

## **Changing Behaviour/Importance of Environment**

### **Indicator**

How important Worcestershire residents consider their local environment to be.

### **Status**



The environment is considered to be very important to Worcestershire residents, but the latest results show a slight decrease over 2009 in the overall importance afforded to a range of environmental categories.

### **Overview**

This indicator seeks to measure the importance people attach to different elements of their environment, through analysing the results of a county-wide survey of residents, the Worcestershire Viewpoint.

The Worcestershire Viewpoint is an effective research tool allowing county residents to offer their views on a range of subjects. The survey is a joint undertaking from Worcestershire County Council, the District Councils, NHS Worcestershire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. Panel members complete twice-yearly questionnaires which are then analysed to provide policy-makers with a measure of public opinion that can help the planning and improvement of services. More information on the Viewpoint is available on Worcestershire County Council's Research and Intelligence web-pages at:

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/research-and-intelligence/market-research/worcestershire-viewpoint.aspx>

The 2011 Viewpoint survey was sent out in May to 6892 households. Included within the survey were a series of questions relating to conserving and enhancing Worcestershire's natural and historic environment. These questions were developed and first used in the June 2009 Viewpoint survey as 'standing item' questions to be included in future surveys. The questions will ideally be included every year, but if not every year then as close as possible to this frequency. This allows any changing perception of the importance of the environment to be monitored. One of the questions (relating to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) had previously been asked in May 2006, allowing changes in perceptions on this particular issue to be tracked over a longer period. 3408 valid responses were received, providing a robust sample of county residents.

The questions asked are reproduced below:

**Q1 Thinking about your local environment, to what extent do you feel that each of the following aspects need improving?**

Please tick **ONE** for each a) to g)

|  | <i>A great deal</i>      | <i>To some extent</i>    | <i>Not very much</i>     | <i>Not at all</i>        | <i>Don't Know</i>        |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) <b>Parks and Open spaces</b> - how welcoming, safe and well maintained they are   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) <b>Farmland wildlife habitats</b> - how frequently you encounter a good variety of songbirds, or butterflies or wild plants in the farmed countryside | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) <b>Historic buildings</b> - their state of repair   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) <b>Condition of the landscape</b> - trees, hedges, grassland and the impact of human activity   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) <b>Rivers and Streams</b> - how clean the water seems, and the wildlife they support  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) <b>Doorstep recycling</b> - how effective this is, and how much waste is recyclable   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) <b>CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</b> - how much we need to reduce the amount of harmful emissions from homes, businesses and transport in the County       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Q2 How important do you consider the following aspects of the County's environment to be?**

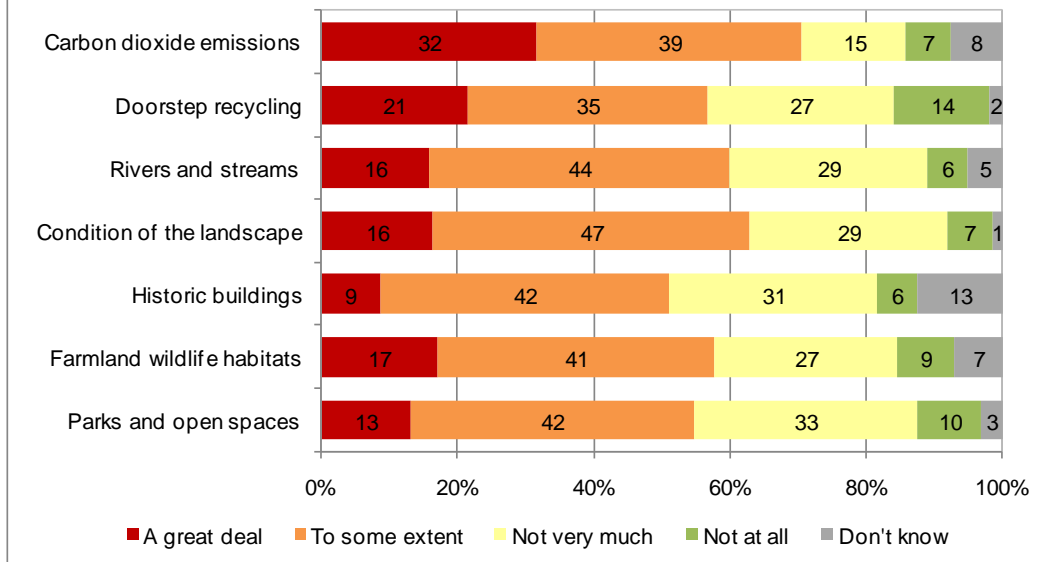
Please tick **ONE** for each a) to g)

|  | <i>Very important</i>    | <i>Important</i>         | <i>Not very important</i> | <i>Not at all important</i> | <i>Don't Know</i>        |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) <b>Parks and Open Spaces</b> - the importance of easily accessible, well-maintained parks and open spaces   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) <b>Farmland wildlife habitats</b> - the importance of key habitats such as ponds, wetlands, ancient trees, flower-rich grasslands and hedges to Worcestershire's appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) <b>Historic Buildings</b> - the importance of historic buildings' contribution to local character   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) <b>Condition of the landscape</b> - the importance of the appearance and amenities of the landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) <b>Rivers and Streams</b> - the importance of clean waters with thriving plant and animal life  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) <b>Doorstep recycling</b> - the importance of ensuring that as much household waste as possible is recycled   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) <b>CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</b> - how serious you feel the impacts of climate change and severe weather are on the environment  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Performance

A summary of the results for each of these questions is provided below:

### Responses to Question 1: Thinking about your local environment, to what extent do you feel that each of the following aspects need improving?



### Overall results for Question 1

|                            | A great deal | To some extent | Not very much | Not at all | Don't Know |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| Parks and Open Spaces      | 13           | 42             | 33            | 10         | 3          |
| Farmland wildlife habitats | 17           | 41             | 27            | 9          | 7          |
| Historic buildings         | 9            | 42             | 31            | 6          | 13         |
| Condition of the landscape | 16           | 47             | 29            | 7          | 1          |
| Rivers and Streams         | 16           | 44             | 29            | 6          | 5          |
| Doorstep recycling         | 21           | 35             | 27            | 14         | 2          |
| Carbon dioxide emissions   | 32           | 39             | 15            | 7          | 8          |

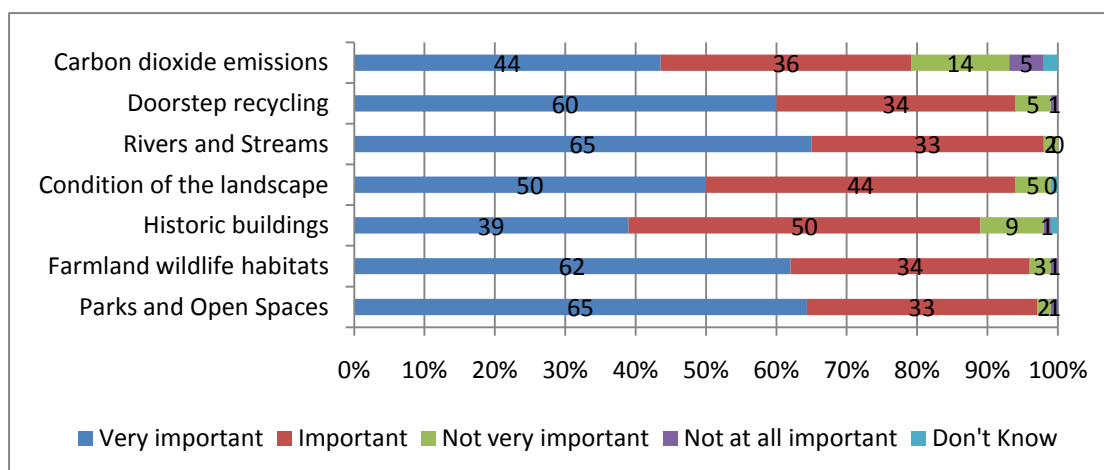
### Comparison with 2009 results, Question 1

Percentage who feel issue needs improving either a great deal or to some extent

|                            | 2009 result (%) | 2011 result (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Parks and open spaces      | 60              | 55              |
| Farmland wildlife habitats | 59              | 58              |
| Historic buildings         | 54              | 51              |
| Condition of the landscape | 69              | 63              |
| Rivers and streams         | 65              | 60              |
| Doorstep recycling         | 71              | 57              |
| Carbon dioxide emissions   | 74              | 71              |

Whilst the results from Question 1 are broadly similar to those of 2009, the table above shows that for all aspects of the environment considered in the question, people feel there is less of a need for improvement than there was. This could be indicative of a general sense among Worcestershire residents that conditions across all sectors have improved, and that the county's environmental assets are perceived to be in marginally better condition than they were two years ago.

**Responses to question 2: How important do you consider the following aspects of the county's environment to be?**



**Overall results for Question 2**

|                            | Very important | Important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't Know |
|----------------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Parks and Open Spaces      | 65             | 33        | 2                  | 1                    | *          |
| Farmland wildlife habitats | 62             | 34        | 3                  | 1                    | 0          |
| Historic buildings         | 39             | 50        | 9                  | 1                    | 1          |
| Condition of the landscape | 50             | 44        | 5                  | 0                    | 1          |
| Rivers and Streams         | 65             | 33        | 2                  | 0                    | 0          |
| Doorstep recycling         | 60             | 34        | 5                  | 1                    | 0          |
| Carbon dioxide emissions   | 44             | 36        | 14                 | 5                    | 2          |

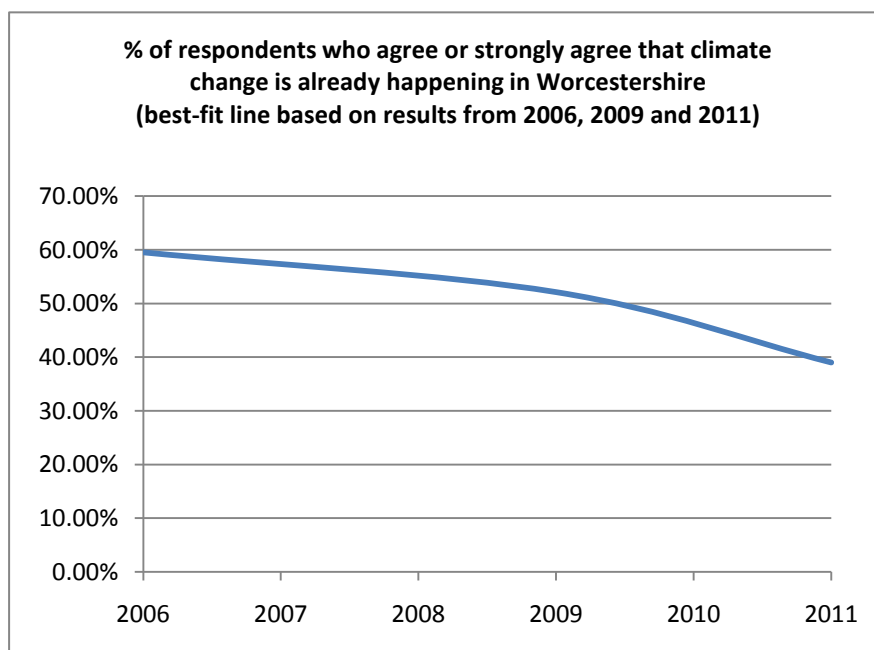
**Comparison with 2009 results, Question 1**

|                            | % very important |                 |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                            | 2009 result (%)  | 2011 result (%) |
| Parks and open spaces      | 64               | 65              |
| Farmland wildlife habitats | 59               | 62              |
| Historic buildings         | 37               | 39              |
| Condition of the landscape | 50               | 50              |
| Rivers and streams         | 67               | 65              |
| Doorstep recycling         | 63               | 60              |
| Carbon dioxide emissions   | 48               | 44              |

The results indicate that (taking the combined range of issues as a broad indicator for the overall environment of Worcestershire):

**92.5% of respondents felt the environment to be either important or very important.**

Within the Citizens' Panel, a specific question on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was included that was a repeat of a question asked in a previous (May 2006) Citizens' Panel, as well as last year's survey. Residents were asked to state how far they agreed with the statement that "Climate change is already having an effect in Worcestershire". The new results provide an opportunity to directly compare how this has changed, and indicate that, whilst in May 2006, 59.5% agreed, when the same question was asked in June 2009, only 52.1% agreed. For the 2011 survey, this had fallen to 39%.



## Geographical Context

There are no direct national or regional comparators to enable the results to be placed in a geographical context.

## Actions

This indicator is in its infancy and this year is only the second in which comprehensive data has been available – and the first in which any sort of comparison could be made. The first action must be to lobby for the long-

term future of the data collection; the Worcestershire Viewpoint collects data on a whole range of topics, and there is no guarantee that the environmental questions used to inform this indicator will be repeated in the future. However, discussions with Worcestershire County Council's Research and Intelligence Unit (who administer the survey on behalf of the partners) will continue, to help ensure that the questions remain in future surveys. It may be that in future the questions are only able to be asked every 2 years.

### **Further Information**

For further information on the Worcestershire Viewpoint, visit Worcestershire County Council's Research and intelligence webpages, at: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/research-and-intelligence/market-research/worcestershire-viewpoint.aspx>