



Best Value Tenants Survey 2006

Full Report (July 2006)



Prepared by The Market Research Group (MRG), Bournemouth University,
on behalf of
Crawley Borough Council.

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1: Executive Summary

The following summary points have been taken directly from the research findings section of the report, in which more detailed results may be found.

1.1: Best Value Performance Indicators

- BV74: Overall satisfaction with service received from landlord.
 - Overall 83% satisfied.
 - Non-ethnic minorities 84% satisfied.
 - Ethnic minorities 76% satisfied.
- BV75: Satisfaction with opportunities for participation.
 - Overall 65% satisfied.
 - Non-ethnic minorities 66% satisfied.
 - Ethnic minorities 50% satisfied.

1.2: Accommodation

- Over three quarters of respondents (84%) were satisfied to some extent with their accommodation, a positive result which has declined though slightly since 2003 and 2000.
- Over three quarters (81%) believed that their accommodation is in good condition.
- Around three quarters of respondents (82%) also believe that the number of rooms in their accommodation is about right for their needs.

1.3: The Local Area

- Just over three quarters of respondents (82%) were satisfied to some extent with their local area of residence. Therefore there has been an improvement since 2003 (79%).
- Racial harassment, people causing damage to your home and problems with neighbours were generally not thought to be a problem by respondents.
- However, graffiti, noise from people, dogs, other crime, vandalism and litter & rubbish in street were thought more of a problem overall.

1.4: Overall Views Of Service

- The majority (84%) were satisfied to some extent with the overall service from their landlord which is an improvement since previous years.
- Three quarters of respondents (79%) also believed that they receive good value from their rent, again an improvement since 2003.

1.5: Tenant Contact

- Over two thirds of tenants (73%) had contacted their landlord within the last twelve months.
- The methods of contact have remained the same since 2000. Over half of those making contact (59%) used the telephone, just over a third (33%) visited the office in person, and very few wrote letters (3%), used e-mail (3%) or other media (2%).
- As in 2000 and 2003 the most common reason for contact given was to report repairs (70%). The other reasons have remained fairly constant, with rent & housing benefit the only one being cited by over a tenth (13%).
- Just under two thirds (61%) thought that getting hold of the right person was easy. There has therefore been a decline since the 2003 figure (75%).
- Over three quarters of respondents (82%) thought that the staff they dealt with were helpful.
- Over three quarters (77%) also said that staff were able to deal with the problem.
- Nearly three quarters (71%) were satisfied with the outcome of this contact, with contact experiences remaining generally positive since 2003 and 2000.

1.6: The Repairs Service

- Firstly, it was found that 74% of tenants have requested repairs to their home within the last twelve months. The proportion of tenants reporting repairs is slightly higher than 2003 (72%), but lower than 2000 (75%).
- Furthermore, two thirds of respondents (68%) reported that they had had repairs completed at their home within the past twelve months.
- Just over three quarters (81%) of respondents were satisfied with the repairs service to some extent, with just over half of these being fairly satisfied (43%).
- Respondents were most satisfied with the attitude of workers, the overall quality of repair work and the keeping of dirt & mess to a minimum.
- Respondents were also generally satisfied with the speed of work completion, and to a slightly lesser extent being told when the worker would call and the time taken before work started.

1.7: Information & Participation

- The majority (88%) thought the Council performs well at keeping them informed, with nearly half (47%) believing their landlord to be very good at this.
- Half of respondents (50%) believe that the landlord takes little notice of tenants' views when making a decision, a third (32%) believes the landlord takes a lot of notice, whilst under a fifth (18%) thought the landlord takes no notice at all.
- Two thirds of respondents (65%) were satisfied with the opportunities for

participation in decision making. This aspect of the service has not changed significantly since 2003 and 2000.

- Nearly three quarters (72%) of tenants were aware of the Council's Tenant Participation Compact, a significant improvement since 2003. Around half of the respondents (53%) were satisfied with it to some extent, a figure which has declined since 2003 and 2000.

1.8: Service Improvements

- By far the most important service element was found to be repairs & maintenance, this being nominated by the vast majority of respondents (85%).
- Overall, quality of your home (60%) and value for money for your rent (48%) were also cited by a majority, and keeping tenants informed (40%) by just under a half.
- The remaining two services were still thought important by some; taking tenant views into account by around a third (37%) and involving tenants in management by a fifth (15%).
- All of these service elements were rated as needing some improvement, so although not negative there is certainly some room for development.
- Respondents were most positive about keeping tenants informed. This was closely followed by the value for money for your rent, involving in management and repairs & maintenance. Taking tenant views into account and overall quality of your home was rated slightly less positively. Some of the ratings are less than in 2003.

1.9: Tenants' Reward Scheme, Transfer of houses in Housing Association, Housing Standard Board, Mobile Office, Tenants Resource Centre

- 70% of respondents were aware that the Council were consulting tenants on transferring their homes into a Housing Association. 69% also knew that whether to transfer to a Housing Association or to stay with the Council will be decided by tenants in a ballot during late Autumn.
- The main reason given for not joining the Tenant's Reward Scheme was because respondents were not sure whether they are a member of it or not (40%).
- Over half of respondents (59%) did not know that they could give their opinions on the Council's services by joining the Housing Standard Board.
- Over half of respondents (51%) were aware of the mobile office that aims to bring the Council's services to the neighbourhood.
- Around two thirds of respondents (67%) were not aware of the Tenants' Resource Centre in Northgate. 65% also said that there has been no difference in the quality of Council services since the centre opened.

1.10: Other Comments & Suggestions

- Around a quarter of those submitting comments (28%) did so on the subject of the repairs service, confirming previous findings that this is an area that requires attention.
- Also popular were comments about tenant accommodation (15%), other comments (15%), communication and participation (13%) and contact with the landlord (11%). All other comments were mentioned by under a tenth of respondents. These results were very similar to the 2003 results.

1.11: Nature Of Tenants

- Around two third of tenants (67%) were females and a third (33%) were males.
- 30% of respondents were aged 75+ years old, 29% were 18-44 years old, 28% were aged 45-64 years and the remainder 14% were 65-74 years old.
- Around a third of households are combined by one adult aged 60 or over (31%). Under a fifth (15%) are one parent family with child or (14%) one adult under 60 years old. Around a tenth of households are combined by two adults, at least one over 60 (13%) or a two parent family with a child (12%). Other family groups were cited less commonly.
- It was found that the vast majority of tenants (91%) were of White British origin. White Irish (2%), other white backgrounds (2%), Asian/ Indian (1%) and Asian Pakistani (1%) also represent significant minorities of the tenant population, with all other ethnic backgrounds being less common.
- Just under half of respondents (43%) reported that they have an illness, disability or infirmity, and most of these (83%) stated that it limits their daily activities in some way.
- It was confirmed that many of the tenants in Crawley are elderly, with over a third wholly retired from work (36%). Fairly even proportions reported that they were an employee in full-time job (16%), an employee in part-time job (12%), permanently sick or disabled (13%) or simply looking after the home (14%). All other activities were mentioned far less frequently than this, a finding also reported in 2003.
- It was found that most tenants rely on a number of sources, with a state pension (46%), earning from employment (30%), child benefit (26%), a pension from a former job (25%) and income support (24%) being the most common. Around a fifth or less were on disabled living allowance (19%), child tax credit (18%), pension tax credit (13%) and other state benefits (11%), with all others being mentioned by under a tenth.

2: Introduction

2.1: Crawley Borough Council

Crawley Borough Council (CBC) is the local authority for the area, and provides services and facilities to all local residents. As such the Council has a duty to provide the best quality services to the public in the most efficient and effective manner.

Consultation is a route by which Councils can monitor the quality and cost of services, and investigate issues of importance to stakeholders. Assessing the views of residents and service users is key to this process, so RBC has embarked on a full and sustained public consultation programme to ensure that decisions are made in line with public opinion, and so that communities are more involved in the decision making process.

2.2: Best Value Tenants Survey

This report details the results of the Best Value Tenants Survey 2006, addressing the Council's service provision to Housing tenants, an exercise that must be repeated at least every three years under DCLG guidelines.

Best Value consultation is a nation-wide mechanism by which Councils can monitor the quality and cost of services they provide for the public by using standard Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) to assess service usage and satisfaction levels.

In this case the Council had a duty to report satisfaction levels with the overall service provided by their landlord and with opportunities for participation in the management of the service (BV74 and BV75), both of which were broken down by ethnic origin. These performance indicators are fed back to the Department for Communities and Local Government and the National Housing Federation (NHF) for national comparison.

The results of this survey will be compared to those collected in 2000 and 2003 to identify trends in behaviour and opinion.

2.3: The Market Research Group (MRG)

The Council commissioned the Market Research Group (MRG), based at Bournemouth University, to undertake this research. The group offers expertise, experience and advice in the field of market research, tailored to suit the needs of individual organisations. MRG has specialised in consultation of this sort, and has numerous Best Value consultations to its name.

2.4: Project Aims & Objectives

2.4.1: Project Aims

The project's research aim was to provide the Council, and the DCLG and NHF, with reliable information about the views of tenants on various topics of interest. The results of the research will help the Council to make informed decisions about the future of the services provided for tenants in light of comparisons with other authorities, and can be used as a basis for further in-depth research.

2.4.2: Project Objectives

More specifically, the project sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To fulfil the requirement placed upon the Council to report back its BVPIs to the DCLG and NHF.
- To collect information that may be used as a benchmark for future consultations, and to track the progress of the PFI initiative specifically.
- To investigate the nature of the tenants residing within the area.
- To assess overall satisfaction with the service provided by the Council and the value for money afforded by rental charges.
- To determine tenant views of their accommodation and neighbourhood.
- To investigate the contact made by tenants with the Council and assess this process.
- To determine usage and investigate tenant opinions of the repairs service.
- To assess resident views of being kept informed and opportunities for participation in service management.
- To identify the most important aspects for the service and those most in need of improvement.
- To investigate awareness and usage of the Tenants' Reward Scheme, transfer of houses to a Housing Association, Housing Standard Board, mobile office, tenant's resource centre and ways in which the rent can be paid.
- To collect any additional comments and suggestions of relevance.
- To identify any significant differences between respondent groups, and benchmarked data from a similar survey conducted by Crawley Borough Council in 2003 and 2000.

3: Methodology

This section outlines the methods used to undertake the Best Value Tenants Survey 2003, as prescribed by the DCLG and NHF guidance documents.

3.1: Research Design

3.1.1: Target Population

Under the Best Value guidance the target population, those of interest to the project, was defined as all Council tenant households living in the local authority area at the time of the survey.

3.1.2: Sample Frame

DCLG specified that the Council's tenant database should be used as the sample frame in this instance. This provided a complete list of tenant households, numbering approximately 8,400 dwellings in this case.

3.1.3: Sample Size

DCLG indicated that a maximum confidence interval of +/-4% (at the 95% confidence level) be achieved for each performance indicator. This simply means that we can be 95% confident in the results to within this specified margin of error, although it should be noted that breakdowns by demographic data will have larger confidence intervals.

In order to achieve this confidence interval a sample of at least 625 complete interviews were required. In this instance MRG attempted to contact approximately 2,500 households with a view to receiving around at least 1,000 replies, as the Council also required breakdowns by neighbourhood area. In the event 977 (39%) valid completed questionnaires were returned within the fieldwork period, a positive results giving us an overall maximum confidence interval of +/-3.1% (at the 95% confidence level).

3.1.4: Sampling Technique

If the response was to provide representative results it was essential that the respondents reflected the demographic profile of the target population, reducing the need to apply data weighting. As the database was large enough, DCLG allowed us to conduct a random sample of households stratified by neighbourhood area to ensure good geographical coverage.

3.1.5: Data Collection

DCLG prescribed a postal methodology as the data collection method, the means by which respondents are contacted and interviews administered. This method has been found most efficient in terms of cost and time as there is minimal human involvement. This also has the advantages of being most appropriate to the sample frame specified.

DCLG also specified a standard fieldwork period for this project, with fieldwork taking place sometime between April 2006 and October 2006 at the discretion of the Council. In this case fieldwork took over two months, with two questionnaire reminders being distributed to non-respondents three weeks after each previous mailing.

3.1.6: Survey Materials

MRG designed and produced a questionnaire and introductory covering letter for respondents, both of which were based on the standard templates produced by DCLG and NHF for this survey (*see Appendices 1 and 2 for examples*).

The questionnaire included all the standard service, opinion and demographic questions required to report performance indicators applicable to the Council. MRG added a unique ID number to each questionnaire sent out to reduce the possibility of duplicate responses and so that non-respondents could be identified and targeted with reminder mailings.

The covering letter was printed onto the Council's headed paper and introduced the project, its purpose, MRG contacts and Data Protection information. A slightly amended letter was included with repeat mailings of reminder questionnaires.

Provision was also made for those with sensory impairment and those speaking other languages in the form of large print versions, translated versions or telephone interviews.

In addition, to encourage a good response each respondent received a freepost return envelope in which to return their completed questionnaire.

3.2: Data Processing & Analysis

Upon receipt of the questionnaires, each unique ID number was used to log responses on the sample frame database. This was then used to update the Council of response rates and key demographic breakdowns, and formed the basis for reminder mailings.

All questionnaires were checked by MRG, and back-checking exercises conducted if warranted. All open-ended responses (*verbatim comments can be found in Appendix 4*) were coded with standard numerical tags for ease of analysis, and finally all responses were entered into a specialist computer package and combined with the sample frame database.

3.3: Reporting

The Council received regular fieldwork updates from MRG upon commencement of the project, including the number of responses and key demographic breakdowns if requested. This allowed swift corrective action should any problems be encountered.

Upon completion of the data analysis, MRG fulfilled all data submission requirements to DCLG and the NHF as specified in the Best Value guidance (upon confirmation of their content by the Council).

Following completion of these basic requirements, MRG conducted further detailed analysis and reporting for the Council, including extensive benchmarking with historical data.

4: Research Findings

This section of the report discusses the findings of the survey. Where possible significant differences in responses between respondent types have been presented.

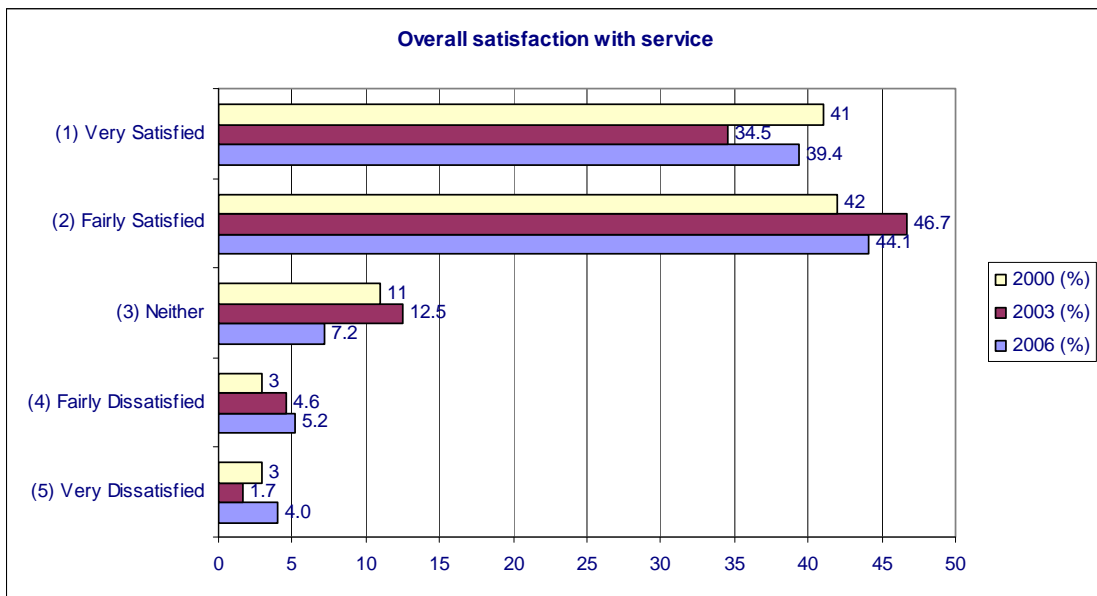
4.1: Best Value Performance Indicators

This section of the results details the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) results, including satisfaction with the overall service provided (BV74) and satisfaction with opportunities for participation (BV75).

4.1.1: Service Overall (BV74)

Over three quarters (83%) were satisfied to some extent with the overall service provided by their landlord. This will be reported as the 2006 Performance Indicator BV74. This result is very similar to that reported in 2003 (81%) and 2000 (83%).

Over a third (39%) were very satisfied and fairly satisfied (44%). Under a tenth (9%) reported dissatisfaction, whilst the remainder (7%) were neutral. The following graph shows these results in full.

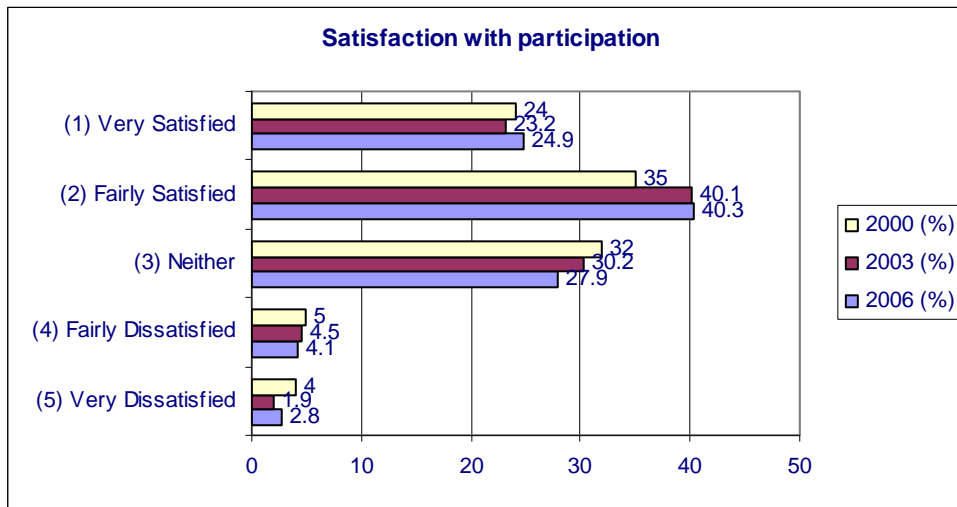


There were no significant differences in overall satisfaction between ethnic minority respondents (76%) and those of a white background (84%) (*Appendix 3, Table 161*).

4.1.2: Tenant Participation (BV75)

Respondents were then asked to rate their satisfaction with current opportunities for involvement in service decision making. Just over two thirds (65%) were satisfied on this point to any extent. This will be reported as the 2006 Performance Indicator score BV75, and has not changed significantly since the 2003 (63%) and 2000 survey (59%).

Just under a quarter (25%) was very satisfied and over a third (40%) was fairly satisfied. Under a tenth (7%) was dissatisfied to some extent, and just under a quarter (28%) neutral. These results are shown in full in the graph below.



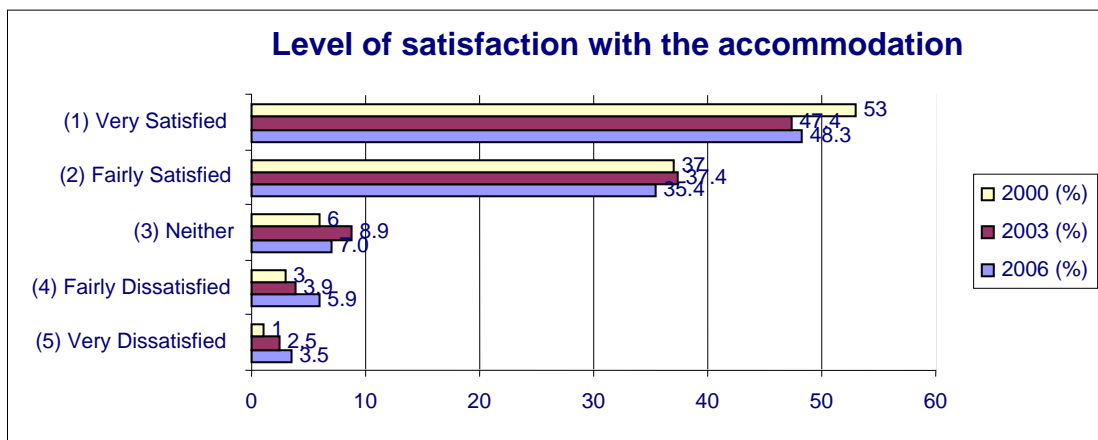
There is a significant difference in satisfaction on this point between ethnic minority respondents (50%) and those of a white background (66%) (*Appendix 3, Table 365*).

4.2: Accommodation

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about the tenants' accommodation, including their satisfaction with the accommodation overall, the general condition of the property and the number of rooms afforded by them.

4.2.1: Accommodation Overall

Around three quarters (84%) were satisfied to some extent with their accommodation overall, and just under half very satisfied (48%). Under a tenth in total (9%) were dissatisfied, with the remainder (7%) neutral on this point. The following graph shows the results of this question in full.

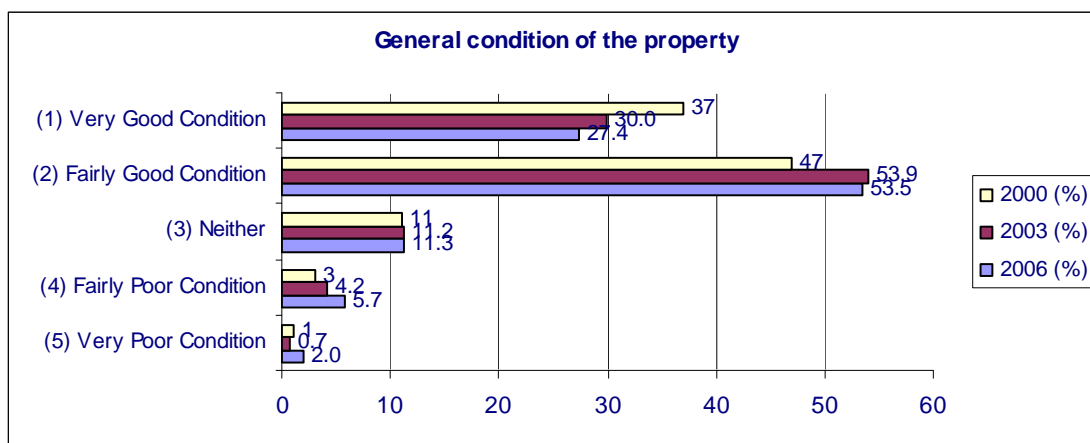


There were no significant differences between the overall satisfaction rating and those applied by tenants suggesting that their accommodation is appropriate for their needs. However, younger respondents were less satisfied than others on this point, whilst older residents were more satisfied than others (*Appendix 3, Table 177*).

4.2.2: Condition Of Accommodation

Respondents were asked to rate the condition of the property in which they reside. The response to this question closely resembles that of the accommodation as a whole, perhaps indicating that the condition of their accommodation is a primary consideration.

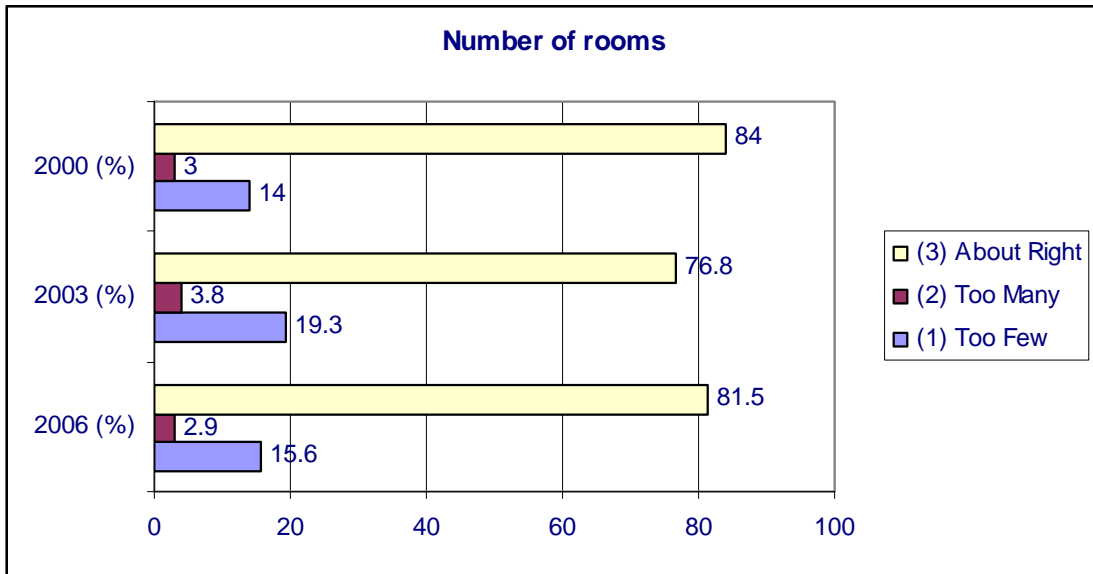
Over three quarters (81%) believed that their accommodation is in good condition, although half (54%) rated it as fairly good condition. Under a fifth each rated it as either neutral (11%) or in poor condition (8%), as shown in the next graph.



Respondents from Three Bridges ward were less satisfied with the general condition of the property with only around a fifth (18%) replying that their property is in very good condition. As this factor is closely related to overall satisfaction, it is hardly surprising that younger respondents were less satisfied with the condition of the property with just under a tenth (15%) of people aged 18-44 years old describing the property in very good condition (*Appendix 3, Table 189*).

4.2.3: Accommodation Rooms

Around three quarters of respondents (82%) believed that the number of rooms in their accommodation is about right for their needs. Less than a fifth (15%) thought there were too few, whilst very few (3%) believed there are too many. This result is shown in the following graph. The percentage of respondents that think that the number of rooms are about right has increased since 2003 (77%).



Younger respondents, who were also more likely to have children in their household, were more likely to believe there are too few rooms in their home (30%) than others, especially the people aged 75+ years old (4%) (*Appendix 3, Table 183*).

4.2.4: Length Of Tenancy & Residence

It was found that more than half (51%) of respondents have had the Council as a landlord for over 21 years. The percentage dropped for respondents falling within the category of ethnic minorities where it was under a third (30%) (*Appendix 3, Table 103*).

Most of their tenancy had been spent in their current accommodation, with a third (33%) of respondents living in their home for more than 21 years (*Appendix 3, Table 25*).

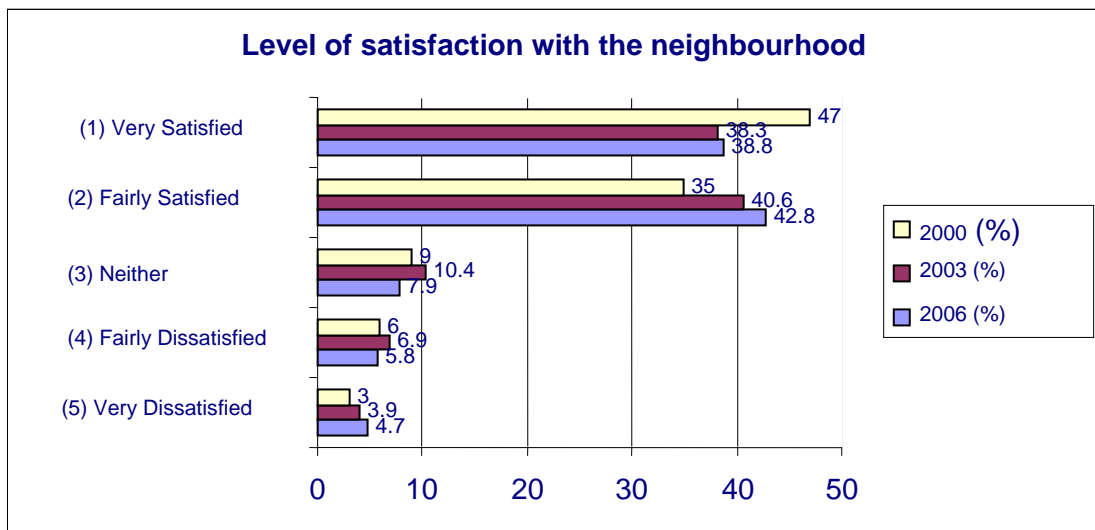
Not surprisingly, older tenants had spent a greater amount of time as a tenant of the Council and in their current accommodation than younger residents (*Appendix 3, Tables 107 & 113*).

4.3: The Local Area

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about the respondents' local areas. Specifically, it deals with their overall satisfaction with their neighbourhood and the problems encountered.

4.3.1: Local Area Overall

Just over three quarters of respondents (82%) were satisfied with their local area of residence, with just over a third being very satisfied (39%). A tenth (10%) were dissatisfied to some extent, and the remainder (8%) neutral on this point. The graph below shows these results with a comparison being made with 2000 and 2003.



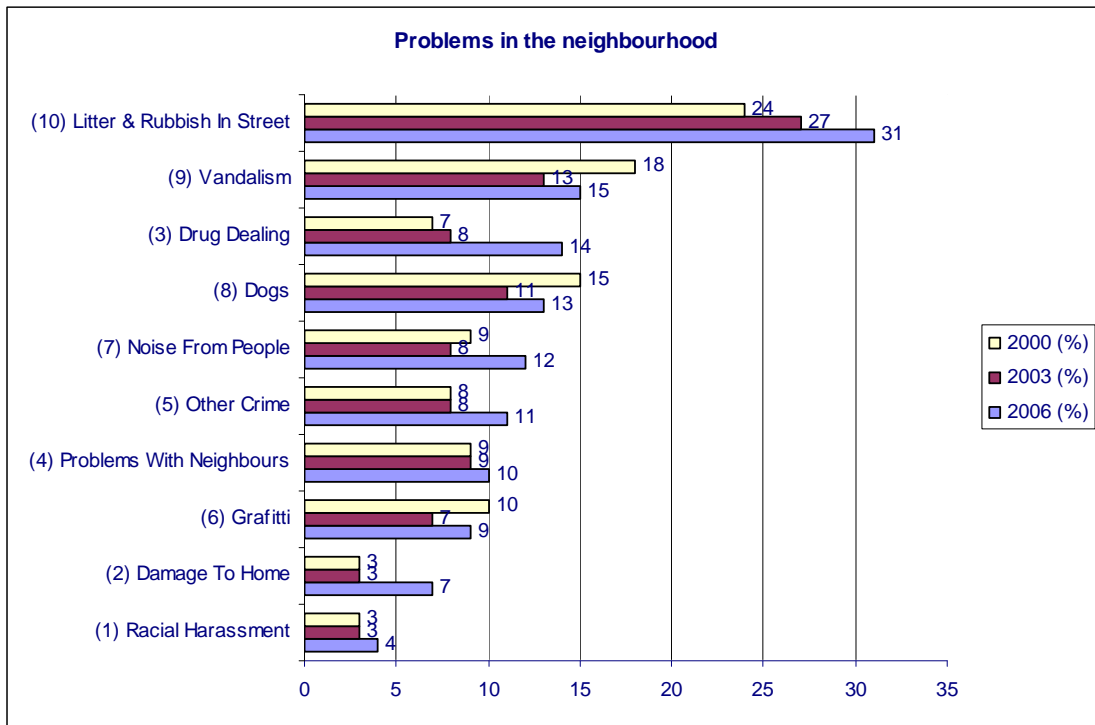
Interestingly, the older age group surveyed were generally more satisfied with their local area (53% of the 75+ years old were very satisfied with their neighbourhood) than the younger age group (21% of the 18-44 years old were very satisfied with their neighbourhood) (*Appendix 3, Table 195*), perhaps a consequence of living there for a greater period.

4.3.2: Problems in Local Area

The following graph provides a summary of the problems highlighted by tenants in their local area.

Litter and rubbish in the street was considered as a serious problem by a third of respondents (31%). Just under a fifth considered vandalism (15%), drug dealing (14%), dogs (13%), noise from people (12%), other crime (11%), and problems with neighbours (10%) a serious problem

Few considered racial harassment (4%), people causing damage to your home (7%) and graffiti (9%) a serious problem. The percentages though are slightly higher than previous years.



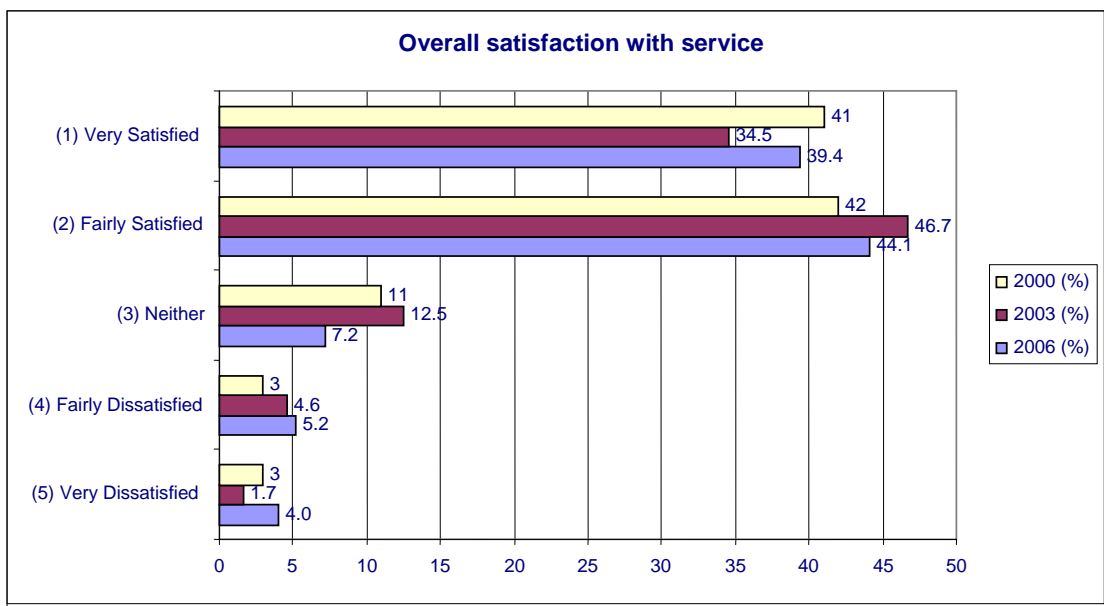
The percentage of people aged 75+ that consider the above as a serious problem was always less than the percentage of people aged 18-44 years that considered the above as a serious problem. In most of the cases the younger the individual the more concerned they were with problems in the area and considered them a serious problem (with the exception of vandalism and graffiti). The number would gradually decline as the age of the respondent increased (*Appendix 3, Tables 201, 207, 213, 219, 225, 231, 237, 243, 249, 255*).

4.4: Overall Views Of Service

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about the overall service received by tenants, and the value for money that they receive from their rent in light of this.

4.4.1: Service Overall

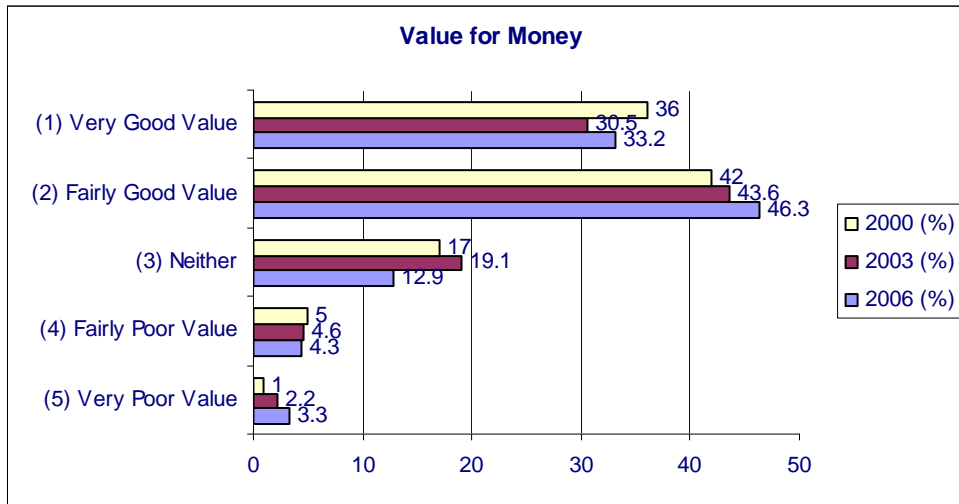
The majority (84%) were satisfied to some extent with the overall service provided by their landlord, with over a third (39%) very satisfied. Just under a tenth (9%) reported dissatisfaction, whilst the remainder (7%) were neutral. The graph below shows the level of satisfaction reported by tenants when asked about the overall service they receive from their landlord.



An interesting result was that older respondents were more satisfied with the overall service generally (57% of 75+ years old were very satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord) than were younger tenants (17% of 18-44 years old were very satisfied with the service provided by the landlord). This may indicate an improvement over the long-term or higher expectations amongst younger people (*Appendix 3, Table 165*).

4.4.2: Value For Money

Over three quarters of respondents (79%) believed that they receive good value from their rent, with a third (33%) rating their rent as providing very good value for money. Just under a tenth (8%) thought that they receive poor value, with the remaining fifth neutral on this point (13%). The graph below shows these results in full.



The youngest respondents thought that their rent was not very good value for money (16% of 18-44 years old stated that their rent is very good value) compared to older respondents (48% of 75+ years old thought that their rent is very good value), perhaps due to higher standards amongst these newer users or because of the relative benefits claimed by these groups (*Appendix 3, Table 171*).

The more satisfied with value for money for their rent were respondents residing in the Maidenbower area (100% thought that their rent very or fairly good value) (*Appendix 3, Table 170*).

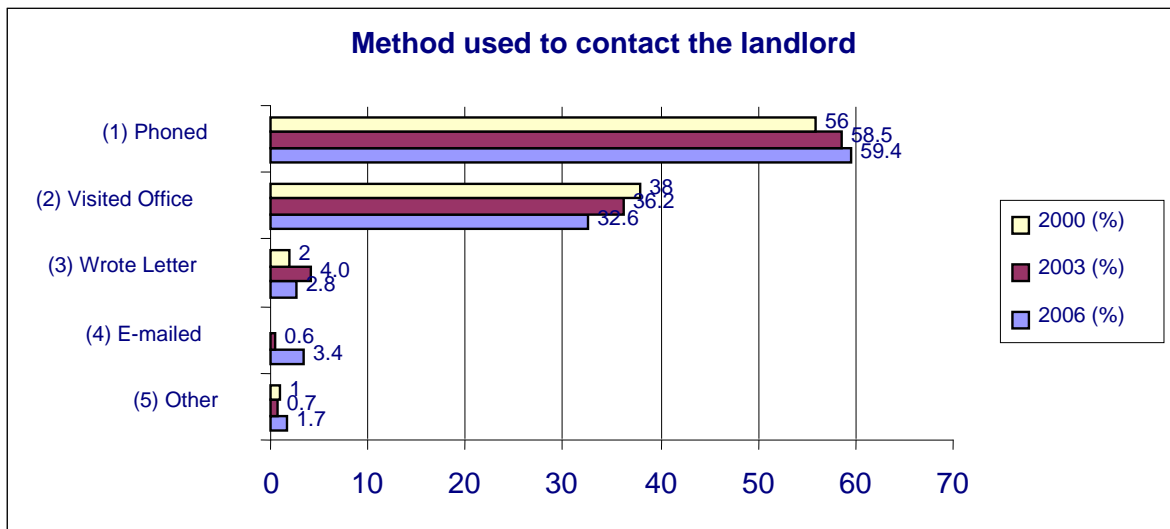
4.5: Tenant Contact

This section of the findings deals with tenant contact with their landlord, including the level, type and topic of contact, and their opinions of the contact and the outcome of this contact.

4.5.1: Contact Background

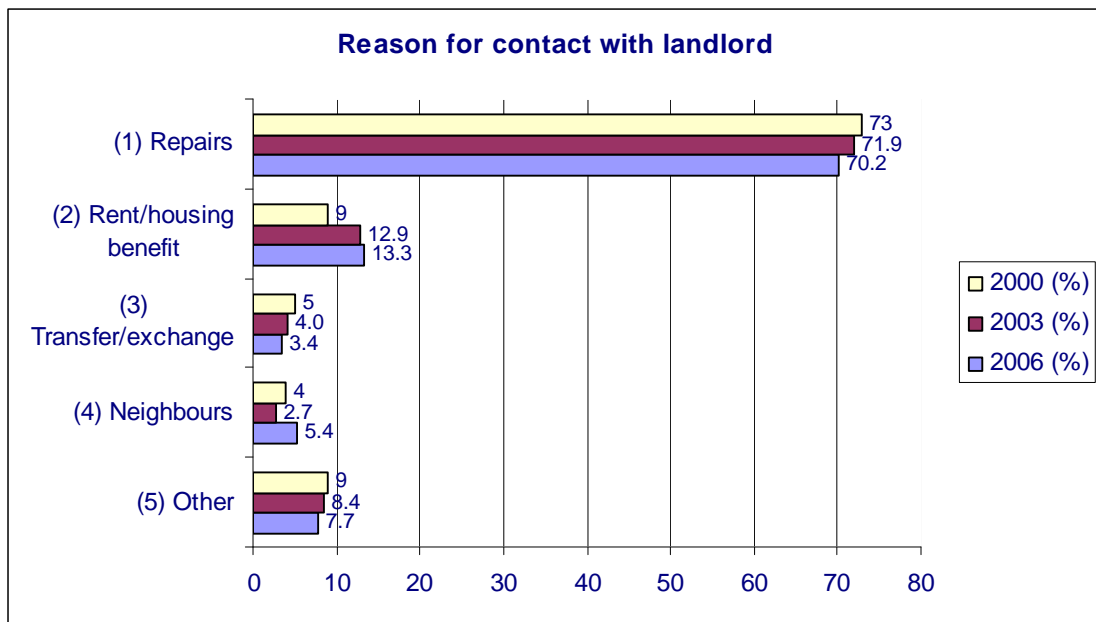
It was found that nearly three quarters of tenants (73%) have contacted their landlord within the last twelve months, which is the same as the level (73%) reported in 2003.

Over half of those making contact (59%) used the telephone; a third (33%) visited the office in person, with very few writing letters (3%), using e-mail (3%) or other media (2%). These methods of contact have remained the same over this period, as shown in the following graph.



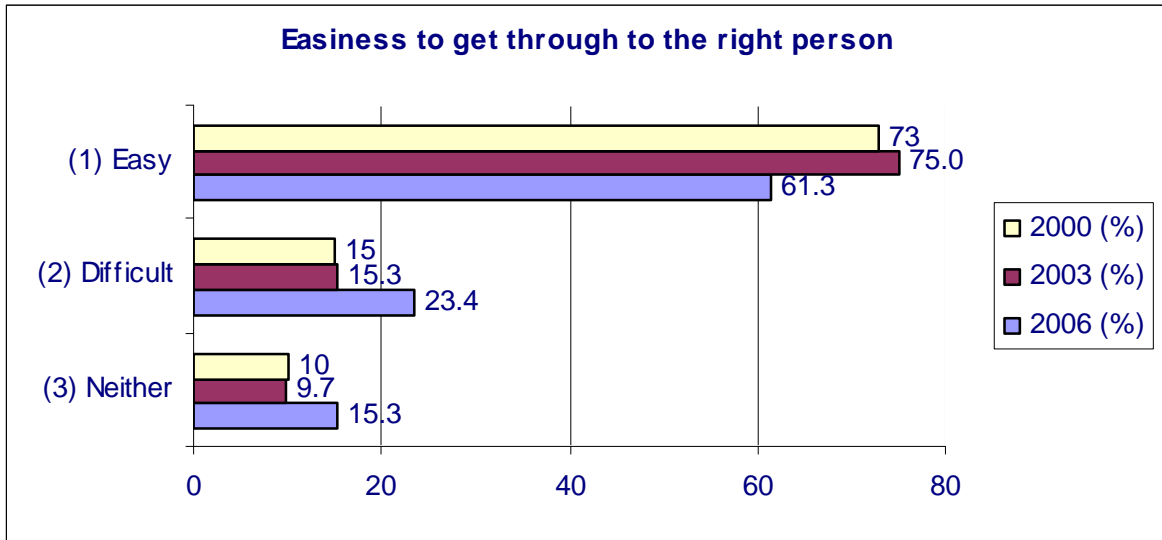
There has been little change in the contact methods used since 2003 and 2000.

As in 2000 and 2003 the most common reason given for contact was to report repairs (70%). The repairs service will be dealt with in more detail in a subsequent section. The other reasons cited have also remained fairly constant over the same period, with rent & housing benefit the only one being cited by over a tenth (13%). The next graph shows the reasons for contacting the Council.

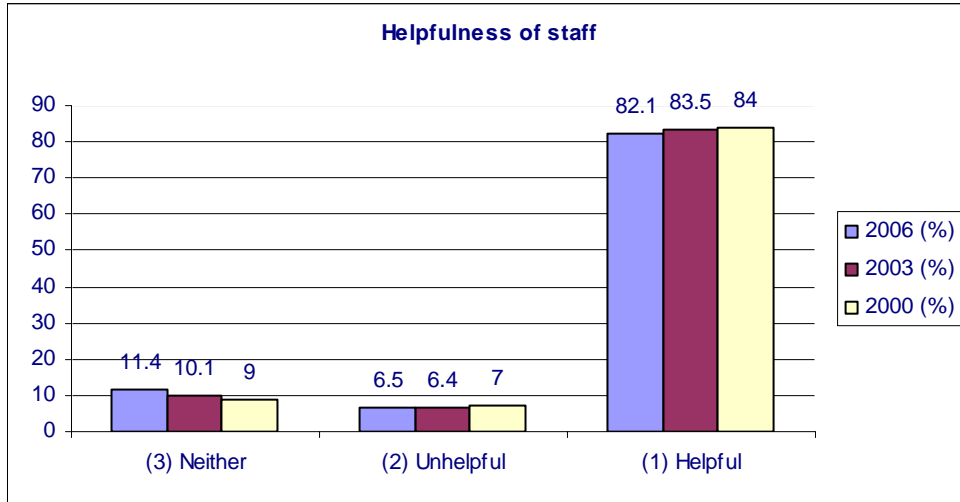


4.5.2: Opinions Of Contact

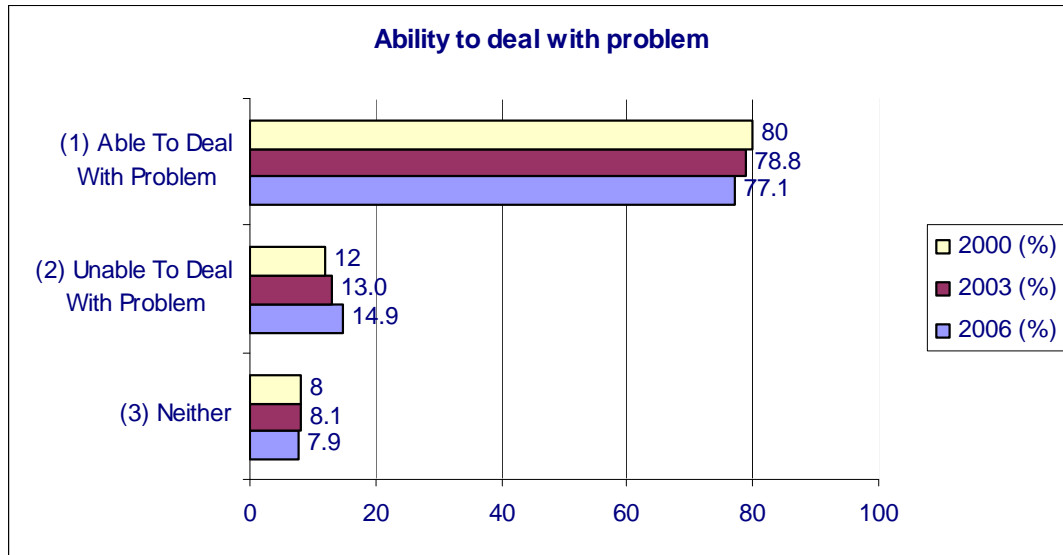
The following three graphs show respondent opinions of the contact they had with their landlord. The first graph shows that just under two thirds (61%) thought getting hold of the right person easy, whereas over a fifth (23%) thought it difficult and over a tenth (15%) were neutral on this point. There has been some change in opinion since 2003 and 2000.



Over three quarters of respondents (82%) thought the staff they dealt with were helpful, whilst a few thought them either unhelpful or neither helpful nor unhelpful (6% and 11% respectively). Again, since 2003 and 2000 there has been little change.

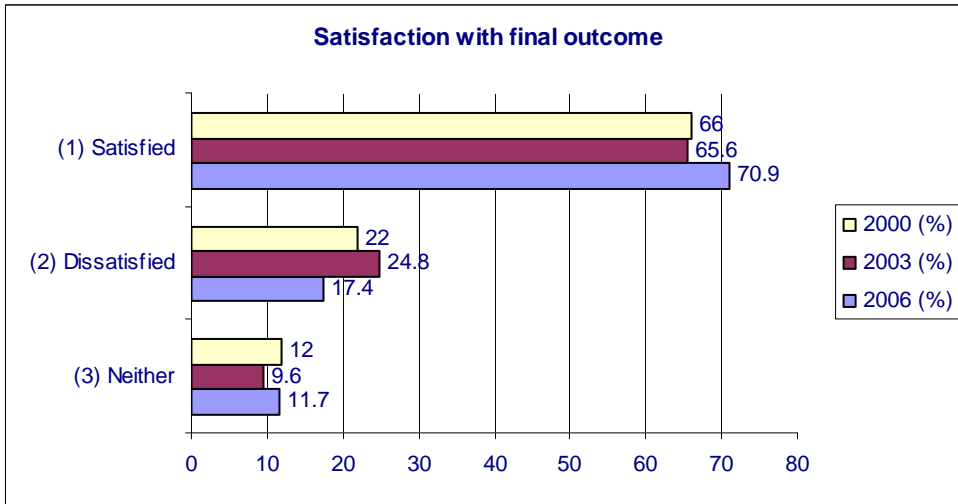


Respondents were also asked whether their contact was able to deal with their problem or enquiry. Over three quarters (77%) said that they were, under a fifth (15%) said there were not, whilst a under tenth (9%) were neutral. The staff's ability to deal with these problems has remained constant since 2003 and 2000.



4.5.3: Outcome of Contact

We can see that nearly three quarters (71%) were satisfied with the outcome of their contact, nearly a fifth (17%) were dissatisfied and a tenth (12%) neutral. The graph below shows tenant satisfaction with the final outcome of their contact with their landlord. These results have not changed significantly but they are better since 2003.



Older respondents were more positive on all these contact questions than younger respondents, perhaps because have greater freedom to spend time contacting the Council during the day (*Appendix 3, Tables 297*).

4.6: The Repairs Service

This section of the findings deals with the Council's repairs service. More specifically, it deals with usage of the repairs service, overall opinions and opinions of various elements of the service.

4.6.1: Repairs Background

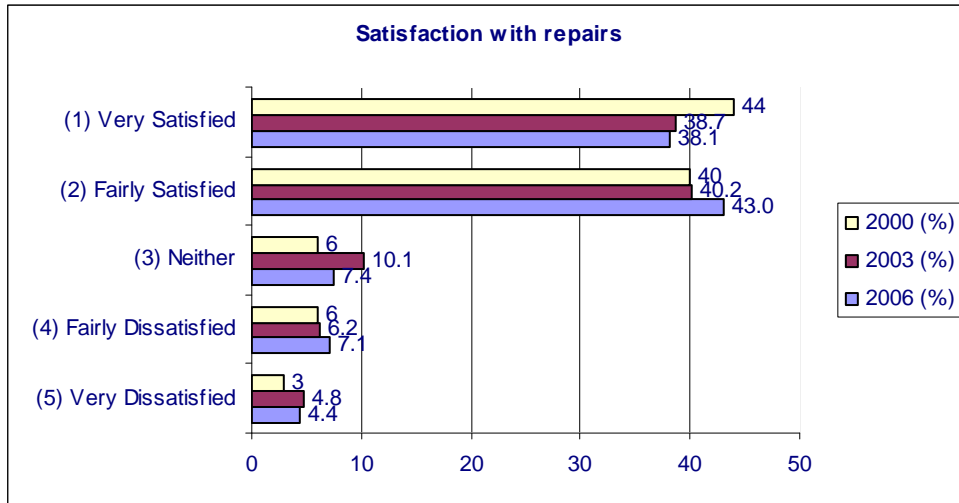
It was found that nearly three quarters (74%) of tenants have requested repairs to their home within the last twelve months (*Appendix 3, Table 58*).

Younger respondents were more likely to have made use of this service (90%) than others, especially the older age groups surveyed (*Appendix 3, Table 309*).

Furthermore, two thirds of respondents (68%) reported that they had repairs completed at their home within the past twelve months (*Appendix 3, Table 59*). This too is on a par with the 2003 and 2000 result (66% and 67%), so the completion rate has remained fairly constant over this period.

4.6.2: Repairs Overall

Just over three quarters (81%) of respondents were satisfied with the repairs service to some extent, with over half of these fairly satisfied (43%). The level of satisfaction is slightly better than year 2003 (79%). Around a tenth (12%) reported dissatisfaction, with the remainder (7%) voicing neutral opinions. The following graph shows these results in full.

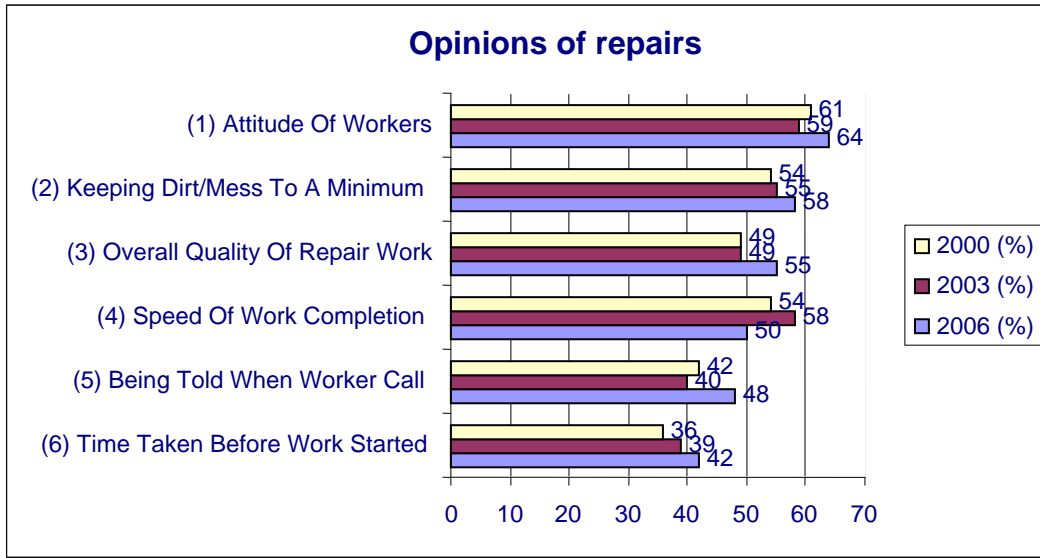


As younger respondents were more likely to have used this service they were less satisfied than others on average (26% of 18-44 years old were fairly or very dissatisfied), especially the older age groups (3% of 75+ years old were very or fairly dissatisfied) included in the survey (*Appendix 3, Table 303*).

4.6.3: Opinions of Repairs

The next graph provides a summary of the opinion ratings submitted by those respondents using the repairs service within the past year.

Respondents were most satisfied with the attitude of workers (61%), their keeping of dirt & mess to a minimum (58%) and the overall quality of repair work (55%).



Respondents were also generally satisfied with the speed of work completion (50%), and to a slightly lesser extent being told when the worker would call (48%) and the time taken before work started (42%).

Although these results have not changed significantly since 2003, there has definitely been some improvement. Specifically the average for overall quality of work was 49% on 2003, being told when the worker would call was 40% and time taken before work started was also 39% on 2003.

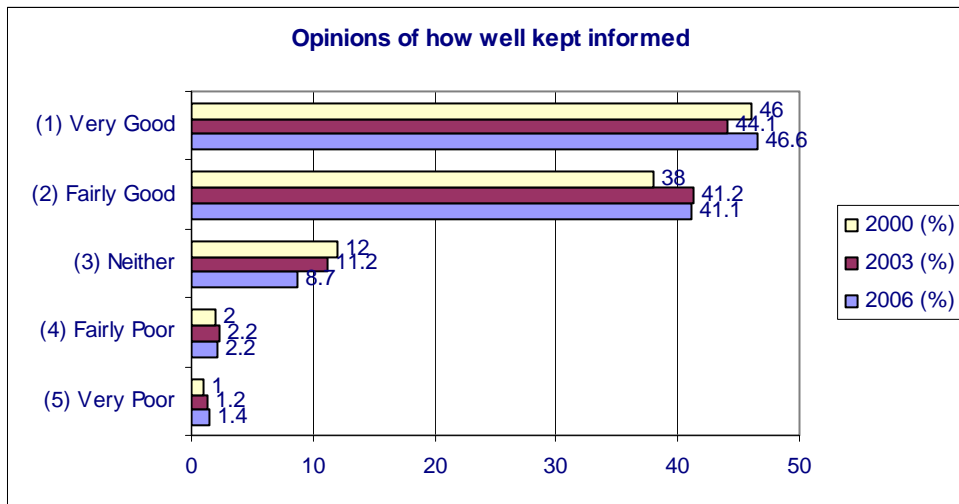
Older respondents tended to be more positive on all these aspects of the repairs service, especially when compared to their younger counterparts (*Appendix 3, Tables 321, 327, 333, 339, 345, 351*).

4.7: Information & Participation

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about information provision and participation in service decisions. More specifically, it deals with tenant opinions of information, the extent to which tenant views are taken into account by the landlord, awareness of the Tenant Participation Compact, and satisfaction with opportunities for participation.

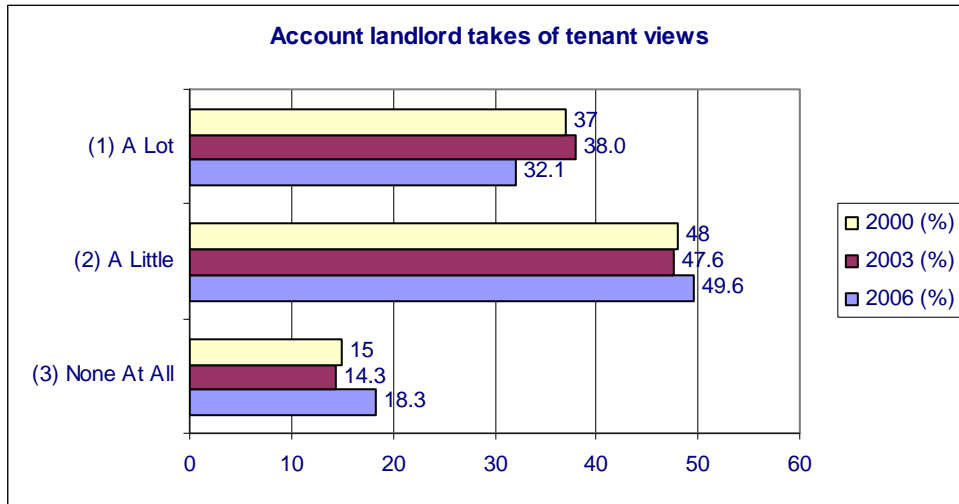
4.7.1: Information Provision

The majority (88%) thought the landlord was good at keeping them informed, with nearly half (47%) believing their landlord to be very good at this. A very small proportion (4%) thought the landlord was poor to some extent, with the remainder (9%) neutral. The following graph shows respondent opinions on this point in full.



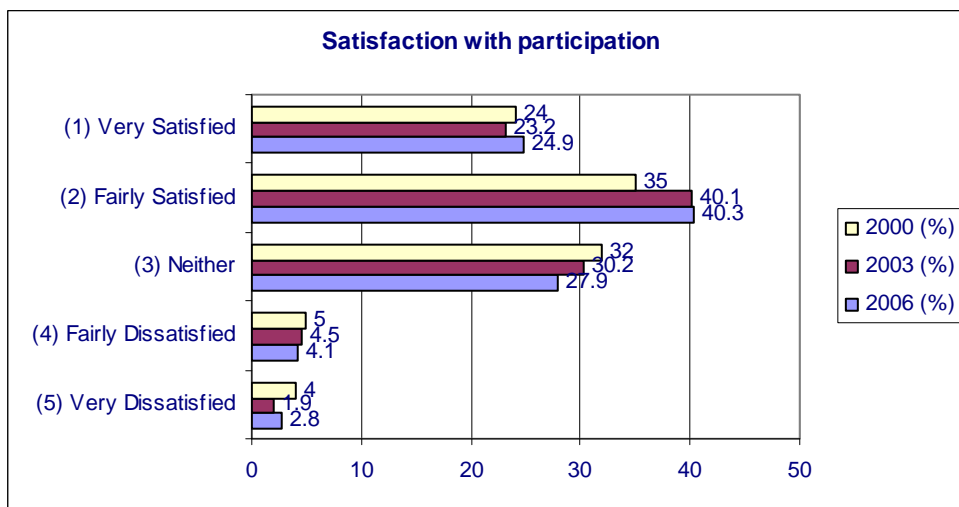
4.7.2: Tenant Views

Half of respondents (50%) believe that the landlord takes little notice of tenants' views when making a decision, a third (32%) believes that he takes a lot of notice, whilst under a fifth (18%) thought the landlord takes none at all. This is shown in the next graph. There has been little change on this point since 2000 and 2003.



4.7.3: Tenant Participation

Respondents were then asked to rate their satisfaction with current opportunities for involvement in service decision making. Two thirds of respondents (65%) were satisfied on this point, with a quarter (25%) very satisfied. Under a tenth (7%) were dissatisfied to some extent, and a quarter (28%) neutral, as shown in the graph below.

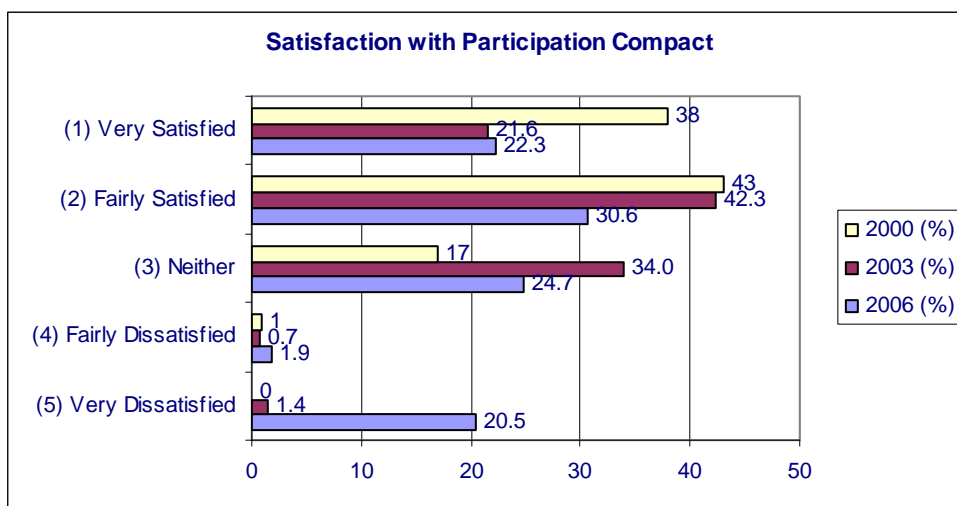


There is a significant difference in satisfaction on this point between ethnic minority respondents (50%) and those of a white background (66%) (*Appendix 3, Table 365*).

Younger tenants were less satisfied on this point than their older counterparts (17% of 18-44 years old were very or fairly dissatisfied whereas only 3% of 75+ were fairly or very dissatisfied) (*Appendix 3, Table 369*).

Nearly three quarters (72%) of tenants were aware of the Council's Tenant Participation Compact (*Appendix 3, Table 69*), which is an agreement about how tenants can be involved in decisions about housing. It has been a clear improvement since 2003, when the figure of awareness was just 45%. Younger respondents were less likely to be aware of the compact (41%) than older respondents (73%) (*Appendix 3, Table 375*).

Around half of the respondents aware of the compact (53%) were satisfied with it to some extent, most of whom (31%) were fairly satisfied. However, 22% of respondents were either fairly or very dissatisfied and that was a dramatic change since 2003 when the figure was just 2%. The next graph shows satisfaction with the compact amongst those that are aware of it.



Again younger respondents were less satisfied with the Participation Compact (35% very dissatisfied). The least dissatisfied were 45-64 years old (14%). Over a third (39%) of the Southgate area residents were also very dissatisfied with the Participation Compact.

4.8: Service Improvements

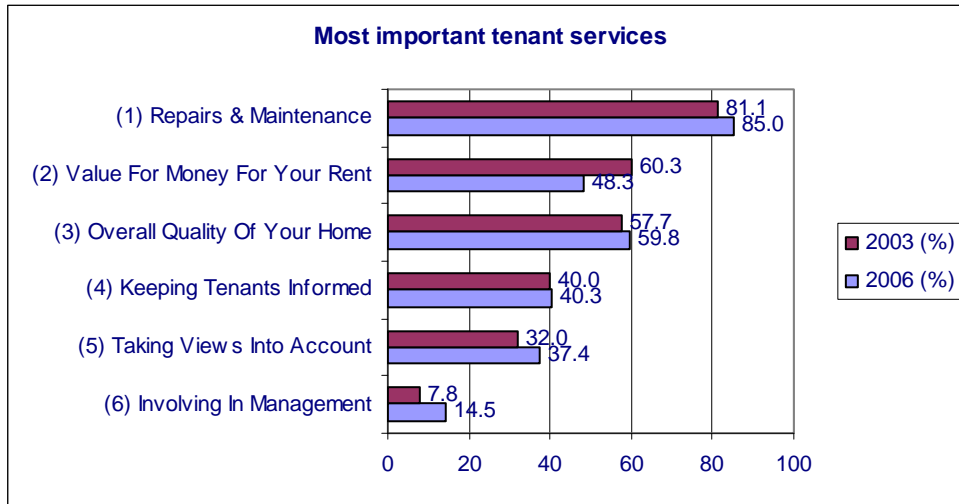
This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about service importance and the improvements required.

4.8.1: Service Importance

By far the most important service element was found to be repairs & maintenance, this being nominated by the vast majority of respondents (85%). Overall quality of your home (60%) and value for money for your rent (48%)

were also cited by a majority, and keeping tenants informed by just under half (40%).

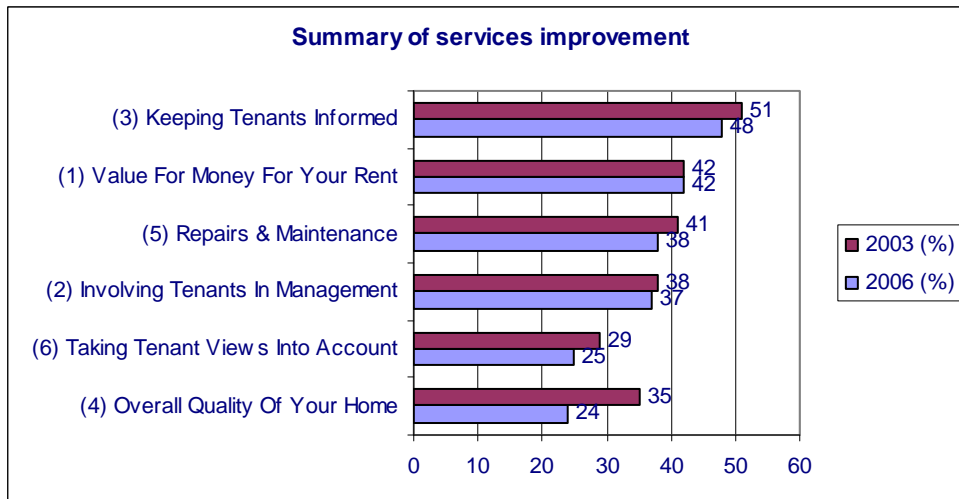
The remaining two services were still thought important by significant minorities; taking tenant views into account by around a third (37%) and involving tenants in management by a fifth (15%). These responses are shown in the following graph.



4.8.2: Service Improvement

The next graph provides a summary of the services that tenants have rated in terms of the improvement required.

Respondents were most positive about keeping tenants informed (48%). This was closely followed by the value for money for your rent (42%), repairs & maintenance (38%) and involving tenants in management (37%). Taking tenant views into account and overall quality of your home was rated slightly less positively (25% and 24%). All of the ratings are lower than the 2003 ones therefore some further development would be recommended.



As older respondents were generally more positive about many aspects of the Council's housing service it is hardly surprising that they consistently believed less improvement is required than younger age groups (*Appendix 3, Tables 393, 399, 405, 411, 417, 423*).

Respondents falling within the ethnic minority category generally believed that a greater amount of improvement was needed in taking tenant views into account and repairs and maintenance which may indicate that communications are suffering in these areas (*Appendix 3, Tables 389, 395, 401, 407, 413, 419*).

4.9: Tenants' Reward Scheme

This section of the findings discusses the responses to the additional questions asked by the Council on the ballot deciding on whether to transfer residents' homes to a Housing Association, the Tenants' Reward Scheme, the Housing Standard Board and the Council's mobile office.

4.9.1: Housing Association house transfer

Nearly three quarters (70%) of respondents were aware that the Council was consulting tenants on transferring their homes into a Housing Association (*Appendix 3, Table 75*). Over two thirds (69%) also knew that whether to transfer with to a Housing Association or to stay with the Council will be decided by tenants in a ballot during late Autumn (*Appendix 3, Table 79*).

Respondents aged 18-44 years old were less aware of the ballot deciding the transfer of the houses to a Housing association (42%) than respondents aged 75+ years old (79%).

4.9.2: Tenants' Reward Scheme

The main reason given for not joining the Tenant's Reward Scheme was that respondents were not sure whether they were a member (40%) or not. Over a fifth (23%) answered that they do not want to join. Other reasons were that rewards do not interest them or that they do not meet the criteria (both 12%). Around a tenth (11%) of respondents have not heard of the scheme. The rest (9%) answered that they do not know how (*Appendix 3, Table 80*). It seems that some more information by the Council on the subject would be recommended.

4.9.3 Housing Standard Board

Over half of respondents (59%) did not know that they could give their opinions on the Council's services by joining the Housing Standard Board.

4.9.4 Mobile Office Awareness

Also over half of respondents (51%) were aware of the mobile office that aims to bring the Council's services to the neighbourhood.

4.9.5 Awareness of Tenants' Resource Centre

Around two thirds of respondents (67%) were not aware of the Tenants' Resource Centre in Northgate. 65% also said that there has been no difference in the quality of Council services since the centre opened. 18% thought that it improved the quality of the Council's services and 17% thought that it did not offer any improvement. A greater majority of 75+ years old (43%) are aware of the tenant's resource centre than people aged 18-44 years old (21%).

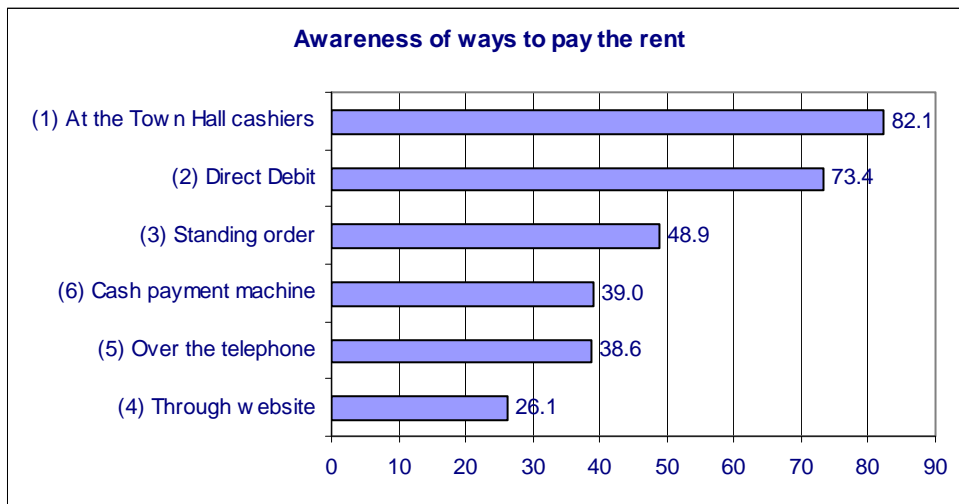
4.9.6 Easiness to report a repair

When asked how easy it was to report a repair in the last twelve months under two thirds (63%) of respondents said that it is easy to report a repair. Over a fifth (21%) replied that they have not reported a repair, whilst over a tenth (16%) consider it difficult to report a repair.

The main reason given for being hard to report a repair was not being able to contact the Council through the phone (66%). For 16% of respondents it took a lot of time to get someone to respond back regarding their problem. 8% reported that there were some coordination problems between members of staff when trying to transfer the calls to the right person that resulted on a lot of transfers to different departments. 4% gave the reason that members of staff were unhelpful (*Appendix 3, Table 86*). It is therefore recommended further development on the call centre that tenants use to report a repair.

4.9.7 Awareness of different ways to pay the rent

The most well known way to pay the rent was at the Town Hall cashiers (82%). Second most well known was through Direct Debit (73%). Standing order was known by nearly half (49%), cash payment machine and over the telephone by over a third (39%). The least known method was through the website (26%).



4.10: Other Comments & Suggestions

This section of the findings deals with other relevant comments and suggestions submitted by respondents. .

Over a quarter of those submitting comments (28%) did so on the subject of the repairs service, confirming previous findings that this is an area that requires attention. Also popular were comments about tenant accommodation (15%), other comments (15%), communication and participation (13%) and contact with the landlord (11%). All other comments were mentioned by under a tenth of respondents. These results were very similar to the 2003 results.

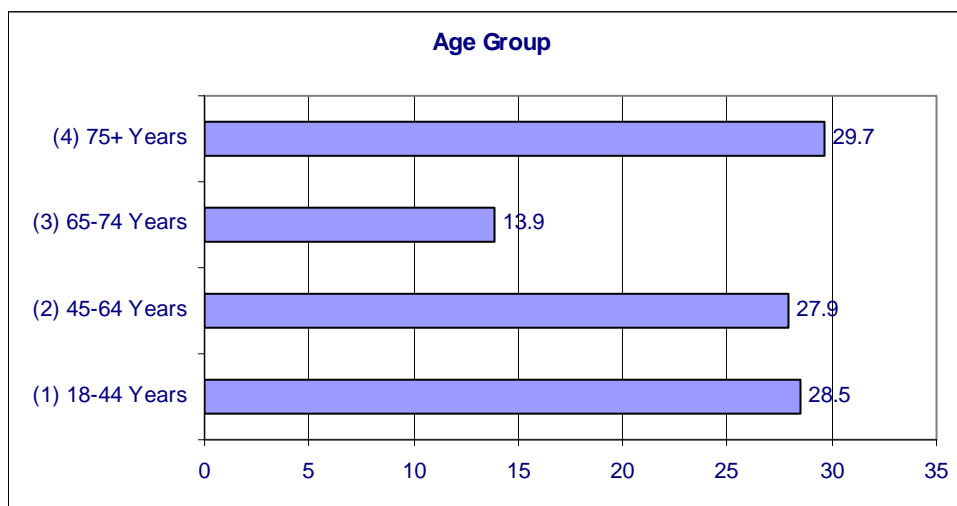
4.11: Nature Of Tenants

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about the tenants themselves, and their families. More specifically, it deals with an analysis of the demographic groups present and their employment and financial status.

4.11.1: Demographic Analysis

Around two third of tenants (67%) were females and a third (33%) were males. (*Appendix 3, Table 14*).

30% of respondents were aged 75+ years old, 29% were 18-44 years old, 28% were aged 45-64 years and the remainder 14% were 65-74 years old. The graph below shows the different age groups.

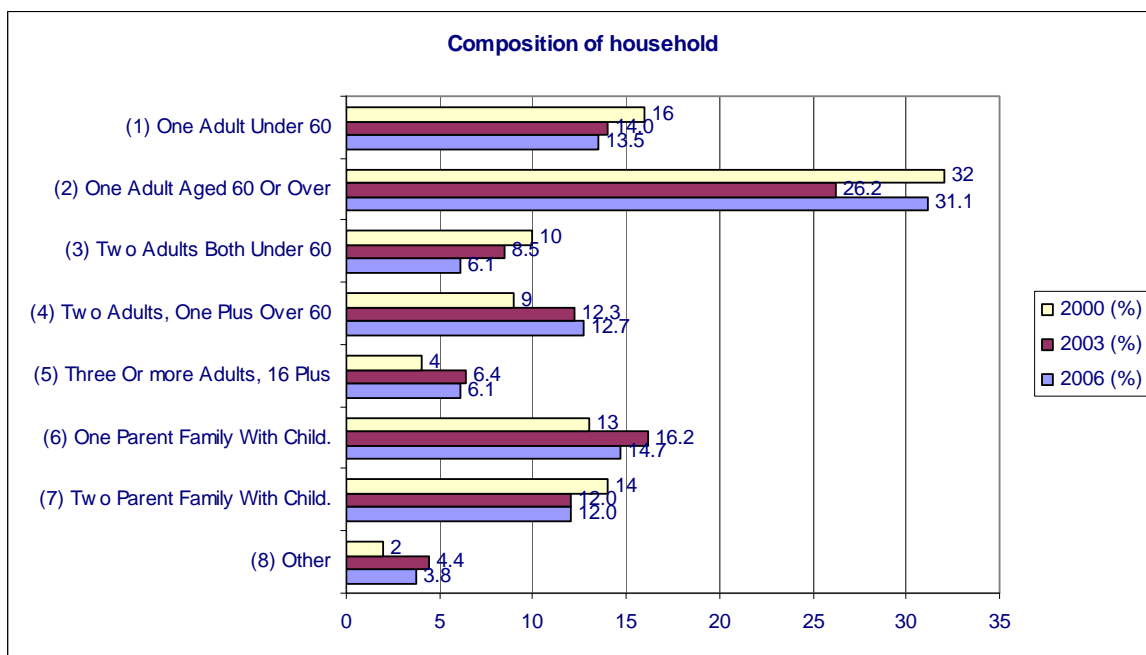


It seems that the area with the youngest population is Broadfield (35% of the population are aged 18-44 years old). The area with the oldest population is Maidenbower (44% are aged 75+ years old).

The percentage of people from non ethnic minorities aged 18-44 years old is lower (27%) than the population of people from ethnic minorities aged 18-44 years old (51%). Also 32% of people from ethnic minorities are aged 75+ years old whereas the percentage for people aged 75+ years old from non ethnic minorities is just 9%.

Under half of tenant households (44%) are occupied by one adult, which is by far the largest group present. Around a quarter of households are occupied by two people (27%), and just under a fifth are occupied by three people.

Most of the households are combined by one adult aged 60 or over (31%). Over a tenth (15%) are one parent family with child, or one adult under 60 years old (14%). Around a tenth of households are combined by two adults- at least one person over 60- (13%) or a two parent family with a child (12%). Other family groups were cited less commonly. The following graph provides a breakdown of these household types, which match fairly closely those reported in 2003 and 2000.



Whilst males were more likely to be part of a couple aged over 60 years (27%), females were more likely to be a single adult aged over 60 (35%) or a single parent with child (21%) than males (*Appendix 3, Table 265*).

A larger proportion of non ethnic minorities individuals (33%) were an adult over 60 living alone than ethnic minorities individuals (11%). Ethnic minorities were in their biggest proportion a two parent family with a child (26%).

The majority of those residing in Langley Green had a child under 16 in their household (60%).

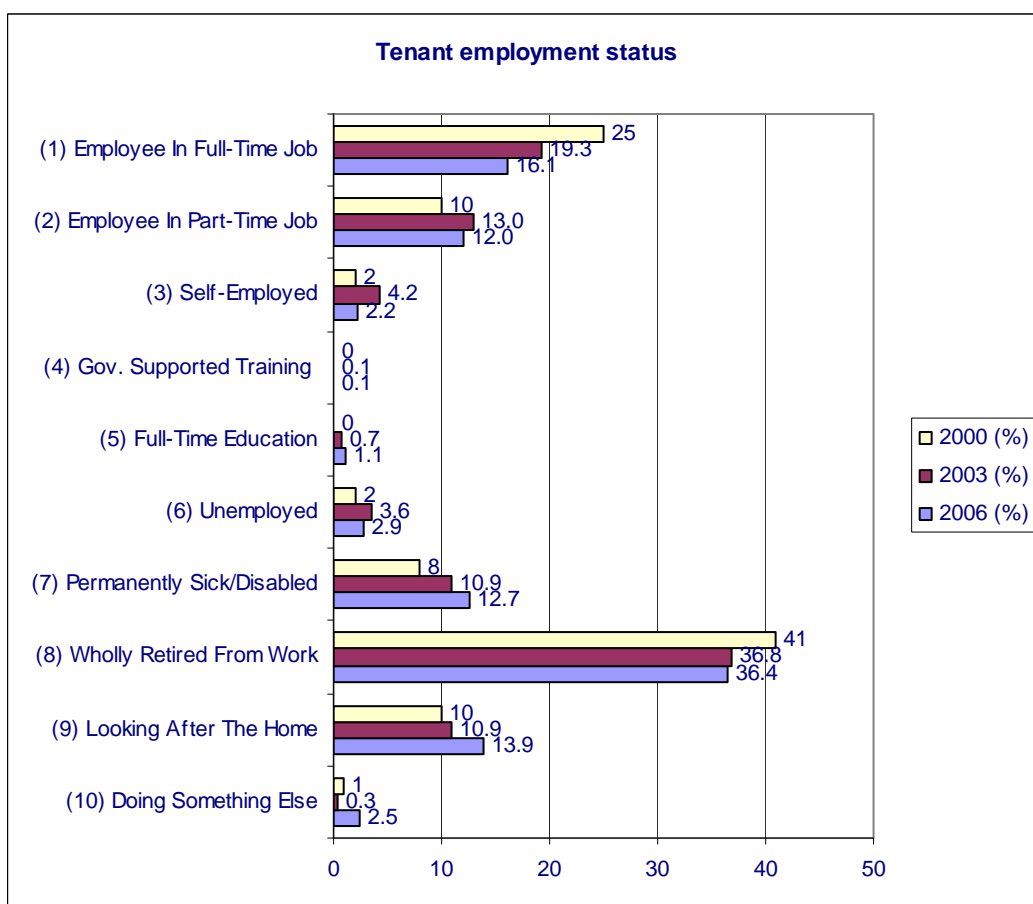
It was found that the vast majority of tenants (91%) were of white British origin. White Irish (2%), other white backgrounds (2%), Asian/ Indian (1%) and Asian Pakistani (1%) also represent minorities of the tenant population, with all other ethnic backgrounds less common (*Appendix 3, Table 7*).

Just under half of respondents (43%) reported that they have an illness, disability or infirmity, and most of these (83%) stated that it limits their activities

in some way (*Appendix 3, Tables 8 & 9*). However, relatively few households (11%) reported that any of the residents used a wheelchair (*Appendix 3, Table 10*). Older respondents were, of course, more likely to suffer from such disabilities (*Appendix 3, Table 153*).

4.11.2: Employment & Financial Status

Respondents were then asked their employment status. Again, it was confirmed that many of the tenants in Crawley are elderly, with over a third wholly retired from work (36%). Fairly even proportions reported that they were an employee in a full-time job (16%), an employee in a part-time job (12%), permanently sick or disabled (13%) or simply looking after the home (14%). All other activities were mentioned far less frequently than this, a finding also reported in 2003. These results are shown in the following graph.

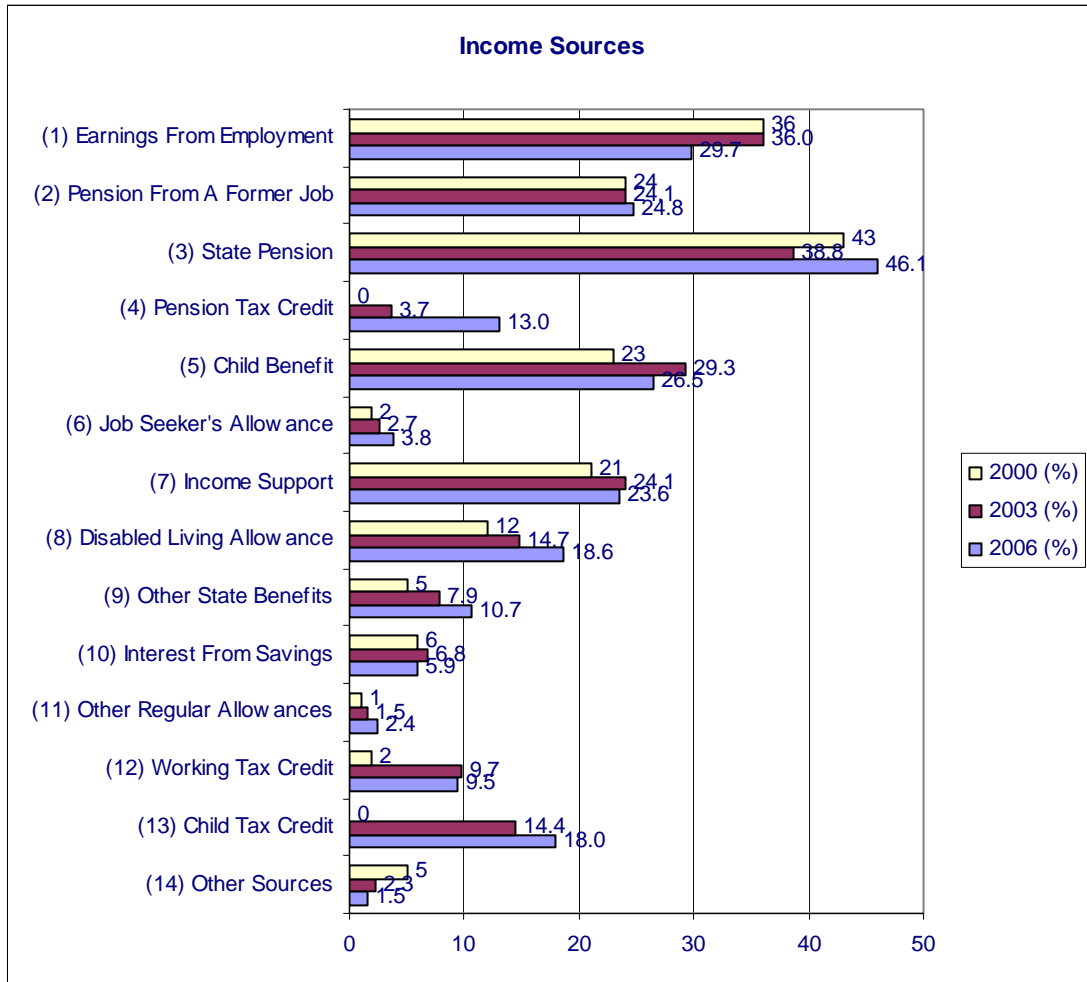


Given their lower average ages it is hardly surprising that ethnic minority tenants are far less likely to be retired (19%) than other respondents (*Appendix 3, Table 507*). It is also logical that older respondents were less likely to be in full time jobs (0.5%) and more likely to claim either private and/or state pensions (48% and 95% respectively) than others (*Appendix 3, Table 511*).

It was found that most tenants rely on a number of sources, with a state pension (46%), earning from employment (30%), child benefit (26%), a

pension from a former job (25%) and income support (24%) being the most common. Also cited around a fifth were on disabled living allowance (19%) child tax credit (18%), pension tax credit (13%) and other state benefits (11%) with all others being mentioned by under a tenth.

The next graph shows the sources of income used by each tenant household.



Ethnic minority tenants are more likely to claim child benefit (42%) when compared to other respondents (25%) (*Appendix 3, Table 519*). Female tenants, who are more likely to have children in their household, were also more likely to claim child benefit (34%) than male (11%) (*Appendix 3, Table 518*).

More than half (55%) obtain their income wholly from the state and a quarter (25%) partly from the state (*Appendix 3, Table 98*). Furthermore, more than half of tenants receive housing benefit (54%) (*Appendix 3, Table 99*).

5: Conclusions & Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations have been drawn from the research findings section of this report.

5.1: Best Value Performance Indicators

- The two Best Value Performance Indicator scores have not changed significantly since 2003 and 2000. These will be submitted to the NHF and DCLG on the Council's behalf for consideration and national comparison.
 - Respondents falling into the category of ethnic minorities did not differ in their levels of satisfaction with the service overall. However, there was a significant difference on the level of satisfaction with the opportunities for participation between respondents falling in the category of ethnic minorities and respondents of white background with the former being less satisfied.

5.2: Accommodation & Local Area

- The physical accommodation used by residents was generally felt to be good in terms of condition and number of rooms.
 - However, there is an increasing number of younger tenants that are generally less satisfied with the condition and size of their accommodation.
 - The main problem in the area is considered to be litter and rubbish in the streets.
 - There has been an increase (since 2003) on the number of people that consider all of the problems outlined as a serious problem so it would be advised that some care is given to all of those areas.

5.3: Associated Services

- Tenants are generally satisfied with the service provided by their landlord, and with the individual services associated with their tenancy.
 - Younger tenants tended to be less satisfied overall.
 - The elements of the service most in need of the Council's attention are the time taken to begin repairs work and informing tenants of this in an effective manner.

5.4: Communication & Participation

- Personal contact was another important aspect of the service for tenants, with a majority making contact within the last year.
 - Telephone and personal contact is still an important area of Council operation, and so the Council should ensure that adequate resources and staff are in place to cope with this communication. A big group of people reported problems in the telephone centre when they called to report repairs. Considering that repairs and maintenance is one the

most important services element it makes it important that some attention is given to this area.

- Most tenants feel informed about things affecting them at present, but due to a relatively low level of some topics (especially the Tenant's Resource Centre in Northgate) it may be the case that not all messages are getting through, especially to young individuals.