ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Results of Public Consultation
Our Budget Challenge – Have your say

OIC launched a public survey on the 6 December 2025 and originally ran until 12 January 2026. This timeline was extended by a week to encourage more participants due to the adverse weather at the start of the year. This survey was used to gather local views on potential changes to Council services and charges. These views will help inform the Council's budget setting process for 2026/2027.

The consultation received 554 completed responses. Results are presented in the following pages, including feedback summaries for each question.

The survey demographics are provided as an appendix at the end of the document.

AI was used to support the development of this document.

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- Q26. Archive Tours Charges
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- Q28. Tote Bag Charges
- Q.29. Photocopying Charges
- Q30. Libraries and Archives Comments
- Appendix: Survey Demographics
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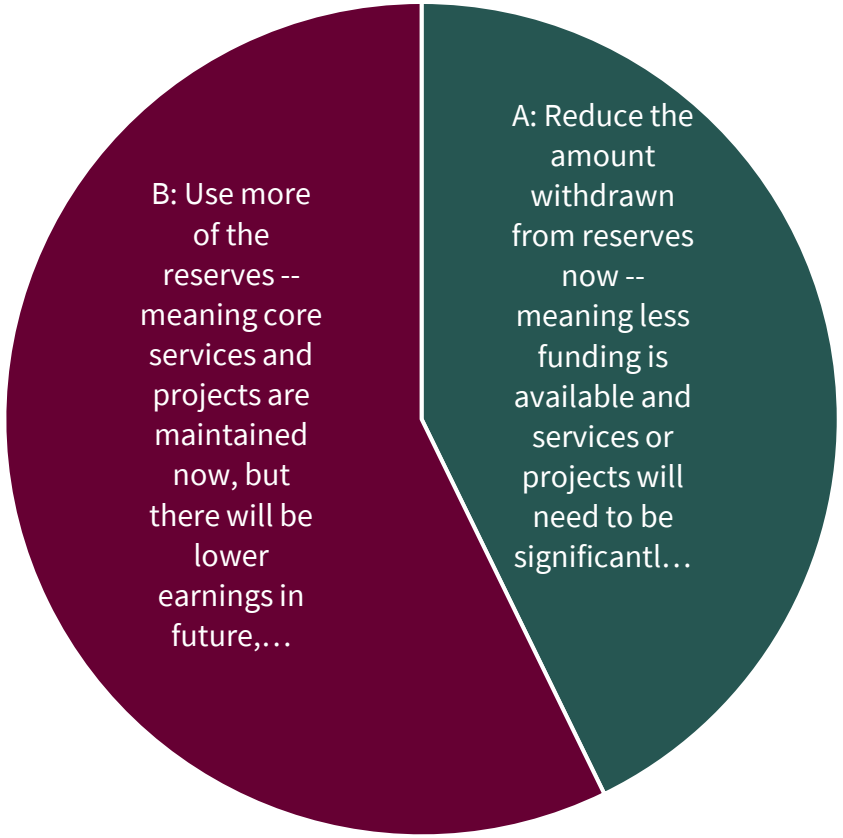
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Our community told us

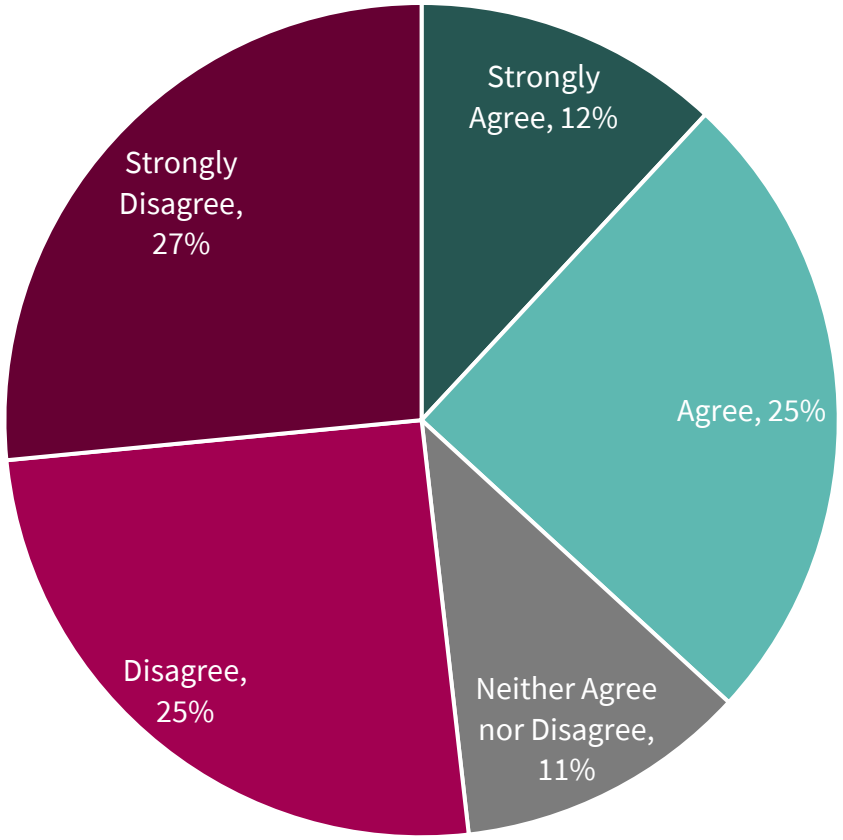
- Engagement in our budget setting process remains high, but less engagement than last year – less 'headline grabbers'.
- General support for the reserves being used to protect core services and projects.
- The community are fairly evenly split on keeping Council Tax at national average and on increasing charges for services – with even less support for new charges.
- A general tendency towards not increasing charges for 'cradle to grave' family services – school meals, youth clubs, interment fees.
- Supportive of increased charges for more specialised services – street naming, environmental health, 3D printing.

Q1| Which Approach Should Orkney Islands Council Take?



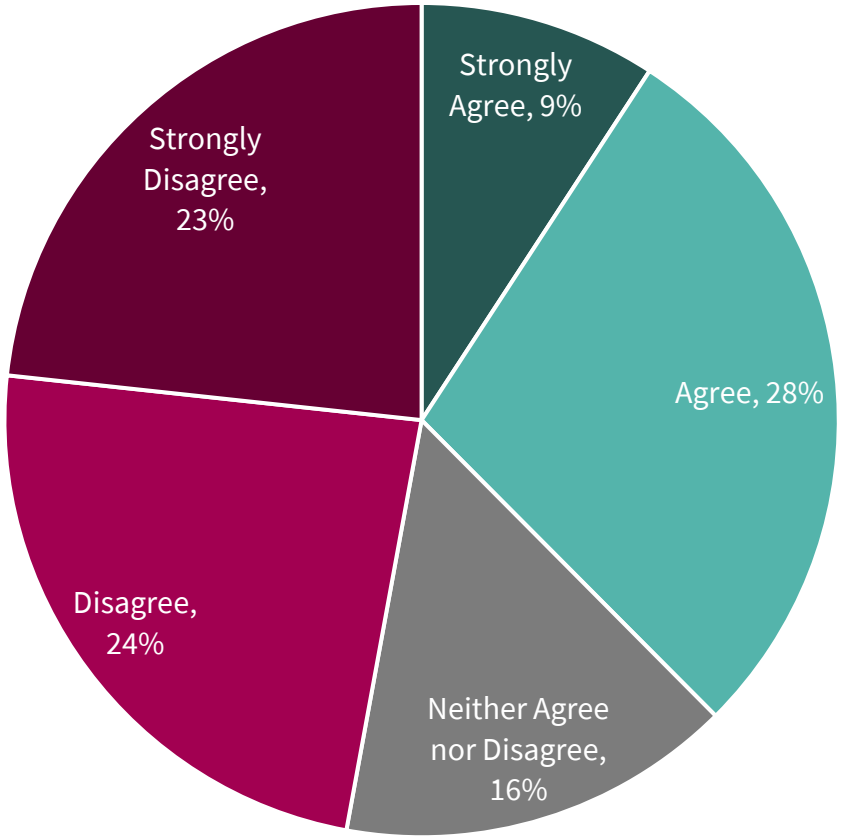
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
A	Reduce the amount withdrawn from reserves now – meaning less funding is available and services or projects will need to be significantly reduced	43%	237
B	Use more of the reserves – meaning core services and projects are maintained now, but there will be lower earnings in future, affecting service provision in years ahead	57%	317
		Answered	**554**

Q2| The Council should continue to set Council Tax for Band D properties at the Scottish national average, even if this results in an above-inflation increase.



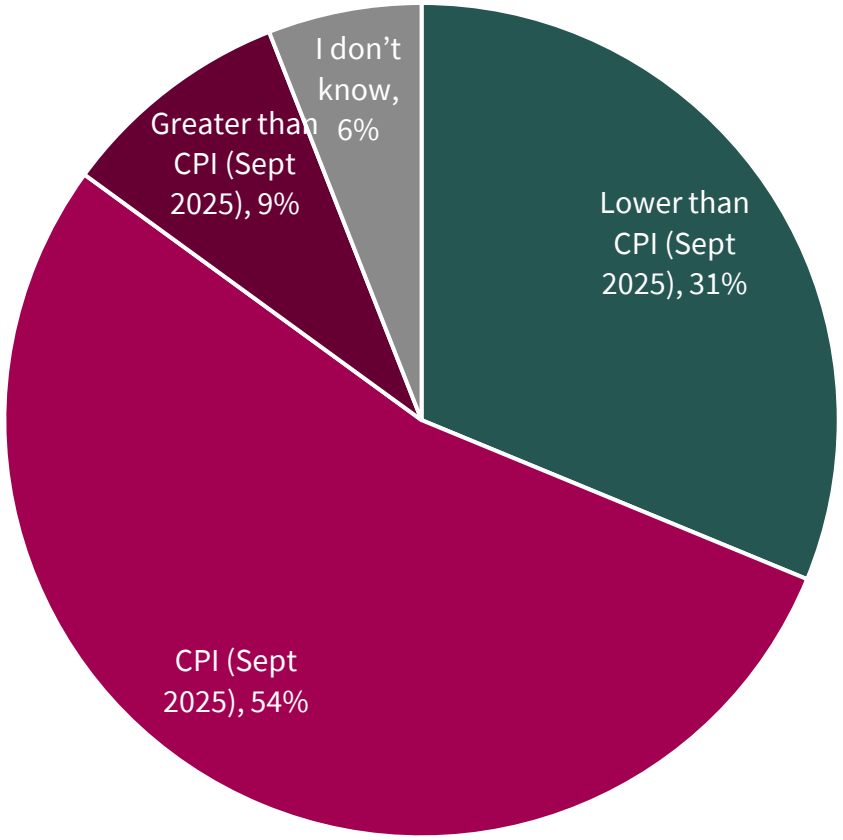
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree	12%	66
2	Agree	25%	138
3	Neither agree nor disagree	11%	63
4	Disagree	25%	140
5	Strongly disagree	27%	147
		Answered	**554**

Q3| The Council should introduce new charges or increase existing charges to help protect services, rather than cut services



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	10%	51
2	Agree	28%	157
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	15%	85
4	Disagree	24%	132
5	Strongly Disagree	23%	129
		Answered	**554**

Q4| What basis would you prefer for the general charges increase in 2026/7?



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Lower than CPI (September 2025)	31%	173
2	CPI (September 2025)	54%	298
3	Greater than CPI (September 2025)	9%	50
4	I don't know	6%	33
		Answered	**554**

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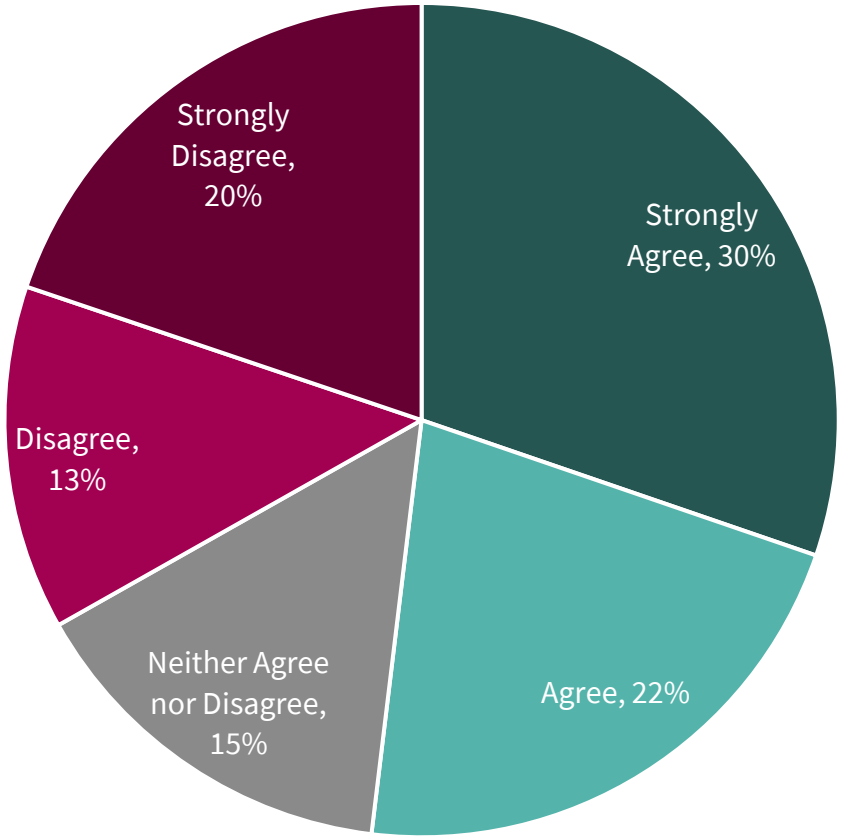
Q5| Summary of comments on these Finance proposals

- **Strong opposition to further Council Tax increases:** Many said that last year's rise was "astronomical" or "crippling" and fear higher charges will push households into poverty. Wages have not kept place with inflation and families are already at "breaking point"
- **Perception of wasteful or poorly managed spending:** A dominant theme is that OIC wastes money on vanity projects, consultants, duplicated roles and unnecessary initiatives. Current financial pressures are believed to be due to mismanagement rather than insufficient income.
- **Calls for major reductions in senior management costs:** Respondents repeatedly highlighted "too many mangers" and "excessive salaries."
- **Preference for internal efficiencies before raising revenue:** The Council should first reduce costs through improved efficiency, streamlined services, tighter procurement, reduced travel expenses, better oversight of contractors and elimination of duplicated functions.
- **Divided views on the use of reserves:** Some believe reserves exist "for times of need" and should be used now to protect services; others warn reserves "can only be spent once" and should be protected for long-term sustainability or invested to generate returns
- **Mixed opinions on charging for services:** Some support increased or new charges (especially if means tested or targeted at tourists), while many argue charges are already too high and risk reducing access to essential services or discouraging participation.
- **Strong support for a tourist related levy or income generation:** A frequent suggestion is introducing charges aimed at visitors—cruise ship levies, cathedral entry fees, tourism taxes, parking fees.

Q5| Summary of comments on these Finance proposals (cont.)

- **Frustration with quality and delivery of existing services:** Many comment that despite high Council Tax, service levels are perceived to have declined (e.g., waste collection, road maintenance, public toilets). Some island residents report lower service levels relative to mainland areas.
- **Criticism of survey design and lack of information:** Respondents frequently describe the survey options as “leading”, “restricted”, or lacking sufficient financial detail to form an informed opinion. Several distrust the process, believing OIC does not act on public feedback.
- **Desire to protect core statutory and vulnerable group services:** Even among cost-cutting advocates, there is consistent support for protecting social care, support for vulnerable residents, education, and community services, with cuts focused instead on management layers and noncore projects.

Q6| School meal prices should be frozen at current levels for 2026/27



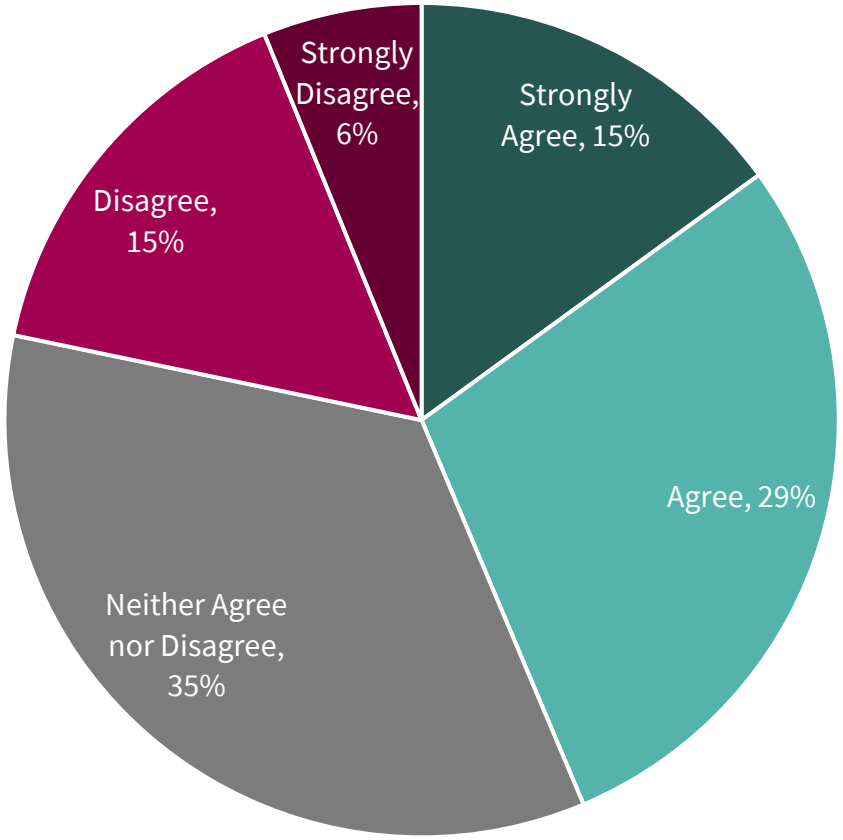
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	35%	197
2	Agree	25%	141
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	18%	97
4	Disagree	16%	87
5	Strongly Disagree	6%	32
		Answered	**554**

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Q7| Summary of comments on these school meal proposals

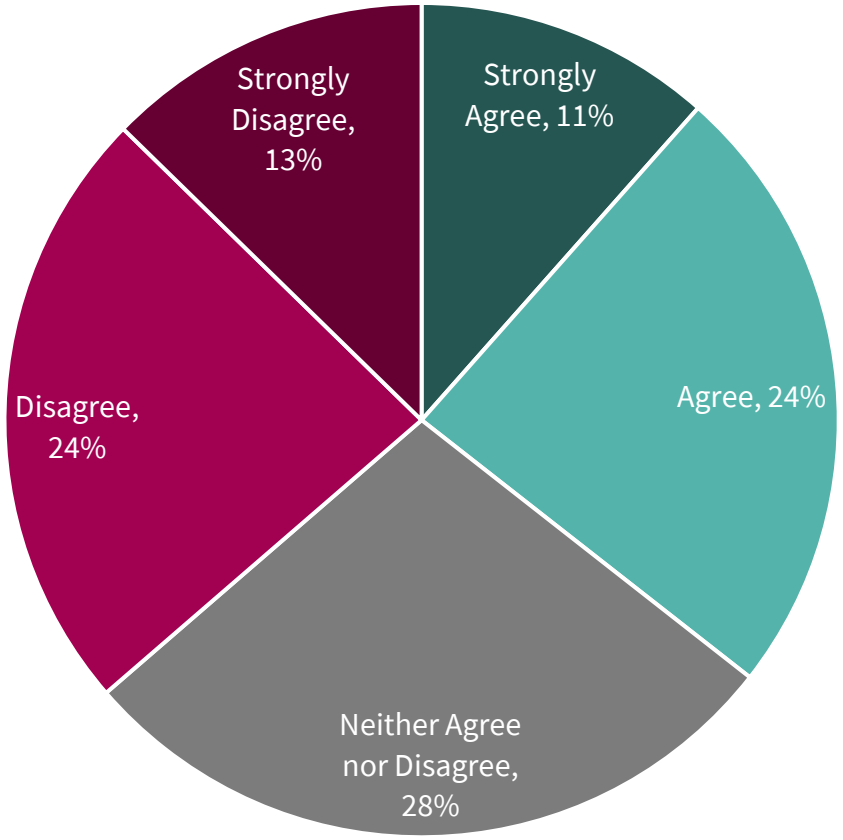
- **Affordability and Cost of Living pressures:** Many argued that families are already struggling with rising living costs and cannot absorb any further increases.
- **Quality, portion sizes, and menu suitability:** A large number described the current school meal quality as poor, portions as too small and menus as unappealing or overly constrained. Many say children come home hungry or choose to buy food elsewhere. Several believe Orkney school meals are among the most expensive in Scotland, which is not reflected in the quality or quantity.
- **Use of local produce:** Strong support for using Orkney produce and allowing school kitchens more flexibility to cook meals children want. Current procurement and nutritional rules are viewed as restrictive and waste creating.
- **Waste, inefficiency and lack of transparency over actual costs:** Respondents frequently mentioned perceived food waste, inefficiencies, and a desire for clearer information on the true cost of producing meals. Some argue better management could offset price pressures.
- **Inflation linked increases seen as reasonable by minority:** a minority accept that prices should rise in line with inflation or actual production costs, provided quality is maintained and support continues for families who cannot pay.
- **Staff meal pricing concerns:** Very strong and repeated sentiment that staff meals should not be subsidised, and teachers should be charged at full cost or commercial rates.
- **Impact on child wellbeing and learning:** numerous comments stressed that hungry children cannot learn, and maintaining affordable, nutritious meals is essential for child welfare.

Q8| The proposed changes to construction consent charges should be implemented



Answer Choice		Response %	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	14%	78
2	Agree	27%	149
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	32%	180
4	Disagree	15%	81
5	Strongly Disagree	12%	66
		Answered	**554**

Q9| The subsequent weekly permit fee should be increased from 25% to 50% of the original permit fee.

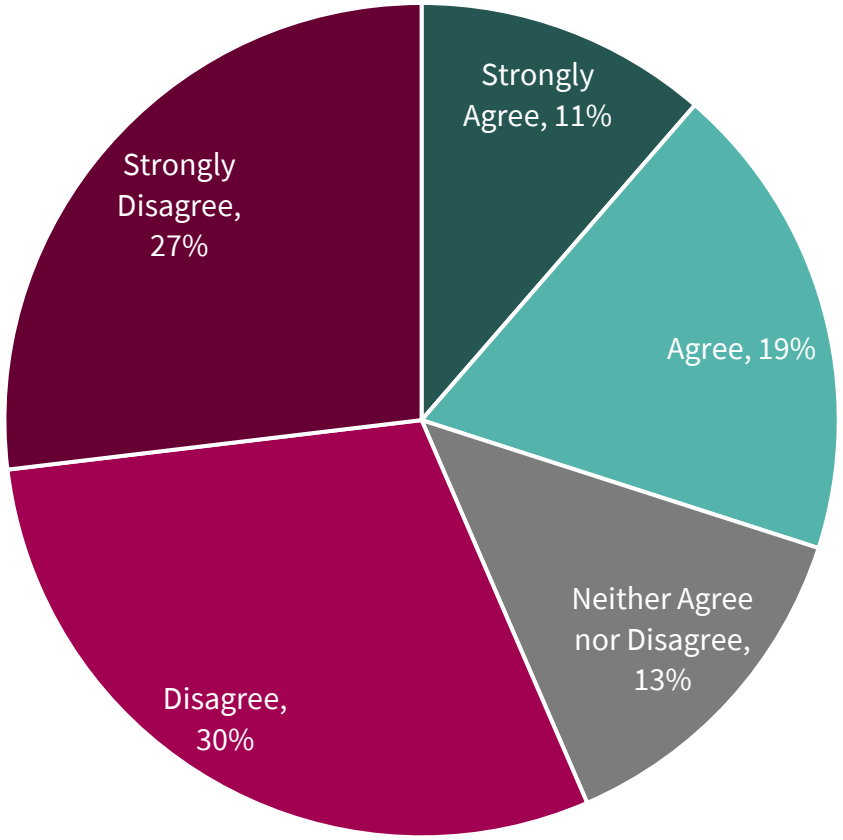


Answer Choice		Response %	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	11%	60
2	Agree	23%	125
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	26%	146
4	Disagree	22%	123
5	Strongly Disagree	18%	100
		Answered	**554**

Q10| Summary of comments on these Road's proposals

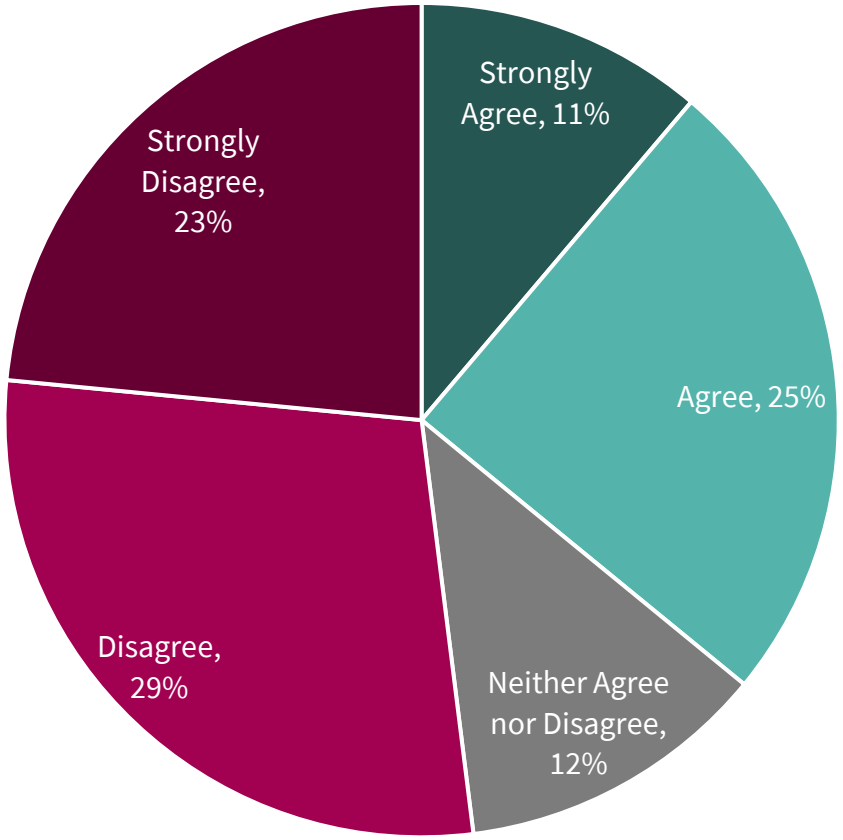
- **Lack of information and poor clarity of proposals:** Many respondents could not form an informed opinion because the consultation lacks key details such as current fees, cost breakdowns, rationale for increases and what the permit system covers.
- **Charges are seen as excessive:** A significant number saw the doubling of the weekly permit rate as too high and not reflective of actual administrative costs.
- **Negative impacts on individuals, small developer and housing supply:** Many express concern that steep charges will deter small projects, self-builders, and essential household improvements – potentially worsening the housing crisis.
- **Risk of discouraging wider development and investment:** High fees may hinder private investment, delay infrastructure projects or discourage contractors.
- **Calls for charges to reflect inflation or actual costs:** Increases should align with CPI, administrative costs, or actual inspection effort rather than being used to generate revenue.
- **Concerns about fairness and alternative charging models:** Suggested alternatives include percentage-based fees and tiering by project scale.
- **Scepticism about OIC's financial management and delivery:** Some respondents express mistrust in OIC's ability to manage funds efficiently, citing perceived waste, bureaucracy or poor road maintenance standards. Increased transparency on projected income, costs, and the purpose of the changes were desired before respondents could support fee increases.
- **Road conditions and reinstatement quality as wider concerns:** Several comments highlight poor existing road conditions, inadequate reinstatement after utility works, and the need for stricter enforcement on organisations causing damage.

Q11| The charge for a letter of comfort should be increased from £259 to £450



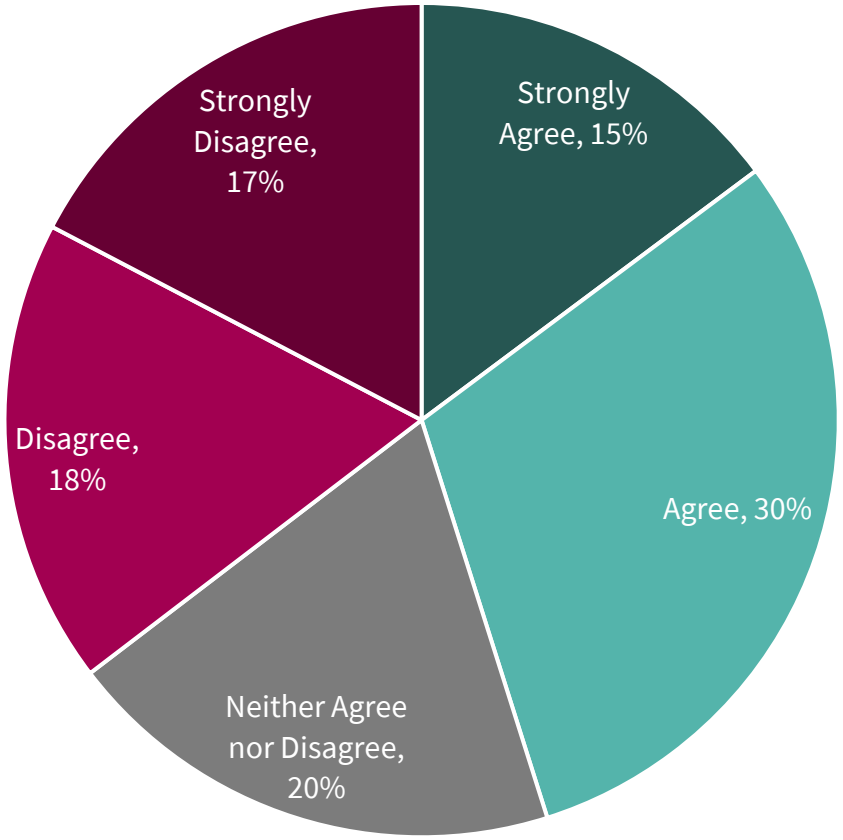
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	11%	63
2	Agree	19%	103
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	14%	75
4	Disagree	29%	164
5	Strongly Disagree	27%	149
		Answered	**554**

Q12| The charge for copies of certified documents should be increased from £47.90 to £150 per property file or request.



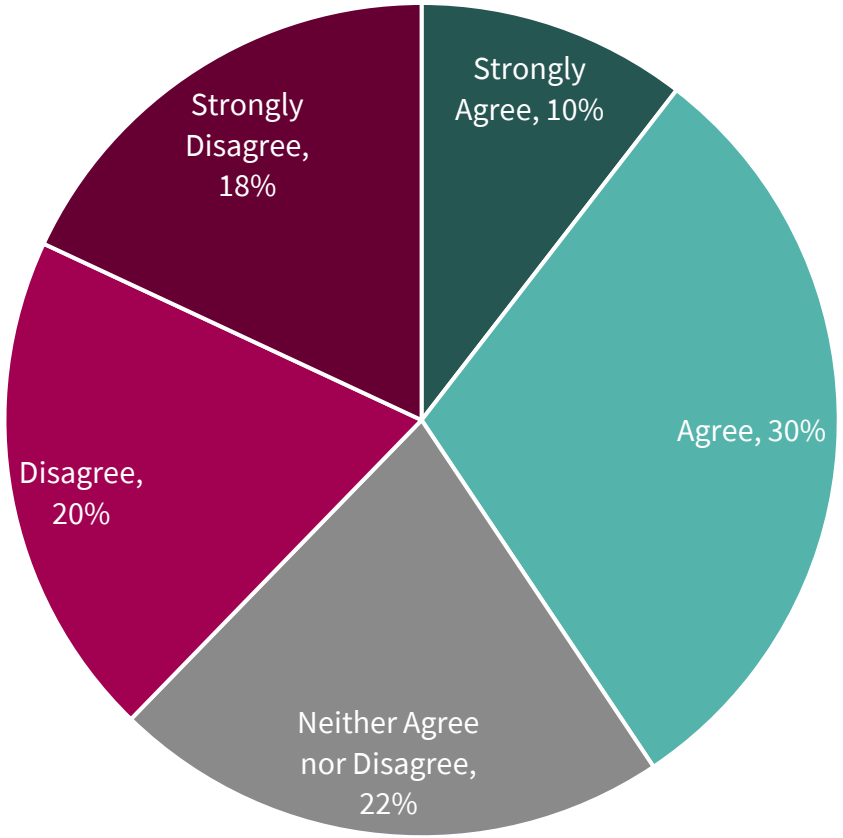
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	11%	62
2	Agree	25%	137
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	12%	67
4	Disagree	29%	158
5	Strongly Disagree	23%	130
		Answered	**554**

Q13| The proposed increases to property and street naming charges should be implemented



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	16%	82
2	Agree	30%	168
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	19%	108
4	Disagree	18%	100
5	Strongly Disagree	17%	96
		Answered	**554**

Q14| The Council should introduce a charge of £119 per request for written confirmation of discharge of planning conditions

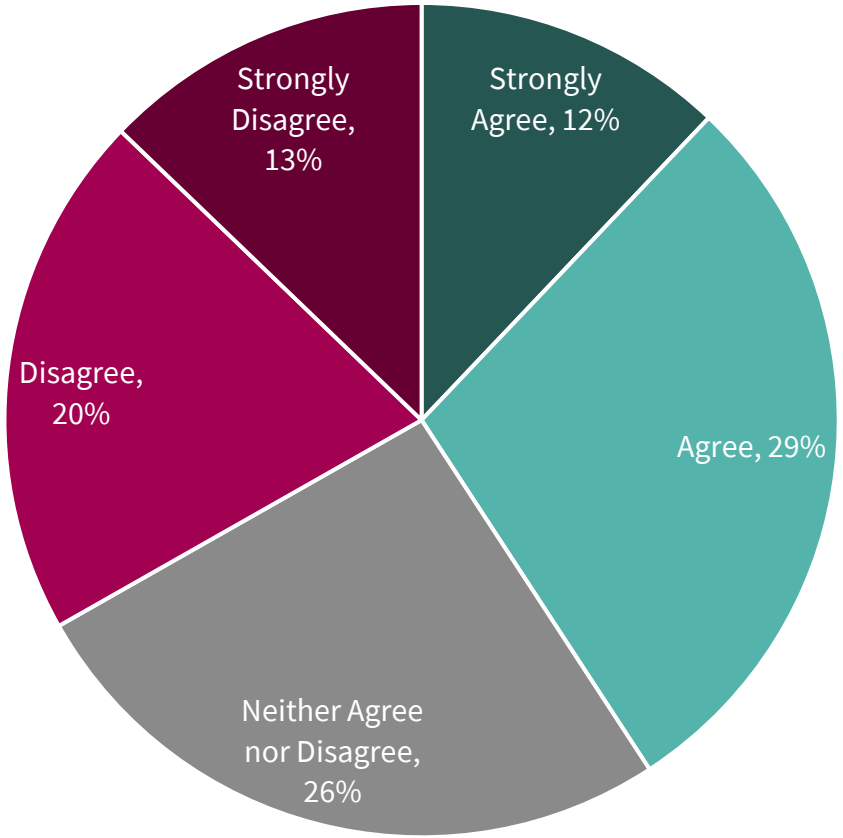


Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	10%	58
2	Agree	30%	167
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	22%	120
4	Disagree	20%	109
5	Strongly Disagree	18%	100
		Answered	**554**

Q15| Summary of comments on these Planning and Building Standards' proposals

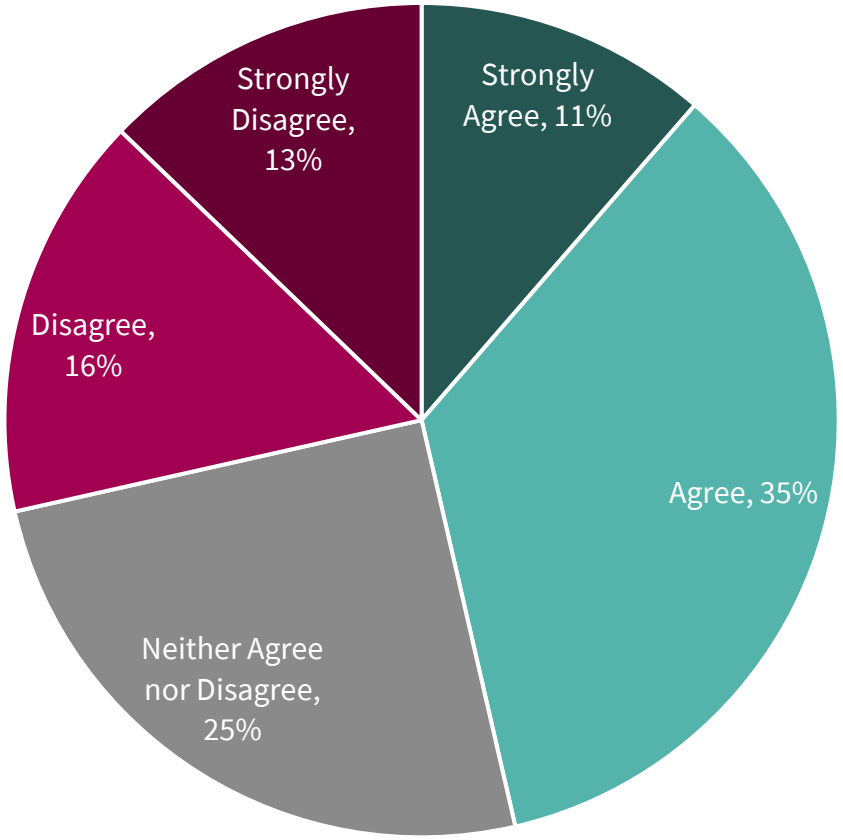
- **Concerns that proposed charges are excessive and unjustified:** Respondents described the increases as too high, "arbitrary", "disproportionate" and beyond inflation.
- **Negative perceptions of Planning and Building Standards performance:** Many highlighted poor communication, delays, lack of responsiveness, and perceived inefficiency. Some thought that fee increases without clear service improvements would feel unfair or punitive.
- **Risk of discouraging housing development and worsening the housing crisis:** Higher fees could deter self-builders, small developers and households. Many household are already financially stretched and further charges risk making building, buying, or renovating homes unaffordable.
- **Disproportionate impact on individuals and small-scale applicants:** Several argued that the increases favour large developers while placing grater burdens on ordinary households.
- **Support for increases only when linked to demonstrable costs or cost recover:** Some accept fee rises in principle but believe they should be tied to actual staff time, administrative cost, or inflation-based adjustments.
- **Calls for simplification and streamlining of processes instead of higher fees:** suggestions include reducing bureaucracy and simplifying applications.
- **Questions about transparency and evidence underpinning the proposed fees:** people requested cost breakdowns, benchmarks with other local authorities, projected revenue and explanations of how proposed figures were reached.
- **Minority view expressed agreement with some increases:** a small number consider certain rises reasonable, though usually with caveats about scale.

Q16| A sliding scale charge for food premises attestations should be introduced, with fees of £250 (two weeks' notice) or £750 (less than two week's notice).



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	12%	67
2	Agree	29%	159
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	26%	144
4	Disagree	20%	113
5	Strongly Disagree	13%	71
		Answered	**554**

Q17| A sliding scale charge for food export health certificates should be introduced, with fees of £100 plus VAT (three working days' notice) or £250 plus VAT (less than three working days' notice).



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	11%	63
2	Agree	35%	194
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	25%	139
4	Disagree	16%	87
5	Strongly Disagree	13%	71
		Answered	**554**

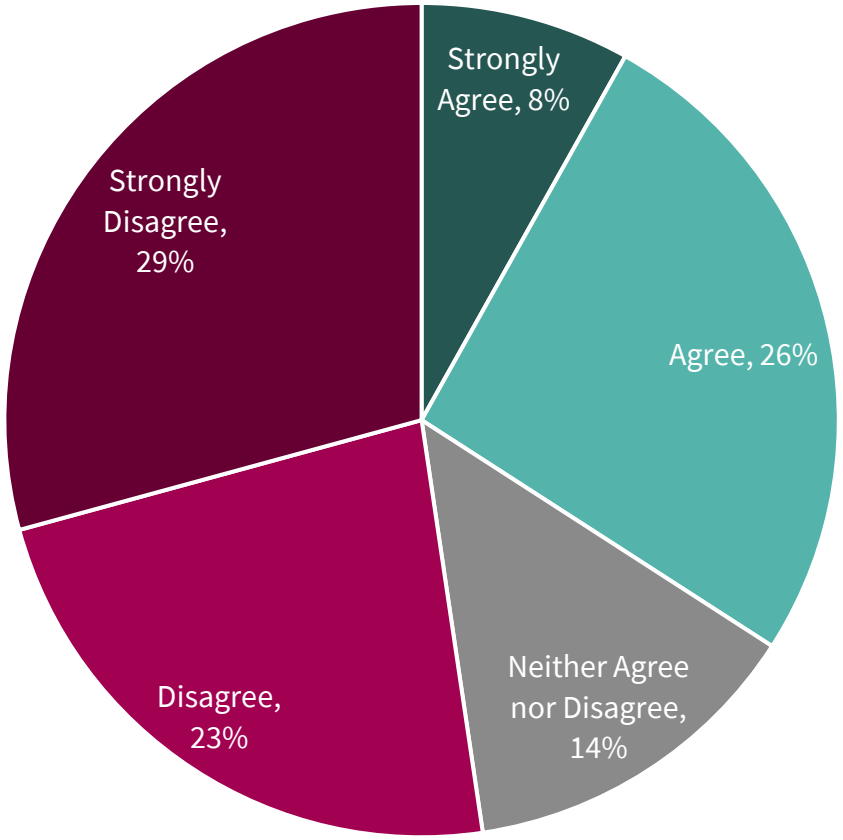
Q18| Summary of comments on these Environmental Health Proposals

- **Increases perceived as excessive and disproportionate:** Many view the proposed charges – especially the jump to £750 – as unreasonably steep and lacking clear justification
- **Negative impact on small and local businesses:** Higher fees may strain small producers already facing financial pressures, risking business closures and reducing the local economy.
- **Preference for inflation-linked or gradual increases:** Many favour modest, proportional increases rather than large changes, or recommend phasing in any uplift over time.
- **Concerns about the fairness of late-notice penalties:** The sliding-scale model is viewed as some by punitive, particularly for exporters of perishable goods or those responding to last-minute commercial opportunities.
- **Calls to better support local business and economic development:** OIC should encourage exporting and entrepreneurship rather than creating barriers through higher charges.
- **Scepticism about Council priorities, efficiency, and resource use:** Some expressed distrust in OIC's spending and staffing, suggesting internal efficiencies should be prioritised before raising fees.
- **Concerns that increased costs will be passed onto consumers:** several respondents note that higher charges ultimately translate to higher local prices.

Q18| Summary of comments on these Environmental Health Proposals (cont.)

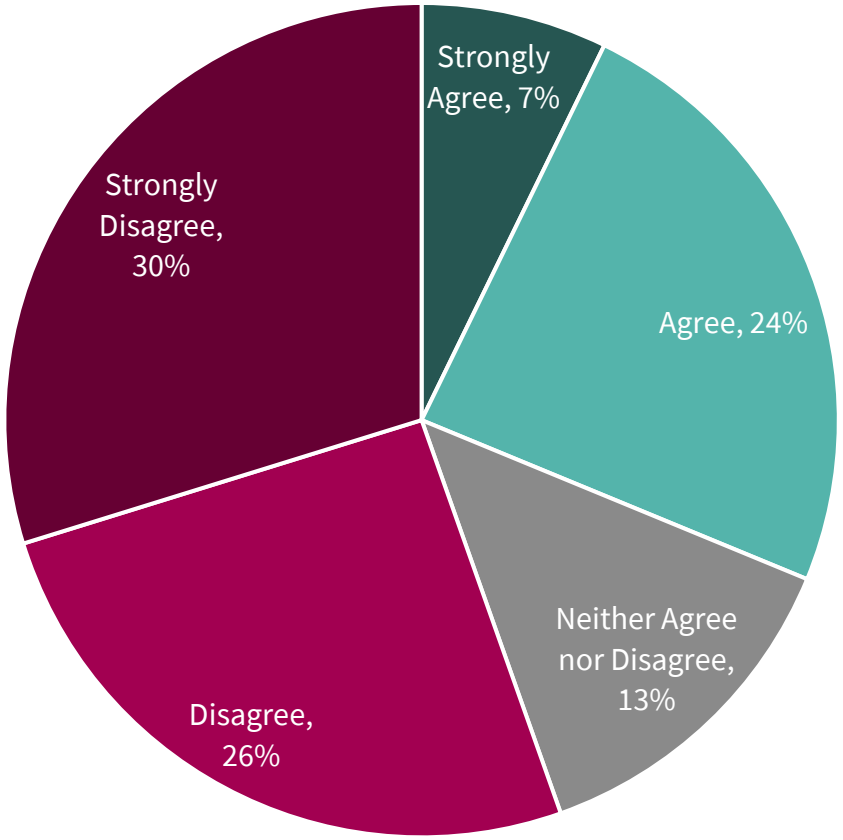
- **Calls for charges to reflect the actual work involved:** Some agree that cost recovery is legitimate but argue that fees should align proportionately with the service delivered, not notice periods alone.
- **Limited understanding due to insufficient context:** A number of respondents report difficulty forming an opinion because definitions, rationale, frequency of use, and implications were not clearly explained. Requests for transparency on how charges were calculated, underlying costs, demand volumes and projected income before being able to give an informed view.

Q19| The Council should increase interment fees for single burials to £750 and double burials to £1,100



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	8%	45
2	Agree	26%	144
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	14%	75
4	Disagree	23%	128
5	Strongly Disagree	29%	162
		Answered	**554**

Q20| A 25% supplement should be applied to interment fees for services requested outside normal working hours or at weekends



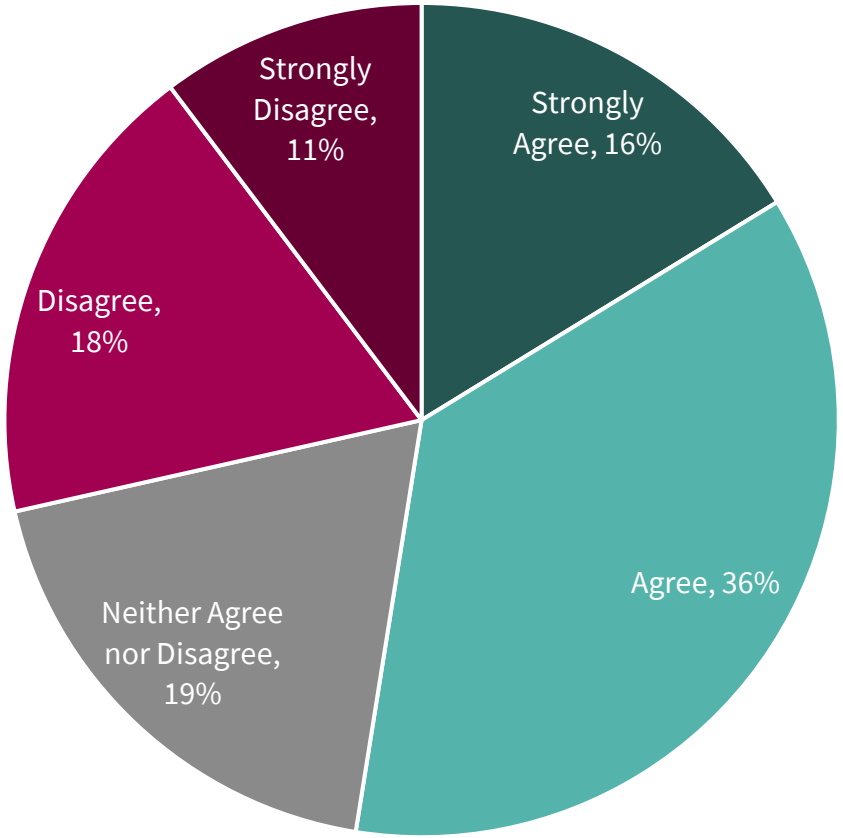
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	7%	40
2	Agree	24%	133
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	13%	74
4	Disagree	26%	142
5	Strongly Disagree	30%	165
		Answered	**554**

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Q21| Summary of comments on these Burial Services Proposals

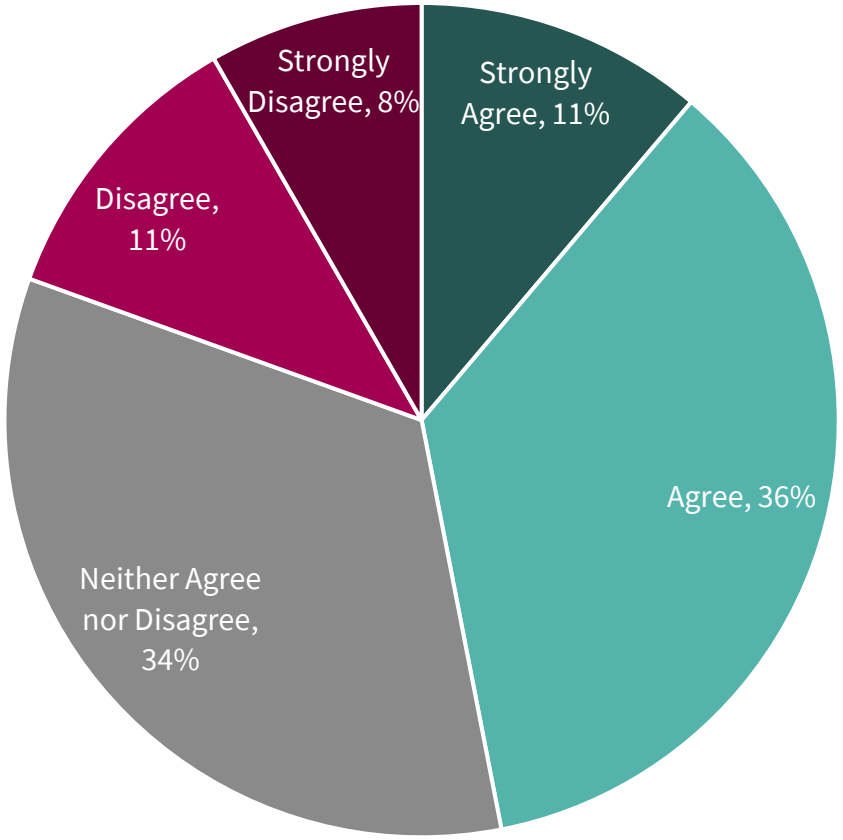
- **Strong opposition to above-inflation fee increases:** Many respondents view the proposed rises as excessive, unjustified and disconnected from inflation or wage growth.
- **Concern about financial hardship for bereaved families:** Comments frequently describe burial costs as already "extortionate" and unaffordable; further increases are seen as adding distress at an already vulnerable time
- **Widespread rejection of a 25% out-of-hours supplement:** Respondents stress that people cannot control the timing of a death, making charges for weekends or non-office hours unfair, punitive or "callous."
- **Island and rural equity concerns:** Some note that weekend or out-of-hours interments are often the only viable option in the Isles, making a universal surcharge inequitable.
- **Criticism of cemetery maintenance and service quality:** Several respondents argue fees should not rise when graveyards are poorly maintained, citing long grass, weeds, or mess.
- **Perception that OIC is profiting from grief:** Strong language reflects a belief that the proposals 'tax the dead' or exploit people's grief, undermining trust in the Council.
- **Requests for clearer justification of costs:** Questions about why fees must rise and ask for transparency around staffing, equipment and operational costs.
- **Support for inflation-linked or modest increases only:** a minority accept small or inflation-aligned uplifts as reasonable, provided fees reflect actual costs and services improve.
- **Calls for alternative solutions, including crematorium:**

Q22| Sports and leisure fees for KGS Sports Centre functions and Stromness health suite should remain at current levels.



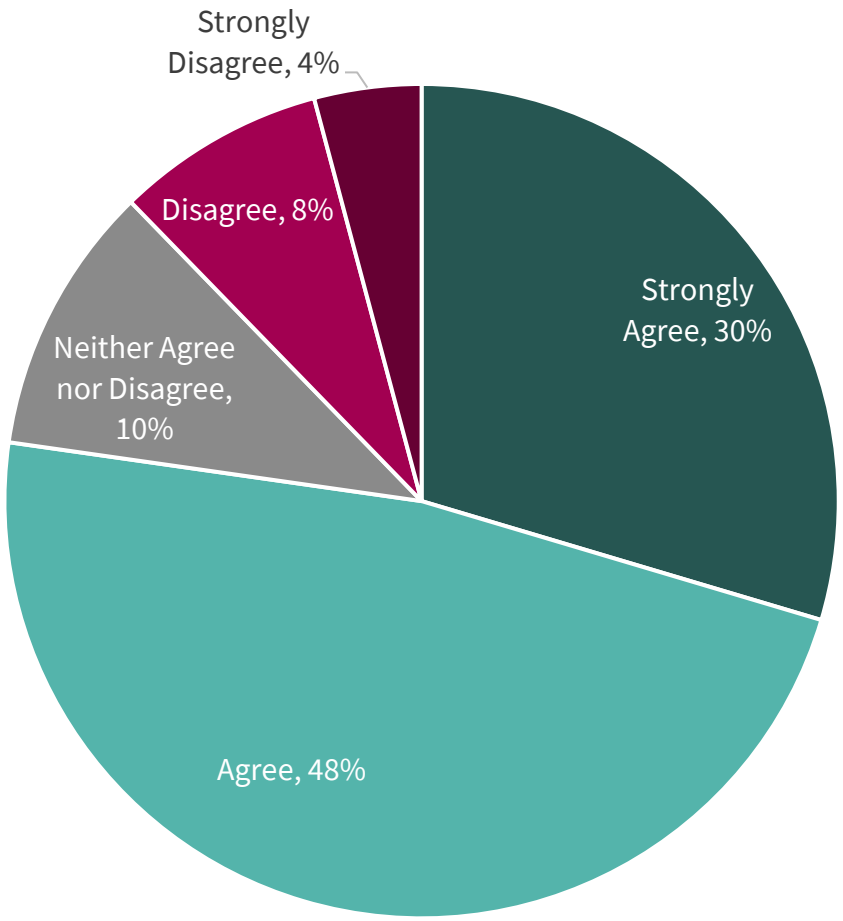
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	16%	90
2	Agree	36%	201
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	19%	105
4	Disagree	18%	101
5	Strongly Disagree	11%	57
		Answered	**554**

Q23| A charge of £56.40 per hour should be introduced for gym hire at Stromness Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	11%	62
2	Agree	36%	198
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	34%	186
4	Disagree	11%	62
5	Strongly Disagree	8%	46
		Answered	**554**

Q24| Youth club fees and charges should remain at current levels for 2026/27



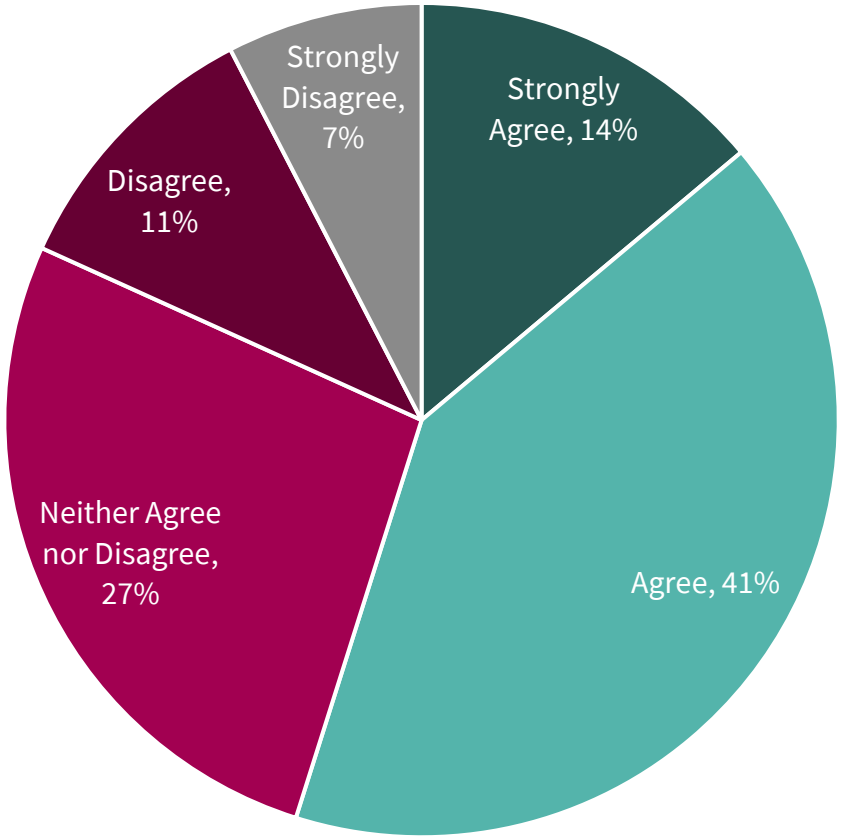
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	30%	164
2	Agree	48%	264
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	10%	58
4	Disagree	8%	45
5	Strongly Disagree	4%	23
		Answered	**554**

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Q25| Summary of comments on these Sport and Leisure proposals

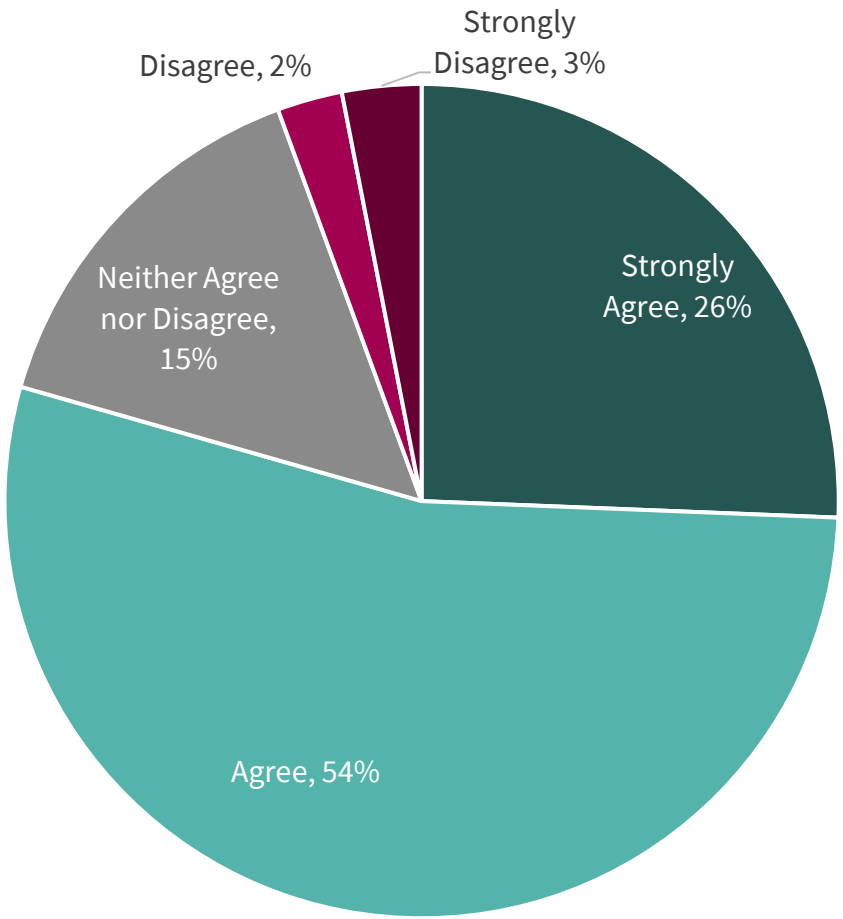
- **General support for inflation-linked increases:** Many felt that any fee changes across sports, leisure and facility hire should rise broadly in line with inflation.
- **Clear distinction between essential and non-essential services:** Views consistently separated *health, fitness and youth services* (seen as essential) from *weddings, functions and private hires (*seen as luxuries), with higher increases more acceptable for the latter.
- **Strong concern for affordability and public health:** Numerous comments argued that raising prices could reduce physical activity, worsening health outcomes and increasing long-term public costs.
- **Youth clubs should remain affordable or protected:** Due to the social value of youth clubs, fees should not increase – with some questioning why youth clubs charge at all.
- **Weddings and KGS function hire fees widely believed to be too low:** Respondents frequently viewed KGS function packages as under-priced compared to market rates.
- **Requests for clearer information and question design:** Specifically, around the proposed £56.40 Stromness gym hire charge: Many were unsure what the fee covers, whether it is new or increased charge, and whether demand exists for gym hire at all.
- **Affordability concerns linked to wider cost-of-living pressures:** Several comments stressed that existing fees are already too high, and that further rises risk exclusion.
- **Concerns about fairness and equity:** Concessions for older adults should be reinstated, that youth services should not bear costs, and that KGS wedding/function hire should be increased.
- **Calls to maximise income from private events and ensure cost recovery:** Some felt all facilities should at least cover operational costs.

Q26| Archive Tours should be introduced at £12 per person.



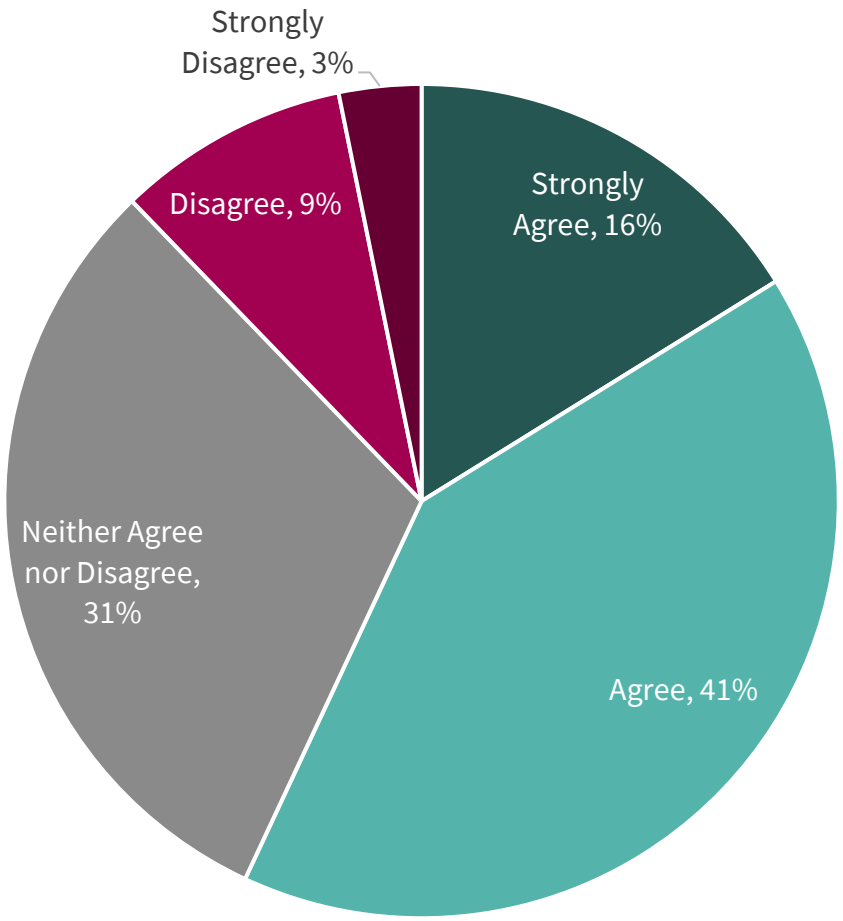
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	14%	77
2	Agree	40%	227
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	27%	149
4	Disagree	11%	59
5	Strongly Disagree	8%	42
		Answered	**554**

Q27| Charges for 3D printing should be introduced based on print time.



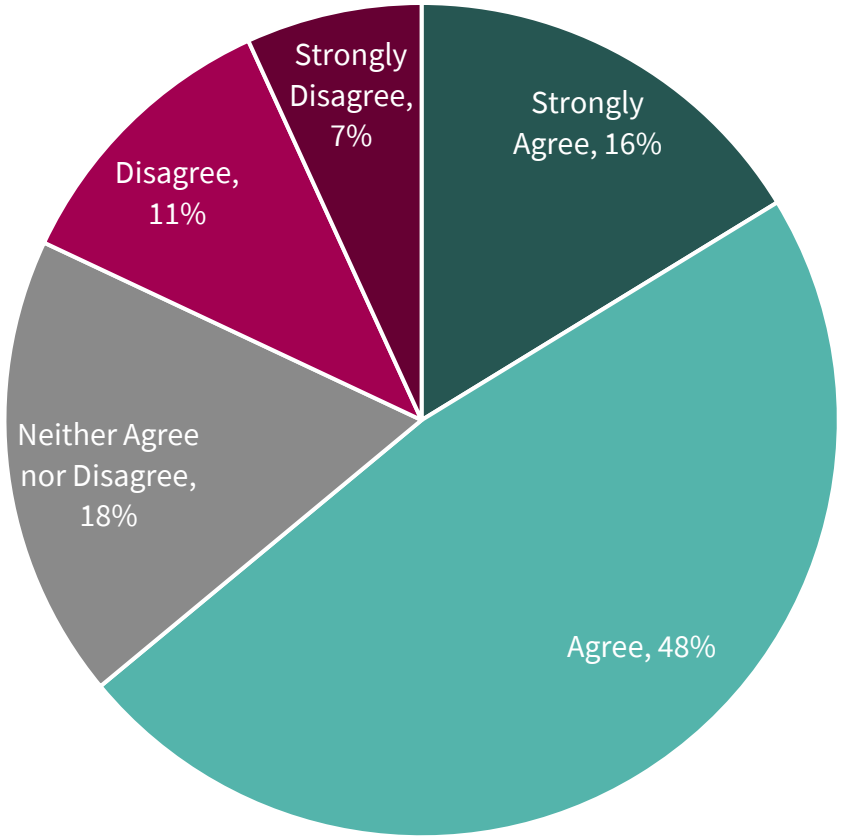
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	26%	142
2	Agree	53%	298
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	15%	83
4	Disagree	3%	14
5	Strongly Disagree	3%	17
		Answered	**554**

Q28| Tote bag charges should increased from £10 to £12



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	16%	86
2	Agree	38%	217
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	30%	164
4	Disagree	9%	48
5	Strongly Disagree	7%	39
		Answered	**554**

Q29| Photocopying charges should remain at current levels



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly Agree	17%	93
2	Agree	48%	273
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	19%	103
4	Disagree	12%	64
5	Strongly Disagree	4%	21
		Answered	**554**

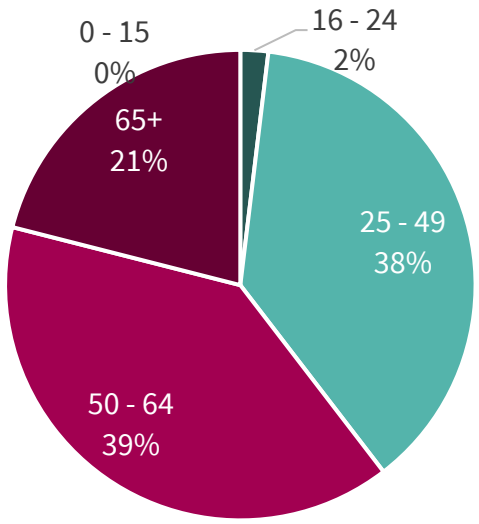
Q30| Summary of comments on these Libraries and Archives proposals

- **Inflation linked or cost reflective pricing:** Many stated that any charge increases should at least track inflation or reflect actual material, staff, and equipment costs.
- **Concern that some proposed charges – especially tote bags – are excessive:** Numerous comments criticized tote bag costs as unjustified or 'ridiculous'
- **Mixed views on Archive Tours, with strong calls for clarity:** Some welcomed tours as an income opportunity; others felt £12 was too high or did not understand what a tour involves. Concerns about staffing capacity were common, with questions raised about whether tours could be delivered without harming core operations given shrinking teams.
- **3D printing charges broadly accepted:** Several respondents supported charging given material and maintenance requirements ;others questioned the value of providing 3D printing.
- **Strong sentiment that core library and archive services should remain affordable or low-cost:** These are vital community resources, particularly for low-income residents and should not be priced as tourist attractions.
- **Photocopying increases viewed as reasonable if justified, but affordability concerns persists:** Some accept modest rises, especially to cover toner or CPI, while other stressed that higher charges penalize those without home printer.
- **Requests for better explanation of costs and rationale**
- **Perception that proposed charges are minor compared to wider financial issues:** Several questioned why these small charges were subject to consultation when larger budget matter exist.

Appendix: Survey Demographics

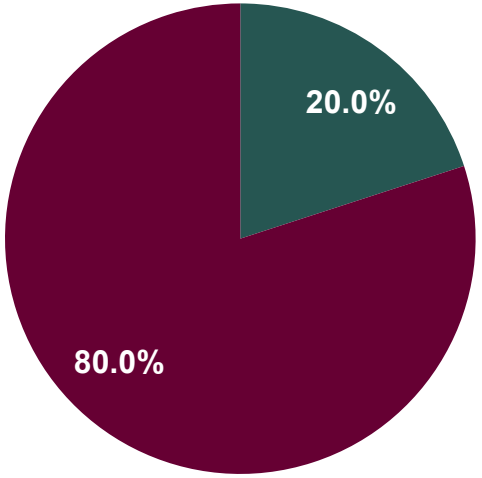
Link to contents

Q | What is your age group?



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	0 – 15	0%	0
2	16 – 24	2%	10
3	25 – 49	38%	197
4	50 – 64	39%	206
5	65+	21%	110
		Answered	**523**
		Skipped	

Q | Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?

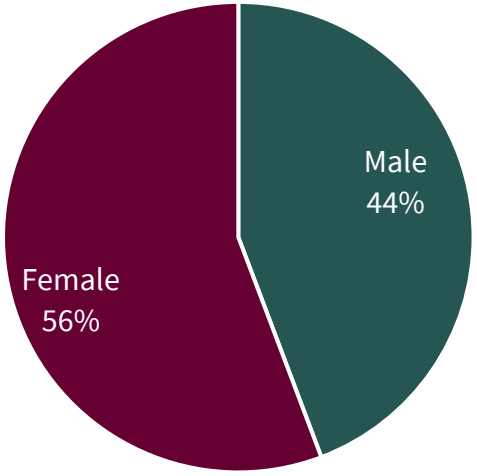


Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	20%	100
2	No	80%	411
		Answered	**514**
		Skipped	

Appendix: Survey Demographics

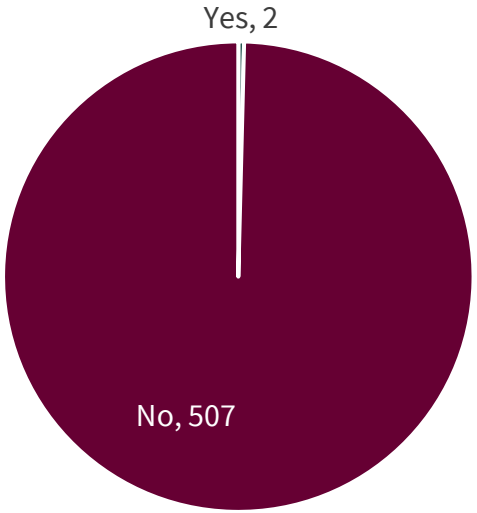
Link to contents

Q | What is your sex?



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	0 – 15	44%	235
2	16 – 24	56%	296
		Answered	**532**
		Skipped	

Q | Do you consider yourself to be trans or have trans history?

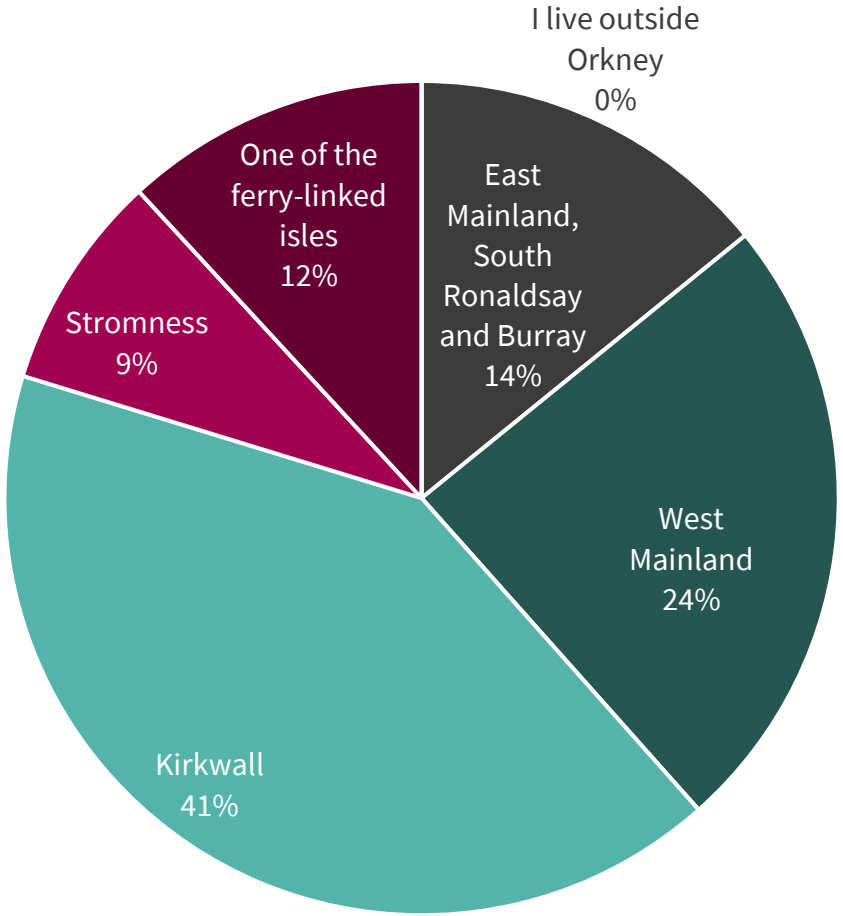


Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	1%	2
2	No	99%	507
		Answered	**510**
		Skipped	

Appendix: Survey Demographics

Link to contents

Q | Where do you live?



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	14%	74
2	West Mainland	24%	127
3	Kirkwall	41%	216
4	Stromness	9%	44
5	One of the ferry linked isles	12%	62
6	I do not live in Orkney	0%	0
		Answered	**523**
		Skipped	**31**

Link to contents

Appendix: other themes

There were a significant number of comments within the survey that did not directly relate to the questions being asked. A summary of the key themes is included below.

- **Cut internal costs before charging the public:** There was a very strong theme throughout to reduce senior management costs, curb consultants, tackle waste and streamline back-office bureaucracy. Core services (Education, Health and Social Care) should be prioritised.
- **Tourism / visitor Contributions:** Frequent calls for visitor levies, higher charges for cruise ships / *Airbnb* and higher council tax for second homes.
- **Survey design, communication and trust:** Many said the survey was too vague or leading and lacking context. They believed that consultations are ignored and they want clearer comms and more transparency
- **Fairness and Equity:** Calls to shield vulnerable and low income households from increased charges by applying means testing and reassessing property bands to improve fairness.
- **General Efficiency:** People want audits, process simplification, less red tape, and better value for money across departments. There were calls to “work like the private sector”; stop duplication and improve procurement.