

North Finchley Business Survey

Survey Results

May to June 2011
NORTH LONDON BUSINESS

The North Finchley business survey was carried out in May – June 2011. A total of 52 businesses were surveyed, mainly comprising retailers but also 5 financial / professional service companies, an educational establishment, a health/social work company and an ICT company.

1. About businesses in North Finchley

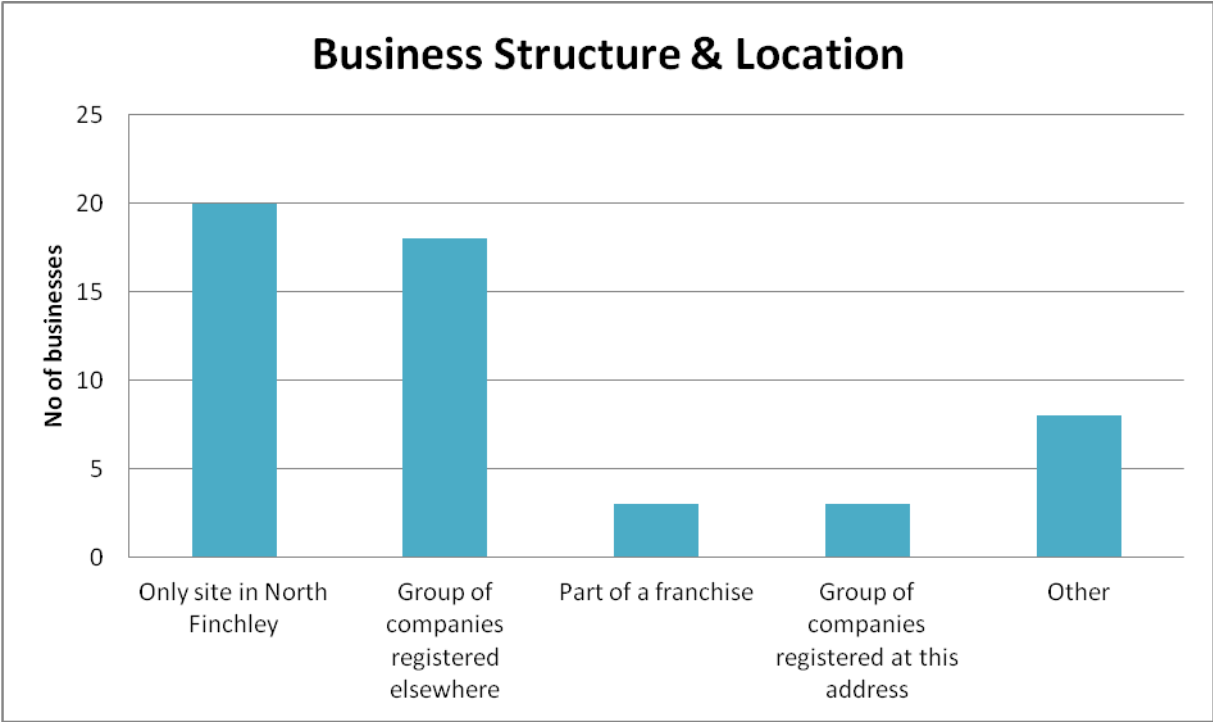
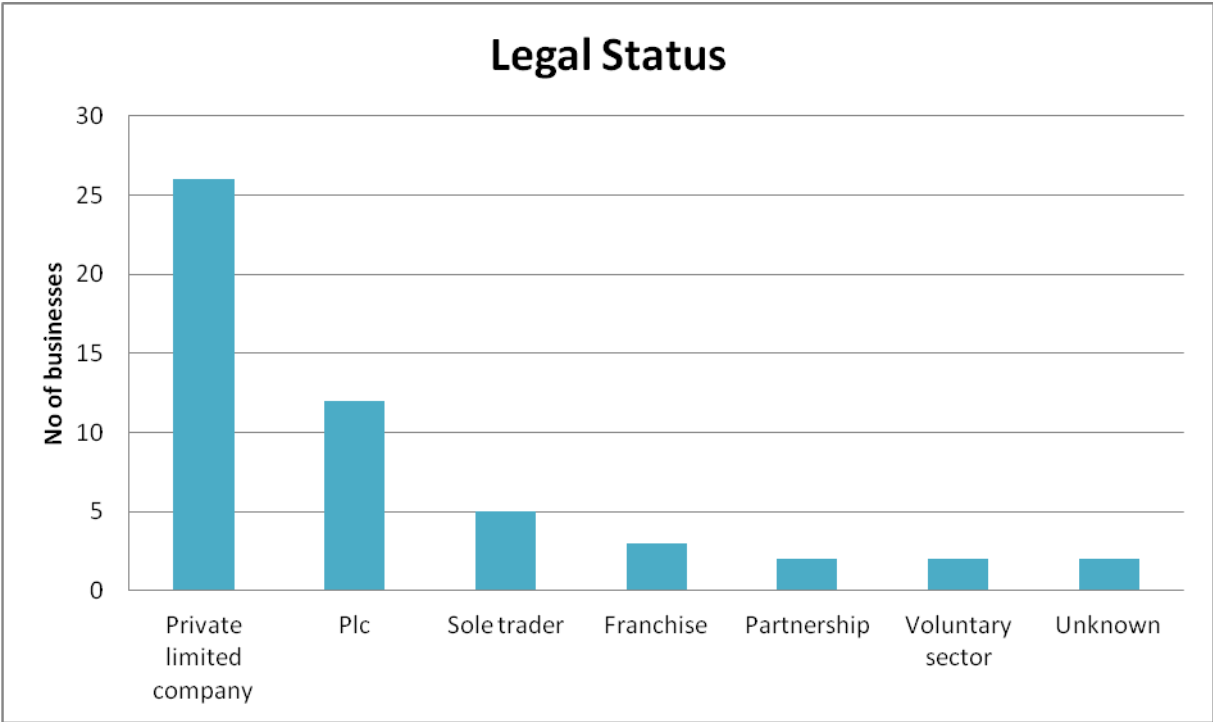
Survey respondents comprised the following sectors / subsectors:

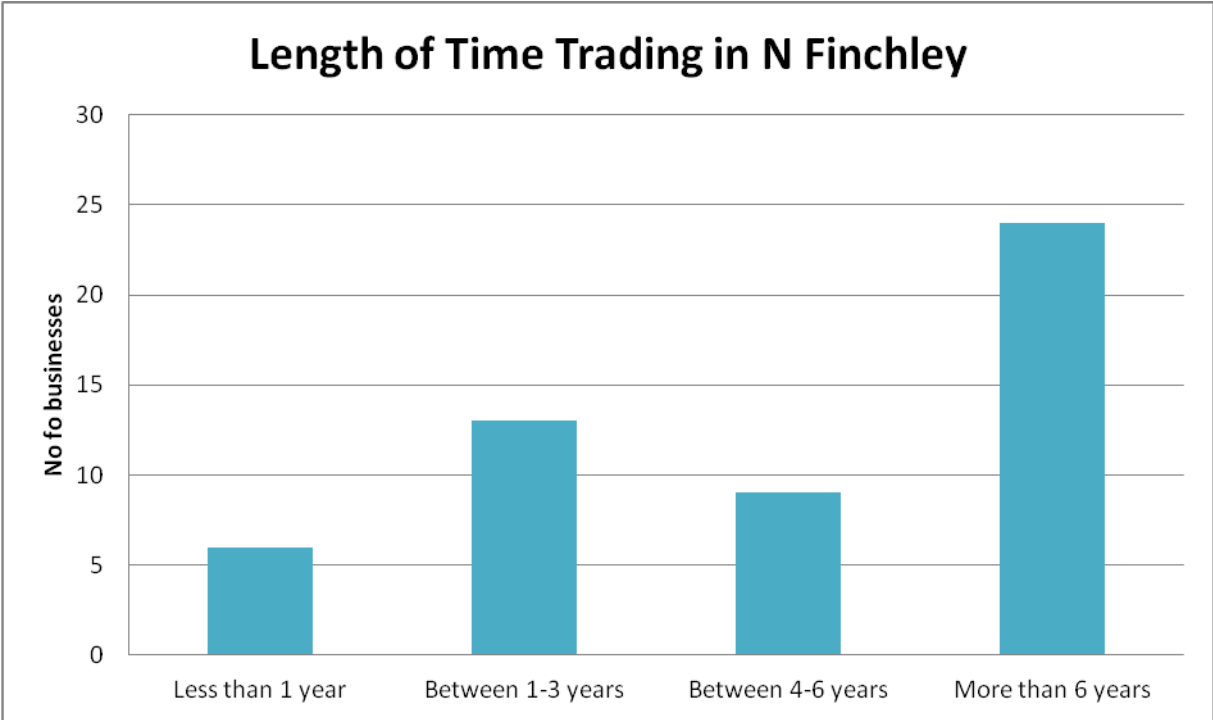
Sector/business type	No of businesses
Retail - Other	23
Retail - Personal services	9
Retail - Restaurant / takeaway	6
Retail - Charity	2
Retail - Food & drink	2
Retail - Newsagent	1
Retail - Entertainment venue eg. Pub	1
Financial/professional services - bank/building society	3
Financial/professional services - property	2
Health & social work	1
Education	1
ICT	1

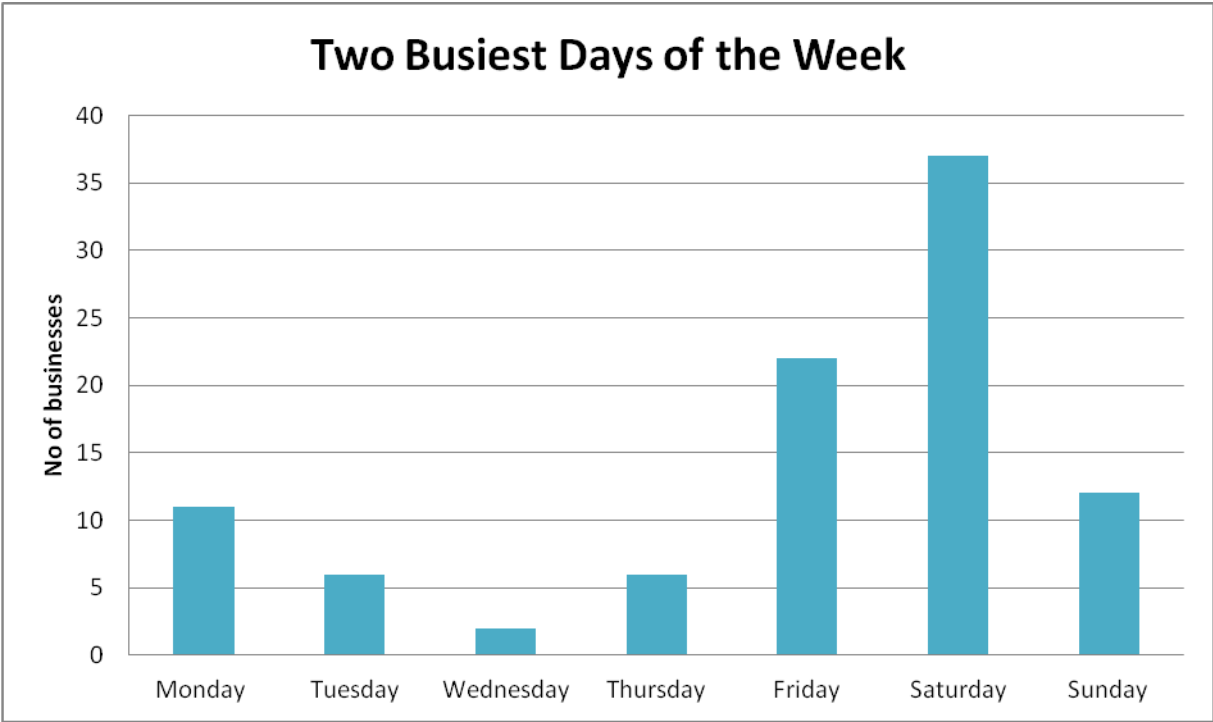
The 52 businesses surveyed employed a total of 487 people, of which just over half are part time, and the rest are full time.

Almost exactly half live within 3 miles of North Finchley. Mode of transport is shown below. Where employees take the underground, many additionally take the bus from Finchley Central, not shown in the bus percentages.

Mode of transport	% of respondents
Bus	47
Walk	21
Car	20
Underground	12







2. Recruitment & Training

The majority of businesses (80%) did not experience any difficulty with recruitment.

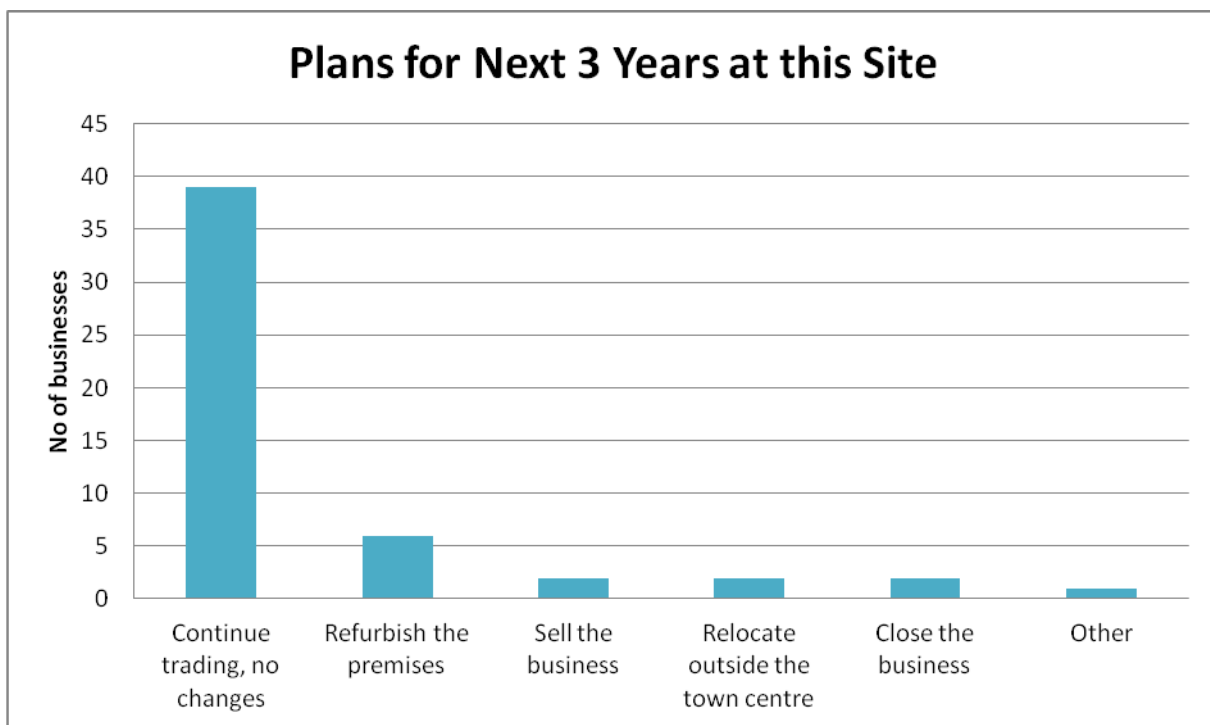
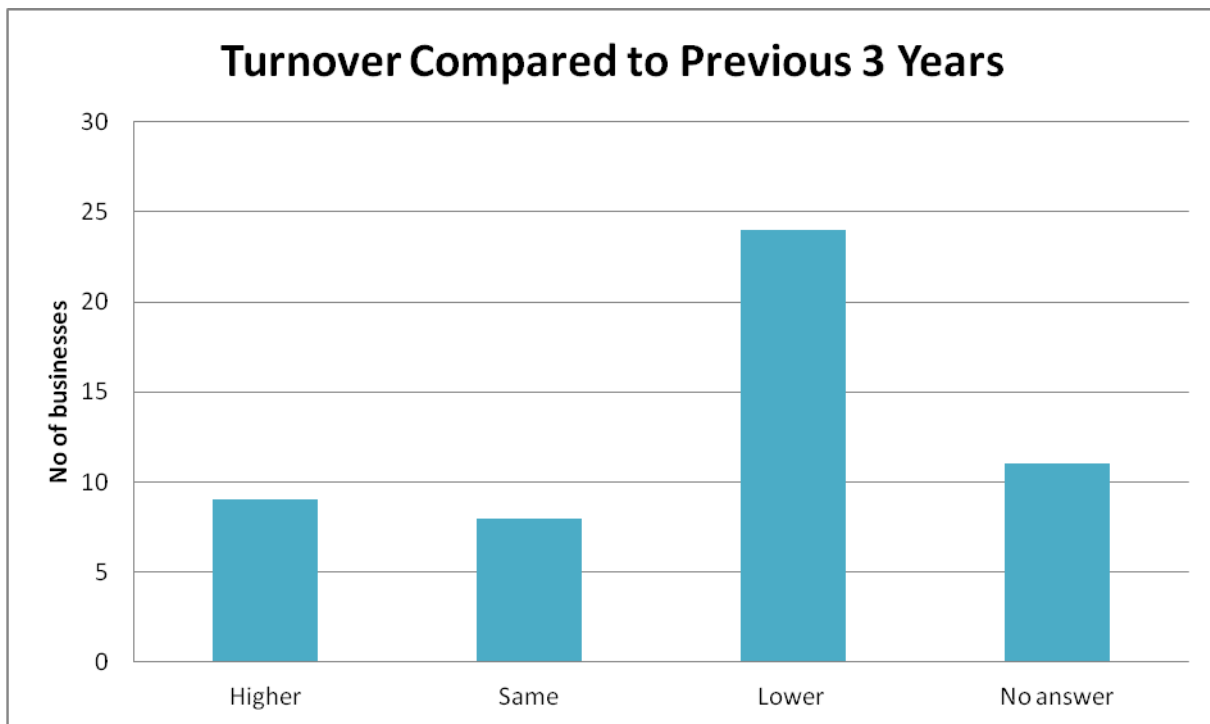
Most (74%) provide formal training to their employees.

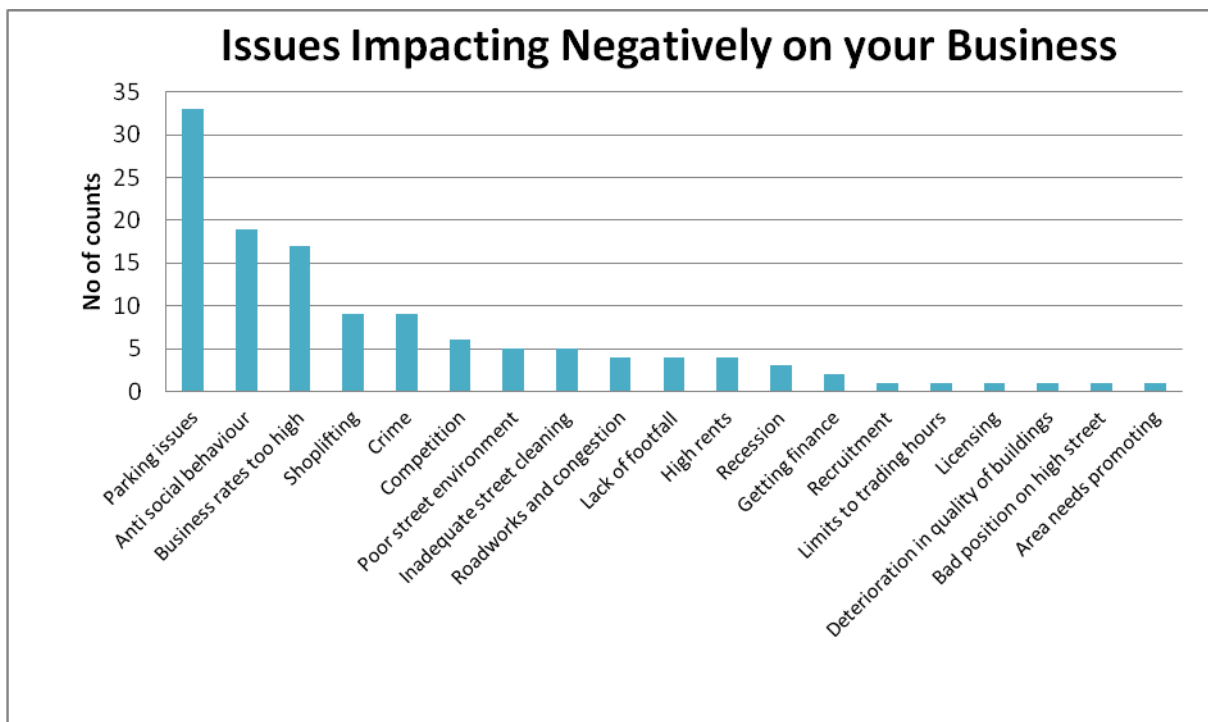
Skills and training required by North Finchley businesses for their staff can be summarised as follows:

Skills & Training Needed

Customer service	25
Product knowledge	7
Sales	6
People skills	4
IT	3
Food handling	3
Cashiering	3
Retail experience	3
Ongoing corporate training	3
Cooking	3
Medicine dispensing & advice over the counter	2
Maths	2
H&S	2
Common sense	2
Hairdressing	2
Physically able	2
Waiting	2
Perfumery	1
English	1
General shop work	1
First aid	1
Honest & hardworking	1
Being reliable	1
Merchandising	1
Nutrition / herbal remedy training	1
Teaching skills	1
Banking	1
Optical experience	1
Vintage clothing / brands	1
Experience working in care	1
Gemology/jewellery repairs/engravings/soldering	1
Management skills	1

3. Current trading environment, future outlook





Business issues

Businesses were asked about the three main issues impacting negatively on their business. Some provided less than three – the chart is based on a total of 126 counts. Further detail on some of the issues is outlined below.

Parking

Some suggested lack of adequate parking was a reason businesses did not shop in North Finchley any longer. Though there are car parks eg. Lodge Lane, these are hidden and quite some distance from some of the shops with charges having recently increased (minimum £1.40 per hour – people pay £1 to get to Wood Green with Oyster Card) and hence often fairly empty. There should be more parking spaces on the roads, at least one side.

The main complaints around parking suggested that there should be some free parking, at least should revert to free parking on Saturdays and weekdays after 5pm. Trade is better on Sundays due to free parking. One suggested free parking on side roads. Businesses said charges were prohibitory and meters often broken, with mobile phone / credit card system not being satisfactory as some don't possess these and people are nervous about doing a transaction in the open. Wardens should be more flexible and use discretion.

Crime

Crime received more counts than parking when anti-social behaviour and shoplifting are also taken into account (37 counts compared to 33). There are apparently a number of anti-social characters who are threatening and abusive, which is unpleasant particularly for children. Some suggested that inhabitants of a local hostels / halfway houses take drugs / drink in public often in groups, behave threateningly and steal from shops. Noise levels are high in evenings due to groups of drunk people.

The Arcade seems a particular hot spot with people using it as a toilet, but it's difficult to control as privately owned.

Some women have been pickpocketing from customers in shops and stealing at cash machines. There are instances of muggings some apparently carried out by teenagers. Over the past year, 5 or 6 recent break ins were cited among respondents. One business established 23 years noted that street crime and shoplifting had gone up considerably. One had reduced stock on shelves to combat, causing inconvenience. Two remarked that there are not enough police officers and believe services are overstretched. One said police had not been responsive to calls about threatening behaviour within a shop.

However, many said they considered North Finchley a very safe area compared to other parts of London where they had branches, or lived.

Business rates

Many said business rates were too high, in one case two thirds of value of the annual rent. Rates had gone up exacerbating the effects of the recession. One side of the street apparently has cheaper rates.

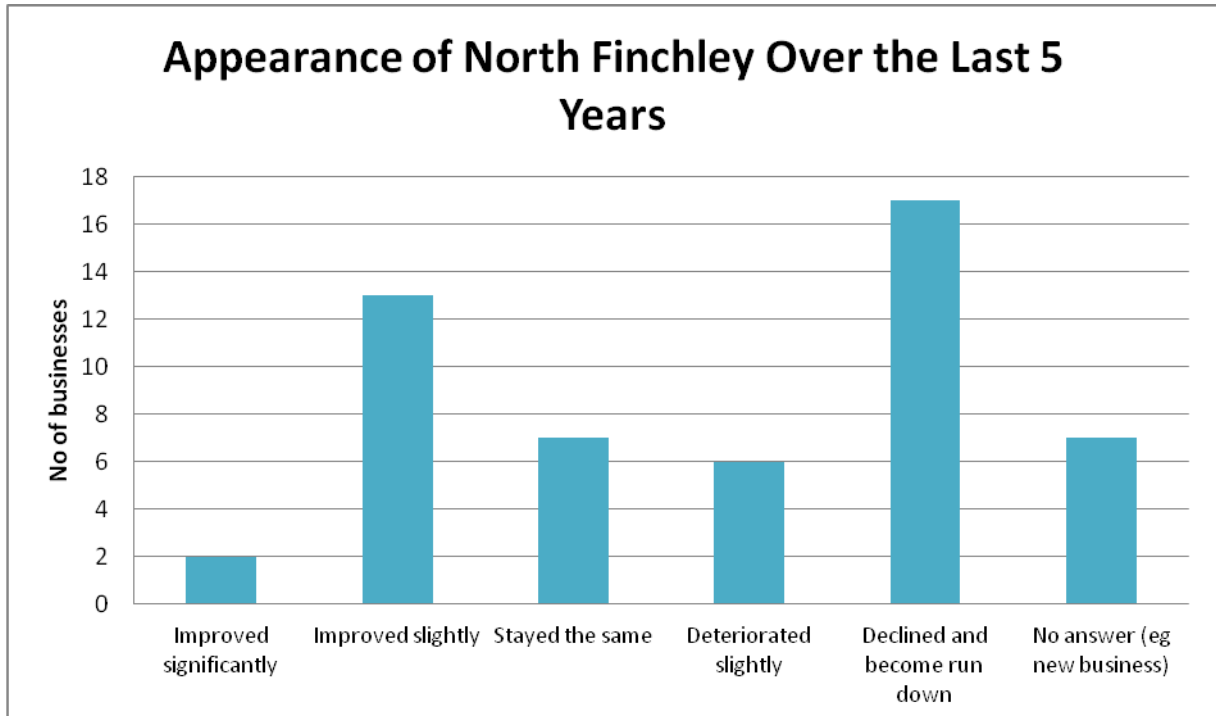
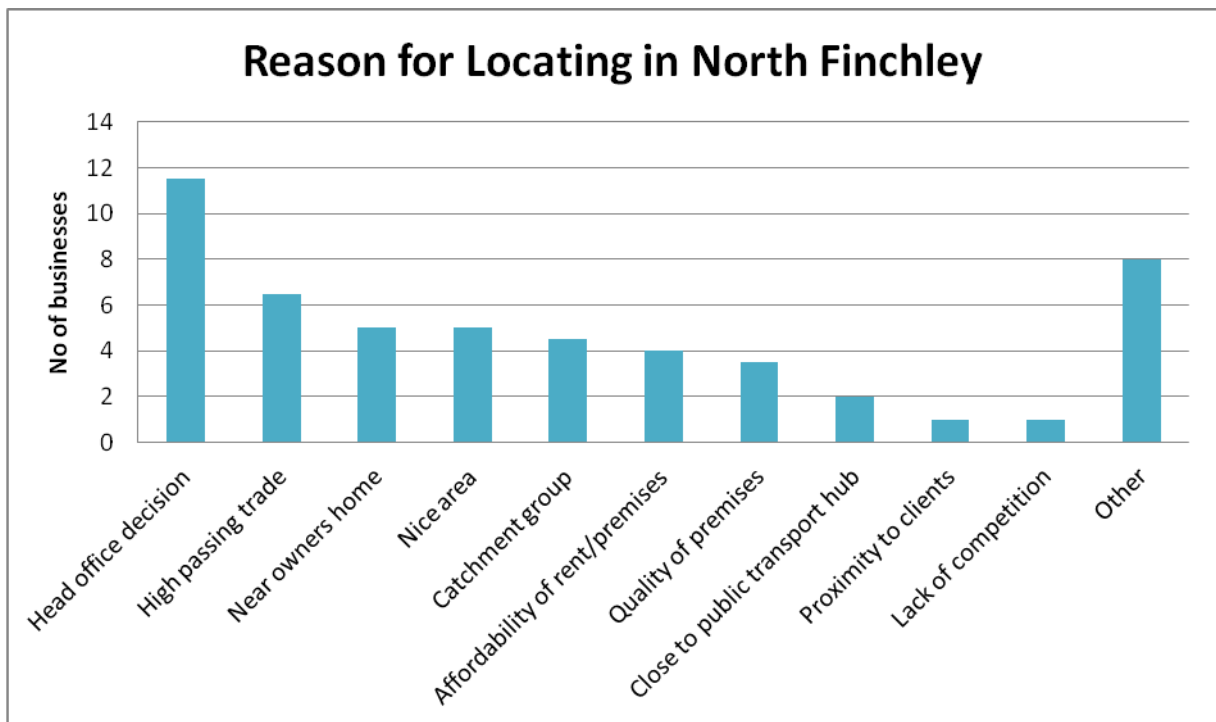
Other

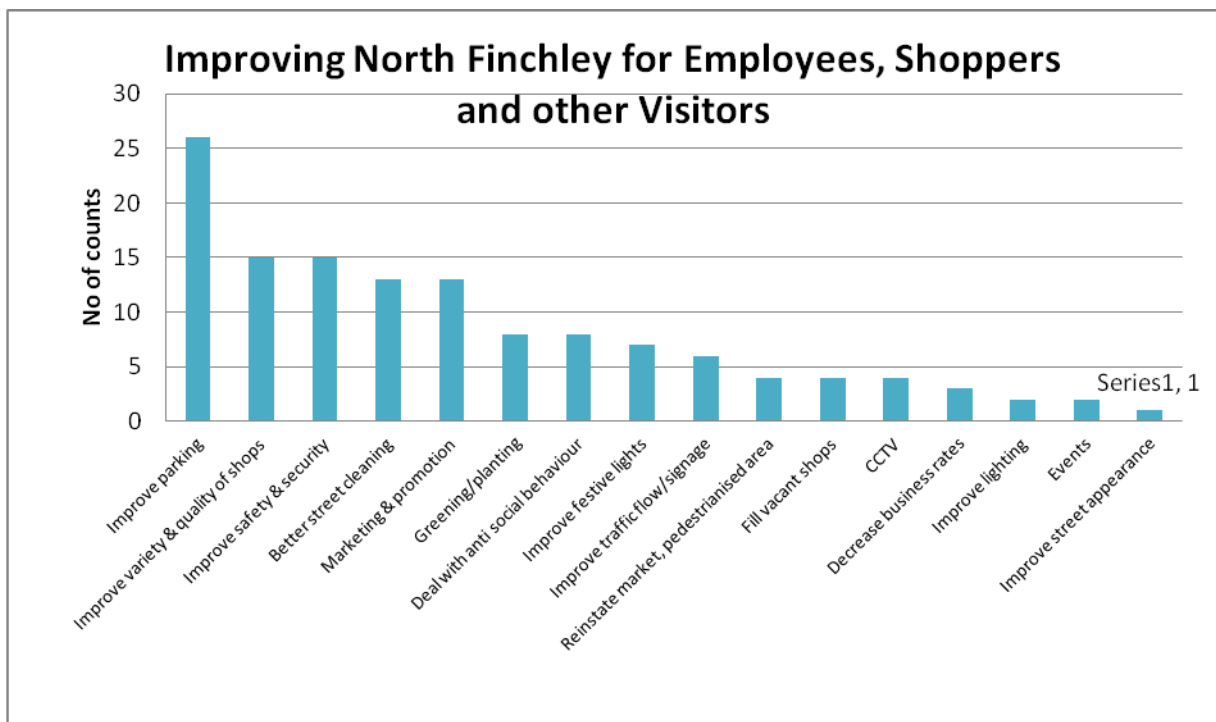
There is competition eg. from Brent Cross which has free parking. Declining footfall was often remarked upon.

Some businesses mentioned that there was a poor street environment with inadequate cleaning of dirt, vomit, urine etc. Flytipping at back of shops & Arcade was mentioned, and some buildings very shabby.

Vacant shops were cited as causing blight. Other issues included restrictions on permitted hours of trading/delivery, individual licensing issues and quality and variety of shops.

4. Views on North Finchley Town Centre





Businesses were asked what were the 3 most important things that should be done to improve the town centre for employees, shoppers and other visitors. A total of 131 counts were provided, as not all businesses had 3 suggestions.

Issues for Improvement

Further detail on some of the suggestions is provided below.

Parking

Ways of improving parking have already been discussed above. Additionally, a business suggested reintroducing vouchers, and 15 – 30 minute free parking was suggested. Public transport options for visitors to the town centre could be better promoted and better awareness of underground car parks would help.

Improving Variety & Quality of Shops

There were various views on this eg. more classy shops, more / less places to eat, a better mix, reducing number of pubs / bars (currently 8-10). Traditional shops eg. butcher / baker and more independents would enhance the town centre. A cinema and nightclub were suggested as well as designer / bigger brand clothes shops. Reintroduction of a more high profile central market was mentioned by several people and would increase footfall. One business mentioned a department store located in the north of the town centre could create linkages with Whetstone.

Improving safety & security

There should be more police on the beat, more visible policing, and police officers rather than PCSOs. There should be more CCTV and enforcement of alcohol free zone. Police need to keep a particular eye on anti-social behaviour behind shops such as smoking, drinking & taking drugs. One

business suggested businesses getting more involved with the Safer Neighbourhoods Team via a shop watch scheme.

Marketing / Promotion

More marketing and promotion was mentioned by several including holding more events eg. A business "open day" and summer & winter festivals eg. Finchley Central's annual event at Victoria Park could be organised. Closure of part of the road was suggested for a French style market.

A loyalty scheme, website, magazine and festive season posters like Brent Cross were all suggested.

Greening / Planting / Street Decoration

Many asked for more greenery / trees / in the street, flower baskets like those on Holloway Road, and better festive lights. A business suggested a green space in the town centre with trees and benches where employees could go for lunch.

Better street cleaning

Several said pavements should be cleaned with water / pressure wash.

Other

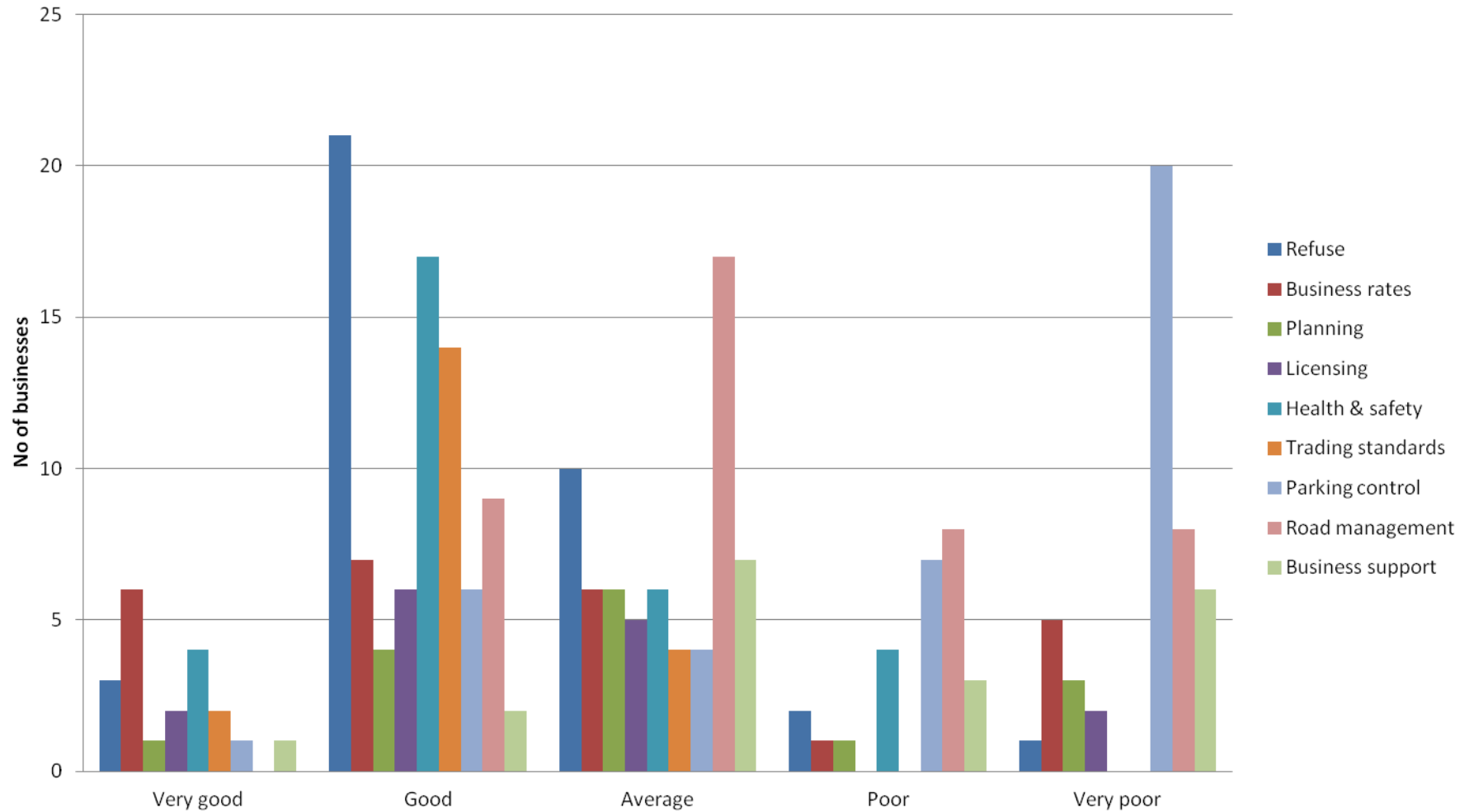
One business suggested improving the signage / access to West Finchley Underground Station from the town centre. Old road signs and faded zebra crossings should be dealt with.

Vacant shops should be disguised or decorated with art work.

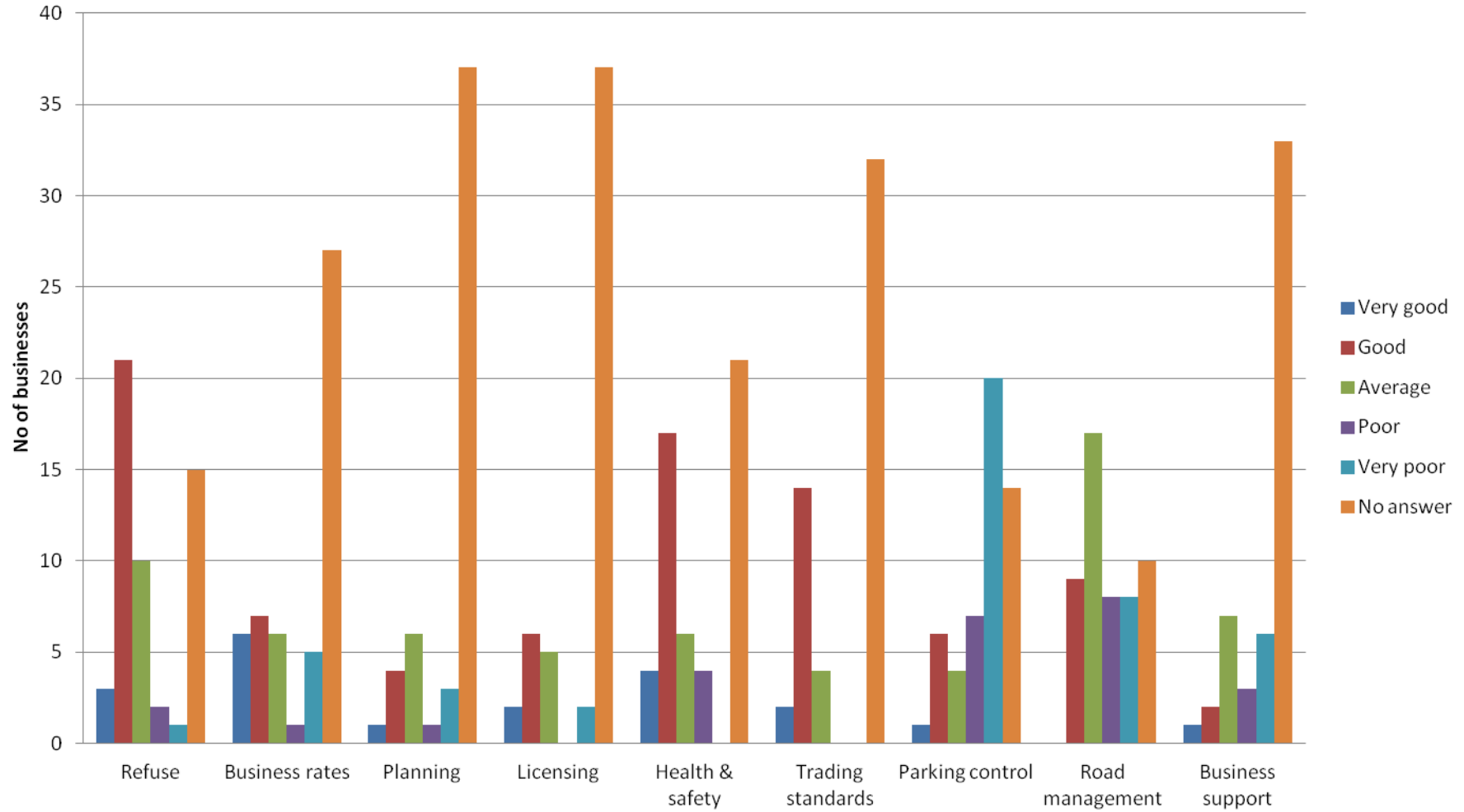
One business suggested replacing the Arcade with open space. Another business suggested pedestrianizing the north side of Ballards Lane and having a permanent market again. A pedestrianized area had apparently been promised as part of the Arts Depot development.

Other ideas for improvements included brighter street lighting and making better use being made of the Arts Depot.

Rating Council Business Services



Rating Council Business Services



5. Rating Council Business Services

Taking all services into account, 71% of businesses said they were very good, good and average, with 62% of these being rated good / very good.

Refuse collection scored highest, followed by health and safety, followed by road management and trading standards.

Business support, parking control and planning departments were the most criticised.

Planning, licensing, business support and trading standards had quite a low response rate, as many may not have had cause to contact these departments.

6. Business support

Most businesses were not aware of business support available.

The following trade associations had representation among respondents:

- Performing Rights Society
- UK Home Care Association
- The Hairdressing Council
- Association of Charity Shops
- Association of British Dispensing Opticians
- General Optical Council
- Health Food Retail Association
- Property Ombudsman x 2
- British Independent Retailers Association
- National Pharmaceutical Association