



Budget Consultation Results

Consultation date: 31 August – 15 October 2023



Context

Aims

- To provide residents and organisations with the ability to **feed into decisions** affecting next year's budget allocation for services
- To communicate the Council's **budgetary pressures to residents and organisations**

Key points

- The consultation ran from 31st August 2023 to 15th October 2023.
- 1,486 Buckinghamshire residents and 7 representatives of organisations completed the 2024/25 Budget Consultation online. There were 3 responses received by email but these respondents did not complete the survey so were considered for verbatim only.
- 171 residents provided feedback on their priority areas for spend at Bucks County Show on 31st August 2023
- Response rate was slightly lower than 2022's consultation (~1800), but significantly higher than both the 2021 (~300) and 2020 (~900) consultations.
- The Leader's e-newsletter to residents drove the majority (61%) of responses, followed by social media (12%)
- Representatives of organisations had a low response rate, with only 7 organisations responding
- The demographic profile of respondents was generally older, more affluent and economically inactive when compared with the Buckinghamshire population

Summary of Key Findings

Higher priority for respondents



Care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults was a high priority for the highest proportion of respondents (60%)



Road maintenance (51%)



Educational services such as childcare, pre-schools and school admissions (40%).

Lower priority for respondents

Services to 'not prioritise' (selected by the highest proportion of respondents) :



Public health services (50%)



Culture and tourism (48%)



Car parking (41%)

Agreement with the Council's proposed budget allocation

Responses were split:



→ **29%** Agree



→ **39%** Disagree



→ **32%** Neither agree nor disagree

Ease of understanding



Respondents found these aspects of the Council's budget **easy to understand**

- **83%** understand how the council is funded
- **82%** understand how the council spends its money



Ease of understanding was slightly lower for these aspects of the Council's budget

- **71%** understand what statutory spend is
- **75%** understand the Council's financial challenges

Summary of Key Findings

Key themes of the free text comments

121

121 respondents suggested reducing spend on Council running costs



90

90 respondents advocate increasing or maintaining spending on the environment



81

81 respondents want to maintain or increase investment in roads and pavements



41

41 respondents made comments about more spending on public transport/cycling



Representatives of organisations

Representatives of organisations had a low response rate (7 organisations). The highest and lowest priorities for organisations were:

Highest priorities



Care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults



Educational services such as childcare Pre-schools and school admissions



Car Parking

Lower priority



Culture and tourism (all 7 organisations who responded selected this)

Ease of understanding

Most organisations found it easy to understand **how the council is funded** and easy to understand **how the council spends its money**.

Views on...

- 1. Proposed Budget Allocation**
- 2. Services to prioritise for Council spending**
- 3. Level of understanding of Council budget information**



Summary of Key Findings

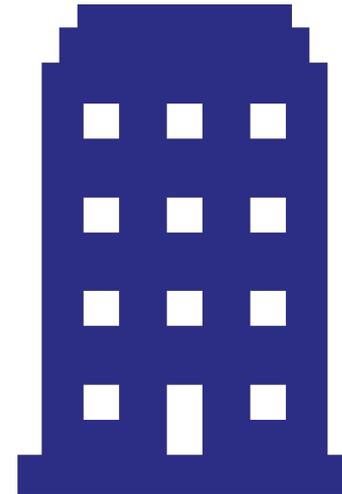
Residents responding – 1,486 respondentsⁱⁱ

- **How Council spending should and should not be prioritised**
 - Care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults was a high priority for the highest proportion of respondents (60%), followed by road maintenance (51%) and educational services (40%)
 - Services to not prioritise were Public Health services (50%), Culture and Tourism (48%) and Car Parking (41%) – these were selected by the highest proportion of respondents.
- **Agreement with the Council's proposed spending allocation**
 - There were mixed views towards the council's proposed spending allocation, with stronger disagreement (39%) than agreement (29%)
 - A significant proportion (32%) of residents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed allocation.
- **How easy the information on Council spending is to understand**
 - 83% of respondents found it very or somewhat easy to understand how the Council is funded
 - 82% found it easy or somewhat easy to understand how the Council spends its money.
 - 71% of respondents understand what statutory spends means
 - 75% of respondents understand the financial challenges the Council faces
- **Comments on the Council's proposed spending allocation**
 - Respondents were asked to make any other comments on the 2024/25 budget and the key themes were:
 - increasing or maintaining spend on the environment
 - increasing or maintaining spend on roads and pavements
 - increasing or maintaining spend on public transport and cycling
 - increasing or maintaining spend on education
 - increasing or maintaining spend on town centre regeneration
 - reducing spend on council running costs
 - reducing spend on social care

Summary of Key Findings

Organisations responding - 7 respondents ⁱⁱⁱ

- **How Council spending should and should not be prioritised**
 - Highest priorities were care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults (4 organisations), educational services such as childcare, pre-schools and school admissions (3) and Car Parking (3)
 - The top Service to 'not prioritise' was culture and tourism (7 organisations).
- **Agreement with the Council's proposed spending allocation**
 - 2 organisations disagreed with the Council's proposed budget allocation, 4 neither agreed nor disagreed and 1 selected "don't know".
- **How easy the information on Council spending is to understand**
 - 6 organisations found it very or somewhat easy to understand how the council is funded
 - 6 organisations found it very or somewhat easy to understand how the council spends its money
 - 5 found it easy or somewhat easy to understand what statutory spend is
 - 4 organisations said that they found it very or somewhat easy to understand the financial challenges the council faces.

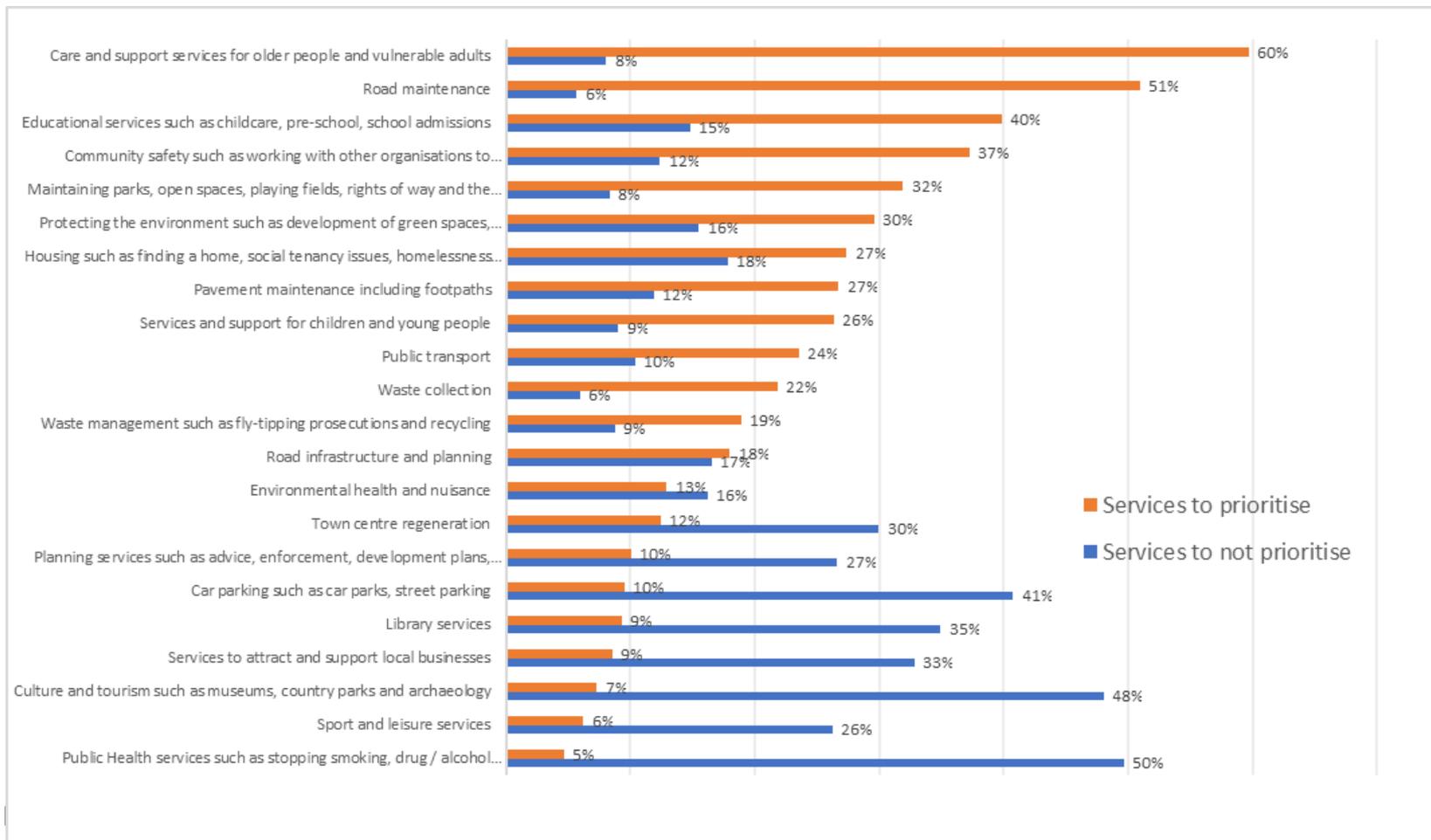


How Council Spending Should and Should not be prioritised

Q1. Which Services would you prioritise for spending?

Q2. Which Services would you not prioritise for spending?

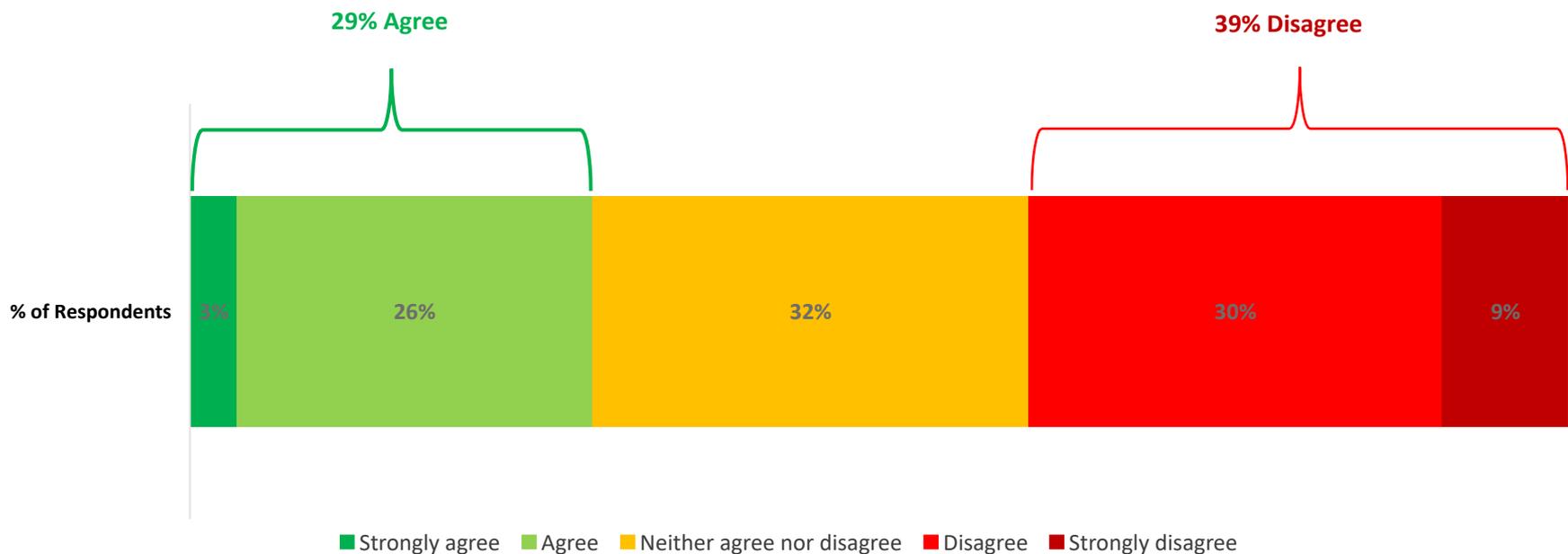
You can select up to 5 services, in no particular order



Agreement/Disagreement with the Council's proposed budget allocation for 2024/25

- 29% of respondents agreed, but there were relatively high levels of disagreement (39%).
- Nearly a third of respondents (32%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed allocation.

(Q3) To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we are proposing to allocate Buckinghamshire Council's budget for 2024 to 2025?



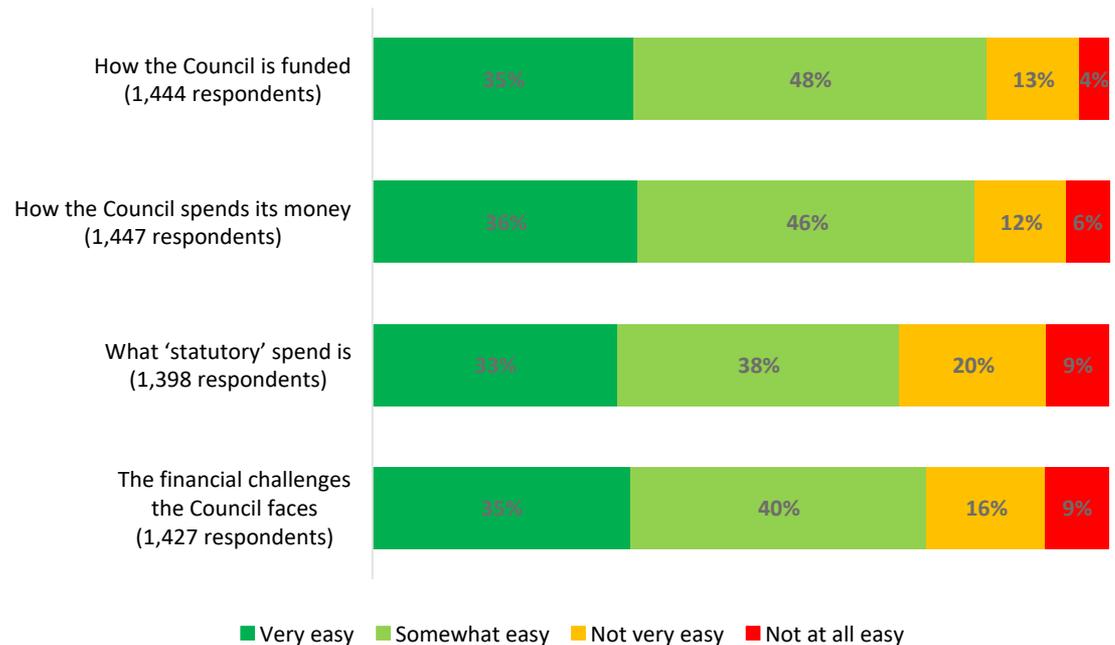
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How easy was the Budget Consultation to understand?

Respondents were asked about ease of understanding of information about the Council’s budget allocation: (1) How the council is funded, (2) How the council spends its money, (3) What statutory spend is, (4) The financial challenges the council faces.

(Q4) How easy to understand was the following information?

- 83% of respondents found it **very or somewhat easy** to understand how the council is **funded**.
- 82% found it **easy or somewhat easy** to understand how the council **spends its money**.
- Ease of understanding was slightly lower** for what **statutory spend is** (71%) and the **financial challenges the council faces** (75%).

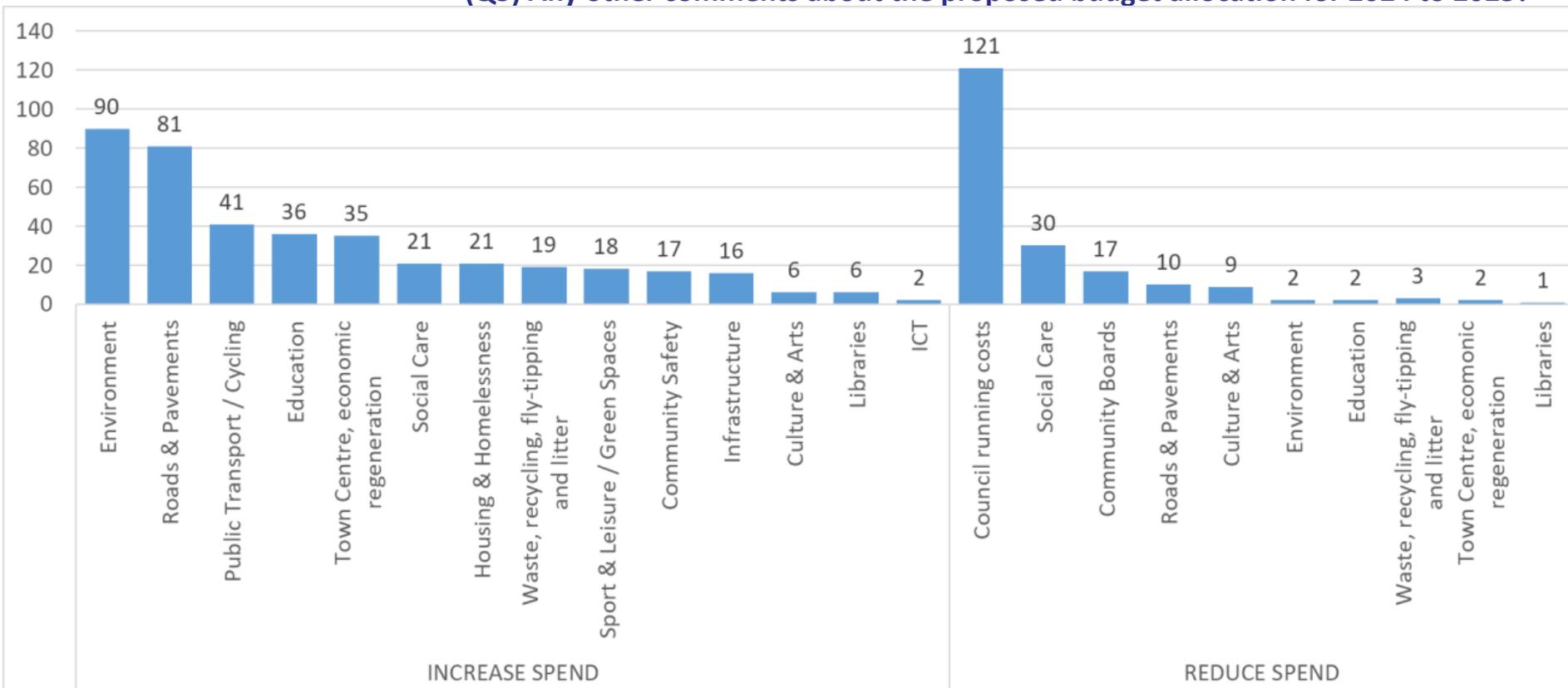


Respondent comments about Spending

Finally, respondents were asked whether they had any other comments about the 2024/25 proposed budget.

- 606 respondents (41%) made a comment. **Key themes** were increasing or maintaining spend on the environment (90) and roads and pavements (81).
- **Other comments** appearing more frequently (≥ 50 comments) were increasing spend on public transport and cycling (41) and reducing spend on Council running costs (121)

(Q5) Any other comments about the proposed budget allocation for 2024 to 2025?



A selection of *verbatim* comments from respondents

(Q) If you have any comments about the proposed budget allocation for 2024 to 2025, please tell us them here:



"Please get us away from using cars and encourage cycling and public transport."



"It's about time genuine priority was given to protecting the environment, improving biodiversity, reducing carbon emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change."



"More support for children with SEN needs (Developing SEN clubs, respite services) Not a lot of support for children with hidden disabilities such as ASD, ADHD.."



"Prioritise seeking efficiencies in internal running of the council to maximise spend on services."

"Keep supporting local businesses so we can grow, hire and continue to serve our community close to us."



"The poor state of our roads with all the extra HGVs from HS2 construction and diversions sending traffic along failed minor roads."

Youth Voice Executive Committee

Youth Voice is a space for young people aged 11-19, and up to 25 if they have a Special Education Need or Disability, to speak about issues that are important for young people. Ten young people on the Executive Committee attended a session on the budget consultation. Feedback is below:

Education

'As people accessing the educational system currently, we advocate for educational budgets to be protected. While we appreciate most schools funding comes from government via the Designated Schools Grant, the funding towards education from the Council, towards infrastructure in particular, is essential to ensuring our children and young people learn and develop in safe, effective environments that are built for learning and achievement and reflect students' value.'

Children's Services

'We know that the services that protect children and young people – from early help and prevention services, to the contextual safeguarding team, to care services - are all under immense pressure. The safety and wellbeing of our children and young people is of paramount importance and we urge these services are prioritised.'

Public Health

'Services offered under the umbrella of public health are essential to young people growing up well, and the mental health crisis impacts us all every day. We advocate for creative provisions, such as freely-available online platforms and 1 to 1 communication options with professionals, to be developed in partnership with young people, so that the availability and diversity of these services meets the needs of as many young people as possible. We recognise PSHE as a vital tool and champion for this to be protected and strengthened, and we ask for efforts to reduce vaping among young people to be ramped up.'

Spaces and places for young people

'Spending cuts to youth services have left many young people without safe, accessible, appealing spaces and services to use. We stand up for the spaces left to be protected, and for innovative new spaces to be co-created with young people and promoted mindfully to tackle and mitigate issues such as inequality, poverty, the mental health crisis, and knife crime.'

Public transport

'Young people are dependent on public transport to access their education, support services, and extra-curricular opportunities – especially those in rural communities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Mindfully developing transport options to work well for young people and implementing initiatives that make public transport affordable, would expand and equalise young people's opportunities to grow, develop, gain careers, and be full members of society, no matter their circumstances.'

Housing

'We need housing when we grow up, the strain of the housing crisis on our families impacts us, and we see the housing crisis via homelessness, homes in disrepair, and negative experiences in temporary accommodation. Student accommodation is a worry for us as we plan for our futures, and supported housing for those with disabilities and the benefits that surround that is important to us too.'

Care for vulnerable adults

'There are lots of young people who are disabled themselves and worry about the support they will receive as an adult, and we care about our older and vulnerable neighbours, relatives, and friends.'

Promotion of the Consultation



Promotion of the Consultation

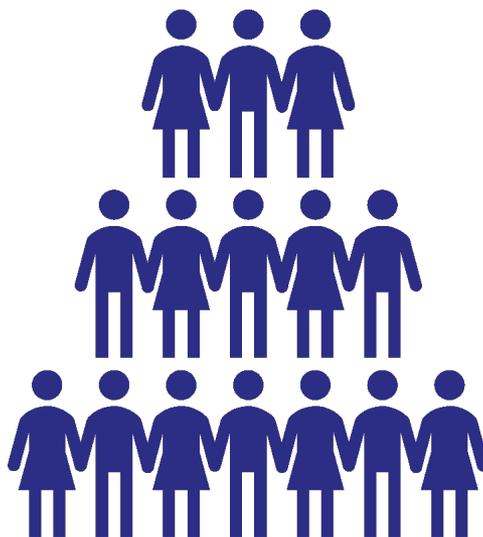
The consultation was promoted via:

- Dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks
- News items on Buckinghamshire Council website
- Promotional banner on front page of Buckinghamshire Council website
- Press releases to local media
- Direct engagement with visitors at Bucks County Show, including handing out flyers
- Social media promotional campaign across all main channels
 - Targeted (paid for) social media promotion to Aylesbury and Wycombe, and by age
 - Shared into local Facebook pages
- Email and e-newsletters to town and parish councils
- Flyers in libraries, Council Access Plus (CAP+) points and family centres
- Internal communications to all staff and Members
- Leader of the Council resident newsletter
- Email to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector via VCSE Partnership Board and Community Impact Bucks
- Email to organisations via Community Opportunities, Engagement & Development team
- Community Boards
- Youth Voice Executive Committee
- Posters on notice boards in car parks (in south of county)

The Business Intelligence and Communications teams worked closely together on the Consultation from scoping and designing to the final results. The BI Team shared a weekly report with the Communications team which included: (1) Response rate by date, (2) How respondents found out about the consultation, in total and by date, (3) Demographic profile and geographic location of respondents. This helped inform whether any groups were under-represented to enable the Communications team to target these groups and increase responses.

The Council Newsletter (61%) and social media (12%) were selected by the highest proportion of respondents

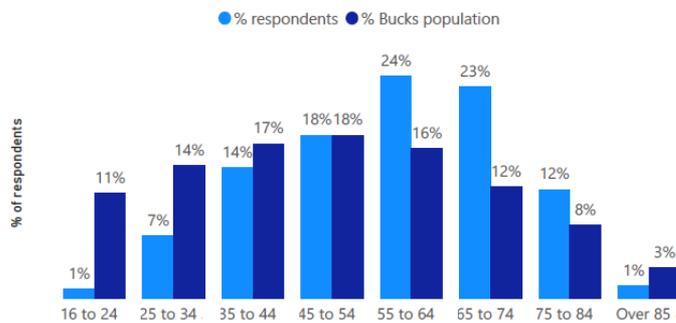
Respondent Profiles



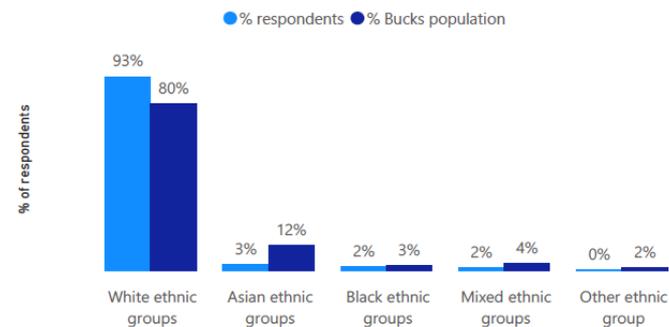
Respondents' Demographic Profile

- **Age:** 60% of respondents are in the middle to older age brackets (55-84) compared with 39% of the Bucks population, whilst Younger people under 35 were under-represented compared with the Buckinghamshire population (8% v's 25%)
- **Ethnicity:** White ethnic groups are overrepresented (93% of respondents, compared with 80% Buckinghamshire average)
- **Economic Activity:** Economically inactive respondents make up 40% of respondents, compared with 36% of the Buckinghamshire population

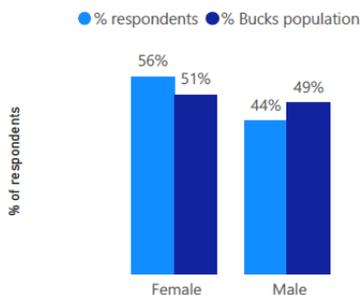
Age



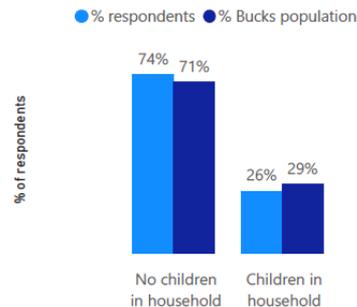
Ethnicity



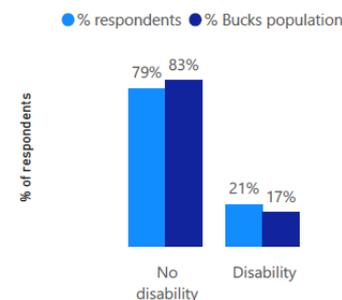
Gender



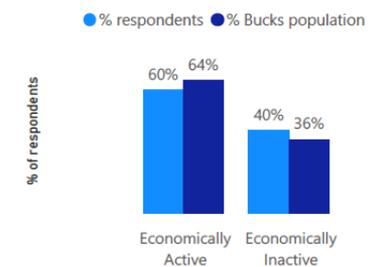
Children aged 0-17 in household



Disability



Employment Status



Students and Carers are not included in these figures as their employment status is unknown. Respondents include 11 students and 6 carers.

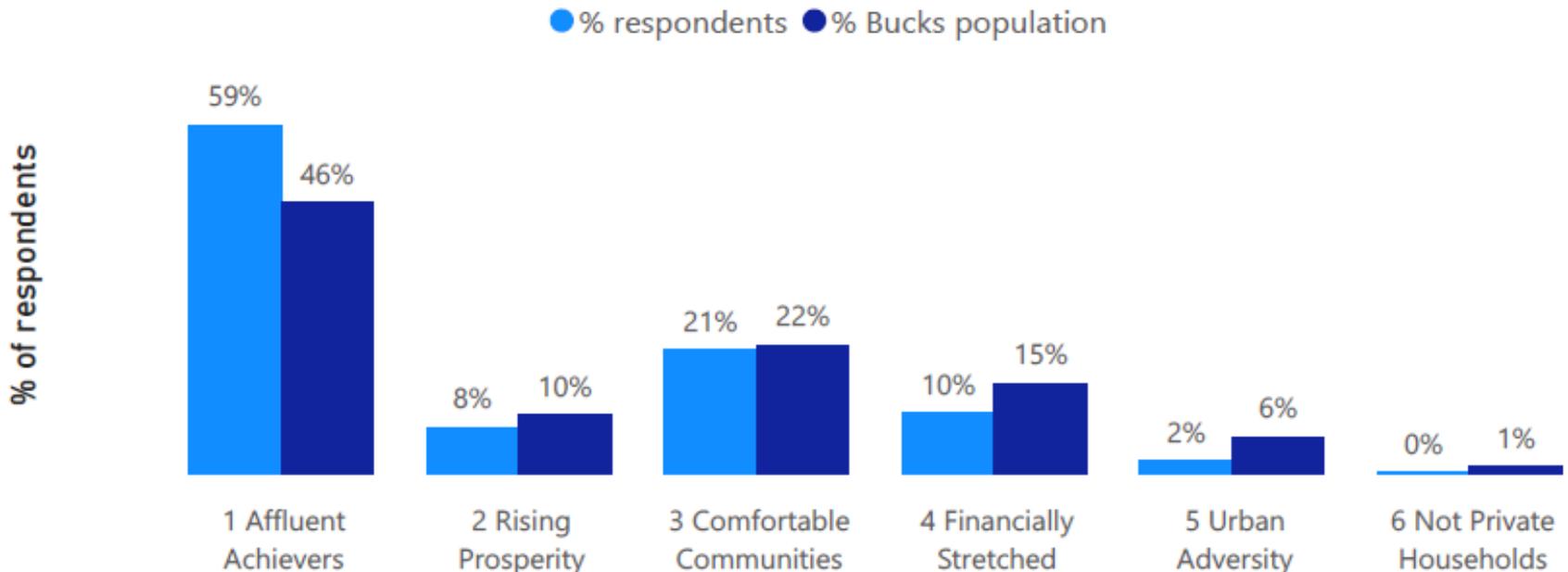
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Bucks population metrics are based on 2021 mid-year population estimates and 2021 Census data from the Office of National statistics.

Respondents' Demographic Profile (ACORN)

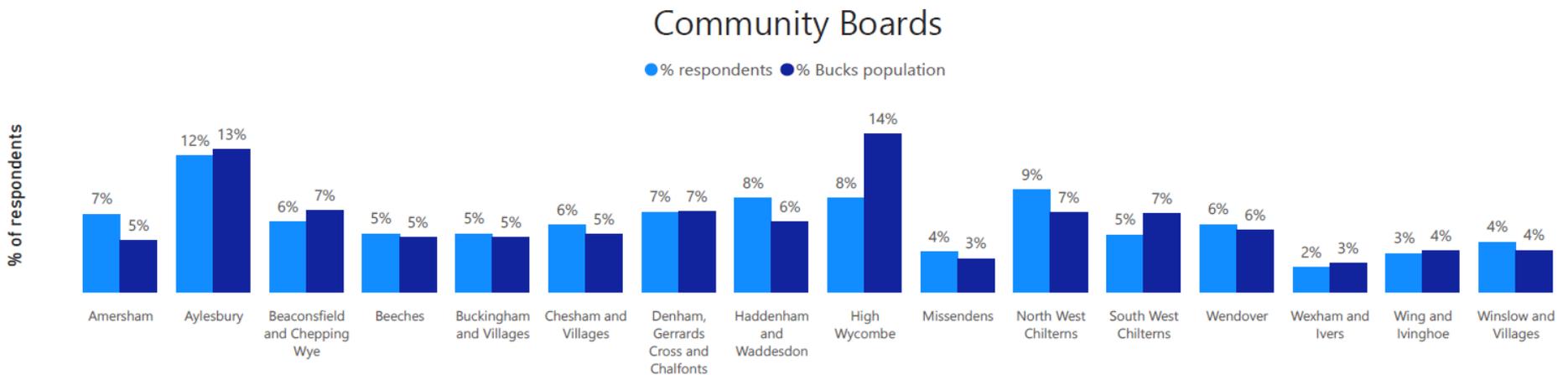
- **Affluent** Acorn Groups were **over-represented**, with 59% from the “Affluent Achievers” category, compared with 46% in Buckinghamshire.
- The two most **deprived** Acorn categories were **under-represented**: 12% of respondents in these category compared with 21% in Buckinghamshire

Acorn profile



Location of Respondents

- Community Boards that were over-represented included Amersham (7% vs. 5%), Haddenham & Waddesdon (8% vs. 6%) and North West Chilterns (9% vs. 7%).
- High Wycombe (8% vs. 14%) and South West Chilterns (5% vs. 7%) were under-represented



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Base: All respondents with a valid postcode that could be matched to a Community Board area (1,215)

¹Within the following Community Board areas: Aylesbury, Buckingham and Villages, Haddenham and Waddesdon, Wendover, Wing and Ivinghoe and Winslow and Villages

Responses from Organisations

N.B. Due to the low number of responses from organisations, caution should be used when interpreting results from this respondent group

- There were 7 responses from representatives of organisations
- All 7 stated that they represent or own a business in Buckinghamshire
- 4 respondents gave the name of their organisation

