



Life in Lancashire Wave 16

Fieldwork 7 June – 14 July 2006
The county of Lancashire
Finding out about county council services
Using county council services
Use of public buildings
The Lancashire County Council website

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1 Executive Summary

Wave 16 of Life in Lancashire was sent to 2,367 members of the panel on 7 June. A reminder was sent to non-respondents on 28 July. The fieldwork ended on 14 July 2006.

The questionnaire covered attitudes to the county of Lancashire, explored how people access council services and whether their background affects this, and the Directgov and Lancashire County Council websites.

In total 1,461 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 62%.

1.1 The county of Lancashire

- When given a list of words to describe Lancashire, residents were most likely to describe it as traditional (64%). One person in three said it was forward-looking (33%).
- Over four in five of the panel agree that it is important that the county of Lancashire has a county council, with almost half agreeing strongly, (83% agree, 47% strongly agree). This is a significant increase on the same question asked to a different panel in 2001.
- Four in five respondents feel good about living in Lancashire (79%). A majority of the panel also agree that people in Lancashire need a stronger voice in Westminster (75%) and that local government in Lancashire would improve by local agencies working better together (77%). Despite the majority agreeing the need for a county council, almost half still agree that local government within Lancashire needs to be reorganised (47%).
- If there were to be changes to councils in Lancashire, the two most important priorities are making sure it is accountable to local people (29%) and the quality of services (26%).
- Over half of panel members said they knew either a great deal or a fair amount about the local councils and their services (55%), while those from a black or ethnic minority background were most likely to say they knew not very much or nothing at all (66%).

1.2 Conclusions

The results for the county council appear very strong; four in five of the panel agree that it is important for Lancashire to have a county council. However, a sizeable minority agree that local government needs to be reorganised. The solution to this apparent contradiction may lie in the fact that most people agree that local government in Lancashire would improve by local agencies working together better. The county council is working increasingly closely with district councils, though how well this is known is unclear. It may be simply that this work needs to be communicated better.

2 Introduction

Lancashire County Council has used Life in Lancashire regularly since August 2001. A panel of willing participants is recruited and is approached on a regular basis to seek their views on a range of topics and themes. Panel members are voluntary participants in the research they complete and no incentives are given for completion.

The panel has been designed to be a representative cross-section of the county's population. The results for each survey are weighted in order to reflect the demographic profile of the county's population.

The panel provides access to a sufficiently large sample of the population so that reliable results can be reported at a county wide level. It also provides data at a number of sub-area and sub-group levels.

Each Life in Lancashire wave is themed. Firstly, it enables sufficient coverage on a particular topic to be able to provide insight into that topic. And secondly, it comes across better to the residents completing the questionnaires if there is a clear theme (or 2-3 clear themes) within each survey.

The panel is refreshed periodically. New members are recruited to the panel and some current members are retired on a random basis. This means that the panel remains fresh and is not subject to conditioning ie the views of panel members become too informed with county council services to be unrepresentative of the population as a whole. The current panel was recruited in September 2005.

3 Research Objectives

The main questions areas looked at:

- attitudes towards the county of Lancashire;
- ways to find out about Lancashire County Council services;
- whether people's background had affected their use of services; and
- the county council website.

4 Methodology

Wave 16 of Life in Lancashire was sent to 2,367 members of the panel on 7 June. A reminder was sent to non-respondents on 28 July. The fieldwork ended on 14 July 2006.

No incentive for respondents to complete the questionnaire was given. In total 1,461 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 62%.

All data are weighted by gender, age, ethnicity and district to reflect the Lancashire overall population, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled down to match the effective response of 1,083 which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

4.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1,000 respond with a particular answer, the chance are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (ie +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

5 Main Research Findings

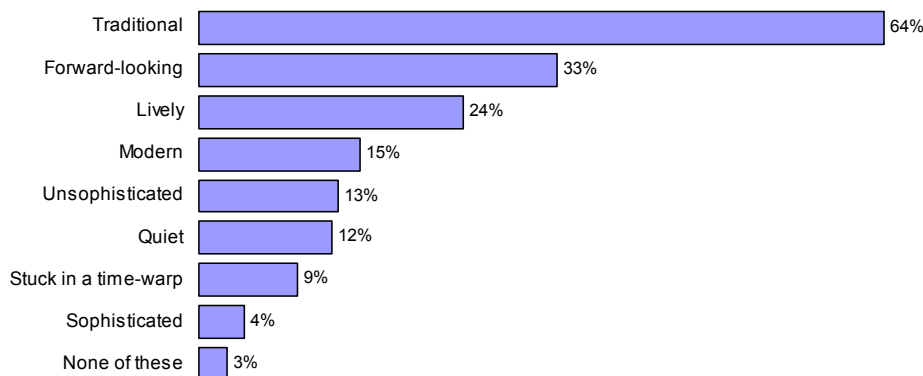
A marked up questionnaire can be found in Appendix 8.2.

5.1 The county of Lancashire

The first section of the Life in Lancashire Wave 16 questionnaire dealt with Lancashire as a county. Respondents were asked which words describe Lancashire and whether or not they agreed to a set of statements about the county.

About two in three respondents described Lancashire as **traditional** (64%), with respondents aged 25-44 years (75%) significantly more likely to say so. A third of panel members would describe Lancashire as **forward-looking** (33%), though this is linked to the age of the respondent, with only 12% of those under 25 thinking so, rising to 44% of people aged 60 or over. A larger proportion of younger panel members say that Lancashire is **stuck in a time warp** (18%). Only about one in eleven of the panel overall think this though (9%).

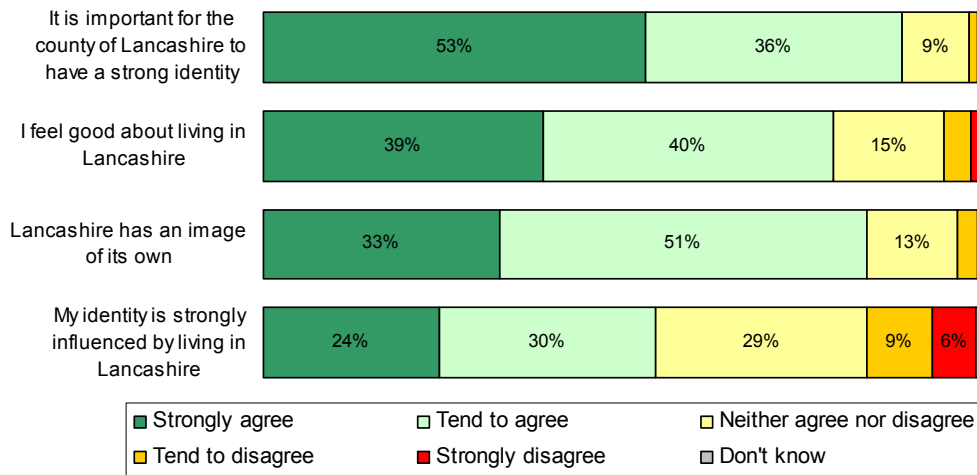
Chart 1 - Which, if any of the following words or phrases would you use to describe Lancashire to a stranger? (Please tick as many as apply)



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1461, Weighted 1083)

The next questions asked the panel how much they agree with a group of statements about Lancashire. The majority of respondents agree that it is important for Lancashire to **have a strong identity** (89% agree), that they **feel good about living in Lancashire** (79%) and that **Lancashire has an image of its own**, (74% agree). Only just over half agree that their **identity is strongly influenced by living in Lancashire** (54%). Demographically, people aged 60 or over are significantly more likely to agree with each statement. Residents of Hyndburn and Pendle are significantly less likely to agree that they feel good about living in Lancashire; though a majority still do (27% strongly agree in Pendle, 25% strongly agree in Pendle).

Chart 2 - How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Lancashire?



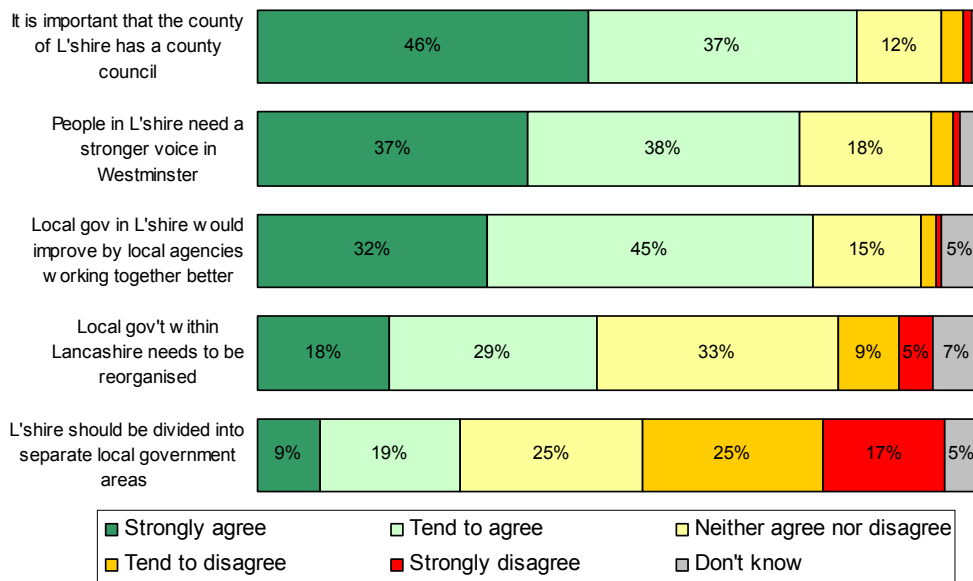
Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1461, Weighted 1083)

The majority of the panel agree that it is important that **the county of Lancashire has a county council**, which is an encouraging result (83% agree, 46% strongly agree). A majority of the panel also agree that **people in Lancashire need a stronger voice in Westminster** (75%) and that **local government in Lancashire would improve by local agencies working better together** (77%). Despite the majority agreeing the need for a county council, almost half still agree that **local government within Lancashire needs to be reorganised** (47%). More of the panel disagree than agree that **Lancashire should be divided into separate local government regions**, (42% disagree, 28% agree).

People who are aged 60 or over and who say they know a great deal or a fair amount about local councils are more likely to strongly agree that **it is important Lancashire has a county council** (54% and 52% respectively). Respondents from socioeconomic grouping¹ C2 are significantly more likely to agree that people in Lancashire need a stronger voice in Westminster (54% strongly agree).

¹ See appendix 6.1 for definitions

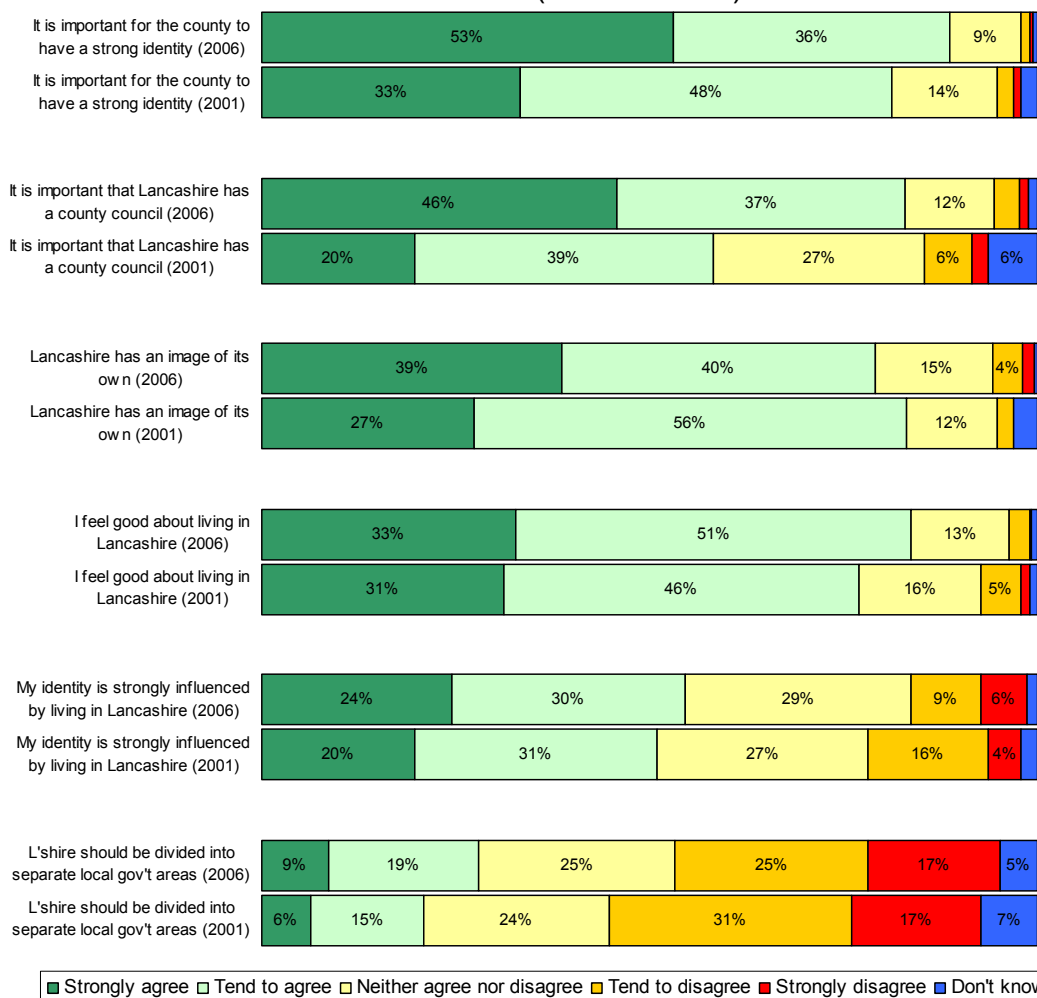
Chart 3 - How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Lancashire?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1461, Weighted 1083)

Some of the above questions were asked on the 3rd wave of the Life in Lancashire panel in 2001 and these are compared in the chart. There are some differences between the panel in 2001 and 2006, most notably that in 2001 the panel was shared with the Lancashire Police Authority and so some panel members were from Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen. This needs to be remembered when comparing the two panels.

Chart 4 - How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Lancashire? (2006 vs 2001)



Base: All respondents 2006 (Unweighted 1461, Weighted 1083); 2002 (Unweighted 1844, Weighted 1384)

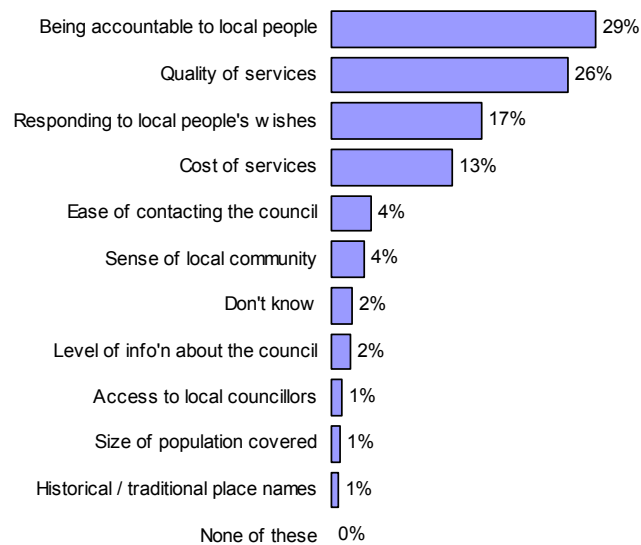
The differences are greatest for the questions on that **it is important for Lancashire to have a strong identity**, (20% more strongly agreeing in 2006), and **important for it to have a county council**, (26% more strongly agreeing in 2006). While some of these differences will be due to the panel having members from outside the county administrative area, the maximum agreement for any district on whether there should be a county council was 69% in South Ribble in 2001. This is less than the **overall** average agreement in 2006, meaning there is a significant difference between the panels in 2001 or 2006 on this question.

Why there should be such a marked difference is uncertain, but it could be either that the make-ups of the two panels are different, or that the proposed boundary changes of 2004 and subsequent communications from the county council have had an effect on people's opinions. Both panels are weighted to match census figures for Lancashire by age, ethnicity and

district, but there could be differences attitudinally. The respondents on both panels have been on the panel for approximately the same amount of time, but the current panel is exclusively for Lancashire County Council, which could explain some greater disposition, however the strength of the change implies a real increase.

The next question asked what needs to be considered if there were to be changes to local government in the county.

Chart 5 - If there were to be changes to councils in Lancashire, which one of the following, if any, do you think is the single most important issue to take into account?



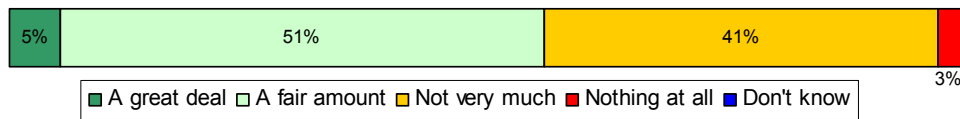
Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1461, Weighted 1083)

It is most important for any changes to make sure it is **accountable to local people** (29%), **takes into account quality of services** (26%) and **responds to local people's wishes** (17%). Men are significantly more likely to name being **accountable to local people** (33%), while full time workers are more likely to name **quality of services** (30%) than the rest of the panel.

This same question was asked on the Boundary Committee for England's survey of 2004. The top three reasons were the same then, with the difference that quality of services was rated as the most important.

The last question on this section asked how much members of the panel felt they knew about local councils. More than half of the panel thought they knew at least a fair amount (56%).

Chart 6 - How much would you say you know about local councils and the services they provide?



■ A great deal □ A fair amount ■ Not very much ■ Nothing at all ■ Don't know

Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1461, Weighted 1083)

Respondents aged 45-59 years were most likely to say they knew **a great deal** or **a fair amount** (62%), while those from a black or ethnic minority background were most likely to say they knew **not very much** or **nothing at all** (66%).

6 Appendix

6.1 Socio-Economic Group Definitions

These groups are based on Market Research Society definitions and on the respondent. They are graded as A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

Group A

- Professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top-level civil servants.
- Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows

Group B

- Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
- Principle officers in local government and civil service
- Top management or owners of small business concerns, educational and service establishments
- Retired people previously grade B, and their widows

Group C1

- Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all others in non-manual positions
- Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational requirements
- Retired people, previously grade C1, and their widows

Group C2

- All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers for responsibility for other people
- Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group D

- All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
- Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their late job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group E

- All those entirely dependant on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons
- Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months (otherwise classified on previous occupation)
- Casual workers and those without a regular income

6.2 Marked Up Questionnaire