

The Highland Council

Community Services Committee – 28 April 2016

Agenda Item	11
Report No	COM 20/16

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Report by the Director of Community Services

Summary

This report summarises the findings of a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey undertaken earlier this year. The full survey report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter) require landlords to provide an annual report to tenants and the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) on a range of performance information.
- 1.2 The Charter sets standards and outcomes that tenants and service users should expect from landlord. The outcomes outlined include tenant satisfactions with a range of housing services. It is expected that all landlords undertake regular surveys of tenant opinion.
- 1.3 The Council commissioned Progressing Partnerships to undertake a postal survey of all Council tenants in late 2015. The survey forms were issued in January 2016. The key objective of the research was to provide the Council with data regarding tenant opinions and satisfaction across all aspects of the housing service.
- 1.4 The response rate of 34.3% overall is exceptionally high compared to previous similar surveys undertaken by the Council and other housing landlords. This provides a statistically valid sample at area level. The full survey report is attached as an **Appendix**. The key findings are summarised below.

2 Overall Satisfaction with the Council as a landlord

- 2.1 The survey indicates that:
 - the majority of tenants were satisfied with the housing service overall;
 - there was some level of uncertainty about opportunities to participate in the housing services decision making process;
 - there was uncertainty amongst tenants over whether the housing service listened to their views and acted on them, although those who expressed an opinion tended to be positive;
 - the housing service tended to be seen as a good communicator; and
 - there was a lack of awareness of published housing services standards.

3 Perceptions of The Highland Council

- 3.1 Tenants were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a

series of statements about the Council's performance as a landlord. Tenants broadly agreed that the Council is providing the service they expect from their landlord. The majority of tenants thought that the Council treats tenants fairly. The research findings suggest that the personal qualities of staff are a strong asset for the Council, and that we have friendly and approachable staff.

4 Keeping in touch

4.1 Tenants were asked whether they used the internet, and how they would prefer to communicate and receive information from the Council. Although nearly two thirds of tenants said they use the internet, a very sizeable minority (37%) indicated that they have limited or no internet access. This does have implications for the ability of tenants to access services on-line and especially Universal Credit, which relies on digital access. The preferred methods for keeping in touch with the Council remain the more traditional methods of telephone or in person.

5 Rents and Value for Money

5.1 Nearly three quarters of tenants (74%) felt that their rent represented value for money. Satisfaction with advice and support relating to claiming benefits and with advice and support received on rent and managing finances was generally good.

6 Quality and Maintenance of Homes

6.1 Three quarters of tenants were satisfied with the quality of their home. Most (70%) tenants who had received a repair in the last 12 months, were satisfied overall with the repairs service, and satisfaction was generally positive across a range of elements of the repairs service.

7 Neighbourhood Management

7.1 Overall satisfaction with neighbourhood management was generally good. Tenants were generally positive about their neighbourhoods. Although no single issue was thought to be a problem by a majority of tenants, the main issues highlighted by tenants tended to relate to the physical environment and issues such as dog fouling and car parking, rather than serious antisocial behaviour.

7.2 Although a relatively small proportion (8%) of tenants have reported antisocial behaviour to the Council in the last 12 months, those tenants were more likely to be dissatisfied than satisfied with the way their antisocial behaviour complaint was dealt.

8 Complaints

8.1 Awareness of the Council's complaints process was found to be fairly low, with just over half (57%) of tenants overall stating that they were aware that the Council has a formal complaints procedure.

8.2 Almost one in five (18%) respondents had made a complaint to the Council in the last 12 months, with only one third of those who had made a complaint able to say that they were satisfied with the Council's complaints handling procedures. Satisfaction ratings relating to the outcome of the complaint were also low.

9 Contacting the Highland Council with an enquiry

9.1 By and large tenants reported finding it easy to get hold of the right person to make their enquiry and were satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with their enquiry quickly and efficiently. Tenants were generally satisfied with the ability of the member of staff to understand their enquiry.

10 Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Findings are generally positive throughout and show that tenants are largely satisfied with most aspects of the housing services they receive. On most measures, tenants are much more likely to be satisfied than dissatisfied. However, in most instances respondents were "fairly" rather than "very" satisfied, indicating some scope for improvement.

10.2 There were lower levels of satisfaction amongst tenants aged 18-34 than older tenants, and this applies throughout almost all the survey results. This is not a phenomenon unique to the Council. Research for other councils reveals a similar pattern of response, with older respondents tending to be the most satisfied with services.

10.3 Some areas consistently reported more positive results than others. In particular tenants in Nairn tended to be more satisfied than those living in other areas with their housing service, and tenants in Skye and Lochalsh tended to be less satisfied. Age profiles are similar between these areas, so it is unlikely that differences are being driven by the overarching differences in satisfaction between age groups. At this stage it is difficult to explain these area differences and we need to consider this in more detail to establish what factors might be involved.

10.4 Some key areas of concern emerge where we need to improve services in future:

- satisfaction with handling complaints and queries is relatively low, and this is especially the case regarding satisfaction with the outcome of complaints;
- a high proportion of tenants who have complained about anti-social behaviour or made other complaints / queries have been dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaints; and
- the quality of repairs could be better and although findings in relation to repairs were generally positive, a fairly large proportion of tenants were not satisfied that the repair was carried out correctly the first time.

10.5 We will now use the results of the survey to complete our annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator. This will

allow us to benchmark our results against those of other landlords. In the meantime the results of the survey will help inform Service Plan priorities for 2016/17. We will also discuss the survey results with tenant representatives and consider how best to involve tenants in further scrutiny and improvement of key service areas.

11. Implications

11.1 Resource

Funding for the tenant survey was contained within HRA revenue estimates

11.2 Legal

The survey helps us comply with regulatory requirements. There are no legal implications arising from the survey results.

11.3 Equality

There are no specific implications associated with this report.

11.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever

There are no specific implications associated with this report.

11.5 Risk

There are no risk implications arising from the survey results.

11.6 Gaelic

There are no implications associated with this report.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the results of the Tenant Survey.

Date: 18 April 2016

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Background Papers:

Scottish Social Housing Charter

Scottish Housing Regulator Guidance



Tenant Satisfaction Survey: 2016

Final Report

April 2016

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1. Executive Summary

Overall, age emerged as the most important determinant of people's views. Younger residents tended to be significantly less satisfied and more critical across many measures than older residents, especially those aged 55 and over.

The Highland Council as a landlord

Satisfaction with the Highland Council as a landlord was broadly positive across a range of measures.

Satisfaction with the housing services provided by The Highland Council was high overall, with nearly three quarters (74%) saying they were either very or fairly satisfied. Satisfaction was especially high amongst tenants aged 55 and over (85%).

Regarding opportunities to participate in the Housing Service's decision making process, satisfaction outweighed dissatisfaction (46% very/fairly satisfied vs. 11% very/fairly dissatisfied). The key finding here however was the potential lack of awareness of these opportunities, with 43% answering either 'don't know' or 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', indicating possible scope for raising awareness of opportunities to participate.

This uncertainty was reflected in relation to satisfaction that the Housing Service listens to and acts on tenants' views, with 38% either unsure or opting for the neither/nor response. Otherwise, results were positive with 45% very/fairly satisfied and only 17% very/fairly dissatisfied.

The Housing Service tended to be seen as a good communicator; 63% said it was very/fairly good at keeping tenants informed about services and decisions. However there is potential for improvement as only 20% said the Housing Service was *very good* in this regard.

Awareness was again an issue regarding the Highland Council's published service standards, with only one third (33%) aware of them.

Perceptions of The Highland Council

Again, results were generally positive regarding how The Highland Council is perceived across a variety of measures, but there was room for improvement.

Over half (56%) believe the Council provides an effective and efficient service; a high proportion (25%) were neutral. Tenants also broadly agree that the Council is providing the service they expect from a landlord (61% strongly/tend to agree).

Regarding perceptions of The Highland Council's reputation in the local area, results were relatively less positive, though still around half (51%) agreed that its reputation was good. A significant minority (21%) disagreed.

The personal qualities of staff emerged as a strong asset for the Council. Nearly three quarters (73%) agreed that they are friendly and approachable, the best result of all the measures of perception in this section.

Most tenants trust the Council (57% agree with the statement 'I trust The Highland Council'); however 19% disagreed and 18% were neutral, indicating scope for improving levels of trust.

Keeping in touch

Nearly two thirds (63%) of tenants use the internet. This leaves a sizeable minority who do not, and would therefore rely on other means of getting information. There is not a great variation between management areas in terms of internet use, ranging from 58% in Inverness to 70% in Lochaber.

Telephone (59%), writing (49%) and visiting a Council office (39%) are the three most preferred methods of communicating with The Highland Council.

Rents and value for money

Encouragingly, nearly three quarters of tenants (74%) feel The Highland Council's housing services provide either very or fairly good value for money for the rent they pay for their property.

One in five (20%) of tenants had asked for advice on paying their rent or claiming welfare benefits over the last 12 months. They were invited to answer subsequent questions about the experience. Satisfaction was generally high.

Over two thirds (67%) were satisfied with the advice and support received from the Council with claiming Housing Benefit and other benefits, with 50% selecting the highest level of satisfaction. Most (60%) were also satisfied with support received with managing finances and paying rent.

Quality and maintenance of homes

Far more people were very/fairly satisfied (67%) than very/fairly dissatisfied (22%) with the quality of their home. However, only 26% were very satisfied, so there is room for improvement.

Over two thirds (68%) had had repairs carried out in their property in the last 12 months. They were asked a series of questions about the experience. Results were generally positive. Nearly three quarters (74%) said an appointment was made and kept to carry out the repairs. Overall, most (70%) were satisfied with the repairs service, and across a range of aspects of the service provided during the most recent repair. However, satisfaction was lowest regarding 'the repair being done right first time': most were satisfied overall (63%) although this was the lowest level of satisfaction across all the measures. Nearly one quarter (24%) were dissatisfied, again the highest level of dissatisfaction across all measures.

Recall was an issue regarding whether the visiting tradesperson showed proof of identity. Around one quarter (26%) could not remember. The rest were fairly evenly split, with 38% saying proof of identity was shown and 36% saying it was not.

Neighbourhood management

Tenants were asked about their perceptions of neighbourhood issues and problems. Overall, 69% were satisfied with the Housing Service's management of their neighbourhood.

Tenants tended not to perceive a range of potential issues as a problem in their neighbourhood. Issues for the Council to watch however included dog fouling (33% felt this was a problem) and car parking (20% felt it was a problem).

Looking at antisocial behaviour specifically, 8% had reported it to the Council in the last 12 months. These tenants were asked a series of questions about this experience. Most found it very/fairly easy to contact a member of staff to make the complaint (65%). However, there was considerable dissatisfaction with the outcome of complaints, with 14% fairly dissatisfied and 38% very dissatisfied.

That said, 69% of tenants who reported antisocial behaviour would be very/fairly willing to report it again in the future.

Complaints

Awareness of The Highland Council's formal complaints procedure was not especially high. Over half (57%) were aware the Council has one, leaving a very large minority unaware.

Eighteen per cent of tenants had made a complaint to The Highland Council in the last 12 months, and they were asked a series of questions about this. Satisfaction was poor. Over half (53%) were very or fairly dissatisfied overall with the way their complaint was handled by The Highland Council, with 34% very dissatisfied. Again, over half (56%) were very/fairly dissatisfied with the overall outcome again, with dissatisfaction again strong (41% very dissatisfied).

Of tenants who had made a complaint, 78% would be willing to do so again in the future.

Contacting The Highland Council with an enquiry

Around half (51%) of tenants had contacted The Highland Council in the last 12 months with a housing-related enquiry other than to pay rent or service charges. The youngest tenants (18-34) were much more likely than those aged 55 and over to have made an enquiry (59% vs. 39%).

Those who had made an enquiry were asked to complete a series of further questions. Most found it easy to get hold of the right person (69% very/fairly easy), though a significant minority (28%) found it difficult. Over half (58%) were satisfied with the time taken to answer their query; again a sizeable minority (24%) were dissatisfied.

Tenants who had made a complaint were also broadly satisfied with the Council staff they dealt with. Sixty one per cent were satisfied (40% very satisfied) with the ability of staff to deal with their query quickly and efficiently. An even bigger proportion (69%) was satisfied with the ability of staff to understand what their query was about (with 46% very satisfied).

Satisfaction with the outcome of the query was less pronounced. Over half (54%) were satisfied with the final outcome, whilst almost one third (32%) were dissatisfied.

Conclusions and recommendations

Findings are generally positive throughout and show that tenants are largely satisfied with most aspects of The Highland Council's performance as a landlord. However, generally large proportions were fairly rather than very satisfied throughout, indicating room for improvement; and a number of key areas for concern emerged that may warrant further action:

- Younger tenants tend to be more dissatisfied: This is a pattern not unique to The Highland Council. It is reflected in research for other councils in Scotland. However it may be worth gathering more qualitative insights into young people's views.
- Satisfaction with handling complaints and queries is relatively low: This is especially the case regarding the outcome of complaints. More in-depth work with complainants may unpick why this is the case.
- There is some variation in satisfaction based on management area: Some areas tended to be more positive than others across a range of measures.
- The quality of repairs could be better: A fairly large proportion of tenants were not satisfied the repair had been carried out correctly the first time.
- Staff are well regarded: Tenants highlighted the level of politeness and customer service exhibited by staff and contractors.

2. Introduction and Objectives

2.1 Background

Since the advent of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Scottish Social Housing Charter, landlords have had an obligation to regularly undertake surveys of their tenants and submit the data to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The SHR's role is to monitor and assess landlords' performance against the Charter, and the data from tenant surveys is essential to enable the SHR to:

- provide tenants and service users with robust, good quality information about services provided by landlords;
- assess landlords' performance against the standards required by the Charter;
- compare the performance of landlords through having identical data from each; and
- plan regulatory activity as a result of performance data received from landlords.

In line with its obligations as a landlord, The Highland Council commissioned Progressive Partnership to undertake a comprehensive survey of its tenants. At the time of the survey, the Council managed 13,916 properties across a vast and widely dispersed area. The number of Council run properties represents 13% of all households in the Highland Council area, with many properties located in rural areas.

2.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The key objective of the research was to provide The Highland Council with data regarding tenant opinions and satisfaction with various aspects of service. The key areas of enquiry covered by the survey included:

- Satisfaction with the quality of housing
- Satisfaction with neighbourhoods - e.g. car parking, amount of litter, grounds maintenance, noisy neighbours, anti-social behaviour, drug use, other criminal behaviour, etc.
- Satisfaction with The Council's handling of reporting of anti-social behaviour
- Satisfaction with The Council's handling of complaints
- Perceptions of the value for money of rent charges
- Satisfaction with communications with The Council
- Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance
- Awareness of The Highland Council's published service standards
- Satisfaction with the standard of service provided by The Council
- Preferred methods of keeping in the touch with The Council

3. Method

In order to ensure all Council tenants had the opportunity to take part in the research, Progressive undertook a postal survey approach. This method also provided a practical and efficient way to reach all tenants given the wide geographical dispersal of properties. The sample frame was The Highland Council's comprehensive database of tenants.

3.1 Questionnaire development

Progressive worked with The Highland Council to develop the survey questionnaire, ensuring that questions were designed to meet the requirements of the SHR, as well as gathering all information required by The Highland Council. A copy of the survey questionnaire can be found in the appendices.

Progressive ensured the questionnaire was accessible to as many tenants as possible by offering translated versions in the most commonly used community languages in The Highland Council area, and a large print version for partially sighted people.

3.2 Fieldwork management

A pack containing the self-completion questionnaire, personalised covering letter and prepaid business reply envelope (addressed to Progressive) was mailed to every household on the Council's database. Three weeks after the initial mail-out, a reminder mail-out was sent to all households that had not yet returned a completed questionnaire. The key fieldwork dates were as follows:

Activity	Date
Initial mail-out of questionnaires to all households	w/c 4 th January 2016
Reminder mail-out to all households that had not returned a completed questionnaire	w/c 25 th January 2016
Fieldwork ends. Cut-off date for receipt of completed questionnaires	15 th February 2016

Every record on the database was tagged with a unique identification number, which was also printed on the questionnaires. This allowed returned questionnaires to be easily identified and removed from the database for the follow-up mail-out.

Between the initial and follow-up mail-outs, The Highland Council undertook some engagement activity to raise awareness of the survey amongst tenants and encourage them to participate. This consisted of publicity and information about the survey in the Council's January newsletter to tenants.

3.3 Response rates and sample details

Of the 13,916 addresses managed by The Highland Council, 4,777 questionnaires were returned in total after the two mail-outs, giving an overall response rate of 34.3%. Response rates varied somewhat across Management Areas, with the highest response from Sutherland (43.2%) and the lowest from Lochaber (29.5%). Overall this is a very good response rate for a postal survey and compares well with other local authorities that have used a predominantly postal methodology.

Table 1: Response rates by area

Management Area:	No. of properties:	No. of returned questionnaires:	Response rate (%):
Badenoch and Strathspey	555	190	34.2%
Caithness	2,042	702	34.4%
Inverness	4,269	1,418	33.2%
Lochaber	1,368	403	29.5%
Nairn	684	269	39.3%
Ross and Cromarty	3,574	1,232	34.5%
Skye and Lochalsh	496	162	32.7%
Sutherland	928	401	43.2%
OVERALL	13,916	4,777	34.3%

As the table below shows, the profile of responses in terms of area was very similar to the overall area profile of properties managed by The Highland Council:

Table 2: Profile of properties and questionnaire returns by area

Management Area:	No. of properties:	Proportion of overall properties (%):	No. of returned questionnaires:	Proportion of overall responses (%):
Badenoch and Strathspey	555	4.0%	190	4.0%
Caithness	2,042	14.7%	702	14.7%
Inverness	4,269	30.7%	1,418	29.7%
Lochaber	1,368	9.8%	403	8.4%
Nairn	684	4.9%	269	5.6%
Ross and Cromarty	3,574	25.7%	1,232	25.8%
Skye and Lochalsh	496	3.6%	162	3.4%
Sutherland	928	6.7%	401	8.4%
OVERALL	13,916		4,777	

However, the age profile of respondents differed significantly from the known age profile of The Highland Council's tenants, as the table below shows. Older respondents (55 and over) were over-represented, with younger respondents (especially aged 18-34) were under-represented. This was not unexpected as it is common in research for older people to be more likely to participate in self-completion surveys than younger people. Weighting was, therefore, applied to the data by age to ensure it was in line with the known age profile of the overall tenant database.

Table 3: Age profiles of tenant database and respondents

Age band:	Proportion of overall tenant database (%):	Proportion of respondents (%):	Weighted profile (%):
18-34	29%	10%	29%
35-54	41%	27%	41%
55+	30%	62%	30%

As this was a postal self-completion survey to all tenants rather than a survey using interviewers, we were not able to set quotas on age or area. However, as shown, the area profile of respondents closely matched the overall area profile, while weighting was applied to the data to ensure representativeness by age.

Looking at gender, 68% of respondents were female and 32% male. This reflects the fact that females are a majority in the tenant database for those records where gender information is held (60% female vs. 40% male).

3.4 Statistical reliability

We can be fairly confident that the results are accurate to within quite small margins of error (up to 1.1% for results based on the full sample of 4,777). Results are deemed to differ significantly from each other if the percentage point difference between them is outside those margins of error. The way that statistical reliability for this survey is calculated can be viewed at Appendix 2.

All work has been carried out in accordance with ISO 20252 guidelines, IQCS guidelines and the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct.

3.5 Reporting conventions

As the survey used a paper self-completion methodology, it was inevitable that some respondents would miss questions they were intended to answer, and answer some questions they were meant to be routed past. All figures throughout the report are based only on those who answered the question. Base sizes for filtered questions also exclude those who answered in error – that is, answered questions they were instructed not to answer based on responses to previous questions.

Differences between subgroups are only highlighted and discussed if they are statistically significant (see the subsection above on statistical reliability).

All figures in the report are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

For questions using ratings scales, mean scores have been calculated as follows:

- Satisfaction: scored from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very dissatisfied)
- Good/poor: scored from 1 (very good) to 4 (very poor)
- Agreement: scored from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree)
- Problems: scored from 1 (a serious problem) to 5 (not at problem at all)
- Willingness: scored from 1 (very willing) to 4 (very unwilling)
- Easy / difficult: scored from 1 (very easy) to 4 (very difficult)

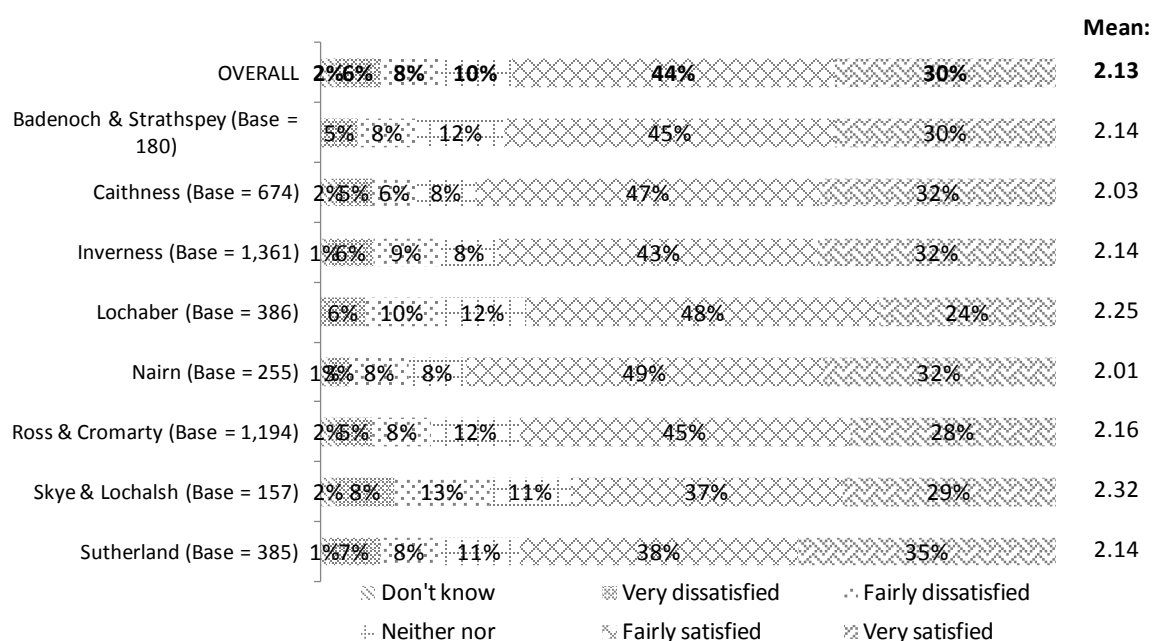
Where such mean scores are presented, these exclude all 'don't know' / 'not applicable' responses.

4. Research Findings

4.1 The Highland Council as a Landlord

Tenants were asked about their overall satisfaction with The Highland Council’s housing services, and with specific aspects of its performance as a landlord. Findings were positive overall, though with room for improvement, particularly amongst younger tenants. Findings sometimes tended to be more positive amongst tenants in houses and maisonettes, compared to those in flats and bedsits, although this could be influenced by the younger age profile of flat and bedsit dwellers (38% of whom were aged 18-34 compared with 20% aged 55 and over). Awareness was relatively low around participation, listening to tenants and keeping them informed, especially amongst younger tenants.

Q1: Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the housing services provided by The Highland Council?



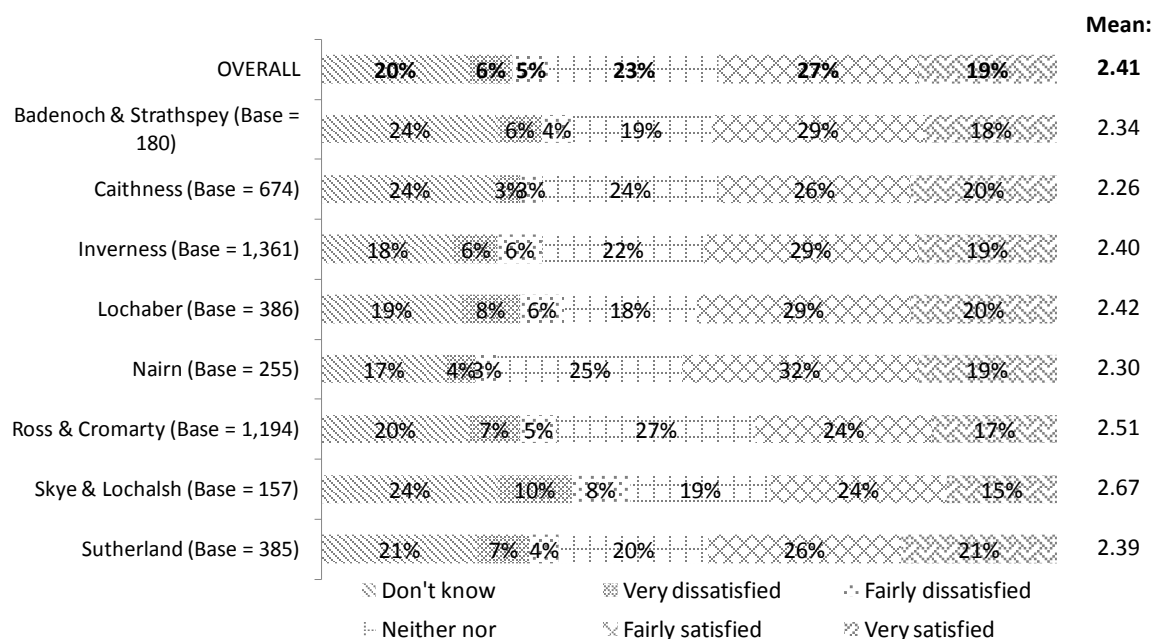
Base: All excluding no response (4,676)

The majority of tenants were satisfied overall. In total, three quarters reported being either very or fairly satisfied, although the greater proportion reported being fairly satisfied (44%) rather than very satisfied (30%), indicating some scope for improvement.

Satisfaction was generally comparable across management areas; however Skye and Lochalsh scored lowest on satisfaction (66% very or fairly satisfied), significantly lower than overall. Satisfaction was highest in Nairn (81% very or fairly satisfied), significantly higher than the total Council -wide figure.

Here, and throughout the survey, older tenants tended to be more satisfied than younger tenants. Two thirds of those aged 18-34 and three quarters of 35-54 year olds were very or fairly satisfied, compared with 85% of tenants aged 55 and over. This was mirrored in strength of satisfaction, with 43% of tenants aged 55 and over saying they were very satisfied, compared with just one in five (20%) of tenants aged 18-34.

Q20: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the opportunities given to you to participate in the Housing Service’s decision making process?



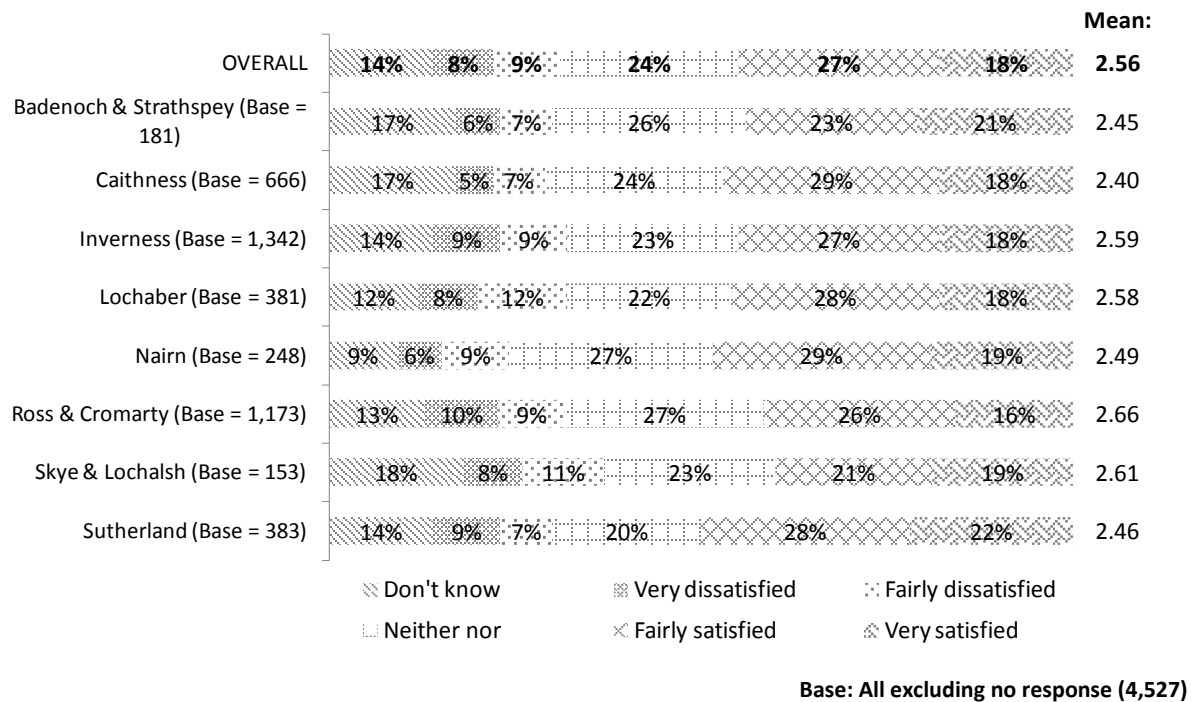
Base: All excluding no response (4,592)

There was some level of uncertainty about opportunities to participate in the Housing Services decision making process, with nearly one quarter (23%) of tenants saying they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and a further one in five (20%) saying they didn’t know. However, tenants were much more likely to be satisfied (46%) than dissatisfied (11%) with opportunities to participate in the decision making process. The results indicate that there is perhaps scope to raise awareness of opportunities to participate.

Comparing management areas, tenants in Skye and Lochalsh were significantly more likely than overall to be either very or fairly dissatisfied (18% vs. 11%), whilst tenants in Caithness were significantly less likely than overall to be dissatisfied (6%).

Again, satisfaction was linked to age. Thirty-six per cent of tenants aged 18-34 reported being very or fairly satisfied, compared with 46% aged 35-54 and 56% aged 55 and over. Actual dissatisfaction tended to be low across age groups, ranging from 7% of those aged 55 and over to 16% aged 18-34 either very or fairly dissatisfied. However, knowledge of opportunities to participate may be significantly better amongst older tenants: 16% aged 55 and over responded ‘don’t know’ compared with nearly one quarter (24%) aged 18-34.

Q21: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the Housing Service listens to your views and acts upon them?

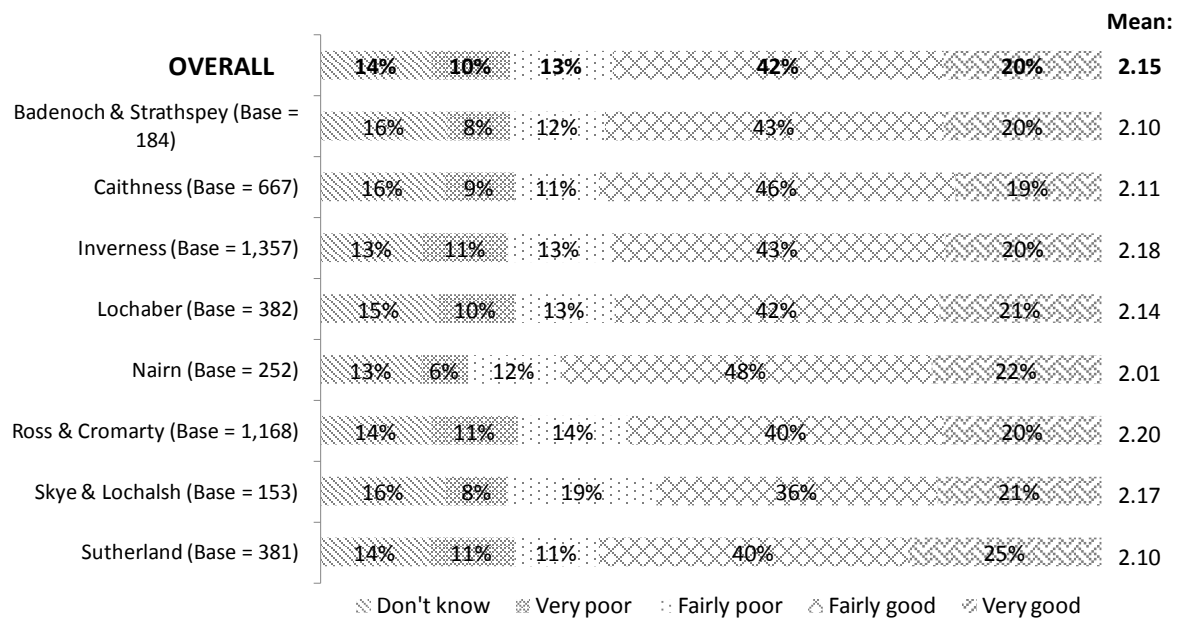


Again, there was uncertainty amongst tenants over whether the Housing Service listened to their views and acted on them, with 38% either unsure or opting for the neither/nor response. Otherwise, those who expressed an opinion tended to be positive, with 45% very or fairly satisfied, and only 17% very or fairly dissatisfied.

Levels of satisfaction tended to be fairly similar across different management areas. However tenants in Sutherland (50% very or fairly satisfied) was significantly more satisfied than those in Ross and Cromarty (42%) or Skye and Lochalsh (41%). Tenants in Caithness were less likely than overall to be dissatisfied (11% very or fairly dissatisfied vs. 17% overall).

The key differences in terms of satisfaction were around age, with the oldest age group (55 and over) significantly more satisfied than overall (58% very or fairly dissatisfied vs. 45% overall), and satisfaction amongst tenants aged 18-34 significantly lower (34% satisfied). Active dissatisfaction was much more pronounced amongst tenants aged 18-34. Nearly one quarter were very (12%) or fairly (11%) dissatisfied compared with only 9% aged 55 and over.

Q22: How good or poor do you feel the Housing Service is at keeping you informed about services and decisions?



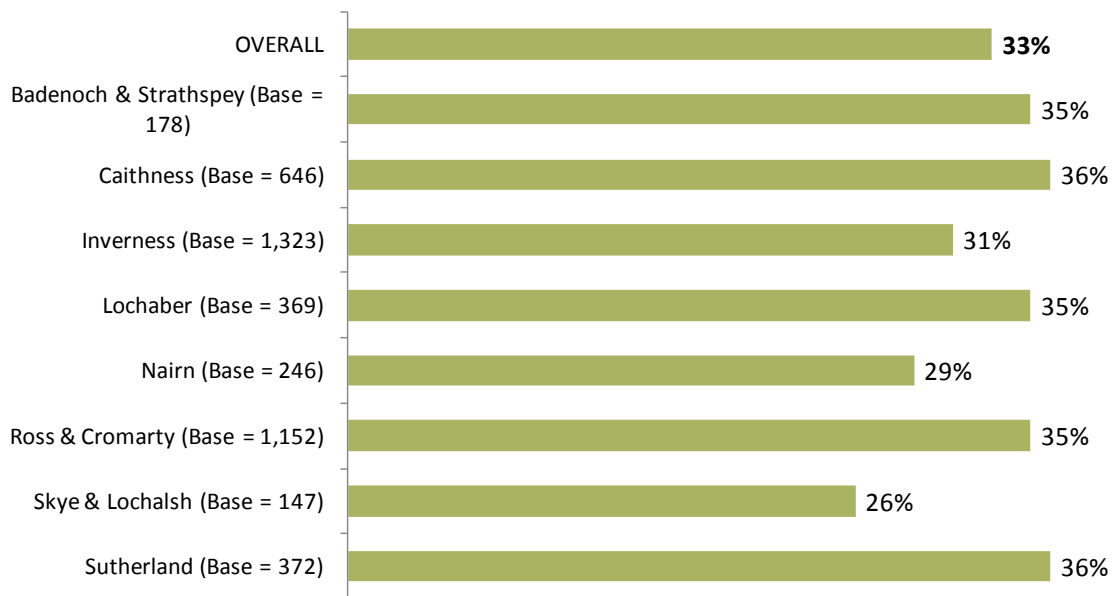
Base: All excluding no response (4,544)

The Housing Service tended to be seen as a good communicator; over three fifths (63%) felt it was very or fairly good at keeping them informed about services and decisions. However, only one in five (20%) overall said the Housing Service was very good in this regard; and a sizeable minority (23%) considered it to be poor.

Results were generally similar across management areas. Tenants in Skye and Lochalsh were least likely to say the Housing Service was very or fairly good at keeping them informed (57%), and those in Nairn most likely (70%).

Age was a powerful factor driving positive and negative responses. Three quarters (75%) of tenants aged 55 and over said the Housing Service was very or fairly good at keeping them informed, compared to 63% aged 35-54 and 51% aged 18-34.

Q28: Are you aware of The Highland Council's published service standards?



Base: All excluding no response (4,433)

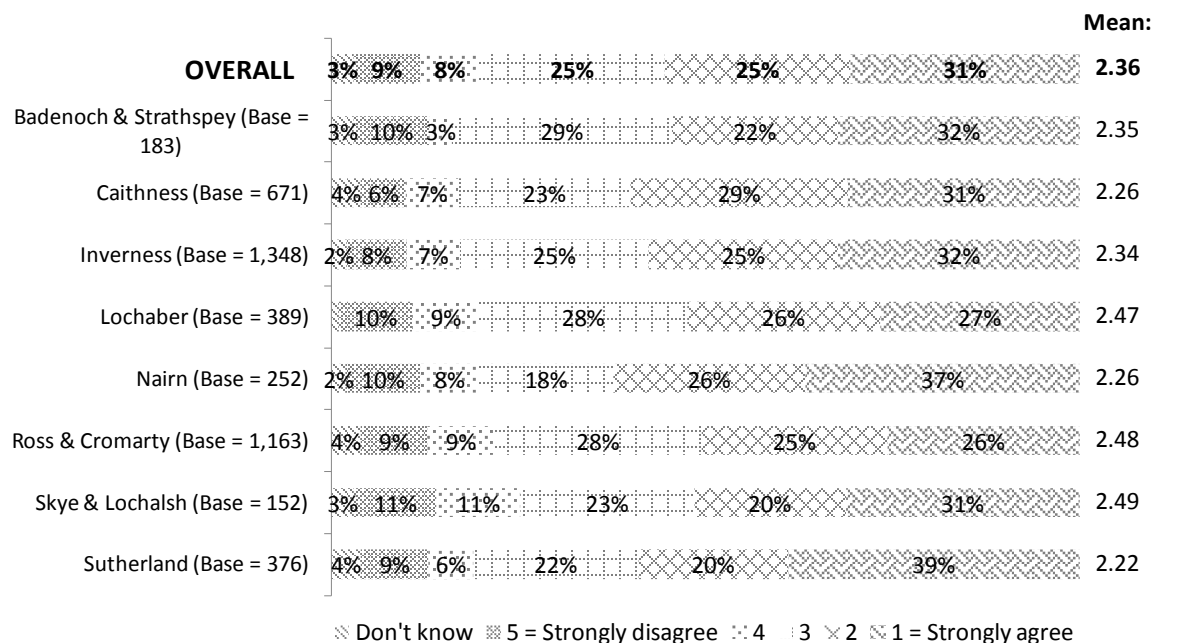
One third (33%) of tenants said they were aware of The Highland Council's published service standards. Across management areas, awareness varied from 26% in Skye and Lochalsh to 36% in Sutherland and in Caithness.

Older tenants tended to be more aware (44% aged 55+), compared to those in the younger age groups (31% aged 35-54 and 27% aged 18-34). Interestingly, male tenants (42%) tended to be more aware of the Council's published service standards than females (30%).

4.2 Perceptions of The Highland Council

Tenants were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about The Highland Council's performance as a landlord. Broadly, perceptions were positive but with some room for improvement. Throughout, older tenants (aged 55 and over) were significantly more likely to agree, and in particular significantly more likely to *strongly* agree with positive statements. Perceptions tended to be most positive in Nairn, Caithness and Sutherland, often significantly more so than in Skye and Lochalsh and Ross and Cromarty, where perceptions tended to be least positive.

Q29.1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? The Highland Council provides an effective and efficient service



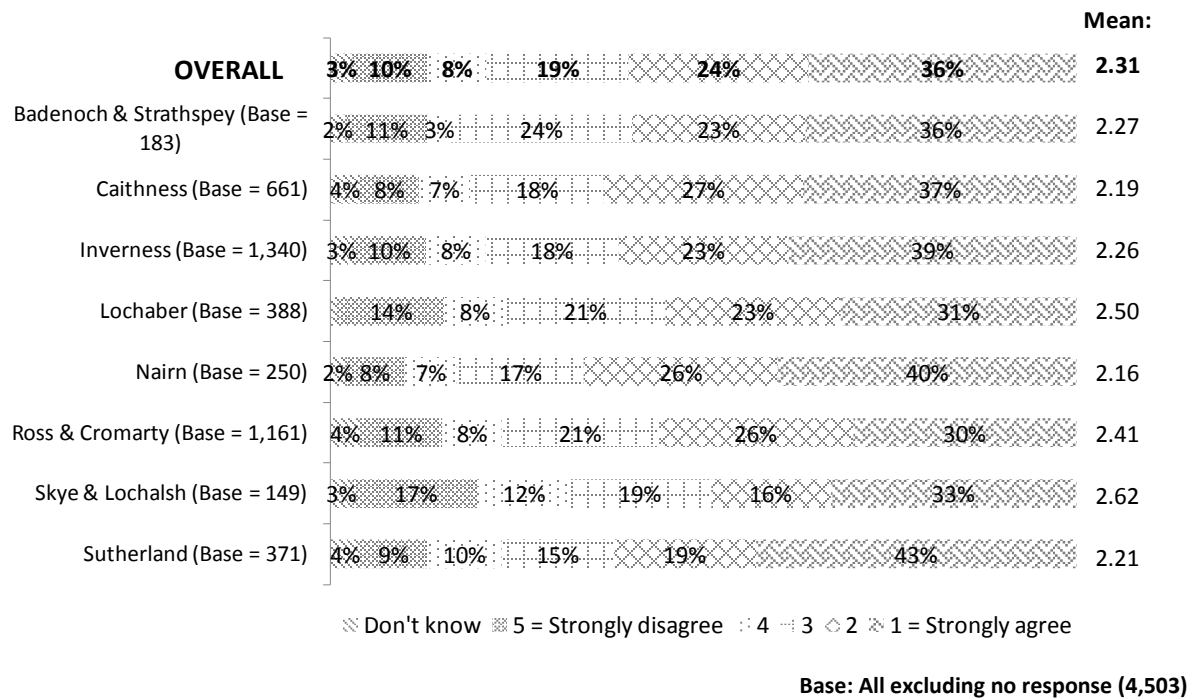
Base: All excluding no response (4,534)

Whilst the largest proportion of tenants (56%) agreed that 'The Highland Council provides an effective and efficient service' (with 31% selecting the strongest level of agreement), a quarter were neutral and 16% overall disagreed with the statement. Again the findings suggest general satisfaction, with some scope for improvement.

Across the management areas agreement (i.e. selection of 1 or 2) was highest in Nairn (62%) and lowest in Ross and Cromarty (51%) and Skye and Lochalsh (51%).

When the data was analysed across the age profile of the sample tenants aged 55 and over (68%) were found to be more likely than overall (56%) to agree. In particular, the over 55s were much more likely to select the strongest level of agreement (44% selected 1, compared with 31% overall).

Q29.2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? The Highland Council is providing the service I expect from my landlord

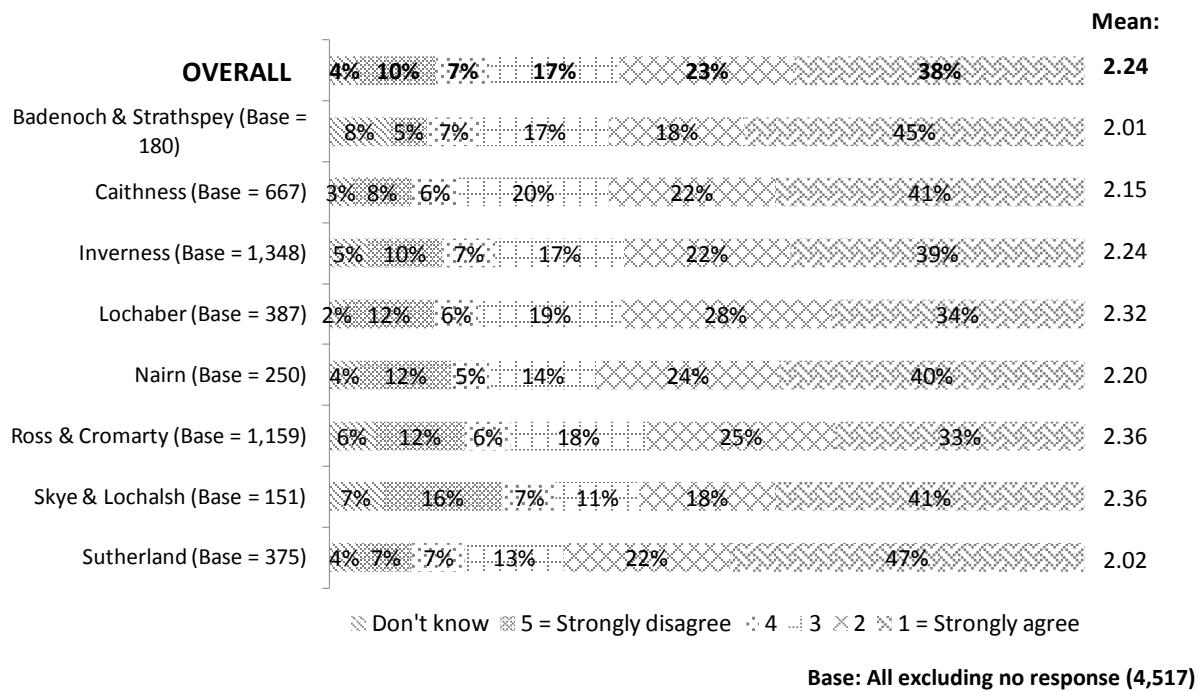


Tenants broadly agreed that the Council is providing the service they expect from their landlord: overall, 60% selected 1 or 2, with the greater proportion (36%) selecting the strongest level of agreement (1). However, a sizeable proportion disagreed, with 18% overall selecting 4 or 5, and a further 19% selecting the neutral option (3). Again the data indicates that there is potential room for improvement.

Tenants in Skye and Lochalsh were especially likely to disagree (29% selecting 4 or 5) and less likely than overall to agree (49% selected 1 or 2). The tenants most likely to agree that the Council meets their expectations as a landlord lived in Nairn (66% agree).

Overall agreement was significantly higher amongst those aged 55 and over, with 69% selecting 1 or 2. The difference was mostly driven by those selecting the strongest level of agreement: 47% aged 55 and over selected 1, compared with 36% overall and 27% of tenants aged 18-34.

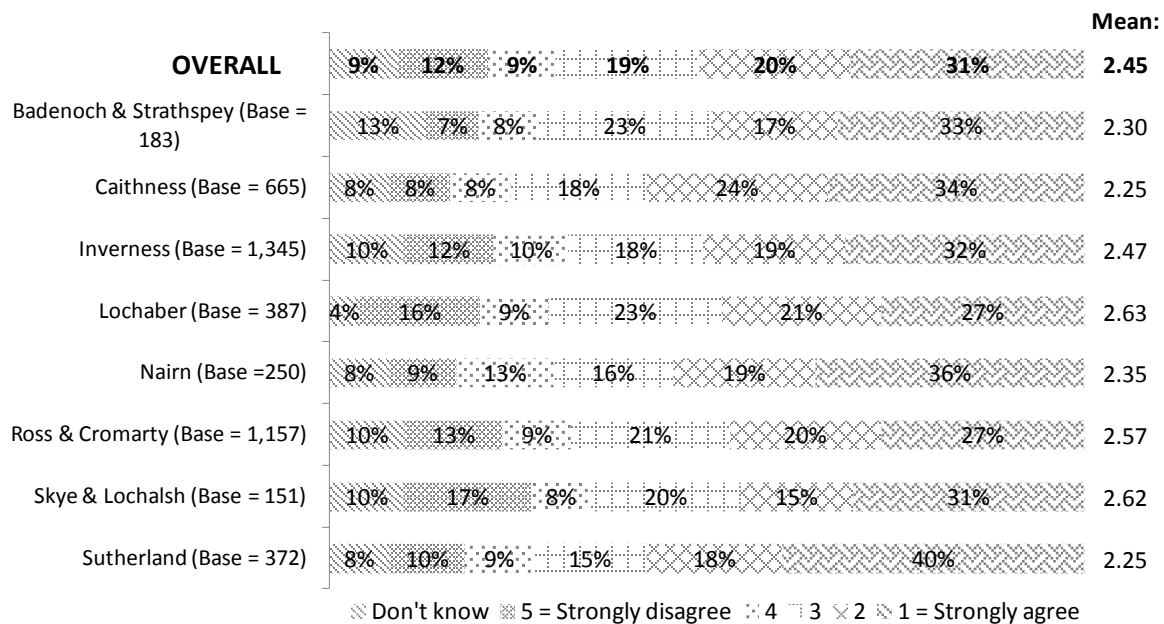
Q29.3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? The Highland Council treats its residents fairly



When asked whether they would agree that the Council treats its residents fairly, the majority (61%) of respondents agreed that it does. The proportions agreeing with this statement were broadly consistent across all of the management areas, with slightly stronger agreement in Sutherland (69%).

Reflecting the general pattern of response, older tenants showed stronger levels of agreement; 71% aged 55 and over agreed, compared to 60% of 35 to 54 year olds and 54% of those aged 18 to 34 years old. Indeed, amongst the over 55 year olds, 49% selected the strongest level of agreement (1) compared with 29% of tenants aged 18-34.

Q29.4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? The Highland Council has a good reputation in my area



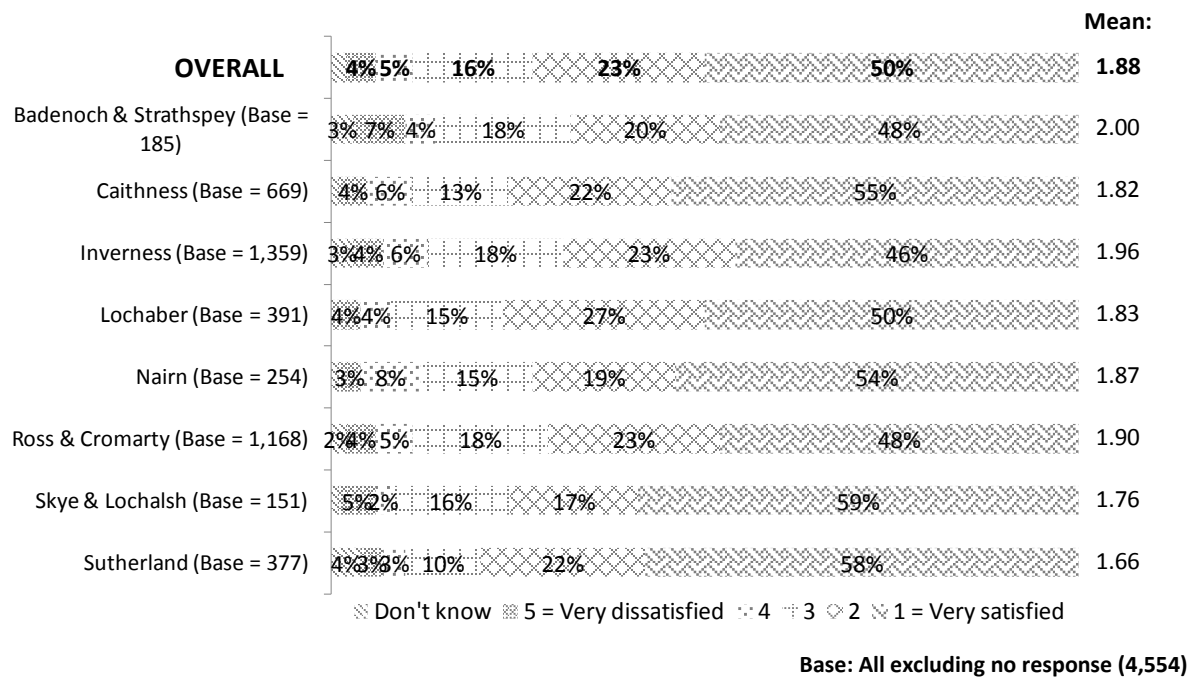
Base: All excluding no response (4,510)

Whilst the largest proportion of the sample agreed that the Council has a good reputation, agreement was weaker than for the other statements. In total, just over half agreed that The Highland Council has a good reputation in their area (i.e. selected 1 or 2), however, a significant minority (21%) disagreed with this statement.

Looking at the management areas, agreement (those selecting 1 or 2) ranged from 45% in Skye and Lochalsh and 47% in Ross and Cromarty, to 58% in both Caithness and Sutherland.

Tenants aged 55 and over were much more likely to indicate strong agreement by selecting 1 (44%) than those aged 35-54 (29%) or 18-34 (22%). Overall agreement was also higher in the older age group (64% selecting 1 or 2), compared to those aged 18-34 (39%) or 35-54 (51%).

Q29.5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? The Highland Council has friendly and approachable staff

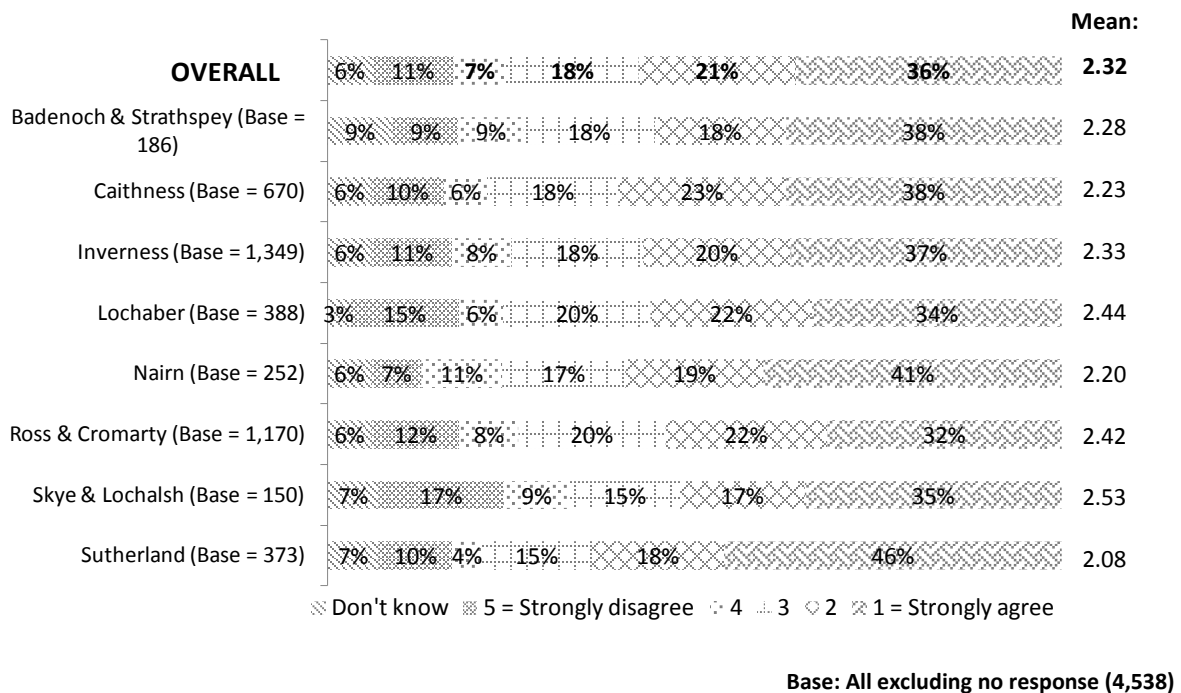


The research findings suggest that the personal qualities of staff are a strong asset for The Highland Council. Indeed, agreement that The Highland Council has friendly and approachable staff was stronger than for all the other statements in this section, with nearly three quarters (73%) indicating agreement by selecting 1 or 2. Encouragingly, half (50%) of respondents selected the strongest level of agreement (1) compared with 23% selecting 2.

No management areas showed significantly less agreement than overall, with a consistently high proportion of tenants across all areas agreeing that staff are friendly and approachable.

Once again, strength of agreement was significantly stronger amongst tenants aged 55 and over: 62% selected 1 compared with 39% aged 18-34. Overall, around 4 in 5 (82%) aged 55 and over agreed, compared with 62% aged 18-34. Part of the difference was driven by greater levels of neutrality rather than outright disagreement amongst the younger tenants, with 21% aged 18-34 selecting 3 compared with 10% aged 55 and over.

Q29.6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? I trust The Highland Council



Whilst the largest proportion of tenants agreed that they trust The Highland Council a significant minority disagreed with this statement. In total, over half of tenants (57%) indicated agreement that they trust the Council, with 36% selecting the highest level of agreement (1). However, 19% indicated disagreement (selected 4 or 5) and a further 18% were neutral.

Disagreement was higher than average in Skye and Lochalsh, with over one quarter (26%) selecting 4 or 5. Respondents living in Sutherland demonstrated the highest levels of trust in the Council (64% agreed) compared to other areas.

Over half of tenants aged 55 and over (51%) indicated strong agreement by selecting 1 compared with only 25% of those aged 18-34 and 35% of tenants aged 35-54 years old.

Q32: Is there anything else you would like to add about The Highland Council and the services it provides to tenants? - Open Ended

Response	
Positive comments	
Good service generally	3%
Polite / helpful staff	1%
Negative comments	
Poor quality maintenance / lack of maintenance of properties	9%
Problems with heating / maintenance of heating systems / lack of insulation	3%
Poor quality property (e.g. damp, lack of soundproofing, draughts)	2%
Antisocial behaviour / noisy neighbours	1%
Poor care of communal areas, e.g. stairs, fencing, shared gardens/open space	1%
Poorly maintained roads / pavements	1%
Hard to contact / get response from council	1%
Poor response to complaints / problems	1%
Problems with dogs, e.g. noise, fouling	1%
Traffic problems, e.g. speeding, parking	1%
Lack of consultation/ contact with tenants	1%
Problems with refuse management, e.g. collections, missing bins	1%
General poor treatment of tenants	1%
Service Point closed	1%
Council has no money / houses for sale	1%
Other comments	3%
No comment / no reply	70%
Base (all)	4777*

*Please note the data within this table has not be weighted as it is drawn from open ended responses

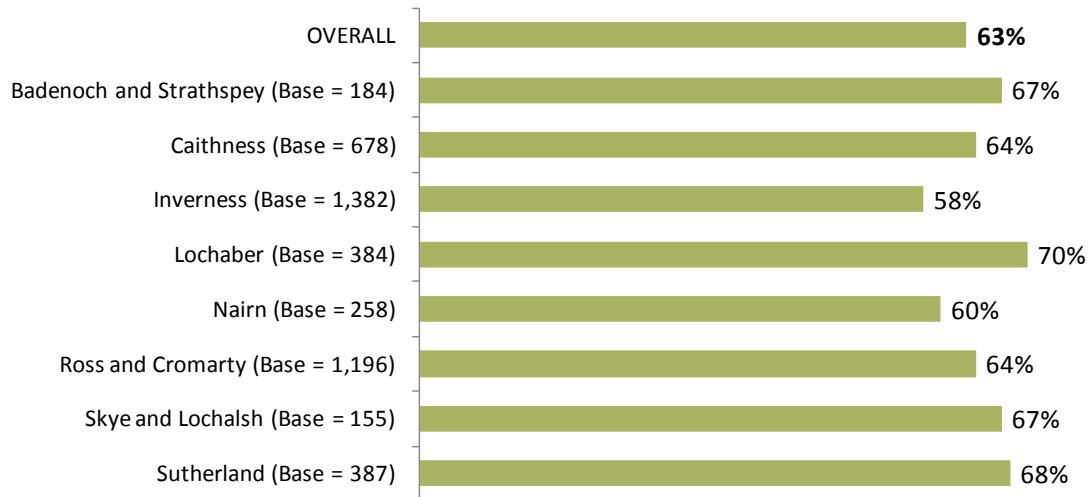
Respondents were asked at the end of the survey whether they had any further comments they would like to make about The Highland Council and the services it provides to tenants. In total, 1,427 respondents took the opportunity to share a comment, which represents 30% of the total sample.

A range of different comments were made, with the most common being poor quality or lack of maintenance of properties (9%), problems with heating and insulation (3%) and poor quality properties generally (2%). A number of respondents also made positive comments, including that the Council provides a good service generally (3%) and staff are helpful and polite (1%).

4.3 Keeping in touch

Tenants were asked whether they used the internet, and how they would prefer to communicate and receive information from the Council.

Q30: Do you use the internet?

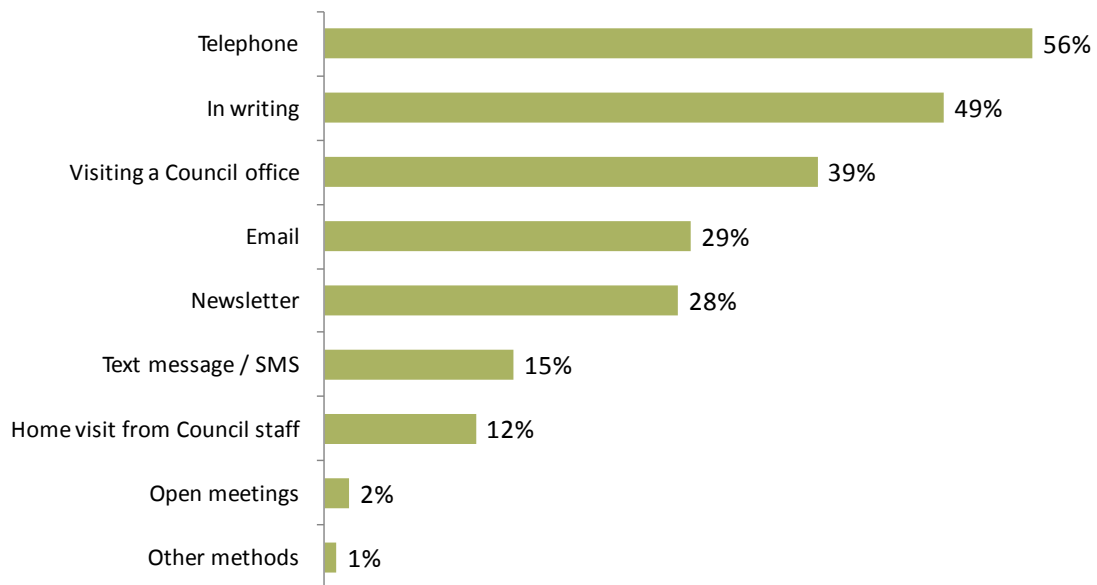


Base: All excluding no response (4,624)

Approaching two thirds of tenants said they use the internet, which means a very sizeable minority (37%) answered no to this question, indicating that they may have limited or no internet access. This finding could also indicate that some simply have no interest in using the Internet. The data does, however, provide evidence to suggest the proportion of tenants who would be able to take advantage of online services, with around one third unlikely to access services via this medium. Across management areas, internet access varies from 58% in Inverness to 70% in Lochaber.

Predictably, there is significant variation by age. Less than one third of the oldest tenants (30% aged 55 and over) have internet access, compared with 71% of tenants aged 35-54 and 85% of those aged 18-34.

Q31: Which two or three of the following methods of being kept informed and getting in touch with The Highland Council are you happy to use?



Base: All excluding no response (4,369)

Respondents were asked to select two or three methods that they would prefer to use to be kept informed by or to get in touch with The Highland Council. Despite almost two thirds of respondents reporting that they use the internet, the preferred methods for keeping in touch with The Highland Council remain the more traditional methods of telephone (56%) and in writing (49%). Almost two fifths (39%) would also prefer visiting a Council office in person, while 29% selected email and 28% selected newsletters.

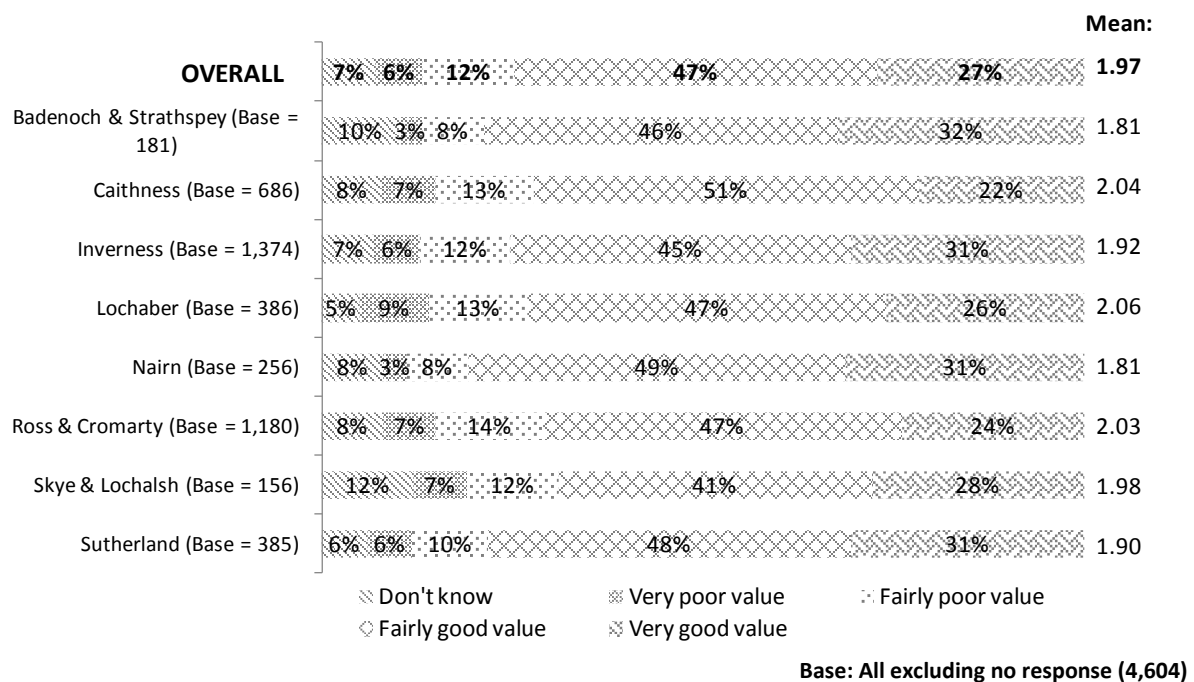
Virtual methods were much more popular with younger people than older age groups; for example 42% aged 18-34 preferred email contact, compared with just 12% aged 55 and over. Similarly, 24% of 18-34 year olds preferred text/SMS, compared with just 5% aged 55 and over. However, interestingly, the highest proportion of the 18-34 age group selected written communications (59%). As well as their preference for digital methods, perhaps what sets the youngest age group apart in terms of communication is the relative lower need for face-to-face contact: just under one third (32%) would prefer to visit a Council office, compared with 39% of 35 to 54 years olds and 44% aged 55 and over.

There were also some large differences between management areas in terms of preference for visiting a Council office. Over half (53%) of tenants in Nairn would prefer to visit in person, the joint most popular method in this area along with telephone (53%). However, only 28% in Sutherland would prefer to visit a Council office.

4.4 Rents and Value for Money

Tenants were asked their views on whether their rent represented good value for money. They were also asked for their views on any help they had received from the Council on rent, benefits and finances.

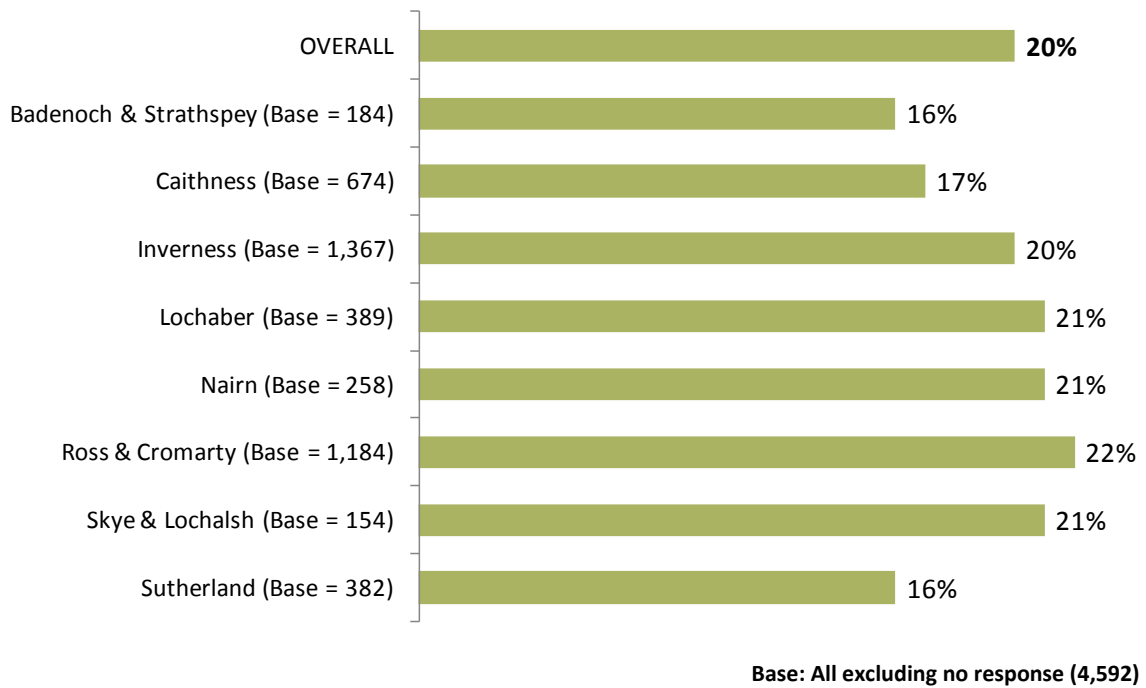
Q14: Taking into account the housing services The Highland Council provides, to what extent do you think the rent for this property represents good or poor value for money?



Encouragingly, nearly three quarters of tenants (74%) felt that their rent represented very or fairly good value for money, although the larger proportion (47%) described their rent as fairly good value for money. The proportion considering their rent to be good value was high across all management areas and ranged from 69% in Skye and Lochalsh to 80% in Nairn.

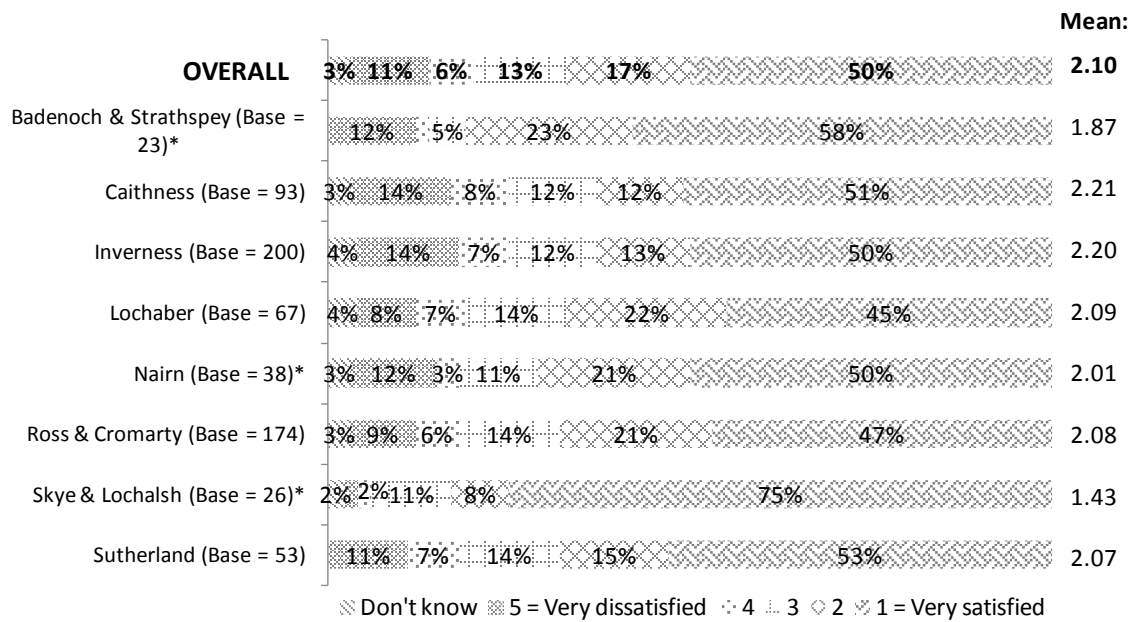
Older tenants were more positive than younger tenants, with 38% aged 55 and over selecting 'very good value for money' compared with 25% aged 35-54 and 20% aged 18-34.

Q15: In the last 12 months, have you asked The Highland Council for advice on paying your rent or claiming welfare benefits?



One in five (20%) tenants had asked for advice on paying rent or claiming benefits in the last 12 months. Differences across areas on this variable are not statistically significant. A higher proportion of younger tenants (27% of 18-34 year olds) had sought advice on paying their rent or claiming benefits than those in the 35 to 54 (19%) or over 55 (13%) age groups.

Q16: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the advice and support you received from The Highland Council... Claiming Housing Benefit and other welfare benefits



Base: All who claimed housing benefits and/or other welfare benefits excluding no response (674)

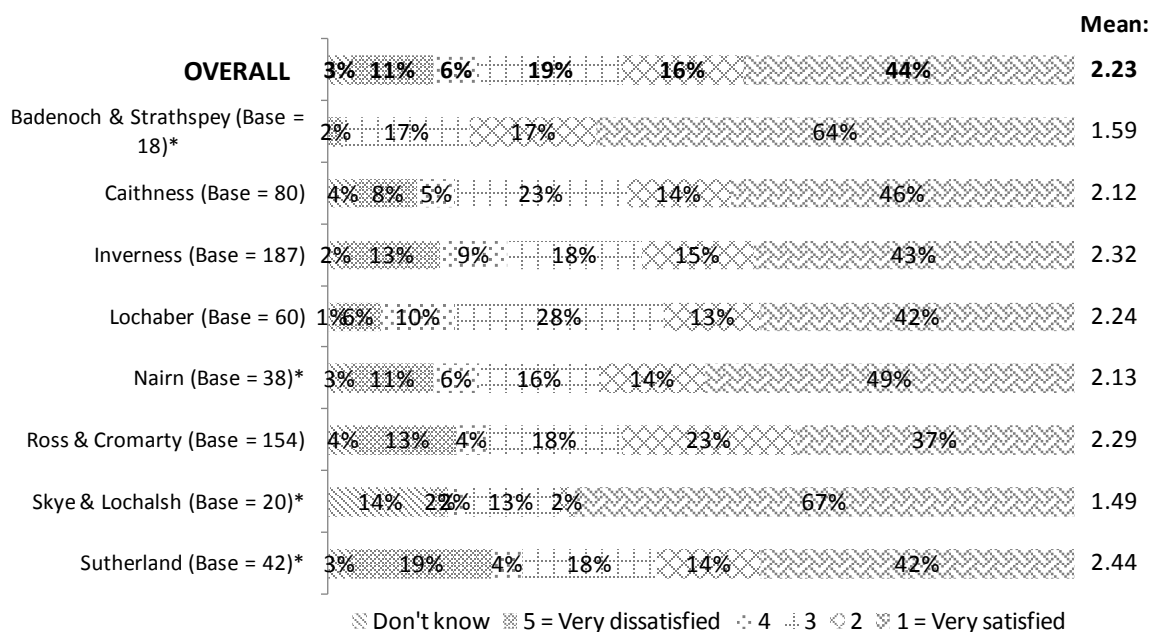
*Caution: small base size (<50)

Amongst those who had received it, satisfaction with advice and support relating to claiming benefits was generally good, with around two thirds (67%) satisfied overall. Encouragingly, half of respondents selected the highest level of satisfaction (1).

Interestingly, satisfaction was particularly strong in Skye and Lochalsh, although the very low base size of just 26 respondents should be noted. Looking at areas where bases sizes are more robust, levels of satisfaction are more consistent.

As previously noted for other questions, strength of satisfaction was associated with age. Two thirds (66%) of tenants aged 55 and over selected 1, compared with 43% aged 18-34. A sizeable minority (25%) of tenants aged 18-34 expressed dissatisfaction (selected 4 or 5), compared with only 15% aged 35-54 and 8% aged 55 and over.

Q16: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the advice and support you received from The Highland Council... Managing your finances and paying rent and other service charges



Base: All who asked for advice on paying rent excluding no response and not applicable (599)

*Caution: small base size (<50)

Respondents who had approached The Highland Council for advice on paying rent and benefits were also asked to comment on how satisfied they were with the advice and support received for managing their finances and paying their rent. It should be noted that those who responded 'not applicable' have been removed from the data presented above.

Again, satisfaction with advice and support received on rent and managing finances was generally good. Three in five (60%) expressed satisfaction, with an encouraging 44% selecting 1, the highest level of satisfaction.

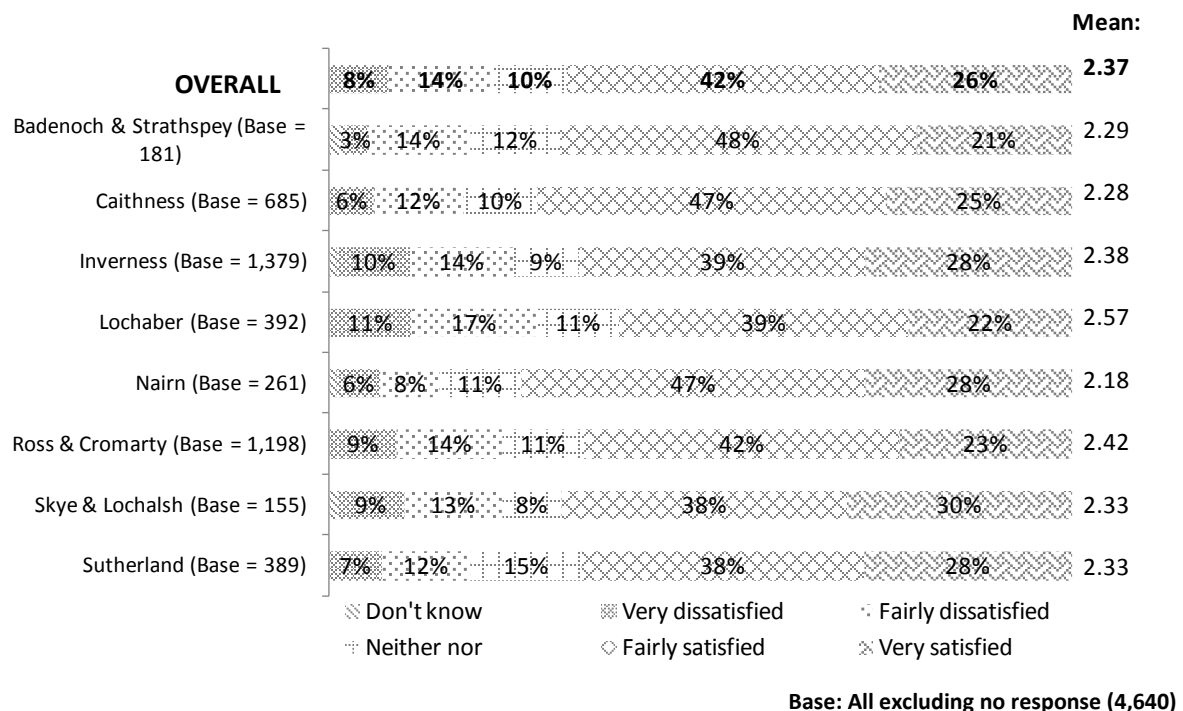
There was some variation in the level of satisfaction across Council areas, however, it is important to note the very small base sizes in some of these areas. Where base sizes are more robust (minimum 80 responses), findings are relatively consistent.

Again, satisfaction depended to an extent on age. Over half of respondents to this question aged 55 or over (56%) selected 1, the highest level of satisfaction, compared with 35% of those aged 18-34. Dissatisfaction was highest amongst the youngest age group (22% selected 4 or 5) and lowest amongst the oldest age group (11%).

4.5 Quality and Maintenance of Homes

Tenants were asked what they thought about the overall quality of their homes and their satisfaction with maintenance services provided by The Highland Council..

Q2: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of your home?

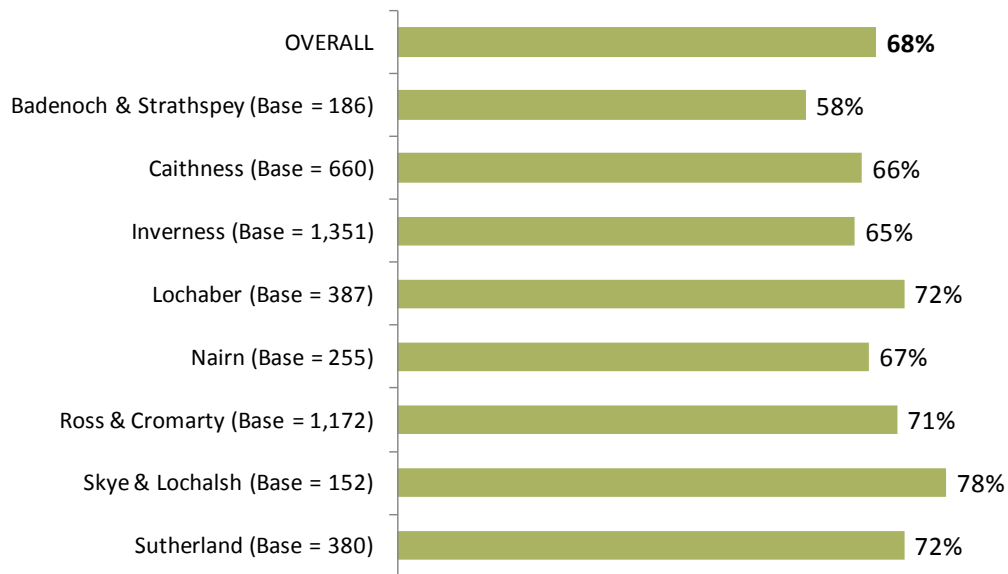


Overall, far more people were very or fairly satisfied (67%) than very or fairly dissatisfied (22%) with the quality of their home. However there is room for improvement with only around one quarter (26%) very satisfied.

Satisfaction is highest in Nairn (74% very or fairly satisfied) and Caithness (72%), which is significantly higher than the area with the least satisfaction, Lochaber (61%).

Age is a factor again, with 83% of tenants aged 55 and over very or fairly satisfied, compared with around two thirds (54%) of tenants aged 18-34.

Q23: Have you had any repairs carried out in the property in the last 12 months?

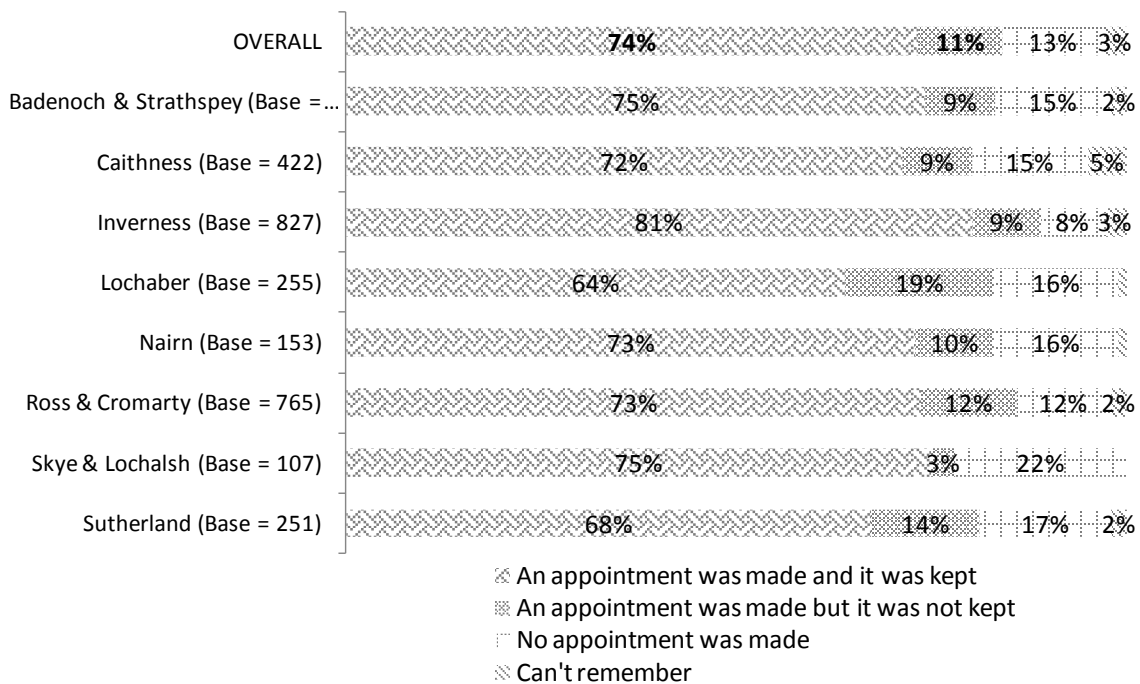


Base: All excluding no response (4,543)

Over two thirds (68%) of tenants had had a repair carried out in their property in the last 12 months. The highest proportion of tenants reporting that repairs had been carried out were living in Skye and Lochalsh (78%), and the lowest proportion was in Badenoch and Strathspey (58%).

Respondents who had received a repair to their property in the last 12 months were then asked a series of questions about the service they had received for their most recent repair. Firstly, they were asked if an appointment for the repair was made and kept.

Q24: Thinking about the most recent time you had repairs carried out: if an appointment was made for this repair, was it kept?



Base: All who had a repair in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,889)

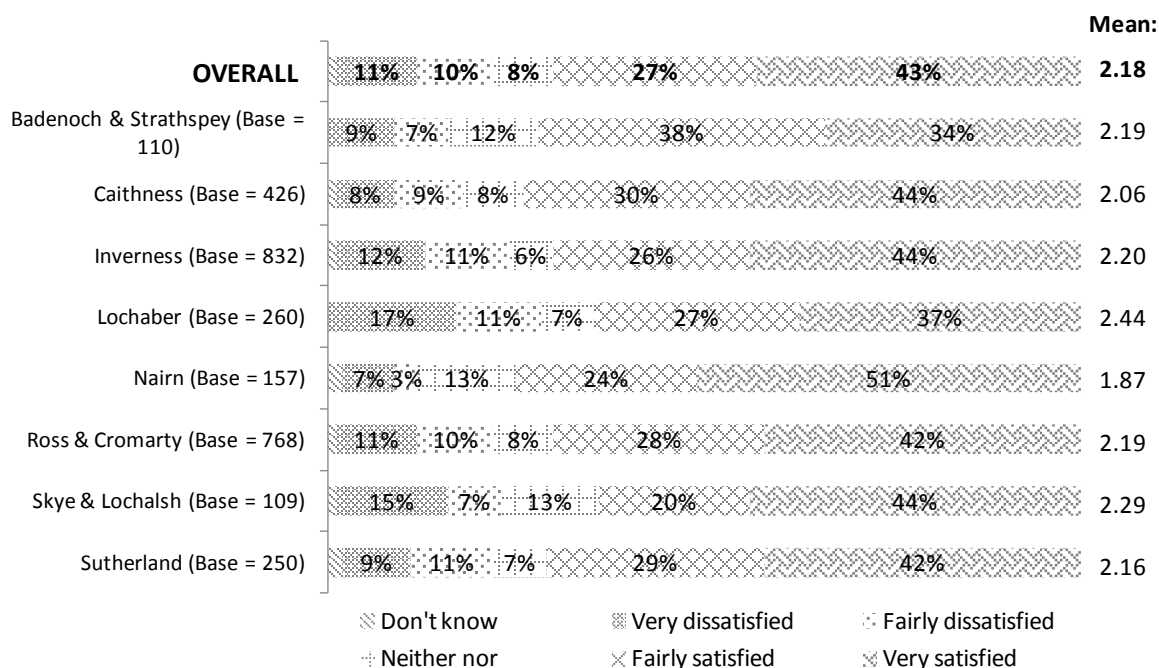
The majority of tenants (74%) were able to report that an appointment was indeed made and honoured. However, in around one in ten (11%) cases an appointment was made and not kept and for 13% no appointment was made.

The highest level of appointments missed was in Lochaber (19%), whilst over one fifth of tenants who had had a repair in Skye and Lochalsh reported that no appointment was made. The most efficient area was found to be Inverness, where 81% reported that an appointment was made and kept.

Responses in relation to appointments need to be viewed in the context of a continuing roll out of appointments to work undertaken by sub-contractors.

Interestingly, older respondents were more likely to report that an appointment had been made and kept (83% of over 55s) than those in the 35 to 54 year old (75%) and 18 to 35 year old (66%) age groups.

Q25: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you overall with the repairs service provided by The Highland Council?

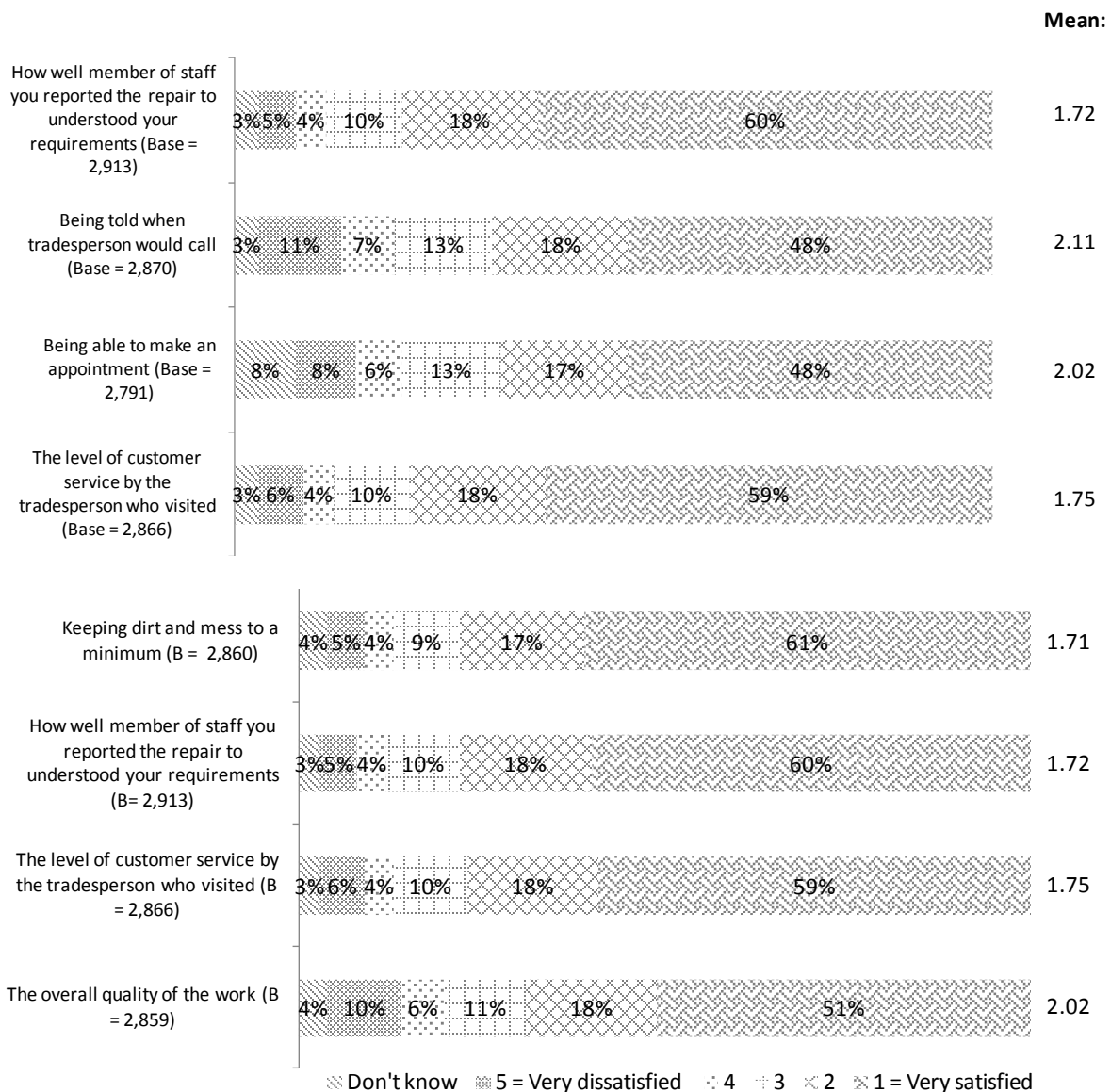


Base: All who had a repair in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,912)

Most (70%) tenants who had received a repair in the last 12 months were either very (43%) or fairly (27%) satisfied overall with the repairs service. More than one in five (21%) were dissatisfied however, indicating some scope for improvement.

Looking at management areas, satisfaction varied from 64% in Lochaber and Skye and Lochalsh to 75% in Nairn. Older tenants (aged 55 and over) were much more satisfied overall than tenants aged 18-34 (85% vs. 58% very or fairly satisfied). Indeed, 61% of tenants aged 55 and over were very satisfied compared with just 28% aged 18-34. This finding could be, at least partly, due to the higher proportion of older respondents who reported that their appointment was honoured.

Q26: On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very satisfied and 5 means very dissatisfied, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with each of the following?



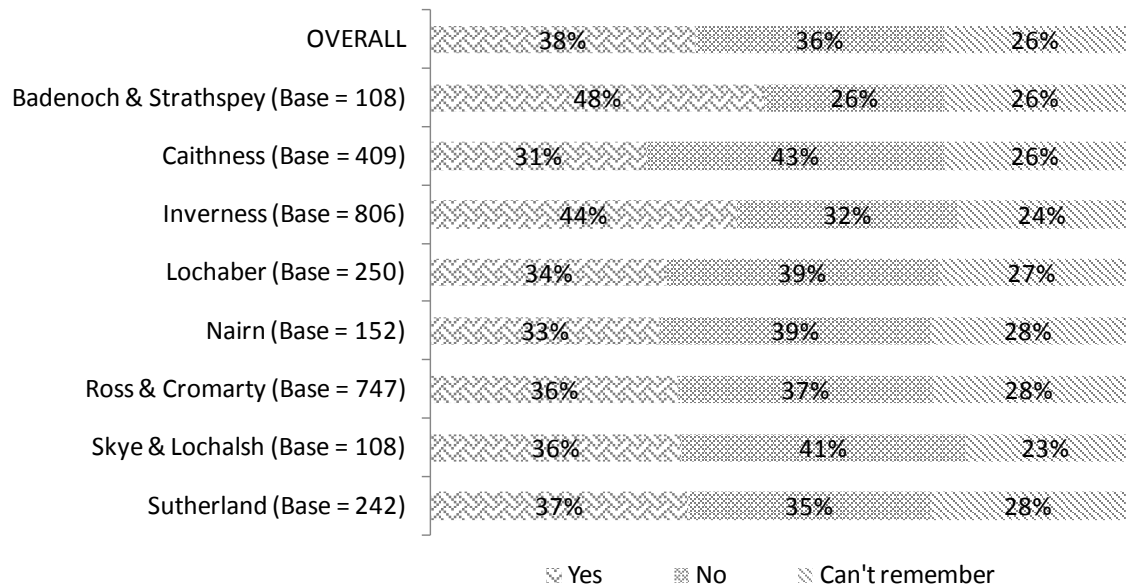
Base: All who had a repair in the last 12 months excluding no response

Across a range of elements of the repairs service, satisfaction was generally positive. Customer service aspects scored particularly well: keeping dirt and mess to a minimum (78% very or fairly satisfied), how well the member of staff the repair was reported to understood requirements (78% satisfied), and the level of customer service shown by the visiting tradesperson (77% satisfied). Tenants tended to be slightly less satisfied with the repair being done right first time (63% satisfied) – still a broadly positive result, but with nearly one quarter (24%) dissatisfied, this emerged as a potential area for improvement.

When asked to provide an overall rating of the repairs service provided by The Highland Council, 48% of those who had received a repair in the last year were very satisfied and 18% were quite satisfied. A sizeable minority (18%), however, were dissatisfied with the service they had received.

In line with findings throughout the report, satisfaction increased significantly with age. Tenants aged 55 and over were significantly more satisfied than those aged 18-34 across all aspects.

Q27: Did the tradesperson who visited to carry out the repair show proof of identity?



Base: All who had a repair in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,822)

Recall was an issue for tenants when asked about whether the tradesperson who visited showed proof of identity; just over one quarter (26%) could not remember. Amongst those who did express recall, roughly equal proportions stated that proof of identity was shown (38%) and was not shown (36%).

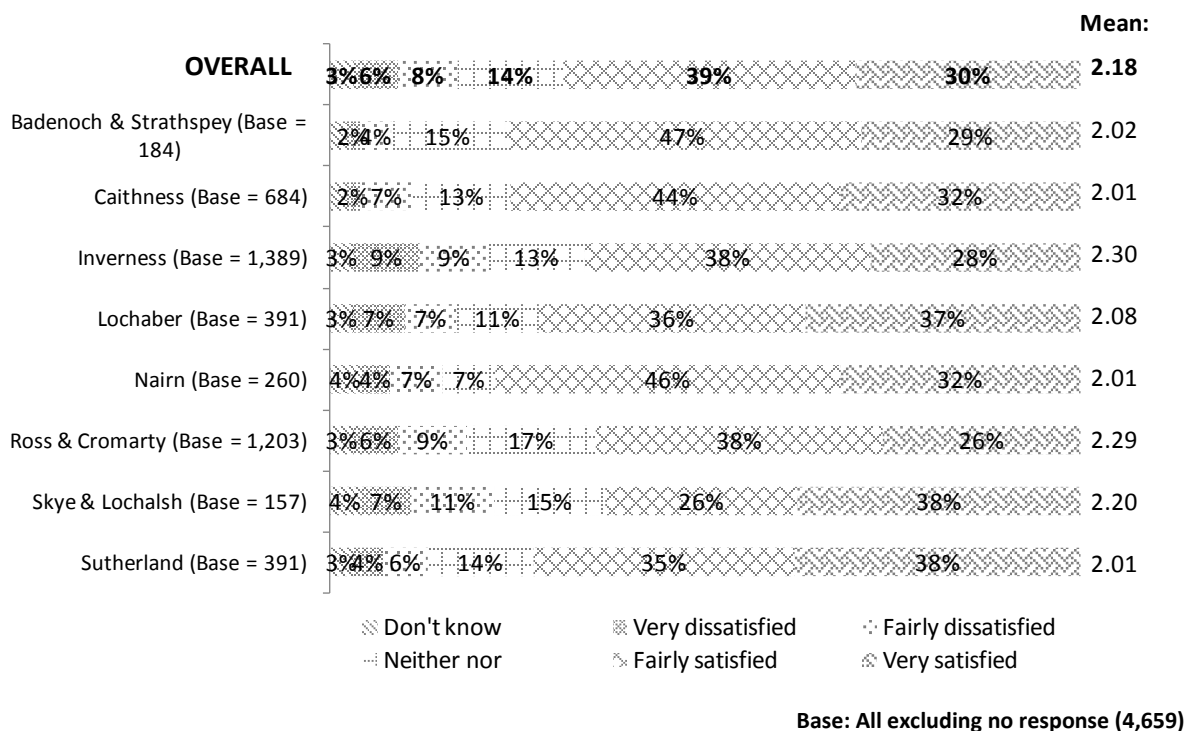
Respondents living in Badenoch and Strathspey (48%) and Inverness (44%) were the most likely to recall that the visiting tradesperson showed proof of identity.

Tenants aged 55 and over were much more likely than tenants aged 18-34 to say that proof of identity was shown (55% vs. 27%) and correspondingly much less likely to say it was not shown (24% vs. 47%).

4.6 Neighbourhood Management

This section discussed tenants' perceptions of neighbourhood issues and problems, and their experience of reporting anti-social behaviour. Again, perceptions of neighbourhood management were mostly good, although the Housing Service's response to anti-social behaviour complaints emerged as an area of concern.

Q3: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Housing Service's management of your neighbourhood?

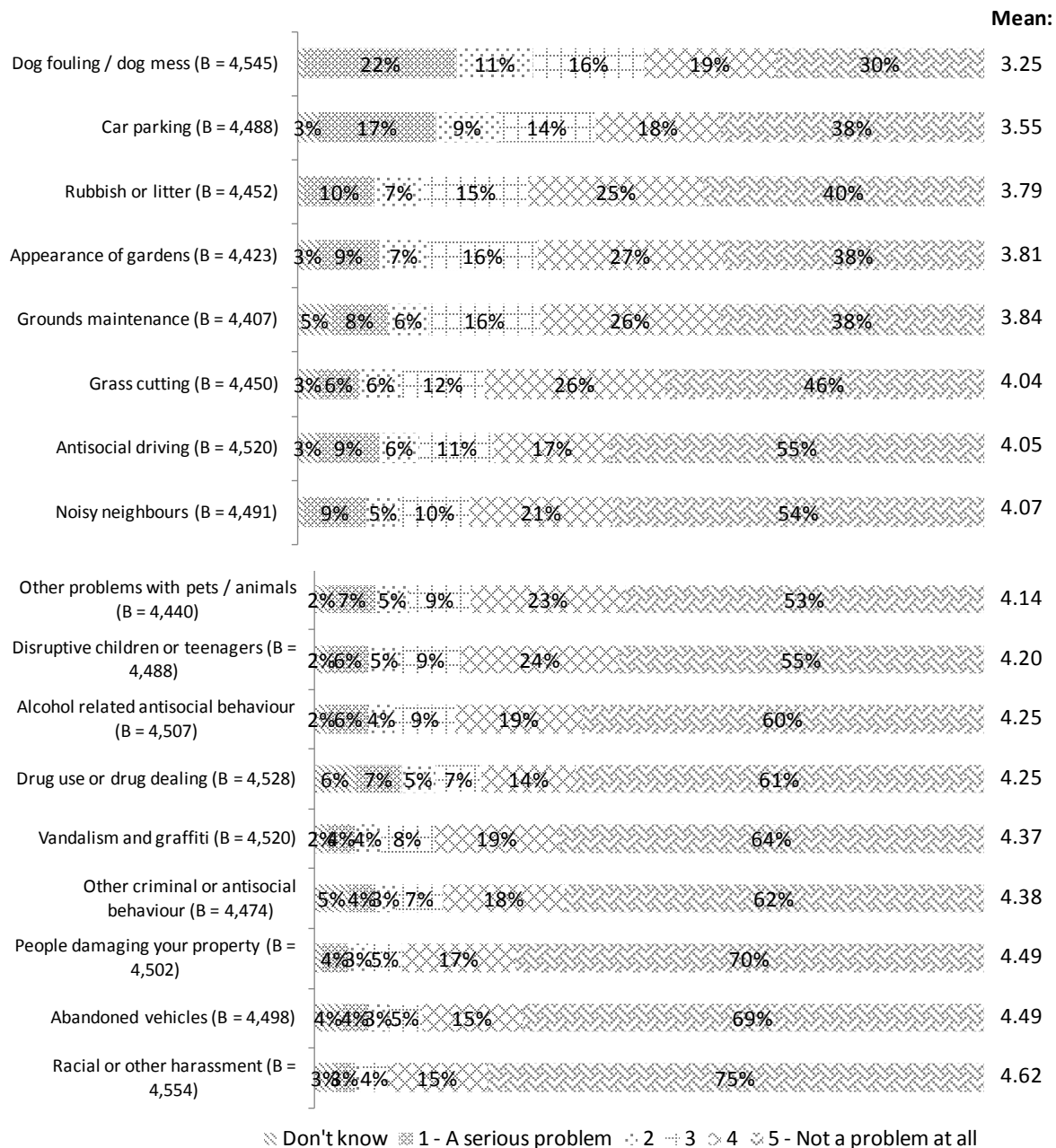


Overall satisfaction with the Housing Service's neighbourhood management is generally good; over two thirds of respondents were either very satisfied (30%) or fairly satisfied (39%).

Nairn (78% satisfied), Caithness (76%) and Badenoch and Strathspey (76%) showed the highest levels of satisfaction, whilst Ross and Cromarty (64%) and Skye and Lochalsh (64%) showed slightly lower levels. Dissatisfaction is not significantly higher than overall in any one management area.

Tenants were asked about the extent to which they thought a series of issues were problems in their neighbourhood.

Q4: To what extent do you think each of the following things is a problem in your neighbourhood?



Base: All excluding no response

Tenants were generally positive about their neighbourhoods. No single issue was thought to be a problem by a majority of tenants. That said, dog fouling and car parking emerged as areas of concern for large minorities: one third (33%) selected 1 or 2 for dog fouling, and just over one quarter (26%) selected 1 or 2 for car parking. Indeed, the main issues highlighted by tenants tended to relate to the physical environment. As well as dog fouling and car parking, lower than average scores were also allocated to rubbish and litter (18% a problem), the appearance of gardens (16%), and grounds maintenance (15%), although it should be noted only a minority of tenants saw these issues as a problem.

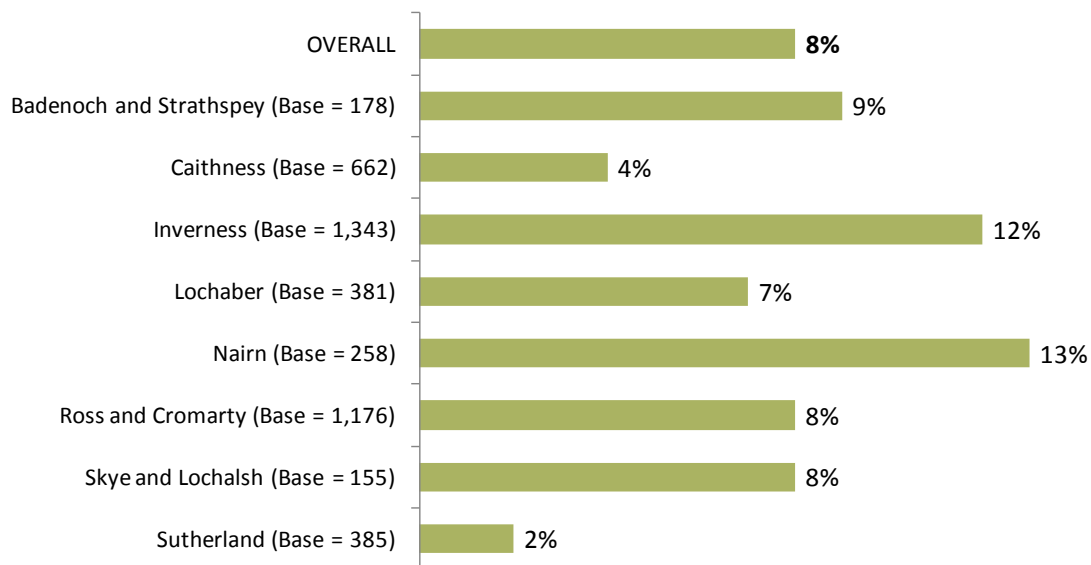
Tenants were least likely to be concerned about racial or other harassment, abandoned vehicles or people damaging their property.

Some problems emerged as very localised – a more serious issue in one area, but not others. Antisocial behaviour-related issues tended to be perceived as significantly more problematic by tenants in Inverness than in other areas. For example, 17% in Inverness felt alcohol-related antisocial behaviour was a problem, and 21% scored noisy neighbours as an issue, significantly more than in any other management area. Vandalism and graffiti (14% in Inverness felt it was a problem), drug use and drug dealing (18%), people damaging your property (10%) and other criminal or antisocial behaviour (13%) followed a similar pattern, with the proportion of tenants in Inverness feeling it was a problem significantly higher for each than for all the other management areas.

Older tenants tended to be somewhat less likely to perceive each of the issues as a problem in their neighbourhood than younger tenants. For example, 28% aged 55 and over see dog fouling as a serious problem locally compared with 37% aged 18-34.

Respondents were also asked if there was any other type of crime or antisocial behaviour that is a problem in their neighbourhood. In total, 112 tenants provided a response, with the most prevalent concerns being conflict and problems with neighbours (43%), burglaries and break-ins (16%) and dangerous and inconsiderate parking or driving (14%).

Q5: Have you reported antisocial behaviour to The Highland Council in the last 12 months?

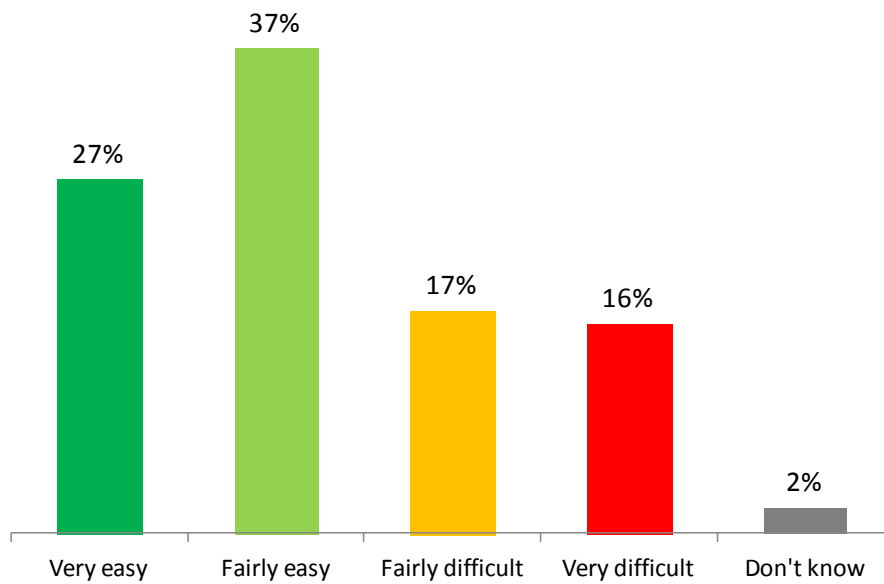


Base: All excluding no response (4,538)

As we would expect, given the low incidence of people perceiving it as a problem in their neighbourhood, only a very small proportion (8%) of tenants have reported antisocial behaviour to the Council in the last 12 months.

Reporting of antisocial behaviour tended to be slightly higher on Nairn (13%) and Inverness (12%) when compared to other areas. Younger respondents were also more likely to have reported antisocial behaviour (12% of 18-35 year olds) than those in the 35-54 year old (8%) and over 55s (5%) age groups.

Q6: How easy or difficult was it to contact a member of staff to report your antisocial behaviour complaint?



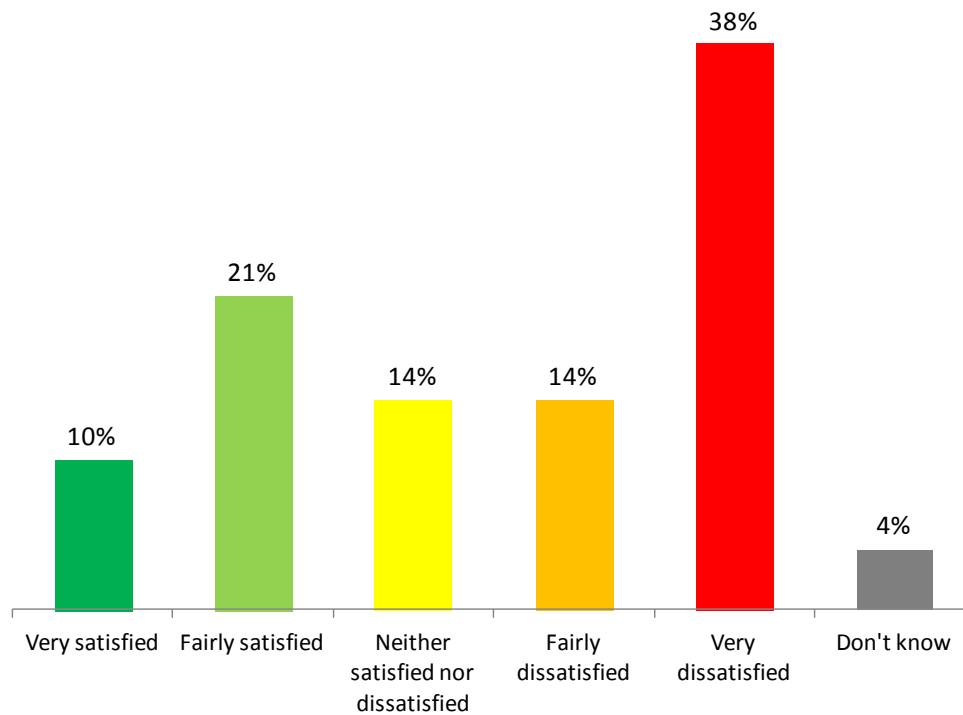
Base: All who reported antisocial behaviour to The Highland Council in the last 12 months (296)

Nearly two thirds (65%) of tenants found it very or fairly easy to contact a member of staff to report their antisocial behaviour complaint. However, this still leaves a sizeable minority (34%) who found it very or fairly difficult.

Comparisons between management areas are not possible because of the small base sizes in many areas.

Looking at age differences, tenants aged 55 and over were not significantly more likely to say it was easy (73%) than those aged 18-34 (65%). However, the older respondents were significantly more likely to say contacting a member of staff was very easy (37%) than the younger respondents (12%).

Q7: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the way your antisocial behaviour complaint was dealt with?



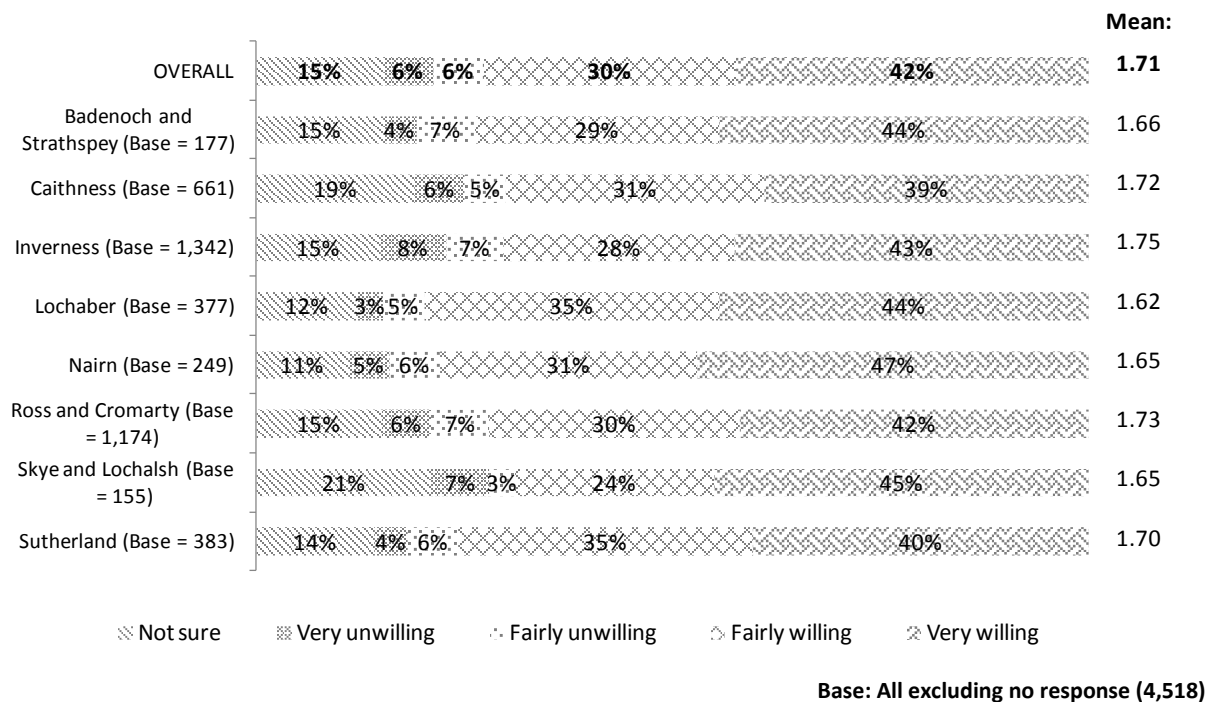
Base: All who reported antisocial behaviour to The Highland Council in the last 12 months (296)

Tenants were more likely to be dissatisfied than satisfied with the way their antisocial behaviour complaint was dealt with by The Highland Council. Indeed, over half (52%) were dissatisfied, with the biggest proportion (38%) very dissatisfied.

Again, small base sizes mean that comparisons between management areas are not possible.

Tenants aged 55 and over were significantly more likely than younger tenants to be very or fairly satisfied (44% vs. 26% aged 18-34 and 30% aged 35-44).

Q8: How willing or unwilling would you be to report antisocial behaviour to The Highland Council in the future?



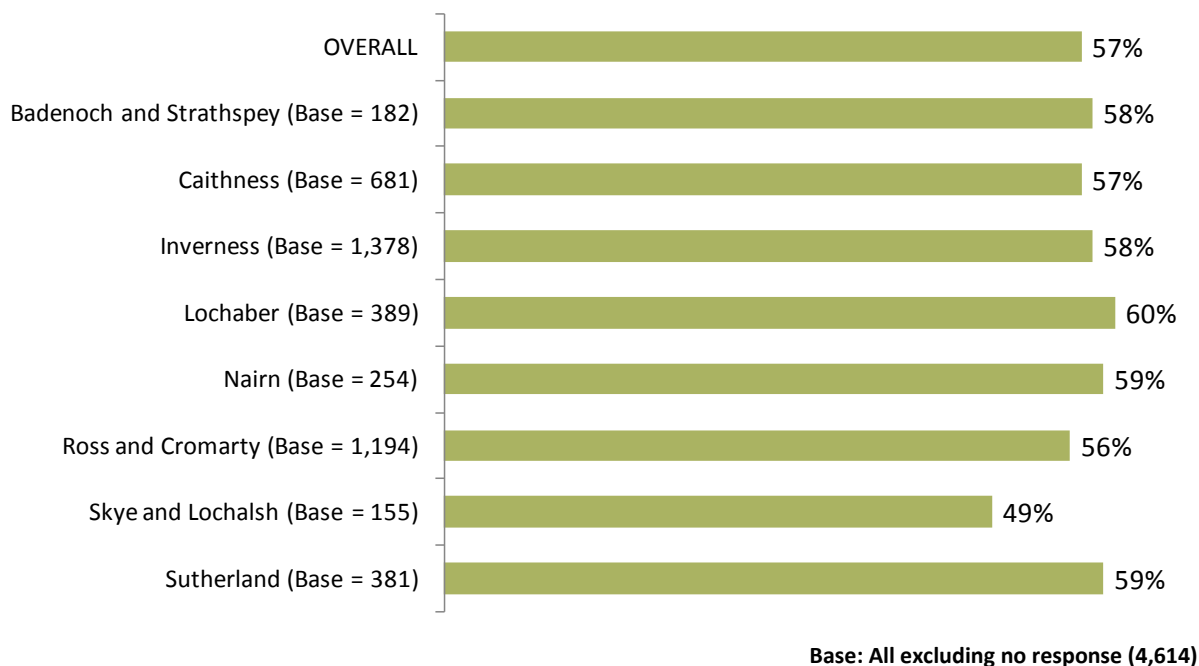
Approaching three quarters (73%) of all respondents would be very or fairly willing to report antisocial behaviour to the Council in the future. Across management areas, the proportion very or fairly willing to report in the future varied from 69% in Skye and Lochalsh to 80% in Lochaber. The figures for very and fairly willing combined were almost identical across the age groups (73% aged 18-34, 72% aged 35-54, and 73% aged 55 and over). However the oldest tenants (55 and over) were significantly more likely than younger tenants to say they were very willing to report antisocial behaviour in the future (47% vs. 42% aged 35-54 and 38% aged 18-34).

Amongst those who had actually reported antisocial behaviour in the last 12 months, 69% stated they would be very or fairly willing to report such behaviour to the Council again in the future. Therefore, despite some dissatisfaction with the way in which their previous complaint was dealt with, most have not been put off engaging with the Council in the future to resolve such issues.

4.7 Complaints

Respondents were also asked to report their experiences of making a complain to The Highland Council. As with reporting antisocial behaviour, satisfaction amongst tenants with the handling of other complaints – and with the outcome – tended to be low.

Q9: Are you aware that The Highland Council has a formal complaints procedure?

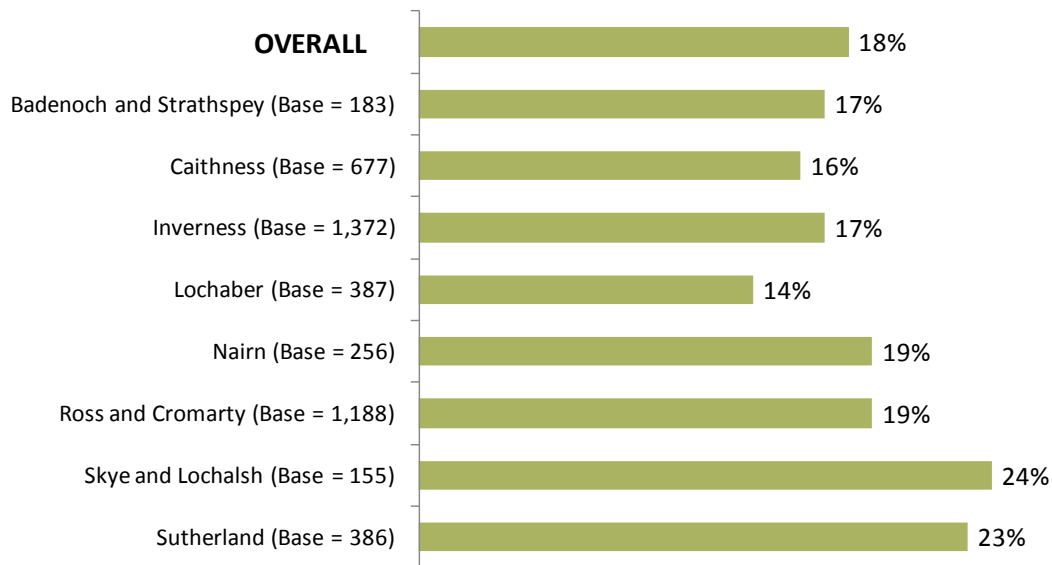


Initially, respondents were asked whether they were aware that the Highland Council has a formal complaints procedure. Awareness was found to be fairly low, with just over half (57%) of tenants overall stating that they were aware that the Council has a formal complaints procedure.

Awareness was broadly consistent across all management areas.

Tenants aged 18-34 were more likely to be aware that the Council has a formal complaints procedure than those aged 55 and over (61% vs. 54%).

Q10: Have you made a complaint to The Highland Council in the last 12 months?



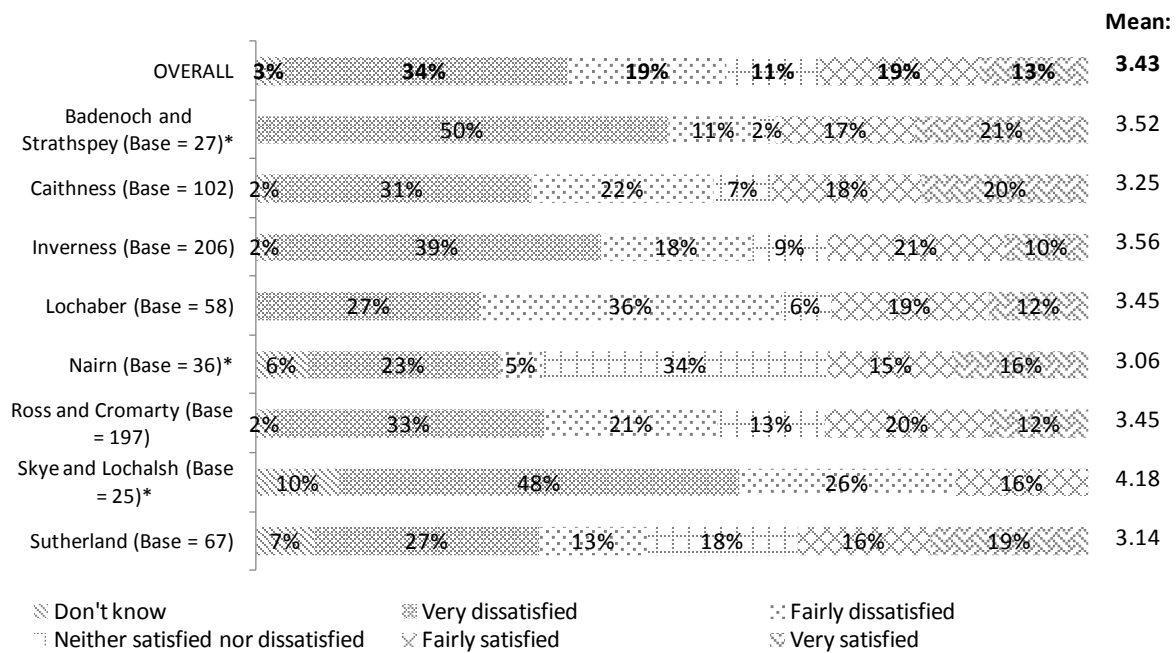
Base: All excluding no response (4,604)

Almost one in five (18%) respondents had made a complaint to The Highland Council in the last 12 months. The lowest level of complaints were from tenants living in Lochaber (14%), whilst those living in Skye and Lochalsh (24%) and Sutherland (23%) were marginally higher.

Complainants were more likely to be in the younger age groups (23% aged 18-34 vs. 16% aged 35-54 and 14% aged 55 and over).

Tenants who had made a complaint to the Council in the last year, were then asked to state how satisfied they were with the way in which their complaint was handled, and with the final outcome of the complaint. The data pertaining to these questions are detailed over.

Q11: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the way your complaint was handled by The Highland Council?



Base: All who made a complaint to The Highland Council in the last 12 months excluding no response (718)

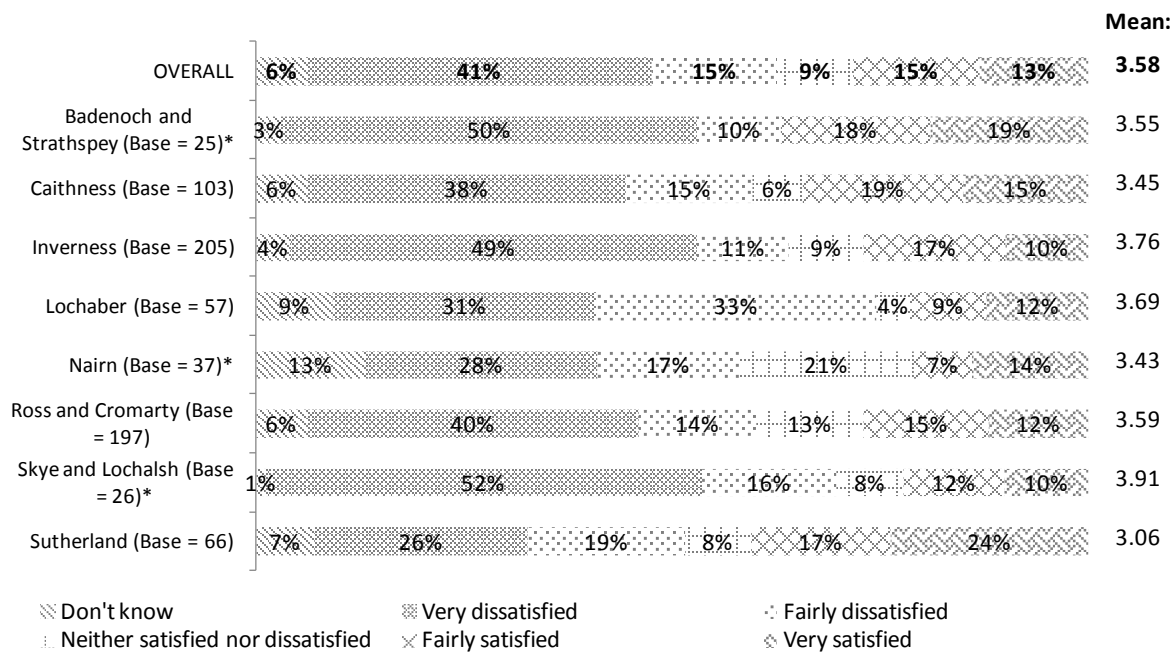
*Caution: small base size (<50)

When asked to report on how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way in which their complaint was handled, over half (53%) were dissatisfied, with just over one third (34%) very dissatisfied. In total, only one third of those who had made a complaint were able to say that they were satisfied with the Council's complaints handling procedures.

The small base sizes for some management areas limits comparisons between them. However, fewer tenants living in Sutherland (40%) and Nairn (29%) reported being dissatisfied when compared to other areas (53% overall). The highest level of dissatisfaction was found in Skye and Lochalsh (74%), however, this finding should be treated with caution due to the very small base size.

Tenants aged 55 and over were significantly more likely to be satisfied than the younger age groups. To demonstrate, 48% of those aged 55 or older were satisfied, compared to 35% of 35 to 54 year olds and just 21% of 18 to 34 year olds.

Q12: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the overall outcome of your complaint?



Base: All who made a complaint to The Highland Council in the last 12 months excluding no response (716)

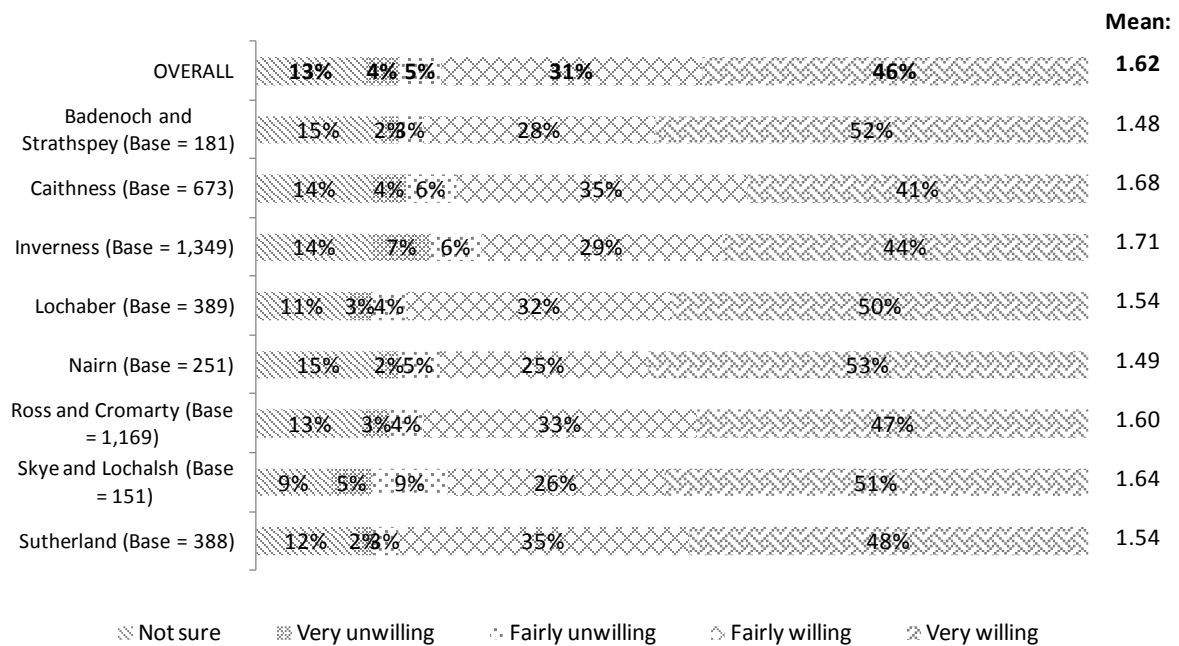
*Caution: small base size (<50)

Findings relating to satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint were similarly poor, with 56% dissatisfied (including 41% very dissatisfied) and only 29% very or fairly satisfied.

Again, dissatisfaction was lower in Sutherland than overall (45% vs. 56%) and satisfaction higher than overall (41% vs. 29%). Dissatisfaction was found to be high in Lochaber and Skye and Lochalsh, although it is important to treat these findings with some caution due to the small base sizes.

Younger tenants were more likely to be dissatisfied - two thirds (66%) of tenants aged 18-34 were dissatisfied, compared with 55% aged 35-54 and 41% aged 55 and over.

Q13: How willing or unwilling would you be to make a complaint to The Highland Council in the future?



Base: All excluding no response (4,551)

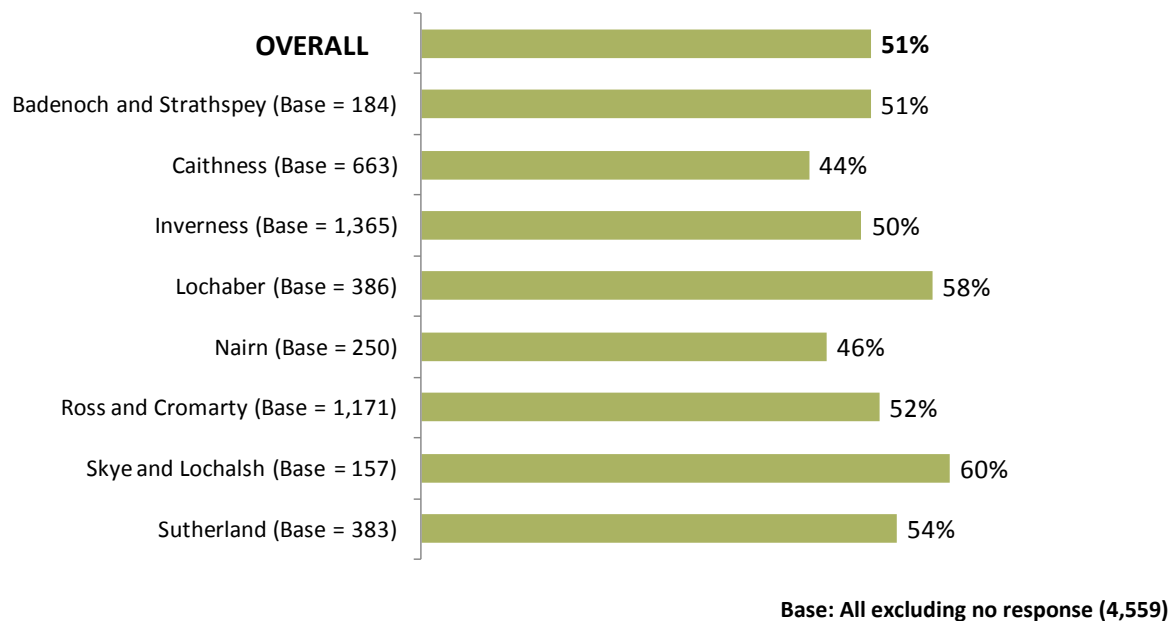
Most tenants overall would be very or fairly willing to make a complaint to The Highland Council in the future (77%). This finding was generally consistent across the management areas, with slightly lower levels of willingness to complain in Inverness (12% unwilling) and Skye and Lochalsh (14% unwilling). Willingness to complain was also consistent across age groups.

Amongst those tenants who made a complaint in the last 12 months, the figure is very similar to the overall average (78% willing, compared to average of 77%).

4.8 Contacting the Highland Council with an enquiry

Tenants were asked about their experience of contacting the Council with a housing-related enquiry. Findings were broadly positive, although satisfaction with the outcome of the enquiry was less strong.

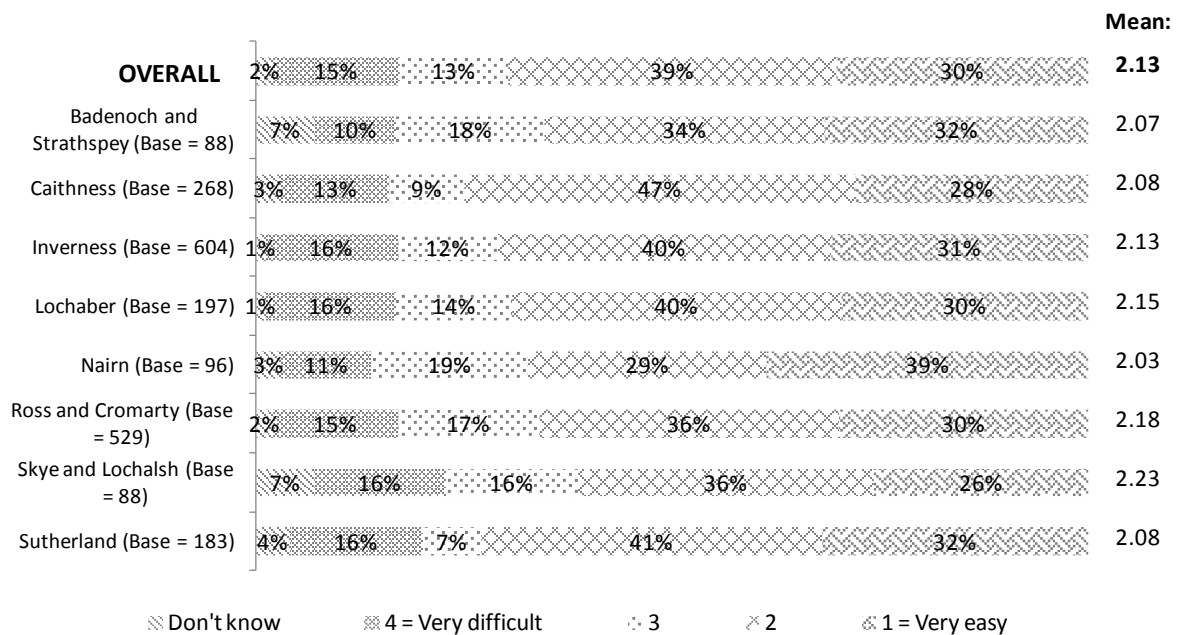
Q17: Have you contacted The Highland Council in the last 12 months with a housing enquiry other than to pay your rent or service charges?



Around half (51%) of tenants had contacted the Council with a housing enquiry, other than to pay rent or service charges, in the last 12 months. Tenants in management areas tending to register lower levels of satisfaction in other aspects of the survey were the most likely to have contacted the Council with a housing enquiry in the last 12 months. For example, in Lochaber 58% had done so, and 60% had done so in Skye and Lochalsh, significantly more than in Caithness (44%) and Nairn (46%), which also tended to register higher levels of satisfaction elsewhere.

Tenants aged 18-34 were more likely to have contacted the Council with a housing enquiry in the last 12 months than those aged 35-54 years old or 55 and over (59% vs. 53% and 39% respectively). Younger tenants were also more likely to express dissatisfaction elsewhere in the survey.

Q18: How easy or difficult was it to get hold of the right person?

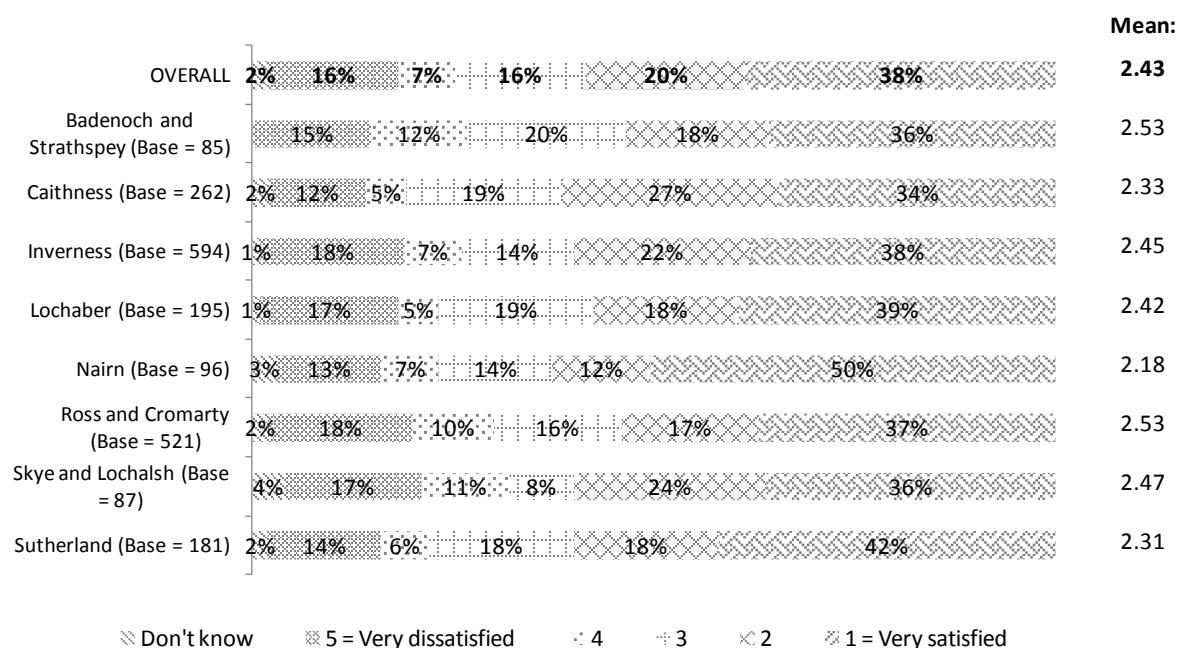


Base: All who contacted The Highland Council with a housing enquiry in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,053)

By and large tenants reported finding it easy to get hold of the right person to make their enquiry (69% overall found it very or fairly easy). However, a significant minority (28%) did report that finding the right person at the Council for their specific enquiry was difficult. There was very little variation in these findings across the management areas.

Younger tenants were less likely to find it easy and more likely to find it difficult than those in the older age groups. For example, one third (33%) of those aged 18-34 found it very or fairly difficult to find the right person for their complaint, compared with 21% aged 55 and over. A greater proportion of over 55s said it was very easy (40% vs. 27% aged 18-34).

Q19: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with: the time it took to answer your query?

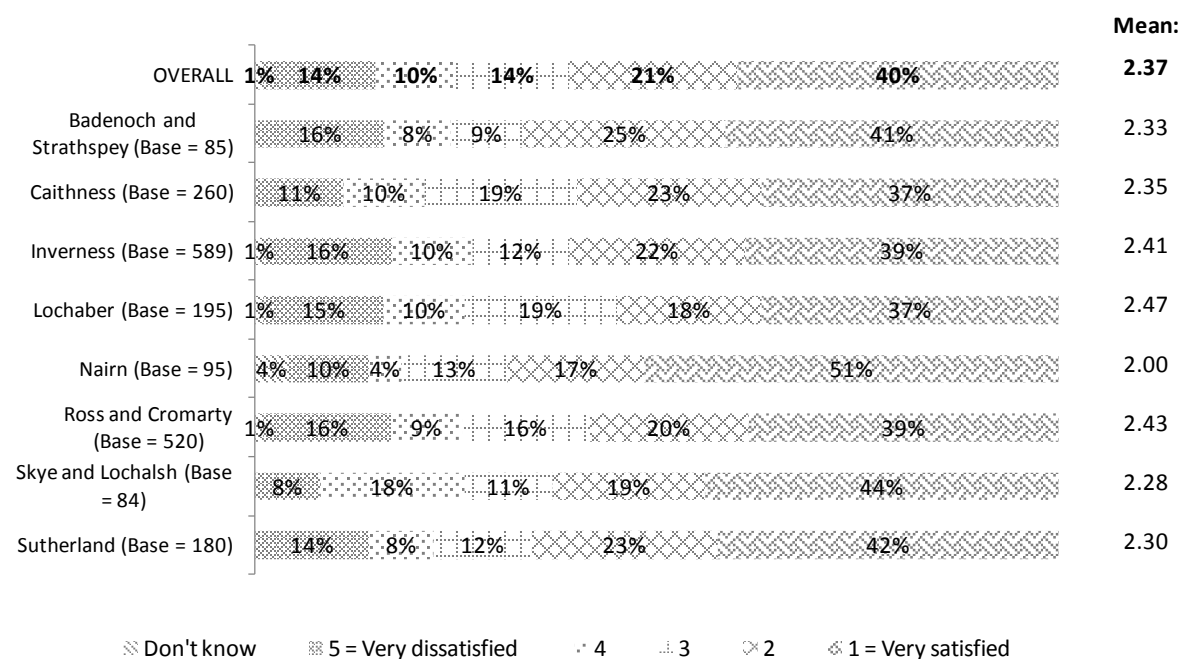


Base: All who contacted The Highland Council with a housing enquiry in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,021)

Those respondents who had made an enquiry to the Council in the last 12 months were then asked how satisfied they were with the time it took to answer their query. Well over half (58%) of these tenants were satisfied (i.e. selected either 1 or 2) with the length of time it took to answer their query, with the biggest proportion (38%) selecting 1. Again, there was a sizeable minority (24%) who were dissatisfied.

Tenants in Nairn (50%) were significantly more likely than those in all other management areas, other than Sutherland, to be very satisfied (i.e. to select 1). Half (50%) of tenants aged 55 and over selected the highest level of satisfaction, compared with 37% of tenants aged 35-54 and 32% of 18-34 year olds.

Q19: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with: the ability of staff to deal with your query quickly and efficiently?



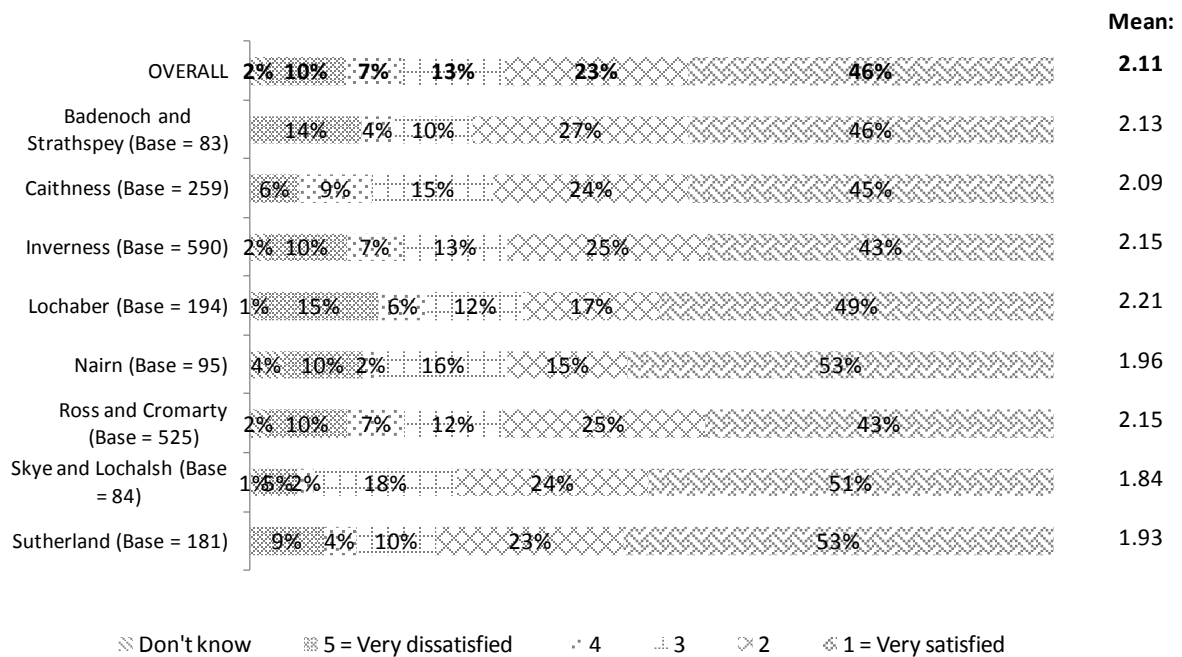
Base: All who contacted The Highland Council with a housing enquiry in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,008)

When asked to state their satisfaction with the ability of staff to deal with their enquiry quickly and efficiently, again overall satisfaction was broadly good (61% satisfied, with 40% selecting the highest level of satisfaction). However, as previously, there was also room for improvement, with nearly one quarter (24%) expressing dissatisfaction by selecting 4 or 5.

This finding was broadly consistent across the management areas, with the main exception being Nairn. Dissatisfaction in Nairn was significantly lower than overall (14% selecting 4 or 5); also, over half (51%) in Nairn selected 1, the highest level of satisfaction.

Looking at age, satisfaction was strongest amongst older tenants. Roughly equal proportions of each of the three age bands selected 2 (22% aged 18-34, 21% aged 35-54 and 19% aged 55 and over). However over half (52%) aged 55 and over selected 1, compared with 30% aged 18-34 and 41% aged 35-54. Therefore, in total, 71% of over 55 year olds were satisfied, compared to 62% of 35 to 54 year olds and 53% of 18 to 34 year olds.

Q19: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with: the ability of staff to understand what your query was about?



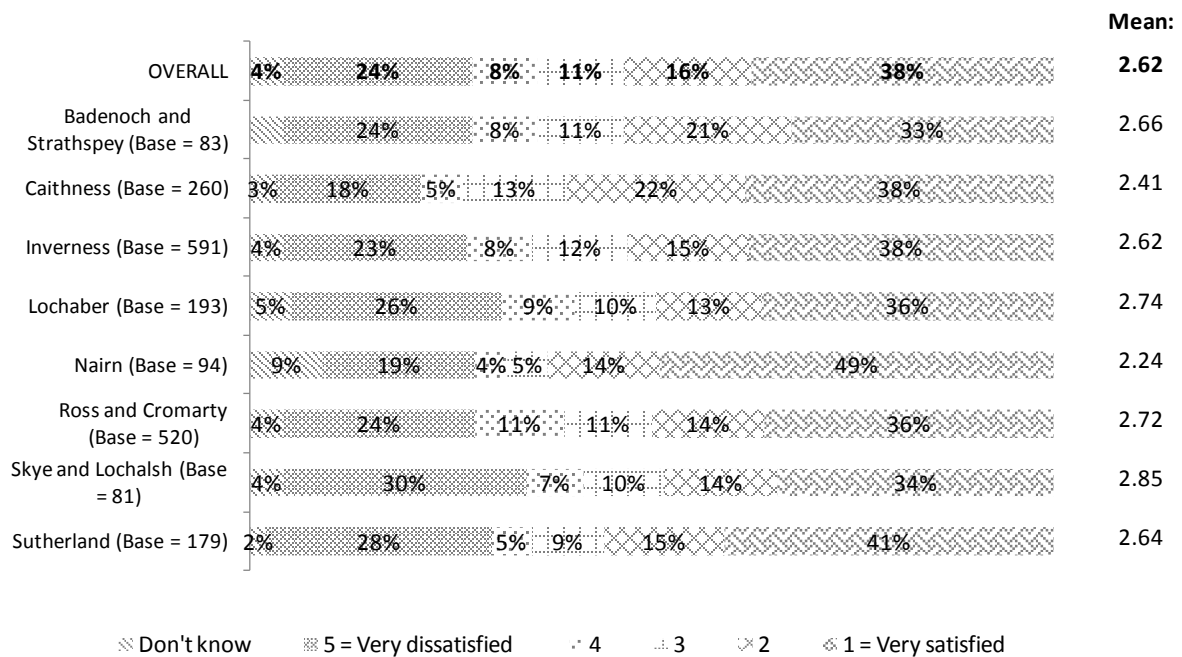
Base: All who contacted The Highland Council with a housing enquiry in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,011)

Tenants were generally satisfied with the ability of the member of staff to understand what the query was about (69% satisfied, with 46% selecting the highest level of satisfaction), with only 17% dissatisfied with this aspect on complaints handling.

There were no significant variations in satisfaction with the ability of staff to understand the query across management areas.

However, again, satisfaction was linked to age: three quarters (75%) of respondents aged 55 and over were satisfied, compared with 64% of those aged 18-34 years old.

Q19: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with: the final outcome of your query?



Base: All who contacted The Highland Council with a housing enquiry in the last 12 months excluding no response (2,001)

There were mixed feelings regarding the final outcome of queries. Over half (54%) of respondents were satisfied, selecting either 1 (38%) or 2 (16%), however, almost one third (32%) were dissatisfied. This mirrors concerns about the outcome of complaints.

Variations in satisfaction across management areas were fairly limited, however, respondents living in Nairn (63% satisfied) and Caithness (60% satisfied) tended to demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with the outcome of their enquiry than those living in other areas.

As previously noted, older respondents tend to be more satisfied than those in the younger age groups. Amongst tenants aged 55 and over, 63% were satisfied, compared with 45% of those aged 18-34 years old.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Findings are generally positive throughout and show that tenants are largely satisfied with most aspects of The Highland Council's performance as a landlord. On most measures, tenants are much more likely to be satisfied than dissatisfied. However, in most instances respondents were fairly rather than very satisfied, indicating some scope for improvement. Furthermore, some key areas of concern emerge that may warrant further action by the Council and the Housing Services.

Younger tenants tend to be more dissatisfied

Lower levels of satisfaction amongst tenants aged 18-34 ran throughout almost all the survey results. This is not a phenomenon unique to The Highland Council, however. Research for other councils in Scotland have revealed a similar pattern of response, with older respondents tending to be the most satisfied with services.

Despite this, it may be worth gathering more qualitative detail on younger tenants' experiences of interactions with the Housing Service.

Satisfaction with handling complaints and queries is relatively low

This is especially the case regarding satisfaction with the outcome of complaints. Large proportions of tenants who have complained about anti-social behaviour or made other complaints and queries have been dissatisfied with the outcome. It is not possible to say from the results why satisfaction is relatively low. More in-depth work with complainants would be needed to understand what is behind their dissatisfaction, and to unpick potentially confounding factors such as age, whereby younger tenants may be simply more demanding and less satisfied with the same level of response than older tenants.

There is some variation in satisfaction based on management area

Some areas consistently reported more positive results than others. In particular, tenants in Nairn tended to be happier than most with the Housing Service, and tenants in Skye and Lochalsh more critical. Age profiles are similar between these areas – for example 26% of respondents in Nairn are aged 18-34 compared with 21% in Skye and Lochalsh – so it is unlikely that differences are being driven by the overarching differences in satisfaction between age groups.

The quality of repairs could be better

Although findings in relation to repairs were generally positive, a fairly large proportion of tenants were not satisfied that the repair may not have been carried out correctly the first time.

Staff are well regarded

Despite concerns about the quality of repairs and the outcome of complaints, tenants were mostly positive about their dealings with staff and contractors and their level of politeness and customer service.