

Budget Survey Report 2018

Methodology

The survey was open between 24th September and 4th November 2018. It was promoted online through the Council's website and our social media channels. Residents who have signed up for consultation reminders were notified and sent an invitation to participate in the consultation. An incentive of entering a prize draw for £50 of shopping vouchers was offered to encourage responses.

A total of 870 people responded to the survey. The results in this report have been weighted by age and gender based on the population in the ONS mid-year population estimates 2017. Based on Maidstone's population aged 18 years and over this means overall results are accurate to 3.3% at the 95% confidence level.

However, the under-representation of 18 to 34 year olds means that high weights have been applied to responses in this group, therefore results for this group should be treated with caution. It should also be noted that respondents from BME backgrounds are slightly under-represented at 4.9% compared 5.9%¹ in the local area.

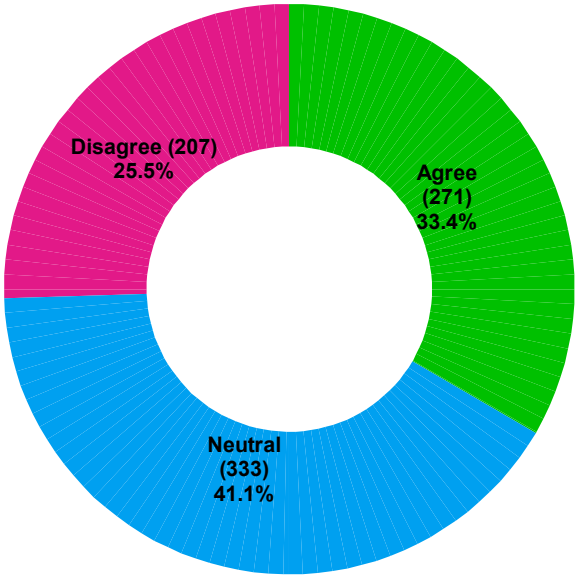
Please note not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall.

Summary Findings

- There has been a 3.2% increase in the proportion of responding positively when asked if they agree or disagree if the Council provides Value for Money.
- The top three priorities are:
 - Well connected safe and empowered communities
 - Better transport systems
 - Great environmental quality
- For mandatory services respondents would like more spent on Community Safety and less on Democratic and Electoral Services.
- For discretionary services respondents would like more spent on Parks and Open Spaces and less on Members' facilities.
- The majority of respondents said Environmental Services was most important to them.
- As with the 2017 Resident Survey the preferred approach to balancing the budget is to provide fewer discretionary services.

¹ 2011 Census

Value for Money



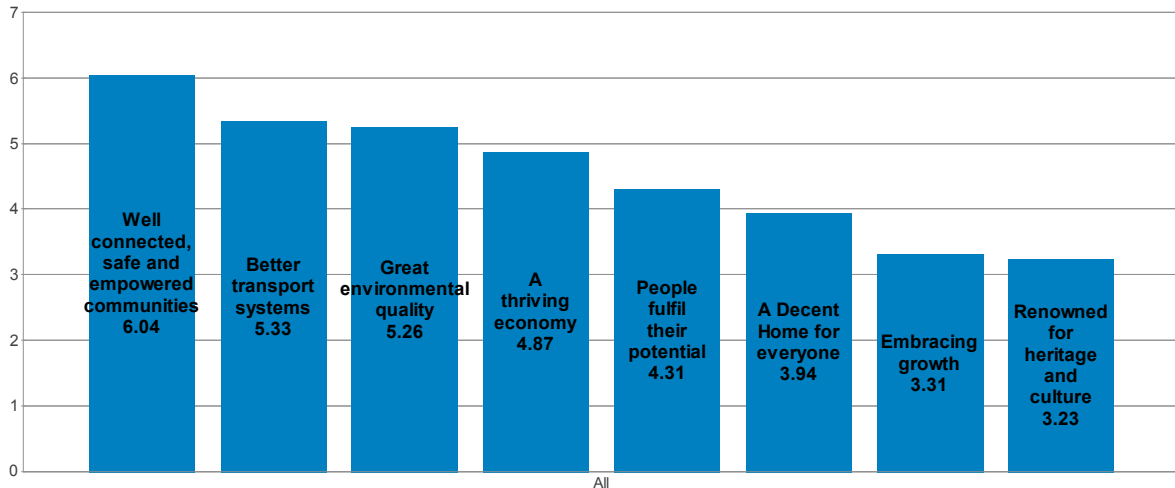
Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that Maidstone Borough Council provides value for money. The questionnaire contained a pie chart illustrating what proportion of Council tax is received by each agency.

The most common response was neither agree nor disagree.

The data shows that respondents aged 65 years had lower proportions responding dissatisfied than the other age groups with 18.8% responding this way.

We previously asked residents this question in the 2017 resident survey and 30.2% of respondents agreed. This year's result shows an improvement on the 2017 figure of 3.2%. This is positive as this increase is a result of fewer people responding disagree (the proportions responding with no strong opinion either way has only changed by 0.1%).

Which of the following priorities are most important to you?

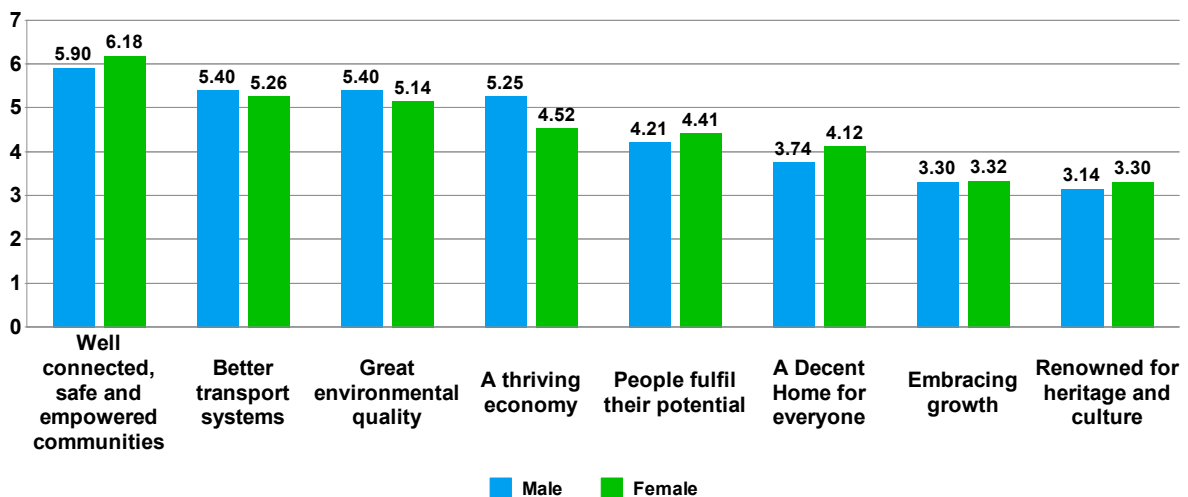


Respondents were asked to put the list of priorities in order of preference. In order to assess this data a weighted average has been used with the priorities placed as first receiving eight points and the priority ranked last given 1 point. These are then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.

Overall, just over half of all responders placed ‘Well connected, safe and empowered communities’ as being the most important or second most important priority and 44% placed ‘Renowned for heritage and culture’ as either seventh or eighth.

The charts below show the difference in response levels for this question between demographic groups.

Priority by gender



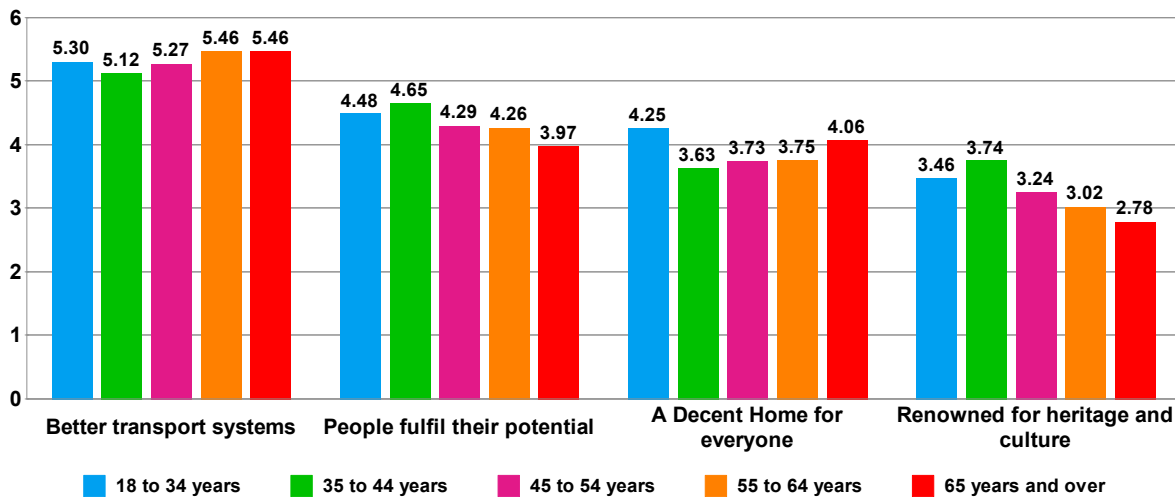
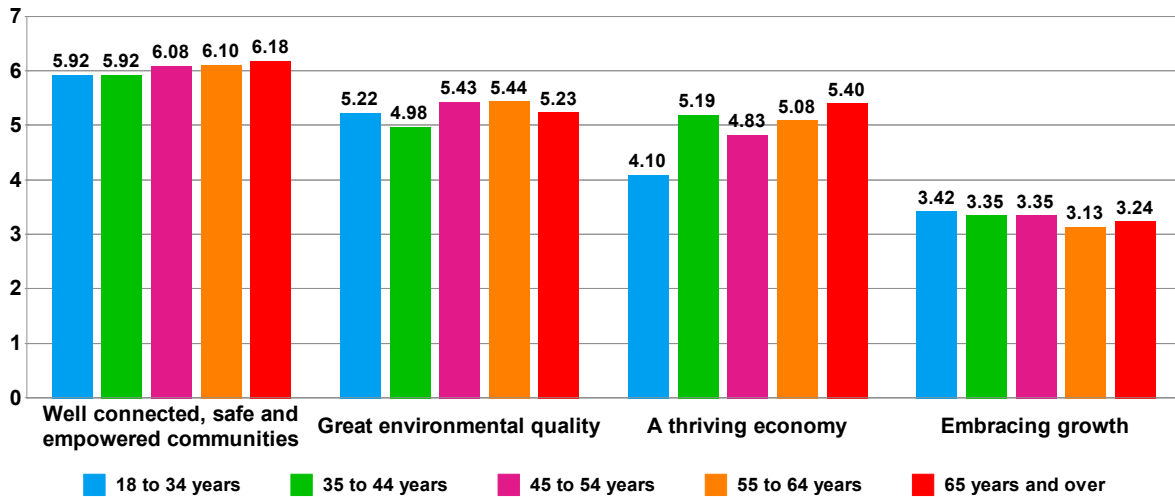
The chart above shows that the profile of responses is broadly the same for both men and women with the priorities ranked in the same order for both sexes. There are some slight differences between the two groups: men were more likely than women to rank a thriving economy higher with 49% selecting this as one of their top three priorities compared to 35.3% of female respondents.

Priority by Age

The charts below show priority ranking by age group.

The priority of ‘Well connected, safe and empowered communities’ was the highest ranked priority for all age groups. In addition ‘Better transport systems’ appeared in each group’s top three priorities and ‘Great Environmental Quality’ appears in each group’s top four.

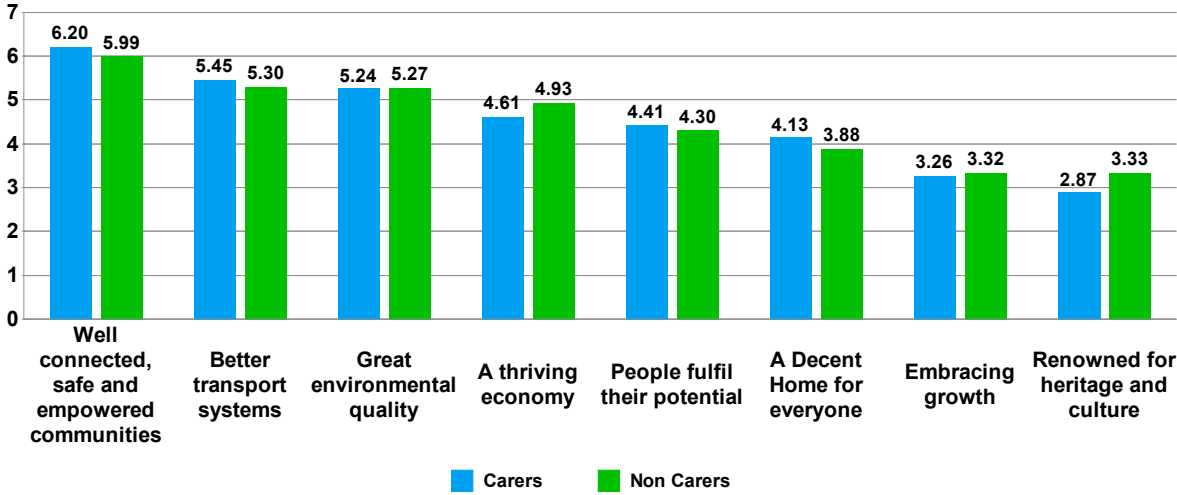
Heritage was ranked bottom by the age groups aged 45 years and over, but was rated sixth by the 35 to 44 years groups.



Priority by Carer Responsibility

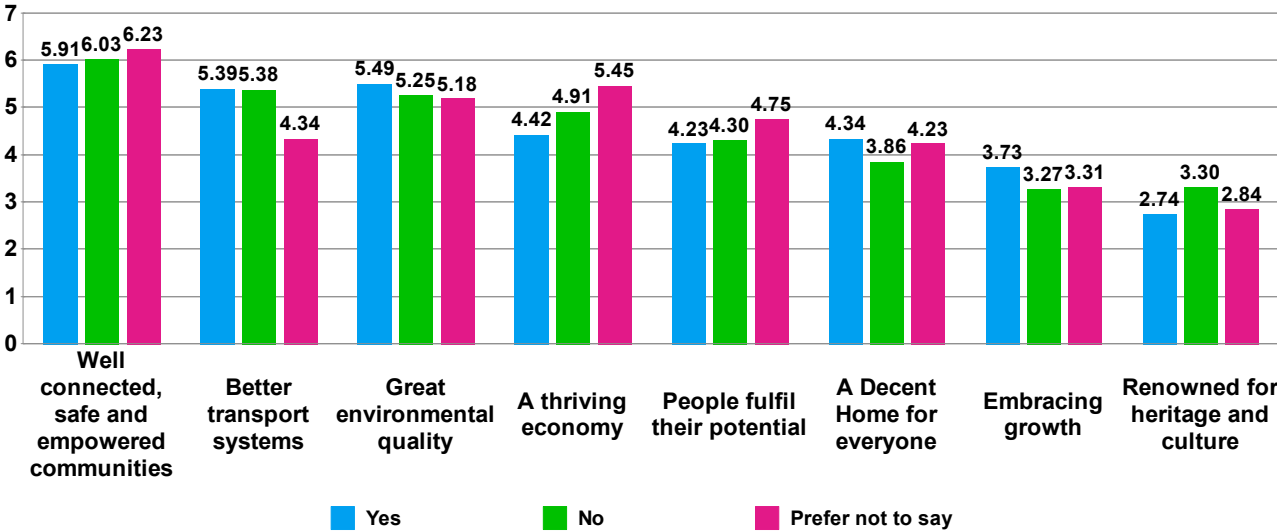
Although the profile of the ranking of priorities is in line with the overall result the data shows respondents with caring responsibilities tended to give a higher ratings to ‘Well connected, safe and empowered communities’ and ‘A Decent Home for Everyone’ than those who do not have any caring responsibilities.

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Priority by Disability

The priorities at the top and bottom of the scale remain the same for respondents with a disability. The data shows that respondents with a disability gave ‘Great Environmental Quality’ and ‘A Decent Home for Everyone’ a higher rating than respondents without a disability.

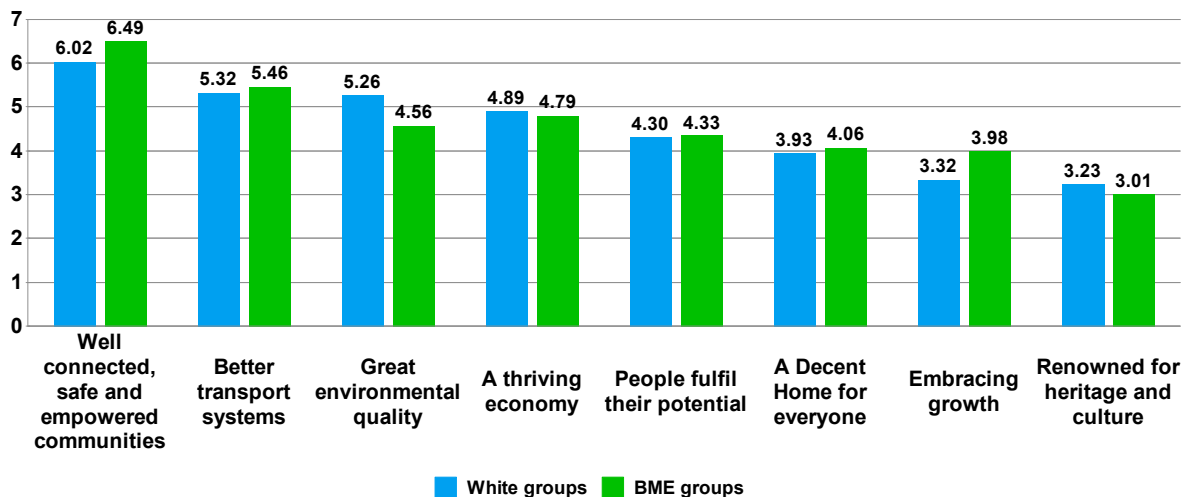


Priority by Ethnicity

As with disability and carers there is no change in the priorities that are first and last between respondents from white groups and respondents from BME groups.

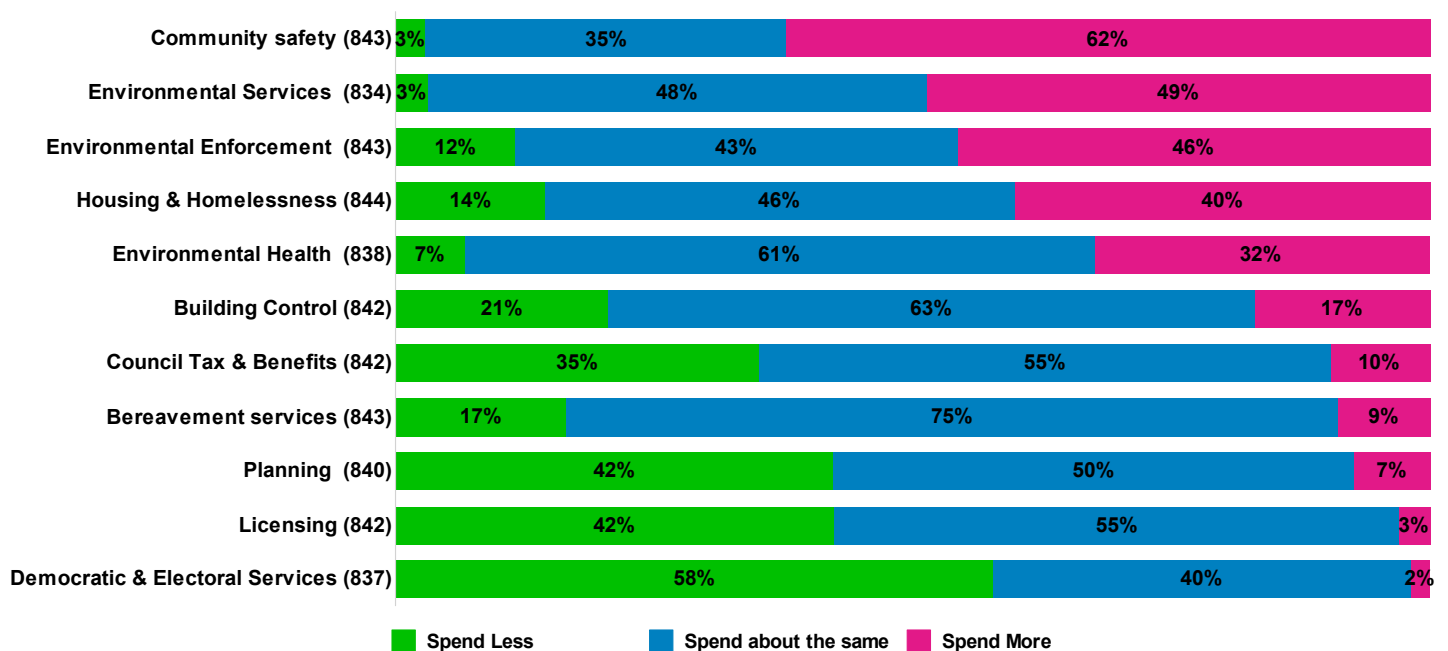
Respondents from White groups rated ‘Great environmental quality’ higher than those from BME groups and respondents from BME groups rated ‘Embracing growth’ higher than respondents from White groups. However the results for BME groups should be treated with caution owing to the small sample.

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Spending – Mandatory Services

Respondents were given a list of mandatory services that the Council is required to provide and were asked if they thought there should be more or less or the same level of spending for that service going forward. The total number of respondents to each question is show in bracket next to the service name.



The top three services where respondents said the Council should spend less were Democratic & Electoral Services, Licensing and Planning.

For Democratic and Electoral Services respondents from White groups had a significantly greater proportion saying that the Council should 'Spend less' in this area than respondents from BME groups, with 58.9% responding this way compared to 28.3% of BME groups. Respondents that have carer responsibilities were slightly more likely than those without carer responsibilities to say more should be spent in this area with 4.4% answering this way compared to 1.1% of non-carers.

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For Licensing, as with Democratic & Electoral Services, there is a difference in response levels between those from BME groups and those from White groups, with 43.3% of White groups saying 'Spend Less' and 26.1% of those from BME answering in the same way.

In relation to planning the data indicates Male respondents had a greater proportion saying 'Spend more' and Female respondents had a greater proportion responding 'Spend less' than their counterparts, however the greatest proportional response for both groups was 'Spend about the same'.

Bereavement Services, Building Control and Environmental Health had the greatest proportion of respondents saying that the Council should spend about the same.

Across all the different demographic groups the majority of respondents in each responded 'Spend about the same'. The data does show some variation; Women were more likely than men to respond 'Spend more' with 12.7% of women responding this way compared to 5.0% of men. The same is true for Carers versus Non-Carers with 13.1% of Carers saying the Council should spend more in this area compared to 7.8% of Non-carers.

There were no significant variations in the response levels across the demographic groups for Building Control, with the majority of each demographic group responding 'Spend about the same'. Respondents aged 65 years and over had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend more' with 23.4% answering this way and respondents with a disability had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend less' at 27.0%.

For Environmental Health, across all demographic groups, the majority of respondents answered 'Spend about the same'. The data indicates some differences between the age groups with the 35 to 44 years group having a greatest proportion responding 'Spend less' compared to respondents age 55 years and over with 10.5% answering this way.

Community Safety, Environmental Services and Environmental enforcement had the greatest proportions of respondents answering 'Spend more'.

Community Safety had the greatest proportion of respondents saying the Council should 'Spend more' in this area, with the majority of each demographic group responding this way. Female respondents had the greatest proportion saying that the Council should 'Spend more' in this area at 65.0% and male respondents had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend less' at 4.8%. The data also indicates that the difference in proportions of Carers and Non-carers responding 'Spend less' is significant, with response levels of 0.4% and 3.6% respectively. Although the sample of respondents from BME groups was too small to make any valid comparisons there were no respondents in this group that said the Council should 'Spend less' in this area.

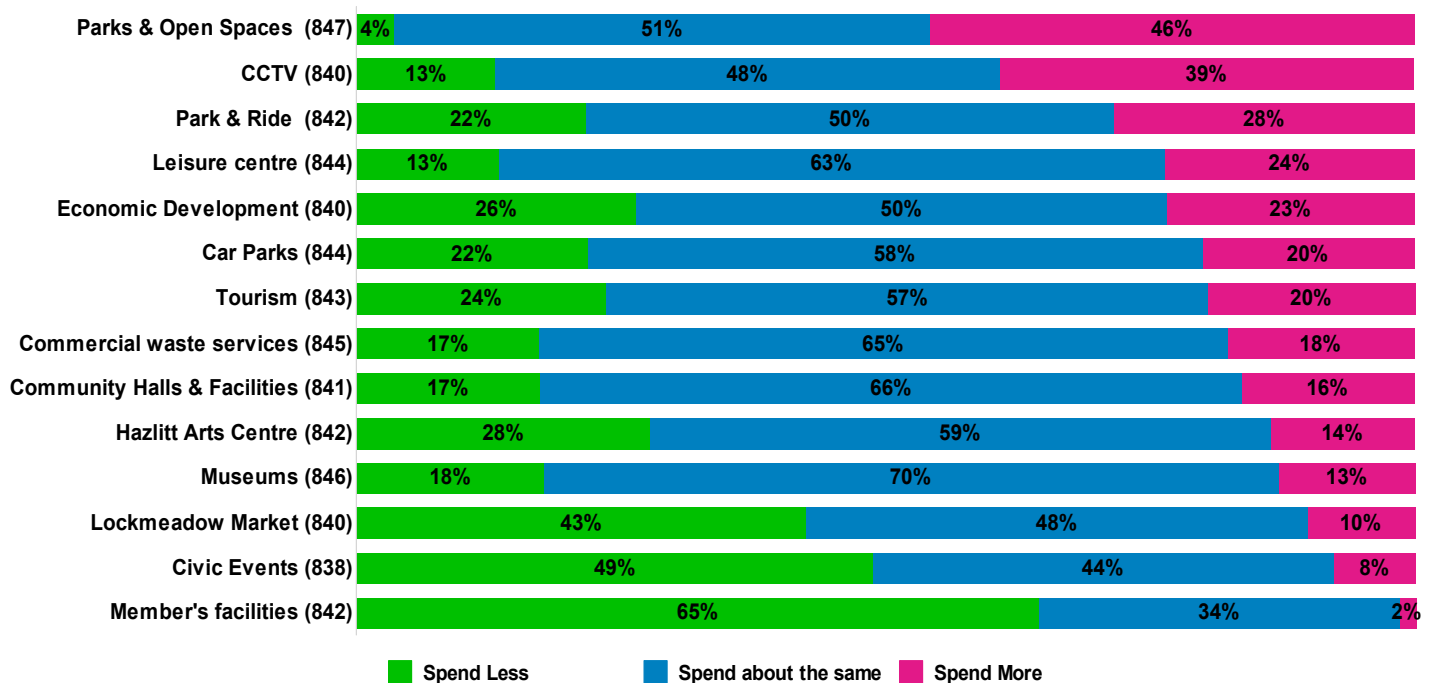
While Environmental Services had the second greatest proportion responding 'Spend more', the response to this question was fairly evenly split between 'Spend more' with 48.6% and 'Spend about the same' with 48.3%. Across all demographic groups the 35 to 44 years age group had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend more' at 56.0% and the 45 to 54 years had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend less' at 5.0%. As with Community Safety although the sample of respondents from BME groups was too small to make any valid comparisons there were no respondents in this group that said the Council should 'Spend less' in this area.

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For Environmental Enforcement the data shows that there is a significant difference in response levels between men and women with a greater proportion of women responding 'Spend less' at 14.3% compare to 8.7%. The difference between those responding 'Spend less' aged 35 to 44 years and those responding this way aged 65 years and over is significantly different with the younger group having a greater proportion that responded 'Spend less' than those aged 65 years and over at 16.3% compared to 5.8%, however almost identical proportions of these groups say 'Spend more' at 50.0% and 49.9% respectively. .

Spending – Discretionary Services

Respondents were presented with a list of discretionary services that the Council are not required to provide, but are currently being provided by the Council and were asked if they thought there should be more or less or the same level of spending for that service going forward. The total number of respondents to each question is show in bracket next to the service name.



The top three services where respondents said the Council should spend less were Members' Facilities, Civic Events and Lockmeadow Market.

More than six out ten respondents said there should be less spending on Members' facilities, the majority of respondents across all demographic groups responded this way. The 55 to 64 years group had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend less' at 78.0%. There were no respondents aged 65 years and over or with a disability that said the Council should 'Spend more' in this area.

Just under half of all respondents said that the Council should 'Spend less' on Civic Events, across the demographic groups there were three where the majority of respondents said 'Spend less' there were; Carers (57.3%), 55 to 64 years (63.4%) and 65 years and over (60.9%). Respondents from BME groups had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend about the same' at 68.8% and respondents age 18 to 34 years had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend more' at 12.9% however due to invalid sample sizes the significance of these differences are untested.

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Just over four in ten respondents said that the Council should 'Spend less' on Lockmeadow Market. The 55 to 64 years groups had the greatest proportion responding this way at 50.0%. The data shows that the difference between response levels for men and women is significant. The data show that men may value or use the market less than women with 48.7% saying spending should be reduced compared to 36.5% of women.

Museums, Community Halls & Facilities and Commercial waste services had the greatest proportions responding that the Council should 'Spend about the same'.

Seven out ten respondents said funding for the Museum should remain about the same, the majority of people responded this way across all the demographic groups. Respondents with a disability had the greatest proportion stating that the Council should 'Spend less' on Museums at 27.4% and the data indicates the difference answering this way between respondents with a disability and those without is significant. This suggests that museums are a lower priority for this group.

Overall, 66% of respondents said that funding should remain about the same. The majority of respondents across demographic groups said that the Council should 'Spend about the same' on Community Halls and Facilities. The data shows that the difference between response levels for men and women is significant. The data show that men may value or use Community Halls and Facilities less than women with 20.4% saying spending should be reduced compared to 14.6% of women. Community Halls often host various community activities such as exercise classes, crèches, hobby and support groups; some of these activities are more frequently attended by women. It also shows the difference in proportions of Carers and Non-carer responding 'Spend more' is significant with Carers having a greater proportion answering this way at 23.0% compared to 14.3% for Non-careers.

Overall, 65% of respondents said that funding should remain about the same for Commercial Waste services. The majority of respondents across all demographic groups responded this way. Female respondents had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend about the same' across all the demographic groups and Males responders had the greatest proportion responding 'Spend less' at 22.6%. The data indicates that the difference in proportions responding 'Spend less' between men and women is significant - 12.3% of female respondents answered this way.

Parks & Open Spaces, CCTV and Park & Ride had the greatest proportions of respondent saying that funding should be increased.

Overall, 46% of respondents said that the Council should 'Spend more' on Parks & Open Spaces. Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the greatest proportion saying that funding in this area should be increased at 58.7% and respondents with a disability had the greatest proportion saying that spending in this area should be reduced at 8.9%.

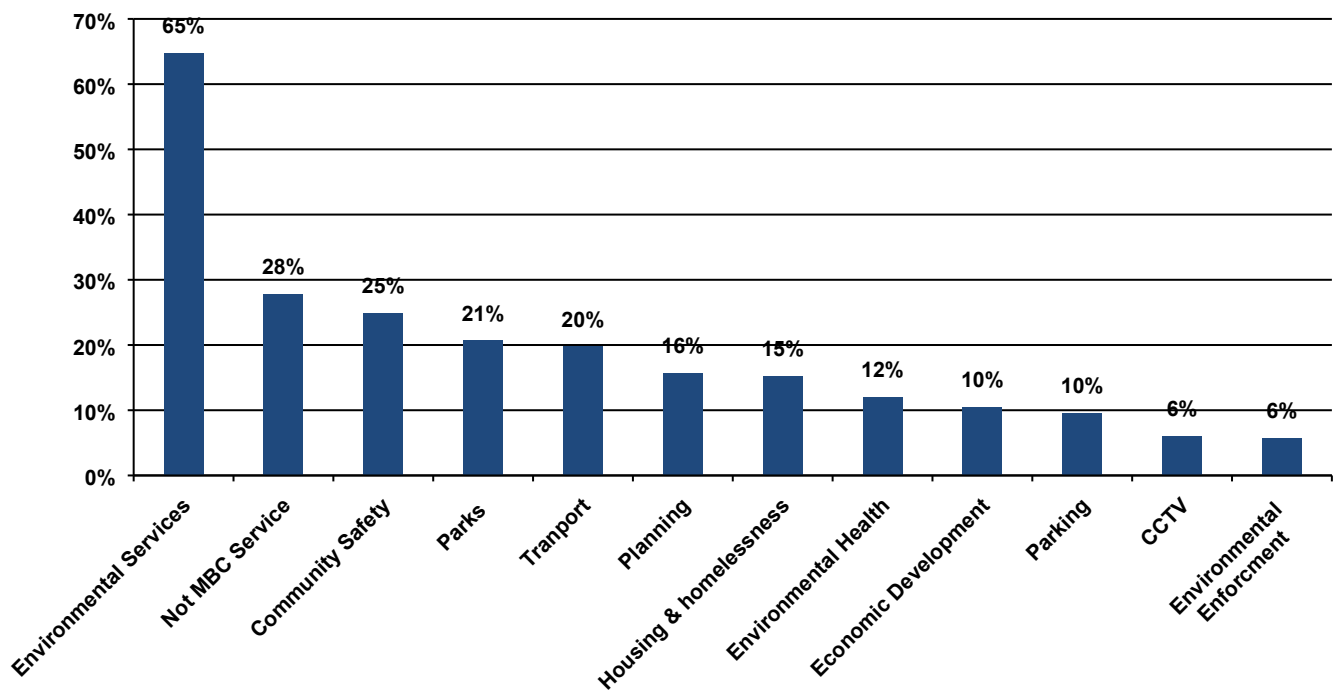
CCTV had the second greatest proportion of respondents that said 'Spend more' with just under four in ten people responding this way. Testing on the response to this service from men and women shows the differences between these groups are significant suggesting each group may have different motivations for their views. Women had a greater proportion than men responding 'Spend more' at 44.4% compared to 33.5% and male respondents had a greater proportion responding 'Spend less' at 16.9% compared to 9.6% for female respondents. Community Safety was the top mandatory services in terms of increasing spending for mandatory services, both of these services having high rates of people saying to increase spending may indicate that people do not feel safe.

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Overall, 28% of respondent said that the Council should 'Spend more' on Park & Ride. Recent changes to the service introduced 'pay to park' which meant that people with Older person's Bus passes could no longer use them on this service. It is this group, the 65 years and over, that have the greatest proportion responding 'Spend more' at 42.6%. The data suggests an age trend with the proportion of people responding 'Spend more' increasing with age. The majority of women said funding should remain the same whereas there was no majority response from male respondents.

Important Services

All survey respondents were given a free text box and asked to state which three services are most important to them. The services which received 50 or more mentions are shown in the chart below.



Environmental services was the most frequently mentioned with 65% of respondent stating this is one of their top three most important services.

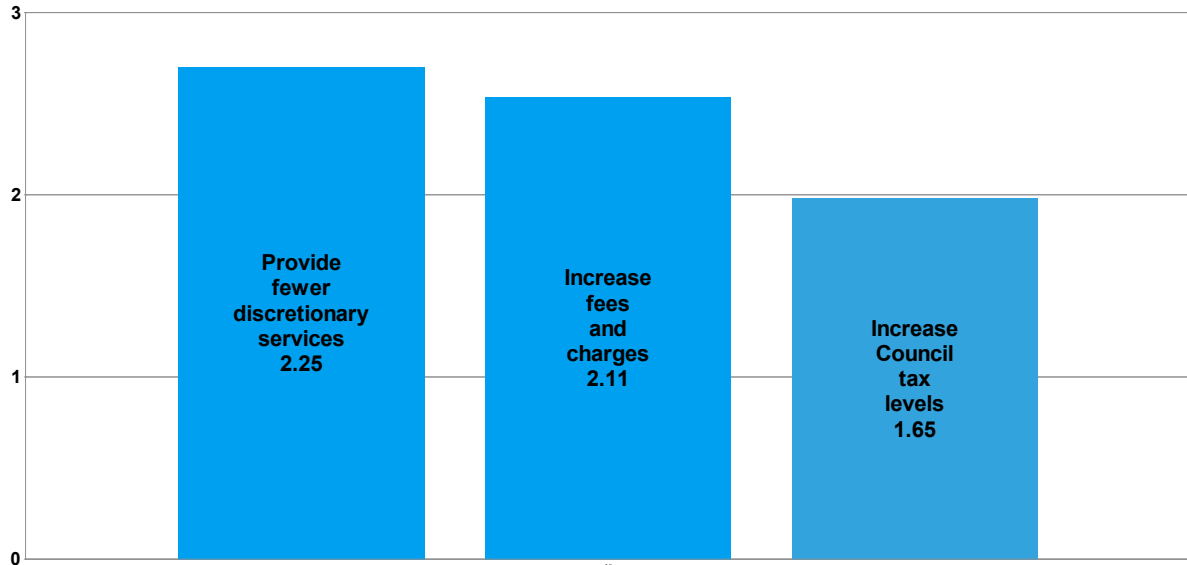
More than a quarter of respondents mentioned a service that is not provided by Maidstone Borough Council, the most common being road maintenance, but there were also people who mentioned the police, health services and adult and children's social services. As these are not MBC services, it suggests there is still some confusion amongst residents about which organisation is responsible for delivering what.

A quarter of respondents mentioned Community Safety and a further 6% mentioned CCTV. Considering responses to other areas of the survey it is clear that Community Safety is a service that residents believe is a high priority on which the Council should spend more.

The top three mandatory services and the top three discretionary services where survey respondents said the Council should 'Spend more' all appear in the services that got 50 or more mentions.

Approaches to balancing the Council’s budget

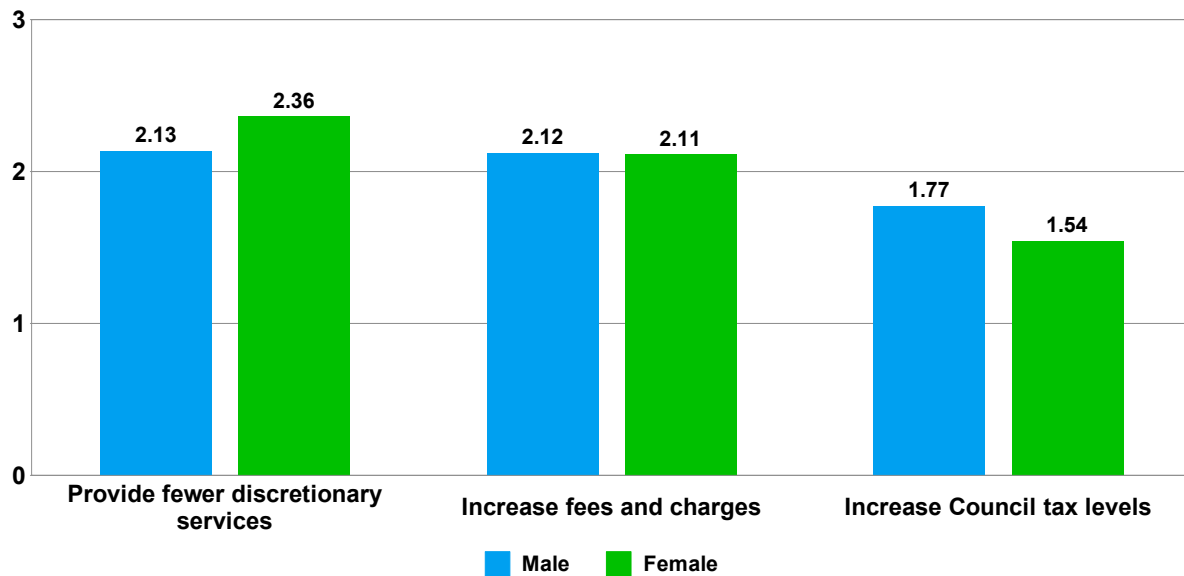
Respondents were asked to put the approaches to balancing the budget in order of preference. In order to assess this data a weighted average has been used with the approach placed as first receiving three points and the approach ranked last is given one point. These are then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.



Overall, ‘Providing fewer discretionary services’ was the most preferred option and ‘Increase Council tax levels’ was the least preferred option. The charts below show the differences between different demographic groups.

A similar question was asked in the 2017 Resident Survey in which respondents were asked to select which out of four options was their preferred approach to balancing the Council’s budget. The result of this were that 61.0% of respondents said that MBC should prioritise stopping delivery of non-essential services in order to balance the budget, 19% said that we should increase fee and charges for services to balance the budget and 16.4% said we should increase council tax (there was a fourth option to provide services less frequently or to a lower standard which 3% of respondents selected).

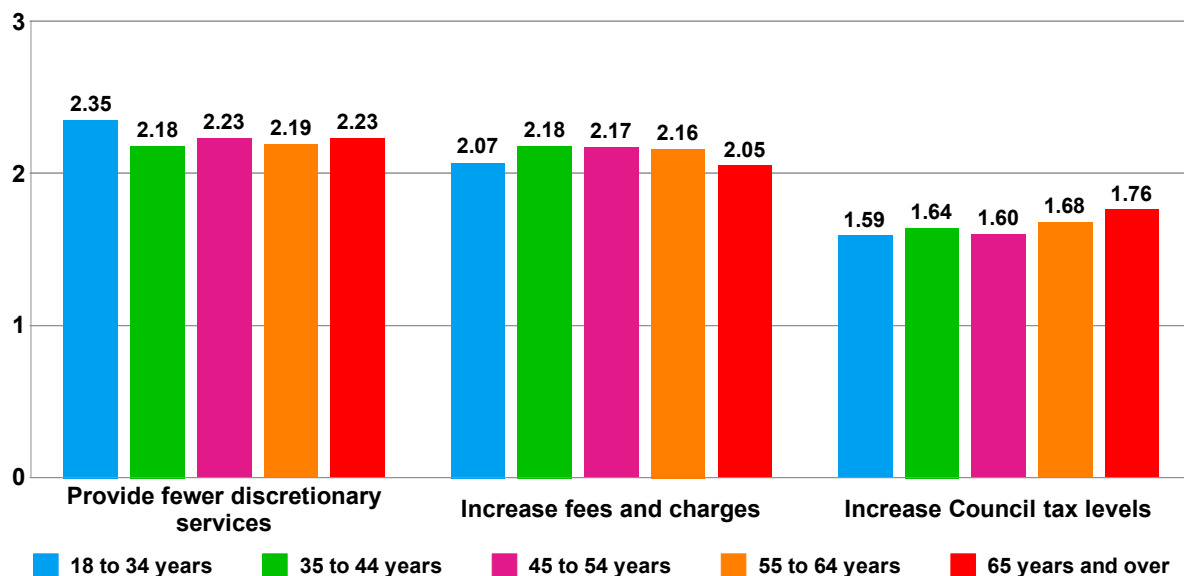
Priority by Gender



The response profile for men and women matches the overall result in terms of priority order. The data shows there is very little difference in the rating between genders to ‘providing fewer discretionary services’ and ‘increase fees and charges’. It also shows more women rated ‘provide fewer discretionary services’ higher than men with 57% of women ranking this approach as first compared to 45% of men. Just over a quarter of male respondents ranked ‘Increase Council Tax levels’ as their preferred approach compared to 16% of women respondents.

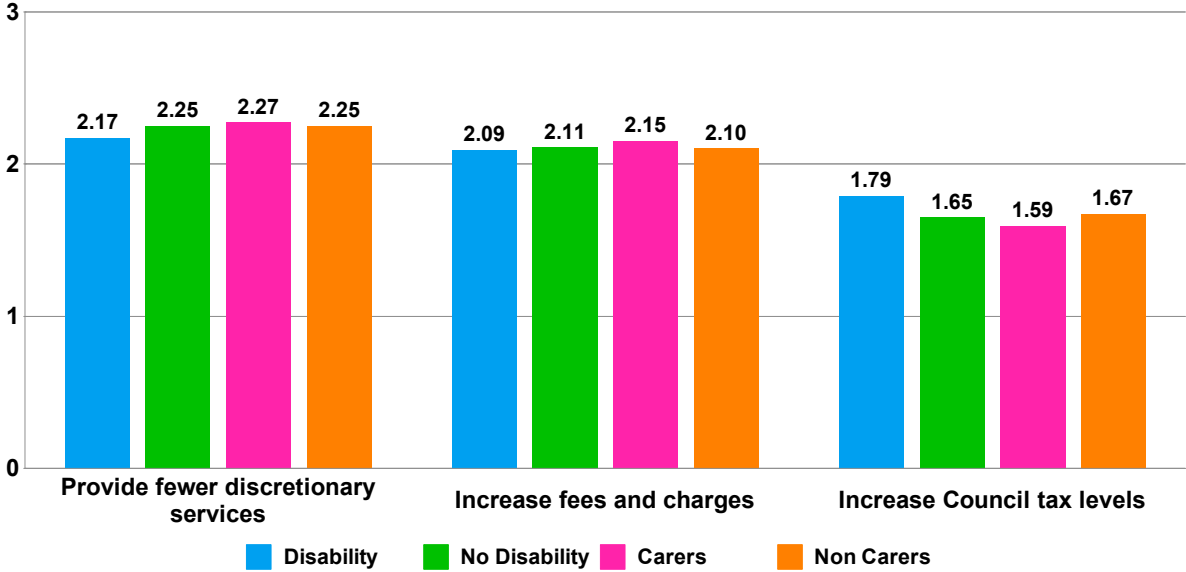
Priority by age

Again across the age groups the order of ranking has not changed from the overall results, in terms of preferred approach.



The data shows that the 35 to 44 years ranking was split between ‘Provide fewer discretionary services’ and ‘Increase fees and charges’ however it should be noted that the there was a greater proportion of this groups that put ‘Provide fewer discretionary service’ as first (51%) than put ‘Increase fees and charges’ first (30.4%).

Priority by Disability & Carer Responsibility



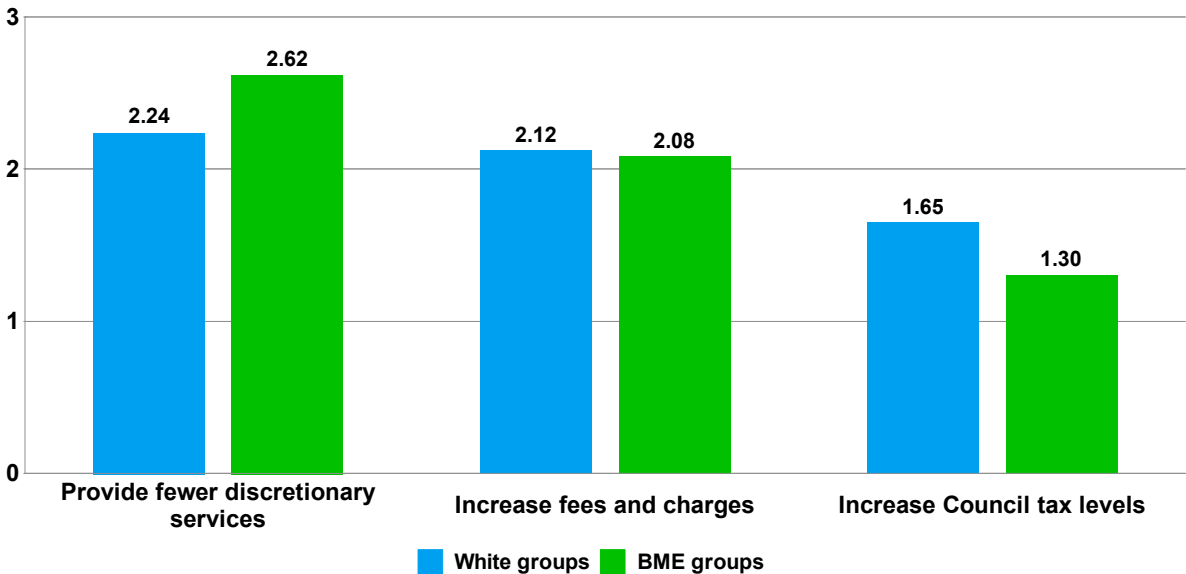
For both respondents with and without a disability and those with and without carer responsibilities the order of ranking has not changed from the overall results, in terms of preferred approach.

Respondents with a disability had a lower proportion ranking ‘Provide fewer discretionary service’ as first, with 44% responding this way compared to 51% of respondents without a disability. Those with a disability also had a greater proportion than those without a disability ranking ‘Increase council tax levels’ with 27% putting this approach first compared to 21% for respondents without a disability.

Respondents that are Carers had a greater proportion ranking ‘Increase Council tax levels’ and the least preferred option compared to those without caring responsibilities with 61% answering this way compared to 55% non-carers.

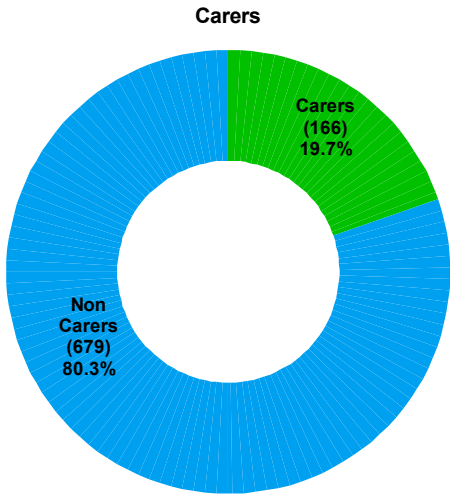
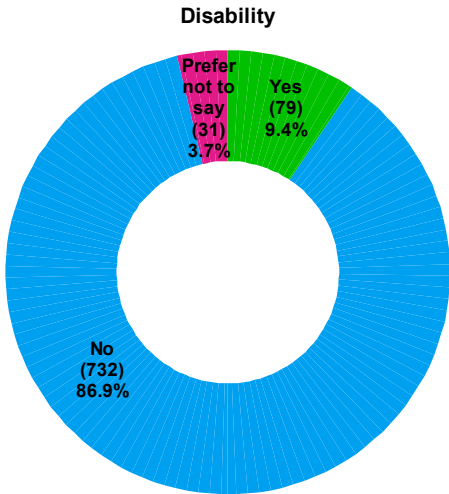
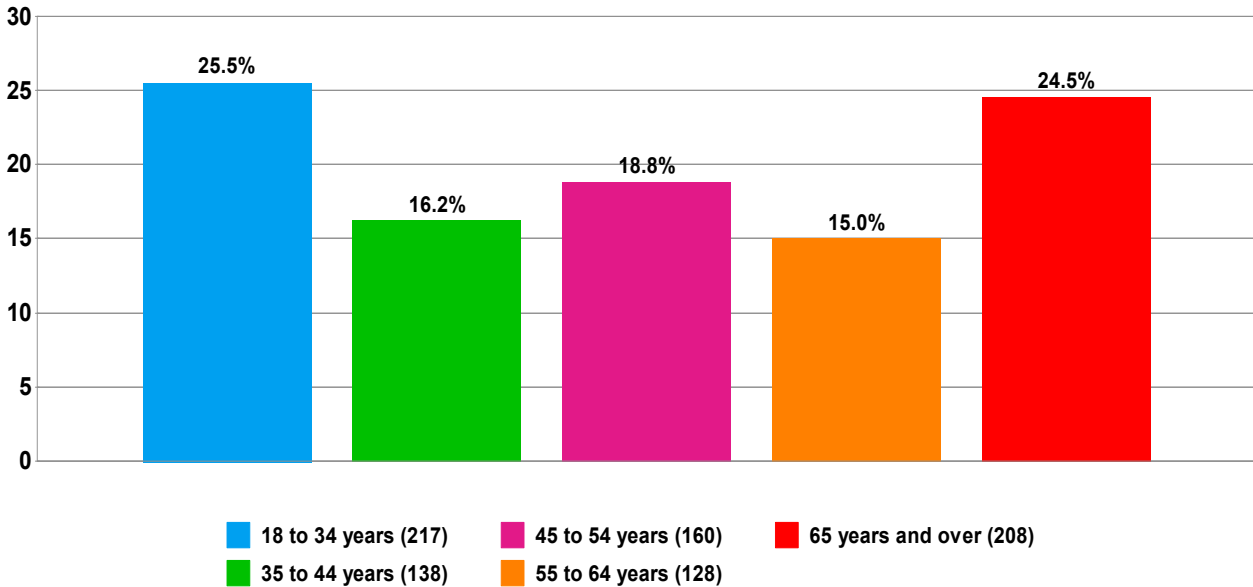
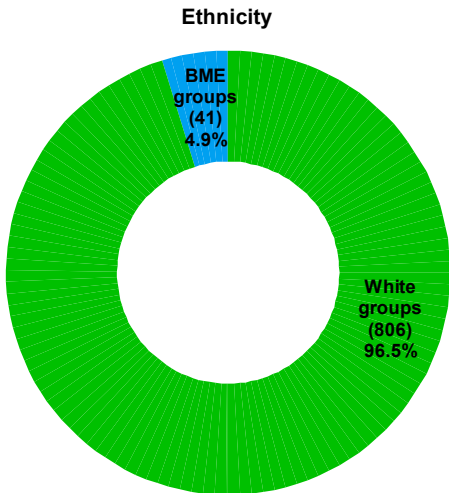
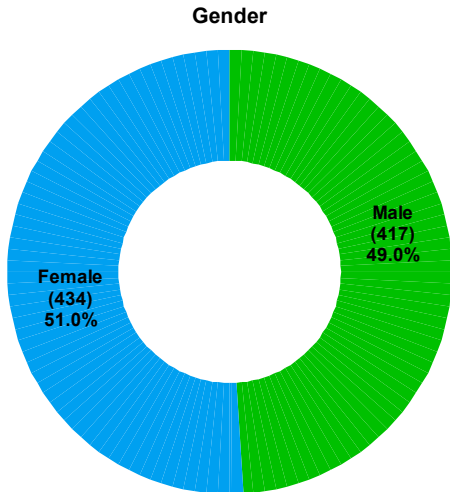
Ethnicity

Again the order of the approaches between these two groups is the same as the overall result. Although the data suggests differences between the way these two groups have responded the sample size for BME respondents is too small to make valid comparisons.



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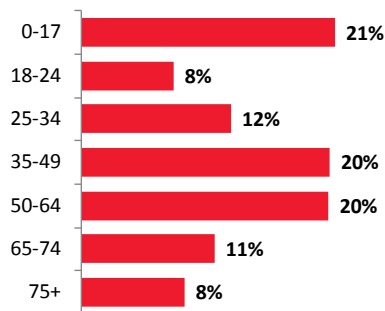
Survey Demographics (weighted by gender and age).



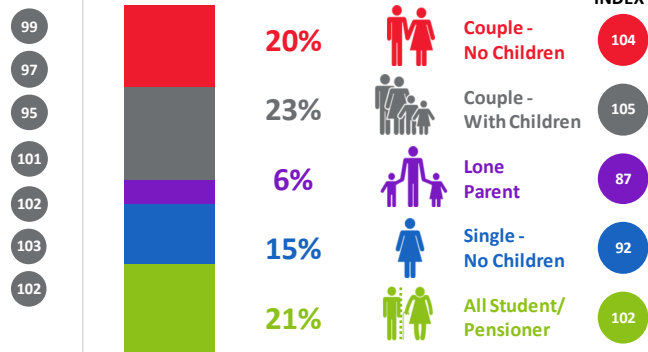
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Acorn Respondent Profile

AGE



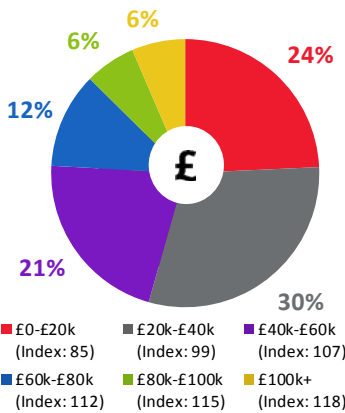
FAMILY



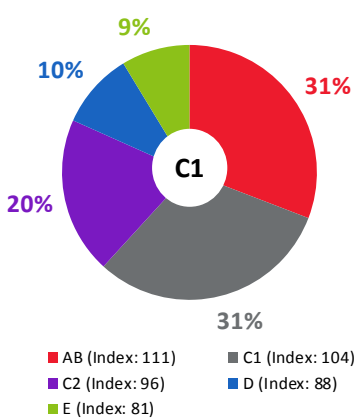
KEY INSIGHTS

- The average age of the population in the profiled households is slightly older when compared to the base.
- Households containing couples with children occur more in this profile than in the base.
- 6.5% of the profile live in households with an income of over £100k.
- The dominant Social Grade is C1 and the most over-represented is AB.
- There is a higher proportion of people in this profile who are self employed than in the base.

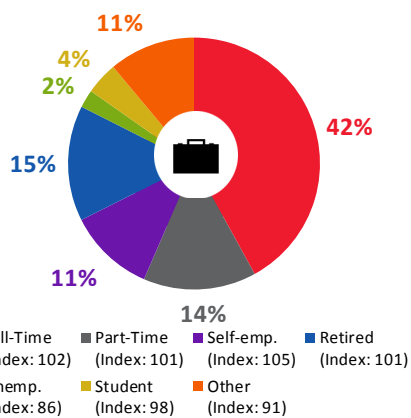
INCOME



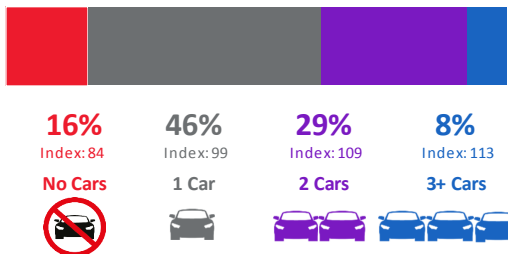
SOCIAL GRADE



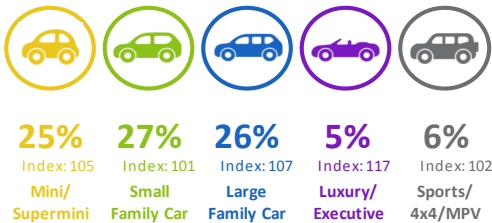
EMPLOYMENT



CARS



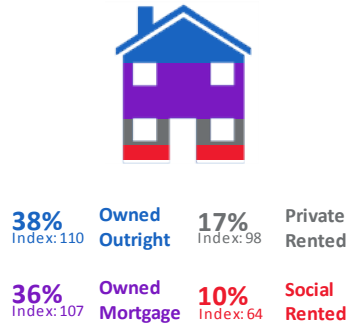
CAR TYPE



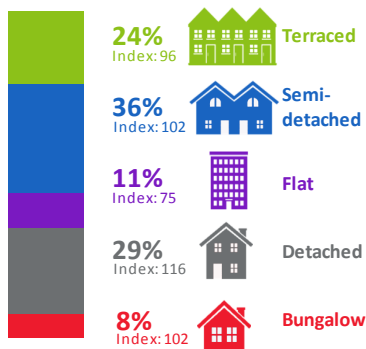
KEY INSIGHTS

- Most households will have access to a small family car.
- A higher proportion, in comparison to the base, are likely to have a luxury/executive car.
- Detached houses are 16.3% more likely than in the base.
- 37.6% of the households in the profile are likely to be owned outright.
- About 21% of households will have 4 bedrooms.
- The prevailing size is 2 people but households with 3-4 people appear more than in the base.

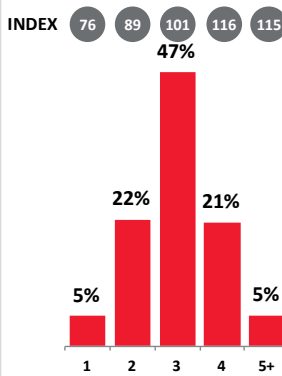
TENURE



TYPE



BEDROOMS



SIZE

