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The Highland Council
2008 Performance Survey
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Section One

Survey Methodology

Introduction

The 2008 Highland Council Performance Survey was conducted independently by Snedden Economics Ltd during June and July 2008. This report addresses key issues of relevance to The Highland Council's overall performance and compares the 2008 results with those from previous years wherever questions are identical and direct comparisons can be made.

The 2008 questionnaire contained additional questions and minor changes in the Community Life section.

Survey Sample

The 2008 survey questionnaire was issued by post to 11,000 named householders on the Register of Electors. The 2008 sample was 22% larger than the 2007 sample of 9,000. Questionnaires were issued randomly across the 22 wards that make up the Highland Council area. Pre-paid return envelopes were provided and three prizes valued at £100 were offered as an incentive to participate in the survey.

Survey Response

Of the overall sample of 11,000, approximately 100 were returned to sender, the addressee having moved or being unknown at that address. 1,978 completed questionnaires were received and analysed – an effective response rate of 18%. The response rate was 17% in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

The profile of respondents to the survey is shown in the following tables in Section One of this report. The data provided in Tables 1.1 to 1.6 are not weighted. Thereafter, in Sections 2-5, all results are weighted by age and gender. Weighting compensates for an under-representation in responses particularly from the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups and an under-representation in responses from males. Some columns do not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Confidence Levels

The level of confidence varies for each question. In places, confidence levels do not allow robust inferences to be drawn from the survey data. Generally, this is where analysis is being conducted on a sub-sample of the data set, notably analysis at the ward level.

The statistical reliability of any random quantitative research result depends upon the percentage value of the result itself and the sample size on which that result is based.

The most commonly used measure of probability within the market research industry is the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the expressed level of accuracy refers to the margin of error around any research result within which we can be 95% certain the true value would lie (the value obtained if the entire population were to be questioned).

Assuming a truly random sample, the following levels of confidence apply. These figures are provided for information purposes only.

Sample Size	Percentage Giving Particular Answer		
	10% / 90%	30% / 70%	50%
100	± 6.0	± 9.2	± 10.0
200	± 4.2	± 6.5	± 7.1
300	± 3.5	± 5.3	± 5.8
500	± 2.7	± 4.1	± 4.5
1,000	± 1.9	± 2.9	± 3.2
2,000	± 1.3	± 2.0	± 2.2

As an approximate guide, the confidence range for questions which draw on the entire sample of 1,978 responses is plus or minus 1.3–2.2% at the 95% level. That is to say, the chances are approximately 95 in 100 that a range of plus or minus 1.3–2.2 percentage points on either side of the sample result includes the true percentage (were the entire population within the Highland Council area to be questioned).

Sample Frame

A breakdown of the sample frame by ward is provided below in Table 1.1. It shows the number and percentage of questionnaires received from each ward. Ward 6 (Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh) provided the largest number of responses (125), and Ward 2 (Thurso) the least (59).

The statistical confidence in results at the ward level is low. For example, if all 59 respondents in Ward 2 answered a particular question, the true results could lie in a range as large as plus or minus 13 percentage points on either side of the sample result. On average, the confidence range for results at the ward level (assuming all respondents answer a particular question) is 6 to 10 percentage points either side of the sample result. Since most questions are not answered by all respondents, the average confidence range is often wider than this.

In order to obtain similar confidence intervals at the ward level that were achieved for the whole sample of 1,978, the questionnaire would have to be sent to all adults in all wards and the survey response rate somehow boosted from 18% to around 20%.

Table 1.1 Sample Frame and Responses by Ward

Ward	% of Total Issued	% Of Total Received	Number Received
1	2.9	3.9	78
2	3.7	3.0	59
3	3.7	3.2	63
4	4.9	5.0	98
5	3.6	3.1	62
6	5.6	6.3	125
7	5.3	5.2	103
8	4.1	4.1	81
9	5.4	5.4	107
10	4.5	5.4	106
11	4.7	5.1	101
12	4.0	3.3	66
13	4.8	5.4	106
14	3.9	3.3	66
15	5.6	4.6	91
16	5.1	5.4	107
17	3.8	3.7	73
18	3.8	3.9	77
19	5.3	5.2	102
20	4.5	4.5	89
21	5.8	6.1	120
22	5.1	5.0	98
Total	100.0	100.0	1,978

Table 1.2, below, shows that over nine out of 10 respondents to the 2008 survey had lived in the Highland Council area for over five years.

Table 1.2 Length of Time Lived in The Highland Council Area

	%
Less than 1 year	1
1-2 years	3
3-5 years	6
Over 5 years	90
Total	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,953)

Table 1.3, below, illustrates the differing propensity to respond by age and gender, which shows a consistent pattern over the years. Overall, males (39% of the sample) were less likely to respond than females (61%). Males under the age of 55 and females under the age of 25 were under-represented in the survey response.

Table 1.3 Age Profile of Survey Respondents

	Survey Response Male %	Survey Response Female %	Survey Response Total %	Population Male and Female %
16-24 years	4	3	4	11
25-34 years	3	9	7	13
35-44 years	11	16	14	18
45-54 years	17	21	19	19
55-64 years	26	22	24	17
65-74 years	22	17	19	12
Over 75 years	16	11	13	10
Total	100	100	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,978)

The working status of respondents is shown below in Table 1.4. The pattern of responses across occupations, housing type (shown in Table 1.5) and ethnic and cultural background (Table 1.6) is consistent with earlier years.

Table 1.4 Profile of Survey Respondents by Occupation

	%
Working for a single employer full-time	29
Working for a single employer part-time	10
Working for more than one employer	2
Self-employed	10
At school or other full-time education	1
Unemployed	1
Unable to work because of long-term sickness	2
Unable to work because of disability	2
Retired	37
Looking after the home or family	4
Carer	1
Total	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,955)

The housing profile of respondents is shown below in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Housing Profile of 2008 Survey Respondents

	%
Own home/mortgage	79
Rent from The Highland Council	8
Rent from a housing association	3
Rent from a private landlord	4
Living with parents	4
House comes with job	1
Resident in care home	1
Total	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,941)

The ethnic and cultural origin of respondents is shown below in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6 Ethnic and Cultural Origin of Respondents

	Number	%
White Scottish	1541	79
White Other British	364	19
Any other white (including Irish)	37	2
All other ethnic and cultural origins	9	*
Total	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,951)

* denotes less than 0.5%

Disability

15% of respondents to the 2008 survey considered themselves to have a disability (also 15% in 2007).

Data by Age, Gender, Disability and Ward

Throughout the remainder of the report, commentary by age, gender and disability is provided, where appropriate, for most questions. Given the predominance of White British as a group, there is no scope for analysing survey data by ethnic and cultural origin. Appendix 1 provides responses to most questions by gender, age and disability, as well as ward-level analysis. This includes clusters of wards arranged into the three Highland Council corporate areas.

In many instances, there were no notable differences to report by age, gender or disability. Where significant differences were apparent, these are noted throughout the report.

For example, females were more likely than males to make contact with the Council. Females were also more likely to be satisfied with services generally and with the response to a complaint if they made one.

The 16-24 age group was generally less likely than average to express satisfaction. Broadly, satisfaction increases in line with age. The 16-24 age group is more likely than other age groups to embrace IT to make contact with the Council and more likely want feedback from the Council by electronic means. The young displayed a lower level of community involvement and a lower sense of belonging to their communities.

People's sense of safety and their worries followed more complex patterns of response by age, geographic area and, to some extent, gender. The elderly are clearly more concerned about certain issues and males displayed slightly higher levels of concern than females about certain issues. These are noted in the body of the report.

For many questions care must be exercised in reading too much into apparent differences in responses at the ward level. However, in some instances, there may be

plausible explanations for significant differences by corporate area or even at the ward level. For example, respondents in the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey corporate area were less involved in their communities and had a lower sense of community than people in other areas. People's sense of safety and the level of volunteering were also lower in this corporate area. A further example, which seems logical, is that residents living in outlying wards regarded road repairs and winter maintenance to be more important than respondents on average.

There were relatively few instances where responses from people with a disability differed significantly from the general population, although there are some notable findings such as the relative importance of certain services among people with a disability (less priority on parks, open spaces and sports facilities and more on libraries and Council Service Points, for example).

Section Two

Contact with the Council

Reason for Contacting The Highland Council

64% of respondents had contacted The Highland Council during the 12-month period preceding the survey. Responses at the ward level to this and most other questions are shown in Appendix 1 along with analysis by age, gender and disability.

The 16-24 age group were notably less likely than average to contact the Council (30%). Females (66%) and people with a disability (72%) were slightly more likely than average to make contact.

Respondents' reasons for contacting the Council are given in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Reason for Contacting The Highland Council

Reason for Contact	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
To obtain a service	41	43	37	33	29	34
To make a payment	37	35	38	37	41	34
To make a personal enquiry	30	27	28	28	27	25
To make a complaint	11	15	11	11	13	12
To make a business enquiry	10	8	8	8	8	9
To speak to a Councillor	5	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	2	3	3	8	3	5

Base: Respondents who had contacted The Highland Council during the preceding 12 months (N=1261)

Note: Multiple responses were accepted. N/a denotes not asked

There were no clear patterns of response by age, gender, disability or geographic area. The contacts with the Council in the "other" category were of various types including people who work at the Council, people performing simple administrative tasks, attending planning meetings or making planning objections.

Method of Contact

The main methods of contact used by respondents to contact The Highland Council are shown in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 Method of Contact

	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
By telephone	59	57	54	60	59	56
Personal visit	50	50	53	52	53	51
By letter	12	13	12	15	14	15
By E-mail (home computer)	8	6	4	5	4	2
Home visit by Council staff	2	2	2	3	4	3
By E-mail (public access computer)	2	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ward forum	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	1	2	1	1	1	*
Through a Councillor	n/a	4	3	1	4	5

Base: Respondents who had contacted The Highland Council during the preceding 12 months (N=1258)

Note: Multiple responses were accepted.

* denotes less than 0.5%

n/a denotes 'not asked'

During the year leading up to the 2008 survey, the most frequently used methods of contacting The Highland Council were telephone (59% of respondents) and personal visits (50%). The pattern of behaviour over time is stable, although a steadily growing number of people are making contact using Email, most notably among the 16-24 age group.

There were few other notable differences by age, gender or disability. There was some variation at the ward level – for example respondents in Inverness South were less likely than average to make a personal visit and more likely than average to use the telephone.

Other responses not itemised in table included BACS, direct debit, the Highland Council website, meetings and work.

Type of Office Contacted

The type of office contacted by respondents in person in the 12-month period preceding the 2008 survey is shown below in Table 2.3. In previous years, the question related to all types of contact not merely visits in person. Responses to this question by ward are provided in Appendix 1.

Table 2.3 Type of Office Contacted

	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
Service Point	69	55	56	58	51	51
Planning and Development	7	9	7	9	8	8
Transport, Environmental and Community Services	6	13	10	10	8	8
Housing	6	11	10	8	17	13
Education, Culture and Sport	2	2	1	2	2	3
Finance	1	5	3	4	6	7
Social Work	1	1	1	2	1	2
Chief Executive's Office	1	1	*	*	*	*
Corporate Services	-	*	*	*	1	1
Property and Architectural Services	-	*	*	*	*	2
Head Office / no service specified	6	4	10	7	6	4

Base: Respondents who had contacted The Highland Council during the preceding 12 months (N=838)
* denotes less than 0.5%

Contact via a Service Point was by far the most common type of office contacted, particularly by respondents living in Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross (77%). People with a disability were more likely than average to contact the Housing Service (14%). As noted above, females were more likely to make contact in general than males. There were no notable differences in behaviour by age.

72% of requests made to The Highland Council were dealt with by the first person contacted (66% in 2007, 67% in 2006, 65% in 2005, 60% in 2004 and 62% in 2003). This was fairly consistent across equalities groups and corporate areas.

Views on Services

Views were sought on a number of aspects of service received by respondents at their last contact with the Council. These are reported in Table 2.4, overleaf. The table shows the percentage of respondents answering “good” and “poor” under each category for the years 2003 to 2008.

The table is most useful to rank respondents’ views across types of contact. In terms of comparisons with earlier years, the results show a reasonably stable pattern.

For all types of contact

Generally, people in the 16-24 age bracket were less likely than average to view their contact with the Council as “good”. There was no notable difference in responses by gender or disability. Respondents living in the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross ward were slightly more likely to view the service they had received as “good”.

For personal visits to Council Office / Service Point

Generally across five measures, respondents over the age of 65 were more likely than average to view the service they received during a personal visit as “good”, especially for opening hours (which respondents with a disability disproportionately also tended to view as “good”). For waiting times, respondents from Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross were notably happier than people from other corporate areas.

For telephone contact

Across three measures, females were more likely than males to view the service they received by telephone as “good”. The over 65s were more likely than other age groups to view the service as “good”. There were no clear themes by disability.

For letter / email / fax

Although the base for this question was lower than for others, respondents from Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross appeared to view the service they received slightly more highly than other corporate areas. There were no clear differences by gender, age or disability.

Table 2.4 Views on Contact with The Highland Council

	2008		2007		2006		2005		2004		2003	
	Good %	Poor %	Good %	Poor %	Good %	Poor %	Good %	Poor %	Good %	Poor %	Good %	Poor %
<i>For all types of contact:</i>												
Helpfulness of staff	73	5	76	6	73	6	69	8	68	7	68	8
How well the staff understood what was wanted	75	6	77	6	76	5	71	7	69	7	69	7
Overall satisfaction with the service given	67	11	70	14	68	12	64	14	62	14	62	16
<i>For personal visits:</i>												
Waiting time	60	8	64	7	61	8	54	15	58	9	57	12
Privacy	39	21	39	21	44	23	32	27	36	28	29	32
Ability to reach the right person	62	10	65	8	63	12	49	17	51	14	54	11
Facilities for people with a disability	61	6	64	6	60	8	52	12	45	20	45	19
Opening hours	62	5	63	6	56	7	53	7	51	6	59	5
<i>For telephone contact:</i>												
Speed with which the telephone was answered	62	5	68	5	60	5	59	7	56	7	63	5
How easy it was to get through to someone who could help	57	11	61	11	57	12	55	16	50	16	46	13
Opening hours	56	4	58	6	53	5	54	5	51	6	56	6
<i>For letter, e-mail and fax:</i>												
Length of time taken for a response	37	24	41	24	37	21	38	24	37	23	33	27

Base: N ranges from 396 to 1,156

Satisfaction with Information on Highland Council Services

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the information they receive on Highland Council services. Prior to 2006, the question was only asked if someone had contacted The Highland Council during the previous 12 months. All respondents were asked the question from 2006 onwards and so the base is larger for these years. The responses are shown in Table 2.5, below.

Table 2.5 Satisfaction with Information on Highland Council Services

	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
Very satisfied	19	20	20	34	27	12
Fairly satisfied	45	41	40	37	39	41
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	27	27	31	15	17	31
Fairly dissatisfied	6	8	6	8	10	11
Very dissatisfied	3	3	4	7	7	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,887)

The percentage of respondents indicating satisfaction in 2008 increased slightly compared with 2007 and 2006.

Satisfaction increased with age. Otherwise, there were no clear differences by gender, disability or geographic area.

Providing Information

A new question was added to the 2007 survey which asked respondents if they would like the Council to provide information in any of three identified ways, namely:

Table 2.6 Other Methods of Receiving Information if Available

	2008 %	2007 %
Interactive / Digital TV	35	23
Text to and from your Mobile	25	7
Pod Casting	4	4

A number of comments were received from respondents who actively did not wish to be contacted by a particular method. For this reason, the percentages in Table 2.6 relate to a base of 1,978 (the whole sample), not merely those answering the question. Although not popular generally, pod casting was slightly more popular among the 16-24 age group. Enthusiasm for texting diminished with age.

Ease of Contact with The Highland Council

Overall in 2008, 90% of respondents felt that it was easy to contact the Council when they needed to compared with 88% in 2007, 90% in 2006, 89% in 2005, 88% in 2004 and 86% in 2003. The apparent differences in the past five years are not statistically significant.

There were no notable differences in response by age, gender or disability. Respondents living in Ross, Skye and Lochaber were most likely to find contact with the Council easy (94%).

Additional Advice/Support Available Through Service Points

Respondents were asked what additional advice or support they would like to access through Highland Council Service Points. Multiple responses were accepted to the question. The option “access to your ward manager” was added in 2008.

In addition to those listed in Table 2.6, a small number of other responses were given which included: disability advice; services available for the elderly, and information on a number of topics including repairs and maintenance schedules, home improvement grants and recycling.

Table 2.6 Additional Advice or Support Respondents Would Like to Access Through Highland Council Service Points

Type of Additional Advice/Support	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
Events in your community	44	45	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy efficiency advice	43	40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Drop in surgeries for particular services	37	39	28	33	29	28
Access to local Councillor	37	38	41	47	52	41
Benefits information and advice	33	33	38	40	45	38
Access to Ward Manager	14	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Community meeting space	13	15	14	14	14	10
Other	2	3	1	2	3	4

Base: All respondents (N=1,413)
 Multiple responses were accepted.
 N/a denotes not asked.

Females (47%) and people in the 16-24 age group (68%) were particularly likely to want access to advice/support on events in the community, whereas people with a disability (23%) and people over the age of 65 (29%) were less likely to do so. Females were also more likely than males to want access to advice/support on benefits information and advice (37%). This was also more likely to be sought in Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross (42%).

Section Three: Satisfaction with Services

The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their satisfaction with a range of services on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high). The score in Table 3.1 is the percentage of respondents who said “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” minus the percentage who said “fairly dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”.

Table 3.1 Satisfaction with Services Scores	2008 Score	2007 Score	2006 Score	2005 Score	2004 Score	2003 Score
Refuse/bin collection	73	70	72	70	74	68
Payment of Council Tax	72	66	67	67	65	66
Council Service Points	70	68	65	65	64	67
Libraries	62	61	57	64	65	66
Registrars for Births, Deaths and Marriages	59	59	62	65	60	69
Walking routes e.g. Great Glen Way	56	57	53	57	61	n/a
Primary education	56	50	63	66	46	50
Street lighting	53	51	62	64	61	59
Recycling facilities	48	42	43	27	-14	-22
Burials and cremations	45	45	53	52	62	59
Public Parks and other open spaces	45	43	38	47	53	54
Secondary education	44	40	51	59	40	25
Pre-school services	37	39	54	52	37	0
Swimming pools	37	37	35	34	34	42
Countryside ranger service	36	40	38	38	46	50
Museums	36	34	26	34	44	46
Other sports facilities	34	32	21	26	27	30
School transport	33	29	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
School meals	31	27	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cycle paths	28	22	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Community learning/adult education	26	23	30	29	19	31
Street cleaning	25	16	39	42	6	0
Environmental Health Service	23	21	39	31	1	15
Trading Standards	20	19	34	29	25	25
Advice on Benefits	18	16	19	17	n/a	n/a
Services to protect children from harm	18	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Council housing repairs	16	9	19	20	17	17
Council housing information and advice	14	14	1	0	1	15
Breakfast and after school clubs	11	11	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dealing with flooding	11	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Home help services	10	16	24	27	7	14
Community Occupational Therapy	10	10	12	14	6	0
Energy efficiency advice	6	2	0.5	n/a	n/a	n/a
Residential homes for disabled/elderly people	4	-1	-4	7	40	54
Public conveniences	4	-5	-3	-2	-16	13
Economic development / business support	3	-3	0.2	-6	2	-16
Winter road maintenance	-2	-1	-6	-10	-14	-22
Planning for future land use (Local Plan)	-5	-12	-19	-21	-28	-10
Planning applications and building warrants	-6	-7	-6	-12	2	-16
Pavement maintenance	-7	-7	5	11	2	-16
Services to reduce youth offending	-27	-35	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Road repairs and pot holes	-55	-53	-57	-57	-57	-52

The pattern of responses to the question about satisfaction with individual services is stable over time. The satisfaction ranking is almost always headed by refuse collection. Road repairs and pot holes always appears at the bottom of the rankings. Minor changes between two years may not be significant in many cases. However, some longer term trends emerge, for example the steady rise in satisfaction with recycling facilities. Satisfaction with residential homes for elderly / disabled people showed a small increase in 2008 following several years of decline.

Council House Repairs

Among the 136 Council house tenants who responded to the question, 70% were “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with Council housing repairs. Using the same convention as was used in Table 3.1, the tenants’ satisfaction score was 51, which compares with a score of 16 among the general population, ie satisfaction was notably higher among tenants themselves.¹

Overall Satisfaction

Respondents were asked if they were satisfied overall with the services provided by The Highland Council. The question was not asked in 2007.

82% of respondents stated that they were satisfied with the services provided by the Council, compared with 80% in 2006, 78% in 2005, 75% in 2004 and 78% in 2003.

Females (84%) were more likely to express satisfaction with Council services than males (80%). The 25-64 age group were least likely to be satisfied (although still 80%). Among people who consider themselves to have a disability, satisfaction with the services provided by The Highland Council was 86%. There was no significant difference in satisfaction across the three corporate areas.

¹ Council house tenants regarded Council housing repairs as the Council’s most important service (mentioned in the top five services by 46% of Council house tenants, compared with only 4% of the population generally – see Table 3.3).

More or Less Satisfied in 2008

A further measure of satisfaction is provided in Table 3.2, below, which shows the responses when people were asked if they were more or less satisfied with The Highland Council's performance this year than in the previous year. There is no notable pattern over time by this measure.

72% of respondents overall noted no change in their satisfaction level in 2008. There were no notable differences by age, gender, disability or geographic area.

Table 3.2 Change in Satisfaction with Services

	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
More satisfied	8	10	7	7	5	5
About the same	72	68	70	68	73	76
Less satisfied	15	17	17	16	16	15
Don't know	5	5	6	11	7	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,909)

Importance of Services

Respondents were also asked to rank services by importance. Table 3.3 overleaf lists the same services as shown in Table 3.1, showing the percentage of respondents who mentioned a particular service as one of their top five in terms of importance to them.

Road repairs and pot holes, winter road maintenance, refuse collection and recycling facilities consistently appear at the top of the list of the public's priorities, followed by primary and secondary education.

Road repairs and pot holes and winter road maintenance were particularly important to respondents living in more outlying parts of the Highlands and less so in and around Inverness.

The importance of refuse/bin collection rose with age. Education was viewed as being significantly less important among the over 65 age group compared with younger age groups.

Among those respondents with a disability, public parks / open spaces and sports facilities were noticeably less important than average, whereas libraries and Council Service Points were more important than average.

There were few differences in response by gender.

Table 3.3 Importance of Services: Appearance in Top Five

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Road repairs and pot holes	46	47	48	52	47	55
Winter road maintenance	40	41	44	49	53	61
Refuse/bin collection	38	40	46	43	39	45
Recycling facilities	37	35	37	37	34	28
Primary education	24	23	24	26	21	23
Street cleaning	19	17	18	21	22	22
Secondary education	18	17	21	22	18	18
Pavement maintenance	17	14	17	16	17	23
Public Parks and other open spaces	16	12	12	17	19	16
Swimming pools	14	11	16	17	16	14
Other sports facilities	13	13	15	15	15	11
Libraries	13	12	16	14	18	18
Planning for future land use (Local Plan)	12	12	9	14	14	12
Council Service Points	11	11	14	14	19	15
Residential homes for disabled/elderly people	10	13	10	8	10	13
Services to protect children from harm	10	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Street lighting	10	9	19	10	13	15
Services to reduce youth offending	9	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Planning applications and building warrants	9	10	7	12	9	9
Payment of Council Tax	9	9	15	14	12	15
Cycle paths	9	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Home help services	7	9	7	7	7	8
Public conveniences	7	8	12	8	10	12
Pre-school services	7	8	10	11	8	9
Energy efficiency advice	7	7	7	n/a	n/a	n/a
Walking routes e.g. Great Glen Way	7	7	6	7	7	4
School meals	6	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Advice on Benefits	6	6	5	7	6	n/a
School transport	6	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dealing with flooding	5	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Community learning/adult education	5	4	6	4	6	5
Council housing repairs	4	4	6	7	11	7
Breakfast and after school clubs	3	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Environmental Health Service	3	4	9	7	8	9
Council housing information and advice	3	2	10	10	13	7
Community Occupational Therapy	2	3	3	3	4	n/a
Economic development / business support	2	3	3	4	4	4
Museums	2	3	2	3	4	3
Burials and cremations	2	2	3	2	1	4
Registrars for Births, Deaths and Marriages	2	1	3	2	1	2
Countryside ranger service	2	1	2	1	3	1
Trading Standards	1	1	2	2	2	3

Base: All respondents (N=1,760)

Statements about The Highland Council

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of a list of statements about The Highland Council. The ranking of importance (1 = most important) is shown below in Table 3.4. A measure of how well the Council performed against these qualities cannot be provided or compared with earlier years owing to a change in the wording of the question in 2008.

The ranking has been fairly stable over time. Maintaining good quality local services has consistently been the highest ranking feature.

Table 3.4 Agreement with Statements about The Highland Council

Statement	Importance Rank					
	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
To maintain good quality local services	1	1	1	1	1	1
To listen to local people	2	2	4	2=	2	2
To provide value for money	3	3	2	2=	3	3
To be aware of people's needs	4	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
To be efficient	5	6	3	5	5	5
To tell local people what it is doing	6	7	6	6	6	6
To involve people in how it spends its money	7	5	5	4	4	4
To be environmentally friendly	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
To treat all residents fairly	9	8	7	7	7	7
To be helpful	10	10	8	9	8	n/a
To be representative	11	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
To be a fair employer	12	12	10	12	10	n/a
To be friendly	13	11	9	11	9	n/a

Base: All respondents (N=1,776)

Complaints to The Highland Council

532 respondents (25% of the sample) indicated their level of satisfaction over how their most recent complaint to the Council had been handled. The results are shown below in Table 3.5. There was a small rise in satisfaction in 2008.

Table 3.5 Satisfaction with How The Highland Council Handled Complaints

	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
Very satisfied	12	10	5	5	6	8
Fairly satisfied	20	15	17	15	10	17
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	42	37	15	18	12	12
Fairly dissatisfied	12	17	27	22	33	25
Very dissatisfied	13	20	37	41	38	39
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Base: 532 respondents

Males were less satisfied than females. Respondents living in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey appeared to have a lower percentage of “very” or “fairly” satisfied responses, although the dissatisfaction levels were no higher than average.

Among respondents who indicated that they had contacted the Council to make a complaint in the past 12 months (a base of 110 respondents), a total of 36% indicated that they were either “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with how their complaint was handled. However, 52% indicated that they were either “fairly dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”. Only 12% were “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”.

Views of The Highland Council

Respondents were asked in general terms whether the Council exceeded or fell short of their expectations. The responses are shown below in Table 3.6. The results show reasonable consistency across the six years.

Generally, the Council was more likely to fall short of people's expectations than to exceed them. There was very little variation in response by age, gender, disability or geographic area.

Table 3.6 People's Expectations of the Council

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Greatly exceeds expectations	1	2	2	1	1	1
Slightly exceeds expectations	7	8	5	6	5	4
Is about what is expected	59	55	58	58	57	58
Falls slightly short of expectations	24	25	23	25	24	26
Falls a long way short of expectations	9	12	10	10	12	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,846)

Communication about the Performance of The Highland Council

Respondents were asked to indicate which from a list of suggestions would be their preferred means of receiving information regarding the Council’s performance. A number of additions and changes have been made to the question since 2006.

Table 3.7 Preferred Means of Communication about the Performance of The Highland Council

	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %
Included with the booklet received with council tax information	52	48	45
A separate newsletter to each household	34	43	37
Written information from Service Points and other offices	34	16	26
Published on the Council’s web pages	31	25	25
As a newspaper insert	24	20	23
Email	19	n/a	n/a
Leaflets and notices in council facilities	19	n/a	n/a
Provided directly by the service	10	n/a	n/a
Through contact with your councillor	7	n/a	n/a
Through ward forums	3	11	n/a

Base: All respondents (N=1,851)

Note: Multiple responses were accepted.

A clear preference was expressed for the current practice of including information with the booklet received with the council tax bill. This was slightly less popular than average among the 16-24 age group (36%). This age group preferred a separate newsletter (41%) and/or dissemination via the Council’s web pages (40%).

There were no clear differences to the general ranking of preferences by gender, disability or geographic area.

General Comments About the Performance of The Highland Council

Respondents were invited to give comments about the performance of The Highland Council in an open question. The main topic areas are shown below in Table 3.8.

Some 446 individual comments were received including multiple comments from a single source. Mostly the question was taken as an opportunity to make critical comments, although 10% of responses expressed satisfaction with the performance of The Highland Council.

Table 3.8 Comments About the Performance of The Highland Council

	2008 Responses %
Issues with the planning decisions/planning process	14
Good service/satisfied/staff helpful	10
Better general up-keep of roads	9
Inefficient use of resources/money wasting	9
More recycling facilities	8
Variable quality of service/staffing	7
Less centralisation around Inverness/do more for remote or rural areas	7
Lack of Council or affordable houses/houses unoccupied/long waiting lists	4
Better winter maintenance of roads	4
Council tax too high	3
Slow/no response to complaints, or reports of TEC-related problems	3
Hard to contact/communication difficult	2
Issues with state of Council housing / housing repairs	2
Less bureaucracy at The Highland Council	2
More information	2
Gaelic road signs – money wasted	2
Poor cleanliness of streets and parks	2
Poor/lack of leisure facilities	1
Insufficient spending on schools	1
Poor care of elderly/provision of residential homes	1
Pavement maintenance poor	1
Public transport poor	1
Call centre poor	1

Base: 446 responses

Section Four

Community Life

Sense of Belonging to a Community

Overall, 72% of respondents felt that their community provides a sense of belonging to “some” or a “great extent”. The pattern of responses is stable over time.

The over 65 age group were more likely than average to feel that their community provides a sense of belonging to “some” or a “great extent” (79%).

There were large differences in response between individual wards. For example, 52% of respondents in Inverness South said “not really” or “not at all” compared with only 5% of respondents in Inverness West.

There was no significant difference in responses by disability.

Table 4.1 To what extent does the area where you live provide you with a sense of belonging to a community?

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
	%	%	%	%	%
To a great extent	22	22	20	21	21
To some extent	50	49	52	47	48
Not really	22	23	21	25	23
Not at all	6	7	6	6	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,739)

Involvement in the Community

Overall, 45% of respondents felt they were “very” or “fairly involved” in the life of their community, which has been stable over time. Responses to this question by ward are provided in Appendix 1.

Table 4.2 How involved are you in the life of your community?

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
	%	%	%	%	%
Very involved	8	7	9	8	7
Fairly involved	37	37	36	40	39
Not really	43	42	43	41	42
Not at all	13	14	12	11	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,937)

People with a disability and the 16-24 age group were both less likely than average to be involved with their community. There was no significant gender difference. Respondents from the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey corporate area were less likely than average to be involved with their communities, notably so among the Inverness wards.

Attitude to People Coming to Live from Outside the Highlands

Overall, 83% of respondents felt to a “great” or “some extent” that their community is accepting of people coming to live here from outside the Highlands. This percentage did not vary significantly by age, gender, disability or by corporate area.

Table 4.3 To what extent do you feel your community is accepting of people coming to live here from outside the Highlands?

	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %
To a great extent	24	22	22	25	26
To some extent	59	60	60	57	59
Not really	13	14	15	14	11
Not at all	4	4	4	4	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,920)

Gaelic Language

Respondents were asked a new question in 2008 about their attitude towards the Gaelic language. 41% of respondents felt well disposed “to a great extent” or “to some extent”. People of retirement age were better disposed (48%) than younger generations. Respondents in the Ross, Skye and Lochaber area were significantly better disposed to Gaelic (53% felt well disposed “to a great extent” or “to some extent”) than in other geographic areas. There was no clear pattern by gender or disability.

Table 4.4 To what extent do you feel “well disposed” to the Gaelic language?

	2008 %
To a great extent	14
To some extent	27
Not really	28
Not at all	31
Total	100

Base: All respondents (N=1,893)

Sense of Safety within the Community

People’s perceptions of how safe their community feels is reported below in Table 4.5. The scores represent the percentage of respondents who indicated that their community feels like a safe place “to a great extent” plus those who said “to some extent”.

The table shows that respondents generally thought their communities were safe places – most of all for themselves but slightly less so for ethnic minorities, the elderly and teenagers.

Residents in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey were least likely to regard their community as safe against a range of measures (for themselves, their families, teenagers and ethnic minorities).

People over 65 were slightly more likely than other age groups to regard their community as safe for themselves and their families. The 16-24 olds were the least likely age group to regard their communities as safe for ethnic minorities (a score of 71).

People with a disability were slightly less likely than average to regard their community as safe for themselves (a score of 89).

There were no notable differences in perception by gender.

Table 4.5 To what extent does your community feel like a safe place to be in?

	2008 score	2007 score	2006 score	2005 score
You	94	95	94	93
Your family	92	93	92	93
Parents and toddlers	90	88	89	91
New residents to the area	88	88	86	n/a
Young children	87	86	86	88
Teenagers (boys)	84	82	81	83
Teenagers (girls)	82	81	81	82
Older people	83	80	82	84
Ethnic minorities	82	81	n/a	n/a

Base: All respondents (N ranges from 1,503 to 1,860)
n/a denotes not asked in previous years

The extent to which people are worried about certain activities in their neighbourhood is reported below in Table 4.6. The scores represent the percentage of respondents who indicated that they were worried “to a great extent” plus those who said “to some extent”. The overall ranking is very similar to previous years, although within each category, the levels of concern sometimes varied significantly by age and location.

There was comparatively little variation by disability or gender, although males were slightly more likely than females to express worry about *anti-social behaviour, violent behaviour* and *drug mis-use or dealing*.

Further observations include:

Speeding cars was the top concern (score 75). Concern grew slightly with age (a score of 80 for the over 65s, compared with a score of 71 for the 16-24 age group).

The next most common concern - *dog fouling* (score 67) was also most likely to be a worry among the over 65s (score 77).

Vandalism, graffiti or other damage to property (general score 60) was of most concern to respondents from Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey (score 65) and to the over 65s (score 68).

Concern over *crime in general* (general score 50) rose with age (a score of 57 for the over 65s, compared with a score of 41 for the 16-24 age group). Concern was highest in the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey corporate area (score 55).

Housebreaking and *noisy neighbours* were both more of a concern for disabled people and less of a concern in the Ross, Skye & Lochaber corporate area.

Table 4.6 To what extent are you worried about any of the following activities in your neighbourhood?

	2008 score	2007 score	2006 score	2005 score
Speeding cars	75	74	76	73
Dog fouling/littering	68	72	68	n/a
Vandalism, graffiti or other damage to property	60	n/a	n/a	n/a
Anti-social behaviour by young people	58	64	59	60
Rowdy behaviour	54	n/a	n/a	n/a
Youth crime	51	56	54	54
Crime in general	51	52	n/a	n/a
Drug mis-use or dealing	49	n/a	n/a	n/a
Violent behaviour	37	45	42	39
Housebreaking	34	39	39	28
Noisy neighbours	31	31	31	29
Child abuse	31	31	27	28

Base: All respondents (N ranges from 1,677 to 1,793)
n/a denotes not asked in previous years

Other Aspects of the Community

Respondents were asked to rate the area within 15 minutes of their home as a place to live. The responses are provided in the table below. The question was introduced in 2008.

Generally, 95% of respondents felt that the area within 15 minutes of their home was either “very safe” or “fairly safe”.

The 16-24 age group were slightly less likely than average to rate their local area as “very safe” or “fairly safe” (88%). There was no notable difference by gender or disability. Residents in the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey corporate area were slightly less likely than average to regard their local area as “very safe” or “fairly safe” (91%).

Table 4.7 Rating of the Area Within 15 Minutes of Home

	2008
	%
A very safe area	46
A fairly safe area	49
Rather unsafe area	4
A very unsafe area	1
Total	100%

Base: 1,943

Respondents were asked to rate their community in terms of six amenities. The results are shown below in Table 4.8. A scoring system is used which adds “very good” and “good” and subtracts “acceptable” and “poor”. The question was not asked in 2003. Schools and health care are consistently well regarded, whereas leisure and other community facilities are regarded least favourably.

Table 4.8 Rating the Local Community in Terms of Amenities

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
	score	score	score	score	score
Schools	48	34	27	30	47
Health care	34	23	22	5	31
Transport	-6	-11	-20	-23	-32
Shops	-12	-15	-19	-2	8
Leisure facilities	-22	-25	-30	-26	6
Other services	-35	-35	-34	-33	n/a

Base: All respondents (N ranges from 1,439 to 1,868)

Respondents were asked a new question in 2008 which sought an overall view of the neighbourhood or community in which they live.

Generally, 95% of respondents rated their neighbourhood as “very good” or “fairly good”. There was no notable difference by gender or disability. A slightly lower percentage (90%) of the 16-24 age group rated their neighbourhood as “very good” or “fairly good”. There was little difference by corporate area.

Table 4.9 How Would You Rate Your Neighbourhood or Community as a Place to Live in?

	2008
	%
Very good	50
Fairly good	45
Fairly poor	4
Very poor	1

Base: 1,903

Community Councils

11% of respondents said they had contacted their Community Council in the past year (16% in 2007). There was a fairly consistent pattern of responses by age, gender, disability and geographic area. This was also the case for the following question in which respondents who had not contacted their Community Council were invited to say why.

Table 4.10 Reasons for not Contacting Community Councils

	2008 %	2007 %
No need to make contact	87	83
Did not know how to contact	13	15
Other	n/a	3

Base: N = 1,632

Respondents who had contacted their Community Council were invited to state the reason for making contact.

Table 4.11 Reasons for Making Contact with Community Councils

	2008 %	2007 %
A planning and development issue	46	42
Improving amenities of your area	31	35
About a change in local services	8	13
Other	23	24

Base: N = 205

Multiple responses were accepted

Other reasons not listed in the table included being a member or otherwise involved with a Community Council, concerns about local roads/drainage/flooding etc, dog fouling and anti-social behaviour.

Section Five

Volunteering

A new series of questions examining volunteering was added to the 2007 survey. In 2008, 27% of all respondents indicated that they volunteer in some capacity (also 27% in 2007).

Among people with a disability, 19% indicated that they volunteer. There were no notable difference by gender or age. People living in Ross, Cromarty, Skye & Lochaber were slightly more likely than average to volunteer (32% compared with only 24% in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey).

Respondents who are “very involved” or “fairly involved” in the life of their community (question 22) were much more likely to volunteer (76% and 39% respectively, compared with 27% for the population as a whole. Also, people who have a “great” sense of belonging to a community (question 21) were more likely to volunteer (40%).

People living in Central Inverness were least likely to volunteer (15%) and people living in Landward Caithness were most likely (40%).

Description of Voluntary Activities

People were asked how many voluntary activities they are involved in. The most common response was one activity, which was given by 43% of respondents (47% of males and 39% of females). People over the age of 65 were more likely than other age groups to be involved in more than three voluntary activities (18%). People with a disability showed a similar pattern of response to the general population and there were no clear geographic differences.

Table 5.1 Number of Voluntary Activities

	2008	2007
	%	%
One	43	46
Two	32	30
Three	14	14
Over three	12	10
Total	100	100

Base: N = 540

Volunteers were asked in what capacity they volunteer. This is reported below in Table 5.2. Owing to the small sub-samples involved, no clear patterns can be discerned by age, gender, disability or geographic area for this question or the following three questions which are reported in Tables 5.3 to 5.5.

Table 5.2 In What Capacity Do You Volunteer?

	2008 %	2007 %
For a voluntary organisation, charity or community group	59	64
In the community	47	40
For a local church / religious group	25	23
As part of a management committee / Board	21	22
In a local school	15	16
In a local hospital / care home	5	6
Other	5	3

Base: N = 542

Multiple responses were accepted

In addition to the categories shown above in Table 5.2 a small number of other responses were given. These included sports organisations, Community Councils, a political party, the police, a hospice and a museum.

Respondents were also asked who they volunteer with. There was some duplication in responses with the previous question.

Table 5.3 Volunteer Groups

	2008 %	2007 %
A local group eg Scouts, youth club or lunch club	33	45
Children and younger people	36	32
Older people	22	18
People with a disability	13	14
Community transport group	4	4
Other	30	25

Base: N = 489

Multiple responses were accepted

As well as the responses listed above in Table 5.3, a number of respondents described other types of voluntary work within the community. These included involvement with arts/heritage, sport or leisure activities; charity shops; village halls; pipe bands; hospitals, for example via the WRVS or hospital radio; environmental/wildlife concerns; Community Councils; people with mental health/abuse problems; hospice/terminally ill people. Other respondents referred to involvement with specific

charities/organisations such as the RNLI, CAB, Blythwood, Mountain Rescue and the Red Cross.

The frequency with which people volunteered is reported below in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Frequency of Volunteering

	2008	2007
	%	%
Every day	3	6
Several times a week	26	21
About once a week	28	27
Several times a month	16	19
About once a month	9	11
Several times a year	18	15
Once a year	1	1
Total	100	100

Base: N = 539

A new question was asked to volunteers in 2008, reported below in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 If You are a Volunteer, To What Extent Do You think The Highland Council Should Support Voluntary Organisations and Their Work?

	2008
	%
To a great extent	42
To some extent	51
Not really	4
Not at all	2
Don't know	2
Total	100

Base: N = 500

Reasons for Not Volunteering

The survey attempted to explore people's reasons for not volunteering. Table 5.6, below, shows the reasons provided by respondents.

Table 5.6 Reasons for Not Volunteering

	2008 %	2007 %
Lack of time	63	60
Do not want to	18	17
Age / ill health	14	13
Not sure how to	10	10
Disclosure requirements	2	2
Other	2	3

Base: N = 1,302

Multiple responses were accepted

Lack of time was primarily a constraint for people of working age. The pattern of responses was similar for males and females and across geographic areas. Understandably, ill health/age was the predominant reason given by people with a disability and for the over 65 age group.

A small number of other responses were given for not volunteering, which included other commitments, stopping after previous involvement as volunteers, lack of transport and too much legislation. Others pointed to lack of opportunities in their area.

Non-volunteers were asked what might encourage them to volunteer from a range of statements reported below in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 What Would Encourage You to Volunteer?

	2008	2007
	%	%
If it fitted with my other commitments	56	51
If I could volunteer when I felt like it	47	36
If it fitted with my interests and skills	41	35
If I thought I could help others	33	37
Information about local opportunities	33	35
If it was good fun	32	29
Information about commitment required	30	34
If training and support were available	26	29
If someone asked me to do something	23	35
If it would improve my skills	19	22
If it would improve my career/job prospects	19	18
If it helped me gain qualifications	19	18
If I was sure I would not be out of pocket	15	14
If I had more confidence	14	18
If there were more people like me volunteering	12	13
If someone I knew volunteered with me	11	15
If I was certain that it would not affect my benefits	6	9

Base: N = 847

Multiple responses were accepted

Appendix 1

Tabulations by Gender, Age, Disability, Corporate Area and Ward

- Question 1 Have you had contact with the Highland Council during the past year?
- Question 2 What was your reason for making contact?
- Question 3 How did you make this contact?
- Question 4b If you contacted an office in person, what type of office was it?
- Question 5 When you last contacted the Council, was your request dealt with by the first person you contacted?
- Question 6 Please give your views on the service you received when you made this contact.
- Question 7 How satisfied are you with the information you get on Highland Council services?
- Question 8 What additional advice/support would you wish to access via The Highland Council services?
- Question 9 If all of the following methods for receiving information or contacting the Council were available to you, which would you use?
- Question 10 Overall, do you find it easy to contact The Highland Council when you need to?
- Question 12 Which five services are most important to you?
- Question 13 Overall, are you satisfied with the services The Highland Council provides?
- Question 14 Overall, are you more or less satisfied with The Highland Council services than you were last year?
- Question 17 If you have made a complaint about the Council in the past year - how satisfied were you with how the Council handled your most recent complaint?
- Question 18 Thinking generally about what you expect from The Highland Council, would you say the Council exceeds or falls short of your expectations?
- Question 20 Which are your preferred means of communication for information on the Council's performance?
- Question 21 To what extent does the area where you live provide you with a sense of belonging to a community?
- Question 22 How involved are you in the life of your community?
- Question 23 To what extent do you feel your community is accepting of people coming to live here from outside the Highlands?
- Question 24 To what extent do you feel "well disposed" to the Gaelic language?
- Question 25 To what extent does your community feel like a safe place to be?

- Question 26 To what extent are you worried about any of the following activities in your neighbourhood?
- Question 27 Taking everything into account, how do you rate the area within 15 minutes walk of your home as a place to live?
- Question 29 Thinking now about the neighbourhood or community you live in, how would you rate it as a place to live?
- Question 30 Have you contacted your Community Council in the past year?
- Question 31 Please state the reason why you have not made contact.
- Question 33 Do you currently volunteer in any capacity?
- Question 34 What best describes your reasons for not volunteering?
- Question 36 How many voluntary activities are you involved in?
- Question 37 In what capacity do you volunteer?
- Question 38 Is your voluntary work with:
- Question 39 How frequently do you usually volunteer?
- Question 40 If you are a volunteer, to what extent do you think The Highland Council should support voluntary organisations and their work?

Appendix 2
2008 Survey Questionnaire