

Allocations Policy Consultation Report

Research and Engagement, Corporate Services



Introduction

Background

The housing department at Portsmouth City Council needed to review their housing allocation scheme as housing need in Portsmouth has changed since 2019. The scheme sets out the rules used to decide if someone can apply for social housing and how high they would be placed on the register, depending on their needs. The housing department needed to consult with all stakeholders and the wider public on the updated draft, feedback from which would then shape the new housing allocation scheme, subject to approval by the council.

Methodology

An online survey was implemented to fulfil these requirements and ran from 20 May 2024 until 3 July 2024.

Response rate

A total of **1,283** people took part in the online survey which was promoted through email bulletins, social media, and the PCC website. Assuming a "total population" of 170,818 (the latest 2021 census data from the Office for National Statistics for people aged 16+ in Portsmouth) this volume of responses ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 3%, well within acceptable parameters.

Report notes

Named tenants and not named tenants of a council/ housing association property have been abbreviated to 'Named council/ HA tenants' and 'Not a named council/ HA tenant'



- Official -

Management summary

Housing status

Just under half of respondents are currently on the housing register (43%), whilst 57% are not. The highest proportion of respondents are not a named tenant of a council or housing association property (39%), followed by 32% who are a named tenant.

Tenants and non-tenants

Just over half of respondents agree that more properties should go to existing tenants than currently, whilst 15% disagree, and 34% are unsure. Those who disagree primarily feel that the council's main focus should be housing anyone in need, so those with a home already should not get priority, in order to address the urgent problem of homelessness in Portsmouth.

The majority of respondents agree with ensuring a fair balance is kept so that the housing needs of non-tenants continues to be met (82%), whilst just 5% disagree with this. Those who disagree feel that there should be a priority in place, such as those who have been waiting the longest, those from Portsmouth, existing tenants, or those without housing at all.

Order of allocation

The majority of respondents agree with offering a property to a lower priority to house multiple households instead of just one (84%), whilst just 4% disagree. Those who disagree largely feel that the priority or waiting list should be adhered to, prioritising those who should be housed first (e.g. due to need or urgency).

Priority names

Most respondents agree with changing the names of priority levels (71%), whilst 14% disagree. Respondents who disagree with renaming the priority levels question the need to do so, feeling that it is pointless/ unnecessary and just about semantics.

Management summary (ii)

Priority groups

Just under half of respondents agree with prioritising Portsmouth care-experienced people and former or serving members of the armed forces (49%), whilst around a quarter each disagree or are unsure. Agreement is higher from those falling under those categories. Whilst some respondents disagree as they feel this is unfair and everyone should have a fair chance, others only agree with prioritising one of the mentioned groups or a different group.

62% of respondents feel there are other groups of applicants who should be given priority. Those with disabilities or health needs are the most common group respondents feel should be given priority (27%), followed by families or people with children, especially young children (14%).

Direct nominations

Around three quarters of respondents agree with continuing to reserve a small number of properties for vulnerable people (73%), whilst 9% disagree and 18% are unsure. The highest proportion of respondents disagree with direct nominations as they feel it is unfair to others on the waiting list, with others pointing out that all those waiting for properties are vulnerable in some way, and that it would be fairer to use the priority system and allocation on a needs basis for everyone.

Further comments

Those leaving further comments most strongly feel that people who are from Portsmouth/ have ties to the area or are otherwise British citizens should be prioritised for housing stock. Respondents also feel that properties should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are suitable and appropriate for tenants needs. This can also relate to suggestions to address overcrowding in properties and encourage downsizing and exchanges where properties could better meet someone else's needs.

Demographics

Just under half of respondents have children under 18 living in their household (43%), with the vast majority having three children or less. The majority of respondents have not served in the armed forces (91%) and are not a Portsmouth care-experienced person (93%). Most respondents are female (64%), White or White British (88%), and do not have a disability (57%). There is fairly good representation for age groups between 25 and 74, the highest proportion being 35-44 years (22%).



- Official -

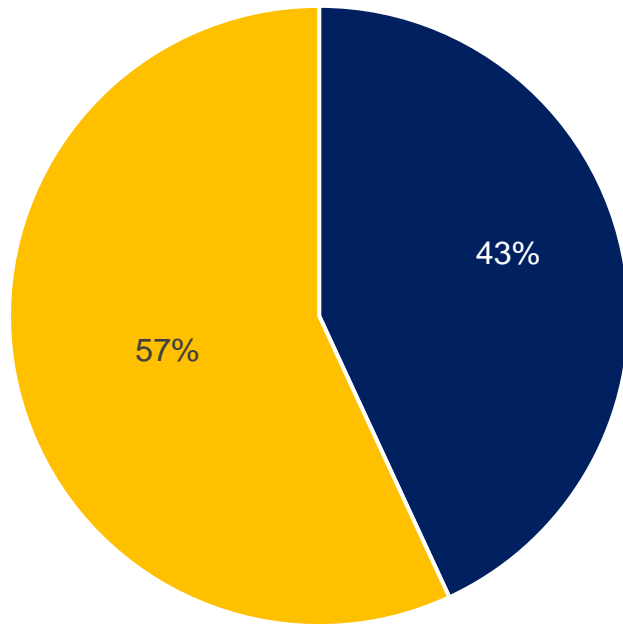
Housing status

Housing status

Q: **'Are you on the housing register?'**

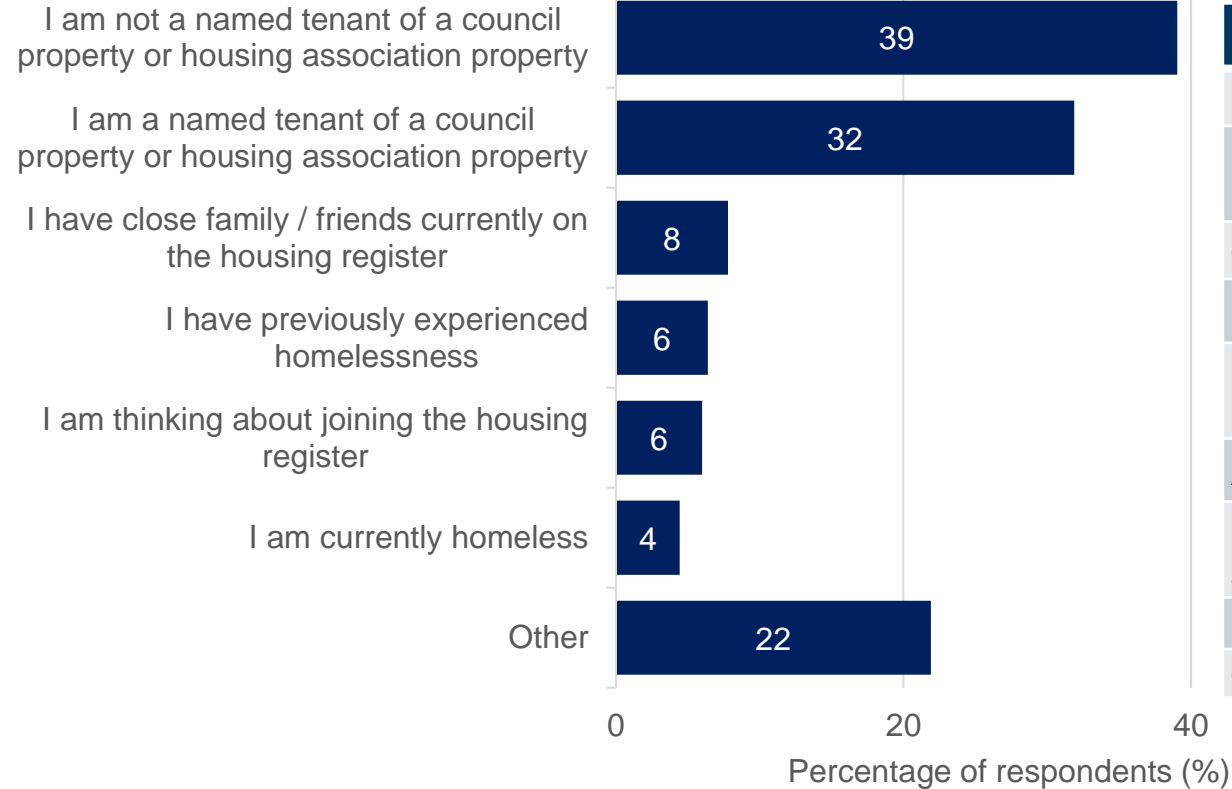
| Base: Total sample (1,283)

- Currently on the housing register
- Not currently on the housing register



Q: **'Which of the following applies?'**

| Base: Total sample (1,283)



'Other'	%
Homeowner	5
Have a job related to homelessness	3
On the waiting list	2
Private tenant	2
Portsmouth resident/ interested party	2
At risk of homelessness	1
In emergency accommodation	1
PCC staff	1
Other	5

- Just under half of respondents are currently on the housing register (43%), whilst 57% are not
- The highest proportion of respondents are not a named tenant of a council or housing association property (39%), followed by 32% who are a named tenant. Lower proportions have close friends or family on the housing register (8%), have previously experienced homelessness (6%), are thinking about joining the register (6%) or are currently homeless (4%)
- Those falling under 'other' describe themselves as a homeowner (5%), followed by those working in a job related to homelessness (3%)

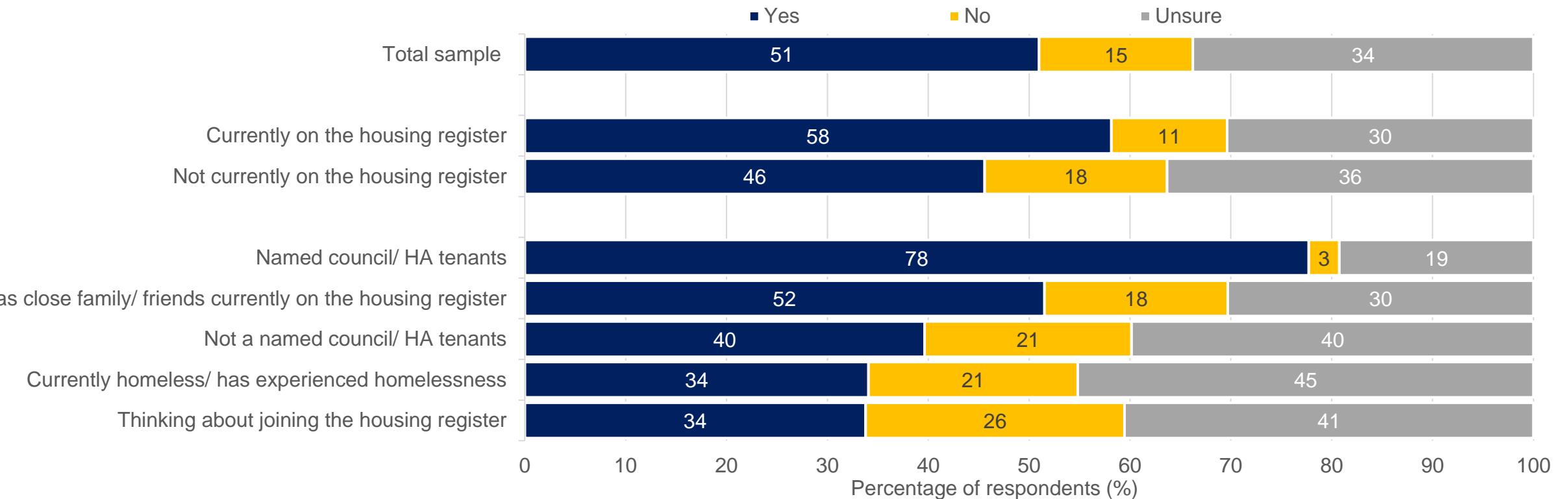


Tenants and non-tenants

Existing tenant allocation

“The majority of social housing currently goes to people who are not existing social housing tenants. When a property does go to an existing tenant, they get the home they need and then the property they are leaving can go to someone else. This means two or more households are housed instead of one.”

Q: **‘Should more properties go to existing tenants than currently?’** | Base (from top to bottom): (1,253) | (540), (713) | (395), (99), (492), (135), (74)



- At a total sample level, just over half of respondents think more properties should go to existing tenants (51%), agreement is highest amongst those on the housing register (58%) or with family/ friends on the register (52%), and named council/ HA tenants (78%)
- Just over a third of respondents are unsure whether more properties should go to existing tenants, leaving just 15% who disagree
- Respondents who are thinking about joining the housing register or are currently homeless/ have experienced homelessness give the lowest levels of agreement (both 34%) – they are more likely to be unsure about the proposal

Existing tenant allocation: reasons for disagreeing

Q: *'Why don't you think more properties should go to existing tenants than currently?'* | Base: All those saying 'No' (191)

Key themes	%
Existing tenants already have a home	32
Those without a home at all should be the priority	31
Everyone should be assessed according to needs	7
The waiting list for a property is already very long	6
Should give more people a chance to become council tenants	6
Many are struggling to afford private rents	6
The homelessness situation is dire and homing people should be the top priority	4
Only agree if existing tenants are not having their needs met in existing accommodation	3
Council should encourage more downsizing of existing tenants	3
Existing tenants can exchange properties if needs are not being met	3
There isn't enough social housing	3
Other	12
<i>No relevant comment</i>	11

"They are housed already. People that are homeless should be prioritised."

"Allocation should be according to need rather than current accommodation status so existing tenants should not be privileged."

"There are more tenants that are in desperate need of housing who have been on the waiting list for months due to this very reason."

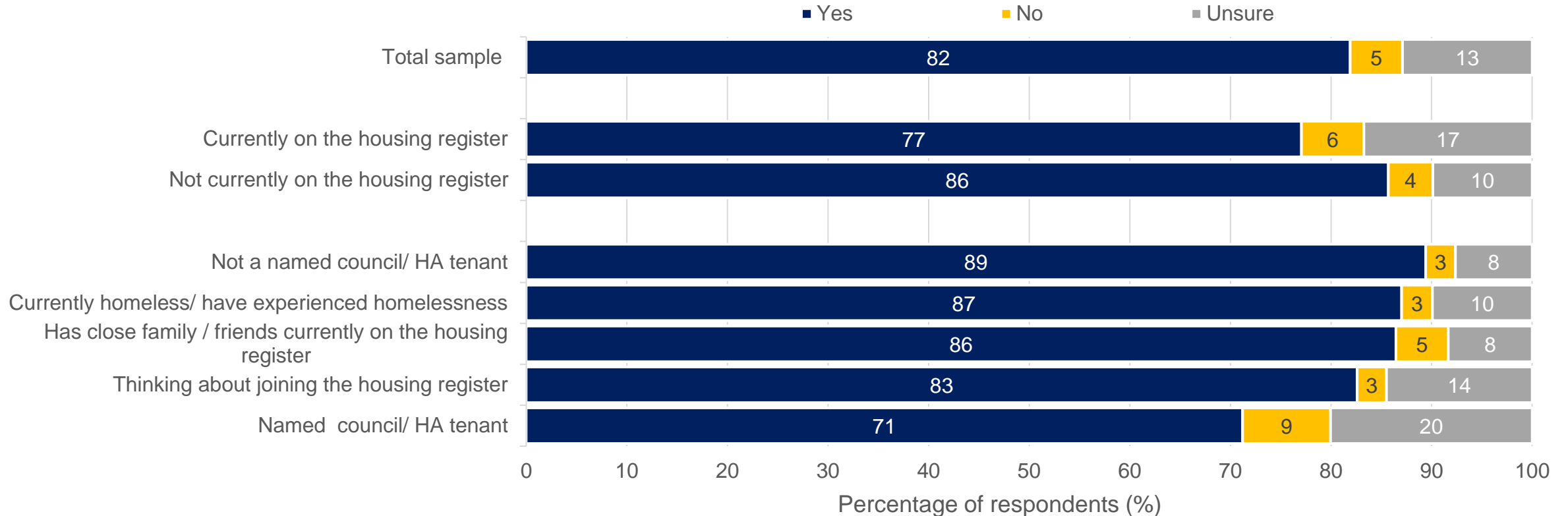
- The most common reason for opposing more housing going to existing tenants is that the council's main focus should be housing anyone in need, so those with a home already should be prioritised, the urgent problem of homelessness in Portsmouth was often mentioned here too
- Whilst some respondents disagree on the grounds of fairness, feeling that the system should be entirely needs based, that waiting list times need to be reduced, and more people given a chance, others feel that the council should better use their system to ensure tenants are in suitable properties (based on needs and size), encouraging exchanges or downsizes to meet this

Meeting the housing need of non-tenants

“Many people who have an urgent housing need, including homeless families, are not existing tenants. If *only* existing tenants were prioritised for properties, those other households would miss out.”

Q: **‘Should the council make sure a fair balance is kept so that the housing need of non-tenants continues to be met?’**

Base (from top to bottom): (1,210) | (532), (678) | (472), (131), (96), (69), (389)



- The vast majority of respondents agree with ensuring a fair balance is kept so that the housing needs of non-tenants continues to be met (82%), whilst just 5% disagree with this
- Agreement is high across all types of respondent

Meeting the housing need of non-tenants

Q: *'Why don't you think the council should make sure a fair balance is kept so that the housing need of non-tenants continues to be met?'* | Base: All those saying 'No' (63)

Key themes	%
Those waiting the longest should be the priority	19
Priority should be Portsmouth residents/ people born in Portsmouth	19
Existing tenants should be the priority	17
Existing tenants have too many unmet needs (e.g. overcrowding)	14
More housing will be freed up by allocating by need	10
Not enough suitable housing in Portsmouth	8
Those without housing at all should be the priority	5
Other	17
<i>No relevant comment</i>	19

“Due to the high number of people already on waiting list surely they need to get the required help first before, taking on others.”

“Houses should be allocated primarily to people who are from Portsmouth not those who have recently arrived.”

- Those who disagree with keeping a fair balance for non-tenants largely feel that there should be a priority in place, such as those who have been waiting the longest, those from Portsmouth, existing tenants, or those without housing at all
- Others are concerned about suitable housing, with some feeling that existing tenants have too many unmet needs, and others feeling there is not enough suitable housing in the city



Order of allocation

Order of allocation: example

“We want to ensure we are making best use of the housing available to us. Experience tells us that including some flexibility in how we allocate housing will help us achieve this. For example, instead of offering a 1-bedroom property to whoever the next person on the housing register is, we could:

1. Offer the 1-bedroom property to a single person currently living in a 4-bedroom property they no longer need,
2. The 4-bedroom property is then freed up for a family of 8 currently living in a 3-bedroom property,
3. The 3-bedroom property is then freed up for a family of 6 currently living in a 2-bedroom property,
4. The 2-bedroom property is then freed up for a family of 4 currently living in a 1-bedroom property,
5. The 1-bedroom property is then freed up for a single person without accommodation, for example the person who was initially next on the housing register

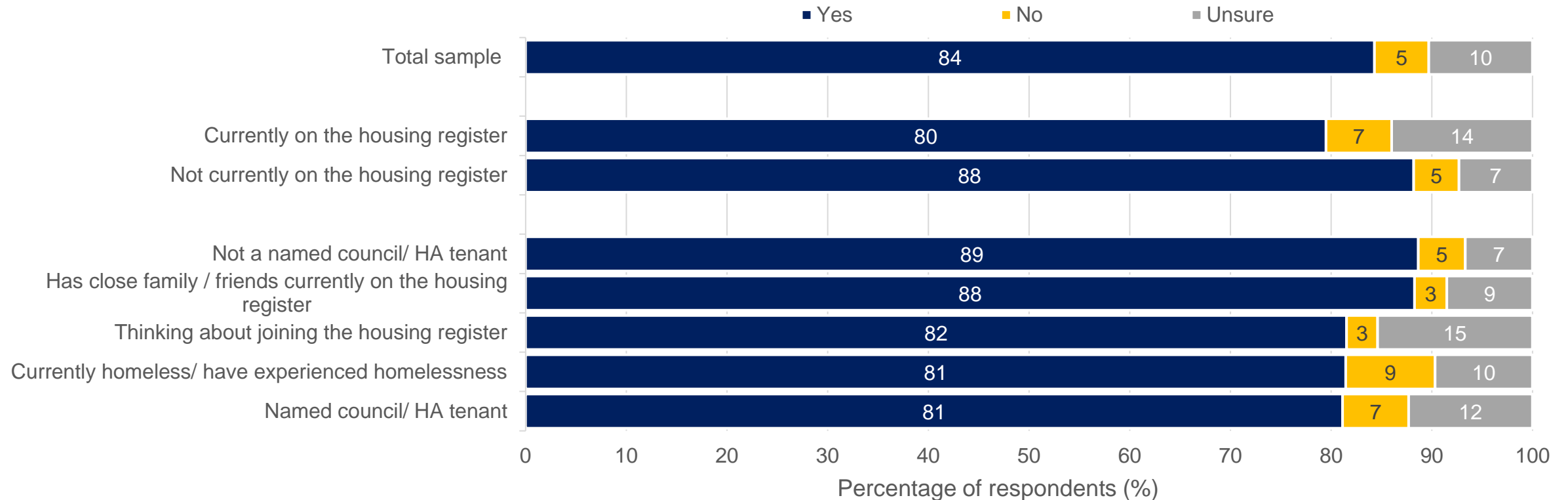
In this example, five households would end up in the right housing instead of potentially just one.”



Order of allocation

Q: **'Do you agree with the following statement?'** | Base (from top to bottom): (1,166) | (522) | (644) | (450), (94), (65), (124), (382)

“The vast majority of properties should be offered to those with the highest priority who have waited the longest, but when appropriate, a property will go to a lower priority so that multiple households are housed instead of just one”



- The majority of respondents agree with offering a property to a lower priority to house multiple households instead of just one (84%), whilst just 4% disagree
- Agreement is consistently high among all groups

Order of allocation

Q: **‘Why don’t you agree with this statement?’** | Base: All those saying ‘No’ (63)

Key themes	%
Certain groups should be given priority (e.g. Portsmouth locals, ex-service, families)	22
Doesn’t respect the priority order/ waiting list (e.g. how long people have waited)	17
High priority indicates an urgency or high need	11
Respondent has been waiting a long time in an unsuitable property	10
Process of house allocation should be changed (e.g. bidding for properties, enforce downsizing)	8
The priority needs to be housing as many people as possible	8
Disagree with people having to move out of their homes	5
Everyone deserves suitable housing	3
Need more information	3
Other	8
<i>No relevant comment</i>	16

“The properties should be offered to Portsmouth people who have waited the longest.”

“It should be based on need and people who have waited the longest otherwise there will be people who will constantly be pushed down the priority list through no fault of their own .”

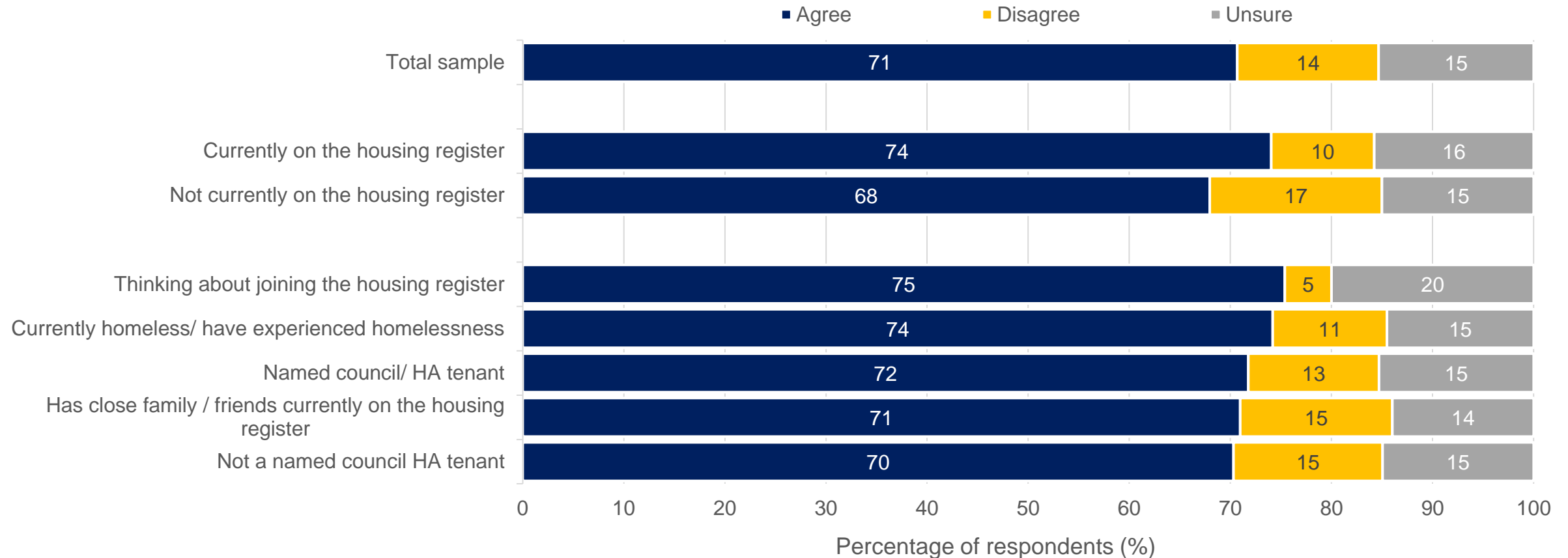
- Those who disagree with offering a property to a lower priority to house multiple households instead of just one, largely feel that the priority or waiting list should be adhered to, indicating groups that should be housed first (due to need/ urgency, circumstance, or those waiting long times for suitable properties)
- Some respondents suggest changing the process of allocation to ensure suitable properties are given to those who need them, whilst others feel that the priority needs to be housing as many as possible



Priority names

Change to how priorities are named

Q: 'People are currently awarded a 'low', 'medium' or 'high' level of priority. Do you agree or disagree that they should be renamed as 'recognised' (low), 'significant' (medium) and 'urgent' (high)?' | Base (from top to bottom): (1,160) | (520), (640) | (65), (124), (379), (93), (448)



- Most respondents agree with changing the names of priority levels (71%), whilst 14% disagree
- Agreement is fairly consistent between different types of respondent, at least two-thirds of all groups agree with the change

Change to how priorities are named

Q: *'Why do you disagree with the suggested renaming of the priority levels?'* | Base: All those disagreeing (162)

Key themes	%
Feels like a pointless/ unnecessary activity	23
Means the same thing/ just semantics/ categories are not being redefined	20
Original names are simpler/ easier to understand	15
Generally disagree with the categorisation process	15
Fine as it is/ leave it as it is	14
Not clear what each new name means	10
Doesn't give enough importance to low and medium levels	7
New names may be misleading/ disheartening (e.g. 'urgent' may be taken as 'immediate', 'recognised' may be taken as dismissive)	6
Other	13
<i>No relevant comment</i>	6

"Because changing the name of the banding does not do anything. It is a pointless re-branding exercise. [sic]"

"Renaming the categories doesn't change the definitions. It is name changing with no benefit to anyone apart from policy makers who can say they have made a change."

"Because the original descriptions better describe the need."

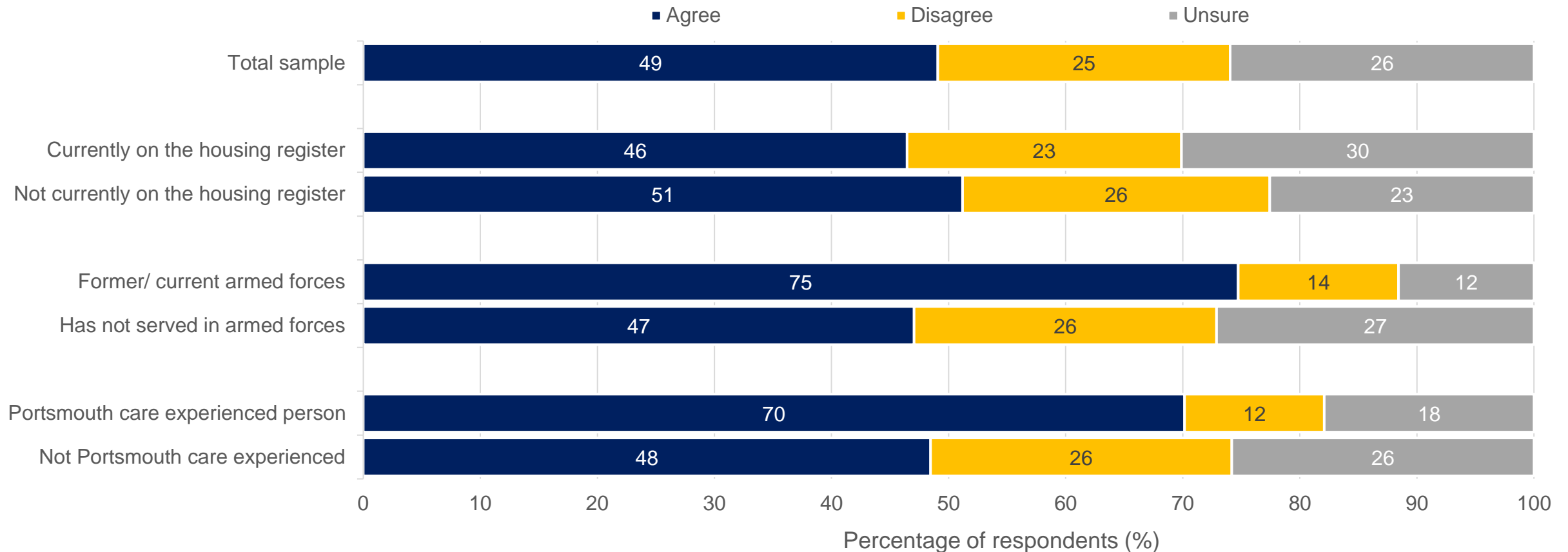
- The most popular reasons for disagreeing with renaming the priority levels question the need to do so; people feel it is pointless and unnecessary, and talk about the categories not being redefined, and that the names are fine as they are
- Other respondents prefer the original names, they feel they are easier to understand, and worry that the new names could be misleading
- Some respondents generally disagree with the categorisation process or feel not enough importance is given to low and medium levels



Priority groups

Priority groups

Q: **‘Do you agree or disagree that Portsmouth care-experiences people and former or serving members of the armed forces should be prioritised ahead of other applicants?’** | Base (from top to bottom): (1,137) | (508), (629) | (95), (948) | (67), (945)



- Just under half of respondents agree with prioritising Portsmouth care-experienced people and former or serving members of the armed forces (49%), whilst around a quarter each disagree or are unsure
- Unsurprisingly, those who fall under one of the mentioned groups express higher levels of agreement with this prioritisation than those who are not
- Respondents who are on the housing register express a slightly lower level of agreement (46%) compared to those not on the register (51%)

Priority groups

Q: *'Why do you disagree that those groups should be prioritised ahead of other applicants?'* | Base: All those disagreeing (284)

Key themes	%
Unfair to prioritise/ everyone should have a fair chance	23
They often have other support, income, or opportunities available to them (particularly armed forces)	17
Not an indication of needs/ others may have more urgent needs	15
Should just be based on needs	11
Only agree with prioritising care experienced persons	8
Other groups should have priority (e.g. those with disabilities)	8
Should stick to the waiting list/ priority system	6
They should be supported elsewhere (e.g. through MoD, social workers)	6
Joining the armed forces is a personal choice/ not the only career that supports the country, so should not be prioritised	5
Only agree with prioritising the armed forces	3
Other	5
<i>No relevant comment</i>	14

"I consider they should be awarded the same level of priority as other applicants who are homeless and meet the homeless criteria."

"There is significant support in place for these two audiences already and whilst they are in need many other groups don't have such assistance and fall through the gaps."

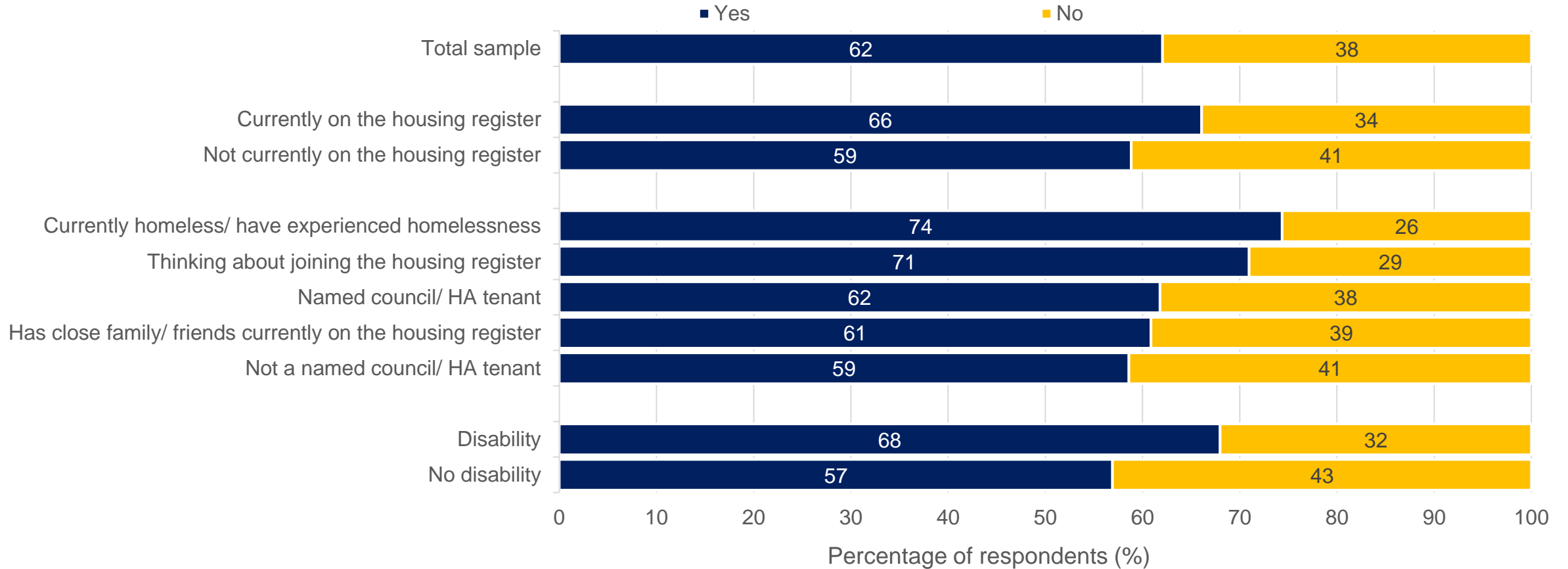
"Belonging to these groups doesn't mean that their housing needs are more urgent than anyone else."

- Whilst some respondents disagree with prioritising care-experienced persons or former/ current member of the armed forces as they feel this is unfair and everyone should have a fair chance, others only agree with prioritising one of the mentioned groups or a different group (e.g. those with disabilities)
- Respondents also feel that the system should be based on need and follow the waiting list order, some mention that these groups often receive support or opportunities elsewhere

Other priority groups

Q: **'Are there any other groups of applicants who should be given extra priority?'**

Base (from top to bottom): (1,136) | (507), (629) | (117), (62), (369), (92), (442) | (507), (629)



- Just under two thirds of respondents feel there are other groups of applicants who should be given priority (62%)
- Levels of agreement are higher amongst those currently on the housing register, those who have ever experienced homelessness or thinking about joining the housing register, and those with a disability

Other priority groups

Q: **'What other groups should also be given extra priority?'** | Base: All those saying 'Yes' (705)

Key themes	%
Those with disabilities or health needs	27
Families/ people with children (especially young children)	14
Those who are homeless/ at risk of becoming homeless	10
Current tenants in overcrowded housing	10
Victims/ survivors of domestic abuse	9
Those who are vulnerable/ with mental ill health	9
People who are local to Portsmouth/ born in Portsmouth or the UK	8
Elderly/ older people	6
Single parents	6
Families with children (including adult children) with additional needs/ disabilities	5
People who have/ have had key or front-line jobs (e.g. NHS workers, ex-service)	5
Current tenants in unsuitable or inappropriate housing (e.g. not meeting their needs, too big)	4
Those with low incomes	2
Those who have been waiting a long time	2
Family with children (particularly older children of different genders) sharing a bedroom	2
Single occupants (e.g. single men)	2
Young adults	2
Refugees	2
No-fault evictions/ people at risk of eviction due to landlord	1
Pregnant people	1
Other	8
<i>No relevant comment</i>	9

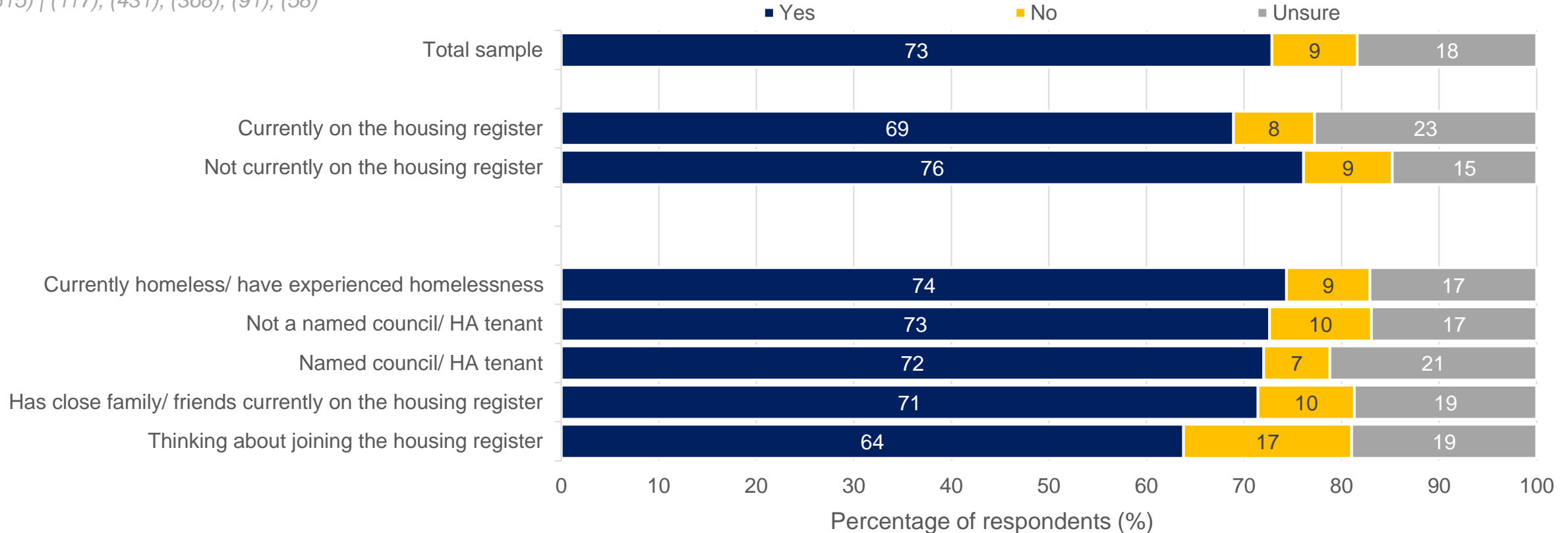


Direct nominations

Direct nominations

“A small number of properties each year are reserved for certain groups of vulnerable people, for example people with learning disabilities or vulnerable families leaving hostel accommodation. These are known as ‘direct nominations’”

Q: **‘Should the council continue to do this, and base the number of properties on the level of need?’** | Base (from top to bottom): (1,120) | (505), (615) | (117), (431), (368), (91), (58)



- Around three quarters of respondents agree with continuing to reserve a small number of properties for vulnerable people (73%), whilst 9% disagree and 18% are unsure
- Levels of agreement are lower among those currently on the housing register (69%) and those thinking about joining the register (64%, where 17% disagree)

Direct nominations

Q: *‘Why don’t you think the council should continue to reserve a small number of properties each year for certain groups of vulnerable people, based on the level of need?’*

| Base: All those saying ‘No’ (98)

Key themes	%
It’s unfair to others who are on the waiting list	23
Disagree with having empty properties if they could be filled	13
All those waiting for housing are vulnerable in some way	12
Should use the priority system/ needs-based allocation for everyone	11
Disagree with how ‘vulnerable’ is defined and prioritised	10
Vulnerable people should have their own process and specific care/ specialised properties	6
Many tenants are in unsuitable properties whilst these ones are kept empty	5
Concerns about people abusing the system	4
Portsmouth locals should come first	3
Other	11
<i>No relevant comment</i>	16

“It is unfair. They should join the register, the same as others.”

“Reserving properties leaves them empty for an unspecified amount of time until ‘a need’ arises. There is always ‘a need’ waiting on the housing register. There shouldn’t be any empty properties anywhere, at any time.”

“Anyone who is homeless is vulnerable.”

- The most common reason for disagreeing with direct nominations is feeling that it is unfair to others on the waiting list, some point out that everyone waiting for properties are vulnerable in some way, and that it would be fairer to use the priority system and allocation on a needs basis for everyone
- With many waiting for a housing or more suitable housing, respondents also disagree with having empty properties ‘just in case’
- Some respondents do not agree with the definition and prioritisation of ‘vulnerable’ or feel that this system should be specialised and separated



Further comments

Further comments

Q: *'Do you have any other comments to make about Portsmouth's allocations policy?'* | Base: Total sample (1,120)

Key themes	%
Prioritise Portsmouth locals/ those with Portsmouth ties/ British citizens	6
Regularly review how suitable and appropriate properties are for tenants needs	5
Need more social housing (e.g. more 3+ bedroom houses, accessible)	4
Address overcrowding	4
Certain groups should have priority (e.g. care-experienced, disabled)	3
Encourage and enable downsizing and exchanges	3
Change system/ process of allocation (e.g. allow bidding)	3
Waiting list is too long/ reduce waiting list time	3
Ensure system is fair and needs-based, whilst considering all factors on people's lives	3
Have transparency and communication whilst on waiting list	2
Praise for policy, survey or current ways of working	2
Be more proactive and intentional with housing allocation (e.g. place people in appropriate housing, consider existing tenants – like over 55s)	2
Intervene/ tackle issues in private sector renting	1
Feel that system is able to be abused	1
Other	4
No relevant comment	64

"The housing policy should always prioritise those who have a connection to the local area."

"I would like to see more action toward people with disabilities living in unsuitable accommodation, and suitable accessible [sic] properties so the current property can be passed on to someone who needs accommodation."

"There needs to be more social housing, especially 3 bedroom properties. The city doesn't need anymore student accommodations."

"I think housing circumstances should be reviewed every so often depending on their housing need. An example of this is an elderly who lives down the road from us, he lives in 3 bedroom council house by himself and had been leaving alone for a long time now, but there are families like us who live in crowded accommodations.."

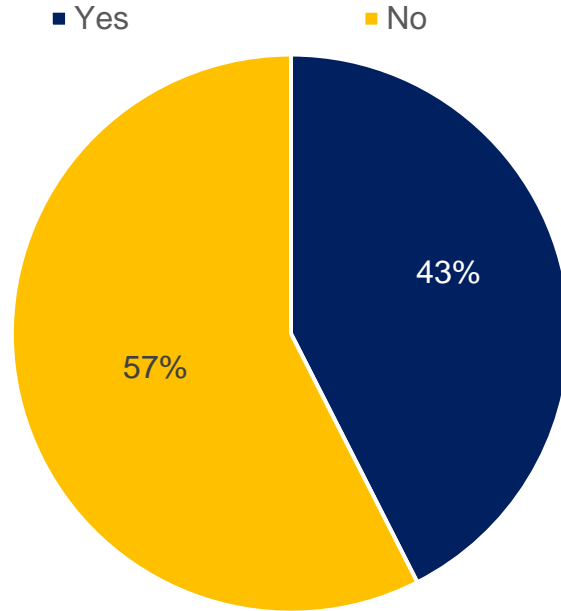


Demographics

Children in household

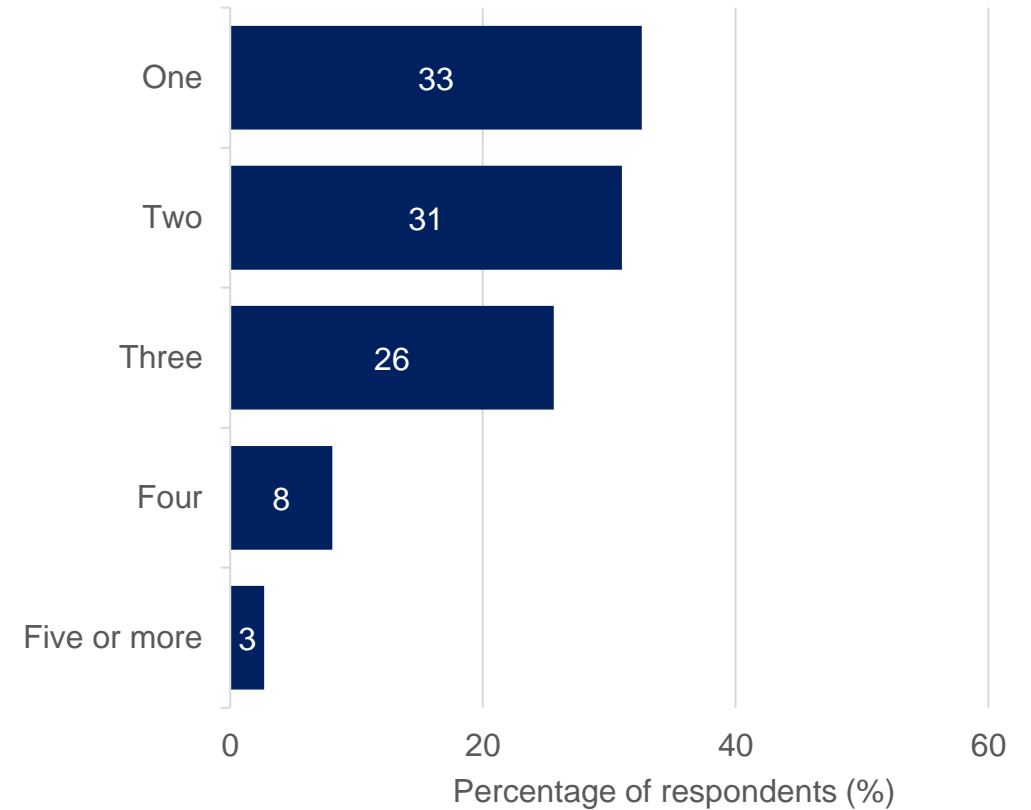
Q: *'Do you currently have any children under the age of 18 living in your household'*

| Base: Total sample (1,049)



Q: *'How many children under the age of 18 do you have living in your household?'*

| Base: All those with children in household (445)

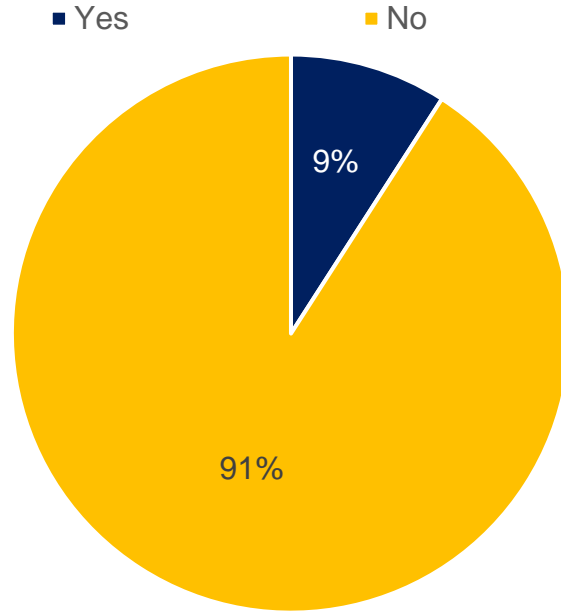


- Just under half of respondents have children under 18 living in their household (43%), whilst 57% do not
- Of those with children in their household, the vast majority have three or less, with just 11% having four or more. A third have one child under 18, 31% have two, and 26% have three

Members of the armed forces and care-experienced people

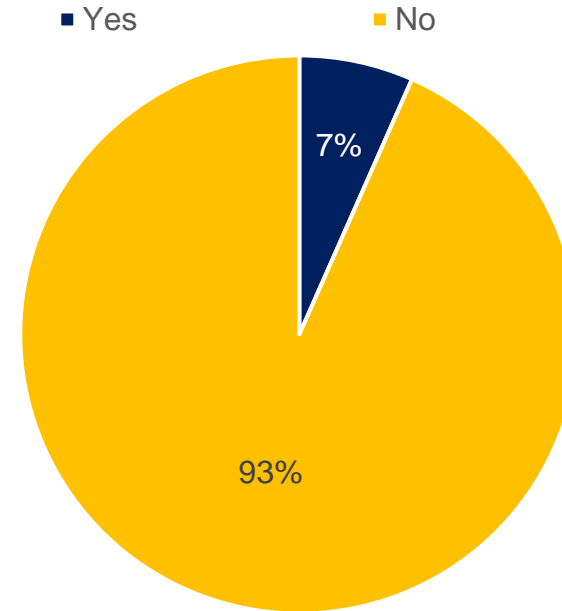
Q: **'Have you formerly served, or are you currently serving in the armed forces?'**

| Base: Total sample (1,044)



Q: **'Are you a Portsmouth care-experienced person?'**

| Base: Total sample (1,013)



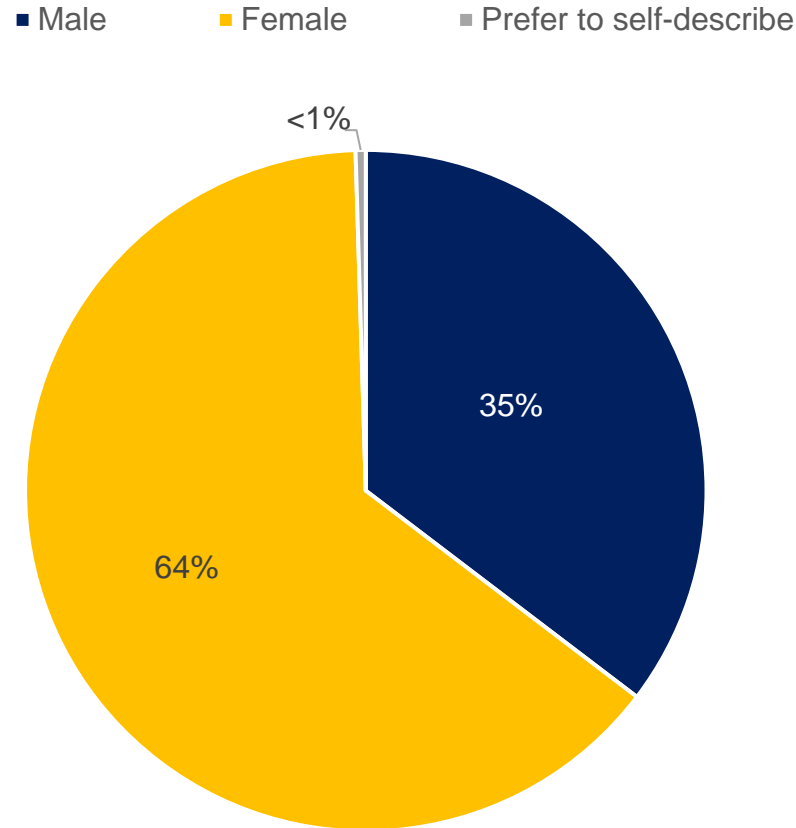
- The majority of respondents have not served in the armed forces (91%), whilst 9% have
- Most respondents are not a Portsmouth care-experienced person (93%), whilst 7% are

Sex and age

- Official -

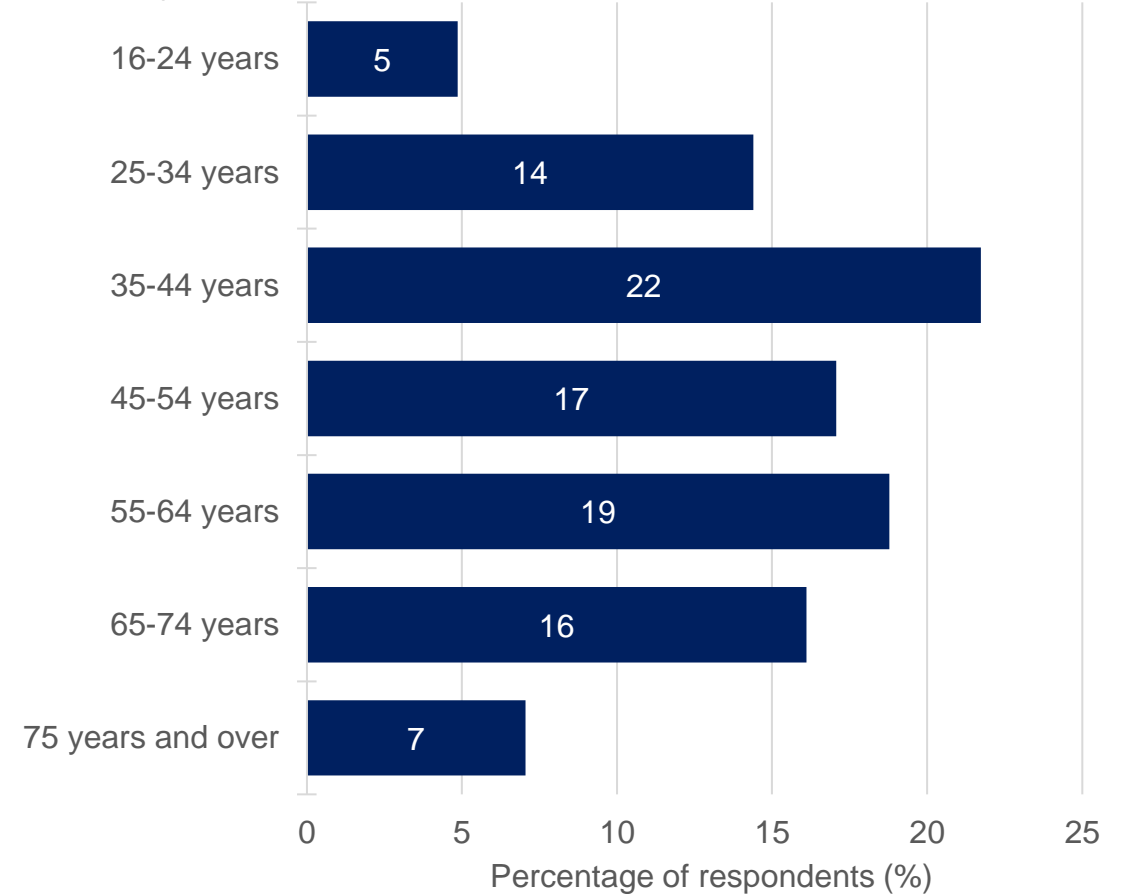
Q: 'What is your sex?'

| Base: Total sample (1,041)



Q: 'What is your age group?'

| Base: Total sample (1,049)

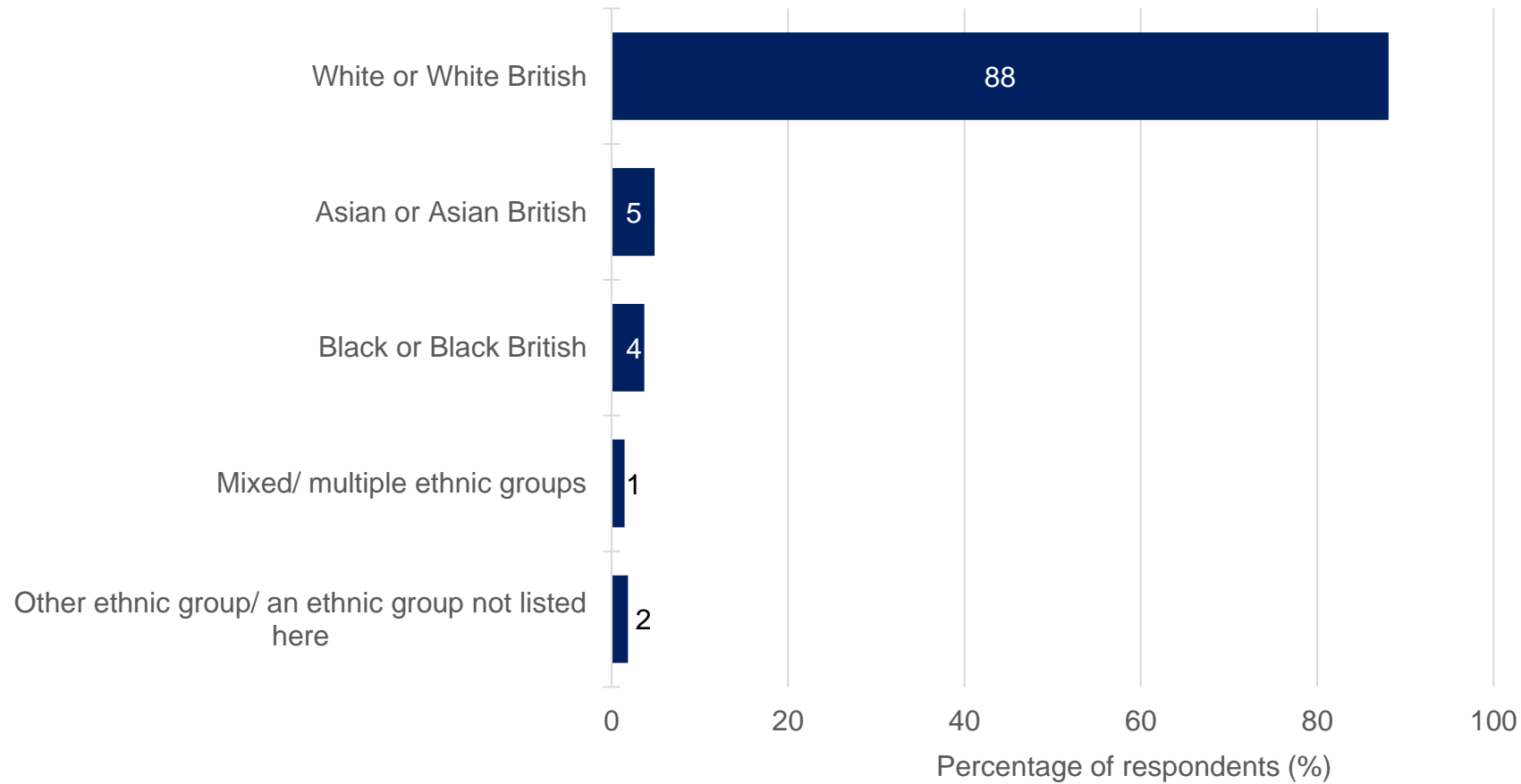


- Most respondents are female (64%), whilst 35% are male and less than 1% prefer to self-describe
- There is fairly good representation for age groups between 25 and 74, the highest proportion being 35-44 years (22%)

Ethnicity

- Official -

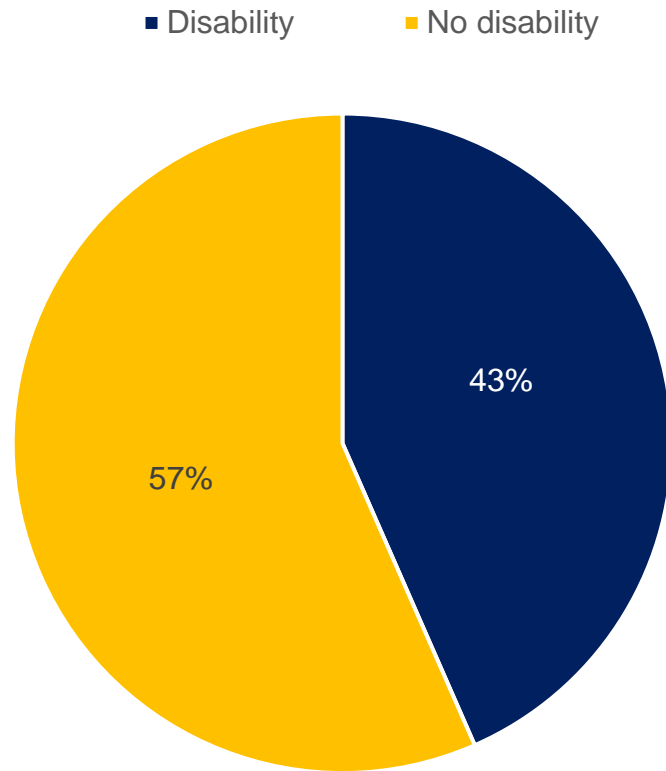
Q: **'Which of the following ethnic groups do you belong to?'** | Base: Total sample (1,025)



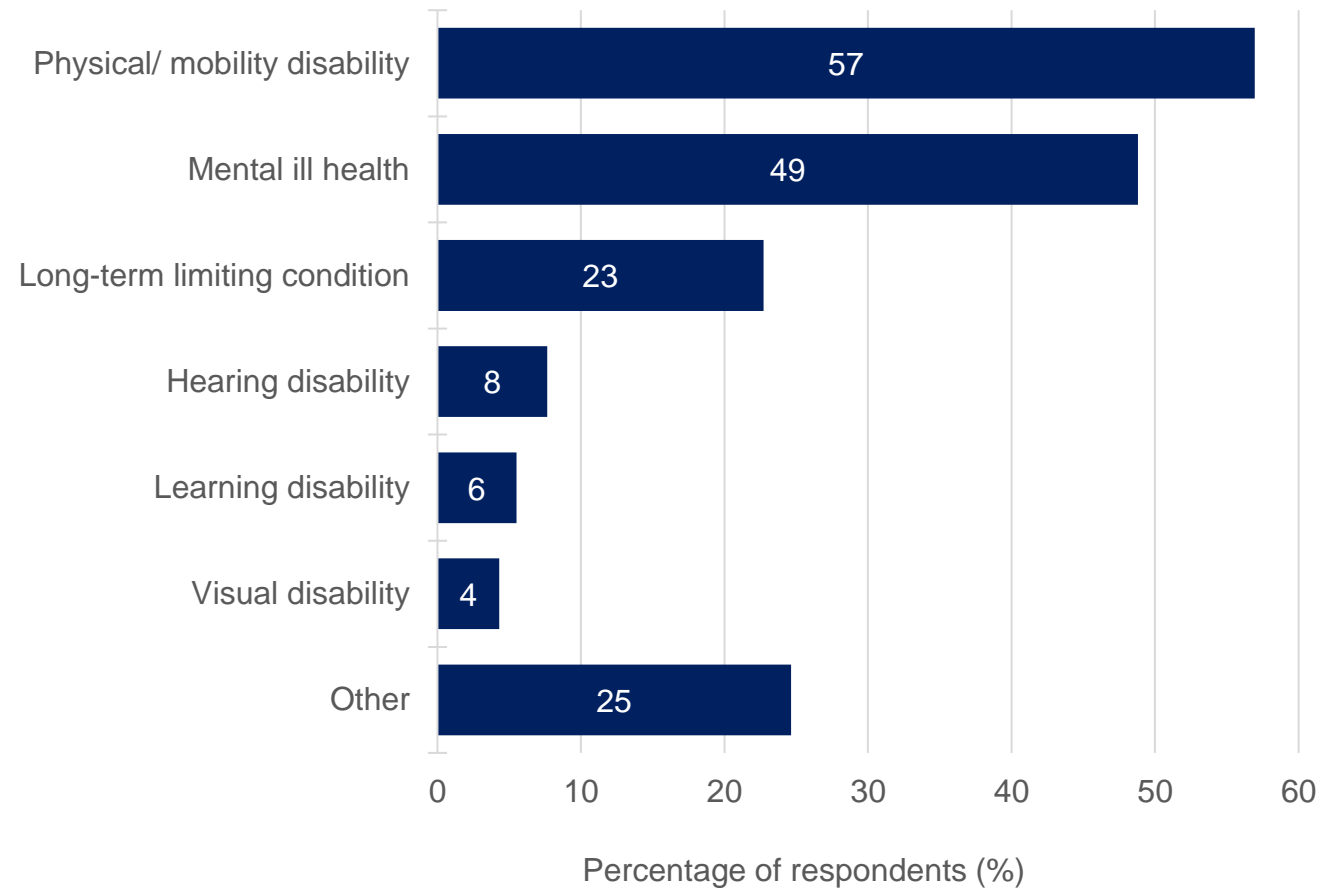
- The majority of respondents are White or White British (88%), whilst 5% are Asian or Asian British and 4% are Black or Black British

Disability

Q: 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability, a long-term illness, or a physical or mental health condition that reduces your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?' | Base: Total sample (997)



Q: 'What is the nature of your disability, long-term limiting condition or health problem?' | Base: Those with a disability (418)



- 43% of respondents have a disability, whilst 57% do not
- The most common type of disability reported is a physical/ mobility disability (57%), followed by mental ill health (49%)