

2021/22 Precept consultation online survey

1. Online survey overview

- 1.1 The online survey was available from 6 November - 18 December 2020. The consultation period was promoted through our website and social media, targeted adverts on Facebook, Devon and Somerset library services, Devon Communities Together, Somerset Resilient Forum, a press release and through internal channels. Examples of the Facebook adverts and promotion information can be found in Section 5 of this report.
- 1.2 In that period a total of **737** completed responses were received, compared with 121 completed surveys last year. This is due to the increased targeted advertising we conducted this year and the lower response last year due to purdah.
- 1.3 As only thirteen of these responses represented the business sector, the results have not been separated.
- 1.4 The total number of responses differ for each question as some people chose not to respond to every question.
- 1.5 Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, there was not an option for paper surveys this year. Any enquiries for an alternative to online would receive a telephone interview with DJS Research. There were no enquiries for this.
- 1.6 The survey had three main sections: general questions about the service to gauge level of understanding of what DSFRS do (section 3 of report), compulsory questions directly about precept (section 2 of report) and demographic questions (section 4 of report).

This report summarises the main findings from the survey.

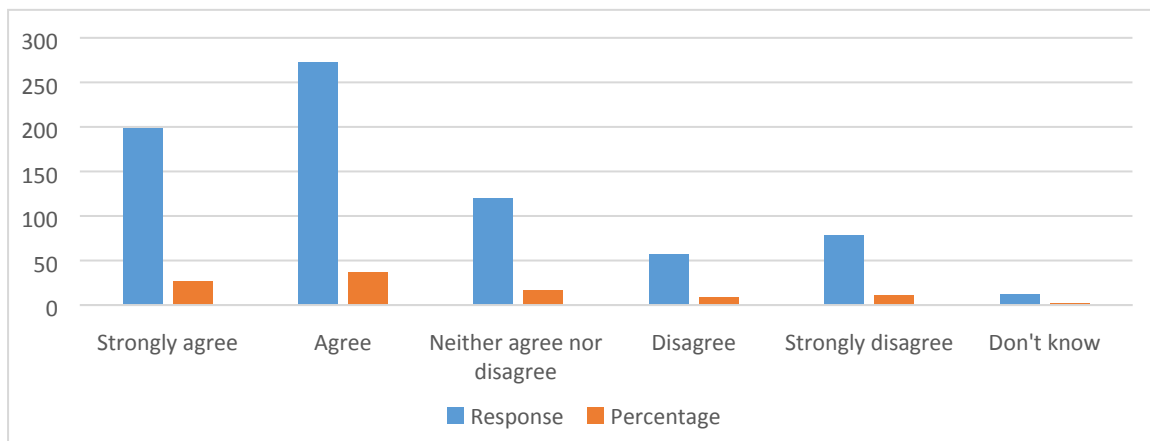
2. Results to compulsory questions (Question number 5-7):

2.1 Q5. How much do you agree that it is reasonable for the Authority to consider increasing its council tax charge for 2021/22?

Table 1: Responses to Question 5

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Strongly agree	198	26.9
Agree	272	36.9
Neither agree nor disagree	120	16.3
Disagree	57	7.7
Strongly disagree	78	10.6
Don't know	12	1.6
Total	737	100

Chart 1: Results of agreement to consider increasing the precept



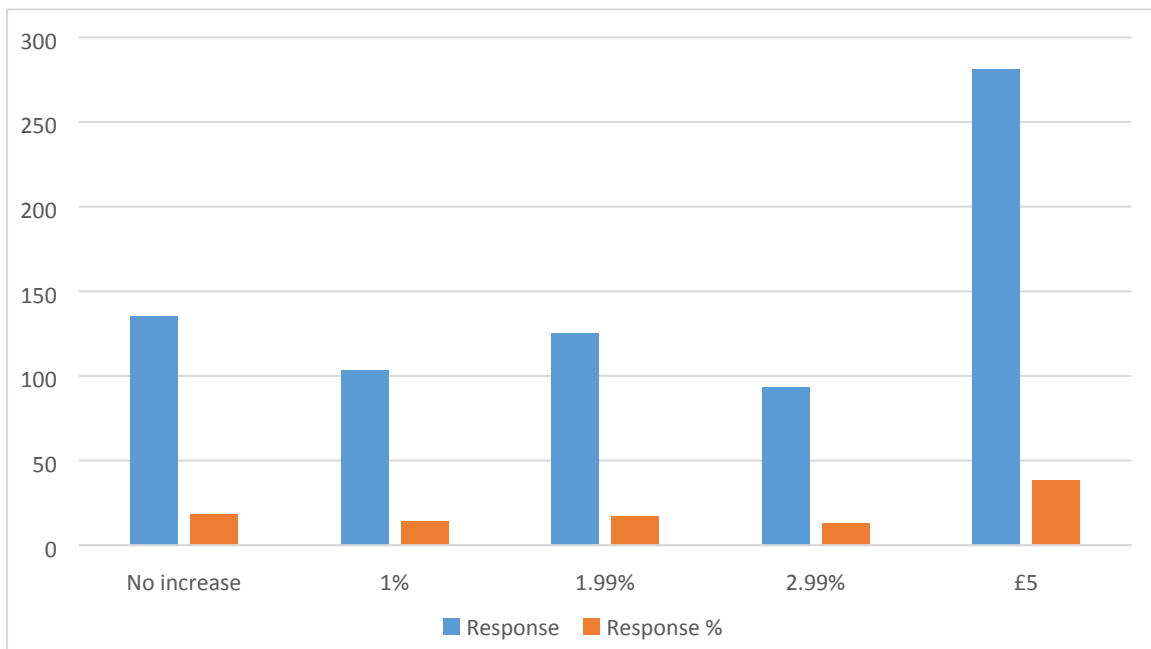
2.2 The results indicate that nearly 64% answered positively to an increase whilst just over 18% answered negatively. Of those who answered negatively, more than half (nearly 11%) strongly disagree that the Authority should consider increasing its charges. This is a significant change to last year's response where 35% strongly disagreed the Authority should consider increasing its charges although still accounts for 135 people who completed the survey.

2.3 Q6. 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 6 who answered either strongly agree, agree, neutral or don't know to question 5.

Answer Option	Response	Response %
1% (An increase of 88p a year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £89.12)	103	17.1
1.99% (An increase of £1.76 a year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £90.00)	125	20.8
2.99% (An increase of £2.64 a year for a Band D property, increasing the total charge to £90.88)	93	15.4
£5 (An increase of £5 a year for a Band D property (pro rata for other bands), increasing the total charge to £93.24)	281	46.7
Total	602	100

Chart 2: Responses to question 6 also including those who did not agree to an increase



2.4 The responses indicate that the most popular option overall is a £5 increase with 281 respondents choosing this (38% of everyone who completed the survey).

2.5 Just over two thirds (67.6%) of respondents considered a 1.99% increase or higher reasonable. 238 people opted for either no increase or 1% increase.

2.6 If you disagreed with Q5, why do you think it is not reasonable for the Authority to increase its element of the council tax charge?

2.7 Of the 135 who disagreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its element of the council tax charge for 2020/21, 103 chose to answer why they disagreed.

2.8 The common emerging themes highlighted by respondents indicated:

- Concerns about affordability for people in light of Covid-19, pay freezes and general financial worries.
- The Service has too much resource, with a focus around salary of management, new fleet and buildings, time spent at stations rather than responding and the amount in Service reserves.
- The Service should look to make efficiency savings before increasing council tax contribution.
- Dissatisfaction at the cuts being made despite increases to council tax.
- Not seeing frontline or service improvements despite increases in the council tax precept and questions around value for money.
- Government support more and efficiency savings in councils.

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

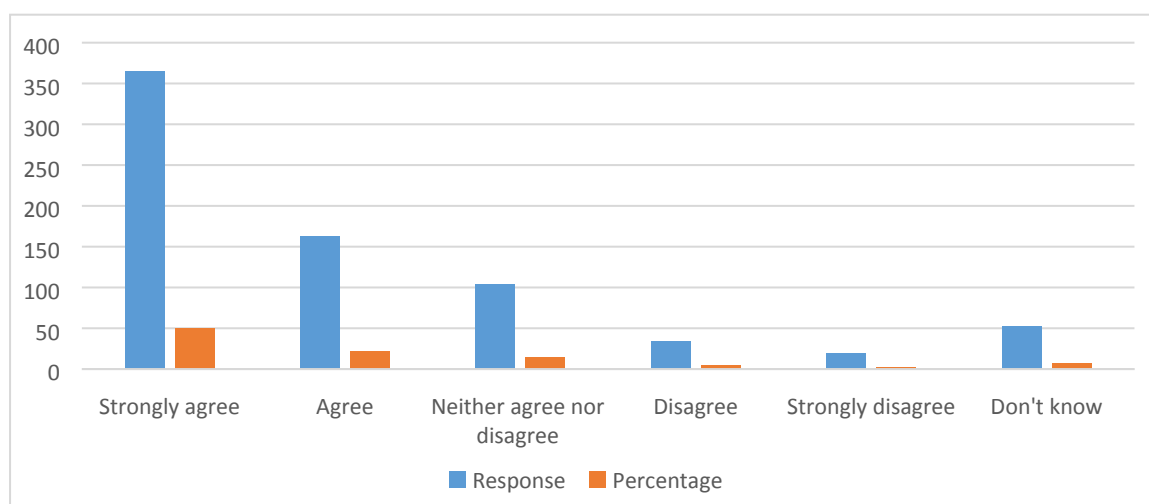
- “First the Authority needs to prove it provides value for money and only if the statutory services cannot be met by the existing level of funding look at increasing it”
- “Why not introduce a Fire Call Out charge of £50 completely voluntary for the saved to pay and keep the council tax rates flat for now until Covid has levelled out. If the voluntary payment system works with extra cash entering each call out then perhaps (the idea) could be shared throughout all emergency services.”
- “Because you're constantly seeking to make savings by cutting frontline services which no matter what way you word it to us, is a reduction in fire cover and therefore we receive less and less for our money's worth. Also I cannot leave the question above blank which is a little flawed so I've marked the lowest possible but in reality it should be 0%.”
- “Should the Fire and Rescue Authority require extra funding consider: 1.Slim down management structure - do you need asst Deputy of the Deputy. 2. Councils need to reallocate more of its overbloated budget, get the Councils out of non-core services and back to what the Council was set up for. Again slim down departments and management structures.”

2.9 Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service provides value for money?

Table 3: Responses to value for money question

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Strongly agree	365	49.5
Agree	163	22.1
Neither agree nor disagree	104	14.1
Disagree	34	4.6
Strongly disagree	19	2.6
Don't know	52	7.1
Total	737	100

Chart 3: Results of value for money question



2.10 The results indicate that almost three quarters of respondents (71%) agree or strongly agree that the Service provides value for money.

2.11 This is consistent with the 2019 HMICFRS perception survey in which 72% perceived their local service provided value for money.

2.12 If anyone disagreed, there was the opportunity to add why with a free text box. None of the 53 respondents who disagreed opted to complete this.

3. Results to non-compulsory questions (Questions 1-4)

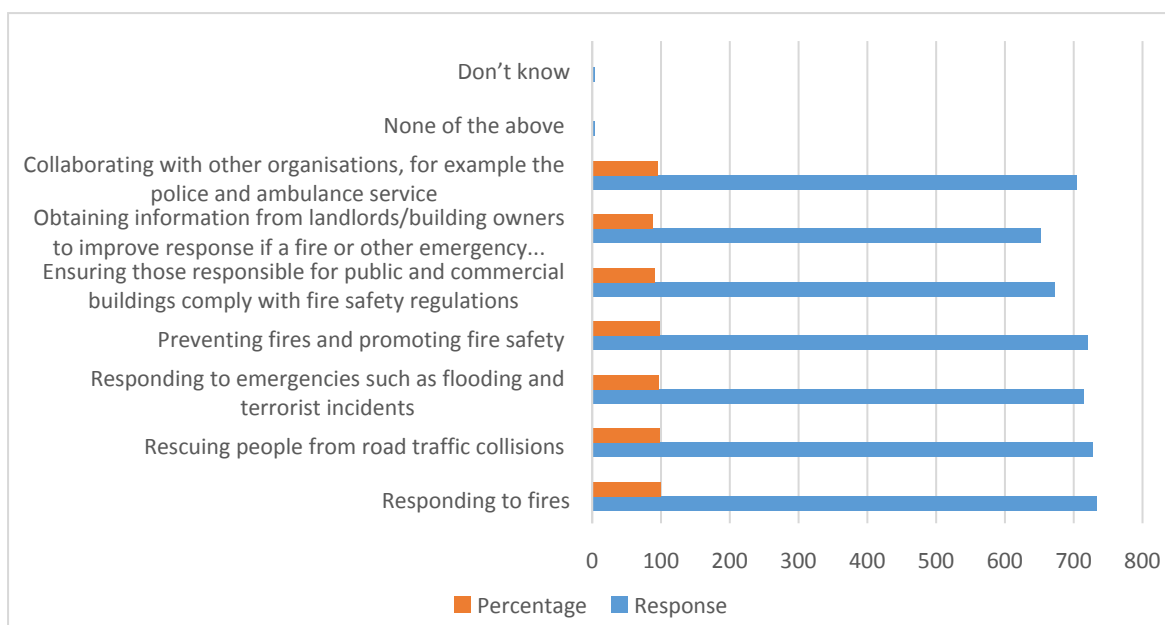
3.1 Q1. What do you think your local fire and rescue service does?

3.2 To contextualise the above and gauge the level of understanding of the public as to what DSFRS does, respondents were asked what they think DSFRS does.

Table 4: Response to Question 1

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Responding to fires	734	99.6
Rescuing people from road traffic collisions	727	98.6
Responding to emergencies such as flooding and terrorist incidents	714	96.9
Preventing fires and promoting fire safety	721	97.8
Ensuring those responsible for public and commercial buildings comply with fire safety regulations	673	91.3
Obtaining information from landlords/building owners to improve response if a fire or other emergency occurs in the building	652	88.5
Collaborating with other organisations, for example the police and ambulance service	705	95.7
None of the above	3	0.4
Don't know	3	0.4

Chart 4: what do you think our fire and rescue service does?



3.3 The results indicate that there is a good level of understanding about what the Service does from those who have completed the survey, with the lowest level of knowledge about 'Ensuring those responsible for public and commercial buildings comply with fire safety regulations' at 88.5%.

3.4 This is higher than the national findings of the 2019 HMICFRS public perception survey which had its highest response as 90% preventing fires and lowest as 61% 'Ensuring those responsible for public and commercial buildings comply with fire safety regulations'.

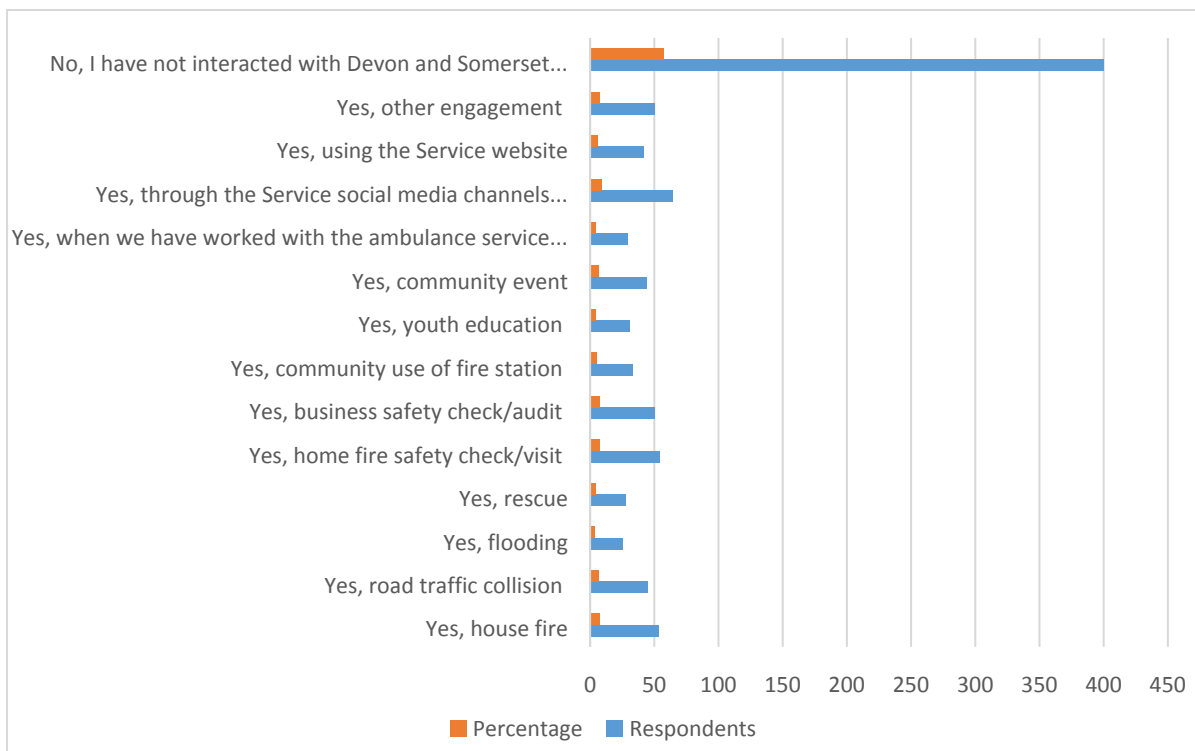
3.5 Q2. Have you interacted with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in the last 12 months? (select all that apply)

Table 5: how people have interacted with DSFRS in the past 12 months

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Yes, house fire	53	7.6
Yes, road traffic collision	45	6.4
Yes, flooding	25	3.6
Yes, rescue	28	4
Yes, home fire safety check/visit	54	7.7
Yes, business safety check/audit	50	7.1
Yes, community use of fire station	33	4.7
Yes, youth education	31	4.4
Yes, community event	44	6.3
Yes, when we have worked with the ambulance service and the police	29	4.1

Yes, through the Service social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)	64	9.1
Yes, using the Service website	42	6.0
Yes, other engagement	50	7.1
No, I have not interacted with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.	400	57.1

Chart 4: how people have interacted with DSFRS in the past 12 months



3.6 The results indicate that the highest level of interaction this year has been online (9.1%). This is likely to be due to the covid-19 pandemic.

3.7 Over half of respondents (57%) have not had any interaction with DSFRS in the past 12 months. The number of respondents who have not interacted with the Service is just slightly higher than last year (55%) despite the covid-19 pandemic.

3.8 Of the 50 respondents who selected 'other', 42 added what this was and included:

Table 6: themed responses to 'other' interaction with the Service

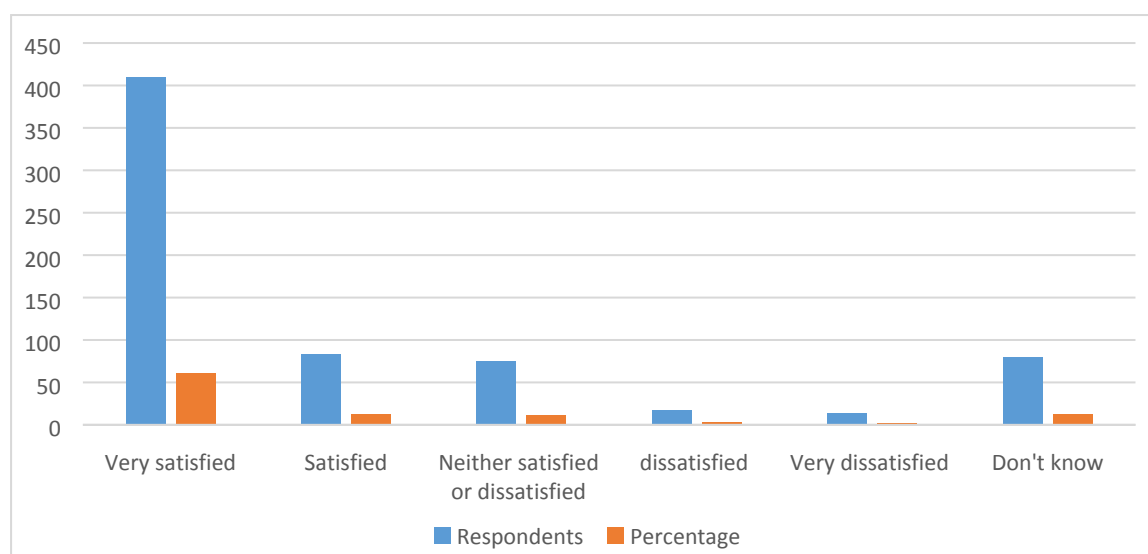
Emerging theme	Response
Seen an incident	16
Employee/ family member/ friend / cadet	10
Partner organisation	5
Town Councillor/ parish council	2
Had fire training by the Service	2
Awareness event for prostate cancer	1
Protection services	1
Fire Service representative body	1
Seen at training exercise	1
Went to station to say thank you	1
Joined campaign to support fire station staffing	1
Fire hydrant check	1

3.9 Q3. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS)?

Table 7: Response to satisfaction question

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Very satisfied	410	60.4
Satisfied	83	12.2
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	75	11.0
Dissatisfied	17	2.5
Very dissatisfied	14	2.1
Don't know	80	11.8
Total	679	100

Chart 5: Results of levels of satisfaction with the service provided by DSFRS



3.10 The results indicate that almost 73% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of service received by DSFRS, a rise from 47% last year most likely due to the Safer Together programme.

3.11 This is in line with the 2019 HMICFRS perception survey in which 73% perceived their local service provided value for money.

3.12 What has influenced how you answered question 3?

Of the 679 who answered question 3, 347 chose to add to the free text box about what influenced their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the service provided by DSFRS.

3.13 The response to emergency services with the Covid-19 pandemic may have had a positive influence on this question.

3.14 The common emerging themes from respondents highlighted:

- General positive comments referring to the service and staff as amazing, dedicated, knowledgeable, professional, heroes, helpful, hardworking amongst others.
- No interaction with the fire service so unable to answer
- Cuts including station closures and changes to fire engines
- Always there when you need them
- Quick response times
- Know/ was/ am a firefighter
- Received advice / prevention services
- Too much resource (eg. Paid to sleep, waste money) Too much resource (eg. Paid to sleep, waste money)
- Staff (lack of recruitment, low pay, lack of staff support)
- From social media/ media/ comms

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

- “Cuts have seen a deterioration in the protection offered to the public with inadequate numbers of firefighters and sub standard vehicles.”
- “The current top management have seriously reduced numbers and the wider public are unaware of the shortage and how long it could take to attend more remote property.”
- “The personnel themselves are superb BUT obviously very understaffed and very stretched. On top of that there's plans to close Frome fire station which will cost lives.”

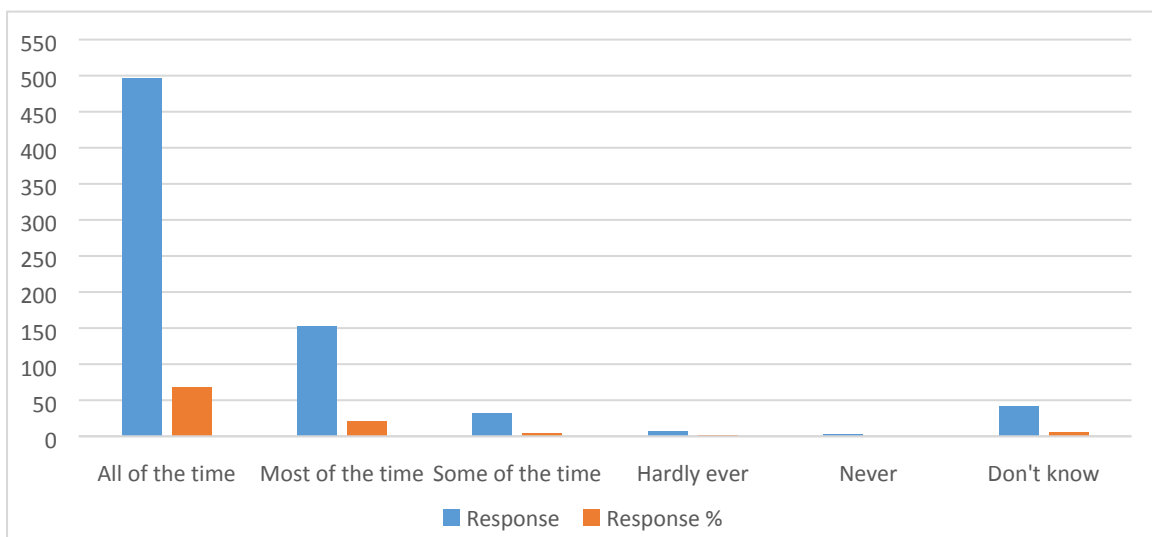
- “Very happy with the way fire fighters and their direct support teams get the job done but not happy at all with the way management and the FSA put the public at risk by making cuts without assessing risks and engaging in an open and honest public discussion.”
- “Always professional, organised, polite, friendly, calming, trustworthy, heroes.”
- “The crew were quick getting to us they showed sympathy and empathy and saved our home when it flooded and gave us good advice on how to dry our brand new carpets and floors”
- “The fire personnel are all local, they interact with the community area that they cover, local people have seen what it means to them when they have had to deal with a fatality or a fire in a local home or business. They care, they are there for everyone and involved with local companies. Most of all no matter how busy they are they still make the effort to wave to the little children on the way to a shout!”

3.16 Q4. Thinking about your local fire and rescue service, do you think they have a good reputation?

Table 8: response to reputation of DSFRS question

Answer Option	Response	Response %
All of the time	496	67.7
Most of the time	153	20.9
Some of the time	32	4.4
Hardly ever	7	1.0
Never	3	0.4
Don't know	42	5.7
Total	733	99.74

Chart 6: response to reputation of DSFRS question



3.17 The results indicate that 88.6% of respondents feel DSFRS has a good reputation most of the time.

3.18 This question was added this year to give opportunity for those who had not used the Service to answer based on reputation rather than satisfaction.

3.19 What has influenced your answer to question 4?

Of the 733 people who answered this question, 291 completed the text box to answer what had influenced their answer. Emerging themes include:

- General positive experience/ perception of teams
- Not heard otherwise
- Have seen positive reports in press/ social media/ other communications
- Positive part of the community
- Cuts including station closures and changes to fire engines
- Too much resource (eg. Paid to sleep, waste money)
- Positive frontline, negative management or back office
- Never needed the fire service/ not enough information to answer fully
- General negative (eg. Too much discussion whilst deciding what to do at an incident, handling of hotel fire)

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

- “Firefighters have an excellent reputation, but the service's management has an appalling reputation.”
- “The way the current senior management are ripping the community heart out of retained stations by the way they treat new prospective employees.”
- “Too many hours sat in the station just in case an incident occurs most have two jobs. They moan to high heaven when they are asked to reduce costs etc.”
- “The local station is fine but your recent consultation and cuts were not right”
- “They always there when you need them in any issue you may be in from floods to car accident and to putting a fire out in a home.”
- “My local crew are totally respected by the local community”
- “I have never heard or seen adverse comments about them. Only praise.”

4. Profile of Respondents

4.1 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.

4.2 **Q.8 Are you...?** Respondents were asked whether they were completing the survey as a business or resident

Table 9: Responses to Question 8

Answer Option	Response	Response %
A member of the public	722	98.2
Representing a business	13	1.8
Total	735	100

4.3 As only thirteen 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. Some who answered as a resident cited their business within an answer.

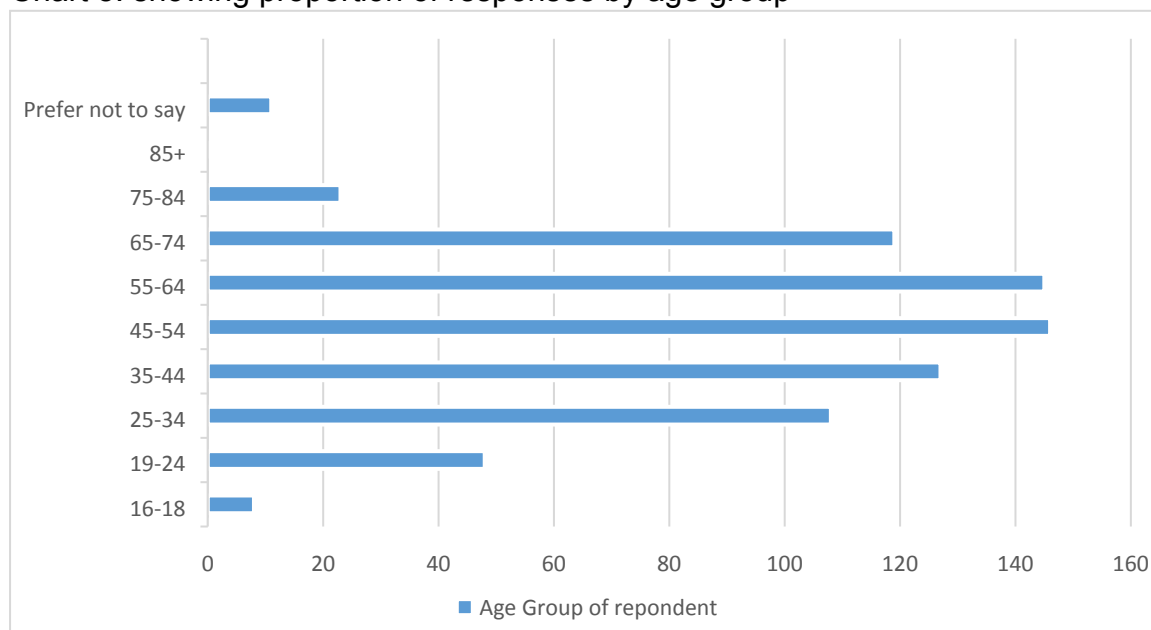
4.4 DJS Research were commissioned to interview 400 businesses so this data will be used to determine any disproportionate views to the views of the public.

4.5 **Q.9: Which of the following age groups do you fall into?**

Table 10: Respondents' age group

Answer Option	Response	Response %
16-18	8	1.1
19-24	48	6.5
25-34	108	14.7
35-44	127	17.3
45-54	146	19.9
55-64	145	19.7
65-74	119	16.2
75-84	23	3.1
85+	0	0
Prefer not to say	11	1.5
Total	735	100

Chart 8: showing proportion of responses by age group



4.6 The results indicate that the majority of respondents were aged between 35-44 (17.3%), 45-54 (19.9%), 55-64 (19.7%) and 65-74 (16.2%).

4.7 There was a very low response rate from those aged between 16-18 (1.1%) and those 75-84 (3.1%), although 23 responses is still a reasonable representation for 75-84. We received no responses from anybody 85+.

4.8 The low responses from the age group 85+ is consistent with previous years. This year we were unable to undertake any face to face engagement due to the Covid-19 restrictions so harder to engage this audience.

4.9 Through the consultation term (6 November – 18 December) the responses were reviewed to ensure a good cross-section of our communities. Paid advertising was used to boost responses from those under 35 and 65+ from 27 November.

Table 11: respondents' age group mid-term compared to after paid for advertising

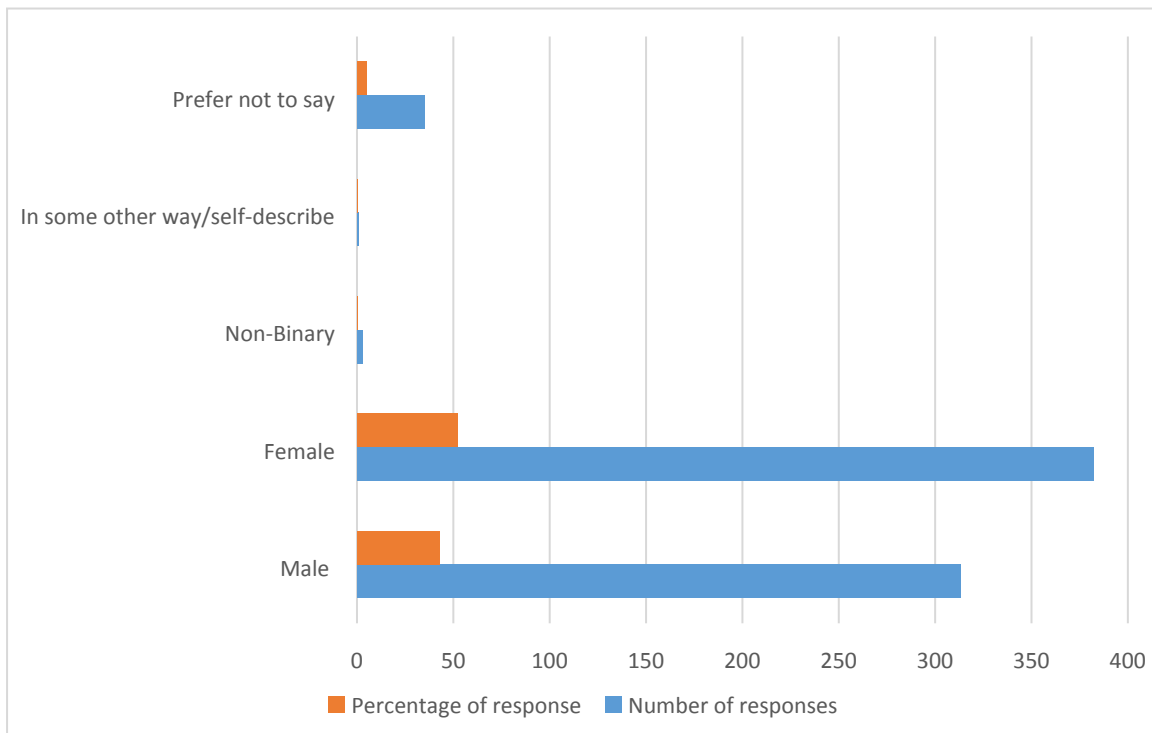
Answer Option	Responses up to 27.11.20	Final Responses
16-18	1 (1.2%)	8 (1.1%)
19-24	1 (1.2%)	48 (6.5%)
25-34	7 (8.6%)	108 (14.7%)
35-44	17 (21%)	127 (17.3%)
45-54	24 (29.6%)	146 (19.9%)
55-64	15 (18.5%)	145 (19.7%)
65-74	10 (12.3%)	119 (16.2%)
75-84	2 (2.5%)	23 (3.1%)
85+	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	4 (4.9%)	11 (1.5%)
Total	81	735

4.10 Q10: Do you identify as:

Table 12: Responses to Question 10 (gender)

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Male	313	42.6
Female	382	52.0
Non-Binary	3	0.4
In some other way/self-describe	1	0.1
Prefer not to say	35	4.8
Total	734	99.9

Chart 9: Chart showing gender of respondents



4.11 Respondents that selected “In some other way/self-describe” commented;

- I change from female to male depending on my mood.

4.11.1 The majority of responses were received from females (52%) compared to males (42.6%).

4.11.2 More women answered positively to an increase of precept with 67.8% answering positively compared to 61.3% male. Women also indicated they would be happier to pay more with 45.3% answering £5 increase compared to 35.5% men selecting a £5 increase.

4.11.3 Before this year’s precept consultation, the mean three year average for responses from female respondents was 25.85%. This means we have received over double the amount of female responses this year than the previous three year average. This is likely to be a result of targeted online advertising which started on 27 November.

Table 13: answer to gender question mid-term and at the end of the survey

Answer Option	Response up to 27.11.20	Response at end of survey
Male	57 (70.4%)	313 (42.6%)
Female	16 (19.8%)	382 (52.0%)
Non-Binary	0	3 (0.4%)
In some other way/self-describe	0	1 (0.1%)
Prefer not to say	8 (9.9%)	35 (4.8%)
Total	81	734

4.12 Q.11 Does your gender identity match your sex as registered at birth?

Table 14: responses to question 11

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Yes	687	94
No	2	0.3
Prefer not to say	42	5.7
Total	731	100

4.12.1 Q.12 - Which of the following best describes how you think about yourself?

Table 15: responses to question 12

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Heterosexual or straight	623	85.8
Gay man	6	0.8
Gay Woman	4	0.6
Bi-Sexual	16	2.2
In some other way/self-describe	9	1.2
Prefer not to say	68	9.4
Total	726	100

4.13 Respondents that selected “In some other way/self-describe” commented;

- Chinese
- I am a straight woman
- Depends on how I feel on the day
- Post op transgender
- Married

- Pansexual x 2
- LGBT+

4.13.1 The majority of respondents selected Heterosexual or straight as their response (85.8%).

4.13.2 More respondents selected Bi-Sexual (2.2%) than Gay Man and Gay Woman added together (1.4%).

4.13.3 Nearly 10% of respondents selected that they would “prefer not to say” (9.4%).

4.13.4 Q.13 – In relation to the definition of disability above, do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Table 16: Responses to Question 13

Answer Option	Response	Response %
Yes	87	11.9
No	596	81.2
Prefer not to say	51	6.9
Total	734	100

4.13.5 The results indicate that the majority of respondents (81.2%) stated that they did not have a disability, long term illness or health condition.

4.13.6 11.9% of respondents consider themselves to have a disability, long term illness or health condition. This is nearly double the responses we received last year (6%) from those that considered themselves to be disabled.

4.13.7 Only 6.9% of respondents selected “prefer not to say”, this is over 12% lower than last year (19.66%).

4.14 Q14: Do you have any caring responsibilities?

Table 17: Responses to Question 14 – Do you have any caring responsibilities? (Please select all that apply)

Answer Option	Response	Response %
None	434	59.5
Primary carer of a child or children (under 2 years)	26	3.6
Primary carer of a child or children (between 2 and 18 years)	128	17.6
Primary carer of a disabled child or children	6	0.8

Primary carer or assistant for a disabled adult (18 years and over)	19	2.6
Primary carer or assistant for an older person or people (65 years and over)	30	4.1
Secondary carer (another person carries out main caring role)	27	3.7
Shared primary carer responsibility, please provide details	8	1.1
Prefer not to say	51	7.0
Total	729	100

4.15 Respondents that selected “please provide details” commented;

- 50/50 custody of daughter
- Both myself and my wife are equally responsible for the care of our two children (2 and 8 years old)
- Child under 2
- Children under 18
- Parental responsibility
- Provide support for my step-dad who has stage 3 Colon & liver cancer & also for my mum has depression.

4.16 The results indicate that nearly 60% of respondents do not currently have any caring responsibilities.

4.17 Question 15: What is your religion?

Table 18: Responses to Question 15

Answer Option	Response	Response %
No Religion	343	46.8
Christian all denominations	300	40.9
Buddhist	3	0.4
Hindu	0	0
Jewish	0	0
Muslim	1	0.1
Sikh	0	0
Prefer not to say	69	9.4
Other	17	2.3
Total	733	99.9

Of the 17 respondents that selected “other”, 16 chose to comment:

- Agnostic x2
- Humanist x1
- Jedi x1
- Jehovah's witness x1
- Pagan x7
- Polytheist x1
- Satanist x1
- Spiritual x1
- Spiritualist x1

4.18 The results indicate that almost half (47%) of respondents have no religion.

4.19 Almost 41% state their religion as Christian all denominations.

4.20 Q.16 How would you describe your national identity?

Table 19: Responses to Question 16 – regarding ethnic origin.

Answer Option	Response	Response %
English	509	69.6
Welsh	9	1.2
Scottish	9	1.2
Northern Irish	1	0.1
British	150	20.5
Prefer not to say	34	4.7
Other	19	2.6
Total	731	99.9

All 19 respondents who selected "other" commented:

- White American
- These questions are stupid and have nothing to do with emergency services, only office idiots need t
- Mixed English
- White American
- Somerset
- European
- American
- Cornish
- Cornish

4.21 Q.17 What is your ethnic group?

Table 20: Responses to Question 17 – regarding ethnic origin.

Answer Option	Response	Response %
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	696	97.1
Irish	4	0.6
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	0.1
Any other white background	16	2.2
White and black Caribbean	2	0.3
White and black African	0	0
White and Asian	1	0.1
Any other mixed multiple ethnic background	1	0.1
Asian / Asian British - Indian	0	0
Asian / Asian British - Pakistani	0	0
Asian / Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0
Asian / Asian British - Chinese	0	0
Any other Asian background	0	0
Black / black British - African	0	0
Black / black British - Caribbean	0	0
Any other black background	0	0
Other ethnic groups - Arab	0	0
Total	721	99.9

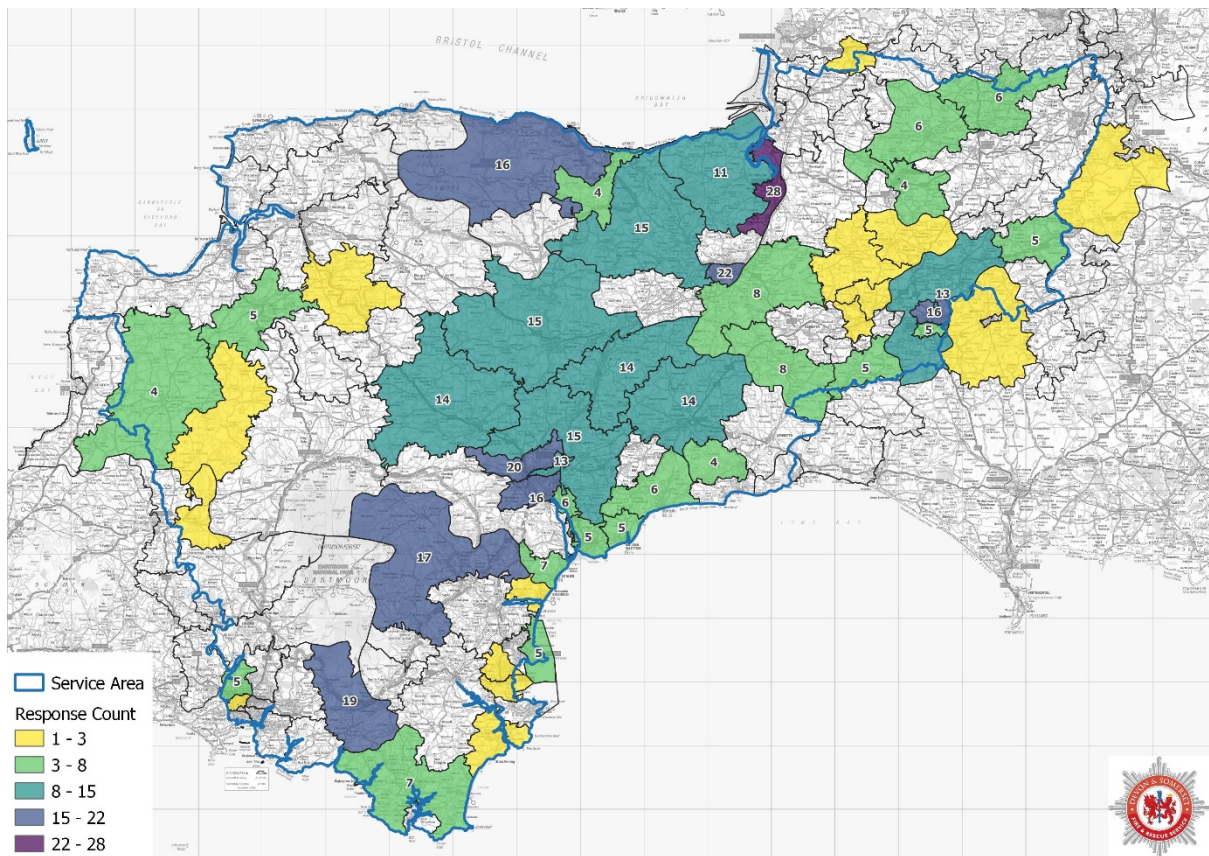
4.22 The results indicate that the majority of respondents (97.1%) stated they were White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British.

4.23 Q.18 What is the first part of your postcode?

4.24 Respondents were asked to provide the first part of their postcode, this helps us to understand whether we received a cross section of responses from across Devon and Somerset. Of the 737 total respondents, 692 provided a postcode and these have been displayed on the map below. Note: although some responses look out of our Service area, part of their postcode area is included.

4.25

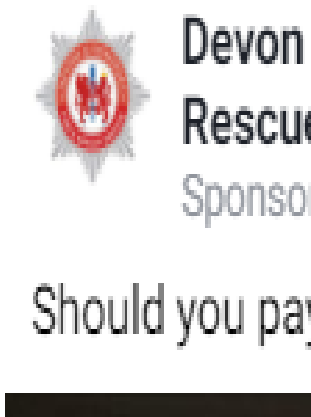
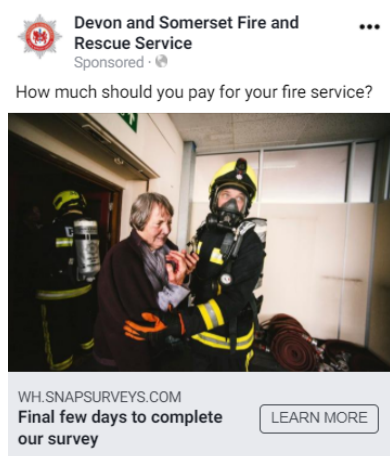
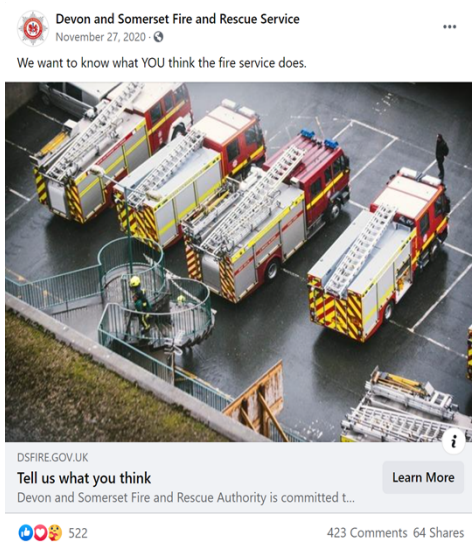
Map 1: displaying respondents' postcode areas



5. Promoting the consultation

5.1 The consultation was promoted using social media, press release and the website homepage.

5.2 Paid for Facebook advertising was used throughout the consultation with these example adverts being used:



5.3 The Facebook post reached 101,439 people and 3,855 people clicked through from Facebook to the survey page. Comments were generally positive and all replied to encouraging to follow the link to complete the survey so we could capture feedback formally.

5.4 Twitter was not paid for advertising and had less of a reach, with 1 retweet from and 4 likes.



5.5 The precept survey featured on the home page of the DSFRS website for the duration of the survey.

5.6 Devon and Somerset library services, Devon Communities Together and Somerset Resilience Forum promoted the survey through their channels. Posters

had been due to be displayed in their locations but were cancelled due to restrictions from covid-19.

5.7 The press release was picked up by local media including Greatest Hits radio, BBC Radio Somerset, Heart FM and local media websites including:

[Fire service asks Devon and Somerset council tax payers 'are ...](#)

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