



Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council Survey on Council Tax Increase 2013

Final Report

February 2013



As with all our studies, findings from this survey are subject to Opinion Research Services Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract

Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey requires the advance approval of ORS. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation

Contents

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Project Overview | 6 |
| | The Survey | 6 |
| | Methodology and Response..... | 6 |
| | Interpretation of the Data | 9 |
| | Weighting the Data..... | 9 |
| | Acknowledgements | 9 |
| 2. | Executive Summary | 10 |
| | Summary of Main Findings | 10 |
| | Results | 10 |
| 3. | Main Findings..... | 11 |
| | Results..... | 11 |
| 4. | List of Tables and Figures..... | 13 |
| | Tables | 13 |
| | Figures..... | 13 |

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1. Project Overview

The Survey

- 1.1 Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by Sefton Council to undertake a survey about a potential increase in the level of Council Tax charged in the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton.
- 1.2 Sefton Council has to save £50 million over the next two years as a result of reductions in government funding (which is in addition to savings of £64 million which have already been made). The survey was intended to gauge whether residents would be prepared to pay an increase in Council Tax to help achieve these savings, if this meant that fewer service cuts would have to be made.

Methodology and Response

- 1.3 The survey comprised 1,002 structured telephone interviews with residents of Sefton aged eighteen or over, which were conducted between 16th January and 2nd February 2013. These interviews were conducted using random digit telephone dialling, and by re-contacting residents who had participated in the Council's telephone Budget Survey (also conducted by ORS) during November and December 2012.
- 1.4 Quota controls were used to ensure that the sample achieved was representative of the area in terms of gender, age, working status and sub-area.
- 1.5 The tables that appear without commentary on the following pages show the un-weighted and weighted profiles of the responses to the survey. (Please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to slight rounding errors).

Table 1: Gender - All Respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

| Gender | Unweighted Count | Unweighted Valid % | Weighted Valid % |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Male | 465 | 46 | 47 |
| Female | 537 | 54 | 53 |
| Not known | 0 | - | - |
| Total | 1,002 | 100 | 100 |

Table 2: Age - All Respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

| Age | Unweighted Count | Unweighted Valid % | Weighted Valid % |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Aged 18 to 24 | 54 | 5 | 12 |
| Aged 25 to 39 | 170 | 17 | 19 |
| Aged 40 to 59 | 354 | 35 | 37 |
| Aged 60 to 74 | 270 | 27 | 20 |
| Aged 75 or over | 154 | 15 | 12 |
| Not known | 0 | - | - |
| Total | 1,002 | 100 | 100 |

Table 3: Ethnic Origin - All Respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

| Ethnic Origin | Unweighted Count | Unweighted Valid % | Weighted Valid % |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| White | 979 | 99 | 99 |
| Non-white | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| Not known | 16 | - | - |
| Total | 1,002 | 100 | 100 |

Table 4: Long-standing illness/Disability - All Respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

| Long-standing illness/Disability | Unweighted Count | Unweighted Valid % | Weighted Valid % |
|--|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Long-standing illness/disability | 133 | 13 | 14 |
| No long-standing illness/disability | 863 | 87 | 86 |
| Not known | 6 | - | - |
| Total | 1,002 | 100 | 100 |

Table 5: Working Status - All Respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

| Working Status | Unweighted Count | Unweighted Valid % | Weighted Valid % |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Working | 501 | 50 | 52 |
| Retired | 383 | 38 | 28 |
| Otherwise not working | 118 | 12 | 20 |
| Not known | 0 | - | - |
| Total | 1,002 | 100 | 100 |

Table 6: IMD Decile within Sefton

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

| IMD Decile within Sefton | Unweighted Count | Unweighted Valid % | Weighted Valid % |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 (most deprived) | 55 | 5 | 10 |
| 2 | 92 | 9 | 9 |
| 3 | 71 | 7 | 10 |
| 4 | 89 | 9 | 10 |
| 5 | 97 | 10 | 11 |
| 6 | 117 | 12 | 10 |
| 7 | 113 | 11 | 10 |
| 8 | 101 | 10 | 10 |
| 9 | 133 | 13 | 9 |
| 10 | 134 | 13 | 10 |
| Not known | 0 | - | - |
| Total | 1,002 | 100 | 100 |

Interpretation of the Data

- 1.6 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the report an asterisk (*) denotes any value less than half a per cent.
- 1.7 ‘Don’t know’ responses have been excluded for the results in most cases.
- 1.8 In some cases figures of 2% or below have been excluded from graphs.
- 1.9 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of residents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a ‘traffic light’ system in which:
- Green shades represent positive responses
 - Beige and purple shades represent neither positive nor negative responses
 - Red shades represent negative responses
 - The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the ‘extremes’, for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied.
- 1.10 When considering changes between demographic sub-groups groups within the population, differences have been analysed using appropriate statistical means to check for statistical significance where appropriate (i.e. not happened ‘by chance’). When comparing results between demographic sub-groups, only results which are significantly different and are appropriate to mention are highlighted in the text. Statistical significance is at a 95% level of confidence.

Weighting the Data

- 1.11 The achieved sample was checked against the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) relative to Sefton in order to take into account the levels of deprivation within the Metropolitan Borough. It was subsequently weighted by IMD decile within Sefton (where decile 1 represented the most deprived areas and decile 10 represented the least deprived areas in Sefton).
- 1.12 The achieved sample was then checked against comparative data for age, working status, gender and ethnicity and weighted by age, working status, and gender. The results presented here are therefore representative of the population of Sefton.

Acknowledgements

- 1.13 ORS would like to thank Sue Holden at Sefton Council for her help and assistance in developing the project. We would also like to thank the 1,002 people who took part in the survey.

2. Executive Summary

Summary of Main Findings

2.1 The following paragraphs selectively highlight some key issues, but readers are referred to the detailed graphics for the full story. The suite of ORS reports also includes full cross tabulations.

Results

- 2.2 Residents were read a preamble containing background information about the £50 million of savings which Sefton Council has to make in the next two years, as well as about potential cuts to services and increases in service charges. It was explained that an average increase of £1.50 per household per week in Council Tax will raise an additional £6 million every year and would mean that the Council would not have to find this amount from service cuts & charges.
- 2.3 More than three fifths of residents (63%) said they would be prepared to pay an extra £1.50 per week if this meant that £6 million of services cuts, such as those mentioned in the preamble, could be avoided. 3 in 10 (30%) said they would not be prepared to pay this extra amount and 6% had no opinion.
- 2.4 Residents from IMD Decile 10 (i.e. from the 10% least deprived areas within Sefton) were significantly more likely to say they would be prepared to pay an extra £1.50 per week. Residents with a disability were significantly less likely to say they would be prepared to pay an extra £1.50 per week, and residents who are retired were significantly more likely to say they would not be prepared to pay this increase.
- 2.5 All residents who were not prepared to pay an extra £1.50 per week were asked whether they would be prepared to pay any increase per week in their Council Tax. Nearly a quarter (23%) said they would be prepared to pay some level of increase, although more than three fifths (64%) said they would not. The remaining 13% had no opinion.
- 2.6 All residents who *were not* prepared to pay an extra £1.50 per week, but who *were* prepared to pay some level of increase, were asked what would be an acceptable increase per week for their household. Residents suggested a range of amounts between 1p and £1.49; however, the most popular amount was 50p (suggested by 37%), followed by £1.00 (27%), 75p (14%) and 25p (13%).

3. Main Findings

Results

Figure 1: Would you or your household be prepared to pay an extra £1.50 per week if this meant that £6 million of service cuts such as the ones I've just mentioned could be avoided?

Base: All residents (997)

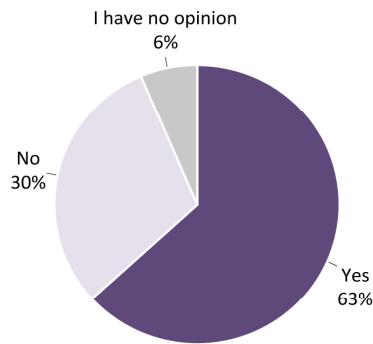


Figure 2: Would you be prepared to pay any increase per week in your Council Tax?
Base: All residents who would not be prepared to pay £1.50 extra per week (379)

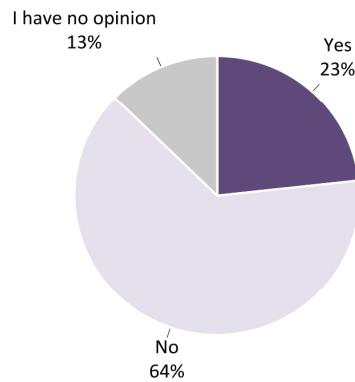
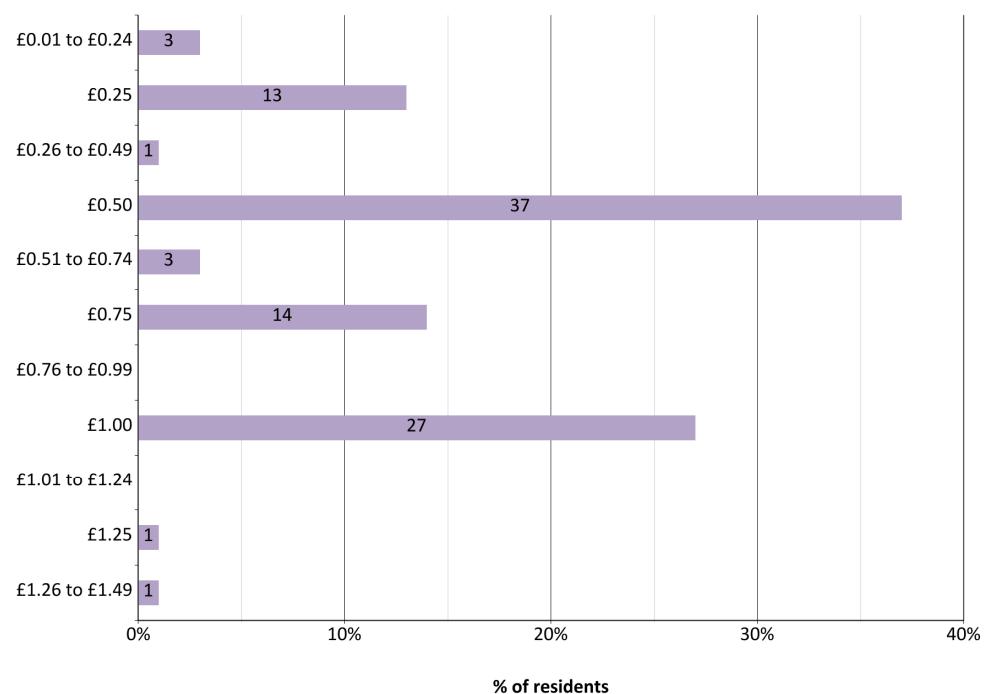


Figure 3: What would be an acceptable increase per week for you or your household?

Base: All residents who would not be prepared to pay £1.50 extra per week, but who would be prepared to pay some level of increase (83)



4. List of Tables and Figures

Tables

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| Table 1: | Gender | 7 |
| Table 2: | Age | 7 |
| Table 3: | Ethnic Origin | 7 |
| Table 4: | Long-standing illness/Disability | 7 |
| Table 5: | Working Status..... | 8 |
| Table 6: | IMD Decile within Sefton | 8 |

Figures

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| Figure 1: | Would you or your household be prepared to pay an extra £1.50 per week if this meant that £6 million of service cuts such as the ones I've just mentioned could be avoided? | 11 |
| Figure 2: | Would you be prepared to pay any increase per week in your council tax? | 11 |
| Figure 3: | What would be an acceptable increase per week for you or your household?..... | 12 |