

Results: Helping people to improve their homes

This report presents results regarding "Helping people to improve their homes" from Survey 9 of the People's Panel West Lancashire, carried out in Winter 2005/06.

The survey involved 1,123 members of the People's Panel West Lancashire: a response rate of 82.6% on the current membership of 1,360.

The results are based on the 1,123 questionnaires returned, and exclude the members who failed to respond to the survey. The label "no-response" used in some tables indicates the % of respondents to the survey who failed to answer an individual question or part question. As a result of rounding and weighting, some results might not precisely tally between tables.

The People's Panel is generally representative of the total population of West Lancashire in terms of ward populations, ethnicity and gender. However, there is some under-representation of specific age groups. Therefore, to ensure that the distribution of responses is representative of the West Lancashire electoral population as a whole, the survey results have been weighted, based on age within gender population.

The People's Panel West Lancashire was recruited in Summer 2003 using probability (random) sampling, stratified by ward, which means that it has a good standard of statistical validity. The Panel was "refreshed" in summer 2005 when around a third of members were retired, and other residents were recruited to replace them. The reliability of the survey is enhanced by the high number of respondents.

The survey results are estimates of the figure in the whole population which would have given a particular response if everyone had been asked. There is, therefore, always a 'margin of error' which depends, for each question, on the size of the percentage and the number of people who answered the question. The greater the number of respondents, the smaller is the margin of error.

In order to assist with the interpretation of the results, a table is given overleaf which enables the margin of error for each individual result to be calculated.

Margin of error

The table below is an approximate guide to the margin of error appropriate to a specific result percentage and size of base (weighted number of members that question applies to) and based on a 95% confidence level (this is the same high level demanded by Government for Performance indicator surveys, and means that we can be 95% certain that we did not arrive at the result by chance.) The formula used to calculate the margin of error is a widely used one but generally assumes that the sample which was drawn was a simple random one. However, this formula is often used as a rule of thumb for all types of sample. As can be seen, the margin of error for any particular percentage given in the survey analyses depends both on the size of the percentage and the weighted base.

How to use the table

In the left hand column, select the figure closest to the 'size of base' (i.e. the number of people who answered the question: these figures are given at the bottom of each of the results tables.) On the top row, select the column with the percentage closest to your % result. The margin of error is the figure where the row and column intersect.

For example: results show that 45.3% of Panel members thought that the existing policy of helping vulnerable households with housing grants should be continued. The weighted base was 1166. Therefore the margin of error is 2.8%. This means that the true % is 45.3% +/- 2.8% i.e. it lies between 42.5% and 48.1%.

Size of base*	Percentage with the characteristic :									
	95 or 5	90 or 10	85 or 15	80 or 20	75 or 25	70 or 30	65 or 35	60 or 40	55 or 45	50
	+/- %									
50	6.0	8.3	9.9	11.1	12.0	12.7	13.2	13.6	13.8	13.9
100	4.3	5.9	7.0	7.8	8.5	9.0	9.3	9.6	9.8	9.8
150	3.5	4.8	5.7	6.4	6.9	7.3	7.6	7.8	8.0	8.0
200	3.0	4.2	4.9	5.5	6.0	6.4	6.6	6.8	6.9	6.9
250	2.7	3.7	4.4	5.0	5.4	5.7	5.9	6.1	6.2	6.2
300	2.5	3.4	4.0	4.5	4.9	5.2	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.6
350	2.3	3.1	3.7	4.2	4.5	4.8	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.2
400	2.1	2.9	3.5	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.9
450	2.0	2.8	3.3	3.7	4.0	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.6
500	1.9	2.6	3.1	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4
600	1.7	2.4	2.9	3.2	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.0
700	1.6	2.2	2.6	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.7
800	1.5	2.1	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.5
900	1.4	2.0	2.3	2.6	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3
1000	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1
1100	1.3	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0
1200	1.2	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8

* weighted number of members answering the question

Helping people to improve their homes

Panel members were told that the Council gives financial help to vulnerable households for home improvements. Grant aid is available for people who own their homes and people who live in privately-rented accommodation. Vulnerable households are those on low incomes and include elderly or disabled occupants or families with young children. Grants are given on condition that if the home is sold within 10 years, some or all of it has to be repaid to the Council. The Council is reviewing this policy and members' views are being sought.

1. Housing grant policy options

With regard to future housing grant policy, members were asked what they thought the Council should do. They were shown a list of options (as set out in Table 1 below) and asked to tick one.

Table 1 shows that a small majority (45.3%) of members completing Survey 9 thought that the existing policy of helping vulnerable households with housing grants should be continued. Only a small proportion of members (9.5%) indicated extending grant assistance to include households who are not considered vulnerable.

The second highest proportion of members (23.6%) thought the Council should provide loans instead of grants to vulnerable households, which must be repaid when the house is sold. 17.1% preferred a policy of providing such loans to both vulnerable and non-vulnerable households.

Only 3.0% of members thought that no financial help of any sort should be provided to any household. This compares to a previous Panel survey during Winter 2002/03 when 13.0% of members indicated that the Council should not continue to give housing grants.

Table 1: Housing grant policy options

	Preferred policy option :
Continue with the existing policy to help vulnerable households	45.3%
Extend grant assistance to include households who are not considered vulnerable	9.5%
Provide loans instead of grants to vulnerable households, so that the loan MUST be repaid when the house is sold	23.6%
Provide help to vulnerable and non-vulnerable households in the form of loans which MUST be repaid when the house is sold	17.1%
Do not provide any form of financial help, loans or grants, to any household	3.0%
No response	1.4%
Total	100.0%

(Weighted base- completing survey = 1166)

Table 2 sets out these responses as broken down by age, gender, disability, area of residence and broad tenure.

It should be noted that these breakdowns involve smaller numbers of people and therefore the margin of error may be greater.

Continuing the existing policy of helping vulnerable households with housing grants was the most popular option with members of all sub-groups (except those of unknown disability or tenure - very small groups). However, there was some variation, particularly by current tenure and area. For example, whereas 60.7% of non owner-occupiers were in favour of this option, the comparative proportion for owners was 41.4%. Similarly, 49.3% of members from Ormskirk/Aughton & Western Parishes chose this option compared with 38.7% of those from Northern Parishes.

Owners were more likely than non-owners to want the policy changing to one of providing repayable loans to vulnerable households (26.2% and 13.2% respectively indicating this option). A higher proportion of members from Northern Parishes (21.8%) than from Skelmersdale/Up Holland (13.1%) wanted the policy to be changed to providing repayable loans to both vulnerable and non vulnerable households.

Table 2 : Housing grant policy options – by age, gender, disability, area of residence and broad tenure

	Preferred policy option :						
	Continue with existing policy to help vulnerable households	Extend grant assistance to include non-vulnerable households	Provide repayable loans to vulnerable households	Provide repayable loans to vulnerable and non-vulnerable households	Do not provide any financial help	No response	Total
Broad age group							
16-24	46.2%	11.5%	19.2%	19.2%	3.8%	0.0%	100.0%
25-44	46.2%	9.7%	25.4%	15.1%	2.8%	0.9%	100.0%
45-64	42.7%	7.8%	27.2%	17.6%	2.8%	1.8%	100.0%
65+	50.0%	8.7%	18.8%	17.0%	4.1%	1.4%	100.0%
No response	40.2%	15.9%	19.5%	19.5%	0.0%	4.9%	100.0%
Gender							
Male	45.0%	8.9%	24.1%	17.6%	3.1%	1.3%	100.0%
Female	45.5%	10.0%	23.3%	16.7%	2.9%	1.6%	100.0%
Disability							
With a limiting disability	49.4%	13.6%	20.4%	10.5%	3.7%	2.5%	100.0%
With a non limiting disability or no disability	44.7%	9.0%	24.1%	18.0%	2.9%	1.2%	100.0%
No response	14.3%	0.0%	28.6%	42.9%	0.0%	14.3%	100.0%
TOTAL	45.3%	9.5%	23.6%	17.1%	3.0%	1.4%	100.0%

(Weighted base - completing survey = 1166. Age : 16-24 = 129, 25-44 = 351, 45-64 = 385, 65+ = 219, no response = 82. Gender : male = 539, female = 627. Disability : with a limiting disability = 162, with a non-limiting disability or no disability = 998, no response = 6.)

continued overleaf

Table 2 cont

	Preferred policy option :						
	Continue with existing policy to help vulnerable households	Extend grant assistance to include non-vulnerable households	Provide repayable loans to vulnerable households	Provide repayable loans to vulnerable and non-vulnerable households	Do not provide any financial help	No response	Total
Area of residence							
Skelmersdale/Up Holland	47.9%	11.2%	25.7%	13.1%	1.6%	0.5%	100.0%
Ormskirk/Aughton & Western Parishes	49.3%	6.7%	21.6%	16.2%	4.2%	2.0%	100.0%
Northern Parishes	38.7%	10.8%	23.8%	21.8%	3.1%	1.8%	100.0%
Broad tenure							
Owner occupied	41.4%	10.3%	26.2%	17.3%	3.0%	1.7%	100.0%
Non owner occupied	60.7%	6.4%	13.2%	16.2%	3.0%	0.4%	100.0%
No response	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
TOTAL	45.3%	9.5%	23.6%	17.1%	3.0%	1.4%	100.0%

(Weighted base - completing survey = 1166. Area of residence : Skelmersdale/Up Holland = 374, Ormskirk/Aughton & Western Parishes = 402, Northern Parishes = 390. Broad tenure : owner occupied = 930, non owner occupied = 232, no response = 4)

