

# Southwark 2002 Residents Survey

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Research Study Conducted for  
Southwark Council



October 2002



## Methodology

MORI interviewed a total of 1,113 residents aged 18+ in 65 randomly-selected sampling points throughout Southwark. Sampling points were comprised of Census Enumeration Districts (EDs), selected at random in proportion to the population to ensure a representative distribution across wards. Within each sampling point, quotas were set for sex, age, working status and ethnicity.

Interviews were carried out face-to-face, in respondents' homes, between 8 June and 19 July 2002. Data are weighted by sex and age to match the profile of Southwark residents as a whole.

## Interpretation of the Data

It should be remembered that a sample and not the entire population of Southwark has been interviewed. In consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. A guide to statistical reliability is appended.

Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the volume, an asterisk (\*) denotes any value less than half a per cent but greater than zero.

In the report, reference is made to "net" figures. This represents the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions, and provides a particularly useful means of comparing the results for a number of variables. In the case of a "net satisfaction" figure, this represents the percentage satisfied on a particular issue or service less the percentage dissatisfied. For example, if a service records 40% satisfied and 25% dissatisfied, the "net satisfaction" figure is +15 points.

It is also worth emphasising that the survey deals with residents' *perceptions* at the time the survey was conducted **rather than with facts** and these may not accurately reflect the level of services actually being delivered.

## Publication of Data

As with all our studies, findings from this survey are subject to our Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract. Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey requires the advance approval of MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

# Executive Summary

## Quality of life & liveability

- Residents' overall views towards their area have become more negative over the last two years. Since 2000, the net satisfaction figure with the area as a place to live (i.e. those satisfied minus those dissatisfied) has declined slightly from +58 percentage points to +54. This result puts Southwark at a similar level to our results for Enfield and Barking & Dagenham, but below Lambeth's.
- The groups who have seen the biggest drops since 2000 are residents living in the North of the Borough (Bankside, Borough, Rotherhithe and Bermondsey), those aged 25-34 years old and Council tenants.
- As in 2000, cleanliness is the most frequently mentioned negative aspect about Southwark, followed by high crime rates/safety and vandalism. When asked what the priorities should be for their local area, residents *spontaneously* mention facilities for young people (seen as helping to solve youth crime), clean streets and better maintenance of the area.
- On the upside, residents cite the accessibility of central London as the major plus point about the area. In addition, residents are more likely to say that transport links and public transport are 'good things' about the area than two years ago.

## Environmental and streetcare services

- The public perception of environmental and streetcare services in Southwark has improved in the last two years. Net satisfaction with refuse collection, recycling facilities, street cleaning, street lighting and parks and open spaces has increased since 2000. There is also good news for recycling facilities, where net satisfaction has gone up by six percentage points.
- In the context of decline in satisfaction with services in many other South East authorities on these services, Southwark occupies a position which compares favourably with other London Boroughs. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go to return to early 1990s levels of public satisfaction. Southwark's best performance is on parks and open spaces, where the Council is placed in the upper-mid half of the table, a sea-change from its performance only six years ago.

## Community identity and cohesion

- As in many other London Boroughs, Southwark residents have a stronger sense of identity with London than they do with Southwark, their local area or their neighbourhood. More people feel attached to South East London than they do with Southwark, reflecting perhaps the feeling that residents feel remote from the Council.
- The majority of Southwark residents do not feel part of their local community, with two in three (65%) saying they feel 'not very much / not at all involved'. However, two in three (66%) are very/fairly proud of their local area (although this is still 10 percentage points lower than the national rating).
- Residents cite having **friendly neighbours/people** (64%) as the principal reason why some areas get on better than others, while **having respect for others** (50%) and **being a good neighbour** (46%) are the two options regarded as most important to being a good citizen in Southwark.

## Crime & community safety

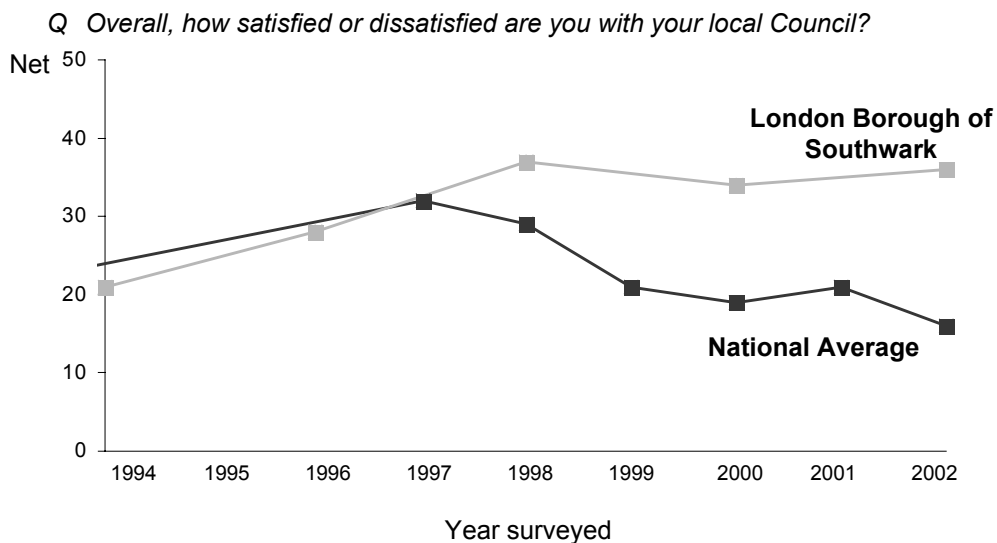
- Crime and the fear of crime continues to have a substantial impact on people's quality of life, as in many other London Boroughs. The proportion of residents who say they feel very safe walking around in the area in daytime remains less than half (42%). Encouragingly for the Council, the proportion of residents who say they feel safe walking outside in the dark has increased slightly since 2000 (to 43%), although it is still well below the national average.
- Residents identify muggings and thefts, burglaries and vandalism as their top problems, and suggest that dealing with street crime and youth crime are the best ways of combating this.
- Three in ten Southwark residents (31%) have personally been the victim of crime in the area; anti-social behaviour, theft, vandalism and burglary are the most frequently cited crimes. Of those who have been a victim, these crimes are often not reported to the police, although half do tell other people such as neighbours, family members and partners/spouses – raising fear of crime, of course.
- In common with research MORI finds elsewhere, the main reason why Southwark residents do not report crimes to the police is because they believe there is 'no chance of catching the criminals'. The perceived lack of confidence in the ability of the local police to deal effectively with crime is reflected in the low satisfaction rating for the police; just under half of residents (48%) say they are satisfied with the police in Southwark, below the national figure (53%). This needs exploring

further. Research undertaken for the Safer Southwark Partnership in 2000 explains some of the factors behind this.

## Satisfaction with the Council

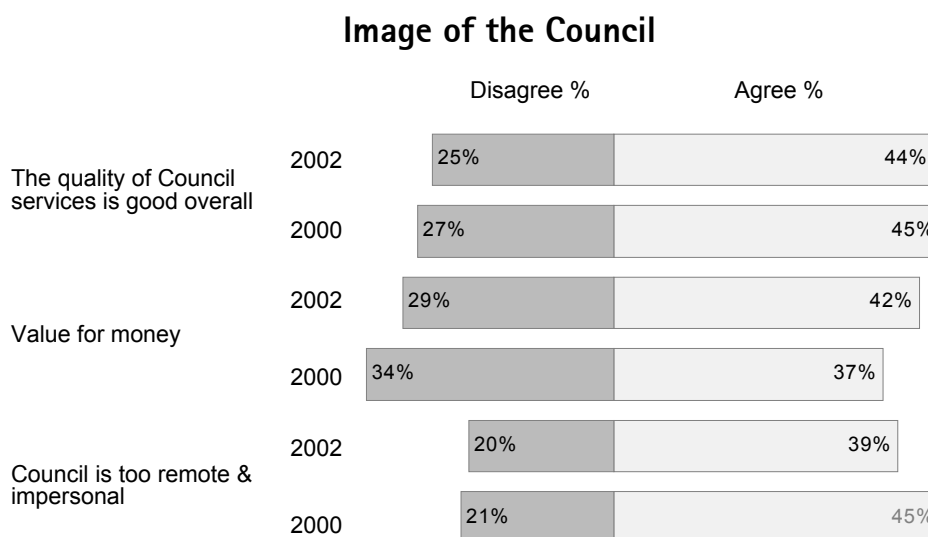
- Net satisfaction with Southwark Council has improved slightly since 2000, from +34 to +36 percentage points, consolidating the previous position. This score places Southwark around the middle of the table of authorities recently studied by MORI, ahead of many London boroughs including Lambeth and Brent.
- Placing Southwark in context, when measured against all authorities MORI has studied recently, the Council now performs above the national average. The following chart illustrates the gradual improvement in satisfaction levels in Southwark compared to the rest of the country in the last few years. Maintaining your current levels is certainly creditable at a time when many others are falling. The key question now is what does the authority need to do to make a further step-change in perceptions?

### Residents' views of Southwark



## The image of the Council

- Overall, there has been some improvements in the corporate image of the Council, as demonstrated in the chart below. Residents feel they are getting better value for money from the Council than they did two years ago.



Base: All respondents aged 18+ (1,113), interviewed between 8 June -19 July 2002

Source: MORI

- The perception that “the Council is too remote and impersonal” has fallen six percentage points since 2000, continuing the improvement set two years ago. In addition, more people think the Council is doing “the best it can with the money available” than two years ago.
- However, there has been little progress when residents are asked to agree or disagree with the statement, “the quality of Council services is good overall”; Southwark Council receives a net agree figure of +19, in line with the finding two years ago. This is perhaps surprising given the improvement in satisfaction ratings with many services provided by the Council such as the environmental/streetcare services, education services, council housing, libraries and local sports and leisure facilities.

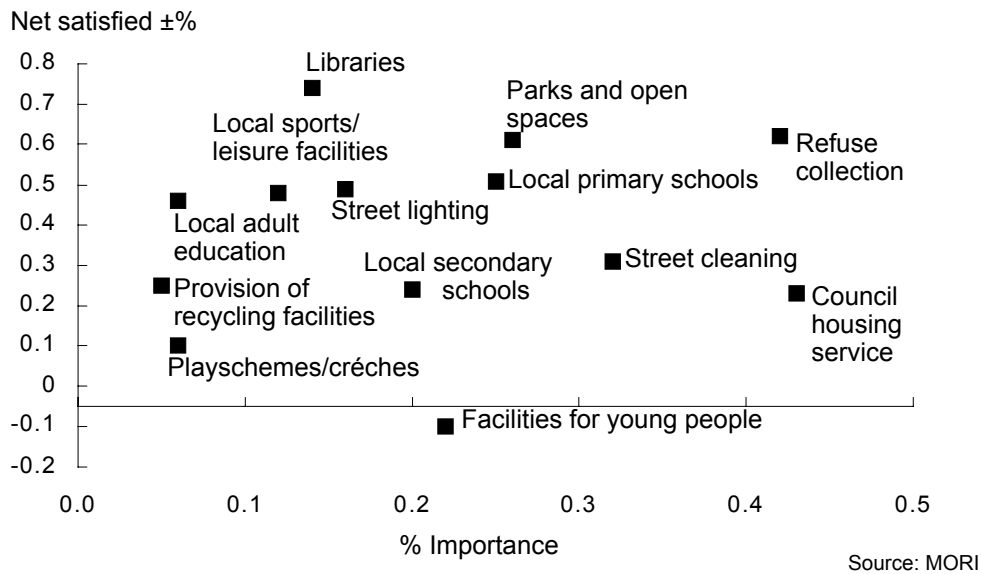
## Overview of Council services

- The priority attached to Council housing has fallen slightly (down by 6 points to 43%), in the aftermath of the Housing Stock Transfer Ballot although it is still regarded as one of the two most important services in the Borough, the other being refuse collection, which has risen. The relative importance of other services has remained broadly unchanged over the last two years. The rise in priority attached to refuse

collection is unusual, and emphasises the need to go on driving through improvements.

- The graph below plots the importance residents place on a service, measured against the satisfaction ratings that service receives. Those to focus on are in the bottom right of the chart – seen as important, but poorly regarded.

### Service Satisfaction versus Importance



## Information & communication

- There has been a major improvement in the proportion of residents who feel well informed by the Council over the last two years, with net satisfaction moving from -11 points to +6. As a result, Southwark is now well placed compared with many other London councils.
- Leaflets through the door and *Southwark Life* are the top two methods of receiving information about the Council. The proportion reading *Southwark Life* has increased by 11 percentage points in the last two years, which illustrates that the Council's communications strategy is doing well in this area.
- Almost three in five residents (57%) have been in contact with the Council in the last year. As in 2000, most of those who contacted the Council did so by telephone or in person. There is little sign of an increase in the use of new technologies to contact the council.



## Education & young people

- Ratings in primary and secondary education as well as satisfaction with playschemes and facilities for young people are on an upward trend with substantial improvement since 2000. This is encouraging, but remember the 2000 figures were some of the worst anywhere. Adult education is also performing well, and has increased its net satisfaction score from +36 to +45.
- One in ten residents report that they send their child(ren) to private schools in Southwark, citing the poor reputation and discipline in Southwark's state schools as the main reasons for this. This is consistent with research in other inner London Boroughs – parents are generally more concerned about discipline and pastoral care than exam results.

## Health

- A majority of Southwark residents (79%) say they are satisfied with their GP, although this is considerably lower than the national figure (89%) taken from this year's People's Panel and Department of Health surveys MORI undertakes for government.
- In contrast, satisfaction with hospitals in Southwark (at 69%) is broadly consistent with national trends.

## Housing

- With the transfer issue over, council tenants are more positive about the council housing service (55%) than in 2000; the service now also compares favourably with the national figure (49%). Tenants prioritise estate cleanliness, followed by the quality of repairs as the most needed improvements to the service: this heavy emphasis on cleaning is unusual and reflects the need for continued effort in this area.

## Cultural services

- The Council should be encouraged by the improved ratings for libraries and local sports and leisure facilities. Southwark has made steady progress in improving satisfaction with libraries over the last few years, and residents are far more positive about this service than at any other period in the last decade. In contrast the national picture is one of slow decline.
- Similarly, Southwark's satisfaction ratings for local sports and leisure facilities, while still below that of other London boroughs like Islington, Camden and Enfield, show the Council is moving in the right direction. This is despite a drop in satisfaction with the provision of sports and leisure facilities in many other authorities.

## **Views of black & minority ethnic residents'**

- Southwark is an ethnically diverse community; one in four say they are black (14% black-African and 9% black-Caribbean) and 4% describe themselves as Asian. There are significant differences in the social make-up of the different ethnic groups, for example, the Asian and black populations are younger than the majority white population.
- Overall, there is a great deal of consistency in the views of Black and Asian residents compared to those of white people. Normally Asian residents are most satisfied, Black residents least so. The fact that this is not the case in Southwark deserves further consideration: historically black people have been most negative about the Council, and this latest survey suggests this is now changing for the better.
- Black residents share a stronger identity with the Borough of Southwark than either white or Asian residents. We have observed this in qualitative work over recent years in the Borough where people are positive about living close to a large number of people from the same cultural or ethnic background.

## **Views of disabled residents'**

- Overall, around one in four residents in Southwark have a longstanding illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work they do; this is greater than the national average (20%).
- Generally speaking, disabled residents share similar views on satisfaction with the area, the Council, and services provided by the Council, as the Borough as a whole.

# Implications

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## **Satisfaction with the Council and the area**

Satisfaction with the Council since 2000 remains relatively unchanged. Dissatisfaction remains constant, while satisfaction has improved slightly – which is a move in the right direction. When compared to falling national satisfaction with local councils, Southwark is performing well.

Satisfaction with the area has fallen slightly. While dissatisfaction remains relatively unchanged, satisfaction has seen a slight fall. As with the 2000 survey, it is residents in the north – Bankside, Borough, Bermondsey and Rotherhithe – that are least happy. Interestingly, residents living in the Peckham area report higher levels of satisfaction – perhaps reflecting the work of the Peckham Partnership here. This disparity in satisfaction shows that the Council still has some work to do in improving life for all of its residents.

## **Southwark's environment**

Residents have seen a real improvement in their physical environment – the improvement in satisfaction levels with street cleaning, refuse collection and recycling are a testament to this. Satisfaction scores have also improved for street lighting and the Borough's parks and open spaces. Given the importance of these services to 'liveability' in Southwark, this is welcome news. The Council needs to ensure it consolidates on these findings in the future because despite improvements in satisfaction, they are still perceived to be among the most important services in the area.

## **Crime and safety**

Crime continues to be a real issue for residents – and similarly to 2000, it is highlighted as the most needed improvement in the area. The 2002 figures show that there has been a slight improvement in those feeling safe in the area after dark – this may be a result of Southwark's Crime and Disorder Strategy.

Street crime is seen as problem by two in five residents and this is a real priority area for people, as is tackling youth crime (no doubt the two are inextricably linked). This is a priority area for the Government and perhaps the recent reported fall in street crime nationally will begin to have an impact in Southwark. However, the Council and its partners will need to look at further ways the issue can be addressed at the local level. The 2000 survey showed that providing facilities for young people is seen as fundamental to reducing crime and while net satisfaction scores have increased slightly, it still remains low.

## **Community Identity and Cohesion**

One in three people feel involved in their community – which is on a par with national figures. Younger people feel least involved, which is a pattern we have recorded elsewhere and reflects the general sense of disengagement they feel with their area and Council. It will be important to look at ways they can get more involved in the community, as this may help to counter some of the problems related to crime.

The 2002 survey shows that residents in Southwark identify more strongly with London, than they do the London Borough of Southwark or their local area. This may in part reflect that while residents feel more informed about their Council, there is still some way to go before they more feel engaged with it. The lack of identification with Southwark may also reflect the geographical nature of the Borough and the disparity felt by residents (e.g. those in the North being less satisfied with their area than those in the South).

## **Communications**

Building on the findings of the 2000, the Council has done really well in improving the way in which it communicates with residents. Significantly more people say they feel informed about what the Council is doing – and more people are reading *Southwark Life*. This is good news as communication is fundamental to people's perceptions more generally and the Council needs to continue its good work in this area.

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