



Research Report

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

Prepared for: Wandsworth Council

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Prepared for: Wandsworth Council

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Date: November 2017



Produced by BMG Research

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www.bmgresearch.co.uk

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1 Introduction

1.1 Methodology

In autumn 2017 Wandsworth Council commissioned BMG Research to undertake a representative sample of leaseholders in order to better understand their perceptions of the services they receive from the Housing and Regeneration Department. It is a common finding for leaseholders to have lower satisfaction with their landlord relative to tenants, given that the latter have a more direct interaction with their landlord. However, Wandsworth Council commissioned this research in order to probe in more detail levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among leaseholders and crucially, the reasons behind this. The purpose of this research was to identify potential sources of leaseholder satisfaction that can be addressed going forward.

In order for these findings to be robust a sample size of 560 was commissioned, in order to deliver a confidence level on the data of +/-3% based on the size of the Wandsworth leaseholder population. To deliver this sample size a dual methodology approach was required. While a telephone survey was the lead methodology, there are an insufficient number of leaseholder records available within the Council's records with a valid telephone number to deliver the full 560. On this basis, a target of 400 interviews was set by telephone. Alongside this a representative sample of 1,100 by ward and property type was drawn from the leaseholder records with no telephone number. All these 1,100 addresses were sent a paper copy of the survey by post, followed by a second reminder copy if the initial survey had not produced a reply. A six week period was allowed for the postal phase, with the telephone survey also completed within this period. The 1,100 postal sample yielded 235 returns in total, which combined with the telephone returns produced a sample size of 596.

1.2 Data and reporting

This report summarises the responses given by leaseholders to the bespoke survey that was designed to probe potential reasons for leaseholder dissatisfaction. This document contains a concise summary of the key findings to emerge from this survey. It aims to highlight the positive messages in the data, plus any areas of concern that require further consideration. A full set of data tables are also available to refer to.

To correct minor imbalances of the achieved interviews relative to the population of leaseholders, the survey data has been weighted by ward and property type.

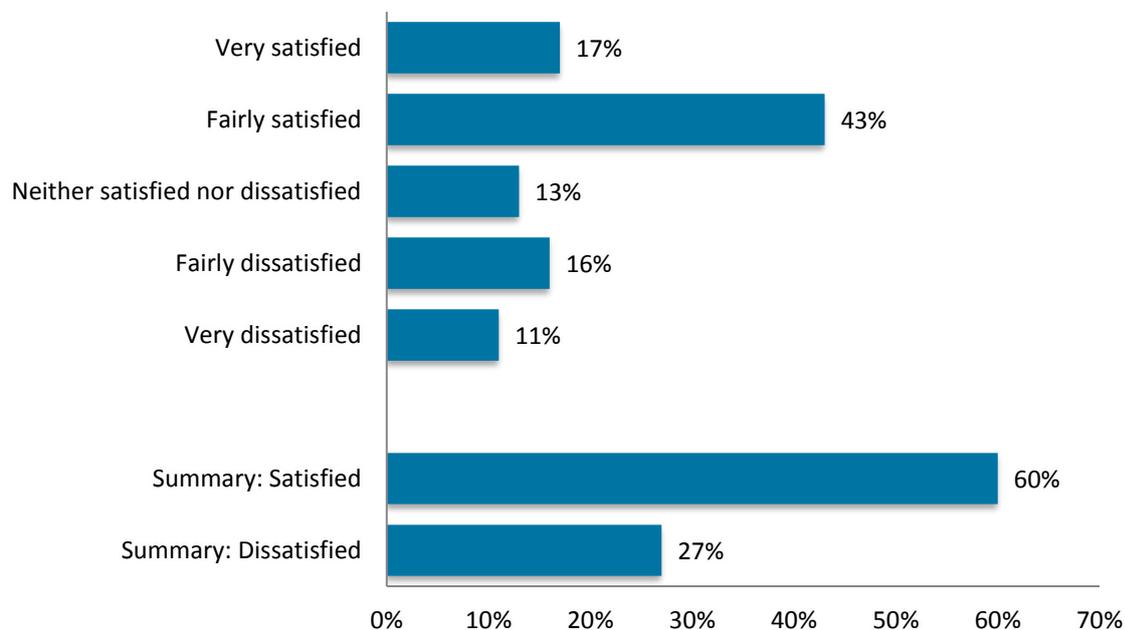
The data used in this report are rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage. It is for this reason that, on occasions, tables or charts may add up to 99% or 101%. Where tables and graphics do not match exactly the text in the report this occurs due to the way in which figures are rounded up (or down) when responses are combined. Results that do differ in this way should not have a variance which is any larger than 1%.

Throughout the report, in tables and in graphs, the symbol * is used to denote any figure that is less than 0.5%.

2 Overall leaseholder satisfaction

The underlying premise of this research is to explore levels of leaseholder satisfaction and to explore the reasons that underpin this. Before exploring the specifics of service delivery to leaseholders all were asked to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with the services provided by Wandsworth Council as their freeholder. As shown by the figure below leaseholders are more likely to be satisfied (60%) than dissatisfied (27%), with a further 13% providing a neutral response. In the last survey of Wandsworth tenants (Autumn 2016) 76% were satisfied overall with the service they receive with 17% dissatisfied. At the same point leaseholder satisfaction was at 55%, so the 60% recorded in 2017 is an improvement.

Figure 1: Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by Wandsworth Council as your freeholder (All responses)



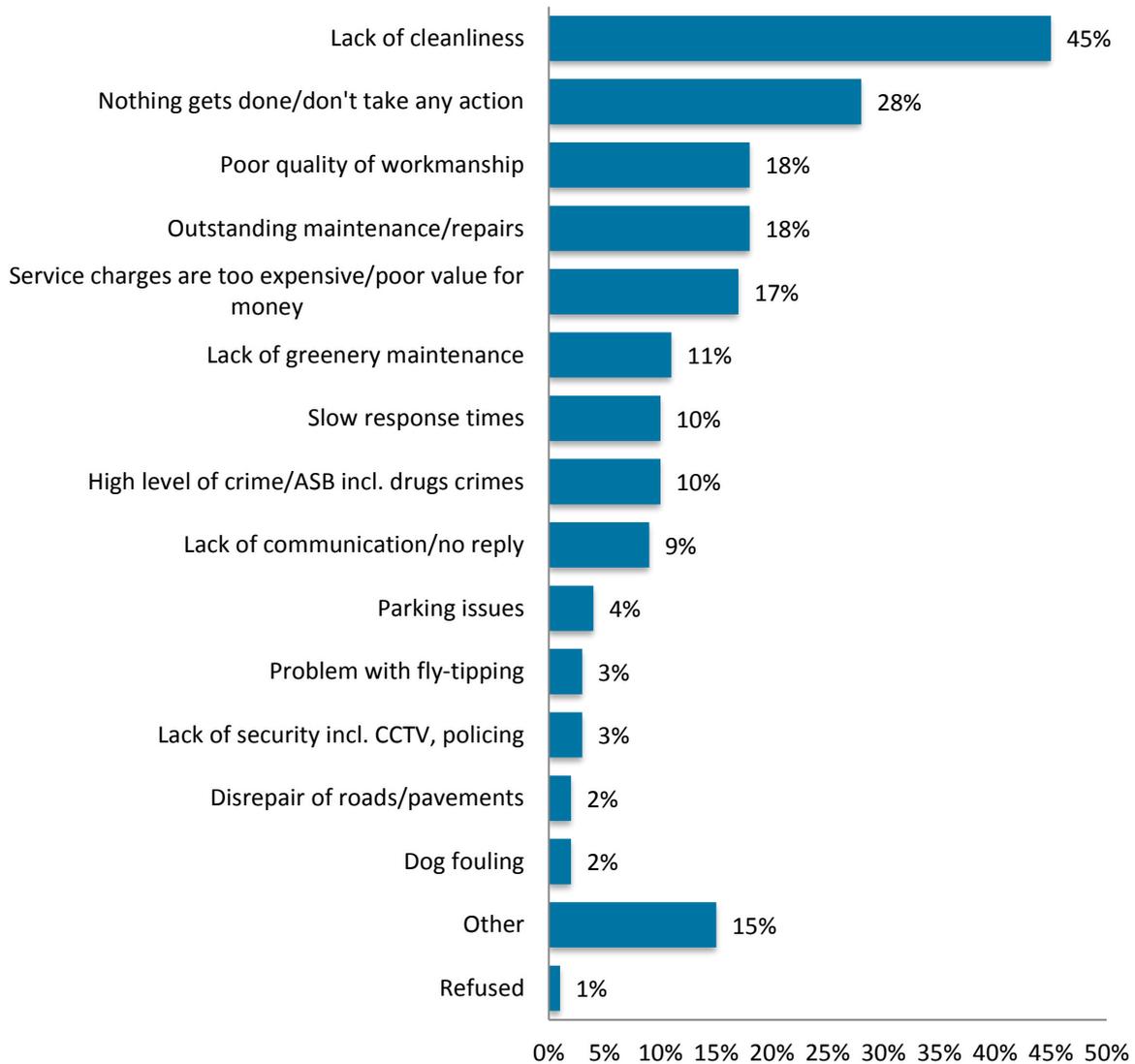
Unweighted sample base: 596

For this and indeed all of the open/free text exploratory questions included in the survey the verbatim responses have been grouped into themes to allow their prevalence to be quantified. For those who are satisfied with the service provided by Wandsworth Council, 38% gave comments that suggested although they are satisfied, there is room for further improvement. Beyond this, the most common explanations of current leaseholder satisfaction are:

- Good cleaning service (18%);
- Don't have any complaints/problems (12%);
- They deal with issues/carry out repairs (11%);
- Good overall service (10%); and,
- Quick to act/prompt service (9%).

When asked to explain directly their dissatisfaction, the most common explanations are those shown in the figure below. These responses suggest that cleaning standards appear to be a divisive issue as they are most commonly cited as the reason for dissatisfaction as well as satisfaction. Beyond the 45% of dissatisfied leaseholders who cite a lack of cleanliness, 28% suggest that Wandsworth Council as a freeholder doesn't take action, and approaching one in five mention poor quality of workmanship (18%), outstanding repairs/maintenance and the cost/value of service charges (17%).

Figure 2: Reasons for dissatisfaction with services provided by Wandsworth Council as freeholder (All dissatisfied leaseholders)



Unweighted sample base: 159

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

Examples of the verbatim responses given in relation to these key themes are below.

Lack of cleanliness

The cleaning is not good, and they doubled our management fee.

The cleaning is a problem. Mattresses have been lying outside for two weeks

the staircases never get cleaned, we have spider webs hanging for years onwards, when they cut the grass it gets left all over the pavement.

In recent months not seen the cleaning of the communal areas.

The cleaning has not been done properly and the footpaths have not been cleared properly at the rear of the property.

Nothing gets done/don't take any action

Finds it difficult to find someone who has responsibility. - People don't follow through with what they need to do.

Recently I've asked council to deal with something and they haven't replied. I contacted them more than once.

Poor quality of workmanship

The people who were meant to fix the downpipe from the roof had to come 5-6 times before it got fixed.

Repairs are shoddy.

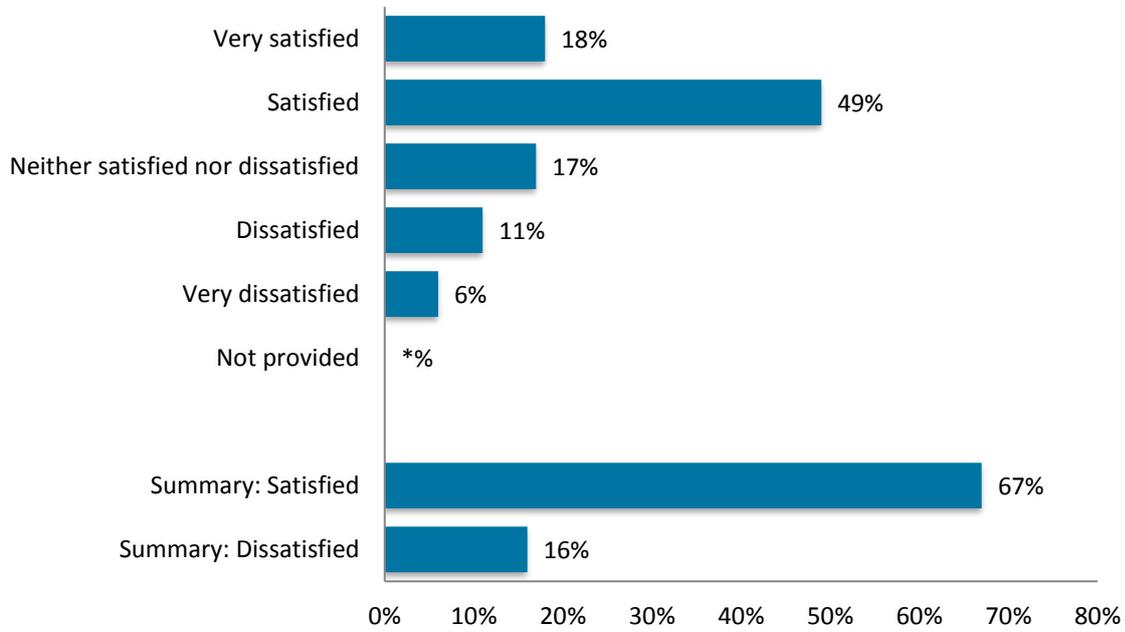
Outstanding maintenance/repairs

Sometimes the lifts don't work or the place isn't as clean as it should be.

They really don't do the job they are being paid for. The building is filthy, the pavement and the road surfaces are broken. The outside of the building has overgrown grass. Despite me contacting them about it they have done nothing about it.

Satisfaction with the Council’s wider role, beyond acting as a freeholder is slightly higher. Two thirds (67%) of leaseholders indicate that they are satisfied with the way Wandsworth Council is running the local area. A total of 16% express some level of dissatisfaction at this question.

Figure 3: Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Wandsworth Council is running your local area? (All responses)



Unweighted sample base: 596

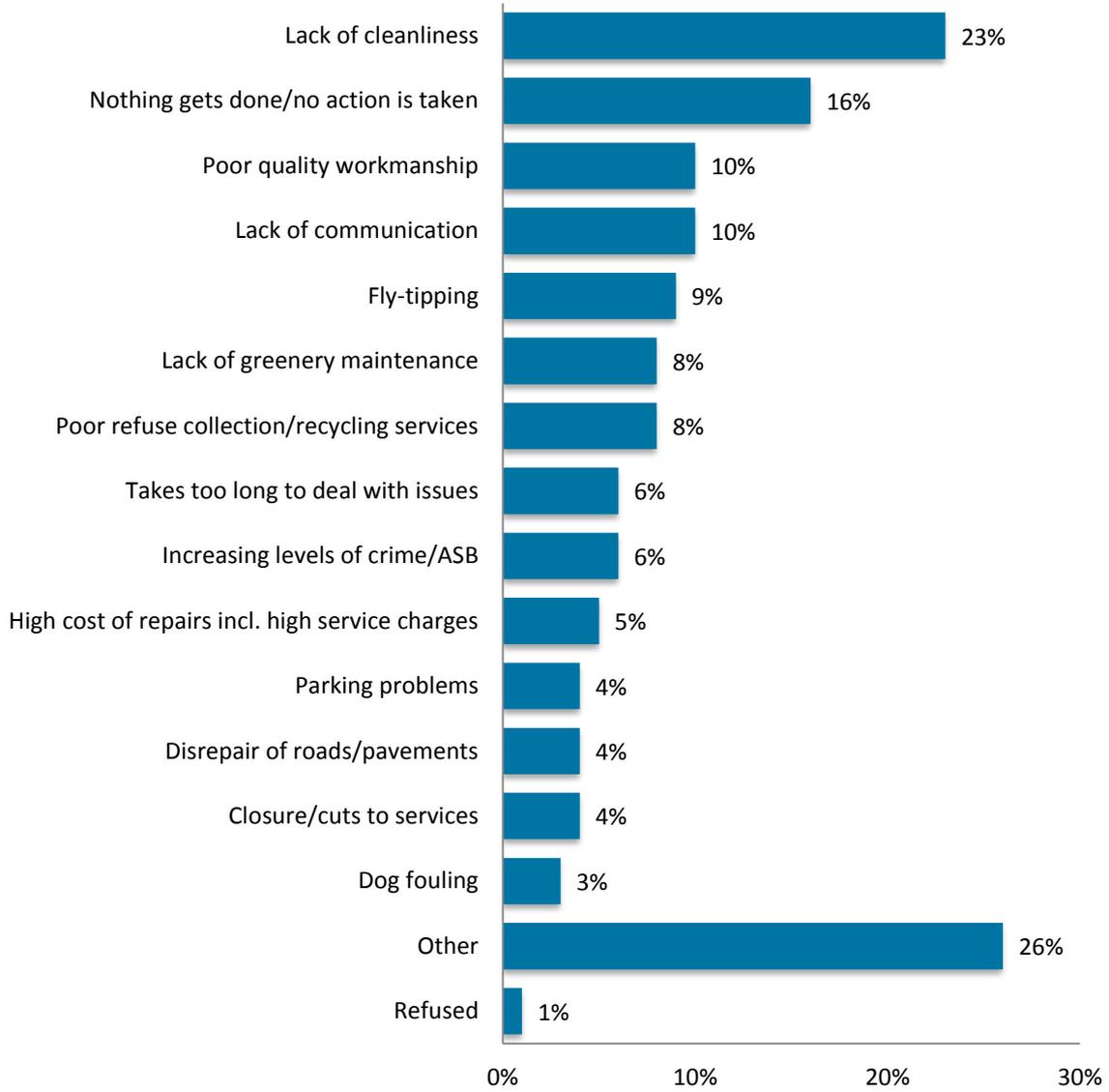
* denotes less than 0.5%

In order to put these results into context, the latest Local Government Association national poll of residents (June 2017) shows that 66% of UK residents are satisfied with the way that their Council runs things, with 21% dissatisfied. This LGA poll will include respondents in a variety of tenures.

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

The reasons given for dissatisfaction with the way Wandsworth Council are running the local area to a large extent echo those given at the previous question about the Council as a freeholder. Again a lack of cleanliness (23%) was most commonly mentioned, followed by a lack of responsiveness (16%).

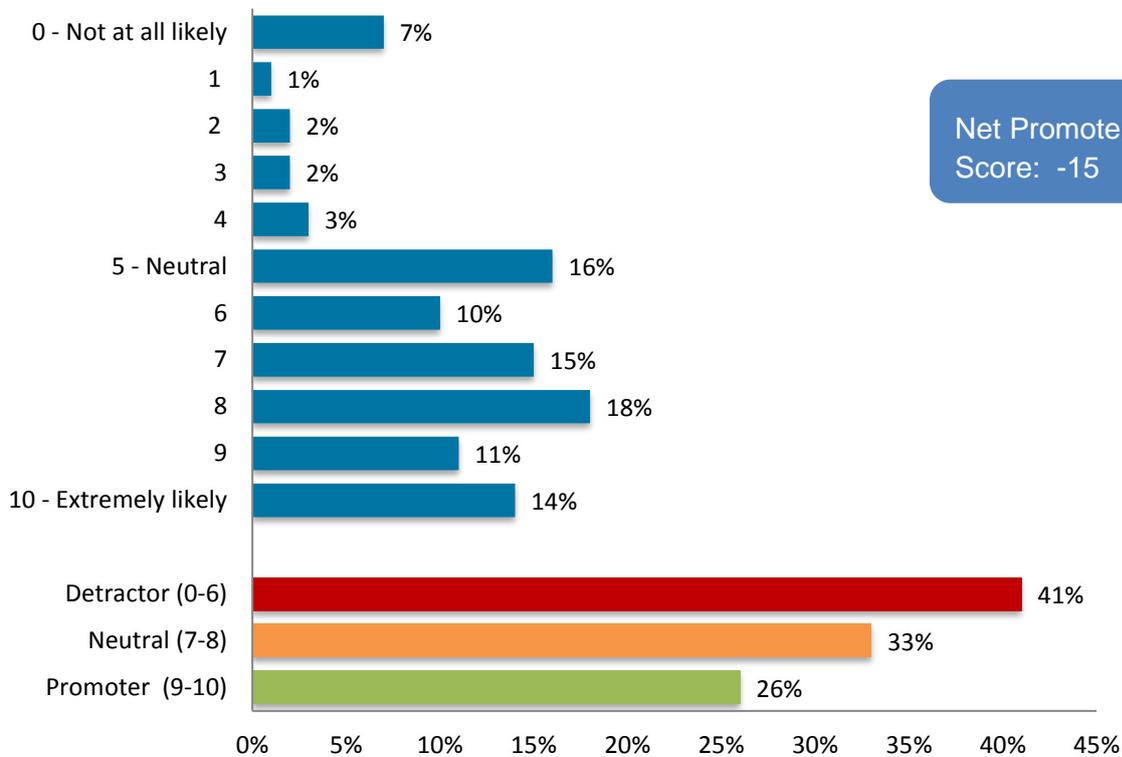
Figure 4: Reasons for dissatisfaction the way Wandsworth Council runs the local area (All dissatisfied leaseholders)



Unweighted sample base: 103

As well as being asked about their satisfaction with Wandsworth Council, all leaseholders were also asked to indicate how likely they would be to recommend Wandsworth Council as a freeholder to family or friends on a scale of 0 to 10. The full range of responses is shown by the figure below. This question allows the calculation of a Net Promoter Score. To do so we have used a standard classification of Promoters (those giving a response of 9 or 10 on this scale), Neutrals (7-8) and Detractors (0-6). Subtracting the proportion of Detractors from the Promoters produces the Net Promoter Score which in this instance is negative at -15. A third of leaseholders (33%) give neutral responses with regards to whether they would recommend their landlord to others.

Figure 5: How likely would you be to recommend Wandsworth Council as a freeholder to family or friends on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is not at all likely and 10 is extremely likely? (All responses)

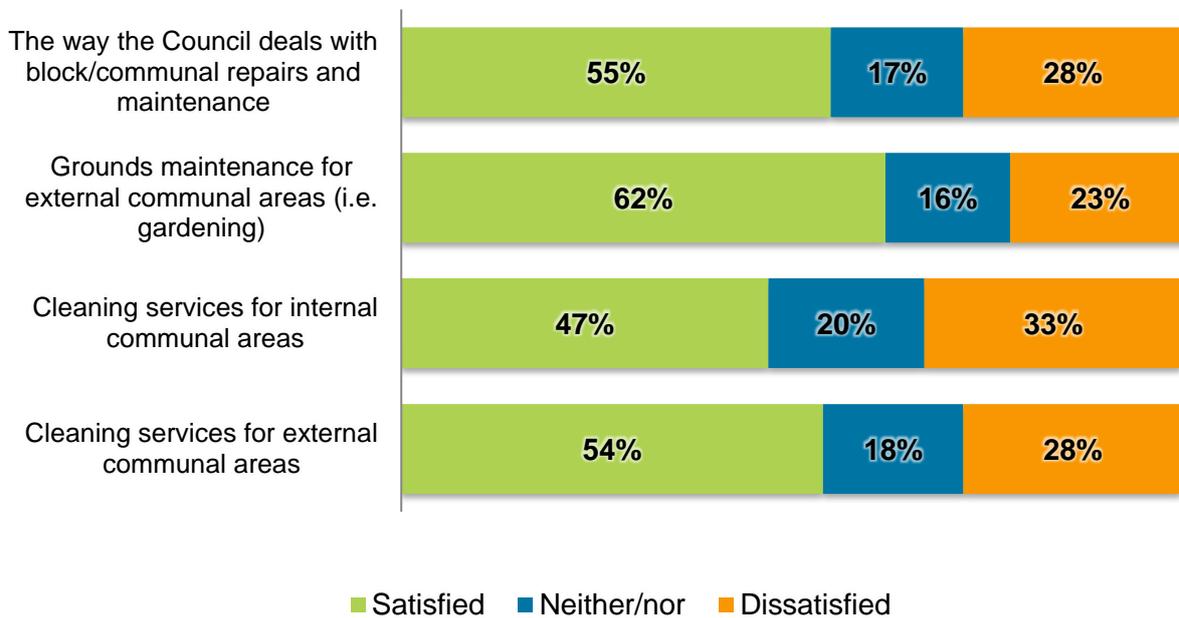


Unweighted sample base: 590

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

How Wandsworth leaseholders view key services they receive is shown by the figure below. Grounds maintenance in external communal areas elicits the highest level of satisfaction with 62% of leaseholders satisfied. However, this means that approaching a quarter (23%) are dissatisfied with this aspect of service delivery. Satisfaction is lowest for the cleaning of internal communal areas, with 47% of leaseholders satisfied and 33% dissatisfied. When considering the cleaning of external communal areas 54% of leaseholders express satisfaction with the same proportion (55%) satisfied with how the council deals with repairs and maintenance of communal areas. While these satisfaction levels are influenced by the level of neutral responses (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), these findings do suggest that for notable proportions of leaseholders cleaning and maintenance services are not meeting expectations.

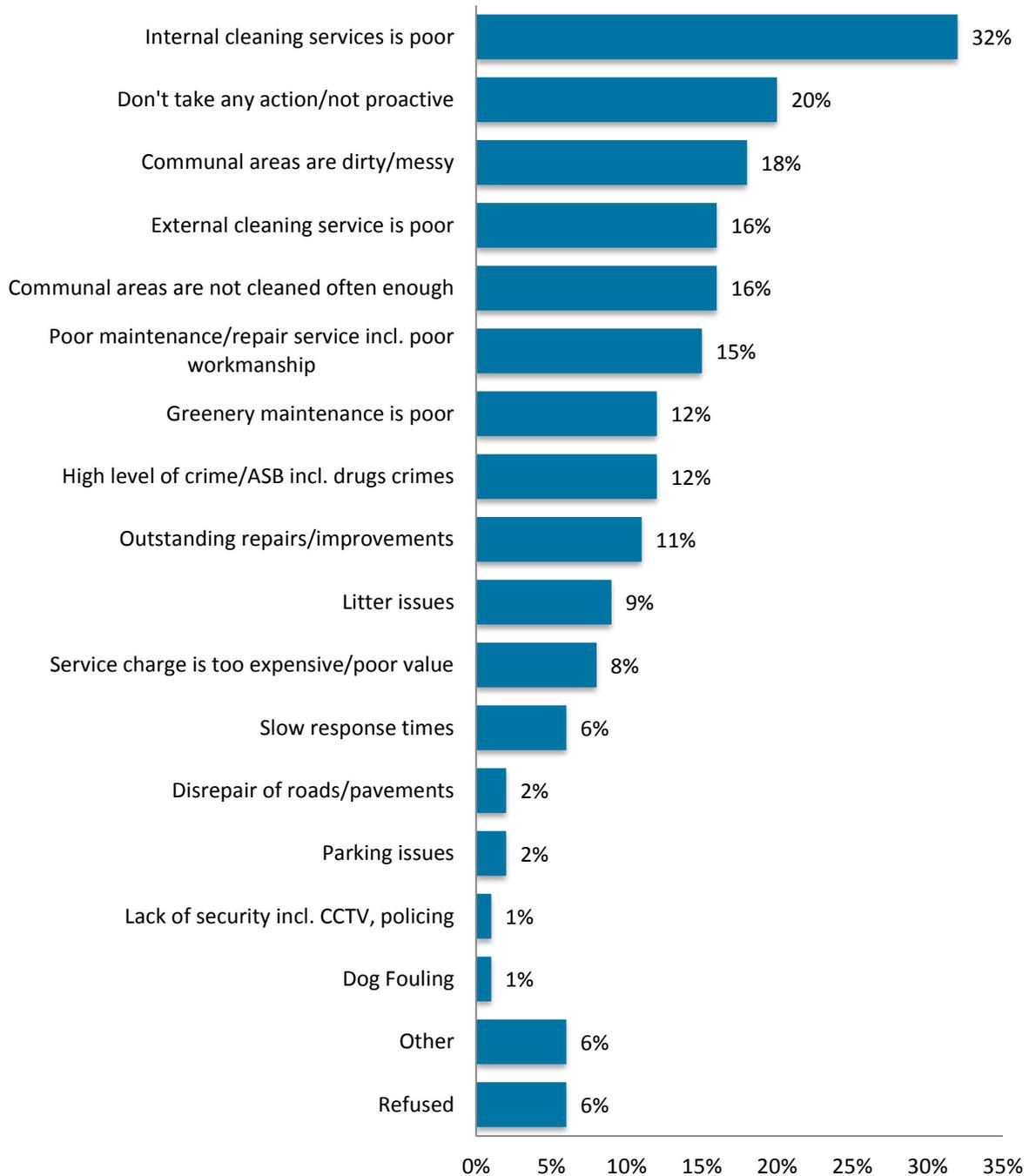
Figure 6: Satisfaction with cleaning and grounds maintenance (All valid responses)



Valid sample bases vary

Those expressing dissatisfaction with any of these maintenance issues were given the opportunity to explain why this is. The main themes in the answers given are as follows. A third (32%) gave responses that suggest internal cleaning is poor and a further 18% mentioned the condition of internal communal areas and 16% indicate that they are not cleaned often enough. Alongside this, 20% again suggest that inaction from the Council prompts their dissatisfaction.

Figure 7: Reasons for dissatisfaction for cleaning and grounds maintenance (All dissatisfied leaseholders)



Unweighted sample base: 305

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

A selection of comments about the cleaning of internal/communal areas is provided to illustrate the issues that leaseholders comment upon.

Cleaning is not very good. - The council can do more.

Coming back from work, I see the dust accumulating.

The walkways need cleaning up a bit more.

Never clean external cleaning areas all they do is mop the floor.

The cleaning services are quite slow and it can be better.

The stairs look dirty.

Workers come everyday for the cleaning e.g. mops and vacuums but when you look at it as over a period of months she believes the workers do not do what they should

They don't seem to bother. - Hygiene is not good, when the caretaker uses the water it is filthy by the time she gets to the fourth block.

Not enough cleaning goes on. Recently the cleaner has not been reliable.

The internal communal where the standards are poor and find areas that are dirty and we pay a service charge and it is not acceptable.

That's because rubbish is left on the stairwell and not cleared up.

Nothing is done properly. Floors are just wet but not cleaned. The cleaning is deplorable inside and outside.

Example comments on **external areas** are also provided below:

Again it is the lack of regular cleaning and paying attention to the area. For example there was a lot of junk left and this creates an issue as you get young mother's with their prams or pushchairs having to cross over to avoid that spot.

The gardening and we have some bushes and they come along with a hedge cutter and trim it up and not done properly.

The speed of repair work, quality of contractors used and the efficiency of communicating to get things done.

Never seen a gardener for the little enclosure.

Because it cost me alot of money and the council does not give me a chance to pay in instalments yet the option of 10months is too less as the amounts are too high to afford.

Inaction is evident in some of these comments, but verbatim also more directly citing this are below:

Because they don't get done. We are continuously chasing the repair and the cleaning and things like that.

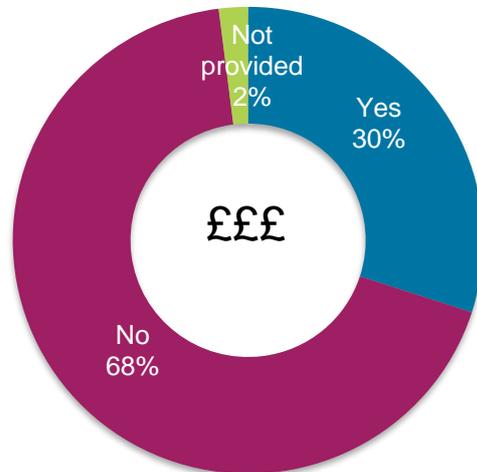
The last block caught fire, and it still hasn't been repaired yet.

There is a leak in our guttering which has not been resolved.

It is difficult to report repairs and difficult to have to follow them up.

Any individual who expressed dissatisfaction either with cleaning or grounds maintenance or cleaning services were asked a follow up question to probe the potential for funding further improvements to these services. When asked if they would prefer to pay a higher service charge for an enhanced service a majority of 68% dissatisfied leaseholders answered that they would not. While 30% of this cohort would support an increased service charge this equates to just 13% of the leaseholder sample overall. Clearly therefore future service delivery and leaseholder satisfaction will be constrained by existing budgets.

Figure 8: Bearing in mind that leaseholders are charged only for services received and that costs are kept as low as possible, would you prefer to pay higher service charges for an enhanced service? (Those dissatisfied with any aspect of grounds maintenance or cleaning services)

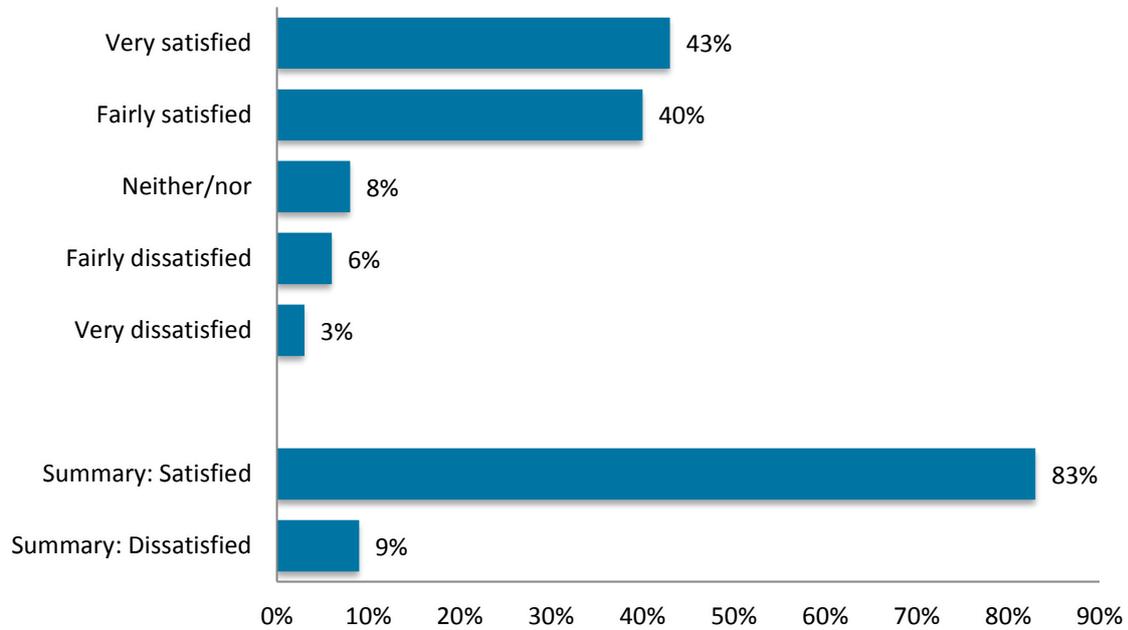


Unweighted sample base: 256

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

Although the comments above and elsewhere in this report do suggest that local cleanliness is an issue for some leaseholders, overall 83% are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. Just 9% suggest they are dissatisfied with their local area.

Figure 9: Neighbourhood satisfaction (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample base: 587

3 Service charges and value for money

To further probe how leaseholders view the services that they receive, a set of questions relating to service charges was included. These questions were preceded by the following explanation (in both the postal and the telephone survey).

As a leaseholder the management of your property is the responsibility of the housing management service who are obliged to provide certain routine services.

If you are a 125-year Council leaseholder, the council (as freeholder) is obliged to provide you with certain routine services and to charge you for those services.

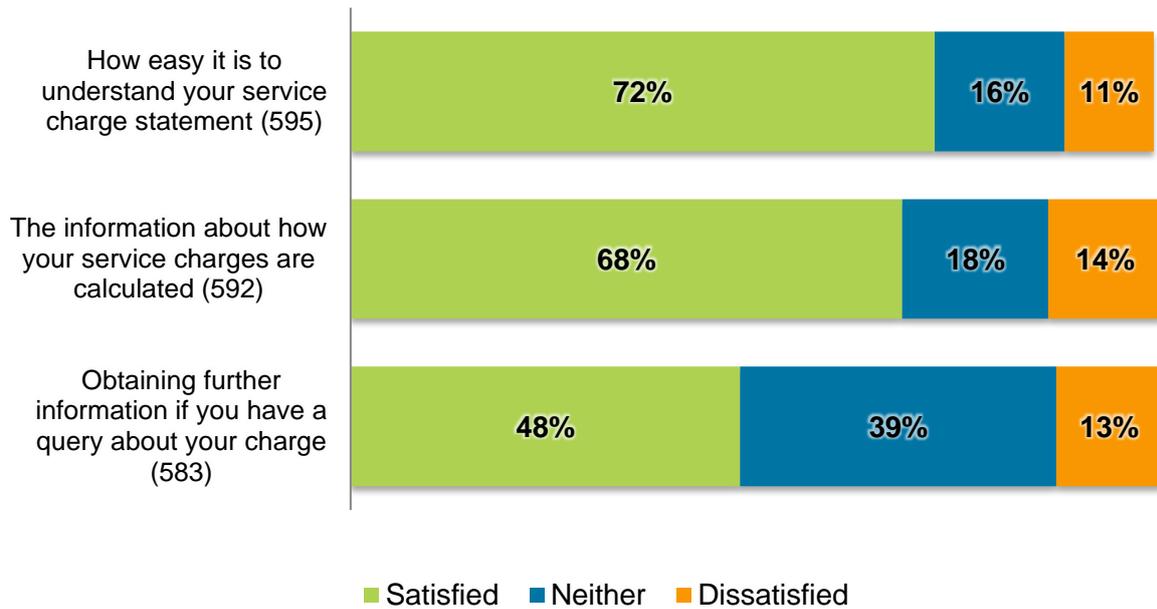
You will be sent an annual service charge bill for these service costs (also known as a routine service charge bill). Any service charges you pay are exempt from VAT as the service is provided by the Council.

The most common type of lease is a two-tier lease, which applies to flats in blocks on housing estates. It contains two percentages, one for the estate and the other for block. These services include estate costs (emergency response service (WEC) and estate cleaning, lighting, repairs and garden maintenance) and block costs (block cleaning, electricity, repairs, paladins, lift repairs and running costs, building insurance and the council's contribution fund which covers claims under £50,000, management expenses and minor works commissioning fee).

The information that Wandsworth Council provides in relation to service charges provides a framework through which leaseholders can then assess the value for money they receive. On this basis, it is encouraging to observe that seven in ten leaseholders (72%) are satisfied with how easy it is to understand their service charge statement, with just 11% dissatisfied in this respect. Satisfaction with information about service charges are calculated is lower at 68% with 14% dissatisfied with this information. Views on how easy it is to obtain further information about service charges are affected by two in five (39%) giving a neutral response. This is likely to be because such individuals have do not have experience of requesting further information.

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

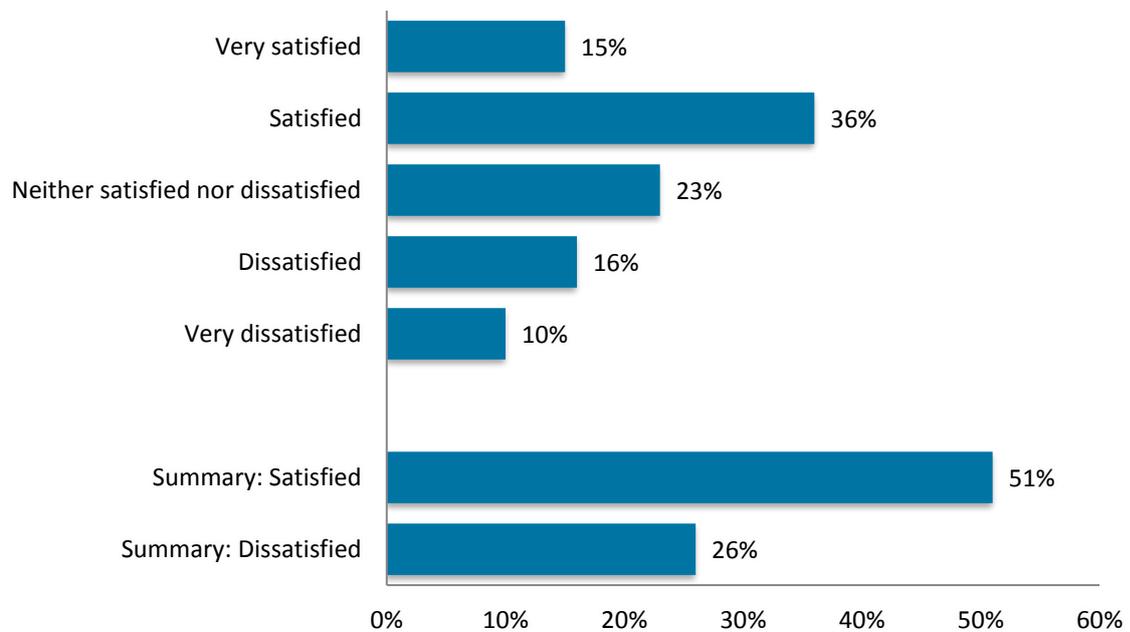
Figure 10: Views on service charge information (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

Overall, half (51%) of leaseholders indicate that their service charge represents value for money. The remainder are equally split between those who have a neutral opinion (23%) and those who are dissatisfied (26%).

Figure 11: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your service charge provides value for money? (All valid responses)

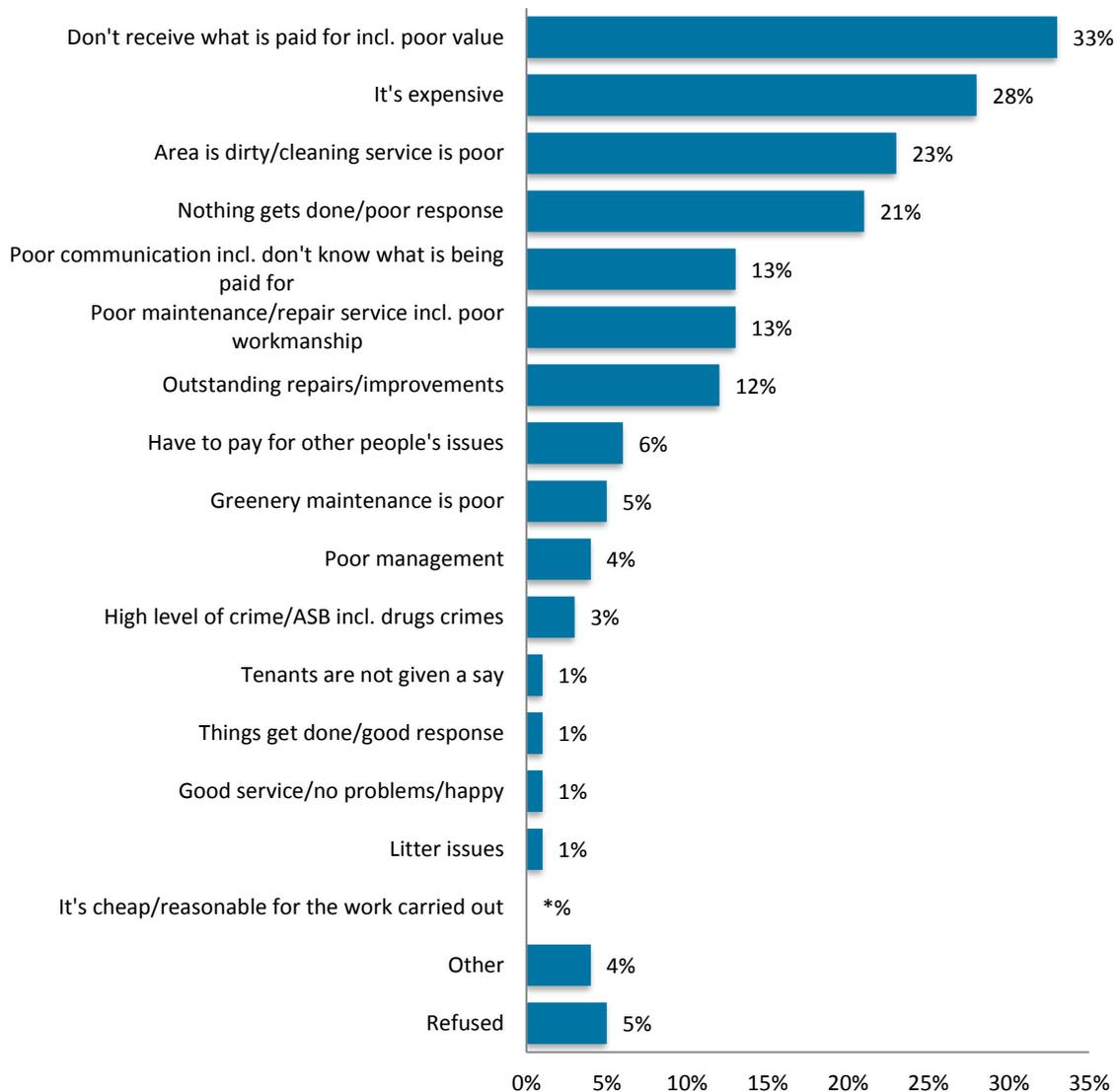


Unweighted sample base: 593

Those who are satisfied with the value for money their service charge provides most commonly explain this using comments that suggest charges are cheap/reasonable for the work carried out (33%) and that they have had no issues with the service (14%) and that things get done/the Council is responsive (7%).

The core reasons underpinning this dissatisfaction are shown by the figure below. The key issues emerging from the open responses is a perception that leaseholders do not receive the services that they pay for (33%), as well as the overall cost (28%). Cleaning comments again feature prominently at this value for money question (23%), along with a lack of responsiveness (21%).

Figure 12: Reasons for dissatisfaction that service charge provides value for money (All dissatisfied leaseholders)



Unweighted sample base: 157

* denotes less than 0.5%

On this basis, dissatisfaction with value for money stems less from the levels of service charges and the information about them, but from specific experiences of service delivery.

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

The comments below give a flavour of the responses received to the value for money question:

I don't mind paying the money but it isn't clear what service we get for it.

Considering the charges we don't see any improvements or average standards of service maintained.

The charge isn't the problem, the cleaning is.

During the summer I had to call estate services a ridiculous number of times to report that our stairs had not been cleaned for three weeks. There was no follow up and so I had to keep chasing them for a further two weeks before the matter was resolved.

Standards, quality and frequency of service is well below the costs charged. Many charges are made for non-existent work. Each year costs rise and standards drop.

Don't see enough evidence of the services taking place (cleaning).

I do appreciate that the service charge is lower than for private blocks of flats, but the difference in the general maintenance and cleaning is huge.

No work done or requires constant chasing. No evidence of cleaning, no ability to turn off interior lights and high fees.

Cleaning is done in a lackadaisical manner day in day out. The external of the building too is appalling. Also refuse are being dumped by traders, other people living in the area. Fly tipping (fly tippers every time).

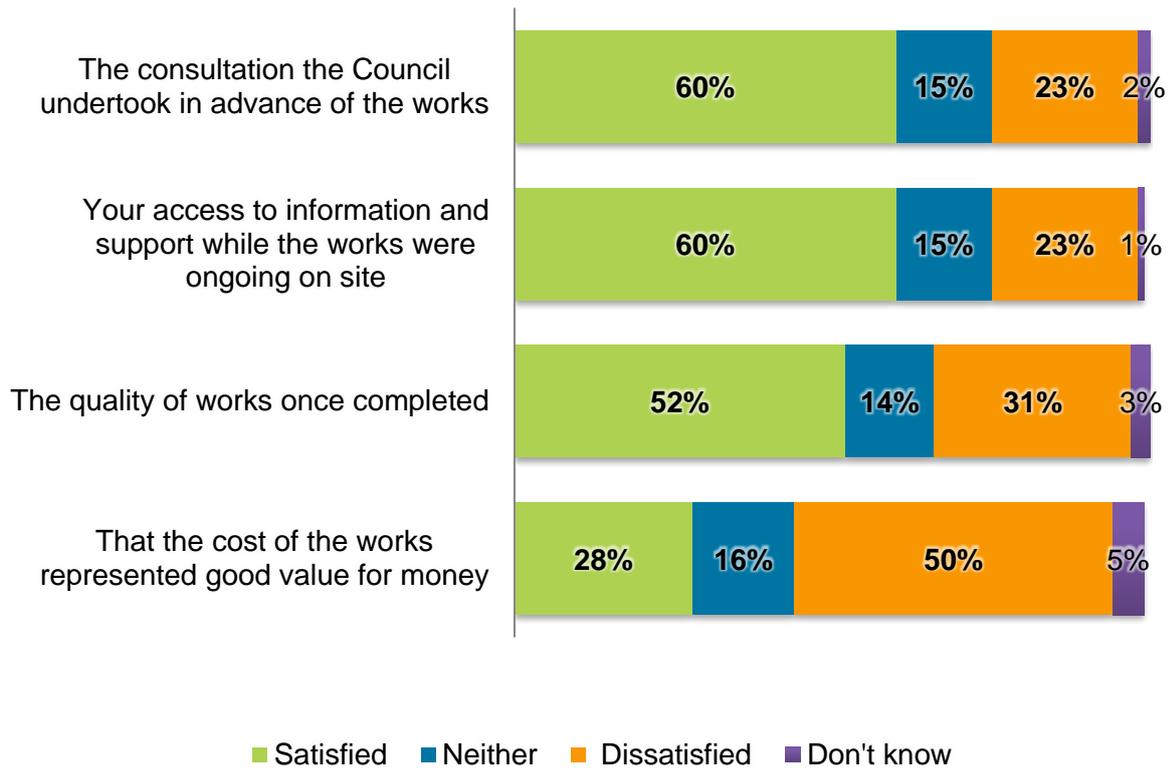
They say their service charges include cleaning but it is not done. They explain what the service charges are for and yet the work they do does not add up.

We still have to pay for the cleaning even if they are not doing a good job.

4 Major works

A total of 44% of the leaseholder sample had experienced major works in their block or estate during the last three years. Among those with this major works experience, six in ten (60%) were happy with the consultation that the Council undertook in advance of the work and their access to information and support while the works were ongoing (60%). However, scope for improvement in both these aspects is suggested by the fact that 23% of leaseholders were dissatisfied with these aspects of communication and information. More significant negativity is evident in relation to whether the cost of the works represented good value for money. More leaseholders experiencing major works within the last three years disagree (50%) rather than agree that value for money was provided. Those expressing satisfaction are a minority at 28%. In seeking to understand this it is notable that only half of works recipients (52%) are satisfied with the quality of the works once completed.

Figure 13: Experience of major works (Those who have had major works within the last three years)

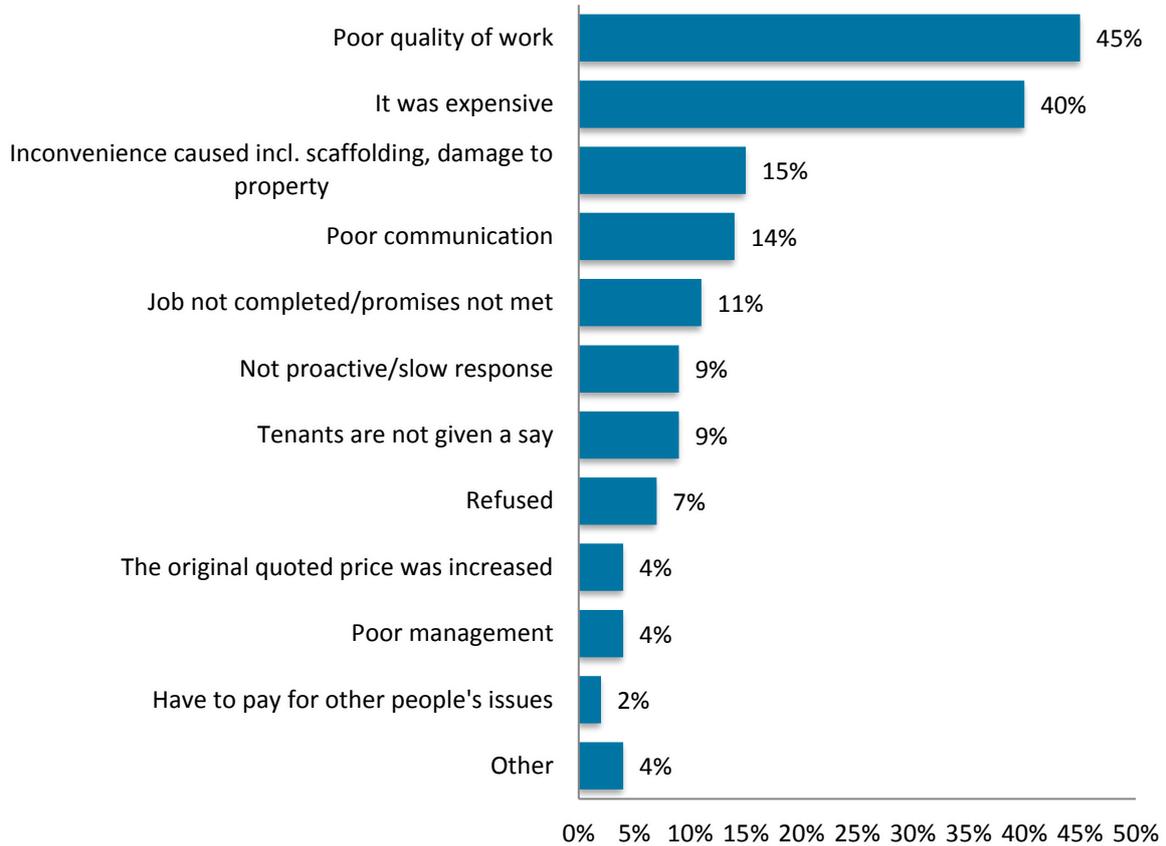


Unweighted sample base: 272

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

Among the leaseholders who expressed dissatisfaction with their major works the explanations are equally split between the quality of the work (45%) and the expense (40%). To a lesser extent the inconvenience caused (15%) and the level of communication (14%) were also issues. The full range of responses is shown by the figure below.

Figure 14: Reasons for dissatisfaction with major works (All those dissatisfied)

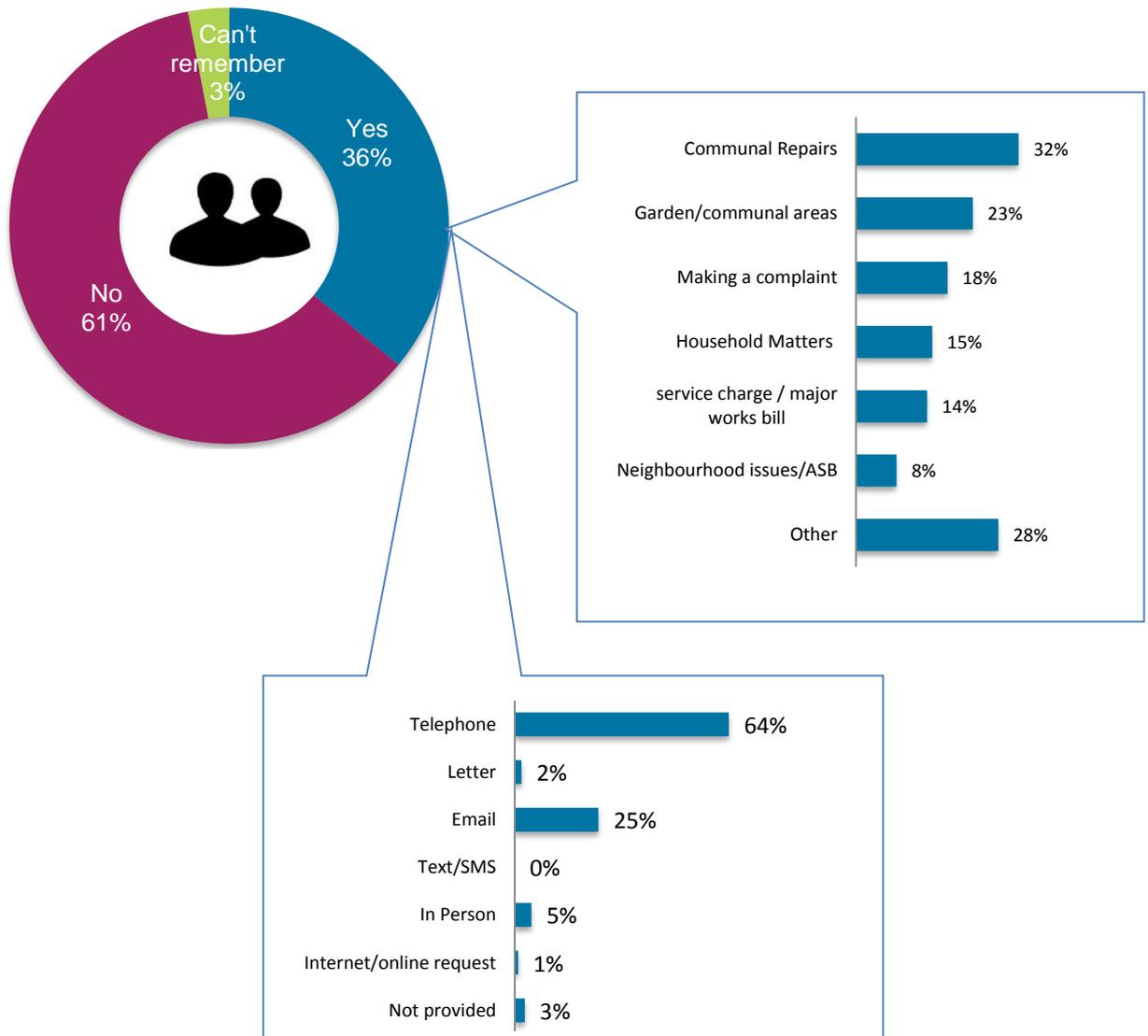


Unweighted sample base: 168

5 Communication and information

On the premise that any contact that leaseholders have with the Housing and Regeneration department is likely to shape satisfaction levels among leaseholders, a set of questions was included in the survey in order to probe contact experiences. Firstly, all leaseholders were asked whether they have contacted the Housing and Regeneration during the last 12 months. In total, just over a third (36%) of leaseholders indicated that they had made contact during this period. On this basis, six in ten (61%) leaseholders will not have had their perceptions shaped by recent direct contact.

Figure 15: Contact with the Housing and Regeneration Department in the last 12 months



Unweighted sample base: total sample: 595 contacted sub-sample: 211

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

Among those leaseholders who did make contact with the Housing and Regeneration Department during the last 12 months, the most common reasons for doing so were communal repairs issues (32%), issues to do with gardens/communal areas (23%) and to make a complaint (18%). A further 15% made enquires relating to household matters e.g. enquires about their lease agreement and a similar proportion (14%) made an enquire relating to their service charge.

Among leaseholders the telephone contact channel is dominant, with 64% making contact with the Housing and Regeneration Department in this way. On this basis high quality contact handling on the phone is essential. Beyond the telephone, 25% of leaseholders made their initial contact via email.

Probing the experiences of those leaseholders who made contact with their landlord shows that although 58% said that getting hold of the right person was easy, a quarter (25%) found this difficult.

Feedback on the helpfulness of staff has a strongly positive balance, with seven in ten (70%) leaseholders contacting their landlord indicating that the staff they spoke to were helpful. In total, 14% indicated that that were either unhelpful or very unhelpful.

Despite this positivity less than half 45% of leaseholders contacting the housing and regeneration department were satisfied with the outcome that they were able to achieve. The fact that 35% were dissatisfied with the outcome provides suggest that leaseholder expectations of what the Housing and Regeneration Department may well be high. Clear communication of why a desired outcome cannot be delivered would seem critical in this context.

Examining the explanations that leaseholders gave about their dissatisfactory contact outcome gives a flavour of the outcomes that (in their view) were not delivered:

The job was not done straight away because it took 3 calls to get the proper repair done

I had to deal with the contractor myself. They don't answer with any regularity, they are not useful. There is no point in them.

Incredibly difficult to get anything done. Respondent gives an example of when she asked for recycling bags - a very simple plea which took several emails and telephones. There was a lack of communication which caused her extreme hardship, difficulty and devastation.

The process took far too long. I had to contact them 5-6 times to get what I needed done. It was very difficult to get the mistake rectified.

Still waiting on a response to the atrocious repair of the quality repairs and what they will do about it.

So much red tape to go through. I got the impression it was easier for the person on the other end of the phone to say no and dismiss my query.

Because the job has not been completed.

Enquiries still pending.

My issue hasn't been resolved. However, I was given a time to call but couldn't get hold of the advisor.

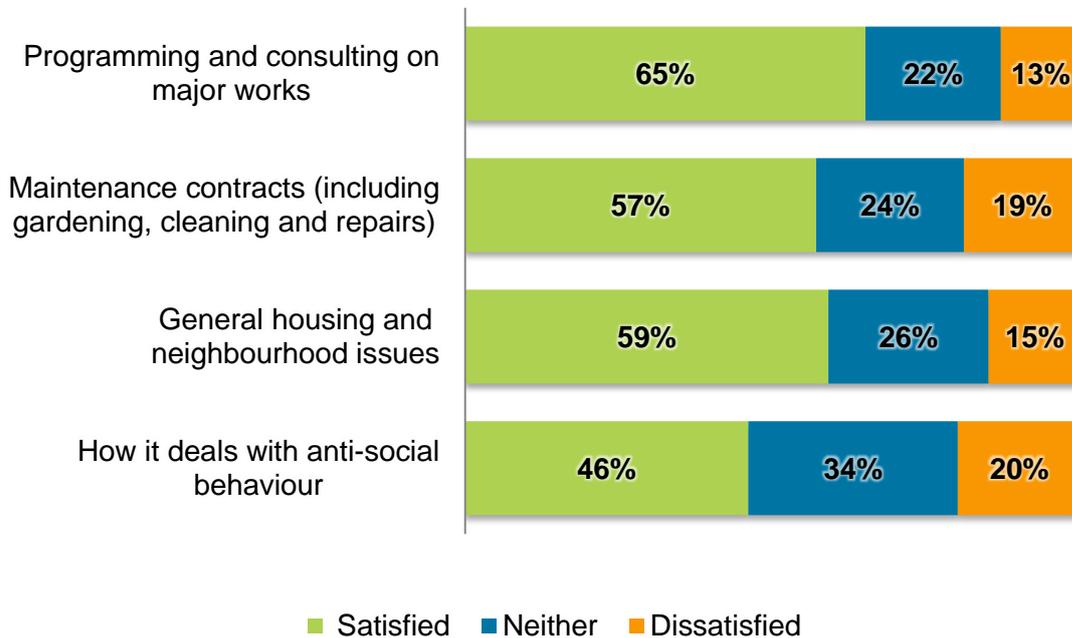
No answer to emails. Had to telephone. Nobody knew who deals with problems. They said they would contact me. Never heard from them again.

5.1 Information provision

All leaseholders were asked if they are satisfied with the way that their freeholder keeps them informed. This question asked leaseholders to respond in relation to four specific aspects of communication provision. As shown by the figure below, for three of these four aspects a majority are satisfied. Almost two thirds (65%) are satisfied with how the Council keeps them informed about major works while approaching six in ten are satisfied with how they are kept informed about maintenance contracts (57%) and general housing and neighbourhood issues (59%). Around a quarter (22%-26%) of leaseholders answered neutrally on these three areas, meaning that relatively small proportions of leaseholders are dissatisfied.

On the fourth area on information provision: how the Council deals with anti-social behaviour satisfaction drops below half (46%). Again neutral responses are sizable (34%), but one in five (20%) are dissatisfied with how they are kept informed about how ASB is being dealt with. On this basis this may be a topic on which communications could be strengthened

Figure 16: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the Council keeps you informed about the following areas? (All valid responses)

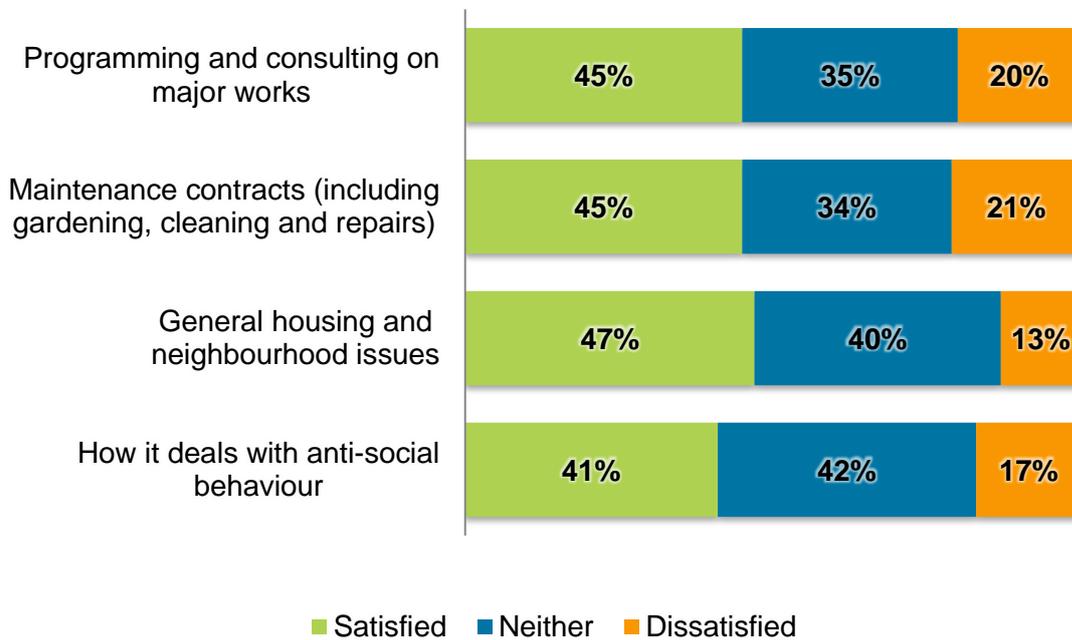


Unweighted sample bases: 589-591

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

The same four key topics were also covered in a question about listening and taking leaseholder views into account. Satisfaction with how the Housing and Regeneration department does this is expressed by a minority of leaseholders for all four topics. However, while there is some dissatisfaction regarding how views are listened to, the low satisfaction is due to sizeable proportions answering neither agree or disagree. It is not possible to ascertain whether this high neutrality is due to a lack of direct experience of providing feedback to the Council or because leaseholders experiences haven't been significantly strong to produce a rating in either a positive or negative direction.

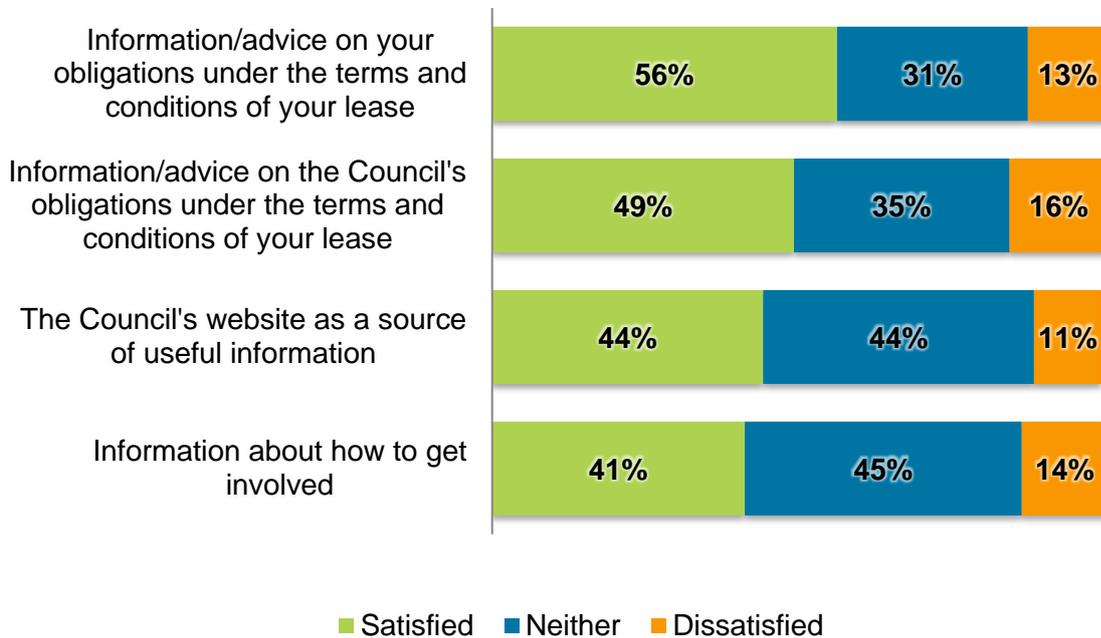
Figure 17: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the Council listens to your views and takes these into account when making decisions about the following areas? (All valid responses)



Unweighted sample bases: 584-588

A further question on more specific information topics and advice does not provide any conclusive evidence of gaps in information provision. Again neutrality is prominent, particularly in relation to information about how to get involved (45%), and the Council’s website as a useful information source (44%). Approximately half of leaseholders are satisfied with the information about their obligations under the terms and conditions of their lease, while 49% are satisfied with information on the Council’s obligations. A clear understanding of the roles of the respective parties may help in reducing the potential for heightened service expectations from leaseholders, but the evidence from this question (particularly the dissatisfaction levels) does not seem strong enough to suggest that information/advice in this area needs to be reviewed.

Figure 18: Thinking about the information and advice you receive from the Council about being a leaseholder, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following? (All valid responses)

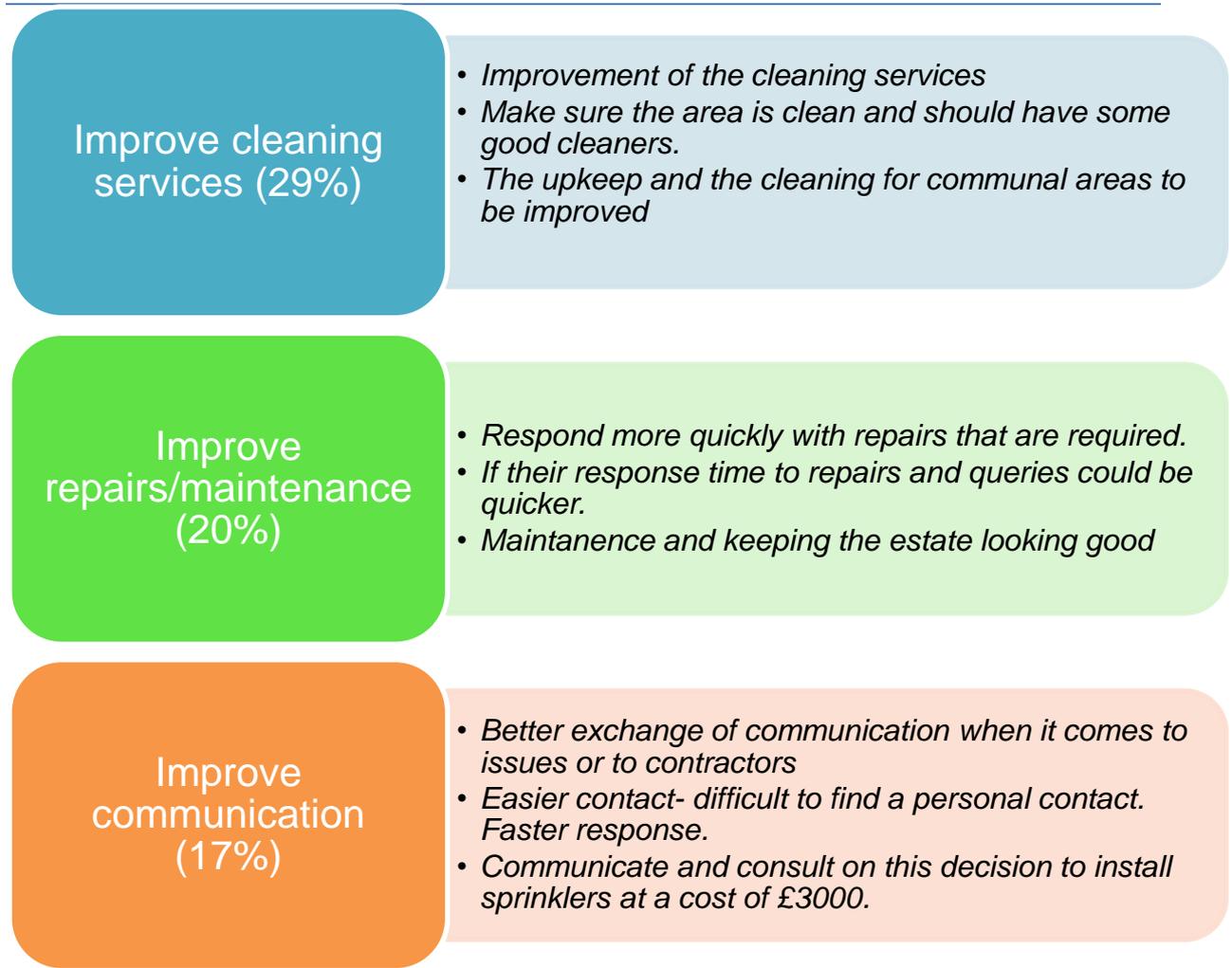


Unweighted sample bases: 585-588

6 Suggested improvements

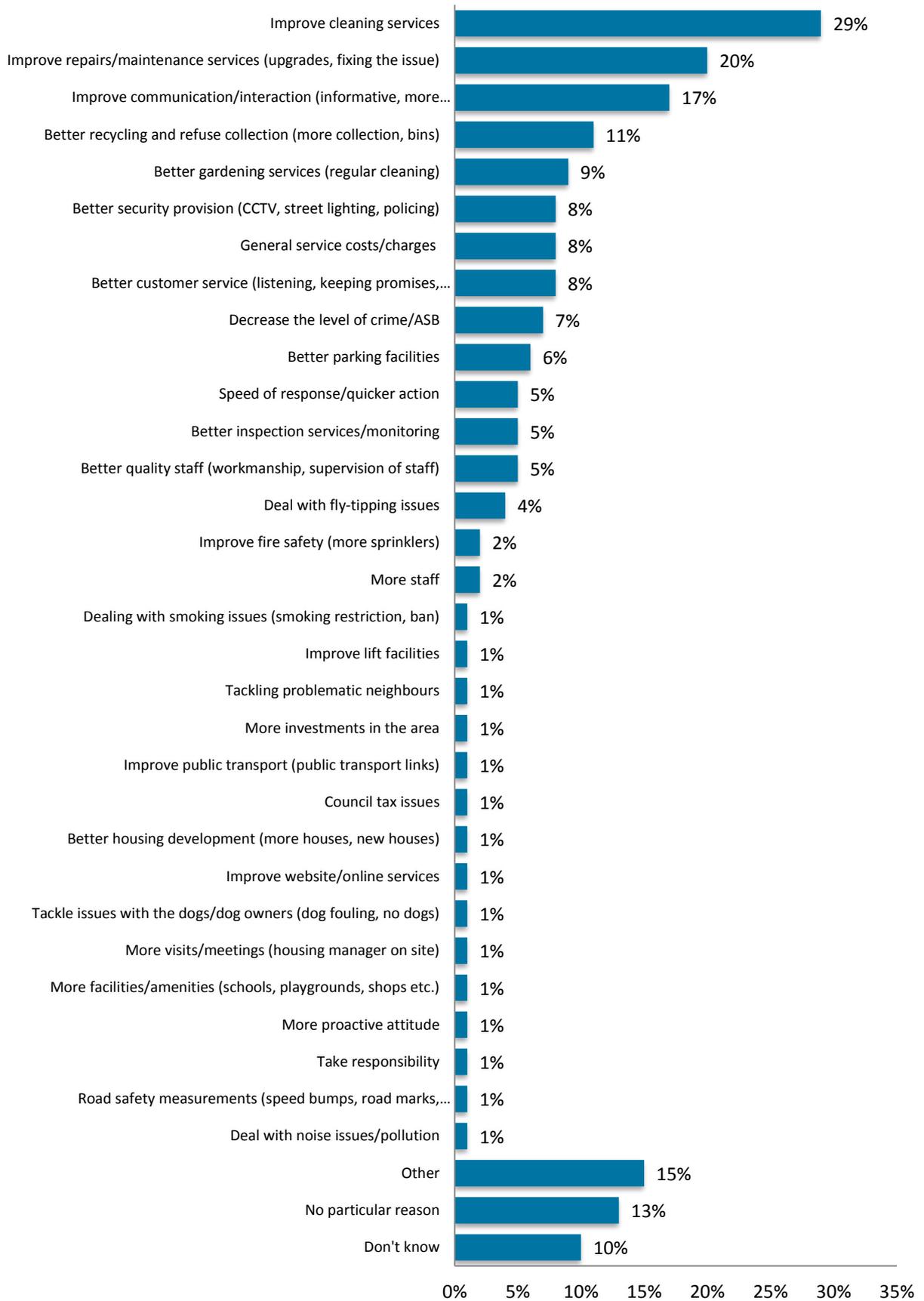
To complete the survey all leaseholders were asked to think about the services Wandsworth Council provides, and to suggest up to three things they could do to improve the housing services they provide. Collating all of these responses shows that the main suggestions are to improve cleaning, to improve repairs and maintenance standards and to enhance communications. A small selection of illustrative verbatim comments is shown in the figure below for these key suggestions.

Figure 19: Suggested improvements top 3 (All responses)



The full range of suggestions given at this question by at least 1% of respondents is shown in figure overleaf.

Figure 20: Suggested improvements summary (All responses)



Unweighted sample base: 596

7 Appendix: Statement of Terms

Compliance with International Standards

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management (ISO 27001:2013).

Interpretation and publication of results

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

Ethical practice

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

