

Responses to the Budget Consultation 2023/24

The Council ran a budget consultation exercise for one month from 19/12/22 to 19/01/23. The consultation was accessible through the Council's website and was promoted via the website, local media channels and various social media platforms.

The consultation received 378 responses, which is a substantial increase from the 134 responses received last year. Details of the responses are provided below.

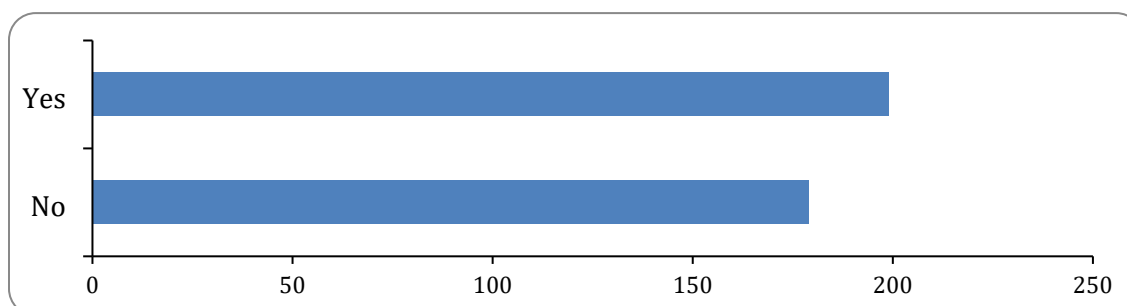
Headlines from the consultation are:

- A small majority of respondents support the higher level of Council Tax increase proposed in the draft budget.
- A clear majority of respondents support the 7% increase in housing rents.
- If additional funding becomes available the service areas most supported to receive the benefit of that are Roads Maintenance and both Adult and Children's Social Care.
- Adult Social Care also topped the list of priorities for additional capital resources.

1: In your opinion, should the Council look to increase Council Tax by 3% and the Adult Social Care Precept by 2% in order to close the financial gap and continue to provide services at current levels?

CT increase

There were 378 responses to this part of the question.

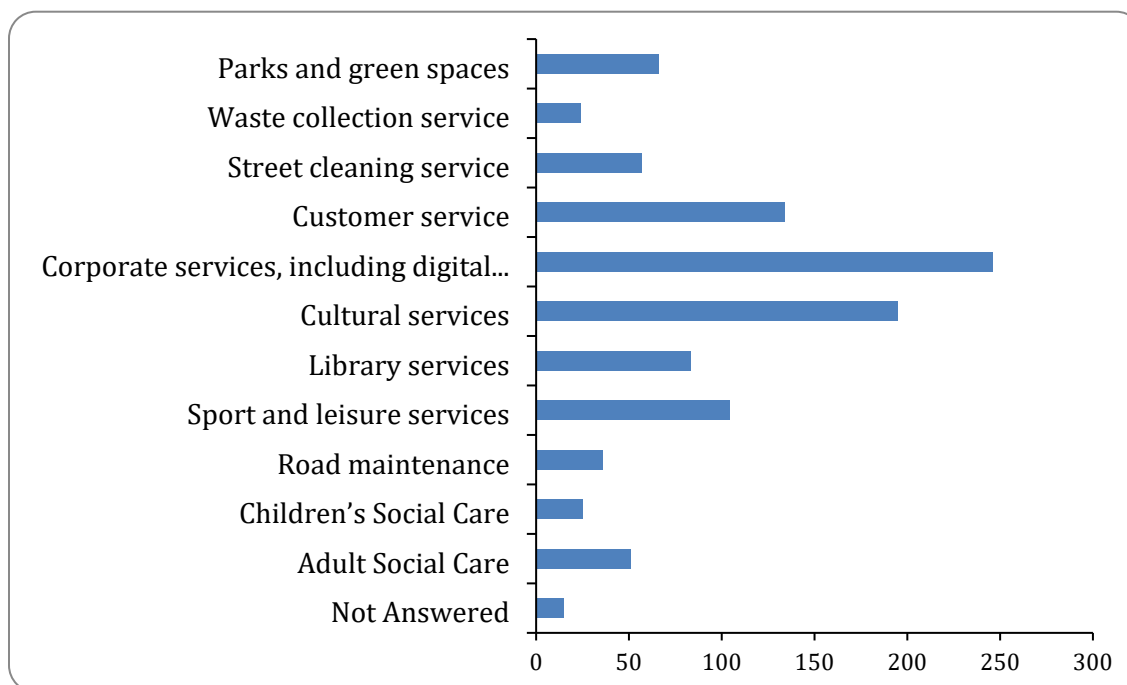


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	199	52.65%
No	179	47.35%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

2: Which three service areas, shown in the list below, would you reduce rather than increase Council Tax from 3% to 5% (please choose only 3 services)

Service reduction preference

There were 363 responses to this part of the question.

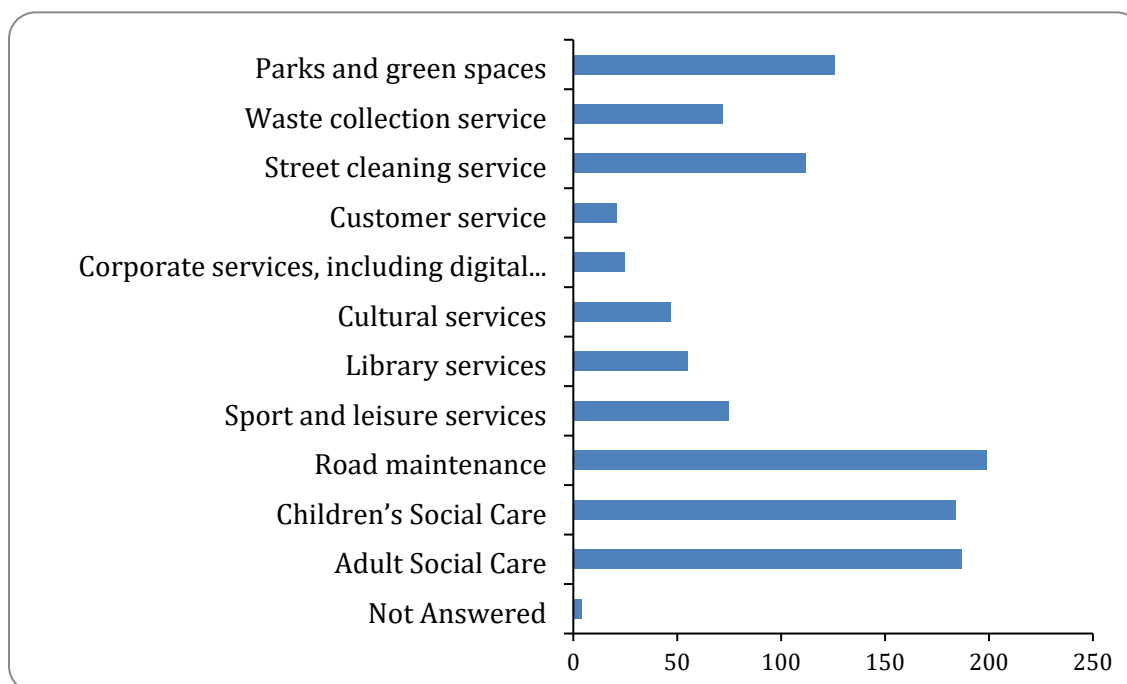


Option	Total	Percent
Parks and green spaces	66	17.46%
Waste collection service	24	6.35%
Street cleaning service	57	15.08%
Customer service	134	35.45%
Corporate services, including digital and website, legal, democratic services, communications, human resources	246	65.08%
Cultural services	195	51.59%
Library services	83	21.96%
Sport and leisure services	104	27.51%
Road maintenance	36	9.52%
Children's Social Care	25	6.61%
Adult Social Care	51	13.49%
Not Answered	15	3.97%

3: If the Local Government Settlement is better than currently anticipated, which three services, shown in list below, would be your preference for additional investment? (please choose only three services).

Additional funding preference

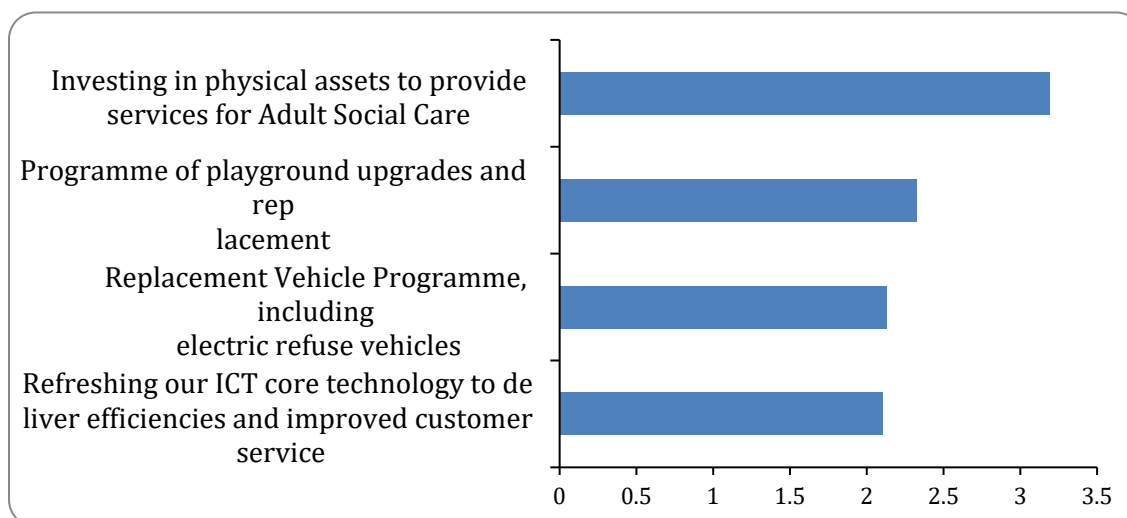
There were 374 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Parks and green spaces	126	33.33%
Waste collection service	72	19.05%
Street cleaning service	112	29.63%
Customer service	21	5.56%
Corporate services, including digital and website services, legal, democratic services, communications, human resources	25	6.61%
Cultural services	47	12.43%
Library services	55	14.55%
Sport and leisure services	75	19.84%
Road maintenance	199	52.65%
Children's Social Care	184	48.68%
Adult Social Care	187	49.47%
Not Answered	4	1.06%

4: If additional funding becomes available, which of the following schemes would you prioritise? Please rank, with your top priority being 1.

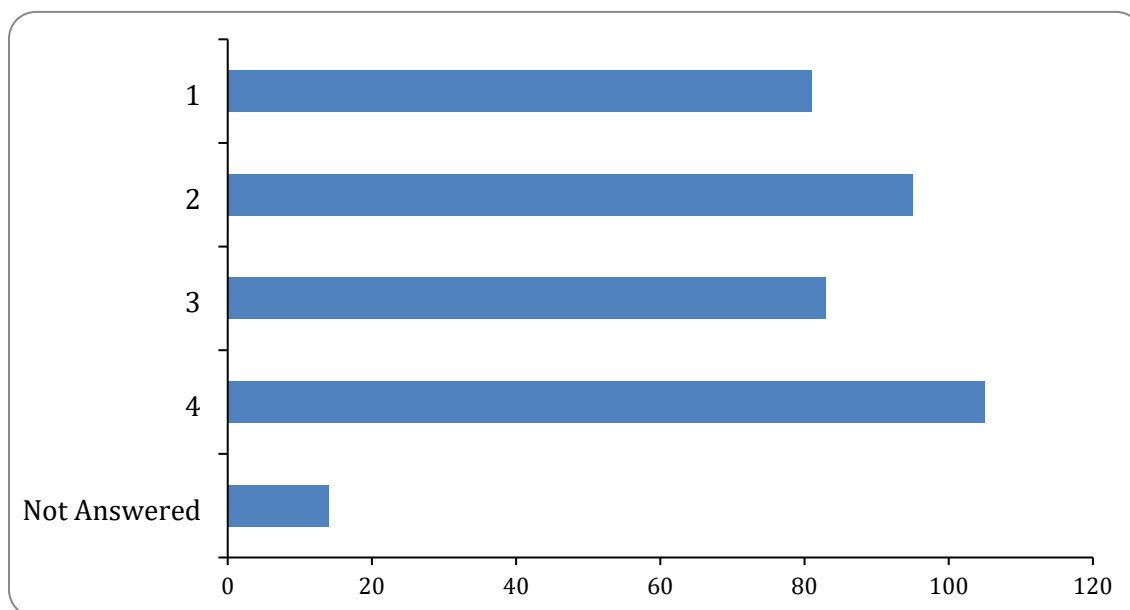
Ranking of 'Capital scheme ranking'



Item	Ranking
Investing in physical assets to provide services for Adult Social Care	3.19
Programme of playground upgrades and replacement	2.33
Replacement Vehicle Programme, including electric refuse vehicles	2.13
Refreshing our ICT core technology to deliver efficiencies and improved customer service	2.10

Capital scheme ranking - Programme of playground upgrades and replacement

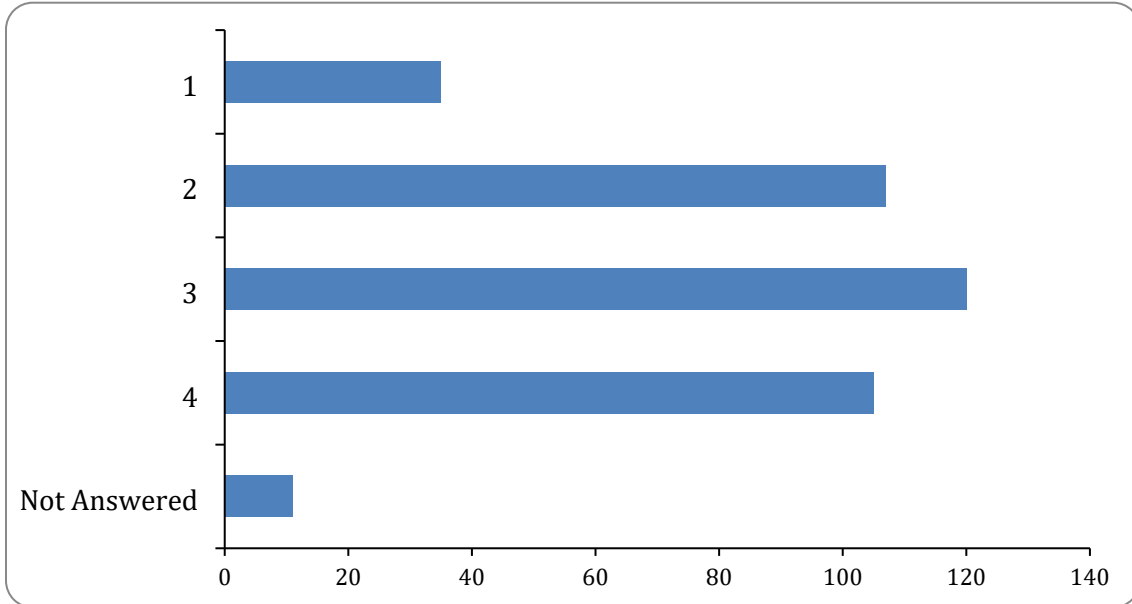
There were 364 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1	81	21.43%
2	95	25.13%
3	83	21.96%
4	105	27.78%
Not Answered	14	3.70%

Capital scheme ranking - Replacement Vehicle Programme, including electric refuse vehicles

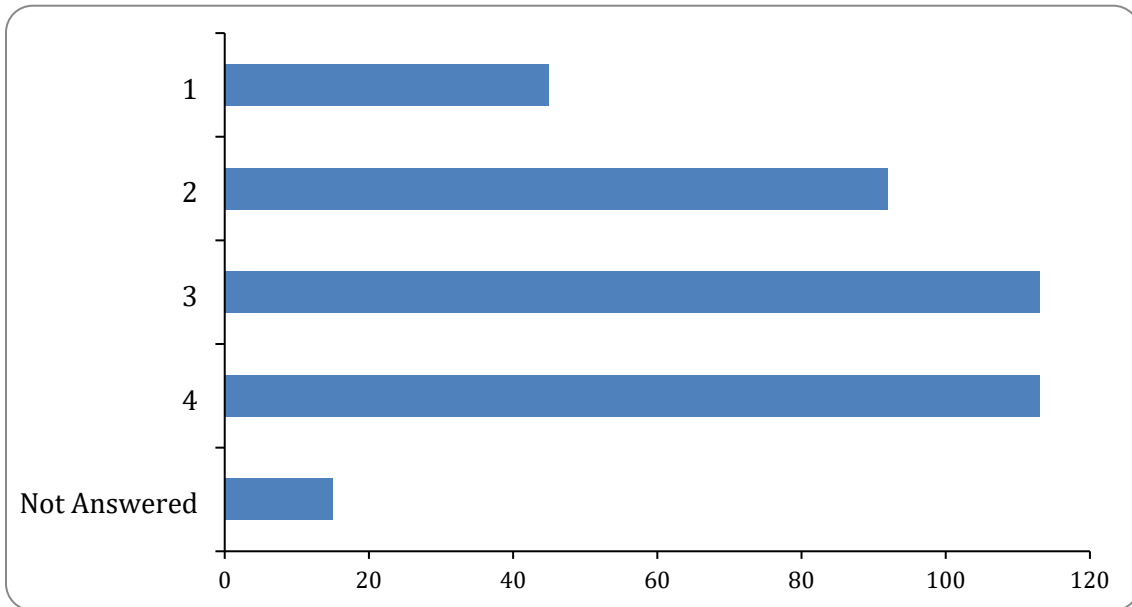
There were 367 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1	35	9.26%
2	107	28.31%
3	120	31.75%
4	105	27.78%
Not Answered	11	2.91%

Capital scheme ranking - Refreshing our ICT core technology to deliver efficiencies and improved customer service

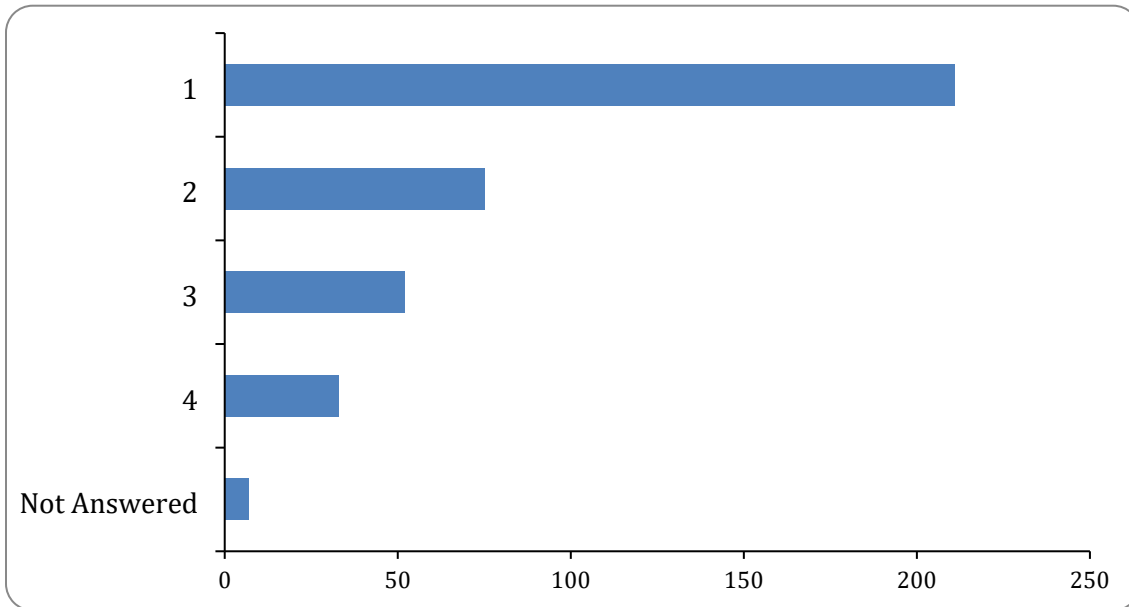
There were 363 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1	45	11.90%
2	92	24.34%
3	113	29.89%
4	113	29.89%
Not Answered	15	3.97%

Capital scheme ranking - Investing in physical assets to provide services for Adult Social Care

There were 371 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1	211	55.82%
2	75	19.84%
3	52	13.76%
4	33	8.73%
Not Answered	7	1.85%

5: Looking at the draft Capital Programme included with the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy report (see link above), are there any schemes that you would remove, or scale back, in order to prioritise some of the schemes listed above and currently not included within the Capital Programme?

schemes to be removed

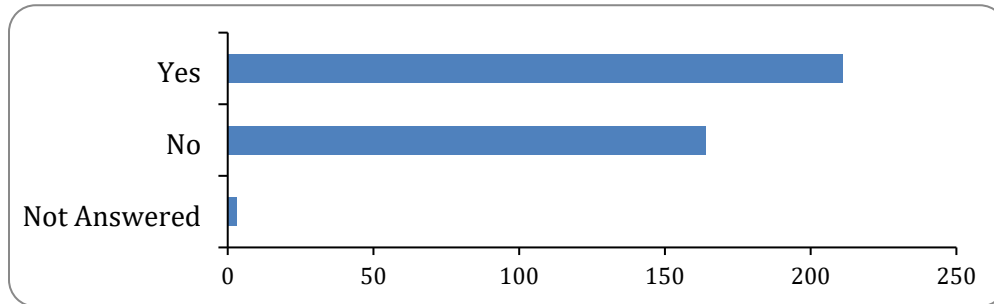
There were 139 responses to this part of the question.

Cycle lanes	17
Gypsy accommodation	11
Replacement vehicles	8
Culture	7
Oracle shopping centre	7
Carbon reduction initiative	7
Playground equipment	6
Invest in Corporate buildings/Health & safety works	6
Reading Football Club Social Inclusion Unit to SRLC	5
Reading West station	5
Re-wilding	5
South Reading MRT Phases 5 & 6	4
Leisure Centre Procurement	4
Maintenance and enhancement of Council Buildings	4
Green Park station	3
Abbey Quarter Restoration	3
High Street Heritage Action Zone	3
Rail station upgrades	3
Mobile working and smart device	3
EV charging points	3
Loan To RTL (Bus replacement programme)	3
Reduce social care	3
Reading Station subway	2
Libraries	2
Central Library scheme	2
Road improvements	2
City bid	2
Local Transport Plan Development	2
IT Future Operating Model	2
Property and asset management	2
Prospect Park play scheme	2
Private housing renewals	2
Civitas- Synthetic Sports Pitch	2
Digitised TROs	2

Minster Quarter	
Historic wall, Caversham gardens	
The Keep arts building works	
Town centre	
Reduce staff	
savings could be made on refuge, recycling & food recycling.	
"Annual Bridges and Carriage Way Works programme & Highway Infrastructure Works	
Parks	
Harden Public Open Spaces to Prevent Incursion	
Fabric Condition Programme	
traffic lights	
Reading gaol	
Flats	
Pedestrian handrails	
Air quality	
third party contracts	
Planning regulations	
Car Park Investment Programme	
Burial land acquisition	
Mortuary equipment/cemetery equipment	
Sell Council offices	
Berkshire Record Office	
New Capital Bid - S106 Kenavon Drive Landscape	
Customer Digital Experience	
Universal Digital Systems	
Re-Procurement / Reimplementation of Finance System	
Delivery Fund (Pump priming for Transformation projects)	
Transport demand management scheme	
skate parks,	
for The Heights school/ for additional school places,	
individual schemes such as improving Crescent Road playing fields	
Economic growth and commercial services	
e-Marketplace & Equipment Renewal Portal Software	
Env	
transportation	
Hexagon	

**6: The Government has announced a maximum increase of 7% on social housing rents. Do you support rent increases?
social housing rents**

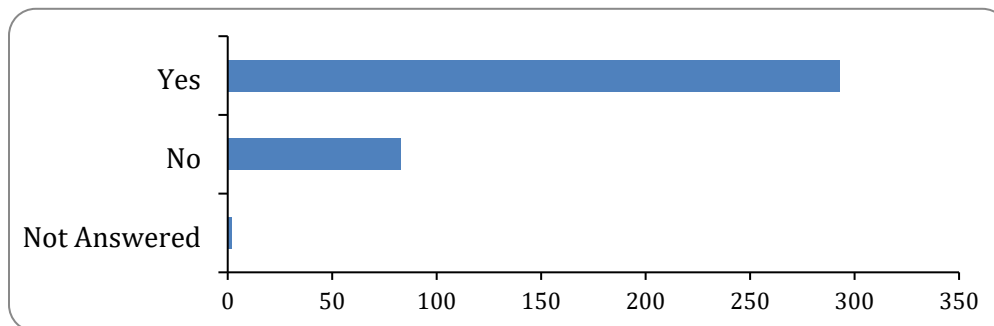
There were 375 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	211	55.82%
No	164	43.39%
Not Answered	3	0.79%

**7: Would you support the Council opting for a 7% increase if this allowed the Council to continue retrofitting existing homes, thereby investing in energy efficiency measures and in turn, reducing tenants' bills?
7% social rent increase**

There were 376 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	293	77.51%
No	83	21.96%
Not Answered	2	0.53%

8: Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding the Council's draft budget for 2023/24, or the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy?

comments

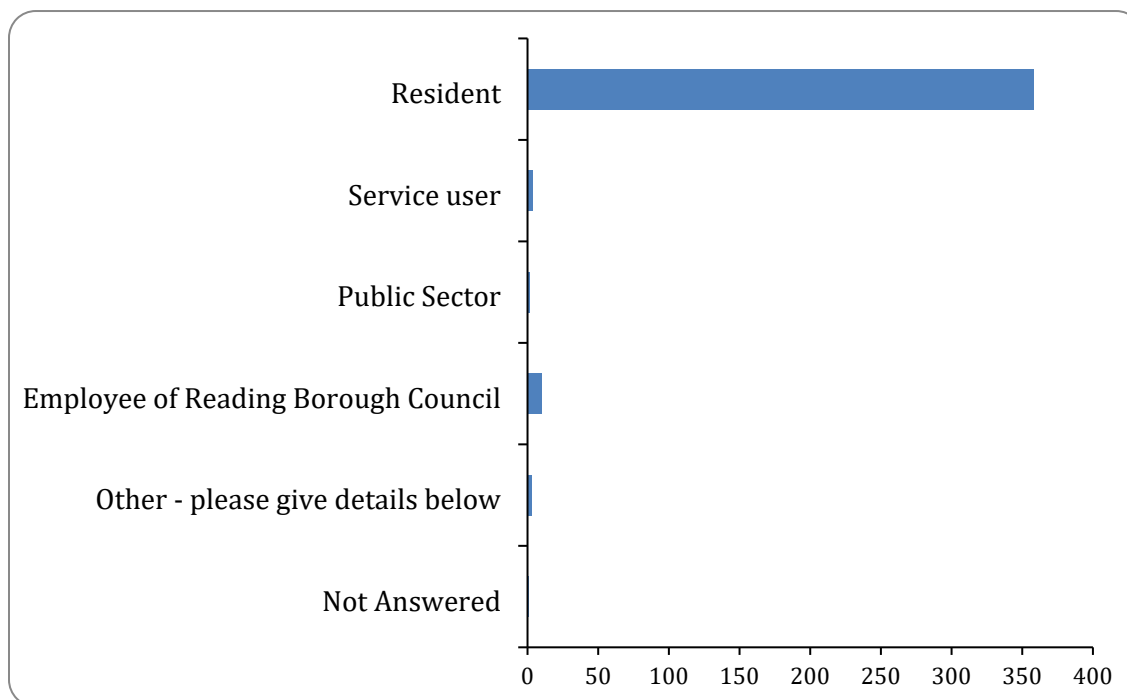
There were 143 responses to this part of the question.

Reduce/don't increase CT	11
Improve road maintenance	7
Spend on social care	6
Reduce/don't increase rents	5
More active travel funding	4
Spend on street cleaning	4
Spend on universal services	3
Decrease car parking charges	3
Focus on green spaces	3
Better business planning	3
Council doing good job	3
Look at staffing levels	2
Middle income hit hard by cost of living crisis	2
Increase air quality monitoring	2
Invest in integrated cycling infrastructure	2
Budget report terms need explaining	2
Reduce councillors costs	2
Improve waste management	2
Better street lighting	2
Spend on climate change	2
Do audits/accounts on time	2
Spend on social housing	2
Spend on culture	2
Increase policing	2
Don't spend on town centre	
Don't spend on cycle lanes	
Make Reading beautiful	
Make the car park in honey end lane bigger for the football teams and the bowling club	
Increase rogue landlord enforcement	
Increase single person's council tax discount	
More needs to be done to help the disabled become more independent	
Invest in insulation of council buildings	
Fine people who litter the city, fly-tip, and do not segregate well recyclable waste	
Reduce speed limit	
Fine idling vehicles that produce pollution	
Bring leisure services back in house	
Change to double entry/exit buses	

"Borrow a litter picker" scheme	
Support for community 'orchards'	
Reading town centre is a desolate and depressing place	
Reduce overpriced bus and cycle lanes	
Improve road infrastructure and design	
Investment into electric vehicle charging	
Reduce business rates	
Implement a ULEZ zone	
Bus lane on A33 from town to the turning for Rose Kiln lane retail park	
Buy JCB Pot Hole Repair machine	
Increase speed limits on certain roads	
Increase CT & improve services	
Improve customer service	
Safer bus stops with more shelter	
Increase rents for social housing for those residents who are on larger incomes	
Increase schools funding	
Don't reduce bin collection	
Spend on employment support	
Reduce social care	
More invest to save schemes	
Increase youth clubs	
More lobbying central govt	
FSM in holidays	
Don't increase staff pay	
Stop building on green space	
Spend on tree planting	
Better housing for people with disabilities	
Improve traffic problems	
Remove green bin charges	
Spend on childrens social care	
Reduce parking charges	
Support private renters	
Spend on outdoor leisure equipment	
Need buses to Rivermead	
Needs bus from Oxford Rd to hospital	
Support for people with disabilities	
Reduce bus charges	
Spend on school places	
Reduce cost leisure centres	
Allow people to keep single person discount on council tax if they host any refugees, asylum seekers or migrants	
Reduce housing costs	
Increase homeless provision	

9: Please indicate whether you are responding to these proposals as:
userDetails

There were 377 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Resident	358	94.71%
Service user	4	1.06%
Family or friend of service user	0	0.00%
Voluntary organisation	0	0.00%
Business	0	0.00%
Public Sector	2	0.53%
Employee of Reading Borough Council	10	2.65%
Other - please give details below	3	0.79%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

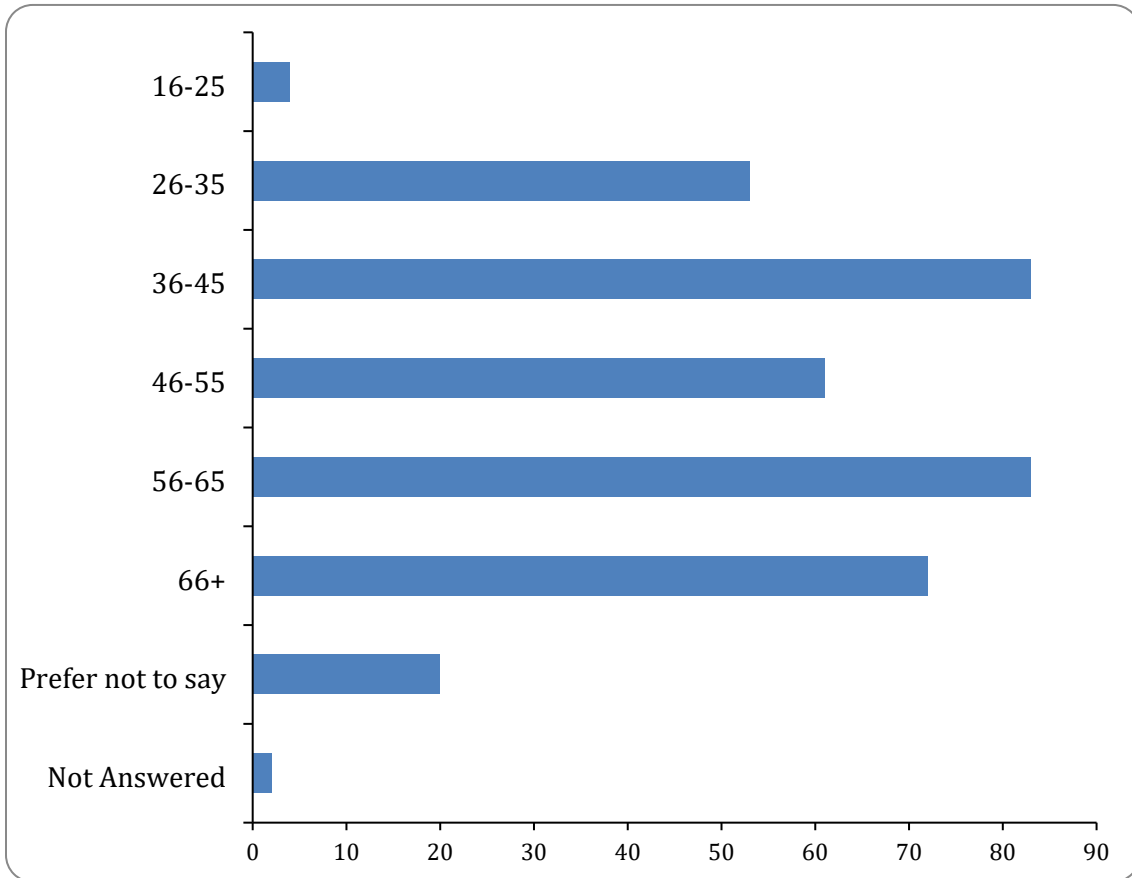
Other Details

There were 7 responses to this part of the question.

10: Which age group do you belong to?

Age Group

There were 376 responses to this part of the question.

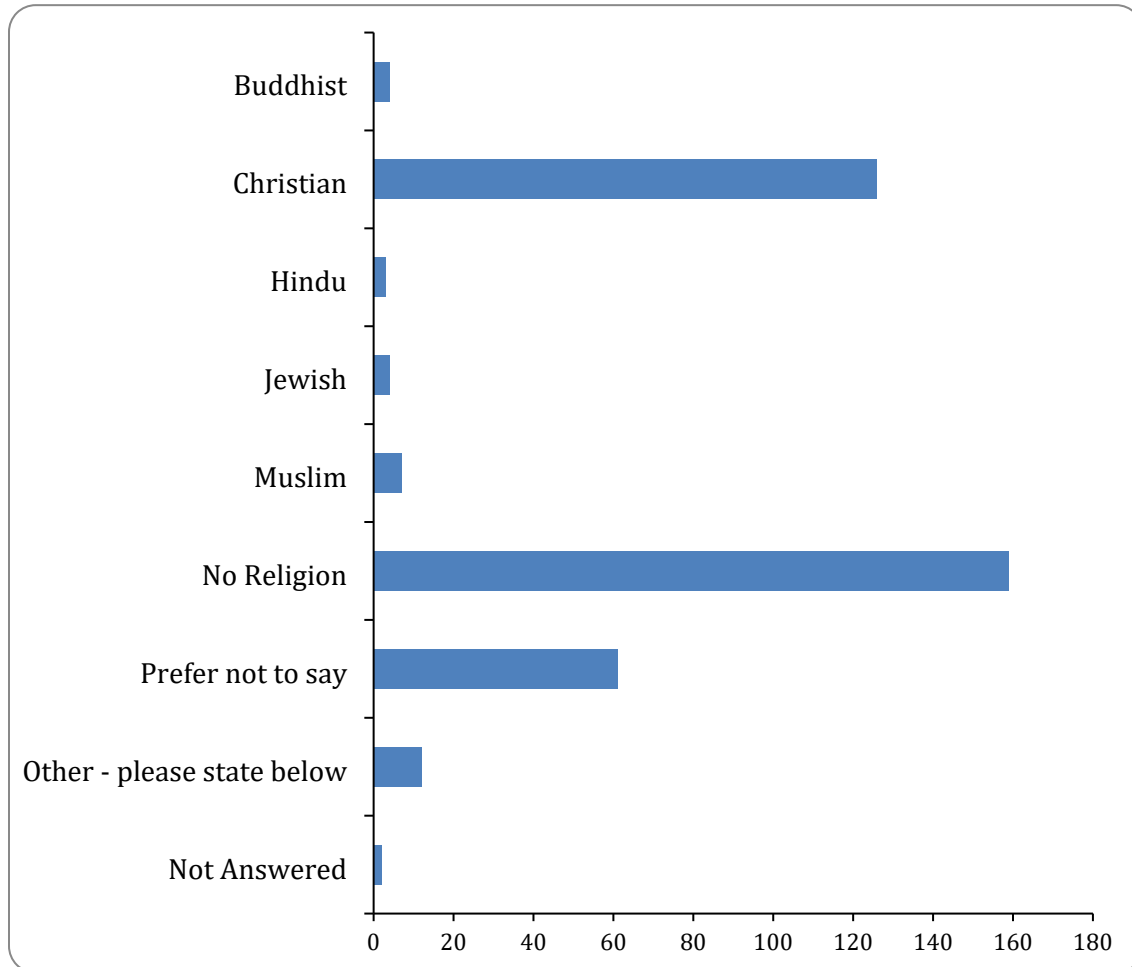


Option	Total	Percent
Under 16	0	0.00%
16-25	4	1.06%
26-35	53	14.02%
36-45	83	21.96%
46-55	61	16.14%
56-65	83	21.96%
66+	72	19.05%
Prefer not to say	20	5.29%
Not Answered	2	0.53%

11: What is your religion or belief?

religion

There were 376 responses to this part of the question.



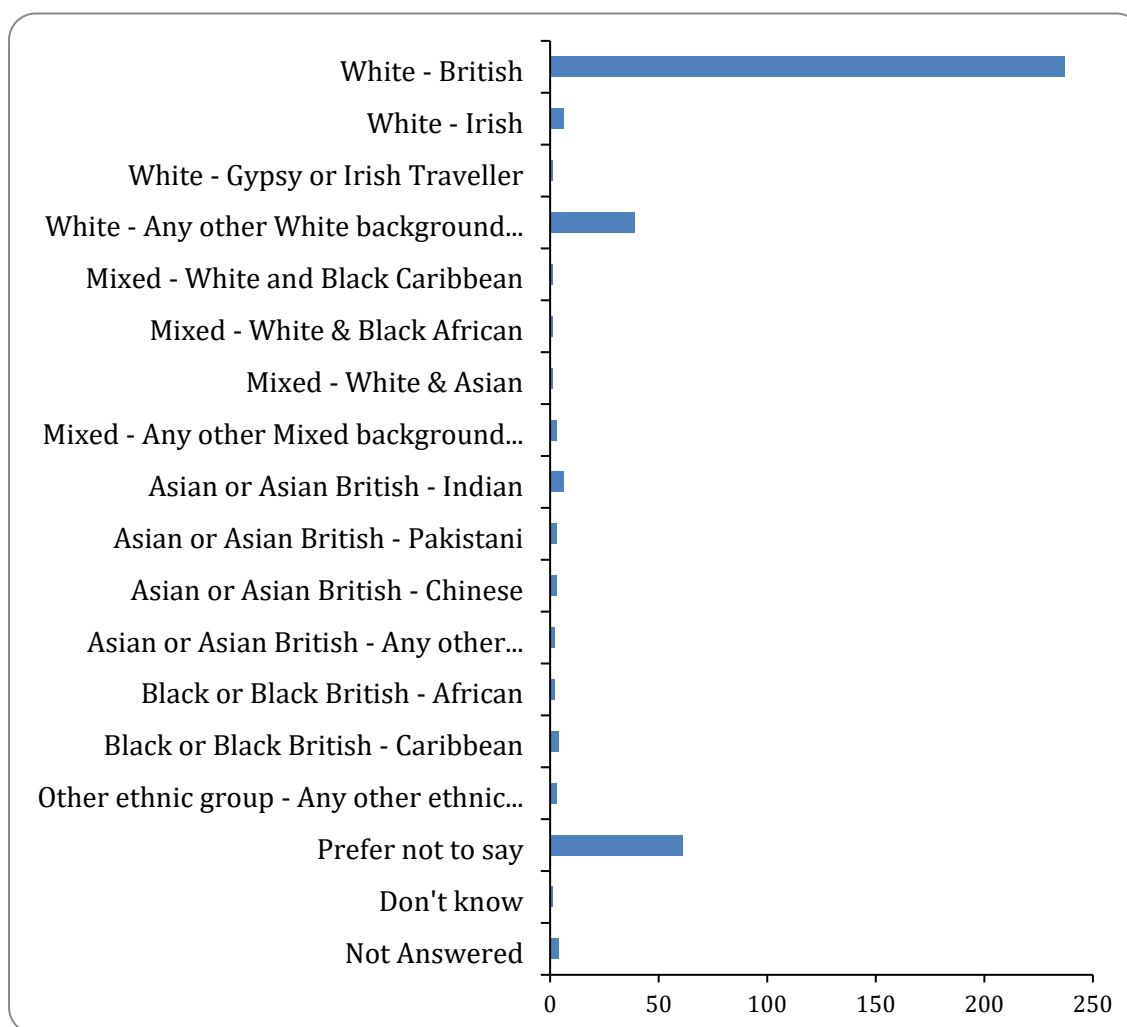
Option	Total	Percent
Buddhist	4	1.06%
Christian	126	33.33%
Hindu	3	0.79%
Jewish	4	1.06%
Muslim	7	1.85%
Sikh	0	0.00%
No Religion	159	42.06%
Prefer not to say	61	16.14%
Other - please state below	12	3.17%
Not Answered	2	0.53%

Other religion

There were 6 responses to this part of the question.

12: To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong? ethnicity

There were 374 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
White - British	237	62.70%
White - Irish	6	1.59%
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	0.26%
White - Any other White background (Please specify below)	39	10.32%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1	0.26%
Mixed - White & Black African	1	0.26%

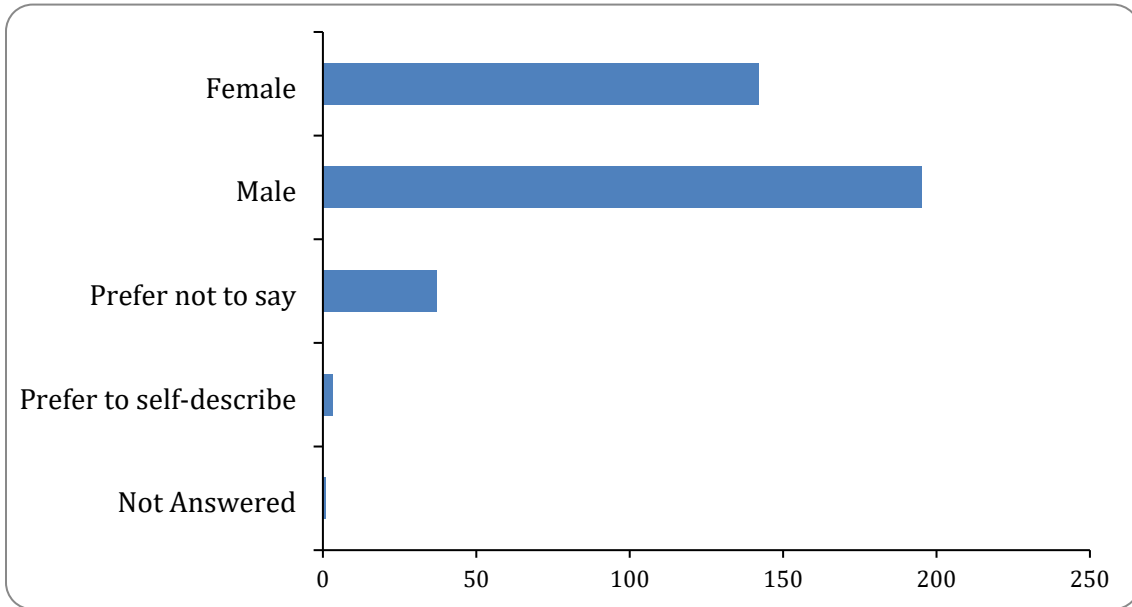
Mixed - White & Asian	1	0.26%
Mixed - Any other Mixed background (Please specify below)	3	0.79%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	6	1.59%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	0.79%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0.00%
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	3	0.79%
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background (Please specify below)	2	0.53%
Black or Black British - African	2	0.53%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	4	1.06%
Black or Black British - Any other black background (Please specify below)	0	0.00%
Other ethnic group - Arab	0	0.00%
Other ethnic group - Any other ethnic group (Please specify below)	3	0.79%
Prefer not to say	61	16.14%
Don't know	1	0.26%
Not Answered	4	1.06%

ethnicityOther

There were 31 responses to this part of the question.

13: Are you: Gender

There were 377 responses to this part of the question.



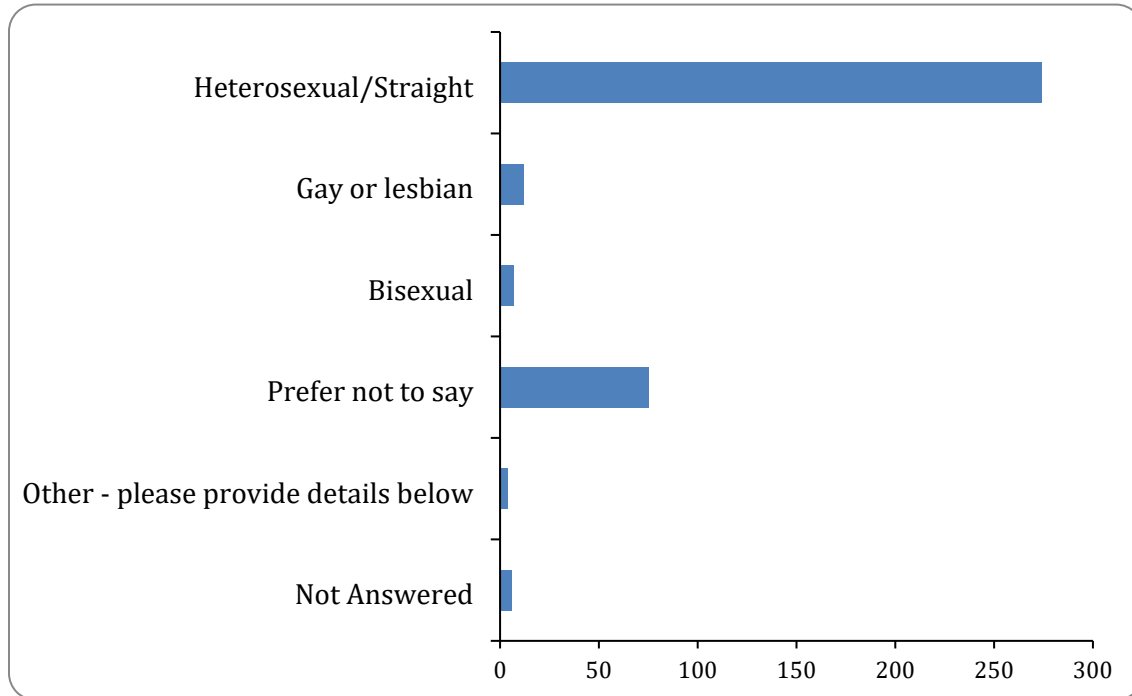
Option	Total	Percent
Female	142	37.57%
Male	195	51.59%
Prefer not to say	37	9.79%
Prefer to self-describe	3	0.79%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

If you prefer to self-describe, please say here

There were 2 responses to this part of the question.

14: What is your sexuality? sexualOrientation

There were 372 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Heterosexual/Straight	274	72.49%
Gay or lesbian	12	3.17%
Bisexual	7	1.85%
Prefer not to say	75	19.84%
Other - please provide details below	4	1.06%
Not Answered	6	1.59%

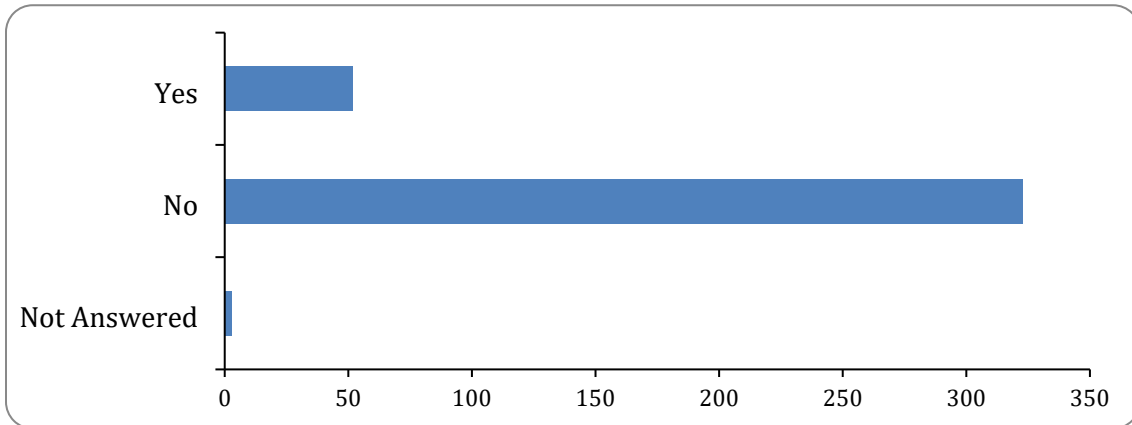
Sexual orientation - other

There were 4 responses to this part of the question.

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

disability

There were 375 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	52	13.76%
No	323	85.45%
Not Answered	3	0.79%