DCN
BETTER LIVES
STRONGER ECONOMIES
DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

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—— Insight & Strategy ——

DCN: Public views on district councils

Final report: 23.02.2023

1 Methodology

Methodology
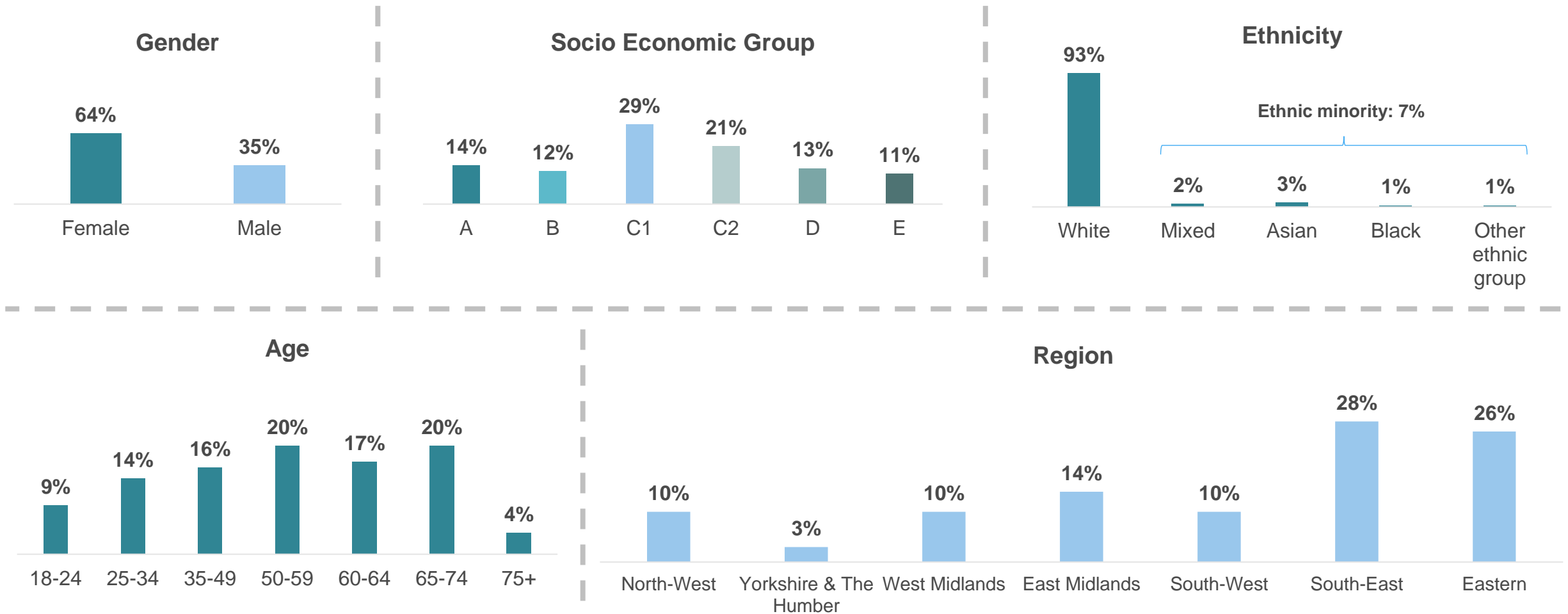
2 x online, 90-min qualitative focus groups

- 7 participants in each group
- Groups were split by age. Each had a mix of Socio Economic Group and gender
- Participants came from different locations across England
- Conducted 24th November 2022

15-minute online survey

- Survey conducted with 1,005 people, in two-tier areas across England
- Data weighted to be representative of the population in England
- Sample gives a margin for error of 3% at a 95% confidence level
- Survey in field 8th to 20th December 2022

* Respondent postcodes were collected and coded into postcode data from ONS to determine which district and county council area they were located in. Questions were then tailored to each respondent so that they answered questions about their local council/s

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Quantitative sample overview: demographics

Gender

- Female: 64%
- Male: 35%

Socio Economic Group

- A: 14%
- B: 12%
- C1: 29%
- C2: 21%
- D: 13%
- E: 11%

Ethnicity

- White: 93%
- Mixed: 2%
- Asian: 3%
- Black: 1%
- Other ethnic group: 1%

Ethnic minority: 7%

Age

- 18-24: 9%
- 25-34: 14%
- 35-49: 16%
- 50-59: 20%
- 60-64: 17%
- 65-74: 20%
- 75+: 4%

Region

- North-West: 10%
- Yorkshire & The Humber: 3%
- West Midlands: 10%
- East Midlands: 14%
- South-West: 10%
- South-East: 28%
- Eastern: 26%

Various questions. Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005).

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2 Awareness

Residents in two-tier areas report feeling confident they can name their councils

Confidence naming their councils
Showing % selecting each

■ Very confident ■ Fairly confident ■ Not very confident ■ Not at all confident ■ Not sure

2%

NET not confident: 28%
- 12%
- 16%

NET confident: 71%
- 38%
- 33%

Two-tier areas
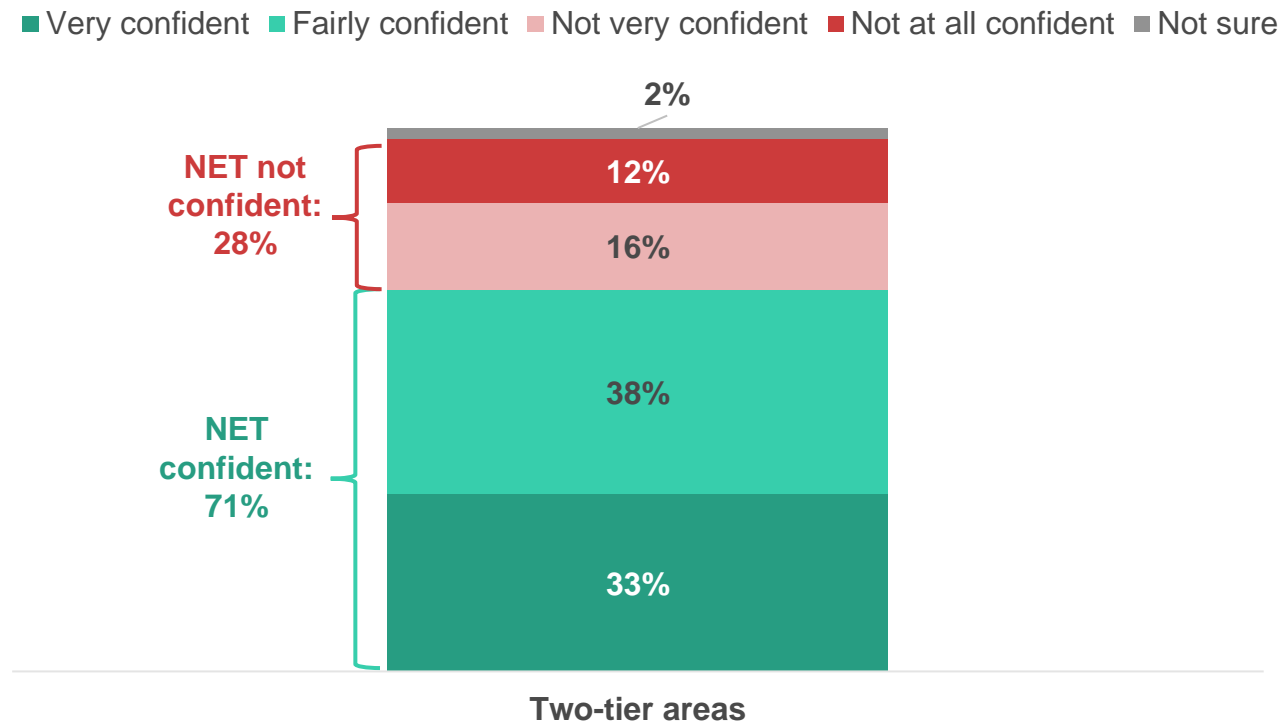
A2. How confident are you that you can name your local council or councils? Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005)

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Residents are more likely to be able to correctly name their district council than their county council

Correct identification of local council(s)
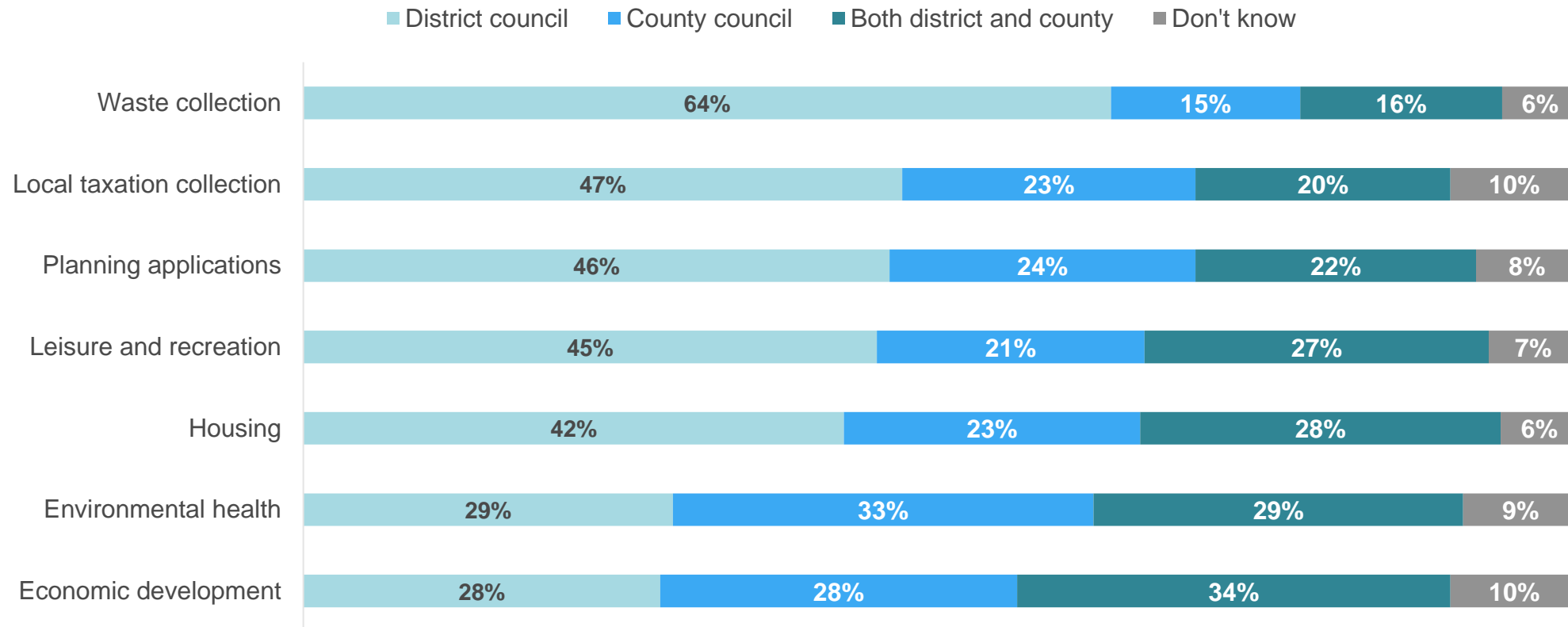*Showing % participants giving each answer type*

District council

30%
59%
10%

- Correct
- Incorrect
- Don't Know

County council

35%
32%
33%
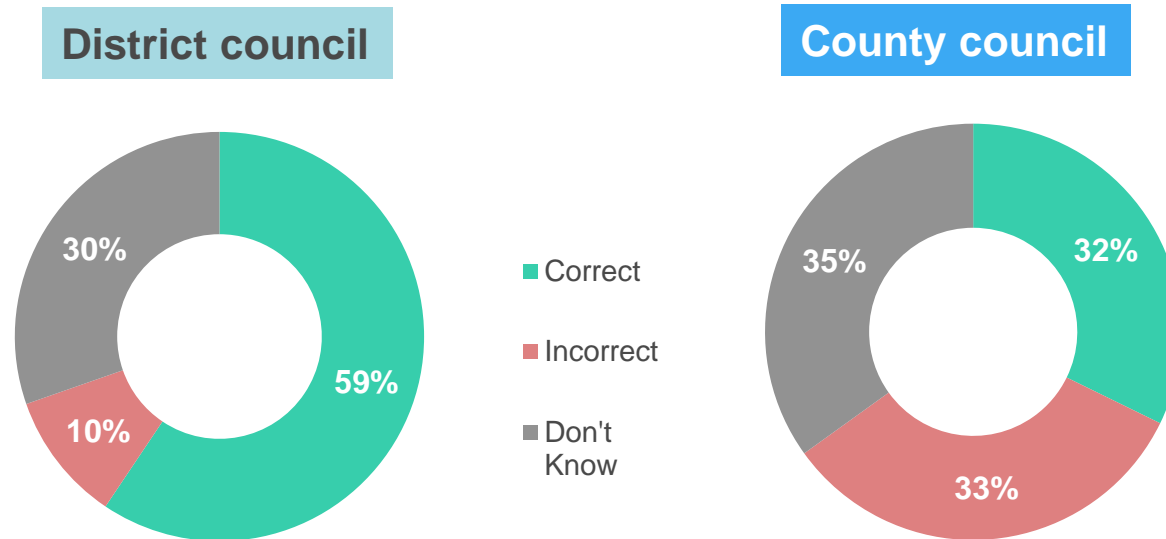
"It's fairly easy, I've grown up in the area and you see it written on leaflets and in the town."

i *Respondents were asked to write in their local council(s) that provide services for them. Responses were then coded against the correct answer, which was based on their postcode*

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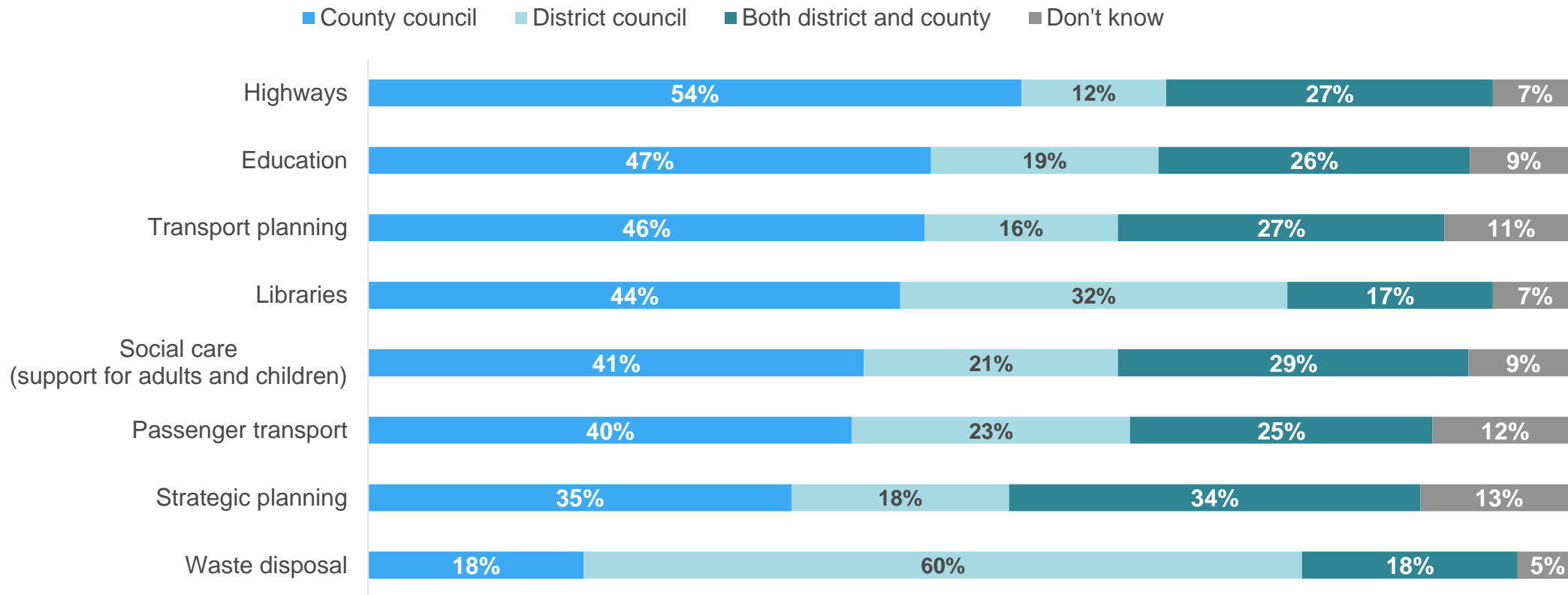# Residents are most likely to correctly identify waste collection as a district responsibility

Understanding of authority in charge of running <u>district</u> council services
Showing responses from two-tier residents

■ District council ■ County council ■ Both district and county ■ Don't know

Service	District council	County council	Both district and county	Don't know
Waste collection	64%	15%	16%	6%
Local taxation collection	47%	23%	20%	10%
Planning applications	46%	24%	22%	8%
Leisure and recreation	45%	21%	27%	7%
Housing	42%	23%	28%	6%
Environmental health	29%	33%	29%	9%
Economic development	28%	28%	34%	10%

A7. Of the following services, which do you think are the responsibility of either your District Council (which is [DC] or County Council (which is [CC] or both? Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005)

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Correct identification of county run services is slightly lower, with highways being the most strongly associated service

Understanding of authority in charge of running <u>county</u> council services
Showing responses from two-tier residents

- ■ County council
- ■ District council
- ■ Both district and county
- ■ Don't know

Service	County council	District council	Both district and county	Don't know
Highways	54%	12%	27%	7%
Education	47%	19%	26%	9%
Transport planning	46%	16%	27%	11%
Libraries	44%	32%	17%	7%
Social care (support for adults and children)	41%	21%	29%	9%
Passenger transport	40%	23%	25%	12%
Strategic planning	35%	18%	34%	13%
Waste disposal	18%	60%	18%	5%

A7. Of the following services, which do you think are the responsibility of either your District Council (which is [DC] or County Council (which is [CC] or both? Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005)

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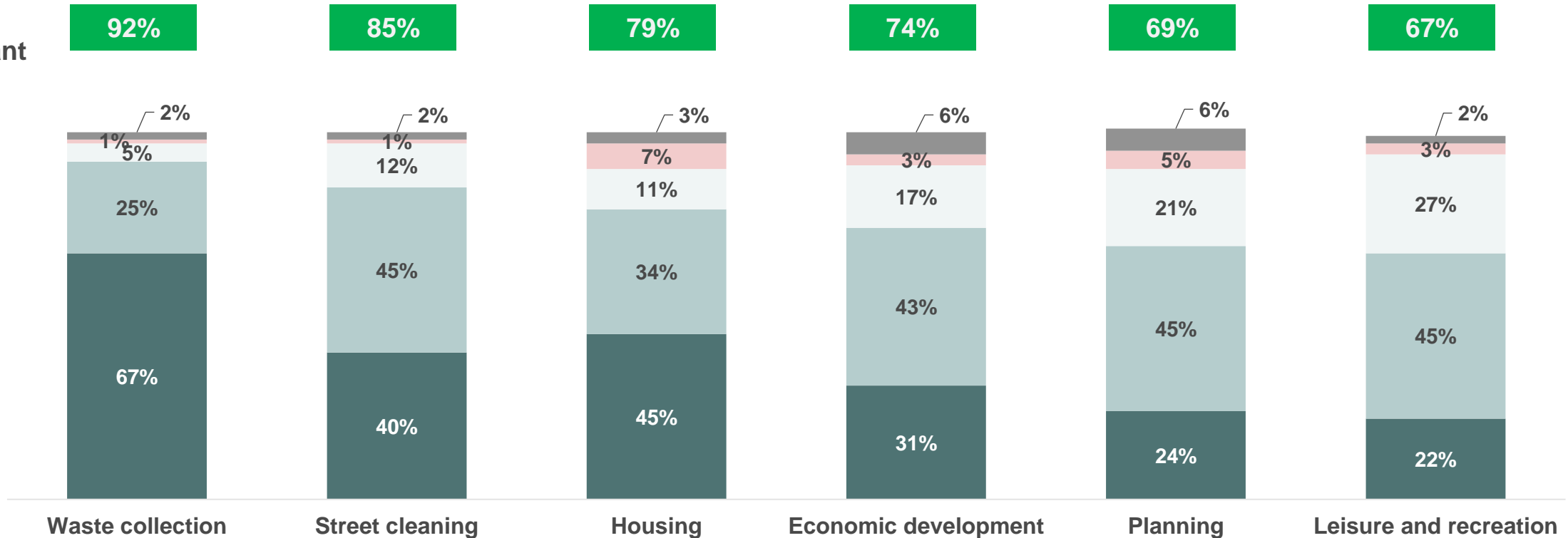Insight & Strategy

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3 Importance

Residents see district-run services as important to their quality of life

Perceived importance of district council services
Showing % respondents selecting each

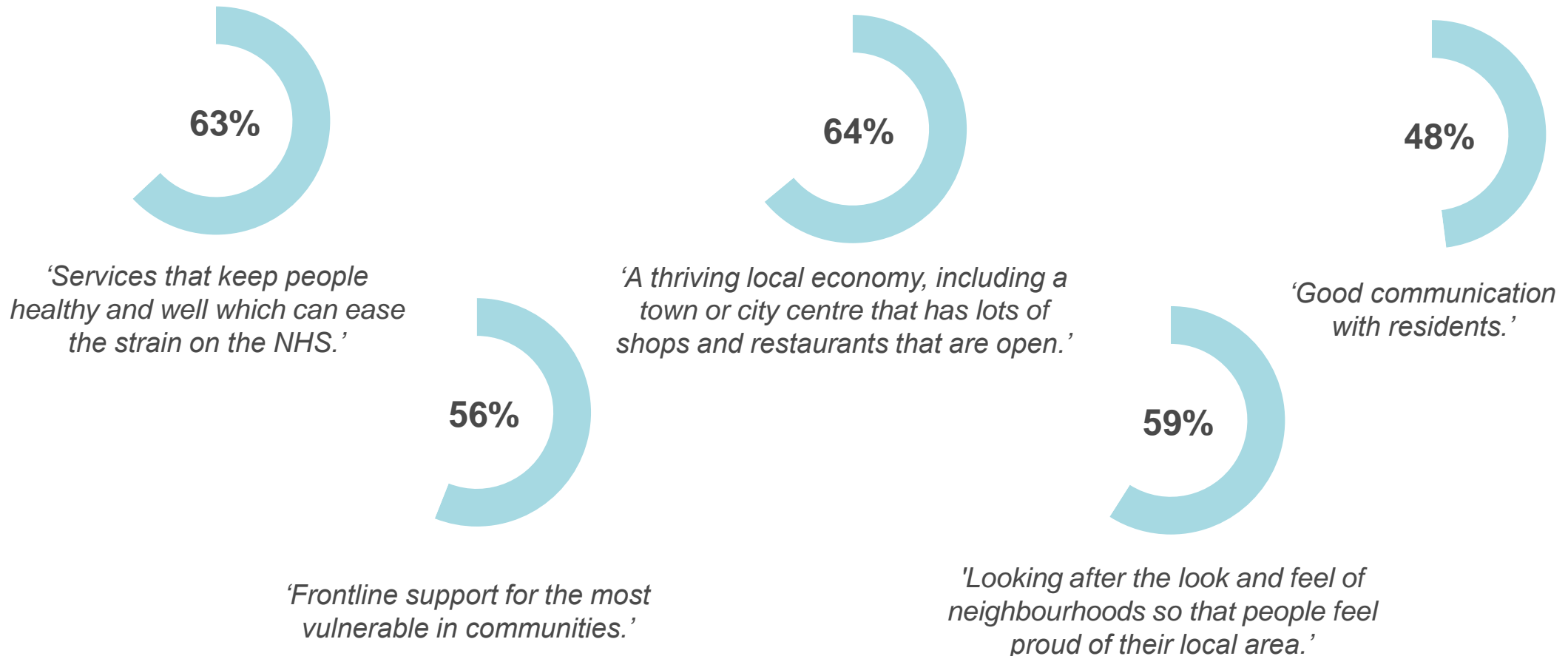■ Essential   ■ Important   ■ Nice to have   ■ Not at all important   ■ Don't know

Net: Important

Waste collection	Street cleaning	Housing	Economic development	Planning	Leisure and recreation
92%	**85%**	**79%**	**74%**	**69%**	**67%**

Waste collection: 2% / 1% / 5% / 25% / 67%

Street cleaning: 2% / 1% / 12% / 45% / 40%

Housing: 3% / 7% / 11% / 34% / 45%

Economic development: 6% / 3% / 17% / 43% / 31%

Planning: 6% / 5% / 21% / 45% / 24%

Leisure and recreation: 2% / 3% / 27% / 45% / 22%

B5: For the same list of service areas that are delivered by local councils, please rate how important each is to the quality or functioning of your life. Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

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A large proportion of residents look to district councils to deliver wider benefits to their areas

Important for district councils to deliver
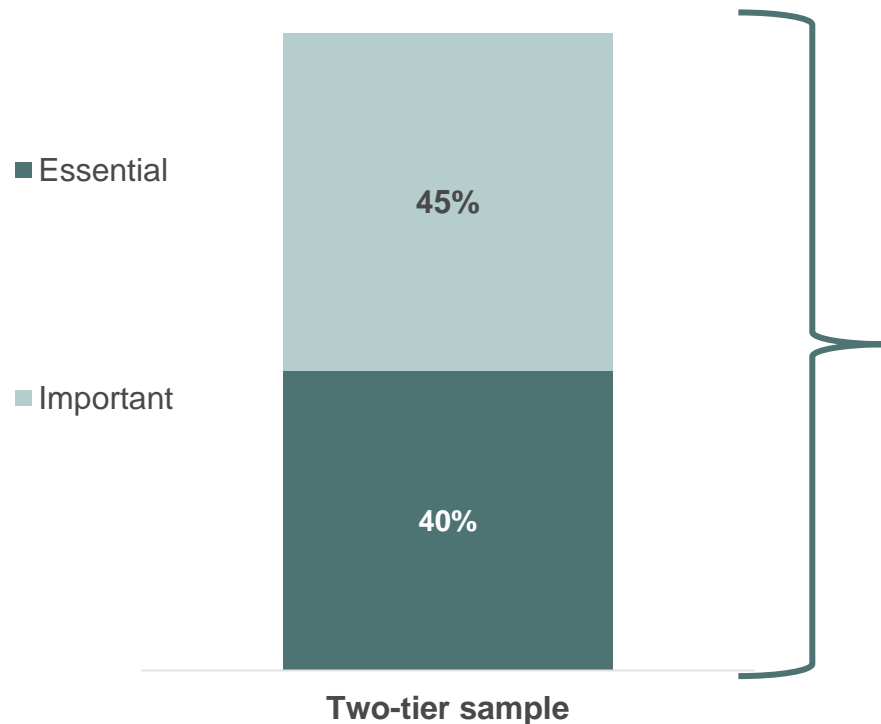*Showing % respondents selecting each as important*

63%

'Services that keep people healthy and well which can ease the strain on the NHS.'

64%

'A thriving local economy, including a town or city centre that has lots of shops and restaurants that are open.'

48%

'Good communication with residents.'

56%

'Frontline support for the most vulnerable in communities.'

59%

'Looking after the look and feel of neighbourhoods so that people feel proud of their local area.'

B7: Which of the following is it important for [INSERT DISTRICT COUNCIL] to deliver well? Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

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92% see <u>waste collection</u> as important. These services are considered vital for creating a hygienic environment

Importance of waste collection
Showing % selecting each option

■ Essential

25%

■ Important

67%

Two-tier sample

Reason waste collection is important
Showing % respondents selecting each

70%
say

"Without waste collection my local area would become dirty and unhygienic very quickly."

63%
say

"Waste collection is a basic service that is needed for a local area to function."

54%
say

"Waste collection services help me recycle more and have a greener lifestyle."

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85% see <u>street cleaning</u> services as important, particularly for encouraging people to respect their surroundings

Importance of street cleaning
Showing % selecting each option

Reason street cleaning is important
Showing % respondents selecting each

■ Essential
■ Important

45%

40%

Two-tier sample

73%
say

"Having a clean local area makes people respect their surroundings more and feel more inclined to play their part in keeping things looking nice."

61%
say

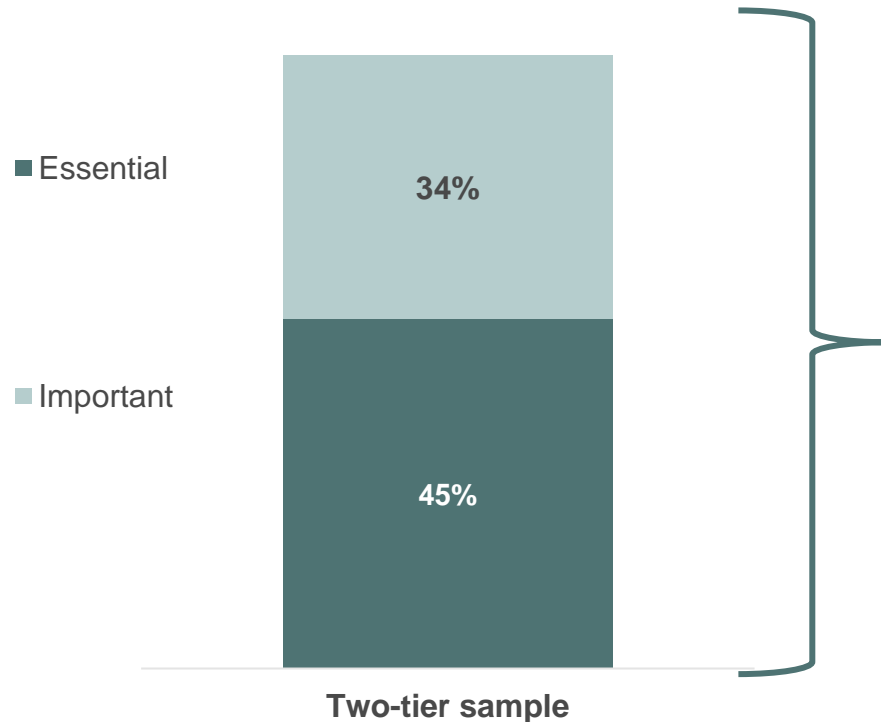*"Street cleaning services help create a clean and tidy neighbourhood that makes me feel proud of my local area."*

47%
say

"Having a clean local area makes me feel more safe and secure."

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79% see <u>housing</u> services as important, particularly for ensuring everyone has an affordable place to live

Importance of housing services
Showing % selecting each option

■ Essential

■ Important

34%

45%

Two-tier sample

Reason housing services are important
Showing % respondents selecting each

69%
say

"Providing social housing and affordable accommodation is vital for local people who cannot afford to buy or privately rent a home."

67%
say

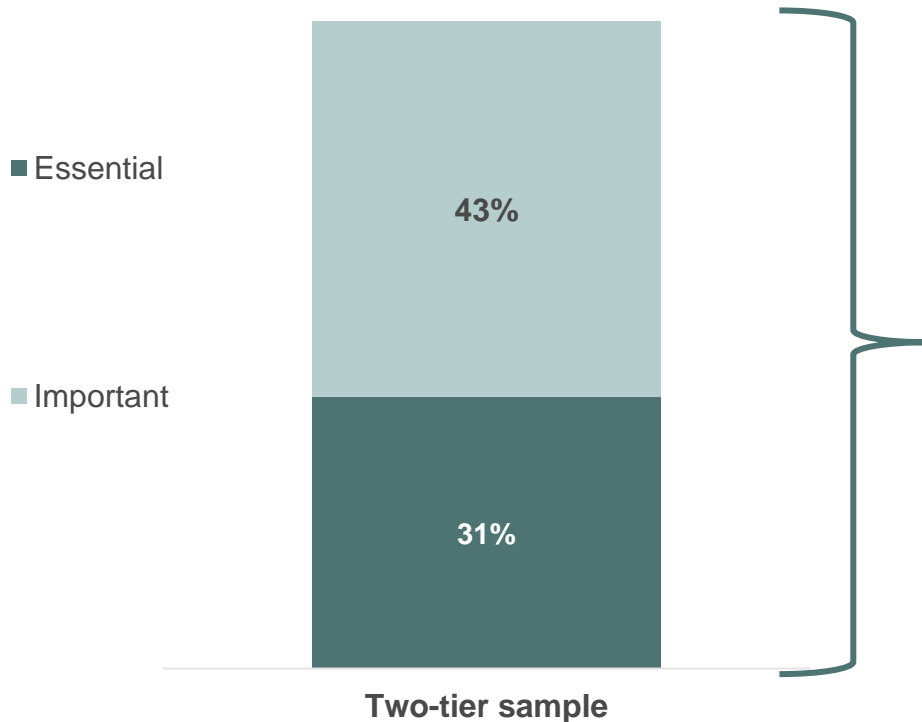*"Ensuring people do not become homeless or remain homeless is a moral duty."*

56%
say

"Ensuring people have safe and secure housing is one way help to ease pressure on local NHS services."

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74% see <u>economic development</u> services as important, particularly for bringing prosperity and creating local pride

Importance of economic development
Showing % selecting each option

■ Essential

■ Important

43%

31%

Two-tier sample

Reason economic development is important
Showing % respondents selecting each

73% say
"Economic development helps bring jobs and prosperity to the local area."

65% say
"Supporting local businesses creates the unique character of a high street that residents can be proud of."

44% say
"Economic development helps to make the local area look and feel nicer."

B5: For the same list of service areas that are delivered by local councils, please rate how important each is to the quality or functioning of your life. Please put your cursor over each service area to read the detail of what this service involves. All two-tier residents (n=1005)

B6: You said that [SERVICE AREA FROM B5] was [ESSENTIAL/IMPORTANT] to the quality or functioning of your life. Which of the following reasons best describe why? You can choose more than one reason. Base: Two-tier council respondents who see economic development services as essential or important (n=742)

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69% see <u>planning</u> services as important for ensuring new developments take the community's needs into account

Importance of planning services
Showing % selecting each option
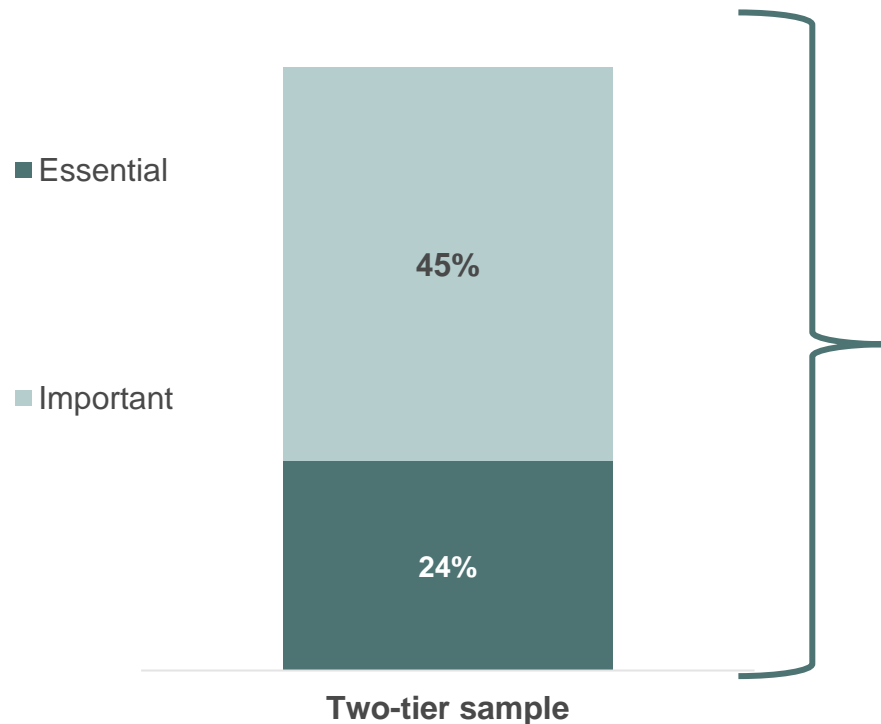
Reason planning is important
Showing % respondents selecting each

■ Essential

■ Important

45%

24%

Two-tier sample

66%
say

"Planning helps ensure that new developments are in keeping with the local area."

59%
say

"Planning is a way to help ensure that there is suitable housing for local people."

57%
say

"Planning helps to regenerate the local area and contribute to a thriving local economy."

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67% see <u>leisure and recreation</u> services as important, particularly as they create opportunities to improve wellbeing

Importance of leisure and recreation services
Showing % selecting each option

- Essential
- Important

45%

22%

Two-tier sample
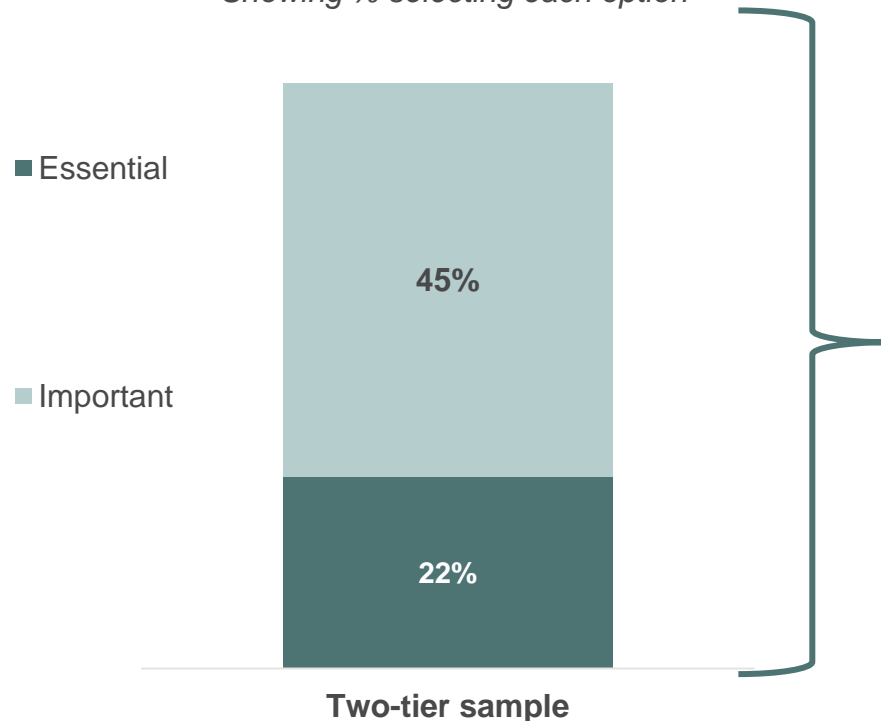
Reason leisure and recreation is important
Showing % respondents selecting each

74%
say

"Leisure and recreation services provide opportunities for people of all age groups from children to older people to keep active and meet up with other people."

58%
say

"Parks and other outdoor facilities help the local area look good and make it a nice destination for visitors."

56%
say

"Ensuring people have leisure and recreation services is one way help to ease pressure on local NHS services."

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4   Satisfaction

Most residents are satisfied with their district council

Satisfaction with the way local councils run things
Showing % of two-tier residents selecting each
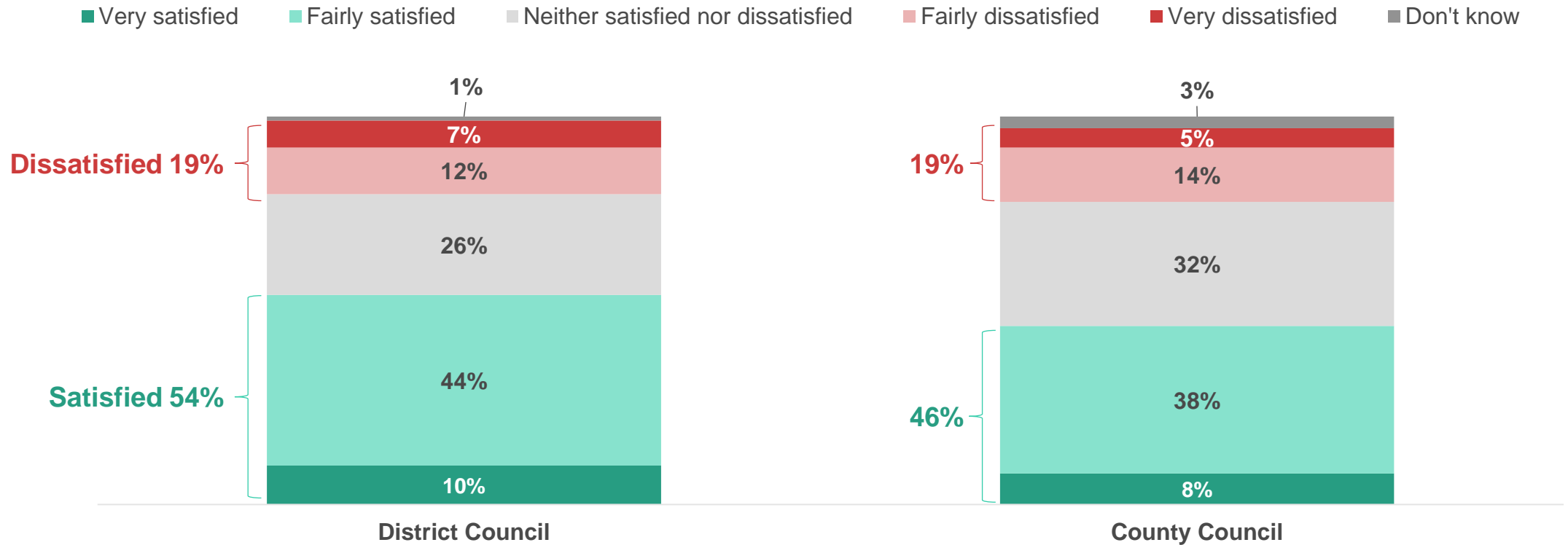
■ Very satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ■ Fairly dissatisfied ■ Very dissatisfied ■ Don't know

District Council

1%
7%
Dissatisfied 19% { 12%
26%
Satisfied 54% { 44%
10%

County Council

3%
19% { 5%
14%
32%
46% { 38%
8%

B1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your [INSERT COUNCIL NAME FROM SAMPLE] runs things? Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

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Satisfaction with districts is higher than that of counties in all age groups, socio-economic groups and by gender

Satisfaction with councils by age, SEG and gender
Showing % net: satisfied (very or somewhat) with their councils

■ District Council ■ County Council

Satisfaction by age

Age	District	County
18-24	51%	39%
25-34	50%	46%
35-49	49%	44%
50-59	51%	44%
60-64	64%	52%
65-74	55%	43%
75-85+	83%	75%

Satisfaction by SEG

	District	County
ABC1	57%	49%
C2DE	52%	43%

Satisfaction by gender

	District	County
Female	53%	44%
Male	57%	50%

B1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your [INSERT COUNCIL NAME FROM SAMPLE] runs things? Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005); 18-24 (n=103); 25-34 (n=171); 35-49 (n=223); 50-59 (n=186); 60-64 (n=80); 65-74 (n=199); 75-85+ (n=43); ABC1 (n=572); C2DE (n=390); Female (n=634); Male (n=367)

*Small base size so findings should be indicative only

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Dissatisfaction with districts is similar to that of counties among socio-economic groups and gender, and broadly similar by age

Dissatisfaction with councils by age, SEG and gender
Showing % net: dissatisfied (very or somewhat) with their councils
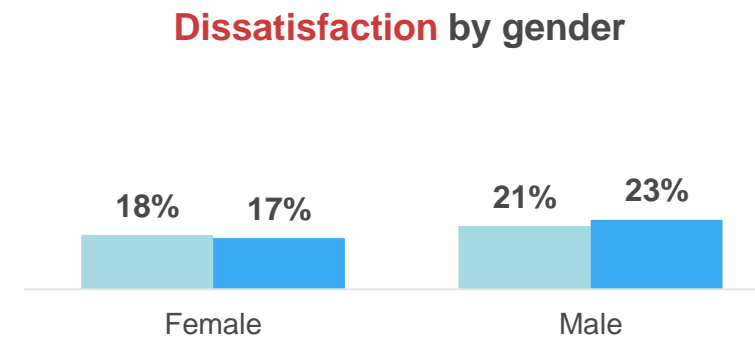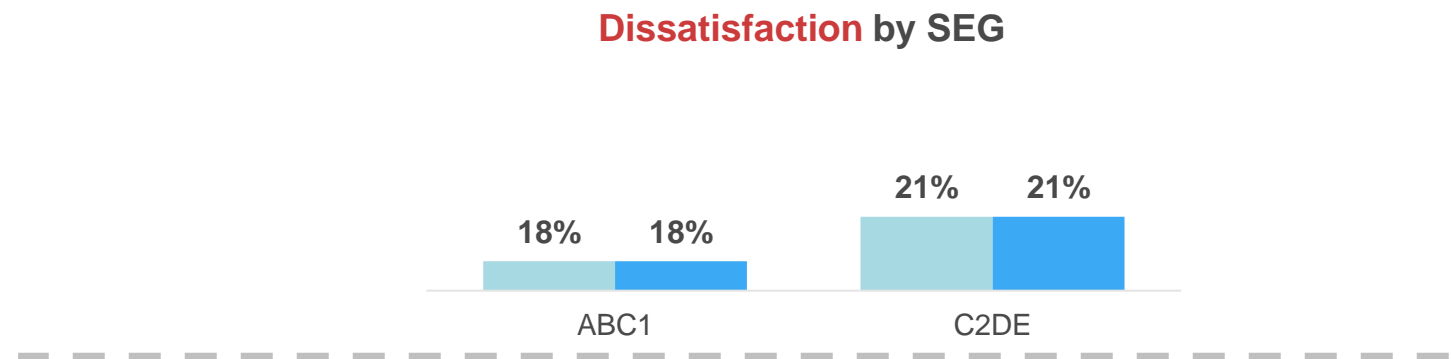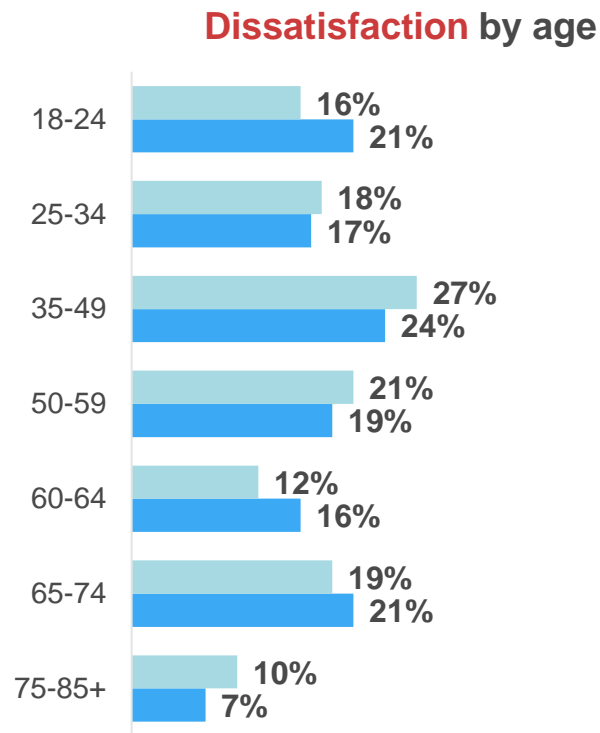
■ District Council ■ County Council

Dissatisfaction by age

Age	District Council	County Council
18-24	16%	21%
25-34	18%	17%
35-49	27%	24%
50-59	21%	19%
60-64	12%	16%
65-74	19%	21%
75-85+	10%	7%

Dissatisfaction by SEG

	District Council	County Council
ABC1	18%	18%
C2DE	21%	21%

Dissatisfaction by gender

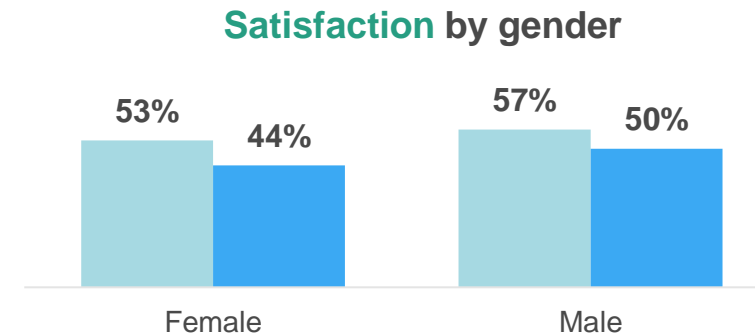|	District Council	County Council
Female	18%	17%
Male	21%	23%

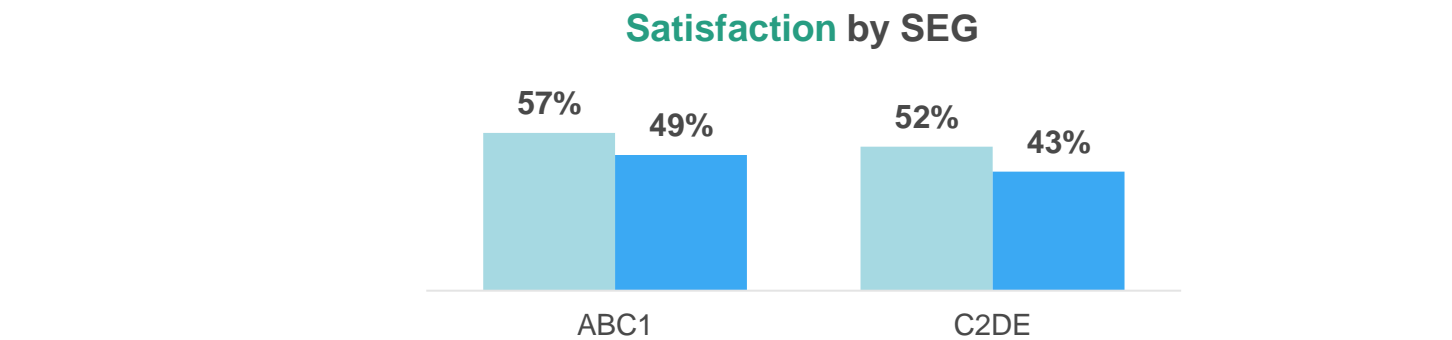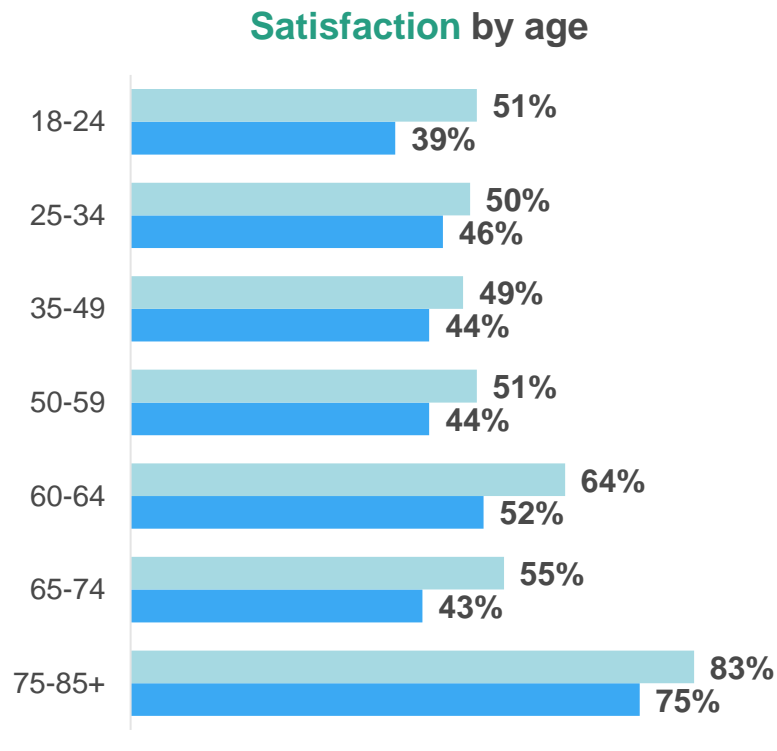B1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your [INSERT COUNCIL NAME FROM SAMPLE] runs things? Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005); 18-24 (n=103); 25-34 (n=171); 35-49 (n=223); 50-59 (n=186); 60-64 (n=80); 65-74 (n=199); 75-85+ (n=43); ABC1 (n=572); C2DE (n=390); Female (n=634); Male (n=367)

*Small base size so findings should be indicative only

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Most residents feel that district council services have a positive impact on the local area

57% agree

"The services [local district council] provides have a positive impact on me and my local area."

60% agree

"If [local district council] stopped running things in my local area there would be a significant negative impact on the local community and economy."

"I'd say district council services are really vital – without most of these [services] you'd be really struggling."

"It's definitely important, definitely. It all contributes to a thriving community, and if it's done well it will just improve it."

"If we didn't have these services, the local area would depreciate rapidly."

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Services run by district councils are generally considered to be delivered well

Perceived performance of council services

*Showing % **delivered well** (very + somewhat) with each service area*
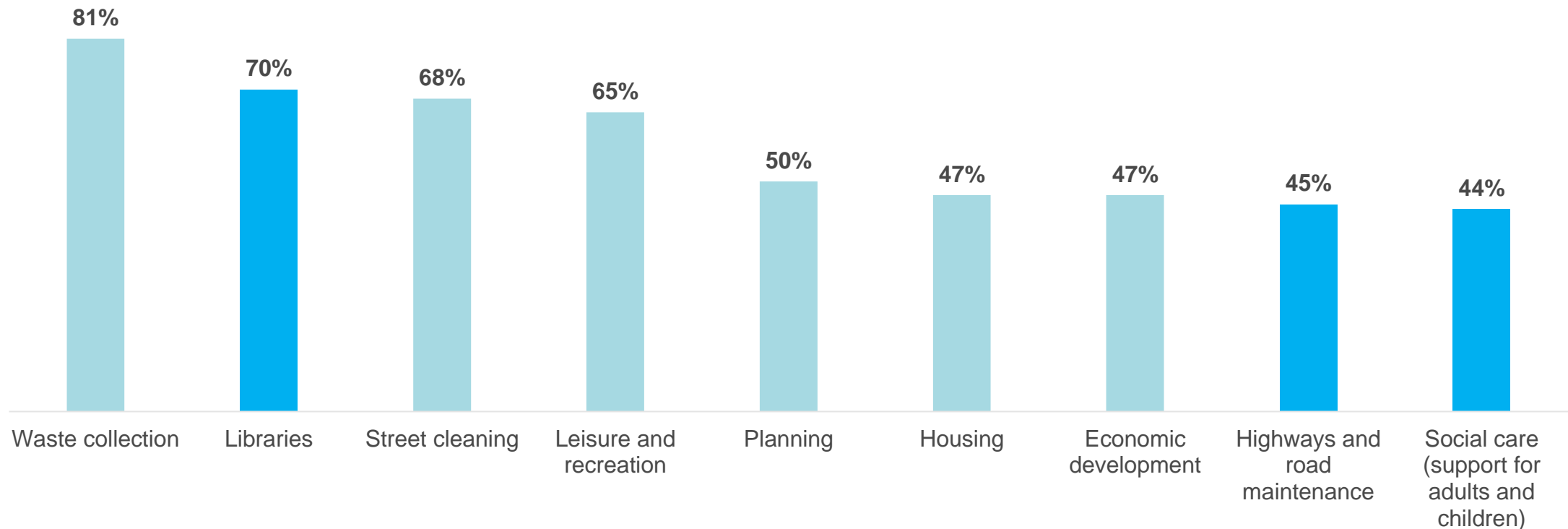
Service	%
Waste collection	81%
Libraries	70%
Street cleaning	68%
Leisure and recreation	65%
Planning	50%
Housing	47%
Economic development	47%
Highways and road maintenance	45%
Social care (support for adults and children)	44%

B4. Below is a list of service areas that are delivered by local councils. Against each one, please rate how well your local council delivers these. Net: WELL. Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

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However, views on delivery of housing and economic development are slightly more polarised

Perceived performance of council services
Showing % selecting each option

■ Very well   ■ Fairly well   ■ Not very well   ■ Not at all well   ■ Don't know

Net: Delivered well	Net: Not delivered well

	Waste collection	Libraries	Street cleaning	Leisure and recreation	Planning	Housing	Economic development	Highways and road maintenance	Social care (support for adults and children)
Net: Delivered well	81%	70%	68%	65%	50%	47%	47%	45%	44%
Net: Not delivered well	16%	18%	27%	25%	27%	35%	29%	49%	26%
Don't know	3%	12%	5%	10%	23%	17%	24%	6%	30%
Not at all well	4%	5%	8%	5%	7%	9%	7%	17%	7%
Not very well	12%	13%	19%	20%	19%	26%	22%	32%	19%
Fairly well	47%	48%	50%	52%	41%	39%	40%	36%	35%
Very well	34%	21%	18%	12%	9%	9%	7%	9%	9%

B4. Below is a list of service areas that are delivered by local councils. Against each one, please rate how well your local council delivers these. Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

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The district services considered most essential are mostly seen as being delivered well
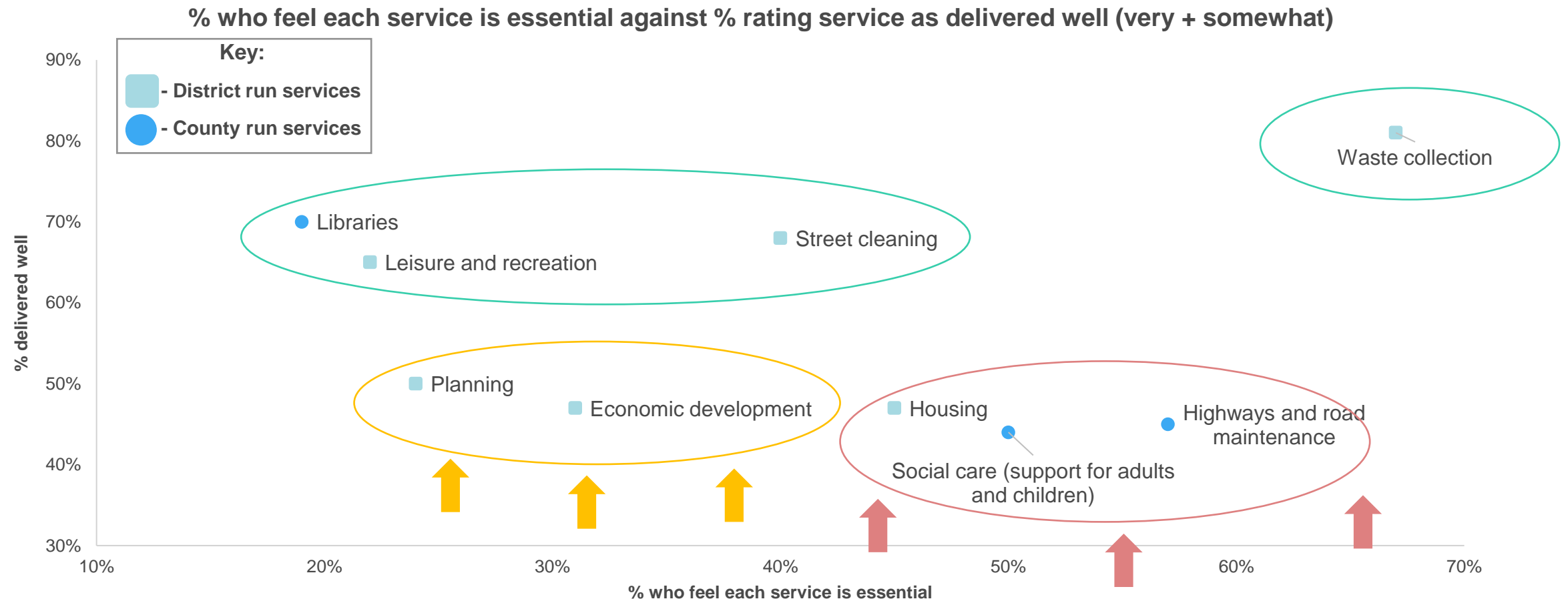
% who feel each service is essential against % rating service as delivered well (very + somewhat)

Key:
- ■ - District run services
- ● - County run services

Data points (y-axis: % delivered well; x-axis: % who feel each service is essential):
- Waste collection (~66%, ~81%)
- Libraries (~19%, ~70%)
- Street cleaning (~41%, ~68%)
- Leisure and recreation (~22%, ~65%)
- Planning (~24%, ~49%)
- Economic development (~31%, ~47%)
- Housing (~44%, ~47%)
- Highways and road maintenance (~57%, ~45%)
- Social care (support for adults and children) (~50%, ~44%)

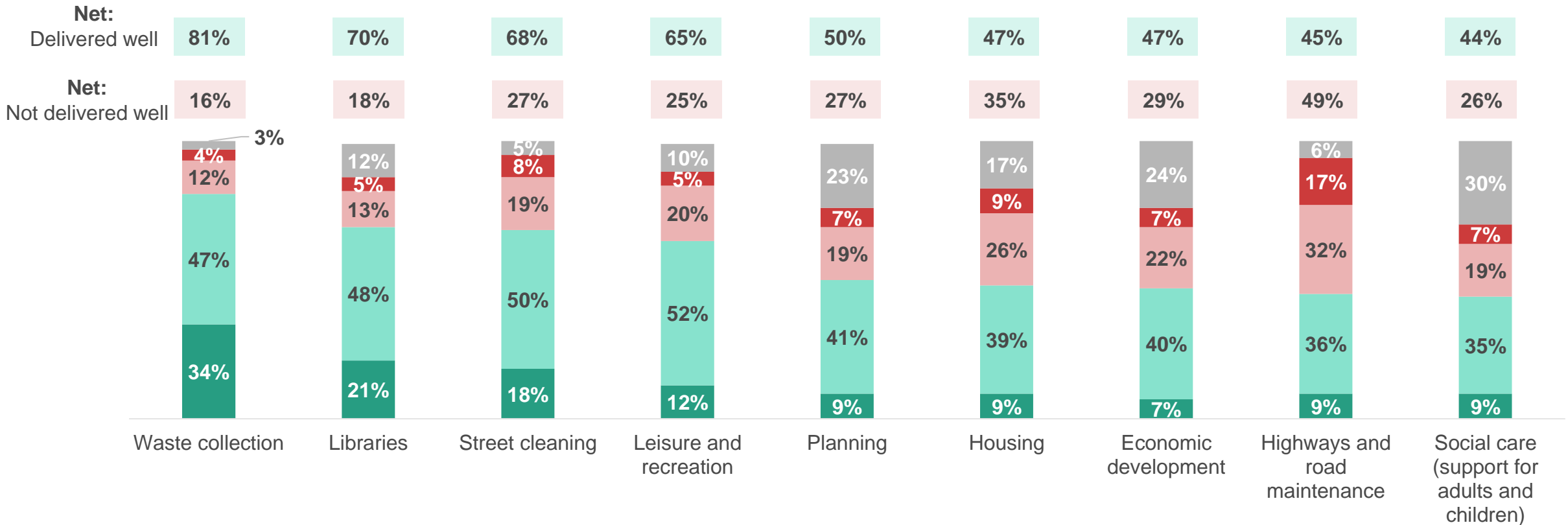B4. Below is a list of service areas that are delivered by local councils. Against each one, please rate how well your local council delivers these. Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

B5: For the same list of service areas that are delivered by local councils, please rate how important each is to the quality or functioning of your life. Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

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5 Trust

Districts score particularly well on being well-meaning, approachable and trustworthy

Attributes to describe district councils
Showing % two-tier residents selecting each
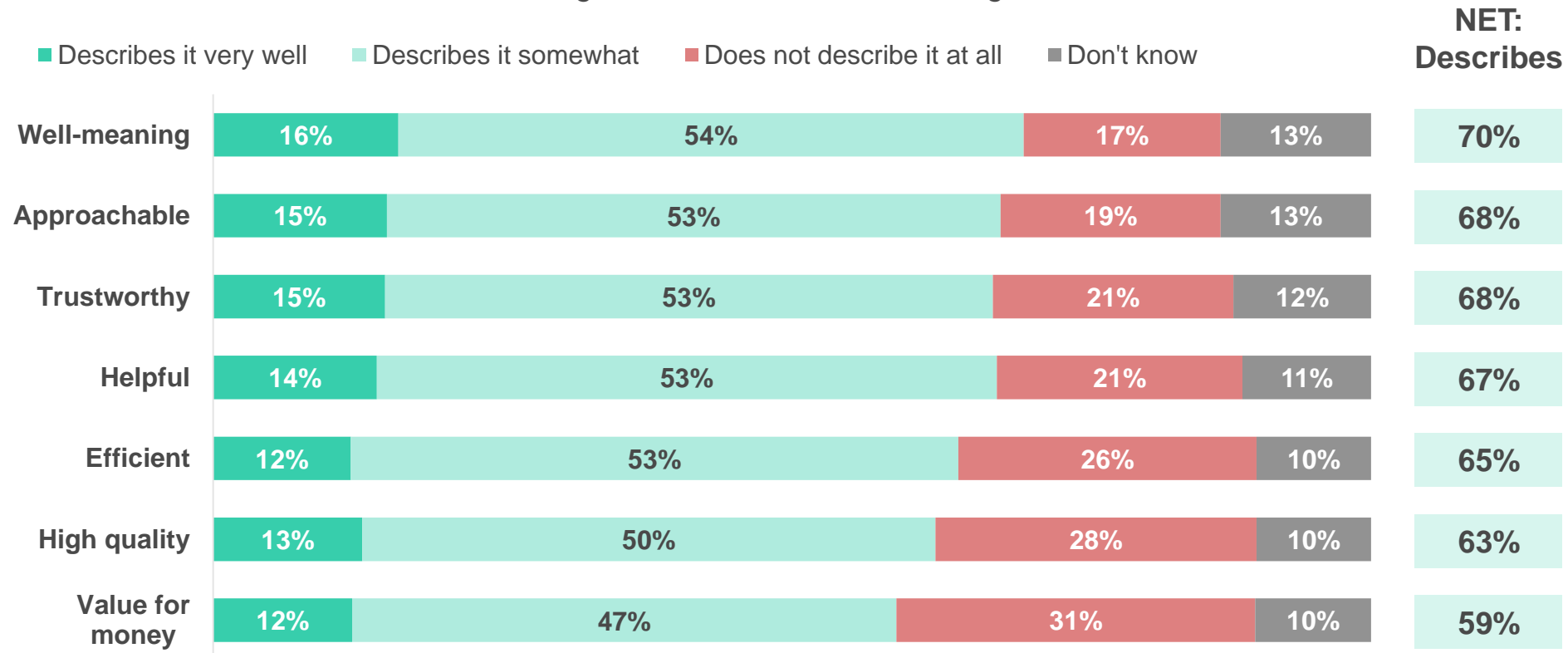
■ Describes it very well   ■ Describes it somewhat   ■ Does not describe it at all   ■ Don't know

NET: Describes

	Very well	Somewhat	Does not describe	Don't know	NET: Describes
Well-meaning	16%	54%	17%	13%	70%
Approachable	15%	53%	19%	13%	68%
Trustworthy	15%	53%	21%	12%	68%
Helpful	14%	53%	21%	11%	67%
Efficient	12%	53%	26%	10%	65%
High quality	13%	50%	28%	10%	63%
Value for money	12%	47%	31%	10%	59%

C1. To what extent do think [ATTRIBUTE] describes [INSERT COUNCIL NAME FROM SAMPLE]. Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005)

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Districts score better against each of the tested descriptors compared to county councils

Attributes to describe Councils
Showing % selecting describes (very or somewhat) each council type
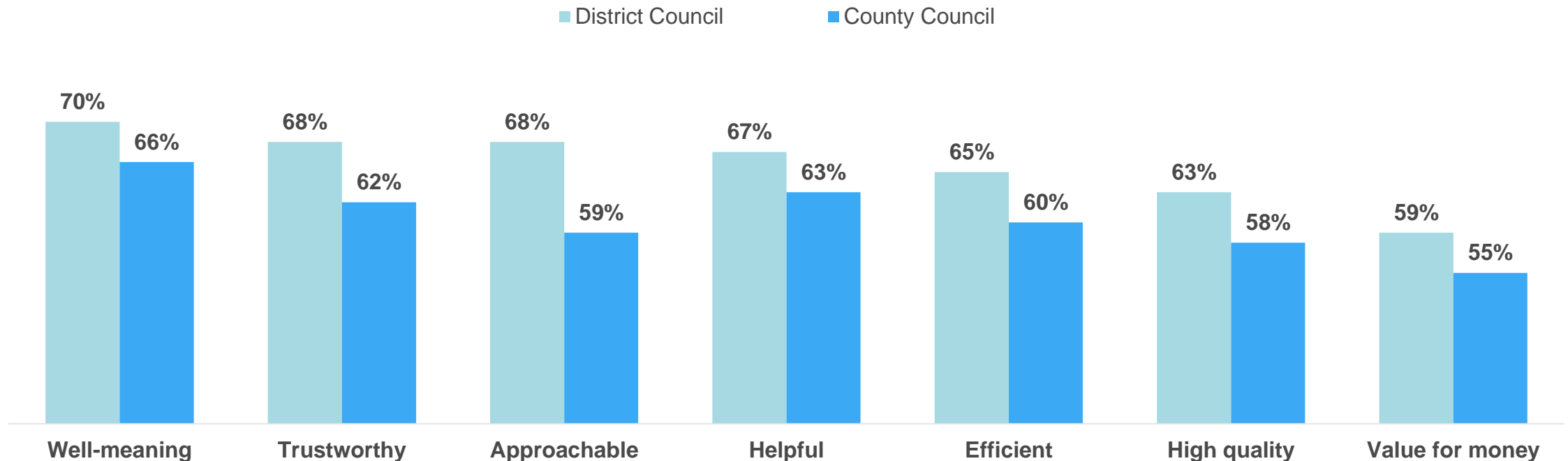
■ District Council   ■ County Council

	Well-meaning	Trustworthy	Approachable	Helpful	Efficient	High quality	Value for money
District Council	70%	68%	68%	67%	65%	63%	59%
County Council	66%	62%	59%	63%	60%	58%	55%

C1. To what extent do think [ATTRIBUTE] describes [INSERT COUNCIL NAME FROM SAMPLE]. Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005)

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Residents agree their district council contributes positively to the local area, understand its needs and has its interests at heart

Agreement with statements on District Councils

Showing % selecting each

■ Completely agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Completely disagree ■ Don't know

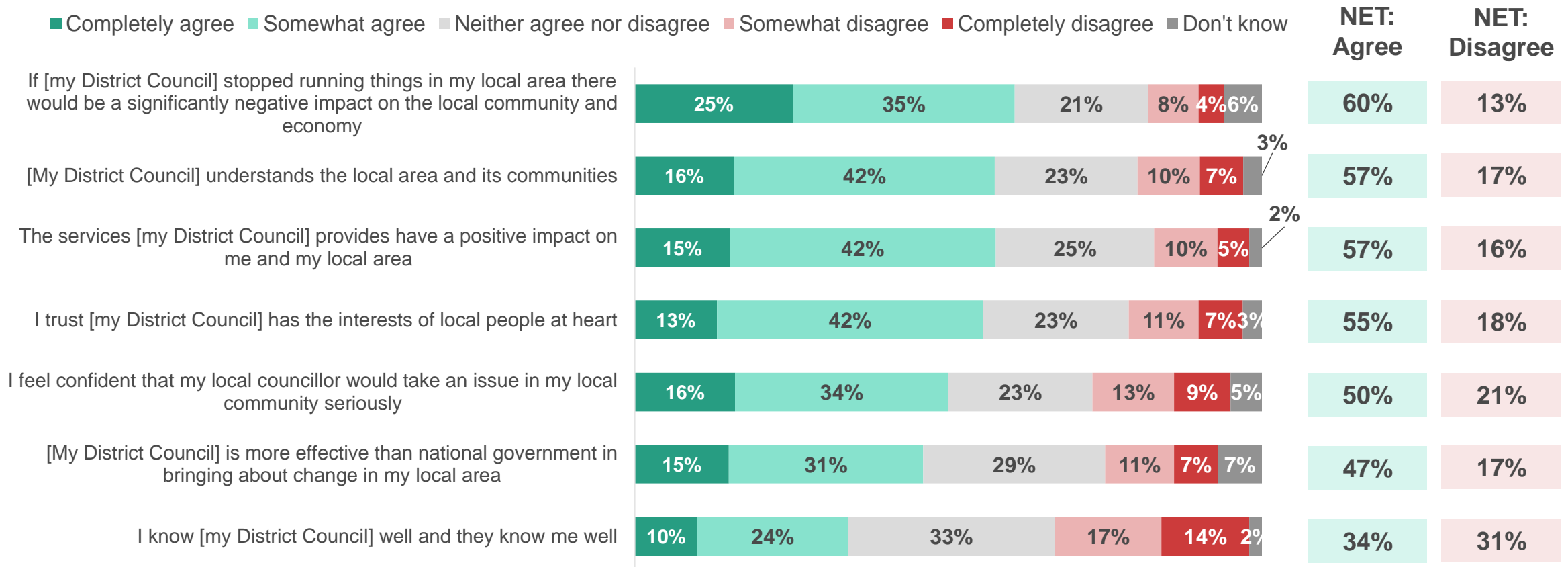|	NET: Agree	NET: Disagree
If [my District Council] stopped running things in my local area there would be a significantly negative impact on the local community and economy — 25% / 35% / 21% / 8% / 4% / 6%	60%	13%
[My District Council] understands the local area and its communities — 16% / 42% / 23% / 10% / 7% / 3%	57%	17%
The services [my District Council] provides have a positive impact on me and my local area — 15% / 42% / 25% / 10% / 5% / 2%	57%	16%
I trust [my District Council] has the interests of local people at heart — 13% / 42% / 23% / 11% / 7% / 3%	55%	18%
I feel confident that my local councillor would take an issue in my local community seriously — 16% / 34% / 23% / 13% / 9% / 5%	50%	21%
[My District Council] is more effective than national government in bringing about change in my local area — 15% / 31% / 29% / 11% / 7% / 7%	47%	17%
I know [my District Council] well and they know me well — 10% / 24% / 33% / 17% / 14% / 2%	34%	31%

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While they also agree county council services have a positive impact, levels of agreement are lower when compared to districts

Agreement with statements on County Councils
Showing % selecting each

■ Completely agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Completely disagree ■ Don't know

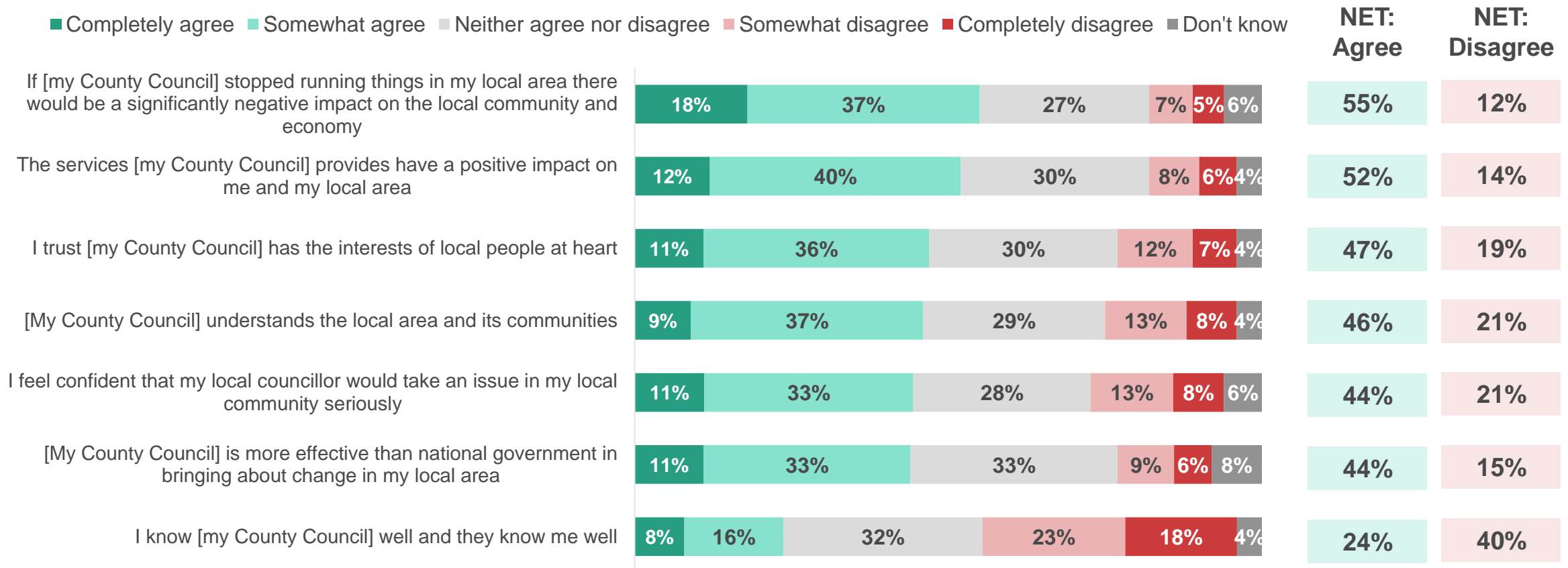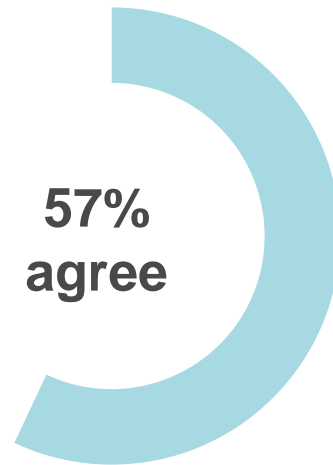| Statement	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know	NET: Agree	NET: Disagree
If [my County Council] stopped running things in my local area there would be a significantly negative impact on the local community and economy	18%	37%	27%	7%	5%	6%	55%	12%
The services [my County Council] provides have a positive impact on me and my local area	12%	40%	30%	8%	6%	4%	52%	14%
I trust [my County Council] has the interests of local people at heart	11%	36%	30%	12%	7%	4%	47%	19%
[My County Council] understands the local area and its communities	9%	37%	29%	13%	8%	4%	46%	21%
I feel confident that my local councillor would take an issue in my local community seriously	11%	33%	28%	13%	8%	6%	44%	21%
[My County Council] is more effective than national government in bringing about change in my local area	11%	33%	33%	9%	6%	8%	44%	15%
I know [my County Council] well and they know me well	8%	16%	32%	23%	18%	4%	24%	40%

C6. How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements about [INSERT CC NAME FROM SAMPLE]? Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)
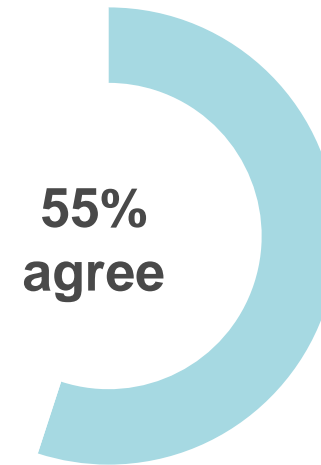
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The majority feel that their district council understands and values the interests of their communities

"[Local district council] understands the local area and its communities"

57% agree

County Council: 46% agree

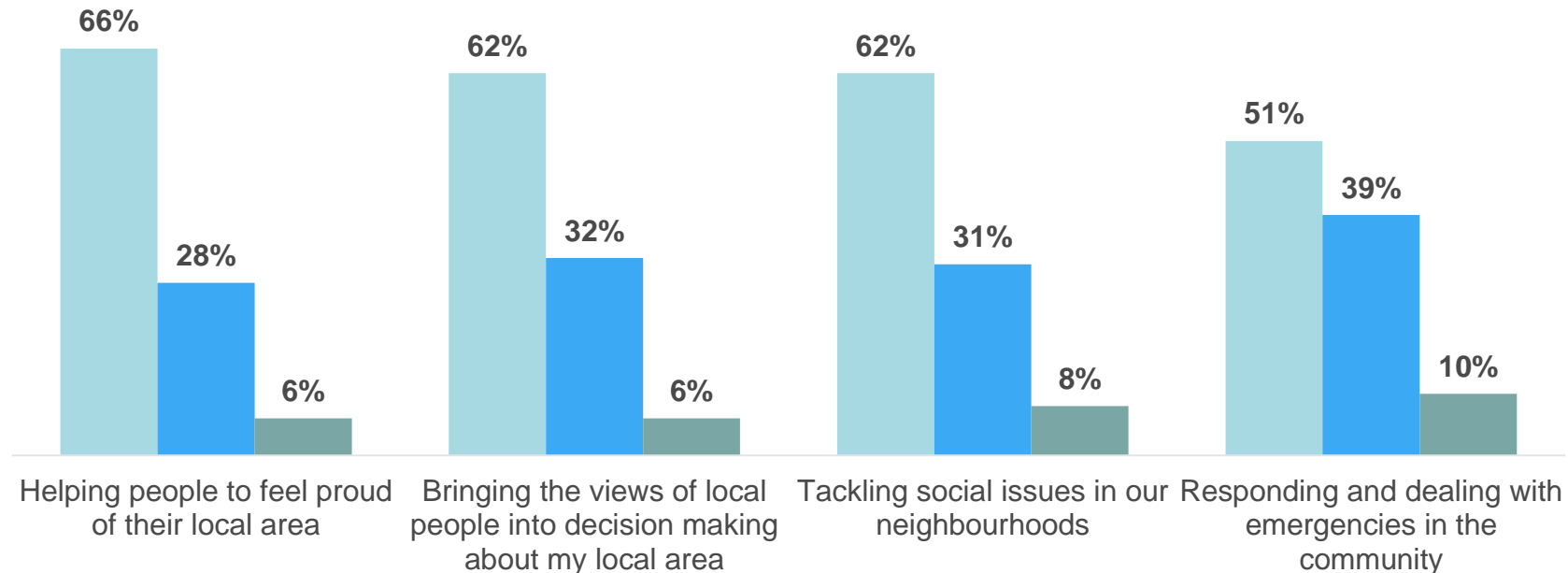*"I trust [Local district council] has the interests of local people at heart"*

55% agree

County Council: 47% agree

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Districts are trusted more than counties or national government to tackle local issues and care for local people

Trust in Councils to tackle issues
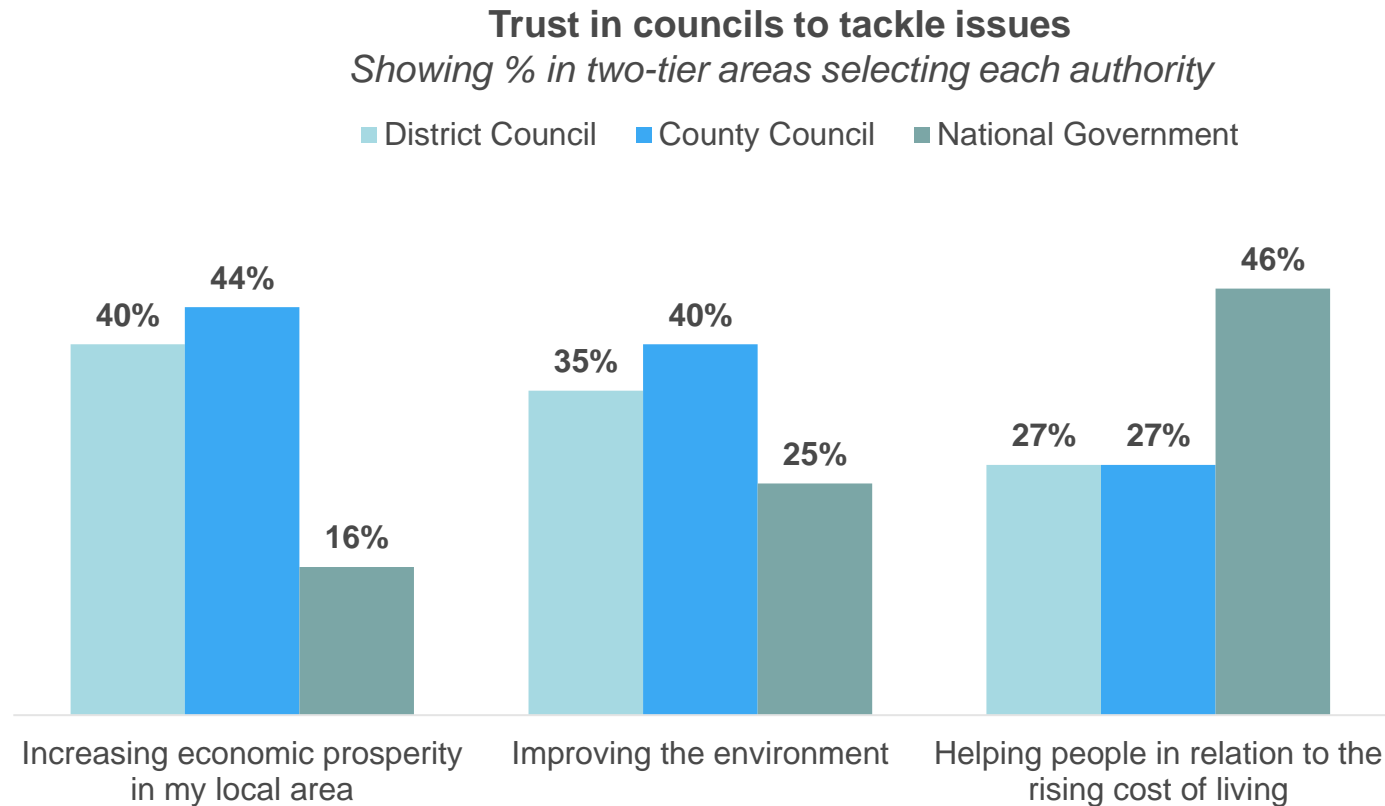*Showing % in two-tier areas selecting each authority*

■ District Council ■ County Council ■ National Government

	District Council	County Council	National Government
Helping people to feel proud of their local area	66%	28%	6%
Bringing the views of local people into decision making about my local area	62%	32%	6%
Tackling social issues in our neighbourhoods	62%	31%	8%
Responding and dealing with emergencies in the community	51%	39%	10%

"At a district level… they make sure the local community is looked after. A county council is responsible for more infrastructure."

C7. Which of these authorities do you most trust with the following…? Base: All two-tier residents (n=1005)

Larger-scale issues are seen to be shared with counties or more the responsibility of national government

Trust in councils to tackle issues
Showing % in two-tier areas selecting each authority

■ District Council ■ County Council ■ National Government

	District Council	County Council	National Government
Increasing economic prosperity in my local area	40%	44%	16%
Improving the environment	35%	40%	25%
Helping people in relation to the rising cost of living	27%	27%	46%

> *"I presume a district council is to manage a smaller area, dealing with more specific problems for that micro-area."*

C7. Which of these authorities do you most trust with the following…? Base: all two-tier residents (n=1005)

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Thank you

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