



BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX CONSULTATION 2026-27: RESULTS

Herefordshire Council Intelligence Unit
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Summary

Herefordshire Council's Budget and Council Tax 2026-27 consultation was carried out from 9 December 2025 to 4 January 2026. The consultation used an online questionnaire, which was published on the council's website and promoted across all of the council's social media channels.

The online questionnaire sought views from respondents on how to prioritise services while making savings and how to balance the budget through increasing Council Tax and making savings and efficiencies across various services.

This report summarises the findings from the 359 responses submitted to this questionnaire. Please note that these results should not be considered representative of the population of Herefordshire, due to the potential bias from self-selected participation, where individuals who choose to participate may have different characteristics or opinions compared to the wider population.

Main messages

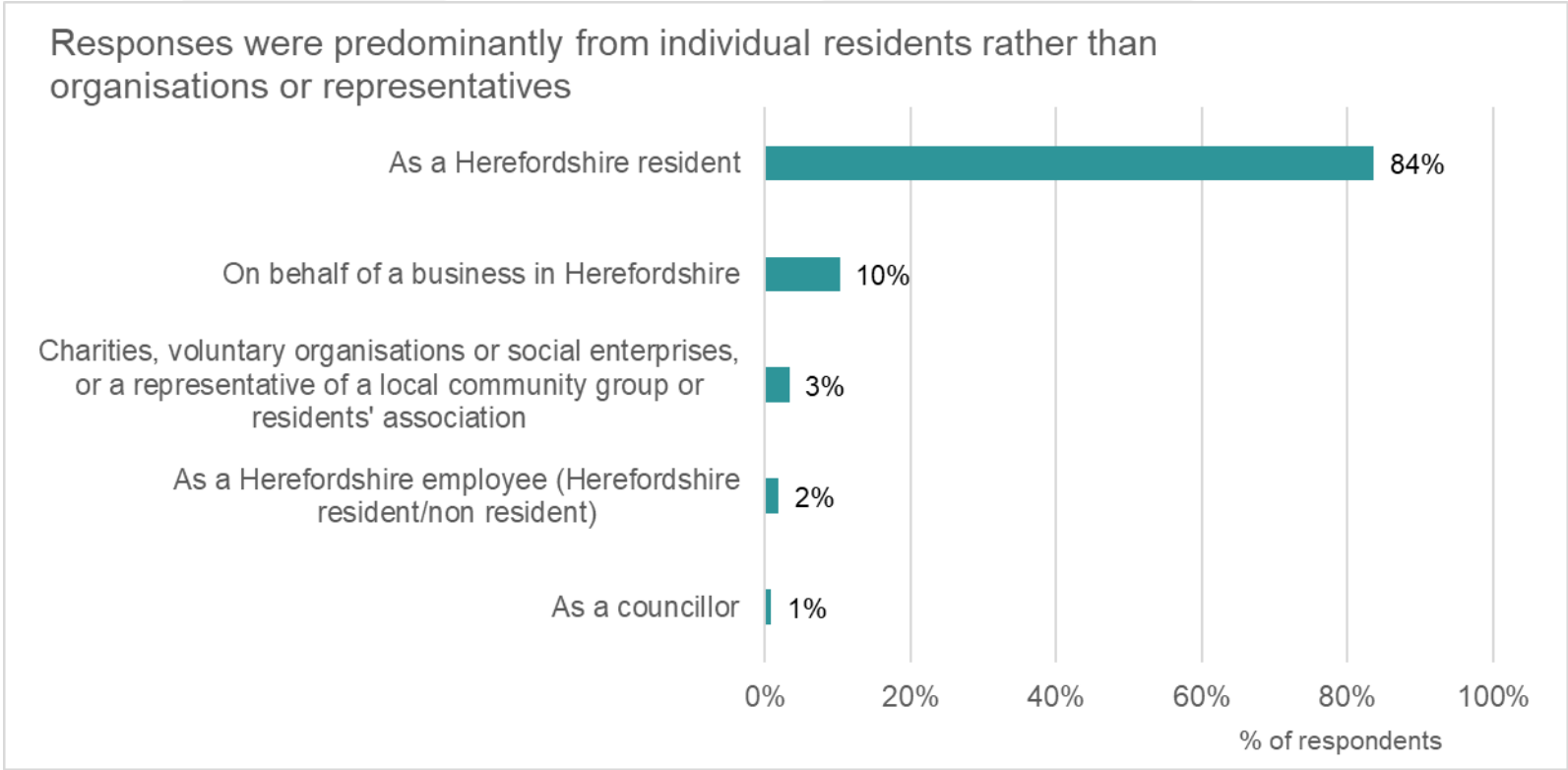
- Most people (83%) were responding as Herefordshire residents, whilst a smaller proportion responded on behalf of a local businesses (10%) or a voluntary or community sector organisation / group (3%).
- There was an over-representation of people aged 45 to 64 amongst respondents (44% compared to 32% of the adult population), and an under-representation of people from an ethnic group other than 'white British' (3% compared to 8% of the population). There was also an under-representation of respondents from lower Council Tax bands (20% from Bands A and B compared to 38% of all properties).

- Respondents were asked how comfortable they would be with a reduction in spending in each of a list of 13 services. Highways maintenance and street lighting was the only service for which more respondents said they were not comfortable with a reduction (52%) than were at least partly comfortable.
- The services with the highest proportions (around two-thirds) saying they would be at least partly comfortable with reduced spending were: museum service, economy and growth including strategic planning and regulatory services, and adult social care.
- Highways Maintenance and Street Lighting was also the service chosen by the highest number of respondents (28%) as the single service if they only had £1 left to spend.
- A higher proportion of people disagreed with increasing Council Tax by an additional 4.99% than agreed: 51% compared to 35%. 14% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- Similarly, more people disagreed that the council should continue to offer the maximum level of Council Tax support to those experiencing severe financial hardship: 42% compared to 38% who agreed. 21% neither agreed nor disagreed
- When considering other possible things the council could do to balance the budget, there was strong support for online services and selling council buildings over reducing services. Almost 70% supported making more services available online as standard, and selling or developing council buildings, with around 15% opposing. On the other hand, around 40% opposed stopping or reducing services (both statutory and non-statutory).

Results: who responded and how they found out about it

The majority of the 359 respondents who completed the online questionnaire were Herefordshire residents (83%). A smaller proportion (10%) responded on behalf of a local businesses (10%) or a voluntary or community sector organisation / group (3%).

Figure 1: Respondents to the online survey (question 1)



Over half of respondents found out about the questionnaire through Facebook (56%). The next most popular channel was an email from Herefordshire Council (20%), followed by the Herefordshire.gov.uk website (8%). Smaller numbers heard about the consultation via friends or family, councillors, Herefordshire Now magazine/newspapers, other social media platforms, or community and voluntary organisations, with each of these accounting for only a small proportion of responses (3% each).

Table 1: How respondents found out about the consultation (question 2)

How found out about the consultation	Proportion of respondents
Facebook	56%
Email from Herefordshire Council	20%
Herefordshire.gov.uk website	8%
From a friend or family member	3%
From a Councillor	3%
Herefordshire Now magazine/Newspaper	3%
Other social media (X, Instagram, LinkedIn)	3%
From a charity, voluntary, community organisation or social enterprise (VCSE)	1%
Herefordshire Council's internal staff communication	1%
Other	4%

Results: views on how the council prioritises services and makes savings

Respondents were asked how comfortable they would be with a reduction in spending on a list of council services (questions 3 to 15).

Overall, at least half of respondents were comfortable with reductions in spending on all the services except 'Highways Maintenance and Street Lighting' – see Figure 1.

The services with the highest proportions of respondents who were mostly comfortable ('comfortable' + 'partly comfortable') with a spending reduction were:

- Museum Service – 65% comfortable
- Economy and Growth including Strategic Planning and Regulatory services – 64%
- Adult Social Care – 64%

The service that the respondents were least 'comfortable' with reduction in spending on was Highways Maintenance and Street Lighting (46% comfortable or partly comfortable).

Other than Highways Maintenance and Street Lighting, a higher proportion of respondents (42% each) were 'not comfortable' for reduced spending on:

- Strategic Housing and Temporary Accommodation
- Children's Social Care
- Education, Skills and Learning
- Public Health

The full breakdown of responses is shown in table 1 on the next page.

Figure 2: How comfortable respondents would be with a reduction of spending in specified service areas (questions 3 to 15)

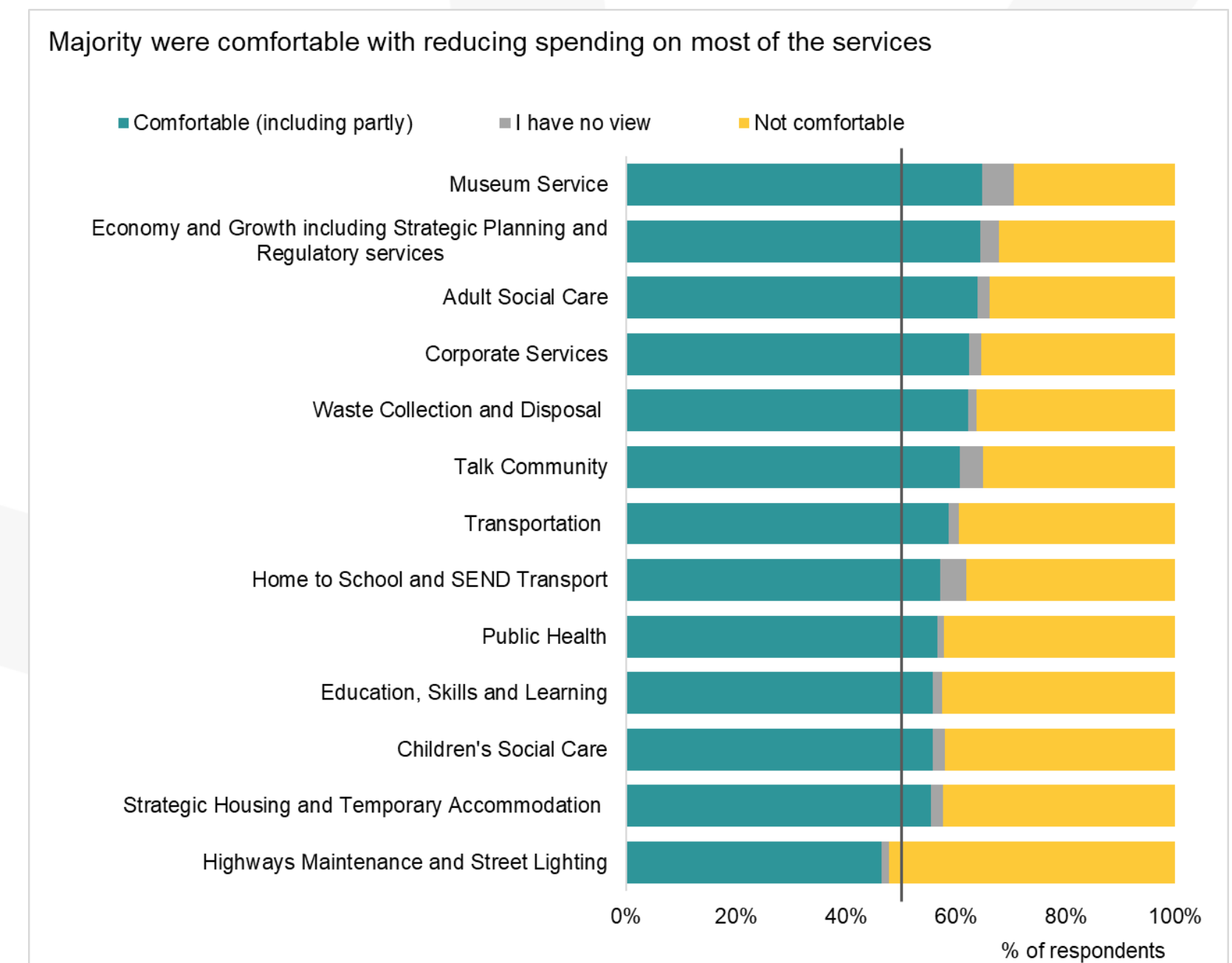


Table 2: Number and percentage of responses by how comfortable they would be with reduced spending for each service (questions 3 to 15)

Service area	Comfortable	Partly comfortable	Not comfortable	I have no view
Museum Service	134 (38%)	97 (27%)	105 (29%)	20 (6%)
Economy and Growth including Strategic Planning and Regulatory services	104 (29%)	124 (35%)	114 (32%)	12 (3%)
Adult Social Care	116 (32%)	113 (32%)	121 (34%)	8 (2%)
Corporate Services	128 (36%)	93 (26%)	125 (35%)	8 (2%)
Waste Collection and Disposal	142 (40%)	78 (22%)	128 (36%)	5 (1%)
Talk Community	113 (32%)	104 (29%)	125 (35%)	15 (4%)
Transportation	105 (30%)	102 (29%)	139 (39%)	7 (2%)
Home to School and SEND Transport	102 (29%)	102 (29%)	136 (38%)	17 (5%)
Public Health	111 (32%)	88 (25%)	148 (42%)	4 (1%)
Education, Skills and Learning	107 (30%)	90 (25%)	150 (42%)	6 (2%)
Children's Social Care	107 (30%)	91 (26%)	149 (42%)	8 (2%)
Strategic Housing and Temporary Accommodation	94 (26%)	103 (26%)	150 (42%)	8 (2%)
Highways Maintenance and Street Lighting	90 (26%)	73 (21%)	183 (52%)	5 (1%)

Which single service to prioritise

Respondents were then asked which single service area they would prioritise if they only had £1 left to spend. Reflecting the results of the previous section, 'Highways Maintenance and Street Lighting' was the most common choice, selected by 28%.. Others prioritised people-focused services, with 16% choosing Education, Skills and Learning, 14% selecting Children's Social Care, and 10% opting for Adult Social Care.

Table 3: Number and percentage of responses by which service area that respondents would spend if they had only £1 left (question 16)

Service area	Number of respondents	Proportion of respondents
Highways Maintenance and Street Lighting	99	28%
Education, Skills and Learning	57	16%
Children's Social Care	51	14%
Adult Social Care	35	10%
Economy and Growth including Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services	31	9%
Public Health	25	7%
Transportation	13	4%
Museum Services	12	3%
Waste Collection and Disposal	10	3%
Temporary Accommodation	8	2%
Talk Community	8	2%
Home to School Transport	4	1%
Corporate Services	1	<1%
Total respondents	354	100%

Results: views on how the council could balance the budget

Increasing Council Tax

When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed “that the council should protect vital public services by increasing council tax by an additional 4.99%”, 35% of respondents agreed (strongly agree or agree), while 51% disagreed (strongly disagree or disagree).

With regard to the council’s discretion to provide support to residents experiencing severe financial hardship or exceptional circumstances that prevent them from paying their Council Tax, 38% of respondents agreed that the council should continue to offer the maximum level of support, while 42% disagreed.

Table 4: Number and percentage of responses by the level of agreement for increasing Council Tax by additional 4.99% and continuing to offer the maximum support for those who need financial assistance (questions 17 and 18)

	Strongly Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree Strongly disagree	
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should protect vital public services as much as possible by increasing council tax by an additional 4.99%?	58	67	50	84	99	
	16%	19%	14%	23%	28%	
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should continue to offer the maximum level of council tax support to those in need of financial assistance?	60	74	74	80	69	
	17%	21%	21%	22%	19%	

Savings and efficiencies

Respondents were given a list of things that the council could do to help balance the budget and asked to what extent they support each one. The results are shown in figure 2 and table 4.

Suggestions supported by the majority were:

- Making more services available online as standard (69% support compared to 13% oppose)
- Selling/developing council buildings (68% support compared to 15% oppose)
- Charging for non-statutory services (60% support compared to 18% oppose)

On the other hand, there was stronger opposition for:

- reducing statutory services (44% support compared to 39% oppose)
- stopping or reducing services that the Council does not have a legal requirement to provide (e.g. events, regeneration, and maintenance of parks) (39% support compared to 41% oppose)

Figure 3: extent to which respondents supported suggestions for balancing the budget

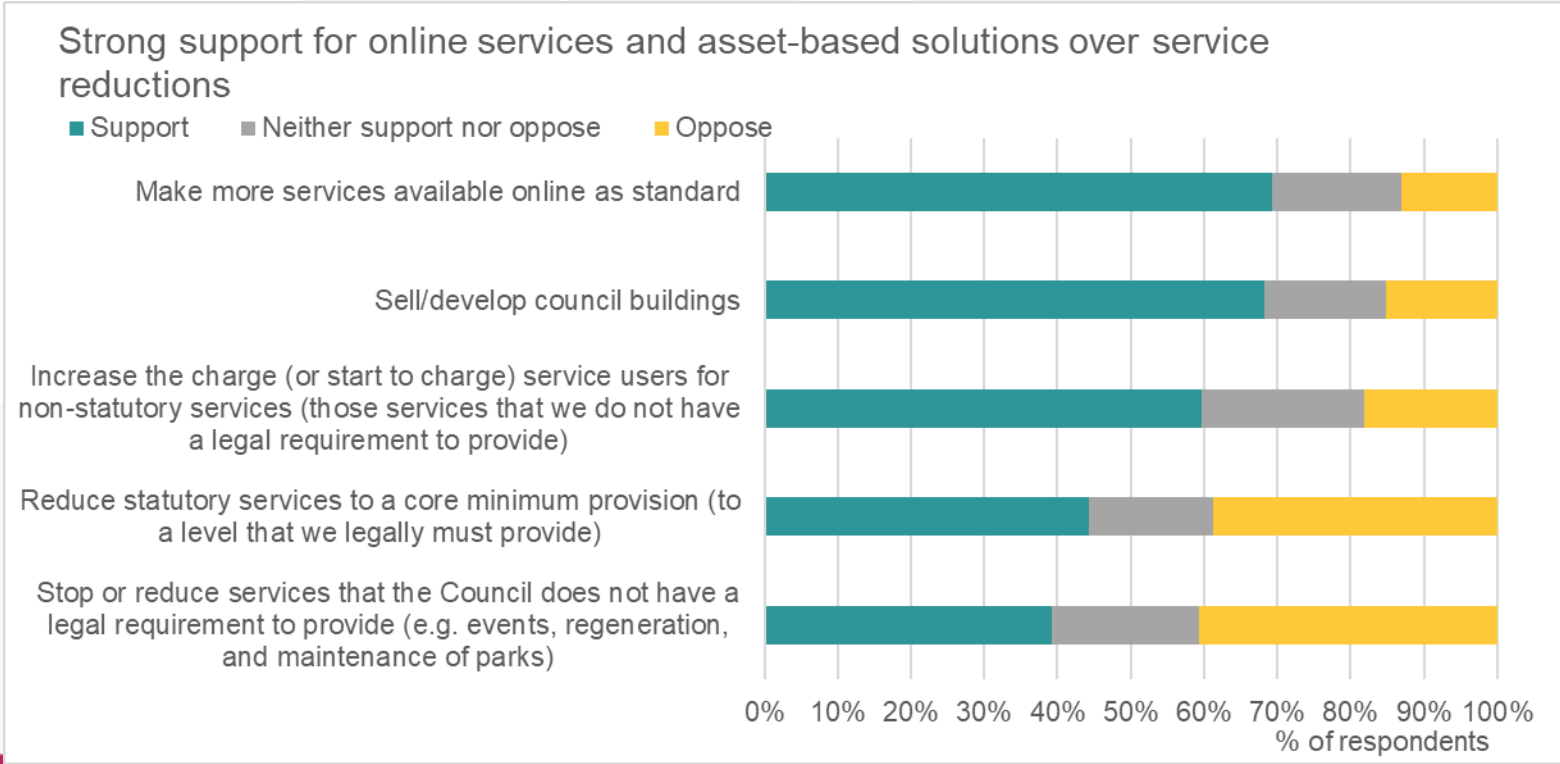


Table 5: Number and percentage of responses by the level of support for suggestions to balance the budget (questions 19 to 23)

	Strongly support	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose
Reduce statutory services to a core minimum provision (to a level that we legally must provide)	61 (17%)	96 (27%)	60 (17%)	92 (26%)	45 (13%)
Stop or reduce services that the Council does not have a legal requirement to provide (e.g. events, regeneration, and maintenance of parks)	52 (15%)	88 (25%)	72 (20%)	109 (31%)	36 (10%)
Increase the charge (or start to charge) service users for non-statutory services (those services that we do not have a legal requirement to provide)	69 (20%)	141 (40%)	78 (22%)	45 (13%)	19 (5%)
Make more services available online as standard	99 (28%)	144 (41%)	62 (18%)	33 (9%)	13 (4%)
Sell/develop council buildings	117 (33%)	125 (35%)	59 (17%)	29 (8%)	25 (7%)

Finally, respondents were invited to suggest how to make savings or efficiencies, or increase the council income (Q24). The comments made are included in the Appendix.

Respondents' profile

Although the online survey approach is self-selecting and cannot be considered a representative sample of the views of the population, it is still useful to compare the characteristics of respondents to the population of the county as a whole.

For this reason, respondents were asked a few questions about themselves. The entire section, as well as the individual questions, was entirely optional to complete. Tables 5 to 9 below show the responses of those who chose to answer each question (those who either didn't answer or selected 'prefer not to say' are not included in the percentages).

The profile of responses was broadly similar to the gender and disability profile of the county. However, there was an over-representation of people aged 45 to 64 amongst respondents (44% compared to 32% of the adult population), and an under-representation of people from an ethnic group other than 'white British' (3% compared to 8% of population aged 16+). There was also an under-representation of responses from people living in properties in lower Council Tax bands (20% from Bands A and B compared to 38% of all properties).

Your gender?

324 (90%) of respondents chose to provide their gender.

Table 6: gender profile of respondents who answered the question compared to Herefordshire population

Gender	Percentage of respondents (online survey)	Percentage of resident population aged 16+ (2024 mid-year estimate)
Female	43%	51%
Male	57%	49%
Other	0%	-

Your age band?

323 (90%) of respondents chose to provide their age band.

Table 7: age profile of respondents who answered the question compared to Herefordshire population

Age band	Percentage of respondents (online survey)	Percentage of resident population aged 16+ (2024 mid-year estimate)
16 to 24 years	2%	9%
25 to 44 years	29%	26%
45 to 64 years	44%	32%
65+ years	25%	32%

Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work you can do?

315 (88%) of respondents chose to provide their disability status.

Table 8: percentage of respondents and percentage of Herefordshire population by disability status

Disability or health problem	Percentage of respondents (online survey)	Percentage of population aged 16+ (Census 2021)
Yes	16%	17%
No	84%	83%

Your ethnic group?

309 (86%) of respondents chose to provide their ethnic group.

Table 9: percentage of respondents and percentage of Herefordshire population by ethnic group

Ethnic group	Percentage of respondents (online survey)	Percentage of population aged 16+ (Census 2021)
White British/ English/Welsh/Scottish/ Northern Irish	96%	92%
Other White	3%	5%
Any other ethnic group	0%	3%

Which Council Tax band are you in?

302 of respondents provided their Council Tax band.

Table 10: percentage of respondents and percentage of properties in Herefordshire by Council Tax band

Council Tax band	Percentage of respondents (online survey)	Percentage of properties (2025)
A	4%	15%
B	16%	23%
C	16%	20%
D	28%	15%
E	18%	14%
F, G or H	18%	13%