APPENDIX C

Budget 2021/22

CONSULTATION REPORT

CONSULTATION@MAIDSTONE.GOV.UK
POLICY & INFORMATION TEAM

Contents

Key Findings

- 29.3% (±2.8%) of respondents agreed that Maidstone Borough Council provides value for money.
- The proportion disagreeing that the Council provides good value for money has increased for the first time in four years. In 2019, 26.9% of respondents disagreed while for 2020, 31.8% of survey respondents disagreed that the Council provides good value for money.
- 28.4% (±2.8%) said Council Tax should increase to help close the budget gap. While six in ten respondents said there should be no increase in Council Tax.
- Just over one in five respondents said that the Council should increase fees and charges. The top three areas for fee increases chosen by these respondents were building control, planning advice and festivals and events.
- Prioritisation of investment programmes remains the same from 2019, with Infrastructure including flood preventions and street scene scoring highly and new homes the lowest scoring priorities.
- More than half of all respondents said that charges should not be introduced in new areas/ for services.
- The top two most important services provided by the Council to residents were waste collection and parks and open spaces.
- The proportion of residents dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live has dropped from just over a quarter in 2019 to just under a fifth for 2020.
- 51.1% (±3.1%) said they were either ‘Very proud’ or ‘Fairly proud’ of Maidstone Borough. This is an increase of 11.4 percentage points compared to the result for 2019.

Methodology

The survey was open between 7 October and 5 November 2020. It was promoted online through the Council's website and social media channels. Residents who have signed up for consultation reminders were notified and sent an invitation to participate in the consultation.

The data has been weighted by age and gender based on the population in the ONS mid-year population estimates 2019 to ensure that the results more accurately match the known profile of Maidstone Borough's population. While this approach assists in achieving a more representation sample for analysis, some groups remain under-represented.

There were 1007 weighted responses (1039 unweighted responses) to the survey. Based on Maidstone's population aged 18 years the overall results are accurate to approximately ±3.1% at a 95% confidence level. This means that if the same survey was repeated 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the results would be between ±3.1% of the calculated response, so the 'true' response could be 3.1% above or below the figures reported (i.e. a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 46.9% to 53.1%). Confidence intervals for individual questions are shown as plus/minus percentages in brackets.

When the sample size is smaller, as is the case for certain groups, the confidence intervals are wider as it is less certain that the individuals in the sample are representative of the population. This means that it is more difficult to draw inferences from the results.

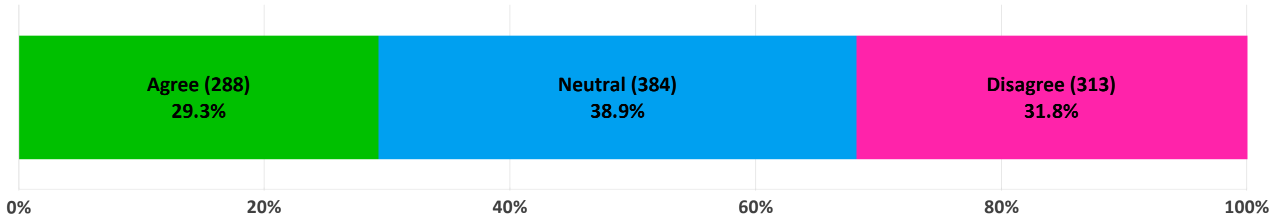
Under-representation of 18 to 34-year olds means that high weights have been applied to responses in this group, therefore results for this group should be treated with caution. Respondents from BAME backgrounds are also under-represented at 5.0% compared to 5.9% in the local area. Due to a small sample size after weighting the BAME respondent group has greater confidence intervals. This means what appear to be a large gap between BAME respondents and white respondents could be up to ±14% the reported figure, depending on the number of responses to each question.

Where reference has been made in the report to a 'significant difference' in response between groups, the proportional data has been z-tested and means have been t-tested. These tests determine if the difference between subgroups is large enough, taking into account the population size, to be statistically significant (meaning that if we were to run the same survey 100 times, at least 95 times out of 100 the same result would be seen) or whether the difference is likely to have occurred by chance. Where references have been made to a relationship between variables, chi-squared tests have been undertaken. This test compares observed (actual) and expected (theoretical) values in order to establish whether there is a significant relationship between two variables being compared.

Please note that not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed, not to the survey overall.

Value for money

Survey respondents were asked to 'what extent do you agree or disagree that Maidstone Borough Council provides value for money'. There was a total of 985 responses.

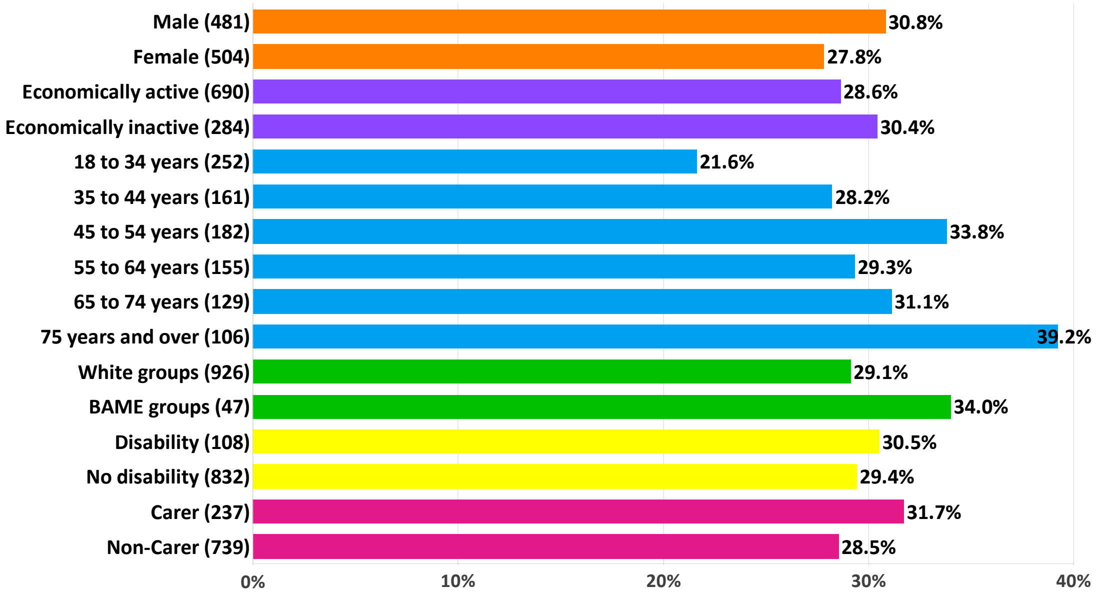


The most common response was 'Neither agree nor disagree' with 384 responding this way. 29.3% (±2.8%) of respondents agreed that Maidstone Borough Council provides value for money.

This question was previously asked in the 2019/20 Budget Survey and 33.2% of residents agreed with this question. In the 2018 Budget Survey 33.4% agreed and in the 2017 resident survey 30.2% of respondents agreed.

Since 2017 the proportion of people responding negatively to this question had declined from 28.6% in 2017 to 26.9% in 2019. The 2020 Budget Consultation is the first time in four years that the proportion responding negatively to this question has increased.

The chart below shows the proportions responding positively (Strongly agree and Agree combined).



	There were no significant differences in the proportions responding positively or negatively in terms of gender.
	Economically active respondents were more likely than economically inactive respondents to answer negatively with 34.4% (±3.5%) answering this way compared to 25.2% (±5.0%) of economically inactive respondents.

	While the proportions from these groups responding positively is comparable, economically inactive respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding neutrally.
	18 to 34 year olds had the greatest proportion responding negatively at 43.0% (±6.1%). This was significantly higher than the proportions responding this way for the age groups 44 years and over. The 75 years and over group had the greatest proportion responding positively at 39.2% (±9.3%). Almost half of this group responded negatively, the greatest proportion responding this way across all age groups.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question in terms of ethnicity.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between respondents with a disability and those without a disability.
	A significantly greater proportion of non-carers answered this question neutrally with 40.8% (±3.5%) responding this way compared to 31.9% (±5.9%) of carers.

Council Tax

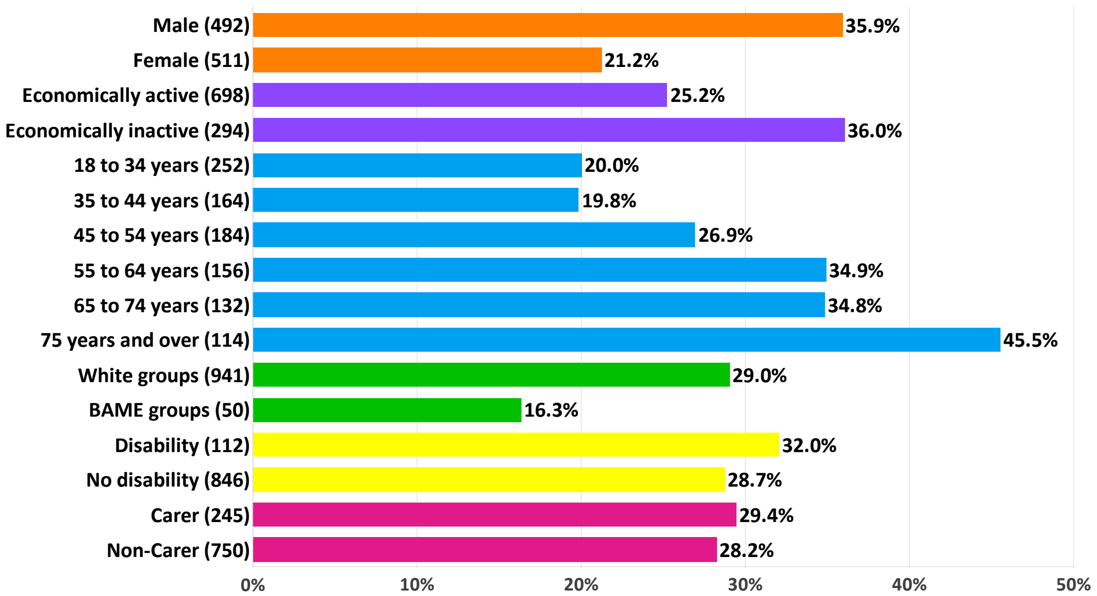
Appetite for increase

The survey asked respondents if they thought that Council Tax for 2021/22 should be increased to help close the budget gap. There were 1003 responses to this question.

The most common response was 'No' with 609 responding this way. 28.4% (±2.8%) of respondents said that Council Tax should increase to help close the budget gap.

This question was asked in the 2019 Budget Consultation (without the wording to' help close the budget gap'). Since then the proportion responding 'Yes' has increased (2019 Budget Survey 24.1%). While the proportion responding 'No' has remained consistent, the proportion responding 'Not sure' has declined from 16.1% in 2019 to 10.8% for 2020.

The chart below shows the proportion responding 'Yes' across the different demographic groups.

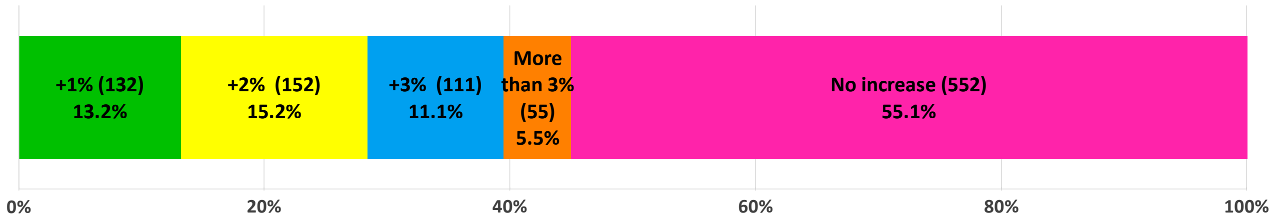


	Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion answering 'Yes' at 35.9% (±4.2%) compared to female respondents where 21.2% (3.5% answered this way). Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding 'Not sure' with 15.1% (±3.1%) answering this way compared to 6.3% (±2.1%) of male respondents.
	There were significant differences between the proportions of economically active and economically inactive respondents answering both positively and negatively. 65.0% (±3.5%) of economically active respondents answered 'No' compared to 50.6% (±5.7%) of economically active respondents.

	Analysis shows that there is a significant liner relationship between this question and age. The proportions responding 'No' decreases with age and the proportion responding 'Yes' increases with age.
	There were no significant differences in how those from white groups and those from BAME groups responded to this question.
	There were no significant differences in how those with a disability and those without a disability responded to this question.
	There were no significant differences in how those who provide care (Carers) and those who do not provide care responded to this question.

Acceptable levels for increase

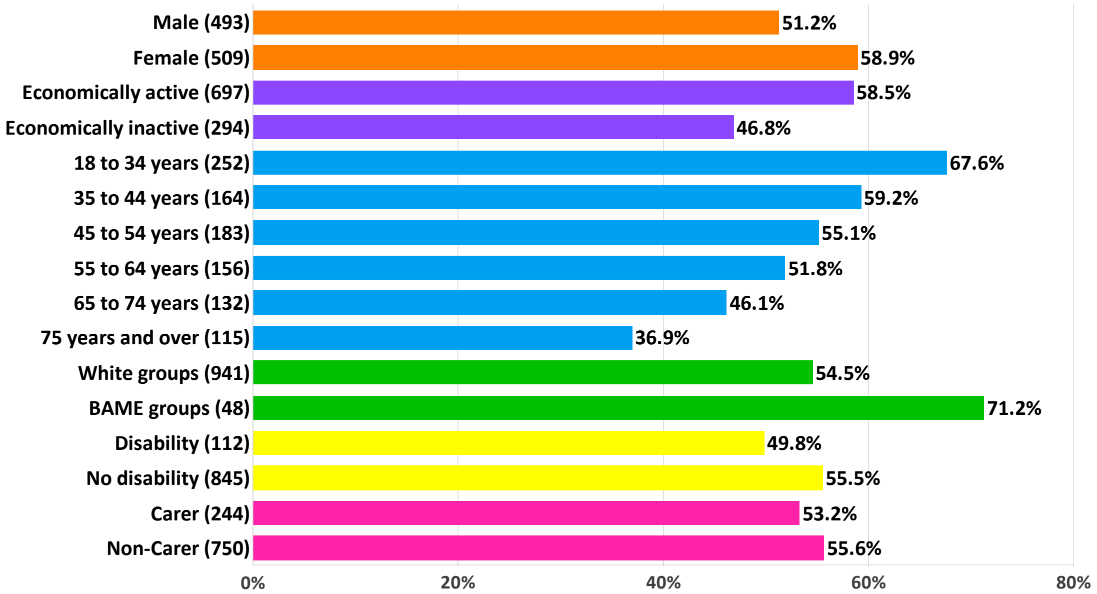
Survey respondents were asked to indicate how much more, if any, Council Tax they would be willing to pay to help close the budget gap. There were 1002 responses to this question.



The most common response was 'No increase' with 55.1% (±3.1%) answering this way. Overall, 44.9% (±3.1%) indicated that Council Tax should be raised to help the budget gap by selecting a percentage increase. This is significantly greater than the proportion responding 'Yes' to the previous more general question. In the survey this question was presented with the average increase per household, providing more details about how a proportion increase translates into money terms. This allowed for a more informed decision to be made and therefore accounts for the greater proportion of respondents amenable to an increase.

The proportion responding 'No increase' has increased by 7.6 percentage points since 2019 when this question was last asked as part of the 2019/20 Budget Survey, increasing from 47.5% to 55.1%.

The chart below shows the proportion responding ‘No increase’ across the different demographic groups.

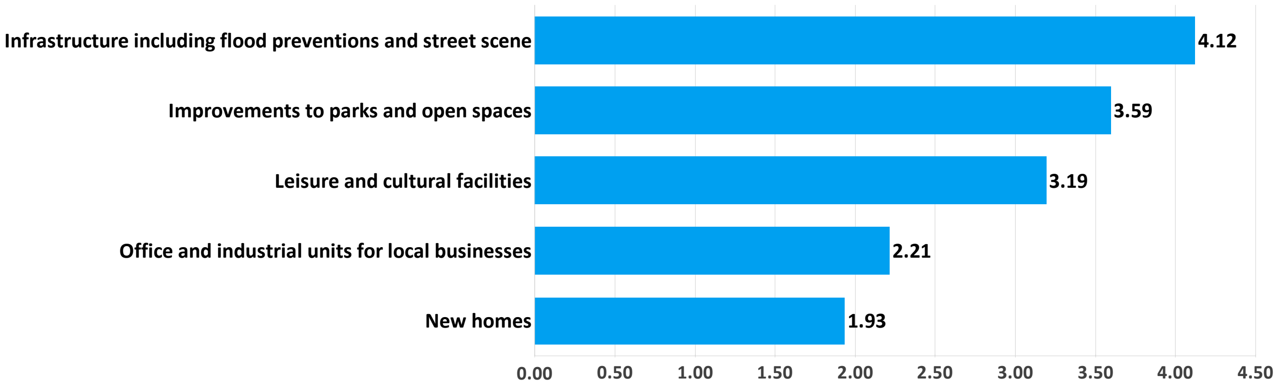


	Female responders had a significantly lower proportion selecting an increase amount compared to male respondents. Where an increase was selected female respondents favoured a 1% increase with 81 answering this way. Male respondents favoured a 2% increase with 87 answering this way.
	Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding ‘No increase’ compared to economically inactive respondents. Where an increase was selected, both groups favoured a 2% increase with 96 economically active respondents and 55 economically inactive respondents answering this way.
	Analysis shows that there is a significant liner relationship between this question and age. The proportions responding ‘No increase’ decreases with age and the proportion selecting an increase amount, increases with age.
	Respondents from BAME groups had a significantly greater proportion responding ‘No increase’ than white group respondents. Where an increase was selected BAME respondents favoured a 3%+ increase with 6 answering this way and white group respondents favoured a 2% increase with 147 answering this way.
	There were no significant differences in how those with a disability and those without a disability responded to this question.
	There were no significant differences in how those who provide care (Carers) and those who do not provide care responded to this question.

Investment Programme Priorities

Survey respondents were asked to place a list of investment programme priorities into their preferred order of importance. A total of 879 respondents ranked the investment priorities.

To assess this data, a weighted average has been used. The programmes placed first received five points and the programmes ranked last were given 1 point. These were then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.

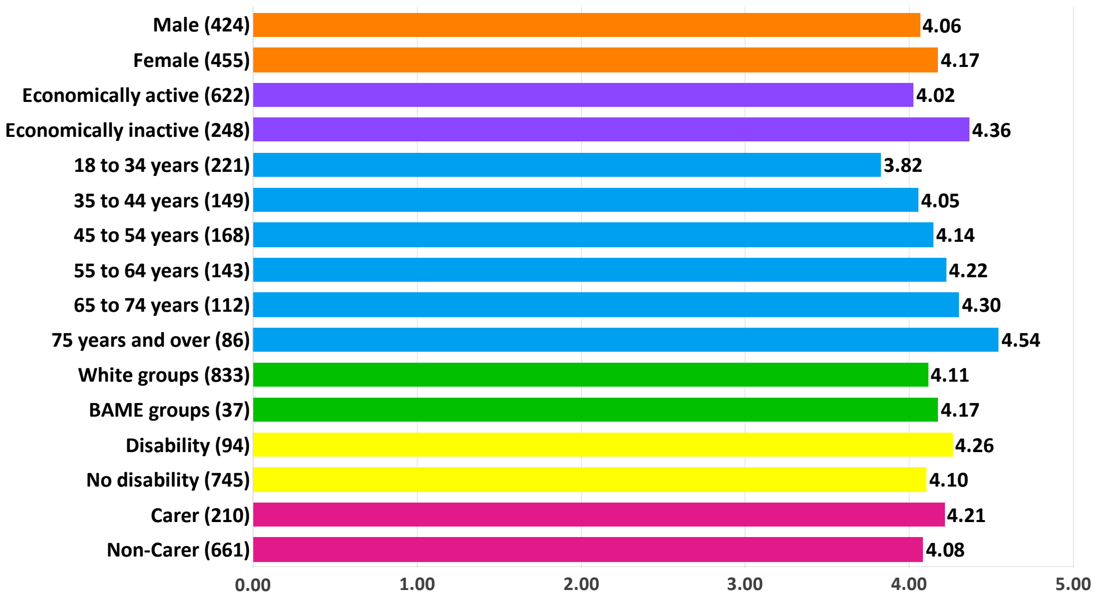


This question was asked in the 2019/20 Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2019. The priorities were placed in the same order as above.

Infrastructure including flood preventions and street scene

Overall, 467 (53.2%) respondents placed 'Infrastructure including flood preventions and street scene' as their top investment priority. This is comparable to the 2019 Budget survey where 52.2% placed this priority as first.

The following chart shows the mean score across the demographic groups for the priority 'Infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene'.

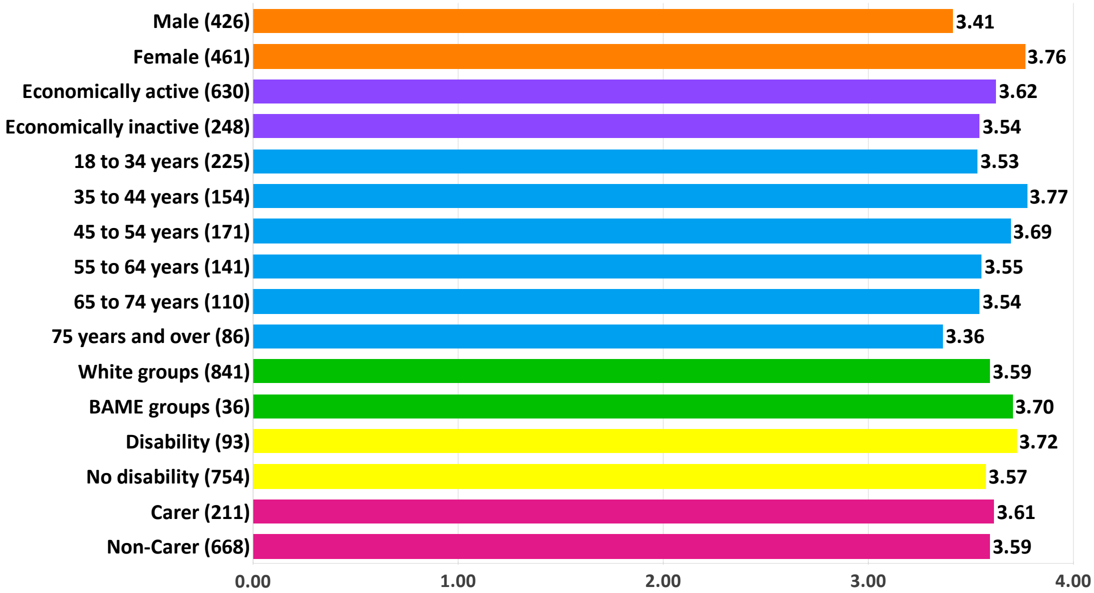


	No significant difference in score between male and female respondents has been identified.
	The difference in score between economically active and economically inactive respondents is significant. 81.7% (±4.8) of economically inactive respondents placed this priority as first or second compared to 67.0% (±3.7%) of economically active respondents answering the same.
	Analysis suggests a significant relationship between age and ranking of this priority with the proportion placing this priority first and second increasing with age. There were no respondents aged 75 years and over that ranked this priority last (fifth).
	No significant difference has been identified in score between respondents from BAME groups and respondents from white groups.
	No significant difference in score between respondents with a disability and respondents without a disability was identified.
	No significant difference in score between respondents that said they were carers and those who do not provide any care were identified.

Improvements to parks & open spaces

Overall, 203 (22.9%) respondents placed 'Improvements to parks and open spaces' as their top investment priority.

The following chart shows the mean score across the demographic groups for the priority 'improvements to parks and open spaces.



	The difference in score between male and female respondents was significant. 65.9% (±4.3%) of female respondents placed this priority as first or second compared to 53.8% (±4.7%) of male respondents answering the same.
	No significant difference in score between economically active and economically inactive respondents has been identified.
	The score for respondents aged 35 to 44 years is significantly greater than the score for respondents 75 years and over, showing this is a greater priority for respondents aged 35 to 44 years.
	No significant difference has been identified in score between respondents from BAME groups and respondents from white groups.
	No significant difference in score between respondents with a disability and respondents without a disability was identified.
	No significant difference in score between respondents that said they were carers and those who do not provide any care were identified.

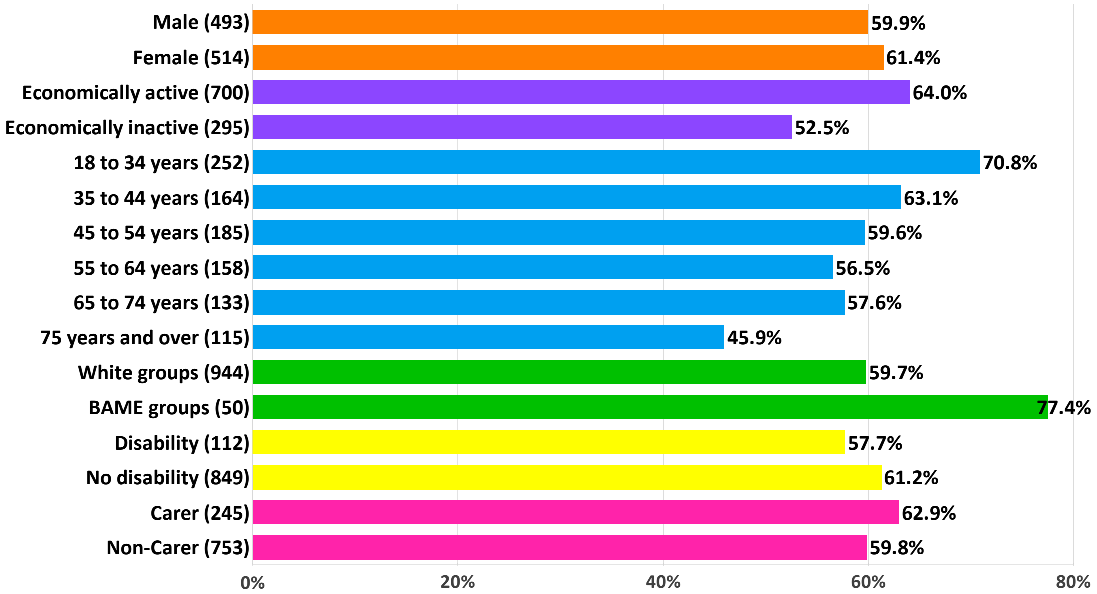
Fee and Charges

Increase Fees?

Survey respondents were asked if thought that the Council should increase fees and charges. A total of 1006 answered this question.

Overall, 60.7% (±3.0%) responded 'No', this was the most common response.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'No' across the different demographic groups.



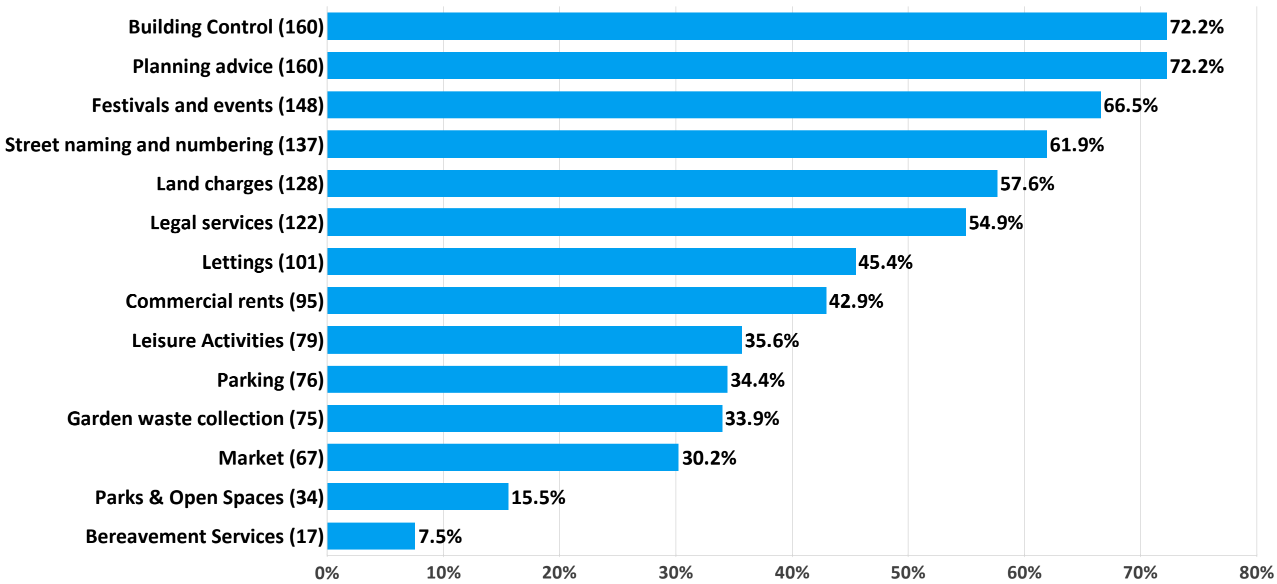
	Although comparable levels of male and female respondents answered 'No', Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding 'Yes' with 26.6% (±3.9%) answering this way compared 17.9% (±3.3%) of female respondents answering the same.
	Economically active and economically inactive respondents had significant differences across all of the answer options. One in five economically active respondents answered 'Yes' compared to one in four economically inactive respondents.
	There were no significant differences across the age groups in the proportion of people responding, 'Not sure'. The proportions who responded 'Yes' follows the same profile as the proportion responding 'No' but reversed with the 18 to 34 years group having the lowest proportion answering this way and the 75 years and over group having the greatest proportion responding this way.

	There were no significant differences in terms of ethnicity in the proportion of people responding, 'Not sure'. The proportions from BAME groups and white groups responding 'yes' and 'No' are significantly different from each other. Respondents from white groups were more in favour of increasing fees and charges than respondents from BAME groups.
	There were no significant differences in terms of disability in the proportion of people responding, 'No' and 'Not sure'. 30.5% (±8.5%) of respondents with a disability answered 'Yes' compared to 21.2% (±2.8%) of respondents without a disability – these differences are significant.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between respondents that are carers and those who were not carers.

Areas for increased fees

Survey respondents that had answered 'Yes' when asked if the Council should increases fees and charges to help close the budget gap were asked to pick from a list of services that the Council currently charge for and which they think the Council should increase (respondents could tick as many or as few as they wished).

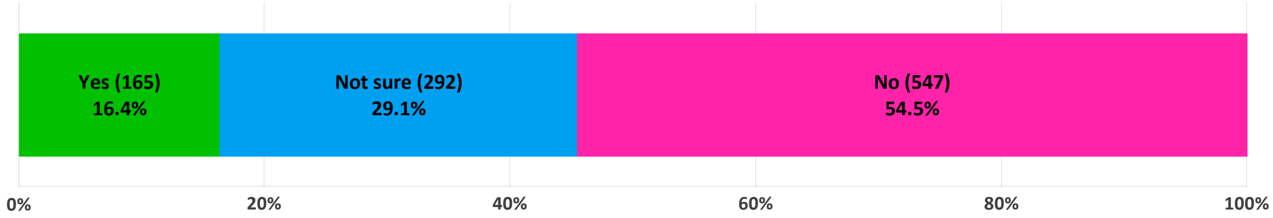
222 respondents answered this question (asked of 223 respondents) and gave a total of 1401 responses (an average of 6.3 options selected per respondent).



Please note - Demographics cannot be assessed for significant differences due to small sample sizes.

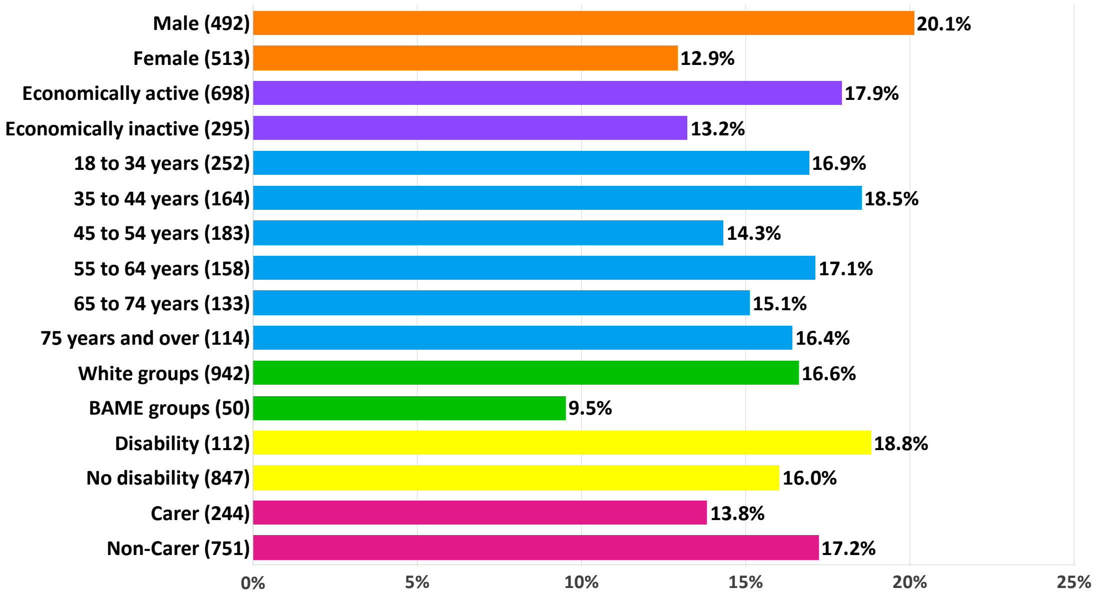
Introduction of new charges

Survey respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should introduce charges for services that it did not currently charge for. There were 1004 responses to this question.



The most common response was 'No' with 547 answering this way. Overall, just over half of all respondents were against the introduction of a fee or charges for services not currently charged for.

The chart below shows the proportion responding 'yes' across the different demographic groups.



	The proportions responding 'yes' for male and female respondents were significantly different. With a greater proportion of male respondents open to idea of introducing charges/fees for services that do not currently incur a charge or fee.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between economically active and economically inactive respondents.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question across the age groups.
	Respondents from BAME groups had a significantly greater proportion responding 'No' with 68.3% (±13.0%) compared to 53.7% (±3.2%) of respondents answering the same from white groups.

	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between respondents with a disability and those without a disability.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between carer and non-carer respondents.

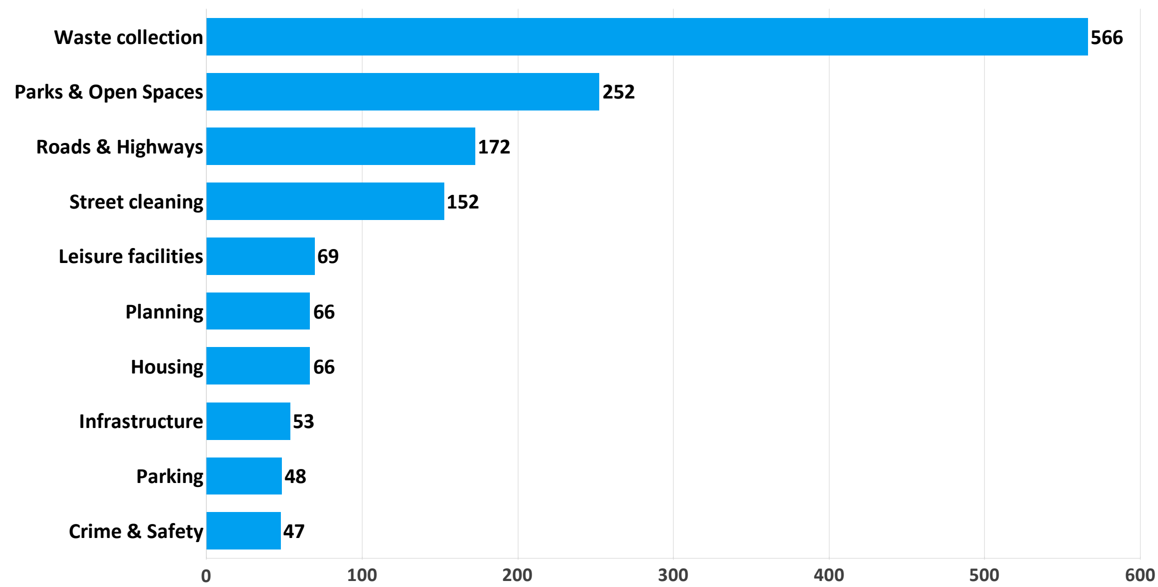
Important Services

Survey respondents were asked what three services were most important to them and provided with three open text boxes to provide a response. The answers have been cleansed so that counts can be obtained (e.g. refuse to waste collection, leisure, and leisure centre to leisure facilities).

A total of 851 respondents answered this question. Please note that not all respondents that answered this question gave three services.

The word cloud below shows the top 71 responses where two or more respondents have said the same thing.

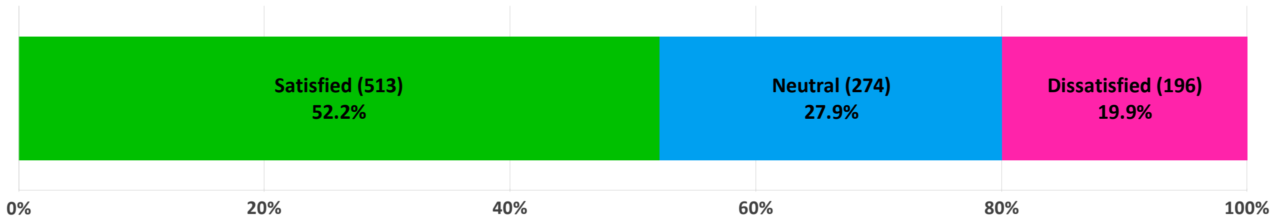
The top ten services mentioned are shown in the chart below.



Living in Maidstone

Satisfaction with local area as a place to live

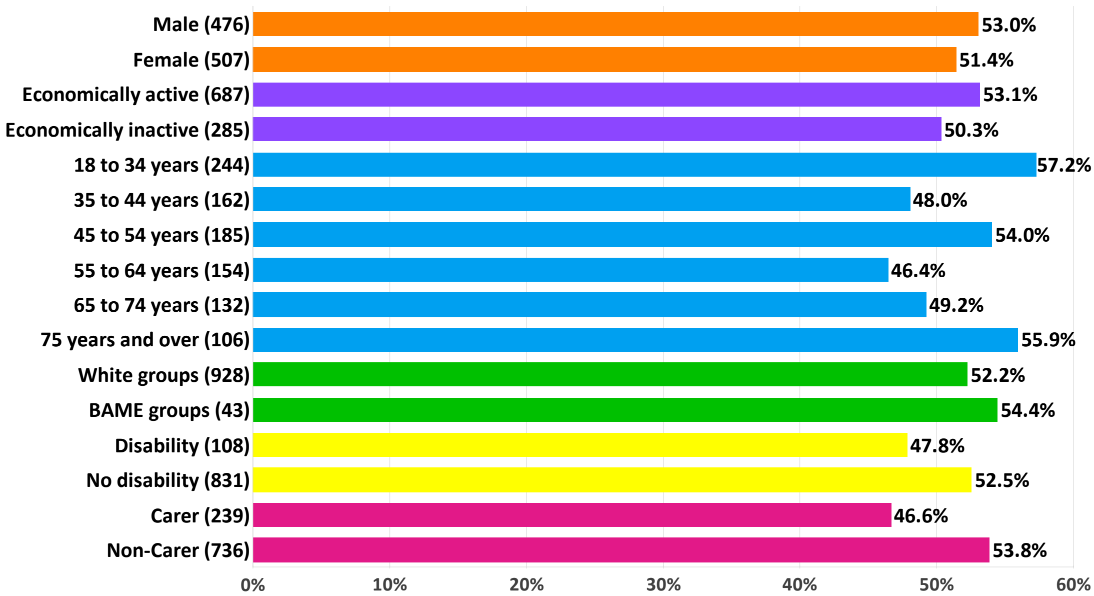
Survey respondents were asked ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?’ and given a five-point scale from Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied. There was a total of 983 respondents.



The most common response was ‘fairly satisfied’ with 428 answering this way. Overall, just over half of respondents said they ‘satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live.

This question was last asked in the 2019 Budget survey. Compared to the 2019 survey the proportion ‘Satisfied’ has remained consistent with 53.1% responding satisfied in 2019. However, the proportion responding ‘Dissatisfied’ has reduced from 28.9% in 2019 to 19.9% for 2020.

The chart below shows the proportion responding ‘Satisfied’ across the demographic groups.

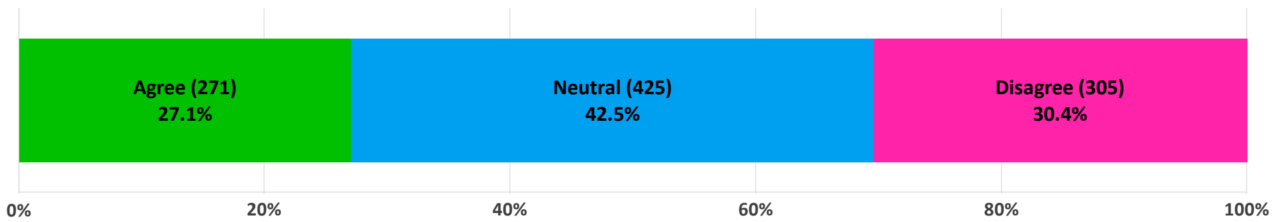


	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between male and female respondents.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between economically active and economically inactive respondents.

	The proportions responding positively from the 18 to 34 years group and the 55 to 64 years group are significantly different from each other. The 55 to 64 years group had the greatest proportion responding negatively at 25.2% (±6.9%) – this is significantly greater than the proportion responding the same from the 75 years and over group where 14.7% (±6.7%) responded negatively.
	There were no significant differences in the proportions responding in terms of ethnicity.
	There were no significant differences in the proportions responding between respondents with a disability and those without a disability.
	Respondents that are carers had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 26.9% (±5.6%) answering this way compared to 17.9% (±2.8%) of non-carers answering the same.

Potential realised

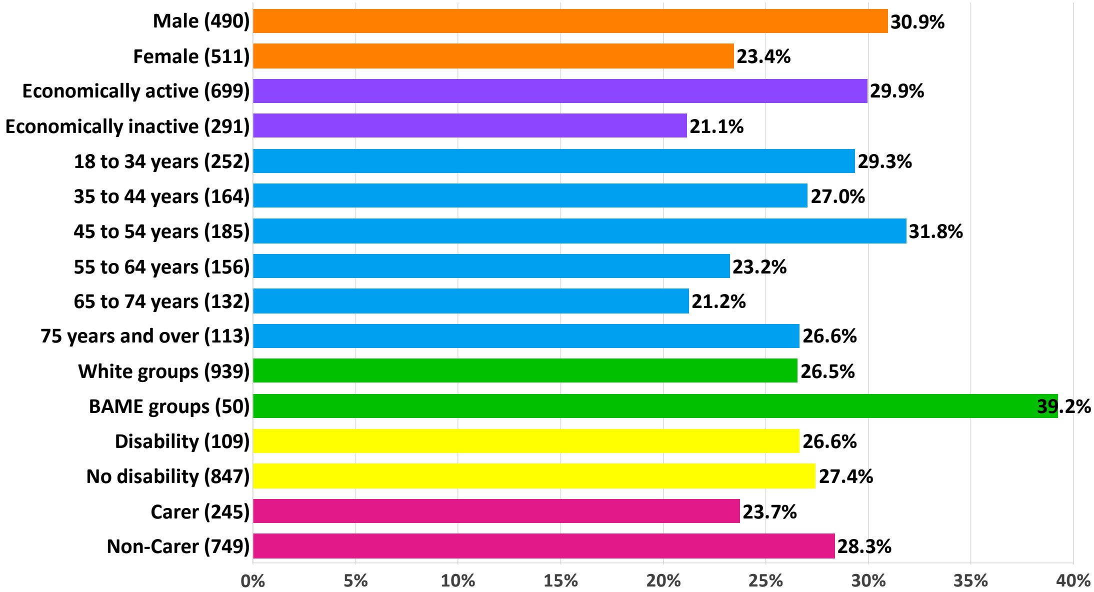
The survey asked respondents 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that Maidstone is a place where everyone can realise their potential?'. A total of 1001 people responded to this question.



Overall, 27.1% (±2.8%) of respondents said they agreed that Maidstone was a place where everyone can realise their potential. The most common response was 'Neither agree nor disagree' with 42.5% (±3.1%) responding this way.

The proportion responding 'Agree' has improved since 2019 when this question was asked for the first time in the 2019 Budget survey. In 2019, 21.9% of respondents agreed and 35.5% disagreed that Maidstone was a place where everyone can realise their potential.

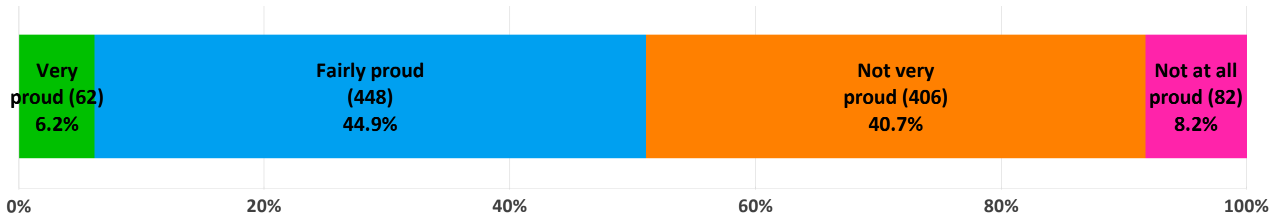
The following chart shows the proportion responding 'Agree' across the different demographic groups.



	While comparable proportion of male and female respondents responded neutrally to this question, the difference in the proportion responding both negatively and positively are significant. Female respondents were more likely to disagree with this statement compared to male respondents.
	More than half of economically inactive respondents responded neutrally, significantly greater than the proportion responding the same, who are economically active. Economically active respondents had significantly greater proportions answering both positively and negatively (more than three quarters of the respondents in the economically inactive group told us they were currently ‘wholly retired from work’).
	The 18 to 34 years and the 35 to 44 years had the greatest proportions responding negatively at 38.4% (±6.0%) and 38.8% (±7.5%) respectively and the lowest proportions responding neutrally. The 75 years and over had the lowest proportion responding negatively and the greatest proportion responding neutrally.
	The difference in the proportion answering positively between BAME groups and white groups is significant. 31.1% (±3.0%) of white group respondents answered negatively compared to 16.4% (±10.4%) of BAME respondents answering the same.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between respondents with a disability and those without a disability.
	Although there were no significant differences in the proportion responding positively and neutrally between carers and non-carers, carers had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 36.9% 9±6.0%) answering this way compared to 28.7% (3.2%) of non-carers.

Pride in Maidstone Borough

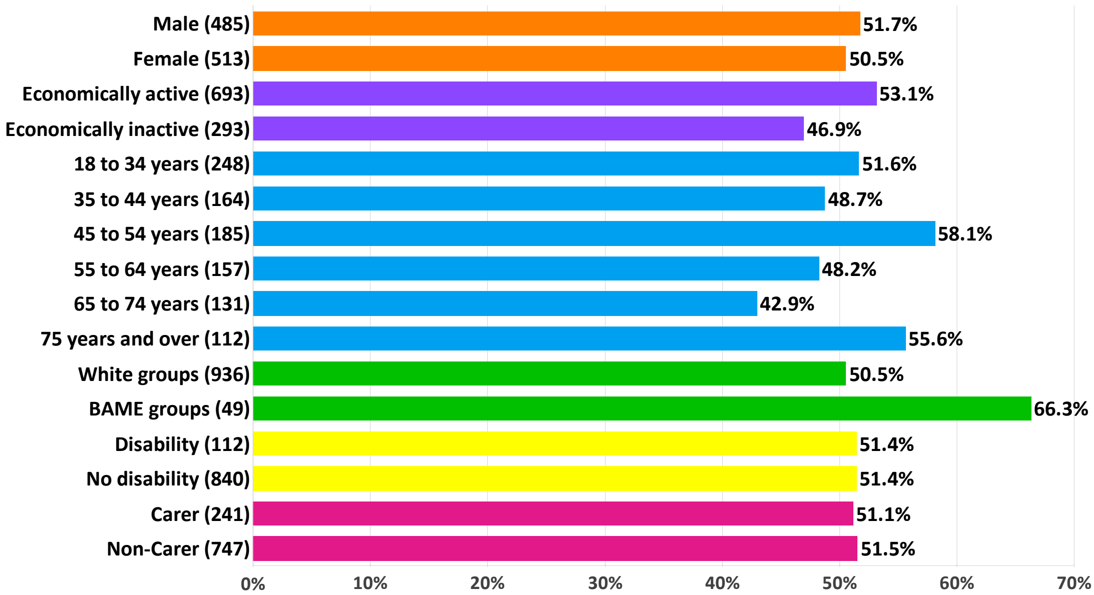
The survey asked respondents 'How proud are you of Maidstone Borough?', a total of 997 responded to this question.



Overall, 51.1% (±3.1%) said they were either 'Very proud' or 'Fairly proud' of Maidstone Borough. The most common response was 'Fairly proud' with 448 answering this way.

The proportion responding positively (very proud and fairly proud combined) has improved since 2019 when this question was asked for the first time in the 2019 Budget survey. In 2019, 39.7% of respondents were positive when answering this question and 60.3% responded negatively. In 2019 'Not very proud' was the most common response.

The chart below shows the proportion responding positively across the different demographic groups.



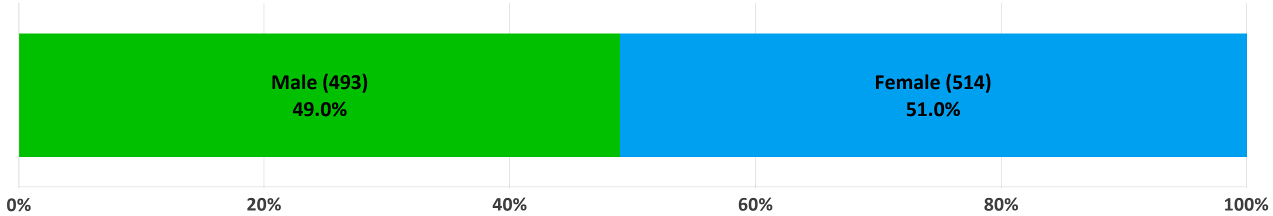
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between male and female respondents.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between economically active and economically inactive respondents.
	Respondents in the 65 to 74 years group had the lowest proportion responding negatively. This result is significant when compared to the proportions responding the same from the 35 to 44 years group and the 75 years and over group.

	The difference in the proportion answering positively between BAME groups and white groups is significant. 49.5% (±3.2% of white group respondents answered negatively compared to 33.7% (±12.2%) of BAME respondents answering the same.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between respondents with a disability and those without a disability.
	There were no significant differences in the response to this question between carer respondents and non-carer respondents.

Demographics

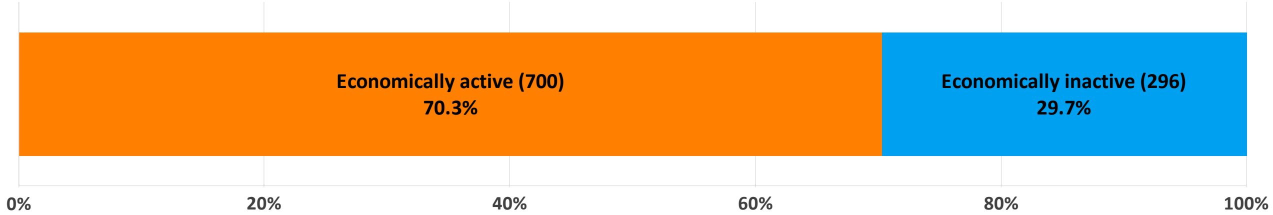
Gender

The proportions for male and female respondents aligns with that in the local population[1] (survey weighting is based on this variable).



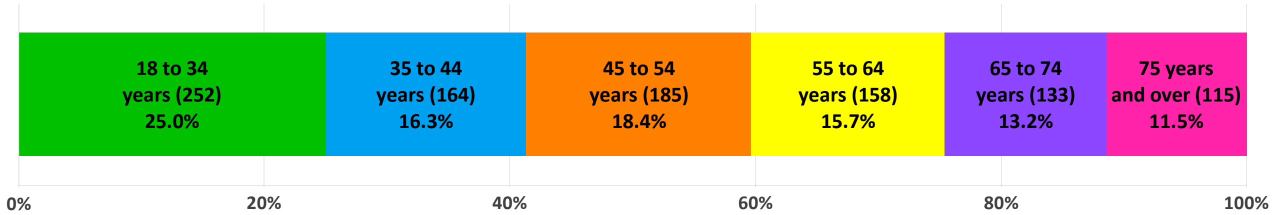
Economic Activity

The economically active were slightly under-represented in the respondent profile accounting for 72.9%. TThe economically inactive are slightly over-represented with 27.1% in the local population[2].



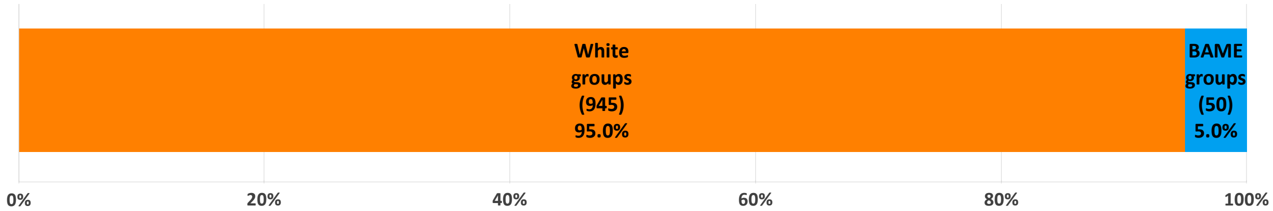
Age

The proportions of respondents in each age group aligns with that in the local population[3] (survey weighting is based on this variable).



Ethnicity

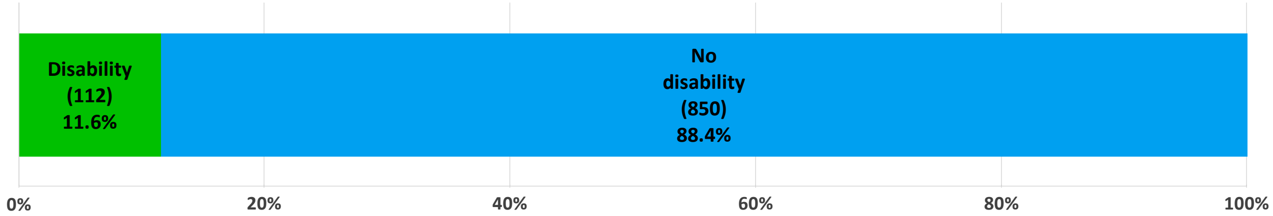
BAME respondents were marginally underrepresented in the respondent profile accounting for 5.9% in the local population[4].



[1] ONS Mid- year population estimates 2019
[2] 2011 UK Census
[3] ONS Mid- year population estimates 2019
[4] 2011 UK Census

Disability

Respondents with a disability were slightly under-represented in the respondent profile accounting for 15.2% of the local population[5].



Carers

There are no national statistic on the numbers of carers (both paid and unpaid) however, 10.2% of all residents provide unpaid care[6], with a further 2,842 claiming carers allowance, therefore it is likely that carers are over-represented in the respondent profile.

[5] UK Census 2011
[6] Census 2011