Research Report

Customer Perceptions Survey 2014

Prepared for: Local Government Association (LGA)

Prepared by: BMG Research

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Date: April 2015

Produced by BMG Research

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Registered under the Data Protection Act - Registration No. Z5081943

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Executive summary

Background and objectives

BMG Research has prepared this report for the Local Government Association (LGA) in order to summarise the findings from the Perceptions Survey 2014.

In the context of reduced council budgets and increased public demand and expectations for services, the LGA's Perceptions Survey is a key measure of: the extent to which councils understand and engage with the LGA and its offer; how they view the LGA and engage with their communications; and specifically their views on and experiences of the support and resources it offers relating to sector-led improvement.

This research aims to:

1. **Quantify members' understanding of the LGA and what the LGA currently offers.** This includes an examination of awareness levels, knowledge of and favourability towards the LGA, including channels of awareness and understanding, functions perceived to be part of the LGA's remit, and how effective the LGA is seen at fulfilling these functions.
2. **Investigate what the membership want from the LGA and how they want to engage.** This again examines significant variations where these exist across the membership and changes since 2012 and 2013. This aspect provides feedback on a strategic level in terms of the organisation's role and responsibilities but also on a tactical level in terms of formats and channels preferred e.g. the extent to which communications have been digitalised.
3. **Assess views of sector-led improvement within local government, and views on support offered by the LGA to assist its members in this.** The research identifies areas where the LGA might enhance its support in this area, by investigating the membership's preferences and experiences of support and by unpicking the impact that such support has had, by asking respondents to reflect on the impacts of their engagement with the LGA and the resources it provides in supporting sector-led improvement.

Method

Following the first wave of the Perception Survey conducted by BMG Research in 2012 with 937 representatives from local councils; and then subsequently in 2013 with 917 respondents, a third wave was commissioned in 2014. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were undertaken with a broadly representative sample of 821 representatives from local authorities across all the English regions (including chief executives, directors, leaders, chairs of scrutiny, portfolio holders, and backbench councillors). Interlocking quotas were set to ensure the research achieved a broadly representative sample whilst establishing minimum quotas to enable detailed analysis by region and amalgamated role (a minimum of 20 respondents per region and amalgamated role group). This sample size has a maximum standard error of +/-3.4% at the 95% level of confidence, giving these findings a high level of accuracy.

Interviews took between 15 and 20 minutes and explored:

- the LGA's offer and current provision;
- its current role and priorities an how these can be developed;
- its communications and respondents' preferred methods of engagement;
- sector-led improvement within local government, the support offered by the LGA to assist its members in this and how it can be developed/improved; and
- respondents' experiences of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships.

Findings

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 (officer, frontbench councillor, backbench councillor) and region. Independent t-tests (within the groups of interest i.e. region) were conducted at the 95% confidence level to identify where findings were statistically significant. Where possible comparisons to the LGA's 2012 and 2013 survey have also been made.

Views on the LGA and its services

- Knowledge of the LGA is high. More than one-half (56%) of survey respondents feel they 'know a fair amount about it'; however, over one-quarter (27%) report that they 'know just a little about it. Backbenchers are most likely to report that they 'know just a little' about the LGA (40%).
- Over two-fifths (43%) of respondents report that they agree with the statement '*I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government* 'a great deal', and just under one-half (49%) report that they agreed 'to some extent'. Backbench councillors are significantly more likely to report that they do not agree at all or do not agree very much with the statement than other role types (12% compared with 2% of officers and 7% of frontbench councillors).
- The majority of survey respondents (72%) report that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or if asked). However, nearly a quarter (23%) report that they have 'no views one way or another' on this question.
- Three-quarters (75%) report that they are either fairly or very satisfied when asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector.
- Overall respondents tend to agree or strongly agree that the LGA are performing their key functions. Over four-fifths of respondents (86%) agree that the LGA *stands up for and defends the reputation of local government* and a similar proportion (84%) agree that the LGA *addresses the issues that are important to councils*. More than three-quarters agree that the LGA *understands what councils need to help improve their service and organisational capacity* (78%); that the LGA *effectively represents the views of its members to central government* (78%); and that the LGA *helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector (77%).* However, far fewer respondents (53%) agree that the LGA *demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives.*
- The majority of respondents believe that based on their knowledge the LGA had been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector 'a fair amount' (59%) or 'a great deal' (23%).

- When asked the extent to which they believe their authority benefits from its relationship with the LGA around one-half of respondents (51%) reported 'a fair amount'; however, only 15% responded 'a great deal'.
- Overall, the majority (around 90%) of respondents believe all the activities conducted by the LGA were either 'fairly important' or 'very important'. Respondents viewed *managing local government's reputation in the national media* as a particularly important activity with 57% viewing it as 'very important'.
- The activities respondents viewed as most important were *providing a single voice for local government* (26%) and *supporting and promoting councils who are trying to transform services to better support their communities* (24%).
- Overall, the majority of respondents believe all the services provided by the LGA are either 'fairly useful' or 'very useful'. Respondents viewed *lobbying on behalf of local government* as a particularly useful service with 58% viewing it as 'very useful'.
- The services respondents viewed as most useful include *lobbying on behalf of local government* (29%*), providing support for sector led improvement (12%), and providing up-to-date information about local government* (12%).

Views on LGA communications

- Overall, the majority of respondents believe that the LGA keeps them either 'fairly well informed' (48%) or 'very well informed' (31%) about their work. However, less than a fifth report that the LGA 'Gives me only a limited amount of information' (16%).
- Respondents report that they find out about the LGA's work in a range of ways. In particular respondents report that they find out about the LGA's work through 'first' magazine (70%), events and conferences (52%), LGA Chairman's weekly email (47%) and publications (47%).
- When asked how they would *prefer* to find out about the work of the LGA the most frequently requested methods are through the LGA Chairman's weekly email (38%) and the LGA chief executive's email (35%).
- The majority of survey respondents have an awareness of the LGA's 100 Days campaign; nearly two-thirds (62%) have heard of it, although most of these respondents (66% of all) feel they know nothing or just a little about it.
- Overall, one half (50%) of respondents report that they were either 'not very engaged' or 'not at all engaged' with the LGA. Less than one-tenth (8%) of respondents report that they were 'very engaged' with the LGA.
- Methods of engagement with the LGA that are most frequently mentioned included: responding to LGA consultations (53%) and attending LGA events (49%).
- When asked how they would *prefer* to engage with the LGA respondents report a range of preferences; however, the most frequent methods reported are through contacting LGA officers by email or phone (54%); contacting councillors/boards by email or phone (39%); face to face contact (23%); and by attending LGA events and conferences (15%).

Views on sector-led improvement

- Over one-half (58%) of respondents report that they have either 'heard a little' or 'heard nothing' about sector-led improvement.
- More than three-fifths (63%) report that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context.* More than four-

fifths of respondents (83%) report that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement.*

- The majority (83%) of respondents are confident that their authority has the capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent'.
- The majority (78%) of respondents are confident that the local government sector has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent'.
- More than three fifths (61%) of respondents believe that the support and resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvement will have a positive impact on their own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent'.
- The majority (88%) of respondents agree with the statement *The LGA should place a stronger emphasis on supporting and fostering innovation across the sector.* Three-quarters (75%) agree that *All authorities should be expected to have a corporate peer challenge, at least every four years*, and 61% agree that *The LGA should be more challenging with authorities about their performance.*
- Over one-half (52%) of respondents have heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny. This increases to 82% of chief executives and 70% of chairs of scrutiny.
- Of those aware of the Centre for Public Scrutiny, just under a third (31%) are aware that their council has used its' services, including 49% of chairs of scrutiny that are aware of it.
- More than three-quarters of those from councils that have used the services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (77%) have been satisfied with them.
- Nearly three fifths (58%) of respondents have heard of Local Partnerships. This increases to 90% of chief executives.
- Of those aware of Local Partnerships, 31% are aware that their council has used any of their services, including 40% of backbenchers that are aware of it.
- More than two-thirds (71%) of those that have used services provided by Local Partnerships are satisfied with them.

Conclusions

- There continues to be a high level of awareness of the LGA and the work it undertakes with understanding varying dependent on specific job role, with backbenchers having the least understanding overall. This consistency in understanding since 2012 also extends to respondent's understanding of the purpose of the LGA and how it works for local government.
- A similar proportion of respondents as in 2013 report that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others. There is an increase in the number of respondents that are very or fairly satisfied with the LGA's work on behalf of the local government sector since 2013.
- As in previous years the services and roles delivered by the LGA that are perceived to be of the most importance to respondents tend to be related to the national role the LGA has in lobbying on behalf of the local government sector.
- A significantly higher proportion of respondents believe the LGA keeps them very well informed about their work compared with 2013.

- There continues to be mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach and this has broadly stayed the same since 2013. However, respondents continue to agree this is the correct approach.
- More than three fifths of respondents were likely to either agree or strongly agree that: *the LGA should place a stronger emphasis on supporting and fostering innovation across the sector*, that *all authorities should be expected to have a corporate peer challenge at least every four years*, and finally, *the LGA should be more challenging with authorities about their performance*.
- There has been no significant change in the awareness and usage of the Centre for Public Scrutiny. However, there has been an increase in awareness of Local Partnerships since 2013.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

BMG Research has prepared this report for the Local Government Association (LGA) in order to summarise the findings from the Perceptions Survey 2014.

The LGA works to support local councils to change lives, to be efficient, to be accountable, and to be reliable. In the context of reduced council budgets and increased public demand and expectations for services, the LGA's Perceptions Survey is a key measure of: the extent to which councils understand and engage with the LGA and its offer; how they view the LGA and engage with their communications; and specifically their views on and experiences of the support and resources it offers relating to sector-led improvement.

A first wave of the Perception Survey was undertaken by BMG Research in 2012 with 937 representatives from local councils; and then subsequently in 2013 with 917 respondents. Key findings from the Perceptions Survey 2013 included:

- There continued to be a high level of awareness of the LGA and the work it undertakes. The overall proportion of those that know just a little about the LGA had decreased significantly; suggesting work undertaken by the LGA to increase people's awareness and understanding has been successful. However, understanding of the LGA's work continued to vary dependent on specific job roles.
- Significantly more respondents described themselves as speaking positively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or if asked) than in 2012 and that they were fairly or very satisfied with the LGA's work on behalf of the local government sector.
- The services and roles delivered by the LGA that are perceived to be of the most importance to respondents tend to be related to the national role the LGA has in lobbying on behalf of the local government sector.
- A significantly higher proportion of respondents believed the LGA kept them at least fairly well informed about their work compared with 2012.
- There continued to be mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach although awareness had increased slightly.
- Respondents were slightly more confident in their authority's and the local government sector's capacity to monitor their own performance and continuously improve than in 2012.
- Just over half of the respondents had heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships.

This wave of the survey allows the LGA to continue to monitor their performance since 2012 and 2013 and to make improvements as required.

1.2 Objectives

This research aims to:

4. **Quantify members' understanding of the LGA and what the LGA currently offers.** This includes an examination of awareness levels, knowledge of and favourability towards the LGA, including channels of awareness and understanding, functions

perceived to be part of the LGA's remit, and how effective the LGA is seen at fulfilling these functions.

This research examines views of the LGA as an organisation and its role and priorities; views on its current provision; and views on its communications and methods of engagement. These are compared across time where questions have been retained from the Perceptions Survey in 2012 and 2013, and across subgroups including respondent role and region.

5. **Investigate what the membership want from the LGA and how they want to engage.** This again examines significant variations where these exist across the membership and changes since 2012 and 2013. This aspect provides feedback on a strategic level in terms of the organisation's role and responsibilities but also on a tactical level in terms of formats and channels preferred e.g. the extent to which communications have been digitalised.
6. **Assess views of sector-led improvement within local government, and views on the support offered by the LGA to assist its members in this.** The research identifies areas where the LGA might enhance its support in this area, by investigating the membership's preferences and experiences of support and by unpicking the impact that such support has had, by asking respondents to reflect on the impacts of their engagement with the LGA and the resources it provides in supporting sector-led improvement.

1.3 Method

The Perceptions Survey 2014 was delivered using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI). A CATI approach was chosen as it offers the most neutral (and least self-selecting) method of interviewing which reduces the risk that bias may be introduced through web-based preferences for engagement if conducting the survey online.

An introductory email was sent to contacts by BMG to invite them to take part in the research. As standard, contacts were called up to 10 times before being logged as a non-response; however, in some cases contacts were called in excess of 10 times if appointments or call-backs were arranged. Interviews took between 15 and 20 minutes.

The survey was designed by the LGA in partnership with BMG Research and in most cases retained the questions and wording from 2012 and 2013 to ensure comparability between the waves. It explored:

- the LGA's offer and current provision;
- its current role and priorities and how these can be developed;
- its communications and respondents' preferred methods of engagement;
- sector-led improvement within local government, the support offered by the LGA to assist its members in this and how it can be developed/improved; and
- respondents' experiences of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships.

Prior to launching the survey a CATI pilot was conducted with 20 respondents to ensure the survey was fit for purpose and would not last longer than the agreed length of 20 minutes. No issues were identified relating to respondents' understanding of the survey content. The survey subsequently took place between the 8th December 2014 and 27th February 2015.

The time period for fieldwork on this wave was extended from that of previous waves in order to reflect efforts made to correct low response rates amongst Directors.

1.4 Sampling

As in previous waves the research aimed to consult a range of officers (including chief executives and directors) and both frontbench (leaders, chairs of scrutiny and portfolio holders) and backbench elected members, from a representative sample of LGA member authorities.

Following discussion with the LGA, interlocking quotas were set to ensure the research achieved a broadly representative sample whilst establishing minimum quotas to enable detailed analysis by region and amalgamated role (a minimum of 20 respondents per region and amalgamated role group). Similar quotas were set in 2012 and 2013 to ensure comparability; however, these were amended slightly to reflect the changed composition of the different role types and the reduction in the number of available contacts within different roles.

In the majority of instances quotas were achieved; however, as in 2013 following senior level restructuring in many local authorities fewer contact details were available. As a result there was a small shortfall in some areas, most notably amongst Directors (amongst whom there was a high level of refusal and those who could not be made available during the survey period); however, this does not affect overall comparability between the 2 years.

Table 1 shows the final sample achieved which forms the basis of this report.

Amalgamated role:	Officers		Frontbench Councillors			Backbench Councillors	Regional Total
Role:	Chief Executives	Directors	Leaders	Chairs of Scrutiny	Portfolio Holders	Backbench Councillors	
East	13	24	11	11	13	45	117
East Midlands	10	12	13	8	11	35	89
London	7	8	1	9	10	24	59
North East	3	11	4	10	7	20	55
North West	9	21	9	12	14	9	104
South East	17	28	20	13	16	67	161
South West	12	15	16	10	8	31	92
West Midlands	9	18	11	9	13	28	88
Yorkshire and the Humber	3	9	5	8	8	23	56
Role Total:	83	146	90	90	100	312	821
Amalgamated role Total:	229		280			312	821

Table 1: Completed interviews

A sample frame of 19,399 contacts (including nearly 15,000 backbenchers) was provided to BMG Research by the LGA. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were undertaken with 821 respondents. This sample size has a maximum standard error of +/-3.4% (compared with +/-3.1% in 2012 and 2013) at the 95% level of confidence, giving these findings a high level of accuracy. Further details of the standard errors by region and role type are included in Appendix 1.

Within this sample the research also captured responses from respondents from a range of council types including:

Local authority type	Number	%
English unitary	148	18
London borough	59	7
Metropolitan district	94	12
Shire county	68	8
Shire district	452	55
Total	**821**	**100**

Table 2: Respondent local authority type

In the first instance named contacts were approached; however, in some instances interviewers were directed to speak with other key members of staff that had responsibility for this area. Where there were refusals to take part reasons for this included those outlined in Table 3.

Reason for refusal	%
No time/too busy	50
Don't do surveys	22
No interest in helping LGA	15
Other[1]	14
Total	**100**

Table 3: Reasons for refusal

Following this, all individuals agreeing to take part in the survey were asked how well they know the LGA. Only 2 of these individuals had never heard of the LGA; however, 27 reported that they had 'heard of but know nothing about it'. As such these 29 respondents were not asked to continue with the survey as some knowledge of the LGA's role was necessary to answer subsequent questions.

1.5 Analytical approach

This report provides a summary of the top-line frequencies and, where relevant, significant findings from cross-tabulations based upon amalgamated role type (officer, frontbench councillor, backbench councillor) and region. Independent t-tests (within the groups of interest i.e. region) were conducted at the 95% confidence level to identify where findings were statistically significant. Where specific findings from cross-tabulations are discussed in the report it is because they have been identified as statistically significant unless otherwise stated.

Full tables showing crosstabulations by region, role, and authority, and individual tables for amalgamated roles crosstabulated by region have been provided to the LGA separately.

[1] Other reasons for not taking part in the survey included personal reasons and not wanting to take part in this survey at this point.

Where possible comparisons to the 2012 and 2013 Perceptions Survey have also been made to show where significant differences exist.

1.6 Report structure

Following this introduction the report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents findings relating to respondents' understanding of the LGA and its services; Chapter 3 provides analysis of the respondents' views on communications with the LGA; Chapter 4 provides analysis of respondents' views on sector-led improvement; and Chapter 5 highlights the key findings and conclusions from this research.

2 Views on the LGA and its services

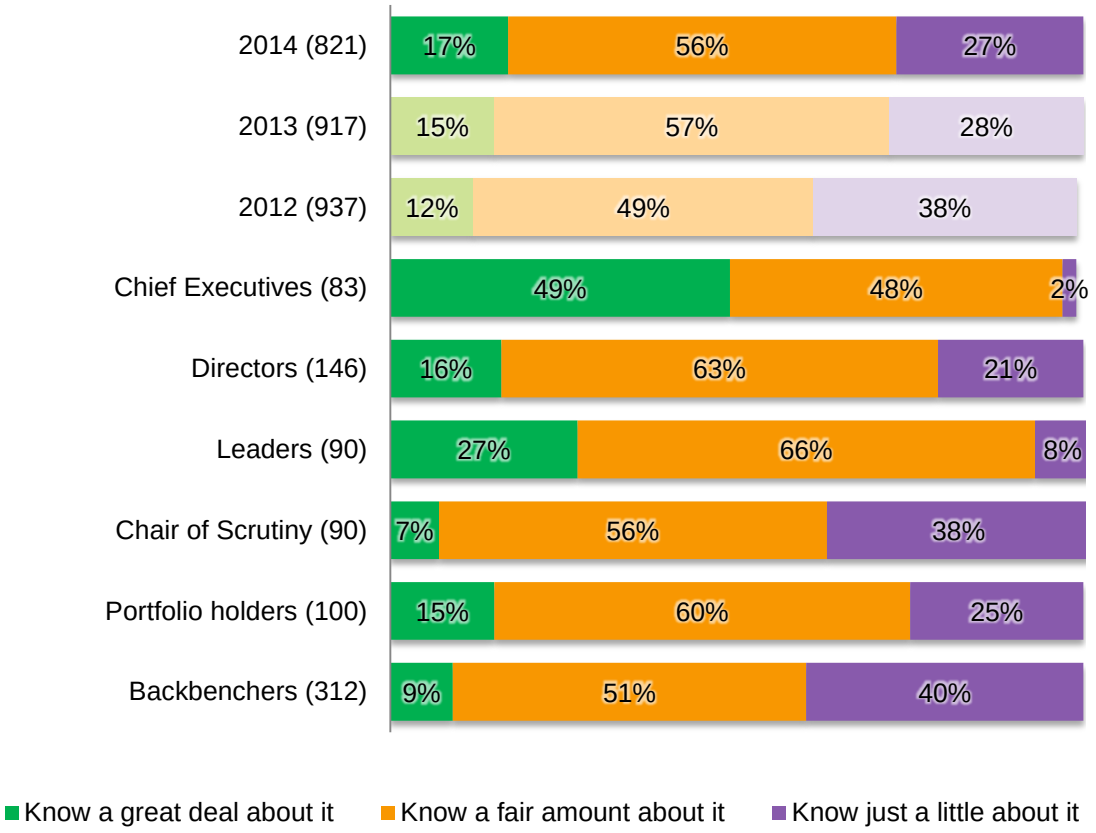
2.1 Knowledge of the LGA

All survey respondents had some knowledge of the LGA, as members who reported that they had 'no knowledge at all' were not asked to take part in the full survey.

When asked how well they know the LGA, more than half (56%) of survey respondents, a similar proportion to 2013 (57%), felt they 'know a fair amount about it'. A slightly higher proportion now than in 2013 felt they 'know a great deal about it' (17%, compared with 15%). Just over a quarter (27%) felt they 'know just a little about it', which is a similar proportion to 2013 (28%).

As Figure 1 shows, chief executives and leaders are particularly likely to be knowledgeable about the LGA. Chairs of Scrutiny were least likely to feel they 'know a great deal about it' in 2014, compared with 2013 when backbenchers were the least likely to 'know a great deal about it'.

Figure 1: How well would you say you know the LGA? Would you say that you… (Crosstabulated by role type)



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

There were no significant differences by region in how well respondents knew the LGA.

By amalgamated role, backbenchers are significantly more likely than officers and frontbench councillors to feel they 'know just a little about it' (40%, compared with 24% and 14% respectively). Around one in five officers and frontbench councillors (28% and 16% respectively) feel they 'know a great deal about it' compared with just 9% of backbenchers.

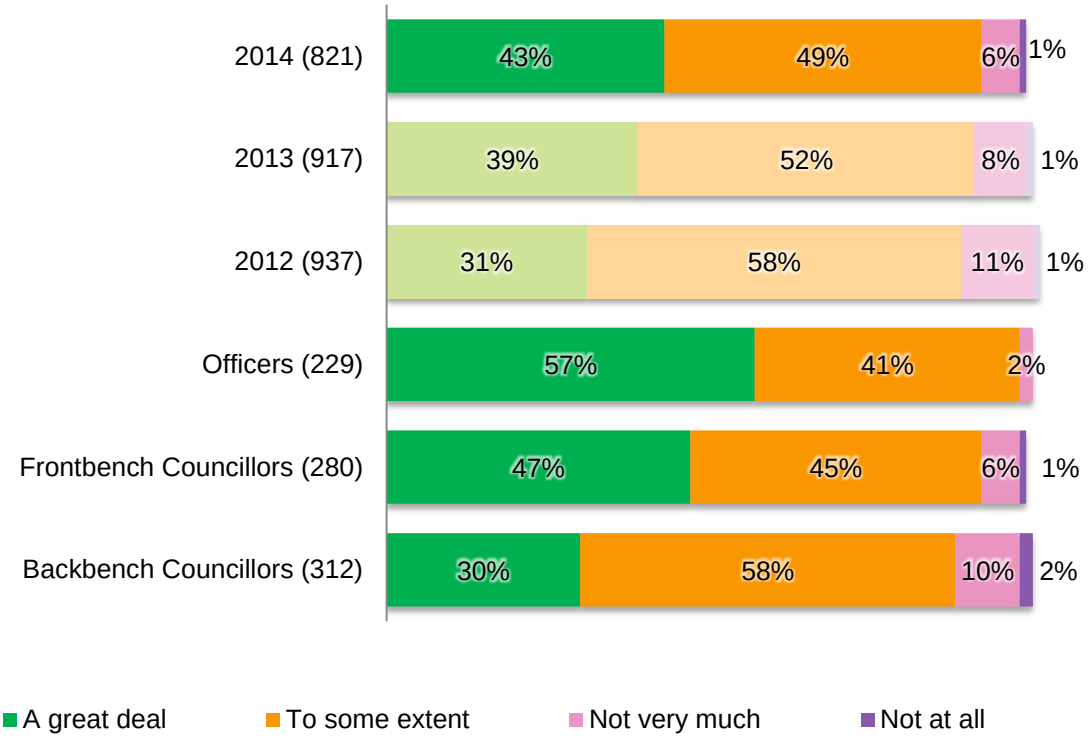
2.2 Understanding of the purpose of the LGA

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement *I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government*. Over two-fifths (43%) reported that they agreed 'a great deal', which is a significantly higher proportion than in 2013 (39%).

Just under half (49%) agreed to some extent, whilst only a small proportion did not agree very much (6%) or at all (1%).

Backbenchers are significantly less likely than officers or frontbench councillors to agree 'a great deal' (30%, compared with 57% of officers and 47% frontbench councillors). It follows that backbenchers are significantly more likely than other members to disagree with the statement *I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government* (12% not very much/not at all, compared with 2% of officers and 7% of frontbench councillors). By individual role type Chief Executives were significantly more likely than any other role to agree 'a great deal' (82% compared with 39% of other role types).

Figure 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government'? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role)



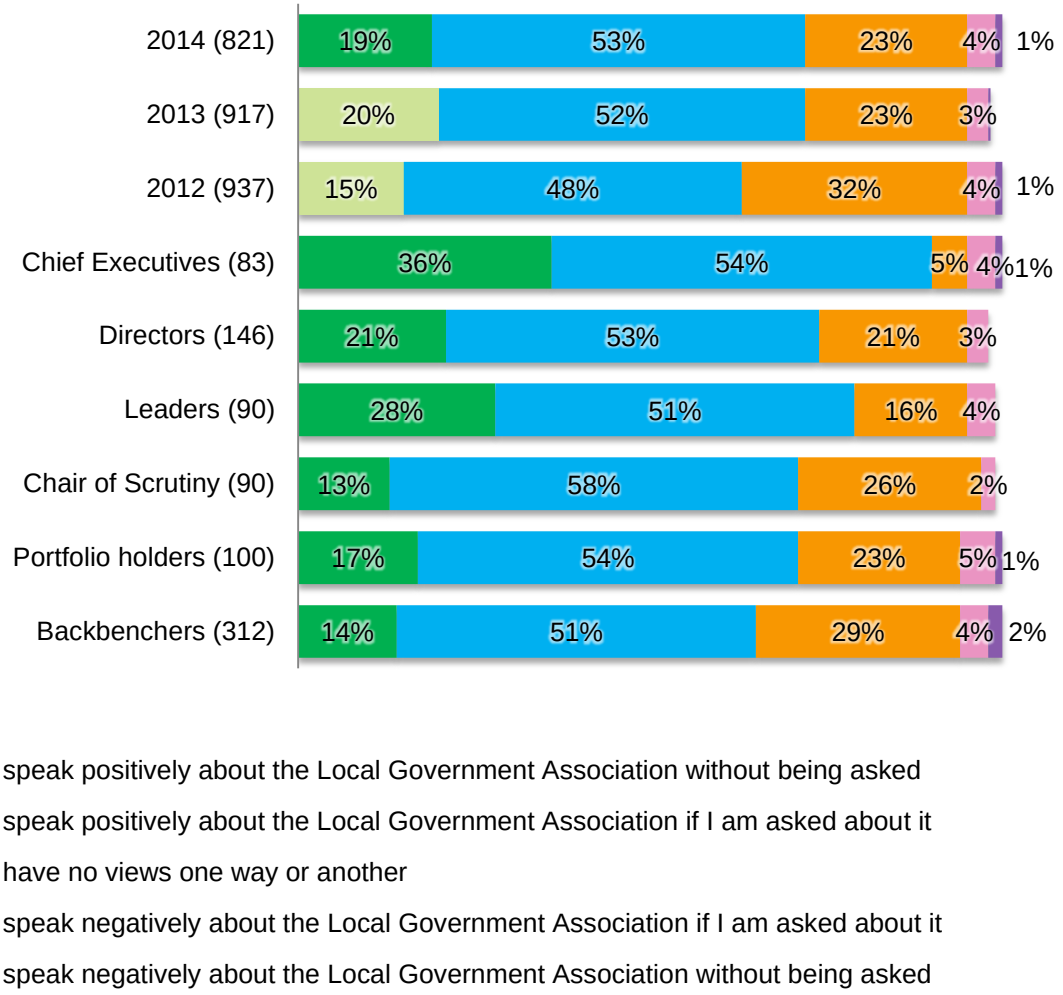
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

By region, respondents in the North West are significantly more likely than in other regions to agree 'to some extent' or 'a great deal' with the statement *I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government* (98% compared with 92% of all other regions).

2.3 Discussing the LGA with others

Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents (72%) reported that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or if asked). This is a similar proportion to 2013 (73%). Only 5% of respondents reported that they would best be described as speaking negatively about the LGA to others, which is a similar proportion to that reported in 2012 (4%), while around a quarter (23%) reported neutrality on this question.

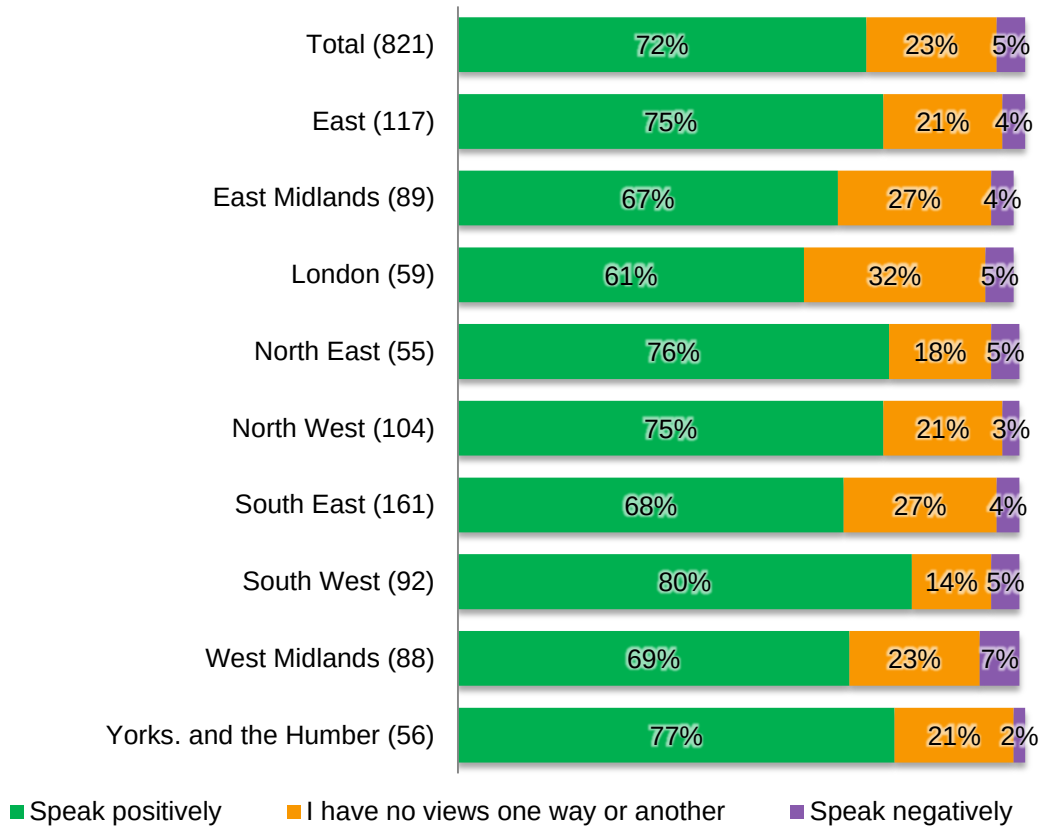
Figure 3: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people? (Crosstabulated by role type)



Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

Respondents in the South West are particularly likely to report having spoken positively about the LGA (80%). There are no significant differences by region regarding likelihood to speak negatively about the LGA.

Figure 4: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people?



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

By amalgamated role type, backbenchers are the least likely to report having spoken positively about the LGA (65% compared with 79% of officers, and 74% of frontbench councillors). Chief Executives were significantly more likely than any other individual role type to speak positively about the LGA (90% compared with 70% of other role types).

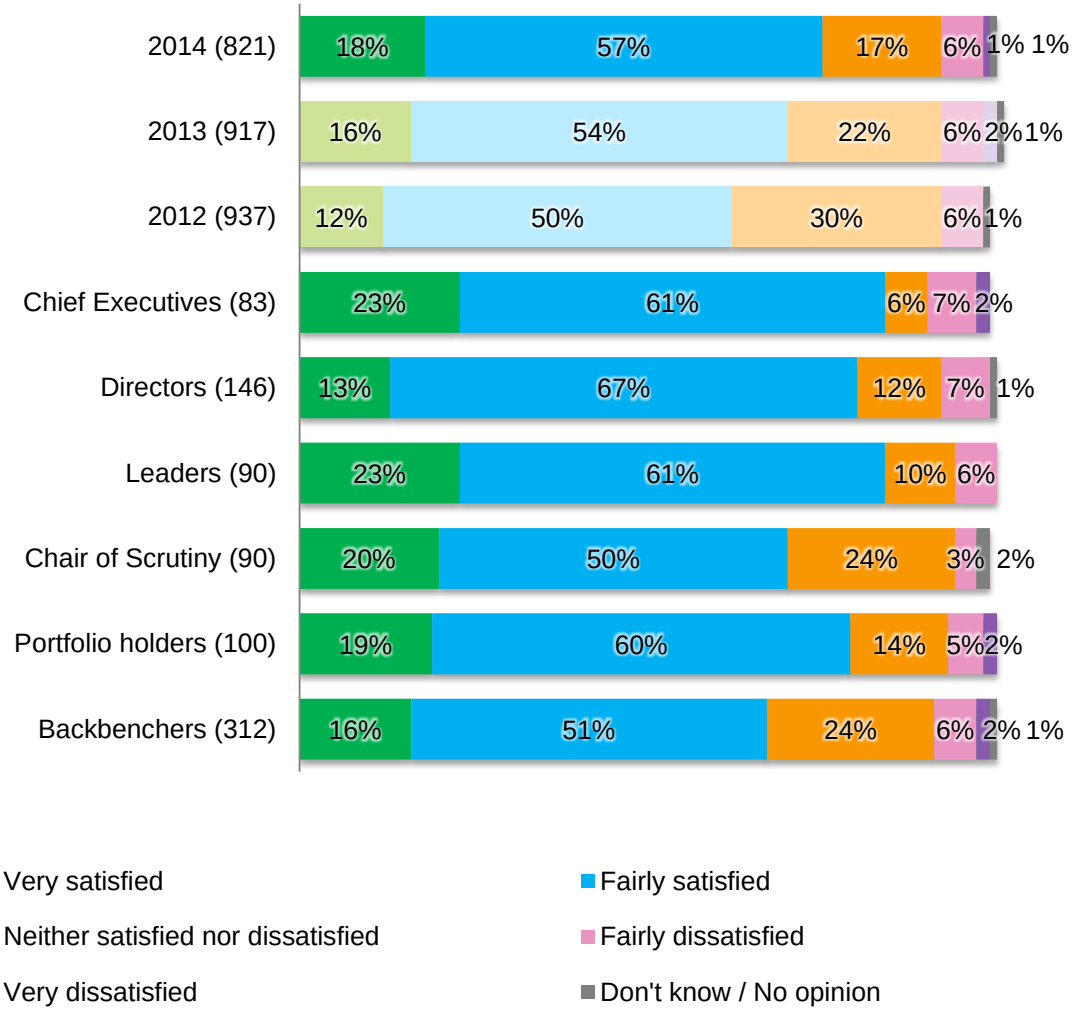
2.4 Satisfaction with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector

When asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector, three-quarters (75%) are either fairly or very satisfied. This represents a significant increase on 2013 (70%). Only 7% of respondents reported being 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with the work of the LGA in this respect.

Officers and frontbench councillors are significantly more likely to be satisfied than backbenchers (82% of officers and 78% of frontbench councillors compared with 67% of backbenchers). There has been a significant improvement in satisfaction amongst officers within the last 12 months (75% were fairly/very satisfied in 2013) and with frontbench councillors (from 69% in 2013 to 78% now).

Over four-fifths of chief executives (85%), directors (80%), and leaders (84%) are fairly/very satisfied with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector. This contrasts with 70% of chairs of scrutiny and 79% of portfolio holders (which is a significant increase from 63% of portfolio holders in 2013).

Figure 5: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by role type)

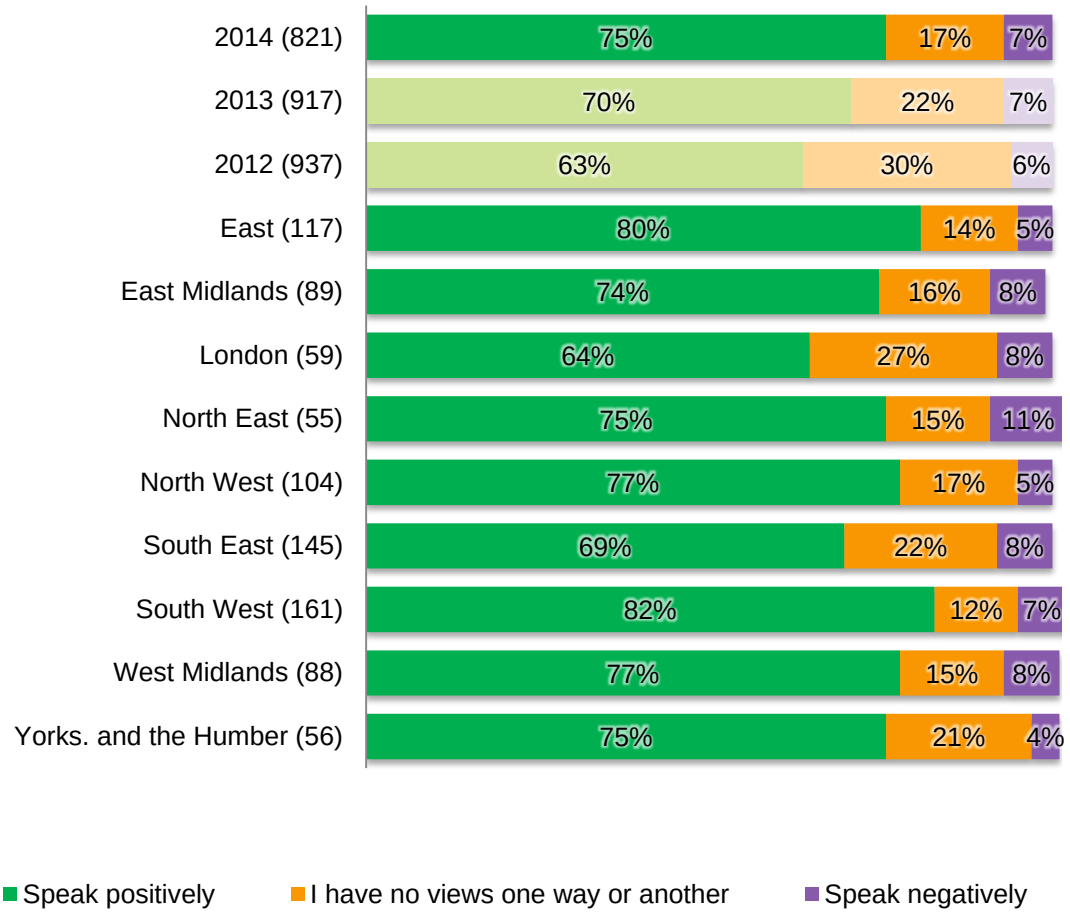


Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

There were no significant differences in satisfaction with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector based on region.

Satisfaction is highest within the South West (82%) and the East (80% fairly/very satisfied); and lowest within London (64%), and the South East (69%).

Figure 6: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by region)



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

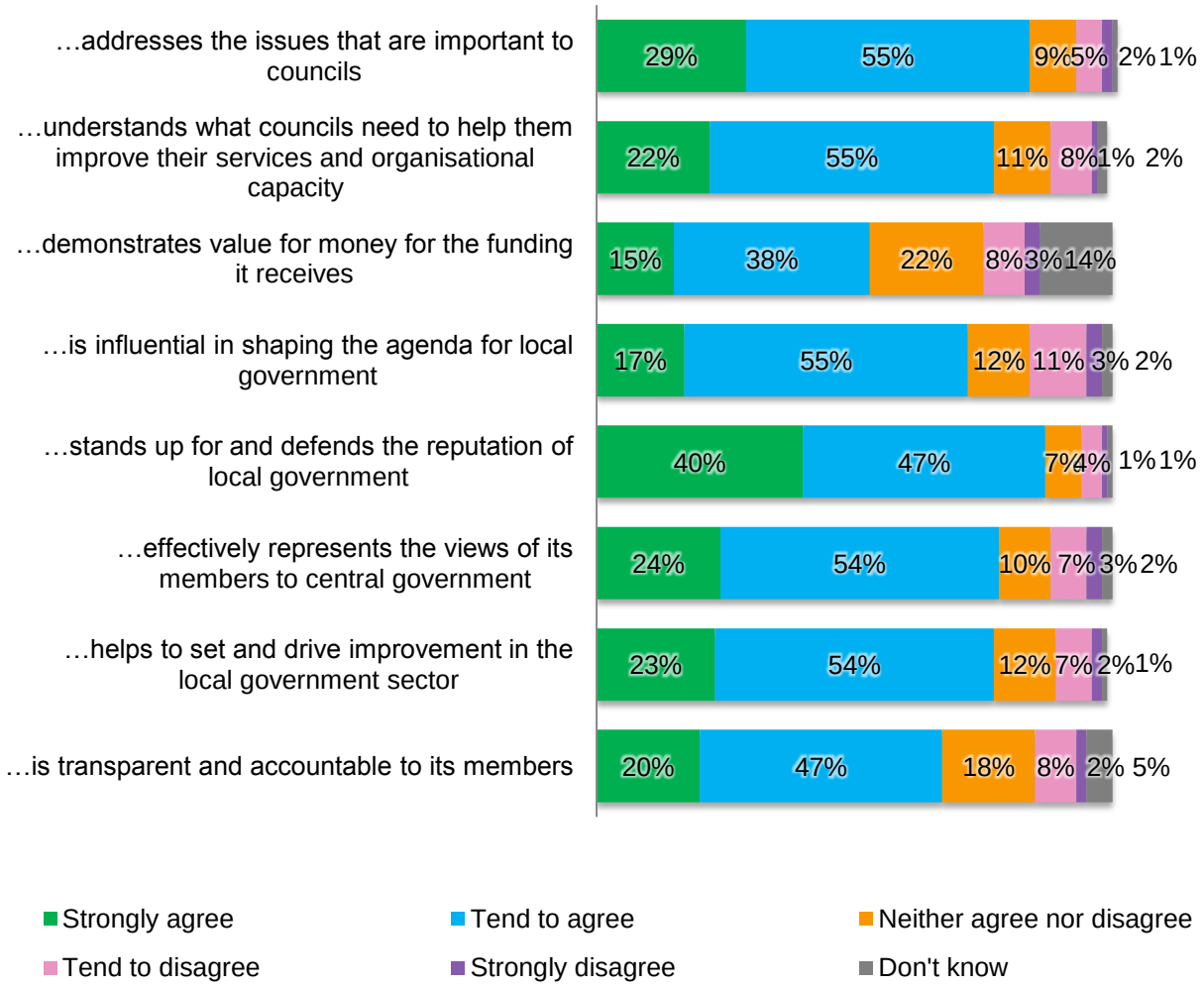
2.5 LGA capabilities

The majority of respondents agreed with statements regarding whether the LGA are performing a range of functions. They are particularly likely to agree that the LGA *stands up for and defends the reputation of local government* (86% agree/strongly agree) and that it *addresses the issues that are important to councils* (84%). This is consistent with findings from 2013 with no significant increases or decreases in agreement with these statements.

More than three-quarters of respondents agreed that the LGA *understands what councils need to help them improve their services and organisational capacity* (78%); *effectively represents the views of its members to central government* (78%); and *helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector* (77%). Again this is consistent with findings in 2013 with no significant increases or decreases in agreement with these statements.

Respondents are least likely to have agreed that the LGA *demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives* (53%), which is again consistent with findings from 2013.

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?



Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There are no significant differences in the propensity to agree with each of these statements by amalgamated role (see Table 4) and levels of agreement on all statements have remained consistent between 2103 and 2014.

	Total			Officers			Frontbench Councillors			Backbench Councillors		
	2012 (937)	2013 (917)	**2014 (821)**	2012 (333)	2013 (325)	**2014 (229)**	2012 (293)	2013 (281)	**2014 (280)**	2012 (311)	2013 (311)	**2014 (312)**
Agree the LGA address the issues that are important to councils	79%	83%	**84%**	84%	87%	**91%**	77%	81%	**83%**	72%	81%	**79%**
Agree the LGA understands what councils need to help improve their service and organisational capacity	68%	77%	**78%**	71%	78%	**81%**	70%	79%	**80%**	65%	72%	**74%**
Agree the LGA demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives	43%	53%	**53%**	39%	53%	**58%**	47%	55%	**53%**	44%	50%	**50%**
Agree the LGA is influential in shaping the agenda for local government	62%	68%	**72%**	66%	70%	**78%**	61%	69%	**75%**	59%	66%	**66%**
Agree the LGA stands up for and defends the reputation of local government	-	85%	**86%**	-	87%	**93%**	-	85%	**87%**	-	81%	**81%**
Agree the LGA effectively represents the views of its members to central government	69%	77%	**78%**	73%	80%	**81%**	67%	77%	**80%**	66%	74%	**74%**
Agree the LGA helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector	71%	76%	**77%**	71%	76%	**81%**	70%	80%	**78%**	72%	72%	**74%**
Agree the LGA is transparent and accountable to its members	58%	66%	**67%**	52%	63%	**68%**	60%	68%	**69%**	61%	67%	**65%**

Table 4: Agreement with the capabilities of the LGA - Comparison between 2012 and 2013 research (crosstabulated by amalgamated role) Bases in parentheses, Single response question

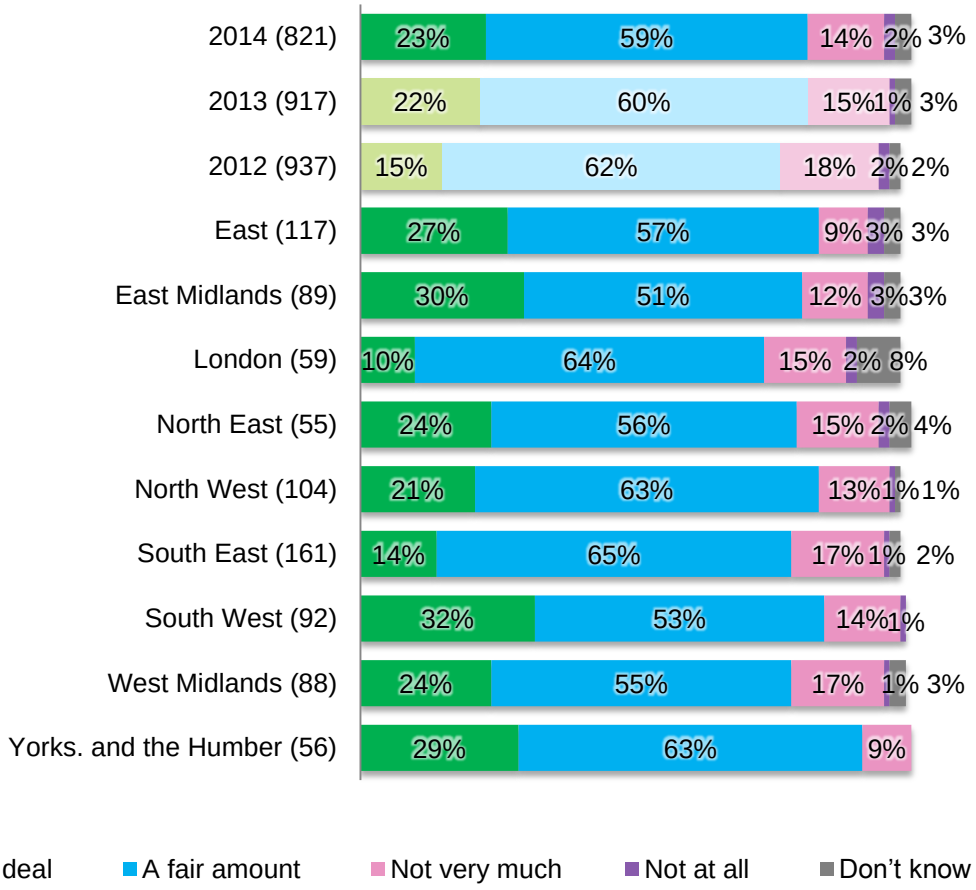
There are few statistically significant differences by region. Notable differences include:

- Respondents in London are significantly less likely than those in other regions to agree that *the LGA demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives* (34%, compared with a sample average of 53%).
- Respondents in the Yorkshire and the Humber region are significantly more likely than those in other regions to strongly agree with the statement *the LGA is transparent and accountable to its members* (32%, compared with a sample average of 20%); whilst respondents from the South West are significantly more likely to strongly or tend to agree with this statement (80%, compared with a sample average of 67%).

2.6 Extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector

The majority of respondents believed that, based on their knowledge, the LGA had been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector 'a fair amount' (59%) or 'a great deal' (23%). This is similar to findings in 2013 as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Based on what you know, to what extent, if at all, has the LGA been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by region)

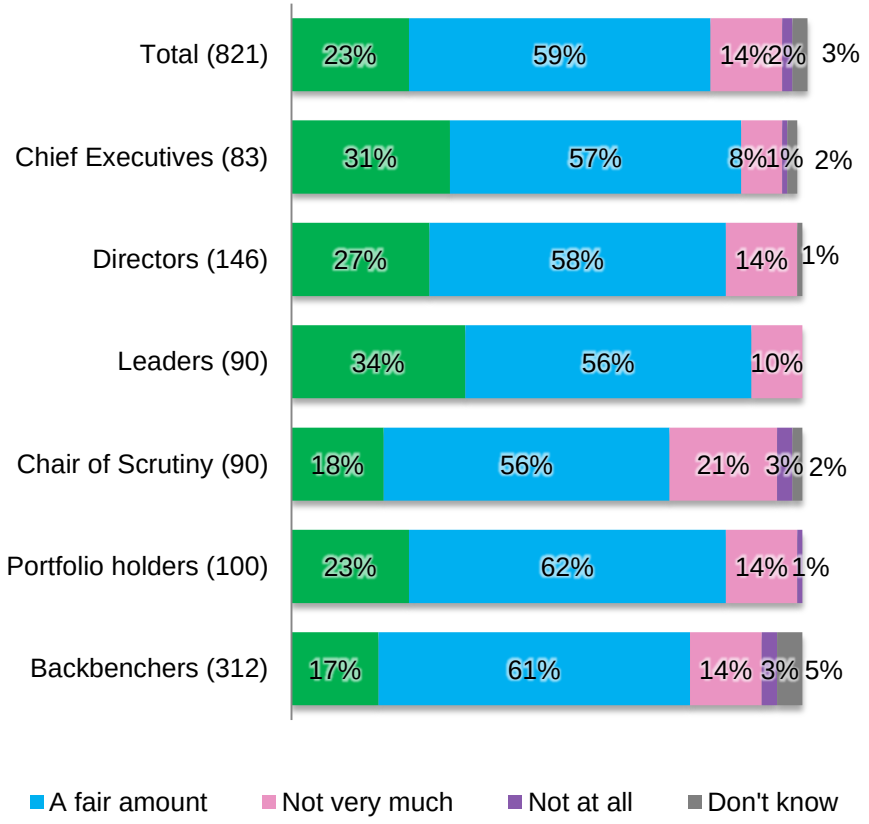


Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There is little statistically significant difference between regions, although respondents in the South East and London are least likely to believe the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector 'a great deal' (14% in the South East and 10% in London compared with a sample average of 23%); whilst respondents from Yorkshire and the Humber are significantly more likely to believe 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal' that the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector (91%, compared with a sample average of 82%).

By role, backbenchers are the least likely to be positive about the LGA as an effective advocate (17% specifying 'a great deal' compared with 23% of the sample overall).

Figure 9: Based on what you know, to what extent, if at all, has the LGA been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by role type)



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

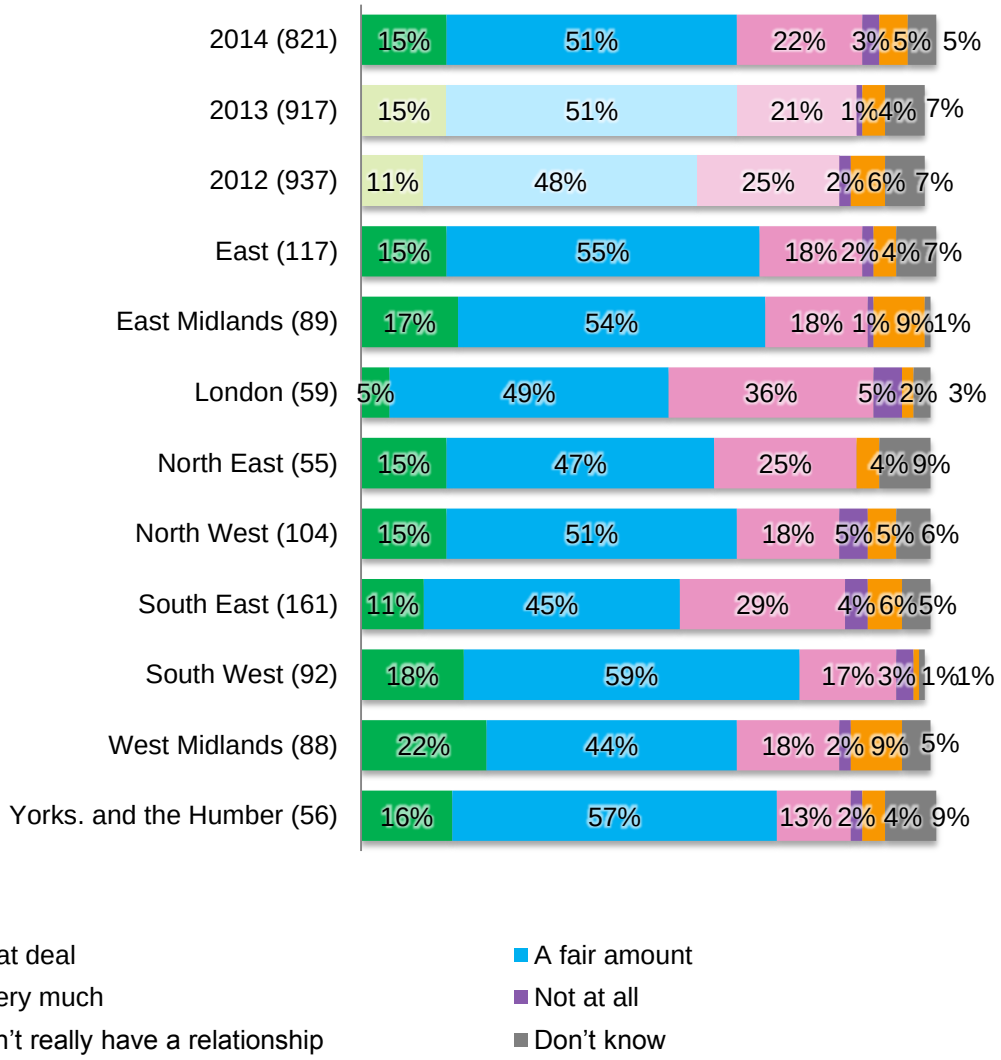
There has been little change between 2013 and 2014 within amalgamated roles.

2.7 Benefits of relationship with the LGA

When asked the extent to which they believed their authority benefited from its relationship with the LGA, around half (51%) reported 'a fair amount' and 15% responded 'a great deal'. This is the same as in 2013. Around one fifth (22%) replied 'not very much', just 3% responded 'not at all'.

There is little statistically significant difference between regions, although respondents in London and the South East are significantly more likely than those in most other regions to say their authority benefits from its relationship with the LGA 'not at all'/'not very much' (41% in London and 33% in the South East, compared with a sample average of 24%).

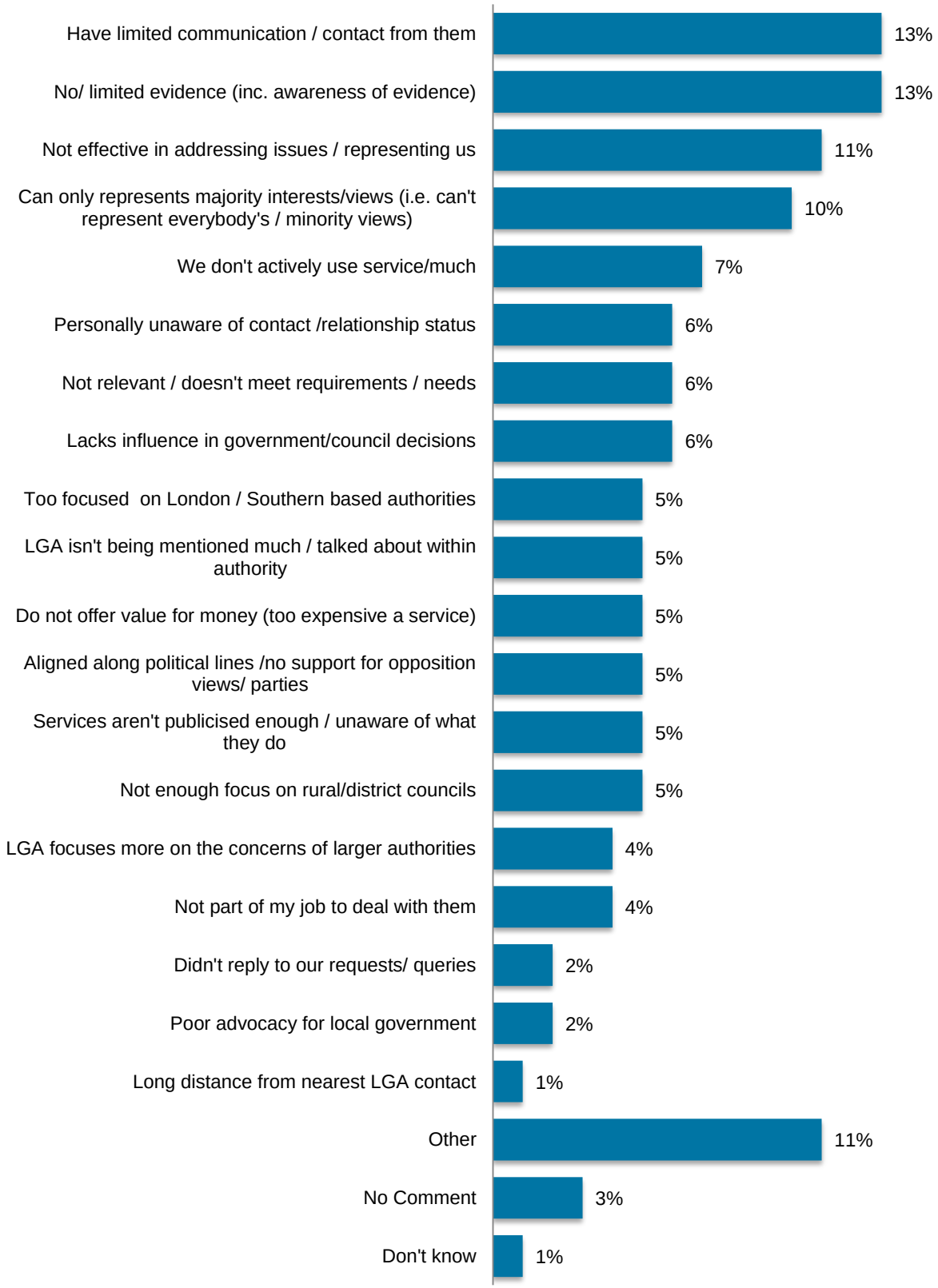
Figure 10: To what extent would you say your authority benefits from its relationship with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region)



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

Respondents who reported that their authority did not benefit at all or 'not very much' were asked why they believed this was the case. Their responses are summarised in Figure 11, with the most frequently cited reasons being that they have limited communications or contact with them or that there was no/limited evidence (13% respectively).

Figure 11: You said your authority benefits 'not very much' or 'not at all' from its relationship with LGA. Why do you say that?

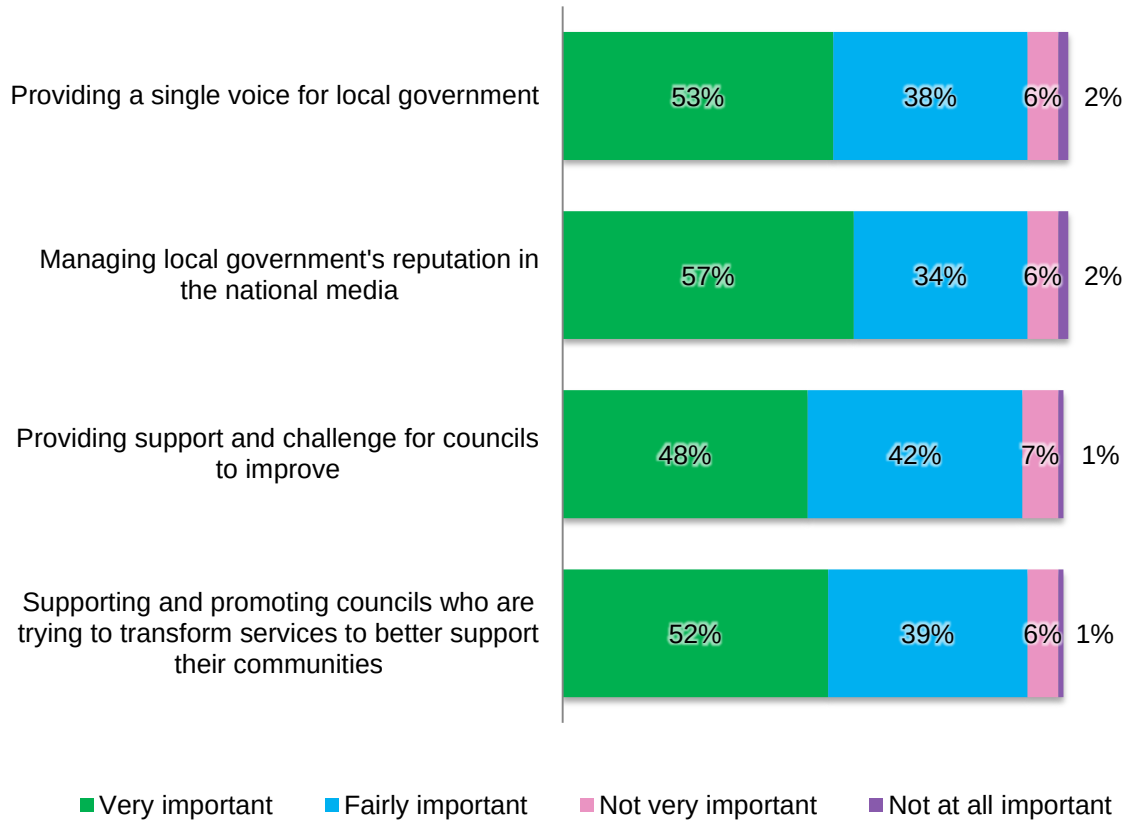


Base = 200, Open response question, coded
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members * denotes less than 0.5%

2.8 Activities conducted by the LGA

At least 90% of respondents believed that any of the four activities conducted by the LGA listed in the survey are important to their authority or the sector; all four activities received either 90% or 91% of respondents stating that they considered these fairly or very important. This is similar to findings in 2013.

Figure 12: I am going to read out a list of activities conducted by the LGA. For each, I would like you to tell me whether they are important or not to your authority or the sector?



Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

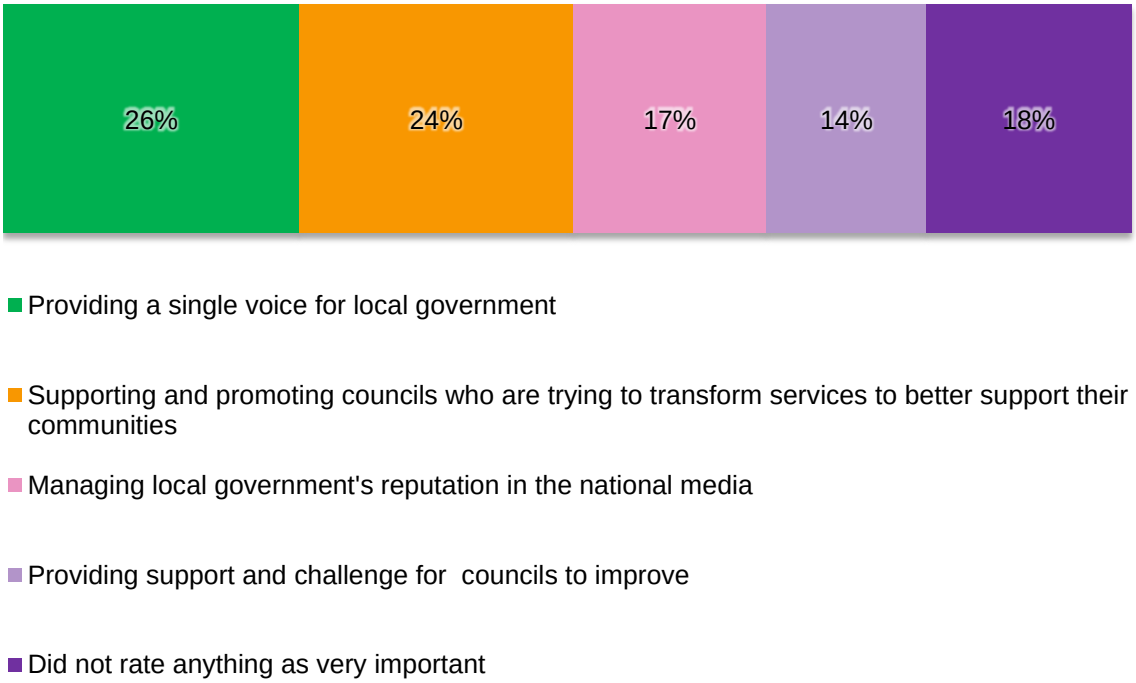
Respondents from the North East are significantly more likely to think *providing a single voice for local government* was 'very important' (73%, compared with a sample average of 53%). Chief Executives were also more likely than other roles to think this was 'very important' (82% compared with a sample average of 53%).

Officers are significantly more likely than other role types to consider *managing local government's reputation in the national media* as either 'fairly important' or 'very important' (97%, compared with a sample average of 90%).

Respondents from the South East are significantly more likely to think *supporting and promoting councils who are trying to transform services to better support their communities* was 'not at all important' or 'not very important' (14%, compared with a sample average of 7%).

Respondents who selected more than one of these activities as 'very important' were asked which they saw as most important and these results were combined with those who had selected only one activity as 'very important'. Figure 13 shows that the activities respondents viewed as most important were *providing a single voice for local government* (26%) and *support and promoting councils who are trying to transform services to better support their communities* (24%). This is a similar result to that reported in 2013 (30% and 26% then respectively).

Figure 13: What is the most important activity conducted by LGA?



Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

2.9 Services provided by the LGA

The majority of respondents believe that all of a range of services provided by the LGA, as specified in Figure 14, are either fairly or very useful.

Lobbying on behalf of local government is considered particularly useful with 58% considering it a very useful service (compared with 61% in 2013).

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions and roles. However, the following differences were observed:

Backbenchers are least likely to find *providing support for sector led improvement fairly or* very useful (76%, compared with 83% of the sample overall).

Portfolio holders are least likely to find *providing a range of online tools to help sector led improvement* fairly or very useful (61% compared with 71% of the sample overall).

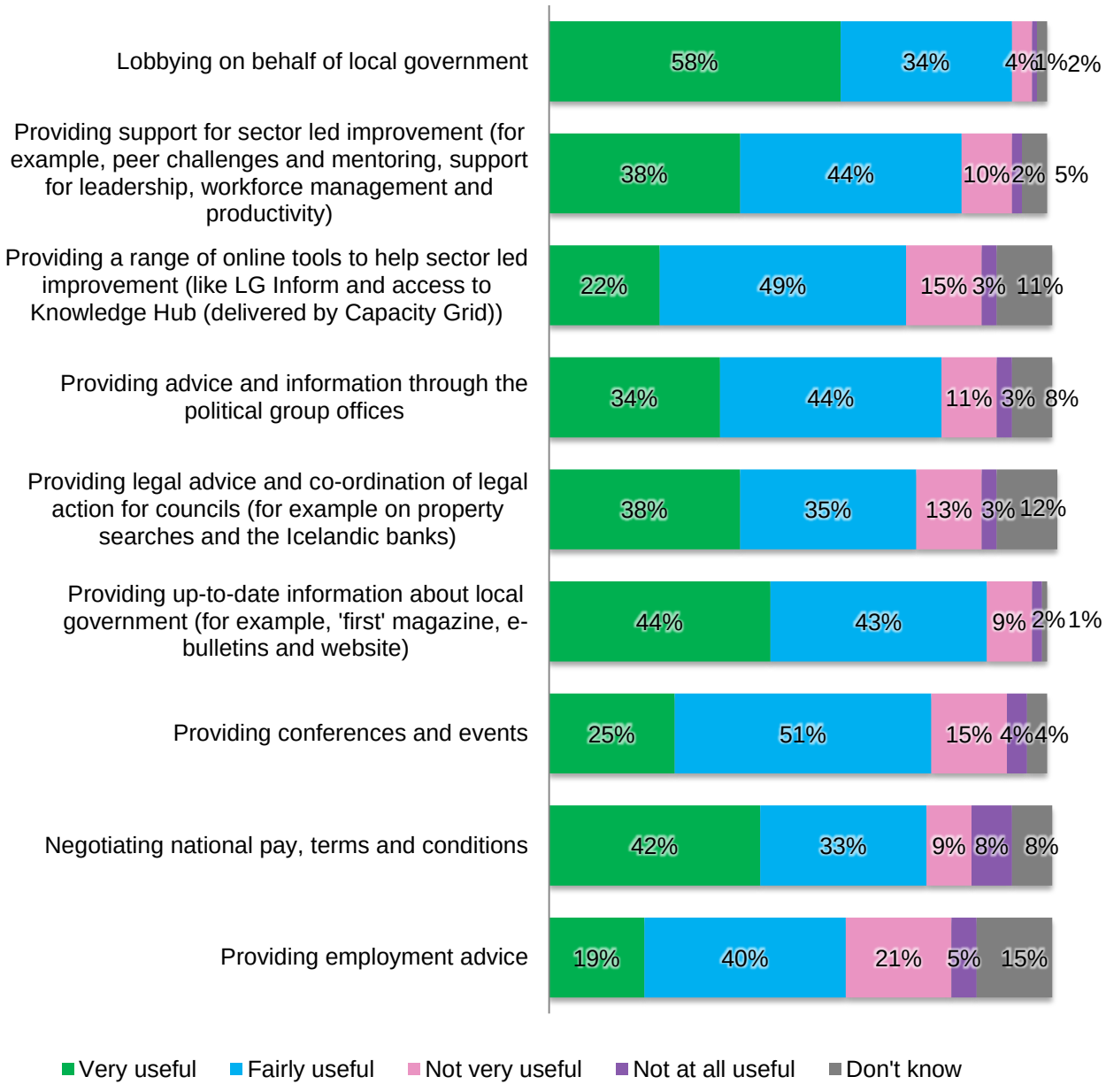
Officers were less likely than frontbench or backbench councillors to find *providing advice and information through the political group offices* fairly or very useful (69% compared with 80% and 82% respectively).

A higher proportion of officers find the service LGA *provides in terms of conferences and events* fairly or very useful compared to frontbench or backbench councillors (88% compared with 76% and 69% respectively).

Those in the South East are least likely to find the LGA's service *in negotiating national pay, terms and conditions* useful (29% do not find it useful compared with 17% of the sample overall).

Officers and frontbench councillors (36% and 28% respectively) are significantly more likely than backbench councillors (17%) to say they do not find the LGA service in *providing employment advice* useful.

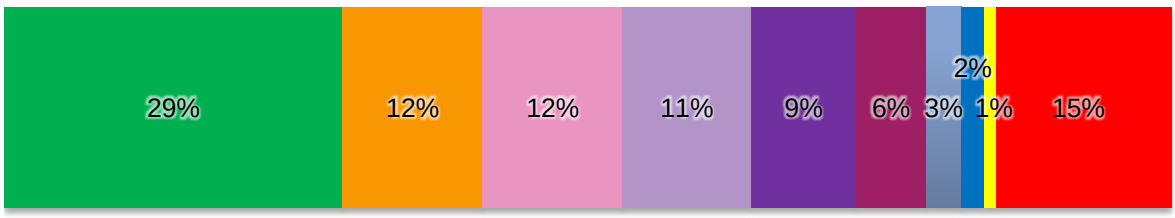
Figure 14: Now I am going to read a list of services provided by the LGA. For each, please could you tell me whether they are useful or not to your authority?



Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Respondents who selected more than one of these activities as 'very useful' were asked which they saw as most useful and these results were combined with those who had selected only one activity as 'very useful'. Figure 15 shows that the activities respondents viewed as most useful were *lobbying on behalf of local government* (29%), *providing support for sector led improvement* (12%), and *providing up-to-date information about local government* (12%). These are similar findings to those reported in 2013 (when 32% viewed *lobbying*... as most useful, 13% selected *providing up-to-date information* and 12% *providing support for sector led improvement*...).

Figure 15: Which of the following services is most useful to your authority?



- Lobbying on behalf of local government
- Providing support for sector led improvement (for example, peer challenges and mentoring, support for leadership, workforce management and productivity)
- Providing up-to-date information about local government (for example, 'first' magazine, e-bulletins and website)
- Negotiating national pay, terms and conditions
- Providing legal advice and co-ordination of legal action for councils (for example on property searches and the Icelandic banks)
- Providing advice and information through the political group offices
- Providing conferences and events
- Providing a range of online tools to help sector led improvement (like LG Inform and access to Knowledge Hub (delivered by Capacity Grid)
- Providing employment advice
- Did not rate anything as very useful

Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There are few statistically significant differences by region, although by role, officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to find *lobbying on behalf of local government* most useful (40%, compared with 28% and 23% respectively).

3 Views on LGA communications

3.1 Attitudes and preferences for LGA communications

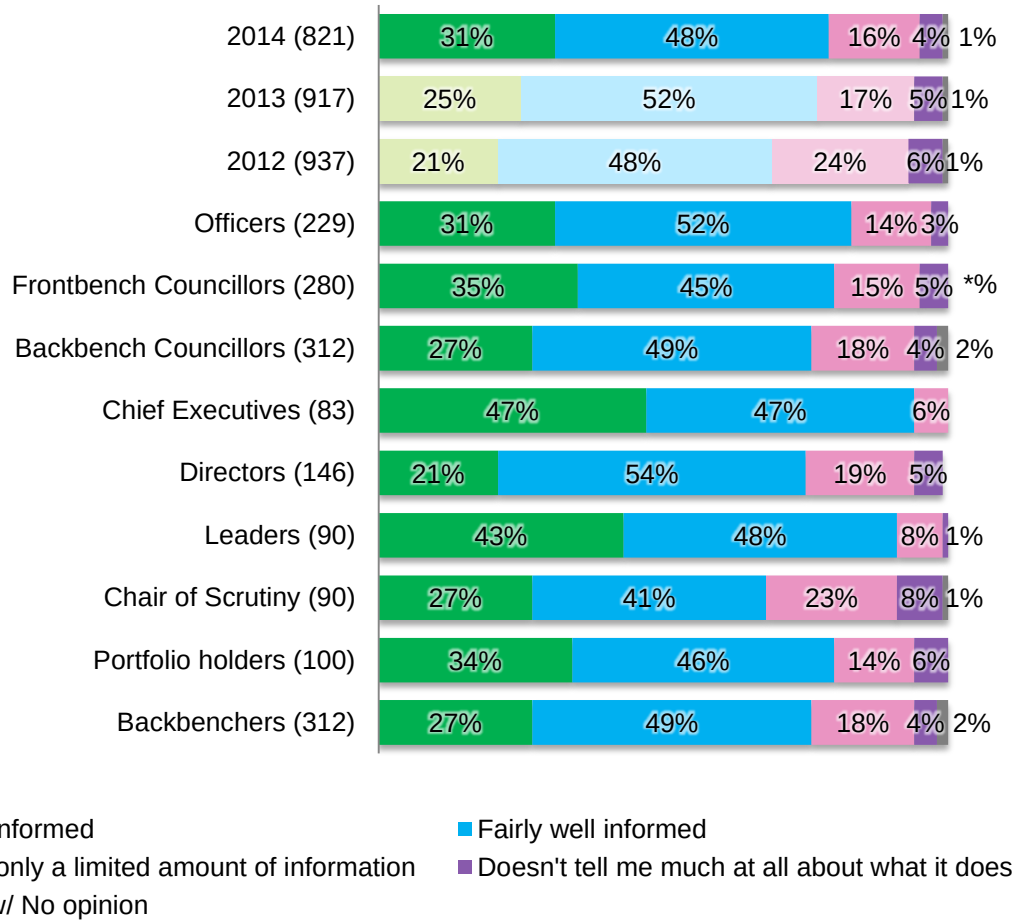
Overall, the majority of respondents believe that the LGA keeps them at least fairly well informed about their work (79%; 48% fairly and 31% very). The proportion who believe they are very informed is significantly higher than in 2013 (25%).

Less than a fifth (16%) believe that the LGA only gives them a limited amount of information and only 4% believe that they are not told much at all.

Chief executives and leaders are particularly likely to feel very well informed (47% and 43% respectively).

There are no statistically significant differences by region.

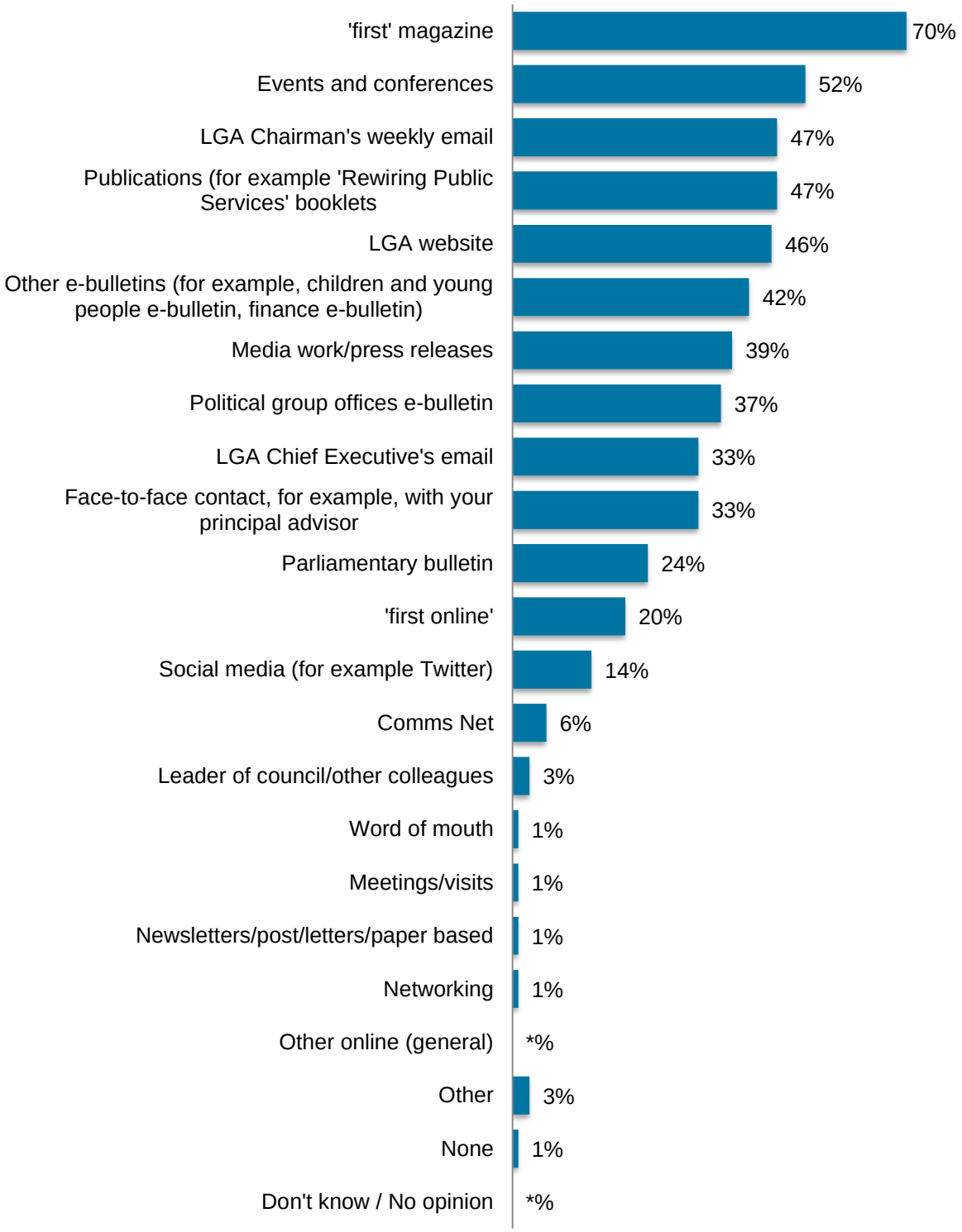
Figure 16: How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its' work? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role and role type)



Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

As in 2013, respondents reported that they find about the work of the LGA in a range of different ways. Similarly to 2013 'first' magazine is most frequently mentioned (70% of all respondents).

Figure 17: How do you generally find out about the work of the LGA?



Base = 821, Multiple response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Other important sources of information include events (52%), the LGA website (46%), and other e-bulletins (42%).

There are key differences in how respondents in different roles find out about the LGA's work, including:

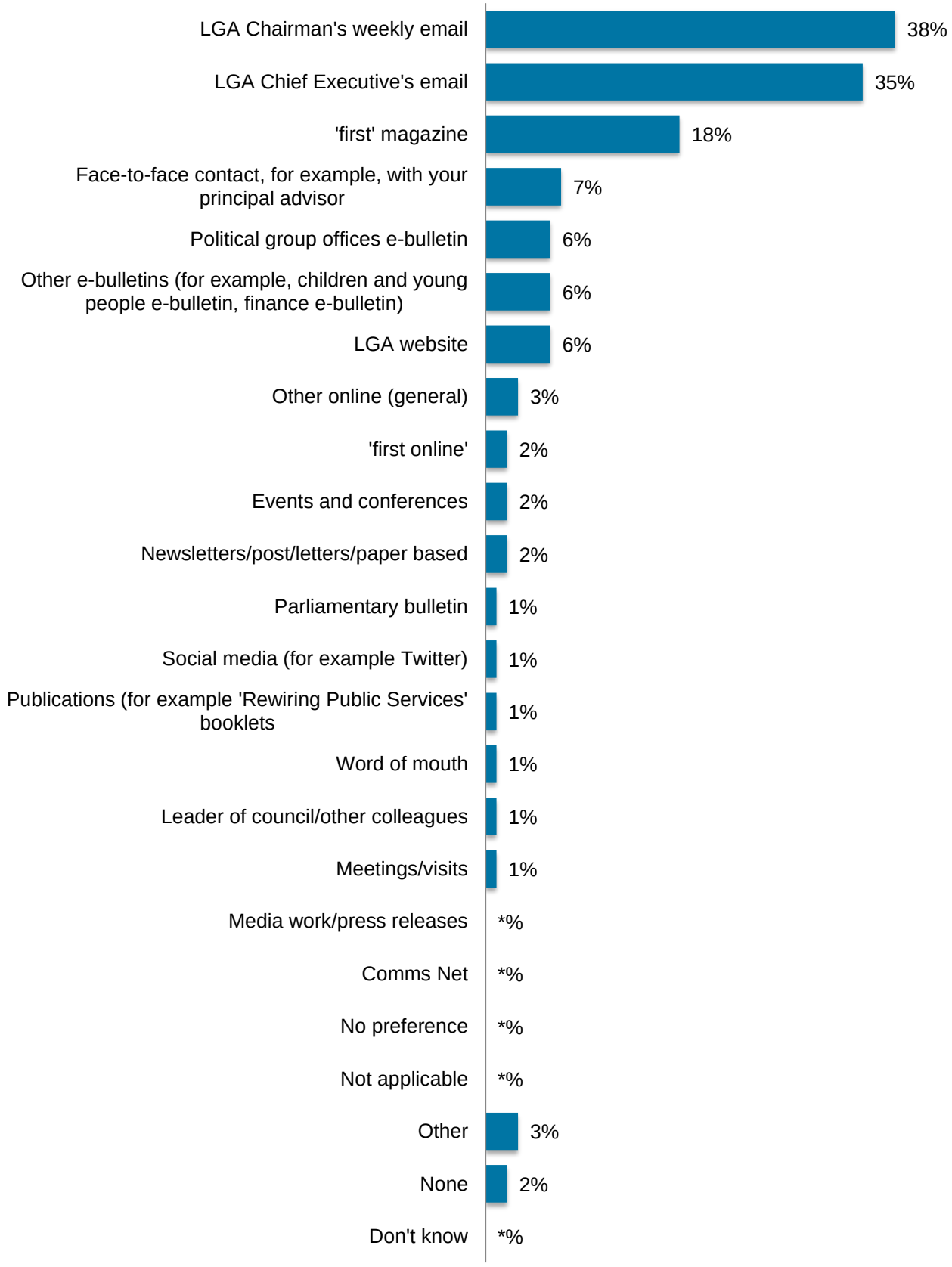
- Officers are most likely to find out about the LGA's work through the LGA website (72%) and are significantly more likely to cite this than frontbench councillors or backbenchers (40% and 32% respectively).
- Officers are also significantly more likely than frontbench councillors or backbenchers to find out about LGA's work through events (69%, compared with 54% and 36% respectively); media work/press releases (55%, compared with 38% and 29% respectively); publications (66%, compared with 44% and 35% respectively); and face-to-face contact (53%, compared with 31% and 20% respectively).
- Frontbench councillors are the most likely to find out about the LGA's work through the LGA Chairman's weekly email (65% compared with 29% of officers and 46% of backbench councillors); political group office e-bulletins (54% compared with 8% of officers and 44% of backbench councillors).
- Backbenchers most frequently cite first magazine (82%) as how they find out about the LGA's work.

In terms of how respondents would prefer to find out about the work of the LGA, the LGA Chairman's weekly email (38%) features most prominently followed by the LGA's chief executive's email (35%) (which has significantly increased in popularity since 2013 when 18% reported it was their preferred way to find out about the work of the LGA).

Further analysis by amalgamated role highlights the following:

- There is particular interest in 'first' magazine amongst backbenchers (31%, compared with 17% of frontbench councillors and just 3% of officers).
- Frontbench councillors are significantly more likely to prefer to hear about the work of the LGA from the LGA chairman's weekly email (51%, compared with 28% of officers and 34% of backbench councillors).
- Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to prefer to find out about the work of the LGA through the LGA Chief Executive's email (45%, compared with 33% of frontbench councillors and 30% of backbench councillors).

Figure 18: How would you prefer to find out about the work of the LGA?

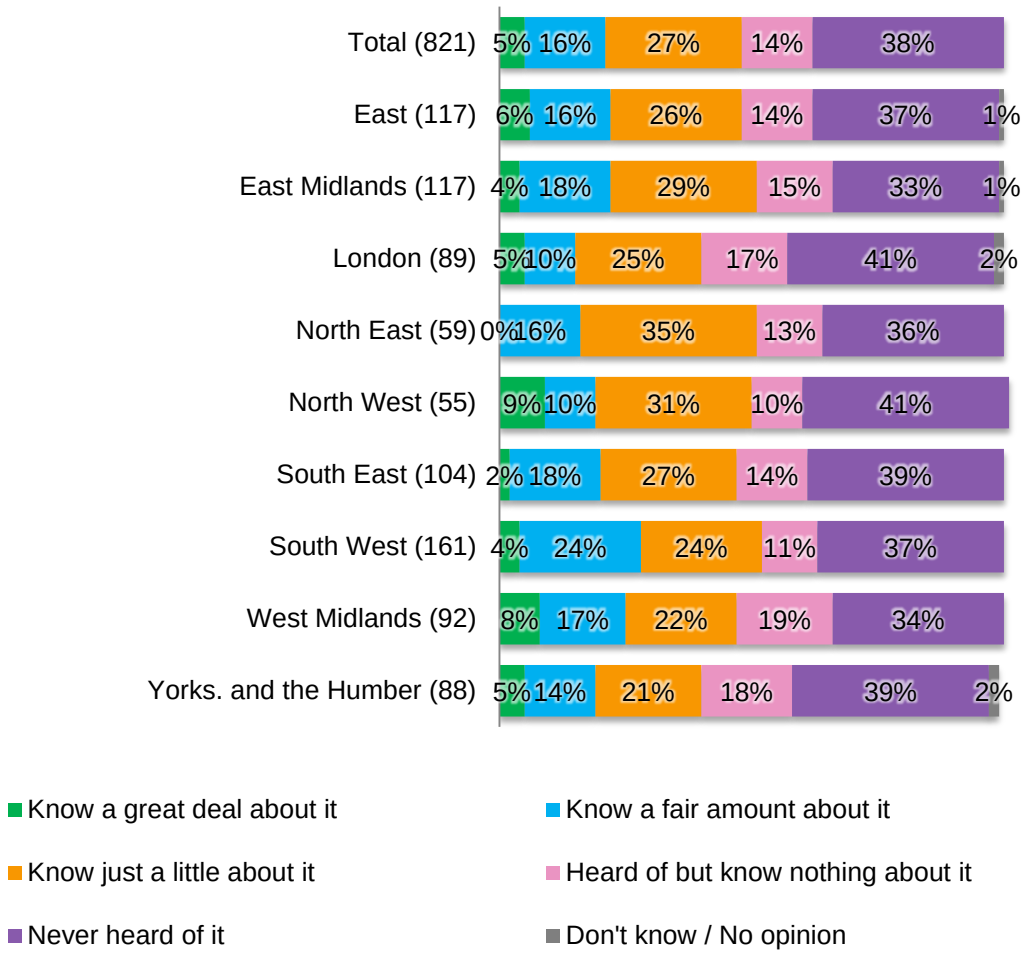


Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

3.2 Awareness of the LGA's *100 days* campaign

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) have heard of the LGA's 100 days campaign. Most of these respondents (66% of all those with some awareness) feel they know nothing or just a little about the campaign, just 8% feel they know a great deal about it, while the remainder (26%) feel they know a fair amount about it. There are no significant differences in awareness of the campaign by region.

Figure 19: How much do you know about the LGA's 100 days campaign? Would you say that you...? (Crosstabulated by region)

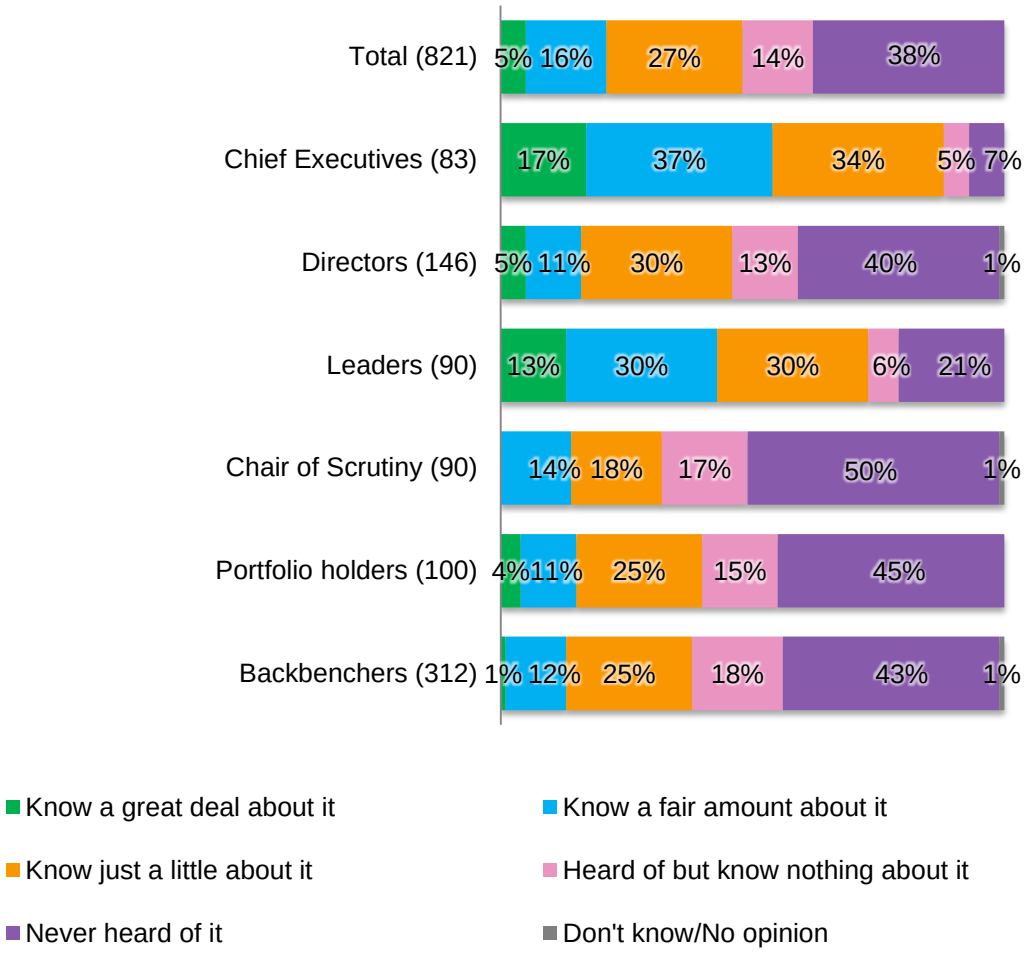


Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Officers and frontbench councillors are significantly more likely than backbenchers to know at least a fair amount about the LGA's 100 days campaign (31%, 24% and 13% respectively). Over a third of backbenchers (43%) and frontbench councillors (39%) have never heard of it, which is a significantly higher proportion than amongst officers (28%).

Chief executives and leaders are significantly more likely than average to feel they know a fair amount or a great deal about the campaign (54% and 43% respectively, compared with 21% of the sample overall).

Figure 20: How much do you know about the LGA's 100 days campaign? Would you say that you...? (Crosstabulated by role type)



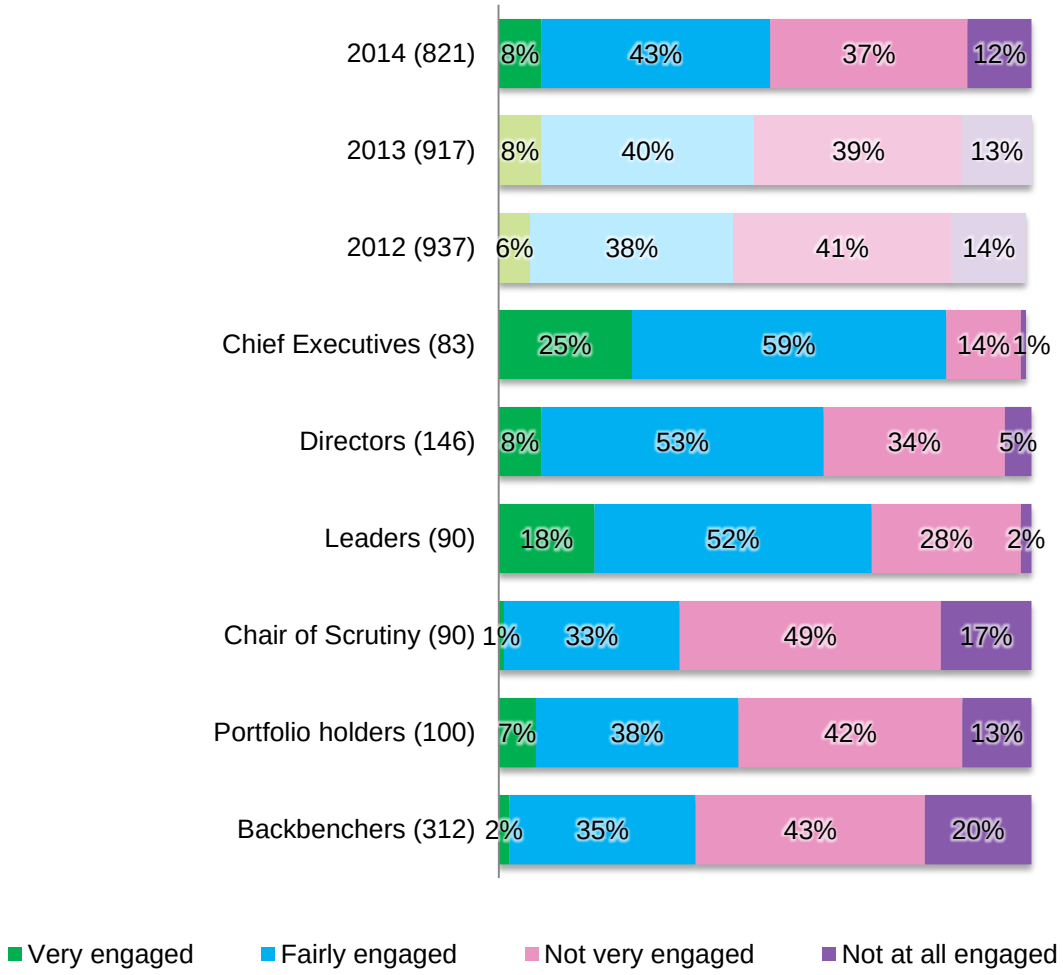
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

3.3 Level of engagement with the LGA

Over one third of all respondents (37%) reported that they are 'not very engaged' whilst 12% are 'not at all engaged' with the LGA. This is a similar proportion to 2013 (52% were either 'not very engaged' or 'not at all engaged'). Two fifths of respondents (43%) reported that they are 'fairly engaged' with the LGA, which is similar to 2013 (40%), while just 8% (the same as in 2013) are 'very engaged'.

There are no significant differences in extent of engagement by region. However, there are some significant differences by role. Backbenchers are significantly more likely to report that they are not engaged than officers and frontbench councillors (63%, compared with 31% and 50% respectively).

Figure 21: How engaged do you feel you are with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by role type)



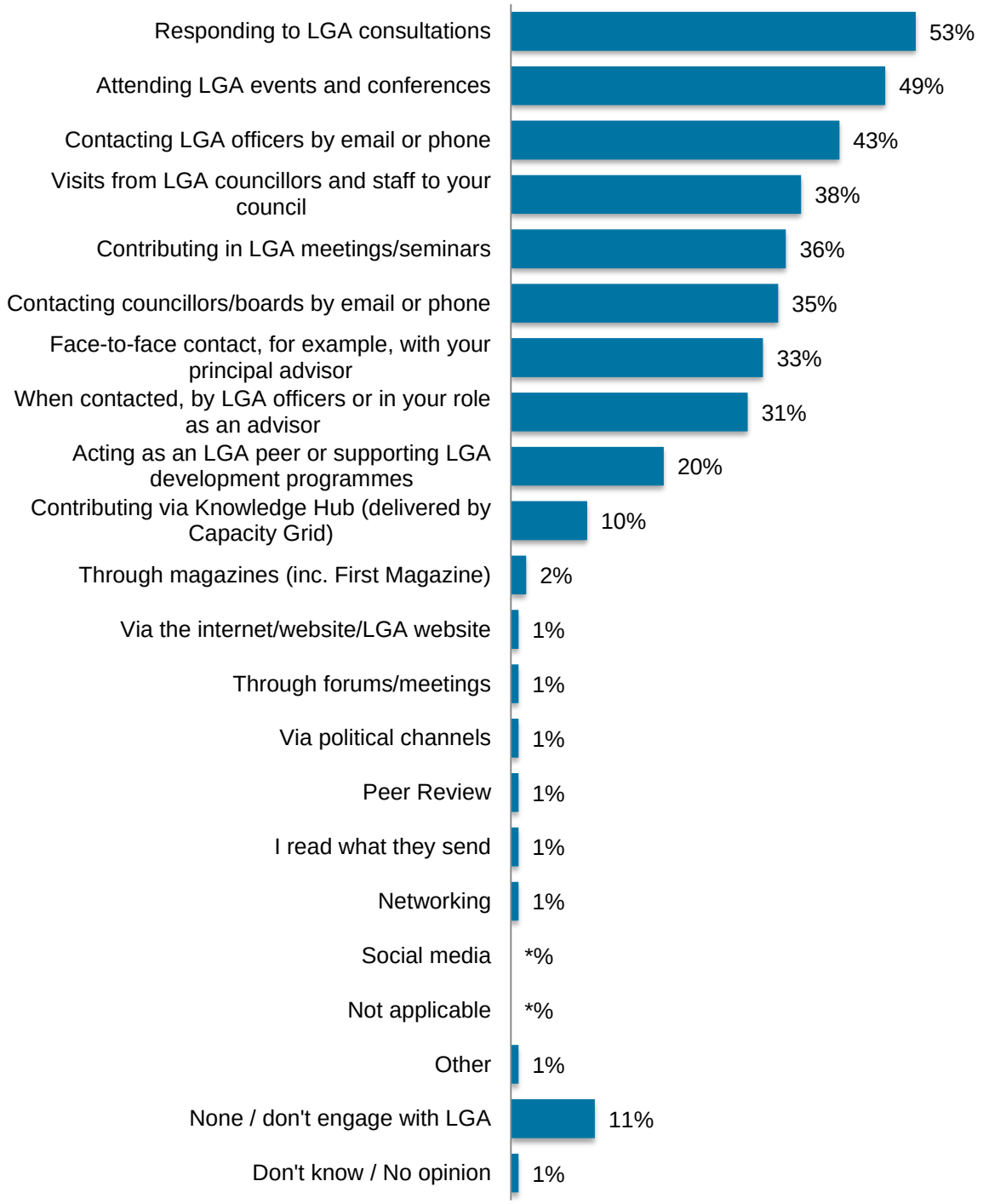
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

3.4 How do authorities engage with the LGA

Respondents reported a range of ways that they engage with the LGA. Methods of engagement that were most frequently mentioned included: responding to LGA consultations (53%), attending LGA events (49%), contacting LGA officers by email or phone (43%), and visits from LGA councillors and staff to their council (38%).

Methods of engagement are similar to those mentioned in 2013.

Figure 22: By what means do you engage with the LGA?



Base = 821, Multiple response question

There are few significant differences in methods of engagement by region, although respondents in the North East are significantly less likely than average to contact councillors/boards by email or phone (27%).

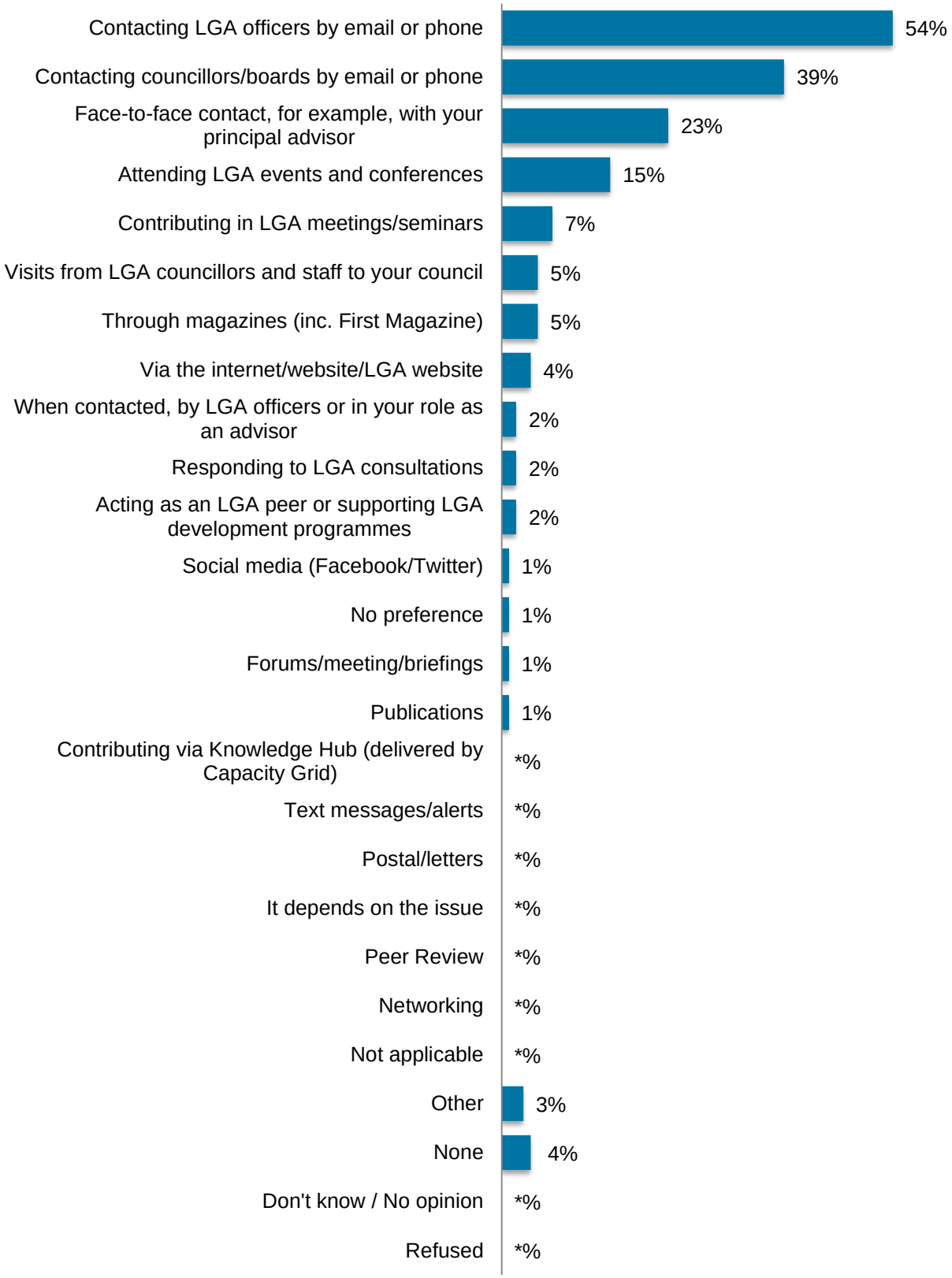
Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench and backbench councillors to contact the LGA using nearly all the means offered. The only mode frontbench and backbench councillors are more likely to use than officers is contacting councillors and boards by email or phone (49% and 40% respectively compared with 11%).

When asked how they would prefer to engage with the LGA, respondents were most likely to specify contacting LGA officers by email or phone (54%). This was also the case in 2012.

Again, there are few significant differences by region, but by role:

- Frontbench councillors are significantly more likely to prefer to engage by contacting LGA officers by email or phone (61% compared with 54% overall) or contacting councillors/boards by email or phone (52% compared with 39% overall).
- Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to prefer face-to-face engagement (40% compared with 23% overall).

Figure 23: By what means would you prefer to engage with the LGA?



Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

4 Views on sector-led improvement

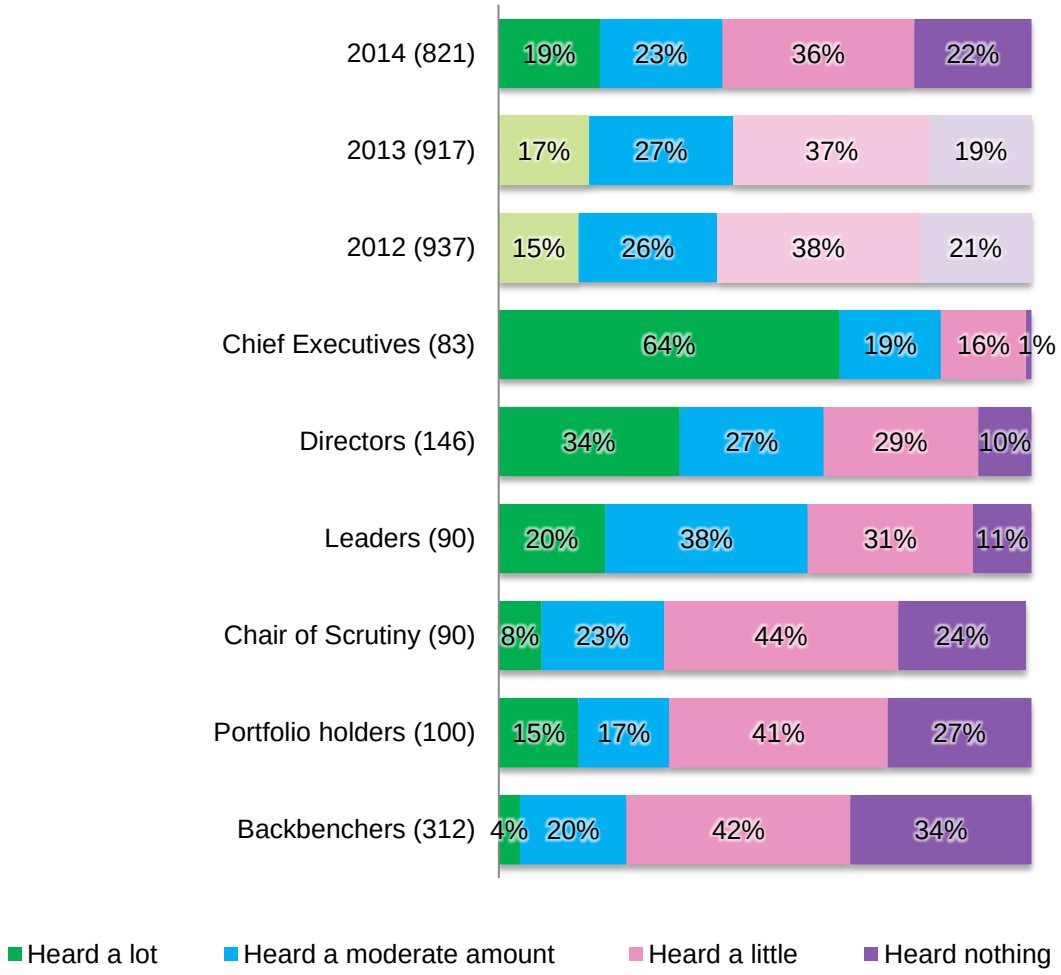
4.1 Awareness of sector-led improvement

More than half of respondents (58%) reported that they have either 'heard a little' or 'heard nothing' about sector-led improvement. This is a similar proportion to 2013 (56%). Around a quarter of respondents (23%) have 'heard a moderate amount', which is a similar proportion to 2013 (27%), while 19% have 'heard a lot' about it, again, this is also similar to 2013 (17%).

There is little significant difference between awareness of sector-led improvement by region. By role, officers' awareness has increased significantly since 2013, they are significantly more likely to be aware of sector-led improvement than frontbench councillors and backbenchers (45% have 'heard a lot', compared with 14% and 4% respectively and compared with 32% in 2013). Three-quarters of backbenchers (76%) have 'heard a little'/'heard nothing' about it, compared with 60% of frontbench councillors and 31% of officers.

The proportion of chief executives that have 'heard a lot' about sector-led improvement is significantly higher than average (64% compared with 61% in 2013).

Figure 24: How much, if anything, have you heard about the sector-led improvement approach? (Crosstabulated by role type)



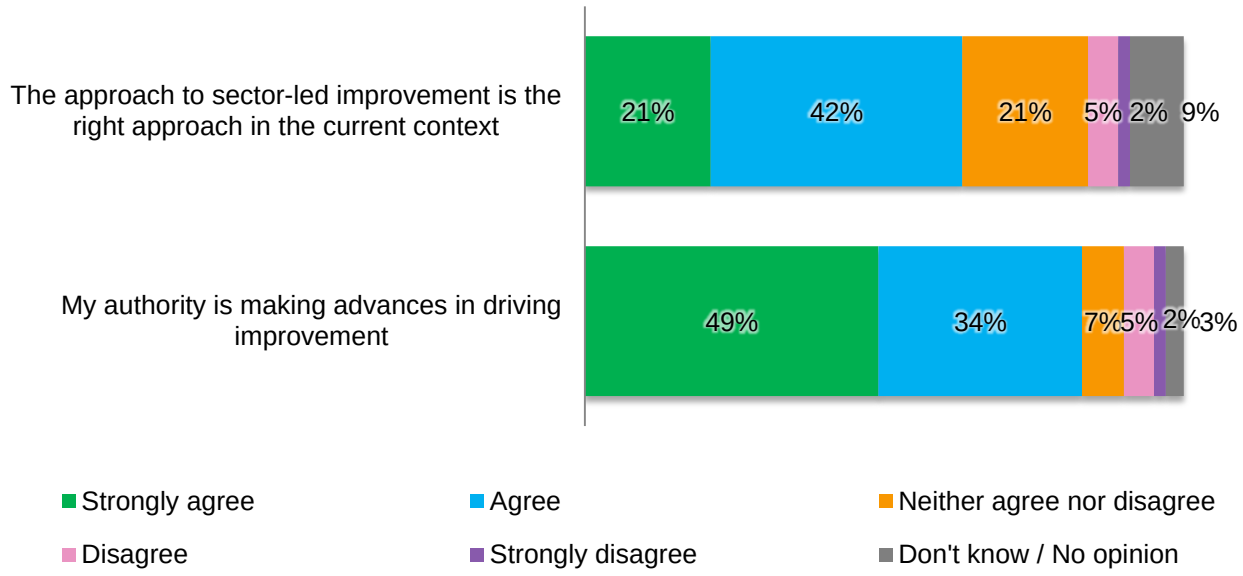
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Compared with levels of awareness in 2013, portfolio holders are less likely to have heard a moderate amount/heard a lot about sector-led improvement (32% compared with 44% in 2013). There were no other significant differences by individual role.

Figure 25 shows the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with different statements relating to sector-led improvement. More than three-fifths of respondents (63%) agree that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context*. This is consistent with findings in 2013 (62%).

More than four-fifths of respondents (83%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement*. This is a lower proportion than that reported in 2012 (88%).

Figure 25: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base = 821, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There were no significant differences in the likelihood to agree with these statements based on region. There are significant differences by role, including:

Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to strongly agree that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context* (32%, compared with 19% and 14% respectively which is consistent with 2013). Furthermore, chief executives are significantly more likely to strongly agree than average that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context* (41%, compared with an average of 21%).

Backbenchers are significantly less likely to strongly agree than officers and frontbench councillors that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement* (39%, compared with 62% and 49% respectively). In aggregate (strongly disagree/disagree), 12% of backbenchers disagree with this statement, compared with very few officers (3%) and frontbench councillors (5%).

Compared with 39% of backbenchers and 29% of chairs of scrutiny, respondents in other roles are significantly more likely to strongly agree that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement.* This includes 52% of portfolio holders; 70% of chief executives, 66% of leaders and 58% of directors. The proportion of chairs of scrutiny that strongly agree that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement* have significantly decreased since 2013 (42% of chairs of scrutiny thought this in 2013 compared with 29% in 2014).

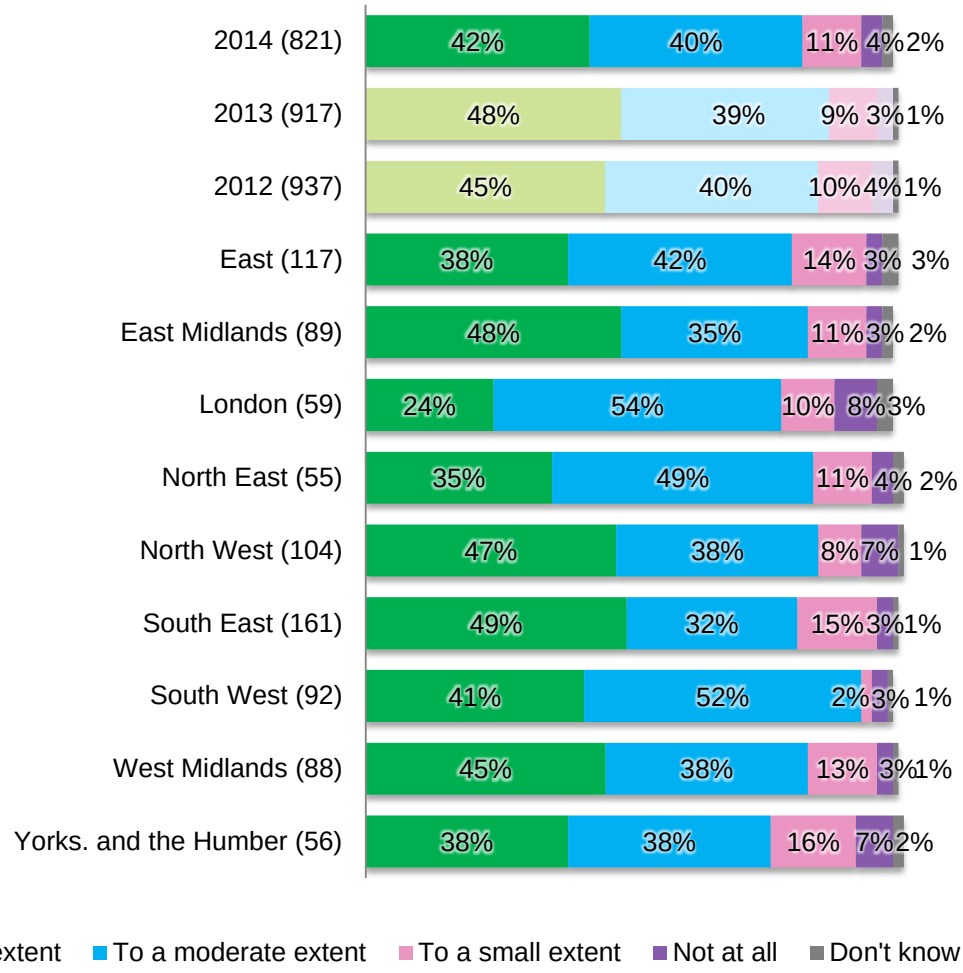
	Total			Officers			Frontbench members			Backbench members		
	2012 (937)	2013 (917)	**2014 (821)**	2012 (333)	2013 (325)	**2014 (229)**	2012 (293)	2013 (281)	**2014 (280)**	2012 (311)	2013 (311)	**2014 (312)**
The approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context	59%	62%	**63%**	68%	71%	**76%**	56%	58%	**62%**	51%	56%	**54%**
My authority is making advances in driving improvement	84%	88%	**83%**	91%	97%	**95%**	89%	91%	**84%**	71%	77%	**75%**

Table 5: Agreement with statements - Comparison between 2012 and 2013 research (crosstabulated by amalgamated role) Bases in parentheses, Single response question

4.1 Capacity for continuous improvement

The majority of respondents (83%) were at least moderately confident that their authority has the capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve. This is a similar proportion as in 2013 (87%). It includes 42% (48% in 2013) that are confident 'to a great extent'. There is little significant difference between regions; however, respondents in the South West were most likely to believe that their authority has the skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve to some extent/to a great extent (93% compared with 83% of the sample overall).

Figure 26: To what extent would you say you are confident that your own authority currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)

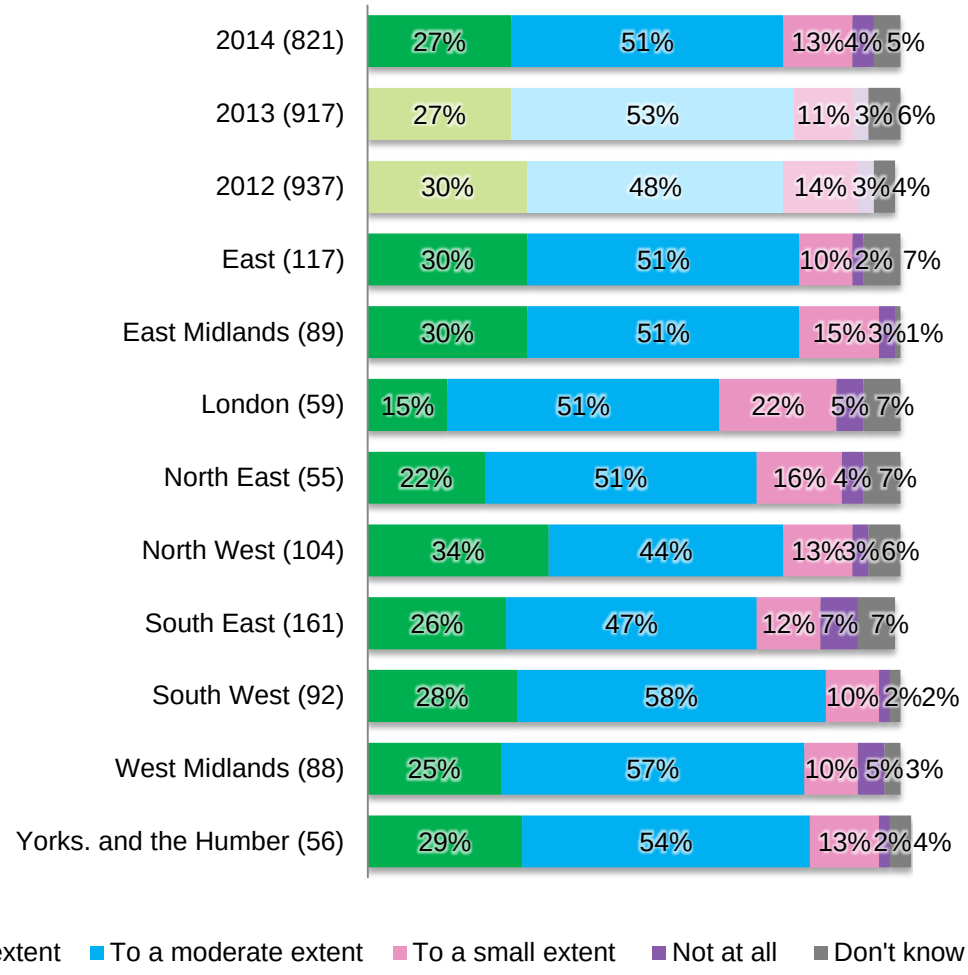


Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

While most officers (91%) and frontbench councillors (85%) are confident that their authority is able to monitor its own performance with a view to continuously improving, fewer backbenchers (75%) are confident that this is the case.

Nearly four-fifths of respondents (78%) are confident that the local government sector has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve. This compares with 80% in 2013, so there has been no significant change in this respect. There is little significant difference in levels of confidence by region.

Figure 27: To what extent would you say you are confident that the local government sector currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)



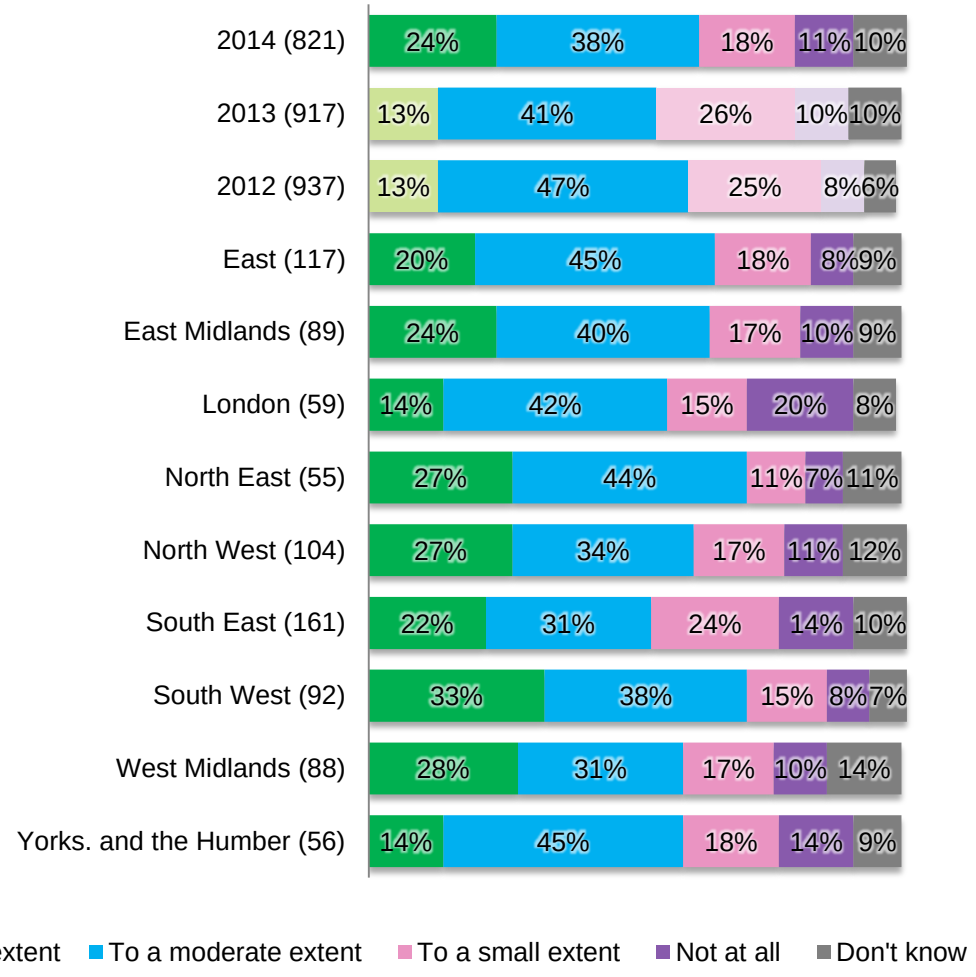
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

While more than four-fifths of officers (84%) and frontbench councillors (81%) are confident that the local government sector is able to monitor its own performance with a view to continuously improving, fewer backbenchers (71%) are confident that this is the case.

4.2 Impact of LGA support and resources for sector-led improvement

More than three fifths of respondents (61%) believe that the support and resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvements will have a positive impact on their own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent'. This is a significantly higher proportion than in 2013 (53%) and back to a similar level as in 2012 (61%). A further 18% believe that it impacts 'to a small extent'. There are no significant differences based on region in respondent's likelihood to believe that the support and resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvements will have a positive impact on their own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

Figure 28: To what extent do you think that this support and these resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvement will have a positive impact on your own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)



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

Officers and frontbench councillors were significantly more likely than backbenchers to believe that the support and resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvements will have a positive impact on their own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve (72% of officers and 65% of frontbench councillors compared with 50% of backbench councillors).

4.3 Views on the sector-led approach

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- The LGA should be more challenging with authorities about their performance.
- All authorities should be expected to have a corporate peer challenge, at least every four years.

- The LGA should place a stronger emphasis on supporting and fostering innovation across the sector.

More than three fifths of respondents agreed to some extent with these statements. Respondents were most likely to either agree or strongly agree that *the LGA should place a stronger emphasis on supporting and fostering innovation across the sector* (88%), followed by *all authorities should be expected to have a corporate peer challenge at least every four years* (75%), and finally, *the LGA should be more challenging with authorities about their performance* (61%).

There were very few differences of note by region in respondents' likelihood to agree or disagree with the statements; however, the South East were significantly less likely than most other regions to believe that *the LGA should be more challenging with authorities about their performance* (50% compared with 61% overall).

By role, officers were significantly more likely to disagree that *the LGA should be more challenging with authorities about their performance* (31% compared with 20% overall). Officers were also significantly more likely to disagree that *all authorities should be expected to have a corporate peer challenge at least every four years* (25% compared with 15% overall). Leaders were significantly more likely than any other role to agree that *LGA should place a stronger emphasis on supporting and fostering innovation across the sector* (98% compared with 88% overall).

Respondents were subsequently asked if there were any needs or challenges their authority was facing which they believed the LGA could provide support on. More than one half (59%) reported that they did not; 12% reported they would require support with funding/budget management; 9% wanted support with the transformation of services; 5% wanted more support lobbying central government; and the remainder covered a range of locally specific issues, none of which equated to more than 2% of the sample.

4.4 Awareness and use of the Centre for Public Scrutiny

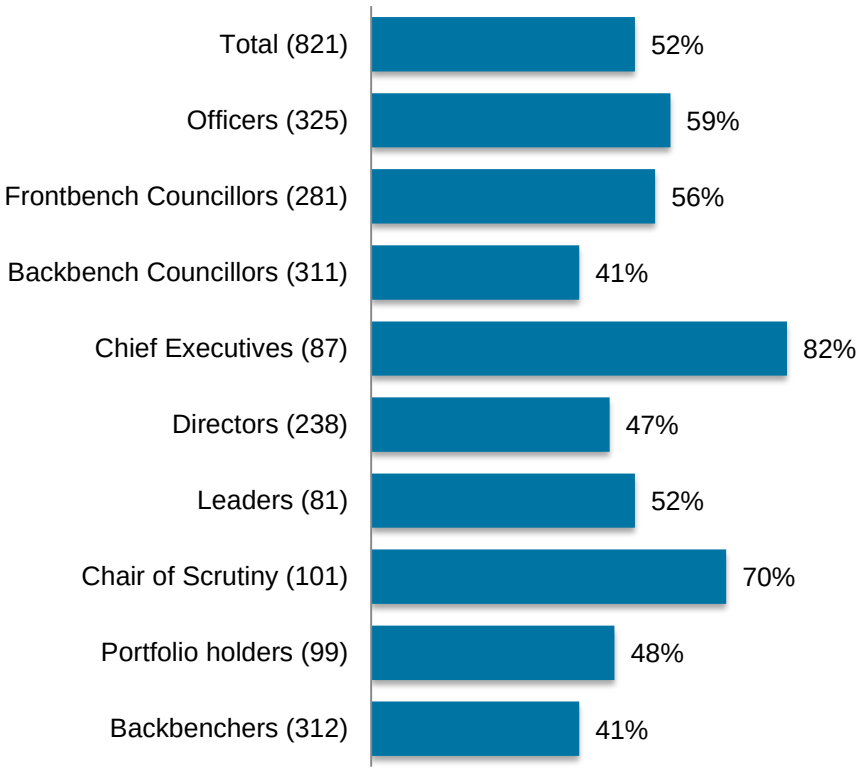
More than half the respondents (52%) had heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny which is consistent with 2013 (54%).

As in 2013 awareness was lowest in the South East (63% had not heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny).

By amalgamated role, backbenchers are significantly less likely than officers and frontbench councillors to have heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (41%, compared with 59% and 56% respectively).

By role type, awareness is significantly higher amongst chief executives (82%) and chairs of scrutiny (70%) than any other categories (52% overall).

Figure 29: Before today, had you heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role and role type)

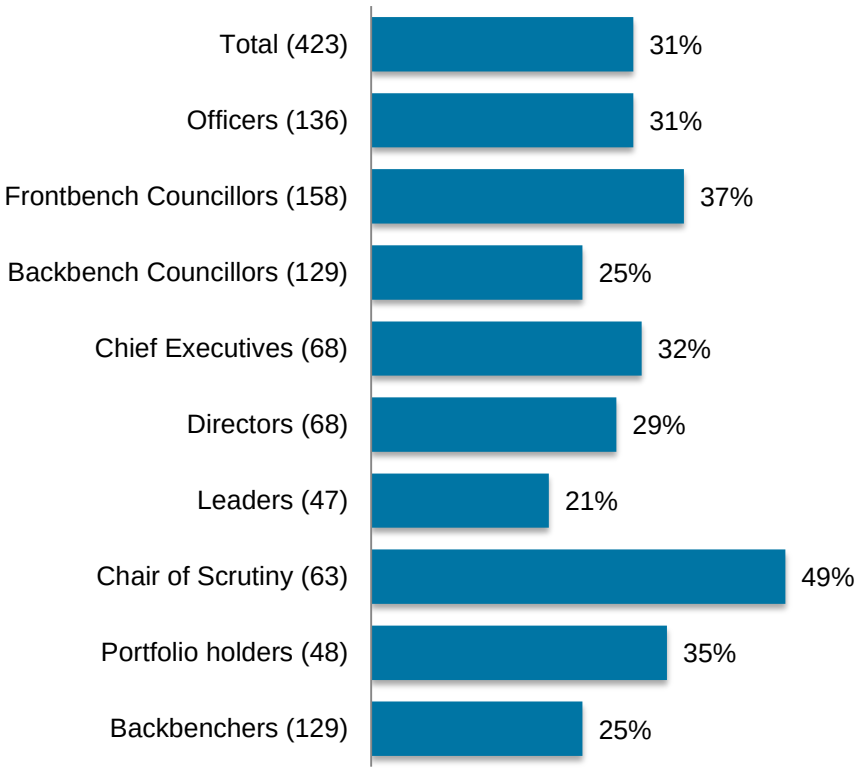


Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Of those aware of the Centre for Public Scrutiny, a third (31%) are aware that their council has used its services (16% of all respondents); this is a similar proportion to those who had used it in 2013.

There are no significant differences in usage of the Centre for Public Scrutiny based on region or role type; although chairs of scrutiny are more likely to be aware that their council had used it (49%) compared with other roles (31% overall). Figure 30 compares usage of services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny across role types based on all respondents. It highlights the relatively high penetration amongst chairs of scrutiny which has significantly increased since 2013 (39%).

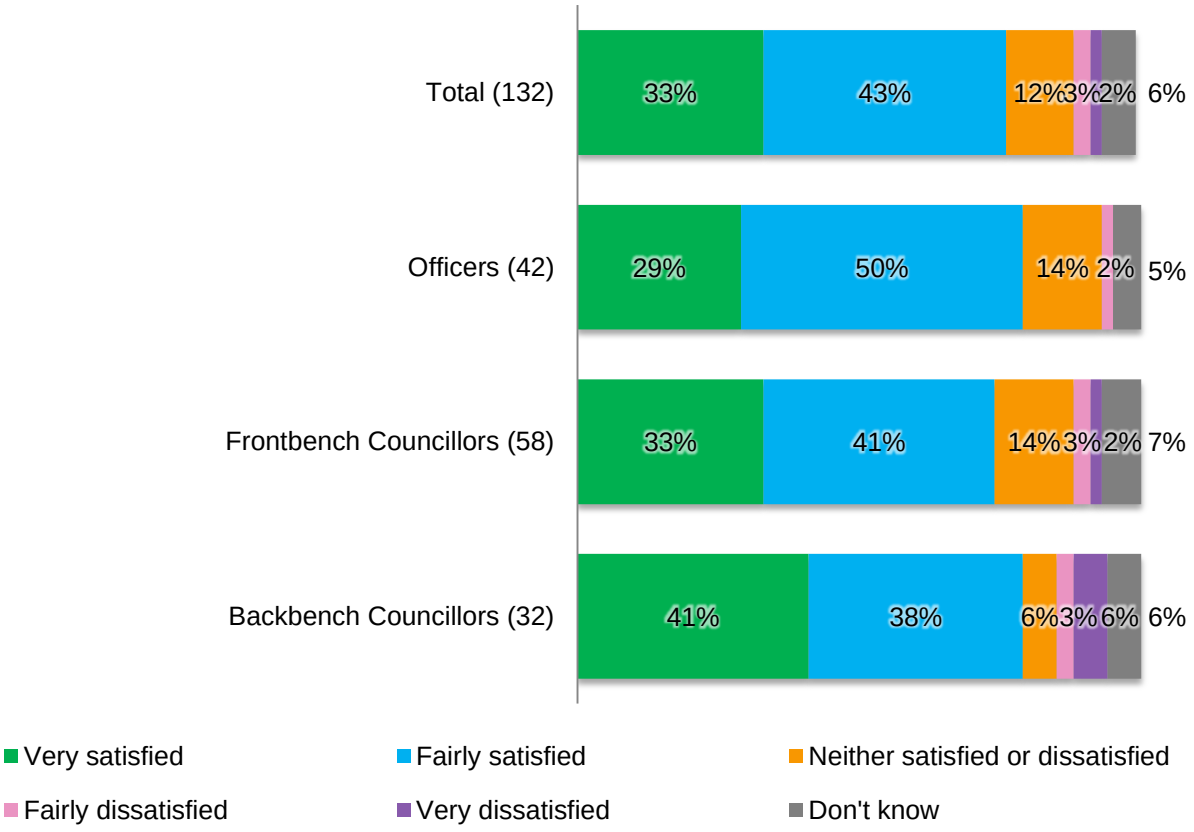
Figure 30: Has your council used any of the services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny in the last year? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role and role type)



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

Of those who were aware their council had used services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, 77% are satisfied with them. This includes 33% that are very satisfied. Just 5% of those that have used the services are dissatisfied with them. There are no significant differences in satisfaction with the Centre for Public Scrutiny based on region or role.

Figure 31: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role)



Bases in parentheses (where used)
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

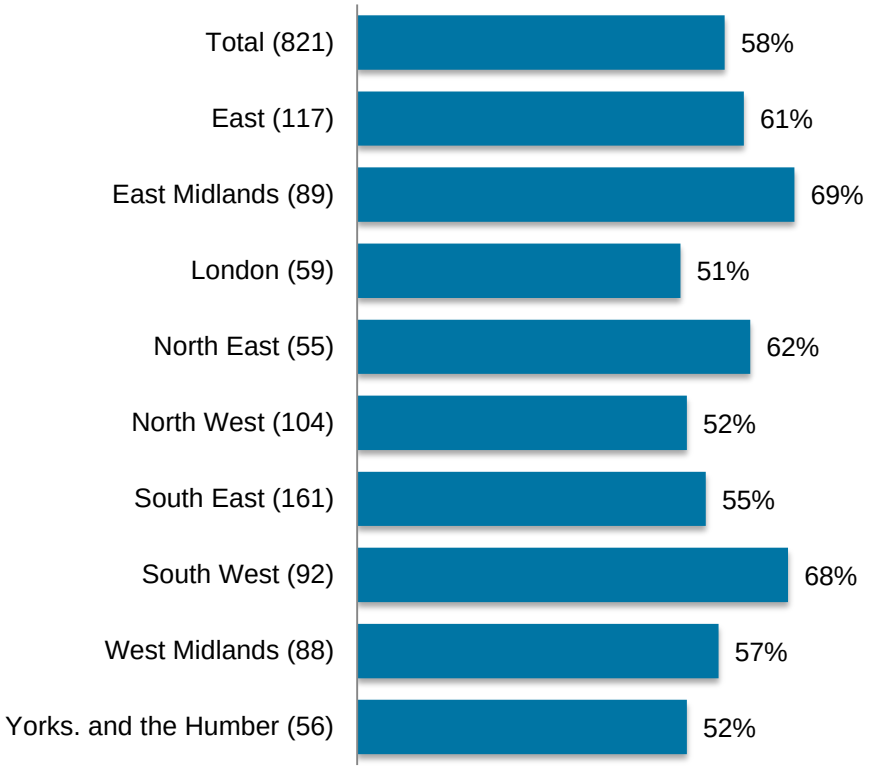
4.5 Awareness and use of Local Partnerships

Nearly three fifths of the respondents (58%) had heard of Local Partnerships, a significant increase from 2013 (47%). By region, this proportion is highest in the East Midlands (69%) and South West (68%).

By amalgamated role, officers are more likely to have heard of local partnerships than frontbench councillors and backbencher councillors (66%, compared with 54% and 57% respectively).

By role type, awareness is significantly higher amongst chief executives (90%, a significant increase from 67% in 2013) than amongst other roles (58% overall).

Figure 32: Have you heard of local partnerships? (Crosstabulated by region)



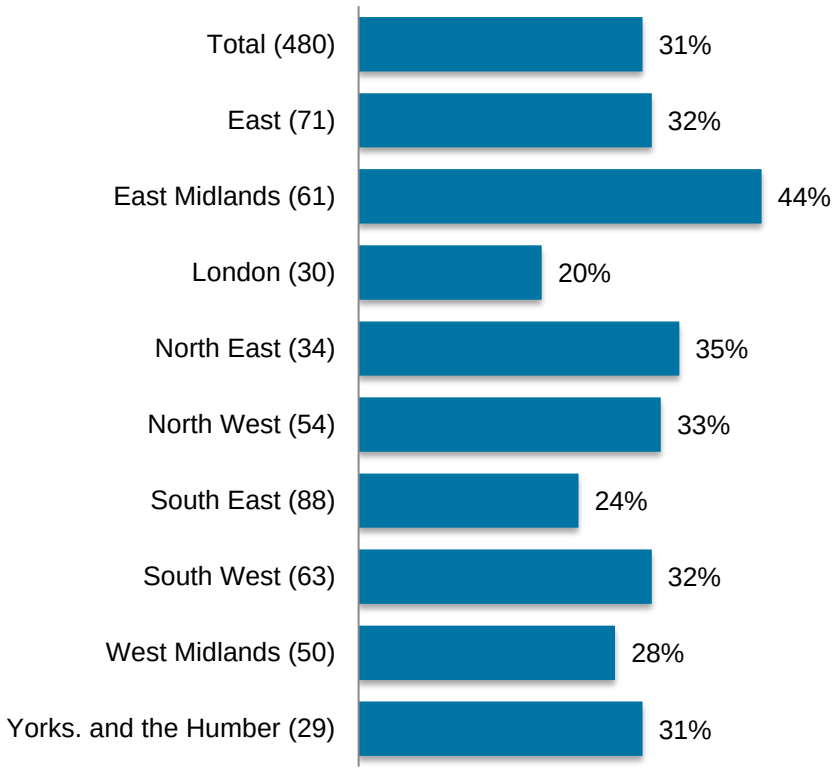
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Of those aware of Local Partnerships, a third (31%) are aware that their council has used any of their services (18% of all respondents), which is consistent with 2013.

Awareness of their councils usage is higher than average amongst backbencher councillors (40%) and frontbench councillors (33%). Officers were the least likely to note that their authority had used Local Partnerships in the last year (19%).

Figure 33 compares awareness of usage of services provided by Local Partnerships across the regions based on all respondents. Respondents in the East Midlands are most likely to be aware that their council has used any of these services (44%).

Figure 33: Has your council used any of the services provided by local partnerships in the last year?



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

Of those that have used services provided by Local Partnerships, 71% are satisfied with them. This includes 14% that are very satisfied. Just 5% of those that have used the services are dissatisfied with them. There are no significant differences in satisfaction with the services provided by Local Partnerships by region or role.

5 Conclusions

This section contains a summary of the main findings and themes emerging from this research:

- There continues to be a high level of awareness of the LGA and the work it undertakes with understanding varying dependent on specific job role, with backbenchers having the least understanding overall and chief executives and leaders with the highest level of understanding. This is consistent with both previous years of this survey.
- Respondent's understanding of the purpose of the LGA and how it works for local government has remained consistent since 2013 and continues to be high; however, overall backbenchers remain significantly less likely to understand this.
- This consistency has also transferred to overall perceptions of the LGA as nearly three quarters of respondents report that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or if asked), a similar proportion as in 2013.
- Overall satisfaction with the work of the LGA has increased since 2013 and over three quarters of respondents are either very or fairly satisfied.
- As in previous years the services and roles delivered by the LGA that are perceived to be of the most importance to respondents tend to be related to the national role the LGA has in lobbying on behalf of the local government sector. The majority of respondents think the LGA has fulfilled this role to some extent with over four fifths believing that the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector either 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal'.
- The perceived regularity and quality of the communications provided by the LGA appears to have increased; a significantly higher proportion of respondents believe the LGA keeps them very well informed about their work compared with 2012. However, the proportion that do not believe they are kept informed at all has remained the same.
- General awareness of the LGA's 100 days campaign is high; however, knowledge of the details of the campaign is low. Awareness is lowest amongst backbench councillors.
- There continues to be mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach and this has broadly stayed the same since 2013. However, respondents continue to agree this is the correct approach.
- Respondents are no more or less confident in their authority's and the local government sector's capacity to monitor their own performance and continuously improve either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent' than in 2013.
- More than three fifths of respondents were likely to either agree or strongly agree that: *the LGA should place a stronger emphasis on supporting and fostering innovation across the sector*, that *all authorities should be expected to have a corporate peer challenge at least every four years*, and finally, *the LGA should be more challenging with authorities about their performance*. Officers were the least likely to be supportive of these statements.
- There has been no significant change in the awareness and usage of the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Just over half of the respondents had heard of the centre and of these a third were aware that their council had used its services and the majority of these were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received.

- There has been an increase in awareness of Local Partnerships since 2013. Nearly three fifths of the respondents had heard of the Local Partnerships and of these a third were aware their council had used its services (similarly to 2013), and the majority of these were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received.

Appendix 1: Standard error

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

Category	Number in sample population	Number of interviews achieved	Maximum standard error (%)
Region			
East	2,604	117	+/-8.9
East Midlands	2,094	89	+/-10.2
London	2,257	59	+/-12.6
North East	870	55	+/-12.8
North West	2,619	104	+/-9.4
South East	3,655	161	+/-7.6
South West	2,071	92	+/-10.0
West Midlands	1,860	88	+/-10.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,369	56	+/-12.8
Amalgamated role type			
Officers	2,373	229	+/-6.2
Frontbench Councillors	2,118	280	+/-5.5
Backbench Councillors	14,908	312	+/-5.5
Role type			
Chief Executives	339	83	+/-9.4
Directors	2,034	146	+/-7.8
Leaders	238	90	+/-8.2
Chairs of Scrutiny	627	90	+/-9.6
Portfolio Holders	1,253	100	+/-9.4
Backbench Councillors	14,908	312	+/-5.5

Appendix 2: 'Other' responses

Q9. You said your authority benefits 'not very much' or 'not at all' from its relationship with the LGA. Why do you say that?

Because I am aware that our authority recently re-joined the LGA so not much time to create a relationship in such a small amount of time.
We had a peer review and some of the recommendations (for instance overview on scrutinity).
Backbenchers are not being funded to go to LGA courses. LGA should host seminars attended by backbenchers.
Tory government should make more use of LGA statistics to make policies etc.
I have heard negative comments about the benefit.
The LGA has its own agenda and it works more for itself.
The LGA is a self serving bureaucracy.
Disregard our decisions as councillors.
I have had little experience of LGA - I went on a course 2 years ago - it was badly organised and talking about the potential effects in advance of the legislation (as they were speaking on a hypothetical level), very ineffective - I do not know how they formed their opinions and it was very little weight and it would be better if the course was set after the legislation was in place.
Because it's officers dominated.
Value for money and LGA seems irrelevant and too many senior members are just after their career ambitions.
I'm a cabinet member of education in my authority and I'm aware that the LGA published some stats that were incorrect about our authourity's education and that was not very helpful.
I'm very disappointed with the employers organisations part of the LGA.
We largely make our own decisions within the limits we are allowed in the council.
i dont see them doing anything apart from talking. Cost too much for what they do.
County council, it engages with county council networks better than it engages with the LGA.
Because we had a peer review carried out and it was definitely officer orientated. We thought it was somewhat unbalanced.
We don't reallyhave a relationship with the LGA, I have a relationship manager but I dont really have a relationship with them.
I think that our authority is leading the way in delivering service with reduced costs and they do not support advocating that approach.

Appendix 3: Statement of Terms

Compliance with International Standards

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management ISO 27001:2005.

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.