



Local Government Reorganisation in Burnley and Pendle

Consultation Survey Findings:
October 2025

Contents

Section	Page
Summary	3
Introduction	8
What's important to local people?	13
Options for Local Government Reorganisation	20
Concerns about Local Government Reorganisation	30

Summary

Introducing the consultation



Context

To find out what local people think about Local Government Reorganisation in the area, Burnley and Pendle Borough Councils ran a public consultation survey in October 2025



The consultation survey was shared widely

Including social media posts, e-newsletter articles and focus groups with businesses and community organisations, with a range of additional engagement in Pendle including visits to various local venues and events such as supermarkets, leisure centres and schools/colleges



1,617 responses were received during the survey period

The majority (1,491) were from local residents, but views were also captured from council employees (160), business owners (82) and charities/ community groups (46)



Responses were more likely to come from people with a connection to Pendle

64% of local resident respondents live in Pendle (three in ten of all resident responses are from the BB18 area) and 70% of responses from business owners are based in Pendle

What's important to local people?



Maintaining and improving good quality local services and listening to residents are most important to survey respondents

When asked what is important to them in any decisions on local government reorganisation



Resident respondents from Pendle appeared to feel more strongly about some issues

They were more likely than resident respondents from Burnley to select options relating to not losing local voices, impact on local community/identity, maintaining/improving local services and listening to residents about what they want/need



Roads (inc transport and gritting) is the most important council service to local people

This is followed by parks and open spaces, waste and recycling, leisure facilities and partnerships with local NHS services; business owners were more likely than others to choose economic development and jobs

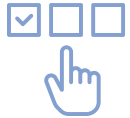


Resident respondents from Pendle were more likely to select a range of services

These include roads/transport, leisure facilities and partnerships with local NHS services

Options for Local Government Reorganisation

The survey set out different options for local government reorganisation in Lancashire and put forward a preferred option for Burnley and Pendle Borough Councils



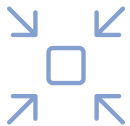
Four in five (80%) respondents prefer this option of one of five unitary councils

Serving around 272,000 residents across Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale



Resident respondents from Pendle were most likely to prefer this option

88% selected this option, compared to 65% of resident respondents living in Burnley



Those choosing the five unitary councils option feel smaller councils are more locally focussed and serve residents and communities better

Other reasons included an opposition to merging with Blackburn with Darwen (particularly amongst Burnley residents) and the importance of local voice and representation



Most respondents agree that a smaller unitary authority would ensure that local government remains local

The survey set out why the Councils prefer a smaller unitary authority and asked respondents whether they agree or disagree with each reason

Concerns about Local Government Reorganisation



Four in five (78%) respondents have concerns about their local area being overseen by a larger unitary authority

This rises to 86% for resident respondents in Pendle, compared to 63% of resident respondents in Burnley



Key concerns include the potential loss of local voice, that smaller areas will be overlooked and that resources may be distributed unfairly

Other concerns raised include a perception that decision makers will be remote and out-of-touch and that there will be a loss of accountability and accessibility



Final comments reiterated a preference for smaller, local councils but also raised financial concerns

Other themes not already raised included a desire for transparency and more public consultation and concerns about how reorganisation would affect council tax

Introduction

Background and approach

The Government is planning changes to how councils are structured in England, replacing the current two-tier system of county and district councils with larger unitary authorities responsible for all local services in their areas. This is called Local Government Reorganisation. Burnley and Pendle Borough Councils believe that smaller unitary councils would be more responsive to local needs, closer to residents, and better placed to deliver high-quality services.

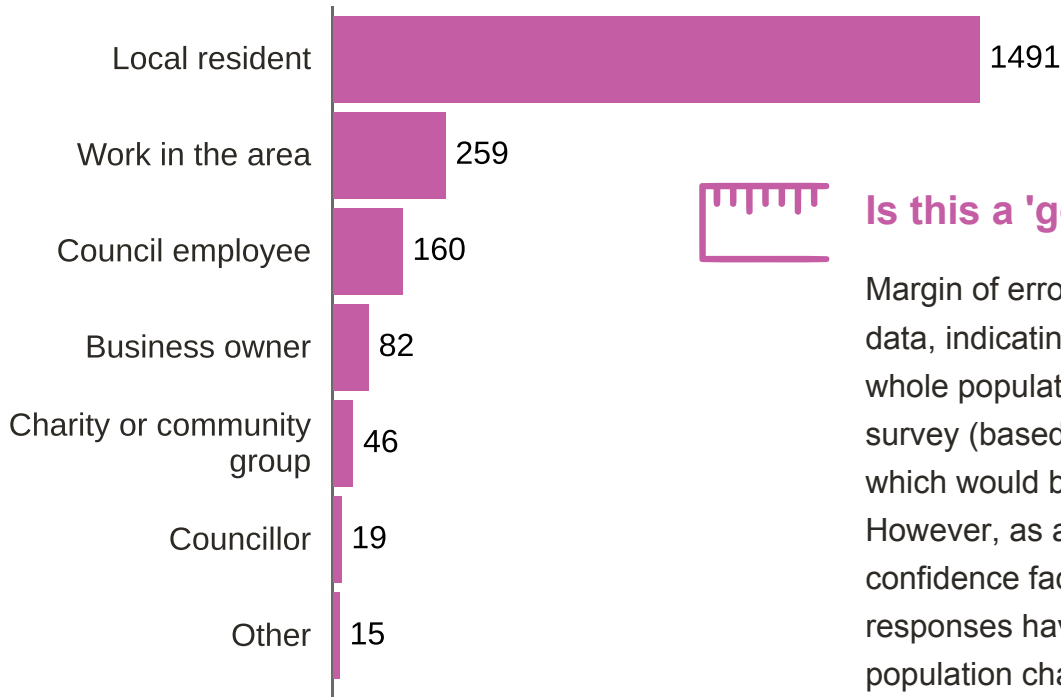
To find out what local people think about Local Government Reorganisation in the area, a public consultation was developed, hosted and shared by Burnley and Pendle Borough Councils in October 2025. An online survey ran from 7 to 27 October 2025, with paper copies available in public buildings. The consultation was shared and promoted in a range of ways, including social media posts, e-newsletter articles, internal messages to council employees and focus groups with businesses and local community organisations. Council representatives in Pendle also visited supermarkets, leisure centres, colleges, schools, churches, parkrun and business events.

An external agency analysed and reported on the data. Due to the number of responses, open-text feedback has been summarised into themes using AI (Microsoft Copilot).

There were 1,617 responses to the survey

The majority (92%) were received from local residents

Connection to the Burnley and Pendle area (actual counts, respondents could select more than one):



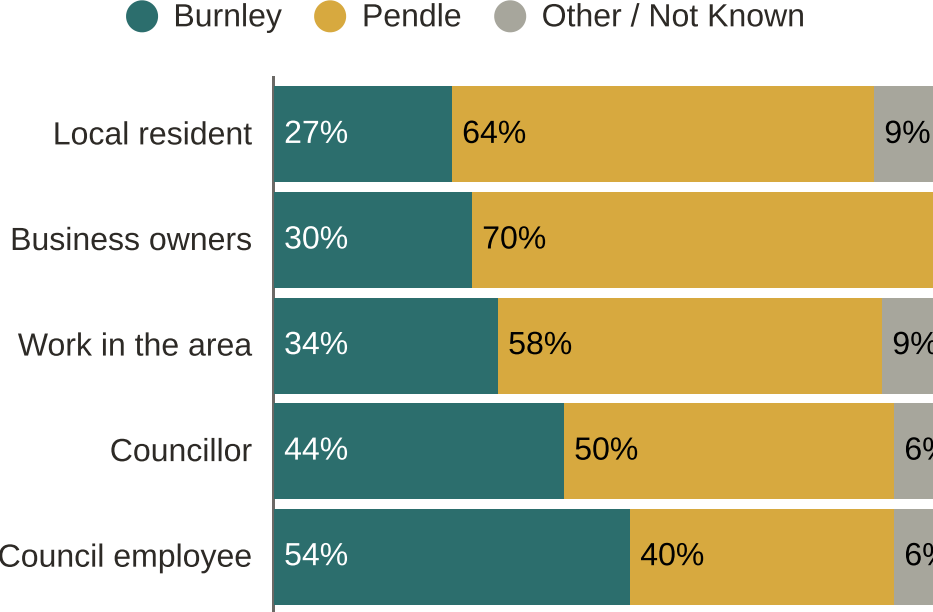
Is this a 'good' response?

Margin of error is a measure of confidence in survey data, indicating how much the results may differ if the whole population responded. The margin of error for this survey (based on responses from residents) is +/- 2.5% which would be considered a good level of confidence. However, as an open-access public consultation other confidence factors should be considered such as where responses have come from and how they reflect population characteristics across the boroughs.

Responses were more likely to come from Pendle

With 64% of resident responses from Pendle and 70% of business owners responding based in Pendle

Connection to the Burnley and Pendle area by district:



78% of responses from charities or community organisations have a base in Pendle

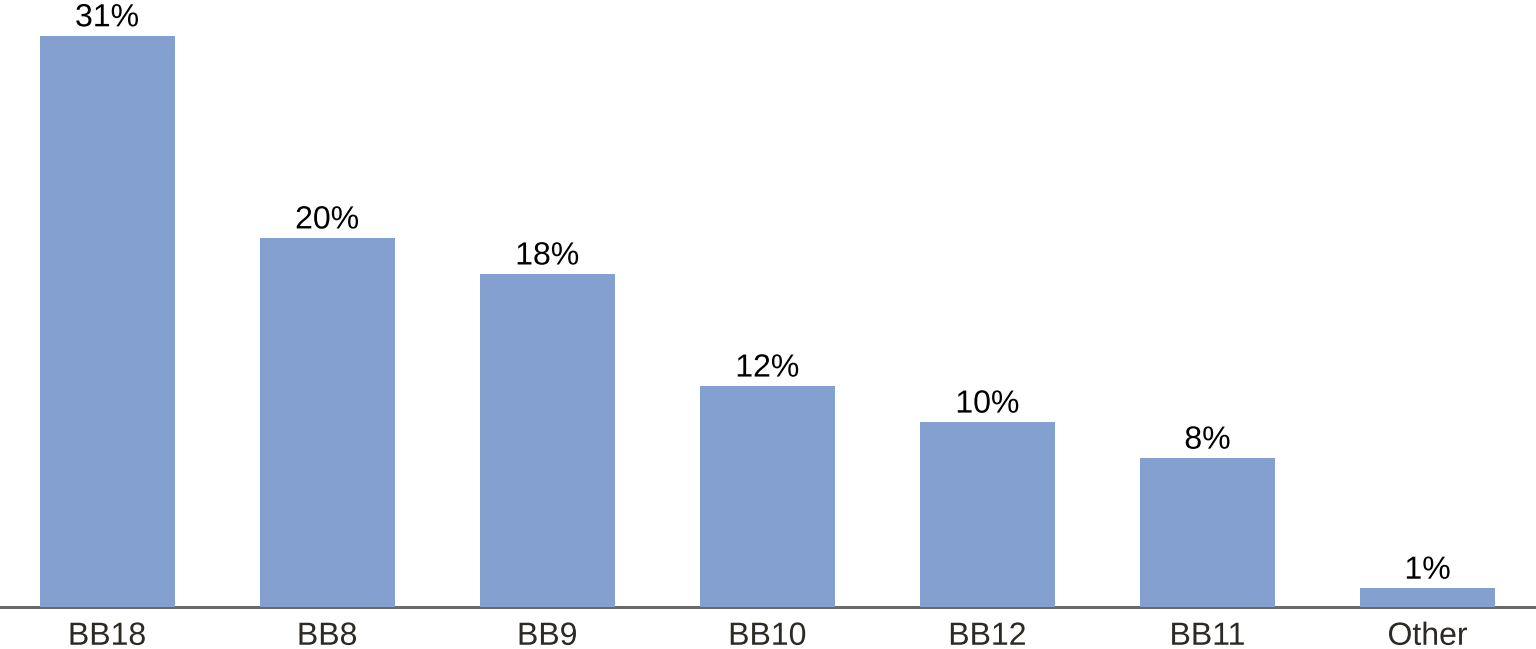
30% have a base in Burnley

Q. What is your connection to the Burnley and Pendle area? Local resident (n=1,491); business owner (n=82); work in the area (n=259); councillor (n=19); council employee (n=160)

Three in ten resident responses were from the BB18 postcode area

A further one in five were from the BB8 postcode area

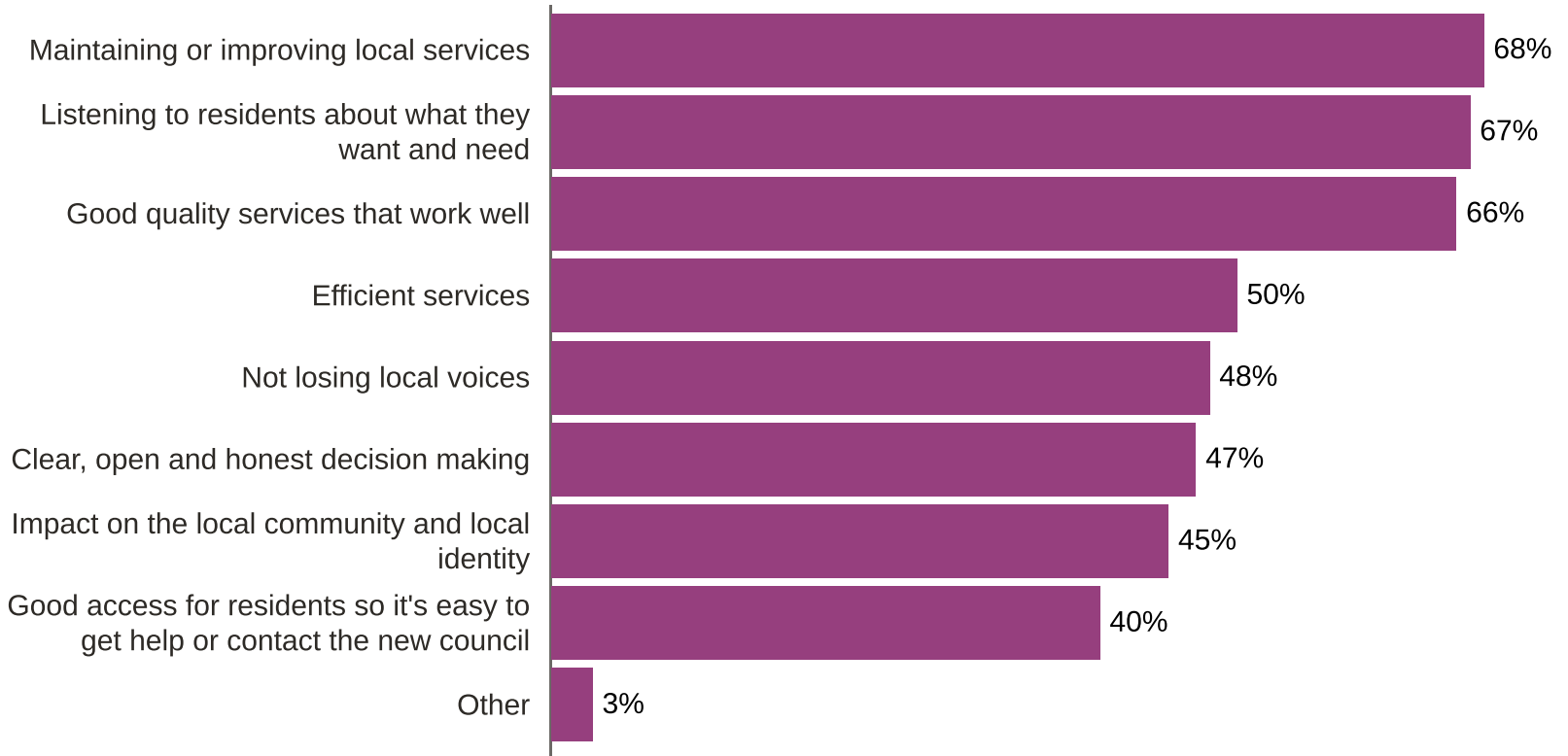
Resident postcode area:



What's important to local people?

What is important in decisions on local government reorganisation?

Maintaining and improving good quality local services and listening to residents are most important to survey respondents



Q. What is most important to you in any decisions on local government reorganisation in your area? Select up to five (n=1,617)

Council employees were more likely than others to highlight good quality services and good access for residents as important

Statistically significant differences by respondent type:



Four in five (79%) council employees indicated that providing good quality services that work well is important

Compared to 66% of local residents and 60% of business owners



More than half (53%) of council employees also feel it is important that there is good access for residents so it's easy to get help or contact the new council

Compared to 40% of local residents and 35% of business owners



Seven in ten (72%) charities and community groups feel the impact on the local community and local identity is important

Compared to 45% of local residents and 54% of business owners

Pendle residents appear to feel more strongly about a range of issues

Resident respondents from Pendle were more likely to select options relating to local voices, local identity, local services and listening to residents

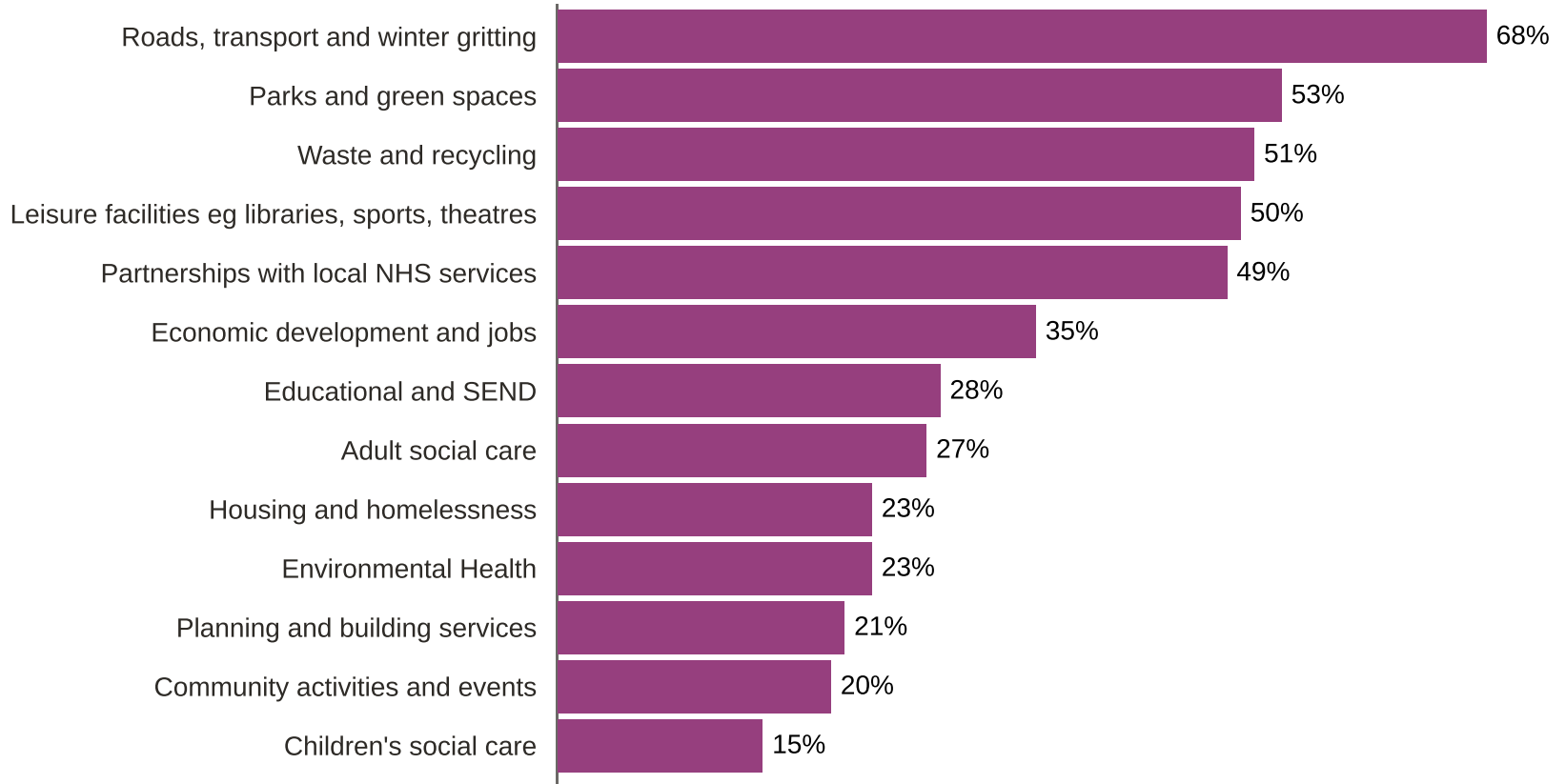
Options where there is a statistically significant difference between Burnley and Pendle residents are highlighted in bold:

	Burnley	Pendle
Good quality services that work well	66%	66%
Listening to residents about what they want and need	60%	71%
Maintaining or improving local services	59%	73%
Efficient services	52%	48%
Clear, open and honest decision making	49%	46%
Not losing local voices	43%	52%
Good access for residents so it's easy to get help or contact the new council	41%	39%
Impact on the local community and local identity	39%	48%
Other	2%	3%

Q. What is most important to you in any decisions on local government reorganisation in your area? Select up to five
(Burnley residents = 437; Pendle residents = 1,034)

Which council services are most important to respondents?

Respondents could select up to 5 services:



Q. Which of these council services are most important to you? Please select up to five (n=1,617)

Economic development and jobs are more important to businesses

Statistically significant differences by respondent type:



Three in five (59%) business owners selected economic development and jobs as a council service that is important to them

Compared to 34% of local residents



Businesses were also more likely than others to select planning and building control as an important council service

38% compared to 21% of local residents and 16% of council employees



Local residents were more likely to choose adult social care services compared to other respondent types

28% selected this, compared to 10% of business owners and 17% of council employees

There are some significant differences in council services selected between Burnley and Pendle residents

	Burnley	Pendle
Roads, transport and winter gritting	61%	73%
Parks and green spaces	50%	55%
Waste and recycling	47%	53%
Partnerships with local NHS services	42%	54%
Leisure facilities	41%	55%
Economic development and jobs	38%	32%
Educational and SEND	32%	25%
Adult social care	27%	28%
Housing and homelessness	26%	20%
Environmental Health	25%	22%
Planning and building services	22%	20%
Community activities and events	17%	22%
Children's social care	17%	14%

Roads, leisure services and local NHS partnerships appear particularly important to Pendle residents
Options where there is a statistically significant difference between Burnley and Pendle residents are highlighted in **bold**

Q. Which of these council services are most important to you? Please select up to five (Burnley residents = 437; Pendle residents = 1,034)

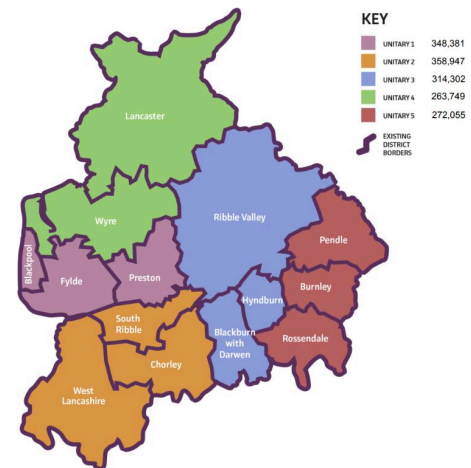
Options for Local Government Reorganisation

Introducing the options

There are five different proposals for unitary councils that are being prepared for Lancashire. The options include two, three, four and five unitary authorities.

Burnley Borough Council and Pendle Borough Council prefer a unitary council which covers Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale and serves approximately 272,000 residents (the option for five unitary authorities across Lancashire). The Councils believe that a smaller unitary council would mean they are closer to residents and more able to engage with people and deliver good quality services like adult social care, health services, highways and waste services.

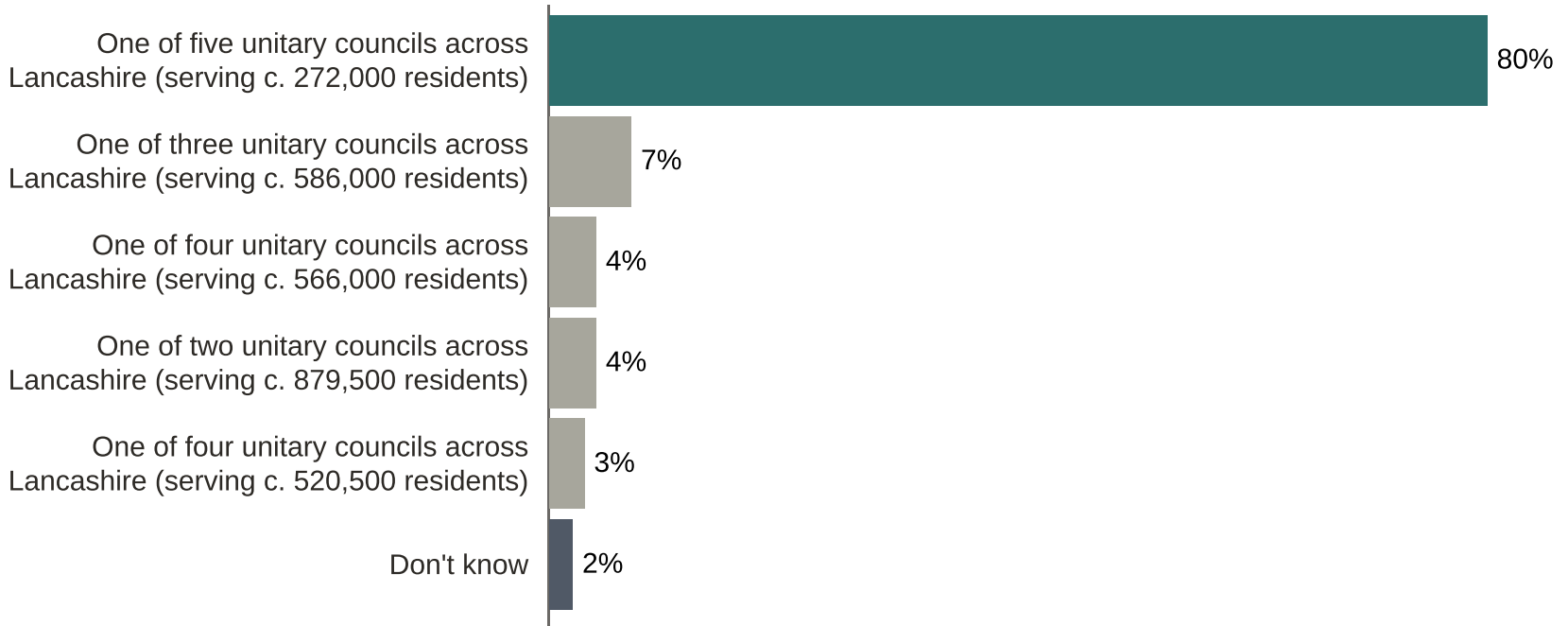
This information was set out in the consultation survey before respondents were asked which option they would prefer for their local area. A map of Lancashire was also shared showing how the five unitary model would be split across the districts in the county.



Four in five respondents would prefer the option of five unitary councils

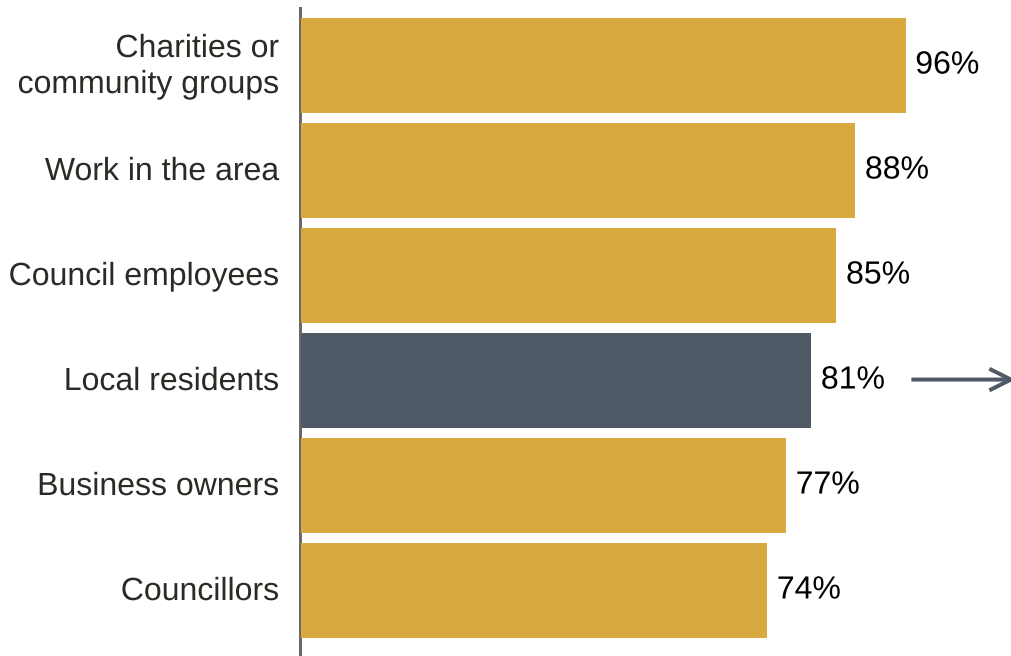
This rises to 88% of respondents who work in Burnley or Pendle and 96% of charity and community group respondents

Which option respondents would prefer to cover their local area:



Pendle residents were more likely than Burnley residents to prefer the five unitary council option

% preferring the option for five unitary councils across Lancashire:



Rising to 88% of Pendle residents (91% for those in the BB18 area), compared to 65% of Burnley residents

Those choosing the five unitary councils option feel smaller councils are more locally focussed and serve residents and communities better

Common themes amongst reasons given for choosing five unitary council option in order of ranking from most often mentioned to less often mentioned (ranks 1-5, where 1 is the most common theme):



1. Preference for smaller, local councils

- Belief that smaller, more locally focused councils will better serve residents



2. Preserves local identity

- Concerned about potential loss of local identity if merge into larger councils



3. Opposed to merging with Blackburn with Darwen

- Fear of being dominated, loss of funding and local priorities being ignored



4. Better connection to residents

- Smaller councils are more in touch with residents' needs



5. Potential loss of voice and representation

- Concern that larger councils will dilute voice of smaller councils, making it harder for residents to be heard and for local issues to be addressed



Burnley residents are more likely to mention being opposed to merging with Blackburn

'Opposed to merging with Blackburn' is ranked higher amongst Burnley residents (second most common theme) than Pendle residents (fifth most common theme)

Other reasons include the belief that this option will result in better quality services and better community engagement

Common themes amongst reasons given for choosing five unitary council option (ranked list continued):



6. Higher quality, more efficient services

- Belief that smaller councils can deliver better quality and more efficient services than larger, more bureaucratic authorities



7. Community spirit and engagement

- Smaller councils seen as being better at maintaining strong community spirit and engagement



8. Fear of resource allocation favouring larger towns

- Concerns that in a larger council, funding and resources would be disproportionately allocated to bigger towns



9. Geographic and cultural similarity

- Preference for grouping areas with similar geography, culture, and demographics (e.g. Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale) rather than with dissimilar areas like Blackburn



10. Accessibility of services

- Importance placed on keeping council offices and services accessible, especially for those who cannot use online services or travel long distances

Respondents who chose one of the other options often cite economic and geographical reasons

Common themes amongst reasons given for choosing any other option (i.e. not the five unitary council option) in order of ranking from most often mentioned to less often mentioned (ranks 1-4, where 1 is the most common theme):



1. Economies of scale and financial sustainability

- Comments emphasise that larger unitary authorities can achieve better economies of scale, reduce costs, and ensure financial resilience; some feel smaller councils may struggle with funding and service delivery



2. Maintaining local identity and representation

- Whilst there is concern about losing local knowledge and maintaining a local voice, there is a balance sought between being 'small enough to care, big enough to matter'



3. Geographical logic and community cohesion

- Comments focus on the importance of logical boundaries that reflect existing communities, shared identities and common issues; keeping East Lancashire together is a recurring theme



4. Service delivery and efficiency

- A focus on the ability of different models to deliver services effectively - respondents worry too-small authorities may lack capacity, while too large ones may lose touch with local needs

Q. Please tell us why you chose this option. All respondents choosing any other option except 'one of five unitary councils' option (n=212)

Other reasons for choosing a different option to the five unitary councils include equality of population and resources

Common themes amongst reasons given for choosing any other option (i.e. not the five unitary council option), ranked list continued:



5. Business and economic growth

- Responses highlight the need for unitary authorities to support business, economic development and strategic planning; the role of chambers of commerce and business organizations is mentioned, as well as the need for a strong “business voice”



6. Fairness and equality of population and resources

- Some mention the importance of equal population sizes and fair distribution of resources, with concerns that some models would create disparities or concentrate deprivation



7. Political concerns and governance

- Respondents mention the need to reduce the number of councillors, avoid political manipulation, and ensure effective governance



8. Alignment with existing services and boundaries

- Some mention the importance of equal population sizes and fair distribution of resources, with concerns that some models may create disparities

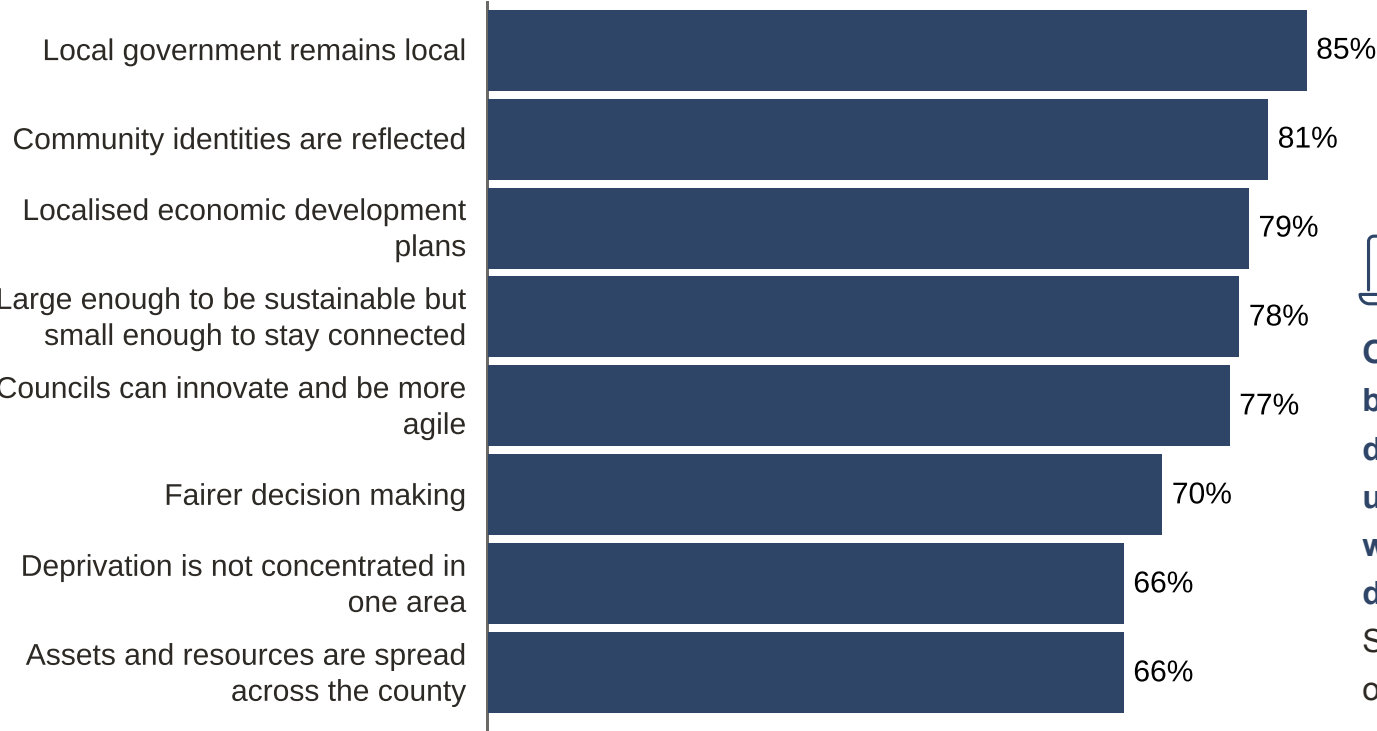
The survey also set out why Burnley Borough Council and Pendle Borough Council would prefer a smaller unitary council

Respondents were then asked if they agree that a smaller unitary council would ensure:

- **Local government remains local** - decision-making remains close to communities, ensuring councils understand and respond to local needs
- **Community identities are reflected** so services match how people actually live and address the specific needs of each area
- **Councils can innovate and be more agile** to deliver better outcomes in social care, health, and education
- **Deprivation is not concentrated in one area** and instead social and economic challenges are spread across five balanced authorities
- Each unitary authority is **large enough to be financially sustainable but small enough to stay connected to residents**
- **Localised economic development plans** can target jobs, skills and regeneration more effectively
- **Fairer decision making** with five strong, credible authorities to engage in Lancashire's devolution deal
- All areas across Lancashire would benefit from **assets and resources being spread across the county**

Most agree a smaller council will ensure local government remains local

% agreeing with each reason for a smaller unitary authority:



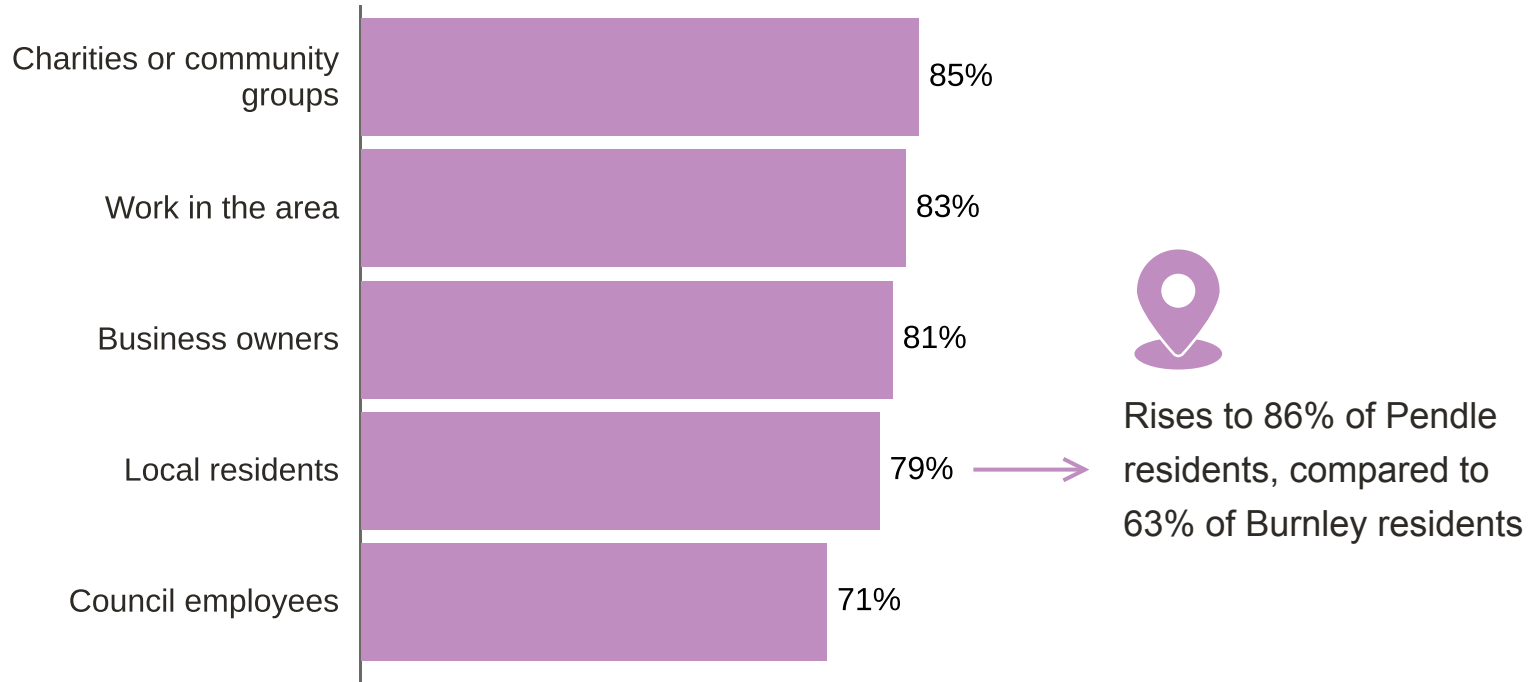
One in five (22%) business owners disagree that a smaller unitary authority would ensure fairer decision making
Significantly higher than other respondent types

Q. Burnley Borough Council and Pendle Borough Council would prefer a smaller unitary authority covering Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale. Compared to other larger models, do you agree or disagree with our view that a smaller unitary authority will ensure the following? (n=1,608)

Concerns about Local Government Reorganisation

Four in five (78%) respondents have concerns about their local area being overseen by a larger unitary authority

% indicating that they have concerns by respondent type:



Key concerns include the potential loss of local voice, that smaller areas will be overlooked and that resources may be distributed unfairly

Most common themes amongst concerns, in order of ranking from most often mentioned to less often mentioned (ranks 1-5, where 1 is the most common theme):



1. Loss of local voice and identity

- Concerned that merging into a larger authority will dilute local representation



2. Smaller areas will be overlooked

- Worried that resources, funding and attention will be concentrated on larger towns



3. Unfair distribution of resources

- Belief that a larger council will result in unequal allocation of resources



4. Remote and out-of-touch decision makers

- Decision makers in a larger authority would be physically and culturally distant and will lack understanding of local needs and issues



5. Loss of accountability and accessibility

- Concerns raised about reduced accountability and difficulty accessing council services and officials if they are no longer locally-based

Other themes amongst concerns include worries over job losses, a possible decline in service quality and loss of local expertise

Common themes amongst concerns (ranked list continued):



6. Job losses and staff disruption

- Concerns worries about job losses, forced relocations, and disruption to council staff as a result of any reorganisation



7. Decline in service quality and efficiency

- Concern that larger councils would be less efficient with poorer service delivery



8. Loss of local knowledge and expertise

- Fear that merging councils would erode expertise about specific community needs



9. Concerns over deprivation and social needs

- Responses highlighted that deprived areas could be further neglected, and that local social and economic needs would not be properly addressed



10. Opposition to specific mergers (e.g. with Blackburn)

- Resistance to merging with certain neighboring authorities, especially Blackburn, due to historical, cultural, or financial reasons



Concerns about job losses are ranked higher amongst council employees

Top five most common concerns amongst council employees (84 comments):

- Loss of local identity and representation
- Unfair distribution of resources
- Job losses and reduced staff morale
- Service quality and accessibility
- Distrust and historical animosity

Comments amongst final feedback reiterate the preference for smaller, local councils but also raise financial concerns

Most common themes amongst final feedback comments, in order of ranking from most often mentioned to less often mentioned (ranks 1-5, where 1 is the most common theme):



1. Preference for smaller, local councils

- Repeated emphasis on importance of local voice and local decision-making



2. Opposed to reorganisation or change

- Reorganisation considered to be unnecessary, a waste of money or detrimental to local services



3. Concerns about loss of local representation and voice

- Fear that merging councils or creating larger local authorities will result in their area being overlooked or having less influence over decisions that affect them



4. Financial concerns and cost of reorganisation

- Questions around whether reorganisation will save money and a desire for transparency around costs and potential savings



5. Quality and accessibility of local services

- Concerns around the impact of reorganisation on local services such as roads, bins, healthcare and housing, and concern that larger councils will lead to reduced service quality and accessibility

Other themes include the desire for transparency and further consultation and concerns about the impact on council tax

Common themes amongst final feedback (ranked list continued):



6. Desire for transparency and public consultation

- Some respondents expressed frustration with a perceived lack of transparency and consultation; some mention secrecy and bias in the consultation and a desire for referenda or more open consultation



7. Concerns about council tax

- Concerns about how reorganisation will affect council tax rates and fairness in distribution



8. Scepticism toward central government motives

- Some suggest that changes are being imposed from above for political reasons, not for the benefit of local communities



9. Need for tailored solutions for different areas

- Respondents highlight the diversity of needs between rural and urban areas, and between different towns, arguing that a "one size fits all" approach will not work



10. Concerns about jobs, management and bureaucracy

- Worries about increased bureaucracy, loss of jobs, and the ability of larger councils to manage local issues effectively; some call for fewer councillors and more professional management