

Consultation
Three Rivers District Council

Three Rivers District Council Garden Waste Consultation

SUMMARY REPORT

October 2015

Background

Cuts in central government grant and restrictions on Council Tax increases necessitate a review by Three Rivers District Council on potential cuts to services or an exploration of new sources of income through additional charges.

All aspects of the Council's services are being looked at, including the Council's refuse and recycling services. The Council has a statutory duty to collect domestic refuse and recycling free of charge and are committed to providing a weekly collection for household recycling and food waste. However, councils are not *obliged* to collect garden waste. Three Rivers (and many other authorities) provide a free service, and are aware that it is well used and popular with residents. However, councils are increasingly making a charge for collecting garden waste – around a third of councils in England charge residents for the service - and some authorities do not offer a garden waste collection at all.

The Council is faced with a difficult decision about the future of garden waste collections. The options are limited: if it is to balance the budget it may be forced to either stop collecting garden waste altogether, or start charging for the service. Other possibilities, such as stopping winter collections only, would not make sufficient savings to cover the shortfall.

A consultation was devised and launched in order to inform the proposals put forward.

Objectives

The key objective of the consultation was as follows:

- to gauge whether a sufficient number of residents would be prepared to pay a small charge for the collection of their garden waste
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Methodology

A 'Survey Monkey' on-line survey was launched on Wednesday 30th September 2015 and closed at noon on Wednesday 21st October 2015. In total, 4169 survey entries were recorded, of which 184 were paper survey returns.

The survey was marketed throughout the district via the following channels:

- Press release, which featured in publications with high distribution (e.g. Watford Observer, Watford Free, local magazines) and associations (e.g. Residents Associations Thrive Homes, Parish Councils)
- E-newsletters (Environmental news: 352 contacts; Have Your Say: 583 contacts)
- Twitter (4,342 followers)
- Facebook
 - Abbots Langley: 252 followers
 - Maple Cross: 156 followers
 - South Oxhey: 192 followers
 - Rickmansworth: 304 followers
 - Croxley: 360 followers
 - Sarratt: 36 followers
- The survey appeared on Three Rivers District Council website – for the first week this appeared on the front page and then moved to the News section.
- Neighbourhood Watch, which has a very extensive following, emailed all its contacts
- An 'all council' email was sent to staff to respond and disseminate
- Paper surveys were sent to the following establishments (in order to target residents less likely to have access to the internet):
 - All the Parish Councils
 - Thrive Homes, Watford and Three Rivers Trust, Roundabout Transport, Watford Community Housing Trust, WRVS, Age UK, Ascend, Mill End Community Centre and Maple Cross Club
 - Customer Services Centre distributed paper questions on-site and on request from telephone/letter/email communication.
 - 10 copies were sent to each Three Rivers District Councillor (and the survey link was sent to their email address)

Respondent Profile

Profile information is recorded at the end of the report, but in summary:

- Respondents naturally fell in to the Three Rivers profile on **gender** (54% female) and **ethnicity** (83% White British).
- Interestingly there was an **older profile mix** on the survey profile versus the Three Rivers population overall – with **39%** of respondents being **65+ years or older**, in comparison to the **2011 census for Three Rivers**, which confirms a figure of **17% for 65+years** and older. In addition, respondents who are **retired** make up **39% of the survey profile**, in comparison to the **Three Rivers 2011 census figure of 22%**. This **dispels the concern that more mature residents would not have a voice on the consultation**, due the lower rates of access to the internet, and thus the on-line survey.

Executive Summary

This summary report incorporates the **initial stages of analysis**. Further quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis of the open ended comments in the on-line survey, together with a review of other forms of resident feedback (e.g. emails – 26 received, letters – 2 received and a petition containing 30 signatures from the Carpenders Park/South Oxhey areas), will be incorporated in to a **final report**, which will be **presented at the Policy and Resources Committee on 7th December 2015**.

Key findings

- Current **satisfaction levels** with the garden waste collection service are **high**, with 90% of respondents stating the service is very good or good.
- The **majority** of respondents put their garden waste bin out **every fortnight** (82%).
- Just **over half** (57%) of respondents currently used a **garden allotment** to dispose of some/all of their garden waste, with a further 45% taking it to the local household waste recycling centre.
- **Three quarters (78%)** of residents stated that they would **prefer a charge for the collection of garden waste**, as opposed to a **discontinuation of the service**
- **Three quarters (76%)** of respondents would be prepared to **pay up to £35** a year for **garden waste removal**. This drops to **just under half (47%)** who would be prepared to pay **up to £50** and a **quarter (26%)** who would be prepared to **pay up to £70** a year.
- **The majority of respondents** (91%) would **not pay for a second bin** at a rate of **£70**, should a 'paid for' service be brought in for the first bin.
- For those believe they would not use a chargeable Council garden waste service, just over **half (54%)**, stated they would take their waste to a **local Household Waste Recycling Centre**, a **quarter (29%)** would put it on a **garden allotment**.

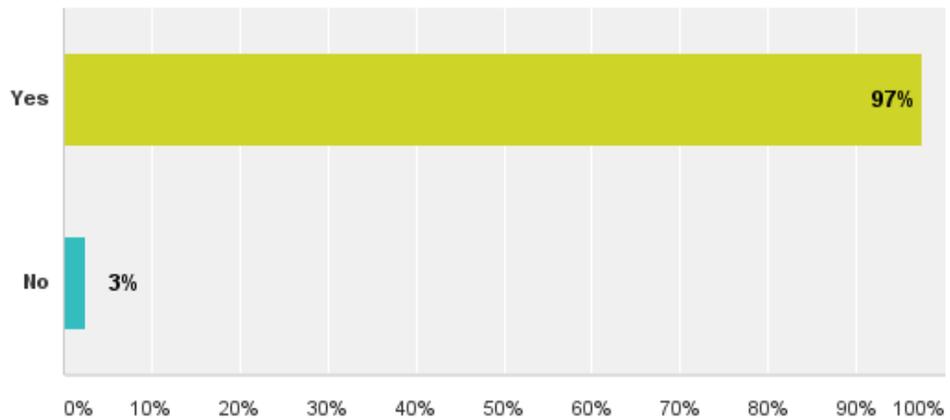
Results

Use of Brown Bins

The majority of respondents do use a brown bin (97%).

Q1 Do you currently use the Council's garden waste (brown bin) collection service?(If your answer is 'no', please move to Q5)

Answered: 4,138 Skipped: 31

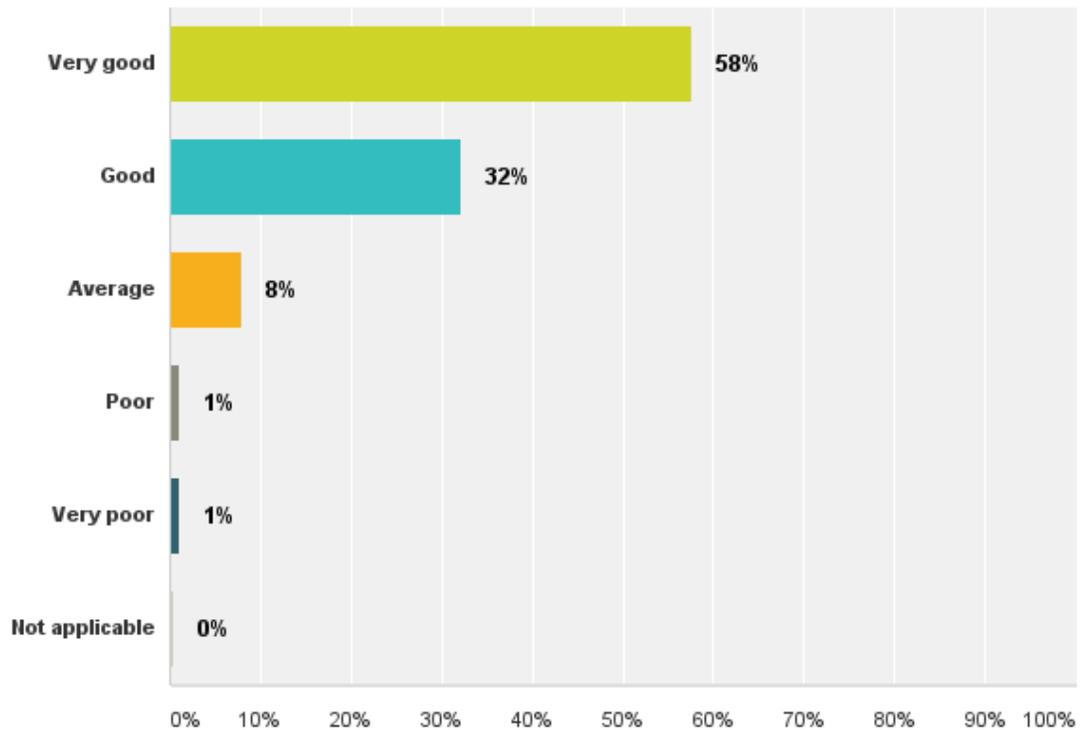


Current Garden Waste Collection Satisfaction

Current **satisfaction levels** with the garden waste collection service are **high**, with 90% of respondents stating the service is very good or good.

Q2 How would you rate the current garden waste collection service?

Answered: 3,866 Skipped: 303

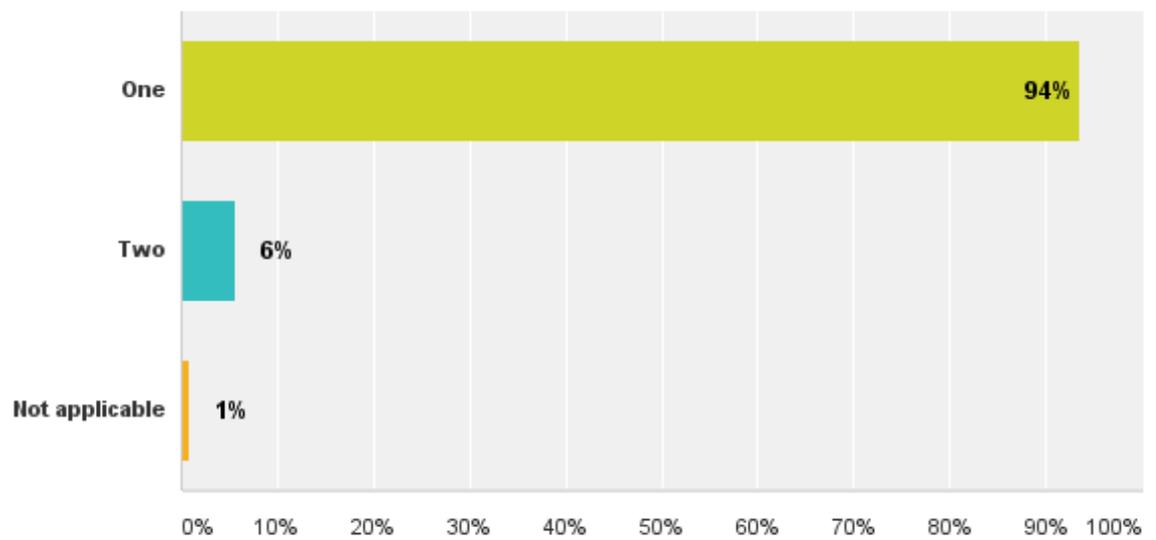


Number of bins at the household

The **majority** of respondents have **one brown bin** at their property (94%).

Q3 How many garden waste (brown) bins do you have?

Answered: 3,849 Skipped: 320

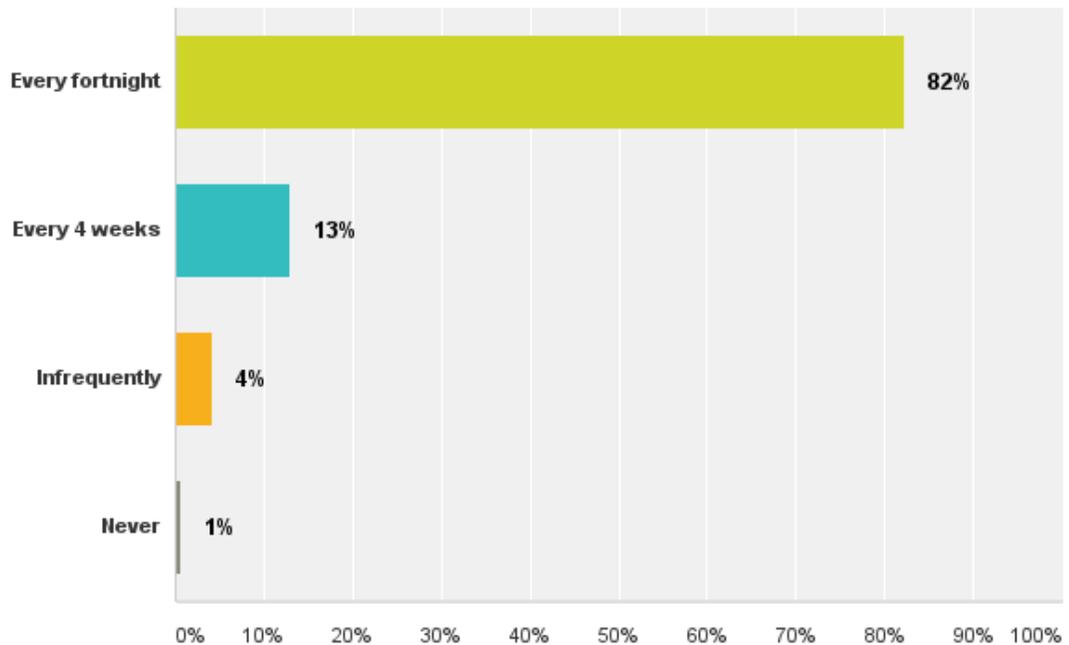


Frequency of use of the current garden waste collection service

The **majority** of respondents put their garden waste bin out **every fortnight** (82%).

Q4 Garden waste is currently collected fortnightly. How often would you say, on average, your garden waste bin is put out for collection? (You can exclude the winter months from your answer, as less garden waste is collected between November and March)

Answered: 3,860 Skipped: 309



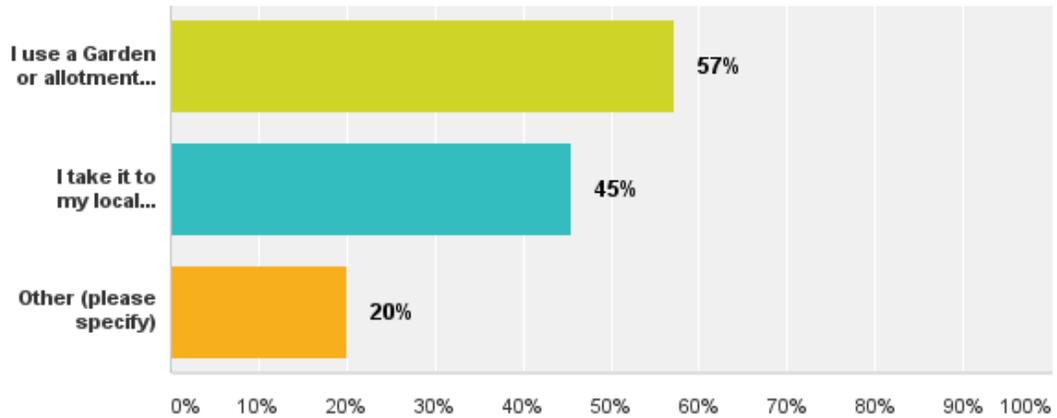
Other methods currently used to dispose of garden waste

Just **over half** (57%) of respondents currently used a **garden allotment** to dispose of some/all of their garden waste, with a further 45% taking it to the local household waste recycling centre.

The 'other' category responses will be analysed in full for the final report to be presented at the aforementioned Policy and Resources Committee on 7th December 2015.

Q5 Do you use any of the following ways to dispose of garden waste instead of, or in addition to, using your brown bin? (tick ALL that apply)

Answered: 2,349 Skipped: 1,820

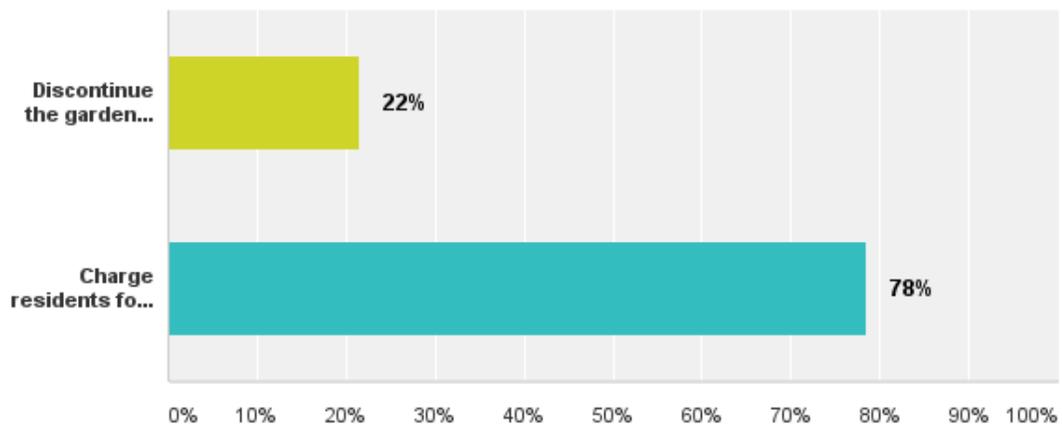


Likelihood of respondents using a 'paid for' garden waste collection service

Three quarters (78%) of residents stated that they would prefer a charge for the collection of garden waste, as opposed to a discontinuation of the service.

Q6 Depending on the financial situation in the coming year, the Council may be faced with the difficult decision of whether to stop collecting garden waste altogether, or to continue with the service on a 'paid for' basis. Ignoring for a moment the amount charged (see next question) which option would you favour?

Answered: 3,380 Skipped: 789



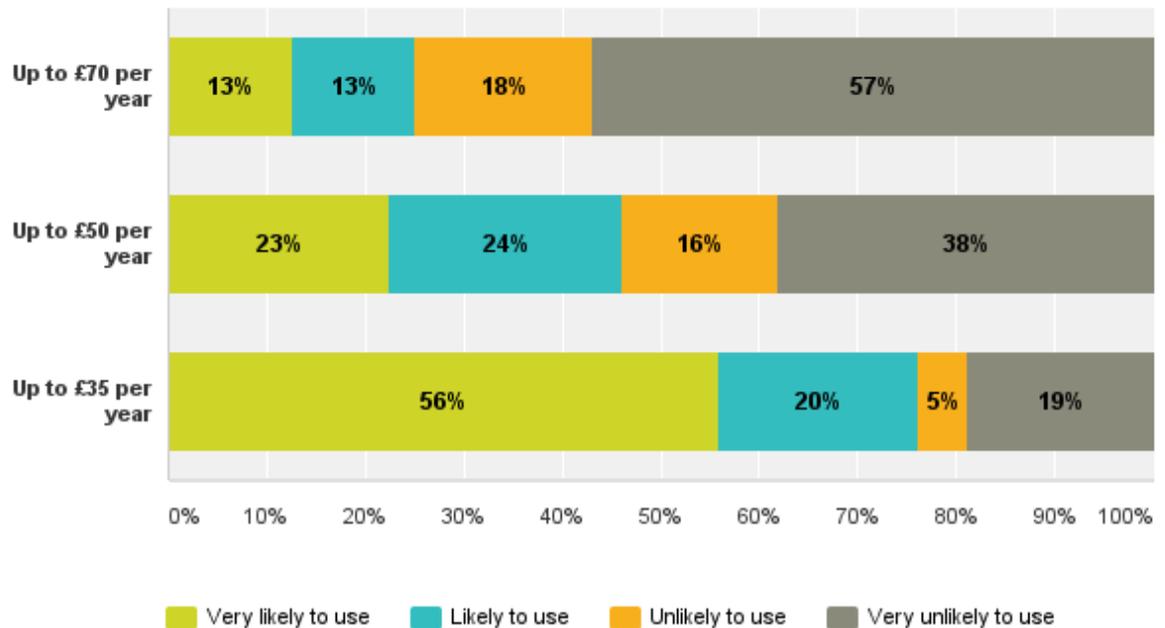
Acceptable Charge for Garden Waste Collection

Three quarters (76%) of respondents would be prepared to **pay up to £35** a year for **garden waste removal**. This drops to **just under half (47%)** who would be prepared to pay **up to £50** and a **quarter (26%)** who would be prepared to **pay up to £70** a year.

It should be noted that the £35 figure being presented initially *could* influence respondents' likelihood of accepting the higher charges.

Q7 If fortnightly garden waste collections are to continue on a 'paid for' basis, how likely would you be to use the service if the following annual charges for one bin were applied?

Answered: 3,792 Skipped: 377

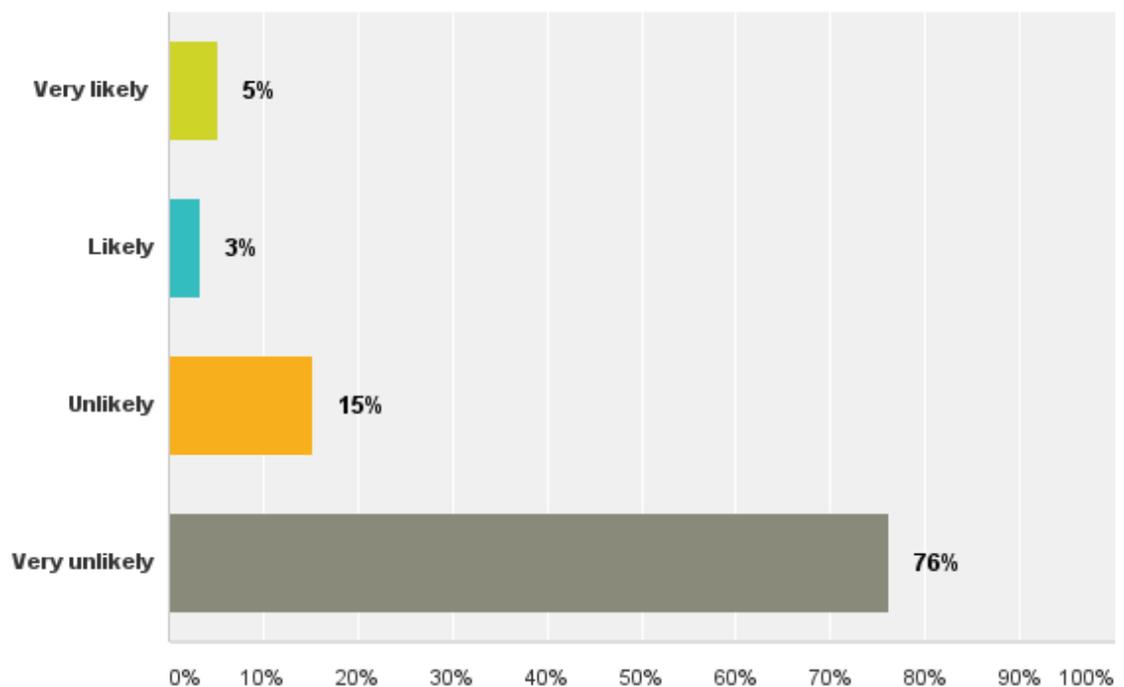


Second brown bin

The majority of respondents (91%) would not pay for a second bin at a rate of £70, should a 'paid for' service be brought in for the first bin.

Q8 Households wanting a second brown bin are currently charged £70 per year. If fortnightly garden waste collections are to continue on a 'paid for' basis how likely is it that you would want a second brown bin, assuming the £70 additional charge remains unchanged?

Answered: 3,719 Skipped: 450



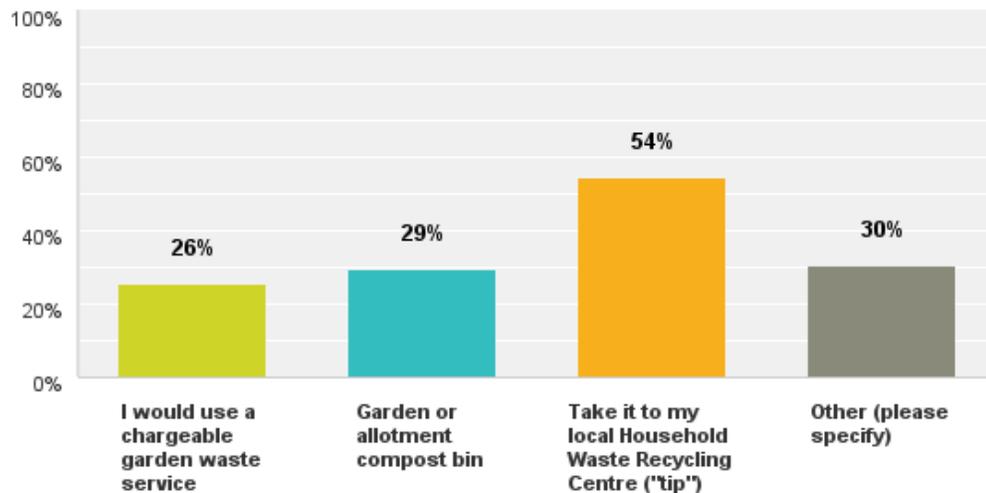
Other methods on green waste removal

For those who believe they would not use a chargeable Council garden waste service, just over **half (54%)**, stated they would take their waste to a **local Household Waste Recycling Centre**, a **quarter (29%)** would put it on a **garden allotment**.

The 'other' category responses will be analysed in full for the final report to be presented at the aforementioned Policy and Resources Committee on 7th December 2015.

Q9 If you would not use a chargeable Council garden waste service, how would you remove your garden waste (tick ALL that apply)?

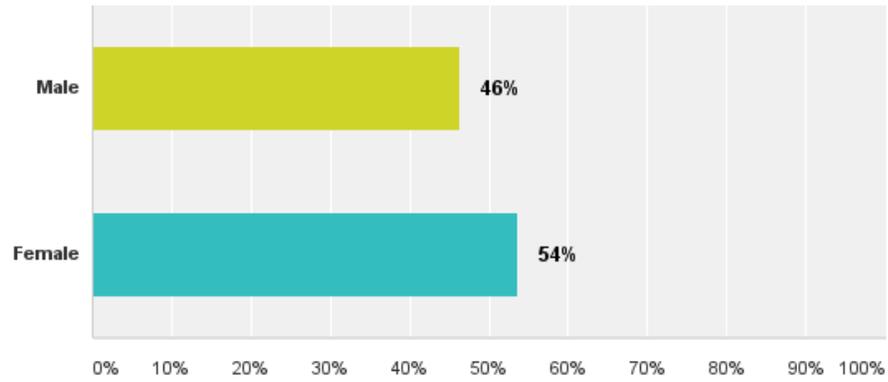
Answered: 3,597 Skipped: 572



THE PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

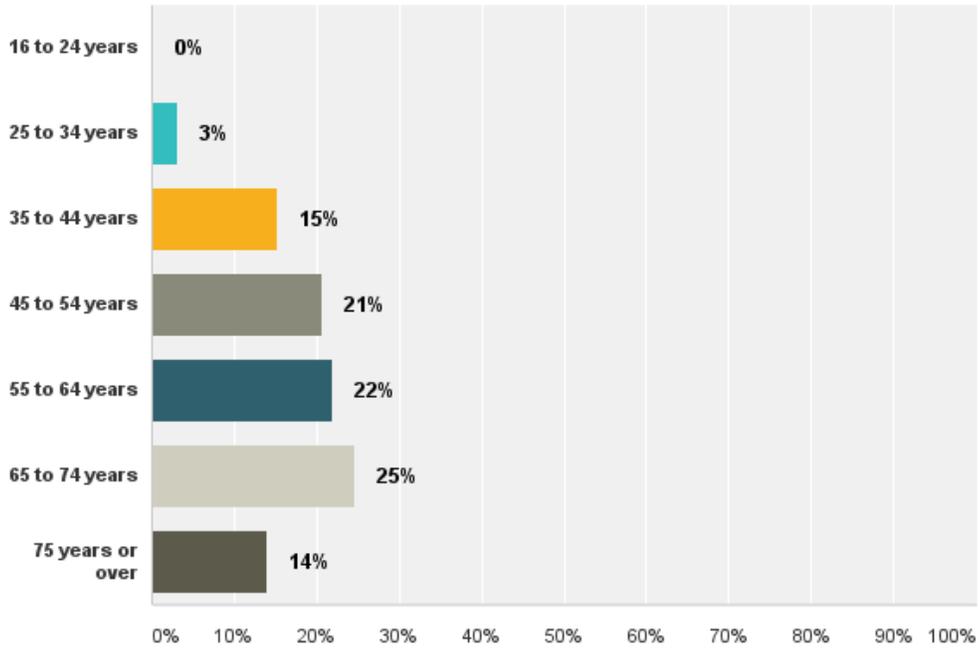
Q11 Are you...?

Answered: 3,701 Skipped: 468



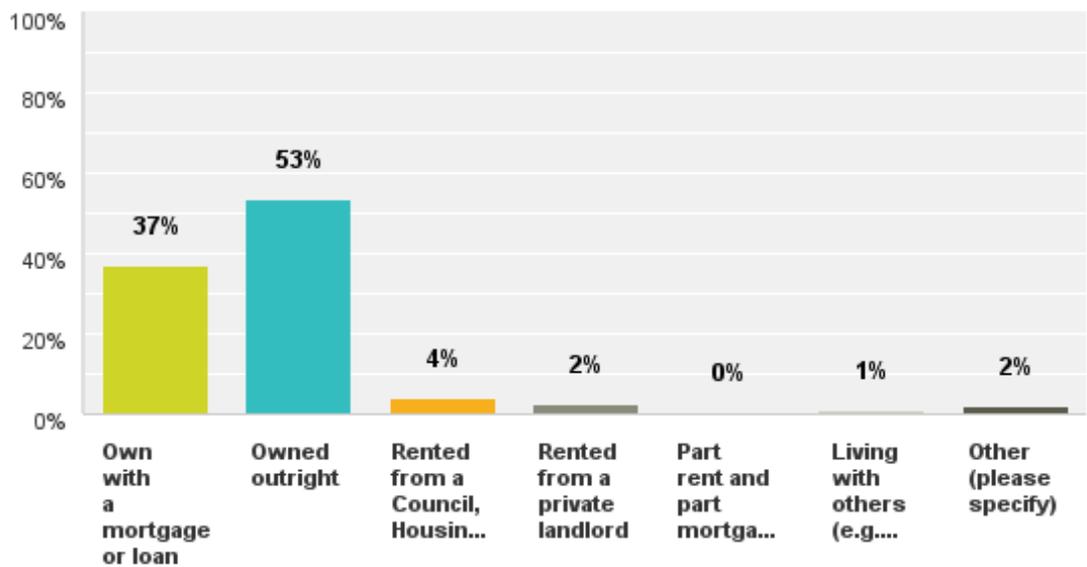
Q12 How old are you?

Answered: 3,715 Skipped: 454



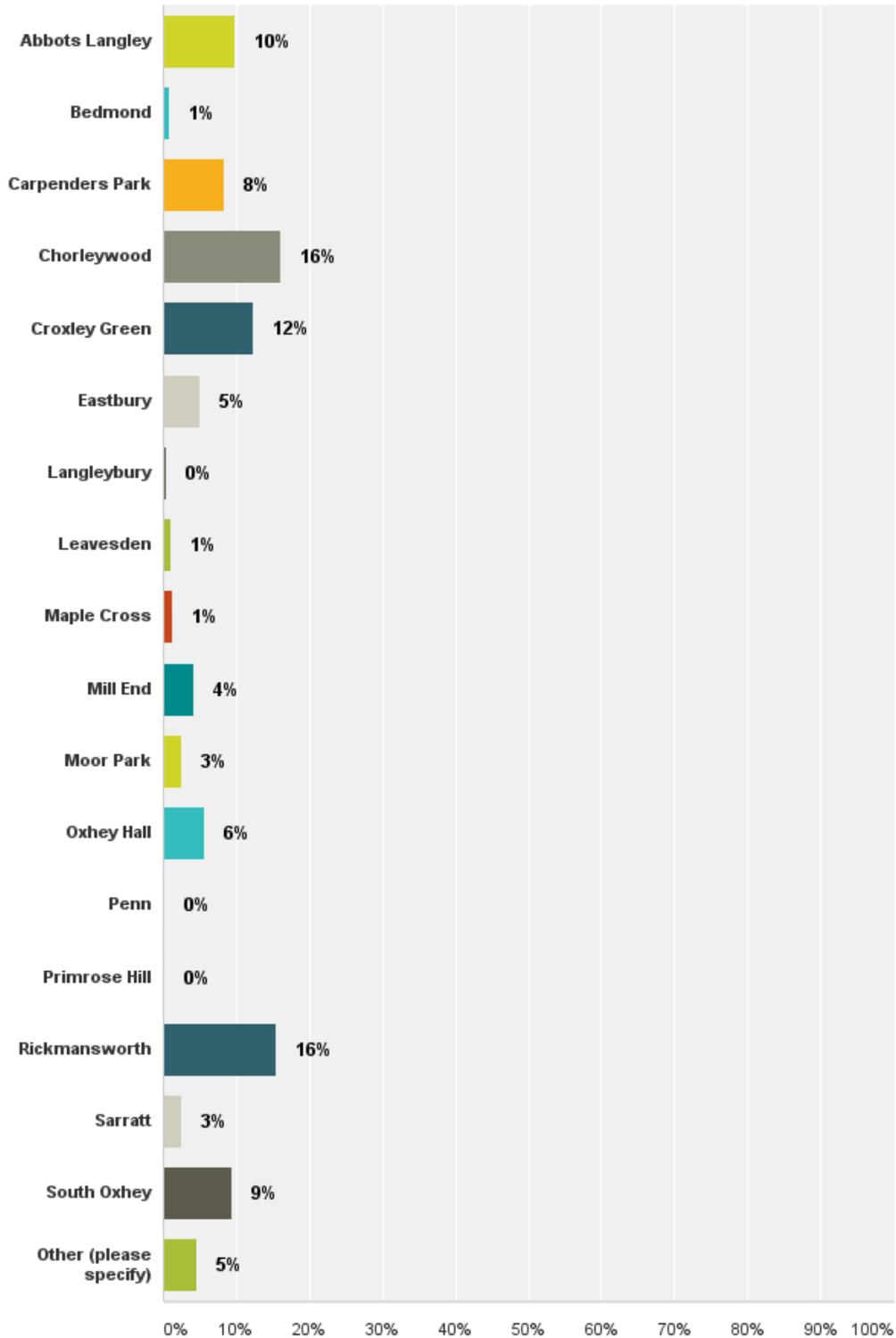
Q13 Do you own or rent your current home?

Answered: 3,693 Skipped: 476



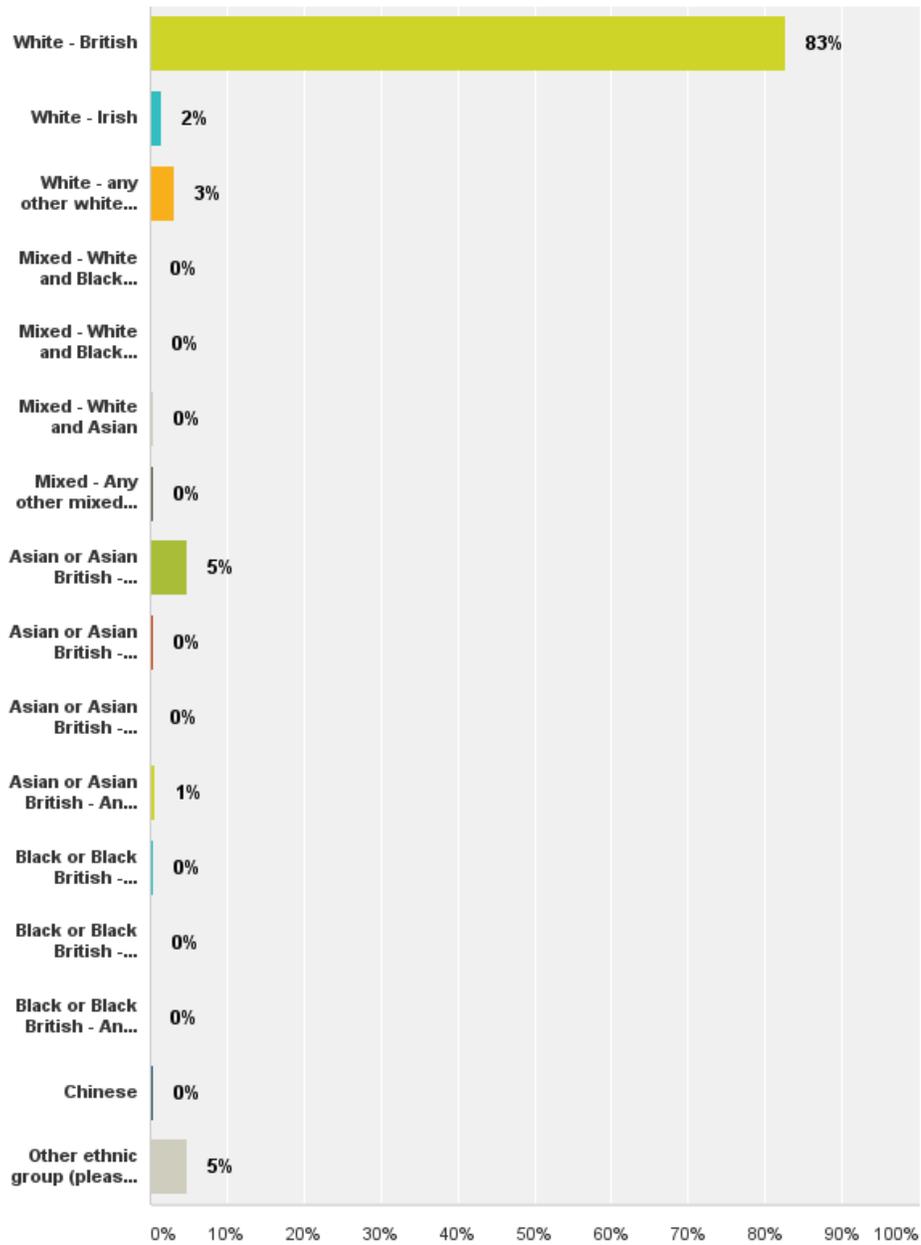
Q14 Where do you live?

Answered: 3,756 Skipped: 413



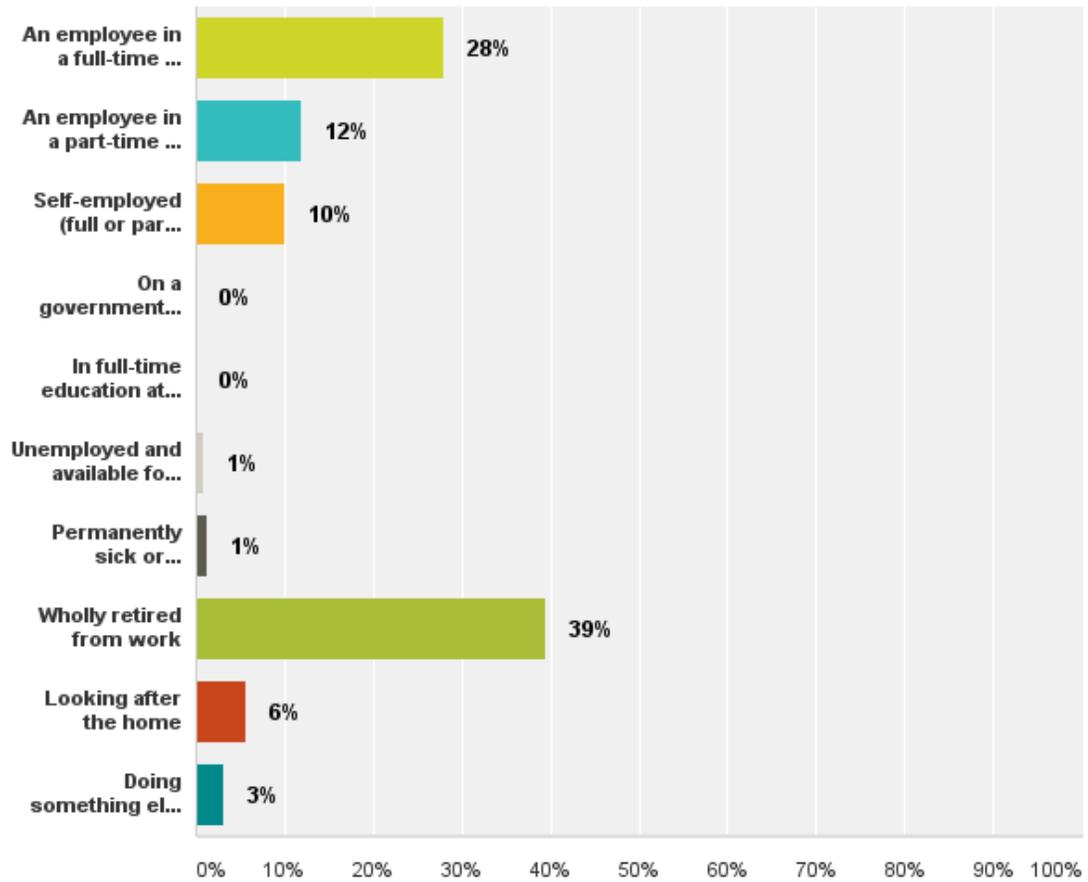
Q15 What is your ethnic group?

Answered: 3,575 Skipped: 594



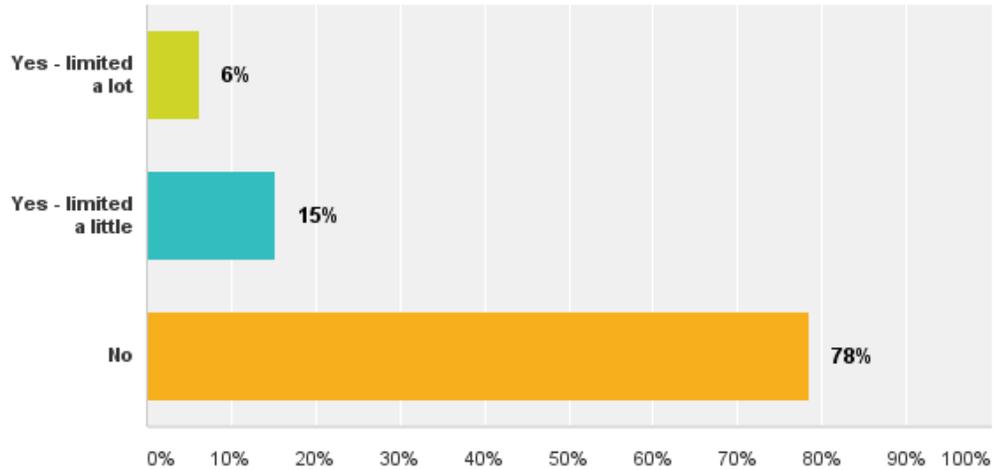
Q16 Are you currently employed, self employed, retired or otherwise not in paid work?

Answered: 3,627 Skipped: 542



Q17 Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

Answered: 3,592 Skipped: 577



Q18 What is your total yearly household gross income (i.e. before tax deductions?)

Answered: 3,538 Skipped: 631

