

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
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SUBJECT: COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (CRMP) 2022-23 ACTION PLAN AND BUDGET
CONSULTATION UPDATE

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Background Papers: See [BFRS Website CRMP and Budget Consultation-and-Engagement](#)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present members of the Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA) with an update of our Fire and Rescue Authority report on Consultation on the 2022-23 Budget and Community Risk Management Plan Annual Action Plan from 14th December 2021.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Members acknowledge the content of this paper.

1. Summary

- 1.1 We have had our most successful Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and budget consultation yet.
- 1.2 Our results are due to more effective use of social media, maximising internal and external staff networks, and encouraging our partners to share our consultation.
- 1.3 We received overwhelming support for our proposals and have a rich baseline of comment and intelligence which we can draw on over the next 12 months in line with our Service Value 'Every Contact Counts'.
- 1.4 The consultation on the 2022-23 CRMP action plan, budget and council tax proposals took place between 28 December 2021 and 31 January 2022. Last year the decision was made to join up the two aspects of consultation; the budget and the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). A total of 746 responses have been received to date.
- 1.5 At 9am on 1 February 2022 results include:
 - 741 online consultation responses and five handwritten responses. This adds up to 746 consultation response.
 - This tops 2021-22 when we received 471 consultation responses;
 - 22 targeted personal interviews with organisations we have not systematically engaged with previously including representatives of gypsies and travellers, faith groups, parish and town councils, and young people;
 - 86% of those responding said yes to the 1.99% increase of Council Tax;
 - 78% of those responding said yes to the £5 increase;
 - 214 respondents gave us a wealth of comments and suggestions for further collaborations and in making efficiencies.
 - A variety of comments related to suggestions for saving money or generating income, such as charging for some services, collaboration with other services including more site sharing and in boosting organisational productivity.
 - 627 (85%) said that they support us prioritising investment in our property based on changes to housing, economic and social change, and the impact of Covid-19 on how we work;
 - 92% support us in innovating our fleet and testing different ideas;
 - 376 responded on What should our investment priorities should include, and we are mining this information further
 - 71% completed the EDI section and we can demonstrate we received a much more diverse range of responses including more from young people. We have more to do to encourage people to be more open about their sexuality.
- 1.6 Appendix 1 provides more detailed analysis.

1.7 The charts in Appendix 1 show an overwhelmingly positive response. Compared to last year we have received proportionately more responses from younger people, from people with disabilities, from people with more diverse backgrounds, and more women.

2. Background

2.1 Feedback from last year was that the consultation was too long and complicated. This year we simplified the survey splitting it into two parts the budget and the proposed CRMP 2022/23 action plan. This seemed to work much better with an increase in responses. The average time taken to complete the survey was eight minutes and two seconds, this will have helped encourage the high number of responses.

2.2 Our report to the Fire and Rescue Authority committee meeting on 14th December 2021 entitled Consultation on the 2022-23 Budget and Community Risk Management Plan 2022-23 Annual Action Plan sets out our approach, consideration of national guidance, our review of what others are doing, and consultation action plan.

2.3 We are currently on target to complete our 2022-23 CRMP and budget consultation action plan.

2.4 We gave Members a commitment to target our consultation and listen to voices we may not have heard before. Our approach includes:

- Working with colleagues internally to encourage them to forward the link to our consultation and for our staff to distribute to their networks;
- Offering a choice of paper based or online consultation, we received five handwritten surveys on paper;
- Sending out to all our Local Resilience Forum (LRF) partners and the LRF sending out to wider groups;
- Emailing to the Chamber of Commerce to send to their members;
- Sending a personalised email to every clerk of all 111 town and parish councils in Bedfordshire;
- Writing to 52 community groups and key stakeholders including faith groups, community groups, youth groups, business groups including Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, sport and leisure organisations including Luton Town Football Club and the two championship rugby teams, infrastructure organisations including Luton Airport, universities and colleges, heritage and arts organisations.
- This resulted in several parish councils adding the link to our consultation on their social media pages and website;
- Conducting personal interviews with representatives from community and faith groups;

- Maximising our social media reach including boosting our social posts.
- Encouraging our colleagues in local authorities to share our consultation; and
- Using BedsFireAlert to send out our consultation to 15,411 recipients (this has been sent out twice and was re-sent on the 24 January as a final reminder).

- 2.5 A survey was sent to the 15,411 people registered on the BedsFireAlert Community messaging system, who are willing to take part in consultations. This was sent out on two additional occasions as a reminder. It was also made available via the Authority's website and publicised through the local press and several organic and paid for social media campaigns on the Service's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter channels. It was promoted to BFRS staff through the weekly editions of Blue Bulletin and a supporting briefing note sent to all managers.
- 2.6 A letter was sent to a number of key partners in the emergency services and local government inviting their views. We also asked a number of organisations including the three unitary authorities, the Police, East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) and the Chamber of Commerce and community groups to put the link on their websites and to promote the consultation to their members. We communicated to the press via press releases and a number of them included the link on their websites and shared our social media content.
- 2.7 We received surveys from all three local councils, local universities and colleges, Luton Airport, three neighboring fire and rescue services, local faith groups, charity and Gypsy and Travelers groups, cultural groups, Visit Bedford and Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. We carried out interviews with eleven town and parish councils
- 2.8 The improvements to our reach and overall approach to engagement is important because the first of the thirteen Areas for Improvement (AFI) in our recent Effectiveness, efficiency and people inspection report for 2021/22 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue HMICFRS finds: *The service needs to improve how it engages with its local community.*
- 2.9 This consultation forms part of the response to this AFI. We are currently working through survey responses to pick out any new risks or areas we need to do more to resolve.

3. Consultation Timeline

W/C 20.12.21	W/C 27.12.21	W/C 4.1.22	W/C 10.1.22	W/C 17.1.22	W/C 24.1.22
Finalise consultation doc and content	Send to partners	ZZ to all staff	Re-send to Beds Alert reminder	ZZ to all staff reminder	Re-send to Beds Alert reminder
Update website & Web banner	Send out first socials	FB pages all 14 updated	Paid for social media	Support stories on socials	Feedback any facts and figures
Send out press release	Send to 120 community groups	Send out socials	Send out socials reminder	Send out socials reminder	Send out socials final reminder
Develop social media banners	Develop a flier to go out via ops	Fliers out in the community	Partners to share on social platforms	Partners to share on social platforms	Partners to share on social platforms
In BB	In BB	In BB	In BB	In BB	In BB
Send to Beds Alert mailing list (19609)	Out to Chamber of Commerce 700+ members	Send to FRA & CMT to share with external partners	Send out press release reminder	Virtual meetings	With community groups / leaders
Brief CMT on plans	Partners to share on social platforms	Review numbers of responses	Review numbers of responses	Review numbers of responses	Summary document for CMT / FRA

4. So What? How are we responding to consultation

- 4.1 We have revealed a significant public interest in improving our focus on community engagement, environmental management and demonstrating ethical governance credentials. These issues will take a stronger focus in 2022-23 and in developing our next CRMP from 2023-24 onwards.
- 4.2 As a response to the themes contained in the consultation, the paras below provide a summary of what efficiencies are already being undertaken.

- 4.3 We have the Shared Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Service in operation with numerous other shared work areas with local authorities such as Democratic Services support, legal, cleaning contracts, joint procurements, data privacy work and the Authority is a founding member of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC), providing an alternative to traditional insurance.
- 4.4 Members will be aware of the collaboration work underway with the Police, Ambulance Service and other organisations. These initiatives are increasing with the sharing of premises and operational service areas, such as Forced Entry, Missing Persons Search and the Falls Team. We are now servicing Ambulance vehicles and there is also a new joint fire Investigation post, with costs shared between three Services, for a two year period included within the 2022/23 budget.
- 4.5 The Service has also significantly contributed to supporting the community over the pandemic. This has been fully documented elsewhere and includes driving ambulances, mortuary support, delivering food parcels, co-responding, supporting the Local Resilience Forum etc.
- 4.8 The Service now shares its estate with the police at four locations (Bedford, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill and Toddington), the Ambulance at five (Luton, Sandy, Stopsley, Shefford and Dunstable) with discussions taking place for Bedford station and others in the north of the county. Other partner organisations also rent some space at our stations.
- 4.9 The Service informs telephone callers where charges will be levied on services provided such as lock outs and flood clearance from basements, where not deemed emergencies and suggesting that they seek alternative suppliers for these incidents.
5. Next Steps
 - 5.1 We are mapping results against actions in our 2022-23 CRMP action plan. For example, environmental, community engagement and ethical issues will take a much stronger focus. More capacity may be needed in the Communications and Engagement team to understand and then deliver the consultation results.
 - 5.2 We will share the results of our consultation on our website and show what is changing as a result in line with our Service Value 'We Are Accountable'.

6. Recommendations

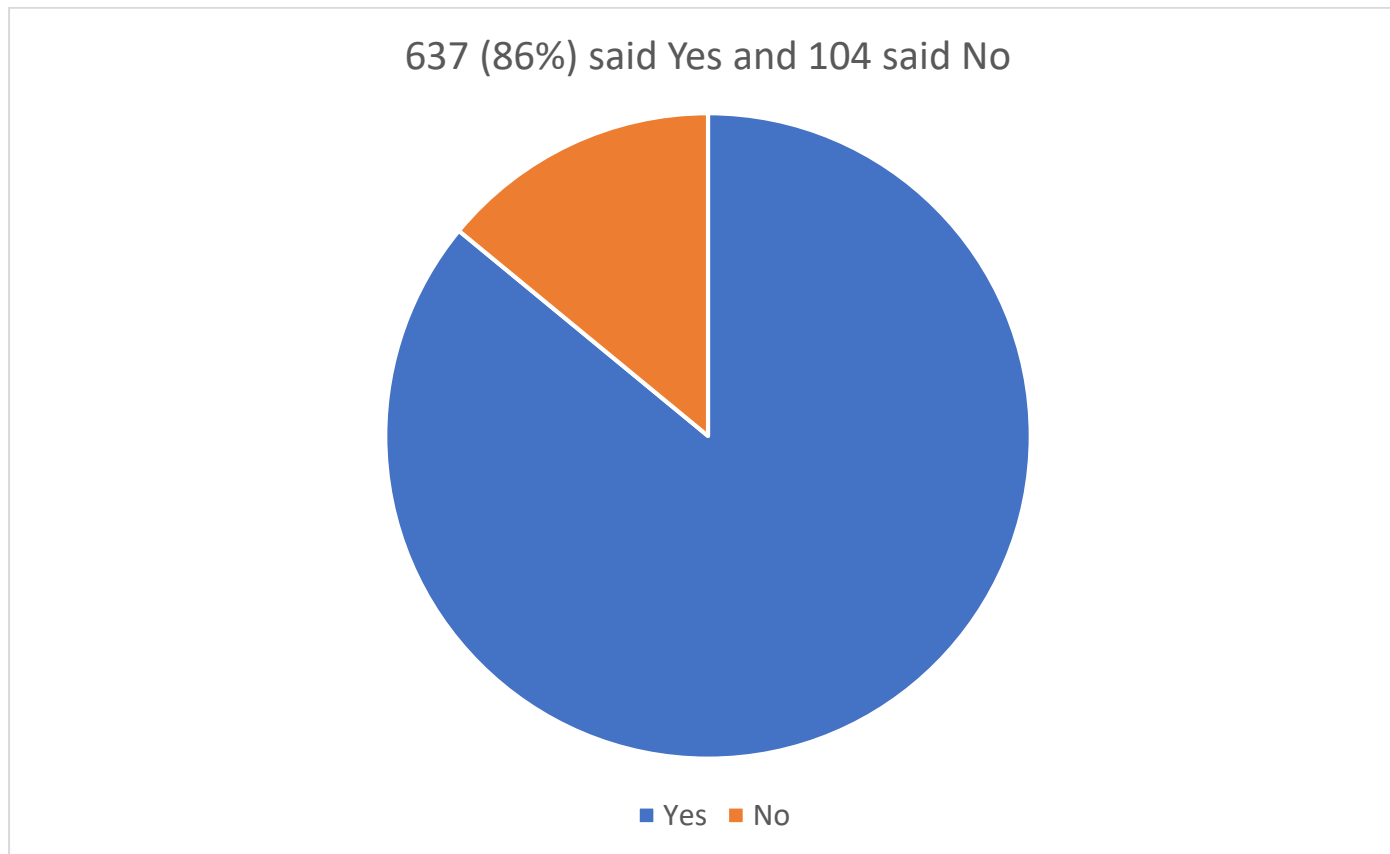
6.1 Members acknowledge the contents of this report.

STEVEN FRANK
HEAD OF STRATEGIC SUPPORT AND ASSURANCE

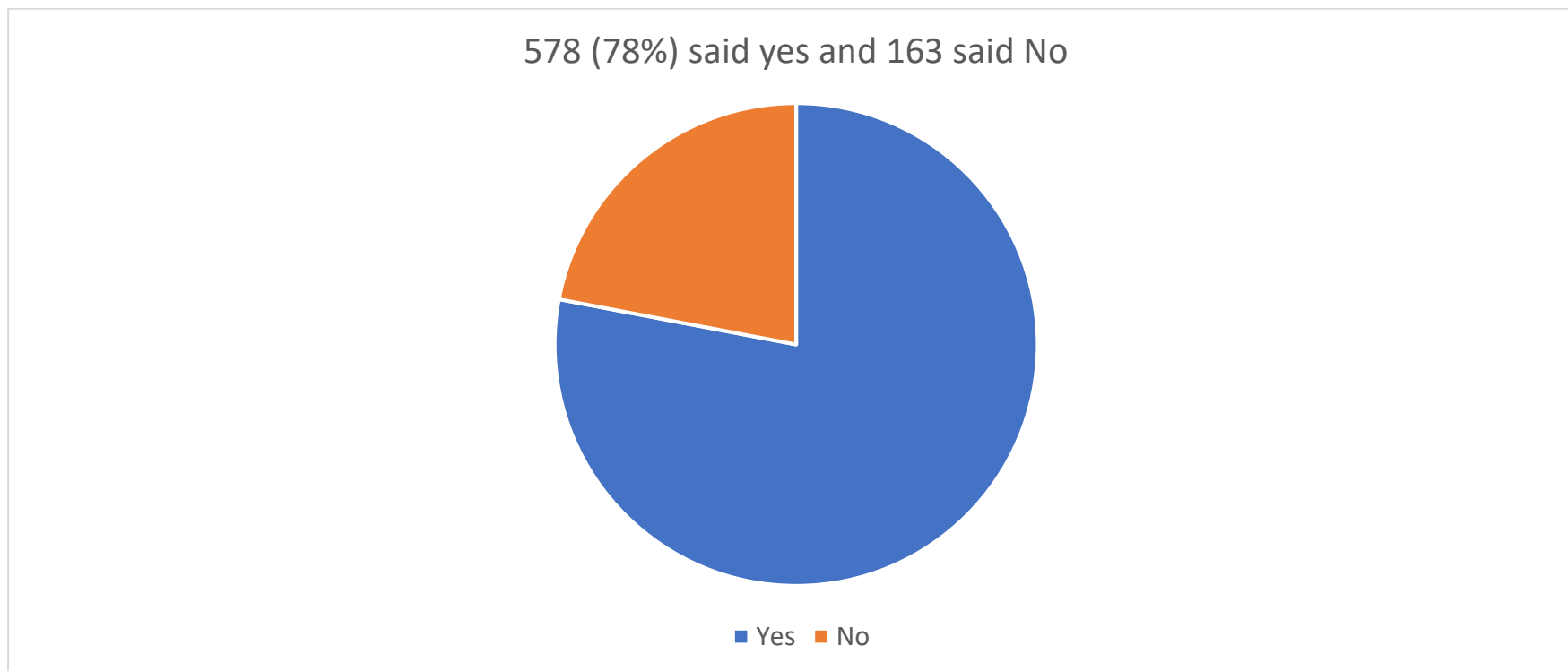
Appendix 1

We will now reexamine responses to each survey question in detail.

The Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority is currently considering a council tax increase of 1.99% for a Band D house. Do you support an increase of below 2%? This would increase the Band D charge for the Fire & Rescue Service from £102.41 to £104.45.



If in another year the council tax referendum cap is increased above the current 2%, or we are permitted to have up to a £5 increase, would you support an increase of up to £5 for a Band D property to protect and invest in your local Fire & Rescue Service?



Typical comments on the above included:

- *“It’s a small price to pay for peace of mind that in our hour of need there are professionals to help us.”*
- *“I fully support and appreciate your position. I have nothing but good things to say about the emergency services. You all run into danger when everyone else is running away!”*
- We find 47 other very positive and supportive comments

Are there any other savings, efficiencies or areas of collaboration that you would suggest should be investigated further?

In order of frequency, comments on collaboration include:

- Further collaboration with Local authorities, particularly with social and housing services received 34 comments;
- More collaboration with the Police was made by 26 respondents;
- Ambulance and EEAST received 24 comments;
- Collaboration with parish and town councils on data sharing, prevention activity and volunteering received 22 comments;
- Working closer with the voluntary and third sector on identifying vulnerable people received 11 comments;
- More Regional collaboration was suggested in 9 comments;
- Working with faith groups on identifying vulnerable people received 7 comments.

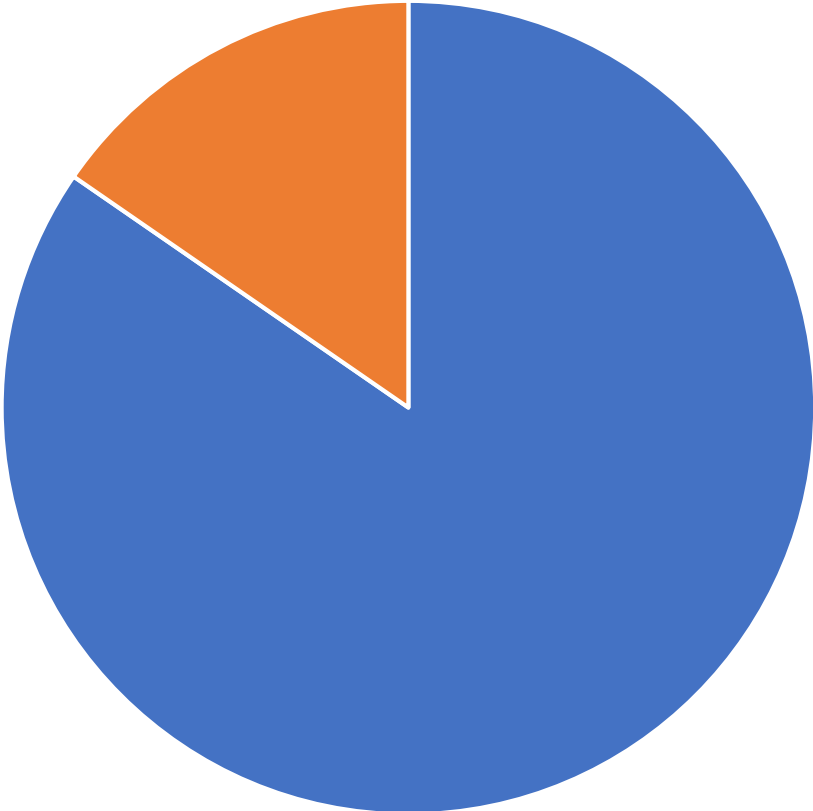
Increasing fees, charges and commercial income received 36 comments.

In order of frequency, comments on savings and efficiency include:

- Effective Information and Communication Technology received 29 comments;
- Integrating corporate, support and back office functions with partners received 26 comments;
- Digital service delivery received 22 comments;
- More effective Fleet procurement received 19 comments;
- Sharing estates and property received 18 comments;
- Reducing senior management and democratic services costs received 16 comments;
- Improving staff and station productivity received 14 comments
- Reducing automatic fire alarms as false alarms received 13 comments; and
- Removing red tape and bureaucracy received 12 comments.

Do you support us prioritising investment in our property based on changes to housing, economic and social change, and the impact of Covid-19 on how we work?

627 (85%) said Yes and 114 said No

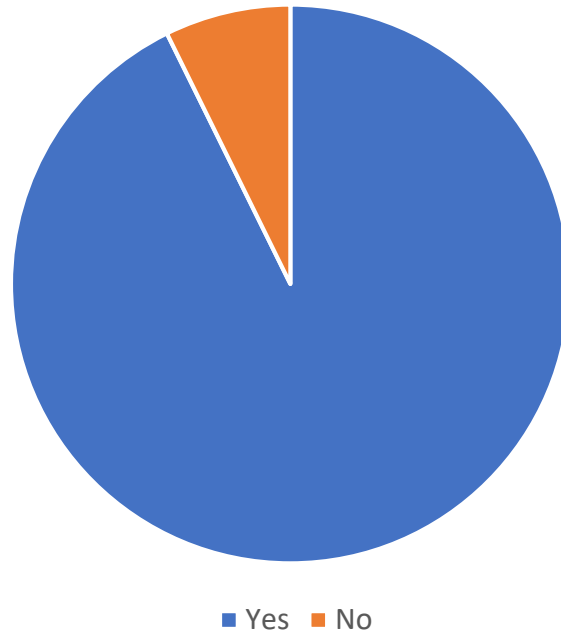


■ Yes ■ No

Do you support us in innovating our fleet and testing different ideas? Some of the responses included;

- *“Bedfordshire as a County has changed a great deal over the past 30-40 years yet whilst there has been much change in BFRS also, our locations and resourcing of pumps hasn't really changed for a great many years.*
- *Keep us informed please, it sounds fascinating*
- *It's always good to reflect on what we are doing and if we can make things better, more environmentally friendly and cost efficient.*
- *testing and piloting is so important. Good luck with it. We would suggest avoiding confirmation bias and setting too many narrow objectives. The learning journey is best started without too many restrictions*
- *We think it is vitally important to trial, pilot and test new ideas otherwise you will be left behind.”*

687 (92%) said Yes and 54 said No



What should our investment priorities include?

In order of frequency, comments include:

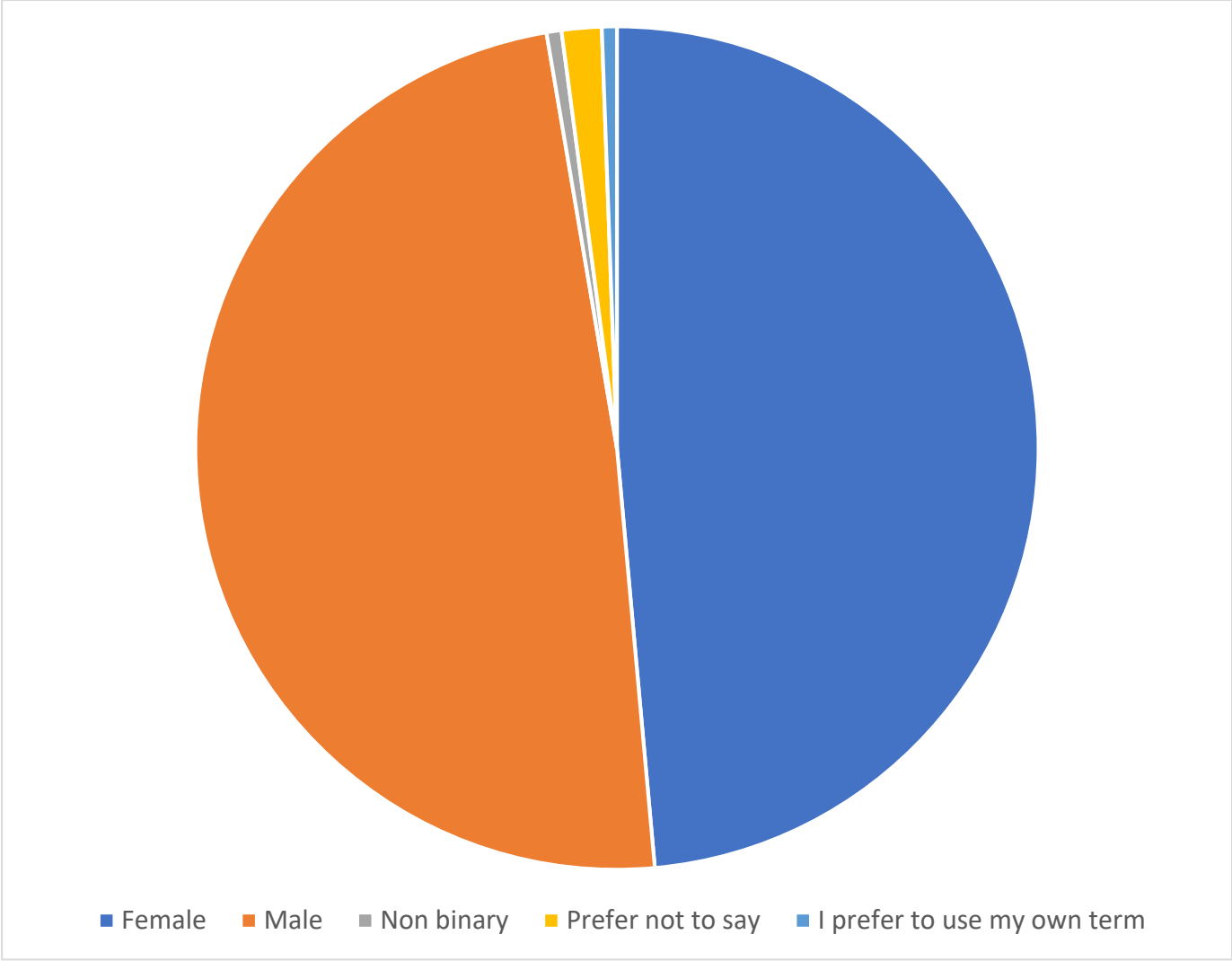
- Supporting communities and community engagement received 74 comments;
- Safe systems of work received 68 comments;
- Environment, carbon reduction and green criteria received 67 comments;
- ICT received 63 comments;
- staff training and development received 57 comments;
- ethical investment received 55 comments;
- value for money criteria received 52 comments;
- More prevention activity including road safety received 39 comments.
- equality, diversity and inclusion received 22 comments; and
- Clear links to corporate priorities received 21 comments.

What should Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service look like in 2050?

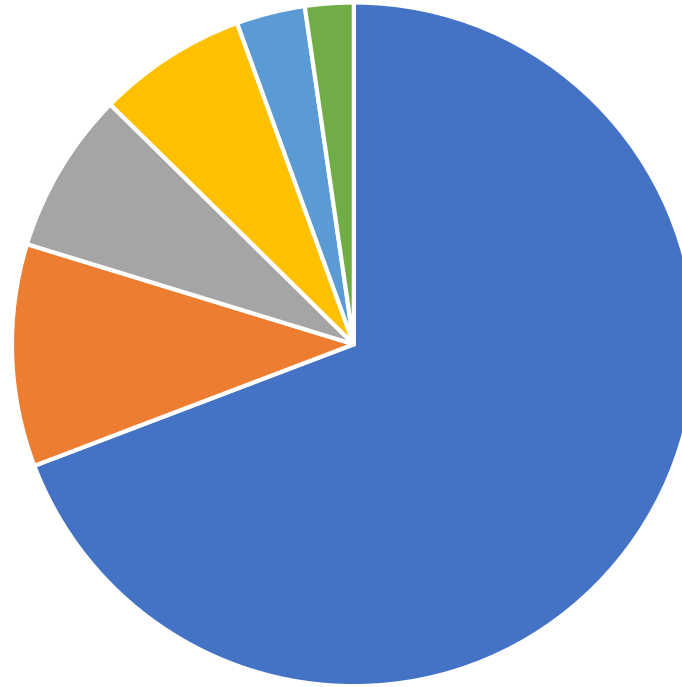
- Community focused received 139 comments;
- integrated into the wider public service family received 68 comments;
- long term focused received 52 comments;
- Environmentally friendly and greener received 49 comments;
- More collaborative received 48 comments;
- More technologically advanced received 45 comments; and
- A more inclusive service on staffing received 22 comments.

Age – we will need to do some more work on this as it is difficult to draw it out from the chart. Ages range from 14 to over 90. A rapid review of feedback shows we have received more surveys from younger people.

Gender – we received nearly 50/50 male and female responses



Ethnicity



■ 362 said White British

■ 55 said mixed multiple ethnic groups

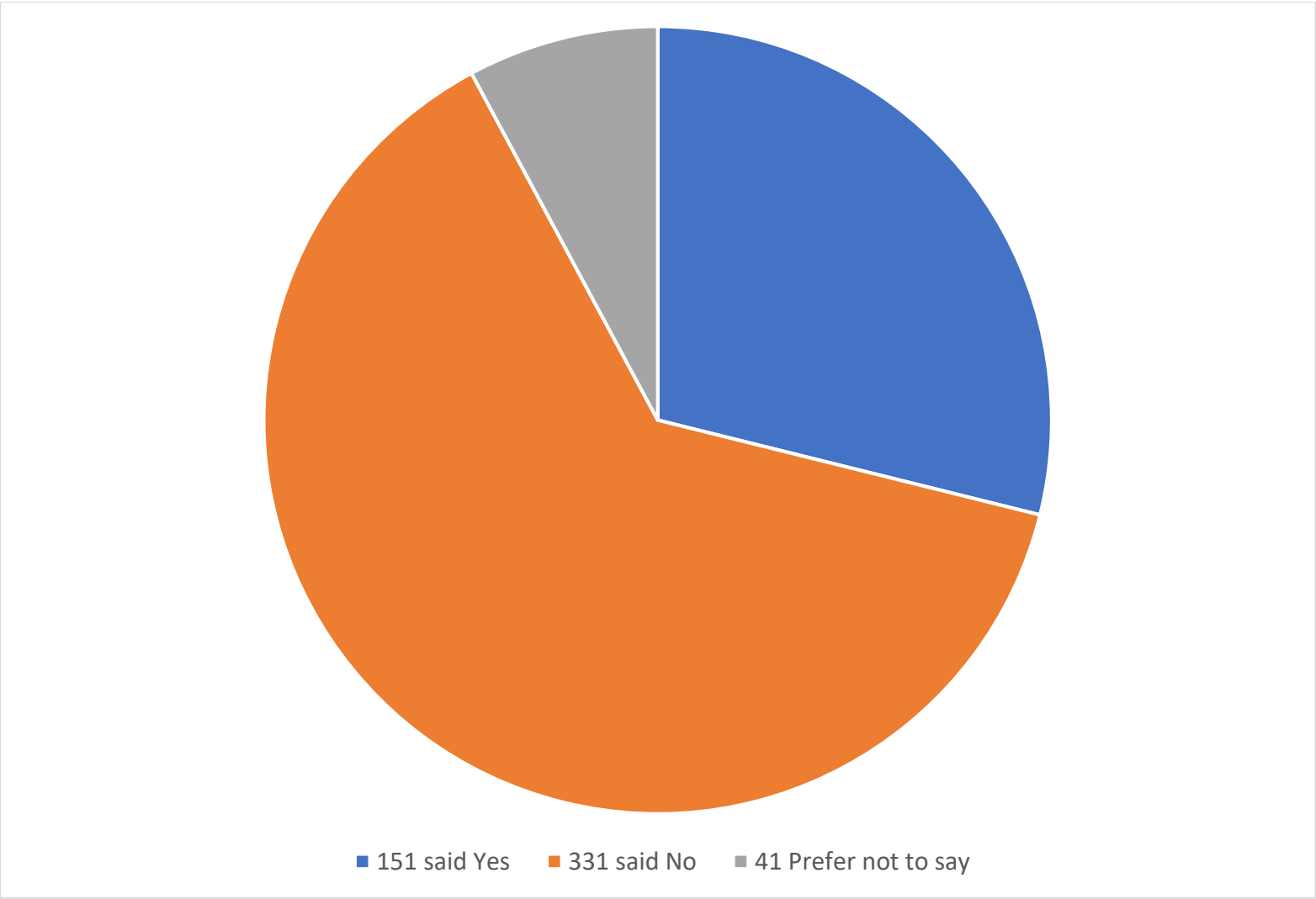
■ 40 said Asian/Asian British

■ 37 said Black/Caribbean British

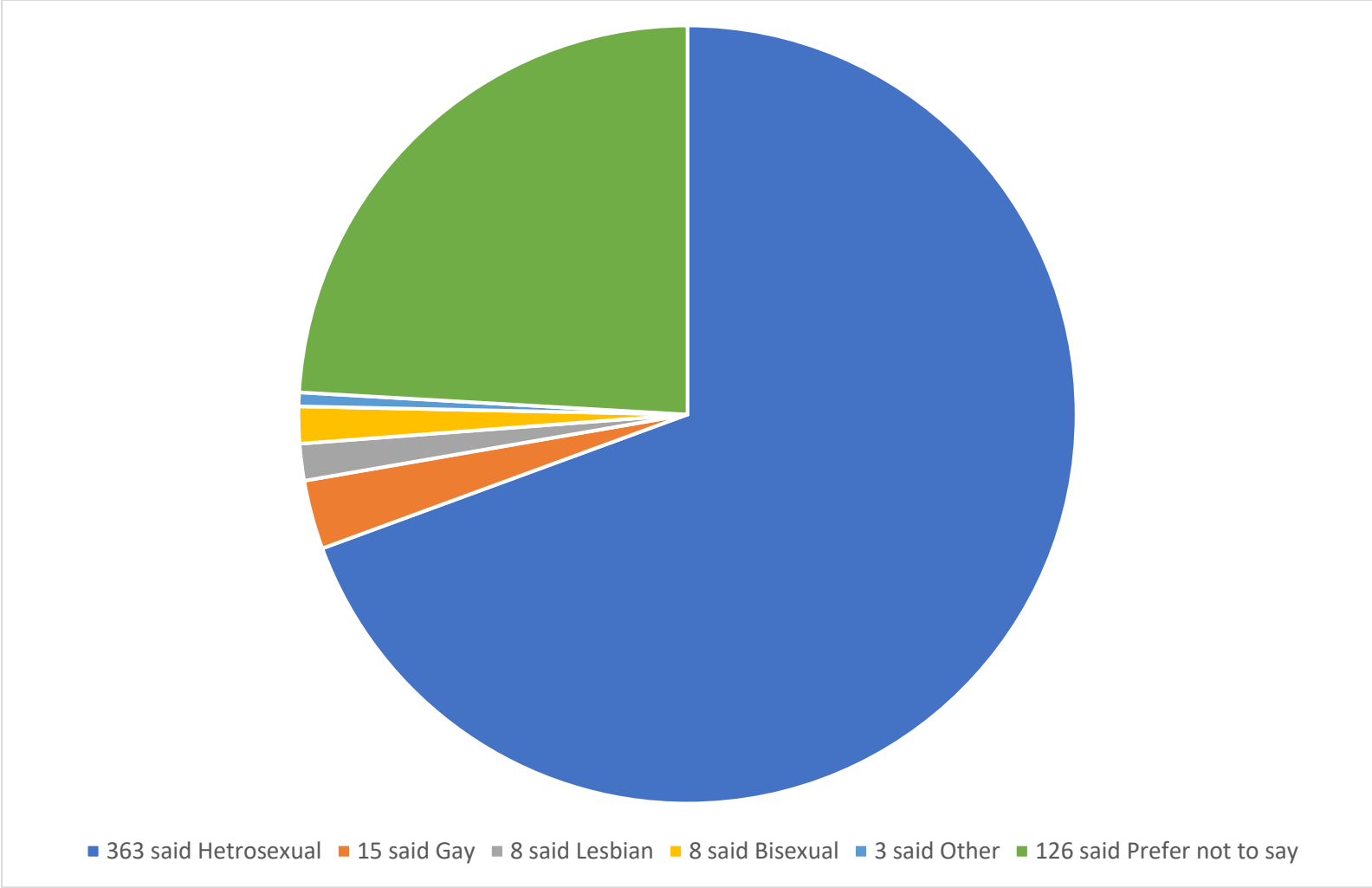
■ 17 Preferred not to say

■ 12 said other with 9 saying Irish Gypsy

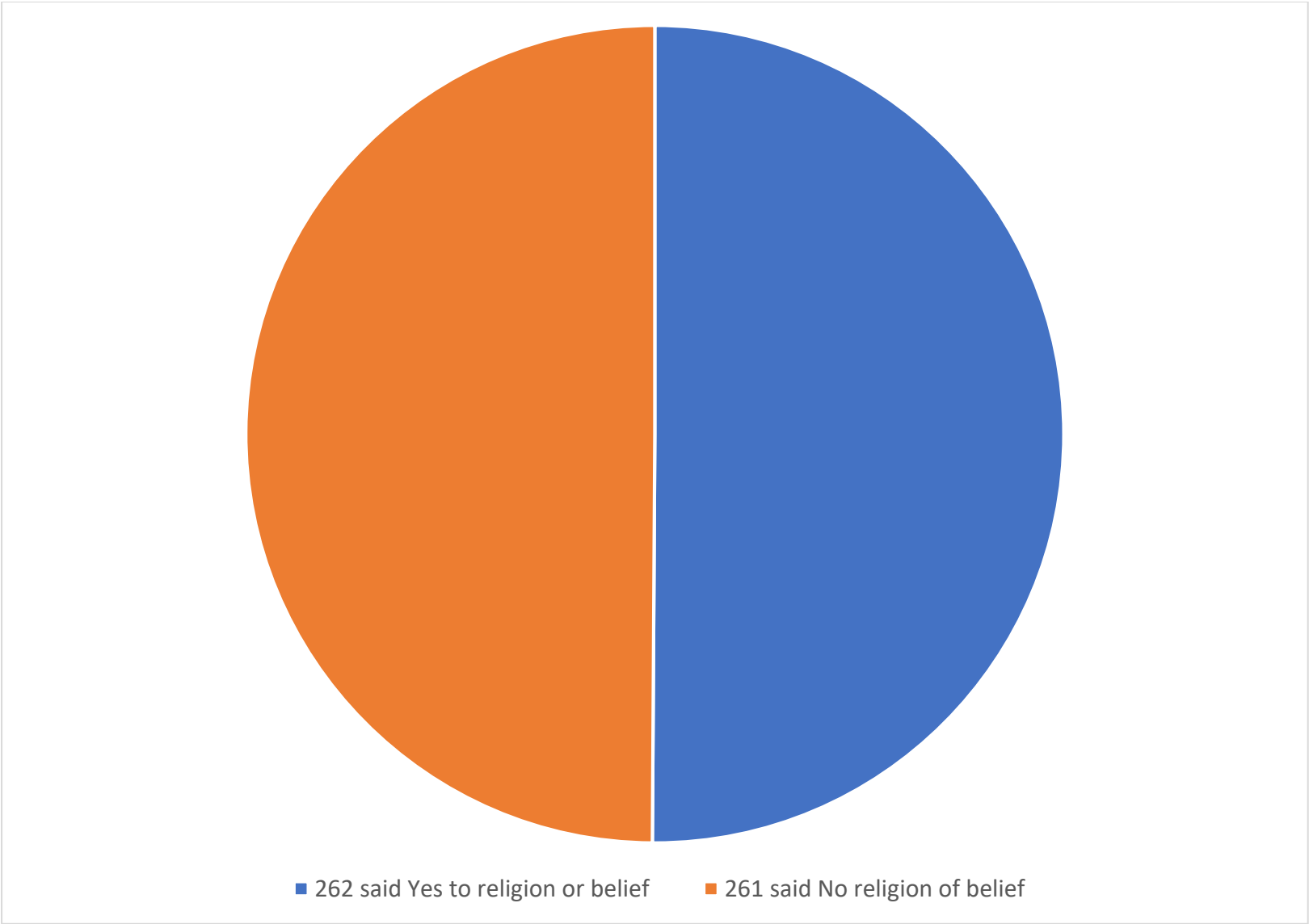
Disability or health condition

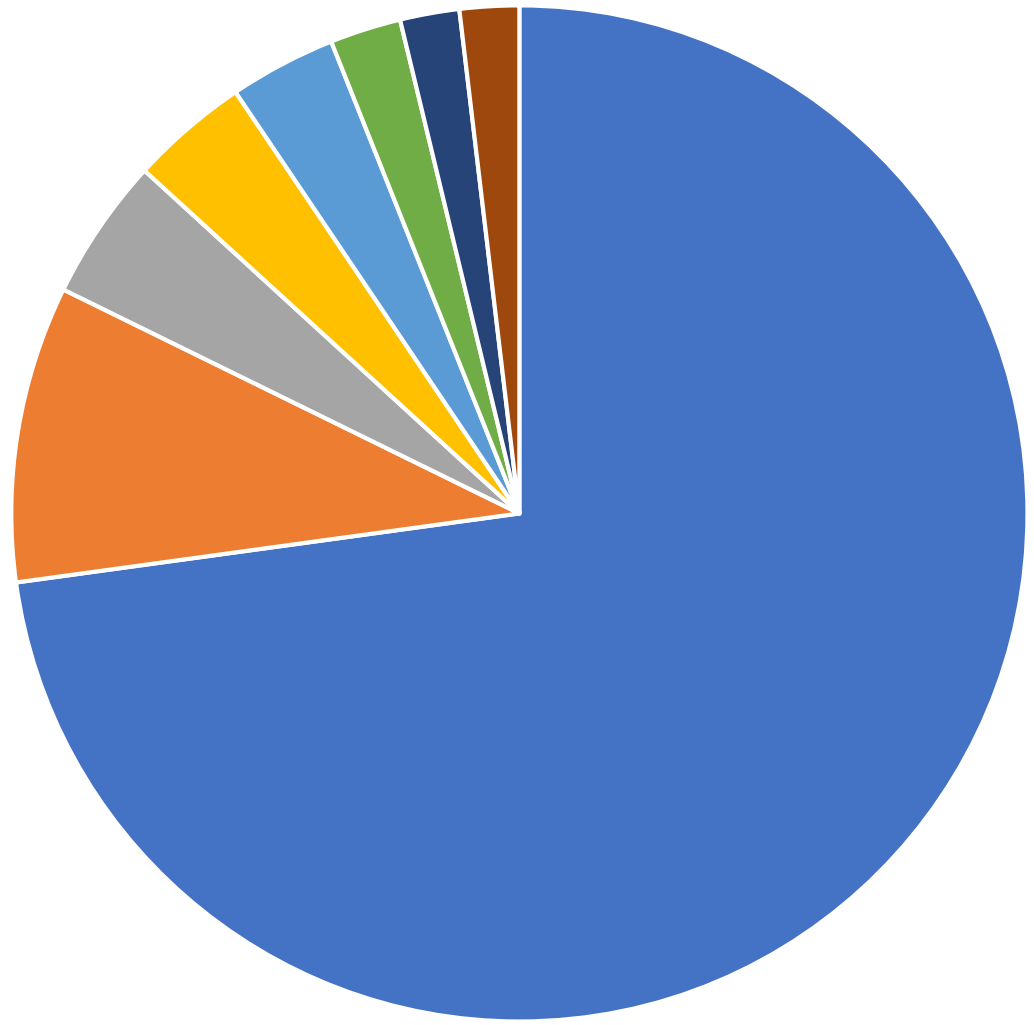


Sexual orientation



Religion, belief or spirituality





■ Christian ■ Judaism ■ Hinduism ■ Islam ■ Spiritualist ■ Buddhism ■ Pagan ■ Sikhism