

Shaping Our Future

Putting People First in Exeter and Devon

Exeter City Council

Final Proposal for Local Government
Reorganisation in Devon

Appendices

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Appendix One: Financial Sustainability, Approach and Assumptions

1 Overview of approach

- 1.1 Our approach to the financial modelling and review of costs, savings and financial viability has been developed by a senior group of cross-authority finance professionals, following a review of various approaches taken in previous or proposed Local Government Re-organisations. We have developed detailed financial models to establish the financial case for reorganisation, and to assess the viability of each proposed new unitary. Transitional and implementation costs have been estimated with reference to the implementation plans set out in Appendix 2, drawing upon evidence from previous Local Government Reorganisations and a review of available models. Corroborating indicators of financial resilience have been reviewed alongside our modelling to provide further analysis of financial sustainability. We have commissioned specialist external input to provide advice and modelling in technical areas. This appendix sets out the methodology used for the core financial modelling work, referencing source data and setting out assumptions and the basis of calculations at each stage.
- 1.2 As a first stage, we have used published financial datasets to collate and analyse baseline costs. Within these baseline calculations, we have differentiated fixed and variable cost elements and used this analysis to estimate likely savings and additional costs from the aggregation and disaggregation of different service areas. We have also used data collected from the 11 current councils across Devon as a baseline to estimate the likely savings from the aggregation of corporate services and rationalisation of senior managers, the rationalisation of accommodation, and a reduction in the number of elections and councillors. Savings from the transformation of service delivery and the harmonisation of income streams have been calculated for some specific areas. This has enabled us to estimate the future running costs of each proposed Unitary (after the delivery of reorganisation and transformation savings, and the application of any ongoing costs of disaggregation). Section 2 of this Appendix provides further detail on this stage of financial modelling.
- 1.3 Secondly, we have compared the estimated future running cost with modelled revenue streams for each proposed new unitary in order to assess the financial viability of each proposed base and modified Unitary. Secondary assessments of viability have been carried out by reviewing comparative resilience and viability indicators for each new council, alongside an initial assessment of likely balance sheet health. The methodology used to assess viability and financial sustainability is set out in more detail in section 3 of this Appendix.
- 1.4 Section 4 below explains how the costs of implementation have been estimated, for each new council area and for Devon-wide co-ordination and governance arrangements. Estimated implementation costs are profiled, alongside estimates of savings, disaggregation costs and revenues, to produce a medium-term financial forecast for each proposed new Unitary. Financing options for costs have been considered.

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2 Transformation and Reorganisation benefits and Disaggregation costs

2.1 Baseline costs

- 2.1.1 Costs have been estimated and analysed using source data from the 2025/26 RA returns from each of the current 11 councils, with some further detail sourced from published financial statements (adjusted to a 2025/26 price base). This source cost data has been supplemented with further information collected through a working group of senior finance leaders from each council, using a 2025/26 price base with a reconciliation back to the published RA data. Data from published 2024/25 statement of accounts and other published sources has also been used to estimate 2025/26 senior management costs and members allowances. The results of this data collection exercise are presented in Annex 1 below, which sets out a baseline cost for each current authority against various categories of cost. Costs for corporate services (charged as overheads to RA lines in accordance with guidance) have been disaggregated by each authority so that the full cost of corporate services can be analysed. The total baseline cost reconciles to each authority's 2025/26 RA return.
- 2.1.2 All baseline costs analysed in Annex 1 are generally presented and analysed using the net cost of service calculation prescribed by the RA guidance, aggregating the total cost of services at a level of cost which:
- Includes costs that are funded by government grants, i.e. costs shown are gross of government grant income (with costs funded by Dedicated Schools Grant set out separately).
 - Presents (with some exceptions) a net position for other (non-government grant) income streams. Exceptions, where costs are presented gross of non-government grant income, are noted in paragraph 2.5 below.
- 2.1.3 This approach allows a fuller understanding of the costs that would be impacted by Local Government Reorganisation, allowing all taxpayer-funded costs to be analysed. However, we have applied a general assumption that most non-governmental income streams (e.g. fees and charges income, grants and funding provided by other, non-governmental bodies) are either not material or would be impacted in line with costs. For example:
- Client income for social care packages would be distributed to new authorities in line with the net cost of care packages.
 - Income from fees and charges will generally be distributed in line with the cost of the service.
 - Other income streams are generally considered to be de-minimis for the purposes of this proposal stage.
- 2.1.4 The exceptions to this general approach for non-government grant income are

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income received from parking operations (parking charges, permit income and fines), and income received within economic and community development functions (generally for property held for economic development and regeneration purposes, but also including revenue grants). These income streams are material (totalling £65.7m and £59.2m respectively across Devon). The geographical distribution of income streams and behaviour of cost in these areas are likely to vary independently of each other and so have been analysed separately.

- 2.1.5 All costs shown are revenue costs. At this stage we have not attempted to baseline or analyse Capital Expenditure; although we consider that there would be financial benefits from the aggregation and consolidated management of capital programmes savings are likely to be smaller and difficult to estimate at this stage. Capital financing costs are included in the cost modelling set out in Annex 1 as disclosed in each Council's 2025/25 RA return.

2.2 Estimates of savings and costs – service aggregation and disaggregation

- 2.2.1 The baseline cost data presented in Annex 1 has been disaggregated into fixed and variable elements for different service areas. Fixed and variable costs have been estimated with reference to existing council budget data for comparable authorities. We have taken this approach to try to model estimates of savings and costs, but also to ensure that the overall cost of new council structures is forecast effectively, taking into account the fixed costs of different service areas in a new four unitary model of local government, and apportioning the variable cost of operations carefully across new council areas. The methodology set out in this section 2.2 also forms the basis of the financial viability assessment in section 3 below.

- 2.2.2 Variable costs have been reallocated to proposed new unitary councils for base case and modified proposals based on the following principles:

- Where a whole existing council will be incorporated within a proposed new unitary council, all of the variable costs for that council are included within the proposed new unitary. For example, in both the base proposal and modified proposal, the estimated variable costs for Torridge District Council services are included within the cost base for the proposed Devon Coast & Countryside unitary.
- Where an existing council area will be split between two or more proposed unitary councils, the estimated variable costs for that council have been allocated to proposed new unitary councils in proportion to appropriate cost drivers for each constituent geography. Cost drivers have been selected for each category of cost using a balance of accuracy / availability of data and the most appropriate basis for apportioning cost across geographical areas.

- 2.2.3 The fixed costs of providing services across Devon are likely to change

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significantly through the creation of four unitary councils to replace the existing eleven Unitary, District and County Councils. For upper-tier functions, fixed costs are likely to increase with the creation of a fourth set of social care, highways and education functions – requiring additional management structures, systems and specialist functions. For lower tier and corporate functions, fixed costs are likely to reduce through the aggregation of functions – the cost of management structures, systems and specialist functions that are currently duplicated will be reduced.

2.2.4 As noted in paragraph 2.2.1 above, some information (on the cost of elections, accommodation, senior management and member allowances costs) has been collected through a working group of senior finance leaders from each council, using a 2025/26 price base with a reconciliation back to the published RA data. Data from published 2024/25 statement of accounts and other published sources has also been used to estimate 2025/26 senior management costs and members allowances and to ensure a consistent estimate. These categories of cost are shown separately in Annex 1 and have been analysed separately as detailed in section 2.3 below.

2.2.5 The fixed costs for service delivery and other corporate functions for the new base and modified unitary proposals have been estimated; again, with reference to similar current council fixed cost bases as a guide, using fixed costs in the two current Devon unitaries as a basis for comparative analysis. The following key assumptions have been used:

- For the base case proposal:
 - Plymouth and Torbay councils will be unchanged and so both fixed and variable costs are assumed to be unchanged.
 - The new proposed Exeter unitary is assumed to have a similar fixed cost base to the current Torbay unitary, being of a similar population.
 - The new proposed Devon Coast and Countryside unitary is assumed to have a larger fixed cost base than the current Plymouth unitary authority, reflecting the fact that it is a larger, more dispersed council.
- For the modified case proposal:
 - The proposed expansion to Plymouth Council is modest, representing a marginal 12% expansion of population over a relatively small area. Because we are proposing a continuing authority model for the expanded Plymouth Council, we have assumed that the cost of existing Plymouth City Council management structures, systems and specialist functions will continue into the new council largely unchanged. A very small increase has been included in the modified proposal estimates of the fixed costs of education services, reflecting the need to establish a larger specialist school transport function across a new rural area with different demands for mainstream school transport.

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- The proposed expansion of current Torbay Council boundaries and the proposed Expanded Exeter Unitary area represent more significant expansions and an increase in fixed costs has been assumed for these modified proposals compared to the base proposal. Under our modified proposal, Expanded Exeter, Expanded Torbay and Expanded Plymouth will have broadly similar populations and so are assumed to have similar fixed cost bases.
- As with the base proposal, the modified proposal for the Devon Coast and Countryside unitary would be the largest unitary council of the four proposed and is significantly more dispersed than the other three urban councils. However, its size would be reduced compared to the base case proposal, and so a more modest fixed cost base is assumed when compared to the base proposal.

2.2.6 Our analysis assumes that some existing shared service arrangements across Devon councils (specifically, Pensions Administration, Internal Audit, Libraries and Trading Standards & Coroners) will continue to operate as shared services. We have not, at this stage, assumed that new shared service arrangements will be created and therefore for all other services, fixed costs have been estimated based on an assumption that there will be four separate functions operating across Devon following a transition period. Some areas of cost – for example, Capital Financing and Levies – are treated as wholly variable and, at this stage, have been apportioned to new proposed council areas based on population.

2.2.7 It is important to note that, throughout, our estimates of cost are for future ‘steady state’ unitary councils, after a period of transition and transformation into new council structures is concluded. We acknowledge that new councils that are not continuing authorities will inherit a cost base that is likely to be larger than the estimates set out here. This issue is explored further in section 4 below.

2.2.8 Estimates of changes to fixed costs before and after reorganisation are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (below and overleaf), for the base case and modified proposals respectively.

Table 1: Estimated fixed service delivery costs before and after reorganisation: base case proposal

	Total estimated current fixed costs	Estimated fixed costs after reorganisation (£m) – base case proposal				Total estimated future fixed costs	Difference – cost / (saving)
		Devon coast & countryside	Exeter	Plymouth	Torbay		
Top tier functions	42.7	21.6	9.5	11.8	9.5	52.5	9.8
Lower tier functions	62.3	11.7	6.9	8.5	6.9	34.0	-28.3
Corporate functions	140.1	38.1	21.6	29.1	21.6	110.2	-29.9
TOTAL	245.1	71.4	38.0	49.3	38.0	196.7	-48.4

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Table 2: Estimated fixed service delivery costs before and after reorganisation: modified case proposal

	Total estimated current fixed costs	Estimated fixed costs after reorganisation (£m) – modified case proposal				Total estimated future fixed costs	Difference – cost / (saving)
		Devon coast & countryside	Expanded Exeter	Expanded Plymouth	Expanded Torbay		
Top tier functions	42.7	16.7	13.8	11.9	13.8	56.2	13.5
Lower tier functions	62.3	9.5	8.9	8.5	8.9	35.7	-26.5
Corporate functions	140.1	32.0	29.2	29.1	29.2	119.3	-20.8
TOTAL	245.1	58.2	51.8	49.4	51.8	211.2	-33.9

2.3 *Property optimisation, democratic costs and optimising leadership*

2.3.1 We have estimated savings achievable through the rationalisation of property and the optimisation of democratic and leadership costs separately to the broader estimation of savings and additional costs arising from the wider. The baseline expenditure for the relevant categories of cost has been disaggregated from other corporate / central services costs (as set out in Annex 1) to ensure there is no double-counting within wider aggregation savings. For all costs in this section, under the base case costs are assumed to be unchanged for the base proposal for Plymouth and Torbay unitaries.

Property optimisation

2.3.2 Savings through the rationalisation of office accommodation have been estimated for the proposed Exeter and Devon Coast and Countryside unitaries in both the base and modified proposal – and in the modified proposal for a Expanded Torbay council - with reference to actual premises running costs of office accommodation collated through a cross-authority senior finance officer working group. Taking an average cost across similar categories of office sites from the existing office estate cost base, we have estimated the costs of office accommodation for new proposed councils using the following assumptions:

- It is assumed that the cost of office accommodation for the base-case Exeter unitary would be broadly equivalent to the current cost of office accommodation for Torbay Council, a similar-sized unitary.
- It is assumed that office accommodation for the proposed Devon Coast and Countryside unitary would be dispersed for both the base and modified proposals. We have based estimated costs for both the base and modified options on four larger satellite sites.
- For the modified proposal for a Expanded Exeter unitary, we have assumed the office accommodation cost of the base case proposal, with an additional two small satellite sites.

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- It is assumed that office accommodation costs for the proposed Expanded Torbay unitary would be equivalent to those for the current Torbay council, with a further mid-sized satellite site.
- 2.3.3 It is possible that further property optimisation savings may be achievable through a broader rationalisation of operational property (for example, depot sites and customer service delivery points). However, we are not assuming any further savings beyond the office estate as a result of this exercise.
- 2.3.4 We do not consider that there are likely to be any significant property optimisation savings falling to the proposed Expanded Plymouth Council within our modified proposal, and so for this proposal office accommodation costs for the current Plymouth Council are assumed to be equal to the costs for a Expanded Plymouth Council. In line with other corporate services, a marginal increase in variable costs for wider FM services has been assumed in order to account for any increase in satellite customer service point or depot costs.

Optimisation of democratic costs

- 2.3.5 The number of elections held in Devon will reduce in proportion to a reduction in the number of councils in Devon from 11 to 4. Currently, every 4 years there are 15 elections held in Devon – Exeter and Plymouth Councils hold ‘elections by thirds’ with three elections every four years; all other councils hold one election every four years. We have assumed (under both the base case and modified proposals) that the Exeter based and Plymouth based unitaries will continue with elections by thirds and the other two councils will operate an ‘all out’ democratic process. The estimated cost of elections has therefore been reduced proportionately through a reduction from 15 elections to 8 elections every four years, with costs allocated to new councils in line with the number of elections assumed for each new council, allowing for different population sizes as a further variable element and fixed management and system costs.
- 2.3.6 The number of councillors would also reduce with a reduction in the number of councils – there are currently 475 district, county and unitary councillors across the 11 authorities in Devon. Councillors are paid allowances and expenses, which would reduce in proportion with a reduction to the number of councillors – assumed numbers for new authorities are set out in Table 3:

Table 3: assumed number of councillors – base and modified proposals

<i>Assumed no. of councillors – base proposal</i>				<i>Assumed no. of councillors – modified proposal</i>			
Devon C & C	Exeter	Plymouth	Torbay	Devon C & C	Expanded Exeter	Expanded Plymouth	Expanded Torbay
110	39	57	36	90	55	60	55

- 2.3.7 Cost estimates of general and special allowances have been calculated by reducing the baseline costs across current Devon councils in proportion to the reduced number of councillors. This cost has been apportioned across the base and modified proposed unitaries using the assumed number of

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councillors set out in the table above. Special allowances are assumed to change in proportion to the number of councillors and so have not been calculated separately to general expenses / allowances. Whilst Exeter are currently proposing 72 Councillors, the change (at a cost of approximately £300,000) is not considered material to the case and costs will ultimately be based on MHCLG's final decision.

Optimisation of leadership costs

2.3.8 Senior leadership costs will reduce as a result of Local Government Reorganisation in Devon through the elimination of duplication and consolidation of management structures. For the purposes of our analysis, we have defined 'senior leadership' as follows:

- For district councils, the Chief Executive and direct reports to the Chief Executive, plus (if different) the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer;
- For the County Council and Unitary Councils, the Chief Executive, direct reports to the Chief Executive, and the third tier of management; including the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

2.3.9 Current senior leadership costs have been collated through a cross-authority senior finance officer working group and cross referenced to published statement of accounts data (adjusted to a 2025/26 price base). Headteachers and other school-based senior leaders have been excluded. These costs are shown separately in Annex 1 (with other cost categories adjusted to ensure there is no double-counting).

2.3.10 For the Plymouth and Torbay Councils proposed in the base case proposal senior leadership costs are assumed to be unchanged; we are assuming that (under a continuing authority model) that senior leadership team costs for Expanded Plymouth will remain unchanged from the current Plymouth council costs. For other new unitary councils proposed (Exeter Council / Expanded Exeter and Devon Coast and Countryside Councils in the base and modified proposals, and for the modified proposal for Expanded Torbay) we have assumed that each Council will have a leadership team cost broadly equivalent to the average senior leadership cost for the existing top tier authorities.

2.3.11 Tables 4 and 5 (below and overleaf) set out estimates of the various savings covered in this section.

Table 4: Estimated costs & savings before and after reorganisation (Office accommodation, Democratic costs, Senior leadership): base case proposal

	Total current costs (£m)	Estimated costs after reorganisation (£m) – base case proposal				Total estimated	Estimated saving (£m)
		Devon	Exeter	Plymouth	Torbay		

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		coast & countryside				future costs (£m)	
Office accommodation	8.4	2.1	1.4	1.6	1.4	6.5	-1.9
Elections	4.0	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.3	2.1	-1.9
Member allowances	5.9	1.9	0.6	1.2	0.5	4.2	-1.7
Senior Leadership	13.0	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	9.7	-3.3
TOTAL	31.3	7.4	4.9	5.4	4.7	22.4	-8.9

Table 5: Estimated costs & savings before and after reorganisation (Office accommodation, Democratic costs, Senior leadership): modified proposal

	Total current costs (£m)	Estimated costs after reorganisation (£m) – modified proposal				Total estimated future costs (£m)	Estimated saving (£m)
		Devon coast & countryside	Expanded Exeter	Expanded Plymouth	Expanded Torbay		
Office accommodation	8.4	2.1	1.6	1.6	1.7	6.9	-1.5
Elections	4.0	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.3	2.2	-1.8
Member allowances	5.9	1.5	0.8	1.3	0.8	4.4	-1.5
Senior Leadership	13.0	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	9.7	-3.3
TOTAL	31.3	6.8	5.5	5.7	5.3	23.3	-8.0

2.4 Other savings

- 2.4.1 New unitary councils would have to harmonise fees and charges; the experience of previous reorganisations in other areas is that this results in some additional income. For the Base Devon Coast and Countryside proposal, and for the Modified proposals for the Devon Coast and Countryside and Extended Torbay unitaries, we have assumed a 2% increase in parking revenues, with a separate modelled increase for the modified Extended Exeter Unitary developed by finance colleagues at Exeter City Council. A minor increase in fees and charges income is also assumed within cost estimates for regulatory services and leisure services.
- 2.4.2 Some modest savings arising from economies of scale in procurement and efficiencies for single systems have been assumed to be delivered through the merging of lower tier services in the Devon Coast and Countryside proposals for both options, and in the Extended Exeter and Extended Torbay options for the modified proposal. A 5% reduction in variable costs has been assumed for planning development, economic and community development, with more modest savings in regulatory services and sports, leisure and open spaces.
- 2.4.3 Specific savings assumptions have been developed in Waste Collection for the Extended Plymouth, Extended Exeter and Extended Torbay proposals in the modified case in consultation with finance colleagues at Exeter City Council. Comparative analysis of unit costs in this service indicates that there are likely to be cost reduction opportunities arising from reduced travel times and route harmonisation, as well as extended use of recycling technology currently adopted at Exeter City Council across a wider area.

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- 2.4.4 Comparing unit costs for Adult and Children social work safeguarding, assessment and care management activity (excluding care placement costs) between current Devon County Council and current Plymouth City Council costs indicates that there is likely to be a saving in this area falling to the Extended Plymouth council, which could be delivered through reduced travel times and other operational efficiencies. We have applied existing Plymouth City Council unit costs to the activity data supplied by Devon County Council for the expanded area, which results in a significant cost saving on current apportioned costs.
- 2.4.5 In addition to the savings categories described above, Table 6 below also sets out a possible additional saving (of £11.3m in the modified proposal), modelled on a reduction in the cost of social care packages through 'right sized', localised delivery models. This additional saving has not been included in the wider financial modelling of financial viability and payback periods because there are differing views on how Local Government Reorganisation in Devon (and other two-tier areas) might impact on the cost of commissioned social care services.
- 2.4.6 Currently, the unit costs of providing social care packages in the County Council area are observably higher than similar unit costs in the Unitary council areas of Torbay and Plymouth. It is arguable that some of this difference relates to the benefits of providing social care through a more localised, responsive delivery model in a smaller geographical area. The £11.3m saving is based on a modest (2-3%) reduction in the cost of commissioned social care packages across the current county area – based on an assumed reduction in unit costs that are currently higher than the unit costs of councils in Devon which operate more localised social care services. However, we feel that this assumed reduction is more uncertain than other assumptions used in our financial modelling, and so we are taking a prudent approach by excluding this saving from our financial viability calculations.

2.5 Summary of Transformation and Reorganisation benefits and Disaggregation costs

Table 6 sets out a summary of disaggregation costs and financial savings for the base and modified proposals calculated using the methodology set out above.

Table 6: Summary of costs and savings – Base and Modified proposals

	Estimated cost / (saving) (£m) - Base Proposal	Estimated cost / (saving) (£m) - Modified Proposal	Description
Service disaggregation costs	9.8	13.5	<i>Additional cost of creating new top tier services</i>
Service consolidation savings	-28.3	-26.5	<i>Savings from the consolidation of lower tier services</i>

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Corporate services consolidation savings	-29.9	-20.8	<i>Savings from the consolidation of corporate services</i>
Optimising Senior Leadership	-3.3	-3.3	<i>Reduced costs of senior leadership team</i>
Optimising costs of democracy	-3.6	-3.3	<i>Savings in the cost of elections and councillor allowances / expenses</i>
Property rationalisation	-1.9	-1.5	<i>Savings from the rationalisation of offices</i>
Service Transformation Savings	-5.9	-11.3	<i>Savings from the transformation of services, i.e waste route optimisation</i>
Harmonisation of fees and charges	-1.3	-5.2	<i>Additional income from the harmonisation of fees and charges</i>
TOTAL NET MODELLED ANNUAL SAVING	-64.5	-58.4	

3 Financial sustainability and viability

3.1 Estimated costs and income for proposed authorities

3.1.1 Using the estimates of fixed and variable costs developed through the methodology set out in section 2 above, we have modelled a projected cost of services for each Unitary Council proposed. All costs are shown at a 2025/26 price base

3.1.2 Income from Council Tax has been estimated using published 2025/26 taxbase figures, aggregated at parish level to match proposed authority boundaries. For councils where council tax harmonisation will be required, harmonisation to an average rate has been assumed in the first year of new unitary councils.

3.1.3 Settlement Funding Assessment income for the base case and modified proposals has been modelled for all unitaries proposed by specialist advisors Pixel, using their latest modelling of the impact of changes proposed in the government's recent Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation. Note that this modelling was done in October 2025, before the impact changes to Indices of Multiple Deprivation data and prior to the policy statement.

3.1.4 Table 7 below sets out these estimated costs and income streams.

Table 7: Estimated Costs of proposed Unitary Councils – Base and Modified proposals

	Estimated costs & income (£m) - Base Case			
	Devon Coast & Countryside	Exeter	Plymouth	Torbay
NET COST OF SERVICES:	751.8	181.7	315.8	185.0
<i>funded by:</i>				
Settlement Funding Assessment	235.4	77.7	164.2	89.3
Council tax	559.9	79.2	147.9	95.9
TOTAL CORE SPENDING POWER FUNDING:	795.3	156.9	312.2	185.2
Viability surplus / (gap) in funding	43.5	- 24.8	- 3.6	0.2

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	Estimated costs & income (£m) - Modified Case			
	Devon Coast & Countryside	Expanded Exeter	Expanded Plymouth	Expanded Torbay
NET COST OF SERVICES:	503.5	316.4	338.4	276.8
<i>funded by:</i>				
Settlement Funding Assessment	143.9	144.0	163.5	116.3
Council tax	367.4	177.0	177.8	163.3
TOTAL CORE SPENDING POWER FUNDING:	511.3	321.0	341.2	279.6
Viability surplus / (gap) in funding	7.7	4.6	2.8	2.8

4 Transition costs & Medium-Term Financial profiles

- 4.1 Transition Costs are detailed in the main proposal document, with main assumptions stated there. These have been developed through workshop discussions with the Plymouth City Council LGR team, with reference to learning from previous Local Government Reorganisations. Colleagues at Exeter City Council have provided estimates for the Transition Costs for the disaggregation of an Exeter-based Unitary from the wider Devon Coast and Countryside Unitary, which are assumed to be similar for both the base case and modified proposals. We have assumed Transition Costs for the creation of an Extended Torbay council in the modified proposal to be approximately double the costs for the creation of an Extended Plymouth council, due to a more complex implementation; though under the proposed continuing authority model these costs would remain far lower than Transition Costs for the other two councils proposed.
- 4.2 Annex 2 sets out how costs and savings are assumed to fall across the implementation period and for the first 10 years of new councils. We have assumed that savings will take 2-3 years to be fully implemented in most cases.

LGR PROPOSAL – FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY APPENDIX
ANNEX I – Baseline Costs (£m)

	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	North Devon	South Hams	Teignbridge	Torridge	West Devon	Devon CC	Plymouth	Torbay	TOTAL COST
Education (DSG funded)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	425.1	108.8	66.5	600.3
Other Education	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	82.7	20.3	13.3	116.2
Transport Strategy	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.4	0.1	3.0
Highways	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.0	7.1	7.5	49.6
Traffic Management	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.9
<i>Parking costs</i>	1.9	3.5	0.7	1.3	2.4	2.1	1.1	0.8	5.5	6.4	2.5	28.1
<i>Parking income</i>	-5.6	-10.6	-1.5	-4.0	-4.8	-5.8	-2.4	-1.1	-9.8	-12.2	-8.0	-65.7
Parking Services	-3.7	-7.1	-0.8	-2.8	-2.4	-3.7	-1.3	-0.4	-4.3	-5.8	-5.5	-37.6
Concessionary Fares	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1	4.4	3.6	16.1
Other transport	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	18.2	0.1	0.9	19.3
Children Looked After	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	118.2	59.0	27.2	204.4
Safeguarding Children	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	48.4	12.5	15.0	76.0
Other Children's Social Care	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.0	12.7	6.4	54.0
Adults Care – 18-64	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	175.1	63.4	30.0	268.6
Adults Care – 65+	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	153.9	48.1	26.8	228.9
Safeguarding Adults	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.3	8.5	1.1	49.9
Other Adults Social Care	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.9	2.0	9.7	42.6
P. Health children's services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.3	6.7	3.6	26.6
P. Health adults services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.1	8.6	4.6	32.3
Other Public Health services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.1	2.5	3.0	9.7
Homelessness	1.4	2.5	0.3	-0.4	0.6	1.6	0.5	0.6	1.0	7.0	4.1	19.1
Housing Benefits admin.	0.9	1.0	0.5	0.6	0.6	1.4	0.3	0.4	0.0	1.6	2.0	9.3
Other Gen.Fund housing	0.2	0.5	0.0	-0.1	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.0	-0.1	0.8	2.7
Libraries & Archives	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.8	2.0	0.7	10.5
Culture, Heritage & Tourism	0.3	2.6	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	4.0	1.5	8.8
Sport, Leisure & Parks	5.4	3.2	1.7	-0.2	0.9	2.9	0.5	0.3	2.1	5.3	0.7	22.9
Cemetery & Crematoria	0.2	0.1	-0.1	-0.2	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.0	0.0	-1.9	-0.8	-2.9
Trading Standards	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.3	0.2	2.9
Regulatory services	2.0	0.8	-0.1	-0.3	1.3	2.0	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.4	1.4	8.7
Community safety	0.6	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.4	2.9
Flood & Coastal Protection	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.1	-0.9	0.7
Street cleansing	1.8	1.7	0.6	0.7	0.9	2.4	1.0	0.6	0.0	4.6	1.9	16.2
Waste Disposal	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.5	1.4	6.5	34.5
Waste Coll. & Recycling	6.4	3.9	0.7	0.8	6.2	4.6	1.9	2.8	16.6	12.7	6.0	62.7

LGR PROPOSAL – FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY APPENDIX
ANNEX I – Baseline Costs (£m)

	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	North Devon	South Hams	Teignbridge	Torridge	West Devon	Devon CC	Plymouth	Torbay	TOTAL COST
Building control	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	-0.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.7
Planning (dev. control)	1.6	0.5	0.4	0.1	1.7	1.3	0.3	0.7	0.8	1.3	0.3	9.0
Planning policy	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.2	3.3
Environment & Climate	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	2.6	1.2	0.2	5.2
<i>Economic & Com. Dev. cost</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>1.6</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>10.8</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>43.8</i>
<i>Economic & Com. Dev. inc.</i>	<i>-0.1</i>	<i>-13.9</i>	<i>-1.5</i>	<i>-2.3</i>	<i>-3.5</i>	<i>-0.8</i>	<i>-2.2</i>	<i>-1.4</i>	<i>-6.2</i>	<i>-23.6</i>	<i>-3.7</i>	<i>-59.2</i>
Economic & Comm'ty Devlt.	0.8	-6.6	0.1	-0.4	-0.4	0.0	0.0	0.4	2.5	-12.8	1.0	-15.4
Coroners & courts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.7	0.4	2.9
Corporate & Democratic	0.4	0.7	1.1	-1.5	0.8	-0.6	0.4	0.5	2.6	3.3	4.4	12.1
Local tax collection	1.4	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.4	1.3	7.7
Emergency planning	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.9
Other central services	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	-0.7	1.2	0.0	2.0
Non-distributed costs	0.0	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.2	1.6	0.2	0.4	5.5	0.0	1.3	11.9
Finance & Procurement	1.2	1.7	0.7	1.2	0.6	1.4	0.6	0.3	10.2	4.6	3.4	25.8
FM, Property & Accom'm'n.	1.1	1.4	1.5	2.1	0.5	0.2	1.0	0.0	0.2	10.4	2.6	21.0
ICT, Change & Cust. Svs.	1.9	4.0	1.1	2.8	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.2	11.8	13.8	1.8	43.1
Legal services	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.3	0.3	3.6	1.4	2.8	10.2
HR & OD	0.4	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.2	6.3	2.3	2.1	14.1
Senior Management	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.5	2.9	2.2	2.5	13.0
Office Accommodation	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	2.5	1.6	1.4	8.4
Cllr. expenses & allowances	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.3	1.3	1.2	0.5	5.9
Election costs	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.4	0.5	0.3	4.0
Other overheads	1.0	0.8	2.0	10.4	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.1	12.4	1.4	11.5	40.3
Housing Benefits	15.5	28.6	11.2	17.4	10.5	18.0	9.8	6.5	0.0	40.4	35.3	193.2
Levies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.6	0.2	2.8
Trading Accounts	-0.5	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	-1.5	0.0	-2.4
Capital financing	1.2	5.9	1.1	2.3	1.0	2.0	0.2	1.4	41.3	48.5	20.7	125.6
Interest, investment inc.	-2.2	-1.7	-0.7	-0.4	-1.8	-1.2	-0.7	-2.0	-4.0	-4.8	-14.2	-33.6
NET COST OF SERVICES	43.1	51.8	25.8	36.8	26.2	40.1	21.3	16.9	1,372.9	517.2	319.1	2,471.1

LGR PROPOSAL – FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY APPENDIX
ANNEX 2 – Medium Term financial profile (£m)

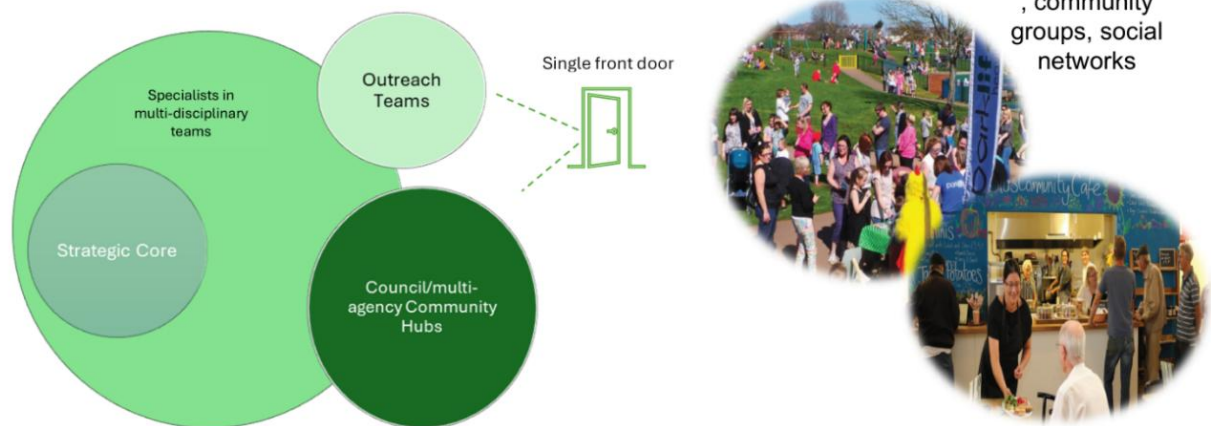
	<i>Year -1</i> <i>(2026/27)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 0</i> <i>(2027/28)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 1</i> <i>(2028/29)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 2</i> <i>(2029/30)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 3</i> <i>(2030/31)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 4</i> <i>(2031/32)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 5</i> <i>(2032/33)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 6</i> <i>(2033/34)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 7</i> <i>(2034/35)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 8</i> <i>(2035/36)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 9</i> <i>(2036/37)</i> <i>(£m)</i>	<i>Year 10</i> <i>(2037/38)</i> <i>(£m)</i>
Base Case proposal												
Transition costs	4.6	22.4	20.1	7.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Savings in each year	0.0	0.0	-8.4	-33.6	-62.1	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5
Incremental Net Impact	4.6	22.4	11.7	-25.7	-62.1	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5	-64.5
Cumulative Impact	4.6	27.0	38.7	13.1	-49.0	-113.6	-178.1	-242.6	-307.1	-371.7	-436.2	-500.7
Modified Proposal	Year -1	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Transition costs	5.8	27.7	27.3	9.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Savings in each year	0.0	0.0	-4.9	-29.7	-54.8	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4
Incremental Net Impact	5.8	27.7	22.4	-20.4	-54.8	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4	-58.4
Cumulative Impact	5.8	33.5	55.9	35.6	-19.2	-77.6	-136.0	-194.4	-252.8	-311.2	-369.6	-428.0

Appendix Two: Putting People First in Exeter and Devon

Reforming Public Service Delivery: Proposed Target Operating Model

Target Operating Model

Early Intervention and prevention



The system will operate through five core functions that align data, people, and services around residents. Predictive analytics, supported by AI, will identify households, streets, and communities at risk 12 to 18 months before crisis, guiding timely interventions such as stabilising family life under safeguarding pressures; sustaining tenancies to avoid eviction and homelessness or supporting carers before they reach breaking point.

The Strategic Leadership core will set strategic direction and ensure the council is outcomes-focused, prevention-led, guided by evidence, effective commissioning, and strong partnerships. Leveraging data to spot emerging risks, target investment, and coordinate efforts across the unitary, while tailoring commissioning to the needs of urban, suburban, rural and priority communities.

Specialists in multi-disciplinary teams will provide targeted expertise, from safeguarding and mental health to housing and school engagement, within collaborative case management. They will work alongside universal and community-based staff to ensure timely, appropriate interventions for complex or escalating needs.

Outreach Teams will bring early intervention directly to those with limited access, especially in priority and hard-to-reach communities. They will provide home visits, school-based programmes, and proactive outreach to identify hidden needs and address them before they escalate.

Single front door will be a unified access point by phone, online, email for self-referral, referral by partners, or because of proactive outreach. Customer Services Officers handle routine queries, provide low-complexity information, assistance and guidance, and connect residents to the right support or partner, ensuring people get support quickly without navigating complex systems.

Council/multi-agency hubs will be local, integrated service points in neighbourhoods and schools offering in-person support such as homelessness prevention and benefits advice, parenting programmes, and well-being initiatives. Trusted local staff working closely with

schools, health professionals, and community partners.

For staff and partners, the model enables flexible team working with shared data, stronger collaboration, and less duplication. For residents, it means earlier, more connected help that strengthens families, supports carers, and improves wellbeing. For the Council, over time, this will reduce demand for costly statutory interventions, delivering better outcomes for residents and a more sustainable system for Greater Exeter.

In practice, this will look and feel like:

Resident Journey Family with Housing and Social Support Needs	Resident Journey Individual on Assisted Waste Collections
Strategic Core – Intelligence and Targeting • Data and insight teams identify families at risk of homelessness or living in unsuitable housing, using predictive analytics and community profiles. • Outreach is prioritised for families in priority neighbourhoods, especially those with overlapping needs (e.g., low income, school attendance issues, health concerns). Mobile Outreach Teams – Proactive Contact • Outreach teams work with schools, health visitors, and voluntary sector partners to identify families who may need housing support. • Home visits and community events are used to engage families, explain available services, and build trust. Single Front Door – First Formal Contact • The family contacts the council via the unified access point (phone, online, email, or in-person at a community hub). • Customer Services Officers triage the enquiry, provide initial advice, and connect the family to the right support (housing, benefits, parenting advice). Multidisciplinary Team – Coordinated Support • The family's needs are assessed holistically by a multidisciplinary team (housing officers, social workers, benefits advisors). • A coordinated plan is developed, including support for tenancy sustainment, financial advice, and links to community resources. Community Hub – Holistic Support • The family attends sessions at a local community hub, accessing parenting programmes, wellbeing initiatives, and advice on employment or education. • Ongoing support is provided, with regular reviews and adjustments as the family's situation evolves.	Strategic Core – Intelligence and Targeting • Data systems flag individuals who have requested assisted waste collections, cross-referencing with other indicators of vulnerability (e.g., disability, age, health status). • Predictive analytics identify households where additional needs may be present but not yet formally recognised. Mobile Outreach Teams – Proactive Contact • Outreach teams proactively contact individuals on the assisted waste register, offering home visits to review their needs. • During visits, staff assess for additional support requirements (e.g., adaptations, social care, benefits advice). Single Front Door – First Formal Contact • The individual can contact the council via the unified access point to request changes to their waste collection service or flag new needs. • Customer Services Officers handle the request, provide information and advice, and refer to relevant services (e.g. community connector, occupational therapy, social care). Multidisciplinary Team – Coordinated Support • If additional needs are identified, a multidisciplinary team (waste services, social care, occupational therapy) develops a tailored support plan. • This may include home adaptations, referral to community support, or linking with care and health services. Community Hub – Holistic Support • The individual is invited to attend local community hub sessions for advice on independent living, wellbeing, and social inclusion. • Staff at the hub monitor progress and offer ongoing support, ensuring the individual's needs are met holistically.

Resident Journey Family with Housing and Social Support Needs	Resident Journey Individual on Assisted Waste Collections
Stepping Down to Community-Led Support • As the family's housing situation stabilises, support is gradually stepped down. • Community connectors and voluntary groups continue to provide informal support, helping the family build resilience and independence	Stepping Down to Community-Led Support • As the individual's situation stabilises, formal support is reduced. Community connectors and voluntary groups provide ongoing informal support, helping the individual maintain independence and wellbeing

Appendix Three: Adult Social Services in Devon

The National Context for Adult Social Care Services

Adult Social Care (ASC) in England is a complex and evolving system, providing vital care and support to nearly 890,000 people every day. ASC supports adults aged 18+ who have care and support needs arising from disability, illness, age, or other circumstances. Services include:

- Assessment, information, advice, and guidance
- Community-based prevention and advice
- Supported living and day opportunities
- Residential and nursing care
- Reablement and post-hospital recovery
- Personal care and domiciliary support
- Care market shaping
- Safeguarding

Gross expenditure by English councils on ASC services in 2023/24 totalled £32 billion, with local authorities funding £23.3 billion of these costs and the NHS £2.9 billion. The balance is met by contributions from service users for the cost of their care. On average 1.5% of the population aged 18+ are long term users of ASC services rising to 11.7% for those aged 85+¹.

Eligibility for support is assessed under the provisions of the Care Act 2014 and can either be a short-term intervention to enable an individual to regain their independence or a longer-term care plan for an ongoing need. The act requires that the assessments have due regard to opportunities to reduce, delay or prevent future needs and often the care solutions will be provided in local community settings or by providers commissioned in local neighbourhoods

The Care Act 2014 emphasises promotion of wellbeing, enabling independence, and preventing escalation of need. ASC best practice promotes a strength-based approach, focusing on the individual's aspirations, abilities and goal setting. This is particularly important for those aged 18 to 64 who may need varying levels of support throughout their adult life. There are two distinct but overlapping client groups:

- Working Age Adults (WAA) – including those with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, autism, or mental health needs.
- Older Adults (OA) – often requiring support with frailty, dementia, or recovery posthospitalisation.

In addition, ASC services will often be working closely with children aged 14 to 18, planning for their transition from children's services through to adults for those with the most complex support needs.

There are significant, well documented long standing challenges in the Adult Social Care sector including:

- Political choices and policy changes
- Demographic pressure and rising demand

¹ The Kings Fund – Key facts and figures about adult social care in the UK 2024 <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-andanalysis/data-and-charts/key-facts-figures-adult-social-care#:~:text=How%20many%20people%20who%20request,%2C%20and%2031%25%20receive%20nothing.>

- Workforce crisis and fragility of provider markets
- System complexity and integration risks
- Financial pressure and cost inflation
- Pressures with NHS Acute hospital for earlier/swifter discharges
- Increasing number of self-funders needing advice and guidance in negotiating complex care system

ASC is by far the largest single element within any unitary council's budget. There are long standing challenges for councils in meeting demand, while managing the spiralling costs for commissioned services from the provider market. Alongside the established services required for older adults (65+) the emerging needs of younger adults including those with complex neurological conditions or physical support needs are defining a whole new approach to lifelong independence and the type of interventions required.

Nationally the ASC system is under intense and growing pressure, which has included a long-standing political challenge to address the underlying funding methodology for ASC and the degree of personal liability any individual should have for personal care fees. This question remains unresolved, despite the significant funding pressure both local authorities and self-funders are experiencing in the current inflationary environment. The increasing number of self-funders requiring the advice, guidance and support of adult social care department to assist them in negotiating the complex care market. Combined with challenging efficiency targets within NHS budgets there will continue to be on ongoing pressure in the system regardless of LGR.

LGR is taking place in the context of a rapidly changing landscape with major shifts already taking place across the wider health and social care landscape. Our proposals for reform of ASC services in Devon are mindful of the current challenges and for the future, including:

- NHS Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are evolving rapidly, with reconfigured NHS boundaries and new approaches to population health².
- Ongoing financial pressure on ICS making it increasingly difficult to allocate resources to preventive or discretionary activities.
- CQC inspection of local authority ASC functions have been refreshed, with greater scrutiny of quality, outcomes and safety.
- Workforce pressures, provider fragility, and complex transitions from children's services all create demand for smarter commissioning and deeper local knowledge.
- Revolutions in the use of technology, data and predictive analytics present new opportunities in personalised care, within the need for security of personal data.
- The Casey Commission³ is likely to recommend far-reaching changes and reforms to adult social care which could mean further change following LGR

The Local Context for Adult Social Care Services

There are currently 3 councils in Devon with statutory responsibility for the provision of ASC; these are the 2 existing unitaries of Torbay and Plymouth and Devon County Council. Within the context of our Modified Proposal the focus of this section is on the current set up of ASC provided by Devon County Council as this is the service we propose to disaggregate .

Strategic Performance Overview

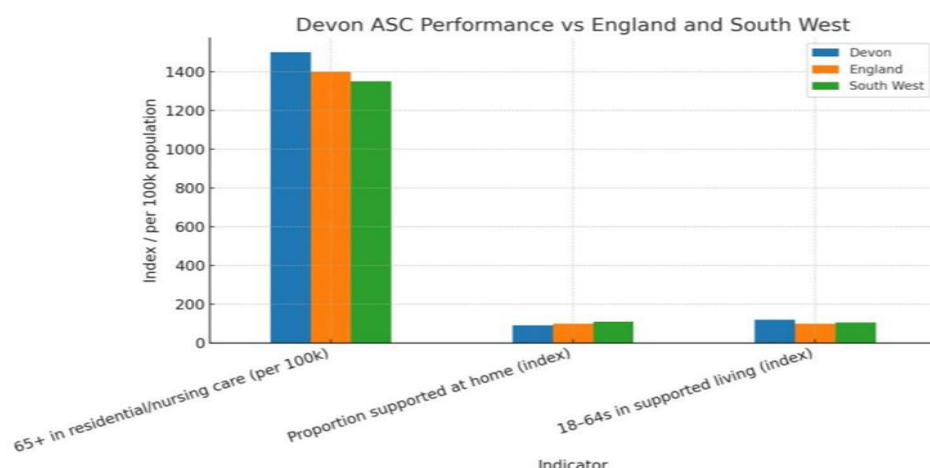
2

³ The Casey Commission, launched in May 2025, is an independent body established to develop a long-term plan for reforming adult social care in England. Phase 1, reporting in 2026, will identify immediate priorities and propose medium-term reforms; Phase 2, concluding by 2028, will outline a comprehensive roadmap for implementation over the following decade.

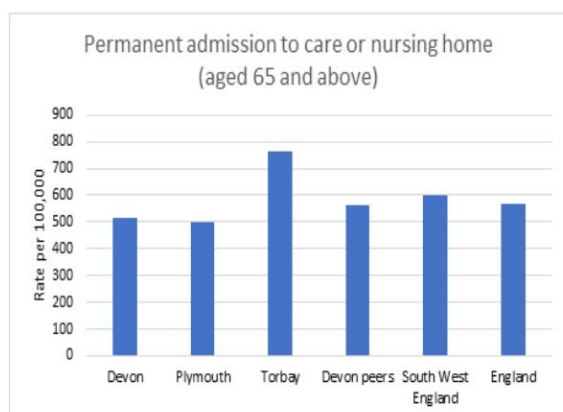
Devon County Council ASC has not had a Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance Inspection. It does however undertake an annual self-assessment and publishes an annual report, the most recently published report was for the 2025 self-assessment. This report can be found here <https://www.devon.gov.uk/adult-social-care/devon-social-care/adult-social-care-assurance/our-self-assessment-of-adult-social-care-in-devon-2025/>

Utilising publicly available data our analysis draws the following conclusions on current performance:

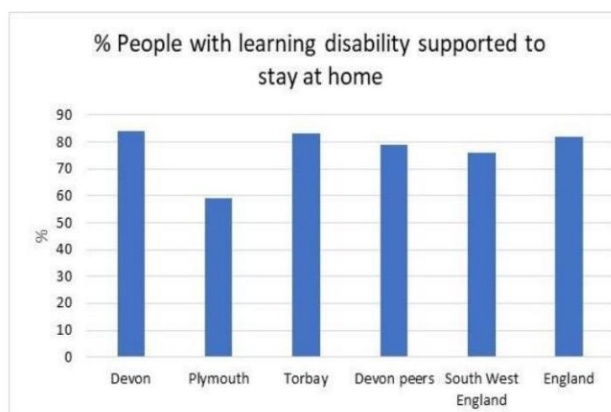
- With 1,500 per 100,000 people over-65s in residential/nursing care Devon is above both the national and regional averages for people living in long term care and is below both the regional and national averages of the proportion of people over 65 being supported to live at home.
- Devon is performing well at 20% above national and regional average for working age adults (18-64) in supported living.



- It is noteworthy that despite its aging population Devon spends proportionally more in working-age adults than on older people.
- Overall benchmarking shows Devon is mid-tier compared with England averages, with variation across a range of performance indicators with relatively good performance across a range of key performance indicators as the following examples show.

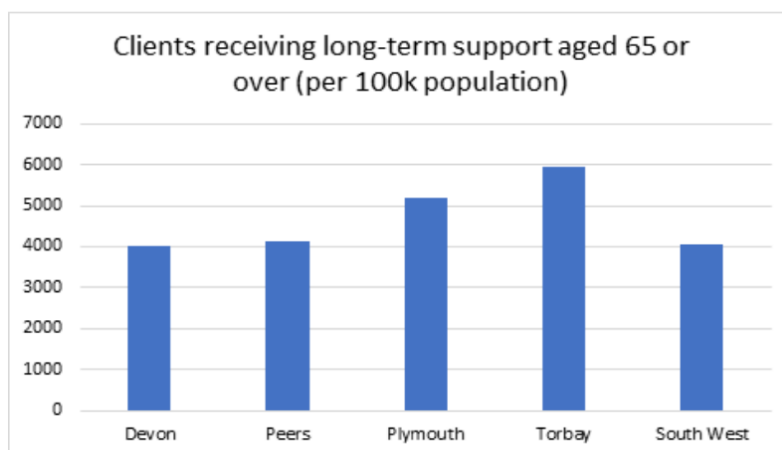


Source: Adult Social Care Outcomes framework (2023/24)



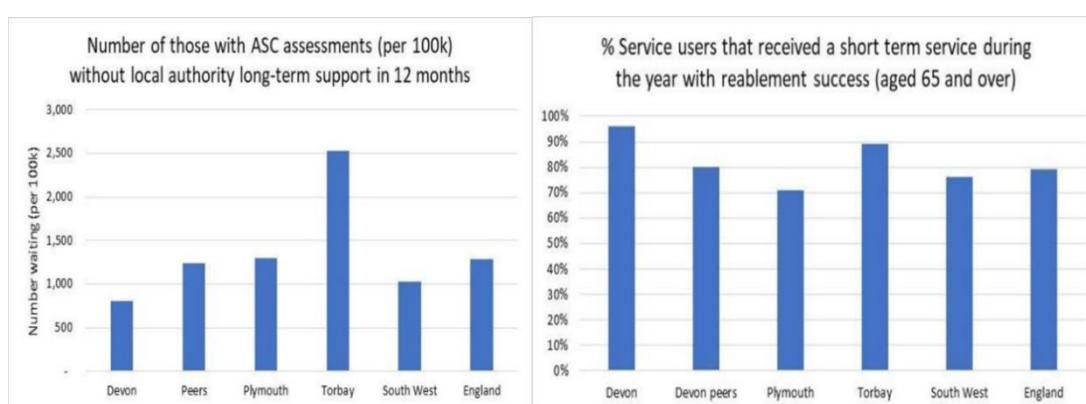
Source: Short and Long Term Support (SALT) survey 2023-24

- Devon ASC performs on a par across the South West but less well than the 2 Devon unitaries in relation to the number of older adults helped to live at home.



Source: Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Comparator report (SALT)

- Devon ASC performs well in comparison with national, regional and local (Devon unitaries) in relation to waiting times for services:



Source: Monthly Adult Social Care statistics bulletin (July 2025) Source: Short- and Long-Term Support (SALT) survey 2023-24

- When comparing performance in Devon between the 3 ASC authorities, Plymouth and Torbay are higher users of residential care for working age adults than Devon.
- Torbay operates at a higher cost per user than Devon and Plymouth with a higher proportion of older adults than Devon.
- ASC in Devon is broadly stronger than both Plymouth and Torbay in providing supported living services for working age adults with learning disabilities and mental health needs.

Variations in performance at Devon District Council level

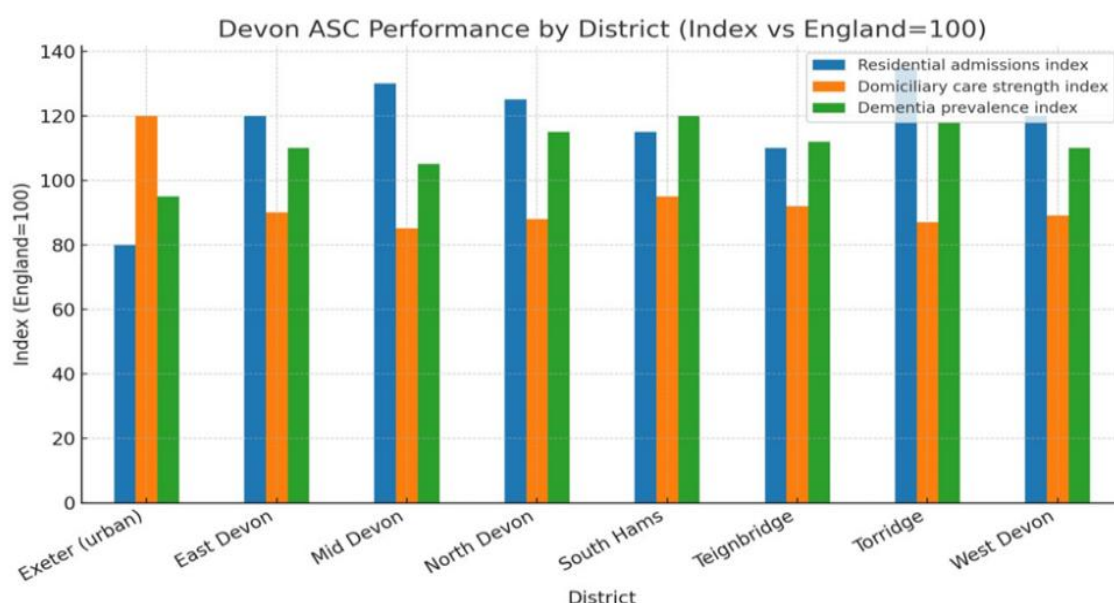
A high-level assessment of ASC performance at District Council level has identified significant variations including:

- Higher dementia prevalence amongst coastal districts
- Higher long term care residential admission rates in the more rural districts (East, Mid and North Devon)
- DCC Market Position Statement (2025) shows a lower prevalence of care homes and greater use of domiciliary care in Exeter compared to other districts which is likely to reflect the urban nature of the city. It identifies a gap in care home provision across the county of 270 beds to support older people with complex needs, especially those providing positive behavioural support – the majority of which is in East Devon and Exeter. The assessment of capacity indicates that Northern Devon has near sufficient capacity to meet the demand for highly complex dementia placements. The greatest

increase in beds is needed in East Devon (including Exeter) which also has the highest demand.⁴

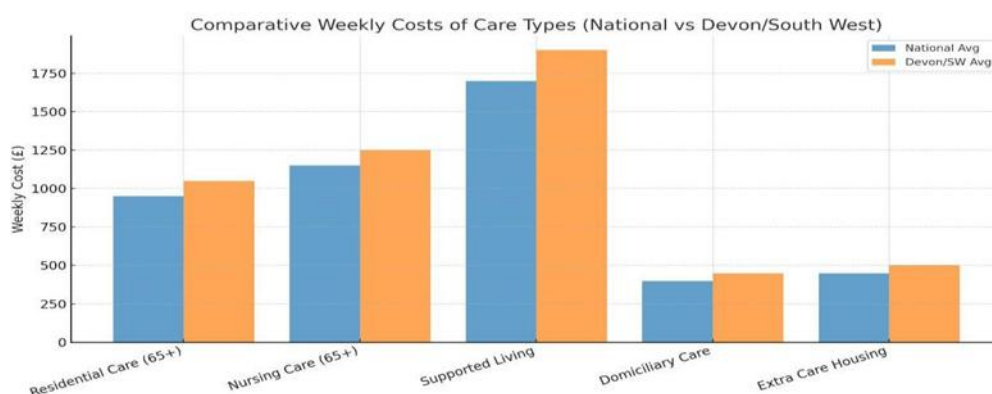
- There are 3 providers of Extra Care Schemes across Devon: Guinness Partnership provides 4 schemes: 2 in South Hams (92 beds) 1 in Teignbridge (50 beds) and 1 in West Devon (50 beds); Sanctuary Housing provide 1 scheme in North Devon (59 beds) and Exeter City Council provides Edwards Court (53 beds) in the city.
- In 2015, DCC in its last refresh of its strategy for Extra Care Housing identified unmet need of 966 Extra Care units across Devon with a projected unmet need of 1978 units by 2033. With 304 units there is a significant under provision of Extra Care across Devon, with around a quarter of unmet need originating in Exeter.

In summary, District variations indicate that the use of prevention and the impact of supported housing are greater in Exeter but with significant unmet need in Extra Care. This graph provided a summary of the variation in performance across districts.



Comparison of ASC costs in Devon with national and regional benchmarks

On average Devon ASC costs are higher than the national average and the South West across all care types.



Devon residential care costs are slightly above South West average but below England mean. Domiciliary care costs in Devon are amongst the highest in the South West, likely to be

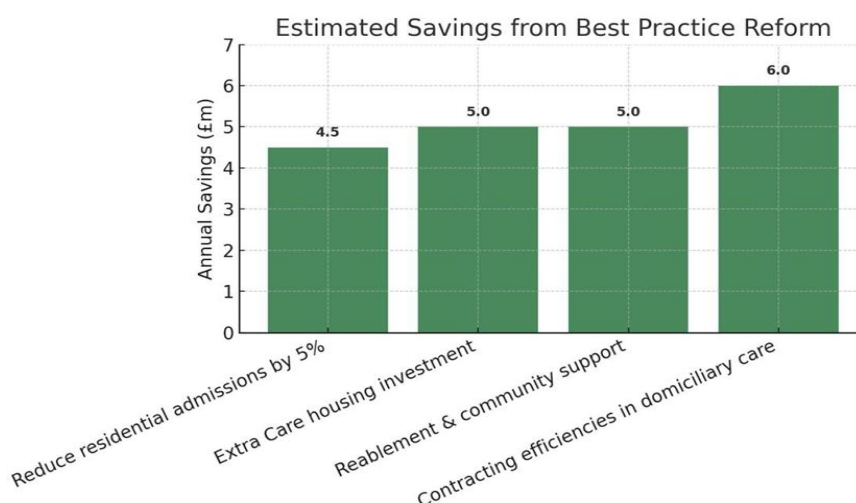
⁴ <https://www.devon.gov.uk/providerengagementnetwork/document/market-position-statement-february-2025/#extra-care-housing-ech>.

reflecting the size of the area its rurality and travel costs. Compared with Plymouth/Torbay: Devon has lower costs overall but higher spend on working-age adults.

Cost benefit of moving to best practice

The relatively strong performance in Devon ASC is a general, high-level indicator that there is unlikely to be much scope for significant cost savings resulting from moving to a unitary authority model in a shift and lift approach to disaggregation. However, there is a significant opportunity to shift current mid-tier performance to top quartile/ best practice within a model of delivery more closely aligned to the specific needs of rural and urban communities. Here are some examples:

Investing in Extra Care Housing: Around £14.5 million could be saved annually across Devon by reducing residential admissions, investing in Extra Care housing as an alternative to costly residential placements and expanding reablement and community support. All these measures would also improve outcomes for people, enabling more people to live independently for longer. Further cost reductions in the region of £6 million annually could be achieved through more effective locality commissioning of domiciliary care could yielding around 5–7% savings.



Investing in Shared Lives and Support Living Placements: Devon currently supports around 80 adults in long-term Shared Lives placements⁵; with between 16 and 25 adults benefit from a Shared Lives short break every month. DCC data shows that the cost of a Shared Lives Placement is between £305 and £479 per week depending on levels of need. This compares the cost of supported living costs for working adults of (average £600-800 / week and residential care for working adults of (average) £2,000 per week

Expanding this model for people with learning disabilities, autism, and mental health needs is one of the most cost-effective alternatives to residential provision⁶.

Devon's current ASC delivery model

⁵ Shared Lives is an innovative model of care where approved carers open their own homes to support adults with learning disabilities, mental health needs, or other support requirements.

⁶ 90% of Directors of Adult Social Care (2023 Autumn survey) view Shared Lives as 'a highly impactful model', agree increased provision would have a positive impact on outcomes for people and 87% say greater availability of Shared Lives would reduce adult social care expenditure.

Devon ASC has a complex model of delivery with elements of a client journey broken down into segments with separate teams focused on aspects of a person's needs. There is considerable opportunity to modernise this fragmented approach: designed to cover a large geographical area. Designing a more local place-based service with more integration around the needs of people would introduce operational efficiencies as well as improve the outcomes and experiences for people.

Currently first contact is through Care Direct Plus of which there are 3 centres across Devon in north, south and east Devon. As well as the 3 localities for Care Direct Plus Services Devon has also been divided into large localities for some ASC services, based on NHS Community Health and Care Team areas.

Within Care Direct Plus there are teams of social care assessors, social workers, occupational therapists, therapy assistants, support workers including coordinators and advisors. These staff are organised into separate Assessment and Review and Arranging Support teams. Outside of Care Direct Plus there are separate Adult Safeguarding Hubs, Occupational Therapy teams, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) team, Transitions (from Children's services) Adult Social Care team, a Sensory team and an Emergency Duty Team. There is also a Client Financial Services team responsible for financial assessment, billing and payment recovery.

In addition to the staff directly employed by DCC in the above teams, there are a number of Health & Social Care teams, provided jointly with the NHS under Section 75 agreement⁷ with Royal Devon and Exeter university NHS Foundation Trust. These include Hospital Discharge Teams; Health and Social Care Community Teams based in NHS four localities across Devon linked to hospital patient flows. There is a further Section 75 agreement with Devon Partnership NHS Trust for an Autism and ADHD Team, a Specialist Placements Team, Hospital Discharge and Community Mental Health Services. DCC also contract with other providers for some services such as Information, Advice and Advocacy support from Living Options Devon: a VCSE organisation.

A Home Care Reablement service is provided in house by DCC joint funded by the NHS, along with a range of other services through the Better Care Fund (BCF)⁸ (BCF funding in 24/25 £81.194 million from the NHS and £55.575m from DCC)

Community Equipment, Minor Adaptations and Technology Enabled Care and Support (TECS) are provided via a contract with Millbrook Healthcare Ltd and Devon Independent Living Centre (DILIS), provided by Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust who runs a centre in Newton Abbot where the public can receive advice on equipment and TECS and try out a wide variety of items. Major home adaptations are provided by the 8 District Council through around £9 million per year of capital funding from the BCF via a capitated grant.

Residential care supported living and domiciliary care are delivered via contracts with independent sector providers, (Care Market).

Adult Social Services in Devon: Outline Transition Plan

Strategic System Challenge A: Political and Cultural Alignment
Reorganising ASC services can be deeply political and cultural challenge as well as a structural and technical one. It is important to align political leadership, officer teams, and organisational

⁷ A Section 75 agreement is a formal partnership under the NHS Act 2006 between a local authority and an NHS body, creating a pooled budget and enabling the shared commissioning and provision of health-related and social care services to achieve better integration.

⁸ The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a government-backed initiative in the UK that pools funding from local authorities and the NHS to create integrated, person-centered health and social care services

cultures across the newly formed authorities.

Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
	Deliver a joint leadership development plan. Bringing elected members and senior officers from all legacy councils together using structured sessions to explore expectations, risk appetite, governance models, and shared priorities.	Embed values and behaviours in governance. Codify expectations for behaviour, decision making and collaboration into new constitution, performance frameworks, and leadership development. Reinforce these through appraisal, induction and ongoing peer support.
	In creating a shared narrative for the new council, develop a clear story about what the new council is for, what will be different, and how it will serve communities better — especially in ASC, where continuity and compassion are vital.	Address cultural differences openly by creating safe space to acknowledge and work through those differences. risks, and reform goals to ensure informed oversight.
		Prioritise member induction and ASC literacy by providing early and ongoing development to help members understand ASC duties, budgets etc.

Strategic System Challenge B: Disaggregating Funding

Disaggregating ASC services during local government reorganisation presents a unique set of challenges, including how to model and implement fair, practical service and budget splits between new unitary authorities.

While other functions (such as refuse collection or planning) may lend themselves more easily division along new administrative boundaries, ASC is deeply embedded in patterns of demand supply and risk that often cross or defy geographic logic.

Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Agree criteria for disaggregating funding including need, deprivation and agree rules for applying ordinary residence.	Establish shared understanding of how need and provider market composition may have been skewed by strategic commissioning decisions and agree transitional funding to allow for transformation to realign historic patterns of care within reformed models of delivery.	Implement and monitor delivery of agreed financial and risk management transition plan.
	Agree strategic and financial risk management plan and governance.	

Strategic System Challenge C: ICT Rationalisation and contract novation

ICT Rationalisation Is critical to maintaining continuity of care, statutory compliance, and service functionality during and after local government reorganisation.

The disaggregation process can be complex in that legacy IT systems were never designed to be split. Case management platforms, finance systems, provider databases, and contract management tools are often highly customised, poorly documented and interwoven with broader infrastructure (e.g. county-wide HR or finance systems)

Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Secure ICT and legal capacity and establish digital programme teams, legal contract review, and supplier negotiation	Secure inter-authority agreements for shared contracts and systems.	
Map and rationalise the contracts/license portfolio by completing an audit of active and lapsed contracts, and triage which need novation, which can be repurchased, and which require bespoke solutions.	Where services or suppliers must remain shared for a period, ensure legally binding agreements on funding, security access and decision making	

Strategic System Challenge D: Provider Engagement

A significant proportion of ASC spend goes to external provision in some areas. Disruption to this system, even if unintended, can quickly translate into instability for the most vulnerable residents.

Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Audit contracts and provider geography to understand who delivers care, at what cost, to whom and how reliant they are on scale or local clustering to avoid accidental market destabilisation by splitting a geography that providers need to sustain operations.	Set up a provider transition forum early in the programme. For sharing information, flagging risks, and co-designing solutions.	
	Test contract terms and pricing models before rollout to avoid a “lift and shift” approach to contract novation. Invite providers to review new terms and give feedback — especially smaller organisations who may struggle to absorb complexity.	
	Coordinate payment cycles and uplifts between councils through the changeover: agree transitional alignment to reduce the administrative burden on providers.	
	Identify transition costs: supporting market stability may require short-term investment through bridging payments, provider support packages, or joint commissioning	

	arrangements which need to be built into transition budgets.	
ASC Strategic Challenge 1: Workforce Sustainability		
• High vacancy and turnover rates (27% turnover, broadly in line with England). • Reliance on international recruitment and low average pay compared to national levels. • Recruitment and retention difficulties exacerbated by cost-of-living issues and competition with other sectors.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
identify and appoint senior leaders — particularly ‘shadow’ directors and assistant directors of adult social services — as early as possible: Empowered in shadow roles to shape transition plans, stabilise key relationships, and begin carrying the load of distributed leadership well before go-live.		
Joint workforce mapping and early talent planning alongside collaborative recruitment campaigns to avoid bidding wars and ensure shared messaging about career opportunities in the new structures.	Agree principles on pay and conditions to prevent destabilizing market inflation; short term shared or hosted roles particularly in specialist or senior functions where continuity is more important than early separation.	Leverage the city’s higher education institutions (e.g. University of Exeter, Exeter College) to create structured pipelines into care careers.
Values and Vision workshops with senior officers and members to co-create a shared sense of purpose and clarify what success should look and feel like post transition.	Create a narrative to share with staff and communities about what the new service stands for: not just how it will be structured but why it exists and why it will be different	Use local economic development, housing, and planning powers to support affordable housing for care staff, improving retention.
Define “safe and legal” through clear, collaborative decision-making based on agreed and rigorously applied criteria around safety and statutory duties.		Lead joined-up workforce campaigns (e.g. “Proud to Care Exeter”) focused on urban/rural recruitment advantages.
ASC Strategic Challenge 2: Demographic Pressures and Complex Needs		
• Ageing population with dementia prevalence among over-85s set to rise. • Peaks in demand at transition to adulthood and as family carers age. • Adults with learning disabilities, autism and physical disabilities living longer with more complex needs.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Benchmark local services for dementia- friendly assistive technology, and community support best practice.	Ensure shadow portfolios and directorates reflect the future intent of the new organisation: e.g. explicit bringing together of housing, health integration and adult care.	Development of integrated pathways with housing, education, and employment services to better support young adults in transition.
	Development of integrated pathways with strategic NHS ICS commissioners and operational delivery partners including Primary Care Networks (PCN’S) ; RDHU and DPT NHS Trust hospital discharge and community	Integration and co-location of housing, social care, NHS and VCSE services into Neighborhood Area Teams aligned with PCN’s.

	teams.	
		Co-produce and implement assistive technology strategy promoting independence, choice and control
ASC Strategic Challenge 3: Care Home Market Fragility		
- Over-provision of general residential care but shortages in nursing and complex dementia beds. - Estimated shortfall of 270 care home beds by 2027, with highest unmet need in East Devon including Exeter.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Update strategic needs assessment and renew market position statements	Use planning and housing powers to incentivise the right type of provision (nursing/complex dementia care, not just general residential).	Align Section 106 and City Development frameworks to steer investment into areas of greatest need.
	Directly influence design standards for accessibility and dementia-friendly environments.	Grow hyper-local brokerage capacity for speed, stability and building provider relationships.
ASC Strategic Challenge 4: Extra Care Housing & Supported Living		
- Significant current unmet need: 151 units in Exeter, rising to 252 by 2033. - Supported living services grown piecemeal, inconsistency in quality and tenancy models		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Update strategic needs assessment and renew market position statements	Link with city regeneration schemes (e.g. existing brownfield developments, city centre sites) to embed ECH. Proactive collaboration with Homes England, registered providers, and developers to secure sites.	Integrate housing, planning, and social care to strategically deliver extra care and supported living.
ASC Strategic Challenge 5: Carers' surveys highlight gaps in respite/replacement care and pressures on unpaid carers		
Community-based services under strain from increased demand and cost-of-living crisis.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Update strategic needs assessment and renew Carer's strategies	Harness hyper local community infrastructure (e.g. Wellbeing Exeter) to support carers and reduce isolation.	Hyper local commissioning of tailored respite and replacement care offers
	Stronger coordination with voluntary and community sector partners already embedded in neighbourhoods	
ASC Strategic Challenge 6: Integration with Health		
- Need to move from hospital-based to community-based care. - Current hospital discharge pathways often lead to inappropriate long-term placements.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation

Review and renew hospital discharge and reablement strategy and pathways to identify integrated models of delivery	Maintain current team and delivery structures where practicable, disaggregating staff, caseload and budgets to align with new unitary footprint and where practicable to Primary Care Networks. Expand reablement services, with a focus on admission avoidance - using the principles of reablement to maintain more people for longer within the community and avoid, wherever possible, admission to acute hospital settings.	Implement joint commissioning strategies to deliver integrated delivery services within Neighbourhood Area teams utilising outcomes-based Section 75 agreement with NHS partners where it makes sense to do so.
Establish collaborative commissioning and procurement teams to help manage inheritance of Devon-wide contracts with providers	Maintain arrangements with Mental Health and Learning Disability partnerships.	
Develop shared arrangements in specific areas – e.g. Out of hours emergency response; Section 117 aftercare/ forensic mental health/other specialist support/ financial assessments and charging functions which may benefit from collaboration with wider Devon unitary social care	Co-design with NHS partners, future integrated delivery services within Neighbourhood Area teams	

Appendix Four: Children's Social Care, SEND and Education Services in Devon

The National Context for Children's, SEND and Education Services

Children's Services, SEND, and Education in England form an interdependent statutory system that supports children and young people from birth up to age 25. In January 2024, there were 8.84 million children in education in England, including 1.06 million receiving SEND Support and 517,000 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In addition, around 400,000 children were supported by children's social care at any given time. Local authorities carry statutory responsibilities across safeguarding, SEND, education, childcare and placement sufficiency and corporate parenting. Leading work in partnership with schools, police, health services, voluntary organisations, and families.

Local authorities are legally required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under the Children Act 1989, Children and Families Act 2014, Education Act 1996, and the SEND Code of Practice (2015). Statutory guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) reinforces multi-agency accountability for protecting children and ensuring their voices are heard.

SCOPE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Safeguarding and Protection	A fundamental responsibility, including investigating concerns about child abuse or neglect and taking action to protect children from harm.
Supporting Children in Need	Providing extra help and support to children and families facing challenges, such as mental health issues, or disability, or living in poverty.
Promoting Wellbeing	Working to improve the physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing of children, including access to education, healthcare, and recreational opportunities.
Children in Care	Managing the care of children placed in foster or kinship care or in residential homes, or supporting them into permanence through adoption, making sure they have stable, loving homes.
Care Leavers	Supporting young people, including with housing and financial support, as they transition out of care and into independent living.
Early Help and Prevention	Offering a range of early intervention and support services to families to prevent problems from escalating and promote the wellbeing of children.
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	Supporting children with SEND and their families, ensuring they have access to appropriate education and care, including publishing and maintaining a local offer of services.
Education	Ensuring there are sufficient school places and admissions arrangements for all children and children are able to attend schools and alternative provisions which meet their needs. There are additional responsibilities where children are being Electively Home Educated (EHE).
Working with Partners	Collaboration with schools, healthcare providers, police and other

Local authorities' gross expenditure on children's services in 2023/24 was £14.8 billion, of which £8.1 billion was on looked-after children and £3.4 billion on safeguarding. Total local authority and school expenditure reached £50.4 billion, including £31 billion on schools, £4.4 billion on other education, and £10.1 billion via the High Needs Block.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funds schools and SEND provision. High Needs Block deficits have become a major financial risk for many councils. A statutory override, allowing councils to carry DSG deficits separately from their general fund, has been extended until March 2028. Despite additional investment, demand is outpacing resources, EHCPs rose to 517,000 in January 2024, over 60% higher than in 2015, with specialist placements and SEND transport driving cost escalation. Working in partnership with all schools is a key duty of the Local Authority. Councils must convene a Schools Forum to advise on allocation of the DSG, with membership from maintained schools, academies, early years, and other stakeholders (Education Act 2002).

Eligibility for children's services is primarily assessed under the Children Act 1989, supported by the Children and Families Act 2014, the Education Act 1996, and the SEND Code of Practice. Assessments may lead to short-term interventions such as early help or targeted family support to prevent escalation or longer-term statutory plans including Child in Need Plans, Child Protection Plans, or EHCPs for children with complex or ongoing needs.

Best practice emphasises early intervention, safeguarding, and inclusion, with a strengths-based and child-centred approach. This ensures that assessments and plans consider the aspirations and voice of the child, their abilities, and potential for positive outcomes. It is particularly vital for children with SEND, Children in care who require permanence and stability, Care leavers preparing for adulthood and independence. Nationally, the system faces significant pressures:

- Shortages of placements and high costs for fostering and children's home care.
- Escalating demand for EHCPs and insufficient inclusive mainstream provision.
- Persistent attainment gaps linked to deprivation and SEND, widened by the pandemic and still larger than pre-2020 despite slight narrowing in 2024.
- DSG high-needs block deficits creating financial instability.
- Workforce shortages across social care, SEND services, teachers, and teaching assistants.
- Changes to NHS Integrated Care Systems create continued challenges for joint commissioning for SEND and children in care. With significant waits for key services such as CAMHS and Autism assessment.
- Nationally referral demand for children's social care dropped by 2.9% in 2024, after rising demand, to the peak in 22/23, following the pandemic.

The government has introduced major reforms to address these challenges:

Families First for Children Strategy (2025): redesigning early help, child in need, and child protection; rolling out multidisciplinary family help teams for complex needs; and creating multi-agency child protection teams. Councils and partners are expected to show significant progress by March 2026.

Best Start in Life Strategy (2025): rolling out Best Start Family Hubs in every council by April 2026 and developing a national Best Start Digital Service, representing a substantial shift in delivery models and partnership working.

SEND and education reform:

- £740 million SEND capital funding in 2025/26 to create 10,000 new places, adapt mainstream schools, and expand special provision.
- Longer-term £1 billion investment to fund 44,500 places by 2028.
- SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (2023) introducing national standards, strengthened mediation, and a single national system.
- Plan for Change (2024) setting out reforms to inclusion and mainstream capacity.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (2025): new duties for family-led decision making, expanded school services such as breakfast clubs, attendance enforcement, and workforce regulation.

Education White Paper (2025): expected to outline broader reforms, building on these measures.

Children's Services, SEND, and Education remain under intense pressure from rising demand, financial risk, and workforce shortages. At the same time, government is introducing wide-ranging reforms, including strengthened safeguarding, expanded early help, new Family Hubs, and significant capital investment in SEND provision.

The Local Context for Children's, SEND Services and Education Services

There are currently 3 councils in Devon with statutory responsibility for the provision of Children's, SEND Services and Education Services in Devon; these are the 2 existing unitaries of Torbay and Plymouth and Devon County Council. Within the context of our overall proposal of four unitaries for Devon the focus of this section is on the current set up of Children Services provided by Devon County Council.

The following outcomes are the responsibility of each Local Authority and its partners to deliver.

- **Safety and Protection:** Every child is safe from harm, abuse, and exploitation, with effective early identification and intervention when risks arise.
- **Stability and Belonging:** Children grow up in stable, loving homes – ideally within their family or community – with minimal disruption to relationships, school, or community ties.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Children and young people enjoy good physical, emotional, and mental health, with strong support for those with SEND or additional needs.
- **Education and Achievement:** Every child has access to inclusive, high-quality education that meets their needs, supports their aspirations, and enables them to reach their full potential.
- **Voice and Participation:** Children, young people, and families are listened to, and their voices shape decisions about their care, education, and future.
- **Independence and Life Skills:** Young people, particularly care leavers or those with SEND, have the skills, opportunities, and confidence to live independently and thrive as adults.
- **Prevention and Early Help:** Families receive early, joined-up support to prevent crises and reduce the need for statutory intervention

Role of OFSTED

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages and they also inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people.

Ofsted inspect maintained schools and academies, some independent schools, colleges, apprenticeship providers, prison education and many other educational institutions and programmes outside of higher education. They also inspect childcare, local authorities, adoption and fostering agencies, initial teacher training and teacher development

Ofsted regulate early years and children's social care services, making sure they're suitable for children and potentially vulnerable young people and they publish reports of findings so they can be used to improve the overall quality of education and training and inform policymakers about the effectiveness of these services.

Strategic Performance Overview

Devon County Council's Children's Services, including Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) and Education, continue to face significant strategic challenges. Despite targeted improvement efforts, the service remains rated "Inadequate" following inspection by Ofsted during 2024 and 2025. This follows over a decade of Ofsted, through its Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) process, raising consistent concerns around safeguarding, SEND provision, and outcomes for vulnerable children.

The ILACS 2025 inadequate judgement highlighted the following:

Overall Judgement Inadequate

- Children needing help and protection: Inadequate
- Children in care: Inadequate
- Care leavers: Inadequate
- Leadership impact: Requires improvement to be good

Key Concerns

- Children at risk of harm: delays in strategy discussions and poor safety planning.
- Neglect and domestic abuse: inconsistent identification and response.
- Care leavers: many live in unsuitable accommodation, including unregistered homes.
- Planning and oversight: weak child protection and care plans; lack of measurable outcomes.
- Multi-agency working not strong enough to meet needs of vulnerable children.
- Placement sufficiency: over-reliance on unregistered and unsuitable accommodation.

Areas of Improvement

- Leadership stability: since 2023, stronger leadership has led to more ambitious improvement plans.
- Early Help: expanded and better targeted; waiting lists reduced.
- Front Door Services: more effective screening and quicker responses.
- Emergency Duty Service: timely and effective out-of-hours safeguarding.
- Private Fostering & Homeless Response: strong and timely support.
- Children's Social Care Academy: positive impact on staff development and practice.

Progress and Challenges

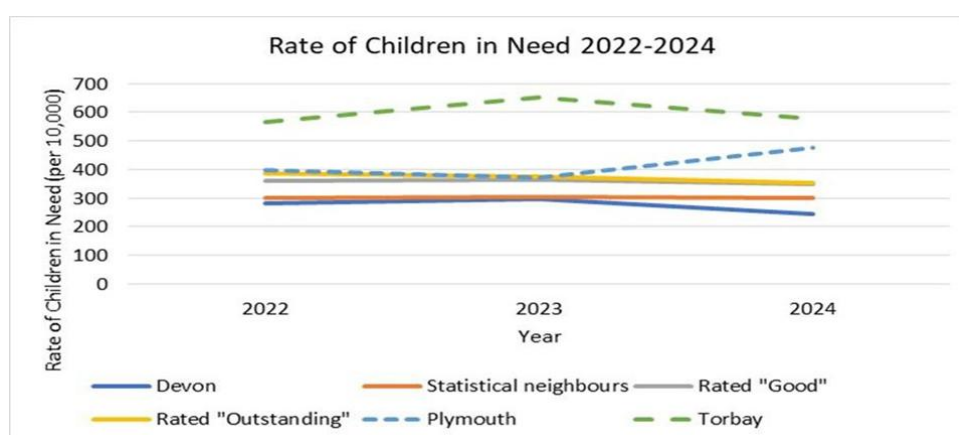
- Positive trajectory: improvements are emerging but not yet widespread.
- Staff morale: generally positive, with improved recruitment and retention.
- Leadership ambition: strong corporate and political support for change.
- Ongoing issues: many children still face delays, instability, and inadequate support

Children in Need (CIN)

Devon's levels of Children in Need continue to be very low: well below Torbay and Plymouth. This can indicate an effective Early Help system. Ofsted note thresholds for early help and Child Protection Plans (CPP) are appropriate, but improvements are needed in targeted early help.

Ofsted identified that the right part of the system is responding as families are not escalating to statutory Social Care Intervention unnecessarily, however, the interventions are just below the threshold for social care to be more effective.

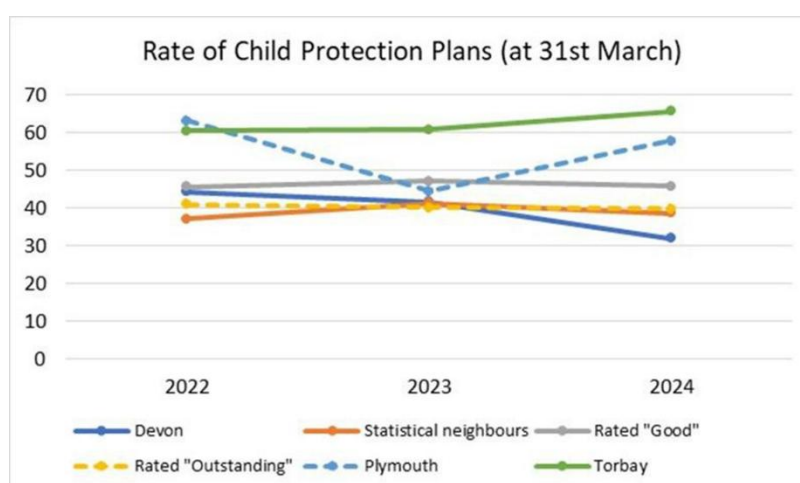
Targeted Early Help was expanded and invested in 2024 but some families with less urgent need were waiting too long for support particularly timely multi-agency support from Domestic Abuse services.



Child Protection Plan Rates (CPP)

The graph below shows that for 2024, Devon had a level below its statistical neighbours and Ofsted rated good and outstanding Local Authorities for rate per 10,000 of CPP.

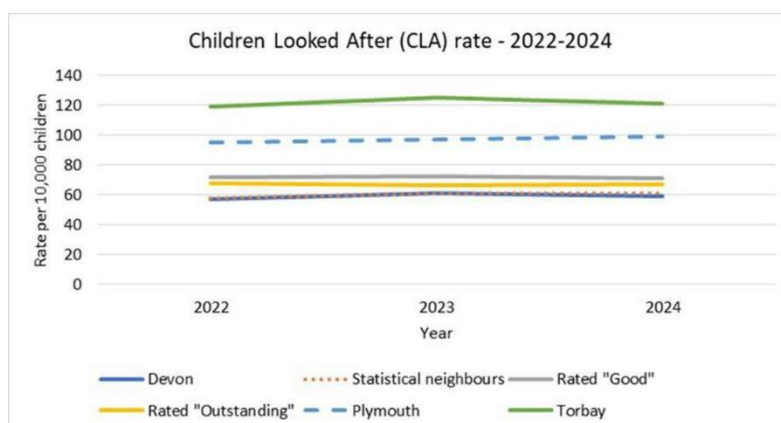
Whilst this can indicate effective Early Help Ofsted note that there are delays to half the child protection conferences, the quality of plans is too variable, and children are 'stepped down' too quickly to Child in Need or Early Help without partners being able to track if change has been sustained.



Children Looked After (CLA)

Devon's rate of CLA has been steady and is reported in May 2024 as continuing to fall. As of May 2024, there were 873 children in care of which 570 (65%) are placed in Devon¹. Devon compares well with the average rate of Ofsted rated outstanding Local Authorities and well below Plymouth and Torbay (reflecting differences in levels of need).

Whilst this performance looks good Ofsted note too many children are coming into care in an unplanned way, particularly older adolescents, and that multi-agency work for children missing, at risk of, or subject to exploitation, subject to neglect, needs improvement as does more timely access to domestic abuse services.



Financial and Budget overview

Children and young people's services make up 30% of the Council's overall budget. At a value of £237.3m (excluding DSG) for 25/26. Of which Children's Social Care is £172.1m (a 7.4% rise on 23/24). £4.5m savings are planned for 25/26. Social Work agency staff account for £1.5m of the £10.3m overspend reported at month 4, with a further £7.9m attributed to placements, due to increase in numbers over plan.

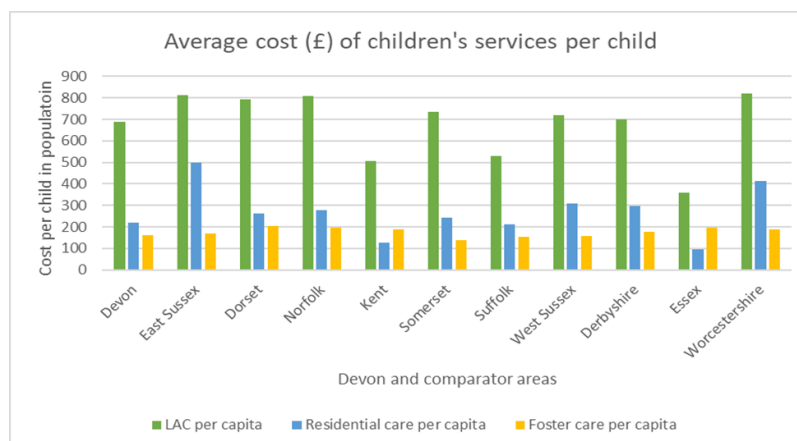
Sufficiency and cost of care

The average weekly cost of a fostering placement in Devon is £750 compared to £795 nationally². Residential children's home placements in Devon cost in the region of £4,000–£5,000 per week compared to £5,000 nationally. Actual figures in month 4 budget reporting taking total 24/25 spend and Full time Equivalent placements figures show Children's Homes at £6,129 Supported Accommodation at £5,171 and independent Fostering at £1,373

64% of children in care in Devon are placed in foster care, 44% in-house fostering and 20% with a fostering agency. Devon's overall spend on children in care is consistent with South West averages and slightly below averages for fostering and residential care.'

¹ Devon County Council Sufficiency Strategy 24-29

² Based on PSSRU unit cost 2021 uplifted for GDP deflator to 2025/26



Adoption services are hosted by Devon delivered through a regional adoption agency, Adopt Southwest which is a partnership with Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay Councils. In April 2024, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly joined the partnership.

In 2023/24, Adopt Southwest placed 196 children for adoption (a 15% increase), with over 91% matched to its own adopters, national-leading performance in early permanence (42% vs 21% nationally), and reduced family breakdowns. Challenges remain around adopter recruitment (down 19%) and timeliness in Devon, while adoption support referrals exceeded 1,000, the service also reported a £551k underspend on its £5.43m budget, with funding rising to £6.59m in 2024/25 to include Cornwall.

Education and Achievement – Early Years

Early Years and School Readiness: Overall in Devon 68.5% of children achieve a Good Level of Development at the end of reception: close to the national average of 67.7% in 2023/24. However, there is wide variation across districts with a local attainment gap of 20% points between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children. In Exeter for example, several wards are below the county average with significant underperformance for disadvantaged children.

Education and Attainment: Overall, in Devon attainment is broadly in line with national averages but there is a wide gap on attainment for disadvantaged children. For example, in Exeter secondary outcomes are below the county average in certain schools particularly for disadvantaged pupils. School exclusions are higher in Exeter than in rural Devon, where there is a 30.8% attainment gap between children eligible for Free School Meals and those ineligible.

SEND and Education finance: There are currently 16,545 children in Devon on Special Educational (SEN) Needs support in 24/25. The current total number of EHCPs as of July 2025 is 9,943 compared to 9,382 for July 2024 (6% increase), in addition, average costs are rising. The average cost for July 2024 was £17,043 compared to £17,271 for July 2025, an increase of £228 (1.3%).

In February 2025, the number EHCPs reached 9,950, surpassing the Safety Valve target by around 550 for this year³ As identified by OFSTED, EHCP timeliness is a known weakness with less than 30% of plans issued within the statutory timeframe.

Schools finance: Education and Inclusion have a budget of £545m. For 25/26 the DSG has an increase of £78.1m, of which £35.2m is for the Early Years, High Needs Block is increased by £8.6m to £125.5m. The Transport budget has stabilised after significant pressures.

³ ((Public Pack): Agenda Document for Devon Education Forum, 19/03/2025 10:00.

A Safety Valve agreement of £95m was reached with DfE in March 24 for the Council to reach a financially sustainable position by the end of 2026/27, with the aim of paying off the deficit by the 2030/31 financial year. An Accelerated Progress Plan to address efficiency and the EHCP backlog was agreed as part of this process. A revised plan was submitted to DfE in February 2025 due to demand outstripping available resources.

At month four 2025 the DSG is 'forecasting an overspend of £53.3m'. With the 'cumulative deficit forecast to be £165.5 million by the end of the year, £57.3 million more than the position included within the Safety Valve Agreement with the DfE⁴ The cost pressures are rising due to the volume of EHCP's, the high cost of placements, the outcome for high-cost placements from tribunals and workforce turnover. The levels of overspend on SEND High Needs Block⁵ mirror national trend but is proportionately higher.

As part of its strategy to address this the council plans to create 200+ new special school places and expand mainstream college and secondary school capacity with additional investment of £28.5 million. This is funded by Local Authority and DfE resources. Successful applications to the Free Schools Programme for the new Special Schools in Ivybridge with a hub in Tavistock (Due to open Sept 25) and Cranbrook (Sept 2026) (Source MTFP).

Cost benefit of moving to best practice

Reducing residential placements: Devons Children Looked After (CLA) rate is below national average (60 vs 70 per 10,000) but Devon has too many in high-cost residential care. This is due to increased need and lack of sufficiency in fostering. Month 4 figures 2025/6 show overspend for numbers of children in Children's Homes if the reliance on the use of residential placements in Devon is reduced "top quartile" levels (8% of CLA vs current 14%), this could save £7m-£10m a year and £0.7m-£1.0m a year in Exeter alone.

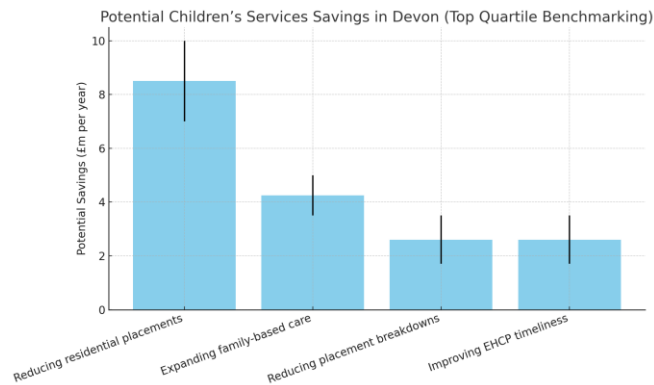
Expanding family-based care: Increasing capacity in in-house fostering and preventing placement breakdowns reduces the need to commission from more expensive Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). Recruiting and retaining more local authority foster carers, through Mockingbird (a scheme to support foster families by creating a hub or extended family style network) or similar specialist schemes, could help to achieve top quartile stability rates which could deliver £3.5m-£5m million in cost avoidance across Devon.

Reducing Placement Breakdowns: Top quartile performing local authorities achieve significantly lower disruption rates and reduced multiple moves for CLA. Matching across Devon this could save £1.7m-£3.5m emergency placement and safeguarding costs

Improving EHCP timeliness & sufficiency: Timely, high-quality EHCPs reduce tribunal costs and reliance on out-of-county placements. Moving from <30% to top quartile across Devon (75%+ within 20 weeks) could save £1.7m-£3.5m through reduced litigation and placement spend.

⁴ (2025-26 Month 4 Budget Monitoring Report.pdf)

⁵ The term is High Needs Block it is an element of Dedicated Schools Grant. It funds provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), from birth to age 25. It covers the costs of specialist support, top-up funding for pupils in mainstream schools, and placements in special schools or alternative provision



Devon's current Children's and SEND delivery model

There are essentially five components to Children's Services System

Social Care	Early Help	Schools & Education	SEND	Systems Leadership
Children in need, child protection, children in care, care leavers, extra familial harm	Family hubs, youth support.	School place planning and sufficiency, home to school transport, educational attendance, educational outcomes, elective home education.	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.	Public health, mental health support, youth justice, broader safeguarding partnership

Current Delivery Children's Social Care

Local Children and Families Service consists of four Children and Families Teams based offices in Barnstable, Tiverton, Totnes and Exeter. Each office acts as a base for who staff undertake initial assessment and support Children in Need and Children on a Child Protection Plan, and Children in Care and Care Leaver. Decisions made here as to whether threshold for statutory social care involvement is met. The Core functions of these teams are:

Initial Assessment (Child and Family Assessment) Where the child or family meets the threshold for statutory Social Work, a social worker in the Children and Families Team undertakes an assessment under the Children Act 1989, usually within 45 working days to determine the child's needs, risks, and protective factors.

Section 47 Enquiry (Child Protection) If there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, a Section 47 enquiry is launched. This may lead to an Initial Child Protection Conference

Child in Need (CIN) Plan – Section 17 Where the child needs services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development but is not at immediate risk of significant harm. And CIN plan sets out support and services, it is reviewed regularly.

Child Protection (CP) Plan If the risk of significant harm is confirmed, a CP plan is agreed at the conference. This sets out actions by agencies and family to reduce risk, reviewed at core group meetings.

Pre-Proceedings (Public Law Outline) If risks remain unmitigated, the local authority may begin pre-proceedings work with the family. Letter Before Proceedings sent, legal planning meetings held; aim is to avoid court if possible.

There are also several centralised services Including:

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) A concern about a child's safety or welfare is reported (by a professional, family member, or member of the public) to a centralised MASH based in Exeter, which screens and co-ordinates safeguarding referrals across Devon.

Corporate Parenting Service: includes **Children in Care Teams** (social workers managing children placed in foster care, residential care, or with kinship carers) and the Care Leavers service. Oversight is provided by the **Corporate Parenting Board**, which monitors outcomes for children in care across health, education, and wellbeing.

Disabled Children's Service (DCS): supports children and young people up to 18 with severe and complex disabilities, alongside their families. Referrals are usually made through the MASH or Early Help system, and eligibility is based on the child's disability and level of need. The team provides statutory social care functions, including assessments, care planning, and safeguarding, as well as services such as short breaks, direct payments, and practical support to help families care for their child at home.

In-house Fostering Service: Devon is part of a collaboration of in-house fostering services joining up their recruitment and marketing to new foster carers. The partnership consists of fourteen South West Councils, hosted by Wiltshire, funded by the DfE. This is part of the Governments drive to increase the capacity of Local Authority Fostering Services.

Children's Home and Residential Short Breaks Provision: Devon directly manages six of its own residential children's homes:

Home	Location	Service
Meadowpark	Exeter	A 3-bed home equipped for children and young people with complex healthcare needs and/or physical disabilities, providing short breaks, treatment support, and family short breaks.
Barnes	Tiverton	A 2-bed home providing day and overnight short breaks, assessments, and planned stays for children with complex health physical or behavioural needs.
Hillcrest	Honiton	A 3-bed home equipped for children with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and medical and sensory needs.
Welland House	Barnstable	A 5-bed home for children with learning disabilities, autism, complex medical/physical needs, and challenging behaviour.
The Lyric	Oakhampton	A 2-bed home for children with learning disabilities
The Brook	Dartington.	An 8-bed home for children with learning disabilities
Atkinson	Exeter	An 8-bed home for children and young people, aged between 10 and 17 years. Provides welfare secure placements on a national level and is rated Outstanding by Ofsted

Permanence and Adoption Service: Adoption services are hosted by Devon delivered through a regional adoption agency, Adopt Southwest which is a partnership with Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay Councils. In April 2024, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly joined the partnership. In 2023/24.

Current Delivery – Early Help

Early Help Locality Teams are multi-disciplinary teams coordinating support for children, young people, and families before problems escalate into statutory services. Based in local offices (North, South & West, Exeter, Mid & East Devon). Each team includes Early Help Coordinators, Family Practitioners, Public Health Nurses (health visitors and school nurses), youth workers, SEND/inclusion staff, and education welfare officers, with input from social workers where safeguarding thresholds are met. Their role is to lead the Team Around the Family (TAF) process, deliver practical interventions, and ensure families receive joined-up support across health, education, and social care.

These teams work closely with schools, Family Hubs, health services, police, and the voluntary sector, acting as a single point of contact in each locality. While the exact mix of professionals varies by area, the locality model ensures consistent early help across Devon, connecting families quickly to the right support and preventing escalation into higher-cost or crisis services.

Family Hubs: There are five Family Hubs in Devon, these were bought back in house in 2025 to give the council greater control, consistency, and flexibility in shaping services around its Early Help and SEND improvement priorities. The Hubs are in Exeter; Ilfracombe; Bideford Bay; Newton Abbot and Totnes. These offer a range of services for families with children aged between 0-19 (and up to 25 for those with SEND) ranging from drop-in advice, Start for Life (0-2) programmes, parenting groups (sleep, feeding, behaviour), play & learning sessions, and signposting to local support.

Special School Provision: a child can only be placed in a special school if they have an EHCP and the local authority decides, usually through a panel, that mainstream provision cannot meet their needs. Parents may express a preference, and if they dispute the local authority's final decision, they can use mediation, or appeal to the SEND Tribunal, which has the power to overturn the placement decision.

Location	Special School Provision
Exeter	• Barley Lane School – maintained • Southbrook School –maintained (ages 11–16) • Ellen Tinkham School & College –maintained (all-age;)
Teignbridge / South Devon	• Glendinning Academy (Newton Abbot) – free school (Reach South Academy Trust) • Orchard Manor School (Dawlish) –maintained residential • Bidwell Brook School (Dartington) – maintained
East Devon	• Mill Water School (Bicton) –maintained special school
Mid Devon	• ACE Tiverton – Academy free school (ACE Schools MAT)
North Devon	• The Lampard Community School (Barnstaple) –maintained • Pathfield School (Barnstaple) –maintained • Marland School –maintained residential I school

Alternative Provision DCC commissions and statutory alternative provision AP under its Education Act duty to provide education for pupils unable to attend mainstream school. Alongside this, the Transforming Futures Trust (ACE Schools MAT) operates ACE Tiverton

and other alternative provision including hospital education under academy governance. In addition, a range of independent providers are commissioned on a case-by-case basis, delivering registered placements inspected by Ofsted but not directly governed by the council.

DCC maintained or commissioned Alternative Provision	Academy or Free School Alternative Provision
• The Russet House (Exeter, Tiverton, other sites)	• ACE Tiverton –part of the Transforming Futures Trust (ACE Schools MAT, Plymouth).
• Medical AP / Hospital Education funded by DCC but managed by ACE Schools	• ACE Schools Plymouth / Devon sites part of the Transforming Futures Trust

Current Delivery SEND

There are several specialist teams supporting children and young people with SEND, working alongside schools, health, and families:

Early Help & Locality Teams (described above): Referrals are made via the Early Help Request for Support or MASH. They work directly with children and families, including those with emerging SEND.

SEND 0–25 Team: Based centrally at County Hall, Exeter, with caseworkers allocated by locality. Referrals come through EHCP applications or annual review requests (usually via schools or parents). They work with families and schools to assess needs, issue EHCPs, and monitor provision.

SEND Support Services: Specialist advisory teachers (Autism, Communication & Interaction, Sensory Impairment) are countywide but locality-based, attached to education teams in Exeter, Barnstaple, and Newton Abbot. Referrals are made by schools and early years settings through the SEND Advisory route. They mainly support schools with training and strategies but also work directly with children where appropriate.

Educational Psychology Service: Based in area offices (Exeter, Barnstaple, Newton Abbot, Tiverton), linked to schools. Referrals are made by schools (and occasionally parents) via the SEND 0–25 Team or as part of the EHCP statutory process. They work with schools, children, and families through consultation, assessment, and advice.

Inclusion and Attendance Service: Locality-based staff linked to schools, referrals come from schools or education welfare panels. They work mainly with schools and families to address persistent absence, exclusions, and reintegration linked to SEND.

Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) Team: Based in Exeter but working across Devon. Referrals are through the SEND 0–25 Team for young people aged 14–25 with EHCPs. They work with young people, families, schools, colleges, and adult services to plan transitions.

Across SEND services there are also links with Social Care Disabled Children’s Service and Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD)

Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD) – NHS-led, with teams based in community clinics and children’s centres across Devon (Exeter, Barnstaple, Newton Abbot, Tiverton, Exmouth). Referrals are via GPs, health visitors, schools, or EHCP processes. They provide therapies and health support (speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nursing, community paediatrics) for children and young people with SEND.

Current Delivery Systems Leadership

Working in partnership across the wider health and public sector system is critical to achieving the best outcomes for children and young people. The following section sets out the key services working with the wider system.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) A concern about a child's safety or welfare is reported (by a professional, family member, or member of the public) to a centralised MASH based in Exeter, which screens and co-ordinates safeguarding referrals across the wider system.

Public Health Nursing (PHN) and Integrated Family Support supports families with children aged 0-19 through health visiting (pregnancy–5) and school nursing (5-19). The offer includes developmental checks, health advice, and parenting support, alongside targeted work such as improving attendance, home routines, and coordinating a Team Around the Family (TAF) plan.

PHN is delivered through the Family Hub model, with school nurses linking health and education, and close partnership with Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to provide early help on issues like anxiety and self-harm. Locality teams combine health visitors, school nurses, and family support workers, based in four hubs: Honiton (East Devon, Cullompton, Tiverton), Exeter (Exeter, Crediton), Barnstaple (North Devon, Torridge, Okehampton), and Totnes (Teignbridge, South Hams, Tavistock). PHN is Inspected by CQC and graded Good in 2023. The service is provided by Children's Services Devon after being insourced in 2018 and commissioned by Public Health.

The **Family Intervention Team (FIT)** in Devon provides intensive, short-term support to families at risk of escalation into social care, working from a locality base alongside Family Hubs and Early Help services. Referrals come through the MASH or Early Help system, usually from schools, health, or social workers. FIT supports families with issues like parenting, routines, school attendance, and safeguarding, and where domestic abuse is identified, they link directly with specialist services such as Splitz Support Service, as well as Children's Social Care and police, ensuring safety planning and therapeutic work are coordinated through a Team Around the Family plan.

The **LINKS service** in Devon provides intensive support for children and young people with highly complex needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, mental health issues, and risks of family or placement breakdown. Addressing contextual safeguarding/extra-familial risk (for young people aged 10–25 and includes care-experienced young adults). Referrals are made through Devon's Front Door (MASH/Request for Support) process, or internally via Children's Social Care with team manager agreement and a completed or updated Safer Me assessment and are considered at multi-agency panels. The service operates on a locality basis across Devon (North, South, Exeter/Mid/East), with staff delivering both outreach in homes, schools, and communities, and direct work from their offices.

The **Bridges team** (Edge of Care Service) in Devon is a specialist service that works with young people aged 11–17 who are on the edge of care, at risk of entering care, or in care and needing intensive support to return home or move to family-based placements. The team provides therapeutic, relationship-based intervention to stabilise families, reduce placement breakdown, and prevent escalation to high-cost residential care. The team were recognised nationally (Children's Services Team of the Year, 2023) for their work preventing family breakdown and care entry.

Bridges is countywide but locality-based, with staff operating out of hubs in Exeter, Barnstaple, and Newton Abbot, allowing them to cover East, Mid and South Devon as well as North Devon and Torridge. Referrals are made through Devon's Children's Social Care, usually by a social

worker with team manager agreement, where the case meets edge-of-care thresholds. Eligibility is confirmed through panel processes, and the service is coordinated with Early Help, Youth Justice, and other specialist teams.

The **Youth Service** provides targeted support for young people aged 11–19 (up to 25 with SEND) who are vulnerable, at risk of exclusion, or need help to make positive choices. The service focuses on early intervention, personal development, education and training engagement, and preventing offending, working in partnership with schools, health, police, and the voluntary sector. Delivery is through locality-based youth workers, targeted programmes (including youth justice and prevention), and links with Family Hubs and Early Help teams to ensure joined-up support across the county.

Youth services are delivered from a network of youth centres and hubs across Devon, including Exeter (The 100 Club), Barnstaple (Georgies), Bideford Youth Centre, Okehampton (Room 13), Exmouth (The Hive), Newton Abbot (The Station), Ottery St Mary (The Station), Tiverton Youth Centre, and Sidmouth Youth Centre. Since 2014, most of Devon's youth service has been commissioned and outsourced to Space Youth Services, an independent social enterprise that runs the county's youth centres and programmes, with additional provision delivered by Young Devon through its YES Centre's in Newton Abbot, Exeter, and Barnstaple. This commissioning arrangement allows the council to retain strategic oversight while specialist providers deliver day-to-day youth work.

The **Family Group Conferencing (FGC) service** in Devon enables families to take the lead in planning for children when there are safeguarding or welfare concerns, with independent coordinators supporting them to create their own plan for approval by professionals. The service is countywide, with coordinators based across localities and linked to Early Help and Children's Social Care. Referrals are made by social workers or Early Help practitioners through MASH or internal processes, with parental consent.

FGC plays a strategic role in preventing children from entering care where safe alternatives exist, strengthening family networks, and supporting permanence planning, early help, and safeguarding duties. Government policy now aims to mandate family-led decision-making such as FGCs before care proceedings, as set out in the forthcoming *Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill*, with research by Foundations (2024) showing that national rollout could prevent thousands of care placements and save over £150m within two years.

The **Young Carers service** provides support for children and young people under 18 who care for family members with illness, disability, mental health needs, or substance misuse. The offer includes an assessment of needs, one-to-one support, respite and short breaks, peer support groups, and help to balance caring with education and wellbeing.

Specialist young carers workers, commissioned by Devon County Council (currently delivered through Devon Carers/Westbank), also provide information, advice, and signposting, run targeted activities and clubs, and work with schools to ensure young carers are identified early and supported in their learning.

The **Devon Youth Justice Team** works with young people aged 10–17 who offend or are at risk of offending, aiming to prevent reoffending and keep communities safe. It brings together staff from social care, police, probation, health, and education to deliver assessment, intervention, and support that addresses risks and builds positive futures. With office bases in Barnstaple and Exeter. A Youth Offending Team (YOT) Board (required under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.) provides governance and strategic oversight for the local YOT. It is a multi-agency partnership board, including senior leaders from the local authority, police, probation, health, education, and the voluntary sector, which sets priorities, monitors performance, ensures statutory duties are met, and aligns youth justice work with wider children's and

community safety strategies.

Current delivery – Community Health Services

Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD) were commissioned in 2019 as the NHS service responsible for delivering children's community health services across Devon (excluding Plymouth). It is operated by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, in partnership with Devon Partnership NHS Trust and Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Rated Good by CQC (overall Trust effectiveness - Requires Improvement) A section 75 agreement is in place for a range of services including- CFHD, Short Breaks and Child Death overview panel. With the ICB acting as lead commissioner on behalf of the LA for CFHD. Devon County Council contributes to the pooled fund.

CFHD provides a range of services, including:

- Community Children's Nursing
- Specialist school nursing for children with complex health needs Community therapy services (Speech & Language, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy)
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services CAMHS
- Children in Care health services
- Services for neurodiversity, physical disabilities, early developmental delays, sensory needs, palliative care
- Access to Devon's Family Information Service (a statutory service Required under the **Childcare Act 2006** (sections 12 and 13))

Outline Transition Plan Children's Social Care, SEND and Education Services in Devon

Strategic System Challenge A: Political and Cultural Alignment		
Reorganising Children's services can be deeply political and cultural challenge as well as a structural and technical one. It is fraught with substantial risks to highly vulnerable children. Leaders must not at any point lose focus on the safeguarding of children through transition and beyond. It is important to align political leadership, partnership responsibilities, resources, officer teams, and organisational cultures across the newly formed authorities.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
	Deliver a joint leadership development plan. Bringing elected members and senior officers from all legacy councils together using structured sessions to explore expectations, risk appetite, governance models, and shared priorities.	Embed values and behaviours in governance. Codify expectations for behaviour, decision making and collaboration into new constitution, performance frameworks, and leadership development. Reinforce these through appraisal, induction and ongoing peer support.
	In creating a shared narrative for the new council, develop a clear story about what the new council is for, what will be different, and how it will serve	Address cultural differences openly by creating safe space to acknowledge and work through those differences. risks, and reform goals to

	communities better — especially in ASC, where continuity and compassion are vital.	ensure informed oversight.
		Prioritise member induction and Children's Services literacy by providing early and ongoing development to help members understand Children's Services duties, budgets etc. Including Children's Social Care, Education and SEND.

Strategic System Challenge B: Disaggregating Funding

Disaggregating Children's services during local government reorganisation presents a unique set of challenges, including how to model and implement fair, practical service and budget splits between new unitary authorities.

While other functions (such as refuse collection or planning) may lend themselves more easily division along new administrative boundaries, children's services are deeply embedded in pattern of demand, supply and risk that often cross or defy geographic logic.

Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Agree criteria for disaggregating funding including need, deprivation and agree rules for applying ordinary residence.	Establish shared understanding of how need and provider market composition has been shaped by strategic commissioning decisions. Develop business cases to agree transitional funding to allow for transformation. Reform models of delivery.	Implement and monitor delivery of agreed financial and risk management transition plan.
	Agree strategic and financial risk management plan and governance.	

Strategic System Challenge C: ICT Rationalisation and contract novation

ICT Rationalisation Is critical to maintaining continuity of care, statutory compliance, and system functionality during and after local government reorganisation.

The disaggregation process can be complex in that legacy IT systems were never designed to be split. Case management platforms, finance systems, provider databases, and contract management tools are often highly customised, poorly documented and interwoven with broader infrastructure. Additionally, performance data critical to assurance and oversight are built out from these systems.

Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Secure ICT, performance, and legal Capacity and establish digital programme teams, legal contract review, and	Secure inter-authority agreements for shared contracts and systems.	Scale up integrated performance data through integrated data platforms. Creating greater intelligence to shape preventative and

supplier negotiation		early help delivery and manage demand.
Map and rationalise the contracts/license portfolio by completing an audit of active and lapsed contracts, and triage which need novation, which can be reprocurd, and which require bespoke solutions.	Where services or suppliers must remain shared for a period, ensure legally binding agreements on funding, security access and decision making	
Strategic System Challenge D: Provider Engagement		
A significant proportion of Children's Services spend goes to external provision in some areas. Disruption to this system, even if unintended, can quickly translate into instability for the most vulnerable children.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Audit commissioning and sufficiency strategies, market development plans, contracts and provider geography to understand who delivers care, at what cost, to whom. Determination of continued joint commissioning or disaggregation of contracts. Avoiding accidental market destabilisation by splitting a contract geographically that providers need scale to sustain operations.	Set up a provider transition forum early in the programme for sharing information, flagging risks, and co-designing solutions. Forums to be grouped with Children's Homes, Fostering and Supported Accommodation providers brought together. All other providers	Building strong and collaborative provider relationships to better meet the needs of the new Unitary's children. Regular and ongoing communication and joint working. Co-designed models of care. Provider and joint agency learning events to assess impact and develop change. Clear and resourced sufficiency strategy and market development plan developed locally, alongside regional collaboration particularly for provision for children with the most complex needs.
	Test contract terms and pricing models before rollout to avoid a "lift and shift" approach to contract novation. Invite providers to review new terms and give feedback: especially smaller organisations who may struggle to absorb complexity.	
	For placements in children's homes, family-based care and supported	

	accommodation work collaboratively with other councils through the changeover: agree transitional alignment to inflation uplifts, price re-negotiations. To manage the market, prevent unnecessary competition between LA's and to reduce the administrative burden on providers.	
Children's Services Strategic Challenge 1: Workforce Pressures		
- Recruitment and retention difficulties exacerbated by cost-of-living issues and competition with other sectors. - Agency rate (At Jan 25) 47% against establishment. "Management oversight and supervision are still not used effectively or consistently enough" Ofsted ILACS - Capacity in specialist roles, including SEND caseworkers, educational psychologists, and therapy services (SEND inspection)		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
identify and appoint senior leaders: particularly 'shadow' Director of Children's Services and assistant directors of children's social care, education and SEND services as early as possible: Empowered in shadow roles to shape transition plans, stabilise key partnership relationships, and begin carrying the load of distributed leadership well before go-live.		
Joint workforce mapping and early talent planning alongside collaborative recruitment campaigns to avoid bidding wars and ensure shared messaging about career opportunities in the new structures.	Agree principles on pay and conditions to prevent destabilising market inflation; short term shared or hosted roles particularly in specialist or senior functions where continuity is more important than early separation.	Embed sustainable workforce model with reduced caseloads, strong supervision, structured pathways, and housing/economic levers to support retention. Leverage the city's higher education institutions (e.g. University of Exeter, Exeter College) to create structured pipelines into care careers.
Values and Vision workshops with senior officers and Members to co-create a shared sense of purpose and clarify what success should look and feel like post transition.	Create a narrative to share with staff and communities about what the new organisation stands for and their part in it not just how it will be structured but why it exists and why it will be different	Use local economic development, housing, and planning powers to support affordable housing for children's services staff including Social Workers, Team Leaders and SEND caseworkers, Educational Psychologists, improving retention.
Define "safe and legal" through clear, collaborative		Lead joined-up workforce campaigns (e.g. "Proud to

decision-making based on agreed and rigorously applied criteria around safety and statutory duties.		Care Exeter”) focused on urban/rural recruitment advantages.
Children’s Services Strategic Challenge 2: Demand & complex needs		
• Rising complexity of children and family needs (neglect, domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse). • Timeliness of Child Protection strategy meetings • Sufficiency to meet the needs of children with the most complex lives		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Establish baseline demand data (Children in Need, Child Protection and Children Looked After, Consider local strategic needs data for risk areas such as exploitation, County Lines, self-harm and emotional wellbeing needs). Map overlaps with housing, education, domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse.	Ensure shadow portfolios and directorates reflect the future intent of the new organisation: e.g. explicit bringing together of housing, health integration and adult care. Develop integrated early help and edge-of-care pathways. Strengthen MASH thresholds and consistency	Development of integrated pathways with housing, education, and employment services to better support young adults in transition. Embed “no wrong door” approach. Best Start Family Hubs developed into integrated early help with housing, education, employment, and health. Develop highly effective work through the local safeguarding partnership addressing exploitation and multi-agency contextual safeguarding approaches.
Working with Community Health Devon to shape pathways for children and families in Exeter. Assess the effectiveness of joint commissioning arrangements	Development of integrated pathways with strategic NHS ICS commissioners and operational delivery partners including Primary Care Networks (PCN’S); RDHU and DPT NHS Trusts. Bring together commissioners and delivery partners for mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse services.	Integration and co-location of housing, social care, NHS and VCSE services into Neighborhood Area Teams aligned with best start family hubs, early family help and Integrated multi-agency child protection
Understand the needs of the most vulnerable children, where they are placed and the provision, they are receiving	Plan as a partnership for tenacious oversight and joint planning for the continued care of these children throughout transition or where appropriate step down or move on.	Develop strategies and delivery plans to better meet needs, prevent escalation and improve care models for children with the most complex lives. Working in regional collaborations with Provider collaborative, NHS partner and commissioners,

		Ofsted and the police.
Children's Services Strategic Challenge 3: Placement market fragility		
• Insufficient local foster/residential capacity • Instability • Rising costs.		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Update sufficiency strategy and engage with the market Assess sufficiency gaps in foster care, children's home and residential provision and costs. Engage providers on future role of the new unitary .	Using planning and housing powers to incentivise the right type of provision. Pilot Mockingbird fostering hub. Options appraise the development or commissioning of additional small therapeutic homes. Develop local brokerage and joint commissioning with neighbours.	Align Section 106 and City Development frameworks to steer investment into areas of greatest need. Shift sufficiency: expand fostering capacity. Build partnerships for therapeutic homes in the new Unitary area, using planning/housing levers to shape provision and provider relationships. Grow in-house fostering capacity, develop specialisms aligned to local need and strategic assessment of sufficiency. Collaborate for recruitment if the DfE funded pilot does not continue
Assess the local offer for Care Leavers.	Establish early and in shadow form a Corporate Parenting Board. Engage with Care experienced young people to determine their lived experience. Develop resourced strategic priorities for the new unitary.	Further enhance the local offer and the Pledge commitments to Care Leavers for prioritised and supported access routes to education, skills and training and employment. New unitary recruitment policies to pro-actively target Care leavers for employment opportunities. Care Leavers prioritised for housing and housing support. Develop specialist capacity to respond to young people with complex lives.
Connect with good practice in Regional Care Co-operatives, connect with regional and sub-regional partners.		Consider joining or convening a Regional Care Co-operative approach to meet the needs of all children better but most explicitly the needs of

		children with the most complex lives such as in youth justice, mental health or neurodiversity
Children's Services Strategic Challenge 4: SEND sufficiency & inclusion		
• EHCP backlog, and timeliness performance • Autism diagnostic waits • Alternative Provision /special school pressures, demand and capacity shortfall. • Dedicated Schools Grant High needs block deficit and pressure		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Review EHCP backlog and timeliness. Review strategies and capital plans for Alternative Provision and special school provision needs. Benchmark with areas of good practice. Review impact of Locality Inclusion Partnerships as part of improvement plan.	Stand up SEND leadership. Building strong trust and confidence with partners and schools. Strengthen and embed locality inclusion partnerships with Multi Academy Trusts as part of transition arrangements.	Deliver backlog recovery and achieve 20-week timeliness. Robust annual review cycle embedded. Reducing demand for EHCP's through the impact of the locality inclusion partnership and the subsequent stronger mainstream inclusion capacity. Ensure special school and Alternative Provision capacity meet the needs of the children in the locality. Assessing future need and establishing high quality strategic and resource forward plan. Co-produce and implement assistive technology strategy promoting independence, choice and control
Children's Services Strategic Challenge 5: Parent/carers engagement & trust		
• Persistent dissatisfaction, • Poor communications, • Inconsistency and inequity in SEND offer.		
Map engagement/feedback structures with parents, carers, VCS, and schools. Identify gaps in communication.	Establish local parent carer forums. As a partnership develop place based Local Offer addressing inequity. Stronger coordination with voluntary and community	Embed sustainable co-production and trust-based engagement. Stronger VCS coordination across the area. Develop consistency and

	sector partners already embedded in neighbourhoods	reliability in the offer. Improve trust and transparency
Children's Services Strategic Challenge 6: Integration with Health		
• Long waits for ASD diagnosis, limited access to pre and post diagnostic support and waits for therapies and CAMHS • Capacity issues in the specialist workforce (speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, mental health support) (SEND Inspection)		
Phase 1 Preparation	Phase 2 Transition	Phase 3 Transformation
Map current Section 75 and community health arrangements. Engage NHS Devon and charities (Vranch House, Honeylands). Develop shared arrangements in specific areas – e.g. Out of hours emergency response; Section 117 aftercare/ forensic mental health/other specialist support/ financial assessments and charging functions which may benefit from collaboration with wider Devon unitary social care	Maintain current team and delivery structures where practicable, disaggregating staff, caseload and budgets to align with new unitary footprint Consider options to develop separate or continue with combined Section 75 for children's health. Pilot co-location of community teams.	Implement joint commissioning strategies to deliver integrated delivery services within School Cluster or Neighbourhood Area teams areas. Fully operational place-based Section 75. Co-located services, shared workforce planning, integrated therapies, and digital health solutions. Develop partnerships and joint commissioning with Charity sector, joint planning, shared outcomes.
Establish collaborative commissioning and procurement teams to help manage inheritance of Devon-wide contracts with providers	Maintain arrangements with Mental Health and Learning Disability partnerships to co-ordinate collaborative transformation with all age services.	



Local Government Reorganisation survey 2025

Report prepared by Kayleigh Pickles

Enventure Research

October 2025



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1. Engagement overview

Introduction

Exeter City Council is committed to listening to and engaging with its residents to help shape the future of local government in Devon. To support this, the Council commissioned Enventure Research, an independent research agency, to undertake a programme of engagement with local residents to:

- Understand what matters most to residents in relation to their local area and local services
- Gather views to help inform discussions about potential changes to local government structures
- Ensure that a wide range of residents from affected areas are given the opportunity to have their say

Engagement included both an open online survey and a representative survey with residents across the affected areas, carried out via telephone and face-to-face interviews – see the next slide for more information.

This report details the findings from this engagement programme and will help inform the final proposal on devolution and local government reorganisation that will be submitted to Government by 28 November 2025.



Research methodology

- The survey employed a questionnaire similar to that used by other neighbouring local authorities for local government reorganisation engagement work, which was adapted for the methodology.
- The survey was undertaken with residents in Exeter and the local area who were aged 16+ and would be affected by local government reorganisation using primarily a CATI methodology (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing).
- Quotas were set to achieve a sample that was broadly representative of the local population in terms of age group, gender, and local authority area. Additional face-to-face on-street interviews were carried out to balance quotas.
- Interviews took on average no longer than 12 minutes. The survey was piloted before launch to check ease of understanding and that the length was appropriate.
- **1,100 interviews** were completed between 12 August and 25 September 2025.
- An online survey could also be completed, which provided residents the opportunity to have their say in the engagement.
- The online survey was widely promoted by the Council and could be completed between 15 August and 29 September 2025. During this time **956 responses** were received.



1,100 interviews



12 minutes on average



Interpreting the survey results

- As the survey was completed with a random sample and not the entire population of Exeter and surrounding areas, results are subject to **sampling tolerances**.
- This report contains various tables and charts. In some instances, the responses may not add up to 100%. There are several reasons why this might happen:
 - The question may have allowed each respondent to give more than one answer (multiple choice)
 - Only the most common responses may be shown in the table or chart
 - Individual percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number so the total may come to 99% or 101%
 - A response of between 0% and 0.4% will be shown as 0%
- For some questions in the representative survey, respondents were able to rate value or importance using a scale of 1 to 5. For analysis, some scores have been grouped to provide **an overall level**. For example, scores of 4 and 5 have been combined as 'valuable' or 'important' and scores of 1 or 2 as 'not valuable' or 'not important'. Where combined percentages do not equal the overall level reported (being 1% higher or lower), this is due to percentages being rounded to the nearest whole number. **Mean scores** have also been calculated from the ratings by averaging the scores across all respondents. These are clearly marked in the figures and are shown to two decimal places.
- For some questions in the online survey, respondents were given a list of options and asked to **rank** their priority choices in order. For analysis, these were then scored with first choice assigned a score of 1, second choice 2, and so on. Mean scores for each option were then calculated by averaging the scores across all respondents. In contrast to the representative survey, it should be noted that lower mean scores indicate higher priority in the online survey; for instance, a mean score closer to 1 reflects a stronger preference. Priority mean scores are clearly marked in the figures and are shown to two decimal places.
- **Statistical analysis**² has been used to explore differences in the results provided by key subgroups, such as age group, gender, ethnic group, disability, local authority area, and deprivation levels³. Where base sizes for groups are not large enough, subgroups have been combined to create larger groups. Subgroup analysis is shown only where statistically significant differences between subgroups at the 95% confidence level have been found using the z-test.
- Verbatim **comments** from open-end (free text) questions were read in detail and code frames developed to show thematic analysis and categorisation of themes.
- Results from the online survey are shown in the report to **complement** the interviewer-led (representative) survey results. As the sample profile of online respondents differs from that of the interviewer-led survey, findings from that survey should be seen as indicative only.

³Small areas in England are ranked from most deprived to least deprived and divided into 10 equal groups, ranging from most deprived 10 per cent to the least deprived 10 per cent using the latest data from 2019. For analysis IMD deciles were mapped to postcodes, and in this report areas of higher deprivation equate to deciles 1-3, middle 4-7 and lower 8-10.

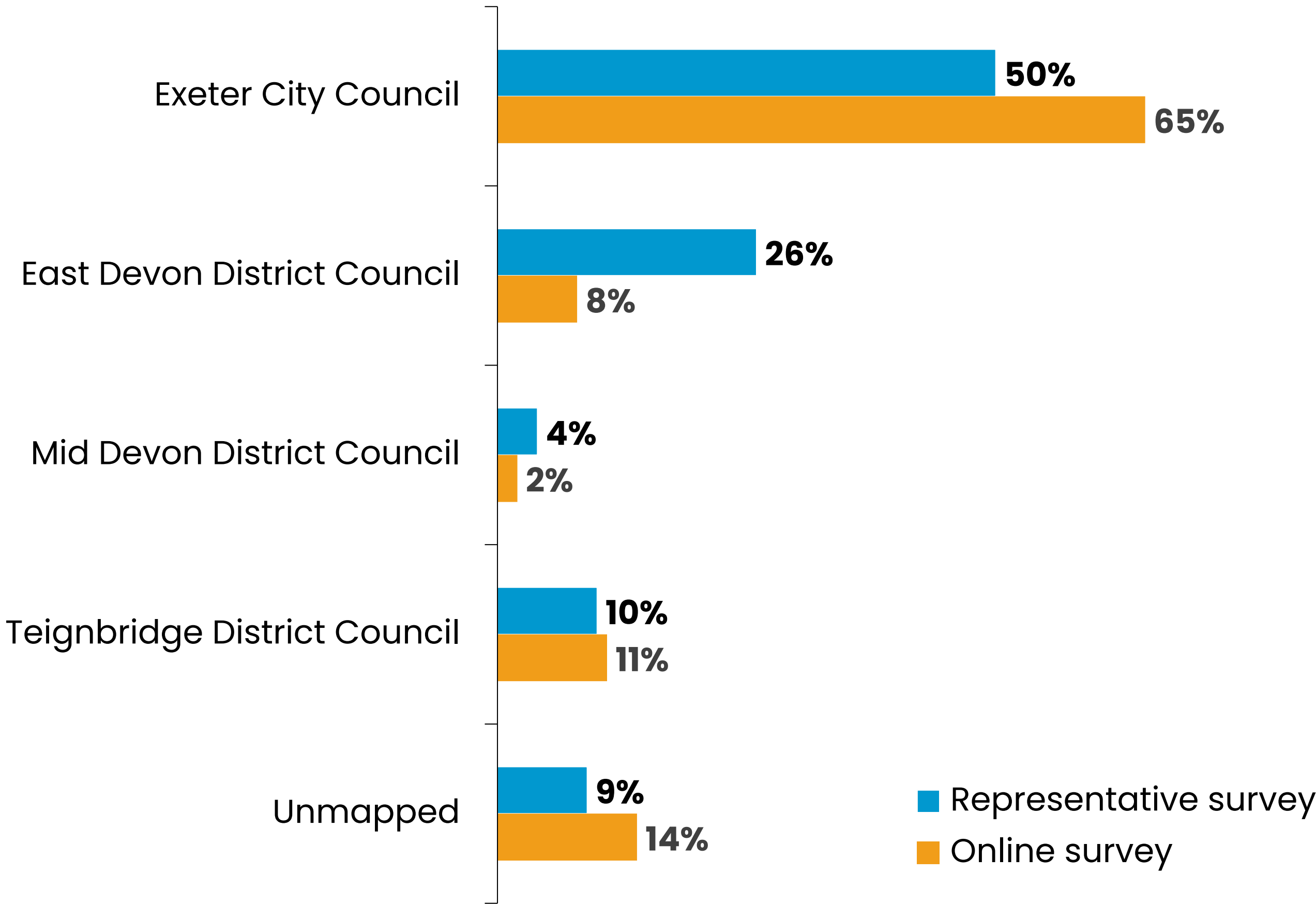
¹Based on 2021 census

²Statistical significance is tested at the 95% per cent level using the z-test



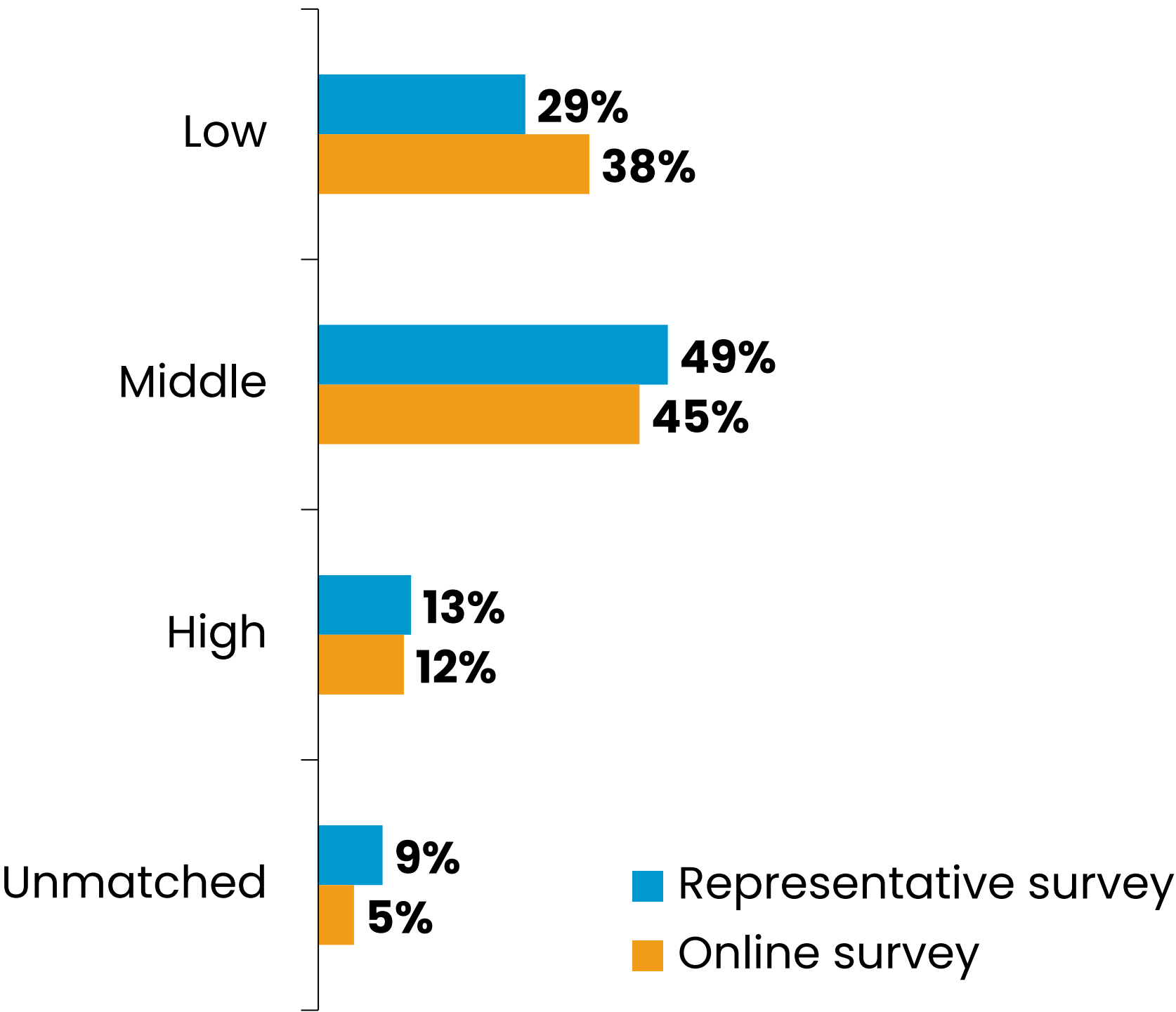
Location profile

Local authority area



Postcodes were collected to map responses to local authority area.

Deprivation levels¹

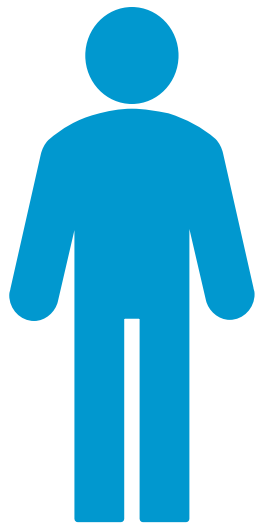


Question: What is your postcode?
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100; Online survey 2025: 956)

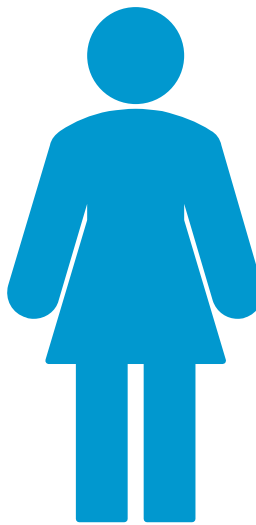
¹Small areas in England are ranked from most deprived to least deprived and divided into 10 equal groups, ranging from most deprived 10 per cent to the least deprived 10 per cent using the latest data from 2019. For analysis IMD deciles were mapped to postcodes, and in this report areas of lower deprivation equate to deciles 8-10, middle 4-7 and higher 1-3.

Respondent profile – representative survey

Sex



48%
male

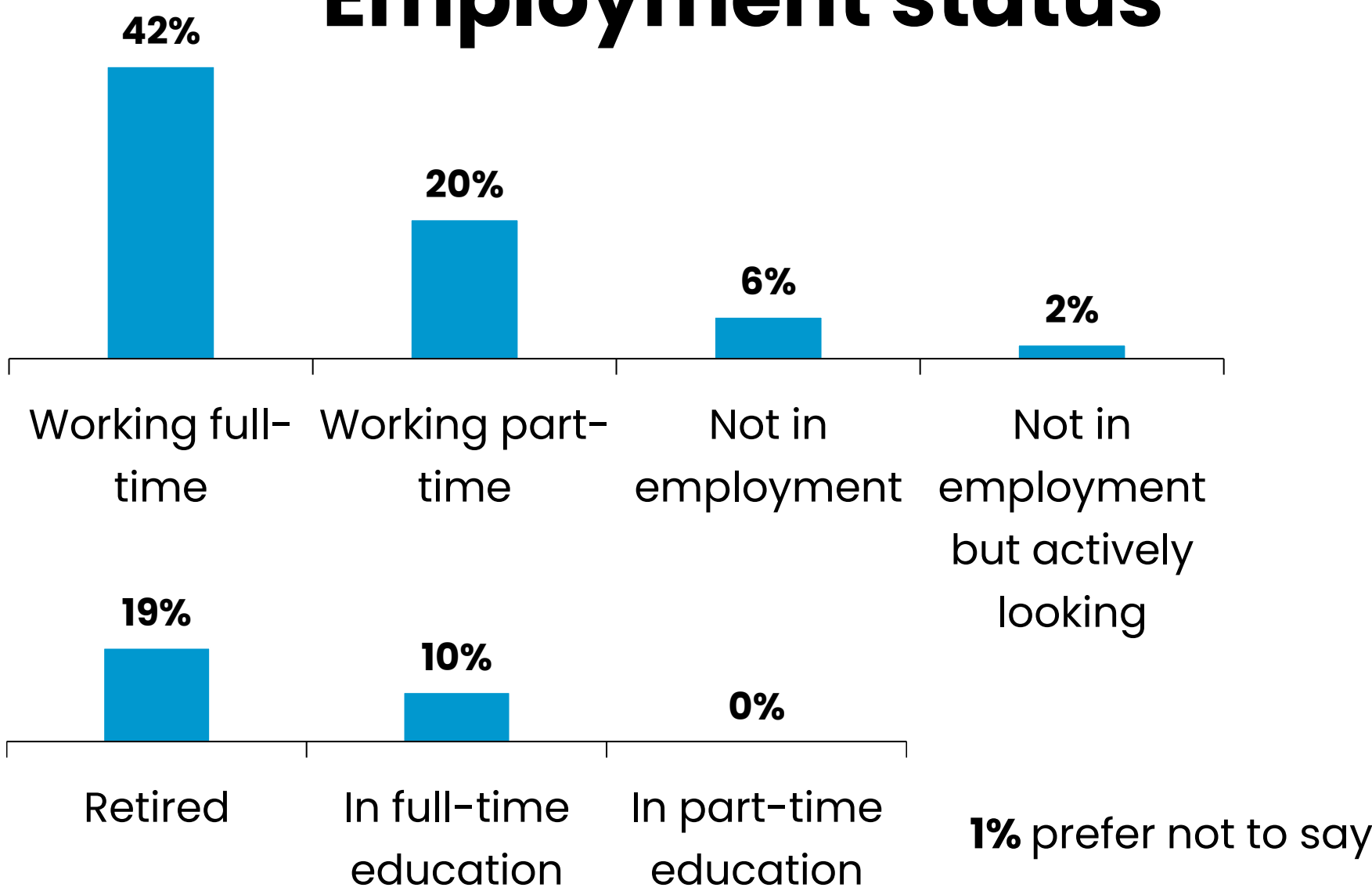


50%
female

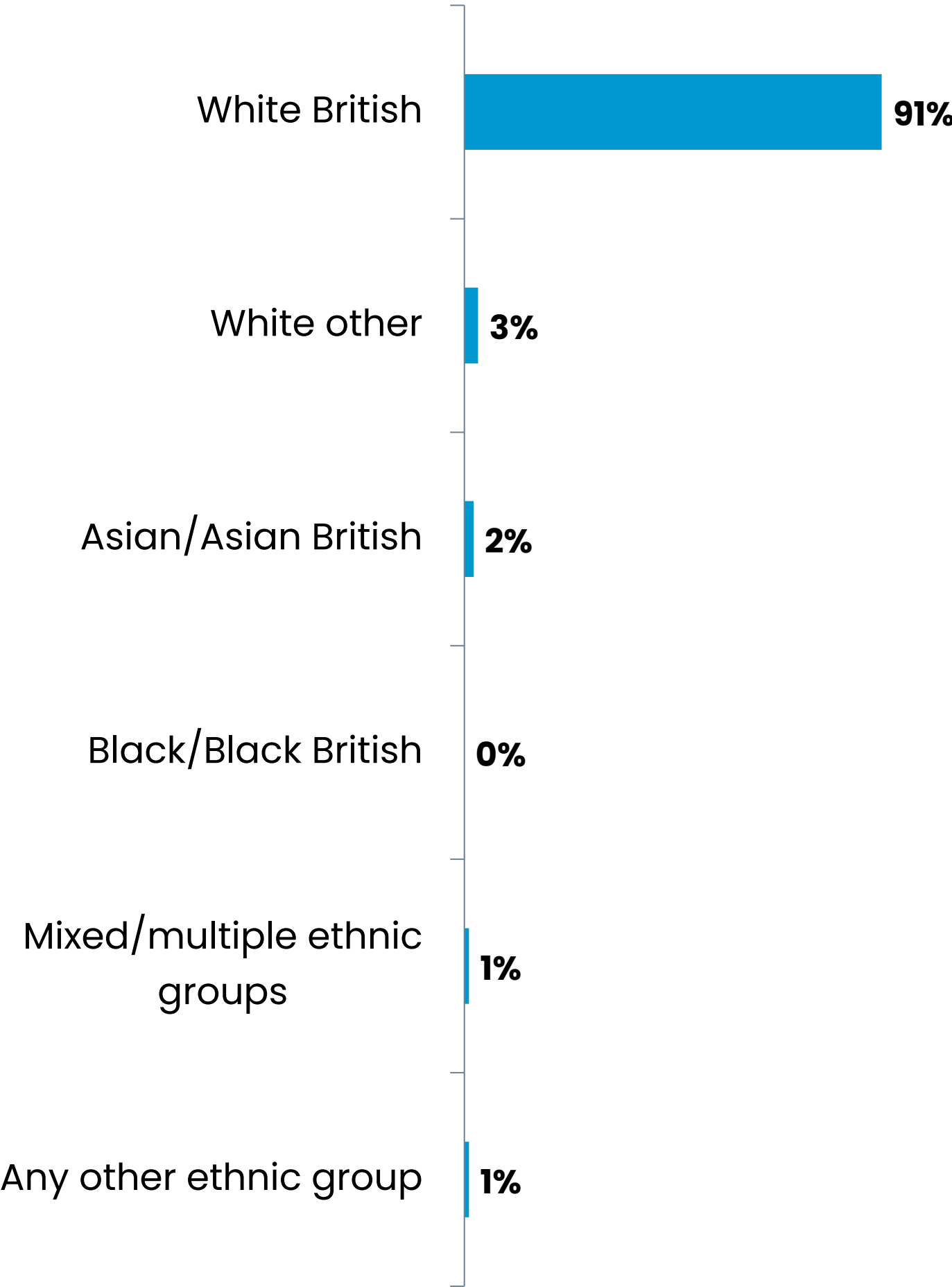
2% prefer not to say

99% same as sex registered at birth

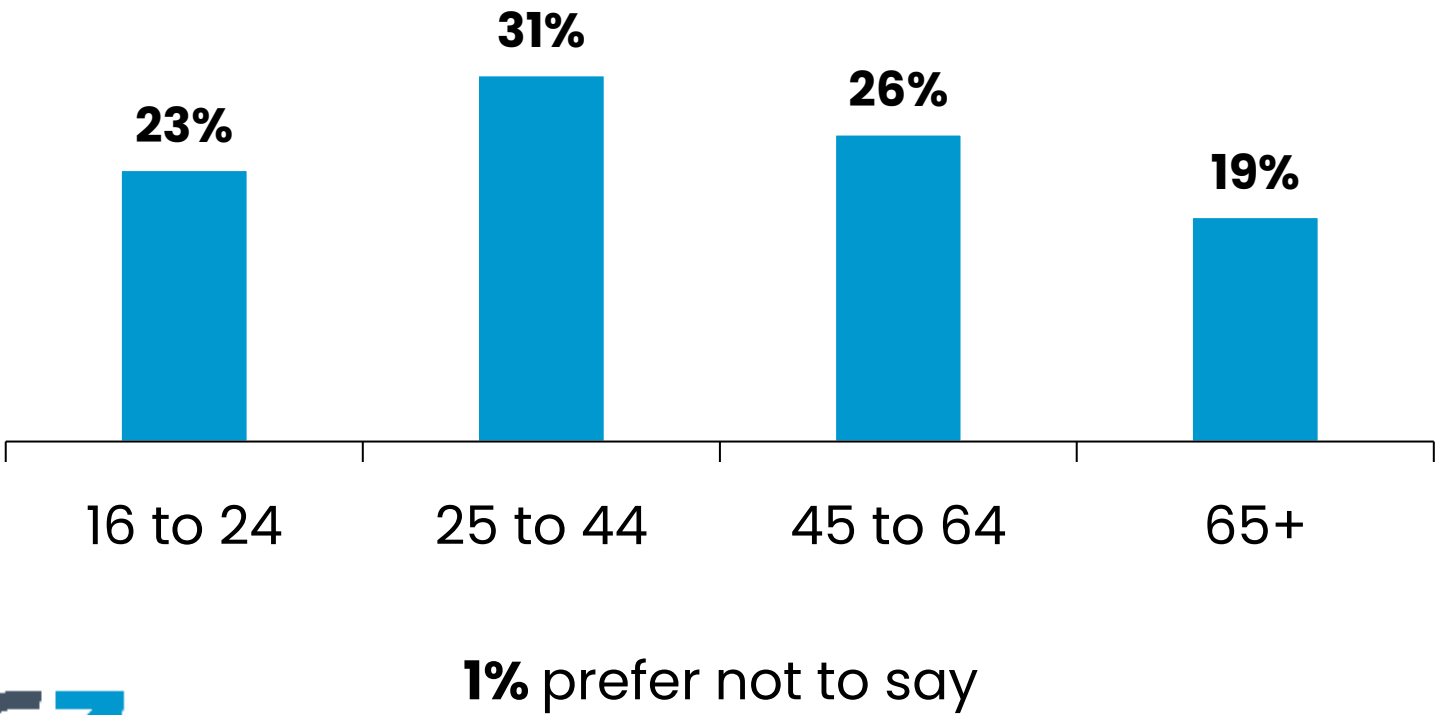
Employment status



Ethnic group



Age



Disability



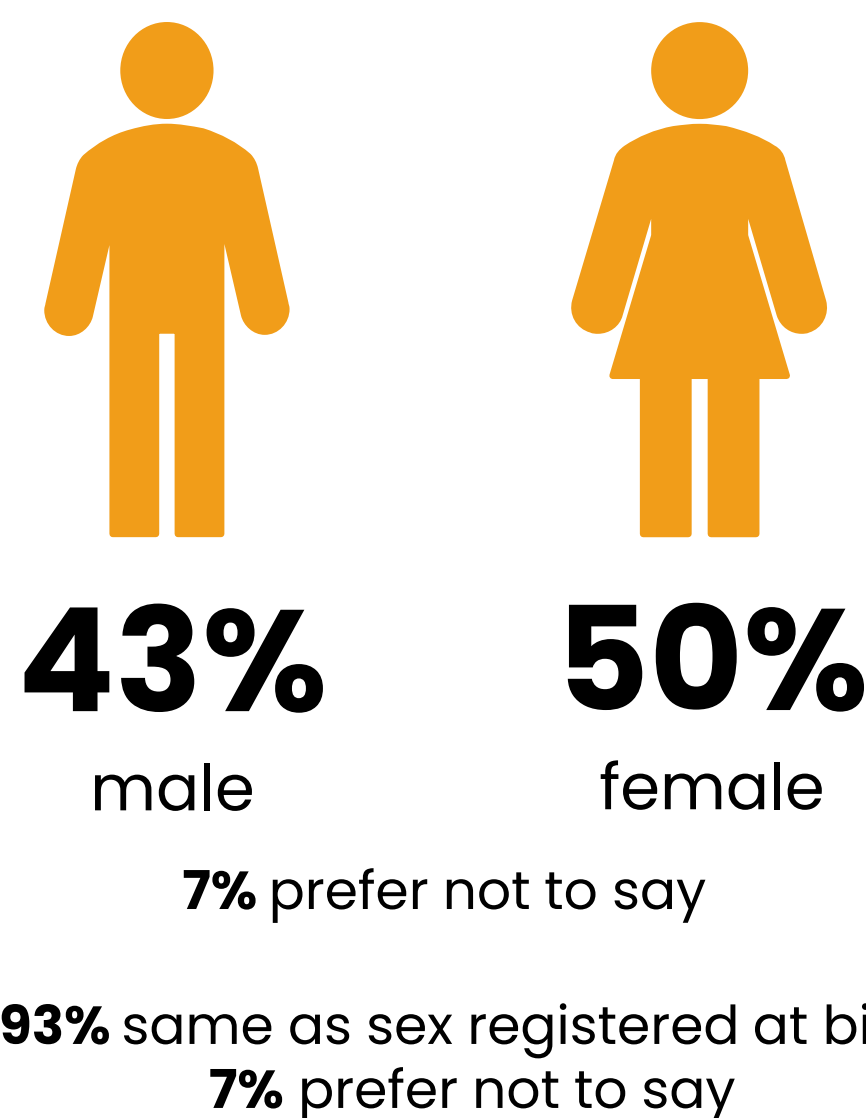
2% prefer not to say

1% prefer not to say

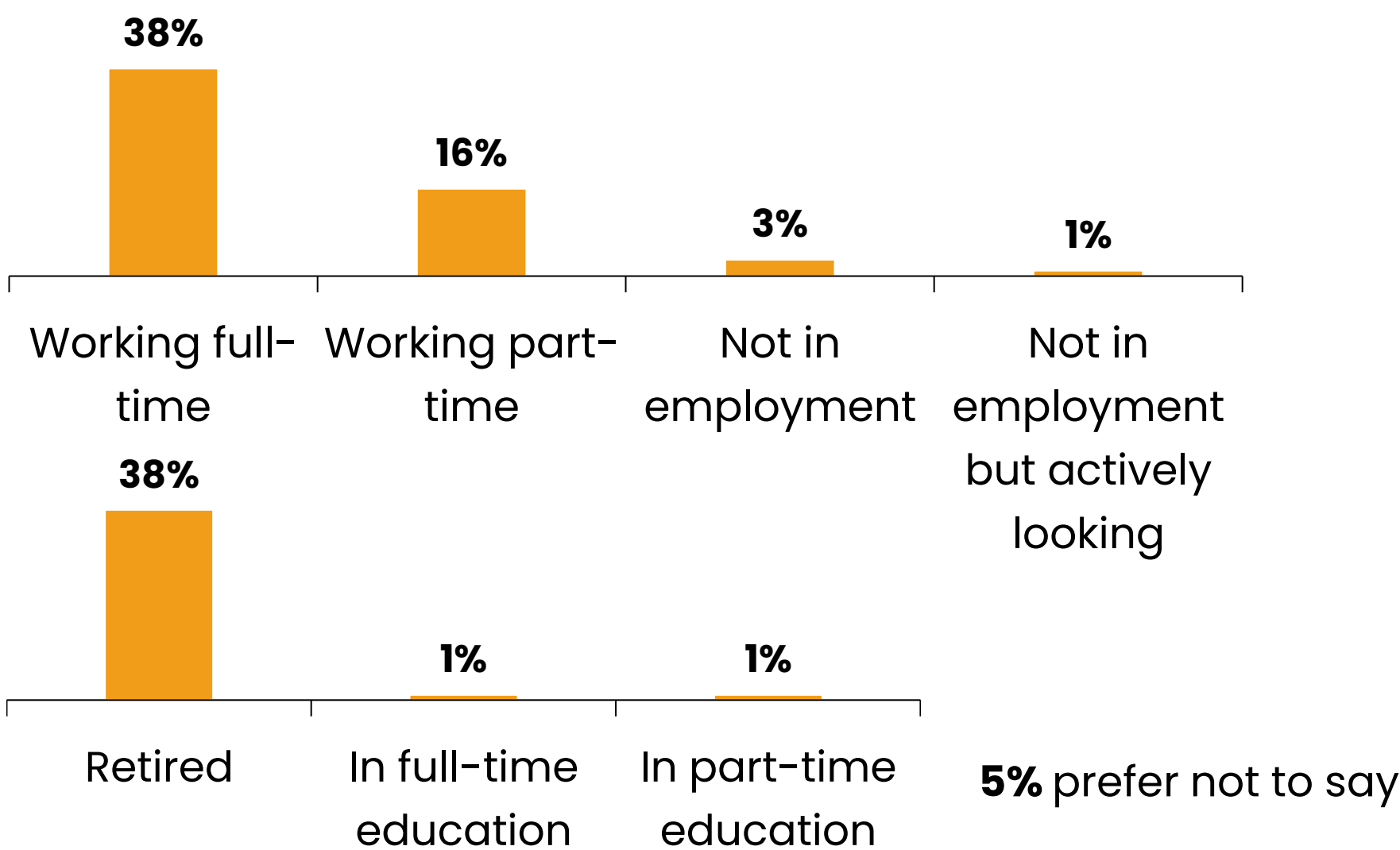


Respondent profile – online survey

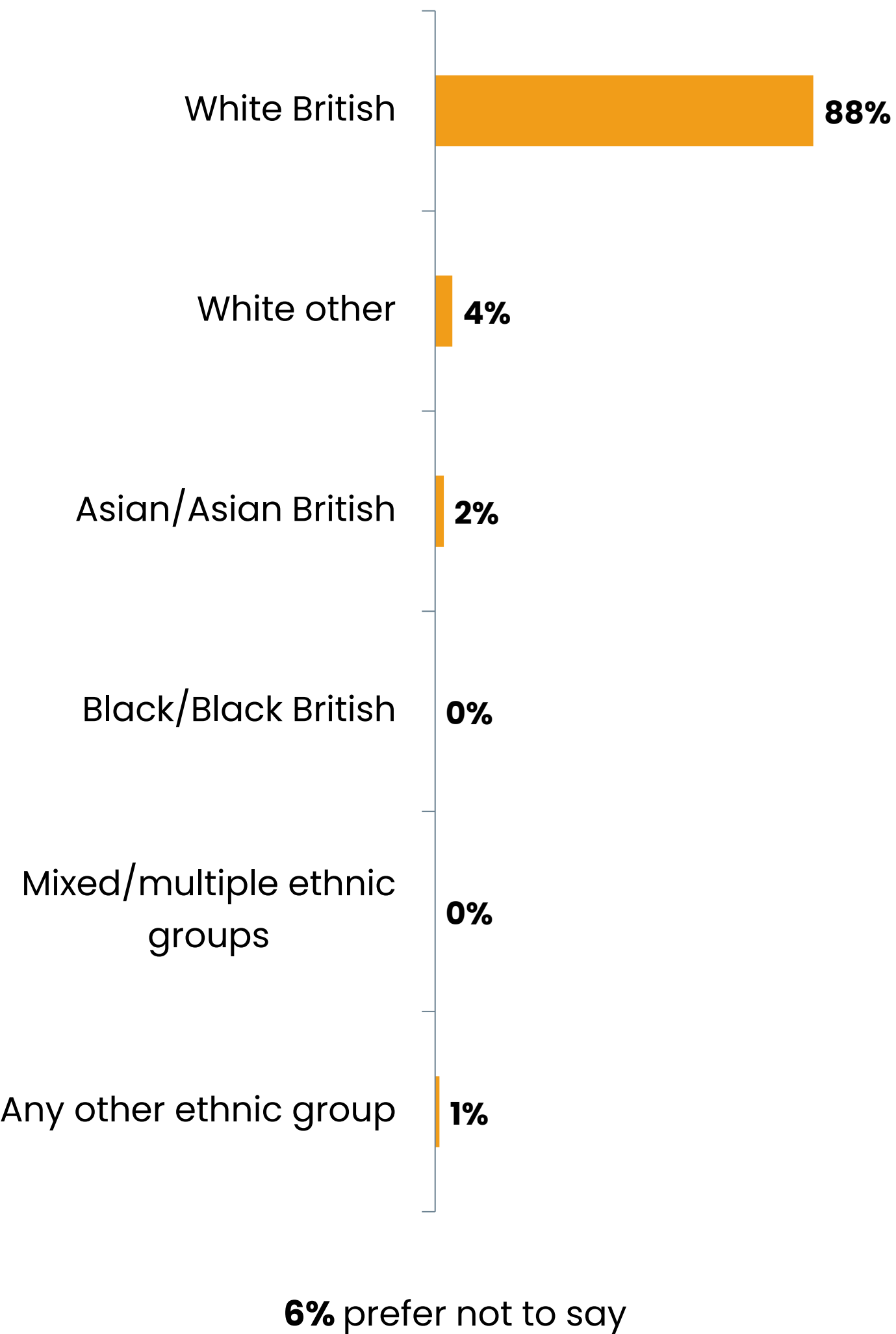
Sex



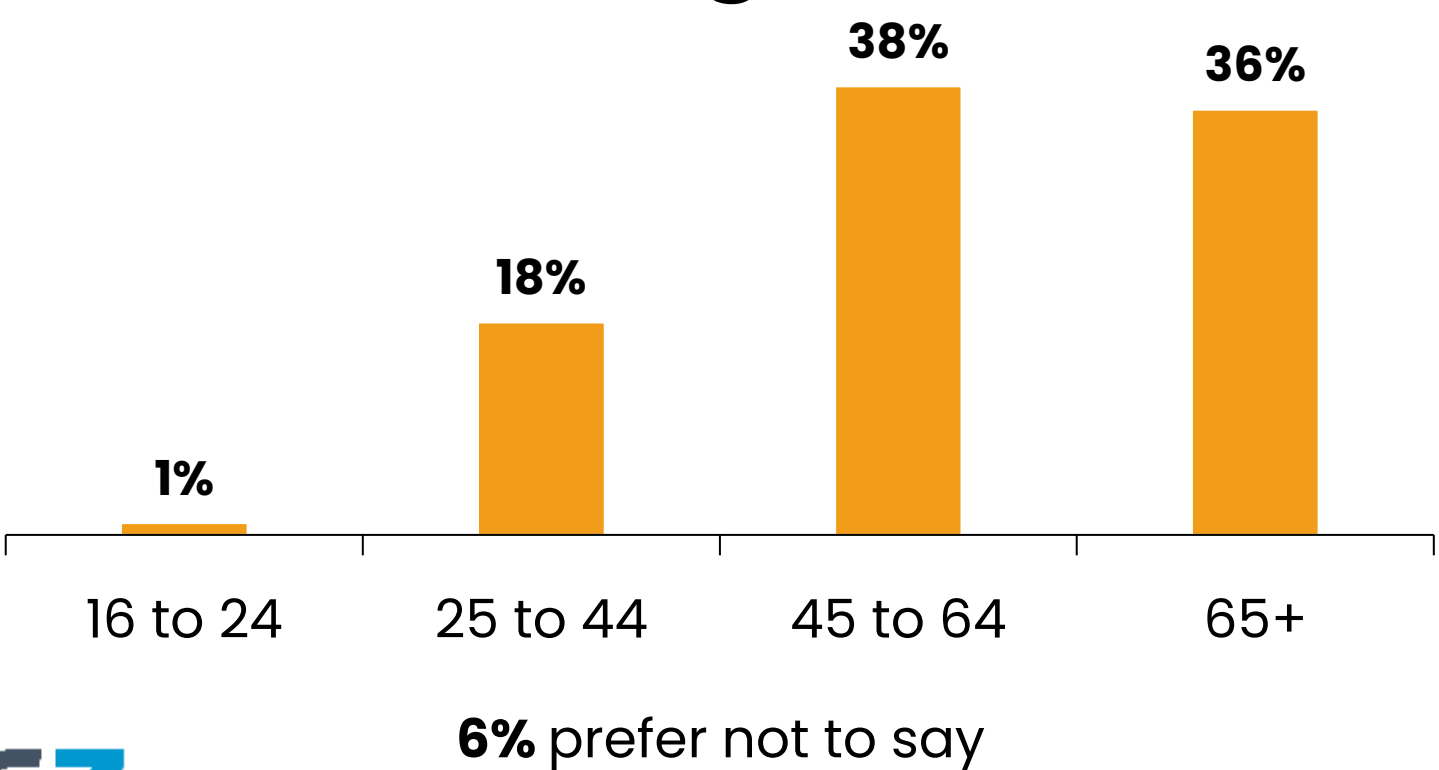
Employment status



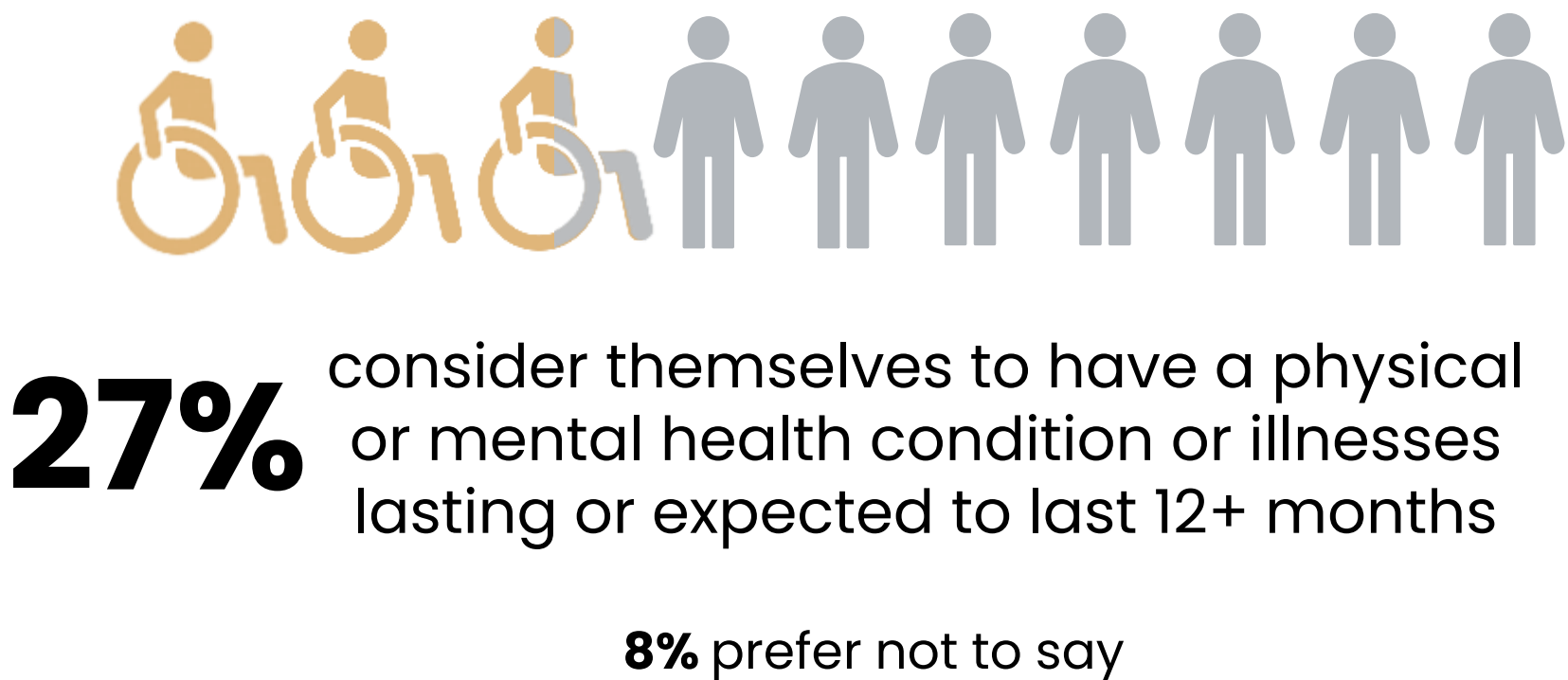
Ethnic group



Age



Disability



2. Key findings

Local area



Top 5 **positive** things about local area

Representative survey

- 1

Quiet/calm/peaceful

21%
- 2

Friendly people/good community/neighbours

21%
- 3

Close to sea/beach/coastline

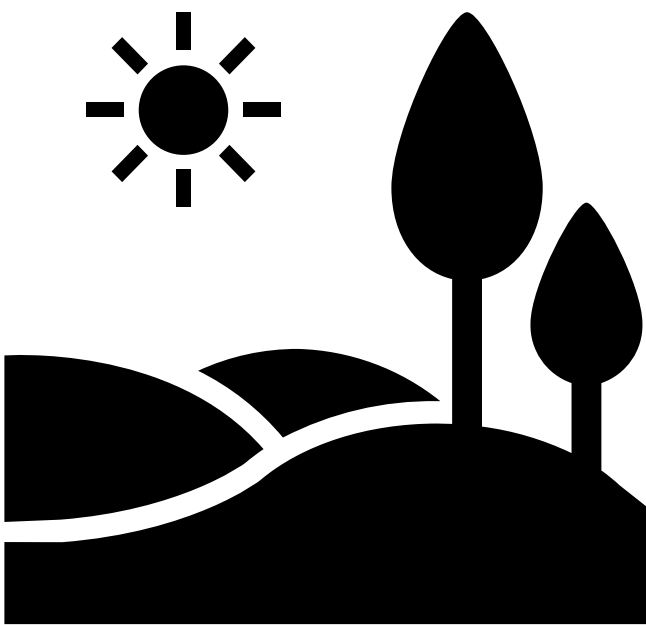
16%
- 4

Location/well connected/accessible

12%
- 5

Close to shops/good range of shops

10%



Online survey

- 1

Friendly people/good community/neighbours

27%
- 2

Rural/in or close to countryside

23%
- 3

Location/well connected/accessible

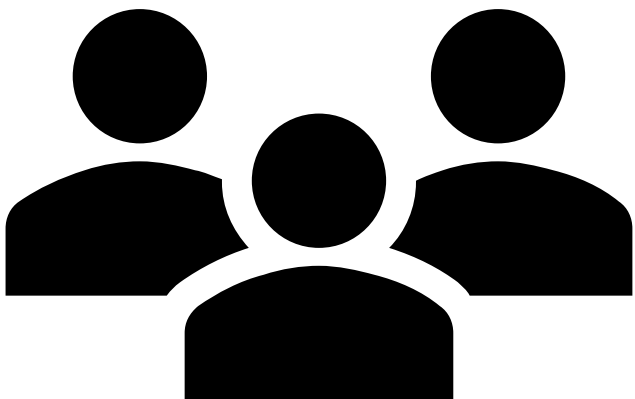
20%
- 4

Quiet/calm/peaceful

18%
- 5

Green spaces/parks

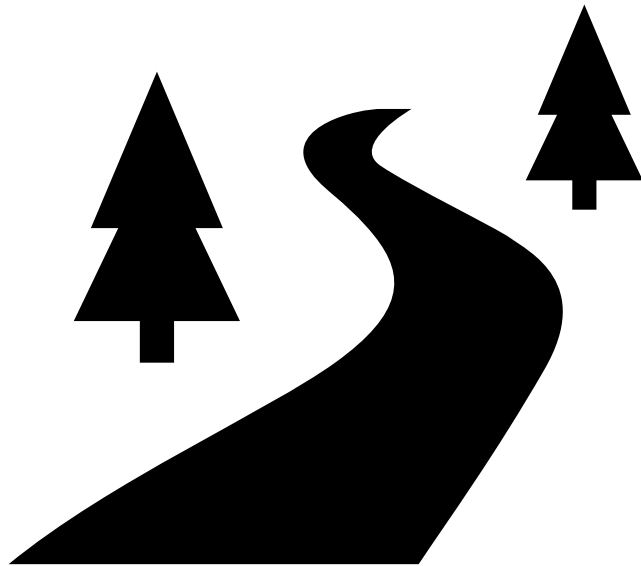
15%



Top 5 suggested improvements to the local area

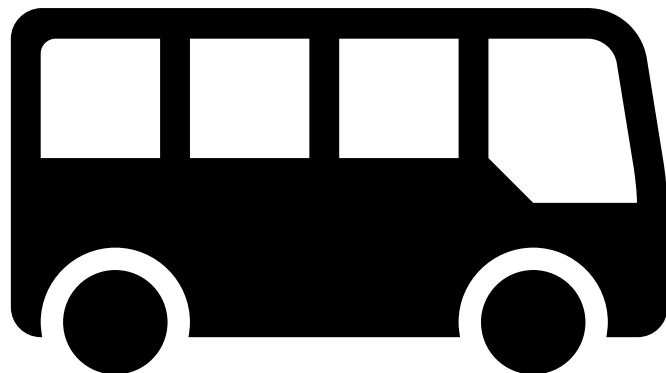
Representative survey

- 1 Improved roads and pavements/fix potholes 15%
- 2 More/improved/cheaper public transport 11%
- 3 Cleaner streets/tidier/less litter/more bins 10%
- 4 Improved safety/more policing/less crime/ASB 8%
- 5 More shops/wider range/fill empty shops 7%

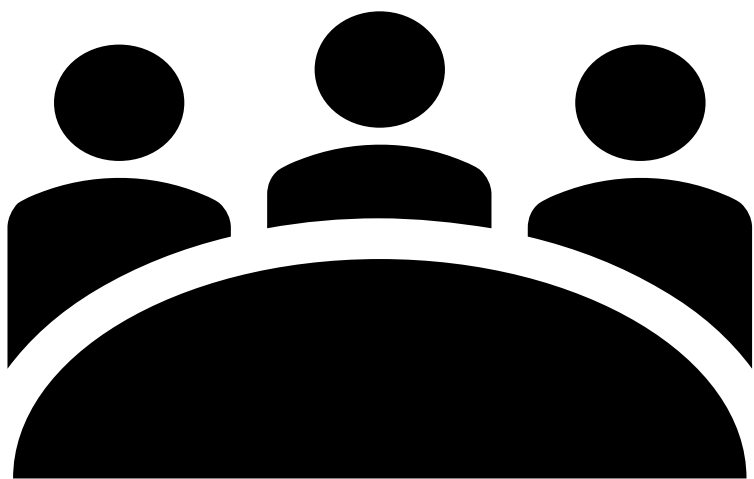


Online survey

- 1 More/improved/cheaper public transport 26%
- 2 Improved roads and pavements/fix potholes 18%
- 3 Cleaner streets/tidier/less litter/more bins 14%
- 4 Reduced congestion/better traffic management 12%
- 5 Improved safety/more policing/less crime/ASB 11%



Preferred ways of being involved in local decision making



Representative survey

- 52% informed but not involved
- 17% focus groups and consultations
- 17% through Town or Parish Council
- 15% community forums/organisations
- 10% not involved or informed

Online survey

- 36% focus groups and consultations
- 32% community forums/organisations
- 28% informed but not involved
- 24% through Town or Parish Council
- 3% not involved or informed

Valued aspects of how local councils serve the community

Most valued in **representative** survey by mean score (out of 5)¹



Representative respondents ranked each aspect from 1-5

Impact of local government reorganisation

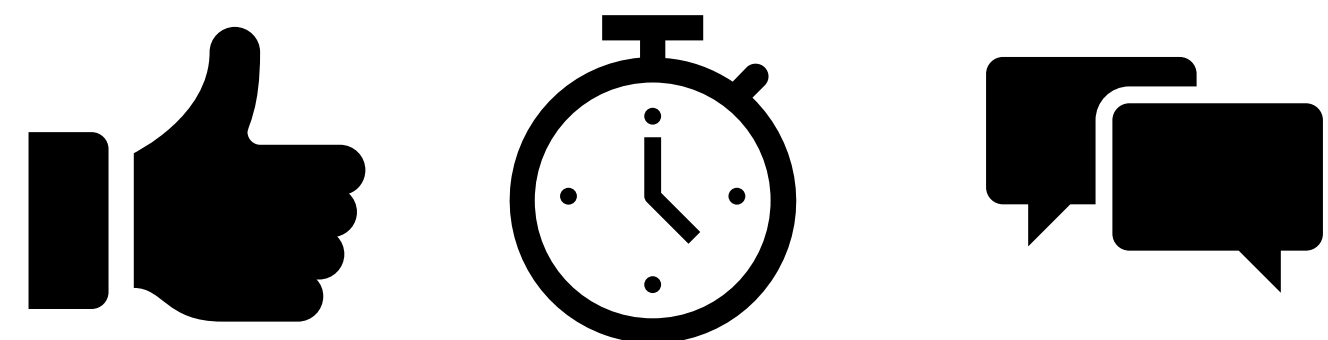
Most important impacts of LGR in **representative** survey by mean score (out of 5)



¹ See slide 6 'Interpreting the survey results' for an explanation about how mean scores are calculated

Valued aspects of how local councils serve the community

Most valued in **online** survey (top 5)



- 39%** delivering services efficiently and reliably
- 32%** being responsive to local needs
- 23%** protecting the environment and promoting climate action
- 21%** representing the community fairly and transparently
- 19%** Providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions

Online respondents could select up to three answers

Impact of local government reorganisation

Most hoped for impacts of LGR in **online** survey by mean score ranking¹

-  **2.08** a good understanding of the issues facing the local area
- 2.51** clear, open and honest decision-making
- 2.70** decisions that impact you are made locally
- 3.32** a supportive and accessible local ward councillor
- 4.39** council decisions made within easy travelling distance



Most hoped for improvements to council services in **online** survey by mean score ranking

-  **2.13** improved quality of services
- 2.34** efficient services that offer good value for money
- 2.95** clear understanding of who is responsible for delivering services
- 3.09** easy access to the council services you need
- 4.49** council offices are located nearby



Question wordings differed to representative survey

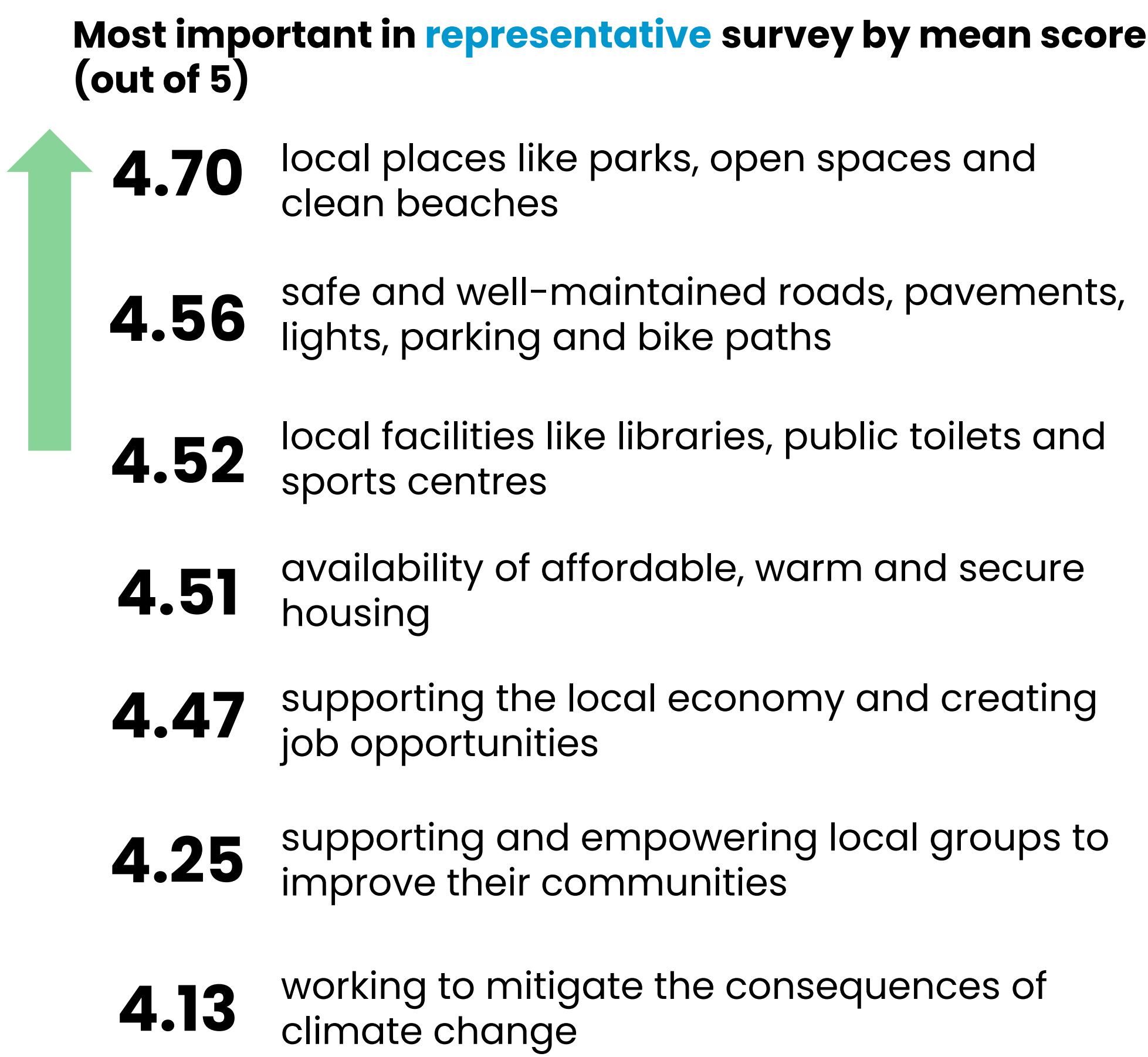


Base: All respondents (Online survey 2025: 956)

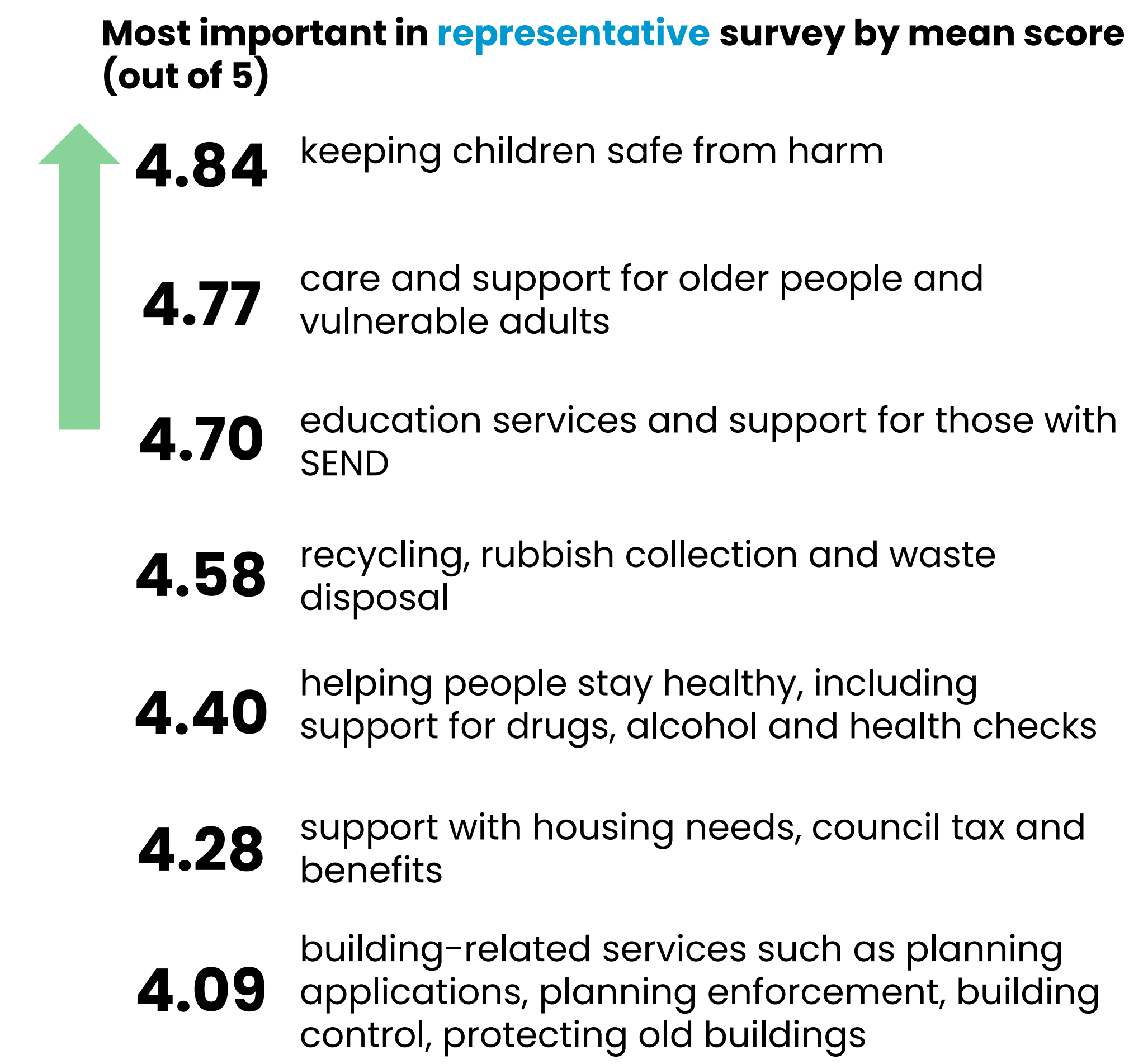
¹ See slide 6 'Interpreting the survey results' for an explanation about how mean scores are calculated

Priorities for shaping the future of local government services

How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon?



How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services?



Priorities for shaping the future of local government services

People and community services

Most important in **online** survey by mean score ranking

- 
- 2.69** keeping children safe from harm
 - 2.89** care and support for older people and vulnerable adults
 - 3.31** education services, including school admissions and transport, and support for those with SEND
 - 3.33** availability of truly affordable, warm and secure housing
 - 4.17** helping people stay healthy, including support for drugs, alcohol and health checks
 - 4.61** support with housing needs, council tax and benefits

Place-based services

Most important in **online** survey by mean score ranking

- 
- 2.57** safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths
 - 2.64** local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches
 - 2.71** local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres
 - 4.21** community safety and standards, such as trading standards, food safety, licensing, noise and air quality
 - 4.42** building-related services such as planning applications, building control, protecting old buildings
 - 4.45** supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities

Environment and economy

Most important in **online** survey by mean score ranking

- 
- 2.09** protecting the environment and keeping it clean
 - 2.37** recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal
 - 2.38** supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities
 - 3.16** working to mitigate the consequences of climate change



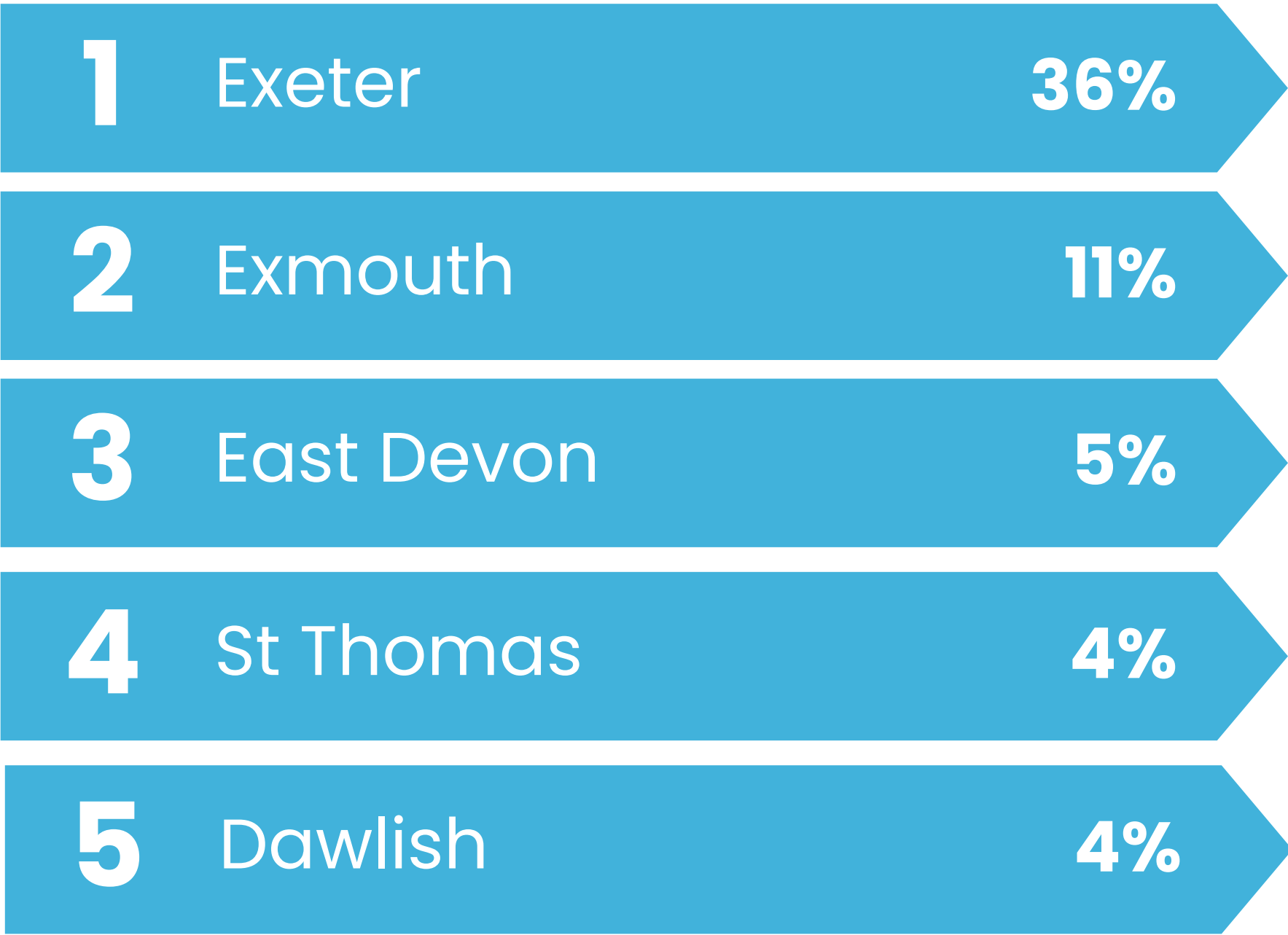
3. Local area

Respondents in both the representative and online surveys most frequently identify 'Exeter' as their local area

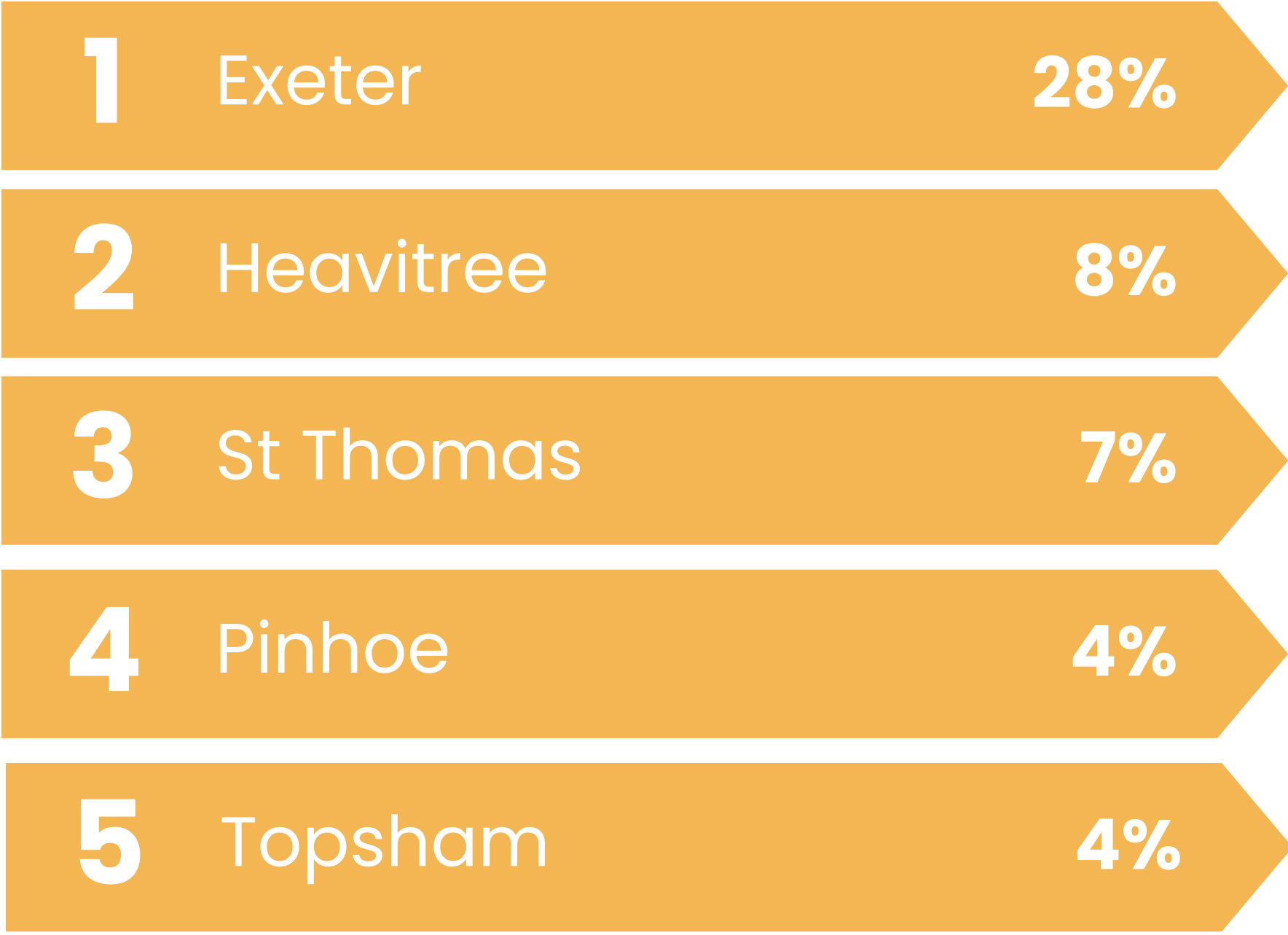
Respondents were asked where they consider their local area to be. A wide range of responses was provided, comprising a mixture of towns, parts of the county, wards, parishes, and a few other places outside of Devon. The top five responses for the representative and online survey are shown below.

The most frequent response given was 'Exeter' in both the representative and online surveys.

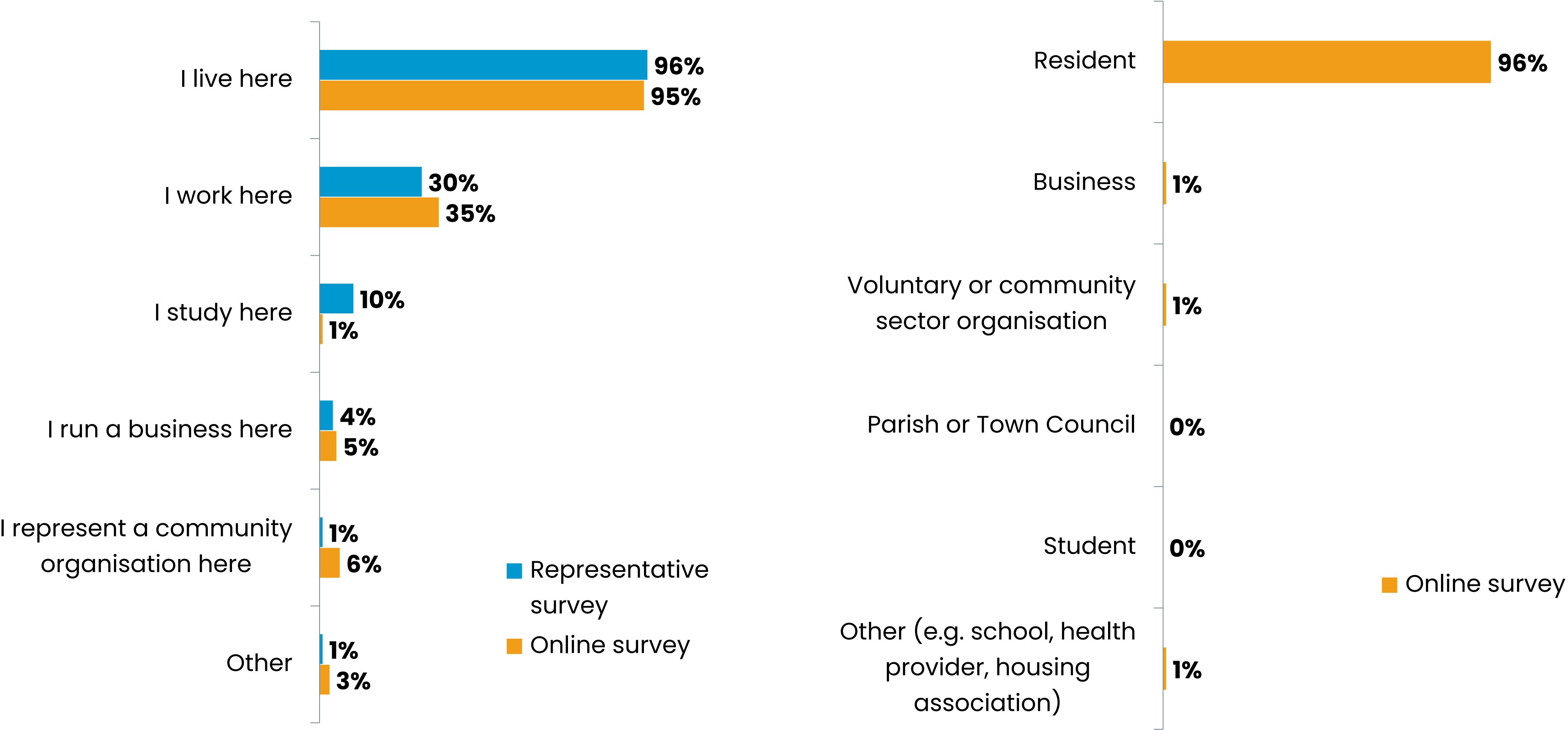
Representative survey



Online survey



Similar proportions in both surveys live and work in Exeter and the surrounding area, and nearly all online respondents were responding in the capacity of a resident

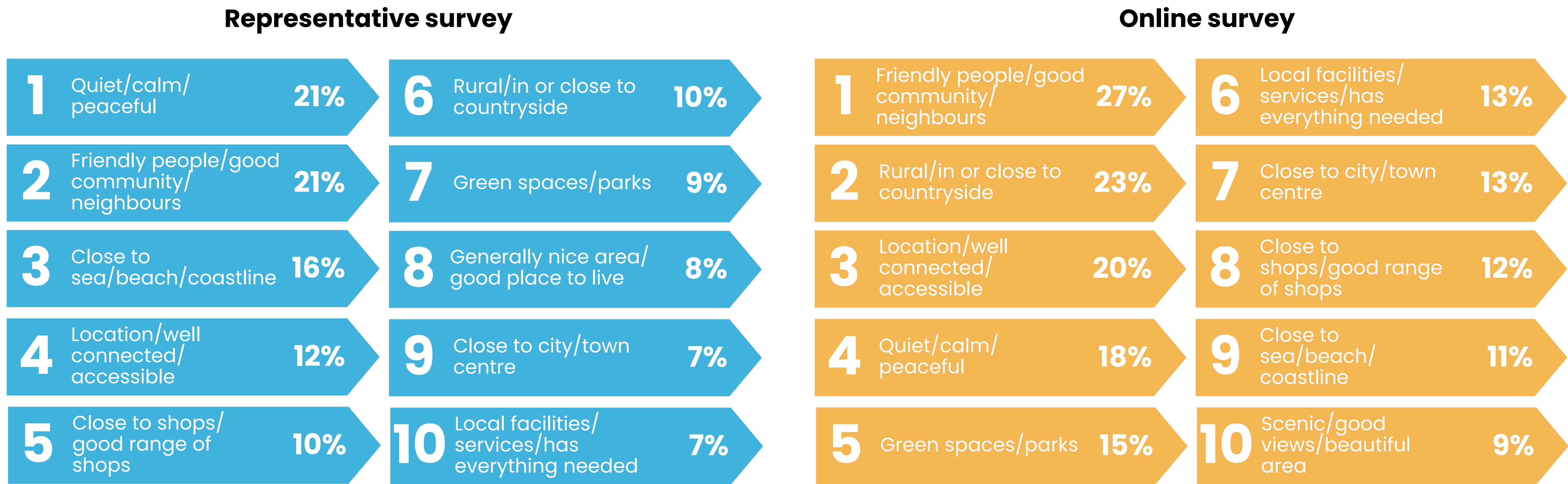


Question: *What is your connection to your local area/Exeter and the surrounding area? / In what capacity are you responding?*
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100; Online survey 2025: 956)

Similar themes emerge in relation to what representative and online survey respondents like about their local area

Respondents were asked what they like about their local area or the area in which they live, work, study or represent. Comments were thematically analysed and the top ten themes for the representative and online surveys are shown below.

Similar themes emerged from both surveys, with frequent references to the area being quiet and peaceful, friendly people and a good local community, the countryside and coastline, and the general location and accessibility to other areas.



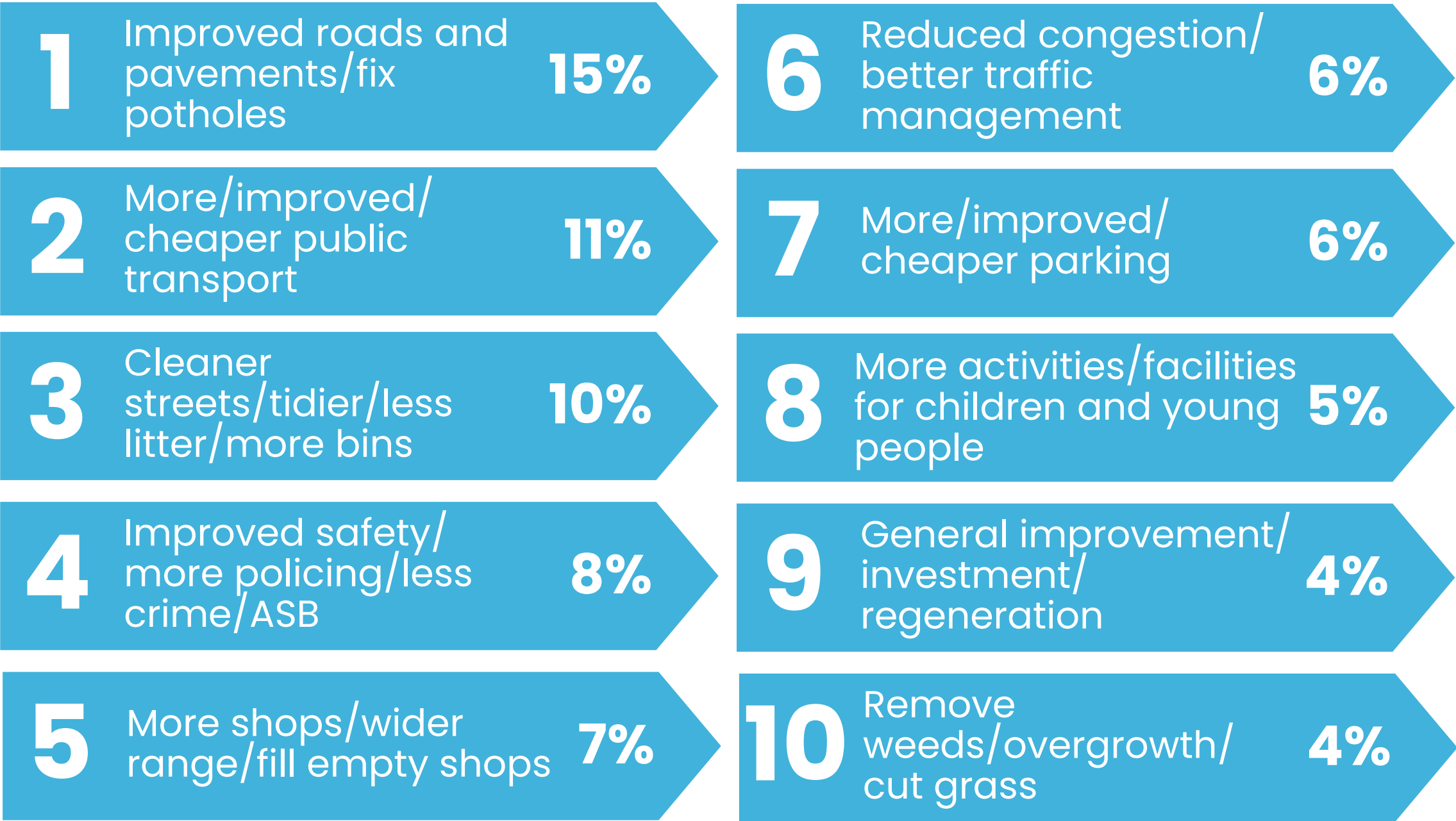
Question: *What do you like about your local area? / What do you like about the area where you live, work, study or represent?*
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100); Those who provided a response (Online survey 2025: 898)

Respondents most frequently highlighted roads and pavements, public transport, and street cleanliness as needing improvement

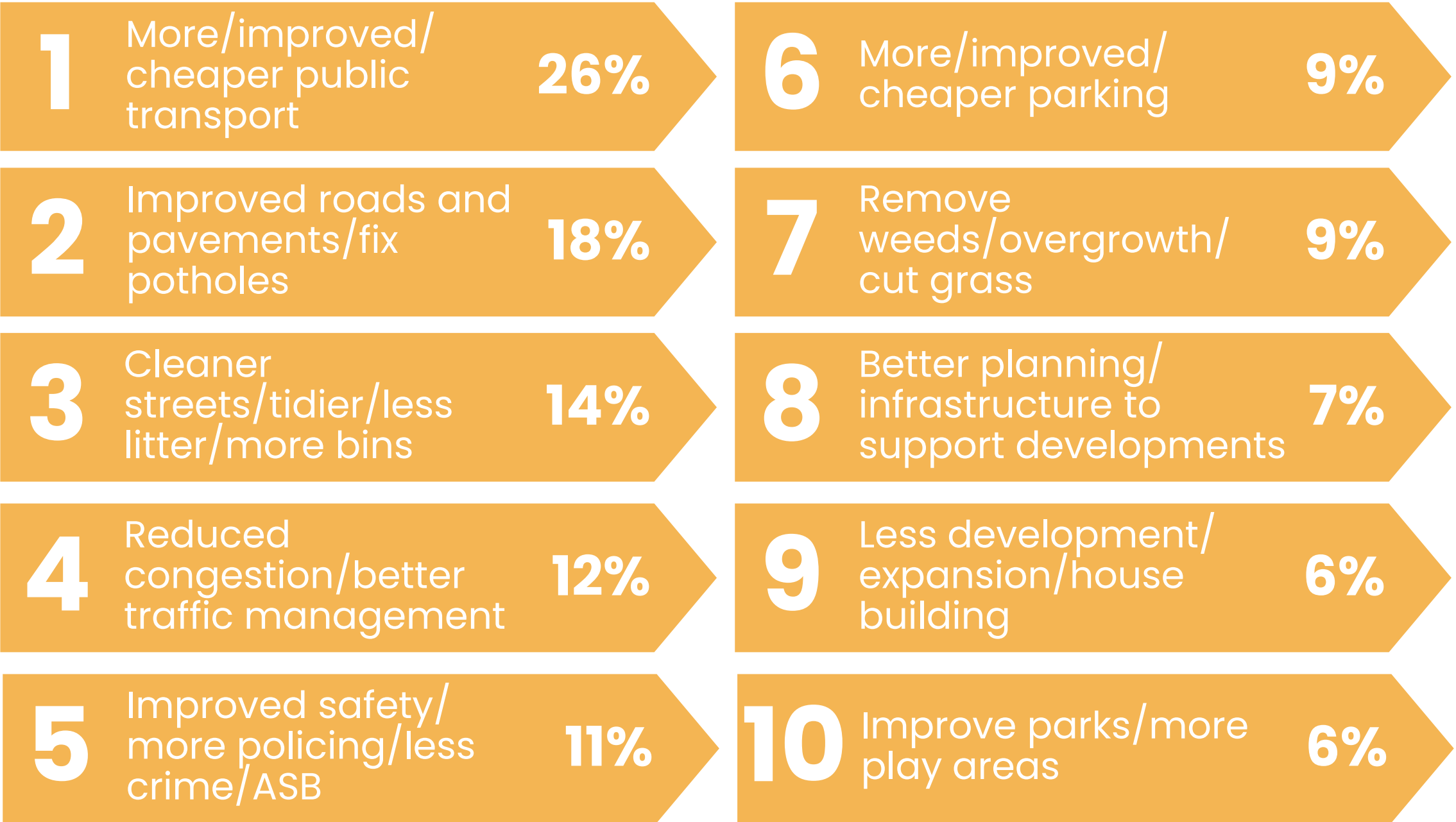
Respondents were asked what they would like to be improved in their local area. Comments were thematically analysed and the top ten themes for the representative and online survey are shown below.

Roads and pavements, public transport and street cleanliness were the top three most frequently mentioned themes in both surveys.

Representative survey



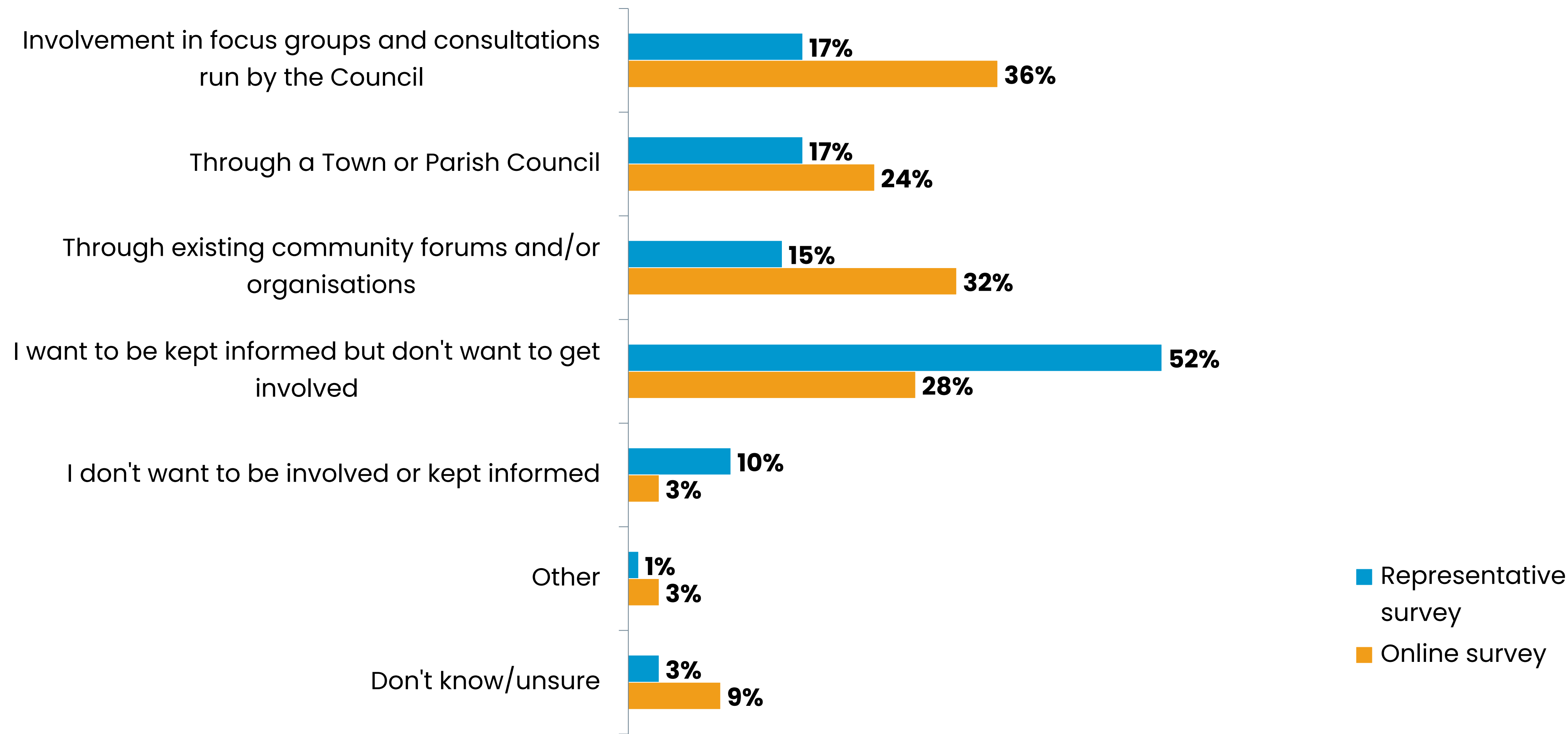
Online survey



Question: *What would you like to be improved in your local area? / What would you like you be improved in this area?*
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100); Those who provided a response (Online survey 2025: 907)

4. Involvement in local decision making

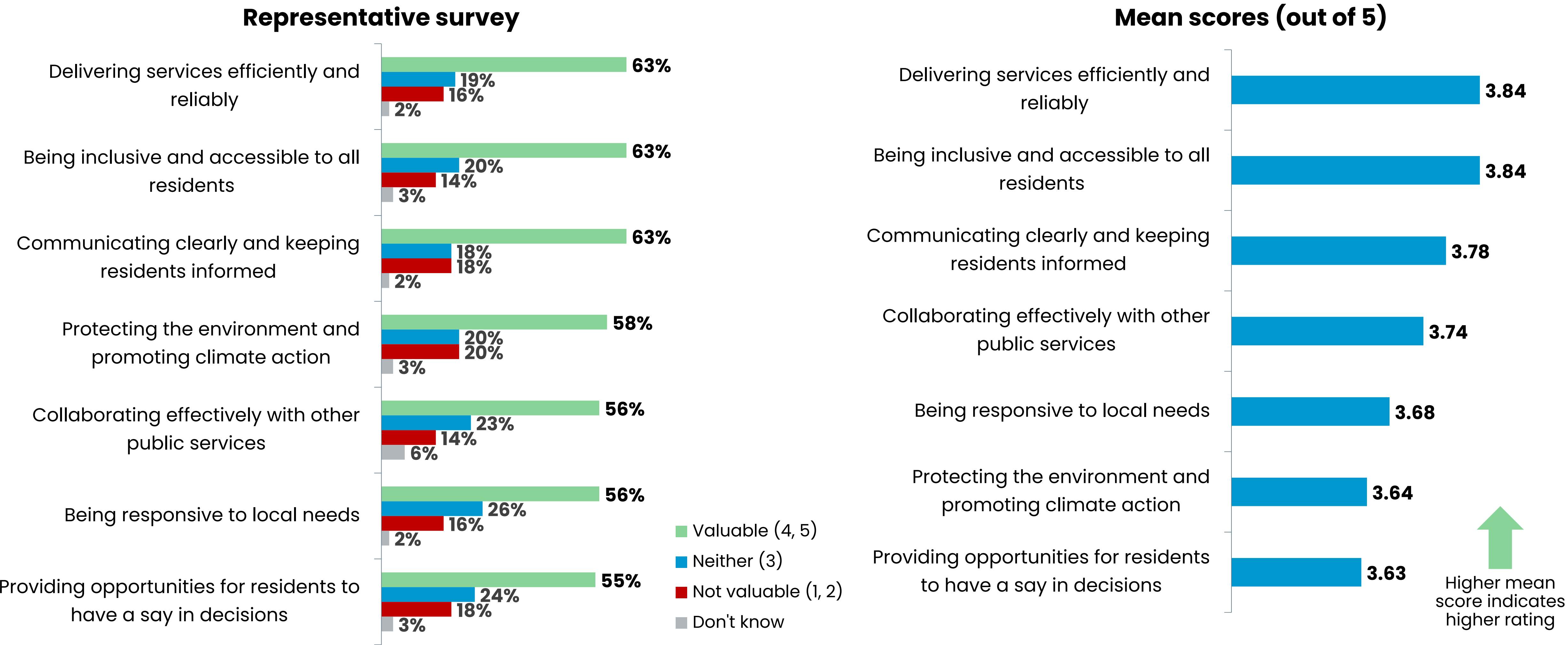
Online respondents show a greater appetite for participation in local decision making than representative survey respondents



Question: *How would you like to be involved in future local decision making?*
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100; Online survey 2025: 956)

5. Valued aspects of how local councils serve the community

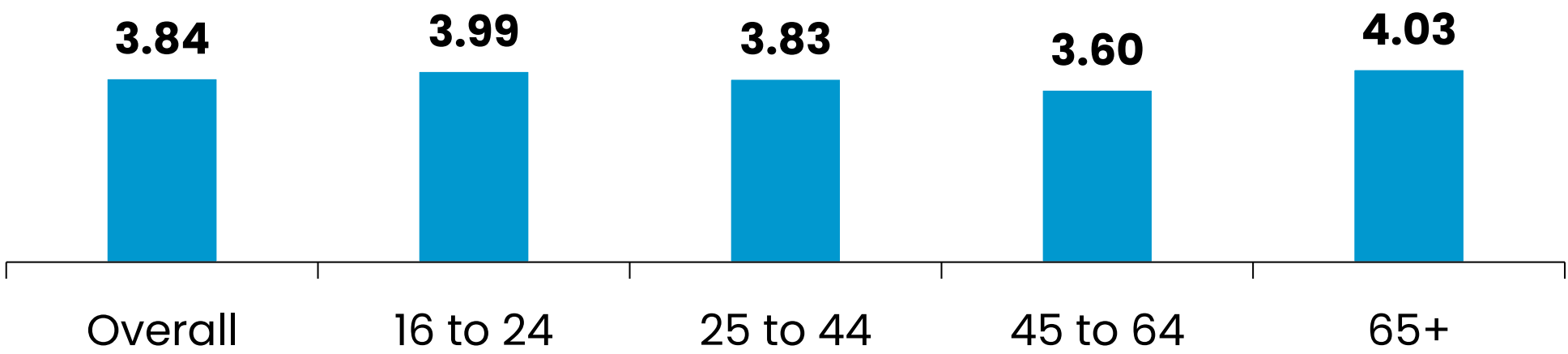
Whilst high value is placed on all aspects of how the council serves the local community, delivering services efficiently and reliably and being inclusive and accessible are rated most highly



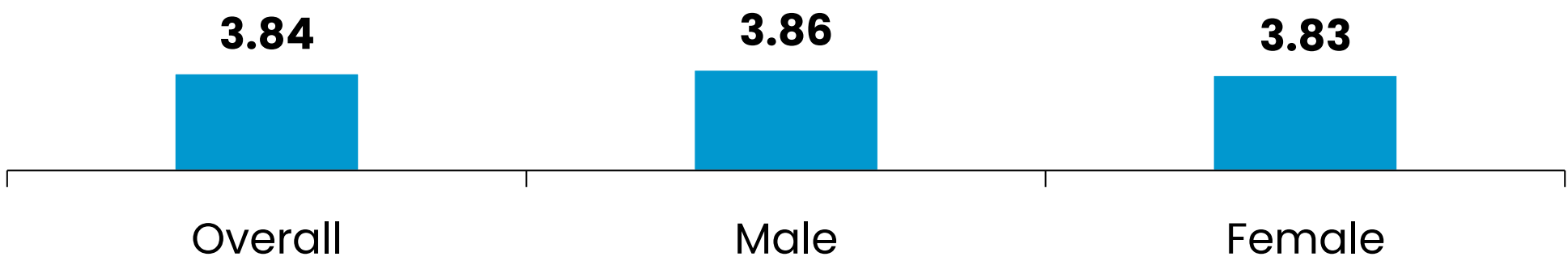
Question: *How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community? (Rate on scale of 1-5)*
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged 65+ and those who study in the local area value delivering services efficiently and reliably more highly than other groups

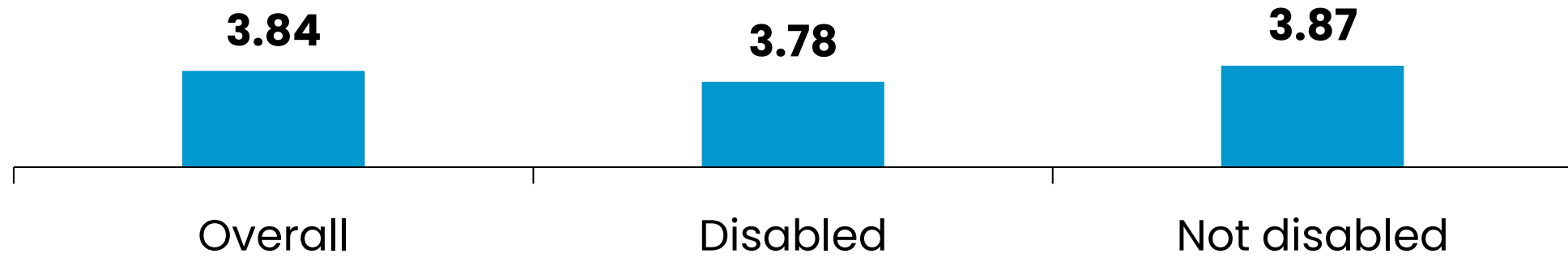
Analysis by age group



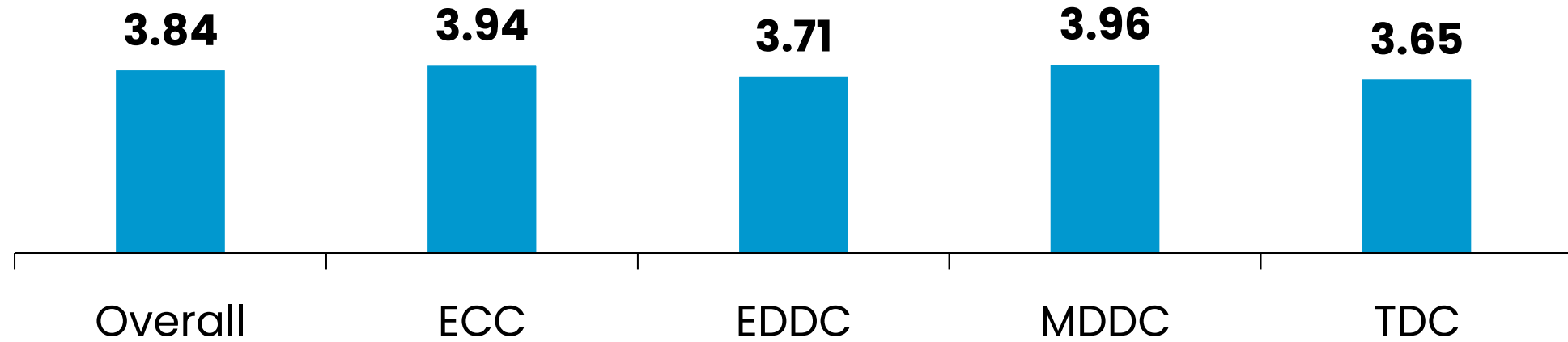
Analysis by sex



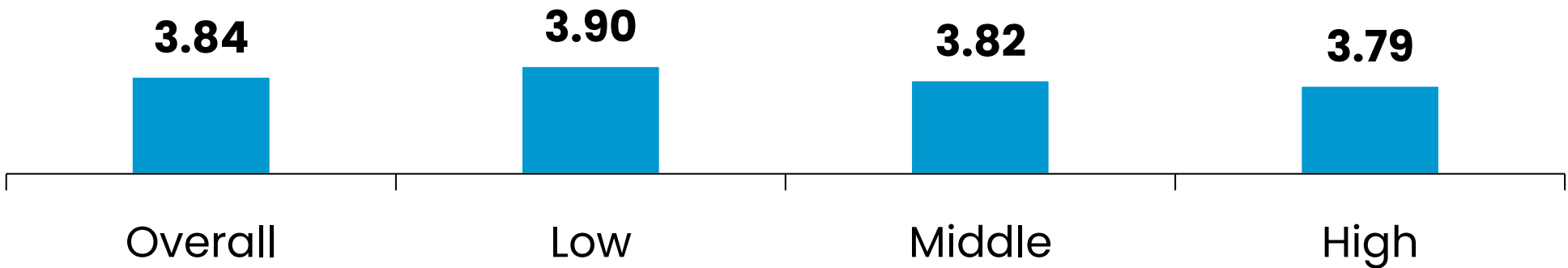
Analysis by disability



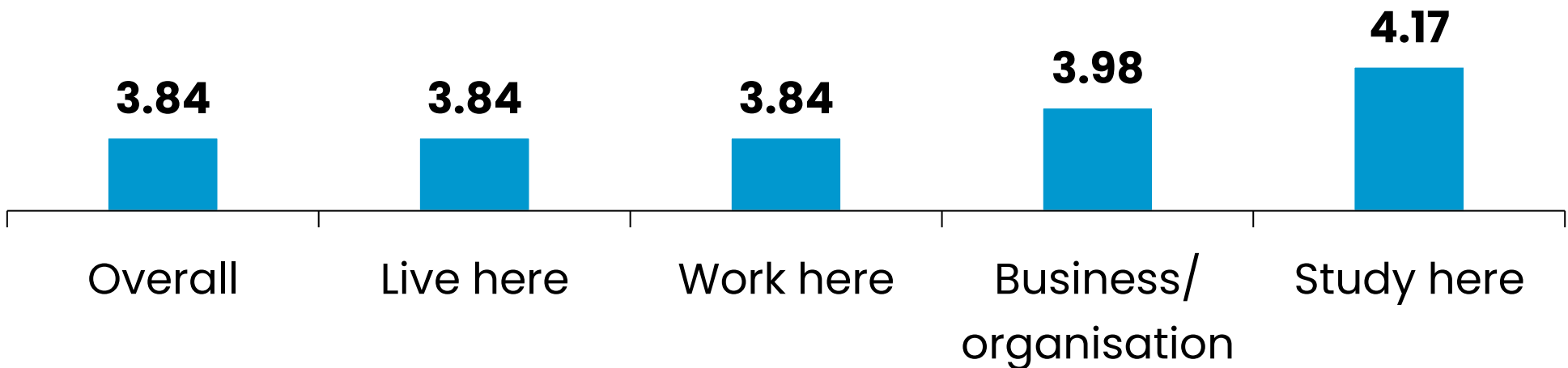
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

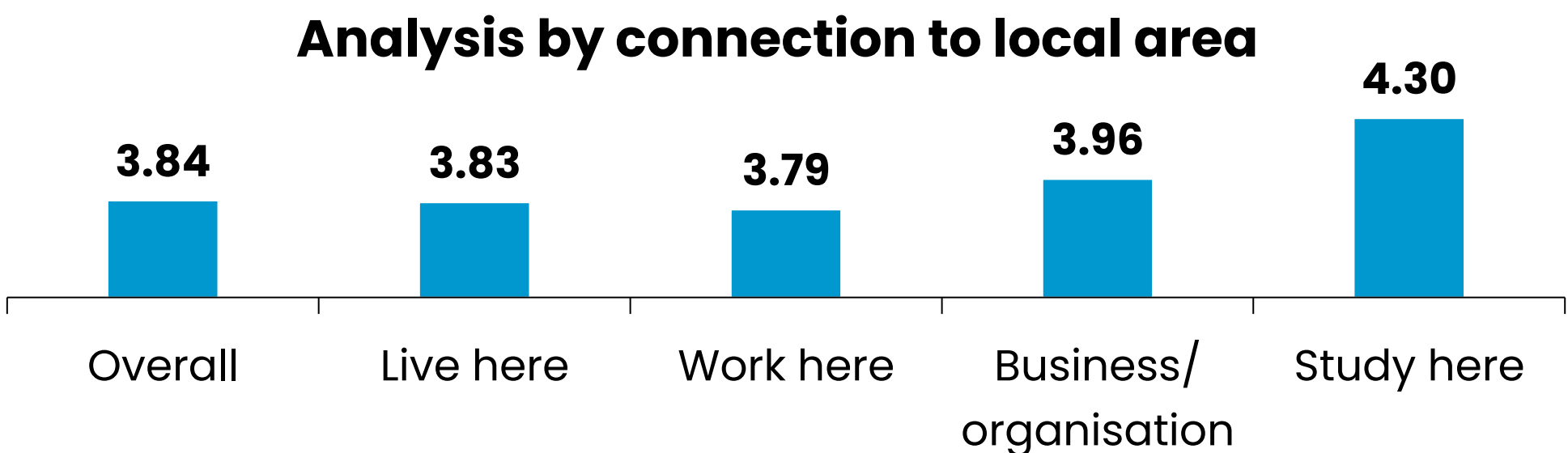
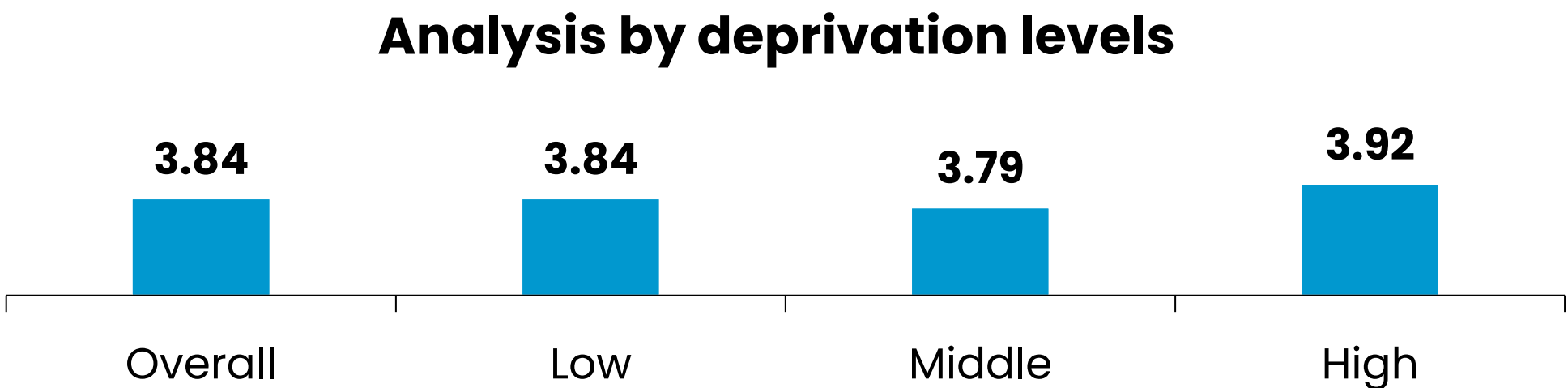
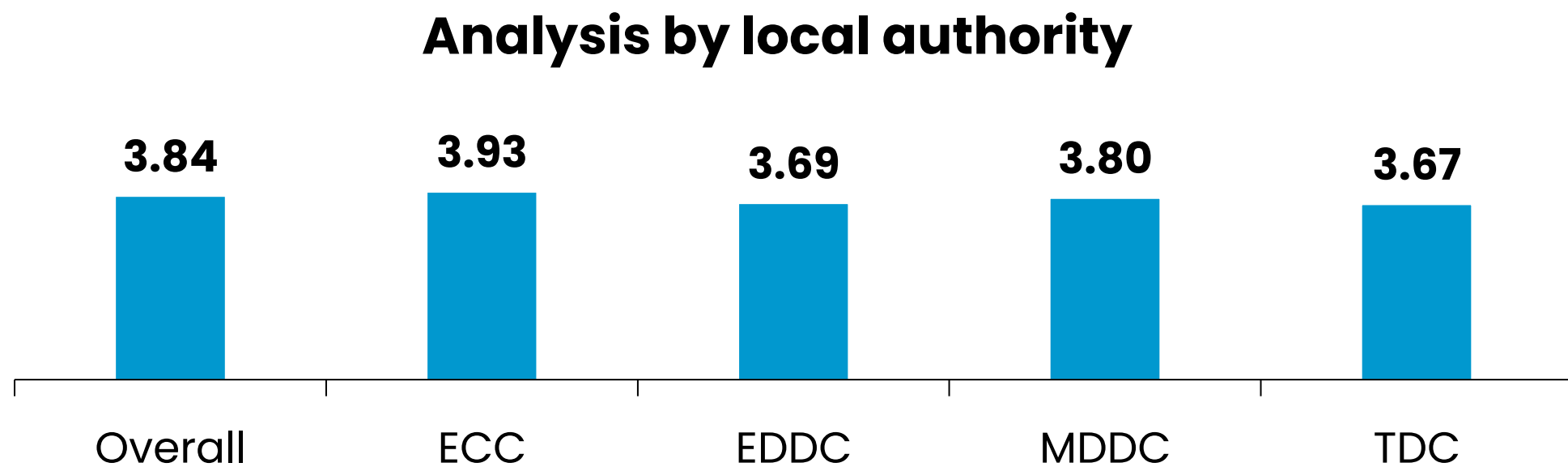
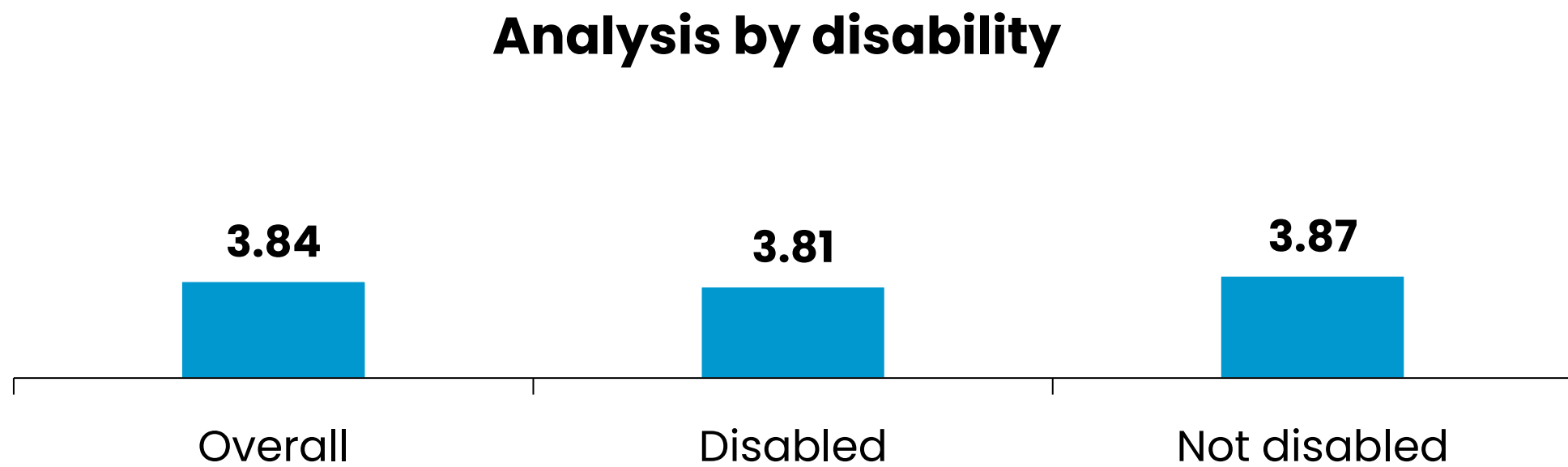
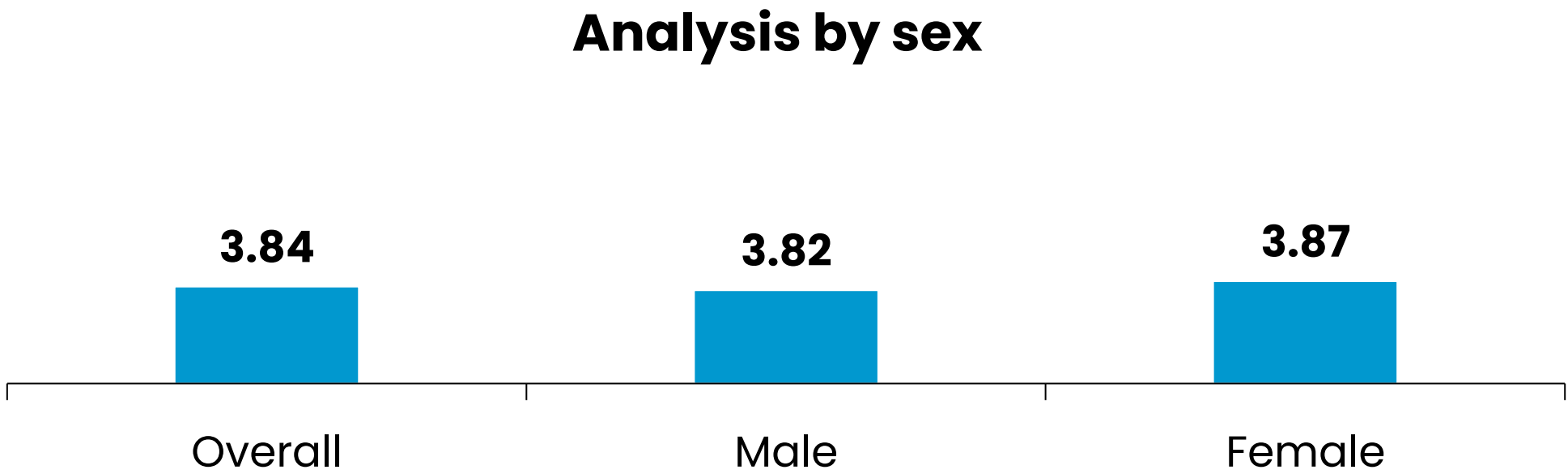
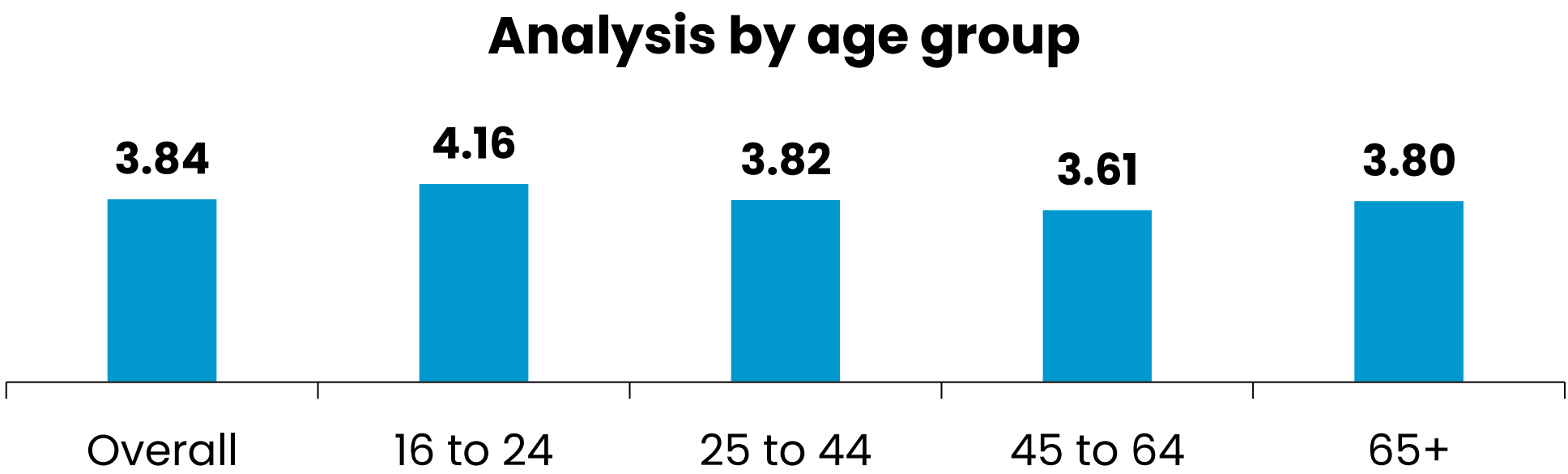


Analysis by connection to local area



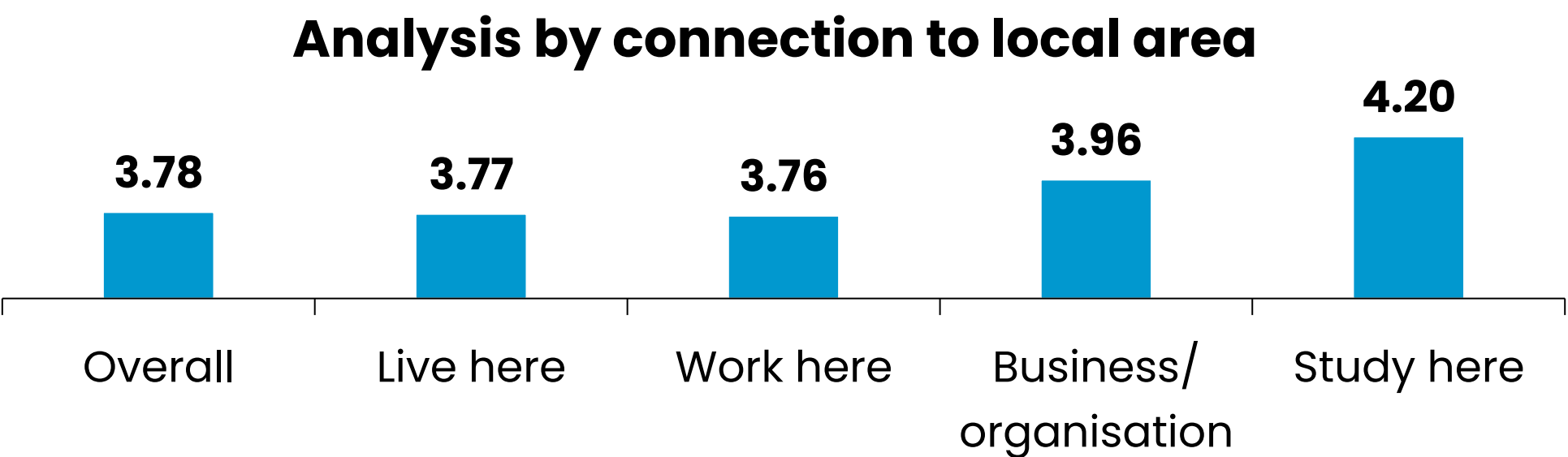
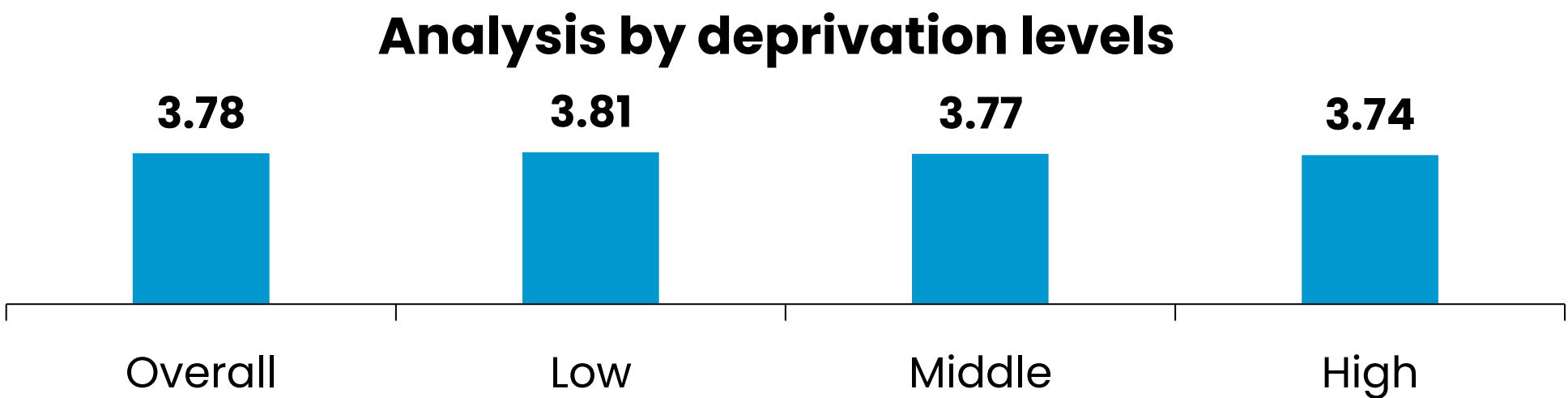
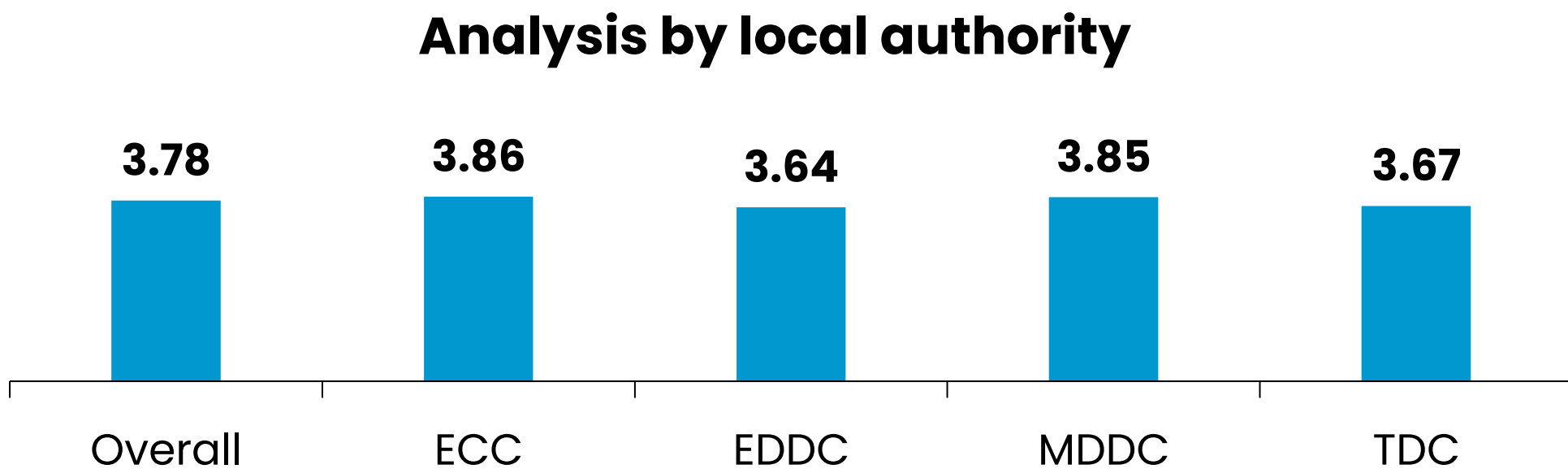
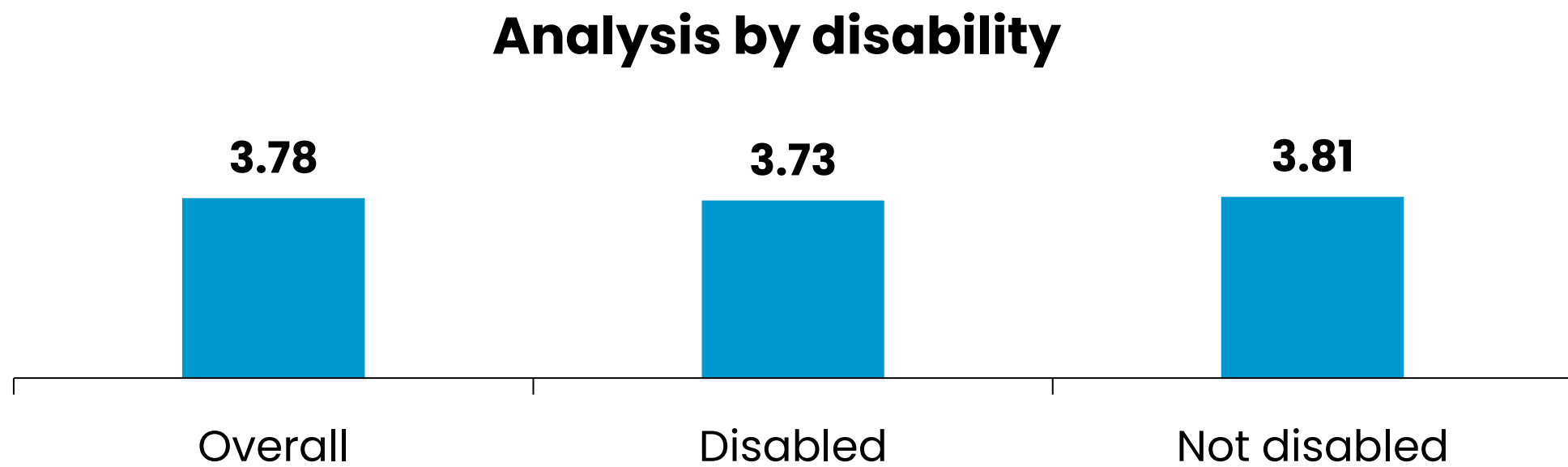
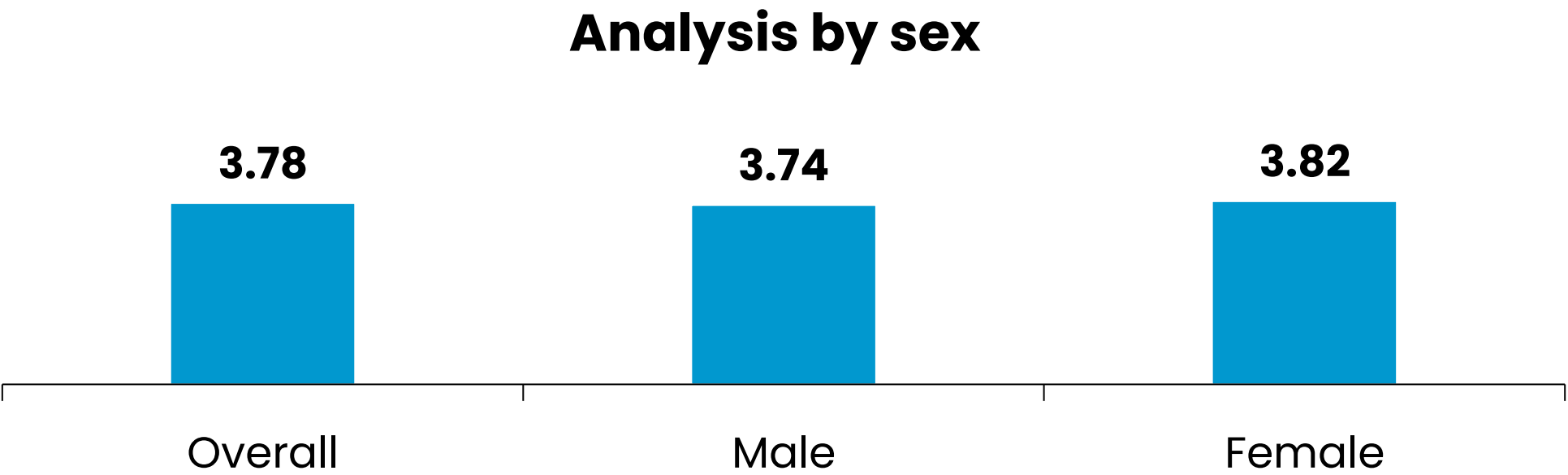
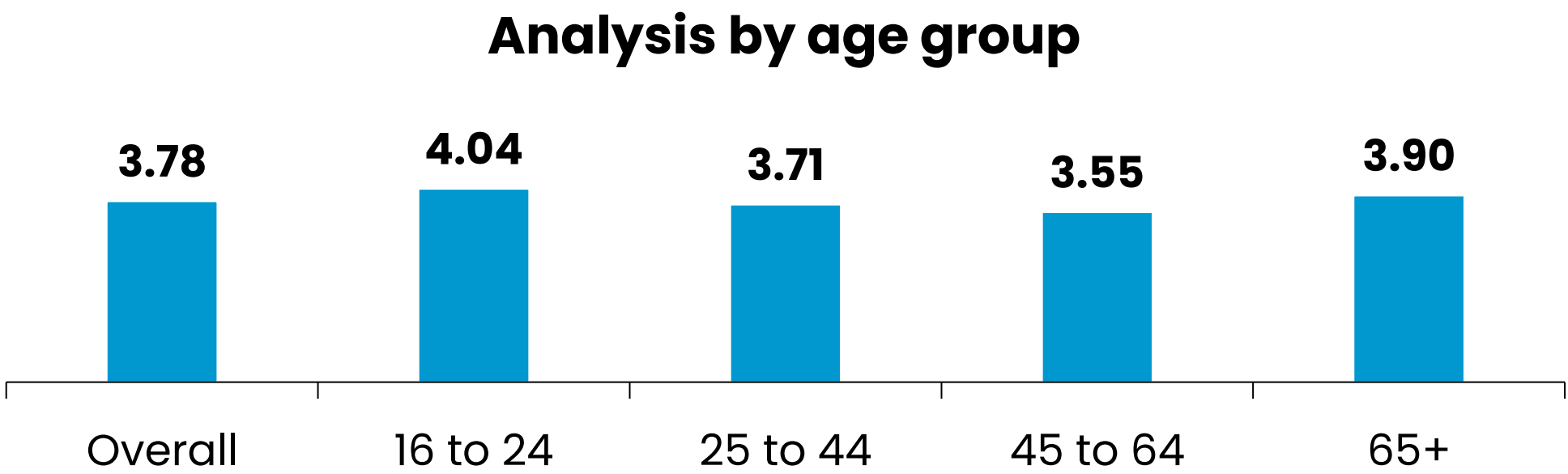
Question: How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community... Delivering services efficiently and reliably? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Being inclusive and accessible is more highly valued by those aged 16–24, ECC residents and those who study in the local area



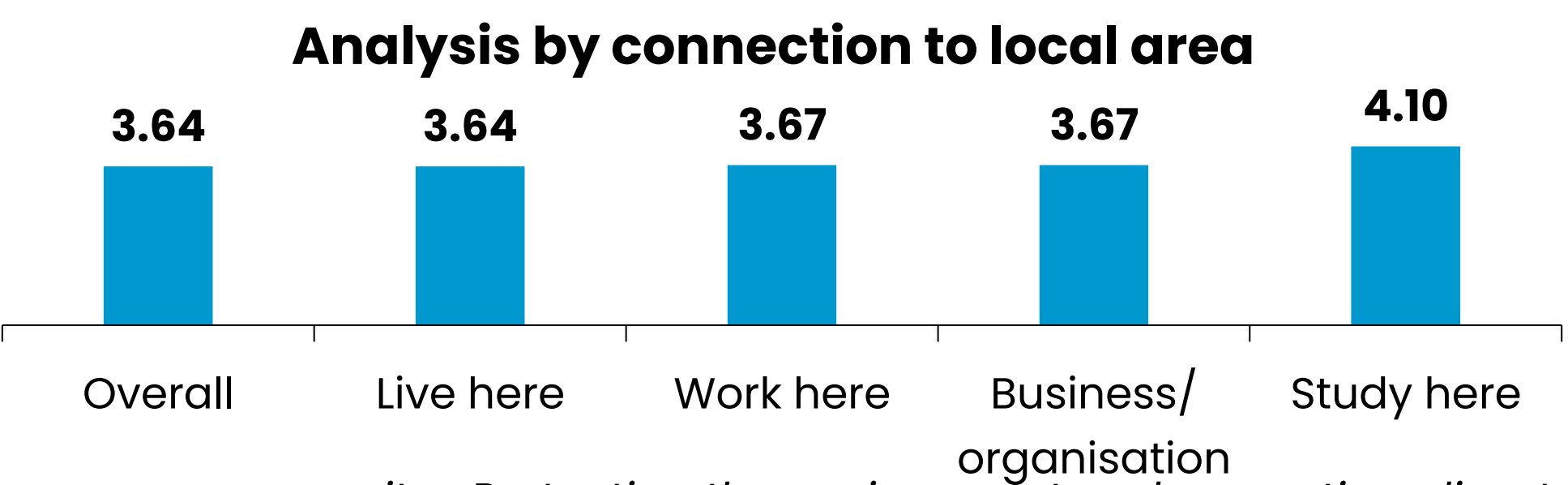
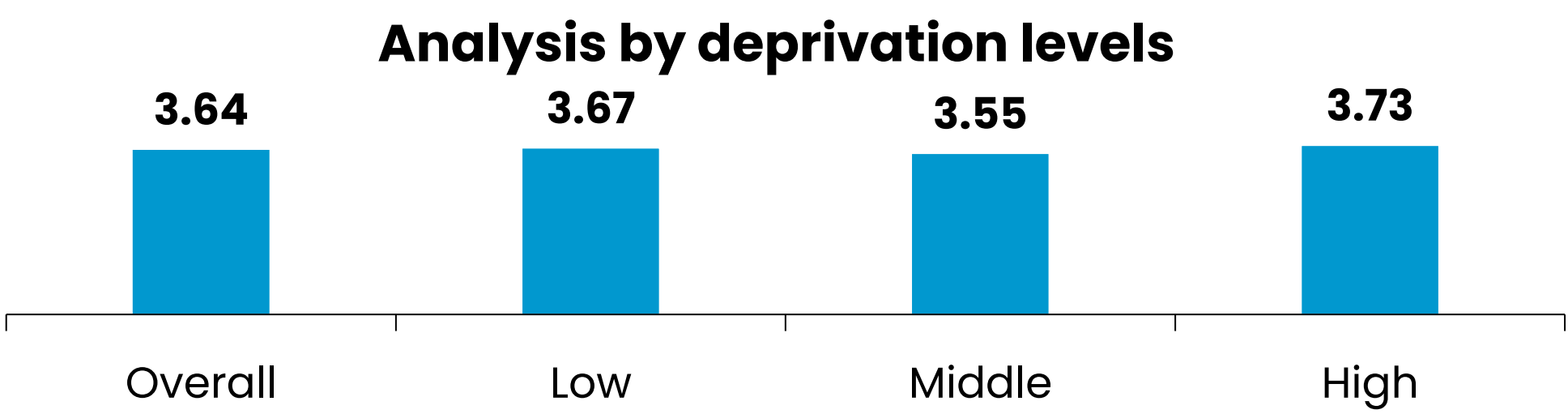
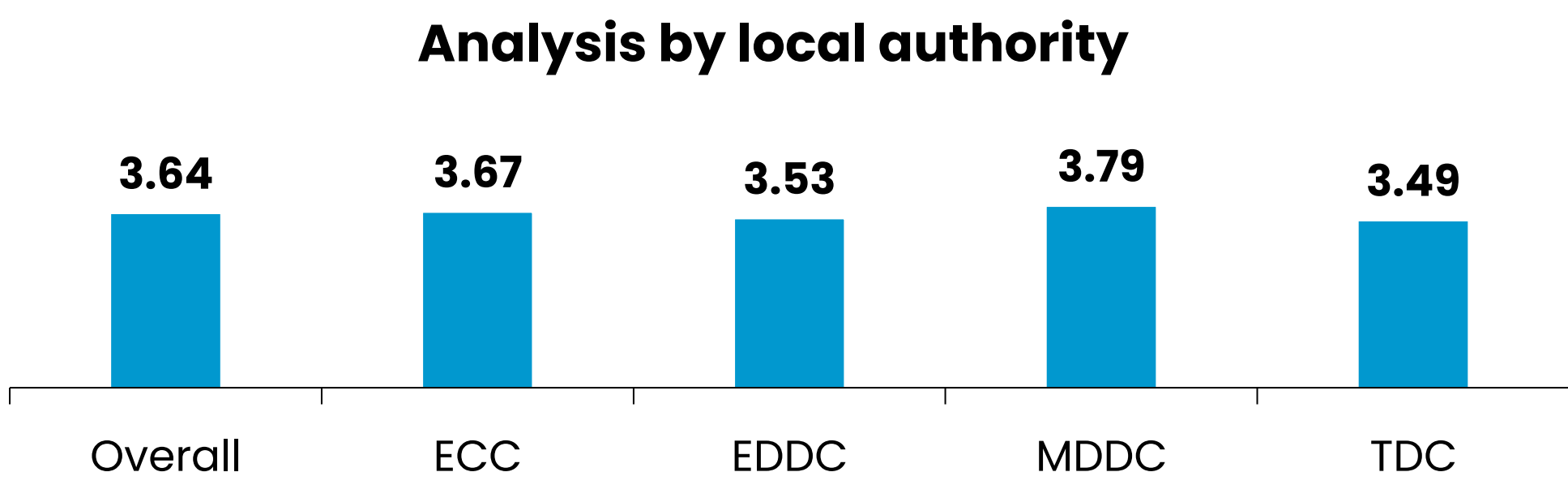
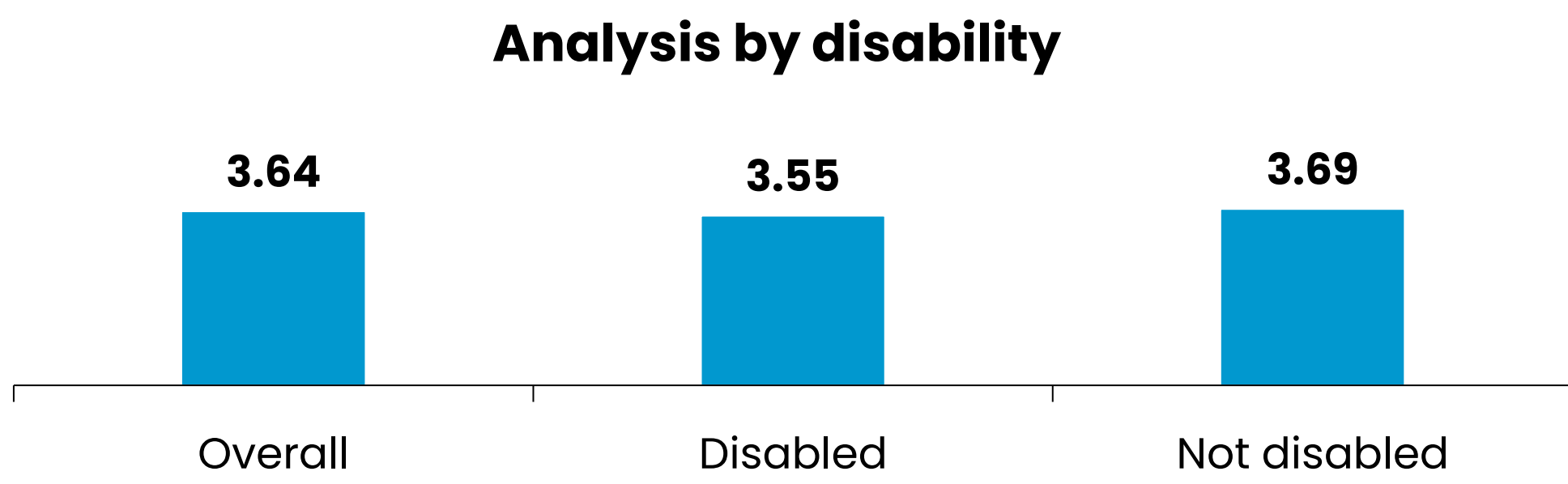
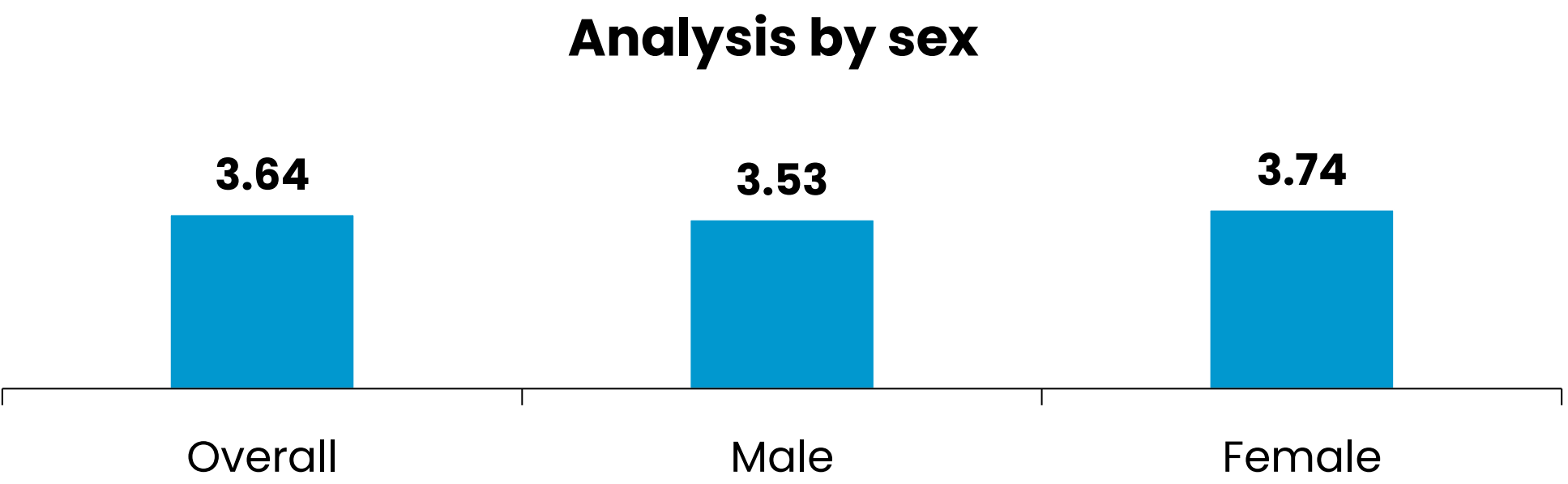
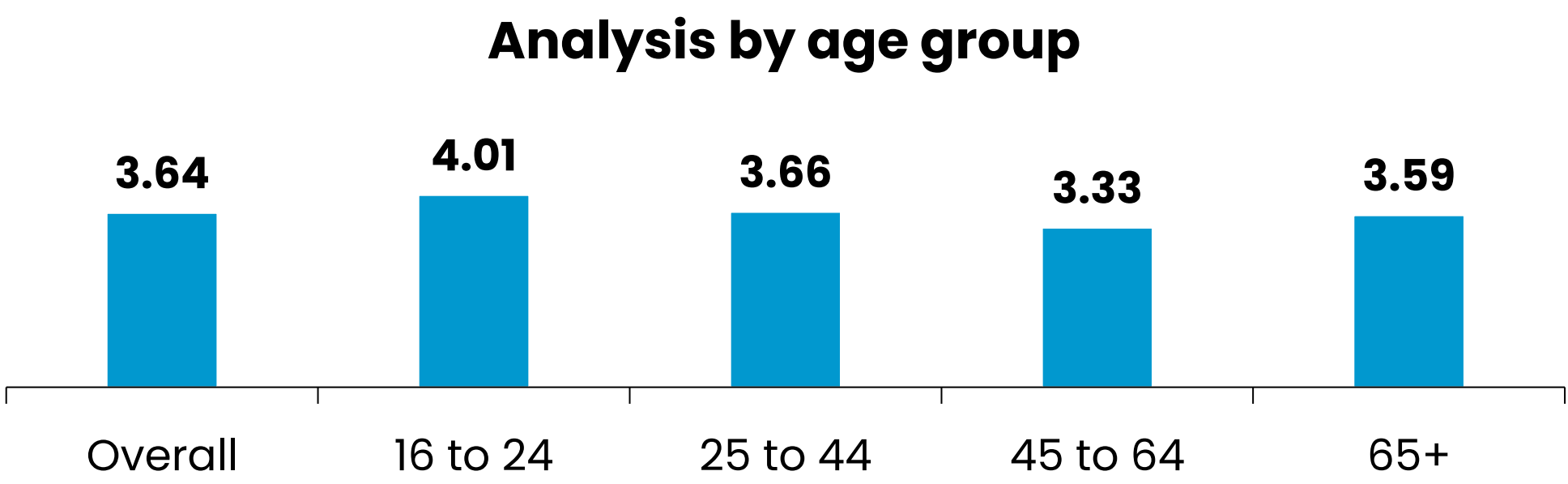
Question: *How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community... Being inclusive and accessible to all residents?* (Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Clear communication and keeping residents informed is rated more highly by those aged 16–24 and those who study in the local area



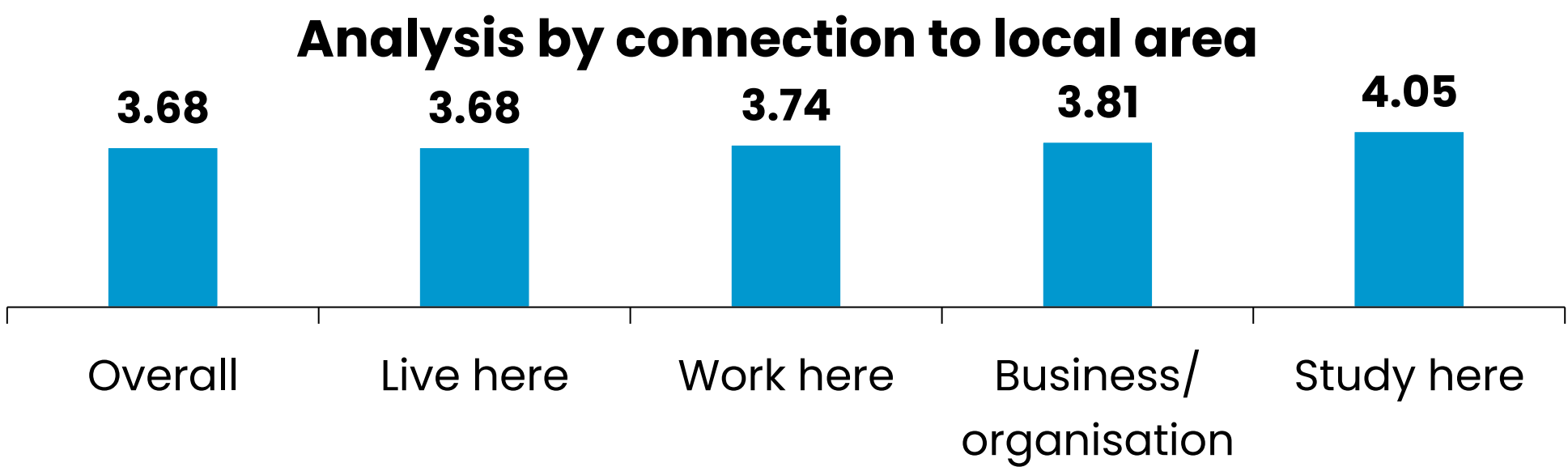
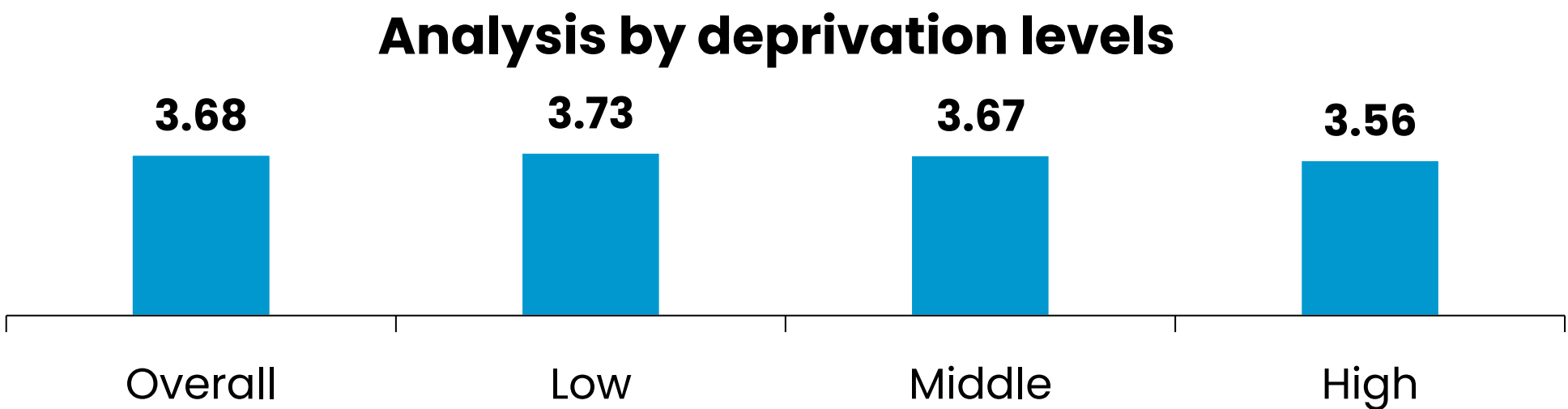
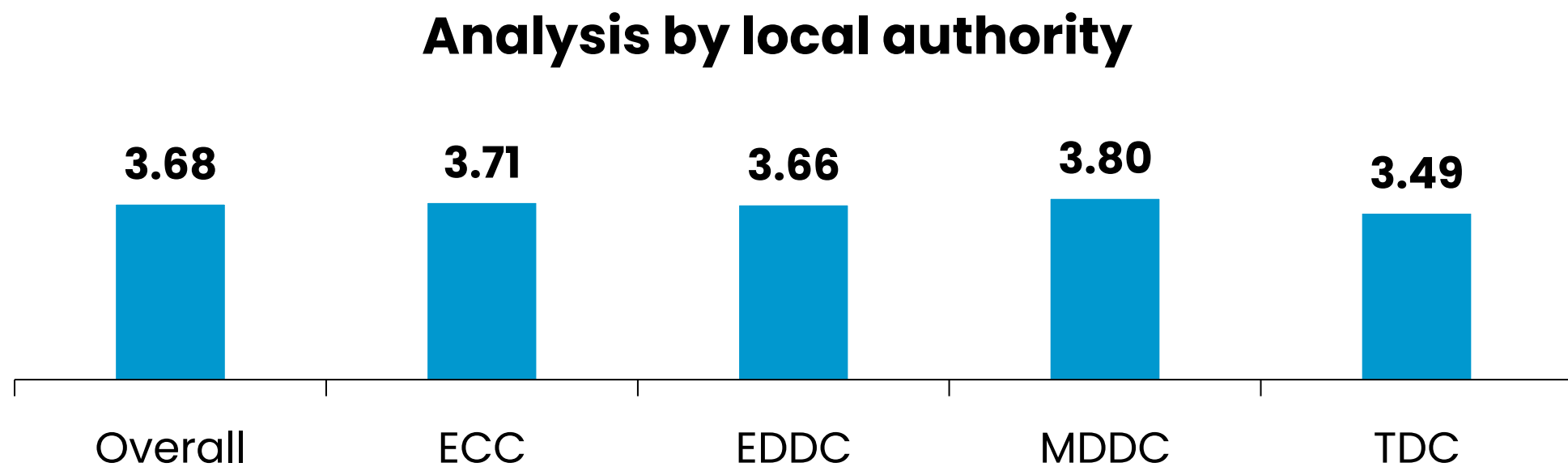
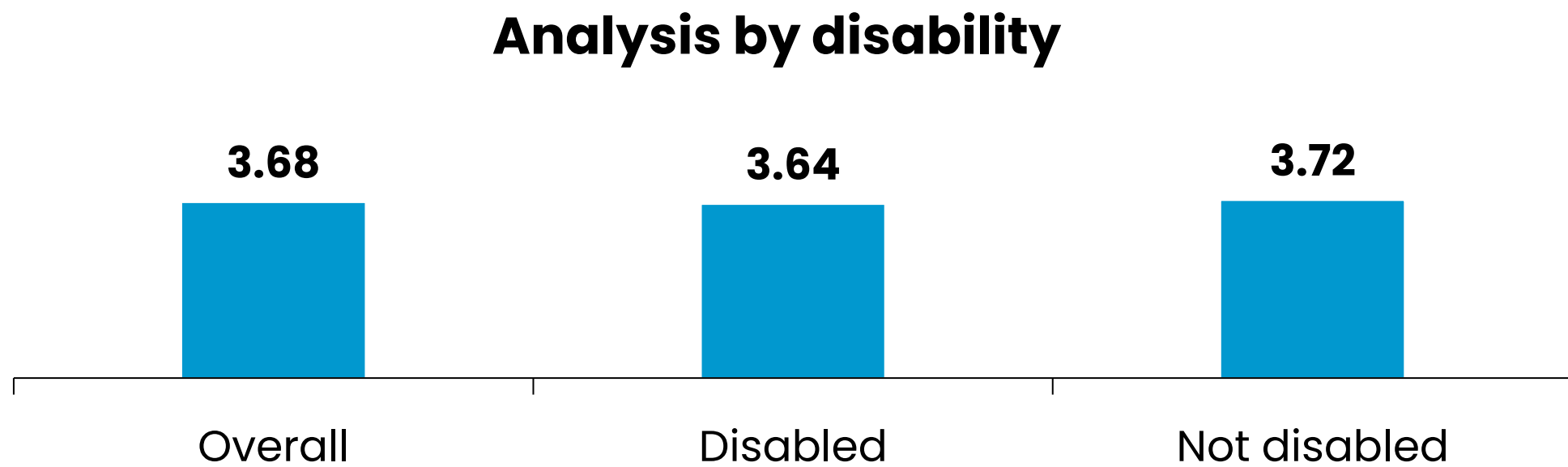
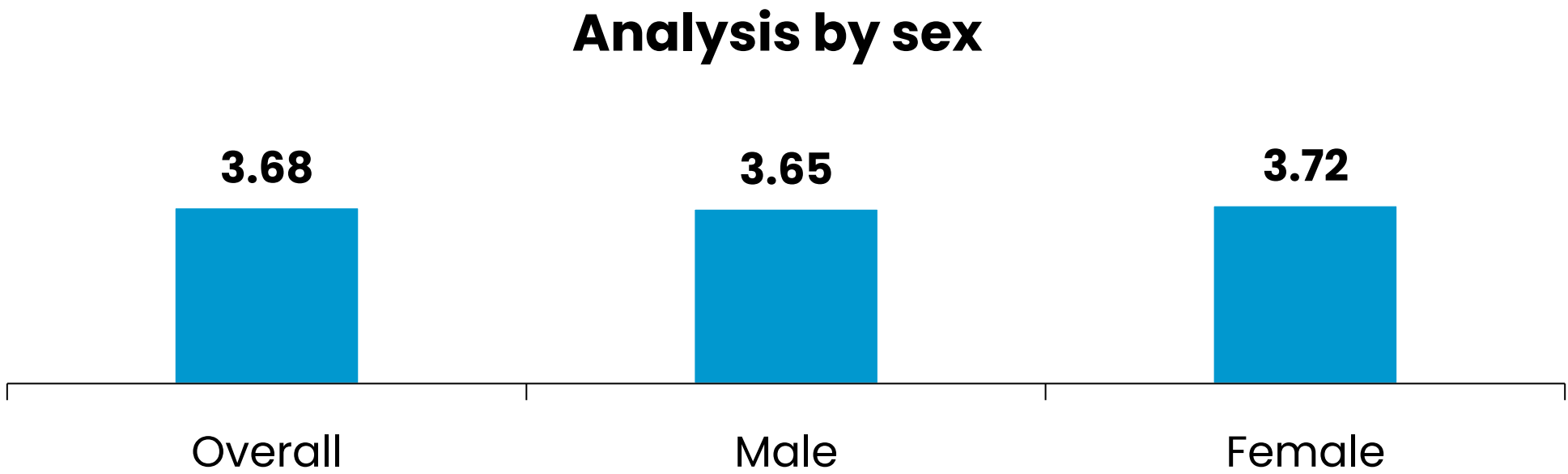
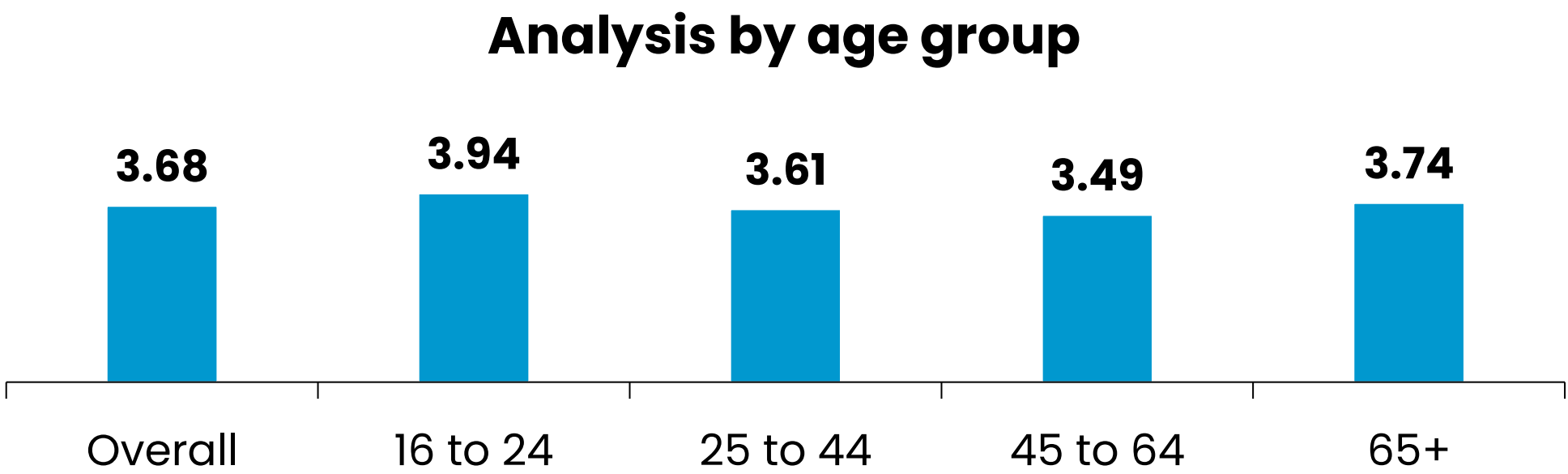
Question: *How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community... Communicating clearly and keeping residents informed?*
(Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Protecting the environment and promoting climate action is more valued by those aged 16–24, female respondents and those who study in the local area



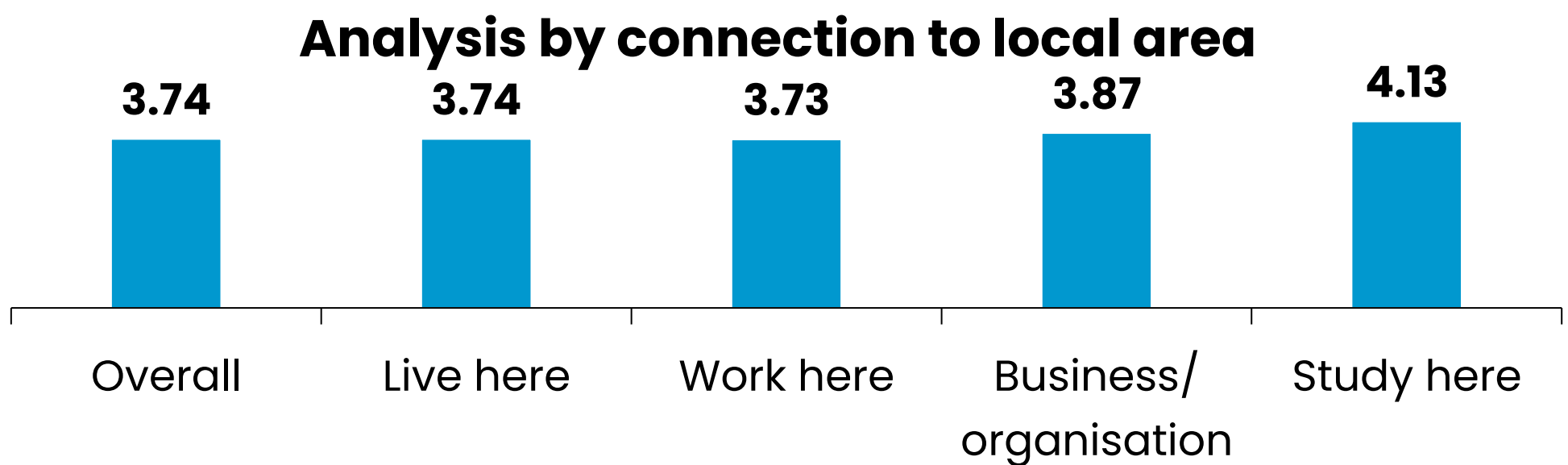
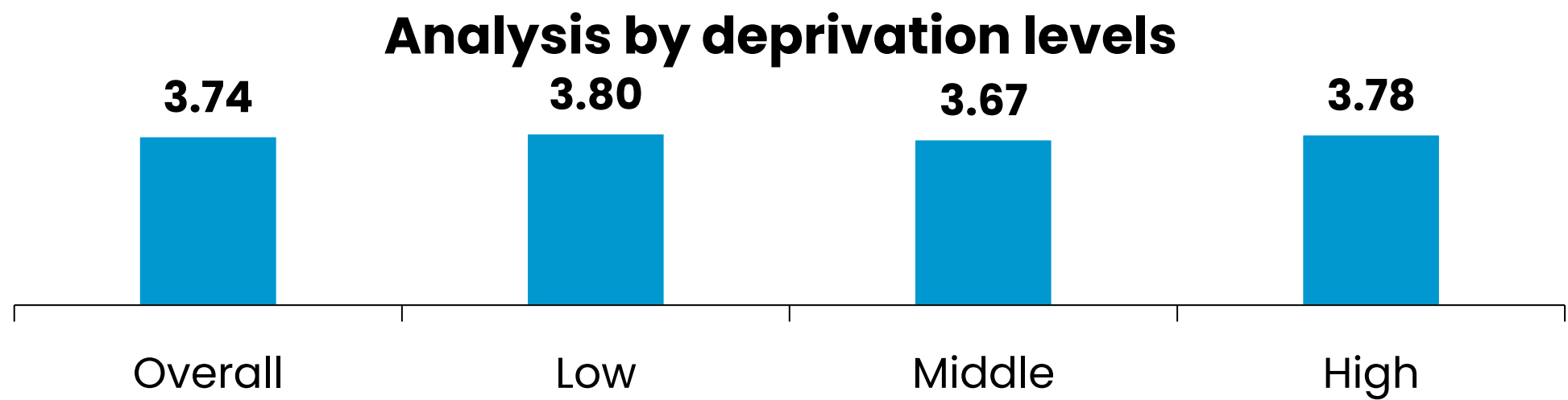
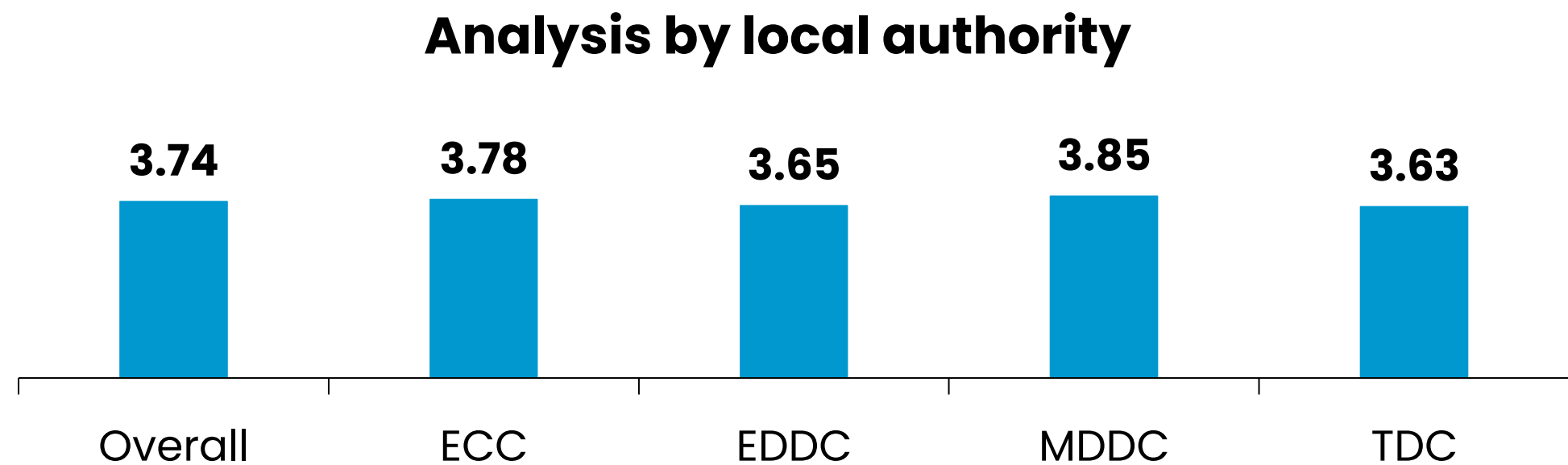
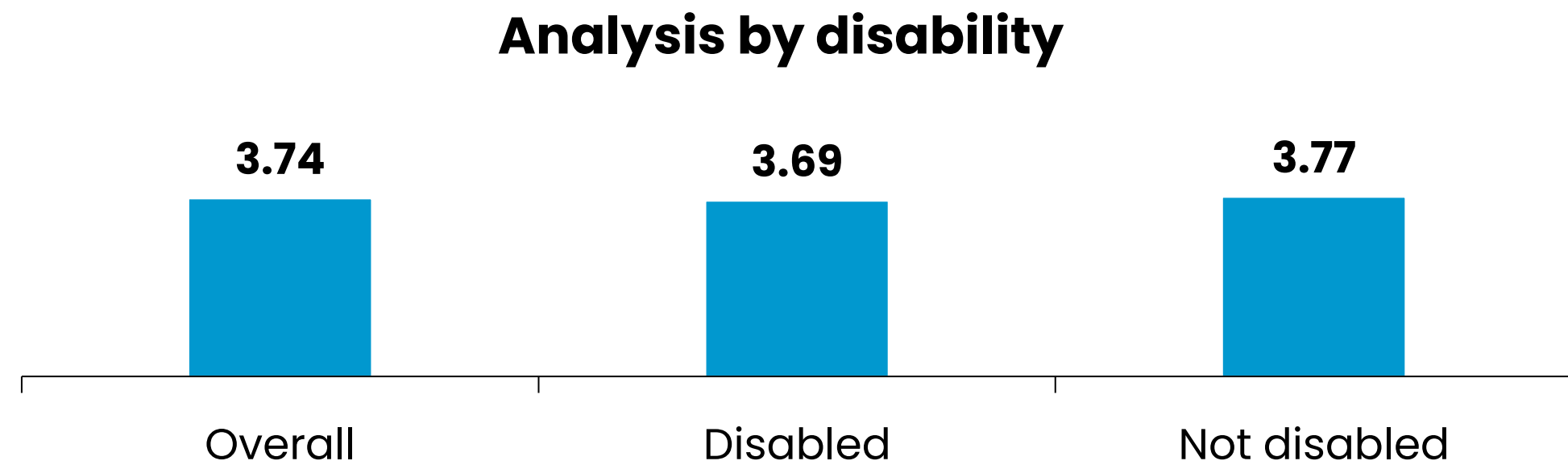
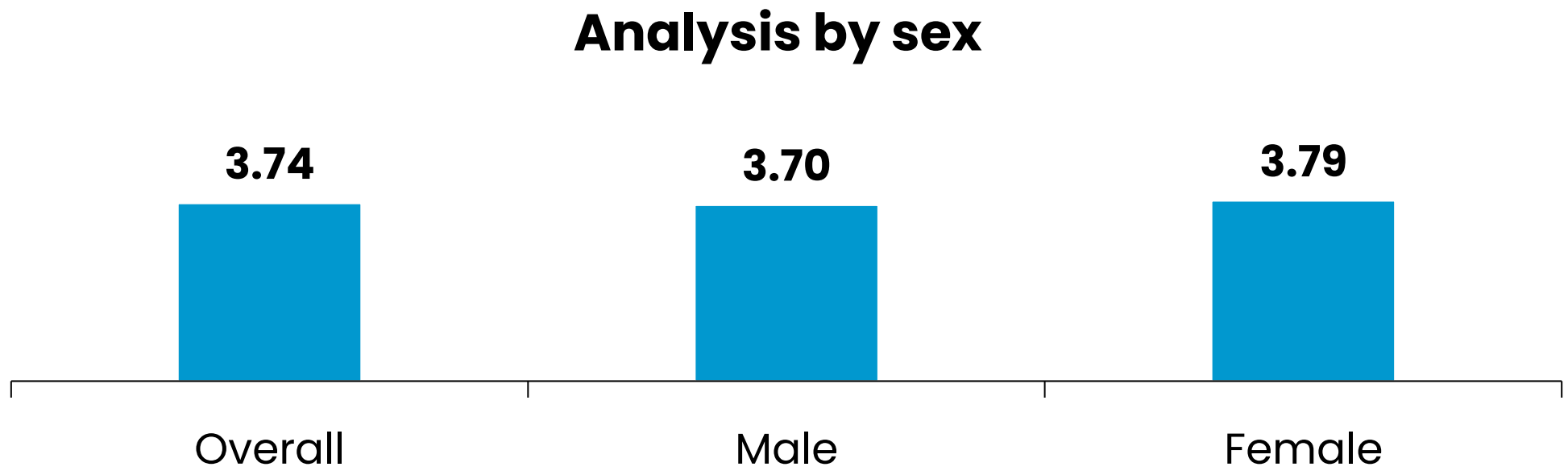
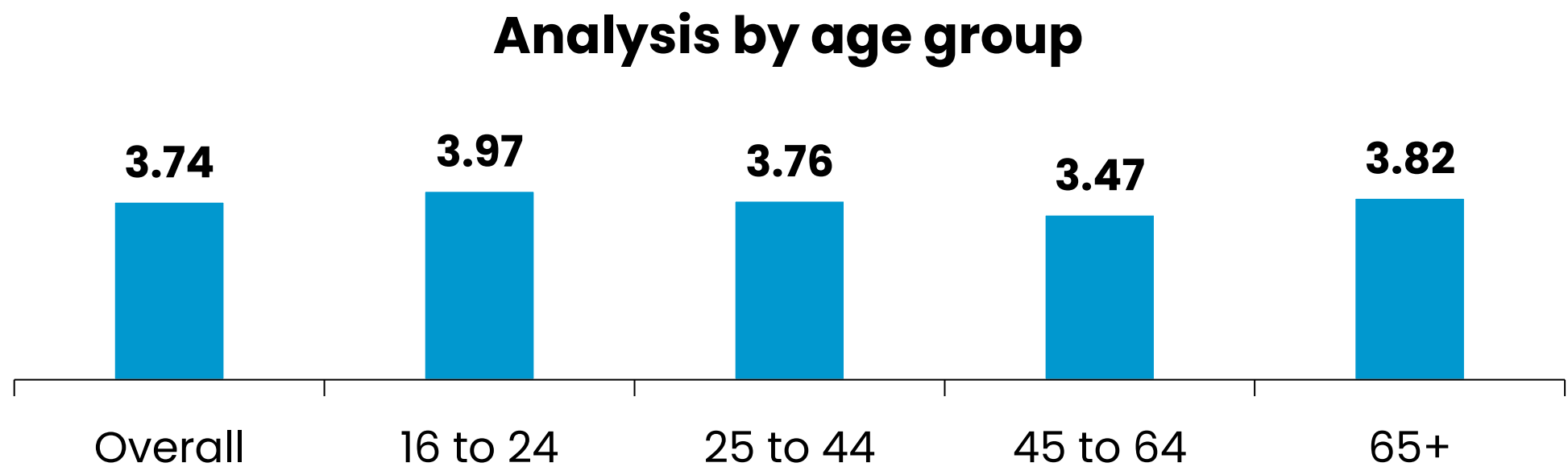
Question: How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community... Protecting the environment and promoting climate action?
(Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged 16–24 and those who study in the local area are more likely to value the council being responsive to local needs



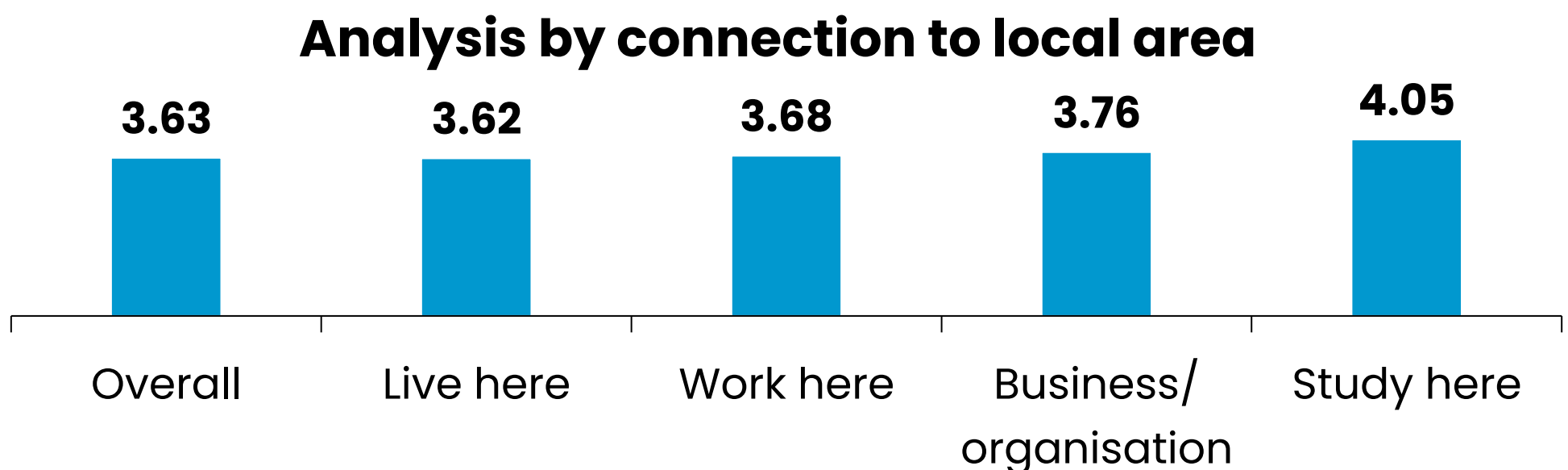
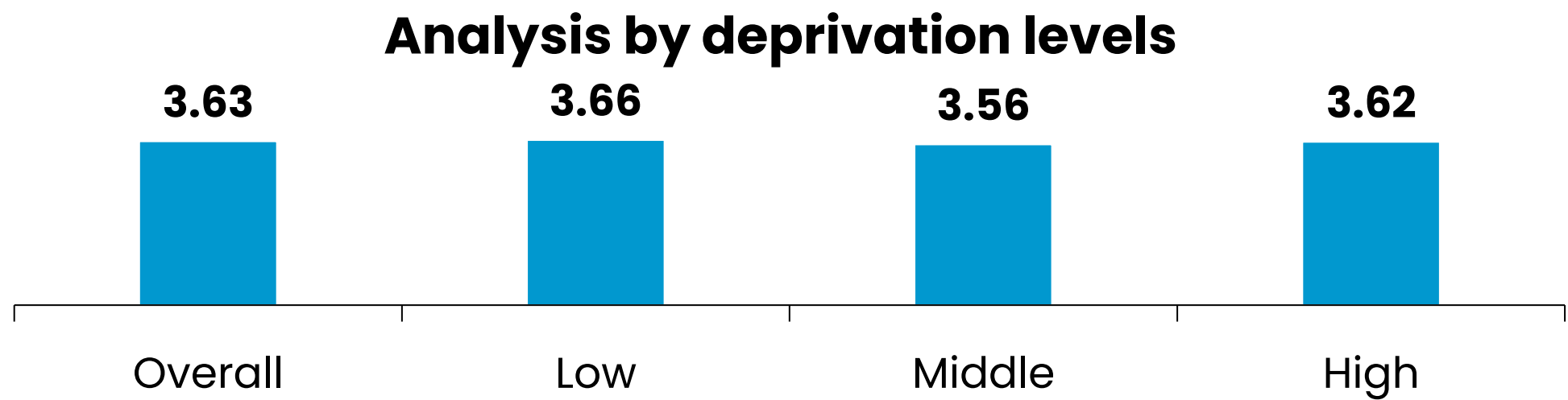
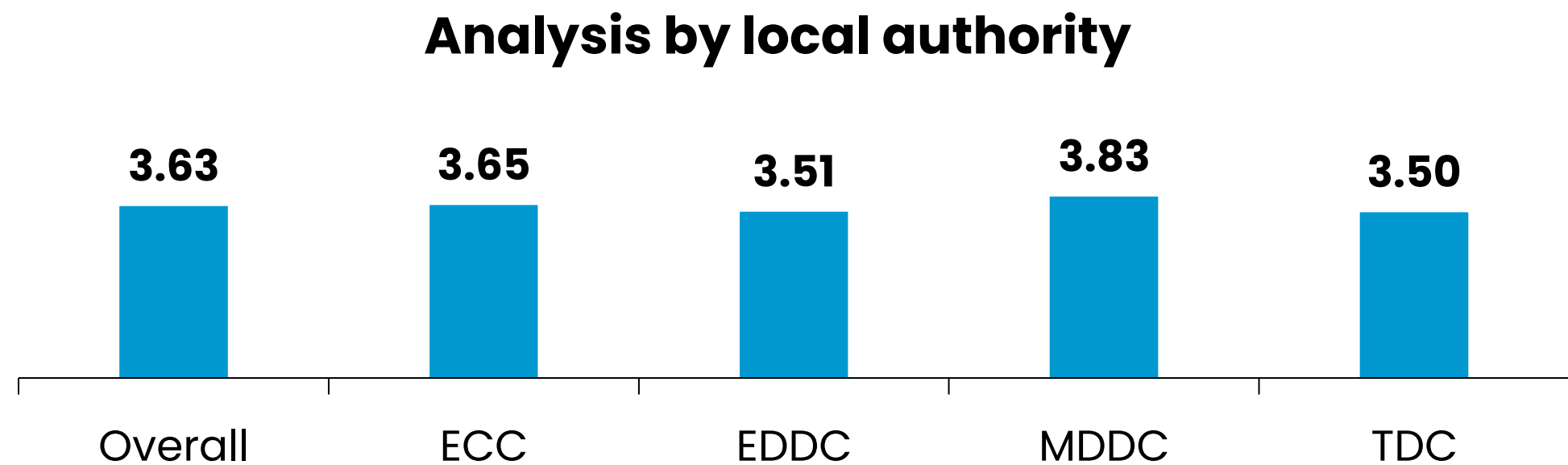
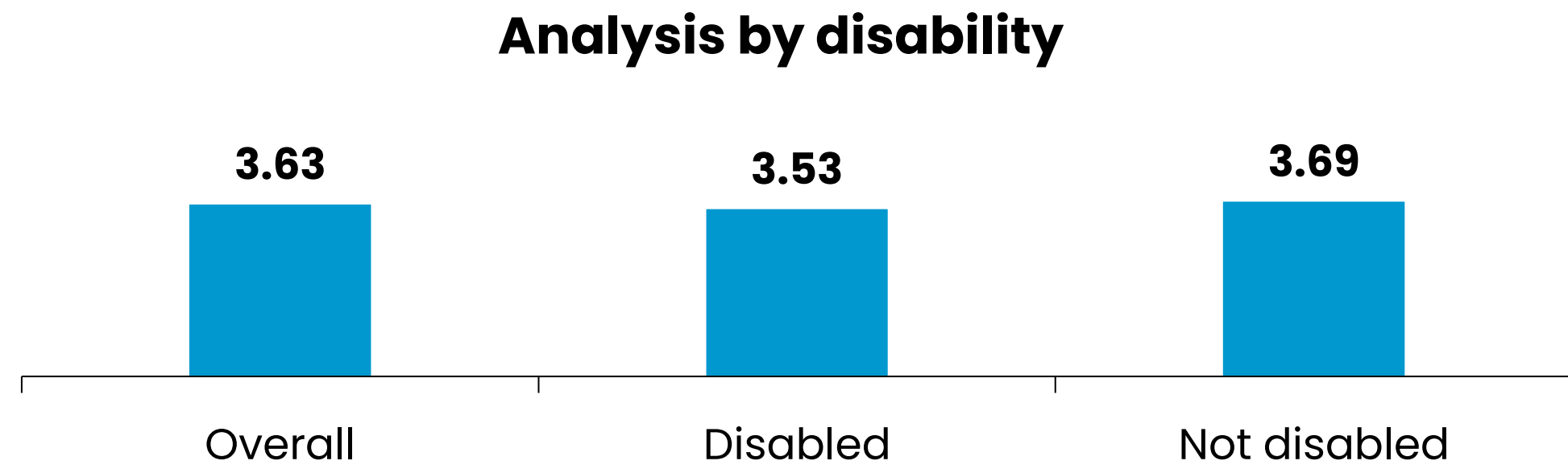
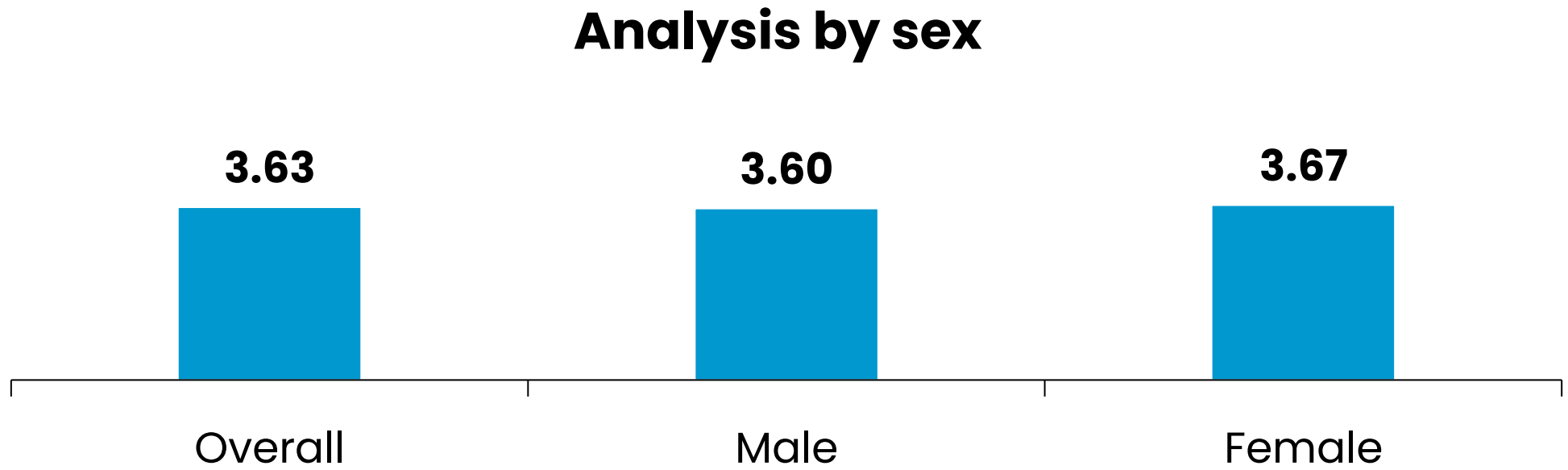
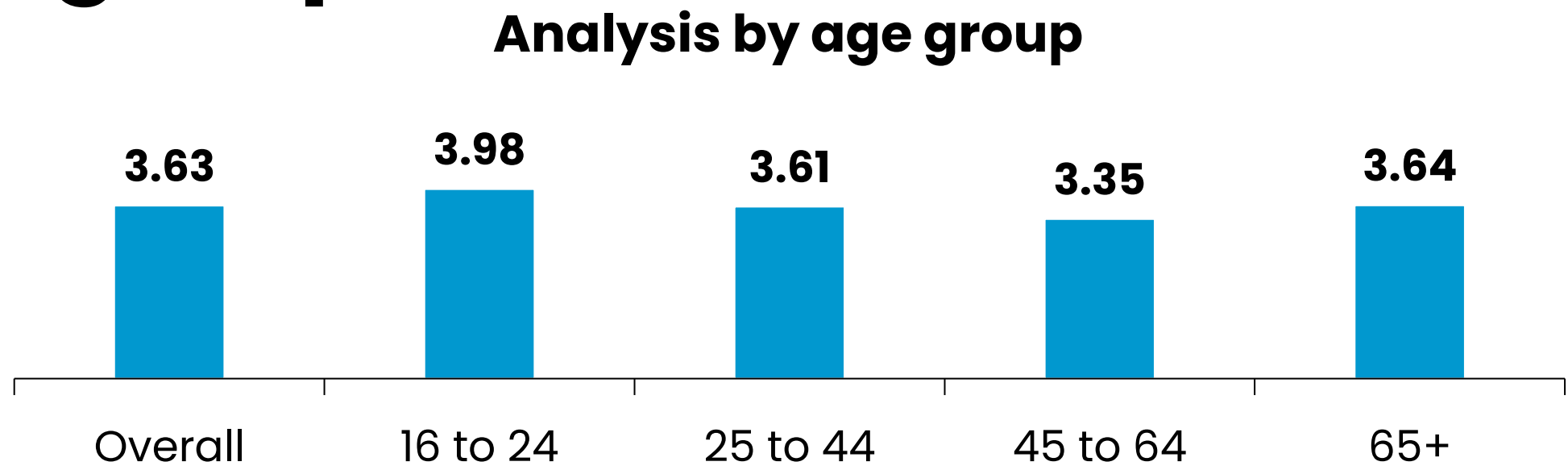
Question: *How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community... Being responsive to local needs?* (Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Collaborating effectively with other public services is rated more highly by those in both the youngest and oldest age groups, as well as those who study in the local area



Question: How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community... Collaborating effectively with other public services?
(Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

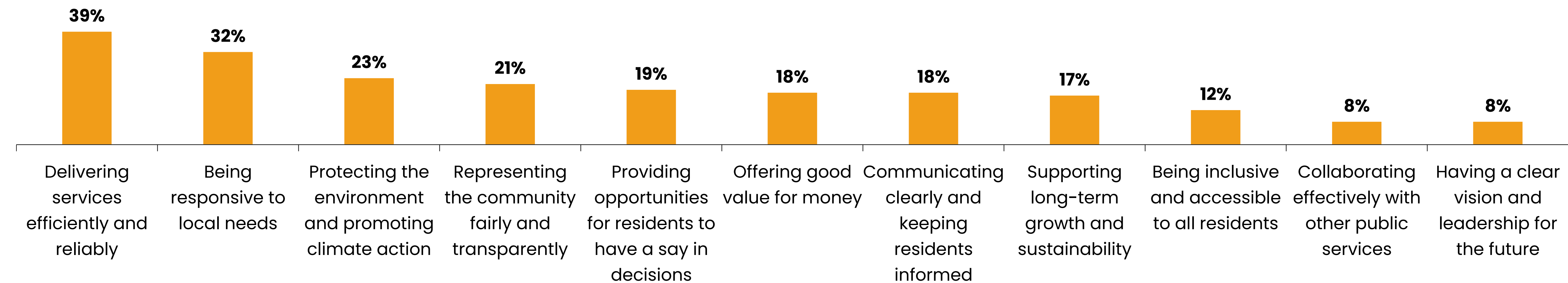
Those aged 16–24 and those who study in the local area value providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions more highly than other groups



Question: How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community... Providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions? (Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Delivering services efficiently and reliably is also most valued by online respondents, however greater importance is placed on responsiveness to local needs and protecting the environment and promoting climate action in comparison to representative respondents

Online survey



Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to select **being responsive to local needs** (32% overall) include:

- MDDC residents (52%) and TDC residents (41%) in comparison with ECC residents (28%)

Subgroups more likely to select **providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions** (19% overall) include:

- Those who represent a community organisation (32%) in comparison with those who live (20%) and work (16%) in Exeter

Subgroups more likely to select **offering good value for money** (18% overall) include:

- Males (22%) in comparison with females (15%)

Subgroups more likely to select **communicating clearly and keeping residents informed** (18% overall) include:

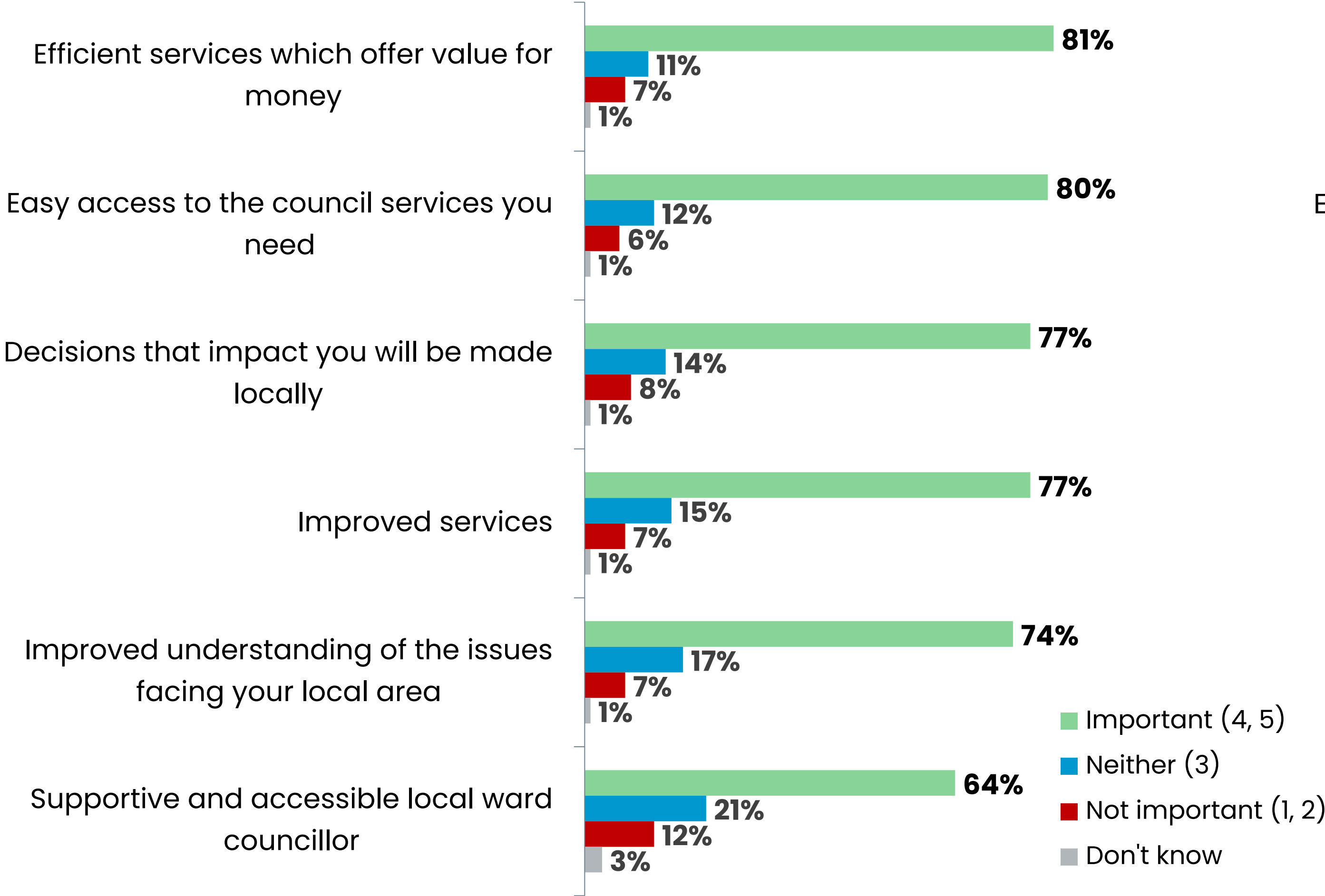
- TDC residents (26%) in comparison with ECC residents (16%)



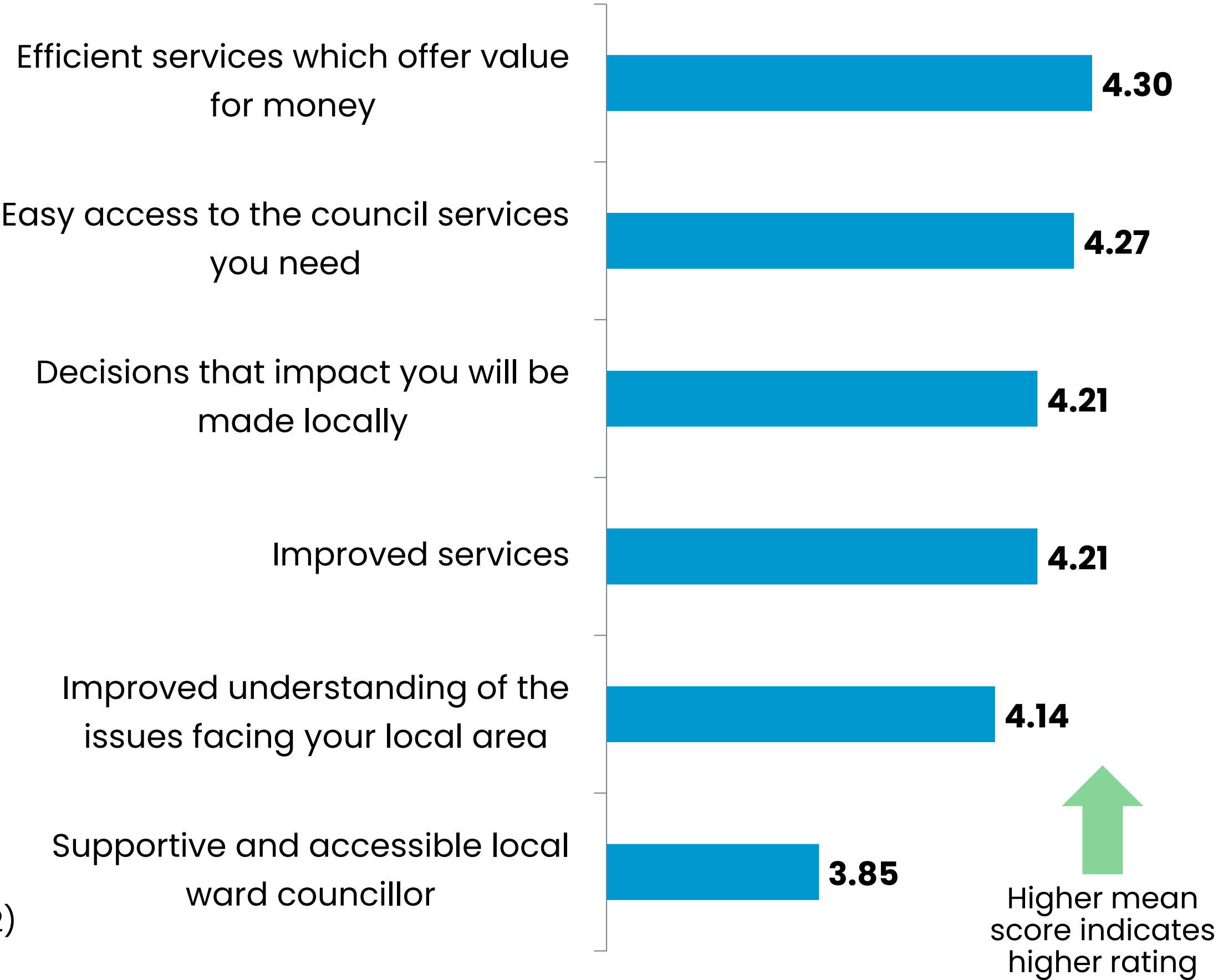
6. Impact of local government reorganisation

Efficient services which offer value for money and easy access to council services are viewed as most important, and less importance is given to having a supportive and accessible ward councillor

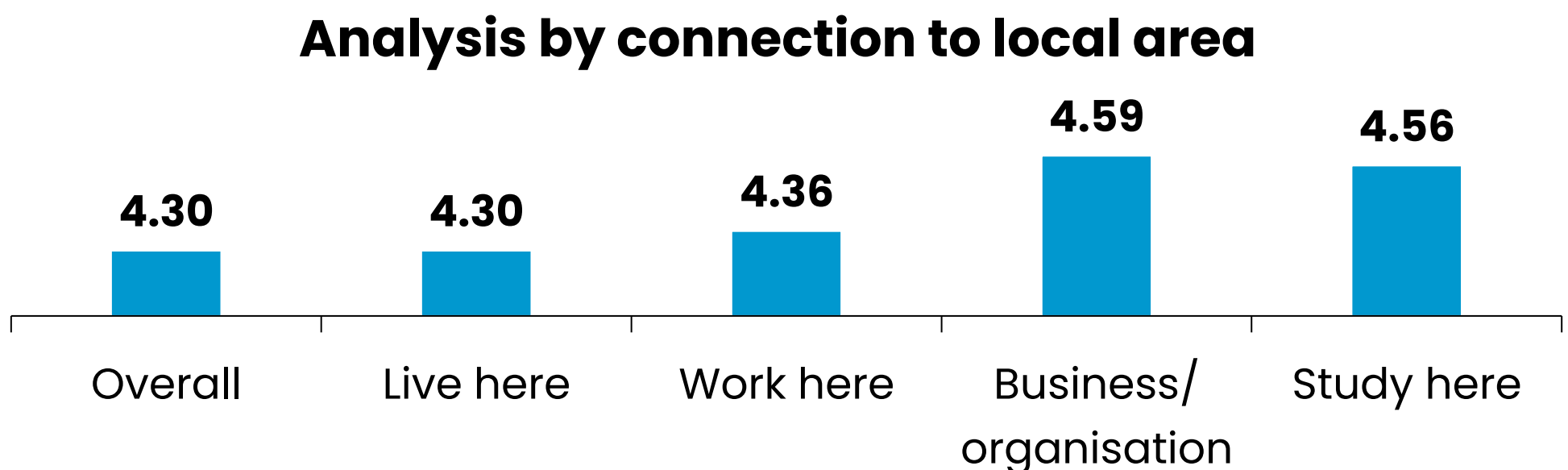
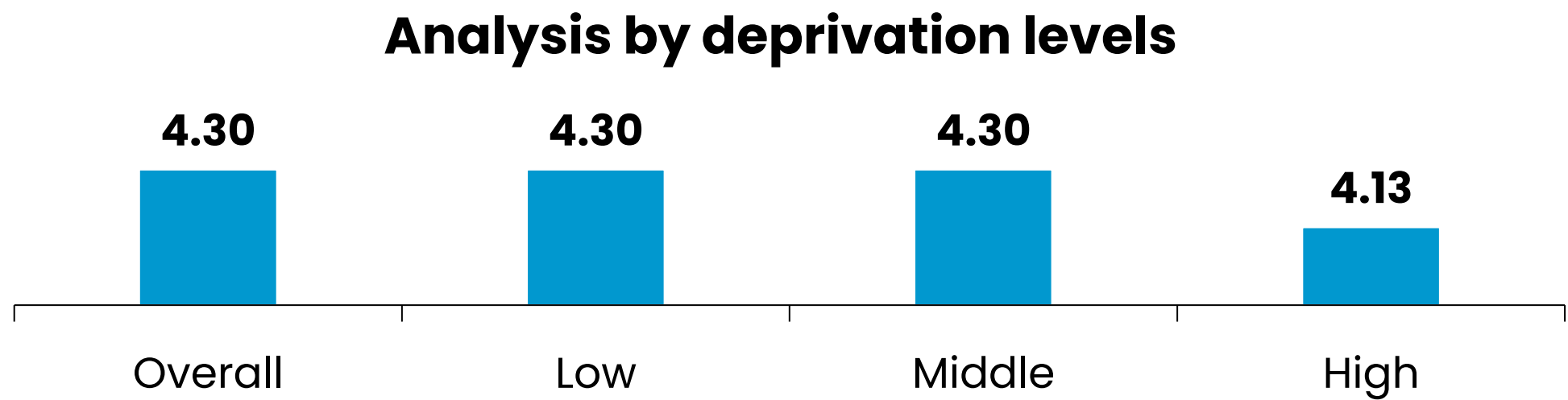
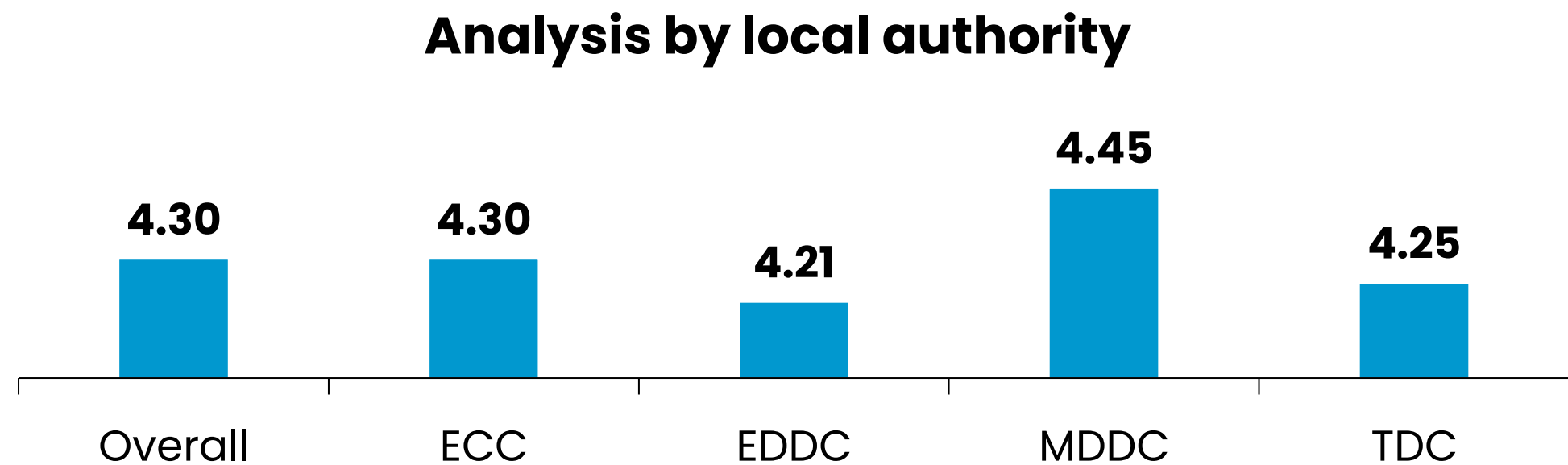
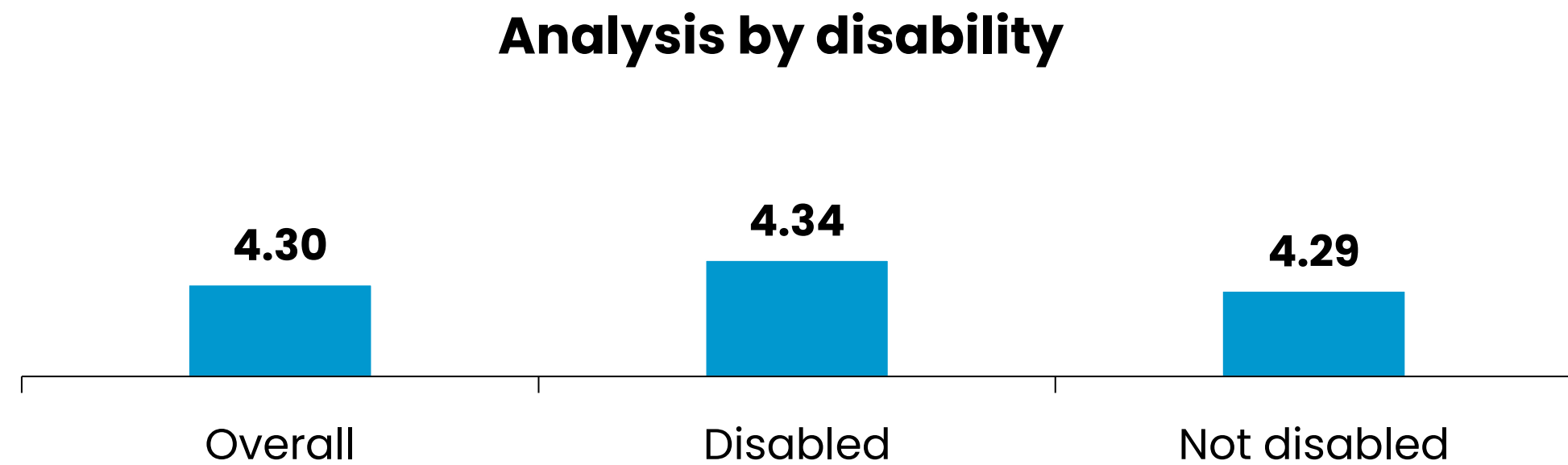
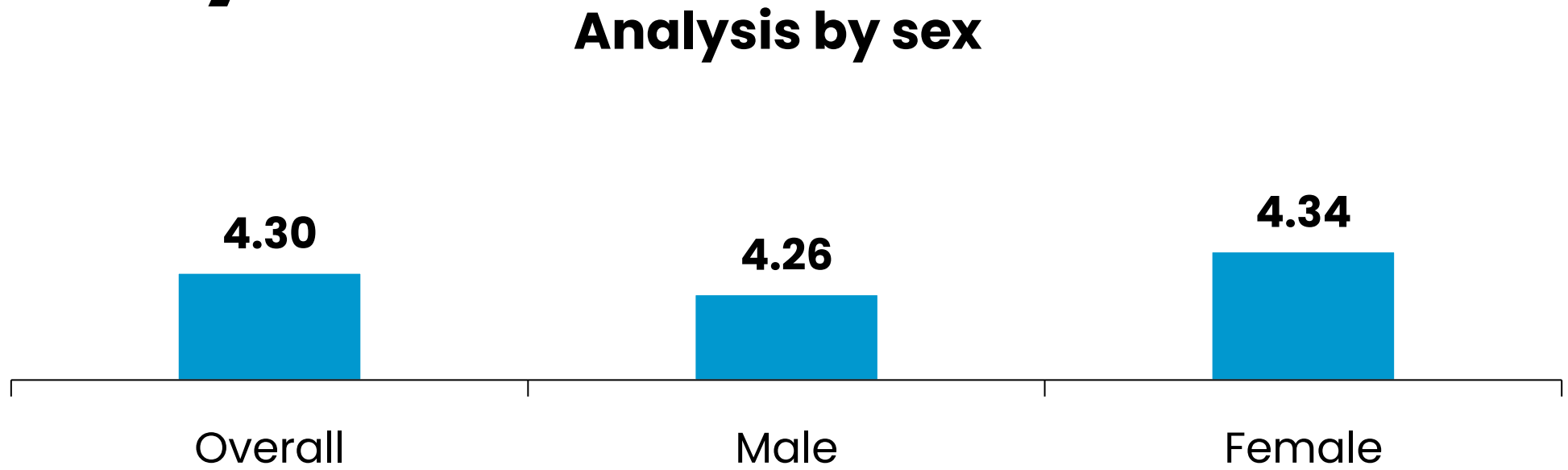
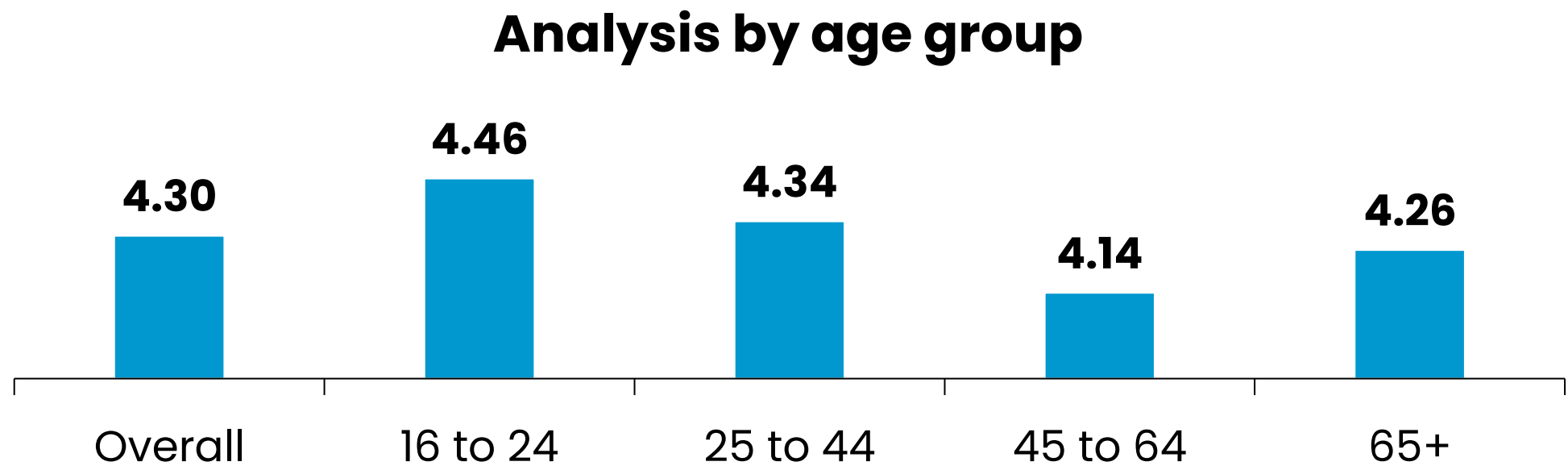
Representative survey



Mean scores (out of 5)

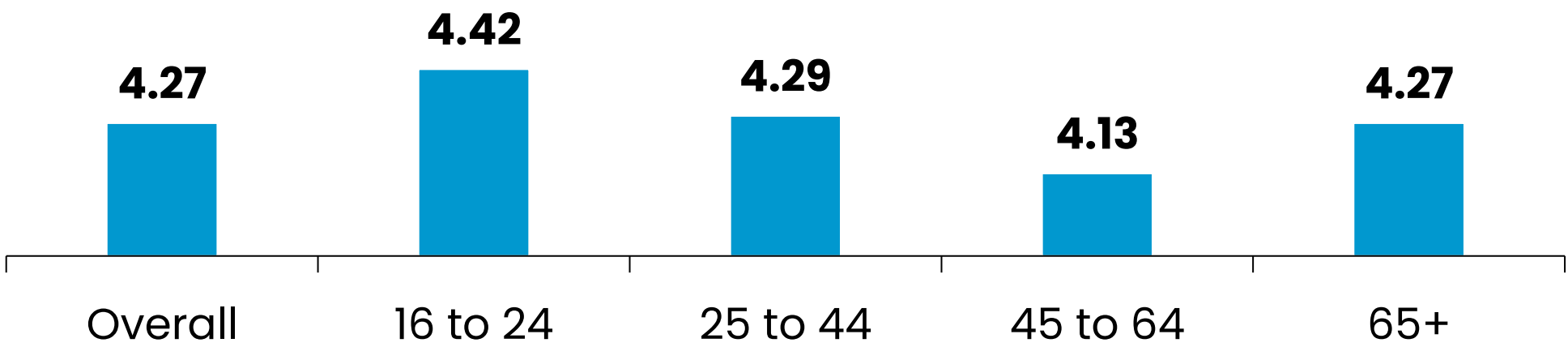


Those aged 16–24 and those who run a business or represent a community organisation and study in the local area placed greater importance on efficient services which offer value for money

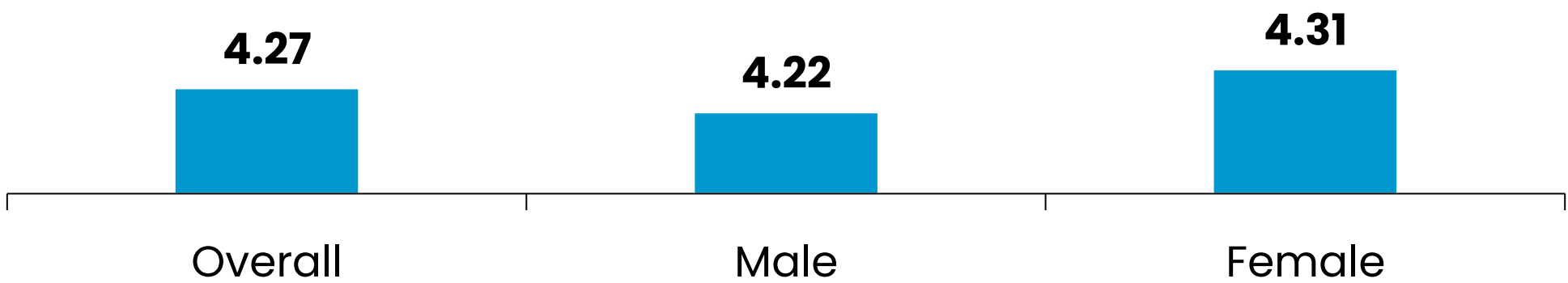


Easy access to the council services you need is rated more highly by those aged 16–24 and those who run a business or represent a community organisation and study in the local area

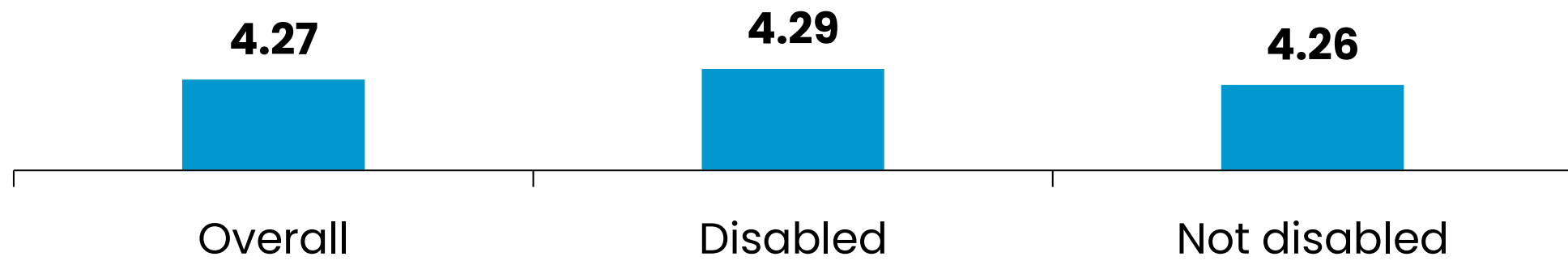
Analysis by age group



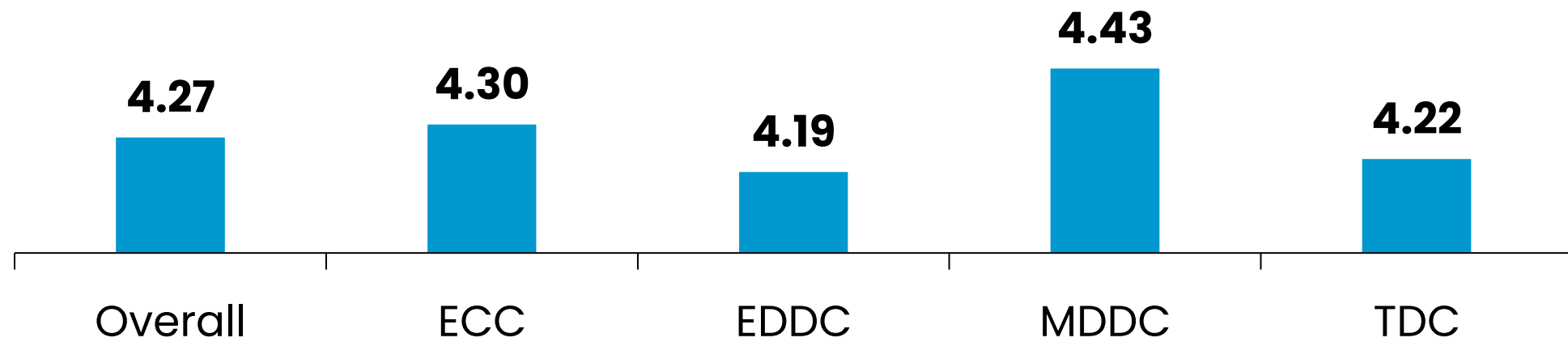
Analysis by sex



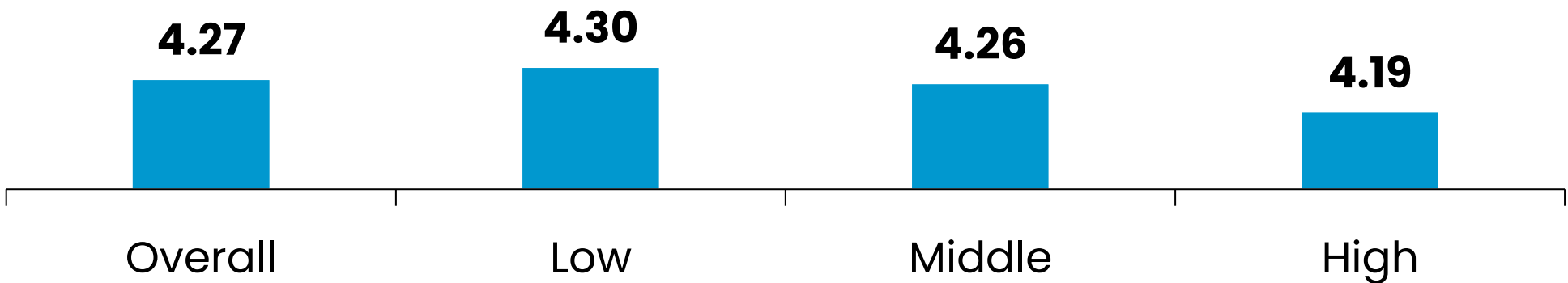
Analysis by disability



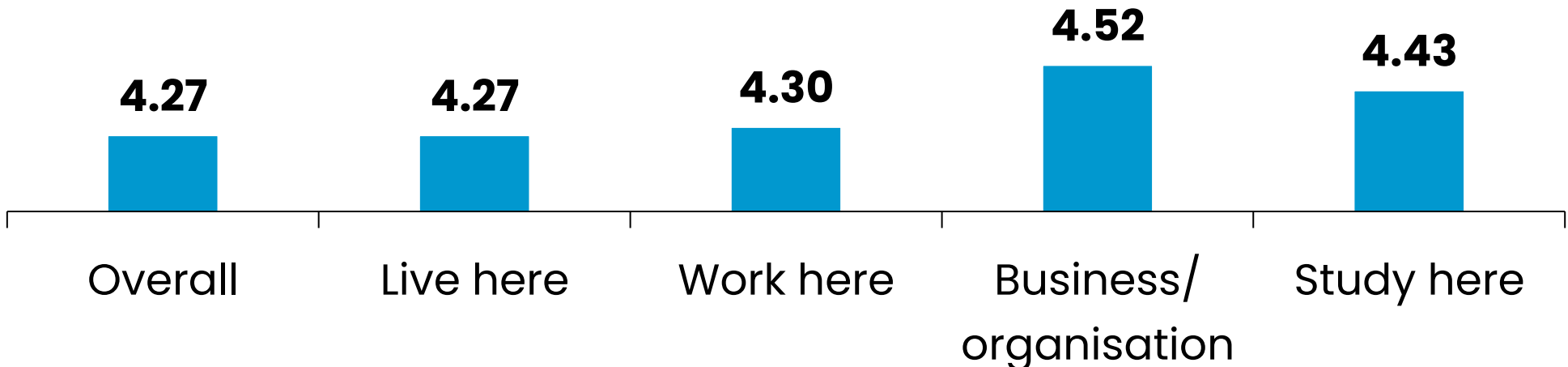
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels



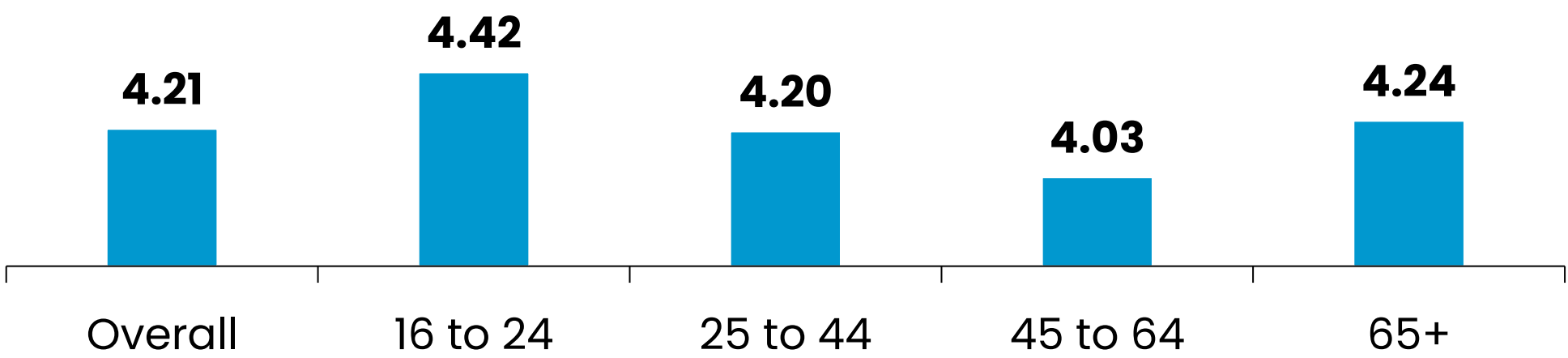
Analysis by connection to local area



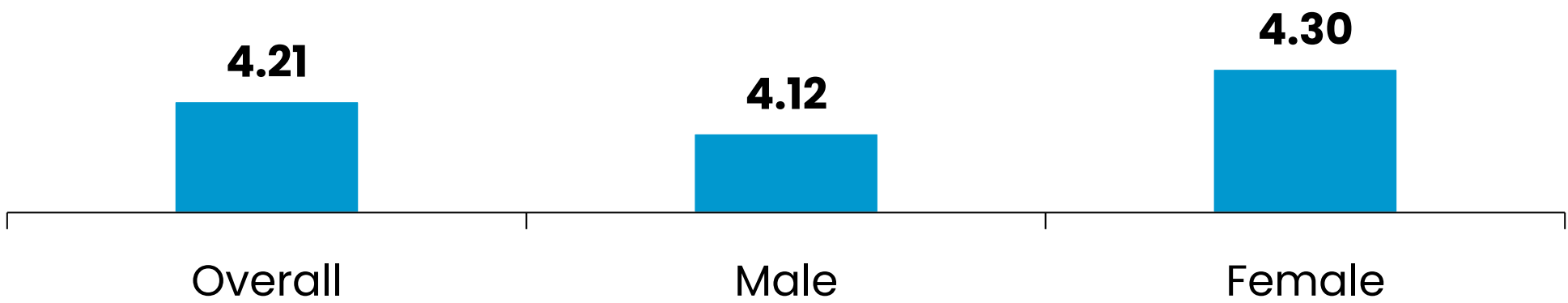
Question: *How important are each of the following when thinking about how local government reorganisation could impact you and your community... Easy access to the council services you need? (Rate on scale of 1–5)*
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged 16-24, females, MDDC residents and those who study in the local area are more likely to feel that local decision making is important

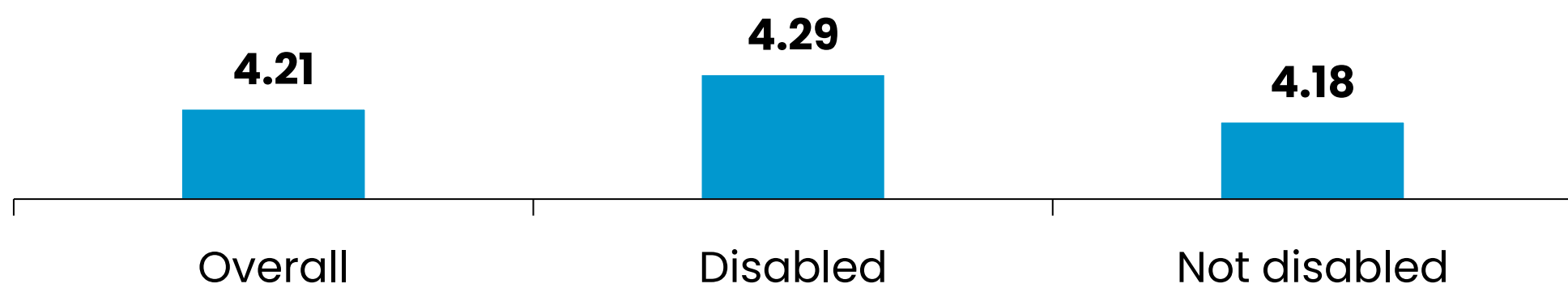
Analysis by age group



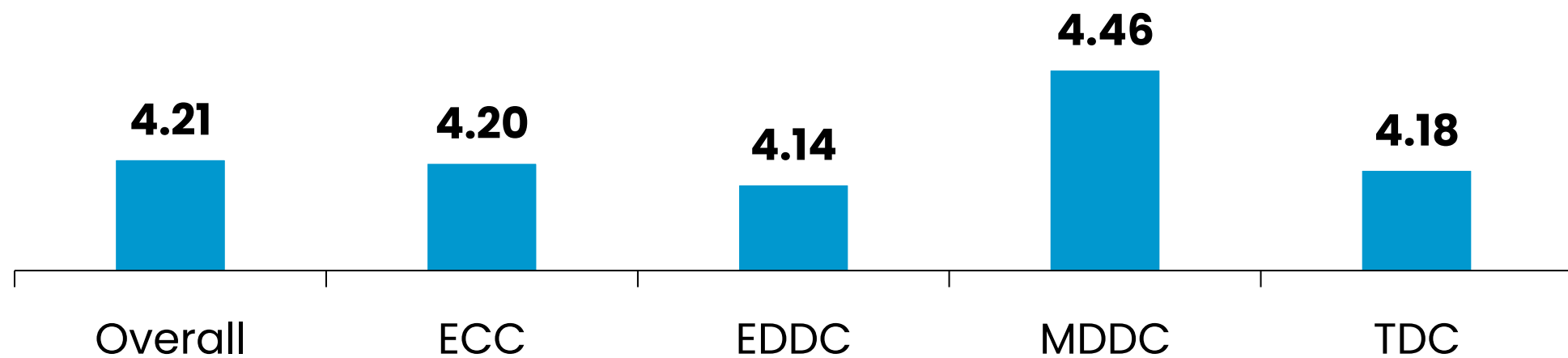
Analysis by sex



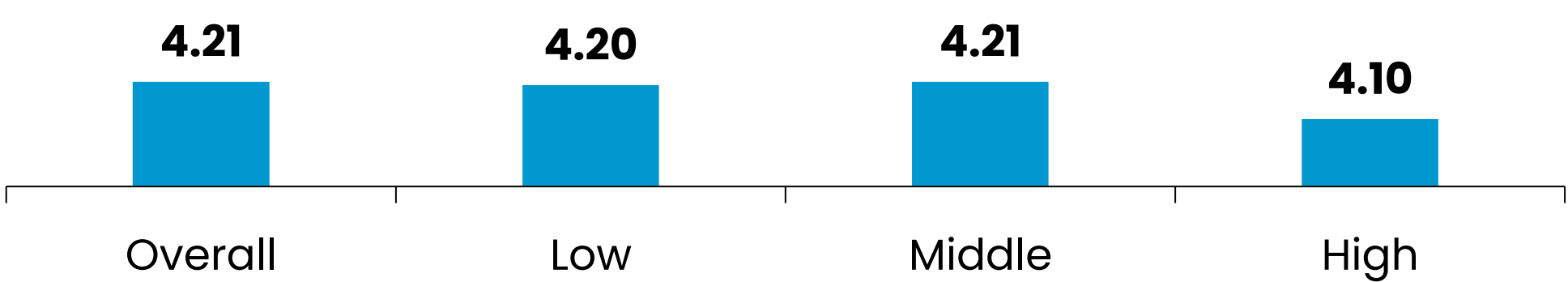
Analysis by disability



Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

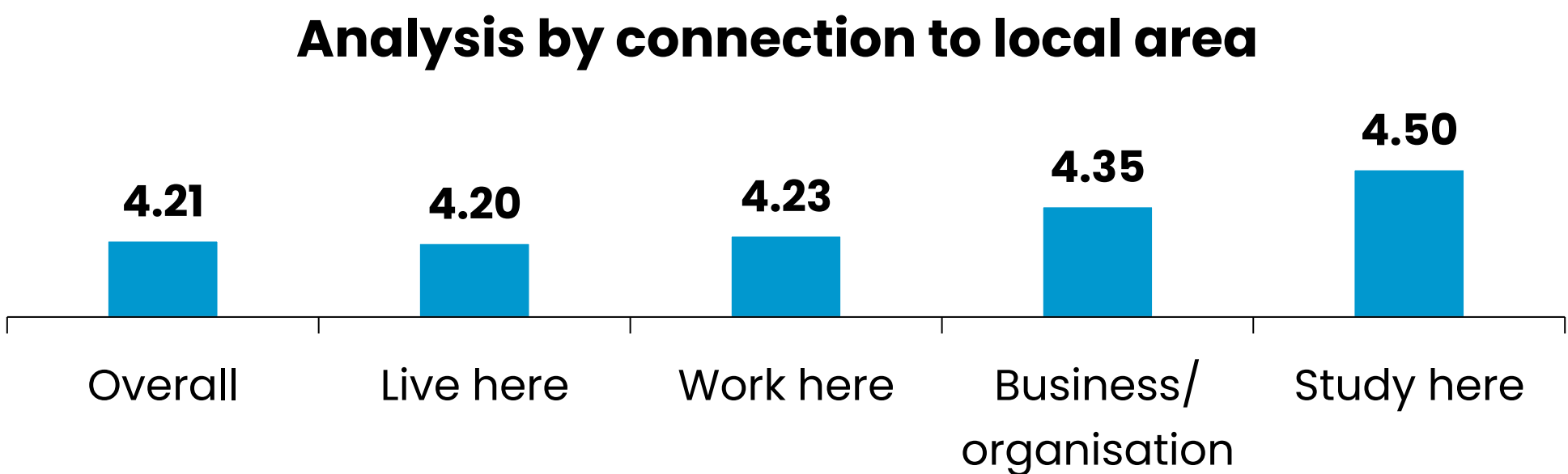
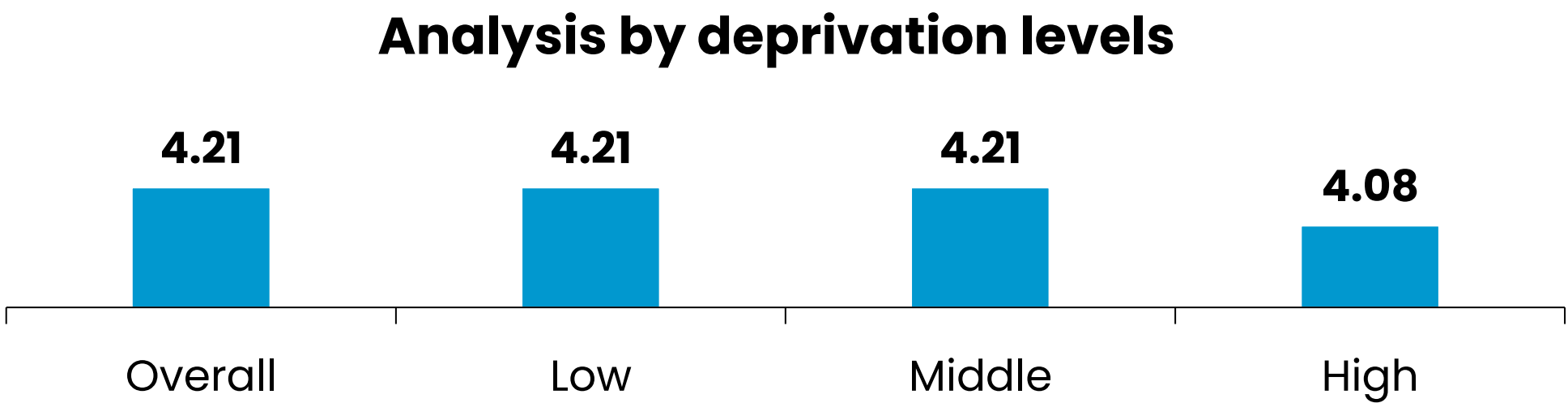
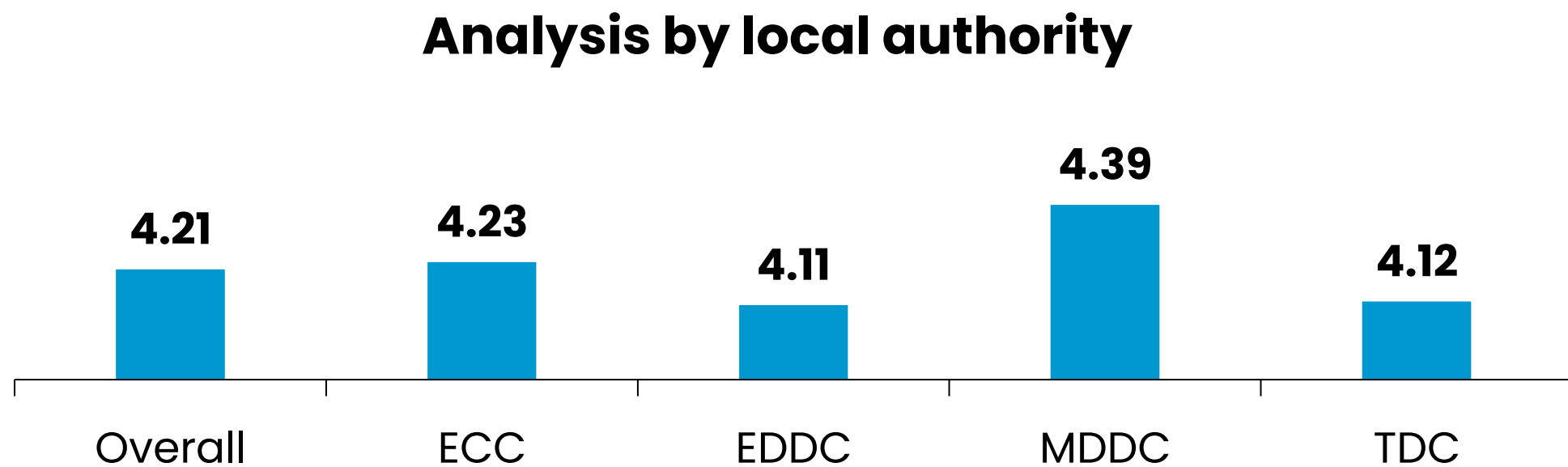
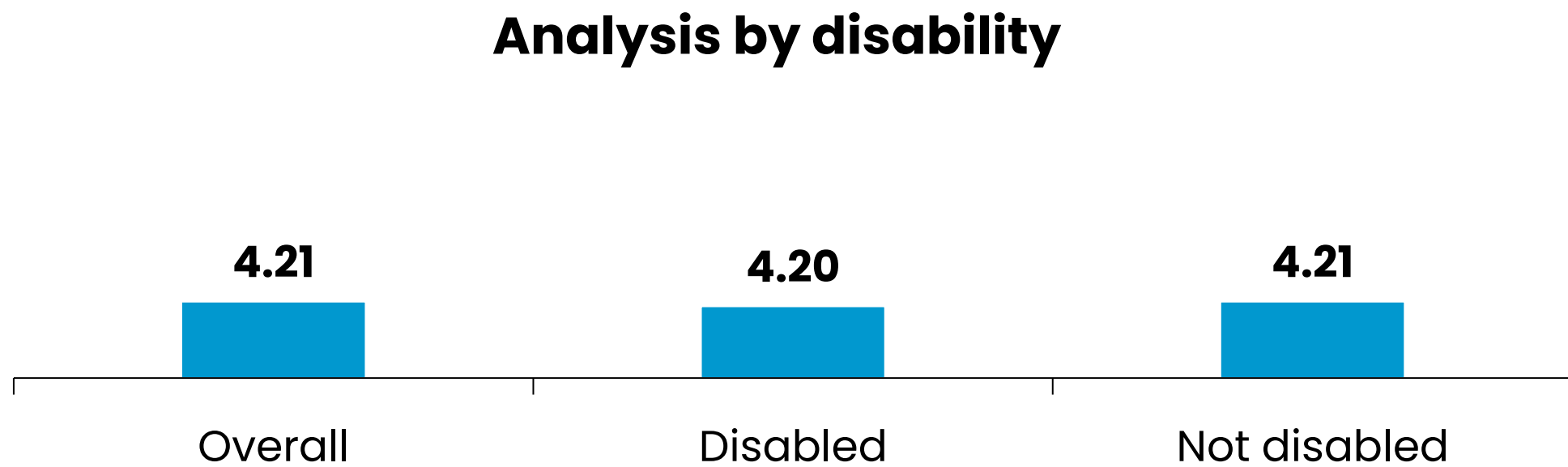
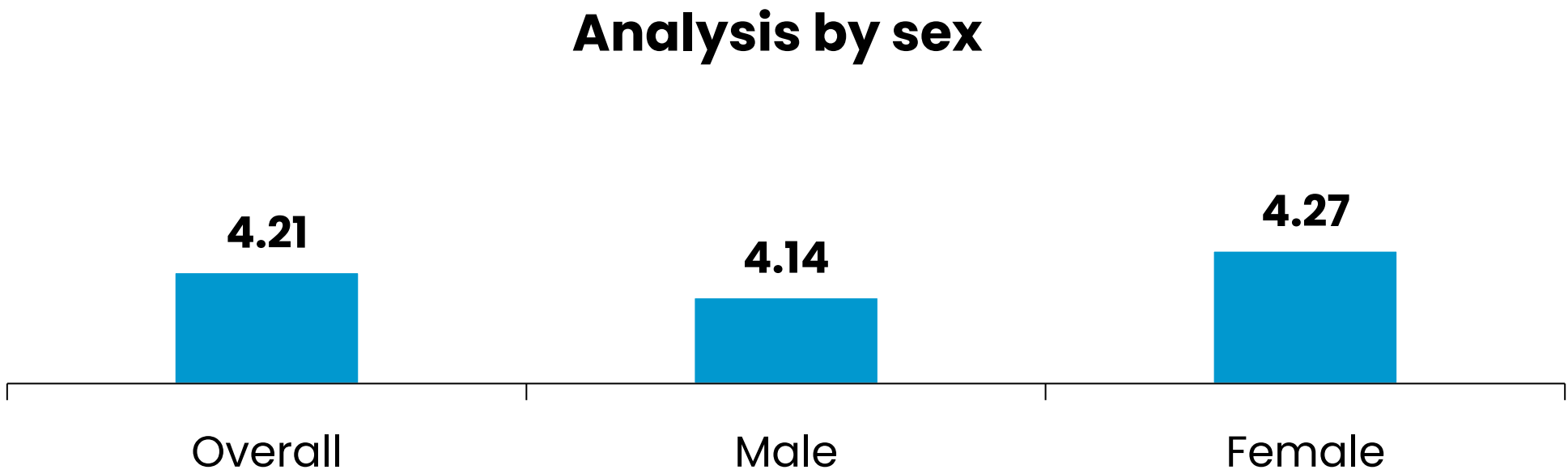
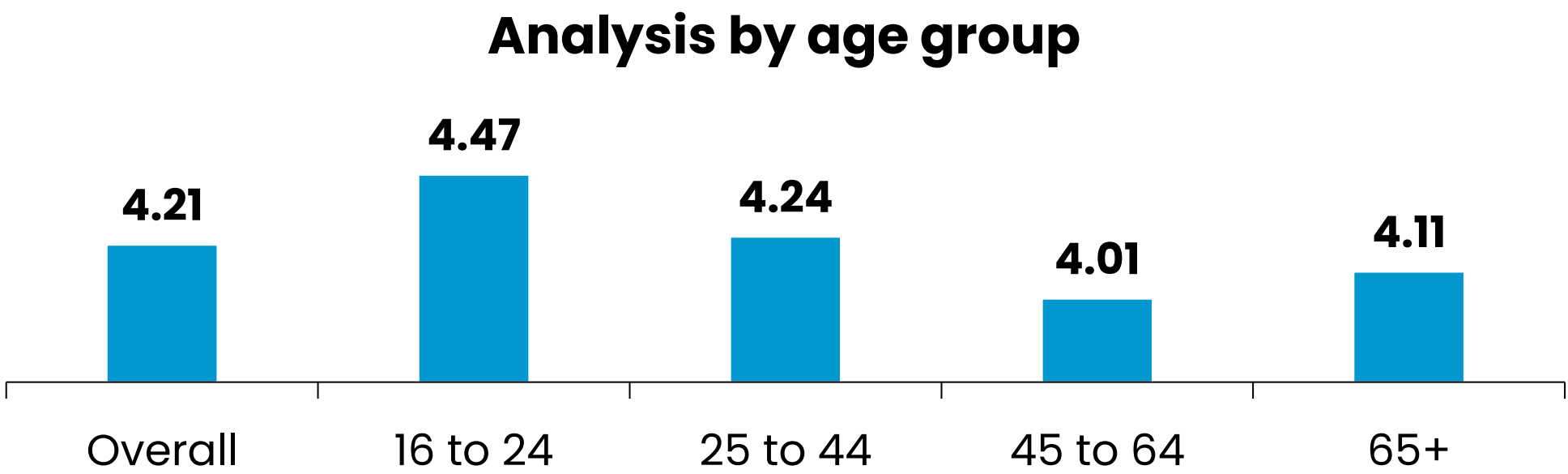


Analysis by connection to local area



Question: How important are each of the following when thinking about how local government reorganisation could impact you and your community... Decisions that impact you will be made locally? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

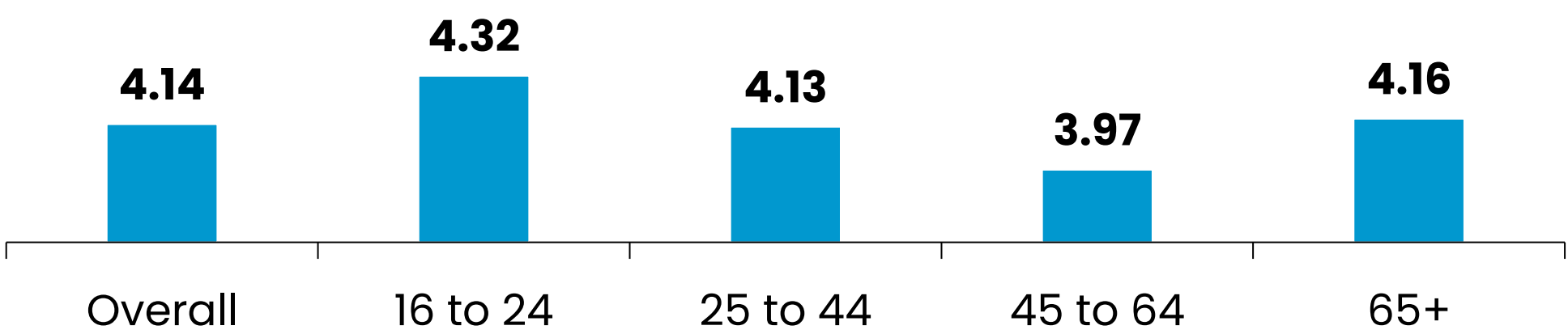
Improved services is rated more highly by those aged 16–24, females, MDDC residents and those who study in the local area



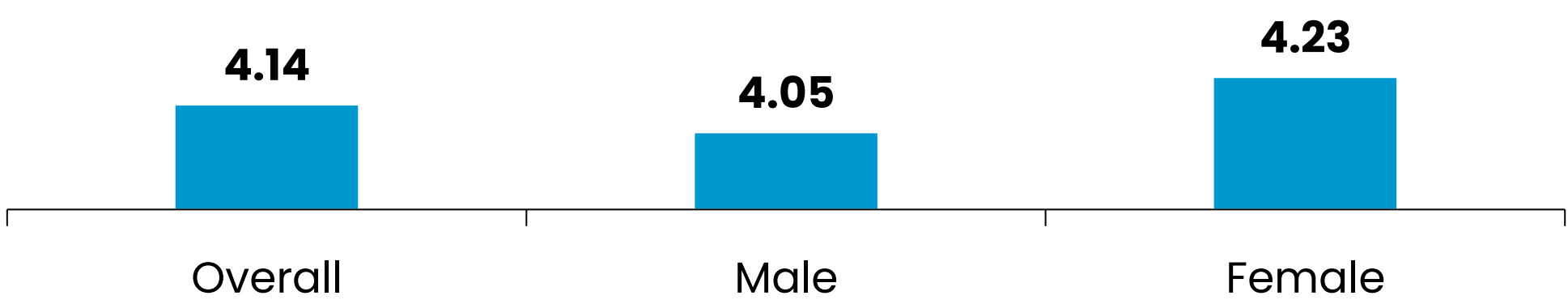
Question: How important are each of the following when thinking about how local government reorganisation could impact you and your community... Improved services?
(Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Improved understanding of the issues facing your local area is of greater importance for those aged 16–24, females, MDDC residents, and those who run a business or represent a community organisation

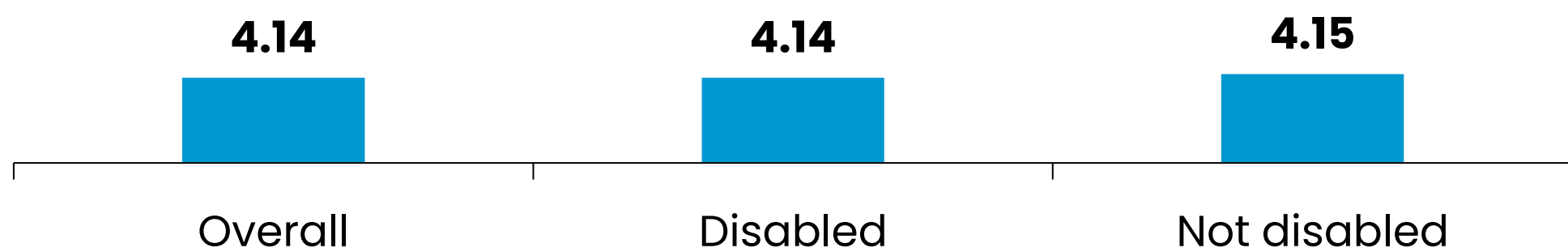
Analysis by age group



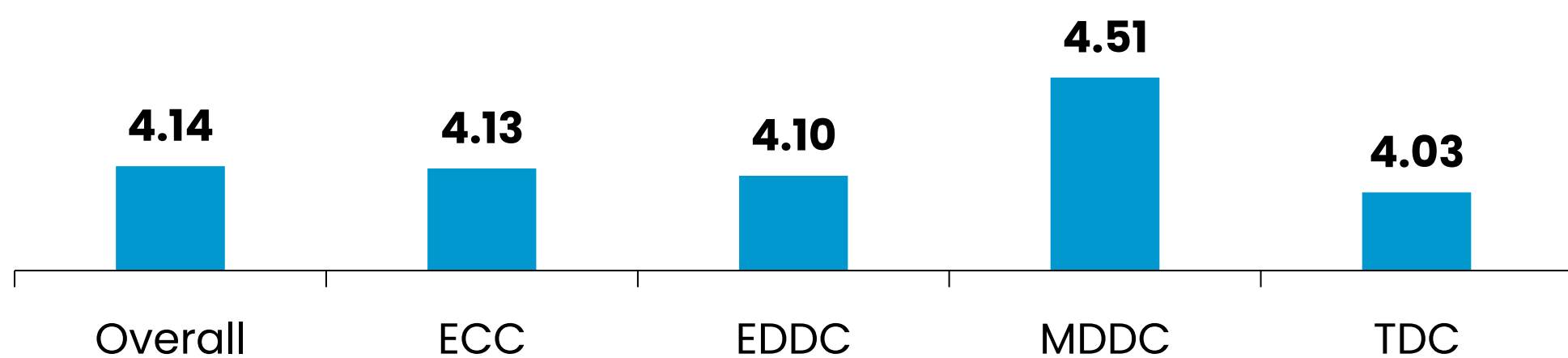
Analysis by sex



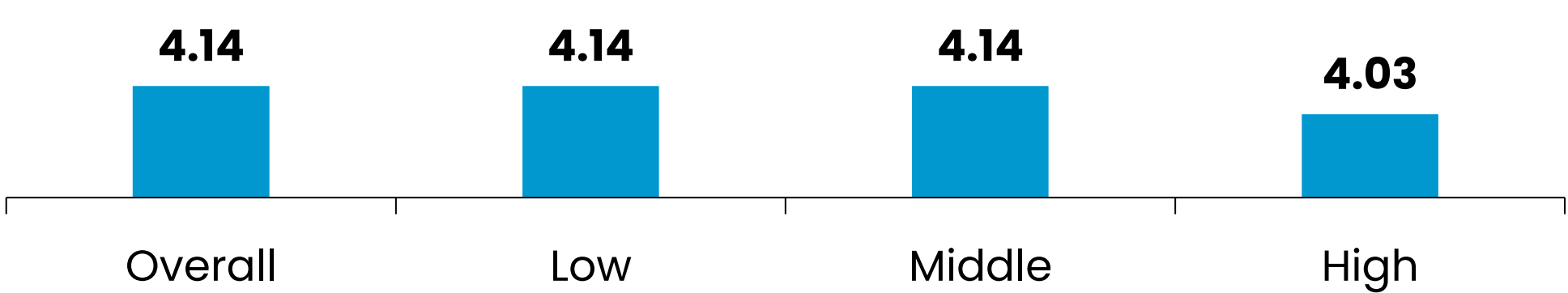
Analysis by disability



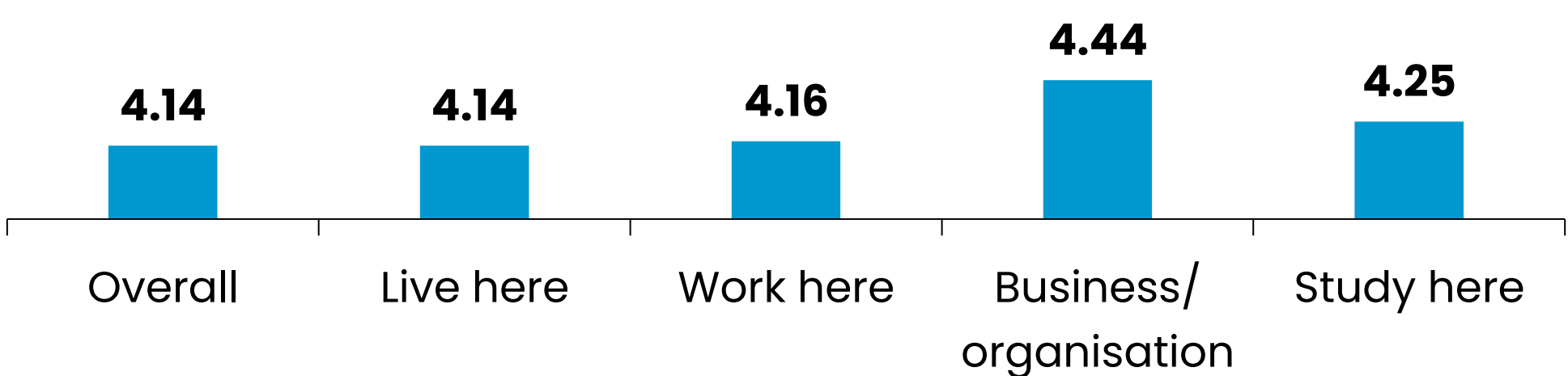
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

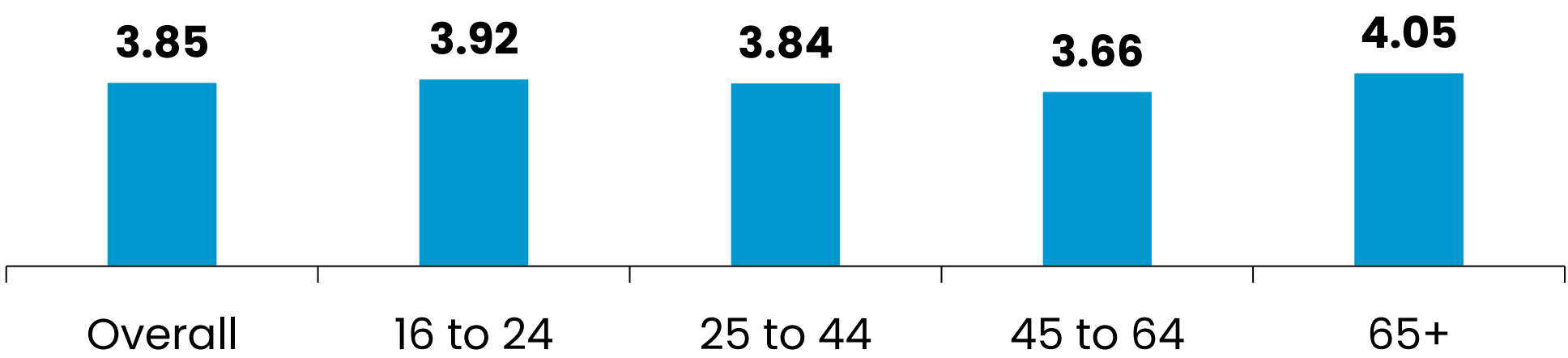


Analysis by connection to local area

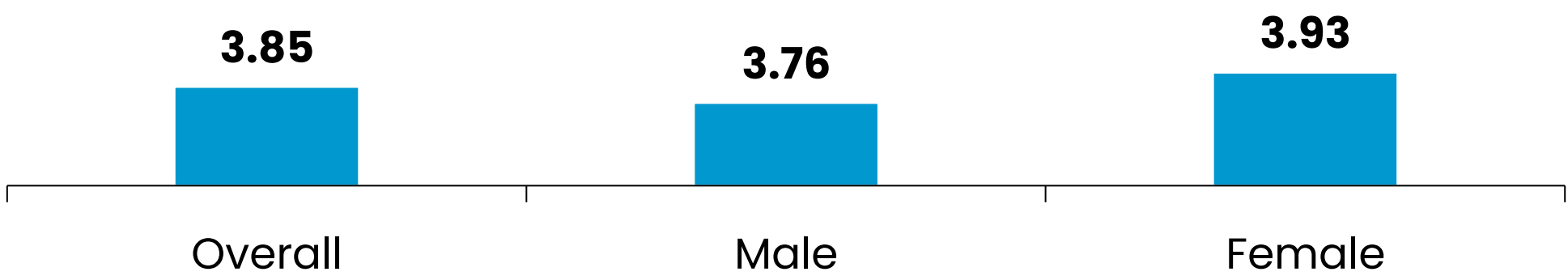


Having a supportive and accessible local ward councillor is more highly rated by those aged 16–24 and 65+, females, and those who have a disability

Analysis by age group



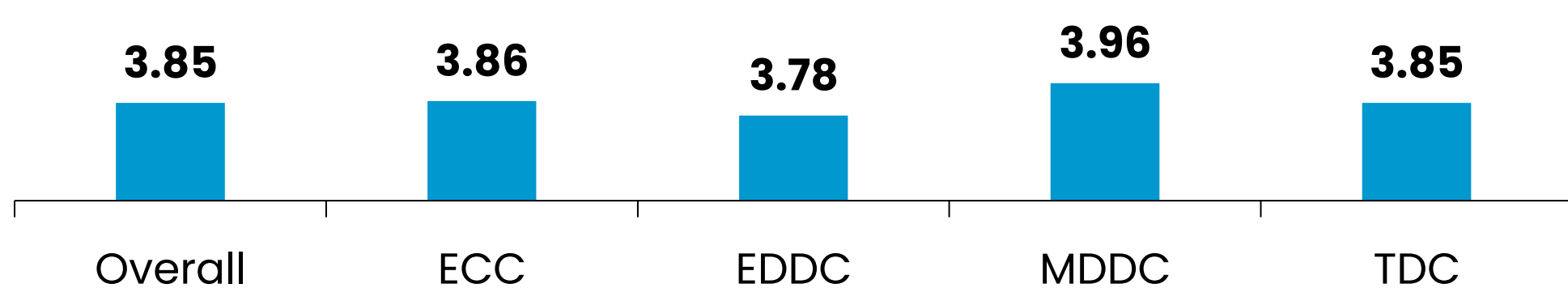
Analysis by sex



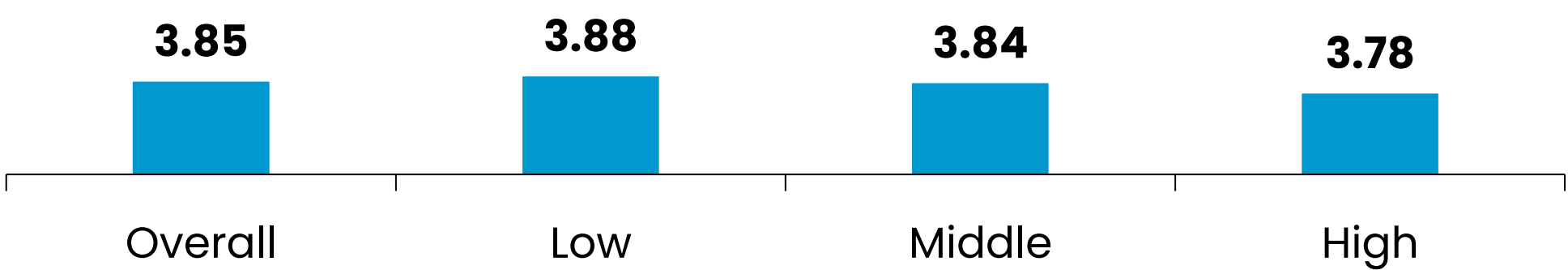
Analysis by disability



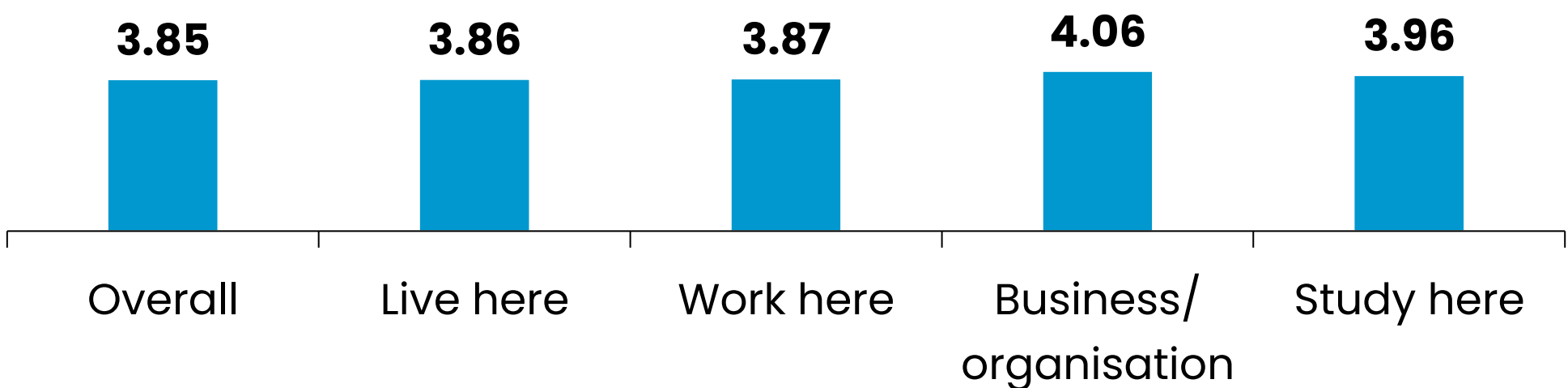
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

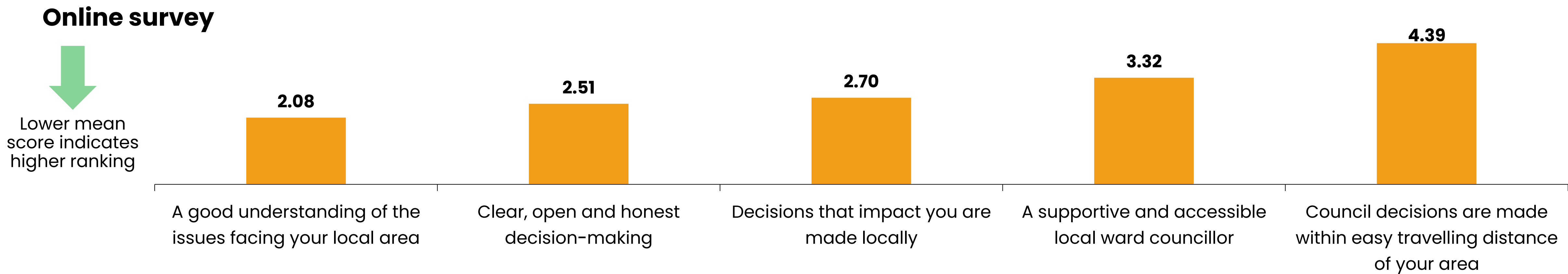


Analysis by connection to local area



Question: How important are each of the following when thinking about how local government reorganisation could impact you and your community... Supportive and accessible local ward councillor? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Online respondents rank a good understanding of the issues facing the local area most highly and council decisions made within easy travelling distance as least important



Subgroup analysis

There were no significant subgroup differences seen in relation to **a good understanding of the issues facing your local area**.

Subgroups more likely to select **clear, open and honest decision-making** (2.51 overall) include:

- ECC residents (2.36) in comparison with residents living in other council areas

Subgroups more likely to select **decisions that impact you are made locally** (2.70 overall) include:

- EDDC residents (2.27) and TDC residents (2.28) in comparison with ECC residents (2.85)

Subgroups more likely to select **a supportive and accessible local ward councillor** (3.32 overall) include:

- Those aged 65+ (3.22) in comparison with those aged 25-44 (3.46)
- TDC (3.21) and ECC residents (3.27) in comparison with MDDC (3.81) and EDDC (3.56) residents

Subgroups more likely to select **council decisions are made within easy travelling distance of your area** (4.39 overall) include:

- Males (4.31) in comparison with females (4.46)



Online respondents rank improved quality of services most highly and feel that council offices being located nearby is less important



Subgroup analysis

- Subgroups more likely to select **improved quality of services** (2.13 overall) include:
- Those aged 25-44 (1.89) in comparison to those aged 45-64 (2.09) and 65+ (2.35)
 - EDDC residents (2.08) in comparison with MDDC residents (2.67)
 - Those who work in Exeter (1.94) in comparison with those who represent a community organisation (2.38)

- Subgroups more likely to select **efficient services that offer good value for money** (2.34 overall) include:
- Those who run a business (2.15) or work (2.23) in Exeter in comparison with those who study in Exeter (3.00)

- Subgroups more likely to select **clear understanding of who is responsible for delivering services** (2.95 overall) include:
- Those aged 65+ (2.85) in comparison with those aged 25-44 (3.11)
 - ECC residents (2.85) in comparison with EDDC residents (3.23)

- Subgroups more likely to select **easy access to the council services you need** (3.09 overall) include:
- Those who represent a community organisation (2.89) in comparison with those who work in Exeter (3.21)
- Subgroups more likely to select **council offices are located nearby** (4.49 overall) include:
- MDDC residents (3.62) in comparison with residents living in other council areas

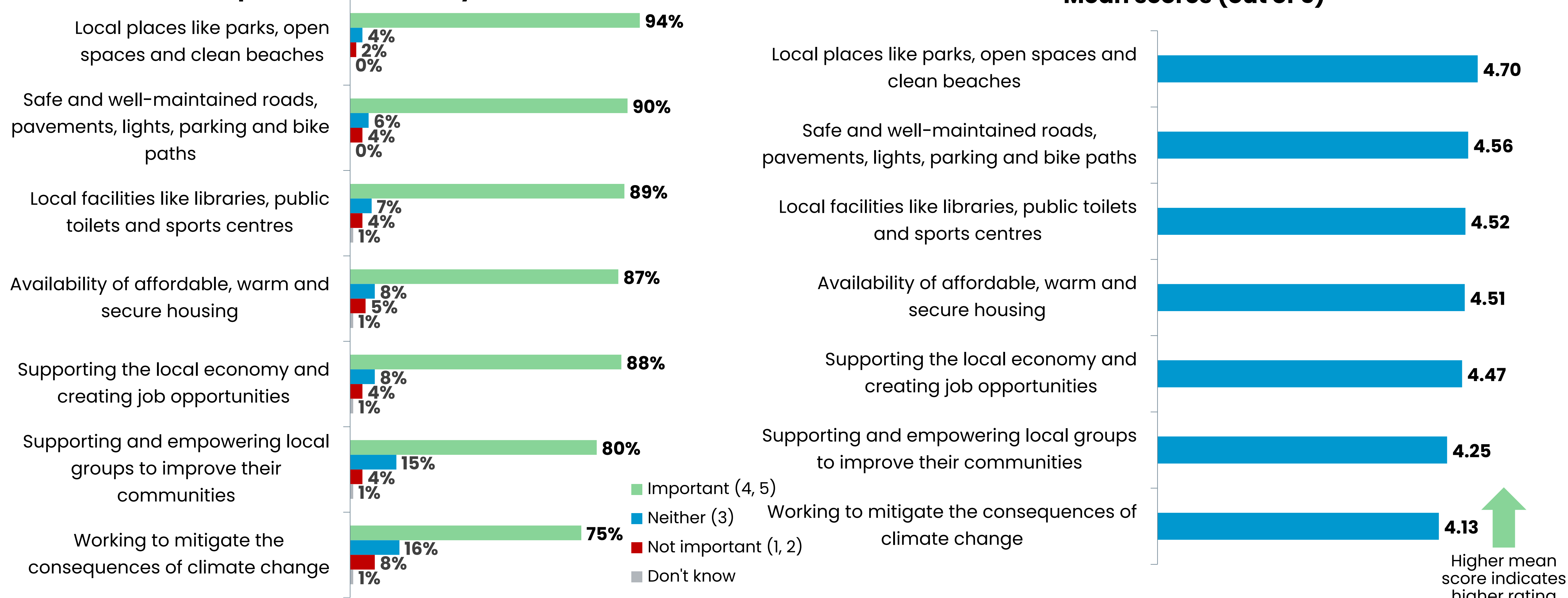


7. Priorities for shaping the future of local government services

Large majorities rate all options as important, but a slightly smaller proportion feel that working to mitigate the consequences of climate change is important

Representative survey

Mean scores (out of 5)



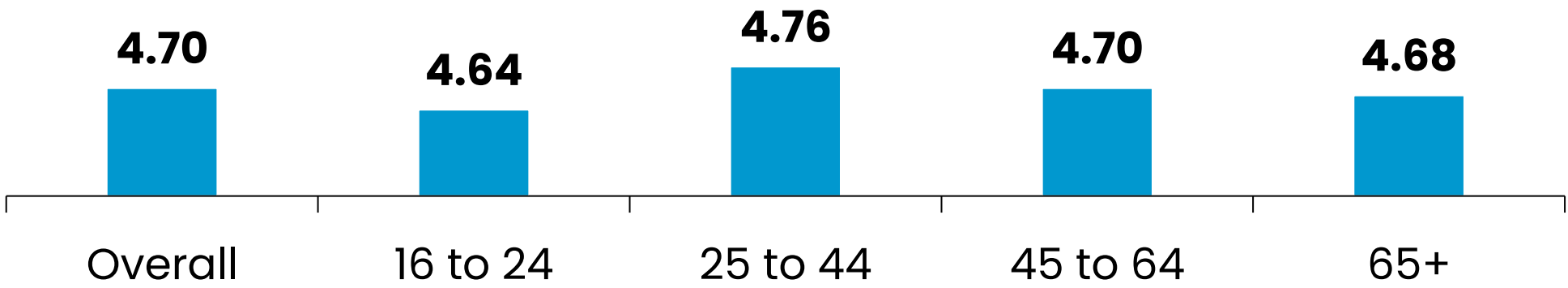
Higher mean score indicates higher rating



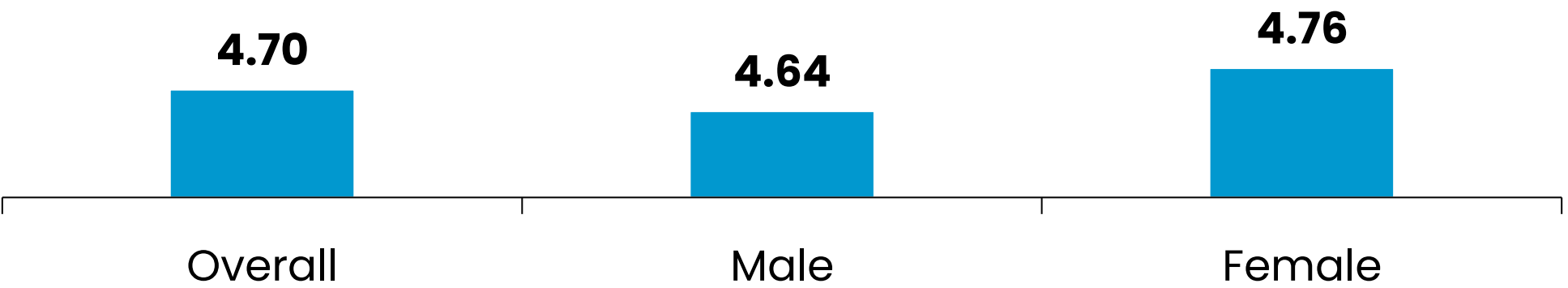
Question: *How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon? (Rate on scale of 1-5)*
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches is rated more highly by those aged 25-44, females, those in areas of low deprivation, and those running a business or representing a community organisation

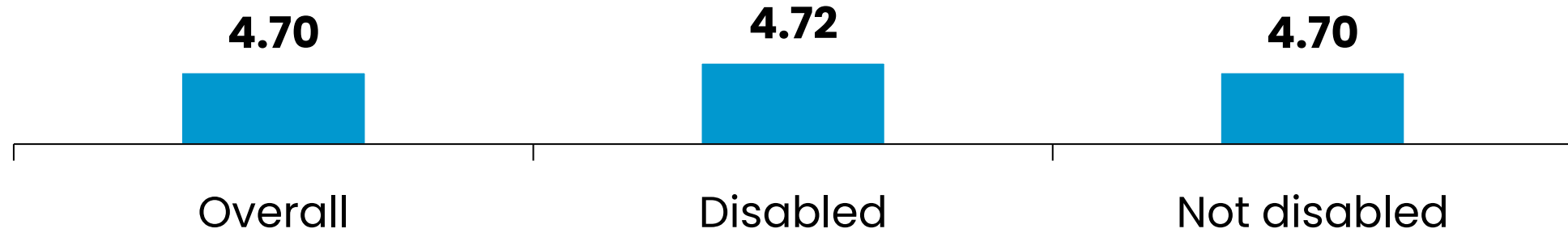
Analysis by age group



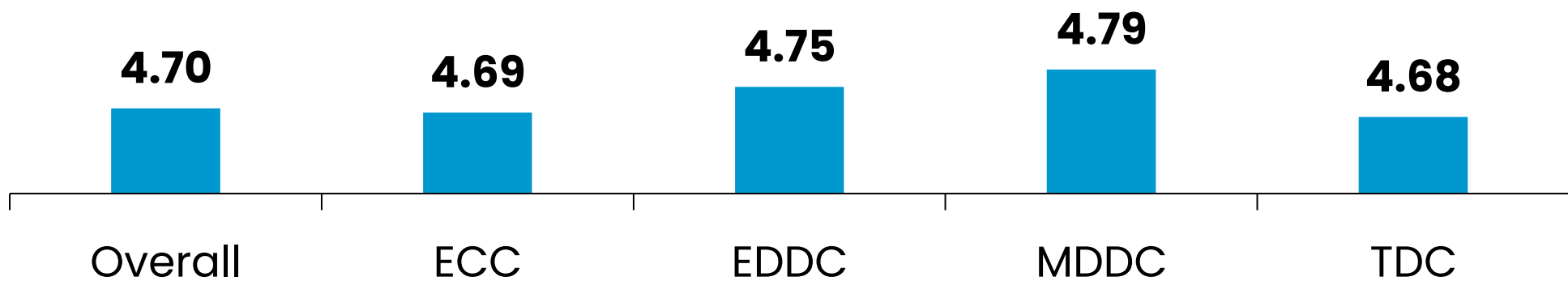
Analysis by sex



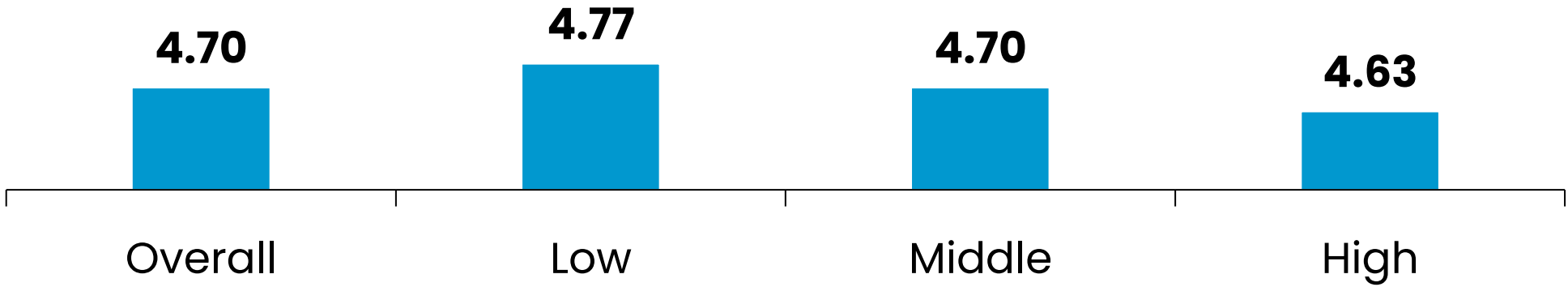
Analysis by disability



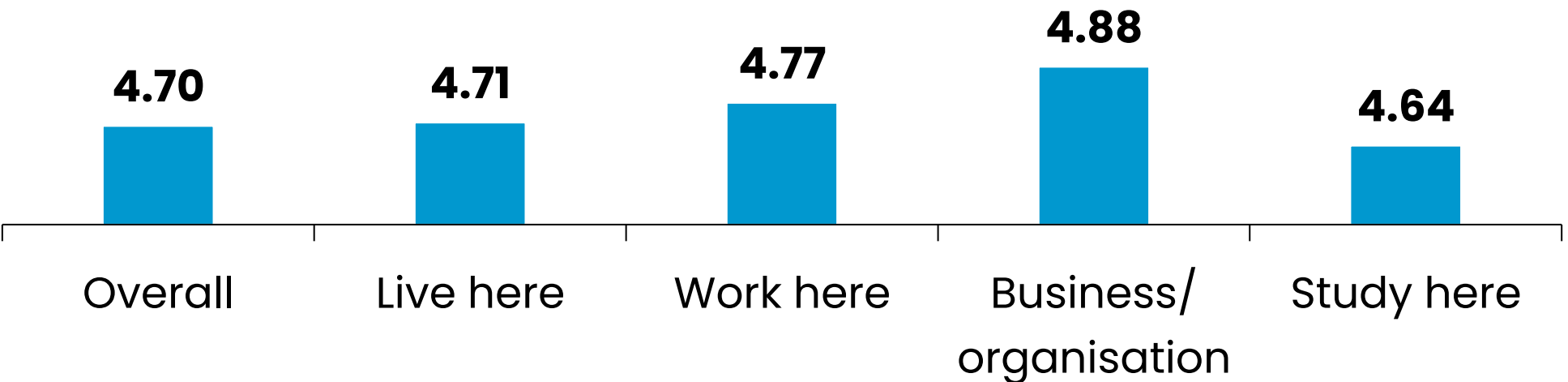
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

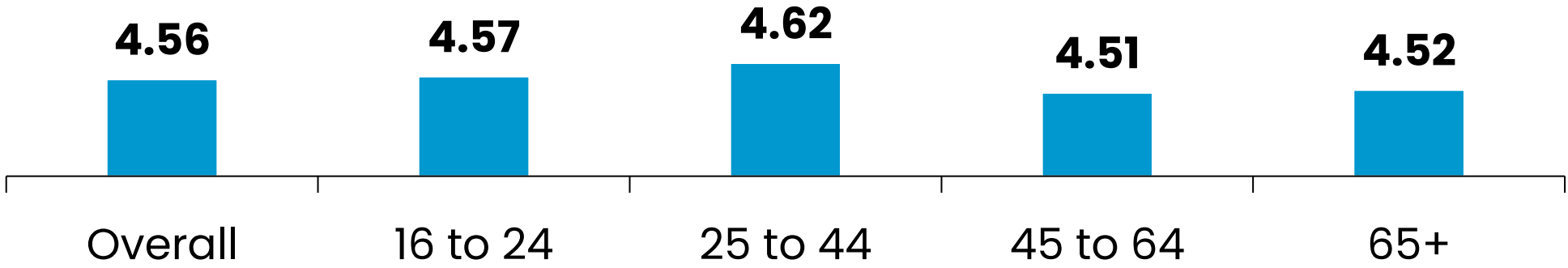


Analysis by connection to local area

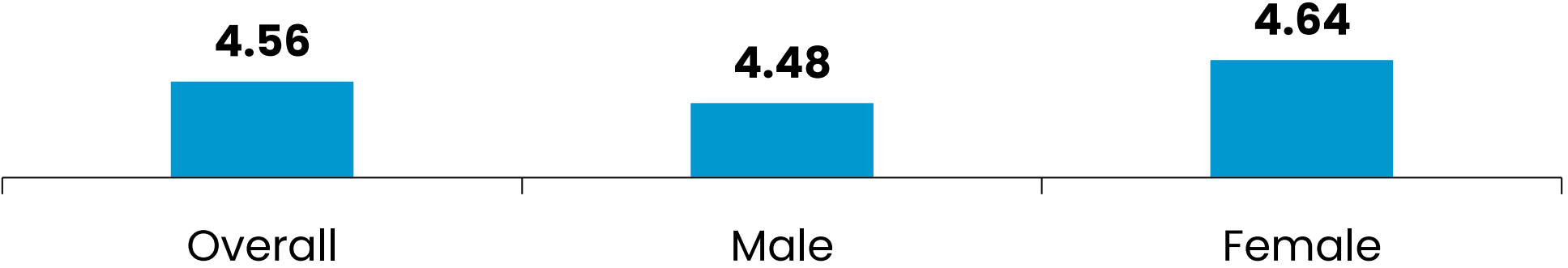


Females and MDDC residents are more likely to rate safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths highly

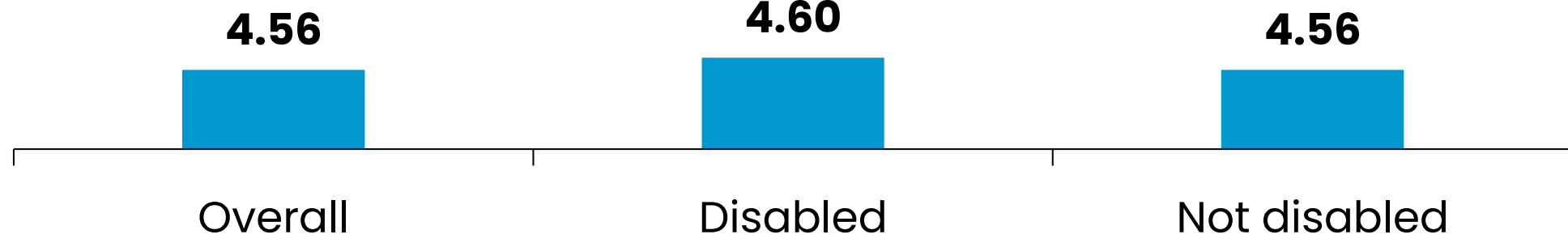
Analysis by age group



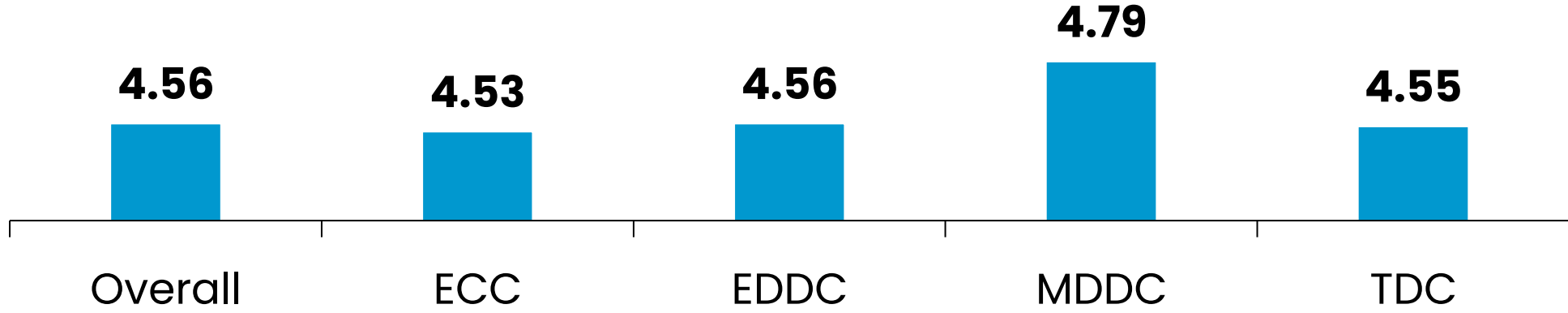
Analysis by sex



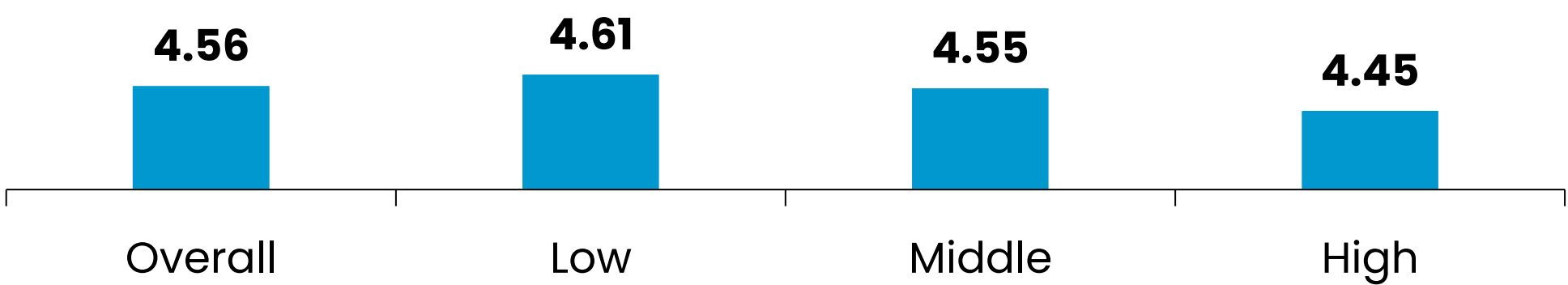
Analysis by disability



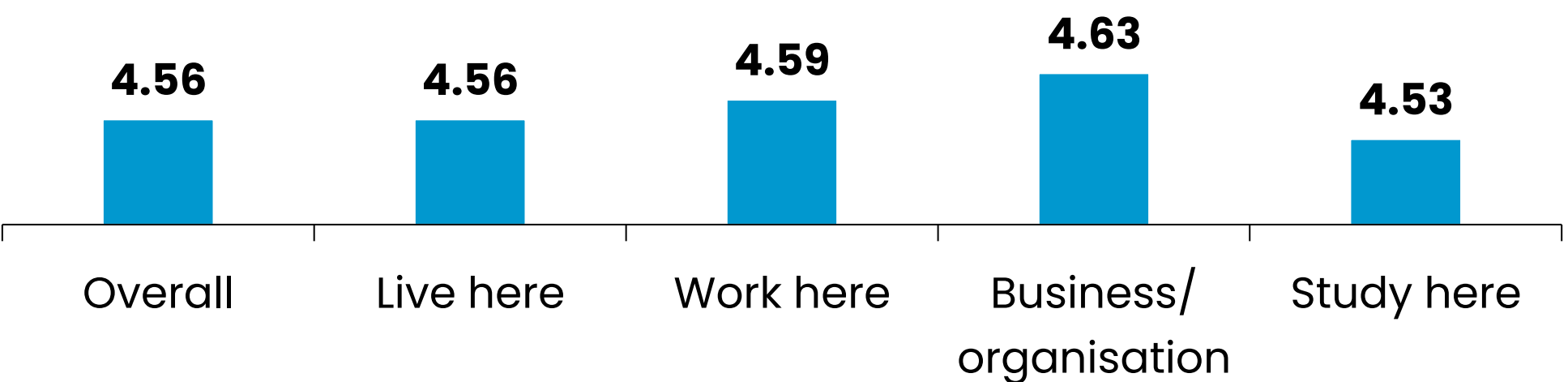
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels



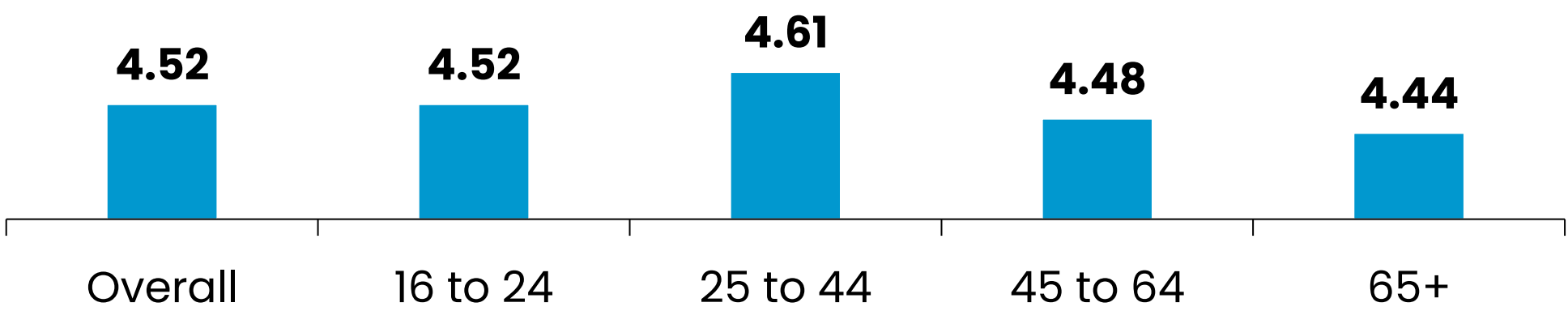
Analysis by connection to local area



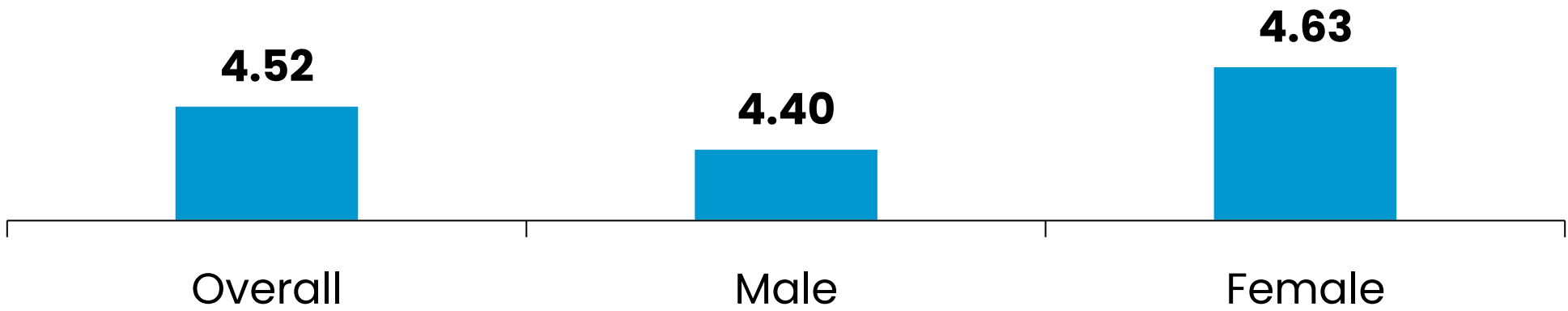
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon... Safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged 25–44 and females allocate greater importance to local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres

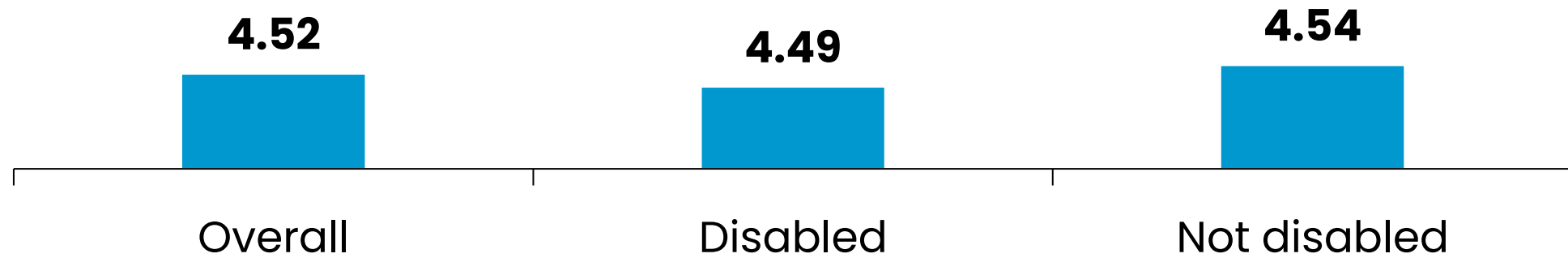
Analysis by age group



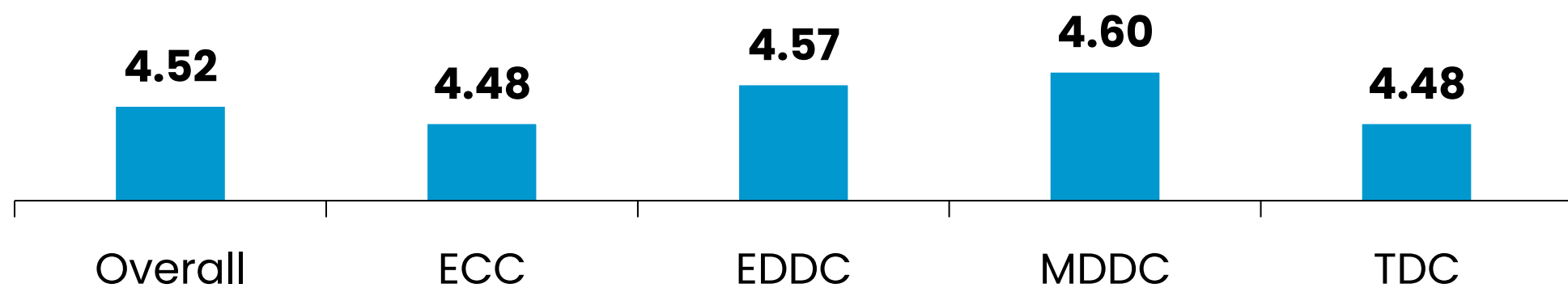
Analysis by sex



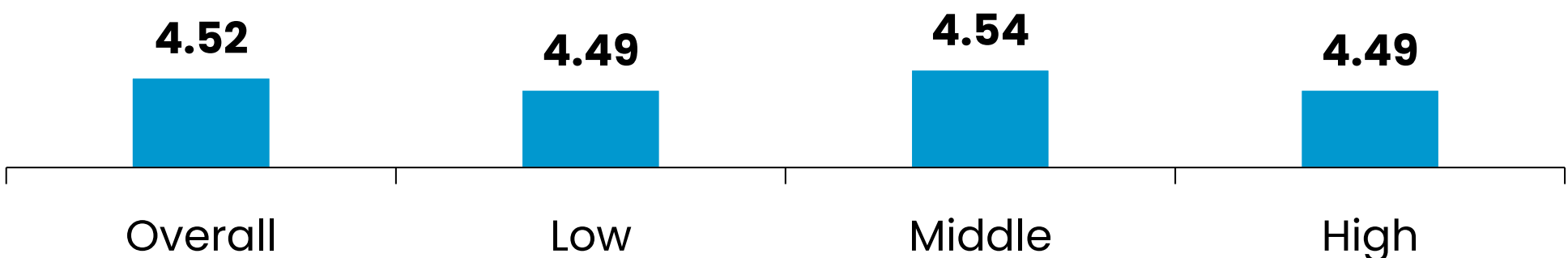
Analysis by disability



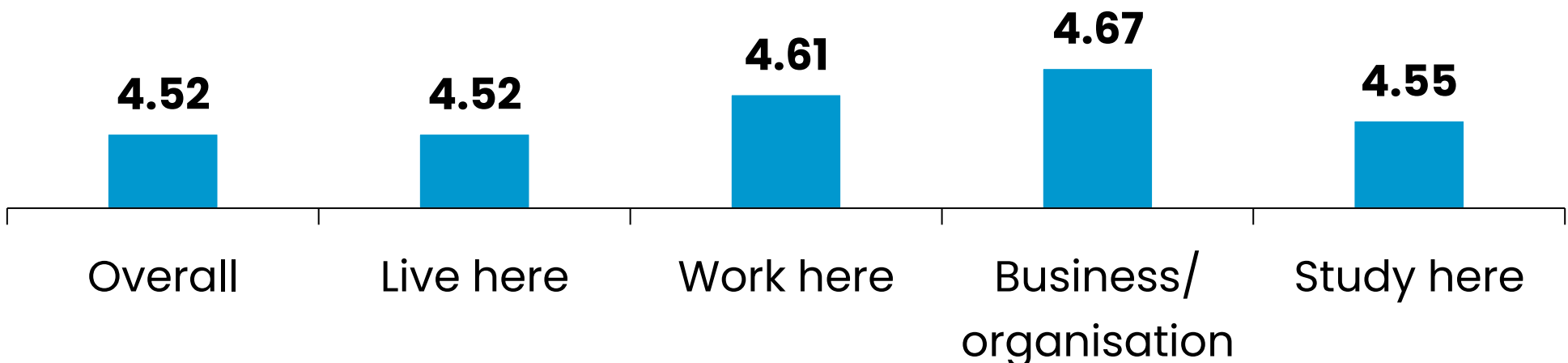
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

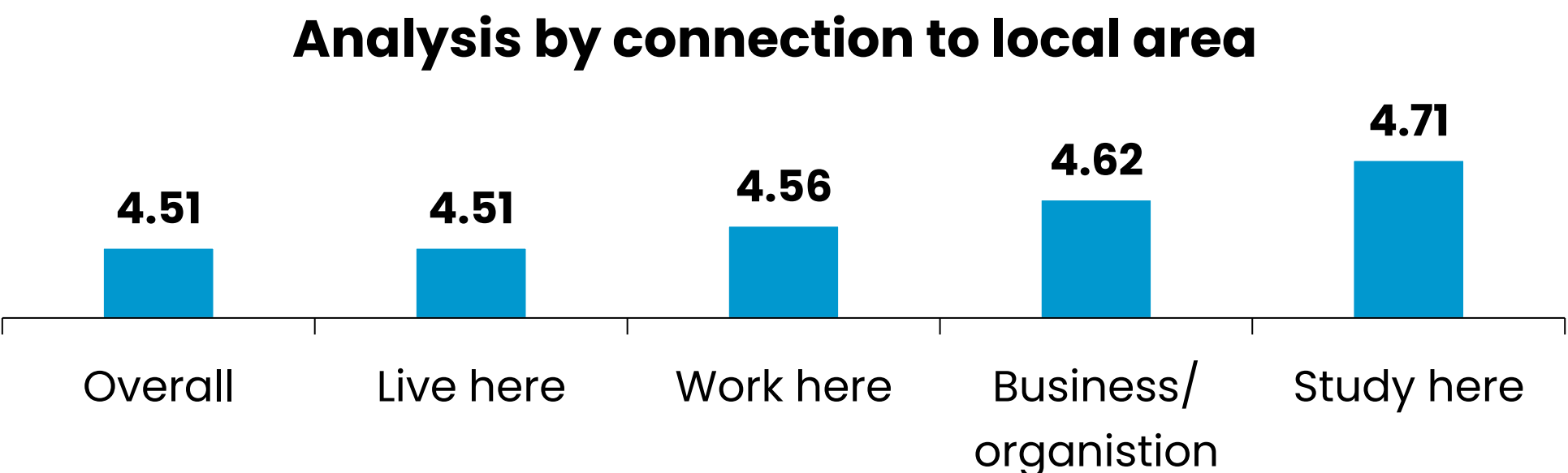
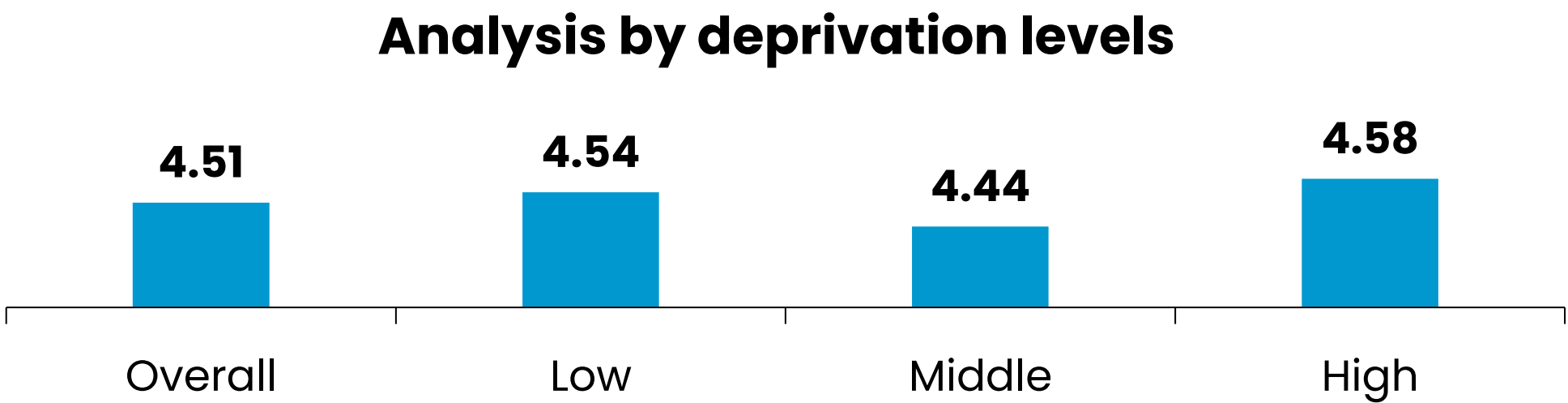
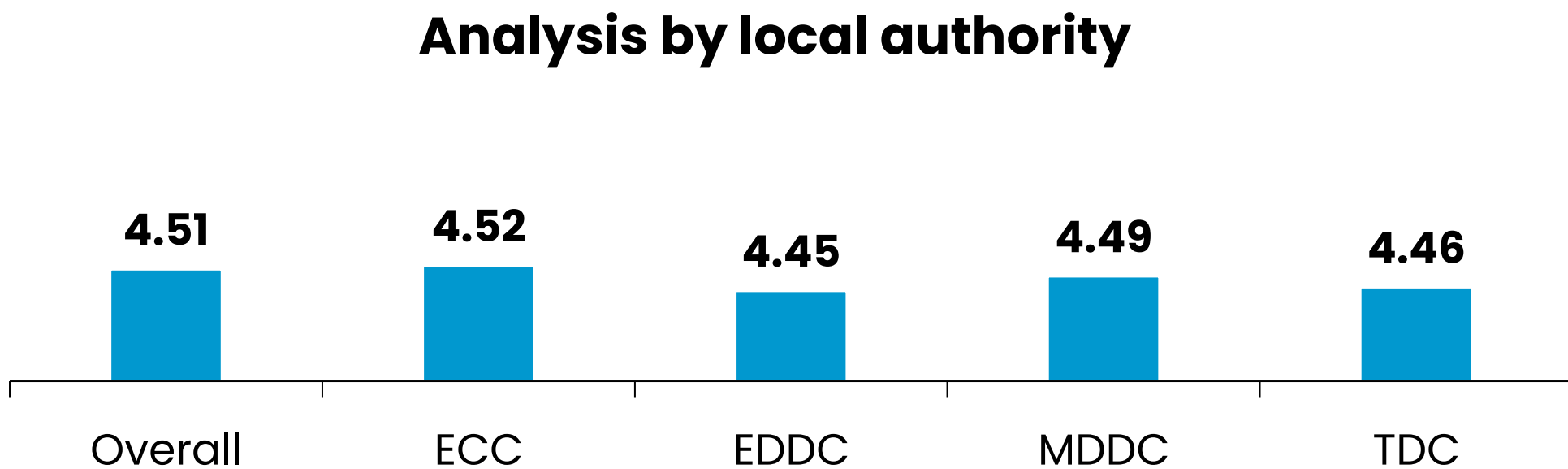
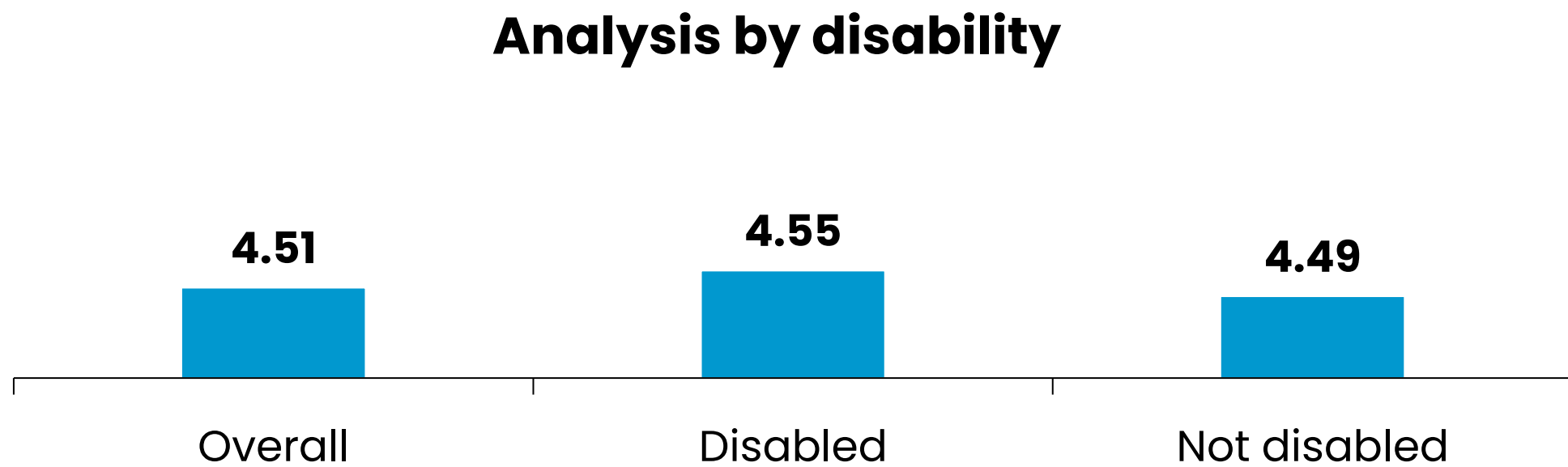
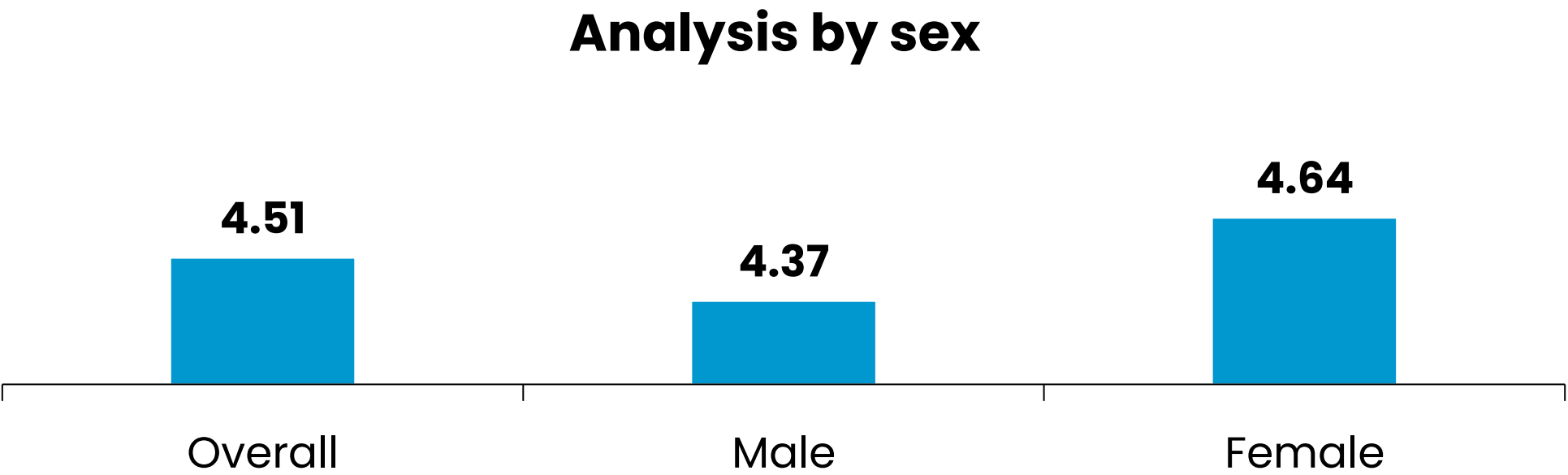
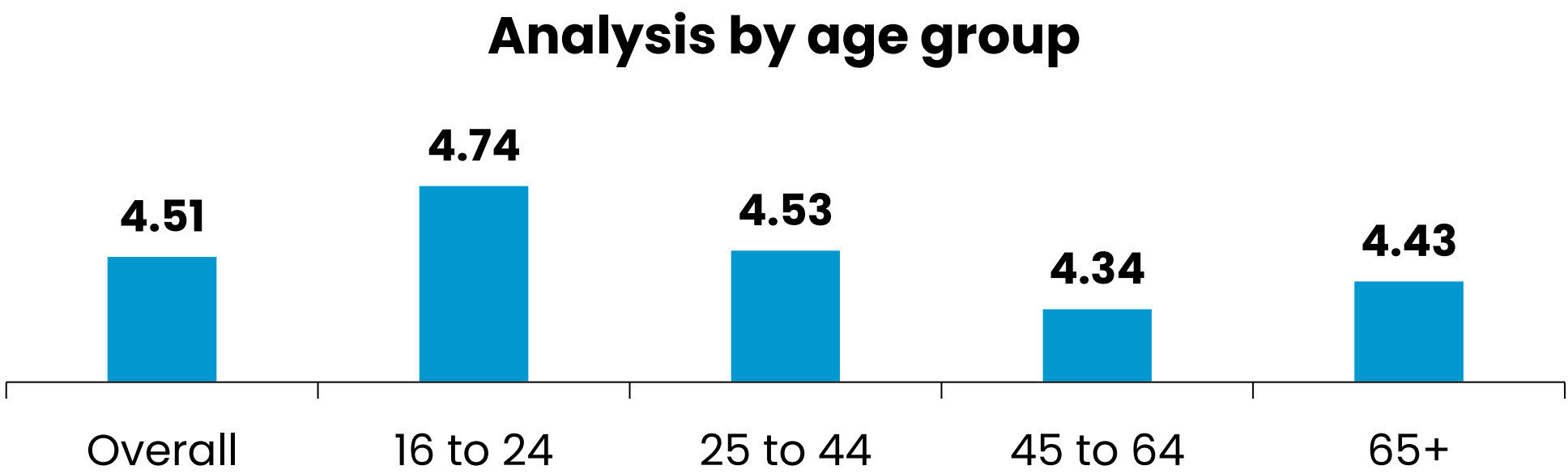


Analysis by connection to local area



Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon... Local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres? (Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

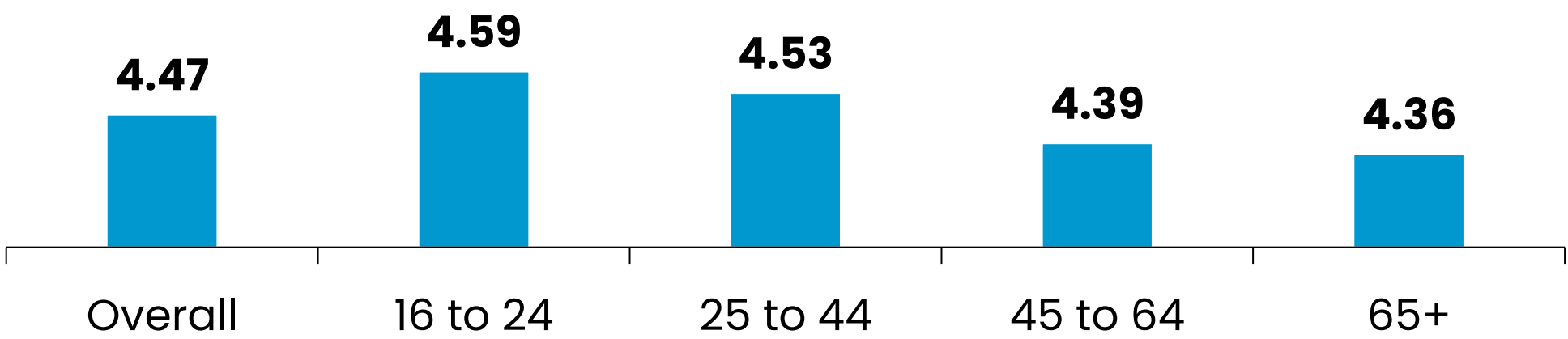
Availability of affordable, warm and secure housing is more highly rated by those aged 16–24, females and those who study in the local area



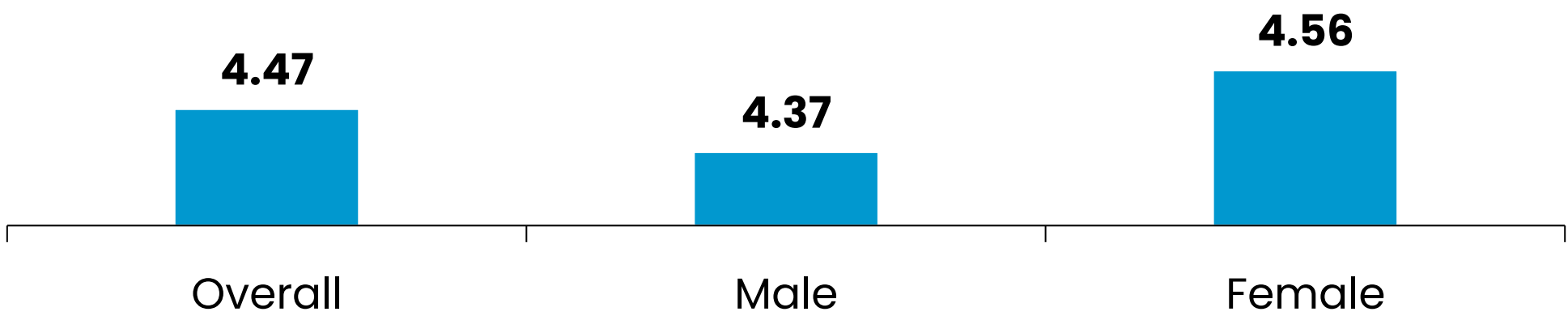
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon... Availability of affordable, warm and secure housing? (Rate on scale of 1–5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged under 45 and females are more likely to feel supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities is important

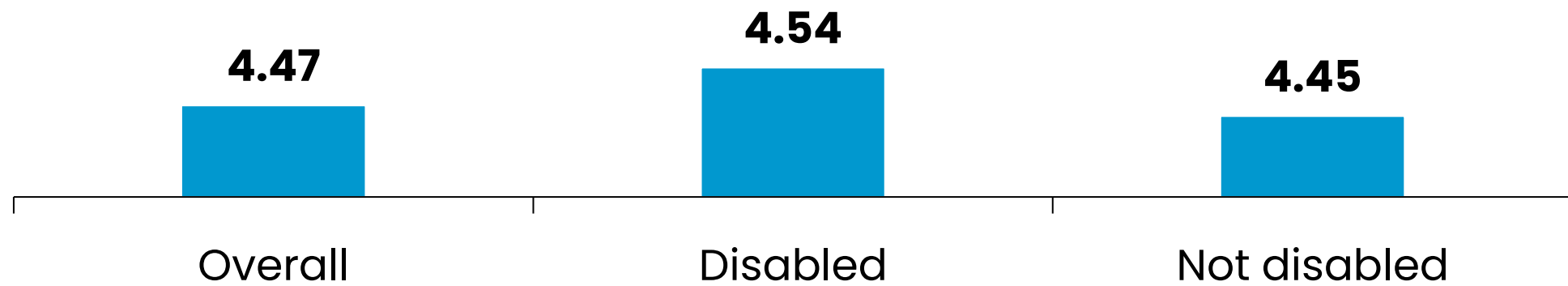
Analysis by age group



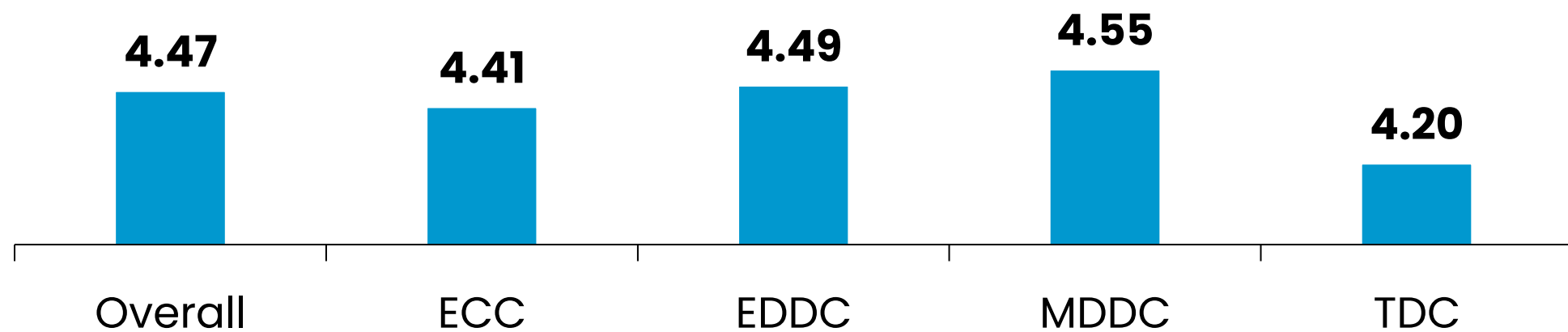
Analysis by sex



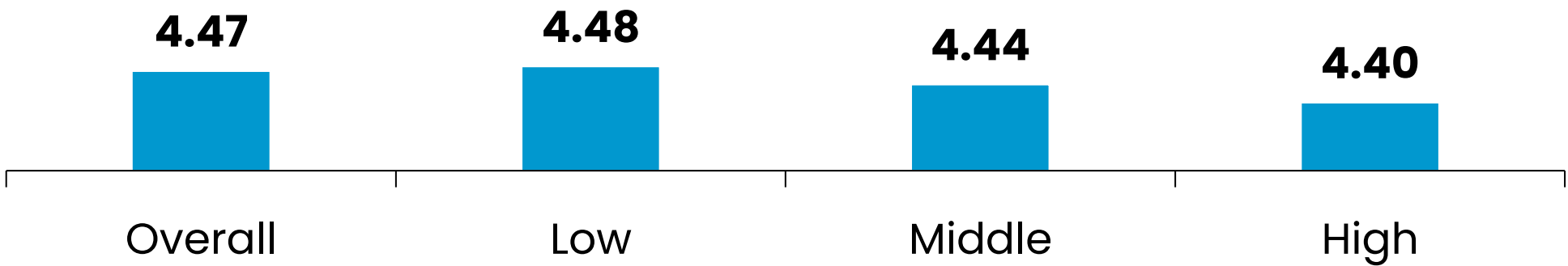
Analysis by disability



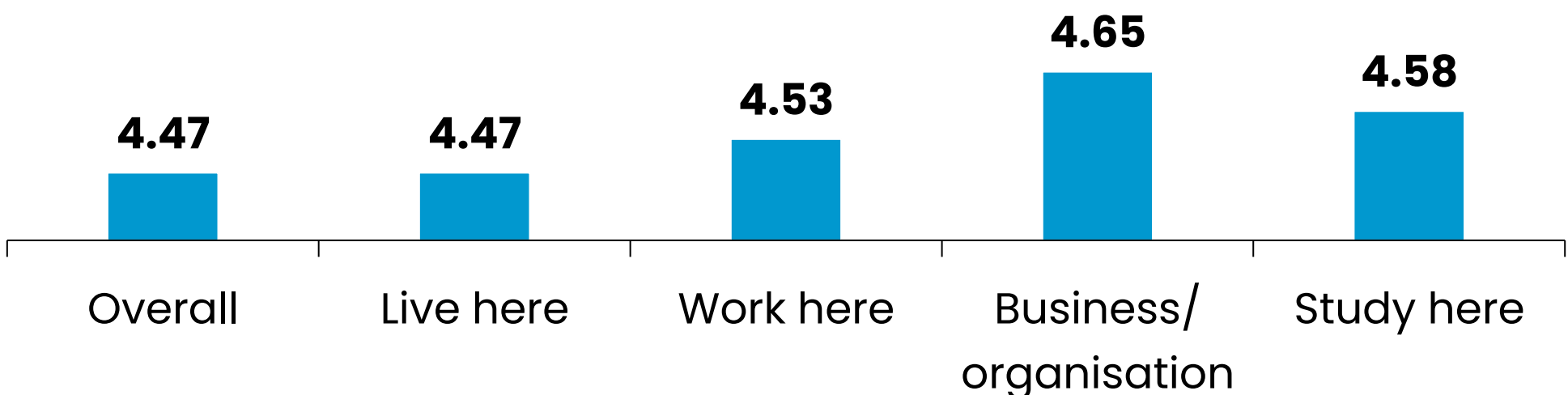
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels



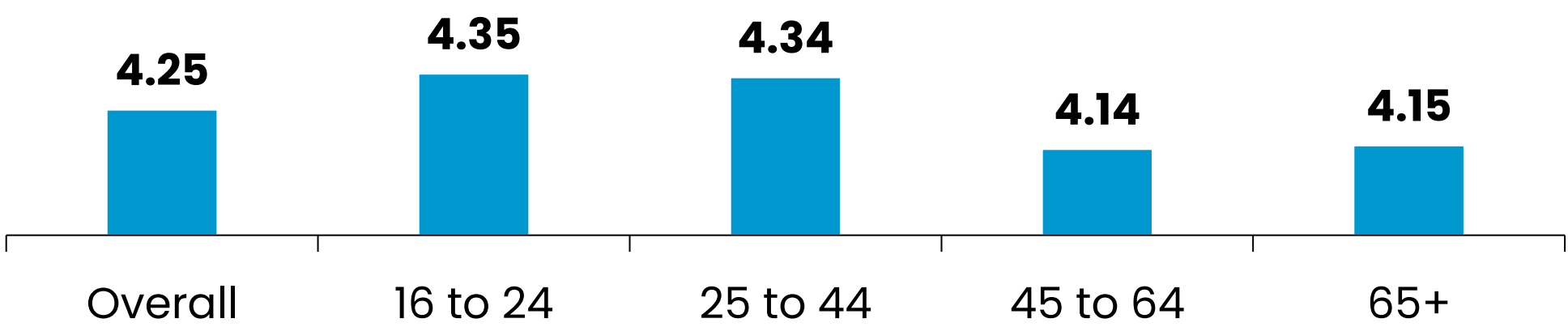
Analysis by connection to local area



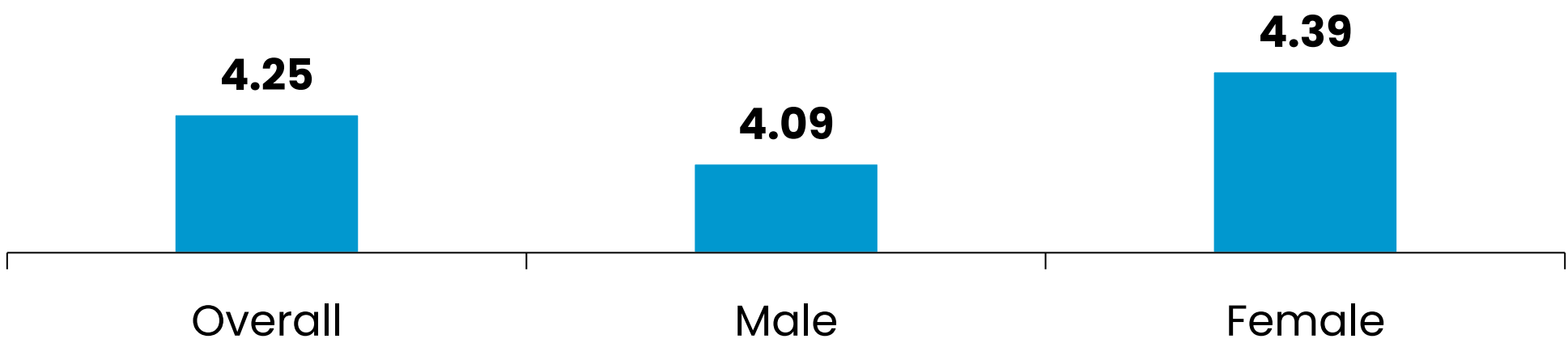
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon... Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities is more important to those aged under 45, females and MDDC residents

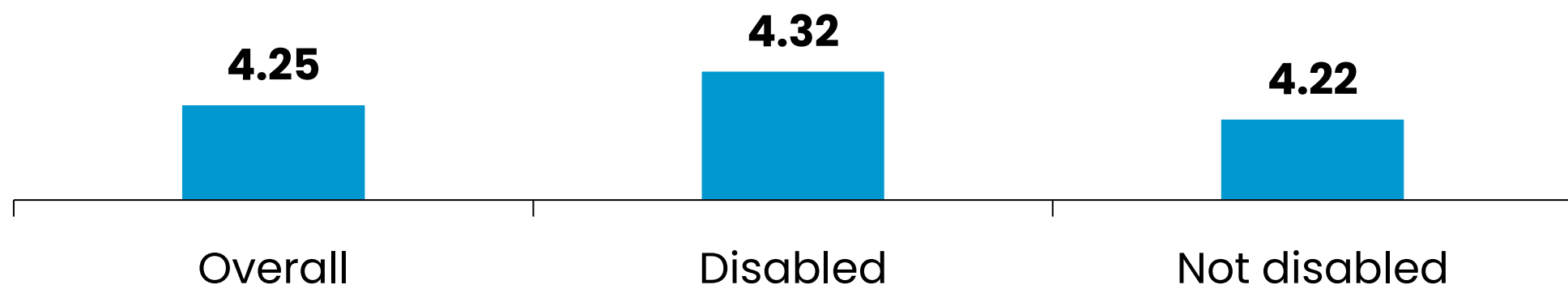
Analysis by age group



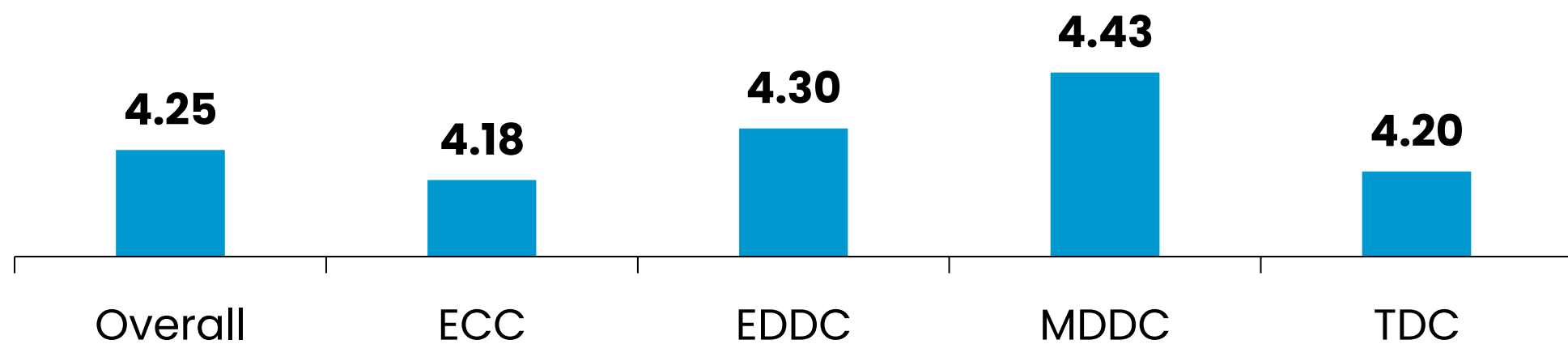
Analysis by sex



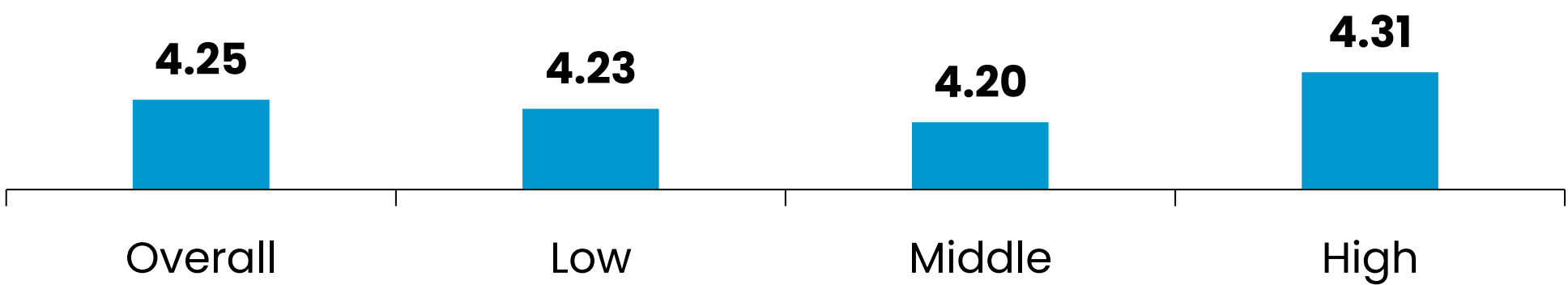
Analysis by disability



Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels



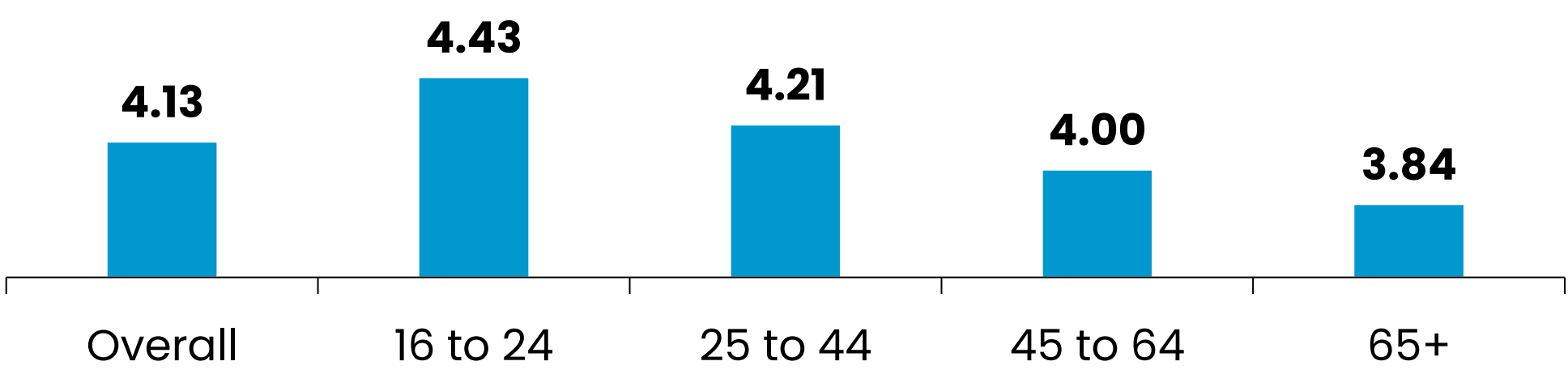
Analysis by connection to local area



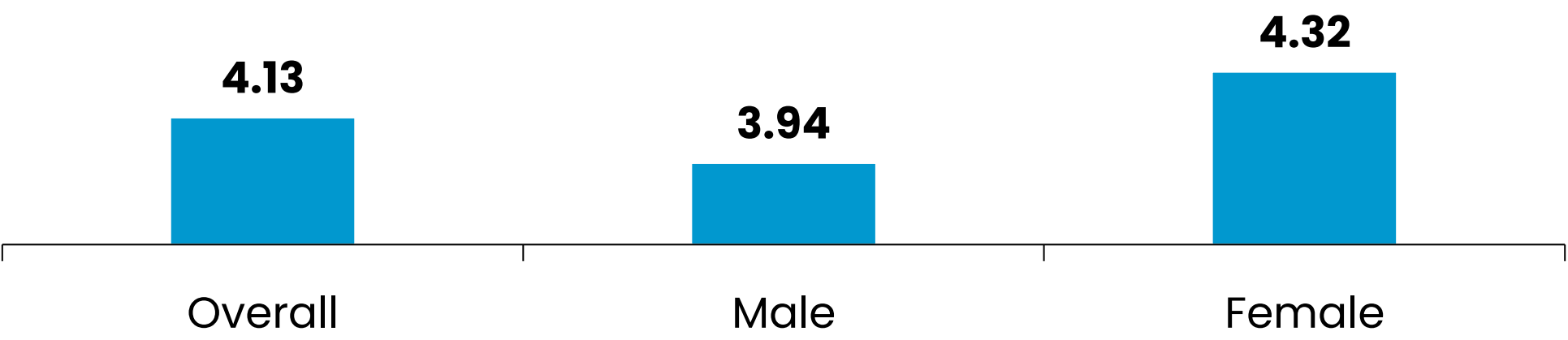
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon... Supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged 16–24, females and those who study in the local area rate working to mitigate the consequences of climate change more highly than other groups

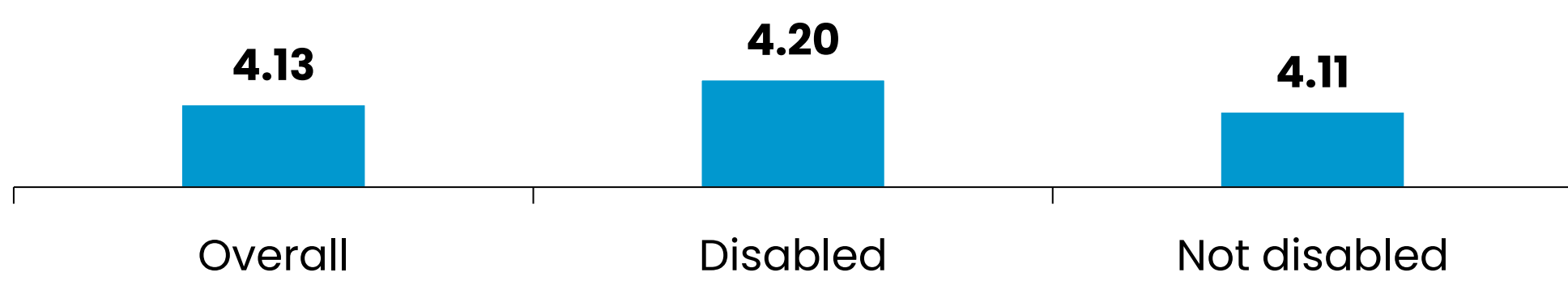
Analysis by age group



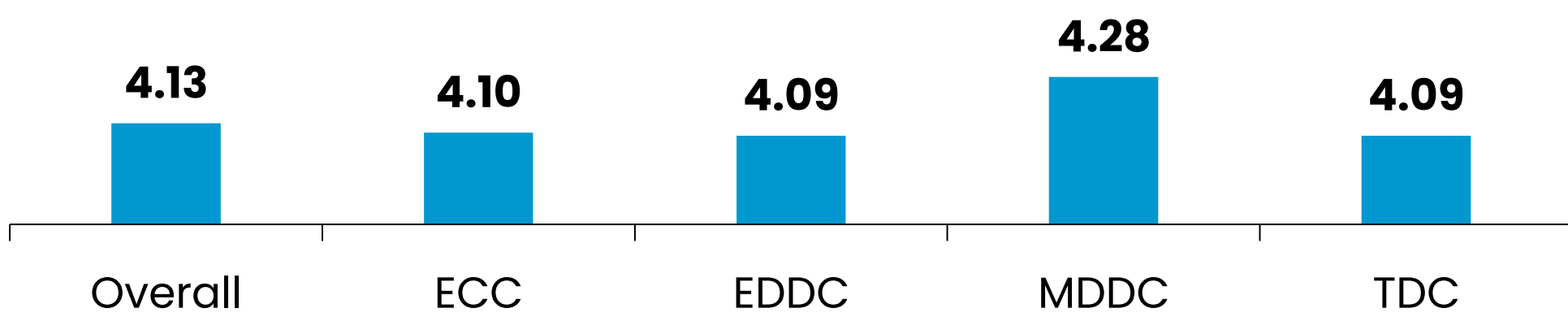
Analysis by sex



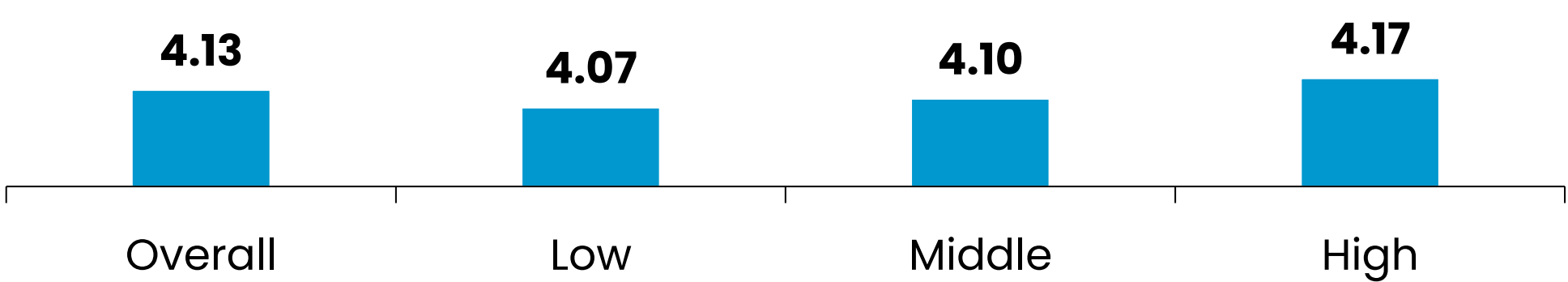
Analysis by disability



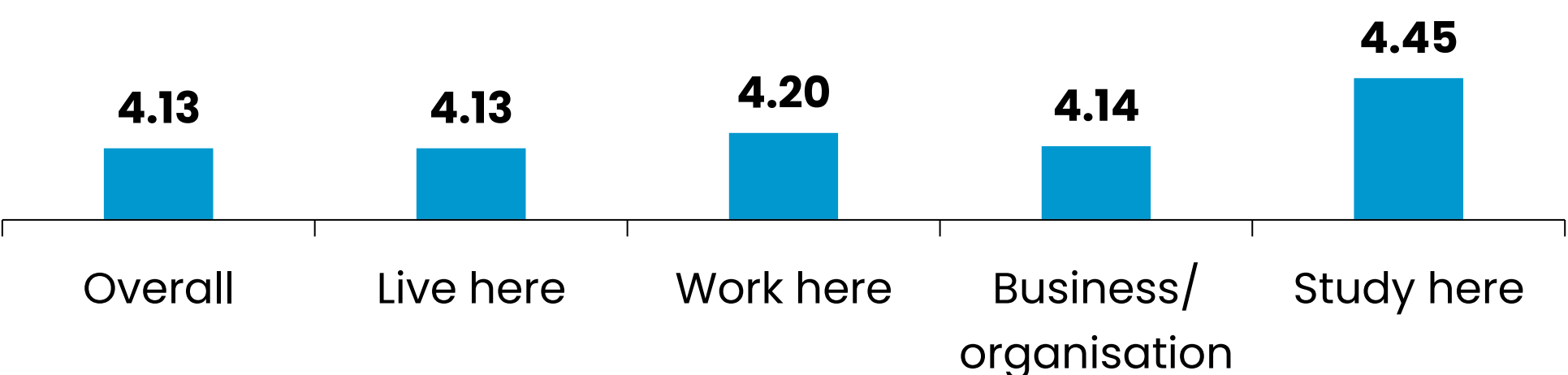
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

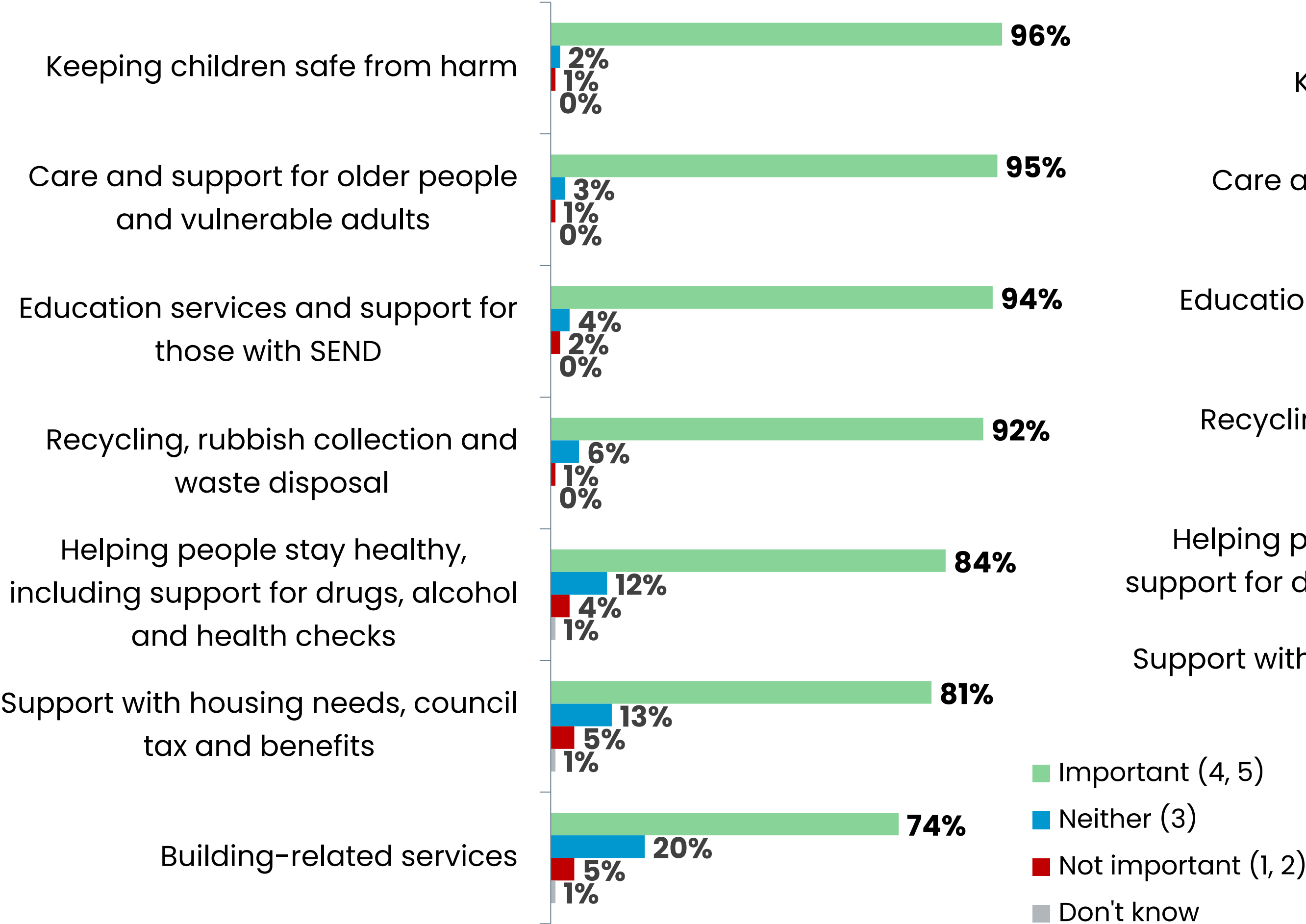


Analysis by connection to local area

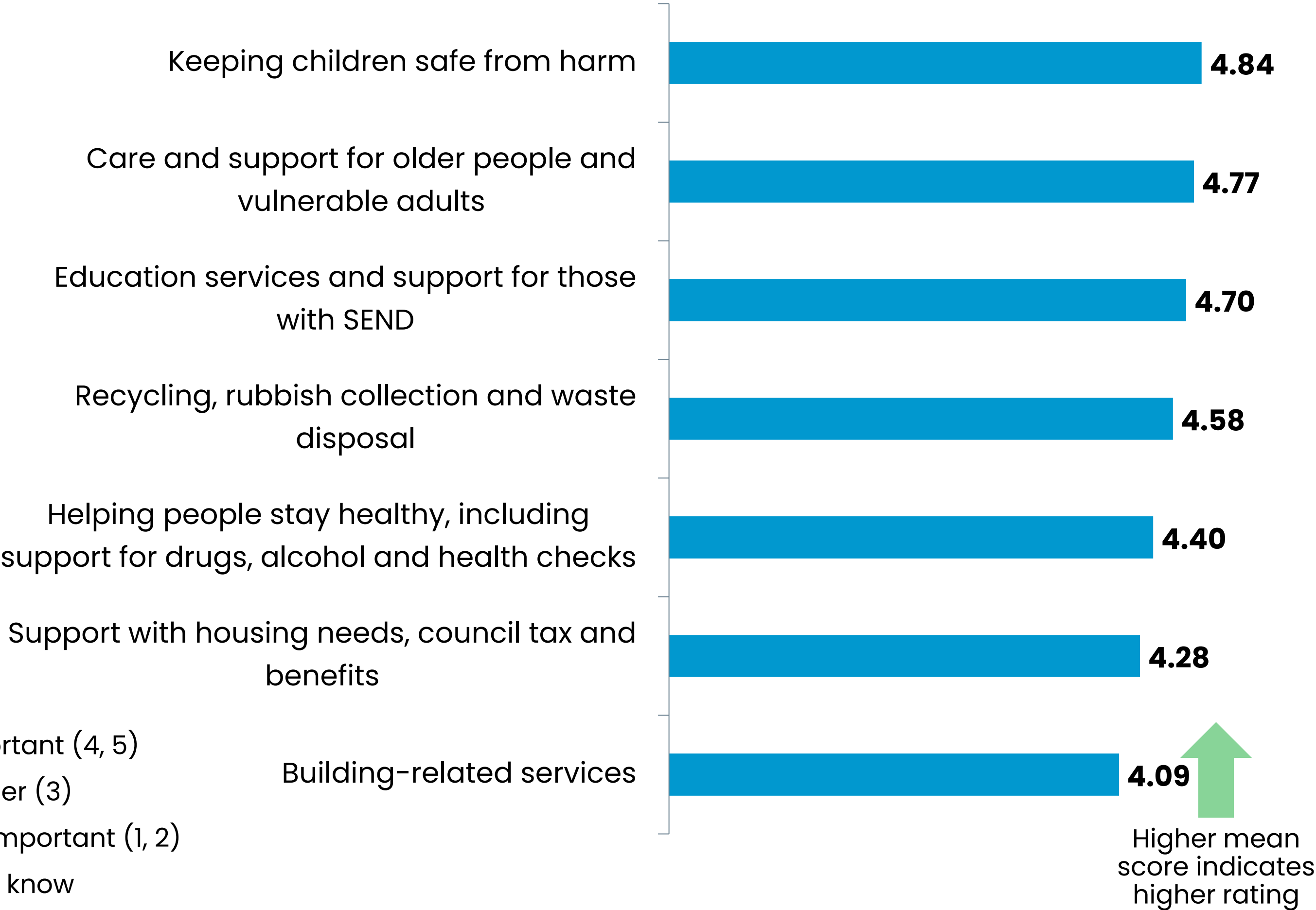


Although the majority feel all options are important, building-related services is less highly ranked

Representative survey



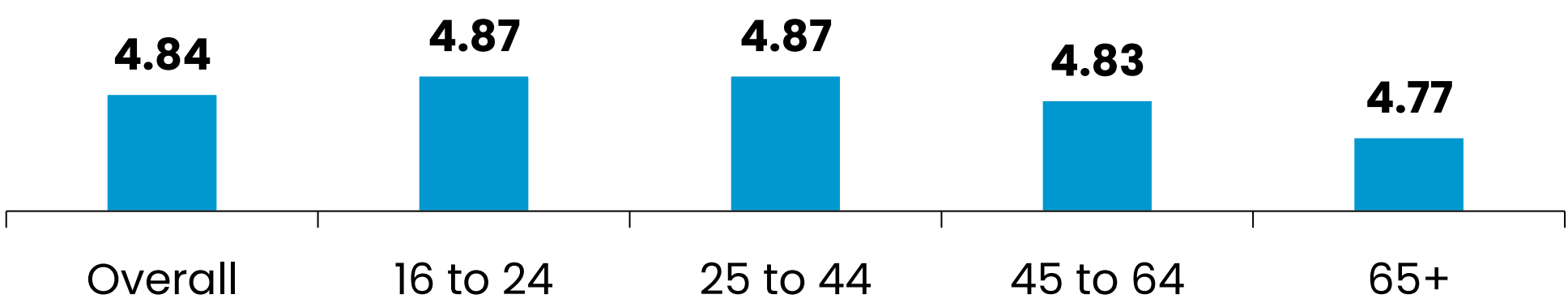
Mean scores (out of 5)



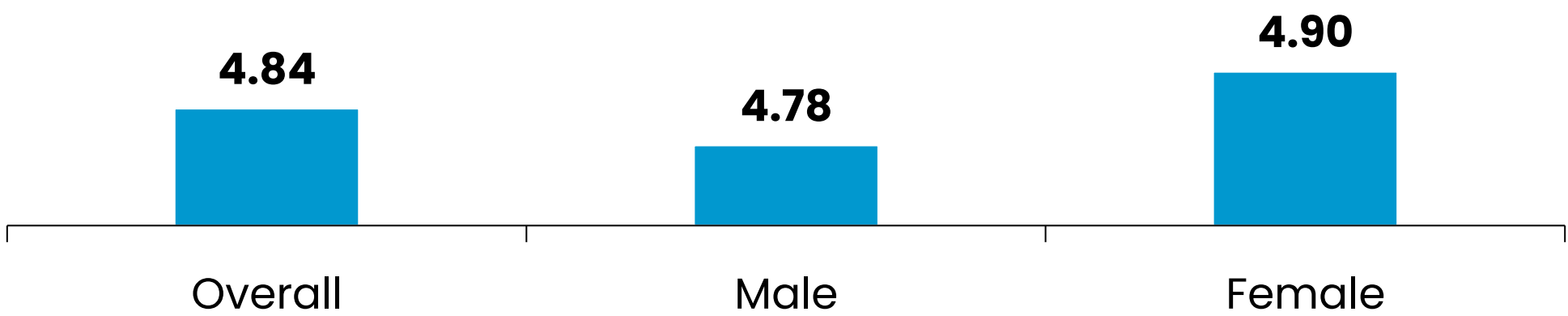
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Females and those who run a business or represent a community organisation are more likely to say keeping children safe from harm is important

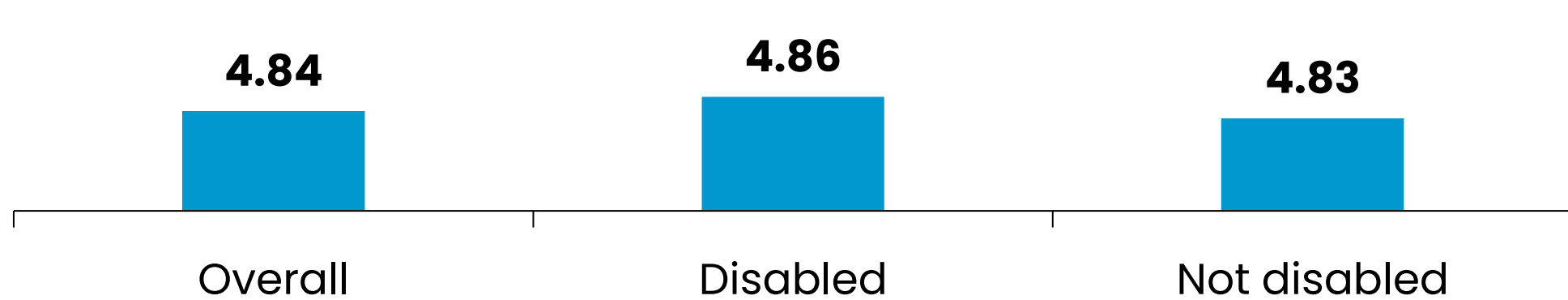
Analysis by age group



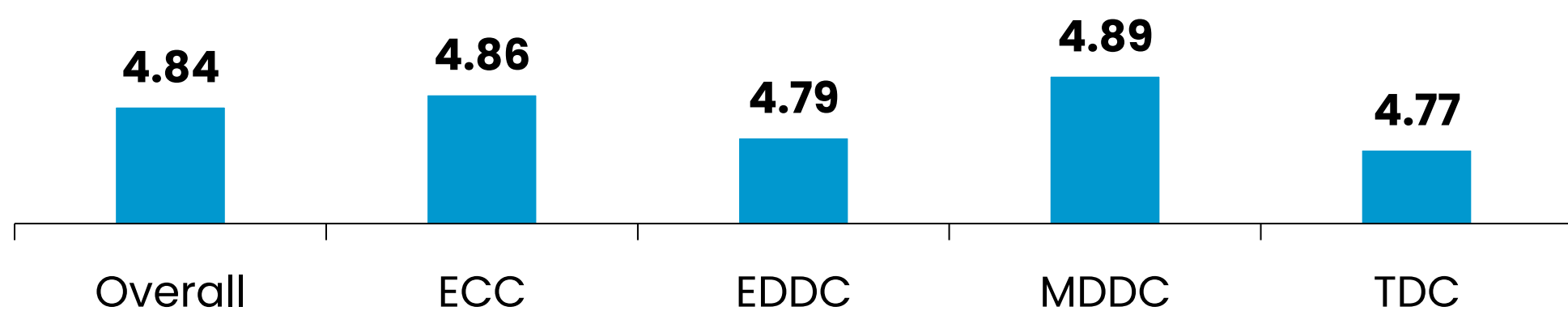
Analysis by sex



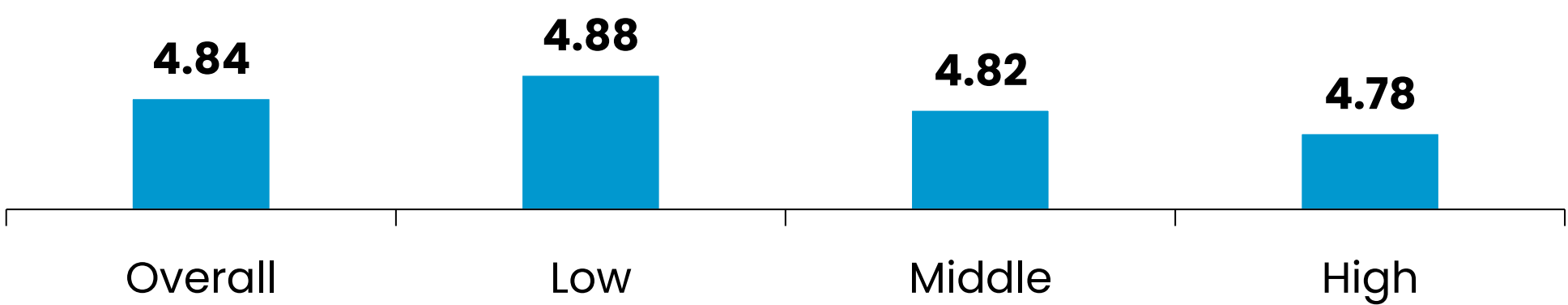
Analysis by disability



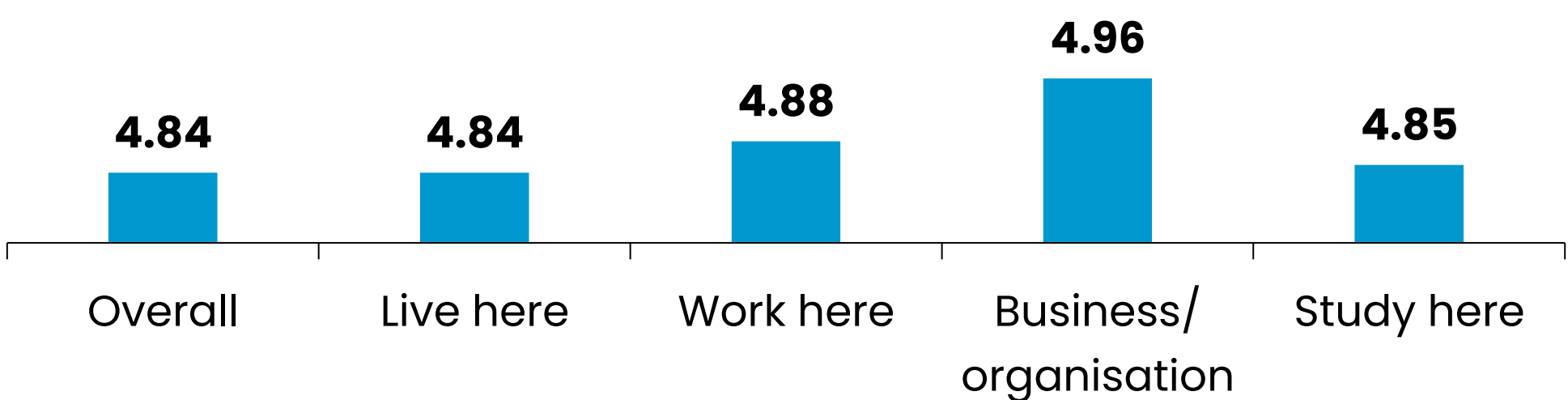
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels



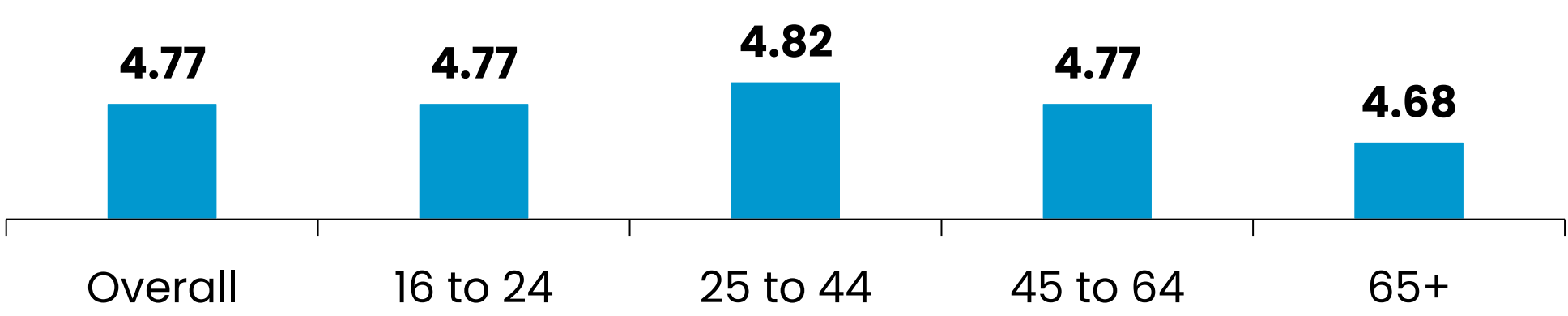
Analysis by connection to local area



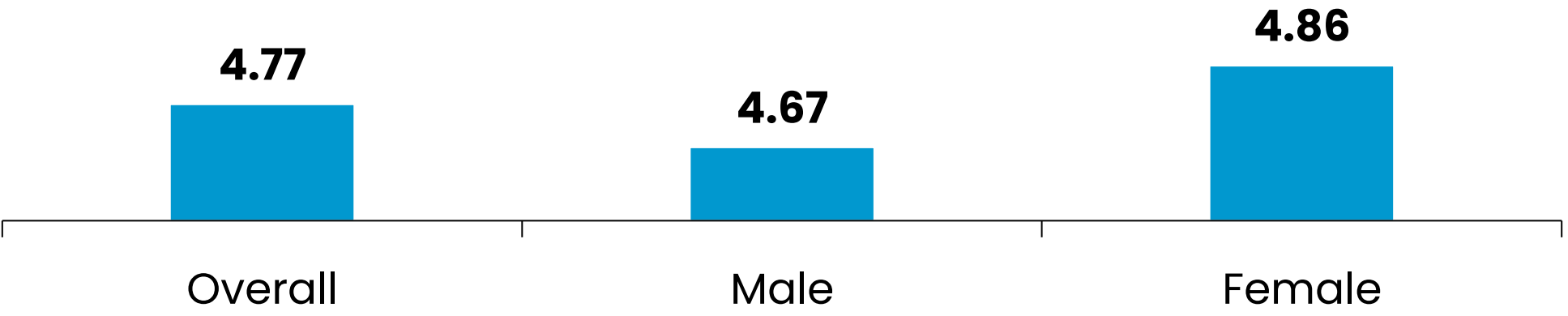
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services... Keeping children safe from harm? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults is of greater importance to those aged 25-44, females and those who run a business or represent a community organisation

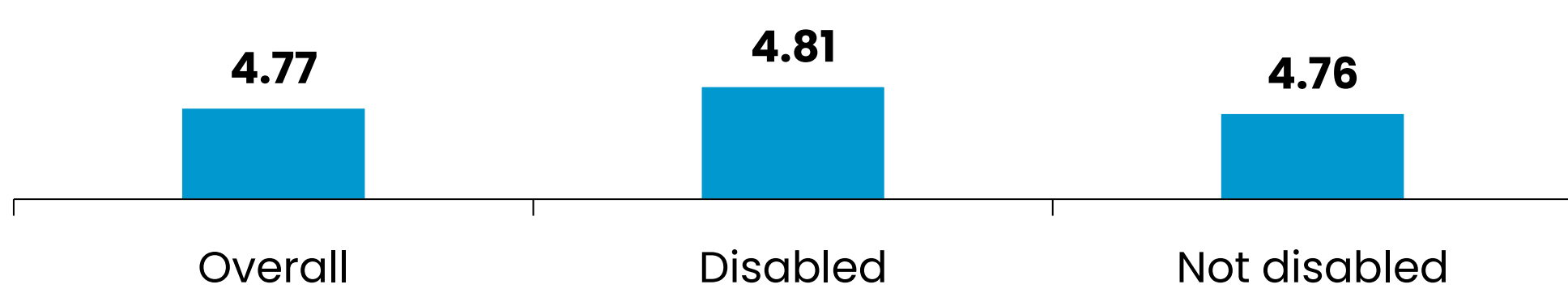
Analysis by age group



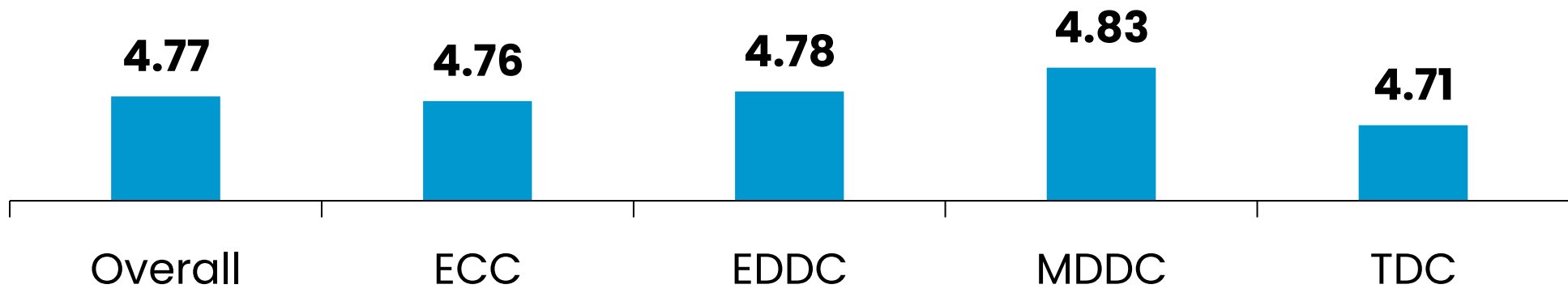
Analysis by sex



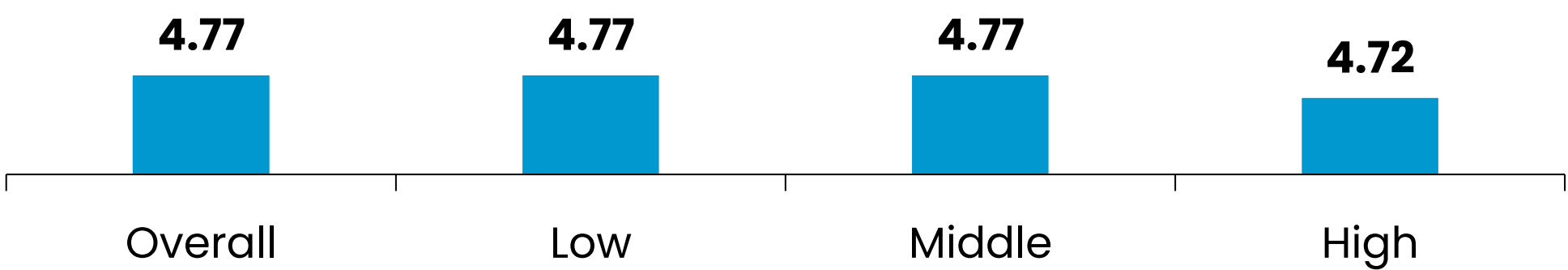
Analysis by disability



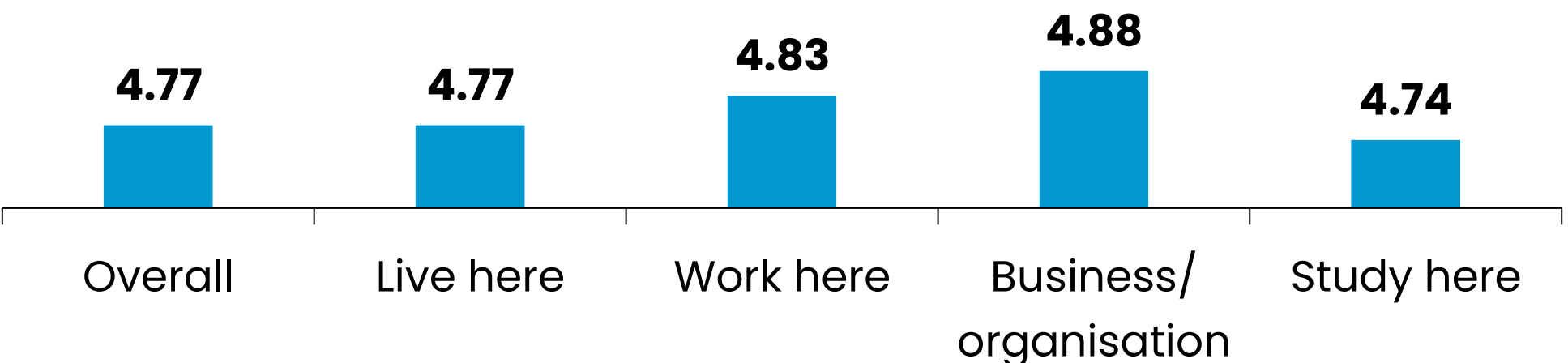
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels



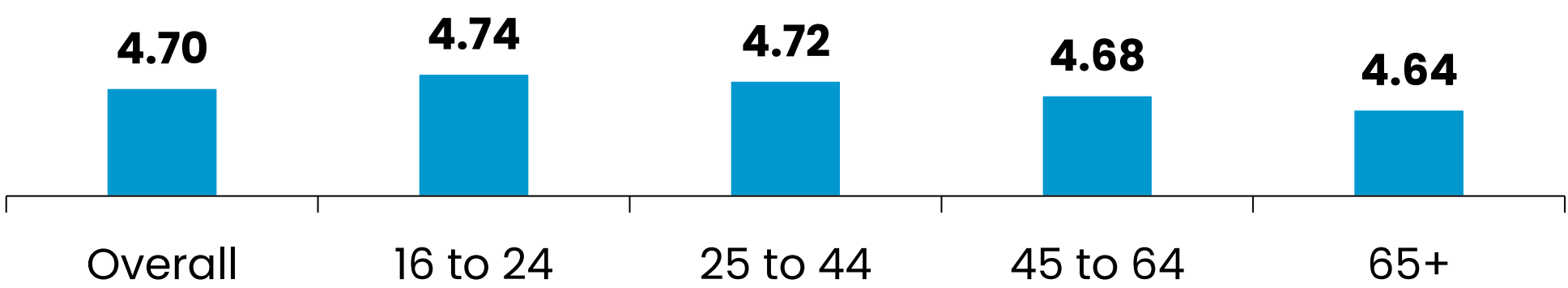
Analysis by connection to local area



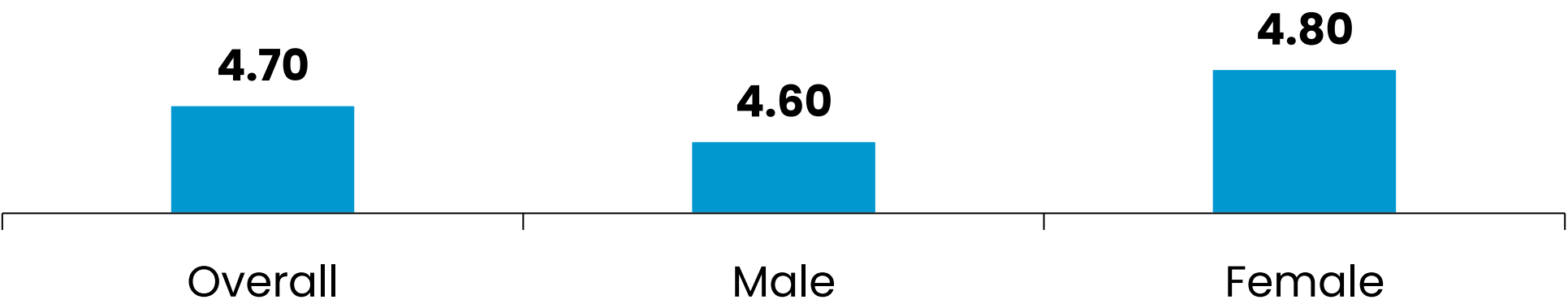
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services... Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Education services and support for those with SEND is rated more highly by females and those who run a business or represent a community organisation

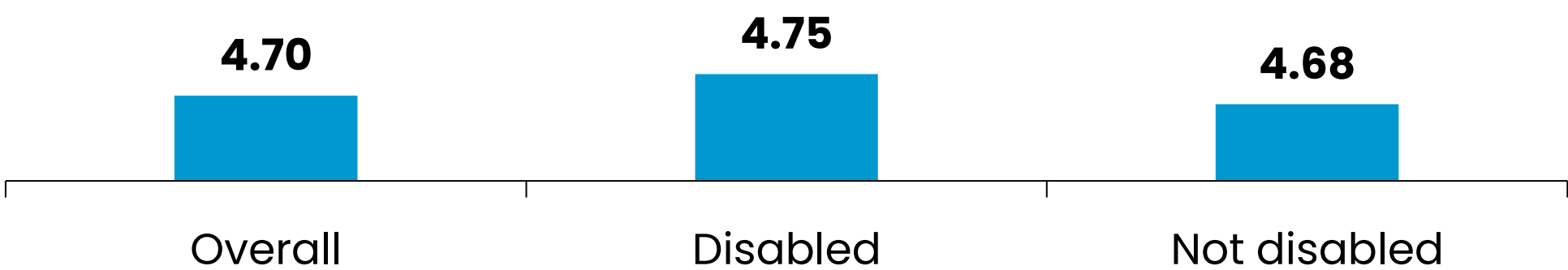
Analysis by age group



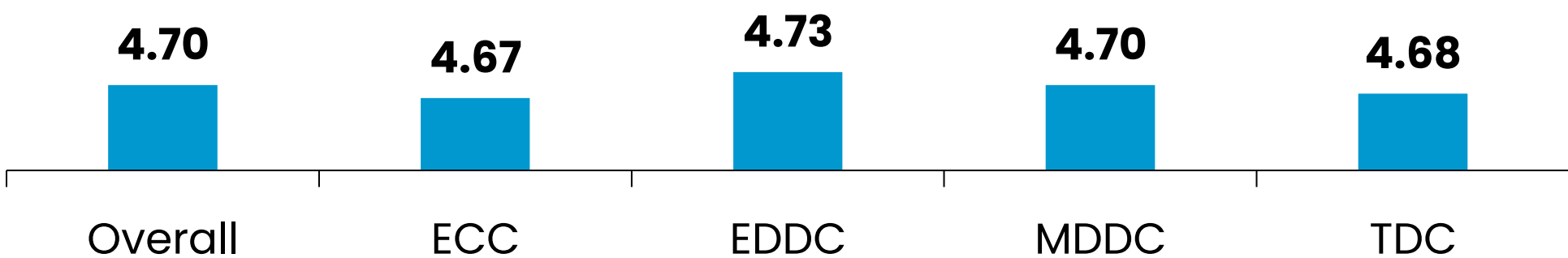
Analysis by sex



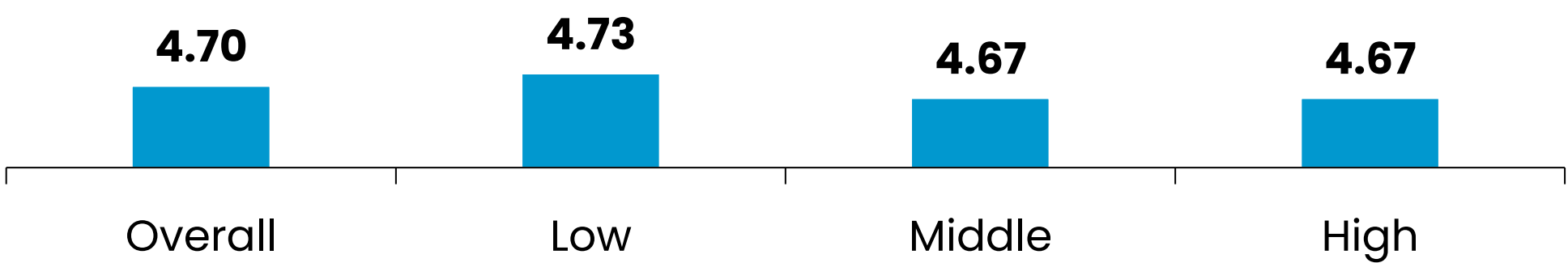
Analysis by disability



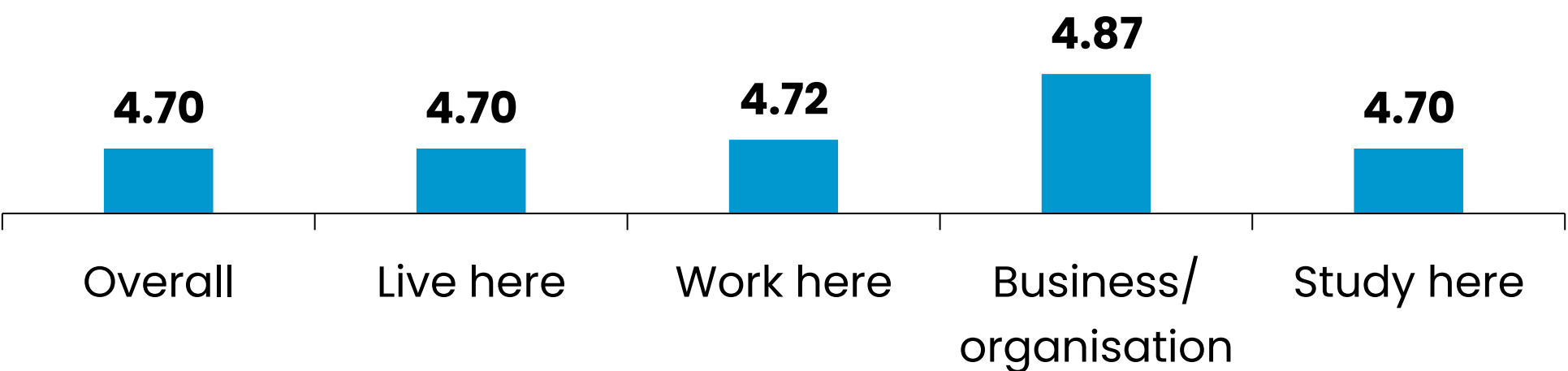
Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels



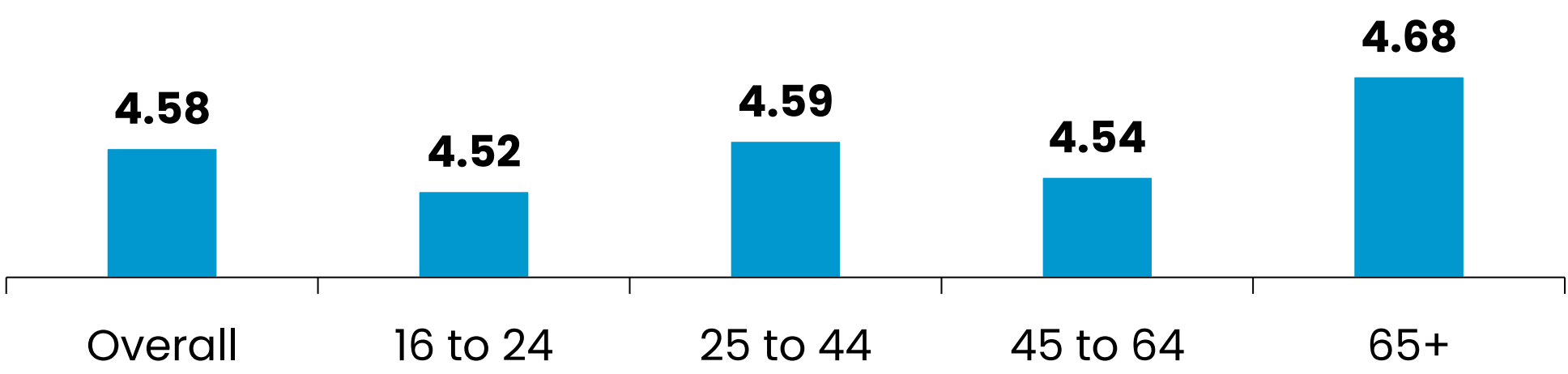
Analysis by connection to local area



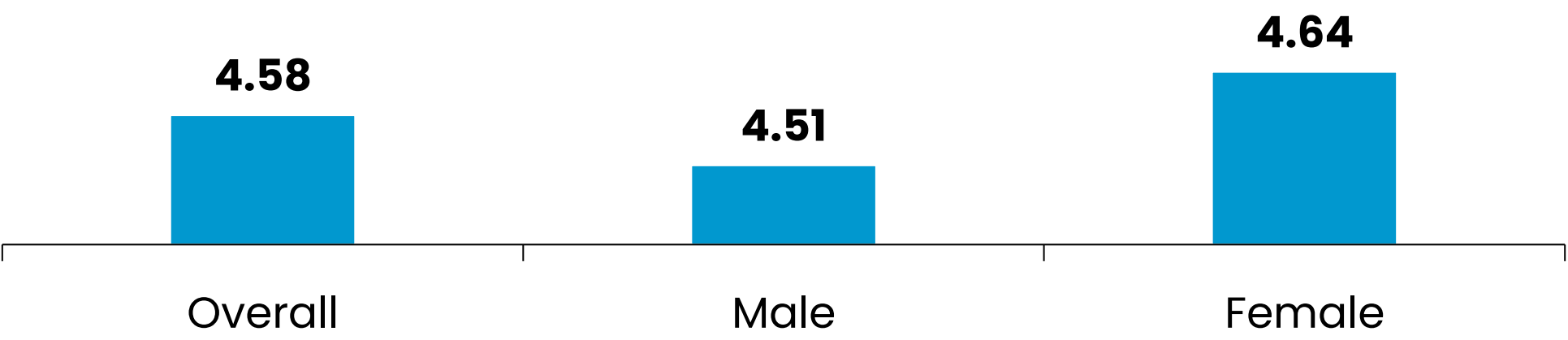
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services... Education services and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged 65+, females and those with a disability rate recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal more highly than other groups

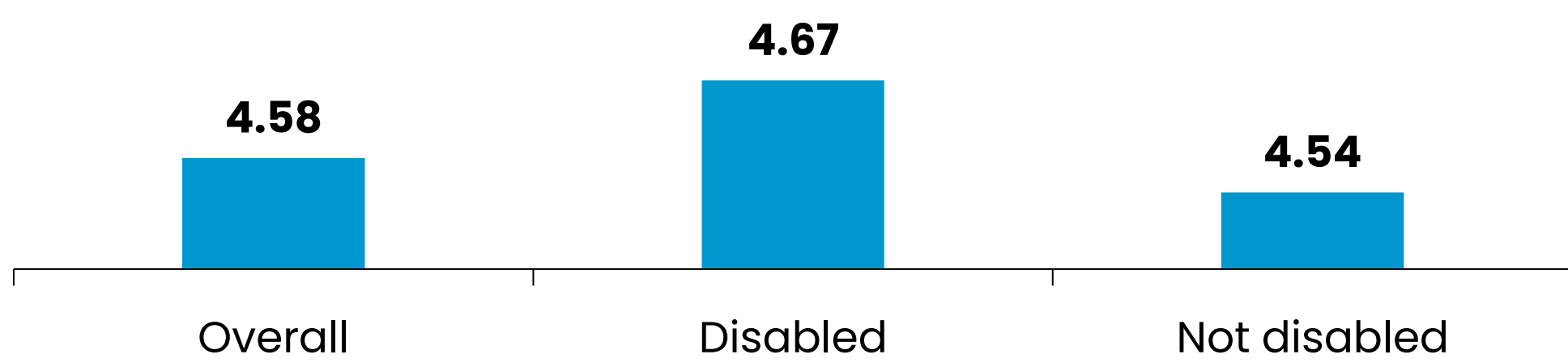
Analysis by age group



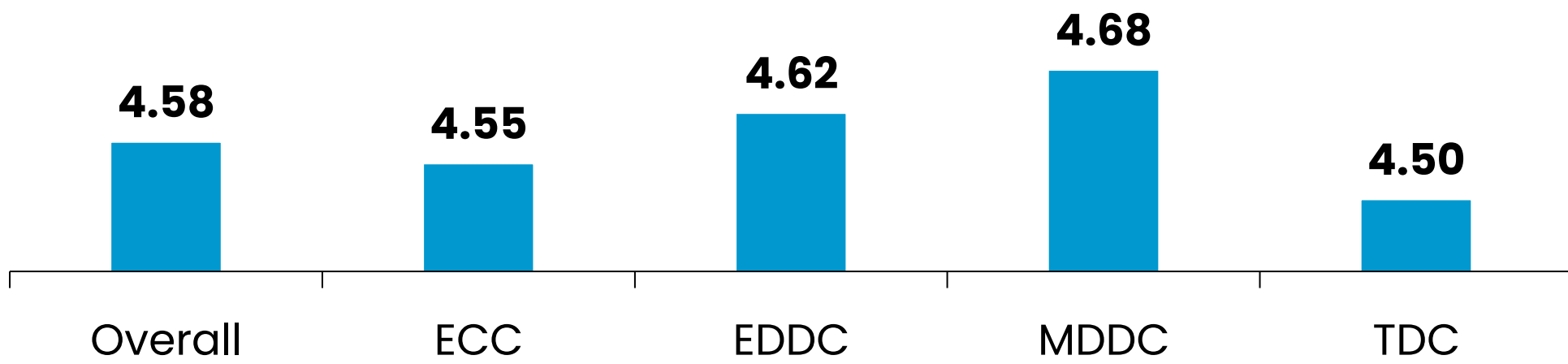
Analysis by sex



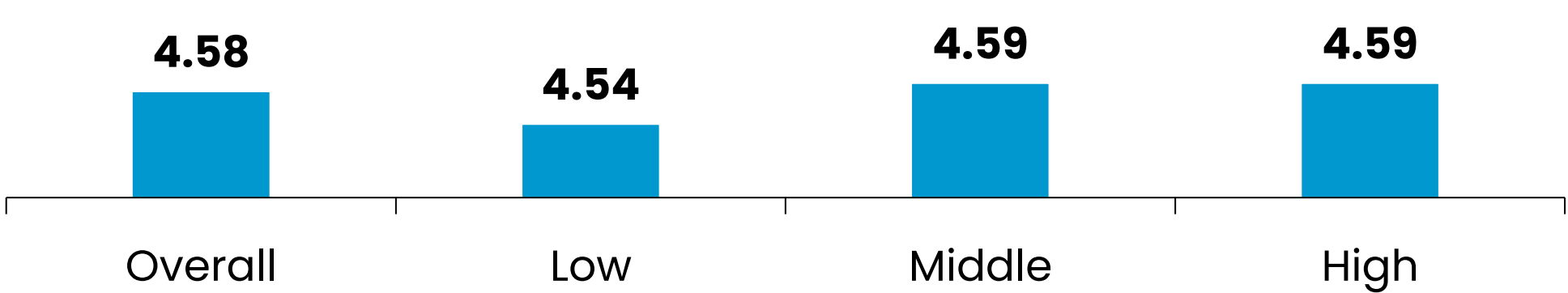
Analysis by disability



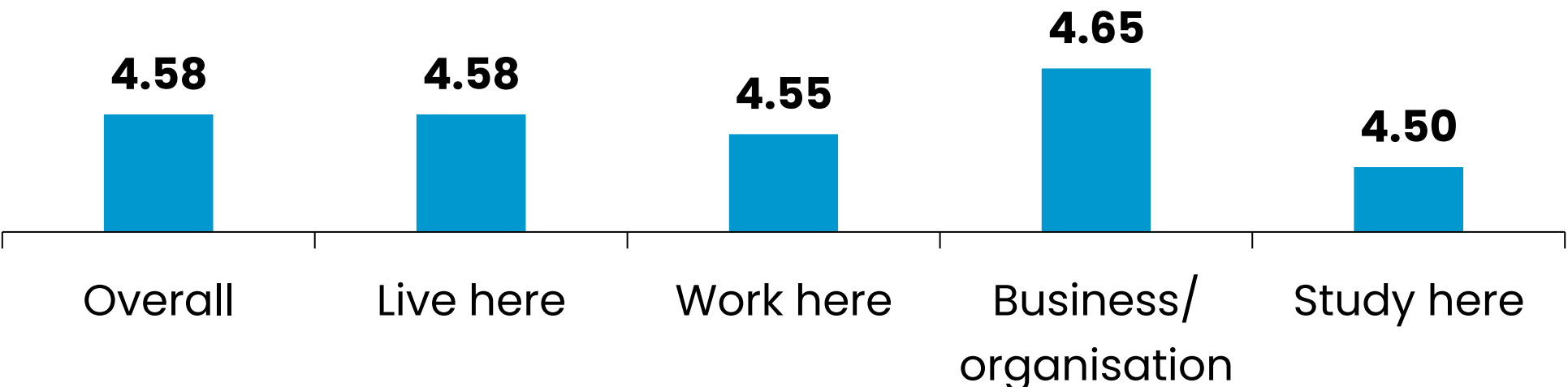
Analysis by local authority



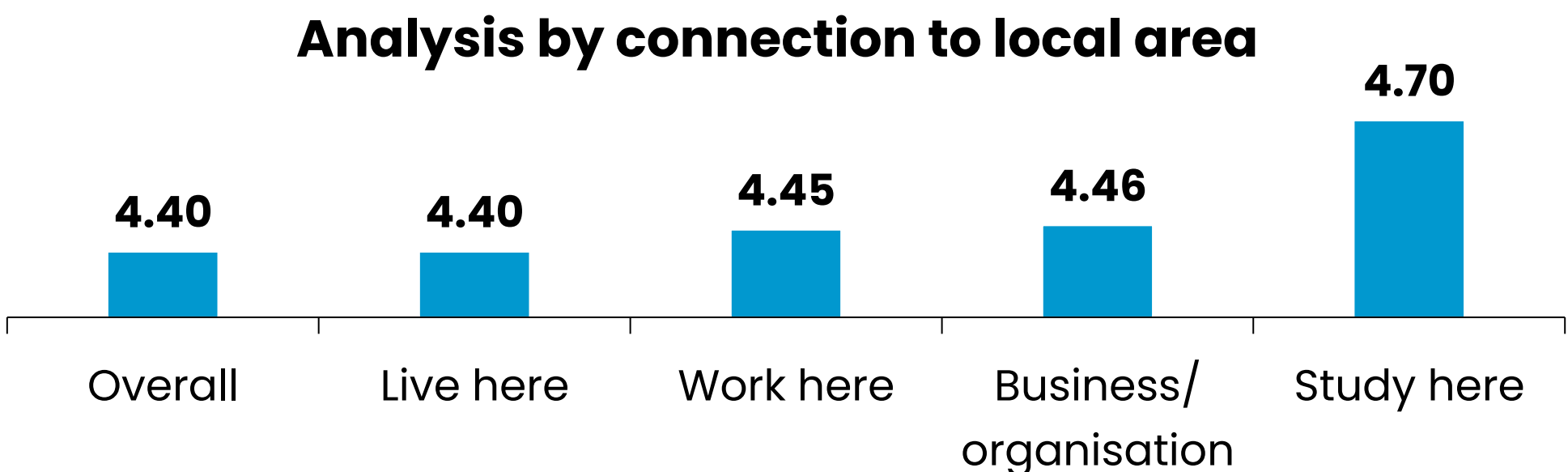
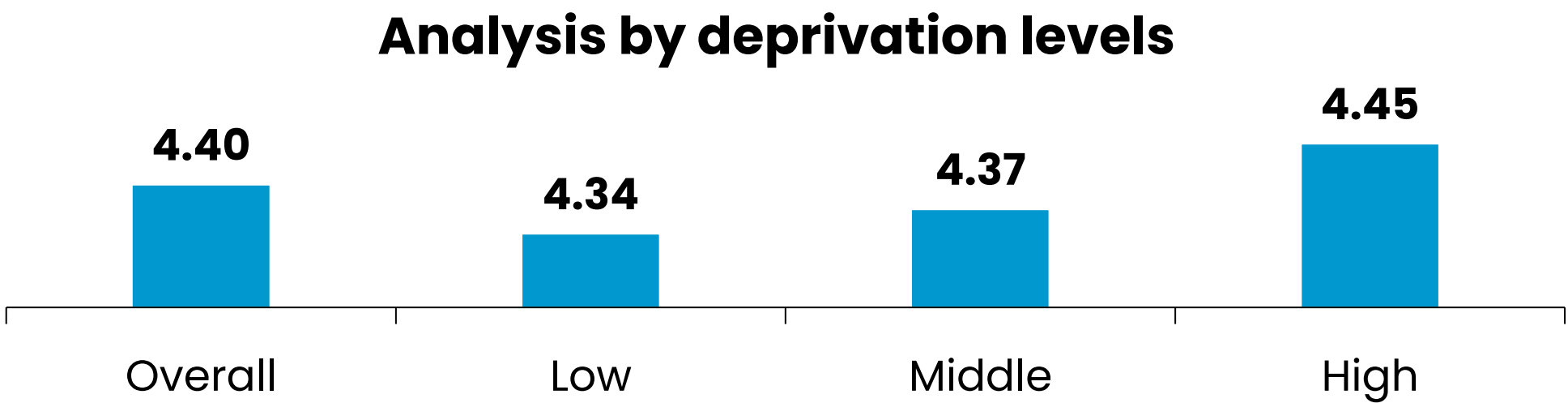
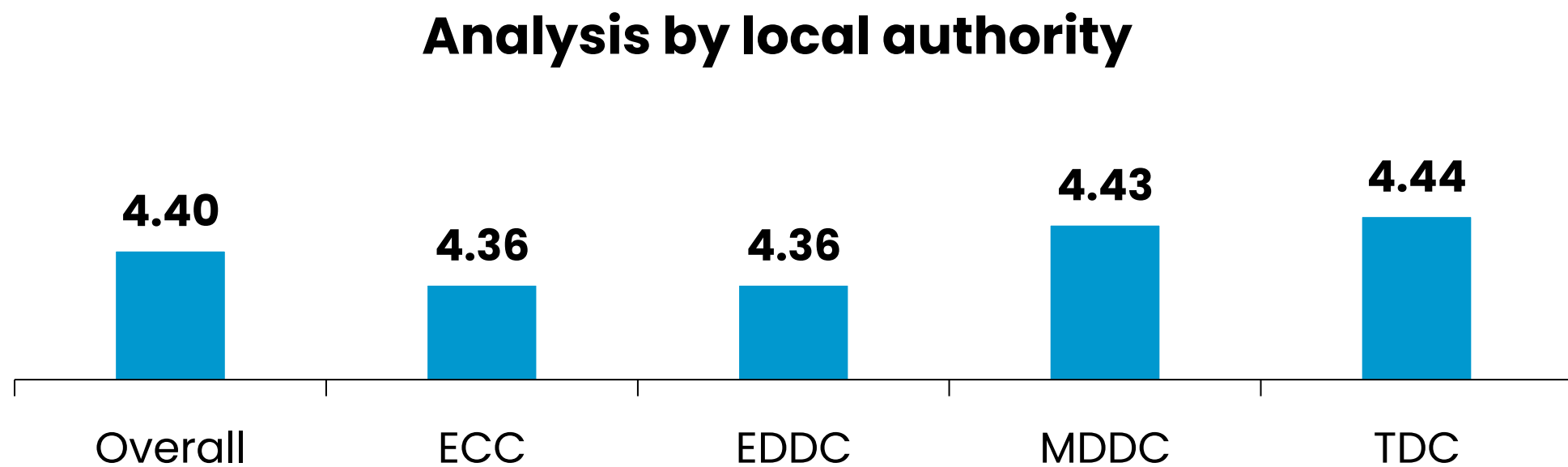
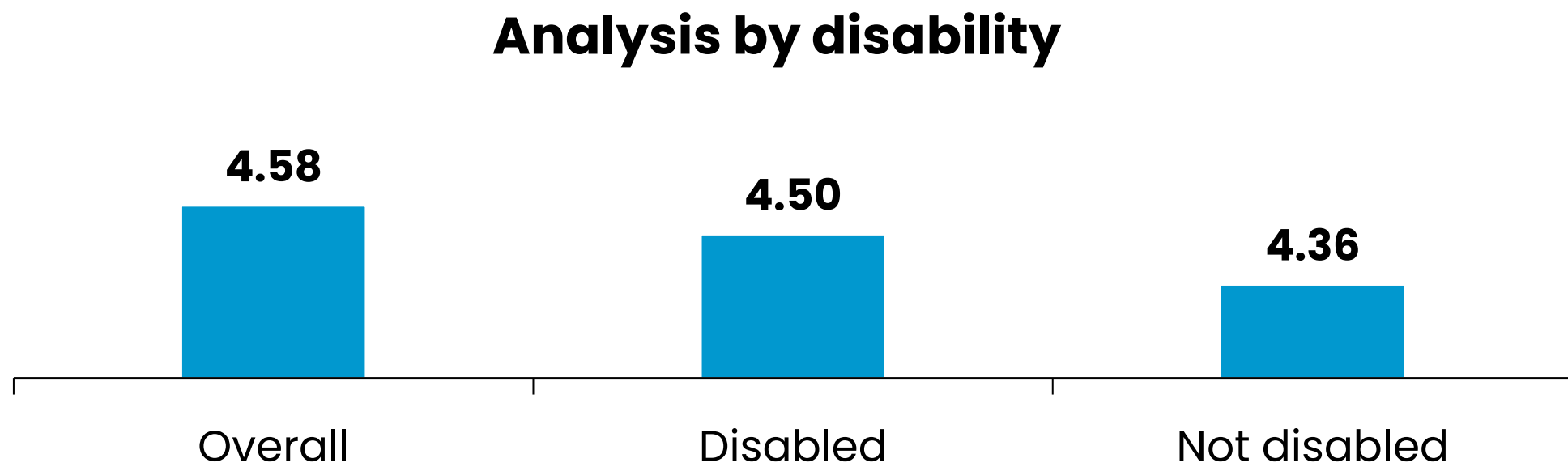
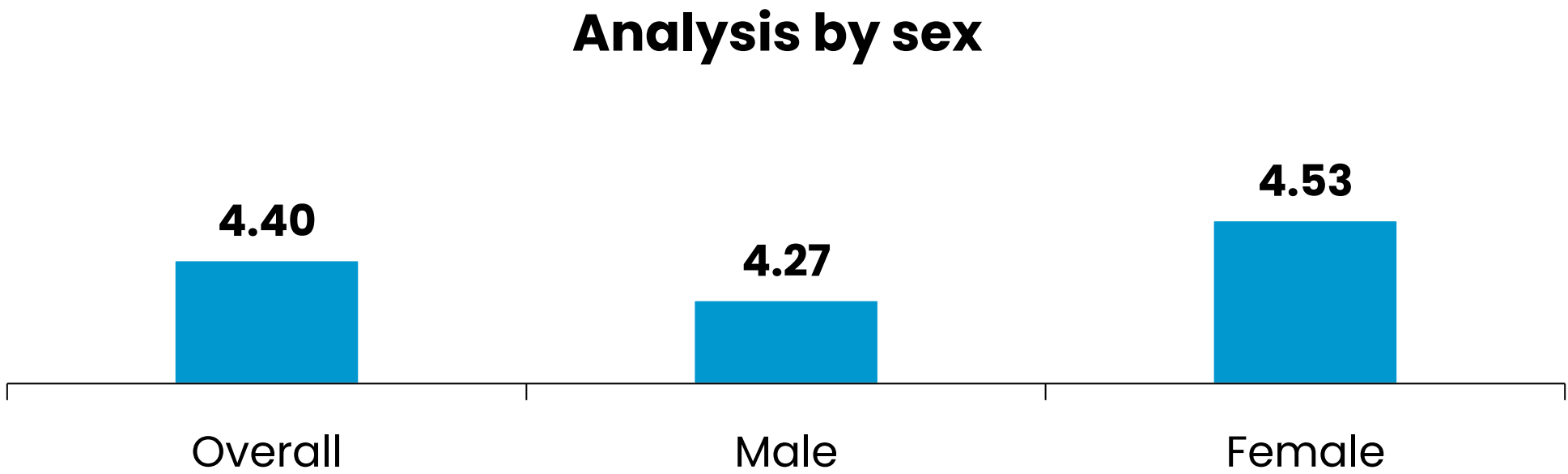
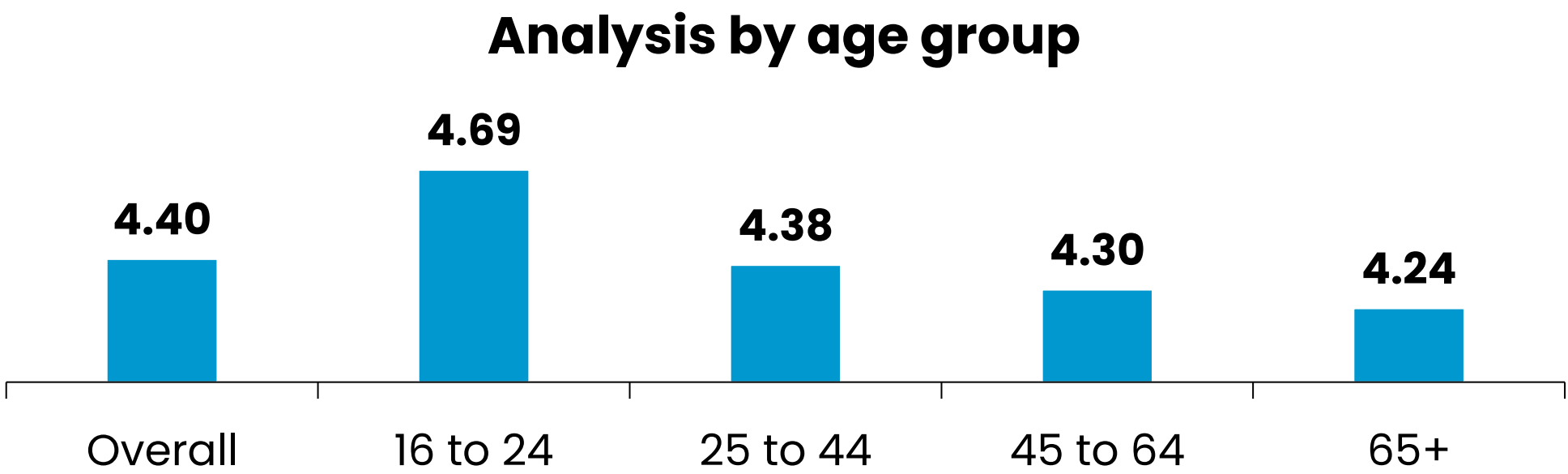
Analysis by deprivation levels



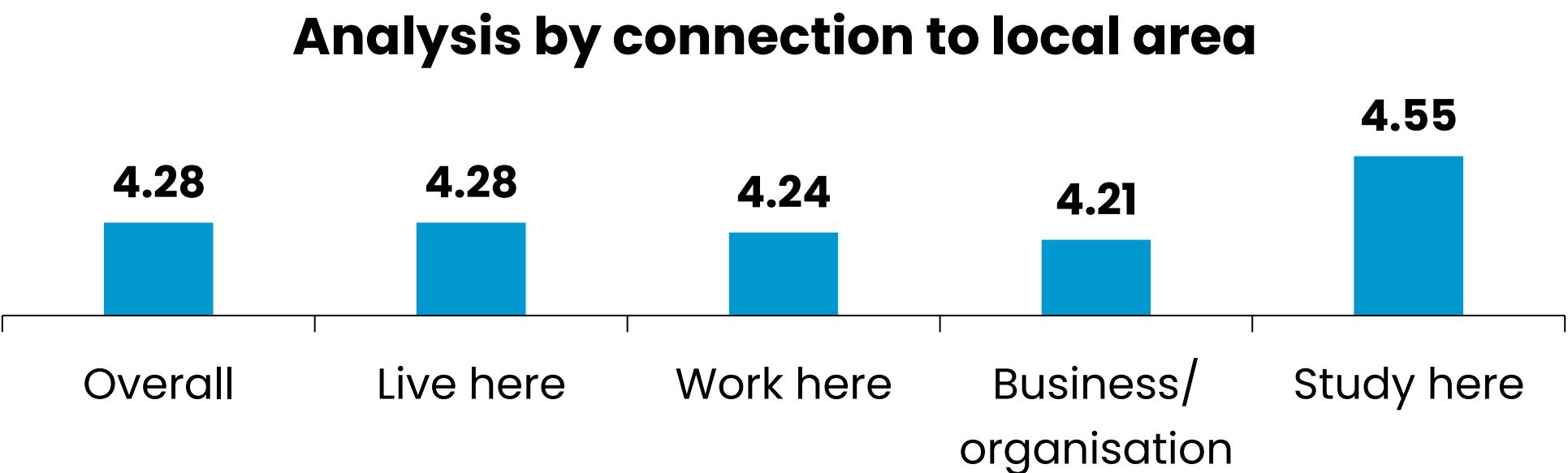
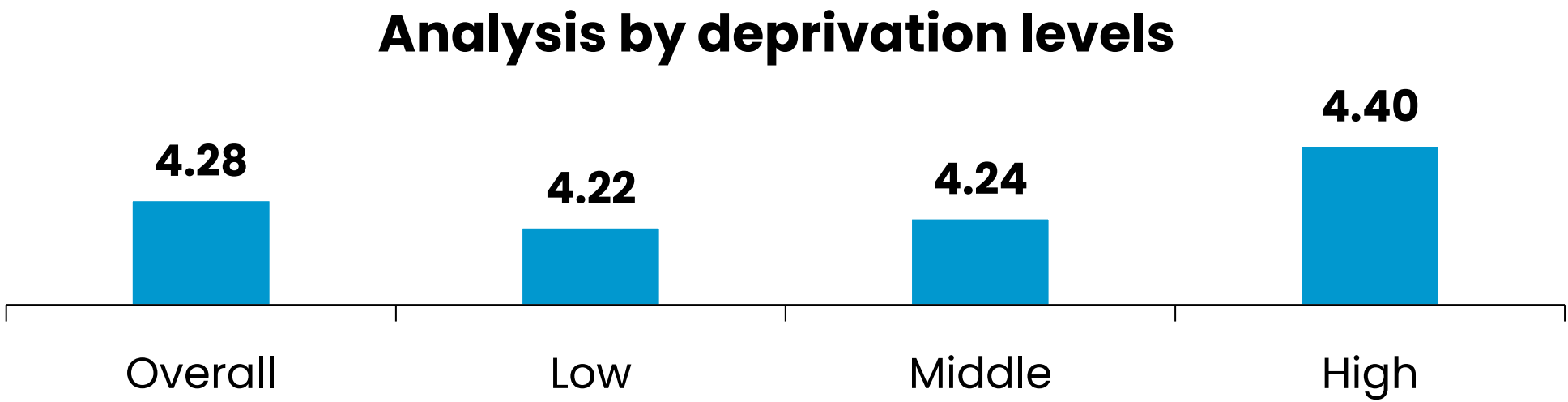
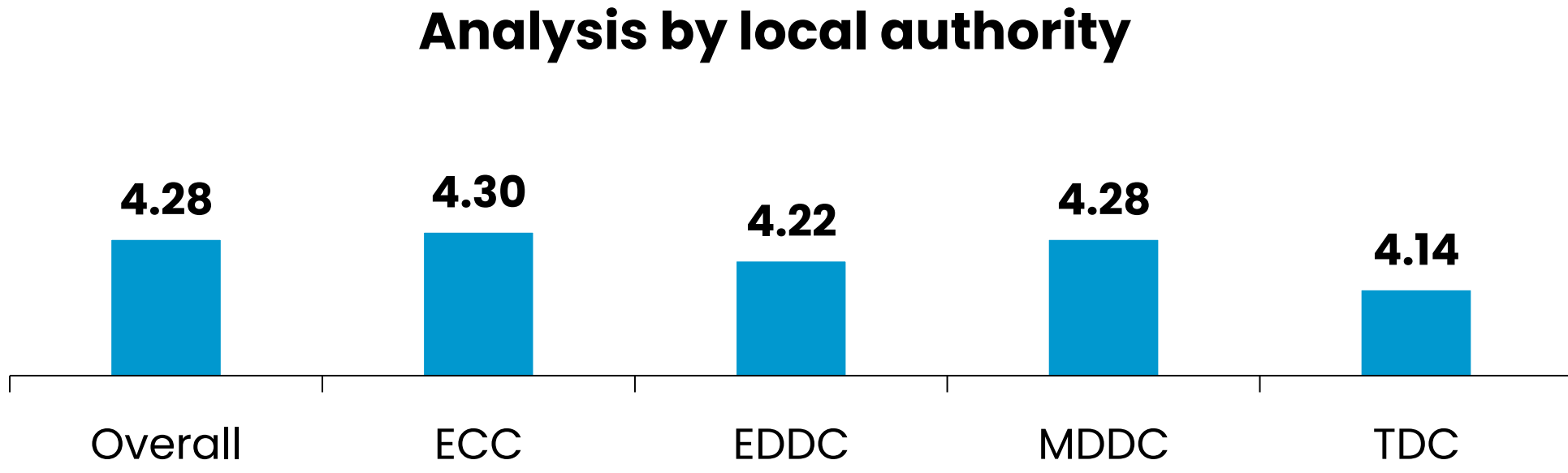
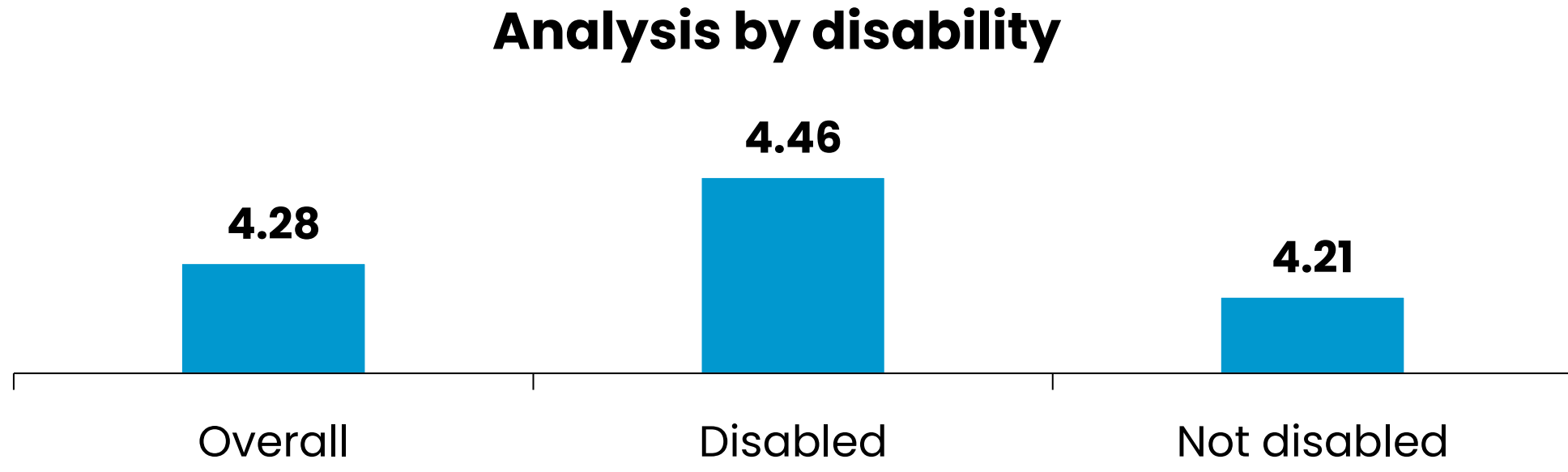
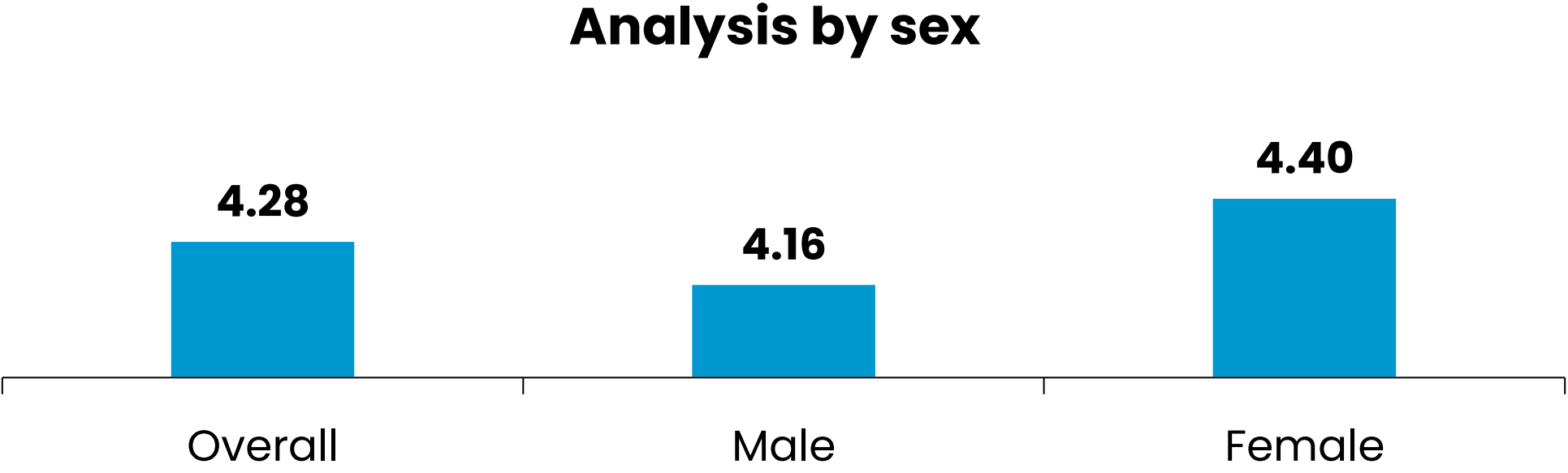
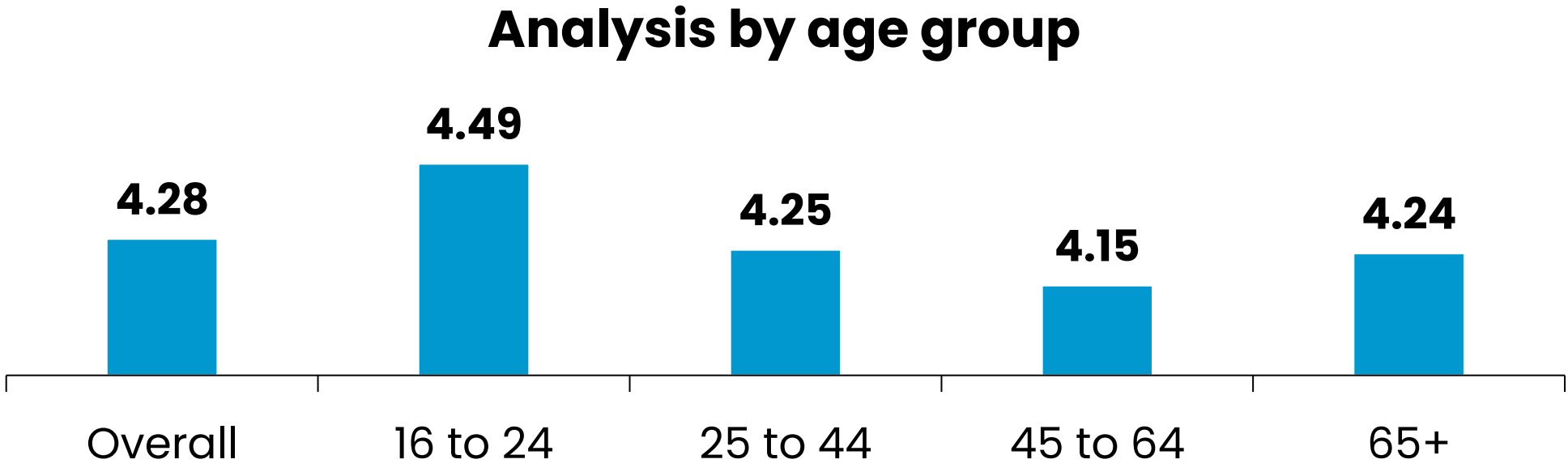
Analysis by connection to local area



Helping people stay healthy is more important to those aged 16–24, females, those with a disability, and those who study in the local area



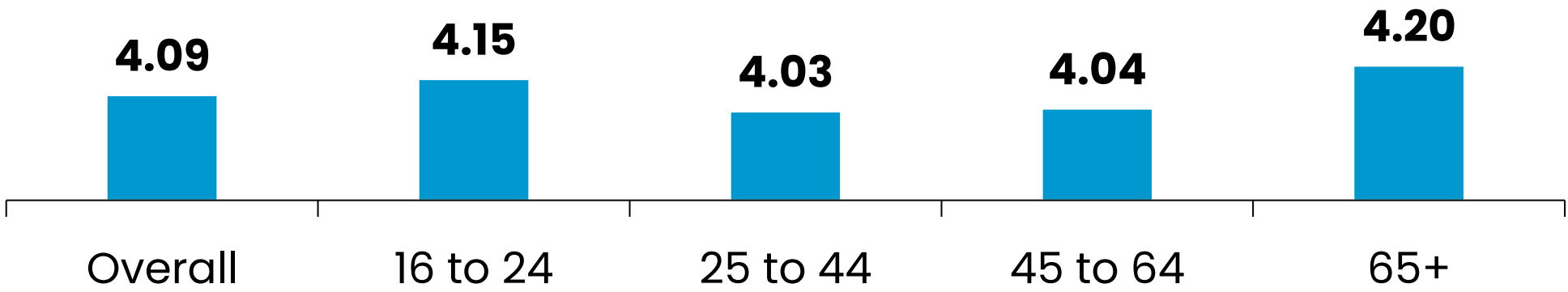
Those aged 16-24, females, those with a disability, and those who study in the local area are more likely to rate support with housing needs, council tax and benefits highly



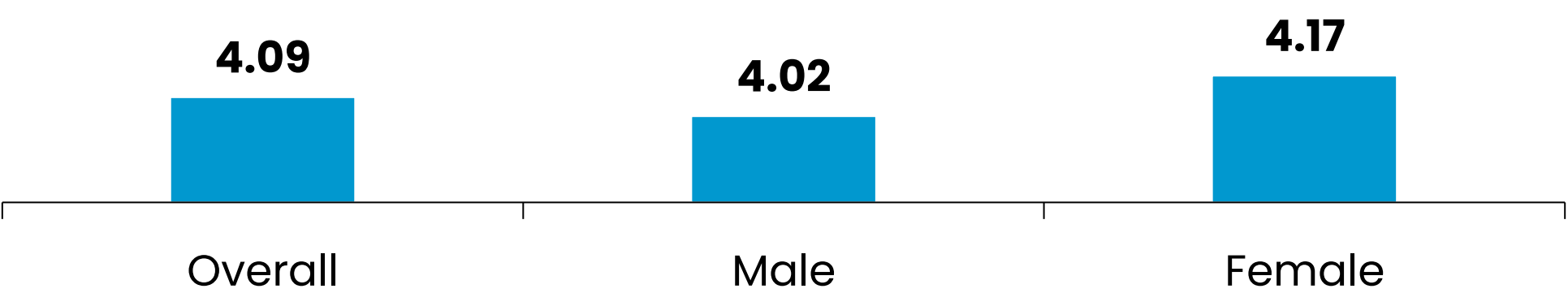
Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services... Support with housing needs, council tax and benefits? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Those aged 65+ and females allocate greater importance to building-related services than other groups

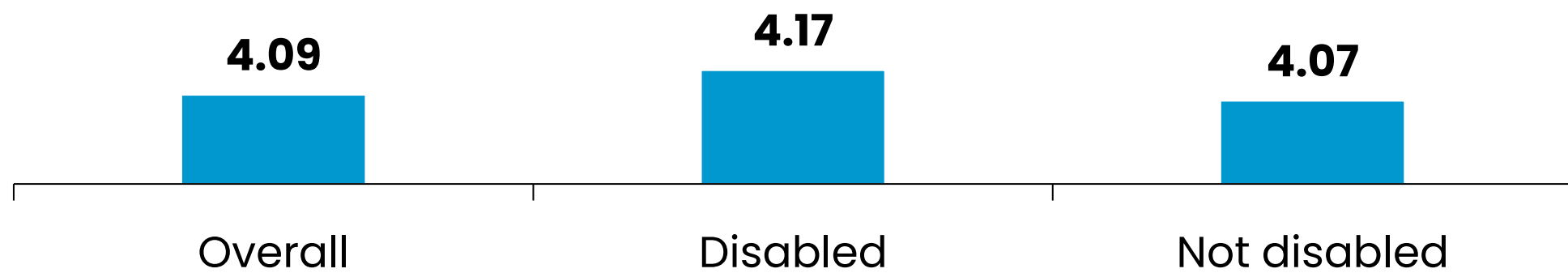
Analysis by age group



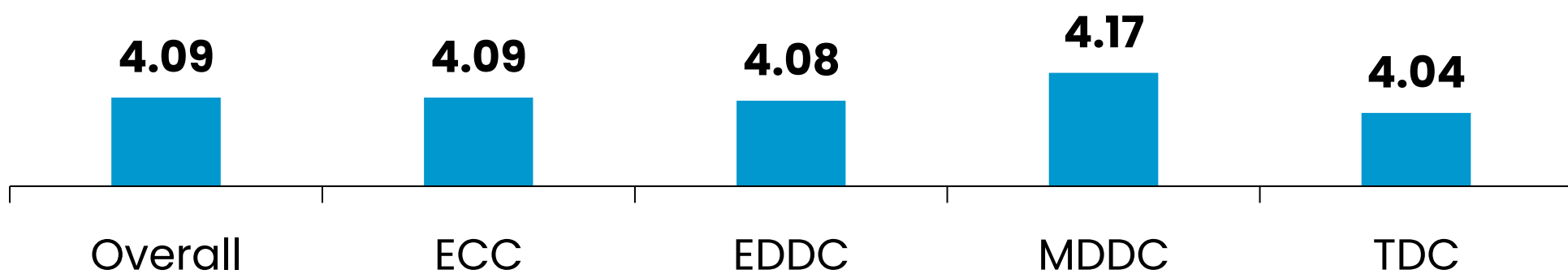
Analysis by sex



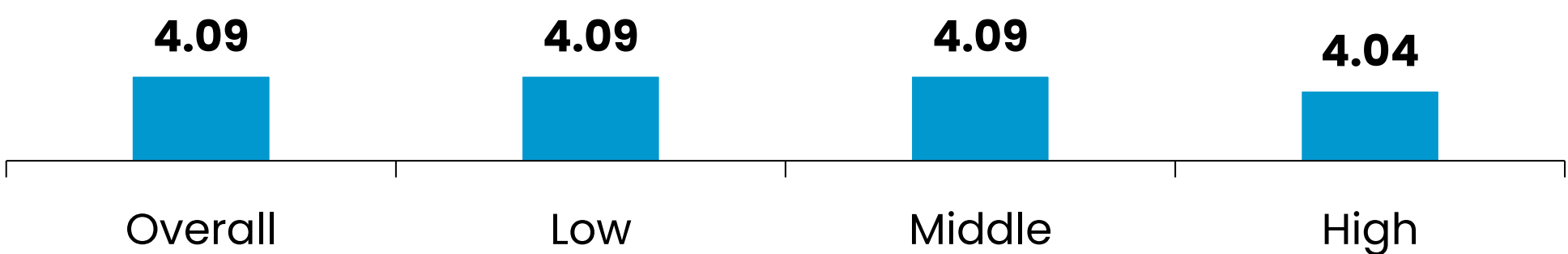
Analysis by disability



Analysis by local authority



Analysis by deprivation levels

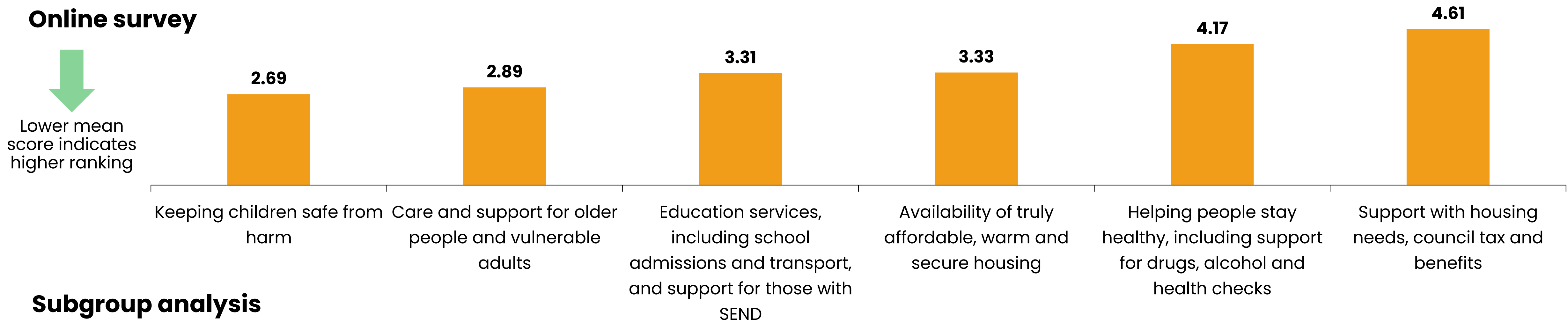


Analysis by connection to local area



Question: How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services... Building-related services such as planning applications, planning enforcement, building control, protecting old buildings? (Rate on scale of 1-5)
Base: All respondents (Representative survey 2025: 1,100)

Keeping children safe from harm and support for older and vulnerable people are ranked most highly by online respondents



Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to select **keeping children safe from harm** (2.69 overall) include:

- Females (2.59) in comparison with males (2.83)
- Those aged 25-44 (2.45) and 45-64 (2.50) in comparison with those aged 65+ (3.03)

Subgroups more likely to select **care and support for older people** (2.89 overall) include:

- Females (2.77) in comparison with males (3.07)
- Those aged 45-64 (2.77) and 65+ (2.69) in comparison with those aged 16-24 (3.79) and 25-44 (3.53)
- TDC residents (2.57) in comparison with EDDC (3.09) and ECC residents (2.94)

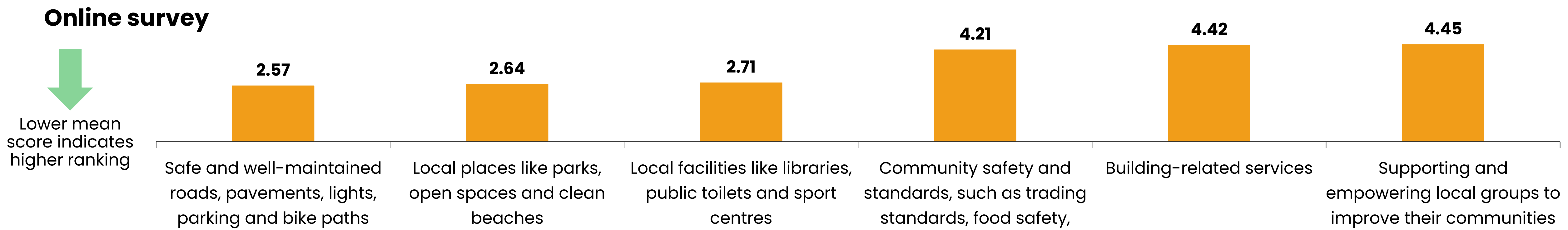
Subgroups more likely to select **availability of truly affordable, warm and secure housing** (3.33 overall) include:

- Those aged 16-24 (2.50) in comparison with all other age groups
- ECC residents (3.18) in comparison with TDC residents (3.72)

Subgroups more likely to select **support with housing needs, council tax and benefits** (4.61 overall) include:

- Those who study in Exeter (3.62) in comparison to those with other connections to Exeter and the surrounding area

Safe and well-maintained roads and pavements, and parks, open spaces and beaches are of highest importance for online respondents



Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to select **safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths** (2.57 overall) include:

- Those aged 65+ (2.49) in comparison with those aged 25-44 (2.76)

Subgroups more likely to select **local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches** (2.64 overall) include:

- Those aged 25-44 (2.25) in comparison with all other age groups

Subgroups more likely to select **local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres** (2.71 overall) include:

- Females (2.56) in comparison with males (2.87)
- MDDC residents (2.29) in comparison with TDC residents (3.05)

Subgroups more likely to select **community safety and standards** (4.21 overall) include:

- ECC residents (4.11) in comparison with MDDC (4.86) and TDC (4.51) residents

Subgroups more likely to select **supporting and empowering local groups** (4.45 overall) include:

- TDC residents (3.91) in comparison with EDDC (4.54) and ECC (4.53) residents

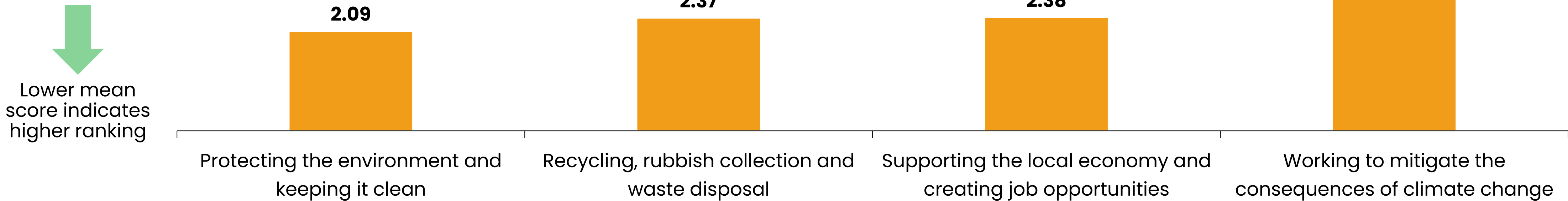
Subgroups more likely to select **building-related services** (4.42 overall) include:

- Males (4.30) in comparison with females (4.59)
- Those aged 65+ (4.24) in comparison to those aged 25-44 (4.63) and 45-64 (4.57)
- EDDC residents (4.03) in comparison to ECC residents (4.49)



Most environment and economy priorities are ranked similarly by online respondents, however working to mitigate the consequences of climate change is ranked the lowest

Online survey



Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to select **protecting the environment and keeping it clean** (2.09 overall) include:

- EDDC (1.92) and TDC (1.92) residents in comparison with ECC residents (2.15)
- Those who live in Exeter (2.09) in comparison with those who represent a community organisation (2.36)

Subgroups more likely to select **recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal** (2.37 overall) include:

- Those aged 65+ (2.33) in comparison with those aged 25-44 (2.52)

Subgroups more likely to select **supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities** (2.38 overall) include:

- MDDC residents (1.95) in comparison with TDC residents (2.65)



8. Representative survey subgroup analysis summary

Subgroup analysis: Age

16–24 year olds were more likely to:

- Highly value being inclusive and accessible to all residents
- Highly value communicating clearly and keeping residents informed
- Highly value protecting the environment and promoting climate action
- Highly value being responsive to local needs
- Highly value collaborating effectively with other public services
- Highly value providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions
- Rate efficient services which offer value for money as more important
- Rate easy access to the council services you need as more important
- Rate decisions that impact you will be made locally as more important
- Rate improved services as more important
- Rate improved understanding of the issues facing your local area as more important
- Rate supportive and accessible local ward councillor as more important
- Rate availability of affordable, warm and secure housing as more important
- Rate supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities as more important
- Rate supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities as more important
- Rate working to mitigate the consequences of climate change as more important
- Rate helping people stay healthy as more important
- Rate support with housing needs, council tax and benefits as more important



Subgroup analysis: Age

25–44 year olds were more likely to:

- Rate local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches as more important
- Rate local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres as more important
- Rate supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities as more important
- Rate supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities as more important
- Rate care and support for older people and vulnerable adults as more important

65+ year olds were more likely to:

- Highly value delivering services efficiently and reliably
- Highly value collaborating effectively with other public services
- Rate recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal as more important
- Rate building-related services as more important



Subgroup analysis: Sex

Female respondents were more likely to:

- Highly value protecting the environment and promoting climate action
- Rate decisions that impact you will be made locally as more important
- Rate improved services as more important
- Rate improved understanding of the issues facing your local area as more important
- Rate supportive and accessible local ward councillor as more important
- Rate local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches as more important
- Rate safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths as more important
- Rate local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres as more important
- Rate availability of affordable, warm and secure housing as more important
- Rate supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities as more important
- Rate supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities as more important
- Rate working to mitigate the consequences of climate change as more important
- Rate keeping children safe from harm as more important
- Rate care and support for older people and vulnerable adults as more important
- Rate education services and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities as more important
- Rate recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal as more important
- Rate helping people stay healthy as more important
- Rate support with housing needs, council tax and benefits as more important
- Rate building-related services as more important



Subgroup analysis: Disability and deprivation levels

Those with a disability were more likely to:

- Rate supportive and accessible local ward councillor as more important
- Rate recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal as more important
- Rate helping people stay healthy as more important
- Rate support with housing needs, council tax and benefits as more important

Those living in areas of low deprivation were more likely to:

- Rate local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches as more important



Subgroup analysis: Local authority

Exeter City Council residents were more likely to:

- Highly value delivering services efficiently and reliably
- Highly value being inclusive and accessible to all residents
- Highly value communicating clearly and keeping residents informed

Mid Devon District Council residents were more likely to:

- Rate decisions that impact you will be made locally as more important
- Rate improved services as more important
- Rate improved understanding of the issues facing your local area as more important
- Rate safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths as more important
- Rate supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities as more important



Subgroup analysis: Connection to local area

Those who run a business/community organisation were more likely to:

- Rate efficient services which offer value for money as more important
- Rate easy access to the council services you need as more important
- Rate improved understanding of the issues facing your local area as more important
- Rate local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches as more important
- Rate keeping children safe from harm as more important
- Rate care and support for older people and vulnerable adults as more important
- Rate education services and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities as more important



Subgroup analysis: Connection to local area

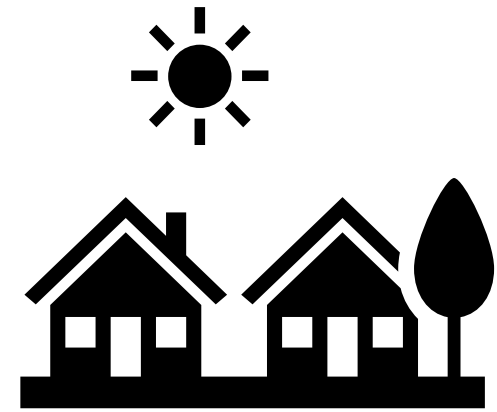
Those who study in the local area were more likely to:

- Highly value delivering services efficiently and reliably
- Highly value being inclusive and accessible to all residents
- Highly value communicating clearly and keeping residents informed
- Highly value protecting the environment and promoting climate action
- Highly value being responsive to local needs
- Highly value collaborating effectively with other public services
- Highly value providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions
- Rate efficient services which offer value for money as more important
- Rate easy access to the council services you need as more important
- Rate decisions that impact you will be made locally as more important
- Rate improved services as more important
- Rate local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres as more important
- Rate availability of affordable, warm and secure housing as more important
- Rate working to mitigate the consequences of climate change as more important
- Rate helping people stay healthy as more important
- Rate support with housing needs, council tax and benefits as more important

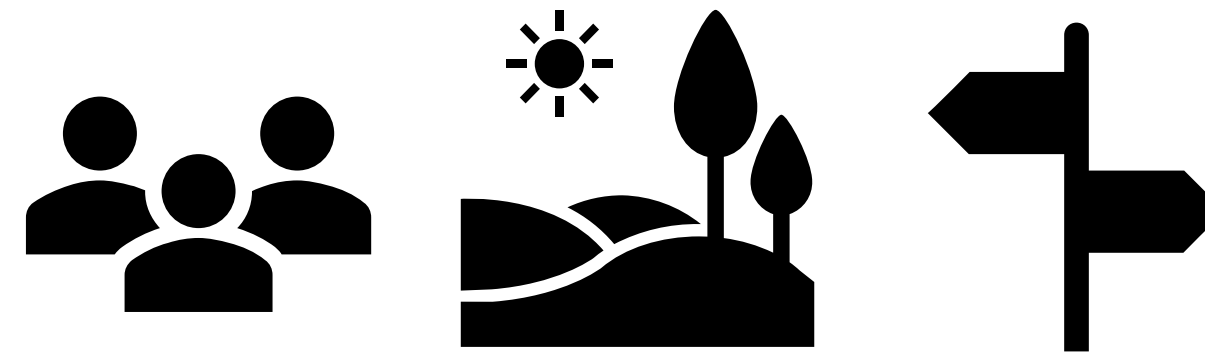


9. Conclusions

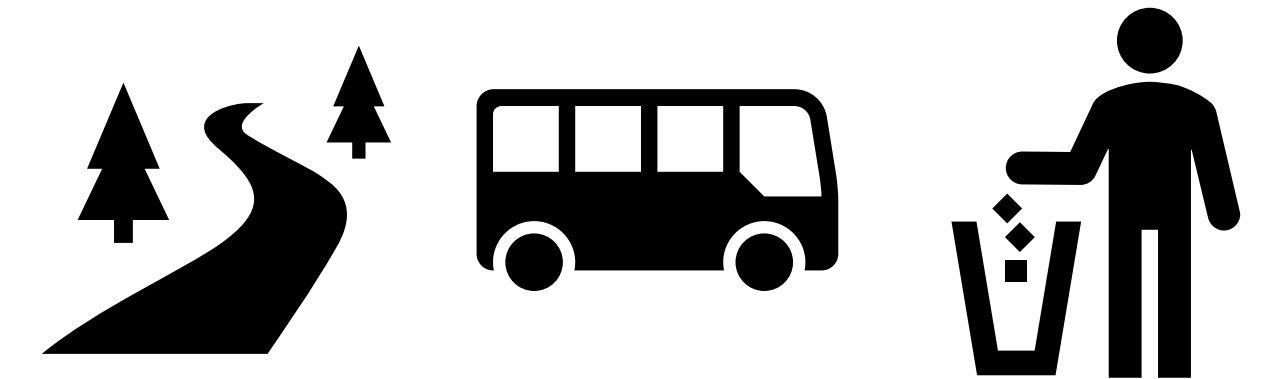
Conclusions



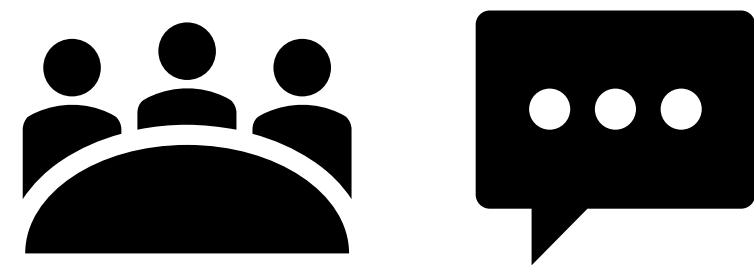
‘Exeter’ is most frequently identified by both representative and online survey respondents as their local area, suggesting a strong sense of local identity. A wide range of other responses were provided, including towns, parts of the county, wards and parishes.



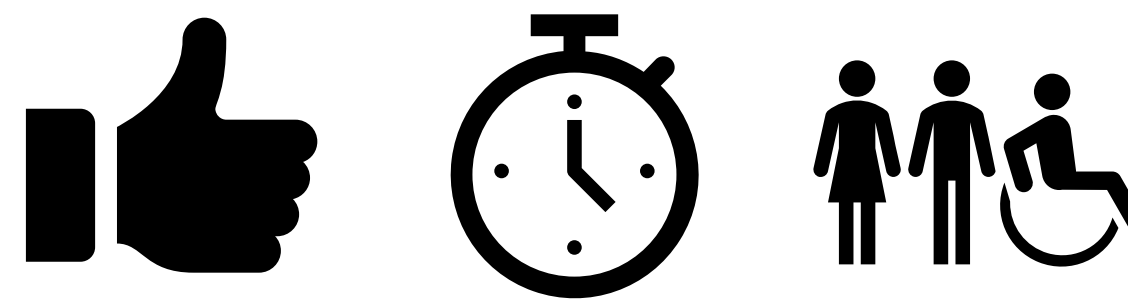
Both surveys highlight that residents value the character and community feel of their local area, particularly its peaceful environment, friendly people, proximity to green and coastal spaces, and accessibility to other locations.



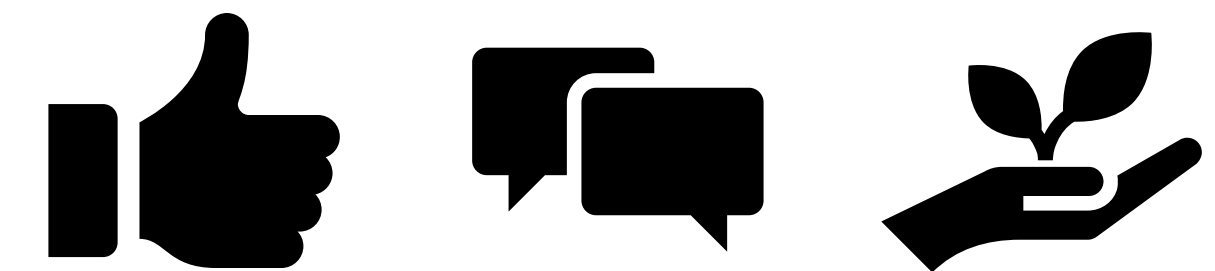
Roads and pavements, public transport and street cleanliness are the most frequently suggested improvements by respondents in both surveys. Safety, traffic/congestion, shops and parking were also commonly cited.



While many residents are content to be kept informed, **there is evidence of interest in greater participation in decision making amongst online respondents**, who expressed stronger appetite for involvement through consultations, focus groups, forums, town and parish councils, and community organisations.

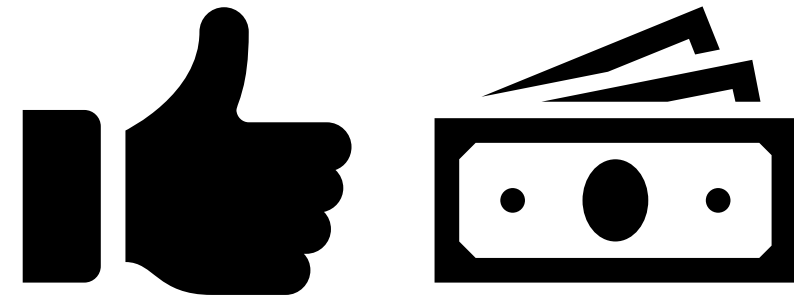


All aspects of how local councils serve the community were viewed as valuable by representative survey respondents. **Delivering services efficiently and reliably and being inclusive and accessible to all residents were rated most highly**, however there was little variation between mean scores.

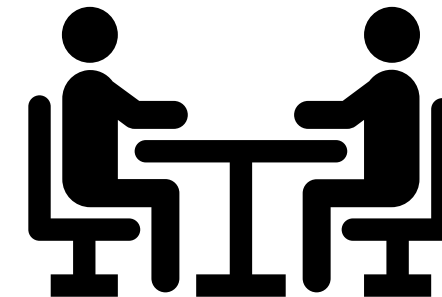


Online respondents also most frequently selected delivering services efficiently and reliably, but being responsive to local needs and protecting the environment and promoting climate action were of higher importance than for representative respondents.

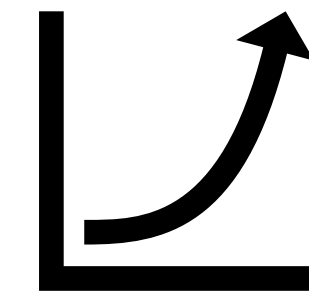
Conclusions



When considering how local government reorganisation could impact themselves and their community, **representative respondents rated efficient services which offer value for money the most important factor, followed by easy access to council services.** Again, there was little variation between mean scores, but supportive and accessible local ward councillor was rated slightly lower.



When asked how they hope LGR will impact themselves and their community, **online respondents ranked a good understanding of the issues facing your local community most highly**, followed by clear, open and honest decision making, and decisions being made locally. Less importance was allocated to council decisions being made within easy travelling distance of their area.



Thinking about how they hope LGR will improve council services in their area, **improved quality of services was ranked most highly by online respondents, whilst council offices being located nearby was perceived as being of less importance.**



All listed aspects for shaping the future of local government in Devon were ranked highly by representative survey respondents, with little variation in mean scores. However, local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches was rated most highly and working to mitigate the consequences of climate change was rated lowest.

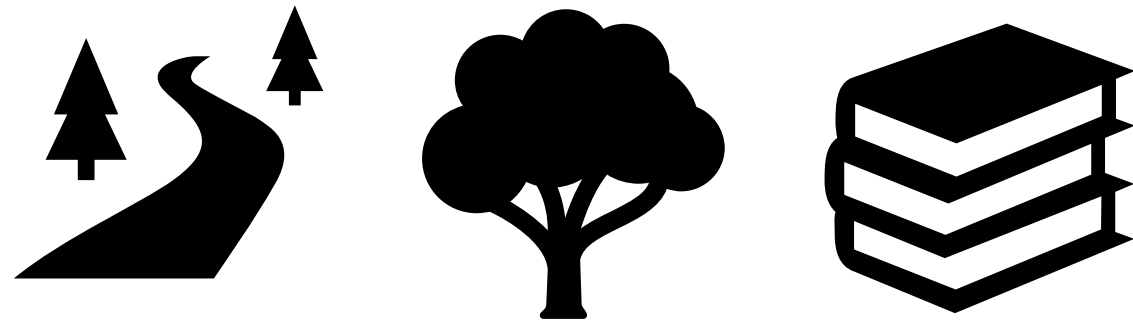


For people and community services, **the safety and protection of children, older people and vulnerable adults are seen as the most essential priorities in the representative survey, followed by education and SEND support.** Again, all aspects were rated highly with little variation between mean scores. Building-related services was ranked lowest.

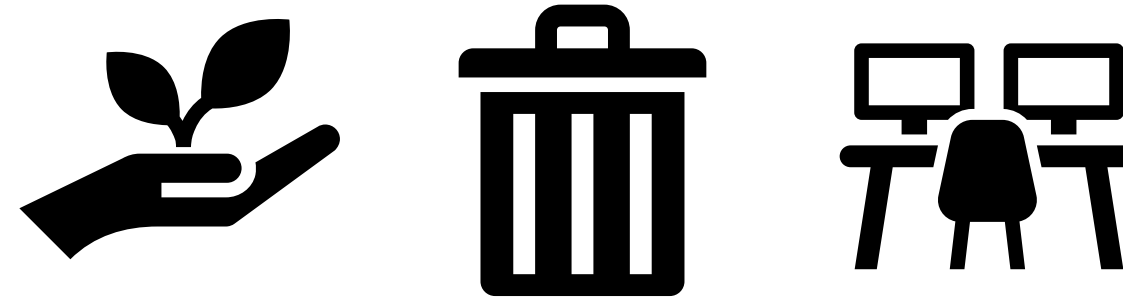


Online respondents had similar priorities, citing the same top three priorities relating to supporting children, older and vulnerable people, and education and SEND, when asked what the top priorities should be for shaping future people and community services for Devon. Helping people stay healthy and support with housing needs were ranked slightly lower than the other priorities.

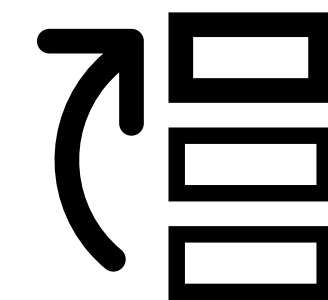
Conclusions



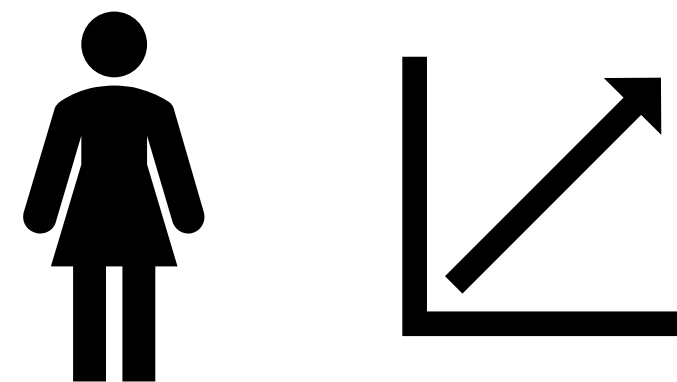
Online respondents' highest ranked priorities relating to place-based services for Devon were safe and well-maintained roads, local places like parks, open spaces and beaches, and local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres. Community safety and standards, building-related services, and supporting and empowering local groups were viewed as of lesser importance.



The most highly ranked environment and economy priorities for online respondents were protecting the environment and keeping it clean, and similar rankings were provided for waste collection and disposal and supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities. Working to mitigate the consequences of climate change was the lowest ranked priority.



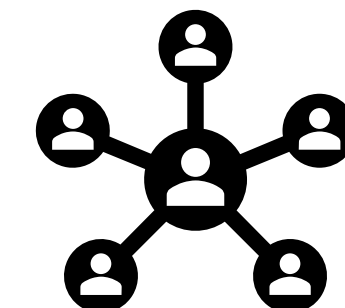
Across both surveys, few subgroup differences in relation to local authority were seen. However, in the representative survey, ECC residents ranked delivering services effectively and reliably, being inclusive and accessible, and communicating clearly and keeping residents informed more highly. For MDCC residents, higher importance was allocated to decisions being made locally, improved services, understanding of local issues, roads and pavements, and empowering local groups.



Female representative survey respondents ranked several areas as of higher importance than male respondents, for example, protecting the environment and promoting climate action, local decision making, supportive and accessible local ward councillor, and warm and secure housing.



Those aged 16–24 and those who study in the local area similarly allocated higher importance to several priorities, including inclusivity and accessibility, communication, efficient services, and supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities.



Overall, the findings reveal a consistent picture of residents who value strong, efficient and transparent local government, expect high standards of service delivery, and want councils to balance economic care, community wellbeing and economic opportunities in shaping Devon's future.



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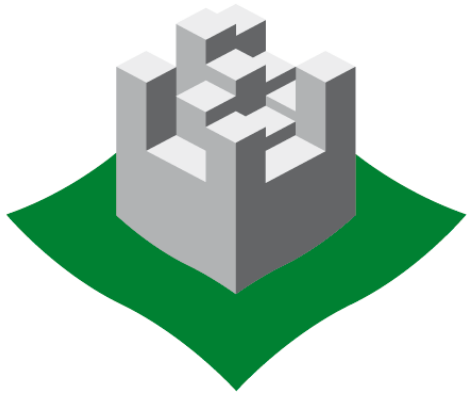
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Exeter
City Council

**Local Government Reorganisation:
Findings from engagement
activities**

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Context and Purpose:

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is the process of changing how local councils are organised and what they are responsible for. The Government plans to replace the current two-tier system of district and county councils with fewer single tier unitary councils that deliver all local services and can cover counties, towns, or cities.

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon, wrote to all councils in remaining two-tier areas and neighbouring small unitaries to set out plans for a joint programme of devolution and local government reorganisation.

In response to the White Paper, the Exeter City Council sent a Letter of Intent to Government on 10 January 2025, expressing Exeter's intention to submit interim plans for unitary status for Exeter, following approval by councillors at an Extraordinary Council meeting.

Exeter's interim submission was unanimously approved by councillors at an Extraordinary Council meeting on 20 March 2025. At an Extraordinary meeting on 14 August 2025 councillors agreed the initial geography for a three unitary model for local government reorganisation in Devon.

With LGR representing the biggest reforms to devolution in generations, developing a deep understanding how people living in Exeter and the surrounding areas think and feel about it was an essential pillar to help inform a final proposal to submit to Central Government. This report details the steps taken to achieve this deep level of understanding, and the findings of the research undertaken by Exeter City Council, ensuring that people's voices help in shaping the future of devolution.

This report sets out the findings of the six-week public engagement period.

Process:

In line with Exeter City Council's policies and processes, the LGR engagement period was open six weeks. The team delivering the engagement work included the People and Communities Team, the Executive Office, the Communications Team, and members of the Senior Management Board. Some of the engagement activities were delivered by an external research partner ([Enventure Research](#)). An internal task and finish group of multi-disciplinary staff from these teams held weekly meetings throughout the engagement period to ensure all planned engagement activities were delivered.

Methods:

A mixed methods approach was used during the six-week engagement period. Quantitative data was collected through the delivery of two surveys, to understand the views of residents in and around Exeter. Qualitative data was collected through the delivery of a series of focus groups and obtaining written feedback to broad topic areas from service user groups in and around the city, a series of webinars with Parish and Town Councils, and an in-person event with the local business community.

Surveys

A representative survey was carried out with people living in Exeter and the surrounding areas (i.e. within the boundary area in the Councils proposal). The representative survey was delivered primarily over the phone, but also face-to-face, to ensure that representative participant quotas were reached. Throughout the geographical areas surveyed, the quotas of interest were age and sex, measured against the population sizes of the different geographical areas, broken down to ward level. For more detail on the representative survey, refer to the full report from Enventure Research. The representative survey questions can be found in [Appendix 1](#)

A total of 1100 people took part in the representative survey

A self-referral online survey was also conducted over the six-week engagement period. This was delivered using Sanp Survey software. The survey was made available online via the Exeter City Council website advertised on Exeter City Council's website and social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Next Door). Furthermore, the online survey was advertised in print media (The Exeter Citizen). For more detail on the self-referral online survey, refer to the full report from Enventure research. The self-referral online survey questions can be found in [Appendix 2](#)

A total of 956 people took part in the self-referral online survey

Focus Groups

A series of five focus were carried out with users of community-based services, many of whom intersected with users of local and county council services. The aim was to better understand the views and opinions of seldom heard from people in relation to LGR. To access service users, we contacted local VCSE groups via email, informing them of the LGR engagement work and the purpose of wanting to carry out focus groups with seldom heard from service users.

In total five focus groups were delivered. All five focus groups took place in settings used frequently by the VCSE groups and lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. The focus groups were limited to a maximum of 10 attendees to ensure smooth management and running, allowing time for all attendees to participate effectively.

The following broad topics were covered in the five focus groups.

- Understand experiences of council services (local and county council)
- Exploring and understanding unmet local needs (e.g. in service provision)
- Potential benefits/ challenges of more joined up services in the future
- Potential benefits/ challenges of more local decision making in the future
- How to ensure a stronger voice for the local area

The focus groups were carried out with the following.

- ECC tenants and lease holders: 8 attendees
- [Inclusive Exeter](#) (ethnically diverse group of service users) 5 attendees
- [Westbank](#) (volunteers supporting a range of service users around health and wellbeing, including carers in an around Exeter) 6 attendees
- [Common Ground](#) (people with lived and ongoing experience of homelessness, mental health challenges, substance misuse and recovery) 11 attendees
- [Age UK Exeter](#) (older people accessing Age UK services and support in and around Exeter) 5 attendees

The topic areas were shared with focus group attendees ahead of each session. During the focus groups ECC staff introduced the concept of LGR and spoke about the national and local implications of the process, and the opportunities offered by it. The introductory slides can be found in [Appendix 3](#). The attendees were then given the opportunity to briefly ask questions related to the introductory slides.

The focus group facilitator then re-introduced the topic areas that were shared ahead of the session, and asked for views, insights, opinions, and personal stories related to each topic area in turn. At the end of each focus group, attendees were told how their insights would be used to help shape ECC's final submission regarding LGR to Central Government. They were also given the timelines for achieving this and informed that they would be informed of when the final report would be available for them to view. Extensive notes were taken by ECC staff during each focus group on the topics and themes that were discussed by each participant group. The focus group with Common Ground was also audio recorded, and the transcript later shared with ECC staff with the permission of all focus group attendees.

In total the five focus groups were attended by 35 people

Obtaining Written Feedback

In contacting local VCSE groups, it became clear that when we were targeting young people, some of whom were vulnerable, we would be unable to carry out focus group activities with them. The main reason for this was because some of the young people were under the age of 16, meaning that we would have required parental/ guardian consent to speak with those young people, and would require DBS checks for ECC staff facilitating focus groups. Because it was not possible to achieve this within the engagement period, we instead shared the LGR introductory slides ([Appendix 3](#)) and broad topic areas (those used to guide the focus groups, outlined above) so that of young people could provide us with written feedback.

This method was used with a group of 22 young people from Grecians Generation Z – an independent fan group of Exeter City FC, who advise the Club and Trust on issues of importance (linked to the club and wider local area) impacting young fans.

Parish and Town Council Webinars

In total, 49 Town and Parish Councils were included in ECCs proposed geography for LGR, served by 377 Parish Councillors. All 49 Councils were contacted to make them aware of the webinars and to register their interest in attending.

There were three webinars held in total. Of the 49 Town and Parish Councils invited, 24 attended and 25 did not attend, meaning we engaged with 49% of the Parish and Town Councils we targeted.

Town and Parish Council engagement focused on:

1. Communicating and informing
2. Asking and listening

Key Messages

1. Town and Parish Councils are not changing and will continue to serve their communities as they have always done.
2. LGR offers an opportunity for new unitaries to strengthen relationships with Town and Parish Councils and work together in new ways.
3. Your voice is important; What are the things that matter to you about your place that you would like any new unitary council to know about?

4. LGR and Devolution could unlock exciting opportunities for Town and Parish Councils to take on greater powers and have a bigger impact on outcomes for residents.
5. We will listen to local views to help shape the best possible proposal for Devon, but the decision will be made by Government.
6. The Government will lead a public consultation in early 2026, so there will be more opportunity to have your say.

Local Business Community – In-Person Event

At the in-person event there were a total of 50 attendees from across Exeter businesses and industry associations, including senior representatives from local businesses and anchor institutions.

The event was held to engage local business leaders on the future of local government in Devon. The aim was to share emerging proposals for LGR, gather business perspectives, and explore how LGR could support economic growth, simplify services, and strengthen Exeter's role as a regional driver.

ECC's CEO and the Council Leader gave a short presentation outlining the LGR proposals, followed by an open Q&A session. Attendees discussed the potential impact on business support, local decision-making, and service delivery. The session provided a platform for feedback and helped shape the final submission.

Findings

Findings from the focus groups, Parish and Town council webinars, and the local business in-person event are presented below. The findings from the representative survey and the self-referral online survey are presented in a separate document produced by Enventure Research.

Focus Groups

The notes taken from each focus group were analysed individually using principles of thematic analysis, to identify common themes that were discussed by the different user groups in attendance. The written feedback from the group of young people from Grecians

Generation Z was also analysed in this way. After this, all separate focus group and written feedback themes were considered together to identify any overarching recurring themes that existed between the user groups. The themes are presented separately for each of the focus groups, and written feedback. The overarching themes are then presented.

N.B. Quotes from the focus groups were limited because note taking focused on capturing the content and direction of the conversations, rather than verbatim transcripts. See [Appendix 5](#)

Themes: Tenant and lease holder focus group

1. Concerns About LGR

There were general concerns from the group that LGR brings with it unanswered questions around the potential financial implications of reorganisation. Central Government financial modelling of the costs associated with LGR was brought into question, as was what would happen to Devon County Council's existing debt when a final decision on LGR is taken. There was fear that LGR could bring about risks to services with cuts possible due to financial pressures on a single unitary. Furthermore, there was concern at a perceived lack

of consideration to tenant housing in LGR documentation, and apprehension that LGR could lead to the loss of good structures and support staff for tenants. Related to this, the tenant group also felt that they would want to retain ECC's current tenant housing strategy, as it is well regarded. Finally, there were real concerns that if there was no continuity of service, they may be forced into becoming housing association tenants rather than council tenants.

2. Tenant Voice & Involvement

The group were worried that there would be a potential risk that their voice as tenants would be diluted in a county-wide and large unitary authority, as their needs may be different or specialised to their geographical area. There was a desire that in a post-LGR setting, that tenants have an expanded remit and influence to be included in service design and delivery, and work around contact renewals and housing decisions impacting them.

3. Service Delivery

The group highlighted that there would be a potential risk to services during a transitional period brought about by the LGR process. It was felt this could lead to gaps in service provision and service continuity – impacting some of the most vulnerable people in society. This was seen to be particularly the case for children's services, SEND children, and housing tenants with complex needs. Additionally, there was a sense of frustration around the difficulties in knowing currently which Council is responsible for all the service that affect them, and also how to navigate those service providers. There was a desire for services to be managed more efficiently in the future.

Themes: Inclusive Exeter focus group

1. Local Government, Inclusion & Accessibility

The attendees who access and navigate services, perceived Devon County Council as being less culturally aware and more bureaucratic than Exeter City Council. Exeter City Council was also seen as being more focused on the customer, however there was a strong desire to see all services become much more culturally inclusive and accessible to ensure that institutional and navigational barriers to services are broken down. In terms of accessibility, the group highlighted language barriers and low IT literacy as the most pressing issues facing them, meaning there is often a preference for face-to-face service offerings. There was also a strong view that many services that have traditionally offered advice to support culturally diverse people and families to access support are now putting the onus on the individual(s) being responsible for accessing services, increasing vulnerabilities.

2. Education & Schools

The group highlighted the difficulties for migrant families around school admissions and the overlapping responsibilities that currently exist for these processes between Devon County Council and Exeter City Council. It was felt that this factor, and the difficulties in assessing schools around measures of inclusivity leaves people whose first language is not English at a disadvantage.

3. Public Transport

The group highlighted that many people accessing benefits and low income families are reliant on public transport, but the cost of that transport is prohibitive to regular usage. Furthermore, it was clear that the reliability of public transport, particularly buses is an issue. Affordability and reliability were seen as barriers for people to get to work or attend job interviews, which again can disproportionately impact migrant families.

4. Employment, Migrant Workers & Exploitation

There was specific insight from the group around taxi drivers working in Exeter, many of whom are migrants. It was felt that it is currently difficult for Exeter registered drivers to compete with other drivers registered outside of the city, but who come into the city to work.

The cost and licencing requirement differential between neighbouring authorities has created an uneven playing field for Exeter based taxi drivers. There was a consensus that migrant workers face insecure employment options, with many taking on cash-in-hand work which is often below the minimum wage, particularly when working in restaurants, salons, and farms in the local area. Additionally, it was felt that many migrant workers lack access to pension schemes, further deepening inequality. While migrant workers will often work long hours for low pay in roles that are insecure, more severe levels of exploitation also exist, with some workers threatened with loss of sponsorship and withholding of passports by employers.

Themes: Westbank focus group

1. Local Governance & Participation

There was a certain amount of concern around how local governance would work because of LGR, with many attendees raising the issue of council tax and whether this would rise for people in Exeter and the surrounding areas, whatever the outcome of LGR. There was a strong desire from the group that they have continued representation from local councillors. Furthermore, the group were keen to have a strong voice in decision making that impacts them and be spoken to directly by the council. People were keen for there to be a one-stop-shop approach to local services to reduce confusion of who to go to for what service.

2. Transport & Connectivity

There was widespread agreement within the group that public transport, particularly buses are unreliable and expensive, and the unreliability is compounded in rural areas around Exeter. Furthermore, the buses can represent accessibility barriers for some people, with a switch to digital ticketing systems and cashless payments. It was felt that these issues of connectivity in the local area creates issues of social isolation, especially for older residents.

3. Digital Inclusion & IT Skills

The group spoke strongly about the need for more thought from local authorities around digital inclusion and IT skills, particularly for older residents. It was acknowledged that while some older people and those with complex needs are tech-savvy, many people will struggle with confidence around digital technologies, impacting their access to support services. The attendees felt that a move to digital only services excludes people and removes the rights of those who are not or cannot be digitally engaged.

4. Health, Welfare & Social Isolation & Community Support

The attendees described real issues in being able to access GP appointments, which can ultimately end up causing acute situations for people, putting greater strain on emergency services. There was also agreement that there are risks to vulnerable people on discharge from hospitals, with people often going back to poor living conditions which highlighted a frustration with a lack of clarity around who is responsible for ensuring that this does not happen. Linked to this, the group stated the great need for joined up thinking between service providers. Finally, the attendees were keen to point out that social isolation is an issue for their service users, and this is true for people across different age groups and can be felt more in rural areas and new neighbourhoods around the city, many of which have been built without thought to creating community hubs.

5. Data & Early Intervention

The group felt strongly that now and into the future, councils need to do more with data and data sharing across services. For multiple reasons, this was seen as beneficial to residents,

particularly vulnerable residents. It was felt it would allow better identification of gaps in service provision and would support the identification of vulnerable people (e.g. ill health, risk of poverty, etc) sooner allowing for early intervention and the avoidance of acute situations more detrimental to health and wellbeing, while being more financially costly.

Themes: Common Ground focus group

1. LGR & The Local Area

The group were keen for LGR to actually offer benefits to residents in reality, and not just in theory. To this end there was some concern raised about the motivations for LGR from Central Government being solely about cost savings, and it was questioned whether cost savings would be reinvested locally. Attendees also focussed on the differing needs between urban and semi-urban needs compared to rural needs, with very different priorities for Exeter compared to the largely rural rest of Devon. For some there was also concern that LGR would bring significant job losses and threaten the running and continuity of services people rely on.

2. Service Integration & Accessibility

There was hope among the group that because of LGR, services could be joined up with simplified pathways with no fragmentation, offering greater wrap around support to users. People spoke about falling victim to siloed working in the past and interacting with services across multiple providers with inconsistent safeguarding processes. Many attendees also spoke about the need to overcome bureaucratic hurdles when accessing services and support, which hinders the accessibility of those support services. This was said to be particularly true of accessing mental health support, as well as equipment for disabilities. It was hoped that as well as more joined up services, there would be better data sharing between service providers, avoiding unnecessary bureaucratic barriers.

3. Mental Health Services

There was a particular focus from the group about the lack of robust mental health, siting Devon as being one of the worst performing counties in England. The group spoke about the regularity at which people are falling through the gaps and remain dangerously isolated because of the severe gaps in mental health service provision. There was also concern about the loss of mental health services that used to be provided by organisations such as Mind and Bridge Collective, and a call for more community-based support and networks.

4. Housing & Homelessness

There was a level of frustration within the group about the housing pathway, banding system, and lack of transparency in how the processes work. This led to calls for a simpler process and an aid to help people navigate the processes. There was further frustration with a perception that to move quickly through the housing banding system, you would need to be at a point of crisis (e.g., suicidal) to qualify for support, which was seen as deeply problematic. Attendees also spoke about house building in the city, with a tension between student housing taking away the potential for affordable and social housing. The building of housing outside of the city, meanwhile, was seen to lack a focus on building communities and community infrastructure, with essential services missing, putting a greater strain on services within the city.

5. Community & Social Isolation (peer support)

Attendees focused on the difficulties many people across different age groups who access drug and alcohol services can face a loss of community and social isolation when they are in recovery and beyond. They spoke about the importance of community centres, warm places, community cafés and volunteer led initiatives to help combat this and offer greater support to people. Many of the attendees spoke about how they are involved in delivering such support

services now, but until they received support themselves, they would have been unable to play an actively supportive role within the community.

6. Opportunities & Optimism

Despite the clear issues highlighted by the attendees in relation to their experiences of being service users across a range of services, there was also optimism about the potential opportunities LGR could bring. With the reimagining of structures to focus on local issues, the group insisted that there needs to be an emphasis on co-design, amplifying local voices and implementing community driven change. It was also hoped that with clearer governance structures, it should become easier for community-based organisations to obtain funding from council, have a greater impact locally, and drive sustainability – reducing duplication and improving coordination.

Themes: Age UK Exeter focus group

1. Concerns About Representation

The attendees did mention the difficulties in balancing council led decisions that would benefit urban areas over rural areas and vice versa. However, there was also a strong sense that large and growing areas outside of Exeter such as Cranbrook do not currently contribute financially to Exeter, but they feel part of the wider city, and the people living there use Exeter based services. There was a clear desire for much greater clarity around who is responsible for what in and around the city and calls for processes and services to be simplified to benefit users. However, there was some caution that LGR could cause a loss of continuity, service gaps, and loss of expertise in the transition away from current structures.

2. Social Care Accessibility

The attendees focused on the current state of social care and the struggles in accessing appropriate support for older aged people, particularly for those living alone who are socially isolated. It was felt that there was a lack of clarity in terms of responsibilities and a lack of joined up thinking between agencies. There was hope that LGR might offer an opportunity to improve social care funding and access, but that service users should be involved in creating new structures.

3. Transport & Transport Infrastructure

Public transport in and around Exeter was seen as a major issue within the group, particularly related to buses. It was stated that there is a lack of clarity around who is responsible for transport in the city as it stands. Furthermore, Stagecoach was seen as a poor provider for the area, with very unreliable services, infrequent buses in the rural areas serving Exeter, and high costs associated with travelling – all of which were said to have a greater impact on older aged people. There was also a strong desire for there to be much better coordination in transport planning in the area.

4. Digital Inclusion & Participation

The group felt that the digitisation of services, and the digital processes to access those services risks isolating older aged people. Many of the attendees spoke about the transition towards cashless parking in and around the city, the reliance on apps, and the unaffordability of smart technologies being a barrier for many older people. The group felt that there should be non-digital option available for reasons of inclusivity, and a desire for meaningful involvement and consideration of older people's views.

5. Planning & Development

The attendees also focussed on the current and future need of better planning to take place in and around Exeter. This was particularly true for ensuring that new areas outside of the city are built with developing a sense of community in mind, alongside more joined up

thinking about new infrastructure, including roads to service those communities and take the strain off roads in and around the city that were never designed for heavy traffic use.

Written Feedback – Young People

The written feedback from groups of young people who we could not engage through focus groups is displayed below.

Grecians Generation-Z

1. Greater voice for younger people

“Give young people a proper voice – It would be great if the Council could set up regular meet-ups where teenagers and young adults can get to know how the Council works and ask questions. Most of us don’t really know where to start, so something friendly and face-to-face would help.”

2. Build greater community links

“Work together with community groups Please keep building links with Exeter City Community Trust (CCT) and arrange a bigger meeting with all interested parties. Having the Council take an active place within the Trust would show you’re serious about working with the whole city, not just running services from a distance.”

3. Look after the environment

“Look after the environment. Keep eco issues high on the list: better buses and trains so we don’t have to rely on cars, and making sure green spaces are protected.”

4. Feeling safe

“Keep Exeter safe – We want to feel safe walking around the city, especially at night. Working with the police, schools and community groups to keep streets and public areas safe really matters.”

5. Simplified structures

“Make it [council structures and services] easy to understand. Not everyone is online all the time, so please make sure any new council set-up is explained in ways everyone can follow.”

Overarching Themes – From Focus Groups & Written Feedback

Below are the overarching themes which highlight the common sentiments from across the user groups we engaged with.

1. Access, Inclusion & Equity

- Barriers due to language, digital exclusion, and low IT literacy.
- Need for culturally inclusive services and non-digital options.
- Preference for face-to-face support, especially among older and migrant communities.
- Concerns about accessibility in transport, housing, and services.

2. Service Integration & Clarity

- Fragmented service delivery across councils and sectors.
- Confusion over current roles and responsibilities for services.
- Calls for joined-up working, simplified service pathways, and clearer guidance.
- Bureaucratic hurdles in accessing support (e.g., disability equipment, housing).

3. Housing, Homelessness & Development

- Lack of transparency in housing systems and banding.

- Frustration with temporary housing and supported living transitions.
- Desire for community-focused building development and clearer housing strategy.

4. Health, Community & Early Intervention

- Fear of individuals falling through the cracks, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- Need for joined-up services to identify and support vulnerable people earlier.
- Collapse of key services and lack of emergency support, particularly around mental health.
- Social isolation across all age groups has far reaching consequences for health and wellbeing.
- Importance of grassroots initiatives and volunteer networks.

5. Local Governance & Representation

- Strong desire for local voices to be heard and represented in decision-making.
- Concerns that larger unitary structures may dilute representation, especially for tenants and people living urban and rural communities.
- Concerns about job losses for existing ECC staff, leading to a loss of expertise, provision of services and local voice.
- Confusion over boundaries and council responsibilities.

6. Transport, Infrastructure & Environmental Concerns

- Poor public transport access, especially in rural areas.
- Accessibility issues with buses and taxis.
- Desire for eco-friendly transport and standardised recycling.
- Frustration over unclear infrastructure responsibilities.

7. Greater Community Voice

- Increased engagement with communities and service users
- Clear pathways for influencing decisions
- Opportunities for meaningful co-design

Parish and Town Council Webinars

Below are the key interests and themes that were established from the 3 webinars carried out with Parish and Town Councils.

Key Interests

1. Maintaining strong local representation and avoiding dilution of their voices.
2. Ensuring financial sustainability and equitable service delivery.
3. Preserving existing boundaries and respecting local and neighbourhood plans.
4. Strengthening relationships with upper-tier councils and exploring opportunities for greater local service provision.
5. Addressing concerns about urban-rural balance and the impact of development on rural areas.

Themes: Arising from Questions and Answers

1. Engagement and Communication:

- Desire for earlier and more in-person engagement.
- Importance of meaningful consultation and ensuring all voices are heard.

- Concerns about how insights will shape the final proposal.
- 2. Benefits and Opportunities:**
 - Interest in the benefits of the proposal for Town and Parish Councils.
 - Concerns about smaller parishes being overlooked in a larger council.
 - Questions about the potential transfer of locally based assets to Town and Parish Councils.
- 3. Local Priorities and Representation:**
 - Ensuring local priorities are reflected in the new arrangements.
 - Balancing urban and rural needs, particularly in areas like Exeter and its surroundings.
 - Concerns about the dilution of parish voices in a larger council.
- 4. Governance and Structure:**
 - Questions about the role of Neighbourhood Area Forums and their relationship with existing councils.
 - Clarification on whether parish boundaries or structures will change.
- 5. Financial and Service Delivery:**
 - Concerns about financial sustainability and service delivery in rural areas.
 - Questions about efficiency gains, financial shocks, and funding for services like social care and transport.
- 6. Boundaries and Geography:**
 - Questions about how boundaries were determined and the inclusion/exclusion of specific areas.
 - Concerns about splitting closely connected communities.
 - Clarification on the timeline for boundary changes.
- 7. Strategic and Regional Issues:**
 - Interest in how the new council will interact with Devon-wide strategic authorities.
 - Concerns about the impact on existing partnerships and regional collaboration.
 - Questions about the potential for a mayoral devolution model.
- 8. Housing and Development:**
 - Concerns about housing development in rural areas and its alignment with local plans.
 - Questions about the impact of the proposal on urban sprawl and rural character.
- 9. Support for Service Provision:**
 - Interest in support for parish councils taking on new services.
 - Questions about staff transfers and capacity building for service delivery.
- 10. Town-Specific Concerns:**
 - Specific questions about the inclusion of towns like Chudleigh and their relationship with Exeter.
 - Concerns about preserving the rural character of certain areas while addressing development needs.

A full list of the question and answers can be found in [Appendix 4](#).

Local Business Community (In-Person Event)

Below are the key questions asked by the business community, with the responses given by the ECC CEO and Council Leader.

1. **What happens if the Government doesn't approve your preferred model?**
We'll need to adapt. The Council has a clear rationale for its proposal, but if the ideal structure isn't accepted, we'll work within the approved framework to protect Exeter's interests and ensure services remain effective.
2. **How will Exeter's voice be protected in a larger unitary council?**
The proposal includes a dedicated Exeter-based unitary to ensure strong local leadership. This avoids Exeter being overshadowed by rural priorities and allows the city to speak with one voice on economic and strategic issues.
3. **What criteria will the Government use to assess proposals?**
Government will assess against legal requirements and core criteria: financial sustainability, service delivery, local representation, and collaboration. While growth isn't a formal criterion, our proposal embeds it throughout.
Is Exeter big enough to be a standalone unitary authority?
Yes. While the original benchmark was 500,000 population, the Government has moved away from rigid thresholds. What matters is strong local leadership and the ability to deliver joined-up services effectively.
4. **How will the new model address planning and infrastructure bottlenecks?**
By consolidating planning, transport, and infrastructure under one council, we remove duplication and delays. This enables faster decision-making and unlocks funding opportunities from bodies like Homes England.

Appendix 1: Representative Survey Questions

Putting people first in Exeter and Devon: Residents Survey

CONTACT FOR COUNCIL

Council website: www.exeter.gov.uk

If they can't find the answer they want here, then the Council's main number is 01392 277888.

This covers (but is not limited to):

Bins and Recycling

Housing, (ECC tenants and homelessness)

Council Tax

Planning Services

Benefits & welfare, (Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Household Support Fund)

Car Parks, (not on road)

Parks

Clean, safe City (e.g. graffiti, noise complaints, pests, littering)

Leisure & Culture

Licensing

As it is a two-tier set up, there are things Exeter City Council doesn't cover, but instead are covered by Devon County Council exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/website-help/what-we-don-t-do/

Devon County Council website: www.devon.gov.uk. Council main number is call to 0345 155 1015.

INTERVIEWER NOTE

1. Speak to residents aged 16 or over according to your given quota
2. Read the introductory text "READ OUT" where it is provided, before asking the questions
3. Do not read out the 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say' category in questions

READ OUT: Good morning / afternoon / evening my name is _____ and I am calling from Enventure Research on behalf of Exeter City Council, who have asked us to carry out a survey to help them understand the views of residents in Exeter and the surrounding area about local government reorganisation.

At an Extraordinary meeting on 14 August Exeter City councillors agreed the initial geography for a three unitary model for local government reorganisation in Devon, which recognises the distinct needs and identities of urban and rural areas:

- Urban unitary for Exeter and surrounding areas
- Urban unitary council for Plymouth and adjacent Parishes
- Rural and coastal unitary for the rest of Devon

Reorganisation presents a once in a generation opportunity to reshape public services to improve outcomes for residents, address inequalities and deliver value for money.

The 3-council model for Devon will enable critical services including those for children and young people, vulnerable adults, public health and housing to be designed around local needs and be aligned with services from other agencies like the NHS and police. Exeter City Council thinks this will deliver better outcomes for local people and best value for money for the taxpayer.

The 3 unitary proposal supports growth, resilience, and service delivery for cities, coastal towns and dispersed rural areas.

As a resident within the area proposed for an urban unitary for Exeter, it is essential that we know what you think.

Exeter City Council's community and stakeholder engagement will inform the final proposal that will be submitted to Government in November 2025.

Your answers will be anonymous and confidential and the interview should take around 12 minutes to complete.

Would you have time to take part in the survey?

All information provided will be analysed by Enventure Research, an independent research agency, and treated in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. Enventure Research will only use information you provide to inform the research. Enventure Research is registered with the Data Controller and is a Market Research Society Company Partner. For our privacy notice, please refer to our website www.enventure.co.uk

If resident seems unsure...

You do not have to answer any questions if you don't want to, and you can end the interview at any time. Are you happy to proceed?

About you

S1 S1. Please tell me which of the following age bands you fall into

- ☐ 16 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

S2 S2. How do you describe your sex? The next question gives the option to tell us if the gender you identify with is different from your sex registered at birth, and, if different, the option to tell us what term you prefer to use

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say

S2a S2a. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

S3 What is your postcode please? (Use capital letters and a space between the two parts)

E.G. EX2 4NG

READ OUT: These questions are based around the outcomes which the Government expects the Council to consider when looking at the structure of councils in Devon.

Q1 Where do you consider your local area to be? **READ OUT AND WRITE BELOW**

Q2 What is your connection to your local area? **READ OUT, MULTI-CODE**

- ☐ I live here
- ☐ I work here
- ☐ I run a business here
- ☐ I represent a community organisation here
- ☐ I study here
- ☐ Other

Your local area

Q3 What do you like about your local area? **READ OUT AND WRITE BELOW**

Q4 What would you like to be improved in your local area? **READ OUT AND WRITE BELOW**

Your community

READ OUT: You have a key role in shaping Council decision-making related to your community and wider area.

Q5 How would you like to be involved in future local decision making? **READ OUT, MULTI-CODE**

- ☐ Through a Town or Parish Council
- ☐ Through existing community forums and/or organisations
- ☐ Involvement in focus groups and consultations run by the Council
- ☐ I want to be kept informed but don't want to get involved
- ☐ I don't want to be involved or kept informed [DO NOT READ OUT]
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Don't know/unsure [DO NOT READ OUT]

Your Council

Q6 How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community? Please rate each one on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all valuable' and 5 means 'very valuable'
READ OUT, SINGLE CODE

	1 - not at all valuable	2	3	4	5 - very valuable	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Being responsive to local needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being inclusive and accessible to all residents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaborating effectively with other public services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Protecting the environment and promoting climate action	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Delivering services efficiently and reliably	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communicating clearly and keeping residents informed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q7 How important are each of the following when thinking about how local government reorganisation could impact you and your community? Please rate each one from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all important' and 5 means 'very important' READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE

	1 - not at all important	2	3	4	5 - very important	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Improved understanding of the issues facing your local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supportive and accessible local ward councillor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Easy access to the council services you need	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Decisions that impact you will be made locally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Efficient services which offer value for money	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q8 How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon? Please rate each one from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all important' and 5 means 'very important' READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE

	1 - not at all important	2	3	4	5 - very important	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of affordable, warm and secure housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working to mitigate the consequences of climate change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9 How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services? Please rate each one from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all important' and 5 means 'very important' **READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE**

	1 - not at all important	2	3	4	5 - very important	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Keeping children safe from harm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Education services, and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Building-related services such as planning applications, planning enforcement, building control, protecting old buildings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support with housing needs, council tax and benefits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helping people stay healthy, including support for drugs, alcohol and health checks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

About you

READ OUT: The following questions ask for some more information about you. These questions are voluntary. You can say 'Prefer not to say' if you do not want to answer a question. Your answers will only be used so we can analyse differing views, opinions and attitudes and make sure that we hear from a cross-section of people. They will not be used for any other purpose.

Q10 What is your ethnic group? **READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE**

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British | ☐ Black/Black British African |
| ☐ White Irish | ☐ Black/Black British Caribbean |
| ☐ White Gypsy or Irish Traveller | ☐ Black/Black British Somali |
| ☐ White Roma | ☐ Any other Black/African/Caribbean background |
| ☐ Any other White background | ☐ Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean |
| ☐ Asian/Asian British Indian | ☐ Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Black African |
| ☐ Asian/Asian British Pakistani | ☐ Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Asian |
| ☐ Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi | ☐ Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background |
| ☐ Asian/Asian British Nepali | ☐ Arab |
| ☐ Asian/Asian British Vietnamese | ☐ Any other ethnic group |
| ☐ Asian/Asian British Chinese | ☐ Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ OUT] |
| ☐ Any other Asian background | |

Q11 What is your employment status? READ OUT, MULTI-CODE

- ☐ Working full time
- ☐ Working part time
- ☐ Not in employment
- ☐ Not in employment but actively looking
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ In full-time education
- ☐ In part-time education
- ☐ Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ OUT]

Q12 Do you consider yourself to have a long-term health condition and/or disability? READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ OUT]

Thank and close.

READ OUT: Thank you for taking the time to take part in the survey. Your views are greatly appreciated.

READ OUT: As part of our quality checking process, we contact a proportion of people to check you were interviewed in a friendly and professional manner and in accordance with the MRS code of conduct. It will only be used for this purpose and WILL NOT be passed on or used in the future.

Please click the tick button to send the interview.

Appendix 2: Online (Self-Referral) Survey Questions

Putting People First in Exeter and Devon

What is the survey about?

This survey gives you the opportunity to share your views and opinions relating to local government reorganisation. The questions are based around the outcomes which the Government expects us to consider when looking at the structure of councils in Devon.

At an Extraordinary meeting on 14 August Exeter City councillors agreed the initial geography for a three unitary model for local government reorganisation in Devon, which recognises the distinct needs and identities of urban and rural areas:

- Urban unitary council for Exeter and surrounding areas
- Urban unitary council for Plymouth and adjacent areas
- Rural and coastal unitary council for the rest of Devon

Reorganisation presents a once in a generation opportunity to reshape public services to improve outcomes for residents, address inequalities and deliver value for money.

The 3-council model for Devon will enable critical services including those for children and young people, vulnerable adults, public health and housing to be designed around local needs and be aligned with services from other agencies like the NHS and police. Exeter City Council thinks this will deliver better outcomes for local people and best value for money for the taxpayer.

The 3 unitary proposal supports growth, resilience, and service delivery for cities, coastal towns and dispersed rural areas.

As a resident within the area proposed for an urban unitary for Exeter and surrounding areas, it is essential that we know what you think. Exeter City Council's community and stakeholder engagement will inform the final proposal that will be submitted to Government in November 2025.

The survey will take around 12 minutes to complete and is open until 26 September 2025. Taking part in the survey is voluntary, but your feedback is really valuable.

Taking part in the survey

To navigate through this survey, use the arrow buttons at the bottom of each page. DO NOT use the back/forward options in your browser. To remove your answers to a question, click on the reset button.

You can save your answers at any point and return to them later. To do this, you will need to use the save button at the bottom of the page and provide your email address. You will then be sent a link to use to complete the survey.

If you have any questions about completing this survey, please call the helpline on 0800 0092 117 or email helpline@enventure.co.uk

How we will use your information and your rights

Exeter City Council has asked an independent organisation, Enventure Research, to collect responses to the survey so that your responses remain confidential. The Council will receive a report on the aggregated survey findings, and no one will be able to identify individual responses.

For information about your data rights and who to contact please read Exeter City Council's privacy notices.

Enventure Research will use the information you give in your survey response as described above. Your data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

To take part in the survey, click the arrow button to go to the start of the survey.

About you

The following question will allow us to provide context to your responses. They will not be used to identify you personally.

Q1 What is your connection to Exeter and the surrounding area?
Select all that apply

- ☐ I live here
- ☐ I work here
- ☐ I run a business here
- ☐ I represent a community organisation here
- ☐ I study here
- ☐ Other please specify

Q2 In what capacity are you responding?
Select one answer

- ☐ Resident
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Parish or Town Council
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Voluntary or community sector organisation
- ☐ Other e.g. school, health provider, housing association please specify

Q3 Where do you consider your local area?
Please tell us below

About you

Q4 What is your home postcode?
e.g. EX2 4NG

Q5 Where is your work or education based?
Please tell us below

Q6 Where do you do most of your shopping?
Please tell us below

Q7 Where do you spend most time socialising or taking part in cultural activities? Please tell us below

Your area

Q8 What do you like about the area where you live, work, study or represent? Please tell us below

Q9 What would you like to be improved in this area?
Please tell us below

Q10 What are your hopes and dreams for your local area?
Please tell us below

Q11 What are the biggest challenges in your local area?
Please tell us below

Your community

You have a key role in shaping Council decision-making related to your community and wider area.

Q12 How would you like to be involved in future local decision making? Select as many as apply

- ☐ Through a Town or Parish Council
- ☐ Through existing community forums and/or organisations
- ☐ Involvement in focus groups and consultations run by the Council
- ☐ I want to be kept informed but don't want to get involved
- ☐ I don't want to be involved or kept informed
- ☐ Other please specify
- ☐ Don't know/unsure

Your Council

Now we'd like you to think about how you'd like your council to work for you in the future.

**Q13 Which of the following Councils delivers services, such as waste collection and Council Tax, in your area?
Select one answer**

- ☐ East Devon District Council
- ☐ Exeter City Council
- ☐ Mid Devon District Council
- ☐ North Devon Council
- ☐ Plymouth City Council
- ☐ South Hams District Council
- ☐ Teignbridge District Council
- ☐ Torbay Council
- ☐ Torridge District Council
- ☐ West Devon Borough Council
- ☐ Don't know

**Q14 Thinking about your local council or councils, which of the following do you most value in the way it serves your community?
Select up to three answers**

- ☐ Being responsive to local needs
- ☐ Representing the community fairly and transparently
- ☐ Providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions
- ☐ Offering good value for money
- ☐ Supporting long-term growth and sustainability
- ☐ Being inclusive and accessible to all residents
- ☐ Collaborating effectively with other public services
- ☐ Protecting the environment and promoting climate action
- ☐ Delivering services efficiently and reliably
- ☐ Having a clear vision and leadership for the future
- ☐ Communicating clearly and keeping residents informed
- ☐ Other please specify
- ☐ Don't know

Q15 How do you hope that Local Government Reorganisation will impact you and/or your community?

Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
A good understanding of the issues facing your local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A supportive and accessible local ward councillor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clear, open and honest decision-making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Decisions that impact you are made locally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Council decisions are made within easy travelling distance of your area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q16 How do you hope that Local Government Reorganisation will improve Council Services in your area?
Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Easy access to the council services you need	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved quality of services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clear understanding of who is responsible for delivering services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Efficient services that offer good value for money	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Council offices are located nearby	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q17 What should be the top priorities when shaping future people and community services for Devon?
Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Keeping children safe from harm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Education services, including school admissions and transport, and support for those with SEND	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of truly affordable, warm and secure housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support with housing needs, council tax and benefits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helping people stay healthy, including support for drugs, alcohol and health checks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q18 What should be the top priorities when shaping future place-based services for Devon?

Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Building-related services such as planning applications, planning enforcement, building control, protecting old buildings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community safety and standards, such as trading standards, food safety, licensing, noise and air quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q19 What should be the top priorities when shaping the future of the environment and economy for Devon?

Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Protecting the environment and keeping it clean	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working to mitigate the consequences of climate change	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q20 Do you have any final comments? Please tell us below

About you

The following questions ask for information about you. These questions are voluntary. You can say 'Prefer not to say' if you do not want to answer a question. Your answers will only be used so we can analyse differing views, opinions and attitudes and make sure that we hear from a cross-section of people. They will not be used for any other purpose.

Q21 Please select which of the following age bands you fall into.
Select one answer only

- ☐ 16 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q22 How do you describe your sex? The next question gives the option to tell us if the gender you identify with is different from your sex registered at birth, and, if different, the option to tell us what term you prefer to use.
Select one answer only

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q23 Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? Select one answer only

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Appendix 3: Focus Group Introductory Slides



What is Local
Government
Reorganisation
or “LGR” all
about?

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is the process of changing how local councils are organised and what they are responsible for

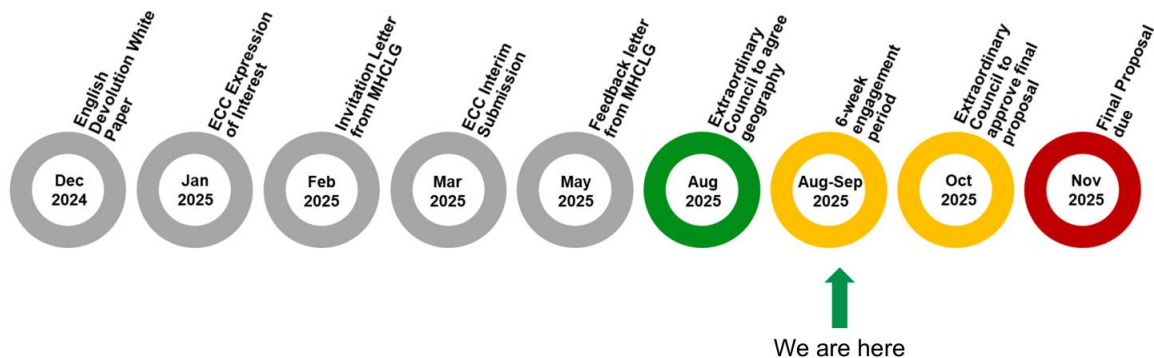
The Government plans to replace the current two-tier system of district and county councils with fewer single tier unitary councils that deliver all local services and can cover counties, towns, or cities

The aim is to simplify local government and make structures more sustainable

This is a mandatory process, as stipulated by the Government.



Timeframe



ONE EXETER
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



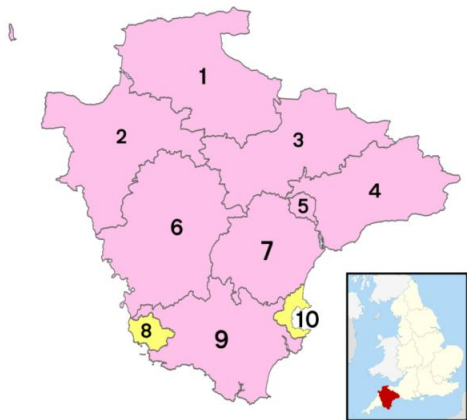
LGR: A once in a generation opportunity

- **Simpler and clearer:** one council will deal with all your services except in parished areas, where there will be two
- **Better, more efficient services:** combining services under one roof will be easier to manage and more joined-up
- **Better value for money:** reducing the number of councils will reduce duplication and bring efficiency savings
- **More local empowerment:** LGR links to Devolution which aims to shift power out of Westminster
- **Improves outcomes and tackles inequalities.**

ONE EXETER
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



What does this mean for Devon?



- Devon has 11 different authorities delivering services for residents:
 - Devon County Council
 - 2 unitary authorities; Plymouth and Torbay
 - 8 District Councils
- Under Local Government Reorganisation plans, all 11 authorities will be replaced with a smaller number of new unitary councils

ONE EXETER
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



ECC proposal

3 new unitary councils:

- A unitary council based on Exeter and surrounding area
- A unitary council for Plymouth and adjacent areas
- A unitary council for the rest of Devon



ONE EXETER
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Today's topic areas

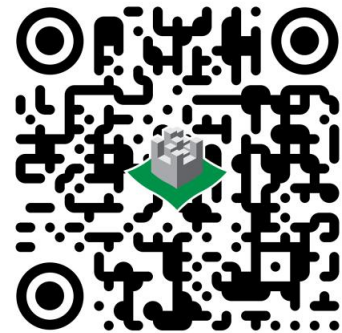
- Understand your experiences of council services –delivered by ECC and Devon CC
- Exploring and understanding any unmet local needs
- Potential benefits of more joined up services in the future
- Potential benefits of more local decision making in the future
- Thoughts on having a stronger voice for the local area

ONE EXETER
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



More ways you can be involved

1. Complete our online survey
www.exeter.gov.uk/lgr
2. Participate in the representative survey if you are contacted
3. Look out for the Government led Public Consultation in Spring 2026



ONE EXETER
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



Appendix 4: Q&A Arising from Parish & Town Council Webinars

Engagement and Communication

Why not talk to us sooner?

We needed time to look at the data and evidence to model different options – not all would be viable against the government criteria.

We wanted to ensure everyone heard the same message at the same time. This has helped us be clear on who might be affected and how so that we could embark on meaningful engagement.

We have initiated a broad programme of engagement aiming to speak to as many stakeholders and residents as possible.

Why do webinars - in person engagement is more meaningful?

We agree and would love to be able to visit each town and parish but within the timeframe, this is not possible. We're keen to hear your views and would encourage you to complete the online survey.

How will the insights inform the final proposal?

We recognise that parish and town councils are closest to their communities and have a deep understanding of local needs and priorities. The insights and feedback you share – whether through these sessions, surveys, or direct conversations – will be carefully considered as we shape the final proposal. We're committed to reflecting what we hear from you, and your expertise will help ensure that the new arrangements are responsive to the realities of each area.

Have you consulted with parishes that would be left in the “rest of Devon” authority, and do you think government will accept this arrangement?

Ideally, all councils would agree a model together, but this hasn't been possible. The proposal must be financially sustainable for all of Devon” but detailed modelling is still underway. We are assuming that parish areas that sit outside of the council's proposed geography will be engaged by their district councils as part of their building of their submission to government as of course we have done for those parishes within our proposal.

Benefits and Opportunities for Town and Parish Councils

What are the benefits for us?

Our proposal is about strengthening relationships between upper tier councils and Town and Parish Councils. We think there is opportunity to look at new ways of working and

the potential for local parish councils to take on delivering more services if they have an appetite to do so.

How will your proposal benefit parishes compared to other options, and how will you ensure small parishes aren't overlooked in a larger council?

The proposal is for a smaller unitary than alternatives being supported by the other district councils and the county council. We believe that the size of the council is less important than the political and managerial leadership working with communities to understand local needs. We will be proposing that the new council has a specific focus on positive engagement and working with parish councils.

How will you work with existing neighbourhood plans?

The new council will honour existing local and neighbourhood plans, which have legal status. Over time, a new local plan will be developed, but current plans will be respected.

How will your proposal improve finances for services like social care and transport, given the population is only just enough for resilience?

The proposal is still being modelled for financial sustainability.

There is evidence that both small and large unitaries can deliver social care well – it's not just about size, but about leadership and local responsiveness.

Are you concerned about dilution of parish voices in a larger council?

We recognise the importance of parish voices. The team is seeking feedback on what would make a better relationship between parishes and the new council. They want to learn from current experiences and reflect improvements in the proposal.

Is there an intention to parish urban areas in Exeter to ensure equitable opportunity to deliver local services?

The government has made it clear that the existing town and parish council structure will remain unchanged, and they do not expect new ones to be set up. However, our proposal will strengthen the role of Town and Parish Councils where there is a local desire to do so. The city council are exploring ways to co-produce a system of Neighbourhood Area Forums within Exeter (which doesn't have parishes) to enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Will there be an opportunity for the town councils to take some of the assets that are more sort of locally based assets that currently run by the town councils?

There will be an opportunity for the new unitary council, once established, to discuss with parish and town councils the potential transfer of locally based assets.

This would be a matter for negotiation, depending on the appetite of both the parish councils and the new authority, but it is certainly possible.

Local Priorities, Representation, and Governance

How will you differentiate between and reflect local priorities?

By listening, learning, and using data. There's already a lot of information on local priorities from previous community engagement.

The new council will need to differentiate between urban and semi-urban priorities and tailor support accordingly.

What support is there for parish councils who might be looking to move into service provision that they don't currently have experiencing?

There would be support available. If parish councils take on services currently provided at the upper tier, there would need to be consideration of staff transfers (under TUPE regulations).

Support would be provided both from the new council and from external bodies to help parish councils build capacity and expertise.

How will you balance dealing with more rural parish areas, given Exeter is predominantly urban? How would a Greater Exeter unitary benefit rural residents?

The new council will have political representation from both urban and semi-urban areas.

At least half the population in the proposed area is from outside of the current Exeter city so elected members and parish/town councils will ensure appropriate services for all.

Does driving growth mean more houses in rural areas?

No, the proposal is not about increasing housing in rural areas beyond what's already planned in local and neighbourhood plans.

The new council will have to respect existing plans and go through statutory processes for any new local plan.

Will Exeter be allowed to build everywhere under the new arrangements?

No. Development will continue to be guided by agreed Local Plans. Concerns were raised about a proposed new town in East Devon and the lack of adequate transport links.

We recognise the importance of ensuring new development is well-connected and does not worsen traffic or reduce anyone's sense of place.

How will you learn from challenges faced by authorities like Somerset (e.g., staff restructures and savings)?

The team is working with other councils and consultants to learn from Somerset's experience, including the challenges of funding and restructuring. They aim to be open and honest about what's achievable.

When you say that town and parish councils will exist, will exist in the same number in the same geographies, will there be any border changes or would you be considering that they will remain as they are now?

The government has made it clear there will be no change to parish and town councils – their number and boundaries will remain as they are. Parish boundaries are being used as the building blocks for the new unitary proposals

In your proposal, you mentioned something called Neighbourhood Area forums, and I wondered whether you could just address what they are in relation to town and parish councils.

Neighbourhood Area Forums are used in some areas (e.g. Wiltshire, Cornwall) to give a local voice to neighbourhoods.

In areas with parish councils, these forums are unlikely to duplicate existing governance.

They may be piloted in Exeter, which does not have parishes.

Boundaries, Geography, and Inclusion

How did you determine where to draw the lines on the map?

The proposed boundary was drawn to include areas with strong connections to Exeter – places where people regularly travel for work, study, culture, and leisure.

We included existing growth areas to the east and south of the city, as well as communities that naturally look to Exeter for services.

As we move through this engagement period, we'll use data, evidence, and feedback to refine the boundary, ensuring it reflects real patterns of daily life and meets the government's financial sustainability requirements.

The aim is to create a structure that supports both the unique needs of urban Exeter and the wider rural and coastal communities across Devon.

To amend boundaries will require a formal process, how many years is it anticipated to take?

The timeline will be determined by the Minister and Local Government Boundary Commission England – it is likely to take several years.

We expect more clarity once proposals are submitted and reviewed nationally.

Of the rural Devon remaining – are there other unitary counties without a city as there would be no true centre if Exeter removes itself from the County of Devon?

Yes, it's not unprecedented. For example, in Cornwall, Herefordshire, Wiltshire, and Westmorland and Furness

Many of these local authorities resemble Devon in terms of landscape, economy, and market towns etc and have unitary authorities that function as counties – but do not include any official city.

It's worth noting that all Devon proposals include at least one unitary without a city centre.

Changes to postcodes will impact on those wishing to attend Torbay Grammar Schools who give preference to Torbay postcodes and are the closest selective state schools– has this been considered.

Postcodes will not change as part of this process.

We're aware of school access concerns and welcome further input on how best to address them.

Why isn't Ottery St Mary included in the proposed boundary?

We're aware of the strong links between Ottery, West Hill and Aylesbeare – including shared schools and councillors.

The current proposal reflects a range of factors, but we understand the concern about splitting closely connected communities and will continue to review this.

Financial and Service Delivery Implications

What would happen logistically and financially to the vast rural area in terms of delivering its services such as Waste, Care Provision, Transport of children requiring special provision/taxi, etc– would savings be made or only in areas of dense population?

This is something that we are currently modelling as our task is to demonstrate that our proposal is in the best interest of all of Devon. Efficient models of service delivery would need to be developed by all of councils putting forward proposals.

The aim is to design high quality services with better outcomes for residents.

The driver for this proposal is to make/keep Exeter as the main driver for the Devon economy which is fine, but the larger area involved is the rural economy, how does this plan move that forward?

The proposal recognises the importance of both urban and rural/coastal economies.

A dedicated rural and coastal unitary council is part of the model to ensure tailored support for rural communities.

The aim is to design services and investment strategies that reflect the distinct needs of rural areas, not just urban centres.

Improved coordination between councils will help unlock growth across the whole county, including farming, tourism, and small business sectors.

Will more money be available for services under the new boundary?

We are still working through the financial information.

The aim is to ensure services are sustainable and responsive, but no final decisions have been made yet.

What percentage savings or efficiency gains are expected, and what is meant by “financial shock”?

Efficiencies are expected over a five-year period, not immediately.

“Financial shock” refers to the council’s ability to withstand unexpected financial pressures, such as changes in funding or demand.

Strategic and Regional Issues

Do you have any details of how you still propose to stay in contact, discuss with and manage the pan Devon decisions of greater strategic importance which affect all of Devon in a major way when many of the previous county wide assets are now locked away and controlled in the relatively small unitaries of Plymouth and Exeter and may even be Torbay yet?

Our submission to Government will focus on achieving better outcomes for all residents in Devon.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) champions the interests of its residents and the area as a whole, both nationally and internationally.

The Leader of the City Council is currently a member of the Devon and Torbay CCA Board and the Housing Advisory Board, albeit without full voting powers.

If our proposal was agreed by Government, the unitary council for Exeter and the surrounding area would work as one of the Constituent authorities within the DTCCA, with full voting powers and participate in Devon-wide outcomes through shared frameworks on housing, transport, economic growth, skills, net zero, and infrastructure investment.

What will happen to existing partnerships across Devon?

Many partnerships are working well, and we don’t want to disrupt what’s already effective. The intention is to build on existing strengths, not dismantle them.

What is your opinion on the effectiveness of the/a Strategic Combined Authority and how will you officially interact with it which may even be mayoral in the future?

As you may be aware, all Leaders across Devon recently united behind a call for the creation of a South-Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority.

In terms of the opportunities that devolution will bring in the future, I believe that our region has presented a compelling case for a mayoral devolution model that would

enhance local control, drive economic growth, and improve outcomes for our residents and businesses.

I feel the 'rest of Devon' are being disadvantaged with a postcode lottery after paying the same as those advantaged in the city areas over many years.

Local Government Reorganisation will result in changes to constituent authorities, but we think the benefits of an MSA are clear as it will:

- Maximise the potential of our exceptional environmental assets and internationally significant research capacity to position the UK as a leader in environmental intelligence and clean marine innovation.
- Leverage our significant tourism economy (worth over £2 billion annually) more effectively through coordinated investment and promotion. The visitor economy in Devon and Torbay supports nearly 33,000 local jobs.
- Address the specific housing pressures faced by our communities with a strategic approach to housing affordability and availability.
 - Create an integrated transport network that connects rural and coastal communities with our urban centres and beyond.
 - Develop coordinated skills provision that meets the needs of our key growth sectors and addresses productivity challenges.
 - Support the vital national security role of Devonport dockyard, which maintains the UK's Continuous at Sea Nuclear Deterrent capability and will see £4.4 billion of investment over the next decade as part of the MoD's long-term commitment.

Town-specific questions

How will your proposal improve things for Chudleigh compared to other proposals?

The team is seeking feedback on what would make a better relationship between parishes and the new council. They want to learn from current experiences and reflect improvements in the proposal.

The final decision will be made by the Minister, not by a local vote.

Is the plan to include the whole of Chudleigh Town? Where would the border lie?

Yes, Chudleigh Town is a logical inclusion due to strong links with Exeter – with people already commuting for work, leisure, study and services.

The border will be along the parish boundary. We're not proposing to include all of Chudleigh Ward, as this would mean splitting Hennock Parish, which sits in Teign Valley ward.

Chudleigh Ward would be split leaving out the most rural elements of Hennock Parish, Chudleigh is an ancient wool town surrounded by farmland how does this

fit into the city scape of Exeter? Would it be anticipated that further housing development sprawl would travel towards Chudleigh?

Chudleigh has strong functional links to Exeter, which supports its inclusion. We're not proposing to include all Chudleigh to avoid splitting Hennock Parish.

Future development will be guided by planning policy, not by this boundary proposal alone.

Appendix 5: Quotes from Focus Groups

N.B. Quotes from the focus groups were limited because note taking focused on capturing the content and direction of the conversations, rather than verbatim transcripts.

“Friends not coming into Exeter anymore because of digital/app-based parking meters.”

“Health, digitalisation and loneliness have come out as the top three challenges for older people locally for two years running.”

“Six years later, I still couldn’t get an electric wheelchair. I didn’t meet the criteria. Eventually, they gave me the wheelchair — and it changed everything.”

“There needs to be a clear flowchart [for housing banding]. Forget the jargon.”

“Nobody knows the process for getting housing. We still don’t really know.”

“Sometimes Mid Devon doesn’t connect with Exeter. Exeter connects with East. This will build a bigger system.”

“Different safeguarding processes wherever you go — it gets confusing.”

“You shouldn’t have to be on death’s door for someone to listen to you.”

“I’ve been on the list for social housing for over four years... I’m nowhere near the top.”

“I was in supported living. The contract ended. I was moved to Band D. To get back to Band B, I’d have to go backwards.”

“They keep building houses. But are they building communities?”

“There’s no clear pathway. Even professionals don’t know how the system works.”

“Student accommodation was taking over the city somewhat”

“Since I’ve lived in Devon, all I’ve seen is a collapse [in mental health services]. Mind in Exeter and East Devon is no longer there.”

“There is no emergency service geared towards addiction of any description within our communities.”

“How does this actually benefit the person on the street? Changing government boundaries doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s going to benefit the person on the street.”

“Reducing the number of councils will reduce duplication and bring efficiency savings... Local empowerment links to devolution.”

“Transport is not within the current council’s remit and this is frustrating.”

“Lack of infrastructure with local developments that put pressure on existing old roads.”

“Look after the environment. Keep eco issues high on the list [of priorities] and have better buses and trains so we don’t have to rely on cars.”

Summary of Discussion – LGR Exeter Boundary Change Meeting (3 September 2025)

Attendees Exeter City Council

- Philip Bialyk (PB) Leader of Exeter City Council
- Bindu Arjoon (BA) - Chief Executive
- Jo Yelland (JY) – Strategy Director
- Lorraine Betts (LB) – Project Lead LGR
- Simon Copper (SC) – Head of Legal Services/Monitoring officer
- Judith Wellings (JW) - Exeter City Council

MHCLG

- Ruth Miller (RM) - Deputy Director, MHCLG
 - Ellie Smyllie (ES) - Head of LGR Local Delivery, MHCLG
 - Louise Beckingham (LB) - LGR Policy Lead
 - Christian Denison (CD) - LGR Delivery Lead
 - Sonia Cross - LGR Delivery support and Notetaker
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- The Purpose of the Meeting was to discuss possible presentation of boundary change options and the development of LGR proposals.
 - Exeter is willing to work with other Devon councils on how they might incorporate their proposals.
 - MHCLG advised that boundary changes can be sought but they must demonstrate a strong financial sustainability and public services justification. Proposals must also meet invitation criteria and be suitable for consultation. MHCLG referred to the SoS's invitation letter dated 5 February 2025, and the guidance attached at the schedule to the letter, as well as the LGA's local government reorganisation FAQs and glossary in relation to submissions involving boundary changes.
 - Submissions must be a single, clear proposal with base case based on existing boundaries and modifications justified. Examples on when, councils may wish to consider a proposal with modified boundaries include where existing boundaries would not meet the criteria or changes to boundaries would better meet the criteria.
 - The Secretary of State may seek advice from the LGBCE prior to implementing a proposal. There are different ways to achieve boundary change, we are setting out one route where we think you can achieve boundary and structural change together.
 - LGBCE has two roles: boundary change and electoral review. Webinars are being held to support councils in understanding warding patterns for new authorities.
 - Structural change orders may be used to implement modifications including boundary changes. This would form the legislative basis for new authorities.
 - Exeter along with other councils was offered ongoing support and advised further meetings would be welcomed.

Analysis of Financial Risk

Risk to new authorities	Risk description	Risk mitigation
New councils inherit unaffordable contractual commitments	Unexpected construction or service contract commitments inherited by new authorities may create budgetary pressures.	Early and ongoing engagement across predecessor councils to ensure councils work together to maintain balanced budgets and consult on significant new contractual commitments. Section 24 directions during implementation period.
Sub-optimal or poor value asset acquisitions and disposals	Assets acquisitions create unaffordable debt for new councils; assets are disposed of by predecessor councils for less than best value.	Early and ongoing engagement between predecessor councils as noted above. Section 24 directions during implementation period.
New councils inherit unsustainable budget positions	Current authorities may utilise one-off reserves to fund ongoing expenditure or may not be able to deliver planned savings or contain costs within budget. This would leave new authorities inheriting an unbalanced budget position.	Early and ongoing engagement between predecessor councils to ensure councils commit to maintaining balanced budget positions in the run up to reorganisation. Provision of adequate reserves and contingencies within initial budget setting for new councils.
Cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit	Within the wider risk around budgets, there is an acute risk in Devon regarding the level of DSG deficit that, on current trends, would be inherited by new councils. The statutory override ends on 31st March 2028, the day before new councils would be created and this is therefore considered a significant risk.	Projected levels of DSG deficit in Devon are likely to be unmanageable locally without support from central Government. Engagement with Government to agree a solution will be key to ensuring viability of new councils in relation to this acute issue.
Depletion of reserves	Predecessor councils utilising reserves to fund transition costs or to balance the budget could leave inadequate levels of reserves for new councils.	Early and ongoing engagement between predecessor councils to ensure councils commit to maintaining balanced budget positions and adequate levels of reserves.

Risk to new authorities	Risk description	Risk mitigation
Transition costs are higher than estimated	The cost for separating services previously delivered by a top tier authority may be higher than anticipated, in particular due to higher IT or redundancy costs.	Contingencies are built in to estimates and should be funded within financial plans. Implementation plans could be adjusted, e.g. by phasing or the use of shared service agreements to defer / spread transition costs.
Estimated savings are not achievable	The savings estimated are based on historic costs and a high level, desktop analysis. They may not materialise as expected, which could impact on the financial sustainability of new councils.	Implementation executives, continuing and shadow authorities will need to review savings assumptions and revise if necessary, as more information becomes available; establishing benefits tracking systems to ensure that the projected savings are closely monitored and delivered will be key to realising financial benefits. Financial plans and budgets should take a zero based approach, improving the accuracy of initial estimates.
Legacy debts and liabilities may create disproportionate, unaffordable capital financing pressures	We anticipate that, generally, debt liabilities would be apportioned to new councils on an equitable basis; however, there is risk that for specific debt financed assets this general approach could lead to 'stranded' debt liabilities, disassociated from income streams or assets.	Conduct review of assets and liabilities ahead of transition. Early and ongoing engagement between predecessor councils to ensure potential 'stranded debt' issues are identified and resolved at an early stage.