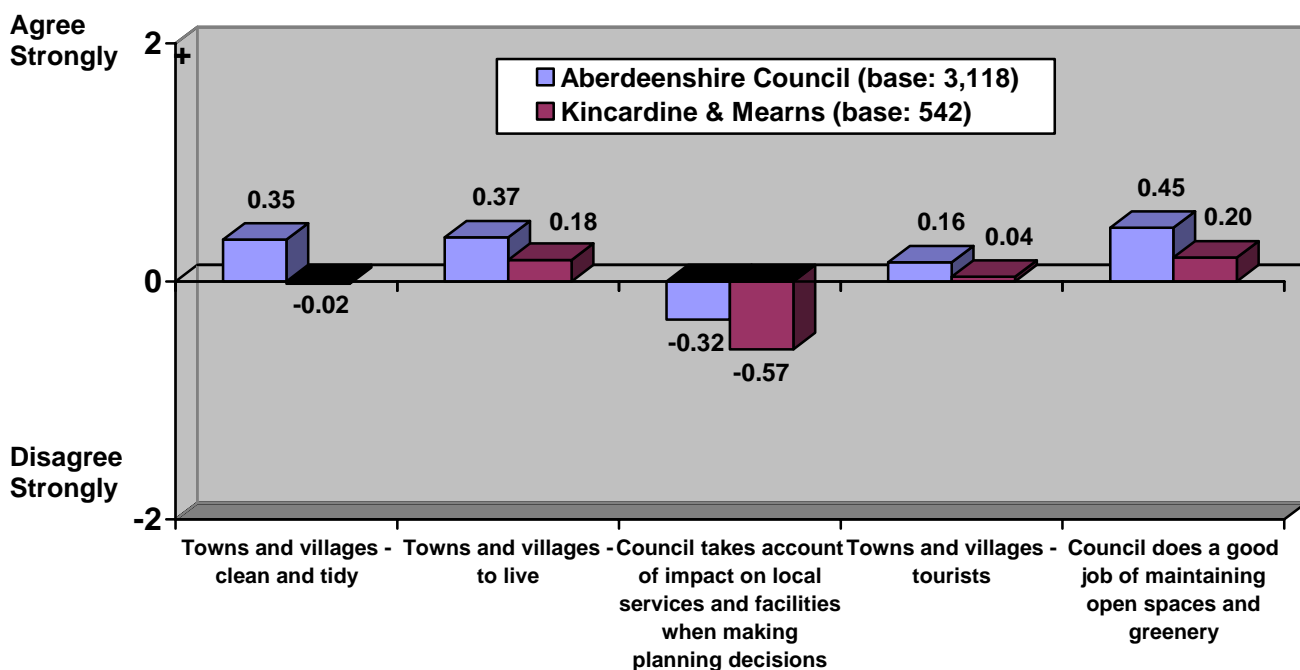
4.1 A series of agree/disagree questions were asked in relation to the impact which the Council has had on Aberdeenshire. These statements, the results to which are summarised in Figure 4.1 below, included:

- “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 Kincardine and Mearns 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.

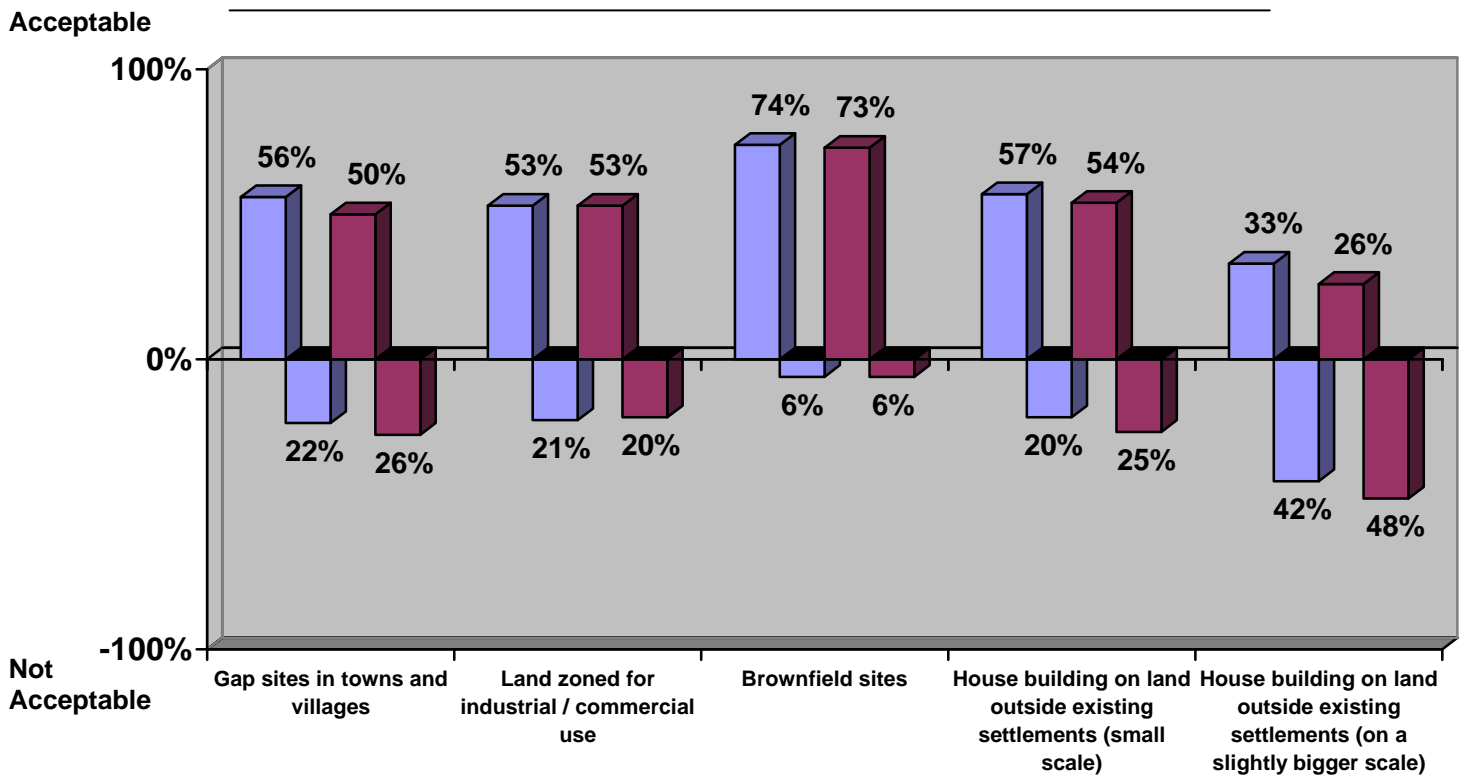
Figure 4.1: The Communities of Aberdeenshire – Towns and Villages



Kincardine and Mearns residents are notably less likely to agree on all 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 Kincardine and Mearns.
- 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 Kincardine and Mearns specifically, a significant majority opposes the idea of larger scale house building on land outwith settlements.

Figure 4.2: Attitudes to Planning Decisions



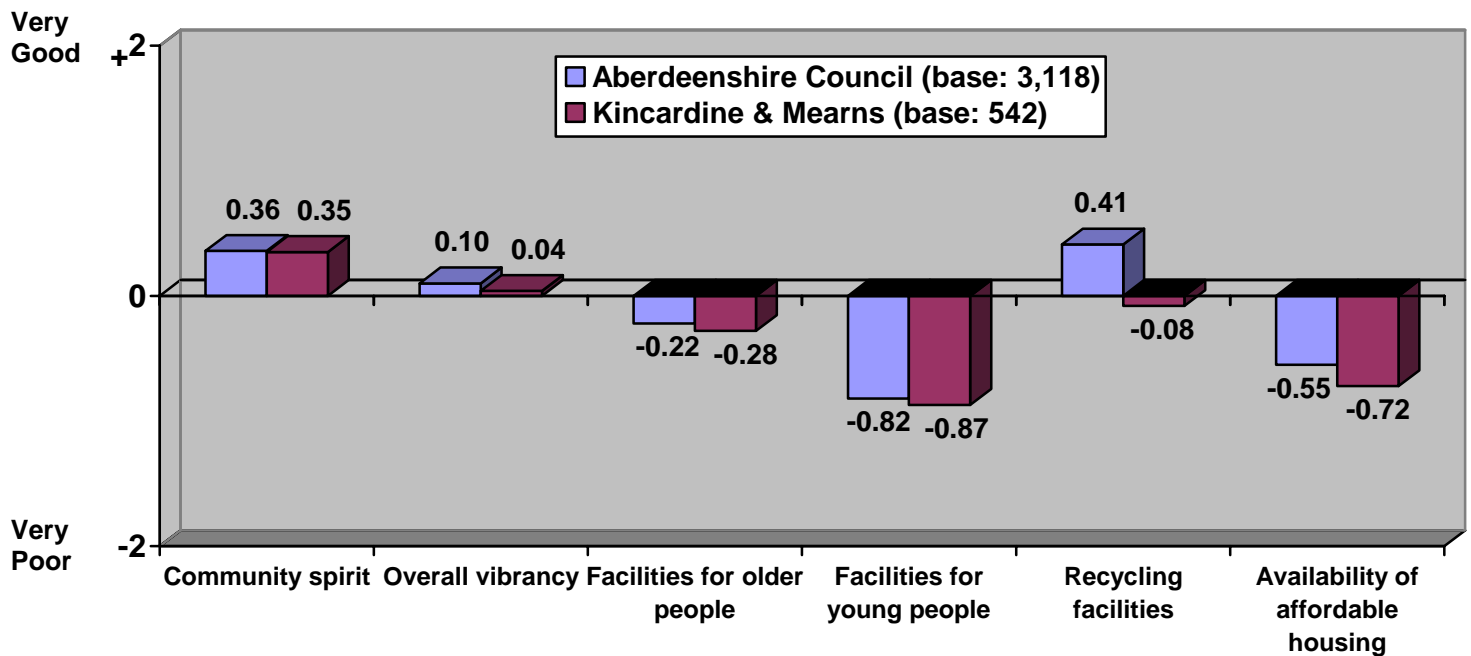
N.B. balance is “don’t know” responses

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

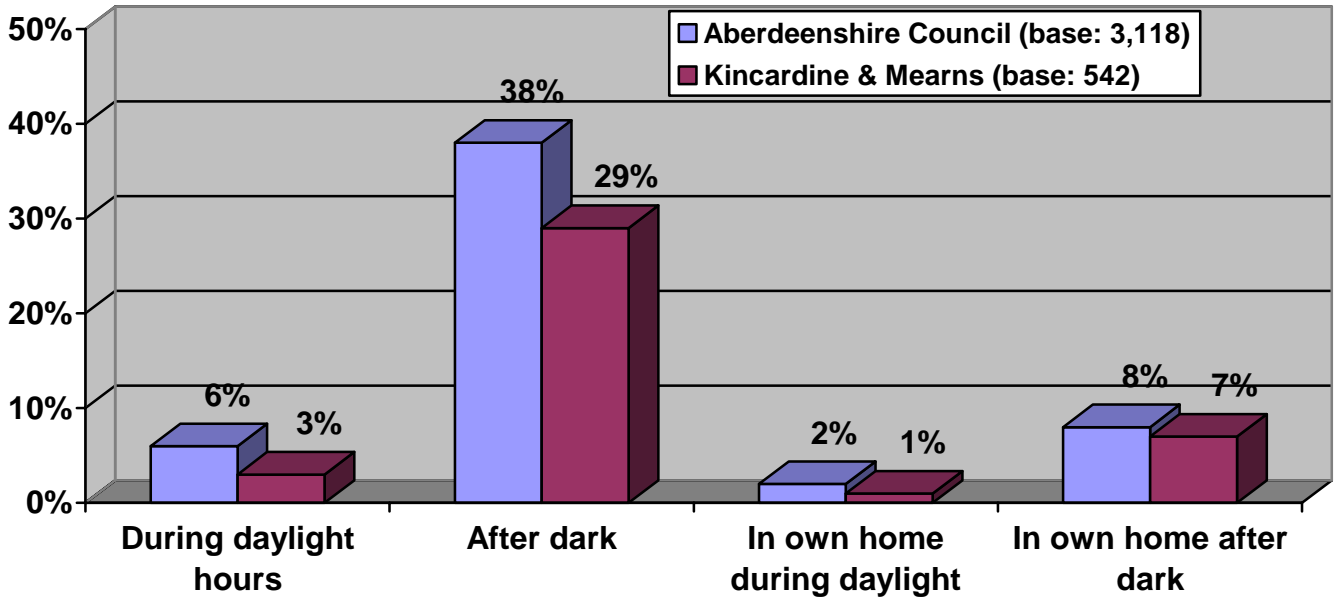


There does appear to be a slightly less positive response in Kincardine and Mearns in comparison to the Council as a whole when the related concepts of community spirit and vibrancy are considered, and also with regard to selected facilities. There is also a strongly held belief that there is a lack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

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 Kincardine and Mearns who feel unsafe to some extent in a range of scenarios is generally lower compared to that for Aberdeenshire as a whole.

Figure 4.4: Personal Safety

% feeling either a bit or very unsafe

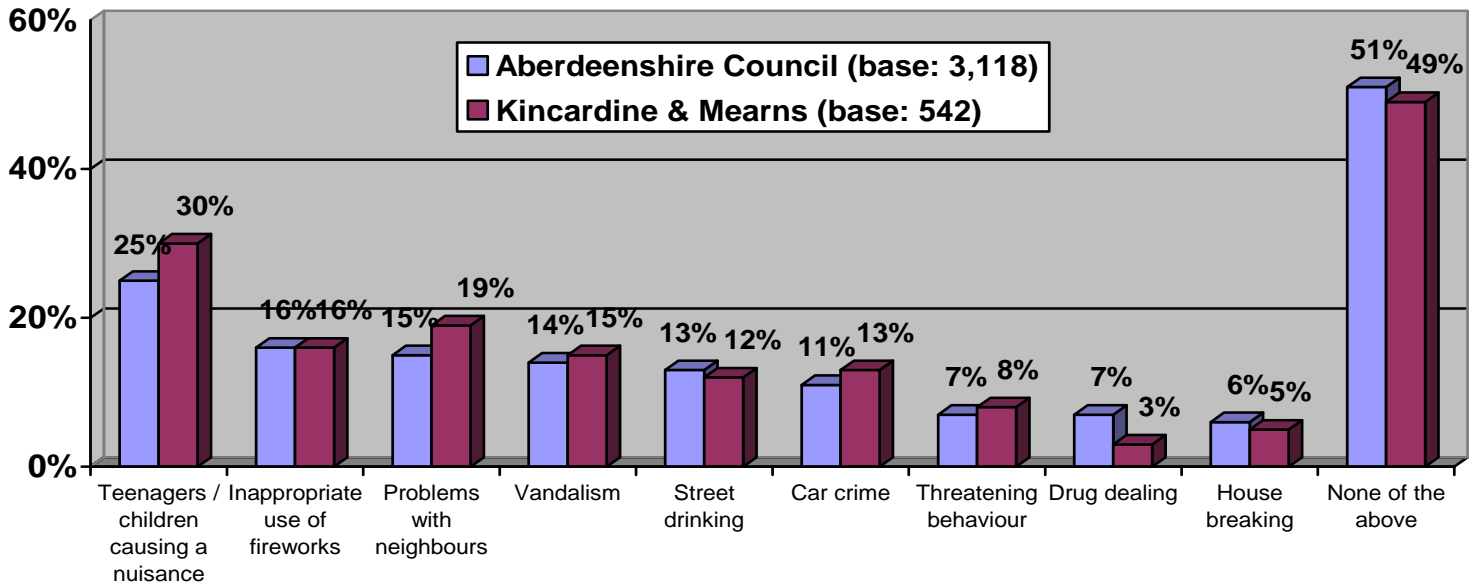


Amongst the groups of people in Kincardine and Mearns who were most likely to feel unsafe after dark were the following:

- Those over 74 (48%).
- Those with a disability (42%).
- Females (34%).

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 Kincardine and Mearns notably with the problem of teenagers / children causing a nuisance and problems with neighbours. However, 49% 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 Kincardine and Mearns 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: 516)	3%	27%	20%	28%	22%
Current town or village (base: 495)	1%	19%	15%	23%	42%
Kincardine & Mearns (base: 459)	0%	17%	12%	21%	49%
Aberdeenshire (base: 417)	1%	15%	13%	23%	48%

4.8 This table indicates that there has been a considerable movement within Aberdeenshire and Kincardine and Mearns 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 Kincardine and Mearns, representing 17% of all respondents. Of those to move into Kincardine and Mearns, 20% have been non-Scottish Europeans.

4.9 Age is also a factor in the movement of population, with 56% of respondents under 45 having moved in the last 5 years, compared to only 17% 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 Kincardine and Mearns 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	Stonehaven	Brechin or Montrose	Somewhere else in Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen City	Somewhere outwith Aberdeenshire	Online
Main grocery shop	23%	15%	21%	26%	12%	1%	1%
'Top-up' grocery shop	44%	32%	6%	9%	7%	0%	0%
Large items like furniture, white goods	2%	3%	8%	9%	67%	5%	4%
Books, CDs, DVDs	10%	3%	10%	11%	43%	3%	15%
Using sports / leisure facilities	17%	32%	8%	7%	17%	2%	2%
Going to a doctor	49%	32%	2%	10%	6%	1%	0%
Going to a dentist	14%	29%	18%	9%	22%	2%	0%
Going to a library	37%	32%	7%	3%	8%	2%	1%
Taking part in a club / society or other interest	28%	27%	3%	6%	16%	4%	1%
Going to work	13%	12%	3%	7%	30%	6%	1%

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

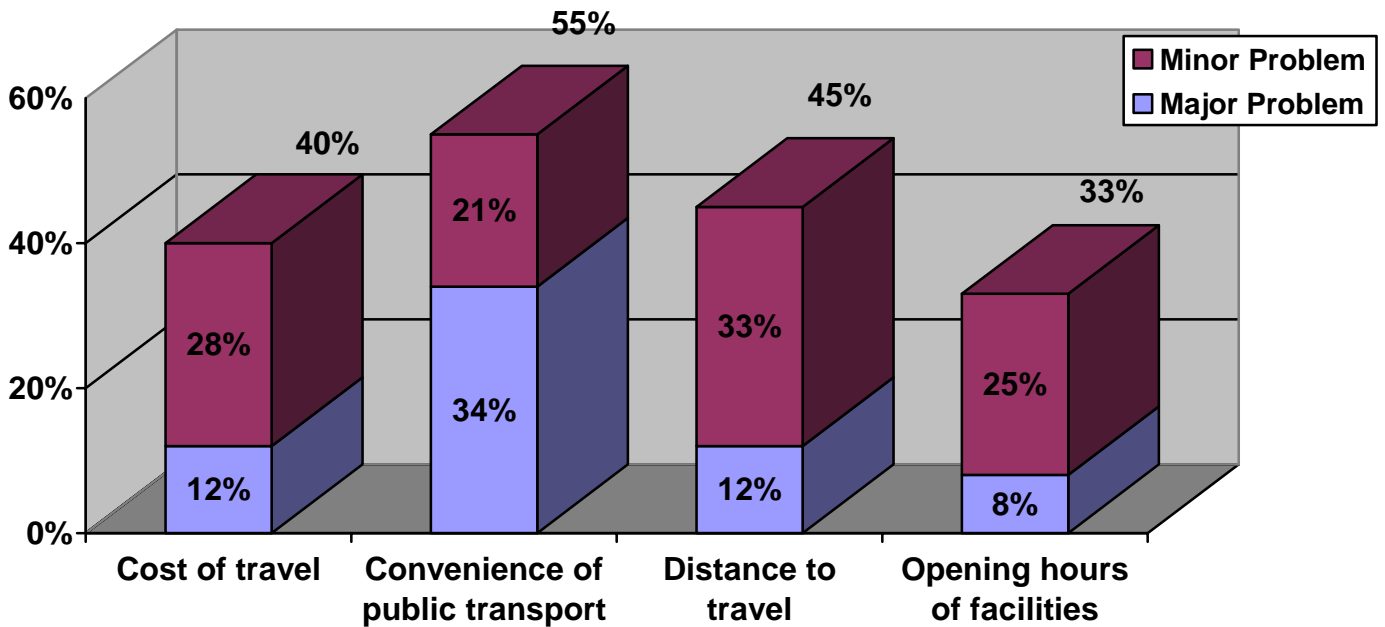
48% of grocery shopping takes place in Kincardine and Mearns itself, whether locally or in Stonehaven, with the remainder of respondents conducting their grocery shopping outwith Kincardine and Mearns. For large "big ticket" items, there is significant "leakage" to elsewhere in Aberdeenshire and, in particular, to Aberdeen City.

4.12 Although there is a notable proportion of respondents (15%) 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 Kincardine and Mearns to do so, with the exception of dentistry, with over 50% of residents accessing this service outwith Kincardine and Mearns.

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

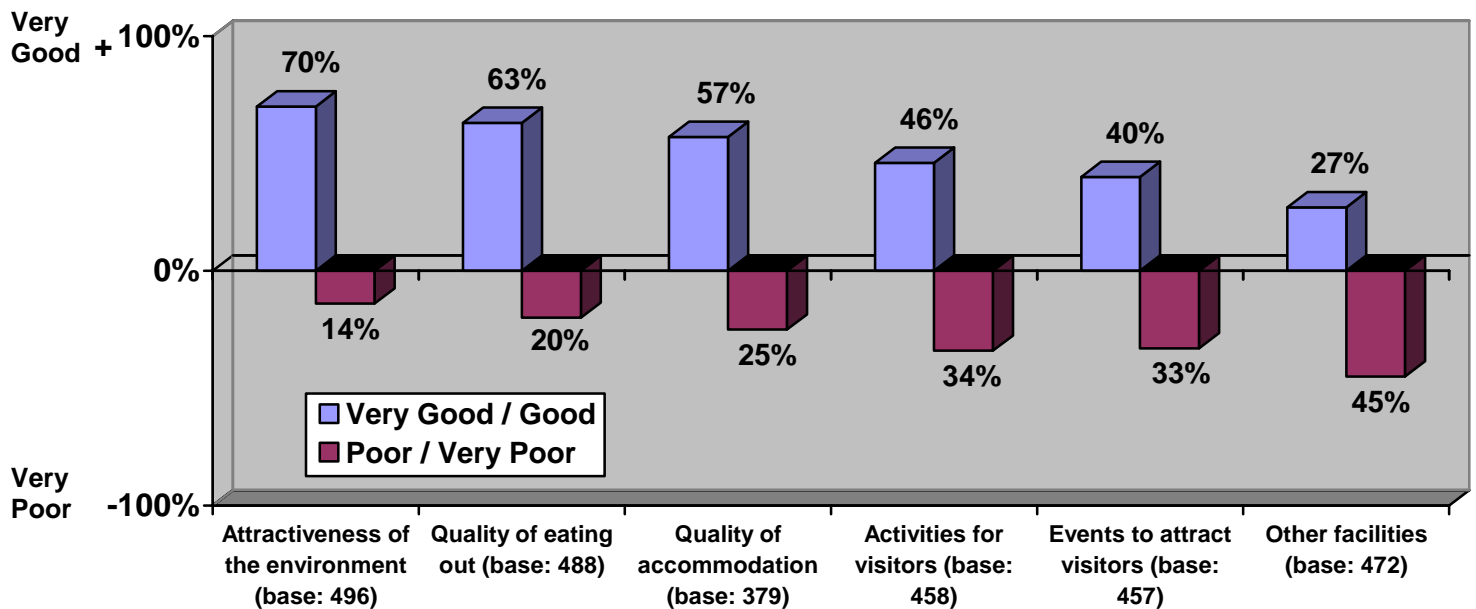


Base: 534

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 experienced by a majority of respondents and is slightly more pronounced in rural areas, with 59% believing it to be a minor or major problem, compared to 54% of urban residents.

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

Figure 4.8: Kincardine and Mearns 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, activities for visitors and events to attract visitors). However, other facilities (such as public conveniences, transport, visitor attractions) are not felt to be of an acceptable standard.

Summary of Key Points

Kincardine and Mearns residents feel the Council does not do as good a job of making towns and villages attractive compared to other Aberdeenshire residents.

There is also concern 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 Kincardine and Mearns 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 Kincardine and Mearns are more likely to feel there is a shortage of affordable housing.

Summary of Key Points (continued)

Community spirit and vibrancy in Kincardine and Mearns is rated slightly lower when compared to the rest of the Council area.

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

There are lower levels of perceived danger when respondents' personal safety is concerned when they are outside after dark in Kincardine and Mearns, 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 Kincardine and Mearns 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 Kincardine and Mearns in the past five years, as well as an inward migration of 17% from outwith the area.

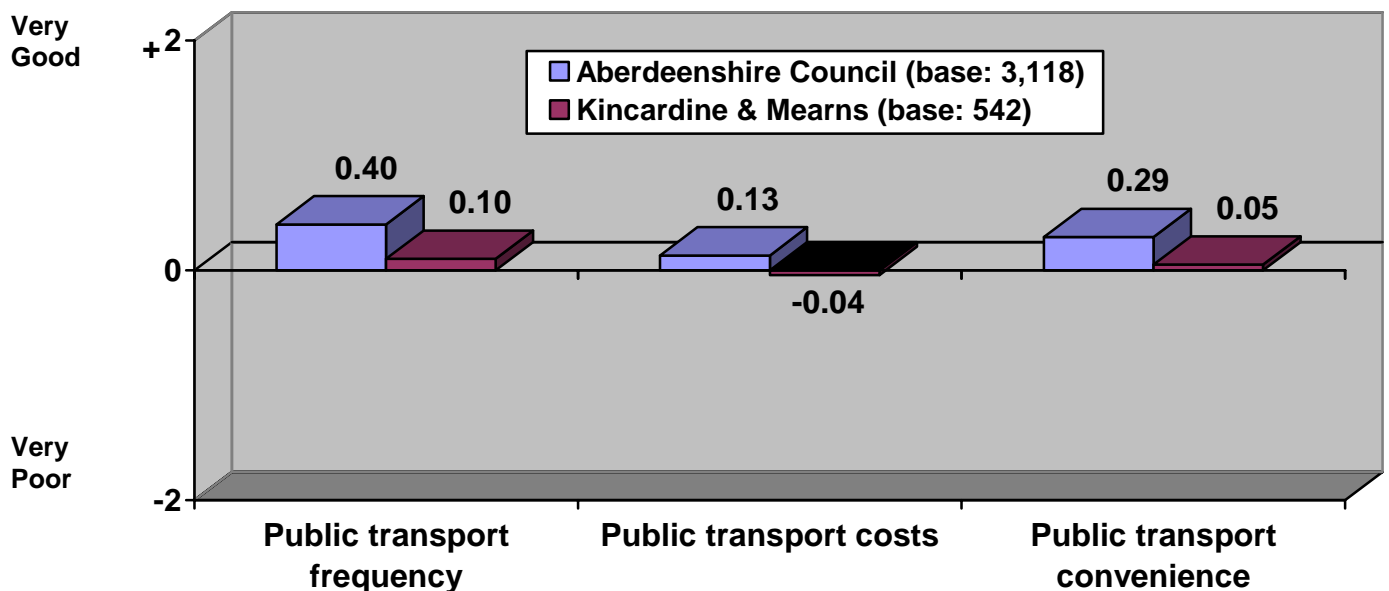
Less than half of grocery shopping tends to be done locally (with a notable minority of shopping taking place elsewhere in Aberdeenshire, in Aberdeen or Angus) but "big ticket" items such as white goods see some leakage to the rest of Aberdeenshire and in particular to Aberdeen City. Public services 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 Kincardine and Mearns' appeal as a visitor destination are positive in the main, although ancillary facilities are rated less highly.

5.0 TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY

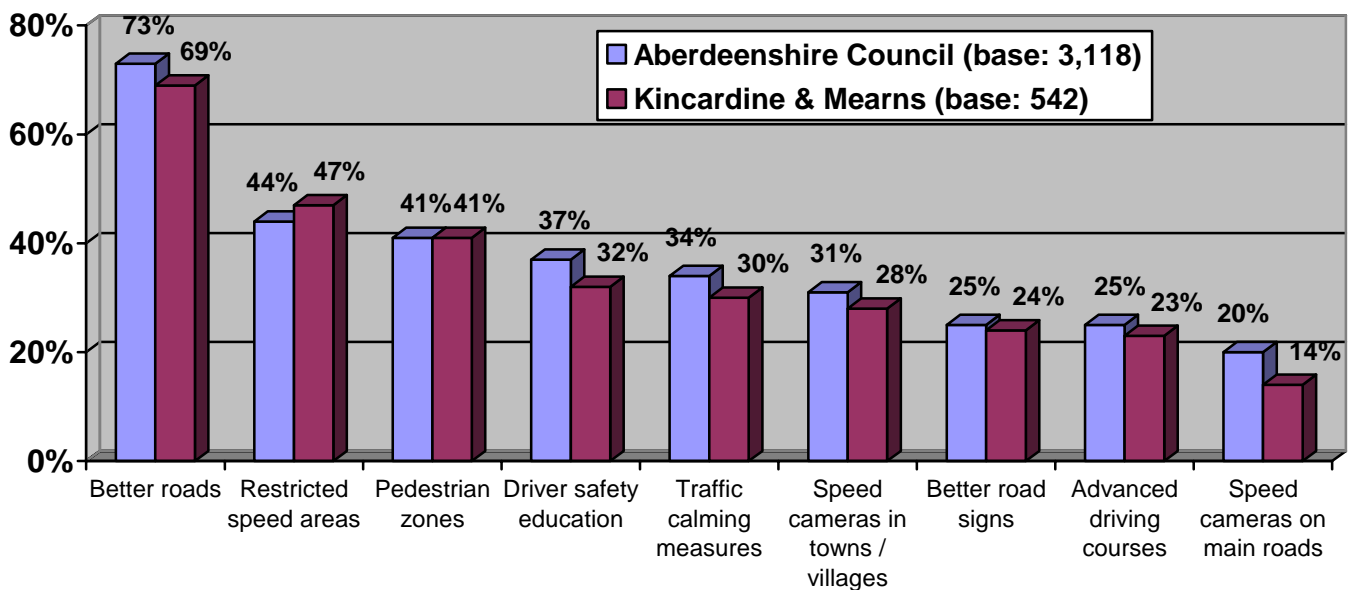
5.1 As illustrated in Figure 5.1 below, respondents in Kincardine and Mearns rate the questioned aspects of public transport less highly than Aberdeenshire residents as a whole, with the cost of public transport in particular receiving a negative rating.

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 Kincardine and Mearns 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.

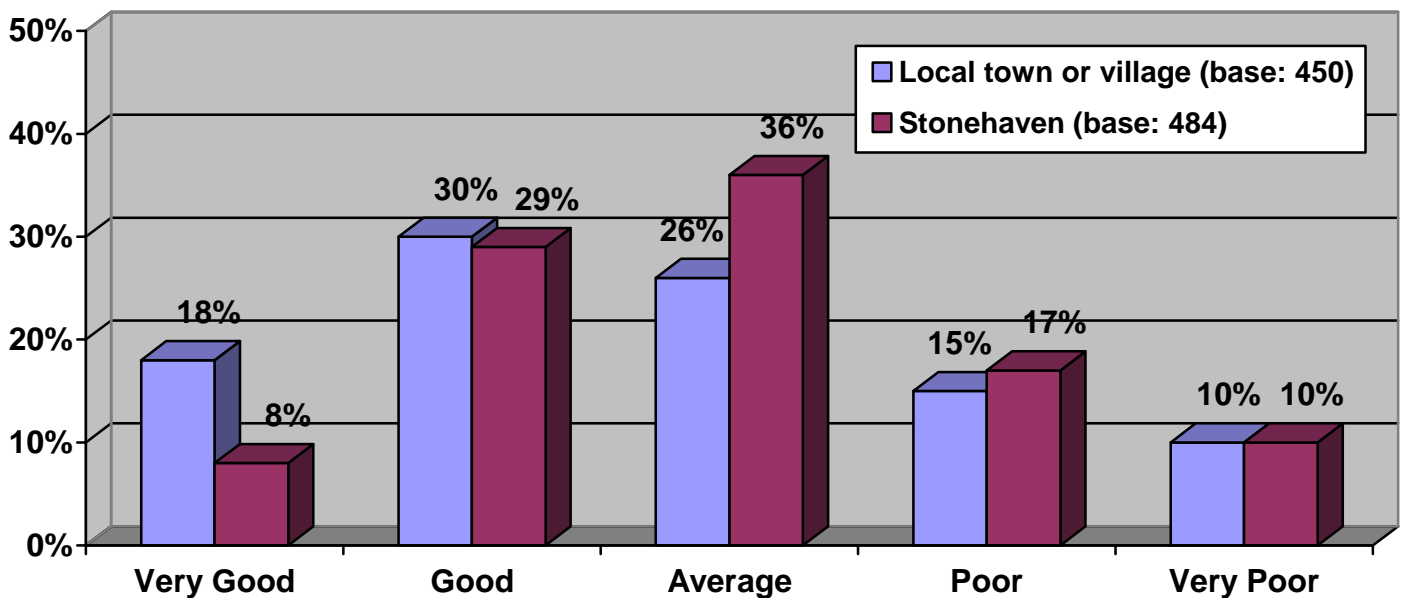
Given this, quite a number of people would like to see measures such as:

- 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 Kincardine and Mearns 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 Stonehaven.

Summary of Key Points

Perception of the quality of public transport is lower in Kincardine and Mearns when compared to the rest of Aberdeenshire.

There is a strong desire for road improvements within Kincardine and Mearns, 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).

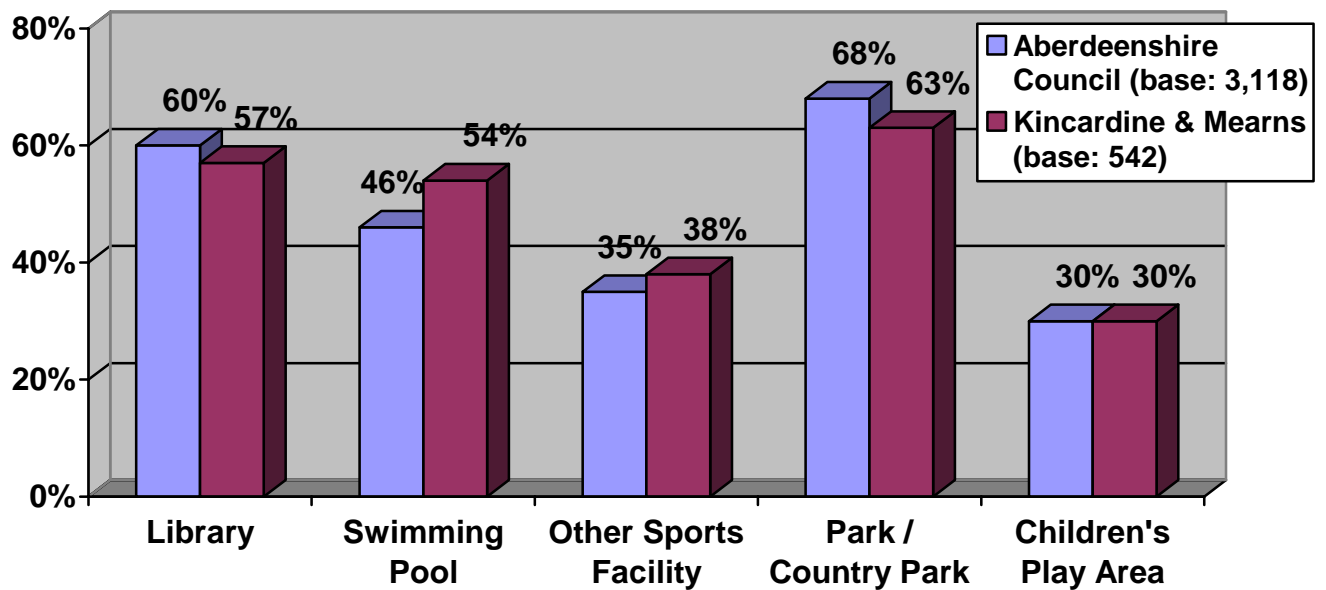
Parking is given a reasonable rating in within local villages, but is less well regarded in Stonehaven.

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



Respondents from Kincardine and Mearns are more likely to use some services more (swimming pools; other sports facilities), some less (libraries; parks / country parks), 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

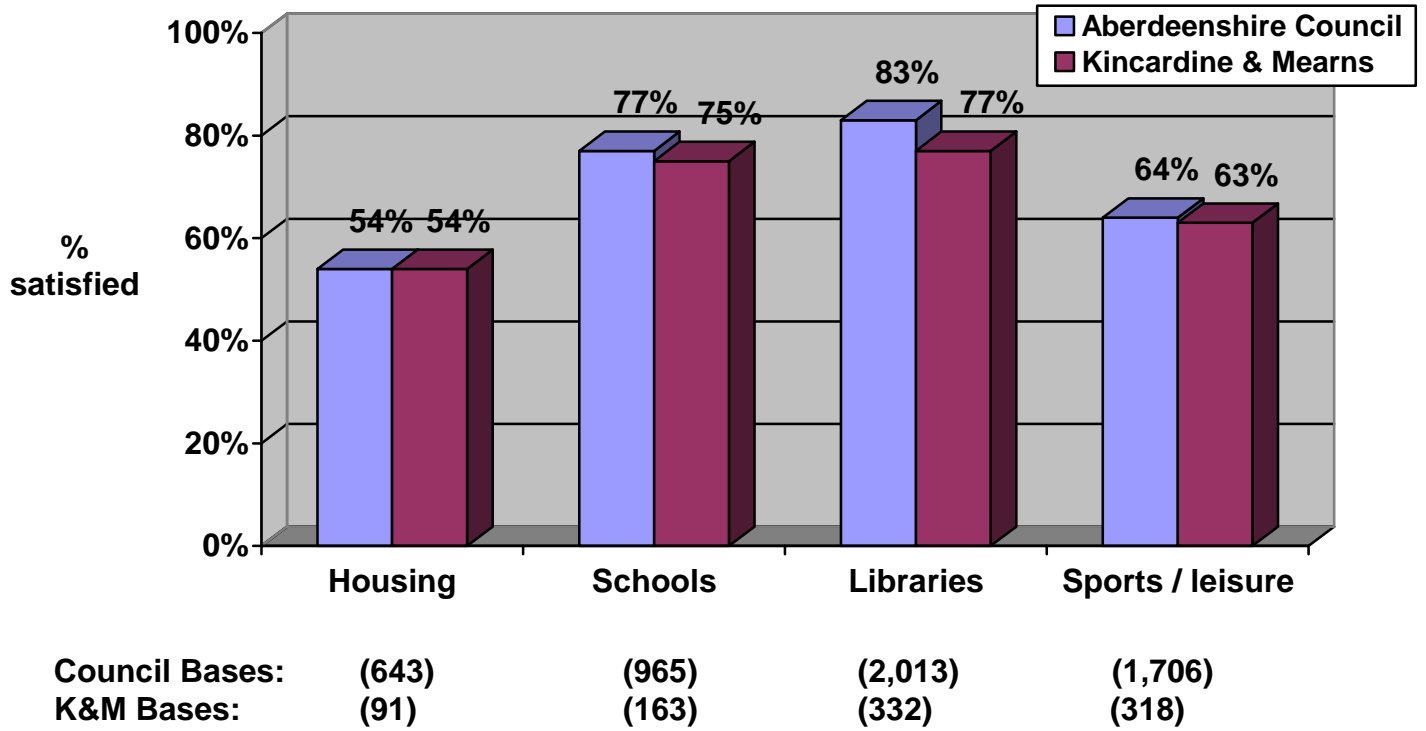
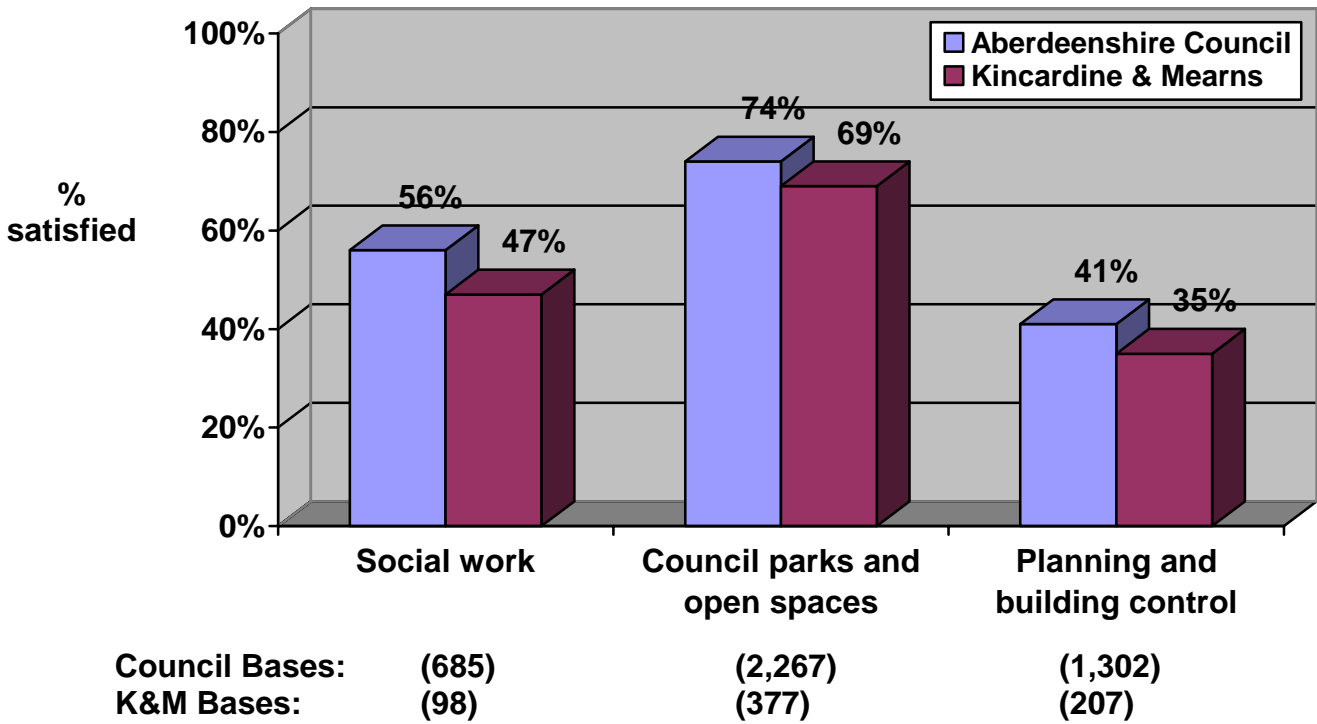


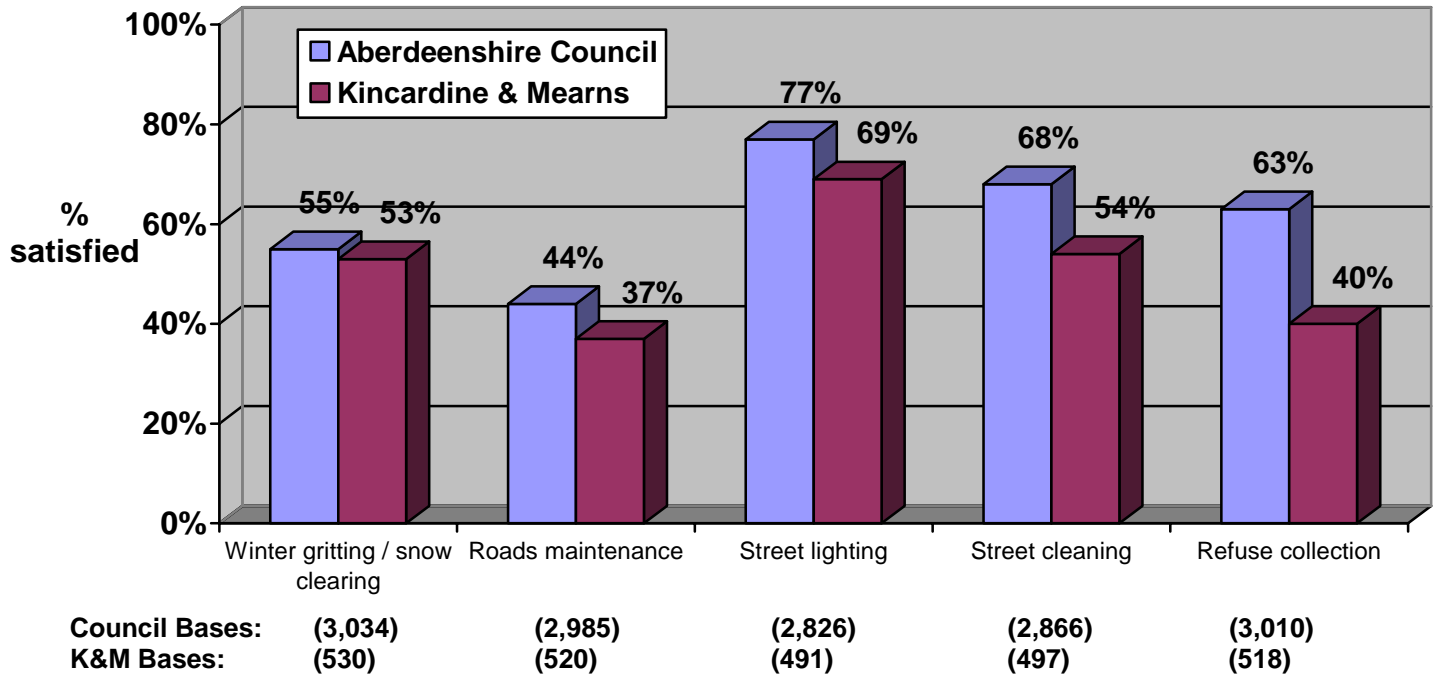
Figure 6.2(b): Services You Use – Specific Services



Although these results are generally positive in Kincardine and Mearns, these satisfaction levels are, in the main, lower than those across Aberdeenshire Council.

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



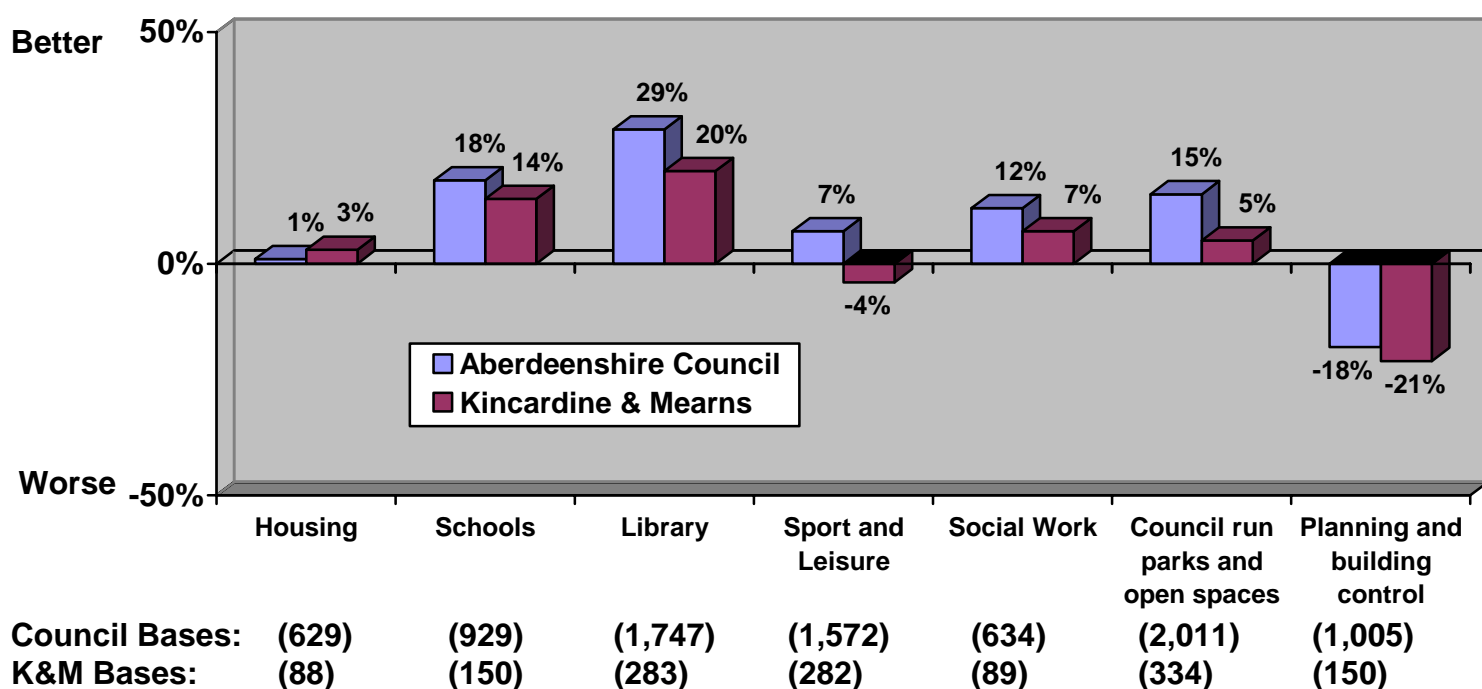
With regard to services that are used by all residents, residents in Kincardine and Mearns are markedly less likely to be satisfied than Aberdeenshire Council as a whole, particularly with regard to street cleaning and refuse collection.

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.

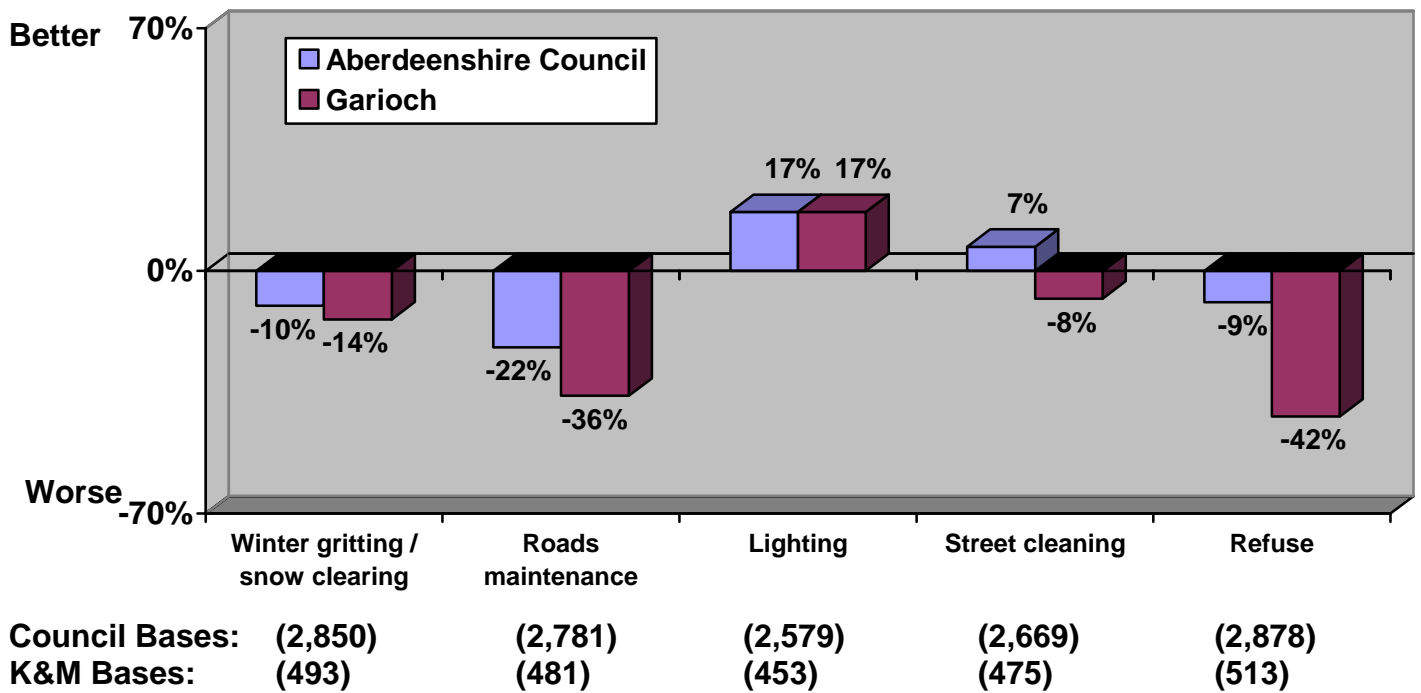
Figure 6.6: Pattern Data in Relation to Specific Services



Improvement has been perceived in all areas with the exceptions of sport and leisure 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 and Council-run parks and open spaces, for example, Kincardine and Mearns 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.

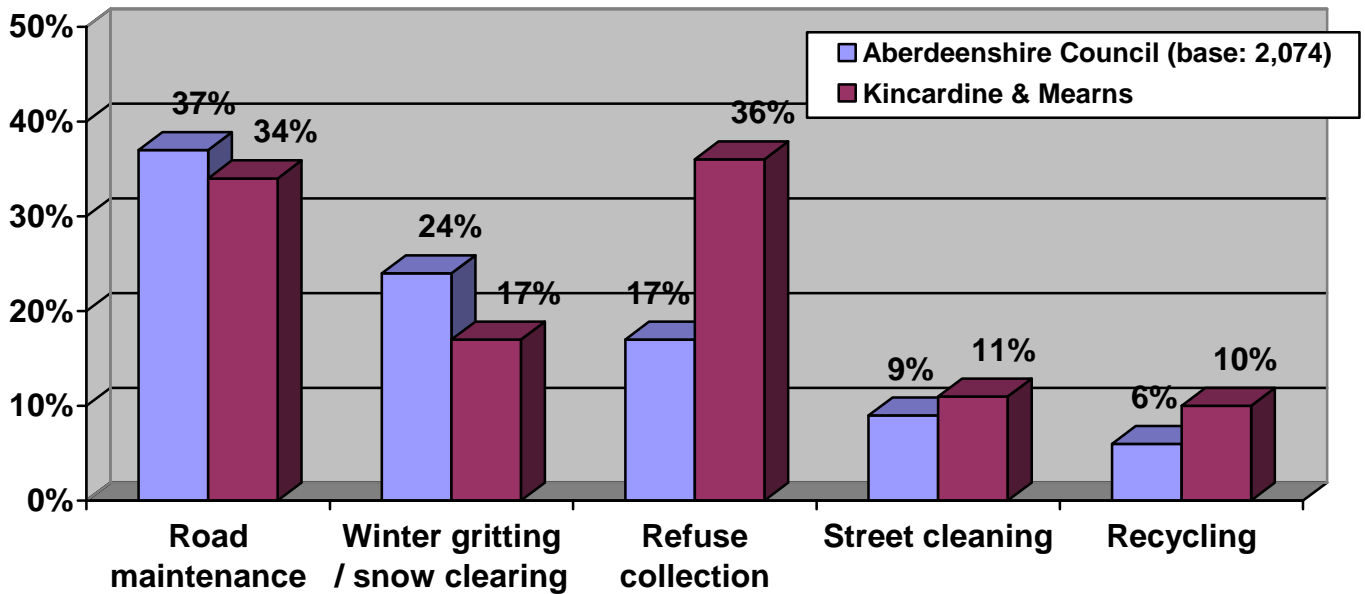
Figure 6.7: Pattern Data on Perceived Changes to Universal Services



The patterns of perceived changes is most notably different in the area of street cleaning, while the perception of a worsening in roads maintenance is more pronounced in Kincardine and Mearns. 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.

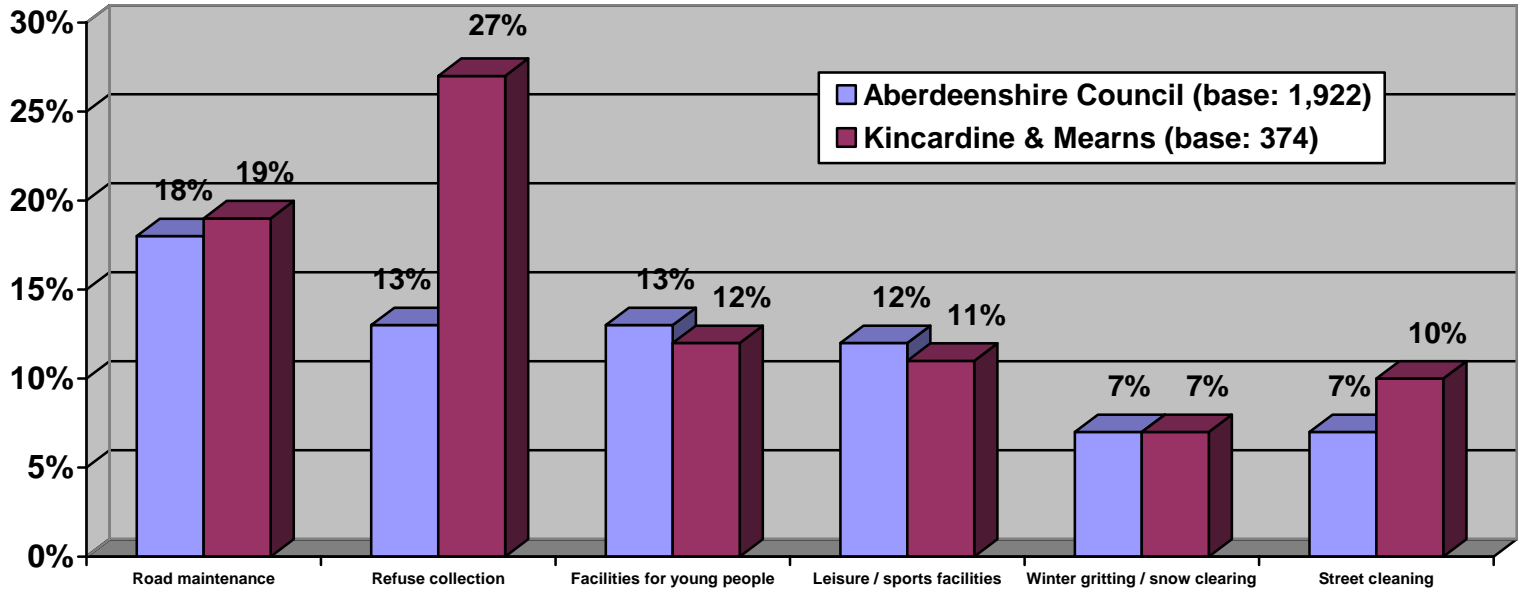
Figure 6.8: On which services should the Council have spent more money last year?



There are some variations between where Kincardine and Mearns residents and Aberdeenshire residents as a whole felt more money should have been spent last year, notably refuse collection, which reflects the large 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 (suggestions accounting for more than 5% of the total are included).

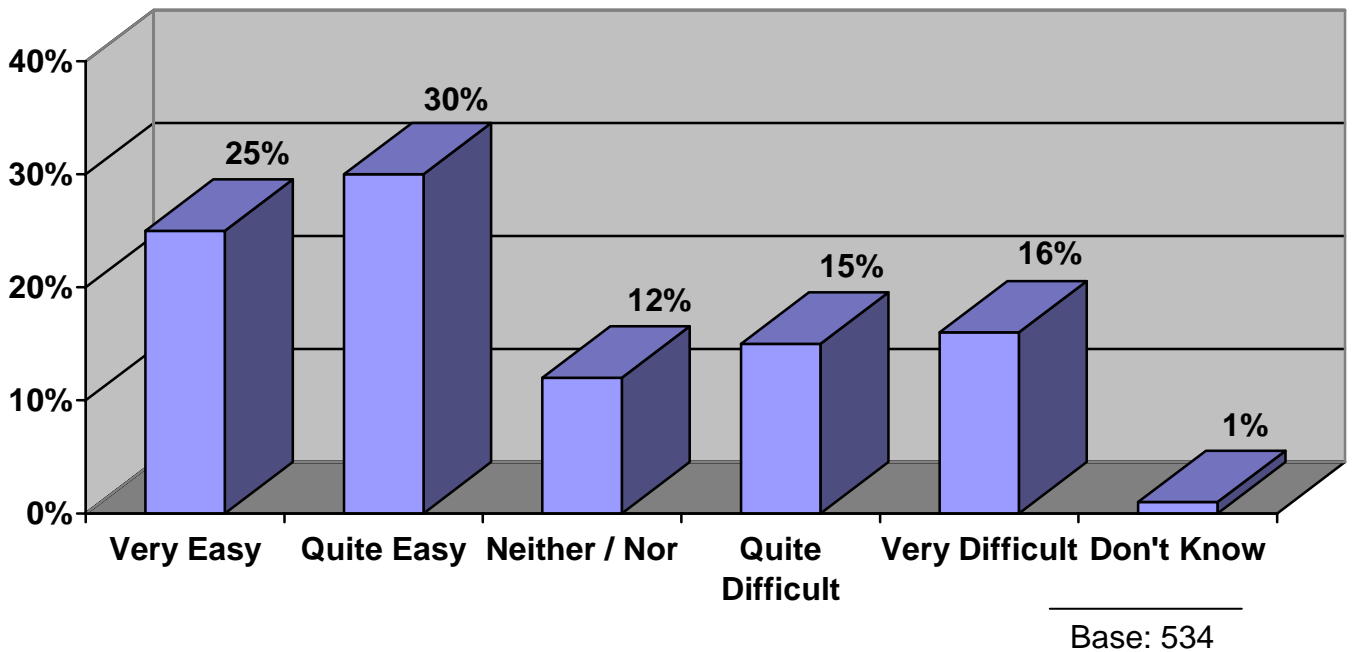
Figure 6.9: What facilities or services should be given priority?



Clearly, Kincardine and Mearns residents have a number of areas of priority of roughly the same importance, with the exception of refuse collection where extenuating circumstances in the shape of the new collection regime could be possible for this outcome.

6.9 The “local insert” questionnaire asked Kincardine and Means 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 (31%) have not. An impressive 76% 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 Kincardine and Mearns are generally lower than those for Aberdeenshire as a whole.

With regard to a range of “universal services”, Kincardine and Mearns residents rate these services lower compared to the main sample of residents and in some cases significantly lower.

The level of perceived improvement in services is lower in Kincardine and Mearns.

Kincardine and Mearns residents would prioritise refuse collection for attention.

A majority of Kincardine and Mearns residents have found the transition to the new refuse collection regime to be easy, with more than three in four 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

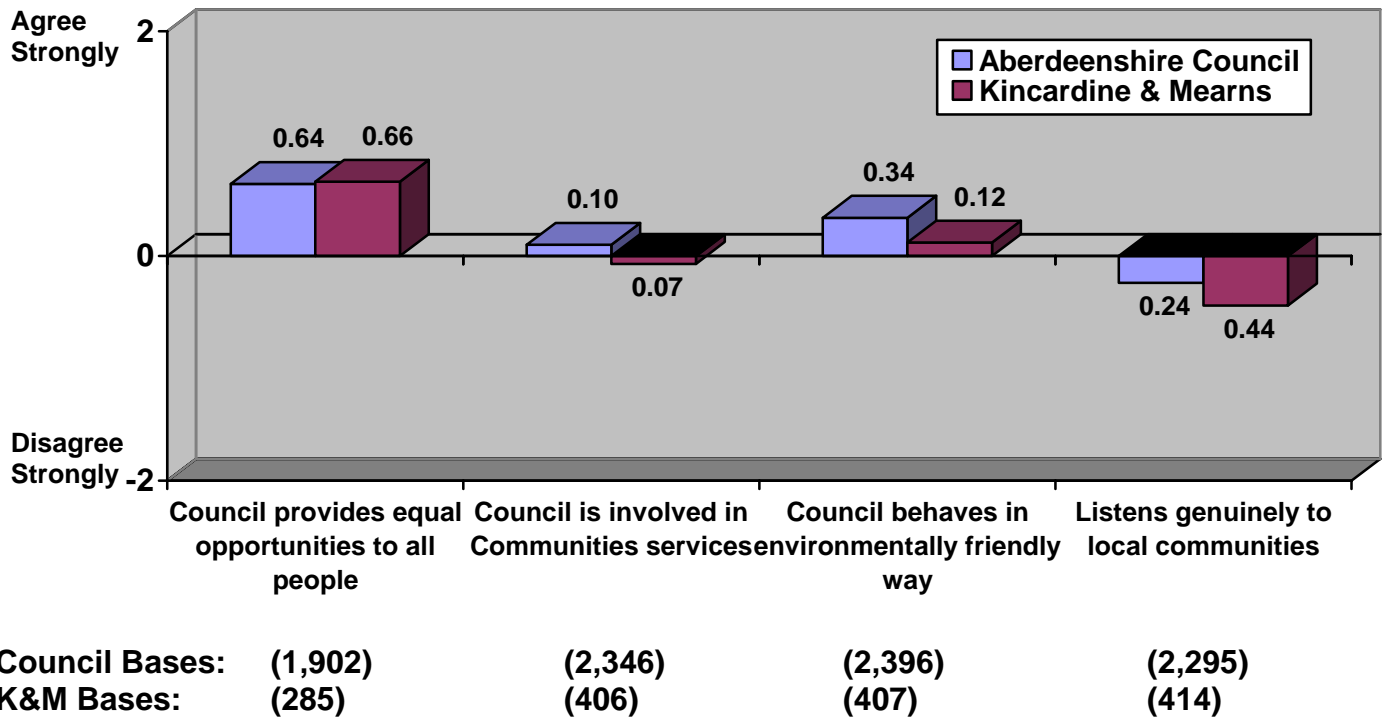
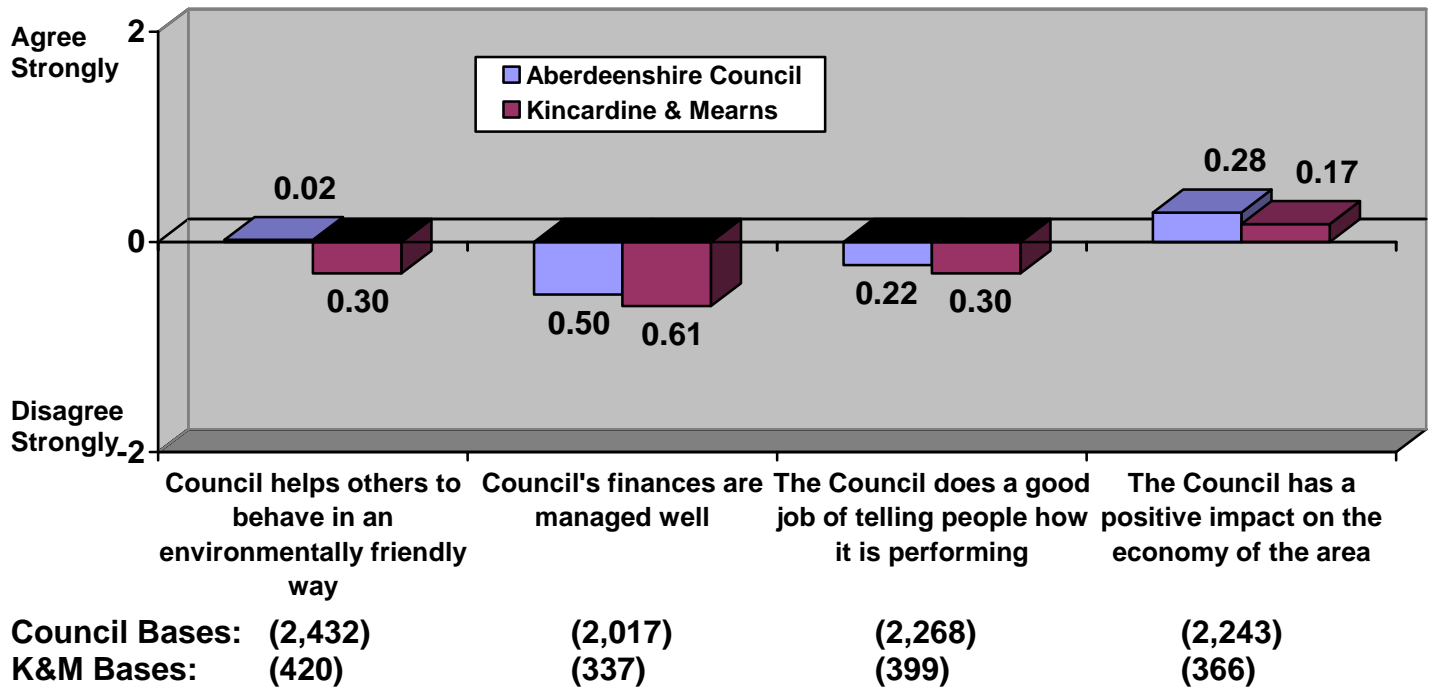


Figure 7.1(b): Measures of Council as Socially Responsible Organisation

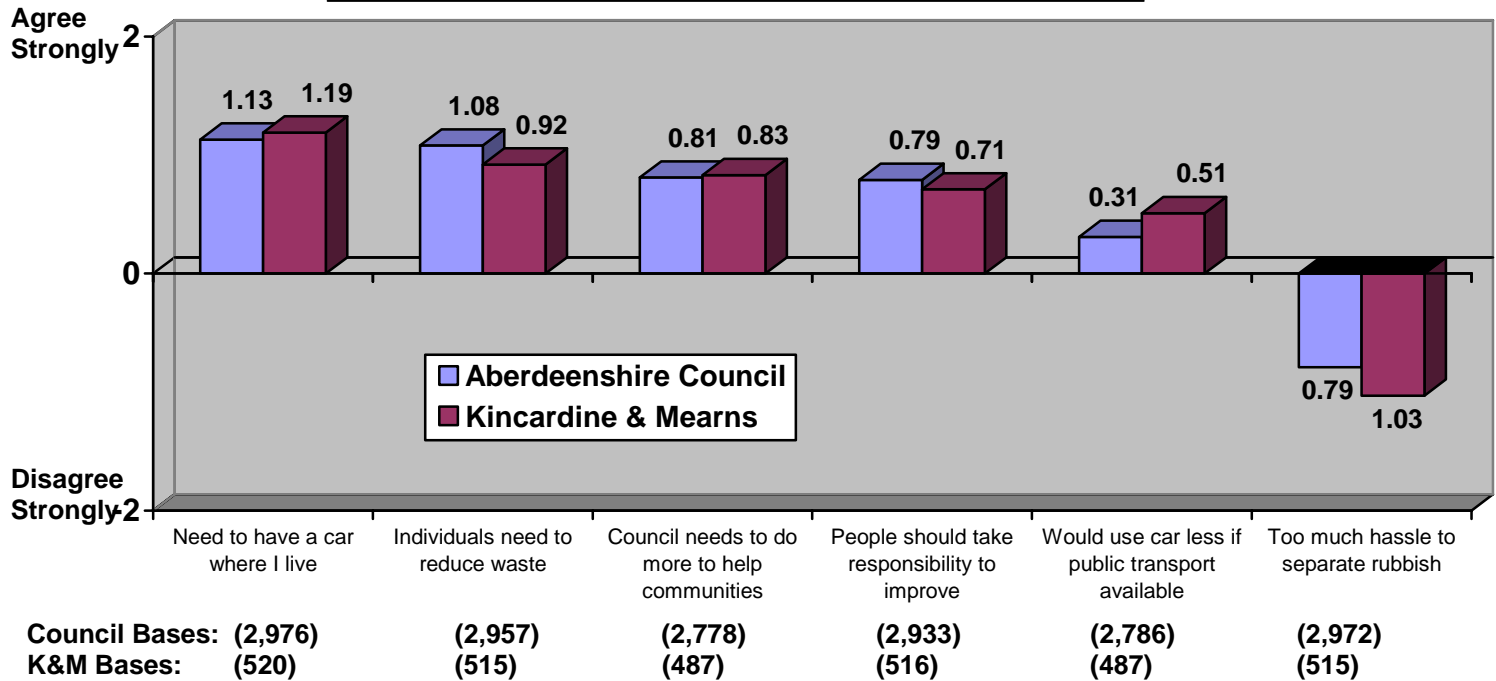


7.2 The levels of agreement amongst Kincardine and Mearns residents are, in general, lower when compared to those for all survey respondents, with some areas in particular seeing notable divergence:

- The Council acting in an environmentally friendly way
- The Council helping other to act in an environmentally friendly way
- The Council genuinely listening to local communities.

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 Kincardine and Mearns in comparison to the whole of Aberdeenshire, although there are some very slight variations worthy of note:

- Fewer Kincardine and Mearns residents agree that separating rubbish out is too much hassle
- Kincardine and Mearns residents are less likely to agree that individuals need to reduce waste
- Residents in Kincardine and Mearns would be more likely to use their car less if better public transport was available.

Summary of Key Points

Kincardine and Mearns 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 less positive.

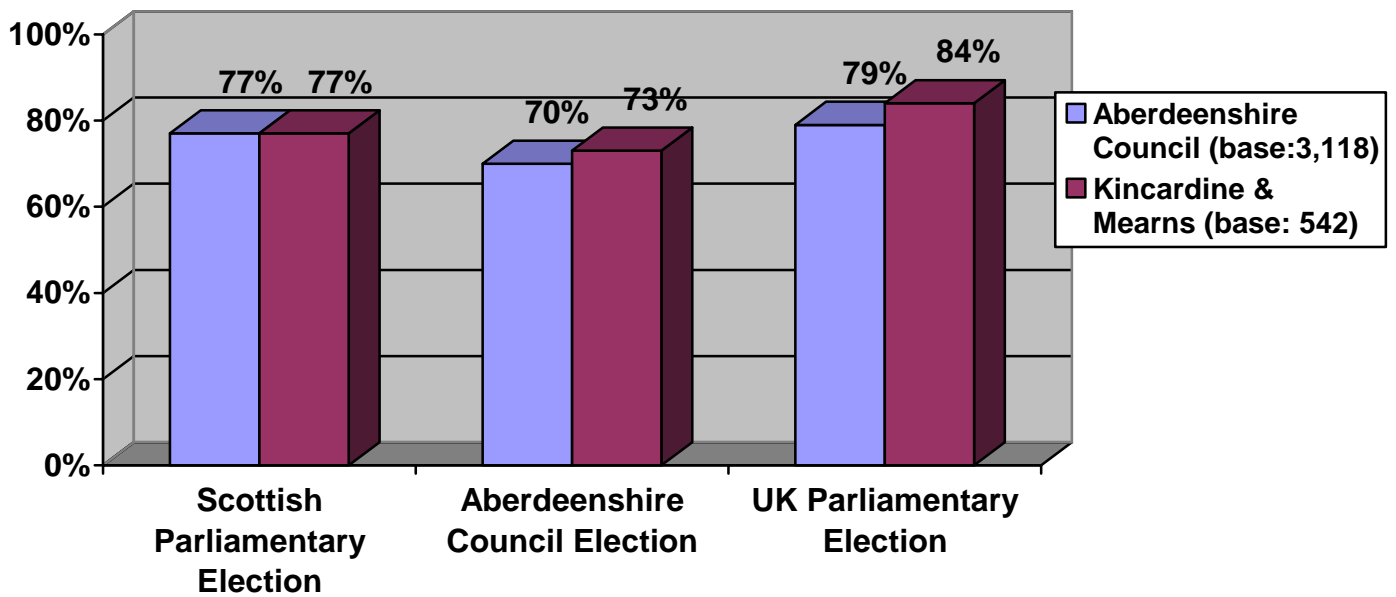
The view that the Council should be doing more to help communities is slightly more prevalent in Kincardine and Mearns, with slightly fewer residents believing that individuals themselves should do more to improve their communities.

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

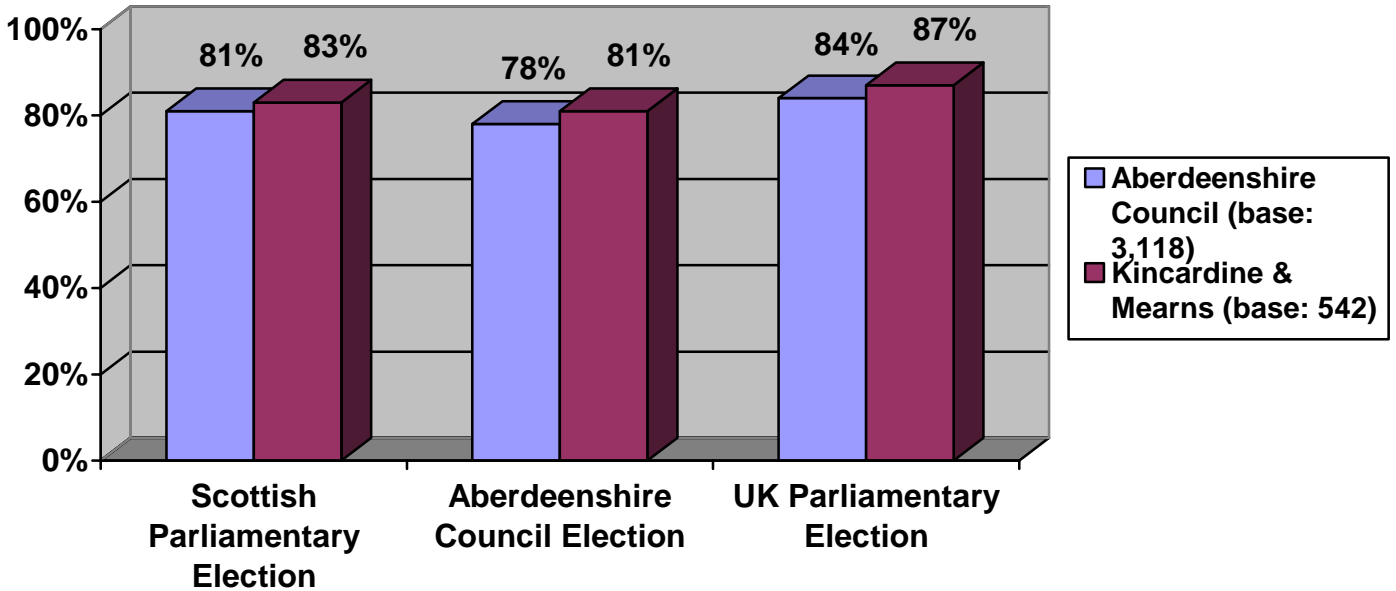
Figure 8.1 (a): Voted in Last Elections



Clearly, a high proportion of the survey samples claim to have voted in these elections, with the results for Kincardine and Mearns being generally higher, particularly for the most recent UK Parliamentary election.

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

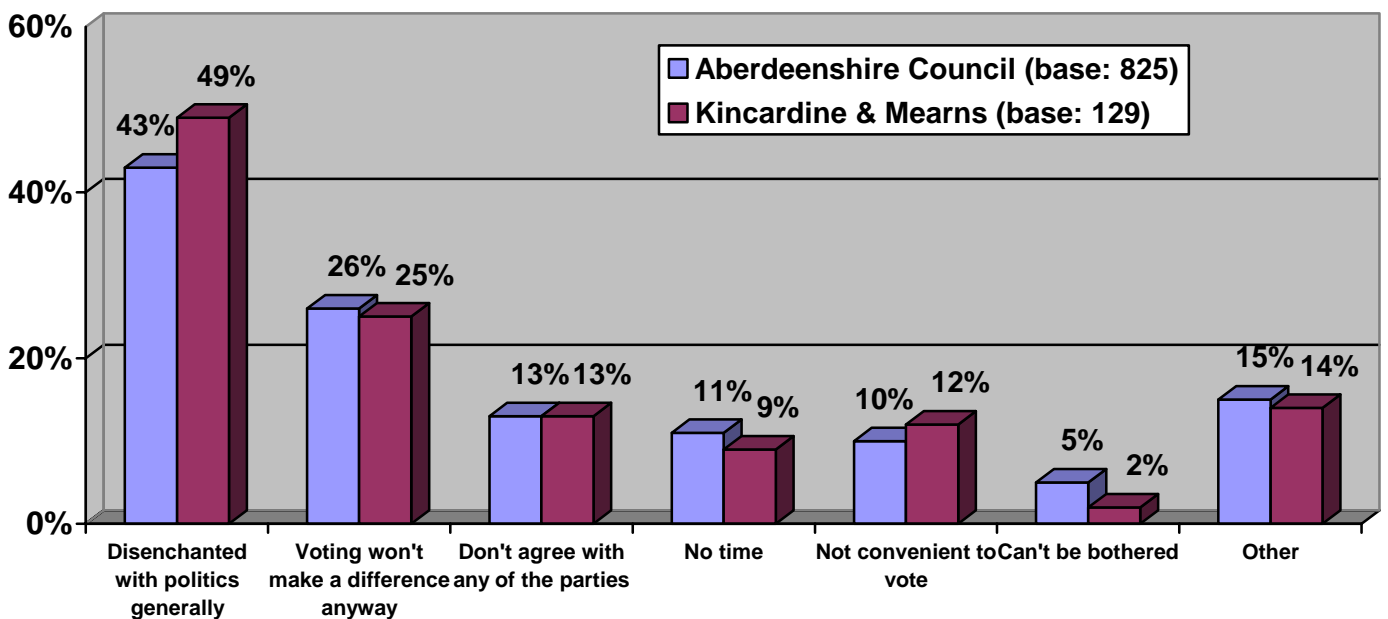
Figure 8.1 (b): Intend to Vote in Next Elections



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:

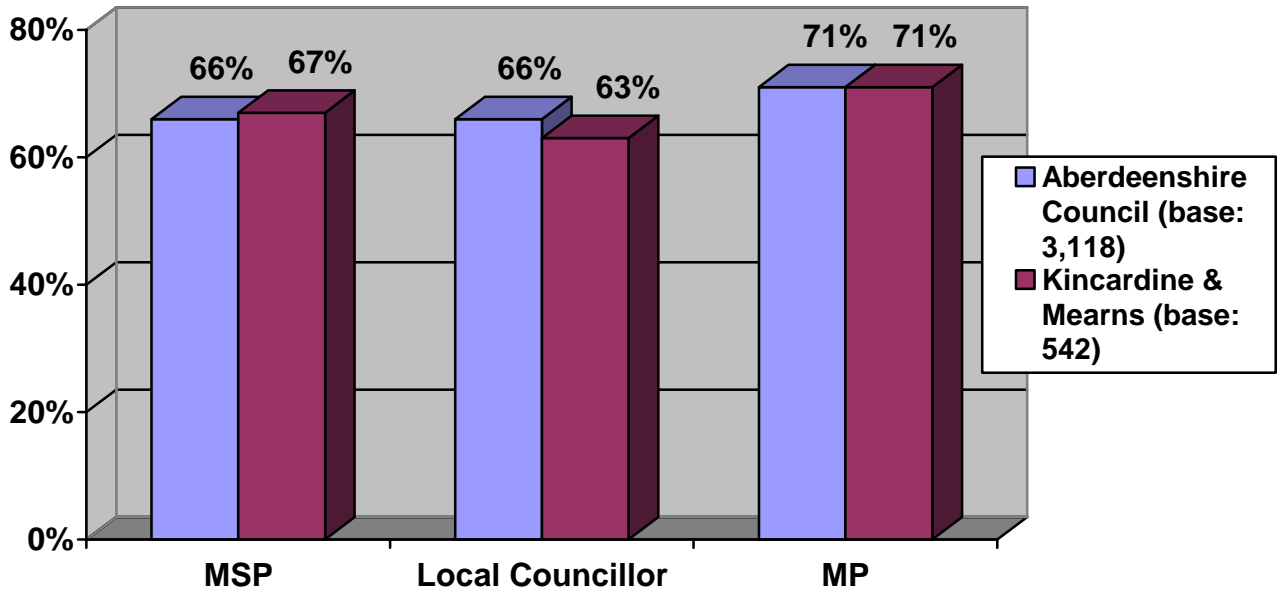
Figure 8.2: Reasons for Not Voting



Kincardine and Mearns voters who have not voted in at least one of the named elections are more likely not to have done so due to a general disenchantment with politics.

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

Figure 8.3: Ability to name Local Elected Representatives



8.5 Aberdeenshire residents display an impressive level of awareness of local councillors (well ahead of the 43% most recently quoted by the Scottish Household Survey) with the figures for Kincardine and Mearns residents for each category of elected representative in the survey being similar.

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

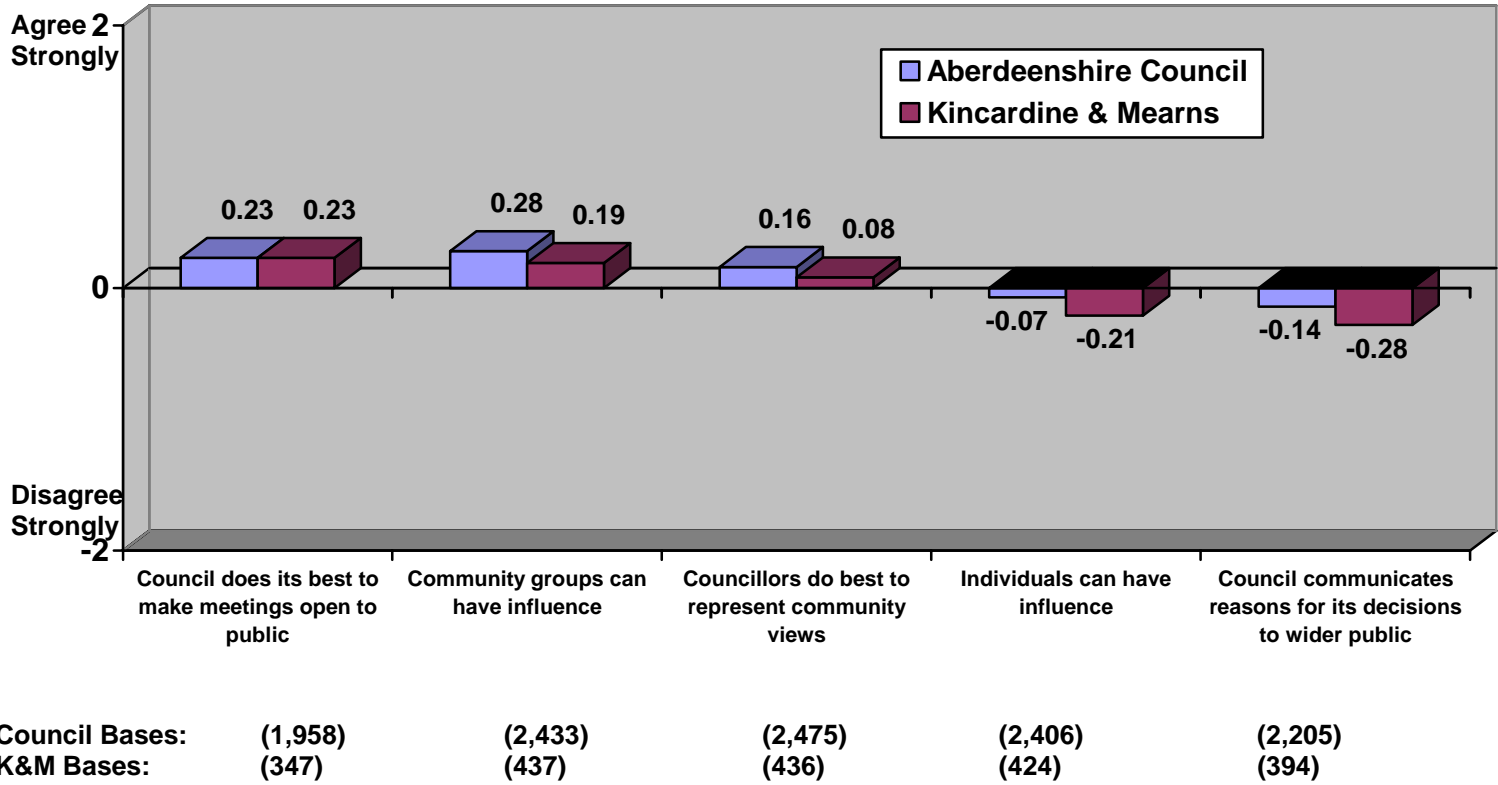
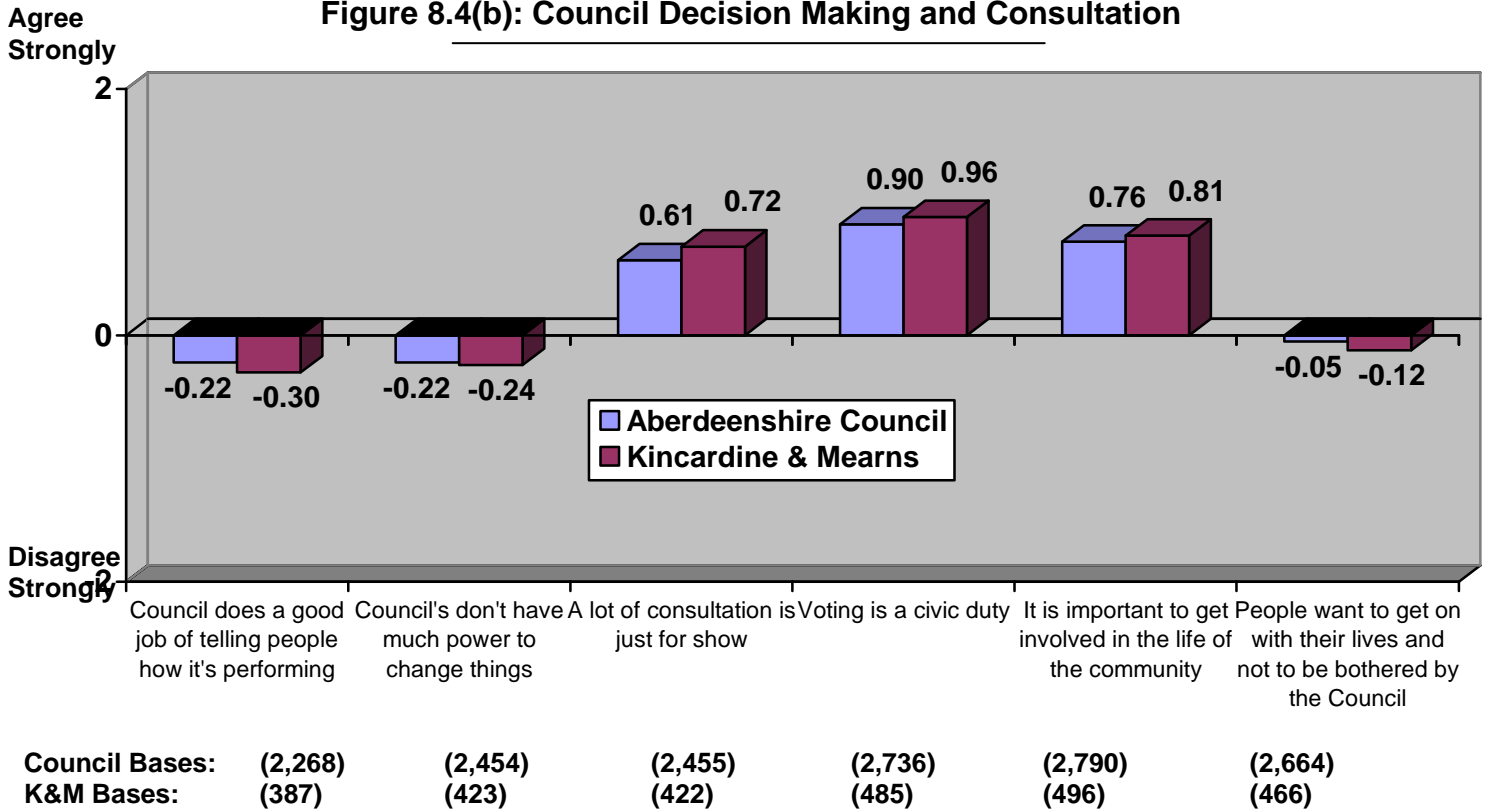


Figure 8.4(b): Council Decision Making and Consultation

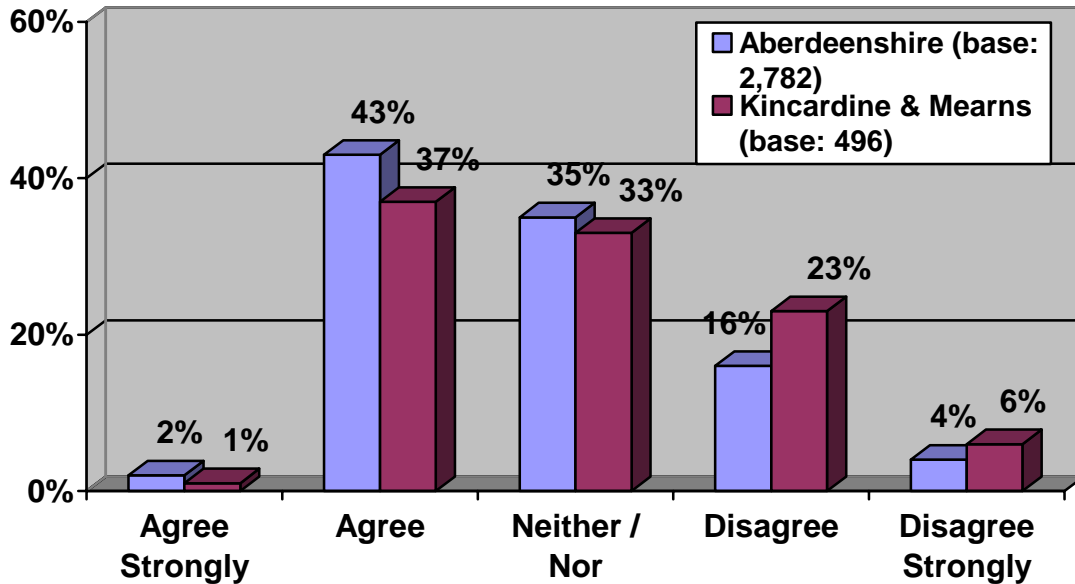


8.7 Most responses in Kincardine and Mearns are in line with the average for Aberdeenshire Council, although there are some slight variations worth noting:

- More Kincardine and Mearns respondents feel that “a lot of consultation is just for show”
- Fewer Kincardine and Mearns residents feel that individuals can have influence
- Fewer Kincardine and Mearns residents feel that the Council communicates the reasons for its decisions to the wider public.

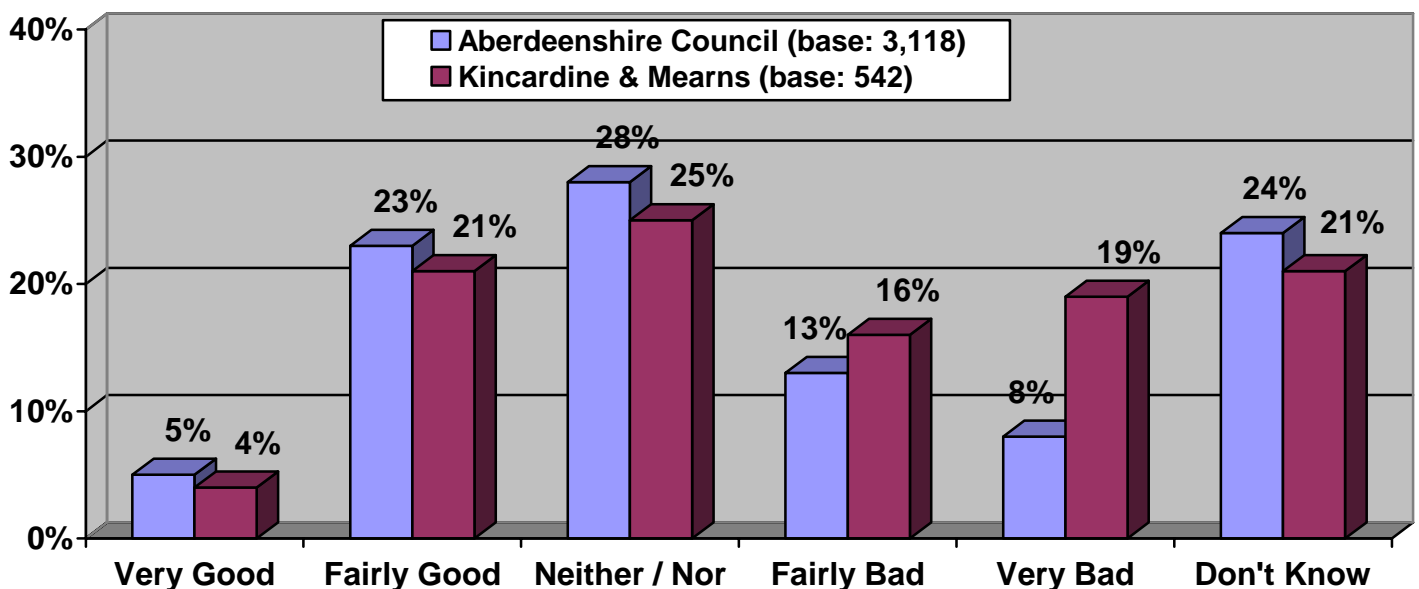
8.8 As illustrated in Figure 8.5 below, a significant minority of people (including 29% in Kincardine and Mearns) are not satisfied with the information that they receive on Council services.

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 far more evident in Kincardine and Mearns where 35% feel the Council is fairly bad or very bad), 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, and this is apparent to a greater degree in Kincardine and Mearns.

A high proportion of Aberdeenshire residents are able to name their elected representatives, with Kincardine and Mearns generally just as 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, and this view is more strongly held in Kincardine and Mearns.

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. Kincardine and Mearns residents are more negative than the Aberdeenshire average, in relation to these issues.