OXFORD AND SHIRES & RIDGEWAY COUNCILS

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT – AUGUST 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The online engagement survey received a total of 2,147 responses, of which 15 were posted or handed over in person by respondents. Eight late submissions were received but have not been included as a response to the engagement. This report details the findings of the online survey.

About you

The survey was primarily targeted at members of the public, and this group contributed 1,874 responses (87 per cent). Six per cent were council employees and four per cent district/county or town and parish councillors. One per cent responded on behalf of a business or organisation.

For each of the sections below, after the specific questions, respondents were invited to provide their comments on the topic with no specific prompts or examples of what their comments could include.

Your services

- The most important council service according to respondents is education and schools, with 17 per cent selecting it as their first choice. Roads and transport and waste and recycling were selected as the second and third most important service, receiving 17 and 14 per cent of preferences respectively.
- 57 per cent of respondents said that roads and transport is the council service most in need of serious improvement. This was followed by planning and development (32 per cent), and adult social care (28 per cent).
- 40 per cent of comments made on this topic expressed the need to improve services, or that services should receive more investment.

Your democracy

- In terms of participation to local democracy, most respondents said they take part in council consultations at least once a year (57 per cent), whilst for engagement activities and committee meetings the rate was to 41 and 22 per cent respectively.
- When asked what prevents them from participating more often, 26 per cent said it's not finding out about the engagement, and 25 per cent said they only take part if it's a topic they feel strongly about.
- Among the comments received, 26 per cent said they don't take part in council meetings or engagement activities more often due to the time or location of the event, and 22 per cent said that it's due to their views not being listened to.
- 35 per cent said that the online survey is their preferred way of giving feedback on how the council operates.
- Most respondents believe that their input will not influence the way the council does things, with 45 per cent saying their input will not influence things at all, and 35 per cent saying it will influence things very little.
- Among the comments received, 50 per cent expressed the view that residents' opinions are not listened to.

Economy and council finances

- The most important economic priority for respondents is 'improving transport links' (45 per cent of preferences). This was followed by 'providing affordable homes' (39 per cent), and 'revitalising the high street' (37 per cent).
- The vast majority of respondents said that decisions relating to economic growth and investments should be made locally (85 per cent).
- 18 per cent of comments received indicated that the council should focus on improving local services.

Your local community

- 75 per cent strongly agreed that it's important the council represent local community's needs.
- 83 per cent strongly agreed that it's important the council provide good quality services and value for money.
- 50 per cent strongly agreed that it's important the council be based around an area with shared history and culture.
- Among the comments received 12 per cent said that the areas in the proposal are too different from one another, and 11 per cent said that the councils should focus on efficiency and service improvement rather than reorganisation.

Other options

- Among the comments received on the Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway Councils proposal, 14 per cent expressed concern that some areas will be left behind. Another 14 per cent worried that residents' views will not be listened to. 12 per cent of comments expressed unprompted support for the proposal whilst ten per said would prefer merging with another council.
- Most respondents said they are aware of government's plan to restructure local government, but 41 per cent said they don't understand the proposal well.
- The topic around local government local government reorganisation and devolution that respondents found most interesting is 'Value for money/cost of services' (14 per cent of total preferences).

Any other comments?

- There was a mixture of unprompted comments showing support and a lack of support for the proposal and of reorganisation in general. Ten per cent asked for more information and engagement on the proposal, including holding a referendum

A few more questions about you

- The majority of respondents found out about the engagement via email (28 per cent) or council social media (26 per cent).
- 60 per cent said they would like to be kept informed on future progress on local government reorganisation.

- In terms of where respondents were from: 37 per cent resided in West Berkshire, 21 per cent in South Oxfordshire, 16 per cent in the Vale of White Horse, 12 per cent in West Oxfordshire, 11 per cent in Cherwell and one per cent in Oxford City.

ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

The Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway Councils engagement ran from **Wednesday 4 June until 11:59pm on Wednesday 16 July 2025.**

An online survey was launched to gather feedback from residents across South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Berkshire, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell on the unitary proposal. Paper comment forms were also made available.

2,147 completed responses were received to the online engagement.

5,799 residents and stakeholders across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse were contacted directly about the engagement via the councils' consultation databases and stakeholder lists.

West Berkshire Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Cherwell District Councils actively shared the engagement with their respective communities.

Promotional postcards and posters were distributed to local shops and cafes to help promote the engagement. Councillors also received the materials to spread the word.

A series of press releases were issued by the contributing councils, with stories published in an extensive variety of printed and online news outlets, and covered on broadcast news and current affairs shows, both locally and nationally.

A wide variety of other stakeholder sessions, both online and in person were carried out for Town and Parish Councils, businesses, local community groups, political representatives, public sector organisations, and much more – this is covered in more detail in the proposal document.

To ensure council officers were fully informed, regular online Q&A sessions and one in-person drop-in event were held throughout the engagement period.

Paper copies of consultation documents were made available at key locations (23) across

South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire, and an online interactive exhibition was offered for those unable to attend in-person events.

Abbey Sports Centre (Berinsfield), Burghfield Common Library, Chinnor Community Pavilion (Chinnor), Cornerstone Arts Centre (Didcot), Council Office, Abbey House (Abingdon), Goring Social Club (Goring- on-Thames), Henley Leisure Centre (Henley-on-Thames), Hungerford Library, Lambourn Library, Faringdon Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool, Mortimer Library, Newbury Library, Pangbourne Library, Proof Social Bakehouse (Kennington), St Mary Le More Church (Wallingford),Thame Leisure Centre, Thatcham Library, The Beacon (Wantage), The Bell at Grove, The Eagle (Watchfield), The Waggon & Horses (Kingston Bagpuize), Theale Library and Wheatley Park Sports Centre.
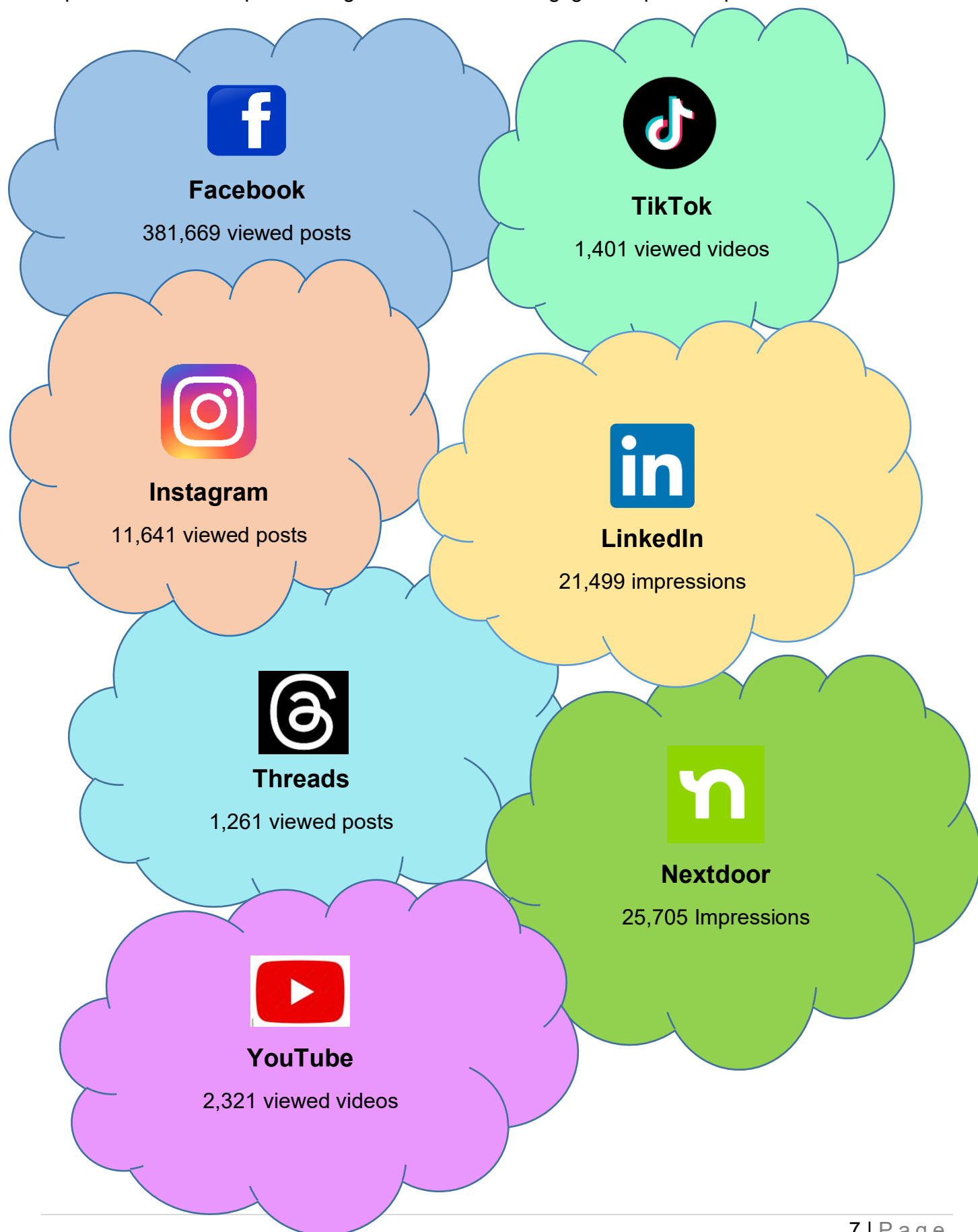
Residents were invited to attend one of 23 drop-in events hosted across South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Oxford in the following locations:

- Café Aroma, Abingdon, Friday 13 June, 1:30 to 4.30pm
- Berro Lounge, Didcot, Tuesday 17 June, 10:30am to 1:30pm
- Beansheaf Community Centre, Calcot, Wednesday 18 June, 11:30am to 2:30pm
- St Mary-le-More Church, Wallingford, Thursday 19 June, 1:30pm to 4:30pm
- Newbury Library, Thursday 19 June, 11:30am to 2:30pm
- Thatcham Market, Friday 20 June, 10am to 2pm
- War Memorial Hal, Charlbury, Monday 23 June, 3pm to 7pm
- Exeter Hall, Kidlington, Monday 23 June, 3pm to 7pm
- John Paull II Centre, Bicester, 24 June, 3pm to 7pm
- The Beacon, Wantage, Wednesday 25 June, 1pm to 4pm
- Hungerford Library, Wednesday 25 June, 11am to 2pm
- Old Crown Coach Inn, Faringdon, Friday 27 June, 10:30am to 1:30pm
- Old Headington Village Hall, Oxford, Friday 27 June, 3pm to 7pm
- Northbrook Street, Newbury, Saturday 28 June, 11:30am to 2:30pm
- Jericho Community Centre, Oxford, Monday 30 June, 3pm to 7pm
- Henley Town Hall, Henley, Tuesday 1 July, 2.30pm to 5:30pm
- Florence Park Community Centre, Oxford, Wednesday 2 July, 3pm to 7pm
- Thame Town Hall, Thame, Friday 4 July, 10:30am to 1:30pm
- Cotswold Sports Centre, Saturday 5 July, 11am to 3pm
- Banbury Town Hall, Monday 7 July, 3pm to 7pm
- Bampton Village Hall, Wednesday 8 July, 3pm to 7pm
- Unit 14a, Marriotts Walk, Witney, Thursday 10 July, 3pm to 7pm
- Theale Library Community Forum, Reading, Tuesday 15 July, 6pm to 8pm

Total attendance: 750 residents attended the above drop-in events.

The survey was promoted across all council social media channels, including Facebook, Nextdoor, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Threads. The number of views and impressions across all posts throughout the six-weeks engagement period is provided below.

Facebook

381,669 viewed posts

TikTok

1,401 viewed videos

Instagram

11,641 viewed posts

LinkedIn

21,499 impressions

Threads

1,261 viewed posts

Nextdoor

25,705 Impressions

YouTube

2,321 viewed videos

Reporting methodology

This report provides a summary of all quantitative and qualitative results of the online survey, including a summary of the comments made. Any personal information supplied to us within the comments that could identify anyone has been redacted and will not be shared or published. Further information on data protection is available in this privacy statement, which was laid out for the purpose of this public engagement.

Some punctuation errors in the original comments raised were corrected in the main body of this report.

When stating percentages in the analysis, we are referring to the percentage of respondents that answered the specific question, rather than the total number of responses to the overall survey. Response percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding up over .5 and rounding down under .5. Words that appear in italics are quotes taken from comments received.

KEY FINDINGS – QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

This section outlines the key quantitative findings, which are organised by main section of the online consultation.

ABOUT YOU

Please choose the option that relates to the responses you'll be providing to this survey. If you're responding on behalf of an organisation or council, you can come back and respond again in a personal capacity.

We will also be getting in touch directly with a number of different groups, businesses and organisations, including town and parish councils, but please do also fill in this survey, as we want to make sure we get as many views as possible.

Q1. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOU?

The vast majority of respondents took part in the engagement as members of the public (87 per cent). Six per cent were council(s)' employees and four per cent were district, county or town/parish councillors.

One per cent responded on behalf of a business organisation, and another one per cent selected the option 'Other, please specify below'.

Figure 1: Which of the following best describes you?
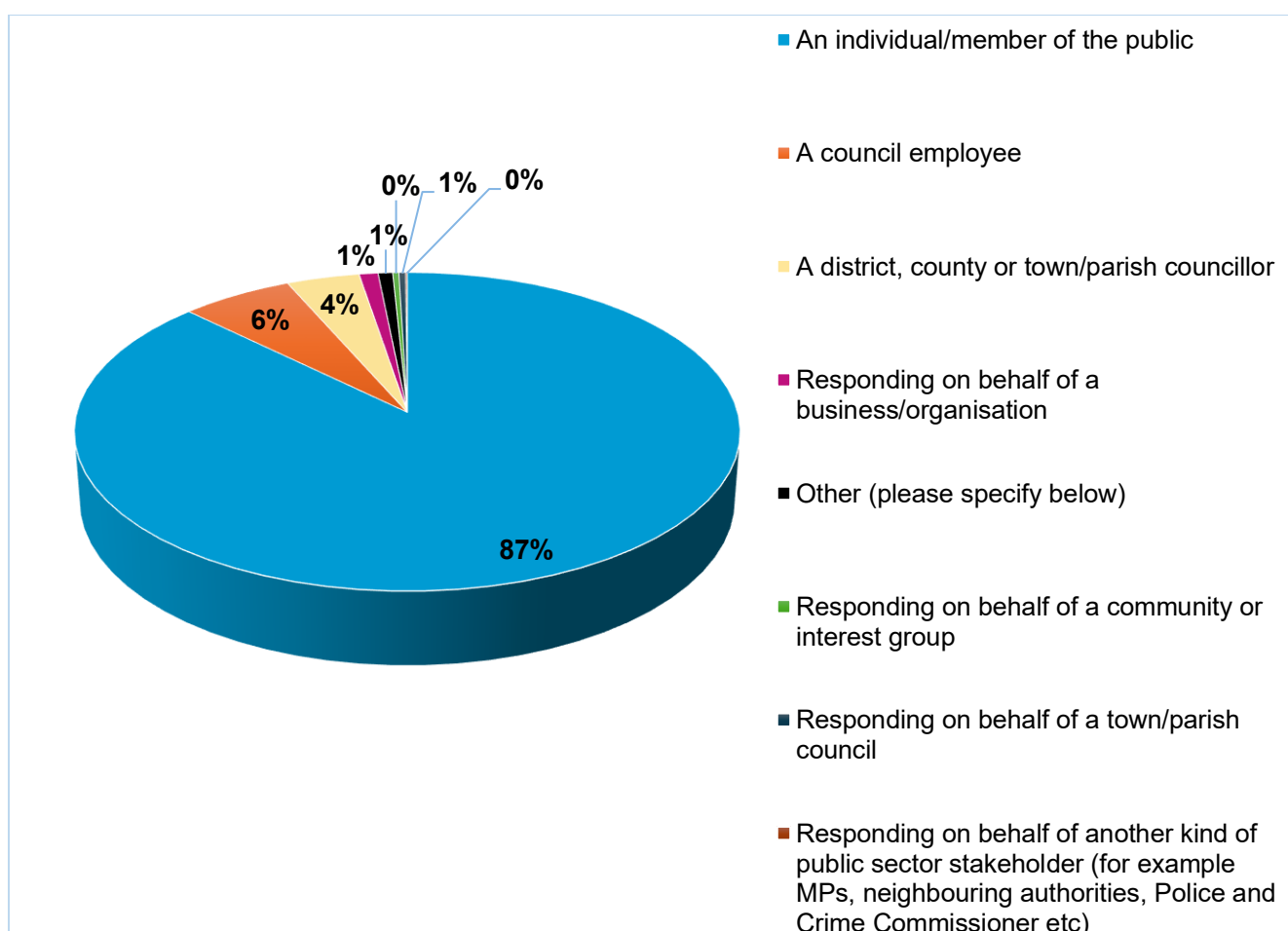
'OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY BELOW)':

23 respondents provided more information after selecting the above option. Of them, 11 said they were members of the public (42 per cent), and six said they were current or ex district, county, or town/parish councillors (23 per cent).

Two were Town/Parish/District or County council employees and another three worked in local government. One was a private or non-profit organisation.

Since the above question 1 allowed for a single response, these comments may have been made by those who wished to clarify that there was more than one role they identified with.

Q2. IF YOU ARE REPRESENTING AN ORGANISATION, PLEASE PROVIDE ITS NAME BELOW.

We received 66 responses to this question. A list of all the names is provided in the appendix to this report.
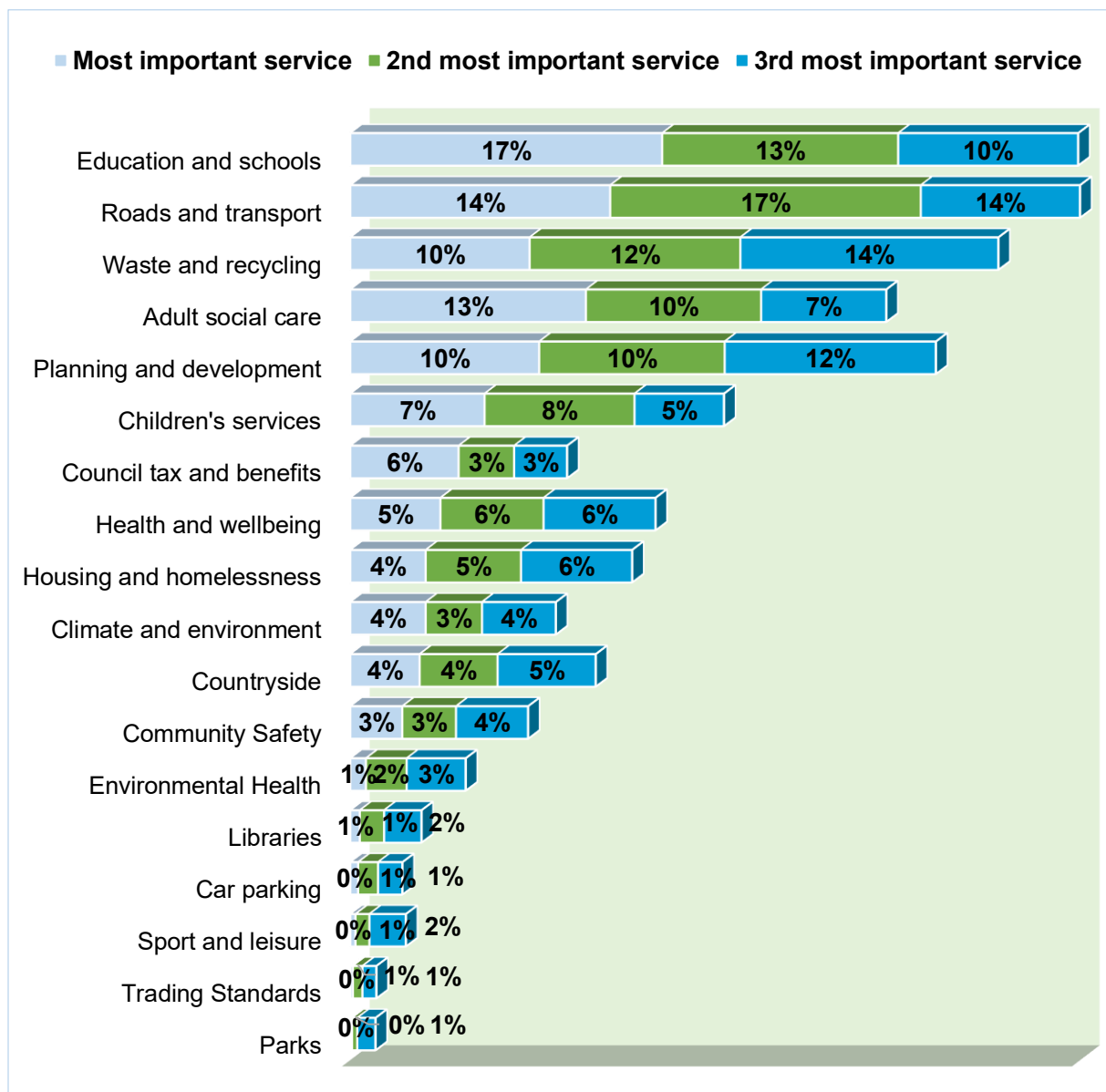
YOUR SERVICES

To help us design a new council that reflects your priorities, we'd like to understand where you think your current councils need to improve the most.

Q3. WHICH DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT COUNCIL SERVICES FROM THE DROP-DOWN LISTS BELOW?

We asked them to rank their top three most important services, and so there are a few different ways to present these results, but there were five services that stood out from the rest as being the most important to respondents.

- **Education and schools**
    - the most-selected first choice (17 per cent)
    - The second most selected service overall (40 per cent selected it as either first, second or third choice)
- **Roads and transport**
    - the most-selected second choice (17 per cent)
    - the most selected service overall (45 per cent)
- **Waste and recycling**
    - the most-selected third choice (14 per cent)
    - The third most-selected service overall (36 per cent)
- **Adult social care**
    - The third most-selected first choice (13 per cent)
    - The fifth most-selected service overall (30 per cent)
- **Planning and Development**
    - The fifth most selected first choice (10 per cent)
    - The fourth most selected service overall (32 per cent)

Figure 2 – Which do you think are the three most important council services from the drop-down list below?

Most important service **2nd most important service** **3rd most important service**

Service	Most important	2nd most important	3rd most important
Education and schools	17%	13%	10%
Roads and transport	14%	17%	14%
Waste and recycling	10%	12%	14%
Adult social care	13%	10%	7%
Planning and development	10%	10%	12%
Children's services	7%	8%	5%
Council tax and benefits	6%	3%	3%
Health and wellbeing	5%	6%	6%
Housing and homelessness	4%	5%	6%
Climate and environment	4%	3%	4%
Countryside	4%	4%	5%
Community Safety	3%	3%	4%
Environmental Health	1%	2%	3%
Libraries	1%	1%	2%
Car parking	0%	1%	1%
Sport and leisure	0%	1%	2%
Trading Standards	0%	1%	1%
Parks	0%	0%	1%

Q4. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL SERVICES NEED IMPROVING IN YOUR LOCAL AREA? PLEASE GIVE THEM A RATING FROM 0 TO 4, WITH 0 NEEDING NO IMPROVEMENT AND 4 NEEDING SERIOUS IMPROVEMENT. ONLY PROVIDE AN ANSWER FOR SERVICES YOU HAVE EXPERIENCES OF.

In the charts that follow, council services are listed based on their need of improvement, with the service most in need of serious improvement appearing at the top. Due to the number of services listed, the chart has been split into two.

The three council services which respondents said are most in need of serious improvement are:

- Roads and transport (57 per cent said so)
- Planning and development (32 per cent)
- Adult social care (28 per cent)

Conversely, the services which respondents said need no improvement are:

- Libraries (21 per cent said so)
- Trading standards (20 per cent)
- Car parking (19 per cent)
- Climate and environment (19 per cent).

Figure 3: Which of the following council services need improvement in your local area?
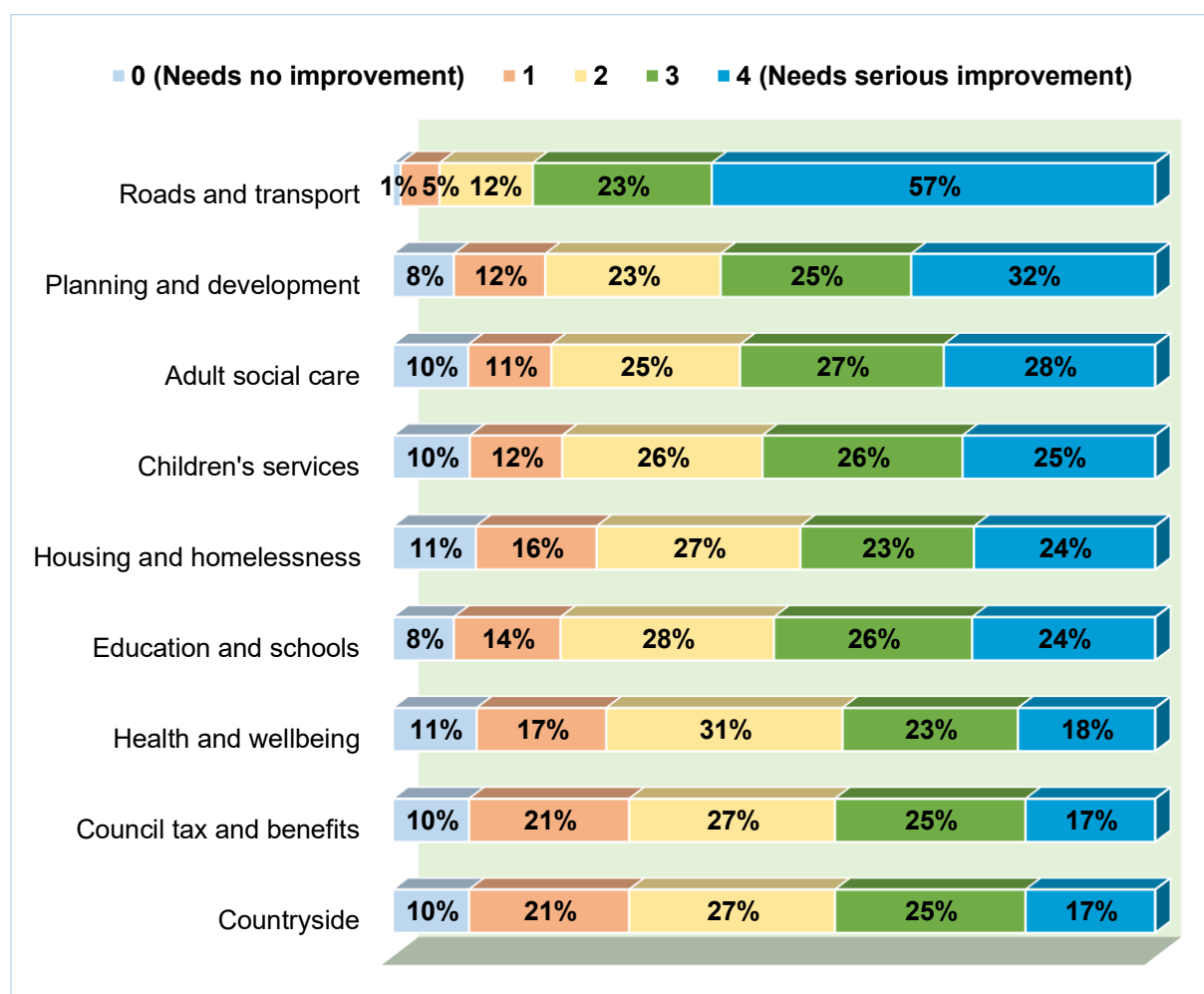
Figure 4: Which of the following council services need improvement in your local area? (2)
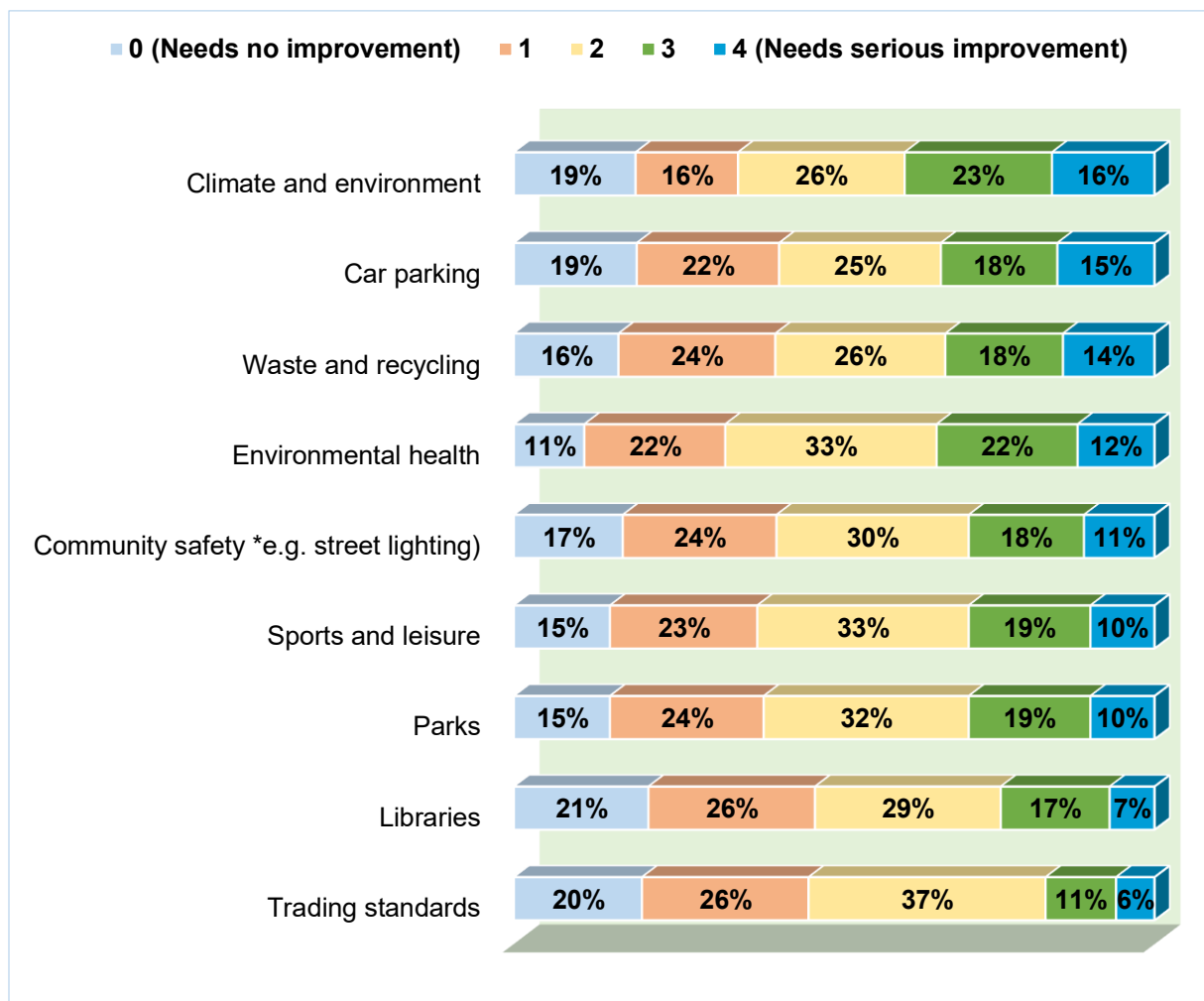
Q5. IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THIS TOPIC, PLEASE PROVIDE THEM BELOW.

573 comments were received in response to this question.

46 per cent of comments expressed the need to improve services, or that services should receive more investment.

10 per cent were dissatisfied with the survey, saying that it did not offer appropriate response options or the questions were not clear enough.

Eight per cent of comments expressed concerns about local democracy and accountability and worries that residents aren't listened to.

YOUR DEMOCRACY

Our proposal will set out how our communities will be able to influence decisions and take part in democratic processes at the new councils, so we'd like to hear about how you get involved, and how you would like to get involved in council decision-making:

Q6. HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET INVOLVED WITH COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS, ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS?

With respect to participation in local democracy, responses vary considerably depending on type of activity. More specifically, whilst most respondents said they take part in council consultations at least once a year (57 per cent), for engagement activities and committee meetings this proportion falls to 41 and 22 per cent respectively. Committee meetings see the lowest level of participation, with 55 per cent saying they never take part.

Figure 5 – How often do you get involved?
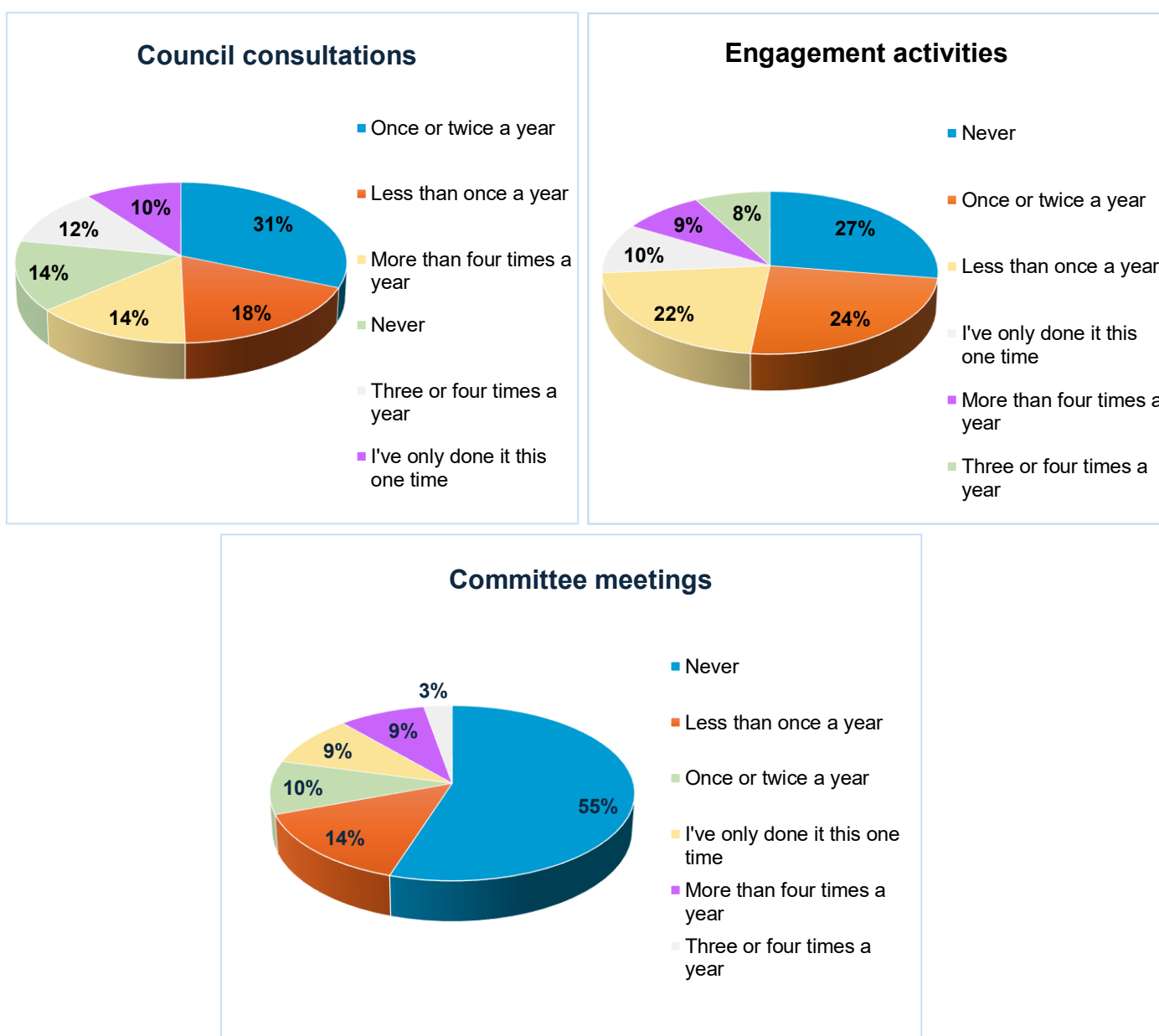
Q7. IF LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR, WHAT PREVENTS YOU FROM TAKING PART IN THESE ACTIVITIES MORE OFTEN? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

Most respondents said that what prevents them from taking part in activities more often is not finding out about them (26 per cent), or the specific topic of discussion, since they only get involved if it's a topic they feel strongly about (25 per cent).

Other respondents mentioned:

- I don't believe it will make a difference (19 per cent)
- I don't have time (15 per cent)
- I don't know how to get information about it (nine per cent)
- Other (please specify below, four per cent)
- I am not interested (two per cent).

Figure 6 - If less than once a year, what prevents you from taking part in these activities more often?
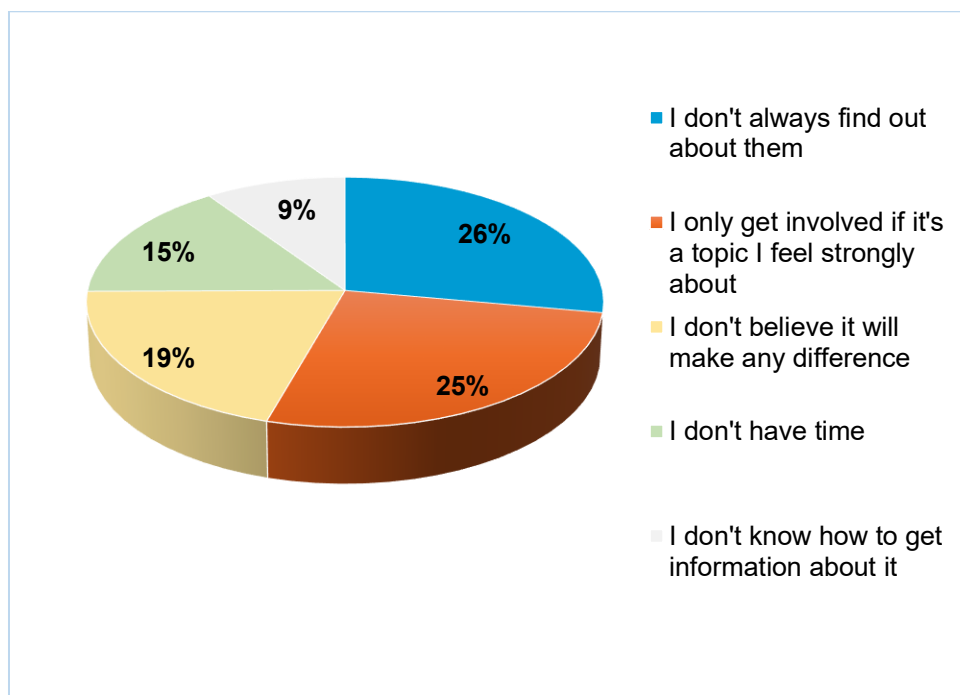
'OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY BELOW)':

181 comments made in response to this question.

Among them, 26 per cent said they don't take part in council meetings or engagement activities more often due to the time or location of the event, with many saying that meetings are during working hours.

22 per cent said they don't take part more often because their views are not listened to and their participation would not make a difference.

13 per cent said the main cause they don't take part more often is age or disability, and 12 per cent said this is due to lack of communication or engagement from the council(s).

Q8. WHAT ARE YOUR PREFERRED WAYS OF GIVING FEEDBACK ON HOW THE COUNCIL OPERATES?

The most preferred way of giving feedback on how the council operates is the online survey (35 per cent selected this). This was followed by email and letter (13 per cent) and providing feedback on the website (11 per cent).

Figure 7 – Your preferred ways of giving feedback
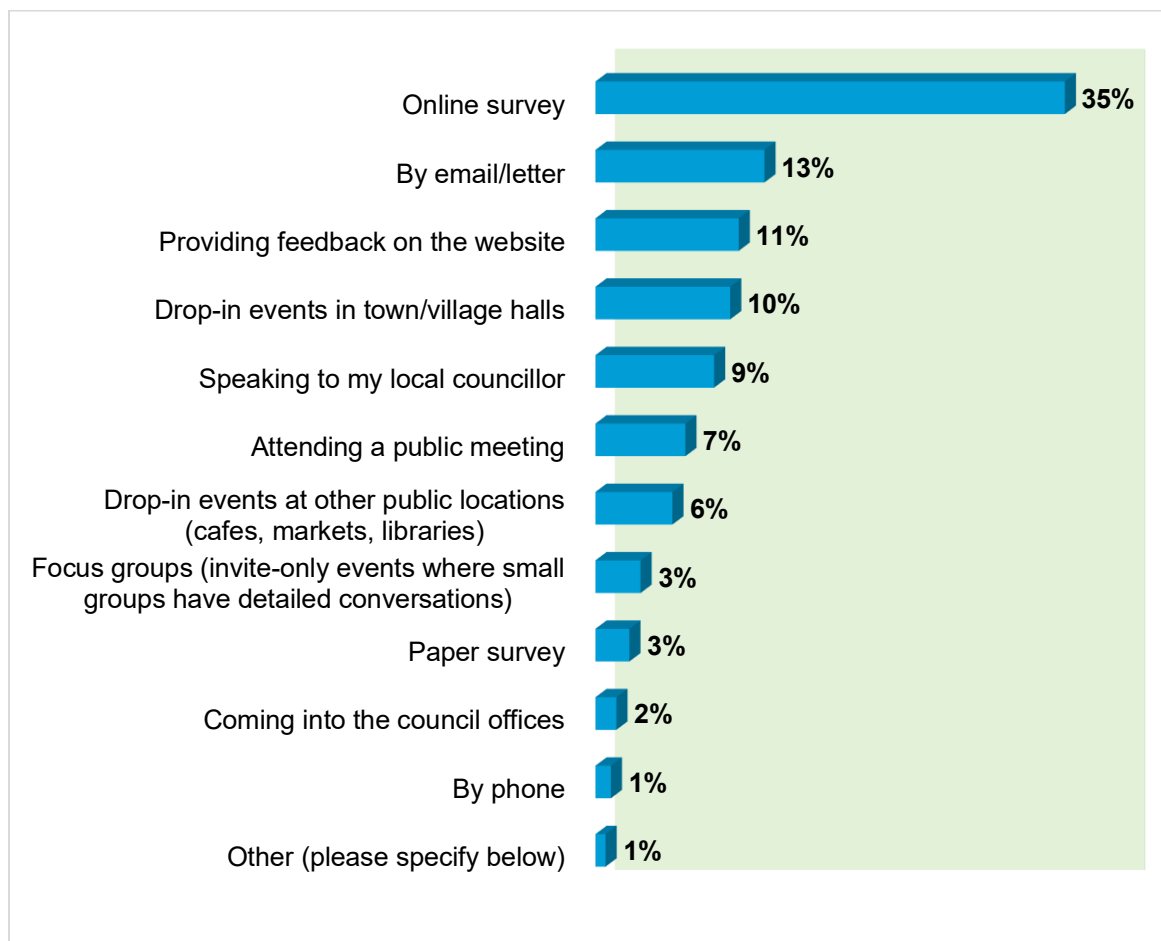
'OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY BELOW)':

68 comments were received in response to this question.

26 per cent of comments provided feedback on drop-in events or the online survey organised for this public engagement. Of them, 60 per cent said that events were not held in their local area, but they would have liked to attend.

19% of comments complained that feedback is not taken into account.

Another 19 per cent said that they provide feedback in other ways (i.e. in virtual meetings, via the press).

Q9. ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK YOUR INPUT AND INVOLVEMENT CAN INFLUENCE HOW COUNCILS DO THINGS? WHERE 1 IS YOU FEEL YOU CANNOT INFLUENCE THINGS AT ALL AND 5 IS YOU FEEL YOU CAN HAVE A STRONG AND MEANINGFUL INFLUENCE.

Most respondents think their input and involvement does not influence how the council(s) do things. More specifically, 45 per cent said their input will not influence things at all, and 35 per cent said their input is going to influence things very little.

Only one per cent said they believe they can have a strong and meaningful influence over how the councils do things.

Figure 8 – How your input and involvement can influence how the councils do things
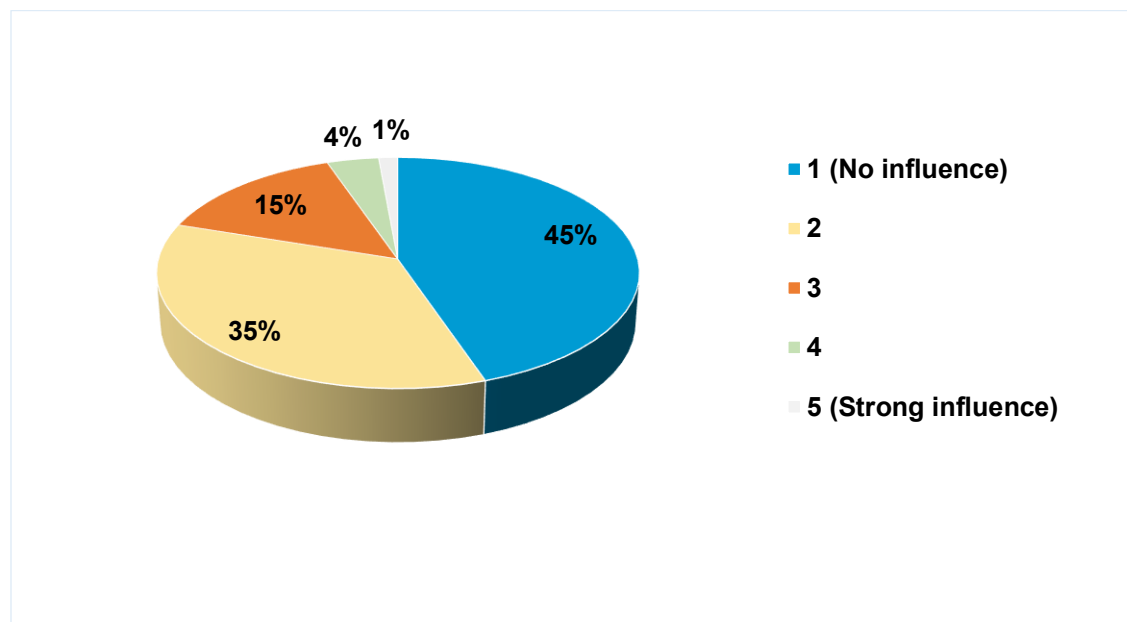
Q10. IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THIS TOPIC, PLEASE PROVIDE THEM BELOW.

528 responses were received in response to this question.

50 per cent of comments lamented that residents' views are not listened to.

Ten per cent of comments lamented that council officers are not always competent or accountable.

Smaller proportions of comments included the following:

- Negative comments about this specific engagement and online survey EG people who wanted the scope of this engagement to be different (seven per cent)
- Further engagement on this and/or more communication from the council(s) are welcome (six per cent)
- Services are inadequate or need improvement (five per cent).

ECONOMY AND COUNCIL FINANCES

A key part of the government proposals to change the structure of councils is to make sure they are financially resilient and provide value for money for the taxpayer. Creating two appropriately sized councils would help achieve this but also keep them connected to your local needs. We also need to look at how our proposal can boost local economies, create more jobs and support businesses.

Q11. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC PRIORITIES FOR YOUR LOCAL AREA? PLEASE RATE THEM FROM 1 TO 5, WITH 1 BEING NOT VERY IMPORTANT AND 5 BEING VERY IMPORTANT.

The below bar chart lists the economic priorities according to their relative importance, with the most important one appearing at the top.

According to respondents the three most important economic priorities in their local areas are:

- Improving transport links (45 per cent deem this very important)
- Providing affordable housing (39 per cent)
- Revitalising the high street (37 per cent).

Figure 9 – What are the most important economic priorities in your local area?
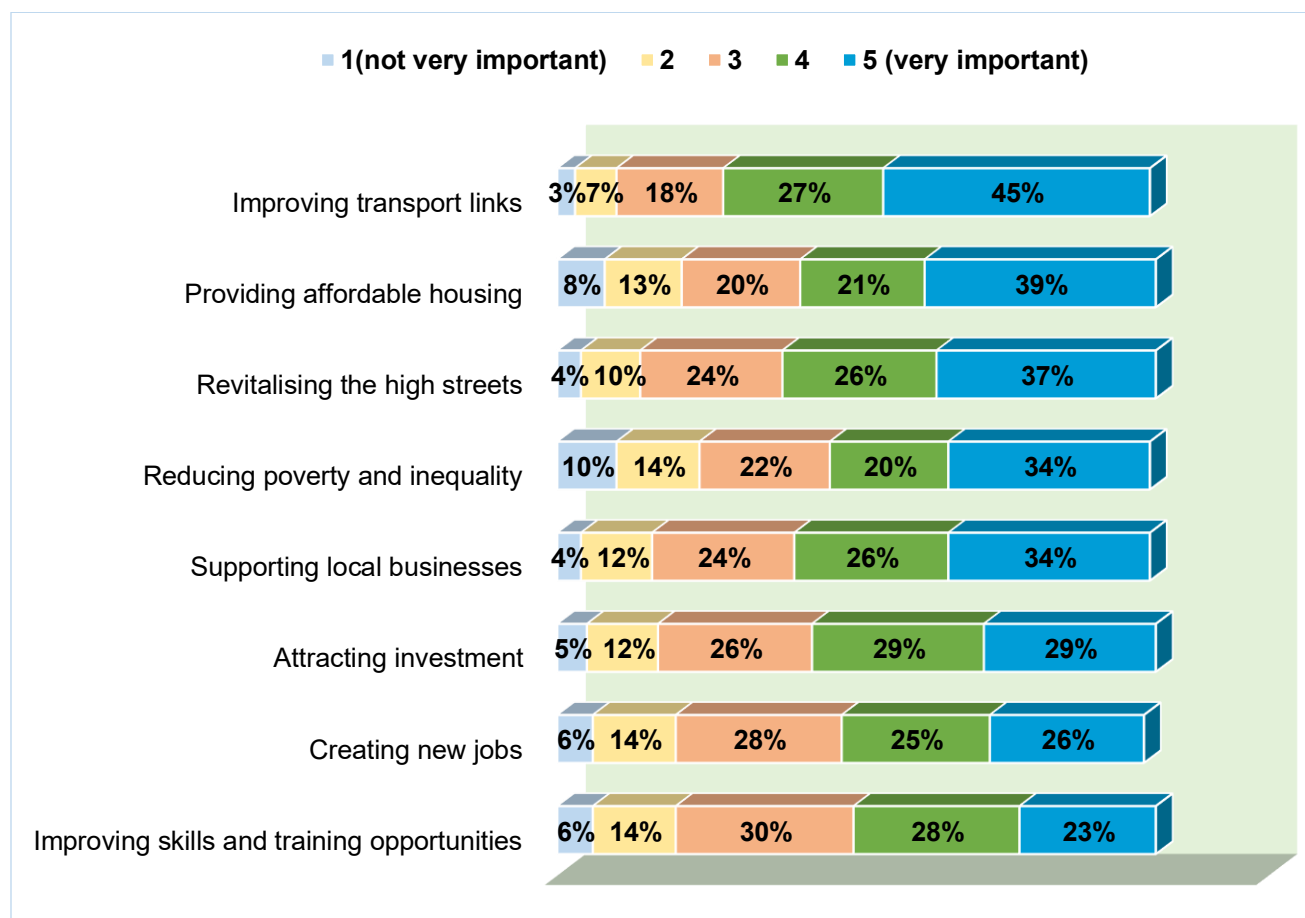
Q12. SHOULD DECISIONS BE MADE LOCALLY TO HELP SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENCOURAGE NEW INVESTMENT?

The vast majority of respondents said that decisions regarding economic growth and investment should be made locally (85 per cent).

Figure 10 - Should decisions be made locally to help support economic growth and encourage new investment?
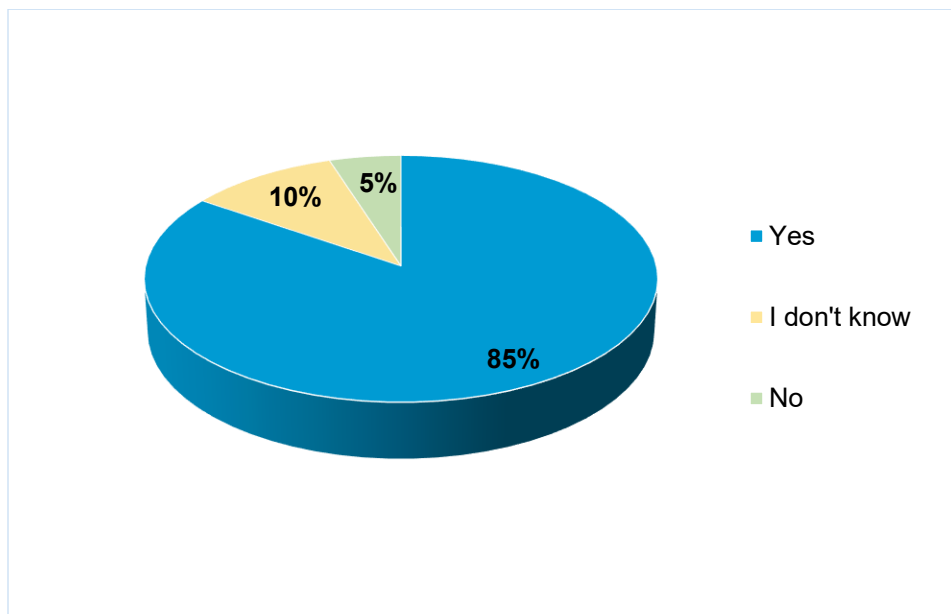
Q13. IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THIS TOPIC, PLEASE PROVIDE THEM BELOW.

406 comments received in response to this question.

18 per cent of comments indicated that the councils should focus on improving local services.

Ten per cent said that the council(s) should focus on supporting businesses and making sure they want to move to the area. Nine per cent said that some of the priorities listed in the survey are not under local government responsibility.

Respondents also made the following comments:

- Public engagement must be improved/residents' views are not listened to (eight per cent)
- The new council will be too far from the communities it will need to represent (eight per cent)
- Negative comment on questions or survey (eight per cent)
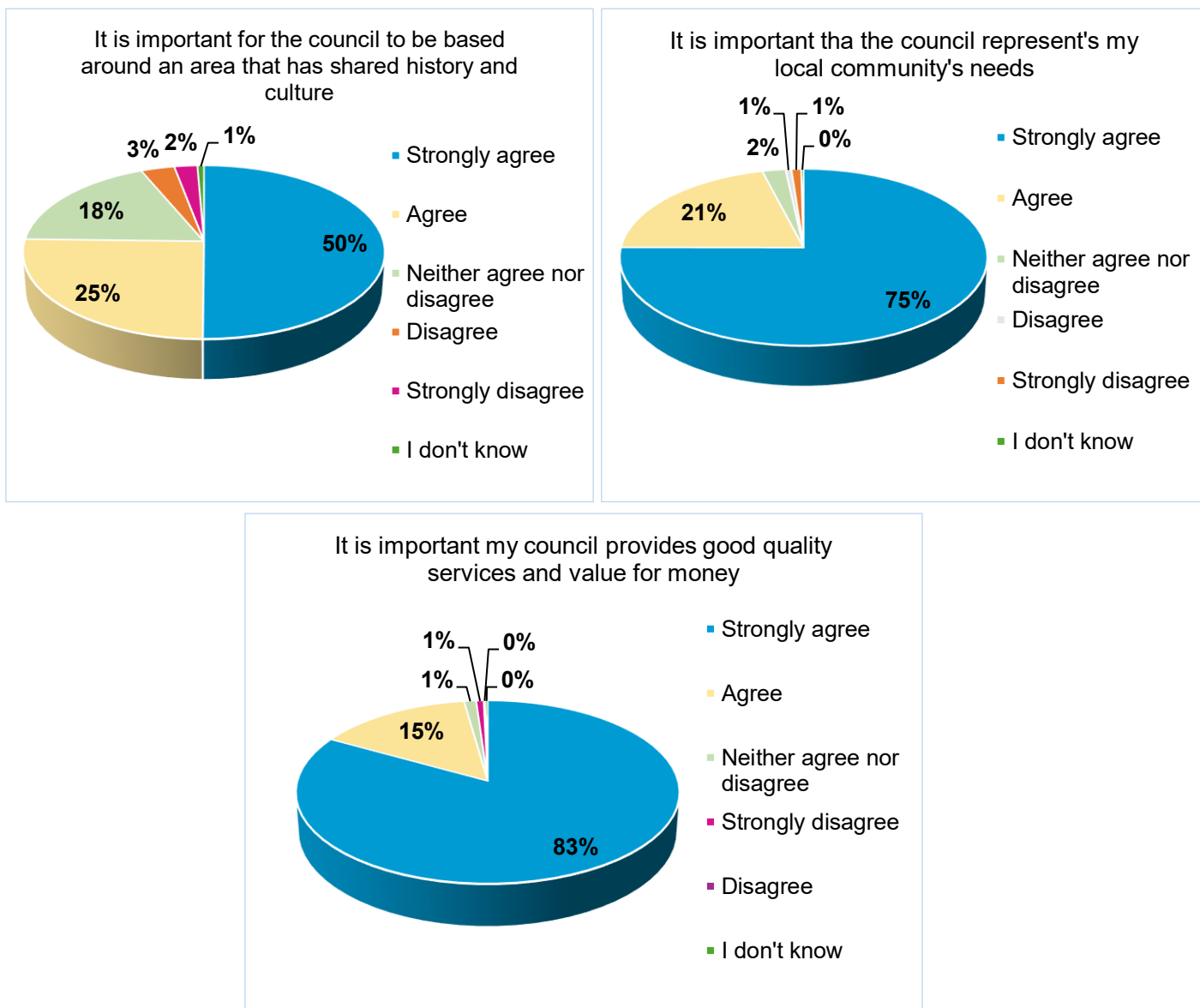
YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Councils often hear from residents about their local community and how connected they feel to them. We want to make sure we are representing you, understanding where you live and looking after your interests and what matters most to you.

14. HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

A large majority of respondents strongly agreed that it is important that the council represents local community's needs (75 per cent), and that provides good quality services and value for money (83 per cent).

A somewhat lower proportion of respondents strongly agreed that it's important that the council be based around an area that has a shared history and culture (50 per cent).

Figure 11 – How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

It is important for the council to be based around an area that has shared history and culture

- Strongly agree — 50%
- Agree — 25%
- Neither agree nor disagree — 18%
- Disagree — 3%
- Strongly disagree — 2%
- I don't know — 1%

It is important tha the council represent's my local community's needs

- Strongly agree — 75%
- Agree — 21%
- Neither agree nor disagree — 2%
- Disagree — 1%
- Strongly disagree — 1%
- I don't know — 0%

It is important my council provides good quality services and value for money

- Strongly agree — 83%
- Agree — 15%
- Neither agree nor disagree — 1%
- Strongly disagree — 1%
- Disagree — 0%
- I don't know — 0%

Q15. IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THIS TOPIC, PLEASE PROVIDE THEM BELOW

439 comments made in response to this question.

15 per cent of comments indicated that the areas in the proposals are too different (different culture and needs).

14 per cent said that the council(s) should focus on efficient and service improvement. Another 11 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with the scope of the survey.

Nine per cent expressed lack of support for the proposal, and another nine per cent expressed worry that the proposal will make them feel less connected, and that local issues and voices won't be heard.

Smaller proportions of comments expressed the following:

- 'I would prefer merging with another council' (five per cent)
- 'I feel this is a political decision that does not respond to local needs' (five per cent)
- 'I prefer another proposal/comment on other proposal' (five per cent)
- 'I am concerned about tax raising and/or access to or level of service deteriorating' (five per cent).

OTHER OPTIONS

Two other councils are making their own proposals for how they think councils could be rearranged in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing for there to be one very large council based on its current borders that does all of the services in the area. This does not provide any alternative suggestions for West Berkshire.

Oxford City Council is proposing to divide the area up into three different councils based around an expanded city of Oxford; the remainder of the north of Oxfordshire; and the remainder of the south of the county combined with West Berkshire. You can read more about the city council's proposal on its Greater Oxford website here.

We are proposing two new councils that reflect how people live, work, and travel while ensuring they are appropriately sized for financial resilience. The focus is on best representing the communities they would serve.

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council will be running their own public engagement activities to enable you to comment on and inform their proposals. You are free to comment on the various proposals in the 'any other comments' box on the next page, but you may find that your comments on the other two proposals have more impact if you provide them directly to the relevant council.

The government will decide which proposal will be implemented.

Q16. REGARDLESS OF WHICH OF THE PROPOSALS EXPLAINED ABOVE IS CHOSEN, WHAT ARE YOU THOUGHTS, IDEAS OR CONCERNS ABOUT THE CHANGES THAT ARE COMING TO COUNCILS? YOUR ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION WILL HELP US ENSURE OUR PROPOSAL FOCUSES ON WAYS TO TACKLE THE THINGS YOU MIGHT BE WORRIED ABOUT, AND TAKE ON GOOD SUGGESTIONS FROM OUR COMMUNITIES.

1631 comments were made in response to this question.

12 per cent of comments expressed the worry that this proposal will lead to some areas being left behind, or that urban areas will take the focus over rural ones. Another 12 per cent of comments expressed concern that local views will not be listened to.

Ten per cent said they support the Two Councils proposal, whilst nine per cent would prefer merging with another council.

Respondents also mentioned the following:

- The new councils should reduce the bureaucracy, cut their costs or find savings' (seven per cent)
- Concern about changes to services and cross-border cooperation (seven per cent)
- Lack of support for the proposal (five per cent).

Q17. BEFORE COMPLETING THIS SURVEY, WERE YOU AWARE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PROPOSING TO CHANGE THE STRUCTURE OF LOCAL COUNCILS IN MANY PARTS OF ENGLAND?

Most respondents were aware of the Government's plans to restructure local councils in England. However, whilst 50 per cent said they understood the Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway Councils proposal well, 41 per cent said they didn't fully understand the proposal.

Nine per cent said they were not aware of Government's intention to reorganise local government.

Figure 12 - Before completing this survey, were you aware that the government is proposing to change the structure of local councils in many parts of England?
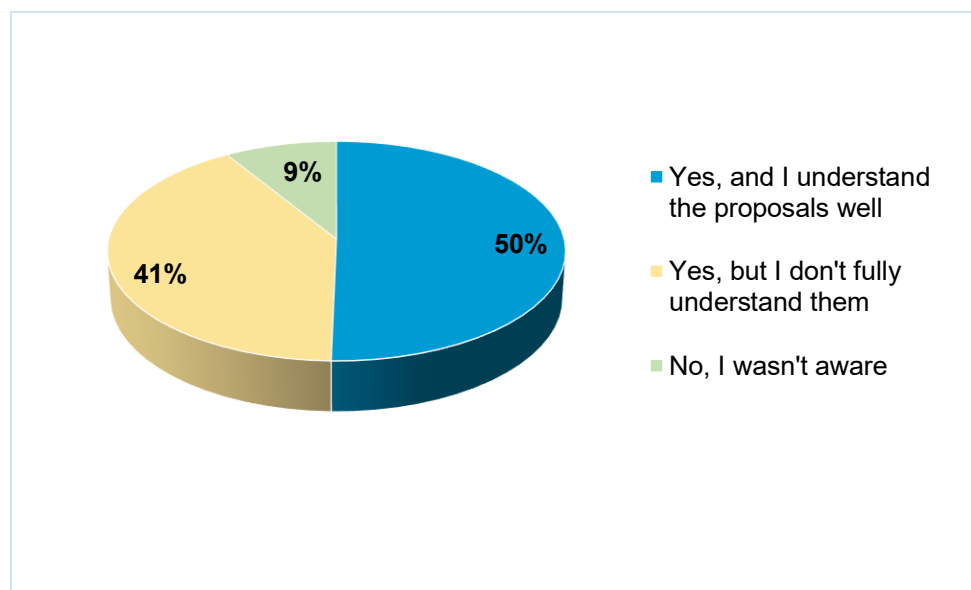
Q18. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS INTEREST YOU THE MOST IN RELATION TO DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION?

The four topics related to devolution and local government reorganisation that respondents found most interesting are:

- Value for money/cost of services (14 per cent of total preferences)
- How decisions affecting your area would be made (13 per cent)
- Keeping a sense of local identity (12 per cent)
- How councils respond to the needs of their communities (12 per cent)

Figure 13 - Which of the following topics interest you the most in relation to devolution and Local Government Reorganisation?
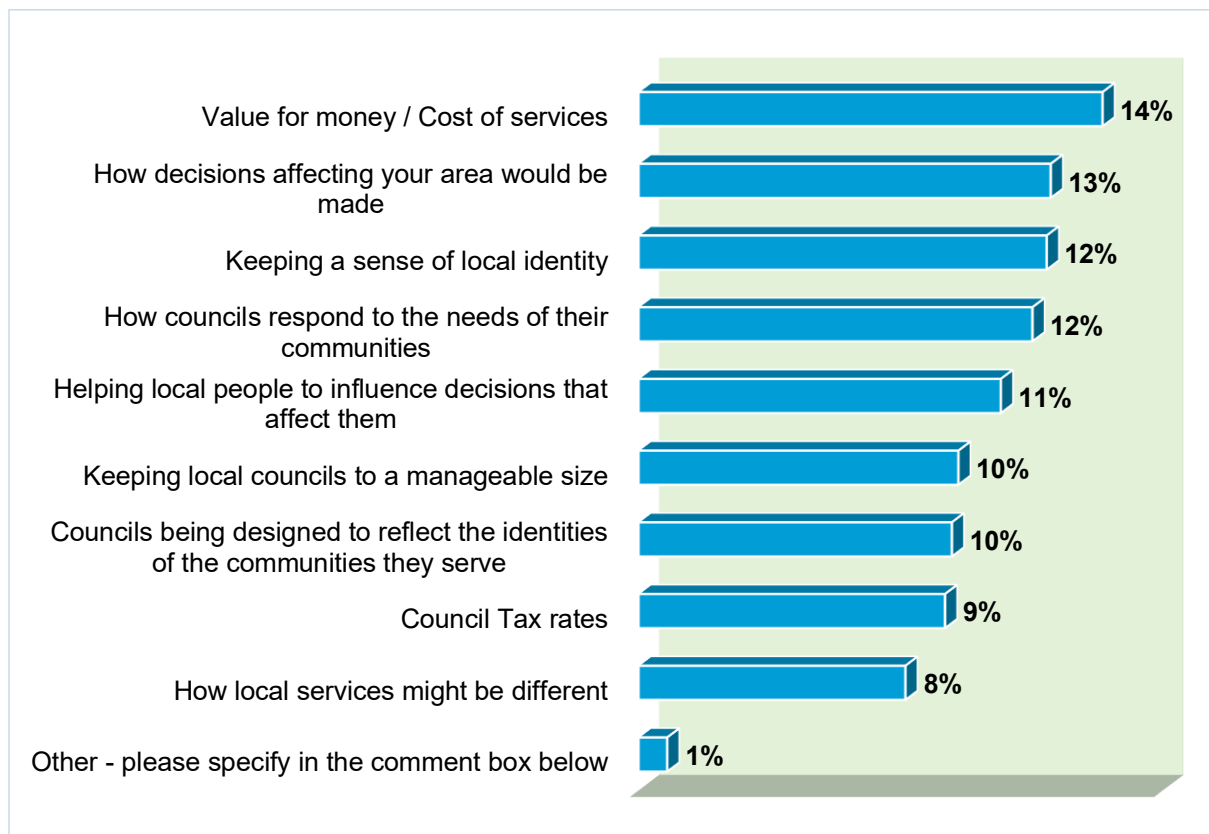
'OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY BELOW'

246 comments received in response to this question.

Of them, 12 per cent said what interests them the most is 'helping local people to influence decisions that affect them'. This was one of the response options in the survey.

Additionally:

- Nine per cent said what interests them is 'value for money/cost of services'
- Nine per cent mentioned 'how local services might be different'
- Eight per cent mentioned 'keeping a sense of local community'
- Eight per cent made a negative comment on devolution, the proposal or the survey
- Seven per cent said 'how councils respond to the needs of their communities'.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

19. IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS, CONCERNS, OR SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE OXFORD & SHIRES AND RIDGEWAY COUNCILS PROPOSAL, PLEASE PROVIDE THEM BELOW.

703 comments made in response to this question.

There was a mix of support and a lack of support for this proposal. Among the reasons for a lack of support some mentioned that the needs of the rural and urban areas are too different for them to merge, some expressed concerns about democracy and representation and some would prefer merging with another council.

11 per cent of comments asked for more information and engagement on the proposal, including holding a referendum.

Nine per cent per cent expressed concern over changes to services and/or that these should improve.

Eight per cent said that there are aspects of the proposal they would like to change. Of them, 38 per cent said they would like different names for the new unitary councils.

A FEW MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

We would like to ask you further information that would help us improve our communication with everyone and reach all communities.

Q20. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE OXFORD & SHIRES AND RIDGEWAY COUNCILS ENGAGEMENT?

Figure 14 - How did you find out about the Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway Councils engagement?
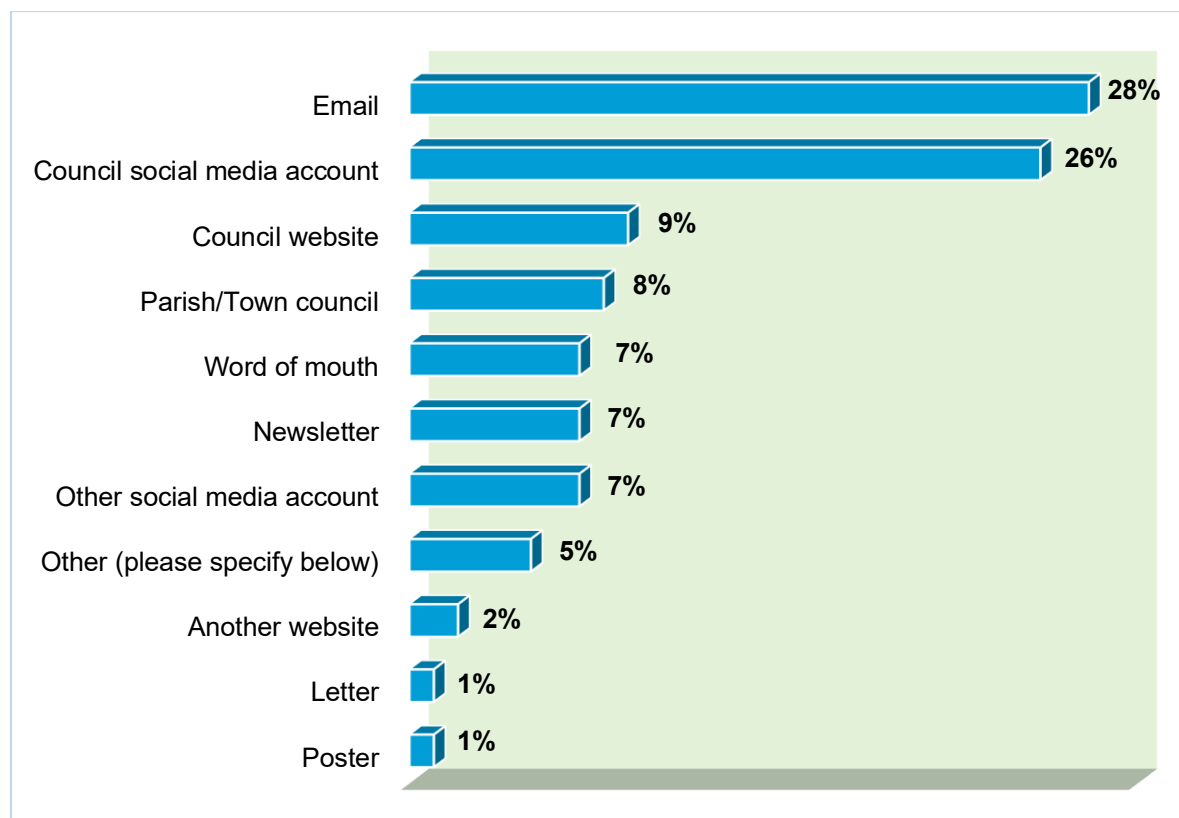
'OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)'

198 respondents selected the option 'Other' and made a comment. Of them, 36 per cent said they heard about on the local newspaper or media. 12 per cent heard about the engagement on BBC news or on national media, and 10 per cent through their employer.

Nine per cent found out about the engagement at an in-person event or public display.

Q21. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE KEPT INFORMED ABOUT THE PROGRESS ON THE OXFORD & SHIRES AND RIDGEWAY COUNCILS PROPOSAL FOR YOUR AREA, PLEASE CONSENT BELOW AND PROVIDE US WITH YOUR NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS.

Most respondents said they would like to be kept informed about future development relating to local government reorganisation.

Figure 15 - Would you like to be kept informed about the progress on the Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway Councils proposal for your area?
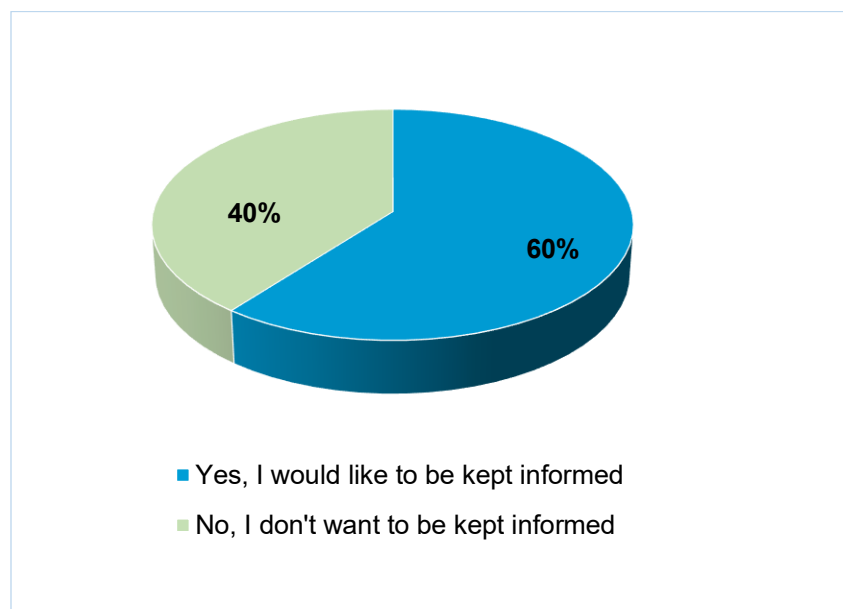
Q22. WHICH DISTRICT DO YOU LIVE IN?

You can find out which district you live in by clicking here.

If you're representing an organisation, please respond based on its location rather than your home address.

Just over a third of all respondents lived or were based in West Berkshire (37 per cent).

Respondents from South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse made up 21 and 16 per cent respectively, whilst those from West Oxfordshire and Cherwell made up 12 and 11 per cent of the total respectively. Two per cent of respondents were from Oxford City.

Figure 16 – Which district do you live in?

Legend:
- West Berkshire
- South Oxfordshire
- Vale of White Horse
- West Oxfordshire
- Cherwell
- Oxford City
- Other (please specify below)

Pie chart values: 37%, 21%, 16%, 12%, 11%, 2%, 1%
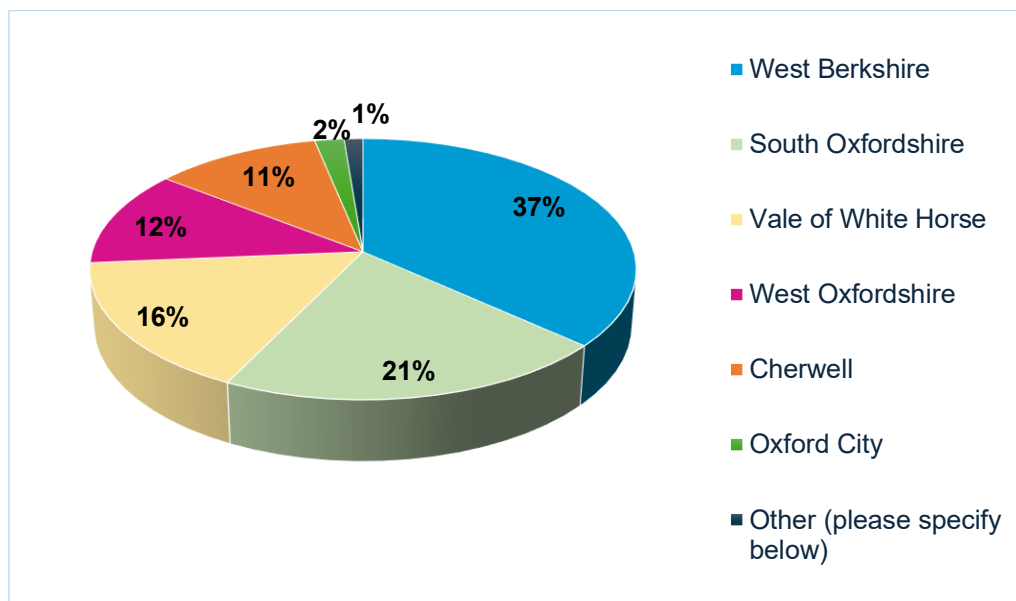
Q23. WHAT IS THE FIRST PART OF YOUR POSTCODE?

We are awaiting a map of all the postcodes provided (showing the name of the village/town) produced by data capture.

This question was included in the survey to allow us to assess the geographical spread of the responses. 1,985 postcodes were received. The most frequently mentioned are provided below. 41% of respondents were received from the following locations:

Henley (RG8) – 152 postcodes (8%)
Didcot (OX11) – 113 postcodes (6%)
Wantage (OX12) – 101 postcodes (5%)
Reading (RG7) – 97 postcodes (5%)
Wallingford (OX10) – 88 postcodes (4%)
Newbury (RG14) – 82 postcodes (4%)
Abingdon (OX14) – 82 postcodes (4%)
Chipping Norton (OX7) – 54 postcodes (3%)
Hungerford (RG17) – 50 postcodes (2%)

The remaining 60% of postcodes can be viewed on the map below.

Local Government Reorganisation Engagement 2025
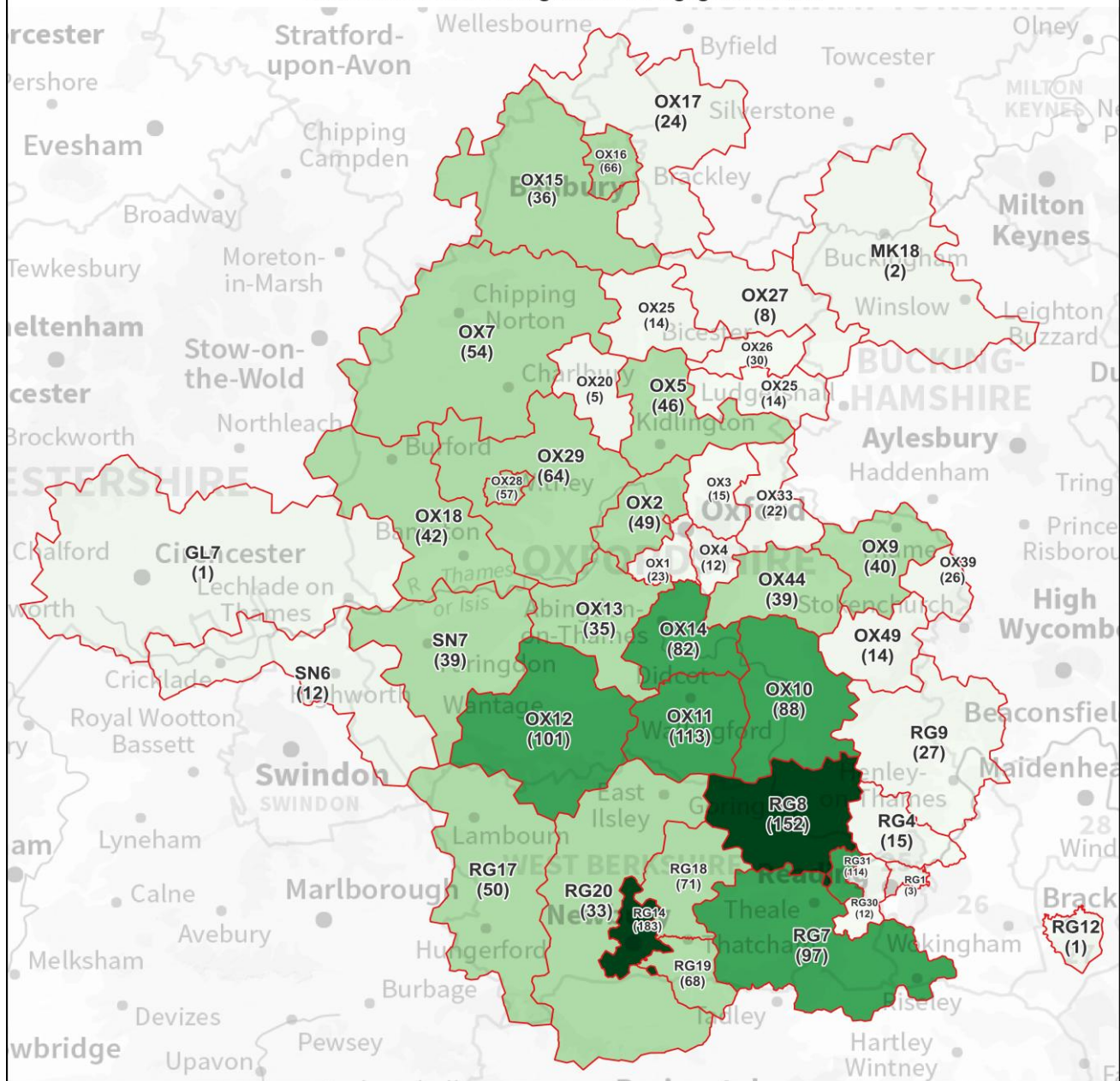
Postcode District - Coloured by Count
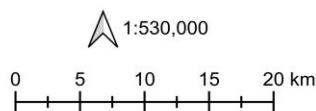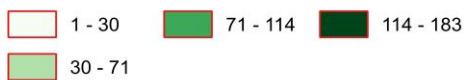
1 - 30	71 - 114	114 - 183
30 - 71		

1:530,000

0 5 10 15 20 km

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Below is the demographic data collected in the engagement. Not all respondents answered so percentages given represent responses to each question. Comments in italics in brackets are provided for clarification.

Q24. WHAT IS YOUR SEX?

With respect to their sex, respondents were almost equally split between males and females, with ten per cent preferring not to answer the question.

Figure 17 – What is your sex?
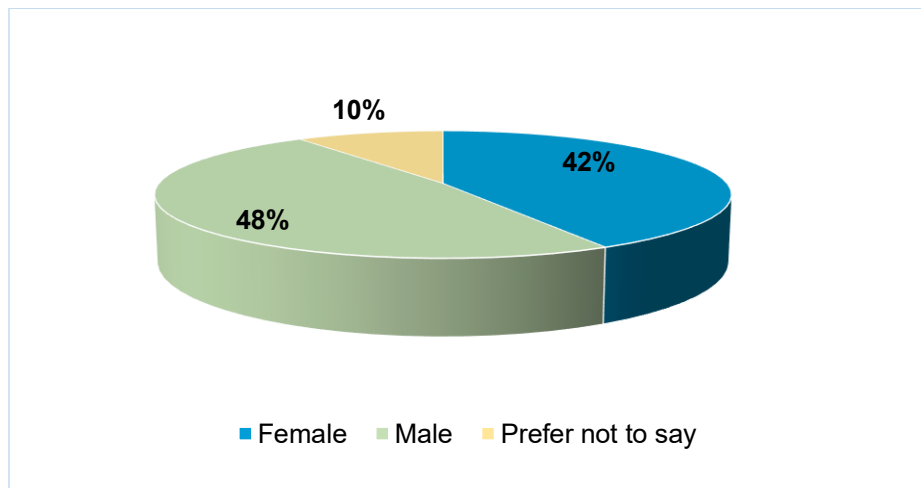
Q25. IS THE GENDER YOU IDENTIFY WITH THE SAME AS YOUR SEX REGISTERED AT BIRTH?

90 per cent of respondents said that the gender they identify with is the same as their sex registered at birth, whilst two per cent answered 'No'. Nine per cent preferred not to answer this question.
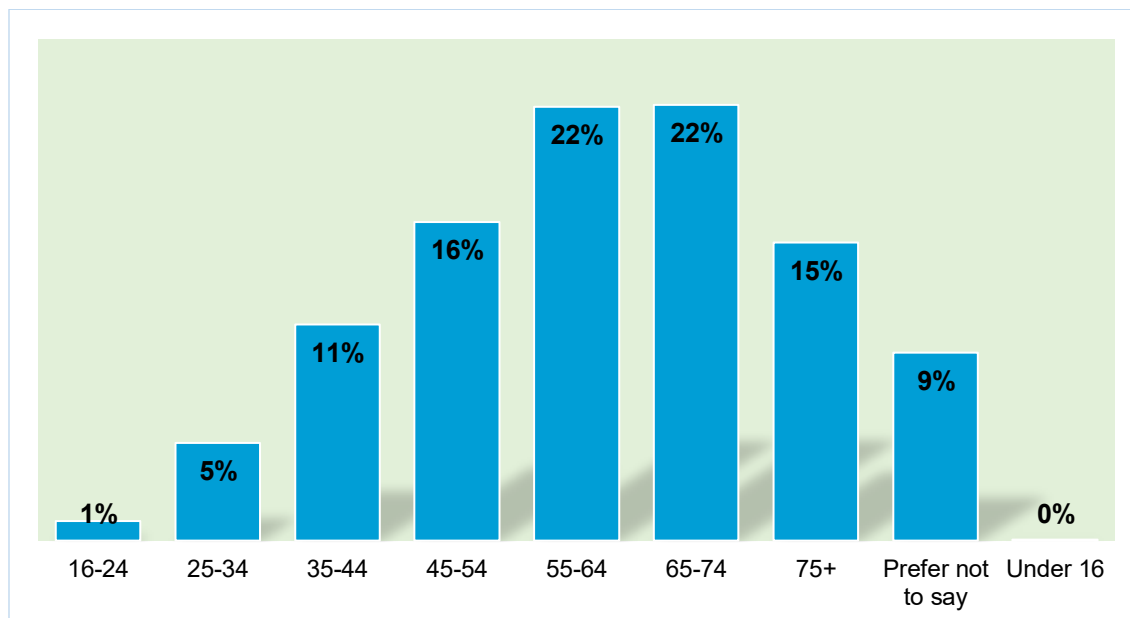
Figure 18 - Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?
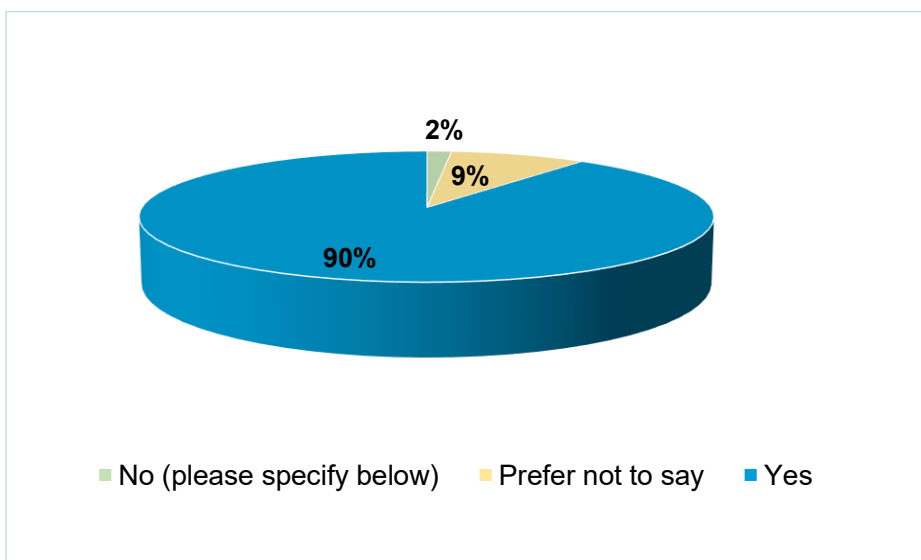
Q26. HOW OLD ARE YOU?

All age groups, except for the under 16, took part in the engagement. However, older age groups participated in larger numbers than younger ones, with respondents between 45 and 74-year-old making up 60 per cent of the total.

Figure 19 – How old are you?

Q27. WHAT IS YOUR ETHNIC GROUP?

The most common ethnic group was White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British), which made up 88 per cent of total respondents. Any Other White background made up three per cent, and White Irish made up 1 per cent of the total. All the other ethnic groups made up less than 0.5 per cent and therefore do not appear in the chart below.

Eight per cent preferred not to answer this question.

Figure 20 – What is your ethnic group?
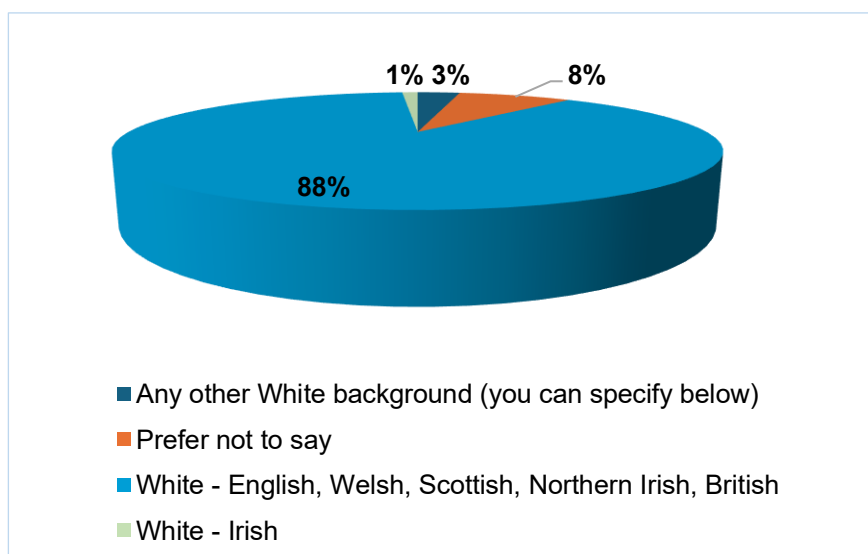
Q28. DO YOU HAVE ANY PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS OR ILLNESS LASTING OR EXPECTING TO LAST 12 MONTHS OR MORE?

69 per cent of respondents said they don't have a health condition or illness lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more, whilst 19 per cent answered positively to this question.

12 per cent of respondents preferred not to answer.

Figure 21 - do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illness lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?
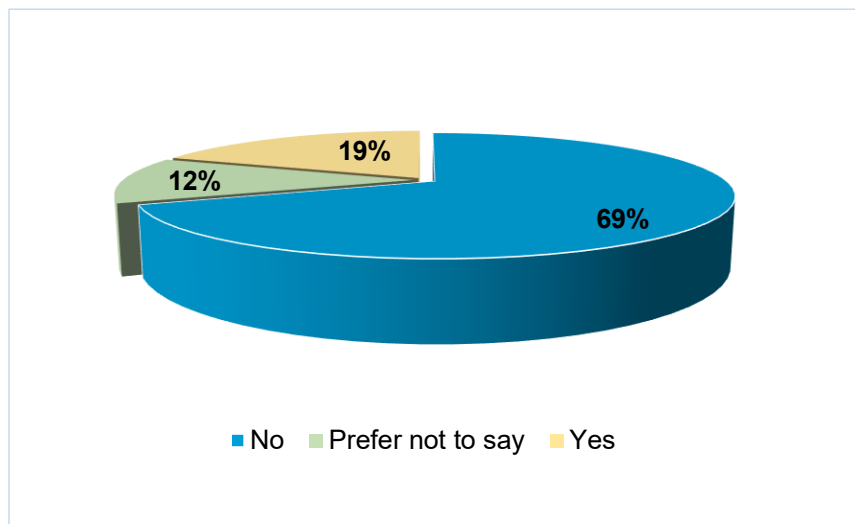

Q29. DO ANY OF YOUR CONDITIONS OR ILLNESSES REDUCE YOUR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES?

Among those who did say they have an illness or health condition, the majority said this has impact on their ability to carry out daily activities (71 per cent). More specifically, 54 per cent said the impact on their daily activities is 'a little' and 17 per cent said it's 'a lot'.

28 per cent said their health condition or illness does not have any impact at all on their ability to carry out daily activities.

Figure 22 - Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?
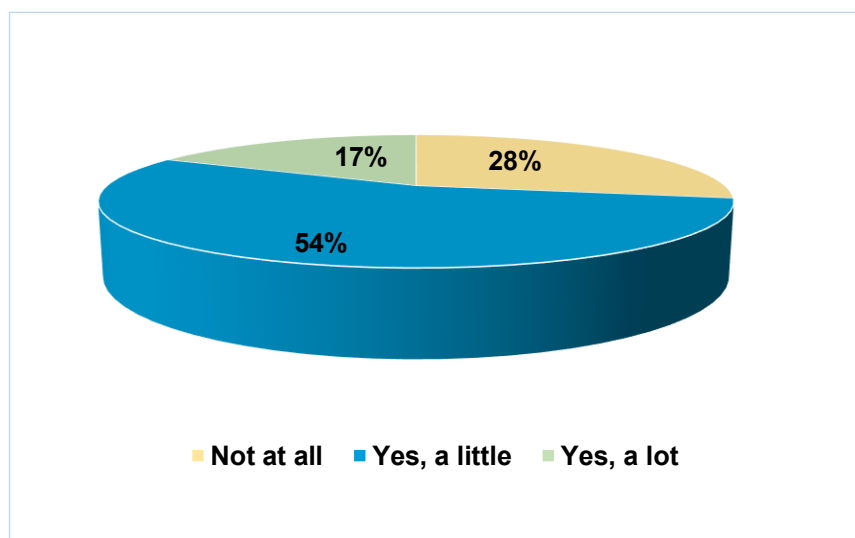
HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

Thank you for providing your feedback on the Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway proposal. We have reviewed and analysed all responses and comments made. Your thoughts, ideas, priorities and ambitions will play an important part in helping us prepare our final proposal, which must be submitted to government by 28 November 2025.

The government has indicated it intends for the new unitary councils to be implemented in May 2028.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like more information about this consultation and the results presented in this report, or if you require this report in an alternative format (for example large print, Braille, audio, Easy Read and alternative languages), please contact:

Consultation and Community Engagement Team
South Oxfordshire/ Vale of White Horse District Council
01235 422 425
jointheconversation@southandvale.gov.uk

To enquire about the council's work on Local Government Reorganisation, please get in touch with:

South Oxfordshire/ Vale of White Horse District Council