

2020/21 Precept consultation online surveys

1. Online survey

- 1.1 The online survey was available from 31 October – 21 December 2019. The consultation period was promoted through our website, adverts on Facebook and Twitter. Examples of the Facebook adverts and the banner on our website can be found in Section 4 of this report. The extent of promoting the consultation was impacted by the Purdah pre-election period imposed prior to the General Election on 12 December 2019.
- 1.2 In that period a total of **155** responses were received. Of those 155 responses, 121 fully completed the questionnaire and 34 partially completed it. As only five of these responses represented the business sector, the results have not been separated. Total number of responses differ for each question as some people chose not to respond to every question.
- 1.3 This year’s consultation exercise follows a three-month large scale public consultation process, which the Service undertook in the summer to gauge views on the proposed new Service Delivery Operating Model. It is important to note that, from the range of responses received, this earlier consultation has influenced a number of respondents’ viewpoints when compared to last year’s responses. This report summarises the main findings from the survey.

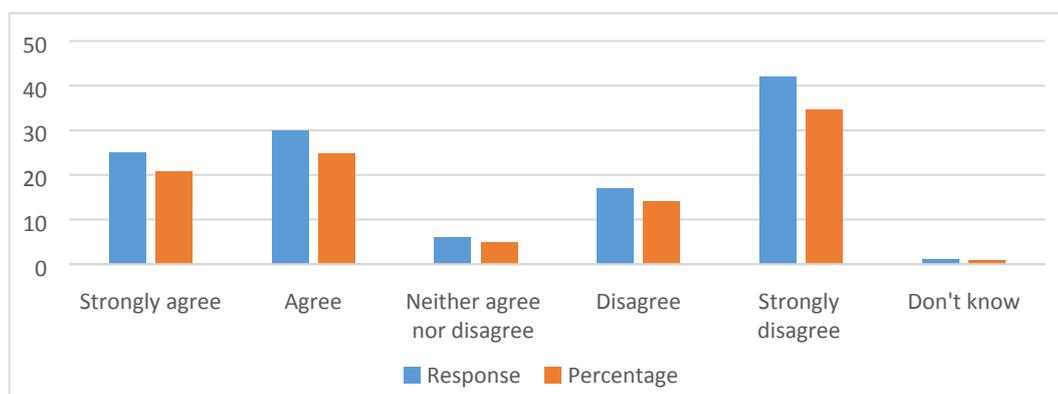
2. Results

Q1. How much do you agree or disagree that it is reasonable for the Authority to consider increasing its council tax charge for 2020/21?

Table 1: Responses to Question 1

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Strongly agree	25	20.66
Agree	30	24.79
Neither agree nor disagree	6	4.96
Disagree	17	14.05
Strongly disagree	42	34.71
Don't know	1	0.83
Total	121	

Chart 1: Results of agreement to consider increasing the precept



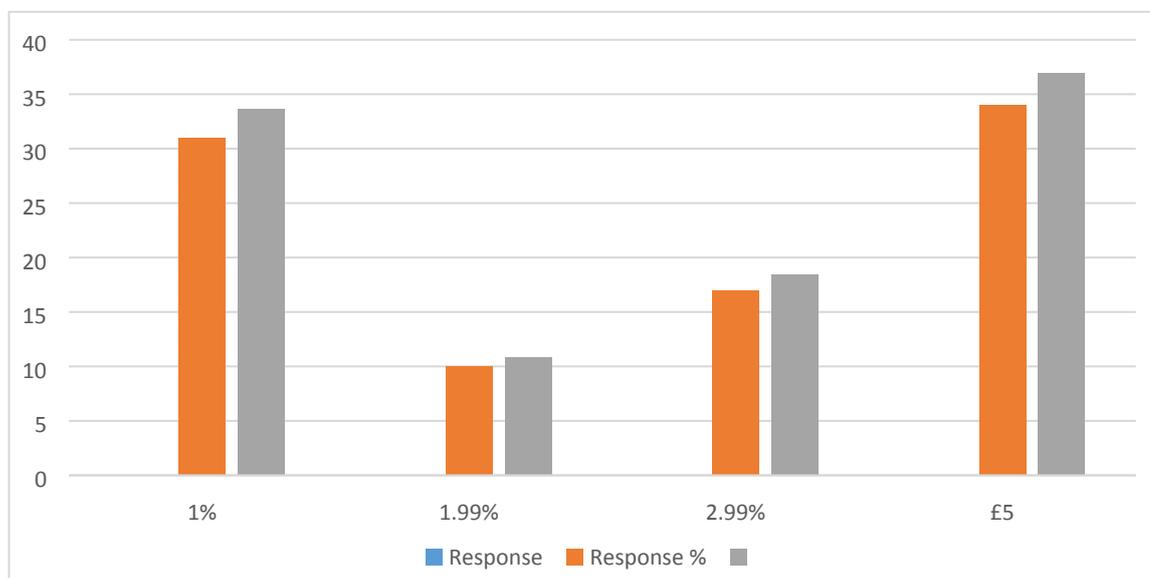
- 2.1 The results indicate that almost 35% of respondents strongly disagree that the Authority should consider increasing its charges, as opposed to approximately 21% who strongly agree. This is a significant change to last year's response where 70% of respondents agreed the Authority should consider increasing its charges.

Q2. What level of increase would you consider is reasonable for the Authority to increase its element of the council tax charge by?

Table 2: Responses to Question 2

Answer Option	Response	Response %
1% (An increase of 87p a year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £87.39)	31	33.70
1.99% (An increase of £1.73 a year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £88.25)	10	10.87
2.99% (An increase of £2.60 a year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £89.12)	17	18.48
£5 (An increase of £5 a year for a Band D property (pro rata for other bands), increasing the total charge to £91.52)	34	36.96
Total	92	

Chart 2: Results of levels of increase to the precept



- 2.2 The results indicate that almost 37% of respondents are in support of an £5 increase, whereas almost 34% support an increase of 1%.

Q3. If you disagreed with Q1, why do you think it is not reasonable for the Authority to increase its element of the council tax charge?

- 2.3 Those respondents who disagreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its element of the council tax charge for 2020/21 were asked why they disagreed.

- 2.4 The common emerging themes highlighted by respondents indicated:
- Impact of potential service cuts offering a reduced service
 - Review existing internal spending
 - Review of senior management structure before asking public to pay more
 - Fire cover not available or to standard expected
 - Willing to pay increase if it resulted in fire stations being kept open
 - Seek increase in funds from Central Government

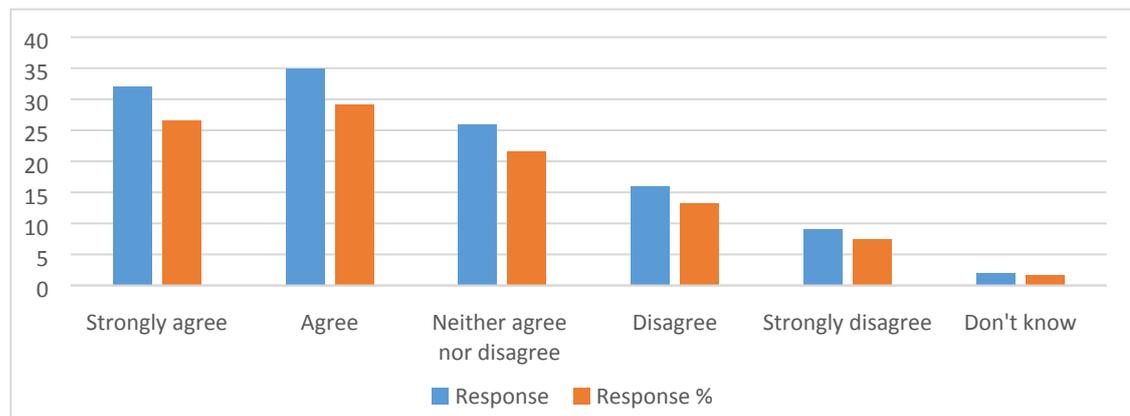
- 2.5 A sample range of comments made by respondents are listed below:
- *‘Due to potential cuts in the service, I don’t see how you can ask for more money for a reduced service.’*
 - *‘The Authority needs to ensure that the money already provided is spent efficiently. The Fire Service is very top heavy in management terms and this could/should be reduced to save money before asking the public to pay more.’*
 - *‘Fire cover that my council tax pays for is often not available or to the standard expected.’*
 - *‘I would pay more if my local fire station stays open.’*
 - *‘I believe the increase in funds required should come from central government not the tax payer. They should respect what a great job emergency services do and fund them accordingly.’*

Q4. How strongly do you agree or disagree that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service provides value for money?

Table 3: Responses to Question 4

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Strongly agree	32	26.67
Agree	35	29.17
Neither agree nor disagree	26	21.67
Disagree	16	13.33
Strongly disagree	9	7.50
Don't know	2	1.67
Total	120	

Chart 3: Results of value for money question



2.6 The results indicate that over half of respondents (56%) agree or strongly agree that the Service provides value for money.

Q5. If you disagreed to Q4, why do you feel the Service does not provide value for money?

2.7 Those who disagreed that DSFRS provides value for money were asked why they disagreed.

2.8 The common emerging themes from respondents highlighted:

- Concerns over future of service, if proposed changes are implemented
- Public perception that money is not being used efficiently
- Service should introduce charging for attendance at incidents
- Duplication of work that could be done regionally/nationally
- Firefighters already provide value for money

2.9 A sample range of comments made by respondents are listed below:

- *'At the moment it does, in the future it might not, if these changes go ahead.'*
- *'Not efficient, too many managers, staff paid to sleep.'*
- *'From press reports money seems to be wasted elsewhere and is not being used to support my local community.'*
- *'The service could charge for attendances that are not part of the normal service provided. More change is needed around processes to provide value for money.'*
- *'Again the amount of duplication of work that could be done regionally/nationally. The constant waste in house of re-inventing the wheel; promotion changes, training recording systems, re arranging the 'top table'.....'*
- *'It's the Firefighters that give good value for money. Not the chief or his minions. It's the Firefighters on the ground risking their own lives and safety to make sure that we, the general public are safe.'*

Q6. Have you interacted with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in the last 12 months?

2.10 To contextualise the findings reported above, all respondents were asked if they had used any of ten specific services provided across Devon and Somerset.

Table 4: Response to Question 6

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Yes, house fire	1	0.92
Yes, road traffic collision	2	1.83
Yes, flooding	0	0.00
Yes, rescue	3	2.75
Yes, home fire safety check/visit	5	4.59
Yes, business safety check/audit	3	2.75
Yes, community use of fire station	4	3.67
Yes, youth education	5	4.59
Yes, community event	24	22.02
Yes, at a public consultation event for our Safer Together Programme	29	26.61
No, I have not used a Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service	61	55.96
Other	3	1.83
Total	140	

2.11 Other responses received included the following:

- Assessment Team – 1 response
- Employment of retained staff – 2 responses

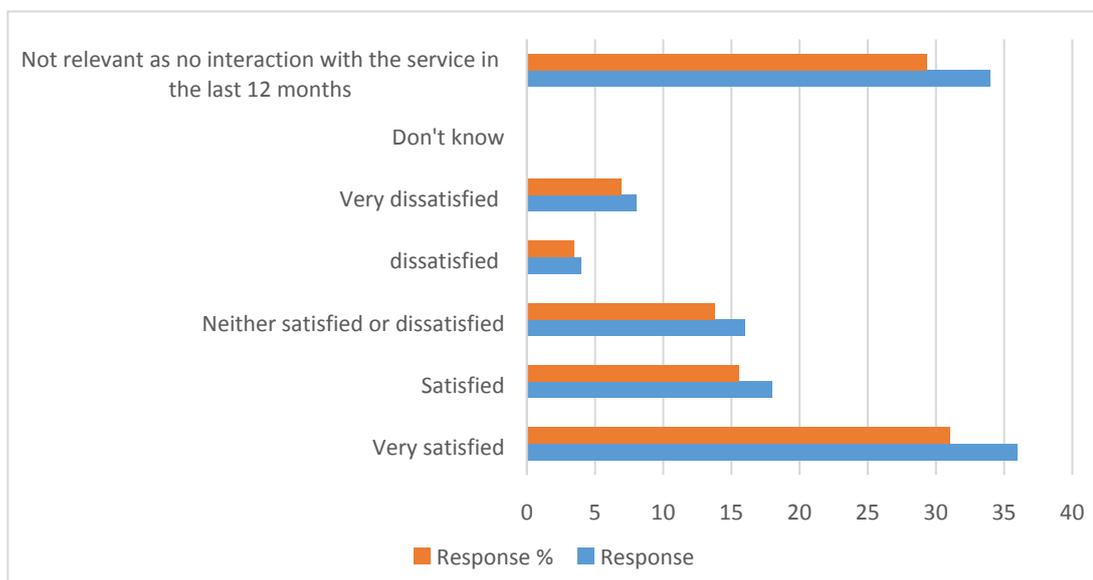
2.12 The results indicate that almost (56%) of respondents have not interacted with the Service in the last 12 months, however, (22%) had attended community events and over a quarter of respondents (27%) had attended a public consultation event for the Safer Together programme.

Q7. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)?

Table 5: Response to question 7

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Very satisfied	36	31.03
Satisfied	18	15.52
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	16	13.79
dissatisfied	4	3.45
Very dissatisfied	8	6.90
Don't know	0	0.00
Not relevant as no interaction with the service in the last 12 months	34	29.31
Total	116	

Chart 4: Results of levels of satisfaction with the service provided by DSFRS



2.13 The results indicate that almost (47%) of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of service received by DSFRS.

Q8. What has influenced how you answered question 7?

2.14 Respondents were asked to provide comments on what influenced their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the service provided by DSFRS. It was evident as mentioned earlier that the earlier summer public consultation had influenced a number of responses to this question.

2.15 The common emerging themes from respondents highlighted:

- Recognition of dedicated front line staff but concerns over support from management
- Acknowledgement of good response times to incidents
- Willingness to increase precept charge
- Awareness of fire appliances not being available

- Effects of recent consultation process and proposed changes to the Service
- Seeking public reassurance around emergency response when contacting 999

2.16 A sample range of comments made by respondents are listed below:

- *'The frontline staff clearly are dedicated and response seems good on most occasions. Not sure they are supported enough by the management within the Authority and standards may be reducing as a result.'*
- *'Fire appliances not available.'*
- *'As a DSFRS employee (support) I have an understanding of the huge effort it takes to operate an effective front line emergency service and the resources required to support the communities of Devon and Somerset. The transformation required by the Government comes at a financial price but this should not be allowed to adversely affect the incredible work the Service provides keeping our region safe - if we as a community want the Fire and Rescue Service we deserve then an small increase in the precept will help.'*
- *'Media, contact with local firefighters and other employees, review of committee papers and other publicly available documents.'*
- *'I want to pay for the stations, fire engines & firefighters that exist now. No closures or reductions.'*
- *'It is immaterial until it goes wrong. When it goes wrong I want to be able to call 999 safe in the knowledge the right resources are available to attend in the shortest time. Services are NOT businesses and they need proper funding.'*
- *'Staff spoken with are so dedicated and passionate about their job. They care so much for the communities they serve.'*

3. Profile of Respondents

3.1 The following questions provided an opportunity to gather local intelligence from respondents and ascertain whether a cross section of people had responded to the survey.

Table 6: Responses to Question 9 – Are you...?

Answer Option	Response	Response %
A member of the public	78	67.24
A member of DSFRS staff	21	18.10
Representing a business	5	4.31
Prefer not to say	9	7.76
Other	3	2.59
Total	116	

3.2 Other responses received included the following:

- How is this relevant?
- DSFRS firefighter
- Welfare Volunteer

Table 7: Responses to Question 10 – regarding age

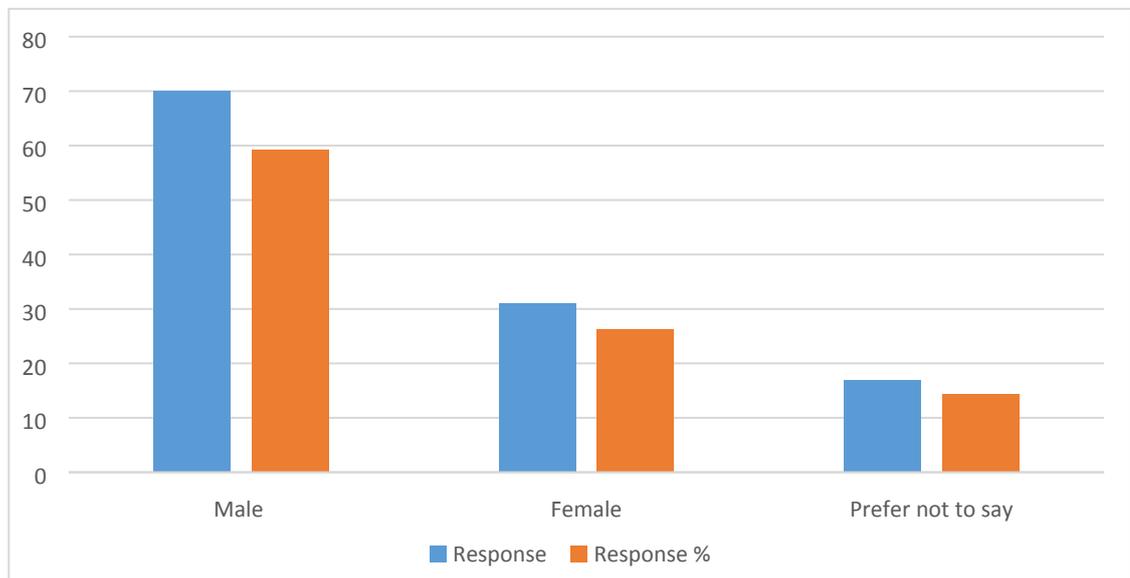
Answer Option	Response	Response %
16-24	11	9.24
25-34	23	19.33
35-44	24	20.17
45-54	21	17.65
55-64	13	10.92
65-74	15	12.61
75-84	2	1.68
84+	0	0.00
Prefer not to say	10	8.40
Total	119	

3.3 The results indicate that the majority of respondents were aged between the categories of 25-34 (19%), 35-44 (20%) and 45-54 (18%). There was a very low response rate from those aged between 75-84 (2%) and no response from anyone aged over 84 years.

3.4 Table 8: Responses to Question 11 – regarding gender

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Male	70	59.32
Female	31	26.27
Prefer not to say	17	14.41
Total	118	

Chart 5: Results of question relating to gender



3.5 The results indicate that the majority of respondents were male (59%).

Table 9: Responses to Question 12 – regarding gender identity

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Yes	92	78.63
No	0	0.00
Prefer not to say	25	21.37
Total	117	

- 3.6 This question asked respondents to confirm their gender identity matched their sex as registered at birth. The results indicate that the majority of respondents (78%) confirmed that their gender identity did match their sex as registered at birth.

Table 9: Responses to Question 13 regarding sexual orientation

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Hetrosexual or straight	81	72.32
Gay man	2	1.79
Gay Woman	0	0.00
Bi-Sexual	3	2.68
Asexual	0	0.00
Prefer not to say	23	20.54
Other	3	2.68
Total	112	

- 3.7 The three ‘Other’ responses received were comments which questioned the relevance of asking for this information.

Table 10: Responses to Question 14 – regarding relationship status

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Single (never married or in a civil partnership)	15	13.16
Cohabiting	16	14.04
Married	53	46.49
In a civil partnership	1	0.88
Seperated (but still legally married or in a civil partnership)	0	0.00
Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	2	1.75
Widowed or a surviving partner from a civil partnership	3	2.63
Prefer not to say	22	19.30
Other	2	1.75
Total	114	

- 3.8 The two ‘Other’ responses received were comments which questioned the relevance of asking for this information.

Table 11: Responses to Question 15 – regarding disability, long term illness or health condition.

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Yes	7	5.98
No	87	74.36
Prefer not to say	23	19.66
Total	117	

- 3.9 The results indicate that the majority of respondents (74%) stated that they did not have a disability, long term illness or health condition.

Table 12: Responses to Question 16 – regarding caring responsibilities.

Answer Option	Response	Response %
None	63	54.31
Primary carer of a child or children (under 2 years)	9	7.76
Primary carer of a child or children (between 2 and 18 years)	18	15.52
Primary carer of a disabled child or children	1	0.86
Primary carer or assistant for a disabled adult (18 years and over)	1	0.86
Primary carer or assistant for an older person or people (65 years and over)	3	2.59
Secondary carer (another person carries out main caring role)	6	5.17
Prefer not to say	23	19.83
Total	124	

- 3.10 The results indicate that (54%) of respondents do not currently have any caring responsibilities.

Table 13: Responses to Question 17 – regarding religion

Answer Option	Response	Response %
No Religion	59	51.75
Christian all denominations	25	21.93
Buddhist	0	0.00
Hindu	0	0.00
Jewish	0	0.00
Muslim	0	0.00
Sikh	0	0.00
Prefer not to say	27	23.68
Other	3	2.63
Total	114	

- 3.11 The results indicate that almost (52%) of respondents have no religion and almost (22%) state their religion as Christian all denominations.

- 3.12 The three 'Other' responses received were:

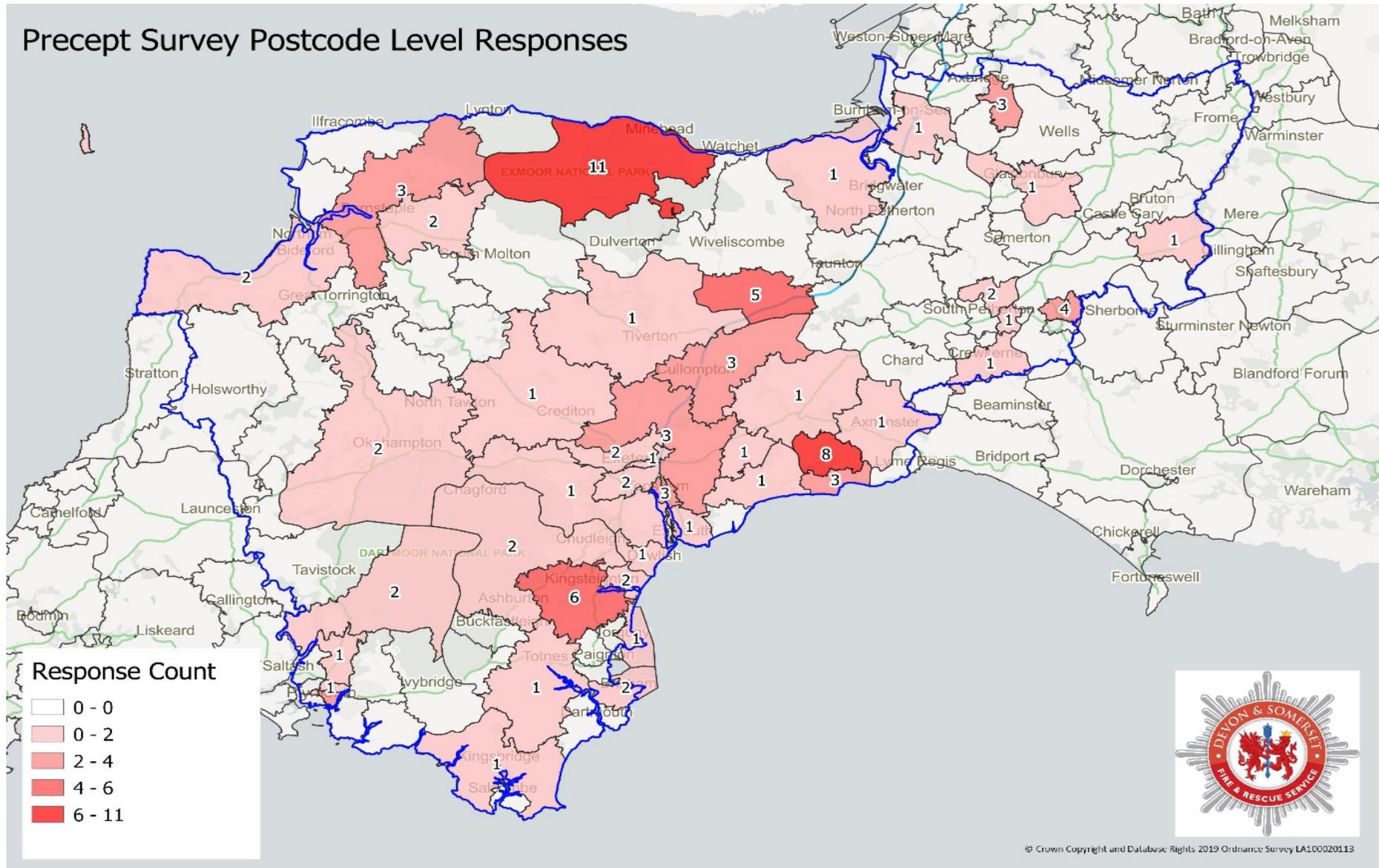
- Raelian
- Agnostic
- How is this relevant?

Table 14: Responses to Question 18 – regarding ethnic origin.

Answer Option	Response	Response %
White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	91	78.45
White - Irish	1	0.86
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0.00
Any other white background	1	0.86
White and black Caribbean	0	0.00
White and black African	0	0.00
White and Asian	0	0.00
Any other mixed multiple ethnic background	0	0.00
Asian / Asian British - Indian	0	0.00
Asian / Asian British - Pakistani	0	0.00
Asian / Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0.00
Asian / Asian British - Chinese	0	0.00
Any other Asian background	0	0.00
Black / black British - African	0	0.00
Black / black British - Caribbean	0	0.00
Any other black background	0	0.00
Other ethnic groups - Arab	0	0.00
Prefer not to say	23	19.83
Total	116	

- 3.13 The results indicate that the majority of respondents (78%) stated they were White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British.
- 3.14 Respondents were asked to provide their postcode, this helps us to understand whether we received a cross section of responses from across Devon and Somerset. Of the 155 total respondents, 106 provided a postcode and these have been displayed on the map overleaf.

Precept Survey Postcode Level Responses



4. Promoting the consultation

- 4.1 The consultation was promoted using Facebook and Twitter and the website homepage. (See posts on Facebook and website banner on page 13). The advertising of the consultation was cut short due to the Purdah pre-election period which was announced shortly after we commenced with initial posts on social media.
- 4.2 The Facebook post reached 7,373 people and 197 people clicked through from Facebook to the survey page. There was quite an active discussion on Facebook with 79 comments – these were mostly negative and in relation to the consultation and the timing of the precept survey.
- 4.3 The tweet had 3.6K impressions, 72 click throughs and 2 comments. The comments were similar to those on Facebook.
- 4.4 A banner was featured on the website homepage from the date when the survey opened but this was taken down once the Purdah period began.

