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Survey of Somerset residents on local government reorganisation

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01

Summary

1 Summary

- When presented with four options to replace the current structure of local government in Somerset, the Stronger Somerset proposal to create two new unitary councils of Eastern and Western Somerset was the most preferred. Three in ten (29%) preferred the Stronger Somerset proposal compared with 27% who preferred more collaboration between councils within the current structure, 23% wanted no change at all, while just 15% said they preferred the creation of a new single unitary council for all of Somerset.

- Somerset residents recognised that there is a difference between Eastern and Western Somerset when it comes to landscape, infrastructure and people. A majority (54%) agreed there is a difference while only 18% disagreed. A majority in both the areas of what would become Eastern and Western Somerset agreed to this (51% in Eastern Somerset and 56% in West Somerset).

- Most Somerset residents found each of the challenges set out within the Stronger Somerset Outline Business Case to be a concern.[1] The most pressing issues residents recognised are the challenges facing young people (72%), challenges facing the economy (71%) and disadvantages of older people (70%).

- Overall, residents were more likely to think that the ability to address these challenges will stay the same if the proposal to create two new single unitary councils goes ahead. However, few thought that it would make things worse. For example, when it comes to the challenges facing young people, 50% said things would stay the same if the proposal went ahead, 23% said it would make it better while 16% say it would make things worse.

- Sentiment was more divided when it came to the Stronger Somerset proposal improving local democracy. For example, when it comes to the ability of local government to make decisions for the local area 36% said having two councils would make things better, 24% said worse and 33% said it would stay the same.

- Amongst those who preferred the Stronger Somerset proposal, these residents were much more likely to think that the proposal will improve both the ability to address the challenges facing Somerset and strengthen local democracy.

- When it comes to support for the principles of devolution and localism, residents were very much in favour of these principles. Two-thirds (66%) said they support devolution (in line with both national and local polling) while 71% support said they support localism.

- Somerset residents showed higher levels of satisfaction with their district council than they did with Somerset County Council. Two-thirds (67%) said that they were satisfied with their district council (15% dissatisfied) compared with 45% who were satisfied with the county council (31% dissatisfied).

- The services people were most satisfied with are waste and recycling collection (79%), parks and green spaces (71%) and street cleaning (64%) while they're mostly dissatisfied with road maintenance (52% say dissatisfied). The district councils were also more trusted than the County Council to deliver all services asked about in the survey, including services and support for young

[1] The Stronger Somerset Outline Business Case is available at https://www.strongersomerset.co.uk/case-for-change

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people. The only exceptions where the County Council was more trusted was the delivery of road maintenance and environmental provisions.

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Methodology

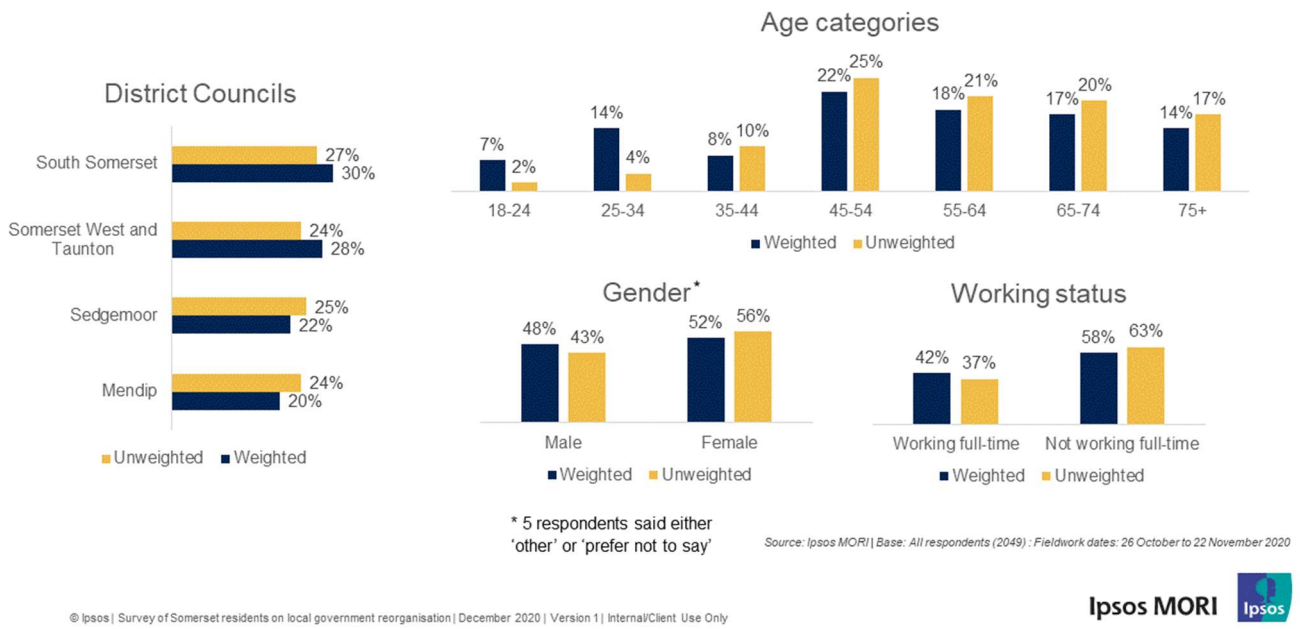
2 Methodology

Ipsos MORI carried out 2,049 telephone interviews conducted across the County of Somerset with adults aged 18+ between 26 October and 22 November 2020. Fieldwork was completed via CATI (computer assisted telephone interview) using Random Digit Dialling (RDD) to ensure random probability when contacting participants.

Quotas were used for gender, age, and work status so that the data represents the population profile of Somerset County. Ipsos MORI also ensured that a minimum of 500 interviews were completed in each of the four Somerset district councils of Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, and Somerset West & Taunton. This is to enable comparisons between the district councils to be made.

Overall data has been weighted by gender, age, work status and district council to match the population profile of Somerset County. Figure 2.1 demonstrates the weighted and unweighted proportions of the variables used for quotas during fieldwork.

Figure 2.1: Quota demographics used during fieldwork



Where percentages in this report do not add up to exactly 100% this is due to computer rounding.

Please also note that the 'margin of error' on these figures is c.+/-2.2% at the '95% confidence interval'. This means, for example, that a figure of 50% could actually fall anywhere between 47.8% and 52.2%, though it is far more likely to fall at 50% than at the extreme ends of this range.

All comparisons between sub-groups in this report are statistically significant. If a comparison was not made it is likely that there was no statistically significance between these groups however in some instances it is mentioned where there are no differences between groups if it is important to the context or narrative of the overall findings.

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03

Support for the reorganisation of local government

3 Support for the reorganisation of local government

3.1 Introduction

Residents were presented with two local government reorganisation options, along with alternative options including 'no change' and the option for more collaboration between existing local authorities. They were then asked which option they preferred. The option not to select any of the options was also available, as was a don't know response.

3.2 Overall support levels for local government reorganisation options

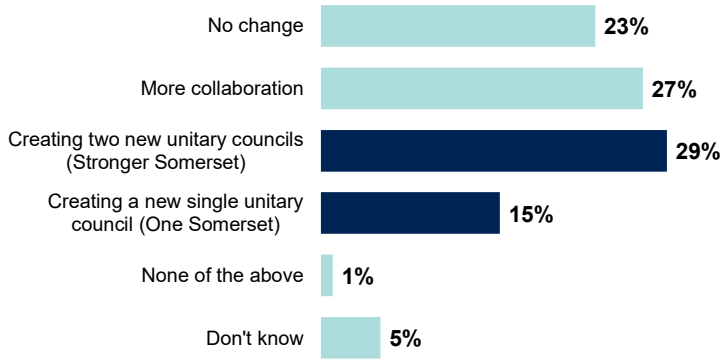
Key insight

Twice as many preferred the Stronger Somerset proposal than the One Somerset proposal of creating a new single unitary council

When Somerset residents were presented with four different options for reorganisation of local government in Somerset County, the creation of two new unitary Councils of Eastern and Western Somerset (the Stronger Somerset proposal) was the most preferred option with nearly three in ten (29%) selecting this option. This was closely followed by having more collaboration between the district councils without changing the district and county council arrangement (27%) while 23% wanted no change at all. Fifteen percent preferred the option of creating a new single unitary council (the One Somerset proposal) to replace the current local government setup.

Figure 3.1: Overall support for local government reorganisation options

Q6A. When considering how the Councils of Somerset might be restructured, which of the following four options, if any, would you most prefer?



Source: Ipsos MORI | Base: All respondents (2049) : Fieldwork dates: 26 October to 22 November 2020

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There were several notable differences amongst various demographic groups when it came to reorganisation preferences. While there was no statistical significance between men and women

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supporting the Stronger Somerset proposal (30% of men vs. 28% of women), women were more likely than men to prefer the option of more collaboration (30% vs. 25% respectively) while men were more likely to prefer the One Somerset proposal than women (19% vs. 11% respectively). Those aged 75+ were the age group most in favour of the status quo (no change) with three in ten (31%) opting for this option compared to 23% overall while those aged 55-64 were the most likely age group to support the One Somerset proposal (19% vs. 15% overall). Despite being the age group that most likely supported the One Somerset proposal, their preferred option was the Stronger Somerset proposal, and they, along with those aged 35-54, were the most likely age groups to support the Stronger Somerset plan (with 31% of both age groups preferring Stronger Somerset compared to 29% overall).

There were also notable differences between social grade groups.[2] Those with an occupation classified within the AB social grade were the most enthusiastic about the Stronger Somerset proposal with 36% choosing this as their preference compared with 30% of those in the C1 category, 27% of those within the C2 category and 24% of those within the DE category. Those within the DE category were more likely than the other groups to prefer no change with 29% opting for the status quo compared with 19% of those in the AB category, 20% in the C1 category and 22% in the C2 category.

Those who preferred no change were also presented with a scenario in which some local government reorganisation would be taking place (the Stronger Somerset proposal vs the One Somerset proposal) and asked to make a binary choice as to which they preferred. Nearly three in five (58%) of these individuals selected the creation of two new unitary councils (Stronger Somerset) while 20% selected the creation of a new single council (One Somerset).

3.3 Overall support levels for local government reorganisation options by district council

Key insight

Support for the Stronger Somerset proposal was broadly consistent across all four districts, although the two reorganisation options polarised opinion in Somerset West & Taunton

Preference for creating two new unitary councils (the Stronger Somerset proposal) over creating one new single council (the One Somerset proposal) was evident in each of the four district councils. Somerset West & Taunton (the largest populated district council) was the only council where the Stronger Somerset proposal was the highest by a statistically significant margin when compared to all four options – the option of more collaboration shared similar levels of preference with Stronger Somerset in Mendip, Sedgmoor and South Somerset

[2] NRS social grade classification definitions are available at http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/

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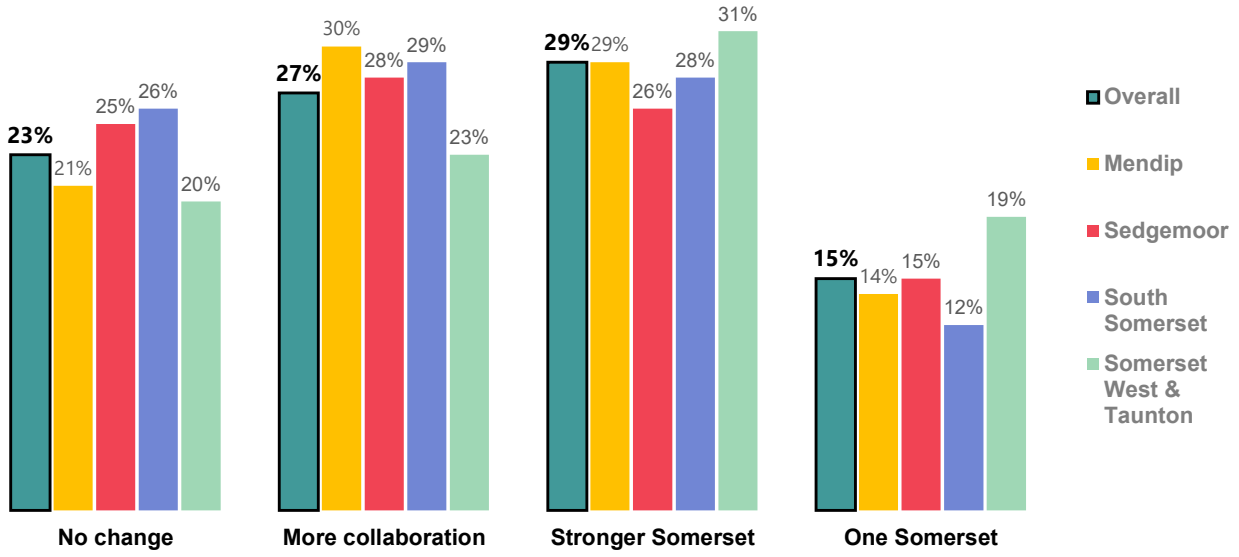
Figure 3.2: Support for local governance reorganisation by district council

Q6A. When considering how the Councils of Somerset might be restructured, which of the following four options, if any, would you most prefer?



Source: Ipsos MORI | Base: All respondents (2049); Mendip (501); Sedgemoor (504); Somerset West & Taunton (500); South Somerset (544) : Fieldwork dates: 26 October to 22 November 2020

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While support for the Stronger Somerset proposal was highest in Somerset West & Taunton (standing at 31%) support for the One Somerset proposal was also highest in this district council (at 19%) showing that residents within Somerset West & Taunton are most likely to desire significant change to the current local governance structure.

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04

The challenges facing Somerset

4 The challenges facing Somerset

4.1 Introduction

Respondents were asked whether they agreed that the East and West of Somerset are different to each other in terms of landscape, infrastructure and people – a principle underpinning the thinking behind the Stronger Somerset proposal for two new unitary councils.

Respondents were also asked to what extent they were concerned about each of the challenges facing Somerset listed in the Stronger Somerset business case. They were asked whether, if the proposal to create two new single unitary councils went ahead, if it would make things better or worse when addressing these challenges.

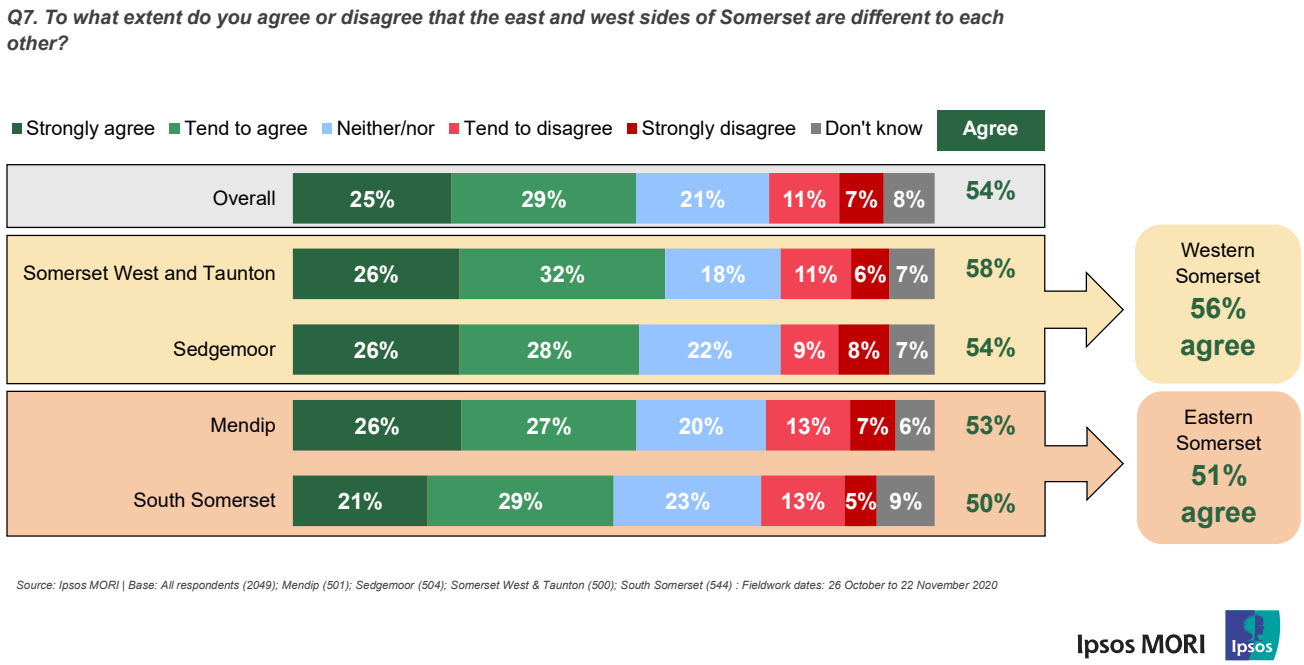
4.2 The East and West of Somerset

Key Insight

A majority (54%) agreed that the East and West of Somerset are different to each other. Those in the districts which would make up West Somerset were more likely to agree.

Over half (54%) agreed that there is a difference in terms of landscape, infrastructure and even people between Eastern and Western Somerset with one in five (18%) of respondents having disagreed. A further three in ten (29%) either did not know or had no strong opinion either way.

Figure 4.1: Difference between Eastern and Western Somerset



Those living in Somerset West & Taunton and Sedgemoor, the district councils which make up the west of the County, were more likely to agree that there are differences (56%) compared to 51% of those living in the east (Mendip and South Somerset) – a statistically significant difference between the two

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areas. Fewer than one in five people disagreed with this notion (18%) but there were also many who did not know or didn't express a strong option either way (29%).

Aside from geographical differences, there were also a number of differences amongst demographic groups Almost a quarter of men (23%) disagreed that these differences exist compared with 14% of women. Twice as many women than men answered that they did now know (10% vs. 5%). However, a majority of both men and women were in agreement with the statement (52% and 55% respectively).

Those aged 35-44 were most likely to disagree with this statement (21% vs. 18% overall), however across all age groups, a majority agreed that differences between the east and west are apparent. A high proportion of younger people were more likely to answer that they had no opinion either way (27%). Also, twice as many 75+ were likely to answer that they didn't know whether these differences exist (16% vs. 8% overall).

When it comes to social grade, one in ten of those with an occupation classified as AB strongly disagreed that the East and West of Somerset are different. However, those within the C2 category showed strongest levels of agreement (61% vs. 54% overall).

Those in support of the Stronger Somerset proposal were most likely to agree with the business case findings outlining the differences between the East and West of Somerset (68% vs. 54% overall). A majority of proponents of no change or greater collaboration as their preferred reorganisation option were in agreement with this principle (53% and 51% respectively), whereas 35% of those preferring the One Somerset proposal disagreed. Despite this, there was net agreement of 5% amongst those who preferred the One Somerset option.

4.3 The challenges facing Somerset and the potential to address them

Key Insight

The challenges identified were all of significant concern, most notably those facing young people (72%). While more believed that the Stronger Somerset proposal would change the way these challenges would be addressed, few believed that it would make it worse.

A majority of residents agreed that all five challenges mentioned by the Stronger Somerset business case were of concern to them - the greatest of these being the challenges facing young people (72%). Most people thought that these challenges would likely remain if the Stronger Somerset proposal went ahead but, in every case, more thought that the issue would get better rather than worse as a result of creating two new single unitary authorities.

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Figure 4.2: The five challenges facing Somerset

Q8. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following issues in your local area?

Q9. Do you think the following issues would get better, get worse or stay the same as they are now?

Source: Ipsos MORI | Base: All respondents (2049. Fieldwork dates: 26 October to 22 November 2020
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The challenges facing young people were identified as most concerning across the county, Overall, three-quarters (76%) of those in both Mendip and Somerset West & Taunton were very or somewhat concerned about this issue, with 50% of people in Mendip expressing they were very concerned. Comparatively, although a majority in Sedgemoor agreed, three in ten (29%) expressed little or no concern, a similar level to those in South Somerset (28%).

- When it came to age groups, those aged between 55-74 were most likely to express concern about the challenges facing young people in their local area (77%) whereas younger people themselves were most likely to be a little concerned (24% vs. 16% overall). There were few differences between social grade groups although those classified as AB were most likely to be very or somewhat concerned compared to others (77%. vs 72% overall). Supporters of all available reorganisation options besides that of no change were more likely to show concern for younger people in the area (74%-77% vs. 63%), although a majority of those opting for no change were still not concerned overall.

- Half of those who responded thought that the Stronger Somerset proposal wouldn't cause this issue to get any better or worse. This was consistent across most demographic variables including age, geography and social grade. Almost a quarter (23%) thought that it would improve the issue whilst 16% thought it would worsen.

More than three quarters (76%) of those in Somerset West & Taunton said that they were very or somewhat concerned about the local economy - significantly higher than levels of concern in Mendip (69%) and Sedgemoor (66%). Women were significantly more likely to express greater concern than men about economic challenges (41% vs. 33%).

Concern was shared across the county for the challenges facing older people, but most notably of concern in Somerset West & Taunton (74%). This concern was also shared by seven in ten (70%) across all age groups, besides those who themselves were over the age of 75, over a third (35%) said they showed little or no concern about this issue.

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- Those with occupations classified as C2DE were also most likely to be very concerned about the disadvantages facing older people across Somerset (39% vs. 33% ABC1).

- Again, around half (49%) stated that the proposal at hand wouldn't have a significant difference either way on the issue at hand. A majority of those who preferred an option other than the Stronger Somerset proposal were in agreement that the situation would remain the same, however, those with an opinion either way were more likely to expect the disadvantages facing older people to get worse as a result of the proposal.

Women were more likely to express concern about the disadvantages affecting children across Somerset compared with men (41% vs. 36%). Concern was greatest in Somerset West & Taunton (73%) - 10 percentage points higher than that in South Somerset (63%).

- A quarter (24%) thought that the Stronger Somerset proposal would likely improve the issues facing children across Somerset but most still thought that it would remain the same (47% overall). Among those opting for the One Somerset option, more thought it could make things better than worse (22% better vs. 16% worse).

The challenges facing the environment in Somerset were of least concern of the five issues, yet still concerning to a majority (66%) of people. Those aged 55-74 were most likely to show greatest concern, particularly compared to younger people (73% very or somewhat concerned vs. 55% of those aged 18-34). Those who were dissatisfied with the district councils and Somerset County Council were more likely to be concerned about the environmental challenges faced in Somerset.

- Of the five issues in question, more people were inclined to say that the Stronger Somerset proposal would improve environmental issues (29%) - twice as many than thought it would make things worse (14%). However, most thought that despite the proposal, environmental challenges facing the county would remain the same. Those most optimistic of improvement were from Mendip (34% better) and those preferring either the Stronger Somerset or One Somerset proposals were also more likely to think that the proposal would make things better than worse.

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05

Support for the principles of devolution and localism

5 Support for the principles of devolution and localism

5.1 Introduction

Devolution and localism are principles that underpin many proposals for the restructuring of local governance structures and practices. Respondents were asked to what extent if at all they support or oppose both principles in turn following brief explanatory statements. In the questionnaire the definitions for devolution and localism were as follows:

- **Devolution** is when certain decision-making powers, as well as funding, are transferred down from Central Government to a local area. It means that decisions are taken close to where they have an effect.
- **Localism** is when certain decision-making powers or the delivery of certain services is transferred down from the Local Authority to a more localised area, such as a parish council or neighbourhood forum. It means that decisions are taken closer to where they will have an effect rather than by the Local Authority as a whole.

The impact of any local government reorganisation on issues regarding local democracy are also of importance. Respondents were asked to comment on the likelihood of the proposal to make on several issues relating to local democracy better, worse or stay the same.

5.2 Support for the principles of devolution and localism

Key Insight

Support for the principles of devolution and localism is high. Two-thirds support devolution while 71% support localism

In line with national polling data, a majority of people **support the principle of devolution** (66%) with fewer than one in ten in opposition while there was also significant **support for the principle of localism** (71%). Support for the principle of devolution is high as we have seen in other local surveys Ipsos MORI has conducted around Britain. For example, in a 2016, we found 53% of residents in 14 Local Authorities in East Anglia also supported the principle of devolution, while 16% opposed it.[3]

Support for the principle of devolution was shared across the county to a similar extent. Seven in ten of those aged 55-74 supported the principle - the highest across all age groups. However, of those in the younger age bracket (18-34), although six in ten expressed support for devolution, one third said that they neither supported nor opposed the principle or did not know. Those categorised within the AB or C1 social grade also support devolution in principle more explicitly than those of lower social grades.

Just over seven in ten (72%) of those who support the principle of localism were also supportive of the principle of devolution. Although a majority of those preferring no change when it came to preference for local government reorganisation expressed support for the principle of localism, a quarter (25%) said

[3] More information can be found at https://www.eastangliadevo.co.uk/

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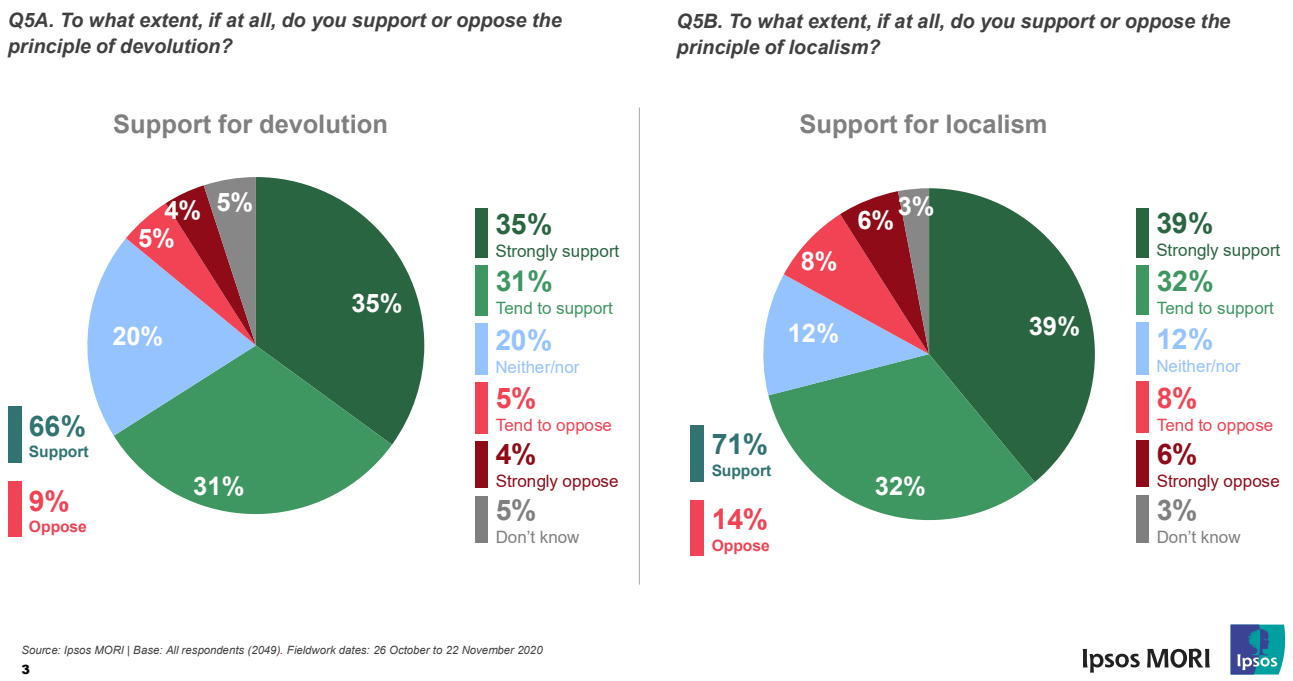
that they neither supported nor opposed the principle, a similar to those who preferred One Somerset (24%).

Figure 5.1: Support for devolution and localism



Support for the principle of localism was at similar levels to that of devolution with seven in ten (71%) expressing support compared with 14% in opposition. Women were more likely than men to be in support of the principle of localism (74% vs. 68%), although both were significantly in favour. This principle also appealed to younger people (aged 18-34), with almost eight in ten (79%) registering their support and receiving less opposition than across other age groups (7% vs. 16% of 35-54s, 17% of 55-74s and 14% of 75+). Those expressing satisfaction with local government currently across all levels were significantly more likely to be supportive of the principle.

A quarter of those who preferred the One Somerset option of reorganisation opposed the principle of localism compared to 16% of those in support of the Stronger Somerset proposal. Those opting for greater collaboration were most likely to support the principle of localism - even more so than those whose preferred option was the Stronger Somerset proposal (78% vs. 73%).

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5.3 Stronger Somerset's potential for improvement of local democracy

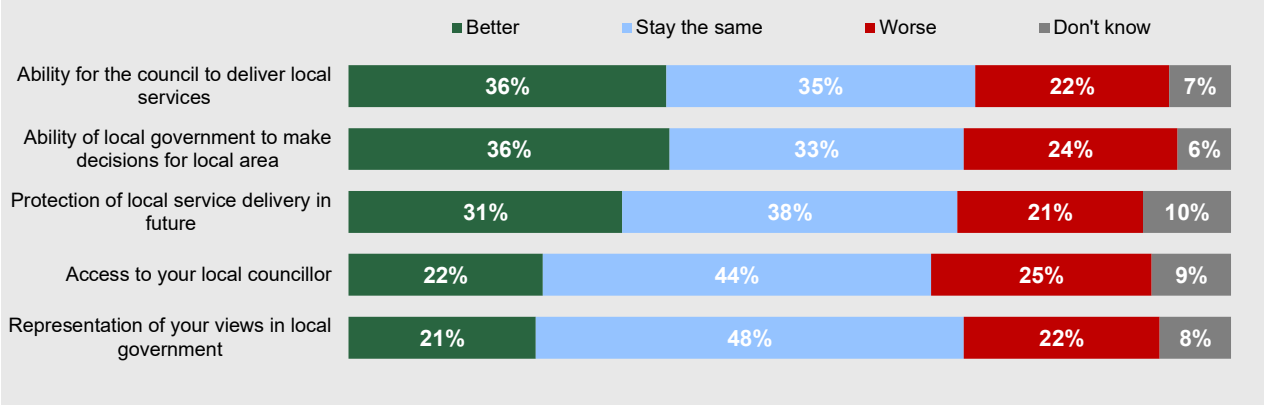
Key Insight

Views were more mixed on democratic issues. Over a third thought the proposal would improve the ability to deliver local services and make local decisions (both 36%) but there was concern that representation and access could get worse

There were mixed views on **democratic issues and the impact of the Stronger Somerset** proposal upon things such as local representation, access to local councillors, protection of service delivery and the ability to deliver local services. Although many residents thought that these things may likely stay the same, there was concern specifically that access to local councillors may get worse (25% vs. 22% better).

Figure 5.2: Stronger Somerset's potential for improvement of local democracy

Q10. And if a proposal to create two new single (unitary) councils for East Somerset and West Somerset went forward, do you think each of the following would get better, get worse, or stay the same as they are now?



Source: Ipsos MORI | Base: All respondents (2049). Fieldwork dates: 26 October to 22 November 2020

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On local services, more thought that the Stronger Somerset proposal would improve the ability for the council to deliver services (36% better. vs 22% worse). This was a view held by more people across all district councils except for Sedgemoor, where more felt that no change either way was more likely (39% stay the same vs. 35% better). Two thirds of those in support of the proposal thought that it would improve this aspect of local democracy, more than double those who preferred other options. However, of those in support of the One Somerset proposal, more thought the Stronger Somerset proposal would make this better than worse (30% vs. 24%). More also thought that the Stronger Somerset proposal would improve the ability of local government to make decisions for the local area.

Slightly more residents believed that the Stronger Somerset proposal would make access to their local councillor worse than better (25% worse vs. 22% better), while they were more split when it came to representing their views in local government (22% worse vs. 21% better). Those categorised as social grade ABC1 were more likely to expect local councillor access to worsen (28% vs. 23% of those categorised as C2DEs) and older age groups were also more likely to be pessimistic on this front although most did expect it to stay the same. Those preferring no change or greater collaboration when it came to local government reorganisation were also more likely to anticipate access to their local

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councillor to worsen as opposed to be improved although, more of them did think this would remain the same.

When it came to representing their views in local government one in five (21%) expected that the Stronger Somerset proposal would improve this. Almost half of those who expressed an opinion expected this to remain the same (48%). A quarter of those aged 55-74 anticipate the representation of their views to worsen under a Stronger Somerset proposal, a similar figure to those categorised as ABC1 social grade (24%). Of those whose preferred option was the One Somerset proposal an equal proportion would expect representation to get better or worse (both 19%) with a majority anticipating no change (59%). Overall, across this range of democratic issues, most people do not anticipate significant change if the Stronger Somerset proposal were to go ahead, but in general fewer would expect things such as access, representation and service delivery to worsen.

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06

Services and satisfaction

6 Services and satisfaction

6.1 Introduction

The survey gave residents the opportunity to give their opinion about a range of services delivered by either the district council(s), county council or by a combination/hybrid of both. The purpose of this part of the questionnaire was to understand resident perceptions towards the various services, how satisfied they are with them and which tier of local government they would trust to deliver different services.

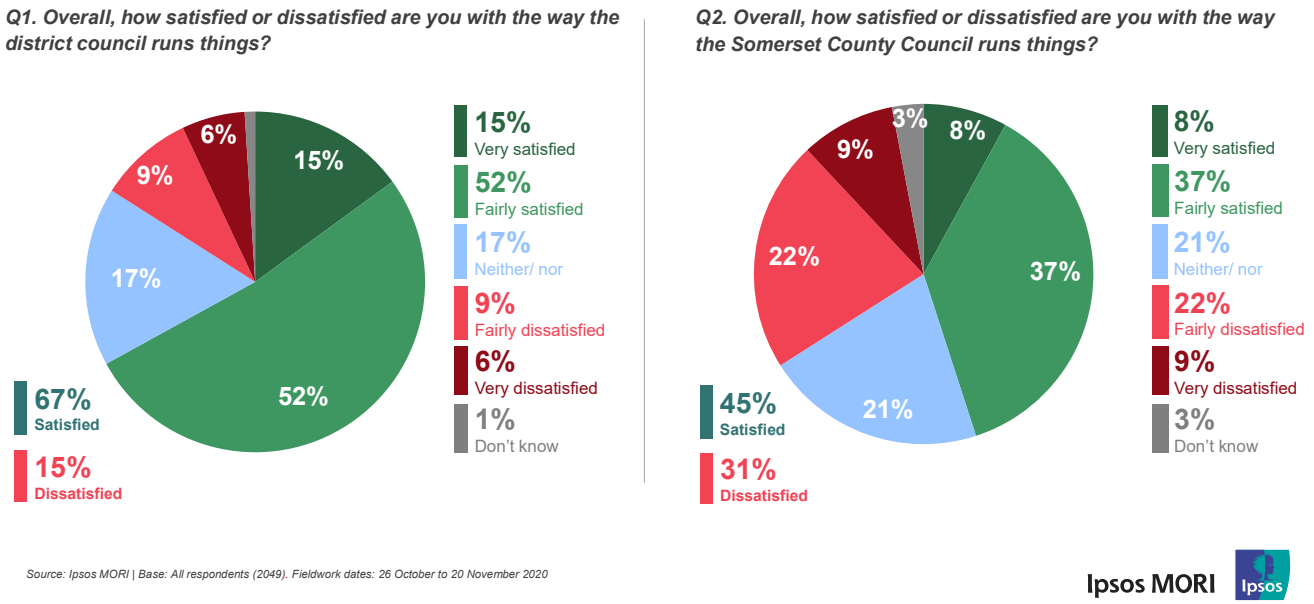
6.2 Satisfaction with the district and county councils

Key Insight

There is greater overall satisfaction towards the way District councils run things across Somerset than the County Council.

Overall there was a greater level of satisfaction with how the relevant district councils run things (67%) than the county council (45%). Just under a third (31%) of residents also said they were dissatisfied with the way the county council runs things, compared to only 15% who said the same about their relevant district council.

Figure 6.1: Satisfaction with district councils and county council



When it comes to **satisfaction with the district councils**, those living in South Somerset were significantly more likely to be satisfied overall with the way their district council ran things (72% compared to 67% overall). Otherwise there was little variance in the levels of satisfaction across the district areas.

There was a polarisation in the older age range when it came to satisfaction with the district councils. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of those aged 75 and over were significantly more satisfied with their district

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council compared to the county average. Conversely, one in five of those aged between 70 and 79 were dissatisfied, which was significantly greater than the average (15%).

District council satisfaction levels also differed by social grade, with those in the upper middle class and middle class (AB) significantly more satisfied (72% compared to 67% overall), whilst those who are generally unemployed (prior to the pandemic lockdown) are also significantly more satisfied with the way the district councils run things (70%).

Those who support the principle of devolution were also significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way their district council runs things (70% compared to 67% overall).

In terms of **satisfaction levels with the way the county council runs things**, there were no notable differences between residents living in the four districts of Somerset. The main difference aligned to age, with those aged over 75 years old significantly more likely to be satisfied as to the way the council runs things (56% compared to 45% overall).

As with satisfaction towards district councils, those who are opposed to the devolution of powers from Westminster to local authorities were significantly more likely to also be dissatisfied with the way which the county council runs things.

6.3 Satisfaction with services and trust in delivering them

Key Insight

Satisfaction varies depending on service, with district councils more trusted for most services and the county more trusted to deliver those which span district boundaries, such as flood provision (environmental) and maintenance of roads.

Residents were given a number of local services and asked about levels of satisfaction and at which tier of local government (i.e. district or county level) they would trust each service to be delivered at.

In terms of service delivery there was a wide range of satisfaction levels, with a majority of residents satisfied with waste and recycling collection (79%), parks, green spaces and play areas (71%), street cleaning (64%) and environmental provision such as flood defences (53%).

When it comes to which tier of local government is trusted to deliver such services, it is generally cross-county services, such as environmental provisions, which residents trust the county council to deliver, with district councils more trusted to deliver more localised services such as parks and green spaces and street cleaning.

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Figure 6.2: Satisfaction with local services and trust to deliver these services (1)

Q3. Thinking about the last 12 months, I'd like you to tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the quality of each service.

Q4. For each of the following services, state whether you would have greater trust if they were delivered by xxx Council at a district level or by Somerset County Council at a county-wide level?

Source: Ipsos MORI | Base: All respondents (2049). Fieldwork dates: 26 October to 20 November 2020

Ipsos MORI

- Around four in five residents (79%) expressed satisfaction with **waste and recycling collection services**. There is a clear age difference in perception of the quality of service, with significantly more people aged between 18 and 54 likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of service (25% of 18-24 and 19% of 35-54 year olds). Conversely, those in socio-economic grade AB were more likely to be satisfied with this service (83% compared to 79% overall). When it came to the choice of delivering the service at a district or county-wide level, most residents would prefer it being delivered at a district level, although this view is not universally shared by all age groups with young people (18-34) more likely to prefer delivery at a county level (47% compared to 34% overall). Significantly more people aged between 55 and 74 (55%) and 75+ (59%) trusted the district council to deliver at a district-based level.

- Seven in ten residents (71%) were satisfied with **parks, green spaces and play areas**, which was broadly consistent across all areas and demographics.

- More residents were satisfied with **street cleaning** services than dissatisfied +45 percentage points). Those aged between 35 and 54 were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the level of service (67% compared to 64% overall), whereas those aged over 55 were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied towards it (22% of 55-74 and 24% of 75+ year olds). As for trust in delivering the service, young people (18-24) were more likely to prefer it being delivered at a county than district level (30% compared to only 20% overall).

- Over half of residents (53%) were satisfied with **environmental provisions (such as flooding)**. Satisfaction was significantly greater amongst those residents living in Sedgemoor District (64% compared to 53% overall), whilst those living in the county aged between 55-74 were more likely to be dissatisfied with the same service (18% compared to 15% overall). In terms of trust to deliver such services, those in the socio-economic grades ABC1 were more likely to trust such services

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being planned for and delivered at a county level (55% compared to 51% overall), whilst those in C2DE were more likely to trust the district councils to deliver (36% compared to 33% overall).

- Satisfaction levels for **health and social care** services were consistent across all districts of Somerset, which suggests there is no significant variance in service from one to another. Significantly more older people were satisfied with the service, with just over half (52%) of 75+ year olds saying this, whilst significantly more people aged between 35 and 54 were likely to be dissatisfied with it (22% compared to 18% overall). When it comes to delivering this service at a district or county level, women were more likely to prefer it to be delivered locally at a district level (49% compared to 43% overall), whilst men were more likely to prefer to see it delivered by the county council at a county-wide level (46% compared to 40% overall). Those aged over 75 years old were least likely to have an opinion on delivery of such services (14% did not know at what level should provide this service). Older people (75+) also preferred this service to be delivered at a district level (52% compared to 43% overall), which perhaps reflects the apparent ease of accessing a more localised service for this demographic.

- When it comes to **road maintenance**, which is a service currently delivered by Somerset County Council, there was no difference in satisfaction levels between the four districts. Those aged 75 years old and over were significantly more satisfied with road maintenance (45% compared to 35% overall) whilst those slightly younger, aged between 55 and 74, were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied (55% compared to 52% overall). When it comes to who should run the service, a greater number of residents thought road maintenance should be delivered at a county rather than district level, although significantly more people who said this were also more likely to be satisfied with the way the county council runs things as well.

- **Local housing provision** is a contentious issue across the country, and fewer than a third of residents were satisfied with the service (31%). There were no significant differences between districts, and it was the young people living in the county (aged between 18 and 34) who were significantly more satisfied – over two in five (42%) said they were satisfied at what was provided (compared to 31% overall). It was older ages, specifically those between 55 and 74, who were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with local provision (27% compared to 22% overall). When it comes to who should run the service, significantly more young people (18-34) felt that housing provision should be delivered at a county rather than district level (39% compared to 27% overall), whilst those aged between 55 and 74 were more likely to hold an opposing view and thought it should be a district level service (58% compared to 54% overall).

- When it comes to **services and support for old people**, there were higher levels of satisfaction from residents of Sedgemoor (36% were satisfied compared to 31% overall). Two in five (42%) of those aged 75+ years old were satisfied, which was significantly greater than the average (31%). Conversely, significantly more people aged between 55 and 74 were dissatisfied as to the service (21% compared to 18% overall). When it comes to who should run the service, those aged over 55 years old were significantly more likely to want the service to be delivered at a district level – 55% of 55 to 74 year olds said this (compared to 51% overall) whilst 59% of 75+ year olds said the same. Conversely, over two in five young people (43%) felt that such service should be delivered at a county level by a county council (compared to 32% overall).

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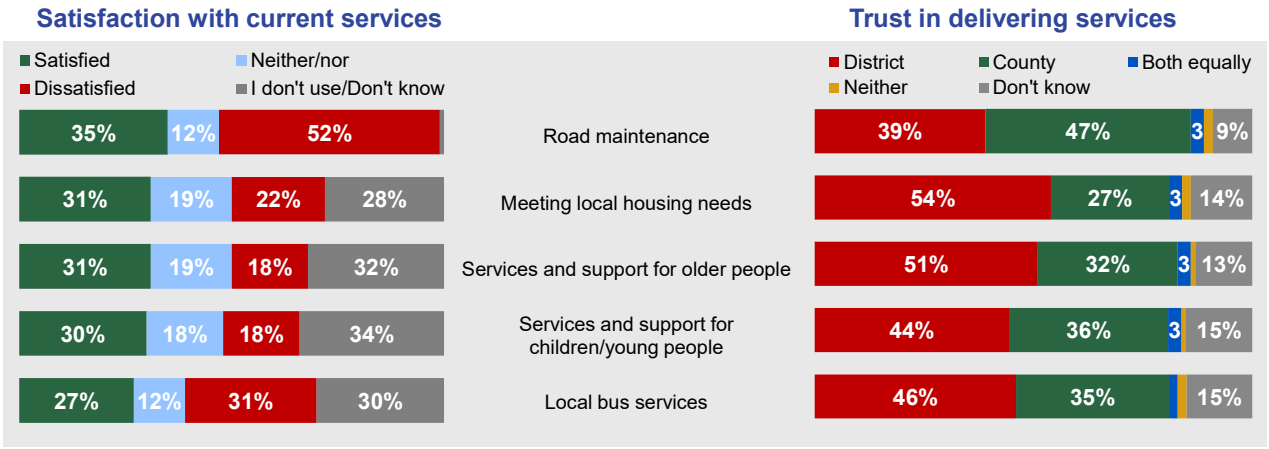
Figure 6.3: Satisfaction with local services and trust to deliver these services (2)

Q3. Thinking about the last 12 months, I'd like you to tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the quality of each service.

Q4. For each of the following services, state whether you would have greater trust if they were delivered by xxx Council at a district level or by Somerset County Council at a county-wide level?



Source: Ipsos MORI | Base: All respondents (2049). Fieldwork dates: 26 October to 20 November 2020

- As for **services and support for young people**, there were no significant differences between districts, with more residents being satisfied than dissatisfied at the level of service (+12 percentage points). Interestingly, significantly more 18-34 year olds were satisfied with the service (41% compared to 30% overall), whilst there was a more polarised view amongst the slightly older age group (35 to 54), with a third of this age group (34% compared to 30% overall) expressing satisfaction with the services and a quarter expressing dissatisfaction (24% compared to 18% overall). When it comes to who should run the service, more residents felt it should be run at a district level than county level (44% compared to 36% who thought county), which was consistent across all areas and demographics.

- There was net dissatisfaction towards **bus services** (-4 percentage points). There was some variance to this in Mendip District, where residents were significantly more satisfied with the bus services in their area (33% were satisfied compared to 27% overall). There was also significantly greater satisfaction amongst the older age group, with 36% of over 75s being satisfied with the service (compared to 27% overall). However, those aged between 55 and 74 were significantly more dissatisfied with the service (34% compared to 31% overall). When it comes to who should run the service, residents living in Mendip were more likely to prefer bus services to be run at a county level (40% compared to 35% overall). Young people aged between 18 and 34 were also more likely to agree with this (46%).

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07

Appendix

7 Appendix

7.1 The Questionnaire

INTRODUCTORY TEXT:

Good afternoon/good evening my name is …… and I'm calling from Ipsos MORI an independent research agency. We're carrying out this survey on behalf of the district councils in Somerset. The councils would like to find out more about what local residents think about some of the challenges in their local area and possible ways of dealing with them in the future. This survey is being carried out in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct, and the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Your responses to the survey will be kept completely confidential and no personal information will be shared with any third parties, the postcode data will be used for analysis by local area. All data will be securely stored and deleted at the end of the research in line with GDPR.

You can access the privacy notice online at [LINK TO BE PROVDED]
This explains the purposes for processing your personal data as well as your rights under data protection regulations to access your personal data, withdraw consent, object to processing of your personal data and other required information.

ROUTING/SCRIPTING INSTRUCTIONS IN BLUE

Before we start, I just want to clarify that participation in the survey is voluntary and you can stop the survey or change your mind at any time. You also have the option to answer "prefer not to say" on any question

SCREENER QUESTIONS

ASK ALL
S1. Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

1. Yes
2. No – THANK AND CLOSE

Firstly, we'd like to ask a few questions to ensure we are talking to a wide range of people.

ASK ALL
S2. What is your postcode please?

IF ASKED WHY: This is so we ensure we speak to a wide range of people spread throughout Somerset. This will not be shared with the district councils or anyone else and will not be used to identify you or your responses.

IF PREFER NOT TO SAY – THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL
S3. Can I just check if you work for either the Somerset County Council or any of the Somerset district councils including Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Somerset West and Taunton?

1. Yes – work for Somerset county or district councils – THANK AND CLOSE
2. No – Do not work for Somerset county or district councils - CONTINUE

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ASK ALL
S4. Which of the following describes how you think of yourself?

1. Male
2. Female
3. In another way
4. Prefer not to say (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK ALL
S5. How old are you?

TEXT BOX

CODE TO BAND. SINGLE CODE ONLY
1. 18 – 24
2. 25 – 34
3. 35 - 44
4. 45 – 54
5. 55 – 64
6. 65 – 74
7. 75 – 79
8. 80+
9. Prefer not to say (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK ALL
S6. Which of these applies to you? Please refer to your status prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown earlier this year.

1. Have paid job or self-employed full time (30+ hours per week)
2. Have paid job or self-employed part time (under 30 hrs per week)
3. Not in paid work – looking after home or family
4. Retired
5. Full time student
6. Unemployed and seeking work
7. Not in paid work and not seeking work because of long term illness or disability
8. Not in paid work and not seeking work for other reason
9. Other
10. Refused (DO NOT READ OUT)
11. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK ALL
S7 Social grade module [QUESTION: What is/was your (main) job?
If you are not currently working please think about this in relation to your last main job]

CODE TO
A
B
C1
C2
D
E
Prefer not to say

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CURRENT ATTITUDES/EVALUATIONS

ASK ALL

Q1. Your local area receives services from [INSERT DISTRICT COUNCIL NAME] council. They are responsible for a range of services, such as housing and planning, street cleaning and maintaining parks and green space.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the district council runs things?

REVERSE 1-5

1. Very satisfied
2. Fairly satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Fairly dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK ALL

Q2. Your local area also receives services from the Somerset County Council. They are responsible for a range of services such as road maintenance, and services and support for older and younger people.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the Somerset County Council runs things?

REVERSE 1-5

1. Very satisfied
2. Fairly satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Fairly dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK ALL

Q3. I'm going to read out different types of services that are provided by both your district council and Somerset County Council. Thinking about the last 12 months, I'd like you to tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the quality of each service.

RANDOMISE A-J

A. Meeting local housing needs
B. Waste and recycling collection
C. Street cleaning
D. Road maintenance
E. Local bus services
F. Services and support for older people
G. Services and support for children and young people
H. Parks, green spaces and play areas
I. Environmental provisions such as flooding prevention
J. Health and social care services

REVERSE 1-5

1. Very satisfied
2. Fairly satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Fairly dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

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6. I/my household don't use this service (DO NOT READ OUT)
7. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

TRUST IN DELIVERY OF SERVICES

ASK ALL

Q4. For each of the following services, please state whether you would have greater trust if they were delivered by [INSERT DISTRICT COUNCIL NAME] Council at a district level or by Somerset County Council at a county-wide level?

RANDOMISE A-J

A. Meeting local housing needs
B. Waste and recycling collection
C. Street cleaning
D. Road maintenance
E. Local bus services
F. Services and support for older people
G. Services and support for children and young people
H. Parks, green spaces and play areas
I. Environmental provisions such as flooding prevention
J. Health and social care services

ROTATE 1-2

1. District level
2. County level
3. Both equally (DO NOT READ OUT)
4. Neither of these (DO NOT READ OUT)
5. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

PRINCIPLES OF DEVOLUTION AND LOCALISM

ASK ALL

Q5A. Devolution is when certain decision-making powers, as well as funding, are transferred down from Central Government to a local area. It means that decisions are taken close to where they have an effect.
To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of devolution?

REVERSE 1-5

1. Strongly support
2. Tend to support
3. Neither support nor oppose
4. Tend to oppose
5. Strongly oppose
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

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ASK ALL

Q5B. Localism is when certain decision-making powers or the delivery of certain services is transferred down from the Local Authority to a more localised area, such as a parish council or neighbourhood forum. It means that decisions are taken closer to where they will have an effect rather than by the Local Authority as a whole.
To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose the principle of localism?

REVERSE 1-5

1. Strongly support
2. Tend to support
3. Neither support nor oppose
4. Tend to oppose
5. Strongly oppose
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

THE REORGANISATION OPTIONS

I'd now like to talk to you about local government in Somerset. There are a number of ways in which local government, including your district council and the County Council, could be reorganised. There are four options being considered which have been independently assessed against several criteria.

ASK ALL

Q6A. When considering how the Councils of Somerset might be restructured, which of the following four options, if any, would you most prefer?

REVERSE 1-4

1. No change – keep the councils structured as they currently are
2. More collaboration of delivering services between councils
3. Create two single (unitary) councils to replace the four district councils and county council, one representing the East and one the West of Somerset. This is known as the Stronger Somerset proposal and is supported by the four district councils
4. Create a new single (unitary) council representing all of Somerset. This is known as the One Somerset proposal and is supported by the County Council
5. None of the above (DO NOT READ OUT)
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK IF CODE 1 "NO CHANGE" AT Q6A

Q6.B And when it comes to restructuring local government in Somerset, which of the following two options would you most prefer?

ROTATE 1-2

1. Creating two new unitary councils, one representing the East and one the West of Somerset
2. Creating a new single unitary council representing all of Somerset
3. Neither (DO NOT READ OUT)
4. Both equally (DO NOT READ OUT)
5. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

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TESTING THE MOTIVATIONS BASIS FOR STRONGER SOMERSET

ASK ALL

Q7. Some people say that the east and west sides of the county of Somerset are different to each other in terms of landscape, infrastructure and even people. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the east and west sides of Somerset are different to each other?

REVERSE 1-5

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK ALL

Q8. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following issues in your local area?

RANDOMISE A-E

A. The disadvantages affecting children in Somerset, including poverty and deprivation
B. The challenges facing young people in Somerset, such as access to higher education and affordable housing
C. The challenges facing Somerset's economy, such as low productivity and low wages and skills of workers
D. Challenges surrounding the environment in Somerset, such as reducing carbon emissions and flood prevention
E. The disadvantages of older people in Somerset, such as isolation and quality of their health

1. Very concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. A little concerned
4. Not concerned
5. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

ASK ALL

Q9. And if a proposal to create two new single (unitary) councils of East Somerset and West Somerset went forward, do you think the following issues would get better, get worse or stay the same as they are now?

RANDOMISE A-E

A. The disadvantages affecting children in Somerset, including poverty and deprivation
B. The challenges facing young people in Somerset, such as access to higher education and affordable housing
C. The challenges facing Somerset's economy, such as low productivity and low wages and skills of workers
D. Challenges surrounding the environment in Somerset, such as reducing carbon emissions and flood prevention
E. The disadvantages of older people in Somerset, such as isolation and the overall quality of their health

ROTATE 1-2

1. Better
2. Worse
3. Stay the same
4. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

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ASK ALL

Q10. And if a proposal to create two new single (unitary) councils for East Somerset and West Somerset went forward, do you think each of the following would get better, get worse, or stay the same as they are now?

RANDOMISE A-E

A. Access to your local councillor
B. The ability for the council to deliver local services
C. The protection of local service delivery in the future
D. The ability of local government to make decisions for the local area
E. Representation of your views in local government

ROTATE 1-2

1. Better
2. Worse
3. Stay the same
4. Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)

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Ipsos MORI's standards and accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a 'right first time' approach throughout our organisation.

ISO 20252

This is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911/MRQSA and incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). It covers the five stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos MORI was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.

ISO 27001

This is the international standard for information security designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos MORI was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.

ISO 9001

This is the international general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994, we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.

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By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos MORI endorses and supports the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commits to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation.

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Ipsos MORI is required to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018. It covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.

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