



The state of England's local environment

A survey by Keep Britain Tidy 2009/10



What is the survey about?

Keep Britain Tidy carries out surveys across the country to assess the cleanliness of our local areas. The surveys measure and grade the condition of our streets, looking at issues that affect the public day to day, such as litter, grime and graffiti. The information may be used by councils, land owners and street cleansing companies to highlight conditions that may impact on their ability to cleanse streets to a good standard. In essence, the survey describes the 'state of the nation', in terms of cleanliness.

This survey is conducted annually and provides a valuable gauge of current conditions and identifies trends that can be used to inform policy, understand priority issues, and enable authorities to support local needs. It is the largest survey of its kind, with our surveyors visiting a total of 10,645 sites in 54 local council areas across all nine English regions, between April 2009 and March 2010.

This is what we discovered...

The national picture

The overall standard of **local environmental quality (LEQ)** remains the same as last year, according to our National Cleaning Index¹, however the detail reveals emerging trends, improvements and regressions.

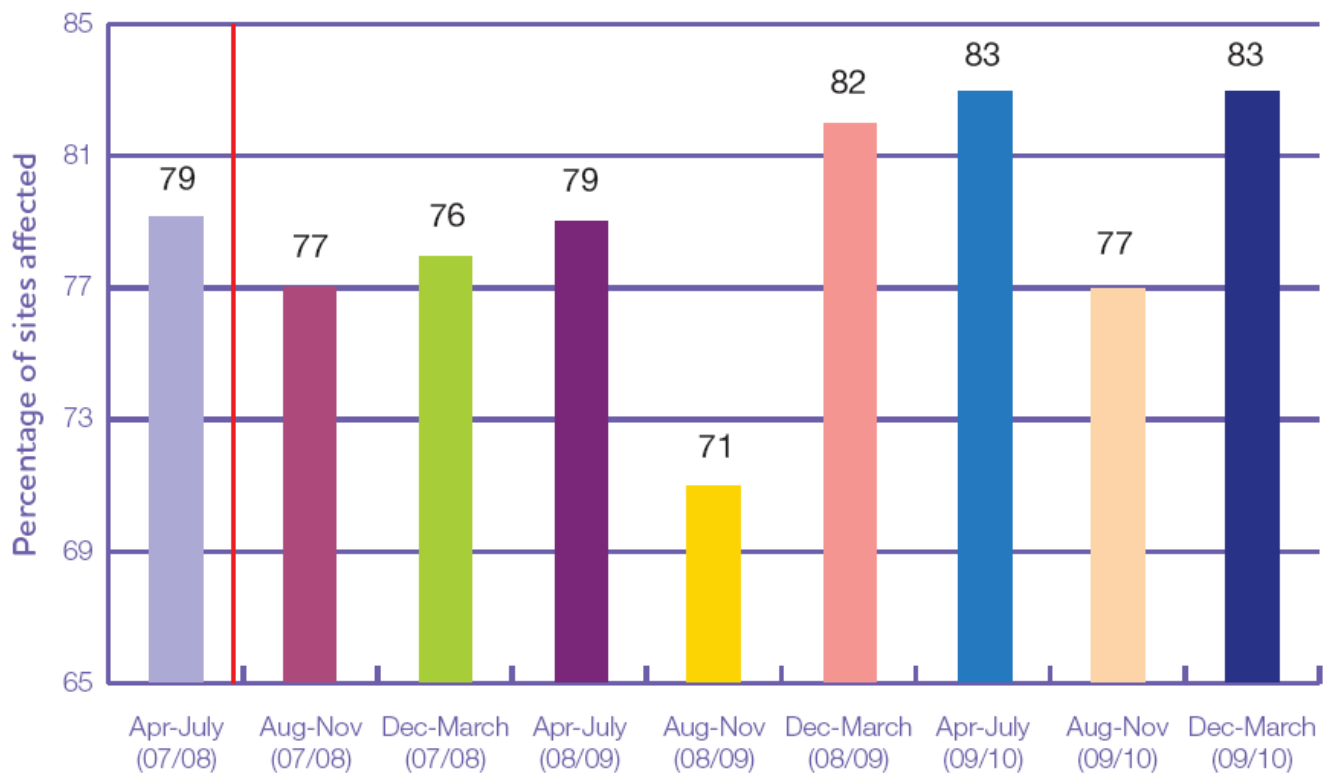
There have been improvements to the levels of both **alcohol-related litter** and **travel-related litter**, both reducing by 3%, and dog fouling which has improved by 1% when compared with last year². The cleanliness and condition of **litter bins** has also improved. Our research³ shows that dirty bins can have a negative impact on usage, particularly with teenagers, so clean bins in a good condition are likely to help to reduce littering.

Smoking related litter however has worsened with an increase in affected sites recorded this year. The only land use to see a rise in standards is 'recreational areas'⁴, including parks, picnic sites, canals and riversides. This continues to be the best scoring land use.

¹ The National Cleanliness Index rates the country, and different land uses, with a score to see how well they are managing street cleanliness. This year we have simplified the National Cleansing Index, giving a composite rating for a range of LEQ issues, (litter, detritus, fly-posting, graffiti, leaf fall, weed growth and staining) based on the available Grades A-D. Grade A sites score 3 through to Grade D sites which score 0. Totals are then calculated. 100 is the best possible score (all assessments at a Grade A standard) and 0 is the worst possible score (all assessments at a Grade D standard). Therefore, the higher the score, the cleaner the area is considered to be. This year the level remains the same at 76.

Cigarette litter on our streets has increased by 5%. This year, it was present on 81% of sites. The chart below shows some distinct trends in the data since 2007 when the smoking ban was introduced (indicated by the red line).

Percentage of sites affected by cigarette litter



Surprisingly, the annual figures for cigarette litter suggest a drop in the year following the smoking ban in England in 2007. However the data reveals some notable seasonal drops between August and November.

The slowly rising increase is presumably not due to increased numbers of smokers, but could perhaps suggest that immediately after the ban there were greater actions put in place to mitigate a litter problem, for example, with greater care and maintenance of areas surrounding designated smoking zones by landlords or proprietors, increased enforcement action (or fear of) or new bins in place. The poorer scores for 2009/10 could suggest that these efforts may now have lapsed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, retail areas suffer worst from cigarette littering, with butts present on 99% of 'main retail' sites surveyed.

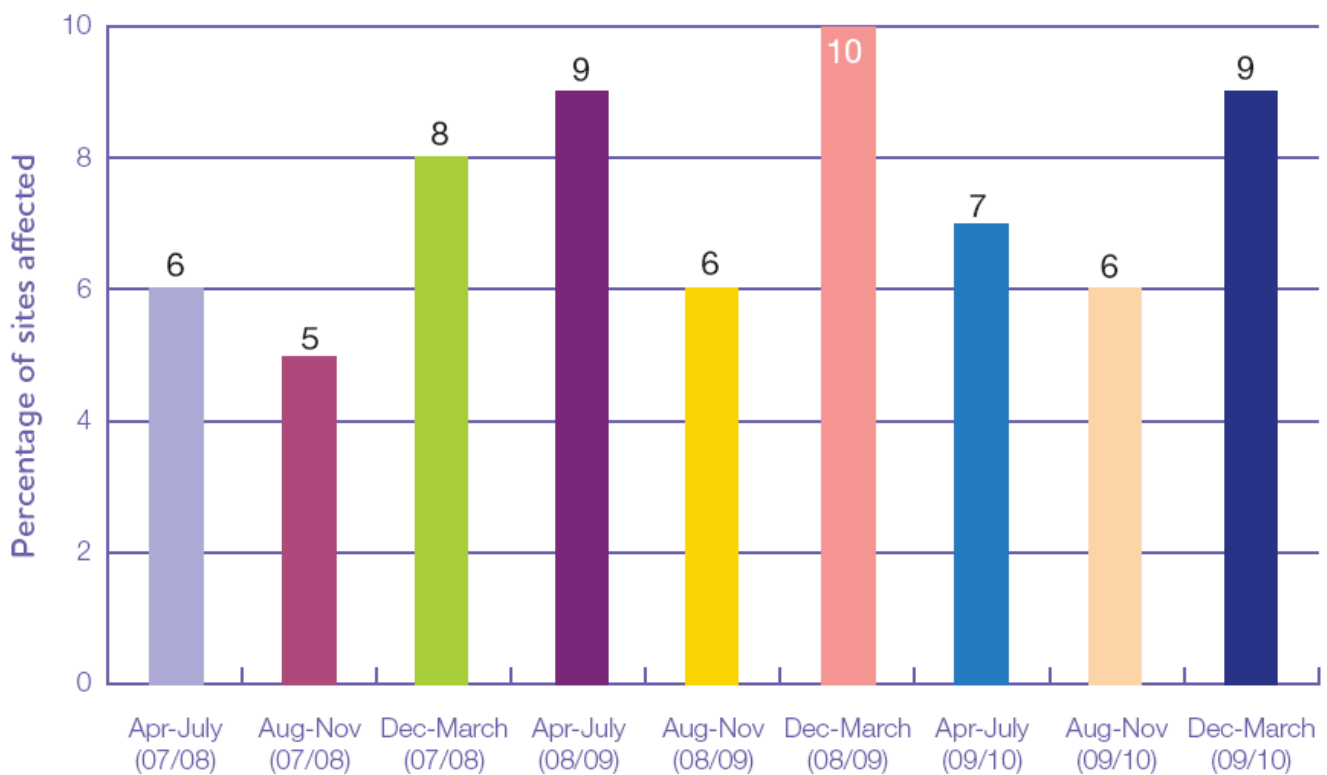
² This year's survey used 10 land use categories rather than 12 recorded in 2008/09, to align with the National Performance Indicator for street cleanliness (NI195). 'Transport' has been removed and 'public open spaces' and 'watersides' have been amalgamated as 'recreational areas'. Overall the numbers of recorded sites this year has reduced by 1,895 to 10,645.

³ Teenage Dirtbag, Keep Britain Tidy (formerly ENCAMS), 2004.

⁴ 'Recreational increase of 1 up to 83 using the National Cleansing Index.

Over the past five years, standards of dog mess have fluctuated, though they have improved by 1% since last year, with 7% of sites surveyed affected. A seasonal trend has been observed this year, with incidences of **dog mess** rising in the winter months. This is shown in the chart below.

Percentage of sites affected by dog fouling



Dog fouling was most commonly found on ‘other highways’ (such as alleyways, underpasses, bridle and cycleways) and ‘recreation areas’, suggesting that in less visible areas the problem of dog fouling isn’t effectively dealt with.

According to our research, dog mess is a major concern to members of the public. Keep Britain Tidy is currently addressing this problem with the national **‘There’s no such thing as the Dog Poo Fairy’** campaign⁵ to encourage irresponsible dog owners to clean up after their pets.

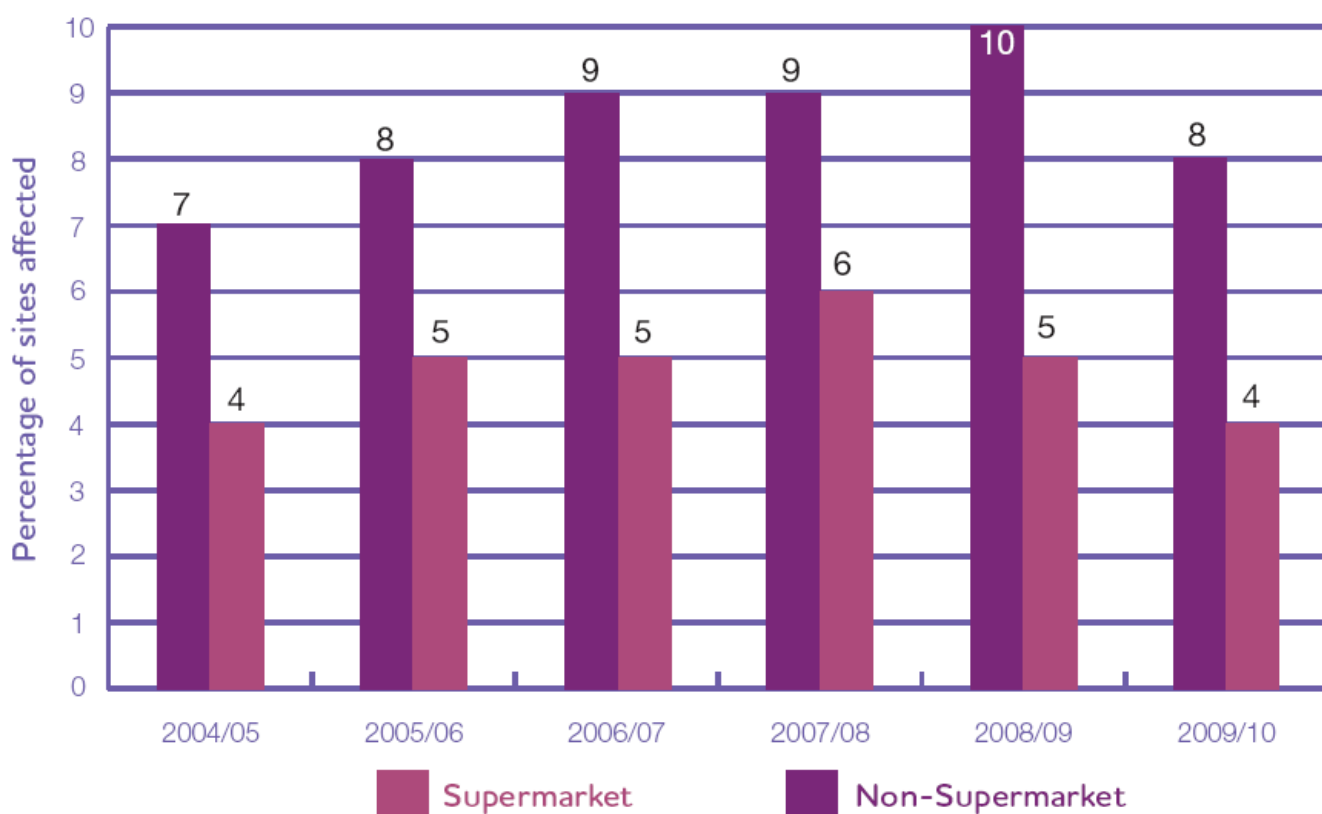
⁵ Please visit the campaigns section of the Keep Britain Tidy website at www.keepbritaintidy.org to find out more.

Overall, standards for **graffiti** remain 'good'. However standards in 'main retail' areas have dropped again this year, which highlights this as an area of concern.

Gum staining continues on an upward trend. This survey found gum staining present on 69% of sites surveyed. Considering potential cuts to cleansing budgets over the next year, it is likely that this trend could continue.

The downward trend of incidences of **supermarket carrier bags** continues, dropping by a further 1% this year to 4% of sites. While plain plastic carrier bags continue to be found on more sites (8%), there was 2% a drop compared with last year, as shown in the chart below.

Percentage of sites affected by plastic bag litter



How clean is your area?

According to the National Cleansing Index, the South East and the South West are the cleanest regions, whilst the North West continues to feature at the bottom of the list.

| Regional benchmarks | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| All Areas | 77 | 76 | 76 |
| South East | 79 | 77 | 79 |
| South West | 80 | 78 | 79 |
| East of England | 78 | 78 | 76 |
| North East | 79 | 76 | 76 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 76 | 77 | 76 |
| London | 75 | 75 | 75 |
| West Midlands | 77 | 77 | 75 |
| East Midlands | 76 | 75 | 74 |
| North West | 76 | 73 | 73 |

South East

The South East now joins the South West as one of the cleanest regions, with a two-point increase on last year's figure. Interestingly, however, when you examine the proportion of good to poor assessments, there has been an increase this year in the number of assessments receiving the poorest grades. In terms of detritus levels, the region saw its poorest result in the past five years, though the severe weather conditions experienced in the region are likely contributory factors.

South West

The South West has maintained its position as the cleanest region (along with the South East), showing the lowest proportions of cigarette and confectionery litter in the country. In terms of staining, there were fairly equal proportions of gum staining, vehicle staining and mud/grime. Tags were the most prevalent form of graffiti in the region, which along with London and the East of England bucks the national trend (where juvenile graffiti was generally most prevalent).

East of England

The National Cleansing Index identified a two-point decrease for the East of England this year, compared with last year. Detritus was at its worst recorded level in the last five years. However, the cleanliness and condition of bins has improved this year, which could help to encourage greater usage. Also, staining has improved this year and is now at a satisfactory standard. In comparison to other regions, bus stops in the East of England have the highest cleansing standards. Tags were found to be the most prevalent type of graffiti, which bucks the overall national trend (where juvenile graffiti is the most common form).

North East

The North East has maintained the same score as last year. The region features in the top three regions for the highest levels of alcohol-related litter, which was found on 22% of sites. In comparison to other regions, the North East saw detritus scores worsen, though this could be explained by the severe weather conditions last year and its impact on cleansing operations. However, the region saw the biggest improvement in staining scores.

Yorkshire and the Humber

The National Cleansing Index revealed a one-point decrease for Yorkshire and the Humber, compared with last year. The scores for detritus, leaf fall and weed growth worsened this year. Fast food litter is more than double that of other regions and is found on 68% of sites. Scores for alcohol-related litter and gum staining show that this is more prevalent than in other regions. However, both bin condition and the degree of fill improved significantly this year. All other key indicators, except leaf fall, match the national averages.

London

Cleanliness in London has remained at a consistent level over the two years. However, London was the only region to improve its detritus score this year, which is now in line with the national average. Tags are the most prevalent type of graffiti in the region, which bucks the overall national trend (where juvenile is the most common form). London has the highest proportion of remnants from fly-posting on its streets, stickers and tied notice remnants account for around two thirds (67%) of the region's fly-posting. Travel-related litter has seen a dramatic decrease in London since the advent of the Oyster card, dropping from 20% in 2003 to 7% of sites this year.

West Midlands

Although it experienced a two-point decrease on the National Cleanliness Index, the region saw an improvement in its standards for waste placed out and staining. However, there was a decrease in the standards achieved for litter, detritus and leaf fall. For the first time in five years, the scores for litter and detritus in the West Midlands have fallen below the national average. Litter bin cleanliness also fell below the national average, despite an improvement in the standards of bin condition.

East Midlands

There was a one-point decrease on the National Cleanliness Index for the region in comparison with last year. Although there was little change for the majority of indicators in the East Midlands when compared with last year, there was a drop in standards of waste placed out and graffiti, both of which now fall below the national average. However, the condition of bus stops and staining at bus stops improved to above the national average.

North West

Although it maintains its position as the least clean region, the North West has seen improvements in the proportion of sites achieving top grades for both litter and cigarette litter, though it still has the poorest scores for both issues, with 90% of sites affected by cigarette litter – the highest level in the country. However, alcohol-related litter is lower than in other regions and improvements in scores for confectionery litter are higher than in other regions. The North West also has the lowest incidence of poster-related fly-posting in the country.

Want to know more?

This leaflet is a summary of our more detailed Local Environment Quality Survey of England (2009/10) report, which can be found by visiting the surveys section of our website at www.keepbritaintidy.org

What can you do?

We all have a role to play in keeping the area where we live clean and tidy, whether it is the council, residents or industry. You can make a big difference to help keep our country clean and green by:

- ✓ Respecting your environment
- ✓ Using a bin or taking your rubbish home
- ✓ Picking up any rubbish you find lying around
- ✓ Encouraging others to respect their environment too
- ✓ Signing up as a Keep Britain Tidy supporter – simply visit

www.keepbritaintidy.org and look under the ‘Get Involved’ section

Get in touch

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