

# Oxfordshire Local Government Restructure Research

Report, March 2017

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252:2012 and with the Ipsos MORI Terms and Conditions.



# Survey Background & Methodology



# Background

Oxfordshire currently has a two-tier system of local government. Some services are run by Oxfordshire County Council and others are run by the District or City Councils.

The 'One Oxfordshire' proposal to abolish existing councils and create a unitary county council has been proposed by Oxfordshire County Council with South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council.

The County Council has communicated the detail of the proposal to the public in a number of ways, including a dedicated 'One Oxfordshire' website (now hosted at: <https://www.better-oxfordshire.org>). The website also included an open, online consultation (which is now closed). This gave residents the opportunity to give their feedback to the proposal. In addition, the County Council has undertaken some face-to-face interviewing (100 interviews in each district/city council area).

Ipsos MORI were commissioned by Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council to conduct a representative survey across Oxfordshire County to understand public opinion on the level at which local services should be managed and delivered, as well as to test awareness and understanding of the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal.

# Methodology

A core objective of the survey was to gain a representative opinion of residents in Oxfordshire as to their view on the level at which local services should be managed and delivered, as well as their awareness and understanding of the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal.

A telephone survey was therefore conducted with a representative sample across the five District and City Council areas within the County - Vale of White Horse, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and Oxford City. This provides a balanced, representative snapshot of public opinion across all demographics.

To ensure a representative sample was achieved, quotas were set on age, gender and working status and matched to the population proportions of each District/City Council area. This ensured that those participating in the survey closely reflected the demographic of each area. A full breakdown is provided in the Technical Appendix.

A questionnaire was developed by Ipsos MORI for Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxford City Council. This survey was scrutinised by Ipsos MORI's 'Polls for Publication' unit, which ensures all questions are balanced and not leading in any way. All fieldwork was undertaken by Ipsos MORI's in-house telephone unit. Fieldwork took place from 20<sup>th</sup> February to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

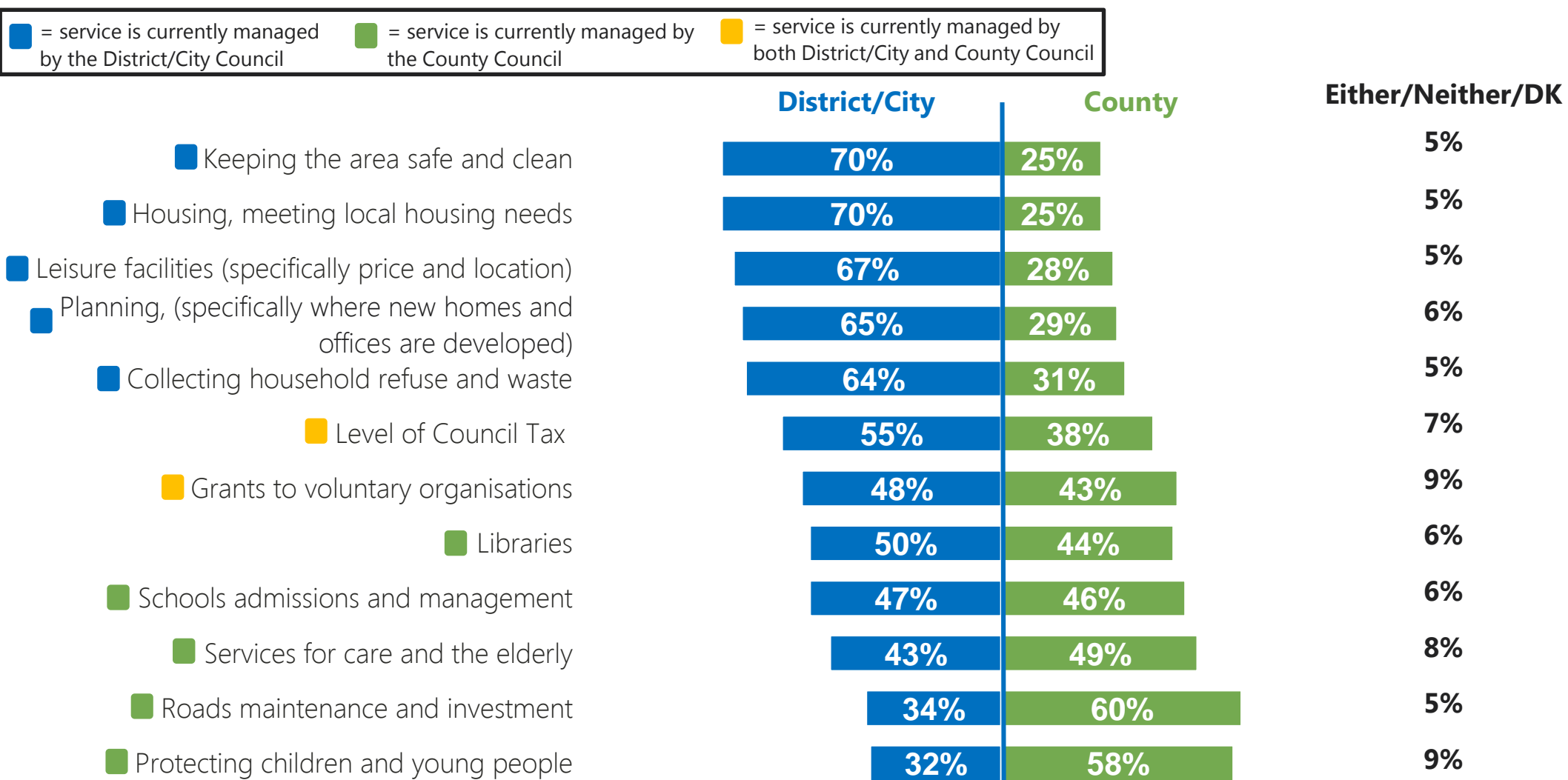
# Council Services

*'Overall, public opinion is in favour of the status quo when it comes to the management and delivery of services, with the vast majority of residents able to state a preference as to whether individual services should be delivered at a district/city or county level'*



**Respondents had strong views and opinions as to the local control of existing council services. The majority of residents felt that services currently delivered at a district/city level should continue to be delivered in this way by locally elected district/city councillors. They also felt that, on the whole, services delivered at a county level should continue to be delivered like this. However, a greater proportion of residents felt that voluntary organisation grants should be delivered by a district/city council, whilst a slight majority also felt that libraries and school admissions should be managed more locally as well.**

**Q1. For each of the following services, please state whether you think decisions should be made within your district/city by locally elected district/city councillors or at a county level for Oxfordshire as a whole by councillors elected to the county council.**



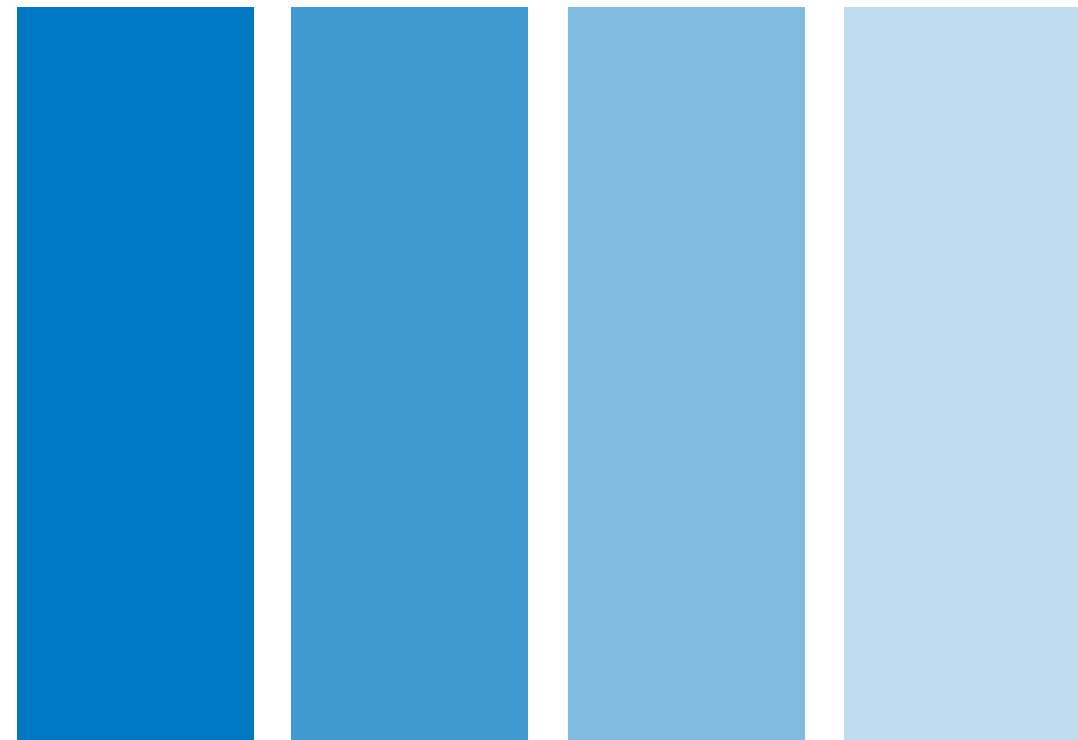
Base: All valid responses (1950) : Fieldwork dates: 13<sup>th</sup> February – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

Source: Ipsos MORI



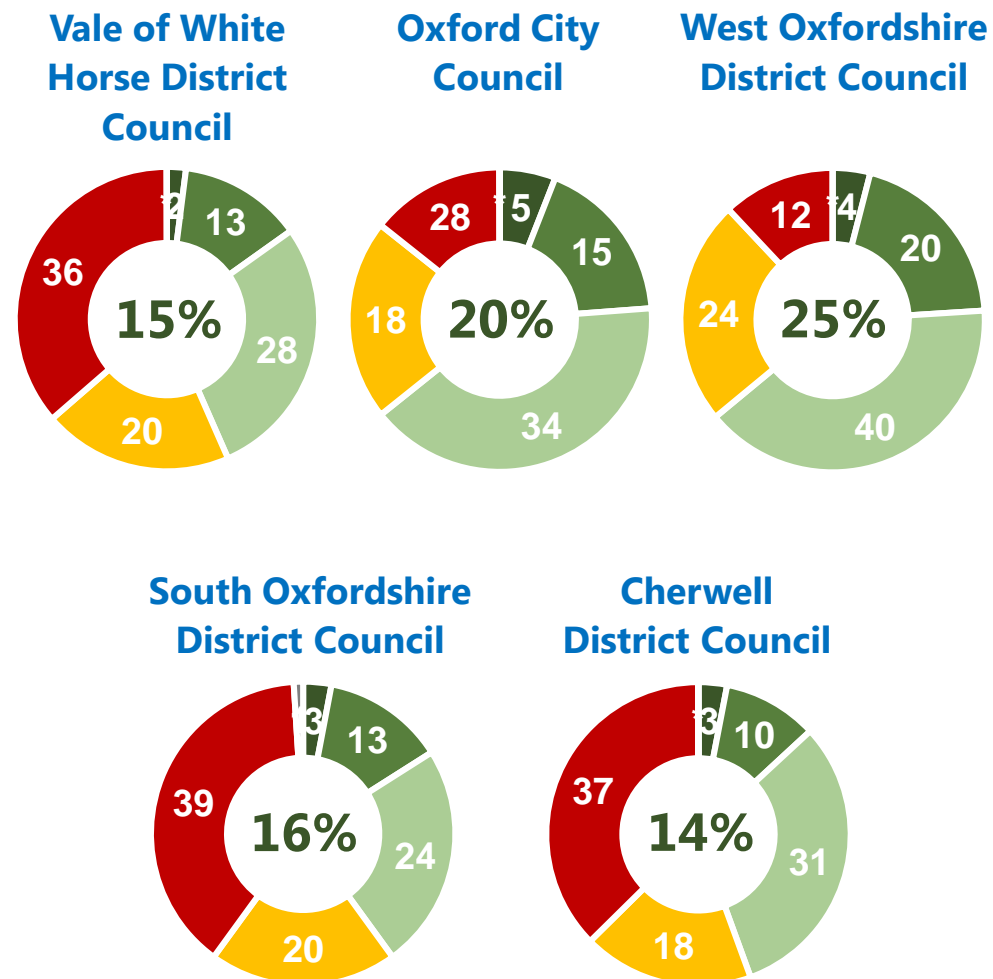
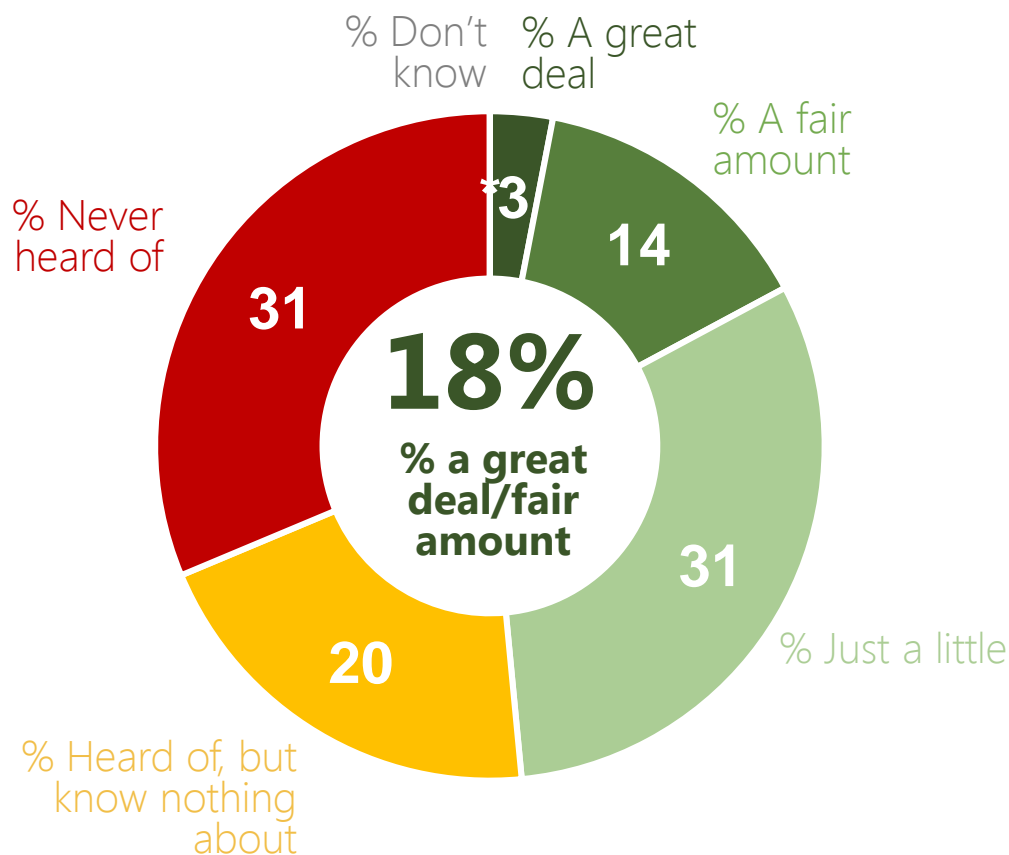
***'The majority of the public in Oxfordshire have heard of the One Oxfordshire proposal.'***

***However, in spite of this, over two-thirds of residents (68%) did not think they had sufficient information about what the proposal means for their household or district/city where they live'.***



The majority of residents (7 in 10) have heard of the One Oxfordshire proposal – just over four-fifths (82%) know ‘a little’ or ‘nothing’ about it. Significantly, residents living in two of the district councils in partnership with ‘One Oxfordshire’ were more likely to have either never heard of the proposal or known nothing about it - 56% of those living in Vale of White Horse and three in five residents (59%) living in South Oxfordshire District had either not heard of it or knew nothing about it. Residents living in Cherwell District were also significantly more likely not to have heard or know nothing about it (55%). Those living in West Oxfordshire were more likely to know ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’ about it (25% said this compared to only 18% overall).

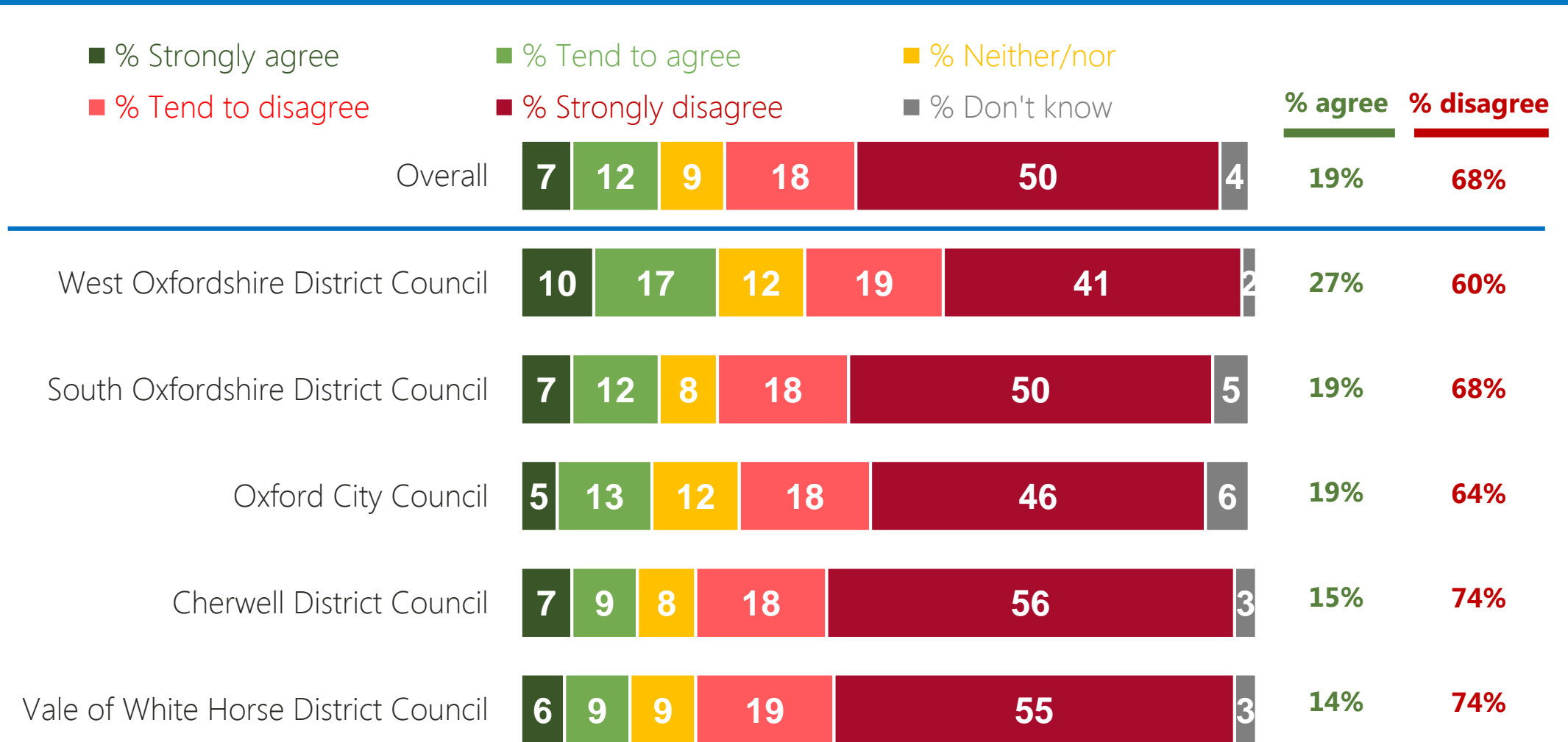
Q2. Before this interview today how much, if anything, would you say you know about the ‘One Oxfordshire’ proposal?





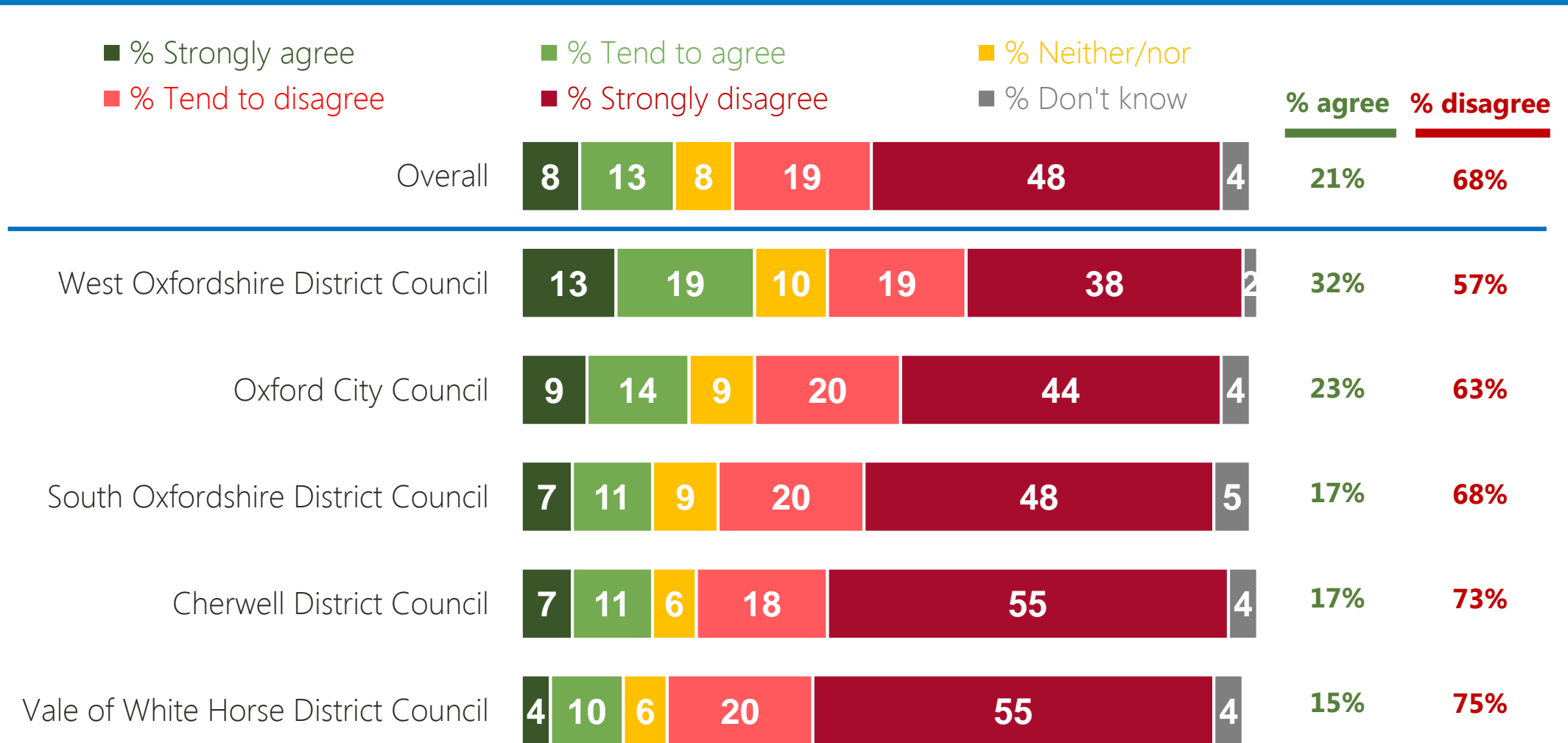
**Over two-thirds (68%) of Oxfordshire residents felt that they did not have sufficient information about what the One Oxfordshire proposal means for them and their household. This sentiment was particularly prevalent in two of the county's districts – three quarters of residents living in Vale of White Horse District (74%) and Cherwell District (74%) were significantly more likely to disagree with this statement. Younger people (age 18-34) were also significantly more likely to disagree that they know what the proposal means for them. Residents in West Oxfordshire were more likely to say they understand the proposal (27% agree) and a quarter of those aged 65+ (25%) were also more likely to say this.**

**Q3a. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree that (before this interview) you had sufficient information about what the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal means for you and your household?**



The majority of Oxfordshire residents did not feel that they have sufficient information about what the proposal means for their city/district – only one in five (21%) agreed that they do. Those living in Vale of White Horse District (73%) and Cherwell District (73%) were significantly more likely to not feel they have had sufficient information. A similar proportion of young people aged 18-34 (74%) also did not feel sufficiently informed. Conversely, residents in West Oxfordshire were significantly more likely to agree that they did have sufficient information (32%) as were those aged 65+ (29%).

Q3b. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree that (before this interview) you had sufficient information about what the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal means for city/district where you live?



# Public engagement with options for future structure of local government

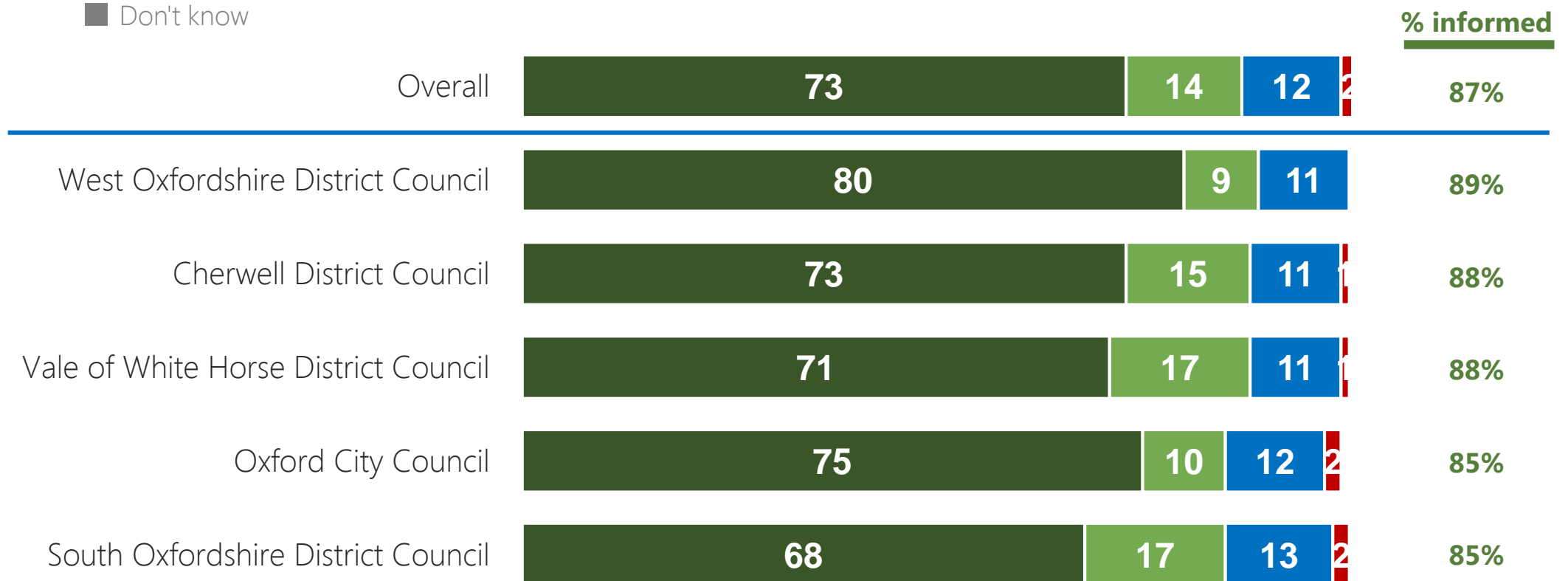
*'Residents want to be informed about all of the proposed options in the county and want to be given an opportunity to have their say.'*



The majority of residents in Oxfordshire want to be informed of all of the proposed options under consideration so they can have a say on the future structure of local government in the county – this is particularly important given that the majority did not feel they had sufficient information about the One Oxfordshire proposal. Residents in districts which currently support the One Oxfordshire proposal were significantly more likely to say they don't want a say in the future – 17% of those living in Vale of Horse District and a similar proportion of those living in South Oxfordshire (17%) stated this. There was little difference in opinion across the age ranges although significantly more in the 35-54 age range (78%) wanted to have their say after having considered all of the proposed options.

#### Q4. Which of the following statements best describes your interest in the future structure of local government in Oxfordshire?

- I would like to be informed of all of the proposed options under consideration so that I can have a say
- I would like to be informed of all of the proposed options under consideration but I don't want to have a say
- I don't need to know about the proposed options under consideration as I trust local politicians and councillors to make the right decisions on my behalf
- Don't know



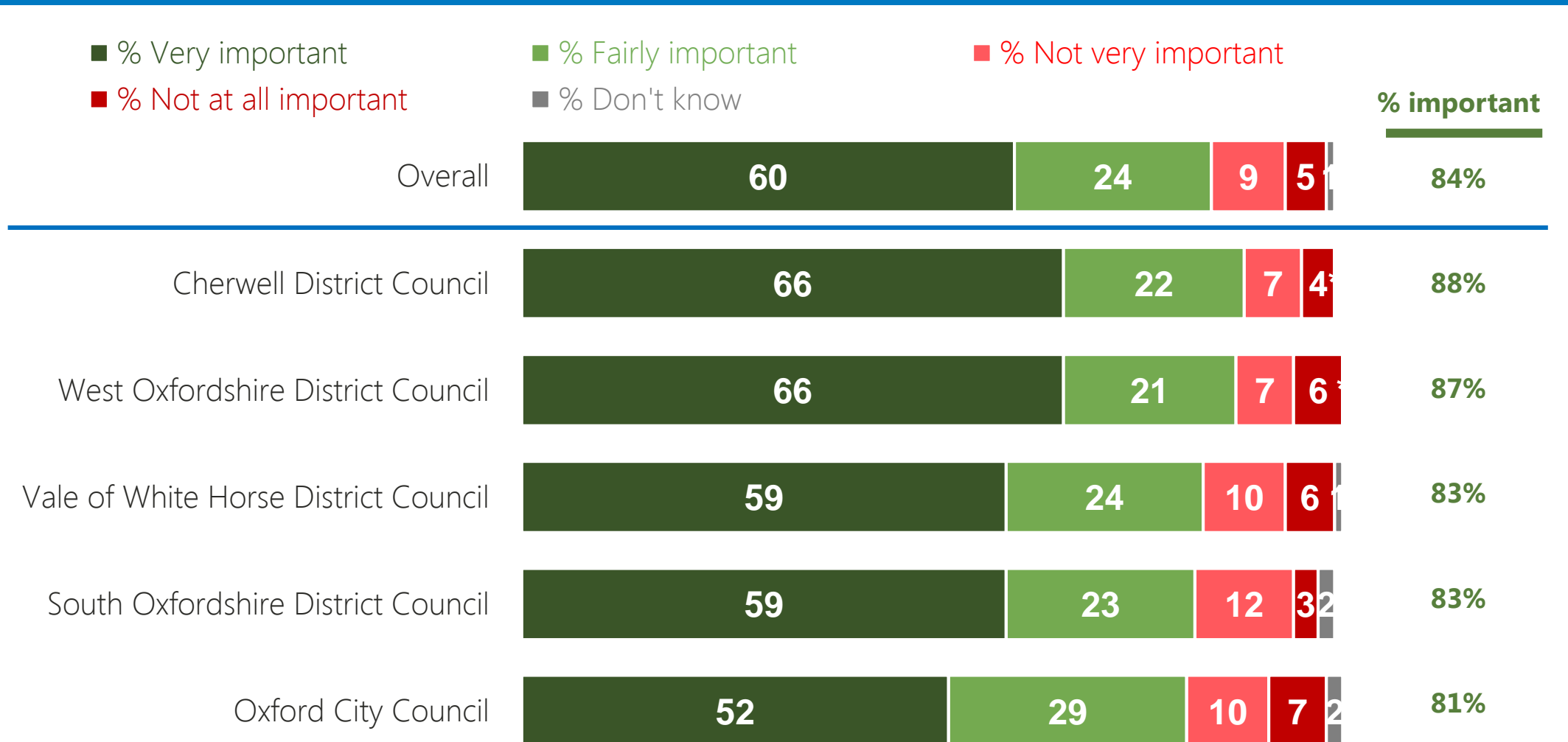
# Changes to Council Tax

*'Vast majority of residents think it's important for them to understand how the One Oxfordshire proposal will impact on their Council Tax before they are asked if they support or oppose it'*



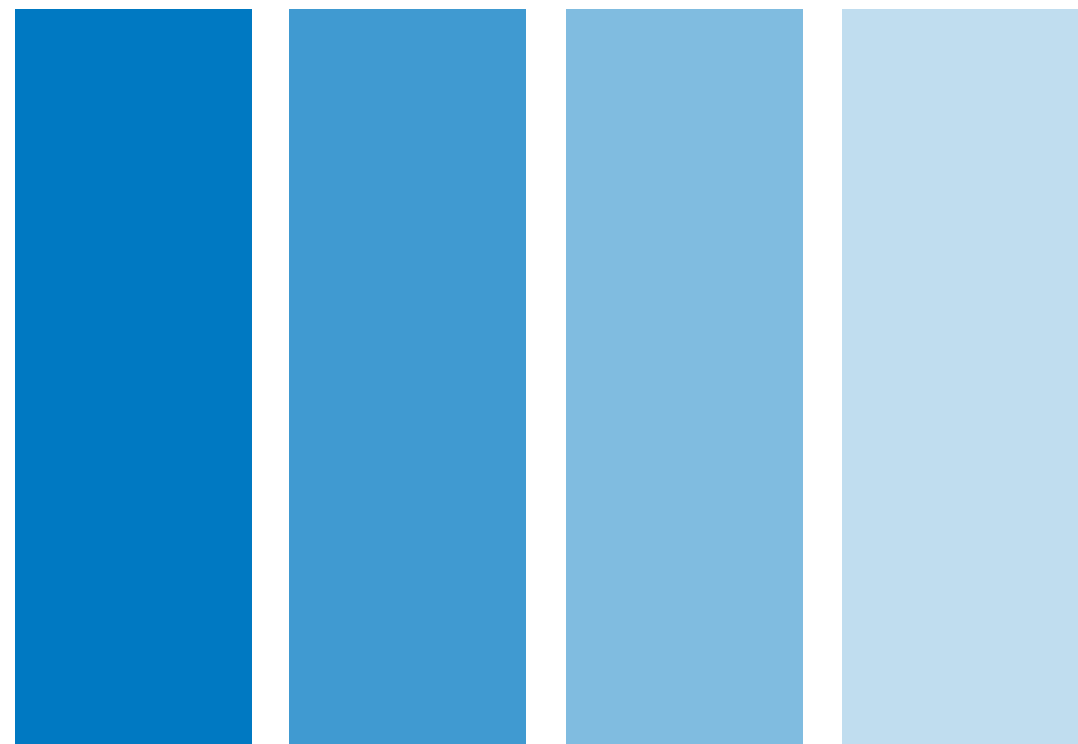
The vast majority of residents (84%) want to understand how the One Oxfordshire proposal impacts on their Council Tax. Residents living in Cherwell District were more likely to agree that this was important (88% compared to 84% overall). Otherwise, opinion was relatively unanimous across the county, even in the council areas which are supportive of the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal. Females were more interested in males to know about Council Tax (87% felt it important to know compared to 81% of males) whilst one in five (19%) of those aged 35-54 did not feel it was important to know about this issue prior to being asked about it.

Q5. how important or not is it that you know how your household's Council Tax would be affected before you were asked whether you agree or disagree with the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal?





# Technical Appendix

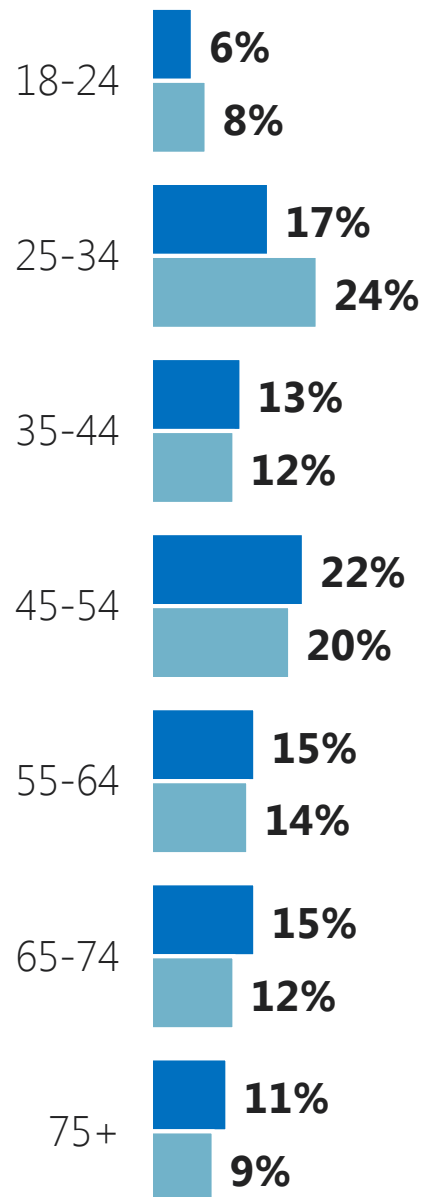


# Demographics (1)

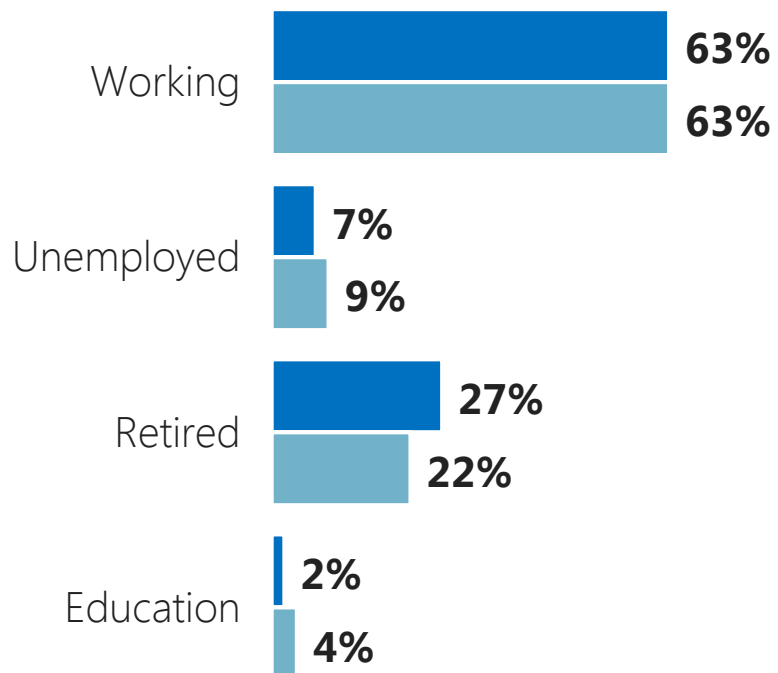
## Gender



## Age



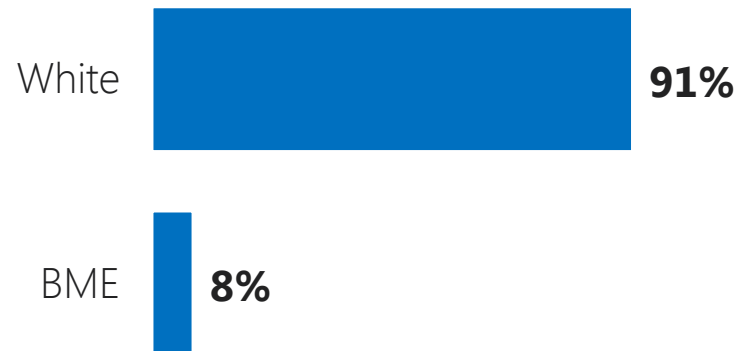
## Employment status



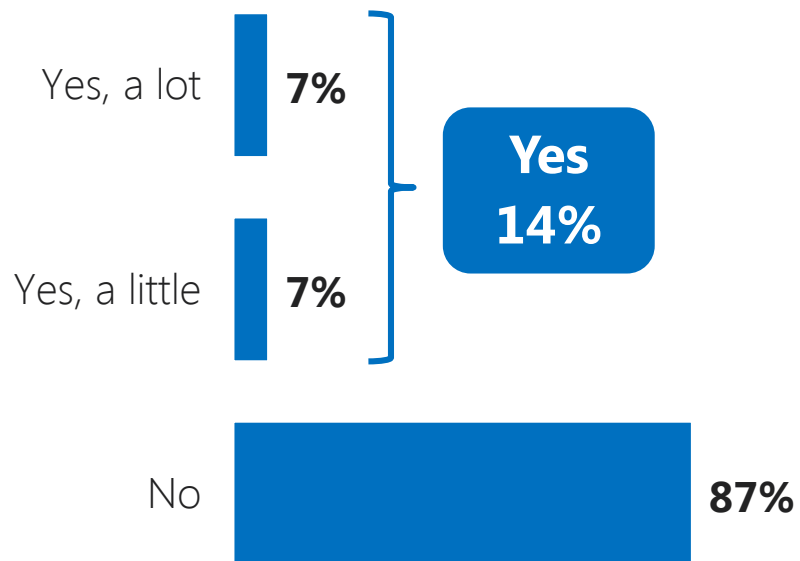
■ Unweighted  
■ Weighted

## Demographics (2)

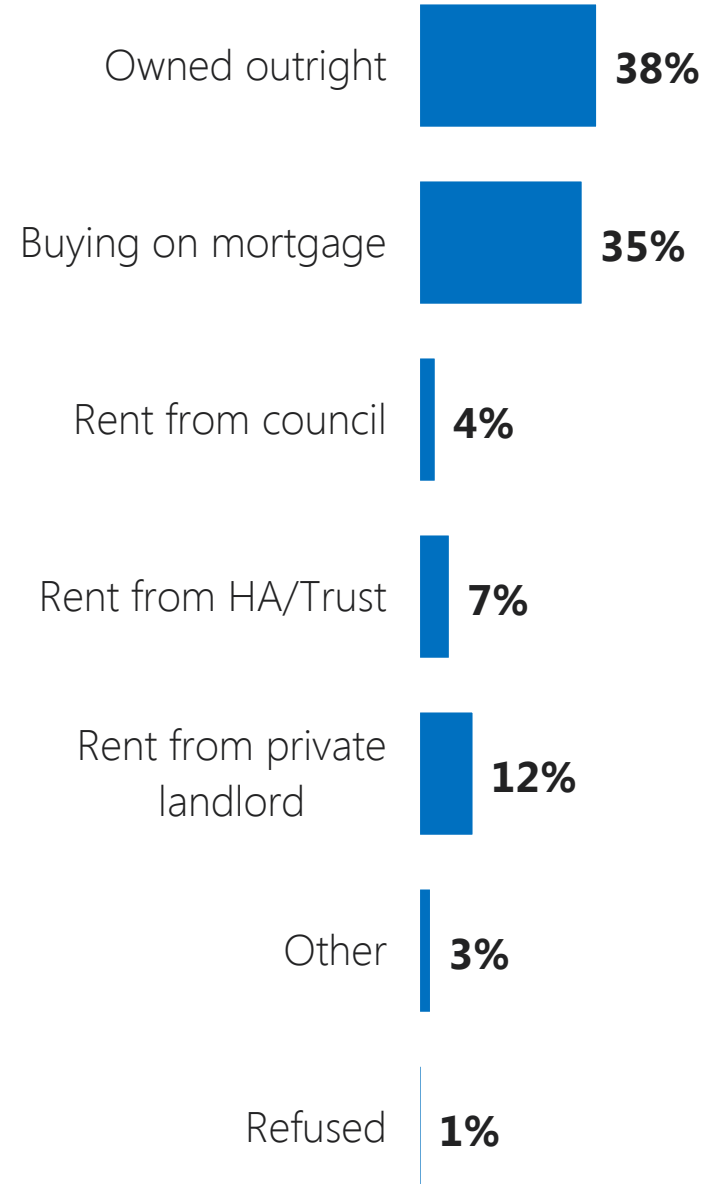
### Ethnicity



### Disability



### Tenure



# Sampling approach and quotas

The sample was disproportionately stratified to achieve 390 interviews in each District/City Council area. The sample was carefully controlled with fixed quotas set within each county on gender, age, and work status, based on updated Census profile information. Random Digit Dialling (RDD) was undertaken to achieve a random selection of households within these contact areas.

District/City Council	Number of interviews	Total
Oxford City Council	390	1,950
Vale of Whitehorse District Council	390	
South Oxfordshire District Council	390	
West Oxfordshire District Council	390	
Cherwell District Council	390	

# Statistical reliability and margins of error (1)

The residents who took part in the survey are only a sample of the total 'population' of residents in Oxfordshire, so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those that would have been reached had everyone responded (the 'true' values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results to each question is based, and the number of times a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range. The following illustrates the predicted ranges for the sample sizes at the '95% confidence interval'.

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
390 responses	2.9	4.5	4.9
1,950 responses	1.3	2.0	2.2

For example, with a sample size of 1,950 where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are, 19 in 20 that the 'true' value (i.e. the one which would have been obtained if all residents aged 18+ living in Oxfordshire had been interviewed) will fall within the range of +/- 2 percentage points from the survey result (i.e. between 28% and 32%).

## Statistical reliability and margins of error (2)

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample (e.g. between districts) different results may be obtained. The difference may be 'real', or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one - i.e. if it is 'statistically significant' - we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we once again assume a '95% confidence interval', the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in the following table:

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	$\pm$	$\pm$	$\pm$
390 vs. 390	3.0	4.6	5.0