Research Report

Customer Perceptions Survey 2013

Prepared for: Local Government Association (LGA)

bmg research

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Prepared by: BMG Research

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www.bmgresearch.co.uk

Project: 8993

Registered in England No. 2841970

Registered office:

7 Holt Court North
Heneage Street West
Aston Science Park
Birmingham
B7 4AX
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 121 3336006

UK VAT Registration No. 580 6606 32

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Member No. B4626

Market Research Society Company Partner

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Table of Contents

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 2013.

The LGA Perceptions Survey 2012-13 was commissioned following the merging of five organisations under the operating framework of the LGA during 2010-2011[1], and in the context of a number of campaign launches in 2012 through which the LGA has aimed to maximise its impact on behalf of councils and to show a quick response to council concerns.

This research aims to:

- **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.
- **Investigate what the membership want from the LGA and how they want to engage.** 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.
- **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 of 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 to support sector-led improvement.

Method

Following the first wave of the Perceptions Survey conducted by BMG Research on behalf of the LGA in 2012 amongst 937 representatives from local councils, a second wave was commissioned in 2013. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were undertaken with a broadly representative sample of 917 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 30 respondents per region and amalgamated role group). This sample size has a maximum standard error of +/-3.1% at the 95% level of confidence, giving these findings a high level of accuracy.

Interviews took between 15 and 20 minutes and explored:

[1] The Local Government Association; Local Government Improvement and Development; Local Government Employers; Local Government Regulation; and the Leadership Centre.

- the LGA's offer and current provision;
- its current role and priorities an how these can be developed;
- its communications and your preferred methods of engagement; and
- 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.

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 survey have also been made.

Views on the LGA and its services

- Knowledge of the LGA is high. More than one-half (57%) of survey respondents feel they 'know a fair amount about it'; however, over one-quarter (28%) report that they 'know just a little about it. Backbenchers are most likely to report that they 'know just a little' about the LGA (45%).
- Nearly two-fifths (39%) 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 over one-half (52%) 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 (15% compared with 4% of officers and 7% of frontbench councillors).
- The majority of survey respondents (73%) 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.
- Seven in ten respondents (70%) 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 (85%) agree that the LGA *stands up for and defends the reputation of local government* and a similar proportion (83%) agree that the LGA *addresses the issues that are important to councils*, Around three-quarters agree that the LGA *understands what councils need to help improve their service and organisational capacity* (77%); that the LGA *effectively represents the views of its members to central government* (77%); and that the LGA *helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector.* 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' (62%) or 'a great deal' (22%).

- 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 64% viewing it as 'very important'.
- The activities respondents viewed as most important were *providing a single voice for local government* (30%) and *supporting and promoting councils who are trying to transform services to better support their communities* (26%).
- 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 61% viewing it as 'very useful'.
- The services respondents viewed as most useful include *lobbying on behalf of local government* (32%) and *providing up-to-date information about local government* (13%).

Views on LGA communications

- Overall, the majority of respondents believe that the LGA keeps them either 'fairly well informed' (52%) or 'very well informed' (25%) about their work. However, one in six report that the LGA 'Gives me only a limited amount of information' (17%).
- 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 (67%), events (50%), media work/press releases (49%) and the LGA website (47%).
- When asked how they would *prefer* to find out about the work of the LGA the most frequently requested methods are through 'first' magazine (21%), the LGA Chairman's weekly email (19%) and the LGA chief executive's email (18%).
- There is a high level of awareness of the LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign amongst respondents; over three-quarters (78%) have heard of it, although most of these respondents (47% of all) feel they know nothing or just a little about it.
- Overall, more than one-half (52%) 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 (50%) and attending LGA events (48%).
- 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 (46%); contacting councillors/boards by email or phone (20%); face to face contact (20%); and by attending LGA events (19%).

Views on sector-led improvement

- Over one-half (56%) of respondents report that they have either 'heard a little' or 'heard nothing' about sector-led improvement.
- More than four-fifths of respondents (88%) report that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement.* Slightly fewer (85%) report that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *local accountability is strong in my authority.*

- The majority (85%) 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 (80%) 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'.
- Overall, awareness of the resources offered by the LGA to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement is low. Respondents have the most awareness of: *member training and development* (61% of respondents report that they have 'heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about this resource) and the *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011* (56%). Respondents have the least awareness of the resource providing *access to the LG Inform data service, to provide access to key data about the council or fire and rescue service area and allow benchmarking and comparisons with others* (68% of respondents reported that they had 'heard nothing' or 'heard a little' about this resource).
- Over one-half (53%) 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'.
- Over one-half (54%) of respondents have heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny. This increases to 79% of chief executives and 76% of chairs of scrutiny.
- The councils of a third of those aware of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (33%) have used its' services, including those of 51% 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 (79%) have been satisfied with them.
- Just under one-half (47%) of respondents have heard of Local Partnerships. This increases to 67% of chief executives.
- The councils of a third of those aware of Local Partnerships (34%) have used its' services, including those of 49% of backbenchers that are aware of it.
- More than three-quarters of those from councils that have used the services of Local Partnerships (78%) have been 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. The increase in understanding since 2012 also extends to respondent's understanding of the purpose of the LGA and how it works for local government.
- Significantly more respondents report that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others than in 2012 and that they are fairly or very satisfied with the LGA's work on behalf of the local government sector.
- As in 2012 the services and roles delivered by the LGA that were perceived to be of the most importance to respondents tended 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 at least fairly well informed about their work compared with 2012.

- There is high level of awareness of the LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign; awareness is lowest amongst backbenchers.
- There continues to be mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach. However, respondents continued to agree this was the correct approach and significantly more believed their local authority had made steps to drive improvement than in 2012.
- Awareness of the resources offered by the LGA to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement continue to be mixed; however, awareness has improved considerably since 2012.
- Just over half of the respondents had heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and just under half had heard of Local Partnerships; the councils of a third of these respondents had used these services and the majority were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received.

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 2013.

The LGA works to support local councils to change lives, to be efficient, to be accountable, and to be reliable. One of the five outcomes[2] that make up the LGA's vision for 2012/13 is that Councils are the most improved part of the public sector, with councillors and senior officers leading the transformation of local places.

The LGA Perceptions Survey 2012-13 was commissioned following the merging of five organisations under the operating framework of the LGA during 2010-2011, and in the context of a number of campaign launches in 2012 through which the LGA has aimed to maximise its impact on behalf of councils and to show a quick response to council concerns. A range of means are being used to communicate the message, all of which focus on the issues that matter most to local government at the present time.

It is essential that the LGA has access to the most up to date and rigorous insight into how local government perceives its work and how this work measures up against the wants and needs that exist across its diverse membership, at a time of significant policy change in the local government sector.

A first wave of the Perception Survey was undertaken by BMG Research in 2012 with 937 representatives from local councils. Key conclusions from the Perceptions Survey 2012 included:

- There was a high level of awareness of the LGA and the work it undertakes; however, understanding of this work varies dependent on specific job role.
- Overall, respondents believed that the LGA was effectively delivering the services and activities it offers to the local government sector; however, further value for money could be demonstrated.
- Respondents particularly valued services related to the national role the LGA has in lobbying on behalf of the local government sector.
- A high number of respondents did not feel engaged with the LGA but wanted to be.
- There was mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach but respondents mostly agreed this was the correct approach.
- Respondents were confident in their authority's and the local government sector's capacity to monitor their own performance and continuously improve.
- Respondents were mainly not very aware of the resources offered by the LGA to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement.

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

[2] Public service reform; Growth, jobs and prosperity; Funding for local government; Efficiency and productivity; Sector-led improvement.

1.2 Objectives

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.

   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 2012, and across subgroup including respondent role and region.

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. 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 of 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 to support sector-led improvement.

1.3 Method

The Perceptions Survey 2013 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 the LGA 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 to ensure comparability between the waves. It 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; and

- 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.

In addition the 2013 survey explored 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. Following the pilot some open response questions were removed to ensure the survey could be carried out within this time; however, no issues were identified relating to respondents' understanding of the survey content. The survey subsequently took place between the 4th October and 4th December 2013 (reflecting the same time period in which the survey was conducted in 2012 to ensure participants had not been contacted for a full year).

1.4 Sampling

As in 2012 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 30 respondents per region and amalgamated role group). The same quotas were set in 2012 and 2013 to ensure comparability.

In the majority of instances quotas were achieved; however, 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; 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	14	38	11	14	8	41	126 (14%)
East Midlands	13	25	11	12	10	42	113 (12%)
London	6	31	2	11	11	30	91 (10%)
North East	5	11	3	6	11	30	66 (7%)
North West	11	23	8	10	11	30	93 (10%)
South East	16	38	19	19	3	50	145 (16%)
South West	7	18	16	10	11	30	92 (10%)
West Midlands	9	31	8	8	15	30	101 (11%)
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	23	11	11	19	28	90 (10%)
Role Total:	87 (10%)	238 (26%)	81 (9%)	101 (11%)	99 (11%)	311 (34%)	917 (100%)
Amalgamated role Total:	325 (35%)		281 (31%)			311 (34%)	917 (100%)

Table 1: Completed interviews

A sample frame of 17,587 contacts was provided to BMG Research by the LGA. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were undertaken with 917 respondents. This sample size has a maximum standard error of +/-3.1% (the same as in 2012) at the 95% level of confidence, giving these findings a high level of accuracy.

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

Local authority type	Number	%
English unitary	144	16
London borough	89	10
Metropolitan district	116	13
Shire county	73	8
Shire district	495	54
Total	**917**	**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	51
Don't do surveys	11
No interest in helping LGA	17
Other[3]	22
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 3 of these individuals had never heard of the LGA; however, 19 reported that they had 'heard of but know nothing about it'. As such these 22 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. Where possible comparisons to the 2012 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.

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

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 (57%) of survey respondents, a significantly higher proportion than in 2012 (49%), felt they 'know a fair amount about it'. A slightly higher proportion now than in 2012 felt they 'know a great deal about it' (15%, compared with 12%). Just over a quarter (28%) felt they 'know just a little about it', which is a significantly lower proportion than in 2012 (38%).

As Figure 1 shows, chief executives and leaders are particularly likely to be knowledgeable about the LGA, with backbenchers least likely to feel they 'know a great deal about it'.

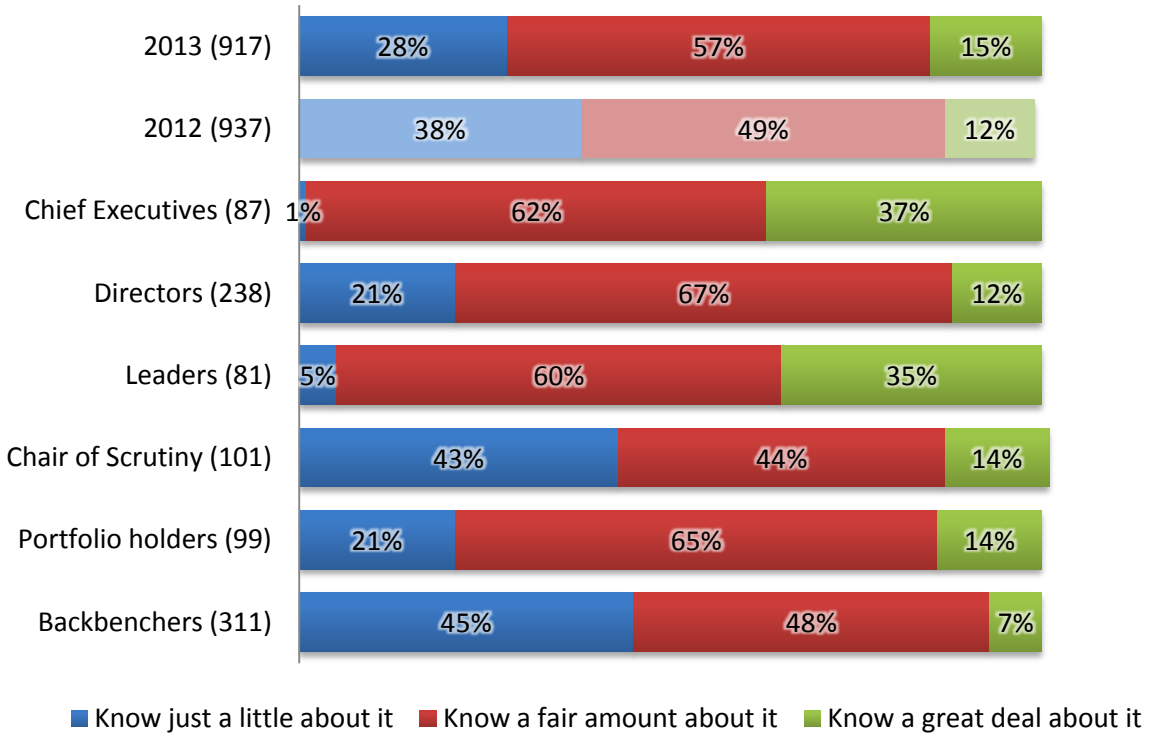

Figure 1: How well would you say you know the LGA? Would you say that you… (Crosstabulated by role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

By region, respondents in the North East are most likely to feel they 'know a great deal about...' the LGA (21%), while those in London are least likely to (9%). However, the North East also has the highest proportion of members who feel they 'know just a little about it' (33%).

By amalgamated role, backbenchers are significantly more likely than officers and frontbench councillors to feel they 'know just a little about it' (45%, compared with 16%

and 24% respectively). Around one in five officers and frontbench councillors (18% and 20% respectively) feel they 'know a great deal about it' compared with just 7% 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*. Nearly two-fifths (39%) reported that they agreed 'a great deal', which is a significantly higher proportion than in 2012 (31%).

Just over half (52%) agreed to some extent; a significantly lower proportion than in 2012 (58%).

Backbenchers are significantly less likely than officers or frontbench councillors to agree 'a great deal' (24%, compared with 47% of both officers and frontbench councillors). It follows that backbenchers are significantly more likely than other members to disagree (15% not very much/not at all, compared with 4% of officers and 7% of frontbench councillors). Amongst officers and frontbench councillors the propensity to agree 'a great deal' that they understand the LGA's purpose and how it works has increased significantly since 2012 (see Figure 2).

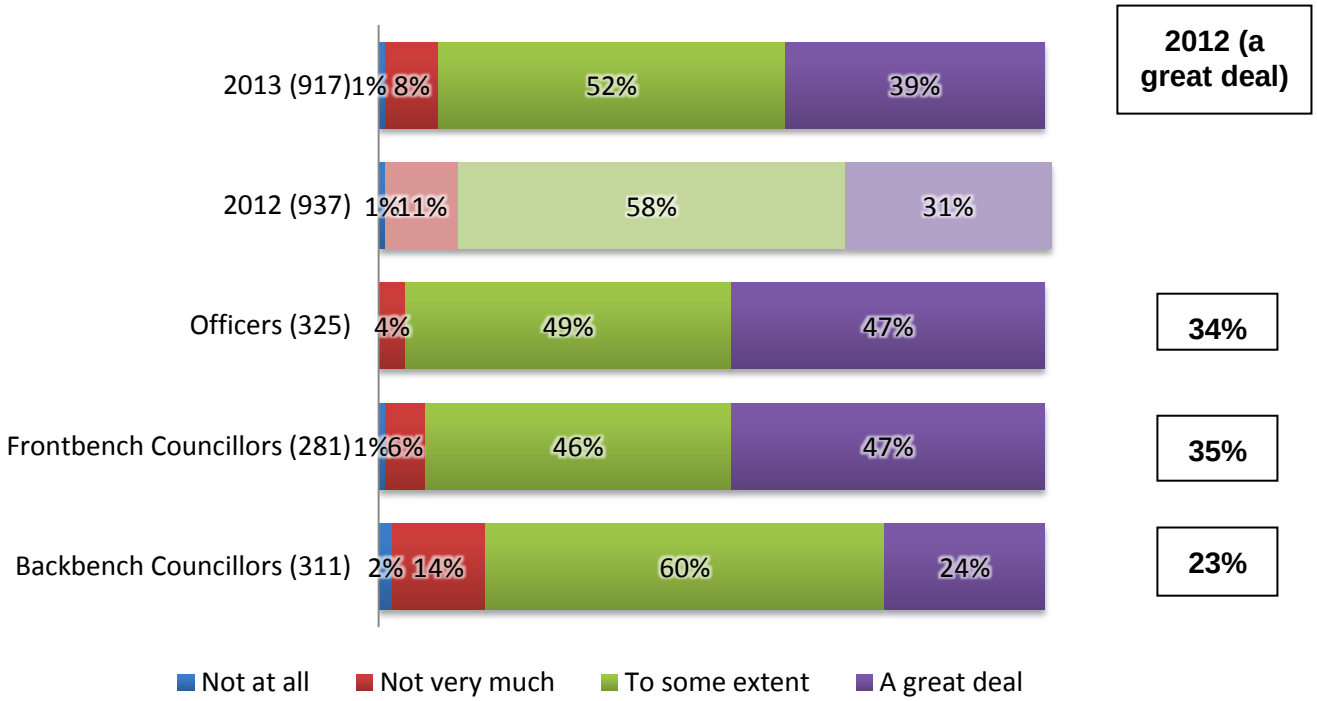

Figure 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government'? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There are no significant differences by region, although respondents in the South West (47%), North West (46%) and East Midlands (45%) are most likely to agree 'a great deal', with those in London and the South East least likely to do so (both 32%).

2.3 Discussing the LGA with others

Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents (73%) reported that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or if asked). This is a significantly higher proportion than in 2012 (63%). Only 4% 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 (5%), while around a quarter (23%) reported neutrality on this question.

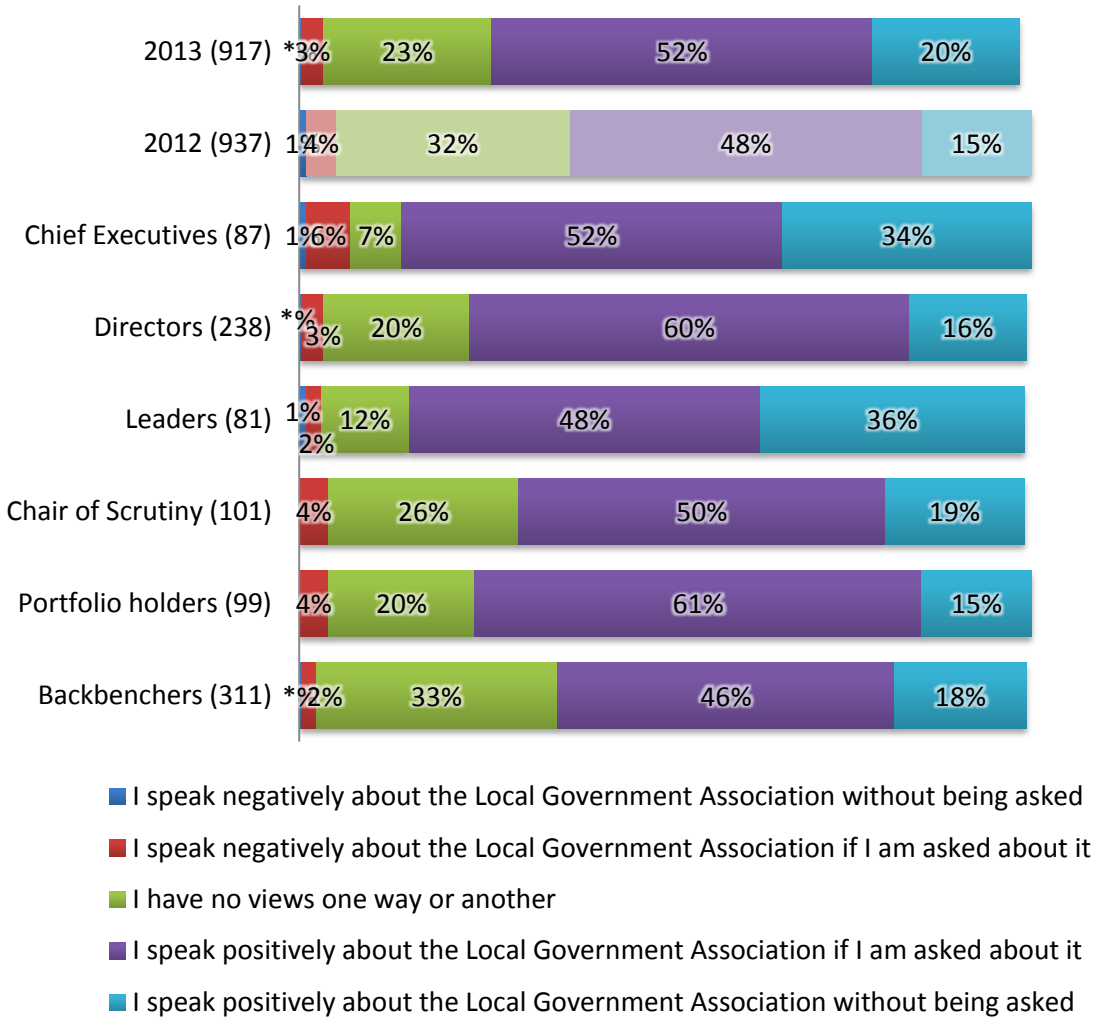

Figure 3: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people? (Crosstabulated by role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

Respondents in the South West are particularly likely to report having spoken positively about the LGA (84%), while those in the North West are more likely to have spoken negatively about the LGA than those in other areas (8%), although it is still only a small proportion that have done so. Within the North West, just 67% of respondents reported they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA.

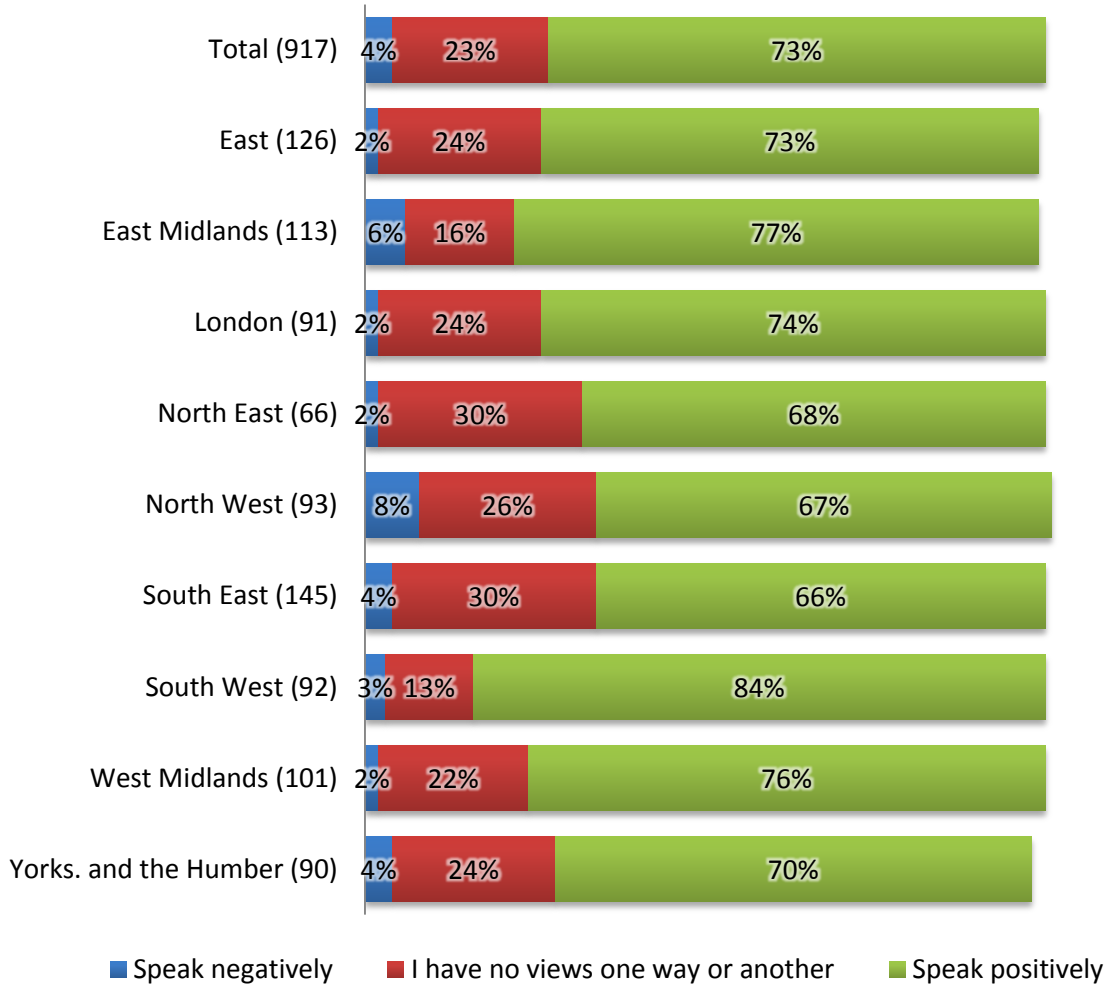

Figure 4: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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, seven in ten (70%) are either fairly or very satisfied. This represents a significant increase on 2012 (62%). Only 2% of respondents reported being 'very dissatisfied' with the work of the LGA in this respect.

Officers are significantly more likely to be satisfied than backbenchers (75%, compared with 65%). There has been a significant improvement in satisfaction amongst officers within the last 12 months (62% were fairly/very satisfied in 2012) while only a slight increase amongst frontbench councillors (from 66% in 2012 to 69% now).

Four-fifths of chief executives (80%) and leaders (79%) are fairly/very satisfied with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector. This contrasts with only 67% of chairs of scrutiny and 63% of portfolio holders.

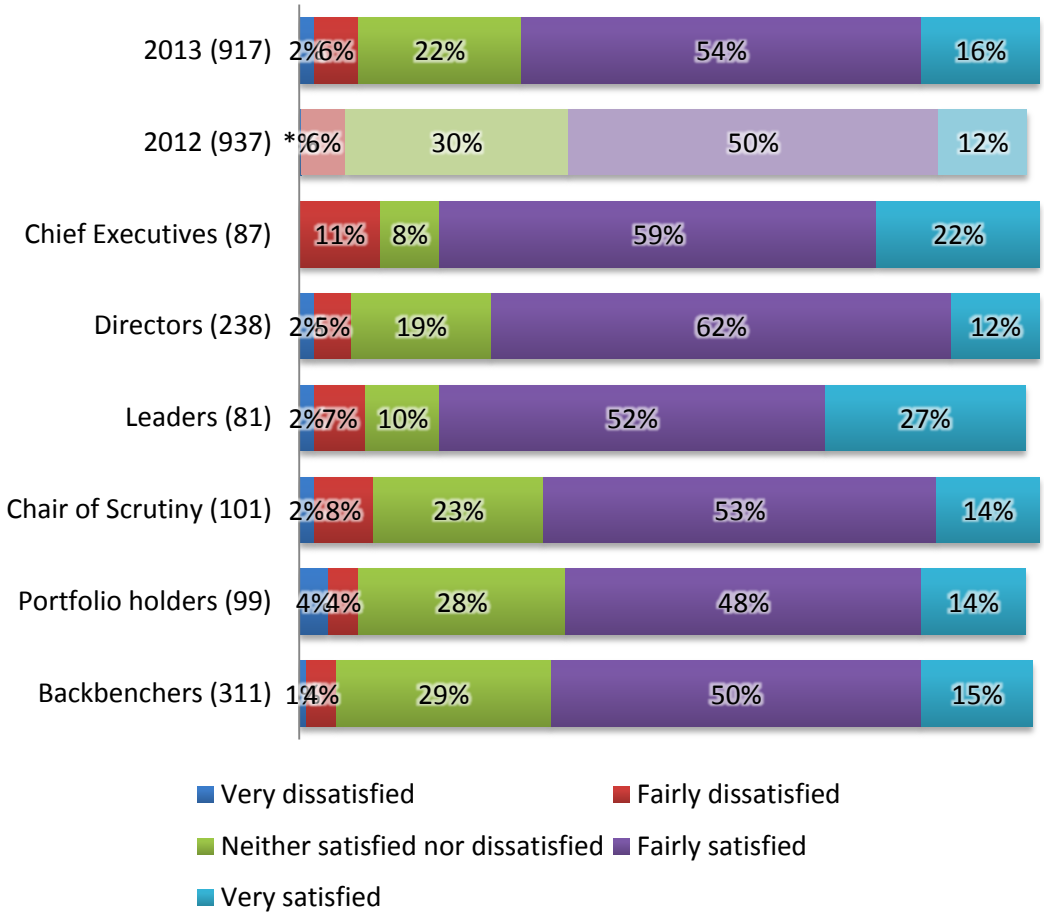

Figure 5: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

By region, satisfaction is highest within the East (76% fairly/very satisfied) and the South West (76%) and lowest within the North East (59%), South East (62%) and North West (63%).

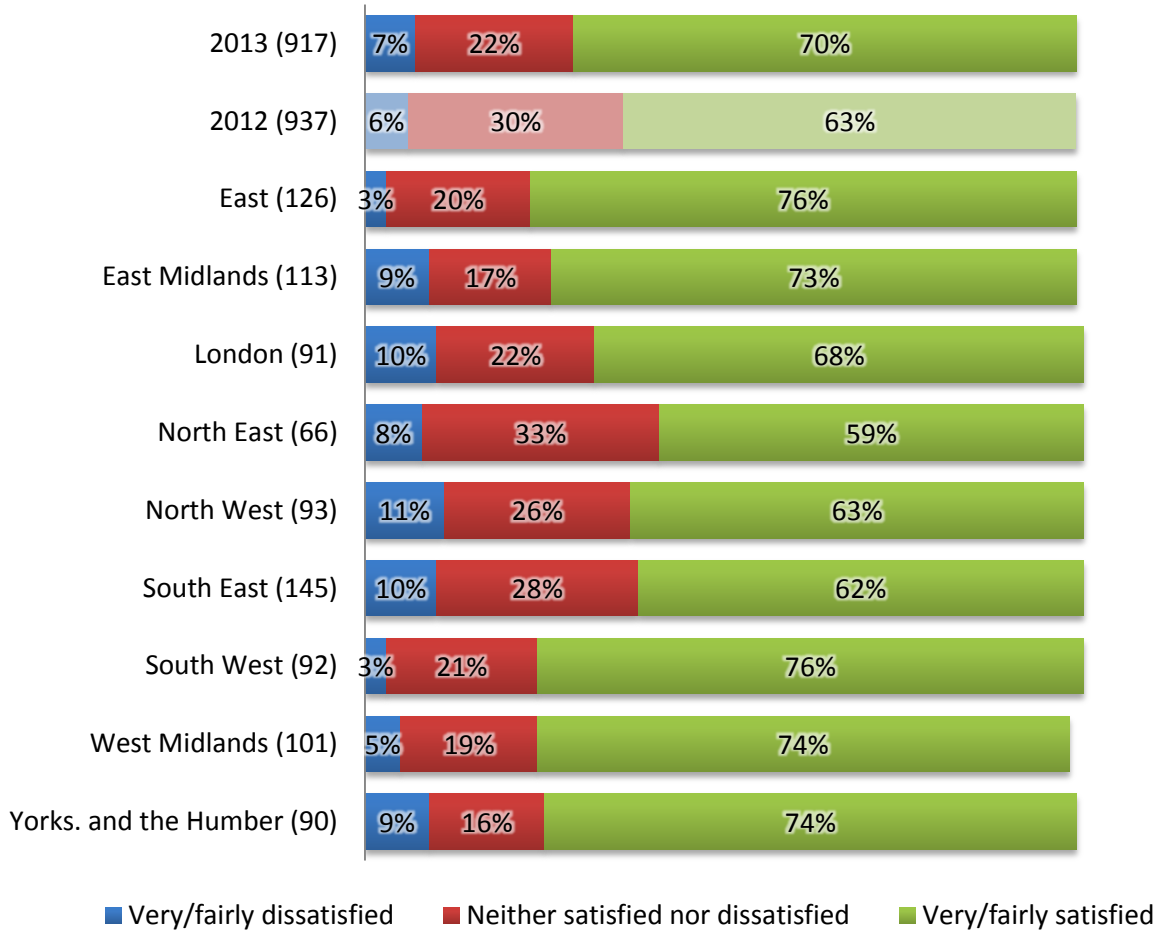

Figure 6: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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* (85% agree/strongly agree) and that it *addresses the issues that are important to councils* (83%).

More than three-quarters of respondents agreed that the LGA *understands what councils need to help them improve their services and organisational capacity* (77%); *effectively represents the views of its members to central government* (77%); and *helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector* (76%). There has been significant improvement since 2012 in each of these respects, as around two-thirds agreed with these statements 12 months ago (68%, 69% and 71% respectively).

Respondents are least likely to have agreed that the LGA *demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives* (53%), although this too represents a significant improvement on 2012 (43%).

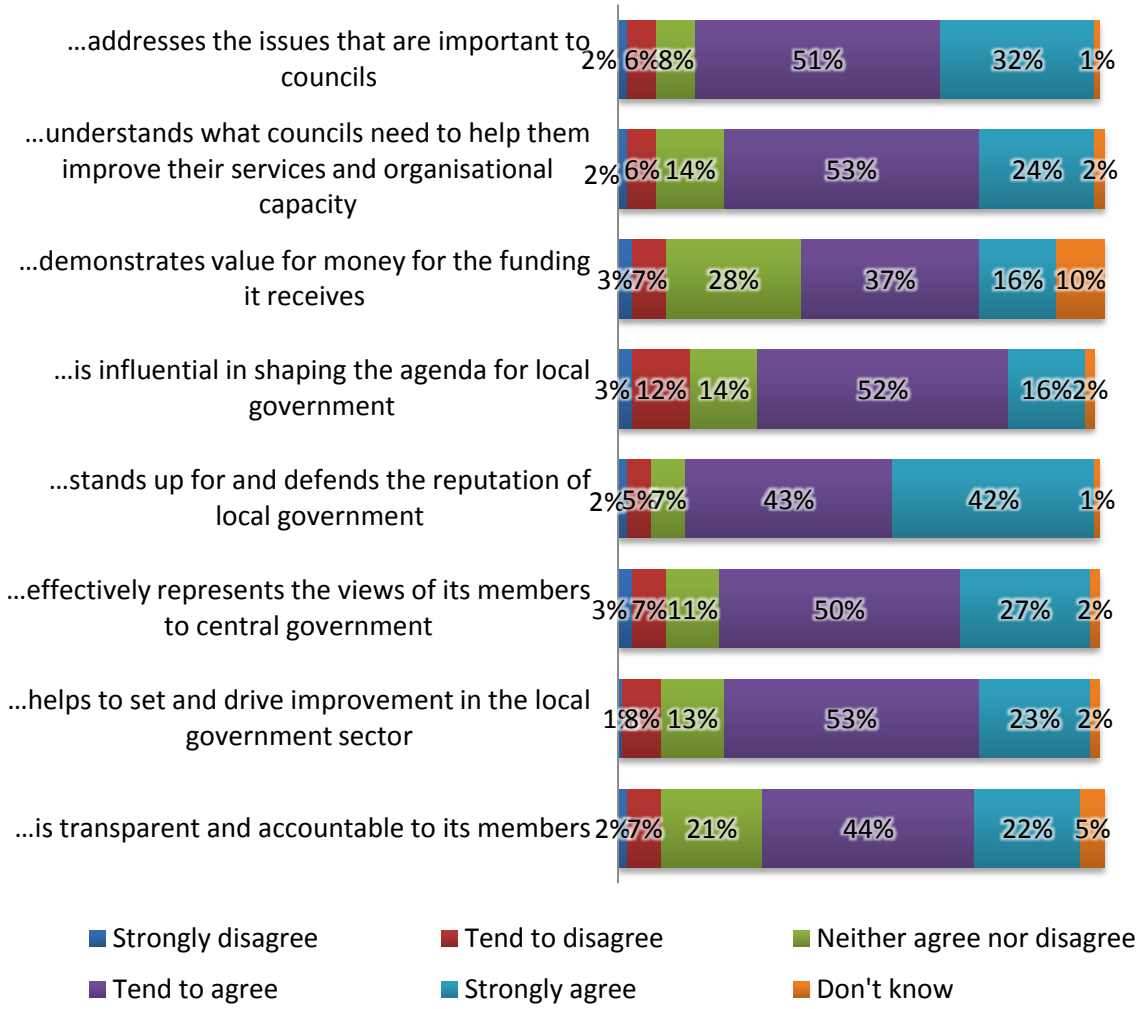

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?
Base = 917, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There are no significant differences in the propensity to agree with each of these statements by amalgamated role (see Table 4) but there has been improvement between 2012 and 2013 on all statements across these amalgamated role groups (where comparisons are available).

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

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:

- East Midlands respondents are significantly more likely than most to strongly agree that the LGA *addresses the issues that are important to councils* (45%, compared with a sample average of 32%); that it *effectively represents the views of its members to central government* (41%, compared with a sample average of 27%) and that it is *transparent and accountable to its members* (33%, compared with 22%).
- South East respondents are significantly more likely than those in other regions to disagree that the LGA *understands what councils need to help them improve their services and organisational capacity* (16%, compared with a sample average of 8%) and that it is *transparent and accountable to its members* (16%, compared with 9%).

- East Midlands and South West respondents are significantly more likely than average to strongly agree that the LGA *demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives* (both 24%, compared with a sample average of 16%).
- Respondents in the Yorkshire and the Humber region are significantly more likely than those elsewhere to strongly agree that the LGA *helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector* (36%, compared with a sample average of 23%).

2.6 Extent to which the LGA 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' (62%) or 'a great deal' (22%). Respondents are significantly more likely than they were in 2012 to believe that the LGA had been an effective advocate 'a great deal' (15% in 2012).

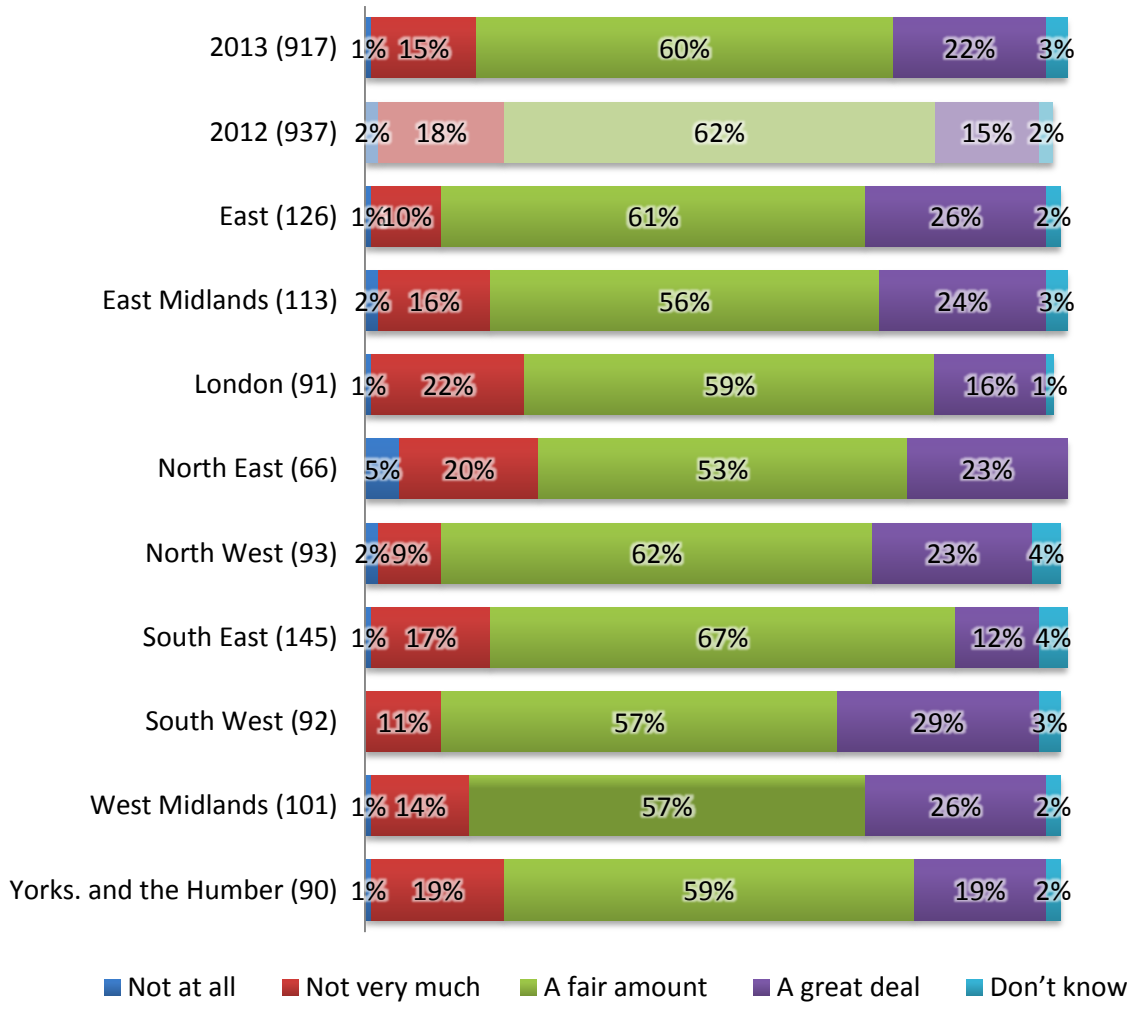

Figure 8: Based on what you know, to what extent, if at all, has the LGA been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There is little statistically significant difference between regions, although respondents in the South West are most likely to believe the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector 'a great deal' (29%), while those in the South East are least likely to believe this is the case (12%).

By role, leaders are particularly likely to be positive about the LGA as an effective advocate (35% specifying 'a great deal') and backbenchers are significantly less likely than respondents in other roles to be positive in this respect (76% 'a fair amount'/'a great deal').

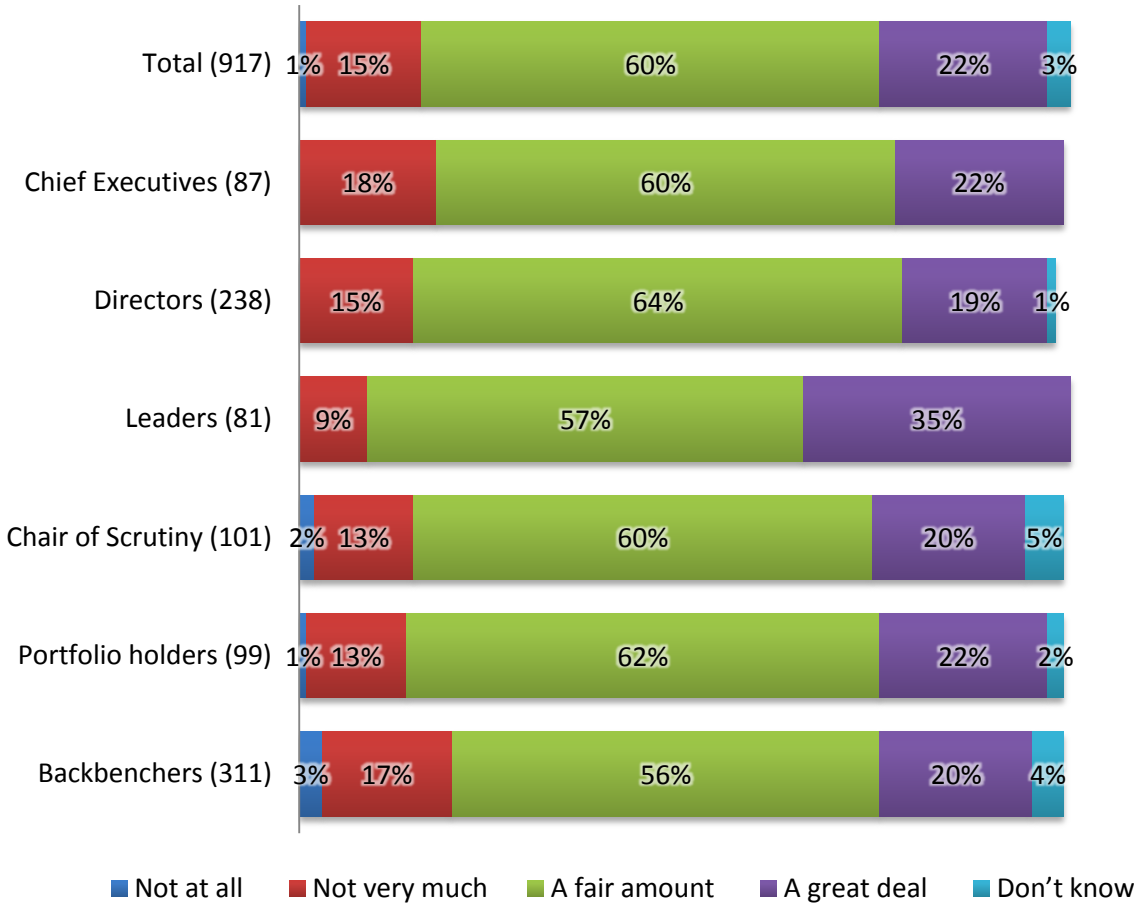

Figure 9: Based on what you know, to what extent, if at all, has the LGA been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There has been little change between 2012 and 2013 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'. The proportion responding with 'a great deal' is significantly higher than in 2012 (11%).

While around one fifth (21%) replied 'not very much', just 1% responded 'not at all'.

There is little statistically significant difference between regions, although respondents in the South West are significantly more likely than those in most other regions to say their authority benefits from its relationship with the LGA 'a fair amount'/'a great deal' (82%, compared with a sample average of 67%).

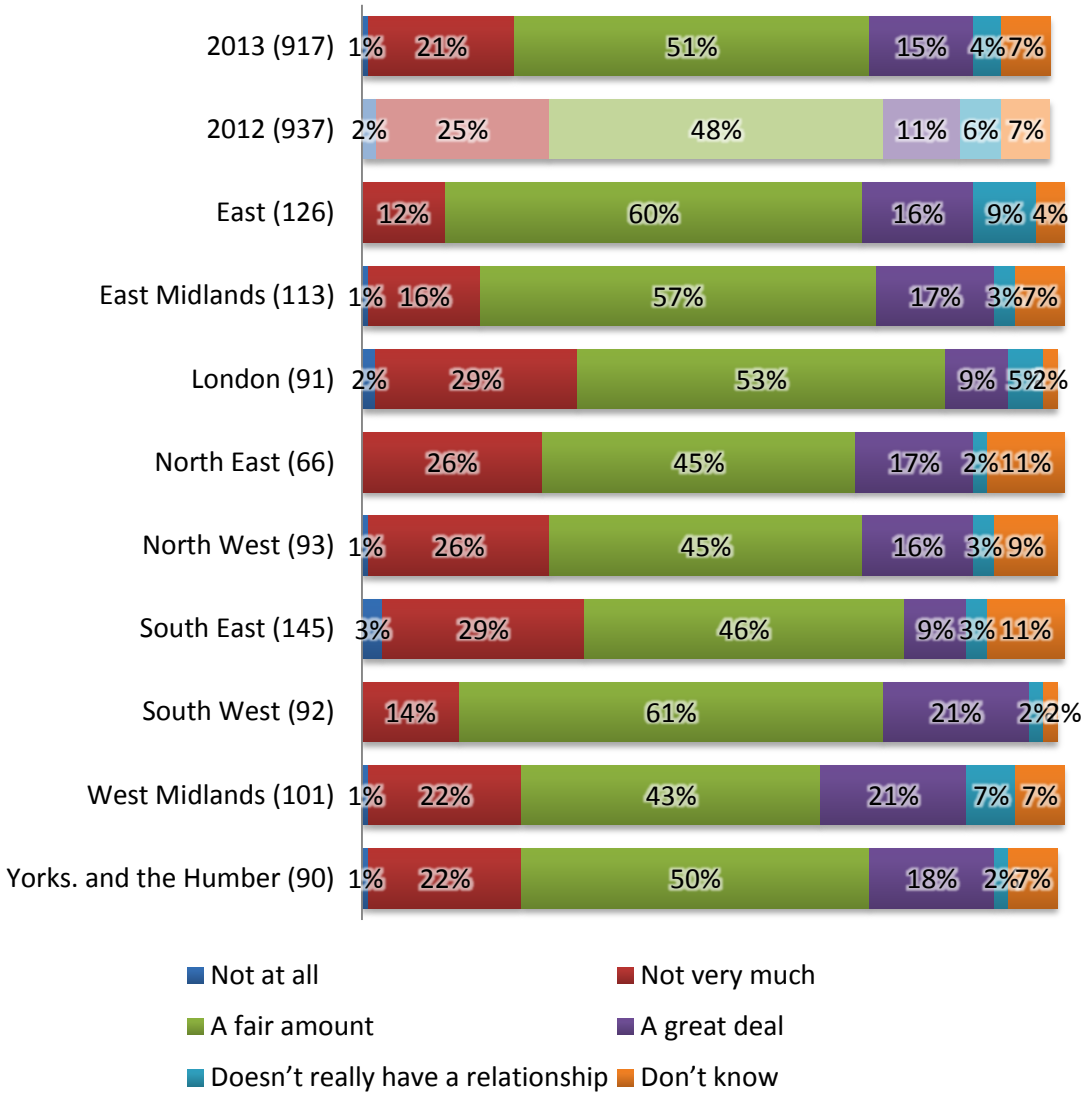

Figure 10: To what extent would you say your authority benefits from its relationship with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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 reason being that there was no/limited evidence (13%).

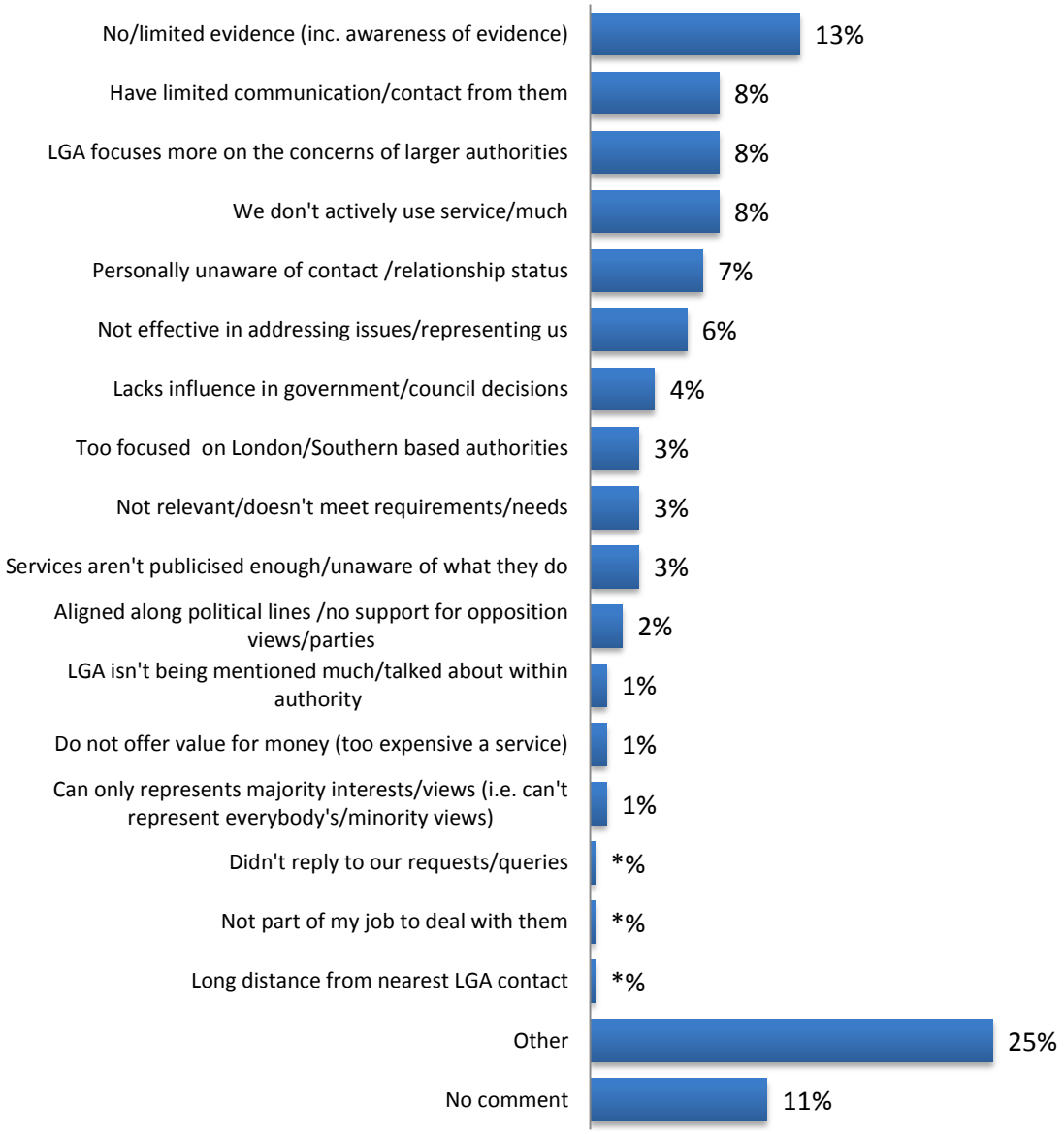

Figure 11: You said your authority benefits 'not very much' or 'not at all' from its relationship with LGA. Why do you say that?
Base = 207, Open response question, coded
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members * denotes less than 0.5%

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. They are most likely to consider providing *a single voice for local government* as important (94% fairly/very important), whilst least likely to consider *providing support and challenge for councils to improve* as important (90%).

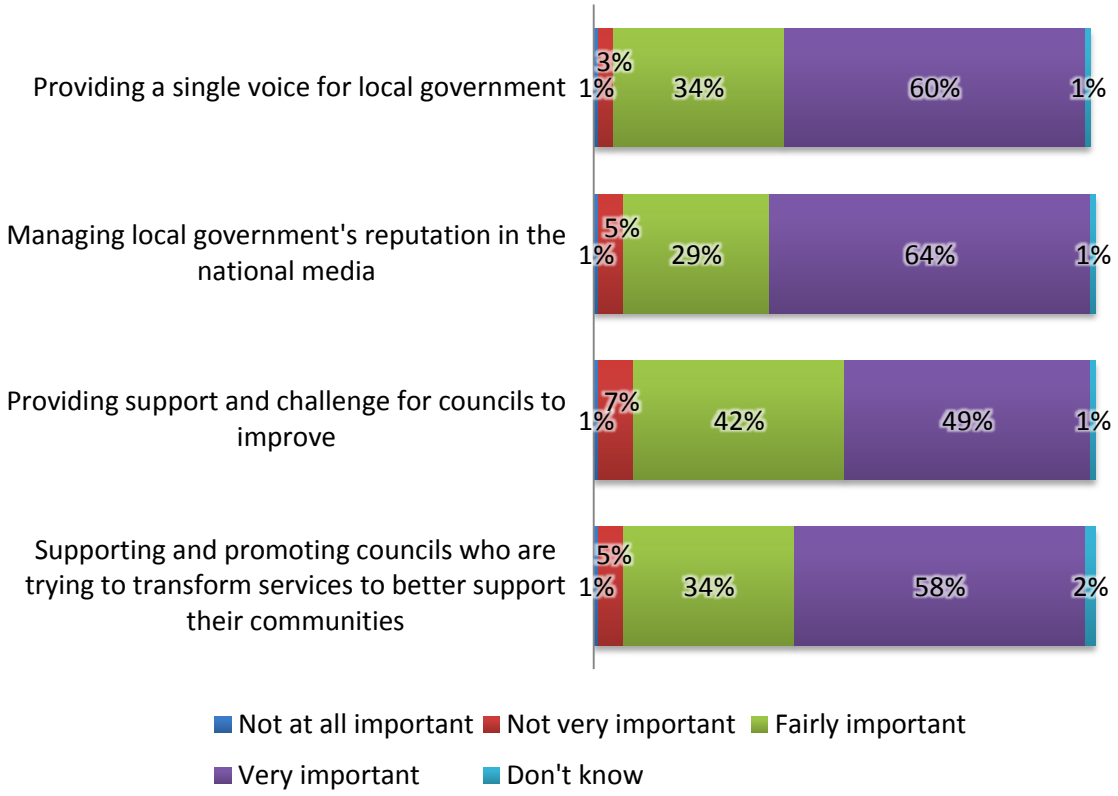

Figure 12: I am going to read out a list of activities conducted by the LGA. For each, I would like you to tell me whether they are important or not to your authority or the sector?
Base = 917, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

There is little statistically significant difference between regions, amalgamated role and role type, although chairs of scrutiny are significantly more likely than other roles to consider *managing local government's reputation in the national media* as unimportant (11%, compared with a sample average of 6%), while leaders are particularly likely to consider *providing support and challenge for councils to improve* as very important (56%, compared with a sample average of 49%).

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* (30%) and *support and promoting councils who are trying to transform services to better support their communities* (26%). This is a similar result to that reported in 2012 (26% and 25% then respectively).

Figure 13: What is the most important activity conducted by LGA?
Base = 917, 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 61% considering it a very useful service.

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

Chief executives are particularly likely to find *providing support for sector led improvement* very useful (46%).

Respondents in the North West are particularly likely to find *providing a range of online tools to help sector led improvement* very useful (30%), while the proportion is also higher than average amongst chairs of scrutiny (30%).

More than two-fifths of respondents in the North West (44%), Yorkshire and the Humber (43%) and the South West (41%) find *providing advice and information through the political group offices* very useful and the proportion is significantly higher amongst leaders than amongst respondents in other roles (51%). Officers were less likely than frontbench or backbench councillors to find *providing advice and information through the political group offices* very useful (19% compared with 42% and 38% respectively).

Backbenchers are significantly more likely than officers and frontbench councillors to find *providing legal advice and co-ordination of legal action for councils* very useful (49%, compared with 32% and 40% respectively).

Chairs of scrutiny are particularly likely to find *providing up-to-date information about local government* very useful (56%).

A higher proportion of respondents than average in the North East (32%) and North West (27%) do not find the service LGA *provides in terms of conferences and events* useful.

While those in the South East (although not in London boroughs) are least likely to find the LGA's service *in negotiating national pay, terms and conditions* useful (31% do not find it useful), those in the South West are most likely to find this service useful (90%).

Respondents in the South East (39%) and chief executives (52%) are significantly more likely than others 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 = 917, 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* (32%), *providing up-to-date information about local government* (13%) and *providing support for sector led improvement* (12%). These are similar findings to those reported in 2012 (when 32% viewed *lobbying*... as most useful, 12% selected *providing up-to-date information* and 12% *providing support for sector led improvement*...)

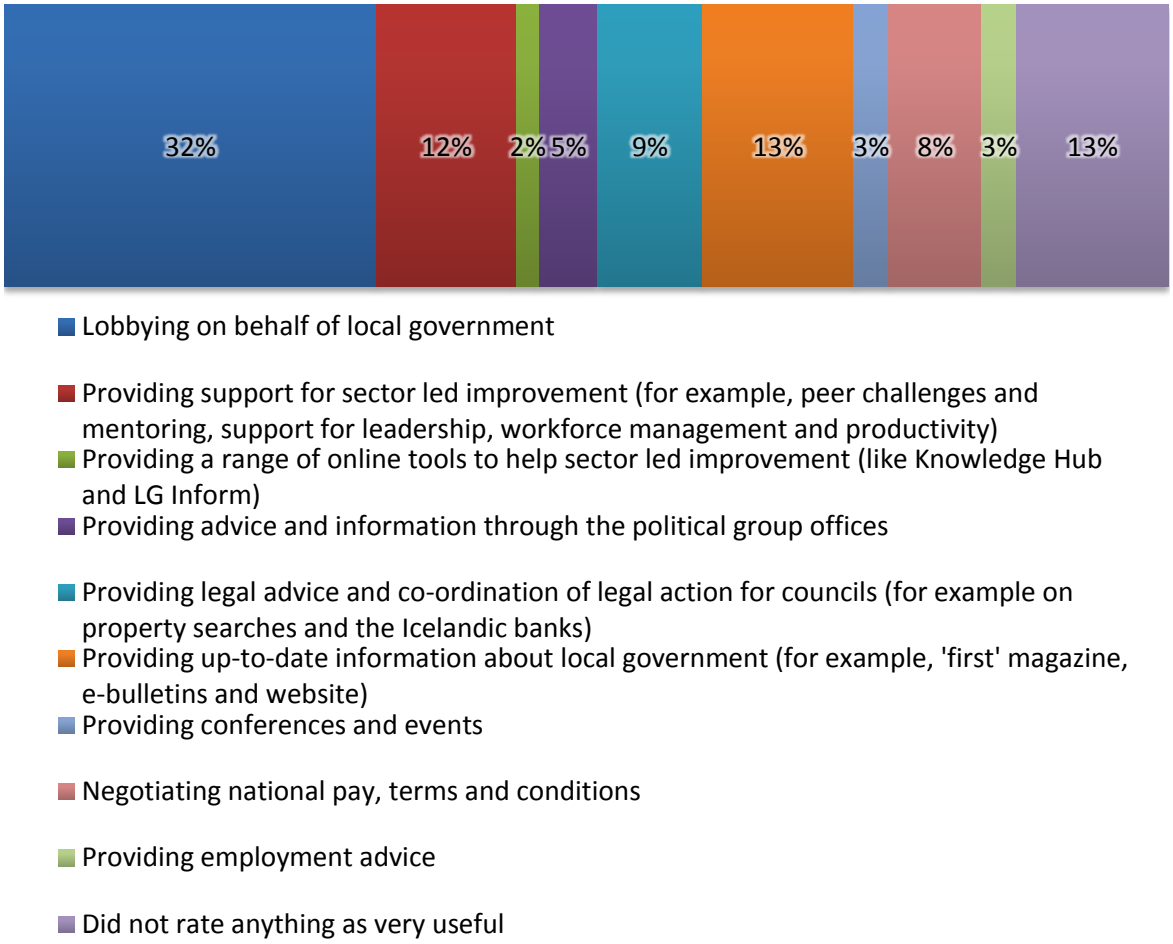

Figure 15: Which of the following services is most useful to your authority?
Base = 917, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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 (41%, compared with 29% and 27% respectively). The proportion is particularly high amongst chief executives (52%).

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 (77%; 52% fairly and 25% very). This is a significantly higher proportion than in 2012 (69%; 48% fairly and 21% very).

Respondents are significantly less likely to believe that the LGA only gives them a limited amount of information now than they were 12 months ago (17%, compared with 24%), while a similar proportion in 2012 and 2013 believe that they are not told much at all (6% and 5% respectively).

Chief executives and portfolio holders are particularly likely to feel very well informed (41% and 36% respectively), while this proportion is also relatively high amongst leaders (32%). Backbenchers are significantly more likely than officers to believe they are not well informed (26% limited information/not much at all, compared with 18%).

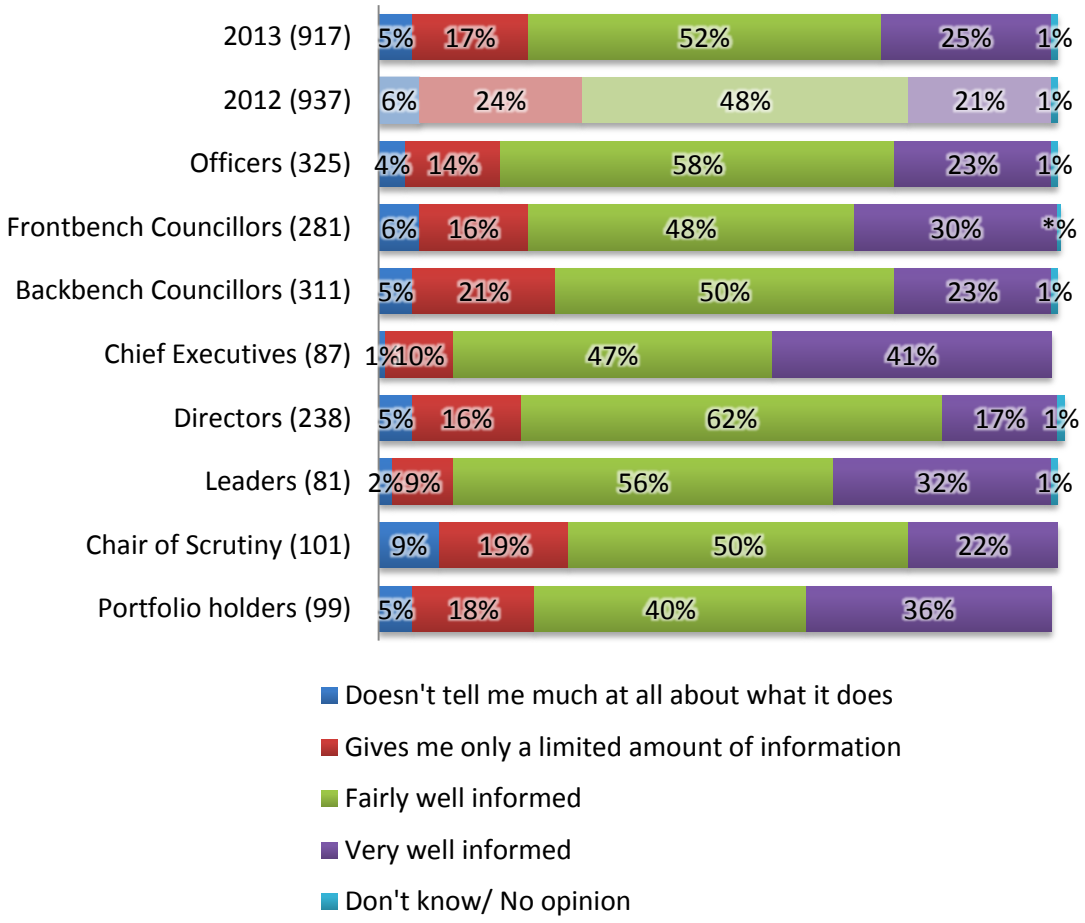

Figure 16: How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its' work? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role and role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

There are few statistically significant differences by region, although respondents in the East Midlands (40%) and South West (36%) are most likely to believe they are very well informed and those in the South East (17%) and West Midlands (19%) are least likely to believe this to be the case.

As in 2012, respondents reported that they find about the work of the LGA in a range of different ways. Similarly to 2012 'first' magazine is most frequently mentioned (67% of all respondents, as was the case in 2012).

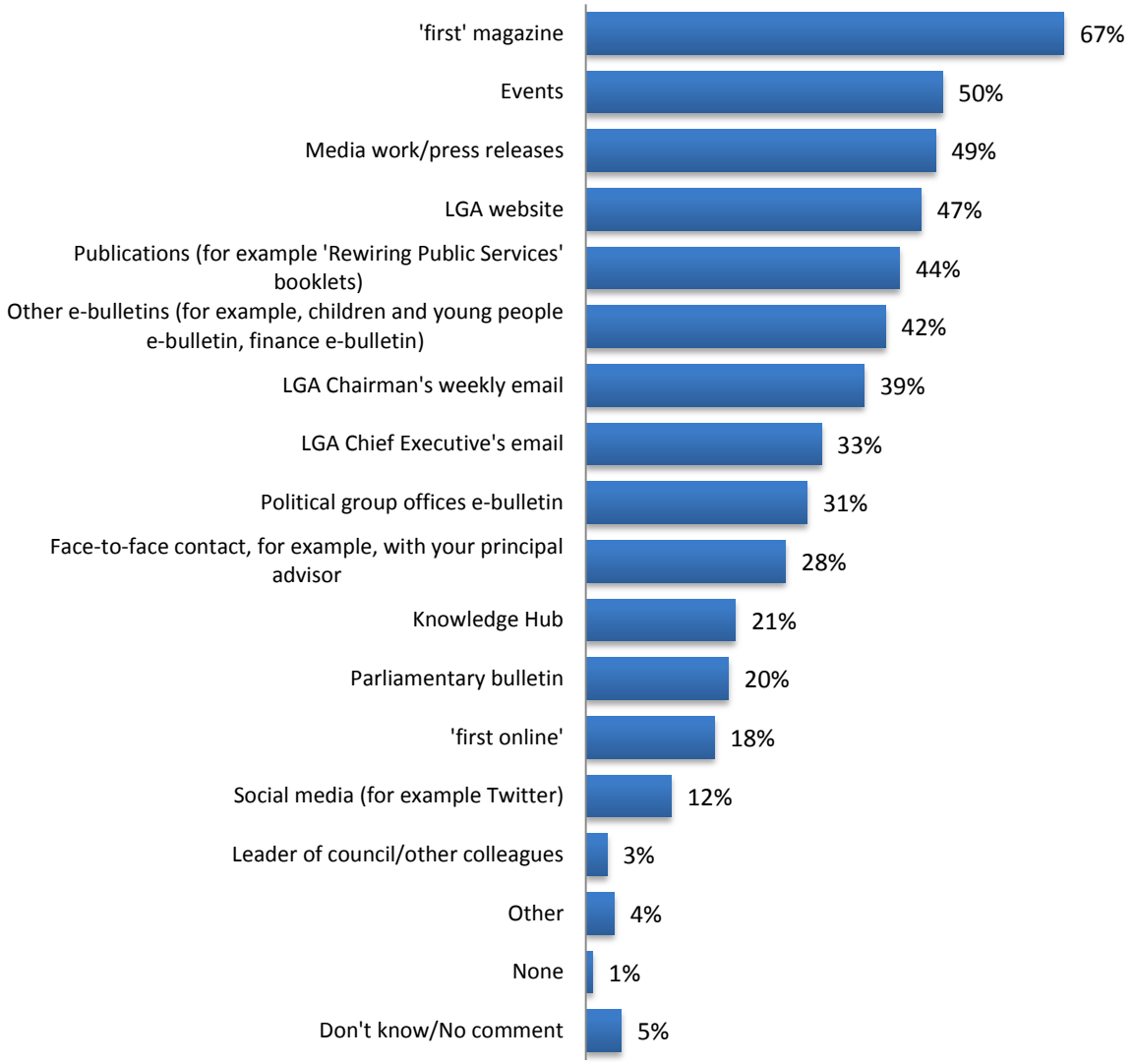

Figure 17: How do you generally find out about the work of the LGA?
Base = 917, Multiple response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Other important sources of information include events (50%), media work/press releases (49%) and the LGA website (47%).

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 events (70%) and are significantly more likely to cite this than frontbench councillors or backbenchers (47% and 32% respectively).
- Officers are also significantly more likely than frontbench councillors or backbenchers to find out about LGA's work through media work/press releases (65%, compared with 44% and 36% respectively); publications (60%, compared with 41% and 28% respectively); the Knowledge Hub (40%, compared with 12% and 9% respectively) and face-to-face contact (40%, compared with 28% and 16% respectively).
- Frontbench councillors are most likely to find out about the LGA's work through events (47%) and significantly more likely than backbenchers to do so (32%), while also significantly more likely than backbenchers to find out about the LGA's work through media work/press releases (44%, compared with 36%); publications (41%, compared with 28%) and face-to-face contact (28%, compared with 16%).
- Backbenchers most frequently cite media work/press releases (36%) 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, 'first' magazine features most prominently (21%), closely followed by the LGA Chairman's weekly email (19%) and the LGA's chief executive's email (18%).

Further analysis by amalgamated role highlights the following:

- There is particular interest in 'first' magazine amongst backbenchers (39%, compared with 22% of frontbench councillors and just 3% of officers) and significantly higher levels of interest in finding out about the work of the LGA through the LGA chief executive's email amongst officers (22%) and frontbench councillors (19%) than amongst backbenchers (13%).
- Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to prefer to find out about the work of the LGA through e-bulletins other than political group offices or Parliamentary e-bulletins (15%, compared with 6% and 5% respectively) or through the LGA website (14%, compared 5% and 5%), but they are more likely to prefer the LGA Chairman's weekly email (20%).
- For frontbench councillors, 'first' magazine is most frequently mentioned as their preferred source of information (22%), followed by the LGA Chairman's weekly email (21%) and then the LGA chief executive's email (19%).

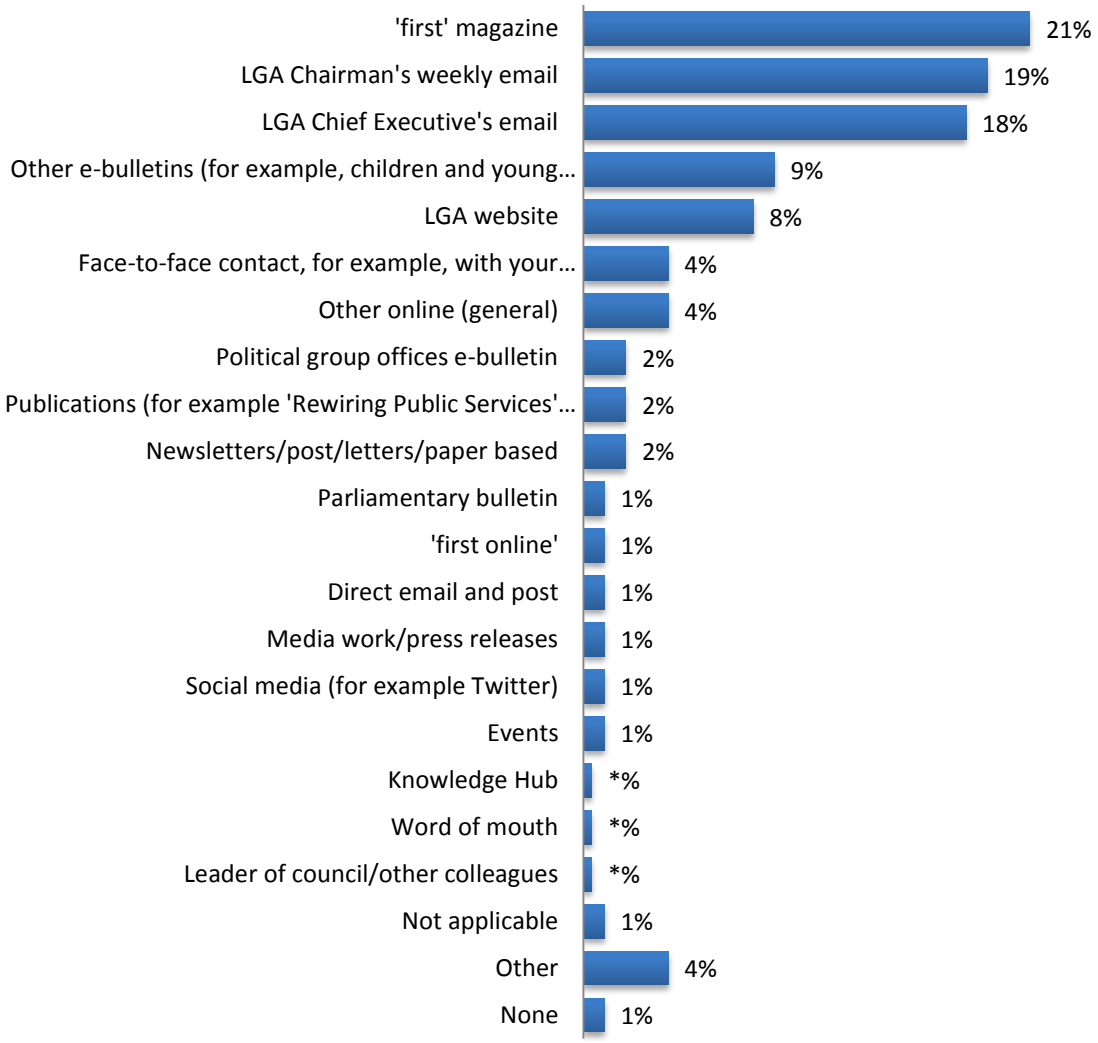

Figure 18: How would you prefer to find out about the work of the LGA?
Base = 917, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

3.2 Awareness of the LGA's *Rewiring Public Services* campaign

More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) have heard of the LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign. Most of these respondents (47% of all) feel they know nothing or just a little about the campaign. Just 8% feel they know a great deal about it, while the remainder (23%) feel they know a fair amount about it.

There are some differences by region, with respondents in London and the South East most likely to be unaware of the campaign (31% and 29% respectively). Familiarity with the campaign is greatest within the South West (39% feel they know at least a fair amount about it).

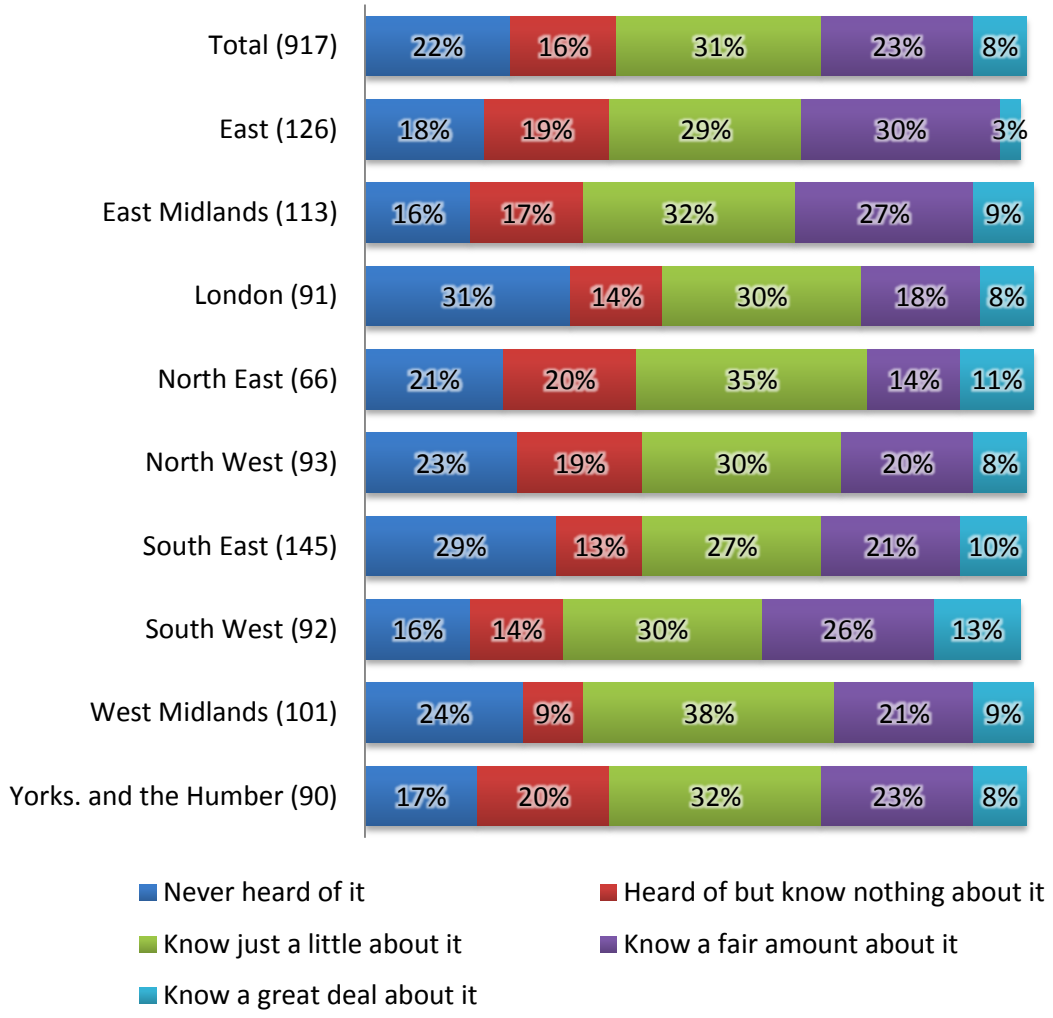

Figure 19: How much do you know about the LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign? Would you say that you...? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Officers and frontbench councillors are significantly more likely than backbenchers to know at least a fair amount about the LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign (42%, 37% and 14% respectively). A third of backbenchers (33%) have never heard of it, which is a significantly higher proportion than amongst officers (12%) and frontbench councillors (20%).

Chief executives and leaders are significantly more likely than average to feel they know a great deal about the campaign (31% and 26% respectively, compared with 8%) and also more likely to feel they know a fair amount about it (46% and 42%, compared with 23% on average). A third of chairs of scrutiny (35%) have never heard of the campaign.

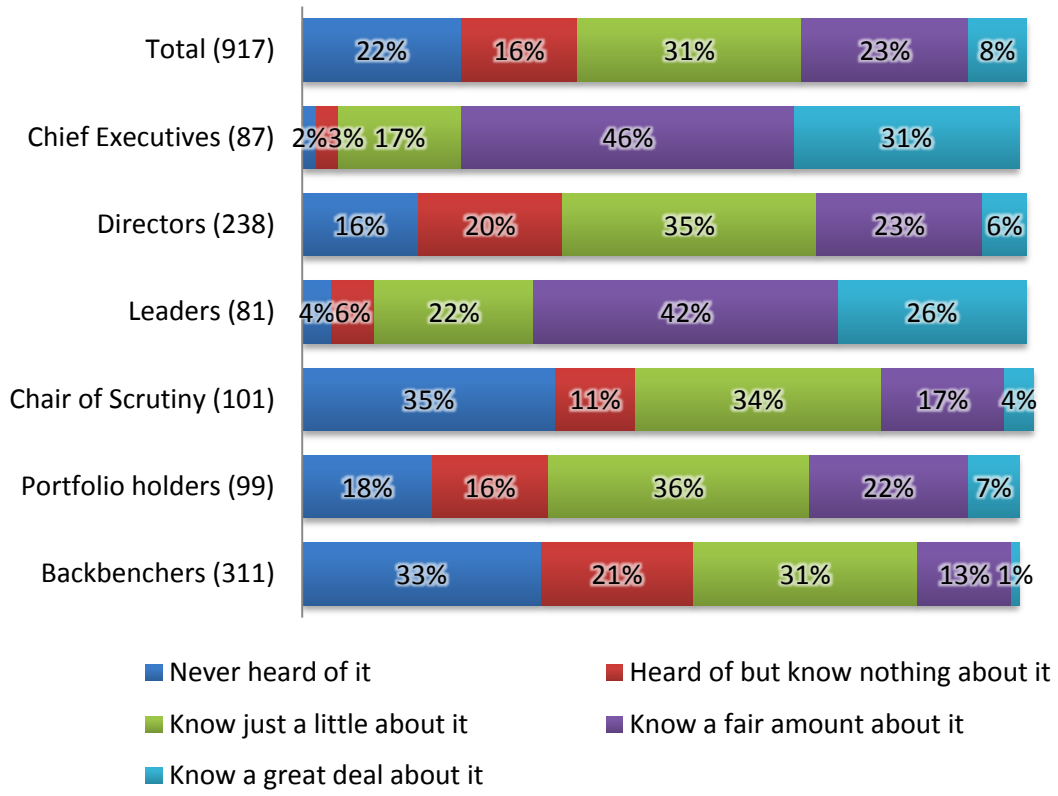

Figure 20: How much do you know about the LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign? Would you say that you...? (Crosstabulated by role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

3.3 Level of engagement with the LGA

Overall, more than a half of all respondents (52%) reported that they are either 'not very engaged' (39%) or 'not at all engaged' (13%) with the LGA. This is a lower proportion than in 2012 (56%). Two fifths of respondents (40%) reported that they are 'fairly engaged' with the LGA, which is similar to 2012 (38%), while just 8% (compared with 6% in 2012) 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 (66%, compared with 43% and 46% respectively).

Chief executives and leaders are significantly more likely than those in other roles to be very engaged with the LGA (29% and 20% respectively), while 18% of chairs of scrutiny and 19% of backbenchers are not at all engaged.

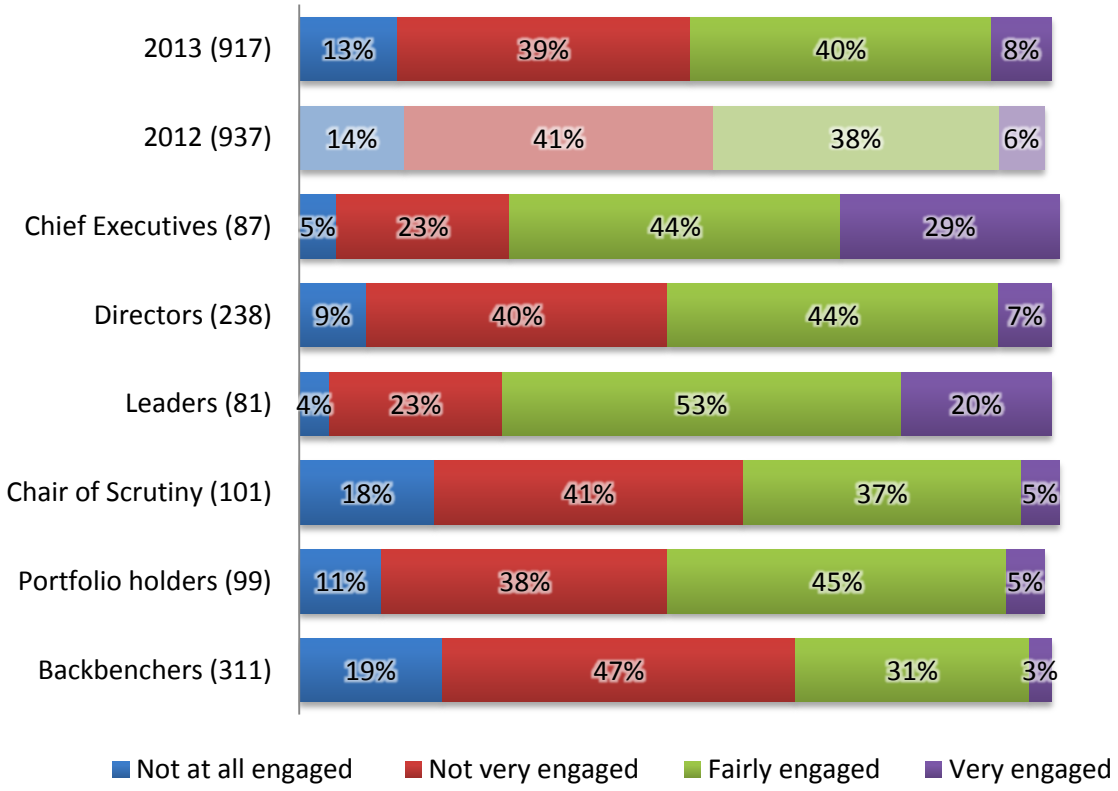

Figure 21: How engaged do you feel you are with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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 (50%), attending LGA events (48%), contributing in LGA meetings/seminars (39%) and contacting LGA officers by email or phone (37%).

Methods of engagement are similar to those mentioned in 2012.

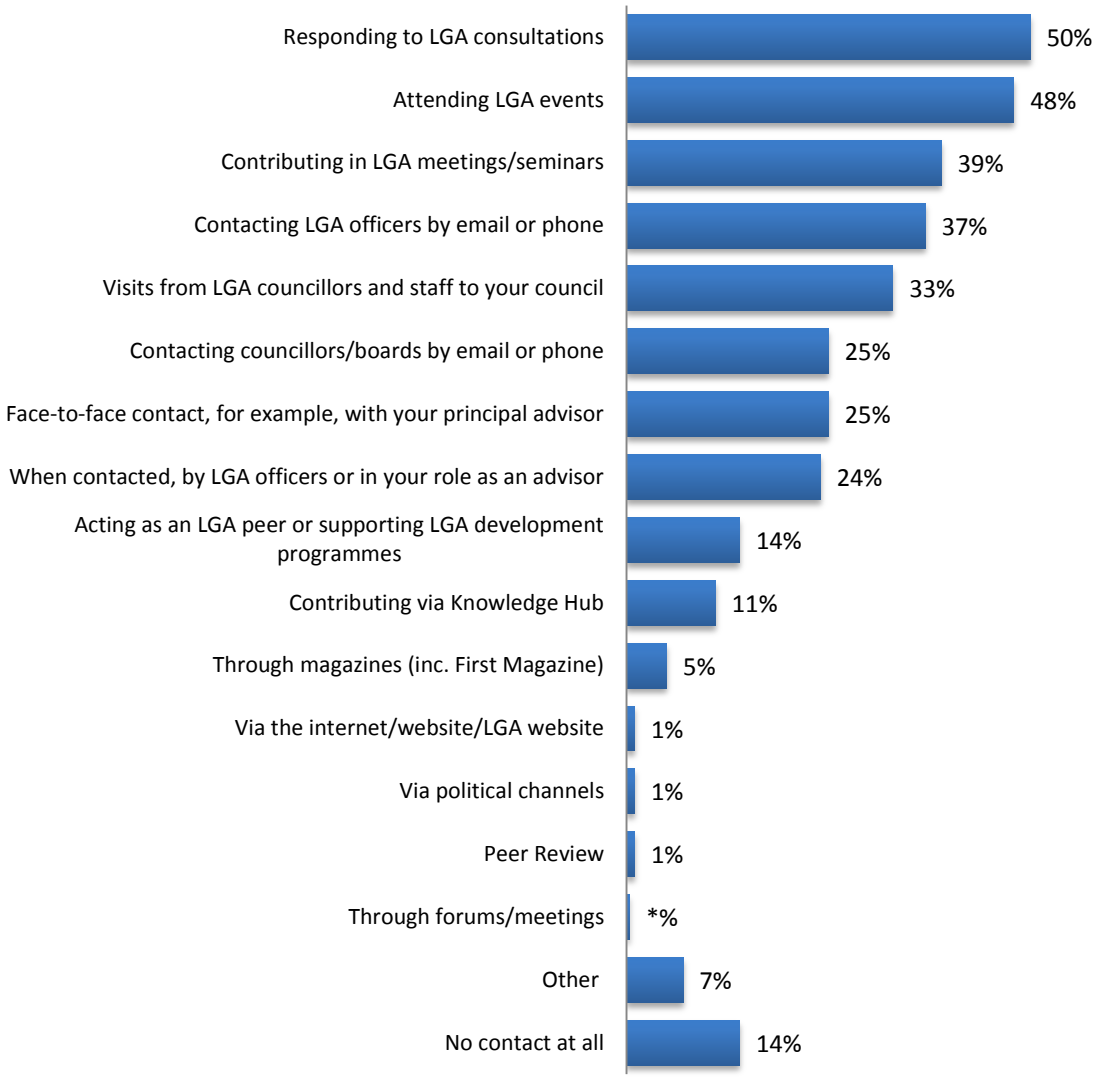

Figure 22: By what means do you engage with the LGA?
Base = 917, Multiple response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

There are few significant differences in methods of engagement by region, although respondents in the South West are significantly more likely than average to contact councillors/boards by email or phone (37%).

Analysis by role highlights some significant differences, including:

- Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to contact the LGA by *responding to LGA consultations* (66%, compared with 50% and 33% respectively); *attending LGA events* (66%, 51%, 27%); *contributing to LGA meetings/seminars* (56%, 42%, 18%); *contacting LGA officers by email or phone* (54%, 35%, 21%); *when contacted by LGA officers or in their role as an advisor* (39%, 21%, 12%); *face to face* (38%, 23%, 12%); *acting as an LGA peer or supporting LGA development programme* (26%, 11%, 5%) and *contributing via the Knowledge Hub* (20%, 6%, 5%).

- Frontbench councillors are most likely to engage with the LGA by *attending LGA events* (51%) and *responding to LGA con*sultations (50%). They are significantly more likely than officers and backbenchers to engage by *contacting councillors/boards by email or phone* (37%, 15%, 24% respectively), while significantly more likely than backbenchers to engage in most ways.
- Backbenchers are most likely to engage with the LGA by responding to LGA consultations (33%) and significantly more likely than officers and frontbench councillors to engage *through magazines (including 'first')* (13%, none and 3% respectively) and significantly more likely than officers to engage by *contacting councillors/boards by email or phone* (24%, compared with 15%).
- Both officers and frontbench councillors are significantly more likely than backbenchers to engage with the LGA through *visits from LGA councillors and staff to their council* (44%, 38% and 17% respectively).

When asked how they would prefer to engage with the LGA, respondents were most likely to specify contacting LGA officers by email or phone (46%). This was also the case in 2012.

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

- Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to prefer engagement in most ways. Similarly to frontbench councillors and backbenchers they are most likely to prefer contacting LGA officers by email or phone (43%, 48% and 47% respectively), followed by face to face (30%) and attending LGA events (29%).
- Both frontbench councillors and backbenchers, after contacting LGA officers by email or phone are most likely to specify contacting councillors/boards by email or phone (both 24%). This compares with a significantly lower proportion amongst officers (14%).
- Backbenchers are significantly more likely than officers and frontbench councillors to prefer to engage with the LGA through magazines (including 'first') (15%, none, 5%), and this reflects their current mode of engagement.

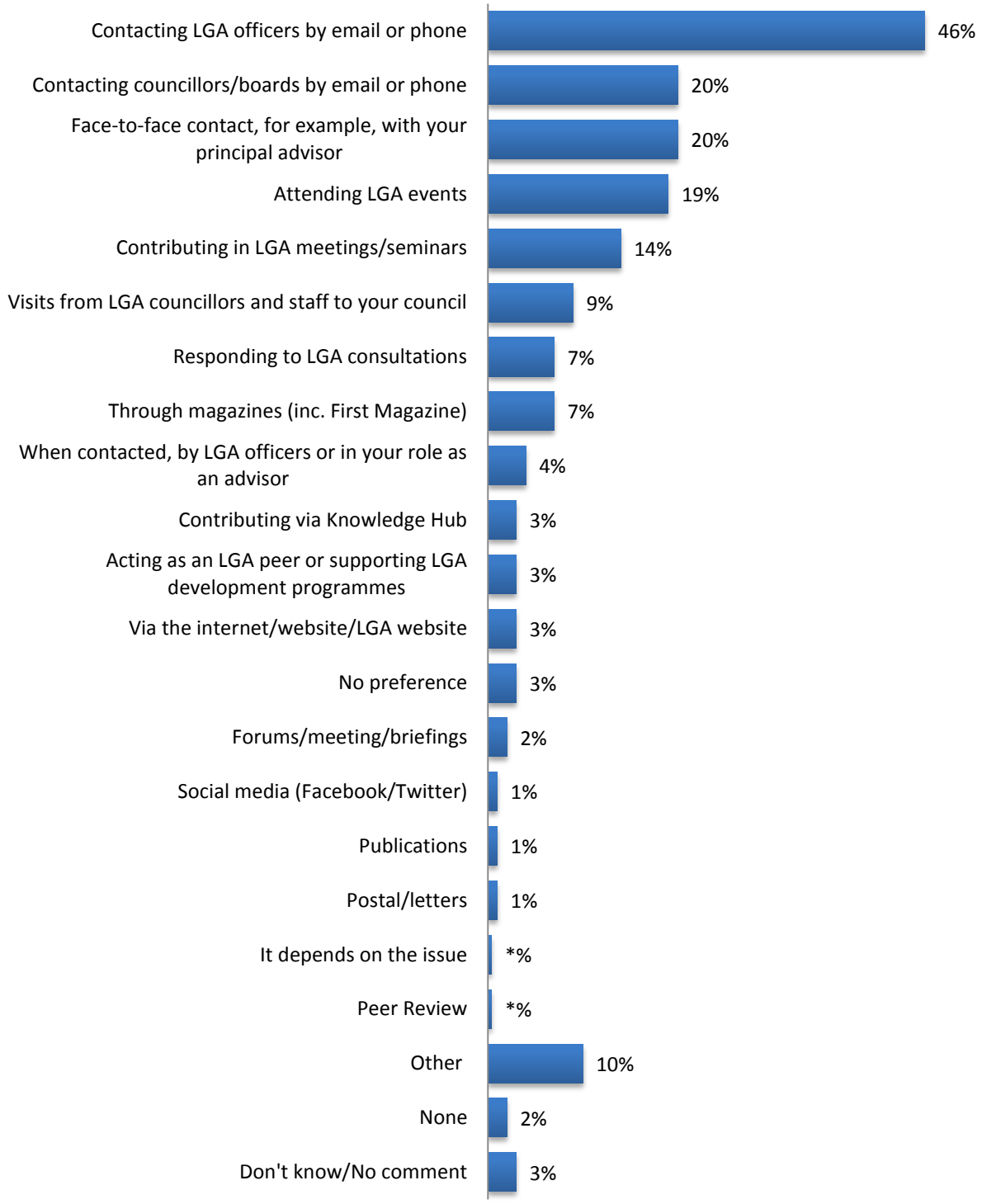

Figure 23: By what means would you prefer to engage with the LGA?
Base = 917, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members *denotes less than 0.5%

4 Views on sector-led improvement

4.1 Awareness of sector-led improvement

More than half of respondents (56%) reported that they have either 'heard a little' or 'heard nothing' about sector-led improvement. This is a slightly lower proportion than in 2012 (59% in aggregate). Around a quarter of respondents (27%) have 'heard a moderate amount', which is a similar proportion to 2012 (26%), while 17% have 'heard a lot' about it, a slightly higher proportion than in 2012 (15%).

There is little significant difference between awareness of sector-led improvement by region, with respondents in the East Midlands most likely to have heard a moderate amount/a lot about it (51%) and those in the South East most likely to have heard a little/nothing (64%). Three in ten South East respondents (30%) report hearing nothing about sector-led improvement which is a significantly higher proportion than in many other regions.

By role, officers are significantly more likely to be aware of sector-led improvement than frontbench councillors and backbenchers (32% have 'heard a lot', compared with 11% and 6% respectively). Three-quarters of backbenchers (74%) have 'heard a little'/'heard nothing' about it, compared with 54% of frontbench councillors and 41% of officers.

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

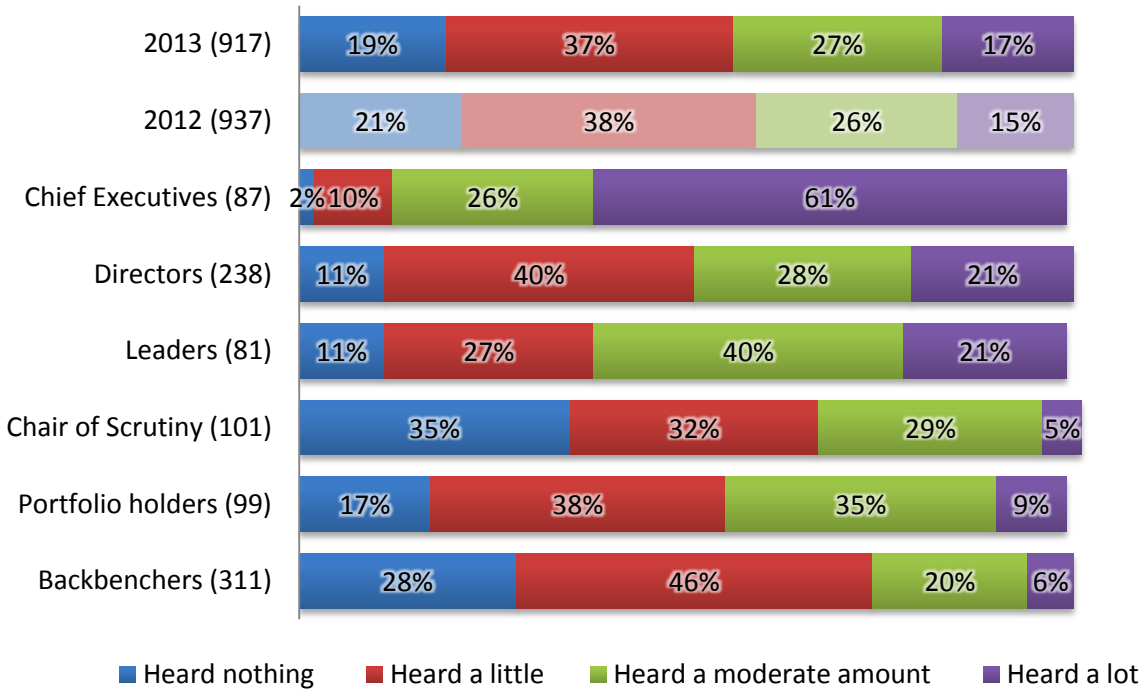

Figure 24: How much, if anything, have you heard about the sector-led improvement approach? (Crosstabulated by role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Compared with levels of awareness in 2012, there has been little change by role.

Figure 25 shows the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with a variety of statements relating to sector-led improvement. More than three-fifths of respondents (62%) agree at all that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context*. This is a slightly higher proportion than in 2012 (58%).

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

The proportion of respondents that 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that local accountability is strong in my authority is similar (85%) but only slightly higher than in 2012 (83%).

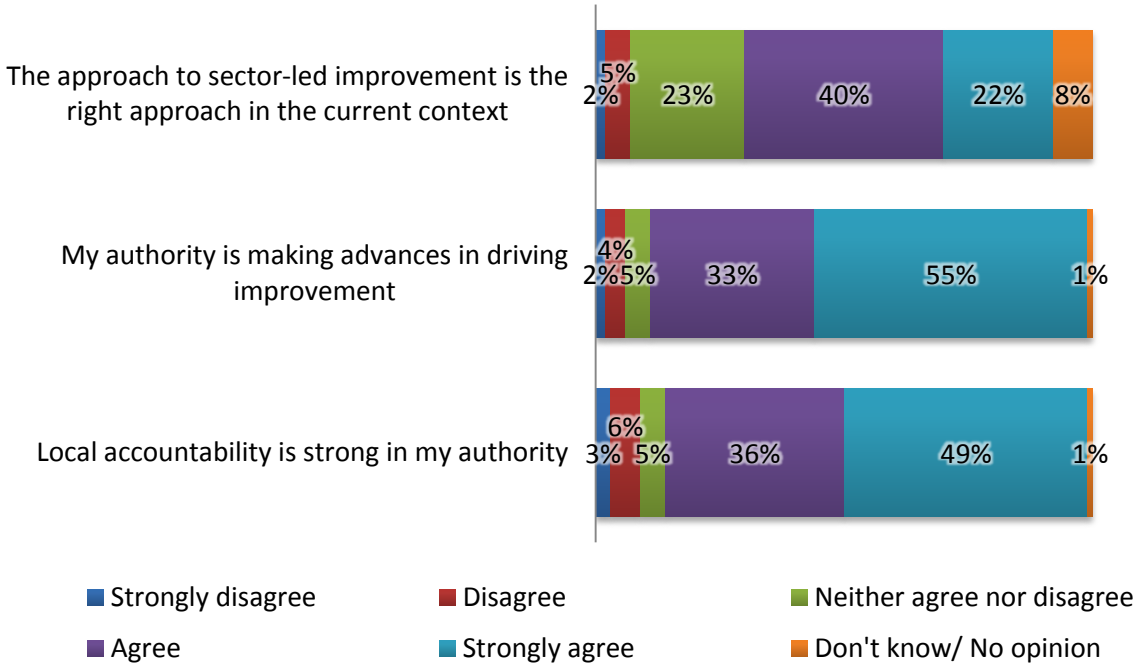

Figure 25: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base = 917, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

In terms of regional differences, respondents in Yorkshire and the Humber are more likely than average (16%) to disagree that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context*, while the proportion of respondents that strongly agree that *local accountability is strong in my authority* is higher than average in the North East (64%).

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 17% and 15% respectively). Frontbench councillors and backbenchers are significantly more likely than officers to be neutral on this statement (25%, 27% and 18% respectively).

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 22%).

Backbenchers are significantly less likely to strongly agree than officers and frontbench councillors that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement* (41%, compared with 65% and 60% respectively). In aggregate (strongly disagree/disagree), 13% of backbenchers disagree with this statement, compared with very few officers (less than 1%) and frontbench councillors (2%).

Compared with 41% of backbenchers and 42% 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 73% of portfolio holders; 69% of chief executives, 68% of leaders and 64% of directors.

Similarly, backbenchers are significantly less likely to strongly agree than officers and frontbench councillors that *local accountability is strong in my authority* (40%, compared with 56% and 50% respectively), and again, in aggregate (strongly disagree/disagree), 15% of backbenchers disagree with this statement, compared with just 3% of officers and 8% of frontbench councillors.

Furthermore, around three-fifths of chief executives (59%) and leaders (59%) strongly agree that *local accountability is strong in my authority*, compared with just two-fifths of chairs of scrutiny (41%) and backbenchers (40%).

There have been increases in the extent of agreement with all these statements since 2012 and this is apparent across amalgamated role types (see Table 5).

	Total		Officers		Frontbench members		Backbench members	
	2012 (937)	2013 (917)	2012 (333)	2013 (325)	2012 (293)	2013 (281)	2012 (311)	2013 (311)
The approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context	59%	62%	68%	71%	56%	58%	51%	56%
My authority is making advances in driving improvement	84%	88%	91%	97%	89%	91%	71%	77%
Local accountability is strong in my authority	83%	85%	89%	94%	89%	87%	73%	74%

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

4.2 Capacity for continuous improvement

The majority of respondents (87%) were at least moderately confident that their authority has the capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve. This is a slightly higher proportion than in 2012 (85%). It includes 48% (45% in 2012) that are confident 'to a great extent'.

There is little significant difference between regions. Confidence is highest in the East Midlands (58% are confident 'to a great extent'), and lowest in the West Midlands (20% are 'not at all'/'to a small extent').

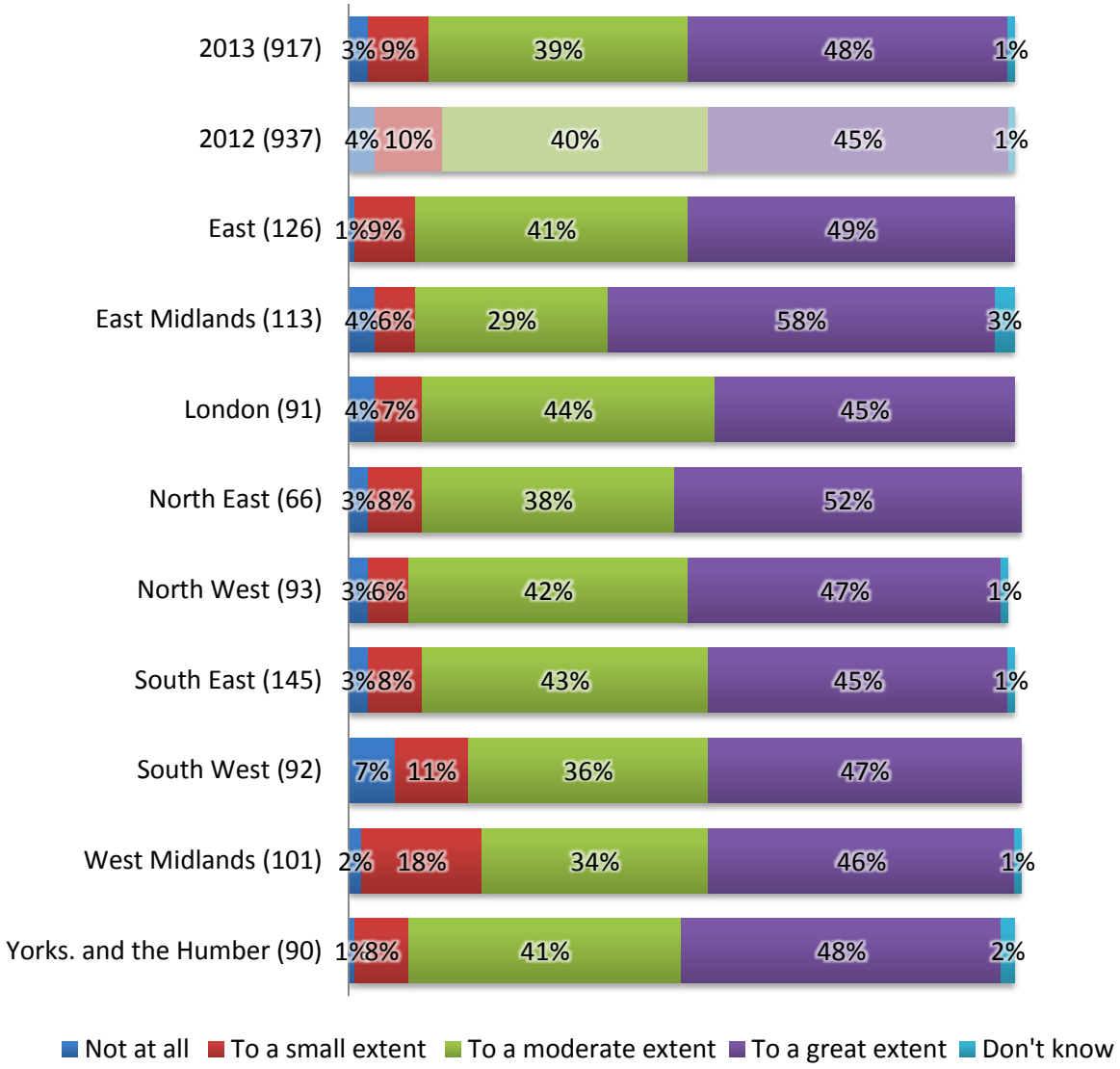

Figure 26: To what extent would you say you are confident that your own authority currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

While most officers (92%) and frontbench councillors (91%) are confident that their authority is able to monitor its own performance with a view to continuously improving, one in five backbenchers (20%) are not confident that this is the case.

Four-fifths of respondents (80%) are confident that the local government sector has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve. This compares with 79% in 2012, so there has been no change in this respect.

There is little significant difference in levels of confidence by region, with respondents in the East Midlands most confident (35% 'to a great extent') and those in the North East (20% 'to a small extent'/'not at all') least confident.

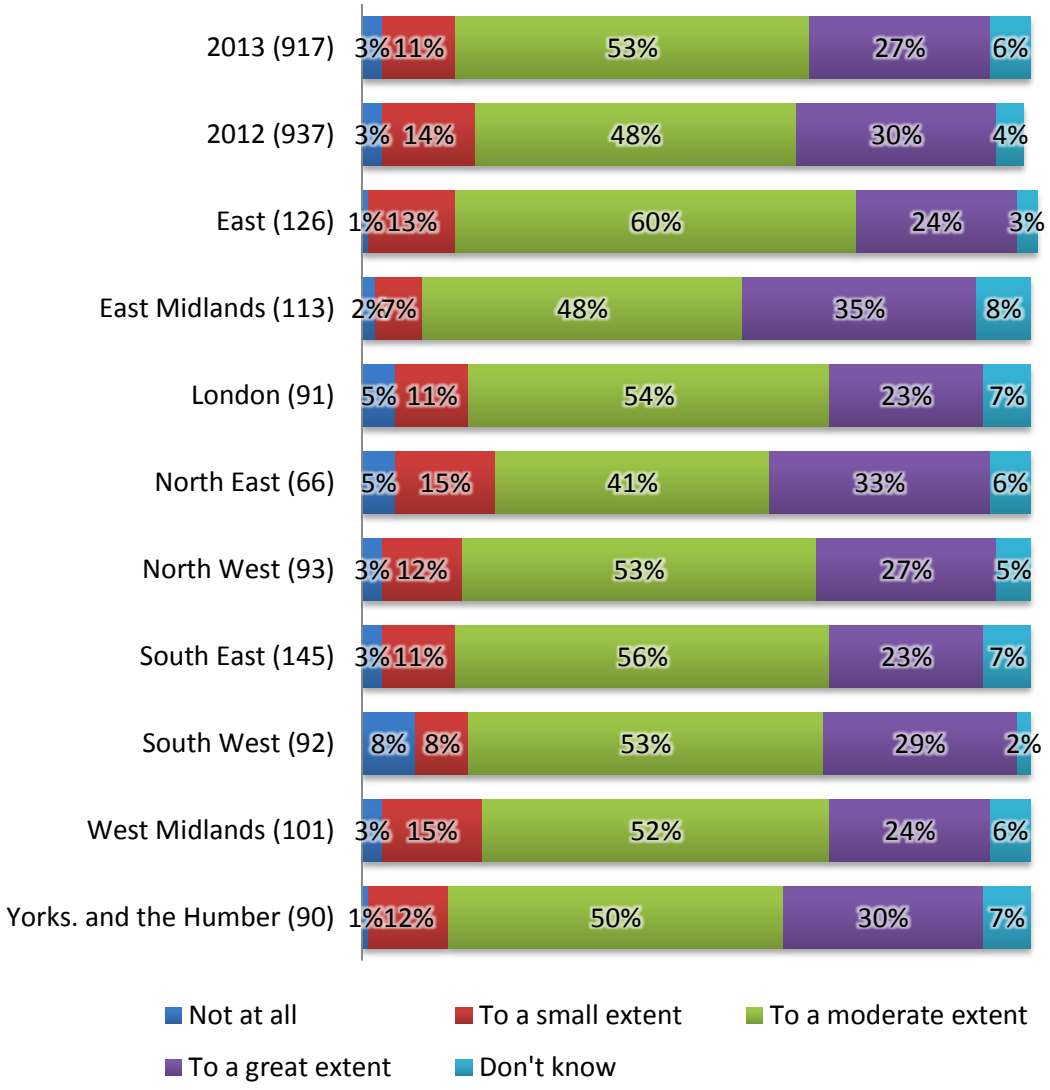

Figure 27: To what extent would you say you are confident that the local government sector currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

While more than four-fifths of officers (86%) are confident that the local government sector is able to monitor its own performance with a view to continuously improving, fewer frontbench councillors (but still the majority – 79%) are confident, with, again, one in five backbenchers (20%) not confident that this is the case.

4.3 Awareness of resources to support sector-led improvement

As in 2012, awareness of the resources offered by the LGA to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement is low, with only around a third having heard 'a moderate amount' or 'a lot' about most resources, although the proportion is higher with regard to *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011* (56%) and *member training and development* (61%).

Around half of the respondents (49%) have heard nothing of *five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control*, with the proportion of respondents having heard nothing about *access to the LG Inform data service, to provide access to key data about the council or fire and rescue service area and allow benchmarking and comparisons with others also relatively high (40%)*.

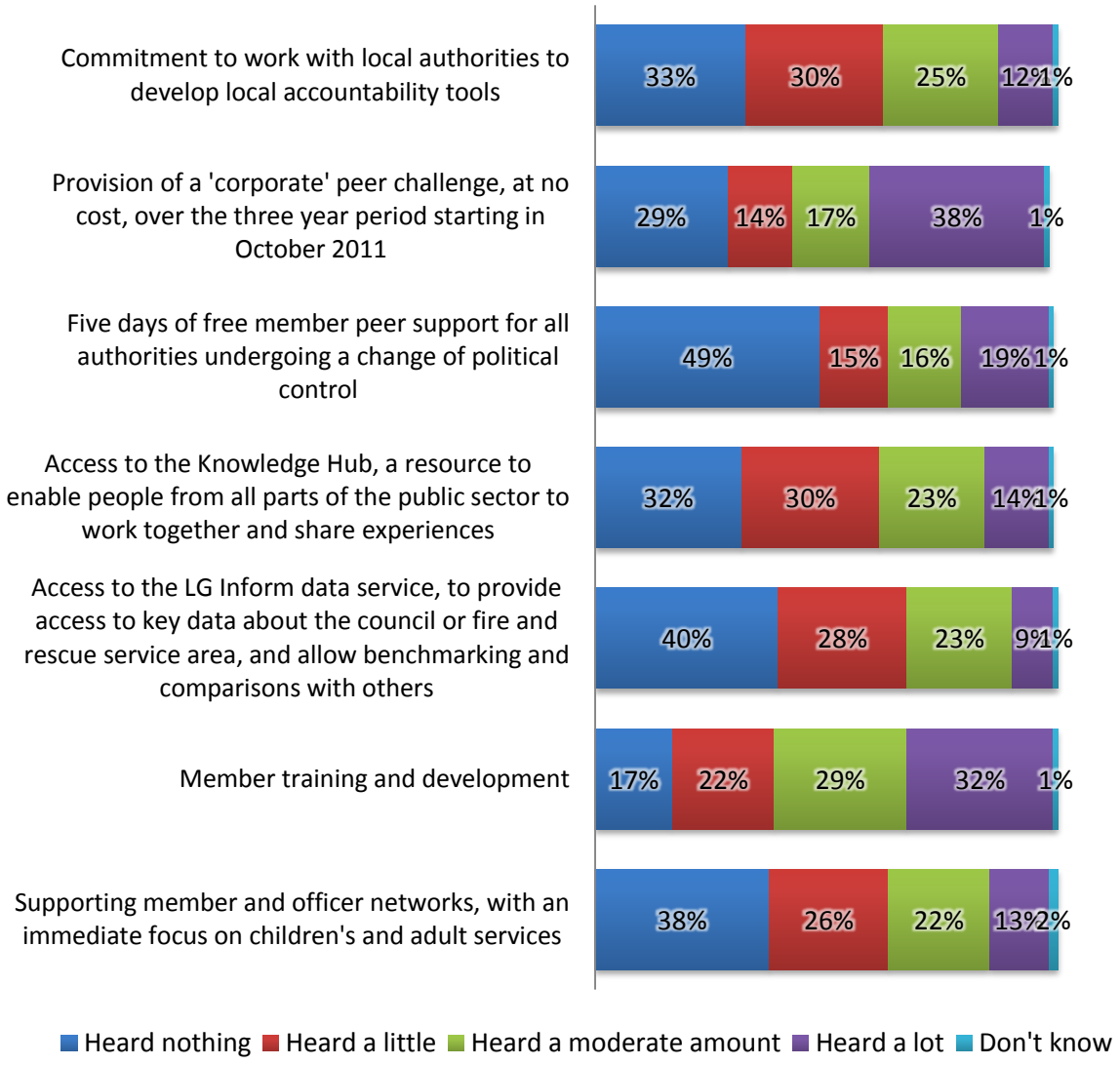

Figure 28: As part of Taking the Lead, the LGA has offered a number of resources, to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement. Which, if any, of the following elements of the LGA's offer have you heard about?
Base = 917, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Compared with 12 months ago, awareness of the resources has improved, particularly with regard to *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011*.

		Heard nothing	Heard a little	Heard a moderate amount	Heard a lot	Don't know	Summary: Heard a moderate amount/a lot
Commitment to work with local authorities to develop local accountability tools	2013	33%	30%	25%	12%	1%	37%
	2012	40%	28%	22%	9%	1%	31%
Provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011	2013	29%	14%	17%	38%	1%	56%
	2012	40%	20%	16%	24%	0%	40%
Five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control	2013	49%	15%	16%	19%	1%	35%
	2012	57%	16%	13%	14%	0%	27%
Access to the Knowledge Hub, a resource to enable people from all parts of the public sector to work together and share experiences*	2013	32%	30%	23%	14%	1%	38%
	2012	39%	30%	18%	12%	1%	30%
Access to the LG Inform data service, to provide access to key data about the council or fire and rescue service area, and allow benchmarking and comparisons with others*	2013	40%	28%	23%	9%	1%	32%
	2012	50%	25%	17%	7%	1%	24%
Supporting member and officer networks, with an immediate focus on children's and adult services	2013	38%	26%	22%	13%	2%	35%
	2012	44%	27%	16%	11%	2%	27%

Table 6: Elements of the LGA's offer that LGA members have heard of - comparison between 2012 and 2013 research Bases in parentheses, Single response question *wording change since 2012 (previously 'Development of....)

Further analysis by role shows significant differences in respondents' awareness of the resources to support sector-led improvement, including:

- Officers are significantly more likely than frontbench councillors and backbenchers to have 'heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about the *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011* (84%, 56% and 26% respectively); *five days of free*

member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control (47%, 38% and 21%); *access to the Knowledge Hub, a resource to enable people from all parts of the public sector to work together and share experiences* (56%, 33% and 23%); and *access to the LG Inform data service, to provide access to key data about the council or fire and rescue service area, and allow benchmarking and comparisons with others* (40%, 31% and 23%).

- Backbenchers are significantly less likely than both officers and frontbench councillors to have ‘heard a moderate amount’ or ‘heard a lot’ about any of the resources, while frontbench councillors are significantly more likely than Bankbenchers to have ‘heard a moderate amount’ or ‘heard a lot’ about *member training and development* (68% and 46% respectively) and *supporting member and officer networks, with an immediate focus on children's and adult services* (38% and 26%).

By role type:

- Chief executives are significantly more likely than those in other roles to have heard a lot about provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011 (90%); access to the Knowledge Hub, a resource to enable people from all parts of the public sector to work together and share experiences (39%); and access to the LG Inform data service, to provide access to key data about the council or fire and rescue service area, and allow benchmarking and comparisons with others (31%).
- Chairs of scrutiny and backbenchers are significantly less likely than those in other roles to have heard a lot about five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control (12% and 8% respectively); access to the Knowledge Hub, a resource to enable people from all parts of the public sector to work together and share experiences (6% and 5%); member training and development (25% and 20%) and supporting member and officer networks, with an immediate focus on children's and adult services (8% and 6%).
- The proportion of directors and leaders that have heard a lot about provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011 (55% and 63% respectively) is particularly high.
- Leaders are particularly likely to have heard a lot about five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control (48%); member training and development (58%) and supporting member and officer networks, with an immediate focus on children's and adult services (22%).

	Chief Executives		Directors		Leaders		Chairs of Scrutiny		Portfolio Holders		Back-benchers	
	2012 (92)	2013 (87)	2012 (241)	2013 (238)	2012 (82)	2013 (81)	2012 (102)	2013 (101)	2012 (109)	2013 (99)	2012 (311)	2013 (311)
Commitment to work with local authorities to develop local accountability tools	47%	49%	27%	38%	37%	51%	27%	34%	39%	41%	27%	28%
Provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011	90%	99%	52%	79%	55%	78%	30%	35%	39%	60%	14%	26%
Five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control	72%	74%	24%	37%	54%	62%	18%	23%	25%	35%	14%	21%
Access to the Knowledge Hub, a resource to enable people from all parts of the public sector to work together and share experiences*	58%	76%	36%	49%	30%	48%	21%	21%	28%	32%	20%	23%
Access to the LG Inform data service, to provide access to key data about the council or fire and rescue service area, and allow benchmarking and comparisons with others*	61%	66%	22%	31%	26%	36%	15%	24%	23%	35%	19%	23%
Member training and development	53%	66%	22%	64%	49%	88%	24%	50%	34%	69%	15%	46%
Supporting member and officer networks, with an immediate focus on children's and adult services	53%	84%	23%	34%	22%	47%	22%	30%	32%	40%	23%	26%

Table 7: Elements of the LGA's offer that LGA members have heard of (a moderate amount/a lot) - Comparison between 2012 and 2013 research (crosstabulated by role type) Bases in parentheses, Single response question *wording change since 2012 (previously 'Development of....)

More than a half of respondents (53%) 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 lower proportion than in 2012 (61%). A further 26% believe that it impacts 'to a small extent'.

Similarly to 2012, respondents in the South East are significantly more likely than those in most other regions to believe that the resources will impact on their authority 'to a small extent' or 'not at all' (48%). This proportion is similar in London (47%).

Figure 29: 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

Approaching two-thirds of respondents (63%) believe that the support and resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvements will have a positive impact on the sector's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent'. This is a slightly lower proportion than in 2012 (69%). A further 19% believe that it impact 'to a small extent'.

There is no significant difference between the regions, with respondents in the North East (73%), East Midlands (71%) and the East (71%) most likely to believe the

resources will have a moderate or great impact, while respondents in the South East (52%) and London (53%) are least likely to hold this view.

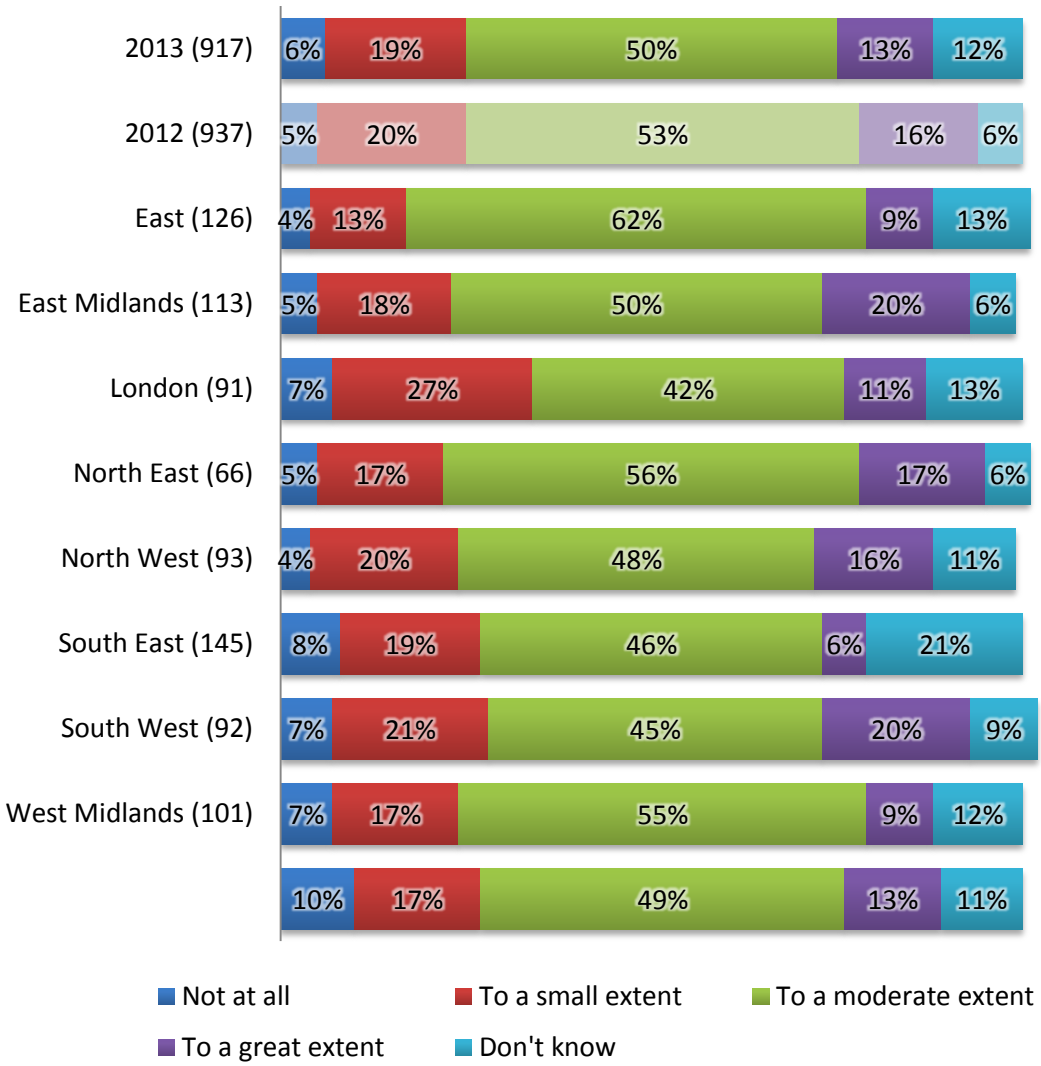

Figure 30: To what extent do you think that this support and these resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvement will have a positive impact on the sector's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

4.4 Awareness and use of the Centre for Public Scrutiny

More than half the respondents (54%) had heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

By region, this proportion is highest in the South West (61%) and North West (58%) and lowest in the South East (45%). The difference between the highest and lowest proportions is statistically significant.

By amalgamated role, backbenchers are significantly less likely than officers and frontbench councillors to have heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (42%, compared with 54% and 66% respectively).

By role type, awareness is significantly higher amongst chief executives (79%) and chairs of scrutiny (76%) than amongst directors (45%) and backbenchers (42%).

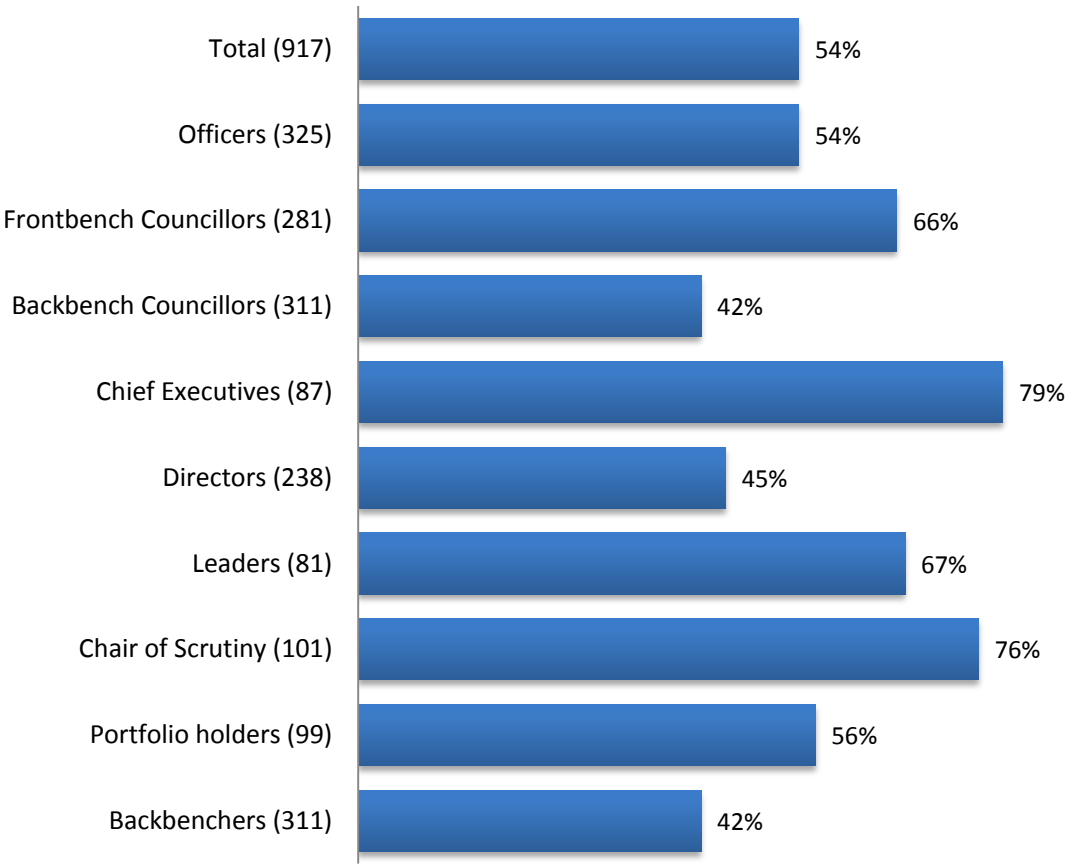

Figure 31: Before today, had you heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role and role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Of those aware of the Centre for Public Scrutiny, a third (33%) are aware that their council has used any of its services (17% of all respondents).

Chairs of scrutiny are more likely to be aware that their council had used the Centre for Public Scrutiny (51%) whilst leaders (24%) and portfolio holders (18%) are least likely to be aware that their council had used any of these services.

Figure 32 compares usage of services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny across role types based on all respondents. It highlights relatively high penetration amongst chief executives (30%) as well as chairs of scrutiny (39%).

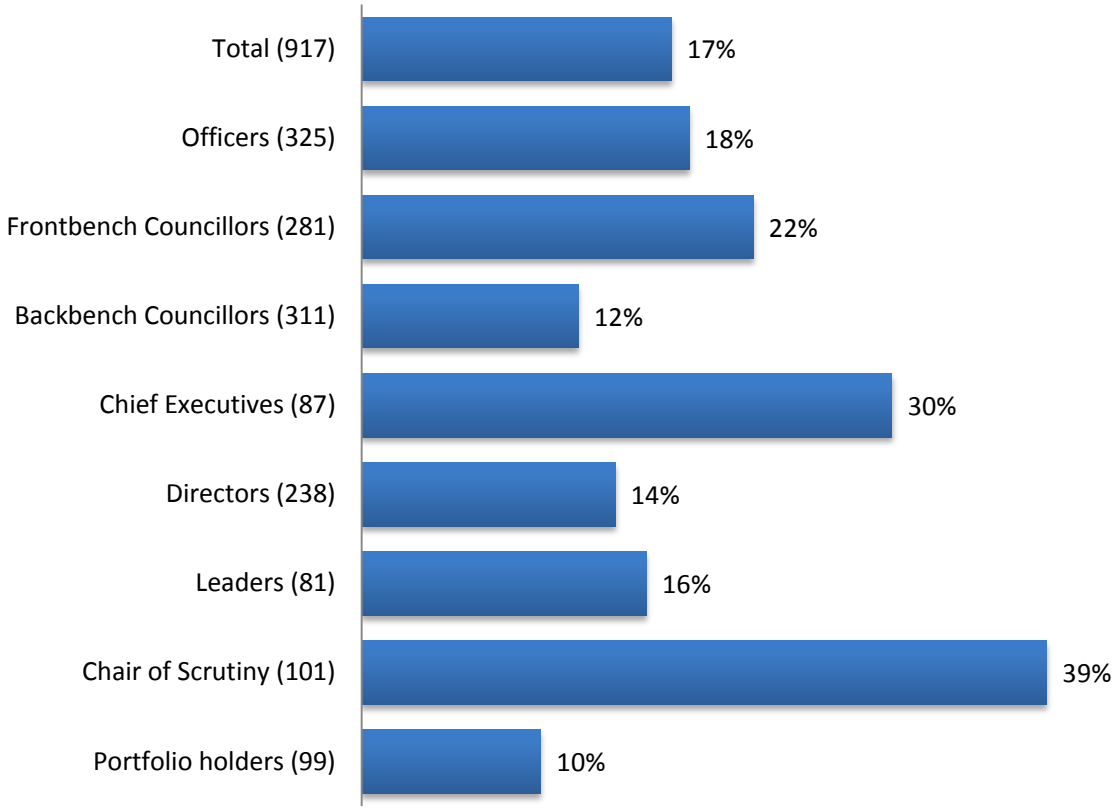

Figure 32: Has your council used any of the services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny in the last year? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role and role type)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Of those who were aware their councils had used services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, 79% are satisfied with them. This includes 40% that are very satisfied. Just 6% of those that have used the services are dissatisfied with them.

There are no significant differences by region or role. Of the three amalgamated role types backbenchers are least likely to be satisfied (76%, compared with 80% of officers and 79% of frontbench councillors).

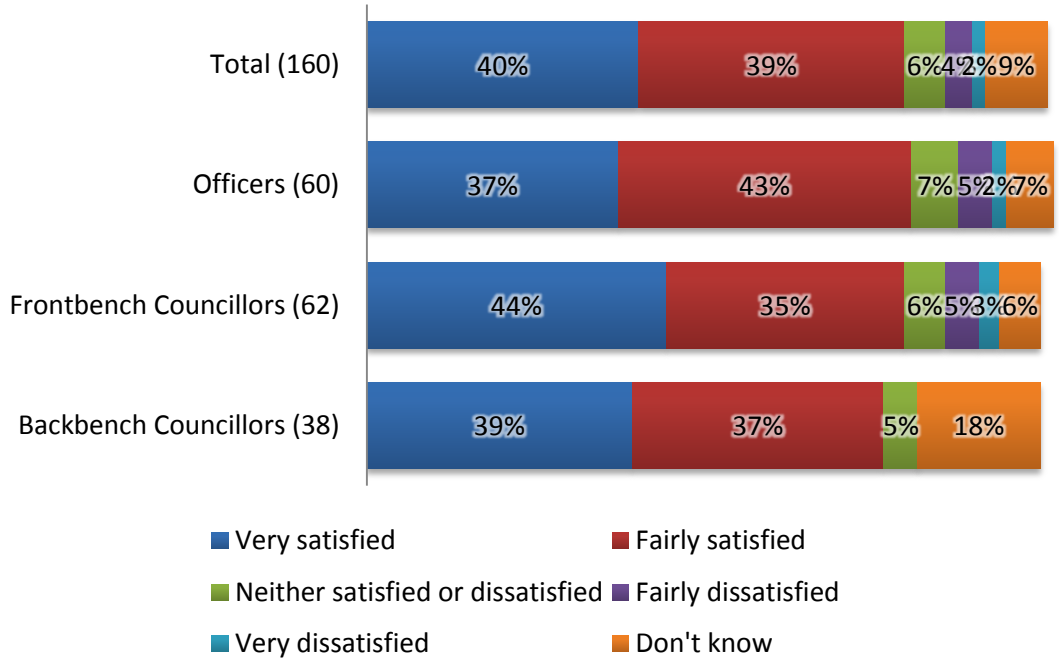

Figure 33: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role)
Bases in parentheses (where used)
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

4.5 Awareness and use of Local Partnerships

Nearly half the respondents (47%) had heard of Local Partnerships.

By region, this proportion is highest in the North East (56%) and lowest in the West Midlands (39%) and the South East (41%). The difference between the highest and lowest proportions is statistically significant.

By amalgamated role, frontbench councillors are less likely than officers and backbenchers to have heard of Local Partnerships (44%, compared with 49% and 47% respectively).

By role type, awareness is significantly higher amongst chief executives (67%) than amongst other roles (backbenchers and leaders, both 47%; portfolio holders, 45%; directors, 43%; and chairs of scrutiny, 41%).

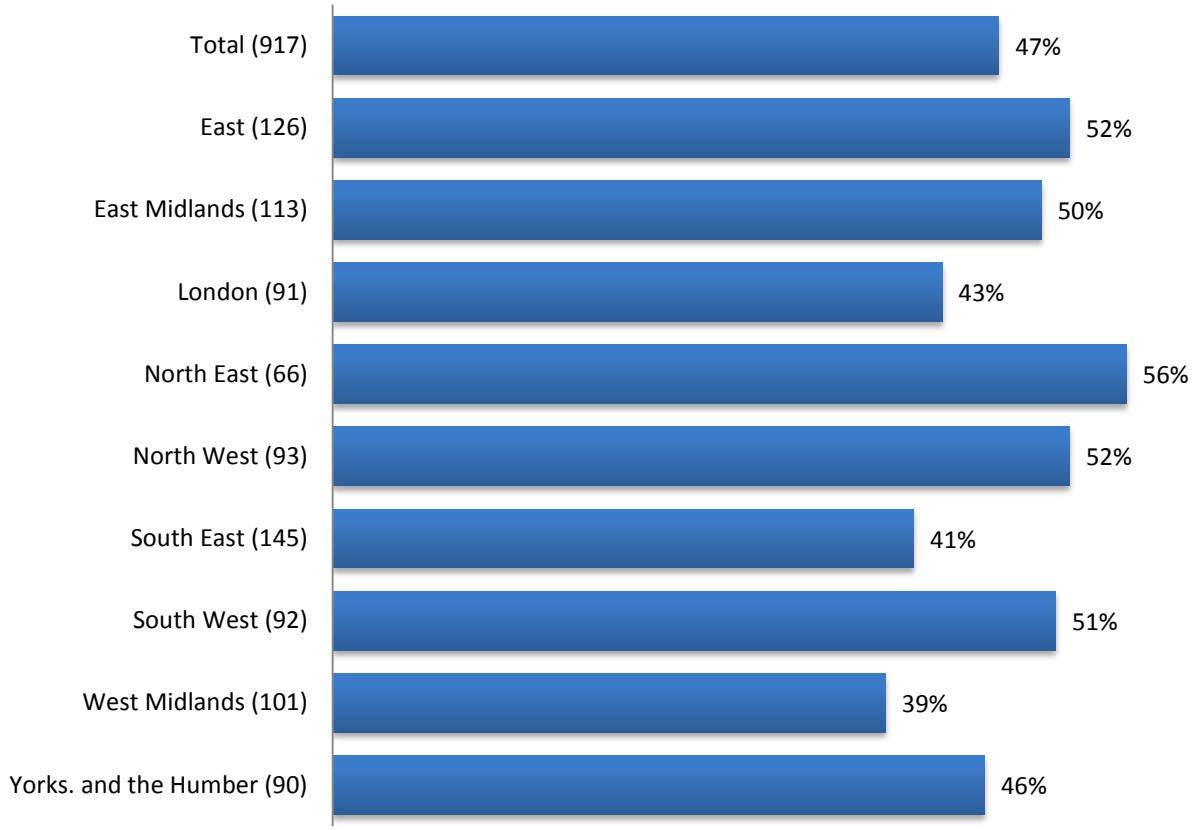

Figure 34: Have you heard of local partnerships? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Of those aware of Local Partnerships, a third (34%) are aware that their council has used any of their services (16% of all respondents).

Awareness of their councils usage is higher than average amongst backbenchers (49%). Directors (21%) and leaders (24%) are least likely to be aware that their council have used any of these services.

Figure 35 compares awareness of usage of services provided by Local Partnerships across the regions based on all respondents. Respondents in the South East are least likely to be aware that their council has used any of these services.

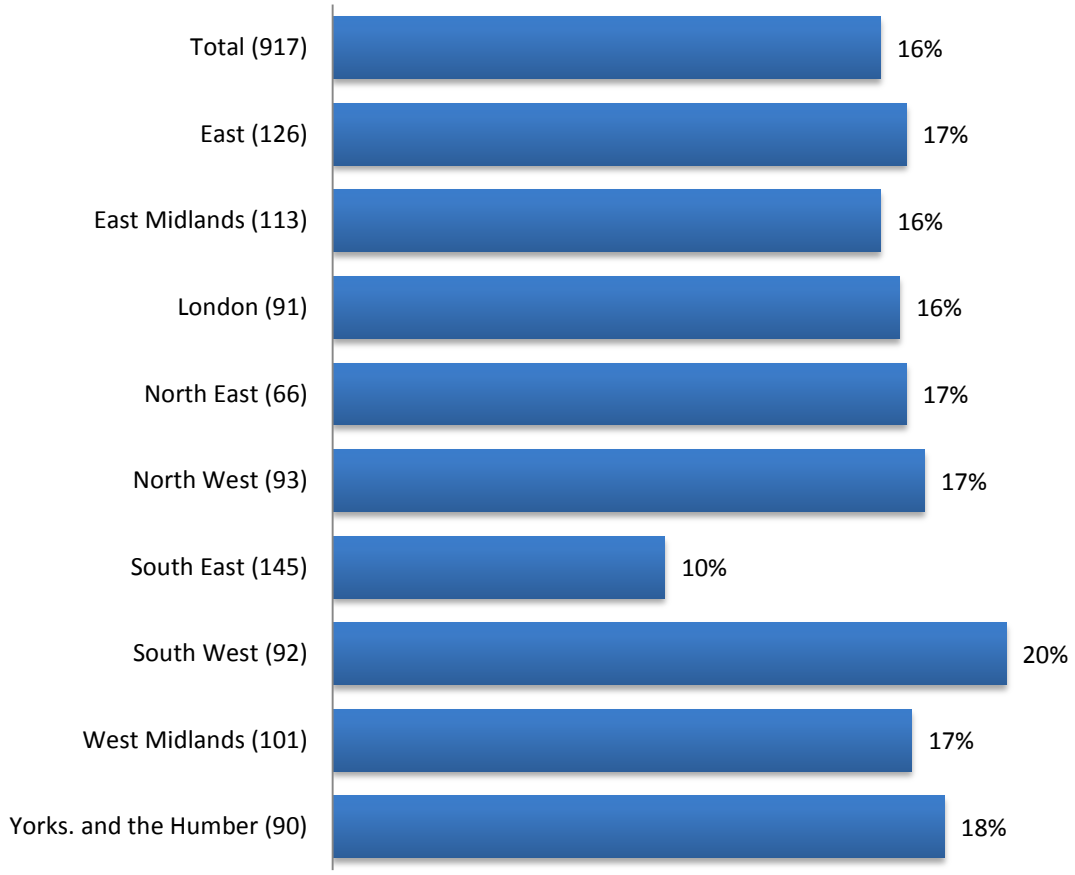

Figure 35: Has your council used any of the services provided by local partnerships in the last year? (Crosstabulated by region)
Bases in parentheses, Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Of those that have used services provided by Local Partnerships, 78% are satisfied with them. This includes 24% that are very satisfied. Just 4% of those that have used the services are dissatisfied with them.

There are no significant differences by region or role. However, respondents in the East region are most likely to be satisfied (90%) while those in the South East and West Midlands are least likely to be (both 71%).

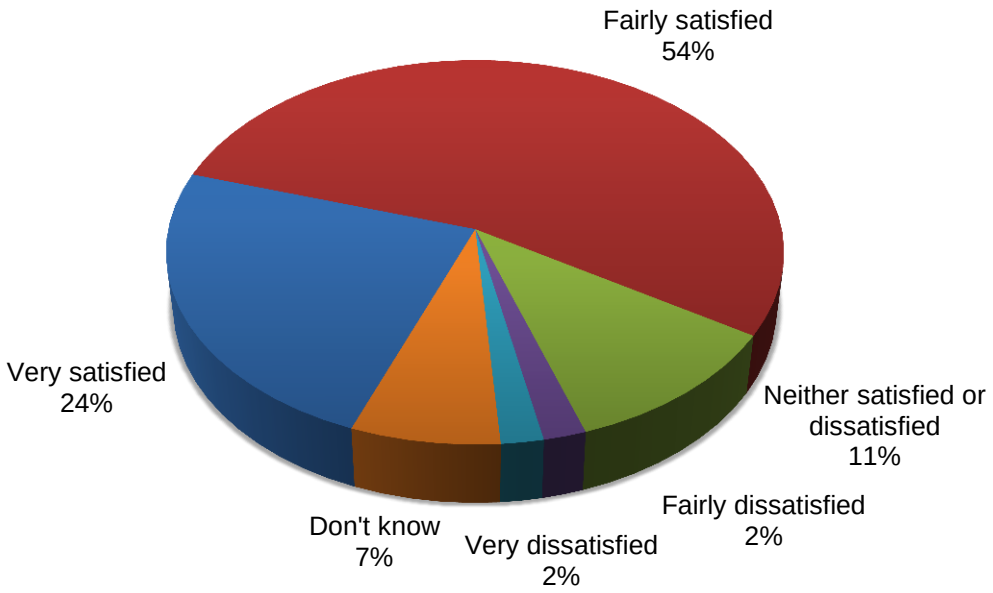

Figure 36: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by Local Partnerships?
Base = 431 (where used), Single response question
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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 have the highest level of understanding. However, the overall proportion of those that know just a little about the LGA has decreased significantly; suggesting work undertaken by the LGA to increase people's awareness and understanding has been successful.
- The increase in understanding since 2012 also extends to respondent's understanding of the purpose of the LGA and how it works for local government; however, overall backbenchers remain significantly less likely to understand this.
- The increased understanding may have impacted on the overall satisfaction with the LGA as significantly more respondents report that they would best be described 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. Respondents are also more likely to think they benefit a great deal from their relationship with the LGA.
- As in 2012 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 at least fairly well informed about their work compared with 2012. However, a similar proportion do not believe they are kept informed at all.
- There is a high level of awareness of the LGA's Rewiring Public Services campaign; awareness is lowest amongst backbenchers.
- There continues to be mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach although awareness has increased slightly these is not a significant increase. However, respondents continued to agree this was the correct approach and significantly more believe their local authority had made steps to drive improvement than in 2012.
- Respondents were slightly more 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 2012.
- Awareness of the resources offered by the LGA to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement continue to be mixed; however, awareness has improved considerably since 2012.
- Just over half of the respondents had heard of the Centre for Public Scrutiny 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.
- Similarly just over half of the respondents had heard of the Local partnerships and of these a third were aware their council had used its services and the majority of these were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received.

Appendix : Statement of Compliance

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).

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 be 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 20 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

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

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