

Consultation and Engagement



# Bristol's Budget

## 2024/25



# Consultation

Budget 2024/25 Consultation

Consultation Report v5

15 January 2024

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## Executive summary

### ES1 Bristol City Council Budget 2024/25

The council's budget proposals will be considered by Cabinet on 23 January 2024 for recommendation to Full Council to consider and agree on 20 February 2024.

The budget sets out how much money the council will be able to spend on each service area. As part of the budget, Full Council will decide on the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept<sup>1</sup> for 2024/25.

Bristol City Council is spending around £1.051 billion<sup>2</sup> this year (2023/24) providing services to the people of Bristol. In 2023/24, 40% of this budget is raised locally through Council Tax (£263 million; 25%) and Business Rates (£154 million; 15%). The remaining 60% (£634 million) of funding comes from grants from the government (£451 million; 43%), income we make from fees and charges for some services we provide (£137 million; 13%), contributions from other organisations (£41 million; 4%), and income from investment (£5 million; less than 1%).

The budget decisions for 2024/25 will again be made in the context of acute financial pressures due to rising costs, continuing constraints on government funding, and increasing demand for the services the council provides. Based on our current forecasts, we face a funding gap over the next five years (from 2024/25 to 2028/29) of between £4.7 million and £81.2 million, with a realistic assumption of £32 million<sup>3</sup>. This is in addition to the £13.6 million of savings and efficiencies proposals for 2023-2028 outlined in the 2023/24 budget.

Each year, the government sets a limit for the maximum amount councils can increase core Council Tax without holding a local referendum. The government also sets the maximum level of Social Care Precept local authorities can charge. The government announced the proposed 2024/25 referendum limits for Council Tax (up to 3%) and Social Care Precept (2%) in the [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#) on 18 December 2023. This was after the start of the council's budget consultation.

Each 1% increase in Council Tax would raise approximately £2.7 million. If the council increases Council Tax by 3%<sup>4</sup> and adds an additional Social Care Precept of 2% in 2023/24, we estimate there would still be a substantial funding gap in the council's core budget in 2024/25. If we do not increase Council Tax or levy a Social Care Precept, the funding gap would be even greater; by up to £13.7 million more. With such a significant challenge the budget cannot be balanced without more funding, making greater efficiencies (doing the same for less money) and, in some cases, stopping doing some things entirely.

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- <sup>1</sup> Social Care Precept is a levy on top of core Council Tax, which is dedicated to help fund adult social care.
  - <sup>2</sup> The £1.051 billion is general fund revenue and excludes capital and ringfenced funds.
  - <sup>3</sup> The wide range in these forecasts is due to national economic uncertainties (such as inflation and interest rates), the council's ability to manage demand and risks, and unknown levels of future government funding.
  - <sup>4</sup> The council is permitted to raise Council Tax by **up to 3%** in 2023/24. Where we refer to a 3% increase in Council Tax, this is shorthand for an increase of 2.99%

## ES2 The Budget 2024/25 consultation

The Budget 2024/25 consultation took place between 9 November and 21 December 2023. It sought views from the public (including businesses and organisations which represent non-domestic rate payers<sup>5</sup>) on options for the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept in 2024/25, and proposals for how the council might save money and generate income to help bridge the forecast funding gap. The responses to the consultation have helped to inform final budget recommendations and will be taken into consideration by the Cabinet and by Full Council when making their decisions in January and February 2024.

The Budget 2024/25 consultation sought feedback on the following.

- Options for the level of core Council Tax people would prefer in 2024/25. Options were no increase, a 1% increase, a 2% increase or a 3% increase, each of which would have different implications for how much money the council could spend on general services.
- Options for the level of Social Care Precept they would prefer in 2024/25 to support the delivery of adult social care, in addition to the increase in core Council Tax for general services. Options were no Social Care Precept, a 1% Social Care Precept, or a 2% Social Care Precept.
- Whether respondents would be prepared to pay an increase of more than 3% in core Council Tax and/or more than 2% Social Care Precept if the government permits this in 2024/25. The [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#) on 18 December 2023 set out that these larger increases would not be permitted.
- Respondents' reasons for the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept they would prefer, and any suggestions they have for how the council could save money or generate income<sup>6</sup>.

The budget consultation comprised [information about the council's financial position](#) and an [online survey](#). [Easy Read](#) and [British Sign Language](#) formats were also available online on the Consultation and Engagement Hub. Paper copies of the survey were available in libraries and on request. Alternative accessible formats, including language translations, were available on request.

The consultation was widely publicised through media, social media and communications with the public, including partner organisations, non-domestic rate payers and other stakeholders, as described in section 2.2.

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<sup>5</sup> The council has a statutory duty to consult each year with representatives of non-domestic rate payers about the authority's proposals for expenditure in the forthcoming year. The activities undertaken to consult representatives of non-domestic rate payers are described in section 2.2.4.

<sup>6</sup> The consultation included information about [25 proposals to reduce our costs and increase income](#) to help balance the budget. We also described [11 'invest to save' ideas](#) (ways we might use capital investment to reduce our costs in the long term). We did not include specific questions about these other proposals because we do not think they are likely to mean major changes to services the council provides. However, people could provide feedback on any of the proposals as part of their free text comments in the survey.

### **ES3 Scope and use of this report**

This consultation report describes the methodology and presents the feedback received in the Budget 2024/25 consultation. It includes quantitative data for all 2,547 survey responses and analysis of the 1,146 survey free text responses (question 5) and 12 email responses.

This consultation report does not contain the council's recommendations for the level of Council Tax increase or Social Care Precept (if any) in 2024/25, nor an assessment of the feasibility of any of the suggestions received. The consultation feedback that is summarised in this report has been taken into consideration by officers when developing final proposals for the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept, and ways to balance the budget gap in 2024/25. The final proposals are included in a separate report which, together with this consultation report, will be considered by Cabinet on 23 January 2024. Full Council will take into consideration this consultation report and responses when making its decisions about the 2024/25 budget at the Full Council meeting on 20 February 2024.

Budget decisions will be published through normal procedures for Full Council and Cabinet decisions at [democracy.bristol.gov.uk](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk)

### **ES4 Budget 2024/25 consultation - Key findings**

#### **ES4.1 Response rate**

The Budget 2024/25 consultation survey received 2,547 responses.

2,082 responses (82%) were received from postcodes within the Bristol City Council area, 23 (1%) were from South Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES), and North Somerset. A further 54 (2%) were from unspecified locations within the four West of England authorities<sup>7</sup>. 385 (15%) did not provide a postcode.

Analysis of respondents' postcodes shows that there was under-representation of responses from the most deprived 30% of the city, and response rates from the least deprived 20% of the city were over-represented. People with the following protected characteristics were under-represented compared to the proportion of people in these groups living in Bristol:

- Children and young people aged 24 years and younger, and people aged 85 and older
- Respondents of Asian or Asian British backgrounds; Black, Black British, Caribbean or African backgrounds; Mixed or multiple ethnic groups; and other ethnic backgrounds
- Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs
- Female respondents
- Heterosexual respondents.

A map of response rate by ward for the Bristol respondents is presented in Chapter 3 along with the details of age profile, sex and other respondent characteristics.

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<sup>7</sup> Incomplete postcodes identified the home location as within the WOE authorities area (Bristol, B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire), but not which authority.

## ES4.2 Level of Council Tax increase and Social Care Precept in 2024/25

### Core Council Tax

Of the 2,485 people who stated their preference for the level of Council Tax, a majority (1,641 respondents; 66%) favour an increase in core Council Tax to support general services in 2024/25.

- 1,046 (42%) would prefer a 3% increase in core Council Tax. This is the option with the highest support.
- 316 (13%) favour a 2% increase.
- 279 (11%) favour a 1% increase.
- 844 (34%) respondents would prefer 'no increase to Council Tax' in 2024/25. This is the option with the second highest support.
- 62 respondents did not give a view on Council Tax.

### Social Care Precept

Of the 2,494 people who stated their preference for the level of Social Care Precept, a majority (1,498 respondents; 60%) favour some Social Care Precept (on top of core Council Tax) to support the delivery of social care in 2024/25.

- 932 (37%) would prefer a 2% Social Care Precept. This is the option with the second highest support
- 566 (23%) favour a 1% Social Care Precept
- 966 (40%) respondents would prefer no Social Care Precept in 2024/25. This is the option with the highest support
- 53 respondents did not give a view on Social Care Precept.

### Combinations of core Council Tax and Social Care Precept

Figure ES1 shows the percentage of 2,547 survey respondents who prefer each combination of Council Tax increase (0%, 1%, 2% or 3%) and Social Care Precept (0%, 1% or 2%) proposed in the consultation.

In Figure ES1, each of the coloured rectangles represents a combination of one Council Tax option (0%, 1%, 2% or 3%) and one Social Care Precept option (0%, 1% or 2%). For example, the top left green rectangle is the combination of no increase to Council Tax and no Social Care Precept. 28% of respondents favour this option. Options with lower support appear red; those with higher support are green.

The numbers in the coloured circles show the total percentage increase in Council Tax plus Social Care Precept for each combination. For example, ② indicates a 2% total increase.



**Figure ES1: Preferred combinations for Council Tax and Social Care Precept**

Percentage of respondents who prefer each combination of Council Tax and Social Care Precept

	No additional Social Care Precept	An additional 1% Social Care Precept	An additional 2% Social Care Precept	No view on Social Care Precept
No increase to Council Tax	28% <span style="color: red;">0</span>	3% <span style="color: red;">1</span>	2% <span style="color: red;">2</span>	0.3%
1% increase to Council Tax	3% <span style="color: red;">1</span>	7% <span style="color: red;">2</span>	1% <span style="color: red;">3</span>	0.1%
2% increase to Council Tax	3% <span style="color: red;">2</span>	6% <span style="color: red;">3</span>	3% <span style="color: red;">4</span>	0.1%
3% increase to Council Tax	5% <span style="color: red;">3</span>	6% <span style="color: red;">4</span>	30% <span style="color: red;">5</span>	0.2%
No view on Council Tax	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	1%

**Key**

- 0 No change to Council Tax or Social Care Precept
- 1 1% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 2 2% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 3 3% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 4 4% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 5 5% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept

Figure ES1 shows that:

- The option with the highest support (30% of 2,547 respondents) is a 3% increase in core Council Tax and a 2% Social Care Precept. This is the maximum increase permitted under government limits announced on 18 December 2023 in the [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#)
- The second most popular option (28% of 2,547 respondents) is no increase in core Council Tax and no Social Care Precept.
- The third most popular option is 1% increase in core Council Tax and 1% Social Care Precept. This has substantially lower support (7% of 2,547 respondents).
- For options where Council Tax and Social Care Precept are not the same, more people favour a higher increase in Council Tax than Social Care Precept. For example:
  - 6% favour 2% increase in core Council Tax with 1% Social Care Precept, compared to 1% who prefer a 1% increase in core Council Tax with 2% Social Care Precept
  - 3% favour 2% increase in core Council Tax with no Social Care Precept, compared to 2% who prefer no increase in core Council Tax with 2% Social Care Precept.

### ES4.3 Differences in views on the level of Council Tax in areas of high and low deprivation

Views on the preferred level of core Council Tax increase (0%, 1%, 2% or 3%) were compared for respondents in areas with different levels of deprivation (Figure ES2). The comparison looked at levels of deprivation in 10 bands (known as 'deciles') from decile 1 (most deprived) to decile 10 (least deprived).

Figure ES2 also shows the views of people who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode, and the combined views of all respondents.

**Figure ES2: Preference in each deprivation decile for the core Council Tax options**

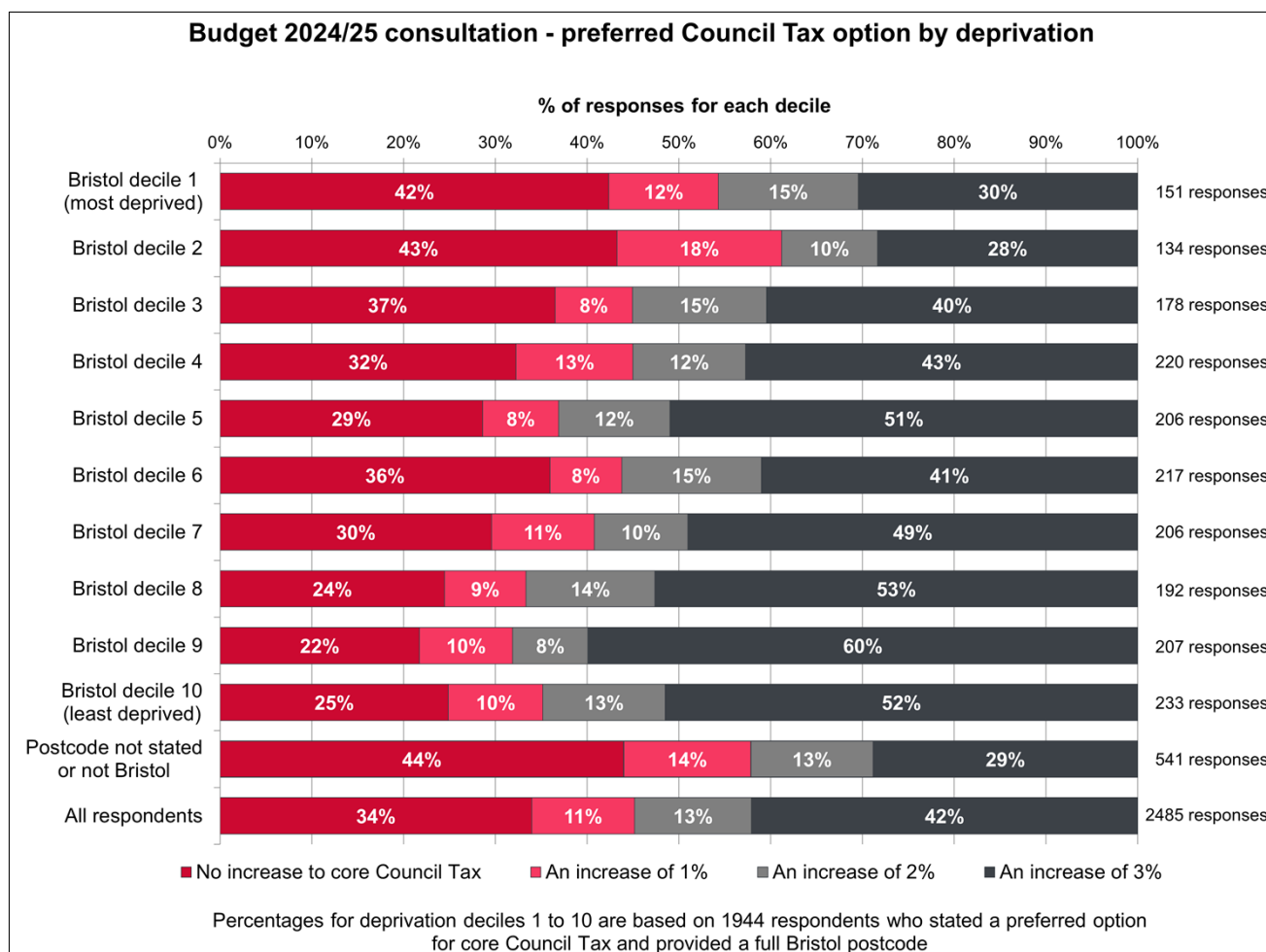


Figure ES2 shows that people living in less deprived areas tend to support higher levels of core Council Tax.

Support for a maximum **3% increase** in Council Tax is highest in the least deprived 30% of Bristol (60% of respondents prefer a 3% increase in decile 9, 53% in decile 8, 52% in decile 10). Support is lowest in the most deprived 20% of areas (30% in decile 1, 28% in decile 2).

Support for **no increase** in core Council Tax is highest for respondents in the most deprived 20% of Bristol (42% of respondents in decile 1, 43% in decile 2). Support for no increase reduces to 22% in decile 9, 24% in decile 8, 25% in decile 10 (the least deprived 30%).

A 3% increase in Council Tax is the most popular option in all deciles except the most deprived deciles 1 and 2. For deciles 1 and 2, no increase is the preferred option.

Support for 1% and 2% increases in Council Tax do not show a clear trend between more deprived and less deprived areas.

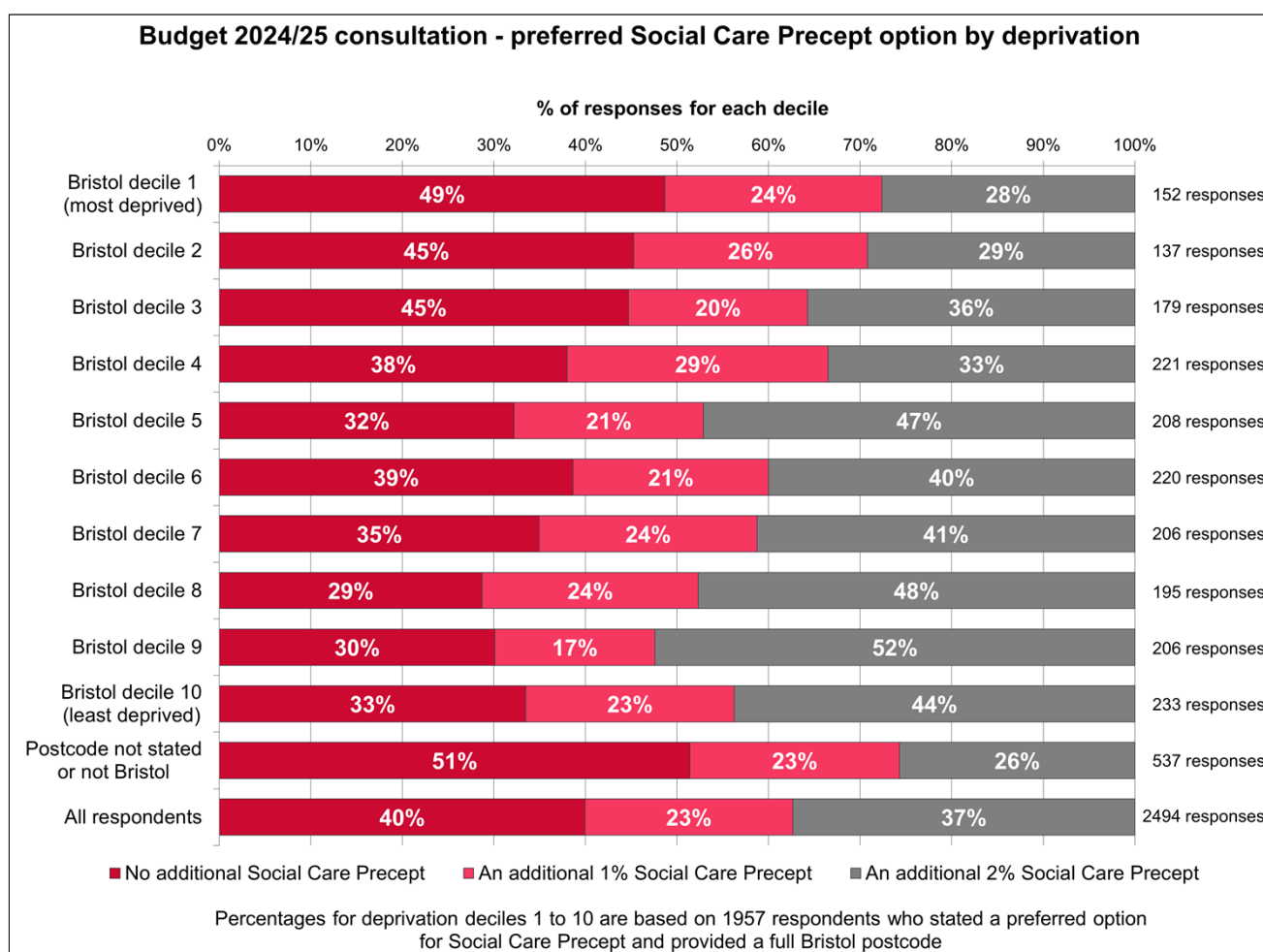
The views of respondents who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode are similar to an average of the most deprived deciles 1 and 2. 44% in this group favour no increase and 29% support a 3% increase.

#### ES4.4 Views on the level of Social Care Precept in areas of high and low deprivation

Views on the preferred level of Social Care Precept (0%, 1% or 2%) were also compared for respondents in areas with different levels of deprivation (Figure ES3).

Figure ES3 also shows the views of people who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode, and the aggregate views of all respondents.

**Figure ES3: Preference in each deprivation decile for the Social Care Precept options**



As with core Council Tax, support for a Social Care Precept is highest in the least deprived areas.

Support for no Social Care Precept ranges from 49% in decile 1 (most deprived) to 29% in decile 8 (with slightly higher figures of 30% in decile 9 and 33% in decile 10). Conversely, support for 2% Social Care Precept increases from 28% in decile 1 to 52% in decile 9 (44% in decile 10).

A 2% Social Care Precept is the most popular option in deciles 5 to 10. In the most deprived deciles 1 to 4, preference for no Social Care Precept exceeds support for a 2% precept.

A 1% Social Care Precept is the least popular option in all deciles.

The views of respondents who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode are similar to the most deprived decile 1. In this group, 51% favour no increase and 26% support a 2% increase.

Comparison of Figures ES2 and ES3 shows a greater willingness to pay more Council Tax than Social Care Precept. More people support the maximum 3% increase in Council Tax than support the maximum 2% Social Care Precept, for all deprivation deciles except decile 2. This is also the case for respondents who provided no postcode or a non-Bristol postcode.

#### **ES4.5 Views on increasing Council Tax more than 3% and Social Care Precept above 2%**

The Budget 2024/25 consultation was launched before the government announced the limits for the level of Council Tax increase or Social Care Precept for 2024/25. To ensure we could take into account the public's views on any possible scenario the government might announce, respondents were asked if they would be prepared to pay an increase of more than 3% in core Council Tax and/or more than 2% Social Care Precept, if the government announced this is permitted in 2024/25.

Figure ES4 shows the percentage of the 2,547 respondents who prefer each combination of the options for Council Tax increase above 3% and Social Care Precept of more than 2%. Each of the coloured rectangles represents a combination of one Council Tax option (no increase above 3%, or increases of 4%, 5%, or 6% or more) and one Social Care Precept option (no precept above 2%, or a precept of 3%, 4%, or 5% or more).

















Figure ES4 shows that:

- The option with the highest support (57% of 2,547 respondents) is no increase above 3% to core Council Tax and no Social Care Precept above 2%.
- The second most popular option is an increase of 6% or more to Council Tax and a Social Care precept of 5% or more. This is the maximum option included in the budget consultation. This option has substantially lower support (9% of 2,547 respondents) than the no further increases option.











The [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#) published on 18 December 2023 set out that these larger increases would not be permitted in 2024/25.

### Figure ES4: Views on combinations of higher Council Tax and Social Care Precept

Percentage of respondents who prefer each combination of Council Tax increase above 3% and Social Care Precept above 2%

	No Social Care Precept above 2%	An additional 3% Social Care Precept	An additional 4% Social Care Precept	An additional 5% or more Social Care Precept	No view on Social Care Precept above 2%
No increase above 3% to Council Tax	57% 	6% 	1% 	1% 	1%
4% increase to Council Tax	4% 	7% 	1% 	1% 	0.4%
5% increase to Council Tax	1% 	2% 	3% 	2% 	0%
6% or more increase to Council Tax	1% 	0% 	0% 	9% 	0%
No view on an increase above 3% to Council Tax	1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1%

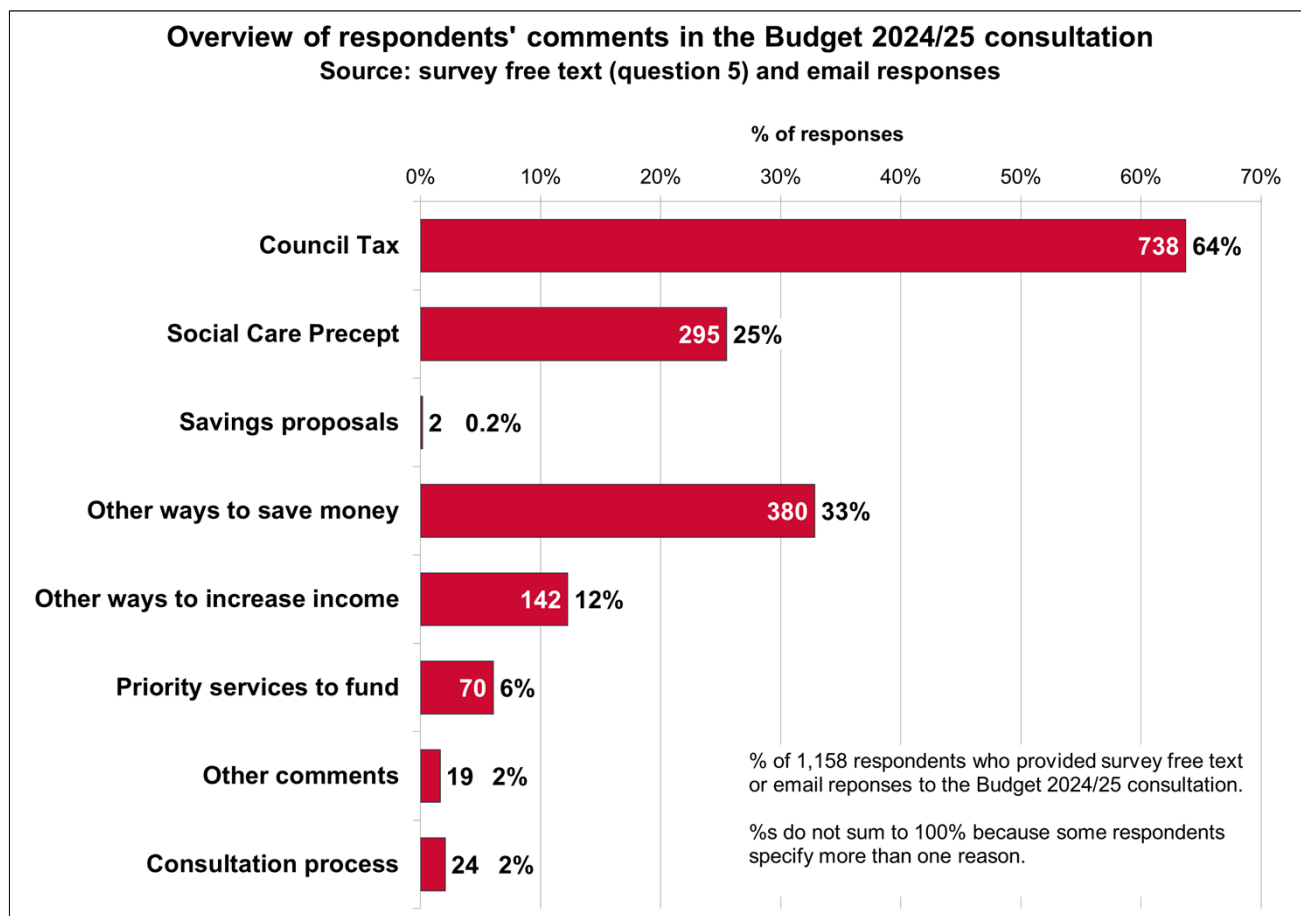
**Key**

-  No more than 5% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  No more than 6% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  No more than 7% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  No more than 3% increase from Council Tax plus 5% or more Social Care Precept OR no more than 2% Social Care Precept plus 6% or more increase in Council Tax
-  7% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  8% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  9% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  9% or more increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  10% or more increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
-  11% or more increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept

### ES4.6 Free text comments on the budget proposals

1,158 (45%) of the 2,547 survey and 12 email respondents provided free text comments which explained their preference for the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept, their views on the savings / income generation proposals, suggestions for other ways the council could save money or generate more income, and some comments about the consultation. The 1,158 free text and email responses have been categorised into themes (Figure ES5).

**Figure ES5: Overview of survey free text and email comments about the budget**



- 738 (64% of 1,158 respondents) explained their preference for the level of Council Tax or made other comments about Council Tax. A breakdown is provided in section 4.7.2
- 295 (25%) explained their preference for the level of Social Care Precept, or made other comments about Social Care Precept (section 4.7.3)
- 2 respondents (0.2%) provided comments on the savings proposals to reduce the budget gap (section 5.2)
- 380 (33%) suggested other ways the council could save money (section 5.3)
- 142 (12%) suggested other ways the council could increase income (section 5.4)
- 70 (6%) identified services they think are priorities to continue to fund (section 5.5)
- 19 (2%) provided other comments or suggestions (section 5.6)
- 24 (2%) provided comments about the consultation process (section 5.7).

The total number of comments exceeds 1,158 because some respondents addressed several themes.

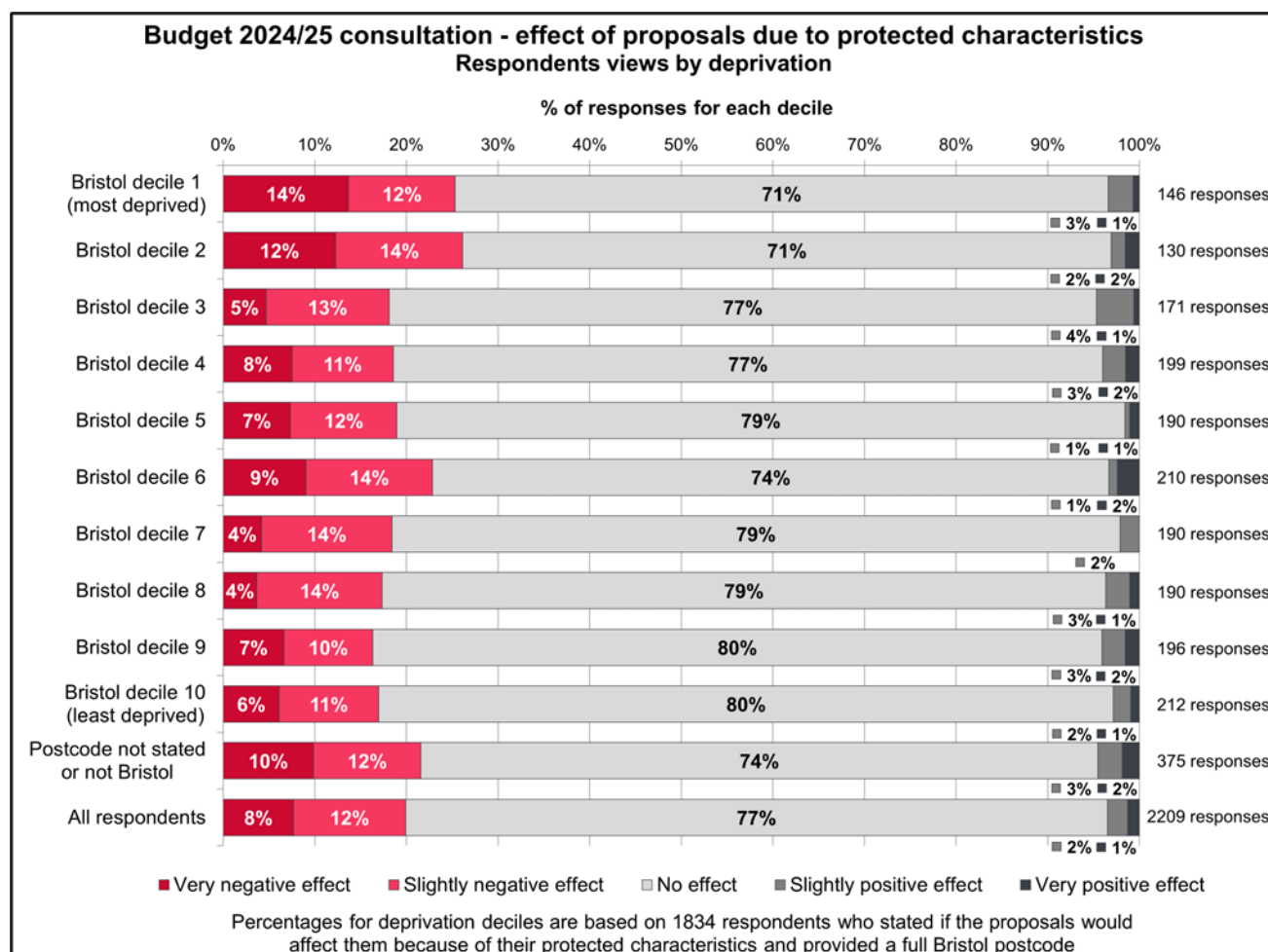
### ES4.7 Impact of the proposals because of protected characteristics

Respondents were asked what effect, if any, the proposals would have on them because of their protected characteristics<sup>8</sup>. Of the 2,209 (87%) respondents who answered the question:

- 170 (8%) said the proposals would have a very negative effect
- 270 (12%) said the proposals would have a slightly negative effect
- 1,692 (77%) said the proposals would have no effect
- 49 (2%) said the proposals would have a slightly positive effect
- 28 (1%) said the proposals would have a very positive effect.

The proportion of respondents who think the proposals would have a very negative or slightly negative effect because of their protected characteristics is higher in the most deprived 20% of the city (26% in each of deciles 1 and 2) than other areas (Figure ES6). For other deciles, the proportion who say the proposals would have a slightly negative or very negative effect ranges from 16% in decile 9 to 23% in decile 6.

**Figure ES6: Effect by deprivation of the proposals because of protected characteristics**



217 respondents explained their reasons why the proposals would have an impact on themselves or others. This is summarised in section 6.2.

<sup>8</sup> The protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; race including colour; nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sex; gender reassignment; sexual orientation; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or on maternity leave.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The council's budget

Bristol City Council is spending around £1.051 billion this year (2023/24) providing a range of services to the people of Bristol. The money the council has available to spend on delivering day-to-day services to citizens is called the revenue budget<sup>9</sup>.

In 2023/24, 40% of this budget is raised locally through Council Tax (£263 million; 25%) and Business Rates (£154 million; 15%). The remaining 60% (£634 million) of funding comes from grants (such as schools funding) from the government (£451 million; 43%), income from fees and charges we make for some of the services we provide (£137 million; 13%), contributions from other organisations (£41 million; 4%), and income from investment (£5 million; less than 1%).

Every year, the council must agree an annual budget which balances the money we spend with the money we expect to receive. On 20 February 2024, Full Council will set the council's budget for the 2024/25 financial year. The budget sets out how much money the council will be able to spend on each service area and what the priorities are. As part of the budget, Full Council will decide on the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept<sup>10</sup> for 2024/25.

This year, these decisions will be again made in the context of acute financial pressures due to rising costs, continuing constraints on government funding, and increasing demand for the services the council provides.

## 1.2 Funding pressures and uncertainty

Councils are facing unprecedented financial pressures because of ongoing high inflation, interest rates at a 15-year high, pay pressures, and a global energy crisis, affecting the cost of our supply chain of goods, energy and services. At the same time, there have been many years of reductions or changes in local government funding. And in Bristol, demand for services, and the cost of providing them, have continued to rise as the city's population has grown, and the complexity of care and support packages we provide has increased.

Based on our current forecasts, we face a funding gap over the next five years (from 2024/25 to 2028/29) of between £4.7 million and £81.2 million, with a realistic assumption of £32 million<sup>11</sup>. This is in addition to the £13.6 million of savings and efficiencies proposals for 2023-2028 outlined in the 2023/24 budget.

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<sup>9</sup> The £1.051 billion is general fund revenue and excludes capital and ringfenced funds.

<sup>10</sup> Social Care Precept is a levy on top of core Council Tax, which is dedicated to help pay for adult social care.

<sup>11</sup> The wide range in these forecasts is due to national economic uncertainties (such as inflation and interest rates), the council's ability to manage demand and risks, and unknown levels of government funding in the future.



The council is able to increase core Council Tax by up to 3%<sup>12</sup> to help fund general services in 2024/25, without a local referendum. This would raise an additional £8.2 million. A Social Care Precept of up to 2% can be added to support the delivery of adult social care. This would raise £5.5 million and is in addition to the permitted increase of up to 3% in core Council Tax for general services. These limits are set by government<sup>13</sup>. There was not enough time to hold a local referendum on increases above these limits before Full Council decides on its 2024/25 budget in February 2024.

If we increase Council Tax by 3% and levy a Social Care Precept of 2% next year, we estimate there would remain a substantial funding gap in the council's core budget in 2024/25. If we do not increase Council Tax or levy a Social Care Precept, the funding gap would be even greater; by up to £13.7 million more. With such a significant challenge the budget cannot be balanced without additional funding, making greater efficiencies (doing the same for less money) and, in some cases, stopping doing some things entirely.

### 1.3 Budget 2024/25 consultation

The Budget 2024/25 consultation took place between 9 November and 21 December 2023. It sought views from the public (including businesses and organisations which represent non-domestic rate payers<sup>14</sup>) on the following:

- Options for the level of core Council Tax they would prefer in 2024/25 to support the delivery of general council services
- Options for the level of Social Care Precept they would prefer in 2024/25 to support the delivery of adult social care, in addition to the core Council Tax for general services
- Other ideas or suggestions for how the council might bridge the budget gap.

In addition to options for increasing Council Tax and Social Care Precept, the consultation described [25 other proposals for how we can reduce costs and increase our income](#) to help balance the budget. We also described [11 'invest to save' ideas](#) (early ideas for how we might use capital investment to reduce costs for the council in the long term). We do not think these other budget proposals are likely to mean major changes to services the council provides, so we did not include specific questions about them. However, people could provide feedback on any of these proposals as part of their free text comments in question 5 of the survey. If specific proposals are brought forward, public consultation and assessment will be undertaken if needed.

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<sup>12</sup> Where we refer to a 3% increase in Council Tax, we are using 3% as shorthand for an increase of 2.99%.

<sup>13</sup> The limits of a 3% increase in Council Tax and 2% for Social Care Precept were announced in the [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#) on 18 December 2023.

<sup>14</sup> The council has a statutory duty to consult each year with representatives of non-domestic rate payers about the authority's proposals for expenditure in the forthcoming year. The activities undertaken to consult representatives of non-domestic rate payers are described in section 2.2.4

## 1.4 Scope of this report

This consultation report describes the consultation methodology and the feedback received, which will be considered by Cabinet on 23 January 2024 before decisions on the 2024/25 budget are made by Full Council on 20 February 2024.

- **Chapter 2** of this report describes the consultation methodology. The consultation information and questions are summarised in section 2.1.1. The print versions of the [consultation information guide](#) and [survey booklet](#) can be viewed online.
- **Chapter 3** presents the consultation survey response rate and respondent characteristics
- **Chapter 4** describes feedback on the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept
- **Chapter 5** summarises respondents' suggestions on other ways to reduce costs and generate more income, which would help to bridge the forecast budget gap over the next five years.
- **Chapter 6** sets out the effects that respondents said the proposals would have on them because of their protected characteristics.
- **Chapter 7** describes how this report will be used and how to keep updated on the decision-making process.

This report includes analysis of the responses to the multiple-choice questions and the 'About You' survey questions for all 2,547 respondents to the survey.

1,146 of the respondents also provided free text comments and suggestions as part of their survey responses (survey question 5). These have been analysed together with the 12 email responses to the consultation (1,158 free text survey and email responses, in total).

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Survey

#### 2.1.1 Online survey

The [Budget 2024/25 consultation survey](#) was available on the council's Consultation and Engagement Hub ([www.ask.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.ask.bristol.gov.uk)) between 9 November and 21 December 2023. An [Easy Read version](#) and a [British Sign Language version](#) were also available on the Consultation and Engagement Hub.

#### Survey information

The survey contained the following information as context for the survey questions.

- Details of the council's revenue budget (the money available to spend on delivering day-to-day services). This included an overview of where the money comes from, a breakdown of how Council Tax revenue is spent (based on 2023/24 expenditure) and details of three other budgets (the Dedicated Schools Grant, the Public Health Budget, and the Housing Revenue Account), which the council must keep separate from its main day-to-day spending
- Details of the forecast budget shortfall as estimated at the time of publication (in November 2023) of between £4.7 million and £81.2 million<sup>15</sup> over the next five years to March 2029, due to increasing costs, continuing constraints on UK Government funding, and increasing demand for services the council provides
- Details of the assistance the council is providing to low-income households in meeting their Council Tax bills
- An outline of the council's capital investment programme in 2023/24
- An explanation of council reserves
- Forecasts of how much additional revenue would be raised in 2024/25 by each of the proposed core Council Tax options (increases of 0%, 1%, 2% or 3%) and each of the options for the level of Social Care Precept (0%, 1% or 2%)
- The weekly and annual cost increases that would be payable by households in each Council Tax band for each Council Tax option and Social Care Precept option
- A description of [25 other proposals for how we can reduce costs and increase our income](#) to help balance the budget.
- Information about [11 early ideas for how we might use capital investment to reduce costs for the council in the long term](#), which would help to bridge the budget gap.

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<sup>15</sup> The latest estimate of the forecast budget gap on 15 January 2024 remains between £4.7 million and £81.2 million.

## Survey questions

The survey questions sought respondents' views on the following:

- The level of core Council Tax they would prefer in 2024/25. Options were no increase, a 1% increase, a 2% increase or a 3% increase, each of which would have different implications for how much money the council could spend on general services
- The level of Social Care Precept they would prefer in 2024/25 in addition to the increase in core Council Tax. Options were no Social Care Precept, a 1% Social Care Precept, or a 2% Social Care Precept
- Whether respondents would be prepared to pay an increase of more than 3% in core Council Tax or more than 2% Social Care Precept, if the government announced this is permitted in 2024/25 <sup>16</sup>. Options for Council Tax were no increase greater than 3%, a 4% increase, a 5% increase, or an increase of 6% or more. Options for Social Care Precept were no more than 2%, a 3% precept, a 4% precept, or a precept of 5% or more. The [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#) published on 18 December 2023 set out that these larger increases would not be permitted in 2024/25
- Respondents' reasons for the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept they would prefer, and any other suggestions they have for how the council could save money or generate income. Respondents could also comment on the 25 other budget proposals and 11 ideas to invest capital to save in the long term.

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.

- Respondents' postcode – this identifies if any parts of the city are under-represented in responding to the consultation and it can show if people from more deprived areas of the city have different views compared to people living in less deprived areas
- Equalities monitoring information – this enables the council to check if people with specific protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are under-represented in the responses
- Other information about respondents; for example, whether they are a councillor, a council employee, or represent a local business
- How respondents found out about the consultation – to help the council publicise future consultations effectively.

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

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<sup>16</sup> In the Local government finance policy statement 2024 to 2025 published on 5 December 2023, the government announced that core Council Tax can be increased by up to 3% in 2024/25 and the maximum level of Social Care Precept would be 2%. This was after the start of the council's budget consultation. The consultation options of more than 3% for core Council Tax and more than 2% for Social Care Precept would not be permitted.

## 2.1.2 Alternative formats

An [Easy Read version](#) of the consultation was available on the Consultation and Engagement Hub and could be completed online or printed and returned by post.

A [British Sign Language version](#) was also available on the Consultation and Engagement Hub.

Paper copies (a [consultation information guide](#) and a separate [survey booklet](#)) were distributed with Freepost return envelopes to all libraries in Bristol and were available on request.

Other formats (braille, large print, other alternative formats, and translation to other languages) were available on request.

## 2.1.3 Other correspondence

12 emails were received in response to the consultation. All 12 emails were received from citizens. The emails provided comments on the level of Council Tax, ideas for other ways to raise income and reduce costs, views on which services are important to continue funding, and feedback about the consultation process.

The email text has been analysed with the free text responses to question 5 of the survey and is reported with the survey free text feedback in chapter 5.

## 2.2 Publicity and briefings

### 2.2.1 Objective

The following programme of activity was carried out to publicise and explain the Budget 2024/25 consultation. The primary objective was to engage residents, communities, stakeholders, businesses and representatives of non-domestic ratepayers across the city in decisions on the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept, and other ways the council might bridge the forecast budget gap.

To achieve this, information was shared across a wide range of channels, reaching as broad a range of audiences as possible, to maximise response rates. Areas of the city that were found to have responded in lower numbers were targeted part way through the consultation.

### 2.2.2 Bristol City Council channels

Online and paper versions of the consultation document were shared via the following council and partner channels and networks:

- BCC weekly business e-newsletter 5 December 2023- 2,700 recipients
- We Are Bristol weekly newsletter 6 December 2023 – 2,000 recipients
- Ask Bristol e-bulletin – delivered to 7,292 recipients on 23 November 2023, and delivered to 7,285 recipients on 13 December 2023
- Public Health citizen e-newsletter ICS December issue

- Emails to 134,997 users of the online Council Tax account system were sent on 17 November 2023 inviting citizens to take part in the survey. Follow-up emails were sent on 7 December and 19 December 2023
- Headteachers' newsletter bulletin 4 December 2023
- Direct email to over 300 community-based organisations and organisers
- Paper copies in libraries

### **2.2.3 Internal communications**

Messages announcing the launch of the public consultation were sent to the following internal stakeholders:

- Cabinet
- Directors, managers, managers of offline staff
- Party group leaders
- Elected councillors who were provided with a digital engagement pack, which included assets for social media and newsletter content, to share with their contacts.
- Chairs of scrutiny committees
- Chair of HR committee
- Trade unions
- Staff-led groups, and all staff
- Youth Council and Youth Mayors
- Mayoral Commissions (Women's, Race, Disability, History)
- Wholly owned companies (Bristol Holding Company, Bristol Waste, Goram Homes).
- Staff and elected members were asked to promote the public consultation.

There were reminders throughout November and December through our blogs and bulletins.

### **2.2.4 Bristol City Council partners, businesses and voluntary sector organisations**

The council has a statutory duty to consult each year with representatives of non-domestic rate payers about the authority's proposals for expenditure in the coming year.

Details of the consultation were shared at the launch, and with one week to go, with representatives of business organisations (including Business West, local Business Improvement Districts, and the Federation of Small Businesses), the LGA, voluntary sector organisations, public sector/city stakeholders, local health partners, equalities groups and community groups, with a request for information to be circulated through their networks.

77 survey responses were received from people who represent or own a local business, and, in addition, there were 11 survey responses from health and social care providers, school or education providers, and public transport providers. 14 survey responses were received from voluntary/community/social enterprise organisations / interest groups. Details are reported in section 3.4.

### **2.2.5 Media engagement**

A news article was published to the BCC Newsroom on 9 November 2023. The External Communications team supported reporting of the budget leading to six items of news coverage and other references to the consultation across broadcast media during the six-week period.

### **2.2.6 Social Media – posts, outreach and advertising**

Regular posts on Bristol City Council's social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, Next Door, LinkedIn and Instagram) were made for the duration of the consultation. These organic posts had a potential reach of 22,000 people resulting in 186 survey link clicks.

Paid for Facebook advertising (approximately £200) was also employed one week before the consultation closed to engage targeted areas of the city where response was low. This had a reach of 24,000 with 746 link clicks.

### 3 Survey response rate and respondent characteristics

#### 3.1 Response rate to the survey

The Budget 2024/25 consultation survey received 2,547 responses, of which 2,364 (92%) were responses to the main online survey, 168 (7%) were responses via the Easy Read survey, and 15 (1%) were paper surveys. In addition, 12 email responses were received.

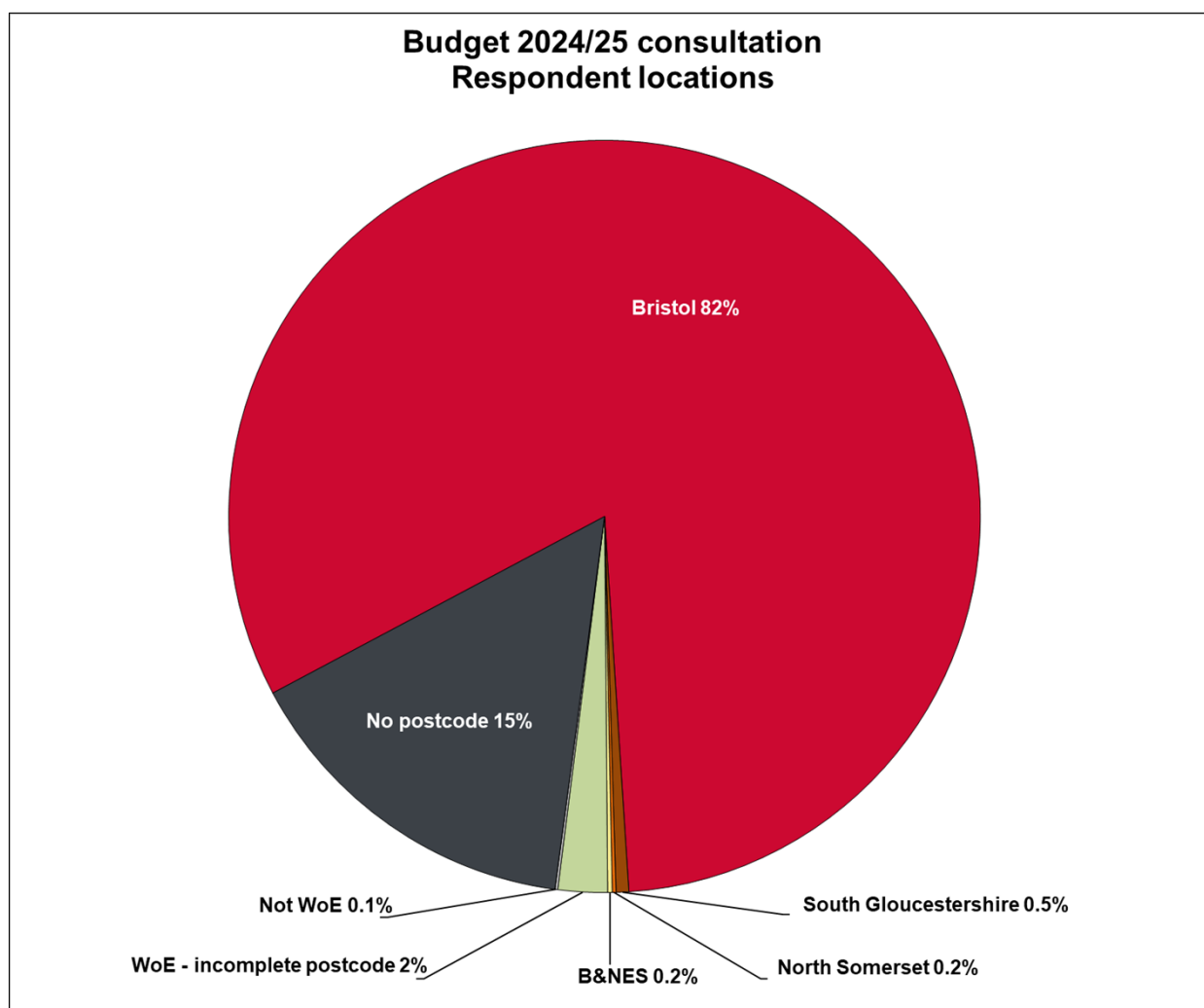
The response rate and respondent details in sections 3.2 to 3.4 below are for respondents to the survey. Details of the email respondents are summarised in section 3.5.

#### 3.2 Geographic distribution of survey responses

2,082 responses (82%) were received from postcodes within the Bristol City Council area, 14 (0.5%) responses were from South Gloucestershire, five (0.2%) were from Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES), and four (0.2%) were from North Somerset. A further 54 (2%) were from unspecified locations within the four West of England authorities<sup>17</sup> (Figure 1).

385 (15%) did not provide a postcode.

**Figure 1: Geographic distribution of responses**

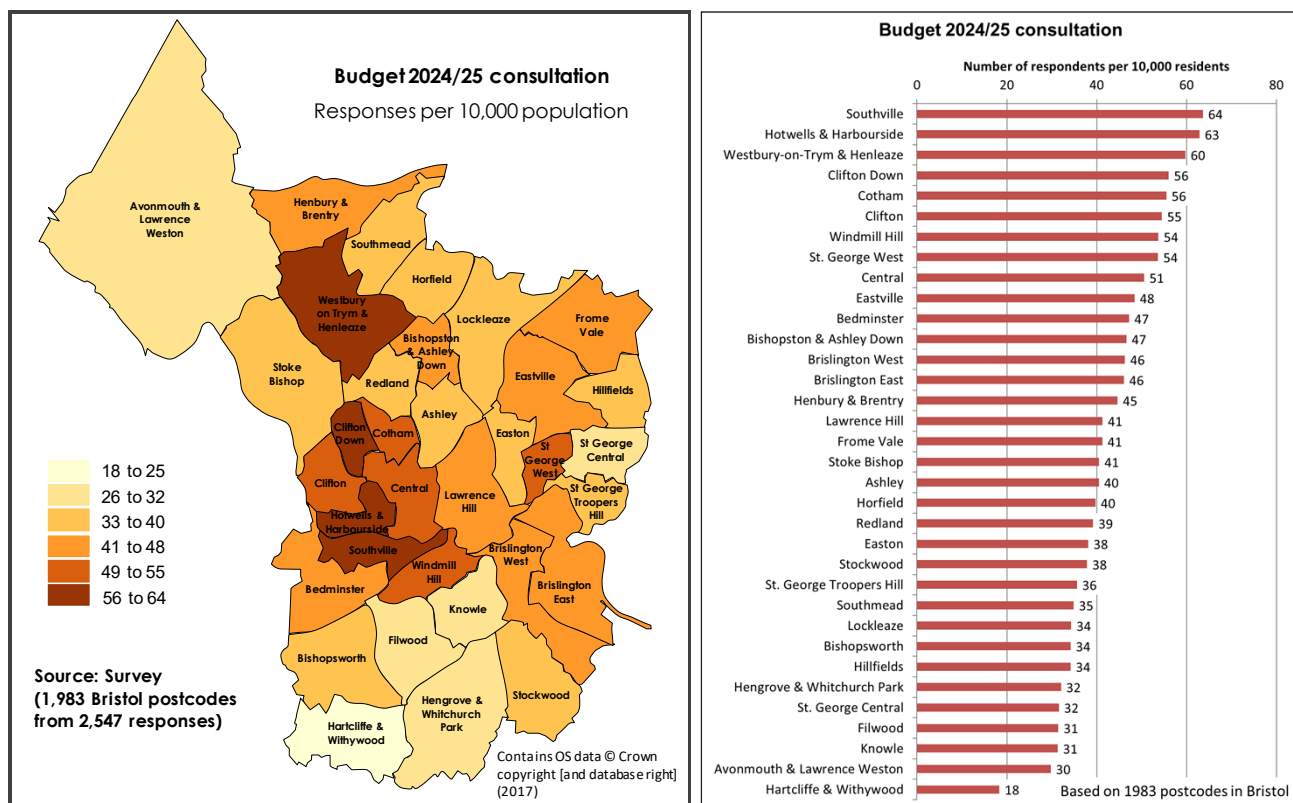


<sup>17</sup> Incomplete postcodes identified the home location as within the WOE authorities area (Bristol, B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire), but not which authority.



Of the 2,082 responses from within the Bristol City Council area, 1,983 provided full or partial postcodes from which the ward of origin could be identified<sup>18</sup> (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Geographic distribution of responses in Bristol**



### 3.3 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 city<sup>19</sup> 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). Figure 3 compares the percentage of Bristol respondents<sup>20</sup> living in each of the deprivation deciles (red bars) to the percentage of all Bristol citizens who live in each decile (grey bars).

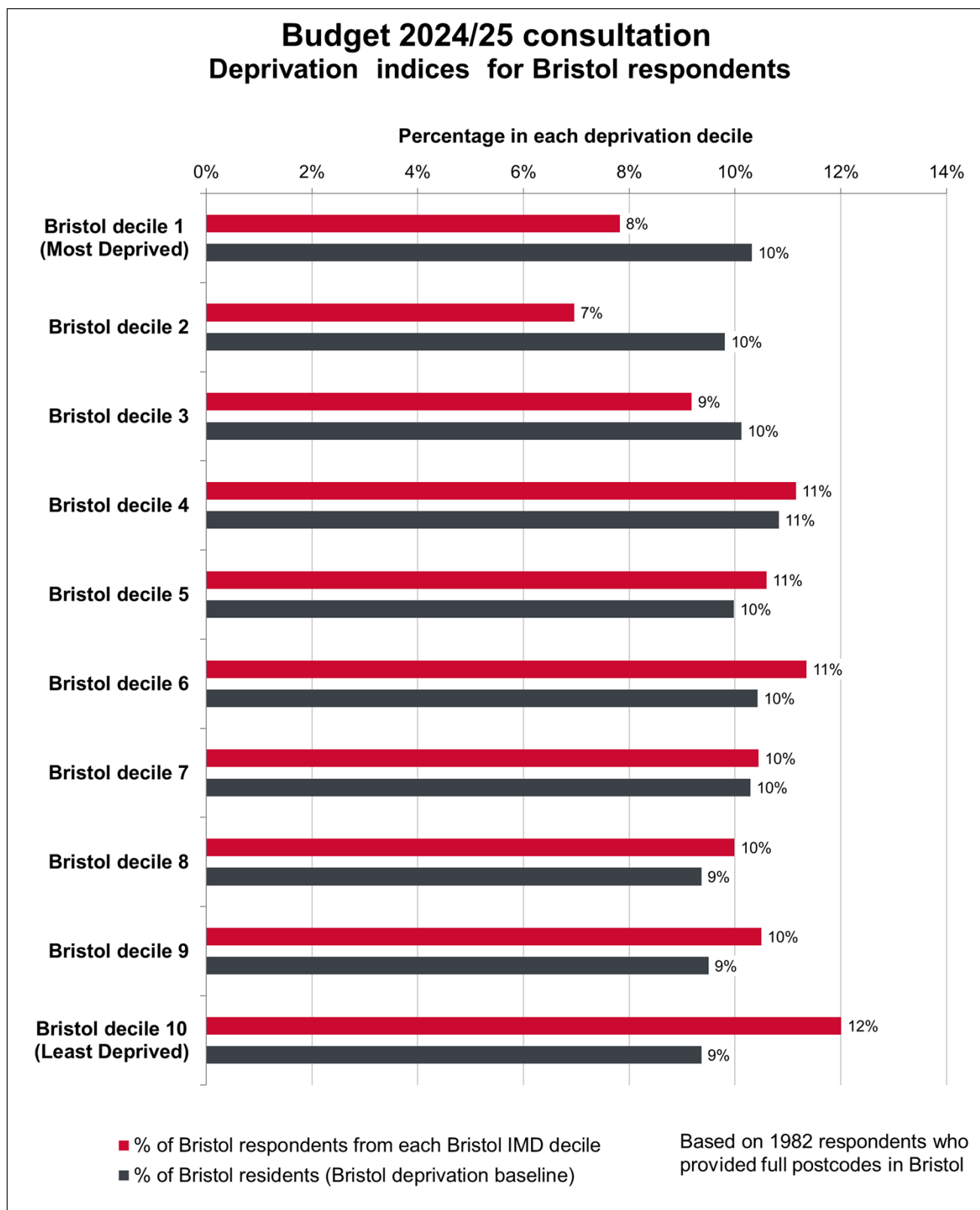
<sup>18</sup> The other 99 responses included incomplete postcodes which are within Bristol but do not include enough information to identify a specific ward.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> Based on 1,982 respondents who provided full postcodes in the Bristol administrative area from which deprivation decile can be identified.

Figure 3 shows there was under-representation of responses from the most deprived 30% of the city (deciles 1, 2 and 3). Response rates from the least deprived 20% of the city (deciles 9 and 10) and also from decile 6 were over-represented. Responses from deciles 4, 5, 7 and 8 broadly match the proportion of Bristol citizens living in these deciles.

**Figure 3: Comparison of response rate from areas of high and low deprivation**



Percentages in Figure 3 are shown to the nearest whole number. The length of each bar reflects unrounded percentages; hence bars shown with the same percentage (e.g. decile 4) may be slightly different in length.

### 3.4 Characteristics of survey respondents

#### 3.4.1 Overview

2,462 (97%) people answered one or more of the equalities monitoring questions.

Respondent 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, and people aged 85 and older
- People of Asian or Asian British backgrounds; Black, Black British, Caribbean or African backgrounds; Mixed or multiple ethnic groups; and people of other ethnic background
- Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs
- Females
- Heterosexual citizens

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

- People aged 25 to 74 years
- Disabled people
- People of Other White Background
- People with no religion, Buddhists, Jews, and people with 'Other religion'
- Males
- Bi, gay/lesbian, and people who use another term to describe their sexual orientation

Chapter 6 describes the effects that respondents said the proposals would have on them because of their protected characteristics.

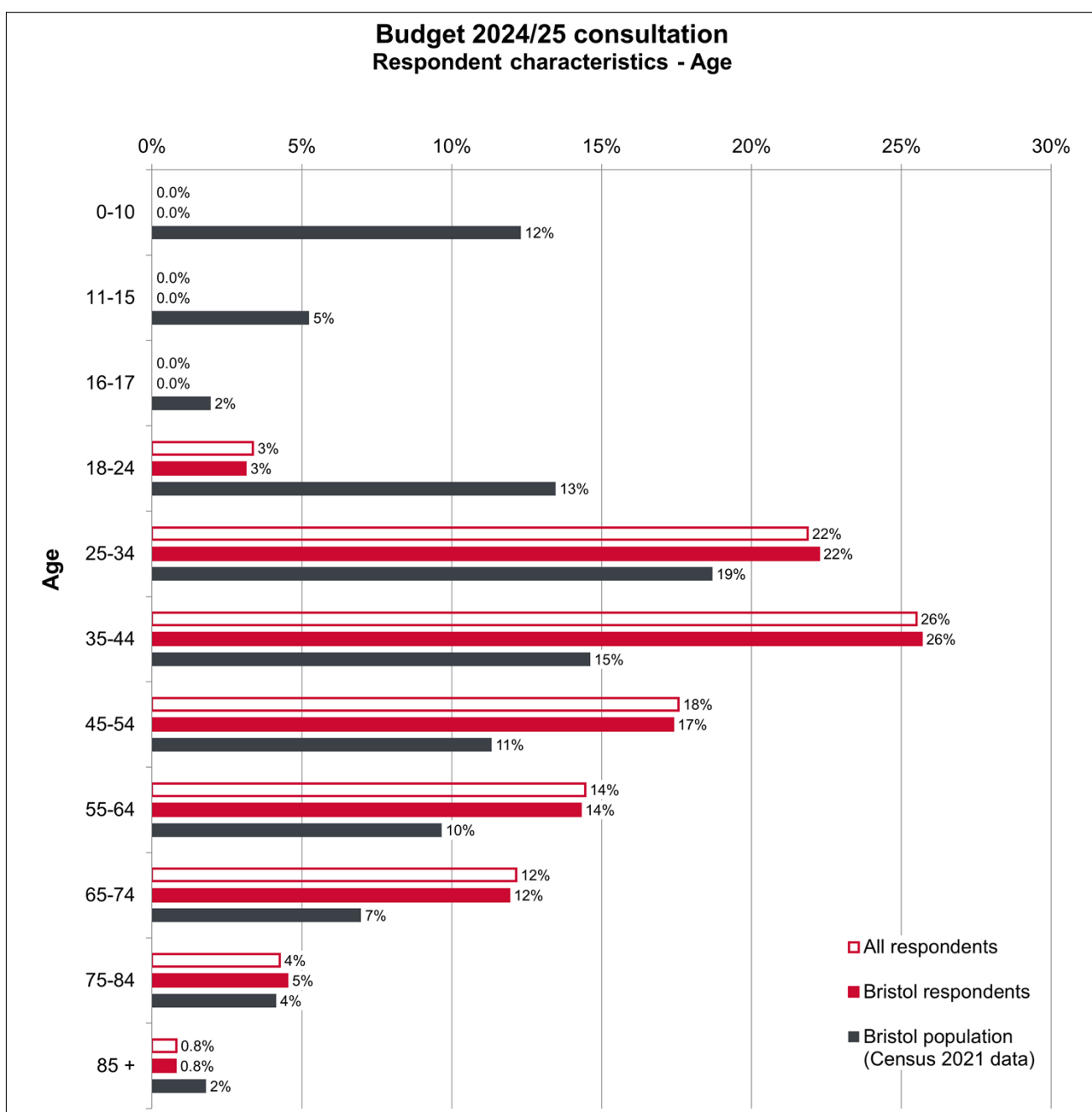
### 3.4.2 Age

The highest number of responses were from respondents aged 35-44 years (26%), followed by 25-34 (22%).

All age groups between 25 and 74 responded in higher proportions than these ages in the population. Response rates from people aged 75-84 years closely match the proportion of these age groups in Bristol's population. Survey responses from children (under 18), young people aged 18-24 and people aged 85 and older were under-represented. These percentages exclude the 4% of respondents (3% of Bristol respondents) who answered 'prefer not to say'.

In each age category, the proportions of 'all respondents' and 'Bristol respondents' were very similar.

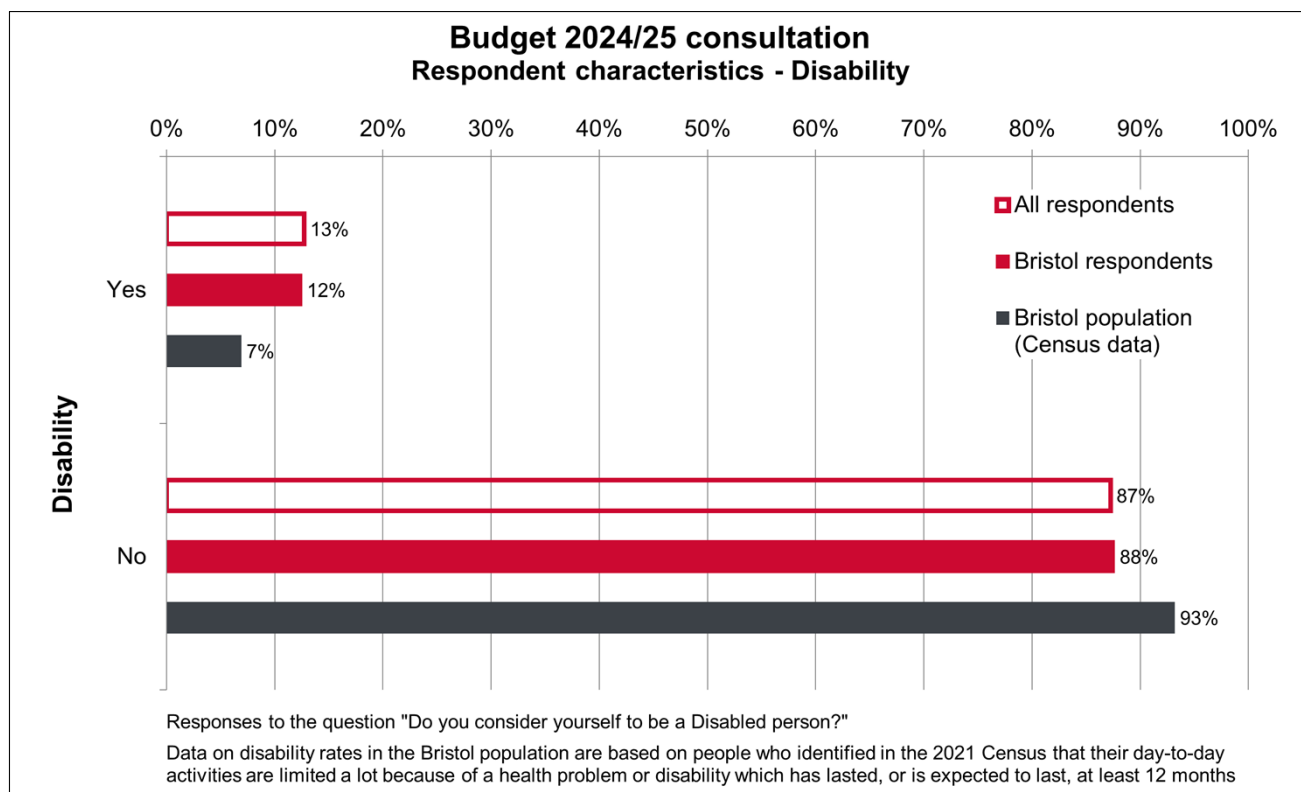
**Figure 4: Age of respondents**



### 3.4.3 Disability

The proportion of disabled respondents (13% of all respondents; 12% of Bristol respondents) is greater than the proportion of disabled people living in Bristol. These percentages exclude the 9% of respondents (7% of Bristol respondents) who answered ‘prefer not to say’)

**Figure 5: Disability**



### 3.4.4 Ethnicity

The response rate from Other White Background respondents (15%) is higher than the proportion of these citizens in the Bristol population.

The proportion of White British (73% of all respondents; 74% of Bristol respondents) and Gypsy, Roma or Traveller (0.2%) is similar to the proportion of these citizens in the Bristol population.

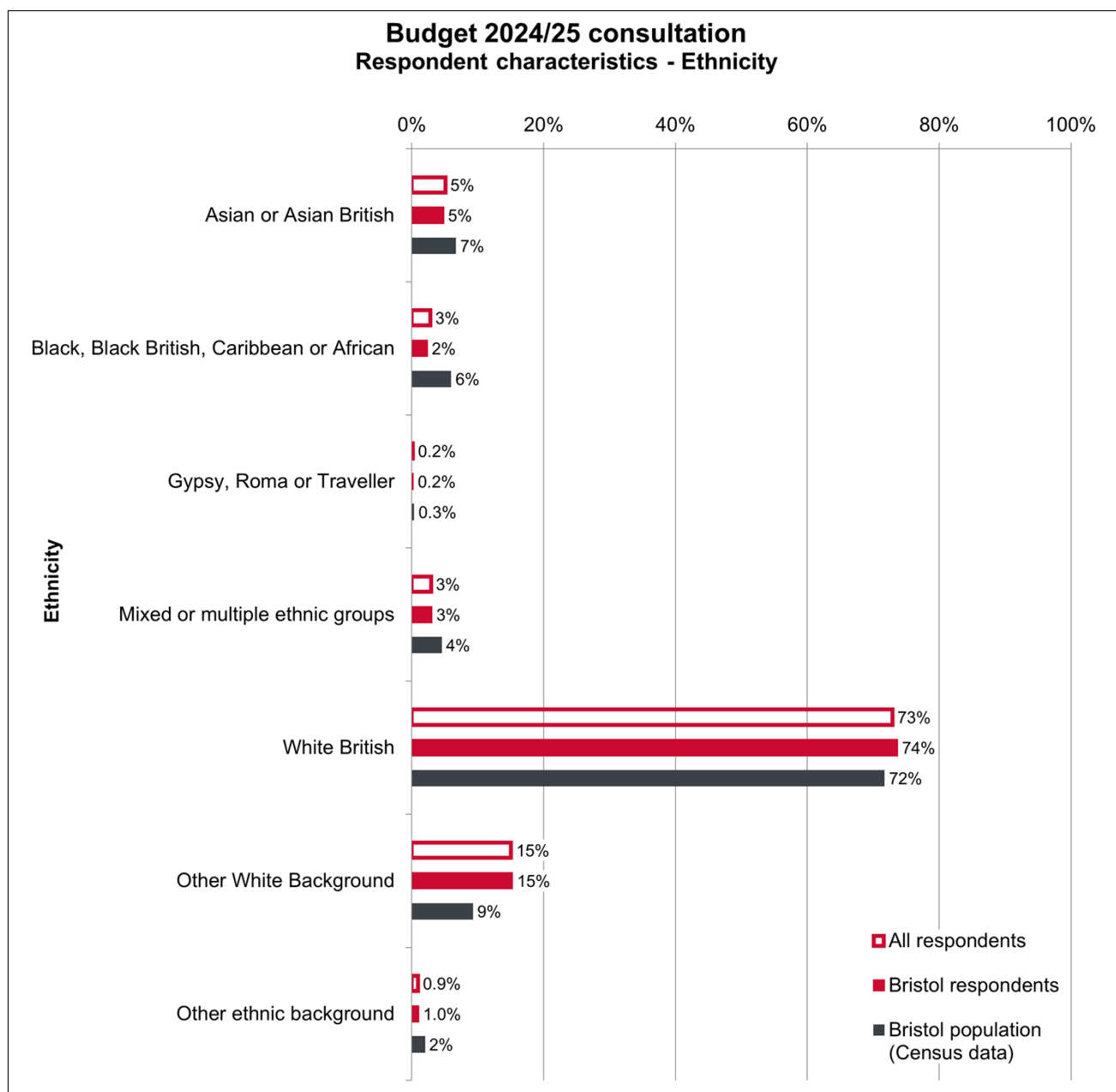
The following ethnic groups were under-represented in the response rates compared to the proportion of people in each of these ethnic groups living in Bristol:

- Asian or Asian British (5% of all respondents; 5% of Bristol respondents)
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African (3% of all respondents; 2% of Bristol respondents)
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (3% of all respondents; 3% of Bristol respondents)
- Other ethnic background (0.9% of all respondents; 1% of Bristol respondents)

These percentages exclude the 12% of respondents (10% of Bristol respondents) who answered ‘prefer not to say’. Proportions of each ethnicity for all respondents are similar to

respondents who provided a Bristol postcode, with the exception of Black, Black British, Caribbean or African respondents.

**Figure 6: Ethnicity of respondents**



### 3.4.5 Religion/Faith

People with no religion (63% of all respondents; 64% of Bristol respondents) responded in higher proportion than people of no religion in Bristol's population (55%).

Buddhists (0.7% of all respondents; 0.8% of Bristol respondents), Jews (0.4%) and people with 'Other religion' (1%) also responded in slightly greater numbers than the proportions of these faiths in Bristol.

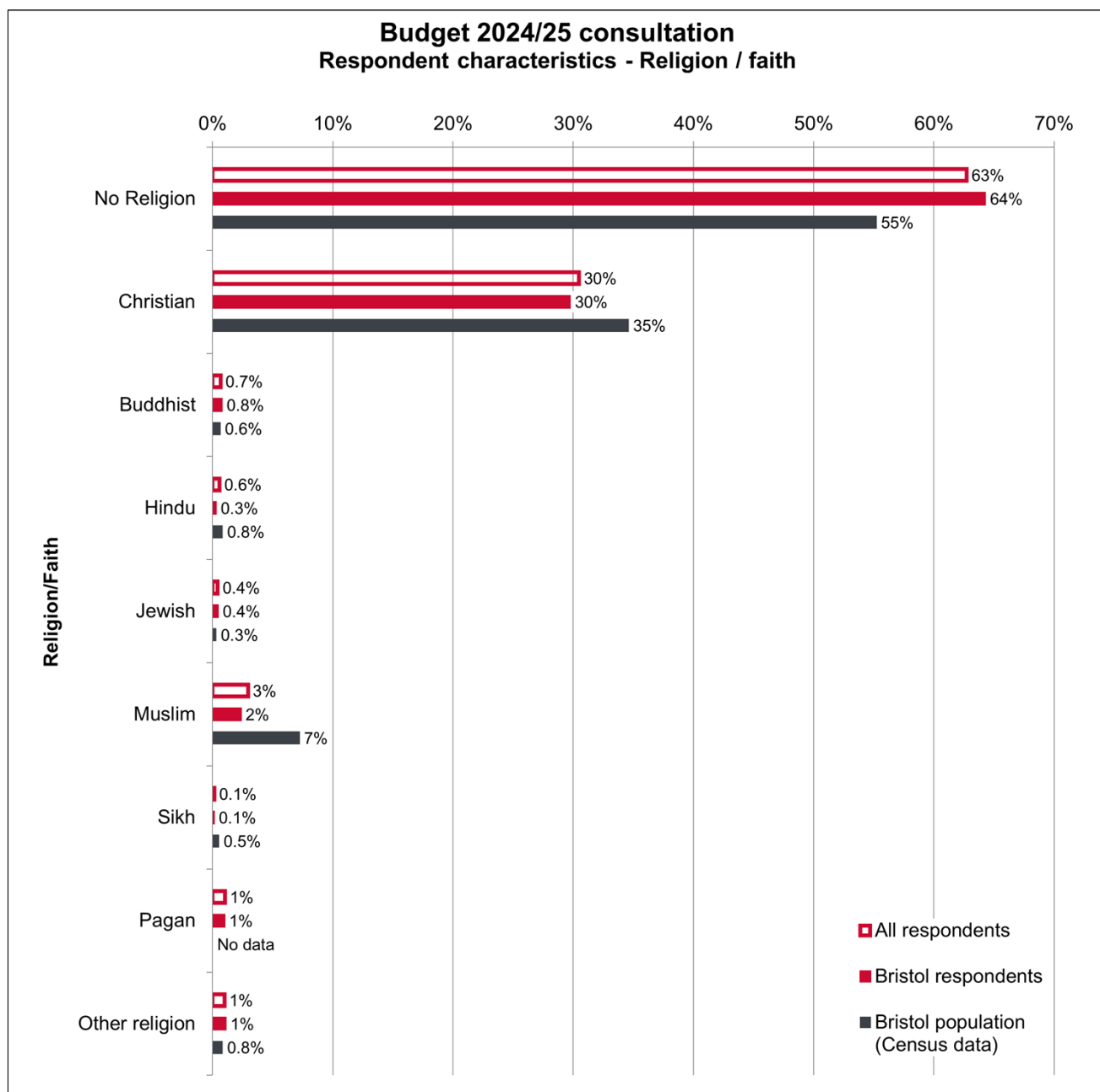
Christians (30%), Muslims (3% of all respondents; 2% of Bristol respondents), Hindus (0.6% of all respondents; 0.3% of Bristol respondents) and Sikhs (0.1%) were under-represented compared to the proportions of these faiths living in Bristol.

1% of respondents are Pagan. There are no data from the Census 2021 for the proportion of Pagans living in Bristol.

These percentages exclude the 14% of respondents (12% of Bristol respondents) who answered 'prefer not to say'.

The proportion of each religion/faith for all respondents closely matches Bristol respondents, with the exception of Hindu and Muslim respondents.

**Figure 7: Religion/faith of respondents**



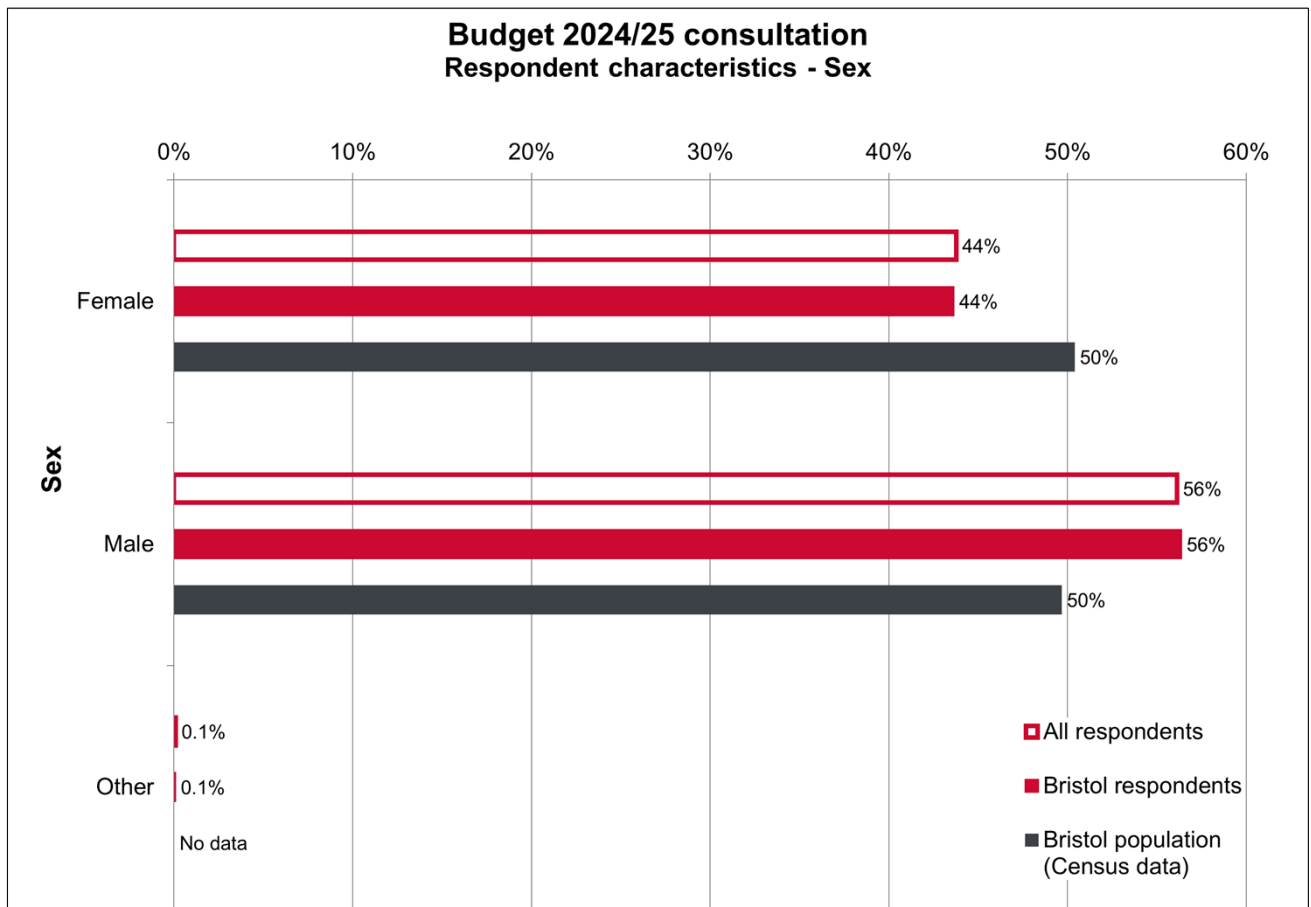
### 3.4.6 Sex

44% of all survey responses were from women and 56% were from men. This compares to 50% of each sex in the Bristol population. 0.1% of responses were from people who identified as ‘other sex’.

The proportion of male and female for all respondents closely matches Bristol respondents.

These percentages exclude the 12% of respondents (10% of Bristol respondents) who answered ‘prefer not to say’.

**Figure 8: Sex of respondents**



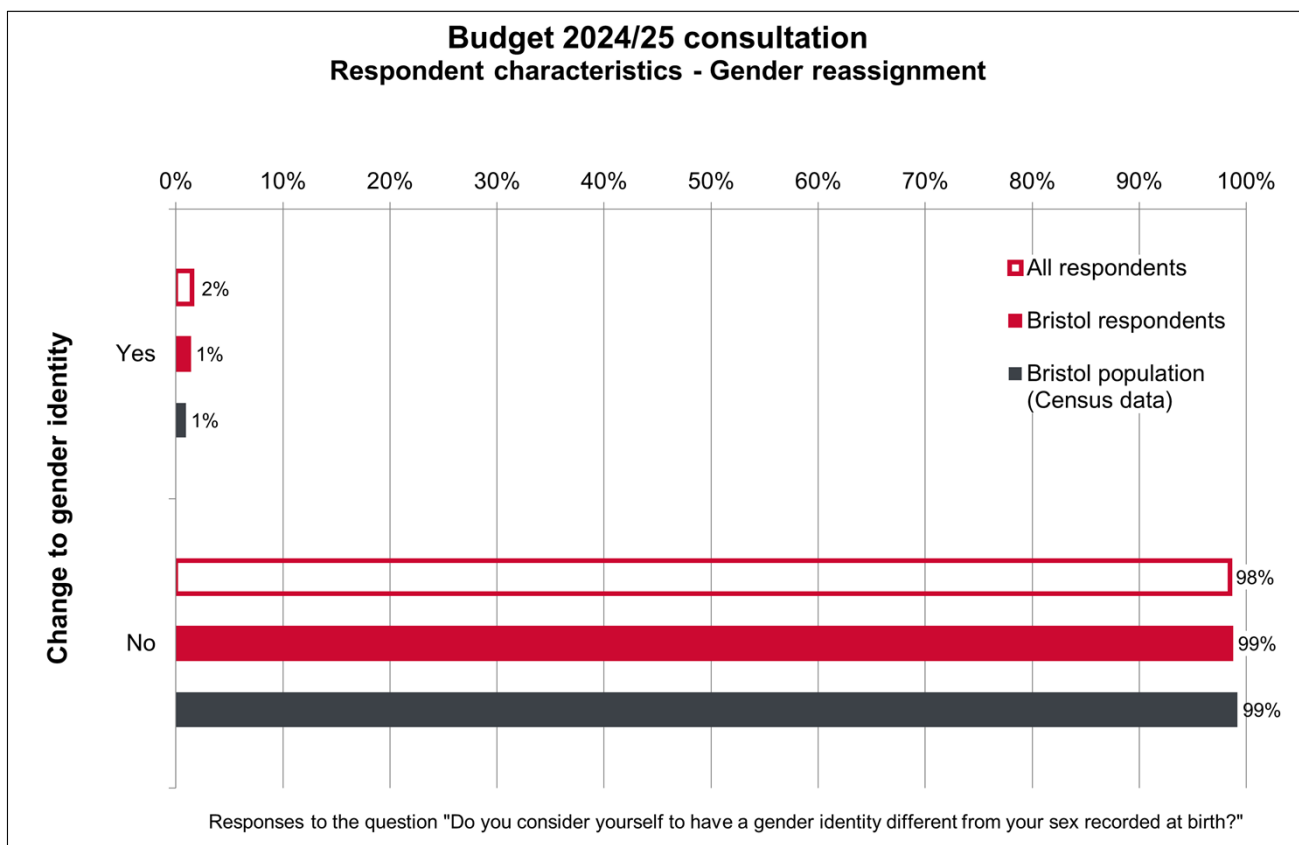


### 3.4.7 Gender reassignment

2% of respondents (1% of Bristol respondents) stated they have a gender identity different to their sex recorded at birth. This is similar to the 1% of the Bristol population who stated in the 2021 Census that their gender identity is different to their sex recorded at birth.

These percentages exclude the 10% of respondents (9% of Bristol respondents) who answered 'prefer not to say'.

**Figure 9: Gender reassignment**



### 3.4.8 Sexual orientation

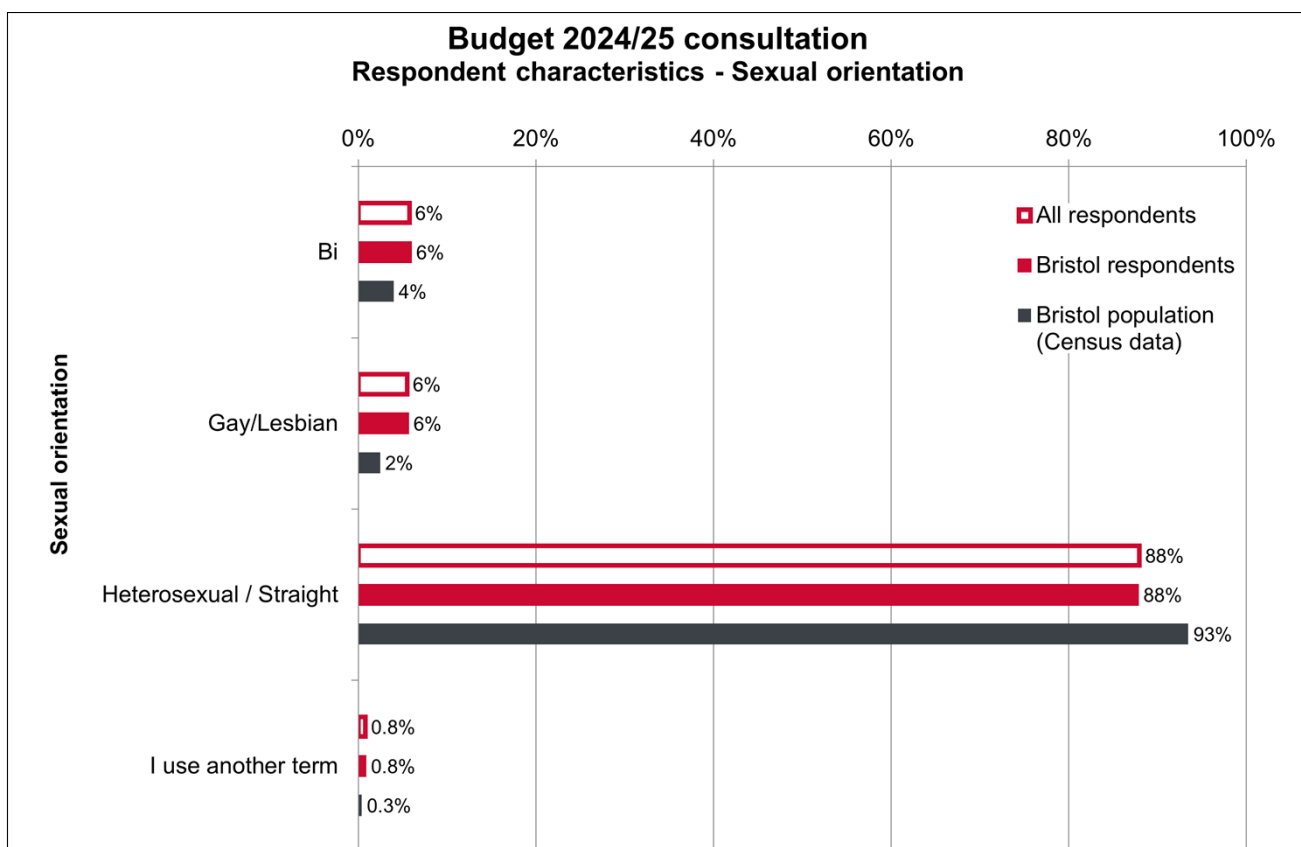
People who are bi (6%), gay/lesbian (6%), or who use another term for their sexual orientation (0.8%) responded in higher numbers than the proportions of these groups in Bristol's population. In the 2021 Census, the proportions of each group in Bristol was 4% bi, 2% gay/lesbian, and 0.3% use another term.

Heterosexual respondents (88%), were under-represented compared to the proportions of heterosexual people living in Bristol (93%).

The proportions of each group for all respondents match the proportions for Bristol respondents.

These percentages exclude the 21% of respondents (19% of Bristol respondents) who answered 'prefer not to say'.

**Figure 10: Sexual orientation**

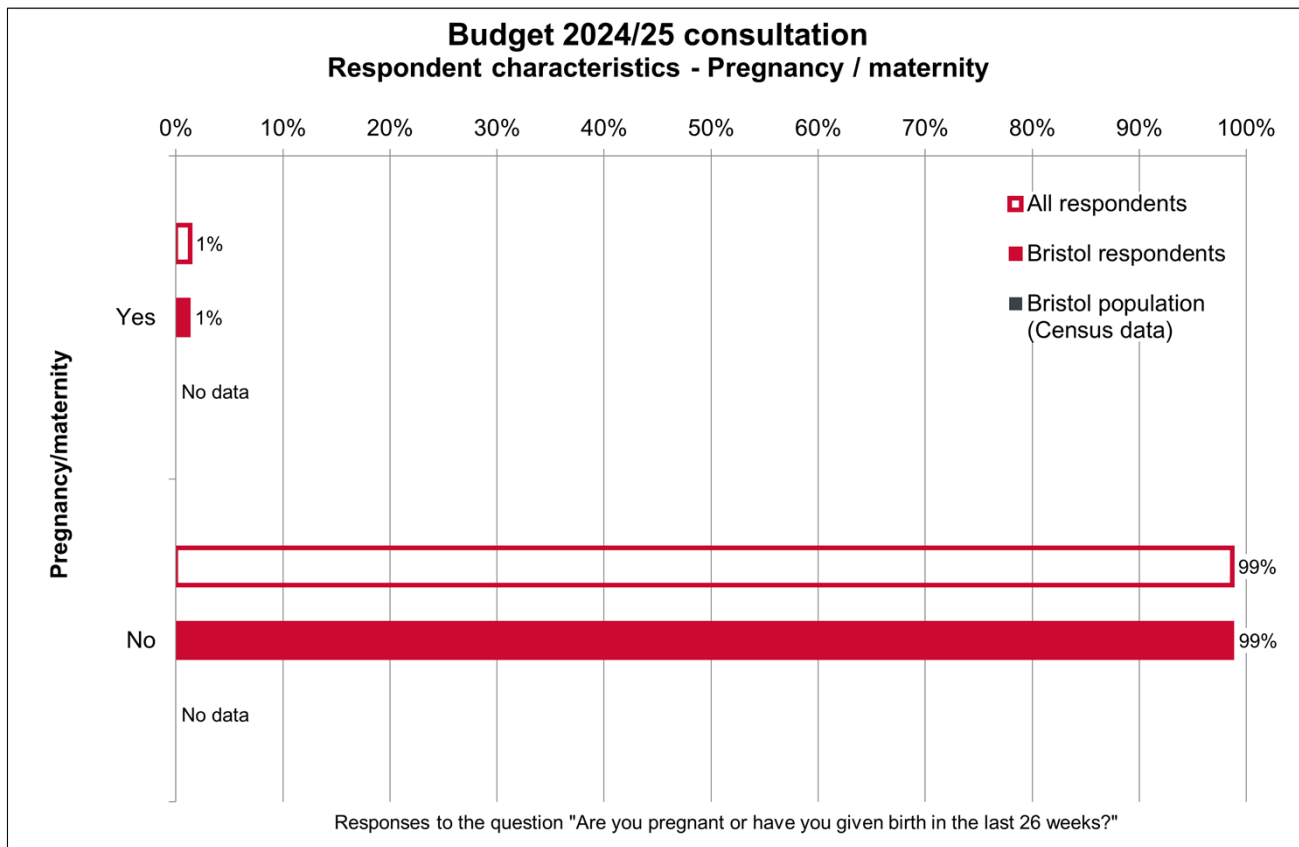


### 3.4.9 Pregnancy and maternity, carer status and and refugee/asylum status

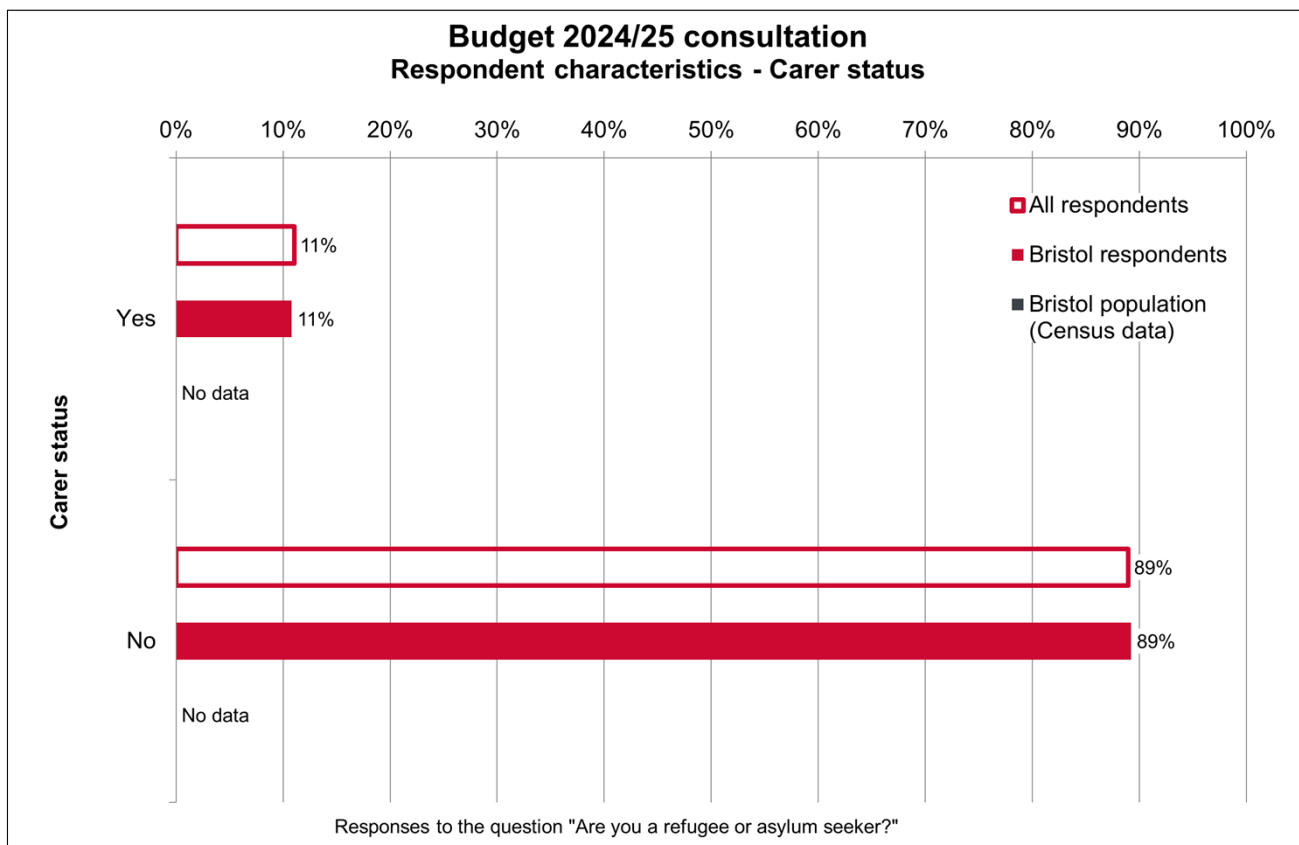
The survey also asked respondents about their pregnancy and recent maternity status, if they are a carer, and if they are a refugee or asylum seeker.

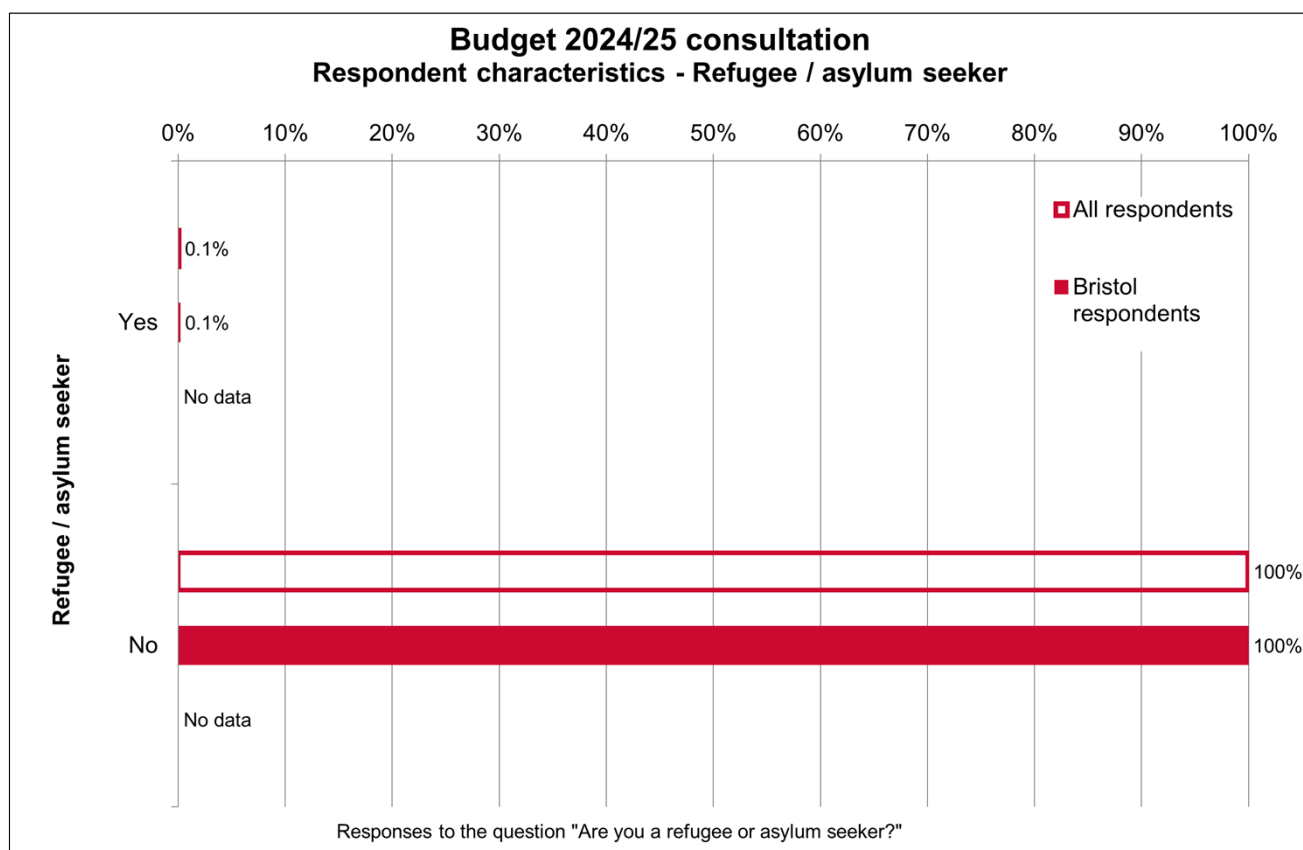
Census data are not available for the proportion of people with these characteristics living in Bristol. Figures 11, 12, and 13 show the proportions of all respondents and Bristol respondents for each of these characteristics. The proportion of each characteristic for all respondents closely matches the proportion for Bristol respondents.

**Figure 11: Pregnancy and recent maternity**



**Figure 12: Carer status**



**Figure 13: Refugee or asylum seeker status**

### 3.4.10 Other respondent characteristics

2,479 (97%) respondents provided other details of their personal situation, selecting from a list of 12 options. Because respondents could select more than one option, the percentages below exceed 100%.

- 2,430 (98% of the 2,479 respondents who answered the question) are Bristol residents
- 77 (3%) are Bristol City Council employees
- 77 (3%) represent and/or own a local business
- 33 (1%) work in Bristol but live elsewhere
- 14 (1%) responded on behalf of a Voluntary/Community/Social Enterprise/interest group
- 6 (0.2%) responded on behalf of a health or social care provider
- 4 (0.2%) responded on behalf of a school or education provider
- 3 (0.1%) are ward councillors
- 1 (less than 0.1%) responded on behalf of a public transport provider
- 50 (2%) selected 'other'.

Of the 50 respondents who selected 'other':

- 15 are retired
- 5 gave details of their profession
- 4 described their employment status
- 4 reiterated that they are Bristol residents and shared their views on aspects of the council's work
- 3 are carers
- 2 gave details of their voluntary roles.
- 2 are landlords
- 2 stated they are tax-payers
- 2 others pay Council Tax in Bristol but live elsewhere
- 1 is a South Gloucestershire resident and Council Tax-payer
- 1 is a student in Bristol
- 1 is a foster carer
- 1 stated they are a Disabled citizen
- 1 stated they had needed support from the council in the past and were now self-reliant.
- 6 selected 'other' but gave no details.

### **3.5 Respondents who provided email feedback**

12 responses to the consultation were received via email. All 12 emails were received from citizens. These are in addition to the 2,547 survey responses.

The email text has been analysed with the free text responses to question 5 of the survey and is reported with the survey free text feedback in chapter 5.

## 4 Survey results: level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept

### 4.1 Level of core Council Tax and Social Care Precept – all respondents

#### 4.1.1 Core Council Tax

Respondents were asked to state which level of Council Tax they would prefer in 2024/25, choosing from the following four options.

- **Option CT0: No increase to Council Tax.** This option would increase our funding gap by £8.2 million and require other savings each year to close the forecast budget gap<sup>21</sup>.
- **Option CT1: An increase of 1% to Council Tax.** This option would raise £5.5 million less than our forecast for 2024/25, so we would have to find £5.5 million more in other savings each year to close the forecast budget gap. This option would contribute £2.7 million to support the delivery of services, and would add around 30 pence per week to the Council Tax bill for Band B properties.
- **Option CT2: An increase of 2% to Council Tax.** This option would raise £2.7 million less than our forecast for 2024/25, so we would have to find £2.7 million more in other savings each year to close the forecast budget gap. This option would contribute £5.5 million to support the delivery of services, and would add around 60 pence per week to the Council Tax bill for Band B properties.
- **Option CT3: An increase of 3% to Council Tax<sup>22</sup>.** This option would raise £8.2 million to support the delivery of services. This is the amount we have assumed in our forecast for 2024/25. This option would add around 90 pence per week to the Council Tax bill for Band B properties.

2,485 respondents (98% of the 2,547 people who responded to the consultation survey), stated their preference for the level of core Council Tax. A majority (1,641 respondents; 66%) favour an increase in core Council Tax to support general services in 2024/25 (Figure 14).

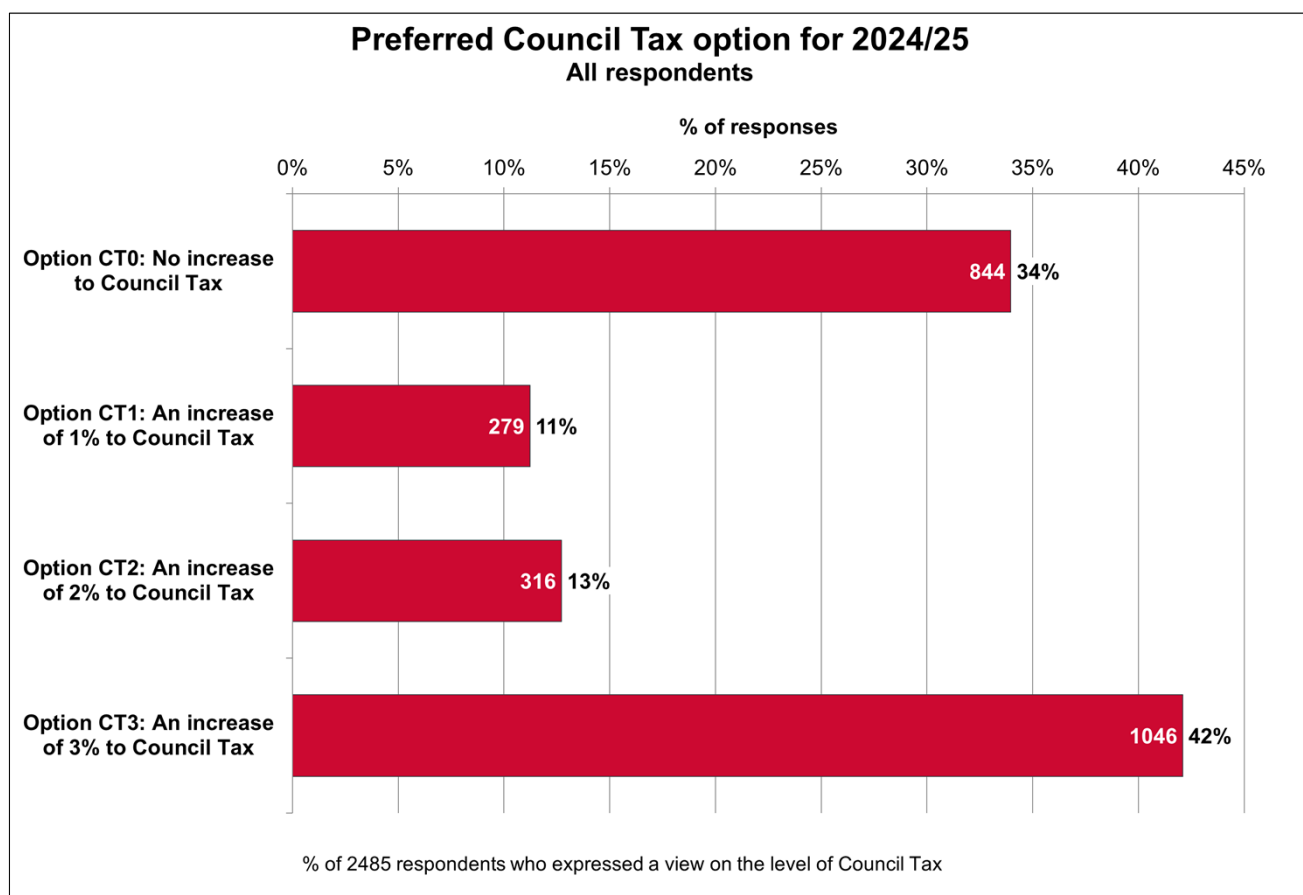
- 1,046 (42%) would prefer a 3% increase in core Council Tax. This is the option with the highest support
- 316 (13%) favour a 2% increase
- 279 (11%) favour a 1% increase
- 844 (34%) respondents would prefer 'no increase to Council Tax' in 2024/25. This is the option with the second highest support
- 62 respondents did not give a view on Council Tax.

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<sup>21</sup> In forecasting the budget gap, our planning assumed an increase in Council Tax of 3% and a Social Care Precept of 2% in 2024/25. No decision has been taken on the level of Council Tax increase or Social Care Precept; this will be decided by Full Council in February 2024. Every 1% increase in the level of Council Tax would also raise around £2.7 million towards meeting the council's rising costs.

<sup>22</sup> An increase up to 3% in core Council Tax is the maximum permitted without requiring a local referendum.

**Figure 14: Preferred level of core Council Tax increase in 2024/25**



#### 4.1.2 Social Care Precept

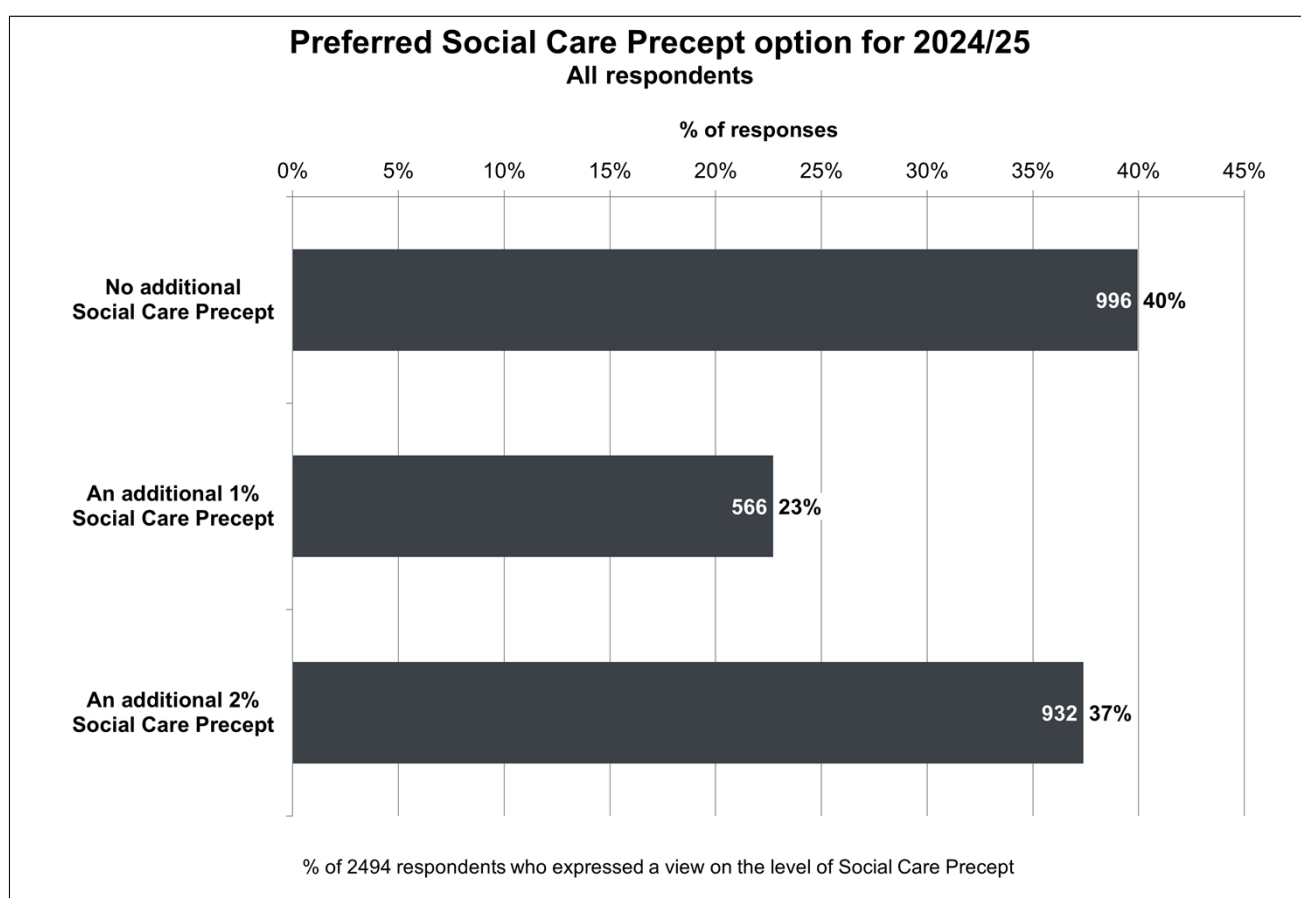
Respondents were also asked to state which level of Social Care Precept they would prefer in 2024/25, choosing from three options:

- **No additional Social Care Precept.** This option would raise no extra income to support the delivery of adult social care in 2024/25. This is £5.5 million less than our forecast for 2024/25, so we would need to find £5.5 million from other sources to fund adult social care.
- **An additional 1% Social Care Precept.** This would be an extra 1% increase to Council Tax in addition to the increase in core Council Tax. This option would raise £2.7 million less than our forecast for 2024/25, so we would need to find £2.7 million from other sources to fund adult social care. This option would contribute £2.7 million to support the delivery of adult social care and would add around 30 pence per week to the Council Tax bill for Band B properties.
- **An additional 2% Social Care Precept.** This would be an extra 2% increase to Council Tax in addition to the increase in core Council Tax. This option would raise £5.5 million to support the delivery of adult social care. This is the amount we have assumed in our forecast for 2024/25. This option would add around 60 pence per week to the Council Tax bill for Band B property.

2,494 respondents (98% of the 2,547 people who responded to the consultation survey), stated their preference for the level of Social Care Precept. A majority (1,498 respondents; 60%), favour some Social Care Precept (on top of core Council Tax) to support the delivery of social care in 2024/25 (Figure 15).

- 932 (37%) would prefer a 2% Social Care Precept. This is the option with the second highest support
- 566 (23%) favour a 1% Social Care Precept
- 966 (40%) respondents would prefer no Social Care Precept in 2024/25. This is the option with the highest support
- 53 respondents did not give a view on Social Care Precept.

**Figure 15: Preferred level of Social Care Precept in 2024/25**



### 4.1.3 Combinations of core Council Tax and Social Care Precept

Figure 16 shows the percentage of the 2,547 respondents who prefer each combination of Council Tax increase (0%, 1%, 2% or 3%) and Social Care Precept (0%, 1% or 2%) proposed in the consultation.

In Figure 16, each of the coloured rectangles represents a combination of one Council Tax option (0%, 1%, 2% or 3%) and one Social Care Precept option (0%, 1% or 2%). For example, the top left green rectangle is the combination of no increase to Council Tax and no Social Care Precept. 28% of respondents favour this option. The bottom right green rectangle is a 3% increase to Council Tax and a 2% Social Care precept.



Options with lower support appear red; those with higher support are green.

The rightmost (white) column shows the percentages of respondents who gave their views on each Council Tax option but did not provide a view on Social Care Precept. The bottom row shows the percentages of respondents who gave their views on each Social Care Precept option but did not provide a view on Council Tax.

The numbers in the coloured circles show the total percentage increase in Council Tax plus Social Care Precept for each combination. For example, 2 indicates a 2% total increase, which could comprise:

- No Council Tax increase plus 2% Social Care Precept; or
- 1% Council Tax increase plus 1% Social Care Precept; or
- 2% Council Tax increase with no Social Care Precept.

**Figure 16: Preferred combinations for Council Tax and Social Care Precept**

Percentage of respondents who prefer each combination of Council Tax and Social Care Precept

	No additional Social Care Precept	An additional 1% Social Care Precept	An additional 2% Social Care Precept	No view on Social Care Precept
No increase to Council Tax	28% <span style="color: red;">0</span>	3% <span style="color: red;">1</span>	2% <span style="color: red;">2</span>	0.3%
1% increase to Council Tax	3% <span style="color: red;">1</span>	7% <span style="color: red;">2</span>	1% <span style="color: red;">3</span>	0.1%
2% increase to Council Tax	3% <span style="color: red;">2</span>	6% <span style="color: red;">3</span>	3% <span style="color: red;">4</span>	0.1%
3% increase to Council Tax	5% <span style="color: red;">3</span>	6% <span style="color: red;">4</span>	30% <span style="color: red;">5</span>	0.2%
No view on Council Tax	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	1%

**Key**

- 0 No change to Council Tax or Social Care Precept
- 1 1% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 2 2% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 3 3% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 4 4% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 5 5% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept

Figure 16 shows that:

- The option with the highest support (30% of 2,547 respondents) is a 3% increase in core Council Tax and a 2% Social Care Precept. This is the maximum increase permitted under government limits announced on 18 December 2023 in the [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#)
- The second most popular option (28% of 2,547 respondents) is no increase in core Council Tax and no Social Care Precept.
- The third most popular option is 1% increase in core Council Tax and 1% Social Care Precept. This has substantially lower support (7% of 2,547 respondents).
- For options where Council Tax and Social Care Precept are not the same, more respondents favour a higher increase in Council Tax than Social Care Precept. For example:
  - 6% favour 2% increase in core Council Tax with 1% Social Care Precept, compared to 1% who prefer a 1% increase in core Council Tax with 2% Social Care Precept
  - 3% favour 2% increase in core Council Tax with no Social Care Precept, compared to 2% who prefer no increase in core Council Tax with 2% Social Care Precept

#### 4.2 Views on core Council Tax in areas with different levels of deprivation

Views on the preferred level of core Council Tax were compared for respondents in areas with different levels of deprivation, to check for any significant differences. The comparison used the postcodes provided by respondents in Bristol to match each response to one of 10 deprivation bands (deciles) as described in section 3.3.

Figure 17 shows the percentage of respondents from each deprivation decile who want a 0%, 1%, 2% or 3% increase in core Council Tax in 2024/25. This is based on the 1,944 Bristol respondents who stated a preferred option for core Council Tax and provided a full postcode<sup>23</sup>. Figure 17 also shows the views of people who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode, and the aggregate views of all respondents.

Figure 17 shows that preference for higher core Council Tax tends to increase as deprivation reduces.

Support for the maximum **3% increase** in Council Tax is highest in the least deprived 30% of Bristol, with 60% of respondents preferring a 3% increase in decile 9, 53% in decile 8 and 52% in decile 10. Support for a 3% increase is lowest in the most deprived 20% of Bristol; 30% in decile 1 and 28% in decile 2 support a 3% increase.

Support for **no increase** in core Council Tax is highest among respondents in the most deprived 20% of Bristol, with 42% of respondents in decile 1 and 43% in decile 2 favouring no increase. Support for no increase in Council Tax reduces to 22% in decile 9, 24% in decile 8 and 25% in decile 10 (the least deprived 30%).

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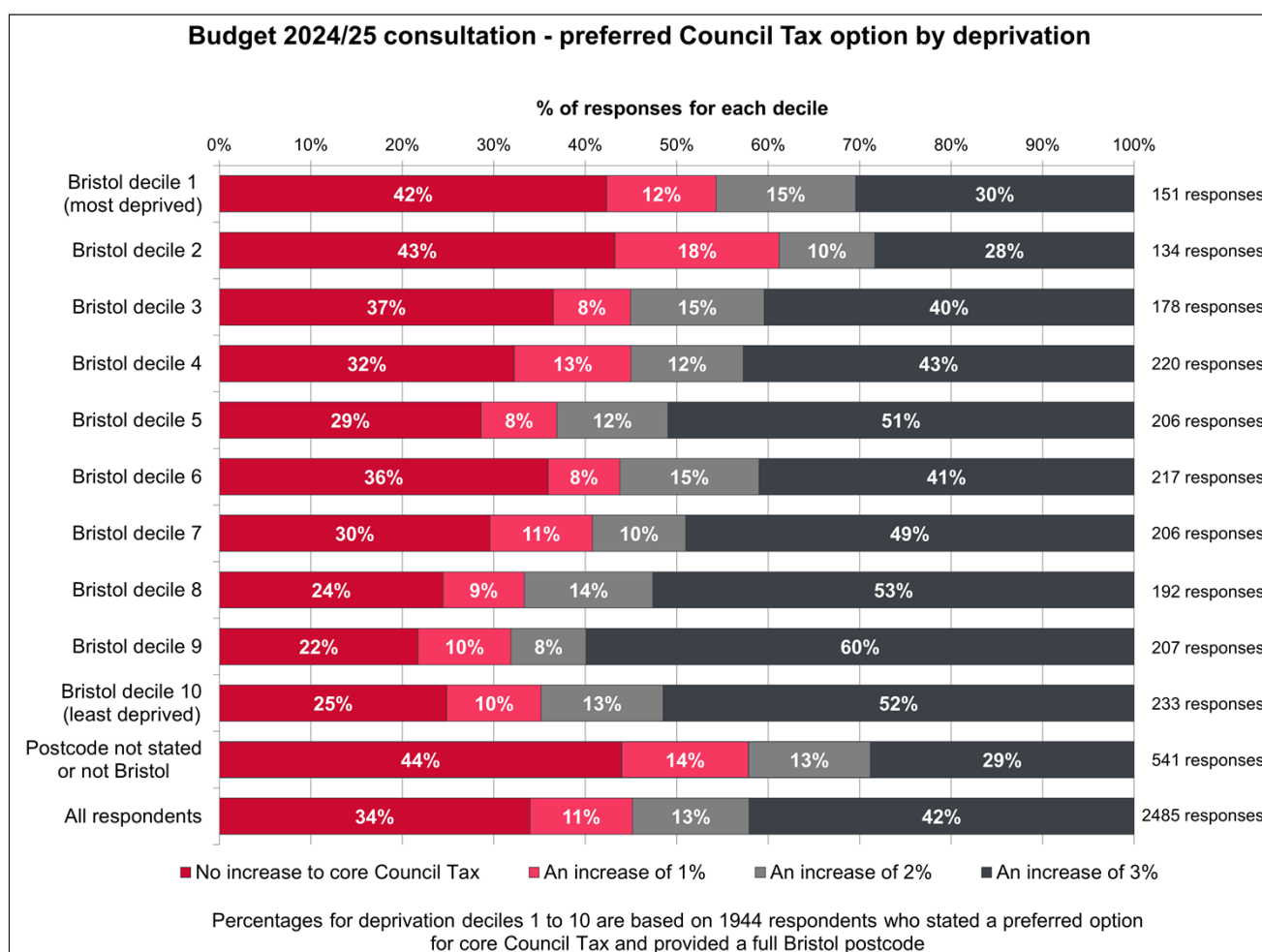
<sup>23</sup> Incomplete postcodes cannot be matched to the deprivation data.

A 3% increase in Council Tax is the most popular option in all deciles except the most deprived deciles 1 and 2. For deciles 1 and 2, no increase is the preferred option (42% of respondents in decile 1; 43% in decile 2) and a 3% increase is the second most popular option (30% of respondents in decile 1; 28% in decile 2).

Support for 1% and 2% increases in Council Tax do not show a clear trend between more deprived and less deprived areas. A 1% increase in Council Tax is the least popular option in six deciles (deciles 1, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10). A 2% increase in Council Tax is the least popular option in the other four deciles (deciles 2, 4, 7 and 9).

The views of respondents who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode are similar to an average of the most deprived deciles 1 and 2. 44% in this group favour no increase and 29% support a 3% increase.

**Figure 17: Preference in each deprivation decile for the core Council Tax options**

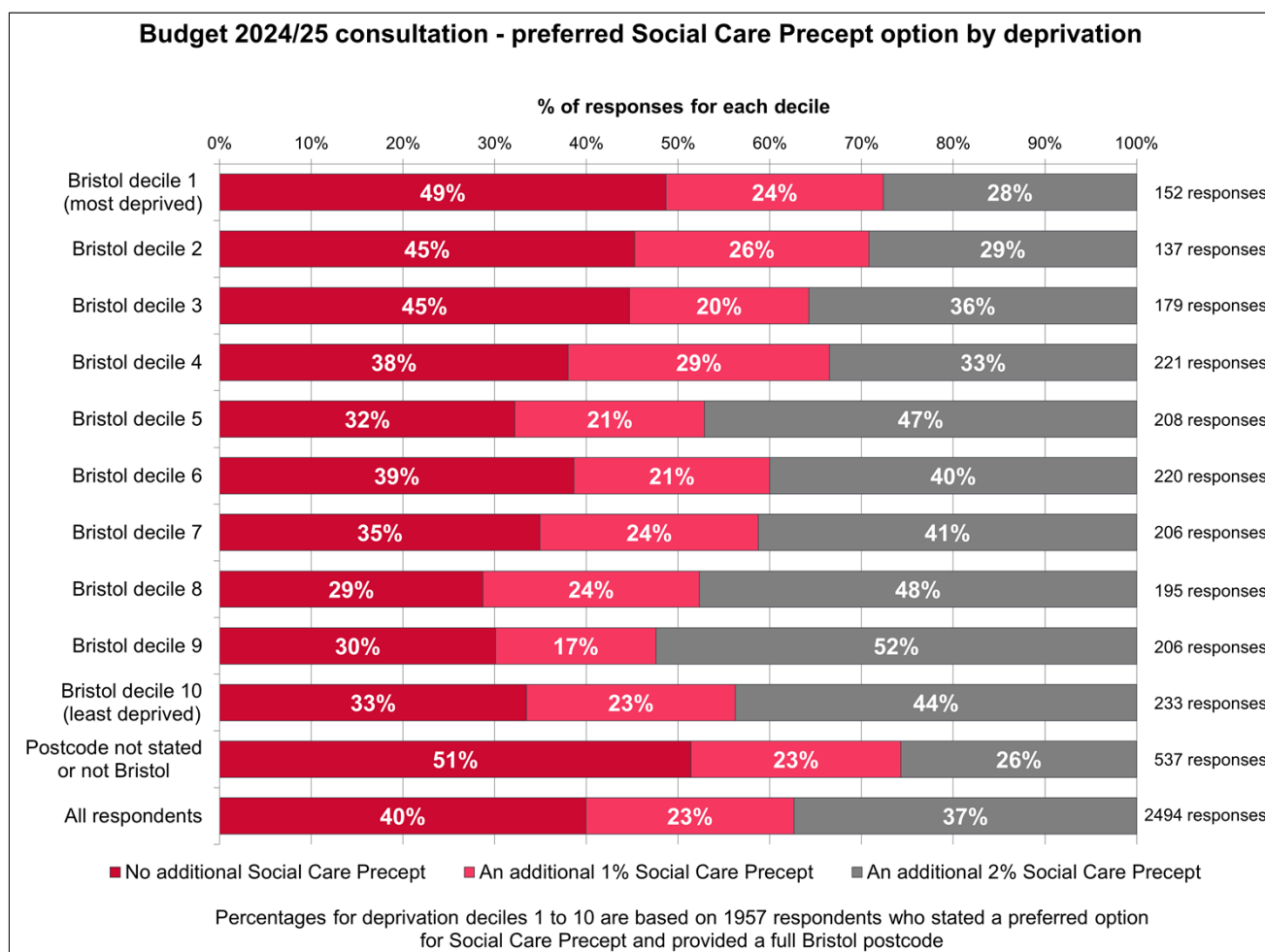


### 4.3 Views on Social Care Precept in areas with different levels of deprivation

Views on the preferred level of Social Care Precept were also compared for respondents in areas with different levels of deprivation, to check for any significant differences in views.

Figure 18 shows the percentage of respondents from each deprivation decile who want a 0%, 1% or 2% Social Care Precept in 2024/25. This is based on the 1,957 Bristol respondents who stated a preferred option for Social Care Precept and provided a full postcode. Figure 18 also shows the views of people who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode, and the aggregate views of all respondents.

**Figure 18: Preference in each deprivation decile for the Social Care Precept options**



As with core Council Tax, support for a Social Care Precept follows an inverse trend with deprivation (Figure 18).

Support for no Social Care Precept decreases from 49% in decile 1 (most deprived) to 29% in decile 8 (with slightly higher figures of 30% in decile 9 and 33% in decile 10). Conversely, support for 2% Social Care Precept increases from 28% in decile 1 to 52% in decile 9 (44% in decile 10).

A 2% Social Care Precept is the most popular option in deciles 5 to 10. In the most deprived deciles 1 to 4, preference for no Social Care Precept exceeds support for a 2% precept.

A 1% Social Care Precept is the least popular option in all deciles.

The views of respondents who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode are similar to the most deprived decile 1. In this group, 51% favour no increase and 26% support a 2% increase.

Comparison of Figures 17 and 18 shows a greater willingness to pay more Council Tax than Social Care Precept. More people support the maximum 3% increase in Council Tax than support the maximum 2% Social Care Precept, for all deprivation deciles except decile 2. This is also the case for respondents who provided no postcode or a non-Bristol postcode.

## 4.4 Views on increasing Council Tax more than 3% and Social Care Precept above 2%

### 4.4.1 Overview

The Budget 2024/25 consultation was launched before the government announced the limits for the level of Council Tax increase or Social Care Precept for 2024/25. To ensure we could take into account the public’s views on any possible scenario the government might announce, respondents were asked if they would be prepared to pay an increase of more than 3% in core Council Tax and/or more than 2% Social Care Precept, if the government announced this is permitted in 2024/25.

The [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2024 to 2025](#) published on 18 December 2023 set out that these larger increases would not be permitted in 2024/25.

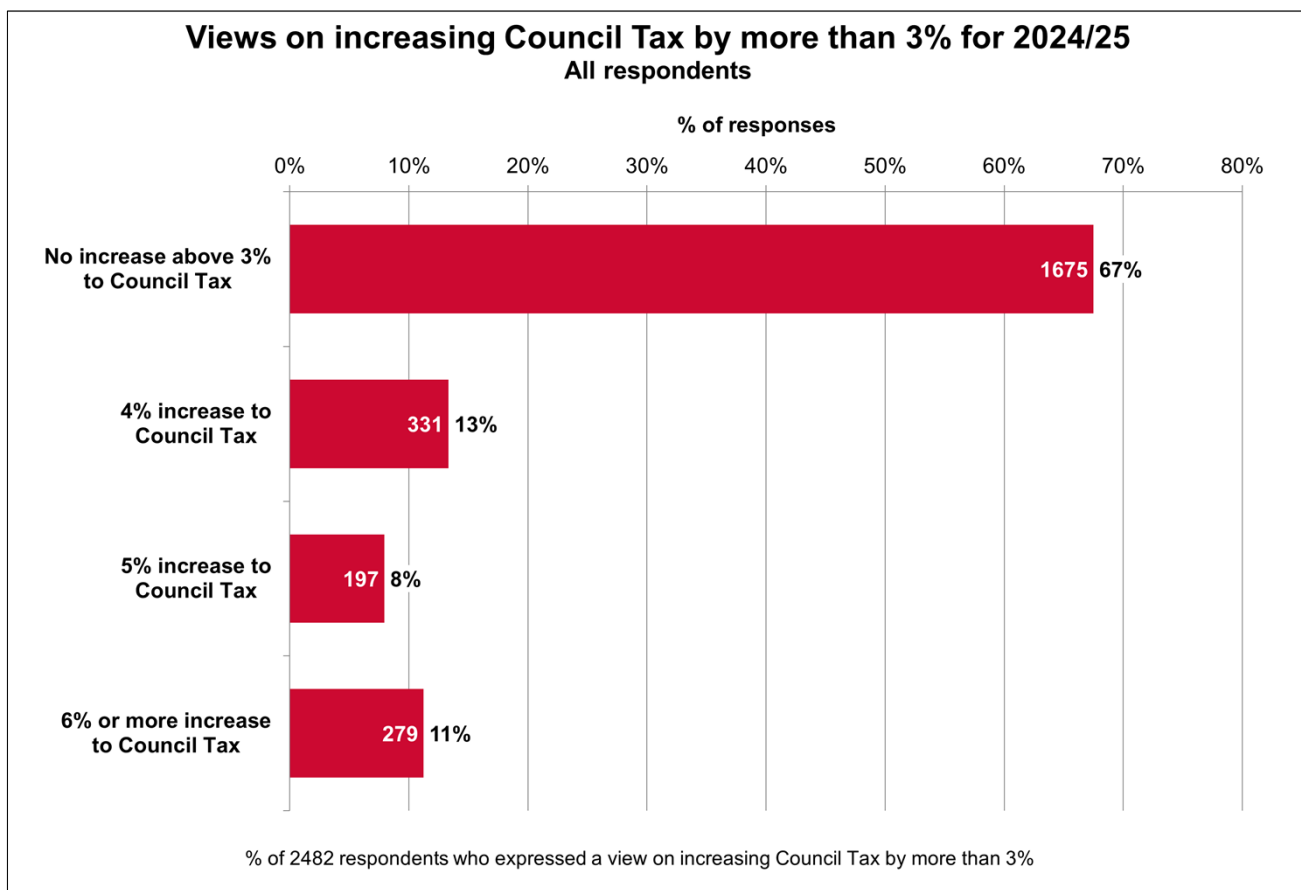
### 4.4.2 An increase in core Council Tax of more than 3%

Respondents were asked if they would prefer to pay no increase in Council Tax above 3%, or an increase of 4%, 5%, or 6% or more in 2024/25, in case the government allowed this.

2,482 respondents (97% of 2,547 surveys) stated their preference (Figure 19). Of these:

- 1,675 (67%) opted for no increase above 3% to core Council Tax
- 331 (13%) favour a 4% increase
- 197 (8%) favour a 5% increase
- 279 (11%) respondents would support an increase of 6% or more to Council Tax
- 65 respondents did not give a view on increasing Council Tax above 3%.

**Figure 19: Views on increasing Council Tax by more than 3%**



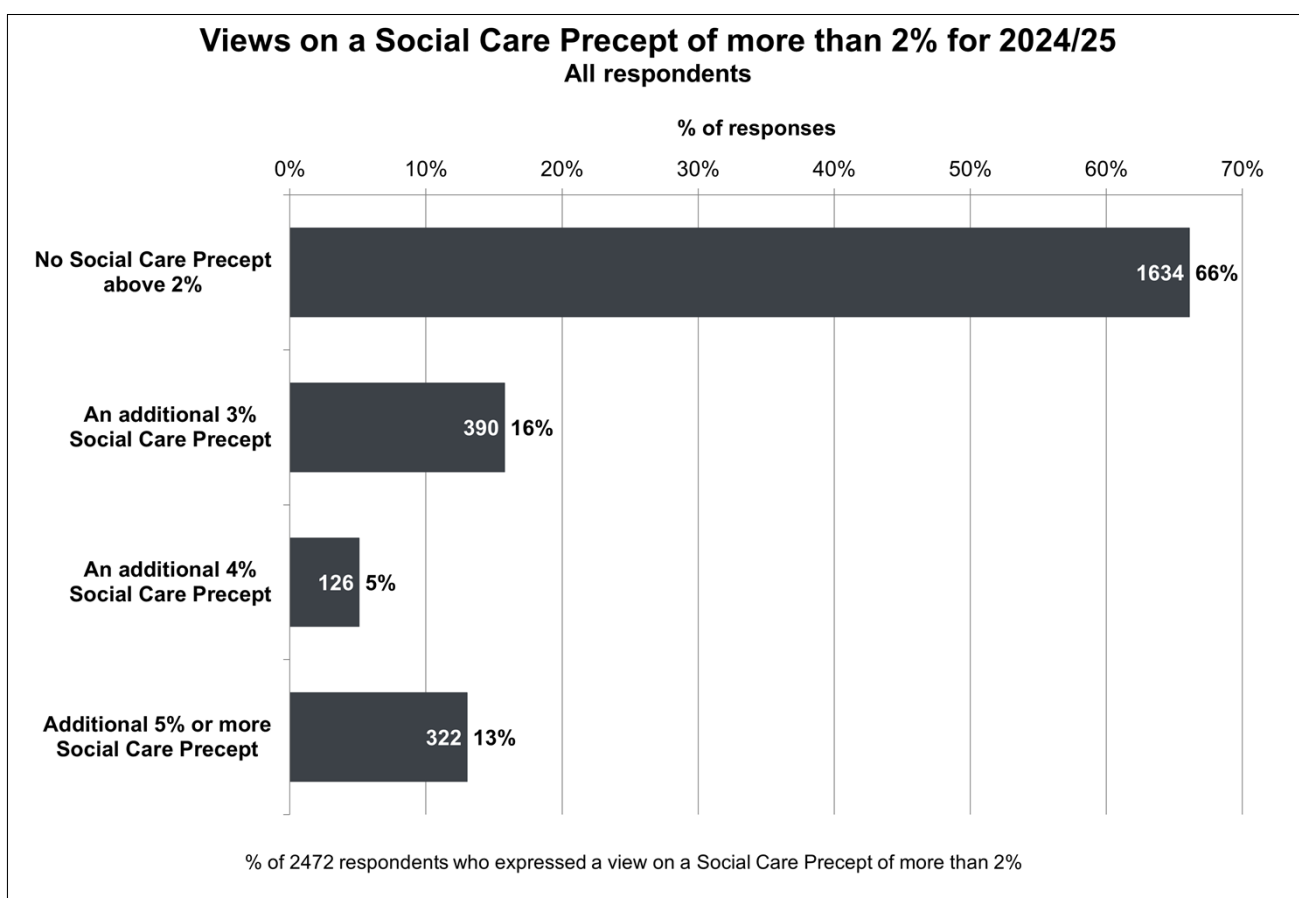
### 4.4.3 A Social Care Precept of more than 2%

Respondents were asked if they would prefer to pay no Social Care Precept above 2%, or a Social Care Precept of 3%, 4%, or 5% or more in 2024/25, in case government allowed this.

2,472 respondents (97% of 2,547 surveys) stated their preference (Figure 20). Of these:

- 1,634 (66%) opted for no Social Care Precept above 2%
- 390 (16%) would prefer a 3% Social Care Precept
- 126 (5%) favour a 5% Social Care Precept
- 322 (13%) respondents would support a Social Care Precept 6% or more
- 75 respondents did not give a view on a Social Care Precept of more than 2%.

**Figure 20: Views on a Social Care Precept of more than 2%**



### 4.4.4 Combinations of Council Tax increase above 3% and Social Care Precept above 2%

Figure 21 shows the percentage of the 2,547 respondents who prefer each combination of the options for Council Tax increase above 3% and Social Care Precept of more than 2%.

In Figure 21, each of the coloured rectangles represents a combination of one Council Tax option (no increase above 3%, or increases of 4%, 5%, or 6% or more) and one Social Care Precept option (no precept above 2%, or a precept of 3%, 4%, or 5% or more). For example, the top left green rectangle is the combination of no increase above 3% to Council Tax and no Social Care Precept above 2%. 57% of respondents favour this option. The bottom right green rectangle is an increase of 6% or more to Council Tax and a Social Care precept of 5% or more. Options with lower support appear red; those with higher support are green.

The rightmost (white) column shows the percentages of respondents who gave their views on each Council Tax option but did not provide a view on Social Care Precept. The bottom row shows the percentages of respondents who gave their views on each Social Care Precept option but did not provide a view on Council Tax.

The numbers in the coloured circles show the total percentage increase in Council Tax plus Social Care Precept for each combination. For example, 8 indicates an 8% total increase, which could comprise:

- 5% Council Tax increase plus 3% Social Care Precept; or
- 4% Council Tax increase plus 4% Social Care Precept.

**Figure 21: Views on combinations of higher Council Tax and Social Care Precept**

Percentage of respondents who prefer each combination of Council Tax increase above 3% and Social Care Precept above 2%

	No Social Care Precept above 2%	An additional 3% Social Care Precept	An additional 4% Social Care Precept	An additional 5% or more Social Care Precept	No view on Social Care Precept above 2%
No increase above 3% to Council Tax	57%	6%	1%	1%	1%
4% increase to Council Tax	4%	7%	1%	1%	0.4%
5% increase to Council Tax	1%	2%	3%	2%	0%
6% or more increase to Council Tax	1%	0%	0%	9%	0%
No view on an increase above 3% to Council Tax	1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1%

**Key**

- No more than 5% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- No more than 6% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- No more than 7% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- No more than 3% increase from Council Tax plus 5% or more Social Care Precept OR no more than 2% Social Care Precept plus 6% or more increase in Council Tax
- 7% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 8% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 9% increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 9% or more increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 10% or more increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept
- 11% or more increase from Council Tax plus Social Care Precept

Figure 21 shows that:

- The option with the highest support (57% of 2,547 respondents) is no increase above 3% to core Council Tax and no Social Care Precept above 2%.
- The second most popular option is an increase of 6% or more to Council Tax and a Social Care precept of 5% or more. This is the maximum option included in the budget consultation. This option has substantially lower support (9% of 2,547 respondents) than the no further increases option.
- The third most popular option is a 4% increase in core Council Tax and 3% Social Care Precept. This favoured by 7% of 2,547 respondents.
- Options with much higher Council Tax and low Social Care Precept (bottom left area of Figure 21), or low Council Tax and much higher Social Care Precept (top right area of Figure 21) are the least popular
- 38% of respondents<sup>24</sup> would select combination of core Council Tax increase above 3% and/or Social Care Precept above 2% if levels of core Council Tax above 3% and Social Care Precept above 2% were permitted by national government. Note that this is more than the 30% who opted for the maximum permitted 3% core Council Tax and 2% Social Care Precept in questions 1 and 2 (section 4.1.3)

#### 4.5 Views on increasing Council Tax above 3% for areas of different deprivation

Views on an increase in core Council Tax above 3% were compared for respondents in areas with different levels of deprivation, to check for any significant differences. The comparison used the postcodes provided by respondents in Bristol to match each response to one of 10 deprivation bands (deciles) as described in section 3.3.

Figure 22 shows the percentage of respondents from each deprivation decile who would prefer to pay no increase in Council Tax above 3%, or an increase of 4%, 5%, or 6% or more in 2024/25, if the government allowed it. This is based on the 1,946 Bristol respondents who stated a preferred option for increases in core Council Tax above 3% and provided a full postcode<sup>25</sup>. Figure 22 also shows the views of people who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode, and the aggregate views of all respondents.

Figure 22 shows that no increase above 3% for core Council Tax is the most popular option in all deciles, supported by between 55% and 80% of respondents.

Preference for higher core Council Tax tends to increase as deprivation reduces. This trend broadly mirrors the results in Figure 17 for Council Tax options up to 3%.

<sup>24</sup> 38.4% of respondents would select a core Council Tax increase of 4% or more and/or a Social Care Precept of 3% or more. The 38.4% excludes the 4.1% of respondents who did not give a view on Council Tax and or Social Care Precept (the white row and column in Figure 21) and the 57.4% who opted for no increase above 3% to core Council Tax and no Social Care Precept above 2%.

<sup>25</sup> Incomplete postcodes cannot be matched to the deprivation data.



Support for the maximum increase of **6% or more** in Council Tax is highest in decile 9 at 16%. Support for an increase of 6% or more is lowest in the most deprived 20% of Bristol; 5% in decile 1 and 8% in decile 2.

Support for a **5% increase** in core Council Tax similarly rises as deprivation decreases, from 5% in the most deprived 20% of areas (deciles 1 and 2) to 15% in decile 9.

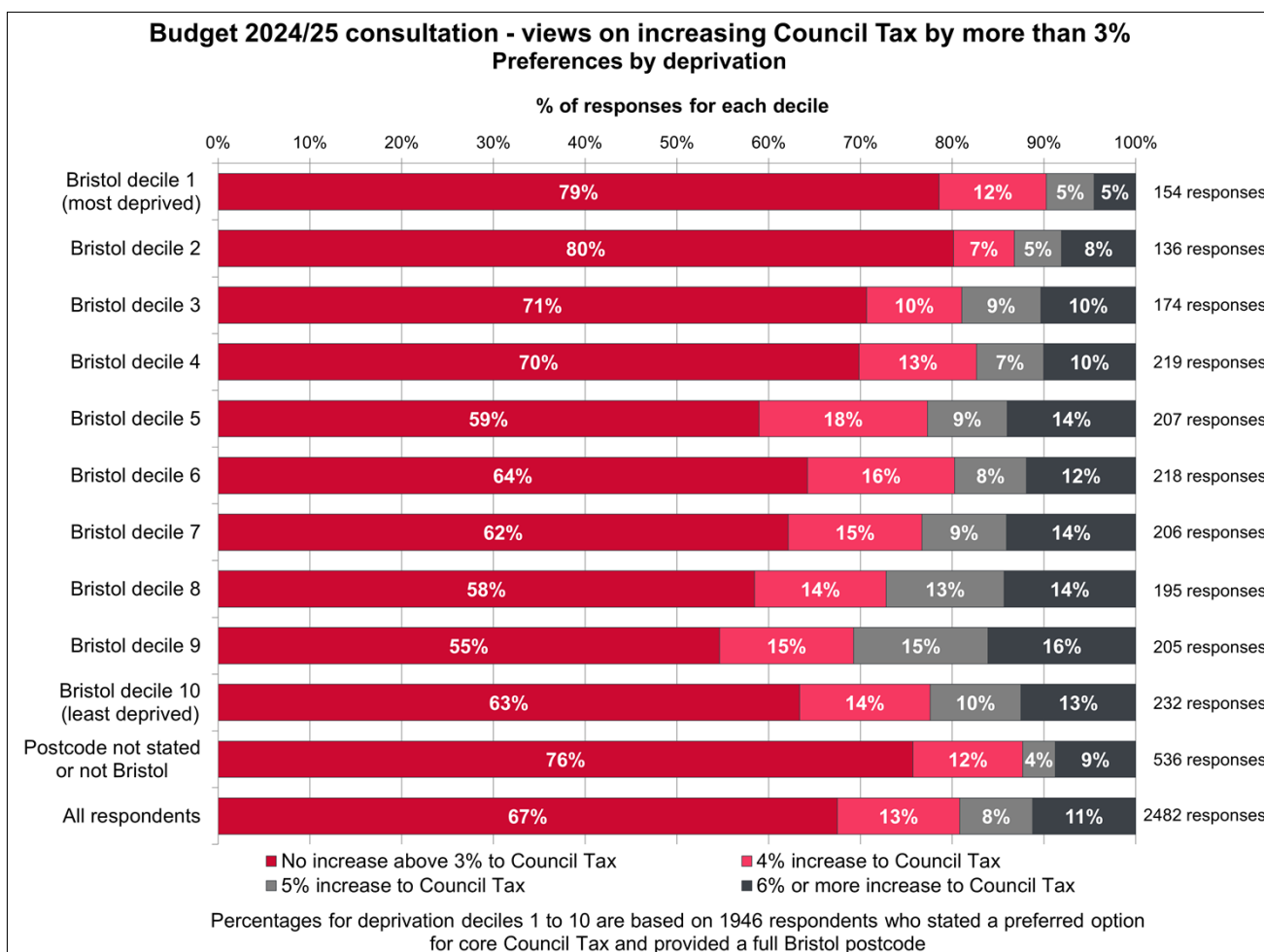
Support for a **4% increase** shows a weaker trend, but support for this option is still higher in the least deprived 30% of areas, than the most deprived 30%.

Support for **no increase above 3%** in core Council Tax is highest among respondents in the most deprived 20% of Bristol, with 79% of respondents in decile 1 and 80% in decile 2 preferring no increase above 3%. Support for no increase above 3% for core Council Tax reduces to 58% in decile 8 and 55% in decile 9.

Respondents in the least deprived decile 10 deviate from this trend, by showing lower willingness than decile 9 to pay more. 13% of respondents in decile 10 opted for a core Council Tax increase of 6% or more, 10% prefer a 5% increase, and 63% favour no increase above 3%.

The views of respondents who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode are similar to an average of the most deprived deciles 1 and 2. 76% in this group favour no increase above 3%, and 9% support an increase in corer Council Tax of 6% or more.

**Figure 22: Preference in each deprivation decile for core Council Tax above 3%**

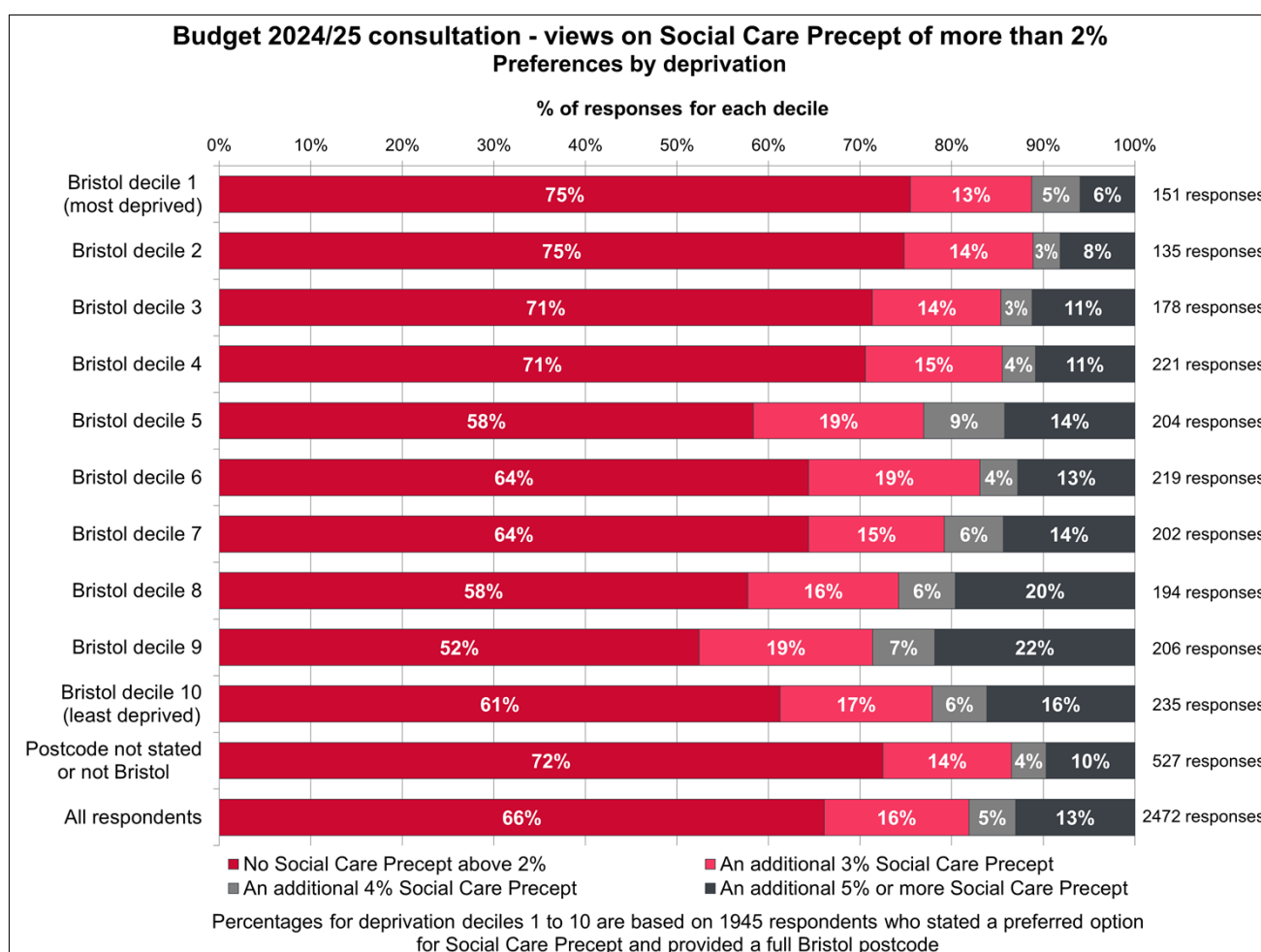


#### 4.6 Views on increasing Social Care Precept above 2% for areas of different deprivation

Views on a Social Care Precept above 2% were compared for respondents in areas with different levels of deprivation, to check for any significant differences. The comparison used the postcodes provided by respondents in Bristol to match each response to one of 10 deprivation bands (deciles) as described in section 3.3.

Figure 23 shows the percentage of respondents from each deprivation decile who would prefer to pay no Social Care Precept above 2%, or a Social Care Precept of 3%, 4%, or 5% or more in 2024/25, if the government allowed it. This is based on the 1,945 Bristol respondents who stated a preferred option for increases in Social Care Precept above 2% and provided a full postcode<sup>26</sup>. Figure 23 also shows the views of people who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode, and the aggregate views of all respondents.

**Figure 23: Preference in each deprivation decile for Social Care Precept above 2%**



<sup>26</sup> Incomplete postcodes cannot be matched to the deprivation data.

Figure 23 shows that no Social Care Precept above 2% is the most popular option in all deciles, supported by between 52% and 75% of respondents.

Preference for higher Social Care Precept tends to increase as deprivation reduces. This trend broadly mirrors the results in Figure 18 for Social Care Precept options up to 2%.

Support for the maximum Social Care Precept option of **5% or more** is highest in decile 9 at 22%. Support for a precept of 5% or more is lowest in the most deprived 20% of Bristol; 6% in decile 1 and 8% in decile 2.

Support for a **4% Social Care Precept** rises as deprivation decreases, from between 3% and 5% in the most deprived 30% of areas (deciles 1, 2 and 2) to 7% in decile 9.

Support for a **3% Social Care Precept** increases from 13% to 14% in the most deprived deciles 1, 2 and 3 to 19% in decile 9.

Support for **no Social Care Precept above 2%** is highest among respondents in the most deprived 20% of Bristol, with 75% of respondents in deciles 1 and 2. Support for no Social Care Precept above 2% reduces to 52% in decile 9.

Respondents in the least deprived decile 10 deviate from this trend, by showing lower willingness than decile 9 to pay more. 16% of respondents in decile 10 opted for a Social Care Precept of 5% or more, 6% prefer a 4% precept, 17% prefer a 3% precept, and 61% favour no precept above 2%.

The views of respondents who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode are similar to an average of the most deprived deciles 1, 2 and 3. 72% in this group favour no Social Care Precept above 2%, and 10% support a Social Care Precept of 5% or more.

## 4.7 Reasons for Council Tax and Social Care Precept levels chosen

### 4.7.1 Overview

Of the 1,158 free text survey and email responses, 738 (64%) explained their preference for the level of Council Tax or made other comments about Council Tax. 295 (25%) provided comments about Social Care Precept.

### 4.7.2 Comments about Council Tax

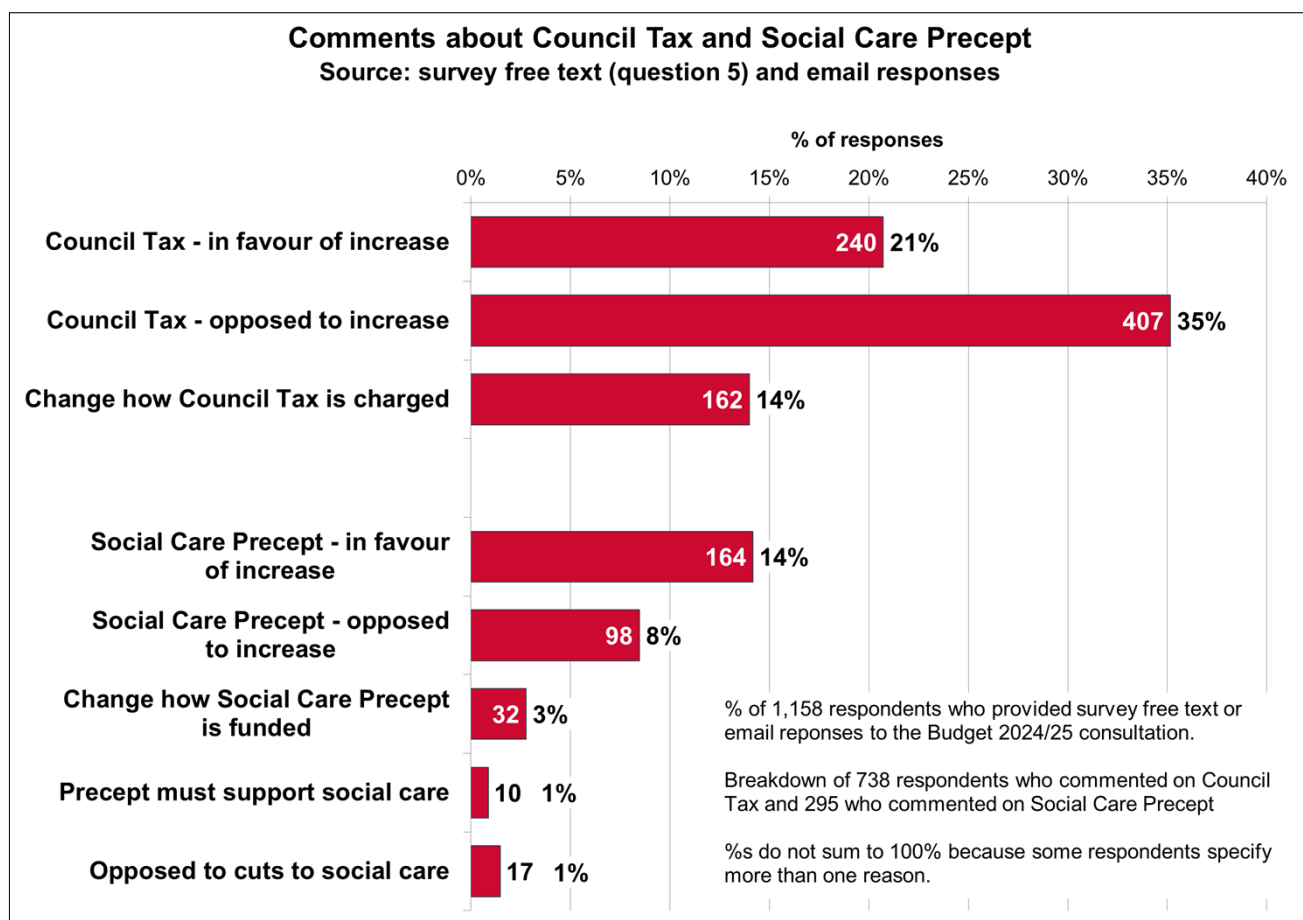
#### 4.7.2.1 Summary

Of the 738 respondents (64%) who made comments or suggestions about Council Tax (Figure 24):

- 240 (21% of 1,158 respondents) made comments in favour of increasing Council Tax
- 407 (35%) gave reasons why they oppose an increase to Council Tax
- 162 (14%) said that they thought that Council Tax should be charged in a different way.

A further breakdown of these comments is provided below. All percentages are percentages of the 1,158 free text survey and email responses. Because a single respondent might comment on several issues, the total percentages will exceed 100%.

**Figure 24: Comments about Council Tax and Social Care Precept**



#### 4.7.2.2 Comments in favour of increasing Council Tax

240 (21%) respondents made comments in support of increasing Council Tax. Comments addressed the following issues.

- **Support for a Council Tax increase**
  - Recognition that Council Tax increases and increased funding are necessary due to government cuts and financial challenges
  - In stating support for an increase, respondents drew attention to economic challenges, including inflation, the rising cost of living, and the need for a fair and just distribution of financial burdens
  - Calls for a balanced approach to the increase considering both the need for increased funding and the financial constraints of many residents
  - Importance of affordability in determining the extent of the tax increase
- **Acknowledgment of personal affordability**
  - Higher earning individuals stated their willingness to contribute more to support essential services
- **Importance of essential services**
  - Importance of maintaining or improving local services despite inflationary pressures on incomes
  - Recognition that increased public spending is necessary to improve efficiency and capacity
  - Recognition of the community's responsibility to support essential services
  - Expressions of social awareness and a sense of duty to contribute to the well-being of the city's residents
  - Willingness to pay higher Council Tax to prevent cuts to essential services for vulnerable populations, emphasising the importance of services for both adults and children
- **Transparency and accountability**
  - Requests for assurance that increased taxes will result in tangible improvements for citizens
  - Desire for transparency in how additional funds will be utilised
  - Calls for robust accountability mechanisms to ensure the effective use of increased tax revenue
- **Suggestions for the appropriate percentage increase for Council Tax:**
  - This was often linked to personal circumstances (highly dependent on individual income), inflation rate or the perceived needs of the service. Respondents advocated for balance between the tax burden on citizens and the budget needs of the council.

#### 4.7.2.3 Comments from respondents opposed to increasing Council Tax

407 (35%) respondents provided free text comments opposed to an increase to Council Tax. Among these respondents, there was widespread acknowledgement that services are important and need to be funded, but an unwillingness to pay more Council Tax. Respondents gave the following reasons.

- **Financial difficulties and cost of living**
  - Challenges in heating homes and maintaining a minimal food budget, with fears that increased Council Tax would put a further strain on their situation, particularly for single parents
  - High cost of living/inability to make ends meet, contributing to homelessness and potential eviction due to missed mortgage payments
  - Concerns about increased criminal activity due to financial struggles of other citizens
- **Doubts about the council's effective allocation of Council Tax funds**
  - Respondents were concerned that funds would not be used to address specific issues faced by, and of importance to, respondents. One respondent voiced reticence to pay more without more information about the council's accounts
- **Suggestions for alternative solutions to an increase**
  - Recommendations for alternatives to increasing Council Tax were cuts to services and service budgets, better investment strategies, and streamlining Bristol City Council.

#### 4.7.2.4 Suggestions for how Council Tax should be charged differently.

162 (14%) respondents suggested changes to the way that Council Tax is charged overall. Comments and suggestions included the following.

- **Comprehensive reassessment of Council Tax bands:** This included criticism of the existing “antiquated” banding system. Recommendations were for reassessments to be based on:
  - Property size
  - Street space, and local facilities
  - Raising taxes proportionately to income in certain areas
- **Graduated increases to Council Tax:** Graduated increases would involve higher bands paying a larger percentage uplift. Suggested charging structures included:
  - A graduated increase where band C would pay 1% more, bands D and E would pay 3% more, and bands F, G, and H would pay 5% more
  - No increase for bands A to C, a 3% increase for bands D to F, and 5% or more for bands G and H

- **A means-tested approach**
  - Recommendations for means-testing Council Tax rates based on factors such as income, wealth, household size, and age of residents
  - Time-limited increases: households earning above a certain threshold with a high disposable income would pay a higher Council Tax for a specific duration. This would be set at five years for new residents in Bristol and two years for people who currently live in Bristol
  - Explore the option of doubling Council Tax on second homes, to be aimed at individuals less engaged in the community
- **Exemptions, reductions, and incentives**
  - Calls for Council Tax exemptions for individuals over 65 and reduced rates for individuals living alone
  - Perceived inequity in Council Tax for multiple residents in flats compared to single occupants in larger properties
  - Consider a discount for people who pay Council Tax bills on time. This could encourage prompt payment and reduce the costs of chasing council tax debt
- **A flat fee for adults**
  - Charge Council Tax as a flat fee for every adult over 18, eliminating the connection to property size
- **Flexibility in allocation**
  - More choice for citizens in decisions about how Council Tax is spent
- **Student contributions**
  - Proposal to require financial contributions from students as part of the Council Tax system
  - Proposal to require financial contributions from universities
- **Landlords and housing**
  - Recommendations included increasing taxes on landlords, particularly those renting to students, and introducing Short Term Let licenses to regulate Airbnb operations. This aimed both to generate additional revenue for the council and alleviate the impact of Airbnb on permanent residents
- **Specific tax initiatives**
  - More local tax-raising powers through devolution
  - Adopting initiatives akin to B&NES Council's approach, focusing on levying additional funds through similar mechanisms
  - A proposal to deduct funds from people with 'non'dom' status and the salaries of Members of Parliament (MPs) to contribute to council finances.

## 4.7.3 Comments about Social Care Precept

### 4.7.3.1 Summary

Of the 295 respondents (25%) who made comments or suggestions about Social Care Precept (Figure 24), there was a diverse range of opinions:

- 164 (14% of 1,158 respondents) commented in favour of increasing Social Care Precept.
- 98 (8%) gave reasons why they oppose an increase to Social Care Precept
- 32 (3%) said there should be a change to how Social Care Precept is charged
- 10 (1%) said that any Social Care Precept must be used to support social care
- 17 (1%) voiced their opposition to cuts to social care.

### 4.7.3.2 Comments in favour of increasing Social Care Precept

Of the 164 (14%) respondents who said they favour increasing Social Care Precept, comments included:

- **Recognition of the increasing demand**, and essential need, for social care to address the challenges for vulnerable individuals
- **Prevailing sentiment against cuts**, emphasising the importance of maintaining high-quality social care services, and the long-term community benefits of funding social care
- **Groups that were identified as a priority** to receive social care support were elderly people, especially people with dementia, and other vulnerable individuals
- **Emphasis on the moral duty to contribute** through taxes, expressing trust in local government efficiency
- **Ability to pay**. Some higher-income respondents stated their willingness to pay more for social care support because they could afford to
- **Support for funding social care, but with qualifications**, including:
  - Preference for a precept of less than the maximum 2% permitted, considering the cost-of-living crisis. Some respondents mentioned their personal financial struggles and a proposed proportionate tax increase
  - Willingness to pay more but with insistence on accountability. Whilst in favour of the overall Social Care Precept, some respondents voiced concerns about the council's level of accountability, and ability to balance affordability with effective services
  - Conditional support for the Social Care Precept, with support only if the money is focussed on helping specific groups, including the elderly, young children, and British nationals.



### 4.7.3.3 Comments opposed to increasing Social Care Precept

Of the 98 (8%) respondents who said why they oppose an increase in Social Care Precept, comments included:

- **Efficiency improvements are needed in social care before seeking more funding.**
  - Respondents advocated addressing existing challenges within the social care system before approving additional funding, emphasising the need for systemic improvement to enhance efficiency and effectiveness
  - Respondents criticised the amount of spending on senior managers, citing a disparity in pay between ordinary care staff and management. They stated this has a negative impact on expertise and customer service levels
- **Scepticism about the cost-effectiveness of adult and social care services**
  - Respondents questioned the value for money in relation to the weekly cost of care. And voiced scepticism about the necessity of additional funds
  - Comments stressed the need for transparent and accountable spending practices
- **Scepticism that the Social Care Precept will be spent on social care and the vulnerable people who need support**
- **Dissatisfaction with high amounts spent on social care to the detriment of other priorities.** This extends to concerns about high spending levels (which respondents consider excessive) on adult social care, children's social care, and housing benefits. Comments included:
  - Respondents saying that they don't need or benefit from social care, resent paying for it, and have other priorities for spending that are more important to them
  - Discontent about the substantial portion of council funds directed towards adult/older people's social care, with a view that there needs to be fairer distribution and responsiveness to the needs of the younger working generation
  - Concerns about the impact of social care budgets reducing funding available for other public services, including healthcare, law enforcement, infrastructure, and housing. Respondents emphasised the need for balanced resource allocation
- **Social care should be funded by older people's personal resources before taxpayer money<sup>27</sup>.**
  - Respondents suggested using the accumulated wealth and income of older people who need social care, before tapping into additional funds from the working population
  - Comments emphasised a desire for shared responsibility and resource contribution.

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<sup>27</sup> This point is included under two themes; comments opposing a Social Care Precept, and again under the theme of Changing how social care is charged

#### 4.7.3.4 Change how Social Care Precept is funded.

32 (3%) recommended other ways social care should be funded, instead of by a local Social Care Precept. These were:

- **Central government funding**, via National Insurance and other central government funds, not raised by local authorities
- **Integrated healthcare system**: Advocates for integrating social care with the NHS to create a more cohesive healthcare system
- **Means-testing social care**: Proposals to adjust financial responsibilities, including making the elderly pay more for their benefits and targeting higher Council Tax bands/higher incomes
- **Accountability by older voters**: Suggestions that older people, who have elected governments that have overseen the social care funding problems, should now contribute more to their benefits – owning the consequences of their policy preferences, particularly in terms of paying for their own social care
- **The Social Care Precept should be included in Council Tax**. The respondent thinks that separating the percentage increases in core Council Tax and Social Care Precept is confusing and deceptive
- **Explore radical solutions for social care**: Bristol City Council should start a public debate on what we can all do, as local communities, to solve escalating social care costs.

#### 4.7.3.5 Assurance that Social Care Precept will be used to support social care.

Of the 10 (1%) respondents who said that Social Care Precept must be used to fund social care, comments were:

- Hope, but also scepticism, that a Social Care Precept would be used for its intended purpose. Respondents wanted assurance that increased funding for social care will be directed specifically to social care and not diverted to other projects
- Call for more transparency and better communication regarding fund utilisation
- Call for a review/monitoring system to ensure that resources reach the intended beneficiaries
- A perception that social care is given too easily to people who could work and be more self-sufficient.

#### 4.7.3.6 Comments opposed to cuts in Social Care

Of the 17 (1%) respondents who said they oppose cuts to social care services, comments included:

- **Preference for avoiding cuts to local services**, advocating for a balanced budget without further reductions
- **Impact of under-funded social care on the NHS, with a focus on hospitals.** Respondents highlighted the urgency of addressing issues such as bed blocking in hospitals, stressing the impact of social care shortages on NHS waiting times
- **The need to preserve vital social care services by saving money elsewhere:**
  - Respondents proposed exploring alternative avenues for cost savings without cutting social care services, emphasising the importance of maintaining adult social care services
  - Concerns about stretched services, with a call for better management of council funding to prevent cuts in essential services
  - Respondents specifically called on the council to fulfil its duties for adult social care and SEND, suggesting that cuts should be explored elsewhere
- **Support for displaced refugee families:** Recommendations to allocate more funds to support displaced refugee families, which would enable them to contribute to the local economy and public services.

## **5 Proposals for saving money and generating income.**

### **5.1 Overview**

This chapter describes respondents' free text comments and suggestions about issues other than proposed levels of Council Tax and Social Care Precept (which are described in section 4.7). Of the 1,158 free text survey and email responses:

- 2 respondents (0.2%) provided comments on the savings proposals to reduce the budget gap (section 5.2)
- 380 (33%) suggested other ways the council could save money (section 5.3)
- 142 (12%) suggested other ways the council could increase income (section 5.4)
- 70 (6%) identified services they think are priorities to continue to fund (section 5.5)
- 19 (2%) provided other comments or suggestions (section 5.6)
- 24 (2%) provided comments about the consultation process (section 5.7).

### **5.2 Comments on savings proposals and 'invest to save' ideas**

One respondent questioned how renting properties direct from landlords (proposal GAP048 described in the budget consultation) would reduce costs.

The same respondent voiced opposition to 'proposed cuts to the disabled support service'.

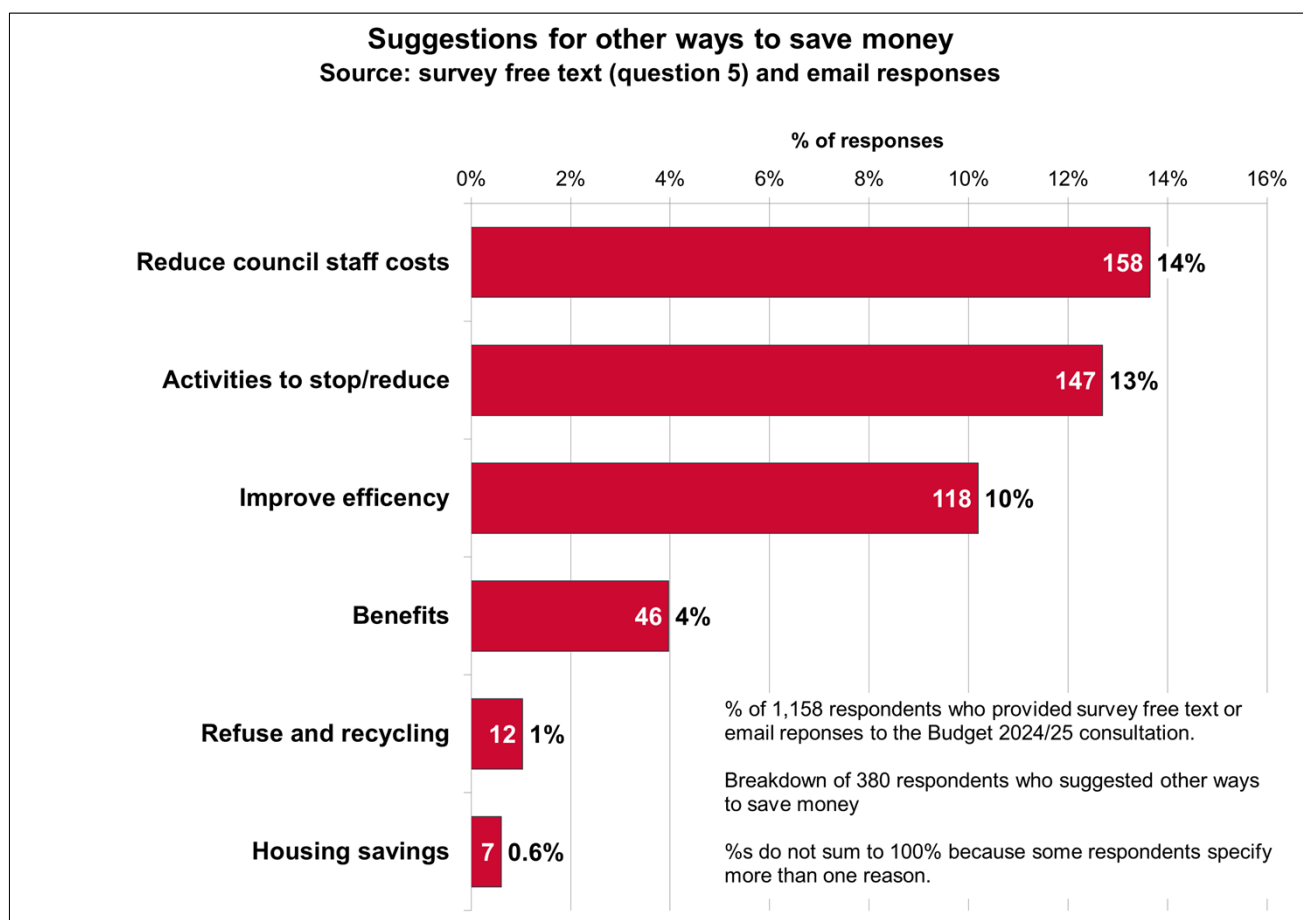
One person recommended the 'invest to save' ideas should include reviewing salaries of social care staff to make them competitive with other local authorities. They said this would avoid the costs of training social care staff, then losing them to higher paying local councils.

### **5.3 Other suggestions for ways to save money.**

Of the 1,158 free text survey and email responses, 380 (33%) provided suggestions for other ways the council might save money (Figure 25). Of these:

- 158 (14% of 1,158 respondents) proposed ways the council should reduce staffing costs
- 147 (13%) recommended activities the council should stop or do less
- 118 (10%) advocated ways the council should improve efficiency
- 46 (4%) wanted changes to benefits to reduce costs
- 12 (1%) identified ways to reduce refuse and recycling costs
- 7 (0.6%) proposed housing-related ways to reduce costs.

**Figure 25: Suggestions for other ways to save money.**



### 5.3.1 Reduce staff costs

158 (14%) respondents suggested ways to reduce staffing costs.

- **Collaboration with other public sector and voluntary organisations** to share staff resources:
  - Collaborate with WECA and other authorities to avoid duplication of efforts and to pool resources and achieve cost savings
  - Explore sharing corporate back-office costs, like payroll, with the NHS
  - Work with the voluntary sector to provide services like children's homes
- **Staffing and restructuring:**
  - Recommendations to restructure BCC staffing to cut down on staffing levels and streamline departments save costs
  - Deliver more with in-house staff and pay less to consultants for better value. Other respondents suggested privatising services and allowing more market competition
  - Recommendation to achieve potential savings resulting from the end of an elected mayor and the City Office

- **Staff and councillor salaries and benefits**

- Reduce salaries of senior council officers and implement wage freezes
- Calls for a review of elected officials' salaries, expenses and 'bonuses'
- Concerns about perceived unnecessary expenses like overseas travel, conferences, and away days
- Reduce employer contributions to council staff pensions to be in line with the private sector
- Eliminate perceived staff perks such as free council employee parking
- Incentivise council staff to be more efficient, using bonuses proportional to either additional income generated or cost savings implemented.

### 5.3.2 Activities to stop or reduce

147 (13%) respondents identified activities which respondents thought should be stopped or reduced to save money. Comments included:

- **High profile, high-cost projects:** Projects that respondents mentioned repeatedly as not feasible, or poor value for money, are the Bristol Beacon, mass transit/underground, other major transport projects, Bristol Energy, and Harbourside redevelopment
- **Transport spending.** Respondents suggested:
  - Reduced spending on highways, roads, and "unnecessary" road layout changes. Respondents objected to what they see as constant construction, saying "the city is turning into a building site"
  - Stopping allocation of funds to bike lanes
  - Opposition to e-scooters and e-bikes, by respondents who consider them to be an unsafe menace
  - Re-evaluating the implementation of bus lanes
  - Fewer police mobile speed camera operations, especially in 20mph zones
- **Street lighting:** Switch off streetlights after midnight in residential areas
- **Housing:** Stop construction of additional student housing
- **Discontinue discretionary services,** including:
  - Subsidies to businesses
  - Grants to local charities
  - Cultural support, including causes like Pride
  - Stop neighbourhood free projects
  - Spending on aesthetic improvements
- **Climate initiatives**
  - Opposition to funding for carbon net zero plans by respondents who dismiss the concept or urgency of addressing the climate emergency.

### 5.3.3 Improve efficiency

The 118 (10%) respondents who suggested there is scope to run the council more efficiently identified the following themes.

- **Leadership and council decision-making**
  - Improve overall budgetary responsibility, with long-term budget decisions in preference to short-term fixes
  - Calls for the council to be more prudent in its decision-making and avoid unnecessary expenditures
  - Requests for more inclusive decision-making processes in full council meetings rather than committees
  - Concerns that money is mismanaged on major projects
  - Perception that senior management decisions negatively affect service quality
  - Accusations of lack of accountability and perceived corruption
- **Transparency concerns:**
  - A need for greater transparency about how Council Tax is used
  - Calls for increased public scrutiny, voluntary scrutiny panels, and accountability measures within the council
  - Ensure residents see tangible benefits of increasing Council Tax, to increase acceptance
  - A perceived focus on hiding negative news
- **Cost savings and efficiency suggestions**, including:
  - Generic calls to cut unnecessary spending and improve efficiency, in preference to service cuts or fee increases, which may affect essential services
  - Recommendations for a change in the council's culture to focus on key policies and services, avoid unnecessary consultations, and ensure value for money
  - Focus on delivering higher quality services at a faster pace
  - Review and potentially renegotiate contracts, particularly with a focus on road maintenance
  - Improve use of council spaces, to achieve cost savings
  - Suggestions to adopt technology and administrative process automation for cost savings and increased efficiency
  - Benchmark how other councils balance their budgets and spend their funds, and adopt best practice
- **Workforce efficiency**
  - Calls to increase employee accountability
  - Concerns about perceived declining expertise, made worse by poor staff pay
  - Incentivising staff based on performance for a more performance-driven approach.

### 5.3.4 Saving money through changes to benefits

46 (4%) advocated saving money through changes to benefits. Suggestions were:

- Reduce or remove the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- Cost-saving measures:
  - Better/stricter screening of benefits applications
  - “Self-sufficiency” training for benefits recipients through volunteer programmes
  - Ensure that when recipients of food vouchers go on holiday, their food vouchers should go to the local food bank
- Emphasis on the availability of jobs and a call for the council to provide more support for people who are out of work to find employment
- Measures for specific types of recipients:
  - Opposition to providing benefits, social services, or housing to drug users
  - Regular drug testing for welfare recipients
  - Withdrawal of financial support and/or eviction for council tenants engaged in antisocial behaviour, current and/or prior criminal activities, or vandalism, with a proposal for a permanent blacklist
  - Stop benefits and/or support for “illegal” immigrants/refugee population who do not pay taxes
  - Benefits for asylum seekers should be the responsibility of the national government.

### 5.3.5 Changes to refuse and recycling.

12 (1%) suggested saving money through changes to refuse and recycling:

- **Efficiency:** Reassess the waste and recycling operation to make it more efficient
- **Recycling centres:** Reduce the hours that recycling centres are open
- **Less frequent household waste/recycling collections.** Specific suggestions included:
  - Cut recycling services (the respondent considers recycling to be non-essential saying it has “minimal environmental benefit compared to reducing and re-using”)
  - Reduce the frequency of household waste/recycling collections for suburban areas that have garages and can store their recycling
  - Cut out one week of waste and recycling collections over the Christmas and New Year period to save on Saturday working. The respondent notes that the gap between two recycling collections during this period is already 11 days for Friday collections, making it seemingly feasible for residents
- **Improve how waste collection staff clear up** the street as they move through areas.



### 5.3.6 Housing savings

7 (0.6%) suggested measures to increase housing supply and reduce dependence on council housing. Themes covered were:

- **Increase housing supply to reduce the costs of supported housing**
  - Build more social housing to reduce the costs of emergency accommodation
  - Increase building heights in city centre core and near stations and build new larger blocks of flats
  - Increase the height of student flat buildings elsewhere to free up family homes
  - Make it easier for older people to downsize allowing larger houses to be back on the market for young families
  - Increase the rental market in order to hold costs down, to make it easier for people to rent property
  - Better regulation of housing developers to ensure they deliver social housing and amenities as part of approved projects
- **Reduce dependency on the council for housing**
  - Permit and help asylum seekers to work and support themselves, so they do not require costly housing support while being unable to contribute.

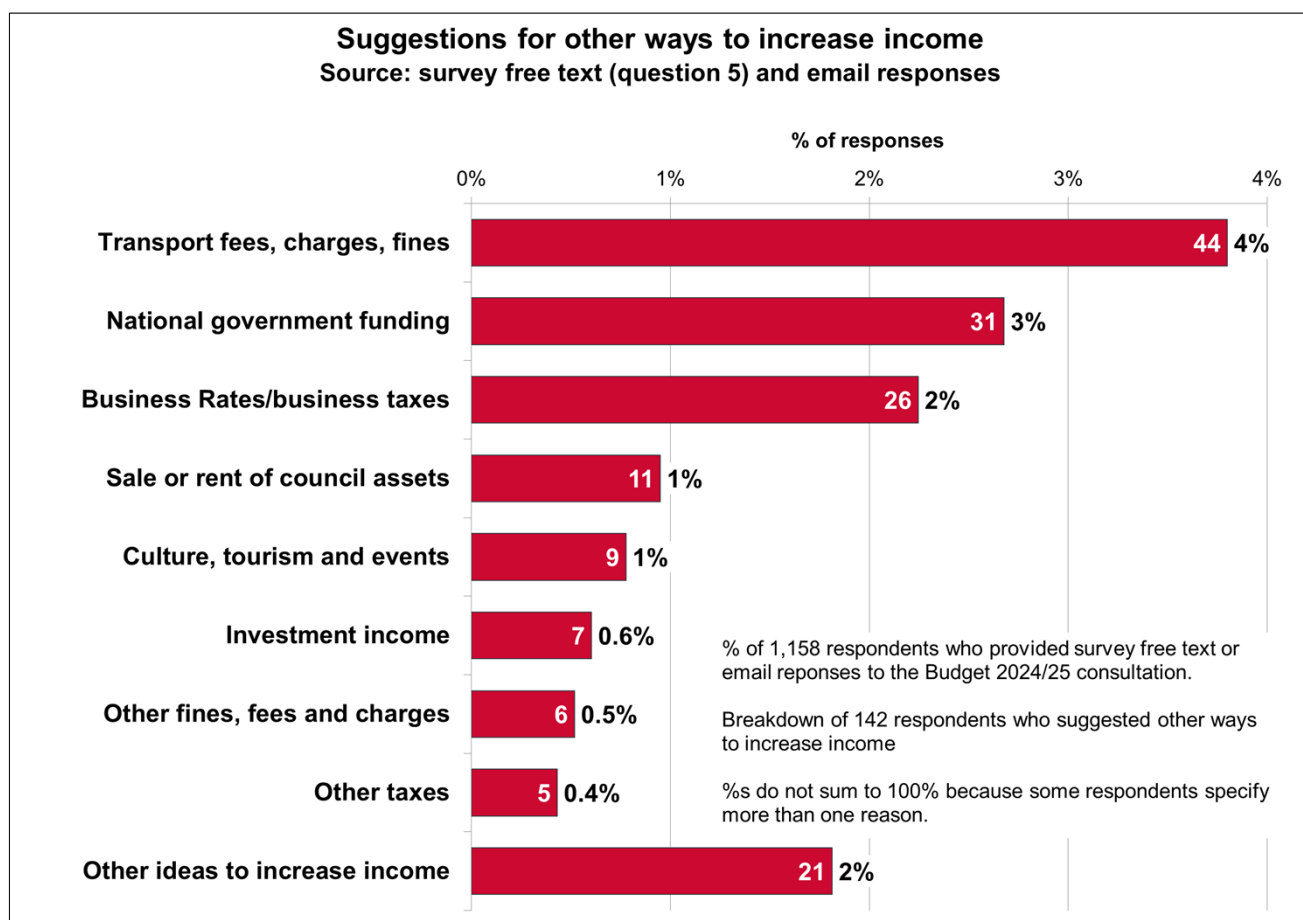
### 5.4 Suggestions for other ways to increase income.

#### 5.4.1 Overview

Of the 1,158 free text survey and email responses, 142 (12%) provided suggestions for other ways the council might increase income (Figure 26). Of these:

- 44 (4%) recommended increasing revenue from transport fees, charges and fines
- 31 (3%) said national government should provide the funding needed by local authorities
- 26 (2%) favoured increasing Business Rates or other business taxes
- 11 (1%) recommended raising money through sale of council assets
- 9 (1%) suggested raising revenue from culture, tourism and events
- 7 (0.6%) advised investing to create a long-term revenue stream
- 6 (0.5%) proposed a variety of other fines, fees and charges
- 5 (0.4%) suggested ways to raise income via other taxes
- 21 (2%) provided other ideas to increase income.

**Figure 26: Other suggestions for ways to increase income**



A further breakdown of these comments is provided below. All percentages are percentages of the 1,158 free text survey and email responses.

#### 5.4.2 Transport taxes, charges and fines

44 (4%) mentioned use of taxes, charges, fines and enforcement related to transport. Of these, 34 (3%) suggested specific ideas for using transport fees, fines and enforcement to increase the council's income. 10 (1%) expressed opposition to transport charges, with nine criticising the Clean Air Zone, one opposed to increases in parking charges in the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ), and one critical of increasing Residents' Parking permit charges.

Ideas in favour of using transport taxes, charges and fines to increase council revenue were as follows.

- **Increase road tax.** Specific comments included:
  - change road tax to a road transit tax with all wheeled transport paying for use of the roads
  - Increase tax on Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) – tax based on vehicle weight
- **Clean Air zone:** Extend the Clean Air Zone (also referred to as 'low emission zone') to cover the entire Bristol City Council area and charge for entry
- **Introduce a congestion charge**

- **Parking revenue (charges and fines):**
  - Introduce a workplace parking levy to fund public transport improvements
  - Increase parking charges, including in council-managed car parks
  - Increase parking enforcement (and employ more enforcement officers). There was a view expressed by several respondents that there is not enough parking enforcement in parts of central Bristol, specifically Old Market, and that increasing enforcement is needed to reduce nuisance and could also increase revenue
  - Increase minimum parking fines and charge for illegally parked vehicles that need to be towed away. Targeting match-day illegal parking was suggested.
  - Extend / expand residents' parking schemes and increase the cost of permits
  - A request for clarity on revenue raised on residential parking schemes and why resident's parking has not been rolled out equitably in areas (the examples of St Andrews and Redland were given) which border existing schemes
  - Introduce fines for parking on pavements. Issues of delivery vehicles parking on, and damaging footways, and vehicles parking on, and blocking, pavements or overhanging driveways in residential areas were mentioned
  - Charge for disabled parking bays including annual renewals. (The respondent thought these are being abused)
  - Charge van dwellers for parking on public roads and prevent people parking large campervans on narrow residential streets for long periods
- **Vehicle access charges**
  - Charge online shopping delivery couriers for access to the city
- **Electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure**
  - Increase spending on EV charging infrastructure. It was suggested that on-street EV chargers could provide significant income for the council whilst helping to support the aims of the Clean Air Zone
- **Cyclists:** fine cyclists for breaking Highway Code

Of the 10 respondents who were critical of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) and parking charges:

- **Clean air zone:** nine respondents variously saw the CAZ as a waste of money, a non-transparent way of raising income, ineffective at improving air quality, an 'unfair tax', and having a negative impact on the viability of the city centre. The section of the CAZ across the Cumberland Basin was specifically criticised
- **Increase in parking permits costs in the CPZ.** This was criticised as unjustified and unfair for people living in the city centre during a cost-of-living crisis.

### 5.4.3 National government funding

31 (3%) respondents recommended that more of the funding for local authorities should be raised nationally, instead of from citizens in each local authority. The following themes were covered. Comments were:

- **Central government responsibility:** There was a prevailing sentiment that central government was responsible for funding shortfalls for local authorities and cuts to local services. Respondents stated that central government should restore adequate funding to local councils to deliver essential services and reverse austerity measures
- **Fund local government using nationally raised taxes.** Specific suggestions included:
  - Fund services through progressive general taxation at a national level, including income tax and wealth taxes, with a higher tax take from the highest earners
  - Fund local government through VAT
  - Redirect the Treasury's planned tax cuts to local councils
- **Grants:** Increase grants from central government to local authorities.

### 5.4.4 Business rates and increases to business taxes

26 (2%) respondents suggested increasing Business Rates and other business taxes as a way to increase council income. These comments included suggestions for changes to business rate relief. Comments included:

- **Balance of public versus business taxation:**
  - Increase business taxes instead of individual taxes
  - Businesses need to be taxed more, not the public
  - Compare business taxation rates with other major European cities
  - Stop subsidising non-contributing businesses
  - Increase charges for food shops selling alcohol
  - Businesses should take responsibility for driving positive changes
- **Other comments about Business Rates**
  - Increase Business Rates, particularly for larger businesses such as law and accounting firms, and hotels
  - Implement a sliding scale for business rate relief
  - Review and potentially reduce 100% relief for small businesses
- **Tax poor environmental responsibility:**
  - Tax polluting and unsustainable businesses
  - Fine or tax delivery companies for pavement damage.

#### 5.4.5 Sale or renting of council assets

11 (1%) had recommendations for increasing the council's income through sale or renting out council assets. The themes were:

- Emphasis on the importance of efficiently managing and monetising existing council assets to meet financial needs rather than resorting to raising council tax directly
- Optimise use of council buildings by evaluating office needs and renting out spaces
- Sell unused and underutilised council properties, including BCC estate assets and vacant land. Use the income to fund essential services
- Consider selling expensive housing in high value areas and relocating to cheaper areas
- Explore selling or co-developing unused land and buildings for commercial ventures
- Sell the Bristol Beacon or seek sponsorship/investment to recoup some of the costs of redevelopment.

#### 5.4.6 Culture, tourism and events

9 (1%) suggested the council could raise revenue from culture, tourism and events, including:

- Charging more for cultural services
- permitting or organising public events, including festivals, county fairs, camping, outdoor discos, sports events, car boot sales
- Encouraging tourism.

#### 5.4.7 Investment income

7 (0.6%) respondents recommended that the council develops investment strategies to create a long-term funding stream to support revenue budgets. Ideas included:

- **Build more homes for rent.** There was specific mention of building high quality council homes on brownfield sites by allowing councils to fund via private debt, with priority given to key workers. The respondent anticipates this would generate money in the long term
- **Housing renovation:** Buying up and renovating Bristol's run-down private housing stock to improve energy efficiency and then sell at a profit or rent
- **Environmental investments,** including enabling citizens to invest in projects which tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. It was suggested that this could help the council meet its goals as well as increasing revenue.

#### 5.4.8 Other fines, fees and charges.

6 (0.5%) respondents suggested other fines, fees and charges which could raise income.

- **Fines**

- Prosecution of fly tippers and harsher fines for littering
- Issue fines to utility companies cutting fibre connections to businesses
- Issue fines to 'unscrupulous' property developers, particularly those who destroy buildings by fires or leave buildings to become derelict
- Charge people for missed doctor's appointments

- **Fees and charges**

- Make a small charge for employed people to use libraries

#### 5.4.9 Other taxes

5 (0.4%) respondents suggested increasing income from other taxes. These comments tended to be accompanied by frustration at the prospect of a significant increase in individual contributions. Suggestions for other taxes were:

- A tourist tax or leisure tax
- A tax on banks
- Higher local taxes on landlords
- A tax on polluting/unsustainable businesses
- Local wealth taxes

#### 5.4.10 Other ideas to increase income:

21 (2%) had other recommendations for increasing the council's income. These were:

- **Charge higher rent** for council homes.
- **Introduce Short Term Let Licences** to curb the number of Airbnbs in the city and generate additional council revenue
- **Development gain:** Be more rigorous in levying Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on developers
- **Support refugees:** there are highly educated people looking to contribute to our society and more support here would see a noticeably benefit to the Bristol local economy and public services as a result
- **Donations:** donated items to the council could be sold online
- **Attract sponsorship**
- **A Bristol postcode lottery** with profits going to Bristol City Council
- **Legalise cannabis:** the respondent suggested the council could raise income by legalising cannabis and opening cannabis cafes.

## 5.5 Suggestions for other priorities the council should fund

53 (5%) had recommendations for projects in which the council should invest additional funds. These were commonly suggested as services to preserve when budgets were at risk, or things that need improving in the context of comments about support for or opposition to Council Tax increases:

- **Council housing and affordable housing**
  - Allocate more funds to affordable housing developments to meet the needs of a growing population
  - Increase the rental market to hold costs down and make it easier for people to rent
- **Adult and children's social care**
  - Children's services, parenting support, and parent mental health
  - Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)
  - Good quality care homes
  - Support vulnerable people, including those facing homelessness and drug addiction
  - Encourage local communities to provide more/better mental health support
  - More youth clubs
- **Transport improvement:**
  - Road and highway maintenance. Specific concerns mentioned were repeated flooding in Easton and uneven surface on the Bristol-Bath cycle path
  - Better public transport and cycling infrastructure
  - Increase spending on Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure
- **Environmental initiatives:**
  - Tree planting and other environmental projects to reduce air pollution
- **Public facilities and services that affect all citizens:**
  - Address footpaths, streetlights, drains, litter, and weeds
  - Increase the number of public toilets
  - Prioritise waste/recycling programs
- **Safety and law enforcement:**
  - Increase police presence
- **Education:**
  - Invest in education, schools and specifically address dyslexia-related issues
  - Boost the economy by helping young adults be more employable
  - Focus on public-private partnerships in the education sector
- **Arts and cultural funding:**
  - Better funding for the arts, citing The Watershed as an example.

## 5.6 Other comments and suggestions

19 (2%) respondents offered the following other comments and suggestions.

- **Disparities in levels of council services in different areas of Bristol.** It was perceived that that some areas receive more advantages while others in need of funding do not
- **HMO licensing fees:** It was suggested that licensing fees could be increased for houses in multiple occupation (HMO), particularly in overpopulated areas like Southmead Road. The respondent questioned the lack of consideration for an Article 4 Direction in Southmead and the absence of an additional licensing scheme
- **Recommendations without knowledge of spending plans:** Some respondents expressed difficulty making recommendations without knowing how the increased money will be spent
- **Concerns about perceived bias and broadness of the phrase “adult social care”:** The respondent criticised the survey as potentially biased, stating that adult social care is not defined only as aid for the elderly and disabled but as a broad safety net that has the ability to be abused. They suggest that categorising all welfare systems under one umbrella is disingenuous
- **Begging and addiction:** A respondent suggests making giving money to beggars illegal to discourage begging for drugs, and recommends donations of food and clothing instead.
- **Other comments** covered a range of topics, including dissatisfaction with the planning department; lack of bus services in Whitchurch; concerns about homelessness and addiction; and a specific request for detailed information on education services expenditure.

## 5.7 Comments about the consultation survey

24 (2%) respondents commented on the consultation process. Comments covered the following issues.

- **Positive comments** about the level of information provided and transparency in involving citizens in helping to shape the budget
- **Insufficient information:** Request for more information to be provided in the survey, including:
  - Information about other precepts (fire service, police) to be included, to compare to cost of Social Care Precept
  - Information about whether Business Rates can be increased as an alternative to Council Tax
  - Information about restructuring to reduce BCC staffing and reduce ward councillor and Cabinet member expenses
  - Information about possible savings coming from the end of an elected Mayor and the City Office



- Information about how effective budget spending has been; not just information about which services the money is spent on
- Information on the total monthly costs to an individual of each combination of Council Tax and Social Care Precept options
- Request for details of how increased payments to private landlords could be considered a saving
- Concern that some of the images may be intended to emotionally manipulate respondents to agree to higher Council Tax or Social Care Precept
- **Confusing information**
  - Confusion about the financial amounts needed and how much each Council Tax and Social Care Precept would raise
  - Difficulty understanding the key issues because of the amount of information provided
- **Accessibility and involving all communities:**
  - Concerns regarding the accessibility of the survey
  - Request for clearer communication in plain English, with concern that the amount and complexity of the information in the consultation may exclude less-heard groups
  - Worries that the survey may not reach certain demographics
  - Suggestions made to engage a wider community through local institutions such as libraries, community centres, and religious centres
- **Scepticism that the consultation would influence decision-making.**
  - Scepticism that the decisions about the budget would reflect the preferences expressed in the consultation feedback. Respondents expressed hope that the council would act on the survey feedback
  - Concerns expressed about the council's responsiveness, with references to past instances where respondents said feedback and petitions were not implemented
  - Call for transparency, with requests to publish survey results against actual decisions to demonstrate how the consultation has influenced decisions
- **Objection to being consulted.**
  - Requests not to be contacted again about council consultations
  - Requests that the council makes its own decisions instead of asking citizens.

## 6 Impact of the proposals because of protected characteristics

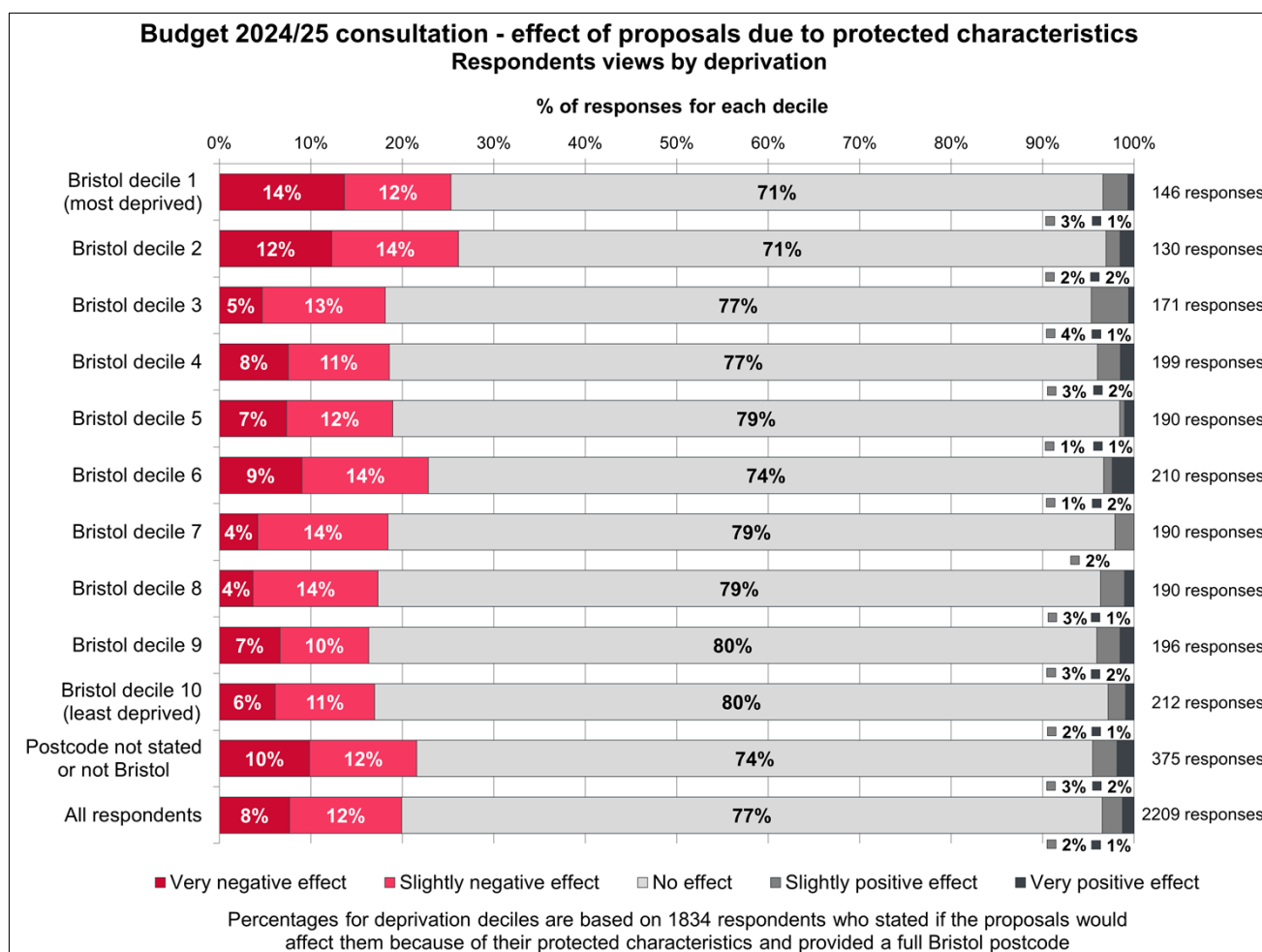
### 6.1 Scale of effects

Respondents were asked what effect, if any, the proposals would have on them because of their protected characteristics<sup>28</sup>. Of the 2,547 respondents to the survey, 2,209 (87%) answered the question. Of these:

- 170 (8%) said the proposals would have a very negative effect
- 270 (12%) said the proposals would have a slightly negative effect
- 1,692 (77%) said the proposals would have no effect
- 49 (2%) said the proposals would have a slightly positive effect
- 28 (1%) said the proposals would have a very positive effect.

Answers to this question were also compared for respondents in areas with different levels of deprivation, to check for any significant differences in potential effects (Figure 27)

**Figure 27: Effect by deprivation of the proposals because of protected characteristics**



<sup>28</sup> The protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; race including colour; nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sex; gender reassignment; sexual orientation; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or on maternity leave.

Figure 27 shows the percentage of respondents from each deprivation decile who stated the extent of positive or negative effects on them because of their protected characteristics. This is based on the 1,834 Bristol respondents who stated the impact of the proposals and provided a full postcode. Figure 27 also shows the views of 375 people who did not provide a postcode or gave a non-Bristol postcode, and the aggregate views of all respondents.

Figure 27 shows that the proportion of respondents who think the proposals would have a very negative or slightly negative effect because of their protected characteristics is higher in the most deprived 20% of the city (deciles 1 and 2) than other areas. In deciles 1 and 2, 26% say the proposals would have a very negative or slightly negative effect. Decile 6 also has a higher-than-average proportion (23%) who anticipate very or slightly negative effects. For other deciles, the proportion who say the proposals would have a slightly negative or very negative effect ranges from 16% in decile 9 to 19% in deciles 4 and 5.

In every decile, fewer people anticipate very positive or slightly positive effects than negative effects. The proportion of respondents who think the proposals would have a very positive or slightly positive effect because of their protected characteristics ranges from 2% in deciles 5 and 7 to 5% in decile 3. There is no clear pattern in views about positive effects between areas of high and low deprivation.

Note that percentages in Figure 27 are shown to the nearest whole number and may appear not to add up to 100% due to rounding. For example, the percentages for postcode not stated (10%, 12%, 74%, 3%, 2%) appear to add up to 101%. This may similarly affect totals for 'very negative effect' and 'slightly negative effect' in the text.

## **6.2 Reasons why the proposals would affect people because of protected characteristics**

Respondents were also asked to explain how they believe the proposals would have an impact on themselves or others. The 217 respondents who provided a free text response, highlighted the following impacts.

### **Financial difficulty and impact of rising costs**

30% of the 217 respondents to the question described financial difficulty and the impact of rising costs. These included:

- Concerns about increased living costs and inability to manage additional expenses, especially Council Tax rises. This was a concern particularly for low-income households
- Specific groups, including retirees, young people, and those on fixed incomes, highlighted the strain of rising expenses. For example:
  - Additional Council Tax rises would be particularly challenging for retired individuals who have limited income, especially due to fixed pension rates
  - Issues of financial strain, difficulty in affording housing, and saving for the future were highlighted, particularly for younger individuals
- Criticism directed towards the proposals, with calls for support for struggling families and scepticism about the benefits derived from increased taxes.

### **Concerns about the impact on specific demographic groups**

18% of the 217 respondents to the question cited concerns about impacts on specific demographic groups. These included:

- Challenges highlighted for specific groups - including single parents, carers, those on maternity leave, women, LGBT+ individuals, foreign nationals, single occupants, and those on limited benefits facing financial difficulties - indicating potential negative impacts of increased taxes on their budgets and lives
- Concerns raised by single parents, disabled individuals, and those on fixed pensions about their vulnerability to cost increases in general
- Concerns about financial impacts due to individual circumstances such as age, employment, and fixed income, indicating potential disproportionate burdens
- Criticisms related to gender disparities, especially concerning pay gaps and the differential treatment of households based on marital or partnership status.

### **Concerns about the disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and minority groups**

17% of the 217 respondents to the question stated their concerns about disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and minority groups. These included:

- Concerns raised by disabled individuals and carers regarding increased living expenses, financial strain, and limitations in accessing support services. Issues highlighted include:
  - difficulties in managing everyday costs, transportation expenses, and energy needs due to disabilities
  - Challenges in accessing specialised support, private school costs
  - disparities in societal assistance despite paying taxes
- Calls for increased funding and improvements in provisions for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and social care for disabled individuals and families
- Concerns about how protected characteristics might lead to indirect discrimination
- Financial impact on ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals due to existing gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

### **Concerns about council governance, decisions and the consultation**

12% of the 217 respondents to the question mentioned concerns about council governance, decisions and the consultation. These included:

- Criticisms about the distribution of funds, perceived inefficiencies in council services, perceived mis-spending of money, and concerns about governance competency
- Criticism of high Council Tax rates – which were attributed to inefficient council services - and the impact this has on the personal funds of hardworking individuals
- Opposition to tax increases

- Scepticism regarding the consultation process and distrust towards proposed policies and their implementation
- Frustration over a perceived lack of responsiveness to community needs and preferences
- Lack of trust in the decision-making process
- Accusations of enabling victimisation and catering to minority groups
- Calls for policies which represent the majority's interests and concerns.

### **Concerns about the impact of service cuts on the community and public services**

9% of the 217 respondents to the question raised concerns about the impact of cuts to services on the community and public services, and their priorities for funding services. These included:

- Respondents emphasising the importance of social care for older people within the community
- Concerns about infrastructure issues like uneven pavements, potholes, and parking hindrances which disproportionately affect those with mobility issues
- Anticipation of rising living expenses and declining service quality
- Dependence on public services such as the NHS for health needs
- Worries about potential service cuts affecting maternity leave experiences, libraries, and community activities
- Willingness to pay for better local authority services despite limited income
- Recognition of the need for increased funding in social services and education but anticipating impacts on personal care availability.

### **Accessibility, equality and fairness**

6% of respondents to the question cited issues regarding accessibility, equality and fairness. These included:

- Criticism of equality measures which they consider meritless and causing division and isolation
- Questioning the council's focus on protected characteristics and whether the Equality Act is of wider concern to majority of citizens
- Criticism of positive discrimination and targeted campaigns, including scepticism of criteria for social support, alleging favouritism
- Advocacy for gender-neutral cost considerations, prioritising education
- Acknowledgment of negative impacts on various lower-income groups: families, people on maternity leave, disabled individuals, elderly people, and students
- Linking equality to inclusivity and how this can benefit citizens by creating a hospitable environment
- Concerns about unequal treatment based on marital status and the financial implications of different household structures.

### **Concerns about the impact on health and wellbeing**

3% of respondents to the question stated concerns about the impact of higher costs and reduced services on health and wellbeing. These included:

- The impact of increased costs on mental health and anxiety about financial stability
- Impact of reduced disposable income on maintaining health and wellbeing, especially for those with disabilities or health conditions
- Significant decline in wellbeing services over the last few years
- Concerns about potential charges or reduced care for those with mental health conditions
- Impact on mental health of cutting services like swimming pools and libraries.

### **Uncertain impact**

3% of respondents to the question said they were unsure about the impact of the proposals.

### **No impact**

2% of respondents to the question re-iterated that the proposals would have no impact on them because of their protected characteristics.

## 7 How will this report be used?

The consultation feedback summarised in this report has been taken into consideration by officers when developing final proposals for the 2024/25 budget, including the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept and proposals to save money and generate income.

The final proposals are included in a separate report which, together with this consultation report, will be considered by Cabinet on 23 January 2024.

Full Council will take into consideration this consultation report and responses in making its decisions about the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept and how much money the council will be able to spend on each service area, as part of the 2024/25 budget. These decisions will be taken at the Full Council meeting on 20 February 2024.

### How can I keep track?

You can find the latest consultation and engagement surveys online on the council's Consultation and Engagement Hub ([www.ask.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.ask.bristol.gov.uk)). You can also sign up to receive automated email notifications about consultations and engagement at [www.bristol.gov.uk/askbristolnewsletter](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/askbristolnewsletter)

Decisions related to the proposals in this consultation will be made publicly at the Full Council meeting on 20 February 2024.

You can find forthcoming meetings and their agendas at [democracy.bristol.gov.uk](http://democracy.bristol.gov.uk).

Any decisions made by Full Council and Cabinet will also be shared at [democracy.bristol.gov.uk](http://democracy.bristol.gov.uk)