

# **Essex PFCC Policing Survey 2026**

Final Report

27<sup>th</sup> July 2026

Prepared for:-

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

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# Introduction and methodology

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## Introduction

The Home Office published a White Paper, 'From Local to National: A New Model for Policing' in January 2026, which sets out proposals for significant changes to the structure of policing in England and Wales.

Under the proposals, existing police forces would be merged into larger regional organisations supported by Local Policing Areas (LPAs) to manage neighbourhood issues. A new National Police Service (NPS) would initially be established to set standards and provide central support functions, before potentially assuming responsibility for areas including serious and organised crime, counter-terrorism and fraud.

To ensure Essex's voice is heard as the Government considers one of the most far-reaching packages of policing reform in decades, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex hosted a public survey and encouraged residents from all communities and age groups to take part and share their views.

Feedback gathered in this survey will be used by the PFCC to inform representations to Government and contribute to national discussions on policing reform on behalf of Essex residents.

This document provides analysis of the PFCC Essex Policing Survey results and has been prepared by an Independent Research Consultant. Charts and tables are used throughout the report, along with verbatim quotations, to illustrate the findings.

## Methodology

The survey was hosted online and ran between Wednesday 10th June and Wednesday 22nd July 2026. Links to the survey were shared with all partners listed in the survey communications plan by email and via social media channels. Partner organisations also included the survey links in internal and external channels and two media releases were distributed to local Essex news organisations which saw wide pick up in print and online media. The survey was also promoted to partners attending the PFCC annual conference, held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July.

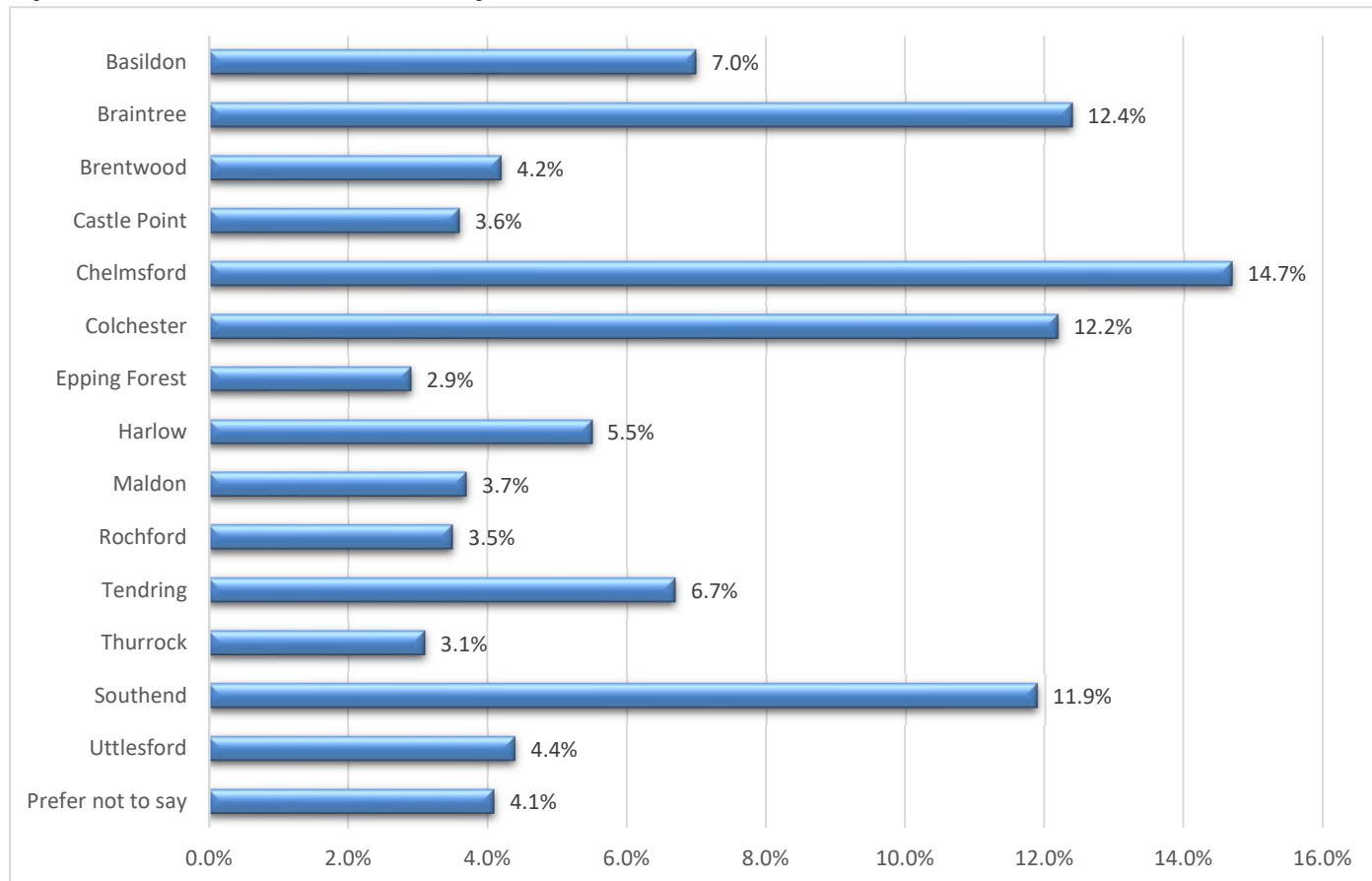
# Sample

A total of 1,707 individuals engaged with the survey. This section of the report details the profile of respondents taking part. (NB. Not all respondents completed every question and so sample bases provided throughout the report are those answering each question).

## District

As shown below, highest proportions of respondents lived in Chelmsford, Braintree, Colchester and Southend.

### If you live in Essex, which district do you live in?

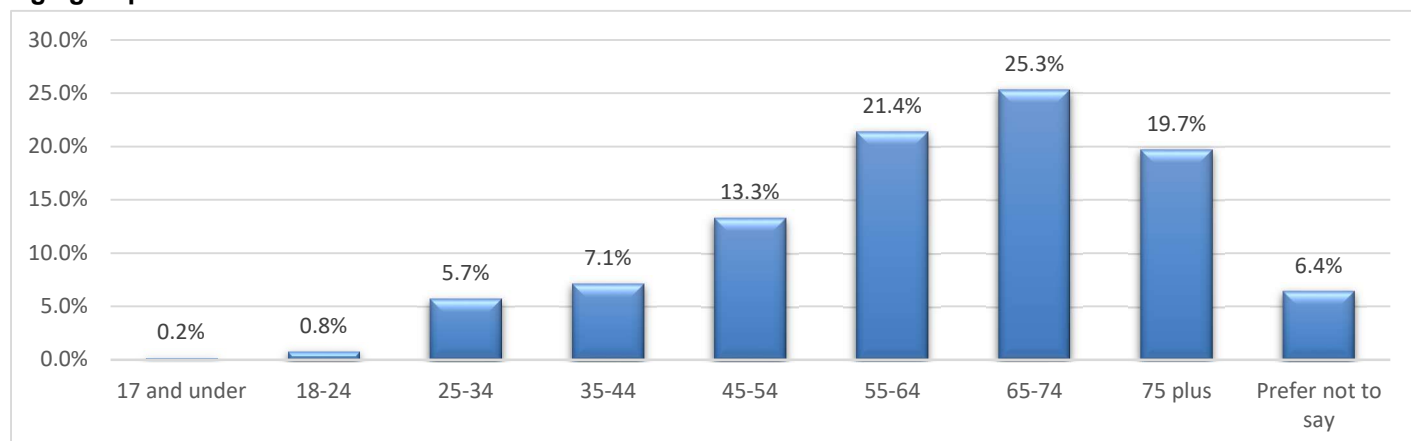


Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,295)

## Age

Respondents ranged from being aged 17 and under to 75 and over, with highest proportions in the 65 to 74 age category.

### Age group

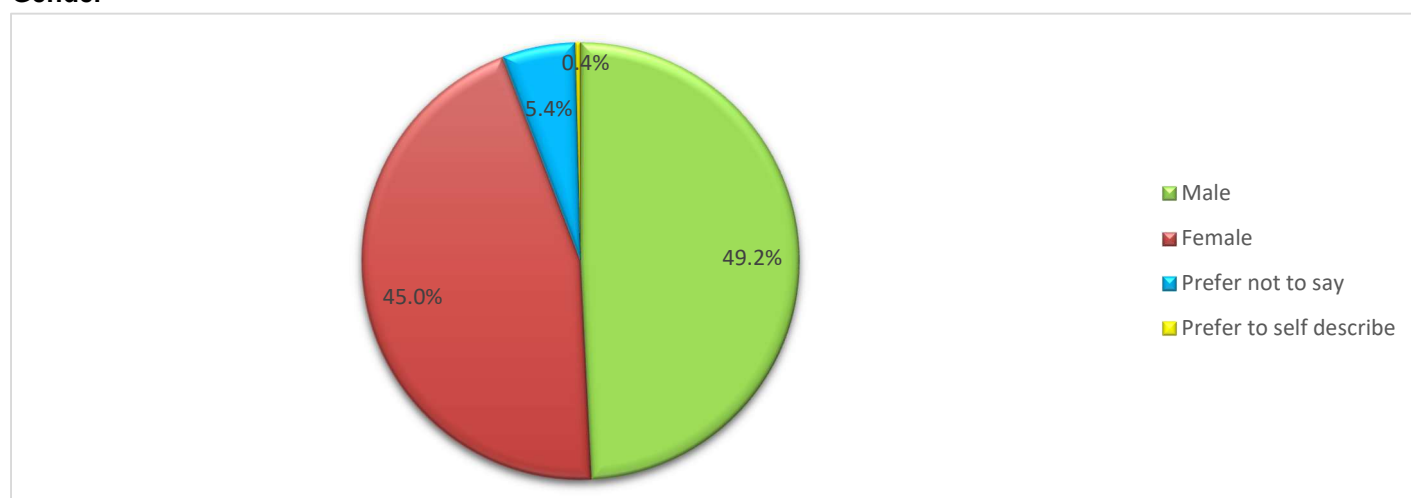


Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,296)

## Gender

Approximately half of respondents overall were male (49.2%) with 45.0% female.

### Gender



Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,294)

## Ethnicity

Some 88.8% of respondents were White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British.

### Ethnic heritage

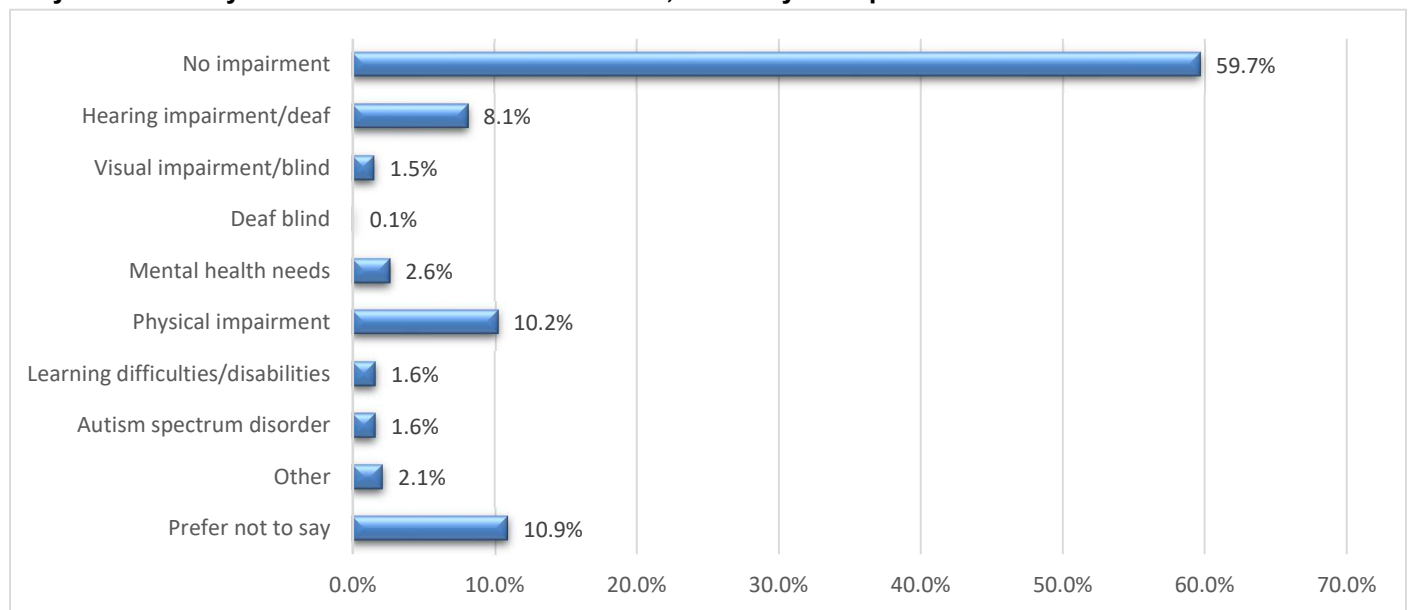
|                                                   | Number of respondents | % of respondents |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| <b>White</b>                                      |                       |                  |
| English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British | 1,144                 | 88.8%            |
| Irish                                             | 12                    | 0.9%             |
| Gypsy/Irish Traveller                             | 3                     | 0.2%             |
| Any other white background                        | 16                    | 1.2%             |
| <b>Mixed/Multiple ethnic origins</b>              |                       |                  |
| White and Black Caribbean                         | 2                     | 0.2%             |
| White and Black African                           | -                     | -                |
| White and Asian                                   | 5                     | 0.4%             |
| Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background        | 6                     | 0.5%             |
| <b>Asian/Asian British</b>                        |                       |                  |
| Indian                                            | 5                     | 0.4%             |
| Pakistani                                         | -                     | -                |
| Bangladeshi                                       | 1                     | 0.1%             |
| Chinese                                           | 3                     | 0.2%             |
| Any other Asian background                        | 4                     | 0.3%             |
| <b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b>      |                       |                  |
| African                                           | 6                     | 0.5%             |
| Caribbean                                         | 2                     | 0.2%             |
| Any other Black/African/Caribbean background      | 1                     | 0.1%             |
| <b>Other ethnic group</b>                         |                       |                  |
| Arab                                              | 1                     | 0.1%             |
| Any other ethnic group                            | 3                     | 0.2%             |
| Prefer not to say                                 | 75                    | 5.8%             |

Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,289)

## Disability

Just under one in four (23.4%) of respondents considered themselves to have a health condition, disability or impairment.

### Do you consider yourself to have a health condition, disability or impairment?



Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,339)

As shown above, some 10.2% considered themselves to have a physical impairment, with 8.1% having a hearing impairment.

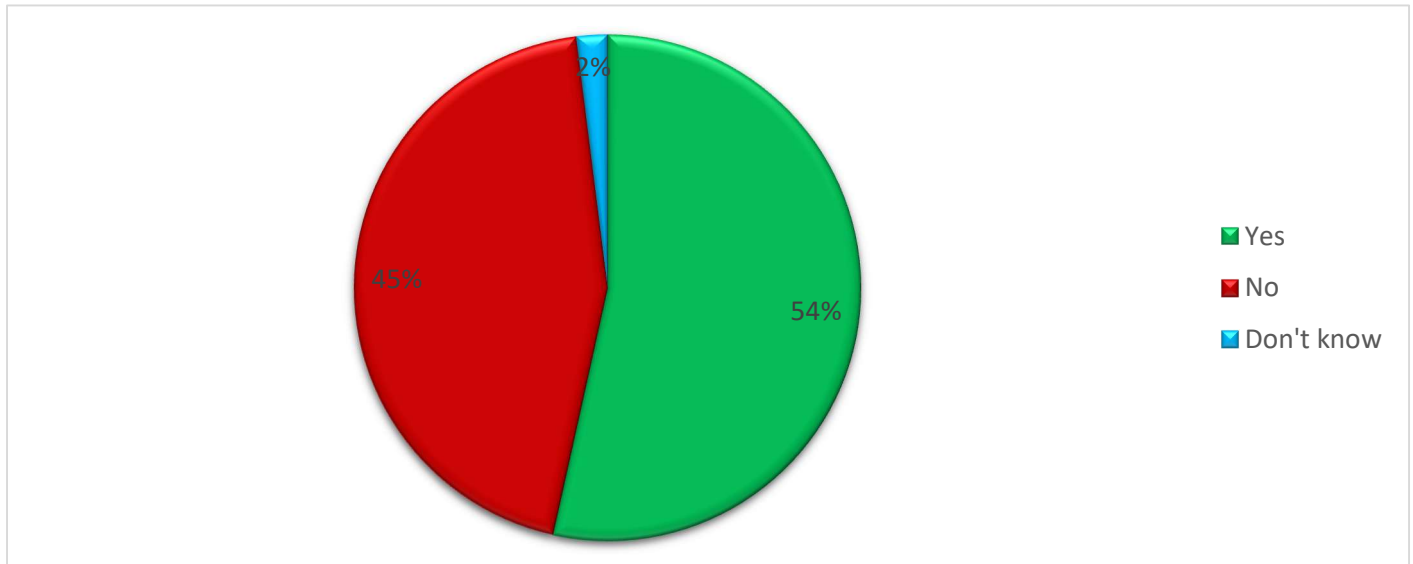
# Findings

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## Awareness of Government proposal to merge police forces across England and Wales

Just over half, 54%, of respondents were aware that the Government had proposed merging police forces across England and Wales before they had completed the survey.

**Before this survey, were you aware that the Government has proposed merging police forces across England and Wales?**



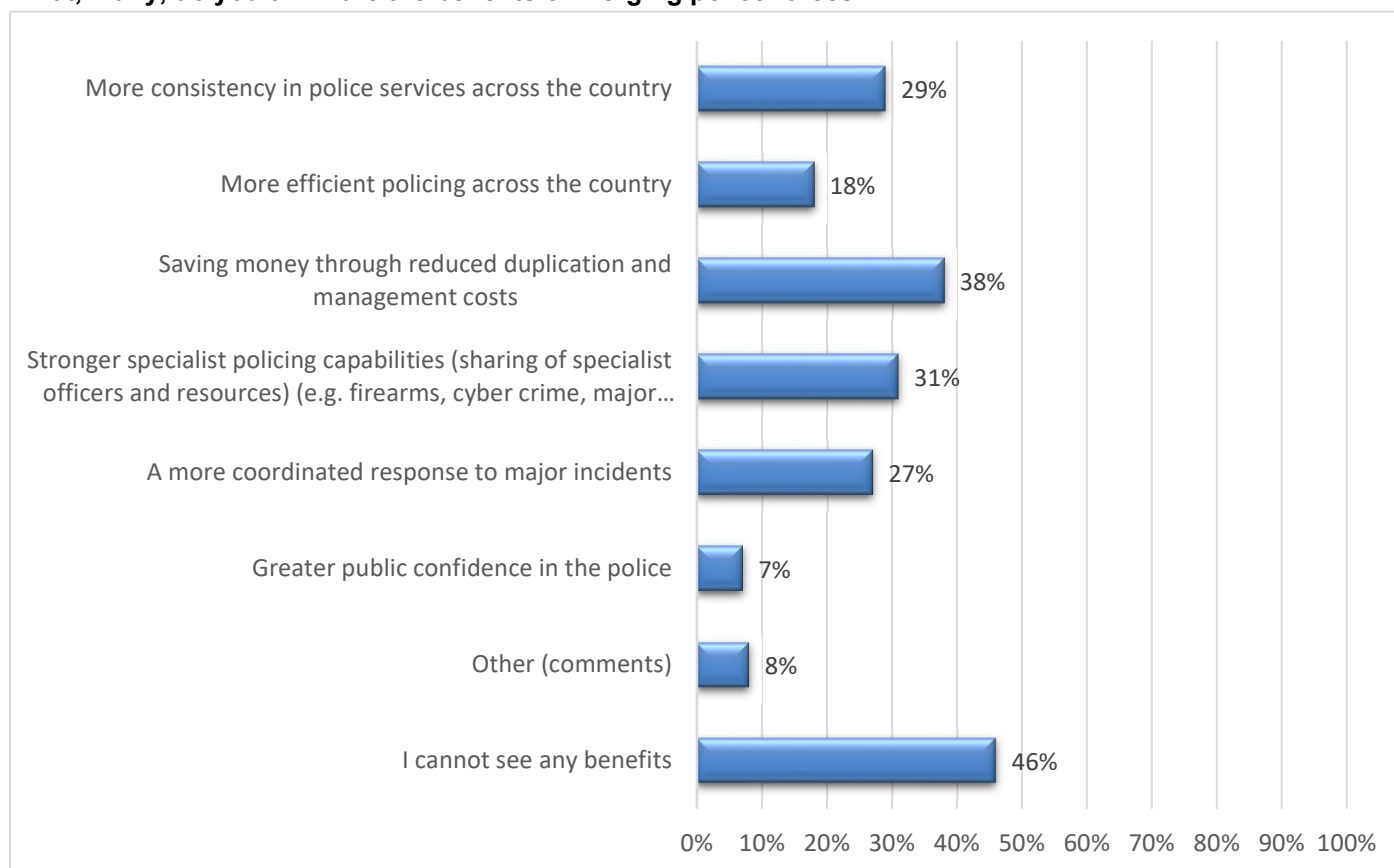
Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,334)



## Benefits

In considering what they thought would be the benefits of merging police forces, highest proportions suggested they could not see any benefits (46%).

### What, if any, do you think are the benefits of merging police forces?



Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,339)

As shown above, some 38% of respondents suggested 'saving money through reduced duplication and management costs' would be a benefit of merging police forces.

Just under one third of respondents suggested each of 'stronger specialist capabilities' (31%), 'more consistency in police services across the country' (29%) and 'a more coordinated response to major incidents' (27%) to be potential benefits of merging police forces.

Whilst 18% suggested proposed changes may lead to 'more efficient policing across the country', only 7% felt merging police forces would result in 'greater public confidence in the police'.

### Additional comments:

As shown above, 8% of respondents provided 'other comments' here. Almost half of these comments were raising risks rather than suggesting other benefits of merging police forces.

Other 'benefits' discussed by respondents included comments around using the same systems/sharing resources (5 comments - <1%) and joint procurement (3 respondents - <1%).

*"The sharing of resources in the fact that we will all have the same systems." (Female, 25-24, Thurrock)*

*"Some benefits in procurement, national vetting, nationalisation of policing software platforms." (Female, 45-54)*

*“Central purchasing for vehicles, equipment, clothing, stationary; central computer.” (Male, 75+, Uttlesford)*

Sharing data, with it being easier to share intelligence was discussed here by 9 respondents (1%), with improvements to cross border work by removing county boundaries discussed by 7 respondents (1%).

*“Able to access each others information held on others.” (Male, 25-34)*

*“I think it could be beneficial in terms of sharing data and ensuring that policies etc are the same in different areas.”  
(25-34, Chelmsford)*

*“Being able to track more perpetrators who have gone from one county to another. More communication between police forces to get convictions and keep people especially children, women and girls safe.” (Female, 45-54, Colchester)*

Merging forces being of benefit to specialist policing capabilities (2 respondents - <1%) and improving capability against serious/organised crime/counter-terrorism (2 respondents - <1%) were also discussed.

*“The only benefit might be for some specialised policing capabilities e.g. cybercrime and phone scams.” (Chelmsford)*

*“Better capability against serious and organised crime and counter terrorism.” (Male, 55-64, Castle Point)*

Three respondents (<1%) stated their support for one national police force here. A further 4 respondents (<1%) shared the view that merging police forces would result in a reduction of costs and so provide better value for money, with 3 respondents (<1%) referring to the removal of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners as a result of the merger being a benefit.

*“As an ex-Police officer I believe there should be one national police force.” (Male, 65-74, Colchester)*

*“There would be some benefits to the proposal, mainly cost savings. The downside to that is, at what expense?”  
(Female, 55-64, Basildon)*

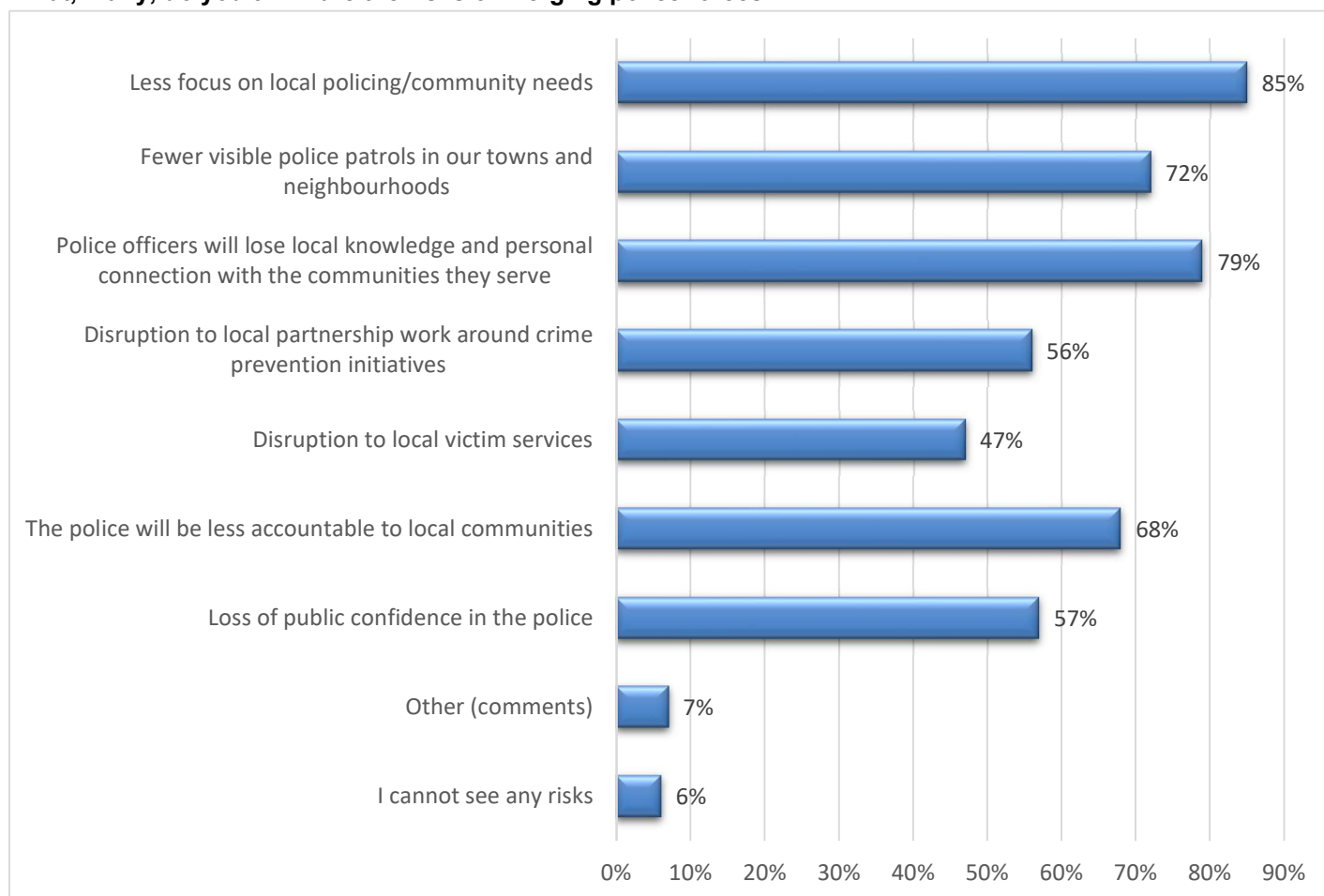
*“Like the armed forces procurement of providing assets can become costly. Under one umbrella this could produce a reduction in costs and more value for money by putting additional resources where they need to be.” (Female, 55-64, Braintree)*

*“Gets rid of PFCC’s.” (Male, 45-54, Chelmsford)*

## Risks

In considering what they thought would be the risks of merging police forces, highest proportions suggested they felt there would be 'less focus on local policing/community needs' (85%).

### What, if any, do you think are the risks of merging police forces?



Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,339)

A further 79% of respondents saw 'police officers will lose local knowledge and personal connection with the communities they serve' to be a potential risk of merging police forces.

More than two out of three respondents also felt 'fewer visible police patrols in our towns and neighbourhoods' (72%) and 'the police will be less accountable to local communities' (68%) would be risks of merging police forces.

Around half of respondents felt merging police forces could lead to 'disruption to local partnership work around crime prevention initiatives' (56%) and 'disruption to local victim services' (47%).

Some 57% of respondents suggested merging police forces could result in a 'loss of public confidence in the police', with only 6% suggesting they could not see any risks to merging police forces.

### Additional comments:

Some 7% of respondents made 'other comments' here, with some of these duplicating/expanding on those already highlighted in the chart.

Twelve respondents (1%) referred here to impacts on local policing with the risk of police being taken away from local issues, with a further 8 respondents (1%) discussing the risk of police losing their relationships with the community/key figures in the community.

*"Police lack of focus on local concerns while prioritising national goals which may not have the greatest impact on local people." (Female, 65-74, Brentwood)*

*"Flies in the face of 'local policing'." (Male, 45-54, Brentwood)*

*"Less feeling of community involvement and the loss of relationships with the public that can take many years to build but can be destroyed at the stroke of a pen...at your peril." (Male, 75+, Uttlesford)*

*"Risk losing relationships with key figures in the community." (25-34, Chelmsford)*

Six respondents (<1%) referred specifically here to impacts on rural areas, with the fear these would be 'abandoned' in favour of urban areas, with <1% (2 respondents) concerned there would be a reduction in service in low priority areas. Concern was also raised by <1% (6 respondents) that police travelling to/covering other areas would leave some areas without cover.

*"Abandonment of the remote rural communities." (Male, 55-64, Uttlesford)*

*"Even less investigation and policing of rural crimes." (Female, 65-74, Colchester)*

*"Further cuts to funding and reduction of service, especially to areas that are low priority." (Male, 45-54, Chelmsford)*

*"Officers diverted to large towns and cities away from rural communities." (Male, 25-34, Colchester)*

Four respondents (<1%) raised concerns in relation to impacts on frontline policing, with 2 respondents (<1%) concerned it would lead to a reduction in the number of officers and 10 respondents (1%) a reduction in police presence locally.

*"Wider spread of police means less focused on individual towns. Merging sounds like a way to reduce costs by spreading service thinner." (Female, 35-44, Harlow)*

*"A reduction in the number of police officers. We need more police officers." (Female, 75+, Southend)*

*"The police would definitely be less visible and less accountable." (Female, 75+, Chelmsford)*

Six respondents (<1%) referred to a lack of local accountability as a risk associated with merging police forces, with a further 4 respondents (<1%) discussing a lack of control/local decision making.

*"More crime on our streets, less accountability for police." (Male, 55-64, Braintree)*

*"Lack of local accountability. Lack of local control. Lack of local financial accountability." (Male, 75+, Colchester)*

Six respondents (<1%) raised concern here that merging of police forces may have an impact on response times, with 6 respondents (<1%) sharing the view that the proposal to merge forces would increase costs rather than save money.

*"The dispersal of police officers could impact response times." (Male, 75+, Southend)*

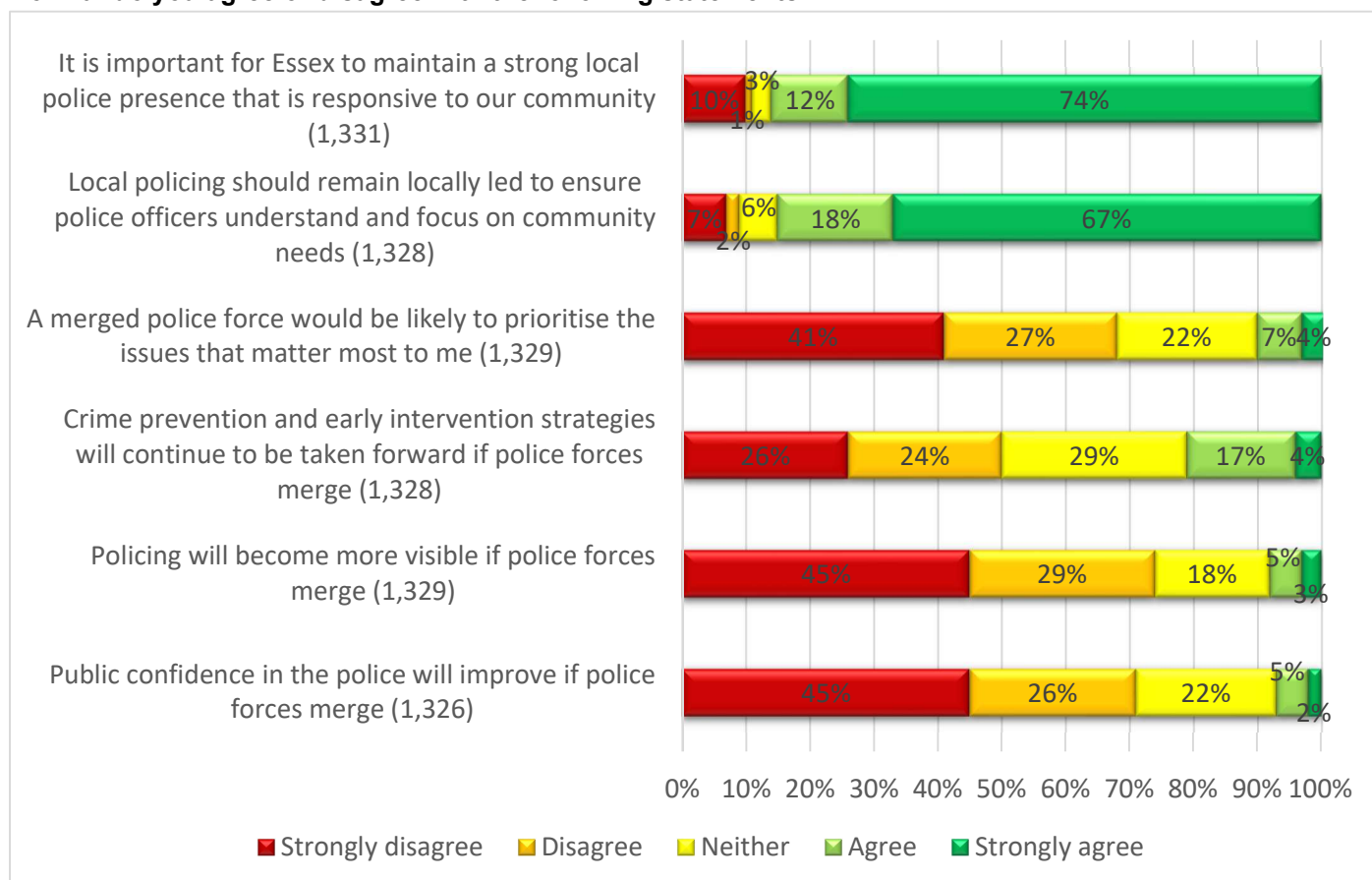
*"If resources are already stretched thinly this will not help the response times I think will go up." (Male, 55-64, Basildon)*

*"I believe that costs will rise not fall due to more bureaucratic administration." (Chelmsford)*

## Statement Analysis

Respondents were asked how far they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about policing and potential impacts of proposed reforms.

### How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,326-1,331)

As shown above, 86% agree (74% strongly agree and 12% agree) that 'it is important for Essex to maintain a strong local police presence that is responsive to our community', with only 11% disagreeing with this statement.

Some 85% agree (67% strongly agree and 18% agree) that 'local policing should remain locally led to ensure police officers understand and focus on community needs', with 9% disagreeing with this statement.

Only 11% of respondents agree (4% strongly agree and 7% agree) that 'a merged police force would be likely to prioritise the issues that matter most to me', with more than two-thirds (68%) disagreeing with this statement (27% disagree and 41% strongly disagree).

Respondents lack confidence that 'crime prevention and early intervention strategies will continue to be taken forward if police forces merge', with only 21% agreeing with this statement and 50% disagreeing.

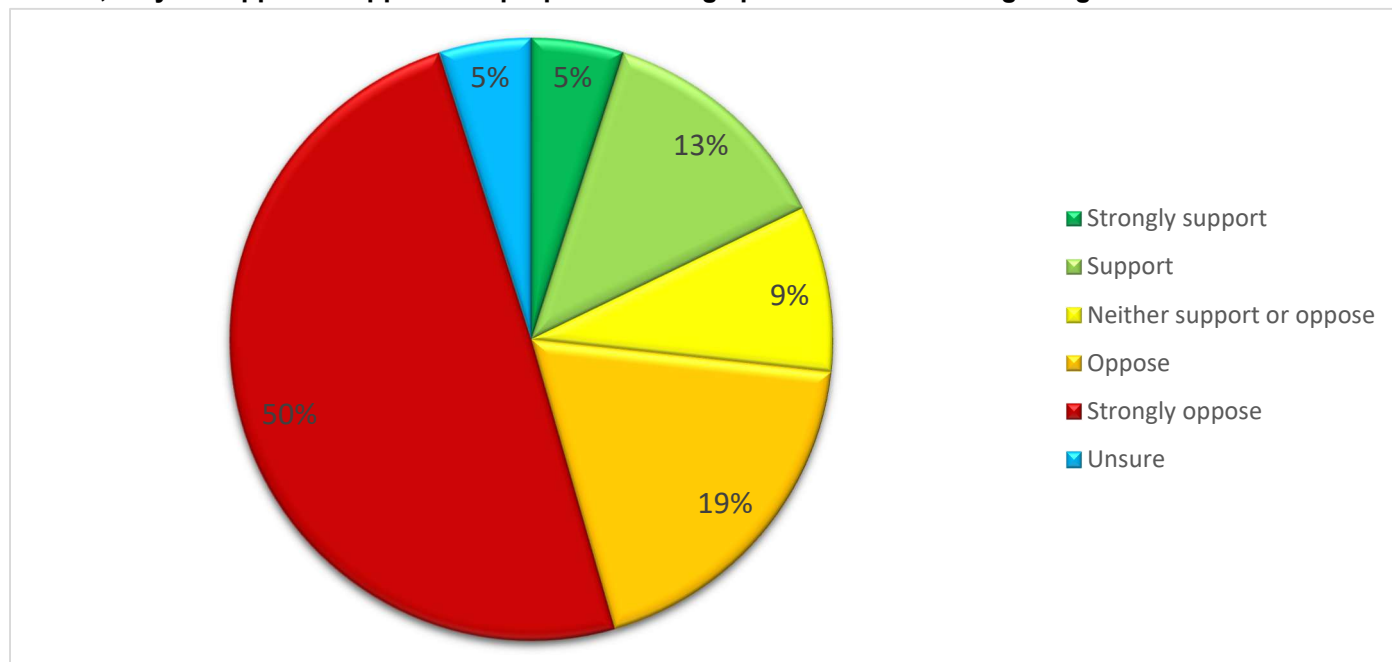
Some 74% of respondents disagree (29% disagree and 45% strongly disagree) that 'policing will become more visible if police forces merge' with only 8% agreeing with this statement (5% agree and 3% strongly agree).

Only 7% of respondents agree (5% agree and 2% strongly agree) that 'public confidence in the police will improve if police forces merge' with 71% of respondents disagreeing with this statement (26% disagree and 45% strongly disagree).

## Support for Government proposal

Overall, 18% of respondents support the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces.

**Overall, do you support or oppose the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces?**



Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,331)

As shown above, 69% oppose (50% strongly oppose and 19% oppose) the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces. Detailed breakdowns of this data by demographic groups are provided at the end of this report (page 26).

Some 45% (603 respondents) provided further comments or views on the proposed policing reforms and what local policing in Essex means to them.

These comments have been grouped into 'supporting comments', 'opposing comments' and 'general comments' in the sections below. Verbatim quotations are also used to illustrate the views shared.

## Additional comments - SUPPORT:

The table below summarises supporting comments, with the sections below the table providing further detail and verbatim comments to illustrate the points made.

|                                                                  | Number of respondents | % of respondents |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Less cost/save money                                             | 12                    | 1%               |
|                                                                  |                       |                  |
| More consistency of operations                                   | 13                    | 1%               |
| Greater efficiency/more efficient                                | 8                     | 1%               |
|                                                                  |                       |                  |
| <b>Benefits of merging back-office functions (IT/HR)</b>         | <b>16</b>             | <b>1%</b>        |
| <b>Countrywide procurement of vehicles/uniform etc</b>           | <b>17</b>             | <b>1%</b>        |
| Sharing best practice                                            | 6                     | <1%              |
| <b>Reduces duplication at senior levels</b>                      | <b>15</b>             | <b>1%</b>        |
|                                                                  |                       |                  |
| Allows for more officers on the ground/more funding for officers | 6                     | <1%              |
| More visible policing/hopefully more visible policing            | 6                     | <1%              |
|                                                                  |                       |                  |
| <b>Support on condition/need to maintain local focus</b>         | <b>17</b>             | <b>1%</b>        |
| Can be organised to maintain local policing                      | 9                     | 1%               |
|                                                                  |                       |                  |
| Shared intelligence would be useful                              | 4                     | <1%              |
| Easier to coordinate countrywide crime/removes border boundaries | 12                    | 1%               |
| <b>Would work for some functions/specialist areas</b>            | <b>20</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
|                                                                  |                       |                  |
| Removal of PFCC's/Crime Commissioners                            | 10                    | 1%               |
| Currently poor/cannot get any worse                              | 8                     | 1%               |

Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,339)

Twelve respondents (1%) made supportive comments regarding the proposal to merge police forces costing less and so saving money.

*"It would save an enormous amount of money by merging as bureaucracy and duplication would be much reduced."*  
(Male, 65-74, Chelmsford)

*"I do understand there could be benefits regarding finance."* (Male, 45-54, Tendring)

The proposal leading to more consistency of operations was discussed by 1% (13 respondents) with a further 1% (8 respondents) suggesting this would lead to greater efficiency and/or a more efficient service.

*"Provide consistency and unity."* (Female, 55-64, Tendring)

*"This would ensure consistency of operations."* (Female, 75+, Chelmsford)

*"Merging forces will improve efficiencies, with regards to all using the same systems and having the same processes which would be greatly beneficial."* (Male, 35-44, Harlow)

Sixteen respondents (1%) raised potential benefits of merging back office functions such as IT and HR, with a further 1% (17 respondents) discussing benefits of countrywide procurement of equipment such as vehicles and uniform.

*"A lot of forces already share support functions and IT as an example so that could be expanded upon." (Male, 25-34, Colchester)*

*"It's ridiculous how fragmented our police forces are, with duplicity in so many departments. No big company would work like this it would be madness. Money saved on back-room departments like wages and HR could be spent more wisely. Purchase power would also increase so better deals could be reached - especially on top priced items like cars etc." (Male, 55-64, Chelmsford)*

*"A national police service can modernise parts of the service which apply to all forces in areas such as IT, uniform and vehicles. There simply doesn't need to be 43 different policies and procedures about how to deal best with the same law that applies across the UK." (Male, 55-64, Chelmsford)*

Sharing best practice between forces (<1% - 6 respondents) and reducing duplication of staff at senior levels (1% - 15 respondents) were also referred to as reasons to support the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces.

*"It is obvious that some police forces are better run than others. Hopefully merging and sharing of best practice will help less successful forces." (Female)*

*"The proposed reform will cut the amount of duplicated manager posts." (Male, 45-54, Maldon)*

Six respondents (<1%) felt merging forces would allow for more officers on the ground, with more funding being available to pay for frontline officers, with a further 6 respondents (<1%) suggesting merging forces would allow for more visible policing.

*"Fewer people in layers of management is surely better so we can afford more officers on the ground." (Female, 65-74, Chelmsford)*

*"Local policing and lack of PCSO has lost its local connection to communities, if the new mergers can allow more police or PCSO to be visible and engaging with local communities that will be an improvement." (Male, 55-64, Chelmsford)*

*"We never see Police in our town anymore, I hope if forces merge it will lead to increased presence on the streets." (Female, 65-74, Braintree)*

Seventeen respondents (1%) commented here that they would support the proposal on condition that a local focus was maintained, with a further 1% (9 respondents) suggesting they felt it was possible for regional forces to be organised to maintain local policing.

*"It would be important that local police managers ensure that the local police force cater for local community needs whilst feeding into the larger organisation." (Male, 75+, Southend)*

*"I would hope for cooperation with other forces on national problems, while maintaining local knowledge of how these affect individual communities." (Female, 65-74, Colchester)*

*"A larger regional force can be organised to maintain local policing, at less cost and with greater efficiency." (Male, 75+, Epping Forest)*

Twelve respondents (1%) suggested the merging of forces would remove 'border boundaries' and make it easier to coordinate countrywide crime, with a further 4 respondents (<1%) sharing the view that they felt shared intelligence would be useful.

*"The most important thing is to remove the current "border boundary" to nationwide policing." (Male, 75+, Basildon)*



*"I think intelligence should be shared, UK and worldwide." (Female, 55-64, Maldon)*

Twenty respondents (2%) felt merging police forces would be beneficial for specialist areas and would work better for some functions.

*"Some specialist services are better implemented across borders." (Female, 65-74, Brentwood)*

*"Critical mass for specialised services requires best not nearest basing. But hub and spoke model needs to apply to community policing as well." (Male, 65-74, Chelmsford)*

A further 10 respondents (1%) commented here that the merging of police forces would lead to the removal of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners, with 8 respondents (1%) sharing the view that the service was currently poor and could not get any worse.

*"It will also end the PFCC role of which has been ineffective and costly." (Male, 45-54, Maldon)*

*"There's very poor effective Policing now, like the NHS, it can't get worse." (Male, 75+, Tendring)*

## Additional comments - OPPOSE:

The table below summarises opposing comments, with the sections below the table providing further detail and verbatim comments to illustrate the points made.

|                                                                              | Number of respondents | % of respondents |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| <b>About saving money/cost saving exercise</b>                               | <b>32</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| Not about improving service (about saving money)                             | 7                     | 1%               |
| Waste on money                                                               | 4                     | <1%              |
|                                                                              |                       |                  |
| <b>Impact on local policing/will dilute local policing</b>                   | <b>27</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| <b>Visible policing is required</b>                                          | <b>38</b>             | <b>3%</b>        |
| <b>Less/reduction in police presence</b>                                     | <b>41</b>             | <b>3%</b>        |
| Response will be get slower/impact on response times                         | 19                    | 1%               |
| <b>Resources will be spread too thinly/thinner in Essex</b>                  | <b>23</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| Lack of officers/officers on the ground                                      | 7                     | 1%               |
|                                                                              |                       |                  |
| <b>Loss of local knowledge</b>                                               | <b>76</b>             | <b>6%</b>        |
| Take police away from local issues/lose local focus                          | 16                    | 1%               |
| Focus will be on national/large regional crime, not local crime              | 11                    | 1%               |
| <b>Benefit to large areas at cost to small areas</b>                         | <b>20</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| Impact on rural policing/rural areas                                         | 11                    | 1%               |
| Will leave areas exposed                                                     | 4                     | <1%              |
|                                                                              |                       |                  |
| <b>Bigger is not (always) better</b>                                         | <b>24</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| Not worked in other areas - ref: GMP/MET                                     | 14                    | 1%               |
| Not worked in Scotland/Police Scotland                                       | 13                    | 1%               |
| Not worked in other industries/organisations                                 | 14                    | 1%               |
|                                                                              |                       |                  |
| <b>Confidence in police will reduce/reduce further</b>                       | <b>24</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| <b>Loss of trust/faith in the Police</b>                                     | <b>23</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| <b>Damage link/relationships between police and public</b>                   | <b>25</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| Local accountability will reduce                                             | 15                    | 1%               |
|                                                                              |                       |                  |
| Disruption to partnership working/harder to maintain links with partner orgs | 12                    | 1%               |
| Impact on police officer morale (lose close contact with leader)             | 6                     | <1%              |
|                                                                              |                       |                  |
| <b>Ref: police station closures/impact of station closures</b>               | <b>41</b>             | <b>3%</b>        |
|                                                                              |                       |                  |
| Unnecessary change/leave it as it is                                         | 12                    | 1%               |
| Essex already more competent than others                                     | 4                     | <1%              |
| Currently doing well/good work in the last few years – don't lose it!        | 3                     | <1%              |
| Police services already work together when needed                            | 4                     | <1%              |

Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,339)

Thirty-two respondents (2%) made opposing comments suggesting they felt the proposal to merge police forces was a cost saving exercise and/or all about saving money, with a further 1% (7 respondents) sharing the view that it was not about improving the service and <1% (4 respondents) a waste of money.

*"Money saving is all this is. Will result in poorer service. Don't do it." (Male, 65-74, Harlow)*

*"It's another way of cost cutting. It is nothing to do with improving policing." (Male, 65-74, Braintree)*

*"What a waste of millions of £s this will be!" (Female, 55-64, Rochford)*

Two percent (27 respondents) felt merging police forces would dilute local policing and/or commented on the impact it would have on local policing.

*"There's precious local policing already and the situation will get worse if there are mergers." (Female, 65-74, Tendring)*

*"We need more local policing not less which will happen with merged/larger police structures." (Male, 75+, Chelmsford)*

A further 3% (38 respondents) commented here that visible policing was required, with 3% (41 respondents) opposing the proposal as they felt it would lead to a reduction in police presence.

*"Local policing means more interaction with the public and a more visible presence therefore giving people the feeling of being safer in the community." (Male, 65-74, Colchester)*

*"More VISIBLE policing is required to control antisocial behaviour, drug dealing, discrimination, violence and other known local crimes." (Female, 65-74, Braintree)*

*"People locally don't see any police presence in their communities unless there is a serious crime. Locally the police are regarded as ineffectual regarding local needs and if this goes ahead, that feeling is only going to increase." (Male, 65-74, Uttlesford)*

*"As we rarely see any police now, they will completely vanish in a merger." (Male, 75+, Chelmsford)*

Impact on response times was discussed by 1% (19 respondents) here, with the view the changes would lead to slower response times, with a further 2% (23 respondents) commenting that they felt resources would be spread too thinly in Essex as a result of merging forces, and it leading to a lack of officers on the ground (7 respondents - 1%).

*"I come from a time when every town had a full-time manned police station, which was good and in rural towns and villages everyone saw the local policeman/ men. This is the very opposite of this. So I can see even less chance of the police turning up, and when they do there shall be extended times in arriving." (Male, 55-64, Colchester)*

*"I can imagine combining forces will spread personnel much thinner across Essex." (Female, 65-74, Brentwood)*

*"Police officers are few and far between already, stretched too thinly, most of the time we haven't even had a response for weeks. So don't see how merging could improve, will just continue in becoming a lawless society." (Female, 45-54, Tendring)*

*"It's just absolutely ridiculous!! We are short of police officers as it is, by uniting will make this even worse." (Female, 55-64, Braintree)*

The highest proportion of respondents (76 respondents - 6%) raised concern here that merging forces would lead to a lack of local knowledge.

*"Lack of local knowledge/interest." (Female, 75+, Tendring)*

*"We need local policing who have local knowledge." (Female, 65-74, Uttlesford)*

*"Local knowledge is key." (Female, 65-74, Colchester)*

Sixteen respondents (1%) discussed police being taken away from local issues, with the focus being on national/large regional crime rather than local crime (11 respondents – 1%).

*"It is important that regional and national crime matters are dealt with correctly and efficiently. But it is worrying that too much focus will be put on the wider scene so that local matters are overlooked or dismissed." (Male, 75+, Basildon)*

*"A merged police force will become another remote State run organisation with little knowledge or care for local communities." (Male, 65-74, Colchester)*

*"But I believe for effective policing there must be local knowledge. With a bigger more central force, I do not feel this would happen. There would be other priorities which would trump local issues." (Male, 45-54, Tendring)*

Whilst 2% (20 respondents) opposed the proposal to merge forces as they felt it would be of benefit to larger areas at a cost to smaller areas, a further 1% (11 respondents) raised concern regarding the impact it would have on crime and policing in rural areas and <1% (4 respondents) discussed the proposed merger leaving areas exposed.

*"Resources are often moved away from local issues and are directed to higher demand areas such as cities, neglecting smaller communities." (Colchester)*

*"There is also a risk that resources, officers and funding would be drawn away from smaller towns and rural areas towards larger population centres." (Female, 65-74, Braintree)*

*"Rural communities already lose out and my view is that merging into larger areas will probably make this worse." (Female, 65-74, Rochford)*

*"Rural policing in Essex is already in a disastrous state and instead of getting better this proposal can only make matters worse." (Male, 55-64, Uttlesford)*

*"Merging resource means focus will be on problem areas or areas of inequality. This means you widen the gap with previously nice areas becoming more lawless as there is no support available." (Female, 35-44, Basildon)*

Twenty-four respondents (2%) made comments around 'bigger not always being better' here, with similar changes discussed not to have worked in other areas such as GMP and the Met (14 respondents – 1%), Police Scotland (13 respondents – 1%) and/or in other industries/organisations such as the Ambulance Service (14 respondents – 1%).

*"Bigger is better is not always the case. Bigger area, bigger mistakes." (Female, 55-64, Southend)*

*"The bigger things become the worse they become. It works leave it alone." (Male, 75+, Chelmsford)*

*"It is quite clear that a bigger force does not work, look at the issues the Met and GMP have. Why on earth would the government want to merge forces and create more issues!!" (Male, 35-44, Chelmsford)*

*"Look at the mess the MET are in!" (Female, 55-64, Harlow)*

*"Bigger for a lot of things is rarely a better outcome. This is a prime example. I don't think that merging the Scottish police into one unit has been very effective or beneficial." (Female, 75+, Braintree)*

*"As shown in Scotland, this will not improve our local policing but is likely to end up costing more for a lesser service!" (Female, 55-64, Southend)*

*"Assuming national services can give value for money by centralising administration has not worked for Trains, Water, Power, Hospitals and now you want to do it for the police too? When will we learn." (Male, 45-54, Chelmsford)*

*"The Ambulance Service had the same changes occur, meaning that they have to liaise with multiple different local boards to get anything agreed or done." (Female, 45-54, Braintree)*

Twenty-four respondents (2%) raised concern that confidence in the police would reduce or reduce further as a result of merging forces, with 2% (23 respondents) suggesting it could lead to a loss of trust and/or faith in the police.

*"Policing is already failing. Making forces larger will cause many problems at a time when public confidence and respect is already at an all time low!" (Male, 75+, Harlow)*

*"The people need confidence in their local officers. This government have already destroyed this with their snowflake ideals. We cannot let this get any worse." (Male, 65-74, Thurrock)*

*"Successful policing depends on the public having faith and trust in their Police officers. The more local that delivery is, the more that trust and faith is strengthened. The proposals currently outlined will do the exact opposite generating a feeling of increased remoteness and lack of awareness of the public's needs and fears." (Male, 75+ Maldon)*

Damage to links/relationships between the police and public were discussed here by 2% (25 respondents), with 1% (15 respondents) concerned that local accountability will reduce.

*"Like everything now in our services e.g. doctors, dentists, hospitals where the services are run by computers and not people we are seeing less and less one to one contact and no consistency. This will happen with our Police Force if allowed to merge and human contact will be scarce, and trust and respect will diminish." (Female, 75+, Southend)*

*"Police officers will end up losing touch with the local communities they are supposed to keep safe." (Male, 35-44, Harlow)*

*"A larger regional force could make decision-making feel more distant and reduce accountability to local people." (Female, 65-74, Braintree)*

Disruption to partnership working with it becoming harder to maintain links with partner organisations was raised as a reason to oppose the proposal to merge forces by 1% (12 respondents), with 6 respondents (<1%) commenting on the impact it may have on police officer morale (with officers losing their close contact with leaders).

*"Working with local volunteer groups and local community safety officers will not be feasible or efficient." (Male, 75+, Harlow)*

*"We have built some great partnerships with Police in Essex that have managed to focus on local needs. Merging might disrupt that." (Female, 55-64, Harlow)*

*"Police officers are already stretched to their limits and cannot police effectively due to lack of funding. Merging with other forces will have no positive effect on the morale of those serving." (Male, 65-74, Chelmsford)*

Forty-one respondents (3%) referred to closures of police stations and the impacts of recent police station closures, in explaining their views on the proposal to merge forces.

*"Village policing knowledge and presence has almost disappeared already with the closure of police houses/offices. Rare visits from a PCSO covering multiple villages is no substitute. This will get worse with mergers as police become more remote from communities." (Male, 65-74, Uttlesford)*

*"The nearest Police station open to the public is already miles away and so it is not local now." (Male, 65-74, Tending)*

Four respondents (<1%) discussed police services already working together when required, with a further 1% (12 respondents) opposing the proposal describing it to be an unnecessary change.

*“Police services already support each other when that support is required.” (Female, 65-74, Braintree)*

*“It is just another government attempt at unnecessary change...cost saving by any chance?” (Female, 55-64, Braintree)*

*“The system isn't broken so don't try to fix it.” (Male, 65-74, Rochford)*

Four respondents (<1%) shared the view here that they felt Essex Police were more competent than other/neighbouring forces, with 3 respondents (<1%) not wanting Essex to lose the good work done over recent years.

*“Essex police are a competent police force that I've had dealings with as a victim of crime, however I have family living in neighbouring counties under other police forces that could potentially merge with that seem wholly incompetent at policing.” (Male, 25-34, Colchester)*

*“My confidence in my local force has grown over the last 2-3 years and I believe Southend on Sea/Essex police are now doing a great job. It isn't broken so don't try to fix it!” (Male, 55-64, Southend)*

*“Our town has changed over the last couple of years, the policing we have is in my opinion, working very well.” (Female, 55-64, Southend)*

## Additional comments - GENERAL:

The table below summarises other general comments made about proposed policing reforms and what local policing in Essex means to them, with the sections below the table providing further detail and verbatim comments to illustrate the points made.

|                                                                                             | Number of respondents | % of respondents |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Merger would be costly                                                                      | 10                    | 1%               |
|                                                                                             |                       |                  |
| <b>Visible policing is important</b>                                                        | <b>44</b>             | <b>3%</b>        |
|                                                                                             |                       |                  |
| <b>Need more boots on the ground/officers</b>                                               | <b>36</b>             | <b>3%</b>        |
| <b>Local policing is core/connects policing and community</b>                               | <b>23</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| <b>Local policing should be the focus/most important/kept local</b>                         | <b>74</b>             | <b>6%</b>        |
| Need local accountability                                                                   | 4                     | <1%              |
|                                                                                             |                       |                  |
| Works for specialist police but local policing should remain local                          | 10                    | 1%               |
| Support procurement/investment being national, but running of forces should be local        | 13                    | 1%               |
|                                                                                             |                       |                  |
| Importance of focus on prevention and intervention/priority                                 | 7                     | 1%               |
|                                                                                             |                       |                  |
| <b>Deal with small crime/more than issue a crime number/don't ignore less serious crime</b> | <b>24</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| Perpetrators know police will do nothing (shoplifting etc)                                  | 6                     | <1%              |
|                                                                                             |                       |                  |
| <b>Two tier policing/immigration comment</b>                                                | <b>21</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| <b>Ref: woke rules/woke agenda/DEI</b>                                                      | <b>17</b>             | <b>2%</b>        |
| Fair policing is important                                                                  | 5                     | <1%              |

Base: all respondents excluding 'no response' (1,339)

Ten respondents (1%) commented here that they felt merging police forces would be costly, with 3% (44 respondents) commenting around the importance of policing being visible.

*"The merger of police forces will be expensive and difficult to deliver." (Information not provided)*

*"Mergers and reorganisations rarely achieve the financial savings and increased efficiencies that are so often promised. On the contrary, mergers come with considerable extra costs and disruption at the outset. There is no guarantee that the 'pain' of the merging process will bring any 'gain' in the longer term." (Female, 65-74, Southend)*

*"Local policing in Essex means to me having visible police on our streets and on our roads to help keep us all safe." (Female, 65-74, Harlow)*

Needing more police officers and/or 'boots on the ground' was raised by 3% (36 respondents), with the focus needing to be on local policing, with policing controlled locally referred to by 6% (74 respondents).

*"I live alone so knowing there is a police station and local police in my town makes me feel safer. We need local police in our towns more than ever. It would be a crime Literally!! Ripping the heart out of communities and taking away our local policemen and women. It's shameful if it goes through and very wrong on every conceivable level."*  
(Female, 55-64, Harlow)

*"Until the number of serving officers is increased, and the retention rate of current officers improved upon, any other organisational change is simply moving around the furniture in a house which is burning down."* (Male, 25-34, Castle Point)

*"We need more boots on the ground. Having police regularly being seen and making themselves approachable will make the elderly and vulnerable feel safer."* (Female, 55-64, Basildon)

A further 2% (23 respondents) referred here to local policing being core and being required to keep the connection between policing and the community, with the need for local accountability discussed by 4 respondents (<1%).

*"The fundamentals of British Policing has always been locally based in co-operation with the public."* (Male, 75+, Braintree)

*"Local policing always has been & always should be about knowing the area & people that you serve. Local knowledge is paramount & may well be lost if forces merge."* (Male, 75+, Colchester)

*"Local policing is the core, or should be, the core which connects the police with the local community."* (Male, 75+, Tendring)

*"Policing needs to be kept local with local accountability."* (Female, 65-74, Basildon)

A number of respondents supported the proposal in part, with the caveat that local policing remained local. Thirteen respondents (1%) supported some aspects, such as procurement, being managed nationally, but on condition that the running of forces remained local. In a similar way, a further 10 respondents (1%) supported the merging of specialist police teams, as long as local policing remained local.

*"I think there is a place for a national police force to tackle serious nationwide organised crime, but not at the expense of local knowledge and local services. I believe we need both a national police force for the big stuff and local forces to serve local communities."* (Male, 75+, Brentwood)

*"Specialist cybercrime and forensic and firearms and maritime/diving units aren't likely to hurt from being centralised (although response times might become an issue) providing that local services like crime prevention and community policing and anti-drug units maintain local contact and local knowledge."* (Male, 65-74, Chelmsford)

The importance of focusing on prevention and intervention, with these areas remaining a priority was also referred to by 7 respondents (1%), with 2% (24 respondents) keen to see smaller/less serious crimes dealt with and not ignored, with a further 6 respondents (<1%) concerned that perpetrators were aware the police would not deal with these lesser crimes (such as shop lifting).

*"Crime prevention and early intervention are a priority through safer ever neighbours, so would have to be delivered regardless of whether forces merge or not."* (Female, 45-54, Harlow)

*"ALL crimes however small, matter to the people involved and MUST be dealt with, not brushed under the carpet."*  
(Male, 75+, Castle Point)

*"The police prioritise only the serious crimes and don't care for the less serious, all they seem to do is issue a crime number over the phone and leave you to your own devices to sort out the mess crime leaves. In my opinion policing has dramatically lost its way with caring for local law-abiding citizens and communities whom have lost all respect from citizens because we know what the response will be before we report crime. To gain the respect back support the people no matter how trivial the crime is. Criminals know your situation and what you'll respond to that's why crime is through the roof."* (Male, 55-64, Chelmsford)



Some 2% (21 respondents) made comments about immigration and two-tier policing, with a further 2% (17 respondents) referring to woke rules and/or diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and 5 respondents (<1%) the importance of fair policing.

*"We need to stop the two-tier policing that it appears we have. Everyone should be treated the same. In some cases this does not appear to happen." (Female, 65-74, Colchester)*

*"Policing is two-tier, woke, and racist (anti-white). It needs strong leadership to bring it back to the old 'without fear or favour' standard. Merging forces will make that less likely to happen. Police chiefs are already faceless, invisible and unaccountable to the public. This move would make that even worse." (Female, 75+, Chelmsford)*

*"Too woke. Too politically correct. Only interested in tick box exercises. No more two-tier policing. Give the police more power." (Male, 75+, Brentwood)*

*"I expect the law to be upheld fairly and not be cherry-picked to coincide with the government flavour of the day."  
(Information not provided)*

## Demographic breakdown

The figures below detail proportions of respondents supporting\* ('strongly support' and 'support') and opposing\* ('strongly oppose' and 'oppose') the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces, broken down by demographic groups.

NB care needs to be taken with categories with small sample sizes here.

Colour is used in the tables below to highlight stronger support (green) and stronger opposition (red).

(\*Aggregated 'support' and 'oppose' data is used here – where this does not match non-aggregated data earlier in the report, this is due to rounding error.)

### Analysis by Gender

|                                                                                                    |           | Overall | Male | Female |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|------|--------|
| Overall, do you support or oppose the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces? | % support | 17%     | 24%  | 11%    |
|                                                                                                    | % neither | 9%      | 8%   | 10%    |
|                                                                                                    | % oppose  | 69%     | 64%  | 74%    |
|                                                                                                    | % unsure  | 5%      | 4%   | 4%     |
| Base number of respondents                                                                         |           | 1331    | 636  | 582    |

Whilst 17% of respondents overall 'support' (strongly support and support) the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces, this ranges from 11% of females to 24% of male respondents, with female respondents more frequently opposing the proposal (74% compared with 64% of male respondents).

### Analysis by Age Category

|                                                                                                    |           | Overall | Up to 25 | 25 to 34 | 35 to 44 | 45 to 54 | 55 to 64 | 65 to 74 | 75 plus |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Overall, do you support or oppose the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces? | % support | 17%     | 14%      | 26%      | 13%      | 15%      | 15%      | 15%      | 25%     |
|                                                                                                    | % neither | 9%      | 14%      | 8%       | 9%       | 6%       | 11%      | 9%       | 9%      |
|                                                                                                    | % oppose  | 69%     | 64%      | 61%      | 73%      | 73%      | 70%      | 72%      | 61%     |
|                                                                                                    | % unsure  | 5%      | 7%       | 5%       | 5%       | 6%       | 4%       | 5%       | 5%      |
| Base number of respondents                                                                         |           | 1331    | 14       | 74       | 92       | 173      | 277      | 328      | 254     |

Respondents in the 25 to 34 and 75 and over age categories more frequently support the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces, with those in the 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 age categories more frequently opposing the proposal.

## Analysis by Disability

|                                                                                                    |           | Overall | Disability | No disability |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------|---------------|
| Overall, do you support or oppose the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces? | % support | 17%     | 20%        | 17%           |
|                                                                                                    | % neither | 9%      | 7%         | 10%           |
|                                                                                                    | % oppose  | 69%     | 69%        | 69%           |
|                                                                                                    | % unsure  | 5%      | 5%         | 4%            |
| Base number of respondents                                                                         |           | 1331    | 289        | 800           |

The same proportion of those with and without a health condition, disability or impairment oppose the proposal to merge forces into larger regional forces (69%). Respondents who consider themselves to have a health condition, disability or impairment slightly more frequently support the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces.

## Analysis by District

|                                                                                                    |           | Overall | Basildon | Brintree | Brentwood* | Castle Point* | Chelmsford | Colchester | Epping Forest* | Harlow | Maldon* | Rochford* | Southend | Tendring | Thurrock* | Uttlesford* |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Overall, do you support or oppose the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces? | % support | 17%     | 21%      | 17%      | 26%        | 11%           | 23%        | 15%        | 22%            | 10%    | 19%     | 9%        | 11%      | 18%      | 15%       | 28%         |
|                                                                                                    | % neither | 9%      | 6%       | 8%       | 13%        | 11%           | 10%        | 12%        | 11%            | 10%    | 6%      | 13%       | 4%       | 12%      | 8%        | 9%          |
|                                                                                                    | % oppose  | 69%     | 67%      | 73%      | 58%        | 79%           | 61%        | 64%        | 68%            | 72%    | 67%     | 76%       | 81%      | 69%      | 75%       | 61%         |
|                                                                                                    | % unsure  | 5%      | 7%       | 3%       | 4%         | 0%            | 6%         | 9%         | 0%             | 9%     | 8%      | 2%        | 5%       | 1%       | 3%        | 2%          |
| Base number of respondents                                                                         |           | 1331    | 91       | 161      | 55         | 47            | 191        | 156        | 37             | 71     | 48      | 45        | 154      | 87       | 40        | 57          |

Respondents living in Chelmsford more frequently support and less frequently oppose the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces.

Lower support for the proposal was recorded in Southend where only 11% support and 81% oppose the proposal to merge police forces into larger regional forces.

\*NB care needs to be taken with very small sample sizes here.