



OPCC 2022/23 budget survey results summary

Using qualitative and
quantitative research
methods to inform
decision making

Introduction

A survey run by the OPCC over a two-week period from December 23, 2021 to January 9, 2022 collected 5,316 responses from members of the public. Below its results are set against responses from two focus groups made up of Devon and Cornwall residents.



General qualitative findings

Focus groups achieved general consensus on the following points:

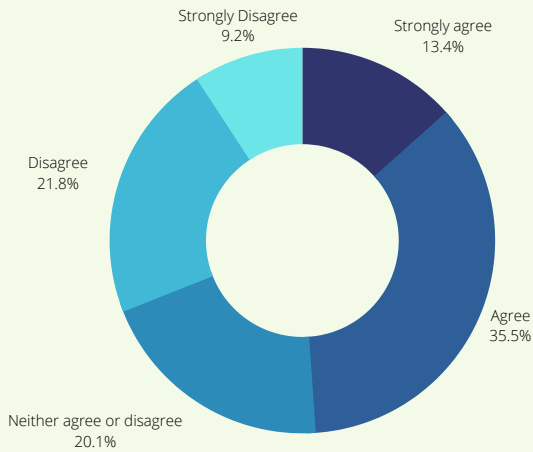
- Participants felt that greater visibility of policing, communication and physical contact with police officers and staff results in:
 - Reduced crime
 - Reduced demand on force contact centres
 - Improved public confidence in Devon and Cornwall Police
 - Improved intelligence flow between communities and police
- Confidence in the 101 non-emergency reporting was generally low, with participants speculating that members of their communities were put off reporting intelligence on low level crime by long wait times. Some felt that this justified greater spending on contact centres while others felt that this was a 'lost cause' and demand on these services would be reduced through greater investment in neighbourhood policing.
- There was widespread recognition of the additional demands placed on policing by Covid-19, the 'summer surge' of visitors in Devon and Cornwall, increased reporting of crime and crimes like cyber crime and domestic abuse, the reporting of which has increased in recent years.
- There was widespread recognition that policing in Devon and Cornwall needed further investment. Policing was a 'tough job' that was highly valued by the public.

- Some participants gave examples of inefficiencies, such as detectives being used as scene guards, officers having to spend time finding a place of safety for mentally unwell members of the public or having to drive miles because of an insufficient number of custody units. It was felt that sometimes these inefficiencies were due to the failure of other agencies and not the fault of the force.
- Participants agreed that a £10 increase in the 'band D' annual police precept would represent an insignificant additional financial burden to Devon and Cornwall households, this was despite discussion about extra financial pressures facing households, such as energy price rises and National Insurance contributions. Energy price rises were deemed a far greater concern than the potential increase in policing precept.
- When asked where they would spend additional revenues all participants agreed that visible neighbourhood policing would be their priority. Several participants said they would invest in additional Police Community Support Officers.
- Participants were divided on police stations being opened to the public with the majority being very supportive of this proposal. Most participants held the view that police stations were essential conduits between the police and public and reopening them to the public would improve trust and communication between the police and their communities. One participant deemed stations 'a thing of the past' and surmised that technology allowing police to do their job while out in the community was of more benefit than static locations.
- Some participants from rural areas felt that crime from rural areas was under-reported because of a lack of a visible police presence. Greater police presence in urban areas of the force would result in more reporting and therefore even more resourcing while rural areas were neglected, despite concerns about crimes like county lines drug dealing, domestic abuse and farm theft in these areas.
- One focus group discussed the Proceeds of Crime Act and Property Act opportunities. There was general agreement that more assets should be seized from criminals and monies obtained spent within communities. These efforts should be supported by a communications strategy with the exercise becoming 'self funding'.
- There was frustration from all participants about the levels of communication from Devon and Cornwall Police. There was a strong desire to hear more about police activity and challenges as well as to hear more 'caught and convicted' success stories from court. There was general agreement that greater communication from the force would result in improved public confidence. Digital communication was felt to exclude an important and significant cohort of people.
- Despite some focus group members being interested in environmental issues, reducing the force's carbon footprint was not deemed a high priority.

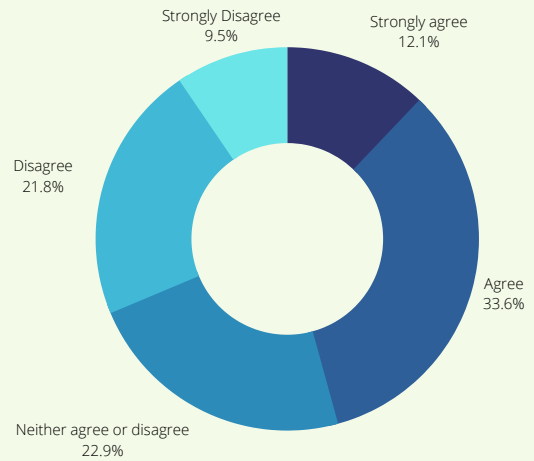
On confidence and communication

Our public told us:

'All things considered, I **generally** have confidence in the police?'



'All things considered, I have confidence in **Devon and Cornwall Police**'



To improve confidence our focus group participants said:

"Meet the public."

"Be more visible in rural areas."

"Meeting the public, allow children to sit in the cars etc. That's how people appreciate what the police are doing. They don't have to see them flying around tackling crime all the time, but to know they're there and start to appreciate what policing is about."

"That documentary series that [the force] did was very good...it must have brought the message home to an awful lot of people."

"You've got to try and get policemen and women to go out there regularly and somehow get some visible presence. When we have a van in my town and officers around I can guarantee that reduces crime."

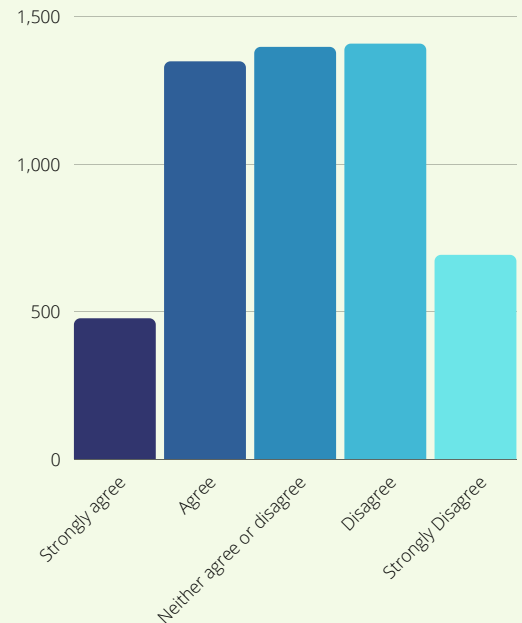
"I think the force very much needs to sell itself to the public in Devon and Cornwall."

"Much more emphasis needs to go on marketing than has done in the past."

On the police precept:

Our public told us:

To what extent do you agree that the 2021/22 Devon and Cornwall Police precept represents value for money?



Our focus group participants said:

"I believe they [the public] are reluctantly prepared to pay it 'cause everything is going up. It's inevitable. But I think they would like to see more bang for their buck."

"I think it's fair to say that no one wants to pay more council tax. We may have to, but 10 pounds [extra] for a year, I think most people will accept that."

"If you opt for a 0% increase it catches you out next time."

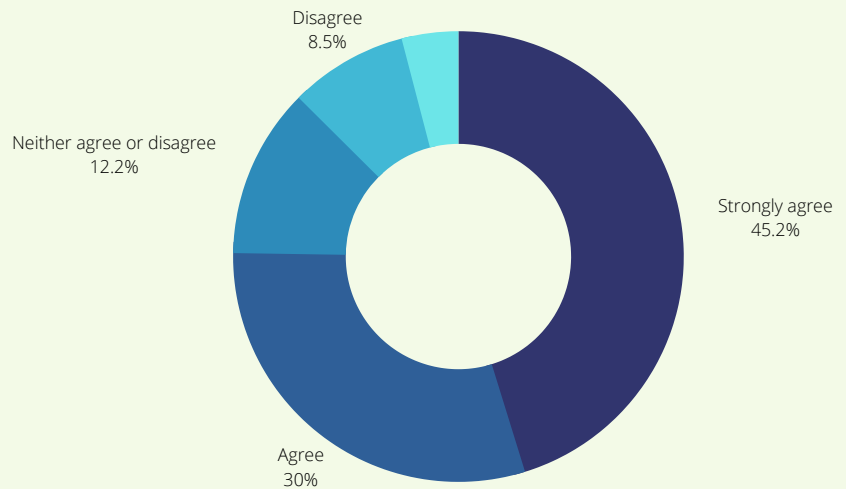
"People are seeing massive increase in food so but no increases in their Universal Credit, whether they work or not. But I think what you're asking for, which is £10, in relation to all that, is actually a drop in the ocean."

"It's £10 a year, then you look at the monthly charge against the price of a cup of coffee, for example. It's negligible and people will quite happily go for a cup of coffee, maybe on a daily basis, even those with very little money. So when you put it that way that for more policing is negligible."

On reopening police stations to the public:

Our public told us:

To what extent do you agree that investment should be made to open more police stations to the public?



Our focus group participants said:

"Some of these police stations to the public should never have been closed in the first place. We lose all the ground intelligence and all the information that people are willing to tell local police officers."

"A lot of elderly residents aren't online, you know. It's the 20% of the older generation who aren't necessarily computer literate. They're also the older generation who tend not to make a fuss."

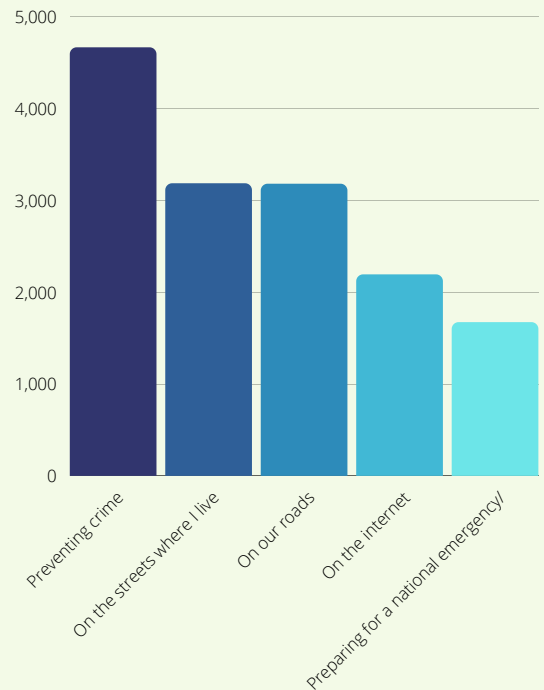
"If you open the police station, people will report crime."

"If you've got the troops, you've got to put them in the right areas, but you must open the police stations for people to go and report things, even if it's only to hand in their documents. Because when you speak to that person you can gather that confidential human intelligence. People want to talk to you and tell you what's going on. If you're not open, it won't happen."

On areas to invest in:

Our public told us:

Selecting three areas, where do you perceive that policing needs greater investment?



Our focus group participants said:

“Three words: communication, efficiency and presence.”

“More feet on the ground and better communication.”

“They [police] should be able to do virtually everything from their vehicle. That at least would make them more visible during that period. That's out there. And if you're going to give me £19 million, it's not rocket science to work out when your periods of peak demand are a lot more police officers out there.”

“I'd be paying overtime to put extra police officers out on the streets and you'd state what's acceptable and unacceptable. So you've got antisocial behaviour. You challenge it, you've got criminal behaviour, you deal with it, and your cells may be full, and the magistrates courts may hate you on the following Monday morning, but you're doing what the public wants.”

“I would prioritise making the police visible and that is simply because it will deliver everything that you need. You need the confidence in the police so people can approach them and actually report things. And then the policeman don't refer them on, I want to actually report it [incidents] and then you will also have the police standing there which will make other people think again before they commit crime or antisocial behaviour.”

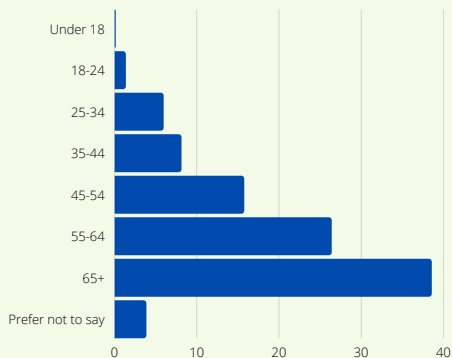
“Visibility, response and admin efficiency, so that the guys aren't doing unnecessary paperwork.”

“I'd invest more in the proceeds of crime works so you could get more money and then you could reinvest that money in more crime prevention.”

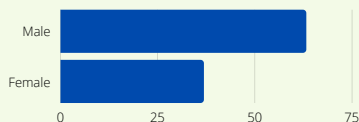
Who completed our quantitative survey?

The following results are expressed as percentages. The survey was self-selecting and participants were offered the opportunity to skip questions relating to their personal details in line with Market Research Society guidance.

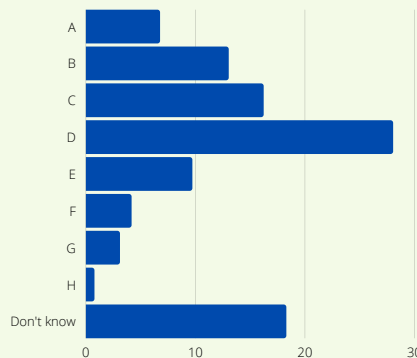
Age:



Sex:



Council tax band



Ethnicity

White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish	88.13
White - Irish	0.92
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.35
Any other White background - please specify below	4.52
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean	0.09
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African	0.07
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	0.18
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background - please specify below	0.30
Asian/Asian British - Indian	0.14
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	0.09
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	0
Asian/Asian British - Chinese	0.09
Any other Asian background - please specify below	0.02
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - African	0.02
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Caribbean	0.12
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background - please specify below	0
Other ethnic group - Arab	0.09
Any other ethnic group - please specify below	4.86

Market Research Society

Industry regulator the Market Research Society (MRS) promotes best practice in market research standards. Both qualitative and quantitative surveys were completed with the assistance of the society and in line with its [Code of Conduct](#).