Voicebox 2023
Summary Findings

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Purpose

The aim of this report is to:

- Provide background to and summary findings of the Voicebox annual population survey.
- Consider local and national contexts to key findings and outline strategic alignment, recommendations and next steps arising from these findings

Background

- Corporately funded resident satisfaction survey.
- Questions developed with service areas and ratified with CMT:
  - Second year of surveys – comparison provided where available.
- Random probability sampled postal survey (3,961 households) with online response options (44% online)
- Fieldwork – Oct-Dec 2023, 28% response rate

Random Probability Survey Sampling

Population size	Required Sample MoE ±5%	Required Sample MoE ±3%
500	218	341
5,000	357	880
50,000	382	1,045
100,000	383	1,056
160,000	384	1,061

Note: B&NES population aged 18+ is c160,000 (2022)

Samples need to be drawn at random from the population (everyone has an equal chance of being selected). If they are, then survey sample sizes can be calculated using the following information:

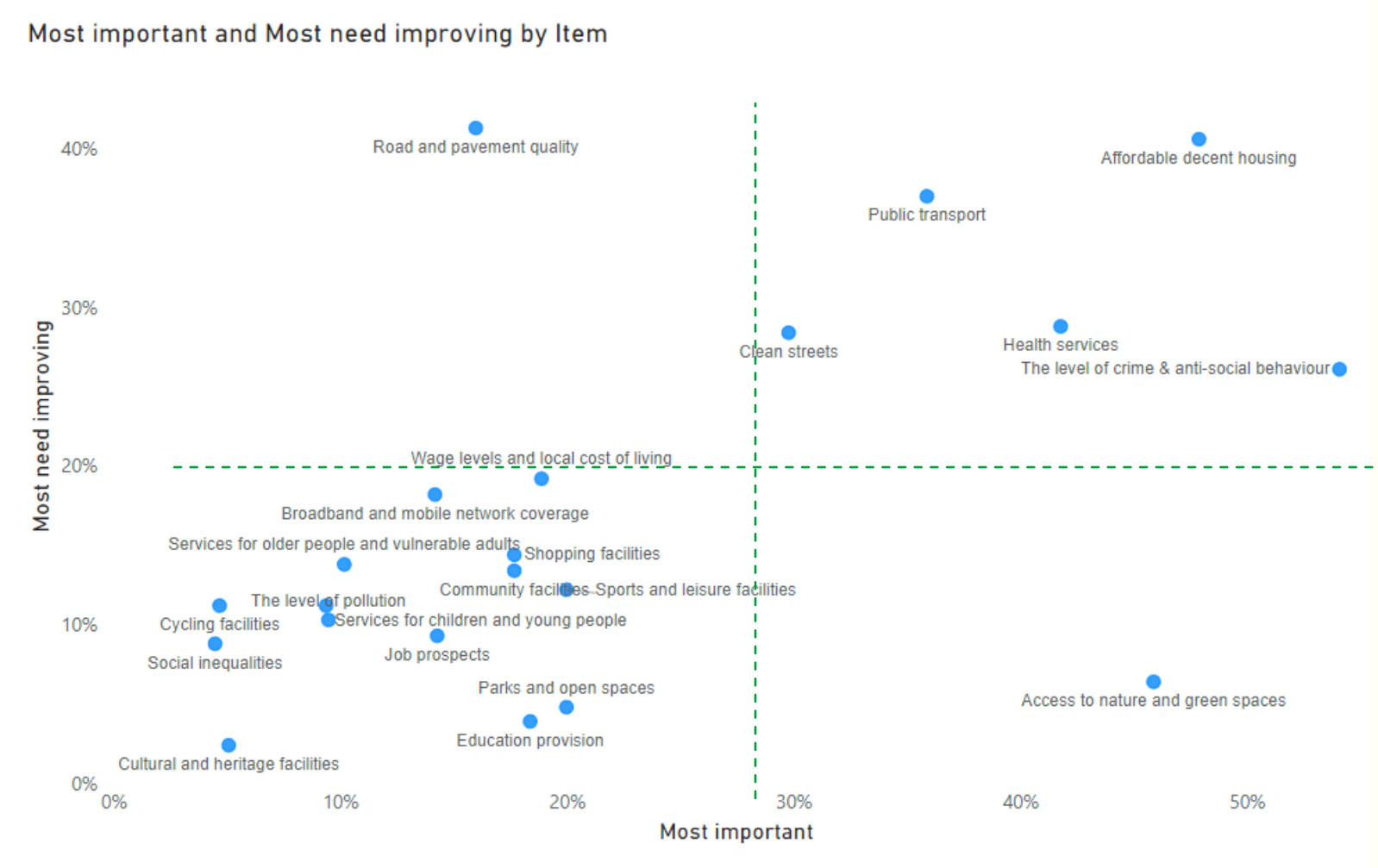
- Population size
- Margin of error (MoE) (Likelihood of results being accurate)
- Confidence level (typically set at 95%) (Likelihood of the sample being representative of the population)

- As can be seen, once the target population exceeds 50,000, the number of completed surveys required increases by very little
- For the UK, required sample size is 1,068 (for a 70m population)
- c1,050 completed surveys gives a good level of confidence in the VB results

Headline findings

1. Local Priorities
2. Resident Satisfaction, Priorities and Involvement in decision making
3. Customer Services & Digital
4. Cost of living and food insecurity
5. Working from Home
6. Community Safety
7. Energy Efficiency
8. Transport

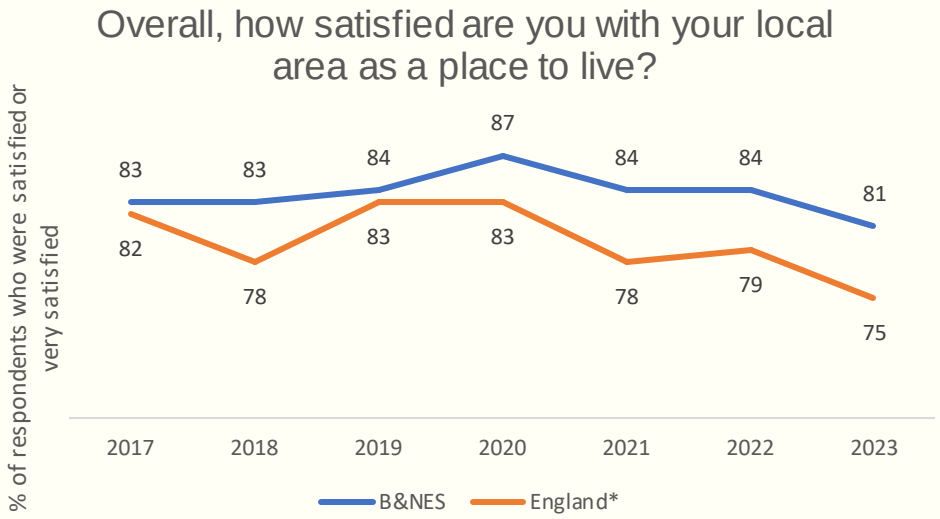
1. Local Priorities

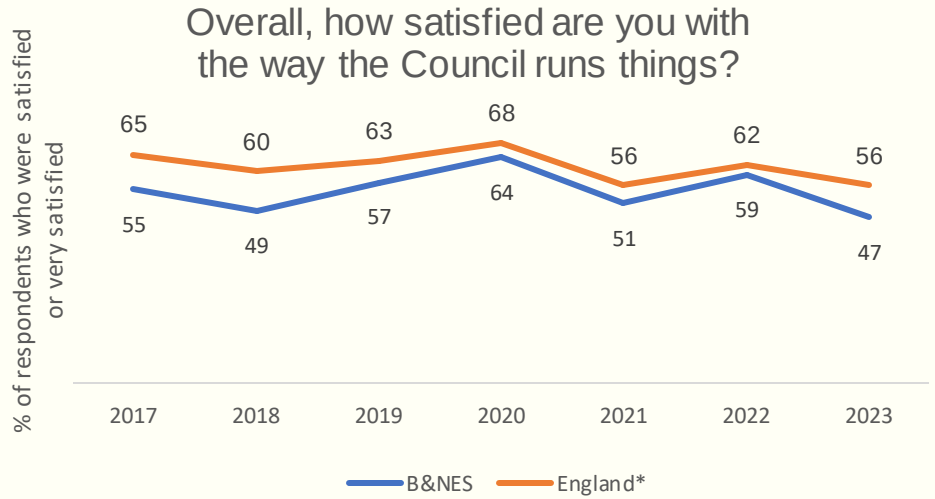


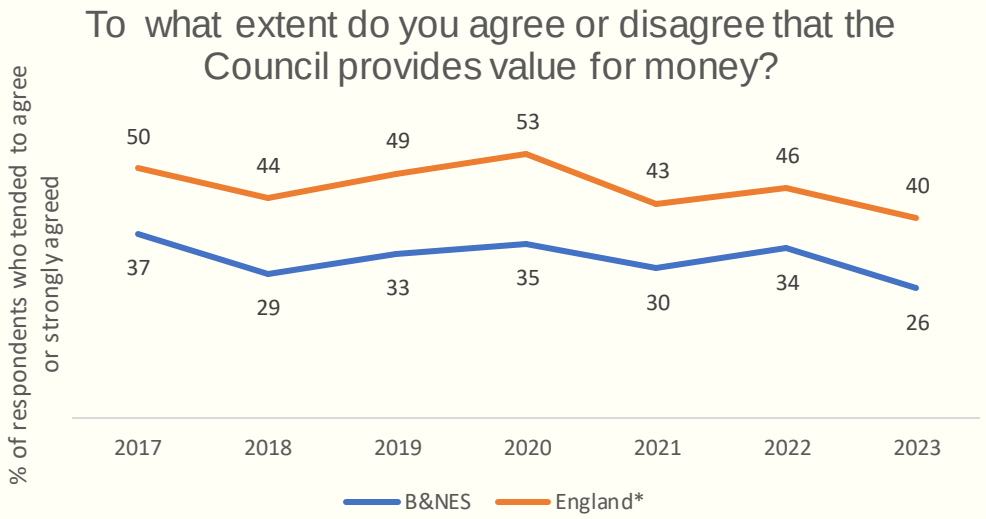
These priorities are similar to those recorded in 2022. Affordable decent housing had a 7% increase in residents saying that the issue needs improving.

Fieldwork was undertaken at a time of significant national coverage of industrial relations in the health service and findings from consultation on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy confirm the priority. It is also in the context of local news regarding serious youth violence both in B&NES and neighbouring authorities.

2. Satisfaction

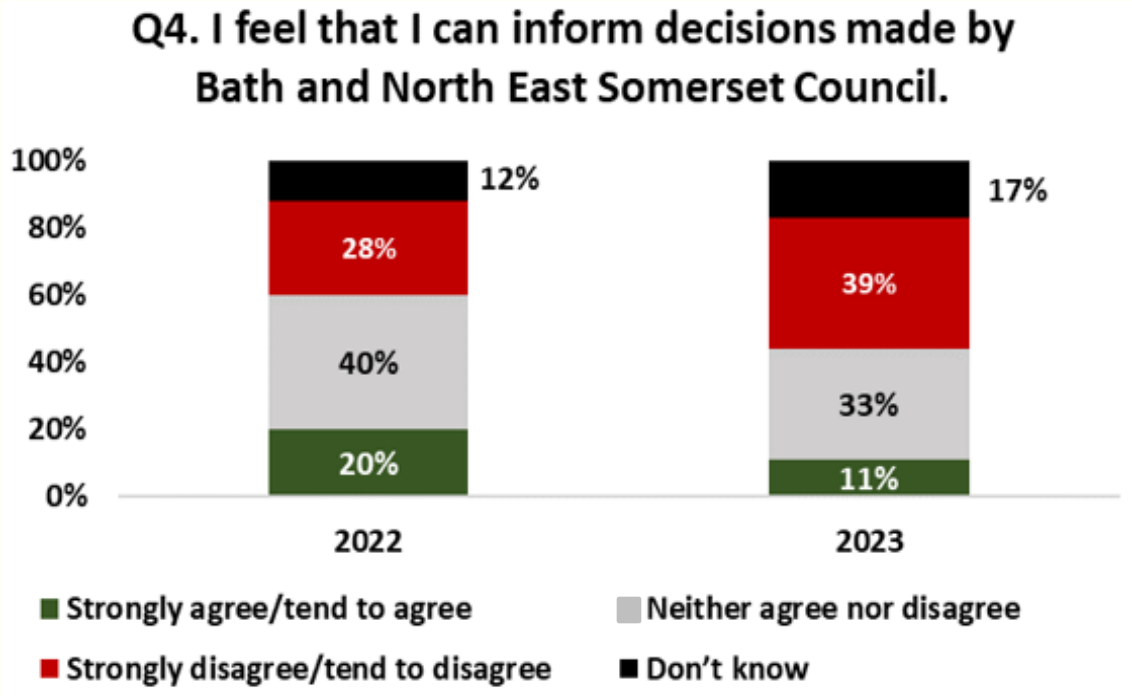




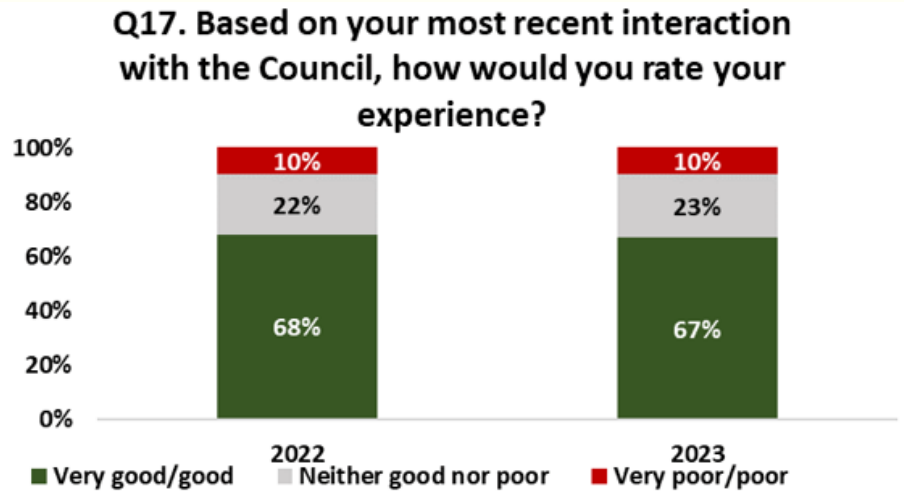


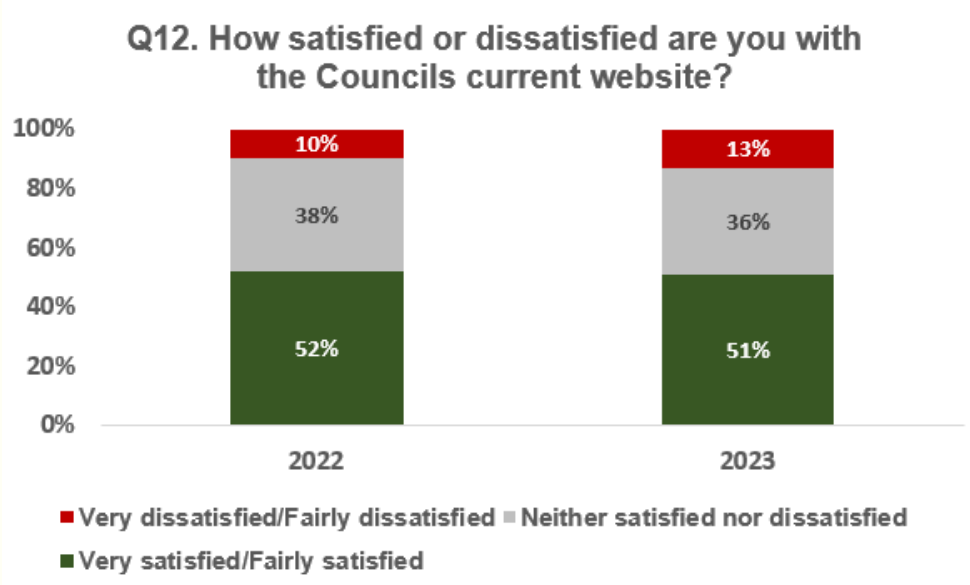
* Source: Local Government Association (2023) Polling on Resident Satisfaction with Councils: Round 36

3. Decision Making

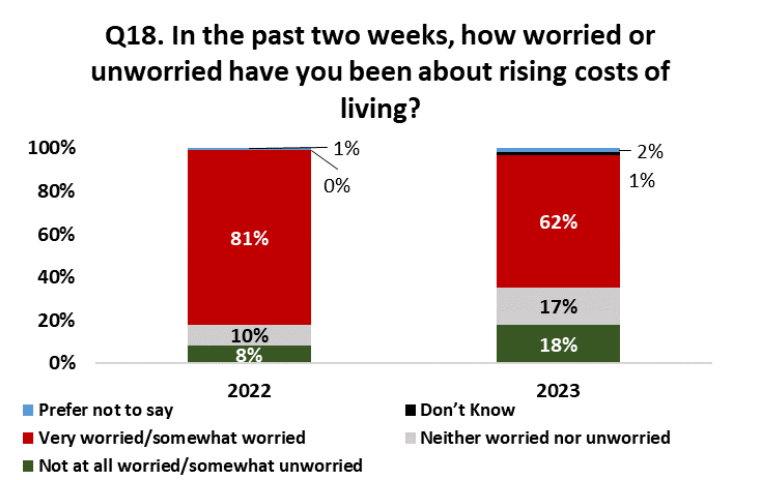


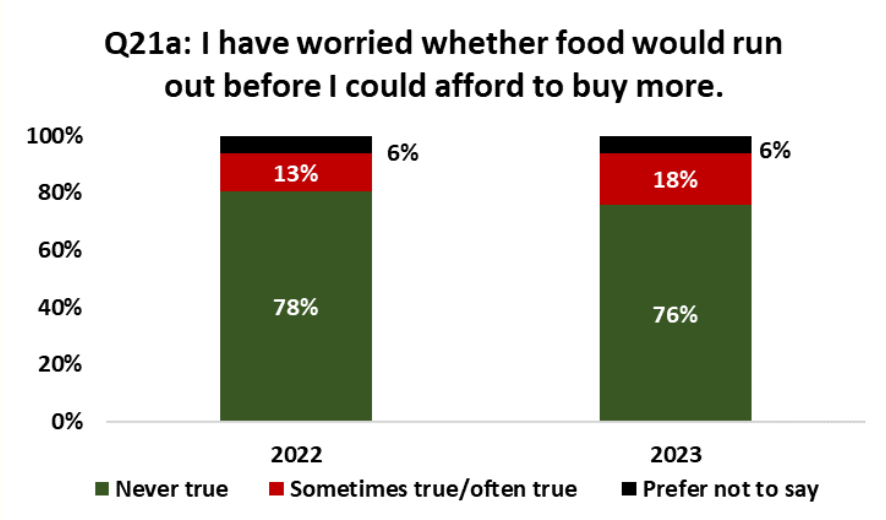
4. Customer Services





5. Cost of Living and food insecurity

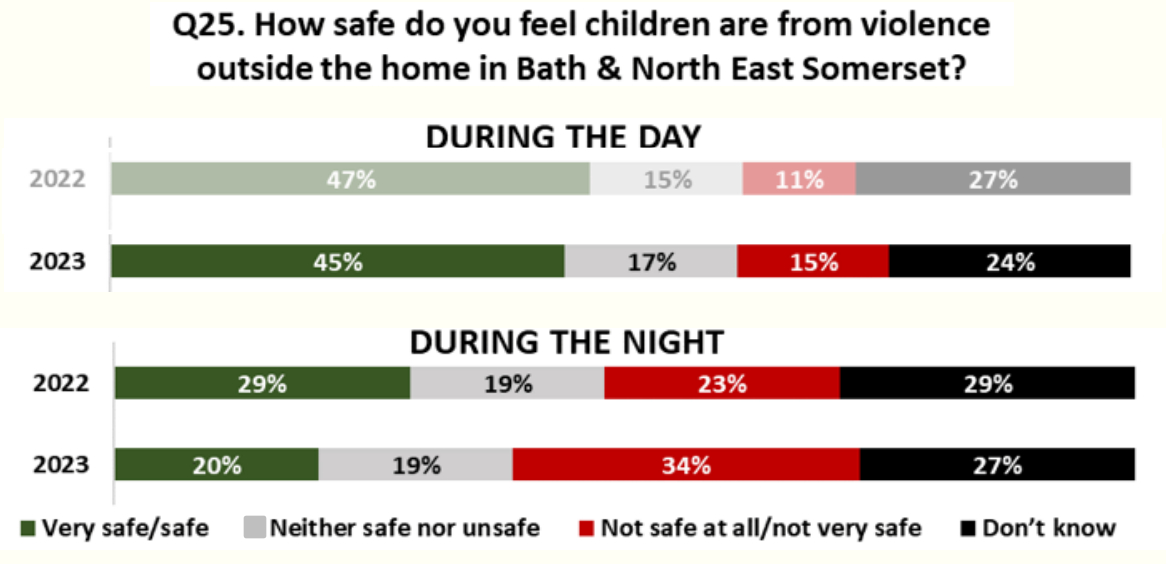


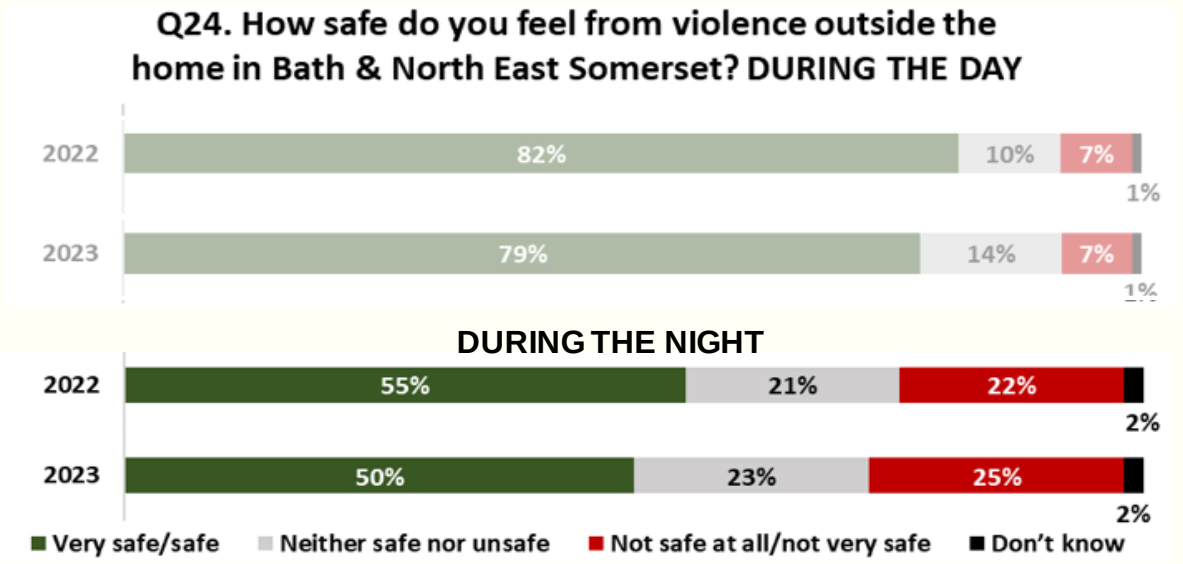


These findings are largely reflective of the national experience of cost-of-living changes and are likely to be largely influenced by national factors.

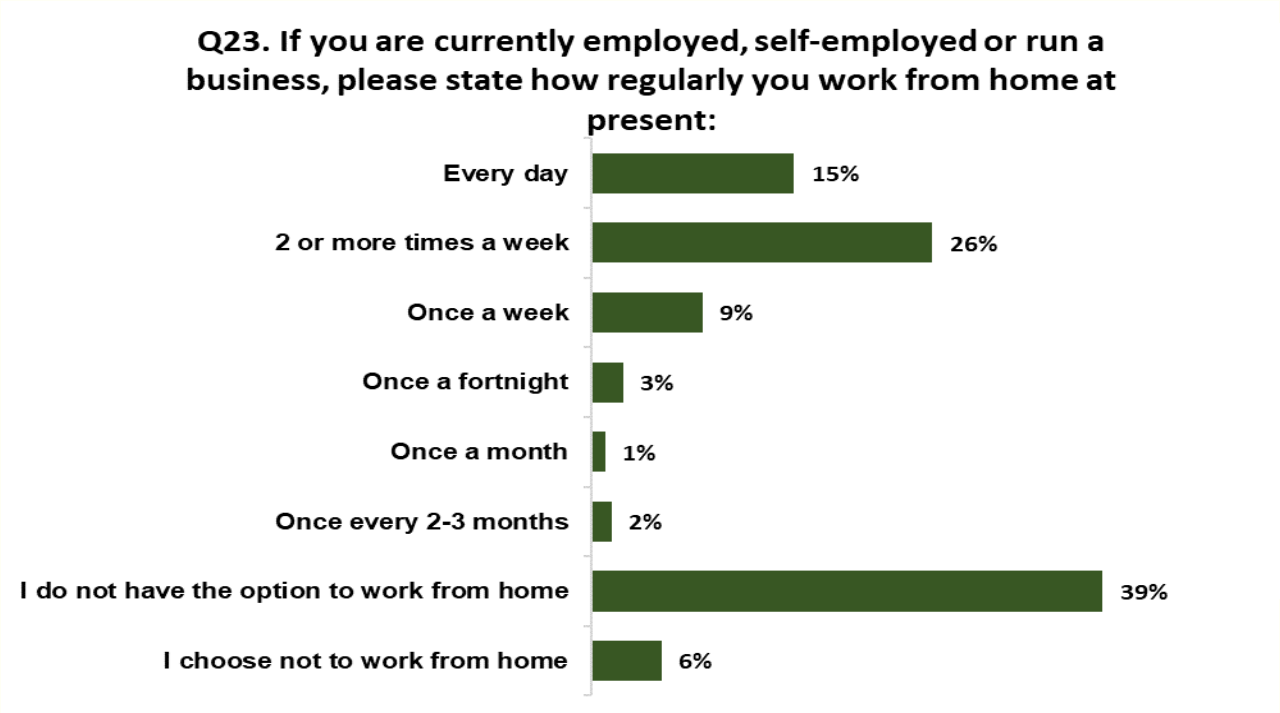
The increase from 13% to 18% in respondents reporting worry about food security is reflective of the impact of cost-of-living challenges on the area's most vulnerable households. This is supported by national trends reported by the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

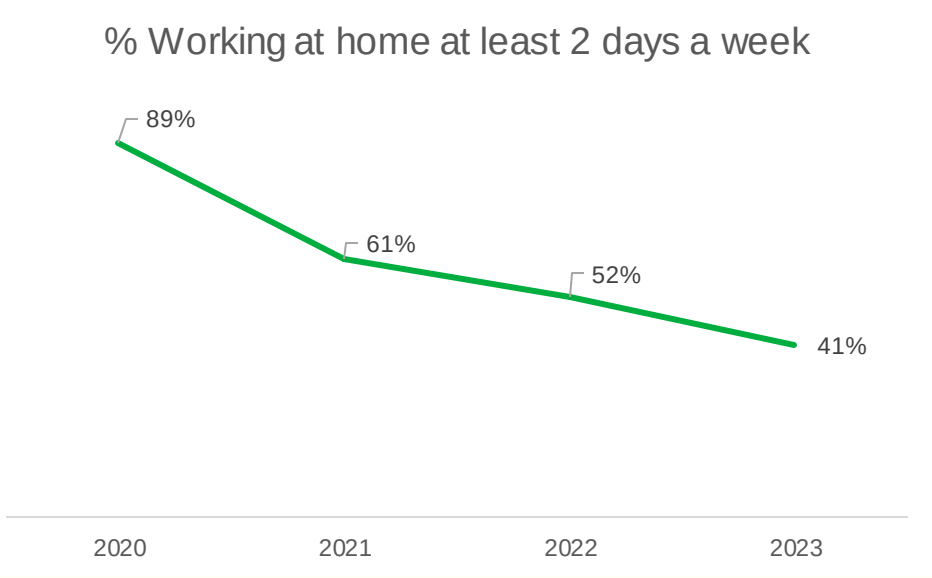
6. Community Safety



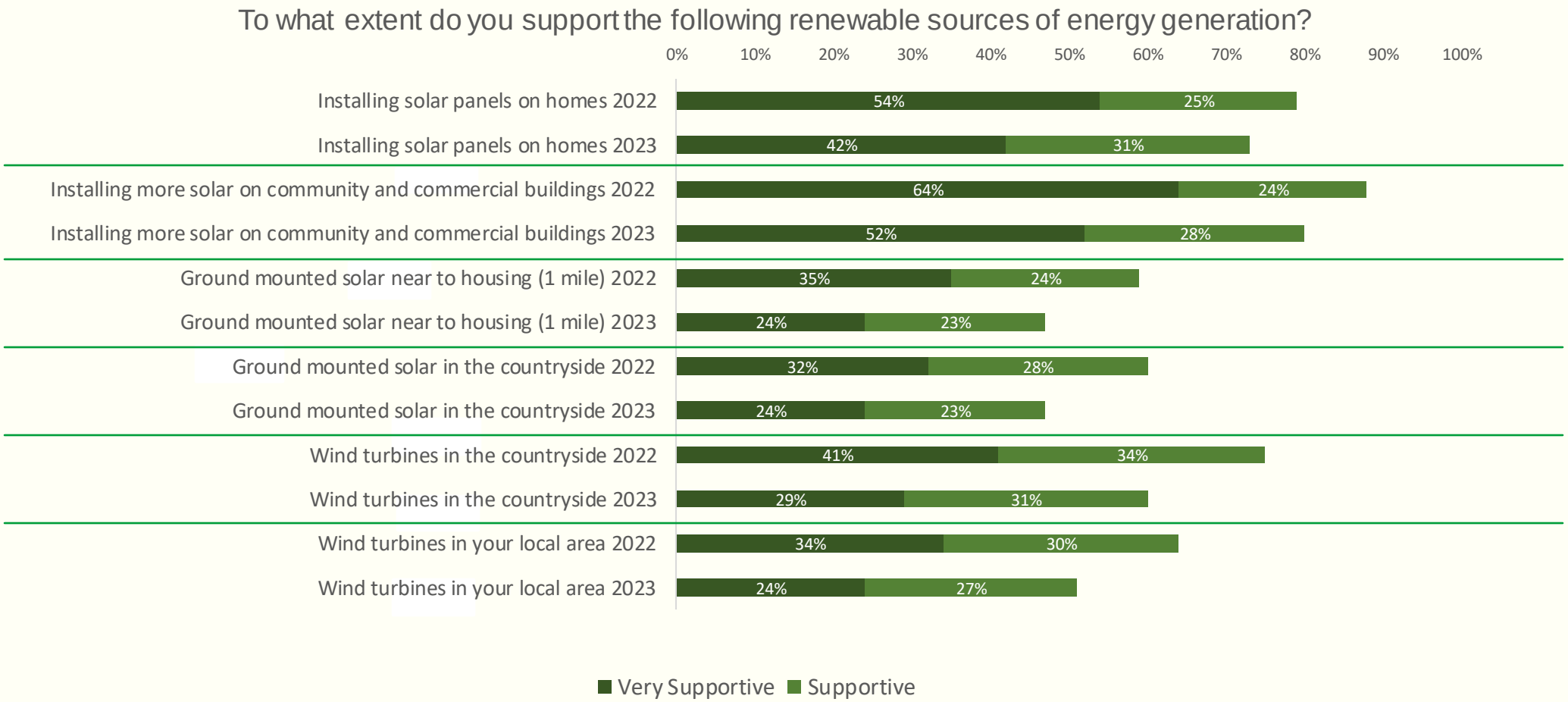


7. Working from home



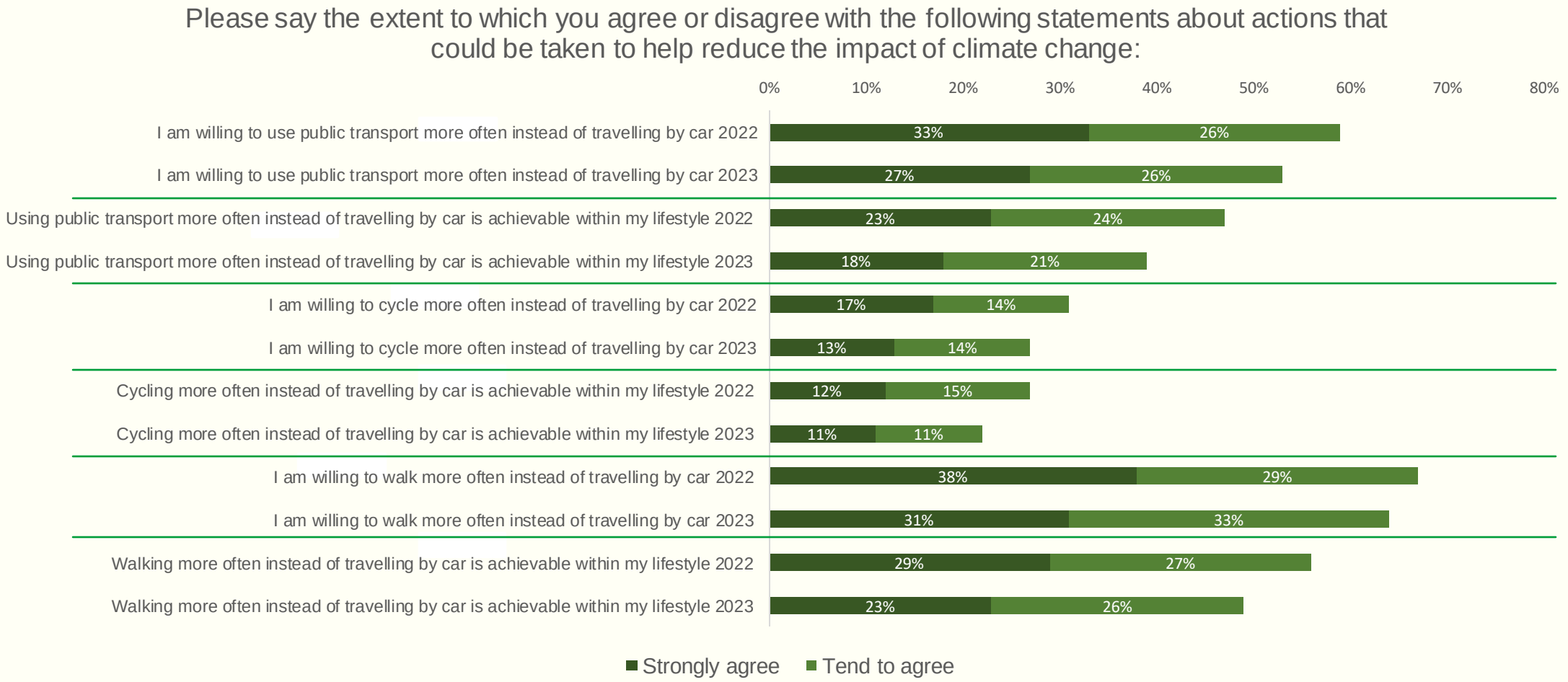


Energy Generation and Efficiency



Broad support for renewable energy generation, particularly domestic and commercial solar and rural wind turbines, but reduction across all sources since 2022.

Transport


Please say the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about actions that could be taken to help reduce the impact of climate change:
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
I am willing to use public transport more often instead of travelling by car 2022
33%
26%
I am willing to use public transport more often instead of travelling by car 2023
27%
26%
Using public transport more often instead of travelling by car is achievable within my lifestyle 2022
23%
24%
Using public transport more often instead of travelling by car is achievable within my lifestyle 2023
18%
21%
I am willing to cycle more often instead of travelling by car 2022
17%
14%
I am willing to cycle more often instead of travelling by car 2023
13%
14%
Cycling more often instead of travelling by car is achievable within my lifestyle 2022
12%
15%
Cycling more often instead of travelling by car is achievable within my lifestyle 2023
11%
11%
I am willing to walk more often instead of travelling by car 2022
38%
29%
I am willing to walk more often instead of travelling by car 2023
31%
33%
Walking more often instead of travelling by car is achievable within my lifestyle 2022
29%
27%
Walking more often instead of travelling by car is achievable within my lifestyle 2023
23%
26%
Strongly agree
Tend to agree

Key Findings for Discussion

Key findings	Context and Interpretation	Strategic Alignment
Satisfaction with how the Council runs things and provides value for money remain lower than national benchmarks and have reduced	Changes in levels of satisfaction have largely followed national patterns although they have both been consistently lower than the national levels. Greater levels of dissatisfaction reported by older working age adults. This cohort of the population also report generally lower life satisfaction. Despite this, satisfaction with recent customer experience is notably higher (67% compared to 47%). Respondents satisfied with customer experience but dissatisfied with how the Council runs things are also more likely to be aged 45-64. Comparative council tax data demonstrates that residents pay less than the regional average in Council tax per head of population.	
11% of respondents feel they can influence decisions, a reduction of 9% points from 2022.	No benchmarking data is available for this information. Fieldwork took place when decisions about bus provision were causing significant debate, and when difficulties with local government finance were also in the national and regional news.	Giving people a say is a key strategic priority for the organisation.
There are lower levels of satisfaction with the Council website than for customer contacts overall. Figure given for those expressing an opinion. Note that nearly 30% of respondents had never used the website.	These findings should be considered in terms of a high level of respondents having no stated opinion of the website and the fact that a high proportion of respondents stated that they have never used the website	The Council's Digital Strategy

Key Findings Continued

Key findings	Context and Interpretation	Strategic Alignment
Perceptions of safety notably lower for children and during the night and worsening over time (from 23% to 34%). **Note level of crime and anti-social behaviour as a priority (section 1).**	These findings can be read in the context of several high-profile serious violence incidents, both in B&NES and neighbouring local authorities. Whilst the Avon & Somerset Violence Reduction Profile notes that the age of violent offenders is getting younger, comparative rates of violent crime in B&NES remain lower than both national and regional figures.	A multi-agency response to community safety and violence reduction form part of the agenda of the Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership.
Broad support for renewable energy generation, particularly domestic and commercial solar.	All areas of renewable energy generation experience popular support, aside from ground mounted solar.	Improving renewable energy infrastructure is part of the Council's response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency.
Positive responses to more sustainable travel activities have reduced, but In terms of more sustainable transport choices, walking more is both most popular and seen to be most achievable.	There remains a disparity between people supporting more sustainable transport routes and feeling that they can achieve them within their lifestyle The reduction is particularly marked regarding public transport, which can be seen in context of recent changes to local provision.	Active and sustainable travel informs both Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities and objectives to reduce vehicle mileage.

For more information

Download the Full report.

Further research can be requested from the Business Intelligence Team

From the Council network, please use the Business Intelligence Request form

Or e-mail research@bathnes.gov.uk