

## **Appendix 2**

### **CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023/4**

#### **February 2023**

##### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Between December 2022 and February 2023, the Council undertook an eight-week period of consultation on its budget proposals for 2023/24, 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 2023/24 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. 2,000 people visited the page, with 545 of them downloading a document and 137 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 local residents on January 26. The issues raised during the meeting are summarised in section 4.
- 2.4. Two engagement sessions were held with the Council workforce on January 16 and 23. The issues raised during the meeting are summarised in section 5.

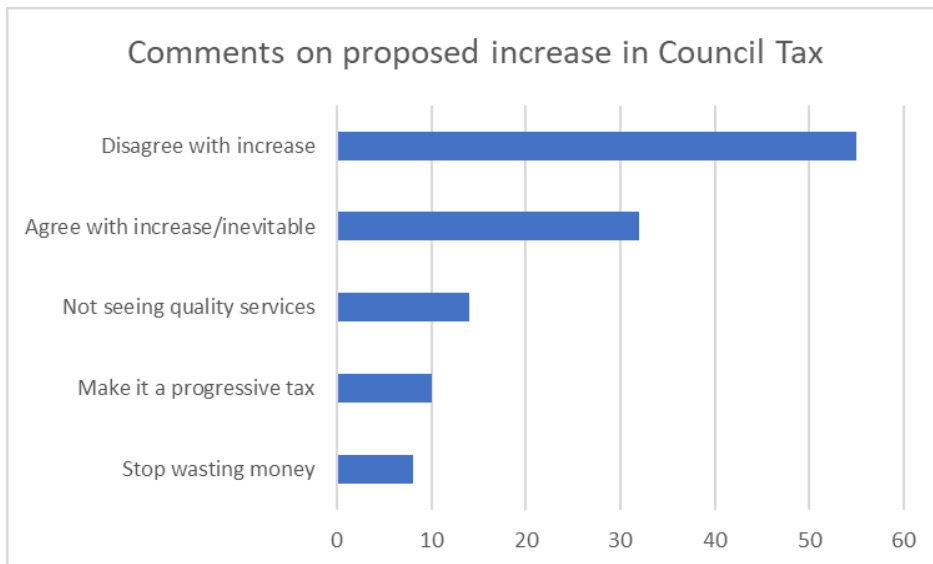
##### **3. Outcomes of the Consultation on the Council's Budget Proposals**

- 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](mailto:paul.jennings@coventry.gov.uk).

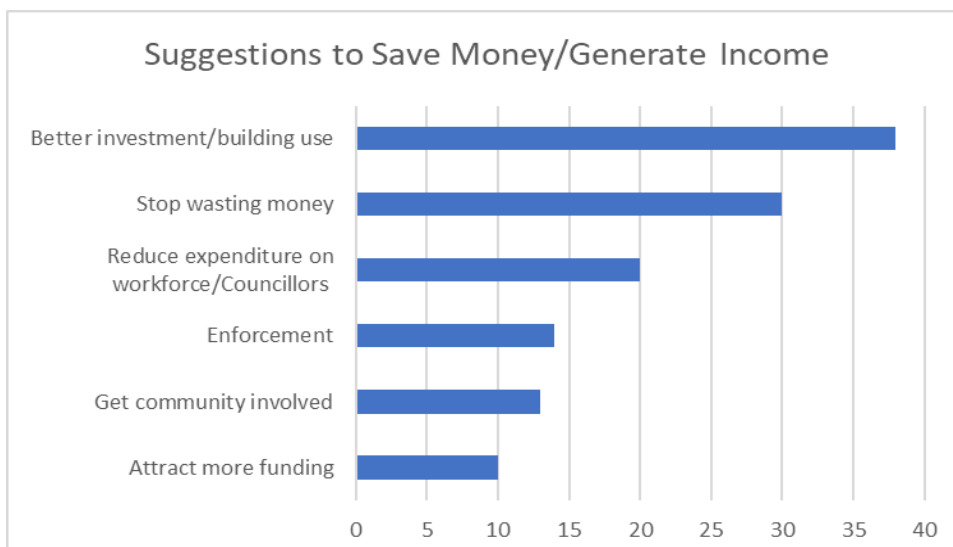
##### **Feedback from the on-line survey**

- 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, focusing on the fact that the impact of the inflationary and cost of living pressures would unfairly negatively impact those already struggling financially. However, a number of respondents agreed with the rise, believing it to be inevitable and necessary to ensure services remain for the vulnerable.

- 3.4. A number of respondents referred to the poor services they receive from the Council and that they would expect to see an improvement in the quality of services provided.
- 3.5. A small number of respondents felt that we should look at the way we charge Council Tax and make it a more progressive tax with a number saying they would be willing to pay more Council tax to ensure essential services are provided for the vulnerable.



- 3.6. 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.
- 3.7. A number of respondents also pointed to the fact that working people that are not entitled to benefits would be impacted the hardest by the proposed increase in Council Tax.
- 3.8. Respondents were asked what they thought the Council could do to save money or generate income. The majority of comments centred on suggestions for better investment/use of money and use of buildings.



- 3.9. Support was given to raising money through various commercialisation activities 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 and investing in Coombe Abbey.
- 3.10. On the other hand, a number of respondents stated that we should involve the community more in delivering services, especially in terms of litter picking, even doing crowd funding giving people the option to pay more in Council Tax to fund essential services.
- 3.11. A number of respondents requested more clarity on how the information is presented to enable more people to engage with the process. Requests for more to be spent on tackling air pollution and mitigating the effects of Climate Change were made as well as a focus on keeping the streets clean.

#### **4. Feedback from Consultation Meeting with Local Residents – January 26**

- 4.1. A presentation was given on the Council's budget setting process and financial proposals. Questions were raised on how they would get feedback from the engagement process, funding received from WMCA and the Council's commercialisation strategy.
- 4.2. Concerns raised were about the amount of litter across the whole city not just the city centre, fear that the improvements to the city centre will be neglected, a view that increases in fly-tipping is due to the charges made to use Whitley, pot holes and health and social care.

#### **5. Feedback from Engagement Sessions with Council Workforce – January 16,23**

- 5.1. Questions raised were around retention of staff, wage increases, regrading of posts, commercialisation strategy and what support we have in place for low paid workers against the cost-of-living increases.

## Examples of Comments by Theme – February 2023

A full list of comments is available on request.

Priority / Theme	Comments
<b>Against Council Tax Increase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council tax is already providing poor value for money and increasing it during a cost-of-living crisis is immoral and irresponsible.</li> <li>• Given the present economic climate the country finds itself in, I believe the council should be reducing the cost burden on the council tax payers.</li> <li>• Very disappointed because as with everything it is middle income earners that will be the hardest hit</li> <li>• Increasing tax during crisis is out of order</li> <li>• There should be NO increase on council or business rates the whole City is struggling and you are putting more pressure on residents by increasing this</li> <li>• Absolutely shocking given the cost-of-living crisis. A council should be helping the public not against them.</li> <li>• Around 5% increase is too much for many household who are already bearing the high living costs. This need to be kept under 2% and other opportunities need to be identified to cover the deficit</li> </ul>
<b>In Support Council Tax Increase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am loathe to support an increase in Council Tax, but there is very little option to do so and be able to support the most vulnerable in the city.</li> <li>• Sadly, needed to protect services from cuts. I would however suggest a much higher levy be placed on the very top band properties and households to help shield lower band households.</li> <li>• I have reservations about increasing the lowest tax bands but I think that residents in higher bands might be able to do more to maintain critical services, especially social care generally and children's and young people's social services in particular</li> <li>• Below what I would imagine with the current economic climate and happy that it appears Coventry Council is taking steps to curb overspending and keeping the increase well below inflation.</li> <li>• It's unwelcome but inevitable. Services need to be paid for, and it seems to me that every service and the people who work in them are stressed to (or close to) breaking point. The city council should take the maximum permitted increase, and then give as much back in support to those most vulnerable as can be delivered.</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is indeed important to pay council tax however, we pay tax in Coventry can barely see its result. Streets are very untidy; bins are not collected on time and there barely any zebra crossing to keep school children safe.</li> <li>• Healthcare and education, together with Economic development should be top priorities for Coventry.</li> <li>• The council tax we pay isn't reflected in the awful mess the roads, pavements, overflowing bins, uneven pavement slabs, ridiculous cycle lane in Coundon (which is such a bad design that it is dangerous) and cars parked up on double yellow lines.</li> </ul>

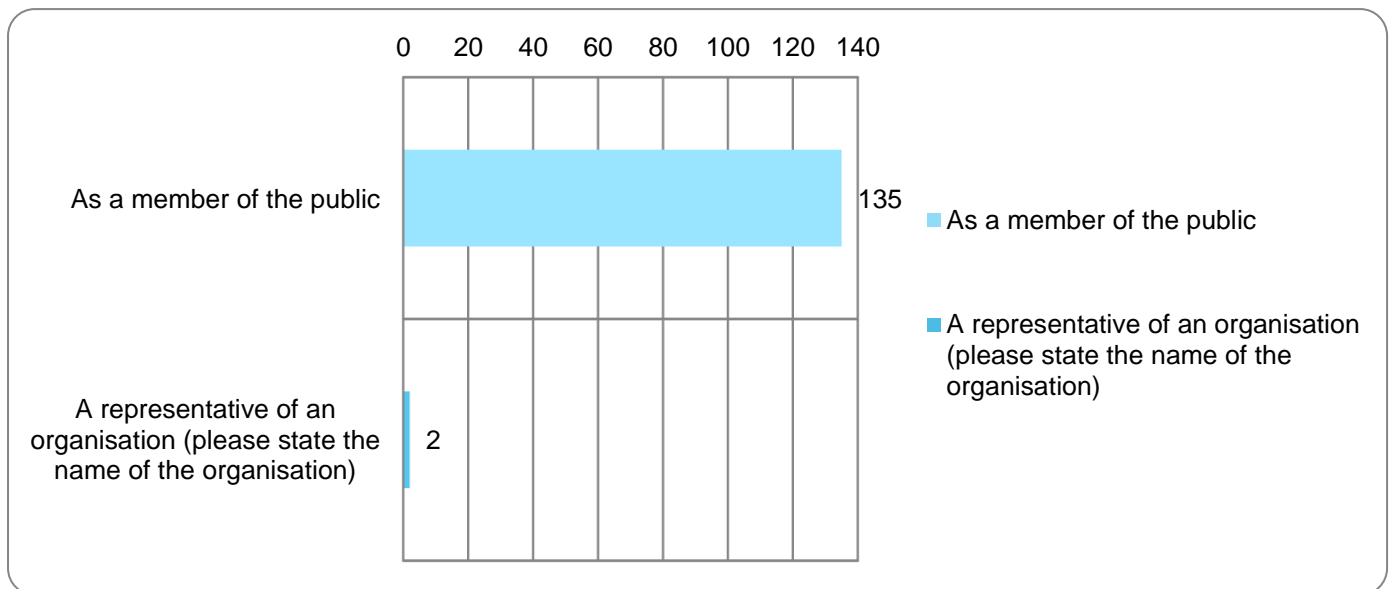
Priority / Theme	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm always concerned that both adult and child social services is underfunded - I appreciate this is a central gvt issue primarily, but I would support cuts to other less impactful things (like the production of Citivision) to fund services to our most vulnerable</li> </ul>
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This effects everybody not just some all the people</li> <li>as usual the increase will disproportionately affect working people that fall outside of the poverty line but below wealthy brackets. Not to mention that most of the burden will be felt by working mothers It effects all groups, on a very detrimental level.</li> <li>Increased council tax will obviously concern people, given other price rises. However, council tax funding is used to support those most vulnerable in the city, so such groups should benefit overall.</li> <li>Council tax rises will hit all coventry residents hard as we are already coping with cost of living, food increases etc. I wonder if you will have more people not paying</li> <li>the middle-income earners will be hit the most yet again. As a consequence, many of these will be entering poverty level thresholds and suffer more inequalities than previously thereby increasing the burden on services</li> <li>Regardless of the protected characteristics of people in the community, the impact of these proposals will be, for residents to be less able to meet their costs of living, paying more for services that remain either the same or reduced.</li> </ul>
<b>Income/Generation Commercialisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There may be some non-statutory but 'nice to have' projects that the Council could consider crowd funding. I know I'd be happy to pay a voluntary top-up of my Council Tax to fund such projects. When I think of all the informal fund-raising that schools do, it doesn't seem such a terrible stretch. For example, I would love to support (via voluntary Council Tax top-ups) an Internet-enabled/staffed minibus covering the low-income neighbourhoods on a predictable monthly rotation in order to reach disadvantaged residents in person, near their homes. It would take time establish itself in the medium term but it might save a lot of heartache and hassle in the longer term.</li> <li>Generate income from a Clean air zone implemented with chargeable access for non-Coventry citizens. Assuming public transport connections are adequate to provide access to City centre by means other than car.</li> <li>Reduce cost of Street cleaning - actively set up and support resident street cleaning, litter picks etc. Engage schools to support with cleaning of their immediate vicinity (also education for students not to drop litter). Services like bin collections should be contracted out</li> <li>Most local authorities charge for garden waste collections. Why does Coventry not do this when it could represent not only a significant income but also a substantial saving in current service running costs?</li> <li>Employ more parking enforcement officers 24 hours/day. Let them patrol the streets around the clock. At worst they will break even, at best they will stop the stupidity that the city's streets are littered with and turn a healthy profit.</li> <li>Additional licensing on HMO's. Faster responses by parking services to tip offs of illegal parking. More enforcement capacity surrounding illegal evictions would generate savings if families didn't need to be housed in temporary accommodation.</li> </ul>

Priority / Theme	Comments
<b>Workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open up voluntary redundancy. Look at how many admin type office staff teams have, look at how many senior roles are not needed.</li> <li>• Reduce salaries for Senior Managers, and Directors. Reduce spending on Cllrs expenses.</li> <li>• Remove all councillors from decision making, remove middle management. Create a new management system consisting of 3 local business owners voted for by the residents of Coventry and allow them to make sensible financially sound decision about how tax payers money should be spent on Coventry.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks to cuts in budgets from central government, Coventry City Council has its work cut out - as with every council in the country to varying extents. I'm sure there is some waste that can be eliminated, but that's not easy to find and often not in the places people expect it to be. I don't agree with every decision the council makes (would have bit the bullet and introduced a Clean Air Zone personally!) but the rationale for decisions appears to be understandable at least. I think there's a silent majority in the city that appreciate the difficulties of the situation, so best to ignore the few who never have anything nice to say...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?</li> <li>• "I have no faith in this council that it will ever put the best interests of its citizens before the best interests of HMO and Corporate landlords, I have no faith this council will ever put the best interests of its independent local businesses, before the best interests of transnational corporate giants. Also please note, we are citizens, not customers like you refer to in all your literature and mailings and email addresses. We do not buy services from you for a profit to you, we empower you via democracy, to provide as many services as possible free at the point of use, that is not a customer relationship."</li> <li>• The council does not seem to think laterally it tends to flit from one supposed good idea to the next without proper consideration. Small amounts spread across random projects are not the way to best serve the city. Concentration on one or two specific projects is better use of limited finds. Good causes are always going to be there, and there contribution to society is to be lauded but, with the fiscal restraints that plague any public body this is not best use of resources. The council has to develop a habit of saying no not this year wait your turn, Adult/social /children's' care, seems to be the priority of any council and is essential to safeguard the more vulnerable in our society but waste of funds on ad hoc projects that benefit only a few is not an essential. The council needs to pare back funding or contributing funding to projects that do not benefits at least a quarter of the city's population.</li> <li>• I recognise that the Council is between a rock and a hard place and stretched to breaking point. I do appreciate the work it does.</li> <li>• I'd like to thank councillors and staff for their work. Local authorities are often criticised in the media and rarely praised - so thank you to all of you who work to make our city a better place to live.</li> </ul>

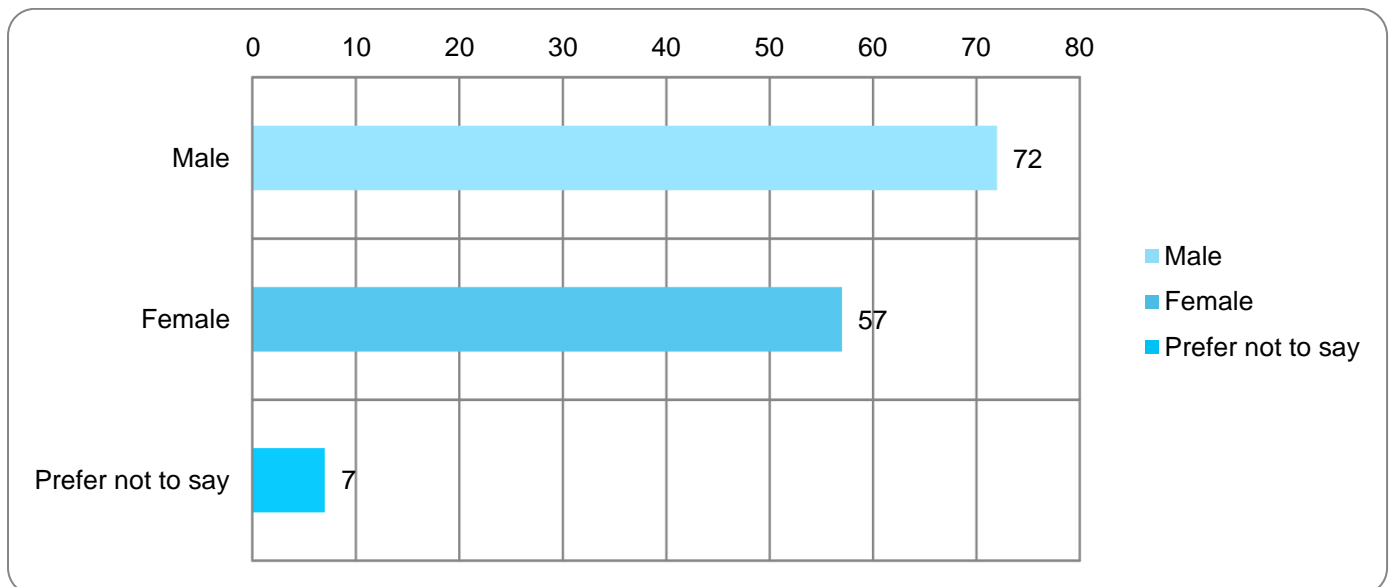
## Profile of Survey Respondents

All charts show the number of respondents in each category

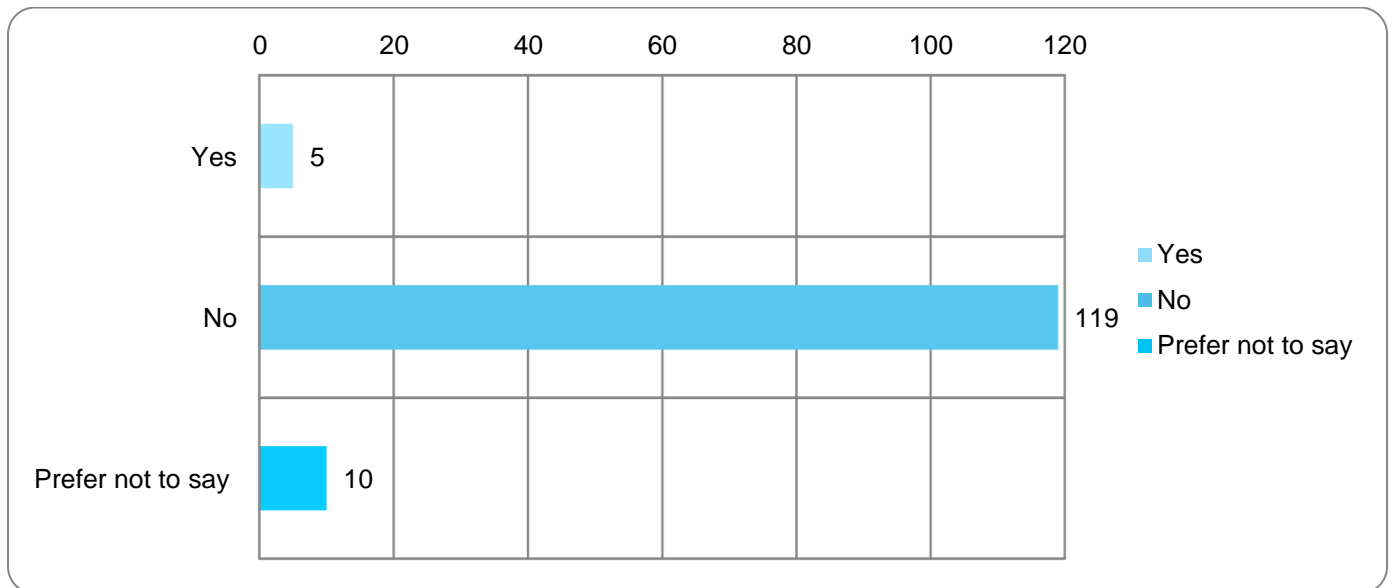
How are you responding to this consultation?



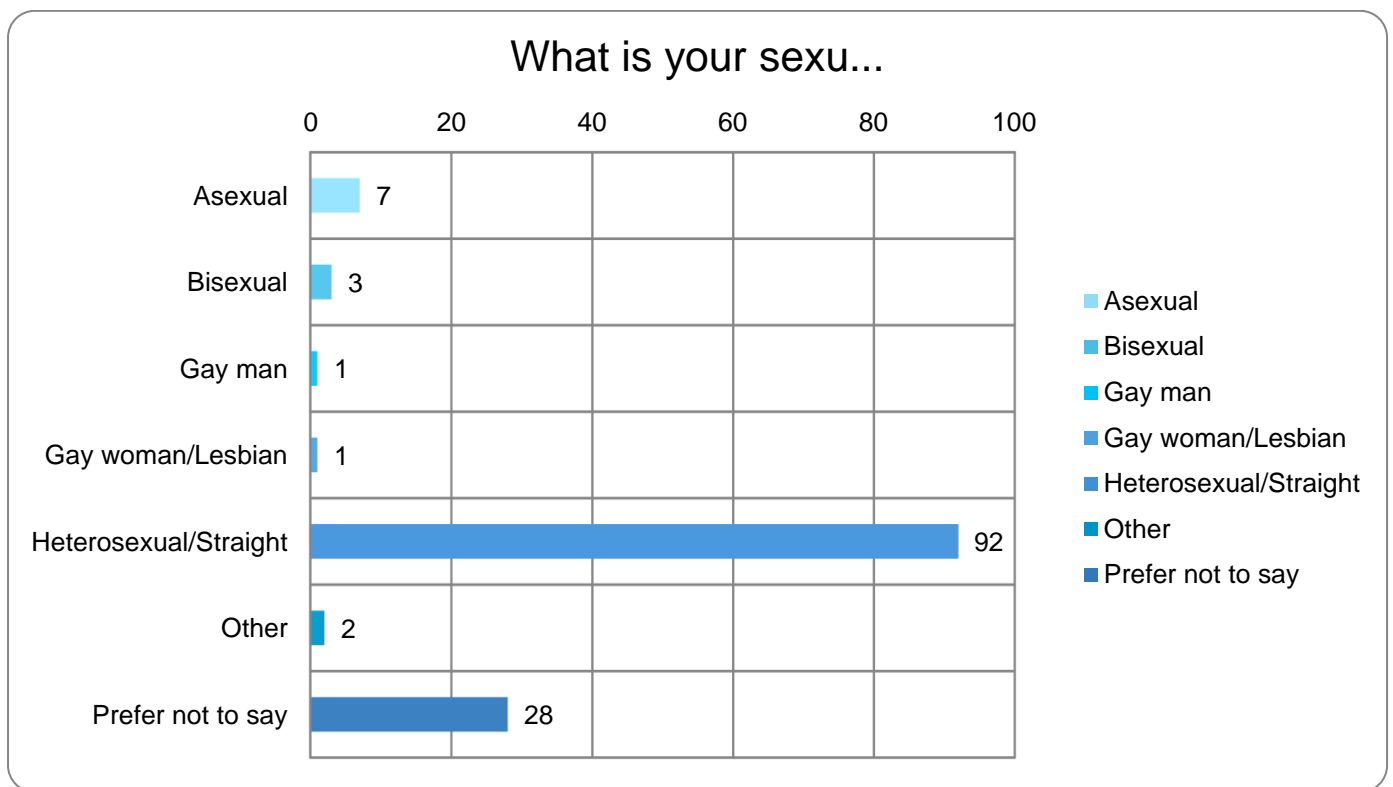
How would you describe yourself?



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

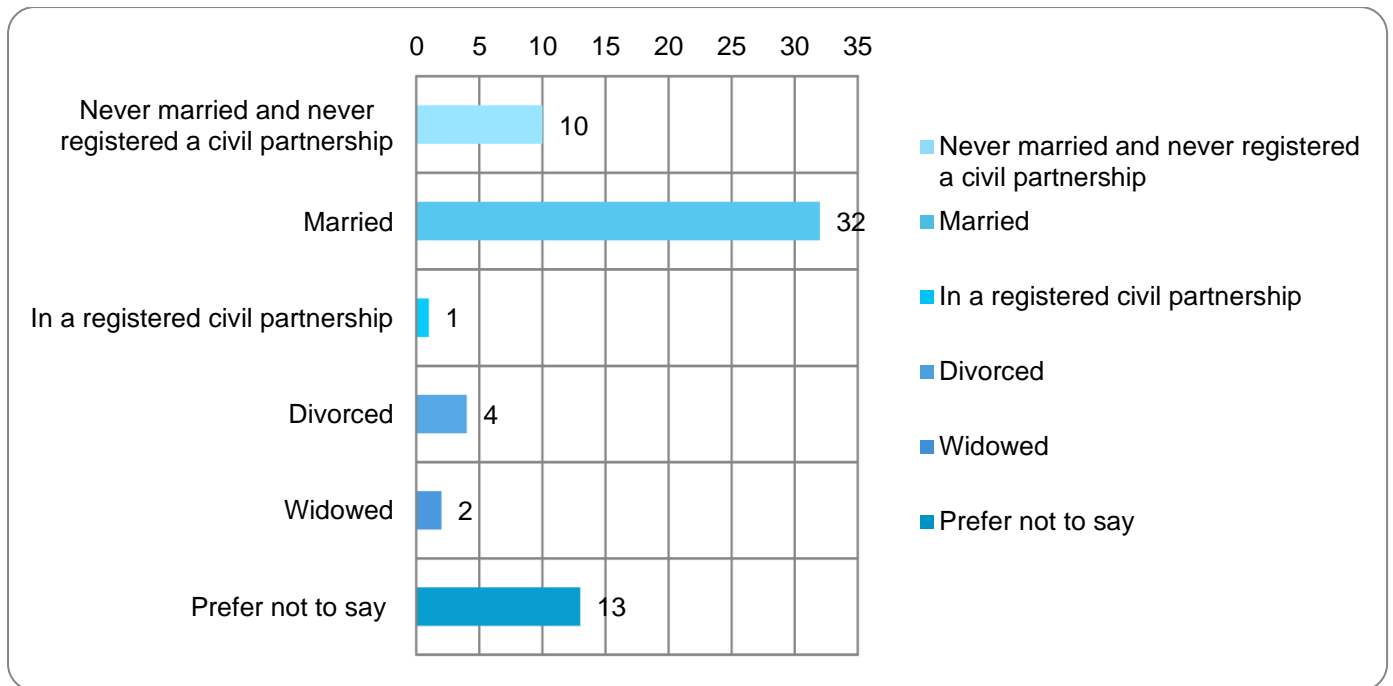


What is your sexuality?

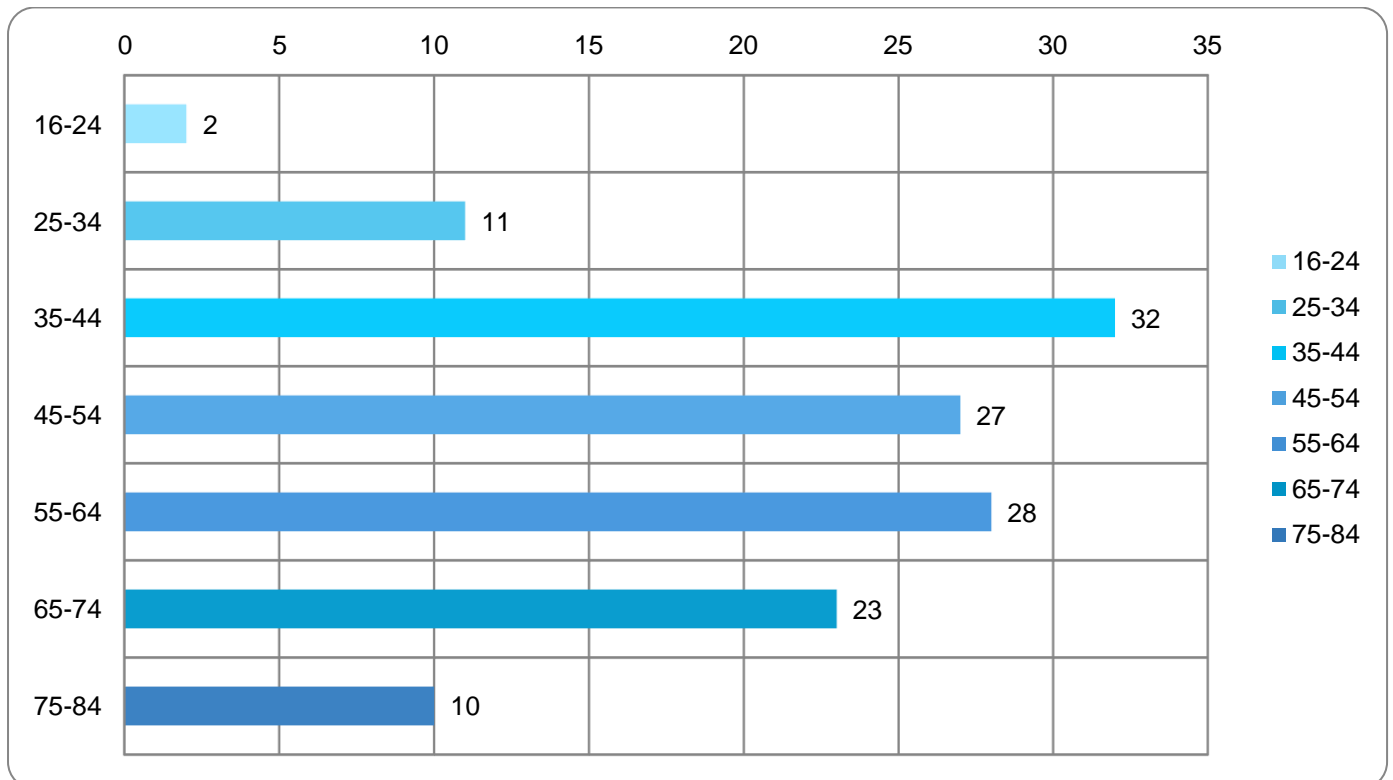




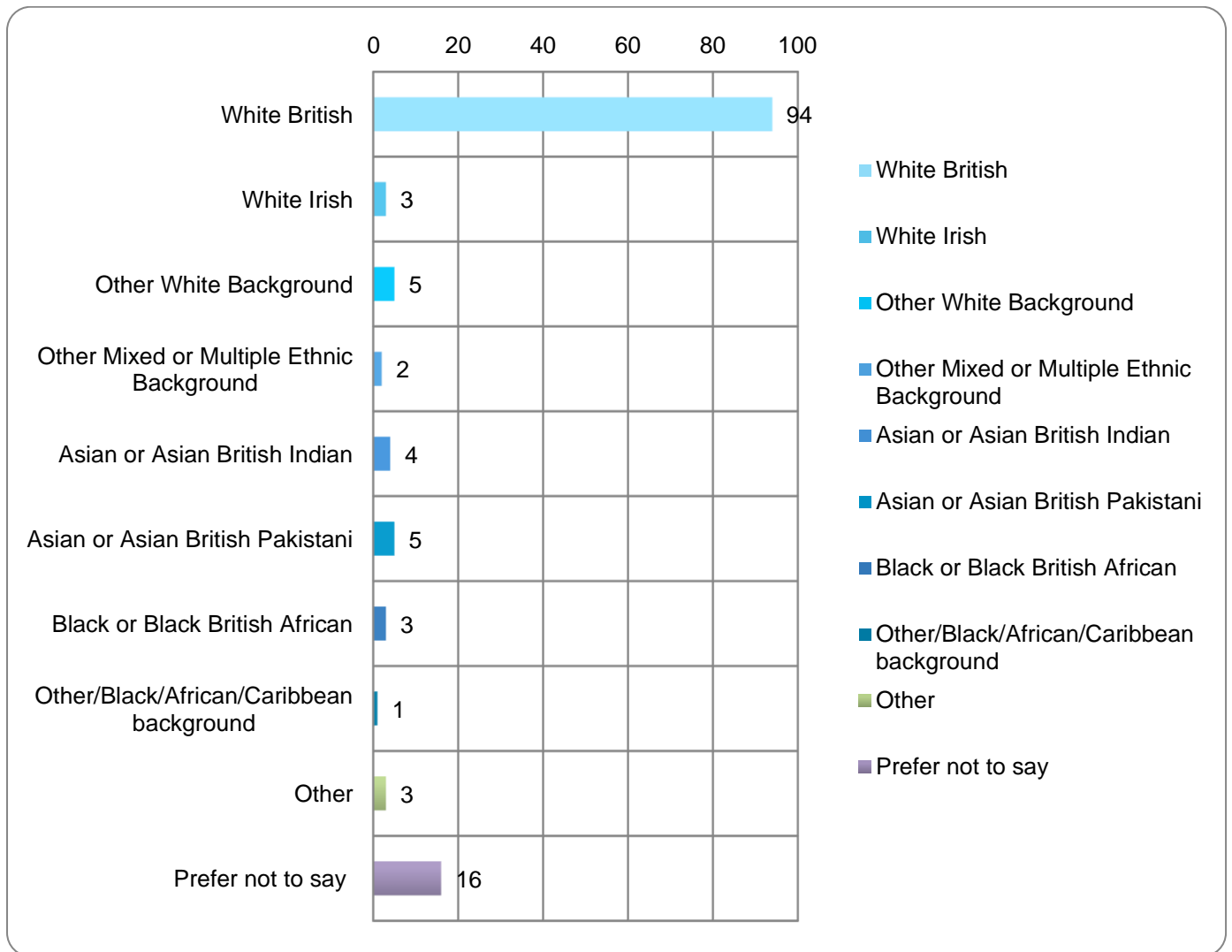
What is your legal marital or civil partnership status?



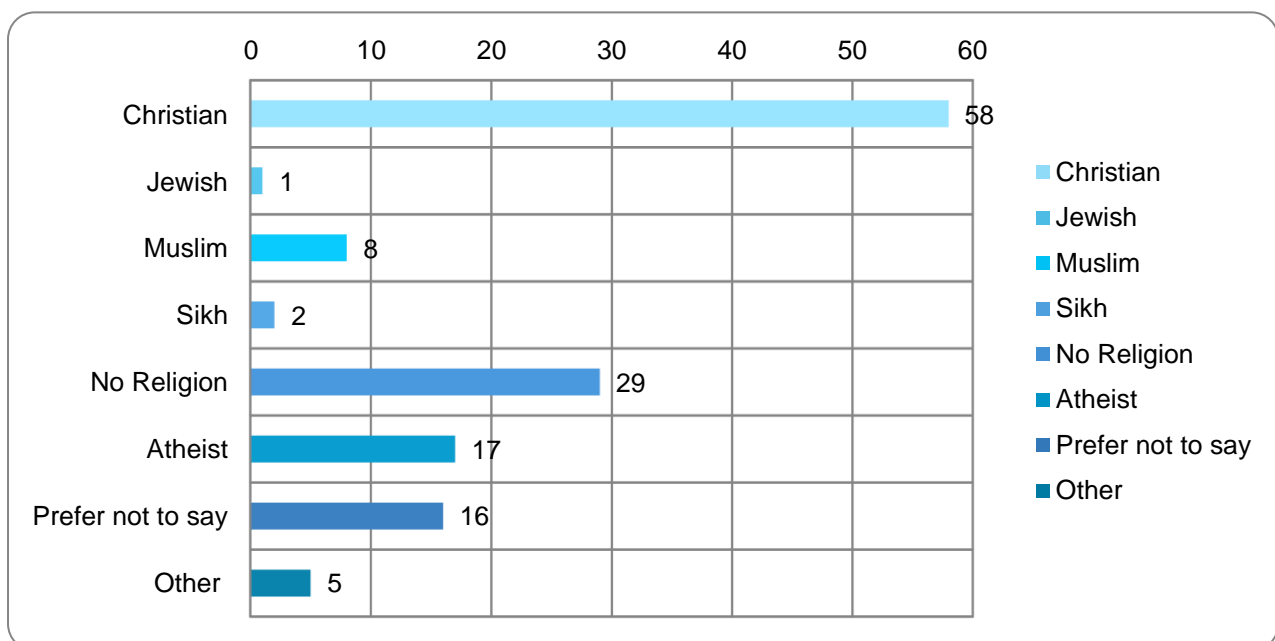
What age group are you in?



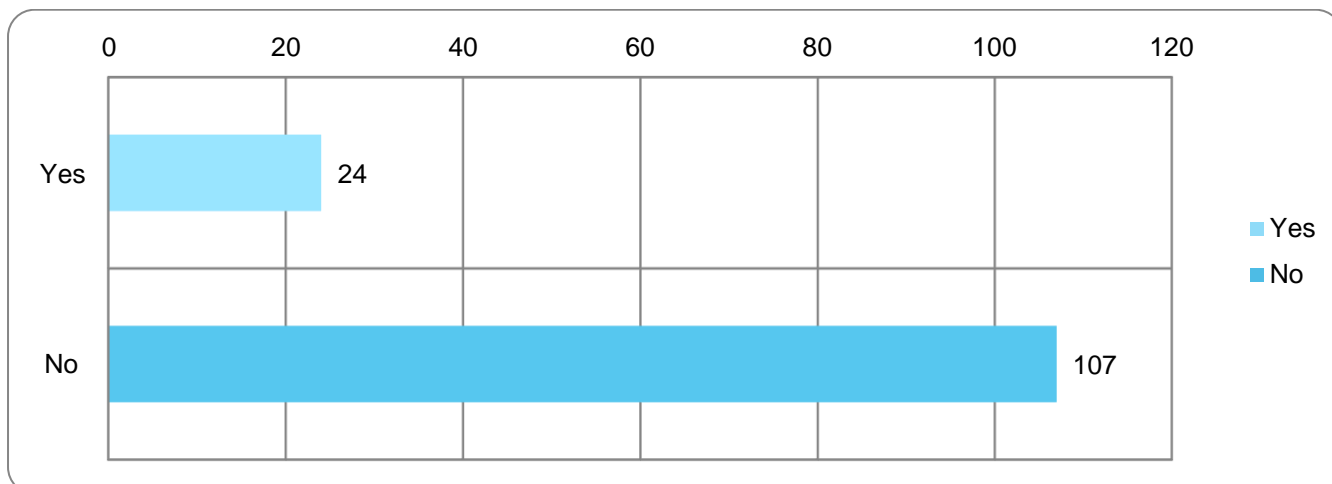
Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?



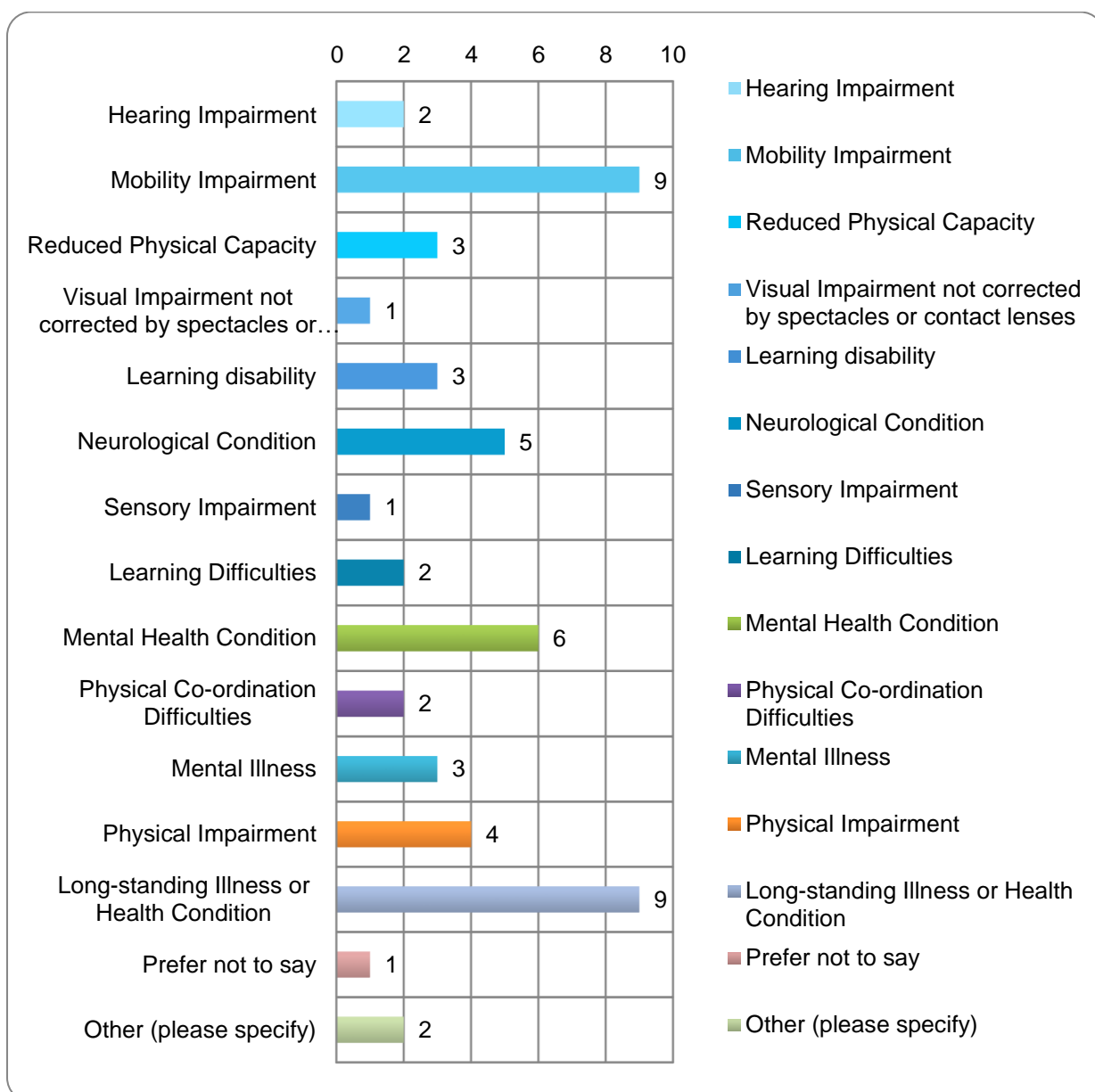
Do you consider yourself to be?



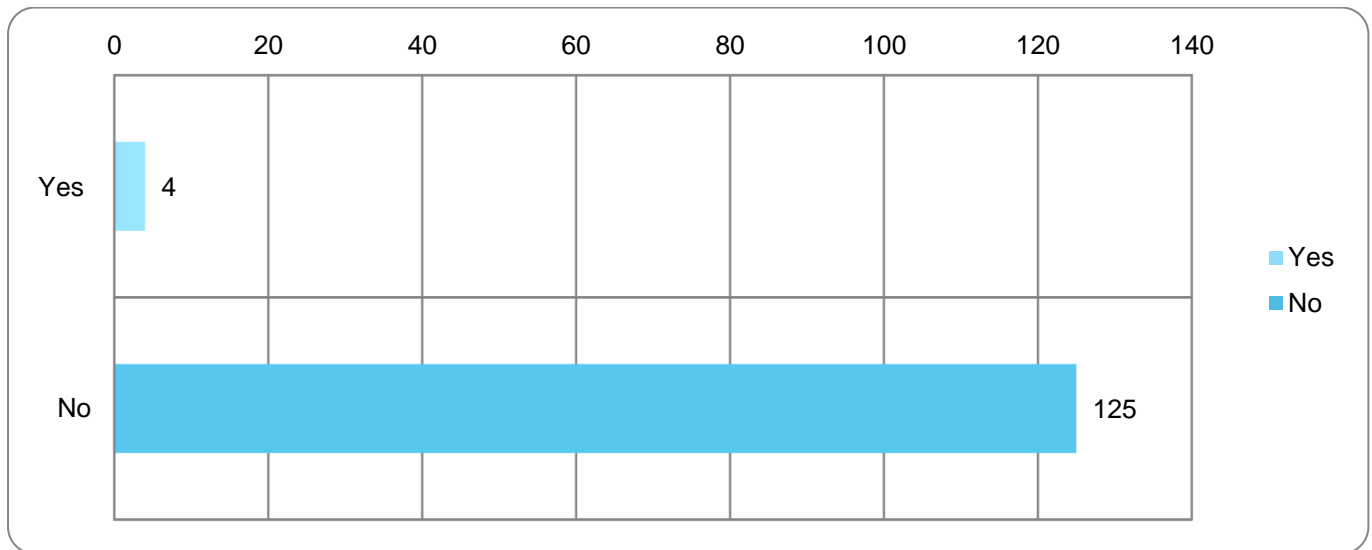
Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?



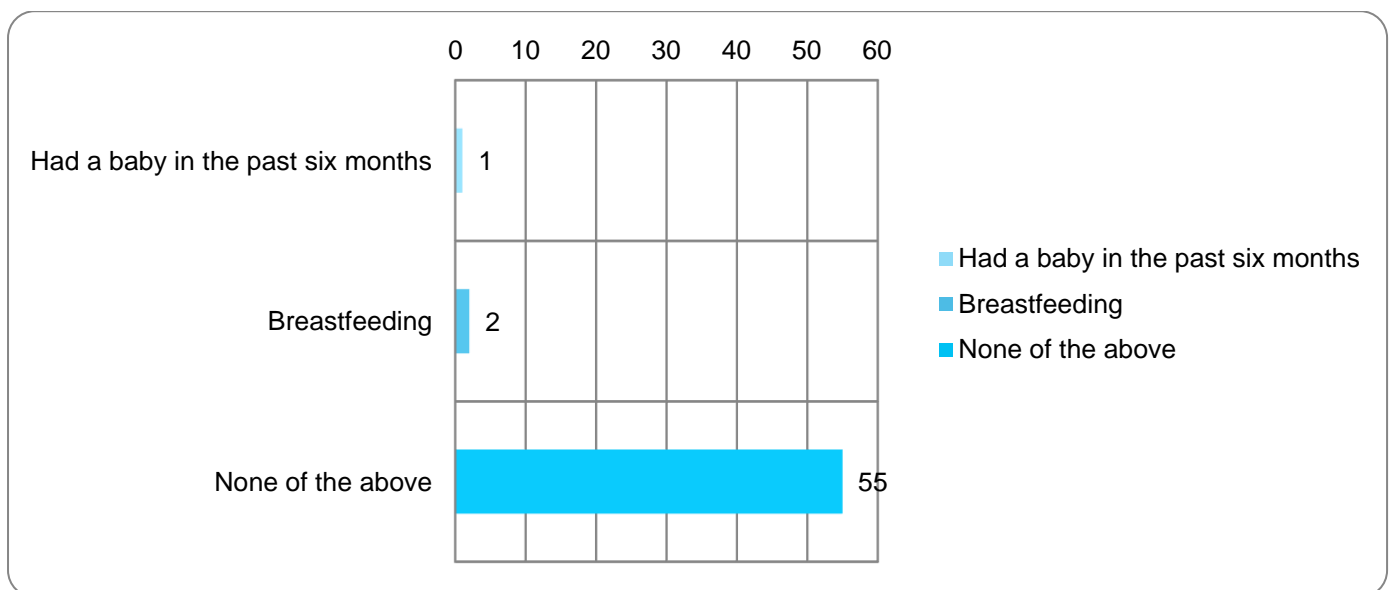
How would you describe your impairment? (Please choose as many as apply)



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?

