

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation

This report details the consultation completed on the draft homelessness strategy and the key findings. All the feedback has been considered by the Homelessness Reduction Board and the strategy has been amended to reflect the views of stakeholders.

Background to the consultation

The Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy ends in 2025, and consequently, a new strategy needs to be formed. The new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will run from 2025 until 2030 and aims to address the wide range of factors that contribute to homelessness in the borough.

The consultation has sought the views of residents, stakeholders, and people with lived experience for the new draft. The strategy has been developed with the Homelessness Reduction Board, data from the Homelessness Review, and engagement with partners and people with lived experience. The information gathered has helped the Council to understand the current and future needs of households who are affected by homelessness.

The new strategy reinforces the principles of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and recognises that homelessness, in its causes and consequences, is a cross-cutting issue, which cannot be tackled by one agency alone. In order to effectively prevent homelessness, it is essential that all partner agencies work together in an integrated way. A collaborative partnership approach is fundamental to the foundations of the strategy for the Council to be able to effectively tackle homelessness.

How the consultation was carried out

To ensure residents, stakeholders, and partners had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, a 12-week engagement programme was completed. This was broken up into a four-week period of engagement for the Homelessness Review data and strategy priorities. Followed by a wider 8-week consultation on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The 4-week engagement period began on 12 August and closed on 8 September, and then the wider 8-week consultation on the draft strategy consultation began on 16 September and closed on 10 November.

There were multiple ways in which participants could respond and take part in the consultation and ensure their views were heard. These methods included an online survey and several scheduled drop-in events which were advertised on the Council website. The events included:

- Chester Aid to the Homeless drop-in session
- Children's Services focus group
- Crossroads Community Hub drop-in session
- Ellesmere Port Library drop-in session
- Health and Well-being Board presentation
- Housing Options Team meeting
- It's Only Temporary focus group
- Poverty Truth Advisory Board presentation

- Refuge focus group
- Sutton Beeches Supported Living scheme focus group
- University Partners meeting presentation
- Victoria House Supported Living scheme focus group
- Winsford Community Grocery drop-in session

Paper copies of the survey were available for those who did not have access to the online version, and people were also able to respond to the consultation by email, letter or telephone.

Communication methods to ensure that key stakeholders were made aware of the consultation and given the opportunity to have their say included a press release, emails to key stakeholder groups, Member Briefings, and the presence of the consultation on the Council website.

The consultation received 50 survey responses, and 3 participants responded via email or letter. In addition, a number of people attended the drop-in events.

Key messages

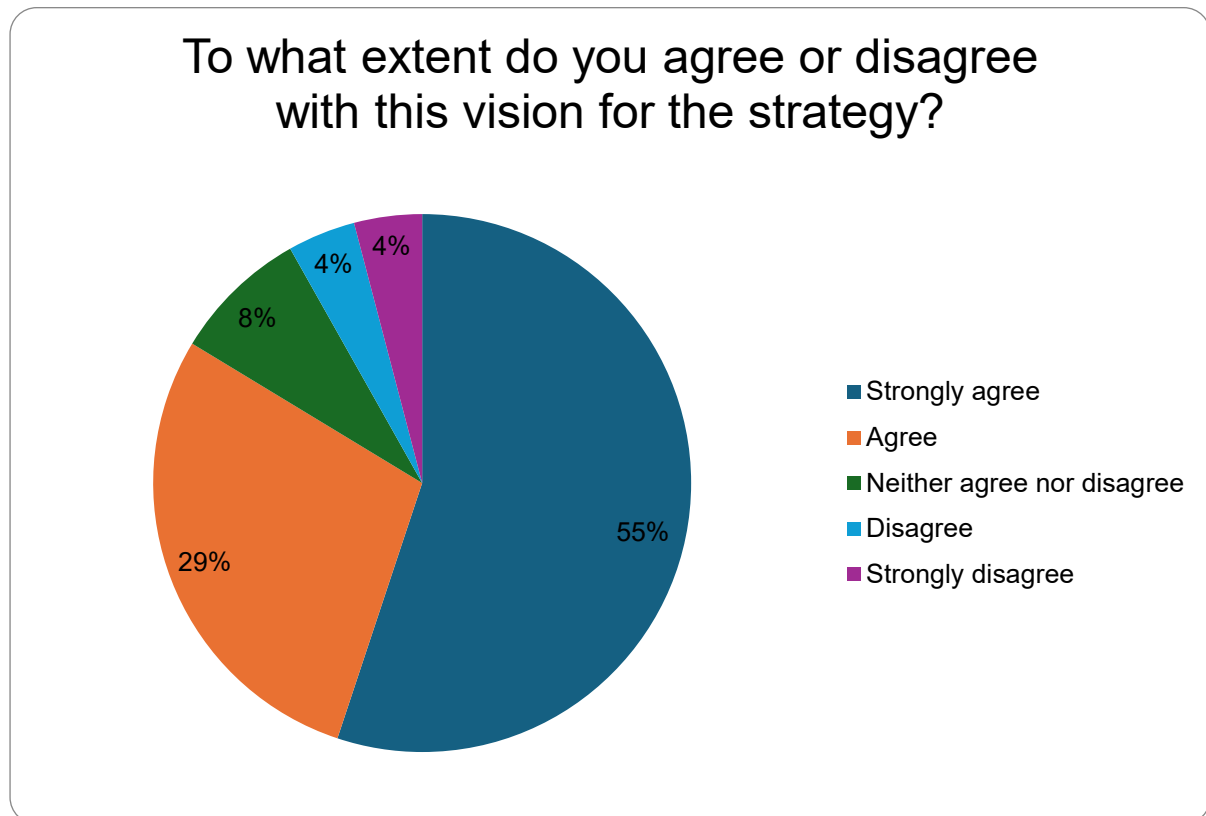
The key messages from the consultation are as follows:

- Support for the vision and three priorities.
- The importance of partnership working at a strategic and operational level.
- Ensuring those with lived experience of homelessness are involved in developing services.
- A need to focus on and learn about the root causes of homelessness.
- Support for more specialised support and accommodation options including for those with complex needs and Housing First.
- Support for specific housing pathways for different groups including young people and rough sleepers.
- A greater focus is needed on improving awareness and access to mental health services.
- Support for multi-disciplinary teamwork and a coordinated response.
- Support for raising awareness of housing options in the borough and the need for clear and accessible information.
- Support for increasing the range of housing options available including developing the council's in-house Private Rented Sector Service.
- Support for moving to an enhanced focus on sustainable and person-centred customer solutions.

Summary of the Online Survey Consultation Findings

The Vision - 'Working in partnership towards ending homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester'.

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the vision for the strategy. A total of 49 people responded to this question and the graph below details the responses.



The above shows that 55% of participants agreed with the vision, 29% strongly agreed with the vision, 8% neither agreed or disagreed with the vision, 4% disagreed with the vision and 4% strongly disagreed with the vision.

Participants were then asked if they had any comments they would like to make on the vision or draft strategy. 28 comments were received and the key messages from these were:

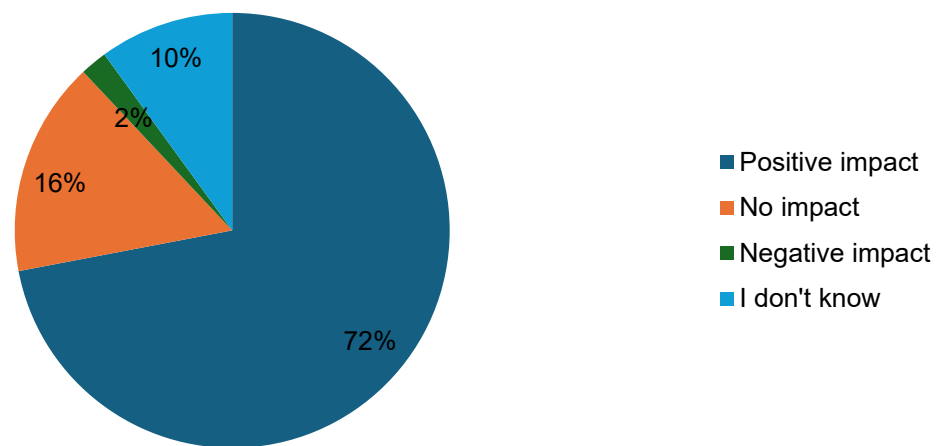
- Support for long-term housing solutions is needed, otherwise, homelessness will always be a revolving door.
- The importance of involving lived experience throughout the strategy.
- There is support for more help and support from the Council is needed at an earlier stage of homelessness.
- More mental health provision for those experiencing homelessness would be beneficial.
- Coordination between services is needed to ensure a joined-up approach and sharing of resources to tackle homelessness.
- More assistance for private landlords to be able to support the Council and homeless households is supported.

- Clearer pathways and processes for rough sleepers need to be developed.
- Support for empty homes to be utilised as homeless accommodation.
- Increasing the range of housing options including shared houses is encouraged.
- More supported and specialised accommodation is needed in the borough to enable people to access accommodation that is suitable and can be sustained.
- Education about homeless prevention for young people is encouraged.
- Support for tougher sanctions on anti-social behaviour.
- More support and information for armed forces veterans is required.
- Adequate resources will be needed from all partners to support the strategy delivery.
- Partnership working is key and greater understanding of who the partners are and their roles.

Priority 1 – Prevent homelessness through early intervention and personalised housing options.

Participants were asked what impact they thought priority one would have. A total of 50 people responded to this question and the graph below details the responses.

What impact, if any, do you think priority one 'prevent homelessness through early intervention and personalised housing options'. would have on you (or your organisation)?



The above shows that 72% of participants felt priority 1 would have a positive impact and only 2% felt it would have a negative impact. 16% of participants felt it would have no impact and 10% did not know if priority 1 would have an impact.

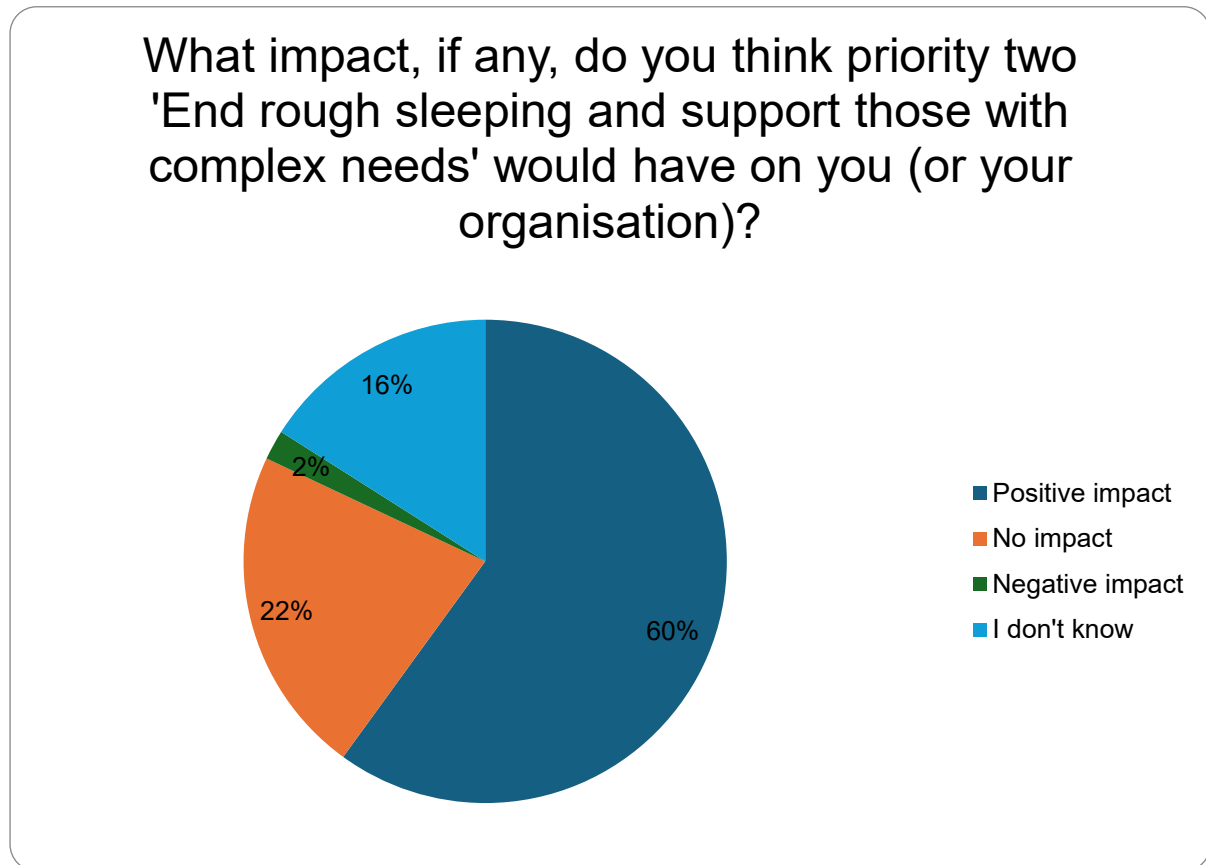
Participants were then asked if they had any comments on how priority 1 may have an impact. 22 comments were received and the key messages from these were:

- The belief that everyone deserves accommodation that is suitable for their needs.
- Support for a great focus on homelessness prevention and planned moves that are person-centred.
- Support for more Housing First style projects.
- Support for young people to learn skills to be able to manage tenancies.
- Early work with people who are at risk of homelessness when they are in prison is encouraged, to ensure they are not homeless on release.
- Tackle the root causes of homelessness.
- A hub that has it all for people to visit and get housing and homelessness advice is welcomed.
- More resources are needed to deliver personalised housing options.

- An improved understanding of the homelessness process is needed. This would help promote a better understanding of homelessness and how to access services.
- Reviewing the rough sleeping verification process is needed as forcing people to rough sleep to prove their homelessness does not align with the priority.

Priority 2 – End rough sleeping and support those with complex needs.

Participants were asked what impact they thought priority two would have. A total of 50 people responded to this question and the graph below details the responses.



The above shows that 60% of participants felt priority 2 would have a positive impact and 2% felt it would have a negative impact. However, 22% of respondents also felt that the priority would have no impact and 16% did not know what the impact of the priority would be.

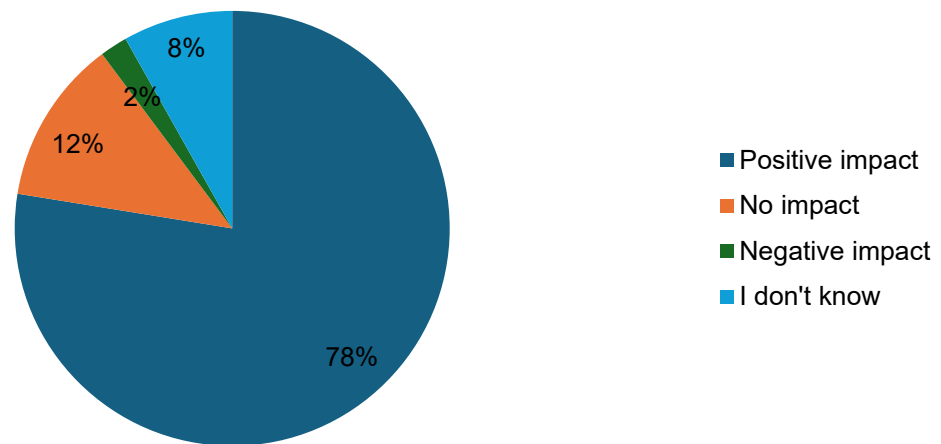
Participants were then asked if they had any comments on how priority 2 may have an impact. 20 comments were received and the key messages from these were:

- More specialised training on 'trauma-informed practices' is required.
- Specialist support and supported accommodation are required.
- More mental health support and awareness are needed for households experiencing homelessness.
- A focus on the root causes of homelessness is needed to improve future outcomes.
- Not all rough sleepers have complex issues, so a broad range of services is needed.

Priority 3 – Develop and improve access to a range of settled, supported and temporary accommodation options.

Participants were asked what impact they thought priority three would have. A total of 49 people responded to this question and the graph below details the responses.

What impact, if any, do you think priority three 'Develop and improve access to a range of settled, supported and temporary accommodation options' would have on you (or your organisation)?



The above shows that 78% of participants felt priority 3 would have a positive impact and 2% felt it would have a negative impact. However, 12% of respondents also felt that the priority would have no impact and 8% did not know what the impact of the priority would be.

Participants were then asked if they had any comments on how priority 3 may have an impact. 21 comments were received and the key messages from these were:

- More one-bedroom properties are needed.
- Support networks need to be considered when accommodating people.
- More specialist accommodation is needed including accommodation for females and long-term options.
- Support should be person-centred and able to flex to an individual's changing support requirements.
- Less out-of-area hotel placements.
- Improving the experience for people in temporary accommodation has a positive effect on them moving on.

Drop-in sessions and focus groups.

The key messages from the drop-in sessions are summarised below.

- One-bedroom properties are needed in Northwich and Winsford.
- More face-to-face communication is needed.
- Increase joint working and access to services so individuals don't have to repeat their story over the phone.
- More information on refuge as participants had been unaware that these options are available to domestic abuse victims.
- Improved awareness and understanding of the homeless process.
- Involve people with lived experience to help develop future services.
- Link in more with schools and health services for families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Dedicated move-on properties for domestic abuse victims.
- Earlier education and support for young people about homelessness.
- Rough sleepers feel excluded.

Email/Letter responses.

Residents and other interested parties were also invited to email their views on the proposed Consultation. In total, 3 email responses were received, and the key messages are listed below.

- Targeted support for individuals who require long-term support to manage a tenancy.
- Improved process for prison leavers to ensure they are not homeless on release.
- Better services for those who cannot 'self-help'.
- An improved verification process to ensure people do not have to prove they are homeless.
- A different approach for sofa-surfers.
- More priority and reference about meeting the needs of those with mental ill health issues.
- Improved hospital discharge processes for to up hospital beds to ensure more patients can access beds.

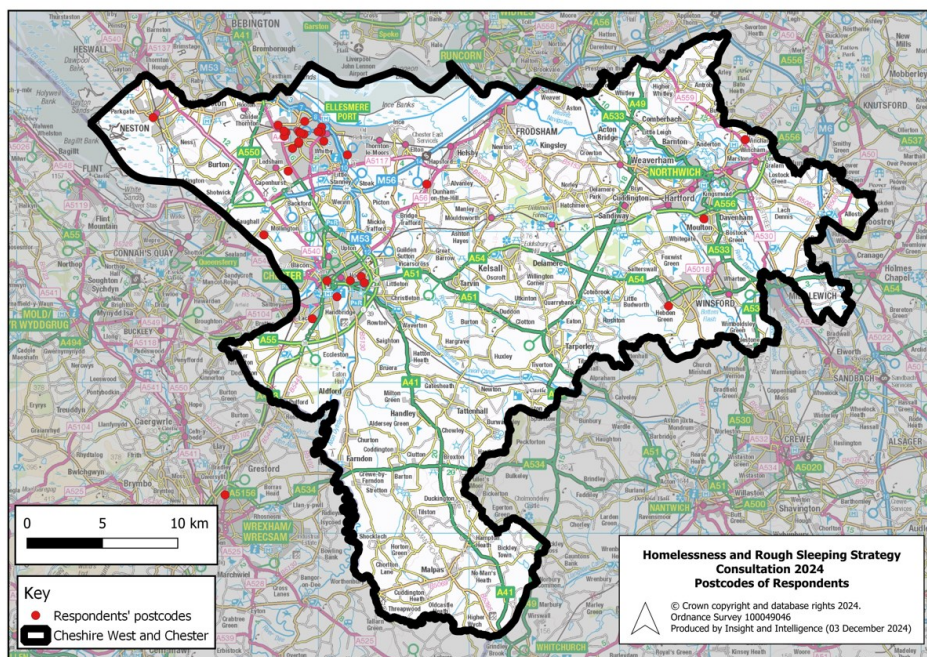
Profile of respondents

In what respect are you completing this survey?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	A resident of Cheshire West and Chester	82%	40
2	An employee of Cheshire West and Chester Council	14%	7
3	A representative of a local business	0%	0
4	An elected Member of Cheshire West and Chester Council	4%	2
5	A local Town or Parish Councillor	2%	1
6	A representative of a voluntary or community organisation	8%	4
7	A member of a local group with a specific interest in housing	0%	0
8	Prefer not to say	2%	1
9	Other (please specify):	8%	4
answered			49

82% of respondents were residents of Cheshire West and Chester, 14% were employees of Cheshire West and Chester Council, 4% were an elected Member of Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2% were local Town or Parish Councillor, 8% were representatives of a voluntary, community or business organisation, and 8% answered 'Other'.

Postcode of respondents

The map below shows all of the postcodes given by respondents that could be mapped (30 postcodes). All respondents lie within the Cheshire West and Chester boundary. Of these, 29 postcodes lie within the CWAC boundary, with one record lying out of borough. 7 records failed to map, either due to incomplete or unmatched postcodes, or postcodes not supplied. The postcode records were matched with Ordnance Survey Code-Point records.



Gender

Are you...?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Male	29%	13
2 Female	60%	27
3 Prefer not to say	9%	4
4 Prefer to use own term:	2%	1
answered		45

29% of respondents were male, 60% were female, 9% answered 'prefer not to say' and 2% answered 'prefer to use own term'.

Age

Which age group do you belong to?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Under 16	0%	0
2 16 - 24	0%	0
3 25 - 34	2%	1
4 35 - 44	31%	14
5 45 - 54	24%	11
6 55 - 64	11%	5
7 65+	22%	10
8 Prefer not to say	9%	4
answered		45

2% of respondents were aged 25 – 34, 31% were 35 – 44, 24% were 45 – 54, 11% were 55 – 64, 22% were 65+, and 9% answered 'prefer not to say'

Long-term illness, health issue or disability

Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Yes	30%	13
2 No	56%	24
3 Prefer not to say	14%	6
answered		43

30% of respondents said they had a long-term illness, health issue or disability, 56% said they didn't and 14% answered 'prefer not to say'.

If you answered 'yes', please indicate which of the following applies to you.		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Physical impairment that causes mobility issues, e.g. wheelchair user	15%	3
2 Visual impairment	5%	1
3 Hearing impairment	10%	2
4 Learning disability or difficulty	10%	2
5 Mental Health issue	35%	7
6 Long-standing illness or health condition	50%	10
7 Prefer not to say	20%	4
8 Other (please specify):	10%	2
answered		20

Respondents were able to select more than one option. 15% of respondents said they had a physical impairment that causes mobility issues e.g. a wheelchair user, 5% said they had a visual impairment, 10% said they had a hearing impairment, 10% said they had a learning disability or difficulty, 35% said they had a mental health issue, 50% said they had a long-standing illness or health condition. 20% answered 'Other' and 20% answered 'prefer not to say'.

Ethnicity

Which of these groups do you consider yourself to belong to?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	89%	40
2	White - Irish	2%	1
3	White - Any other White background	0%	0
4	Black or Black British - Caribbean	0%	0
5	Black or Black British - African	0%	0
6	Black or Black British - Any other Black background	0%	0
7	Asian or Asian British - Indian	0%	0
8	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0%	0
9	Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0%	0
10	Asian or Asian British - Chinese	0%	0
11	Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background	0%	0
12	Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	0%	0
13	Mixed - White and Black African	0%	0
14	Mixed - White and Asian	0%	0
15	Mixed - Any other Mixed background	0%	0
16	Other ethnic group - Arab	0%	0
17	Other ethnic group - Other ethnic group	0%	0
18	Travelling community - Gypsy/Roma	0%	0
19	Travelling community - Traveller of Irish descent	0%	0
20	Travelling community - Other member of the Travelling community	0%	0
21	Prefer not to say	7%	3
22	Other (please specify):	2%	1
answered			45

89% of respondents considered themselves to be White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British and 2% considered themselves to be White – Irish. 7% answered ‘prefer not to say’ and 2% answered ‘Other’.

Religious Belief/Faith

Which of these best describes your religious belief/faith?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Buddhist	0%	0
2 Christian	41%	18
3 Hindu	0%	0
4 Jewish	0%	0
5 Muslim	0%	0
6 Sikh	0%	0
7 None	50%	22
8 Prefer not to say	9%	4
9 Other (please specify):	0%	0
answered		44

41% of respondents described their religious belief/faith as Christian. 50% of respondents answered 'none' and 9% answered 'prefer not to say'.