

**Consultation**  
**Three Rivers District Council**

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# **Three Rivers District Council Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation**

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SUMMARY REPORT

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October 2017

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## Background

In April 2013, as part of the national welfare reform, the government changed the way financial support for council tax was managed. This meant the national council tax benefit system, which helped people with a low income meet their council tax obligations, was replaced by new local council tax reduction schemes designed, administrated and managed by Local Authorities.

Three Rivers District Council's current scheme replicates the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme and has not been reviewed since its introduction in 2013. The scheme mirrors the old Council Tax Benefit scheme with the following amendments:

- A limitation on the amount payable based on the band of the property;
- Changes to capital levels;
- The removal of Second Adult Rebate; and
- Increases in Non-Dependant deductions

In Policy & Resources on 12 June 2017 it was agreed to consult on possible changes to the current scheme and this report provides members with the outcome.

## Objectives

The purpose of this consultation was to:

- inform local residents and other interested stakeholders about the proposed service changes and developments;
  - engage, seek views and gather opinion on the 2017 Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the proposals within it;
  - identify any issues and gather information that will assist with the introduction and future delivery of services;
  - explore the suitability of potential options with service users and seek other solutions and ideas concerning the way the council provides the service;
  - gain a fuller understanding of the likely impact that the proposed scheme could have on service users;
  - undertake a fully compact and charter compliant consultation that satisfies the council's policies and consultation duties;
  - provide decision makers with information to assist them in making informed decisions about any changes to the 2018 Council Tax Reduction Scheme
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## **Methodology**

Councillors discussed and agreed on options for public consultation for the 2018 Council Tax Reduction Scheme at the Policy and Resources Committee on 12 June 2017.

A 'survey monkey' on-line survey was launched on Monday 17 July 2017 and closed at noon on Sunday 8 October 2017.

Consultation information was sent to current recipients of CTR, parish councils, local voluntary/community organisations; an online survey was marketed via social media and on the Three Rivers District Council website.

In total, 340 survey entries were completed, of which 7 were paper survey returns

The results of this consultation will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 November 2017 and councillors will consider the information contained within this report as part of their decision making.

The level of response, information gathered and views obtained provide a useful indicator of opinions and any important issues that will need to be considered.

Percentages used in this report have been rounded and may not add up to exactly 100%. For some survey questions, respondents could select more than one response which also means that percentages, if added together, can total more than 100%.

### **Respondent Profile**

Please see the Appendix for the full respondent profile

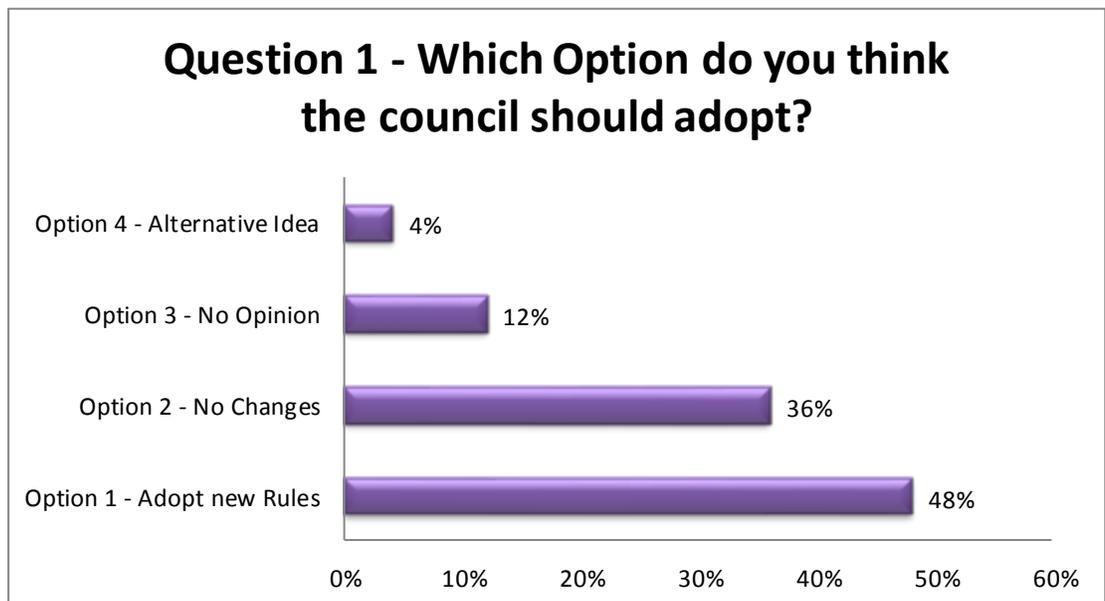
## Results

Survey respondents were asked to tell us which of four options they thought the council could introduce, or to make alternative suggestions.

The option most supported by respondents was Option 1: Adopt New Rules which was supported by 46% of respondents.

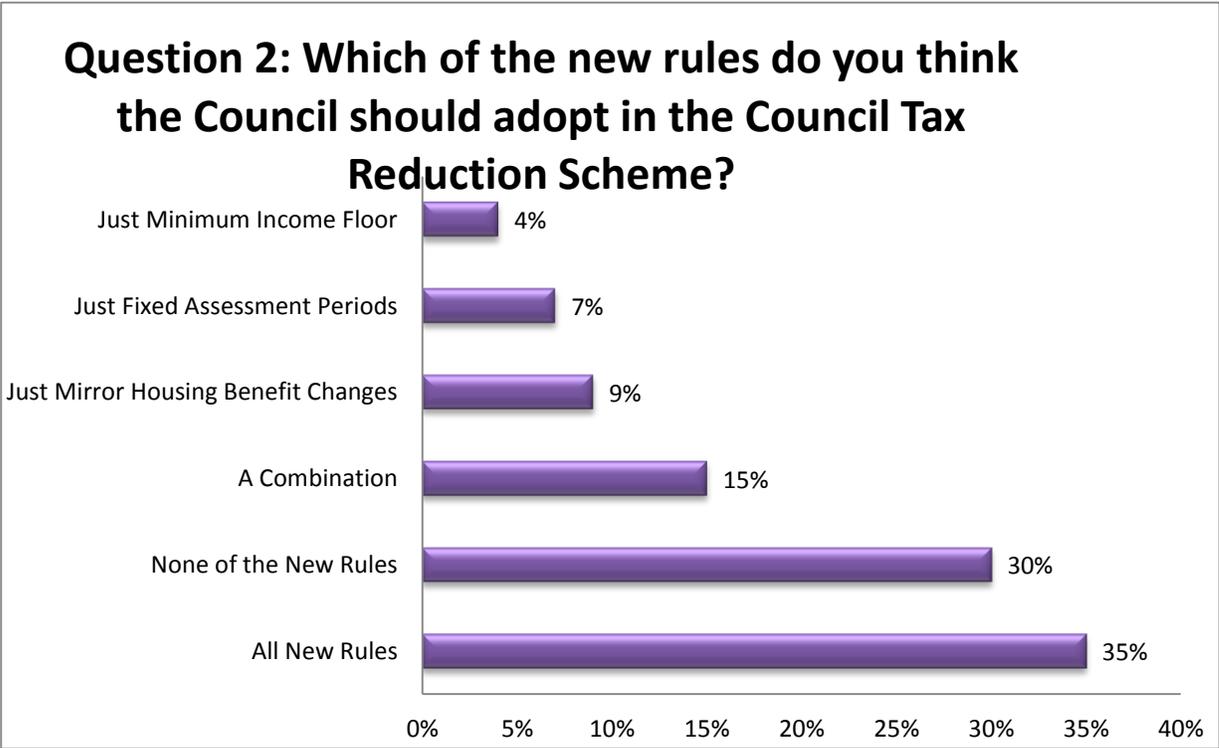
Option 2: Make no change was supported by 35% of respondents

Twelve percent of survey respondents stated they did not have an opinion and 4% of survey respondents provided an alternative idea.

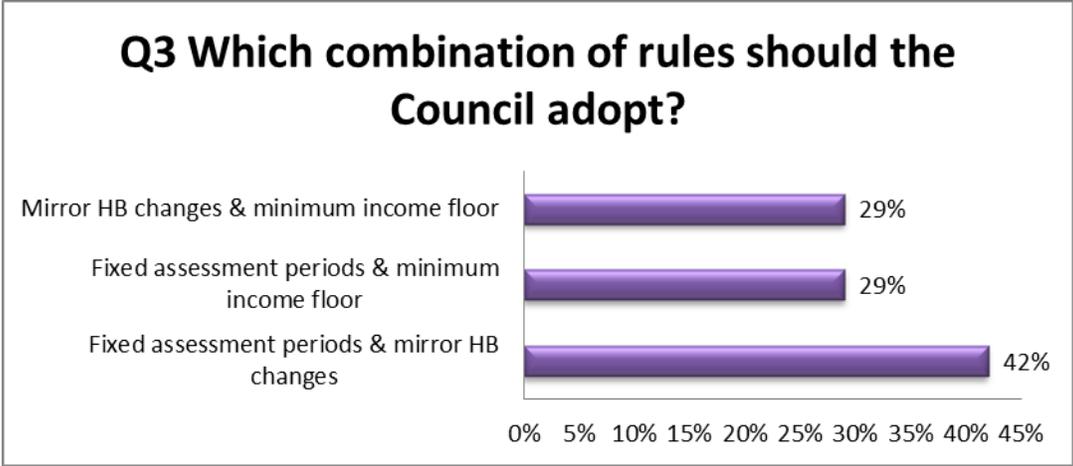


Four percent (13) of respondents made an alternative suggestion to the options provided. These suggestions focused on:

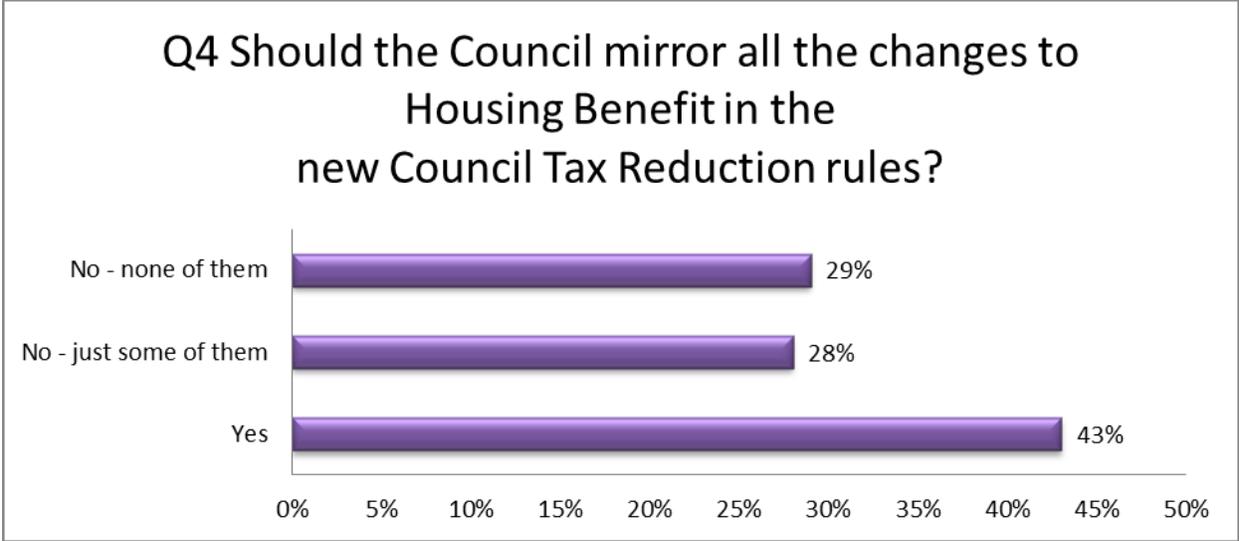
- Charging people who can afford it, more
- Reduce complexity of the scheme.
- Revaluation of Bands.
- Make everyone contribute at least 10%.



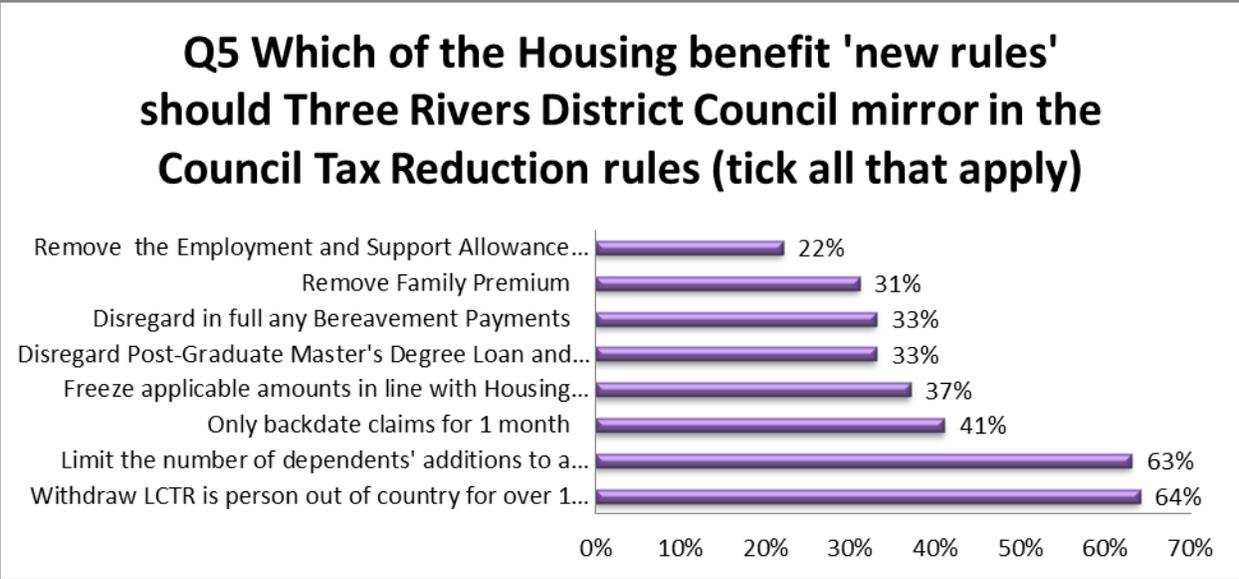
Respondents were asked which of the proposed changes should be considered for implementation. Of the 302 (89%) of people who answered this question 35% (107) chose 'all changes' as their preferred option.



Of the 45 people who had stated a combination of the options as their preferred choice 91% (41) responded to the question asking about which combination should be adopted. Forty two percent (17) indicated that fixed assessment periods & mirroring housing benefit changes as their preferred combination.

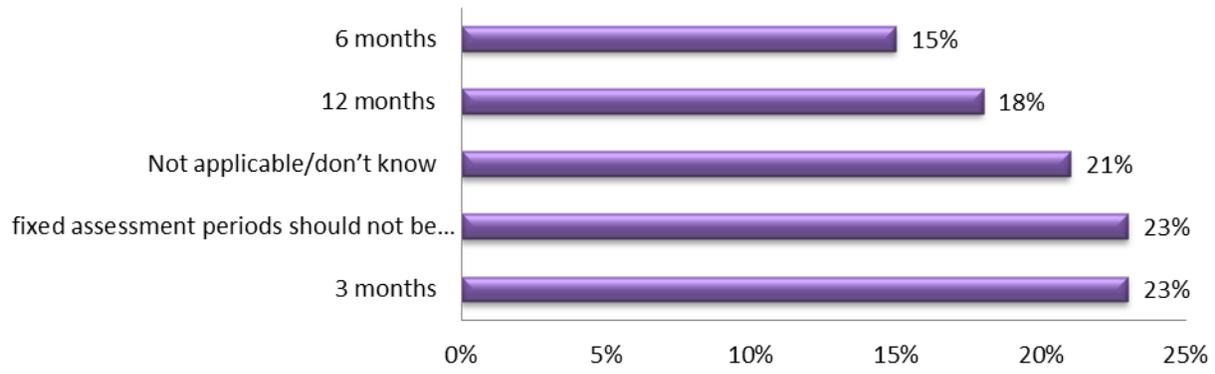


Of the 294 (86%) respondents who answered this question 43% (125) stated that mirroring all the housing benefit changes as their preferred option.



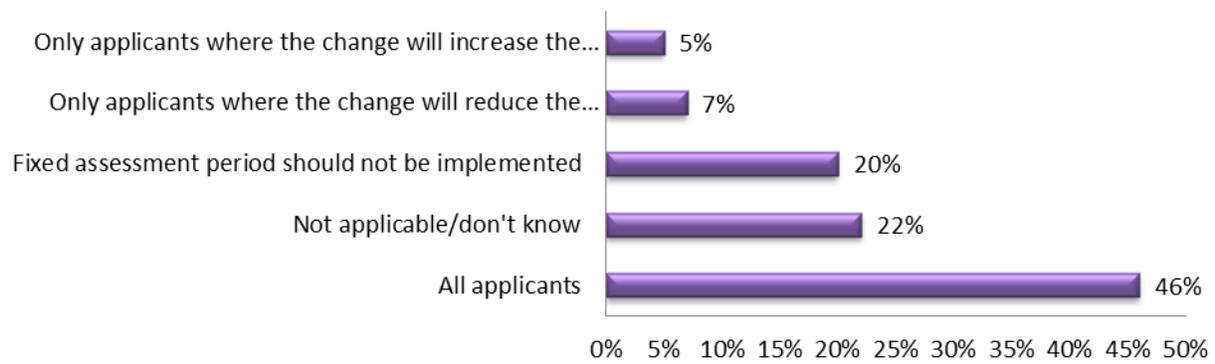
Only 78 (23%) of respondents answered this question but there are clear preferences to which housing benefit rules should be adopted, if any.

**Q6 If the Council were to implement a fixed assessment period, how long do you think the fixed period should be for?**

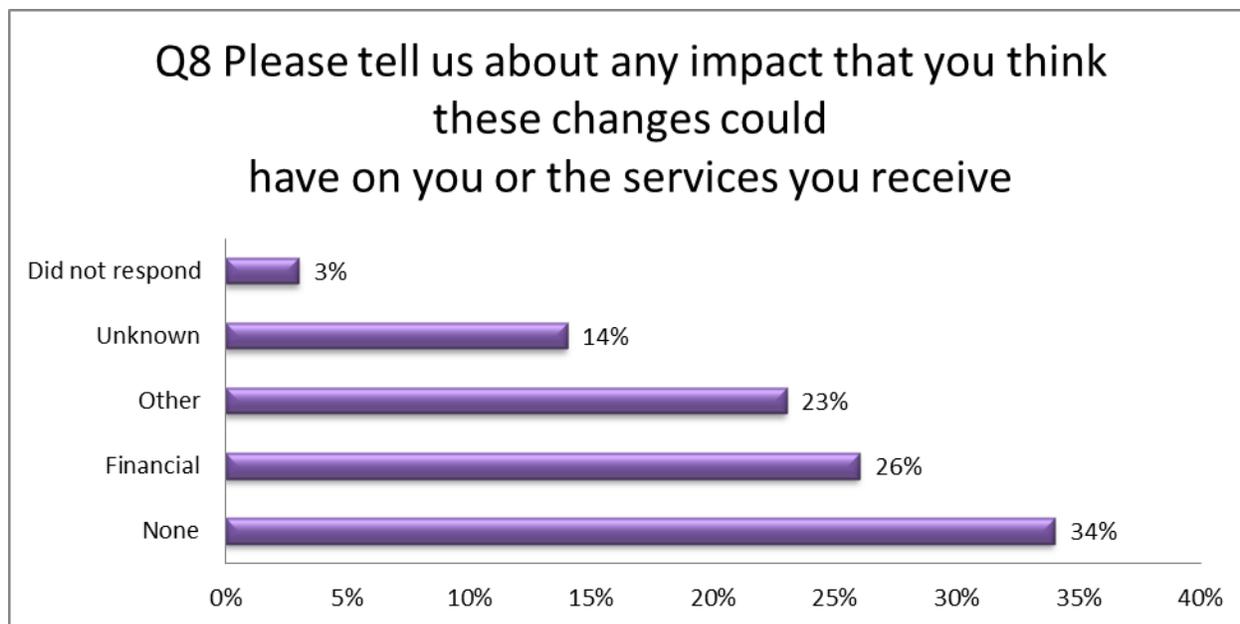


Of the 265 (78%) respondents to this question 23% identified their preference as both a 3 month fixed assessment period and not implementing fixed assessment periods at all.

**Q7 If the Council were to implement a fixed assessment period, should all applicants be affected by a fixed period or only certain ones?**



Of the 263 (77%) respondents to this question 46% identified applying a fixed assessment period to all applicants, should it be adopted, as their preferred option.



Only 22% (74) of respondents answered the above question stating how they thought the changes could affect them. The areas of impact fell into four categories illustrated in the graph above where 34% of respondents stated they would not be affected but 26% stated that would be financially worse off if the changes were adopted.

### **Q9 Please use this space to make any other comments about the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Proposals**

Of the 340 responses received 42 (12%) additional comments were made. The focus of these comments included:-

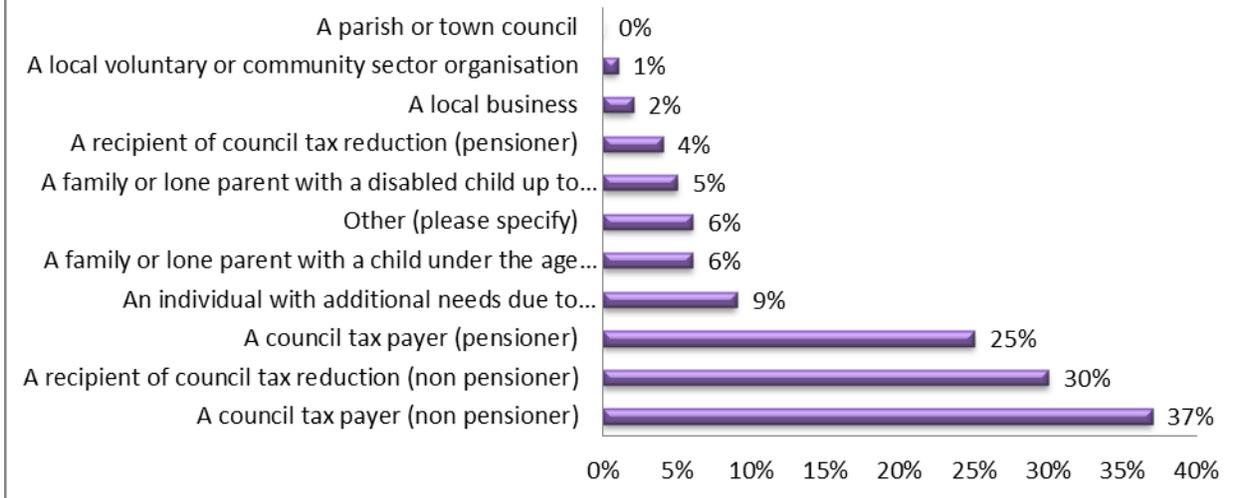
- Making well off people pay more
- Means testing should continue to apply
- If LCTR was removed it would cause financial difficulties
- More help for pensioners
- Too complicated
- Maintain the current scheme
- Turning off street lights
- Mirror HB rules
- Scheme needs to be fair to both non recipients and recipients
- Already being hit by 'cuts'

**Q10 Please provide your full postcode**

Of the 340 responses received 222 (65%) provided their full post code. A breakdown of the postcodes supplied is below

HA6 2	6
HA6 3	8
WD18 8	3
WD19	1
WD19 4	11
WD19 5	13
WD19 6	20
WD19 7	19
WD25 0	2
WD25 7	5
WD25 9	2
WD3	3
WD3 1	10
WD3 3	23
WD3 4	3
WD3 5	38
WD3 6	3
WD3 7	7
WD3 8	7
WD3 9	1
WD4 8	5
WD4 9	1
WD5	1
WD5 0	29
WD9 4	1

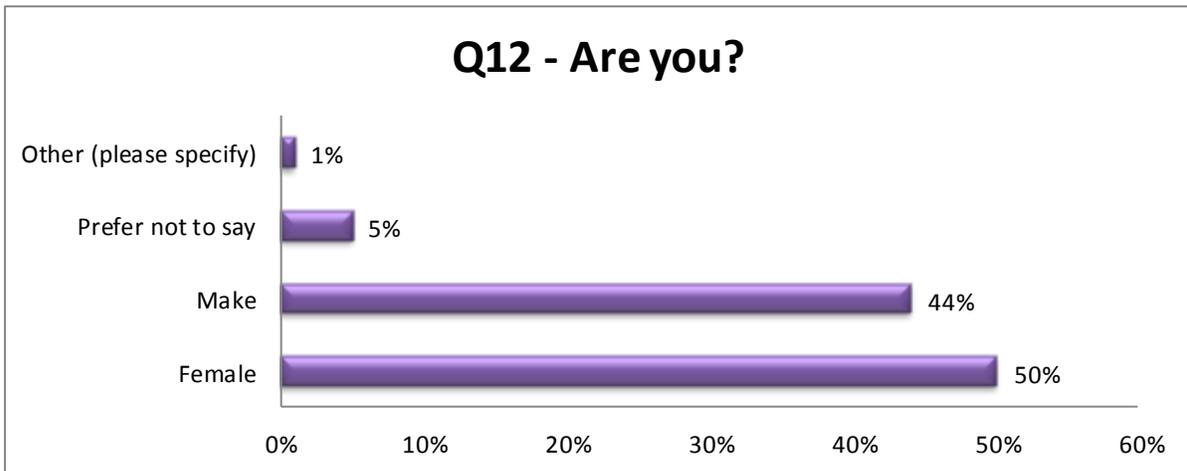
## Q11 Are you responding as (tick all that apply)



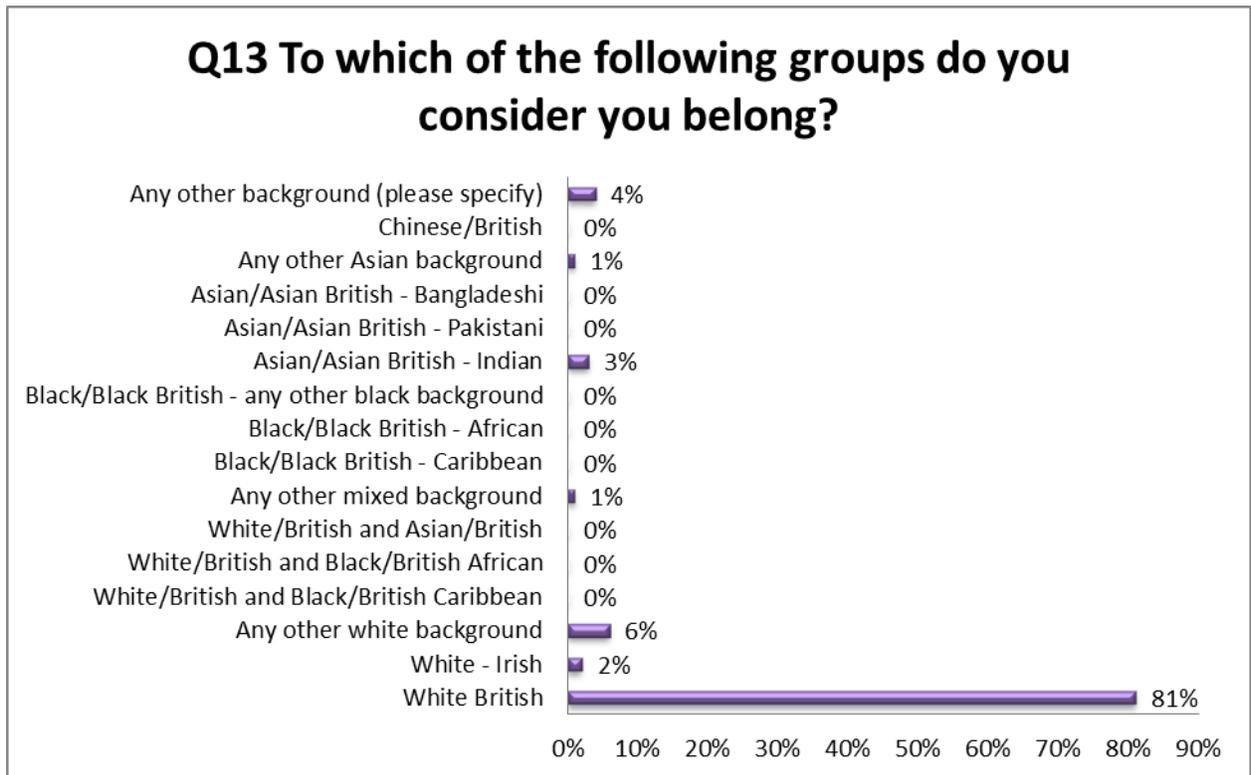
Six percent (15) of respondents stated 'other' to the options provided. These respondents disclosed themselves to be:

- On ESA
- Medially retired
- Parent with disabled child
- Loan parent
- Family on income support
- Single person
- Council Tax payer
- MS sufferer

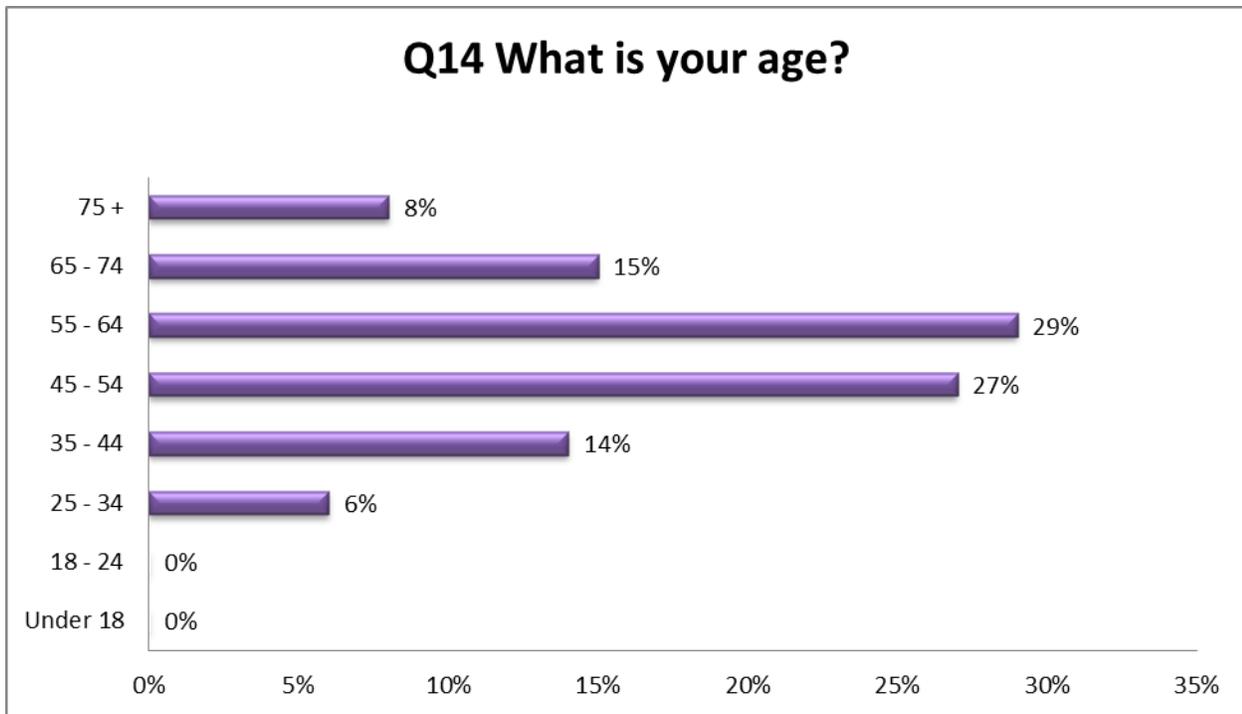
## Profile



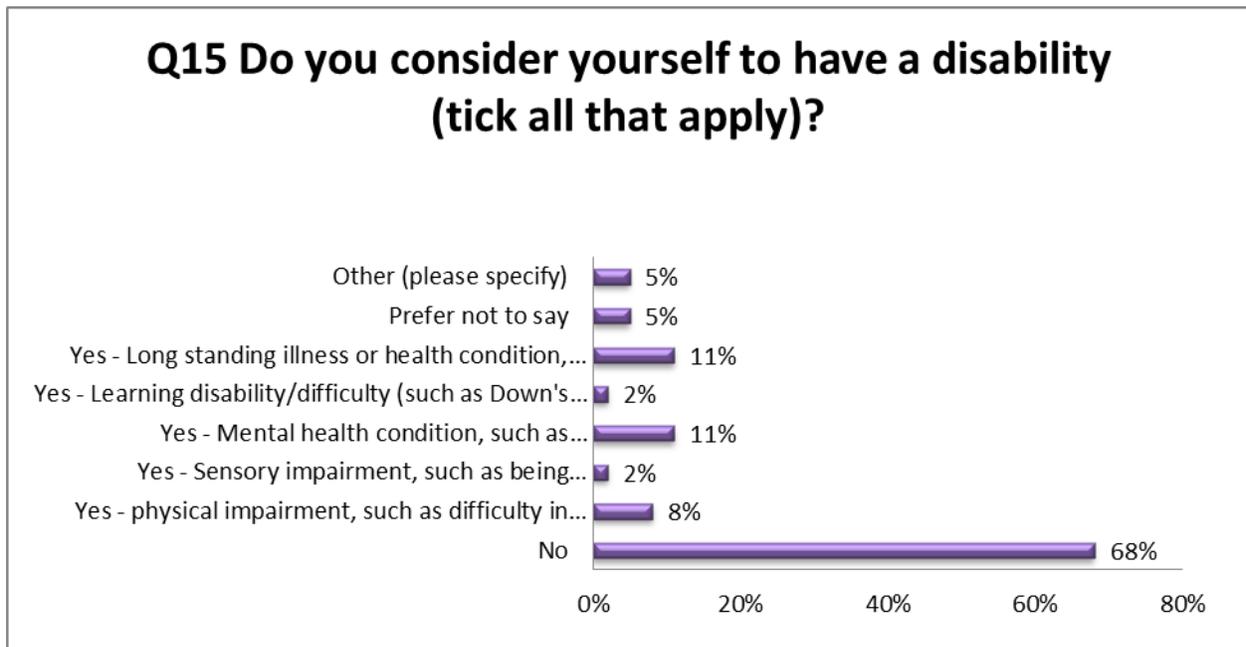
Seventy four percent (252) of respondents answered this question. Of those who stated other as their response they fall in the 'prefer not to say' category.



Of the 340 respondents 248 (73%) answered this question.



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Of the 340 respondents 249 (73%) answered this question. Five percent responded as 'other' and conditions included

- Back pain/Arthritis/Walking difficulties
- Brain tumours
- Autistic child