

Neighbourhood Councils Survey November 2011 / January 2012

Data Report

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction and purpose of report	page 5
2. Methodology.....	page 5
3. Response.....	page 6
4. Focus group feedback.....	page 6
5. Data Tables & Comment Summaries.....	page 9
Table 1	How much do you agree or disagree that generally you would like to have more influence over the decisions and services that affect your neighbourhood?.....page 9
Table 2	How much do you agree or disagree that people in your local area should take decisions about local issues and services rather than the council?.....page 10
Table 3	In your neighbourhood would you like more influence over decisions taken on any of the services below?.....page 10
Table 4a	How much do you agree or disagree that people in your local area should have more responsibility for choosing how money is spent locally?.....page 10
	Why do you STRONGLY AGREE OR TEND TO AGREE that people should have more responsibility for how money is spent locally?.....page 11
	Why do you STRONGLY DISAGREE OR TEND TO DISAGREE that people should have more responsibility for how money is spent locally?.....page 12
Table 5a	How much do you agree or disagree? I would be happy for a local residents group to make decisions on my behalf about issues and services provided in my neighbourhood.....page 13
	Why do you STRONGLY AGREE OR TEND TO AGREE that you would be happy for local residents to make decisions on your behalf?.....page 13
	Why do you STRONGLY DISAGREE OR TEND TO DISAGREE that you would be happy for local residents to make decisions on your behalf?..... page 13
Table 6	How likely or unlikely would you be to pay £20 a year into a neighbourhood budget that would be managed by local residents

in your neighbourhood for the benefit of your local area?.....page 14

Table 7	If neighbourhoods were given more opportunity to make decisions on how local services are designed, funded and delivered, should these be based on existing ward boundaries or local neighbourhoods?.....page 14
Table 8a	If local residents had more influence over decisions taken on how services are designed, funded and delivered in their neighbourhood, how likely or unlikely is it that you would become involved?.....page 15
Table 8b	If you are interested in being more involved in decision making in neighbourhoods, how would you like to be involved?.....page 17
Table 8c	If you would like to be involved in decisions in neighbourhoods, would you be interested in becoming involved in any of the following?.....page 20
Table 8d	If more decision making in neighbourhoods were to take place who would you like to lead your neighbourhood events or meetings?.....page 19
Table 9	What would stop you being involved in local decision making?.....page 22
Table 10a	Are you aware of any of the following representative groups operating in your local area?.....page 24
Table 10b	Are you currently or have you previously been involved with any local representative group?.....page 24
Table 10c	Do you think your group may like to express an interest in being a pilot area for this new approach to local decision making?.....page 24
Tables 11	Do you think that taking some responsibility away from the council and giving more responsibility to local residents could have a positive or negative impact on the issues below? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing greater value for money.....page 25• Creating better local services.....page 25• Providing community solutions to local issues.....page 25• Bringing the community together.....page 26• Raising awareness of political issues.....page 26

6	Demographics & Equalities	page
Table 12	Responses by ward.....	27
Table 13	Gender.....	28
Table 14	Age.....	28
Table 15	Ethnicity.....	28
Table 16	Religion.....	29
Table 17	Sexual orientation.....	29
Table 18	Health and Disability.....	29
Table 19	Carers.....	30

1. Introduction & Purpose of Report

Brighton and Hove City Council are developing new ways of working with communities to make this a more democratic city, leading the way as a place to live and work. Neighbourhoods will be offered greater power to make decisions about services and budgets, addressing issues relevant to them. Arrangements may vary from place to place, but there will be opportunities for all to participate in decision making.

The plans fit into the Localism Act (2011), which sets out a series of proposals that are intended to shift power away from central government, towards local people. The intention is that these changes will allow people to:

- be more involved in their local area and identify opportunities for community action
- raise issues that need addressing and develop local solutions
- be actively involved in the decisions that are taken about their area
- be empowered to develop local services and groups

2. Methodology

As part of a wider consultation about neighbourhood councils a questionnaire was devised by the council's Communities and Performance & Analysis teams. Two questionnaires and different methodologies were used to ensure as many residents and interested parties as possible had the opportunity to be involved while keeping cost to a minimum.

A full questionnaire consisting of 35 questions including all standard equality and demographic questions was made available through the city's Consultation Portal with a paper version also available. A series of community of interest and public events took place between November 2011 and January 2012 where the Portal questionnaire was publicised and the paper copy made available. The consultation was also publicised via council and local community networks.

A short version of the questionnaire, consisting of seven key questions taken from the full questionnaire, was made available as an A5 folded postcard. The post card was...

- sent to a random sample of 10,000 households evenly distributed across the city by full postcode
- 3,000 left for collection at various council and community buildings
- 3,000 posted to GP surgeries, Universities, Colleges, Schools, Places of Worship, libraries, children's centre, community centres, art galleries, cinemas, theatres, leisure centres, youth centres.
- 2,000 distributed by hand at Jubilee library, Asda marina.

The seven questions were...

- How much do you agree or disagree?
 - I would like to have more influence over the decisions and services that affect my neighbourhood.
 - People in my local area should take decisions about local issues and services rather than the council.
 - People in my local area should have more responsibility for choosing how money is spent locally
- If local residents had more influence over decisions taken on how services are designed, funded and delivered in their neighbourhood, how likely or unlikely is it that you would become involved?
- How would you like to be involved?
- What would stop you being involved in local decision making?
- If you would like to be involved in decision making in neighbourhoods, would you be interested in becoming involved in any of the following?

3. Response

376 full questionnaires and 825 short questionnaires were returned.

4. Focus group feedback

Focus groups were carried out at:

- Get Involved Project – The Fed Centre for Independent Living
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Health and Inclusion Project
- MOSAIC (Black and Mixed parentage family group)
- Black and Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP) Women’s Group
- Black and Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP) Elders Group
- Bevendean ABC
- Hollingdean LAT
- Moulsecoomb LAT
- Craven Vale LAT
- Hangleton & Knoll CAG
- West Hove Forum
- Whitehawk forum
- Hollingbury LAT

Across the focus groups held, particular, and shared concerns came through regarding operational issues, financial concerns, concerns about the democratic process, barriers for marginalised groups, how to promote participation and recommendations to take forward into the pilot period.

Operational Issues

Questions arose about who would mediate if there was significant conflict between groups in neighbourhood councils, and how resolutions would be found. There were concerns that local governance arrangements could potentially weaken community cohesion rather than strengthen it.

Financial Concerns

The pilots could be costly and are they badly timed in the current economic climate.

Democratic Process

Unelected and unrepresentative individuals could be able to impose their own agendas with the risk that discriminatory single issue agendas are promoted at the expense of broader concerns. Well thought through processes need to be in place for to deal with issues such as dishonesty, discrimination and pushing unrepresentative agendas.

Decisions made by neighbourhood councils could run the risk of service provision becoming a 'postcode lottery'. This will need to be carefully considered when and if realigning services.

If Neighbourhood Governance is building on existing neighbourhood groups, the marginalisation of minority groups could continue without thought, attention and resources being paid to how to involve and engage communities of interest/identity.

Barriers

Participation could be taken up by more affluent groups who may not have an understanding of issues for marginalised groups and therefore not include them in agendas or decision making. Minority groups do not always feel like they are a part of the community in which they live. This was a barrier that could be seen to be inherent in neighbourhood working. Furthermore, formal structures and governance can be off putting for people where language and/or literacy is an issue.

While B&H has a reputation for being an inclusive city, there is still discrimination and exclusion experienced by many minority groups. This was particularly highlighted in the LGBT focus groups around a possible reluctance to disclose LGBT status for people living with HIV or the trans community.

People across the groups were concerned with the difficulties of representation and the possibility of this becoming tokenistic, leading to people feeling like they have an unreasonable burden of representation.

Promoting Participation and Recommendations from focus groups

1. Address significant equalities implications to ensure these are not excluded from neighbourhood agendas.
2. Think about having designated spaces within Neighbourhood Governance approaches for LGBT, BME, disabled people, carers, older people and young people.
3. Ensure effective monitoring structures for Neighbourhood Governance approaches to demonstrate meaningful involvement and engagement from communities of interest groups and individuals.
4. Ensure equalities awareness training and development support is provided by the relevant organisations, as part of the pilot process for all neighbourhood governance approaches.
5. Support a transparent complaints system, this needs to link into the current council complaints procedure.
6. Only delegate resources to Neighbourhood Governance approaches when they can show plans for meaningful participation and involvement of 'communities of interest'.
7. Provide dedicated recourses to support 'inclusion' within the pilot approaches.
8. Link Neighbourhood Governance approaches in the city-wide equalities structures for advice and guidance.

5. Data table and comment summaries

The following tables summarise the responses to the questions from the full and short Neighbourhood Council surveys.

Table 1: How much do you agree or disagree that generally you would like to have more influence over the decisions and services that affect your neighbourhood?							
		Portal & Paper		Postcard		All responses	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree		183	48.8	406	49.6	589	49.3
Tend to agree		154	41.1	313	38.2	467	39.1
Tend to disagree		25	6.7	41	5.0	66	5.5
Strongly disagree		7	1.9	24	2.9	31	2.6
Don't know		6	1.6	35	4.3	41	3.4
Total		375	100.0	819	100.0	1194	100.0
Missing	No response	1		6		7	

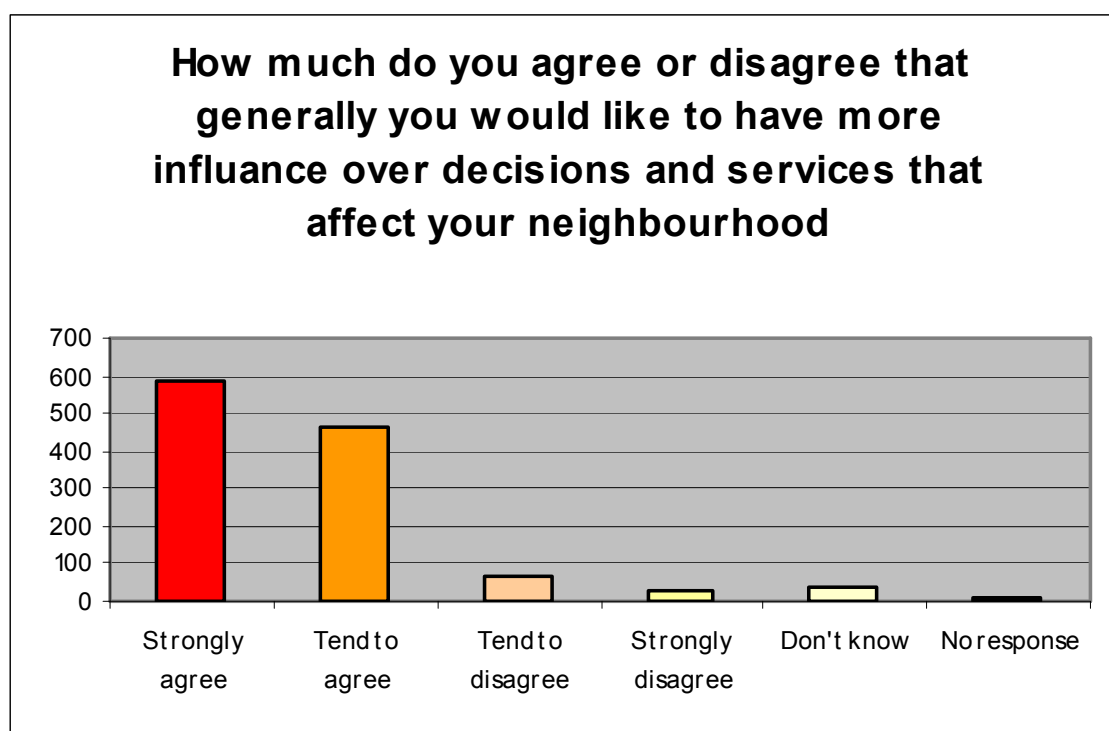
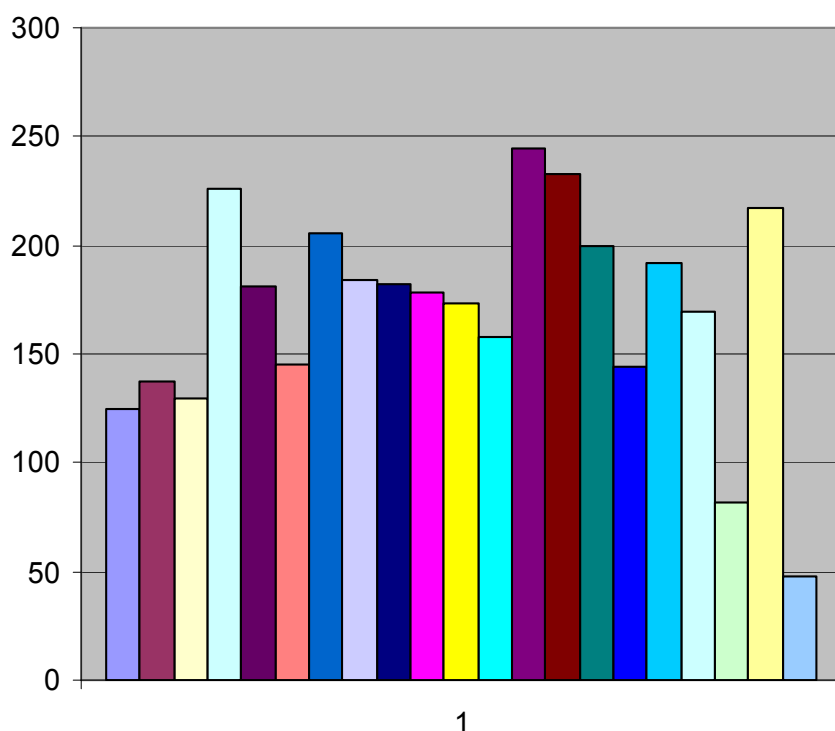


Table 2: How much do you agree or disagree that people in your local area should take decisions about local issues and services rather than the council?

		Portal & Paper		Postcard		All responses	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree		91	24.3	252	31.2	343	29.0
Tend to agree		169	45.2	345	42.8	514	43.5
Tend to disagree		70	18.7	113	14.0	183	15.5
Strongly disagree		20	5.3	56	6.9	76	6.4
Don't know		24	6.4	41	5.1	65	5.5
Total		374	100.0	807	100.0	1181	100.0
Missing	No response	2		18		20	

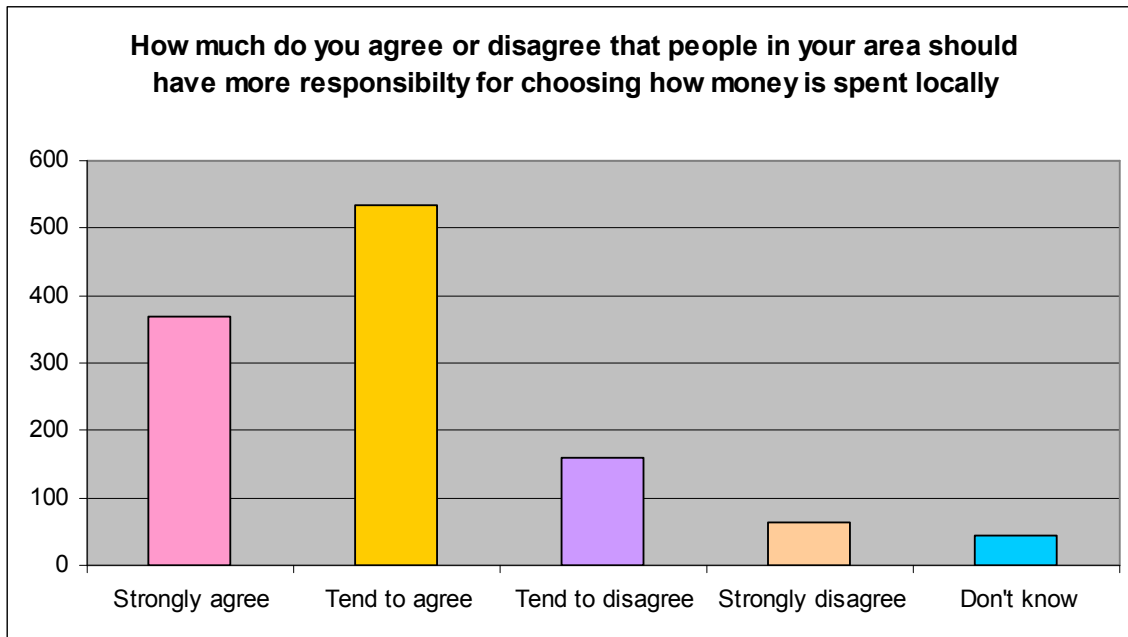
Would you like more influence on any of the services below?



- Allotments
- Bus shelters
- Car parks
- Community centres or buildings
- Community safety schemes
- Community transport schemes
- Crime reduction measure
- Cycle paths
- Festivals & Celebrations
- Leisure facilities
- Litter bins
- Local youth projects
- Parking
- Parks & Open Space
- Planning
- Public toilets
- Street cleaning
- Street lighting
- Tourism activities
- traffic calming measures

Table 3: In your neighbourhood would you like more influence over decisions taken on any of the services below?

	Frequency	Percentage
Allotments	125	35%
Bus shelters	137	38%
Car parks	130	37%
Community centres or buildings	226	63%
Community safety schemes	181	51%
Community transport schemes	145	41%
Crime reduction measure	206	58%
Cycle paths	184	52%
Festivals and celebrations	182	51%
Leisure facilities	178	50%
Litter bins	173	49%
Local youth projects	158	44%
Parking	244	69%
Parks and Open Space	233	65%
Planning	200	56%
Public toilets	144	40%
Street cleaning	192	54%
Street lighting	169	47%
Tourism activities	82	23%
Traffic calming measures	217	61%
Other	48	13%



Q4b. Why do you STRONGLY AGREE OR TEND TO AGREE that people should have more responsibility for how money is spent locally?

“Because people living in the community see the local area in context... How it operates on a day to day basis, the type of people that make up the community (and therefore the communities needs) the real-life problems that need addressing (rather than broad-brush perceived issues” transposed by the general public or council) and they are best placed to see where money needs to be spent. And giving communities real responsibility creates engagement and ownership - more responsibility with the place they live in”

A total of 273 respondents made comments

Key themes

At the highest level respondents thought that it would be more democratic, more devolved, more transparent and more accountable and would provide better value for money.

The arguments / issues to support these themes came from;

- It our money we should have a say in how it spent.
- Local residents are best place to know what is needed locally
- The present system does not work
- Some areas are treated better than other areas – given greater resources
- It would strengthen communities

Q4b. Why do you STRONGLY DISAGREE OR TEND TO DISAGREE that people should have more responsibility for how money is spent locally?

“I believe that the current system offers people the opportunity to make choices at an election and that their elected representative is then responsible for ensuring that their needs as a community are placed uppermost. I have concerns that neighbourhood councils could easily hand power over to the 'shouty minority' which could further alienate some sections of the community”

A total of 73 respondents made comments

Key themes

- Already have elected councillors / current system is ok / Neighbourhood Councils would not improve the current system / Councillors and Officers already have a duty to consult with communities / need to see the bigger (city) picture
- There should be local influence and input in the decision making process with the final decision taken by those who have been elected.
- Fears around the structure of Neighbourhood Councils.
 - Minority community views would not be taken into account
 - Self interest groups
 - Lack of expertise
 - Accountability
 - A few strong voices
 - No representativeness

Table 5a: How much do you agree or disagree. I would be happy for a local residents group to make decisions on my behalf about issues and services provided in my neighbourhood.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	48	12.8
	Tend to agree	163	43.5
	Tend to disagree	71	18.9
	Strongly disagree	61	16.3
	Don't know	32	8.5
	Total	375	100.0
Missing	No response	1	
Total		376	

Q5b. Why do you **STRONGLY AGREE OR TEND TO AGREE** that you would be happy for local residents to make decisions on your behalf?

“I agree with this as long as there is clear expertise available at all gatherings. The ideal scenario is a

partnership between statutory organisations and their expertise alongside local people who see the real needs on a day to day basis”

A total of 170 respondents made comments

Key themes

- Respondents thought / assumed that local residents were best placed to understand / more in touch with local needs.
- Encourage community cohesion
- Importantly respondent's agreement about being happy for local residents to make decisions on their behalf was very often qualified by the need for...
 - Local opinion to have been considered
 - Accountability
 - Representativeness
 - Openness and transparency
 - Expertise

Q5b. Why do you STRONGLY DISAGREE OR TEND TO DISAGREE that you would be happy for local residents to make decisions on your behalf?

“Although my previous answers support more influence over local matters, and there are some things I would be happy for a group of local residents to make decisions on such as youth provision or community facilities, I would be very concerned about some issues being decided by an unelected group of local residents with little accountability and some of whom may have vested interests, or not understand the bigger picture for the area or city as a whole”

A total of 121 respondents made comments

Key themes

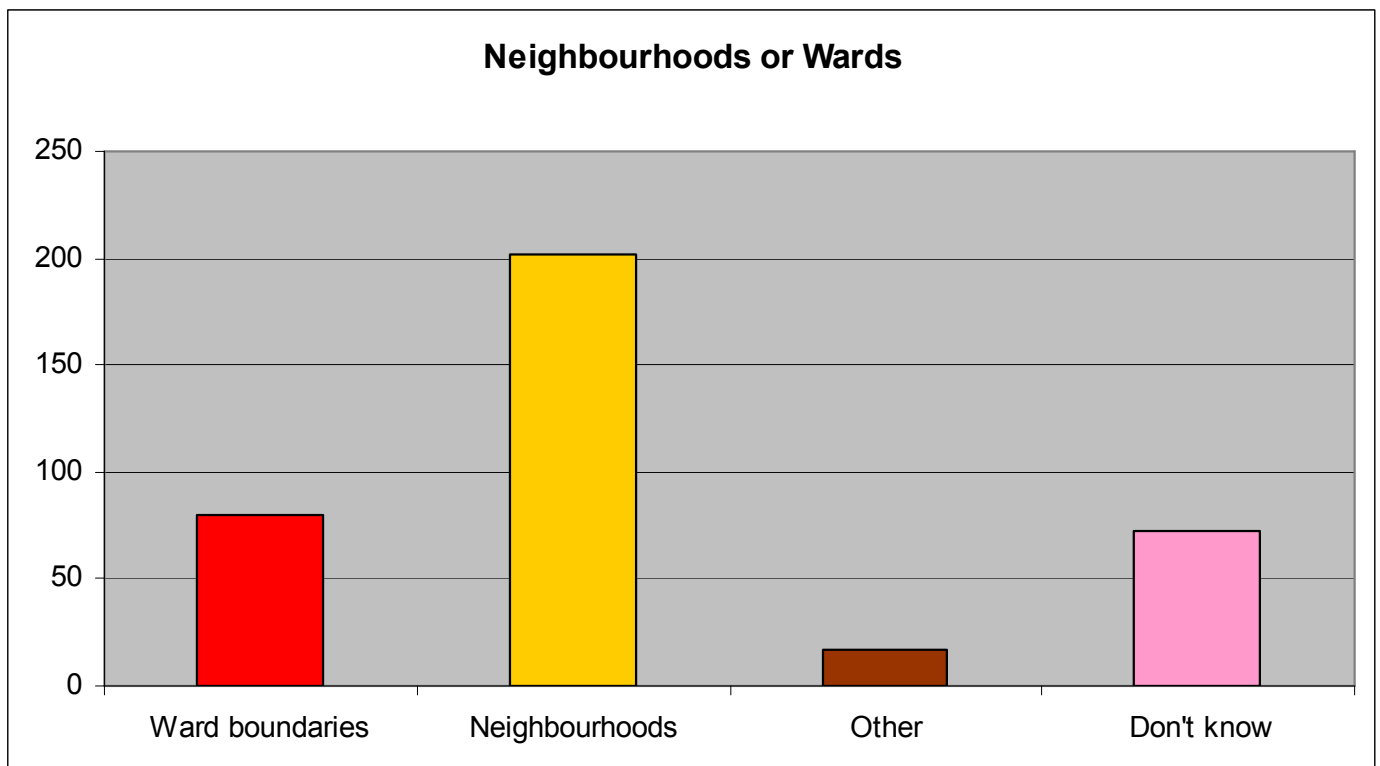
- A need for a city overview / perspective to make better balanced decisions
- It the job of the council / elected members

Other reasons given for not being happy for local residents to make decisions on their behalf were similar to the concerns express by those who were happy for local residents to make decisions on there behalf.

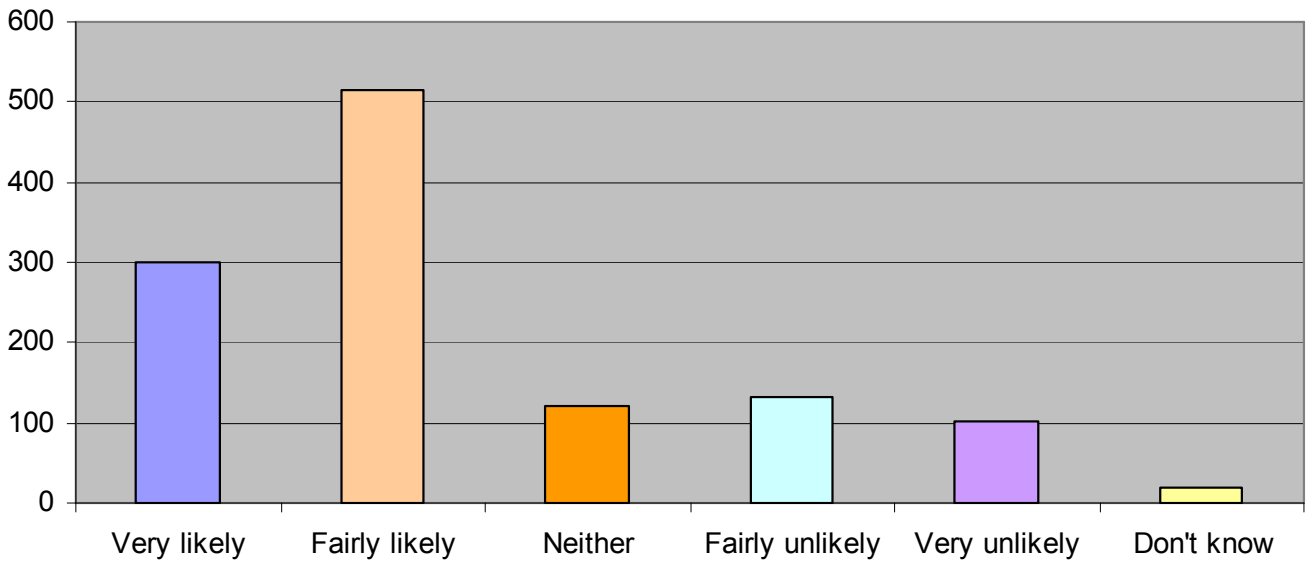
- A lack or representativeness / small vocal minority / self interest groups
- Lack accountability
- Lack of expertise

Table 6: How likely or unlikely would you be to pay £20 a year into a neighbourhood budget that would be managed by local residents in your neighbourhood for the benefit of your local area?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Very likely	81	21.7
	Fairly likely	112	30.0
	Neither	35	9.4
	Fairly unlikely	45	12.1
	Very unlikely	78	20.9
	Don't know	22	5.9
	Total	373	100.0
Missing	No response	3	
Total		376	



If local residents had more influence how likely or unlikely is it that you would be involved?



Very likely	113	30.1	186	22.8	299	25.1
Fairly likely	149	39.7	366	44.9	515	43.3
Neither	29	7.7	93	11.4	122	10.3
Fairly unlikely	37	9.9	94	11.5	131	11.0
Very unlikely	27	7.2	76	9.3	103	8.7
Don't know	20	5.3	0	.0	20	1.7
Total	375	100.0	815	100.0	1190	100.0
Missing	No response	1	10		11	
Total		376	825		1201	

Table 8b: If you are interested in being more involved in decision making in neighbourhoods, how would you like to be involved?

	Portal & Paper			Post Card			Portal, Paper & Post Card		
	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents
By attending public meeting	241	69.1%	64.1%	353	46.8%	42.8%	594	53.9%	49.5%
Participating in local referendums	239	68.5%	63.6%	349	46.3%	42.3%	588	53.3%	49.0%
Completing questionnaires	270	77.4%	71.8%	515	68.3%	62.4%	785	71.2%	65.4%
Via local community groups	195	55.9%	51.9%	249	33.0%	30.2%	444	40.3%	37.0%
Via local events to decide on budgets	174	49.9%	46.3%	233	30.9%	28.2%	407	36.9%	33.9%
Through on-line forums	171	49.0%	45.5%	188	24.9%	22.8%	359	32.5%	29.9%
Via Facebook	98	28.1%	26.1%	103	13.7%	12.5%	201	18.2%	16.7%
Via twitter	56	16.0%	14.9%	35	4.6%	4.2%	91	8.3%	7.6%
By e-mail	211	60.5%	56.1%	358	47.5%	43.4%	569	51.6%	47.4%
By text voting	91	26.1%	24.2%	162	21.5%	19.6%	253	22.9%	21.1%
Other	21	6.0%	5.6%	35	4.6%	4.2%	56	5.1%	4.7%

How would you like to be involved?

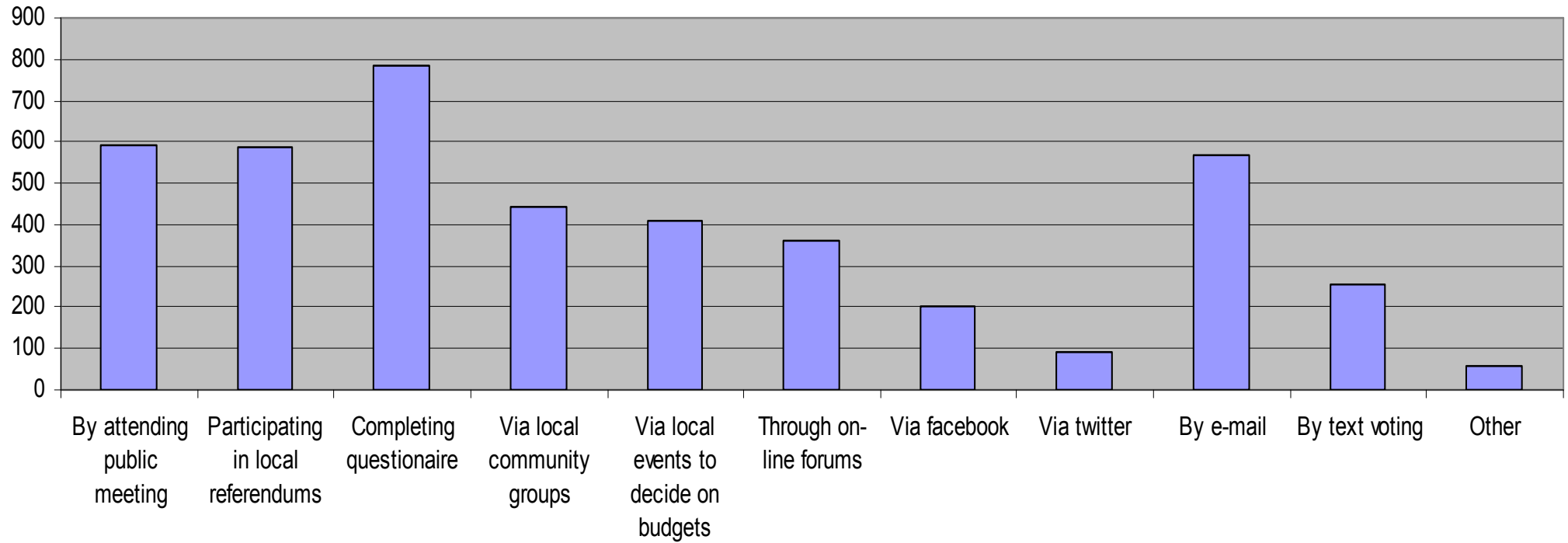


Table 8d: If more decision making in neighbourhoods were to take place who would you like to lead your neighbourhood events or meetings?

	Frequency	Percent
The council	47	12.8
Your local councillor	95	25.9
A local resident chosen by participants	58	15.8
A local representative group	109	29.7
An independent person or group from outside the community	32	8.7
Other	26	7.1
Total	367	100.0
Missing	No response	9
	Total	376

Table 8c: If you would like to be involved in decisions in neighbourhoods, would you be interested in becoming involved in any of the following...

	Portal & Paper			Post Card			Portal, Paper & Post Card		
	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents
A local group with complete responsibility for managing a range of local services and the allocated budgets within their local neighbourhood.	96	30.9%	25.5%	262	43.8%	31.8%	358	39.4%	29.8%
A local group which focuses on specific issues or areas of their neighbourhood such as managing their community building, local park or focusing on particular services such as youth work	163	52.4%	43.4%	264	44.1%	32.0%	427	47.0%	35.6%
A local group that would work with the council, police, NHS and other public service providers to look at the best way to design and deliver local services	228	73.3%	60.6%	366	61.2%	44.4%	594	65.3%	49.5%
Open public events, to look at the design and funding of local public services.	169	54.3%	44.9%	317	53.0%	38.4%	486	53.5%	40.5%

Would you be interested in becoming involved in any of the following

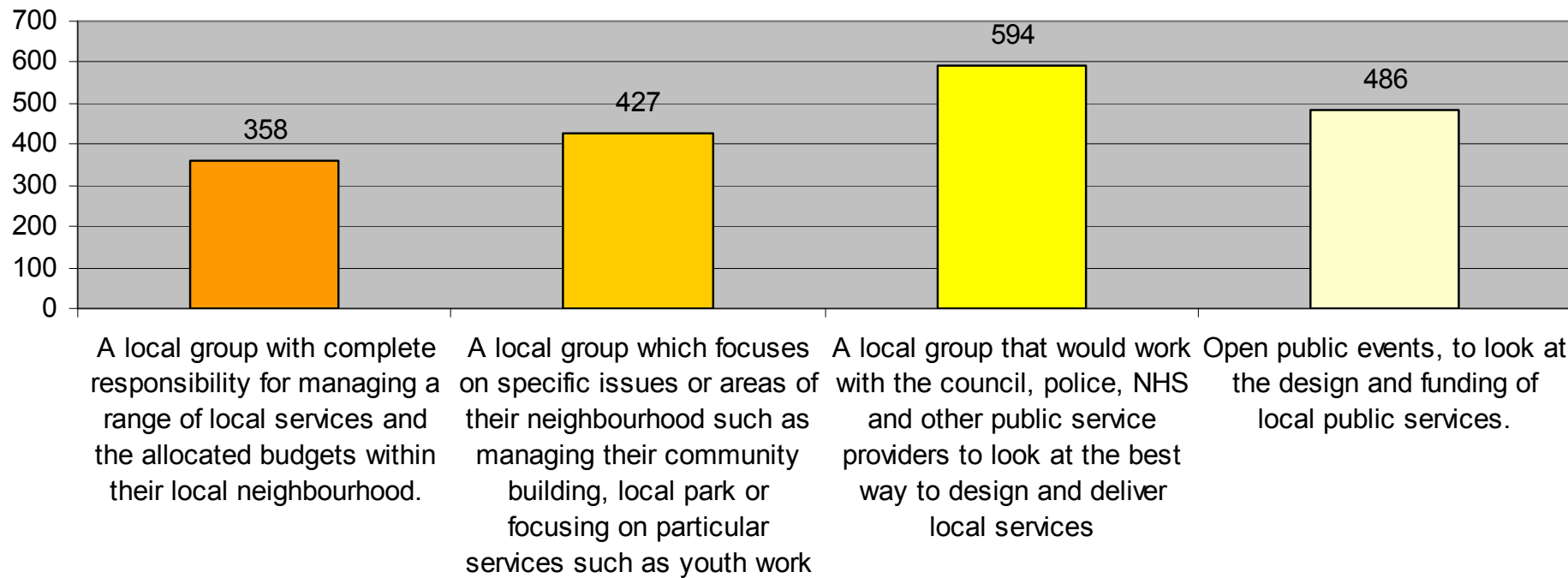


Table 9. What would stop you being involved in local decision making?

	Portal & Paper			Post Card			Portal, Paper & Post Card		
	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents	Frequency	% of those wishing to be involved	% of all respondents
Timing of meetings	231	69.0%	61.4%	na	na	na	na	na	na
Lack of childcare	53	15.8%	14.1%	87	13.3%	10.5%	140	14.2%	11.7%
Lack of confidence	45	13.4%	12.0%	140	21.4%	17.0%	185	18.7%	15.4%
Lack of community development support	75	22.4%	19.9%	139	21.3%	16.8%	214	21.7%	17.8%
Being part of a small community group	39	11.6%	10.4%	28	4.3%	3.4%	67	6.8%	5.6%
No disability access	17	5.1%	4.5%	37	5.7%	4.5%	54	5.5%	4.5%
Poor or no Internet access	14	4.2%	3.7%	73	11.2%	8.8%	87	8.8%	7.2%
Poor IT skills	7	2.1%	1.9%	86	13.2%	10.4%	93	9.4%	7.7%
Not feeling safe	23	6.9%	6.1%	45	6.9%	5.5%	68	6.9%	5.7%
A need for appropriate training	52	15.5%	13.8%	122	18.7%	14.8%	174	17.6%	14.5%
Not enough time available to get involved	154	46.0%	41.0%	352	53.9%	42.7%	506	51.2%	42.1%
A lack of interest	28	8.4%	7.4%	53	8.1%	6.4%	81	8.2%	6.7%
other	49	14.6%	13.0%	56	8.6%	6.8%	105	10.6%	8.7%

What would prevent you being involved?

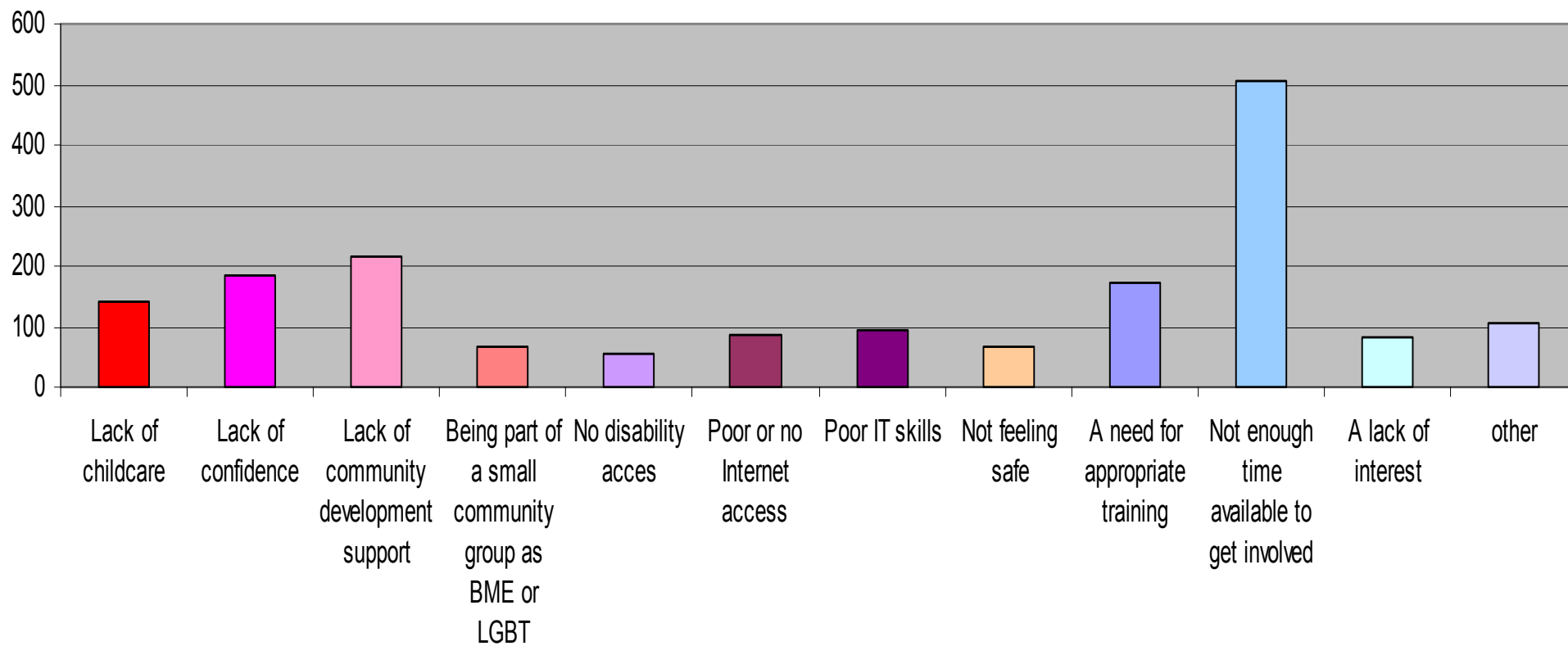


Table 10a: Are you aware of any of the following representative groups operating in your local area?

	Frequency	Percentage
Neighbourhood Forum	93	28.4%
Tenants Association	101	30.8%
Residents Association	172	52.4%
Other	47	14.3%
None	99	30.2%
Total	512	156.1%

Base all respondent to the full questionnaire that answered the question (328)

Table 10b: Are you currently or have you previously been involved with any local representative group?

	Frequency	Percentage
Currently involved	108	40.3
Previously involved	54	20.1
Never been involved	106	39.6
Total	268	100.0
Missing	No response	108
Total	376	

Table 10c: Do you think your group may like to express an interest in being a pilot area for this new approach to local decision making?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	51	31.9
No	18	11.3
Don't know / not sure	91	56.9
Total	160	100.0
Missing	No response	216
Total	376	

Tables 11: Do you think that taking some responsibility away from the council and giving more responsibility to local residents could have a positive or negative impact on the issues below?

Table 11 (i): Providing greater value for money		
	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	165	44.7
Make no difference	60	16.3
Negative	74	20.1
Don't know	70	19.0
Total	369	100.0
Missing	No response	7
	Total	376

Table 11 (ii): Creating better local services		
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Positive	221	60.4
Make no difference	48	13.1
Negative	38	10.4
Don't know	59	16.1
Total	366	100.0
Missing	No response	10
	Total	376

Table 11 (iii): Providing community solutions to local issues		
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Positive	300	81.5
Make no difference	23	6.3
Negative	16	4.3
Don't know	29	7.9
Total	368	100.0
Missing	No response	8
	Total	376

Table 11 (iv): Bringing the community together			
	Frequency	Valid Percent	
	Positive	268	73.0
	Make no difference	49	13.4
	Negative	28	7.6
	Don't know	22	6.0
	Total	367	100.0
Missing	No response	9	
	Total	376	

Table 11 (v): Raising awareness of political issues			
	Frequency	Valid Percent	
	Positive	188	51.1
	Make no difference	103	28.0
	Negative	28	7.6
	Don't know	49	13.3
	Total	368	100.0
Missing	No response	8	
	Total	376	

6. Demographic and Equalities

Other than postcode, demographic and equalities questions were only ask of the 376 respondents who completed the full questionnaire. A higher proportion than usual did not respond to these question. This makes it difficult to estimates how representative of the city's population responses are over all.

Table 12: Responses by ward

	Portal & Paper		Postcard		All Responses	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Brunswick and Adelaide	12	3.2	42	5.1	54	4.5
Central Hove	13	3.5	23	2.8	36	3.0
East Brighton	22	5.9	34	4.1	56	4.7
Goldsmid	18	4.8	49	5.9	67	5.6
Hangleton and Knoll	15	4.0	34	4.1	49	4.1
Hanover and Elm Grove	29	7.7	51	6.2	80	6.7
Hollingdean and Stanmer	23	6.1	35	4.2	58	4.8
Hove Park	3	.8	33	4.0	36	3.0
Moulsecoomb and Bevendean	12	3.2	34	4.1	46	3.8
North Portslade	1	.3	24	2.9	25	2.1
Patcham	15	4.0	35	4.2	50	4.2
Preston Park	26	6.9	60	7.3	86	7.2
Queen's Park	26	6.9	41	5.0	67	5.6
Regency	11	2.9	27	3.3	38	3.2
Rottingdean Coastal	14	3.7	44	5.3	58	4.8
South Portslade	3	.8	21	2.5	24	2.0
St. Peter's and North Laine	38	10.1	53	6.4	91	7.6
Westbourne	8	2.1	31	3.8	39	3.2
Wish	12	3.2	28	3.4	40	3.3
Withdean	13	3.5	43	5.2	56	4.7
Woodingdean	9	2.4	24	2.9	33	2.7
Not known	49	13.0	57	6.9	106	8.8
Out of city	4	1.1	2	.2	6	0.5
Total	376	100.0	825	100.0	1201	100.0

Table 13: Gender			
		Frequency	Percent
	Male	147	46.2
	Female	171	53.8
	Total	318	100.0
Missing	No response	58	
	Total	376	

- Four respondents identified as transgender

Table 14: Age by group			
		Frequency	Percent
	16 - 24	4	1.4
	25 - 34	44	15.0
	35 - 44	83	28.2
	45 - 54	74	25.2
	55 - 64	59	20.1
	65 - 74	19	6.5
	over 74	11	3.7
	Total	294	100.0
Missing	No response	82	
	Total	376	

Table 15: Ethnicity			
		Frequency	Valid Percent
	White - British	231	83.7
	White - Irish	6	2.2
	White - traveller	1	.4
	White - 'Other'	14	5.1
	BME	24	8.7
	Total	276	100.0
Missing	No response	100	
	Total	376	

Table 16: Religion		
	Frequency	Valid Percent
I have no particular religion	117	39.3
Buddhist	7	2.3
Christian	82	27.5
Jewish	4	1.3
Muslim	1	.3
Pagan	5	1.7
Agnostic	10	3.4
Atheist	51	17.1
Other	13	4.4
Other Philosophical belief	8	2.7
Total	298	100.0
Missing	No response	78
	Total	376

Table 17: Sexual Orientation		
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Heterosexual	215	76.2
LGBT	67	23.8
Total	282	100.0
Missing	No response	94
	Total	376

Table 18: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?		
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	52	16.6
No	262	83.4
Total	314	100.0
Missing	No response	62
	Total	376

Table 18a: Type of impairment		
	Frequency	Percent
Physical impairment	23	45.1%
Sensory impairment	3	5.9%
Learning disability / difficulty	2	3.9%
Long-standing illness	26	51.0%
Mental health condition	19	37.3%
Other disability	6	11.8%
Total	79	154.9%

Base: All respondents with a limiting health problem or disability and who answered the question (51)

Table 19: Are you a carer?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	15
No	267	85
Total	314	100
Missing	No response	62
Total	376	

