

SMSR

social and market strategic research

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Precept 2014-15 Survey and Consultation Objectives:

Background & objectives:

Lancashire Police & Crime Commissioner commissioned a quantitative telephone survey to assist in his statutory duty to consult with members of local communities to gather public opinion in relation to the setting of the precept and to attain views regards willingness to pay increased council tax towards the policing 2014-15 budget.

The Commissioner took the decision to carry out this consultation using a quantitative telephone survey approach to ensure that it would provide the opinions of a statistically robust sample of residents of Lancashire and that reliable, measurable and actionable results were obtained.

In addition to obtaining robust Force level results, the Commissioner also wished to achieve statistically robust results within each of the fourteen policing districts and across a variety of demographic groupings in order to provide further insight into residents' views and opinions. Therefore quotas were applied to ensure a representative sample of respondents was achieved across the county, to meet with the above requirements.

The main aims of this research were to measure willingness to pay increases in council tax for policing and gain an insight into what influenced their choices. The findings from this report will be used to aid decision making for precept setting.

This report provides analysis of the results at force level, BCU and district.

Method:

The telephone survey, of 1405 Lancashire residents, was conducted by SMSR an independent research agency.

In order obtain a statistically robust and representative sample of respondents across the county the interviews were split across each of the fourteen policing districts. Additional quotas were applied to age and gender to provide samples robust enough to be statistically analysed and compared with other demographic groups, with the quotas for sampling based on the latest Census data for Lancashire.

Robustness

Based on the population of Lancashire a sample size of 1,405 means that results can be judged to be accurate to a confidence interval of 95% (+/-3%). It is standard practice to aim for this confidence interval when undertaking statistical testing.

In practise this means that the 'true' opinion of all residents of Lancashire is very likely to fall within 3 percentage points of the results found in the consultation. For instance, 40% of respondents said they would be willing to pay an extra 5% towards policing in 2014/15, you can therefore be very confident that the true percentage of the population who would be willing to pay an additional 5% will lie between 37% and 43%.

All data from the survey are unweighted. Significant differences are reported at a 95% level of confidence.

In cases where figures do not add up to 100%, this is due to that fact that some respondents may have answered 'don't know/not sure', may not have answered the question at all or where figures may have been rounded up or down to the nearest percentage point.

Report structure

Included in the report is a set of top-line findings which provide quick reference to all the questions asked throughout the telephone survey. In addition all questions have been analysed by geographic and demographic group and any significant differences in opinion are commented on throughout the report.

It should be noted that when the results are discussed within the report, often percentages will be rounded up or down to the nearest one per cent. Therefore occasionally figures may add up to 101% or 99%.

Respondent Profile:

For the purposes of achieving a representative sample, strict quotas were set on district, with a minimum of 100 telephone interviews conducted in each of the fourteen policing districts. Additional loose quotas were set on gender and age. Victim status was captured. The chart below shows a summary of the respondent profile by demographics.

Tel Respondent Profile: 1405 total (where results do not add up to total respondents this is due to some respondents not providing demographic details)			
Age		Division	
16-24	73 (5%)	Western	201(14.3%)
25-34	148 (10.5%)	Northern	201(14.3%)
35-44	294(20.9%)	Southern	300(21.4%)
45-54	292 (20.8%)	Central	100(7.1%)
55-64	242(17.2%)	Eastern	303(21.6%)
65- 74	229 (16.3%)	Pennine	300(21.4%)
75+	105(7.5)		
Refused	22(1.6)		
Gender		Victim of crime	
Male	47.4 % (666)	Yes	113(8.1%)
Female	52.6% (739)	No	1276 (91.9%)

Headline findings

Willingness to pay increases

Precept for policing in Lancashire:

- Overall three quarters (**74%**) of respondents were willing to pay an increased level of council tax overall with two fifths saying (**40%**) willing to pay the 5% increase.
- Around a quarter (**26%**) of respondents were not willing to pay an increased amount

Most frequent reasons given by respondents for willingness to pay more:

- Policing needs to be maintained/improved by funding/visibility **85%**
- This is the amount I can afford **41%**
- This is the fairest option in terms of inflation and support for the police **34%**

Most frequent reasons given by respondents for freeze/keeping CT level the same:

- This is the amount I can afford **42%**
- I pay enough Council Tax already **21%**
- Should look at other ways of finding the money **17%**

Main Findings:

Precept for policing in Lancashire:

Respondents were informed that over recent years, policing had faced significant financial challenges as Government funding had been reduced; the budget for policing in Lancashire was forecast to reduce by £80M in 2018 and that savings of £60m had already been identified but a further £20m worth of savings needed to be found by 2017/18.

It was explained that additional funding was required to continue to prioritise frontline policing and to invest further in areas such as child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, terrorism, cybercrime and fraud to continue to protect vulnerable people and keep our communities safe.

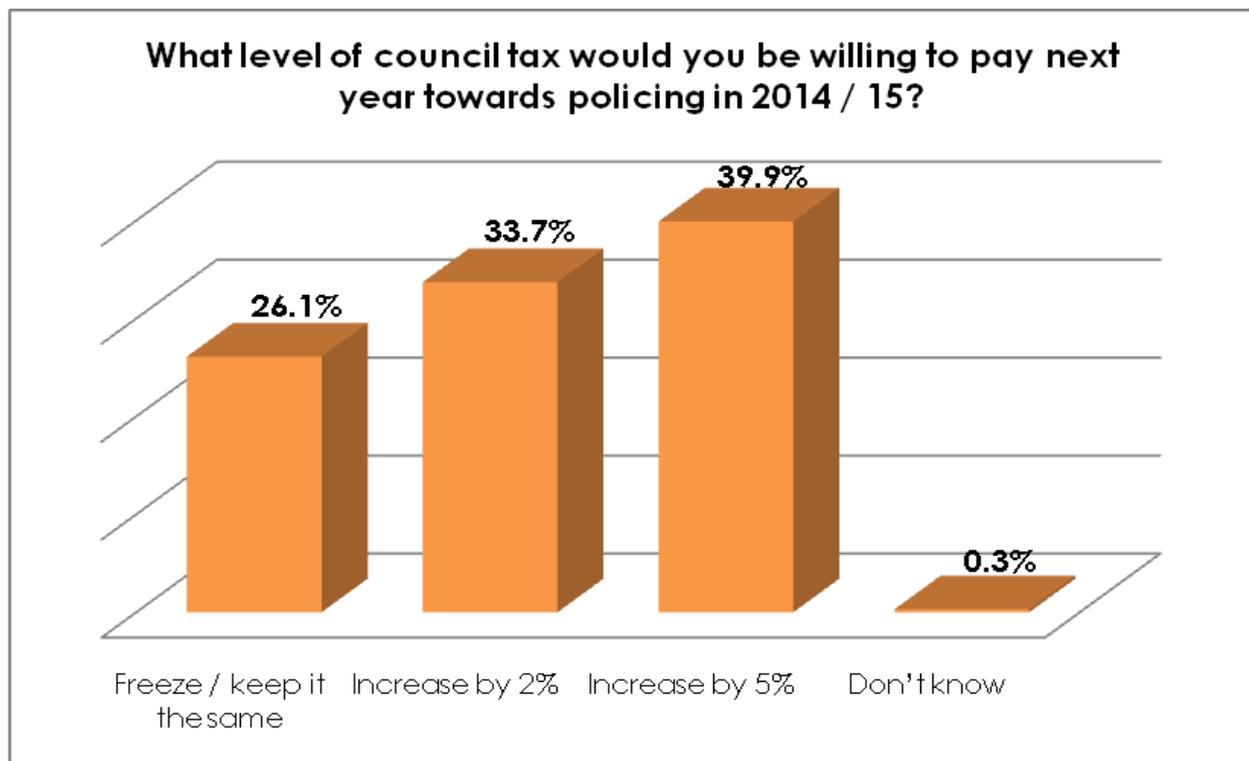
Respondents were asked the following question:

Currently the average Band D household pays **£152.92** per year towards policing. Considering the financial challenge the police are facing, what level of council tax would you be willing to pay towards policing for 2014/15?

- **Freeze/Keep it the same** and accept a Government grant of around **£600,000** per annum.
- **An extra 6p per week** /£3.06per year would generate an **extra £1.2m** per annum
- **An extra 15p per week**/£7.65 per year would generate an **extra £3M** per annum

Overall results show that three quarters (**74%**) of respondents were **willing to pay an increased level** of council tax overall with **34%** willing to pay the 2% increase and **40%** willing to pay the 5% increase.

Around a quarter (**26%**) of respondents were not willing to pay an increased amount



In terms of significant differences by demographics, the results show that:

The following groups were significantly more likely to say that they would be prepared to pay an increased amount:

- *Female respondents were more willing to pay the 2% increase (females 37%, males 30%)*
- *Male respondents were more willing to pay a 5% increase (males: 43%, females: 37%).*
- *Respondents aged 55 to 74 most frequently selected the maximum increase, with more than two fifths (44%) saying they would be willing to pay an additional 5%.*
- *Around a third (34%) of respondents who had been a victim of crime said the level of council tax should remain the same; 9% higher than respondents who had not been a victim of crime.*

Willingness to pay increases at a BCU level:

Central and Southern BCUs were the most willing to pay increases with 50% of central respondents willing to pay an increase of 5% along with 42% from Southern.

Both areas were also the highest for overall willingness to pay increases (81% in central and 80% in southern). In both areas less than a fifth (19%) of respondents indicated that they would not be prepared to pay an increased amount.

Respondents in Pennine and Eastern were least willing to pay increases (32% Pennine and 30% in Eastern said the level of precept should be frozen for 2014 /15.)

What level of council tax would you be willing to pay next year towards policing in 2014 / 15?				
BCU	Freeze/keep same (%)	Increase by 2% (%)	Increase by 5% (%)	Total % willing pay increase
Western	26.9	32.8	39.8	73.3%
Northern	24.4	34.8	40.8	76%
Southern	19.0	38.3	42.0	80%
Central	19.0	31.0	50.0	81%
Eastern	30.4	35.0	34.7	69%
Pennine	32.0	28.7	39.0	68%
Overall	26.1	33.7	39.9	74%

Willingness to pay increases at a district level:

Chorley, Preston and West Lancs districts were the most willing to pay increases (Chorley 86%, Preston 81%, west Lancs 80%)

In Pendle, Blackburn and Rossendale willingness to pay an increase fell to around two thirds (Pendle 68%, Blackburn 65%, Rossendale 65%).

What level of council tax would you be willing to pay next year towards policing in 2014 / 15?				
District	Freeze/keep same (%)	Increase by 2% (%)	Increase by 5% (%)	Total % willing to pay increase
Blackburn	35%	28%	37%	65%
Blackpool	26.7%	29.7%	43.6%	73.3%
Burnley	29%	37%	34%	71%
Chorley	13%	39%	47%	86%
Fylde	27%	36%	36%	72%
Hyndburn	26.7%	38.6%	34.7%	73%
Lancaster	21.8%	34.7%	43.6%	78%
Pendle	32%	22%	45%	67%
Preston	19%	31%	50%	81%
Ribble valley	29.4%	38.2%	32.4%	71%
Rossendale	35%	27%	38%	65%
South Ribble	25%	37%	38%	75%
West Lancs	19%	39%	41%	80%
Wyre	27%	35%	38%	73%
Overall	26.1%	33.7%	39.9%	74%

Reasons for willingness to pay more by District

The reason for selecting the level of council tax precept was similar across all policing divisions; specific comments made by respondents within the district are shown below.

Blackburn

"I think the police service is needed at any cost."

"I am aware that funding has been reduced and that something must be done to address that issue and we have to be realistic and know the money has to come from somewhere."

"We don't see enough police in my area so I would pay more for a better service anytime."

Blackpool

"I wouldn't want to see the police service fall into a poorer state because of insufficient funding and that combined with savings they may make themselves might meet their target."

"I've chosen this option because it's still affordable and the police are being squeezed unfairly. It's a serious reduction that shouldn't be happening and should be made elsewhere. We need the police service and we need to be able to rely upon it."

"Budget cuts for services like the police shouldn't be made full stop as it is a much needed service."

Burnley

"If it keeps more police on the streets and lets them have a higher profile I'm all in favour of paying the maximum amount."

"The policing area is the most important of the services and we need to protect it."

"5% wouldn't cost a lot for each person and the current climate in the country we need the police. The Government is cutting too deeply."

"I have had dealings with the police this year and they were very helpful so I don't mind paying for a good service."

Chorley

"If we have more visible police I am happy to pay 5% as long as it goes where it is needed."

"It is difficult; I think a bigger percentage of the council tax should go to the police rather than the council. The council should look at reducing their spending and give this to the police."

"I am a pensioner and every penny counts. Crime has increased in our area so an increase might get a better response from the police."

Fylde

"I don't mind paying a small increase to aid policing but we have budgets to consider and our council tax bill is our largest bill so I can't afford to increase it by too much."

"The police are underfunded as it stands. They can't afford to recruit and are losing staff and we need more police officer's across the country and on the street."

"I think 2% is fair. Every time we seem to put money in it never seems to get spent where it is needed."

Hyndburn

"I've heard about this recently and I think on average two percent would be manageable. If it goes up any higher people will struggle."

"The police service is extremely important and the level of service will only worsen if the government keep dipping into the police budget."

"I think we need the police to be visible and if they had the funding we might stand a chance of having a police presence in the area once more and I also believe the police deserve the money they get for the job that they do."

Lancaster

"It's important to keep the police force running as much as possible and the increase isn't that much when you work it out weekly."

"I'm a great believer in law and order and we need a good reliable police force so if we need to pay a little extra then so be it. I understand the financial restraints the police are facing"

but it does need addressing as the police is an extremely important service we can't do without."

"If it meant maintaining the same levels of policing then I believe it would be worth paying the extra."

Pendle

"I don't want it to go up but if things need to be subsidised to provide a good police force then that's what we need to do."

"I think the police service is important and £7 or £8 extra per year is value for money."

"I believe the police are the most important service we have."

Preston

"I would pay £10 a month to improve the police service. People are committing crimes and not a lot is being done about it. There are people speeding in the area and the police are not as approachable as they use to be."

"I would pay £7quid more as long as the money is spent on policing and visibility. The police should cut back on spending money on new vehicles; I have read an article recently on the police wasting money."

"The police are there to protect us and we need to protect the police service."

Ribble Valley

"I'm willing to pay more to keep the force running strongly."

"For Me, these amounts of money don't make a difference so I'm not that concerned over this problem."

"If we can help to keep police jobs or increase the amount of policing we have then a small increase would be fine."

Rossendale

"I would choose to pay more as long as the money goes to policing. It would be nice to have more police on the streets. I think they could also look at making money elsewhere; I would like criminals to pay more for their crimes."

"I think the police could save money in areas like clothing and cars but I would be happy to pay 5% if it was needed because the service is needed."

"We need to invest in the police and this will save money from the cost of crime to us all."

South Ribble

"I would like to see more police on the street and I'm prepared to pay for it."

"They deserve a 100 percent increase. I have no problem with giving them more money."

West Lancs

"I think there is a need to pay some money but people do not have an endless pot of money so 2% is fair."

"I think policing is one of the most important things in the council tax. I needed the police last year and the police did not come out due to a lack of resources. I felt let down, so I do not think cutting the service is the answer."

Wyre

“You need the community bobby as a deterrent and you need the higher level of police for the amount of people in the country now.”

“It is only £7 a year and that is not a lot. People will not notice the increase over the year.”