

## **Review of the Library Service – Consultation Analysis**

### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the consultation process, and key consultation findings (including an understanding of who participated in the consultation), the results of which will be used to help inform decisions on the Review of Northamptonshire's Library Service. This consultation ran alongside the consultation on the two phases of other 2018-19 budget proposals. Due to the volume of responses in relation to the library consultation and usual practice regarding consultations on library services, this is presented separately.

### **Cabinet decisions and formal consultations**

2. Consultation on the review of the library service ran from 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to 13<sup>th</sup> January 2018, having been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

### **How was the consultation promoted?**

3. Councillors, local MPs and MEPs, district and borough councils, parish and town councils, partner organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations, representatives of protected characteristic groups, local business groups, customer and user groups and members of the Northamptonshire Residents' Panel were formally invited to give their views and asked to promote the consultation to their members, or within their local area where appropriate.
4. Opportunities to take part in the consultation were also promoted in the local media via press releases, through the council's website, e-newsletter and social media channels, allowing both internal (e.g. NCC staff) as well as external consultees to get involved in the process.
5. Posters were placed in each library informing customers of the review and how they could have their say.
6. Eight drop-in consultation sessions were held across the county during the consultation to enable attendees to have face-to-face dialogue with both library staff and councillors. Other methods of participating were also available during these events.

### **How did consultees have their say?**

7. Local people and organisations were able to have their say about the review of the library service in a range of ways, by:
  - Visiting the Review of the Library Service Consultation webpage and completing the questionnaire or requesting a paper questionnaire from the Council or from their library (including the mobile library)
  - Emailing [consult@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:consult@northamptonshire.gov.uk)
  - Writing to Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation, Northamptonshire County Council, One Angel Square, Northampton, NN1 1ED

- Attending one of eight drop-in consultation sessions held over the consultation period, one in each district/borough council area and two in Northampton
  - Using social media: Tweeting @mycountycouncil or posting comments on the mycountycouncil Facebook page
  - Using the toolkit to hold their own discussions and feeding back to us
  - Signing or submitting a petition or e-petition
8. Some consultees choose to submit their views about the Review of the Library Service directly to local MPs, local Councillors, the county council's Chief Executive, or other senior officers or managers in NCC. These responses were forwarded to the 'Consult' mail box and have been included within the consultation analysis.

### **Budget Scrutiny**

9. In addition to the above consultation channels, local people and organisations were also able to take part in Budget Scrutiny meetings in relation to the wider budget proposals, and on the review of the library service in particular. Budget scrutiny involves Councillors reviewing the draft budget proposals, looking at their aims and how their delivery may affect Council services. Although these scrutiny sessions happen at the same time as the Draft Budget Consultation process, they are separate from it.
10. The Budget Scrutiny Review included the following opportunities for members of the public to give their views in relation to the review of the library service in the following ways, through targeted scrutiny sessions:
- Wednesday 3rd January 2018 – The first meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, to identify which proposals should be subject to further scrutiny
  - Monday 8th January 2018 - An opportunity for members of the public to give their views about public health and wellbeing matters
11. The views expressed in these sessions have been summarised in the [Budget Scrutiny Review papers](#).

### **Number and type of responses received**

12. During the consultation period, using the various means available to consultees, local people and organisations contributed to the consultation almost 6,000 times (acknowledging that some people may have responded to the consultation via a number of different methods available to them).
13. We received submissions from a number of local organisations, including the district and borough councils in Northamptonshire, 30 parish and town councils (including their umbrella organisation), library Friends/Supporters/Strategy groups, local clubs, groups and organisations, academic institutions and a group of authors, partner organisations, local political parties, a residents' association, a charity and a parish council from outside the county. Five local MPs (Peter Bone MP, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Philip Hollobone MP, the Right Honourable Andrea Leadsom MP and Tom Pursglove MP) wrote to us expressing their views and/or forwarded concerns from their constituents.

14. During the consultation period regular summaries of consultation responses received were circulated to decision makers to ensure such responses were considered in full and Cabinet Members had the opportunity to view unredacted consultation responses in a secure room in the County Council offices.
15. A number of responses, predominately letters and emails, were received after the consultation closed. Although receipt of these responses fell outside of the consultation timeframe, all of these responses have still been forwarded on to the senior officers within the service for their consideration. Upon initial inspection of these late submissions the feedback contained within closely mirrored the responses submitted within the formal consultation timeframe.

### What did people say?

#### Questionnaire

16. In total, 5,255 respondents completed a questionnaire, either online or by paper copy and either in standard or easy read format. Respondents did not have to answer every question and so the total number of responses for each question differs and is shown in relation to each question.
17. Respondents to the questionnaire were asked which libraries they regularly use and they were able to select any of the 36 static libraries and the mobile library (respondents were able to select as many libraries as applicable).
18. The library identified as most frequently used by respondents was Brackley, with just over a quarter of respondents (26.04% or 1,373 respondents) stating that they regularly used this library. This was followed by Northampton Central (10.89% or 574 respondents) and Oundle (7.81% or 412 respondents). The library least frequently used by respondents was Danesholme (0.63% or 33 respondents).

Library	Used by no of respondents	Used by % of respondents
Brackley	1,373	26.04%
Northampton Central	574	10.89%
Oundle	412	7.81%
Kingsthorpe	406	7.70%
Brixworth	347	6.58%
Abington	320	6.07%
Weston Favell	314	5.95%
Thrapston	286	5.42%
Long Buckby	285	5.40%
Raunds	284	5.39%
Hunsbury	270	5.12%
Kettering	249	4.72%
Duston	215	4.08%
Towcester	213	4.04%
Moulton	211	4.00%

<b>Library</b>	<b>Used by no of respondents</b>	<b>Used by % of respondents</b>
Burton Latimer	198	3.75%
Higham Ferrers	178	3.38%
Middleton Cheney	171	3.24%
Desborough	170	3.22%
Roade	165	3.13%
Wellingborough	164	3.11%
Daventry	149	2.83%
Deanshanger	141	2.67%
Rothwell	131	2.48%
Rushden	130	2.47%
Mobile	121	2.29%
Earls Barton	114	2.16%
Far Cotton	106	2.01%
Corby	93	1.76%
St James	76	1.44%
Wootton	75	1.42%
Irthlingborough	71	1.35%
Wollaston	61	1.16%
Finedon	46	0.87%
Irchester	41	0.78%
Woodford Halse	34	0.64%
Danesholme	33	0.63%

19. Respondents were also asked which library services they use, choosing as many as applicable from a list, as well as being able to add any other services they used the library for which were not listed. Just over 90% of respondents stated that they used the library to borrow books. Almost half of respondents (48.31%) stated that they attended events for adults and children at libraries. Around 4 out of 10 (41.35%) stated that they accessed computers, photocopying, printing and scanning at libraries.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Used by no of respondents</b>	<b>Used by % of respondents</b>
Borrowing books	4,563	90.90%
Attend events/activities for adults or children	2,425	48.31%
Access Computers, Photocopying, Printing and Scanning	2,076	41.35%
Universal Children's Centre services e.g. Rhymetime, Stay and Play, information and advice, school readiness service, health, lifestyle and wellbeing services, parenting and family support services, Services to improve adults personal skills, education and employability	1,714	34.14%
Take part in the Summer Reading Challenge	1,417	28.23%

<b>Service</b>	<b>Used by no of respondents</b>	<b>Used by % of respondents</b>
Access E-books, magazines, music, comics and newspapers	1,153	22.97%
Baby-friendly/breastfeeding friendly facilities	1,060	21.12%
Make applications e.g. for concessionary bus pass/disabled parking permit/school place	957	19.06%
Other	817	16.27%
Health Visitor drop-in sessions	683	13.61%
Digital support offered by staff to help with using the online services	560	11.16%
Research your family history with free access to Ancestry and Find My Past	517	10.30%
Pods/community meeting spaces	511	10.18%
To contact my district or borough council	508	10.12%
Member of a Friends Group	490	9.76%
Information on/support for looking for a job/self-employment	348	6.93%
Attend free workshops and find out information about starting and developing your own business	326	6.49%
Health Walks departing from libraries	290	5.78%
Access free online courses	270	5.38%
Use Registry Office services (where applicable)	245	4.88%
Volunteer through the Get Involved Hub	198	3.94%
Learn basic IT skills	190	3.78%
Meet a wellbeing adviser and take a holistic wellbeing assessment	148	2.95%
Library to You service	143	2.85%
Reading Well books on prescription	135	2.69%
Sell Your Wares via exhibition space/display cabinets	114	2.27%
Language Café	102	2.03%
Attend Code Clubs to learn about computer programming	84	1.67%
Revise for your driving theory test with free access to Theory Test Pro	83	1.65%
Access Debt Help and Money Management by specially trained library staff	75	1.49%
Keep Safe Scheme	69	1.37%
Not applicable, I do not use a library service	65	1.29%
Sounds Good reading group for the visually impaired	39	0.78%

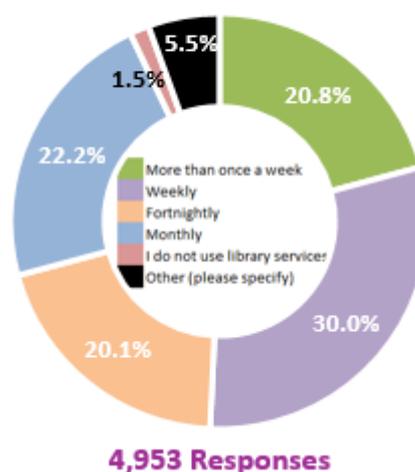
Service	Used by no of respondents	Used by % of respondents
Revise for your Life in the UK test with free access to Go Citizen	37	0.74%

20. Other activities that respondents said they used the libraries for included:

- Borrowing DVDs
- Buying things
- Reading the daily papers

21. Respondents were asked the frequency with which they used libraries. Just under a third (30%) stated that they used libraries weekly, with 20.8% using them more than once a week..

How often do you usually use the services provided at the library?

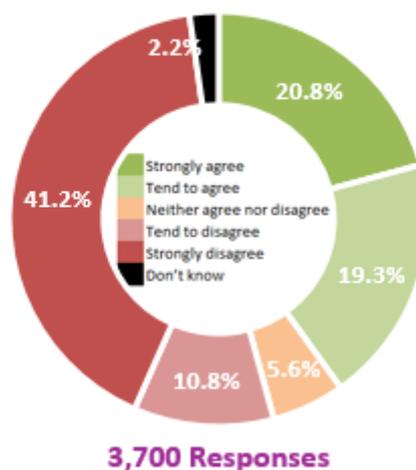


22. The next sections of the questionnaire were designed to explore respondents' views on each of the options (see Appendix M for more detail), why they answered in the way they did, what the impact of the proposal might be, and what could be done to mitigate the impact (also looking separately at the universal children's centre services which are delivered within some libraries). From analysing the responses given it was very clear that many people feel strongly about the library service, whether it is their own local library that they value as a community hub because of all the services they access there, or because they value the library service in general.

### Option 1

23. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with this option. Overall, 40.11% (or 1,484 respondents to this question) stated that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this Option. 52% (1,924 respondents) stated that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with Option 1.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



24. When asked to give their reasons for the way they responded, the following were some of the most frequently mentioned reasons:

Reasons for agreeing with Option 1:

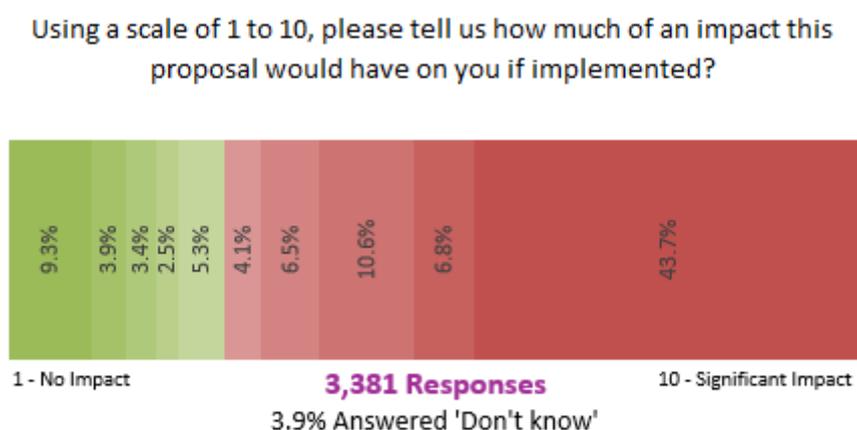
- it has the best chance of keeping their local library running and is most similar to current provision
- Option 1 is the least worst option of the three available
- gives the community the chance to get involved
- their local library was not affected by option 1
- Option 1 was a balanced proposal in the light of the financial challenges

Reasons for disagreeing with Option 1:

- libraries are community hubs because of all the valued services (either by the County Council, other organisations such as the district or borough council, health services or others such as food banks) and clubs/groups they provide and should not be at risk of closure
- concerns about the impact Option 1 would have on universal children's centre services and the importance of them to families, especially new mothers
- the importance people in villages place on smaller, local libraries and how they differ from larger libraries that would be unaffected by this option
- the impact on people with protected characteristics, such as the elderly, people with disabilities (including mental health problems) and children (and their families)
- the impact on people in rural areas if their static libraries closed and with the proposed withdrawal of the mobile library service (especially given the other budget proposal to remove bus subsidies which would have a significant impact on people in rural areas), as well as people from low income families/job seekers
- the impact on literacy and education if libraries closed or became harder to access and the belief that libraries are an important leveller regardless of background

- a belief that libraries play an important role in preventative services and that in the long run, closure could cost more because of the need for people to access more costly services when their need is greater
- doubts that volunteers could run the library service effectively, and that community managed libraries would be unsustainable in the long term
- concern that the process for expressing an interest in becoming a community managed library has been too rushed
- the belief that the Council should run the libraries

25. Respondents were also asked to show on a scale of 1-10 how much of an impact this proposal would have on them if implemented, with 1 being no impact and 10 being a significant impact. This is shown in the chart below.



26. Respondents were then asked what could be done to mitigate the impact of the proposal. Many people took the opportunity to reiterate the impact they felt the proposal would have on them and others in the community. Some comments related specifically to Option 1 being implemented:

- NCC to provide suitable support for community managed libraries, such as advice in raising funds, reduced levels of professional staff, advice on how to get volunteers interested in supporting their community managed library
- Donate the buildings to community groups/charge peppercorn rent to ease the financial costs of community managed libraries
- Get district/borough councils, town and parish councils involved in supporting community managed libraries
- Give community groups more time and more information to work on their proposals
- Phase in over 2-3 years
- Pilot community managed libraries first
- Make the larger libraries community managed instead as they might have a better chance of survival
- Ensure community managed libraries receive support from the remaining NCC libraries
- Work with schools and colleges

- Provide transport for people to get to alternative libraries if theirs closes, or improve public transport to make them more accessible
- Invest in the remaining libraries to improve them
- Extend the loan time to cut down on people having to travel if their local library closes
- Retain the mobile library if smaller libraries close or advertise for volunteer drivers to collect/return books on behalf of others in the community who can't drive
- Engage with the community more and communicate more effectively to make community managed libraries a partnership
- Retain universal children's centre services by moving them elsewhere or have a mobile service

27. Many respondents simply said there was no mitigation, or that only not closing libraries would mitigate the impact. Some respondents requested that an "Option 4" (no change) be included as part of the consultation. This additional option was strongly promoted amongst some of the respondents.

28. Other suggestions included ways the library service could save money or generate income rather than implement Option 1:

- Broaden the appeal of libraries further by joining up with other services, becoming more business-like, hiring out facilities, co-location etc
- Conversely, some said that the library service should go back to basics and focus on its core, statutory duties only
- Reduce opening hours, which could enable libraries to share staff, or to reduce the frequency of the mobile library
- Charge a membership fee/introduce charges/ask for donations
- Don't close so many libraries, and review on an individual basis rather than part of a wider approach, allowing individual libraries to come up with their own plans
- Close town centre libraries, as those areas tend to have more facilities than village locations
- Make more of e-books, downloads and allow access to some library services from home
- Relocate existing libraries from expensive buildings
- Don't open another library in Corby
- Link with businesses/seek sponsorship
- Use s106 monies or the Community Infrastructure Levy to fund libraries
- Spend less on books

29. Other comments related to other ways the Council could address the financial challenges, such as:

- Look for savings/income generation elsewhere
- Increase Council Tax
- Request more funding from central government
- Sell Angel Square
- Manage finances better
- Become a unitary authority
- Use reserves to pay for libraries

30. Respondents were also asked to show on a scale of 1-10 how much of an impact this proposal would have on them in relation to universal children's centre services, if implemented, with 1 being no impact and 10 being a significant impact. This is shown in the chart below.

Using a scale of 1 to 10, if you have children under 5 years and access the universal Children's Centre offer please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?

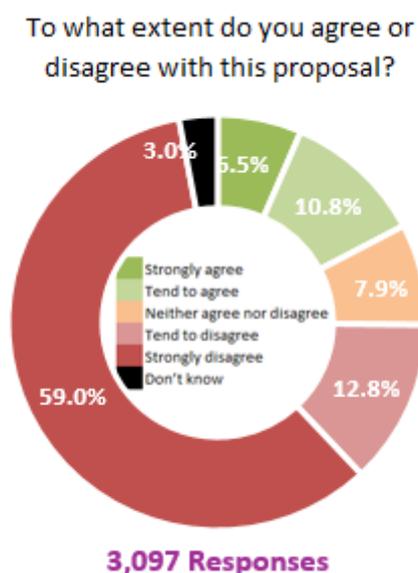


31. Respondents were then asked what could be done to mitigate the impact of the proposal in relation to universal children's centre services. Many respondents reiterated the impact they felt the proposal would have, and also repeated mitigations that had been mentioned in response to the previous question.
32. However, other mitigations specifically in relation to universal children's centre services included:
- Move universal children's centre services to other locations as they are vital to children and families, at what can be a very challenging time in people's lives
  - Use volunteers to run the services
  - Provide more services to outlying villages
  - Families can use other facilities
  - Use nurseries and schools to deliver universal children's centre services
  - Expand provision of children's services at GP surgeries
  - Involve other agencies and charities
  - Reintroduce more home visits e.g. by health visitors
  - Develop closer links between children's centres and parish and town councils
  - Request funding from the Children, Families & Education directorate at the Council
  - Make children's centres charities
  - Expand provision in the remaining children's centres
  - Reintroduce Sure Start centres
33. Some respondents stated that having moved universal children's centre services into libraries to save money, this was a backward step. Others disagreed with the service being moved into libraries in the first place, and felt this would be better for those services.

34. Respondents were also asked the following question: “This proposal would require community involvement to set up community managed libraries in those libraries listed for closure. Do you have any suggestions as to how this could happen? Please specify which library you are referring to if appropriate.”
35. Some respondents reiterated views expressed earlier in the questionnaire regarding this option. Others made suggestions for how the community managed model might work, in terms of building on current community involvement in libraries, involving parish and town councils and fundraising ideas, as well as looking to learn from other areas that have implemented community managed libraries.

## Option 2

36. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with this option. Overall, 17.31% (or 536 respondents to this question) stated that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this Option. 71.84% (2,225 respondents) stated that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with Option 2.



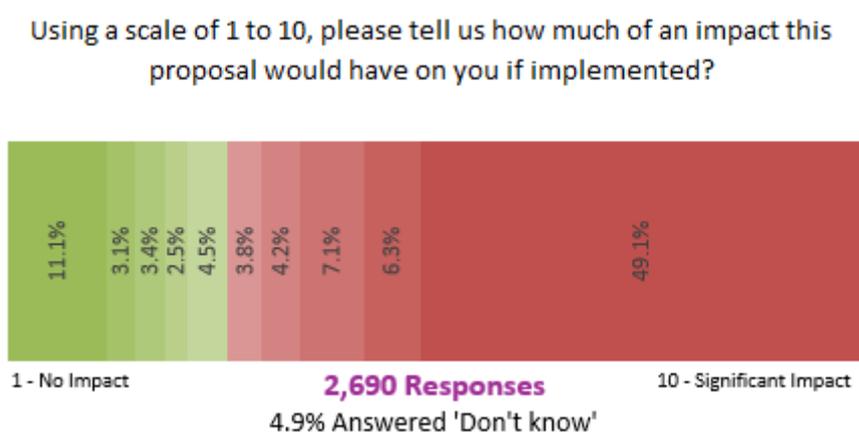
37. When asked to give their reasons for the way they responded, a number of people reiterated points raised in relation to Option 1 (outline above). The following were some of the most frequently mentioned additional reasons:
38. Reasons for agreeing with Option 2:
- it has the best chance of preserving a comprehensive library service across the county, by allowing investment in remaining libraries
  - it is a necessary consolidation of services
  - their library would still remain open under Option 2

39. However, it appears that some respondents answered that they agreed with Option 2 but gave reasons that suggested they disagreed with the proposal and so in reality, agreement with Option 2 is probably lower than the figures suggest. Reasons given for disagreeing with Option 2:

- because they supported Option 1 and the concept of community managed libraries (either because they felt they were a good idea or because it was the best chance of their local library to remain open)
- would result in too many closures and that this would increase social isolation amongst vulnerable groups
- the perception there is no real difference between Option 1 and Option 2
- support for adding an 'Option 4' (no change) to the consultation options
- the view that remaining libraries would need to expand their provision to meet new demand
- loss of libraries as Keep Safe Places as part of the Keep Safe Scheme (which aims to support people with learning disabilities to keep safe and get help in an emergency when out and about in Northamptonshire)
- Option 2 would make it harder to reopen libraries if the financial situation changed
- doubts as to whether the Council would be meeting its statutory requirements under Option 2
- questioning the rationale for which libraries to close and which to keep open
- an observation that there would be no reduction in Council Tax for the loss of this service

40. Concerns around the loss of the mobile library were reiterated.

41. Respondents were also asked to show on a scale of 1-10 how much of an impact this proposal would have on them if implemented, with 1 being no impact and 10 being a significant impact. This is shown in the chart below.



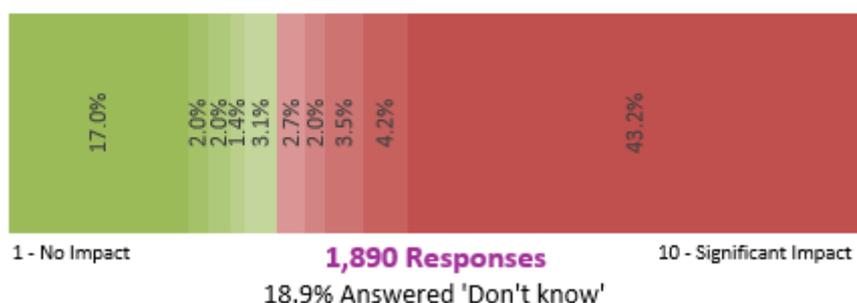
42. Respondents were then asked what could be done to mitigate the impact of the proposal. Most took the opportunity to reiterate the impact they felt the proposal would have on them and others in the community, and reiterate the views expressed in relation to Option 1. Many respondents felt that it would not be possible to mitigate the impact of library

closures and that the only mitigation was not to close libraries. Some comments related specifically to Option 2 being implemented:

- Requesting the re-categorisation of some libraries in the hope that this would mean they did not fall within the scope of Option 2
- Extend the opening hours of and invest in remaining libraries to cope with increased demand
- Put the books from closed libraries into schools so that they can still be used
- Ensure there are sufficient, cost effective public transport links between the smaller towns where libraries would close, and the towns with one of the 15 retained libraries
- Have a transition period
- Offer some services e.g. blue badge applications, computers, photocopying etc elsewhere in the towns where libraries would close

43. Respondents were also asked to show on a scale of 1-10 how much of an impact this proposal would have on them in relation to universal children's centre services, if implemented, with 1 being no impact and 10 being a significant impact. This is shown in the chart below.

Using a scale of 1 to 10, if you have children under 5 years and access the universal Children's Centre offer please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



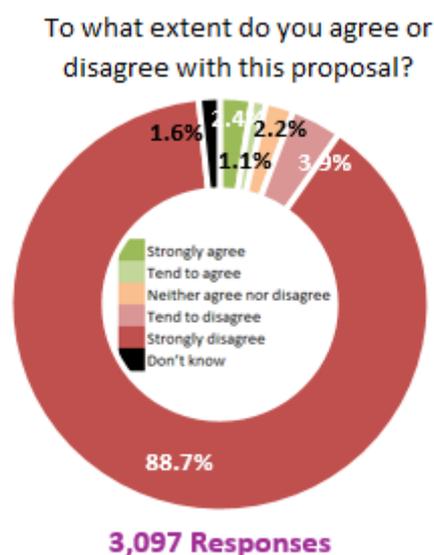
44. Respondents were then asked what could be done to mitigate the impact of the proposal in relation to universal children's centre services. Many respondents reiterated the impact they felt the proposal overall would have, and also repeated mitigations that had been mentioned in response to the previous option.

45. However, other mitigations specifically in relation to universal children's centre services under Option 2 included:

- Provide transportation/ensure there is adequate public transport to remaining children's centres
- Encouragement of other local initiatives to provide children's services
- Reopen standalone children's centres
- Consider mixing adult day care and children's centres
- Use GP surgeries, dentists and pharmacies to provide information to parents

### Option 3

46. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with this option. Overall, 3.57% (or 108 respondents to this question) stated that they strongly agree or tend to agree with this Option. 92.65% (2,799 respondents) stated that they strongly disagree or tend to disagree with Option 3.



47. When asked to give their reasons for the way they responded, many people reiterated points raised in relation to Options 1, 2 or both. As can be seen from the figures above, few people agreed with this option and once again, it appears that some respondents answered that they agreed with Option 3 but gave reasons that suggested they disagreed with the proposal and so in reality, agreement with Option 3 is probably even lower. The following were some of the most frequently mentioned additional reasons for disagreeing with Option 3:

- Their library would close (with all the concerns about the negative impact this could have), with no option for community managed libraries if it was one of the seven that would have remained open under Option 2
- The libraries left under option 3 would not be within practical usage distance for reasons of public transport infrastructure, money and time
- Dislike of the atmosphere in larger libraries
- Loss of footfall in town centres and custom for local businesses

48. Concerns around the loss of the mobile library were reiterated and if anything, amplified given the reduction to eight libraries under Option 3.

49. Respondents were also asked to show on a scale of 1-10 how much of an impact this proposal would have on them if implemented, with 1 being no impact and 10 being a significant impact. This is shown in the chart below.

Using a scale of 1 to 10, please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



50. Respondents were then asked what could be done to mitigate the impact of the proposal. Many took the opportunity to reiterate the impact they felt the proposal would have on them and others in the community, and reiterate the views expressed in relation to the other options. As with Option 2, it was felt that it would be hard to mitigate the impact of Option 3, given that more libraries would close under this option.

51. Some comments related specifically to Option 3 being implemented:

- Offering the community managed library option to libraries which were not offered it in Option 1 but would be closed under Option 3
- Library closures should be reconsidered with a view to ensuring that the libraries are evenly distributed around the county, based on distance rather than population centres, so that no resident is more than a "reasonable" distance from a local library, and also served by a regular bus route
- Provide postal book borrowing services

52. Respondents were also asked to show on a scale of 1-10 how much of an impact this proposal would have on them in relation to universal children’s centre services, if implemented, with 1 being no impact and 10 being a significant impact. This is shown in the chart below.

Using a scale of 1 to 10, if you have children under 5 years and access the universal Children’s Centre offer please tell us how much of an impact this proposal would have on you if implemented?



53. Respondents were then asked what could be done to mitigate the impact of the proposal in relation to universal children’s centre services. Many respondents reiterated the impact they

felt the proposal would have, and also repeated mitigations that had been mentioned in response to the previous options.

54. However, other mitigations specifically in relation to universal children's centre services under this option included:
- Introduce charges for children's services
  - Remaining libraries to work closely with other organisations providing similar services to ensure there is capacity to take on service users from closed libraries
  - Have drop-in sessions at appropriate local businesses instead of operating from a fixed base
  - Provide transport to remaining children's centres
55. Respondents were then asked if they had any other comments they wished to make. Many took the opportunity to reiterate comments they had made earlier in the report, whether they were repeating their agreement or disagreement with the options, stating what they wished to happen or reiterating what they believed the impacts would be of the various options.
56. Other additional comments related to alternative suggestions for how to achieve savings, and how libraries could be run more efficiently and save money. These have been fed back to the Library Service for consideration.
57. The final questions asked respondents about themselves (their postcode and in what capacity they were responding to the questionnaire) and then equality monitoring questions. The responses given are shown at the end of the consultation section of this report.

### **Letters and emails**

58. We received over 600 letters and emails in relation to this proposal. Some were in relation to particular libraries while others focused on the library service in general. Almost all objected to the possibility of library closures and most did not agree with the idea of community managed libraries and wanted to retain the status quo. Some respondents used the Council's complaints e-form to submit their views.
59. By far the most frequent comment made was that libraries were community hubs, because of the number of services (including those provided by district and borough councils and other partners) and clubs that ran from them and the way they are valued by the local community. Many respondents expressed the view that they did not want their local library (or libraries in general) to be closed.
60. Respondents raised concerns about the impact that closures would have on particular groups:
- Children and young people
  - The elderly
  - People with disabilities

- Other vulnerable people, such as people with mental health problems, the homeless and drug users)
  - People with English as a second language
  - Women
61. Many were concerned that if local libraries closed, the next nearest libraries would be too far away, too inconvenient or cost prohibitive to get to and that this would deter people from using libraries in the future. It was feared by many that social isolation would increase and it was felt that the library review would have a negative impact on rural areas. The double impact on rural areas of the proposal to remove bus subsidies, alongside the withdrawal of the mobile library service under all options, was also noted. The social value of libraries was mentioned by some respondents.
62. The rate of growth in Northamptonshire (and in certain areas in particular such as Brackley and Moulton) was cited as a reason not to close libraries, as the need for them in the future was perceived to be even greater.
63. There was a desire among a number of respondents to retain the current library provision, and they requested that 'Option 4' be added to the consultation options.
64. The educational value of libraries was often mentioned, with concerns raised about the impact on children's education if libraries were closed (and especially the education of children from lower income families who may not have access to books and other educational materials at home). The importance of accessing free internet services was also mentioned a number of times, and the free access to computers and other IT equipment, such as printing, given the amount of services now online. The general importance of libraries and books was frequently mentioned, especially when considering the cost of buying books. It was also noted that libraries were used by childminders and home educators.
65. Some respondents did state that they supported Option 1, but this was often qualified with the comment that it was the only way to keep their local library open. A much smaller number supported Option 2.
66. Some respondents expressed concerns about the viability of community managed libraries under Option 1, and felt that it was inappropriate for some services to be delivered by volunteers. Concerns were also expressed about the loss of professional staff.
67. Libraries were viewed by a number of respondents as vital places for families, and especially new mothers, with the groups run for parents and children and the opportunity to meet others in the same situation. Some respondents were concerned about the impact on universal children's centre services if libraries became community managed or were closed.
68. The view was expressed by a number of people that they did not feel that the review would actually generate savings, because of the good value for money provided by libraries and the fact that they offer preventative services that stop people needing to access more expensive services. In the case of Moulton Library, it was noted that the library had not been open for long, and that it would be short-sighted to close it.

69. It was also felt by a number of respondents that any change to the current library provision would have a negative impact on socio-economic deprivation, given that libraries currently provide free access to a wide range of services and could negatively impact job seekers who might find it harder to look for/apply for jobs or access benefits. Some respondents noted the positive impact that libraries have on life chances and social mobility.
70. Some respondents felt that implementing any of the three options would mean that the Council was not meeting its statutory duty around library provision.
71. Some respondents stated that they would be prepared to pay higher Council Tax to retain the current library provision. Conversely, others felt that implementation of Option 1 would mean they were paying twice, if they also had to pay a higher precept to their town or parish council to support a community managed library. Other suggestions to address the financial difficulties facing the Council included:
- Reduce opening hours
  - Make more of library self-service
  - Introduce a membership charge and a nominal charge for borrowing books, and charge a nominal fee for children's groups
  - Work with schools and colleges to extend their provision
  - Work with parish and town councils to support community managed libraries
  - Scale down the current provision (and conversely, add more to services delivered in libraries to make them more financially sustainable, such as combining venues)
  - Look to become self-sufficient by generating more income
  - Twin libraries at risk of closure with those remaining open under all options
  - Libraries should be run by non-profit making organisations
  - Set up a Trust to run libraries
  - Introduce one or more unitary authorities in the county
  - Sell land to raise funds
72. Some general comments were made about the finances of the Council in terms of past decisions and financial priorities, and these mirrored the comments received via the questionnaire.
73. Some concerns were expressed about different parts of the review and consultation. It was considered by some that the process for expressing an interest in becoming a community managed library and the subsequent business case requirements were too rushed and that the Council needed to provide more support for groups considering this. Some felt that the initial equality impact assessment produced at the start of the process was insufficient.
74. With regard to the consultation, some felt it was too focused towards online responses. A small number of respondents felt the Council should have written to every household to inform them of the consultation.

75. A small number of respondents felt that the review of library services was a good thing, stating that libraries are too expensive and should be scrapped, and that times are changing and we don't need as many physical libraries.
76. We also received around 30 letters and emails in relation to the Northamptonshire Studies Collection and in particular, the John Clare Collection and the post of Local Studies Manager. However, Northampton Central library is retained in all three of the options that were consulted on, and there are no current proposals which will impact on the John Clare collection.

### **Petitions, e-petitions, pro-forma letter campaigns and group submissions**

77. At the time of writing this report we have received 29 petitions relating to the library service review. Some were posted to the Council offices, others were hand-delivered at Council meetings during the consultation period or to individual County Councillors or emailed as scanned copies.
78. The petitions and e-petitions covered the following subjects and libraries:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Signatories</b>
Save Brackley Library	2,729
Moulton Library is Under Threat of Closure	2,255
Stop the Closure of Desborough Library	2,225
Oundle Library Petition	1,455
Save Kingsthorpe Library	1,330
Save Our Library – Brixworth	1,232
Option 4 – Libraries Consultation e-petition	1,107
Save Brackley Library e-petition	1,022
Proposed Cuts in the Library Service – Deanshanger	950
Save Long Buckby Public Library e-petition	513
Friends of Thrapston Library	495
Save Our Libraries – Save St James Library	415
Middleton Cheney Library	413
Option 4 – Save Northamptonshire's Libraries	392
Keep Rothwell Library Open	353
Danesholme Library	349
Option 4: Save Northamptonshire's Libraries (Friends of Earls Barton Library)	281
Please Save Raunds Library (St Peters School Raunds)	241
Save Raunds Library e-petition	208
Keep Rothwell Library Open e-petition	194
Save Northants Services – Save our Libraries	178
Option 4 / Save Irchester Library	161
Brixworth Library e-petition	126

Topic	Signatories
Save Higham Ferrers Library and Children's Centre e-petition	110
Trinity Loves our Library (Thrapston)	100
Save Raunds Library	75
Save Danesholme Library e-petition	43
Save Higham Library e-petition	13
Keep Finedon Library Open e-petition	8

79. Some submissions were made on behalf of groups e.g. library users, school children. Many groups and organisations coordinated responses and submitted messages written by both adults and children, some of which were sent alongside their petitions. These messages were often very emotional and expressed the authors' passionate views about the library service. Some contained children's drawings as their way of expressing their thoughts and feelings about the service and photographs of children using and enjoying some of the services provided by the library. The following is an analysis of these collective submissions.

80. Sixty-eight individual messages were sent on behalf of the Save Our Library (Friends of Abington Library Campaign) setting out why the library was important to them. Reasons given included:

- The library is good for wellbeing
- The library is good for families, children, carers
- The library provides support to improve English language skills
- The library is a community hub, providing lots of services
- The library is good for those without a computer
- Losing it will increase gap between rich and poor
- The library is a lifeline for elderly people
- The library is used for homework and is important for children's future education
- It's one of the few remaining free resources
- The library is a source of information
- The library is vital for people to access benefits online
- The library is good for self-help
- The library is accessible for disabled people
- The library provides a safe environment for children
- The library is convenient for its customers and there are no convenient alternatives

81. The Trinity Loves our Library petition also included reasons why the children like their library – these included:

- Homework club
- It is a quiet place
- Summer Reading Challenge
- There are lots of things to do there

82. The Keep Rothwell Library Open petition also included a comment book containing over 370 comments, setting out why people like their library and did not support the possibility of closure. The reasons given included:

- It is important for supporting children's reading
- It provides lots of services – it's a community hub
- It is important for those without internet access
- It's a local meeting place
- It is good for both young and old
- Homework club
- Closure would have an impact on children's centre users
- It provides a local base for Kettering Borough Council services
- It is a safe place for children to be
- It combats social isolation
- It supports vulnerable people
- Going to a library further away would cost more
- It is good for people's mental health
- It is a leveller of inequality as everyone can access the services
- It is important for people with disabilities
- It provides support for mums with/at risk of postnatal depression

83. The supporting letter with the Friends of Thrapston Library petition raised concerns about how the financial situation has arisen, gave the view that the library is a community hub, it is good for children and young mums, praised the skilled librarians and gave the view that the library is value for money.

84. We received almost 300 posters, poems, letters and messages from pupils and staff at Loatlands Primary School in Desborough. The messages included:

- Save our library...because I like the crafts; because computers will go; because it's awesome; because all the kids love the books
- Our library is...a world-opener; a memory-maker; a mind-flooder; a boredom-killer; a knowledge-sharer; amazing; fun
- Our library gives us opportunities in our life
- It is the heart of Desborough
- The library offers more than just books, it is a community hub
- There are coffee mornings for the vulnerable
- Old people and children need it
- It is very important to us
- We like the Summer Reading Challenge
- It helps us with our homework
- I love finding out stuff from non-fiction books

85. We received over 170 messages in relation to Desborough Library, with library users stating why they feel passionate about their library. Reasons included:

- It is key to the community
- Being able to do homework in peace
- It's good to read books
- We can't do without it
- It offers so much to pre-school children and the elderly
- It is warm and welcoming

- It has enabled me to meet new friends
- It is a safe haven
- It is an important place for families to socialise
- Using the library for council-related matters

86. We received over 350 letters, pictures and messages from pupils at Moulton Primary School.

The messages included:

- It is calm and quiet
- It encourages children to read
- It provides a welcoming and safe place for everyone in Moulton village
- It is fun – I love books and the toys
- It's a place to enjoy reading and meet other people
- Some people don't have computers or printers so they can go to the library and do it
- The library can help combat loneliness and isolation

87. We received over 40 letters from pupils at Montsaye Academy in Rothwell. Comments made included:

- It is very important for the community
- The library provides a quiet space for studying
- The library is a place to socialise and learn at the same time
- The library is a place where all of the community is welcomed
- It offers many benefits
- There is nowhere which provides as much free space and peace as our local library

88. We received almost 300 letters and pieces of artwork from Havelock Schools in Desborough.

Comments made included:

- My library has helped me with my love of books
- It is a real hub in the town
- It is a safe and warm environment for the elderly to meet and chat with friends
- Having the library helps to give children and adults a chance to increase their literacy skills
- I think it is fun
- The local people do lots of stuff at the library

89. We received over 100 postcards from pupils at Long Buckby Junior School on what their library means to them. The messages included:

- The library is a great place because everything is free
- The library is a very peaceful place because it is all quiet
- It encourages young children to read
- I love the Summer Reading Challenge
- I always go there to read books and find out more about things
- Lots of fun activities happen in our library
- I love our library because everyone is welcome in there

90. We received over 200 letters and pieces of artwork from pupils at Deanshanger Primary School via Andrea Leadsom MP. The messages included:

- You can go there to read peacefully
- The community of Deanshanger love their library
- It's good for me to find books to improve my homework
- The library offers different clubs
- It's a place to meet new people
- People get inspired at the library to do lots of things
- It will be bad for the environment if we have to travel to Stony Stratford

91. The Save Brackley Library Committee submitted a covering letter, impact assessment, messages and social media extracts. The points raised included:

- Brackley has a larger population than Towcester
- Those most affected will be residents who can't drive
- The library is vital for the wellbeing of older people and for the wellbeing and education of children
- It provides support for new parents
- It is accessible for adults and children with special needs and disabilities
- The draft Equality Impact Assessment was inadequate
- It supports local employment
- Closure would have a local business impact
- The library provides local access to South Northamptonshire Council services as well as NCC
- It provides digital accessibility to those without the internet or computers at home
- The library has a positive social impact on the community
- The barriers of cost and geography to accessing alternative libraries if Brackley is closed
- Libraries are unique – a public space where people can spend time without the expectation of spending money

92. Andrea Leadsom MP also forwarded a selection of messages from her constituents regarding Brackley, Middleton Cheney, Deanshanger, Roade and Hunsbury libraries. The points raised included:

- Disagreement with the idea of library closures
- The value that was placed on the libraries as community hubs
- The growth of the towns and the importance of facilities to serve them
- The view that alternative libraries are too far/too difficult/too costly to visit
- The impact on universal children's centre services and the support that families (especially new mothers) get from libraries
- The impact on people with disabilities and the elderly if libraries were to close
- Libraries as a means of addressing social isolation
- The impact on rural areas of library closures
- How libraries allow access to the internet and IT facilities for those who do not have them at home
- The importance of libraries for education and literacy and children in general
- The importance of libraries to people on low incomes
- Libraries as a county and district council access point

- The perception that library closures would not save money overall because of the support that libraries provide that would be lost
- Limited support for Option 1 and community managed libraries, but also some concern about the viability of community managed libraries

93. We also received over 100 letters and pieces of artwork from pupils of Helmdon Primary School via Brackley Town Council. The messages included:

- It is close to where I live
- I think Brackley Library is good for meetings and good for education for young and old people
- The library is fun
- My favourite books are there
- I love the reading challenges and educational activities on weekdays
- There's so many books to choose from
- The library also helps schools with their work
- It's quiet in there so you can read
- Brackley Library is a lovely community

94. We also received a folder containing 50 messages from local children and other library users on why they love Brixworth library. The messages included:

- It has mountains of books
- It is a calm place to read and it gives you something to do
- It makes me happy
- We get out to meet other mums
- It is an extension of our living room
- It is important to teach my children to respect books by using the library
- It offers an invaluable community resource
- It is nice to use real books and not the internet for homework
- I can do crafting there
- I can get out of the house and not spend lots of money

95. We also received a number of pro-forma letters (as set out below), where people put their name to a master letter setting out views about a library in particular or the review in general.

96. The Moulton Library is Under Threat of Closure petition included a number of pro-forma letters, and we also received a large number of these separately. In total, over 300 copies of two pro-forma letters were received, one which was counter-signed by the Community Connector in Moulton. Both letters stressed the importance placed on Moulton Library as a community hub, the view that elderly people in particular would be isolated with it. The growing population in Moulton was noted, and there were strong feelings that it would be a waste to close it as it had so recently opening. The professionalism of staff at the library was praised, and the letters gave the view that there was no convenient alternative.

97. We received 9 pro-forma letters from the Save Northamptonshire Libraries campaign, supporting 'Option 4' i.e. no change.

98. We received 14 pro-forma letters in relation to Raunds Library, supporting Option 1 for a community managed library for Raunds, as well as 4 slips from a local publication.
99. We received over 350 pro-forma letters from the Save Higham Ferrers Library – supporting the Option 4 campaign.

### **Feedback from public consultation events**

100. Eight public consultation events were held over the course of the consultation. They were combined with the other Phase 1 and Phase 2 budget proposals consultation and the vast majority of people who attended spoke to officers and County Councillors to express their views on the library service review.
101. Comments received at the events included:
- Libraries may have less use but they are still a vital resource
  - Libraries are about far more than reading books - they are community centres, social services and facilities for child development
  - It seems that yes we need to pass responsibility to the communities for the libraries at some point but am not sure if it is the right time
  - The library closing will affect mothers that need a safe place to go with children for info, advice and services
  - Often they are the only place people can go to socialise and where it costs very little or free
  - I would be in favour of option 1 where local councils or parishes communicate and keep their libraries open if that is locally what community wants
  - The library cannot be just a volunteer group standards have to be maintained
  - Keep libraries open and run by the Council
  - They are a vital resource especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds
  - Shutting libraries will cost more in the long run. People will have nowhere to go for support, loneliness and depression
  - Libraries encourage people to come together. First place for new people trying to fit in to the community. It is universal for all ages
  - Close mobile library, remove concessions on buses – need one or the other or both. Very short sighted to close libraries all at same time
  - Don't close the libraries – smaller village libraries are essential to the people in the villages
  - Tough call – keep big libraries open, close small. Put libraries in secondary schools for after school use by the public which would include free access to computers. Promote Library to You better. The costs of delivering these libraries needs to be absolutely clear because the money needs to go to social care

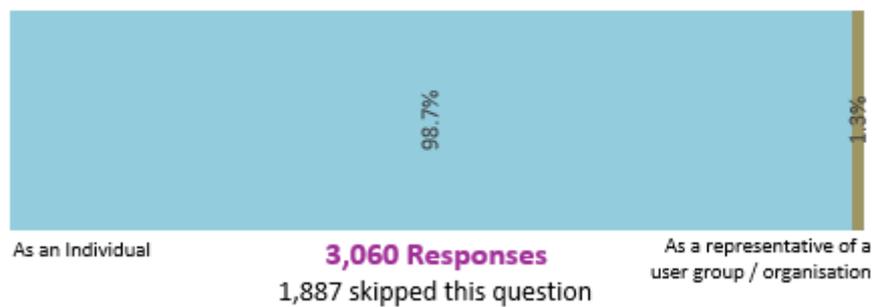
### **Who responded to the questionnaire?**

102. In total, 5,255 people have contributed to this consultation the questionnaire (either via the standard or easy read version). Whilst it has not been possible to ascertain the

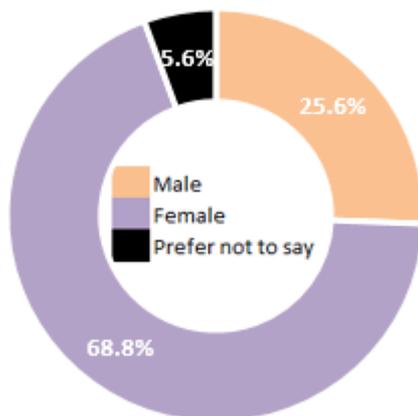
demographic characteristics of the individual consultation responses received other methods (including letters and emails, etc), the charts below show the response to each question in relation to demographic questions, where respondents chose to answer them.

103. The responses to the demographic monitoring questions covering respondents' protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. gender, age, sexuality, gender identity/reassignment, marital status, pregnancy/maternity, disability, religion, and ethnicity/ethnic origin) are shown graphically without commentary.

Are you responding to this consultation as an individual or as a representative on behalf of a user group / organisation?

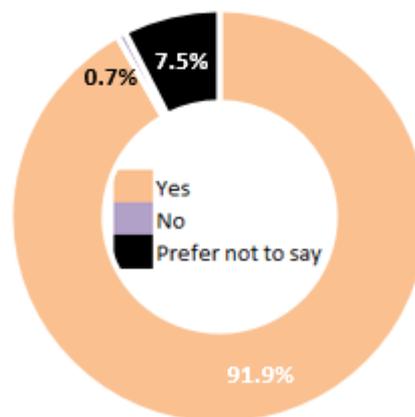


What gender are you?



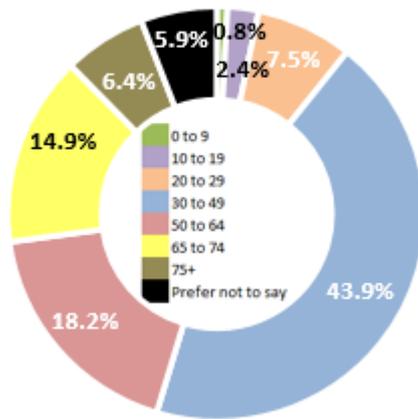
**3,154 Responses**

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?



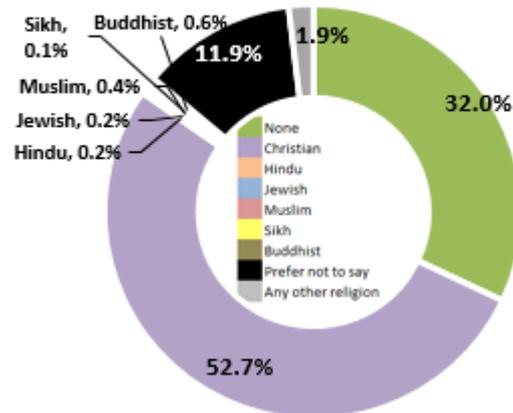
**3,048 Responses**

How old are you?



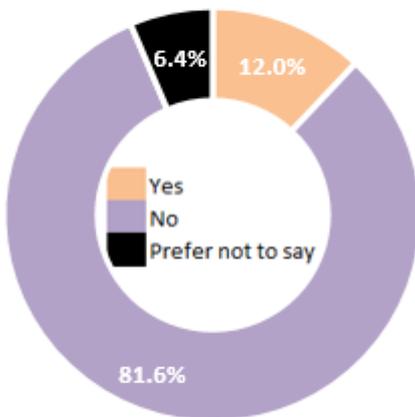
**3,164 Responses**

What is your religion or belief?



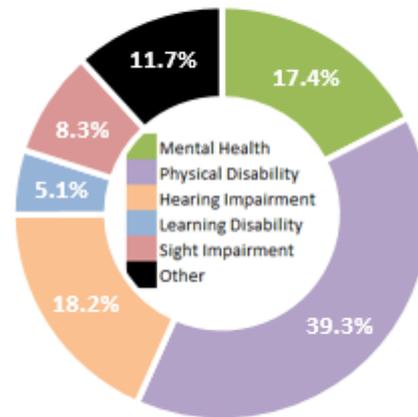
**3,081 Responses**

Do you have a disability?



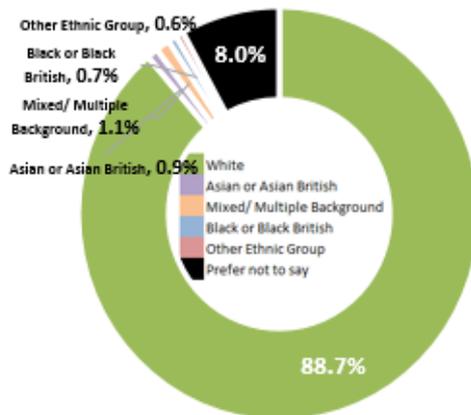
**3,124 Responses**

If Yes, please tick the appropriate box(es) which best describes your disability?



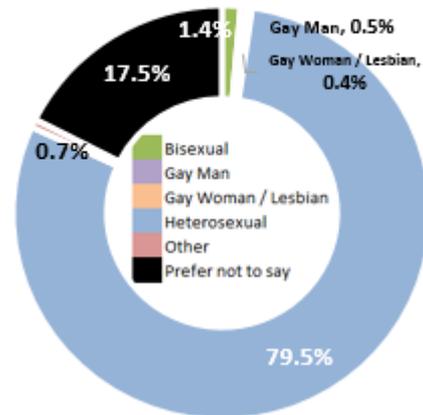
**415 Responses**

How would you describe your ethnic origin?



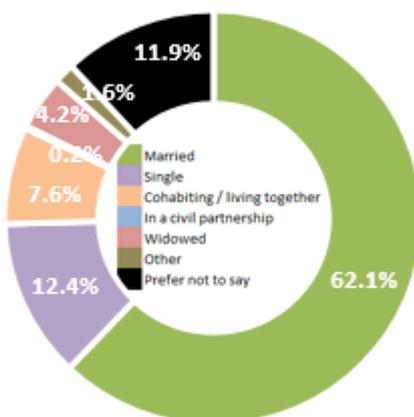
**3,099 Responses**

If you are 16 or over which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?



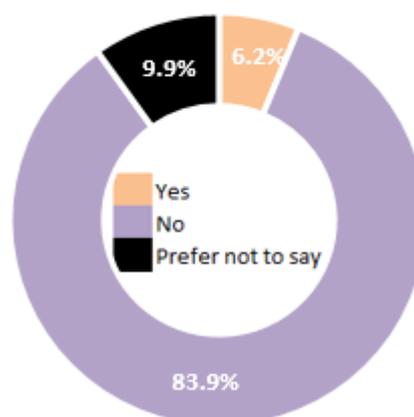
**2,890 Responses**

What is your marital status?



**2,772 Responses**

Are you currently pregnant or have you had a baby in the last six months?



**2,912 Responses**