

Final Report

**Proposal to increase the charge
for household garden waste
collection Consultation**

2024/25

20 March 2024

Street Scene

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the findings from the consultation on a proposal to increase the charge for household garden waste collections.

Local authorities are legally required to set a balanced budget every year. A crucial element of this is ensuring a council is meeting the costs of the services they provide. We also know that keeping Barnet's environment clean and well maintained is one of the best ways we can support residents to enjoy a good quality of life, and that the many services we deliver are valued by local people.

As well as making savings to balance the budget the council needs to look at ways it can continually invest in the services our residents value the most. Barnet has not raised its garden waste charge since its introduction in 2020. Increasing the charge for garden waste collections is one of the proposals that would help balance the budget and ensure the council can sustain its current environmental service offer.

This report will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, in consultation with the Chief Officer for Customer and Place for a decision on the proposal.

1.1 Response to the consultation

- a total of 2,439 questionnaires were completed online via engage.barnet.gov.uk.
- there were no written responses received via paper copy of the questionnaire.
- At least 85.8% of respondents were current service users.

1.2 Summary of consultation approach

- the consultation ran from 14 February to 15 March 2024
- the consultation consisted of an online questionnaire and summary consultation document which was published on engage.barnet.gov.uk
- paper copies were also made available on request
- the consultation was promoted via engage.barnet.gov.uk, the Barnet First e-newsletter, and via posters placed in libraries.

The proposed changes to the charges are:

- increase the current annual garden waste collection charge from £70.00 to £97.00 per annum. This is an increase of £27.00 per year, which equates to an additional charge of around 52p per week extra (or £2.25 per month).
- for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit in Income Band 1, as outlined in the Council Tax Support Scheme, we are proposing to apply concessionary rate by freezing the current garden waste collection charge at £70.00.

1.3 Summary of key findings

1.3.1 Views on the proposals

- **The majority of respondents oppose an increase in charges** (92.74%, 2,262 out of 2,439 respondents), (82.9%, 2,022 out of 2,439 respondents strongly oppose, and 9.84%, 240 out of 2,439 respondents tend to oppose). Respondents aged 55 and above were more likely to support the proposal for an increase in charges and younger age groups were more likely to oppose. Opposition to the charging proposals was higher for Asian, Black and mixed race/ethnicity groups than for white British and other white groups. Minoritised religious groups tended to oppose an increase in charges more than other groups.
- **A minority of respondents supported an increase in charges** (4.18%, 102 out of 2,439 respondents), (1.39%, 34 out of 2,439 respondents strongly support, and 2.79%, 68 out of 2,439 respondents tend to support).
- **A minority of residents neither supported nor opposed an increase in charge or were unsure** (3.08%, 75 out of 2439 respondents), (2.75%, 67 out of 2,439 respondents neither support nor oppose, and 0.33%, 8 out of 2,439 respondents don't know / not sure)
- **Where respondents opposed an increase in charges and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 2,099 out of 2,439 gave a response to this question.
 - 62.2% said that the service should be cheaper or free
 - 9.1% stated that they could not pay an increased charge due to the cost of living
 - 6.7% felt that an increase in charges would lead to more flytipping
 - 5% felt there would be a negative environmental impact, and mental health impacts.
- **Where respondents supported an increase in charges and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 81 out of 2,439 gave a response to this question.
 - 45.5% said that they would accept an increase as this was an important service for them
 - 21.6% acknowledged the council's budgets pressures and therefore accepted the idea of an increase in charges
 - 10.2% accepted the idea of an increase but stated that the increase proposed is high
 - 9.1% accepted the idea of an increase but were concerned about the possible environmental impacts such as flytipping.
- **27.64% of respondents opposed a concessionary rate** being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit - freezing the current charge at £70 (27.64%, 623 out of

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2,254 respondents), (18.81%, 424 out of 2,254 respondents strongly oppose, and 8.83%, 199 out of 2,254 respondents tend to oppose). Younger age groups tended to oppose the concession more than older groups. There was no significant difference in support for a concessionary charge between those with a disability and those without a disability.

- **38.77% of respondents supported a concessionary rate** being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit - freezing the current charge at £70 (38.77%, 874 out of 2,254 respondents), 21.25% (479 out of 2,254) of respondents strongly support, and 17.52%, (395 out of 2,254) respondents tend to support. 26.4 % nether support or oppose, 27.6% strongly or tend to oppose, 7.2% don't know. Jewish and no religion groups opposed a concessionary charge the least, while Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and those with other beliefs opposed the most.
- **Where respondents opposed a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 546 gave a response to this question.
 - 41.7% said that all users of the service should pay the same charge
 - 25.5% said that they did not want to subsidise a discount for other users of the service
 - 12.4% said that the service should be free or cheaper
 - 9.5% were concerned that any discount scheme would be open to abuse.
- **Where respondents supported a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 690 gave a response to this question.
 - 66.4% said that the service should be kept as affordable as possible for those facing cost of living challenges and on lower incomes
 - 10.7% stated that pensioners should be able to access the service at a discounted rate
 - 8.3% stated that all residents eligible for Council Tax Support should be offered a discounted rate
 - 6.4% felt that the proposed increase was fair.
- **When asked if the annual subscription charge increased, which of four statements would apply to them:**
 - 5.29%, (118 out of 2,232) respondents said that they don't currently use the service, and would not start using the service
 - 0.94%, (21 out of 2,232) respondents said that they don't currently use the service, but would consider using the service in future
 - 62.97%, (1,546 out of 2,232) respondents said that they do currently use the service, but would not pay an increased charge and would not continue to use the service
 - 24.51%, (547 out of 2,232) respondents said that they do currently use the service, and would consider paying the increased charge and continue to use the service.

- **When asked if they would not use the service if the charge was increased, how would they deal with their garden waste:**
 - 26.86%, (444 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would take their garden waste to the Reuse & Recycling Centre, Summers Lane
 - 15.12%, (250 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would compost their garden waste at home
 - 14.34%, (237 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would share a neighbour's garden waste bin
 - 43.68%, (722 out of 1,653) respondents answered "other", and these written responses included the following points:
 - 28.3% were unsure what they would do with their garden waste
 - 21.4% said they would place garden waste in their refuse bins, some were aware that this is not permitted
 - 16% said that they would burn their garden waste
 - 8.2% said that they would flytip/dump their garden waste in public spaces
 - The remainder of responses related to negative comments, sharing bins with neighbours, or paying a gardener to take the waste away.

2. CONSULTATION METHOD AND RESPONSE

2.1 Introduction

This report sets out the findings from the consultation on a proposal to increase the charge for household garden waste collections. This report will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, in consultation with the Chief Officer for Customer and Place for a decision on the proposal.

Local authorities are legally required to set a balanced budget every year. A crucial element of this is ensuring a council is meeting the costs of the services they provide. We also know that keeping Barnet's environment clean and well maintained is one of the best ways we can support residents to enjoy a good quality of life, and that the many services we deliver are valued by local people.

As well as making savings to balance the budget the council needs to look at ways it can continually invest in the services our residents value the most. Barnet has not raised its garden waste charge since its introduction in 2020. Increasing the charge for garden waste collections is one of the proposals that would help balance the budget and ensure the council can sustain its current environmental service offer.

- the consultation ran from 14 February to 15 March 2024
- the consultation consisted of an online questionnaire and summary consultation document which was published on engage.barnet.gov.uk.
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The proposed changes to the charges are:

- increase the current annual garden waste collection charge from £70.00 to £97.00 per annum. This is an increase of £27.00 per year, which equates to an additional charge of around 52p per week extra (or £2.25 per month).
- for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit in Income Band 1, as outlined in the Council Tax Support Scheme, we are proposing to apply concessionary rate by freezing the current garden waste collection charge at £70.00.

2.2 Summary of consultation approach

The Cabinet meeting of 6 February 2024 included an item on Business Planning for 2024-2030. This included consideration of an increased charged for garden waste collections. The Cabinet approved a consultation on an increased Garden Waste fee and delegated to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change in consultation with the Chief Officer for Customer & Place to consider the consultation responses and equality impact assessment and make a decision regarding the fee.

The consultation ran from 14 February to 15 March 2024 and consisted of an online questionnaire published on engage.barnet.gov.uk together with information detailing the background of the proposal. Paper copies were also available on request. The consultation was promoted by Barnet Council through engage.barnet.gov.uk, the Barnet First e-newsletter, and via posters placed in libraries.

In terms of service-specific consultations, the council has a duty to consult with service users where there are proposals to vary, reduce or withdraw services. At least 85.8% of respondents to the consultation were existing service users.

2.3 Technical details and method

2.3.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was developed to ascertain residents' views on the proposals for an increase in charges, and a proposal for a concessionary rate for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit in Income Band 1, as outlined in the Council Tax Support Scheme

2.4 Response to the consultation

A total of 2,439 questionnaires were completed – all were submitted online, no paper copies of the consultation were submitted.

The number and percentage breakdown of responses to each question are set out below:

Question 1

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To what extent do you support or oppose an increase of £27 in the annual subscription charge for users of the garden waste service?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	Number
Strongly support	1.39%	34
Tend to support	2.79%	68
Neither support nor oppose	2.75%	67
Tend to oppose	9.84%	240
Strongly oppose	82.90%	2022
Don't know / not sure	0.33%	8
	Answered	2439
	Skipped	0

- The majority of respondents oppose an increase in charges (92.74%, 2,262 out of 2,439 respondents), (82.9%, 2,022 out of 2,439 respondents strongly oppose, and 9.84%, 240 out of 2,439 respondents tend to oppose).
- There was no significant difference between the responses from those receiving and not receiving benefits in relation to the proposal on charges.
- Respondents from West Finchley ward (44 respondents) were the least likely to oppose with 84.1% opposing. Respondents from Colindale South (16 respondents), Cricklewood (18 respondents), Edgwarebury (53 respondents), West Hendon (20 respondents) and Edgware (206 respondents) were the most likely to oppose.

Question 2

If you support the increase of the annual subscription charge for users of the garden waste service, please give reasons for your answer:

- Of those who responded to the consultation, 81 out of 2,439 gave a response to this question.
 - 45.5% said that they would accept an increase as this was an important service for them
 - 21.6% acknowledged the council's budgets pressures and therefore accepted the idea of an increase in charges
 - 10.2% accepted the idea of an increase but stated that the increase proposed is high
 - 9.1% accepted the idea of an increase but were concerned about the possible environmental impacts such as flytipping.

Question 3

If you oppose the increase of the annual subscription charge for users of the garden waste service, please give reasons for your answer:

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- Of those who responded to the consultation, 2,099 out of 2,439 gave a response to this question:
 - 62.2% said that the service should be cheaper or free
 - 9.1% stated that they could not pay an increased charge due to the cost of living
 - 6.7% felt that an increase in charges would lead to more flytipping
 - 5% felt there would be a negative environmental impact, and mental health impacts.

Question 4

To what extent do you support or oppose a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit - freezing the current charge at £70?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	Number
Strongly support	21.25%	479
Tend to support	17.52%	395
Neither support nor oppose	26.44%	596
Tend to oppose	8.83%	199
Strongly oppose	18.81%	424
Don't know / not sure	7.14%	161
	Answered	2254
	Skipped	185

- 27.64% of respondents opposed a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit - freezing the current charge at £70 (27.64%, 623 out of 2,254 respondents), (18.81%, 424 out of 2,254 respondents strongly oppose, and 8.83%, 199 out of 2,254 respondents tend to oppose)
- A higher percentage of those not receiving benefits supported a concessionary charge than opposed it.
- Respondents from West Finchley ward (13.6% - 44 respondents), and Golders Green (14.8% - 61 respondents) were the least likely to oppose. Respondents from Childs Hill ward (40.5% - 42 respondents), Hendon (39.8% - 93 respondents), and Burnt Oak (39.4% 33 respondents) were the most likely to oppose.

Question 5

If you support a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit, please give reasons for your answer:

- Where respondents supported a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit and gave reasons for their answer, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 690 gave a response to this question.

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- 66.4% said that the service should be kept as affordable as possible for those facing cost of living challenges and on lower incomes
- 10.7% stated that pensioners should be able to access the service at a discounted rate
- 8.3% stated that all residents eligible for Council Tax Support should be offered a discounted rate
- 6.4% felt that the proposed increase was fair.

Question 6

If you oppose a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit, please give reasons for your answer:

- Where respondents opposed a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit and gave reasons for their answer, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 546 gave a response to this question.
 - 41.7% said that all users of the service should pay the same charge
 - 25.5% said that they did not want to subsidise a discount for other users of the service
 - 12.4% said that the service should be free or cheaper
 - 9.5% were concerned that any discount scheme would be open to abuse.

Question 7

If the annual subscription charge increased, which of the following statements would apply to you?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	Number
I don't currently use the service, and would not start using the service	5.29%	118
I don't currently use the service, but would consider using the service in future	0.94%	21
I do currently use the service, but would not pay an increased charge and would not continue to use the service	69.27%	1546
I do currently use the service, and would consider paying the increased charge and continue to use the service	24.51%	547
	Answered	2232
	Skipped	207

- 5.29%, (118 out of 2,232) respondents said that they don't currently use the service, and would not start using the service
- 0.94%, (21 out of 2,232) respondents said that they don't currently use the service, but would consider using the service in future
- 62.97%, (1,546 out of 2,232) respondents said that they do currently use the service, but would not pay an increased charge and would not continue to use the service
- 24.51%, (547 out of 2,232) respondents said that they do currently use the service, and would consider paying the increased charge and continue to use the service.

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Question 8

If you would not use the service if the charge was increased, how would you deal with your garden waste?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	Number
Take my garden waste to the Reuse and Recycling Centre, Summers Lane, N12 0RF	26.86%	444
Compost my garden waste at home	15.12%	250
Share a neighbour's garden waste bin	14.34%	237
Other (please type in)	43.68%	722
	Answered	1653
	Skipped	786

- 26.86%, (444 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would take their garden waste to the Reuse & Recycling Centre, Summers Lane
- 15.12%, (250 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would compost their garden waste at home
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 - 16% said that they would burn their garden waste
 - 8.2% said that they would flytip/dump their garden waste in public spaces
 - The remainder of responses related to negative comments, sharing bins with neighbours, or paying a gardener to take the waste away.

2.4.1 Response profile

The tables below show the profile of those who responded to the consultation.

When consulting with our residents and service users, Barnet Council needs to understand the views of our different communities. All answers are treated in the strictest of confidence and stored securely in an anonymous format.

We have taken every care to ensure that questionnaires are carried out and the information stored in compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, including the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

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The council sought to analyse the findings by different locations in the borough, and asked respondents which ward they live in. There were also questions on respondent's employment status, and whether they were in receipt of certain benefits.

Which ward do you live in? (Please tick one option only)

There were 1,843 responses to this question.

	Number of respondents	%
Barnet Vale	79	4.29%
Brunswick Park	66	3.58%
Burnt Oak	33	1.79%
Childs Hill	42	2.28%
Colindale North	16	0.87%
Colindale South	16	0.87%
Cricklewood	18	0.98%
East Barnet	146	7.92%
East Finchley	48	2.60%
Edgware	208	11.29%
Edgwarebury	56	3.04%
Finchley Church End	56	3.04%
Friern Barnet	71	3.85%
Garden Suburb	65	3.53%
Golders Green	61	3.31%
Hendon	93	5.05%
High Barnet	202	10.96%
Mill Hill	131	7.11%
Totteridge Woodside	83	4.50%
Underhill	107	5.81%
West Finchley	44	2.39%
West Hendon	20	1.09%
Whetstone	92	4.99%
Woodhouse	72	3.91%
Other	18	0.98%

Respondents from West Finchley ward (44 respondents) were the least likely to oppose an increase in charges with 84.1% opposing. Respondents from Colindale South (16 respondents), Cricklewood (18 respondents), Edgwarebury (53 respondents), West Hendon (20 respondents) and Edgware (206 respondents) were the most likely to oppose.

Respondents from West Finchley ward (13.6% - 44 respondents), and Golders Green (14.8% - 61 respondents) were the least likely to oppose a concessionary rate. Respondents from Childs Hill ward (40.5% - 42 respondents), Hendon (39.8% - 93 respondents), and Burnt Oak (39.4% 33 respondents) were the most likely to oppose.

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Are you currently employed, self-employed, retired or otherwise not in paid work?
(Please tick one option only)

There were 2,118 responses to this question.

	Number of respondents	%
An employee in a full-time job (31 hours or more per week)	651	30.74%
An employee in a part time job (Less than 31 hours per week)	195	9.21%
Self-employed (full or part-time)	242	11.43%
On a Government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship or Training for Work)	0	0.00%
In full-time education at school, college or university	3	0.14%
Unemployed and available for work	23	1.09%
Permanently sick or disabled	32	1.51%
Wholly retired from work	671	31.68%
Not in work and not available for work, e.g. in a carer role	41	1.94%
Prefer not to say	218	10.29%
Doing something else (please specify)	42	1.98%

There was no significant difference in responses based on employment status.

Please let us know if you receive any of the following benefits: (Please tick all that apply)

There were 2,082 responses to this question.

	Number of respondents	%
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Housing Benefit	11	0.53%
Council Tax Support	33	1.59%
Universal Credit	25	1.20%
I don't receive any of the above benefits	1821	87.46%
Prefer not to say	215	10.33%

There was no significant difference between the responses from those receiving and not receiving benefits in relation to the proposal on charges.

A higher percentage of those not receiving benefits supported a concessionary charge than opposed it.

2.4.2 Profile of protected characteristics

The council is required by law (the Equality Act 2010) to pay due regard to equalities in eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between people from different groups.

The protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, race, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership. In addition, respondents were asked to provide information about the electoral ward in which they live, housing tenure, employment status, and whether they were in receipt of any benefits. Throughout this report, these characteristics have been analysed against responses to the consultation questions and any significant findings have been highlighted.

To assist us in complying with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 we asked the respondents to provide equalities monitoring data and explained that collecting this information will help us understand the needs of our different communities and that all the information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be stored securely in accordance with our responsibilities under data protection legislation (such as the General Data Protection Regulation or the Data Protection Act 2018).

The tables below show the profile of those who answered these questions.

Protected Characteristic, profile of those that completed the questionnaire

Protected Characteristic	Response	
	Number	%
Age		

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Protected Characteristic	Response	
	Number	%
16-17	1	0.05%
18-24	4	0.19%
25-34	53	2.50%
35-44	274	12.95%
45-54	391	18.48%
55-64	396	18.71%
65-74	446	21.08%
75+	298	14.08%
Prefer not to say	253	11.96%
Not answered	323	
Total	2116	

Sex		
Female	1102	52.23%
Male	705	33.41%
If you prefer your own term	288	13.65%
Prefer not to say	15	0.71%
Not answered	329	
Total	2110	

Gender reassignment		
Yes, it's the same	1764	85.34%
No, it's different	8	0.39%
Prefer not to say	295	14.27%
Not answered	372	
Total	2067	

Pregnancy and maternity		
Pregnant	10	0.75%
On maternity leave	9	0.72%
Not answered	1092	
Total	1347	

Religion	Number	%
Buddhist	6	0.30%

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Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	531	26.17%
Hindu	96	4.73%
Jewish	93	14.44%
Muslim	29	1.43%
Sikh	3	0.15%
No Religion	335	16.51%
Other religion/belief (Please specify)	59	2.91%
Prefer not to say	677	33.37%

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Ethnic origin	Number	%
Asian / Asian British		
Bangladeshi	5	0.26%
Chinese	19	0.98%
Indian	131	6.79%
Pakistani	9	0.47%
Any other Asian background (✓ AND WRITE BELOW)	12	0.62%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British		
African	20	1.04%
British	9	0.47%
Caribbean	3	0.16%
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (✓ AND WRITE BELOW)	1	0.05%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups		
White & Asian	14	0.73%
White & Black African	2	0.10%
White & Black Caribbean	2	0.10%
Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background (✓ AND WRITE BELOW)	11	0.57%
Other ethnic group		
Arab	5	0.26%
Any other ethnic group (✓ AND WRITE BELOW)	44	2.28%
White		
British	1051	54.46%
Greek / Greek Cypriot	35	1.81%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0.00%
Irish	42	2.18%
Turkish / Turkish Cypriot	6	0.31%
Any other White background (✓ AND WRITE BELOW)	169	8.76%
Prefer not to say	340	17.62%

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Disability		
	No	1546 74.69%
	Yes	208 10.05%
	Hearing	39 18.66%
	Vision	9 4.31%
	Speech	6 2.87%
	Mobility	87 41.63%
	Physical coordination	18 8.61%
	Reduced physical capacity	92 44.02%
	Severe disfigurement	1 0.48%
	Learning difficulties	5 2.39%
	Mental illness	20 9.57%
	Prefer not to say	26 12.44%
	Other disability (please specify)	31 14.83%

Marital status		
	Never married and never registered a civil partnership	148 7.33%
	Married	1118 55.35%
	In a registered civil partnership	10 0.50%
	Separated, but still legally married	20 0.99%
	Separated, but still legally in a civil partnership	1 0.05%
	Divorced	104 5.15%
	Formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	1 0.05%
	Widowed	123 6.09%
	Surviving partner from a registered civil partnership	1 0.05%
	Prefer not to say	494 24.46%

Sexual orientation		
	Straight or Heterosexual	1383 69.12%
	Gay or Lesbian	15 0.75%
	Bisexual	8 0.40%
	Prefer not to say	549 27.44%
	Other	46 2.30%

