

Hutt City Council Customer Service Centre Survey December 2005



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Background

- This survey is a repeat of the ACNielsen customer satisfaction assessments conducted in 1999 and replicated in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004.
- In 2005, the data collection was carried out by Consumer Link, who also provided raw tabulations of the results.
- This document is the write up of the results of the Consumer Link data with reference to the ACNielsen findings for the previous four years only.



METHODOLOGY

- The 2005 survey consisted of interviews with 208 customers who had visited one of the four customers service desks-- reception, approvals, engineering, or payments.
- The questionnaire used is the same questionnaire from the earlier ACNielsen surveys.
- This report contains comparisons with the earlier surveys. However the sample size in 2005 is closer to the 2002 and 2001 surveys. The 2003 survey only consisted of 93 respondents and the 2004 increased slightly to 150 respondents. This is compared with 274 in 2002, and 304 in 2001. Comparisons with the 2003 and 2004 results are less reliable because of the much smaller sample sizes in those two years.



Executive Summary

- The 2005 survey shows a relatively satisfactory performance by the various Hutt City Council Customer Service Centres.
- Highest performance ratings are for quality of staff and physical environment.
- A comparison with previous years shows a consistent improvement over the 2004 results but still a drop in percentage ratings from those of 2003. However, 2005 shows a mostly consistent improvement over ratings in 2002 and 2001.
- The higher performance in 2003 is perhaps a function of the much smaller sample size of this survey, less than half of the 2005 sample, and a third of the 2001 sample. The lower the sample, the higher the variability in the results and the higher the margin of error.
- It is therefore more appropriate to compare the higher sample sizes of 2005 and 2002/2001.



Executive Summary

In 2005, Hutt City Council's customers are most likely to agree that the Council:

- Has staff who are always courteous with customers (93%)
- Has staff who act in a professional way (92%)
- Has staff who are always easy to approach for assistance (90%)
- Has staff who have the knowledge to answer customer queries (89%).



Executive Summary

In 2005, Hutt City Council customers are least likely to agree that:

- When it promises to do something by a certain time that it will do it by that time (68%)
- Has staff who can be relied upon to keep customers informed when necessary (71%)
- Performs the service right the first time (72%)
- Tells customers when they can expect the service to be performed (73%)
- Customers can feel confident that correct changes to their records will be made the first time (73%)



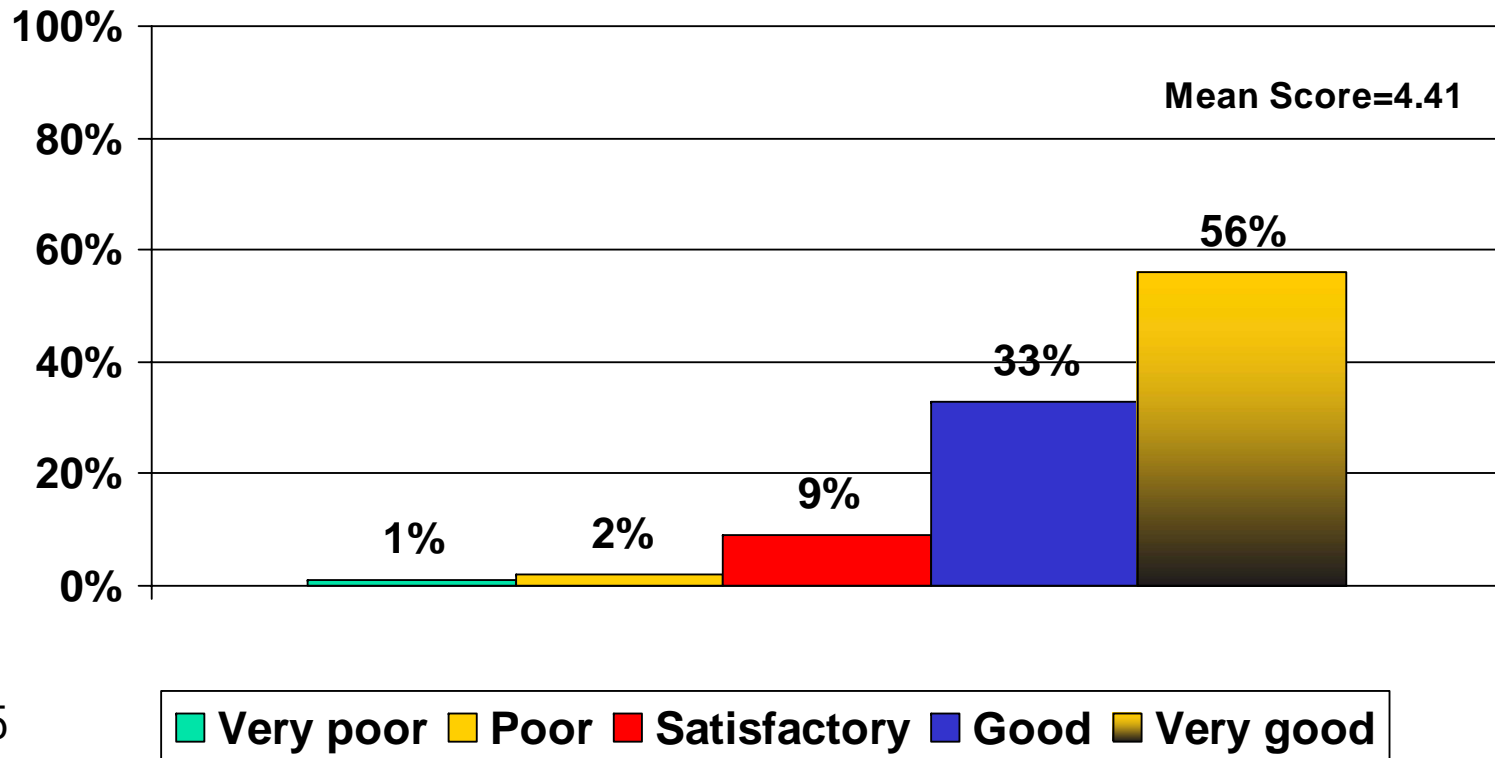
Detailed Results



Overall Satisfaction Levels

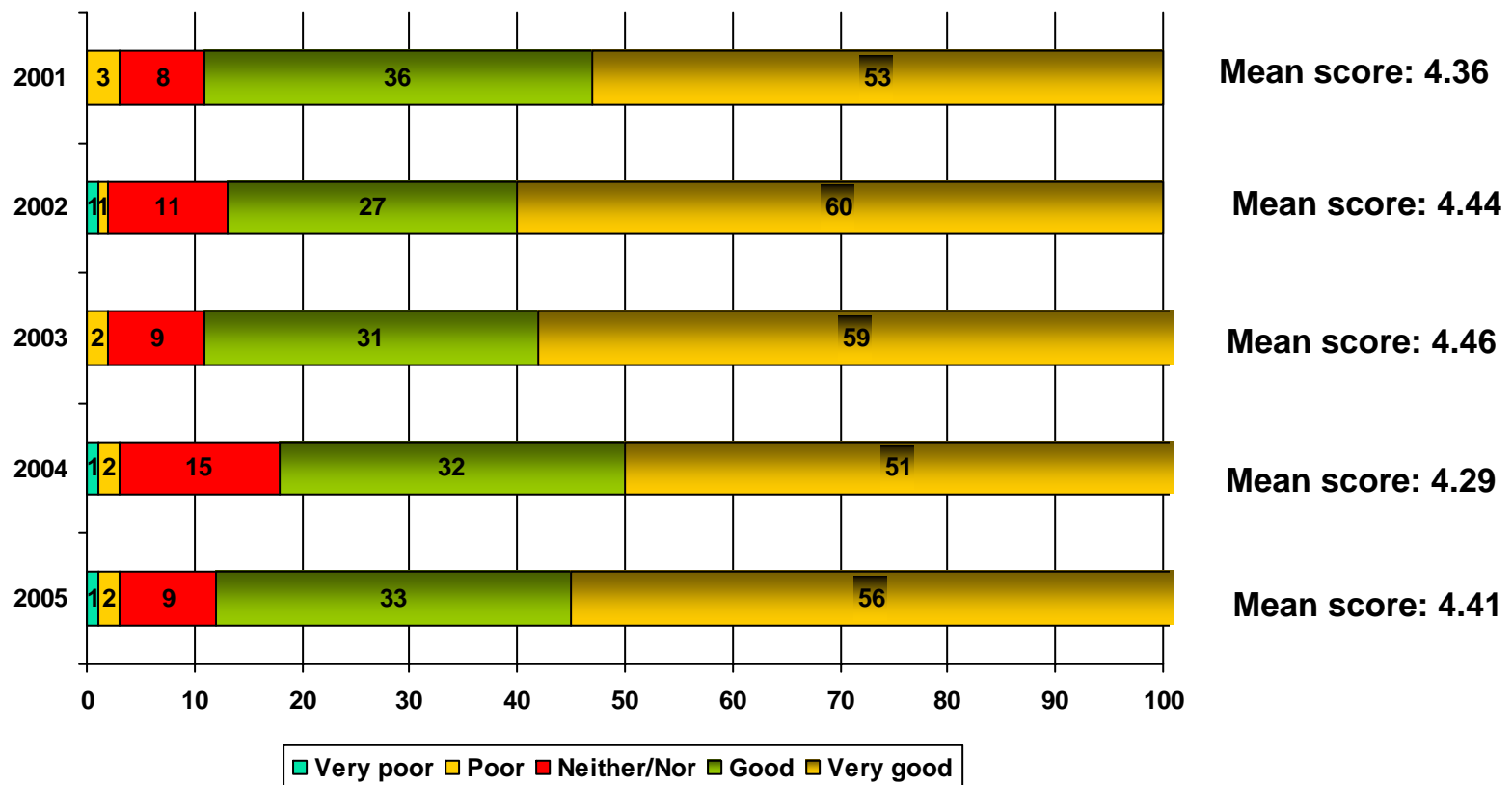
- As in the previous four surveys, respondents were asked to rate their **overall** opinion of Hutt City Council's standard of customer service using a 5 point scale ranging from very good (5) to very poor (1).

Overall 2005 Satisfaction Levels



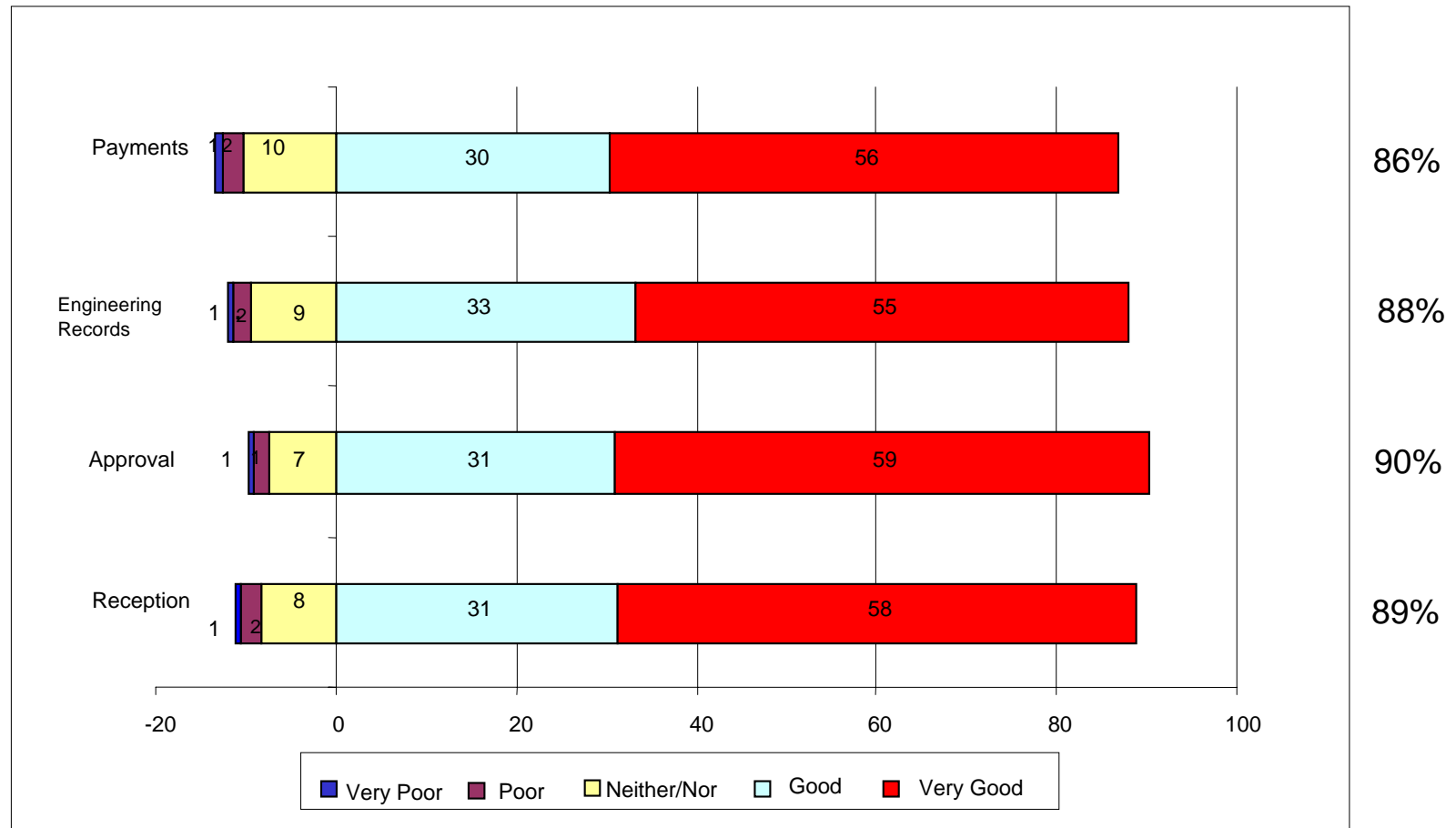
As in previous years, Hutt City Council Customer Service Centre visitors were predominantly positive about the overall standard of customer service, with 89% rating it as 'very good' or 'good'. Only 2% gave an overall rating of 'poor' to the service they experienced. A mean score of 4.41 out of 5 translates to an average overall rating of 88%.

Comparison of 2005 Satisfaction Levels With Previous Four Years



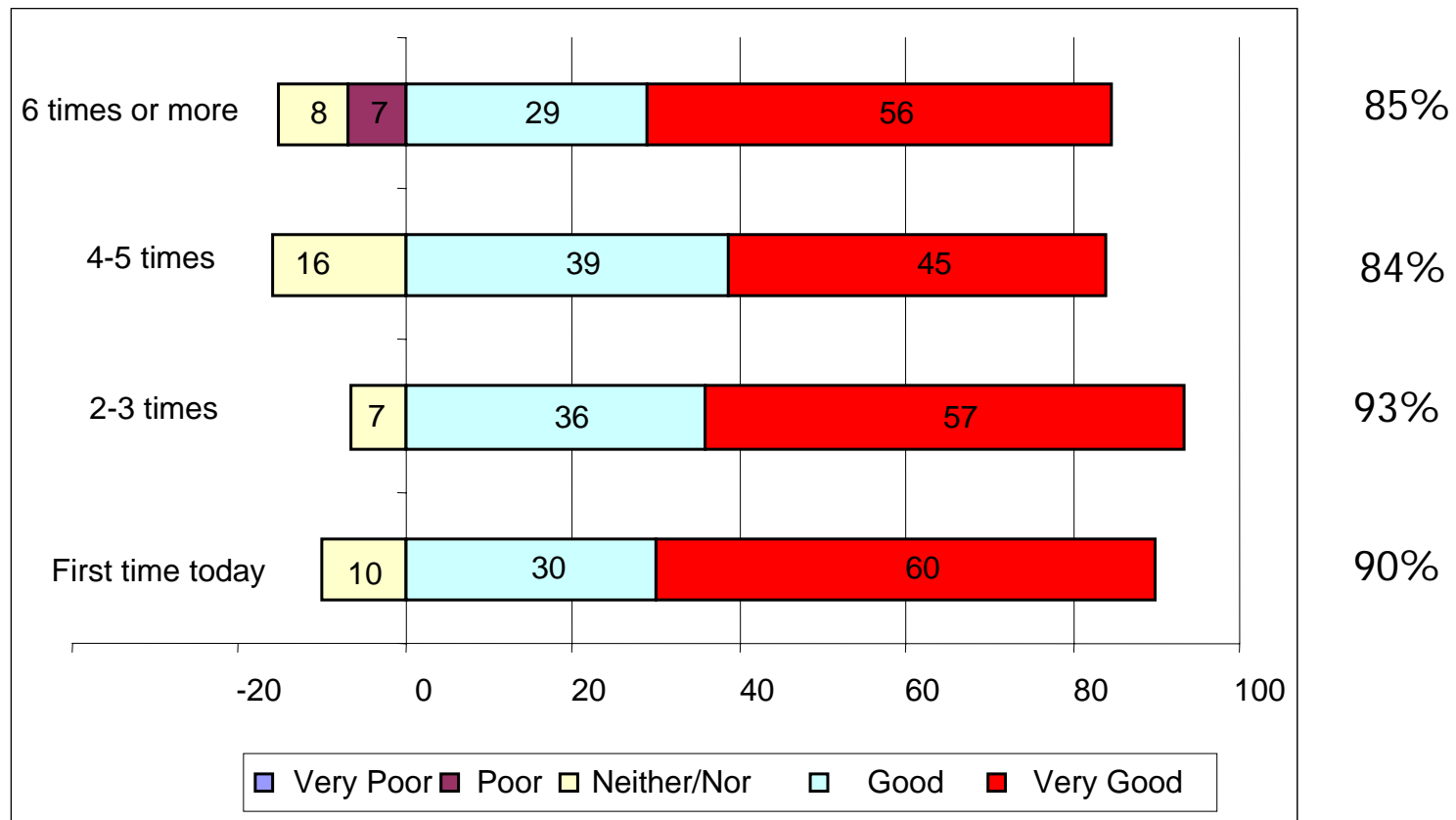
When the past years are compared with the 2005 overall satisfaction levels, the chart above shows that 2005 was an improvement over 2004 and 2001, but the highest ratings were in 2003. The percentage of “very good” in 2005 ratings was higher or equal to all the other years except 2002 where it was just one percentage point greater. When “good” and “very good” are combined, 2005 results are higher than all except 2003.

Overall Opinion Of Service By Service Desk



Although the numbers visiting some desks are much smaller than others, the chart above shows the highest ratings were for the Approvals desk. However, the differences between service desks ratings are too small to be significant.

Overall Opinion of Service By Number Of Times Visited Council



Respondents visiting for the first time and 2 or three times were more likely to be positive than those who had visited four or more times.



Triggers for Positive Rating

Main Triggers for positive perceptions (Very good or Good) (n=181, 87%)

- Friendly, polite and helpful
- Staff courteous and cooperative
- Staff are efficient and helpful
- Fast service
- Staff cheerful and smiling
- Easy directions to appropriate department
- Able to answer questions without referring to someone else.



Reasons For Dissatisfaction

Respondents who gave “poor” or “very poor” as their overall rating for the service they received, cited the following reasons for their dissatisfaction:

- The Council should give a small discount to ratepayers who want to pay rates once a year instead of wasting their time and the ratepayers' by receiving 6 payments.
- A few years ago asked for a rubbish bin outside my house to put the rubbish from the street in but they didn't do anything about it. Staff are friendly, if ringing up about streetlights can never get straight through.
- Always a delay, seems to be a shortage of staff.
- In the past I have found some staff very unhelpful to very simple questions. It seems no one wants to commit to answering questions in fear of reprisals. The reason for my visit today has been going on for months and in my view is not a complicated issue. But we seem to have made progress.
- There are specific time performance criteria laid out that the Council must adhere to. However due to work pressures the Council ignores this and completes the request in its own time frame. Whilst this is understandable, it is frustrating and unprofessional that the Council can set its own rules while pretending to be efficient. Clients have no idea how long to expect things to be completed and are at the total discretion of Council. It took eight weeks to get a Building consent and a similar time to get a simple resource consent (land subdivision) which met all the criteria completed. The Council seems to have lots of time blockages between the various Council departments. If one department is busy the consent seems to sit there and when finally approved move onto the next, again just waiting. There appears no urgency at all because consumers don't have another choice.

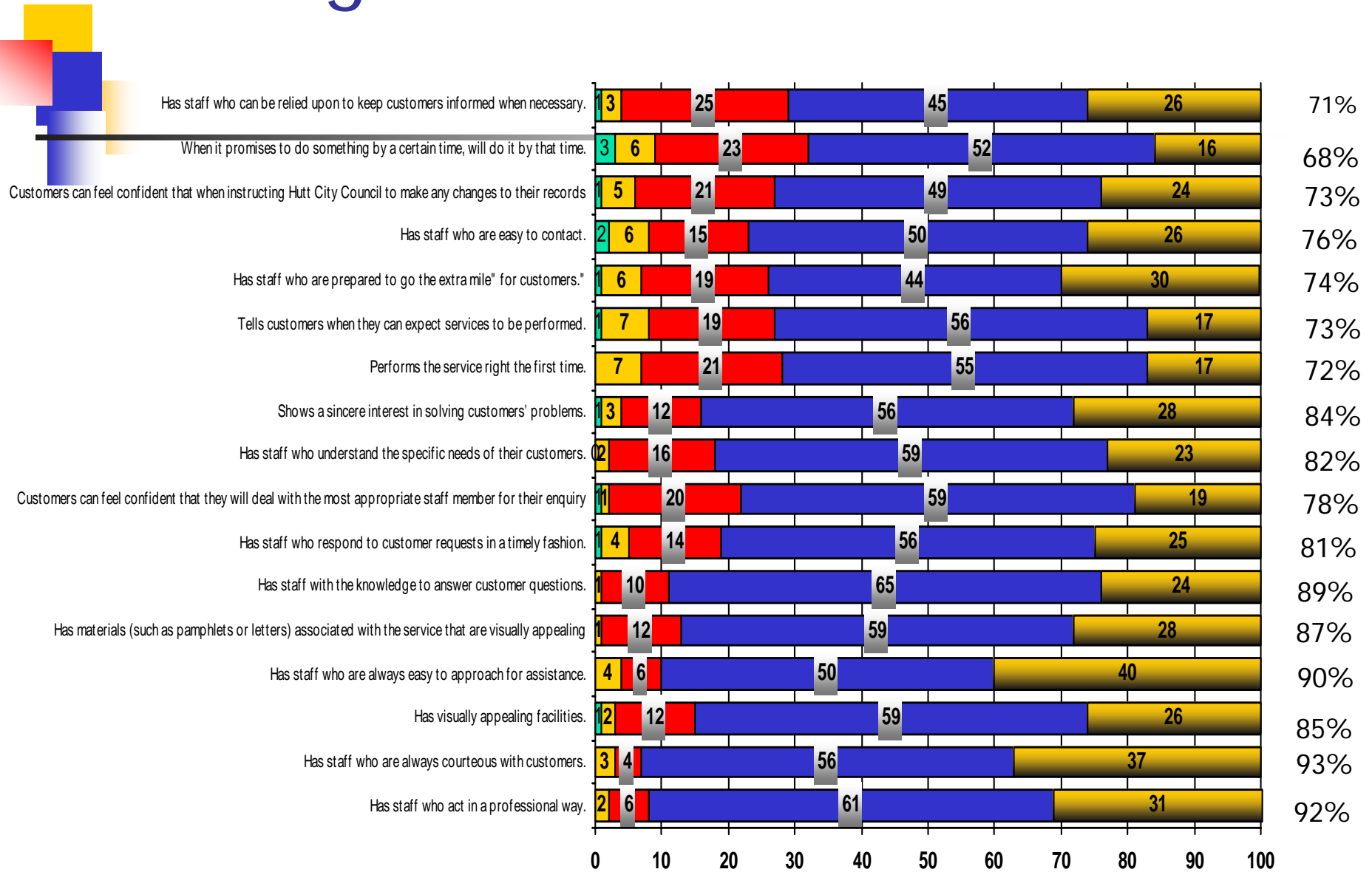


Proposed Solution/Suggestions

Respondents gave the following suggestions to how service might be improved.

- Have separate department for industry so that employment and manufacturing can commence faster than residential matters
- Alterations to venue bookings are communicated to all staff who need to know, eg. Custodian.
- Speed up time for inspections/hire more inspectors
- Longer opening hours
- Increase staffing at counters
- Online drainage plans
- Small children's play area would be helpful
- Statements eg rates not clear to follow
- Cost of search & copy of plans free
- Follow up on queries and complaints made
- Employ more skilled people in the building dept. and planning dept

Rating of Service Attributes



■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neither/Nor
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree



Issues Needing Attention

	% Disagree
When it promises to do something by a certain time, will do it by that time	9
Tells customers when they can expect services to be performed	8
Has staff who are easy to contact	8
Performs the service right the first time	7
Has staff who are prepared to go the extra mile for customers	7
Customers feel confident when instructing Hutt City Council to make any changes to their records, that the correct changes will be made the first time	6
Has staff who respond to customer requests in a timely fashion	5

Of all the items, only the above statements had 5% or more respondents who disagreed with the statement, indicating dissatisfaction with the service.

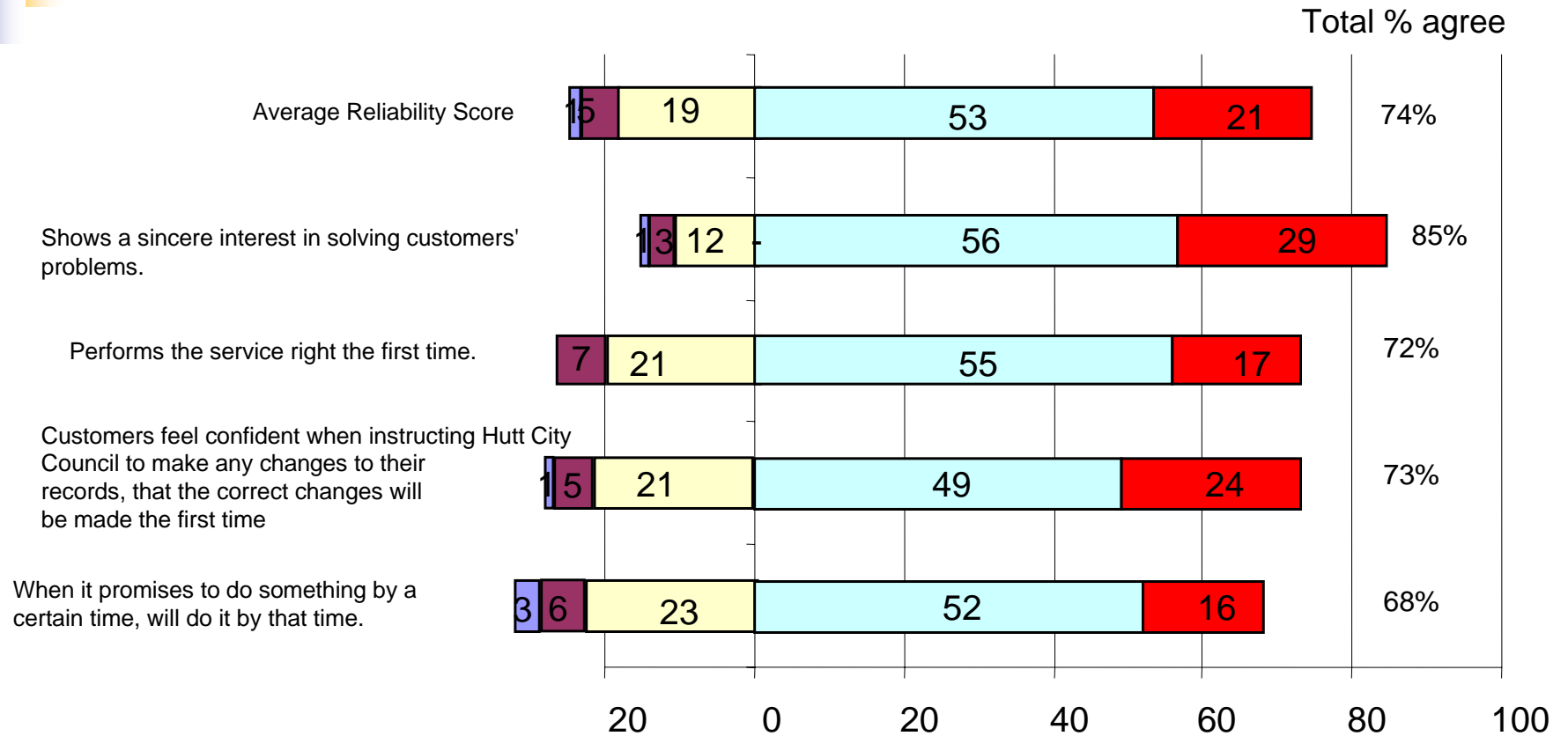


Service Dimensions

- To maintain comparability with the ACNielsen results, the following slides show the 2005 ratings for the statements grouped according to five service dimensions:

Reliability
Responsiveness
Assurance
Empathy
Tangibles

Reliability Dimensions



■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree

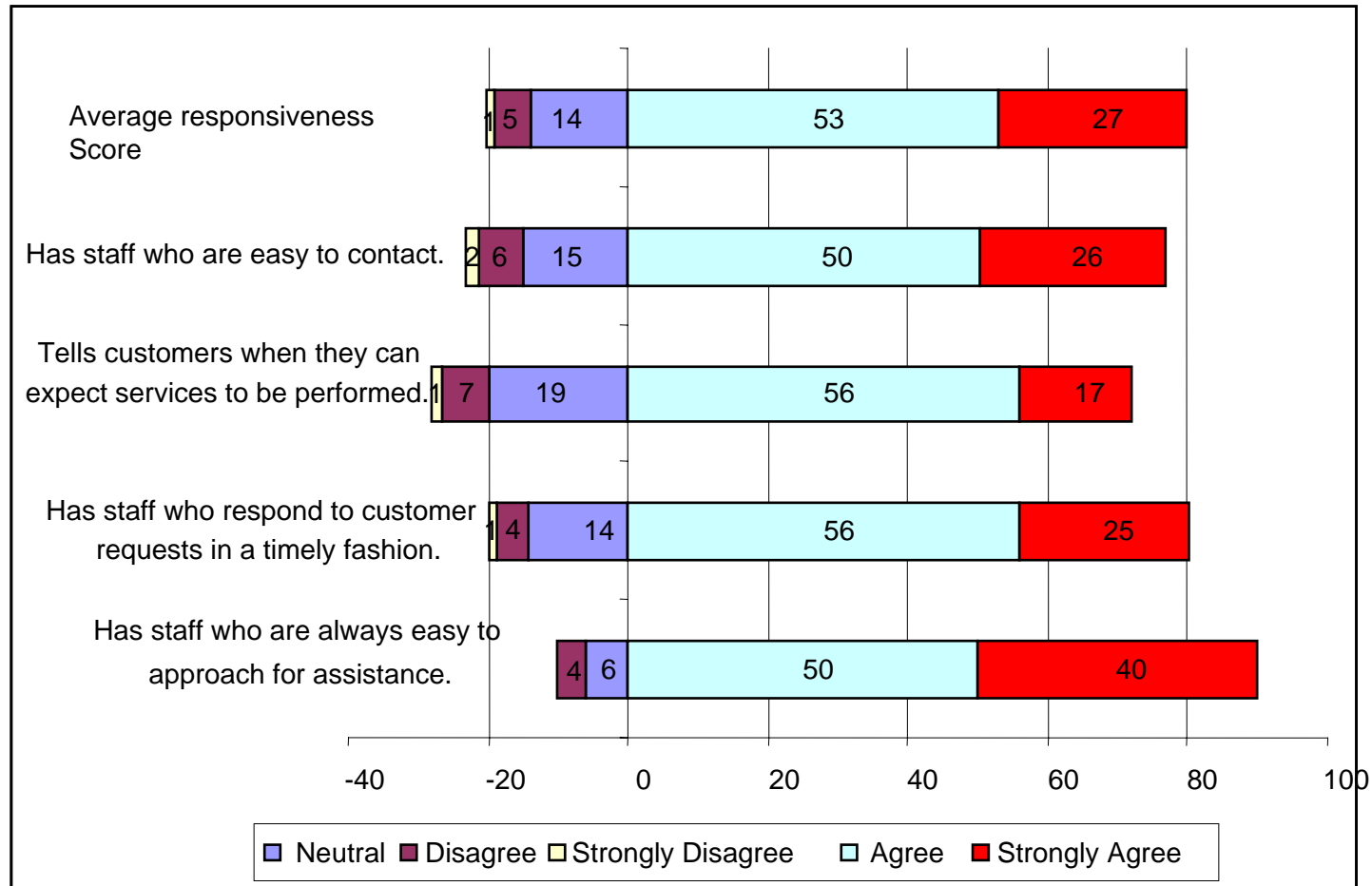


Reliability Dimensions

- The overall average level of satisfaction (74% in 2005 who agree or strongly agree) with the reliability dimensions generally slightly decreased from the 2003 levels (83%), but increased considerably over the 2004 level of only 66%.
- However, the key factor leading to the 2003 results is the rise of respondents who had no definite opinion, selecting neither agree nor disagree as their response. This shift to neutrality was least evident in the 2003 data compared with all the other years, which led to a higher % who agreed or strongly agreed.
- It is important to note that in 2005 there is a rise in the number of respondents who agreed with the statement “Shows a sincere interest in solving customers' problems” which showed a slight improvement over the 2003 results and thus higher than all the previous years.

Responsiveness Dimensions

Total % agree



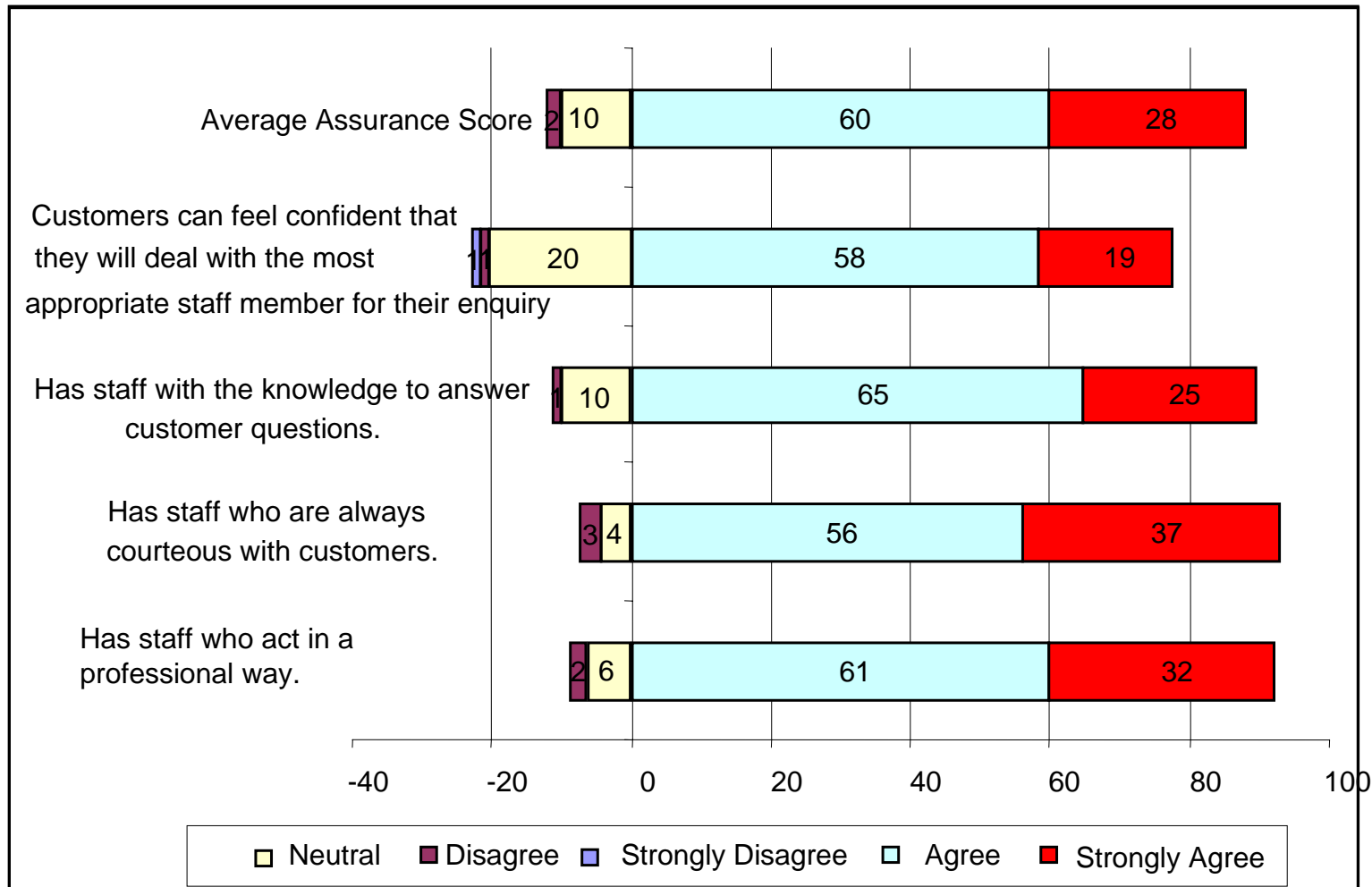


Responsiveness Dimensions

- The level of satisfaction with the responsiveness dimensions also increased in 2005 over the 2004 levels (80% versus 76% in 2004). However, the 2003 levels were somewhat higher at an average score of 88%, but comparable to those of 79% in 2002 and 82% in 2001.
- However, the 2005 results are much more similar to the 2002 and 2001 levels where the sample sizes are also more comparable than the number interviewed in 2003.
- The highest score in 2005 was related to “has staff who are always easy to approach for assistance” (90%) compared with 92% in 2004, 94% in 2003, 89% in 2002 and 90% in 2001.

Assurance Dimensions

Total % agree



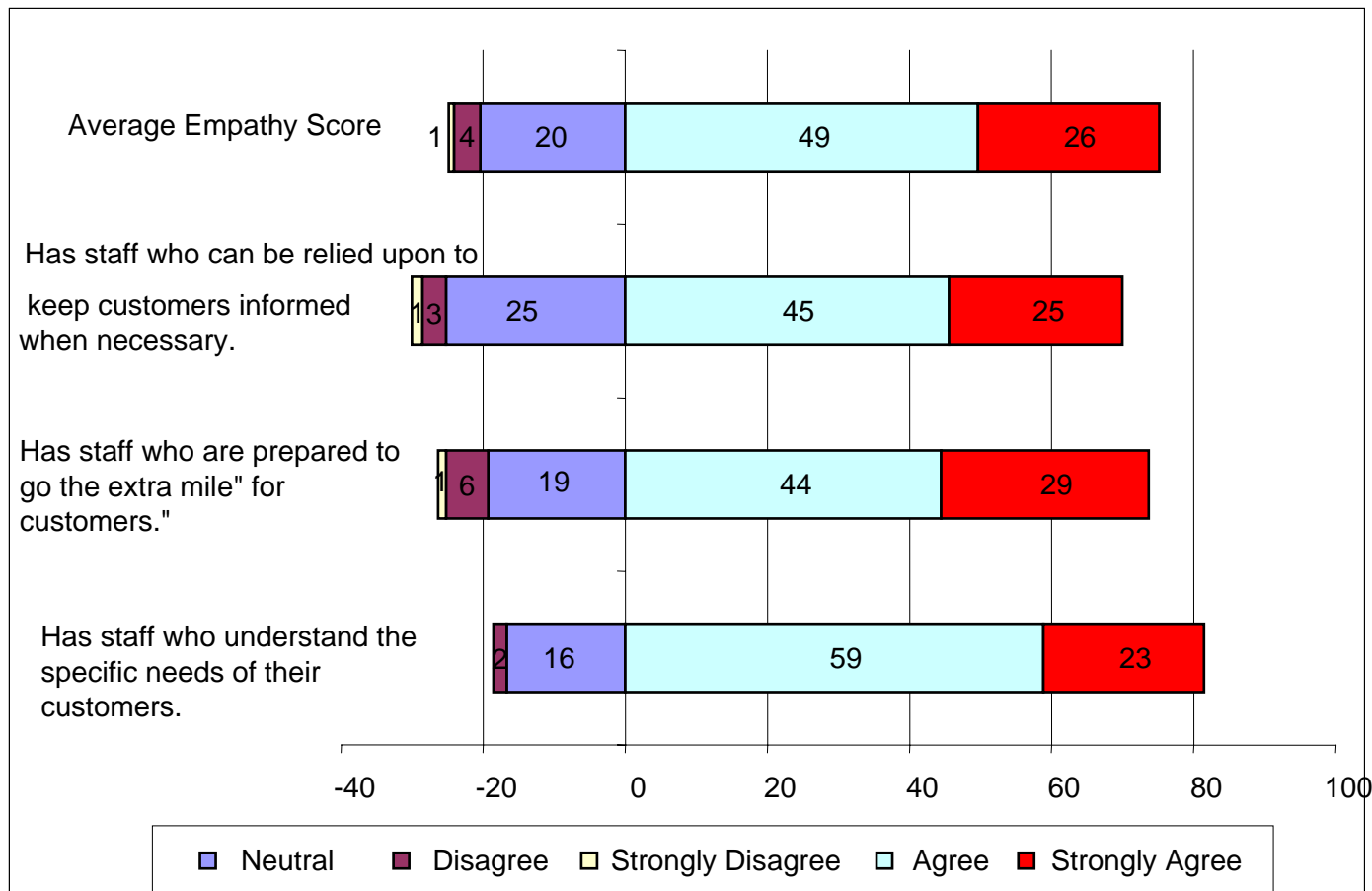


Assurance Dimensions

- The level of satisfaction with the assurance dimensions appears to be much higher than for the reliability and responsiveness dimensions, particularly for aspects of staff professionalism and courteousness (each scoring 93% agreement).
- The average overall assurance score is 88% compared with only 80% for responsiveness, and 74% for reliability.
- In comparison with previous years, the 2005 results show an improvement over 2004 (88% versus 85% in 2004) but still slightly lower than the 92% of 2003 but comparable or sometimes higher than the results for 2002 and 2001.

Empathy Dimensions

Total % agree



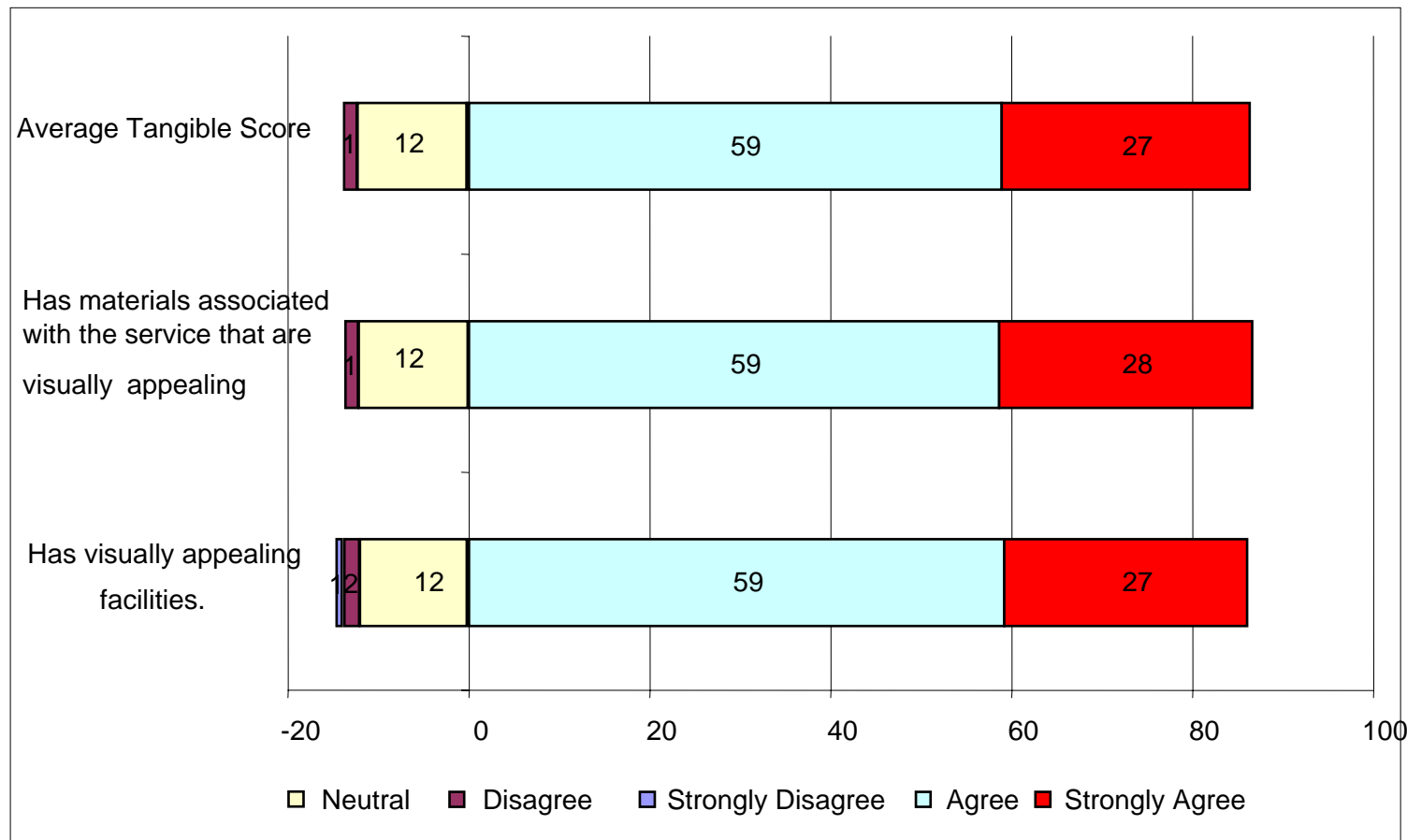


Empathy Dimensions

- As with the other two dimensions, the level of satisfaction with the empathy dimensions has dropped from the 2003 levels but is almost identical to the 2002 and 2001 levels.
- The highest score among the empathy related statements was 82% for “staff who understand the specific needs of their customers”. This attribute scored 85% in 2003, also the highest of the three empathy attributes, 78% in 2002 and 80% in 2001.
- If we disregard the 2003 results of 83% due to the much smaller sample size, the 2005 average empathy ratings are much higher than the 72% of 2004 and also higher than both 2002 and 2001 (75% average in 2005, compared with 72% in 2002 and 75% in 2001.)

Tangible Dimensions

Total % agree





Tangible Dimensions

- Customer Service Centres appear to be doing very well in the area of tangible dimensions.
- Respondents were more generous with their ratings in 2005 than in 2002 and 2001.
- “More visually appealing materials” achieved the highest improvement in scoring, reaching 87% in 2005, compared with 86% in 2004, and the much lower 75% in 2002 and 80% in 2001.
- Average rating of tangible dimensions was 86% in 2005, slightly lower than 89% in 2004, but higher than 80% in 2002 and 83% in 2001. In 2003, however, the average satisfaction with tangible dimensions was as high as 95%.



Summary Scores

Overall average score for empathy

2001
2002
2003
2004
2005

Overall average score for reliability

2001
2002
2003
2004
2005

Overall average score for responsiveness

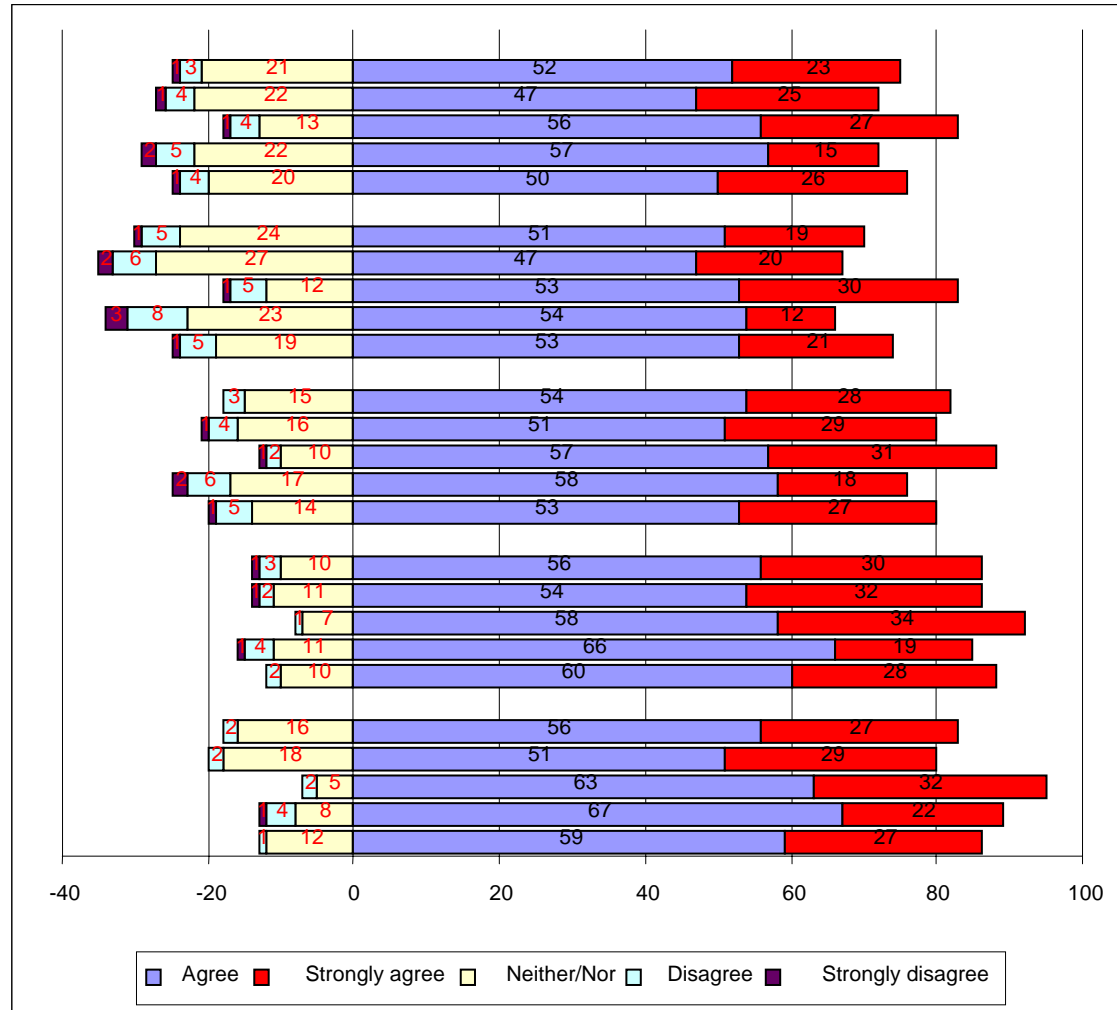
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005

Overall average score for assurance

2001
2002
2003
2004
2005

Overall average score for tangibles

2001
2002
2003
2004
2005





Comparison of Summary Scores

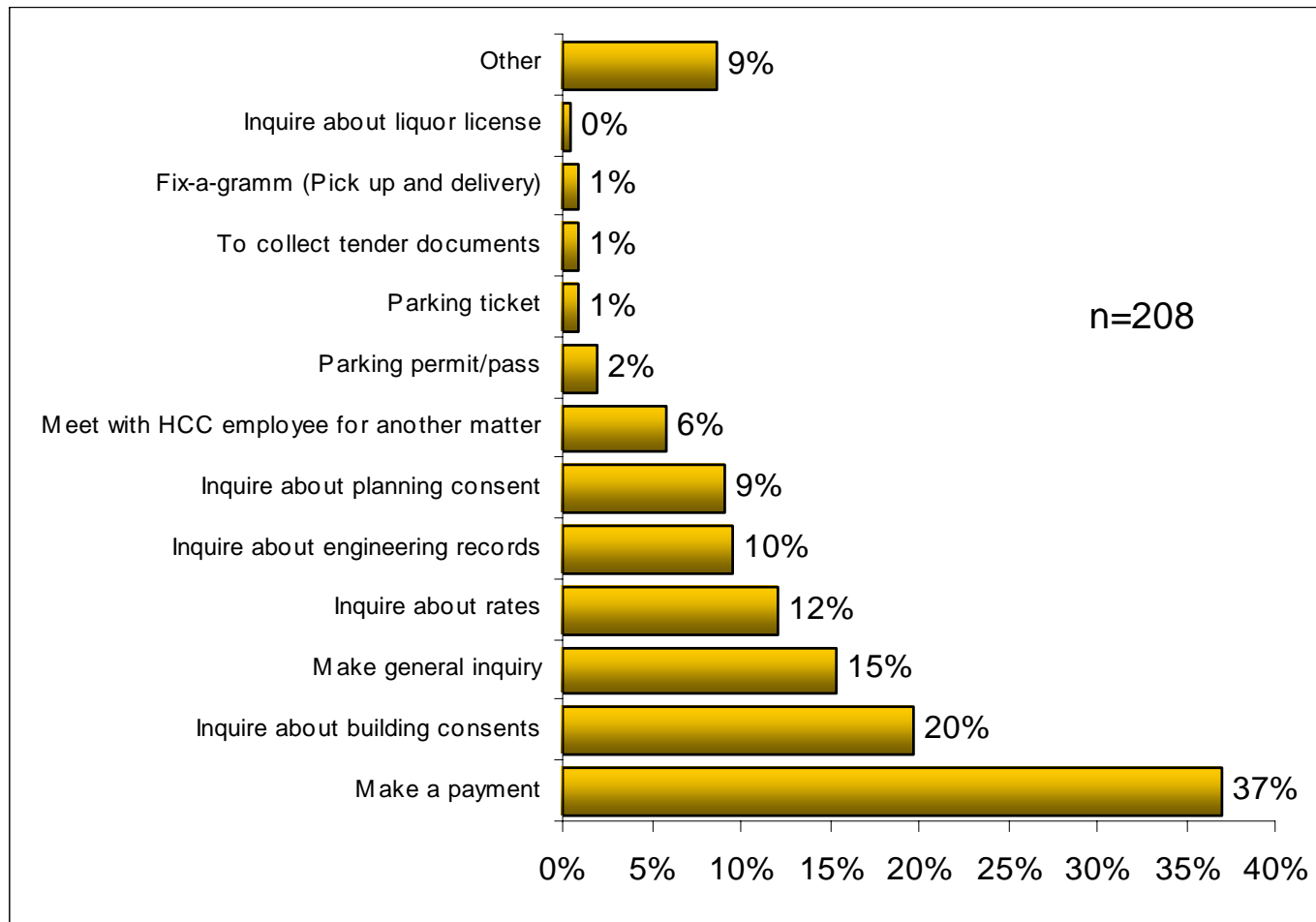
- When summary scores are examined, the 2005 results show the highest ratings for assurance dimensions followed by tangible dimensions.
- This is consistent with the 2004, 2003 and 2001 findings.
- This means that Council has a strong workforce and a physically appealing work environment.
- In comparison with previous years, the 2005 results are highest on the reliability and empathy dimensions if the 2003 results are not included in the comparisons.



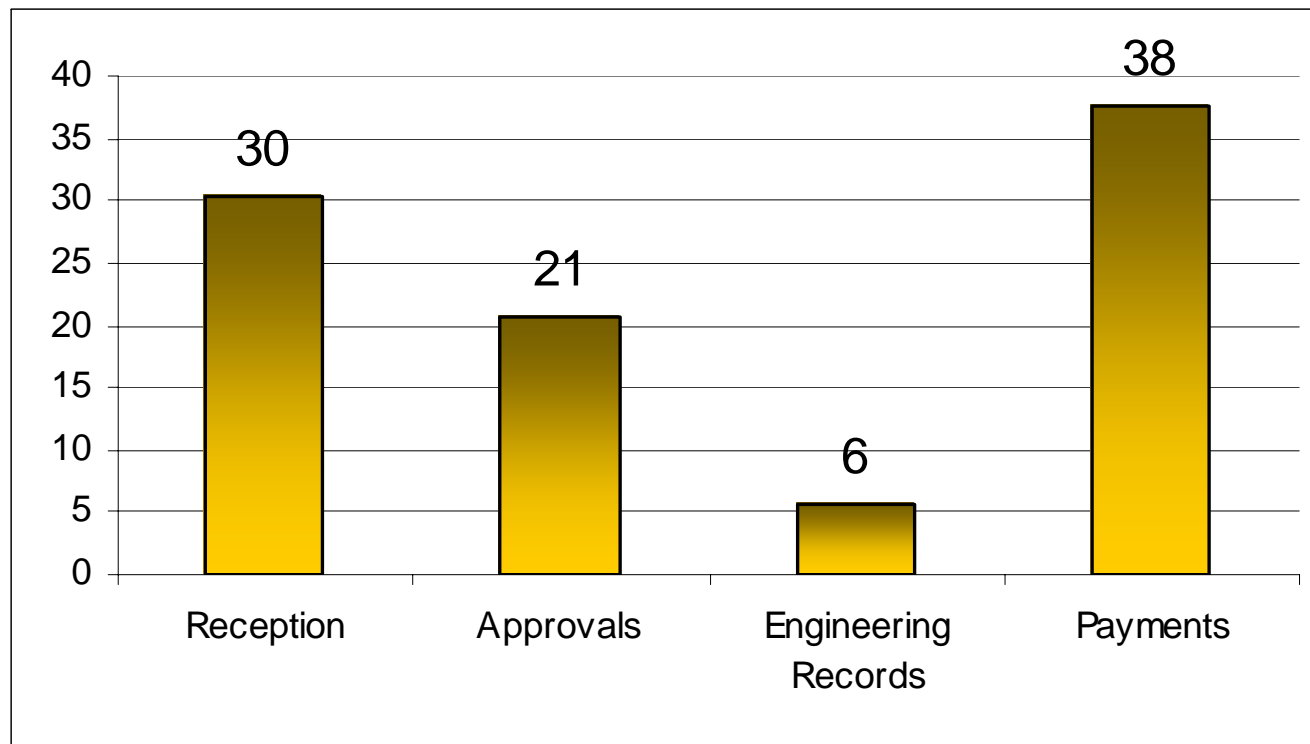
Demographics

- The following slides show the various demographic characteristics of the respondents to the 2005 survey.

Reason For Council Visit

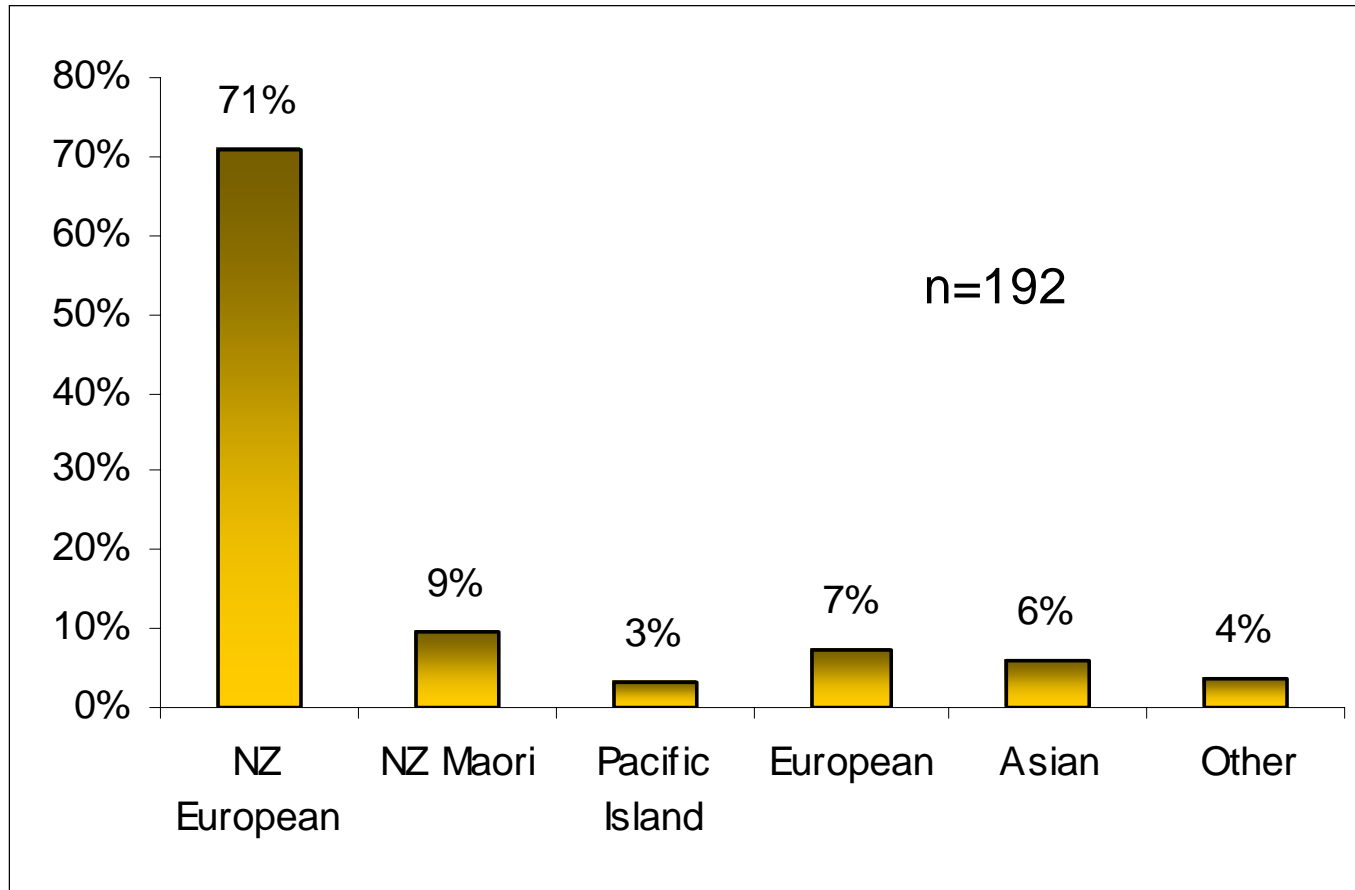


Service Desk Visited

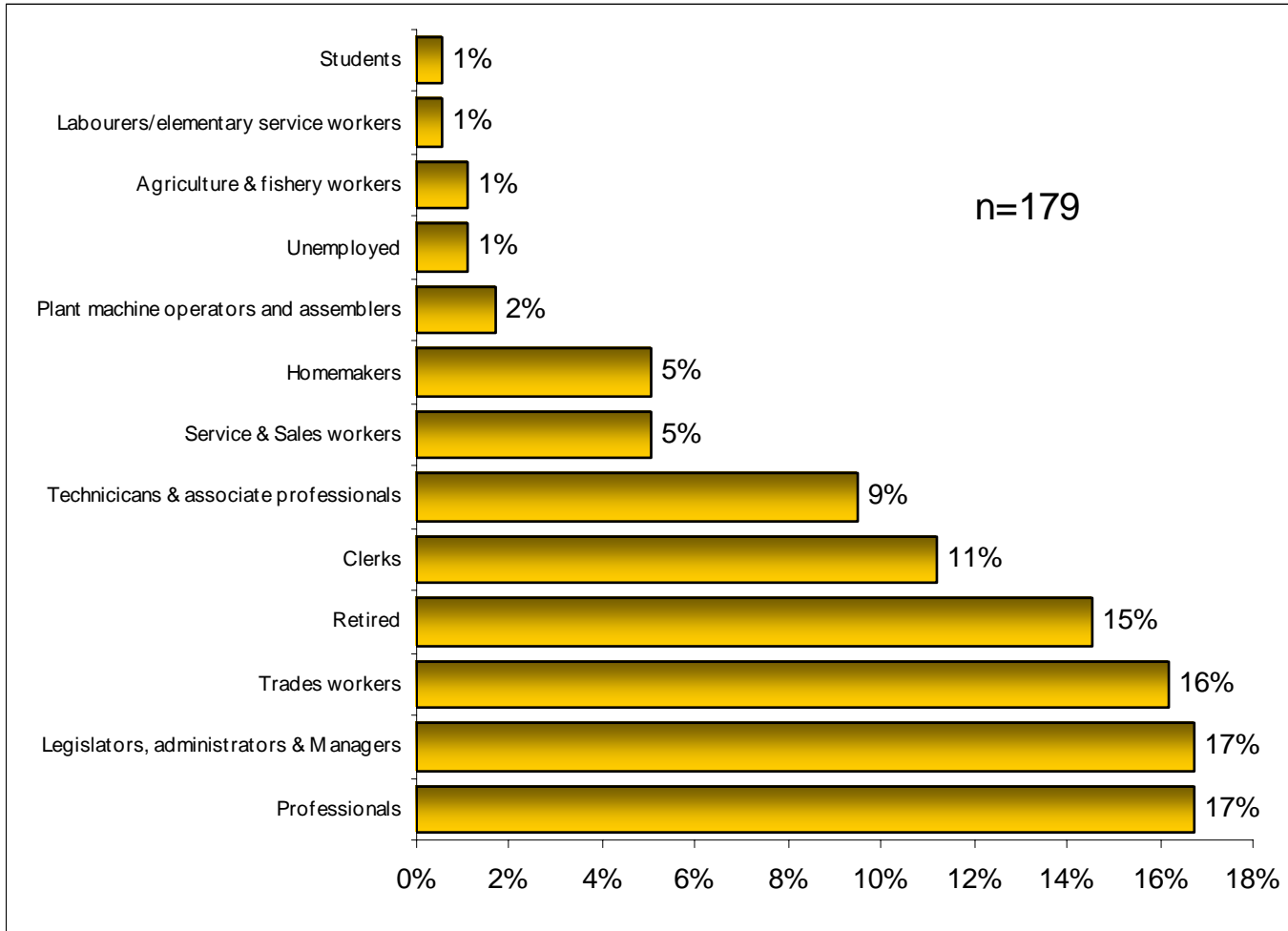


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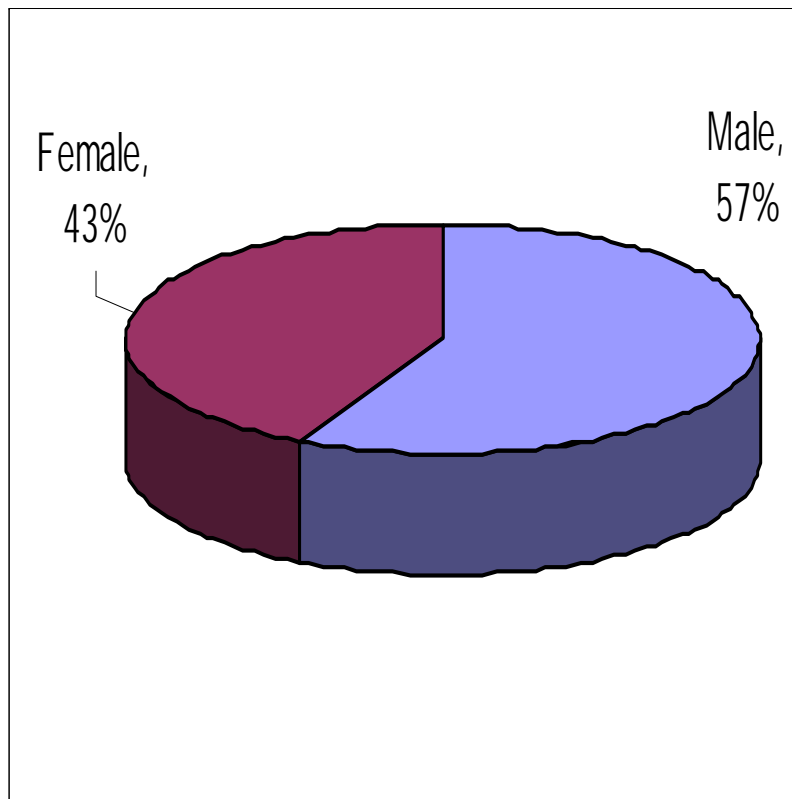
Respondent Ethnicity



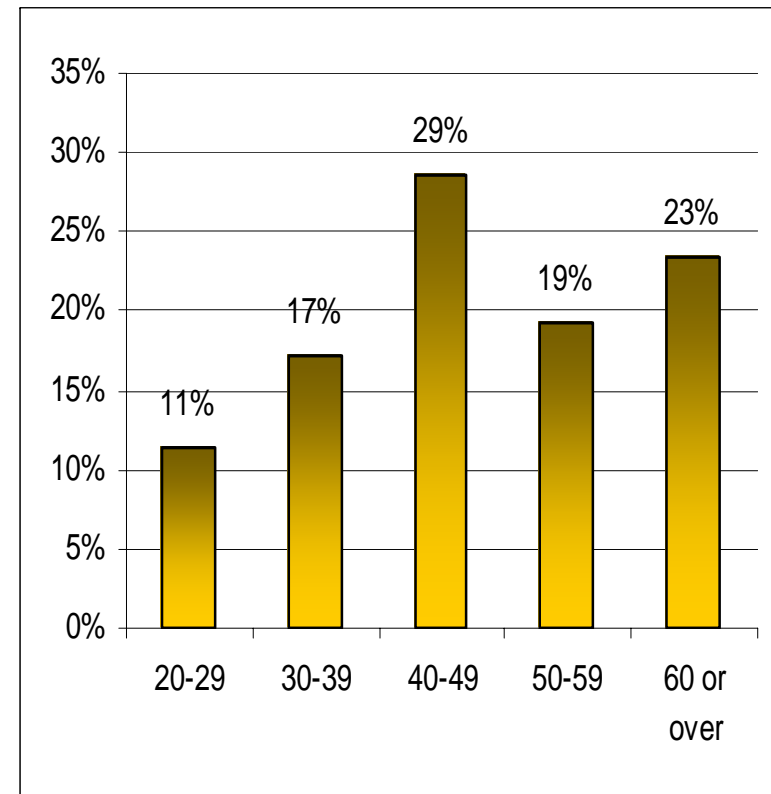
Respondent Profession



Respondent Gender And Age



Slightly over half the respondents to the survey were male.



The largest number of respondents were aged 40-49.