

JULY 2026



Police & Crime  
Commissioner  
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

# Police Force Mergers

## Public Consultation Outcome

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Police and Crime Commissioner  
for Hertfordshire

**3,697** responses | **68%** opposed | **15%**

supportive

Key findings at a glance

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# 1. Introduction

This report summarises the findings of a public consultation conducted by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire from 29th May to 10th July 2026. The consultation sought the views of Hertfordshire residents, businesses and community organisations regarding the Government's proposals to merge police forces in England and Wales.

The Police and Crime Commissioner launched the review in response to the independent review of police force structures established by the Government to deliver recommendations on how to implement the proposals. The review is not engaging with the public and no formal consultation process with the public is currently planned around police force mergers.

"The Government's proposals constitute the biggest shake-up of policing in more than sixty years and could fundamentally change the way policing is delivered in Hertfordshire.

"Despite that, the Government is not asking local communities for their views. Our country prides itself on policing by consent, so it's only right that the public are properly consulted on changes on this scale.

"My Hertfordshire consultation shows clearly that local communities are strongly opposed to police force mergers and want Hertfordshire Constabulary to continue providing policing for our county.

"I am grateful to the thousands of Hertfordshire residents who took the time to share their views in response to the consultation. I will continue working to ensure your voices are heard."

**Jonathan Ash-Edwards,**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire**

## 2. Executive Summary

In total, 3,697 people completed the consultation, the highest number of respondents to a consultation by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire since 2024.

**Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents oppose merging police forces**, compared with **15% who support doing so**.

When asked what they believed to be the biggest risks associated with merging police forces, respondents most frequently raised concerns around local policing becoming less of a focus, with a large majority believing the proposals would have a negative impact on the visibility of police patrols and emergency response times. **60% said they were likely to feel less safe** as a result of Hertfordshire's police force becoming part of a larger, merged force, compared with only **4% who would feel safer**.

When asked about potential benefits of merging police forces, respondents felt that it could present an opportunity for more efficient use of funding, to improve public confidence in the police and strengthen forces' specialist capabilities (e.g. fraud, major crime).

### 3. Methodology and Demographics

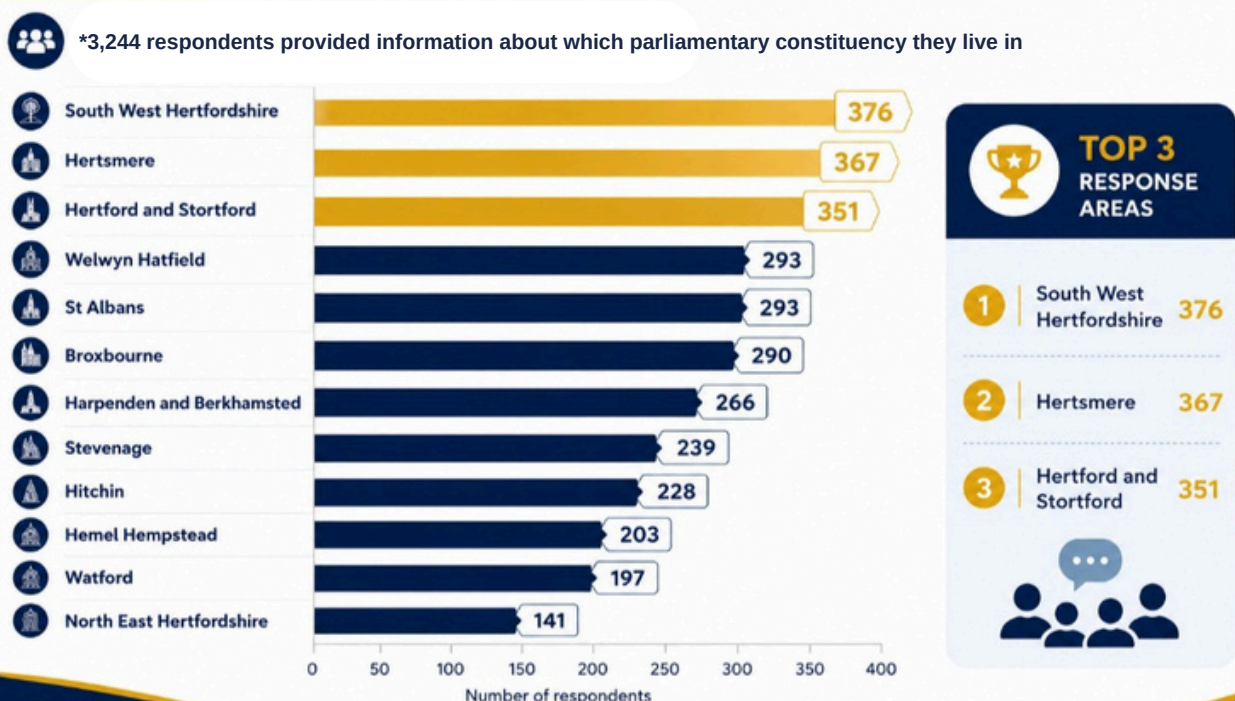
The consultation was distributed via the Herts Connected online platform, social media channels, and through partner organisations across the county.

Respondents were asked a series of structured questions about their views on the proposed mergers, with opportunities to provide open-text comments.

All percentages in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total exactly 100%.

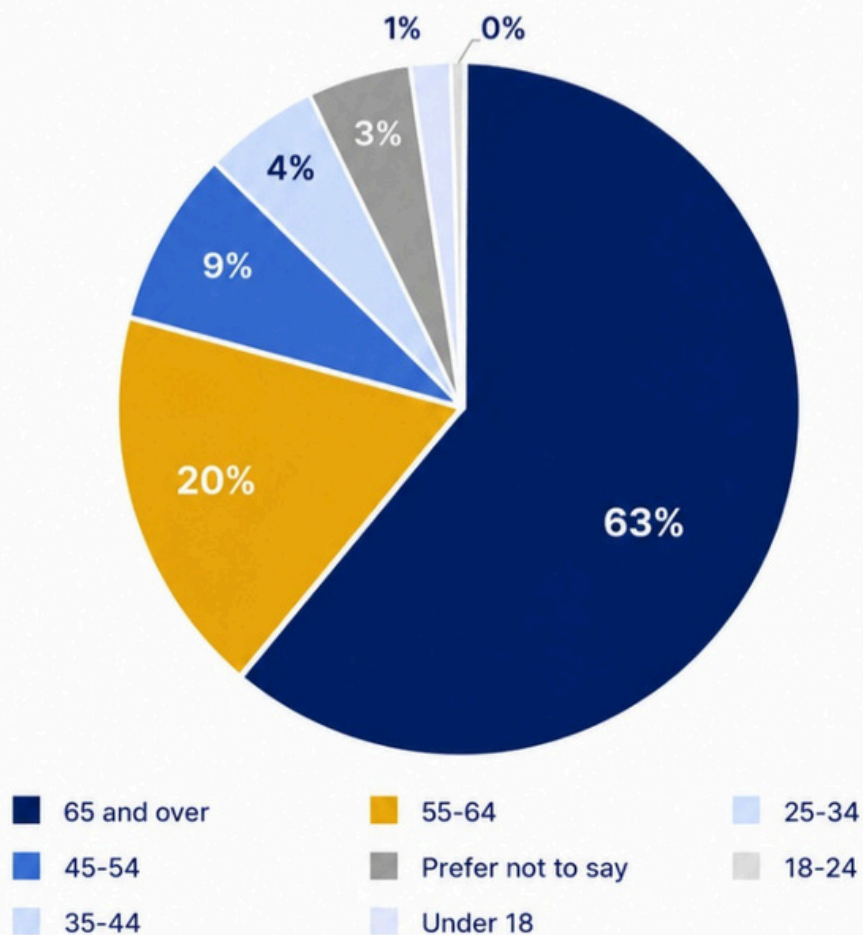
Responses were received from across all areas of Hertfordshire, with representation across age groups. The demographic breakdown of respondents broadly reflects the county's population, though some groups were more engaged than others.

## Response by area



### 3. Methodology and Demographics

#### Response by age

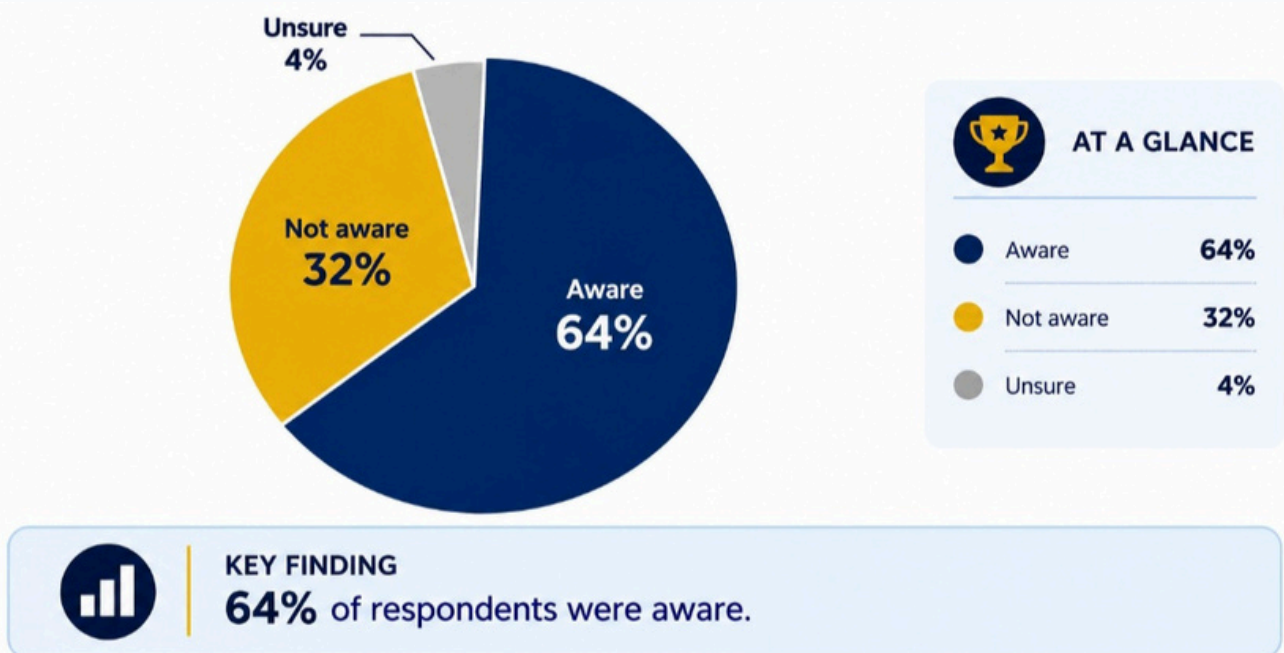


**KEY FINDING:**

**83%** of respondents were aged between 45 and 64.

## 4. Awareness

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of the government's proposals to merge police forces in England and Wales prior to reading information available on the Police and Crime Commissioner's website.

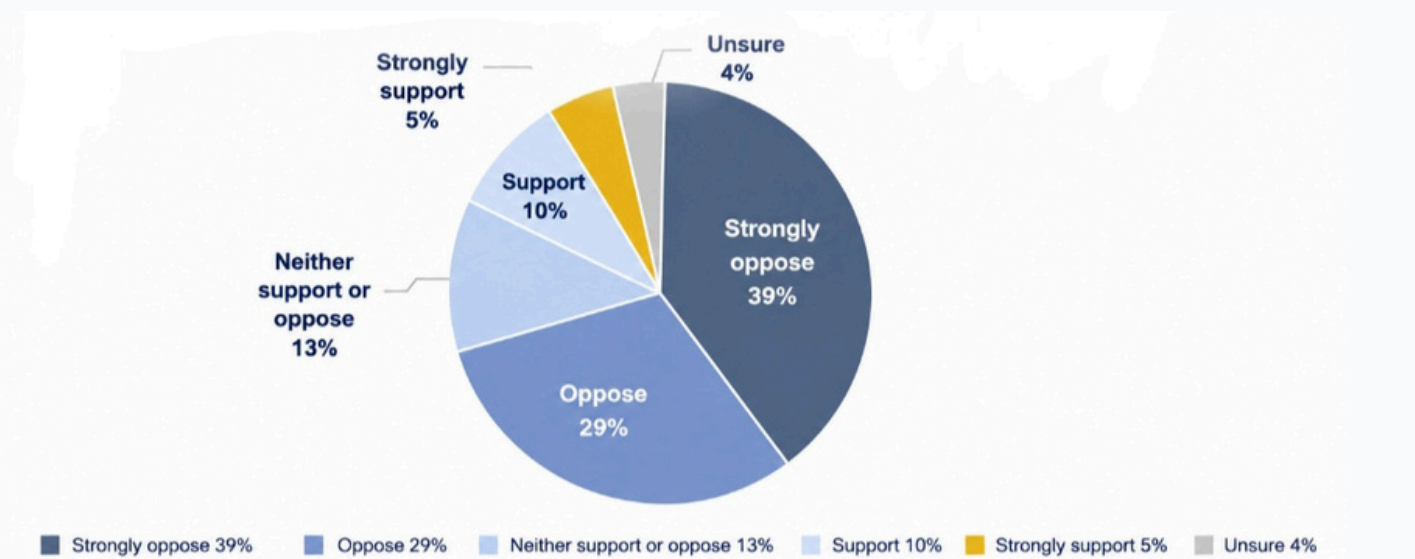


This suggests that while the majority of respondents had some prior knowledge of the merger proposals, a significant minority were learning about them for the first time through this consultation.



# 5. Overall Support

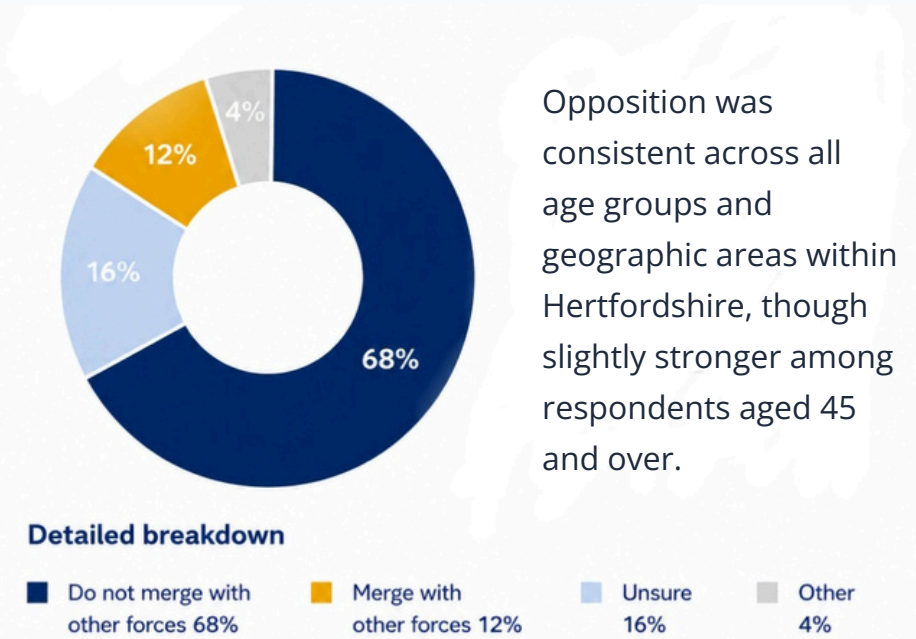
When asked to what extent they supported the Government’s plans to merge police forces into fewer, larger forces, over two-thirds (68%) were against the plans, with 39% strongly opposing the proposal. A minority (15%) supported force mergers, with 5% offering strong support.



**KEY FINDING:**  
**68%** of respondents opposed police force mergers.

Respondents were also asked whether they thought the best outcome for Hertfordshire would be for its police force to merge with other forces, or not.

Over two-thirds (68%) believe that it would be better for Hertfordshire’s police force not to be merged with other forces, whilst 12% chose a merger as the better outcome.



Opposition was consistent across all age groups and geographic areas within Hertfordshire, though slightly stronger among respondents aged 45 and over.



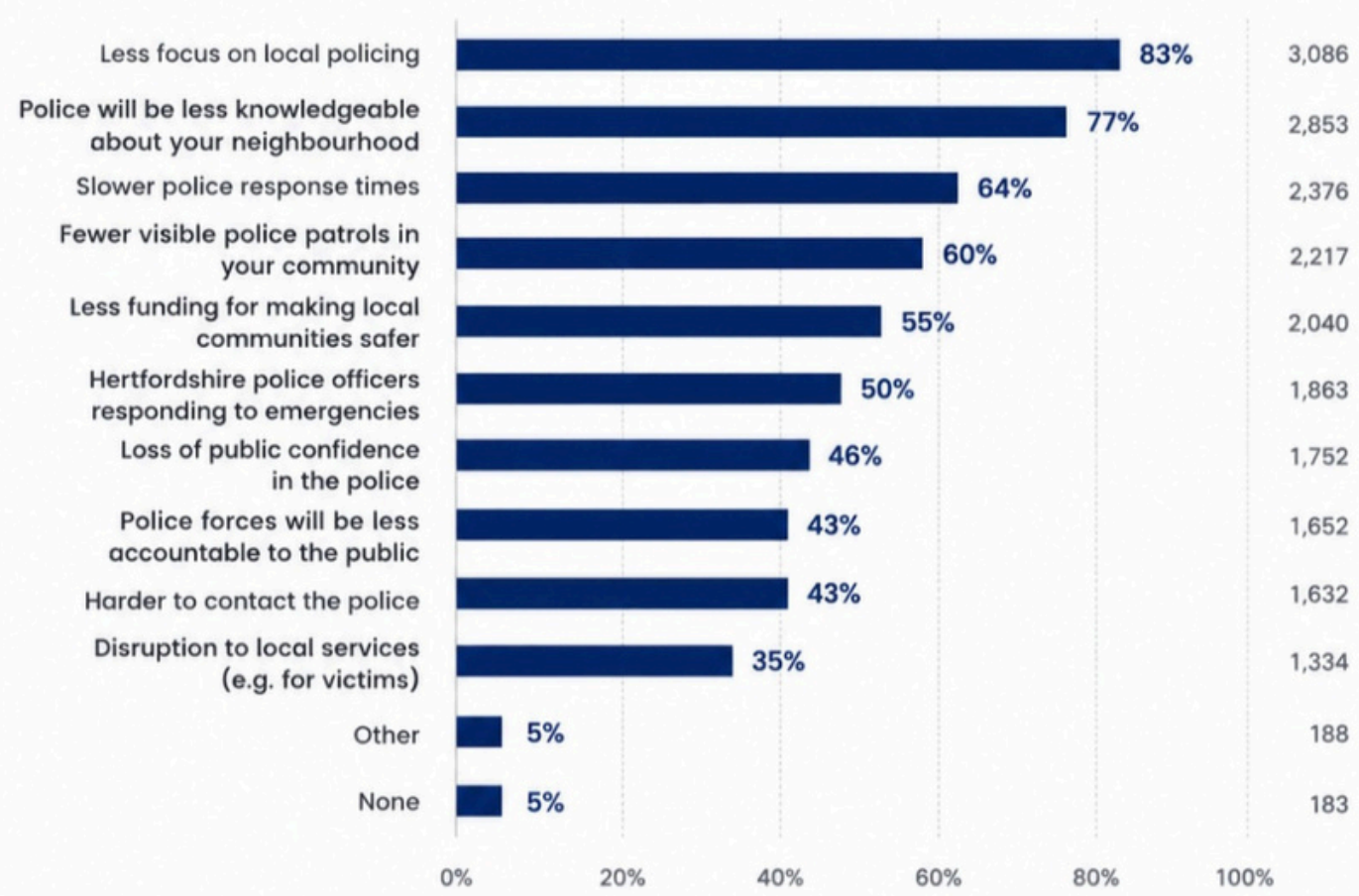
**KEY FINDING:**  
**68%** of respondents believe it would be better for Hertfordshire’s police force not to be merged with other forces.



# 6. Perceived risks of police force mergers

Respondents were asked to select all of the options that they agreed with from a predefined list of possible risks associated with police force mergers.

The most commons answers centred around a perceived shift away from local policing, including less focus on local policing overall (chosen by 83% of respondents), police officers being less knowledgeable about neighbourhoods (77%), slower emergency response times (64%), and fewer visible police patrols (60%).



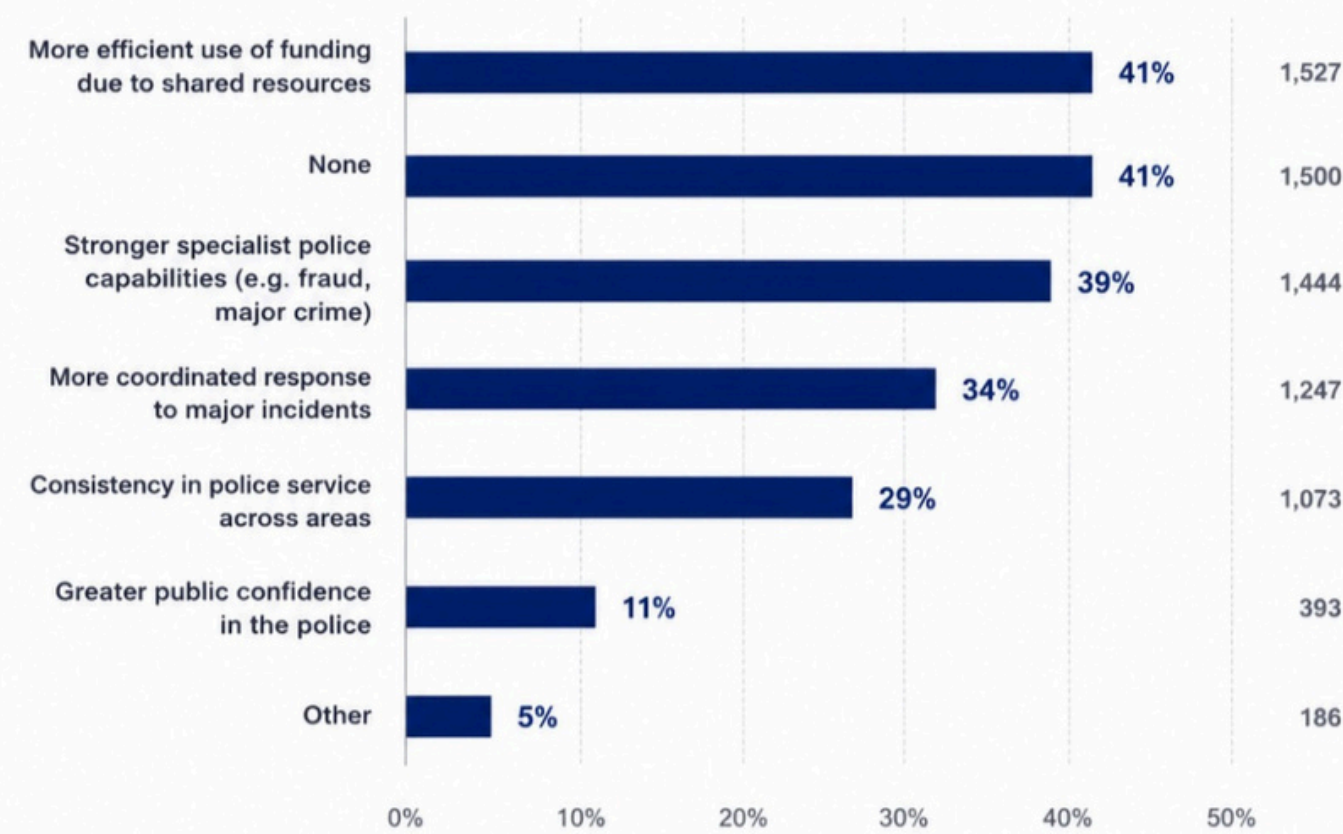
## KEY FINDING:

The top four perceived risks all relate to a shift away from local policing.

# 7. Perceived benefits of police force mergers

Respondents were asked to select all of the options that they agreed with from a predefined list of potential benefits associated with police force mergers.

The most frequently selected answers were more efficient use of funding (chosen by 41%), stronger specialist police capabilities (such as fraud, major crime) (39%), and the police’s ability to deliver a more coordinated response to major incidents (34%). Significantly, 41% of respondents could not identify any benefits.



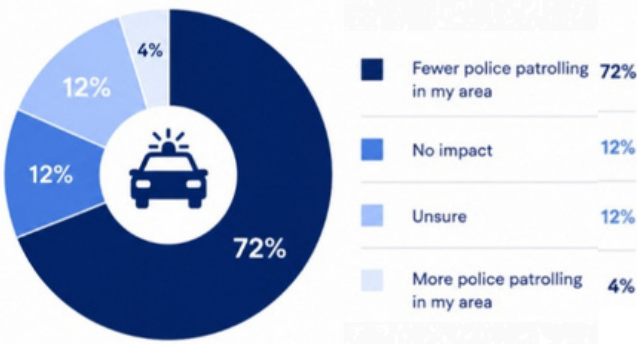
**KEY FINDING:**  
**41%** of respondents could not identify any benefits associated with police force mergers.

# 8. Impact on Local Policing

Respondents were asked how they thought Hertfordshire’s police force becoming part of a larger, merged force would impact several aspects of the local police service they received.

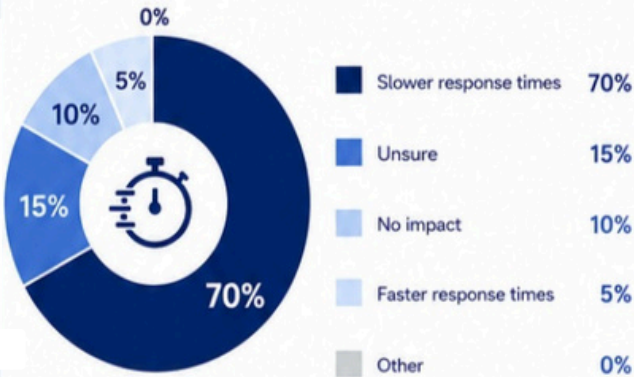
## 1 Police patrols

What impact do you think Hertfordshire becoming part of a larger, merged police force will have on police patrols in your area?



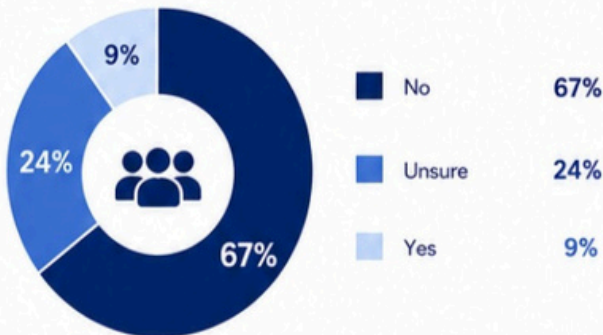
## 2 Response times

What impact do you think Hertfordshire becoming part of a larger, merged police force will have on police response times?



## 3 Prioritisation of local issues

Do you think a merged police force would be likely to prioritise the issues that matter most to you if it served a larger area?



## 4 Ability to feel safe

Do you think you would feel more or less safe as a result of Hertfordshire’s police force becoming part of a larger, merged police force?



### At a glance



72%

believe there would be less police patrolling in their area



70%

believe response times would be longer



67%

believe a merged force would not prioritise the issues that matter most to them



60%

believe they would feel less safe as a result of becoming part of a larger force



### KEY FINDING:

Most respondents expect less visible policing (72%) and to feel less safe (60%), while the majority believe response times would be longer (70%).

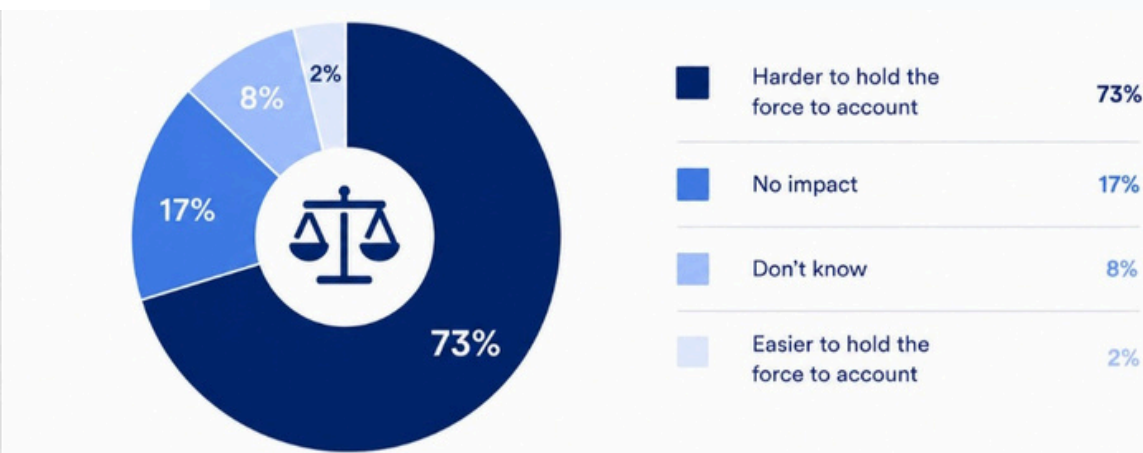


# 9. Local Accountability

Respondents were asked how strongly they felt about decisions around policing in their area being made by people who are directly accountable to Hertfordshire residents. 94% felt that it was important that decision-makers were accountable directly to Hertfordshire residents, with over three-quarters (78%) asserting that it was very important. Only 4% did not believe it was important, and 2% felt that it was not important.



Respondents were then asked if they thought it would be easier or harder to hold their local police force to account if Hertfordshire's police force becomes part of a larger, merged force. Almost three-quarters (73%) thought that it would be harder, 17% felt that there would be no impact, 8% believed there would be no change, and 2% thought it would be easier.



## 10. Public Spending on Police Force Mergers

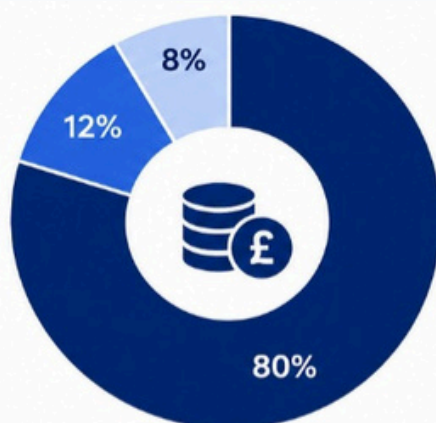
Respondents were told that any significant change to policing structures, such as force mergers, would involve public spending.

They were then asked whether they believed the Government should prioritise police force mergers or investment in more police officers in their local area.

- 80% chose investment in more officers
- 12% selected mergers
- 8% preferred funding be spent on another priority.

There was a strong consensus that taxpayer money would be better spent on frontline policing, putting more officers on the streets, rather than on the administrative and organisational costs of merging forces.

Several respondents noted that previous public sector mergers had often cost more than projected and delivered fewer benefits than promised.



|             |                                                |     |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <div></div> | Investing in more police officers in your area | 80% |
| <div></div> | Merging police forces                          | 12% |
| <div></div> | Other                                          | 8%  |



### KEY FINDING:

A clear majority (80%) believe investment in more police officers in their area should be prioritised over force mergers or other spending priorities.

## 11. Further Comments

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Respondents were asked to share additional thoughts via several free-text questions.

The comments were strongly weighted towards concern around police force mergers, particularly the impact on local policing in Hertfordshire. The most common themes were the importance of local knowledge, visible neighbourhood policing, local accountability and maintaining adequate numbers of officers.

Many respondents also highlighted the differing policing needs of urban and rural communities and expressed concerns that rural areas would be disadvantaged if resources were shared across a larger area. A number of respondents perceive police force mergers primarily as a cost-saving exercise and questioned whether it would genuinely improve the service received by the public.

A smaller number of respondents also recognised the potential benefits that they believe would arise from greater collaboration between forces, including better data-sharing, back-office efficiencies and specialist policing capabilities, such as serious and cybercrime. Many of these respondents commented that they would be supportive of mergers on the condition that local policing, local accountability and officer numbers were protected.

# Selected Respondent Comments

"It would be good to have a central body to deal with cyber and technological crime and organised crime, but it is also important to have a local police force that literally has a foot in the community."

"This proposal seems to have one major aim which is a cost cutting exercise. I strongly believe it will result in more bureaucracy and less actual policing."

"People relate to smaller units and policing depends on public trust and support."

"A regional force across a huge area will cause disparity in coverage with a constant pull to the busier urban areas."

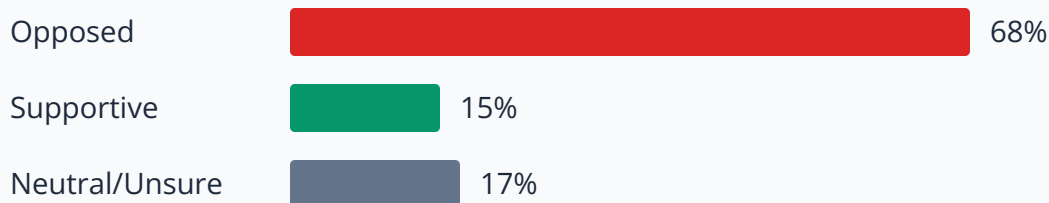
"There are a lot of inefficiencies across the 43 force structure. Having shared IT services or doing something once as opposed to 43 times over has to be better value to the public purse."

"The government should be consulting the public on this more and there should be more information provided to the public on the reasons and the benefits."



# Key Data at a Glance

## Overall Support



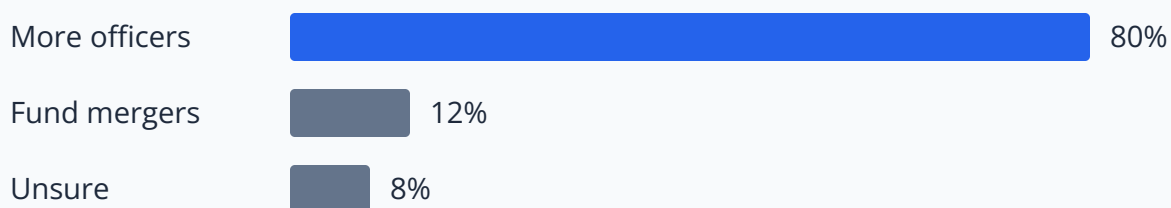
## Perceived Risks



## Perceived Benefits



## Public Spending Preference



## Awareness of Proposals

