

Appendix N

Representative Sample Survey Insight Report August 2025

Background

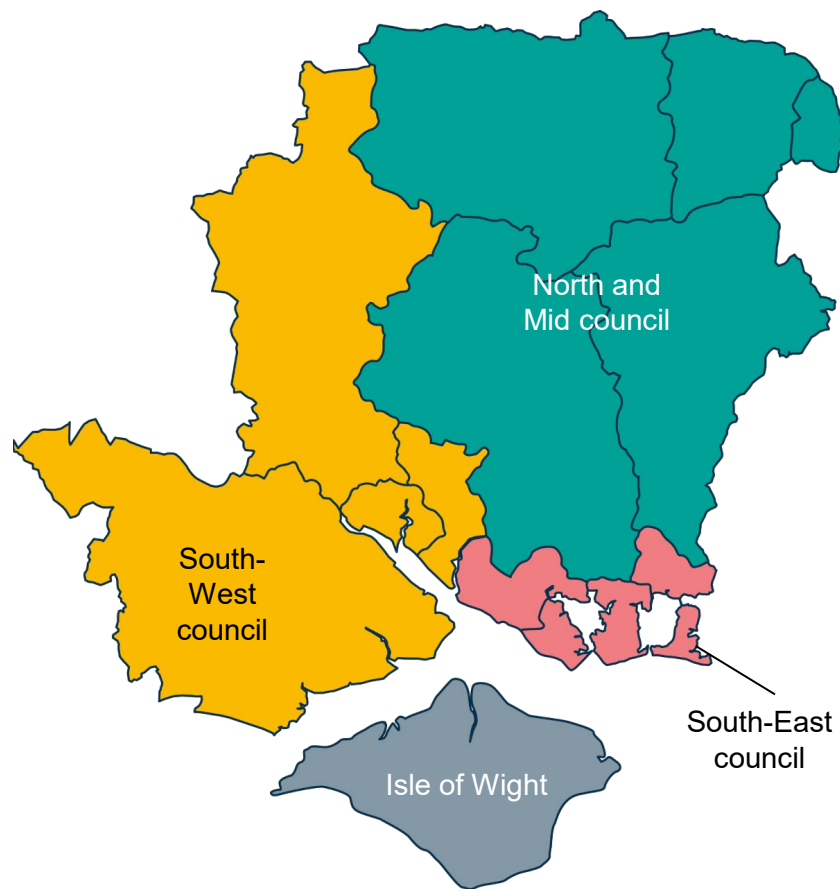
In Summer 2025 Hampshire County Council undertook public and stakeholder engagement to inform proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight (described as “Hampshire and the Solent area” in this report).

Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council have proposed that Hampshire and the Solent area has four councils: three councils on the Hampshire and Solent area mainland, and a standalone Isle of Wight council, as shown on the right.

As part of this work, Hampshire County Council commissioned a polling company, [findoutnow](#), to survey a representative sample of residents living within the Hampshire and the Solent area to ask about:

- Their awareness of plans for LGR in their area
- Any perceived potential benefits or risks of the proposed restructure
- The importance of different criteria when designing a new council
- Views on how the new councils should be named

The survey ran between 23 July and 29 July 2025. It received a total of 1,129 responses. The sample was built using quotas based on the age, gender, and geographical characteristics to provide a representative sample for the Hampshire and the Solent area.



Headline findings

Awareness of Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire and the Solent area

72% of respondents were aware, and 28% unaware, of plans for LGR in Hampshire and the Solent area before taking the survey

Awareness was higher amongst respondents who were older, male, or residents of Winchester or East Hampshire

Potential benefits of the proposed structure

A quarter of respondents felt there would be no benefits of the proposed structure of four councils in Hampshire and the Solent area

Where respondents suggested benefits, these most commonly related to financial benefits for the councils, improved local identity and engagement, and improved service delivery

Potential risks of the proposed structure

Respondents' concerns with the proposed local authority structure most commonly related to local council finances, geographical and boundary issues, and a potential loss of identity or representation

Important considerations when designing a new council

All the criteria set by the Government were seen as important, with the greatest importance placed on financial elements such as value for money and financial stability, as well as councils' understanding of local needs and service quality

Important criteria when naming a new council

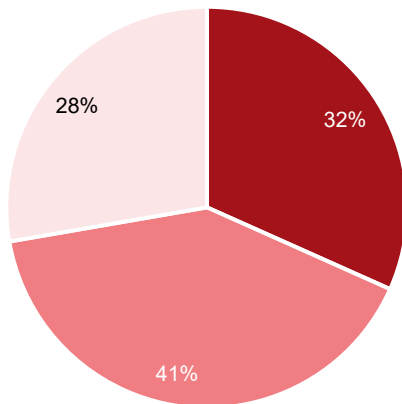
A majority of respondents from each of the proposed council areas felt that the names of councils should reflect the geography of the area, with history and the area's prominent town or city also seen as relatively important

Awareness of LGR

The majority were aware of LGR, with respondents who were older, male, or living in Winchester or East Hampshire the most likely to be aware of the planned changes. However, only a third felt that they had a good understanding of what LGR was all about.

Before taking this survey, were you aware of plans to replace the current two-tier local government system (of counties and district councils) with new (unitary) councils which run all services?

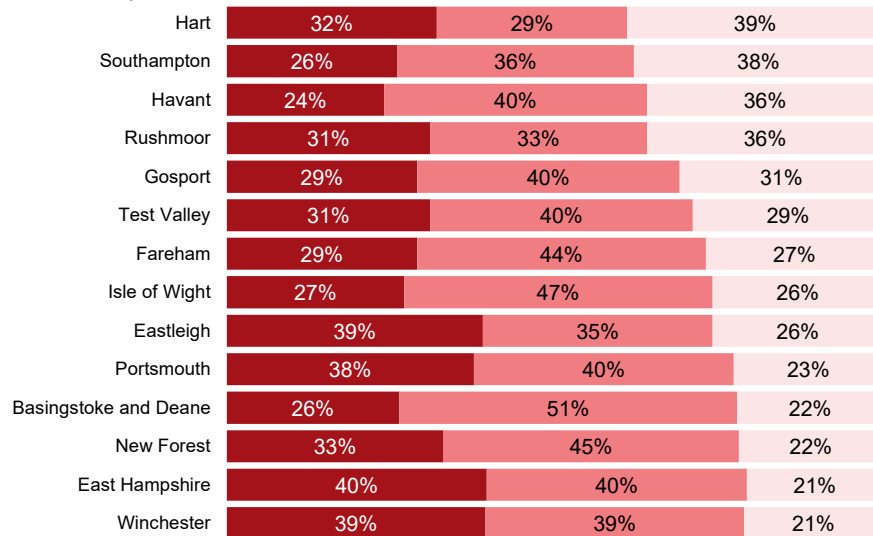
(Base: 1,129)



- Yes, I'm aware and confident I broadly understand what it's all about
- Yes, I'm aware but I don't know much about it
- No, I wasn't aware

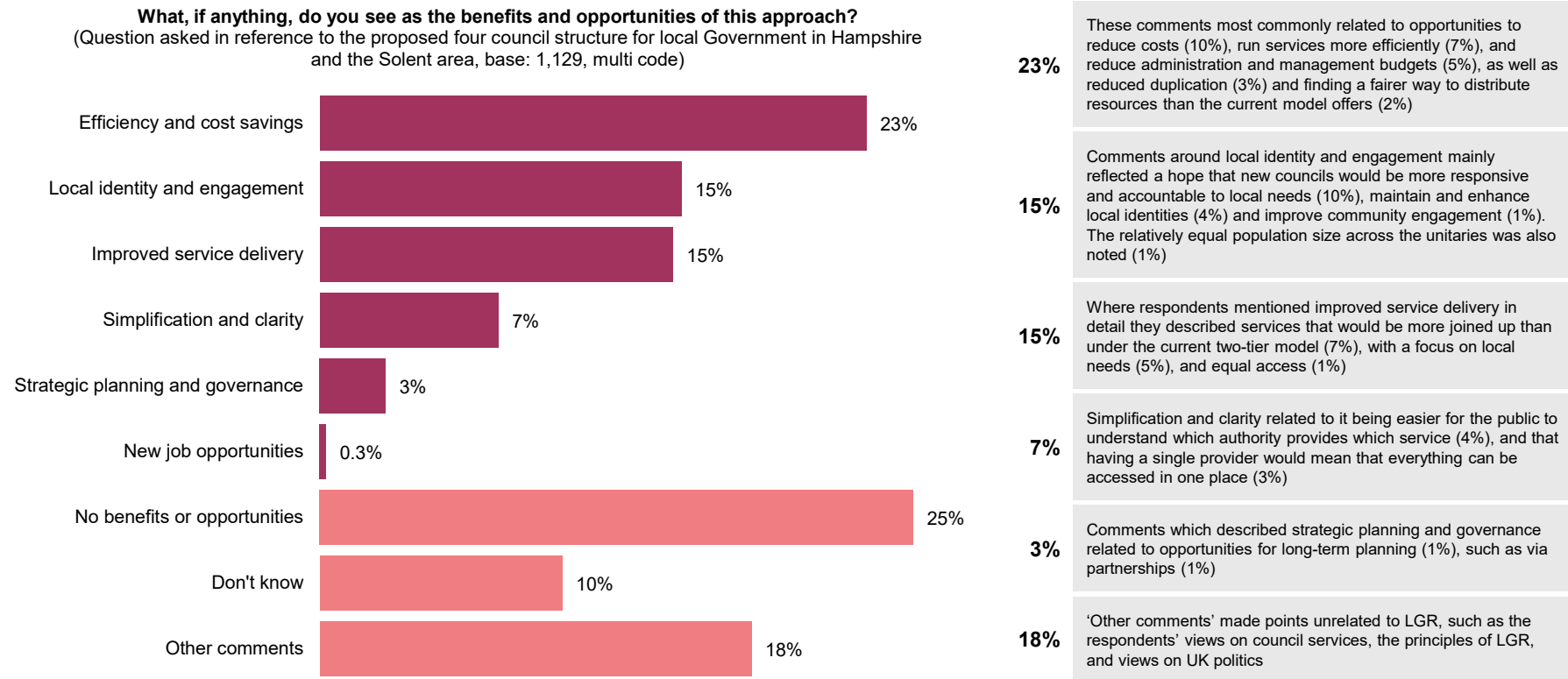
Overall, 72% were aware of the Government's plans for LGR in Hampshire and the Solent area, with the following demographic splits:

- Older respondents were more likely to be aware (85% amongst those aged 65 or over) than younger respondents (56% of those aged under 35)
- 78% of males were aware of LGR before taking the survey; this was lower (68%) for female respondents
- The chart below shows the spread of awareness across Hampshire and the Solent area, which ranged from 61% in Hart and 62% in Southampton, up to 79% in Winchester and East Hampshire:



Potential benefits of the proposed structure

While a quarter of comments suggested that there would be no benefits from the proposed change, most respondents recognised some benefit - such as the potential for efficiency and cost savings, better local identity and engagement, and improvements in service delivery



Perceived potential benefits of the proposed structure – examples of comments provided

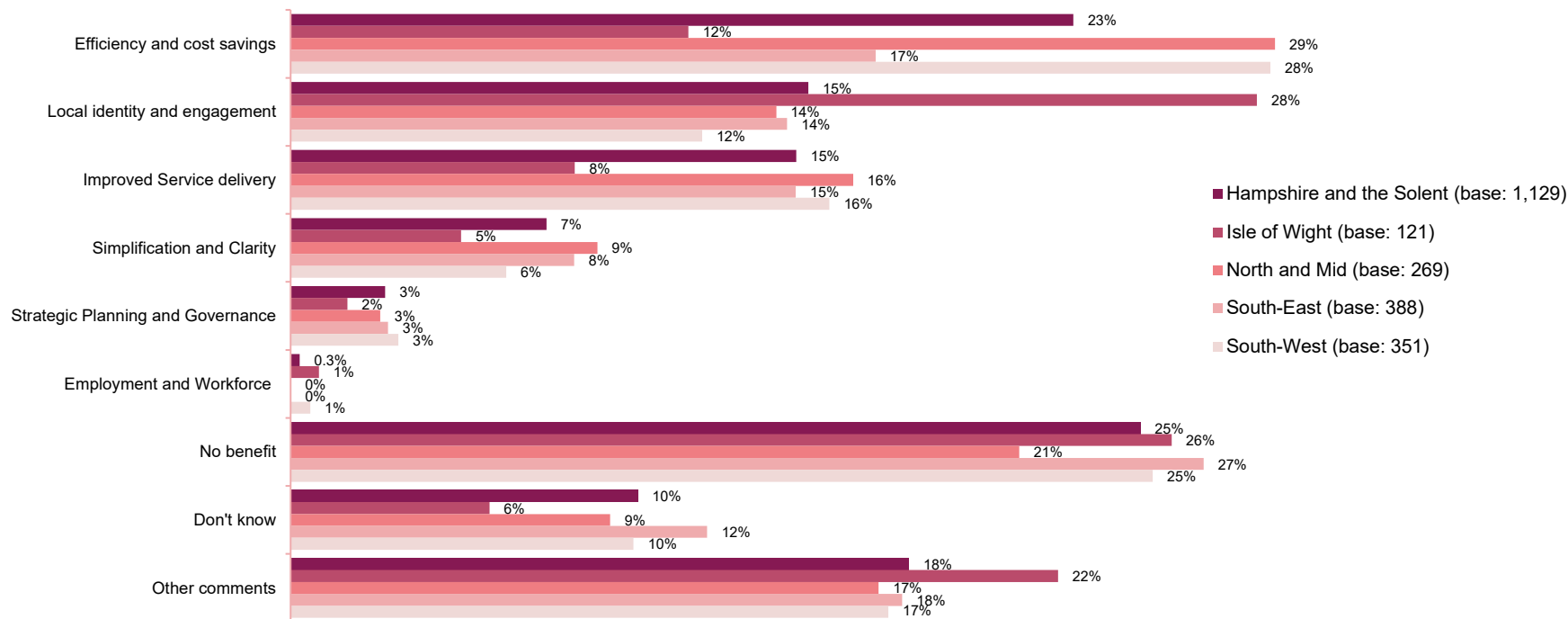
Efficiency and cost savings	Local identity and engagement	Improved service delivery	Simplification and clarity	Strategic planning and governance
“I should imagine that the councils would save a lot of money if this were to happen”	“Issues within the local area being dealt with by local councillors who are better aware of the needs”	“...each council can focus more exclusively on issues that affect local people more directly, rather than having to adopt a policy across a wider area”	“Residents would have clearer understanding of who was responsible for local services, increasing accountability”	“More integrated public transport. Opportunities for quicker delivery of new housing projects”
“Streamlining of staff meaning less costs, which can then be spent on services required”	“People running those districts would hopefully have more local knowledge about how best to spend money”	“Opportunities to replicate good practice and closer working relationships”	“It will be easier to contact the right people about local issues as you'll know whose responsible”	“A more holistic approach to efforts on climate change and the environment”
“Less duplication so hopefully some things are cheaper”	“Simpler to get things sorted as don't have to deal with multiple departments of multiple councils”	“More local services can be more responsive to local need”	“Easier to access services or report any issues, as currently can be unsure as to who to contact regarding different things”	“More power to enforce effective change i.e. transport. With joined up thinking for a combined authority of circa 1 million people Southampton and Portsmouth may just see a light rail system implemented”
“Should hopefully save money and be more efficient”				

Potential benefits of proposed structure

Respondents in the proposed North and Mid and South-West council areas were more likely than average to see the proposed change as delivering cost and efficiency benefits, while those on the Isle of Wight (where no change is proposed) more commonly saw the proposal as delivering local identity and engagement benefits

What, if anything, do you see as the benefits and opportunities of this approach?

(Question asked in reference to the proposed four council structure for local Government in Hampshire and the Solent area, base: 1,129, multi code)



Other demographic observations on the perceived potential benefits of the proposed structure

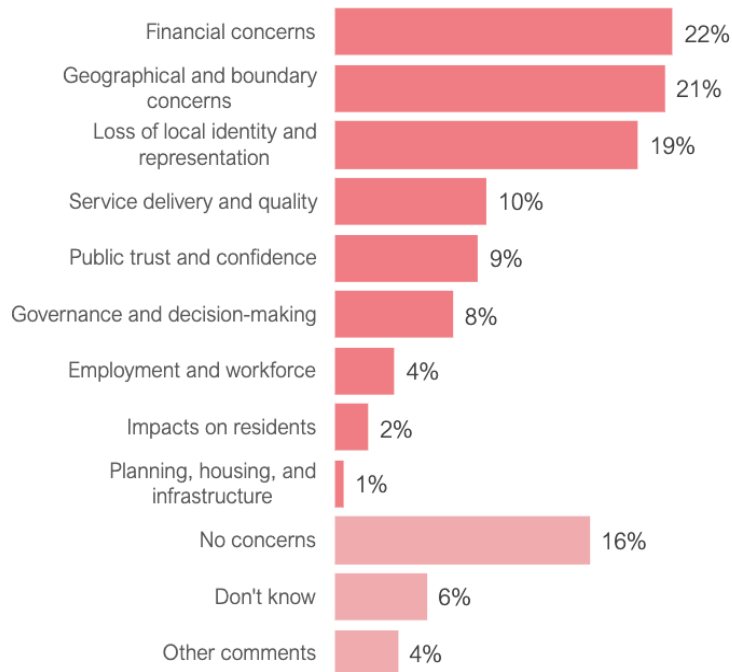
Potential benefit reported by respondents	Proportion of respondents that reported this benefit	Groups more likely than average to report this benefit*
Efficiency and cost savings	23%	Residents of Eastleigh (39%), Winchester (34%), and East Hampshire (33%)
Local identity and engagement	15%	Respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (35%), respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (22%), respondents aged 25 to 34 (35%), respondents aged 16 to 34 (22%)
Improved Service delivery	15%	Households earning £80,001 to £100,000 per year (24%), respondents aged 25 to 34 (22%)
Simplification and Clarity	7%	Residents of Basingstoke and Deane (13%)
Strategic Planning and Governance	3%	Respondents aged 16 to 24 (9%) and 35 to 44 (7%), Residents of Rushmoor (7%), and Eastleigh (6%), respondents with children or young people aged under 25 in their home (5%)
Employment and Workforce	0.3%	Residents of Test Valley (2%), respondents aged 25 to 34 (2%)
No benefit	25%	Residents of the New Forest (34%), respondents aged 65 or over (34%), males (29%)

*Black font indicates significance at the 95% confidence interval, grey font at the 90% confidence interval

Potential concerns with the proposed structure

Respondents most frequently mentioned concerns about the finances of the proposed councils, issues relating to their geographical locations and areas, and that the proposed councils could lose the local connection that the existing councils currently have

What, if anything, concerns you about this approach? (Question asked in reference to the proposed four council structure for local Government in Hampshire and the Solent area, base: 1,129, multi code)



22%	Financial concerns most commonly related to unequal funding across areas (6%), potential budget reductions (5%), costs of LGR implementation (4%) and debt inheritance (3%)
21%	Comments about geographical and boundary concerns suggested views that the proposed areas are too large (9%), too varied (4%), and would mix rural and urban areas (3%)
19%	Respondents mentioning loss of local identity and representation referred to a loss of local voices in larger authorities (10%) and of local knowledge in decision making (6%), as well as overrepresentation of urban areas compared with rural areas (2%)
10%	Concerns around service delivery and quality mainly indicated concerns about worsening services (4%), which would be harder to access (2%), and less consistent across the area (1%) with less of a focus on local needs (1%)
9%	Details on concerns about public trust mentioned scepticism about the purported benefits of LGR (4%), the timescales and budget for the programme's delivery (2%), and the fairness of any resource allocation (2%)
8%	Comments about governance and decision-making suggested concerns about who would take decisions under the new structure (3%), views that councils would reduce local engagement with a top-down approach (2%) and that councils may not communicate adequately with residents (1%)
4%	Comments about employment and workforce mentioned potential redundancies due to LGR (2%), higher workloads for council staff (1%) and changes to their working conditions (1%)
2%	Impacts on residents mainly related to their ability to deal with any service changes (1%)
16%	Planning impacts primarily related to unequal housing targets across the proposed councils (<1%)
4%	'Other comments' made points unrelated to LGR, such as the respondents' views on council services, the principles of LGR, and views on UK politics

Perceived potential concerns with the proposed structure – examples of comments provided

Financial concerns

"Hampshire being split and finances not being evenly distributed"

"Not enough government money to support the increased lower level responsibilities"

"Decentralisation can lead to inequality in investment and spending"

"Funding cuts could be hidden in the restructuring"

"Costly to implement and could mean higher council tax bills"

"Less funding for smaller areas"

Service delivery and quality

"That services may be reduced or harder to access going forward"

"If staffing numbers are reduced, services will suffer, making it more difficult to contact departments"

"I would be concerned that the reduced number of councils having to look after more people may deliver poorer services"

"...departments will have extra work loads with less staff"

Geographical and boundary concerns

"The New Forest has very little in common with Southampton. It seems ridiculous to lump them together"

"Unsure as to why the areas outside the Isle of Wight aren't more evenly divided, population-wise"

"Too big an area, what works in the city won't work in rural areas"

"People on the borders may get confused as to who looks after them"

Public trust and confidence

"It might cost a lot of money and involve lots of extra paperwork for only minimal gain"

"The cost of implementing these changes and the time it will take to merge councils"

"It's going to cost a lot of money and make no difference"

"Restructuring always costs money, which this is supposed to save, and leads to job losses, so more benefits going out, and less income tax coming in"

Loss of local identity and representation

"Having a larger area loses the more locally focussed elements and knowledge. Even in the similar area, different areas may have very different needs"

"Councils becoming too big and not in touch with the local community. I feel Southampton is already like this. I feel places like Eastleigh etc benefit from a smaller council"

"North and Mid Hampshire have no real relationship"

Governance and decision-making

"Small parishes will be forgotten about"

"Where new houses get allocated - due to the South Downs national park, houses in east Hampshire are not fairly allocated"

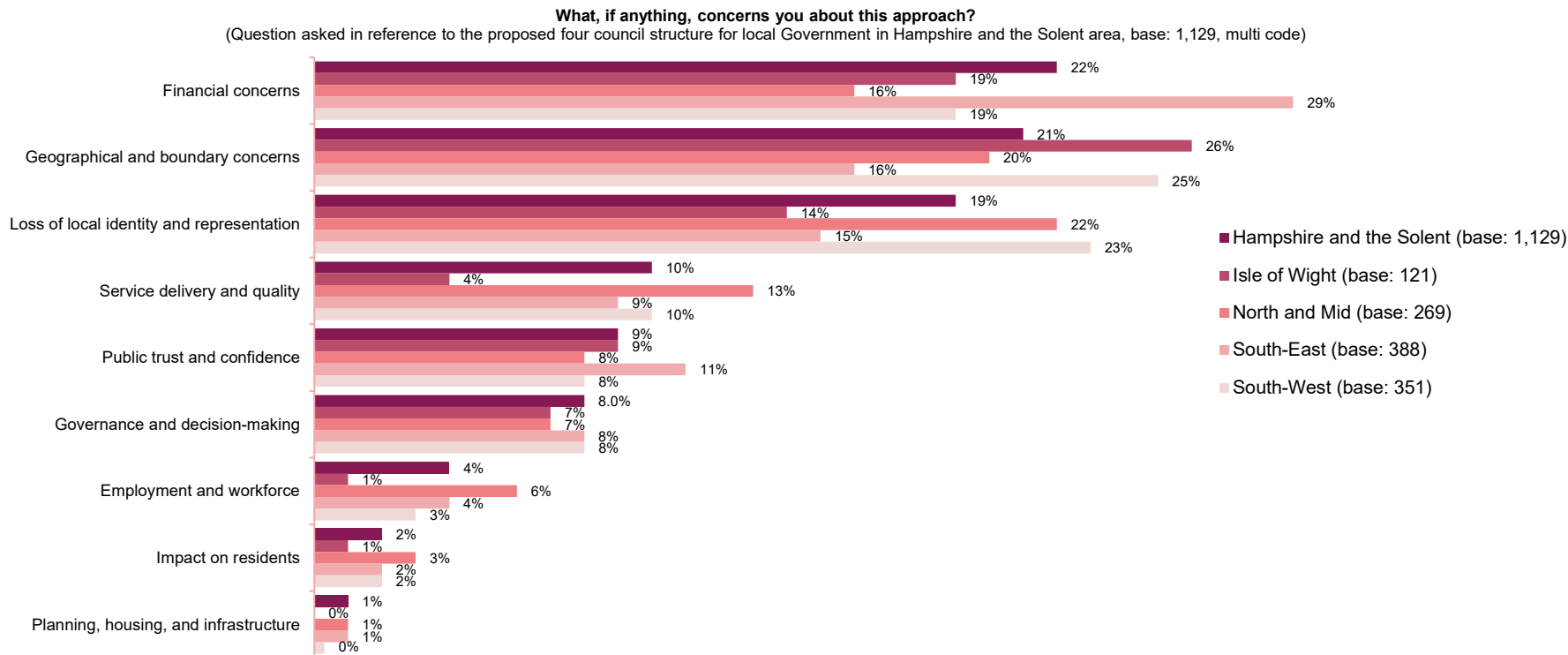
"Poorer areas overlooked in favour of more affluent areas"

"Too much power in one place"

"Negatively being affected by decisions that aren't suitable for my area"

Potential concerns with proposed structure

Geography and boundaries were the most prominent concern amongst respondents in the proposed Isle of Wight* and South-West areas. Respondents in the proposed North and Mid area were most concerned about loss of local identity and representation, whilst those in the South-East area were particularly concerned about finances.



*Comments about the unchanged geography/boundaries on the IOW tended to relate to concerns about the viability of IOW as a standalone authority and whether, as a smaller authority, it would become forgotten and/or receive unequal funding

Other demographic observations on the perceived potential concerns with the proposed structure

Potential concern reported by respondents	Proportion of respondents that reported this concern	Groups more likely than average to report this concern
Financial concerns	22%	Residents of Portsmouth (34%)
Geographical and boundary concerns	21%	Residents of New Forest (32%)
Loss of local identity and representation	19%	Residents of Eastleigh (27%),
Service delivery and quality	10%	Respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (22%), households earning over £100,000 per year (20%), residents of Basingstoke and Deane (17%),
Public trust and confidence	9%	Residents of Hart (23%) and Gosport (17%), respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (22%)
Governance and decision-making	8%	<i>No notable variances from the average</i>
Employment and workforce	4%	Residents of Winchester (15%)
Impact on residents	2%	Respondents aged 16 to 24 (13%), respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (9%), residents of Winchester (7%) and Southampton (7%)
Planning, housing, and infrastructure	1%	Respondents aged 16 to 24 (9%), respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (4%), residents of East Hampshire (3%) and Fareham (2%)
No concerns	16%	<i>No notable variances from the average</i>

*Black font indicates significance at the 95% confidence interval, grey font at the 90% confidence interval

Criteria when designing new councils

Each of the Government's criteria for LGR were seen as important, but ongoing finance elements such as value for money and financial stability were seen as the most critical, and the councils' understanding of local needs and service quality also scored particularly highly in relation to the other criteria

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (very), how important is it that your local council... (Base: 1,129, mean average score shown)



Naming new councils

A majority of respondents, including a majority in each of the proposed council areas, felt that a council's name should reflect its geography, with other factors seen as less important

Following the reorganisation there would be new councils covering Hampshire and the Solent. The new Councils should have names with which the local area can identify. Do you think that an area's name should reflect its...

(Base: 1,129, multi code)

Geography	58%	Observations Higher for those living in the proposed South-West council area (63%), and North and Mid council area (58%), than those in the proposed South-East council area (52%)
History	31%	Higher for those living in Southampton (40%), Rushmoor (40%), and Portsmouth (39%), compared with Hart (16%), Eastleigh (21%), and the New Forest (23%)
Prominent town or city	29%	Higher amongst those in urban areas (36%) than amongst rural residents (18%)
Unique characteristics	22%	Higher amongst those in rural areas (27%) than amongst urban residents (17%)
Cultural identity		Higher amongst males (14%) than amongst females (10%) Higher amongst residents of Gosport (17%) and Winchester (16%) than those living in Eastleigh (6%) and Basingstoke and Deane (7%)
Something else (please specify)	3%	Some of those who selected 'something else' suggested using local river names and the diversity of an area when selecting an authority's name, but the majority of comments provided here indicated apathy regarding the name or disagreement with the LGR process