

What is being reviewed?	Council Budget for 2024/25
Service Lead and Service Unit:	Adam Richens - Finance
People involved in EIA process:	Service Directors – where applicable Heads of Service – where applicable Vicky Edmonds – Policy Officer Sophie Bradfield – Principal Policy Officer Richard Barnes – Service Unit Equality Champion Jon Cockeram – Service Unit Equality Champion Wendy Creighton – Service Unit Equality Champion
Date/s EIA started and reviewed:	05 December 2023 – Infrastructure 05 December 2023 – Adult Social Care 06 December 2023 – Commercial Operations 07 December 2023 – Housing & Communities 07 December 2023 – Environment 08 December 2023 – People & Culture 08 December 2023 – Childrens (meeting 1) 12 December 2023 – Public Health 13 December 2023 – Childrens (meeting 2) 13 December 2023 – Customer, Arts and Property 13 December 2023 – Planning 14 December 2023 – Law and Governance 18 December 2023 – Childrens (meeting 3) 02 January 2023 – Finance 18 January 2024 – Childrens (meeting 4)

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Many councils are facing unprecedented financial demands and are having to make difficult decisions.
- 1.2 Our Public Sector Equality Duty does not prevent us from making difficult decisions when required to achieve significant levels of savings across all our services. It supports us to make robust decisions in a fair, transparent and accountable way that considers the diverse needs of all our local communities and workforce.
- 1.3 Before each of the proposed savings are implemented, they will have completed an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure we are aware, as far as possible of any potential or actual negative or positive equality impacts of our decisions.
- 1.4 From the discussions that informed the basis of this EIA, it is evident that our proposals will have the most impact on our vulnerable residents as well as those on low incomes. Where potential negative impacts are identified, where possible, we will aim to include people that are impacted or their representatives prior to any final decision being made. This EIA covers a wide range and volume of proposals and where possible, mitigating actions have been identified to ease negative impacts. This will not be possible in every case.
- 1.5 Services are looking at ways to increase activity around prevention and early intervention to enable better outcomes earlier. It is hoped this will reduce the need for costly interventions at a later stage. Our investment in new technology will also help to reduce demand on services.
- 1.6 We will work closely with our partners to ensure there is minimal negative impact resulting from any of our decisions. Community Asset Transfers and support from our third sector partners will assist in mitigating impacts where possible.

2. What are we doing?

- 2.1 The Council is obliged to set a balanced budget and commensurate Council Tax level in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 2.2 The Budget Report sets out for cabinet how we intend to achieve a balanced budget and the level of Council Tax we will be setting for 2024/25.

3. Why are we doing it?

- 3.1 Like many other Councils, BCP Council is facing an unprecedented financial challenge. We are taking this difficult decision to ensure we can deliver a balanced budget and to avoid the government intervention that has happened in other councils that would halt many of the services we provide.
- 3.2 We have to change the way we deliver certain services and the budget reflects these changes.
- 3.3 Balancing our budget has become increasingly difficult over the last few years. This is because of rising demand on council services, such as those that keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe and higher costs to deliver council services that keep our places clean and our infrastructure safe. This has been exacerbated by the impacts of Covid, the cost-of-living crisis and years of austerity and its impact on the reduction of the Council's financial resources. As a result, we are currently spending more each year than we receive as income, meaning we must reduce our spend and/or increase our income to balance our budget and live within our means.

4. How did we do it

- 4.1 The council is legally required by the Equality Act 2010 to evidence how it has considered its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The purpose of the PSED is to make sure that public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions think about how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect of their day-to-day business. This is particularly important during the budget setting process to ensure that saving proposals do not disproportionately or unlawfully negatively impact any specific protected characteristic.
- 4.2 For the 2024/25 budget setting process, a series of budget Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) discussions were held during December 2023 and January 2024 to understand which of the budget savings proposals would impact on any group defined by a protected characteristic, as a customer or member of staff.
- 4.3 Members are referred to the full text of [s149 of the Equality Act 2010](#) which must be considered when making decisions on budget proposals.
- 4.4 EIA discussions were chaired by the Policy Team, independent from each service area proposing budget savings, and these proposals were presented by Service Directors, Service Heads, and other key officers. Selected Service Unit Equality Champions also joined the discussions to provide further impartial equality cross-examination.
- 4.5 Assessments were made on how each proposal would impact each protected characteristic. Consideration was given as to whether the impact would be positive, negative, cumulative or disproportionate for any particular group(s) when compared against any other protected characteristics. If a substantial negative or positive equality impact was identified consideration was then given to the mitigating actions that could be taken to reduce or remove potential or actual negative equality impacts or maximise potential or actual positive equality impacts.
- 4.6 Full EIA's will be carried out for each of the savings proposals that proceed and will include the outcomes of any subsequent service user consultation. These will need to be brought back to an EIA panel in due course.
- 4.7 Proposals were also considered against the six domains of the Equality Human Rights Commission (EHRC) measurement framework. The framework reflects the things or areas in life that are important to people and enable them to flourish: Education, Work, Living standards, Health, Justice and personal security, and Participation. Improvement in any of the domains reduces the equality gap.

BCP council has identified this measurement framework as a key way of monitoring progress with equality, diversity and inclusion.

- 4.8 This EIA is based on information made available for consideration during the budget process. It also includes outcomes of EIA panels held earlier in the year where the proposals had previously been discussed. It is important to note that some information may change as the budget process concludes.
- 4.9 We also undertook a budget consultation with our residents. Residents were invited to have their say on the council's proposals for setting a balanced budget for 2024/25. This took place over four weeks between Tuesday 21 November and Wednesday 20 December 2023. The survey was available on-line and hard copies were available in libraries.
- 4.10 The consultation was promoted widely through a variety of channels including:
- Local media coverage
 - The council's social media channels
 - Community and resident group Facebook pages
 - The Council's e-newsletters
 - Staff newsletters
 - Posters and information in all BCP Council libraries
 - All council colleagues were encouraged to share with their networks
- 4.11 2,445 people completed an online or paper survey. The respondent profile is at Appendix B.
- 4.12 Respondents were asked to comment specifically on the following budget proposals:

Proposal	Agree	Disagree
Grounds Maintenance Service	49%	43%
Christchurch Household Recycling Centre	40%	52%
Paddling pools	19%	75%
Public protection	21%	67%
Community Safety Accreditation Scheme	22%	73%
CCTV	31%	59%
Library opening hours	31%	60%
Street lighting	54%	38%
School crossing patrols – Proposal 1	55%	32%
School crossing patrols – Proposal 2	39%	44%
School crossing patrols – Proposal 3	73%	17%
Hengistbury Head Outdoor Education Centre	44%	43%

- 4.13 The [results of the consultation](#) are available on the council website. A full breakdown of responses by protected characteristic forms part of this report. The consultation results did not show any significant differences between or within groups concerning the budget savings proposals that were consulted on.
- 4.14 It will be necessary to feed the results of the consultation into the individual EIA documents which are prepared for each saving outlined above as and when they are delivered.

5. What do we know?

- 5.1 **The Place:** Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) has a combined population of 400,100 and a £10.5bn economy supported by the tenth largest urban local authority in England.
- 5.2 It's a region that promotes and enables wellbeing in all its forms with 15 miles of south-facing sandy beaches and 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest making up nearly a fifth of the area, as well as being home to the second largest natural harbour in the world. This promotes a healthy work life balance, shaping people's everyday lives.

- 5.3 The outstanding natural environment is something residents cherish about living in BCP with a strong sense of belonging to the local area. Yet, like many places BCP has areas of contrast, including some of the most affluent and most deprived areas in England.
- 5.4 There are three world-class universities with about 22,700 students; a multiple site college catering for 11,000 students and collaborating with over 2,000 businesses delivering one of the most successful apprenticeship programmes in the country; and 98 state-funded schools, comprised of 66 primary, 21 secondary, 4 all-through schools and 7 special schools as well as a long-established language school sector.
- 5.5 **The People:** The local population is ageing, with predictions that by 2028, 24% will be aged 65+.
- 5.6 BCP Council is a member of the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant given the proportion of local residents identifying as current personnel or veterans.
- 5.7 The BCP area also has a high proportion of unpaid carers. Across the area there were around 15,958 individuals (4.2%) providing more than 20 hours of unpaid care a week, which compares to 4.4% for England.
- 5.8 Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at birth is better in the BCP area than it is nationally. It is 0.9 years higher for men, and 0.6 years higher for women. However, there are some areas where our populations health could be better.
- 5.9 Deprivation is strongly linked with many health outcomes, with clear inequalities in life expectancy across the BCP area between the most and least deprived areas. Males and females in the least deprived areas in BCP are expected to live 8.9 and 6.1 years longer than those from the most deprived areas.
- 5.10 The relationship between unemployment and health status is clear at ward level for BCP. Wards where levels of unemployment are significantly above the BCP average also have the lowest life expectancy. Areas with the highest unemployment rates are significantly more likely to include residents that have no or few qualifications, people with disabilities and mental ill-health, those with caring responsibilities, lone parents, some ethnic minorities, older workers and particularly young people.
- 5.11 **The Economy:** Around 62% of the total resident population are of working age with higher concentrations of employment in financial services (with the largest financial sector outside London), real estate, tourism & hospitality, arts, entertainment and creative industries, and healthcare. There is also a rich engineering and advanced manufacturing sector.
- 5.12 Overall, 16% of residents aged over 16 in the BCP area have no qualifications, 32% are qualified to degree level or above and 6% have a qualification achieved through an apprenticeship.
- 5.13 The pandemic had more profound effects on the BCP labour market than seen nationally particularly impacting businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector. Unemployment numbers started to rise in 2020 due to the impact of the covid pandemic and rose to an annual figure of 5.6% in the year to Sept 2021 before starting to fall. Rapid adaptation and digital adoption allowed large parts of the economy to bounce back and the BCP area was among the top business survival rate nationally.
- 5.14 With up to a third of the workforce expected to move into retirement, the area needs to invest in young people and create opportunities locally for them to enter the workforce.
- 5.15 **Cost of living:** Wages are lower than the average earnings in England. Median annual pay for all full-time employees working in the BCP area is estimated as £31,700. The equivalent for those living in BCP is very similar at £31,600 with both below the UK median figure of £33,000.
- 5.16 Average house prices and rental costs are higher than average wages. Average house prices in the BCP area have increased significantly in the last ten years. The average house price in the BCP area was £417,500 in the 12 months to end December 2022; this is higher than the average price regionally and nationally. This has only been exacerbated by rising inflation, making housing affordability a key issue for the area.

- 5.17 BCP Council Staff:** As of 31 March 2023, BCP Council had 4,800 permanent employees (excluding school staff). In terms of age, 93% were between 25 and 64; 57% were 45 and above, 3% over 65 and 2% of staff were under 25. Women make up 63% of the workforce.
- 5.18 The provision of additional equality monitoring data is optional. The following data is from information voluntarily input to the council's employee system, but this is not a complete profile of council staff: **Disabled staff** account for 4%; 68% of staff state that they are not disabled; the status of the remaining 28% is unknown. The **ethnic origin** of 3% of staff was identified as being ethnic minorities excluding white minorities; 4% identifies as white minorities; 64% White British and 29% were unknown or preferred not to say. In terms of **religion**, 23% declared they had no religion; 23% Christian; and 2% had other religions or beliefs and 51% preferred not to say. Monitoring data shows that 47% of the workforce identify as Heterosexual, 3% identify as Gay or Lesbian; 50% prefer not to declare their **sexual orientation** or it is unknown. There are insufficient numbers to determine the number of people who identify as Trans and data on Pregnancy and Maternity is not currently recorded.

6. Setting the Council Tax

- 6.1 This year the Council is seeking to increase Council Tax by 4.99%.
- 6.2 Most of the council's money is spent providing life changing support for some of the most vulnerable – including older people, people with disabilities and children who need our care and protection. Like other local authorities across the country, BCP Council is facing significant pressures on its budget. The cost of living is affecting fuel prices, food, and energy costs, which means services like waste collection, street lighting, and the resources that keep our most vulnerable adults and children safe, are all becoming more expensive to run.
- 6.3 It is likely that some of our residents on lower earnings will be affected negatively by the increase. With 11.4% of households in the BCP area experiencing fuel poverty, an increase in Council Tax will negatively impact on households already struggling financially which is not necessarily limited to just lower socio-economic groups given the recent rises to the cost of living.
- 6.4 Positively, increasing council tax will enable the council to continue to support the most vulnerable in our communities and provide the services everyone in the community uses.
- 6.5 There are several schemes in place to assist residents on lower incomes with their Council Tax bills. These include:
- a) Council Tax Support: Residents on lower incomes can apply for assistance with their Council Tax bill by applying for Council Tax Support, further information is available on the Councils website <https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/benefits-support-and-advice/council-tax-support>
 - b) Single Person Discount: If you're the only person over 18 in your home, you may be entitled to a 25% reduction on your Council Tax. Council Tax Discounts and exemptions: Further details of ways in which council tax could be reduced for qualifying households is available on the website including student exemptions. <https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/Council-Tax/Council-Tax-discounts-and-exemptions/Council-Tax-discounts-and-exemptions.aspx> A single person discount is available for those qualifying households. Single Person households make up 35% of all households in the BCP.
 - c) Discretionary Reduction and Help with Paying Council Tax Bill: Section 13A (1c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows local authorities to, in exceptional circumstances, reduce the Council Tax liability for a charge payer. Statutory exemptions and discounts must first have been exhausted. However, it is likely that some of our residents on lower incomes will be affected negatively by the increase.

7. The cumulative impact of the proposed budget

- 7.1 Budget savings proposals have been made by different services in the Council. They will impact on different protected characteristics depending on the nature of the saving. This EIA looks at the cumulative impact of these budget proposals. How do each of the proposals, when brought together affect our residents?
- 7.2 The impact of individual proposals on each protected characteristic was captured in a spreadsheet and the impacts tallied to see which were affected the most. Based on the information gathered in the EIA discussions, low-income households and individuals will be most negatively impacted, followed by older residents, younger age residents and those residents with a disability.
- 7.3 Impacts have been considered against the [Public sector equality duty](#) which came into force in April 2011 (s.149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires Councils, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. These objectives are:

Objective	Impact
(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010	The proposed budget savings within our Housing and Communities Directorate mean that whilst we will still be able to meet this duty, we will only be providing services at a statutory level. The impact will be on our ability to undertake preventative activity which is above the statutory baseline. Areas affected by this would include Anti-Social Behaviour, community engagement activities and trading standards.
(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;	It is unlikely that there will be any impact on this area of the public sector equality duty as we will still be ensuring that everyone has access to our services, we will make sure that those who require additional support receive it and continue to provide good customer service. We are striving to be an employer of choice and as such will continue to advance equality of opportunity in access to recruitment, retention and progression of BCP Council staff.
(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	A reduction in grants for our sports/cultural activities/free attractions in the three towns may impact our ability to improve inclusion and participation. These activities tend to strengthen communities as it brings people of different ages, ethnic origins, religions and beliefs and sexual orientations together

- 7.4 Impacts against [The Measurement Framework for Equality and Human Rights \(EHRC\)](#). The Measurement Framework covers six carefully selected domains – Education, Work, Living standards, Health, Justice and personal security, and Participation – which reflect the capabilities or areas of life that are important to people and that enable them to flourish

Domain	Impact
Education	The budget saving proposals will have minimal impact to some aspects of the arts within schools.
Work	The budget savings proposals have an impact on some of the work opportunities available for some of our residents with disabilities and mental health issues.

Domain	Impact
Living Standards	Increased council tax and proposed increases to certain fees and charges combined with the escalating increases in the cost of utilities and living will undoubtedly negatively impact on the quality of life due to reductions of disposable income.
Health	Changes to the allocation of grant funding allows the council more flexibility on how the funding may be used but reduces the amount available to Public Health directly.
Justice and personal security	A reduction in our community-based activities may negatively impact our residents' feelings of belonging, participation, and social inclusion. The community activities also help to reduce anti-social behaviour and make residents feel safer. They are also opportunities for the Council to improve engagement and access communities that are seldom heard.
Participation	The overall proposed budget will reduce the levels of participation in social and community activities. As a consequence this may impact people with low socio-economic status, older people and people with disabilities as community based events are often a key way to reduce isolation and increase participation and engagement.

7.5 Impacts against the stated protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the councils additional protected groups set out in the [Equality and Diversity policy](#) :

Characteristic	Impact
Age	Budget Saving proposals tend to negatively impact our older and younger residents as significant amount of the Council's budget is spent on the provision of Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.
Disability	Residents with disabilities are also likely to have an older age profile. This is because of the onset of conditions that would fit within the definition of a disabled person as defined within the Equality Act 2010. These residents would be impacted by the proposals to change social care service provision.
Gender Reassignment	There was limited impact on those people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. The only savings proposals that could impact were those where the issue of safety was raised as they may feel more vulnerable as victims of crime.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	There was limited impact on those people with the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership. They were impacted by the raising of fees and charges for weddings.
Pregnancy and Maternity	There was limited impact on those people with the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity. The only savings proposals that could impact were those where the issue of safety was raised and the change in provision of some children's services, e.g. Family Hubs.
Race	There was limited impact on those people with the protected characteristic of race. Savings proposals that raised safety issues may affect this protected characteristic as people may feel more vulnerable as victims of hate crimes.

Characteristic	Impact
Religion and Belief	There was limited impact on those people with the protected characteristic of religion and belief. The only savings proposals that could impact were those where the issue of safety was raised as these people may feel more vulnerable as victims of hate crimes.
Sex	<p>Generally, the profile of our elderly population suggests that it is likely that more women will be impacted than men. Therefore, the severity of impact will differentiate between men and women as women make up a larger proportion of the elderly.</p> <p>The main impacts to women were from budget savings proposals where the issue of safety was raised.</p>
Sexual Orientation	There was limited impact on those people with the protected characteristic of sexual orientation. The only savings proposals that could impact were those where the issue of safety was raised as these residents may feel more vulnerable as victims of hate crime.
Military Veterans	There was limited impact on those people with the protected characteristic of military veterans. Main areas of impact were around the potential transfer of assets to the community.
Carers	The main impacts to carers were from the budget savings proposals where changes were proposed to how we provide some of our social care services. Whilst some of the new ways of working will have negative impacts on carers, such as location changes, it is anticipated that there will also be improvements, including more choice.
Children in Care and care experienced young people	As a number of proposals directly impact children, this will have a knock-on effect for our children in care and care experienced young people. However, a number of proposals including a review of over 18 provision will have a positive impacts on outcomes for children in care.
Socio-economic status	The increased cost of living and pressures on household budgets across BCP area is well documented and it is important to note that the cumulative impact of the proposals will add to the financial burden of some residents within the BCP Council area, particularly those on lower incomes.
Local business or community organisations	<p>Reduced grants for certain areas of our community and reduction of investment in cultural activities could all negatively impact on our local businesses and community organisations. This could also affect jobs within this sector. Loss of trade with falling footfall generated by the free events in local areas has the potential to have a detrimental effect on small and medium local businesses. An increase in some fees and charges may also increase pressure on our local businesses.</p> <p>Positively, changes in the way we deliver some of our services could provide opportunities for local businesses to undertake them instead.</p>

7.6 Mitigating actions for the impacts of any budget saving proposal will need to be addressed on an individual basis.

7.7 **Summary of impact on staff:** The cumulative impact on staff of the budget savings proposals is not known currently. The introduction of a voluntary redundancy scheme, the use of redeployment where compulsory redundancies are necessary and removing vacant posts from the organisation will all

impact on the profile of our workforce. However, until all actions have been completed, we will not know what the resulting organisation will look like. For example, in some areas, there may be more women impacted by a budget saving proposal for compulsory redundancy. In other areas, there may be more men. The impacts of the different proposals may be balanced out across the organisation when put together. Those taking voluntary redundancy are likely to be over 55. Areas where officers take voluntary redundancy may leave those officers with additional pressures and increased workloads. Officers within People and Culture will be monitoring the impact of the budget savings on staff.

- 7.8 Any budget saving proposals, which impact staff, will have an associated Equality Impact Assessment.

Background Papers

- Assessment of Cumulative equalities impact matrix
- EIA Conversation Papers.

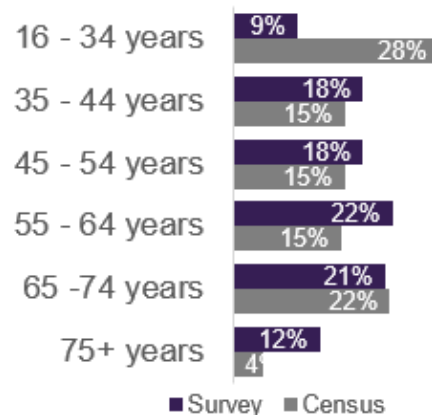
Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan			
Issue identified	Action required to reduce impact	Timescale	Responsible officer
Proposals which impact staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out for any proposals which will impact our staff Staff will be consulted. The Council will follow Organisational change policies when implementing proposals that impact staff. Monitoring of cumulative impact of staff reductions to ensure BCP council is reflective of the community it serves. 	To be agreed.	People and culture Service managers whose staff are affected.
Fees and charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out for any proposals which change Fees and Charges Where appropriate, consideration will be given to mitigating actions to reduce the impact. See section 6 for mitigating actions in relation to Council Tax. 	To be agreed	Service managers where fees and charges are being increased.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance monitoring of service provision - to ensure that performance does not decline because of changes to the way services are funded. 	To be agreed	Public Health

Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of resident's participation in events to see if the changes in service delivery do impact their ability to participate. Make alternatives options available to ensure that residents can still participate. 	To be agreed	
Personal security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring will be required to see whether those budget proposals that could impact safety have a detrimental effect on safety figures in the area. 	To be agreed	

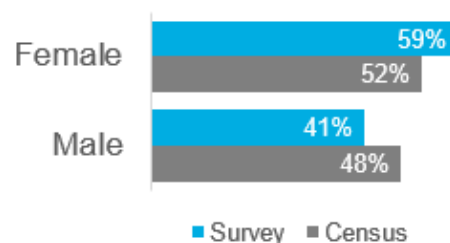
Respondent profile



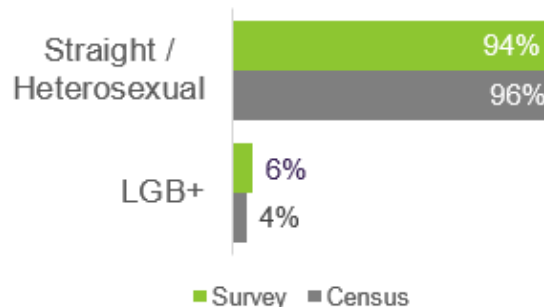
Age group



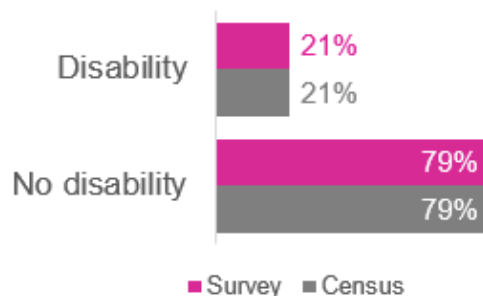
Sex



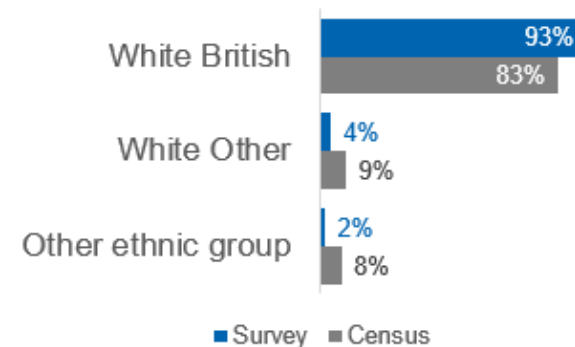
Sexual orientation



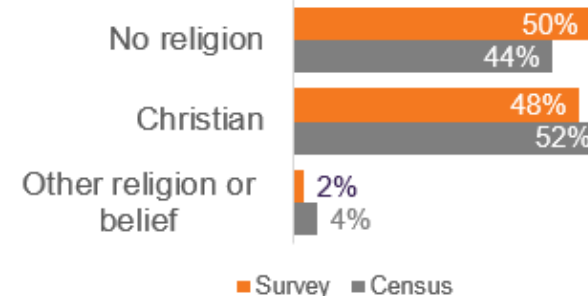
Disability



Ethnicity



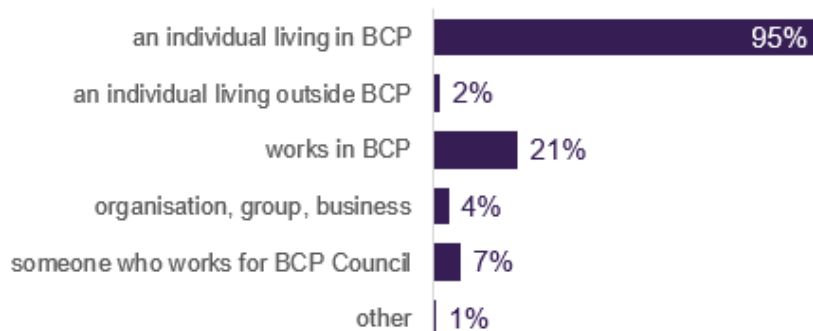
Religion



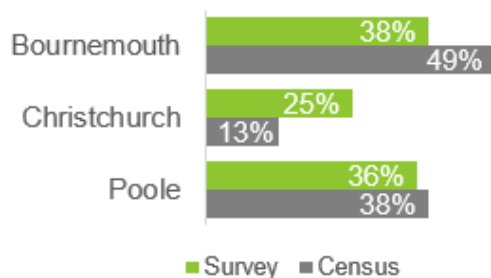
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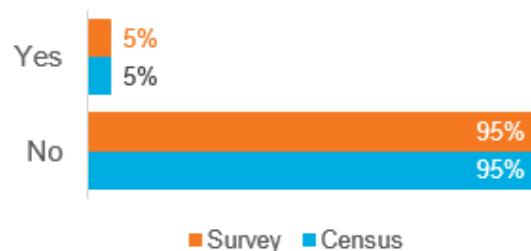
Respondent type



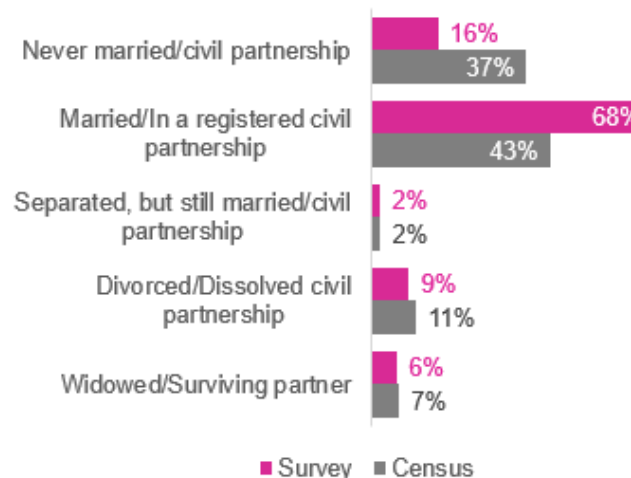
Town (BCP residents only)



Armed Forces



Marital status



Pregnancy / parental leave

