

Appendix 2

CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/3

February 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Between December 2021 and February 2022, the Council undertook an eight-week period of consultation on its budget proposals for 2022/23, prior to making the final decisions on its budget.
- 1.2. The Council reported on its priorities, the budget setting context and local financial position and gave an outline of the proposals to balance the Council's 2022/23 budget. The Council asked for views on the proposed increase in Council Tax levels and its proposals for delivering services in the future while achieving the savings needed.

2. Consultation Process

- 2.1. The Council hosted a survey on its engagement platform Let's Talk Coventry asking for people's views on the budget proposals. This survey was publicised through the Council website, Facebook and Twitter pages.
- 2.2. 1,200 people visited the page, with 498 of them downloading a document and 66 respondents choosing to complete the survey. The results of the survey are summarised in section 3.
- 2.3. In addition, a meeting was held with the Chamber of Commerce on 27 January 2022 to understand the views of local businesses on the Council's budget proposals. The issues raised during the meeting are summarised in section 4.

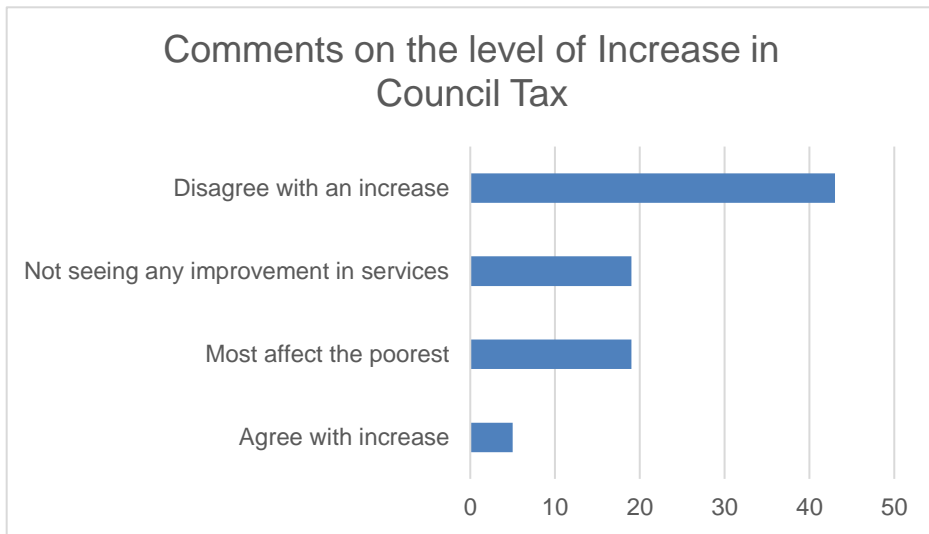
3. Outcomes of the Consultation on the Council's Budget Proposals

- 3.1. The main points that were raised through the public consultation on the Council's budget proposals are set out below. A table is included at the end of this report that provides a selection of the comments made during the consultation by key theme and the profile of respondents.
- 3.2. A full list of comments from the meetings, online survey and written feedback can be received by contacting paul.jennings@coventry.gov.uk.

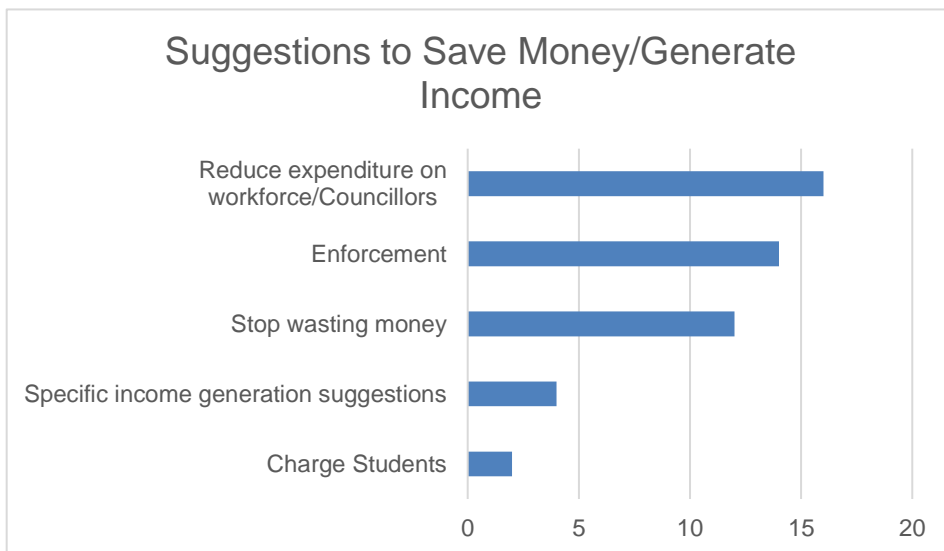
Feedback from the on-line survey

- 3.3. Comments were received from respondents on the specific proposal of increasing Council Tax included in the pre-Budget Report. The graph below shows the comments received by theme. The majority of comments were against any potential increase. A large number of respondents also focused on the fact that the impact of the inflationary pressures and rising energy costs would unfairly negatively impact those already struggling financially.
- 3.4. A number of respondents referred to the poor services they receive from the Council in particular referencing the impact of the refuse drivers strike and the lack of bin collections. The communications around the likelihood of bin drivers' strike started just

before Christmas which correlates to an increase in comments referencing bin collections.



- 3.5. Respondents were asked what impact they thought the proposal might have on different equality groups; many respondents felt that it would impact equally on all groups. Most comments focused on the largest impact being felt by those that were already under pressure economically as well as negatively impacting on the elderly.
- 3.6. Respondents were asked what they thought the Council could do to save money or generate income. The majority of comments centred on reducing expenditure on Council staff and Councillors alongside suggestions for more enforcement.



Support was given to raising money through various commercialisation activities and the contracting out of services such as bin collections and enforcing fines for littering and parking infringements. Several respondents suggested that the council should stop wasting money on schemes such as the cycle schemes.

- 3.7. On the other hand, the city should be looking forward, rather than cutting costs, it should be taking a long-term view in improving the lives of its residents the

development a citywide food strategy going some way to support this. In addition, the question of a climate change vision was raised.

3.8. A number of respondents requested more information and more opportunities to engage directly with the Council.

4. **Feedback from Consultation Meeting with the Chamber of Commerce – January 27th**

4.1. A presentation was given on the Council's financial proposals and future. Discussion and questions included issues around the proposed giga factory and Coventry VLR and the opportunities both will bring the region in terms of jobs and supply chain. Comments were supportive of the fact that there were not any proposed cuts to services and there was recognition that there would have been less income from carpark fees due to the reduced usage of the city centre. Questions were raised about the reform of business rates and the proposed retail/accommodation model for City Centre South.

Examples of Comments by Theme – February 2022

A full list of comments is available on request.

Priority / Theme	Comments
Against Council Tax Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we were getting VALUE for Money, that would be good, but at present everything is rising, and I do not think it is fair, that we have to try and pay more Council Tax, especially when a lot of people are already struggling Financial wise, or losing their Jobs mainly due to the ongoing Pandemic, come on Coventry City Council, play fair, NOT who gives a dam if people are struggling. • I think considering the amount of people who are likely to be needing financial support in the new year, and those already struggling after Universal Credit cuts will not be able to add any more pressure to their already stretched budgets. • Though the proposed increase appears low the fact that 'maximum Council Tax Support' still leaves the poorest liable Coventry residents required to pay 15% of their Council Tax liability means that the poorest will find it more difficult to make ends meet in the coming year. This is compounded by the withdrawal of the £20 per week Universal Credit 'uplift' for those in receipt of this 'safety net' payment. Incomes have reduced and liabilities (CT for example) and living costs (energy for example) have increased. An increasing number of our clients present to us with a 'deficit budget', ie essential expenditures that outweigh weekly incomes. We expect this to continue and any rise in CT will make this worse. Critically, and possibly not well understood by non-experts, the rise will not be 'taken care of' by CTS for those on the lowest incomes. • It will push the families on a tightrope into poverty, expect an increase in use of food banks. With fuel rises, fixed income households (such as pensioners) will, more than ever, face the choice between eating and heating. • Not aligned with salary increase, so realistically worse off for no/minimal service improvements
In Support Council Tax Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is reasonable considering. • Ideally increases should be greater - be bold and make the case for greater spending! • No. The Council is doing a good job in my opinion to work towards balancing the budget whilst protecting front line services.
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start providing the services that are expected and work with the people of Coventry to make Coventry great! • I know 2% is not a big increase, but after all this bin misery the Council could (and should) be so generous not to milk more money from the citizens. • With the bin strikes/as well as the uncertainty of when bins were to be emptied during lockdown I don't think we should be getting an increase - when you have provided all services that have been advertised then increases can happen but I'm not paying more for a shoddy service • Sadly there's no short term fix but as long as the council continues to invest on long term projects (Friargate, city centre south, new recycling centre) that can generate further income in future, hopefully the budgeting becomes easier.

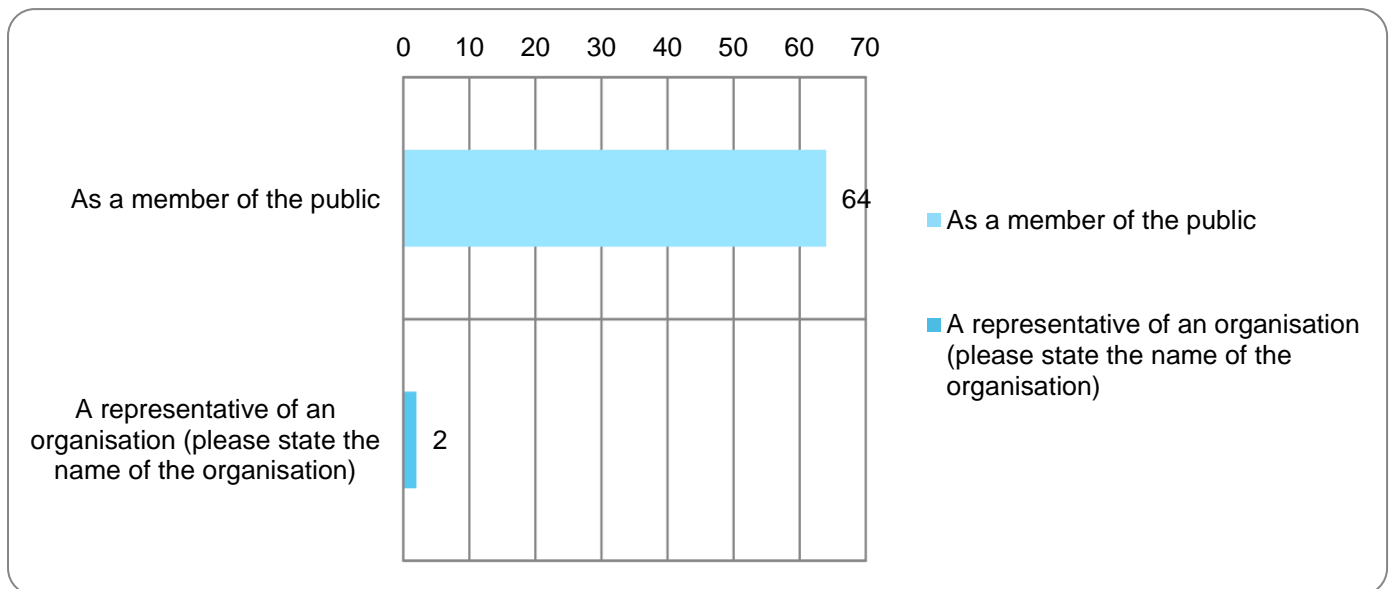
Priority / Theme	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With covid still raging and large numbers of people working part or all the time from home it is difficult to see how the Council can generate extra income from fees, car parking and business rates. • Stop spending on bike lanes and town centre fountains
Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only groups of people who will be able to afford any more council tax are those who are already very well off, a universal increase across the whole of Coventry will negatively impact those who are struggling already whereas those who are not already struggling will not blink at the increase. Perhaps tax the rich? • It effects all groups, on a very detrimental level. • Though the rise in CT is across the board and, therefore, seems even-handed we know that the poorest will be hit hardest and this group are disproportionately represented by the disabled, the old and the marginalised; ie those who cannot easily access full time work and a higher regular income. Income inequality is driven by a number of factors but it is real, increasing and disproportionately impacts particular social groups. Any rise in CT without a parallel rise in incomes will make this worse. • Likely to add to the cost of living for low earners as well as raise the cost of services to the vulnerable.
Commercialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More average speed cameras and traffic wardens to generate revenue from annoyances. • Better enforcement for littering/fly tipping and use the money from these enforcement fines to help keep the streets tidy. Many areas of the city look neglected and underrepresented. • Services like bin collections should be contracted out • Share services more with neighbouring Councils or big companies. • Split the enforcement elements of the Council into a separate organisation / body. This is harming any real relationship the Council can have with its public. It is perceived that enforcement is pushed to make more money.
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there really a need for 3 ward councillors when really 1-2 per ward would suffice. A look at the attendance register at meetings clearly shows that there isn't a need for 3 per ward • If people are working from home how many buildings do you need. • Stop using private agencies for social care both adult and children. Stop the costly restructurings of departments and the highly paid consultants coming in to advise
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It feels as though thoughts and opinion of Coventry residents is not sought when agreeing projects or where to spend money. • Please provide some Plain English narrative on the proposals. The Excel sheet is not accessible to those outside of local government finance. • There is room for considerable improvement in the way our money is spent - but you know that already.. If you were to not only ask but also involve some Citizens in the process our money would go further and do more to benefit the people who live here.. It would also be a big vote winner!!! Don't be Tory aka Boris minded.. people can spot a lack of integrity over time and get rightly angry as well as weary.. It is becoming more important than ever that matters are handled openly and fairly - what is wrong with that premise???

Priority / Theme	Comments
Other Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="506 197 2029 496">• The City Council recently voted to be a 'right to food' city. We believe, with our knowledge of food poverty in Coventry over the past decade, that this is commendable and a positive sign that there is a will to act on this aspiration. However, beyond existing commitments to pandemic-related food support - including supporting the Government funded HAF programme - we believe long term local financial commitments need to be made to end preventable food poverty in Coventry. We urge the City Council to back up its commitment to being a 'right to food city' with a long term, post pandemic sustainable food strategy to either sit alongside or be absorbed into the soon-to-be refreshed Health & Wellbeing Strategy. By preventing food poverty the health of city residents will improve, educational attendance and attainment will improve, work absences will reduce and productivity increase and public health and social costs will reduce; a clear case of 'investing to save'.<li data-bbox="506 504 2007 566">• Where is the vision for the Climate Crisis? Why are we still only at the stage of thinking about stuff and hoping to make a plan?

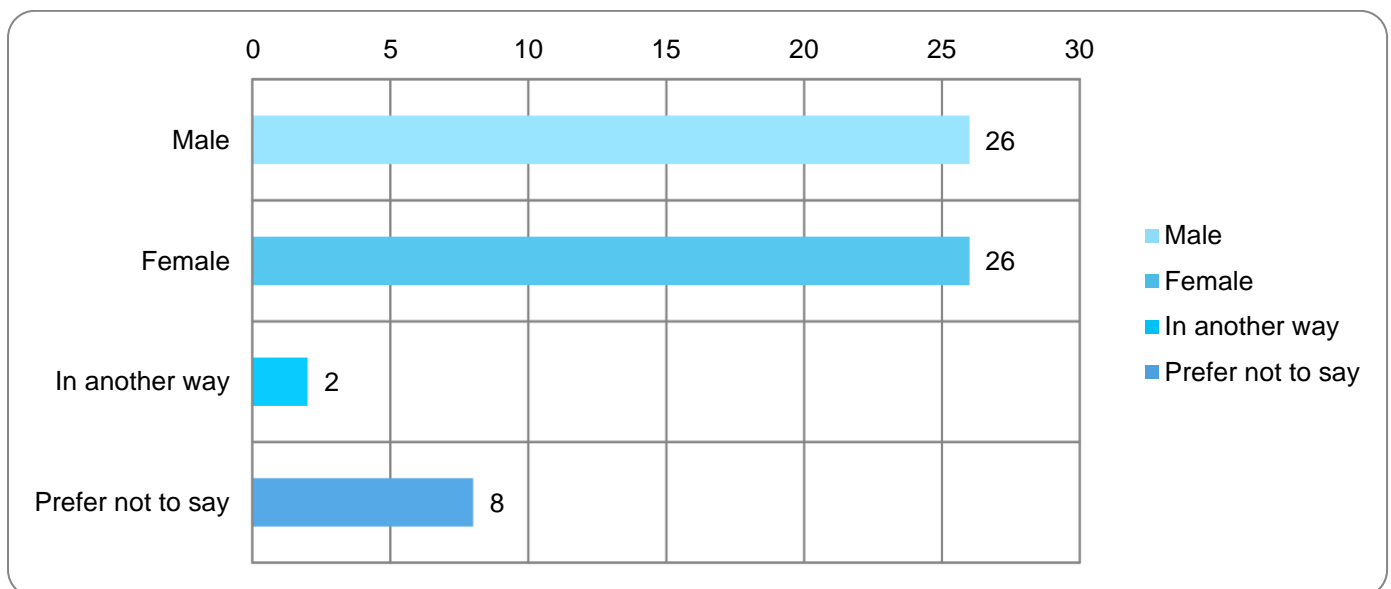
Profile of Respondents

All charts show the number of respondents in each category

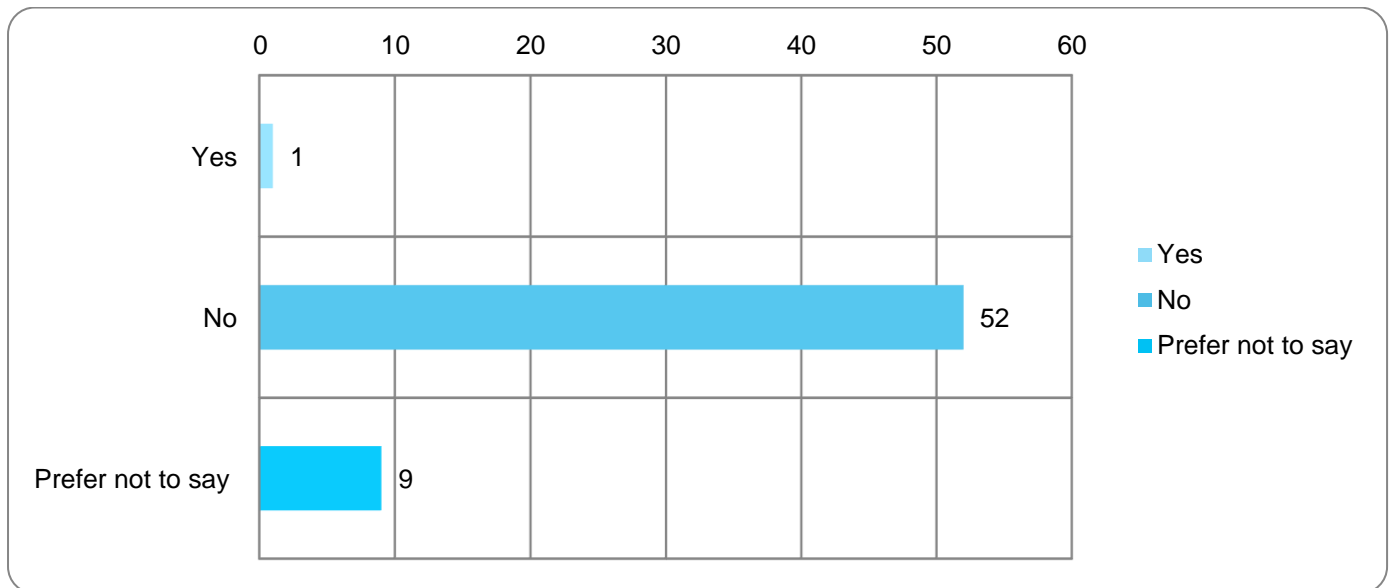
How are you responding to this consultation?



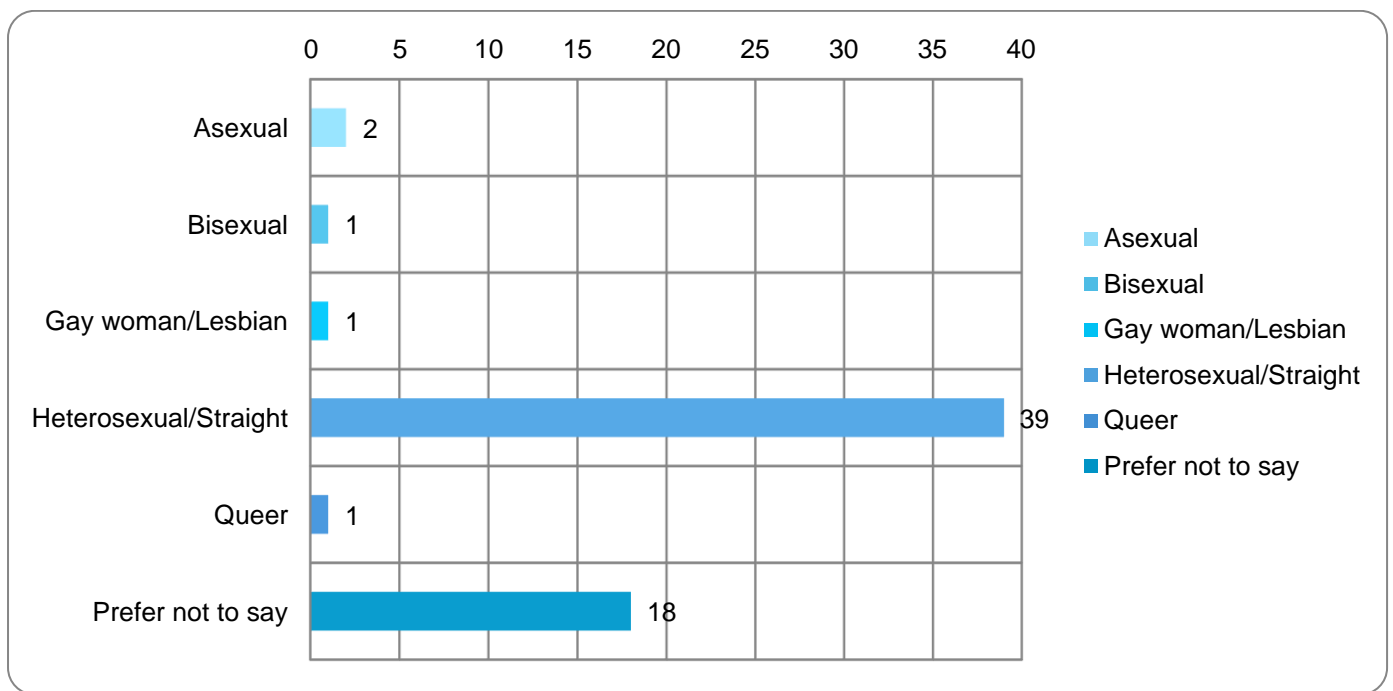
How would you describe yourself?



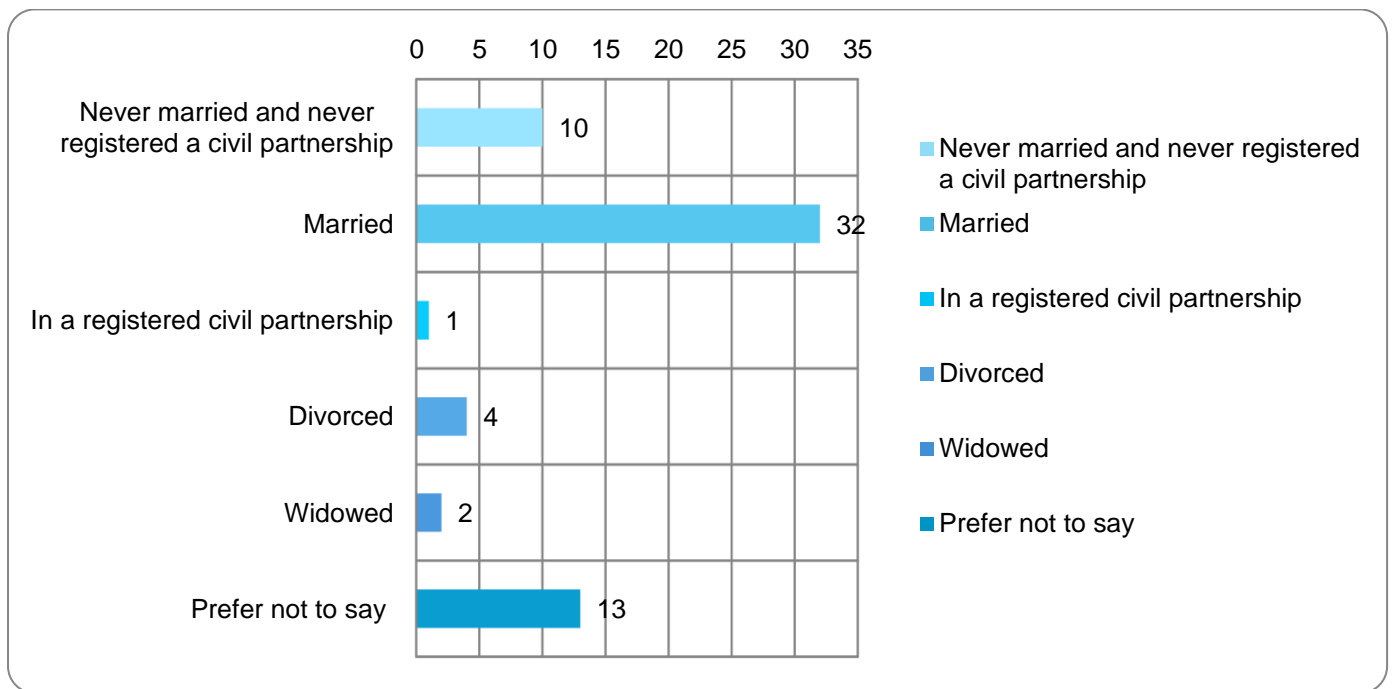
Is your gender different from the gender you were assigned at birth, or do you prefer not to say?



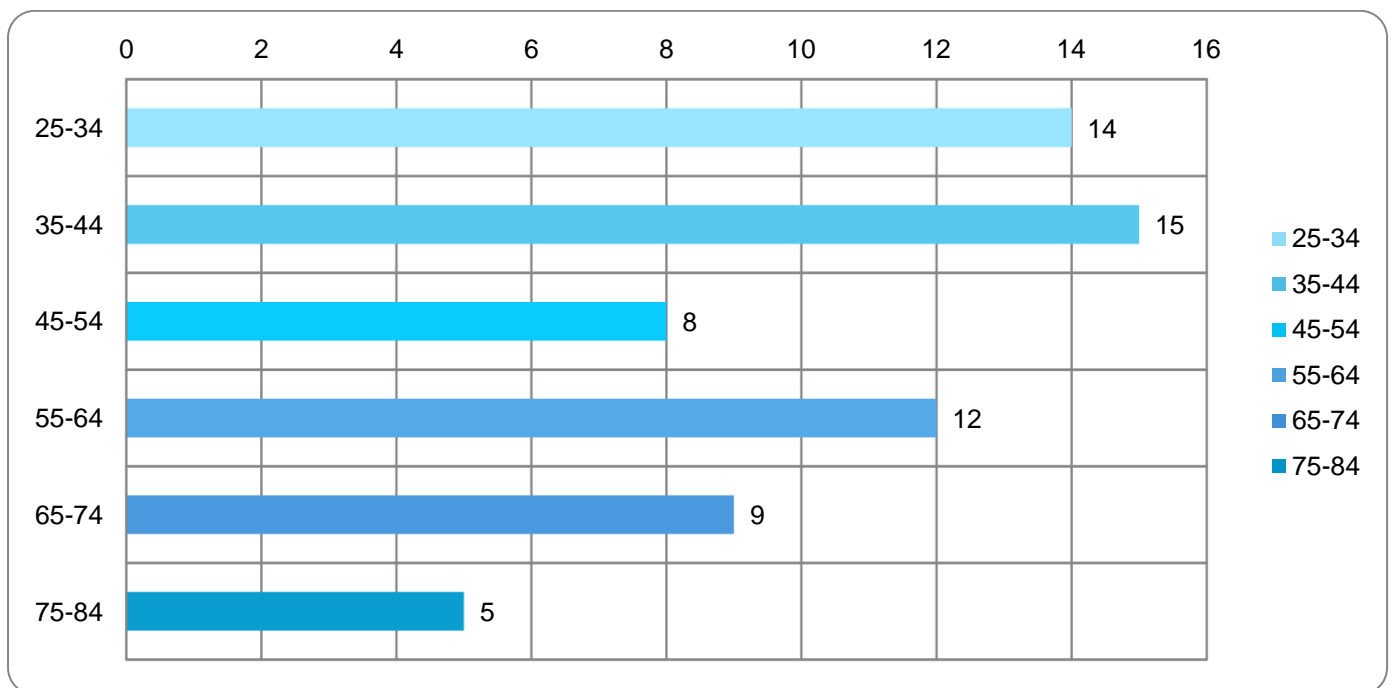
What is your sexuality?



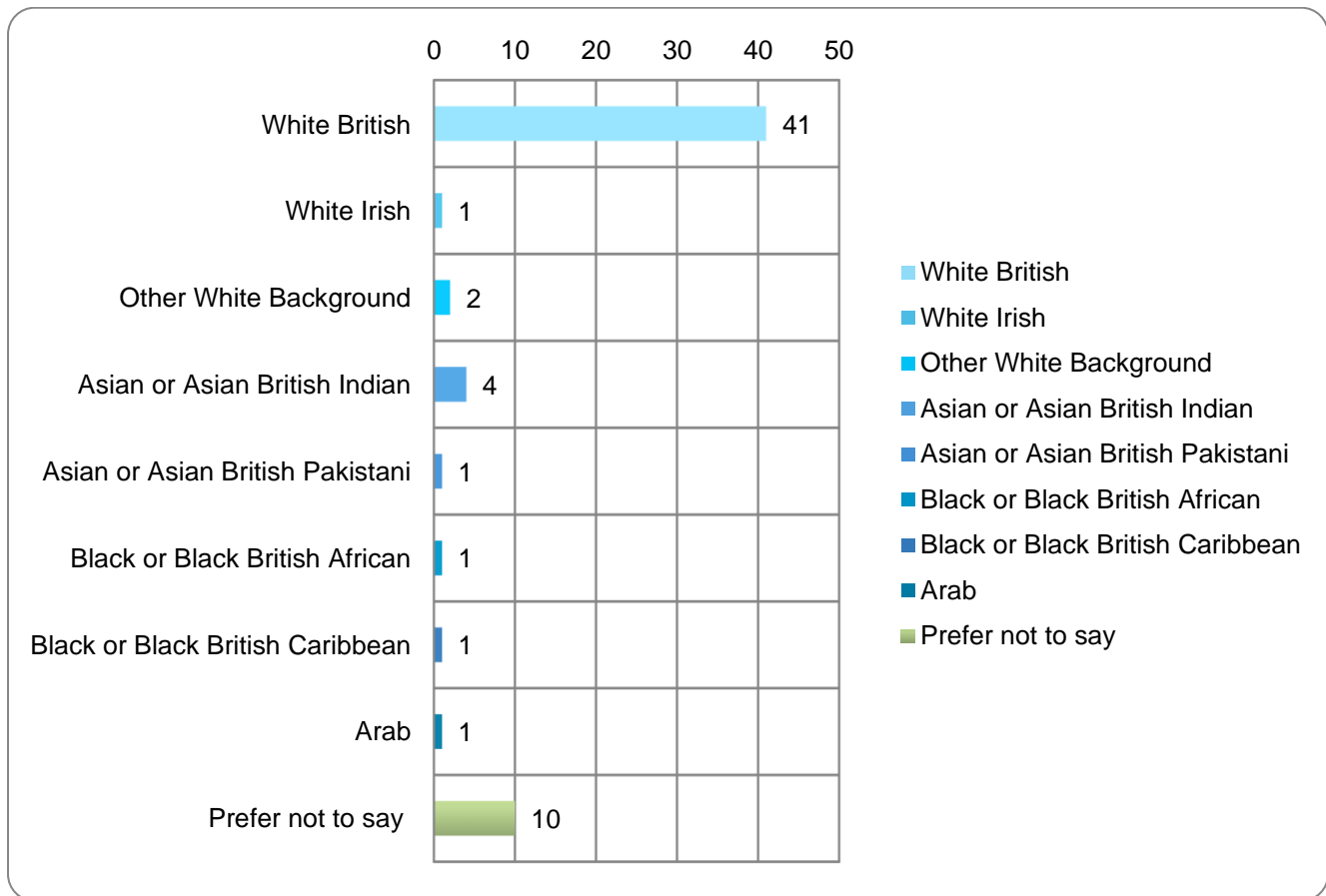
What is your legal marital or civil partnership status?



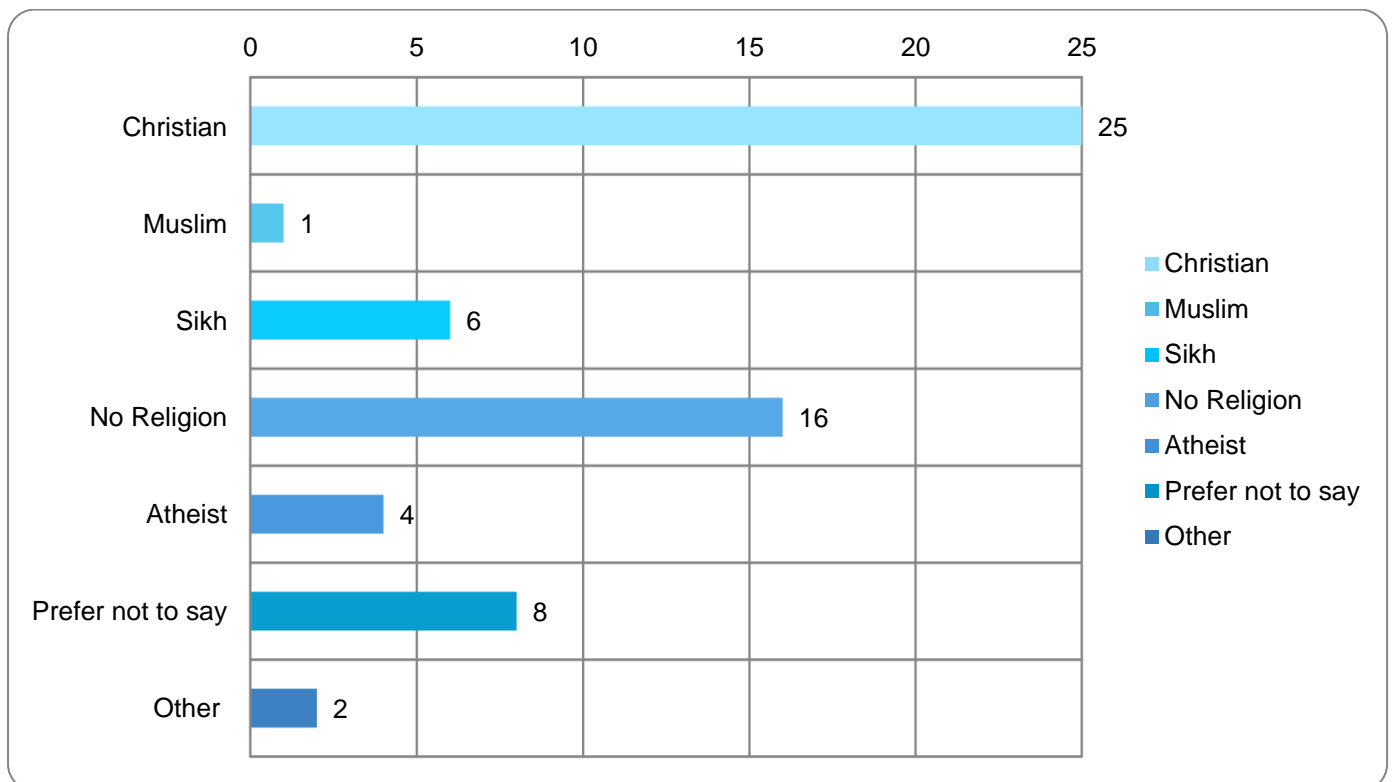
What age group are you in?



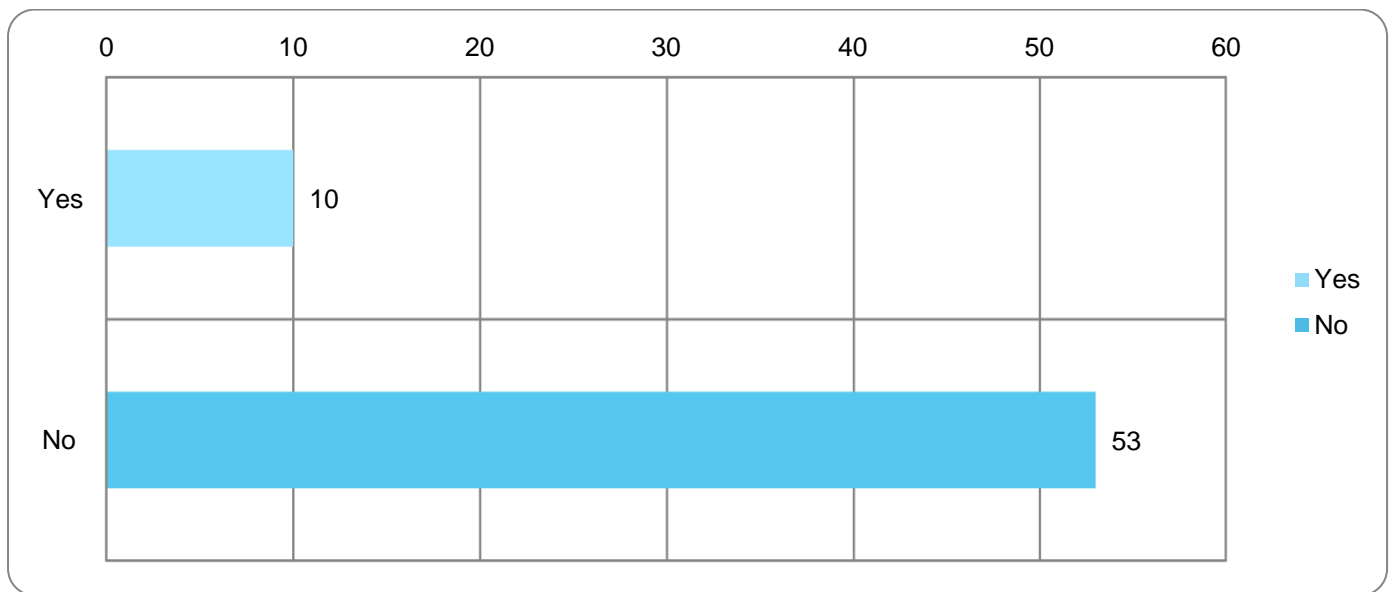
Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?



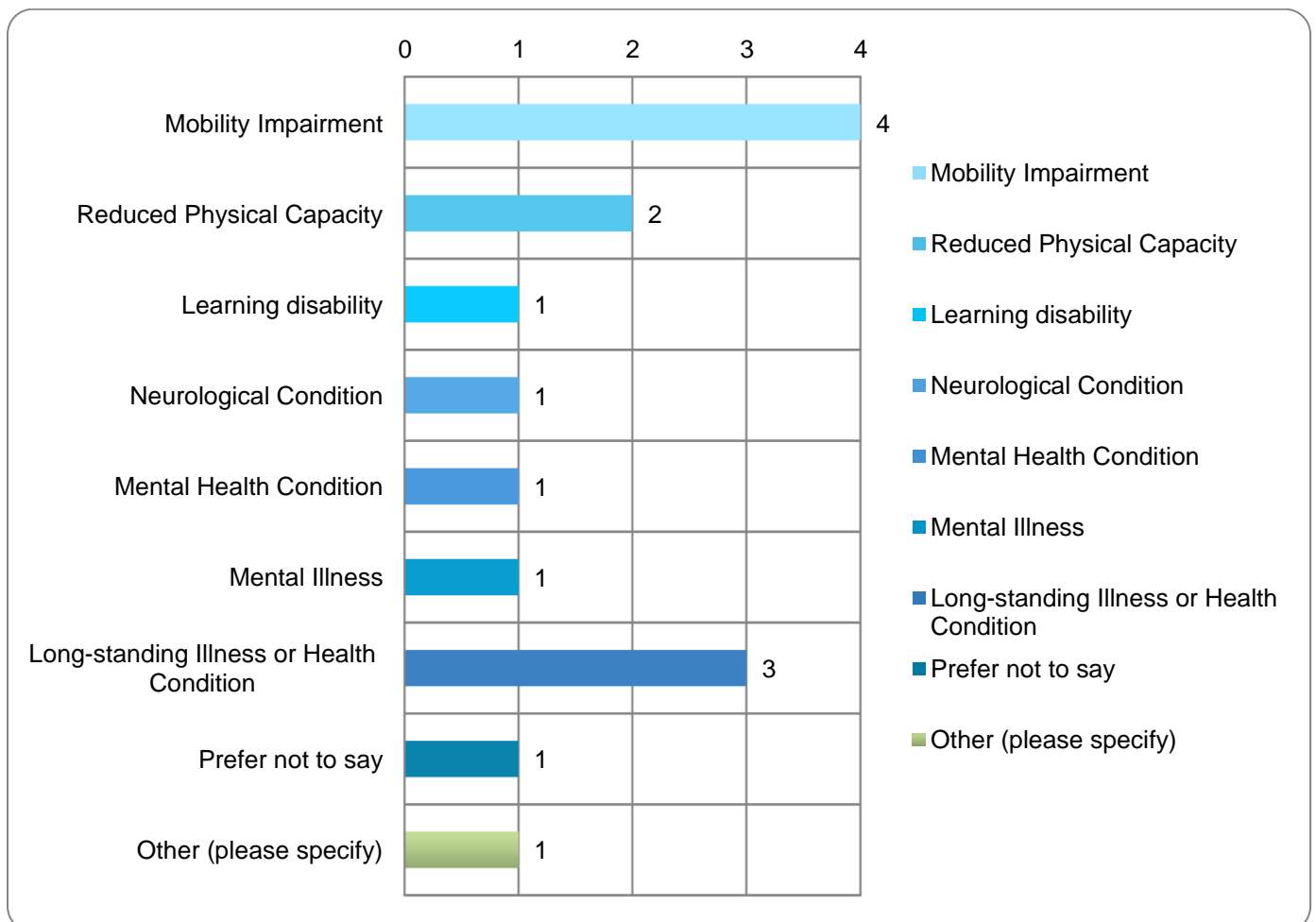
Do you consider yourself to be?



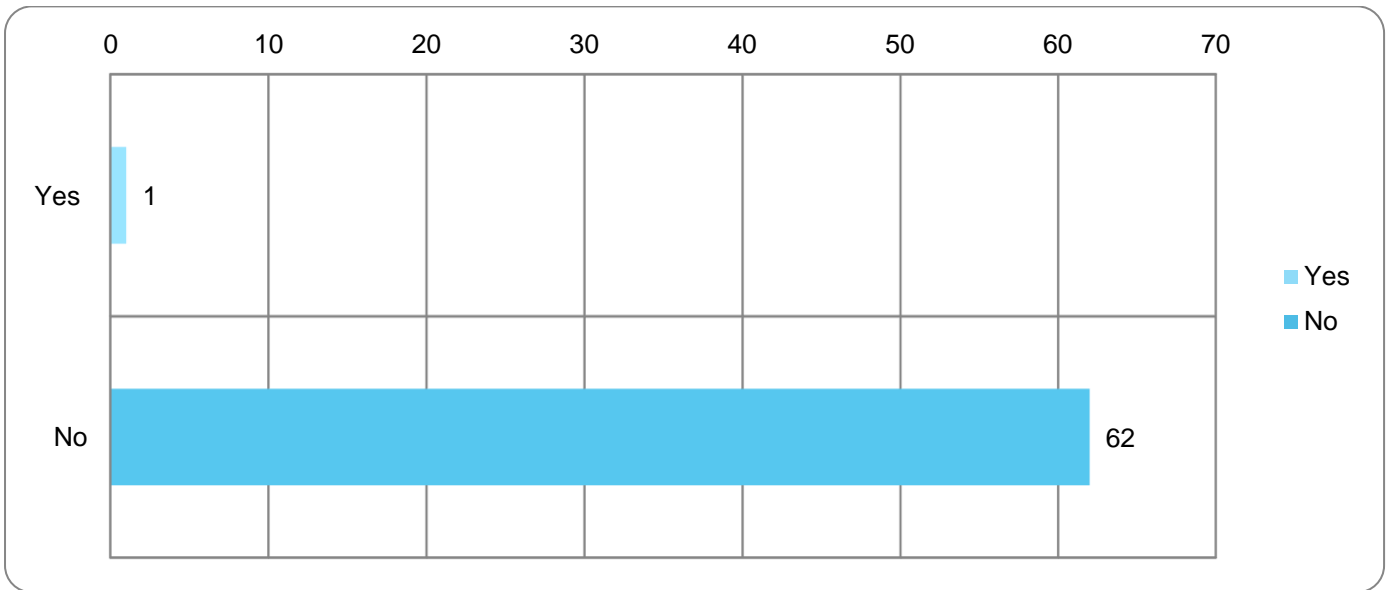
Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?



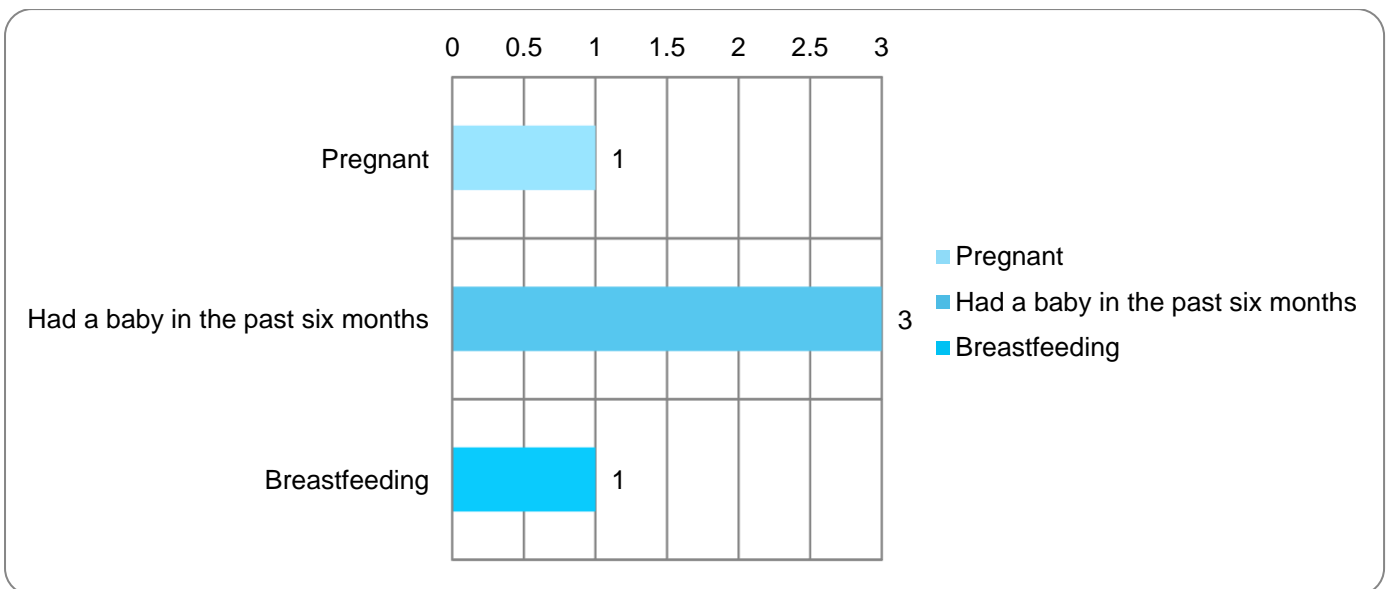
How would you describe your impairment? (Please choose as many as apply)



Are you, or will you soon be, a care leaver?



Are you, or have you recently been, pregnant?



Do you, or a member of your immediate family, currently serve, or have previously served, in the armed forces?

