

Comment

Maintenance opinions vary wildly around UK

Satisfaction with public services including road maintenance differs greatly depending on where you are in the UK and who you ask. Recent surveys carried out by Ipsos MORI found levels of satisfaction concerning road maintenance to be particularly high in Shropshire and comparatively low in Kent.

The majority of Shropshire residents, 58%, are satisfied with highway conditions in their county, against 33% who are dissatisfied. In Kent, only 23% said they were satisfied with the maintenance of roads, compared with 63% who were dissatisfied. A similar pattern emerges for footway maintenance, with Shropshire also fairing well compared to Kent which fairs badly.

We believe this variation is partly due to the demographics of different local areas. For example, we often find that satisfaction with road maintenance among residents in rural

areas tends to be low, probably reflecting the older and more established demographic make up of rural areas. Younger residents – as well as those who have lived in areas for relatively short periods of time – are more likely to be positive.

Similarly, we find that younger residents are more satisfied than older residents with footway maintenance. Residents who live in households without a car or a van are also more likely to be dissatisfied than average, possibly reflecting the fact that they do more walking in their local area than residents with a car. These patterns have been observed time and time again in Ipsos MORI surveys across the country.

In another study published this summer, Ipsos MORI found a discrepancy between what people consider makes somewhere a good place to live and what is thought to be most in need of improvement in a local area.



Rebecca Klahr

Our survey found that the condition of roads and footways ranked bottom in a list of 10 factors which were considered to be most important in making somewhere a good place to live, behind shopping facilities, open spaces and low levels of traffic.

But roads and footways figured much higher when people were asked what most needs improving in their local area, coming third ahead of traffic congestion, health services and public transport.

Improving public satisfaction with transport services, including road and footway maintenance, enjoys an increasing focus within government policy. But local authorities need to show their understanding of residents' and service users' views and to demonstrate that they are acting on them in order to improve public perception.

Rebecca Klahr,
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