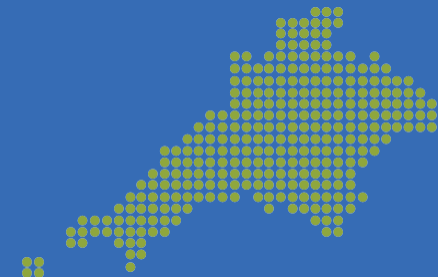


Public Survey on Police Force Mergers Results

July 2026



PCC
Office of the Police and
Crime Commissioner
Devon and Cornwall

Survey arrangements:

In January 2026, the Government confirmed its intention to explore merging the existing 43 police forces across England and Wales into larger, regional forces. In its White Paper 'From local to national' the government stated that *'moving to a system of fewer police forces would improve policing for the public by: saving money through reduced duplication and management costs; providing a more effective service in areas such as major crime, roads policing and firearms; helping to ensure more consistency in the service the public receive from the police; equipping local policing with a greater ability to surge resource and respond to major events, and; making it easier to coordinate and collaborate across forces nationally.'*

An Independent Review of Police Force Structures was launched in March 2026 to advise the Government on how police force mergers could be delivered and is due to report to the Home Secretary at the end of August 2026. The Review held a targeted Call for Evidence in April and May 2026 with stakeholders but has not sought the direct views of the public. In May 2026, the Commissioner launched a survey to seek the public's views around the potential for police force mergers to inform the Government's initial proposals.

The Commissioner has shared the results of this public survey with the Home Secretary and the Chair of the Independent Review of Police Force Structures and has published the results on the OPCC website.

Sample Size: The survey ran from 21st May to 12th July 2026 and a total of 1,606 people responded to the survey. Based on population figures from the 2021 census a sample size of 385 participants was required to give statistically significant results with a margin of error of +/- 5%. It is important to note that the people who responded were self-selecting and their views may not always be representative of the general population.

Key findings

- 1,606 responses
- Good levels of awareness of government plans to merge police forces (81% aware)
- A majority of those that responded did not support merging Devon & Cornwall Police with other police forces. 72% were opposed to a merger with only 23% in support
- Opinions appear to be strongly held. When asked to rate various merger options if Devon & Cornwall Police is forced to merge. 54% selected 'None of these options I cannot support a merger' as their 1st option
- Risks and benefits (people were asked to select up to 3)
 - 55% of respondents (890) chose 'I cannot see any benefits'
 - Highest scoring risks were 'loss of local focus' at 69% (1102), 'loss of knowledge' at 57% (922), and 'being less responsive' at 55% (877)
 - 'Stronger specialist policing' & 'efficiency savings' each listed as benefits by around 1/3 of respondents
- Majority of respondents in each council area were opposed to merger but stronger opposition in Cornwall (78.6%), Plymouth and Torbay (both 77%), than in Devon County (at 65%)
- People aged 60yrs+ more opposed to a merger (74%) but opposition to merger remains high in younger age groups – with 69% of respondents aged under 30 years opposed to a merger

Q. Do you believe that Devon & Cornwall Police should be merged with other forces to create a larger force?

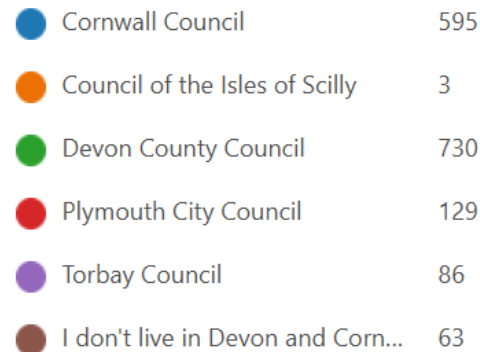
Total responses: 1,606

- 72% did not support a merger
- 23% in favour
- 5% did not know



Location

- Significant majority opposed to merger in every Local Authority area
- Cornwall & Isles of Scilly 78.6%
- Devon County Council 65%
- Plymouth 77%
- Torbay 77%



Age

- 59% of respondents were aged 60 years+
- Age had slight impact on merger support but opposition to merger was consistently high across age groups
- 69% of under 30s not in favour of merger

Q. If Devon & Cornwall Police is forced to merge with one or more other forces? Please drag to rearrange the following options – with the potential merger you would support most at the top. [Total of 1424 respondents]

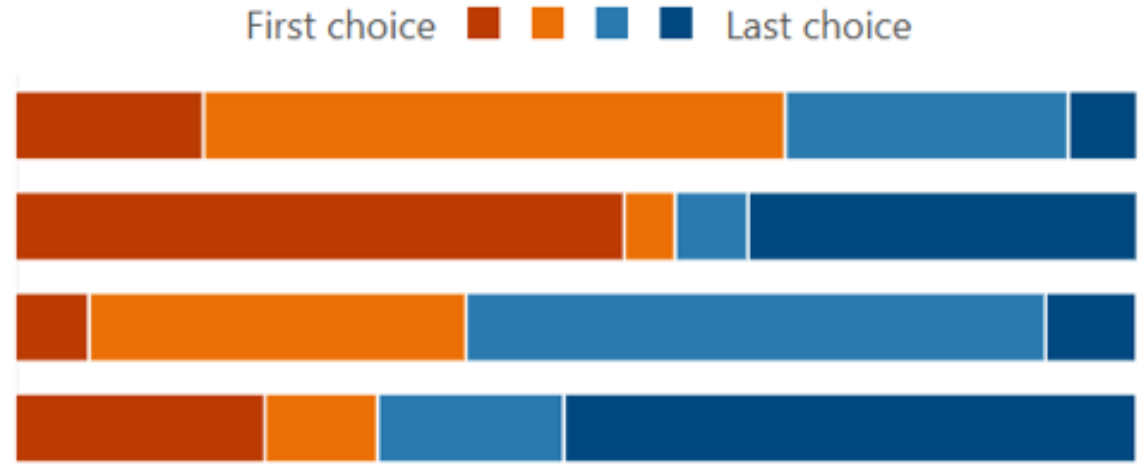
Options

Merge with Dorset Police

None of these options – I cannot support a merger

Merge with Avon and Somerset

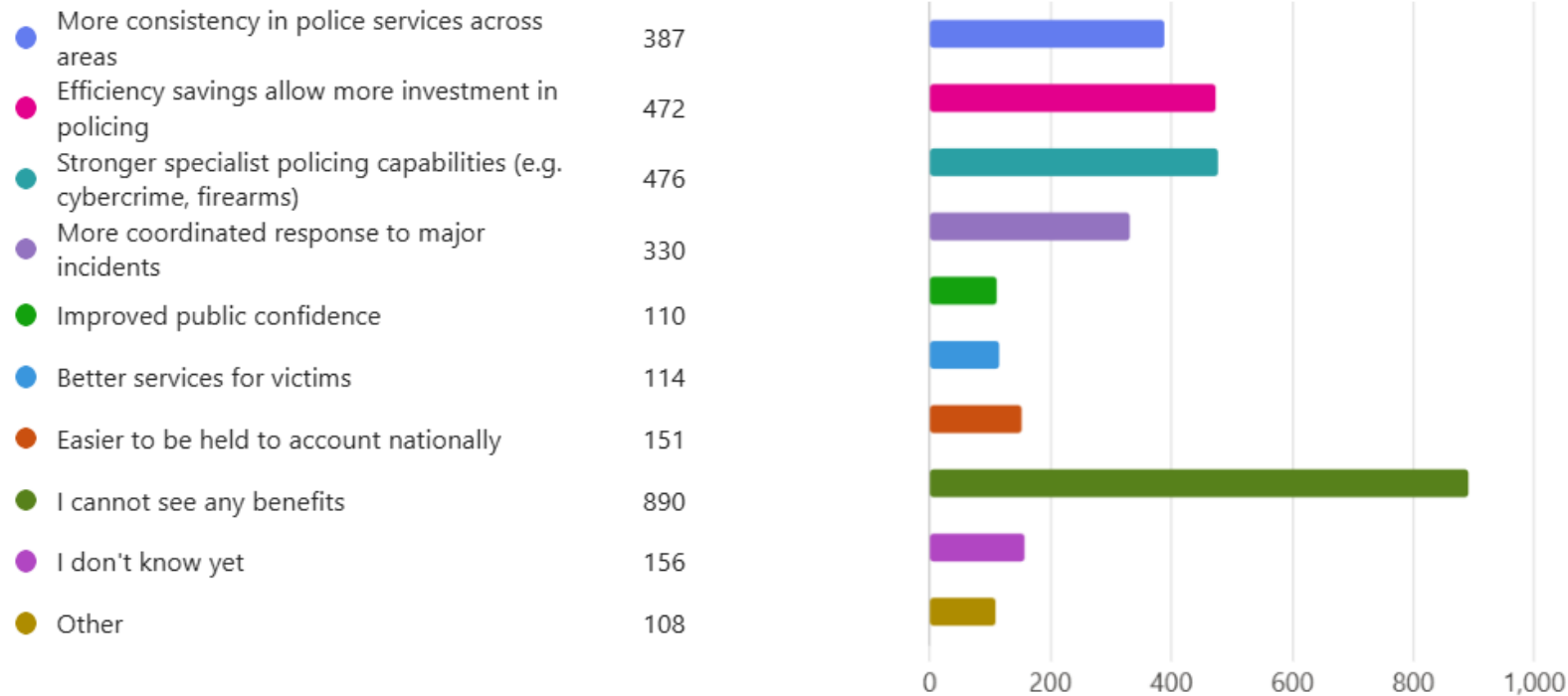
Merge with all the other forces in south west



- Strength of feeling within respondents with over 54% respondents choosing 'None' as their 1st choice and a further 5% as their 2nd choice
- 22% of respondents put a merger with the other 4 SW forces as their 1st choice but for 51% of respondents it was their least preferred option
- For 52% of respondents, Dorset was their 2nd choice

Q. What do you think are the benefits of merging police forces? (up to 3)

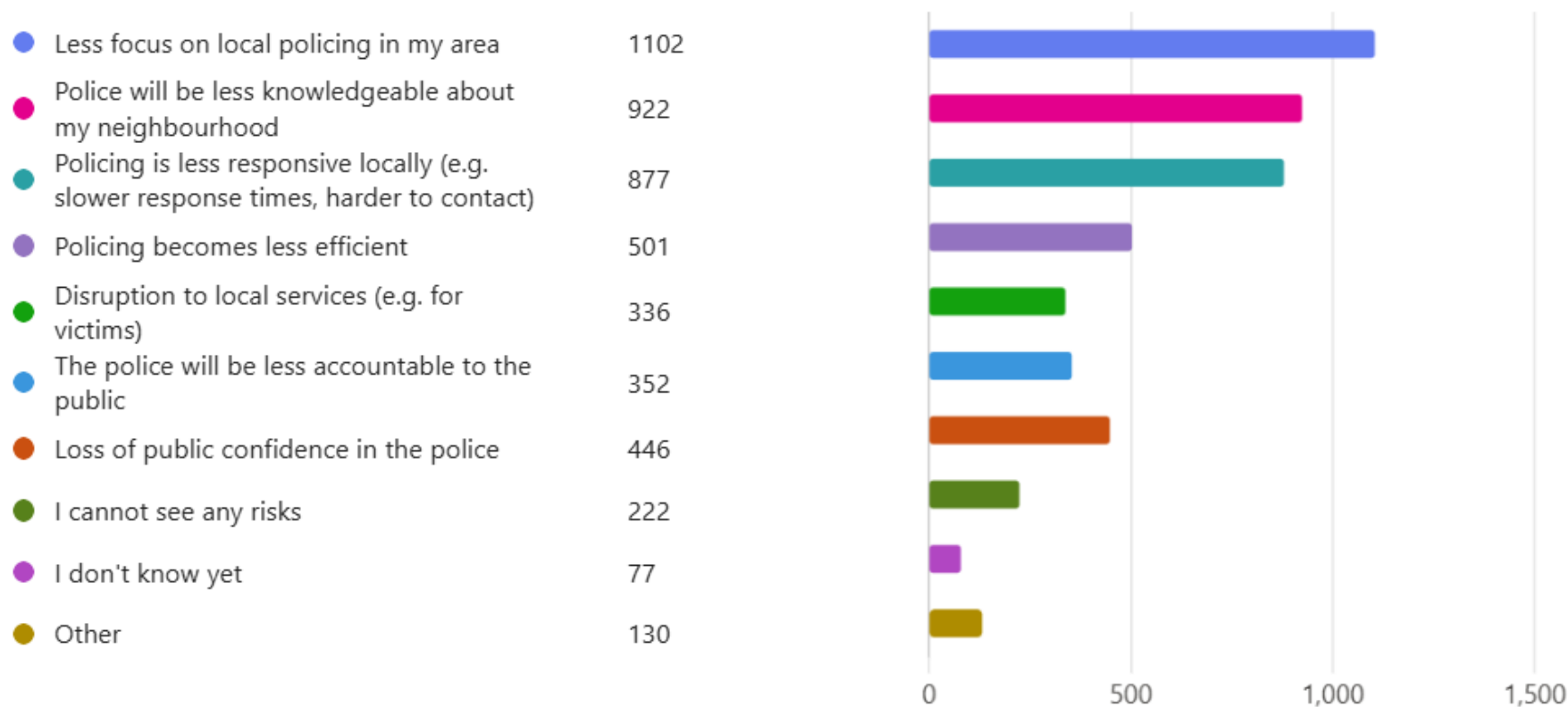
- 890 respondents chose 'I cannot see any benefits'
- Highest scoring benefits were 'stronger specialist policing capabilities' (476) and 'efficiency savings' (472)
- Only a small number respondents chose 'better services for victims' (114) and 'improved public confidence' (110)



Note: Total of preferences cast is 3,194. Maximum should have been 4,818. Number respondents made less than 3 selections.

Q. What do you think are the risks of merging police forces? (up to 3)

- Highest numbers of responses for 'loss of local knowledge' (922), 'less focus on local policing' (1102) and less responsive (877). 446 respondents listed 'loss of public confidence' as one of their risks
- Small number of respondents (222) could not see any risks

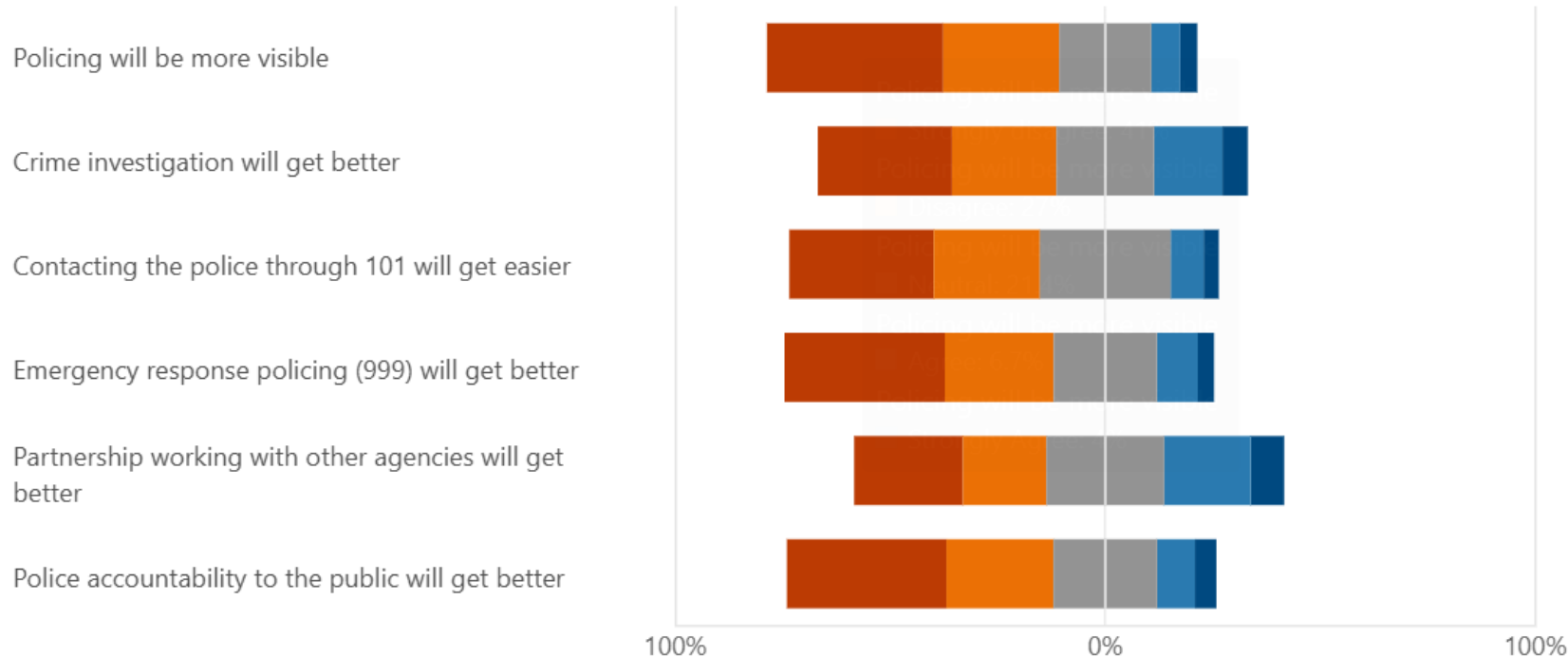


Note: Total of 4,965 preferences cast. Maximum should have been 4,818. Small number of people must have made more than 3 selections.

Q. If Devon & Cornwall Police merges with another force....

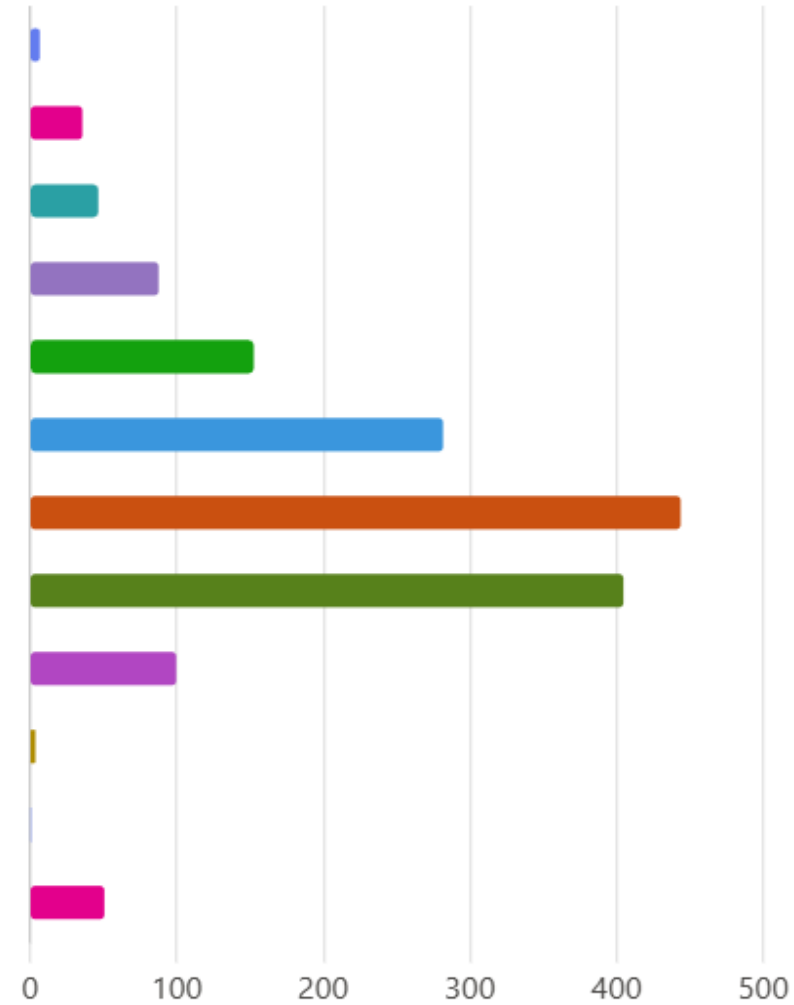
- For each of the statements below, more people felt things would get worse than better
- 1 in 5 said crime investigation would get better, whilst 1 in 10 said the police would be more visible
- 62% of respondents disagreed that accountability to the public would get better
- 68% respondents disagreed that policing would be more visible

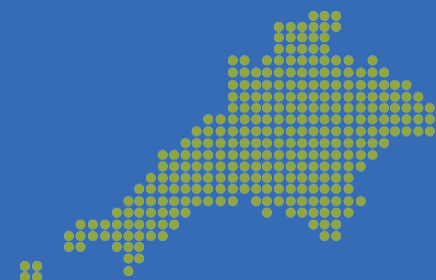
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree



Q. Age of respondents

17 or under	6
18 to 24	35
25 to 29	46
30 to 39	87
40 to 49	152
50 to 59	281
60 to 69	443
70 to 79	404
80 to 89	99
90 to 99	3
100 or over	0
I'd rather not say	50





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