



Budget 2024/25 Consultation

Summary of feedback on council tax proposals

southampton
dataobservatory 

Data, Intelligence & Insight Team



- Southampton City Council undertook public consultation on to seek views on the new budget proposals for 2024/25. This included asking for feedback on the following proposals:
 - Council tax premiums for second home owners and homes that have been empty for more than a year
 - Increases in rent and landlord controlled heating costs in council owned homes.
- This consultation took place between **23 November 2023 and 17 January 2024.**
- The aim of this consultation was to
 - Communicate clearly to residents and stakeholders the budget proposals for 2024/25;
 - Ensure any resident, business or stakeholder who wished to comment on the proposals had the opportunity to do so, enabling them to raise any impacts the proposals may have, and;
 - Allow participants to propose alternative suggestions for consideration which they feel could achieve the objectives in a different way.
- This report summarises the aims, principles, methodology and results of the public consultation; it provides a summary of the consultation responses both for the consideration of decision makers and any interested individuals and stakeholders
- It is important to be mindful that a consultation is not a vote – it is an opportunity for stakeholders to express their views, concerns and alternatives to a proposal; equally, responses from the consultation should be considered in full before any final decisions are made
- This report outlines in detail the representations made during the consultation period so that decision makers can consider what has been said alongside other information



Southampton City Council is committed to consultations of the highest standard, which are meaningful and comply with the *Gunning Principles* (considered to be the legal standard for consultations):

1. Proposals are still at a formative stage (a final decision has not yet been made)
2. There is sufficient information put forward in the proposals to allow 'intelligent consideration'
3. There is adequate time for consideration and response
4. Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made



New Conversations 2.0
LGA guide to engagement



Rules: The Gunning Principles

They were coined by Stephen Sedley QC in a court case in 1985 relating to a school closure consultation (R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning). Prior to this, very little consideration had been given to the laws of consultation. Sedley defined that a consultation is only legitimate when these four principles are met:

1. **proposals are still at a formative stage**
A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers
2. **there is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration'**
The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response
3. **there is adequate time for consideration and response**
There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation. There is no set timeframe for consultation,¹ despite the widely accepted twelve-week consultation period, as the length of time given for consultee to respond can vary depending on the subject and extent of impact of the consultation
4. **'conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made**
Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account

These principles were reinforced in 2001 in the 'Coughlan Case (R v North and East Devon Health Authority ex parte Coughlan²), which involved a health authority closure and confirmed that they applied to all consultations, and then in a Supreme Court case in 2014 (R ex parte Moseley v LB Haringey³), which endorsed the legal standing of the four principles. Since then, the Gunning Principles have formed a strong legal foundation from which the legitimacy of public consultations is assessed, and are frequently referred to as a legal basis for judicial review decisions.⁴

¹ In some local authorities, their local voluntary Compact agreement with the third sector may specify the length of time they are required to consult for. However, in many cases, the Compact is either inactive or has been cancelled so the consultation timeframe is open to debate

² BAILII, [England and Wales Court of Appeal \(Civil Decision\) Decisions](#), Accessed: 13 December 2016.

³ BAILII, [United Kingdom Supreme Court](#), Accessed: 13 December 2016

⁴ The information used to produce this document has been taken from the Law of Consultation training course provided by The Consultation Institute



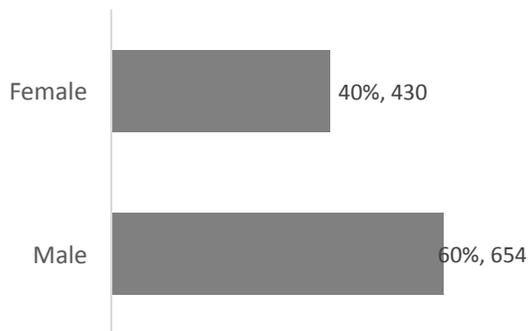
- The agreed approach for this consultation was to use an online questionnaire as the main route for feedback; questionnaires enable an appropriate amount of explanatory and supporting information to be included in a structured way, helping to ensure respondents are aware of the background and detail of the proposals.
- Respondents could also write letters or emails to provide feedback on the proposals: emails or letters from stakeholders that contained consultation feedback were collated and analysed as a part of the overall consultation.
- The consultation was promoted in the following ways:
 - Press release;
 - Council e-bulletins;
 - Social media channels;
 - Southampton City Council website.
- All questionnaire results have been analysed and presented in graphs within this report. Respondents were also given opportunities throughout the questionnaire to provide written feedback on the proposals. All written responses and questionnaire comments have been read and then assigned to categories based upon sentiment or theme.



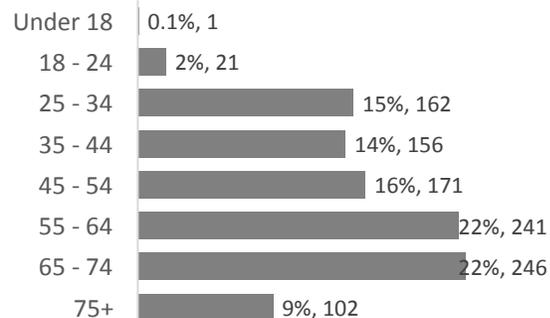
Who are the respondents?

Total responses
1220 questionnaire responses
1 email response
1221 responses in total

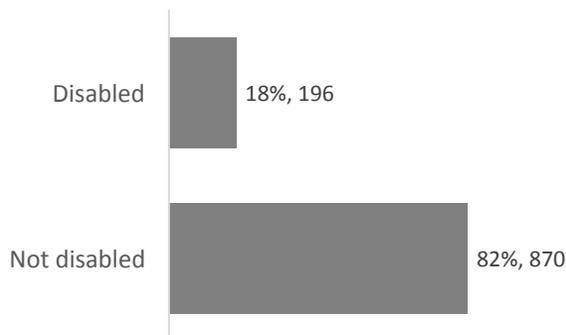
Sex



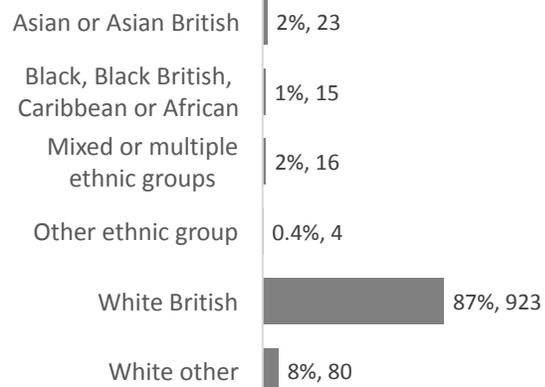
Age



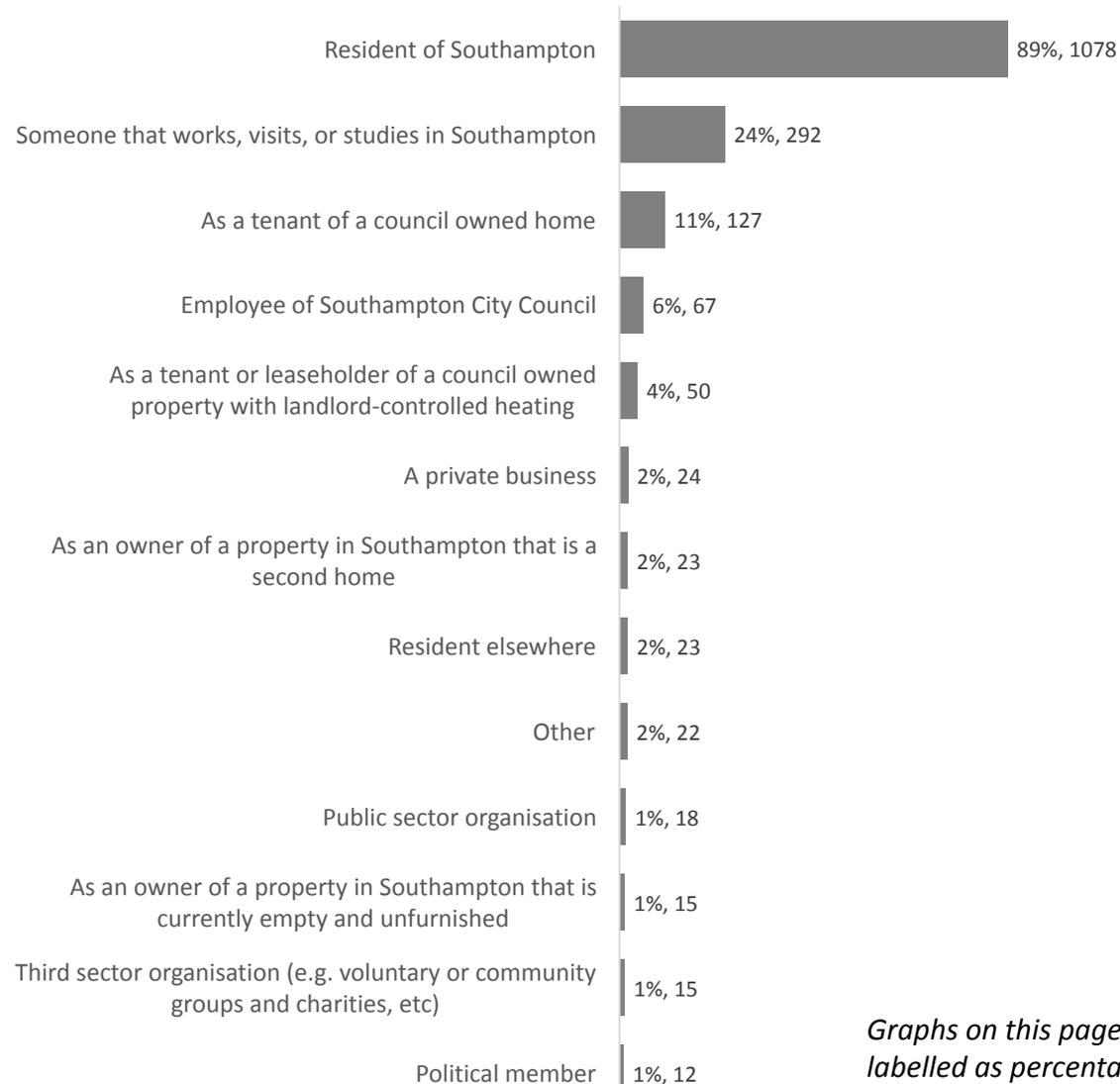
Disability



Ethnicity



Interest in the survey



Graphs on this page are labelled as percentage, count.

Responses & analysis

Proposed council tax premiums



Proposed council tax premiums for second home owners and homes that have been empty for more than a year

We are proposing to:

- Introduce a council tax premium in 2025/26 of 100% for people with **second homes**. This means doubling the council tax that they will have to pay. As of 27 September 2023, there are 906 properties currently registered as being potentially second homes.*
- Introduce a council tax premium in 2024/25 of 100% for people with **properties that have remained empty** for 12 months or more. Currently we charge a premium of 100% where a property is empty and unfurnished for a period of 2 years or more.**

The aim of these proposals is to:

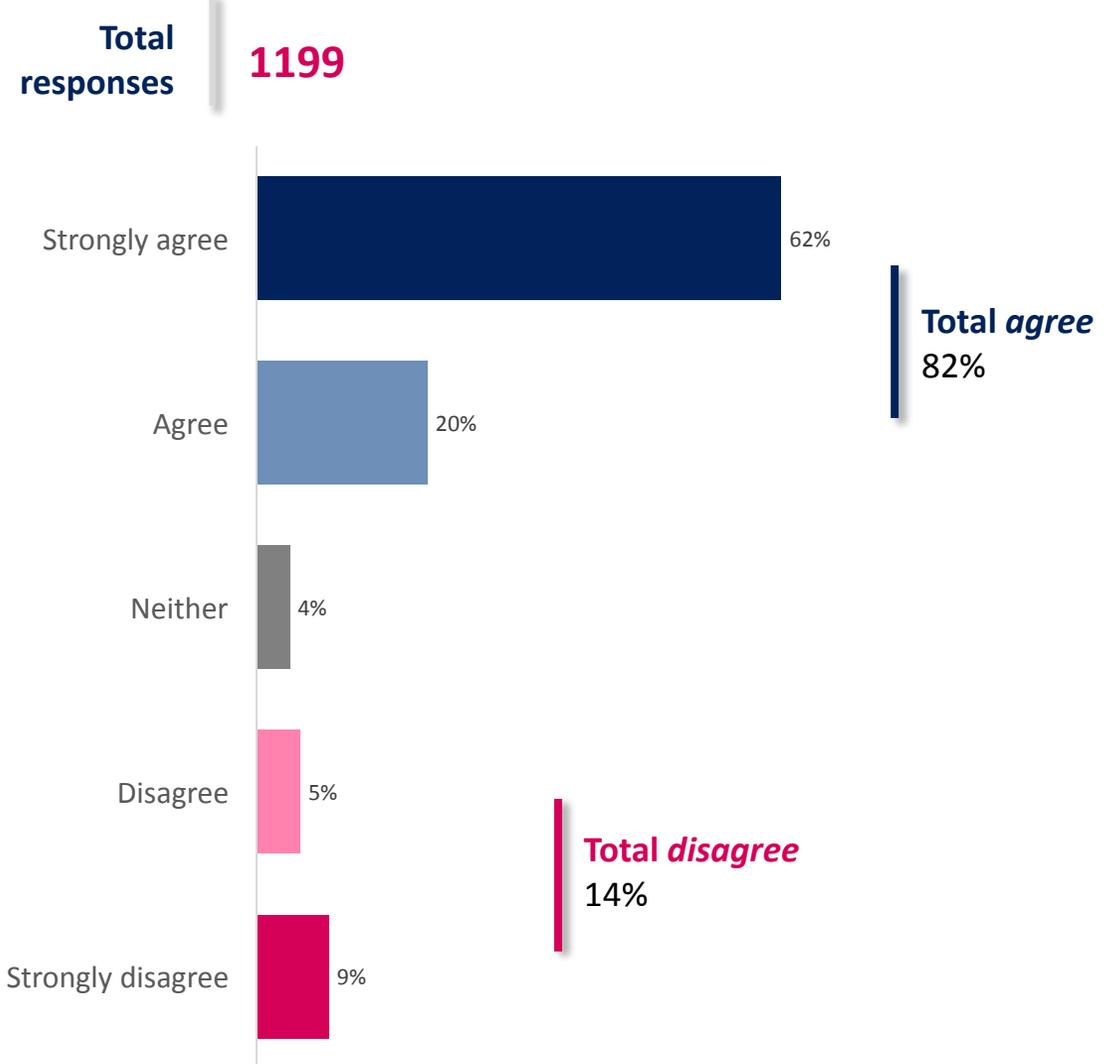
- Incentivise the occupation of empty properties
- Discourage, or generate additional income from, second home ownership in order to ensure the supply of homes to meet local housing needs

We estimate this would generate approximately £350,000 in 2024/25, rising to over £1million in future years.

*due to a typographical error the dates were incorrectly listed as 2024/25 in the questionnaire. The proposal would be implemented from 2025/26.

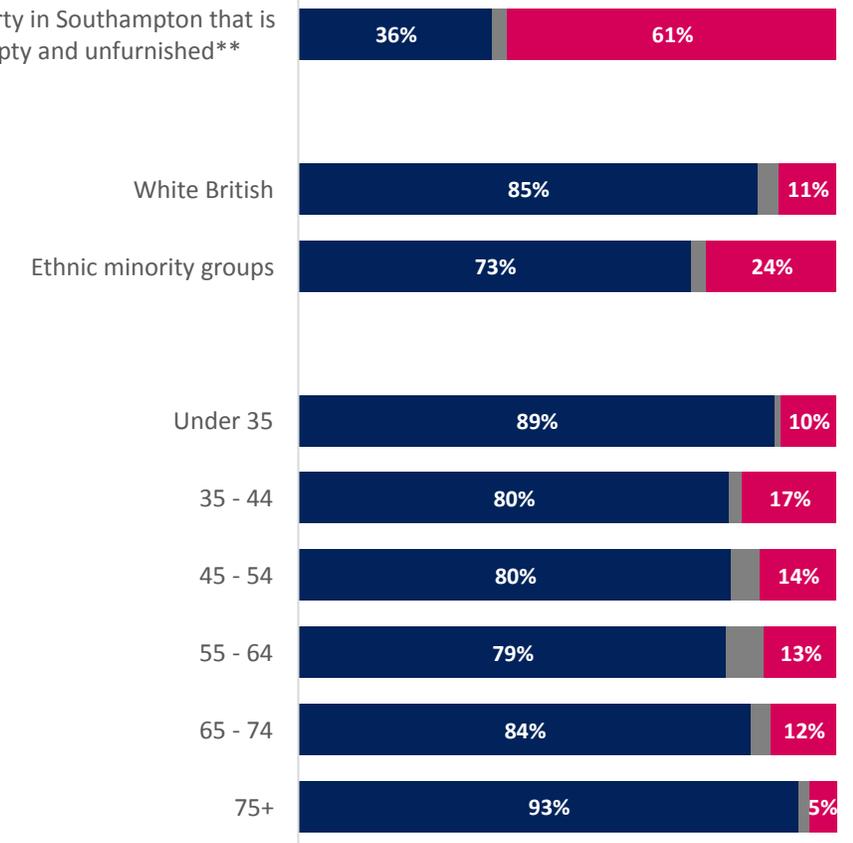
** due to a typographical error the dates were incorrectly listed as 2025/26 in the questionnaire. The proposal would be implemented from 2024/25.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to introduce a council tax premium of 100% for people with second homes?



Notable breakdowns:

As an owner of a property in Southampton that is a second home / empty and unfurnished**

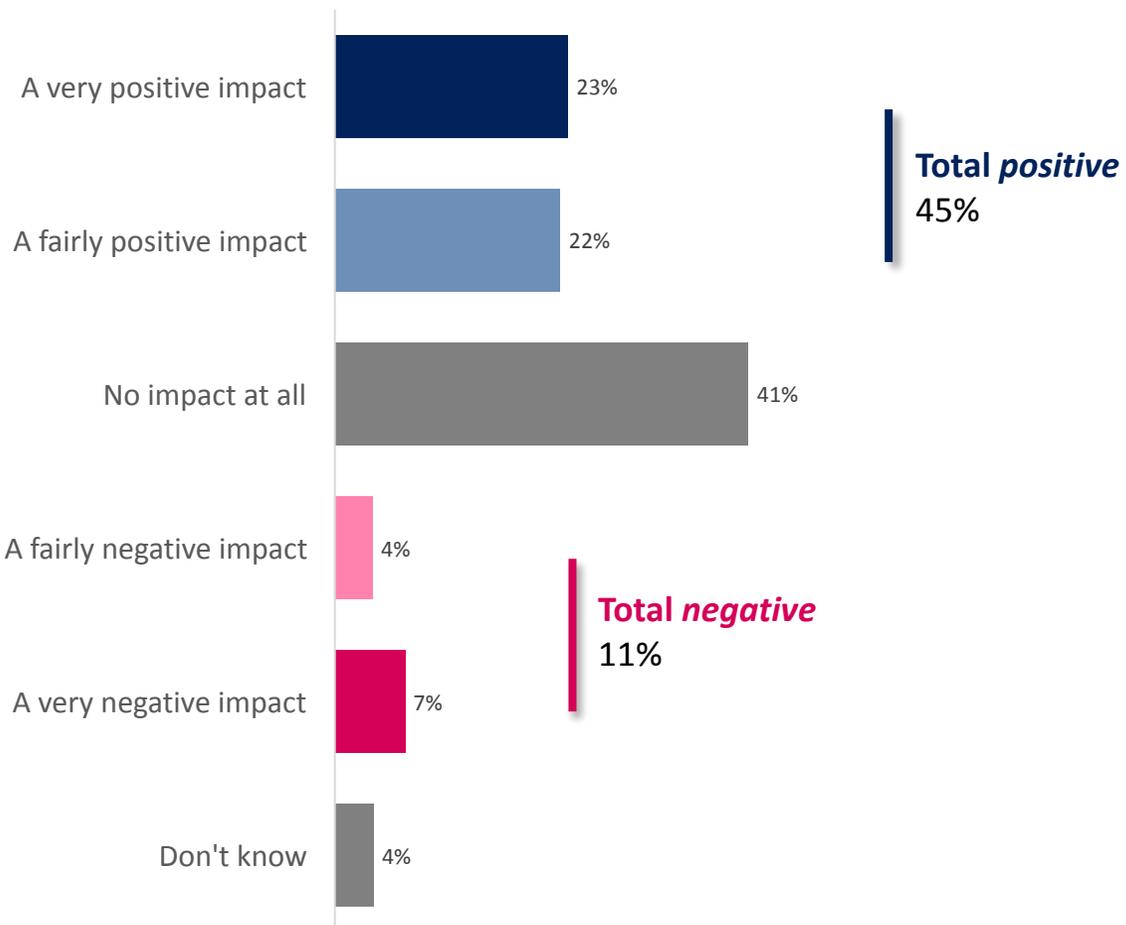


*Small sample size – less than 100
 **Small sample size – less than 50



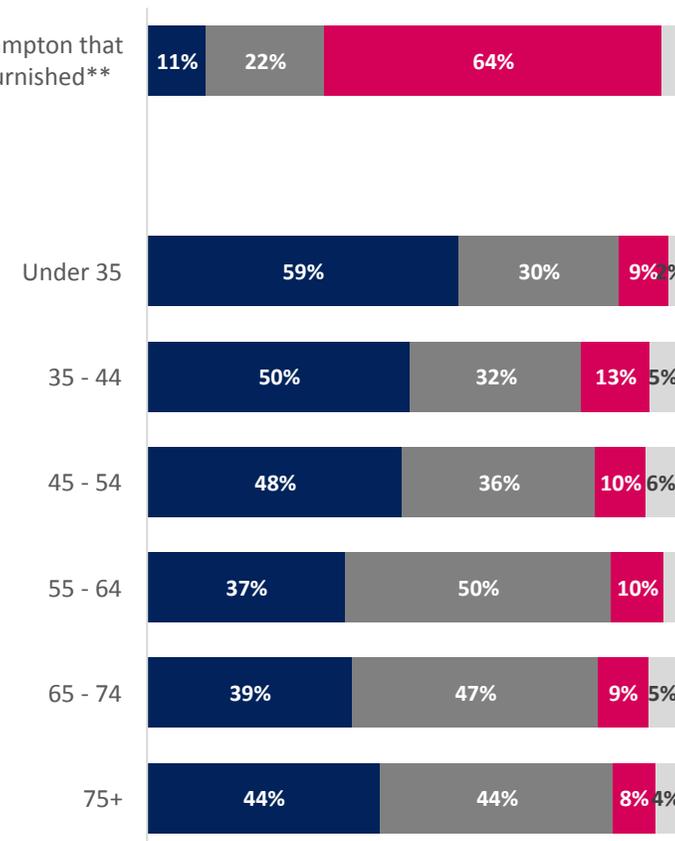
What impact do you feel the proposals to introduce a council tax premium of 100% for people with second homes may have on you or your family, your business or the wider community?

Total responses **1203**



Notable breakdowns:

As an owner of a property in Southampton that is a second home / empty and unfurnished**



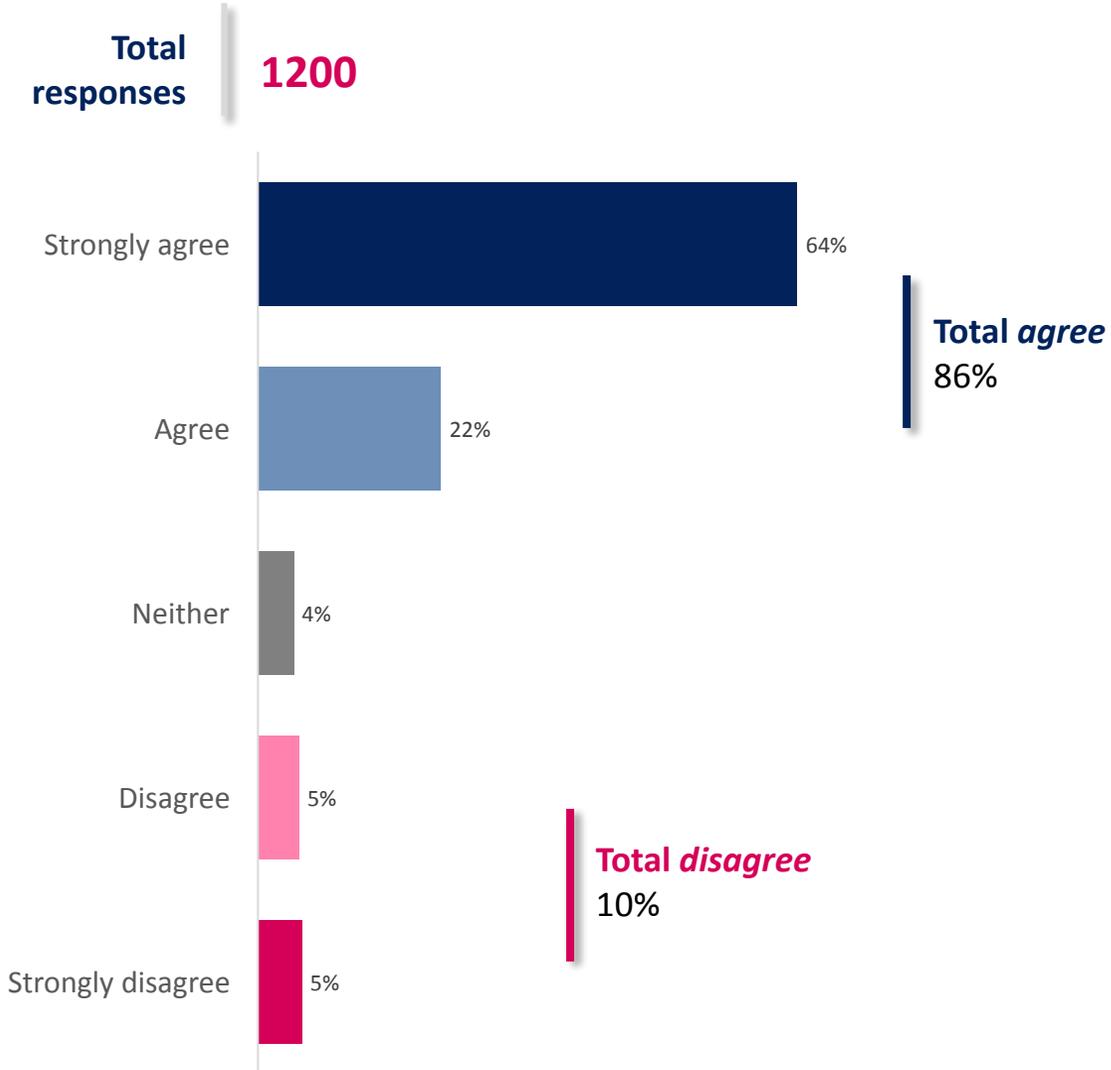
■ Positive total ■ No impact ■ Negative impact ■ Don't know

*Small sample size – less than 100

**Small sample size – less than 50

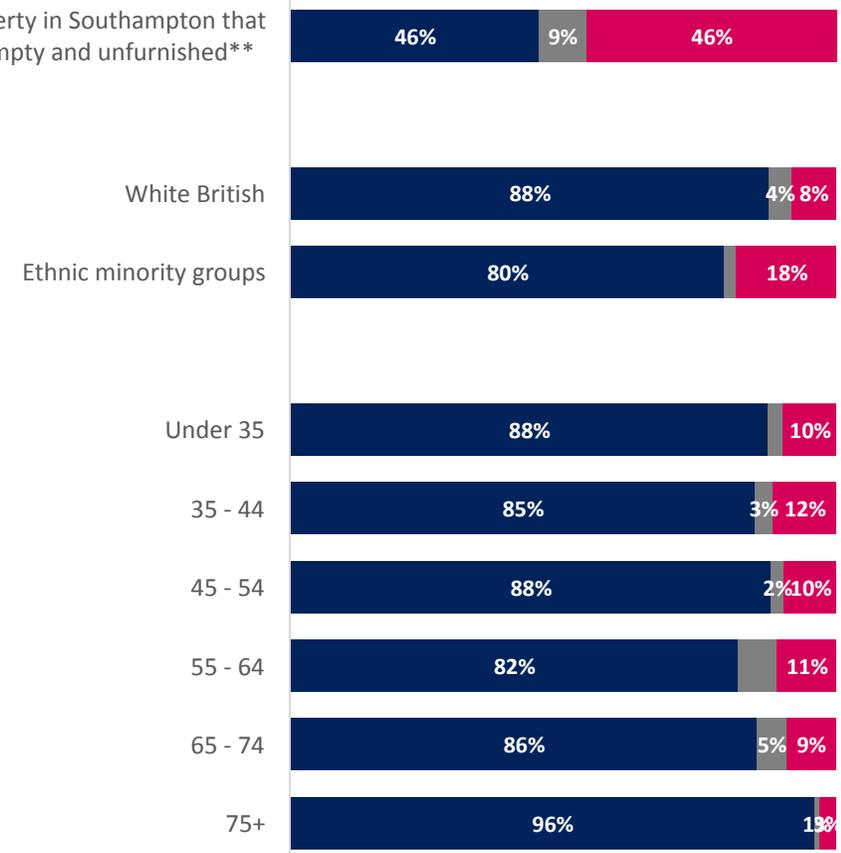


To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to introduce a council tax premium of 100% for people with properties that have remained empty for 12 months or more?



Notable breakdowns:

As an owner of a property in Southampton that is a second home / empty and unfurnished**



■ Agree total ■ Neither ■ Disagree total

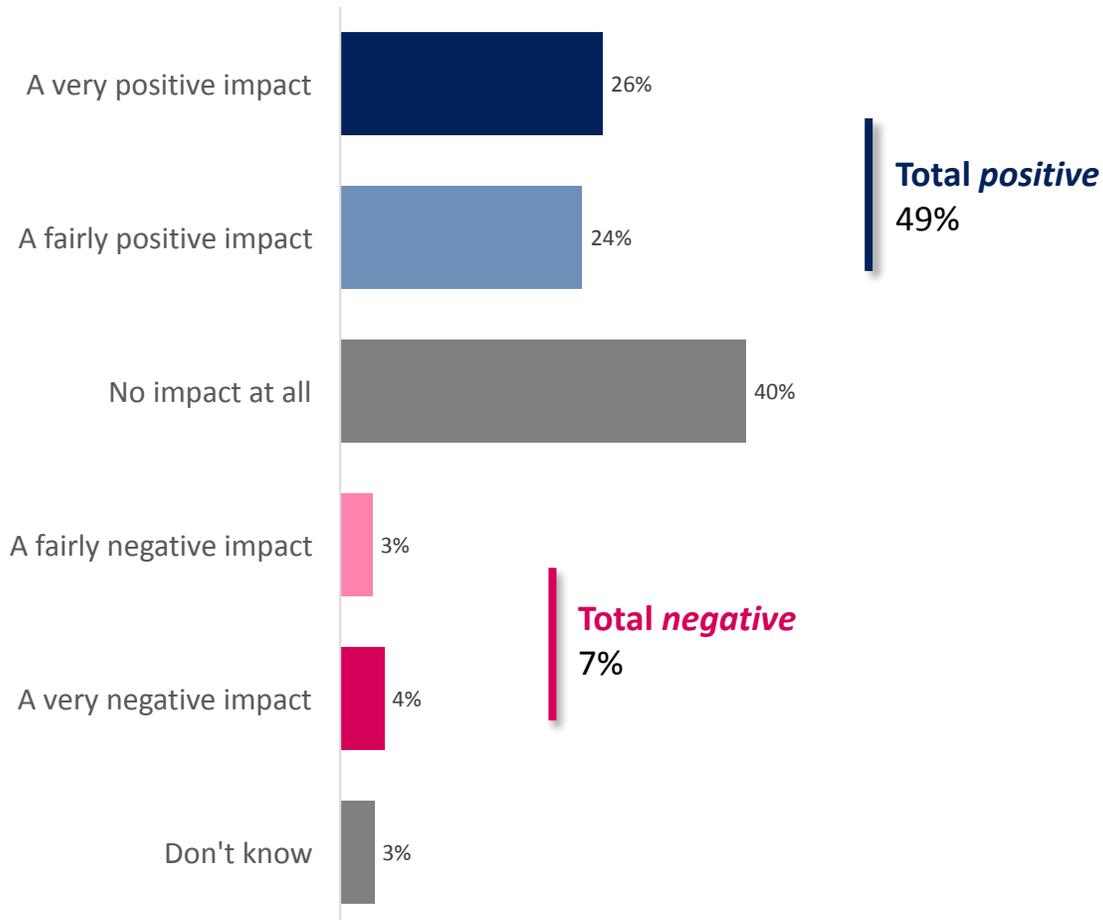
*Small sample size – less than 100

**Small sample size – less than 50



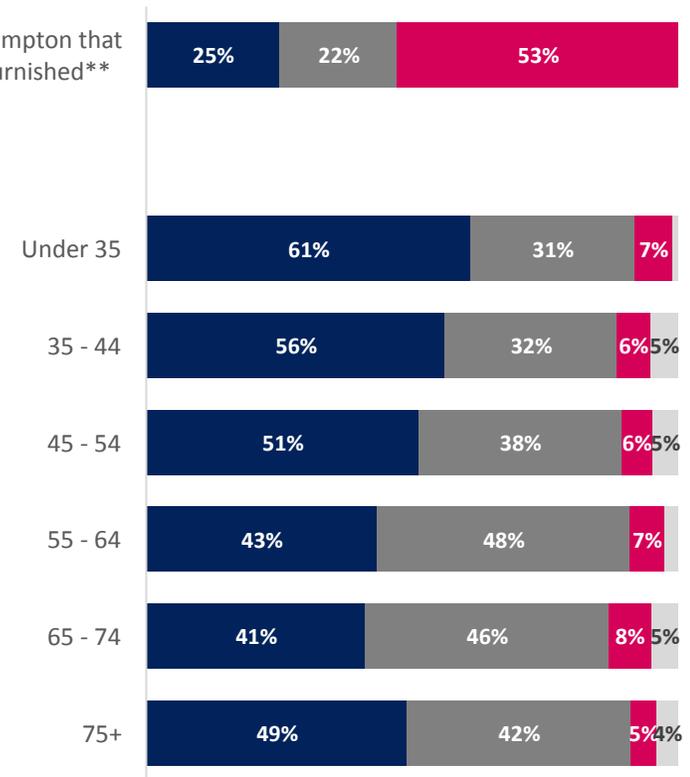
What impact do you feel the proposals to introduce a council tax premium of 100% for people with properties that have remained empty for 12 months or more may have on you or your family, your business or the wider community?

Total responses **1202**



Notable breakdowns:

As an owner of a property in Southampton that is a second home / empty and unfurnished**



■ Positive total ■ No impact ■ Negative impact ■ Don't know

*Small sample size – less than 100

**Small sample size – less than 50

Within the questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their own free text comments. Any email or letter responses were also analysed alongside free-text responses in the questionnaire.

The following graphs show the total number of respondents by each theme of comment.

These graphs are in respondent count, rather than percentage.

Comments, impacts, suggests or alternatives:

