



Council Tax 2026 - 2027

Report by Consultation & Engagement Team

January 2026

1. Background

In December 2025, Bolton Council's Cabinet approved consultation for the review of Council Tax 2026 – 2027. A copy of the budget report to Cabinet, taken on the 15th December, is available via the [Cabinet and Committee meeting webpage](#). As noted within the report, in February 2025 Bolton Council approved a two-year budget covering 2025/26 and 2026/27, this included a savings target of £7.8m over the two-year period. This included agreement to raise Council Tax by 4.99% each year, across the two-year period.

The 2026/27 budget set last year requires an update to reflect the latest information available, and the council is legally required to consult on its Best Value Duty every year. As a result, residents and stakeholders were provided with a further opportunity to voice their opinions on Council Tax increases for 2026/27 and outline any impact a proposed rise would have on them and their family. It should be noted that no additional cuts to services were consulted on as part of this consultation.

Respondents to this consultation were asked to reflect on the proposals to increase Council Tax for period 2026 – 2027 by 4.99%. Views from all stakeholders will be considered, alongside other information to help the Council decide on the final Council Tax options in February 2026.

2. Methodology

Between 15th December 2025 and 12th January 2026, the Council ran a public consultation, seeking to engage residents and stakeholders impacted by rises in Council Tax, in sharing their reflections on a proposed increase by 4.99%. During that period a comprehensive communication plan was implemented to raise awareness of the proposed increases. Information was distributed to all stakeholders, including residents, elected members, businesses, community and voluntary groups. A press release¹ was distributed to local print media and hard copy surveys were distributed to all libraries and the One Stop Shop (refer to Appendix A). The consultation was also shared via E-View, a Council consultation database. Bolton News also published an article on the proposed Council Tax increases on the 8th December², increasing awareness of the proposal.

Documentation was made accessible on the Council's consultation webpage and social media was heavily utilised throughout the period to share key messages about the consultation. Partners, community leaders, Community Alliances and Community Champions were also asked to cascade the consultation to their staff, service users and wider community networks. In addition, the Bolton Council workforce was presented with the consultation and key information via staff emails and the online platform, Viva Engage.

¹ Bolton Council. (2025) *Bolton Council to consult on council tax increase*. Available at: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/news/article/1976/bolton-council-to-consult-on-council-tax-increase>. (Accessed 14th January 2026)

² Forbes, I. (2025) *Bolton Council puts forward proposals to hike council tax*. Bolton News, 8th December 2025. Available at: <https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/25680623.bolton-council-puts-forward-proposals-hike-council-tax/>. (Accessed 14th January 2026).

Participants were surveyed using a questionnaire tool made up of open and closed questions, providing respondents the opportunity to reflect and share their thoughts on the proposal. The questionnaire was made available both digitally and offline, with the survey and supporting documentation being accessible on the council’s consultation web page, as well as in hard copy format on request.

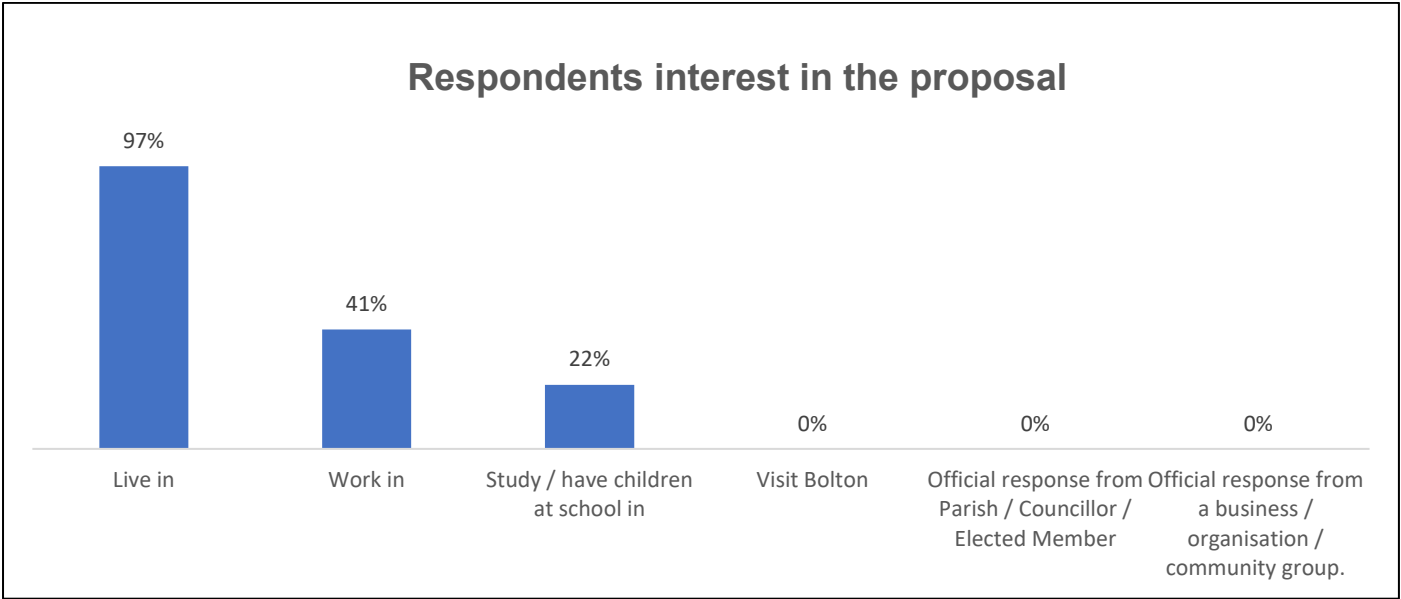
*A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this document, located in Appendix A.

Analysis notes

- Results are presented in the questionnaire format with ‘Don’t know’ type responses removed unless stated.
- Comments have been categorised where feasible. Unless otherwise stated, categories with 20 or more responses are shown. Categories may overlap and a comment from one respondent included in multiple categories. A sample of comments [verbatim] are included in the report. Comments may be abbreviated so that only the relevant extract is included. One comment may be coded into multiple categories, and each category may only cover a certain aspect of the comment, for example a respondent may have made both positive and negative comments about the same aspect.
- Base: unless otherwise stated the base is the number of respondents to a particular question.
- Data has been cleansed where appropriate, e.g. comments moved into existing responses.

3. Digital and paper-based survey responses

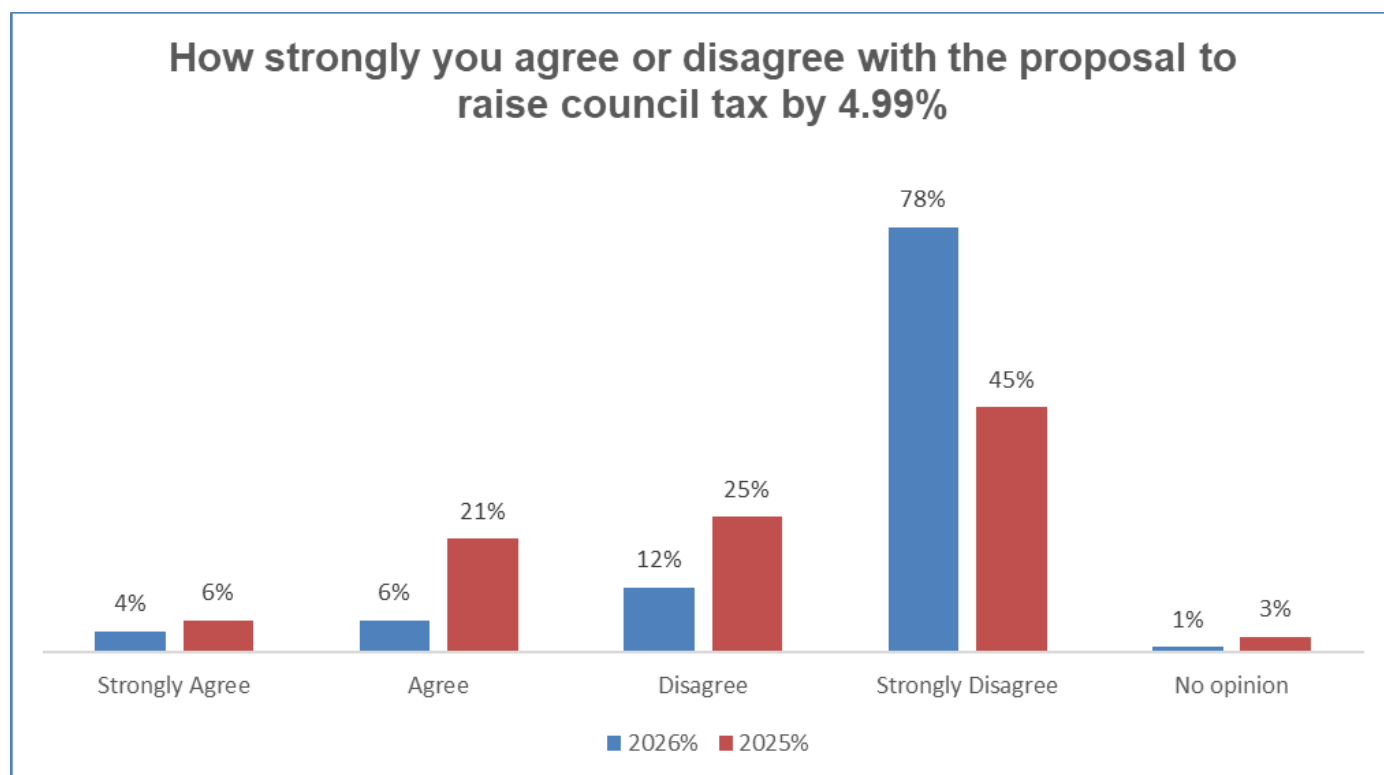
A total of 712 residents and stakeholders took part in the consultation, outlining their reflections on the proposals to increase Council Tax by 4.99%. The majority (97%) of those taking part in the consultation are resident within the borough. Those that responded in an official capacity (4), responded as Ward Councillors (2), or from the community or voluntary sector (2).



Base: 712

4a. Proposal to increase Council Tax

Respondents taking part in the survey were asked whether they supported the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% per year, proposing a 2.99% increase in the General Levy, plus a 2% rise for Adult Social Care. Of the 712 responses to this question, 90% were opposed to the increase and 10% of respondents agreed with the increase. This sees a significant increase in opposition to the proposal compared to 2025, where 70% of respondents disagreed.



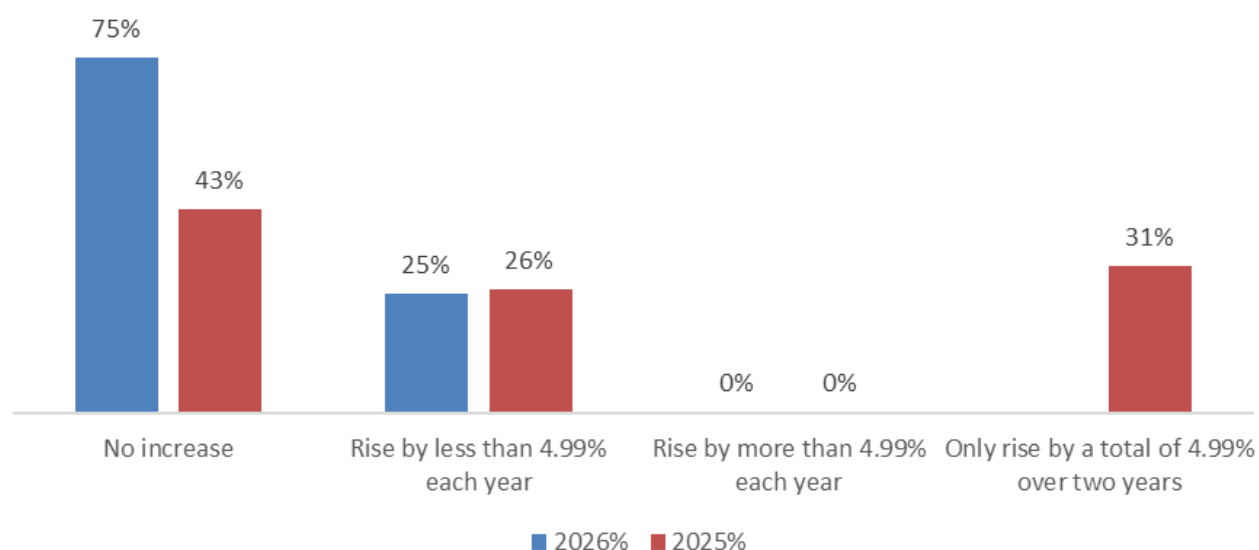
2026 Base: 712

2025 Base: 896

4b. Preferred Council Tax percentage increase

Of the 631 respondents who disagreed with the percentage increase and went on to provide further detail, three-quarters (75%) wanted no further increases in the current Council Tax rates. One-quarter (25%) stated that any Council Tax rises should be lower than 4.99.

If you disagree, what should happen to council tax?



2026 Base: 631

2025 Base: 625

4c. Suggested rate rises

128 respondents suggested amounts that Council Tax should raise by. The table below outlines what the preferred rise should be. The highest number of respondents (43) felt that the raise should be within the range of 2% - 2.49%. However, 19 respondents stated that the raise should only be in line with inflation.

| Percentage increase | Number |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Do not rise | 2 |
| Raise by 1% - 1.99% | 9 |
| Raise by 2% - 2.49% | 43 |
| Raise by 2.5% - 2.99% | 24 |
| Raise by 3% - 3.99% | 28 |
| Rise by 4% | 2 |
| Rise by above 4.99% | 1 |
| Rise in line with inflation | 19 |

5. Impact of proposal to increase Council Tax

All residents and stakeholders were provided the opportunity to reflect further on the proposals and provide additional feedback on how the proposal would impact them or their friends and family members. 634 crossing-cutting comments were received, which predominantly outlined the significant adverse socio-economic impacts the proposal would have. Comments have been analysed and categorised into the following 6 themes.

| Q2. Please describe how you, your family or the people you represent will be affected if the council raise Council Tax by 4.99% | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Rank | Category | No. of respondents |
| a. | Forms of socio-economic impact | 582 |
| b. | Local service provision | 153 |
| c. | Local and national government | 59 |
| d. | Alternative proposals | 40 |
| e. | General disagreement | 26 |
| f. | Official stakeholder responses | 4 |

a. Forms of socio-economic impact

Many responses received reflected upon the significant socio-economic impact any proposed rises in council taxes would have upon residents. While comments were cross cutting across multiple themes of deprivation, including to vulnerable groups, the highest numbers reflected general financial concern. Socio-economic impacts have been broken down further into 7 key thematic areas.

General socio-economic concerns:

210 comments outlined how any proposed tax rises could push more residents into financial difficulty, particularly at a time when the general cost of living is increasing.

- *"Already struggling to live day to day life and if council tax go up then i won't survive and will be financial crisis."*
- *"Extremely detrimental effect on being able to keep afloat."*
- *"We are currently in total crisis, sat in the cold, making ends meet with food and now where are we suppose to magic more money for CTX increase."*
- *"Find it hard to pay other bills as they will go up too."*
- *"We are struggling. A lot of people in Bolton are, and are not high earners."*
- *"It will be a financial burden on us."*
- *"My council tax is already £377 per month and seems to be ever increasing. I'm concerned about how this proposed increase will be affordable, especially as everything else is increasing."*
- *"Cannot afford these extra increases, will have to move house."*
- *"Honestly couldn't afford the £60 something increase. Already scraping money down to the pennies and honestly don't know where i could get the extra £60 from."*
- *"It is getting too hard to balance our household budget, even small increases in household spending means less quality of life and not with working."*
- *"There's a cost of living crisis and it's hard enough to make ends meet without council tax going up."*
- *"We couldn't afford it, we get no help & are already struggling."*
- *"One more increase in the cost of living to absorb alongside every other cost that now go up annually, while tax thresholds remain frozen. No doubt annual 5% increases will become the norm in the future."*
- *"Everyone is struggling now, You the council say you have no money, well us the public have no money either."*
- *"Cost of Living at a high, utility bills at a high, this will be another hike to what already exists."*
- *"It would put our lives at risk as we can barely afford food now."*
- *"Pushed further into poverty."*

Impact on working people:

110 comments were received from people in employment, who outlined the challenges further increases in Council Tax would have on them. Whilst some outlined the challenges already being faced by not being able to access additional Government support, others outlined how the proposed rises are not in line with wage increases, putting them disproportionately at financial risk.

- *"People are already struggling and the suggested increase is not in line with proposed wage increases."*
- *"This will push my household into poverty as the Council don't put our pay up by 4.99%!"*
- *"Myself and my family will be affected if the council tax rises as we are already struggling and i work 40+ hours a week."*
- *"Bills increasing above pay award rates means a pay cut overall for a lot of people - for those on lower wages it would be preferable not to add council tax to the list of those bills that will cause a concern."*
- *"It will hit us hard as everything has risen in price including rent but not our wages."*
- *"I am currently running my house on a shoestring budget and any increases in my bills would tip me over the edge. I do not qualify for any benefits or support as I work and earn above the minimum wage."*
- *"We are a working family with 2 young children. There is absolutely no way we can afford an increase. We already pay close to £200 per month never mind the rising cost of everything else mostly due to pure greed! We are on the brink of having to use food banks and I am a teacher. It is degrading and quite frankly you are going to be FORCING more and more families into poverty."*
- *"We will only get on average 3% pay increase this year, while dealing with increase childcare cost, food cost, fuel cost, we don't need additional strain of paying above inflation % in council tax."*
- *"We are self-employed and this is just a further tax on our already extremely stretched family budget."*
- *"This increase will mean more working people will be below the 'poverty line' as those on benefits get council tax paid for them."*
- *"Both my wife and myself are in full time employment and receive no support from government, we are just about surviving on our income, any additional increase in cost will tip us over the edge into the red."*
- *"Being on minimum wage... With energy prices, food prices, council tax rises, water bill rises, insurance increases... I'd be far better off on the dole."*
- *"The rises in council tax have always exceeded pay increases and it has come to a point now where the Council Tax payment exceeds any other bills."*
- *"I am an employee of Bolton Council as well as a resident and the annual pay award last year was 3.2%, below the proposed 4.99% increase to Council tax. Therefore, you know that you asking people to take a real-term pay cut because our salary is not increasing at the rate our costs are."*
- *"If you increase this by 4.99% i will be impacted negativity as wages are not increasing at this rate pushing me and more families into struggling."*

Making challenging decisions

104 comments were received by residents who stated any further rises in Council Tax would force them into have to make challenging decisions over which bill to pay, or whether to reduce outgoings in other areas.

- *"We will not be able to afford to pay the extra. Which will mean we will have to cut back somewhere else which will mean feeding the children over ourself."*
- *"Any increase in Council Tax would reduce the limited disposable income available to cover basic needs, forcing difficult trade-offs between essentials such as food, heating, and other household necessities."*
- *"An increase in council tax means more cut backs in other areas of our lives and with the cost of living we are already struggling."*
- *"Some people will have to make a choice between feeding their family and being taken to court over their council tax bill."*
- *"Weekly shopping will become harder less food on the table .Have to cut back on heating.will fall behind on other bills !!!!!"*
- *"I won't manage some areas of cost of living such as school meals and taking them for other activities they are enjoying."*
- *"It will affect decision to buy a new property because the banding is no longer financially viable, especially if it continues to rise year on year."*
- *"Its too much money with already bills being so high - just makes family life eating drinking, having family outings more difficult."*
- *"Council tax is ridiculously high! I pay more in council tax than running my car! I can't afford to put my heating on let alone another 5% rise AGAIN."*
- *"Less money to spend in the local community, pressure on bills."*
- *"Even less money for food, bills and household expenses. People will need to go with heating and/or food."*

Socio-economic impact to families

66 comments were received from residents with families, who outlined the impact to them as a household with children. Several comments also reflected the disproportionate impact to those currently on or about to take maternity leave, who will be on reduced incomes and/or statutory maternity pay, which could force some families to return to work earlier than anticipated.

- *"An increase of such a high percentage would have a devastating negative effect on many families that are already struggling. Taking into account the increases in fuel prices and food prices this would place many families including myself in extremely dire circumstances and unable to afford necessities let alone any small luxuries."*
- *"Further significant increase to council tax will have a negative impact on my family. We are a married couple with 2 children. Both work full time, stretched to our financial limit."*
- *"We also have children that we are suppose to support but how when you increase everything."*
- *"It will affect me and my family, we are already struggling currently and this will put us in a worse position for me and my children"*
- *"I have 3 children all under 4, me and my wife, total 5 persons, and I am only job holder, and my pay is less then £1500 per month, I am taking no benefits from government. Increase in council tax will effect badly to me and my family. I humbly requested not to increase any, if possible give some relaxation for families."*
- *"With utilities increasing, cost of food on the increase, increase in public transport costs there is very little left over for family of four."*
- *"IM literally sat in my house with 4 layers and a duvet on my sofa trying to stare body heat with my 5 year old and you want MORE MONEY! You should be disgusted with yourself"*
- *"We are not entitled to any benefits apart from child benefit for our two children. Everything has gone up. After we have paid our bills we live on credit to the next month."*
- *"More children will be pushed into poverty."*
- *"Takes even more from an already tight budget. With food prices rising at the rate they have been it would be difficult to feed my family properly."*
- *"We're struggling as it is. Family of 5 and things are tight already."*

- *"Like many families, we are facing increased costs across essentials — food, energy, fuel, housing, and childcare. These are not optional expenses; they are the basic costs required to live and to maintain stability for our family."*
- *"For families like ours, this would not be a matter of reduced comfort but of increased financial strain and insecurity. At a time when many households are already carefully managing stretched budgets, further increases risk disproportionately affecting those who have little flexibility to absorb additional costs."*
- *"It will push families like ours who live very close to the poverty line already even with both parents in work, further into the poverty line."*
- *"I am absolutely devastated by this increase. I have 2 kids under 2 who I currently provide for. Living costs are sky high as it is and this will put me in further hardship."*
- *"I live with my husband and toddler, we live month to month and do not afford luxurious spending. This will cut into our bills and food. It is hurting people to pay more."*
- *"We will face financial hardship, currently we are a single income household due to maternity leave but do not qualify for financial support."*
- *"Financial impact, cost of living is highly rising and making things extremely difficult, cant afford to save for maternity or to have a child."*
- *"New baby on the way and already an increase in gas and electric and water bills."*

Socio-economic impact relating to age

38 comments were received which outlined the impact to people who are older and of pensionable age, as well as younger people, including students. Some comments also reflected the rise in Adult Social Care.

Pension aged residents:

- *"For multi-generational families, the impact is even broader. Rising council tax does not only affect one household — it ripples across extended family members who may already be vulnerable, on fixed incomes, or dealing with health challenges. This often results in families stepping in financially where public support falls short, further stretching limited resources. What is particularly difficult is the sense that families are being asked to shoulder more responsibility at a time when household incomes are not rising at the same pace as living costs."*
- *"I'm retiring and have planned my budget. An additional rise is unaffordable for me. I dont get benefits. A rise will mean i have to find the money from my food money and that is already cut."*
- *"As a pensioner, will have to find extra cost out of pension and investment income at a time when interest rates are expected to decline."*
- *"We are already struggling to pay bills and cost of living crisis. We would struggle immensely as at home we are elderly and disabled"*
- *"We are pensioners and a rise would greatly effect us ,we already have big fuel bills ,shopping has risen so much."*
- *"We are on a fixed pension. All our bill have increased."*
- *"Any pension increases simply do not cover all these extra costs. The reality is I am getting financially poorer every single year."*
- *"New pensioner, just cant afford a council tax rise."*
- *"I am almost 62 and any further increase in Council Tax won't allow me to reach State Pension Age without entering into debt."*
- *"One pension's coming in and a little wage unable to get any help all ready on the bread line."*
- *"I am 65, living off a works pension of just above the tax threshold with no eligibility for any top up benefits. I'm already struggling as a result of increases in just about everything."*

Impact to young adults:

"I work for the college, most of our students struggle and get financial support which they have to use for basics like food and transport. They cannot afford a rise"

Adult social Care:

- *"It states that increases will support Adult Social Care, however adult social care criteria needs to be stricter and you should only provide services to those who have a genuine mental and physical disability."*
- *"We are roped in to pay a 4.99% increase so the money goes towards adult social care? A service myself and my family do not use. I don't see why honest, hardworking citizens like myself are impacted by contributing to services that we don't even use. It's disproportionate."*
- *"Why should we have to pay for adults in care? It just makes no sense, we are paying for things that we don't even use."*

Impact to single income households

30 comments were received from individuals that were sole earners, including single parent households. These residents outlined how budgets are already stretched and a further increase to Council Tax could have a significant impact on their households.

- *"As a single person with 3.2% increase of the salary and everything going up I am getting poorer by a month."*
- *"I live alone in a band B house which is a terraced house. I am on a low income and will probably have to get another job as well as the full time one I have."*
- *"I am in band D and currently paying £226.00 a month which is a financial struggle, I am single with only my income."*
- *"As a single income home owner, this would have a big impact on my month to month living as I'm having to budget well as it is. This increase in council tax would only make things more tight."*
- *"Even as a single person with a baby and a single person council tax discount, its extortionate."*
- *"As a single earner household every additional pound is a struggle to find, I am in a Band A property yet still struggle with the council tax rises each year."*
- *"Single mother of 3 I get no help I work full time I get no single discount because I have an adult child in the property who cannot work and is on uc and pip."*
- *"I am on my own and due to move into my first house. Everything is going up so rapidly and I worry how I will manage to pay a mortgage, bills etc"*
- *"I am a single parent of 2 dependant children and increase of almost 5% would have a impact which I could not afford."*
- *"I'm a working single parent with a mortgage and all the usual costs of raising a young child. A 4.99% rise will squeeze my budget further – it's not unaffordable, but it does mean less flexibility for things like food, fuel and activities with my son."*
- *"I literally cannot afford anything further. I'm a single mum. I work full time. I don't claim benefits but the cost of living is absolutely killing me."*
- *"I live alone. I have one source of income. A rise of 5% is not sustainable for me, I do not have enough disposable income."*

Impact on those with disabilities and health conditions

24 comments were received from residents and carers of people with disabilities and health conditions. Comments reflected the disproportionate challenges these residents face, as have to prioritise other bills, including heating, to ensure they and their dependants are looked after. Further comments were received from disabled residents who have young adults living with them and are still dependent on them. In addition, comments also reflected the impact to mental health and wellbeing, as a result of being at risk of poverty.

- *"I work full time, and a care full time for my disabled daughter. I am cutting back on anything that is not a necessity, I work 2 days a week from home and do not have the heating on until shes due home from day care around 3:30, the heating stays on until she goes to bed around 9pm, i then turn it down low (around 17 degrees) in case the weather gets cold during the night as she cant regulate her temperature and I cant risk her getting cold. I try to wash about twice a week, this can be difficult if I have to change her bedding."*
- *"I can't afford to heat my home in winter and I have 2 disabled children."*
- *"My husband has a heart condition and is always cold so we use more of our income on heat."*
- *"We live in a 1 bed house, I'm type 1 diabetic don't get any help whatsoever and our electricity bill is over £300 a month, how this is even allowed is beyond me, we have 1 heater on and we are not home during the day."*
- *"I have health conditions and the cold affects me. Have minimise my heating."*
- *"I already lost my 25% discount when my disabled son came to live with me even though he is on benefits and doesn't need to pay council tax!"*
- *"I am a disabled military veteran who is ineligible for any council tax help due to being ineligible for any income-based benefits despite having a combined lower income with my wife than someone claiming universal credit. We are already struggling to pay the council tax bill as it is and any increase would mean less available monies for utility bills such as electric gas, rent and food shopping."*
- *"I don't pay Council Tax because of my Brain Damage, However I have to pay my Sons because he lives with me."*
- *"I have an SMI so I can't work. Fortunately i have a Fabulous Social Worker and Care Team who do their best. Appointee Banking is in place for me so I'm reassured I will never run out of money. My Son is now unemployed so I'm managing out house with the only income I have."*
- *"I am already a patient of depression and anxiety and getting medication and therapy session, these extra taxes will effect me badly."*
- *"It is impacting upon our mental health and ability to live."*
- *"It also impacts our mental wellbeing, as constant financial pressure creates stress and uncertainty, particularly when trying to provide security and opportunities for our children and wider family members who may rely on us for support."*

b. Local service provision

153 comments were received which outlined frustration with the proposal, as residents felt they were seeing a lack of service provision by the council. Residents feel that they are not receiving value for money for year on year increases.

- *"We're absolutely furious. You've already cut our services, bins don't get emptied enough so plagued with rats everywhere. Paths don't get cleaned as often so slip on algae. Bolton is a mess, homeless everywhere, people are clearly frustrated and angry as it is."*
- *"We pay enough and get less and less services."*
- *"Its hard enough to pay for services that are not fully received and all the issues."*
- *"We already pay so much money into what I can only describe as a depressing town, no improvements have been made in years despite the council receiving so much money in council tax."*
- *"We don't see any money being spent on our essential services in our area."*
- *"Simply do not get the value of the money and cannot afford."*
- *"The bin frequency is ridiculous. There is no explicit explanation as to where the money goes and where it has gone."*
- *"Roads are a disgrace, crime is ignored the town centre has died."*
- *"These are constant rises, not consistent with level of services received, the poor state of the town centre."*
- *"The tax rises are just unacceptable for no change in any benefit we receive..in a cost of living crisis..shame on Bolton Council if they rise them again! Year on Year!"*

- *"We don't see the benefits of these rises - if anything the services we actually use and need get cut (library / park maintenance / roads / bins)."*
- *"The cost of living keeps going up and up yet the standards in Bolton are yet to improve. The roads in Brightmet are a mess and potholes are never fixed. There is absolutely no reason for council tax to go up again when services still haven't improved."*
- *"Services levels would remain as they are or decrease. Less value for the councils customers i.e. the Council Tax payers."*
- *"We have nothing from council only poorer and poorer services with bins and an increase in litter for the area while pay more and get less."*
- *"Roads are in ruins. Anti social behaviour rife. It feels we are paying for greater Manchester more than Bolton. It's not fair."*
- *"The rise over the last few years is insane when you consider our household bins have been reduced in size and reduced in pickups. Roads aren't being maintained and schools are having budgets slashed! Yet your mos have a yearly salary of £93,904! Absolutely disgusting!"*
- *"The service levels have gone down drastically over the years."*
- *"Bolton in my opinion is an absolute disgrace as a Town Centre and an embarrassment. If this rise in council tax was to promote the Town Centre and make it into a place you would want to visit and spend money in then I would be happy for that to be the case but more and more money is being given to areas that do not need it."*
- *"My property is in Westhoughton South so I already pay the extra levy. Your constituents cannot afford huge increases in council tax every year, especially when services are being reduced."*
- *"I support the increase, but want to see an increase in value for money from the services provided and evidence that the money is being spent wisely."*

c. General reflections of Bolton Council and national government

59 comments were received which reflected frustration and anger with the council and national government.

Bolton Council:

- *"Worse still you wrote off millions of debt from car parks. Absolute disgrace. You should all be investigated thrown out and start again."*
- *"Audit the damn council as a whole!!! Stoping paying ludicrous wages to your staff and senior managers!!! There is your savings!!!"*
- *"I believe that the council is extremely poorly run and could do so much more to save money rather than increasing taxes."*
- *"This council is a joke."*
- *"I don't believe the council is spending the money they take correctly."*
- *"Seems to be no pride in the quality of services your members of staff carry out just want to do the least possible and move on to the next job...it's woeful"*
- *"Bolton council has the lowest council debt per person in Greater Manchester. It seems a rise would only be for an expensive transformation project and covering losses stolen by your own staff."*
- *"The council mis manages funding, debts are not chased up, and badly negotiated contracts with third parties let big corporations off scott free."*
- *"You waste money left right and centre on pointless expenses and provide nothing of value to the residents of Horwich. I can barely afford to live as it is."*
- *"You should really hold your head down in shame. Non stop with Bolton Council. One failure after another. But hey, at least not as bad as Birmingham. Is that your benchmark?"*

National government:

- *"I'm sick of government and councils with there reckless spending hitting working people its a disgrace."*

- *"The cost of living is on the increase, government just keeps wanting more and more, with nothing given back to working people, it's like Robin Hood rob the poor to feed the rich all over again."*
- *"People in Bolton (Working People and Elderly) are struggling more now since Labour regained power if they had kept their promise then things would be different now."*
- *"We are already struggling thanks to Labours incompetence in handling the economy and now an increase in any bill is pushing us towards the edge."*
- *"Financially it is a lot of extra money to find on top of all the other tax increases introduced by Rachel Reeves."*
- *"I'm sick of government and councils with there reckless spending hitting working people its a disgrace."*

d. Alternative proposals

40 comments were received by residents that called for alternative options to be considered. Suggestions ranged from salary cuts for senior leaders, councillors and MPs; efficiency savings for non-statutory services; and a focus on debt recovery. Some residents reiterated calls from previous years for transparency, wanting service audits to be published.

- *"I feel 2% increase is more in line with inflation."*
- *"Look at cutting big money jobs within the council staff."*
- *"Get people higher up in the council to take pay cuts instead of cutting services."*
- *"If the council bugets the finances properly then we would not need an increase. In social care you have Employees Deputy managers Team managers Heads of service Senior heads of services To many middle managers and senior managers which no one understands the roles."*
- *"Money can be saved with cuts to HR and funding can be saved with a reduction in councillors to 2 instead of 3 or take funds from the airport investment."*
- *"About time councillors were not paid for what was once a voluntary civic role with just expenses."*
- *"Cut the expenditures for the Cllrs and save money there rather than hitting those who are barely even surviving. Start showing hard evidence of where the money is really going and maybe people will be more inclined too dip into their pockets."*
- *"Why do t you freeze council mps salary first?"*
- *"Please draw in all the money from debtors (public or corporate) instead of relying on us."*
- *"Perhaps claiming for the unpaid taxes from the households in the communities that aren't paying them should be the first approach and would be one more aligned to the use of common sense."*
- *"Council should focus on recovering debt and ensure fraud and error is eliminated and debt recovered rather than keep increasing the rates for those who pay."*
- *"What should happen is the council work with DWP to get those on benefits to do free work and then the council services can be maintained at the same council tax rates."*
- *"Don't waste money on the Bolton Festival it's a waste of Money."*
- *"The council should focus on cost cutting and reducing waste spend, rather than getting an additional £7m from residents!!"*
- *"There has to be an alternative way to find funding without cutting essential services. Bolton council need to look at cost effective solutions and not waste money where it's not appropriate. Maybe look at hierarchy pay. Where are they loosing money, as they seem to be making enough from parking fines. Where is all this extra money they generate used /allocated to."*
- *"There should be a full independent audit of the council every year an published to see exactly what money is being spent on and annual waist."*

e. General disagreement

26 comments highlighted general disagreement with the proposal.

- *"The council tax we pay is extortionate as it is. People should not be penalised because they happen to live in a larger house."*

- *“Would negatively impact many.”*
- *“How can you expect people to continually pay an increase year on year? It has increased 15% since we have been here for 4 coming on 5 years.”*
- *“No increase in the council tax.”*
- *“The fact that all trust is lost i vehemently oppose the proposal of a rise in January.”*
- *“Your proposals are very distressing and mot fit for purpose.”*
- *“I am not happy paying any more to Bolton Council. I have never felt more disillusioned.”*

f. Official stakeholder responses

3 official stakeholder responses were received.

- *“This is for the people I support and help as a Independent Generic Peer Advocate Voluntary. Lots of people who have become too ill to work and worked all their lives and on benefits may have their own home but putting their council tax up would have them choosing Eat Heating or pay council tax. They can apply for a discretional housing payment or a reduction but this depends on council resources. or a reduction to income and expenditure, but it would have an impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Also with the personal tax threshold being ceiled until 2031. Also, could not encourage working because getting work would reduce the Universal Credit. OAP with only one full pension do not get pension credit but a lot would own their own home so this would then be a choice between eat heating or paying council tax”.*

Independent Generic Peer Advocate Voluntary

- *“A £61 increase on Band A is significant to residents on low incomes who are struggling to pay energy bills.”*

Elected Member

- *“Age UK Bolton represents older people across Bolton, many of whom are already experiencing significant financial pressure as a result of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. For older residents on low or fixed incomes, including those reliant on the State Pension and disability benefits, a Council Tax increase in 2026/27 will add to existing financial strain. Even relatively modest increases can have a disproportionate impact, particularly for: Older people who are not eligible for Pension Credit but still live on very limited incomes Single-person pensioner households Older people living with long-term health conditions or disabilities Older private renters and those facing rising housing and energy costs We regularly hear from older people who are already making difficult choices between essentials such as heating, food and household bills. For these households, an increase in Council Tax risks tipping people from financial coping into hardship, increasing anxiety, debt, and the likelihood of crisis intervention. The impact is likely to be felt most acutely by those living just above entitlement thresholds, who may not qualify for Council Tax Support but still struggle to absorb additional costs. There is also a risk that some older people will reduce spending on essentials or delay seeking help due to pride, stigma or lack of awareness of available support. Through our Information and Advice Service, Age UK Bolton is already seeing increased demand related to:*

Council Tax arrears and affordability concerns. Benefit checks and income maximisation. Energy and housing-related financial stress. Without effective mitigation and proactive support, demand for advice and crisis services is likely to increase further if Council Tax rises in 2026/27. That said, we recognise that protecting local services — particularly adult social care — is vital for older residents' wellbeing and independence. “

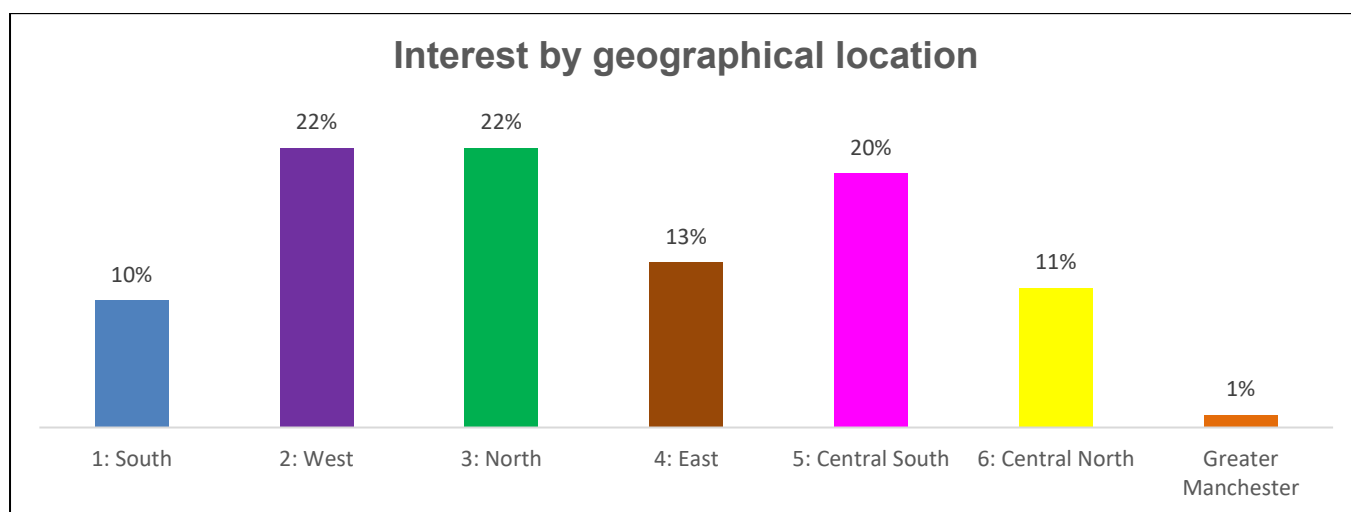
CEO

6a. Demographics: Geographical location

The table below outlines the demographics of respondents by geographical district. A total of 661 responses were received with residents in the North (22%), West (22%) and Central South (20%) representing the highest number of responses. 8 responses came from residents in Greater Manchester and 1 response was received from each Lancashire and outside of the North West.



*Neighbourhoods are a local geography for integrated health and social care; all have a population of around 50,000 residents.



Base: 661

Ward level engagement

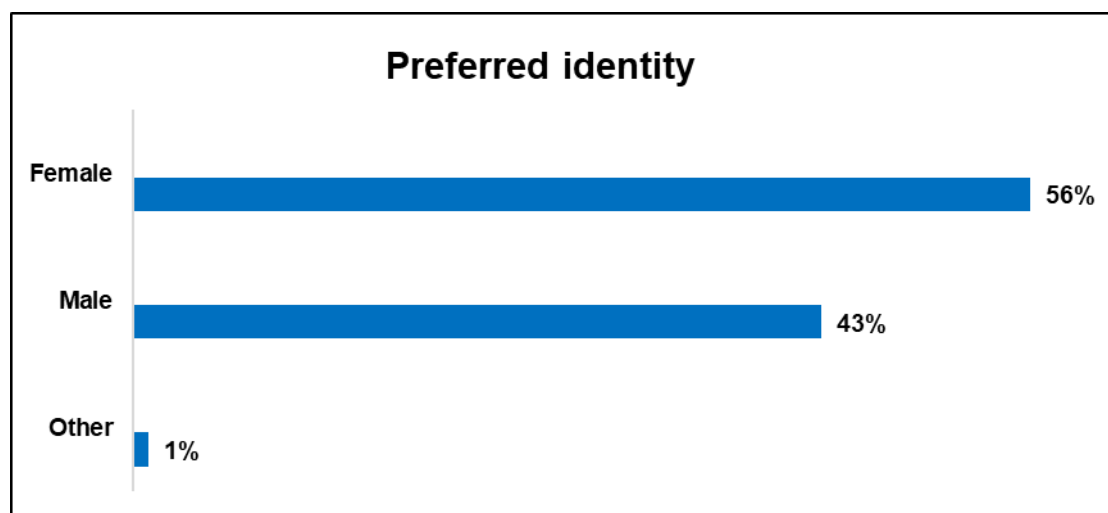
Neighbourhood engagement has been broken down further, providing Ward level engagement. The areas seeing greatest engagement are Rumworth (71), Tonge with the Haulgh (51), Bradshaw (46), Horwich North (44) and Bromley Cross (42).

| Ward | Number |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Astley Bridge | 36 |
| Bradshaw | 46 |
| Brightmet | 26 |
| Bromley Cross | 42 |
| Farnworth North | 26 |
| Farnworth South | 16 |
| Great Lever | 24 |
| Halliwel | 18 |
| Heaton, Lostock & Chew Moor | 24 |
| Horwich North | 44 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Horwich South & Blackrod | 31 |
| Hulton | 39 |
| Kearsley | 16 |
| Little Lever & Darcy Lever | 30 |
| Queens Park & Central | 17 |
| Rumworth | 71 |
| Smithills | 29 |
| Tonge with the Haulgh | 51 |
| Westhoughton North & Hunger Hill | 36 |
| Westhoughton South | 29 |

6b. Preferred identity

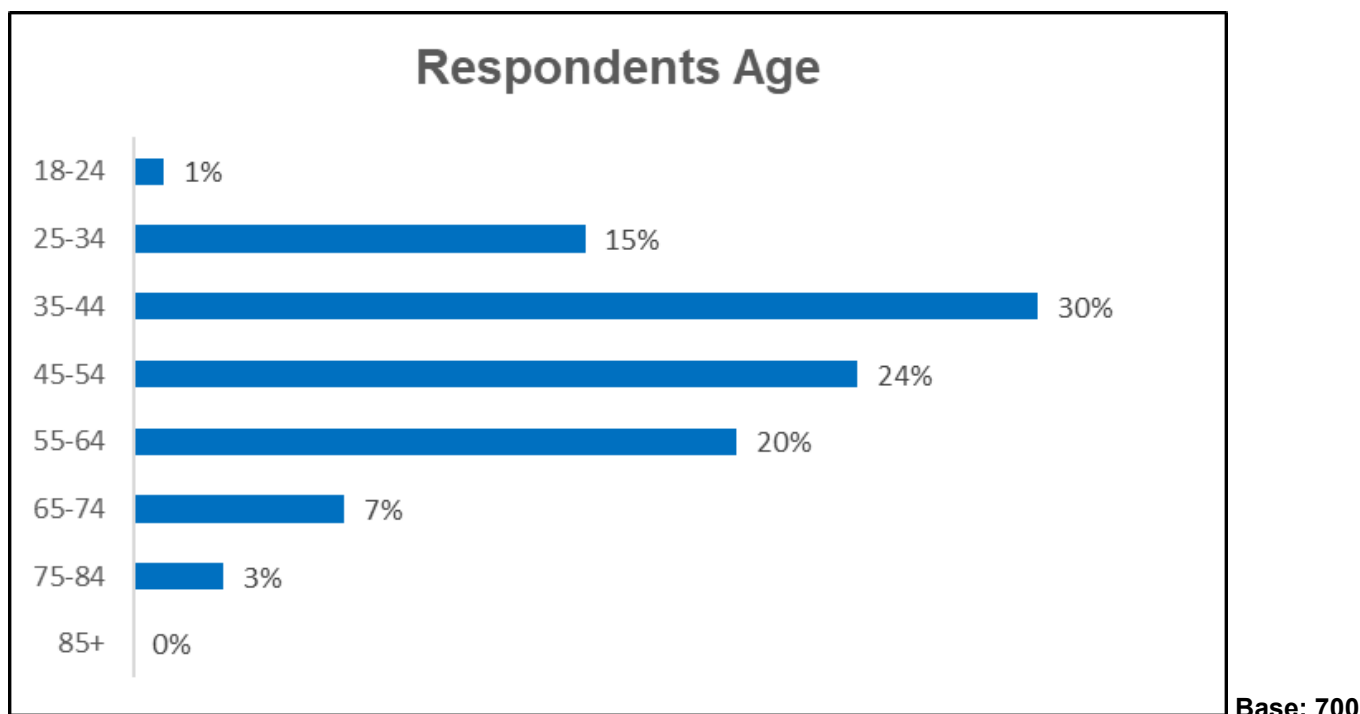
689 responses were received providing the respondent's preferred identity. 56% of respondents' identity as female, 43% as male and 1% of respondents identify as 'other'.



Base: 689

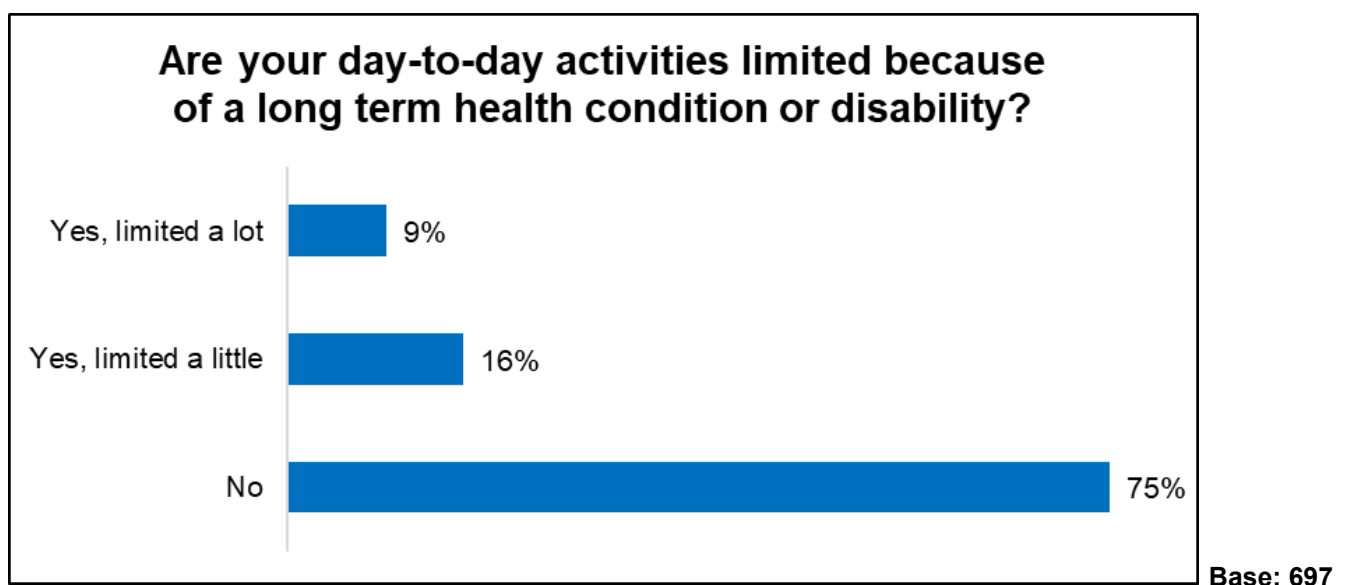
6c. Age

700 responses were received from individuals in all age categories. 1% of responses are under the age of 25 years. 89% of respondents are aged between 25 – 64 years. 10% of responses were received from individuals above the age of 65 years.



6d. Health and disability

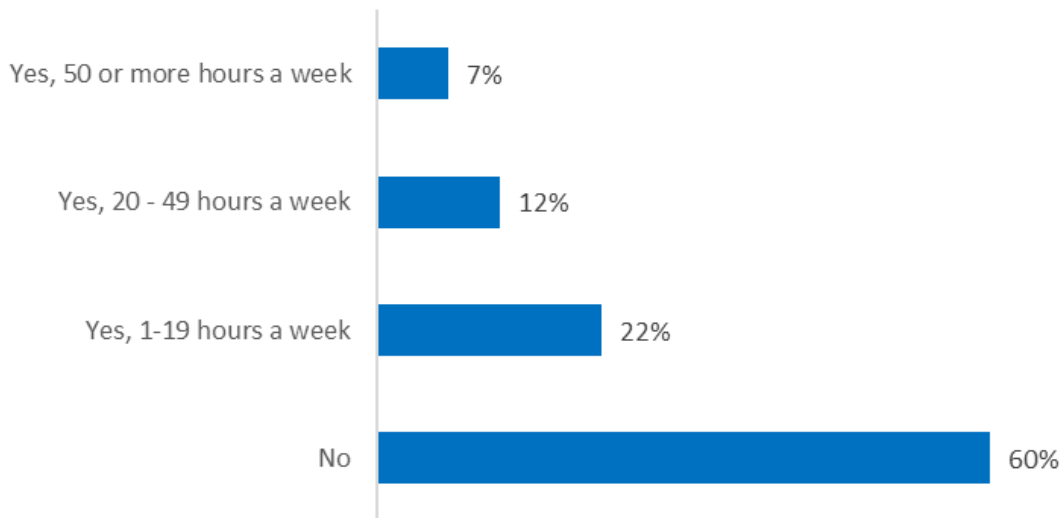
Of the 697 stakeholders responding to the consultation, one-quarter (25%) have their day-to-day activities limited due to a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness.



6e. Caring responsibility

689 respondents stated whether they had a caring responsibility. Over two-fifths (41%) of individuals taking part in this question look after or provide some form of help or support to family members, friends, neighbours and others, who need help because they have a long-term physical or mental ill-health / are disabled or have problems relating to old age.

Caring Responsibilities

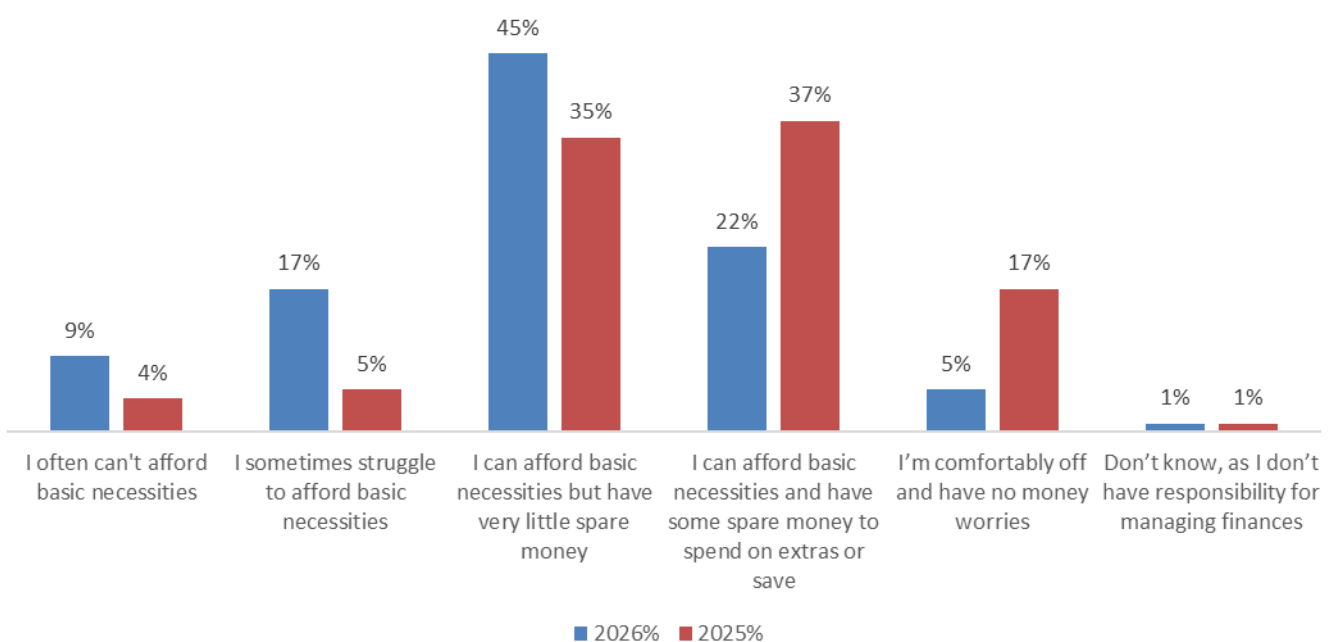


Base: 689

6f. Cost of Living

All stakeholders were asked to reflect on the cost-of-living impact and how financially stable they considered themselves. Of the 692 responses received, nearly three-quarters (71%) have financial challenges, compared with 44% in 2025. Over one-fifth (22%) can afford basic necessities and have some money spare to spend or save, compared with 37% in 2025; and 5% are financially secure, with little money worries, compared to 17% in 2025.

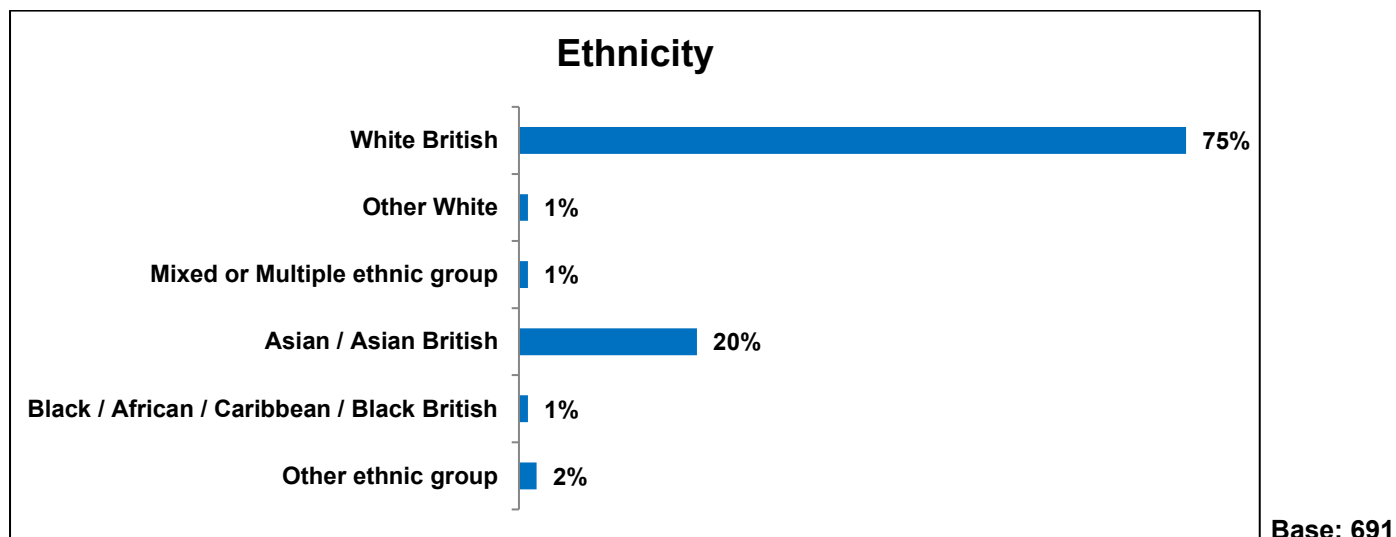
Which of the following best describes your financial situation?



2026 Base: 692

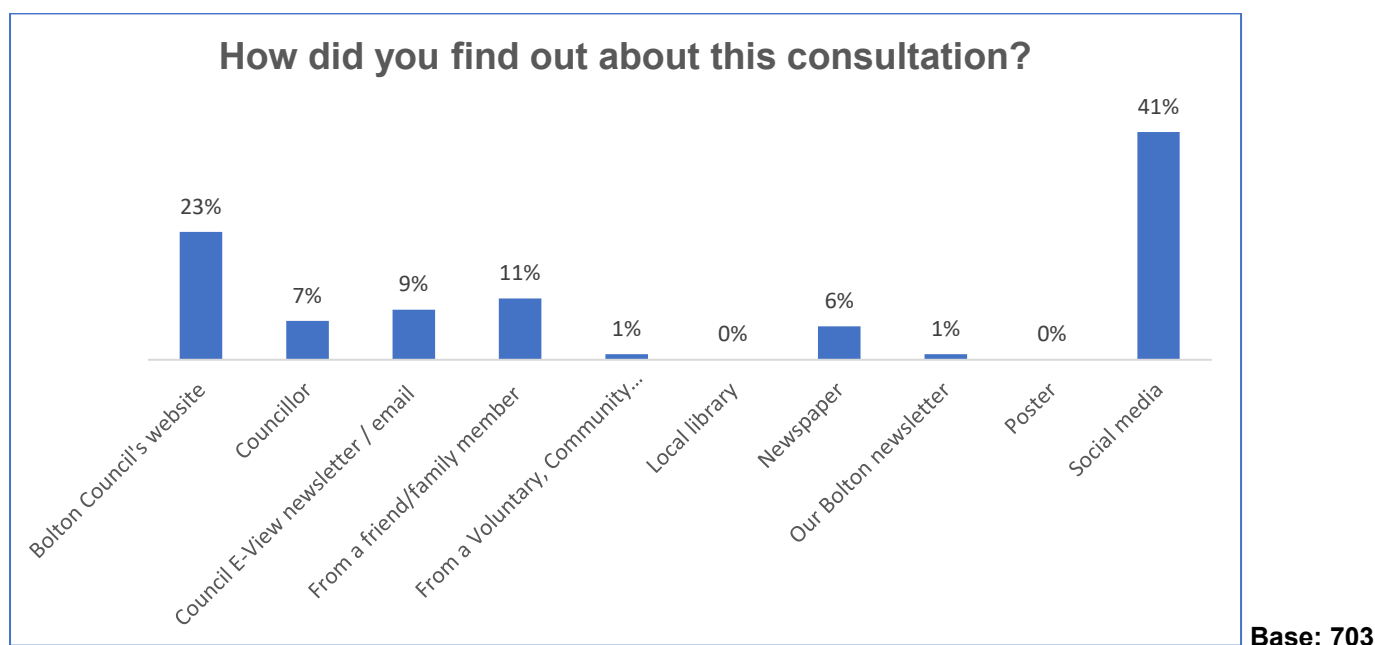
6g. Ethnicity

Of the 691 responses received, 75% are from residents and stakeholders identify as being 'white British'. One-quarter (25%) of responses are representative of communities other than 'white-British', with one-fifth (20%) of those being from the Asian/Asian British community. This is broadly reflective of the population of Bolton.



6h. Awareness of the consultation

All stakeholders were asked to reflect on where they initially heard about the consultation. Of the 703 responses received, over two-fifths (41%) heard about the Council Tax consultation via social media. This was followed by just under one-quarter hearing about the consultation via Bolton Council's website.



7. Summary

Between 15th December 2025 and 12th January 2026, the Council ran a public consultation seeking to engage residents and stakeholders who may be impacted by a proposed 4.99% increase in Council Tax. This consultation builds upon the 2025 budget consultation and report, where agreement to raise Council Tax by 4.99% in both 2026 and 2027 was approved. However, due to a legal requirement to annually consult on Best Value Duty, further consultation was required.

During this current consultation period a comprehensive communication plan was implemented to raise awareness of the proposed increases with various stakeholders and residents. 712 responses were received, with 97% of responses coming from Bolton residents, particularly those from Bolton North (22%), Bolton West (22%) and Central South (20%).

The vast majority of stakeholders responding (90%) are opposed to the proposal to raise Council Tax by 4.99%, compared to 70% of respondents in 2025. Of those responding, 75% stated they would prefer there to be no increase this financial year. Where alternative percentage increases were suggested, 2 – 2.49% was the preferred option.

634 residents and stakeholders outlined the differential impact the proposal has on them and their families, with the majority themed around socio-economic impacts. These were broken down into wider deprivation effects to working people, families, carers and those with disabilities, single income households and pensioners.

Stakeholders also outlined concern that the proposed increases don't reflect the provision of local services being delivered, outlining sub-standard provision. Some stakeholders also outlined frustration with local and national government, citing that poor management is leading to disproportionate impacts on local people. Residents also outlined alternative revenue streams and efficiency savings that could be explored, other than raising taxes.

Three official stakeholder responses were received from a Ward Member and 2 VCSE organisations, all of whom outlined significant challenges and consequences for residents with protected characteristics, specifically older people, those with disabilities and those from lower socio-economic communities.



Council Tax 2026 / 2027 Closes midday, Monday 12th January 2026

Consultation closes 12:00 noon on Monday 12th January 2026

Bolton Council is consulting on increases to Council Tax for period 2026/27 and would like your views.

The proposed 2026/27 budget, including increases of 4.99% in Council Tax was previously consulted on between December 2024 and January 2025.

However, the 2026/27 budget set last year requires an update to reflect the latest information available, and the council is legally required to consult on its Best Value Duty every year. This means that people will have a second opportunity to voice their opinions on Council Tax increases for 2026/27. No additional cuts to services are planned.

Along with other Local Authorities across the UK, Bolton Council continues to face financial challenges. We need to make some difficult decisions if we are to protect the essential services that some of our most vulnerable residents depend on and meet our legal duty to balance the books. We therefore invite you to give your views on the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% in 2026/27.

Your views will be considered alongside other information to help Bolton Council decide on the final Council Tax options in February 2026.

Your response - keeping your data safe

Most questions are optional; just miss out any that you don't want to answer.

The results of this consultation may be made public. If you're responding as an individual you won't be identified in any report as your responses will be anonymised and grouped with those from other people. If you're responding in an official capacity your response may be published but no personal details will be included

Any personal data you provide will be held securely, in line with our retention schedule and privacy policy: www.bolton.gov.uk/data-protection-freedom-information/privacy-notices

We use Snap Surveys professional software to collect and process your data. Snap Surveys Ltd. follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and their privacy policy can be found by following this link: www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/privacy-policy-uk/.

Proposed increases to Council Tax

Council Tax is made up of a General Levy [for general services provided by Bolton Council] and Adult Social Care Levy [social care support for adults], as well as two Greater Manchester Mayoral Precepts [Fire Services, Police and the Greater Manchester Mayor].

Residents in Blackrod, Horwich and Westthroughton pay an additional Parish Levy, which goes towards the cost of their Town Councils.

Under government regulations, we're currently able to increase Council Tax by up to 5% a year without having to hold a referendum. If this limit doesn't change, we propose to increase council tax as follows:

In 2026/27 we propose to raise Council Tax by 4.99%, made up of 2.99% for the General Levy and 2% for the Adult Social Care Levy.

This would mean an increase of £61.89 for a Band A property and £82.52 for a Band C property.

Each 1% rise in Council Tax would generate around £1.53m, so the proposed 4.99% rise would bring in an extra £7.6m

If Council Tax doesn't rise by 4.99%, further cuts would need to be made to services in order to balance the council budget.

In 2026/27 there will be no change to the Council Tax Support scheme, which allows those in most need to apply for help towards paying their council tax.

How strongly you agree or disagree with the proposal to raise Council Tax by 4.99% in 2026 / 2027?

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ No opinion

If you disagree, what should happen to Council Tax?

- ☐ No increase
☐ Rise by less than 4.99%
☐ Rise by more than 4.99%

How much do you think Council Tax should rise by?

Impact of the proposed rise

Please describe how you, your family or the people you represent will be affected if Council Tax rises in 2026/2027.

- ☐ No impact

Your interest

Which of the following best describes you / your family's interest in this consultation?

- ☐ Live in Bolton borough [Bolton Council area]
- ☐ Work in Bolton borough
- ☐ Study / have children at school in Bolton borough
- ☐ Visitor to Bolton
- ☐ Official response from Parish / Bolton borough Councillor / Elected Member
- ☐ Official response from a business / organisation / community group. You must have their permission to submit an official response on their behalf
- ☐ None of the above - please explain below

Please say what your interest is

Please say which ward, business organisation or community group you represent

Please say what your role is - in what official capacity do you represent the ward, business, organisation or community group?

About you

Your answers in this section help us to make sure we are getting views from different types of people. They won't be used to contact or identify you.

Please give your full postcode

eg BL1 1RU

Are you...?

- ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Identify in another way

Which age group are you in?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Under18 | <input type="radio"/> 55 - 64 |
| <input type="radio"/> 18 - 24 | <input type="radio"/> 65 - 74 |
| <input type="radio"/> 25 - 34 | <input type="radio"/> 75 - 84 |
| <input type="radio"/> 35 - 44 | <input type="radio"/> 85 or over |
| <input type="radio"/> 45 - 54 | |

Do you look after, or give any help of support to family members, friends, neighbours or others who need help because they have a long-term physical or mental ill-health / disability, or have problems relating to old age?

Please don't count anything you do as part of paid employment.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> No | <input type="radio"/> Yes, 20 - 49 hours a week |
| <input type="radio"/> Yes, 1-19 hours a week | <input type="radio"/> Yes, 50 or more hours a week |

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a long-term physical or mental health condition / illness?

- ☐ Yes, limited a lot ☐ Yes, limited a little ☐ No

What is your ethnic group?

- ☐ White British ☐ Asian or Asian British
☐ White other ☐ Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
☐ Mixed or Multiple ethnic group ☐ Other ethnic group

Which of the following best describes your financial situation?

This question helps us to see how people are being affected by the cost of living

- ☐ I often can't afford basic necessities [food, heating etc]
☐ I sometimes struggle to afford basic necessities
☐ I can afford basic necessities but have very little spare money
☐ I can afford basic necessities and have some spare money to spend on extras or save
☐ I'm comfortably off and have no money worries
☐ Don't know, as I don't have responsibility for managing finances

How did you find out about this consultation? Please select one option.

- ☐ Bolton Council's website
☐ Councillor
☐ Council E-View newsletter / email from the Council
☐ From a friend/family member
☐ From a Voluntary, Community Sector
☐ Local library
☐ Newspaper
☐ Our Bolton Newsletter
☐ Poster
☐ Social media

Thanks for completing this survey. Please post to:

**Freepost RTTT-YTEL-YSXS,
Consultation & Engagement
Team, 2nd Floor, Town Hall, Victoria Square, Bolton, BL1 1RU**

