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## Introduction

Funding for Essex Police comes from two sources: central government funding and local council tax. Taking these two funding sources into account Essex Police receives the lowest funding per resident of any police force in the country and has the sixth lowest council tax for policing.

Earlier this year the council tax for policing was increased by 3.25%, which meant the average Band D property paid £4.95 more per year. This raised an additional investment of £3.1 million that helped to fund:

- The first phase of a programme to double the number of Special Constables to 700 by 2019.
- An increase of 41 officers for regular front line policing, for the Serious Crime Directorate and for additional firearm officers.
- Improving accessibility by adding 15 additional police staff in the Force Control Room to manage additional demand and improve the 101 contact service.
- Investment in dealing with digital and cybercrime and online fraud, to help tackle gangs and organised crime.
- Investment in the technology that supports the Mobile First Programme, increasing what officers can do via their smartphones on patrol, freeing up time to offer additional support to communities and improving performance management.

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner wants to provide the best service possible for the people of Essex and increasing investment will help deliver this. We can't rely on an increase in government funding this year, but we can raise the level of council tax for policing within the current cap and are advocating to central government to have it raised.

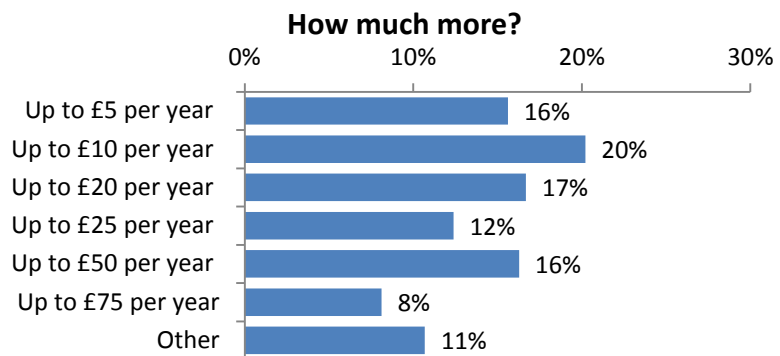
An online survey has been undertaken in order to understand the views of Essex residents about raising the level of council tax for policing.

## Executive Summary

The Police Precept survey was live between the 06<sup>th</sup> November and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and the total number of respondents of the survey was 5,044. The following provides a summary of the survey.

- 66% of respondents said that in general, they would be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided.
- 65% of respondents said that if the Government agreed to it, they would be prepared to see the cap on council tax for policing lifted so that more council tax can be raised and made available for policing in Essex.
- Approximately 25% of respondents disagreed both with investing more and lifting the cap.

- 75% of those who gave a view said they were prepared to contribute an extra £10 or more to invest in policing. Another 16% were prepared to pay up to £5 a year more.



- Local neighbourhood policing was rated as the most important area to focus any additional funds on, followed by tackling anti-social behaviour, tackling gangs, and serious and organised crime.

Over 1,680 comments were received and reviewed. The main themes were:

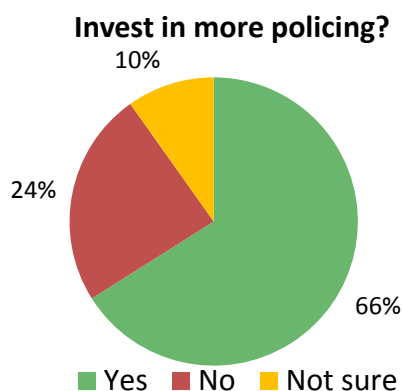
- Having more visible policing or a greater police presence, together with having “*bobbies on the beat*”, more resources/ frontline police and police stations. Respondents also wanted funding to go to policing in their locality, or go into actual policing.
- Wanting a better response to the kinds of day to day/low level crime that people see or that affect them and their communities – mostly burglary, anti-social behaviour, drug dealing in their locality, shop lifting and fly tipping.
- Making the police force become more efficient.
- The police’s poor response to crime was highlighted by a significant number of respondents based on either personal experience or perceptions.
- Central government should fund policing directly and other taxation issues were mentioned, with these two themes often being linked.



## Detailed Findings

Where respondents provided their postcode, these were matched to Experian Mosaic lifestyle categories<sup>1</sup>. These Mosaic categories were then used to determine the most likely Council Tax Band for each respondent and a total of 3,579 matches were made. The results for Bands G, H and I were combined due to the small sample sizes within each band.

Respondents were asked whether, in general, they would be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided.

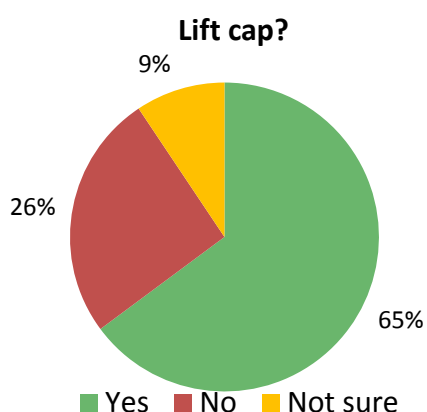


66% of respondents said that in general, they would be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided. 85% of police officers and 68% of parish/town/district/county councillors said this.

Respondents who are likely to be in Council Tax Bands A and B were less likely to say they would be prepared to invest more, while those in Bands D, F and G/H/I were more likely to say this.

Council tax band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G and above	All respondents
Yes	58%	64%	66%	70%	68%	72%	70%	67%
No	25%	29%	25%	20%	22%	22%	9%	24%
Not sure	17%	7%	9%	10%	10%	6%	21%	9%
Number of respondents	201	315	903	571	771	232	210	3203

There is currently a Government cap on how much the council tax for policing can be increased. This cap is currently set at no more than £5 per year for a Band D property in areas like Essex where the council tax for policing is one of the lowest.



65% of respondents said that if the Government agreed to it, they would be prepared to see the cap lifted so that more council tax can be raised and made available for policing in Essex. 81% of respondents who identified themselves as police officers and 67% of respondents who identified themselves as parish/town/district/county councillors said that if the government agreed to it, they would be prepared to see the cap lifted.

<sup>1</sup> This was possible for Essex County Council local authority postcodes only, as ECC does not have access to the Experian data for Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

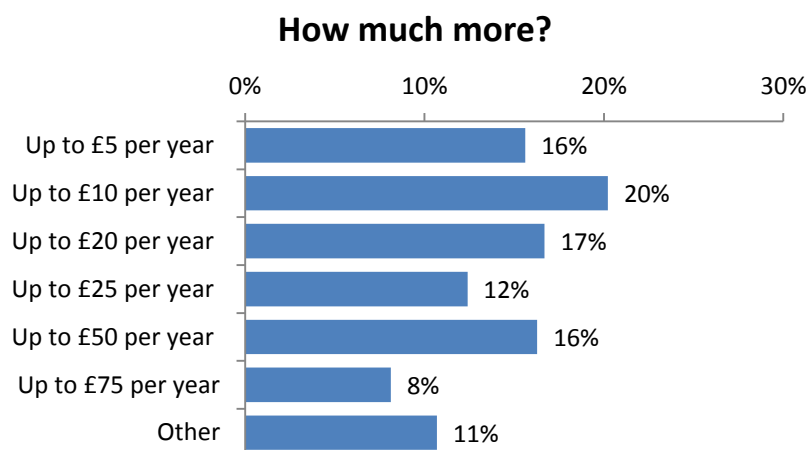
Respondents who are likely to be in Council Tax Bands A, B and C were less likely to say they would be prepared to see the cap lifted, while those in Bands F and G and above were more likely to say this.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G and above	All respondents
Yes	61%	64%	63%	68%	67%	71%	70%	66%
No	27%	29%	28%	23%	24%	23%	22%	25%
Not sure	13%	7%	9%	9%	10%	6%	8%	9%
Number of respondents	200	324	937	596	805	242	218	3322

The majority of the respondents who did not want to invest more in policing also did not want the cap to be lifted.

The Band D council tax for policing in Essex for 2017/18 is £157.05. Respondents were asked how much more they would be prepared to contribute to support more investment in policing. Out of the 4,245 respondents who answered this question, 614 respondents (14%) specifically said that they would not be prepared to pay an increase.

Of the 3,631 respondents who did respond about this amount, 75% of them said they were prepared to contribute an extra £10 or more to invest in policing. Another 16% were prepared to pay up to £5 a year more.



Just over a tenth of respondents suggested other amounts, detailed in the table below. However out of these respondents, 11% felt that the government should fund policing and 9% felt that they do not currently get an effective police service or value for money.

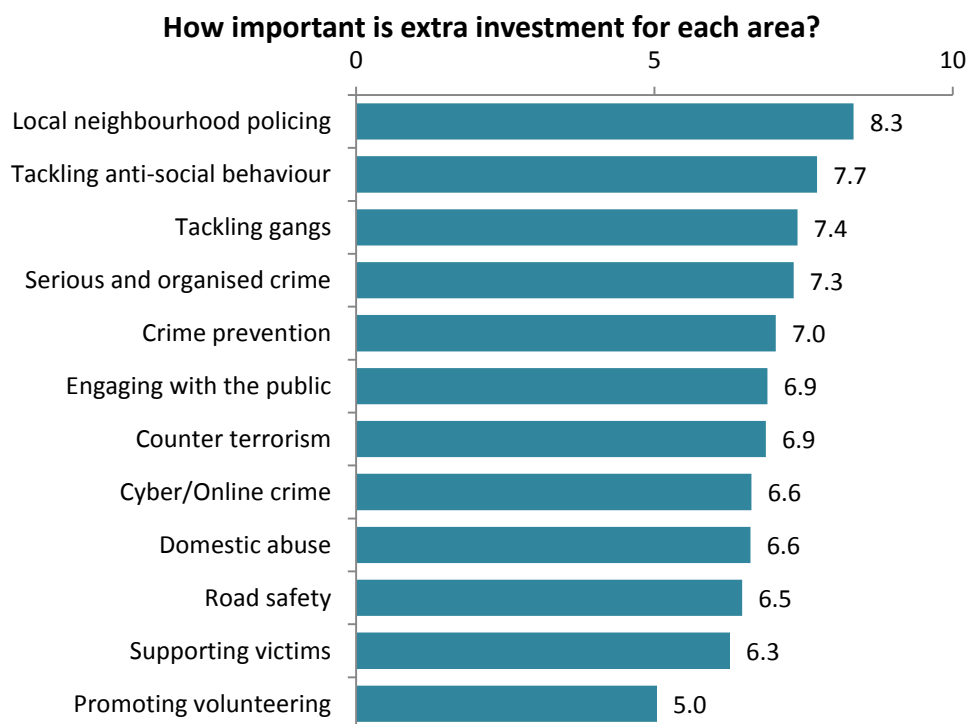
'Other' amounts	Percentage of respondents who specified an 'other' amount
Up to an extra £100 per year	10%
Up to an extra £120 per year	8%
Various amounts ranging from £1 to £500	9%

Various other comments were made, including:

- Respondents pay enough taxes already.
- Money is already tight.
- Respondents are already paying too much/enough for the police service.
- The Police are wasting money currently.
- The amount would depend on what the money would be spent on.
- Respondents would want the extra funding to go on local/front line policing.
- The funding should be decreased.
- Cuts should be made elsewhere.
- Doubt that the extra funding would go to the Police.
- Respondents want to understand what they would get for extra funding.

In recent years the nature of crime and the risks to the public have changed and policing has changed to meet this need. For example, Essex Police has increased its investment in counter terrorism activities, tackling hidden harms such as online abuse and fraud, and investigating complex organised crime. These areas of investment, while not always visible, are essential parts of what the police do to keep Essex safe. As the Police have limited financial resources, they wanted to know where respondents would like them to focus any additional funding that they might receive through the precept.

Respondents were asked how important they feel that extra investment is for each area, on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important). Local neighbourhood policing was rated as 8.3 out of 10 in importance, followed by tackling anti-social behaviour, tackling gangs and then serious and organised crime.



Respondents were asked whether there was anything else that they would like to say about the policing precept, and 1,686 comments were made.

Nearly 300 comments (17%) related to having more visible policing or a greater police presence. This was often linked to the visibility of police being a deterrent to crime/reducing crime, being accessible to their community and making people feel safe. Nearly 40 people (2% of all comments) wanted a more visible presence in rural areas and villages.

*“Additional money raised should be ring fenced to provide more visible presence on the street. It may not be statistically proven to reduce crime or increase detections but this is what the public want. The feeling of being safer outweighs and statistics or targets. If we are paying more - give us what WE WANT not what YOU want to give us.”*

*“People want to see more officers but equally having them walking the streets isn't the best use of time, so an issue of perceive reality. You need to do what you believe is best and based on the full info that you are privy to but any increase needs to be matched by visibly more police not just swallowed up to tackle existing budget challenges. The public will, I believe want to actually see more officers. Good luck!”*

*“I want a reduction - I don't receive a service now as funding is spent in areas that don't benefit me, why would I pay more to receive less? Police funding should come from the government, not me.”*

*“More to be done about rural crime. You are very much left to feel you are on your own and left to your own devices. We know the logistics of policing a rural location are not easy but we pay our taxes just like everyone else.”*

Over 160 comments (10%) related to having “*bobbies on the beat*”, or patrolling the streets more, while over 130 (8% of comments) related to having more resources/ frontline police. Nearly 50 of these comments also linked to having a more visible police presence. Nearly 60 (3%) people wanted a greater police presence on the roads.

*“Policing in the area I live is virtually non existent and the only way to tackle this is by having boots on the ground.”*

*“I would like to see more of police on the roads & on the beat and quicker response times. Being visual does make people feel safer.”*

*“Clearly there is an under resource in policing. What I would like to see if policing being brought back to basics. There is no point in spending vast funds on emerging areas when the police force is Terrible at front line policing. It takes too long to get a policeman when you need one. Which to me is the most critical element of policing.”*



Nearly 230 respondents (12% of all comments) wanted a better response to the kinds of day to day/low level crime that they see or that affect them and their communities – mostly burglary, anti-social behaviour, drug dealing in their locality, shop lifting and fly tipping. Some also believe that allowing low levels of crime to proliferate “*simply encourages greater belief that the law won't catch me, I can do what I want*”. 40 respondents wanted tougher sentences or more charging/better enforcement when offences are committed. Around 50 people wanted police to focus more on the prevention of crime.

*“Local petty crime and antisocial behaviour is clearly getting worse due to a lack of local policing. While these may not be the most serious of crime they are the one which I believe have the biggest impact in our area.”*

*“There seems to have been a lot more aggravated burglaries and also anti-social behaviour by younger members of the community who are terrorising neighbourhoods. That comes in the form of damaging cars, attacking the public with eggs or other missiles! It does not seem to have been taken seriously and they are not being chastised and brought to justice.”*

Over 130 comments (8%) were that respondents wanted funding to go to policing in their locality, while 95 people (6% of comments) wanted any additional funding to go into actual policing. Just over 20 people felt that their precept should not be funding national or global issues (such as cyber crime and counter terrorism). Around 50 respondents linked funding to ensuring that they feel safe and just under 50 wanted evidence of how the money would be spent or what it would achieve.

*“I would be very happy to pay more, but I would like to see it go to local policing so we can have visible local policing. I don't want to see a police officer coming from 30 miles away when police assistance is required. Any extra policing funds raised should not go into a pot, it needs to be kept local.”*

*“Council tax payers must be assured that extra money raised this way must be used by the police and NOT put into general funding of council services.”*

*“It is difficult to say what is the most important aspect of policing but just want to feel safe and secure in my home and neighbourhood.”*

*“While I think around a 10% increase is not unreasonable in order to increase the effectiveness of policing in Essex, I do not know how this compares to the desired budget required in order to meet all the targets and standards being set. If a higher increase is needed, it would make sense to roll it out over 2 or 3 years and make is very clear to the public what that additional money will achieve.”*

Over 130 comments (8%) related to police stations, mainly their closure and/or desire to have police stations back again: many people linked the closure of stations to the invisibility of police, difficulties in contacting police and rise in crime. Ten respondents queried what had happened to the money received after their local station was sold.

*“The public have lost all faith in the police and they feel that low level crime is just being ignored due to the low policing numbers. The fact that lots of local police stations have closed (very short sighted) and there is a non-existent police presence on the streets make low level crime raise and the public perception of the police fall to greater depths.”*

*“Not closing police stations. And leaving people that haven't got computers with nowhere to go and report things.”*

*“The closing down of local police stations to sell land to housing developers is an absolute disgrace... we had a large police station and a community where police lived within the neighbourhood, We all knew several of the police within the station and had beat bobbies, I was always able to let the station know if we were going away I wouldn't mind paying more council tax if these facilities could be reinstated.”*

55 respondents (3% of all comments) wanted to have neighbourhood or community policing back, mainly due to their knowledge of the locality, people and issues. Ten of these comments also referred to police being visible in order to prevent crime and engage with local residents. Around 50 people suggested better community engagement by the police.

*“Since our local community policing has been withdrawn the crime, anti social behaviour, drug selling and vandalism and gone through the roof!”*

*“Local neighbourhood policing is significantly important in collating information and intelligence on a range of issues from ASB, Gangs, Mental Health, Persons of concern (including preventing extremism). Cutting neighbourhood policing over the years has reduced the volume of important local intelligence and community tensions; therefore reducing our ability to rapidly recognise and respond to emerging threats... Their remit needs to be reduced to being local officers, with emphasis on their presence, approachability and engagement with the communities they serve.”*

*“Wouldn't it be a good idea to set up local hubs for neighbourhood officers to keep them actually in the neighbourhood? Places like Asda in Chelmer Village could host an office for a local officer or Springfield library. It's no good police officers hiding themselves in a police station. Beat officers used to work well for the community and alter the public's perception and let's face it, the overall perception of the public is that there are no officers - because they never see anyone.”*

While just over 30 people (2%) wanted to have police officers rather than PCSOs/specials/volunteers, an equal number wanted to have more PCSOs or specials.

*“Essex Police have withdrawn from the streets and I no longer see full time Police Officers in our area. There is too much reliance on recruiting Specials - who cannot commit to performing enough hours per week - who are not trained to the same standards as a full time proper officer.”*

*“I would like to see more police officers than PCSO's, who see to have little powers and get little respect from those they are trying to deal with.”*

*“Keep the PCSOs they are the visible presence on the streets so are in an ideal position to get to know the population and so can provide information to support Police Officers.”*

Around 180 people (11% of comments) wanted the police force to become more efficient. 80 respondents (5% of comments) suggested getting rid of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner while 35 people suggested cutting the number of senior officers. About 30 comments were about not wasting money or spending money more wisely, but there were specific suggestions about:

- Reducing admin and paperwork, while investing in smart solutions or improving IT systems.
- Better deployment of police (when responding to crimes or being a visible presence) including getting them out of cars and onto the street.
- Reviewing the workforce including senior management plus the duties/workload of back office staff compared to police officers.
- Collaboration with other forces/services, including savings from collaborative bulk buying.
- Improving call handling.
- Not running PR campaigns (e.g. on domestic abuse).
- Spending less time on social care or mental health issues.
- The cost of police cars.
- Less being spent on police pensions, with officers retiring at 50.
- Not pursuing “frivolous” cases such as dangerous dogs.

*“Let's first look at what the existing money is being spent on and if cuts or efficiencies could be made here. Then set out what the extra precept would exactly be used for.”*

*“Make savings equal or greater than any increased precept (by investing in equipment for officers, reducing middle management by lean principles, improving procurement, scale up by sharing services with more neighbouring forces, speed up property disposals, apply technologies such as voice/image recognition, cloud computing to extract efficiencies).”*

Over 150 comments (9%) related to either personal experience or perceptions of the police's poor response to crime. This included complaints about the 101 call service, police taking a long time to arrive after a crime is reported or not attending at all for some offences, and refusing to record an incident. Around 50 people (3% of comments) felt that they have been paying more money over the last few years for reduced services.

*"I am an officer for a different Service and I witnessed a pickpocket outside a school as children were leaving, I can not get anyone to take my statement even though you will get a detection for this crime. I had a lovely supervisor ring me up and try and tell me it wasn't recordable, I spoke to him about HOCA and then he agreed he had changed his mind! Is this standard policy, to fudge figures and dissuade people to report crimes?"*

*"The Police do nothing about things that are reported on a regular basis. These matters are life-threatening and making people's lives a misery and have been reported to the Police over a number of years, hence I would not pay extra, apart from not being able to afford it."*

*"101 need to answer quicker... when people have been burgled you need to come faster ... appalling the way we are treated... yet you seem to have enough people to grab people on the roads."*

*"I do not currently bother to report issues as I have to wait too long for the phone to be answered, then only to be told this is not important enough to pursue, even though I am able quote the relevant legislation that sets out the offence."*

Just over 50 respondents (3% of comments) highlighted the good job that the police do.

*"You do a fantastic job already in tough conditions. Thank you, Essex Police, every single one of you."*

*"I think you do a great job and would gladly pay more tax to support your work which is on all of our behalf."*

*"On a whole the Police are doing a great job with the powers you have but I think you need more power or a magic wand to make the average people on the street a little more sensible and have respect for other people and the law."*

Nearly 150 respondents (9% of comments) felt that central government should fund policing directly. Over 170 comments (10%) related to taxation issues, with these two themes often being linked. Issues raised within these comments related to the current high level of council tax and/or not being able to afford an increase in council tax, and/or that council tax is the wrong way of raising funds (including views that it is a household based tax rather than being based on people's ability to pay). Also mentioned within these comments was the money wasted by local councils, that government should reduce spending on overseas aid/benefits/MP salaries, and tax avoidance by the rich.

*"I personally think that any additional funding should come from government. They cut policing budgets and now expect the public to give more for something they should be funding??!!! I don't think so. How about cap their wages and cut their expenses to fund better policing. There are better ways to fund this than taxing an already heavily taxed public."*

*"How much money do you think we have? Why are you asking us for more? We pay so much in tax, the majority of which gets spent on benefits. No I will not give you more. The cheek of it!"*

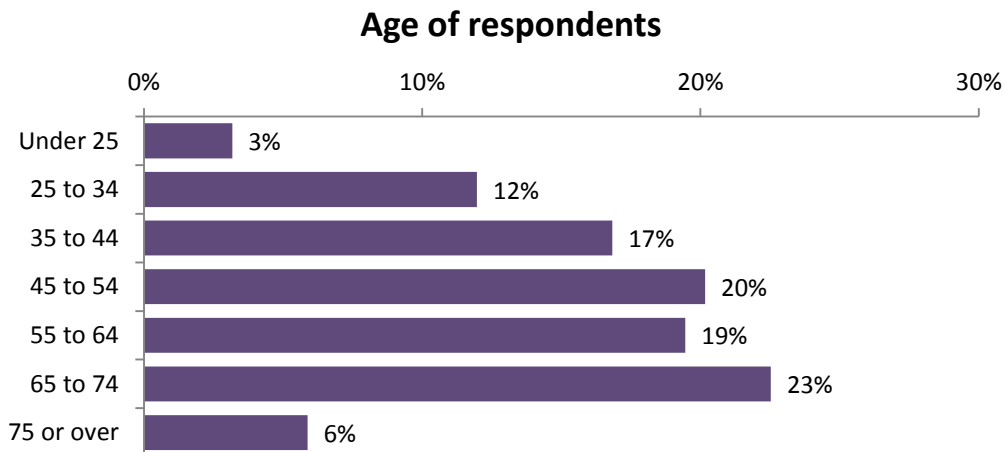
*"If we go down the road of extra council tax for policing this will be the thin end of the wedge. What about the other crucial services, will we be asked to pay extra for the fire service the NHS or may be waste collection? Why not ask businesses earning above a certain amount to pay extra? What our tax is used for should be examined and who is actually paying into the system and who is getting away with not paying."*

## Who gave their views?

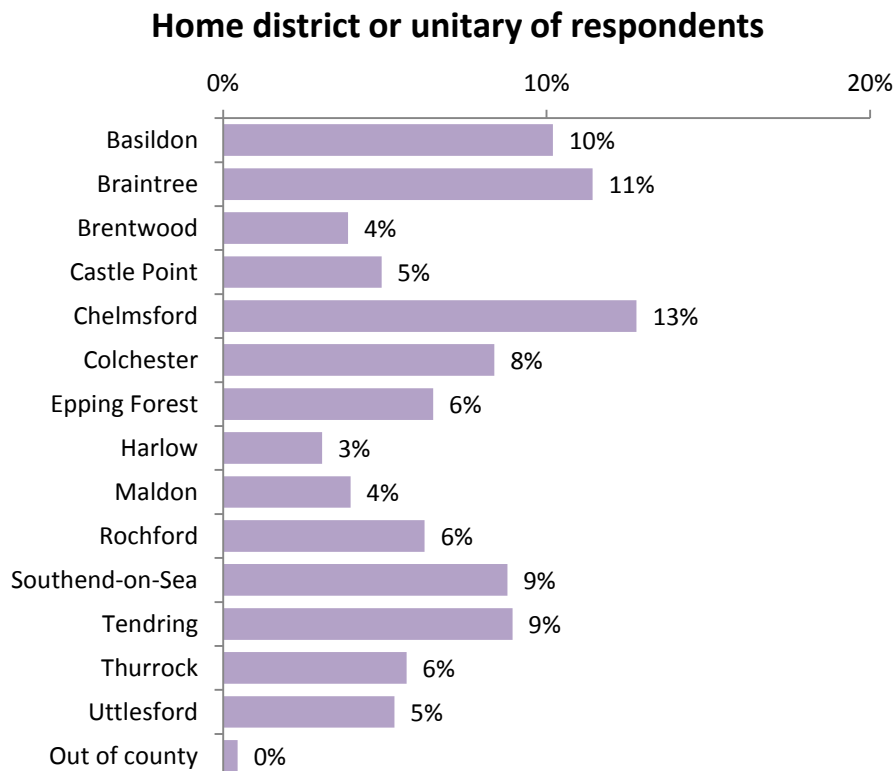
A total of 5,044 people responded to the survey and of those, 3,810 people completed the questions identifying whether they were a resident, police officer or elected representative.

- 3,502 people (92%) identified themselves as residents of Essex, Southend or Thurrock.
- 240 people (6%) identified themselves as employed by Essex Police.
- 357 people (9%) identified themselves as a parish, town, district or county councillor.

58% of respondents were male and the main age range was 45 to 74.



The responses by district are shown below.



This report was written by:

**Vanessa Baxter**

**Intelligence & Insight**

**Essex County Council**

**EUG, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1QH**

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.