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Summer Survey 2008	Version: Full Results

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Introduction

The Viewpoint Summer 2008 Survey was carried out in July 2008 and was sent to all 701 panel members. Comprising 13 questions, many with multiple parts, the survey focused on two subjects; 'Environment & Climate Change' and 'What You Think of the Viewpoint Panel'.

Questions 1 to 5 concentrated on the environment and climate change and were submitted by the Council's Development & Enterprise Department in preparation for further work to raise awareness on the subject. The latter section of the survey was on the Viewpoint Panel itself, how people felt about being part of it and how well or otherwise they thought it functioned.

In total 400 responses were received. For the Viewpoint panel this gives us a response rate of 57%.

Reports are forwarded to areas of the Council that submitted questions, so that responses can be taken into account in decision-making processes.

The Environment and Climate Change

Question 1. Feelings About Climate Change

This question asked respondents to say how far they agreed or disagreed with 6 statements about their perceptions of climate change, its causes and whether they felt they had any influence on these.

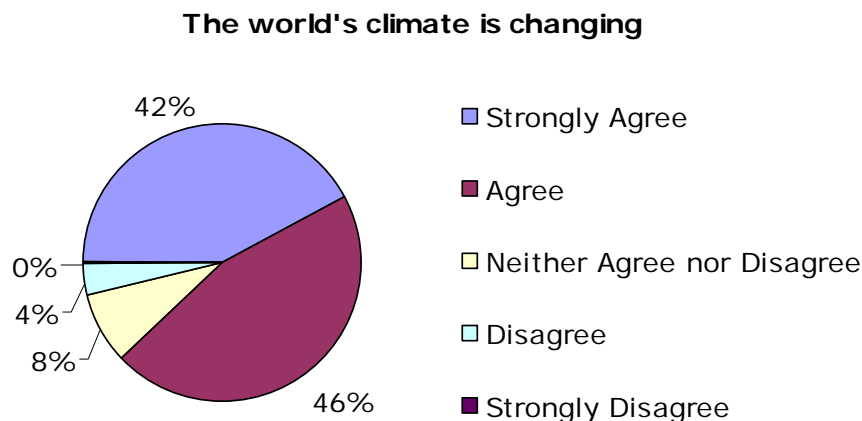


Figure 1

Shown in Figure 1, a majority totalling of 88% strongly agreed or agreed that '*the world's climate is changing*'. This is higher than the national percentage of 74% highlighted in the Local Government Association's survey of May 2008. Of the remainder, 4% disagreed and 8% did not agree or disagree.

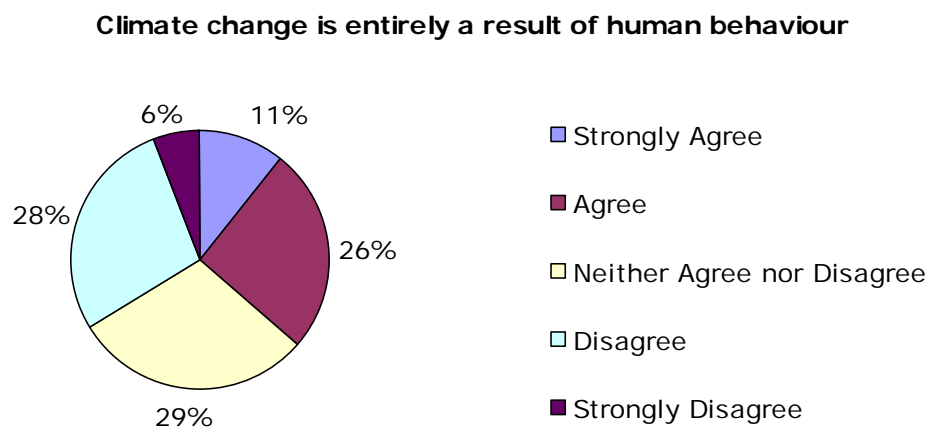


Figure 2

Figure 2 illustrates a much more mixed opinion of the suggestion that '*climate change is entirely a result of human behaviour*'. 11% strongly agreed with this statement, while 6% strongly disagreed. The remainder were almost evenly split; 26% agreed, 28% disagreed and 29% neither agreed nor disagreed.

This reflects feelings about the next statement (Figure 3), which shows that a total of 20% felt that climate change was '*entirely a natural occurrence*'.

(4% strongly agreed, 16% agreed). Almost half, 47% disagreed or strongly disagreed and felt that climate change was not entirely natural, while one third of all respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

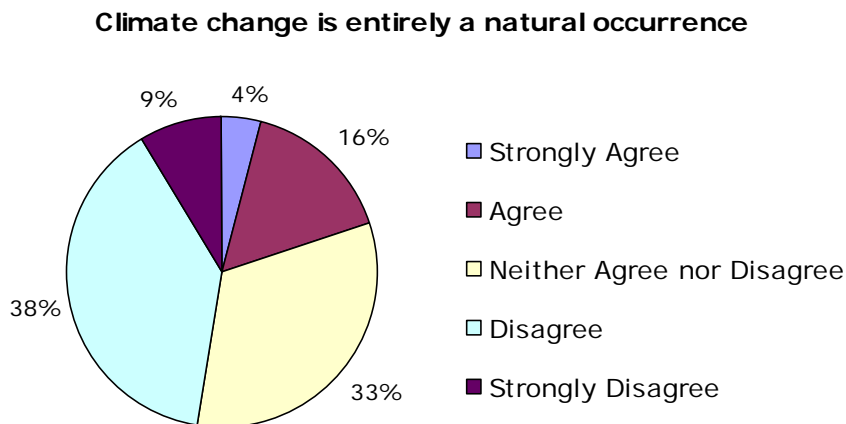


Figure 3

When asked if '*climate change had become more of an issue in the last year*' for respondents, 52% either agreed or strongly agreed, 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 17% did not agree or disagree.

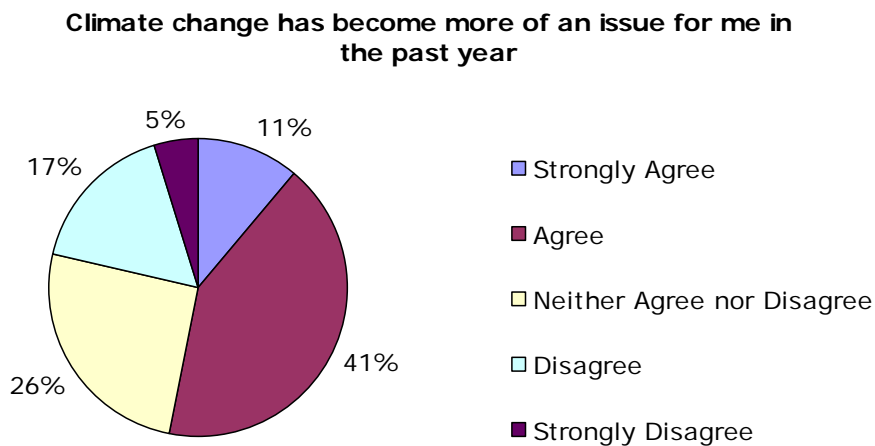


Figure 4

Two thirds of respondents said they '*understand why the climate is changing*', while just less than a quarter were not sure and neither agreed nor disagreed. 10% did not understand and disagreed to some extent, as evident in Figure 5.

I understand why our climate is changing

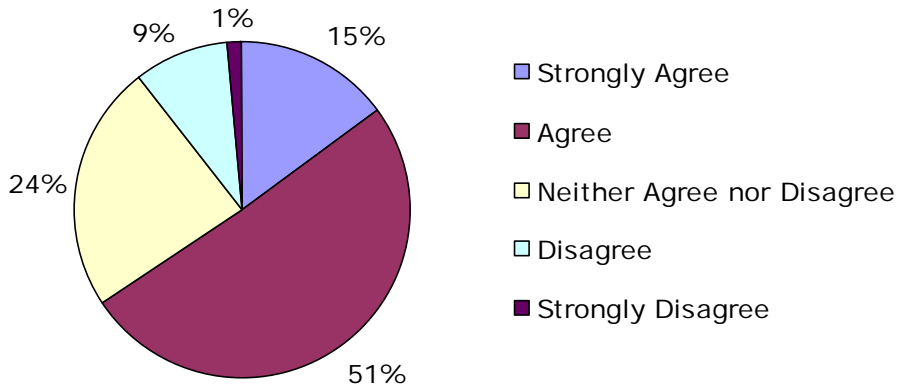


Figure 5

Feelings about personal influence on the effects of climate change reflected almost identical proportions to the previous question. Exactly the same number of respondents who understood why the climate is changing (a total of 66%) also agreed they '*personally could help to limit the effects of climate change*' (Figure 6). 12% felt they could not personally have any effect and 22% did not agree or disagree.

I personally can help to limit the effects of climate change

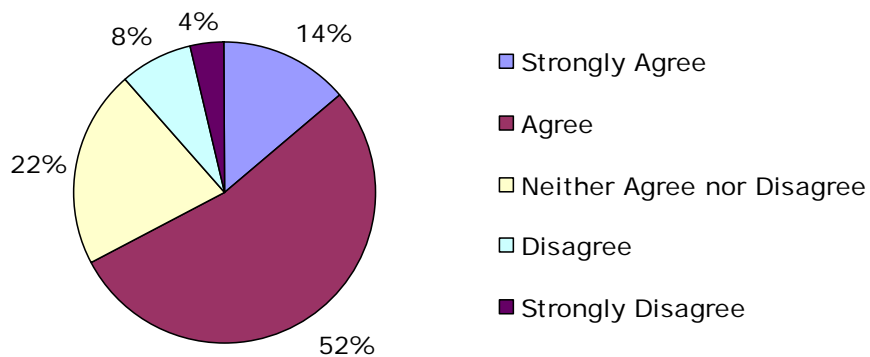


Figure 6

Question 2. Current Lifestyle and the Environment

Respondents were then asked to select a statement to best describe '*how they felt about their current lifestyle*', in relation to the environment. Figure 7 below shows that 45% said they were happy with what they do at the moment, while a further 40% said they would like to do a bit more to help the environment. 14% would like to do a lot more and only 1% were not sure how they felt.

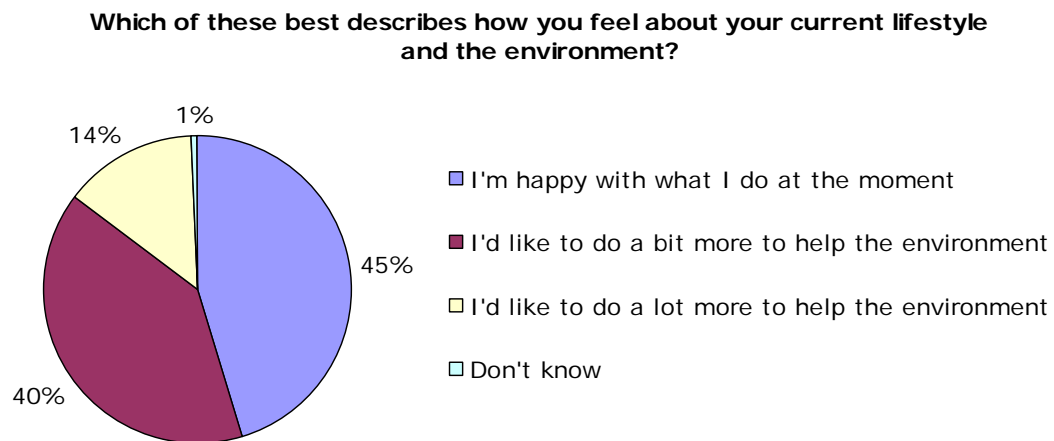


Figure 7

Question 3. Feelings About Current Lifestyle and the Environment

To elaborate on the previous question, people were asked to say '*what day-to-day actions they were currently taking to combat climate change*'. Only 1% said they didn't really do anything. 20% did one or two things, but the majority, a total of 76%, said they did quite a few things or were environmentally friendly in most things they did. 3% said everything they did was environmentally friendly.

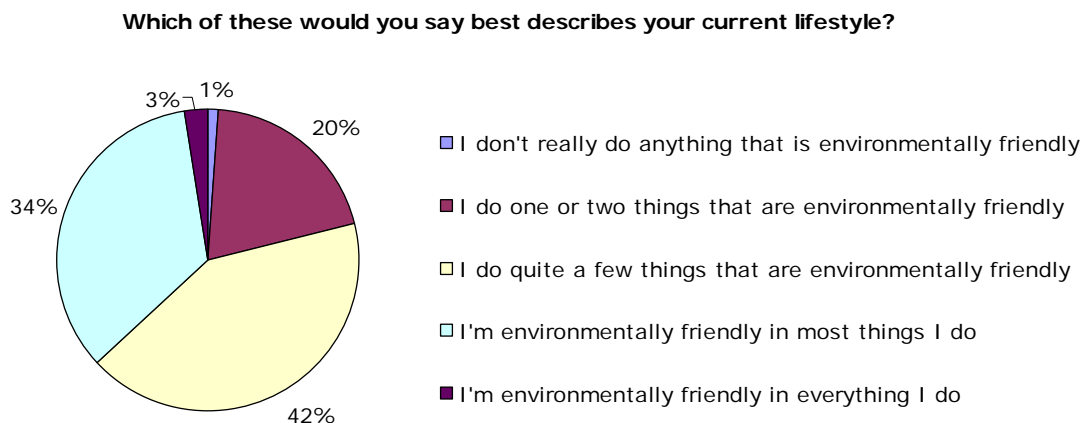


Figure 8

Question 4. Current Lifestyle Evaluation

Environmentally friendly activity was identified in the next section of the survey and respondents stated how often they pursued specific, pro-active activities in their daily lives.

The Government's Energy Saving Trust (EST) recommends turning down home heating thermostats by 1 degree to help reduce carbon emissions and to save money. **72% said their home thermostat was set at 21°C or lower and 19% said theirs was sometimes set similarly. Only 4% said they did this rarely or never, and 5% did not know or did not have a thermostat, as shown in Figure 9 below.**

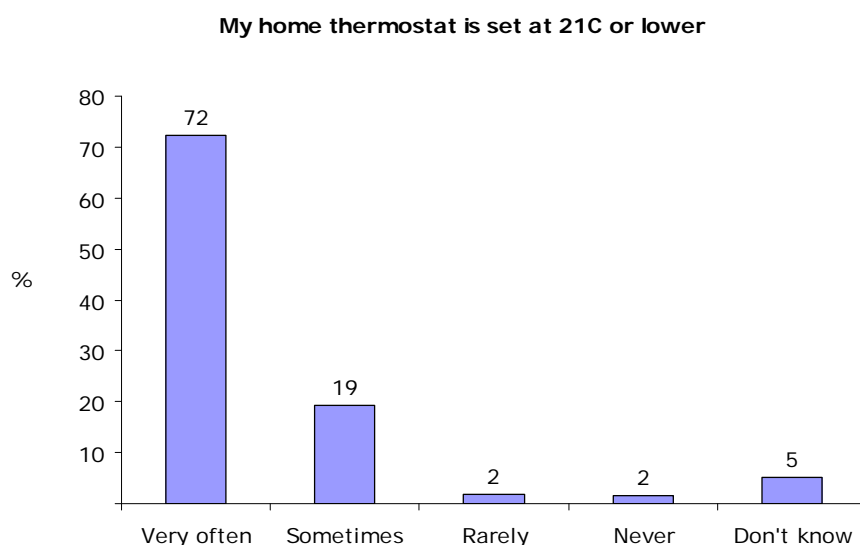


Figure 9

Figure 10 shows **72% of respondents very often saved energy by turning off appliances and not leaving them on standby. 29% did so sometimes and only 5% said they did this rarely or never. This is higher than DEFRA's national percentage of 64%.**

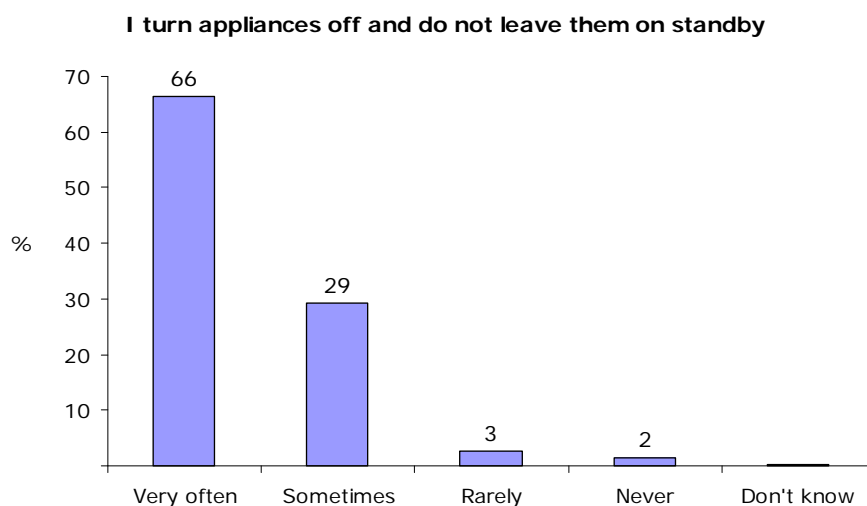


Figure 10

Respondents who said they operated their washing machine at 30°C or lower very often and those who did so sometimes were almost evenly balanced, at 38% and 37% respectively.

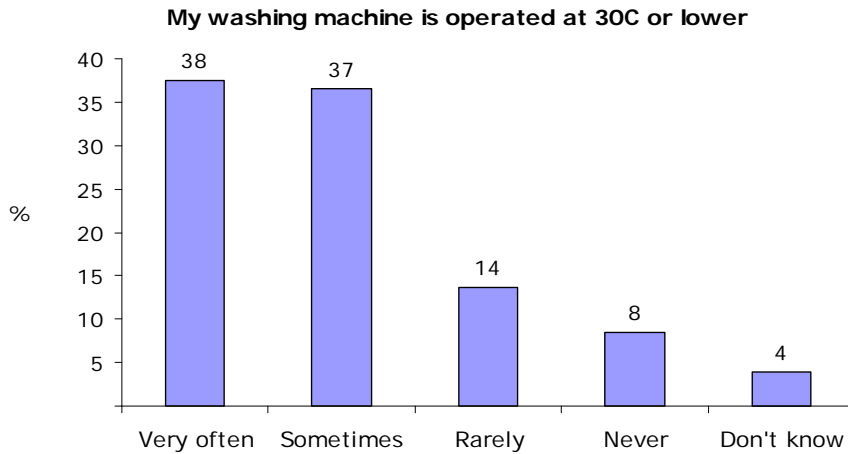


Figure 11

In a marked difference from the two previous energy saving statements, 14% said they rarely operated their washing machine at 30°C or lower, and a further 8% said they never did this. 4% did not know if they did or not. It should be noted however, that some respondents added a note to say their current washing machine did not have a 30°C setting.

Almost two-thirds, 60% of people used energy-saving light bulbs in their homes. 28% sometimes used them, with those rarely or never using them evenly balanced at 6% each. Awareness of use was total, with no respondents saying they did not know (Figure 12). In 2007, the DEFRA survey reported 72% of people using low-energy light bulbs.

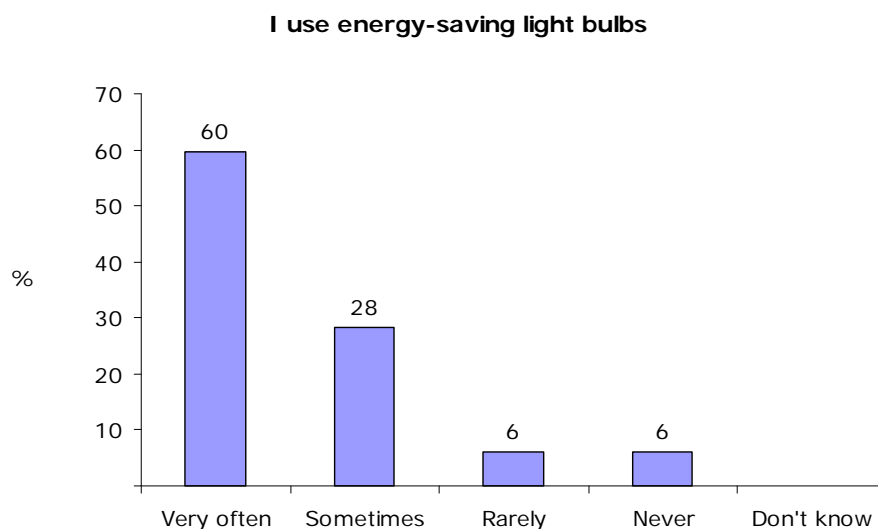


Figure 12

Another widely-accepted environmental impact is that of car engine emissions. Of those people who responded to the statement '*I try to use a car for fewer journeys*' (those who acknowledged using a car), a substantial 45% said they very often tried to use it for fewer journeys.

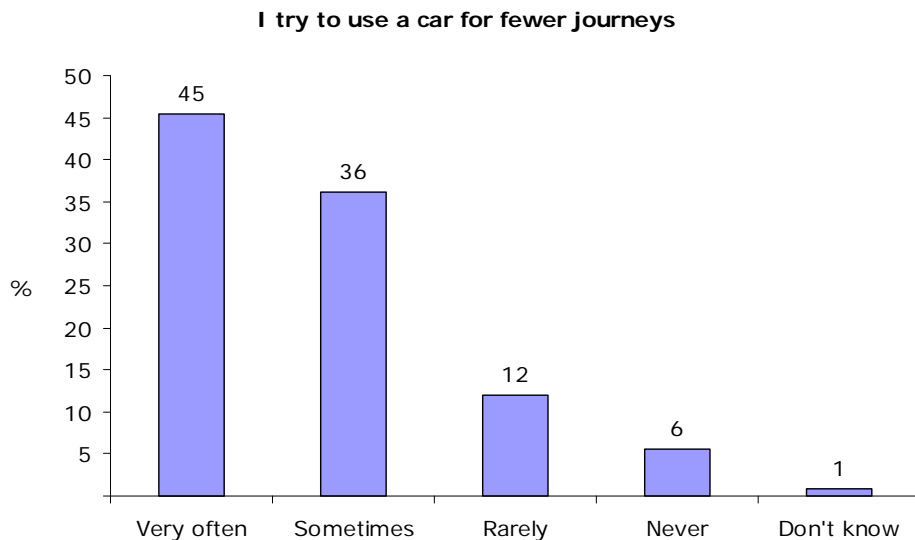


Figure 13

36% sometimes did and 12% rarely avoided using their car. 6% never did so and 1% were unsure. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) 2007 '*Survey Report of Public Attitudes and Behaviours Towards the Environment*' revealed the national figure for people who were using their car less as 29%. This shows Gateshead residents are making more effort than average in reducing car use.

The only statement that did not result in 'very often' being the most common response was that on choosing holidays that avoid air travel. The greatest proportion, at 36%, said they sometimes chose such holidays, as is illustrated below. This was closely followed though, by those who said they very often did, at 31%. Almost one-fifth, 19% said they rarely avoided air-travel holidays and 12% said they never did. 1% were unsure on this statement. DEFRA's report showed 29% trying to fly less.

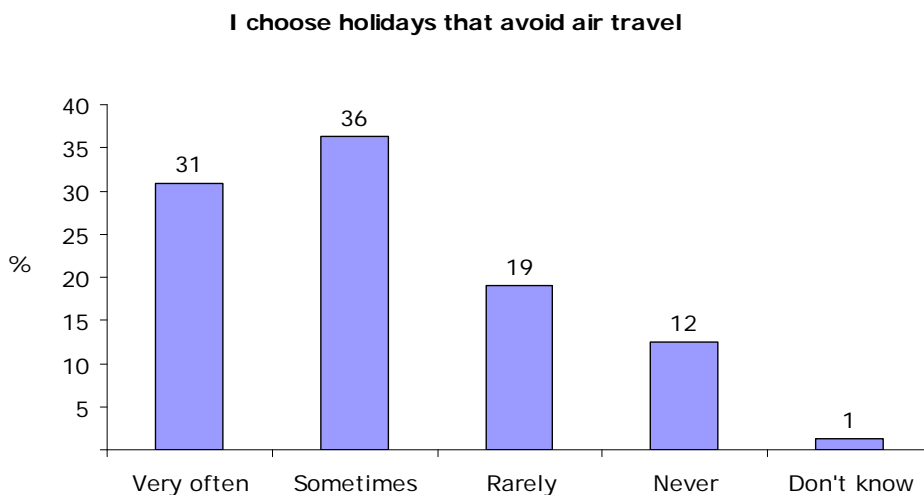


Figure 14

The vast majority of respondents '*made full use of all the recycling schemes available*', with 81% choosing this answer. A further 16 % said they sometimes made use of recycling facilities, with a total of only 4% remaining saying they rarely or never did.

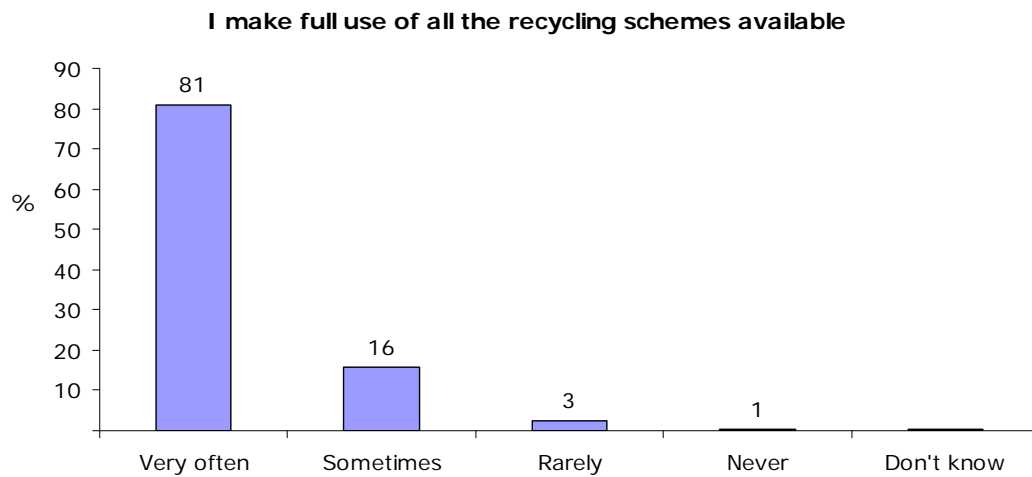


Figure 15

This assumes of course that respondents are well aware of all the recycling schemes available to them.

Question 5. Energy Efficiency at Home

This question related to the energy efficiency of their homes and cars and whether this was likely to improve. The options¹ given for response were

- No
- Partly
- Yes
- Don't know

Respondents were firstly asked to say whether their house loft was '*insulated to the recommended depth of 270mm*'. Figure 16 below shows a substantial majority of 62% have such insulation, and just less than half that amount, 30% say either that they do not, or only partly meet this recommendation.

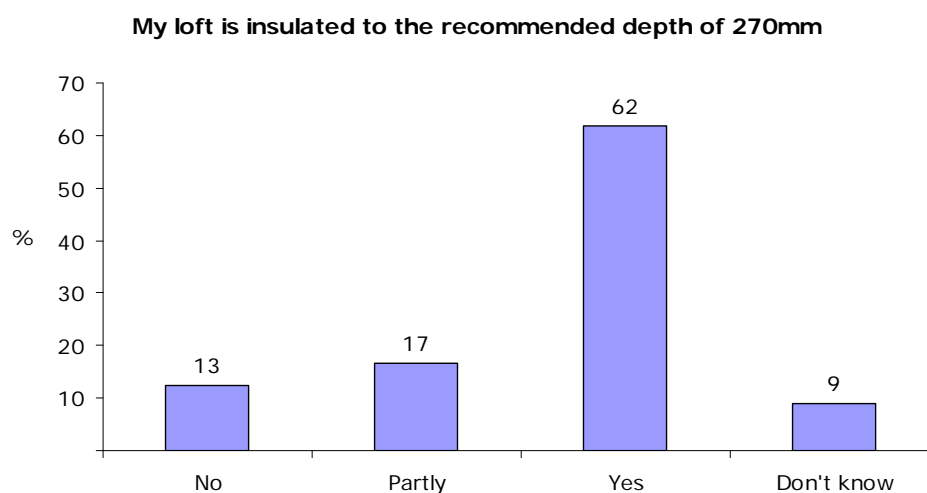


Figure 16

¹ It should be borne in mind that no option of 'not applicable' was offered for this statement, although a few respondents (0.3%) did add this to their survey forms. With hindsight, this option should have been available for all the statements offered in this question.

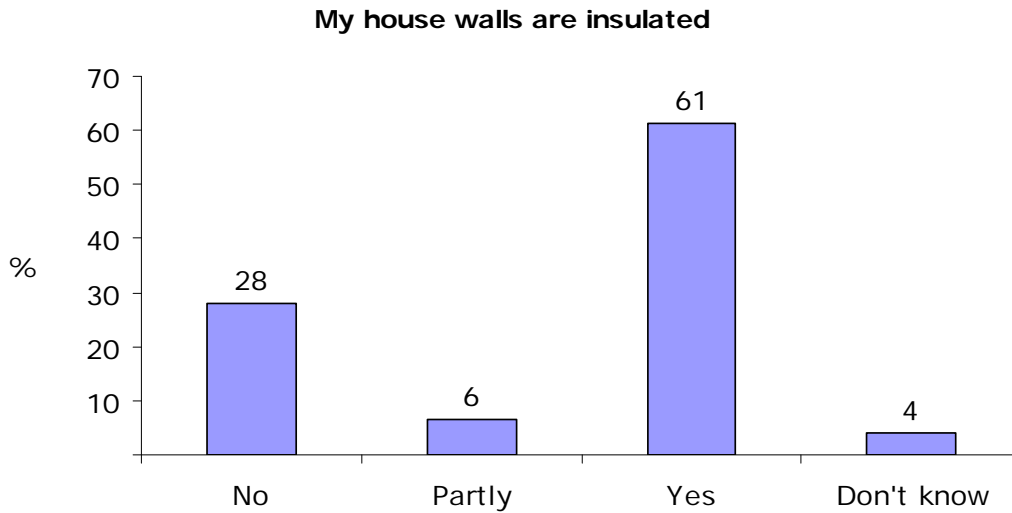


Figure 17

'House wall insulation' showed a similar pattern of response, although some respondents did add that some or all of the walls of their home were not of the cavity type but solid, and therefore this was not possible. Figure 17 shows however that **61%** said that their cavity walls were insulated, **28%** were not and **6%** said their walls were partly insulated. **4%** did not know.

The Energy Saving Trust (EST) states that

"About 60% of your household's CO2 emissions come from your boiler. That's why choosing a condensing boiler is so important. Fitting a new condensing boiler will not only reduce your home's CO2 emissions by more than 800 kilograms a year, but it could also save you between £120 and £140 a year on your energy bills." [\[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk\]](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

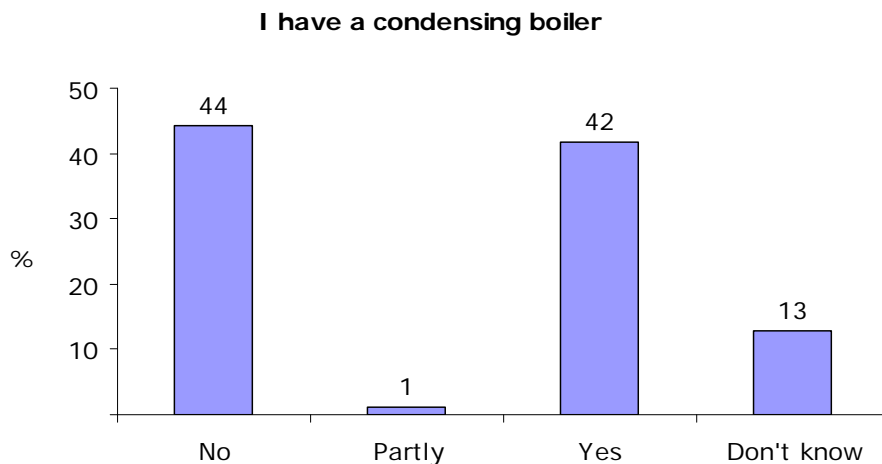


Figure 18

Figure 18 shows that almost equal numbers of people **do (44%)** and **do not (42%)** have 'condensing boilers'. Interestingly, **13%** do not know whether their boiler is a condensing model or not. **1%** indicate they may have, by selecting the 'partly' response.

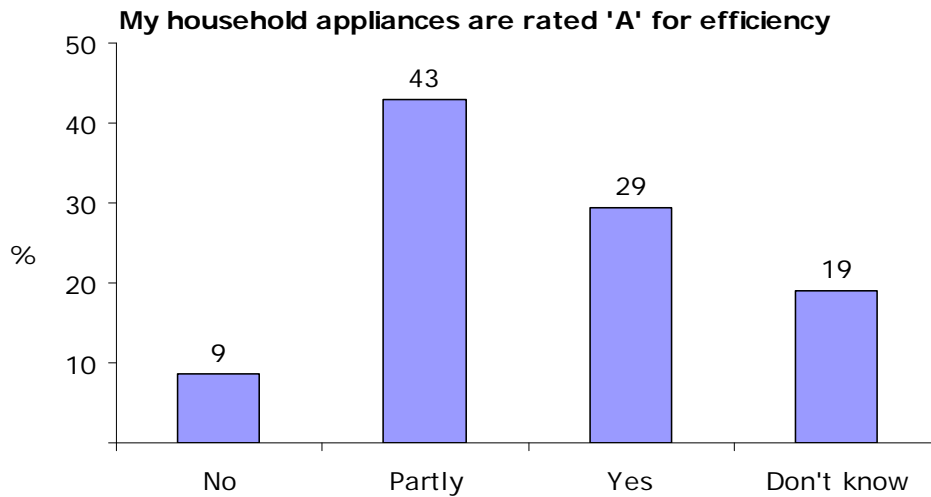


Figure 19

Almost half the respondents (43%) have some 'household appliances that are A rated for efficiency', as illustrated in Figure 19. 29% indicate all their appliances comply and almost one fifth, (19%) do not know. Less than one tenth of all respondents do not use any such appliances. Two-thirds of people nationally said they would buy such appliances even if they cost more (DEFRA Report).

Exactly half of those respondents with cars have vehicles that are 'fuel efficient and produce low CO2 emissions'.

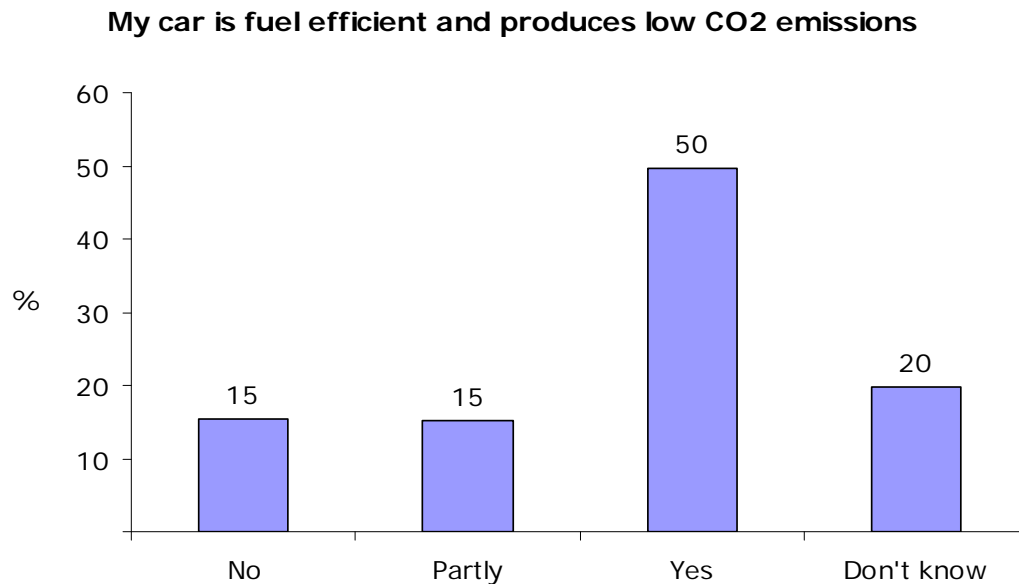


Figure 20

15% had partly and non-fuel efficient cars respectively and 20% did not know.

What You Think of the Viewpoint Panel

This section of the survey examined Focus Group and Survey participation of Viewpoint members and asked how people felt these activities worked for them. It also asked members about the Viewpoint web pages and if members would prefer communications by email.

Question 6. Focus Group Participation

Members were asked to think about the duration of their membership and if they had attended a Focus Group in that time. Exactly half the respondents had attended at least one Focus Group. Names are selected at random using an automated process for such activities and generally, around 10% of those invited respond to say they will attend.

In this question, members were asked to say how far they agreed with various statements about the Viewpoint Panel.

Thinking of your time on the panel, have you attended a focus group?

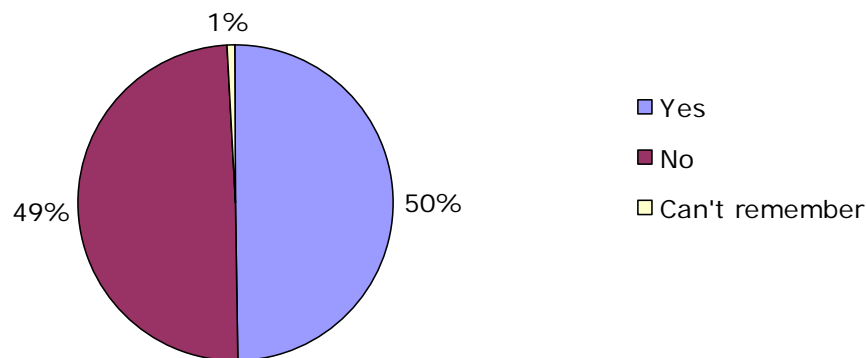


Figure 21

Question 7. About the Focus Groups You Have Been Invited To

When asked if they '*enjoyed attending focus groups*', a total 55% of people said they **did** and a further 40% **did not** feel strongly either way. 4% **did not** enjoy attending and 1% felt strongly that it was not enjoyable.

I enjoy going to focus groups

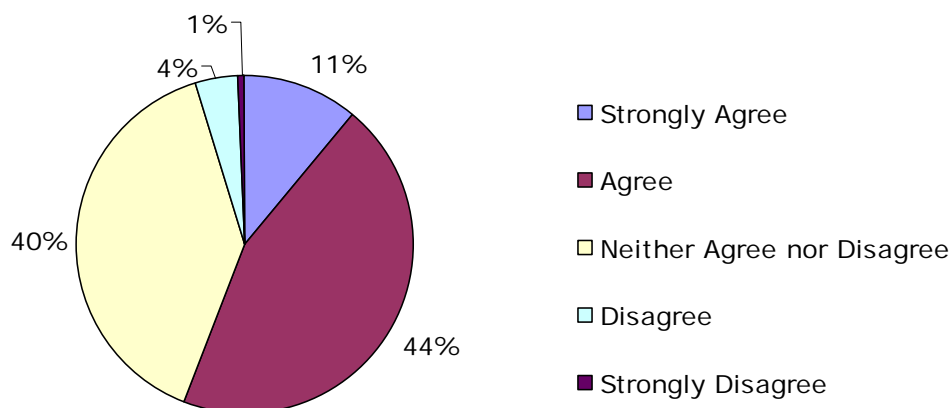


Figure 22

Invitations are sent out as early as possible to enable members to make any necessary arrangements to allow them to attend. Among those who had attended a focus group before, 15% felt they did not receive invitations in good time. A total of 61% of people felt they *did* 'receive invitations in enough time' to be able to attend. The remaining 24% neither agreed nor disagreed.

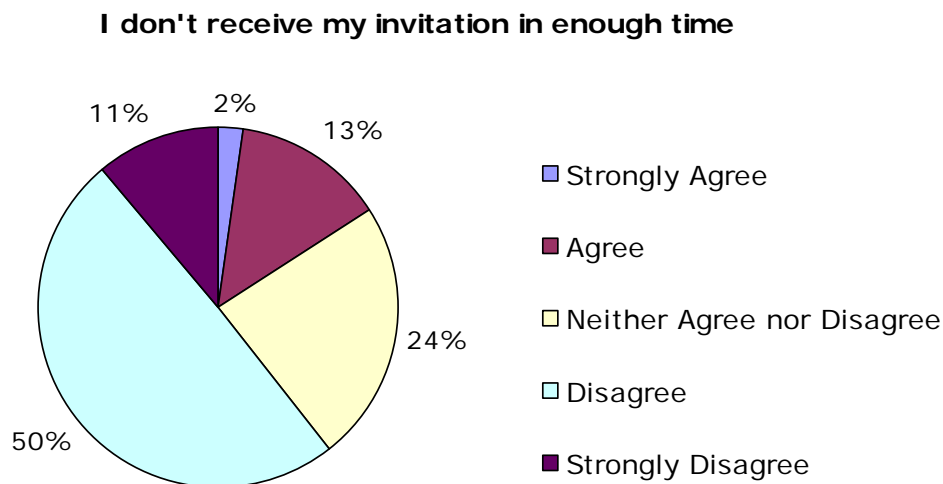


Figure 23

Focus Groups are generally held at Gateshead's Civic Centre. When asked if they *'found the venue easy to get to'*, over two thirds (70%) said they *did* find it easy. 9% did not find it easy and 21% did not feel strongly either way, as seen in Figure 24. (There was a statement later in this section that sought views on whether focus groups should be held at community venues, which can be seen on page 19.)

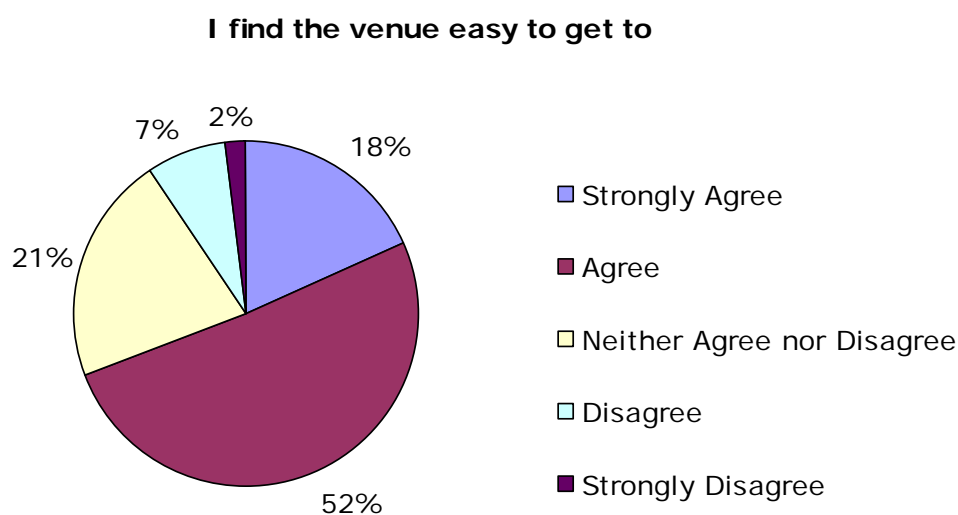


Figure 24

The next statement looked at whether members felt '*the range of topics was limited*'. A total of 24%, just under a quarter of respondents, agreed with this, while 30% disagreed. The largest number though, almost half (46%) felt neutral about this.

I find the range of topics is limited

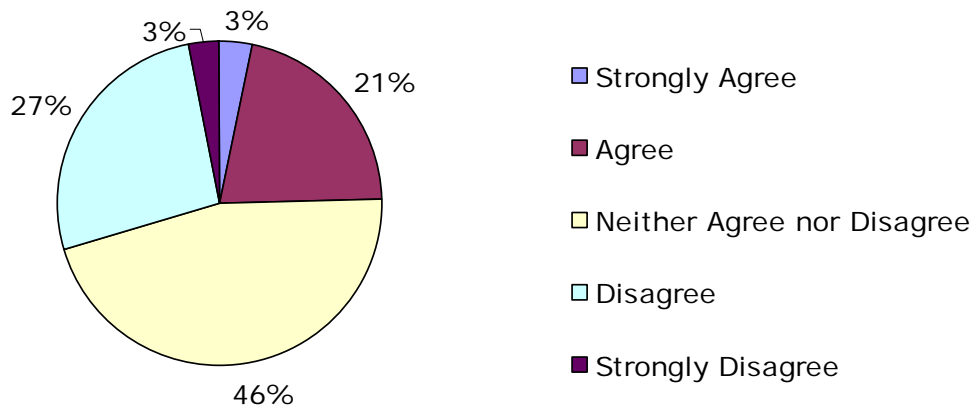


Figure 25

Over two-thirds of respondents felt '*comfortable speaking out in front of the group*' and one-fifth did not mind either way. However, Figure 26 shows a total of 12% felt uncomfortable doing so. This may be due to many factors, but can be understood in the context of the next statement on domination of individuals within groups.

I feel comfortable speaking out in front of the group

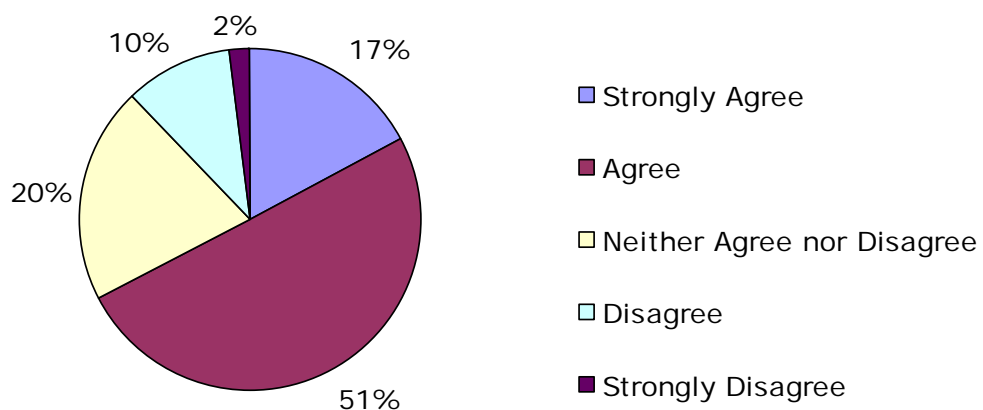


Figure 26

32% of respondents felt that '*the groups were often dominated by one or more residents*'. 11% disagreed and as Figure 27 overleaf illustrates, over half (57%) felt neutral on this statement.

The groups are often dominated by one or more residents

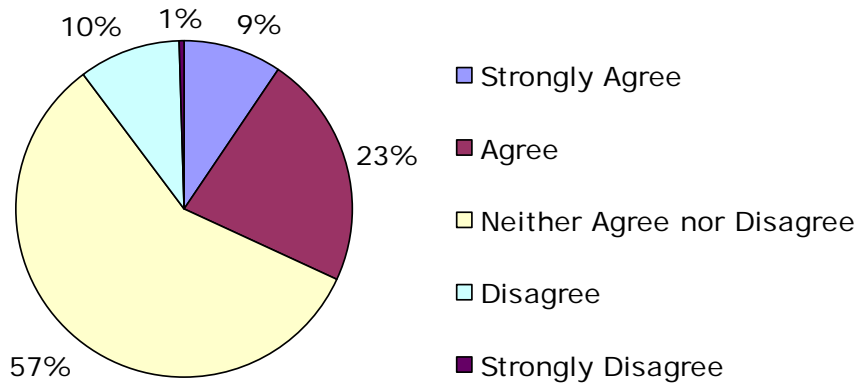


Figure 27

On the subject of the *'amount of information that is fed back'* from Viewpoint, 68% were happy with the current level. 25% expressed no opinion and 7% were unhappy.

It is interesting to note that of the 289 people who answered *both* of the last 2 statements, some of those that felt unhappy speaking out in front of a group are the same people who felt that others dominated the groups, suggesting a possible connection. Numbers of these respondents are highlighted in the table below.

		"The groups are often dominated by one of more residents"					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
"I feel comfortable speaking out in front of the group"	Strongly Agree	5	13	22	7		47
	Agree	16	31	85	15	1	148
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	13	42	4	1	62
	Disagree	4	5	16	2		27
	Strongly Disagree		3	2			5
Figure 28	Total	27	65	167	28	2	289

Asked if they were happy 'with the amount of information fed back' to them, the majority of residents said they were; 9% strongly agreed and 59% agreed. 25% expressed no opinion either way and a total of 7% were not happy with feedback. (See Figure 29 below).

I am happy with the amount of information that is fed back

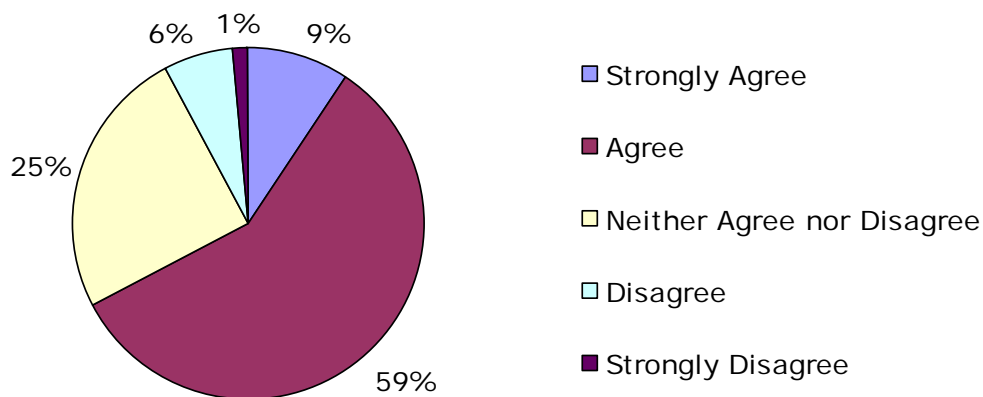


Figure 29

Following on from the earlier element on ease of travel to the venue, the next part of this question referred to 'preference for groups to be held at local community venues'. A substantial number of people expressed such a preference, with 15% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing. 39% were neutral and a total of 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I would prefer groups to be held at local community venues

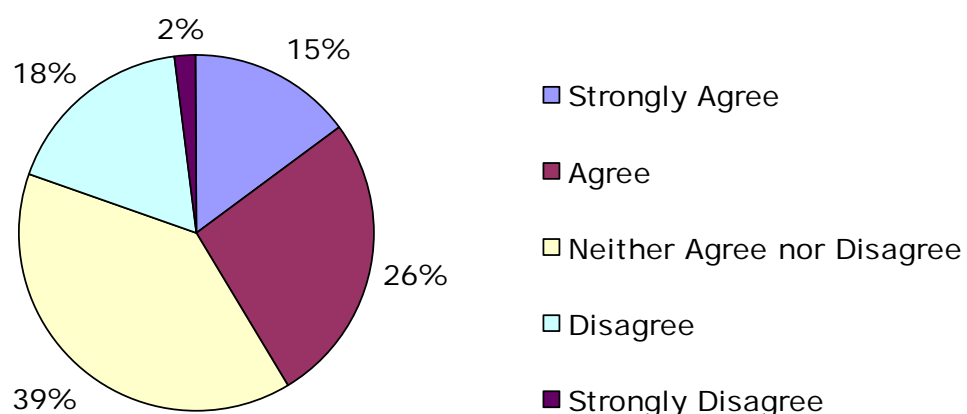


Figure 30

The next element focused on whether *'the focus groups are well organised'*. Two thirds of respondents felt the groups were well organised; 19% strongly agreed and 47% agreed. 33% were neutral and only 1% disagreed.

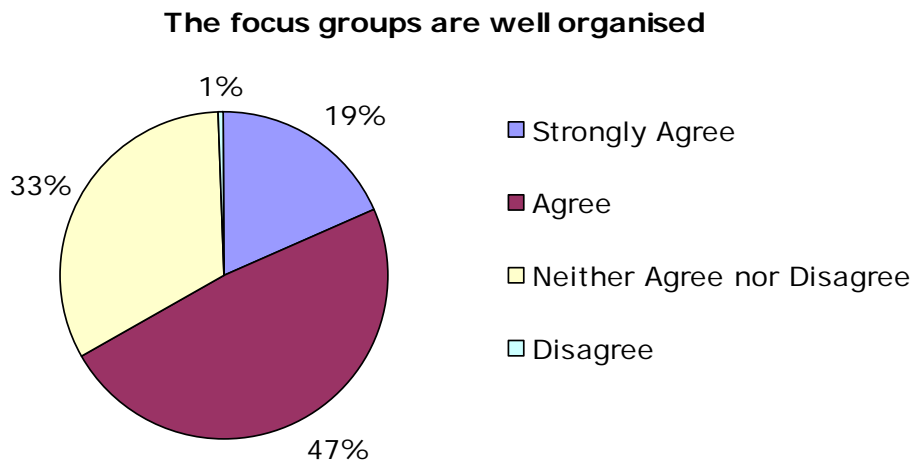


Figure 31

In direct contrast to the results for the question on happiness with the level of feedback received, 8% of participants strongly agreed and 44% agreed that they would *'like to know more about how their input has had an influence'*. 35% expressed no preference and 3% did not want any more information. Figure 32 illustrates this below.

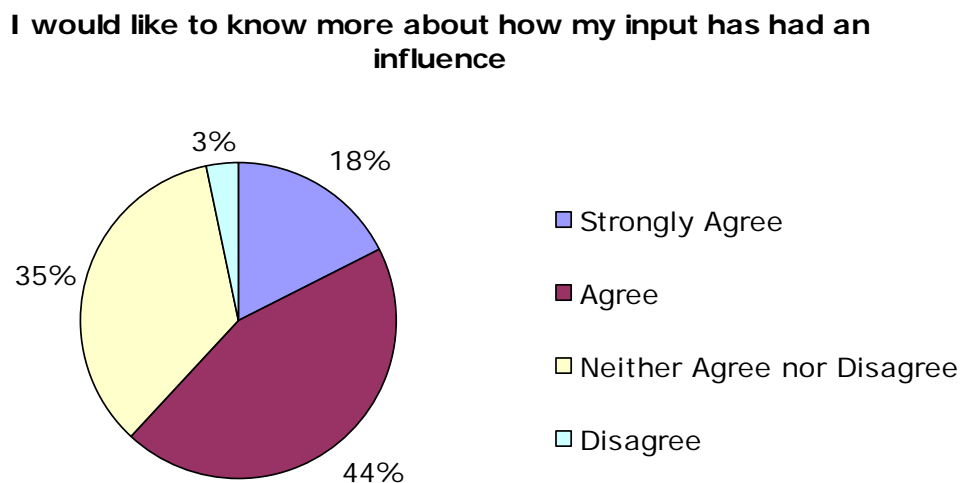


Figure 32

Question 8. Survey Participation

Similar to Question 6, this was a yes-or-no answer question on whether respondents had taken part in a Viewpoint Survey before. Surveys are sent to all members twice each year, one in summer and one in winter.

Split almost exactly in half, Figure 33 shows that 50% had taken part in a previous survey, while 49% had not. 1% had no recollection of a previous survey. Although the surveys are regular, this split is to be expected with a panel that has a regular influx of new members of members as Viewpoint does.

Thinking of your time on the panel, have you attended a focus group?

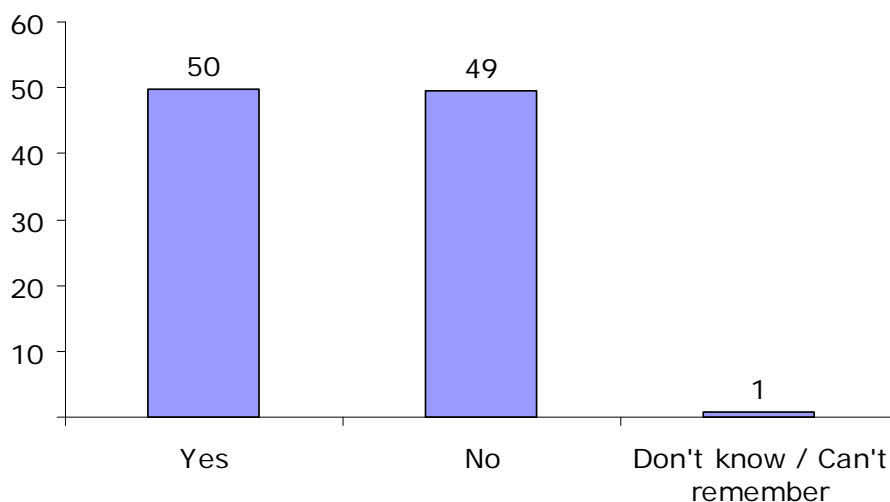


Figure 33

Question 9. Feelings about participating in surveys

When asked if they '*enjoyed completing the surveys*', only 1% of participants disagreed. 20% expressed no opinion, but the vast majority, 79% either agreed or strongly agreed that it was an enjoyable experience.

I enjoyed completing the surveys

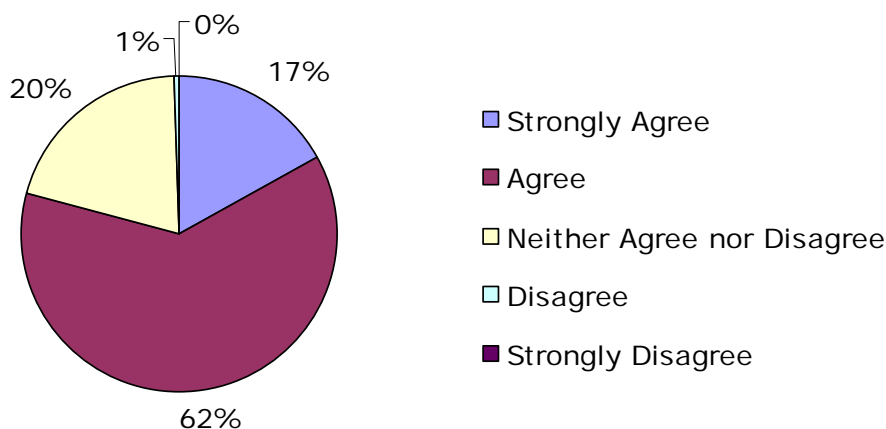


Figure 34

Residents were asked if they would '*prefer to complete their surveys online*'. A total of 19% said they would prefer this and 30% were neutral. However just over half of respondents; 51% disagreed. There is a further question regarding this later in the survey, in which people are asked to give an email address if they wish to pursue this (Question 12, page 28).

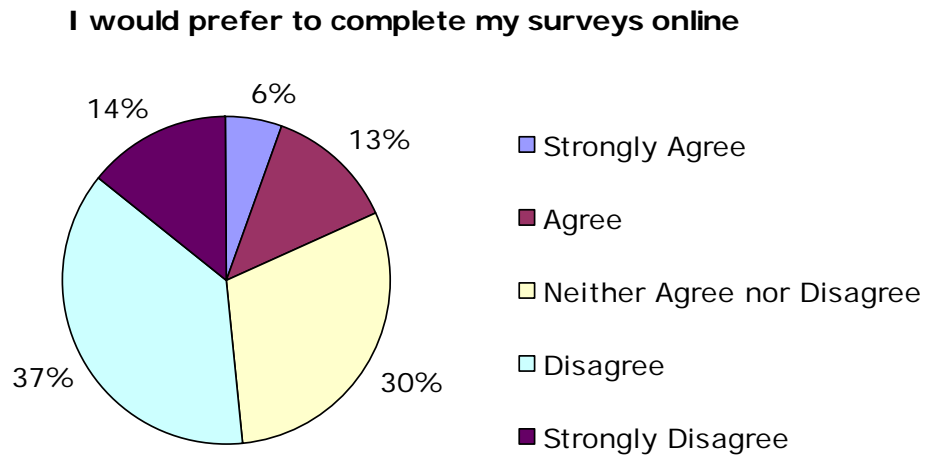


Figure 35

The next element related to whether people felt '*the surveys are well-designed*'. Figure 36 shows that 64% agreed and 14% strongly agreed that they were well designed and 17% expressed no opinion. However, 4% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.

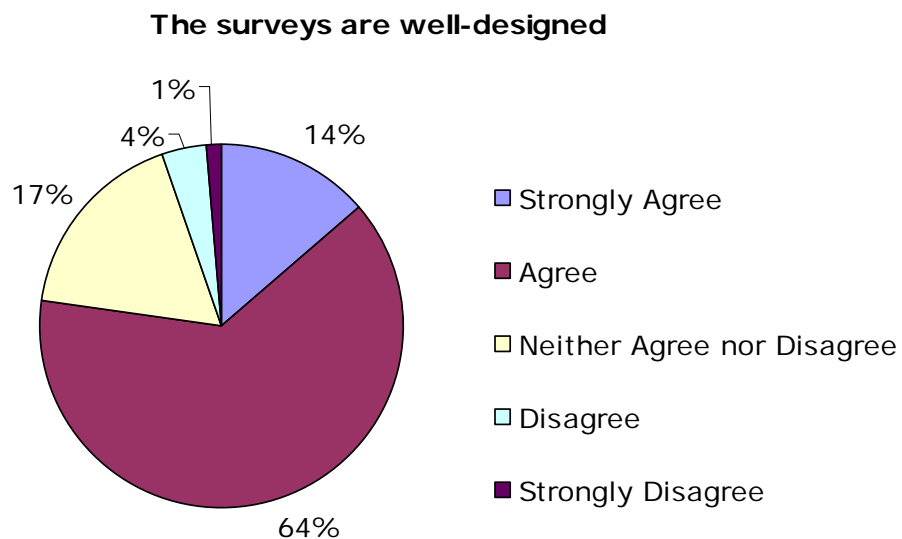


Figure 36

Viewpoint actively seeks as wide a range of subjects as possible for its surveys. The range of topics offered to focus groups is a direct result of questions that are submitted to Viewpoint from various areas within the Council.

Residents were asked whether they '*find the range of topics limited*'. 4% strongly agreed and 26% agreed that topics were limited; 27% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. 41% were neutral on this point.

I find the range of topics is limited

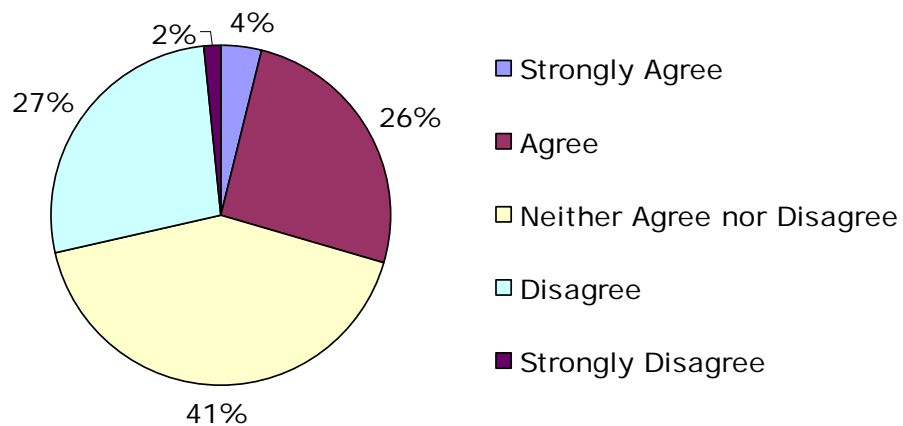


Figure 37

How a question is worded can have an effect on how it is answered, so questions are constructed very carefully to give clarity and a balance across the survey. People were asked if the 'questions are usually easy to understand'. Almost all respondents, 95% agreed they were easy to understand, with only 1% in disagreement. No-one strongly disagreed and 4% expressed no opinion either way.

The questions are usually easy to understand

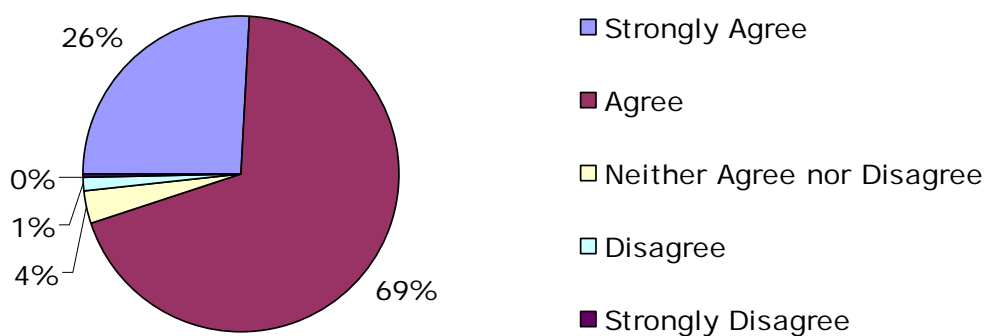


Figure 38

The number of questions and the length of the survey document are kept to the minimum required to achieve the responses needed. This seems to be working well on the whole, with only 3% of respondents **agreeing** that '*the surveys take too long to complete*'. A total of 79% felt the surveys were not too long and 18% were neutral.

I find the surveys take too long to complete

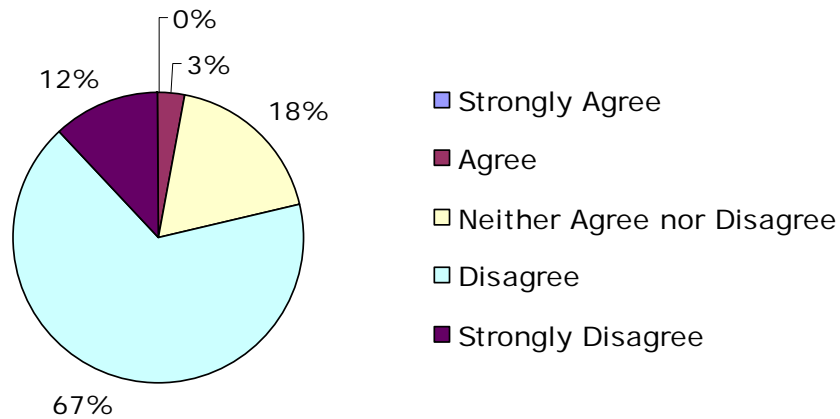


Figure 39

Shadowing the earlier element in Question 7 on feedback relating to focus groups, survey participants are almost identically split on '*happiness with the amount of information that is fed back*'. Figure 40 shows that a total of 63% agreed the feedback is sufficient, 25% were neutral and a total of 12% felt they would like more feedback.

I am happy with the amount of information that is fed back

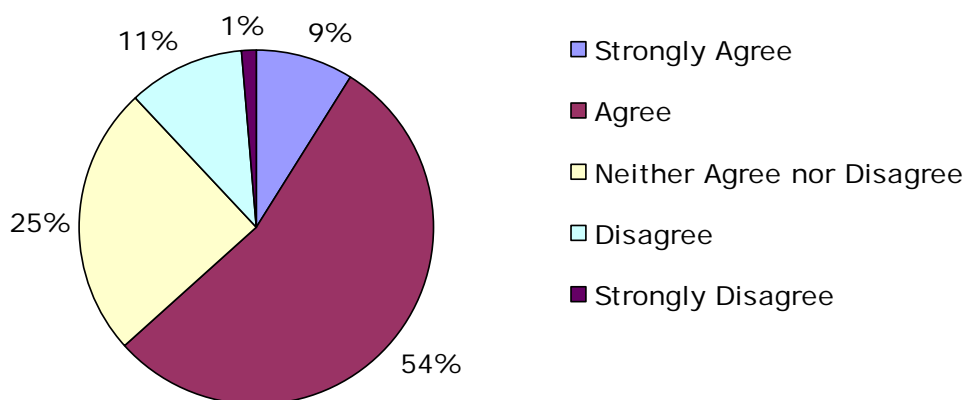


Figure 40

Time made available to participate and complete surveys can have a bearing on response rates, especially in summer when people may be away on holiday. Currently, around one calendar month is given to return completed survey forms.

Only 2% of respondents strongly agreed that '*more time should be given to return the survey*'. 8% agreed and 28% were neutral. The majority however, a total of 62% felt sufficient time was given already.

I think more time should be given to return the survey

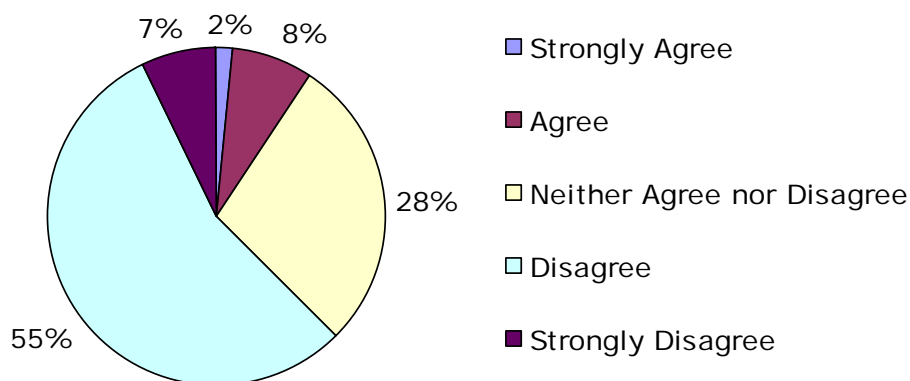


Figure 41

Importantly, 90% of participants felt that '*surveys are a good way to have an input*', and only 2% disagreed to any extent. The remaining 8% neither agreed nor disagreed, as illustrated in Figure 42.

The surveys are a good way for me to have an input

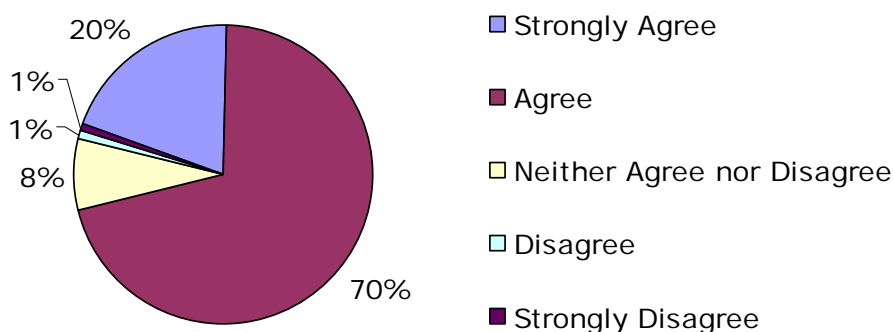


Figure 42

When participants were asked if they '*would like to know more about how their input has had an influence*', very similar numbers of people answered in the same way as for the same question about focus groups. A total of 64%

would like to know more, 28% were neutral and the remaining 8% were content with current information.

This is shown in Figure 43 and once again, is contrary to the previous element on satisfaction with the amount of feedback.

I would like to know more about how my input has had an influence

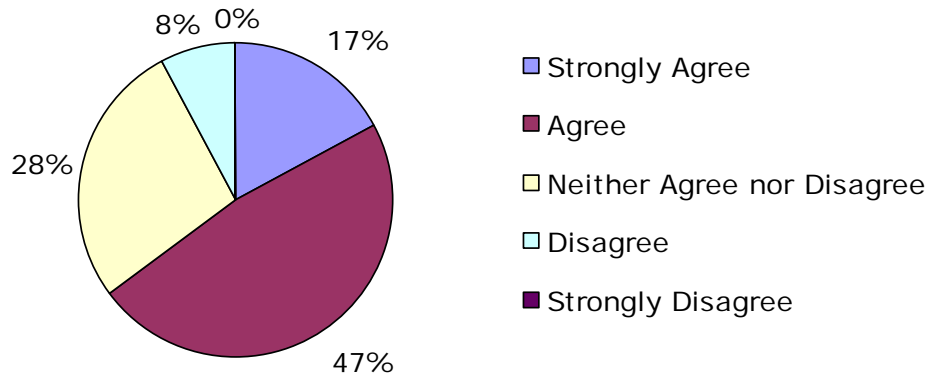


Figure 43

Question 10. Visiting Viewpoint Web Pages

Viewpoint has its own pages on the Council's website and are available from the Viewpoint home page at

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Council%20and%20Democracy/consultation/viewpoint.aspx>

Members were asked if they had ever visited these pages before. Only 12% said yes, they had. 86% said no and 2% could not recall.

Have you ever visited the Viewpoint pages on Gateshead Council's Website?

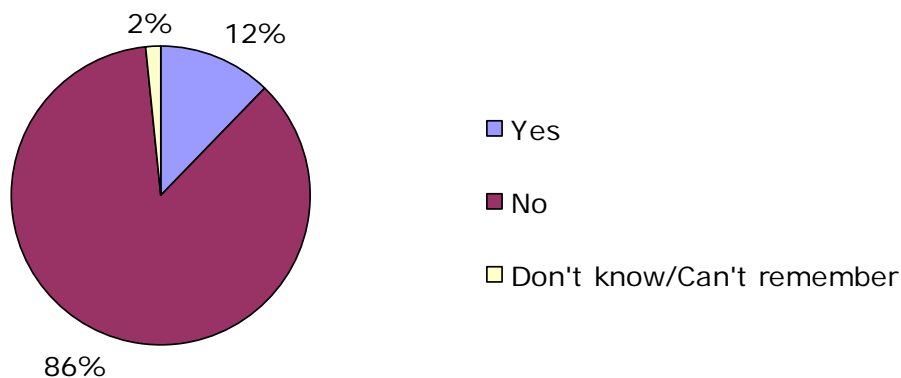


Figure 44

Question 11. Usefulness of Viewpoint Web Pages

Of the 12% who has visited the Viewpoint web pages before, 16% had found them very useful and 63% found them useful. 16% found they were not very useful and 5% could not remember.

How useful did you find the information on the Viewpoint pages?

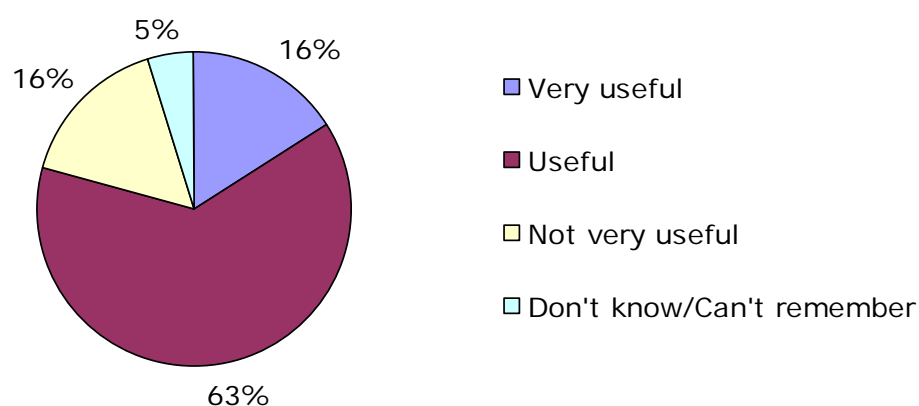


Figure 45

Question 12. Email correspondence

Members were asked if they would be interested in receiving correspondence including focus group invitations, surveys and newsletters by email rather than by post. Well over a third (39%) of all those who took part in this survey said yes, they would. The remaining 61% either said no, or did not give an email address.²

Would you be interested in receiving correspondence by email in the future, e.g. focus group invites, surveys & newsletters?

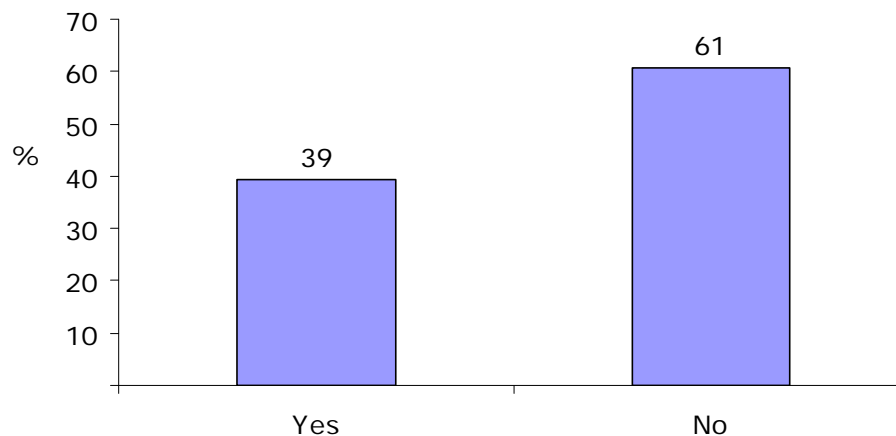


Figure 46

Question 13. Enjoyment of the Panel

Finally, members were asked to evaluate their enjoyment of the Viewpoint Panel.

Overall, how much would you say you enjoy being a part of the panel?

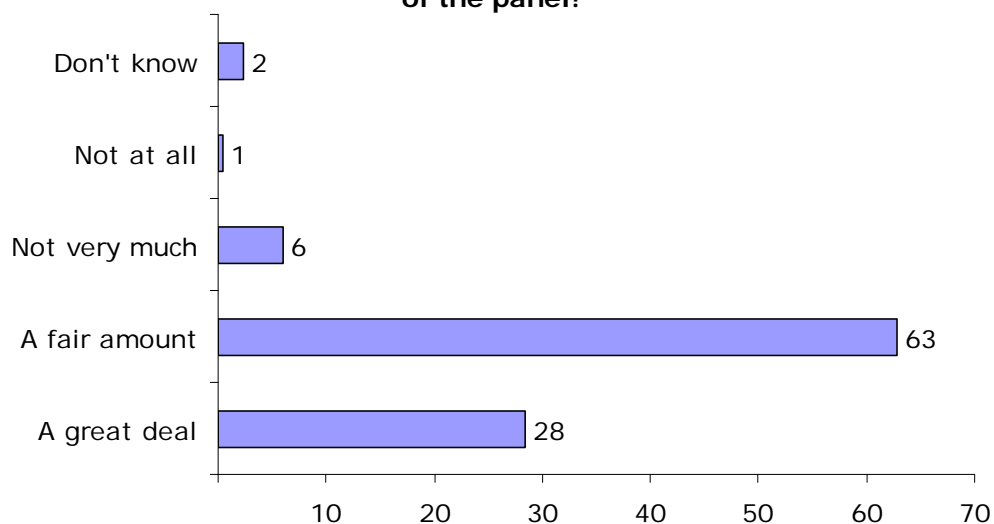


Figure 47

² This is in contrast to the earlier statement on email communications on page 22, in which only 19% expressed a preference for electronic versions of surveys.

The vast majority of members, **91%** said they **enjoyed** being a part of the panel either a **great deal** or a **fair amount**. **6%** said they **didn't enjoy it very much** and **1%** said they **didn't enjoy it at all**. **2%** did not know.