

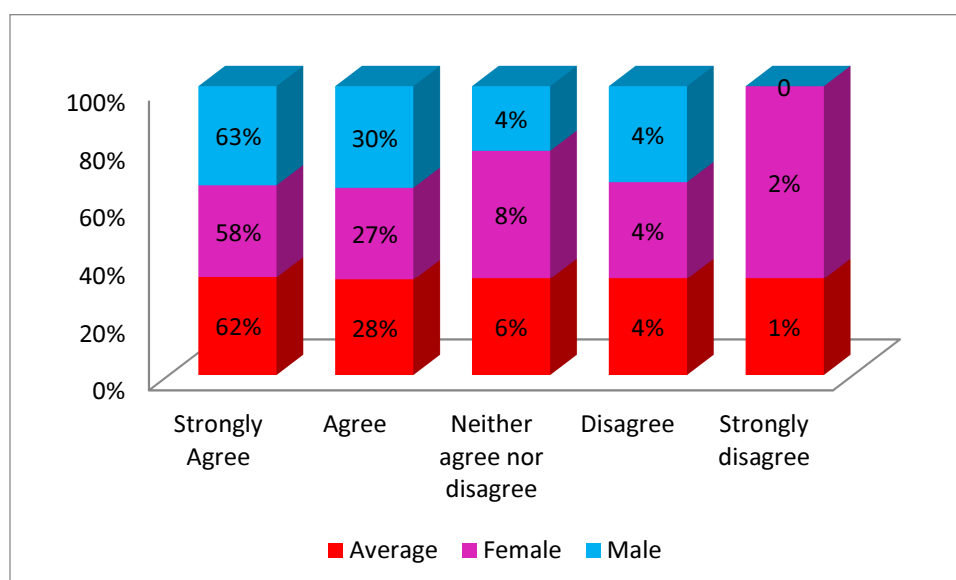
LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME CONSULTATION SUMMARY

During the months of August and September 2015, Tamworth Borough Council consulted with residents regarding a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. In total, 109 responses were received and the main findings from these individuals is contained in the following document.

Q1. Are you answering this survey as...?

The entire sample of 109 respondents answered the survey as an individual rather than as an organisation representing a community.

Q2. To what extent do you agree with the principle “Every household with working age members should pay something towards their Council Tax Bill?”

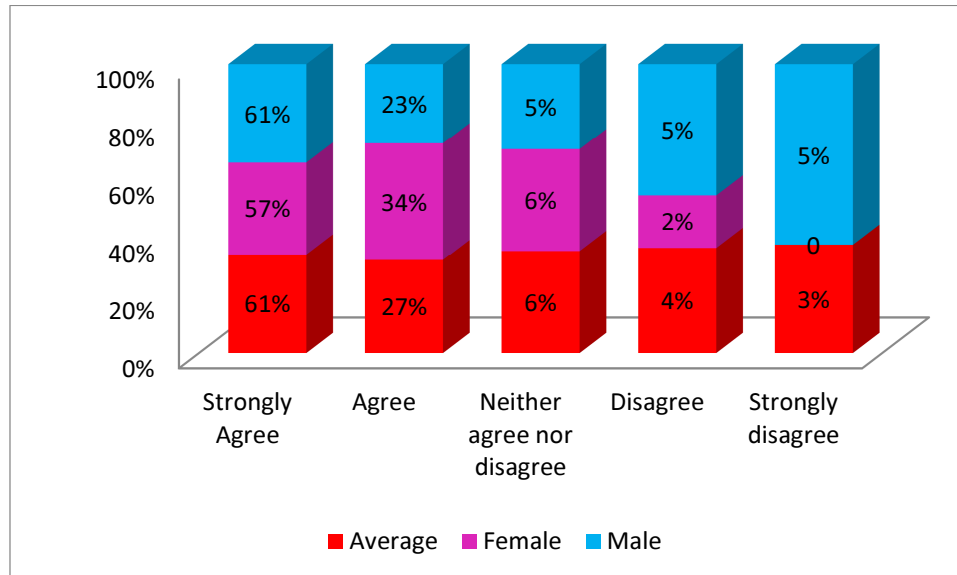


The vast majority of the respondents were in agreement with this principle with only 5% in disagreement.

When analysing the results by age category, no real difference of opinion was noted.

Q3. To what extent do you agree with the principle “The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme should encourage people to work?”

The following chart highlights to what extent respondents agreed with the principle...

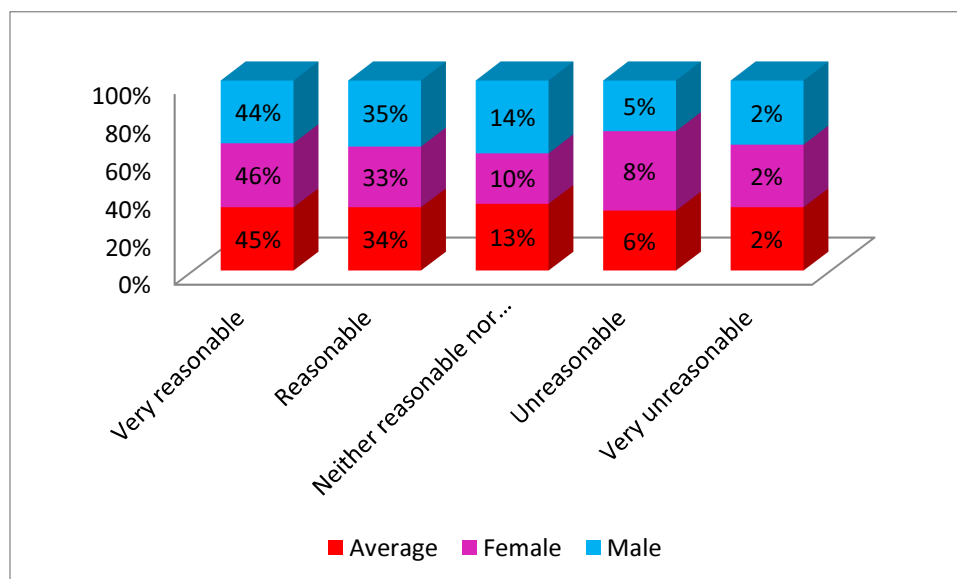


As can be seen, the vast majority of respondents agree with the principle (88%) with less than 10% disagreeing.

Q4 How reasonable do you think Policy 1 is?

Pensioners receive support for up to 100% of their Council Tax bill as they are protected by the Government under a national scheme. We also protect working age claimants classed as severely disabled and in receipt of a Severe Disability Premium, claimants with disabled children and claimants receiving a War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payment in the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. This means that pensioners, claimants classed as severely disabled, claimants with disabled children and claimants receiving a War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payment are the only claimants that receive support for up to 100% of their Council Tax bill. All other working age claimants pay something towards their Council Tax bill and applicable amounts continue to be aligned with those of Housing Benefit

The chart below reveals how reasonable respondents consider Policy 1 to be...



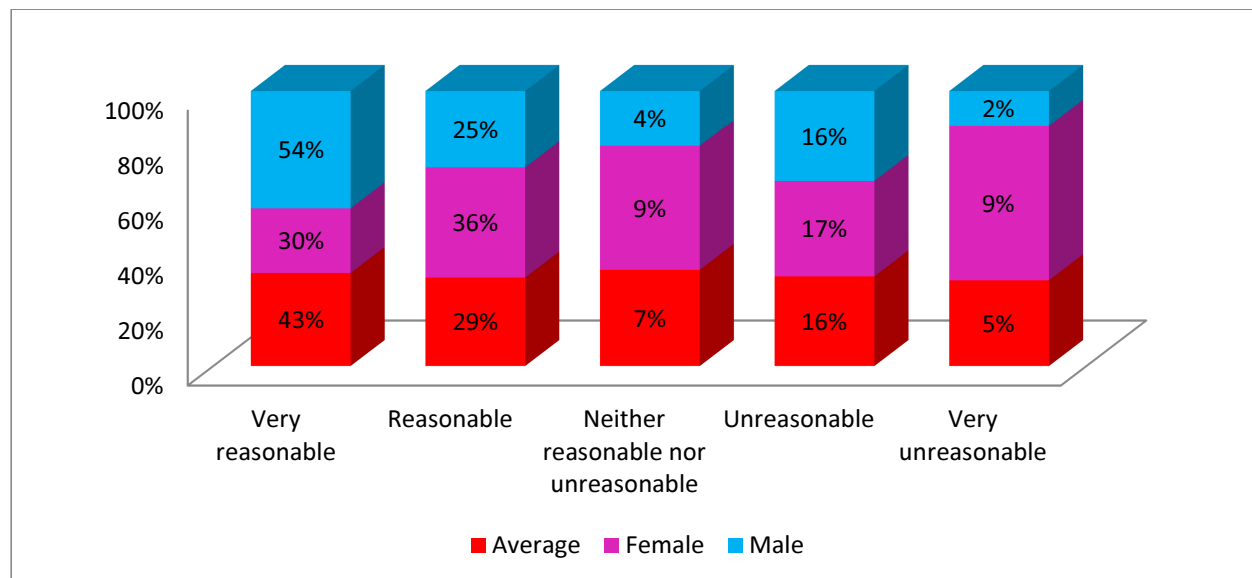
Over three quarters of the sample consider this principle to be reasonable (45% very and 34% reasonable).

One third of the sample made additional comments regarding this policy including; everyone should pay and contribute if earning (39%), and It would be expensive to administer but it should be means tested - easiest & fairest way of doing it (30%).

Q5. How reasonable do you think this is as a way of contributing to the future reductions that need to be made? (Policy 2)

All working age claimants that are not protected have to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax bill. To mitigate future grant reductions, the scheme could ask working age claimants pay at least 30% of their Council Tax bill. This means that working age claimants who are not protected would get less help than they do now

Respondent perceptions of Policy 2 are shown in the bar chart below...



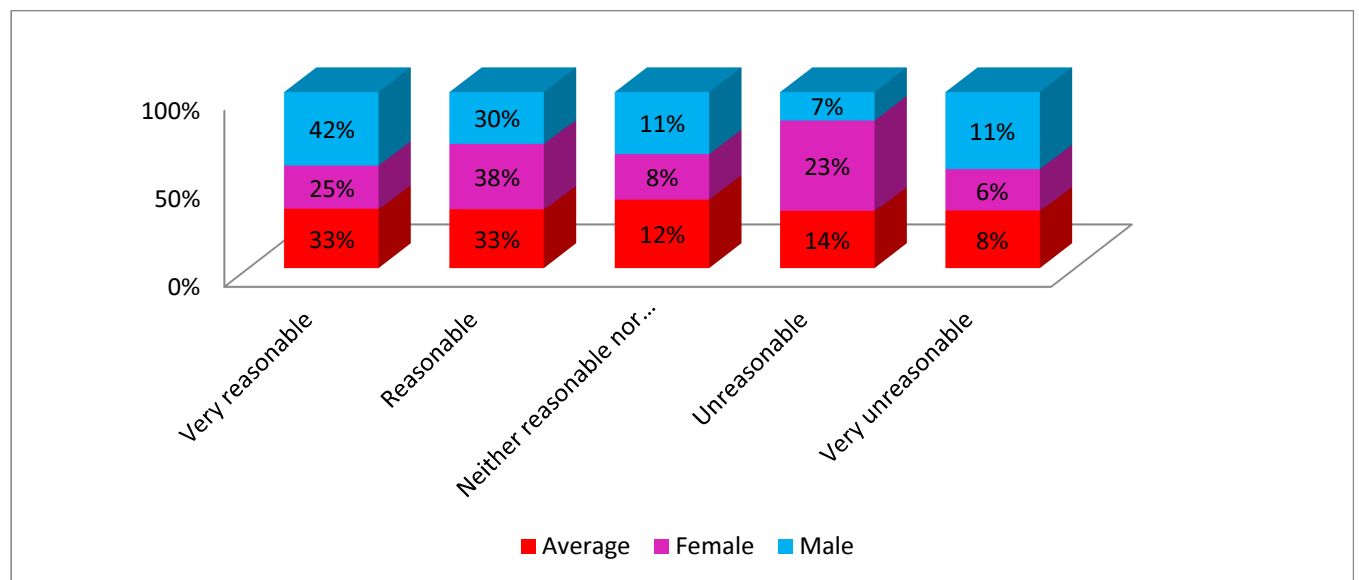
Almost three quarters of respondents consider Policy 2 to be a reasonable way of contributing to the future reductions that need to be made. The male respondents were more receptive to this policy than their female counterparts (79% compared with 66%).

Additional comments that were raised in relation to Policy 2 included the fact it should be means tested - depends on individual circumstances (23%) and 20% of respondents believe 25% is enough as some people will struggle.

Q6. How reasonable do think this is as a way of contributing to the reductions that need to be made? (Policy 3)

Council Tax Reduction is limited to the level that is given for a smaller house. We limit the maximum support offered based on 75% of the Council Tax bill for a Band D property, even if the claimant lives in a property with a higher banding than D. This means that any claimant who lives in a property with a banding higher than D has their Reduction calculated as if they lived in a Band D property

Reaction to Policy 3 is highlighted in the chart below...



Two thirds of those surveyed consider Policy 3 to be reasonable. Again the men were most likely to answer in the positive (72% compared with 62% of women considering it to be very reasonable or reasonable).

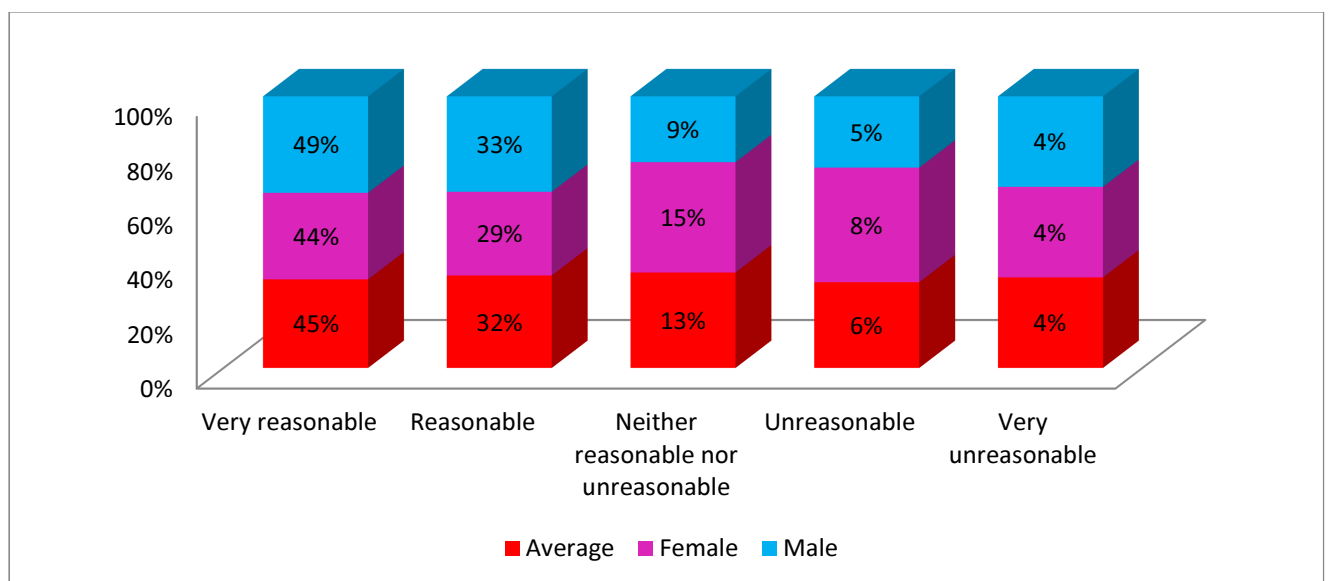
The most commonly recorded "other" comments regarding Policy 3 included; people should pay for what they live in (41%) and people should be taxed on income and not property value - just because they live in a big house doesn't mean they can afford more - it's unfair (26%).

Q7. How reasonable do you think this is as a way of contributing to the reductions that need to be made? (Policy 4)

Before April 2013, some customers were not entitled to Council Tax Benefit in their own right because their own income was too high or they had too much in savings. However, they could claim a Second Adult Rebate, for a reduction of up to 25% off their bill, because they had another adult living with them who was on a low income.

From April 2013, Second Adult Rebate was removed under the Local Scheme. This means that all those of Working Age who were previously entitled to a Second Adult Rebate have to pay 100% of their Council Tax bill. (Second Adult Rebate can still be claimed by pensioners as it is in the national rules)

The chart below reveals the respondents perception of Policy 4.



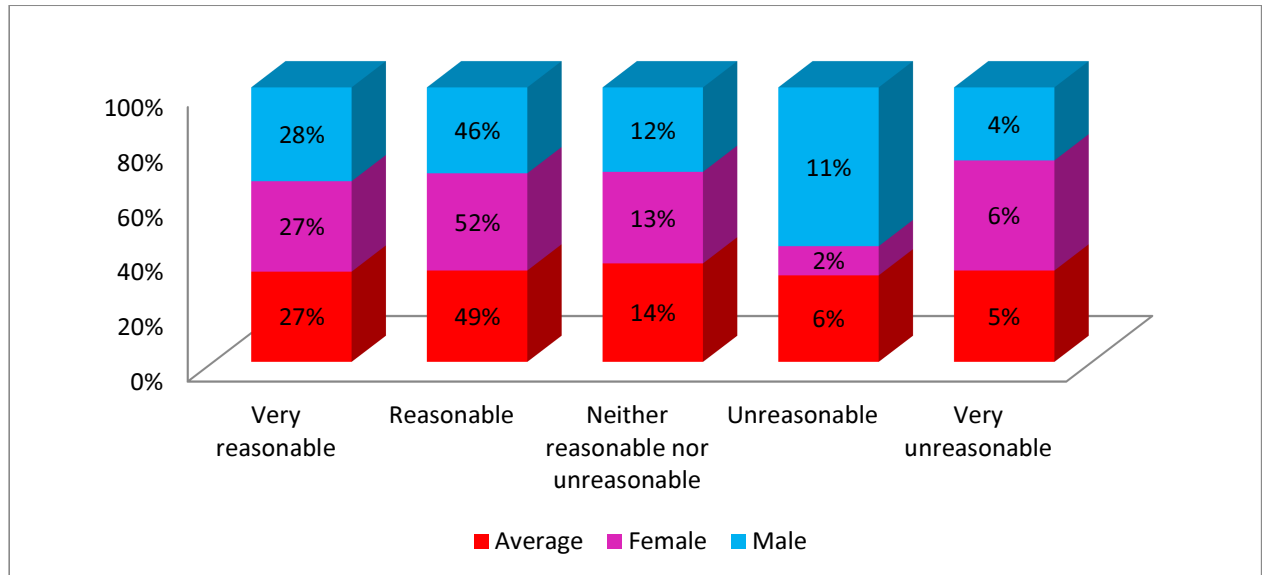
The majority of the sample (77%) deemed Policy 4 to be reasonable. The male respondents were most receptive to Policy 4 with 82% perceiving it to be reasonable to a certain extent (49% very and 33% reasonable).

Only 16 respondents made additional comments in relation to Policy 4, the most common of which were as follows: “all adults use services so should pay” (25%) and “don’t think pensioners should get help” (19%), “should look at a households family income not individual income” (19%) and this “Penalises single parents / single occupancy stay at home mums or people with carers” (19%).

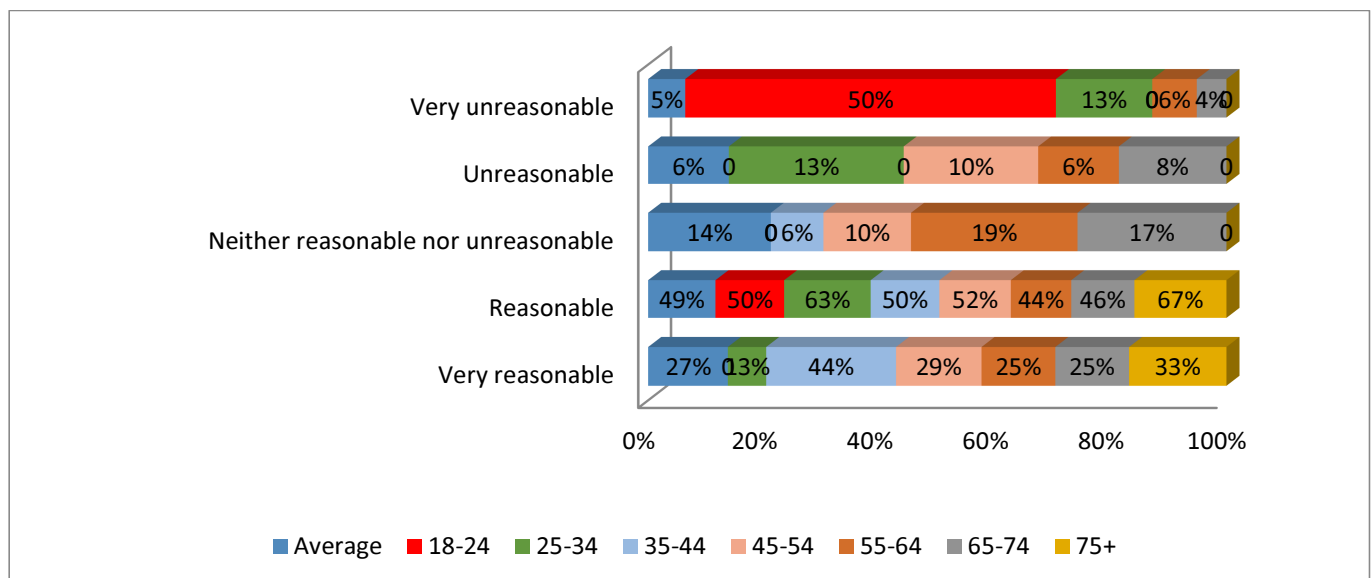
Q8. How reasonable do you think Policy 5?

Child care costs are allowed as an expense when calculating Council Tax Reduction. This does not contribute to any reductions but provides an incentive for parents to stay in work or return to work

Just over three quarters of the sample (76%) consider Policy 5 to be reasonable to a certain extent. The chart below reveals the extent of their opinions...



The youngest respondents were most likely to answer in the positive with 50% of 18-24 year olds and 63% of 25-34 year olds describing it as reasonable. The breakdown by age is shown in the chart below...



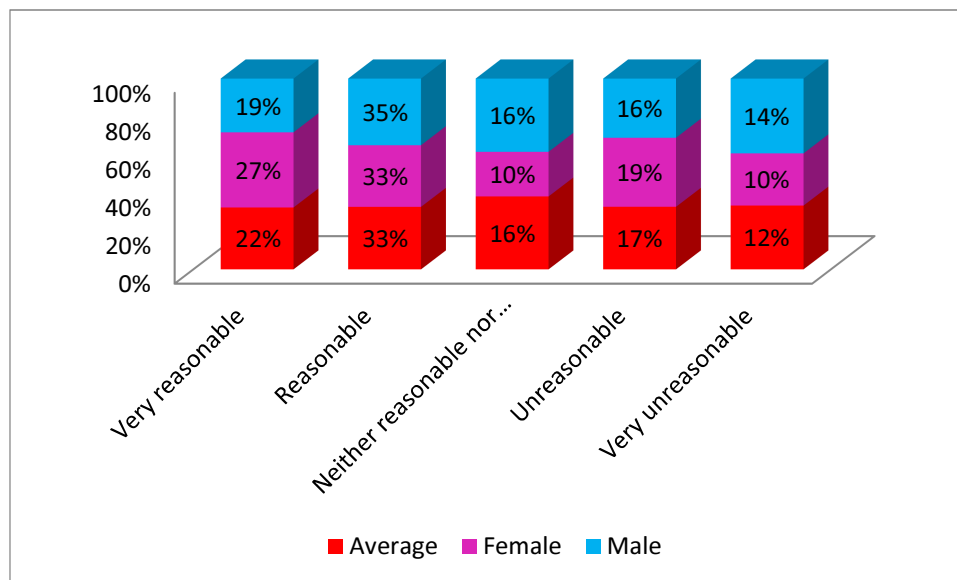
One fifth of respondents made additional comments in relation to Policy 5, the most common of which were as follows; "Childcare costs should not be considered in

reductions - parents should be able to pay for the costs of their own children” (29%), and “Promotes working incentives for parents within the benefit system” (24%)

9. How reasonable do you think this is? (Policy 6)

Claimants are able to have savings of up to £16,000 and still receive support towards their Council Tax Bill

Just over half of those surveyed consider Policy 6 to be reasonable however almost a third (29%) consider Policy 6 to be unreasonable to a certain extent (17% unreasonable and 12% very unreasonable)..

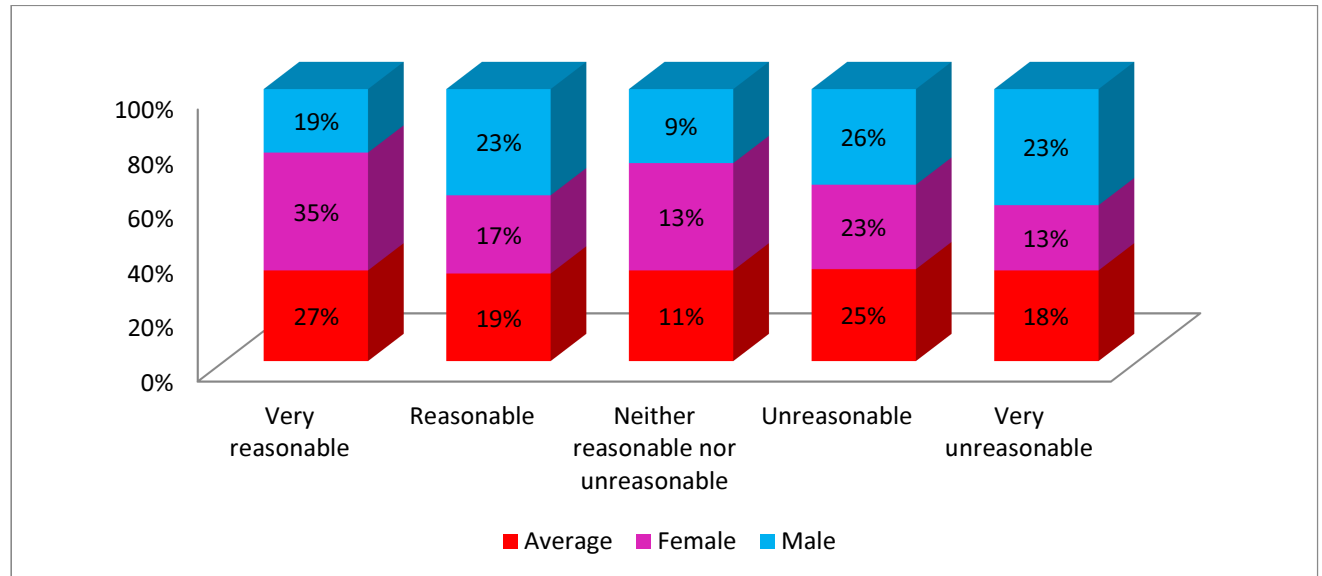


Over a third of respondents (37) made additional comments in relation to Policy 6 including “That’s a lot of savings - so they can obviously afford to pay if have that amount” (35%), “Savers/ pensioners who have saved should not be penalised (25%) and “Saving level is too high - should be £5,000 - £10,000” (25%).

Q10. How reasonable do you think Policy 7?

Child Benefit is not included as income when calculating a claimant's Council Tax Reduction entitlement

Policy 7 met with mixed reaction from the respondents with 46% perceiving it to be reasonable and 43% unreasonable to a certain extent.



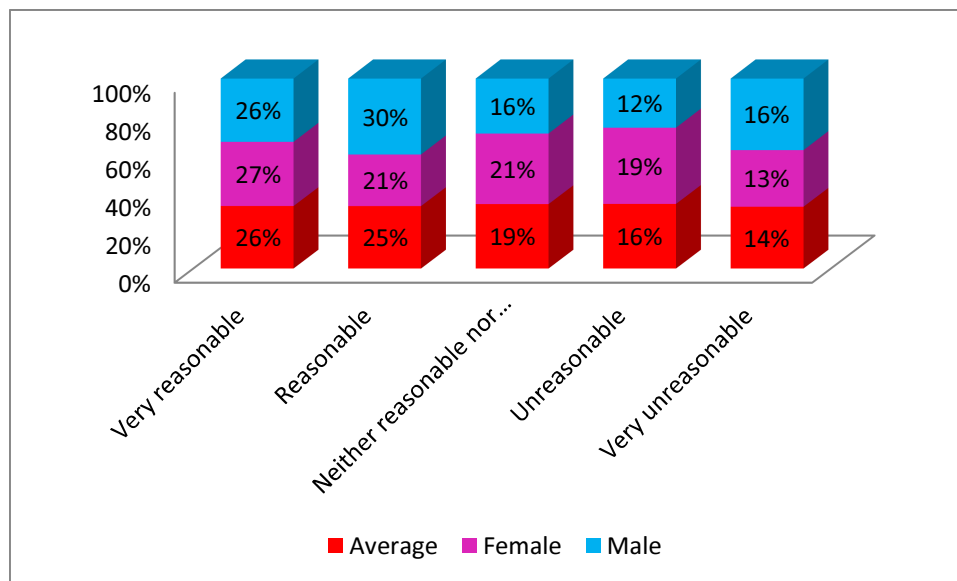
The women were most likely to answer in the positive with 52% describing it as reasonable compared with 42% of the men.

Over three quarters of the respondents who made an additional comment regarding Policy 7 stated that "Child benefit should be counted as income" (77%).

Q11. How reasonable do you think Policy 8 proposal is?

We currently include maintenance payments as income when calculating a Working Age claimant's Council Tax Reduction entitlement. From 1st April 2016 we propose to disregard maintenance as income, to provide an incentive for parents to stay in work or return to work

Approximately half of the sample (51%) consider Policy 8 to be reasonable to a certain extent while almost a third (30%) perceive it to be unreasonable to a certain extent. The men were more receptive to policy 8 than their female counterparts with 56% perceiving it to be reasonable compared with 48% of women.



Of the 34 respondents who offered additional comments relating to Policy 8, 47% stated “it’s an income and should be considered as one and included”. A further 18% disagreed commenting that child maintenance isn’t income.

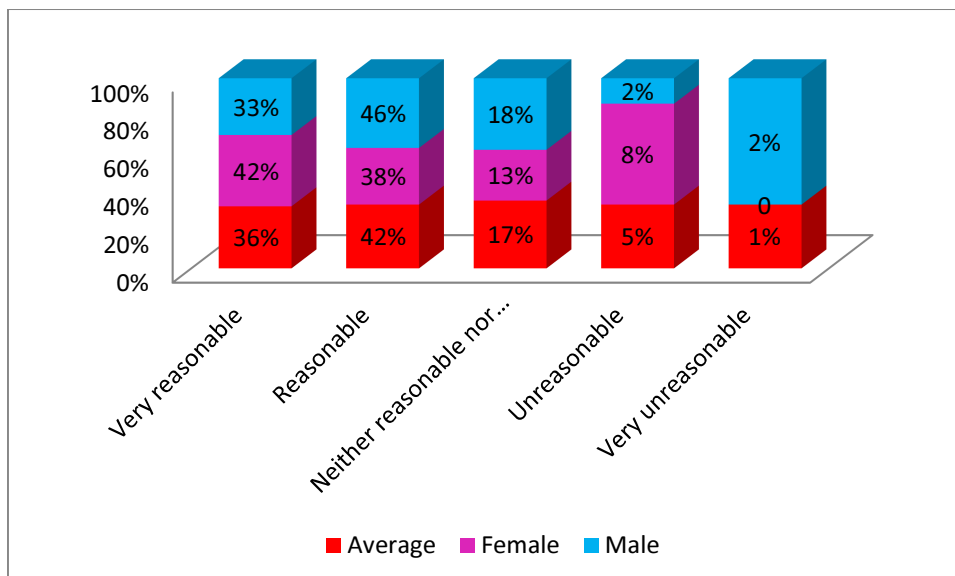
Q12. How reasonable do you think Policy 9 is?

If a Working Age person receives Disability Living Allowance, a Care Component may be added if they require help with day to day tasks or if they need frequent personal care. A lower, middle or higher rate is paid depending on the care needs of the claimant. Single claimants that receive a middle or higher rate Care Component are classed as severely disabled and can attract a Severe Disability Premium too, as long as no one lives with them and no one receives a Carers Allowance for looking after them. Couples can also receive this premium as long as they both are eligible for a middle or higher rate Care Component, no one lives with them and no one receives a Carers Allowance for looking after either of them.

A Severe Disability Premium is also payable if a Working Age person (and their partner if they have one) receives a Personal Independence Payment at the Enhanced Daily Living rate and no one lives with them and no one receives a Carers Allowance for looking after them.

Claimants who are eligible to Severe Disability Premium can receive a Reduction for up to 100% of their Council Tax bill

The chart below highlights respondent opinions of Policy 9. This policy was met with enthusiasm with over three quarters of the sample perceiving it to be reasonable to a certain extent (78%).

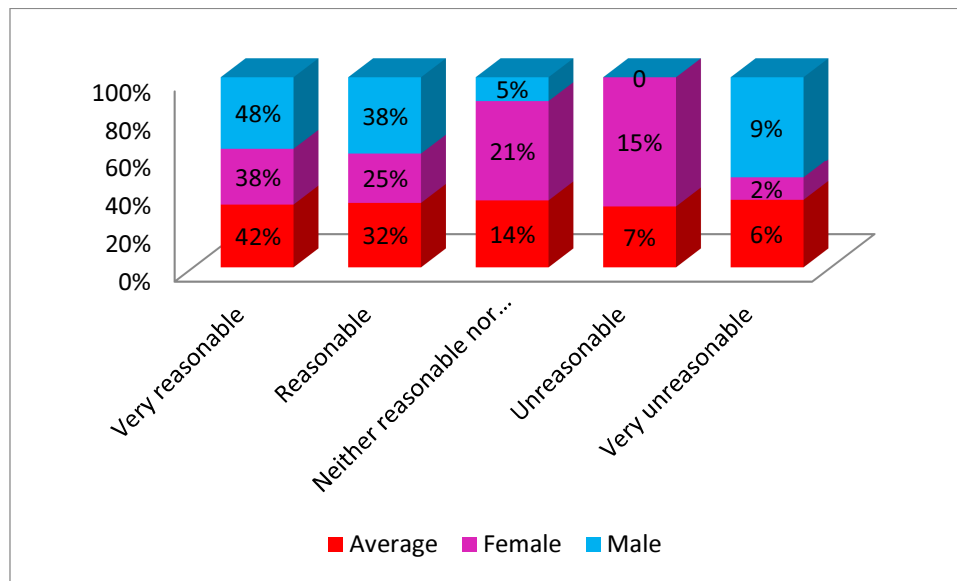


Just under a quarter of respondents offered additional comments in relation to Policy 9, of which 35% stated that “the vulnerable should be protected” and 22% indicated that it “Should be based on the ability to pay/on income”.

Q13. How reasonable do you think Policy 10 is as a way of contributing to the reductions that need to be made?

Any non-dependants living in a Working Age claimant's household are expected to contribute towards the Council Tax bill. If the non-dependant is not working then their contribution would be £5 per week. If the non-dependant is working then their contribution would be a £10 per week

Almost three quarters of the respondents who completed this survey consider Policy 10 to be reasonable to a certain extent (74%). The male sample were most likely to answer in the positive with 86% citing it as reasonable compared with 63% of the women surveyed.

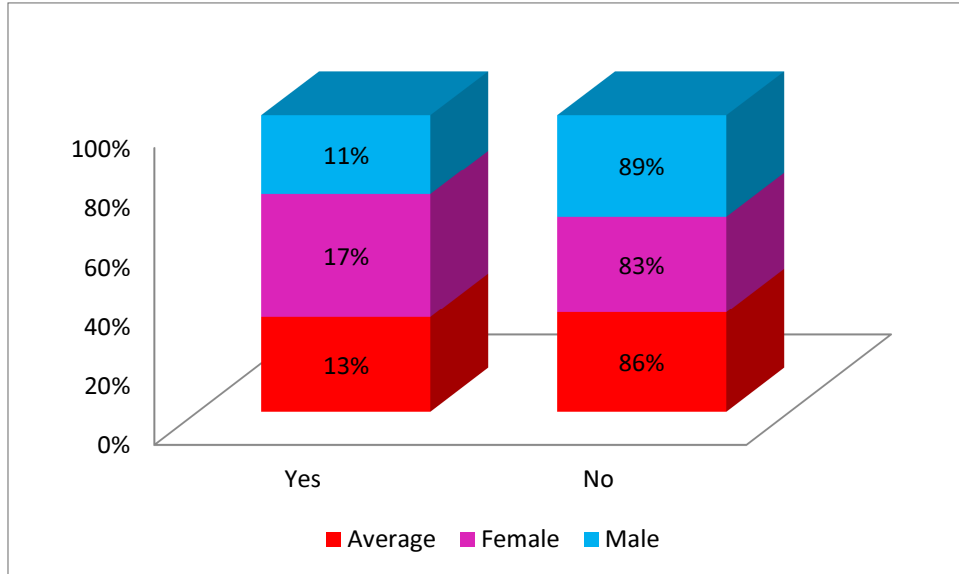


Over a quarter of the sample (29 respondents) made a comment in relation to Policy 10. The most common comments included; “If working then should contribute more” (41%) and “All adults should pay - if use the services then pay for them” (24%).

IMPACT OF THE CHANGES

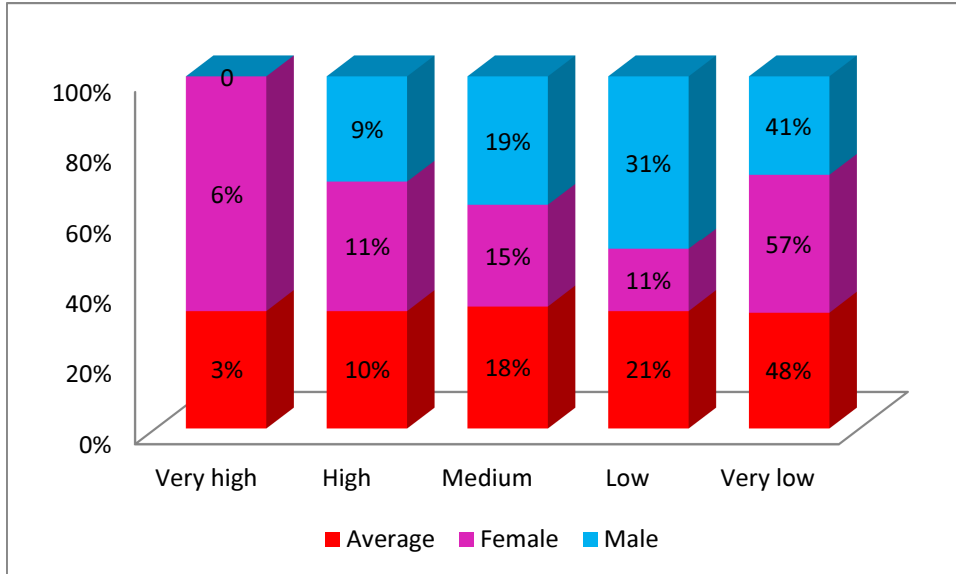
Q14. Does your household receive Council Tax Reduction?

Only a small proportion of the sample (13%) receive Council Tax Reduction.



Q14a. What impact have the changes from April 2013 had on your financial situation, or the financial situation of those communities you represent?

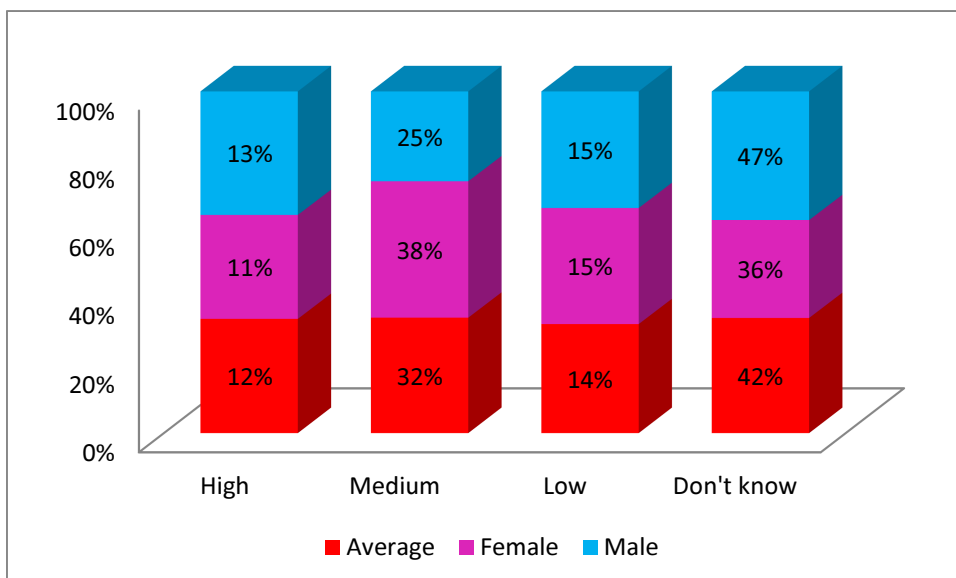
According to over two thirds of the sample surveyed, the impact felt has been low (69%). Just 13% of the sample claimed the changes felt had been high.



Q15. Please tell us whether you think the changes had a high, medium or low impact on each of these groups:

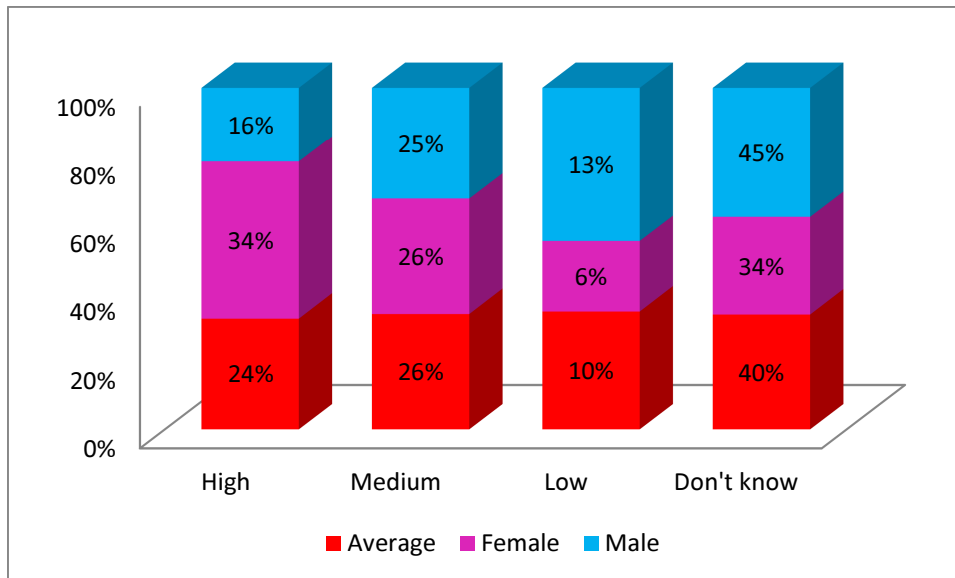
Families with children

Just under half of the sample (44%) think the changes have had either a high or medium impact on families with children.



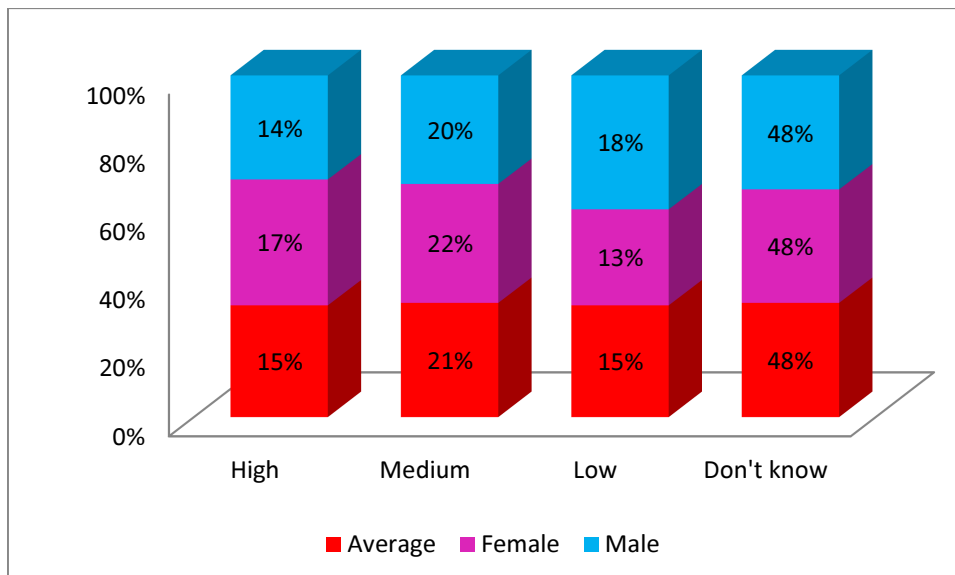
Lone Parents

Exactly one half of the sample think the changes have had either a high or medium impact on lone parents.



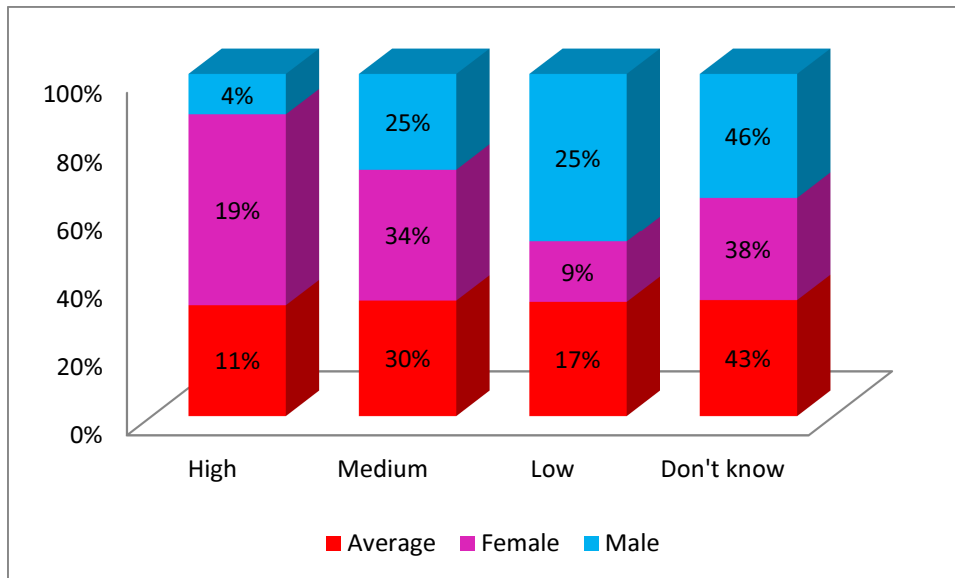
Carers

Over one third of the sample (36%) think the changes have had either a high or medium impact on carers.



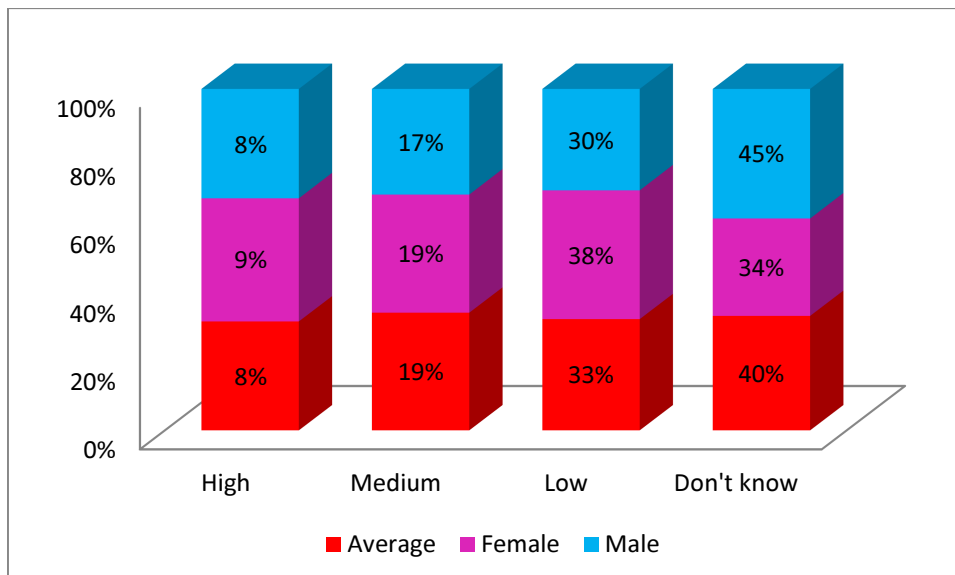
Part Time Workers

Under half of the sample (41%) think the changes have had either a high or medium impact on part time workers.



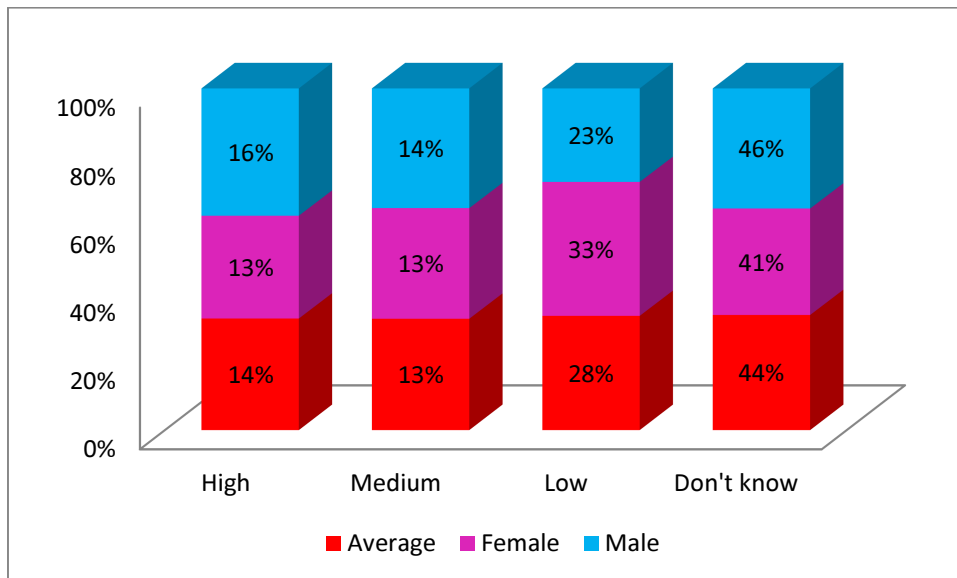
Full Time Workers

Just over a quarter of those surveyed (27%) think the changes have had either a high or medium impact on full time workers.



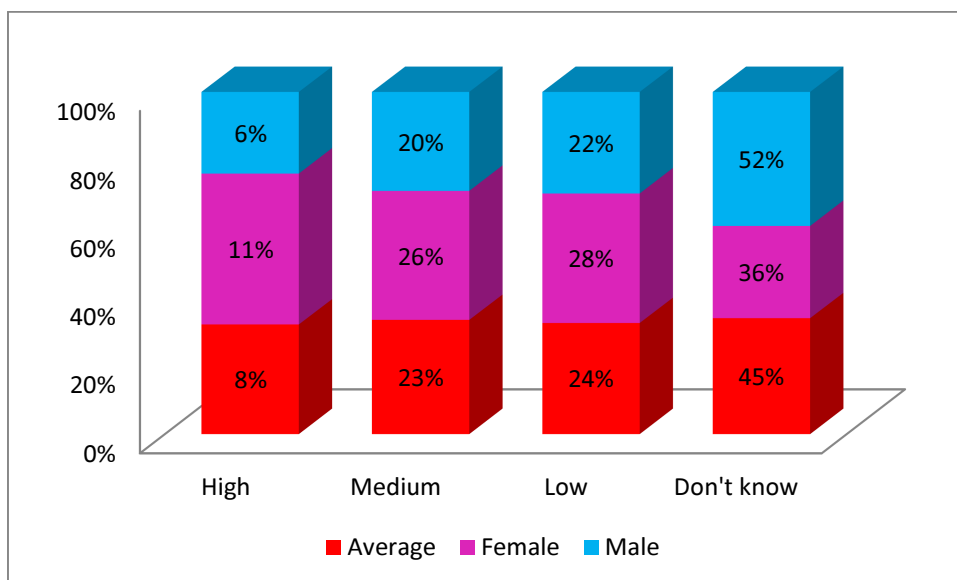
People who are disabled

Similarly, just over a quarter of those surveyed (27%) think the changes have had either a high or medium impact on people who are disabled.



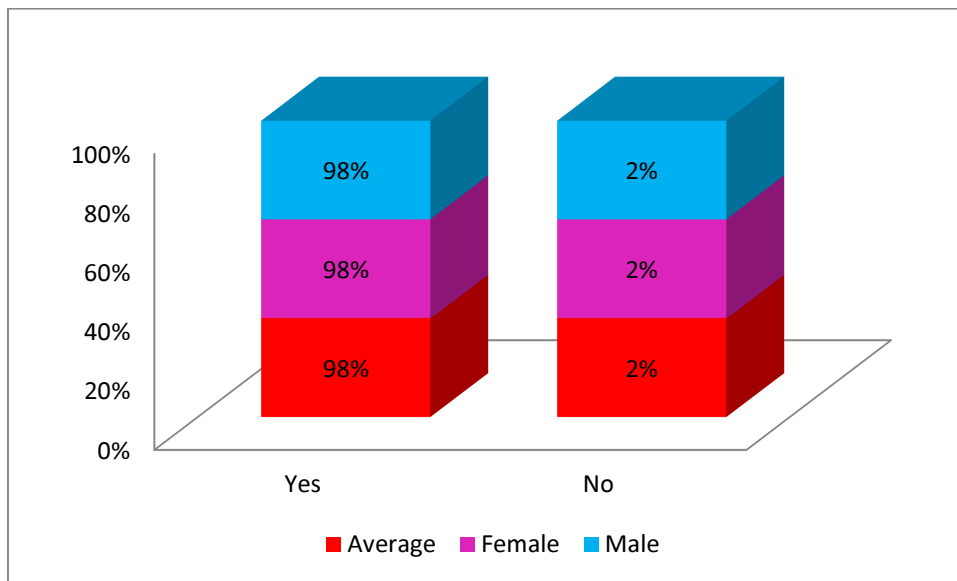
Single people and couples without children

Just under a third of the sample (31%) think the changes have had either a high or medium impact on single people and couples without children.



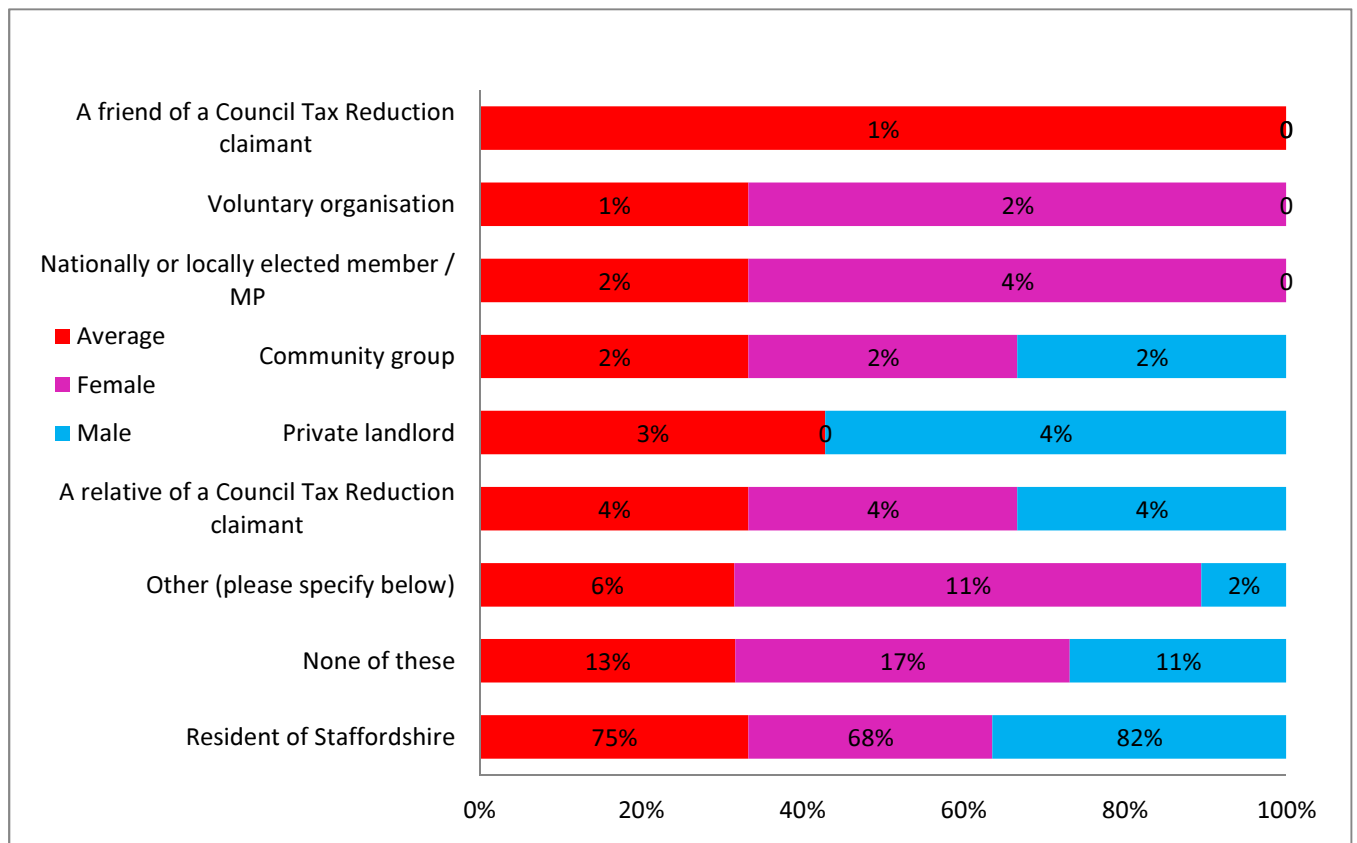
Q19. Are you a resident of Tamworth?

The vast majority of the sample are a resident of Tamworth (98%).

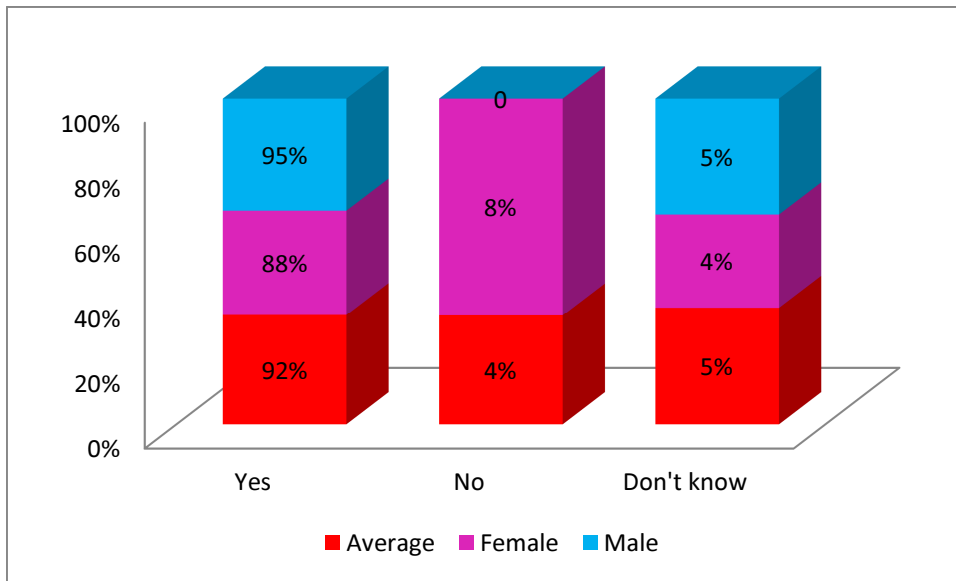


Q20. Are you submitting your views as...?

Three quarters of those who completed the online survey submitted their views as a resident of Staffordshire.

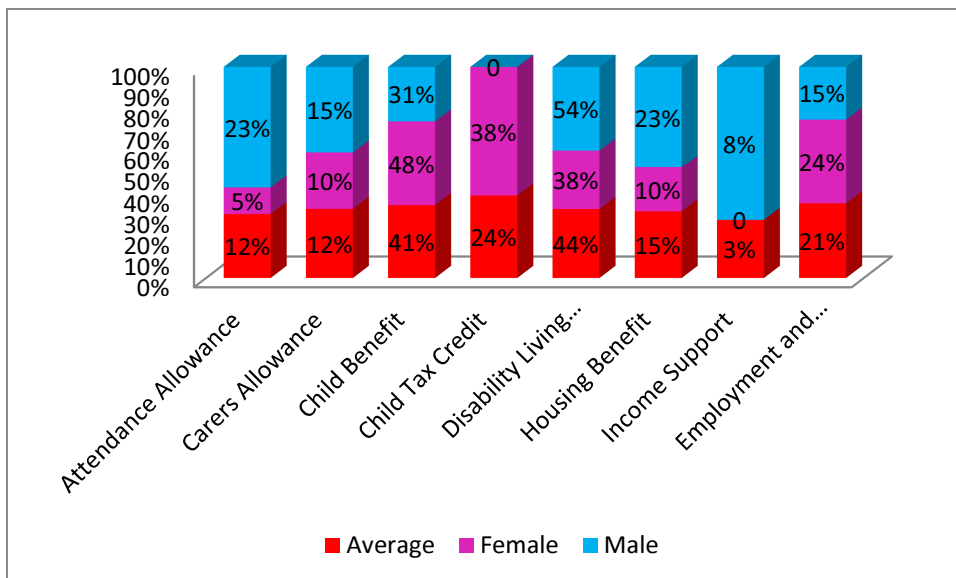


Q21. Does your name appear on the Council Tax Bill for your household?

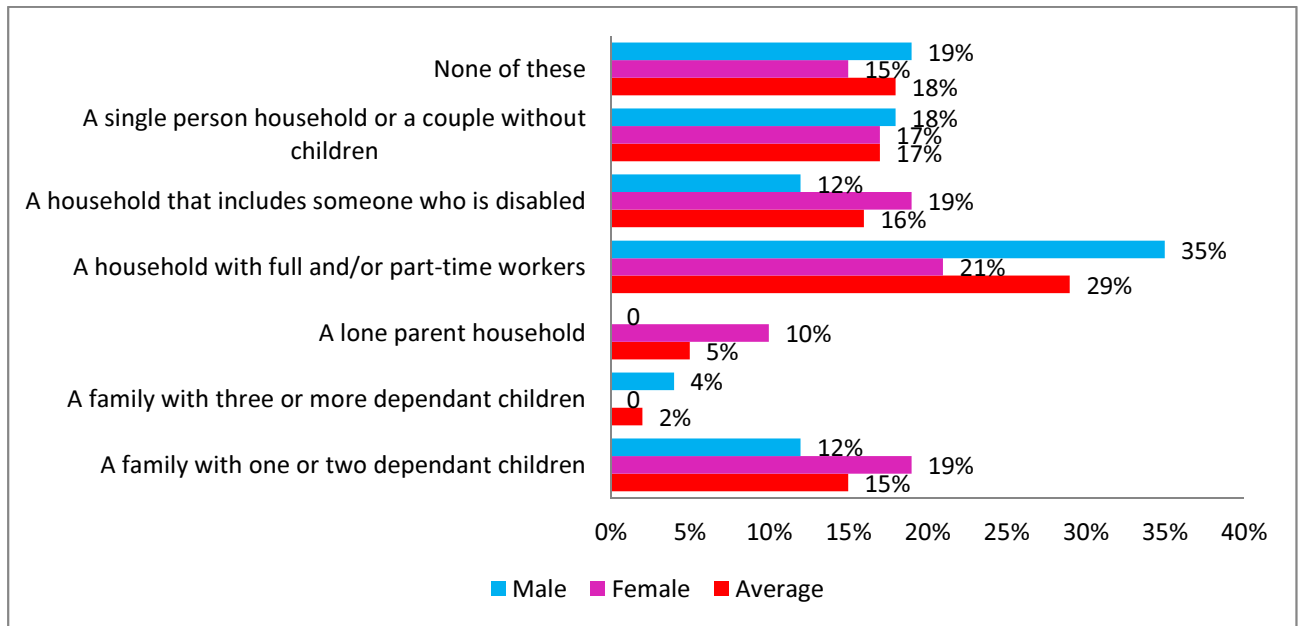


Q22. Does your household receive any of the following benefits?

The most common type of benefit received by the respondents was disability living allowance (44%) followed by child benefit (41%).

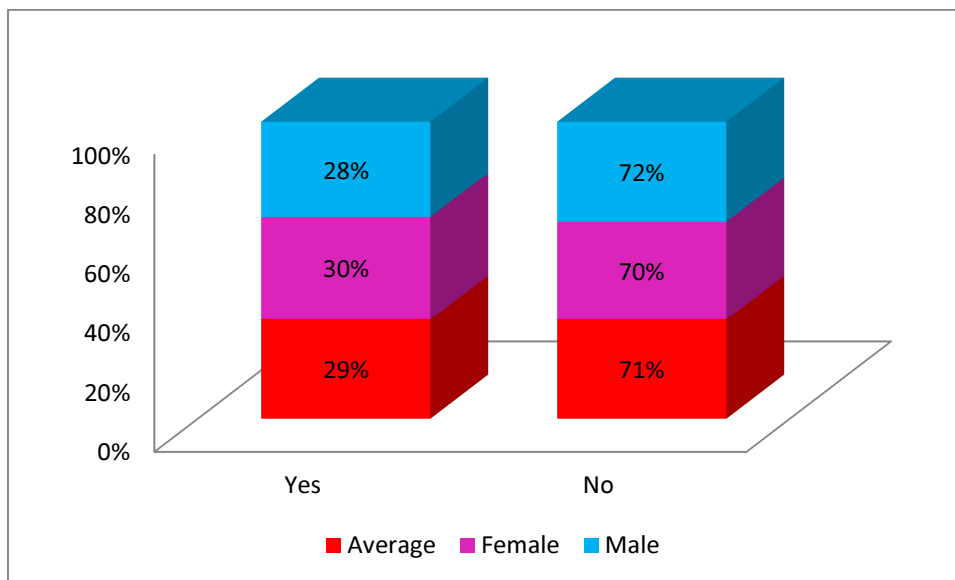


Q23. Would you say that any of the following describes your household?



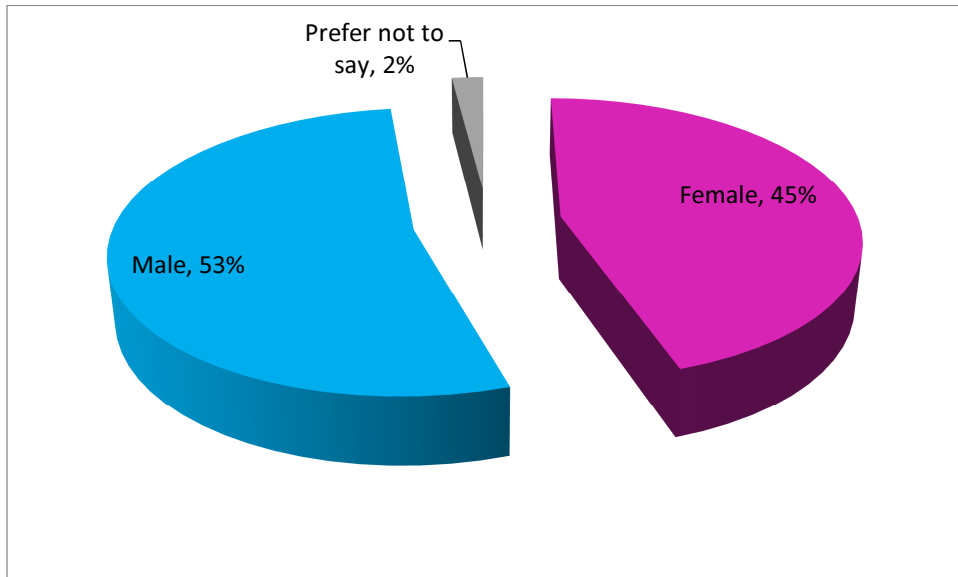
Q24. Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?

Less than one third of the sample (29%) regularly provide unpaid caring support for someone.



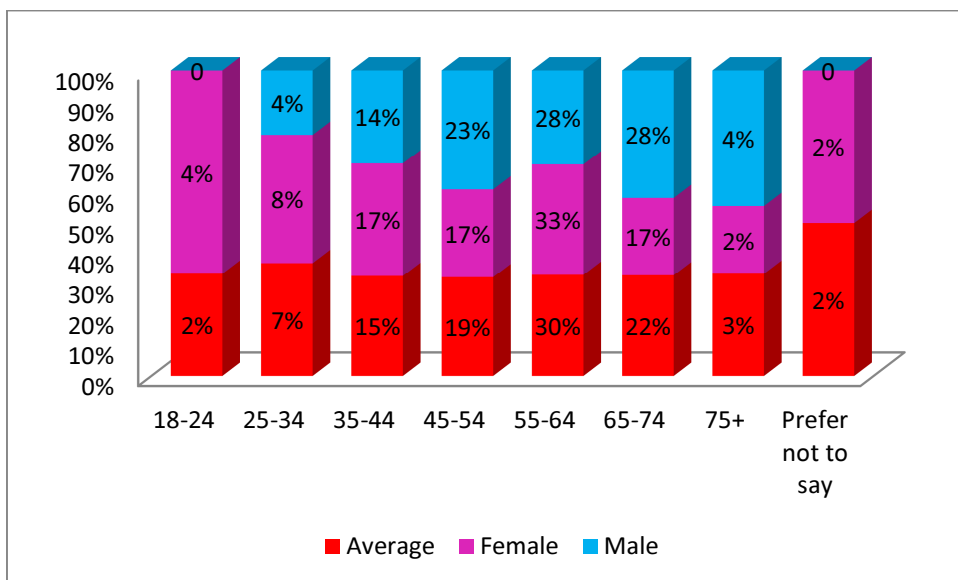
Q25. Are you male or female?

The sample comprised slightly more men (53%) than women (45%).



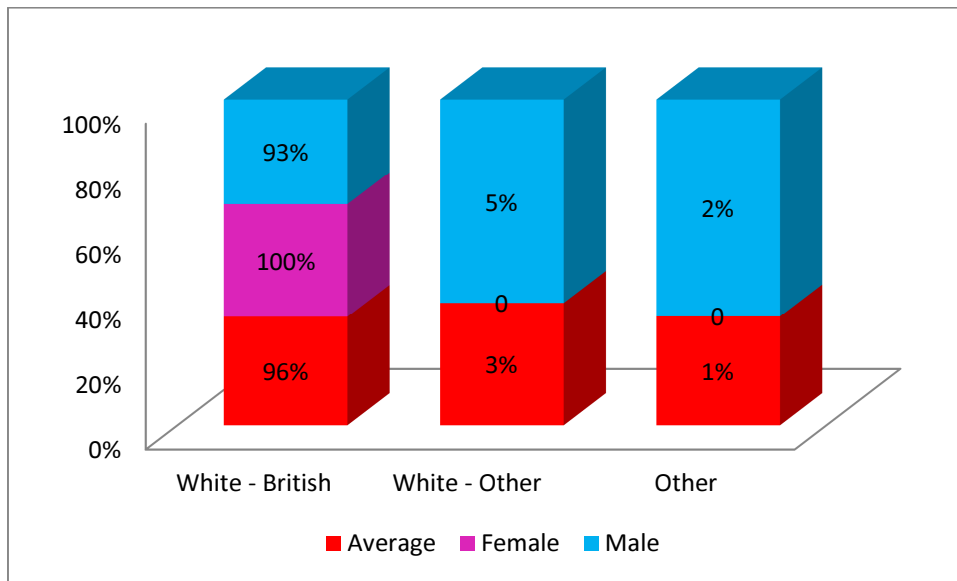
Q26. What is your age?

Just over one half of the sample fall into the 55-64 (30%) or 65-74 year old (22%) age brackets.



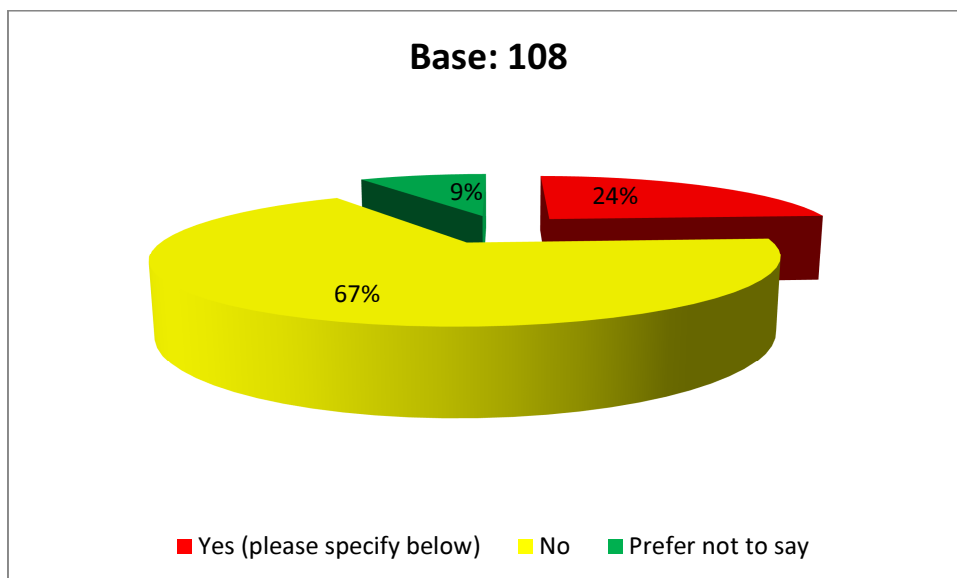
Q27. What is your ethnic origin?

The vast majority of the respondents are of White British ethnic origin (96%).

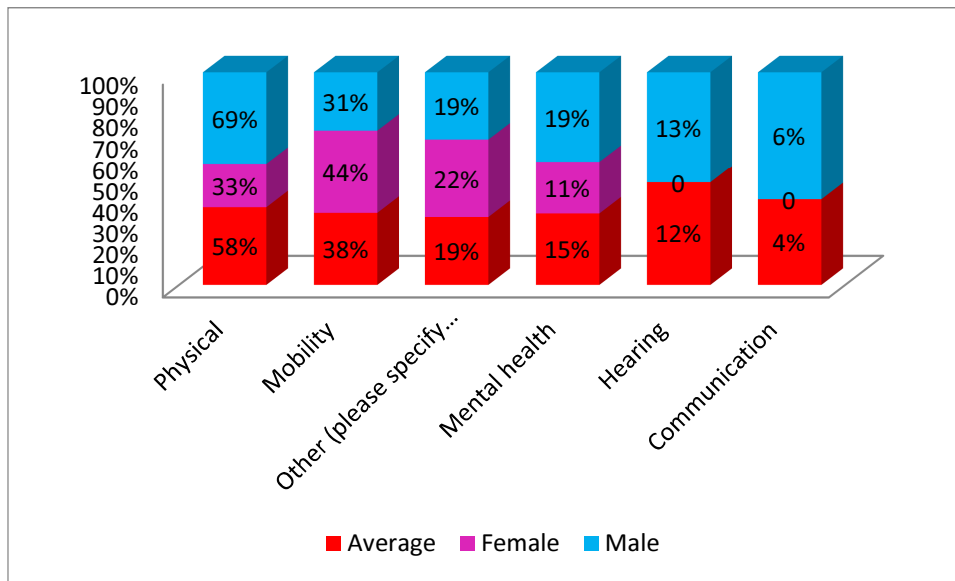


Q28. Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long term health condition?

Less than a quarter of the sample (24%) consider themselves to have a disability or long term condition.

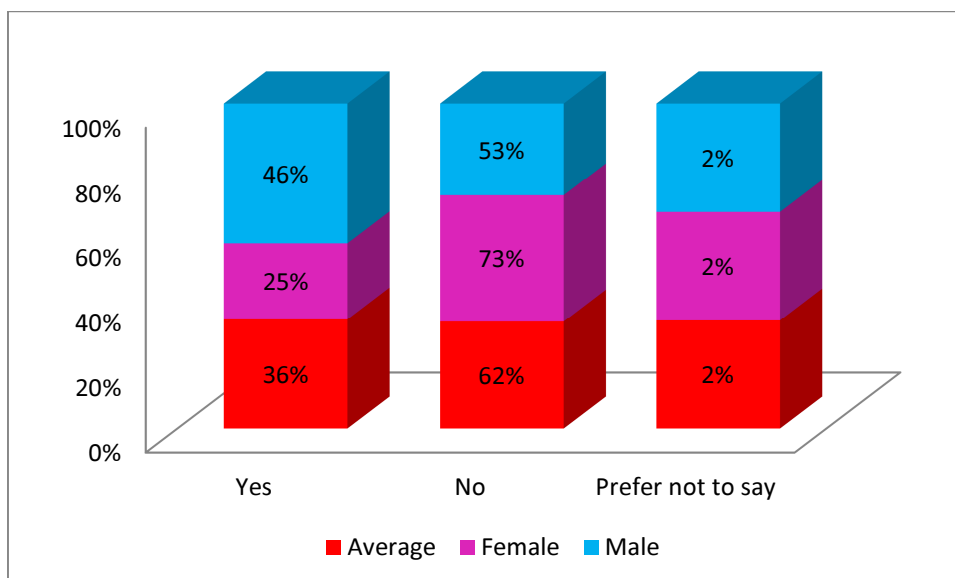


Q28a What is the nature of your disability?



Q29. Are you receiving a Retirement Pension or Pension Credit?

Just over a third of the sample (36%) are in receipt of a retirement pension or pension credit.



Q30. What is your relationship status?

Almost two thirds of the sample (64%) are married).

