Prepared for:

APPENDIX E TO REPORT DSFRA/21/3

DEVON & SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Council Tax Precept Survey 2021/22

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Introduction

1.1 Context and methodology

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (hereafter DSFRS) is the largest non-metropolitan fire and rescue service in England. They provide prevention, protection and response services across the counties of Devon and Somerset (including Torbay and Plymouth).

DSFRS have 83 fire stations and over 1,800 staff who work to protect the 1.7 million people who live in Devon, Somerset, Torbay and Plymouth, alongside the estimated extra 400,000 people who visit this part of the country every year.

In October 2020, DSFRS commissioned DJS Research to undertake a survey amongst 400 businesses and 400 residents. The purpose of the research was to consult with residents and businesses within Devon and Somerset on how DSFRS should approach setting its budget for 2021/22 and on whether the service is currently deemed to be providing a satisfactory and value-for-money service.

The questionnaire for the survey was provided by DSFRS. The contacts for the survey were purchased by DJS Research from a commercial database provider. To ensure that findings form the research would allow for meaningful comparisons to be made , quotas were set by local authority district (LAD), number of employees and broad industry sector for the business survey and LAD, age and gender for the resident survey. We also set aspirational quotas for residents around ethnicity, in order to achieve a large enough sample for sub-group analysis among BAME residents.

In total, 399 interviews with businesses and 402 interviews with residents were completed during the fieldwork period (17 November to 21 December 2020). Tables detailing the calls made as part of this research can be found in Appendix II.

This report summarises the main findings from both surveys.

There are two points to note:

1. The data which appears in these charts and tables has been weighted (adjusted) to account for any under- or over-representation of specific groups within the final data, according to the latest statistical and census data. Tables outlining the weighted and unweighted demographic profiles of the two samples (Businesses and Residents) can be found in Appendix I.

2. Throughout the report, where reference is made to one sub-group being 'significantly more likely' than another sub-group to act in a certain way or hold a specific opinion, this is a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.

Key Findings

2.1 Whether it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its element of the Council Tax charge for 2021/22

Respondents were provided with the following contextual information regarding DSFRS:

> *Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to ambitious plans to end preventable fire and rescue emergencies across the two counties while addressing the funding cuts passed down by the Government. The Service provides 83 local fire stations across Devon and Somerset and employs about 2,000 staff, helping to keep a population of 1.8 million safe. On average, they attend about 15,700 incidents every year and provide home safety advice to over 18,000 households. Incidents they attend include flooding, road traffic collisions, fires and other emergencies. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority is considering its Council Tax charges for 2021/22. The current charge is £88.24 a year for a Band 'D' property.*

They were then informed of the following:

> *The total cost of running Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service equates to approximately £43.91 a year per head of the population.*

Respondents were then asked how strongly they agree or disagree that it is reasonable for the Authority to consider increasing its Council Tax charge for 2021/22.

Businesses

Six-in-ten (62%) businesses agreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its Council Tax charge for 2021/22. Only 14% disagreed that it is reasonable for them to consider an increase.

- A to F sector businesses were significantly more likely than G-N, R+S sector businesses to disagree (19% vs 10%, respectively).[1]

[1] A to F includes the following sectors: A: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; B Mining and Quarrying; C Manufacturing; D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; E Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities; F Construction.

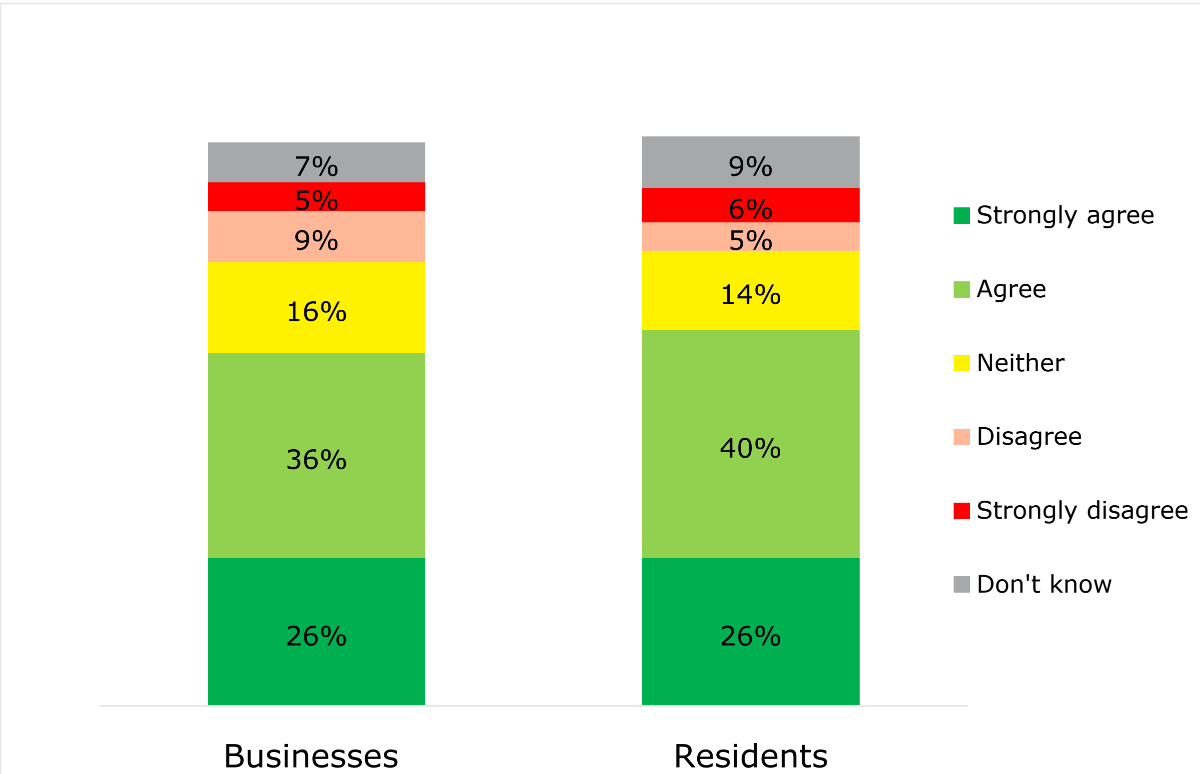
G to N, R and S includes the following sectors: G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; H Transportation and storage; I Accommodation and food service activities; J Information and communication; K Financial and insurance activities; L Real estate activities; M Professional, scientific and technical activities; N Administrative and support service activities; R Arts, entertainment and recreation; S Other service activities

Residents

Two-thirds of residents (66%) agreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its Council Tax charge, compared to only 12% who disagreed.

- Residents who had interreacted with DSFRS in the last 12 months were significantly more likely to agree that it is reasonable to consider increasing its charge.
- Residents aged 25-44 (17%) were significantly more likely than residents in older age bands (45-64, 12%; 65+, 9%) to disagree with an increase.
- BAME residents (29%) were significantly more likely than White residents (11%) to disagree with an increase. While this difference is substantial, it is worth noting that BAME residents (37%) were significantly more likely than White residents (7%) to answer 'Don't know' to this question. Not only could this account for (part of) the difference, it suggests there may be challenges related to awareness regarding what DSFRS does and how it is funded.

Chart 1: Whether it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its element of the Council Tax charge for 2021/22



Q05. How much do you agree or disagree that it is reasonable for the Authority to consider increasing its Council Tax charge for 2021/22? Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402)

2.2 Level of increase that would be reasonable

All respondents, regardless of whether they agreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its Council Tax charge for 2021/22, were asked at what level the increase should be set.

Businesses

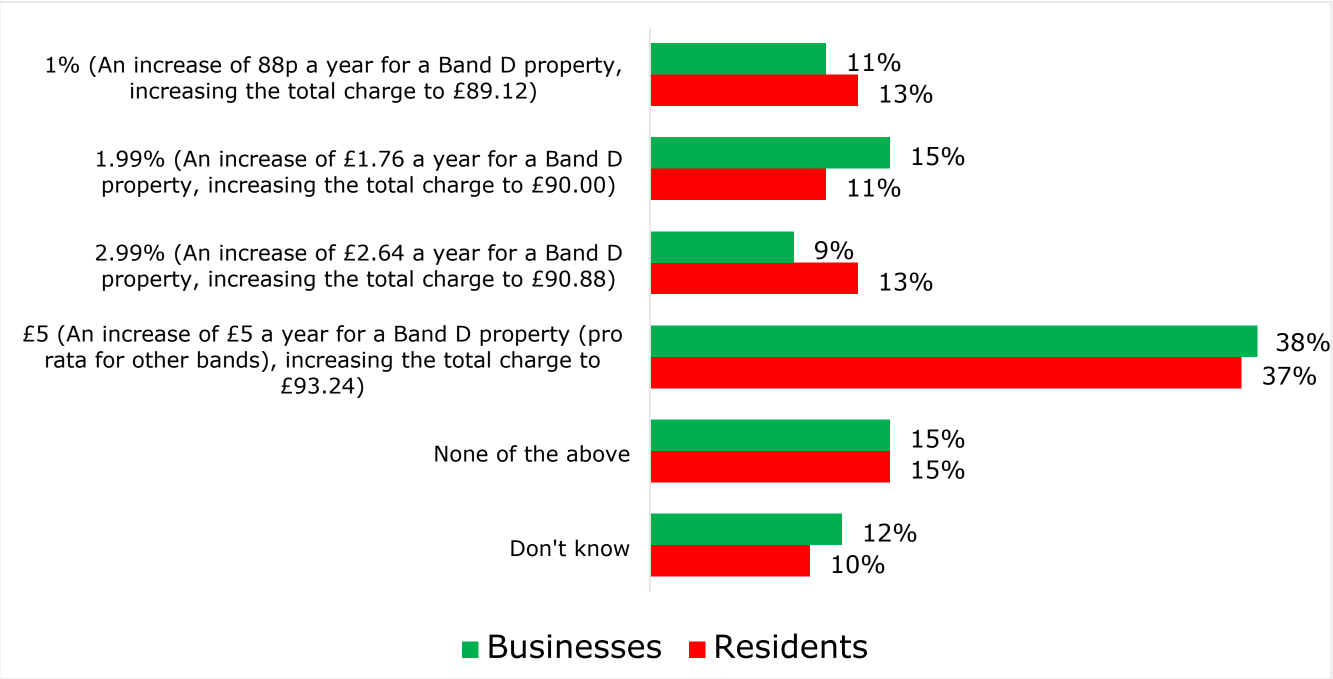
Four-in-ten (38%) businesses opted for a £5 increase, the most popular option among the ones listed. A 1.99% increase, the second most popular option, was chosen by only 15% of business respondents. 15% opted for none of the above.

Residents

Consistent with findings from the business survey, the most popular option among residents was for a £5 increase (37%). The 2.99% increase option proved more popular with residents than businesses, with 13% of residents opting for it, while 11% opted for the 1.99% increase. Also consistent with findings from business survey, 15% of residents opted for none of the above.

- Male residents (17%) were significantly more likely than female residents (9%) to opt for the 2.99% increase, while female residents (15%) were significantly more likely than their male counterparts (8%) to opt for the 1.99% increase
- Residents without a disability (42%) were significantly more likely than residents with one (27%) to opt for a £5 increase.

Chart 2: Level of increase that would be reasonable



Q06. What level of increase would you consider is reasonable for the Authority to increase its element of the Council Tax charge by? Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402)

2.3 Reasons for disagreeing that increase is reasonable

Respondents who disagreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its Council Tax charge for 2021/22 (14% of businesses and 12% of residents) were asked a follow-up question to help clarify their response. The following verbatims were taken from these responses and reflect the general sentiment of the respondents.

Businesses

Businesses suffering due to Covid situation; cannot afford an increase in council tax.

It's a bad time of year to do it, a lot of businesses are struggling. There was also a building being built for the fire brigade which was not occupied for more than two years.

Not in line with inflation and current business costs.

Money should be rechannelled from the police to the fire service. Without any change to council charge.

I'm actually on the breadline so I don't want to be paying more council tax.

It's not an appropriate time to raise council tax with current economic situation.

Residents

I agree with an increase, but from other Council funds.

I'm not pleased with the Council generally and do not think it's justified that council tax goes up at all.

A lot of the time it does not go to the cause it should go to.

Personally, I'd have to say that the wages around here are very poor especially with what has happened this year. I think a lot of people would struggle with an increase in council tax charges.

Q06b. Why do you think it is not reasonable for the Authority to increase its element of the Council Tax charge? Base: All respondents who disagreed it was reasonable to seek an increase (Business n=55; Residents n=48)

2.4 Whether DSFRS provides value for money

All respondents were asked if they agree or disagree that DSFRS provides value for money.

Businesses

Eight-in-ten (79%) businesses agreed that DSFRS provides value for money, including 58% who strongly agreed with the sentiment. Significantly, only 3 business respondents (representing less than 1% of total) disagreed that DSFRS provides value for money.

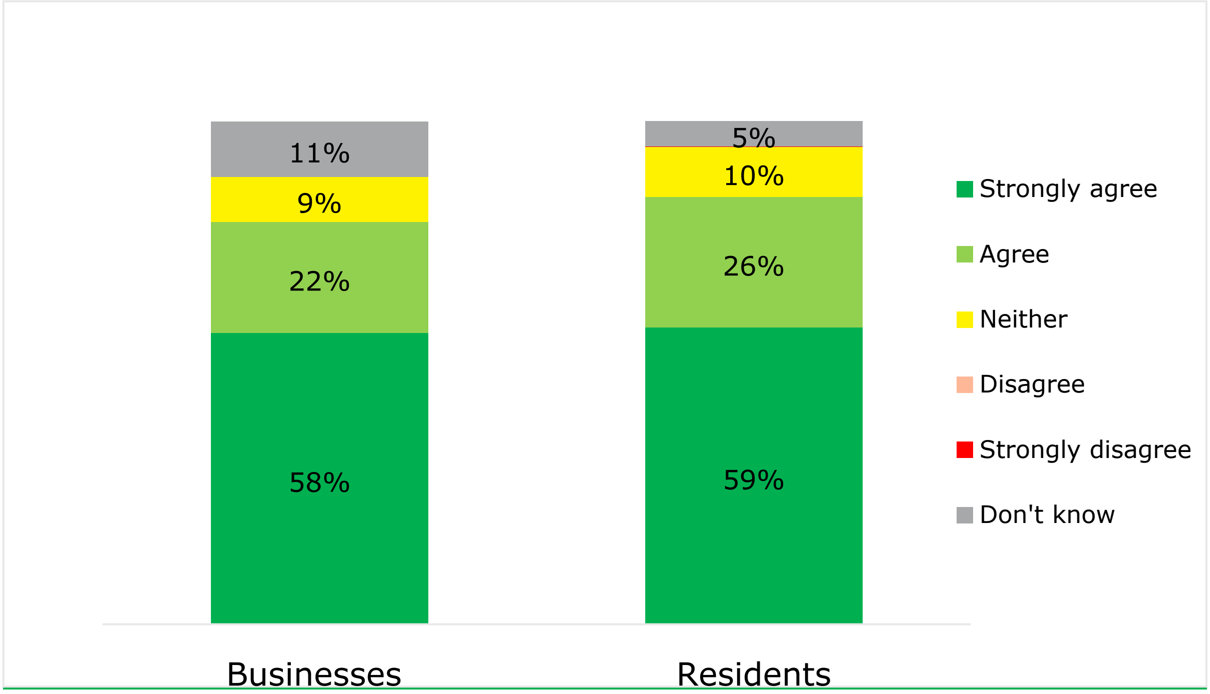
- G-N, R+S sector businesses (62%) were significantly more likely than A to F sector businesses (51%) to strongly agree that DSFRS provides value for money.
- Businesses with no (81%) or some (95%) partners/directors from minority groups were significantly more likely than businesses in which partners/ directors are all from minority groups (34%) to agree that DSFRS provides value for money.

Residents

85% of residents agree that DSFRS provides value for money. Significantly, only one resident disagreed with this sentiment (the balance being made up between those who neither agreed nor disagreed (10%) and those who gave a 'Don't Know' response (5%).

- Residents aged 16-24 (69%) along with those aged 45-64 (64%) were significantly more likely than residents in the 25-44 age band (46%) to strongly agree that DSFRS provides value for money.

Chart 3: Whether DSFRS provides value for money



Q07. How strongly do you agree or disagree that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service provides value for money? Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402)

2.5 Reasons for disagreeing that DSFRS provides value for money

The three businesses and one resident who disagreed that DSFRS provides value for money were asked a follow up question in order to better understand why they disagreed. The following verbatims are included as illustrative of their (not commonly held) views.

Businesses

No interaction with them.

Too many fat cats…

Residents

I don't think value for money should be a factor, as it's a public service.

Q08. Why do you feel the Service does not provide value for money? Base: All respondents who disagreed it provides value for money (Business n=3; Residents n=1)

Survey Findings

3.1 What respondents think the local fire and rescue service does

This question was asked in order to identify gaps in public understanding of the type of services that fall within the remit of DSFRS.

Businesses

100% of business respondents identified 'responding to fires' as something the local fire and rescue service does.

Substantial majorities of respondents identified each and every other service on the list, from a high of 98% in the case of 'rescuing people from road traffic collisions' to a 'low' of 83% in the case of 'obtaining info from landlords/building owners to improve response if fire/emergency occurs in building' as falling within the remit of the local fire and rescue service.

- Results on this question show very little variation between sub-groups, the lone exceptions: a significantly higher share of businesses who have recently interacted with DSFRS choosing 'ensuring those responsible for public and commercial buildings comply with fire safety regulations' compared to those who have not (94% vs 85%, respectively); and a significantly higher share of businesses who agree with a rate increase choosing 'preventing fires and promoting fire safety' compared to those who disagree with an increase (97% vs 89%, respectively).

Residents

Almost all residents (98%) interviewed identified 'responding to fires' as something the local fire and rescue service does as a matter of course. At the other end of the scale, only 71% of residents identified 'obtaining info from landlords/building owners to improve response if fire/emergency occurs in building' as a service they provide.

- Residents aged 45-64 (94%) were significantly more likely than residents in the 25-44 (82%) and 65+ (86%) age bands to identify 'preventing fires and promoting fire safety' as something that lies within the remit of the local fire and rescue service. This may suggest that residents in the youngest and oldest age brackets are more aware of DSFRS' reactive firefighting duties that what can be done to prevent incidents in the first place.
- White residents were significantly more likely than BAME residents to identify the following as services: 'rescuing people from road traffic

collisions' (93% vs 74%, respectively); 'responding to emergencies such as flooding and terrorist incidents' (90% vs 61%, respectively); and 'ensuring those responsible for public and commercial buildings comply with fire safety regulations' (80% vs 53%, respectively). This suggests that there is more DSFRS could do to engage BAME communities with respect to the kinds of services the fire and rescue service provides.

- Those who agreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its Council Tax charge were significantly more likely than those who disagreed with the proposition to identify 'ensuring those responsible for public and commercial buildings comply with fire safety regulations' (84% vs 62%, respectively) and 'obtaining info from landlords/building owners to improve response if fire/emergency occurs in building' (75% vs 55%, respectively)

Table 1: What respondents think the local fire and rescue service does

Service	Businesses	Residents
	%	%
Responding to fires	100	98
Rescuing people from road traffic collisions	98	92
Responding to emergencies such as flooding and terrorist incidents	95	89
Preventing fires and promoting fire safety	96	89
Ensuring those responsible for public and commercial buildings comply with fire safety regulations	86	79
Obtaining info from landlords/building owners to improve response if fire/emergency occurs in building	83	71
Collaborating with other organisations, for example the police and ambulance service	96	86
None of the above	-	-
Don't know	-	1

Q01. What do you think your local fire and rescue service does? Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402)

3.2 Services used

All respondents were asked whether they have interacted with DSFRS in the last 12 months.

Businesses

82% of businesses have had no recent interaction with DSFRS. 7% had a safety check or audit in the last 12 months.

- Results on this question show very little variation between sub-groups

Residents

84% of residents have had no recent interaction with DSFRS. 4% had a safety check or audit in the last 12 months; a similar share (4%) reported a fire safety check/visit in their home during the last 12 months.

- Results on this question show very little variation between sub-groups.

Table 2: Services used*

Service	Businesses	Residents
	%	%
House fire	1	2
Road traffic collision	<1	1
Flooding	-	-
Rescue	<1	-
Home fire safety check/visit	2	4
Business safety check/audit	7	4
Community use of fire station	-	-
Youth education	<1	1
Community event	2	1
When working with ambulance service and the police	<1	<1
Through the service's social media channels	<1	1
Using Service website	<1	1
Other engagement	6	5
No interaction with DSFRS	82	84

Q02. Have you interacted with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in the last 12 months? Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402) *The total percentages exceed 100% due to the multiple-response format of the question

3.3 Satisfaction with service provided by DSFRS

All respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the range of services provided by DSFRS.

Businesses

76% of businesses were satisfied with the service provided, including 66% who said they were 'very satisfied'. None of the respondents were dissatisfied with the service. However, it is worth noting that 18% of respondents did not provide an answer to this question ('Don't Know').

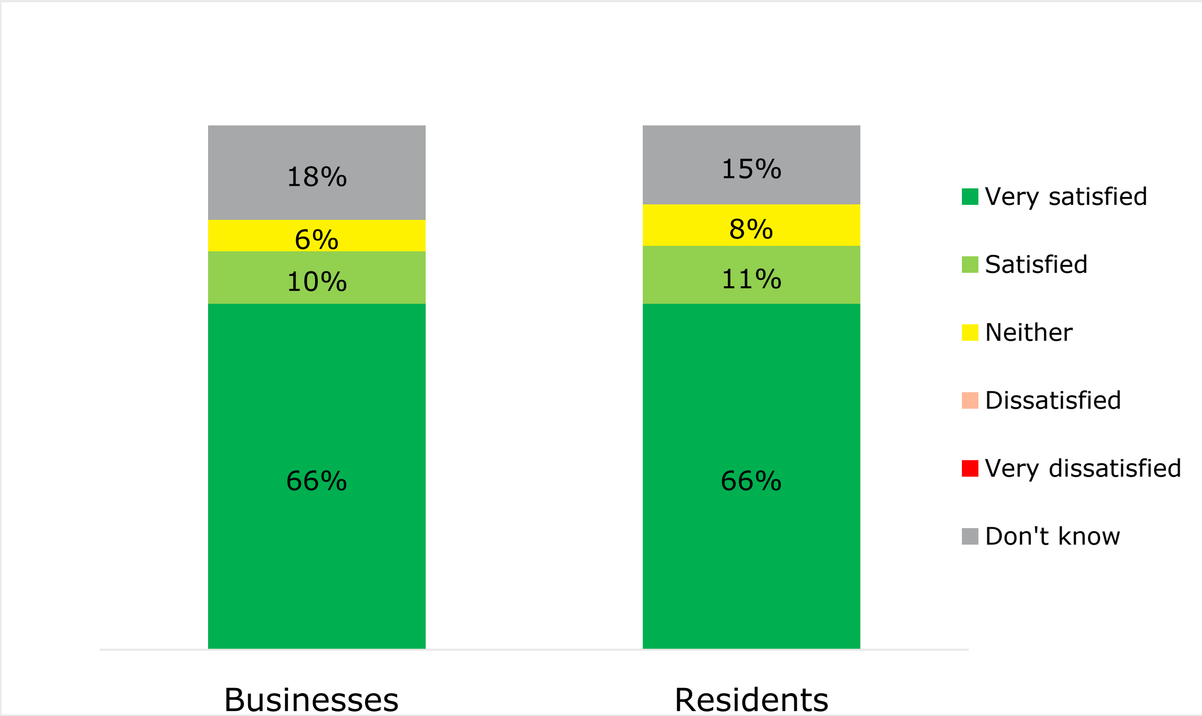
- Echoing results from an earlier question (Q7: Value for money), G-N, R+S sector businesses (80%) were significantly more likely than A to F sector businesses (70%) to be satisfied with the service provided by DSFRS.
- Businesses who reported having contact with DSFRS in the last 12 months were significantly more likely than those who had not to be satisfied with the service (96% vs 72%, respectively).

Residents

Consistent with results from the business survey, 77% of residents were satisfied with the service provided, including 66% who said they were 'very satisfied'. And just as in the business survey, none of the residents were dissatisfied with the service although a significant minority of them (15%) did not provide an answer to this question ('Don't Know').

- Residents who reported having contact with DSFRS in the last 12 months were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the service than those who had not (92% vs 74%, respectively).
- Those who agreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its Council Tax charge were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the service than those who disagreed (82% vs 63%, respectively).
- Residents aged 25-44 (64%) were significantly less likely than those in all other age bands (16-24, 85%; 45-64, 79%; 65+, 83%) to say they were satisfied with the service provided by DSFRS.

Chart 4: Satisfaction with service provided by DSFRS



Q03. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service?
Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402

3.4 What influenced their opinion on question of satisfaction

To add further detail around satisfaction, respondents were asked a follow-up question in which they were prompted to provide some explanatory, qualitative feedback. Note that the verbatims below are reflective of the fact that only positive (‘very satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’) or neutral (‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) responses were recorded in the previous question.

Businesses

I thought they were very thorough and gave practical explanations, they were supportive and friendly.

I’m reassured by their presence in the community.

We had a fire many years ago and the service was faultless.

I did call them four years ago and they were there within seconds. They're very good.

They’re very professional during checks/audits.

No complaints about the service.

They do a good job, although short of staff. Response times would likely improve with full team.

Not had to use the service, just generally happy with work they do.

I am satisfied that if I need them someone will come. I haven't dealt with them on a personal level recently. They do a great job and are probably under resourced.

They're always helpful; whatever you need they're there.

My nan's house burnt down when I was younger and there were immediately 7 fire engines. We also had a fire in a bin near us and they came very quickly.

They do the best they can with the funding.

They're next door to me. The commitment - a lot of them are voluntary so to do that on top of a full-time job - is commendable.

Residents

Presumption of a good job being done and being reassured with their presence.

Considering how things are with all the cuts and what they are up against for small funds, they do a really good job to keep everyone safe and look after everyone.

Aware of accidents on the A38, and of impressed with what has been written about these events in media.

We did have a fire 40 years ago, they were fantastic.

I can see that they always support the community and help out on roads and fires

Happy with how they deal with people with disabilities in the community.

I've seen them in action, and I'm impressed with what they do.

I think they do their job well, despite cuts to their budget.

A fire at a residential building adjacent to my place of work was dealt with promptly and effectively.

Because there was a rumour about them cutting back on the fire service. It would be terrible if they cut out the fire service as we need them desperately.

Q03b. And what has influenced you to say <response from Q03>? Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402)

3.5 Perceived reputation of local fire and rescue service

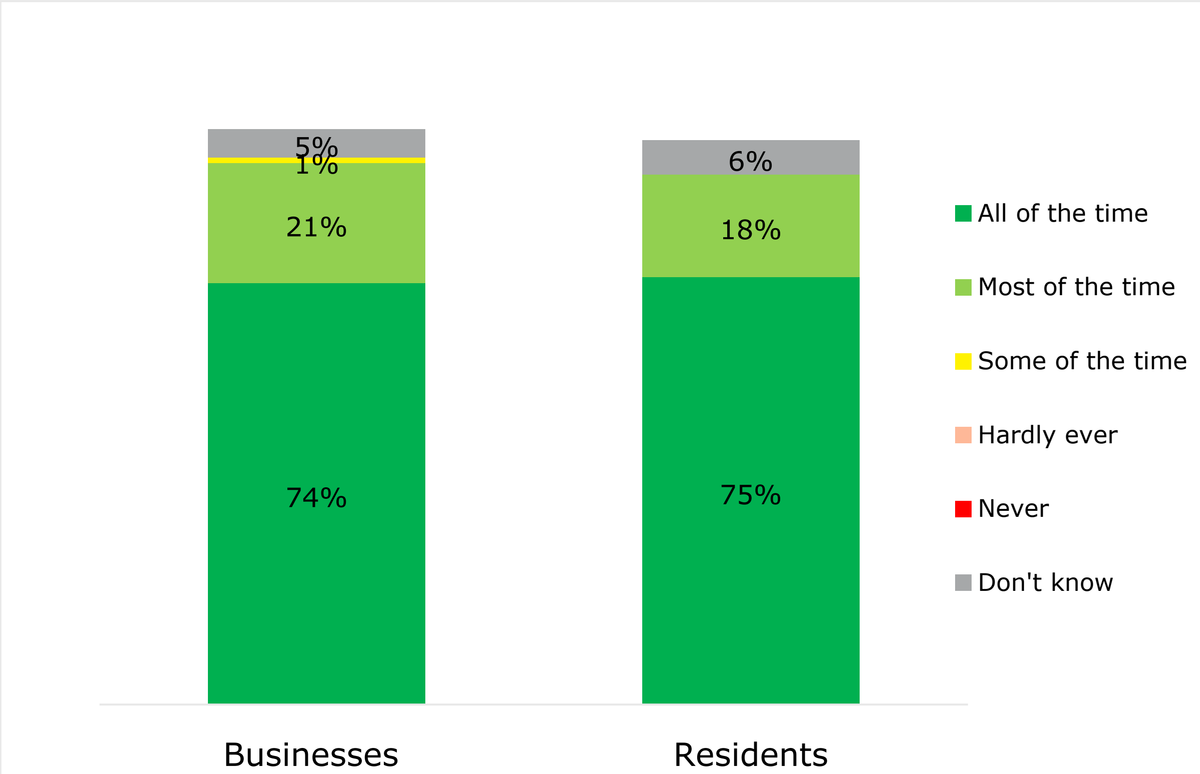
All respondents were asked to reflect on the perceived reputation of their local fire and rescue service.

Businesses
Unsurprisingly, and consistent with results reported elsewhere in this report, 94% of businesses felt the local fire and rescue service enjoyed a good reputation either most (21%) or all (74%) of the time.

Residents
Consistent with results from the business survey, 93% of residents felt the local fire and rescue service enjoyed a good reputation either most (18%) or all (75%) of the time.

- Residents 65+ (67%) were significantly less likely than those in the 25-44 (81%) and 45-64 (81%) age bands to feel the service enjoys a good reputation 'all of the time.'
- As noted elsewhere, those who agreed that it is reasonable for DSFRS to consider increasing its Council Tax charge tended to register higher levels of satisfaction, generally, than their counterparts who disagreed. In this case, they were significantly more likely than those who did not agree with an increase to feel the local fire and rescue service enjoys a good reputation 'all of the time' (80% vs 65%, respectively).

Chart 5: Perceived reputation of local fire and rescue service



Q04. Thinking about your local fire and rescue service, do you think they have a good reputation? Base: All respondents (Business n=399; Residents n=402)

Appendix I: Sample breakdown

The following tables outline the unweighted and weighted demographic profiles of the business and resident samples. (PNS = Prefer not to say)

Businesses

Table 3: Local authority district

Local authority district	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
Torbay	5	22	19	75
Plymouth	8	32	26	102
Devon	52	209	27	107
Somerset	34	137	29	115

Table 4: Business size

Industry sector	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
Micro	90	359	85	340
Small	8	32	10	41
Medium	1	4	4	15
Large	1	4	1	3

Table 5: Industry sector

Industry sector	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
A to F	38	153	33	131
G to N, R + S	62	246	67	268

NOTE:
A to F includes the following sectors: A: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; B Mining and Quarrying; C Manufacturing; D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; E Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities; F Construction.

G to N, R and S includes the following sectors: G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; H Transportation and storage; I Accommodation and food service activities; J Information and communication; K Financial and insurance activities; L Real estate activities; M Professional, scientific and technical activities; N Administrative and support service activities; R Arts, entertainment and recreation; S Other service activities.

Table 6: Directors/partners from minority groups

Directors/Partners	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
No BAME	94	358	93	346
Some BAME	4	14	5	20
All BAME	2	7	2	7

Residents

Table 7: Local authority district

Local authority district	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
Torbay	8	31	28	112
Plymouth	15	59	24	98
Devon	46	185	22	87
Somerset	32	127	26	105

Table 8: Age

Age	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
16-18	2	8	2	9
19-24	9	38	9	38
25-34	13	51	9	38
35-44	12	49	11	45
45-54	16	62	16	64
55-64	16	64	18	72
65-74	17	67	18	73
75-84	11	44	10	42
85+	<1	2	1	3
PNS	4	18	4	18

Table 9: Gender

Gender	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
Female	52	207	53	211
Male	48	192	47	188
PNS	<1	3	<1	3

Table 10: Ethnic background

Ethnic background	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
White	96	385	94	377
Mixed	<1	1	1	3
Asian	2	9	3	12
Black	1	2	1	5
PNS	1	5	1	5

Table 11: Disability

Disability	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
Yes	13	54	18	72
No	77	311	76	306
PNS	9	37	6	23

NOTE:
The Equality Act 2010 defines someone as a disabled person if they have a physical or mental impairment which has long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Such examples may include; HIV, cancer, mobility, sight or hearing impairments or depression. When answering this question, you should not take into account the effect of any medication, treatment or adaptions which reduce the effects of impairment. You should think about the effect your impairments have if medication or treatments were not being used or made.

Table 12: Caring responsibilities

Caring responsibilities (PC = Primary Carer)	Weighted		Unweighted	
	%	Number	%	Number
PC of child/ren <2 yrs	2	9	2	8
PC of child/ren 2-18 yrs	10	42	11	45
PC of disabled child/ren	<1	1	<1	2
PC of disabled adult	3	14	4	17
PC of adult (65+)	6	25	8	31
Secondary carer	2	9	2	10
No caring responsibilities	69	276	69	277
PNS	9	35	5	22

Appendix II: Call outcomes

The following tables provide an overview of all the calls made as part of this research.

Businesses

Table 16: Call outcomes for business sample

Outcome		Contacts	Total (%)
In scope			
	Complete	399	27
	Partial completes	Did not meet criteria = 5	2
		Quota full = 21	
	Refusal	407	28
	Respondent not available	623	43
	Sub-total	**1,455**	**100**
Out of scope			
	No answer	Line engaged = 28	72
		No answer = 1,438	
		Answer machine = 536	
	Unusable	521	19
	Non-qualifier	169	6
	Unreachable	72	3
	Sub-total	**2,764**	**100**
	Total	**4,219**	

Residents

Table 17: Call outcomes for resident sample

Outcome		Contacts	Total (%)
In scope			
	Complete	402	24
	Partial completes	Did not meet criteria = 13	4
		Quota full = 53	
	Refusal	723	43
	Respondent not available	479	29
	Sub-total	**1,670**	**100**
Out of scope			
	No answer	Line engaged = 47	81
		No answer = 1,542	
		Answer machine = 651	
	Unusable	275	10
	Non-qualifier	187	7
	Unreachable	64	2
	Sub-total	**2,766**	**100**
	Total	**4,436**	