

LGR Public Survey 2025

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Executive Summary: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Government Reorganisation Public Survey

Survey Overview

This public survey on local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough achieved 3,174 responses during the four-week collection period (19 June - 20 July 2025), comprising 2,413 public responses and 761 council worker responses.

Key Findings

Trust and Satisfaction with Current Services

Public trust in council decision-making represents a fundamental challenge, with residents showing a net negative score (-5) compared to council workers' positive assessment (+31). This 36-point gap constitutes the largest divergence between public and professional perspectives and permeates many other measures. Public trust is the backbone for bringing forward local government reorganisation.

Current service satisfaction reveals similar patterns, with the public recording a modest positive net score (+10) compared to council workers' substantially more optimistic view (+45). East Cambridgeshire consistently outperforms other districts across multiple measures, whilst Peterborough, despite already operating as a unitary authority, records the lowest satisfaction levels at 29%.

Support for Change

Despite trust deficits, public support for structural change is overwhelmingly positive (net +77), conditional on service improvements. This strong endorsement crosses all demographic and geographic boundaries, with agreement ranging from 76% in Fenland to 88% in Cambridge and Peterborough. The conditional nature of this support emphasises that residents prioritise tangible service improvements over structural change for its own sake.

Reorganisation Concerns

Concern about areas being overlooked during reorganisation is substantial across both public (net +56) and council workers (net +52). This convergence masks significant geographical variation: rural districts including East Cambridgeshire and Fenland show above 80% agreement with this concern, compared to 54% in Cambridge. This large difference highlights fundamental anxieties about representation and resource allocation in any new structure.

Current Performance Assessments

Performance assessments reveal systematic patterns across service areas. Councils perform relatively well on digital service delivery (public net +42) and having councillors who know their area (public net +42). However, significant weaknesses emerge in accountability and transparency (public net -32), service investment (public net -32), and reducing complexity (public net -40).

The assessment of single-point council contact reveals the current two-tier system's limitations, with negative perceptions across most districts except Peterborough, where 42% rate this positively compared to Cambridge's 9%. This demonstrates the practical advantages of unitary structures in simplifying citizen access to services.

Priorities for New Unitary Councils

Residents identify three top priorities for new unitary councils: **investing in council services**, **improving response capabilities**, and **ensuring councillors possess local area knowledge**. For future development, residents prioritise investment in health infrastructure, transport networks, and community facilities. The emphasis on maintaining local knowledge whilst improving service delivery presents a key challenge for larger unitary structures.

Unitary Size Preferences

Public preference centres on unitary authorities serving 400,000-500,000 residents, with 500,000 being the single most selected option. Council workers demonstrate stronger preference for the larger 500,000 population scale. Fenland shows 62% preference for authorities under 500,000, whilst South Cambridgeshire shows 55% support for authorities over 400,000.

Location Preferences

Movement patterns across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough reveal two distinct spheres of influence—Cambridge dominating the south and east whilst Peterborough serves the north—with administrative boundaries bearing little relationship to actual daily flows for shopping, healthcare, and employment.

Rural districts function primarily as dormitory areas (East Cambridgeshire 39%, South Cambridgeshire 34%, Fenland 37%), whilst healthcare shows the strongest local retention due to GP provision and established patient pathways to specialist centres. Between 18-32% of residents work outside the region entirely, with Huntingdonshire showing the highest external employment at 32%, highlighting significant connections to London and other regional centres. Cambridge attracts 34% of East Cambridgeshire residents for shopping and healthcare, whilst South Cambridgeshire splits almost evenly between internal activity (35%) and Cambridge dependence (40%) for retail and leisure, demonstrating functional geographies that already transcend district boundaries. These established movement patterns, particularly for healthcare where Cambridge commands flows from surrounding districts whilst Peterborough serves a more constrained northern catchment, must inform any new unitary boundaries to avoid disrupting essential service access and economic connections.

Community Belonging and Cultural Alignment

Community belonging shows generally positive sentiment (public net +43), though Peterborough records significantly weaker belonging. Perceptions of whether council decisions reflect cultural values are more mixed (public net +9), with council workers more optimistic (net +30). Younger residents consistently report weaker community connections across all districts.

Demographic Variations

Age-related patterns emerge consistently: younger residents (under 35) express lower satisfaction with services, weaker community belonging, and greater frustration with council complexity. Conversely, residents over 75 show higher trust in councils and stronger community connections. Gender differences appear primarily in reorganisation concerns, with women expressing greater anxiety about areas being overlooked.

Implications for Reorganisation

The findings reveal several critical considerations for developing unitary proposals:

1. **The trust deficit between public and council perspectives requires attention during transition planning.** Communications in this regard can help but creating an opportunity for residents to collaborate on proposals or be involved is much more powerful.
2. **Geographic variations in satisfaction, community connection, and size preferences necessitate careful consideration of boundaries** to ensure new authorities can maintain local identity whilst achieving efficiency gains.
3. **Movement patterns demonstrate that functional economic and service geographies already transcend current boundaries**, with some districts showing stronger connections to neighbouring areas than internal cohesion.
4. **The emphasis on maintaining councillor local knowledge whilst creating larger authorities** presents a key challenge requiring innovative approaches to democratic representation.
5. **Rural districts' heightened concerns about being overlooked** require specific safeguards and communication strategies to maintain confidence during transition.
6. **The conditional nature of public support** demands that proposals clearly demonstrate how reorganisation will deliver tangible service improvements rather than merely promising efficiency savings.
7. **Voice of the customer** many of the challenges arise from the fragmentary nature of government in the region and the lack of a robust consultative mechanism to tap into public attitudes which will become doubly important in the new unitary set up and the transition to get there.

The research provides robust evidence that whilst residents are open to change, success will depend on addressing fundamental concerns about democratic representation, service quality, and local identity within new structures. The significant variations between districts in satisfaction, trust, and preferences indicate that a differentiated approach may be necessary, recognising that one size may not fit all communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Introduction and Methodology: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Government Reorganisation Public Survey

Introduction

The Government has mandated that all county and district councils in England will be abolished in April 2028 and replaced with unitary authorities. This directive affects Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, where the current two-tier system of seven authorities comprising of:

- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridge City Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Fenland District Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Peterborough City Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Peterborough City Council already operates as a unitary authority, the only authority in the area to do so, but will be included in the reorganisation process. These councils will be restructured into two or more unitary authorities serving the area's residents. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority will remain unchanged. Town and parish councils are not currently required to change under the Government directive.

The Government has established key criteria that proposals for new unitary structures must address. These criteria require that:

- proposals should achieve better outcomes and local service delivery for the whole area
- ensure unitary local government is the right size to achieve efficiencies and improve capacity
- prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services
- demonstrate how councils have worked together to meet local needs informed by local views, support devolution arrangements
- enable stronger community engagement with genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment.

Additionally, this report considers the issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

This reorganisation represents a fundamental shift in local governance arrangements that have served the area for decades. The current system provides different services through different tiers of government, with residents accessing county council services for education, social care, and highways, while district and city councils provide housing, planning, environmental services,

along with waste and recycling. The proposed unitary structure will consolidate these functions under single authorities, potentially simplifying access to services while creating larger administrative units.

The Government has indicated that financial savings are expected through the process of reducing the number of councils, while also supporting improvements in service delivery through bringing services together. This creates a complex challenge of achieving efficiency gains while maintaining or improving service quality and democratic representation across diverse communities ranging from the urban centres of Cambridge and Peterborough to extensive rural areas.

The area's population is projected to grow to over one million residents within the next fifteen years, adding demographic pressure to the reorganisation challenge. The Government's guiding principle, not a target, is that unitary authorities should serve populations of approximately 500,000; and smaller where appropriate, which would indicate the creation of at least two unitary authorities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, though the final structure remains to be determined through evidence supporting proposals, and central government will make the final decision.

Methodology

The research employed an online survey methodology to gather public perspectives on local government reorganisation across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The survey was designed as an engagement exercise rather than a formal consultation, with the purpose of providing qualitative and quantitative data to inform the development of proposals for submission to Government by November 2025. The survey was also made available in paper versions to ensure that everyone could potentially take part, and these were in libraries and various outlets across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

This public survey served as a companion piece to a parallel businesses and stakeholder survey that asked many of the same questions, enabling comparison between general public and stakeholder perspectives on reorganisation priorities and concerns. The dual survey approach recognised that members of the public who use local government services may have different insights and priorities compared to stakeholders who regularly engage with local government, while ensuring comprehensive coverage of community views across different levels of engagement with local government services. Council workers were also a key constituent group and their responses to the public survey have been extracted and presented separately in this report.

Survey Design and Implementation

The survey instrument was developed collaboratively by the seven affected councils working with Archangel to ensure comprehensive coverage of the Government's criteria for unitary authority proposals. The survey design prioritised brevity and accessibility, limiting the questionnaire to a smaller number of core questions to maximise response rates while gathering essential data on public priorities and preferences regarding local government reorganisation.

While designed as an engagement exercise rather than formal consultation, the approach went above and beyond standard engagement requirements by voluntarily aligning with the Gunning principles for fair consultation. This demonstrated a commitment to best practice standards, ensuring that the public were consulted at a time when proposals were still at a formative stage, sufficient information was provided to enable informed responses, and time was allowed for consideration and response.

No maps or visual representations of potential boundary options were included in the survey design, in accordance with the engagement rather than consultation approach adopted for this research. This neutral approach was particularly important for the public survey to ensure that residents could express their views without being influenced by specific boundary proposals that had not yet been finalised.

Public Engagement Strategy

The online survey was supported by comprehensive communications to residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through established communication channels managed by the communications teams from the seven authorities. This multi-channel approach was designed to ensure broad public awareness and participation across the diverse communities within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This was further supported by digital marketing provided by CAN.

The communication strategy utilised existing council communication channels including websites, social media platforms, direct communication with residents but also offline channels such as newsletters, posters and flyers. Awareness was also raised through news articles, a video, and CAN boosted response through targeted programmatic online advertising reacting in real time to survey response levels. The heads of communications coordinated their efforts to ensure consistent messaging while leveraging the unique reach and audience characteristics of each authority's communication channels. This collaborative approach maximised the potential reach to residents across all areas while maintaining message consistency and professional standards.

The engagement strategy recognised the importance of reaching residents who might not typically participate in local government consultations but whose perspectives are essential for understanding community needs and priorities. Particular attention was paid to ensuring that communications reached residents across different demographic groups, geographical areas,

and levels of engagement with local government services. CAN's marketing strategy was designed to leverage these harder-to-reach groups.

Communications emphasised that the survey was open to all residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, regardless of their current level of engagement with local government services. The messaging highlighted that local government reorganisation would affect all residents through changes to service delivery, democratic representation, and local identity, making broad public participation essential for informing the proposals process.

Data Collection Period and Procedures

The survey was conducted from 19th June 2025 to 20th July 2025, providing a concentrated four-week period for public participation while meeting the tight timescales required for proposals development. The online survey platform maintained a hard stop at midnight on the final day of the survey period, ensuring clear closure for the data collection period and enabling timely analysis for proposals development.

While the online survey closed at midnight on 20th July 2025, paper survey responses continued to be processed for the following week to ensure accessibility for residents who preferred paper survey participation methods or who had obtained paper copies during the survey period but required additional time to complete and return them. This approach balanced the need for timely data collection with accessibility considerations for residents who might face barriers to online participation.

The timing was coordinated with broader communications and engagement activities around local government reorganisation to maximise awareness and participation. The four-week period provided sufficient time for residents to become aware of the survey, consider the information provided, and formulate their responses, while meeting the constraints imposed by Government timescales for proposals submission.

The data collection procedures incorporated robust quality assurance measures to ensure data integrity and prevent duplicate responses. The online platform included validation checks and security measures to maintain the reliability of the data while protecting respondent privacy and confidentiality.

Response Profile and Participation

The survey achieved substantial participation from residents along with council workers across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, representing diverse demographic groups, geographical areas, and levels of engagement with local government services. The response profile demonstrated broad public and council worker interest in local government reorganisation and willingness to participate in the engagement process. In just four weeks, there were 3,174 responses in total. This comprised of 2,413 responses from residents and 761 responses from council workers. These are healthy responses and mean that the public response, when weighted to the population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, is in excess of 1000 which is the gold standard in market research. There is high engagement among council workers and so the survey results specifically include them in comparisons.

The public survey attracted participation from residents across all seven local authority areas, with representation from urban centres, market towns, and rural communities. This geographical distribution provided insights into how local government reorganisation might affect different types of communities and enabled analysis of potential variations in priorities and concerns across different areas. Further information on this can be found in the sample profile.

Demographic analysis of the response profile revealed participation across different age groups, gender categories, and other relevant characteristics, though as with all voluntary surveys, certain demographic groups were more likely to participate than others. This participation pattern necessitated the implementation of weighting procedures to ensure that the analysis appropriately reflected the demographic composition of the broader population.

The response profile includes residents with varying levels of current engagement with local government services, from those who regularly interact with councils through to those who have minimal or no direct contact. This diversity of experience provided valuable insights into how reorganisation might affect different types of service users and enabled analysis of priorities across different levels of current engagement.

Analytical Approach and Statistical Framework

The analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine public responses across the range of survey questions. Quantitative analysis focused on response distributions and patterns across different demographic groups and geographical areas, while qualitative analysis examined open-ended responses and comments to identify key themes and concerns expressed by residents.

Particular attention was paid to identifying differences in perspectives between different demographic groups and geographical areas, recognising that residents in different circumstances may have different priorities and concerns regarding reorganisation. Statistical analysis was conducted where sample sizes permitted reliable comparison between groups, with appropriate confidence intervals calculated to support interpretation of findings.

The methodology incorporated weighting procedures to adjust for demographic differences between the survey sample and the broader population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This weighting approach ensured that the analysis appropriately reflected the demographic composition of the area while acknowledging the voluntary nature of survey participation.

The analytical framework recognised both the strengths and limitations of the public survey approach. The substantial sample size provided statistically robust insights with calculable margins of error and confidence intervals. The broad geographical and demographic representation enabled analysis of variations in perspectives across different communities and population groups.

However, several limitations were acknowledged in the analytical approach. As a self-selecting sample, the survey may over-represent more engaged residents who actively choose to participate in local government processes, potentially under-representing less engaged residents.

Despite these limitations, the substantial sample size, systematic sampling approach, and broad representation across demographic groups and geographical areas provided confidence that the findings offered statistically valid and representative insights into public perspectives on local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Weighting Methodology

To ensure that the survey findings accurately reflected the demographic composition of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, weighting procedures were applied to adjust for differences between the survey sample and the broader population. The weighting approach addressed three key demographic dimensions: gender, age, and geographical location. Population benchmarks for weighting were derived from the most recent Office for National Statistics census data and mid-year population estimates for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, providing reliable demographic profiles against which the survey sample could be calibrated.

The weighting procedures were implemented using iterative proportional fitting techniques to simultaneously balance the sample across all three demographic dimensions. This approach ensured that the weighted sample matched the population benchmarks for gender, age, and location while maintaining the integrity of individual response patterns. While weighting procedures enhanced the representativeness of the survey findings, certain limitations were acknowledged, including that weighting can only adjust for measured demographic characteristics and cannot correct for other potential sources of bias such as differences in political engagement or attitudes toward local government.

In addition, weighting reduces the effective sample size as we take primary research sample to match the population. The public, after weighting, have an effective sample size of 1,411. This gives a margin of error of $\pm 3\%$ on the sample results at the 95% confidence level making the results highly accurate. This means that if a survey response is 50% the true population answer will lie between 47% and 53%.

For council workers, it is difficult to weight on demographic profile as this information is unknown, so the only weighting adjustment was made for district location on the basis of population levels. This levelled out under and over representation of council workers by district. The effective sample size for council workers is 642. The consequent margin of error is $\pm 3.9\%$ on the sample results at the 95% confidence level.

In comparing differences between the general public and council workers on any issue, then it is necessary to calculate the difference between the two samples. On this measure, to be significant, the critical threshold is five per cent difference (4.7%).

Presentation of data

The following analysis presents findings from the survey data collected, with results presented both as individual response percentages and as net scores to provide a clear summary of overall opinion. The data has been weighted to ensure representativeness of the target population, and all percentages have been rounded to whole numbers for clarity of presentation.

Charts and tables throughout this section display the full distribution of responses to allow readers to understand the complete picture of opinion. Significant differences between groups and other key variables are highlighted where they emerge from the data.

In survey, there were single code, single response questions and multi-code, multiple response questions. For example, a multi-code question would be a select up to three coded responses and a single code question would be how much do you agree or disagree with something. Questions are classified as either single code (where respondents can select only one answer) or multi-code (where respondents can select multiple answers). For multi-code questions, percentages will not sum to 100% as respondents may give more than one response. Additionally, where figures do not sum to exactly 100%, this may be due to computer rounding of percentages, which can occasionally result in totals of 99% or 101%.

All charts show weighted data, but bases are given unweighted.

Net Score Calculation

Net scores are calculated to provide a single summary measure of the balance of opinion on each topic. The net score represents the difference between positive and negative responses, excluding neutral or undecided responses from the calculation.

The net score formula used throughout this analysis is: $\text{Net Score} = (\text{Strongly Agree} + \text{Agree}) - (\text{Disagree} + \text{Strongly Disagree})$. For satisfaction measures, the calculation follows the same principle: $\text{Net Satisfaction} = (\text{Very Satisfied} + \text{Satisfied}) - (\text{Dissatisfied} + \text{Very Dissatisfied})$.

A positive net score indicates that positive responses outweigh negative responses, whilst a negative net score indicates the reverse. A net score of zero suggests opinion is evenly balanced between positive and negative views. Net scores can range from +100 (where all respondents give positive responses) to -100 (where all respondents give negative responses).

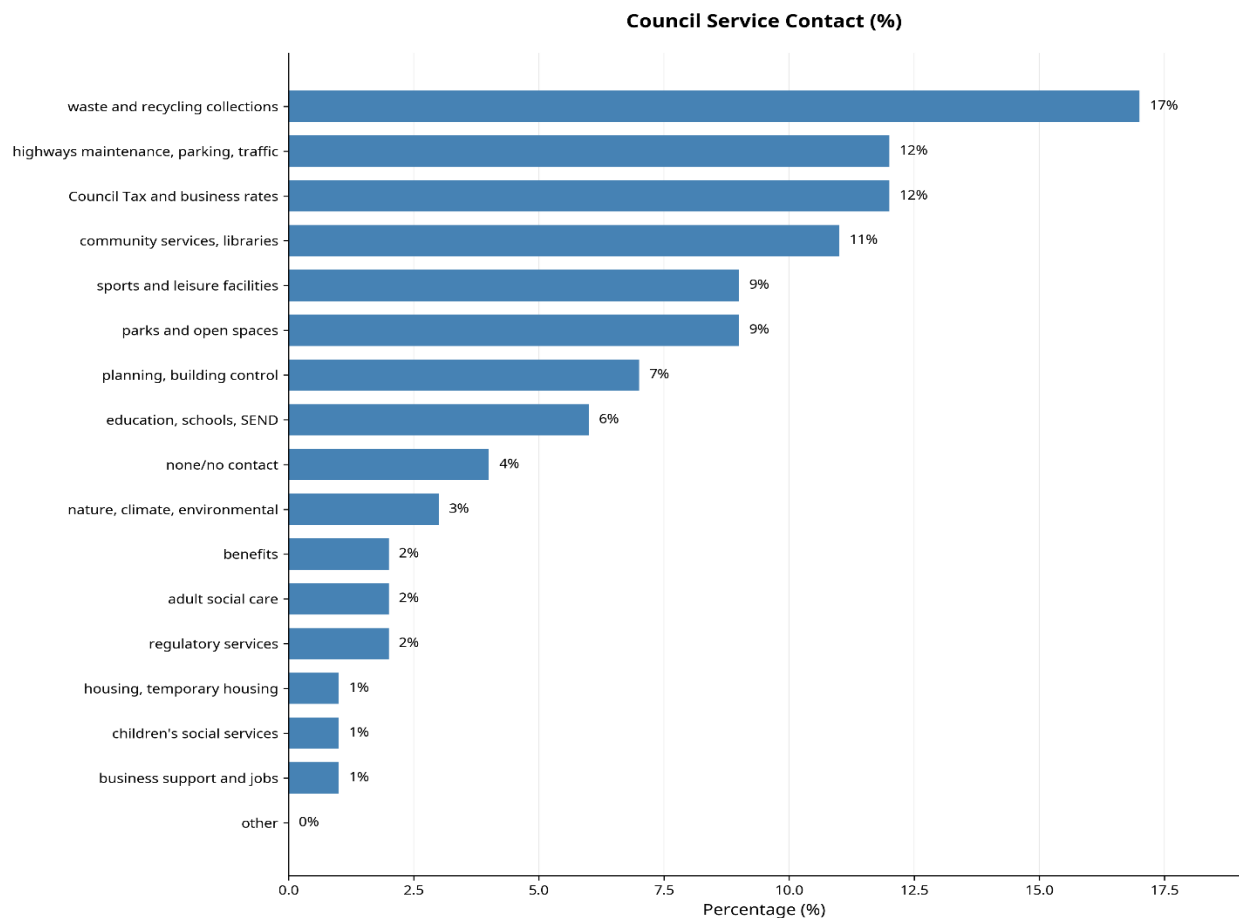
Net scores are particularly useful for comparing performance across different areas, identifying areas of strength and concern, tracking changes in opinion over time, and providing a clear summary statistic. They offer a single figure that encapsulates the overall direction and strength of opinion on any given measure. All net scores presented in the charts are clearly labelled and the underlying data showing the full response distribution is provided to ensure transparency in the calculation method.

Survey Findings

Council Service Contact

In terms of public responses, the survey reveals that waste and recycling collections represent the most frequently contacted council service, with 17% of all service interactions across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This reflects the universal nature of waste services and their visibility to residents, as every household engages with these services on a regular basis. The prominence of waste services in contact patterns demonstrates their fundamental role in daily life and the importance residents place on reliable collection schedules and recycling facilities.

Highways maintenance, parking, traffic management and street lighting account for 12% of contacts, indicating significant public engagement with transport infrastructure issues. This substantial level of interaction reflects the critical importance of road networks and traffic systems to residents' daily mobility and economic activity. The frequency of contact in this area suggests ongoing concerns about road conditions, parking availability, potholes and traffic flow management across the region.

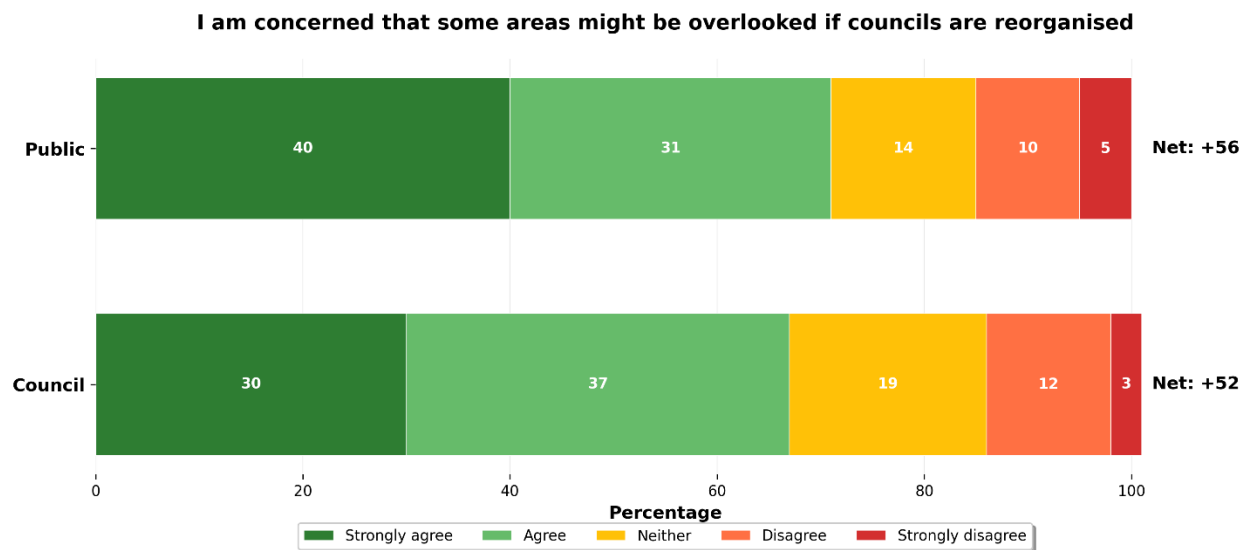


Council Tax and business rates generate 12% of service contacts, whilst community services such as libraries and community centres also account for 11%. These findings suggest that both administrative functions and community-facing services maintain substantial public interaction levels.

Sports and leisure facilities attract 9% of contacts from the public. This uniformity suggests that recreational services maintain broad appeal regardless of employment sector, reflecting their role in community wellbeing and social cohesion. Parks and open spaces generate 9% of public contacts suggesting greater public utilisation of recreational spaces or potentially different awareness levels of available facilities.

Concern about reorganisation: I am concerned that some areas might be overlooked if councils are reorganised

The Professional Divide



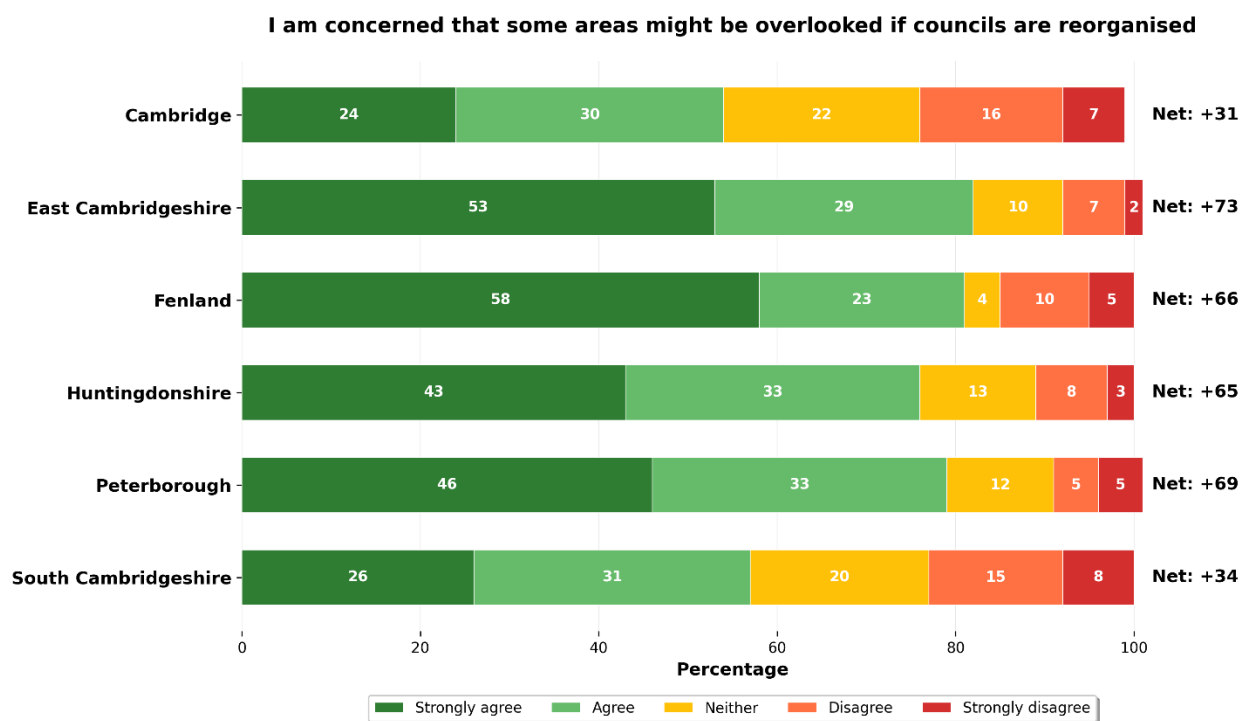
Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The analysis reveals remarkable convergence between public and professional perspectives on this attitudinal dimension, with public respondents recording a net score of +56 and council workers +52. Both the public and council workers’ viewpoints are broadly aligned on their concern that some areas may get overlooked and there is substantial agreement with the statement, though the difference is statistically significant.

Such convergence indicates that this concern about areas being overlooked indicates both groups sharing similar concerns and expectations about the proposed changes. This alignment provides a solid foundation for building consensus around reorganisation planning.

Geographical Perspectives

Concerns about areas being overlooked in council reorganisation show significant district-level variation. East Cambridgeshire and Fenland express the strongest concerns (82% and 81% respectively) compared to Huntingdonshire's 76%, Peterborough's 79%, South Cambridgeshire's 57%, and Cambridge's 54%. The 27-point gap between East Cambridgeshire and Cambridge exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Disagreement remains minimal across all districts, ranging from 9% in East Cambridgeshire to 23% in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The "neither" category varies from 4% in Fenland to 22% in Cambridge. These findings reveal anxiety in rural districts about potential marginalisation under reorganisation, with East Cambridgeshire and Fenland residents expressing considerable concern about being overlooked. The notably lower concern in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire suggests urban and peri-urban residents feel more confident about maintaining influence in any restructured arrangements.

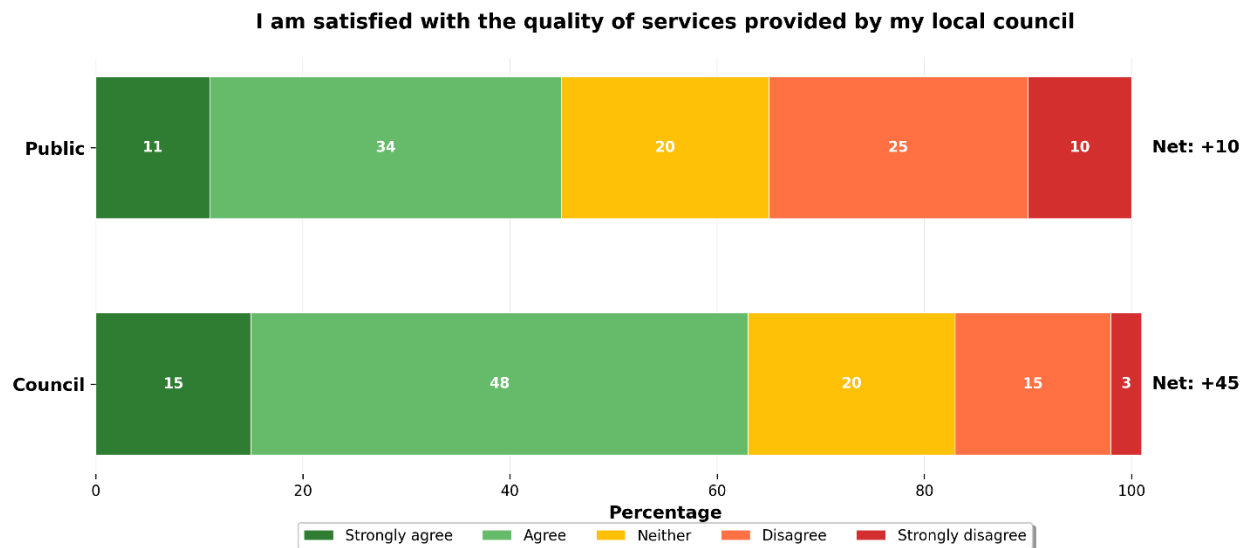


Base: 2413 residents

Those aged 75+ tend to be more concerned about areas being overlooked (Net +57). Females tend to show more concern than males (Net +51).

Council satisfaction: I am satisfied with the quality of services provided by my local council

The Professional Divide



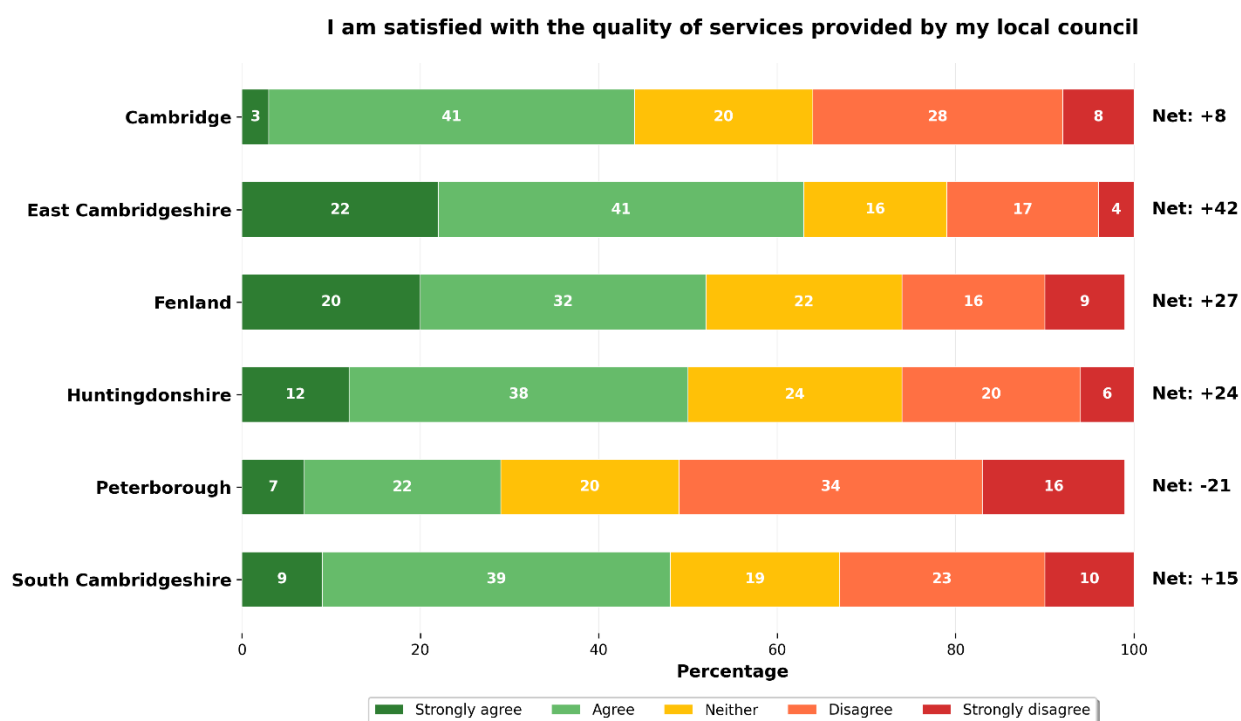
Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The analysis reveals a significant professional divide on this attitudinal dimension, with council workers expressing notably more positive sentiment (net score +45) compared to public respondents (net score +10). This 35-point gap is statistically significant and suggests that professional experience within local government shapes perspectives on reorganisation in meaningful ways.

Council workers' more optimistic outlook may reflect their direct experience with current governance structures and their professional understanding of potential improvements that reorganisation could bring. The public's more cautious stance reflects the natural uncertainty that accompanies significant institutional change, particularly when it affects services and representation that communities rely upon.

Geographical Perspectives

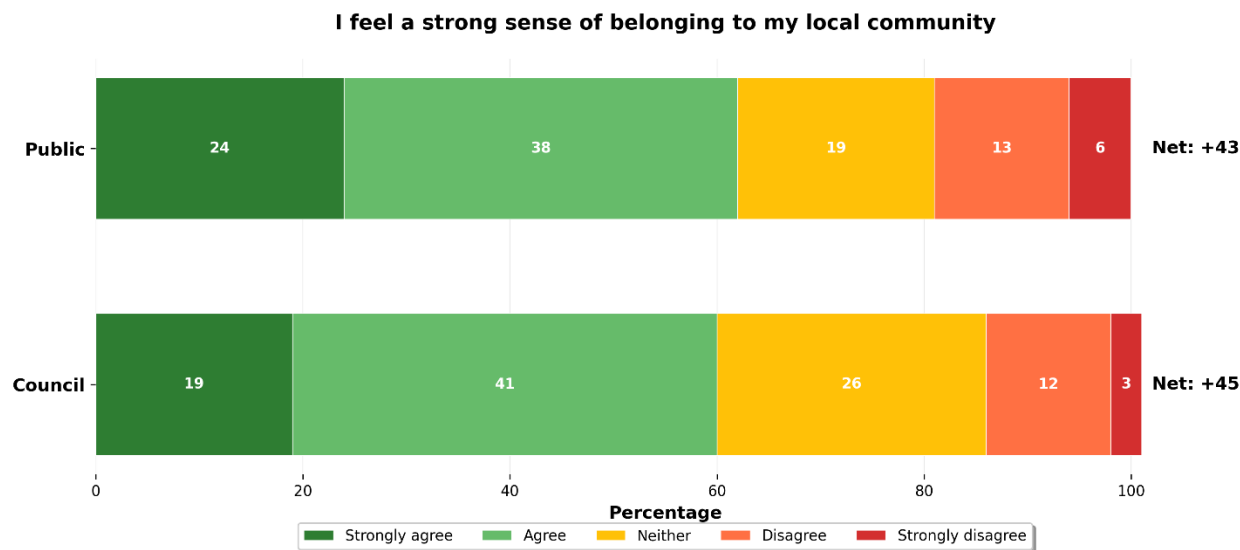
Satisfaction with local council service quality shows significant district-level variation. East Cambridgeshire demonstrates the highest satisfaction at 63%, followed by Fenland at 52%, Huntingdonshire at 50%, Cambridge at 44%, South Cambridgeshire at 48%, and Peterborough at 29%. The 34-point gap between East Cambridgeshire and Peterborough exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Dissatisfaction shows Peterborough at 50%, Cambridge at 36%, South Cambridgeshire at 33%, Fenland and Huntingdonshire at 25%, and East Cambridgeshire at 21%. The 29-point difference between Peterborough and East Cambridgeshire in dissatisfaction is statistically significant. These findings reveal a clear performance divide, with Peterborough net negative and East Cambridgeshire residents consistently reporting higher satisfaction across multiple measures.



Base: 2413 residents

Community feeling: I feel a strong sense of belonging to my local community

The Professional Divide

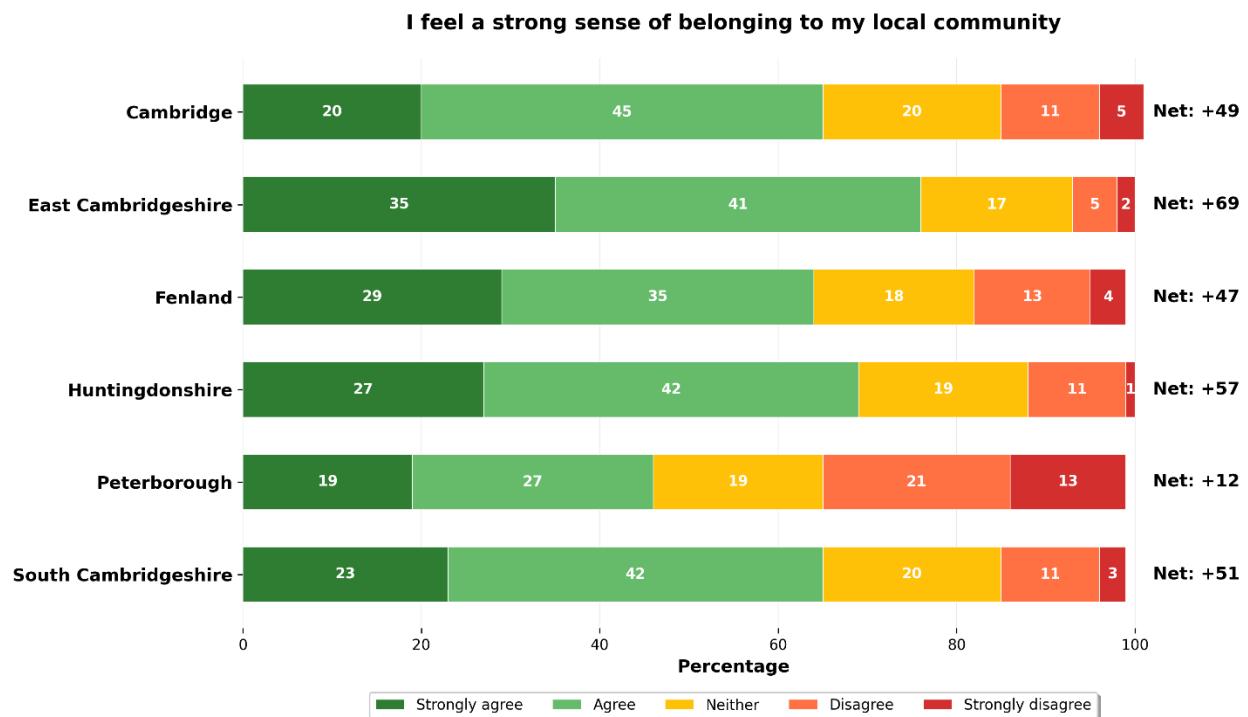


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The analysis reveals remarkable convergence between public and professional perspectives on this attitudinal dimension, with public respondents recording a net score of +43 and council workers +45. This close alignment suggests that both citizen and practitioner viewpoints are broadly aligned on feeling a strong sense of belonging to the local community.

Geographical Perspectives

East Cambridgeshire demonstrates the highest belonging at 76%, followed by Huntingdonshire at 69%, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire at 65%, Fenland at 64%, and Peterborough at 46%. The gap between Peterborough and other districts exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Negative responses show Peterborough at 34%, Fenland at 17%, Cambridge at 16%, Huntingdonshire at 12%, South Cambridgeshire at 14%, and East Cambridgeshire at 10%.

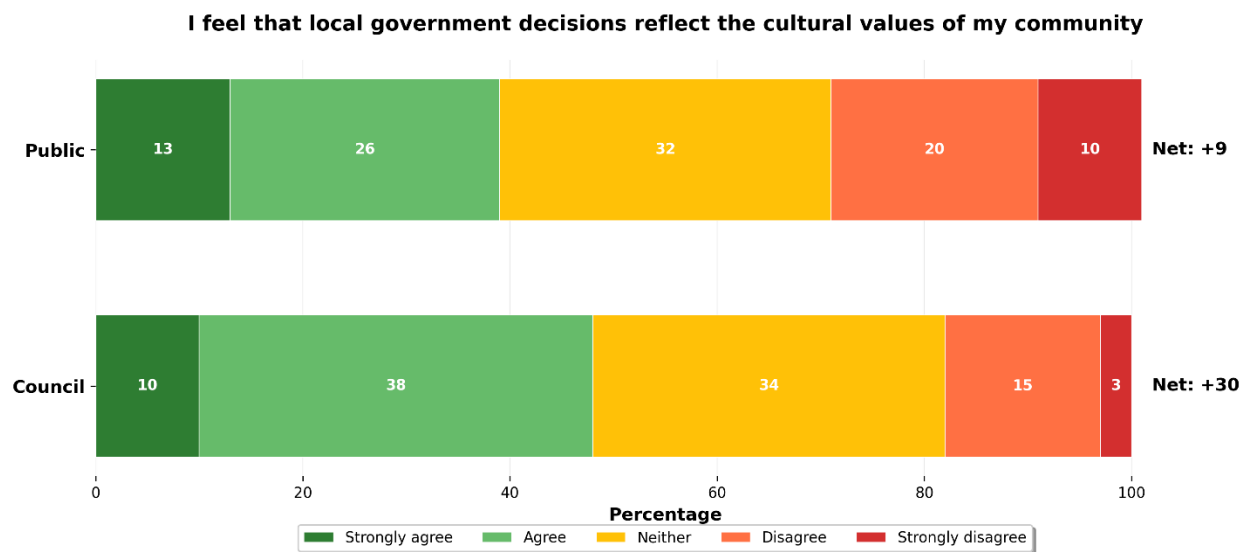


Base: 2413 residents

Younger people are less likely to agree with feeling a sense of belonging to the local community (net +25).

Government reflecting values: I feel that local government decisions reflect the cultural values of my community

The Professional Divide



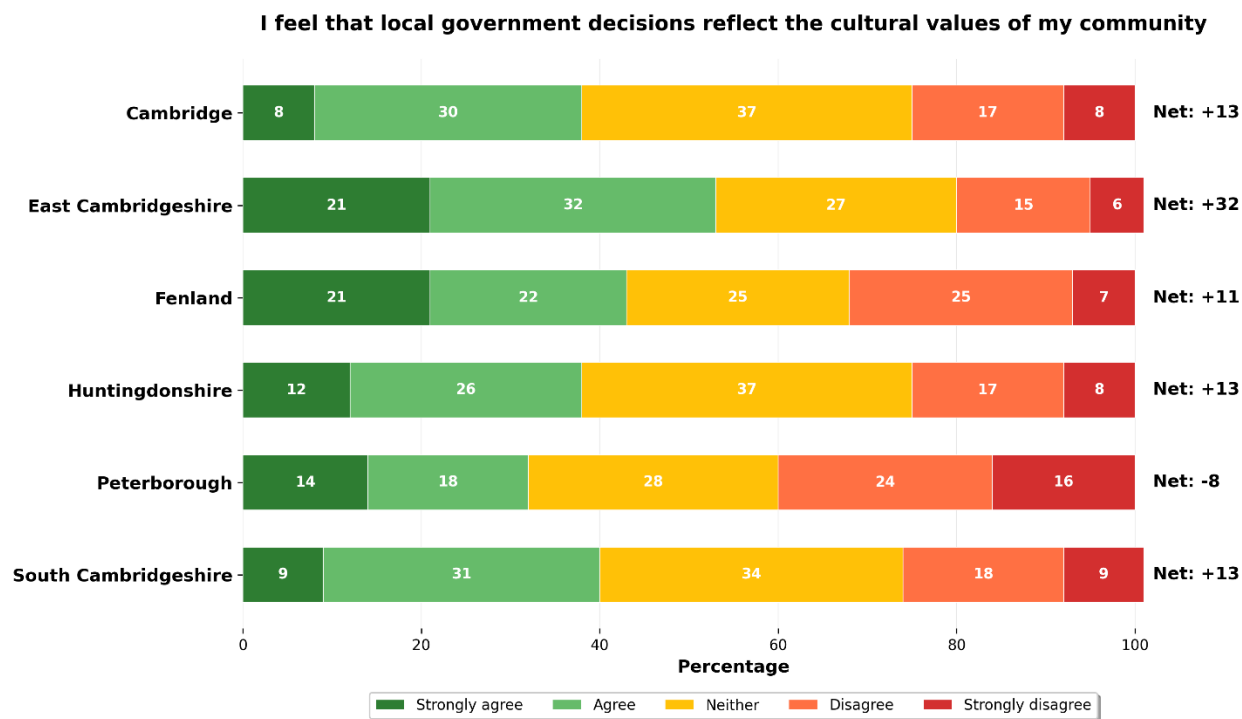
Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The analysis reveals a significant professional divide on this attitudinal dimension, with council workers expressing notably more positive sentiment (net score +30) compared to public respondents (net score +9). This 21-point gap is statistically significant and suggests that professional experience within local government shapes perspectives on reorganisation in meaningful ways.

Council workers' more optimistic outlook may reflect their direct experience with current governance structures and their professional understanding of potential improvements that reorganisation could bring. The public's more cautious stance reflects the natural uncertainty that accompanies significant institutional change, particularly when it affects services and representation that communities rely upon.

Geographical Perspectives

Perceptions of whether local government decisions reflect community cultural values show limited significant variation across districts. East Cambridgeshire shows the highest agreement at 53%, followed by Fenland at 43%, South Cambridgeshire at 40%, Huntingdonshire and Cambridge at 38%, and Peterborough at 32%. The 21-point difference between East Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is statistically significant. Disagreement ranges from 21% in East Cambridgeshire to 40% in Peterborough. The "neither" category shows considerable variation from 25% in Fenland to 37% in both Huntingdonshire and Cambridge. These patterns suggest moderate alignment between governance and cultural values across most districts.

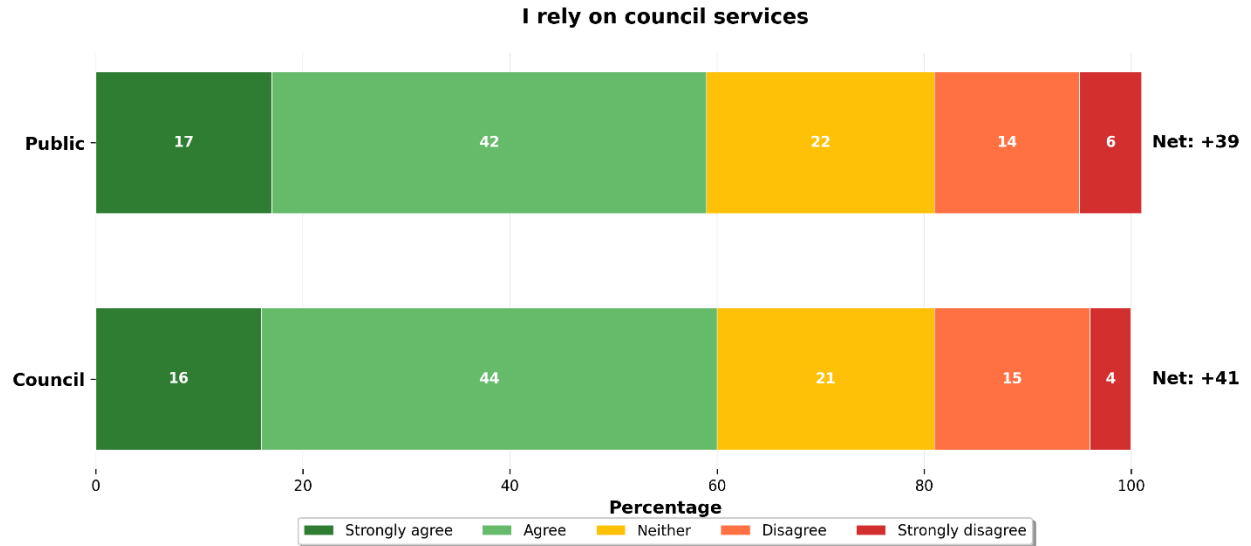


Base: 2413 residents

Here, the under 35s and the 55-64s clearly feel a disconnect, though all the net figures are low (Net +4 and Net +4 respectively).

Council reliance: I rely on council services

The Professional Divide

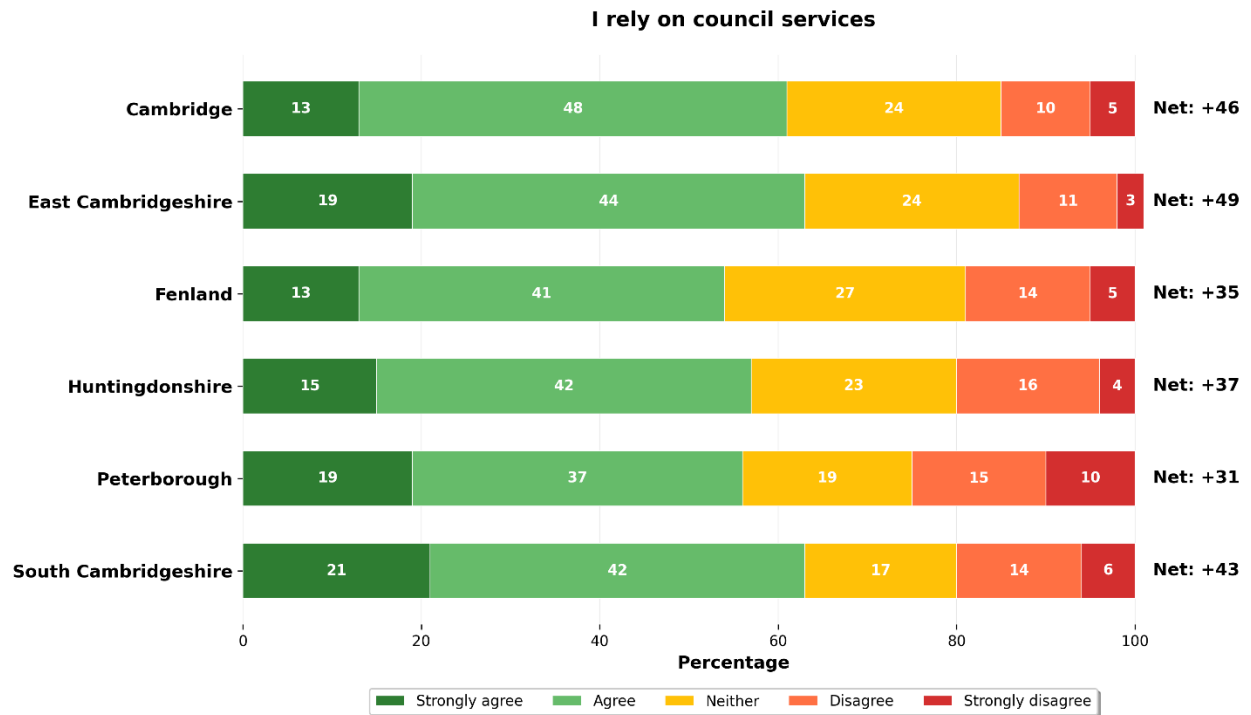


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

A majority of the public say they rely on council services. The analysis reveals convergence between public and professional perspectives on reliance on council services, with public respondents recording a net score of +39 and council workers +41.

Geographical Perspectives

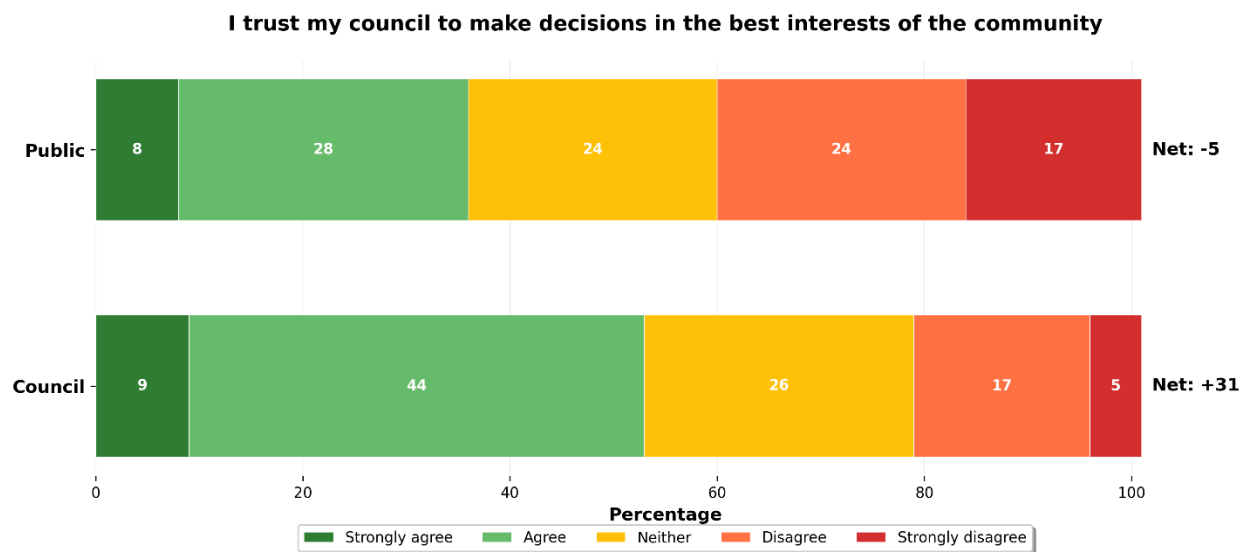
For the council services reliance question shown, there are no statistically significant differences between districts. All observed variations fall within the confidence intervals when properly accounting for sample sizes.



Base: 2413 residents

Trust in councils: I trust my council to make decisions in the best interests of the community

The Professional Divide

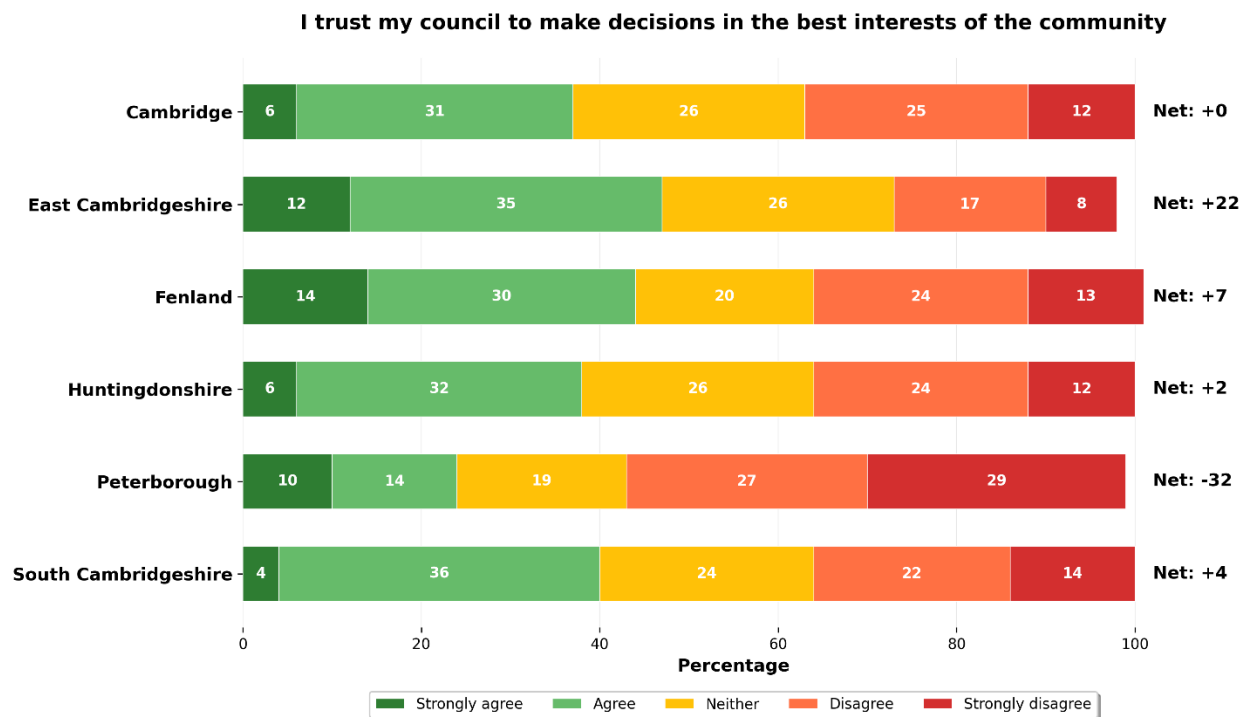


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The analysis reveals a significant divide on trust, with council workers expressing notably more positive sentiment (net score +31) compared to public respondents (net score -5). This 36-point gap suggests that professional experience a real disjunct on the issue of trust. In the LGA local government survey trust has been falling from 76% in 2014 to 65% in 2025 with a recent bounce to 70% in October 2025. Public trust is vitally important, and it is notably that on the matter of trust, a key factor for councils, the public are net negative. One example of this is the perceptions of the satisfaction with the quality of services is massively influenced by trust, and this is true for many other measures.

Geographical Perspectives

Trust in council decision-making varies significantly across the region. Peterborough shows 56% disagreement that their council acts in the community's best interests, compared to 37% in Cambridge and 36% in Huntingdonshire—differences that exceed statistical significance thresholds. At the other end, Fenland records 44% agreement versus Peterborough's 24%, a significant 20-point difference. The distinction appears most pronounced in the "strongly disagree" category, where Peterborough's 29% contrasts with South Cambridgeshire's 14%. These patterns indicate substantial geographic variation in council trust, with Peterborough residents expressing the lowest confidence levels whilst East Cambridgeshire have the highest net agreement.

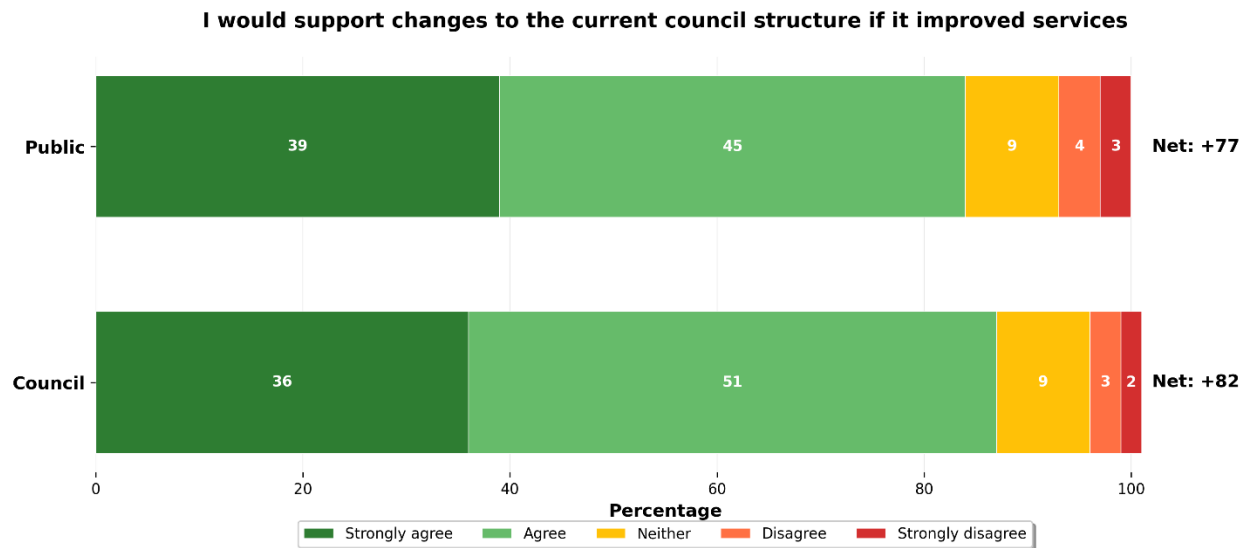


Base: 2413 residents

Interestingly, it is 35-54s who are the most negative in terms of trust and the over 75s who are the most positive. Males show less trust in council decision-making.

Positive change: I would support changes to the current council structure if it improved services

The Professional Divide

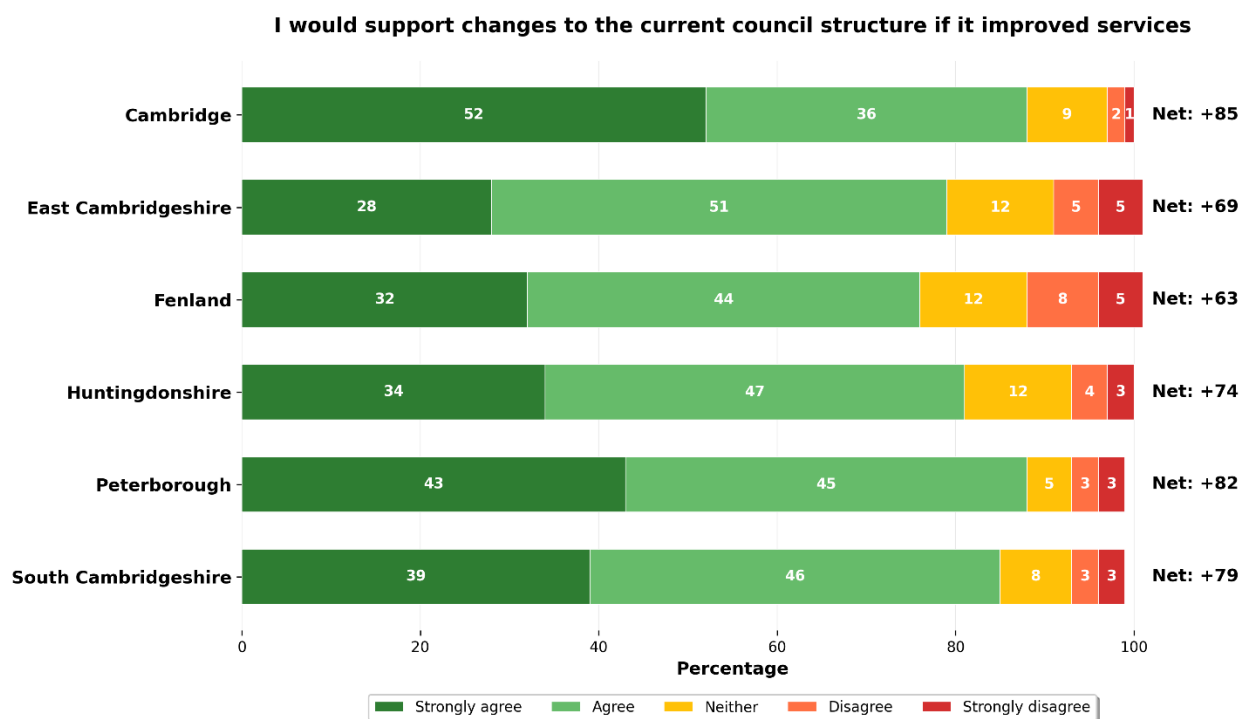


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The analysis reveals both the public and council workers are responsive to change if it will improve services, with public respondents recording a net score of +77 and council workers +82. This close alignment suggests that both citizen and practitioner viewpoints are broadly aligned on wanting change **conditional on improved services**.

Geographical Perspectives

Support for council restructuring contingent on service improvement shows remarkable consensus across the region. There is a statistically significant difference between those that support change in Fenland and Cambridge. Combined agreement ranges from 76% in Fenland to 88% in Cambridge and Peterborough, whilst combined disagreement remains minimal at 3-13% across all areas. This uniformity suggests widespread openness to structural reform across all districts, provided it delivers tangible service improvements. The minimal disagreement and low neutral responses further emphasise this consensus, marking this as one of the few areas of genuine regional agreement in the survey.

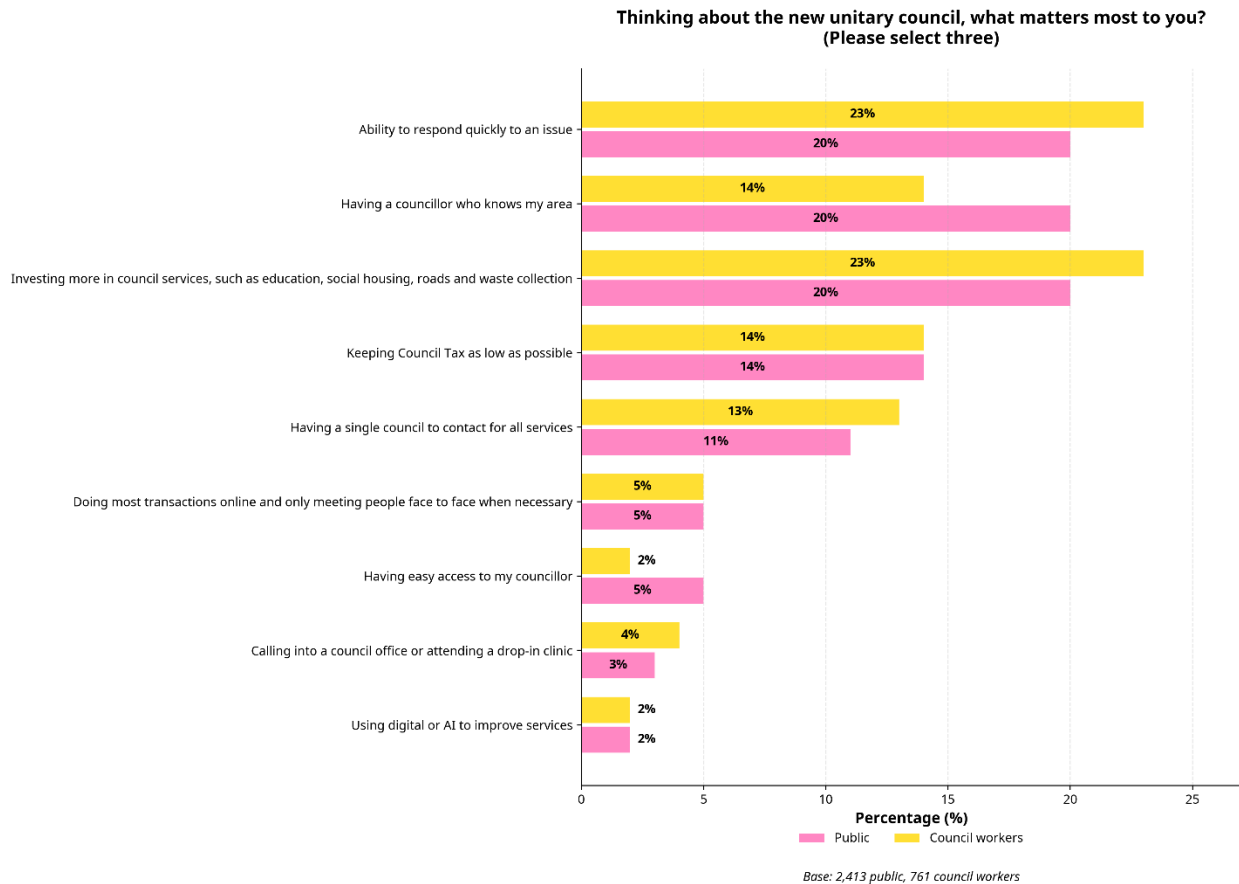


Base: 2413 residents

The generational analysis shows broad positive agreement with 35-44s showing significantly less willingness to change. Ethnic minorities are more positive in terms of change.

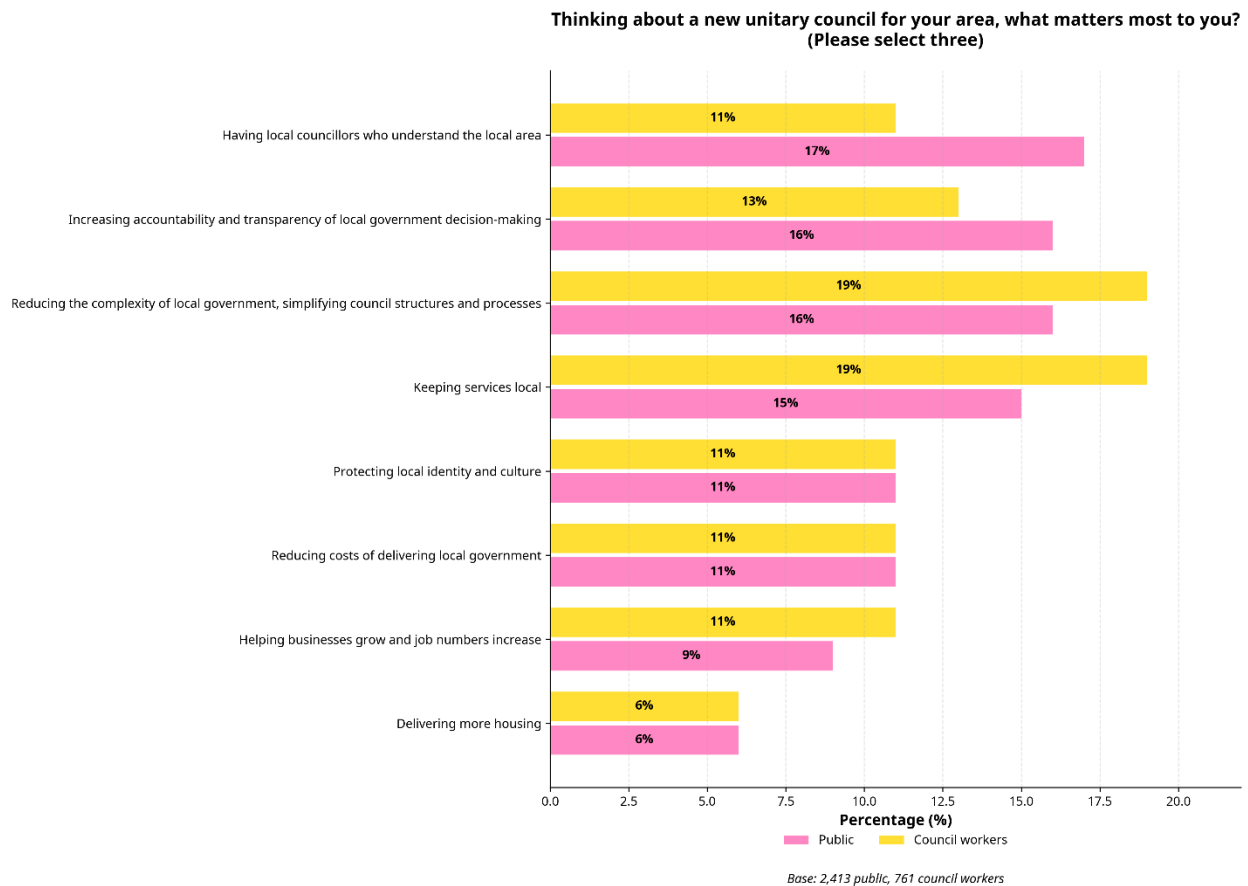
Unitary matters

The top three priorities for the public and council workers from a new unitary council are investing in council services, ability to respond quickly and having a councillor that know the area. Council workers tie third place with keeping council tax as low as possible.



The main areas of focus for new unitary councils

The public would like to see the new unitary councils have councillors with local knowledge, increasing the accountability and transparency of local government decision-making and reducing the complexity of local decision-making. Council workers want to reduce the complexity of local government as well, but they equally emphasise keeping services local and increasing the accountability of local government decision-making.

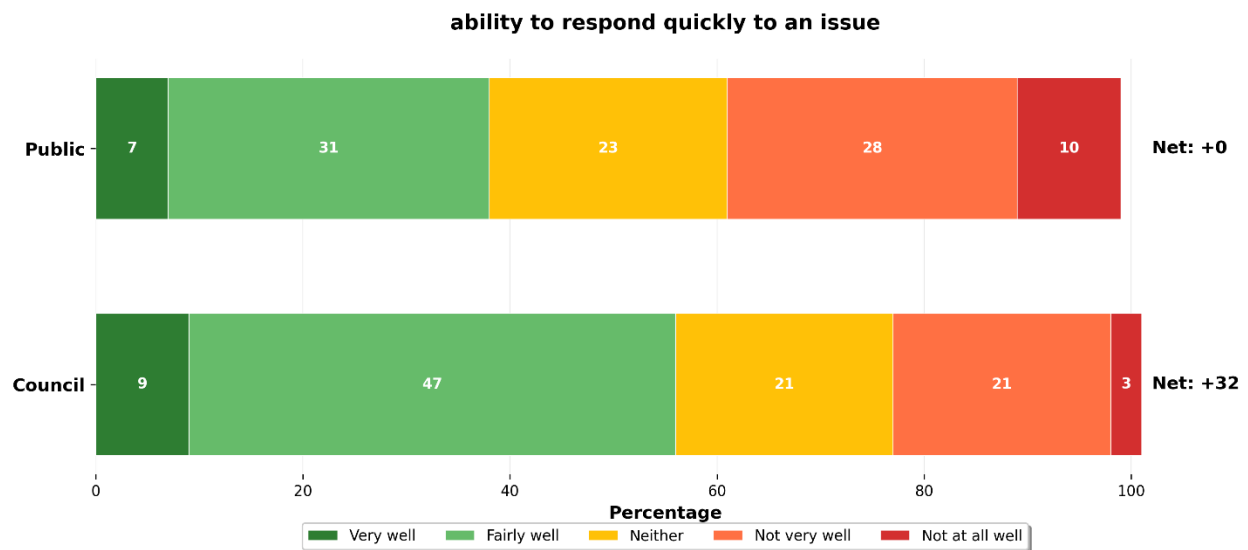


Current Performance

Next survey respondents were asked to rate the current performance of their councils on the same measures they were asked to prioritise for unitary councils.

Responsive councils: Ability to respond quickly to an issue

The Professional Assessment

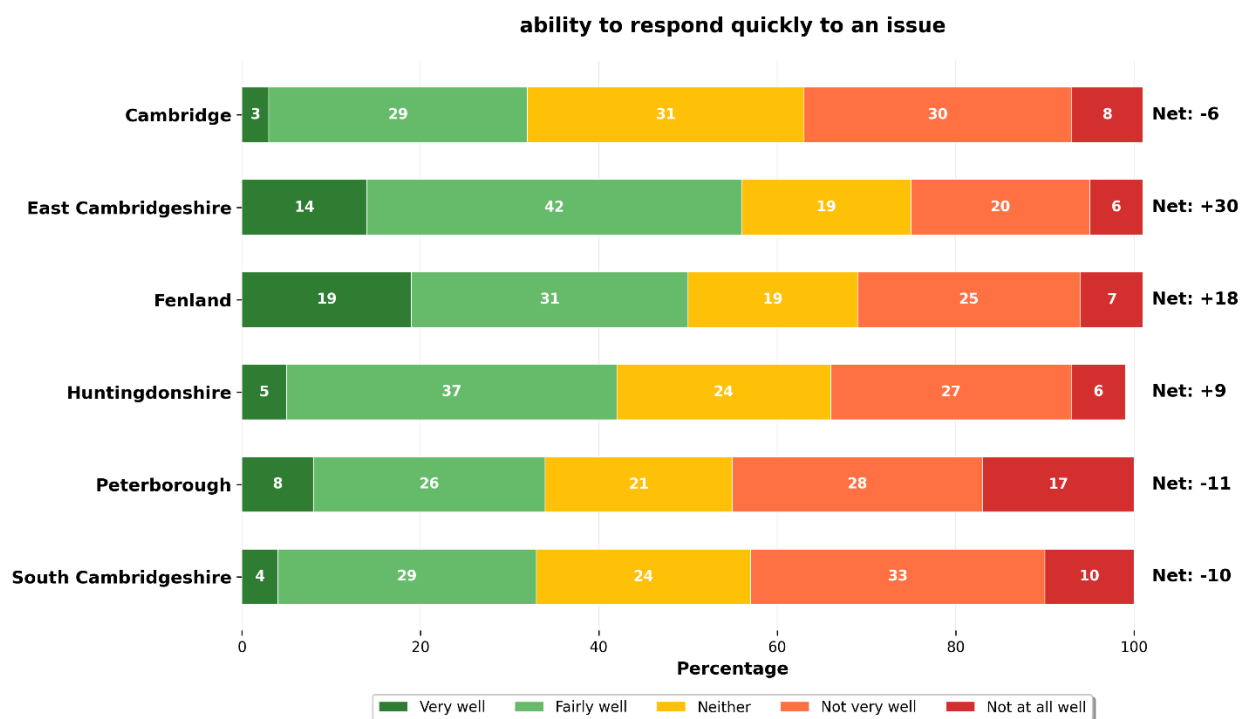


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

This a top public priority and just 38 per cent of the public believe that councils are doing well on it. The performance assessment reveals a significant professional divide, with council workers expressing notably more confidence in the council's ability to respond quickly (net score +32) compared to public expectations (net score +0). This 32-point gap suggests there is a perception gap in terms of being a responsive council.

Geographical Performance Expectations

Perceptions of councils' ability to respond quickly to issues reveal significant district-level differences. East Cambridgeshire shows the highest confidence with 56% believing their council responds well or very well, compared to Fenland's 50%, Huntingdonshire's 42%, and Cambridge's 32%. The gap between East Cambridgeshire and Fenland to Cambridge and Peterborough exceeds statistical significance thresholds. The "neither" category remains relatively consistent at 19-31% across districts, suggesting widespread uncertainty about council responsiveness. These variations indicate that residents' experiences of council responsiveness differ substantially by district, with East Cambridgeshire and Fenland residents reporting notably better experiences than those in Cambridge, Peterborough or South Cambridgeshire.

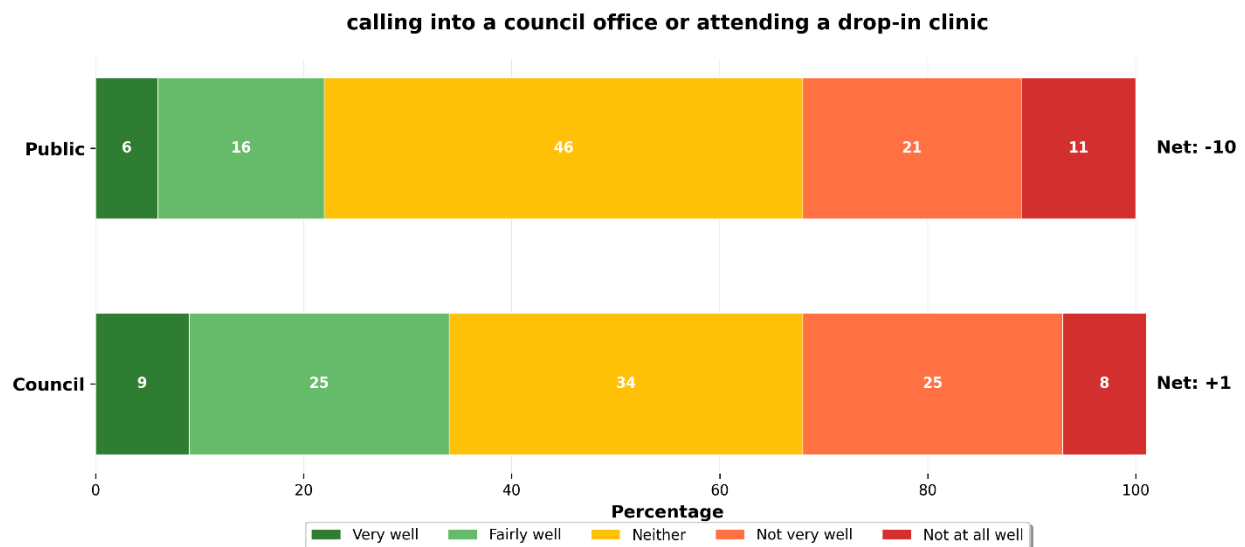


Base: 2413 residents

From a generational perspective, all ages have similar views, and this is broadly low. Males and minorities score councils negatively on council responsiveness.

Council sites: Calling into a council office or attending a drop in clinic

The Professional Assessment

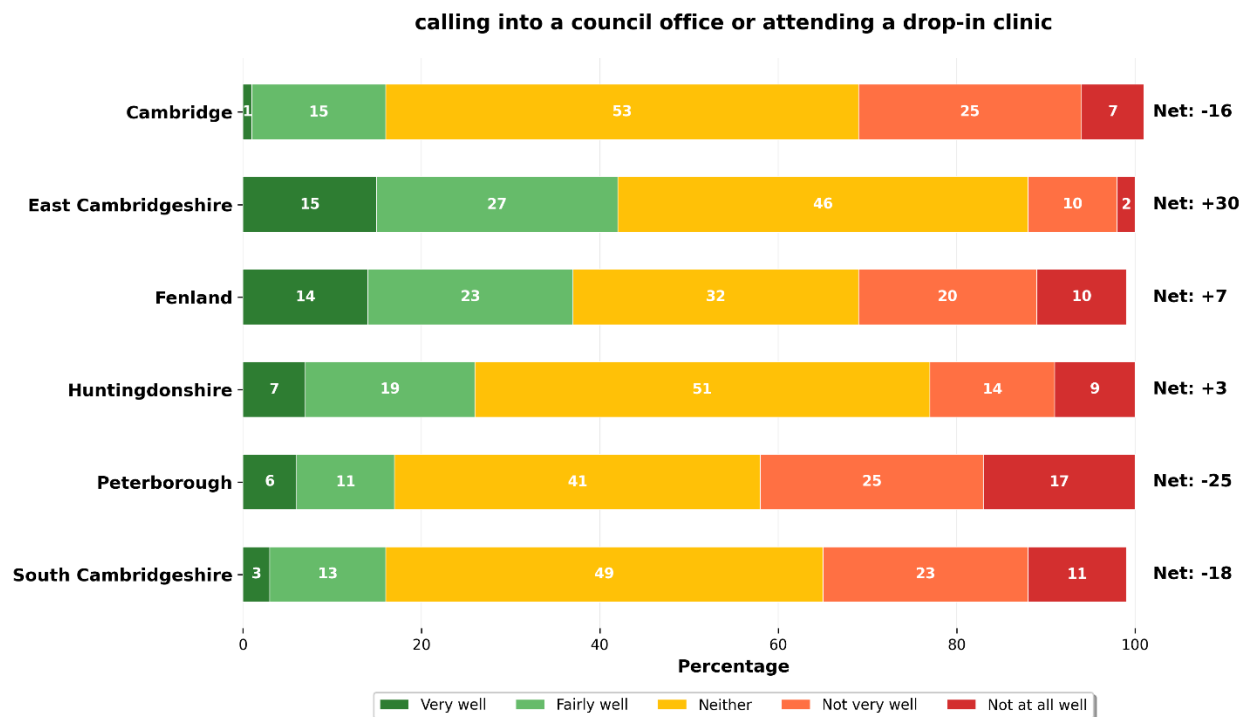


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The performance assessment reveals a significant divide in terms of perceptions of accessing services, with council workers expressing notably more confidence in council performance (net score +1) compared to public expectations which are negative (net score -10).

Geographical Performance Expectations

Satisfaction with calling council offices or attending drop-in clinics shows distinct variation across the districts. The most notable finding is the high proportion selecting "neither" across all areas, ranging from 32% in Fenland to 53% in Cambridge. Combined positive responses (very well/well) range from 16% in Cambridge to 42% in East Cambridgeshire, with Fenland at 37% and Huntingdonshire at 26%. The difference in doing very well/well from East Cambridgeshire and Fenland to Cambridge and Peterborough exceeds significance thresholds. Negative responses remain relatively consistent at 12-43% across districts. The dominance of "neither" responses, particularly in Cambridge where over half of residents appear not to have engaged with these services, indicates that direct contact methods may be underutilised across the region. East Cambridgeshire again shows the highest satisfaction among those who have used these services, consistent with their positive ratings on responsiveness.

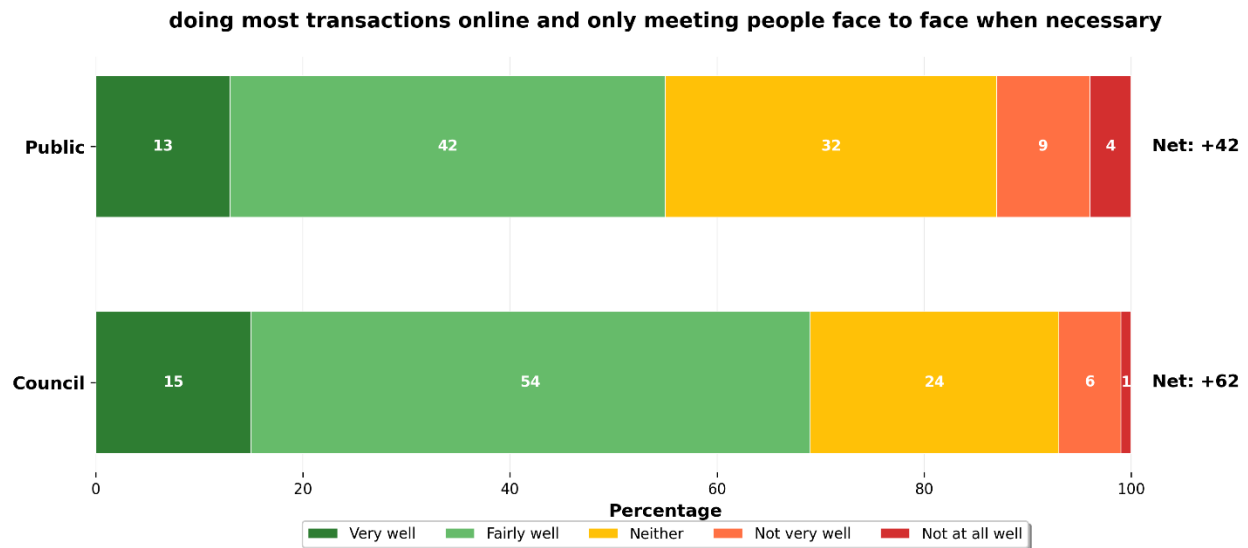


Base: 2413 residents

For the public of all ages, the current performance on this measure is low. Ethnic minorities tend to be more negative on this measure (-7 net).

Digital Councils: Doing most transactions online and only meeting people face to face when necessary

The Professional Assessment

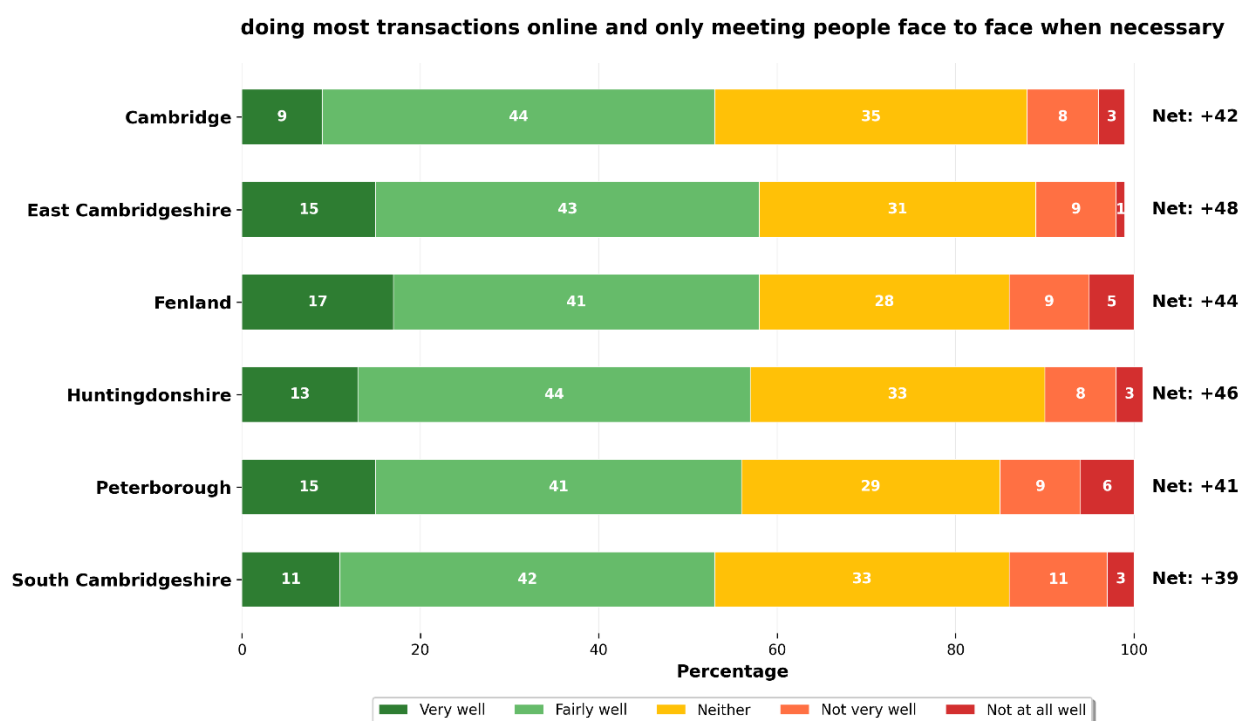


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

A majority of the public are happy to do most transactions online and only face to face when necessary. The performance assessment reveals a significant professional divide, with council workers expressing notably more confidence in council's ability to provide services appropriately (net score +62) compared to public expectations (net score +42). The public are supportive of this, but the 20-point gap suggests more work is needed.

Geographical Performance Expectations

Reinforcing the broad support for this kind of service delivery, performance for online transactions versus face-to-face contact show minimal significant variation across districts. Combined positive responses (very well/fairly well) range from 53% in Cambridge to 58% in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, whilst negative responses vary from 10% in Cambridge and East Cambridgeshire to 15% in Peterborough. These differences fall within confidence intervals and do not reach statistical significance. The "neither" category shows consistency at 28-35% across all districts. The uniformity, with roughly half of residents across all areas supporting online-first approaches whilst maintaining face-to-face options when necessary. This consensus around digital transformation indicates that service delivery preferences are shaped more by individual circumstances and capabilities than geographic location. The substantial neutral responses may reflect mixed experiences or ambivalence about the trade-offs between convenience and personal contact in council service delivery.

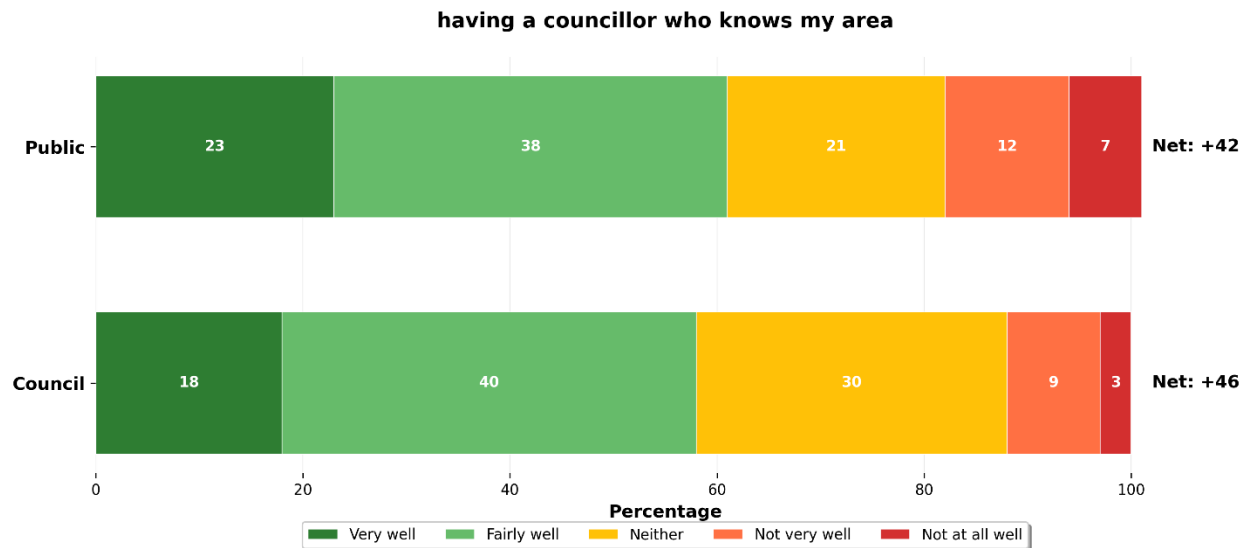


Base: 2413 residents

There is a greater willingness to transact digitally by all groups except the over 75s (Net +23).

Local Councillors: Having a councillor who knows my area

The Professional Assessment

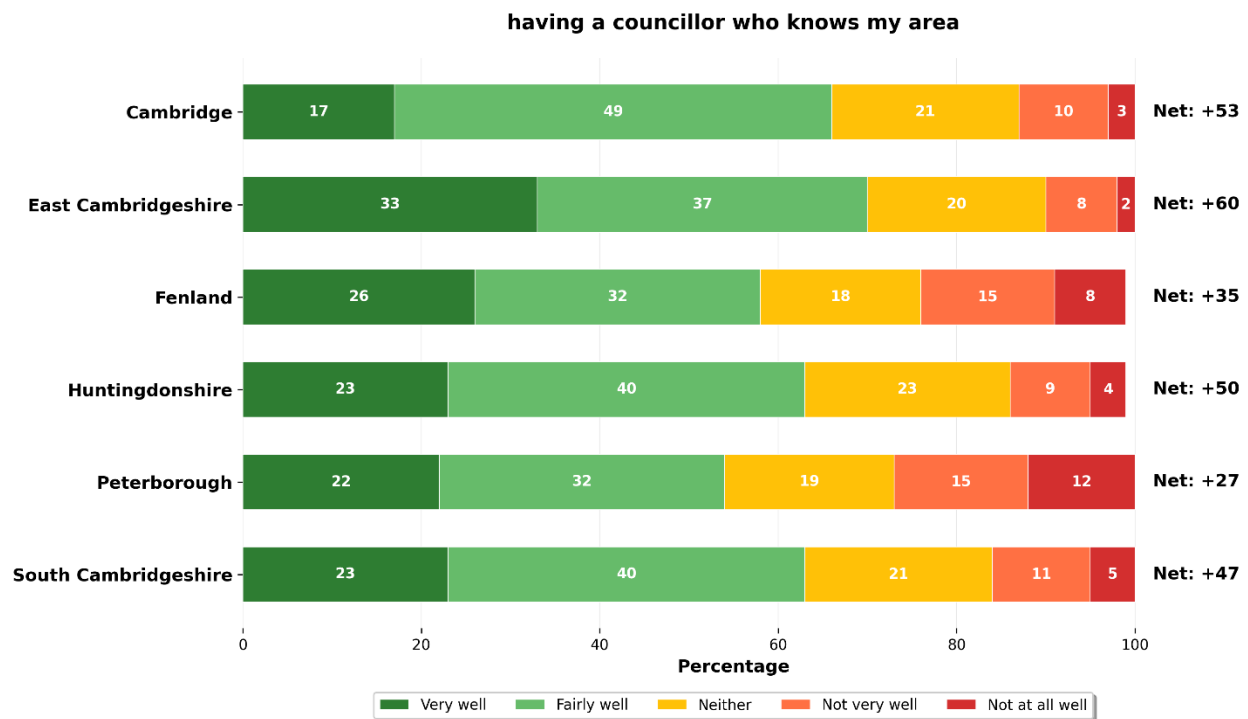


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

This is one of the top priorities of the public and positively, their perception is councillors are doing well on this measure. The performance assessment reveals remarkable convergence between public expectations and professional assessments, with public respondents recording a net score of +42 and council workers +46.

Geographical Performance Expectations

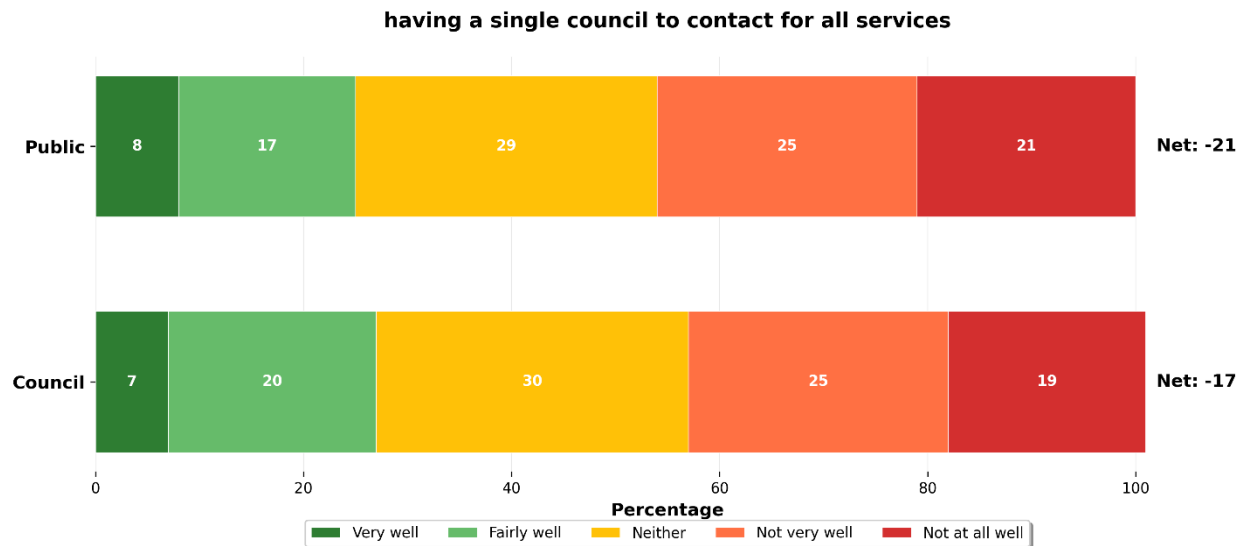
This is a top priority for the public and the performance of 'having a councillor who knows their area' shows notable variation across districts. East Cambridgeshire demonstrates the strongest support with 70% rating this as very well or fairly well, compared to Cambridge's 66%, South Cambridgeshire's 63%, Huntingdonshire's 63%, Fenland's 58%, and Peterborough's 54%. Negative responses remain consistently low at 10-27% across all districts. The "neither" category varies from 18% in Fenland to 23% in Huntingdonshire. These results indicate broad consensus that local knowledge matters in councillor effectiveness, with over half of residents in every district valuing area familiarity. The slightly higher support in rural districts like East Cambridgeshire may reflect the particular importance of local knowledge in dispersed communities with distinct village identities, though differences remain within statistical margins of error.



Base: 2413 residents

Unitary Council: Having a single council to contact for all services

The Professional Assessment

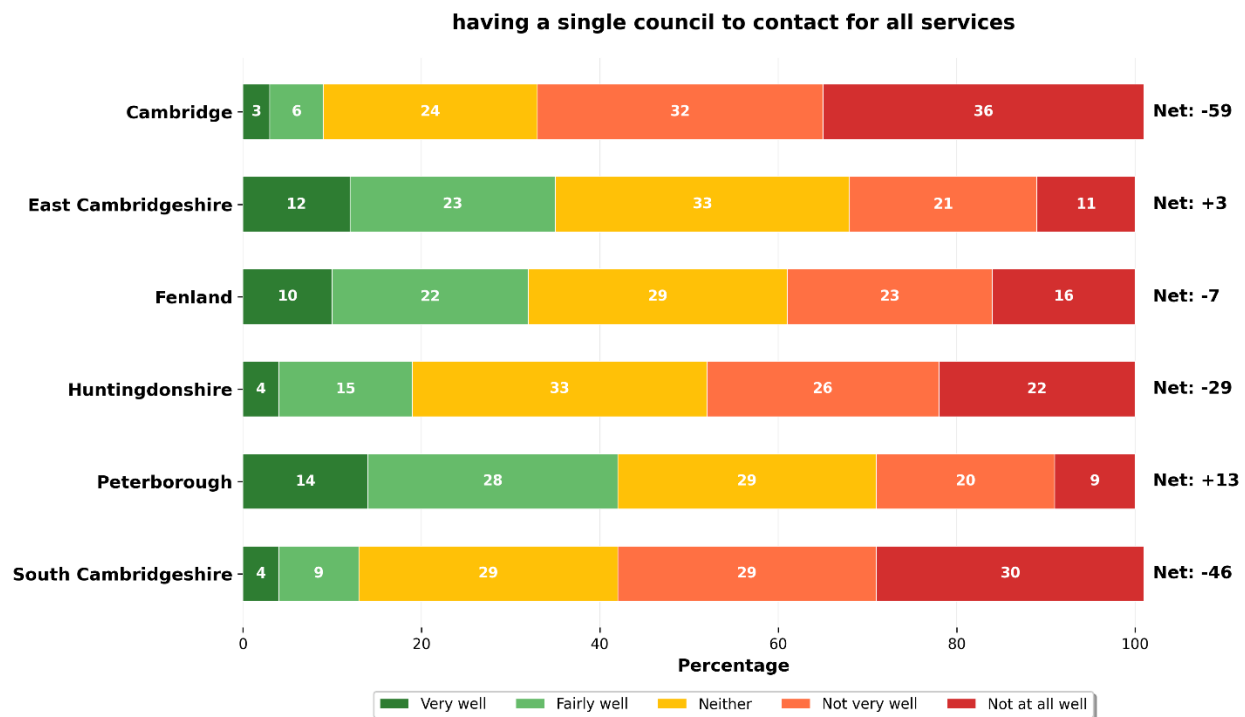


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

On this, both residents and council workers are negative, but it is important to understand that this is about the current performance, and both feel that councils are not acting as one stop shops which is the case except for Peterborough.

Geographical Performance Expectations

Peterborough is the only unitary council, so this is an interesting question to see how all the councils are perceived in terms of being 'joined-up'. Cambridge City shows the highest opposition with 68% rating this poorly (not very well/not at all well), compared to South Cambridgeshire 59%, Huntingdonshire's 48%, Fenland's 39%, East Cambridgeshire's 31%, and Peterborough's 29%. The 39-point gap between Cambridge City and Peterborough exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Conversely, Peterborough shows 43% support versus South Cambridgeshire's 13%, a significant 30-point difference shows one of the benefits of being a unitary council. This said, unitary councils should not be seen as a panacea. Peterborough is able to score well on this measure but less well on many others. The reputations of the new unitary councils will be built on trust, investment in excellent services, responsiveness, accountability and a mechanism for public involvement. In addition, the data suggests that Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire may have some challenges in their service delivery infrastructure because the public are unclear who to contact.

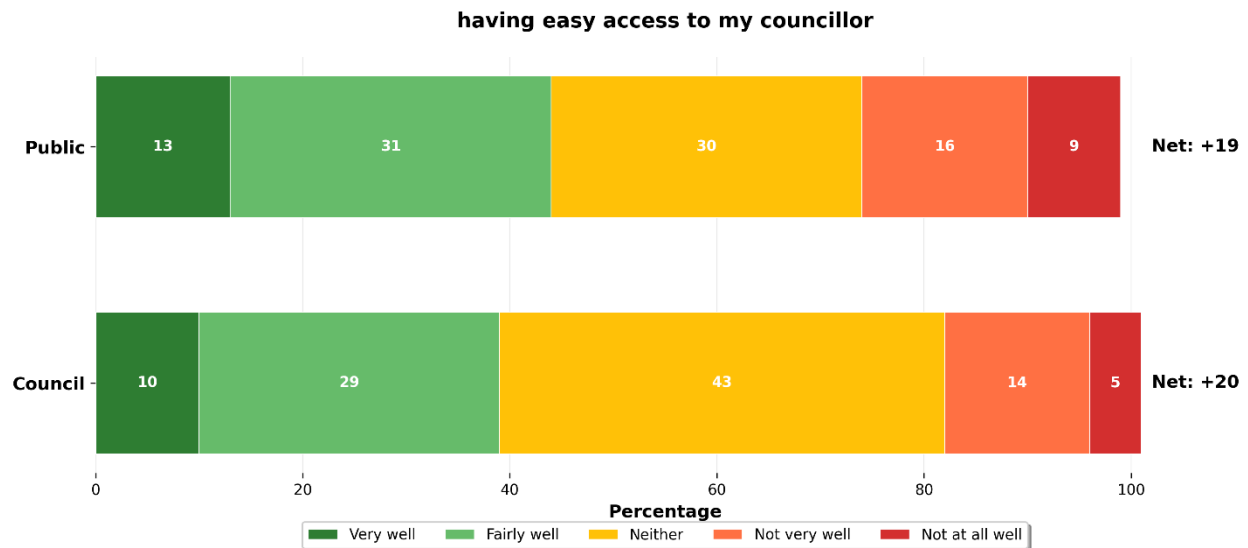


Base: 2413 residents

Again, we observe that younger residents tend to express more frustration with their council services not being a one stop shop than others (Under 35s Net -21 compared to 55-74 Net -11). Males are also more negative (Net -15).

Councillor?: Having easy access to my councillor

The Professional Assessment

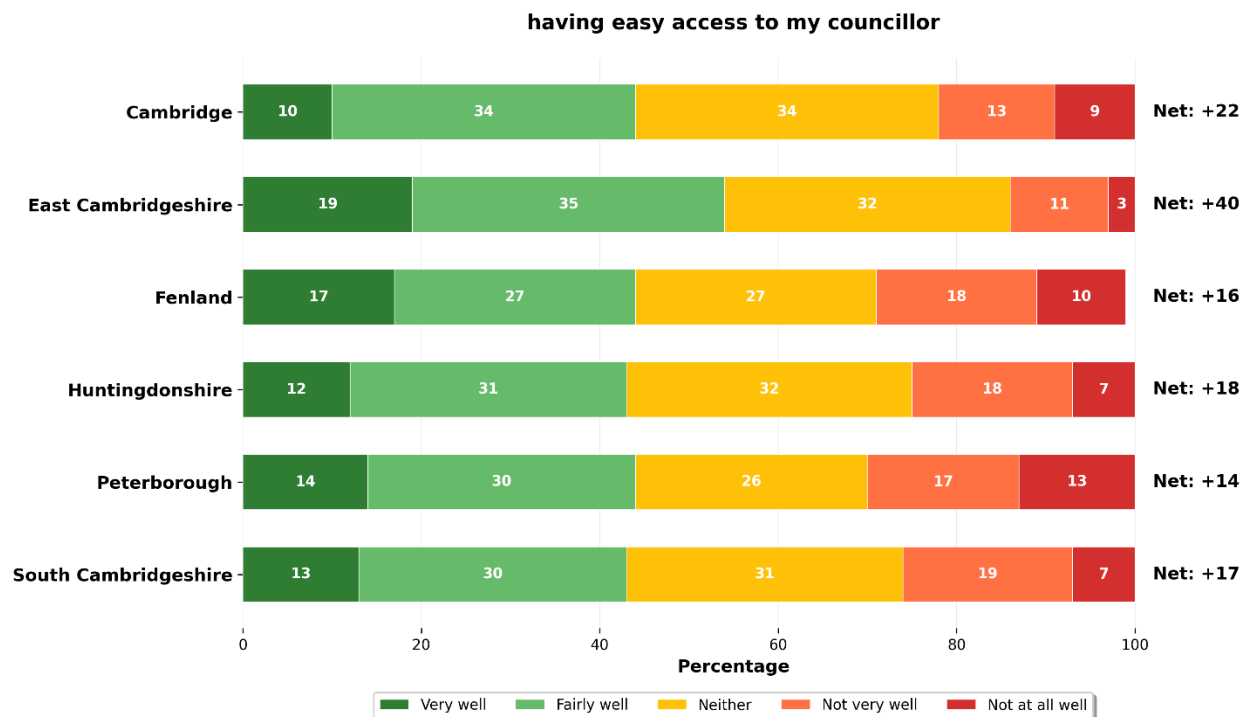


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The performance assessment reveals similarity between public expectations and professional assessments, with public respondents recording a net score of +19 and council workers +20. This close alignment suggests that both citizen and practitioner perspectives are broadly aligned on how easy it is to have easy access to a councillor.

Geographical Performance Expectations

The performance on this 'easy councillor access' show limited significant variation across districts. Combined positive responses range from 43% in South Cambridgeshire to 54% in East Cambridgeshire, with Cambridge, Fenland and Peterborough at 44%, and Huntingdonshire at 43%. These differences fall within confidence intervals and do not reach statistical significance. Negative responses vary from 14% in East Cambridgeshire to 30% in Peterborough, whilst the "neither" category ranges from 26% in Peterborough to 34% in Cambridge. The relatively uniform distribution suggests that councillor accessibility challenges transcend district boundaries, with roughly half of residents across all areas reporting satisfactory access whilst significant minorities experience difficulties. The substantial neutral responses, particularly in Cambridge and East Cambridgeshire, may indicate many residents have not attempted to contact their councillor, making evaluation difficult.

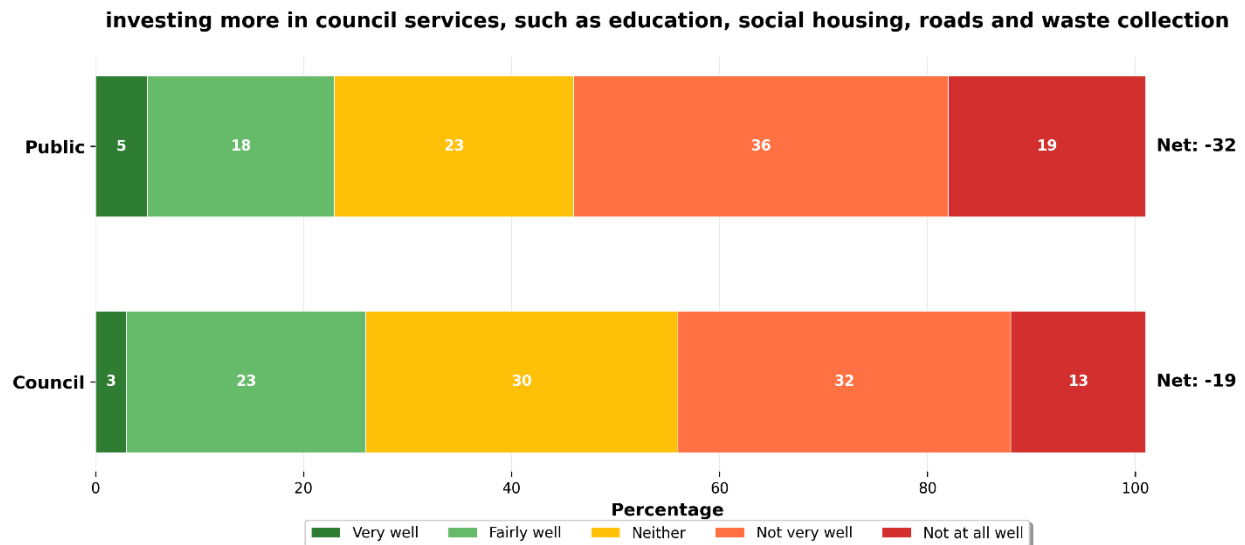


Base: 2413 residents

Older people are much more likely to say they have easy access to a councillor (55-74 Net +28 compared to Under 35s Net +8). White British residents say they are more likely to have easy access to a councillor (Net +28 compared to ethnic minorities Net +7).

Council Investment: Investing more in council services, such as education, social housing, roads and waste collection

The Professional Assessment

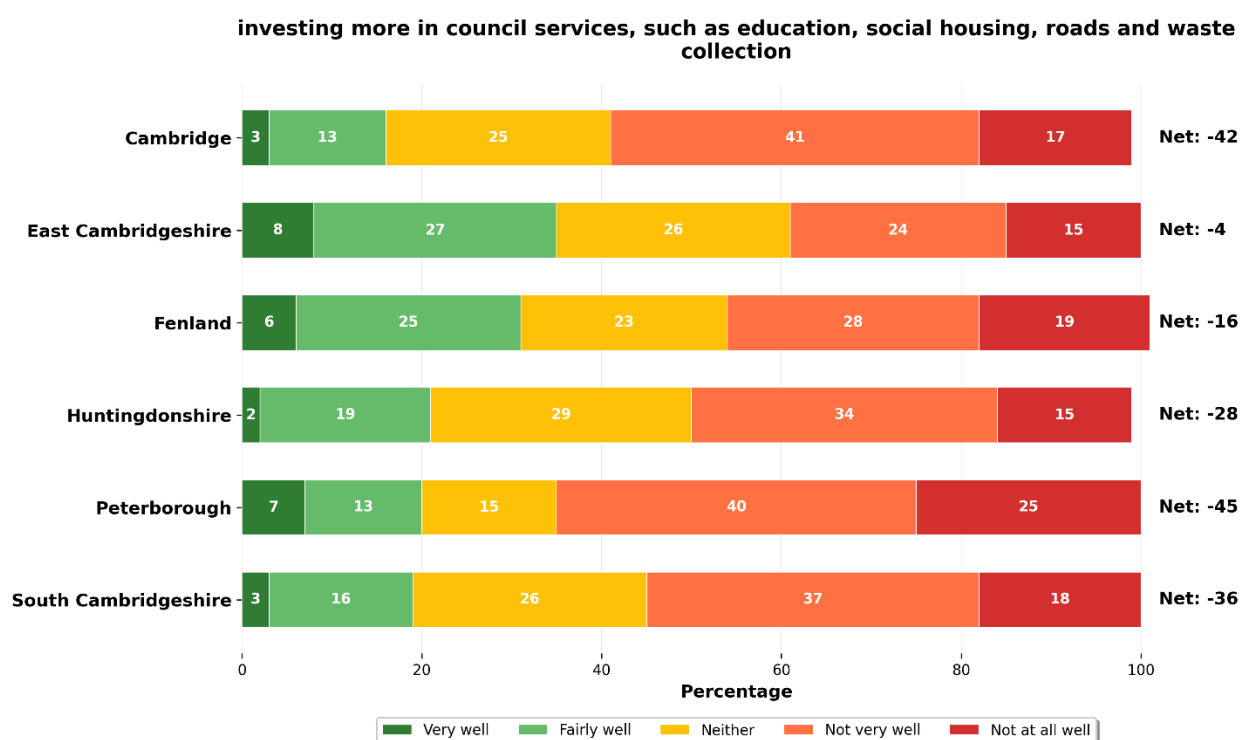


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

This is a top public priority, and the majority are not seeing investment in council services. The performance assessment reveals a significant professional divide, with council workers expressing notably more confidence in unitary council performance (net score -19) compared to public expectations (net score -32). This 13-point gap suggests that the public feel that more investment is required in key services, and this is acknowledged by the negative council worker score as well.

Geographical Performance Expectations

Residents across all the whole region are net negative on this measure. Residents' ratings of current council performance on service investment reveal significant district-level variation. Peterborough residents give the poorest ratings with 65% assessing current investment performance as not very well or not at all well, followed by Cambridge City at 58%, South Cambridgeshire at 55%, Huntingdonshire at 49%, Fenland at 44%, and East Cambridgeshire at 39%. The 26-point gap between Peterborough's negative assessment and East Cambridgeshire's represents a statistically significant difference. Positive ratings remain consistently low, ranging from 16% in Cambridge to 35% in East Cambridgeshire. The widespread dissatisfaction with current investment levels across core services suggests systemic underfunding concerns, with urban areas showing particularly more dissatisfaction. These patterns indicate residents across the region perceive significant underinvestment in essential services, though the intensity of this perception varies considerably by district, as evidenced by the net ratings.

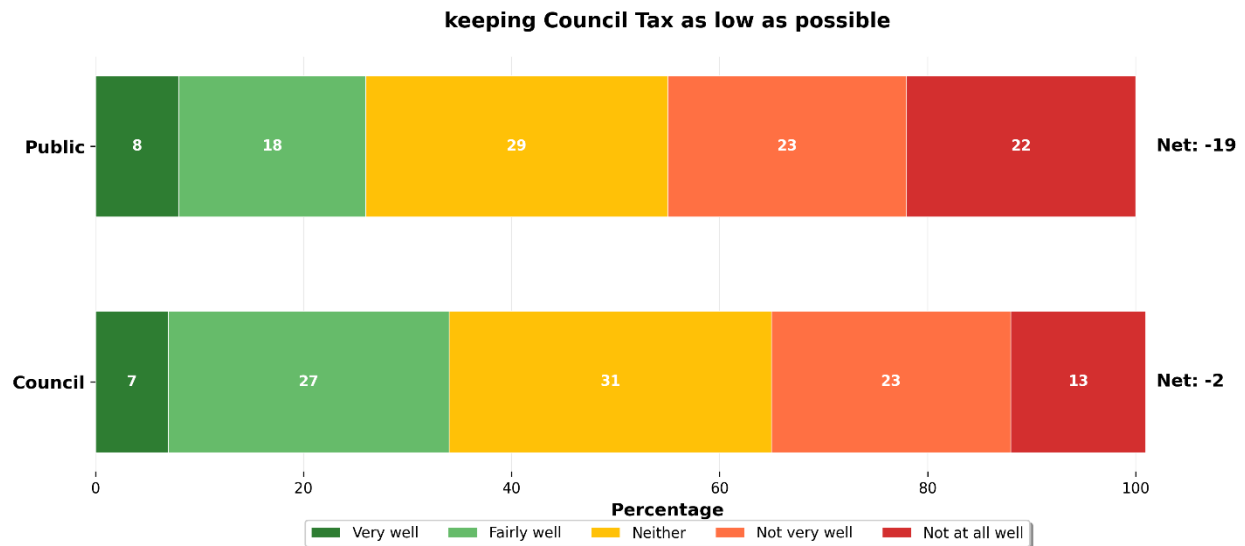


Base: 2413 residents

The working middle are most likely to be negative on this issue (Net -36).

Low Council Tax?: Keeping Council Tax as low as possible

The Professional Assessment

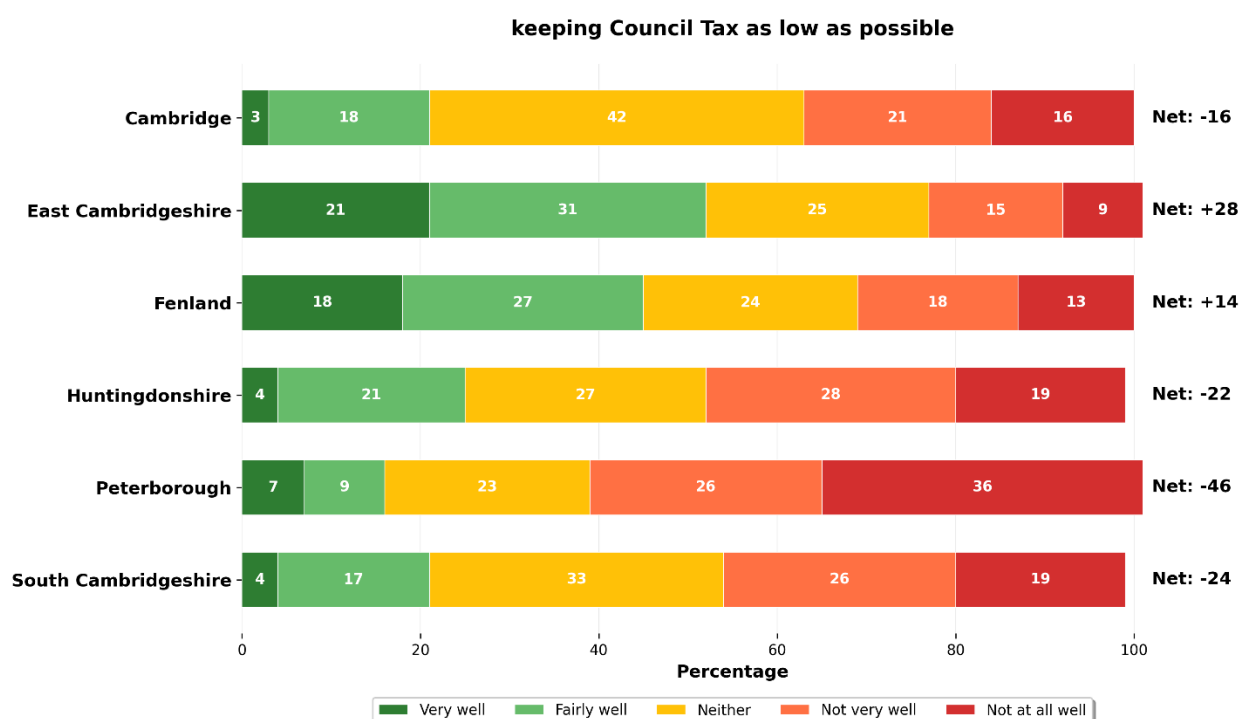


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Both scores on keeping Council Tax low are negative. The performance assessment reveals a significant professional divide, with council workers expressing notably more confidence in council performance (net score -2) compared to public expectations (net score -19).

Geographical Performance Expectations

Residents' assessment of councils' performance on keeping council tax low reveals significant variation across districts. Peterborough residents rate their council most poorly on this measure, with 62% saying it performs not very well or not at all well, compared to Cambridge's 37%, South Cambridgeshire's 39%, Fenland's 31%, East Cambridgeshire's 24%, and Huntingdonshire's 47%. With the exception of Fenland, the gap between most districts and East Cambridgeshire exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Positive ratings show East Cambridgeshire at 52%, Fenland at 45%, Huntingdonshire at 25%, Cambridge at 21%, South Cambridgeshire at 21%, and Peterborough at 16%. These patterns reveal a significant divide in perceptions of fiscal management, with East Cambridgeshire and Fenland residents viewing their councils as relatively effective, whilst Peterborough residents express strong dissatisfaction with their council's tax performance, consistent with their broader distrust of council decision-making and service investment concerns. Huntingdonshire also has nearly half the public (47%) saying they are not performing well on this measure and South Cambridgeshire is not far behind this (45%).

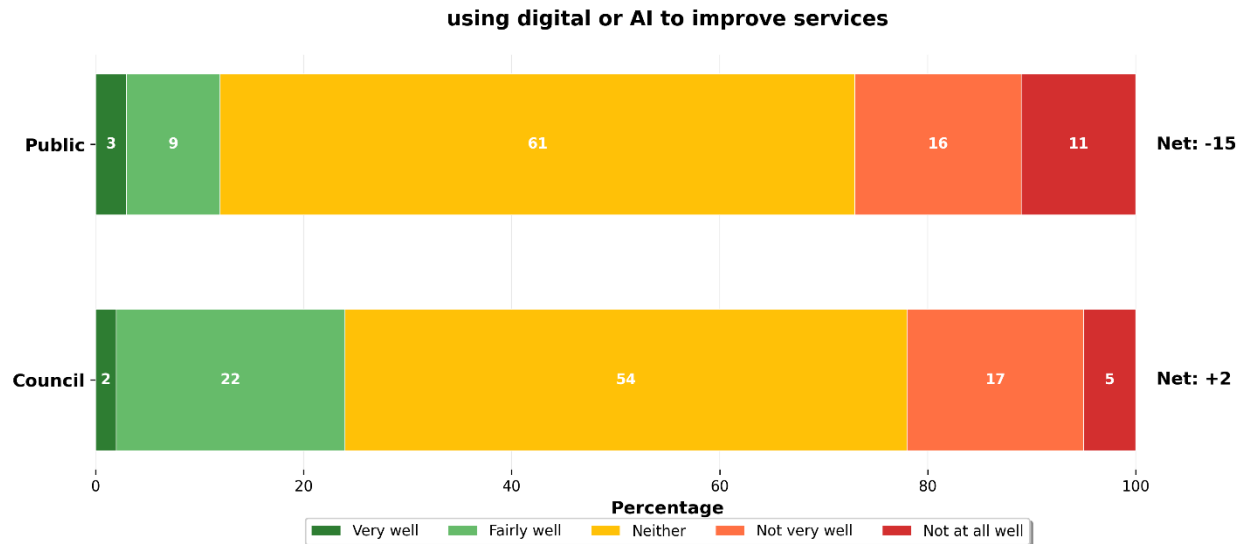


Base: 2413 residents

Younger people tend to think that council tax is not kept as low as possible (under 35s Net -25). Ethnic minorities also tend to disagree with keeping council tax as low as possible (Net -20).

Using digital or AI to improve services

The Professional Assessment

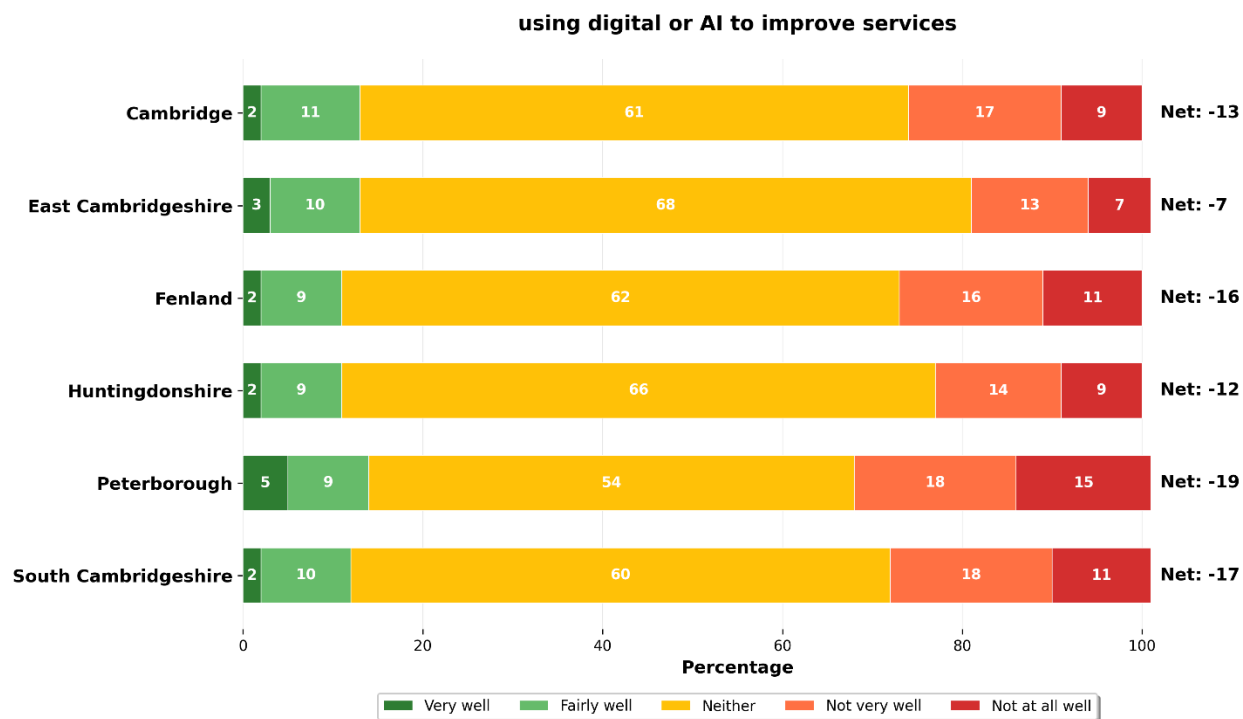


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

The performance assessment reveals a significant professional divide, with council workers expressing notably more confidence in council performance (net score +2) compared to public expectations (net score -15). This 17-point gap that the public think councils have a way to go using digital.

Geographical Performance Expectations

Residents' assessment of councils' performance on using digital technology and AI to improve services shows minimal significant variation across districts and all are net negative. The dominant response across all areas is "neither" ranging from 54% in Peterborough to 68% in East Cambridgeshire, suggesting widespread uncertainty about or unfamiliarity with councils' digital initiatives. Positive ratings remain consistently low, from 11% in Fenland to 14% in Peterborough, whilst negative responses range from 20% in East Cambridgeshire to 33% in Peterborough. The overwhelming neutral response indicates that digital transformation efforts either remain largely invisible to residents or have yet to demonstrate tangible service improvements. This pattern suggests councils across the region face similar challenges in implementing and communicating digital innovation, with residents unable to assess performance in an area where they may have limited direct experience or awareness of behind-the-scenes technological changes.



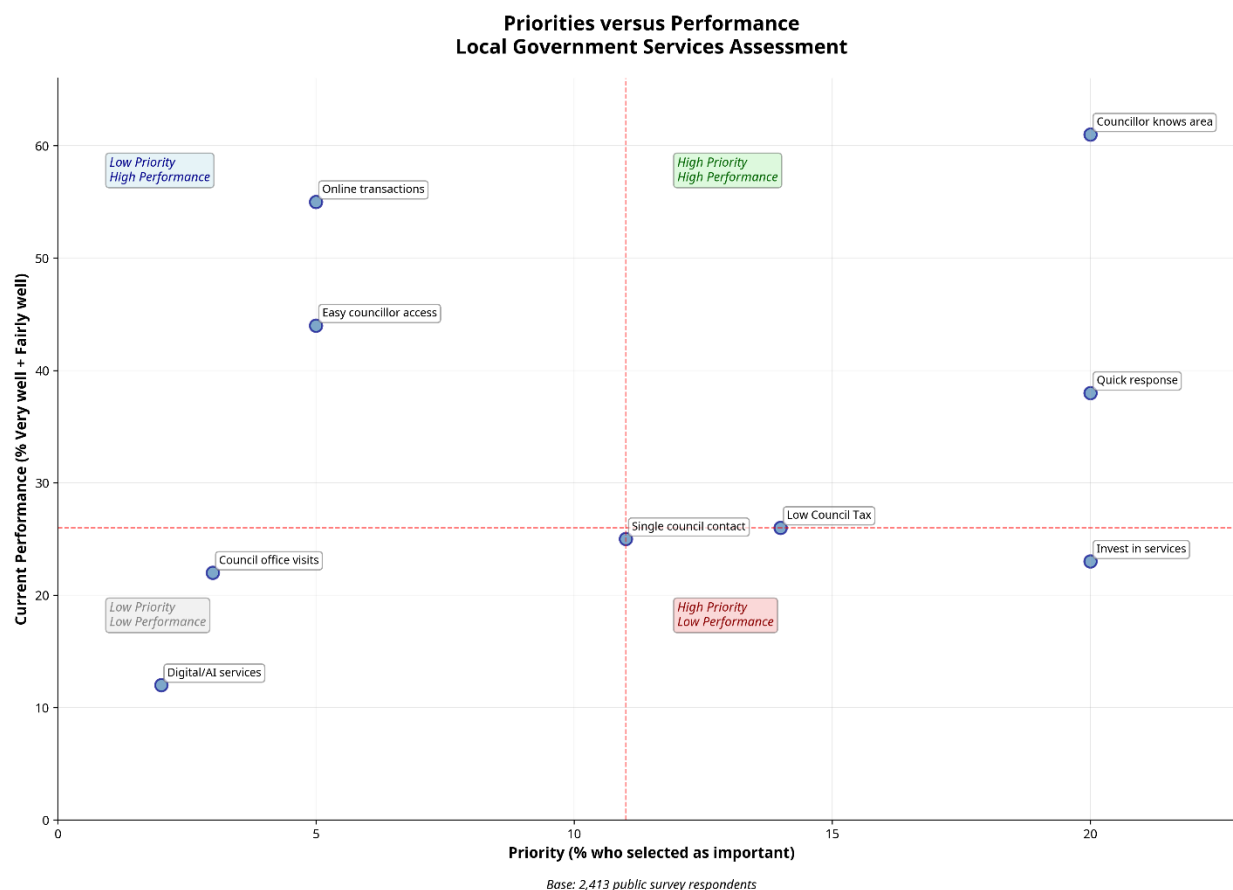
Base: 2413 residents

The 35-54s are most negative about the current performance in this area (Net -24).

Priorities versus Performance

This scatter plot presents a Local Government Services Assessment that maps various public services according to two critical dimensions: their priority to residents and current performance levels. The horizontal axis represents the percentage of respondents who identified each service as important, ranging from 0% to 25%. The vertical axis measures current performance, showing the combined percentage of respondents who rated each service as performing "very well" or "fairly well", with values extending from 0% to 65%.

The chart is strategically divided into four quadrants by red dotted lines positioned at 11% for priority and 26% for performance. This segmentation creates a useful framework for understanding service delivery effectiveness. The green-shaded areas indicate either high priority with high performance or low priority with high performance, whilst the red-shaded areas highlight potential areas of concern where performance may not align with citizen expectations.



In the top right quadrant, representing high priority and high-performance services, we find "Councillor knows area" achieving the highest performance rating at 61%, alongside "Quick response" at 38%, though this could be higher. These services demonstrate where the council is successfully meeting important resident needs. The top left quadrant shows services with

lower priority but high performance, including "Online transactions" at roughly 55% and "Easy councillor access" at 44%, suggesting efficient delivery of less critical services.

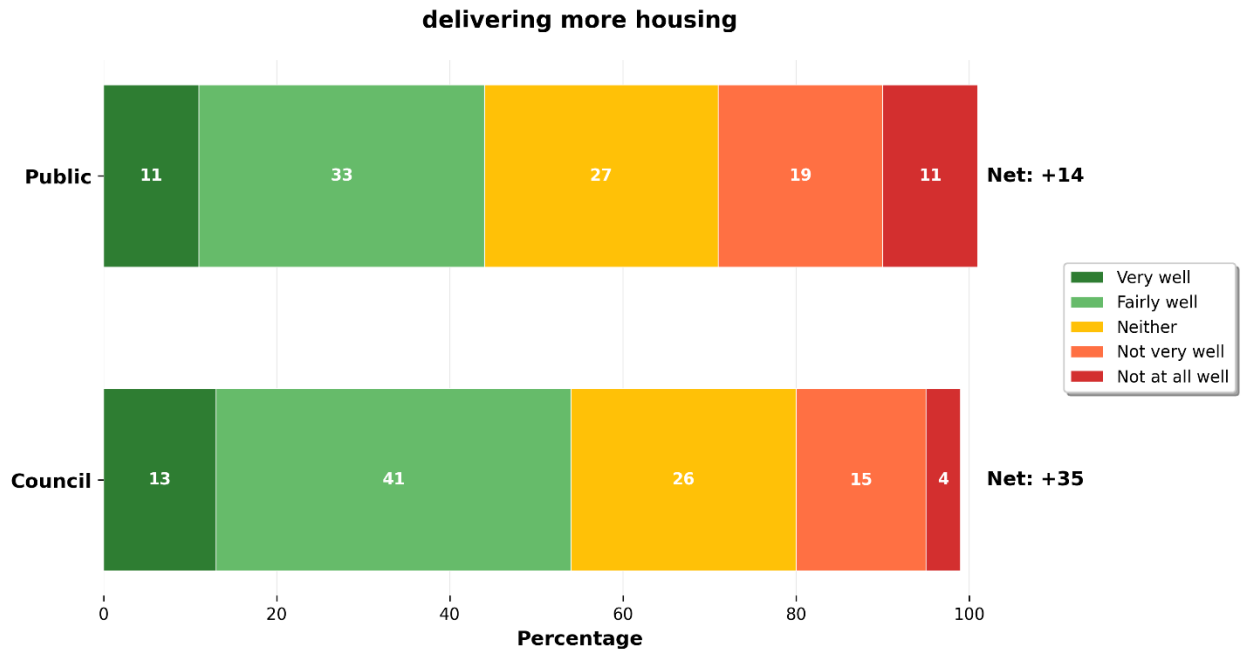
The bottom right quadrant reveals the most concerning findings, where high-priority services are underperforming. These include "Invest in services" at approximately 23% performance, "Low Council Tax" at 26%, and "Single council contact" at 25%. This quadrant represents the most significant opportunities for improvement, as these are services residents deem important but currently experience as inadequate.

The bottom left quadrant contains services with both low priority and low performance, such as "Council office visits" at 22% and "Digital/AI services" at merely 12%. Whilst these services may not require immediate attention given their lower priority status, they still represent areas where future improvements could be considered.

Housing Delivery

The Professional Assessment

Again, respondents were asked to rate their councils on several different measures. On housing delivery, council staff are substantially more positive than residents.

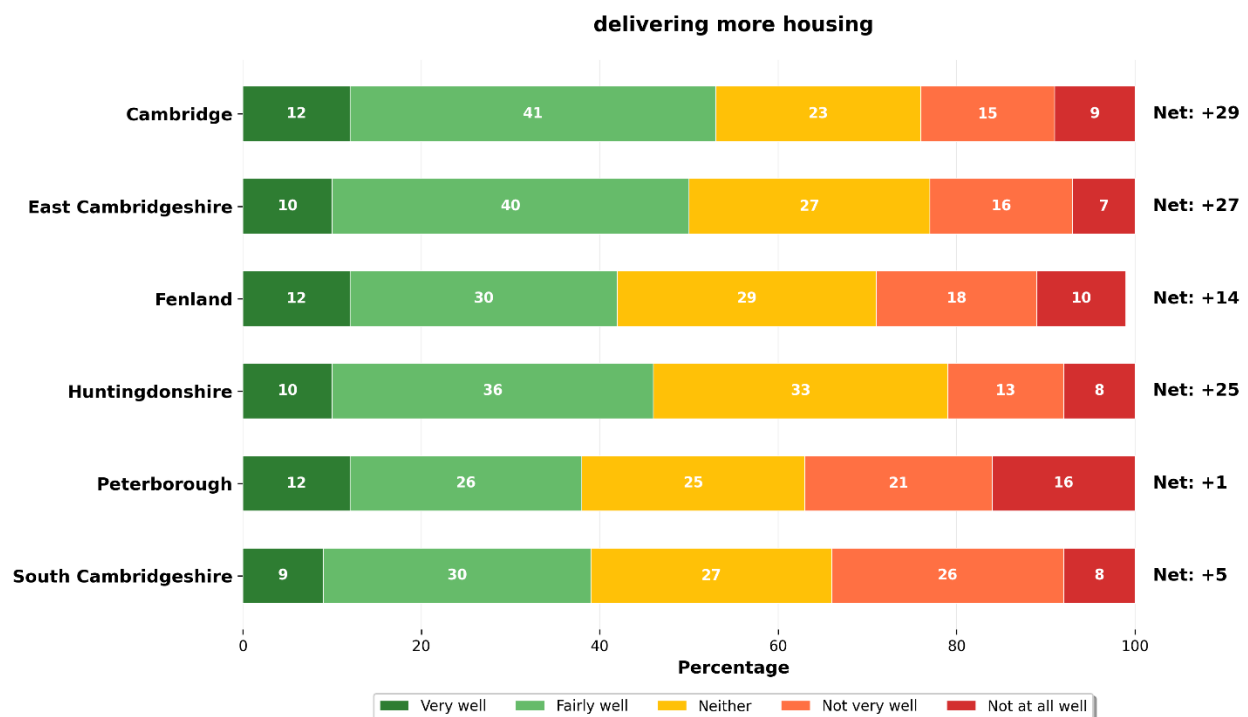


Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical differences

Residents' assessment of councils' performance on housing delivery shows limited significant variation across districts. Cambridge and East Cambridgeshire show the highest positive ratings at 53% and 50% respectively, whilst Peterborough shows 38%, South Cambridgeshire 39%, Fenland 42%, and Huntingdonshire 46%. Cambridge outperforms Peterborough significantly on this measure.

Negative responses range from 21% in Huntingdonshire to 37% in Peterborough, with South Cambridgeshire at 34%. The "neither" category varies from 23% in Cambridge to 33% in Huntingdonshire.

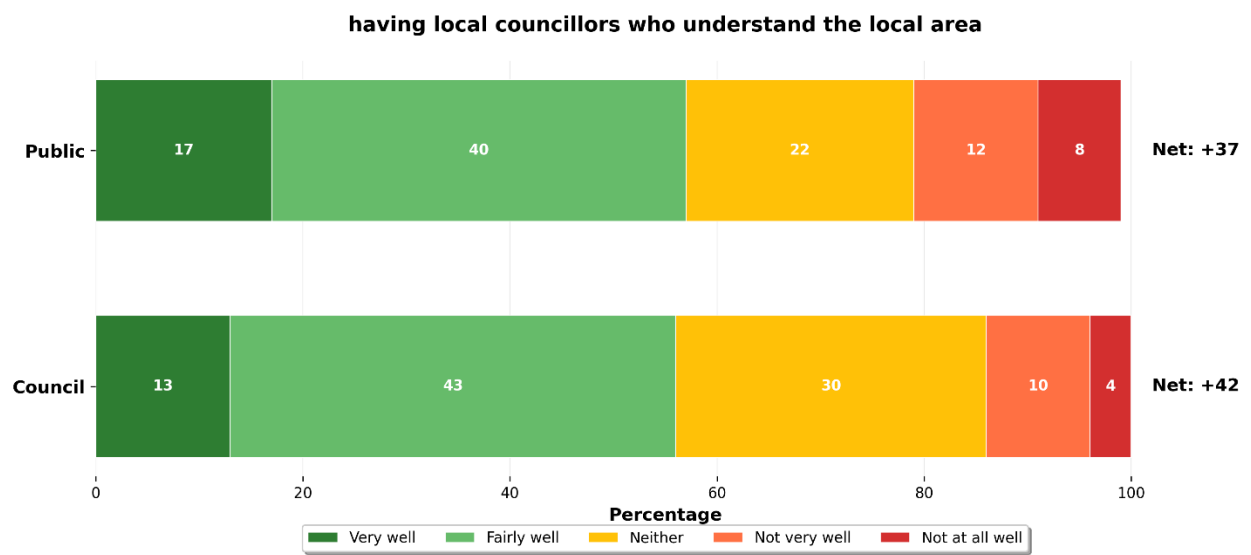


Base: 2413 residents

Councillor local knowledge

The Professional Assessment

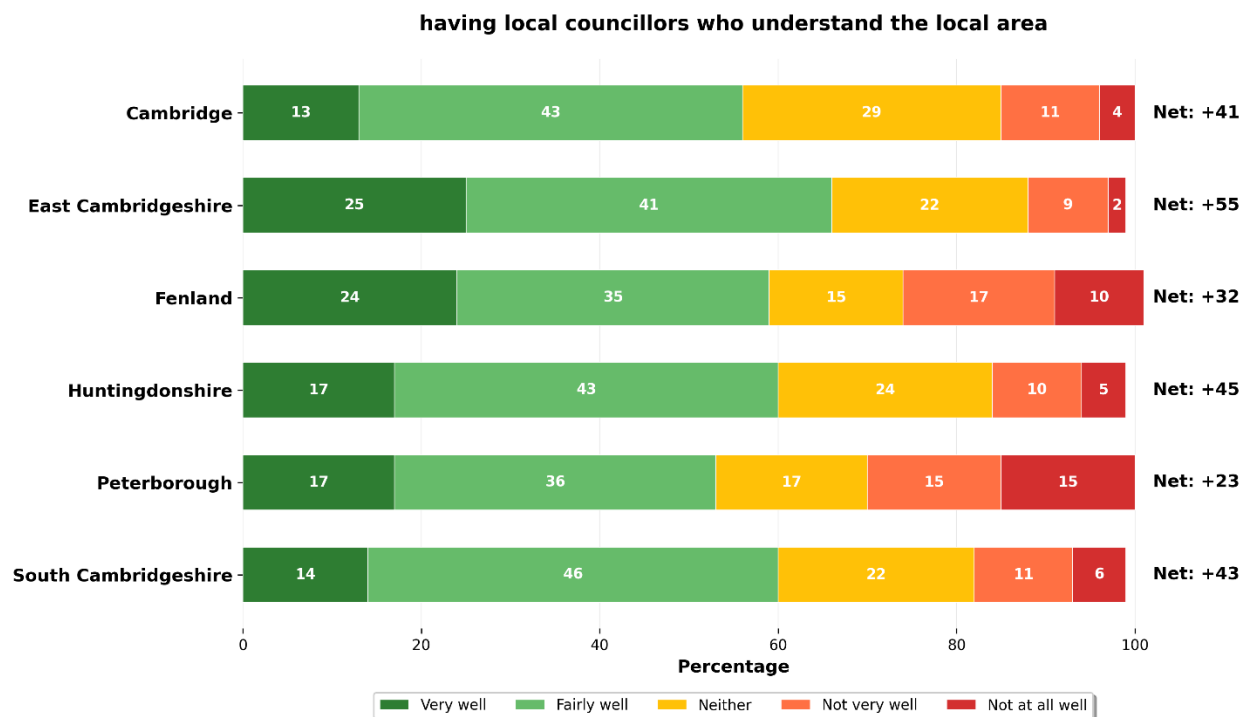
The performance on this measure is similar for both residents and council staff, and both are positive.



Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical differences

Residents' assessment of having local councillors who understand their area shows significant variation across districts. This said, a majority of residents have positive views on this measure in all districts. East Cambridgeshire demonstrates the highest satisfaction at 66%, followed by Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire at 60%, Fenland at 59%, Cambridge at 56%, and Peterborough at 53%. East Cambridgeshire is significantly higher than Peterborough on this measure. Negative responses remain fairly low across all districts, ranging from 11% in East Cambridgeshire to 30% in Peterborough. The "neither" category varies from 15% in Fenland to 29% in Cambridge.

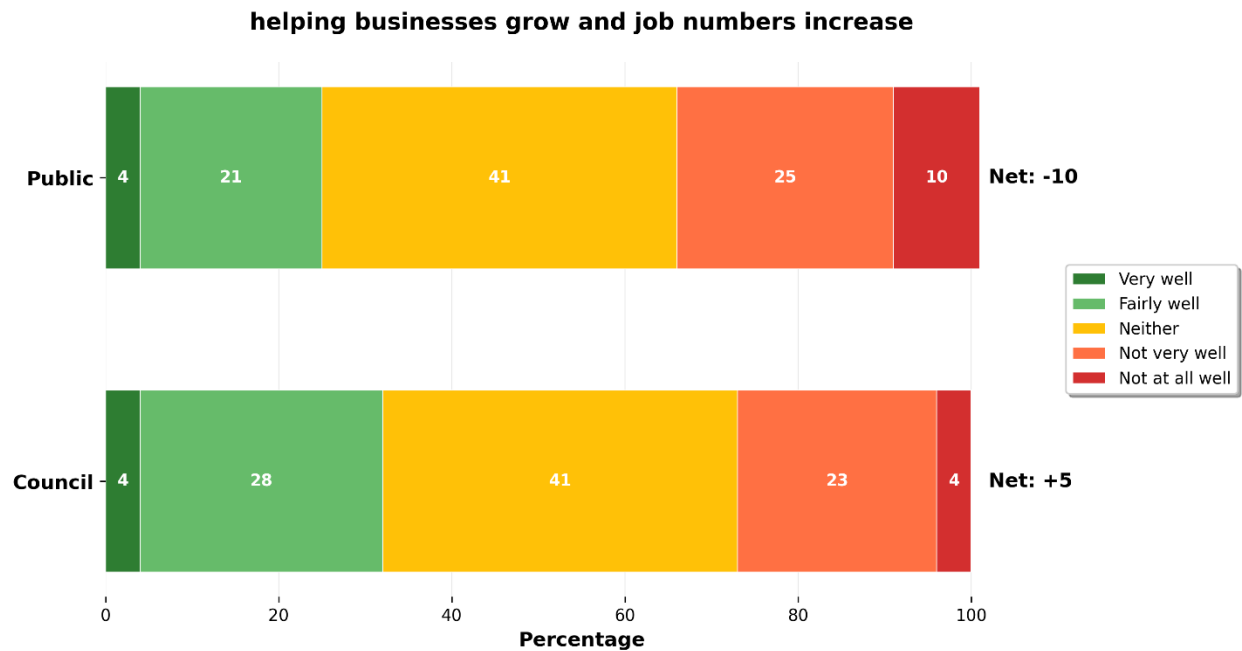


Base: 2413 residents

Business growth

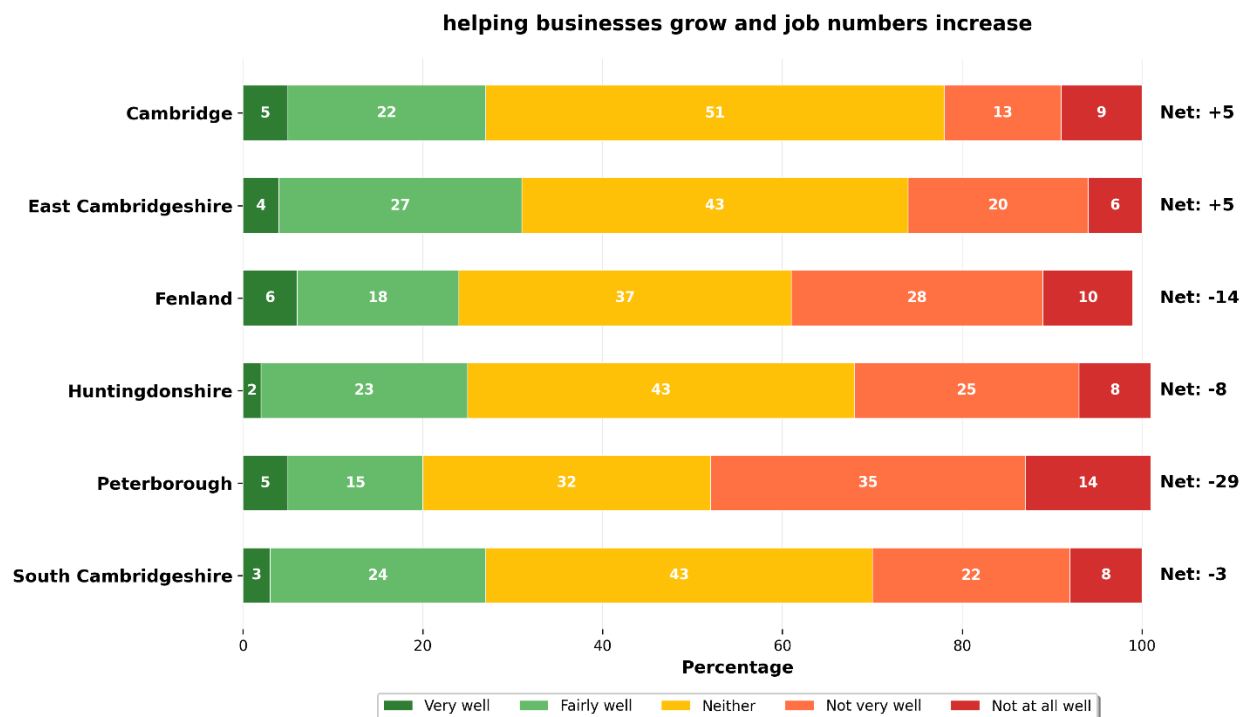
The Professional Assessment

The public believe that more could be done in terms of helping businesses grow and increasing job numbers (-10). While the public are negative and the council workers are only just positive (+5).



Geographical performance

Residents' assessment of councils' performance on business growth and job creation shows minimal significant variation across districts with exception of Peterborough. The dominant response across all areas is "neither" ranging from 32% in Peterborough to 51% in Cambridge, suggesting widespread uncertainty about councils' economic development impact. Positive ratings range from 20% in Peterborough to 31% in East Cambridgeshire, whilst negative responses vary from 22% in Cambridge to 49% in Peterborough. Fenland also records a higher negative score 38%. Cambridge City is seen as statistically different from Peterborough in terms of its efforts to create jobs and help business. The high neutral responses, particularly in Cambridge where over half cannot assess performance, indicate that economic development efforts remain largely invisible to residents or that attribution of business growth to council action proves difficult. This pattern suggests residents across the region struggle to connect council activities with tangible economic outcomes.



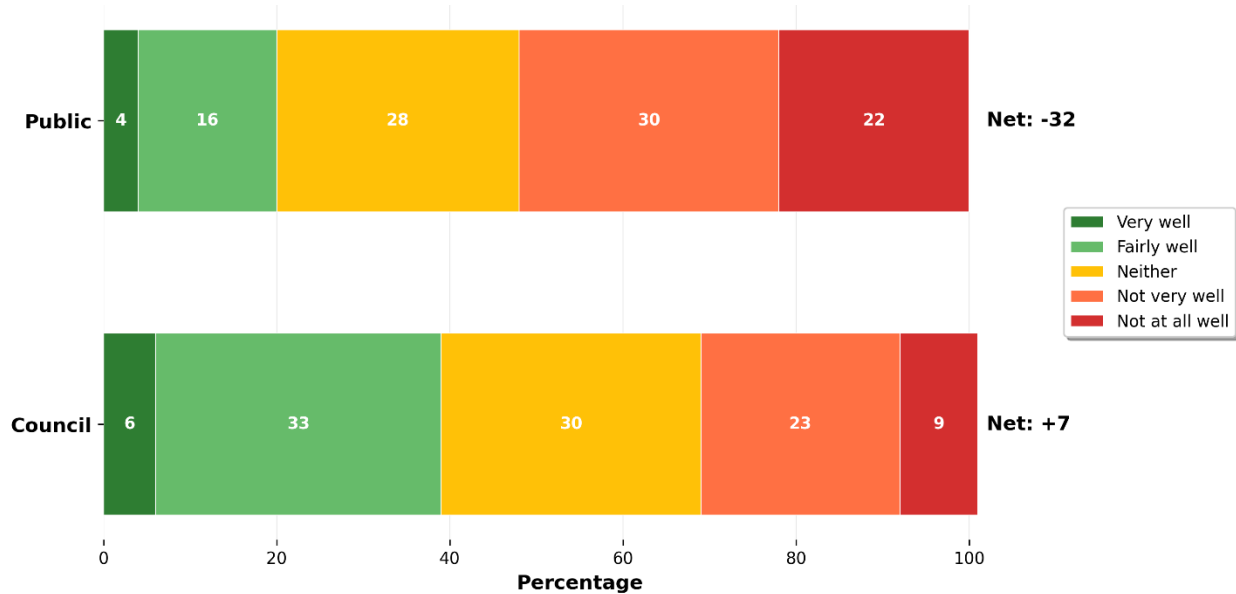
Base: 2413 residents

Accountability

The Professional Assessment

This is an issue that separates the public (-32) from council staff (+7) with the public significantly more negative. Only twenty per cent of the public believe that local government decisions are transparent and this has been highlighted as a key priority for the new unitary councils.

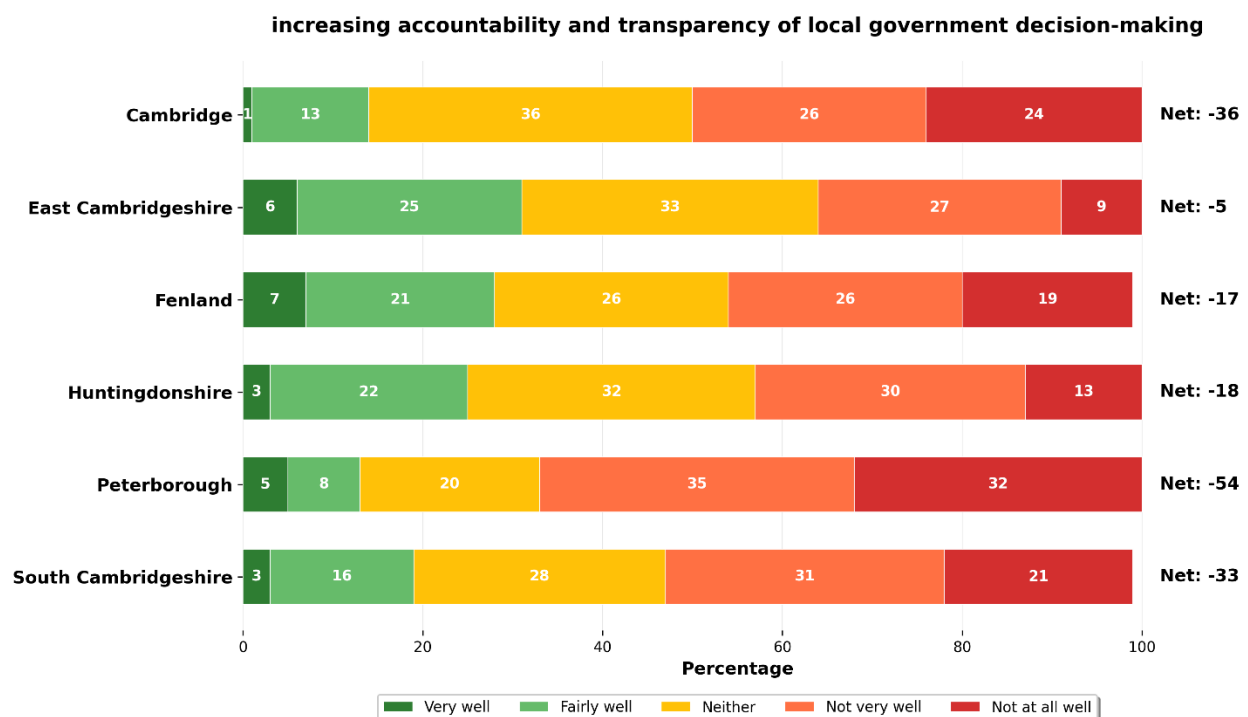
increasing accountability and transparency of local government decision-making



Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical performance

Accountability is seen as a critical top priority by residents. Most importantly, this is a shared issue as all the districts are net negative. Peterborough shows the highest dissatisfaction with 67% rating performance as not very well or not at all well, and a net score of -54. South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City also have a high dissatisfaction ratings with a majority of residents concerned about their accountability. East Cambridgeshire are statistically significantly lower than other districts but still net negative. The "neither" category varies from 20% in Peterborough to 36% in Cambridge. These findings indicate widespread dissatisfaction with transparency and accountability across the region, with Peterborough, Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire showing particularly acute concerns. Generally poor ratings suggest systemic challenges in communicating decisions and engaging residents effectively.

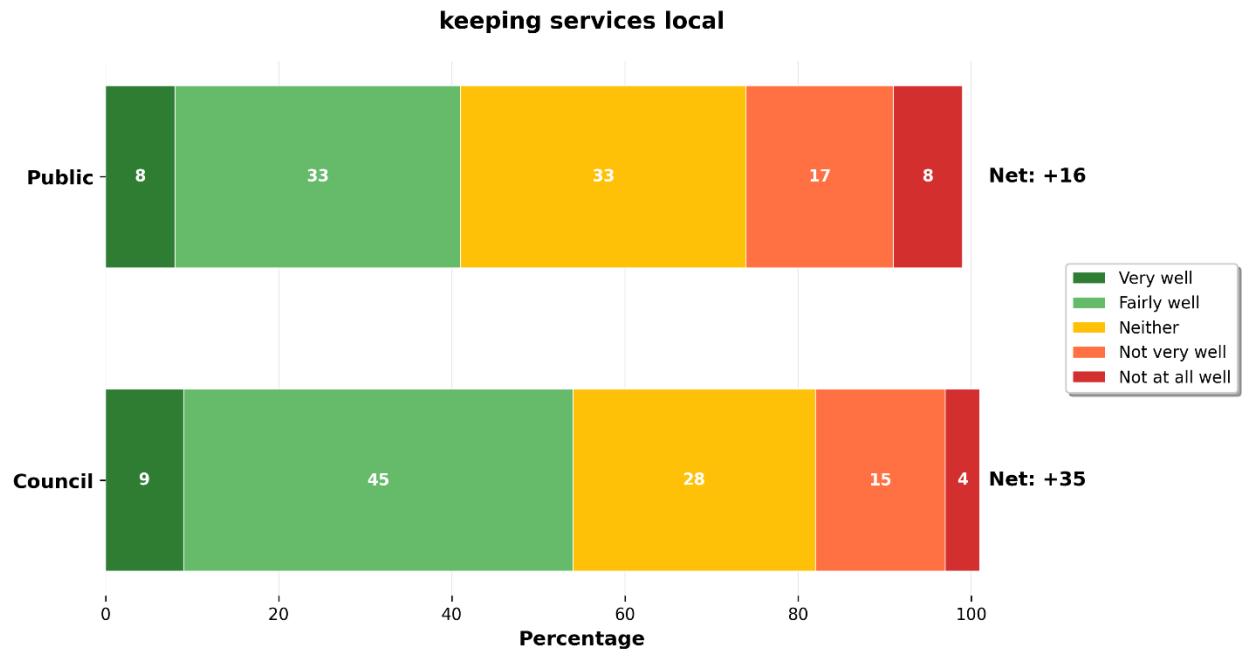


Base: 2413 residents

Local services

The Professional Assessment

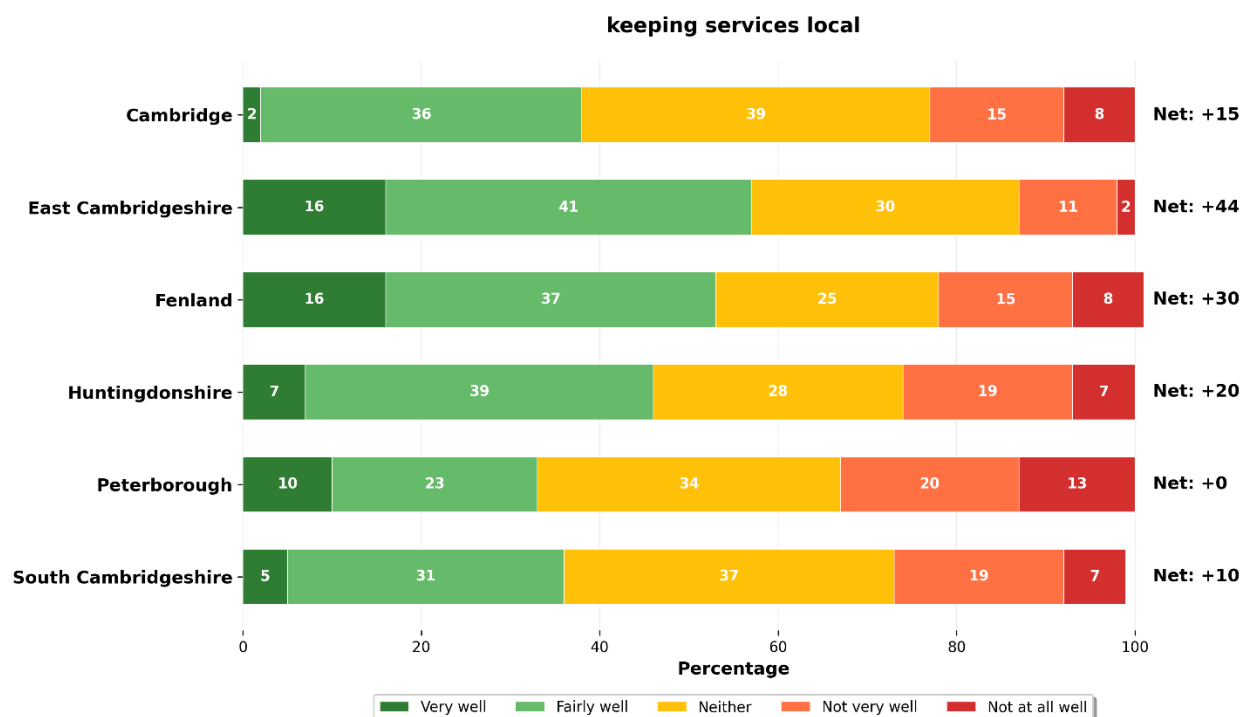
On local services, a minority of the public say their council is doing well. In terms of net scores, the public do not think that councils perform well as council workers believe.



Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical performance

Residents' assessment of councils' performance on keeping services local shows limited significant variation across districts. East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Fenland residents all believe their councils are doing well to keep services local. demonstrates the highest satisfaction at 57%, followed by Fenland at 53%, Huntingdonshire at 46%, Cambridge at 38%, South Cambridgeshire at 36%, and Peterborough at 33%. East Cambridgeshire is statistically higher than both Cambridge and Peterborough. Negative responses remain relatively low across all districts, ranging from 13% in East Cambridgeshire to 33% in Peterborough. These patterns suggest moderate satisfaction with local service provision across most districts, with rural areas like East Cambridgeshire and Fenland showing higher ratings. Urban areas show lower satisfaction with 'keeping services local'.

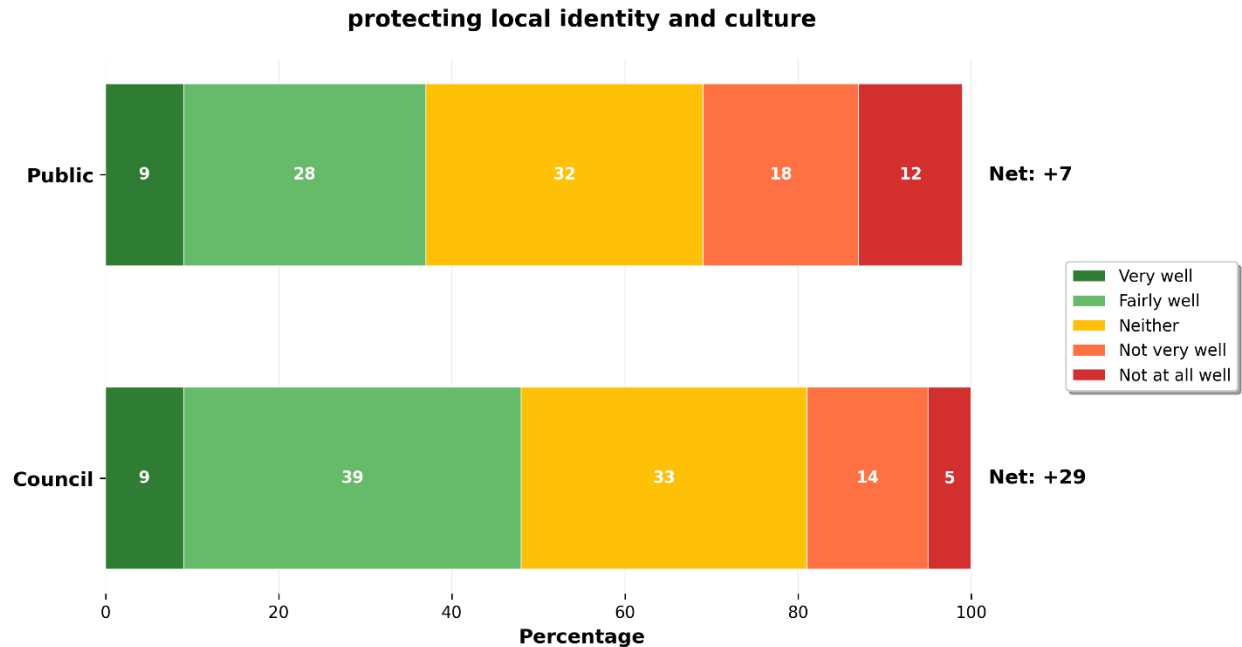


Base: 2413 residents

Protecting local identity

The Professional Assessment

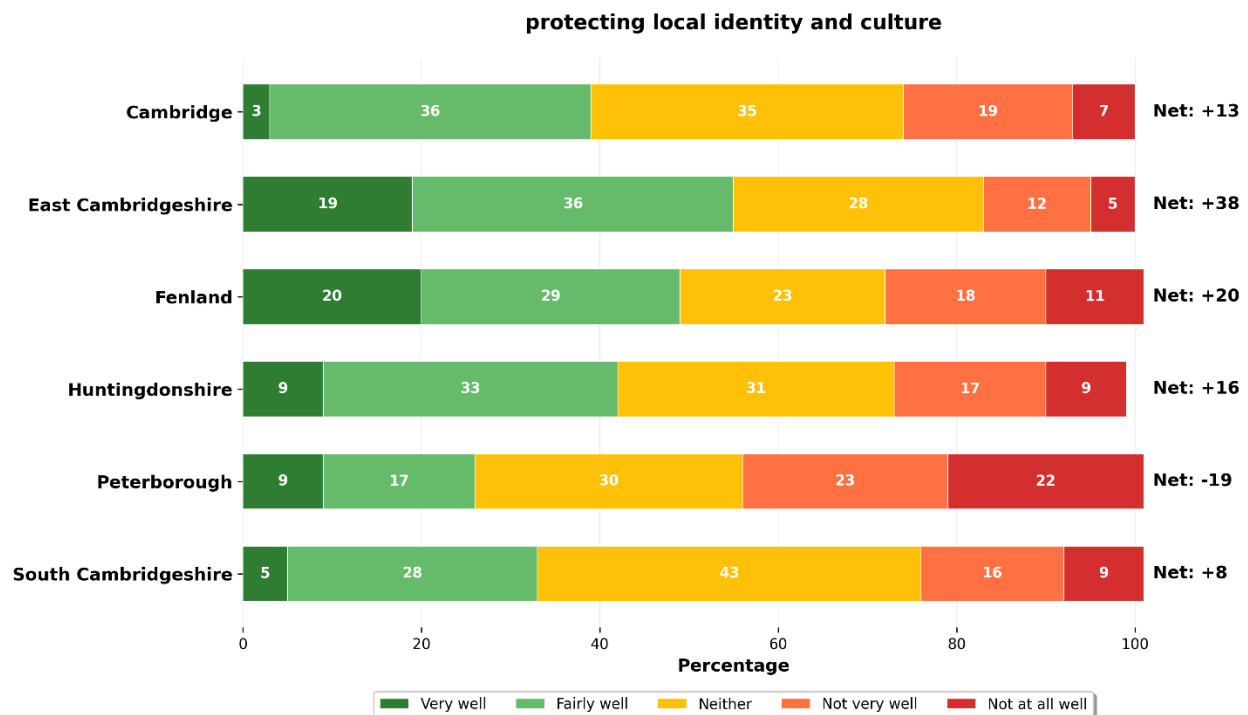
Again, a minority of residents believe that councils are doing well on protecting local identity and culture. The public are significantly less positive on this measure than council staff.



Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical performance

East Cambridgeshire and Fenland have either a majority or a near majority who say that their council is protecting local identity and culture. Conversely, the urban areas perform significantly lower on this rating with Cambridge at 39% and Peterborough at 26%. Negative responses vary from 17% in East Cambridgeshire to 45% in Peterborough. The "neither" category ranges from 23% in Fenland to 42% in South Cambridgeshire. These patterns suggest rural districts perceive better performance in cultural preservation, possibly reflecting stronger village identities and community cohesion. The high neutral responses, particularly in South Cambridgeshire, suggest many residents struggle to assess this somewhat abstract performance measure or feel disconnected from local cultural initiatives.

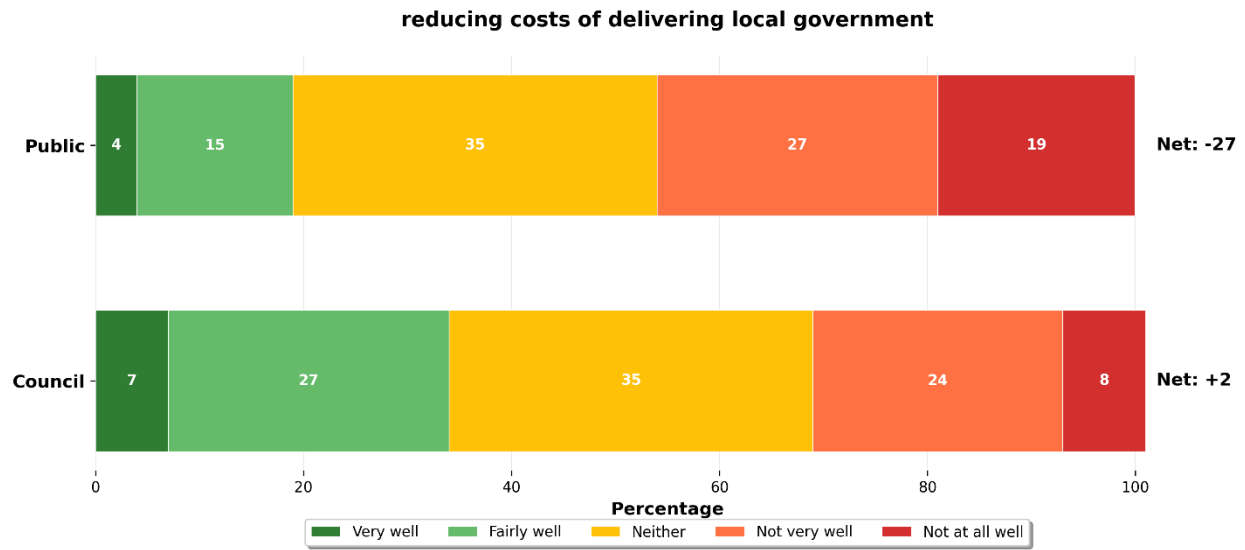


Base: 2413 residents

Cost reduction

The Professional Assessment

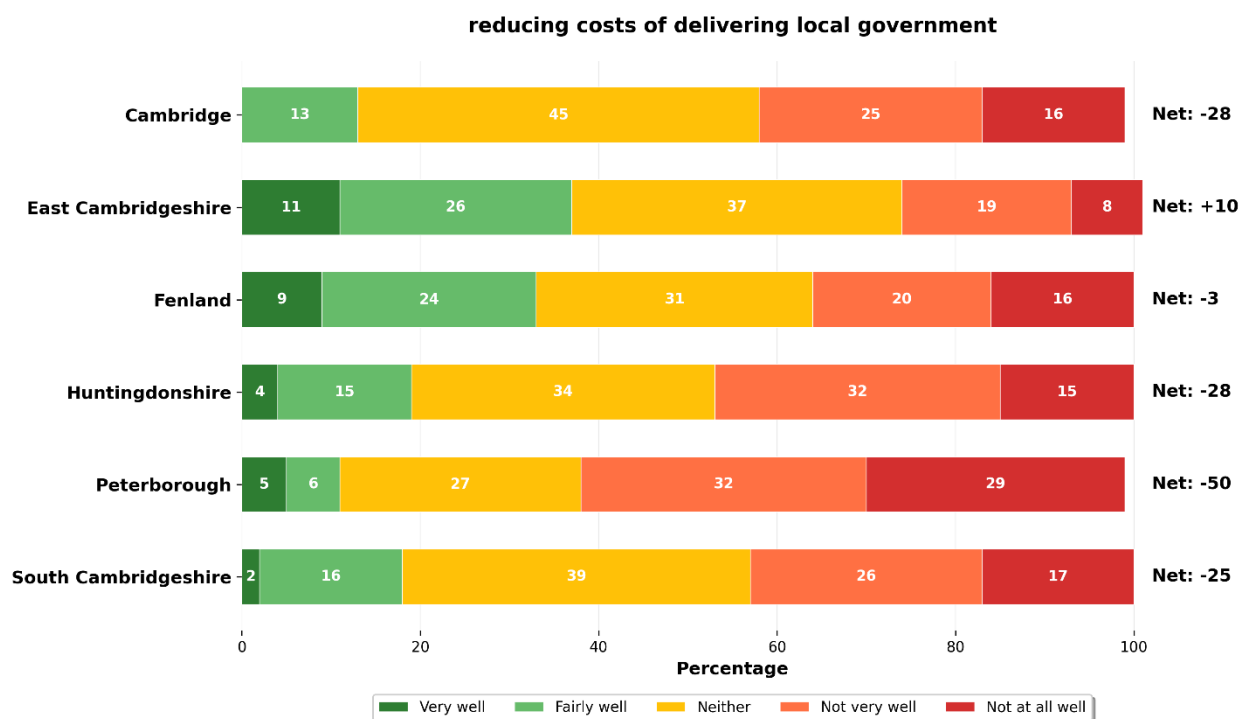
Notably here the public are significantly net negative in their view of local government doing well at cost reduction (-27). For their part, council workers are only just net positive on cost reduction.



Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical performance

Peterborough shows the highest dissatisfaction with 61% rating performance as not very well or not at all well, compared to Cambridge's 41%, South Cambridgeshire's 43%, Huntingdonshire's 47%, Fenland's 36%, and East Cambridgeshire's 27%. The gap between Peterborough to Fenland and East Cambridgeshire exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Positive ratings remain consistently low, ranging from 11% in Peterborough to 37% in East Cambridgeshire, with Fenland at 33%. The "neither" category varies from 27% in Peterborough to 45% in Cambridge. These findings indicate widespread scepticism about councils' efficiency efforts, with Peterborough residents expressing particular dissatisfaction consistent with their broader governance concerns. East Cambridgeshire again shows relatively better ratings, suggesting residents perceive more effective cost management. The high neutral responses, especially in Cambridge, may reflect limited visibility of efficiency measures or difficulty assessing administrative cost-effectiveness from a resident perspective.

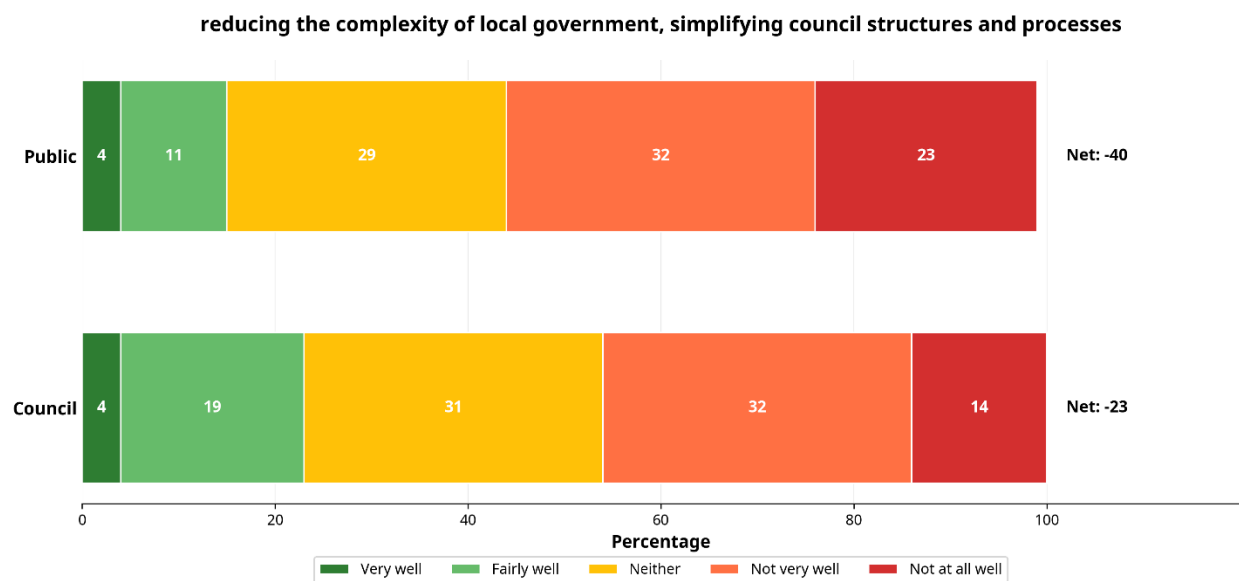


Base: 2413 residents

Reducing the complexity of local government

The Professional Assessment

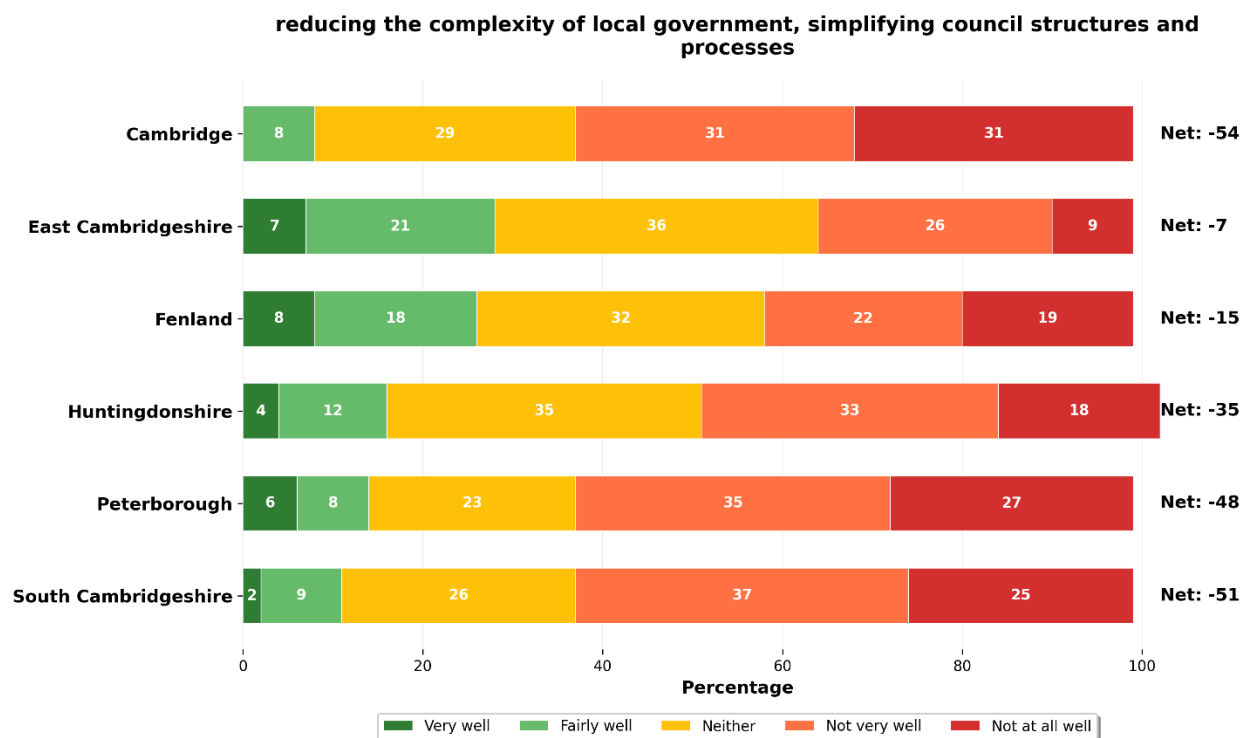
Both residents and council staff tend to say that the local government is not performing well in terms of reducing the complexity of government. This is a key benefit of unitary councils and an important message to convey to the public.



Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical performance

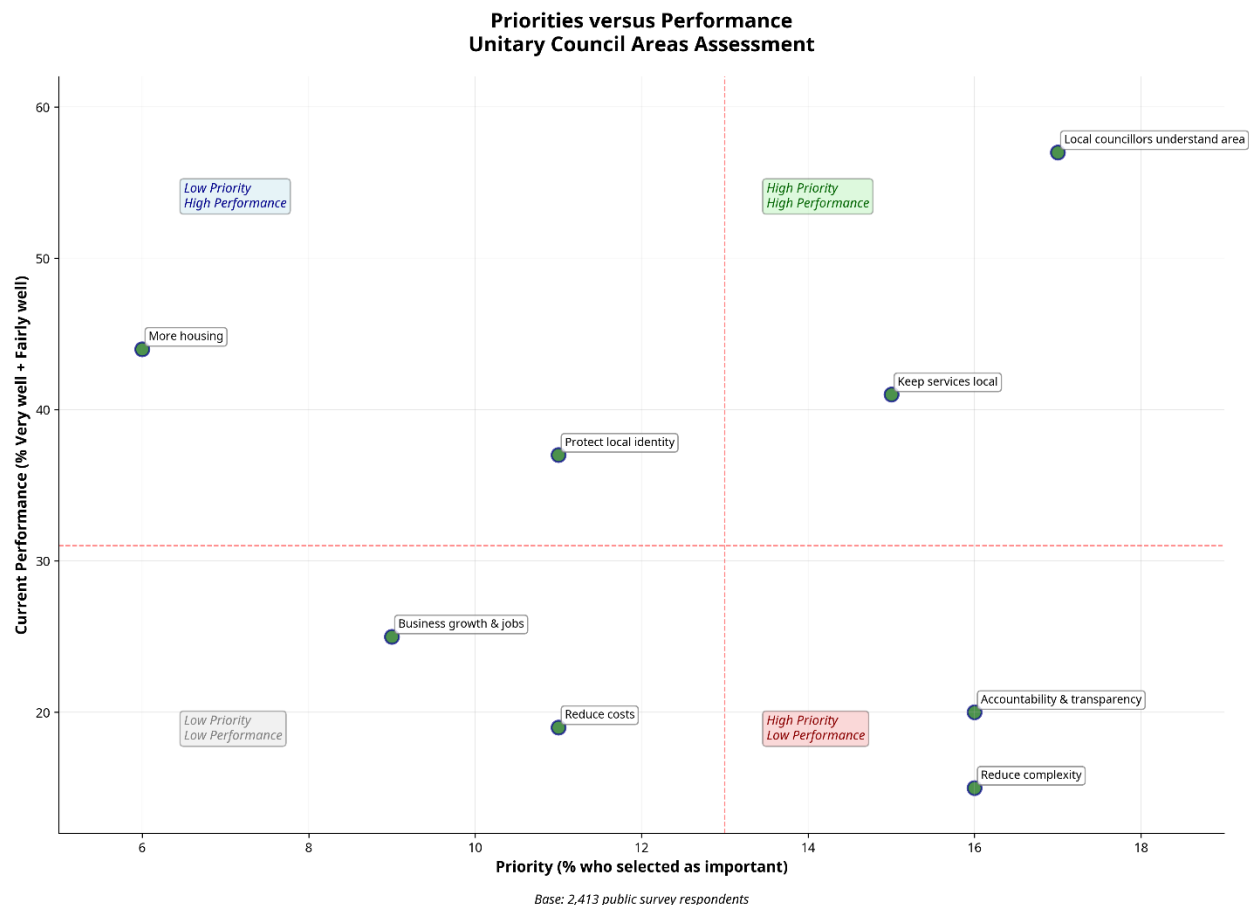
As one of the top priorities for the new unitary councils, views of the complexity of local government vary across the region, and in the main, are negative. Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire show the highest dissatisfaction with 62% rating performance as not very well or not at all well, Peterborough at 61%, followed by Huntingdonshire at 50%, Fenland at 41%, and East Cambridgeshire at 36%. The gap between Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to Fenland and East Cambridgeshire exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Positive ratings remain uniformly low across all districts, ranging from 8% in Cambridge to 28% in East Cambridgeshire, with Fenland at 26%. The "neither" category varies from 23% in Peterborough to 36% in East Cambridgeshire. These findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction with current governance complexity, particularly acute in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire where the two-tier system may be perceived as especially cumbersome. Despite its unitary status, Peterborough's poor rating suggests complexity issues transcend structural arrangements. East Cambridgeshire's relatively better assessment maintains its pattern of higher satisfaction across governance measures, though even here the majority perceive room for improvement in simplification.



Base: 2413 residents

Priorities and Performance

By comparing the main areas of focus and the perceptions of current delivery it is possible to look at quadrant-based priorities and performance.



The horizontal axis measures the percentage of respondents who identified each service as important, spanning from 6% to 18%. The vertical axis represents current performance levels, showing the combined percentage of those rating services as performing "very well" or "fairly well", ranging from approximately 15% to 60%.

The chart employs a quadrant system, divided by dotted lines at roughly 11% for priority and 31% for performance, creating four distinct zones that help identify service delivery effectiveness. Green shading indicates areas of either high priority with high performance or low priority with high performance, whilst red shading highlights potential problem areas where service delivery may fall short of expectations.

In the upper right quadrant, representing both high priority and high performance, "Local councillors understand area" stands out with the strongest performance at 57%, demonstrating effective democratic representation. "Keep services local" also performs well at 41%, alongside

"Protect local identity" at 37%. These services show where the council successfully addresses residents' most important concerns.

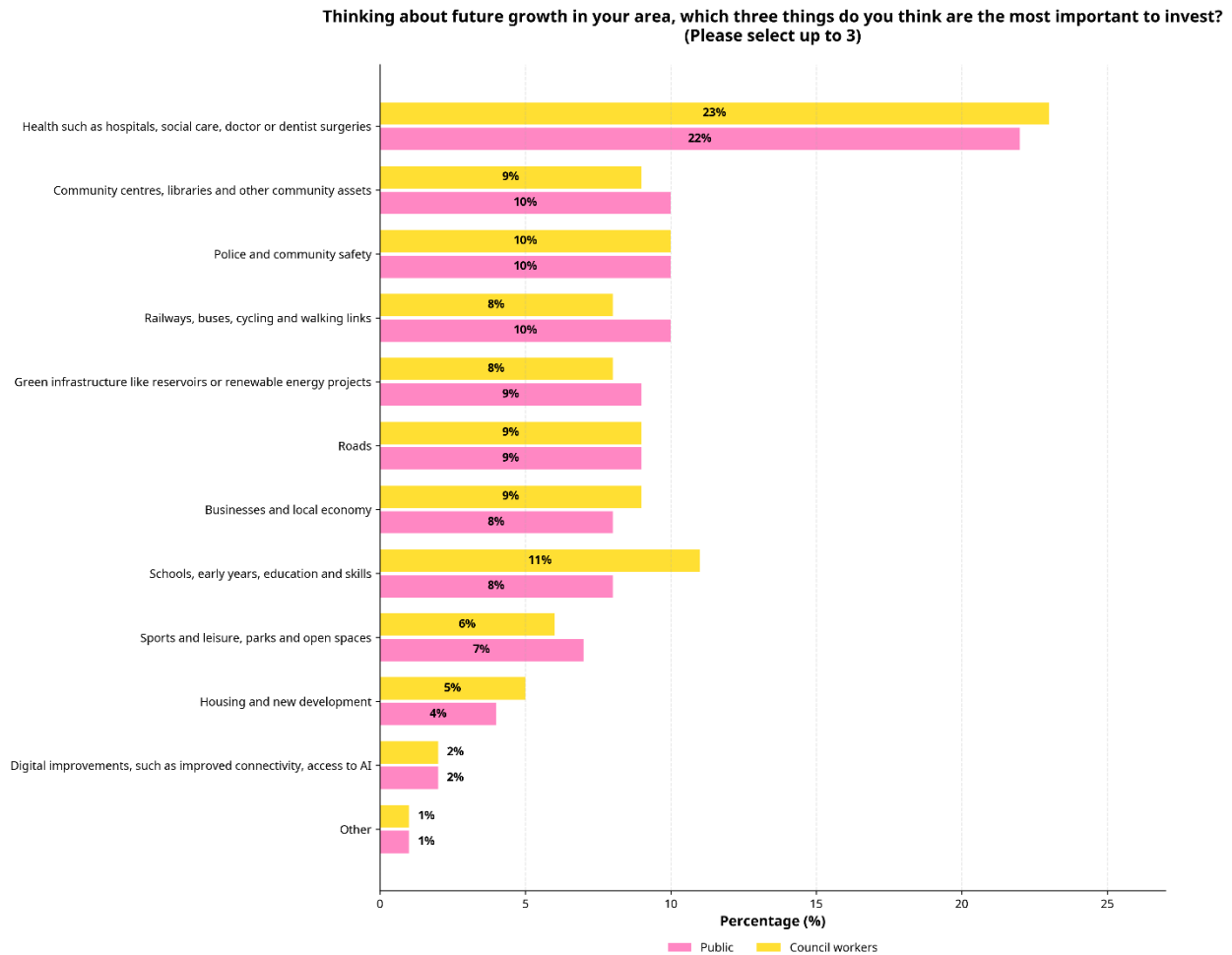
The upper left quadrant contains "More housing" at approximately 44% performance, indicating a service that performs well despite lower priority amongst residents. The lower right quadrant reveals critical service gaps where high-priority items underperform. "Accountability & transparency" sits at 20% performance despite being important to residents, whilst "Reduce complexity" performs worse at 15%. These represent the most significant opportunities for improvement, as they are services residents value but currently find inadequate.

The lower left quadrant shows services with both low priority and low performance, including "Business growth & jobs" at 25% and "Reduce costs" of delivering local government at 19%. Whilst these may not demand immediate attention given their lower priority status, they still represent areas where the council's effectiveness could be enhanced.

The data clearly indicates where resources might be most effectively directed, particularly towards improving transparency and reducing complexity—two high-priority areas where current performance falls significantly short of resident expectations. The assessment suggests that whilst the council excels in maintaining local identity and councillor engagement, substantial work remains in addressing operational transparency and service delivery complexity.

Future growth

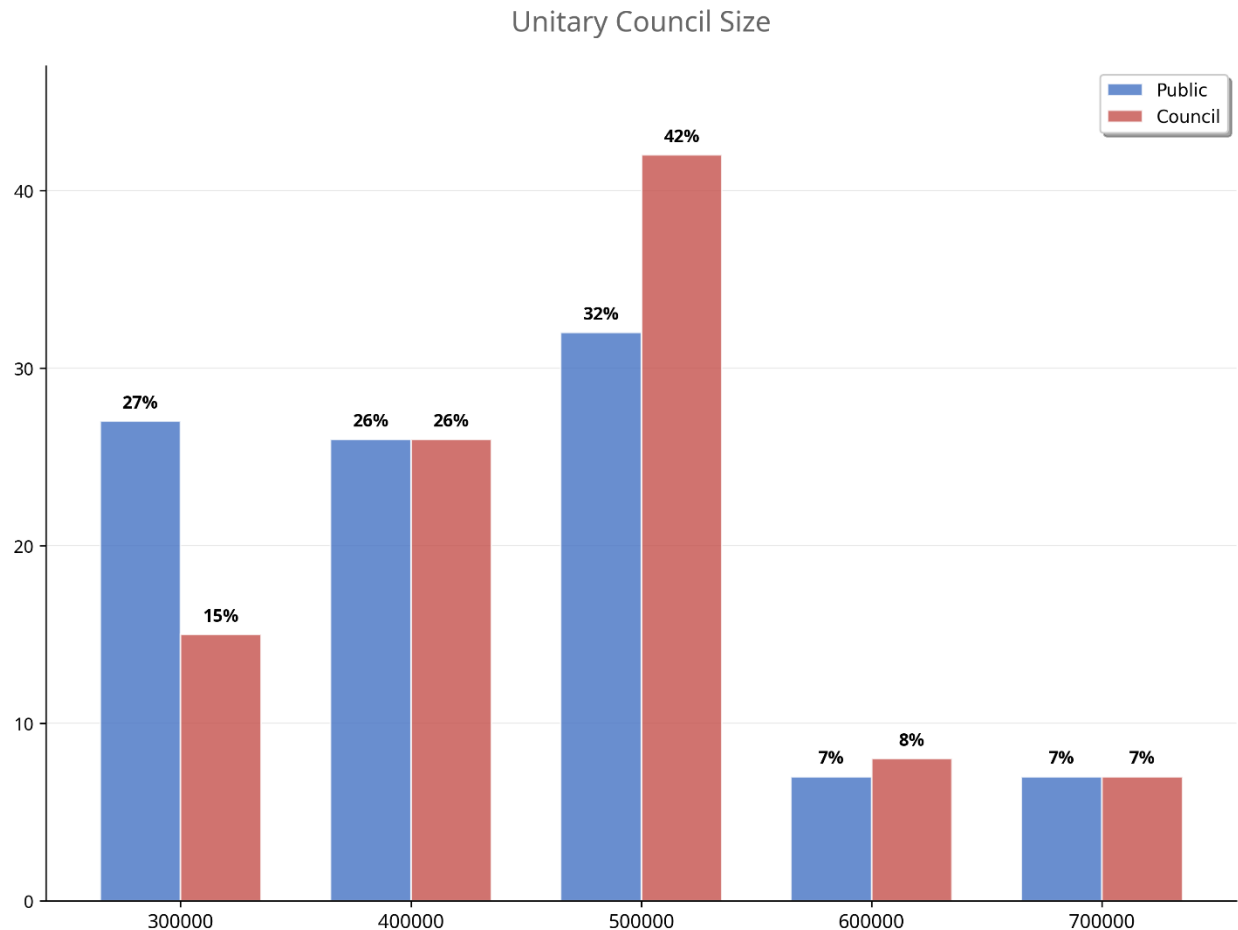
Residents would most like to see investment in health dominates public and council worker perceptions. The public then prioritise community centres, police and public transport. Council workers focus instead on schools and police.



Base: 2,413 public, 761 council workers

Unitary Council Size

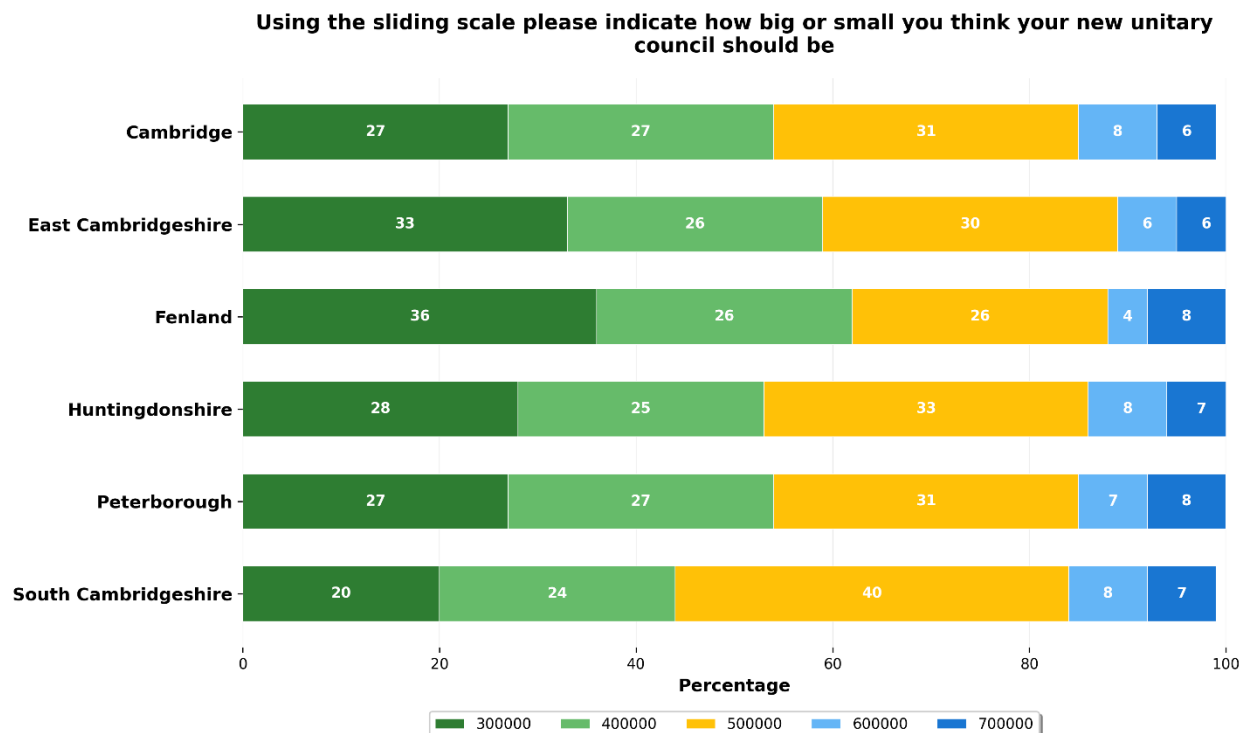
The public median is for 400,000 in terms of size, although the most picked option is 500,000. Council workers, by contrast, four in ten want to see 500,000 with lower agreement with 300 or 400,000. For both groups, larger than 500,000 is less attractive.



Base: 2413 public, 761 council workers

Geographical performance

Fenland shows the strongest preference for smaller councils, with 62% favouring populations under 400,000, compared to East Cambridgeshire's 59%, Cambridge's and Peterborough's 54%, Huntingdonshire's 53%, and South Cambridgeshire's 45%. The difference between Fenland and East Cambridgeshire results and South Cambridgeshire results exceeds statistical significance thresholds. Conversely, South Cambridgeshire shows the highest support for larger councils, with 56% preferring populations over 500,000, versus Fenland's 38%. The 600,000-700,000 category shows minimal support across all districts at 4-8%. These patterns suggest rural districts like Fenland strongly favour smaller unitary authorities, potentially reflecting concerns about representation and local identity within larger structures. South Cambridgeshire's greater openness to larger councils may reflect recognition of the district's integration with Cambridge and acceptance of broader administrative units. The general preference for mid-sized authorities (400,000-500,000) across most districts indicates residents seek a balance between efficiency and local representation.



Base: 2413 residents

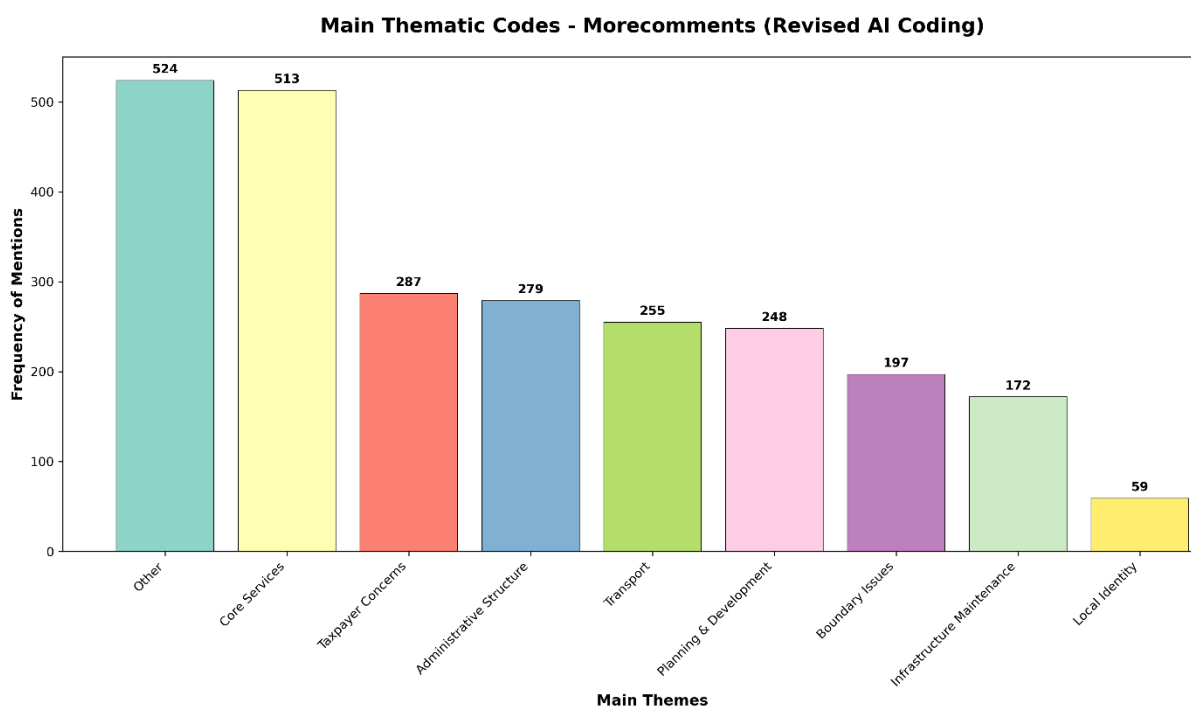
Hopes and concerns

As well as the quantitative questions, there was one open-ended question that asked Do you have any further comments, hopes or concerns you wish to make? Some comments were short, and some were extended. Therefore, in terms of coding data, a multi-code approach was taken i.e. one statement could make several points and so these have all been tracked. In addition, the districts have been supplied with their individual comments in order to look at individual responses in detail. There were 1,564 comments made in total, these come both from residents and council workers. It will definitely be worth investigating both groups of comments especially in terms of future planning.

In terms of sentiment, the responses were tilted to negative.

Sentiment	Percentage
Very Positive	2%
Positive	16%
Neutral	54%
Negative	26%
Very Negative	3%

The comments were tagged for main thematic content and the further tagged for the detail on those responses. With any coding process, there are likely to be a large number of others that do not fit into a thematic category but instead make individual points. This is what we find in this survey. Next, people are concerned about core services along with taxpayer concerns, and how the administrative structure will work.



The detailed thematic coding reveals a striking hierarchy of public concerns, with service quality and delivery dominating the discourse, accounting for over a quarter (27%) of all coded mentions. This overwhelming focus on service standards suggests that regardless of structural reforms, residents remain fundamentally preoccupied with whether their bins are collected, their roads are maintained, and their local services function effectively.

Three substantial themes emerge in the second tier: longer-term planning comments (16%), transport adequacy (15%), and concerns about the functioning of local structures (13%). Together, these themes paint a picture of communities grappling with both immediate service needs and longer-term strategic challenges around development, connectivity, and governance effectiveness.

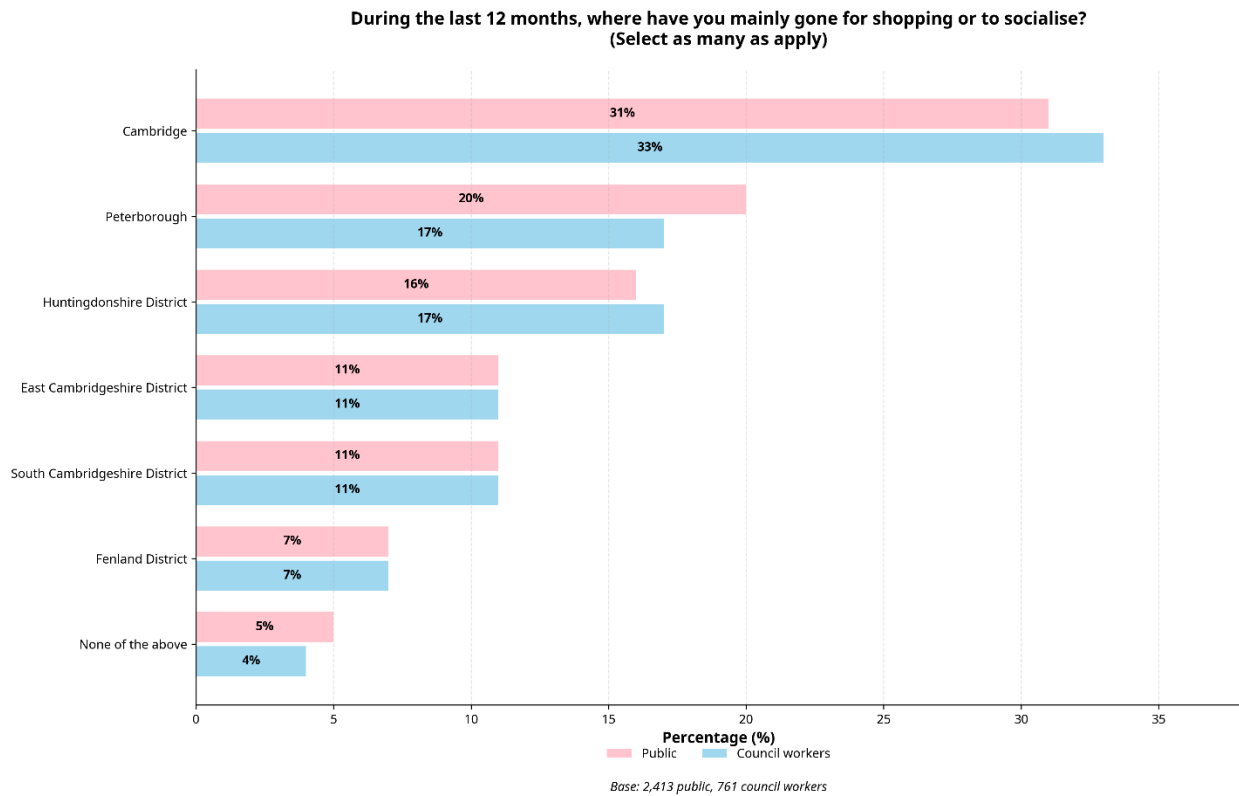
The middle range of the distribution reveals a cluster of interconnected concerns, each garnering between 8% and 9% of mentions. Here we find the cost-effectiveness of changes sitting alongside rural service maintenance and growth management issues, whilst budget allocation concerns and healthcare access each command roughly 8% of the discourse. Educational provision and housing development concerns follow closely, suggesting that residents view these issues as part of an integrated challenge facing local areas.

As we move through the lower frequencies, a tail of more specific concerns emerges, from environmental issues (5%) and protected services (5%) to community business areas and local identity questions (both around 3%). The presence of administration efficiency concerns, opposition to Cambridge-Peterborough combined authority proposals, and fears of losing local voice (each around 2%) speaks to underlying anxieties about democratic representation and administrative distance.

Location Preferences

Shopping and socialising

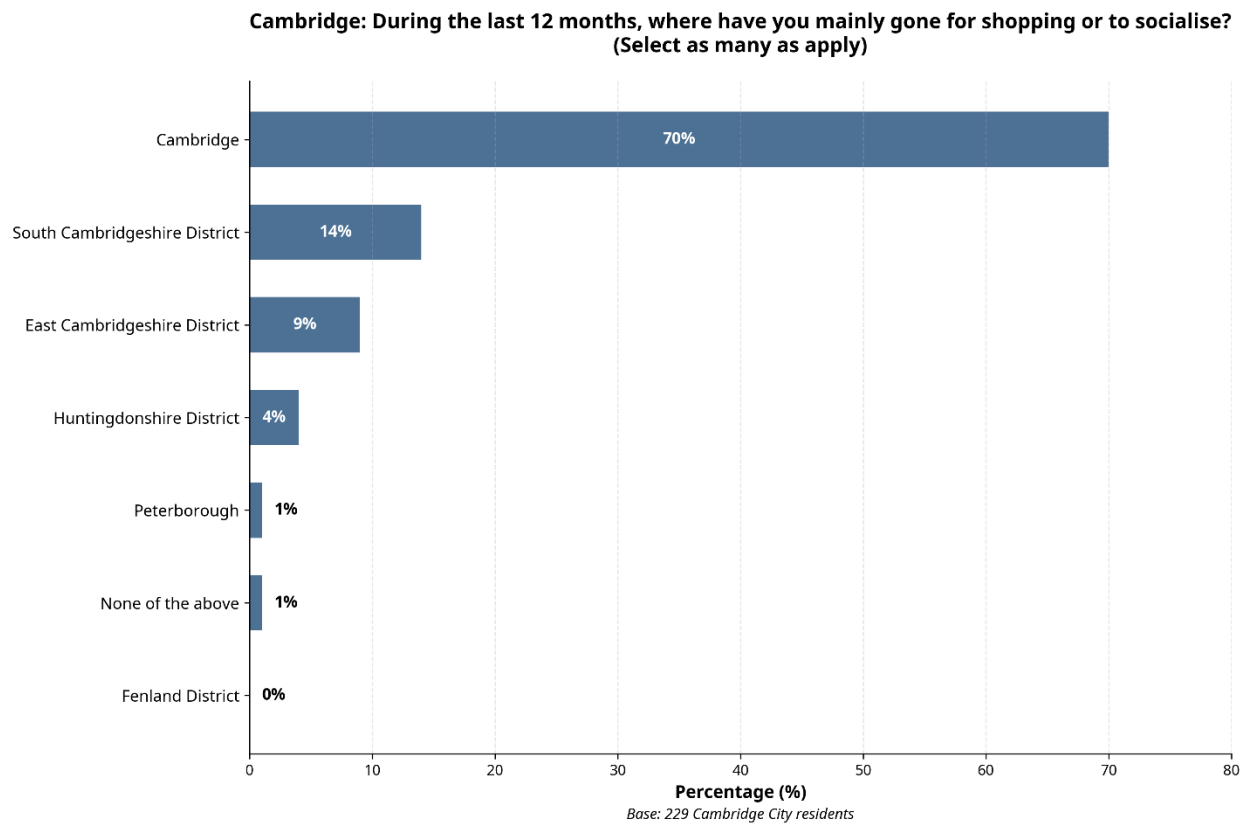
Cambridge City dominates the shopping and socialising chart. Residents are then most likely to shop and socialise in Peterborough or Huntingdonshire. Council workers again are most likely to shop or socialise in Cambridge then Peterborough followed by Huntingdonshire.



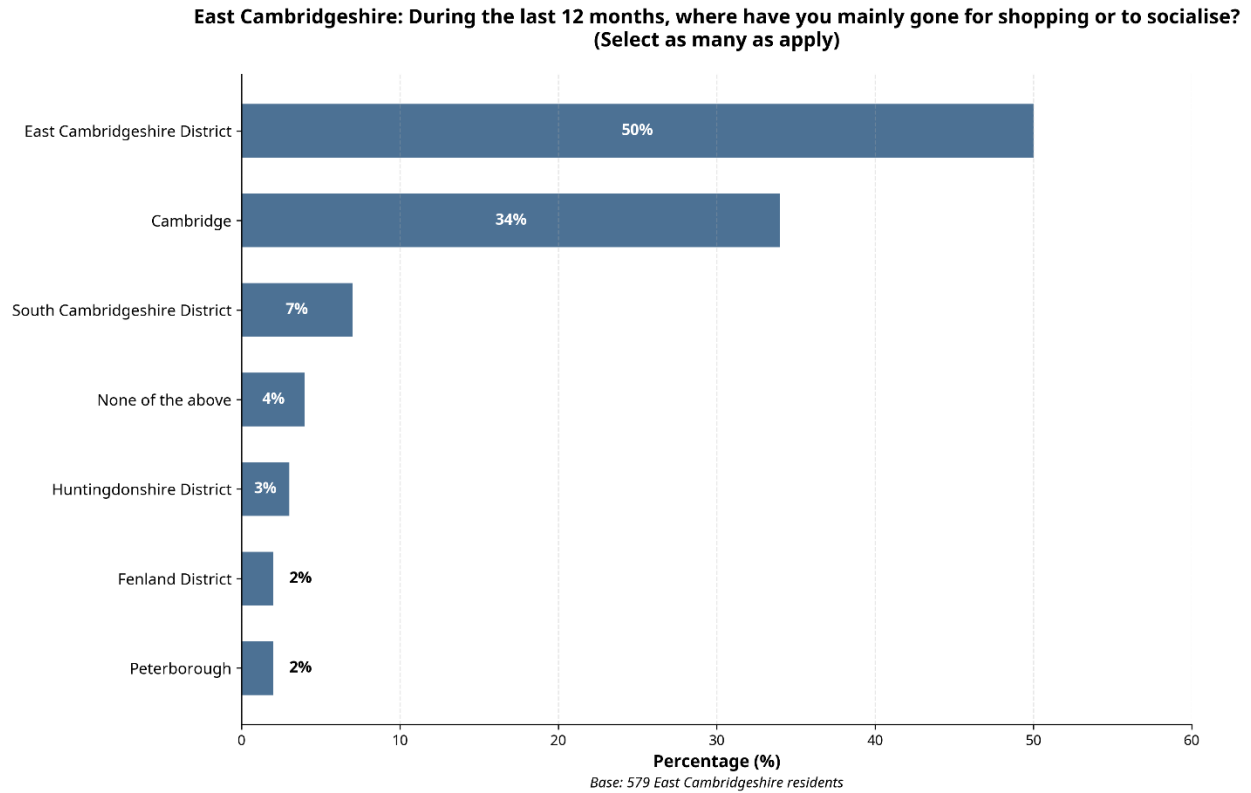
However, in the context of local government reorganisation, residents have emphasised that the new unitary councils should be located in places that they naturally travel to. Residents' decisions about what is a suitable place are complex and multi-faceted, but the travel time is a factor, and it is therefore important to see where people travel for cultural activities, where they travel if they do not feel so well so under some level of duress and finally where they travel for work. We begin by sharing the shopping and socialising experience and then this is layered with health and work.

The analysis of shopping and socialising patterns across the six districts of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough reveals complex patterns of movement and economic interaction that vary considerably by location. These data, collected over a twelve-month period, provide detailed insights into how residents navigate their region for retail and leisure activities, revealing both expected gravitational pulls towards major centres and unexpected patterns of local loyalty and cross-district movement.

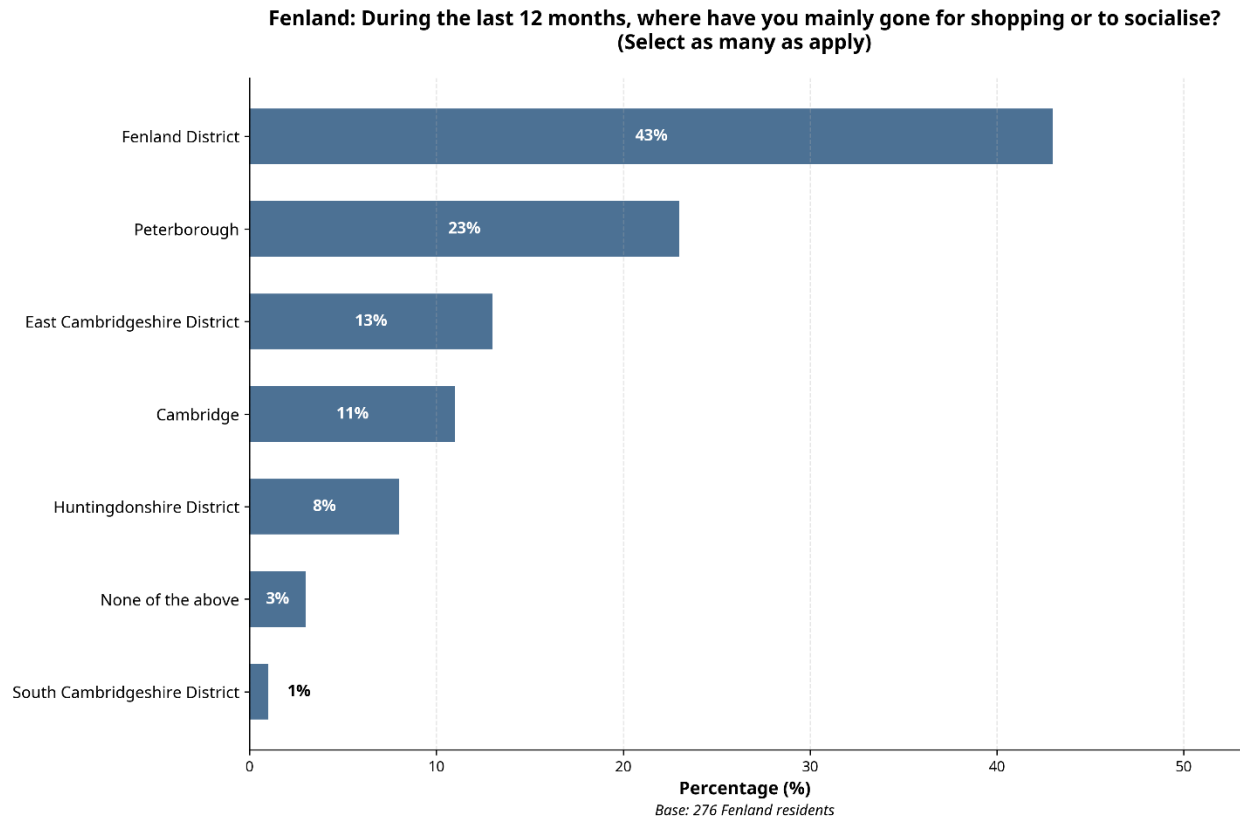
Cambridge demonstrates the highest level of self-containment across all surveyed districts. When Cambridge residents were asked where they primarily shop and socialise, 70% indicated they remain within the city boundaries, a figure that significantly exceeds any other district's internal retention rate. This pronounced local focus suggests that Cambridge's retail and leisure infrastructure adequately serves its population's needs. Secondary destinations for Cambridge residents include South Cambridgeshire at 14%, indicating some movement to retail parks and venues in the immediate surroundings, whilst East Cambridgeshire attracts 9% and Huntingdonshire 4%. Minimal interaction occurs with Peterborough and Fenland, each registering just 1% of Cambridge residents' activity, whilst 1% indicate they shop and socialise outside all the listed areas.



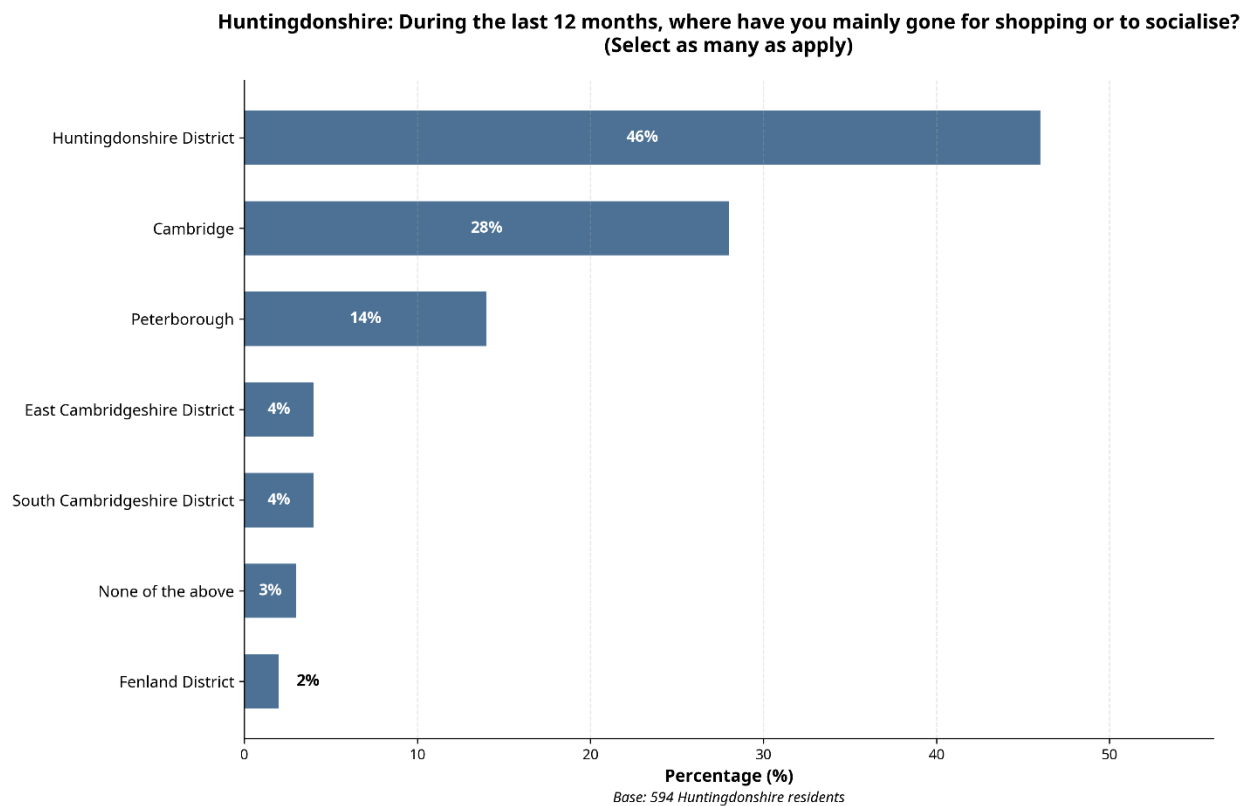
East Cambridgeshire exhibits the most pronounced external orientation of all districts, with an exact 50-50 split between internal and external activity. Half of residents remain within district, likely utilising Ely as the primary centre alongside smaller towns like Soham and Littleport. However, the other half of resident activity flows elsewhere, with Cambridge commanding 34%—the highest proportion of any district's residents travelling to Cambridge after Cambridge itself. This strong connection likely reflects both commuting patterns and the relative accessibility of Cambridge from much of East Cambridgeshire via the A10 and rail links which was supported in the focus groups. South Cambridgeshire attracts 7% of East Cambridgeshire residents, potentially those accessing retail parks or specific venues, whilst 4% indicate they primarily use areas outside those listed. Huntingdonshire draws 3%, and both Peterborough and Fenland register 2% each, indicating limited northward and westward orientation despite geographical proximity to Fenland.



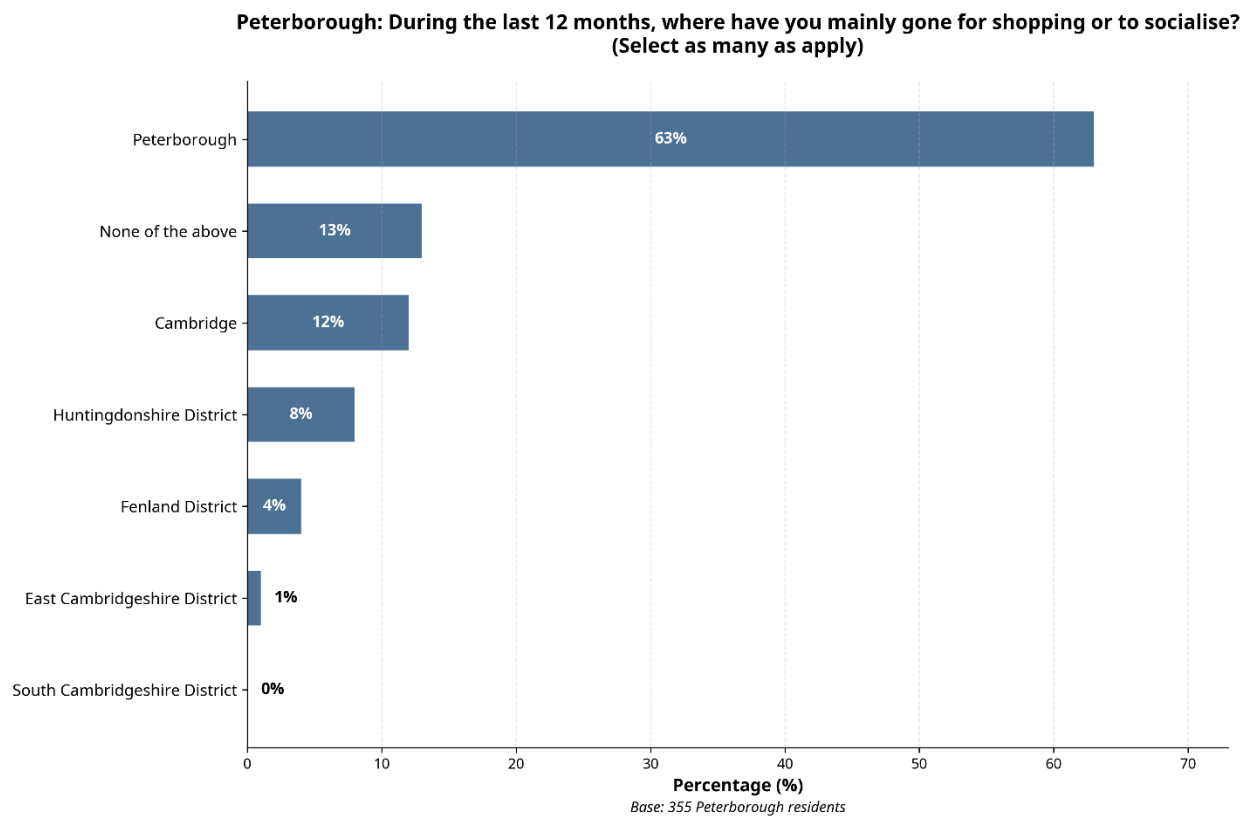
Fenland presents a distinctive pattern characterised by strong local orientation combined with significant links to Peterborough. The district retains 43% of its residents' shopping and socialising activity, likely concentrated in the market towns of Wisbech, March, Whittlesey, and Chatteris. Peterborough serves as the primary external destination at 23%, reflecting both geographical proximity and transport links, particularly from March and Whittlesey. East Cambridgeshire attracts 13% of Fenland residents, possibly those from southern areas accessing Ely, whilst Cambridge draws just 11%—a notably low figure given Cambridge's regional dominance, suggesting that distance and potentially limited transport connections reduce Cambridge's appeal for Fenland residents.



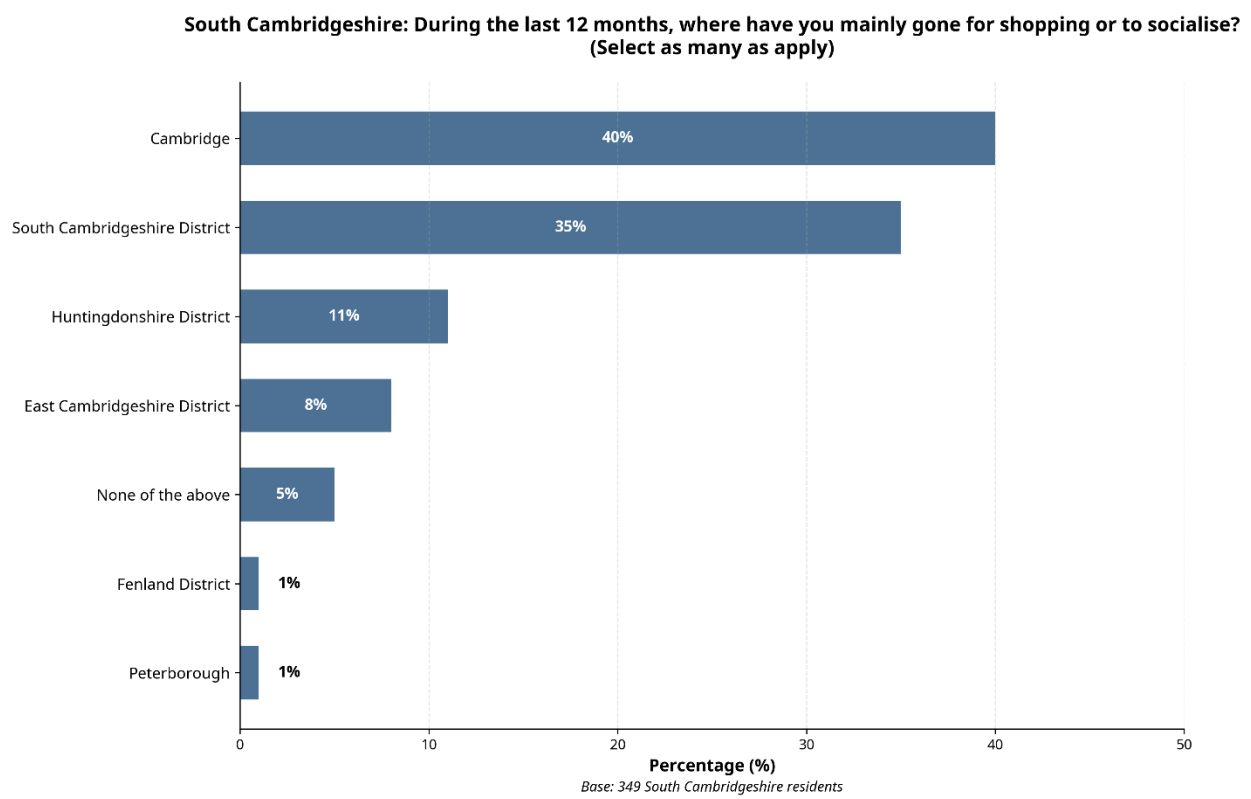
Huntingdonshire displays the most evenly distributed pattern amongst the predominantly rural districts. With 46% of residents staying within district for shopping and socialising, Huntingdonshire maintains a moderate level of self-sufficiency, likely centred on its market towns of Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots, and Ramsey. Cambridge exerts considerable pull, attracting 28% of Huntingdonshire residents—the second-highest proportion of any external district population after East Cambridgeshire. This suggests that many Huntingdonshire residents, particularly those in the eastern areas around St Ives and the Hemingfords, look to Cambridge for major shopping and entertainment. South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridge account for 4% of activity, whilst Peterborough draws 8%, indicating that Huntingdonshire sits at the intersection of both major urban spheres of influence. Fenland registers 2%, with 3% selecting none of the above.



Peterborough emerges as the second major urban centre, with 63% of residents conducting their shopping and socialising within the city. This high retention rate positions Peterborough as a largely self-sufficient urban area serving its population's retail and leisure needs. Twelve per cent of Peterborough residents travel to Cambridge, while another 13% who indicate they have, in the last twelve months, used areas outside those listed, potentially including Leicester, Northampton, or Stamford. Huntingdonshire attracts 8% of Peterborough residents, likely those in the southern areas of the city accessing Huntingdon or St Neots, whilst Fenland draws 4%, reflecting connections with Whittlesey and March. East Cambridgeshire registers just 1%, and South Cambridgeshire shows no measurable interactivity from Peterborough residents, underlining the limited interaction between Peterborough and the Cambridge-centric southern districts.



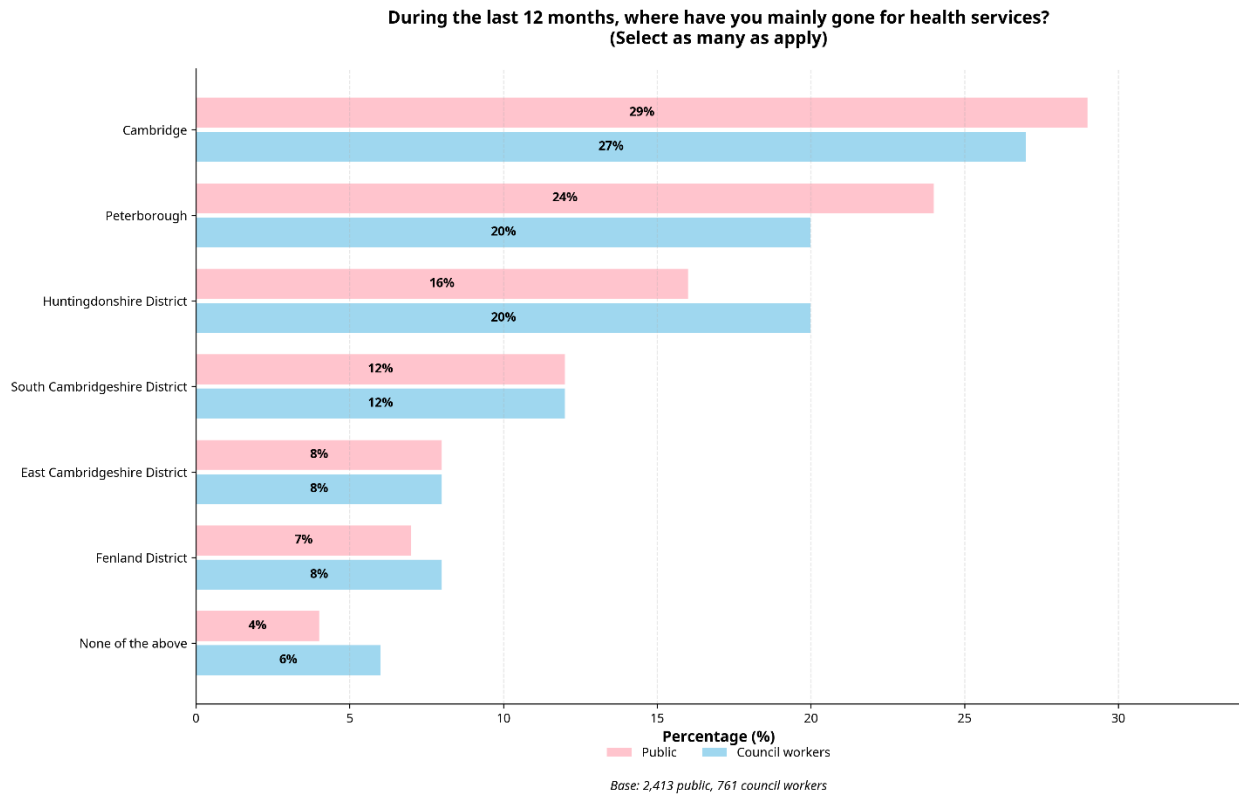
South Cambridgeshire presents a notably different pattern, with residents almost evenly split between staying within their district (35%) and travelling to Cambridge (40%). This near-equal division suggests that South Cambridgeshire maintains viable local centres—likely in market towns such as Cambourne, Sawston, and Melbourn—whilst simultaneously functioning within Cambridge's economic orbit. Huntingdonshire attracts 11% of South Cambridgeshire residents, possibly reflecting connections to St Neots and Huntingdon for those in the western parts of the district. East Cambridgeshire draws 8%, whilst both Peterborough and Fenland register just 1% each. The 5% selecting "none of the above" suggests some residents may be oriented towards locations outside the region, potentially including Royston, Saffron Walden, or further afield to London.



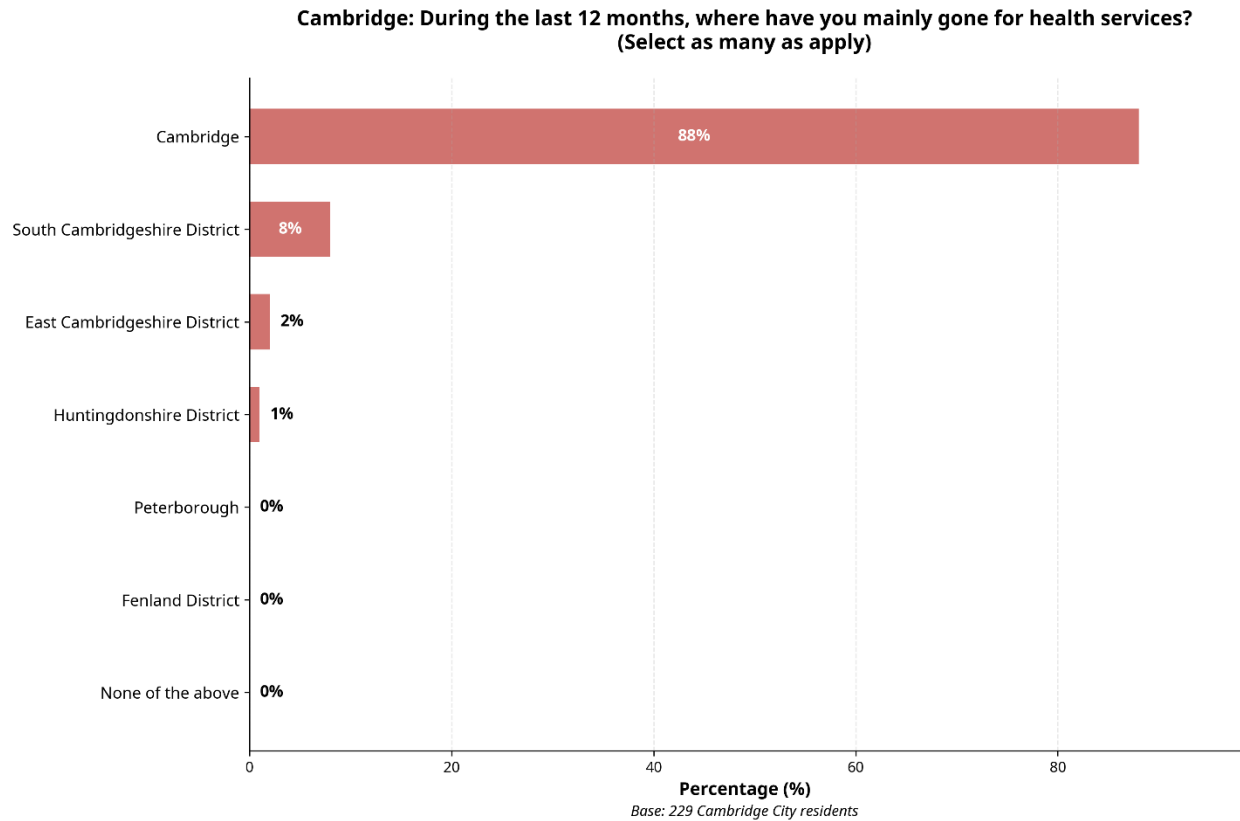
These detailed patterns reveal a region with two distinct urban poles—Cambridge dominating the southern and eastern districts whilst Peterborough serves the north—with varying degrees of self-sufficiency in the rural districts. The data indicate that administrative boundaries only partially reflect actual patterns of movement and economic activity, with some neighbouring districts showing surprisingly limited interaction whilst others demonstrate strong connections despite distance. The variation in "none of the above" responses, ranging from 1% in Cambridge to 13% in Peterborough, suggests differential orientation towards areas outside the region, with Peterborough residents potentially maintaining stronger links to other regional centres whilst Cambridge residents find their needs met within the immediate area.

Health services

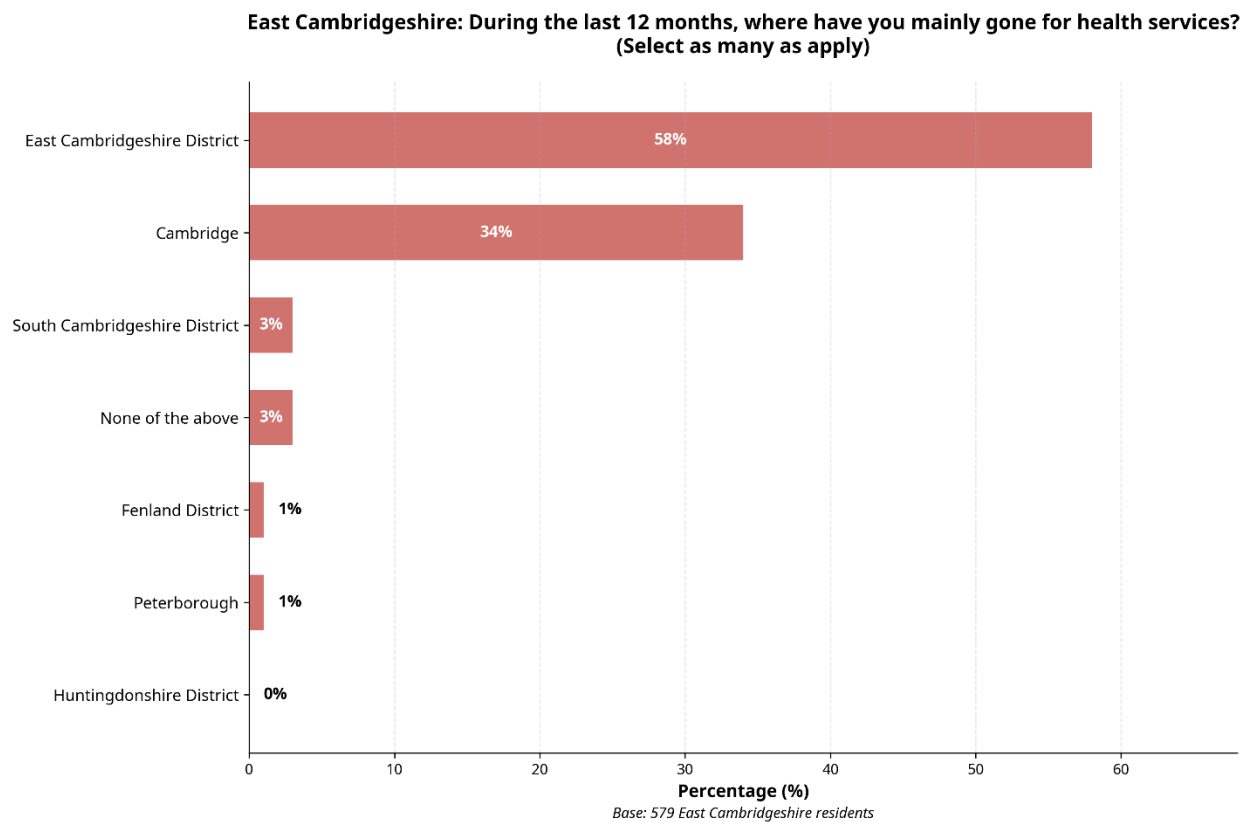
Like shopping and socialising, again for health services, Cambridge City dominates with 29% saying they have been there for health services in the last twelve months. About a quarter of residents have received health services in Peterborough and then next Huntingdonshire. Council workers have the same kind of profile as residents.



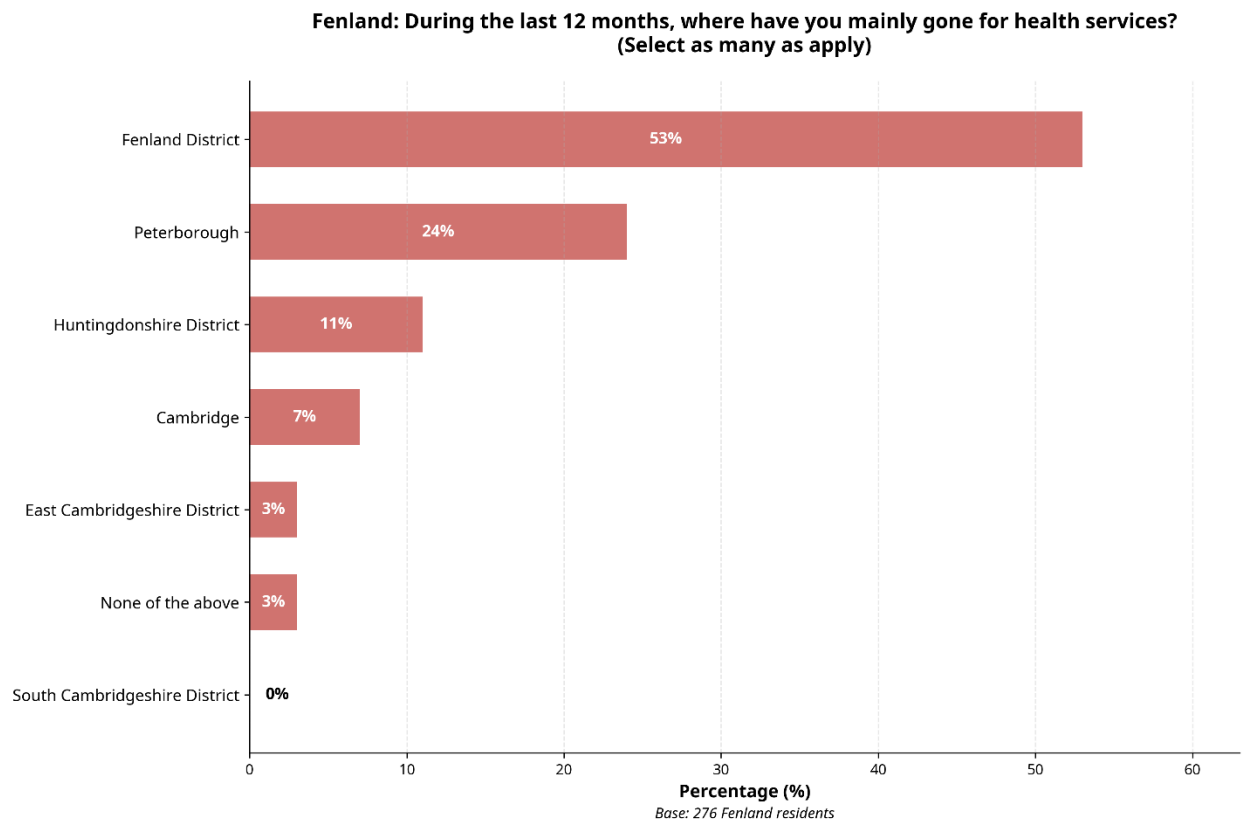
The analysis of health service utilisation patterns across the six districts reveals markedly different configurations from those observed in shopping and socialising behaviours, with far greater local containment and more pronounced disparities in cross-district healthcare flows. These data illuminates questions about healthcare accessibility, service provision, and the complex interplay between administrative boundaries and clinical commissioning arrangements. Cambridge demonstrates the highest level of healthcare self-sufficiency, with 88% of residents accessing health services within the city. This exceptional retention rate likely reflects the concentration of specialist services at Addenbrooke's Hospital and associated facilities, alongside comprehensive primary care provision. The remaining Cambridge residents' healthcare activity disperses thinly, with South Cambridgeshire accounting for 8%, East Cambridgeshire 2%, and Huntingdonshire 1%. No measurable healthcare flows occur to Peterborough or Fenland, whilst no respondents indicated accessing healthcare outside the listed areas, suggesting Cambridge's medical infrastructure comprehensively serves its population's needs.



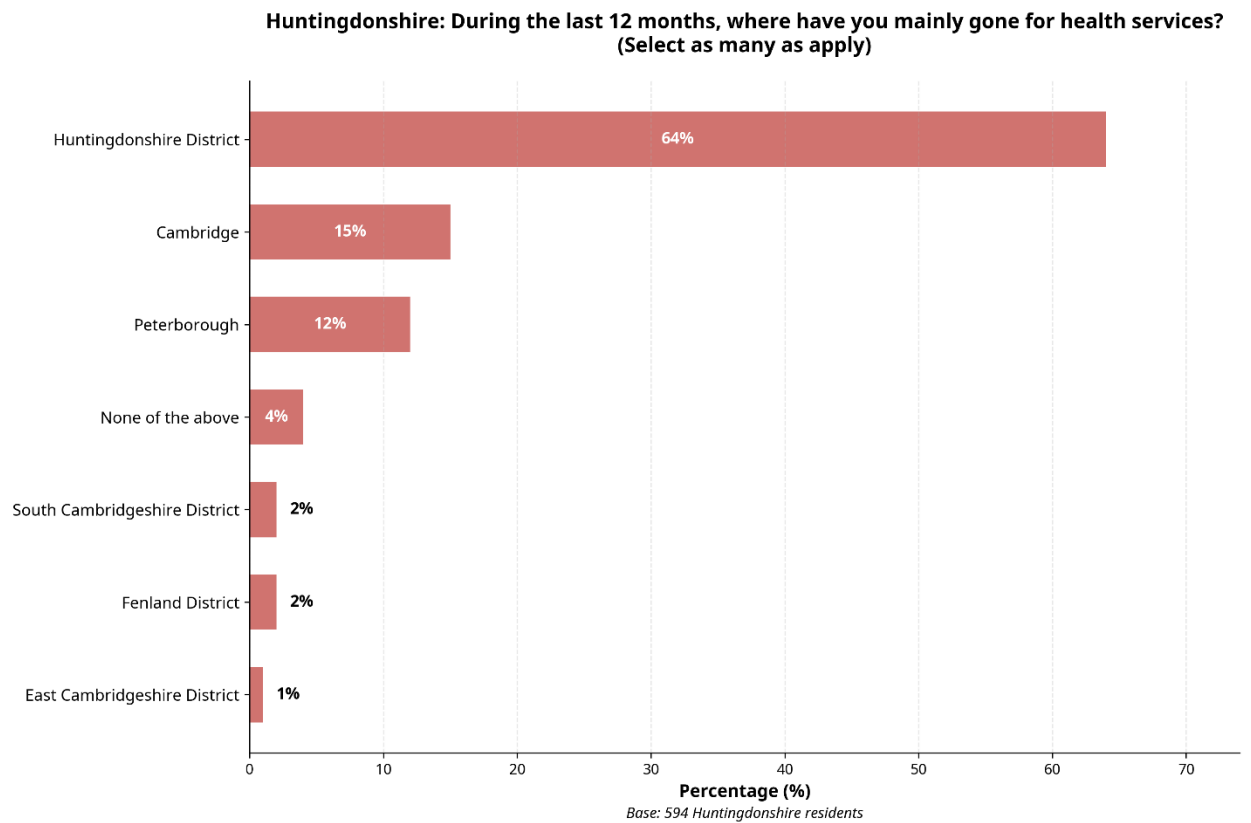
East Cambridgeshire demonstrates moderate local provision at 58%, with Princess of Wales Hospital in Ely serving as the primary acute facility alongside local GP practices. Cambridge commands 34% of East Cambridgeshire residents' healthcare activity—the highest external healthcare dependency observed in any district—reflecting both geographical proximity and the pull of specialist services. South Cambridgeshire accounts for 3% of healthcare activity, matching the proportion accessing services outside the listed areas. Notably, very few East Cambridgeshire residents report accessing healthcare in Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, or Fenland, suggesting a strong southward orientation in healthcare pathways despite proximity to Fenland.



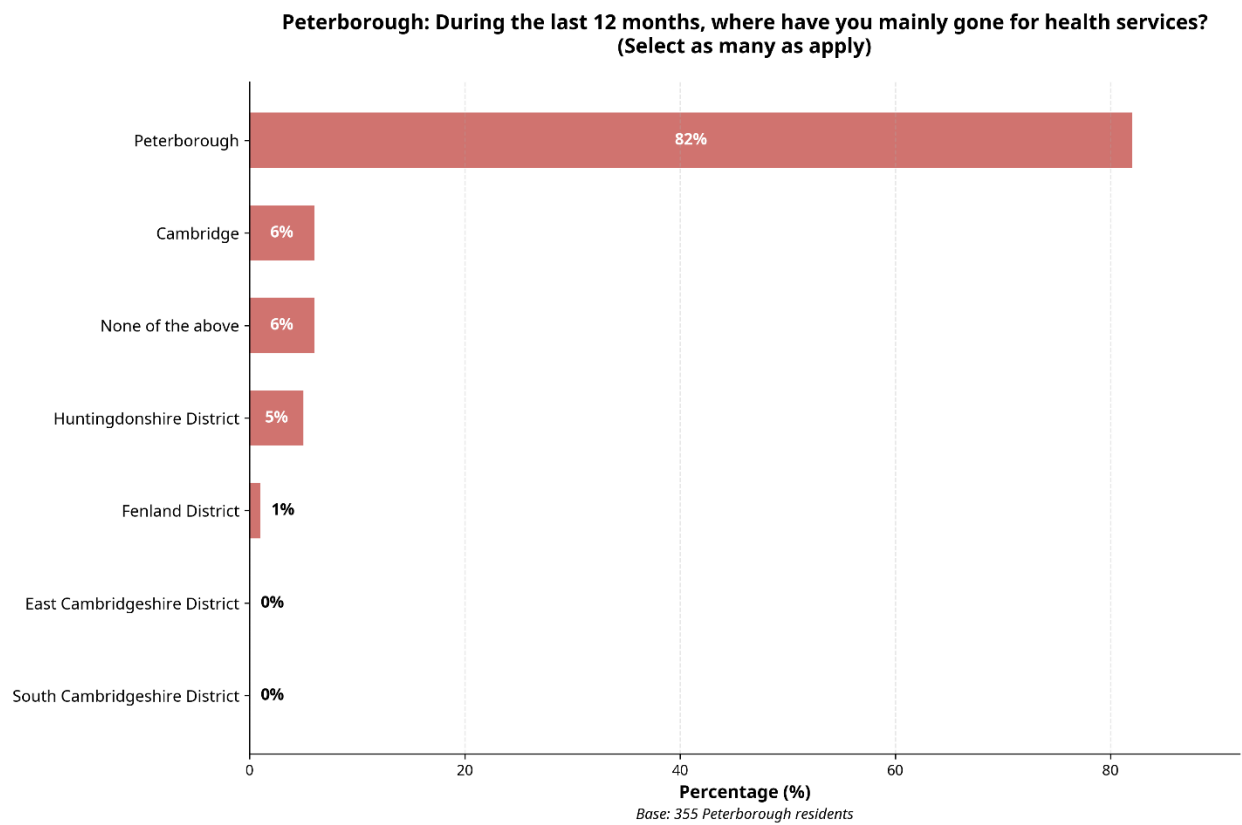
Fenland exhibits moderate local healthcare retention at 53%, served primarily by the North Cambridgeshire Hospital in Wisbech alongside primary care facilities in market towns. Peterborough emerges as the major external healthcare destination at 24%, reflecting both proximity and established patient pathways, particularly from March and Whittlesey. Huntingdonshire attracts 11% of Fenland residents, whilst Cambridge draws 7%—relatively low given Cambridge's regional specialist role, suggesting distance and transport barriers may limit access. East Cambridgeshire accounts for 3% of activity, matching the proportion accessing services outside the listed areas. South Cambridgeshire shows no measurable healthcare flows from Fenland, highlighting the minimal interaction between these geographically separated districts.



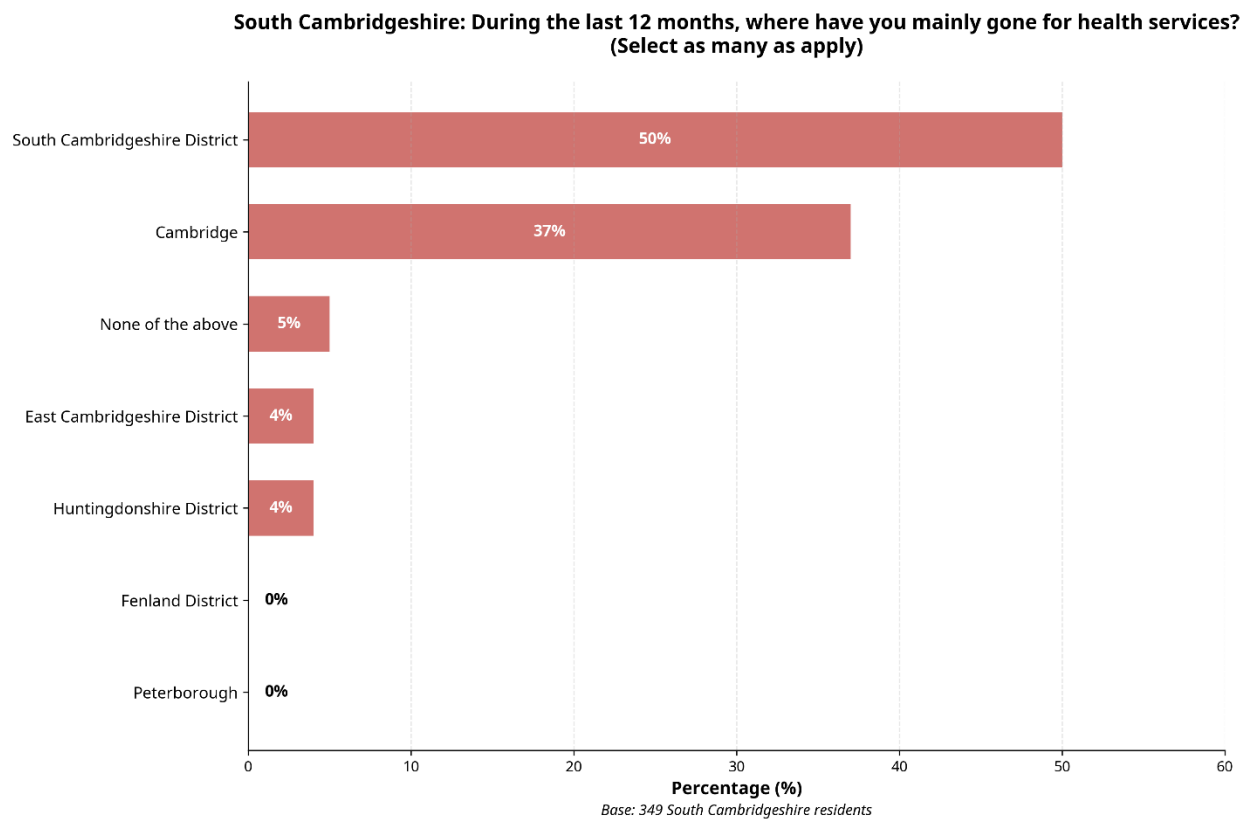
Huntingdonshire shows moderate healthcare self-sufficiency at 64%, with Hinchingsbrook Hospital and local primary care serving the majority of needs. Cambridge draws 15% of Huntingdonshire residents, Peterborough draws 12% of Huntingdonshire residents. East Cambridgeshire attracts 1% of activity, with South Cambridgeshire at 2%. The 4% selecting "none of the above" may reflect healthcare access in Bedfordshire or further afield.



Peterborough exhibits high healthcare self-containment at 82%, anchored by Peterborough City Hospital and its network of primary care facilities. Cambridge attracts 6% of Peterborough residents for healthcare, substantially higher than the reverse flow and likely reflecting specialist service access at Addenbrooke's. Huntingdonshire accounts for 5% of Peterborough residents' healthcare activity, whilst Fenland draws 2%, and East and South Cambridgeshire 0%. The 6% selecting "none of the above" may access specialist services in Leicester, Northampton, or London.



South Cambridgeshire presents the most dispersed healthcare pattern, with only 50% of residents accessing services within district—the lowest retention rate observed. Cambridge dominates external healthcare flows, attracting 37% of South Cambridgeshire residents, reflecting both proximity and the location of acute and specialist services. Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire each draw 4% of residents, whilst the 5% selecting "none of the above" may access services in Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire. Notably, neither Peterborough nor Fenland registers measurable healthcare flows from South Cambridgeshire, reinforcing the district's strong orientation towards Cambridge.



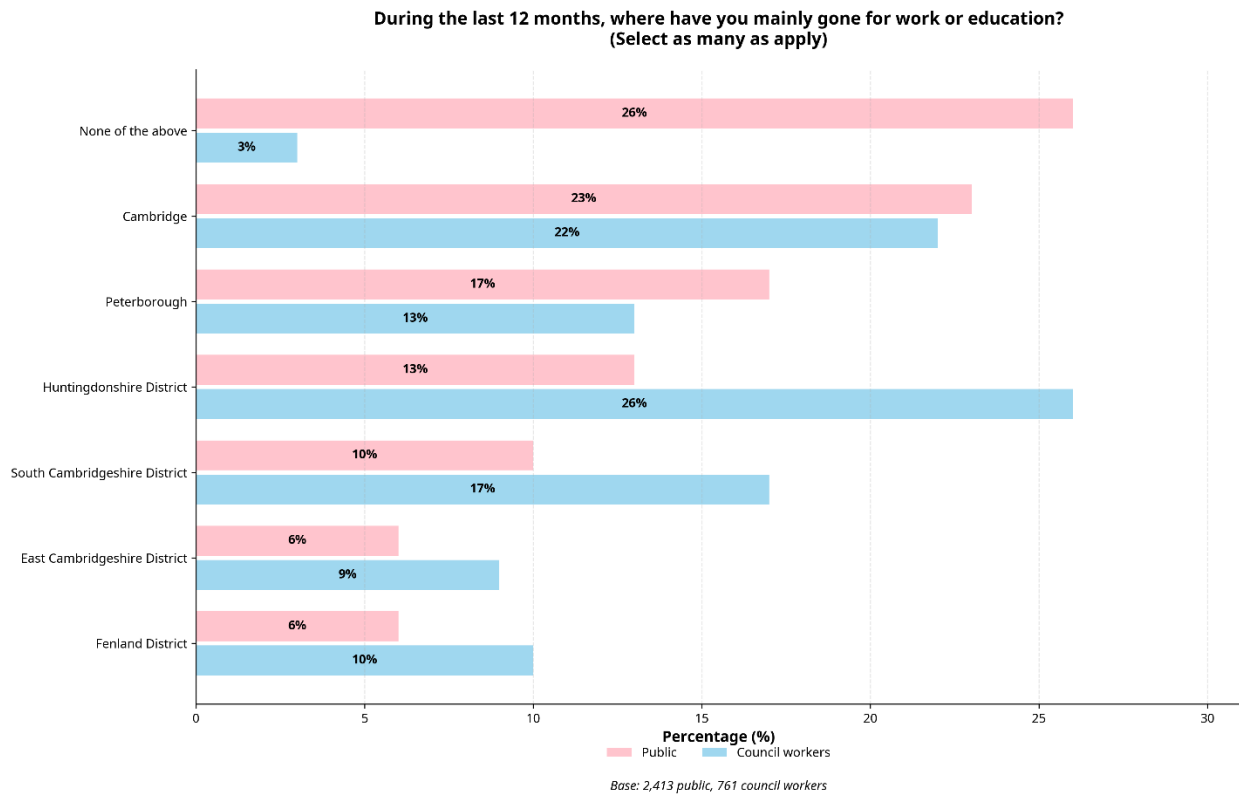
Comparing healthcare patterns with shopping and socialising behaviours reveals fundamental differences in how residents navigate their region. Healthcare shows consistently higher local retention rates than shopping across most districts, reflecting the distribution of GP practices and the principle of local provision. However, the pull of specialist centres creates distinct healthcare geographies, with Cambridge commanding substantial healthcare flows from surrounding districts whilst Peterborough serves a more geographically constrained catchment. The absence of reciprocal flows in many cases—such as Cambridge residents rarely accessing healthcare elsewhere—highlights the hierarchical nature of healthcare provision.

The data suggests that administrative boundaries poorly reflect actual healthcare geographies, with some districts showing stronger healthcare connections to neighbouring areas. Any reconfiguration of local government must carefully consider these established healthcare

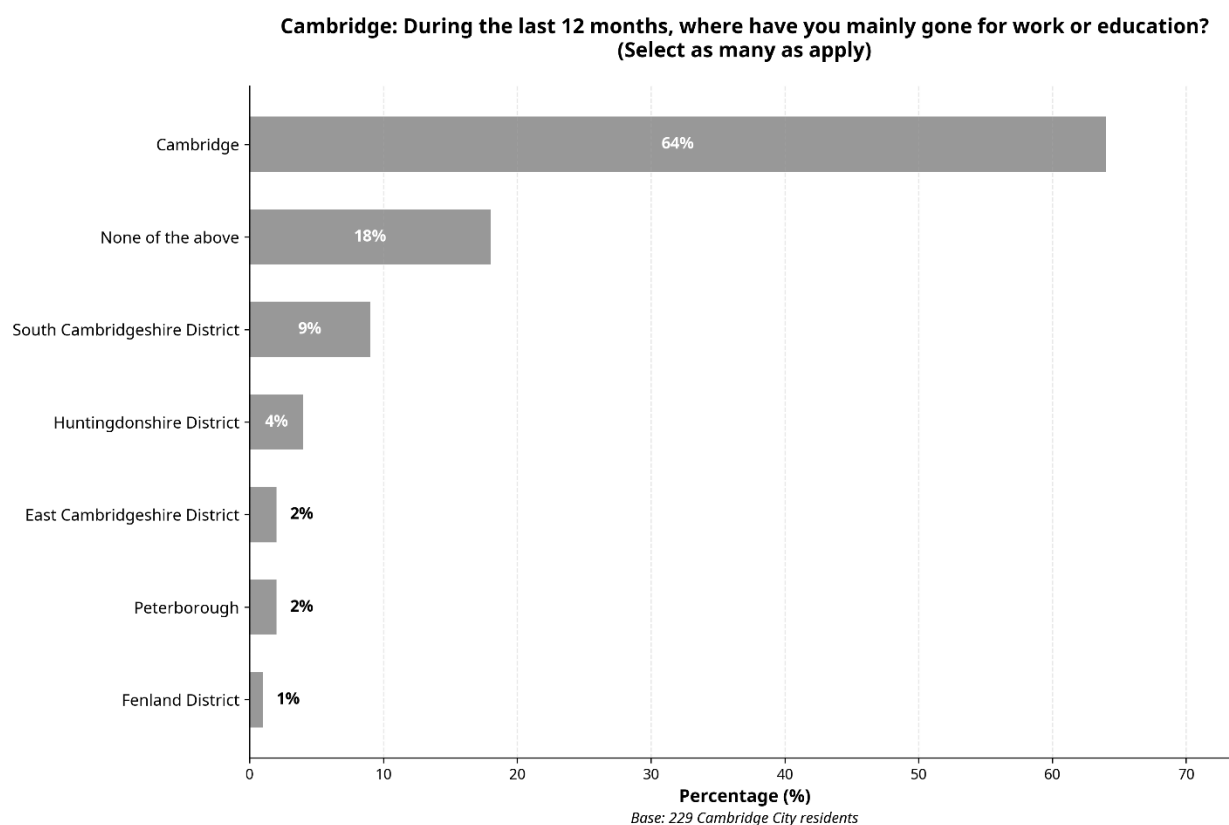
pathways and the implications for clinical commissioning, ambulance services, and integrated health and social care provision.

Work or education

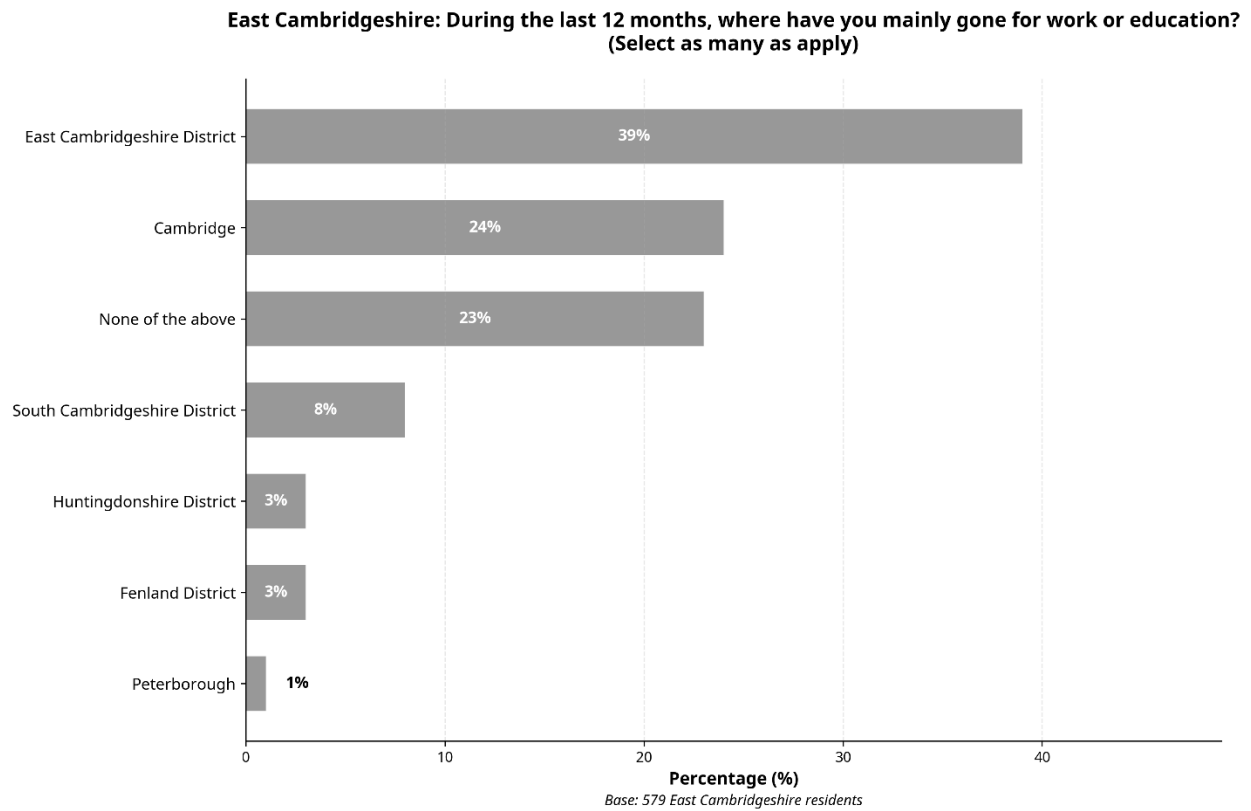
For work or education, over a quarter of residents say that they travelled somewhere else at some point in the last twelve months. Next in line comes Cambridge City with just under a quarter and then Peterborough at 17%. This contrasts with council workers who we know work in the region. Here Huntingdonshire comes top reflecting the number of council workers who responded from Huntingdonshire then Cambridge then Peterborough.



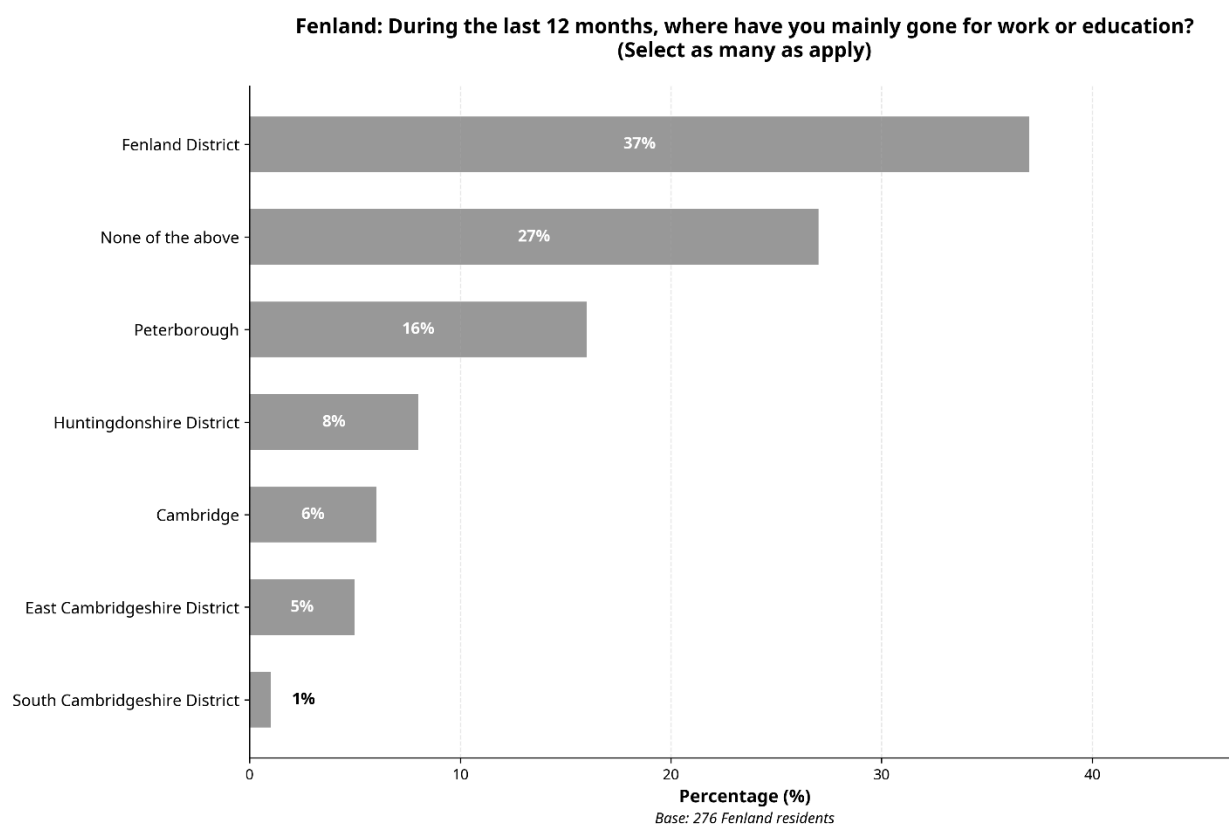
Cambridge demonstrates the highest work/education retention at 64%, yet this figure falls substantially below its shopping (71%) and healthcare (88%) self-containment, suggesting that even Cambridge's diverse economy cannot fully employ its resident workforce. The remaining 36% of Cambridge residents commute elsewhere, with South Cambridgeshire attracting 9%, Huntingdonshire 4%, East Cambridgeshire and Peterborough each 2%, and Fenland 1%. Notably, 18% work or study outside the region entirely, indicating significant connections to London, regional universities, or remote working arrangements.



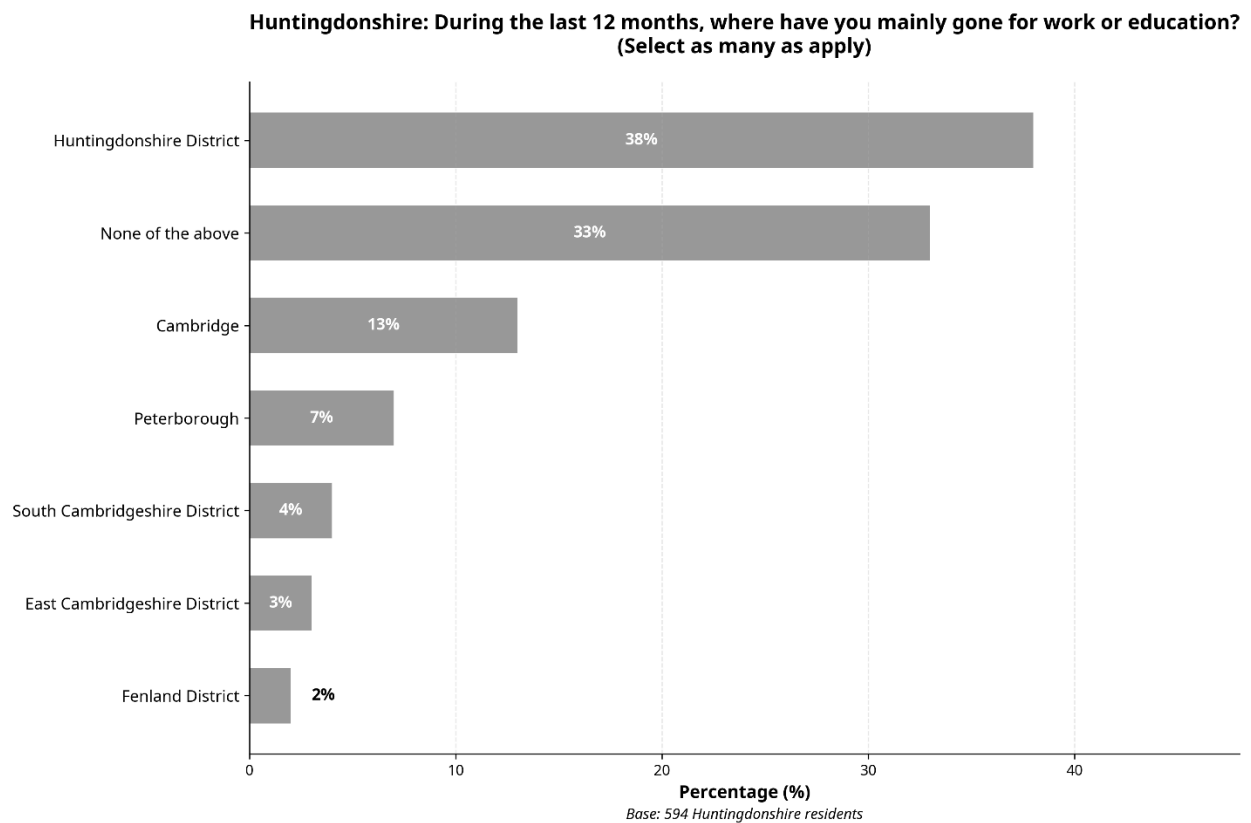
East Cambridgeshire exhibits the lowest employment self-containment at just 39%, with Cambridge attracting 24% of residents for work or education—demonstrating the district's role as a dormitory area for the Cambridge economy. South Cambridgeshire draws 8% of East Cambridgeshire's workers, whilst 23% work outside the region. This pattern, combined with minimal flows to other districts (Huntingdonshire 3%, Fenland 3%, Peterborough 1%), reveals a district whose residents predominantly look south for employment rather than to neighbouring rural areas.



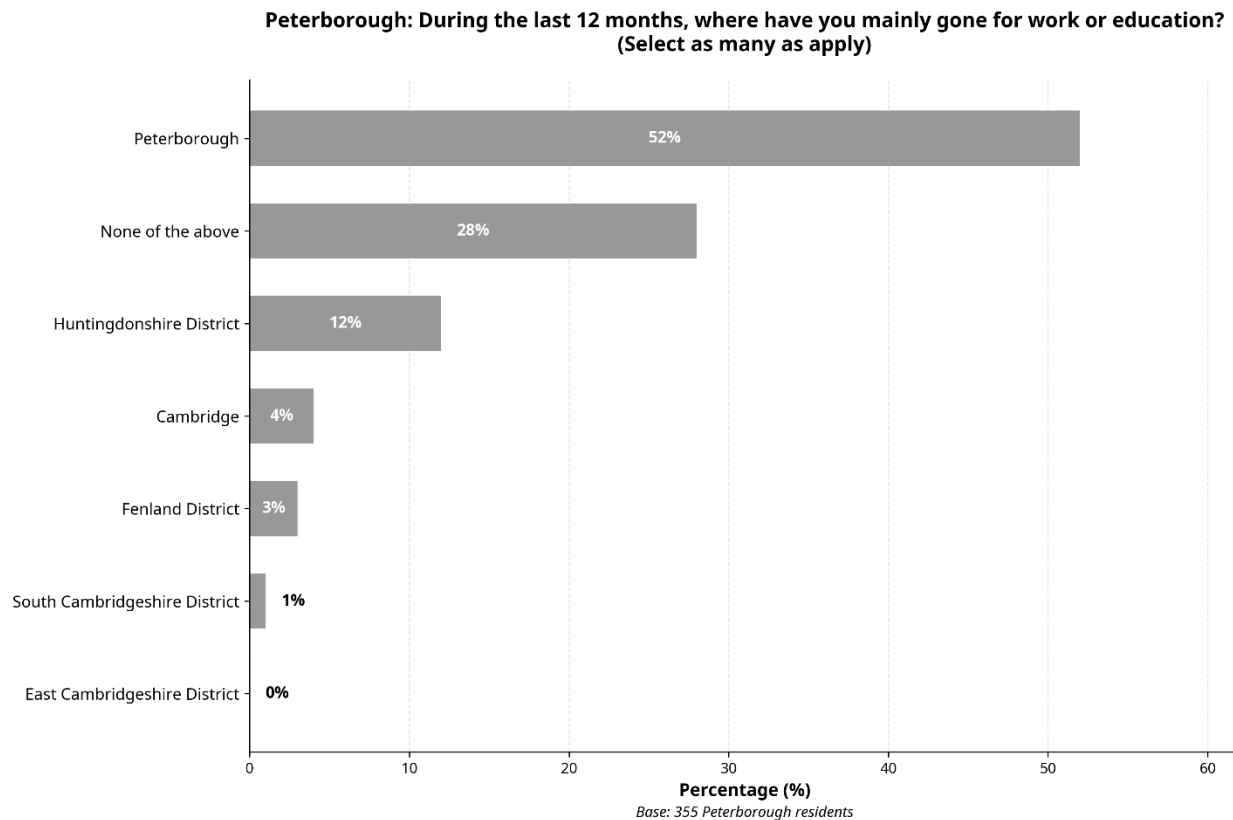
Fenland demonstrates marginally better employment self-containment at 37%, though this remains low by any measure. Peterborough serves as the primary external employment centre at 16%, reflecting established commuting patterns from March and Whittlesey. Huntingdonshire attracts 8% of Fenland's workers, whilst Cambridge draws just 6%, suggesting distance and transport barriers limit access to Cambridge employment. East Cambridgeshire attracts 5% of workers, with 27% working outside the region, potentially in King's Lynn, Wisbech's food processing extending into Lincolnshire, or agricultural employment crossing county boundaries.



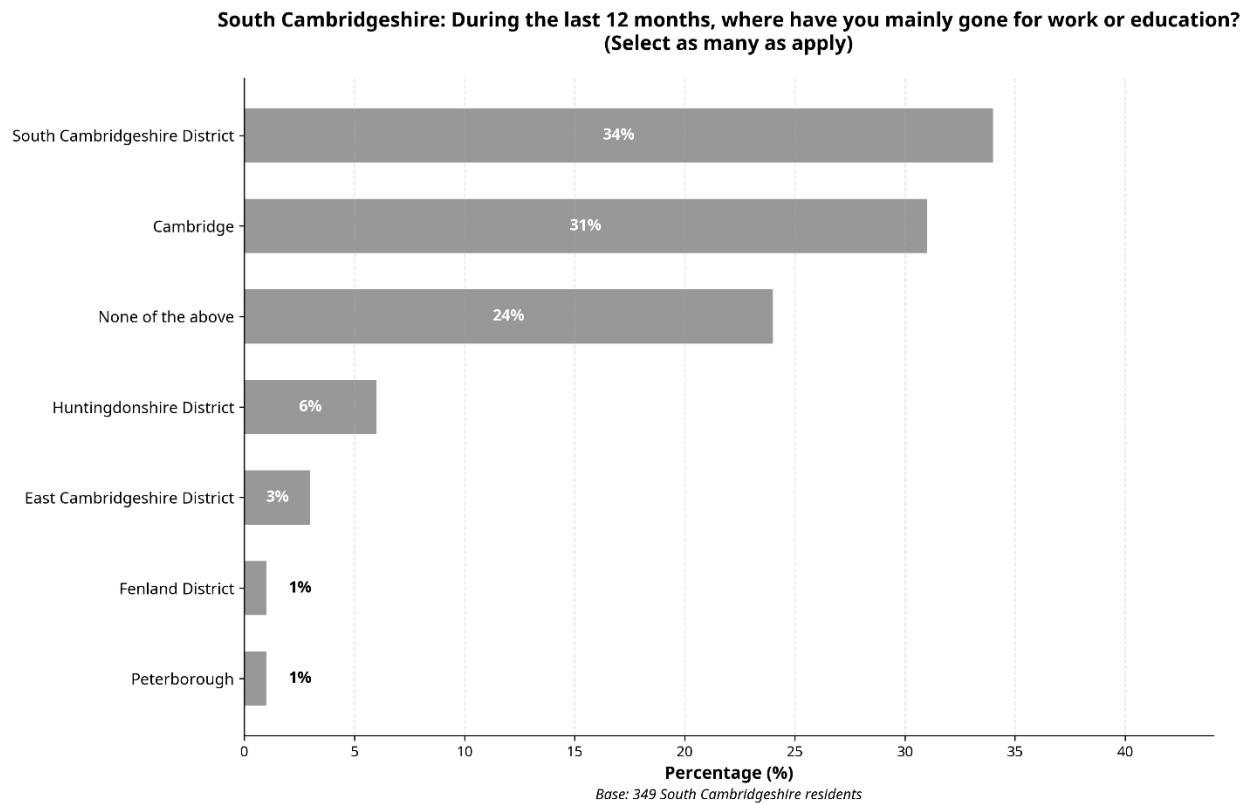
Huntingdonshire shows similarly low local employment at 38%, with residents dispersed across multiple employment centres. Cambridge attracts 13% of Huntingdonshire's workers, Peterborough 7%, and South Cambridgeshire 4%. The substantial 32% working outside the region likely reflects commuting to London, Bedford, or Northampton, highlighting Huntingdonshire's position at the intersection of multiple economic regions. East Cambridgeshire and Fenland each draw just 3% and 2% respectively, indicating limited cross-rural employment flows.



Peterborough shows moderate employment self-sufficiency at 52%, considerably lower than its shopping (63%) or healthcare (82%) retention, highlighting the distinction between service consumption and employment provision. Huntingdonshire attracts 12% of Peterborough's workers—the highest cross-district employment flow from Peterborough—whilst Cambridge draws just 4%. Remarkably, 28% of Peterborough residents work or study outside the region, the highest proportion observed, suggesting limited local employment opportunities relative to the working-age population and potentially significant commuting to Leicester, Northampton, or other areas outside the region.



South Cambridgeshire presents the most dramatic employment dispersal, with only 34% working within district—the lowest recorded across all districts. Cambridge dominates external flows during the last twelve months, attracting 31% of South Cambridgeshire's workers, confirming the district's role as Cambridge's primary dormitory area. Huntingdonshire draws 6%, East Cambridgeshire 3%, whilst Peterborough and Fenland each attract just 1%. The substantial 24% working outside the region likely includes London commuters, particularly from the southern settlements along the rail corridors, alongside those accessing employment and education in Hertfordshire or Essex.



Comparing across all activity types reveals fundamental patterns in the region's functional geography. Work and education show the lowest local retention rates across all districts, averaging below 45% compared to over 60% for shopping and healthcare. Cambridge emerges as a key employment centre, whilst Peterborough's employment draw remains largely confined to its immediate hinterland. The rural districts function primarily as dormitory areas, with their residents travelling substantial distances for work whilst accessing services more locally. These patterns reveal a region where administrative boundaries bear little relationship to economic realities, where daily commuting flows create complex webs of interdependence.

Sample profile

Below is presented the actual sample responses and the weighted sample responses. The demographic questions were optional, and the count is for the unweighted totals.

Demographic Description	Count	Unweighted (%)	Weighted (%)
Gender	2358		
Male		45	47
Female		50	48
Prefer not to say		1	1
Identify gender if another way		4	4
Age	2318		
18-24		1	4
25-34		8	24
35-44		17	14
45-54		20	17
55-64		22	14
65-74		20	12
75-84		7	8
85+		1	1
Prefer not to say		4	4
Ethnicity	2310		
Asian or Asian British		1	2
Black or Black British		1	1
Chinese		0	0
Mixed/multiple ethnicities		2	2
White British or Any Other White background		94	93
Other		1	1
Prefer not to say		1	1
Disability or long-term illness	2325		
Yes		29	30
No		65	63
Prefer not to say		6	7
Location	2407		
Cambridge City		10	16
East Cambridgeshire		24	10
Fenland		12	11
Huntingdonshire		25	18
Peterborough		15	26
South Cambridgeshire		15	18
Not given		1	1