Research Report Stakeholder Perceptions Survey 2020

Prepared for: Local Government Association

Prepared by: BMG Research

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Executive Summary

1.1 Background and Objectives

BMG Research has prepared this summary report for the Local Government Association (LGA) detailing the findings from the 2020 LGA Stakeholder Perceptions Survey. The LGA's Perceptions Survey is a key measure of: the extent to which councillors and senior officers in LGA-member authorities understand and engage with the LGA and its offer; how they view the LGA and its communications; and their views on and experiences of the support and resources it offers.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the research aims for the 2020 survey are a little different to those for previous waves of the survey.

In 2020 this research aims to:

- Quantify LGA's members' awareness of the organisation and the benefits it currently offers.
- Examine how views may have changed compared to before the LGA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Method

A total of 1,003 interviews were undertaken with a sample of representatives from local authorities across all the English regions. The following stakeholder groups were included in the research:

- Chief executives
- Directors
- Leaders
- Chairs of scrutiny
- Portfolio holders
- Leaders of the opposition
- Frontline councillors

Most responses were gathered through Computer Aided Telephone Interviews (CATI) (662) with the remainder through Computer Aided Web Interviews (CAWI) (341). It should be noted that the number of CAWI completes has increased considerably compared to previous waves (191 in 2019 and 6 in 2017) due to this option being further promoted to offer stakeholders greater flexibility and encourage participation. In particular, for 2020 a greater degree of flexibility in terms of the method of approach and survey completion was used to accommodate the additional demands on members due to the

pandemic and the fact that a large proportion of members were working remotely from home during this time.

The sample size has a maximum standard error of 1.53% at the 95% level of confidence, giving these findings a high level of accuracy.

1.3 Findings

1.3.1 Overview

This report provides a summary of top-line frequencies; significant findings from cross-tabulations based upon region, role type, and amalgamated role type (officer, senior councillors and frontline councillors) and comparisons to previous waves. Where differences between these groups are discussed in the report, it is because they have been identified as statistically significant unless otherwise stated. Statistically significant changes compared to the previous waves are also discussed.

Statistically significant changes from 2019 have been **highlighted** in the table below.[1]

Table 1: Summary of positive responses[2] given for key measures

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	2020	Change from 2019
Sample size	(937)	(917)	(821)	(831)	(862)	(1104)	(1106)	(1003)	
Knowledge of the LGA	62%	72%	73%	73%	75%	73%	80%	74%	**-6**
I would speak positively about the LGA	63%	73%	72%	74%	74%	73%	79%	76%	-3
Satisfied with the work of the LGA	63%	70%	75%	76%	73%	73%	78%	74%	-4
The LGA keeps you informed about its work	69%	78%	79%	84%	83%	80%	84%	81%	-3
The LGA demonstrates value for money	43%	53%	53%	57%	N/A	59%	57%	58%	+1

[1] It should be noted that a 2018 wave of the survey was not undertaken due to competing research requirements for the respondent group and local elections.

[2] Positive responses are defined as the following: Knowledge of the LGA (know a great deal/fair amount); I would speak positively about the LGA (I speak positively… without being asked/if I am asked about this); Satisfied with the work of the LGA (very/fairly satisfied); The LGA keeps you informed about its work (very/fairly well informed); and The LGA demonstrates value for money (strongly/tend to agree).

- All the categories in Table 1 have seen a significant increase in positive responses since the first wave of the survey in 2012. Most notably, there has been a 15-percentage point increase in the proportion of stakeholders who agree that the LGA demonstrates value for money, and a 13-percentage point increment in those who would speak positively about the LGA.
- Nearly three in four stakeholders know a great deal/fair amount about the LGA (74%). Whilst this represents a significant decrease of 6 percentage points compared to a peak of 80% in 2019, it is in line with results reported in previous rounds of the survey since 2013.
- 76% of stakeholders would speak positively about the LGA, a proportion which remains in line with previous years (79% in 2019, 73% in 2017). Chief executives are the most likely to speak positively about the LGA (93%).
- Satisfaction with the work of the LGA is also broadly stable compared to previous waves (74% in 2020, 78% in 2019, 73% in 2017). Chief executives are the most likely to be satisfied (92%).
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) say that their satisfaction with the LGA is unchanged compared to before the organisation's response to COVID-19. A quarter (25%) are more satisfied with the LGA compared to before its response to COVID-19. The remaining 3% are less satisfied.
- Around eight in ten (81%) stakeholders feel that the LGA keeps them very or fairly well informed about its work, a proportion that is in line with results reported in previous rounds since 2014. Nearly all chief executives feel either very or fairly well informed (99%).
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) say their level of satisfaction with the way the LGA keeps them informed about its work is unchanged compared to before the COVID-19 response. Nearly a quarter (24%) are more satisfied and the remaining 2% are less satisfied.
- Just under three in five (58%) stakeholders believe that the LGA demonstrates value for money. This result varies substantially by job role, with chief executives being most inclined to agree that good value is delivered (86%) and chairs of scrutiny being the least likely (46%).
- Over eight in ten (83%) say that their level of satisfaction with the value for money offered by the LGA is unchanged compared to before the COVID-19 response. 16% are more satisfied and the remaining 2% are less satisfied.

1.3.2 Usefulness of activities provided by the LGA

Table 2: Proportion who find activities useful

How useful are the following LGA activities to your council or local government as a whole?

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	2020	Change from 2019
Sample size	(937)	(917)	(821)	(831)	(862)	(1004)	(1106)	(1003)	
Providing up-to-date information about local government	92%	89%	88%	93%	91%	91%	92%	88%	**-4**
Providing support for councils[3]	83%	86%	83%	85%	83%	84%	87%	87%	0
Lobbying on behalf of local government	90%	92%	93%	90%	89%	90%	87%	86%	-1
Providing a single voice for local government	90%*	94%*	91%*	88%	89%	92%	88%	84%	**-4**
Managing local government's reputation in the national media	89%*	93%*	90%*	83%	83%	82%	82%	79%	-3
Providing conferences and events	71%	79%	77%	85%	83%	79%	83%	78%	**-5**
Providing advice and information through the political group offices	72%	78%	78%	78%	76%	79%	70%	70%	0
Negotiating national pay, terms and conditions and providing employment advice	73%	78%	75%	74%	71%	65%	63%	68%	**+5**
Providing legal advice and co-ordination of legal action for councils	67%	78%	73%	72%	64%	62%	55%	55%	0

*Prior to 2015/16, respondents were asked whether or not these activities were important which means that these results are not directly comparable.

- *Providing up-to-date information about local government* (88%) continues to be rated as the most useful activity undertaken by the LGA, closely followed by *providing support for councils* (87%).

[3] There have been some small changes to how this option was worded. In 2019 it was 'Providing improvement support for councils' and in 2012 to 2017 it was 'Providing support for sector led improvement'.

- There have been three significant declines, compared to 2019, in the LGA activities that stakeholders find useful: *providing conferences and events* (a drop of 5 percentage points to 78%, which is likely at least partly explained by the impact of COVID-19); *providing up-to-date information about local government* (a drop of 4 percentage points to 88%); and *providing a single voice for local government* (a drop of 4 percentage points to 84%).
- There has been an increase in the proportion of stakeholders who find *negotiating national pay, terms and conditions and providing employment advice* useful. This score has gone up by 5 percentage points compared to 2019 (68% in 2020, 63% in 2019).

1.3.3 Finding out about the work of the LGA

- '*First' magazine* remains the most popular method of discovering the work of the LGA, with 67% reporting to use it. The magazine remains particularly popular with senior councillors (84%) and frontline councillors (87%). Officers, meanwhile, are most likely to get LGA news from *LGA chief executive, Mark Lloyd's e-bulletin* (67%).

1.3.4 Support for councils

- *Financial support* (43%), *lobbying on behalf of local authorities* (37%) and *COVID-related support* (21%) are the top three areas stakeholders feel the LGA should be focussing on over the next 12 months to further support and promote the work of councils. Officers are more likely than average to refer to these areas of support (64% mention financial support, 49% would like to see lobbying and 32% cite COVID-related support).
- The most commonly mentioned areas that stakeholders would like to become part of the LGA's sector-led improvement offer were financial management, sharing best practice, shared services/partnerships, training and development and changes to peer reviews and challenges. 11% of respondents didn't give a response to this question, while a further 9% said that they did not know. Additionally, 12% said they had nothing to add and 5% said that they are happy with the current support and therefore have no suggestions for further support.

Introduction

1.4 Background

This is the eighth time the Local Government Association (LGA) has undertaken a survey of its members. The LGA's Stakeholder Perceptions

Survey is a key measure of councils' perceptions of the LGA and its communications, while also exploring members' views and experiences of the support and resources the LGA offers.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the 2020 survey was shortened to reduce the burden on stakeholders. It also included a few questions specifically related to the LGA's response to COVID-19 and the impact this has had on their perceptions of the LGA.

1.5 Objectives

The main research objectives are to explore:

- Perceptions of the LGA in a range of areas.
- Views on how the LGA communicates and engages with members.
- Any differences between stakeholder groups in terms of knowledge of or engagement with the LGA.
- Perceptions of the services and benefits members get from the LGA and whether there are other services that would be of value or benefit to members or the local government sector.
- Impact of the COVID-19 response on perceptions of and engagement with the LGA.

1.6 Method

The 2020 LGA perceptions survey was delivered using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) and supplemented with Computer Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI). In total, 662 interviews were delivered via CATI and 341 via CAWI.

The number of CAWI completes represents a substantial increase on previous years (191 in 2019 and 6 in 2017). While in 2017 the CAWI option was only offered to respondents in a limited set of circumstances; since 2019, stakeholders were more readily offered the option to complete the survey online. This approach allowed stakeholders maximum flexibility in order to encourage them to participate.

The survey was designed by the LGA in partnership with BMG Research. In most cases, question wording was retained from previous waves of the survey in order to ensure comparability. As well as this, a small number of questions were added to explore new areas of interest.

Prior to the full launch of the survey, a live pilot was conducted with 20 respondents to ensure that the survey worked correctly. No issues were identified relating to either the functioning of the survey or respondents' understanding of its content.

Fieldwork for the survey took place from 27th October 2020 to 18th December 2020.

1.7 Sampling

As in previous waves, the research aimed to gather the views of a representative sample of three key stakeholder groups in LGA-member authorities: officers (chief executives and directors), senior councillors (chairs of scrutiny, leaders, leaders of the opposition and portfolio holders) and frontline councillors from LGA member authorities. LGA board members have not been included in this research.

Interlocking role and region quotas were set to ensure that the research achieved a broadly representative sample. As well as this, minimum targets were set by region and by role (both 30) to allow robust subgroup analysis to be carried out. These minimum targets were met for all subgroups.

A sample frame of 16,754 unique and usable contacts (including 10,881 frontline councillors) was provided to BMG Research by the LGA. A total of 1,003 interviews were conducted, which results in a maximum standard error of ±1.53% (similar to those seen in previous waves) at the 95% level of confidence, giving these findings a high level of accuracy. Further details about the standard errors by region and role type are included in Appendix 1.

Prior to 2019, stakeholder responses were automatically linked to relevant data that the LGA held about an individual and their membership, specifically the stakeholder's role and political affiliation along with information about their council such as council type and region. However, due to changes in data protection regulations, from 2019, respondents were asked for their explicit consent for their responses to be linked back and used in this way. If they refused, respondents were asked if they would be willing to provide this information themselves by answering a small set of additional questions, while making it clear they could still refuse to answer any individual question should they wish.

A small percentage (5%) refused to have this information linked from the LGA database and declined to answer the additional questions to collect this information. Therefore, the responses of these stakeholders will contribute to the overall total of 1,003 and not any subgroups

Table 3 displays the breakdown of completed interviews by region, role and amalgamated role of those who did agree to have their data linked to the LGA database or those who answered the relevant additional question(s) and provided this information themselves.

Table 3: Completed interviews where role & region data is available

Amalgamated role:	Officers	Officers	Senior councillors	Senior councillors	Senior councillors	Senior councillors	Frontline councillors	No role recorded	Regional total
	Chief executives	Directors	Leaders	Chairs of scrutiny	Portfolio holder	Leaders of the opposition	Frontline councillors		
East of England	10	29	12	7	17	14	44	**6**	**139**
East Midlands	9	26	12	5	11	8	31	**0**	**102**
London	4	16	4	8	11	5	29	**2**	**79**
North East	3	8	1	3	6	3	19	**1**	**44**
North West	8	27	8	10	19	13	49	**6**	**140**
South East	12	37	21	12	24	19	57	**10**	**192**
South West	10	11	9	6	11	9	36	**3**	**95**
West Midlands	10	15	8	9	12	10	27	**0**	**91**
Yorkshire & the Humber	4	15	2	5	8	5	26	**4**	**69**
No region recorded	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	**49**	**52**
Role Total:	71	186	77	65	119	86	318	**81**	**1,003**
Amalgamated role total:	**257**	**257**	**347**	**347**	**347**	**347**	**318**		

In addition to this, Table 4 shows the breakdown of respondents by the type of local authority for which they are employed.

Table 4: Respondent local authority type where data is available

Local authority	Number of available contacts	% of available contacts	Number of respondents	% of responses
Non-metropolitan district	7,656	46%	509	53%
English unitary	3,470	21%	202	21%
Metropolitan district	2,508	15%	88	9%
London borough	1,797	11%	79	8%
English county	1,323	8%	76	8%
Total	**16,754**	**100%**	**954**	**100%**

1.8 Analytical approach

This report provides a summary of the top-line frequencies and, where relevant, significant findings from cross-tabulations based upon role type, amalgamated role type, and region.

Z-tests within the groups of interest (e.g. region, role etc.) were conducted at the 95% confidence level to identify where findings are significantly different. Where specific findings from cross-tabulations are discussed in the report, it is because they have been identified as statistically significant unless otherwise stated. Statistically significant changes compared to the previous waves are also discussed[4]. In all tables in this report, all figures which are significantly higher than at least one other figure in the same row are **highlighted**. Full tables showing detailed cross-tabulations have been provided to the LGA separately.

It is also worth noting that when figures do not add up to 100%, this is either due to rounding or because multiple answers were allowed.

[4] A statistically significant result at the 95% confidence level means that there is only a 5% probability of the difference being caused by chance rather than by it being a real difference. This is a widely accepted level of confidence.

Views on the LGA and its services

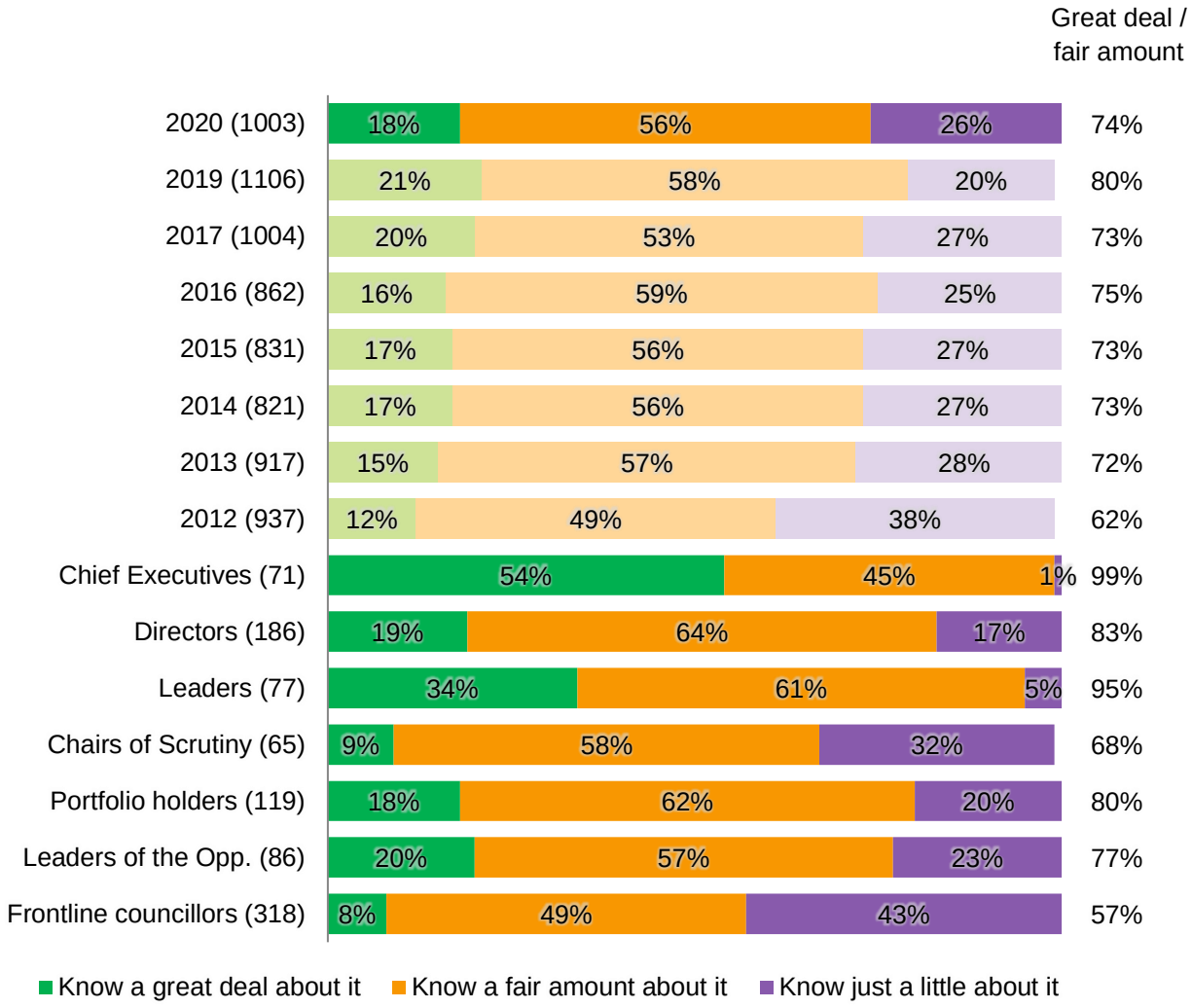
1.9 Knowledge of the LGA

There has been a decrease in stakeholder knowledge of the LGA compared to the previous year. The proportion who have a great deal or a fair amount of knowledge of the LGA has decreased by 6 percentage points compared to 2019 (74% in 2020, 80% in 2019). Nonetheless, this score is again in line with results reported between 2017 and 2013, which ranged between 75% and 72%.[5]

Chief executives are the most knowledgeable group, with the vast majority (99%) reporting either a great or a fair amount of knowledge of the LGA. This is followed by leaders (95%) and directors (83%), who are also more likely to have a high level of knowledge about the LGA than average. In contrast, frontline councillors (57%) are less likely than average to have at least a fair amount of knowledge of the LGA.

[5] Only respondents who said that they know at least a little about LGA took part in the survey. If a respondent said that they have never heard of LGA or had heard of LGA but knew nothing about it, the survey was terminated. This is because a least a little knowledge of LGA is needed to be able to answer the later questions in the survey. In total, nine respondents said that they have heard of LGA but know nothing about it and six said that they have never heard of LGA.

Figure 1: How well do you know the LGA? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members
*Due to rounding, the sum of 'know a great deal about it' and 'know a fair amount about it' may differ from the summary shown in the 'great deal/fair amount' column

By region, stakeholders based in London report the highest level of knowledge about the LGA (82% say they know a great or a fair amount about it). Although this proportion is not statistically significant compared to the average, it is significantly higher than those reported by stakeholders in the East Midlands (69%) and the North West (70%).

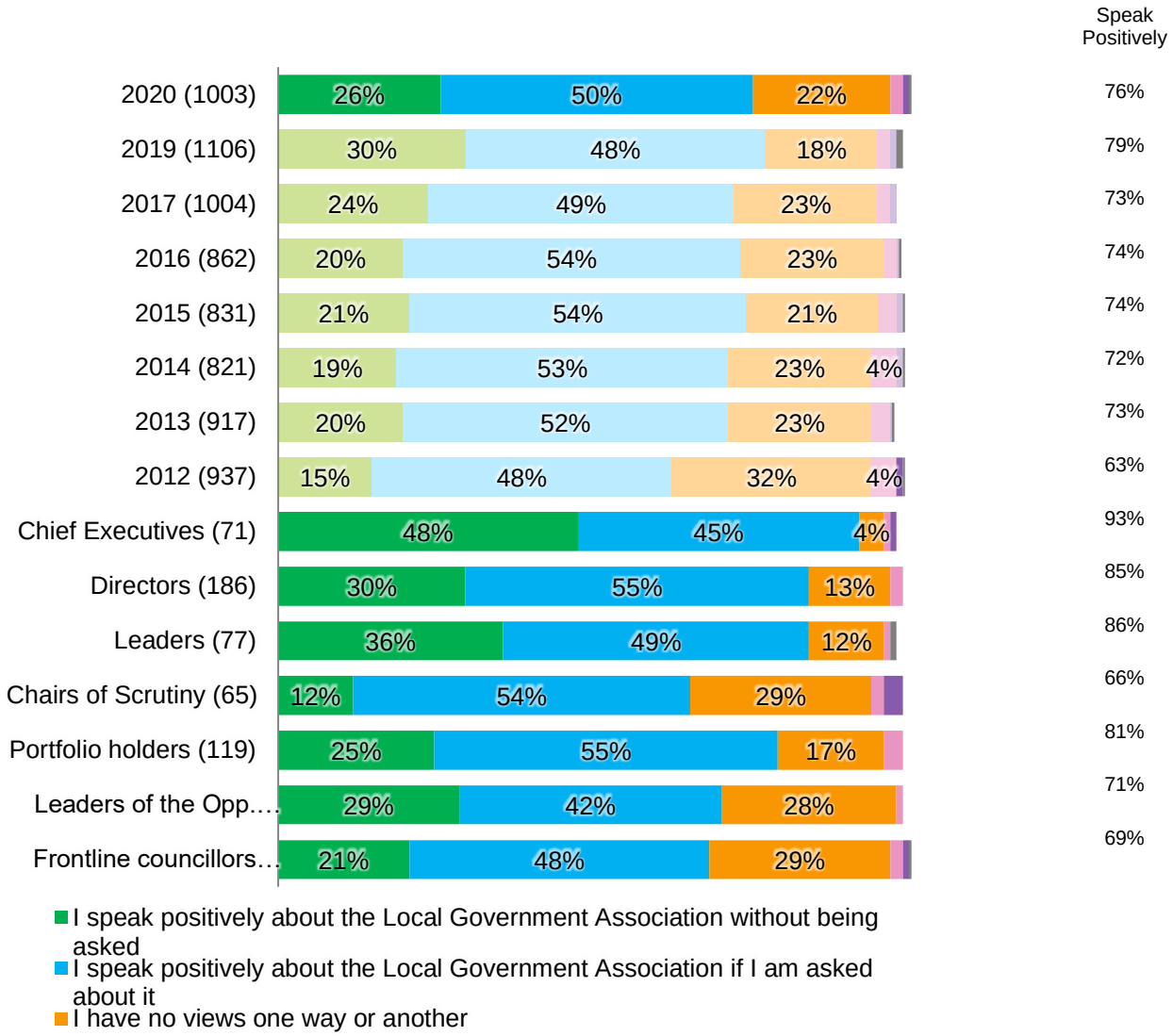
1.10 Advocacy for the LGA

Respondents were asked how positively or negatively they would speak about the LGA. Overall, 76% of stakeholders would speak positively about the LGA, either prompted or unprompted. This is in line with previous years' results up to 2013 and significantly higher than the 63% who would speak positively about the LGA in 2012.

The percentage who would speak positively about the LGA without being asked has gone down to 26%, a significant 4-percentage point decrease compared to 2019 (30%). It is worth noting though that this result is in line with the figure reported in 2017 (24%) and significantly higher than all years previous to that. The percentage who would speak negatively about the LGA has remained consistent with the results for the previous round at 2%.

Chief executives (93%), leaders (86%) and directors (85%) are the roles more likely to speak positively about the LGA. Not only this, but chief executives (48%) and leaders (36%) are significantly more likely than other job roles to speak positively unprompted. Frontline councillors (69%) are less likely than average to speak positively about the LGA (prompted or unprompted). Chairs of scrutiny (66%) are the least likely job role to speak positively about the LGA.

Figure 2: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



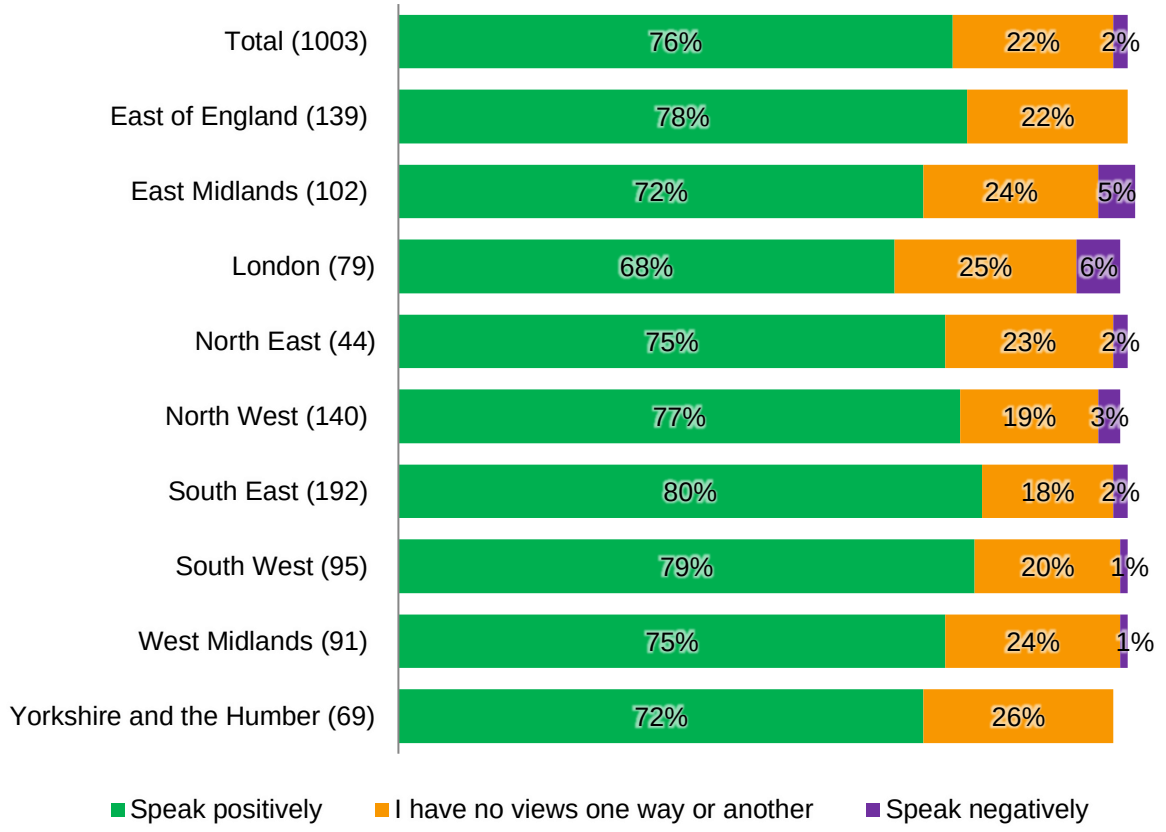
Bases in parentheses, single response question

Source: survey of LGA members
Data labels for values of 3% or lower have been removed
*Due to rounding, the sum of 'I speak positively about the LGA without being asked' and 'I speak positively about the LGA if I'm asked about it' may differ from the summary shown in the 'speak positively' column

Breaking this down by region, stakeholders in the South East are significantly more likely to speak positively about the LGA (80%) than stakeholders in London (68%).

Compared to 2019, the only significant decrease is in the proportion who would speak positively about the LGA in London (-12 percentage points).

Figure 3: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people? (Cross-tabulated by region)



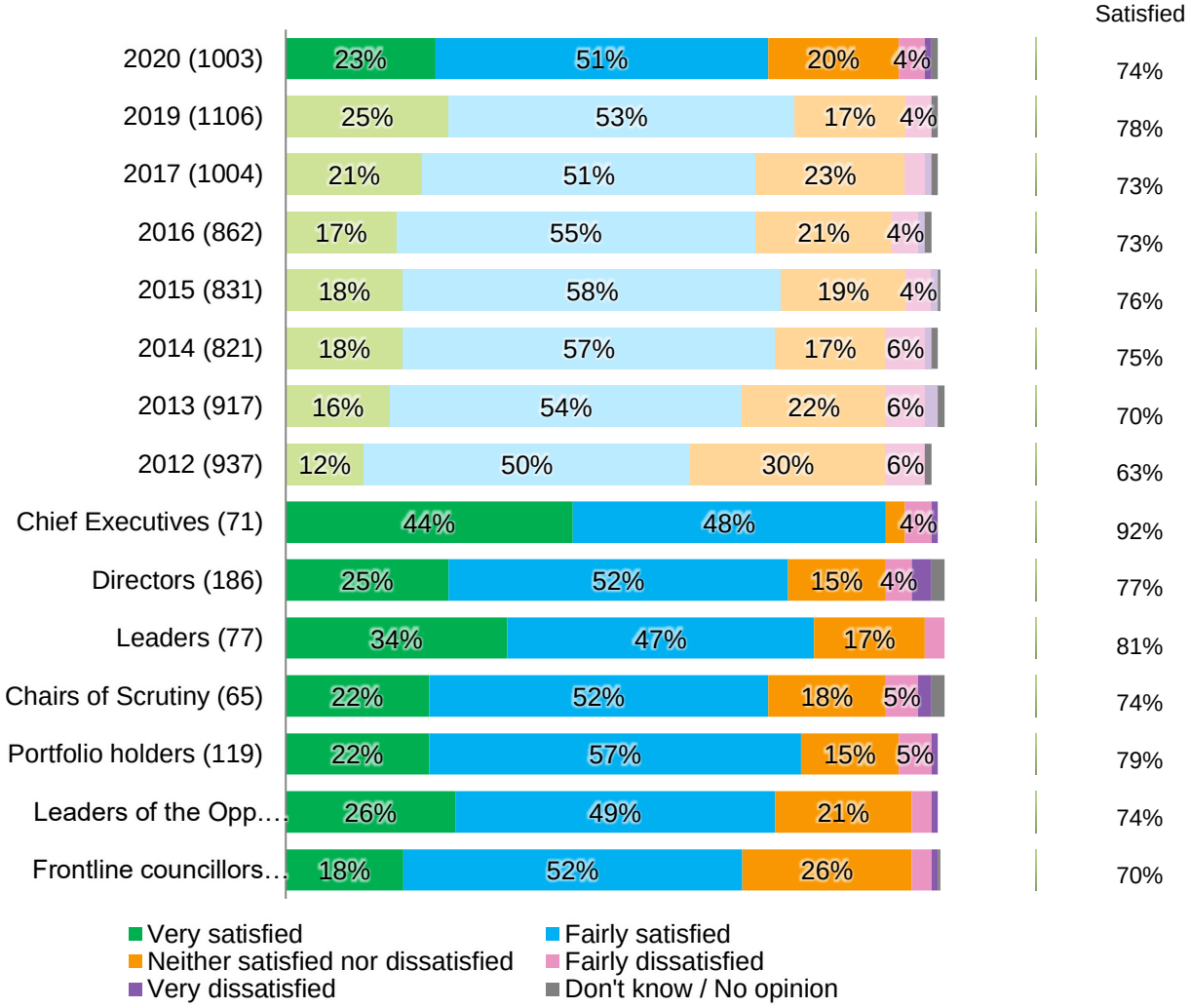
Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

1.11 Satisfaction with the work of the LGA

At 74%, overall satisfaction with the LGA's work is at a similar level to all years from 2014 (although it is 4 percentage points lower compared to 2019, this decrease is not statistically significant).

Chief executives (92%) are the most satisfied group, which is further emphasised by nearly half reporting that they are very satisfied (44%). Meanwhile, the group least likely to be satisfied is frontline councillors (70%). It should be noted that lower levels of satisfaction within groups are primarily driven by higher neutral ratings rather than by high levels of dissatisfaction.

Figure 4: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the LGA? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in

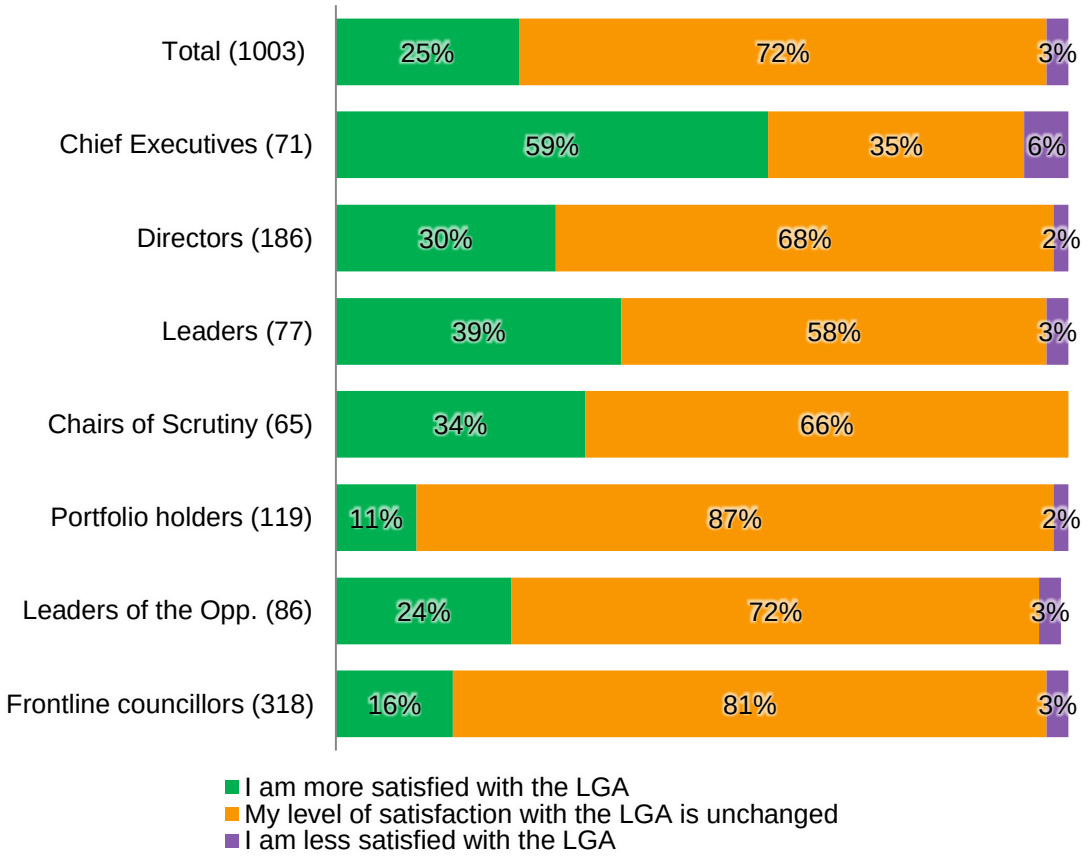
parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members
Data labels for values of 3% or lower have been removed
*Due to rounding, the sum of 'very satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied' may differ from the summary shown in the 'satisfied' column

Although there was some variation by region, none was statistically significant.

The coronavirus pandemic and corresponding unprecedented social distancing measures the UK Government has put in place since March 2020 have led to new demands on council services and changes to councils' priorities. As a result, the LGA have refocussed their support offer to help local governments address COVID-19 and its consequences. To reflect this context, the 2020 survey asked respondents to consider whether the COVID-19 response has had an impact on their satisfaction with the work of the LGA. In relation to this, the majority of respondents (72%) state that their level of satisfaction remains unchanged compared to before the response to COVID-19. A quarter (25%) say that they are more satisfied with the LGA and the remainder (3%) report being less satisfied.

By job role, chief executives (59%) and leaders (39%) are more likely than average to say that they are more satisfied compared to before the COVID-19 response while frontline councillors and portfolio holders are less likely than average to agree with this statement (16% and 11% respectively report being more satisfied) and more likely to say that their level of satisfaction is unchanged (81% and 87% respectively).

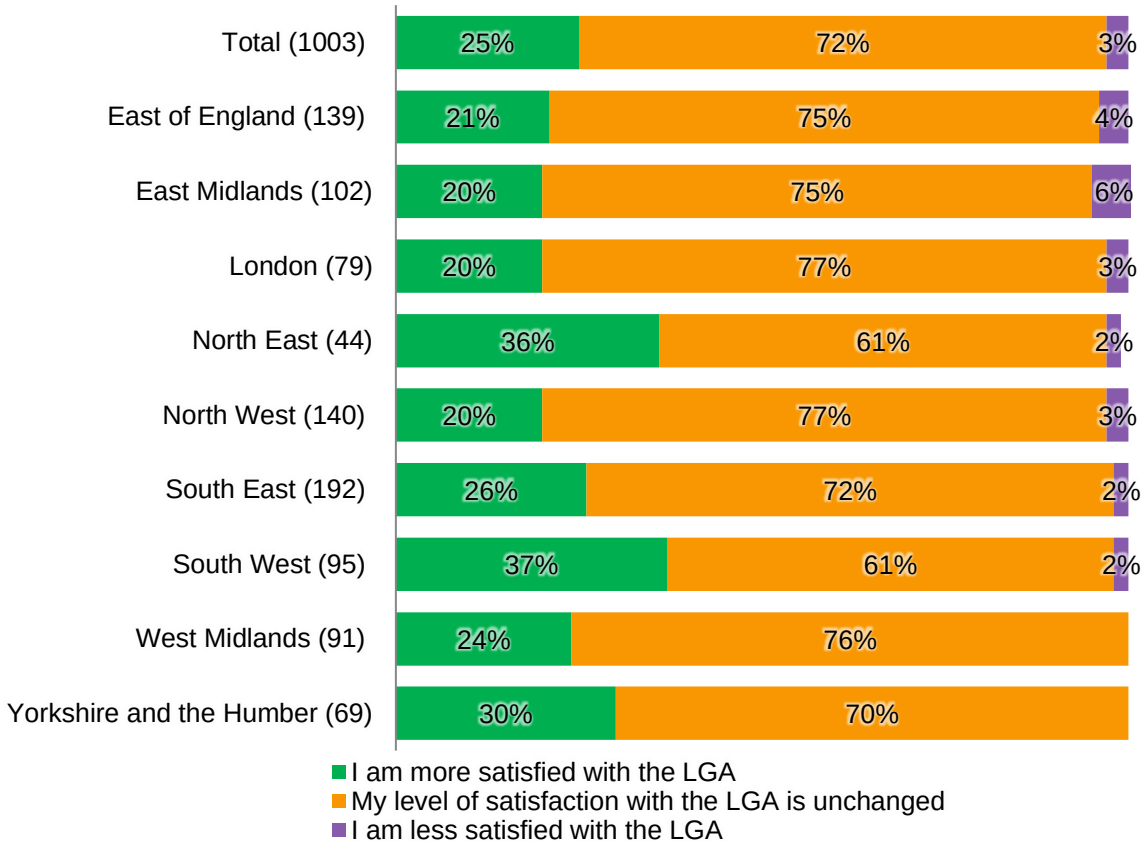
Figure 5: How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the LGA changed compared to before the response to COVID-19? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

By region, stakeholders in the South West are the most likely to report being more satisfied with the LGA compared to before the COVID-19 response (37%). Conversely, those in the East Midlands are more likely than average to say that they are less satisfied with the LGA compared to before the COVID-19 response (6%, compared to 3% overall).

Figure 6: How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the LGA changed compared to before the response to COVID-19? (Cross-tabulated by region)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

Stakeholders were then asked to elaborate on why their levels of satisfaction have or have not changed compared to before COVID-19. For stakeholders whose levels of satisfaction with the LGA remain unchanged, the main reasons are: that the LGA provided and still provides a good service/still meets their needs (31%) or, alternatively, that LGA has little or no effect on their day-to-day life (20%).

Four in ten (40%) of those who are now more satisfied put it down to good communication/the fact that they have been kept informed. Around a quarter refer to the LGA providing good information (26%) and the fact that the LGA have lobbied/pressured the Government, acting on behalf of local interests (24%).

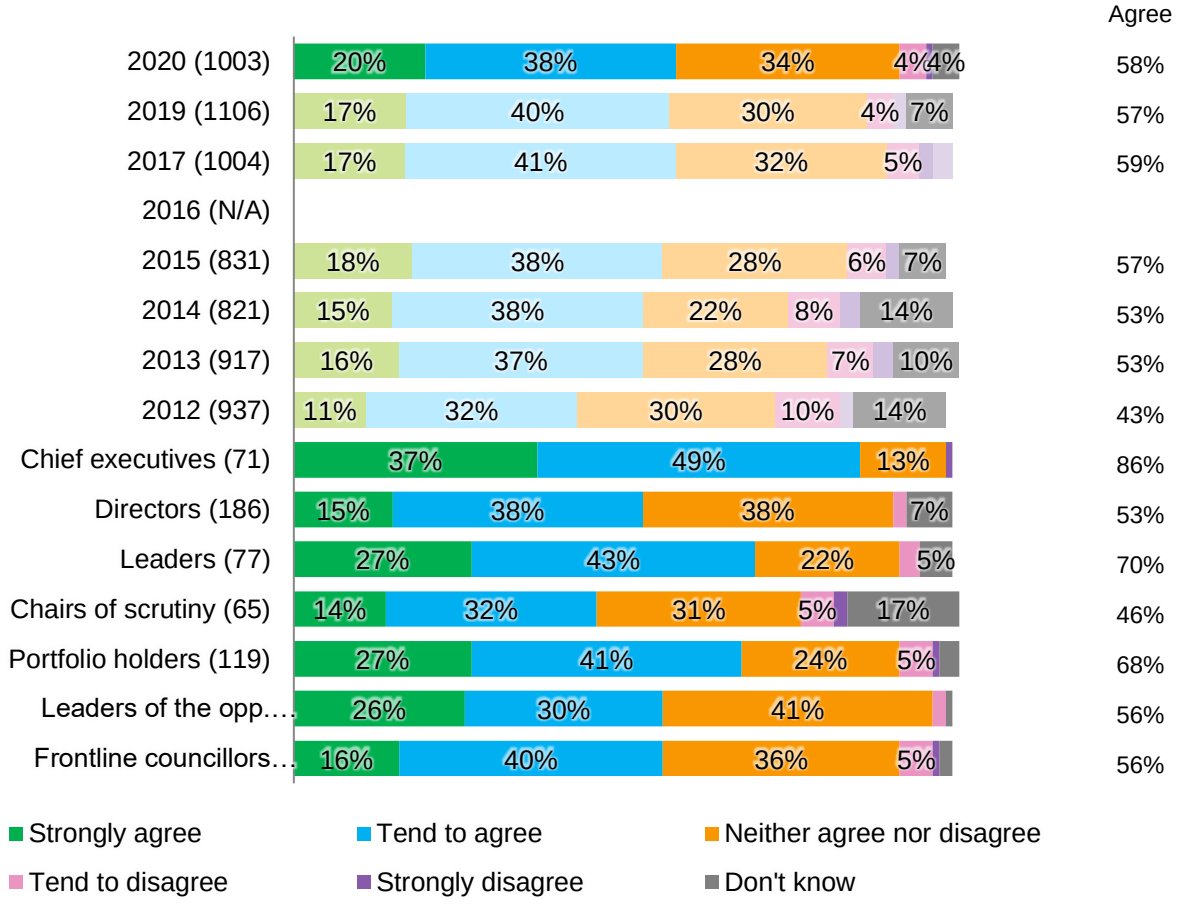
Results for those who feel less satisfied should be interpreted as indicative only given the low base size for this group (28 respondents said that they feel less satisfied compared to before the COVID-19 response). Amongst this group, 46% allude to a feeling that the LGA could do more to lobby/pressure government whilst 11% say that there is a lack of communication.

1.12 Value for money of the LGA

Respondents were then asked to state the extent to which they agree or disagree that the LGA demonstrates value for money. There has been no real change compared to recent years on this metric, with 58% agreeing that the LGA represents value for money in 2020 compared to 57% in 2019.

Chief executives (86%), leaders (70%) and portfolio holders (68%) are significantly more likely than average to agree that the LGA demonstrates value for money. In contrast, chairs of scrutiny are significantly less likely to agree with this statement (46%). As seen previously, the differences between role types are largely a result of those selecting 'neither agree nor disagree'/'don't know' rather than being due to higher levels of disagreement.

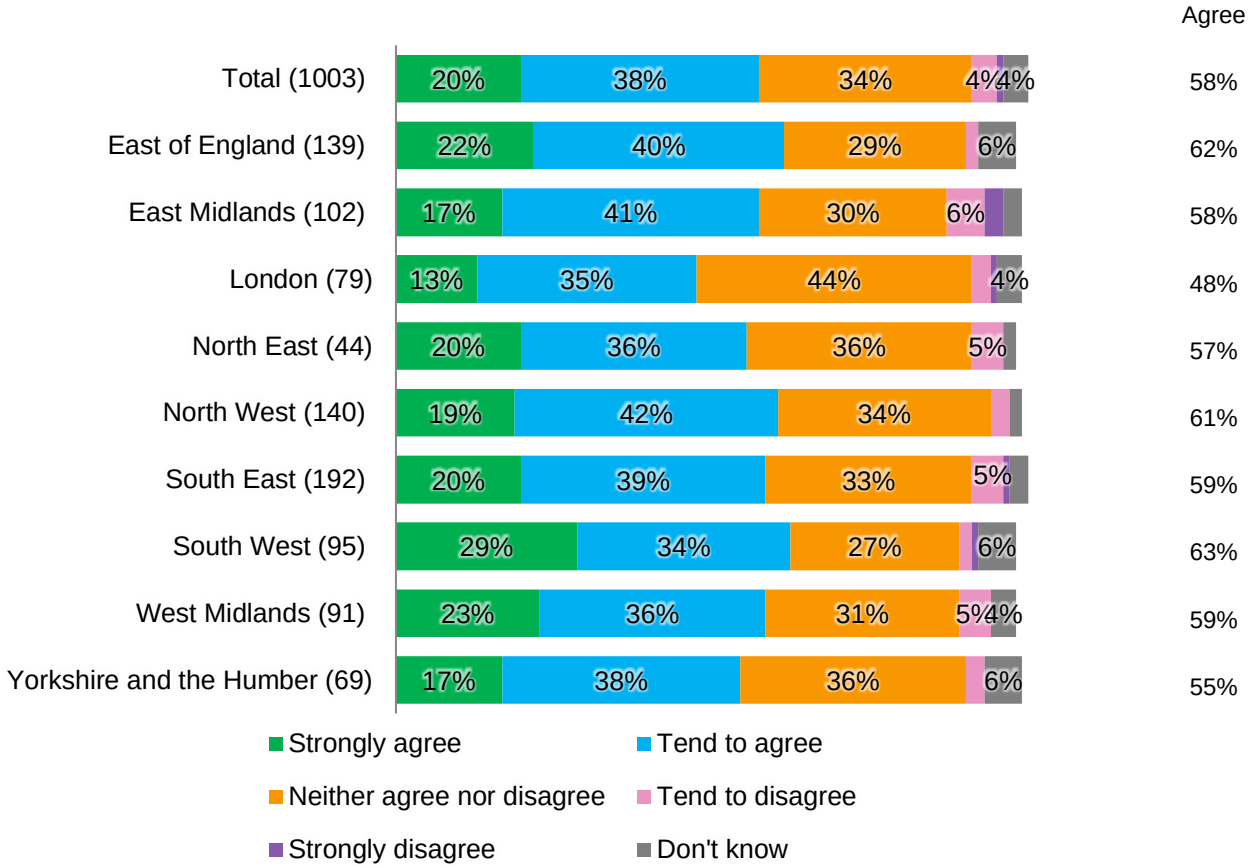
Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? LGA demonstrates value for money (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members
Data labels for values of 3% or lower have been removed
*Due to rounding, the sum of 'strongly agree' and 'tend to agree' may differ from the summary shown in the summary 'agree' column

Consistent with 2019 and 2017, stakeholders in the South West are the most likely to feel that the LGA demonstrates value for money (63% in 2020 and 65% in 2019 and 2017). Indeed, those in the South West are significantly more likely than average to strongly agree with this statement (29% South West, 20% average). Conversely, East Midlands stakeholders are significantly more likely to disagree (9% East Midlands, 4% average).

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? LGA demonstrates value for money (Cross-tabulated by region)



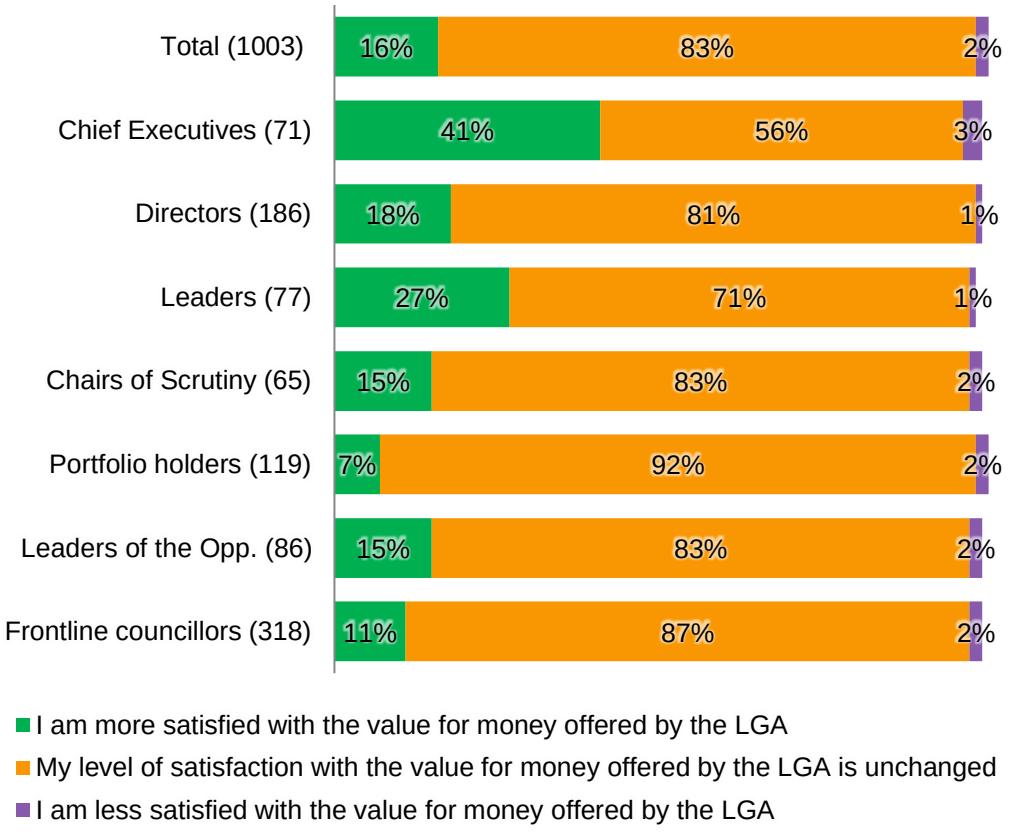
Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members
Data labels for values of 3% or lower have been removed
*Due to rounding, the sum of 'strongly agree' and 'tend to agree' may differ from the figure shown in the summary 'agree' column

The impact of the COVID-19 response upon views around value for money offered by the LGA were also examined in the survey. Similarly to satisfaction with the LGA, the majority (83%) state that their level of satisfaction with the value for money offered by the LGA is unchanged compared to before the COVID-19 response. 16% say that they are more satisfied now while 2% are less satisfied.

Chief executives (41%) and leaders (27%) are more likely than those occupying other job roles to say that they feel more satisfied with the value for money

offered by the LGA compared to before the COVID-19 response. Meanwhile, frontline councillors and portfolio holders are less likely to agree with this statement (11% and 7% respectively are more satisfied). However, this doesn't mean that stakeholders in these roles are more likely to be dissatisfied; instead, they are more inclined to say that their satisfaction with value for money is unchanged (87% and 92% respectively).

Figure 9: How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the value for money offered by the LGA changed compared to before the COVID-19 response? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

The reasons for changes or lack thereof in relation to levels of satisfaction with the value for money offered by the LGA compared to before COVID-19 were then explored. The main explanations for levels of satisfaction remaining unchanged are a view that the LGA has continued to provide what was expected of it thus still demonstrating good value for money (25%) and a feeling that there has been no change in the services provided by the LGA (21%).

Those who are more satisfied point out two main reasons: that there is good communication/they have been kept informed (28%) and that the LGA have

provided more support/services than they would normally have before COVID-19 (26%).

For those who report being less satisfied with the value for money offered by the LGA compared to before the pandemic, the main justification is a feeling that the LGA could do more to lobby/pressure government and act on behalf of local interests (42%). The results for this group, however, should be interpreted with caution given the low base size (19).

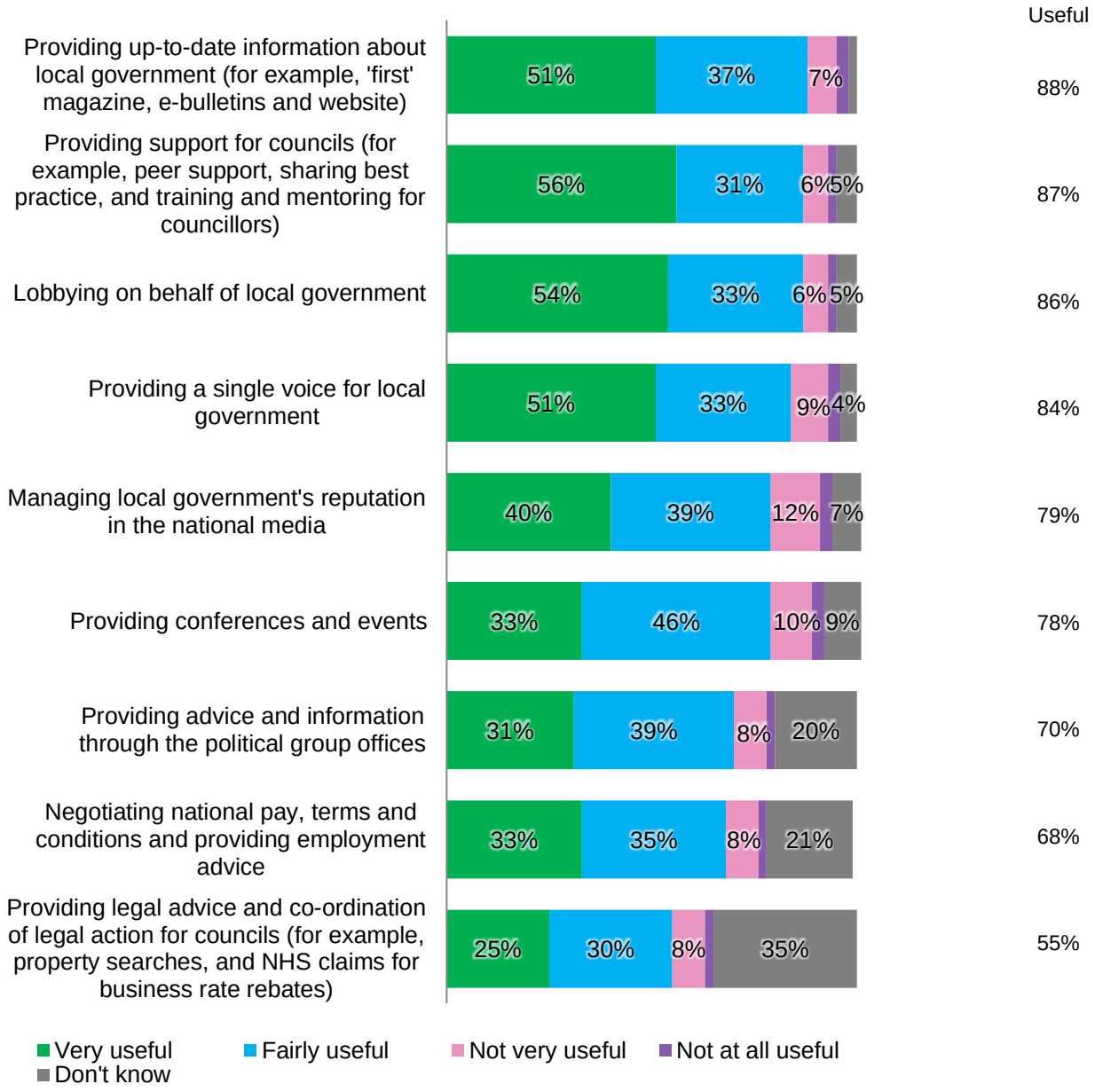
1.13 Usefulness of activities undertaken by the LGA

Figure 12 details how useful stakeholders find various activities that the LGA performs either to their council or local government. As has been the case from 2016 onwards, *providing up-to-date information about local government* continues to perform strongly and is rated the most useful activity this year (88%). *Providing support for councils* (87%)*, lobbying on behalf of local government* (86%) and *providing a single voice for local government* (84%) are considered the next most useful activities by stakeholders. Both *negotiating national pay, terms and conditions and providing employment advice* (68%) and *providing legal advice and co-ordination of legal action for councils* (55%) remain the least useful activities in the opinion of stakeholders, as has been the case since 2013. Nonetheless, the proportion who find the former activity useful has increased by 5 percentage points compared to 2019 (68% in 2020, 63% in 2019).

In contrast, the percentage of stakeholders who find the following activities useful has declined compared to the previous year: *providing conferences and events* (down by 5 percentage points), *providing up-to-date information about local government* and *providing a single voice for local government* (both down by 4 percentage points).

By job role, officers are more likely than average to find most of the activities listed in Figure 12 useful while the opposite tends to be true of frontline councillors. There's an exception to this rule for *providing advice and information through the political group offices,* an activity that senior councillors (81%) and frontline councillors (75%) are more likely than officers (54%) to find useful. This is to be expected, given the political nature of the activity.

Figure 10: Please tell me how useful or not each of the following LGA activities are to your council or local government as a whole.



Base = 1003, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members
Data labels for values of 3% or lower have been removed
*Due to rounding, the sum of 'very useful' and 'fairly useful' may differ from the figure shown in the summary 'useful' column

By region, the following findings differ significantly compared to the average:

- East Midlands
  - Less likely to find the following activity useful: *Providing advice and information through the political group offices* (61% East Midlands, 70% average).

- London
    - Less likely to find the following activities useful: *Providing support for councils* (78% London, 87% average), *providing up-to-date information about local government* (80% London, 88% average), and *providing legal advice and co-ordination of legal action for councils* (33% London, 55% average).
- North East
    - Less likely to find the following activity useful: *Providing conferences and events* (64% North East, 78% average).
- South East
    - Less likely to find the following activity useful: *Negotiating national pay, terms and conditions and providing employment advice* (59% South East, 68% average).
- South West
    - More likely to find the following activity useful: *Providing advice and information through the political group offices* (84% South West, 70% average).
- West Midlands
    - More likely to find the following activities useful: *Negotiating national pay, terms and conditions and providing employment advice* (79% West Midlands, 68% average) and *providing legal advice and co-ordination of legal action for councils* (66% West Midlands, 55% average).

Table 5 shows the usefulness of LGA activities by amalgamated role, combining those who deem the activities either very or fairly useful. Any figures which are significantly higher than at least one other figure in the same row have been **highlighted.**

Officers rate eight of the nine activities significantly more useful compared to at least one of the other groups. This number has increased by one compared to 2019 and 2017. Meanwhile, the number of activities that senior councillors find more useful has remained stable compared to 2019 (six). As was the case in 2019, frontline councillors only find one activity more useful than at least one other group: *Providing advice and information through the political group officers* (75% frontline councillors, 70% average).

Table 5: Proportion saying LGA activities are useful (Cross-tabulated by amalgamated role type)

Stakeholder group Sample size	Officers (257)	Senior councillors (347)	Frontline councillors (318)
Providing up-to-date information about local government (for example, 'first' magazine, e-bulletins and website)	**91%**	**91%**	85%
Providing support for councils (for example, peer support, sharing best practice, and training and mentoring for councillors)	**95%**	**88%**	80%
Lobbying on behalf of local government	**93%**	**88%**	83%
Providing a single voice for local government	**91%**	**86%**	79%
Managing local government's reputation in the national media	**89%**	78%	73%
Providing conferences and events	**90%**	**79%**	70%
Providing advice and information through the political group offices	54%	**81%**	**75%**
Negotiating national pay, terms and conditions and providing employment advice	**81%**	67%	64%
Providing legal advice and co-ordination of legal action for councils (for example, property searches, and NHS claims for business rate rebates)	**61%**	52%	55%

Views on LGA communications

1.14 How the LGA keeps members informed

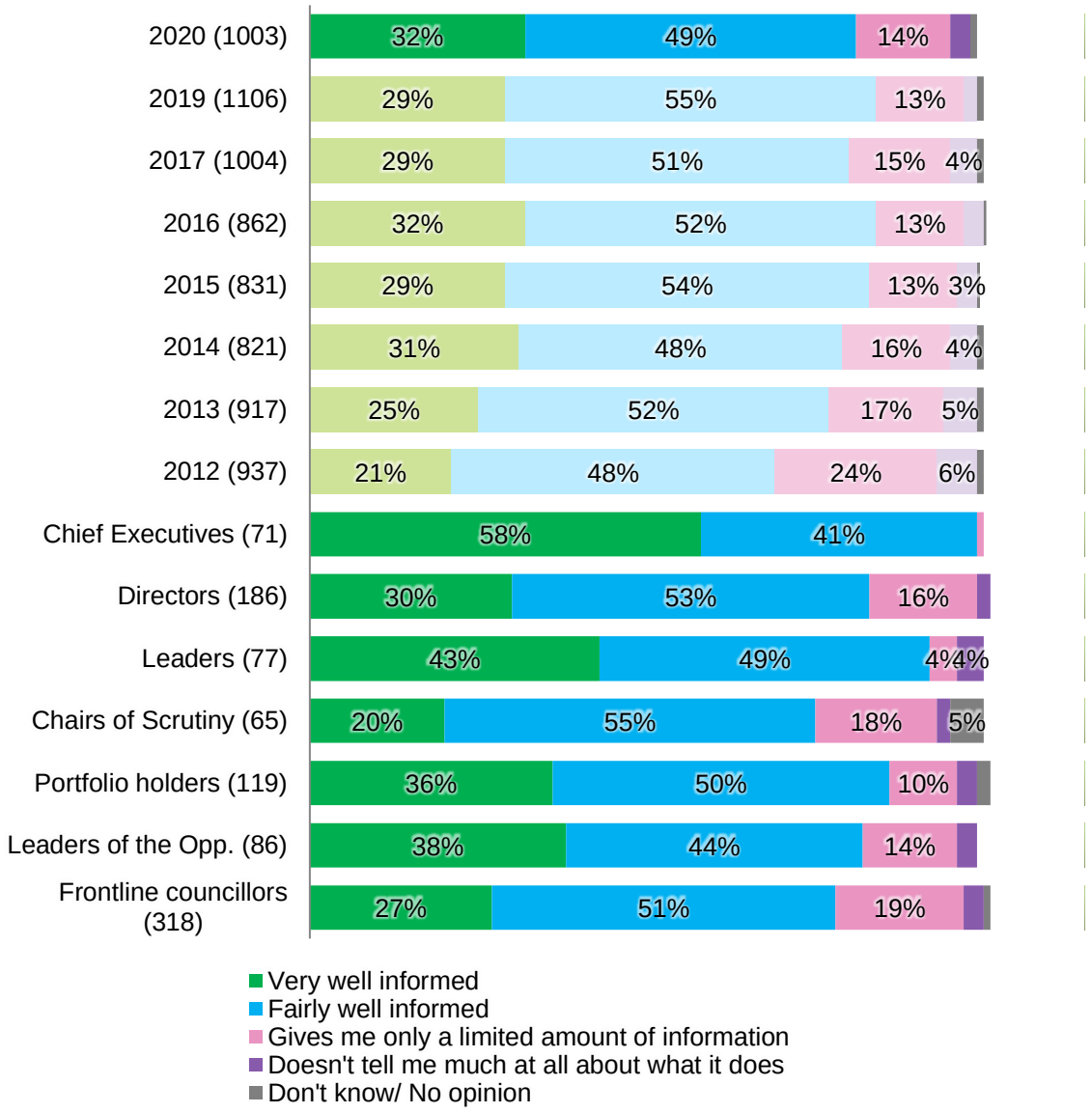
81% of stakeholders believe that the LGA keeps them very or fairly well informed about its work. This result is in line with previous rounds since 2014.

One in seven stakeholders (14%) feel that the LGA gives only a limited amount of information and 3% say that the LGA doesn't tell them much at all about what it does. Again, this is in line with recent years.

Chief executives are the most likely to feel informed (99%), exemplified by over half of this group feeling very well informed (58%). Leaders are also more likely than average to feel informed (92%). Frontline councillors and chairs of scrutiny had the lowest levels of agreement (78% and 75% respectively).

Results by region are consistent with the average, with no significant differences detected.

Figure 11: How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its work? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members
Data labels for values of 3% or lower have been removed
*Due to rounding, the sum of 'very well informed' and 'fairly well informed' may differ from the figure shown in the summary 'informed' column

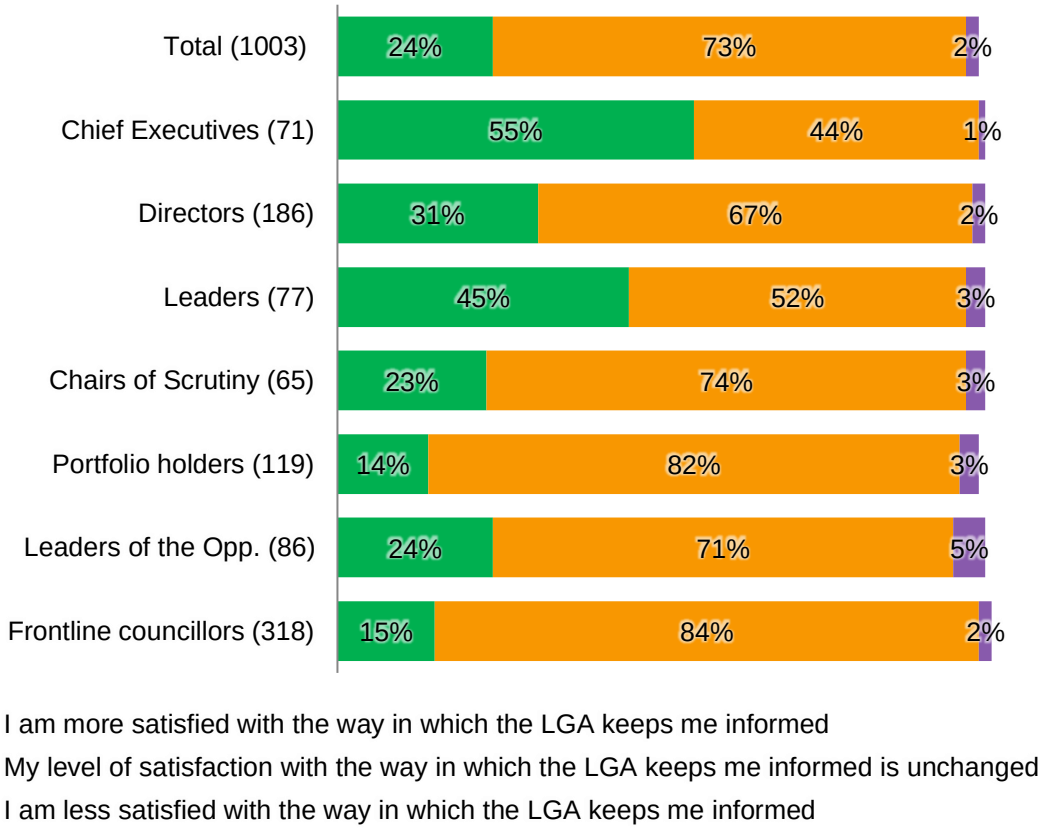
The impact of the COVID-19 response on satisfaction with the way in which the LGA keeps stakeholders informed about its work was also examined, as shown in Figures 14 and 15.

The majority (73%) say that their level of satisfaction with the way in which the LGA keeps them informed about its work is unchanged compared to before the

COVID-19 response; around a quarter (24%) report being more satisfied with this and the remainder (2%) are less satisfied.

Chief executives (55%), leaders (45%) and directors (31%) are more likely than average to say that they are more satisfied with the way in which the LGA keeps them informed compared to before COVID-19. Meanwhile, frontline councillors (15%) and portfolio holders (14%) are less likely to say that they are more satisfied and more likely than average to report that their level of satisfaction with this aspect is unchanged (84% and 82% respectively).

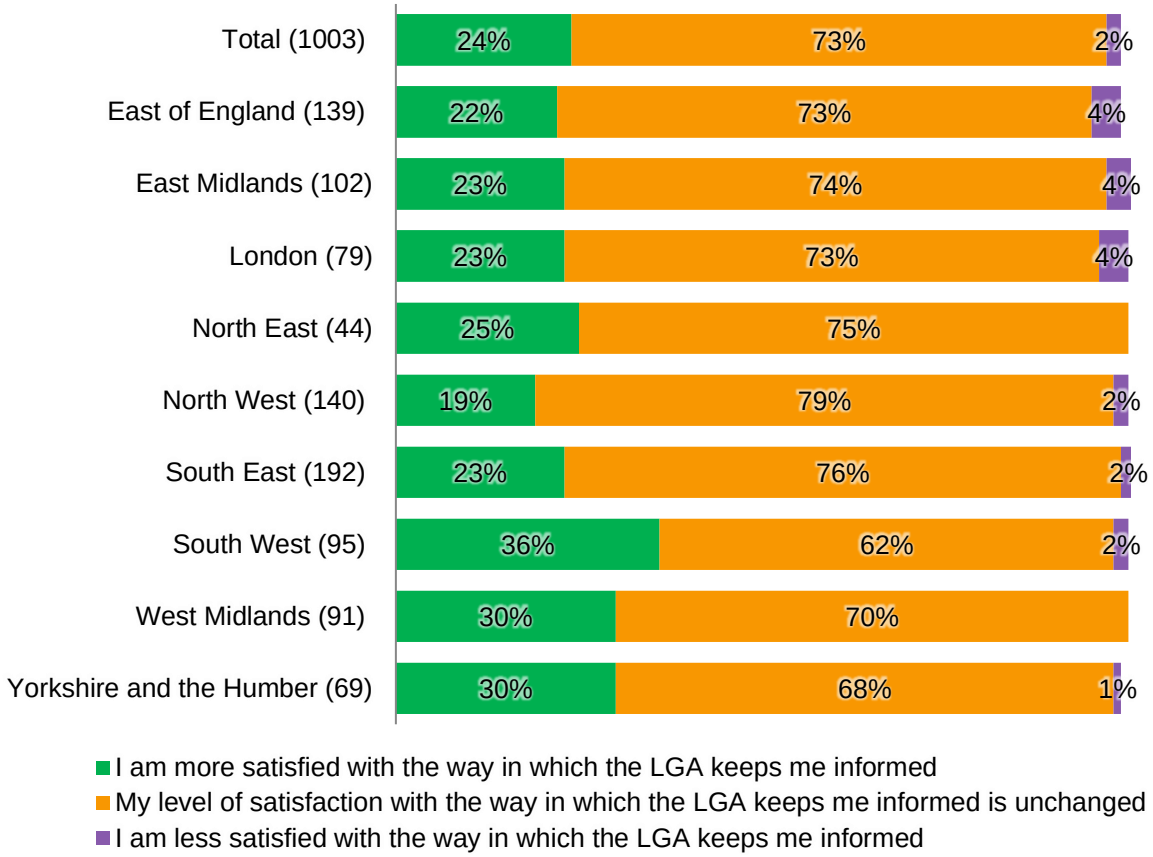
Figure 12: How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the way in which the LGA keeps you informed about its work changed compared to before the COVID-19 response? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

Looking at this by region, stakeholders in the South West are more likely than average to feel more satisfied with the way in which the LGA keeps them informed about its work compared to before the COVID-19 response (36%). This was the only region to show a significant difference from the average.

Figure 13: How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the way in which the LGA keeps you informed about its work changed compared to before the COVID-19 response? (Cross-tabulated by region)

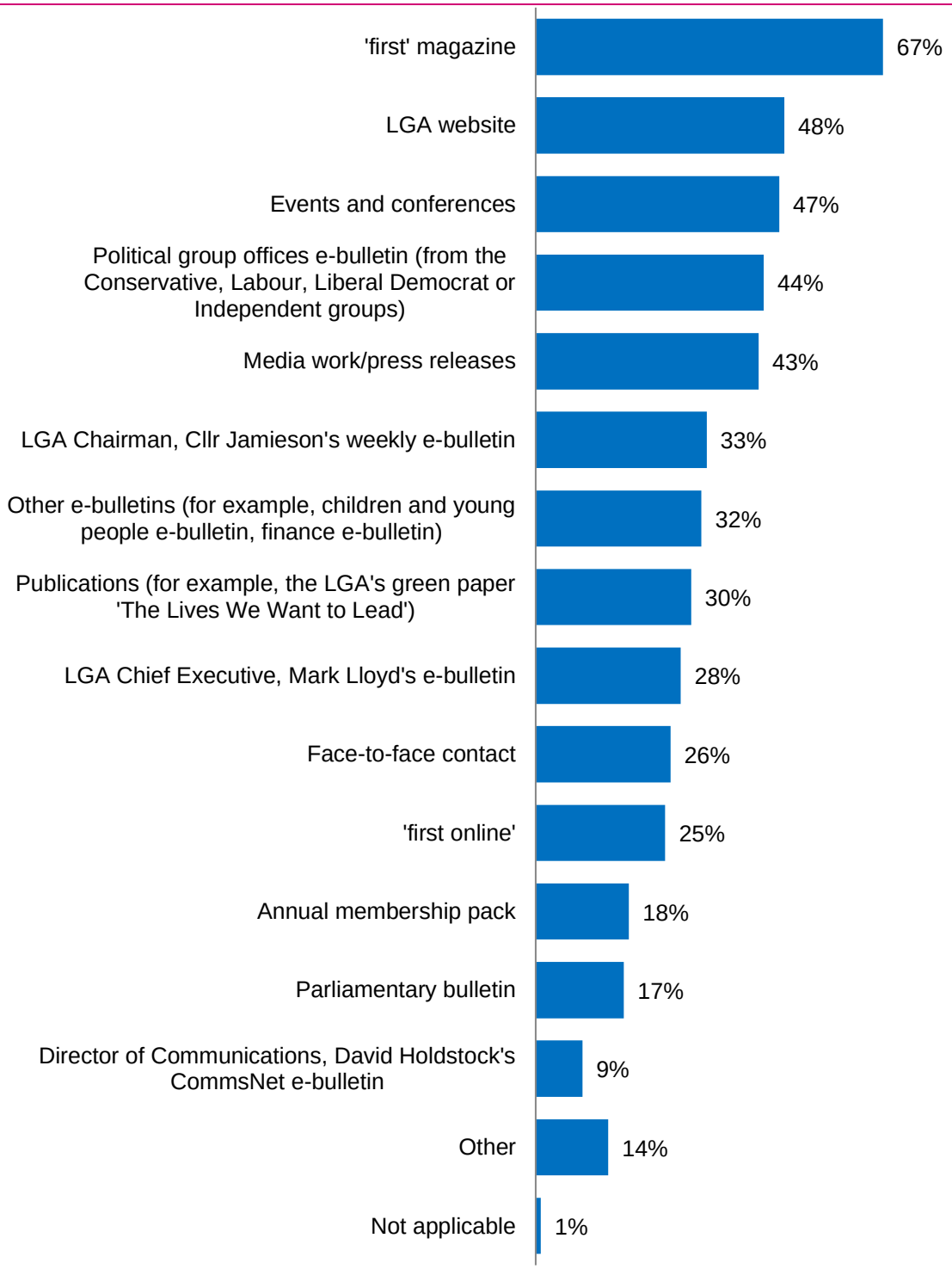


Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

1.15 Finding out about the work of the LGA

As has been the case since 2012, *'first' magazine* continues to be the most popular method for finding out about the work of the LGA among stakeholders (67%). The *LGA website* is the second most popular channel (48%) and *events and conferences* come in third position (47%).

Figure 14: How do you generally find out about the work of the LGA?



Base =1003, multiple response question
Source: survey of LGA members

For senior councillors (84%) and frontline councillors (87%), *'first' magazine* remains the most popular channel, as was the case in 2019 and 2017. For officers (67%), the *LGA chief executive, Mark Lloyd's e-bulletin* is the most popular channel to find out about the LGA. The popularity of this channel

among this group of stakeholders has increased by 21 percentage points compared to 2019[6].

However, compared to the previous wave, the following channels have decreased in popularity among officers: *Face-to-face contact* (-19 percentage points), *events and conferences* (-18 percentage points), *annual membership pack* (-14 percentage points), *publications* (-14 percentage points), '*first online'* (-11 percentage points), *media work/press releases* (-11 percentage points), *parliamentary bulletin* (-8 percentage points) and *political group offices e-bulletin* (-5 percentage points).

Similarly, the following channels have seen a decline in use among senior councillors compared to 2019: *Face-to-face contact* (-12 percentage points), the *LGA website* (-11 percentage points), *events and conferences* (-8 percentage points), *parliamentary bulletin* (-8 percentage points), *publications* (-7 percentage points) and *annual membership pack* (-7 percentage points).

Among frontline councillors, the following three channels have seen a significant decrease in popularity: '*first online'* (-9 percentage points), *publications* (-8 percentage points) and *parliamentary bulletin* (-6 percentage points).

Some of these changes can be explained at least partly by the COVID-19 context, most notably in regards to face-to-face contact.

Table 6: How do you generally find out about the work of the LGA? (Cross-tabulated by amalgamated role type; All responses selected by above 2% overall)

	Officers (257)	Senior councillors (347)	Frontline councillors (318)
'first' magazine	26%	**84%**	**87%**
LGA website	**65%**	39%	43%
Events and conferences	**54%**	**51%**	39%
Political group offices e-bulletin (from the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat or Independent groups	2%	**66%**	**58%**
Media work/press releases	**57%**	40%	36%

[6] It is worth noting that there has been a slight change in the wording of this element compared to 2019: in 2020 respondents were asked about *LGA Chief Executive, Mark Lloyd's e-bulletin* while in 2019 the survey asked about *LGA Chief Executive, Mark Lloyd's email.*

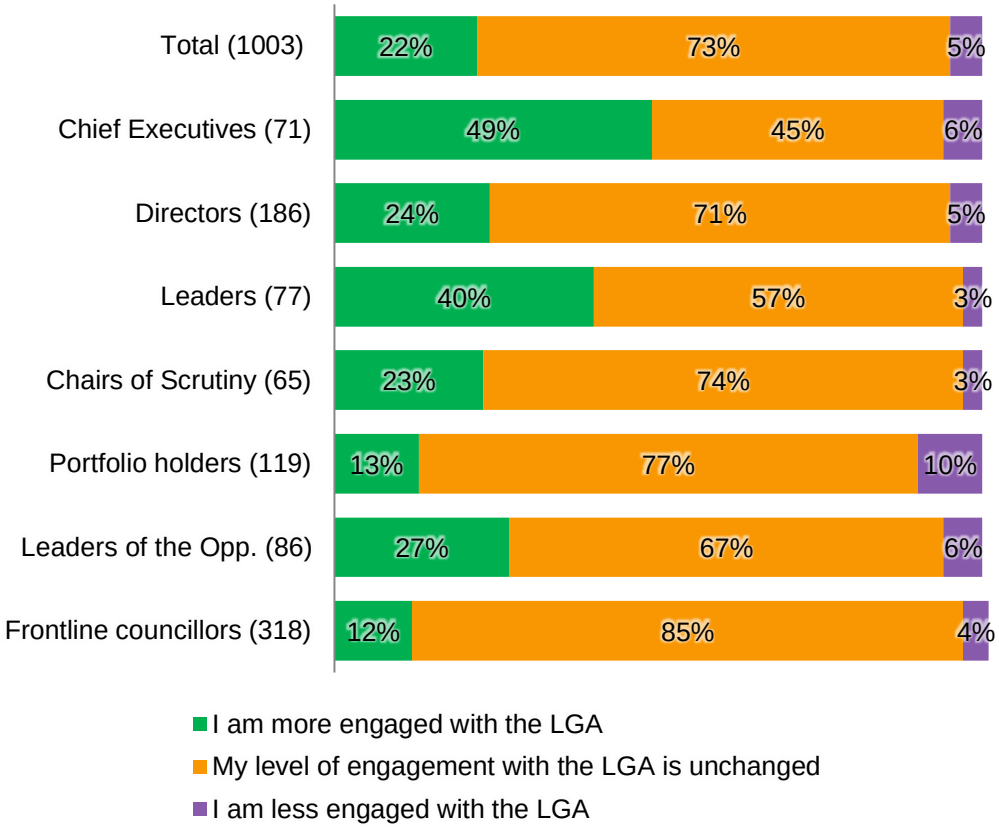
	Officers (257)	Senior councillors (347)	Frontline councillors (318)
LGA Chairman, Cllr Jamieson's weekly e-bulletin	14%	**48%**	**36%**
Other e-bulletins (for example, children and young people e-bulletin, finance e-bulletin	**39%**	29%	31%
Publications (for example, the LGA's green paper 'The Lives We Want to Lead'	**41%**	26%	24%
LGA Chief Executive, Mark Lloyd's e-bulletin	**67%**	14%	13%
Face-to-face contact	29%	27%	24%
'first online'	17%	**32%**	**24%**
Annual membership pack	7%	**18%**	**28%**
Parliamentary bulletin	13%	17%	**20%**
Director of Communications, David Holdstock's CommsNet e-bulletin	**13%**	4%	**8%**
Other	14%	13%	18%

1.16 Engagement with the LGA

Respondents were then asked to consider the effects of COVID-19 on their level of engagement with the LGA.

Chief executives (49%) and leaders (40%) are more likely than average to say that they are now more engaged with the LGA. Meanwhile, portfolio holders are more likely than average to say that they are now less engaged (10%).

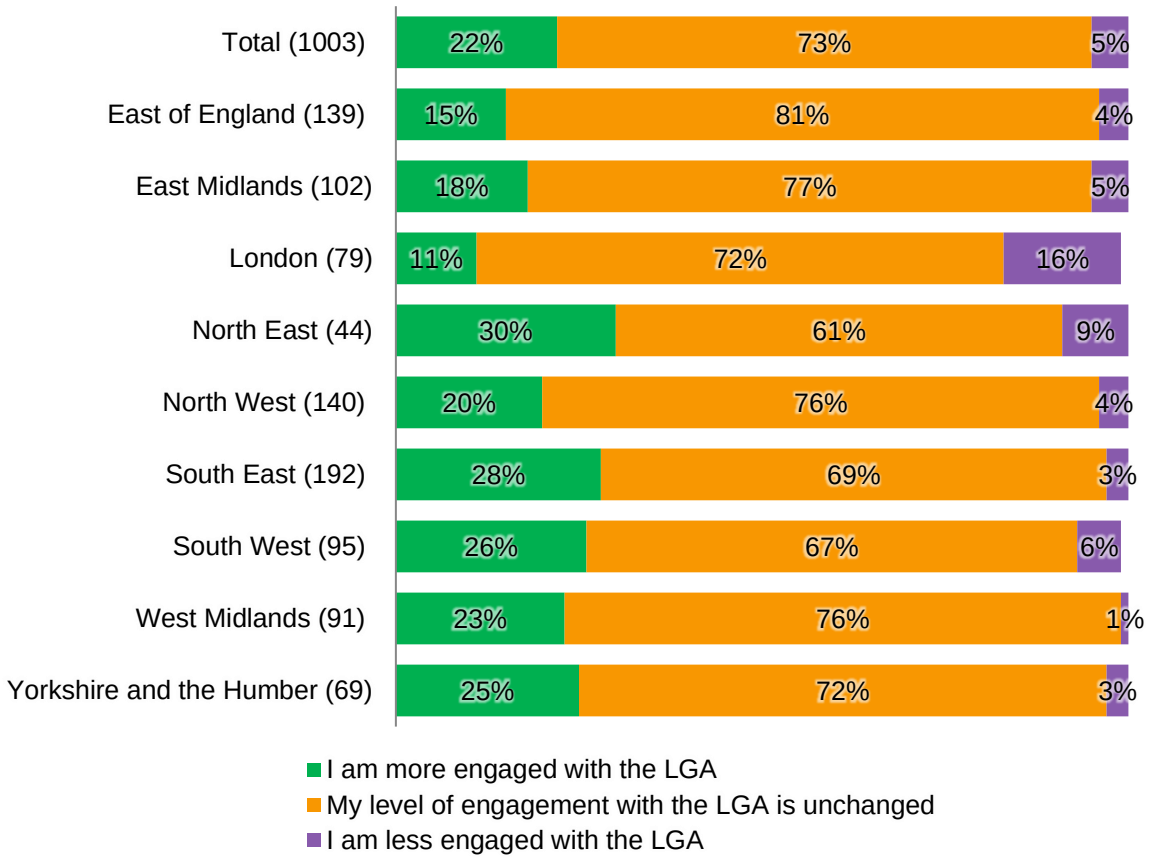
Figure 15: How, if at all, has your level of engagement with the LGA changed compared to before the COVID-19 response? (Cross-tabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

By region, stakeholders in the North East and the South East are more likely than average to state that they are now more engaged with the LGA compared to before the COVID-19 response (30% and 28% respectively) while those in London are more likely to say the opposite (16% report being less engaged). It is worth nothing that the difference for the North East is not statistically significant given the relatively low base size for this group (44).

Figure 16: How if at all, has your level of engagement with the LGA changed compared to before the COVID-19 response? (Cross-tabulated by region)



Bases in parentheses, single response question
Source: survey of LGA members

Areas of support

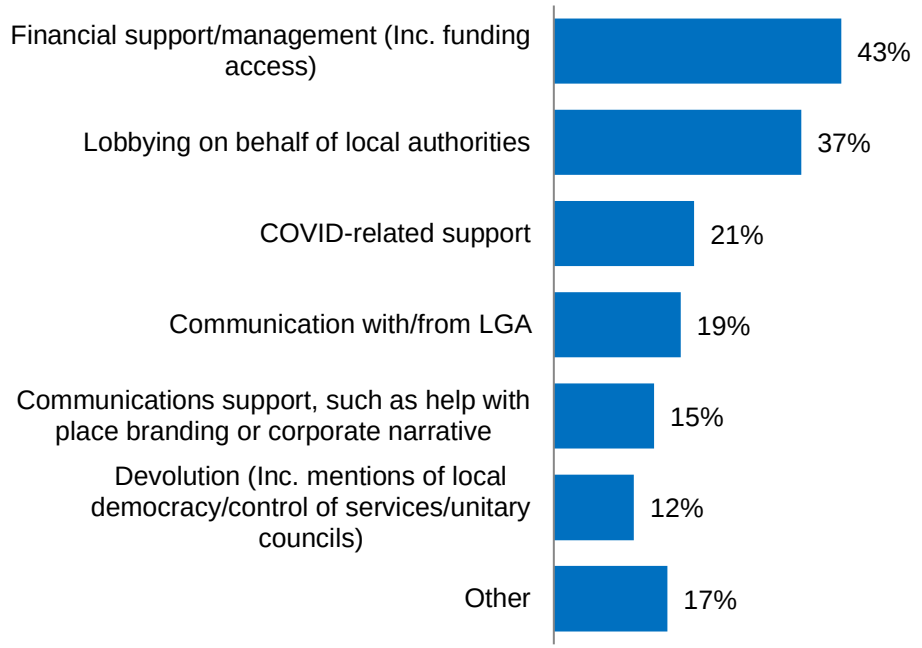
1.17 Priorities for the next 12 months

Stakeholders were asked to name three activities that they think the LGA should be undertaking to further support and promote the work of councils in the next 12 months. The most prominent answers are shown on Figure 19.

Financial support/management comes top, with around two in five (43%) mentioning this. This is followed by *lobbying on behalf of local authorities* (37%). Perhaps unsurprisingly given the ongoing COVID-19 situation, just over one in five (21%) mention *COVID-related support* as an area for the LGA to focus on over the next year. Other areas of support include: *communications with/from LGA* (19%), *communications support such as help with place branding and corporate narrative* (15%) and *devolution* (12%). It should be noted that respondents were asked this as an open-ended question, without being prompted with response options; meaning that the results capture the

most 'top of mind' activities that stakeholders think the LGA should be doing to further support and promote the work of councils.

Figure 17: Thinking about the next 12 months, what three things should the LGA be doing to further support and promote the work of councils? (All responses above 10%)



Base =1003, open-ended question
Source: survey of LGA members

By amalgamated job role, officers are more likely than at least one other group to mention *financial support/management* (64%), *lobbying on behalf of local authorities* (49%) and *COVID-related support* (32%). Meanwhile, frontline councillors are more likely than at least one other group to say the LGA should be focussing on *communications with/from LGA* in the next 12 months (26%), as are senior councillors (18%). Those occupying the latter job role are also more likely to bring up *financial support/management* (42%) and *lobbying on behalf of local authorities* (36%).

Table 7: Activities the LGA should be doing to further support and promote the work of councils (Cross-tabulated by amalgamated role type)

Stakeholder group	Officers	Senior councillors	Frontline councillors
Sample size	(257)	(347)	(318)
Financial support/management (Inc. funding access)	**64%**	**42%**	25%
Lobbying on behalf of local authorities	**49%**	**36%**	26%
COVID-related support	**32%**	19%	14%
Communication with/from LGA	12%	**18%**	**26%**
Communications support, such as help with place branding or corporate narrative	16%	16%	14%
Devolution (Inc. mentions of local democracy/control of services/unitary councils)	14%	12%	11%
Other	18%	15%	18%

When it comes to differences by region, stakeholders in the North East are more likely to mention *COVID-related support* (34%). Those in the East Midlands (20%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (22%) are more likely to refer to *devolution*, compared to the average, as an area of support for the next 12 months.

1.18 Views on sector-led improvement

One of the key goals of the LGA is to facilitate the improvement of councils by mobilising knowledge, skills and experience within the sector. This approach is called 'sector-led improvement'. In relation to this, stakeholders were asked what new forms of support they would like to become part of the LGA's sector-led improvement offer.

The responses given to this question were varied and fairly nuanced, most likely linked to the respondent's individual council and role. Therefore, responses to this question have been analysed in a qualitative manner. It is also worth noting that although the question asked respondents to specifically think about the LGA's sector-led improvement offer, some of the suggestions given by respondents were broader or focussed on things the LGA could do to improve more generally.

11% of respondents didn't give a response to this question, while a further 9% said that they did not know. Additionally, 12% said they had nothing to add and 5% said that they are happy with the current support and therefore have no suggestions for further support.

Of those who did give a response, the most commonly mentioned new (or expanded) forms of support were in the areas of financial management, sharing best practice, shared services/partnerships, training and development and peer reviews and challenges.

These are discussed in more detail below and illustrative quotes have been provided to show the types of things respondents mentioned within these categories.

In terms of support with finances and financial management, responses tended to focus on the management side of finances and financial competence. There were also some mentions of increasingly squeezed budgets and the need to be more commercial.

> *Some councils will need a lot of help with their finances to manage their funds and advice on what services to cut. Financial advice will be key - a lot of councils are on the verge of bankruptcy. (Portfolio Holder, North West)*

> *Budgets and finance for the local authority. More support in understanding the budgeting process and the way to make cuts and helping us to scrutinise what we have to do to make the best out of a bad situation. The more support the LGA can give us the better. (Frontline Councillor, North West)*

In terms of maintaining best practice, most responses acknowledged that there is already some sharing of best practice, but some suggested that what constitutes best practice needs to constantly evolve while others suggested greater sharing of best practice is needed. There were also some mentions of the COVID-19 pandemic changing what best practice is and local authorities needing to adapt how they operate as a result.

> *More sharing of best practice, including innovative approaches to citizen engagement and involvement. (Chair of Scrutiny, South West)*

> *There is best practice and also transition. Everyone has been doing the same thing for years. We are now going to have to have a more commercial approach in the way we deliver services. (Portfolio Holder, South East)*

> *The LGA are best placed to find out what is the best practice to share with councils. I think this comes down to economies. We are all looking to save money and do things in the best way. Our own council has had a consultant in to look at this... Ultimately looking at how we can work more smartly. The LGA are a good broker to do this. Planning applications, for example, how long do they take, how many people do you consult with, what is the most efficient way. (Frontline Councillor, South East)*

Some of the comments concerning shared services and partnerships also mentioned sharing of best practice. There were some specific examples of

issues where local authorities could work together. There was also acknowledgement by some of the push by Government for greater shared services and partnership working.

> *I think governance issues need to be sorted out. We are operating in a more complicated world with government driving us to formal collaboration - partnership agenda and working in effective partnership with our strategic partners. (Director, South West)*

> *More councils working together on joint things like selective licensing, campaigning to improve the homeless situation. (Frontline Councillor, Yorkshire and The Humber)*

In terms of training and development some responses focussed on new councillors and additional support that they may need while others focussed on training related to technology, particularly in light of changes made as a result of COVID-19. There were also some responses asking for greater training provision more generally, particularly online.

> *I think that individual mentoring is really helpful, where you can get linked up with someone much more experienced, especially for the new councillors. (Portfolio Holder, South West)*

> *On-line training courses to continue after Covid-19 on a wide variety of topics. (Chair of Scrutiny, East of England)*

In terms of peer reviews and challenges, most who mentioned this reflected on some positive experience of these already, but felt they should be utilised more widely and more often. There were also some suggestions for how peer reviews and challenges could be improved or adapted, such as focusing on more specific areas.

> *A hybrid version of the peer challenge which makes the most of the digital lessons which we have all learned, and is non-negotiable for all councils. (Chief Executive, West Midlands)*

> *I think councillors could be helped to understand alternative futures/roles for councils in more persuasive/compelling ways. Our financial future is very challenging, our future role in our places may be quite different - helping councillors see that positively (e.g. by learning from other councils, and/or some constructive but robust peer challenge) feels key. (Director, East of England)*

Conclusions

This section summarises the main findings and themes evident from this research.

- **Is the LGA well known among its members?** 74% of stakeholders know the LGA a great or fair amount. Whilst this is a 6-percentage point decrease compared to 2019 (80%), it brings this result back in line with previous rounds up to 2013 and still represents a substantial increase from 62% in 2012. Awareness levels are higher in some job roles, with almost all chief executives having at least a fair understanding of the LGA (99%) as well as 95% of leaders and 83% of directors.
- **How would the LGA's members describe it to others?** 76% of stakeholders would speak positively about the LGA. This result remains stable compared to previous rounds (79% in 2019 and 73% in 2017).
- **Are LGA's members satisfied with its work?** 74% of stakeholders are satisfied with the work of the LGA, a proportion which is broadly stable compared to previous rounds (78% in 2019, 73% in 2017). Satisfaction is higher than average among chief executives (92%), as was the case in 2019. Overall, nearly three in five (72%) state that the LGA's COVID-19 response has had no impact on their levels of satisfaction with the LGA, whilst 25% are more satisfied.
- **Do the LGA's members think it offers value for money?** 58% of stakeholders agree that the LGA demonstrates value for money and 34% have a neutral view, broadly consistent with 2019. Perceptions of the LGA providing value for money are highest in the South West (63%). For most (83%), perceptions around value for money are unchanged compared to before the LGA's response to COVID-19.
- **Do the LGA's members consider its work useful?** Stakeholders are largely positive about the usefulness of the LGA's activities, particularly in regards to its role in *providing up-to-date information about local government* (88%), *providing support for councils* (87%) and *lobbying on behalf of local government* (86%).
- **Does the LGA keep its members informed about its work?** 81% of stakeholders feel well informed about the LGA's work, broadly in line with results reported in previous rounds since 2014. This indicator received the highest proportion of positive comments across all the key measures. Levels of feeling well informed are highest among chief executives (99%) and leaders (92%). Overall, a majority (73%) report that their levels of satisfaction with the way in which the LGA keeps them informed about its work is unchanged compared to before COVID-19, whilst 24% are more satisfied.

- **How do the LGA's members find out about its work?** '*first' magazine* is the main way stakeholders find out about the LGA's work (67%), followed by the *LGA website* (48%) and *events and conferences* (47%). The most popular channel for senior and frontline councillors is *'first' magazine* (84% and 87% respectively); and the *LGA chief executive, Mark Lloyd's e-bulletin* is the most popular among officers (67%).
- **How has engagement with the LGA changed since the LGA's response to COVID-19?** Nearly three in four (73%) say that their level of engagement is unchanged compared to before the COVID-19 response, around two in ten (22%) say that they are now more engaged and 5% say that they are less engaged.
- **What support do members want the LGA to focus on?** The top three areas stakeholders feel the LGA should be focussing on over the next 12 months to further support and promote the work of councils are: *Financial support* (43%), *lobbying on behalf of local authorities* (37%) and *COVID-related support* (21%).
- **Which new forms of support would LGA's members like to become part of its sector-led improvement offer?** Stakeholders most commonly made suggestions in the areas of *financial management, sharing best practice, shared services/partnerships, training and development and changes to peer reviews and challenges.*

Appendix 1: Standard error

The following table shows the maximum standard error for each of the region and role types considered in this report[7].

Category	Number in sample population	Number of interviews achieved	Maximum standard error (%)
Region			
East of England	2,262	139	4.11%
East Midlands	1,868	102	4.81%
London	1,797	79	5.50%
North East	804	44	7.33%
North West	2,272	140	4.09%
South East	3,239	192	3.50%
South West	1,683	95	4.98%
West Midlands	1,586	91	5.09%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,243	69	5.85%
Amalgamated role type			
Officers	2,548	257	2.96%
Senior councillors	3,325	347	2.54%
Frontline councillors	10,881	318	2.76%
Role type			
Chief executives	322	71	5.25%
Directors	2,226	186	3.51%
Leaders	227	77	4.64%
Leaders of the opposition	568	86	4.97%
Chairs of scrutiny	798	65	5.95%
Portfolio holders	1,732	119	4.42%
Frontline councillors	10,881	318	2.76%
Local authority type[8]			
English county	1,323	76	5.57%
English unitary	3,470	202	3.41%
London borough	1,797	79	5.50%
Metropolitan district	2,508	88	5.24%
Non-metropolitan district	7,656	509	2.14%

[7] Please note, the total base sizes for local authority, region and role subgroups are not equal due to some respondents refusing to disclose this information.

[8] The total population size for local authority type is larger than the total population due to the presence of duplicates between local authority types (e.g. a councillor who is both a county councillor and a district councillor is counted in both relevant rows). However, it should be noted that for sampling and analysis purposes, each councillor is only counted once (i.e. they will only be counted in one row in the number of interviews achieved column).

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

FOR CATI SURVEYS

Introduction – INITIAL CALLS

Good morning, afternoon, evening. My name is ..... from BMG Research, an independent research organisation.

We are conducting a survey on behalf of the Local Government Association – the LGA – to help them in their role supporting councils.

As you are a key stakeholder of the LGA, we are keen to hear your views. The survey should take 15 minutes to complete. We would really appreciate it if you could take part.

Are you able to take part now, or would you like to arrange a suitable time for me to call you back?

Introduction – WHERE CALLING FOR A SCHEDULED INTERVIEW APPOINTMENT

Good morning, afternoon, evening. My name is ..... from BMG Research, an independent research organisation.

I am calling you, as agreed, so you can take part in the survey we are conducting on behalf of the Local Government Association to help them in their role supporting councils.

The survey should take around 15 minutes of your time. Are you able to take part now, or would you like to arrange a suitable time for me to call you back?

Appointments, assurances, and refusals – USE *IF NEEDED* IN ALL CALLS

IF WANT TO RE-ARRANGE – CONFIRM TIME AND PHONE NUMBER, THANK AND CLOSE.

SEND ASSURANCE EMAIL IF REQUESTED

IF NEEDED AT ANY POINT DURING INTRODUCTIONS READ THE FOLLOWING ASSURANCES:

Just to confirm, your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. No individual or authority will be identified in any publications without your consent. BMG Research abides by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and data protection laws at all times.

You can find out more information about BMG's surveys and what we do with the information we collect in our Privacy Notice which is on our website - www.bmgresearch.co.uk/privacy

IF REFUSE TO TAKE PART AT ANY POINT, WHY?

No time/too busy
Don't do surveys
No interest in helping LGA
Other, PLEASE WRITE IN:

Commencing the interview

Please note that this call may be monitored or recorded for training purposes.

Just to confirm, your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. No individual or authority will be identified in any publications without your consent. BMG Research abides by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and data protection laws at all times.

You can find out more information about BMG's surveys and what we do with the information we collect in our Privacy Notice which is on our website - www.bmgresearch.co.uk/privacy

ASK Can I confirm that you are happy to participate in the survey?

Record on script 'YES'

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey.

ARE YOU INTERVIEWING THE ORIGINAL CONTACT? IF NOT, PLEASE CONFIRM JOB TITLE WITH REFERRAL AND CODE ACCORDINGLY:

Officer – Chief Executive
Officer – Deputy/Assistant Chief Executive
Officer – Director/Assistant Director/Head of Communications
Councillor – Leader of the council
Councillor – Deputy leader of the council
Councillor – Cabinet member of the council/portfolio holder
Councillor – Chair of scrutiny
Councillor – Backbench member of the council
Councillor – Leader of the opposition
Other: PLEASE CLOSE

1. **How well do you know the Local Government Association (the LGA)?**

Read out of scale. Single code only

- Know a great deal about it
- Know a fair amount about it
- Know just a little about it
- Heard of but know nothing about it – THANK AND CLOSE
- Never heard of it – THANK AND CLOSE
- Don't know/no opinion – THANK AND CLOSE

2. **Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the Local Government Association to other people?**

Reverse read out of scale. Single code only.

- I speak positively about the Local Government Association without being asked
- I speak positively about the Local Government Association if I am asked about it
- I have no views one way or another
- I speak negatively about the Local Government Association if I am asked about it
- I speak negatively about the Local Government Association without being asked
- Don't know

3. **Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the Local Government Association?**

Reverse read out of scale. Single code only.

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know/No opinion

4. **How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the LGA changed compared to before the response to COVID-19?**

Reverse read out of scale. Single code only.

- I am more satisfied with the LGA
- I am less satisfied with the LGA
- My level of satisfaction with the LGA is unchanged

5. **Could you briefly explain why your level of satisfaction with the LGA [DELETE AS APPROPRIATE: has/has not] changed?**

Open response

6. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The LGA demonstrates value for money.**

Single code only.

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

7. **How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the value for money offered by the LGA changed compared to before the COVID-19 response?**

Reverse read out of scale. Single code only.

- I am more satisfied with the value for money offered by the LGA
- I am less satisfied with the value for money offered by the LGA
- My level of satisfaction with the value for money offered by the LGA is unchanged

8. **Could you briefly explain why your level of satisfaction with the value for money offered by the LGA [DELETE AS APPROPRIATE: has/has not] changed?**

Open response

9. **Please tell me how useful or not each of the following LGA activities are to your council or local government as a whole.**

Randomise readout of statements. Reverse read out of scale. Single code only for each.

Very useful/Fairly useful/Not very useful/Not at all useful/Don't know

Original list below

- Providing a single voice for local government
- Lobbying on behalf of local government
- Providing advice and information through the political group offices
- Negotiating national pay, terms and conditions and providing employment
- advice
- Managing local government's reputation in the national media
- Providing support for councils (for example, peer support, sharing best practice, and training and mentoring for councillors)
- Providing legal advice and coordination of legal action for councils (for example, property searches, and NHS claims for business rate rebates)
- Providing up-to-date information about local government (for example, 'first' magazine, e-bulletins and website)
- Providing conferences and events
- Any other LGA activities you use or benefit from (Please specify)

10. How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its work?

Read out. Reverse read out of scale. Single code only.

- Very well informed
- Fairly well informed
- Gives me only a limited amount of information
- Doesn't tell me much at all about what it does
- Don't know/No opinion

11. How, if at all, has your satisfaction with the way in which the LGA keeps you informed about its work changed compared to before the COVID-19 response?

Reverse read out of scale. Single code only.

- I am more satisfied with the way in which the LGA keeps me informed
- I am less satisfied with the way in which the LGA keeps me informed
- My level of satisfaction with the way in which the LGA keeps me informed is unchanged

12. How do you generally find out about the work of the LGA?

Read out. Multi code. Ask each method one by one.

- LGA Chairman, Cllr Jamieson's e-bulletin
- LGA Chief Executive, Mark Lloyd's e-bulletin
- Political group offices e-bulletin (from the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat or Independent groups)
- Parliamentary bulletin
- Other e-bulletins (for example, children and young people e-bulletin, finance e-bulletin)
- 'first' magazine
- 'first online'
- LGA website
- Media work/press releases
- Publications (for example, the LGA's green paper 'The Lives We Want to Lead)
- Events and conferences
- Face-to-face contact
- Director of Communications, David Holdstock's CommsNet e-bulletin
- Annual membership pack
- Other

13. How if at all, has your level of engagement with the LGA changed compared to before the COVID-19 response?

Reverse read out of scale. Single code only.

- I am more engaged with the LGA
- I am less engaged with the LGA
- My level of engagement with the LGA is unchanged

14. **Thinking about the next 12 months, what three things should the LGA be doing to further support and promote the work of councils?**

Open response. Cap at three replies.

Finally, the LGA also helps councils improve. It uses the knowledge, skills and experience in councils to help other councils improve. This approach is called 'sector-led improvement'.

15. **Thinking about the next three years, what new forms of support, if any, would you like to become part of the LGA's sector-led improvement offer?**

Open response.

16. **The LGA would like to use the information collected in this survey to provide targeted support and further information to local authorities. Do you consent to us sharing your responses linked to your contact details with the LGA for this purpose (your responses will remain anonymous in any wider publications, and the LGA will keep your response confidential)?**

Single response

- Yes
- No

17. **The LGA would like to link the responses you provide to information they hold about you and your membership. Specifically, your organisation type, your role, where in the country your authority is based, and your political affiliation. This helps to ensure that we gather and understand the views of a representative mix of authorities and individuals. Do you consent to this information being used in this way?**

Single response

- Yes
- No

THOSE WHO ANSWERED 'NO' AT Q17

In order to ensure that we speak to a representative mix of stakeholders, I'd like to ask you a few more questions regarding your role and your council. I recognise that you might not wish to give this information, in which case you are free not to answer

18. **Are you happy to be asked these questions? [IF NECESSARY: You can still refuse to answer any individual question should you so wish]**

Single response

- Yes
- No – GO TO END SCREEN

19. **Could you please confirm your job title / role that you have in your council?**

Single code. Probe to precodes

- Officer – Chief Executive
- Officer – Deputy/Assistant Chief Executive
- Officer – Director/Assistant Director/Head of Communications
- Councillor – Leader of the council
- Councillor – Deputy leader of the council
- Councillor – Cabinet member of the council/portfolio holder
- Councillor – Chair of scrutiny
- Councillor – Backbench member of the council
- Councillor – Leader of the opposition
- Other: PLEASE SPECIFY
- Refused

***20.* What is the name of your council?**

Single code. If multiple councils given code first one mentioned

- LIST OF COUNCILS
- Refused

***21.* What type of council is this?**

Read out. Single code

- English County Council
- English Non-Metropolitan District
- English Unitary Authority
- London Borough
- Metropolitan Council
- Don't know
- Refused

***22.* In which region is your council located?**

Single code

- East of England
- East Midlands
- London
- North East
- North West
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humber
- Refused

ASK COUNCILLORS AT Q19

***23.* Could you please confirm your political party affiliation?**

Single code

- Conservative
- Green
- Independent
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- Other
- Refused

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions.

Just to confirm, your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. No individual or authority will be identified in any publications without your consent. BMG Research abides by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and data protection laws at all times.

You are in control of any personal data that you have provided to us and the LGA in your response. You can contact us at all times to have your information changed or deleted.

You can find out more information about BMG's surveys and what we do with the information we collect in our Privacy Notice which is on our website - www.bmgresearch.co.uk/privacy

Appendix 3: Statement of Terms

Compliance with International Standards

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2015) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management (ISO 27001:2013).

Interpretation and publication of results

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

Ethical practice

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.