

Consultation on the use of HRA General Needs homes from Temporary Accommodation

4th October 2024

1. Introduction / background

Bristol has around 21,600 households on HomeChoice Bristol (the housing register) waiting to be allocated a home. The council has around 27,000 social housing properties in total and is working hard to increase this, but the number of people who need social housing is also going up.

'General needs' council homes are for people who are on the Bristol Housing Register – either already housed or on the waiting list, waiting to move to a more suitable property. 'Temporary accommodation' provides somewhere to stay for people who are vulnerable and in a housing emergency.

Temporary accommodation is used while the council assesses a household's homelessness application and, after this, while they wait for a more permanent home if they meet certain legal thresholds. The council is committed to providing safe, secure and suitable temporary accommodation for those who need it.

One way to provide safe and secure temporary accommodation is to use some of the council's general needs homes that become available for re-letting. The council piloted this approach successfully from June 2023 to May 2024. During this time, an average of 80 general needs homes became available per month for new and existing tenants on the housing register. The council used up to 13 of these homes each month as temporary accommodation. The pilot ended because consultation was required about the future of this scheme before continuing any further.

2. The Consultation

The council has a legal duty to consult with all secure tenants specifically targeting those who will be most affected by this proposal, which in this consultation are secure tenants currently on the housing waiting list.

The council wrote directly to all council tenants who were on the HomeChoice waiting list at the time of consultation, approximately 6,000 households. The consultation was also promoted to all the council's secure tenants through email promotion to involved tenant groups, promotion on social media and physical posters in all council blocks. The consultation was also made available to the general public on the Ask Bristol website and easy read and translated versions were available.

The consultation was open for responses for six weeks from Tuesday 20th August to Tuesday 1st October.

We also contacted internal and external stakeholders who work with those who are facing homelessness and/or council tenants. This included:

- Housing Management Board
- Homes and Housing Delivery Committee
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Multi-Agency Working Group
- One City Homes and Communities Board
- VCSE organisations
- Community leaders and Champions
- Commissioned Service Pathways
- All council Members
- Housing Officers

The consultation requested views on the following proposal:

“Of the homes that become available for letting in our stock of ‘general needs’ housing, we propose to transfer up to 18 homes each month to be used for temporary accommodation. This will provide homes for people in a housing emergency to live in while the council assesses their housing needs, and they wait for a more permanent home. We propose to do this for a period of two years, with a review after one year.”

“We will not use new-build homes for temporary accommodation. All new-build homes will be available for general needs lettings.”

The consultation comprised information about the proposal and a short online survey asking “Do you agree with the proposal?”, and “Do you have any other comments or suggestions you wish to make about this proposal?”.

The ‘About you’ section requested information which helps the council to check if the responses are representative of people across the city who may have different needs. This included:

- Respondents’ postcode
- Equalities monitoring information
- Information about whether the respondent is a tenant of a Bristol City Council property and whether they are on the waiting list to move or not, whether they are on the waiting list but not currently a council tenant, or if they are currently in temporary accommodation
- Other information about respondents; for example, whether they are a councillor, an MP, represent a housing Association, voluntary or community or social enterprise or interest group.

Respondents could choose to answer some or all questions in any order and save and return to the survey later.

This consultation report describes the methodology and presents the feedback received in the consultation. It includes quantitative data for all 162 survey responses and analysis of the survey free text responses.

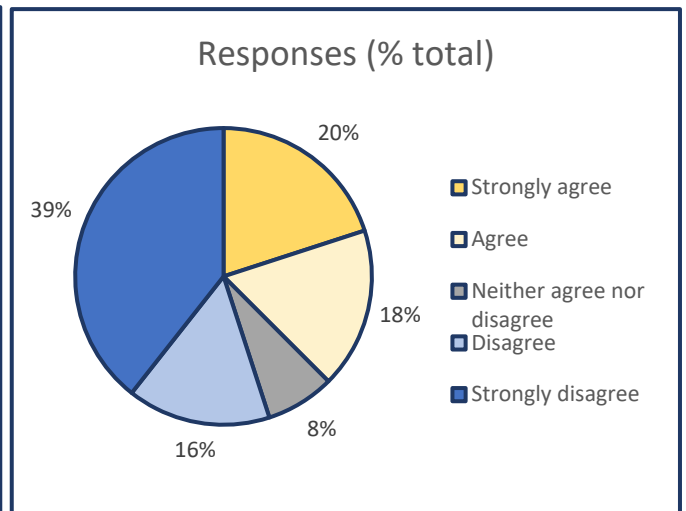
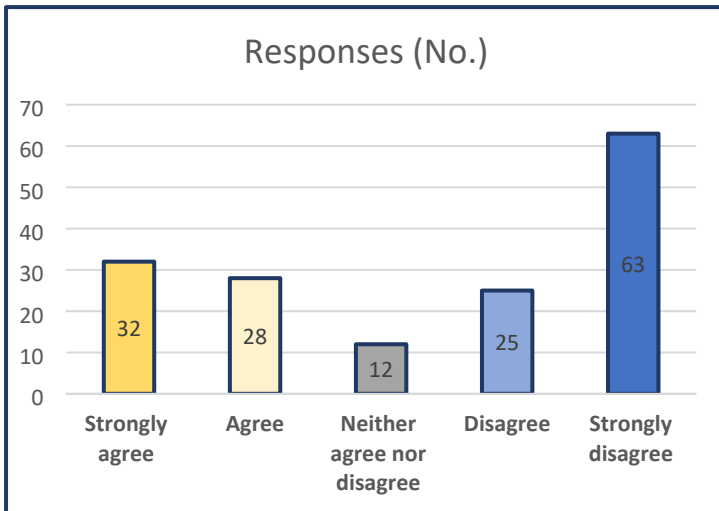
3. Survey Responses

a. Total responses

We received 162 responses (133 standard and 29 Easy Read). Of these 162 respondents, 32 people (20%) strongly agreed with the proposal, 28 people (18%) agreed with the proposal, 12 people (8%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Further, 25 people (16%) disagreed with the proposal, and 63 people (39%) strongly disagreed. See charts below.

These results show that 55% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal while 38% agree or strongly agree, with 8% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Strongly agree	32
Agree	28
Neither agree nor disagree	12
Disagree	25
Strongly disagree	63
Total	162



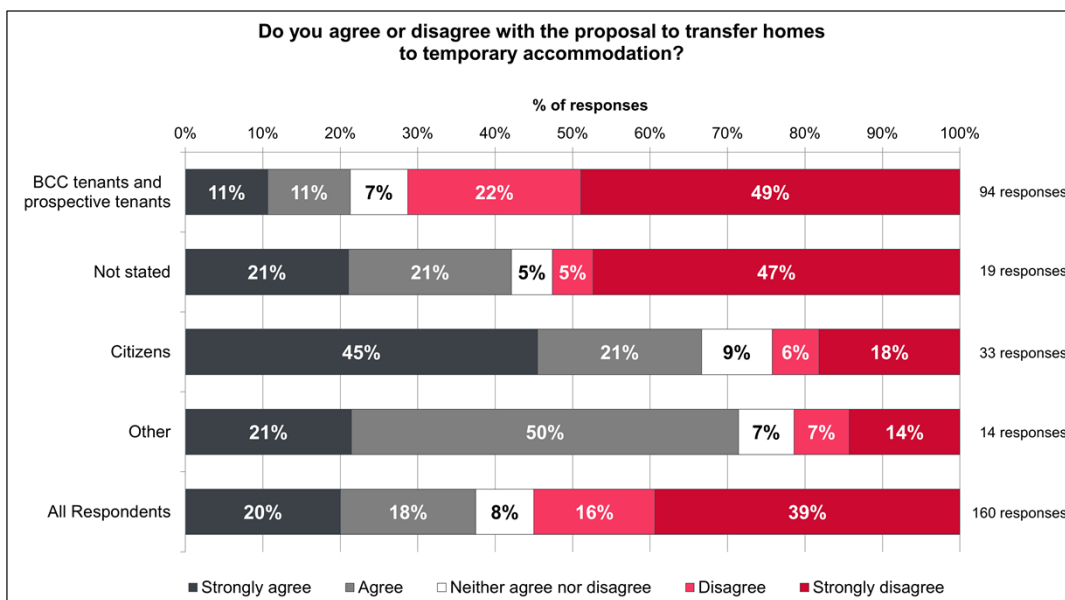
b. Distribution of responses based on situation

All respondents were asked to provide information about their situation to enable the council to compare responses across different groups of people. Respondents were offered multiple choice options and a free text box for 'other'. These have been categorised to enable the council to compare responses.

BCC tenants and prospective tenants made up the majority of the respondents (94, 59%) and had the largest proportion of 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses to the proposal. This group was made up of Bristol City Council tenants, including those on the waiting list to move into a new council property, those on the waiting list to move into a council property who aren't currently council tenants, and those currently in Temporary Accommodation. This group also includes someone responding on behalf of a tenant, and a homeowner/leaseholder of a former council property.

Those respondents labelled as 'citizens' were a smaller proportion of the responses (33, 21%) and had the second largest proportion of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses. This group was made up of Bristol residents, South Gloucestershire residents, homeowners, private rent tenants, those living with parents, and leaseholders.

Those respondents labelled as 'other' were the smallest proportion of the responses (14, 9%) and had the largest proportion of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses. This group was made up of those responding on behalf of a housing association, voluntary or community or social enterprise/interest group, ward councillors, MPs, Bristol City Council housing officer, homelessness professional, and Carer.

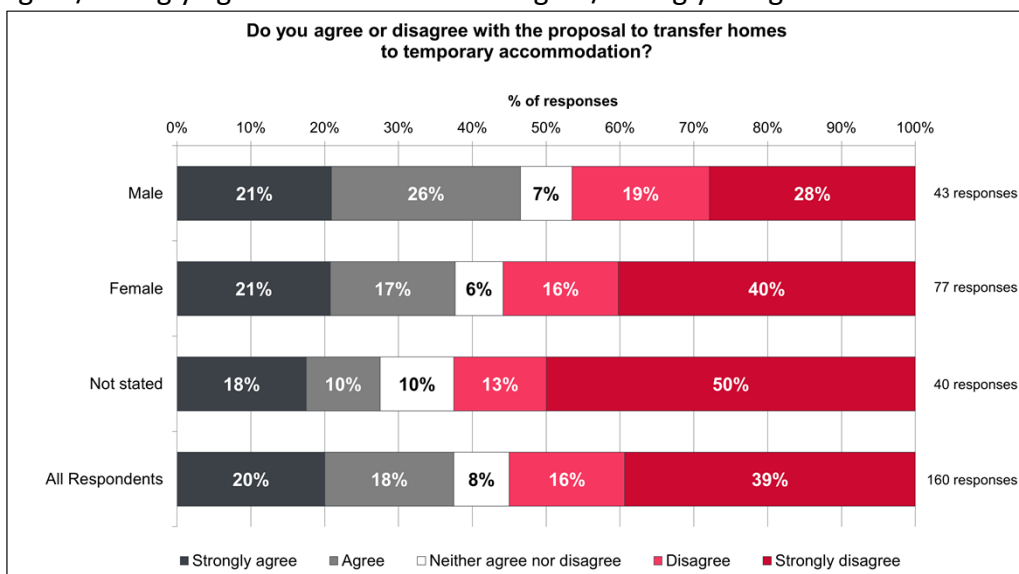


Category of respondent	Number of respondents	% of respondents
I am a tenant of a Bristol City Council property and I am not on the waiting list to move	67	41%
I am a Bristol City Council tenant on the waiting list to move to a new Bristol City Council property	14	9%
I am on the waiting list to move into a home owned by Bristol City Council. I am not currently a Bristol City Council tenant.	3	2%
I am currently in temporary accommodation	3	2%
I am responding on behalf of a voluntary or community or social enterprise / interest group	7	4%
I am a ward councillor or MP	2	1%
Bristol resident	15	9%
Home owner	9	6%
Home owner/Leaseholder of former BCC property	4	2%
Private rental tenant	4	2%
Bristol Council tenant - waiting list status not stated	2	1%
Responding on behalf of a tenant	2	1%
Leaseholder	2	1%
BCC housing officer	2	1%
Living with parents	2	1%
Bristol Resident and Work in a NHS Mental Health Crisis Team	1	1%
Carer	1	1%
Homelessness professional	1	1%
Resident in South Gloucestershire	1	1%
Other	1	1%
Not stated	19	12%
Total	162	100%

c. Distribution of responses based on sex

All respondents were asked to provide equalities monitoring information to enable the council to compare responses across different groups of people. With the data provided the responses have been broken down by sex.

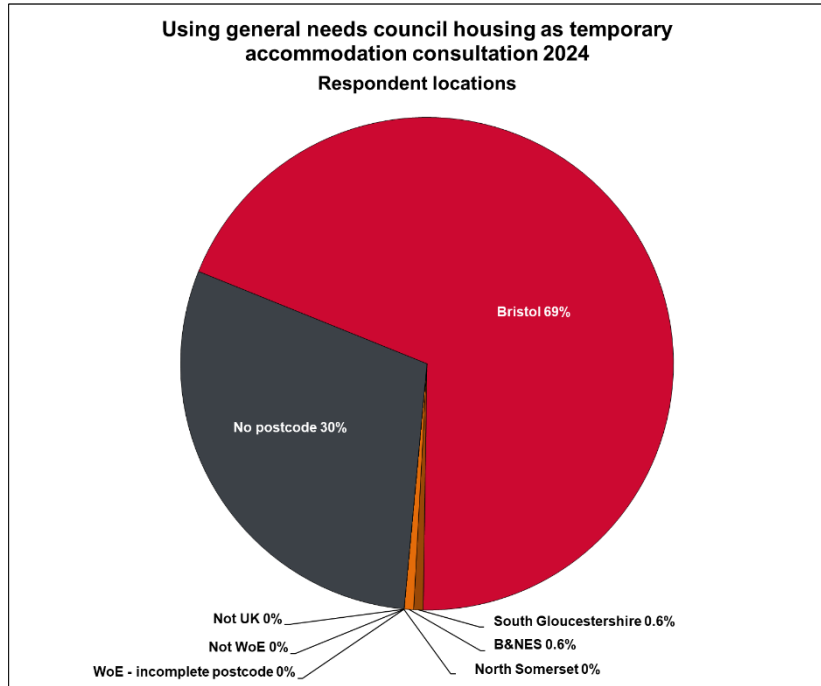
The chart below shows that male respondents are relatively evenly split between agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree. Female respondents have close to a 60/40 split between those who between agree/strongly agree and those who disagree/strongly disagree.



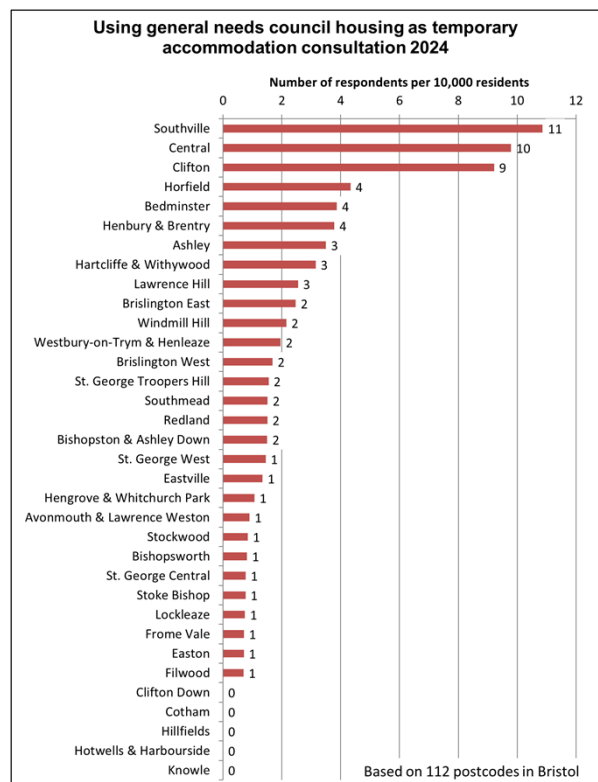
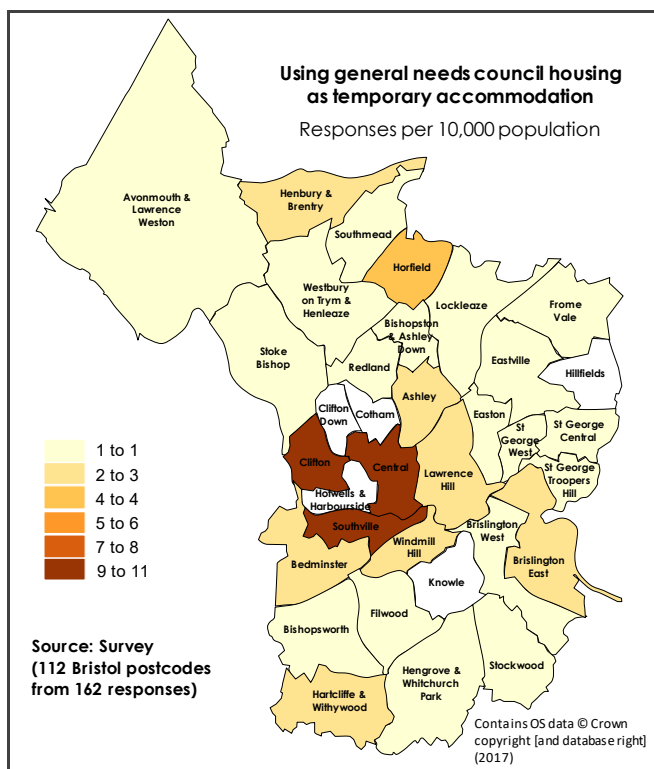
d. Geographic distribution of responses

Of the 162 responses, 112 (69%) were received from postcodes within the Bristol City Council area, 1 (0.6%) was from a South Gloucestershire postcode, and 1 (0.6%) was from a Bath and North East Somerset postcode.

48 (30%) of respondent did not provide a postcode.



Of the 112 responses from within the Bristol City Council area, the wards have been identified and show that 11 responses came from Southville, 10 from Central, 9 from Clifton, and 4 from each of Horfield, Bedminster and Henbury & Brentry. All other wards had 3 or less respondents provide a postcode.

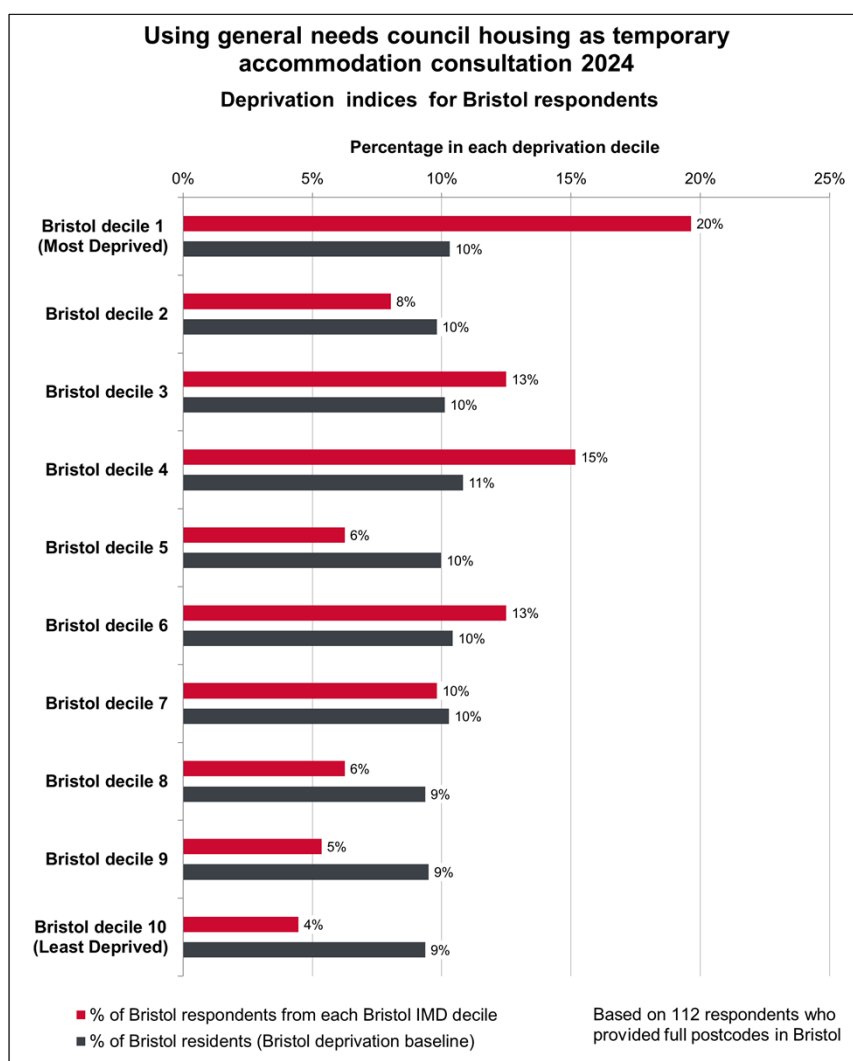


e. Response rate from areas of high and low deprivation

The home location of respondents in Bristol was compared with nationally published information on levels of deprivation across the city¹ to review if the responses received include a cross-section of people living in more deprived and less deprived areas. This helps the council to know if the views of citizens in more deprived areas differ from people living in less deprived areas.

The comparison looked at levels of deprivation in 10 bands (known as 'deciles') from decile 1 (most deprived) to decile 10 (least deprived). The chart below compares the percentage of Bristol respondents who provided a postcode living in each of the deprivation deciles (red bars) to the percentage of all Bristol citizens who live in each decile (dark grey bars).

The chart below shows that there was under-representation of responses in the decile 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, predominantly from the least deprived of the city. The chart shows an over-representation from decile 1, 3, 4 and 6. Responses from decile 7 broadly match the proportion of Bristol citizens living in this decile.



¹ The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes information about deprivation for small areas throughout England - known as 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOAs). For each LSOA, a measure of deprivation is published called 'Indices of Multiple Deprivation' (IMD), which takes account of 37 indicators that cover income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, and living environment. The latest IMD data are from 2019 and define IMD for each of the 32,844 LSOAs in England used in the 2011 Census, of which 263 LSOAs are in the Bristol City Council area. Postcodes provided by respondents can each be matched to one of the 263 LSOAs in Bristol and thus to one of the deprivation deciles. Note: postcodes provide approximate locations; they are not used to identify individuals or specific addresses.

f. Response rate by protected characteristics

Respondants were given the opportunity to answer equalities monitoring questions and of those who chose to provide information, the characteristics are summarised below.

The charts compare:

- characteristics for all respondents who answered the equalities questions (shown by bars with a red outline)
- characteristics of 'Bristol respondents' who answered equalities questions and provided a Bristol postcode (shown by solid red bars)
- characteristics of all Bristol's citizens based on the 2021 Census (shown by solid grey bars). Census 2021 data are available for seven protected characteristics (age, disability, ethnicity, religion/faith, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation)

Note that many of the respondents who did not provide postcodes may also live in the Bristol City Council administrative area but are not included in figures for 'Bristol respondents'.

In summary, groups that were under-represented in the responses were:

- Children and young people aged 24 years and younger
- Males
- People of Asian or Asian British backgrounds
- Christians

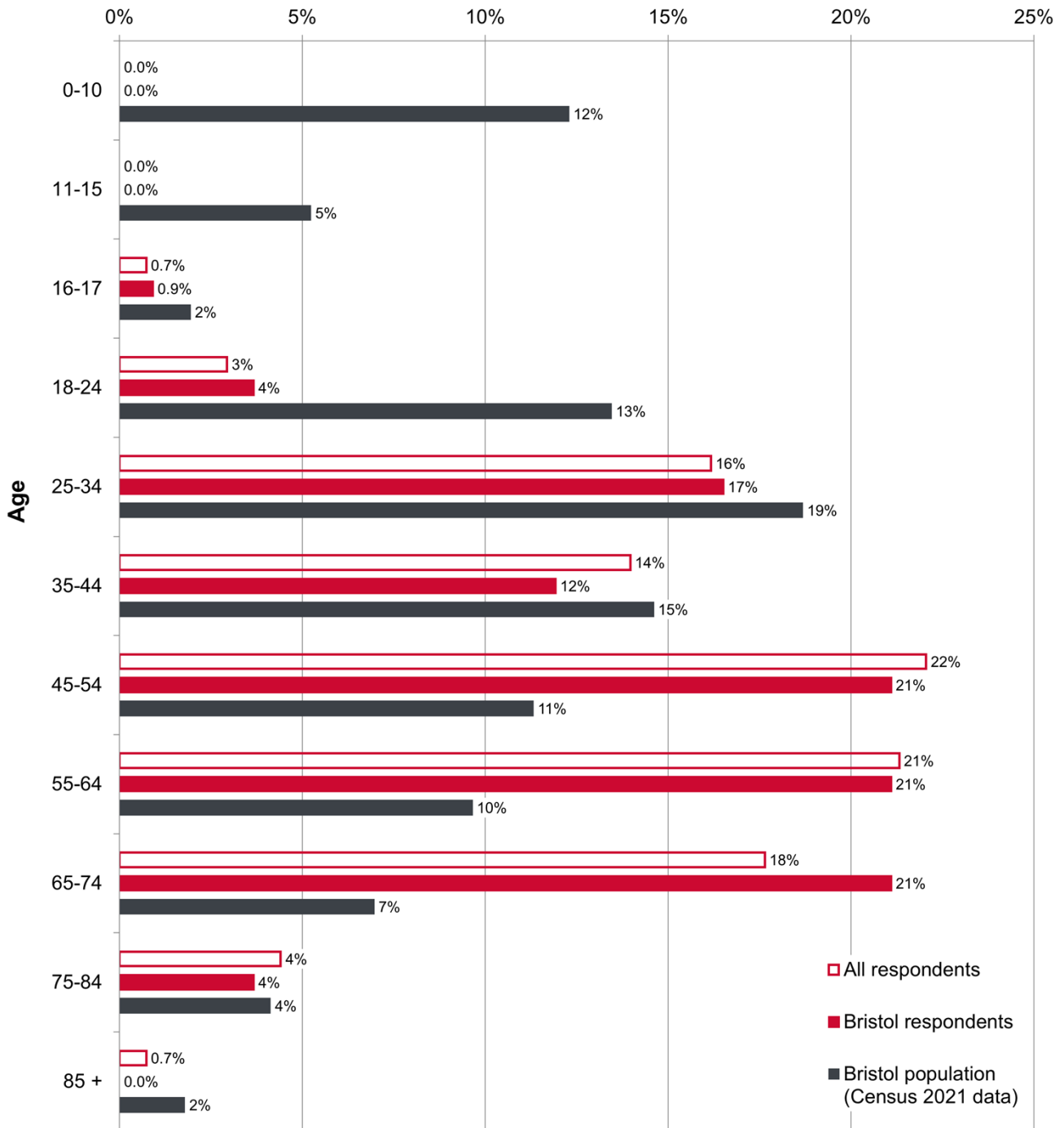
The following groups responded in higher numbers than their proportion in the population:

- People aged between 45 and 74 years
- Females
- Those who consider themselves to be disabled
- Gay/lesbian people

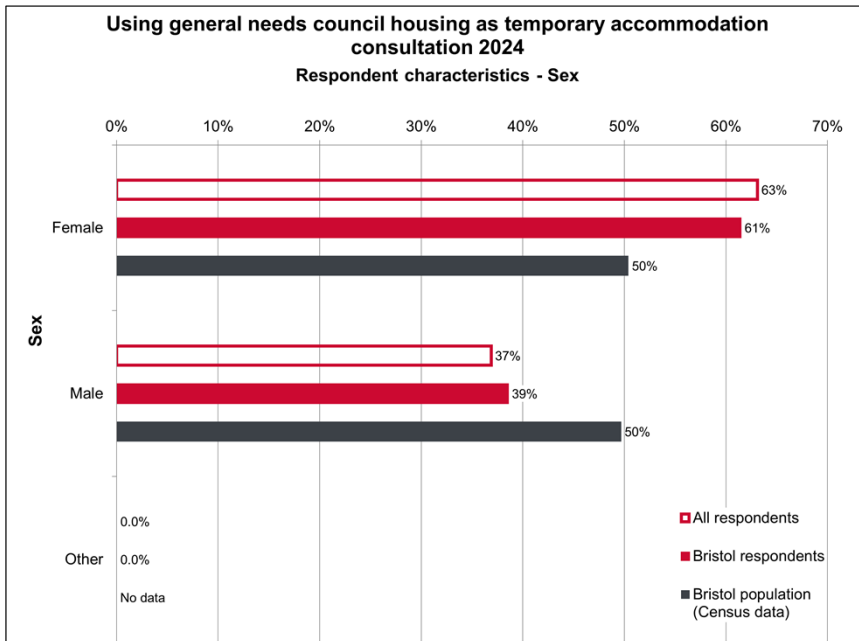
g. Age

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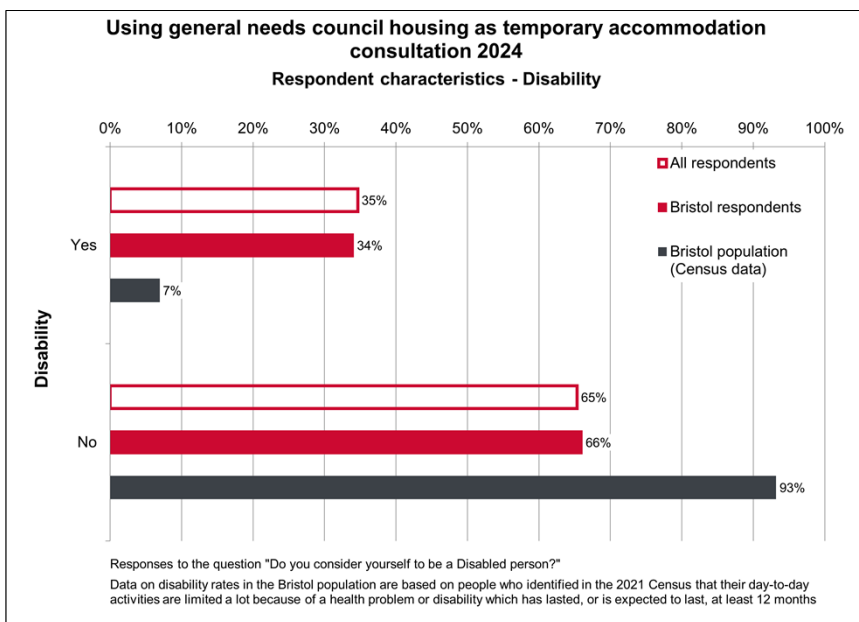
Respondent characteristics - Age



h. Sex



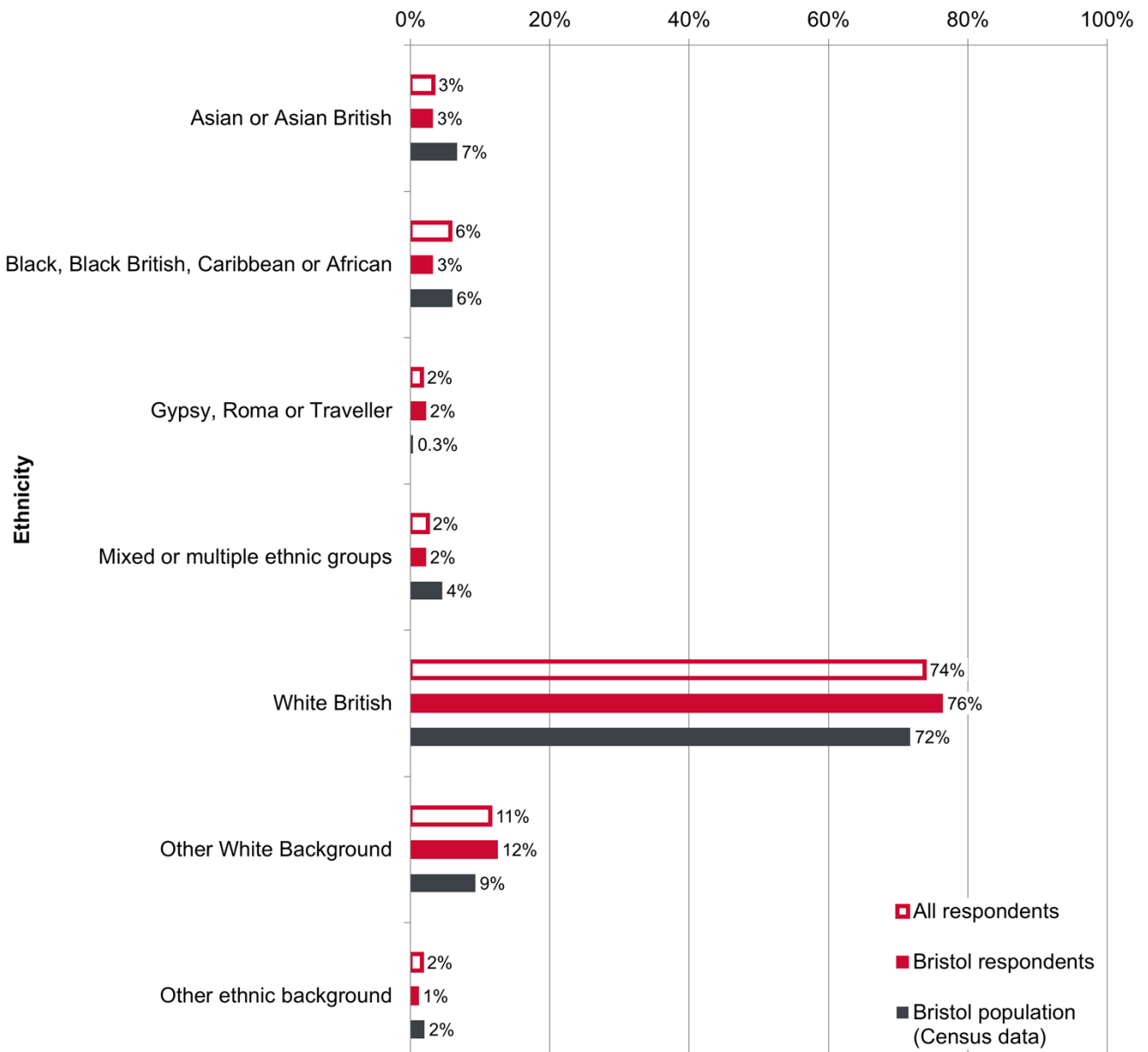
i. Disability



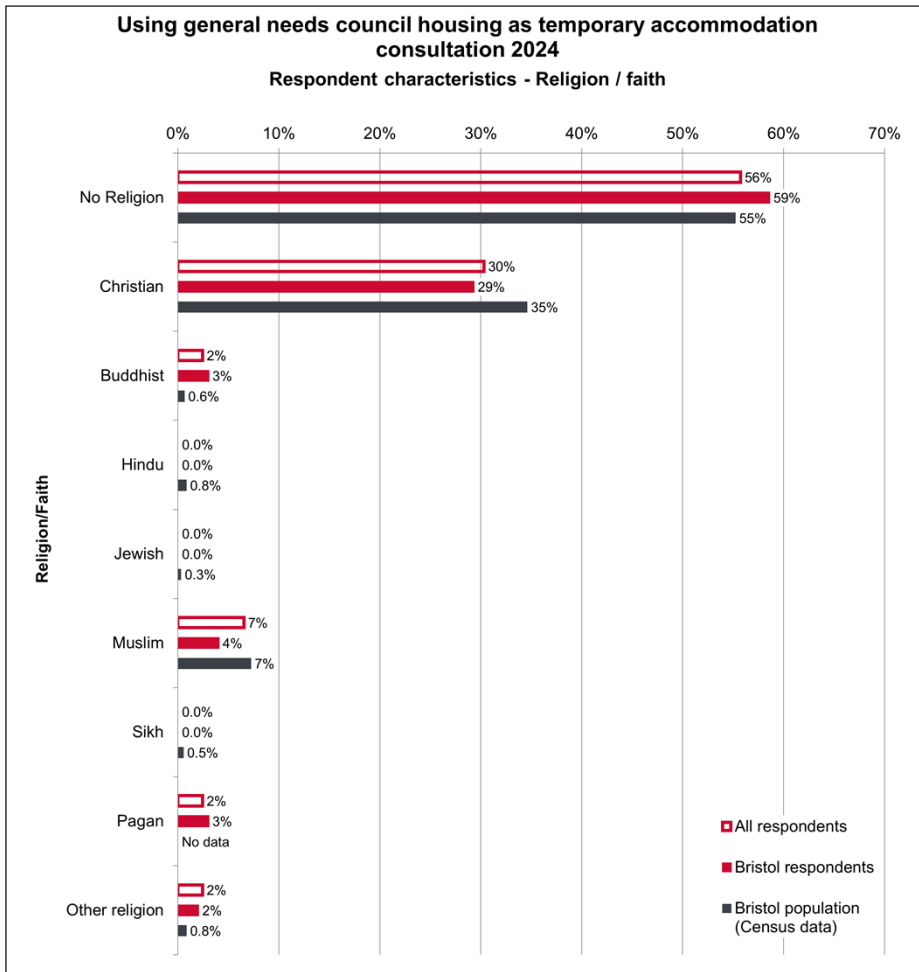
j. Ethnicity

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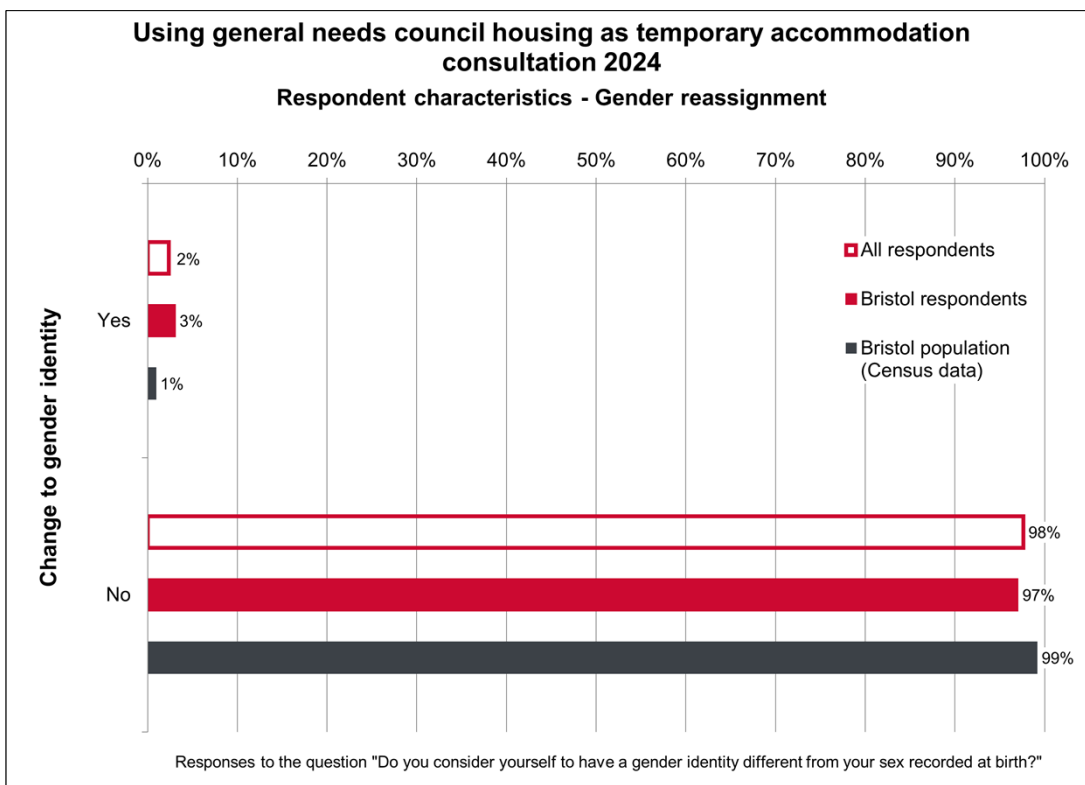
Respondent characteristics - Ethnicity



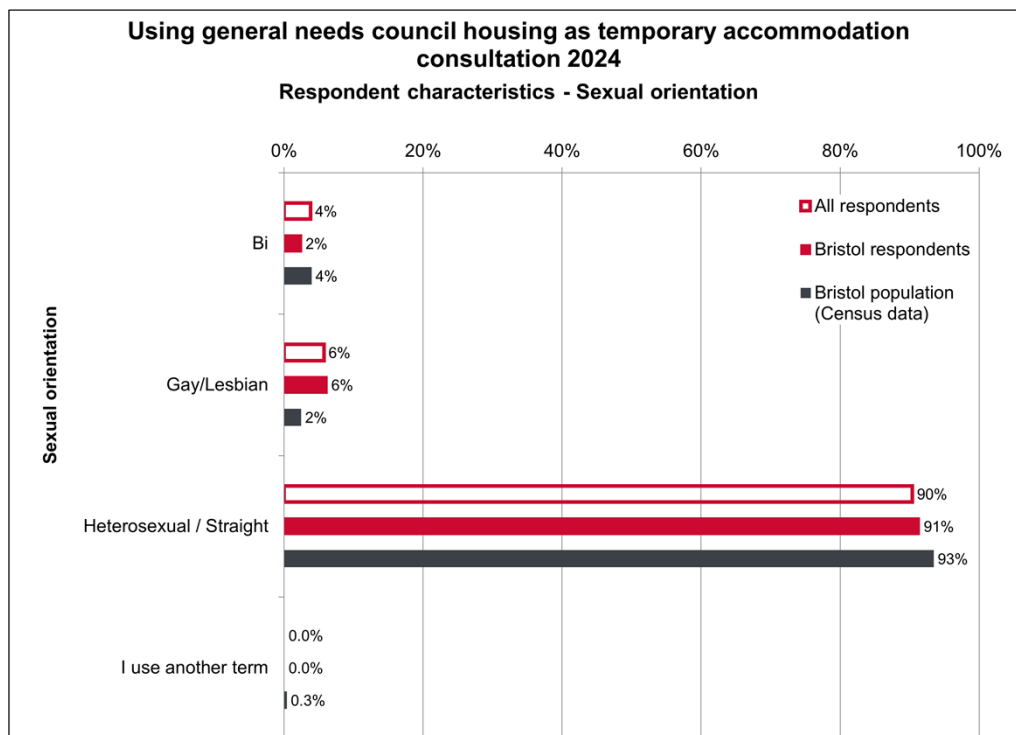
k. Religion/Faith



l. Gender reassignment



m. Sexual orientation



4. Response details

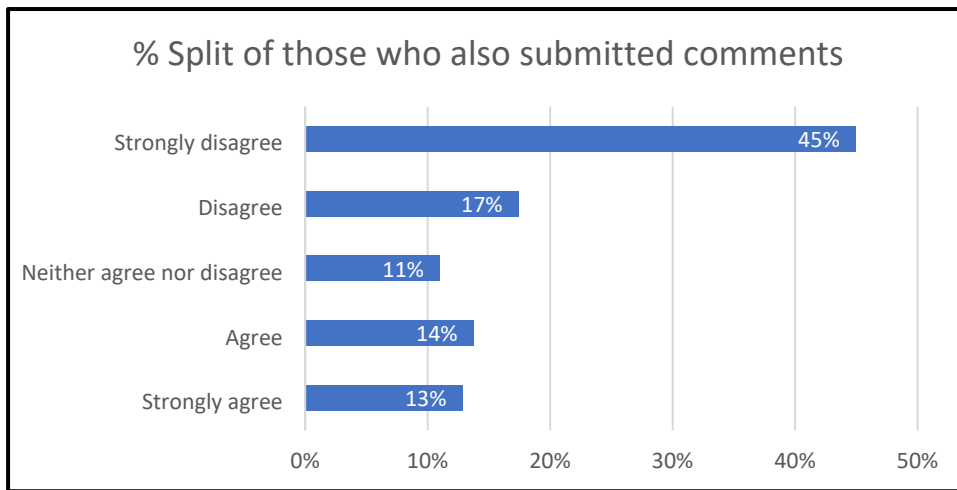
a. Overview of themes

109 of the survey respondents (67%) provided free text comments when asked “Do you have any other comments or suggestions you wish to make about the proposal?”.

Those that provided comments came from all categories, but predominantly comments came from those who strongly disagree (see below).

The breakdown of those who submitted comments and how they responded to the proposal is as follows:

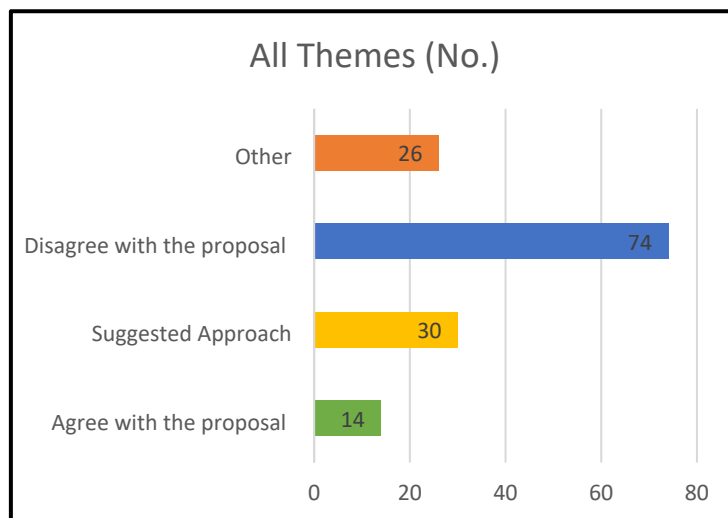
Strongly agree – and submitted free text response	14
Agree – and submitted free text response	15
Neither agree nor disagree– and submitted free text response	12
Disagree – and submitted free text response	19
Strongly disagree – and submitted free text response	49



These free text responses have been categorised into themes and subthemes. The main themes showed:

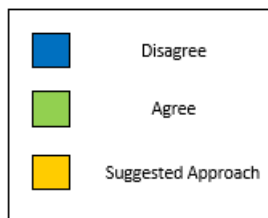
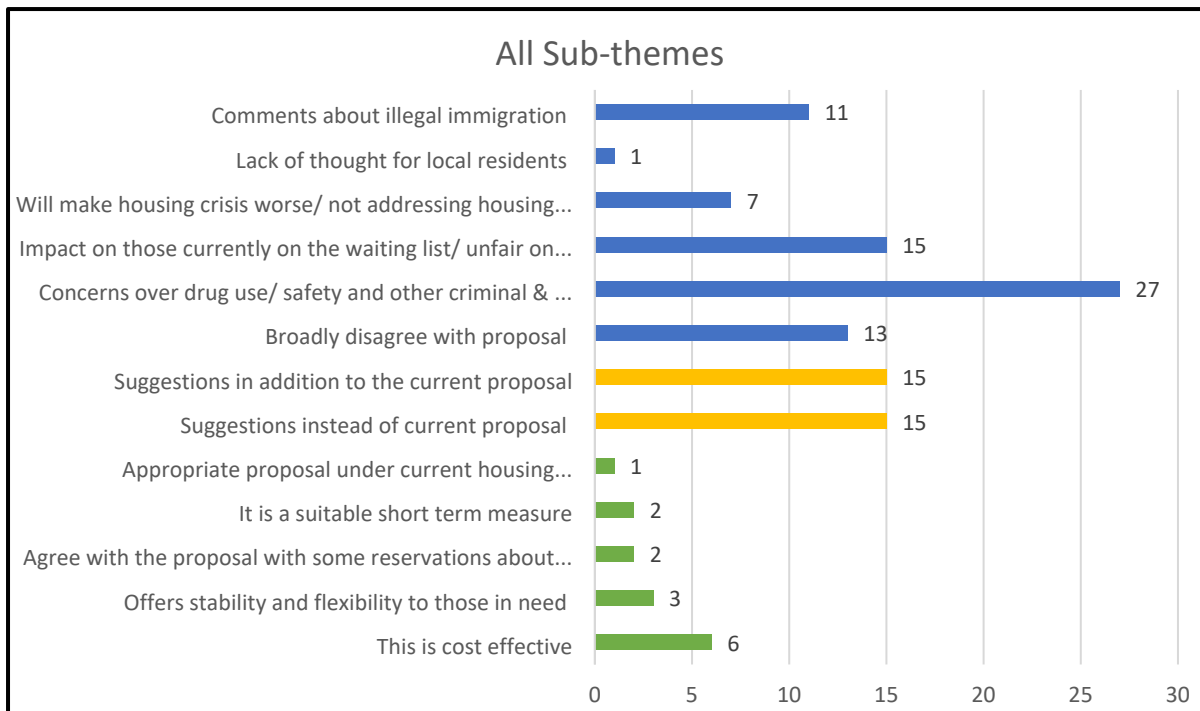
- Agree with the proposal (14 comments, 9% of total respondents)
- Suggested approach (30 comments, 18% of total respondents)
- Disagree with the proposal (74 comments, 46% of total respondents)
- Other (26 comments, 16% of total respondents)

A further breakdown of these comments is provided below. A single respondent may make several comments, so the numbers see below don't add up to the total number of free text responses, but represent the total number of comments within each theme.



b. Summary of subthemes

Further details on the subthemes are provided below and represented graphically below. A single respondent may make several comments, so the numbers below don't add up to the total number of free text responses, but represent the total number of comments within each sub-theme.



c. Subthemes: Agreeing with the proposal

14 respondents (9%) provided comments agreeing with the proposal. These addressed the following:

- **The proposal is cost effective**
 - Reducing the use of profit-making companies/hotels for emergency accommodation in favour of new council housing/income to Housing Benefit or Bristol City Council seen as a good thing.
 - Cost effective but also supportive of people, giving them better quality housing
 - A considered approach, and the need demonstrates how great the demand is.
- **It offers stability and flexibility to those in need**
 - Helps provide stability and normality for families facing homelessness, particularly important where children are involved.
 - Helps the council focus on spending budget effectively.
 - Offers flexibility to deal with urgent needs.
- **Agreement with the proposal with some reservations about safety**
 - Agree although concerns about safety and problems with placements with drug or alcohol dependence.
 - Agree but with concern to make sure those who need it get the support that is required, particularly for mental health and addiction to also help protect surrounding residents.
- **It is a suitable short term measure**
 - Agree but don't think it should be a long term measure
 - Recognising the housing crisis is broad and this will affect waiting times and possible increase waiting list.
- **It is an appropriate proposal under the current housing circumstances**
 - Impact on families in hotel type accommodation is deeply concerning.

d. Subthemes: Further suggestions

30 respondents (18%) provided further suggestions about the approach addressing the following:

- **Suggestions instead of the current proposal**
 - Recommendation to make direct offers to a much higher percentage of General Needs homes to Homeless Families in TA to expediate families moving out of expensive TA and into a permanent home.
 - Purchase more accommodation for TA rather than use general stock, or instead use of military bases, commercial property, conversions, listed buildings, churches or other temporary shelters for emergency accommodation.
 - Alternatively invest in additional support services.
 - Partner with local organisations to facilitate use of community resources more effectively, facilitate short-term rentals with private landlords, or more affordable options within the community.
 - Establish system for regular reviews and feedback from the community.
 - Bring long term empty/abandoned homes into council ownership for use.
 - Ask local businesses to sponsor conversions/use of commercial property for TA.
 - Fast track needs assessments to avoid the need for TA altogether, and minimising waiting times.
 - Make savings from the planned road changes in central Bristol that are not needed instead
- **Suggestions in addition to the current proposal**
 - To convert a TA placement in a General Needs home to a tenancy if the family are able to bid for a council home, and free up a different home for TA. This is applicant-centred allowing the family to stay where they are if they're happy.
 - Children and their families to be given greater priority for social homes to reduce multiple move.
 - Giving Bristolians who require homes a priority.
 - New builds to be offered to established tenants to free up older homes.
 - Invest in building more social rent homes.
 - Bring empty properties (homes/empty offices) into use alongside this proposal. Incentivise landlords/hold them accountable.
 - Integrate support alongside emergency housing provision, particularly for mental health.
 - Research to ensure there is adequate accessible temporary accommodation for those with disabilities.
 - Work with local community organisations.
 - Use more temporary buildings such as pre-fabs.

e. Subthemes: Disagreeing with the proposal

74 respondents (46%) provided comments disagreeing with the proposal. These addressed the following:

- **Broadly disagreeing with the proposal**
 - Those in TA are not invested in the community or property.
 - Incentive to for people to make themselves homeless as a shortcut to getting a General Needs home.
 - Will have a negative impact on the state of and management of council owned homes.
 - Housing team already under pressure – this will add more pressure.
 - Disagree with blocks being split, some permanent and some temporary housing, some families and some singles.
- **Concerns over drug use/safety and other criminal and antisocial behaviour**
 - Placing families into blocks for over 50s could be quite disruptive to existing tenants.
 - Experience of disruptive, criminal, and antisocial behaviour including vandalism and littering, in current housing due to emergency accommodation placements.
 - Fear of disruptive, criminal, racist and antisocial behaviour including vandalism and littering.
 - Feelings of vulnerability in an over 50s placement.
 - Concerns placements won't get the support, supervision, or security needed.

- Concerns over safety for children and vulnerable existing tenants.
- Concerns this proposal would damage community integration.
- **Impact on those currently on the waiting list, or unfair on those currently on the waiting list**
 - People already living in overcrowded conditions.
 - Wait is already long and placing people temporarily will only lengthen the wait.
 - Queue jumping.
 - Brand new furniture for TA placements, but not for existing tenants.
 - People waiting longest should be offered homes first.
 - Will have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of those who have been waiting a long time on the waiting list.
 - Antisocial behaviour among those housed temporarily can upset the community in established blocks.
 - People on the housing waiting list left living in unsuitable accommodation.
- **Will make the housing crisis worse, or will not directly address housing issues, or that this is only a short term solution**
 - Might help the financial challenge but will make existing problems worse.
 - A very small fix for such a big problem.
 - Need to address the rising cost of rent in the city that is pushing more people into social housing.
 - Underlying issue of insufficient social rent housing.
- **That it lacks thought for local residents**
- **Comments about illegal immigration**
 - Council housing should be prioritised for Bristolians.
 - Council housing should be for British people only.
 - Concern about housing being used for illegal immigrants.
 - Concern foreign nationals will be given priority.

f. Subthemes: Further comments

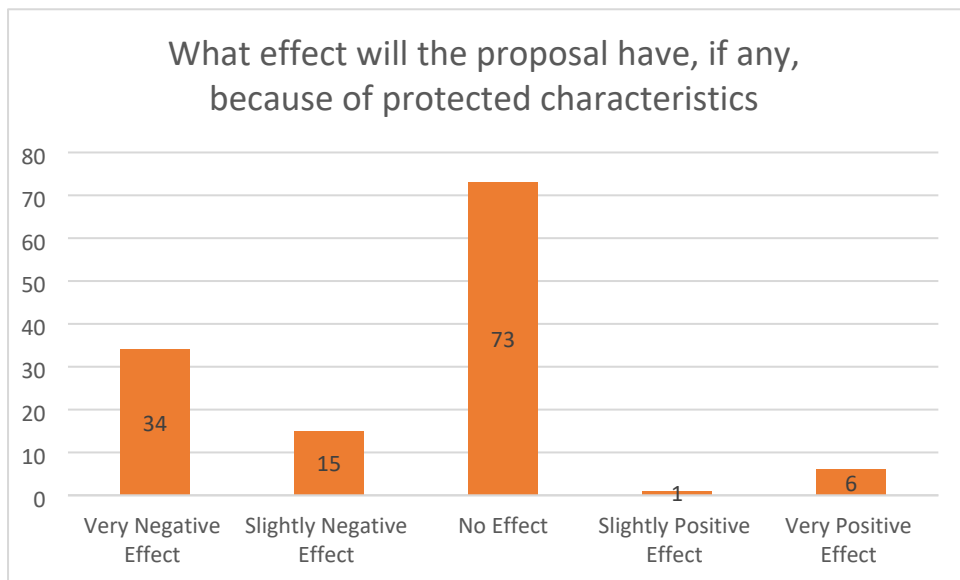
26 respondents (16%) provided further comments addressing the following:

- **Concerns regarding the proposal**
 - Concern about how cases would be managed.
 - Recognition of the impact and necessity to diligently manage this as a proposal.
 - Concern it could create a difficult public narrative.
 - Concern it might not save money.
 - Concern TA placements won't move on and are not really 'temporary'.
- **Additional information in needed from the council**
 - Is it the plan to enable the TA placement family to stay in the house and that become their permanent home, to cut interim costs and upset for placements having to move?
 - Does this include homeless veterans living on the streets or in hostels?
 - How many flats in one block would be used in this way?
 - What is the maximum time of a TA stay?
 - What happens if there is no where for a household to go after the time limit?
 - How was the number chosen? Could it not be larger? Why use the words 'up to' – this suggests target won't be reached?
 - Is this solely for UK residents?
 - Can't savings be made from other areas?
- **Other comments**
 - 18 homes doesn't sound like a lot.
 - There should be an in-person meeting about this.

5. Impact of proposals on protected characteristics

Respondents were asked what effect, if any, the proposals would have on them because of their protected characteristics. Of the 162 respondents to the survey, 132 (81%) answered the question. Of these:

- 34 (26%) said the proposals would have a very negative effect
- 15 (11%) said the proposals would have a slightly negative effect
- 73 (55%) said the proposals would have no effect
- 1 (0.8%) said the proposals would have a slightly positive effect
- 6 (4.5%) said the proposals would have a very positive effect.



Respondents were also asked to explain how they believe the proposals would have an impact on themselves or others. The 42 respondents who provided a free text response, highlighted the following impacts:

- Using housing in this way would mean there is less available to those with disabilities.
- Concern that over 50s housing is being used for any age.
- Concern over potential racist behaviour.
- Concern over potential discriminatory behaviour due to religion.