



# Research Report



## Customer satisfaction survey 2012

Prepared for: Local Government Association (LGA)



---

# Customer satisfaction survey 2012

**Prepared for: Local Government Association (LGA)**

**Prepared by: Dawn Hands (Managing Director), Elizabeth Davies (Research Manager),  
& Alan McConville (Research Manager)**

**Date: January 2013**

---



**Produced by BMG Research**

**© Bostock Marketing Group Ltd, 2013**

**[www.bmgresearch.co.uk](http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk)**

Project: 8943

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

British Quality Foundation Member

The provision of Market Research Services in accordance with ISO 20252:2006

The provision of Market Research Services in accordance with ISO 9001:2008

Investors in People Standard - Certificate No. WMQC 0614

Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) Member Company

Registered under the Data Protection Act - Registration No. Z5081943

The BMG Research logo is a trade mark of Bostock Marketing Group Ltd



The **Local Government Association (LGA)** is the national voice of local government. We work with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

We are a politically-led, cross party organisation which works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

Supporting local government as the most efficient and accountable part of the public sector, the LGA will play a leading role in improvement and innovation so that councils can continue to make a difference in their local areas and to the lives of their residents.

The LGA will fight local government's corner, supporting councils through challenging times and focusing our efforts where we can have real impact.

The LGA covers every part of England and Wales, including county and district councils, metropolitan and unitary councils, London boroughs, Welsh unitary councils, fire, police, national park and passenger transport authorities.

**[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)**

## Table of Contents

Executive summary.....	6
Background and objectives .....	6
Method .....	6
Findings.....	7
Views on the LGA and its services .....	7
Views on LGA communications .....	8
Views on sector-led improvement.....	9
Conclusions .....	10
1 Introduction .....	11
1.1 Background .....	11
1.2 Objectives.....	11
1.3 Method.....	12
1.4 Sampling.....	12
1.5 Analytical approach .....	14
1.6 Report structure.....	15
2 Views on the LGA and its services .....	16
2.1 Knowledge of the LGA.....	16
2.1.1 Comparisons with 2008 report .....	17
2.2 Understanding of the purpose of the LGA .....	18
2.2.1 Comparisons with 2008 report .....	19
2.3 Discussing the LGA with others.....	20
2.3.1 Comparisons with 2008 report .....	21
2.4 Satisfaction with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector ....	21
2.4.1 Comparisons with 2008 report .....	22
2.5 LGA capabilities.....	22
2.5.1 Comparisons with 2008 report .....	24
2.6 Extent to which the LGA been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector.....	25
2.6.1 Comparisons with 2008 report .....	26
2.7 Benefits of relationship with the LGA.....	27
2.7.1 Comparisons with 2008 report .....	29
2.8 Activities conducted by the LGA.....	29

2.9	Services provided by the LGA .....	31
3	Views on LGA communications .....	34
3.1	Attitudes and preferences for LGA communications .....	34
3.1.1	Comparisons with 2008 report .....	35
3.2	Awareness of 'first' magazine .....	38
3.3	Level of contact with the LGA.....	41
3.4	Level of engagement with the LGA .....	41
3.5	How do authorities engage with the LGA .....	43
4	Views on sector-led improvement.....	47
4.1	Awareness of sector-led improvement .....	47
4.2	Driving local accountability .....	49
4.3	Capacity for continuous improvement .....	50
4.4	Awareness of resources to support sector-led improvement .....	51
4.5	Barriers and challenges to increasing local accountability and driving improvement	55
5	Conclusions .....	56
	Appendix 1: Latent class analysis.....	58

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: How well would you say you know the LGA? Would you say that you.. (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members .....	16
Figure 2: How well would you say you know the LGA? Would you say that you...(Crosstabulated by amalgamated role) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members .....	17
Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement ' <i>I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government</i> '? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members.....	18
Figure 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement ' <i>I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government</i> '? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members .....	19
Figure 5: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people? Base=933 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members.....	20

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) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 21

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...? Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 23

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) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 26

Figure 9: To what extent would you say your authority benefits from its relationship with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members . 27

Figure 10: You said your authority benefits 'not very much' or 'not at all' from its relationship with LGA. Why do you say that? Base=260 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members .. 28

Figure 11: 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? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 30

Figure 12: What is the most important activity conducted by the LGA Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 30

Figure 13: 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? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 32

Figure 14: Which of the following services is most useful to your authority? Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 33

Figure 15: How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its work? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 34

Figure 16: How do you generally find out about the work of the LGA? Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 36

Figure 17: How would you prefer to find out about the work of the LGA? Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 38

Figure 18: How often, if at all, do you read 'first' magazine, the LGA's fortnightly membership magazine? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 39

Figure 19: How useful do you think 'first' is in fulfilling the following roles? Base=738 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 40

Figure 20: How do you feel about the level of contact that the LGA has with you? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 41

Figure 21: How engaged do you feel you are with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 42

Figure 22: Would you like to be more engaged with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=521 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 43

Figure 23: By what means do you engage with the LGA? Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 44

Figure 24: By what means would you prefer to engage with the LGA? Base=697 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 46

Figure 25: How much, if anything, have you heard about the sector-led improvement approach? (Crosstabulated by region) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 47

Figure 26: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 48

Figure 27: What is the most significant thing your authority is doing to drive local accountability? Base=781 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 49

Figure 28: 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) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 50

Figure 29: 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) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 51

Figure 30: 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=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 52

Figure 31: 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) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 54

Figure 32: 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) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 55

Figure 33: Region of respondents (crosstabulated by LCA class) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 61

Figure 34: Respondent's amalgamated role (crosstabulated by LCA class) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 61

Figure 35: How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its work? (Crosstabulated by LCA group) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members .... 62

Figure 36: How often, if at all, do you read 'first' magazine, the LGA's fortnightly membership magazine? (Crosstabulated by LCA group) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 63

Figure 37: How engaged do you feel you are with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by LCA group) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members..... 64

Figure 38: How much, if anything, have you heard about this sector-led improvement approach? (Crosstabulated by LCA group) Base=937 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members ..... 65

## Table of tables

Table 1: Completed interviews.....	13
Table 2: Respondent local authority type.....	14
Table 3: Reasons for refusal.....	14
Table 4: Knowledge of the LGA - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research.....	18
Table 5: Discussing the LGA with others - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research .	21
Table 6: Satisfaction with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research .....	22
Table 7: Agreement with the capabilities of the LGA - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research .....	25
Table 8: Extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research .....	27
Table 9: Benefit of relationship with the LGA - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research .....	29
Table 10: How well informed the respondent is kept by the LGA about its work - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research .....	35

## 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 2012.

The LGA Perceptions Survey 2012 has been commissioned following the merging of five organisations under the operating framework of the LGA during 2010-2011<sup>1</sup>, 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

Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were undertaken with a broadly representative sample of 937 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:

- the LGA's offer and current provision;
- its current role and priorities and how these can be developed;

---

<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Association; Local Government Improvement and Development; Local Government Employers; Local Government Regulation; and the Leadership Centre.

- 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 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 2008 rapid review have also been made.

Further analysis was also undertaken to identify emerging 'segments' of respondents holding similar views and perceptions of the LGA and how these groups would prefer to be communicated with in the future.

### Views on the LGA and its services

- Knowledge of the LGA is high. Nearly one-half (49%) of survey respondents felt they 'know a fair amount about it'; however, over one-third (38%) reported that they 'know just a little about it. Backbenchers were significantly more likely than other role types to report that they 'know just a little' about the LGA (54% compared with 31% of all other role types).
- Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents reported that they agreed with the statement I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government 'a great deal', and over one-half (58%) reported that they agreed 'to some extent'. Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely to report that they did not agree at all or did not agree very much with the statement than other role types (18% compared with 9% of all other role types).
- The majority of survey respondents (63%) reported that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or if asked). However, nearly one-third (32%) reported that they had 'no views one way or another' on this question. Comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate that both Officers and Frontbench members are more likely to speak positively about the LGA in 2012 than in 2008 (63% and 66% respectively in 2012 compared with 51% and 54% in 2008).
- More than one-half of respondents (63%) reported that they were either fairly or very satisfied when asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector.
- Overall respondents tended to agree or strongly agree that the LGA were performing their key functions. Over three-quarters (79%) of respondents agreed that the LGA *addresses the issues that are important to councils*; and nearly three-quarters of respondents (71%) agreed that *the LGA helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector*. However, less than one-half (43%) of respondents agreed that the LGA *demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives*.
- 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' (15%).

- When asked the extent to which they believed their authority benefited from its relationship with the LGA nearly one-half of respondents (48%) reported 'a fair amount'; however, only 11% responded 'a great deal'.
- Overall, the majority (90%) of respondents believed 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* (25%).
- Overall, the majority of respondents believed all the services provided by the LGA were either 'fairly important' or 'very important'. Respondents viewed *lobbying on behalf of local government* as a particularly important service with 55% viewing it as 'very important'.
- The services respondents viewed as most useful were *lobbying on behalf of local government* (32%) and *providing up-to-date information about local government* (12%).

### Views on LGA communications

- Overall, the majority of respondents believed that the LGA kept them either 'fairly well informed' (48%) or 'very well informed' (21%) about their work. However, nearly one-quarter reported that the LGA 'Gives me only a limited amount of information' (24%).
- Respondents reported that they found out about the LGA's work in a range of ways. In particular respondents reported that they found out about the LGA's work through 'first' magazine (67%), direct email and post (58%), publications (53%), and events 49%.
- When asked how they would *prefer* to find out about the work of the LGA the most frequently requested methods were through direct email or post (34%), and 'first' magazine (15%).
- There was a high level of awareness of 'first' magazine amongst respondents, over one-half (54%) reported that they always or regularly read it.
- The majority of respondents found that 'first' magazine either 'very useful' or 'fairly useful' in a range of ways including: *informing you about what the LGA does* (78%), *notifying you about key LGA events and publications* (74%), *providing up-to-date coverage of news and issues* (81%), *providing an analysis of policy issues* (72%), and *overall, in your role as a councillor or officer* (72%).
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (70%) reported that they felt they currently had 'about the right level of contact' from the LGA. However, further quarter (26%) reported that they had 'not enough contact' with the LGA.
- Overall, more than one-half (55%) of respondents reported that they were either 'not very engaged' or 'not at all engaged' with the LGA. Less than one-tenth (6%) of respondents reported that they were 'very engaged' with the LGA.
- Only 14% of respondents that did not feel engaged with the LGA reported that they wanted to be 'much more engaged' and 40% wanted to be 'a little more engaged'.
- Methods of engagement with the LGA that were most frequently mentioned included: responding to LGA consultations (63%); contacting LGA officers by email or phone (41%); and contributing in LGA meetings and seminars (41%).

- When asked how they would *prefer* to engage with the LGA respondents reported a range of preferences; however, the most frequent methods reported were through contacting LGA officers by email or phone (52%), and contacting councillors/boards by email or phone (40%).

### Views on sector-led improvement

- Over one-half (59%) of respondents reported that they have either 'heard a little' or 'heard nothing' about sector-led improvement.
- Over three-quarters (83%) of respondents reported that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement*. Over three-quarters (83%) of respondents reported that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *local accountability is strong in my authority*.
- Respondents whose authorities had strong local accountability reported that, amongst other activities, they were undertaking public and community engagement and consultations (44%), and improving the accessibility of information (13%) to drive local accountability.
- The majority (85%) of respondents were 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 (79%) of respondents were 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 was low. Respondents had the most awareness of: the *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011* (31% of respondents reported that they had 'heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about this resource). Respondents had the least awareness of the resource providing *five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control* (73% of respondents reported that they had 'heard nothing' or 'heard a little' about this resource).
- Over one-half (61%) of respondents believed 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'.
- Barriers and challenges cited by respondents to increasing local accountability and driving improvement included: lack of financial resources (31%), lack of public interest in engagement (14%), lack of human resource support (9%), and a lack of time or capacity (9%).
- The most frequently mentioned challenges that respondents believed would face their local authority in the next two years that they would like the LGA's help with was funding and budget management (52%). Other responses included lobbying central government (5%), maintaining service delivery (5%), and making improvements, savings and efficiencies (5%).

## Conclusions

- There is a high level of awareness of the LGA and the work it undertakes; however, understanding of this work varies dependent on specific job role. Further work could be undertaken to engage with Backbenchers and communicate the LGA's role and services to them.
- 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.
- 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.
- Views and understanding of the role and services of the LGA have broadly remained the same or improved between 2008 and 2012; in particular, Frontbench Councillors views and awareness appear to have improved.
- A high proportion of respondents do not currently feel engaged with the LGA but would like to be. The majority of respondents tended to prefer to receive communications directly via email suggesting digitalisation has become more entrenched in the sector. However, respondents still preferred to engage with the LGA directly either responding to LGA consultations or using email or telephone to contact LGA officers.
- There is a mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach. However, respondents tended to agree this was the correct approach and believed their local authority had made steps to drive improvement and had strong local accountability driven by public engagement, consultation and information sharing.
- Respondents were 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'.
- 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. Respondents were most aware of: *the provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011;* but were least aware of the resource providing *five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control.* However, respondents tended to believe that such resources would have a positive impact on their own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

## 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 2012.

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<sup>2</sup> 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 has been commissioned following the merging of five organisations under the operating framework of the LGA during 2010-2011<sup>3</sup>, 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.

### 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 previous rapid review survey from 2008, 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 2008. 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

---

<sup>2</sup> Public service reform; Growth, jobs and prosperity; Funding for local government; Efficiency and productivity; Sector-led improvement.

<sup>3</sup> The Local Government Association; Local Government Improvement and Development; Local Government Employers; Local Government Regulation; and the Leadership Centre.

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 2012 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. Contacts were called up to 10 times before being logged as a non-response. Interviews took between 15 and 20 minutes.

The survey was designed by the LGA in partnership with BMG Research. Building on the previous rapid review survey it explored:

- the LGA's offer and current provision;
- its current role and priorities and 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.

Prior to launching the survey a CATI pilot of the survey 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 would not last longer than 20 minutes; however, no issues were identified relating to participants' understanding of the survey content. The survey subsequently took place between the 4<sup>th</sup> October and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012.

### 1.4 Sampling

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).

In the majority of instances quotas were achieved; however, there was a small shortfall in the following areas.

- Officers in the North East

- Frontbench Councillors in the North East

This shortfall means further analysis by these groups in the North East provided in the appendices of this report is not statistically significant.

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

Amalgamated role: Role:	Officers		Frontbench Councillors			Backbench Councillors	Regional Total
	Chief Executives	Directors	Leaders	Chairs of Scrutiny	Portfolio Holders	Backbench Councillors	
East	9	31	13	12	8	40	113 (12%)
East Midlands	18	31	11	13	12	40	125 (13%)
London	6	25	2	12	16	30	91 (10%)
North East	3	18	5	5	8	30	69 (7%)
North West	12	22	8	10	12	31	95 (10%)
South East	16	40	22	19	6	50	153 (16%)
South West	11	21	9	12	12	30	95 (10%)
West Midlands	11	26	8	9	17	30	101 (11%)
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	27	4	10	18	30	95 (10%)
<b>Role Total:</b>	92	241	82	102	109	311	937 (100%)
<b>Amalgamated role Total:</b>	333 (36%)		293 (31%)			311 (33%)	937 (100%)

**Table 1: Completed interviews**

A sample frame of 18,494 contacts was provided to BMG Research by the LGA. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were undertaken with 937 respondents. 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.

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

Local authority type	Number	%
English Unitary	165	18
London Borough	91	10
Metropolitan District	121	13
Shire County	79	8
Shire District	481	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>100</b>

**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. A total of 505 contacts refused to take part in the survey reasons for refusals are shown in Table 3.

Reason for refusal	Number	%
No time/too busy	205	41
Don't do surveys	50	10
No interest in helping LGA	141	28
Other <sup>4</sup>	109	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Reasons for refusal**

Following this, all individuals agreeing to take part in the survey were asked how well they know the LGA. None of these individuals had never heard of the LGA; however, 32 reported that they had 'heard of but know nothing about it'. As such these 32 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 2008 rapid review have been made. The exact statistical significance of these findings cannot be determined due to the difference in the sample sizes and make-up used; therefore these findings should be seen as indicative only. As

<sup>4</sup> Other reasons for not taking part in the survey included personal reasons and not wanting to take part in this survey at this point.

Backbenchers were not interviewed in the 2008 rapid review, they have been excluded in these comparisons so as not to skew findings.

Following discussions with the LGA it was agreed that further analysis would be undertaken in order to identify emerging 'segments' of respondents holding similar views and perceptions of the LGA and how these groups would prefer to be communicated with in the future. The findings from this analysis and further information regarding the methodology employed to identify the emerging groups is presented in Appendix 1 of this report.

## **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 qualitative interviews; 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, nearly one-half (49%) of survey respondents felt they 'know a fair amount about it'; however, over one-third (38%) reported that they 'know just a little about it', whilst only 12% 'know a great deal about it'.

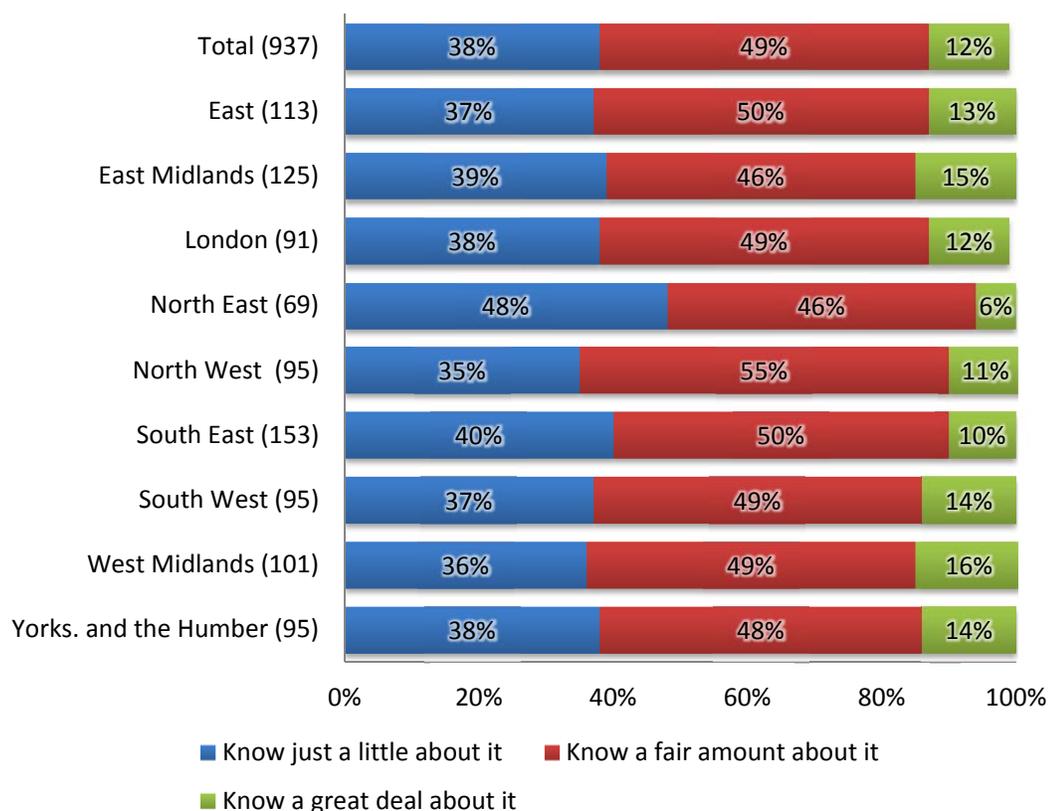


Figure 1: How well would you say you know the LGA? Would you say that you.. (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

It is worth noting that overall the North East reported the least knowledge of the LGA; however, this difference was not statistically significant. When respondents' knowledge of the LGA is explored in further detail, there is very little statistically significant difference between regions or local authority types; however, there are some significant differences by role.

As Figure 2 shows, Backbenchers were significantly more likely than other role types to report that they 'know just a little' about the LGA (54% compared with 31% of all other role types).

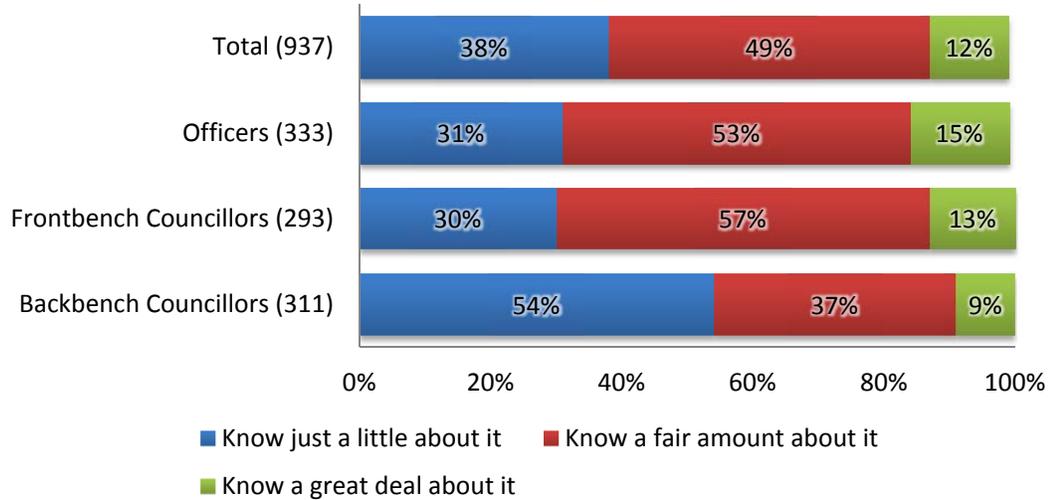


Figure 2: How well would you say you know the LGA? Would you say that you...(Crosstabulated by amalgamated role)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further to this, analysis by specific role type shows that:

- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than other role types to report that they 'know a great deal' about the LGA (35% compared with 10% of all other role types).
- Directors were significantly more likely than Chief Executives to report that they 'know just a little' about the LGA (41% compared with 5% respectively).
- Leaders were significantly less likely than Chairs of Scrutiny and Portfolio Holders to report that they 'know just a little' about the LGA (12% compared with 40% and 33% respectively). Subsequently, Leaders were significantly more likely than Chairs of Scrutiny and Portfolio Holders to report that they 'know a fair amount' about the LGA (71% compared to 52% respectively).

### 2.1.1 Comparisons with 2008 report

Overall, comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate that overall knowledge of the LGA amongst officers has decreased with 31% reporting they know 'just a little' about it compared with 14% in 2008. However, it is possible these findings may be skewed based on the distribution of Chief Executives and Directors in the sample in the rapid review, particularly given the finding that Chief Executives were significantly more likely than other role types to report that they 'know a great deal' about the LGA (35%).

Overall knowledge amongst Frontbench members appears to have increased with only 30% reporting they know 'just a little about it compared with 41% in 2008.

	Officers		Frontbench members	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
Know a great deal about it	20	15	8	13
Know a fair amount about it	66	53	51	57
Know just a little about it	14	31	41	30

**Table 4: Knowledge of the LGA - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research**

## 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 one-third (31%) reported that they agreed 'a great deal', over one-half (58%) reported that they agreed 'to some extent', whilst only 12% did not agree at all or did not agree very much.

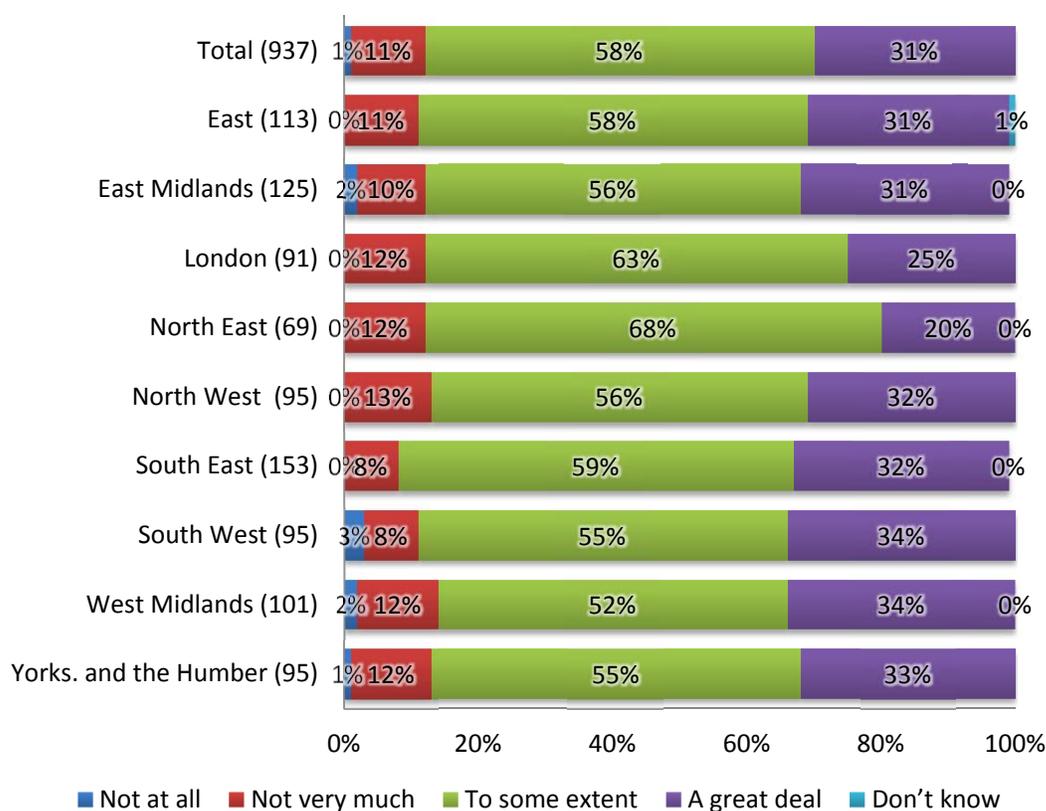


Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government'? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

When respondents' answers to this question are explored in further detail, there is very little statistically significant difference between regions; however, there are some significant differences by role.

Figure 4 shows that Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely to report that they did not agree at all or did not agree very much with the statement than other role types (18%

compared with 9% of all other role types). Subsequently, Officers and Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Backbenchers to report that they agreed with the statement 'to some extent' or 'a great deal' (92% and 90% compared to 82% respectively).

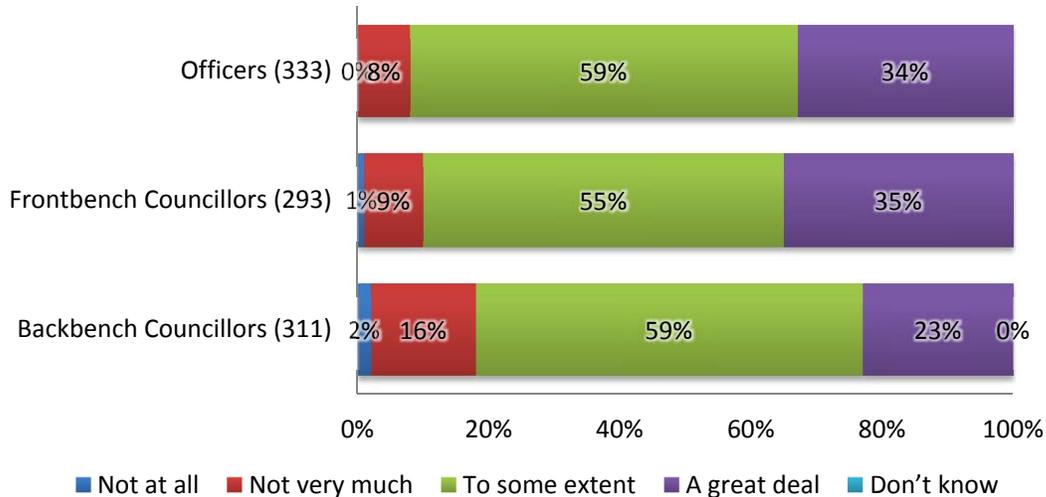


Figure 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government'? (Crosstabulated by amalgamated role)  
Base=937  
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis by specific role type also shows that:

- Directors were significantly more likely to report that they did not agree at all or did not agree very much with the statement than Chief Executives (10% compared with 1% respectively). Subsequently, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to report that they agreed with the statement 'a great deal' (57% compared to 25% respectively).
- Leaders were significantly more likely than Chairs of Scrutiny or Portfolio Holders to report that they agreed with the statement 'a great deal' (50% compared to 26% and 33% respectively).

In addition, survey analysis shows that respondents from Shire Counties are significantly more likely to agree 'a great deal' with the statement *I understand the LGA's purpose and how it works for local government* than English Unitary authorities, London Boroughs, and Shire Districts (43% compared with 25%, 25%, and 32% respectively).

### 2.2.1 Comparisons with 2008 report

Overall, comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate the extent to which Officers and Frontbench members agreed that they understood a great deal or to some extent the purpose of the LGA has decreased. In 2012 92% of Officers and 90% of Frontbench members reported that they understood a great deal or to some extent the purpose of the LGA compared with 100% and 92% respectively in 2008.

## 2.3 Discussing the LGA with others

The majority of survey respondents (63%) reported that they would best be described as speaking positively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or if asked). Only a minority (5%) of respondents reported that they would best be described as speaking negatively about the LGA to others (either spontaneously or is asked). However, nearly one-third (32%) reported that they had 'no views one way or another' on this question.

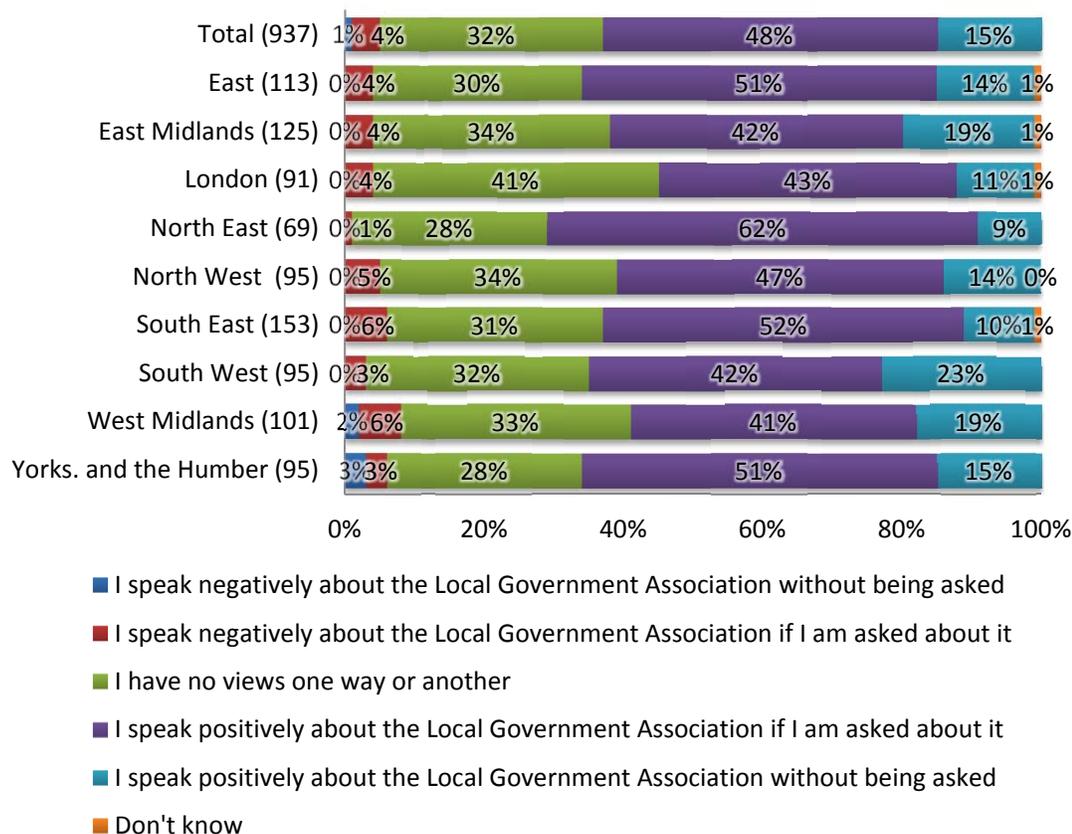


Figure 5: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the LGA to other people?  
 Base=933  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type. Although, it was identified that Chief Executives are significantly more likely to speak negatively about the LGA, if asked about it, than Directors (10% compared with 3% respectively); this finding should also be seen in the context that, Chief Executives are also significantly more likely than Directors to speak positively about the LGA without being asked (21% compared with 12% respectively).

In addition, survey analysis shows that respondents from English Unitary authorities are significantly more likely to speak positively about the LGA if asked about it than London Boroughs, Metropolitan Districts and Shire Counties (56% compared with 43%, 40%, and 42% respectively).

### 2.3.1 Comparisons with 2008 report

Overall, comparisons with the rapid review indicate that both Officers and Frontbench members are more likely to speak positively about the LGA in 2012 than in 2008 (63% and 66% respectively in 2012 compared with 51% and 54% in 2008).

	Officers		Frontbench members	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
Would speak positively about the LGA	51	63	54	66
Would speak negatively about the LGA	10	6	11	6

**Table 5: Discussing the LGA with others - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research**

### 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, more than one-half of respondents (63%) reported that they were either fairly or very satisfied. Only 4 respondents reported they were 'very dissatisfied' with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector.

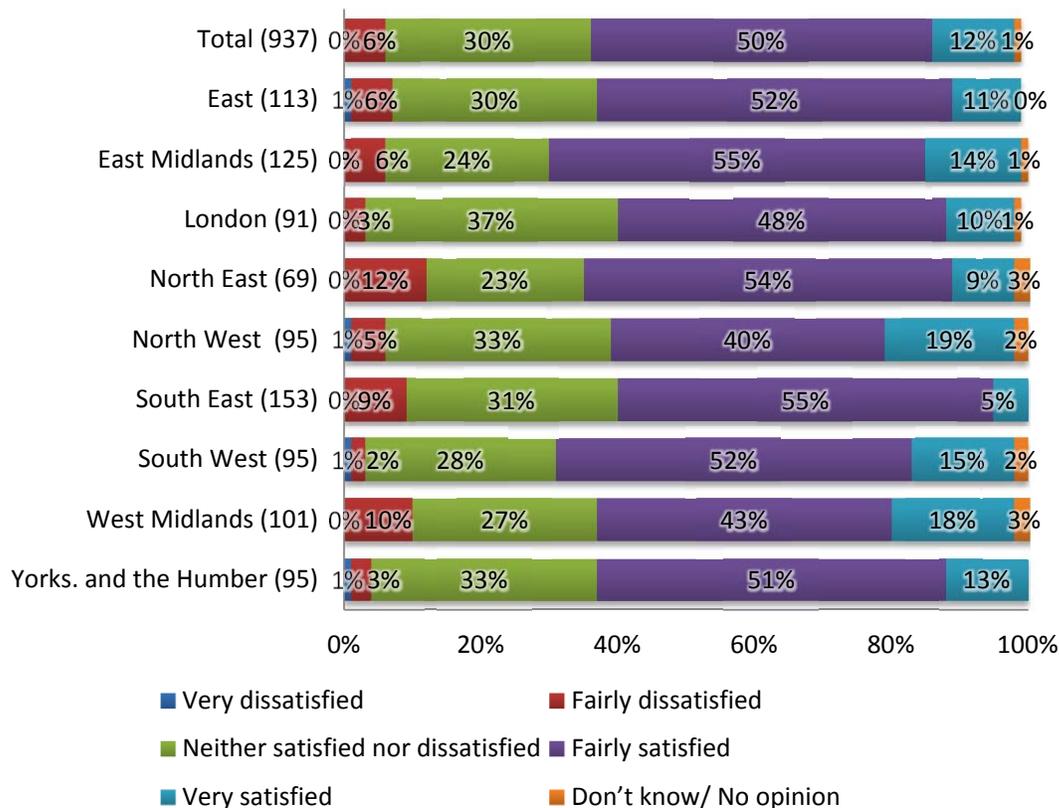


Figure 6: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type regarding how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector. However, Directors were significantly more likely to report they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ than Chief Executives (34% compared to 16% respectively). Subsequently, Chief Executives were significantly more likely to be ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ satisfied with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector (73% compared to 58% respectively).

#### 2.4.1 Comparisons with 2008 report

Comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate that overall an increased proportion of both Officers and Frontbench members are not identifying as fairly or very satisfied with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector, but as neutral (29% and 25% in 2012 respectively compared with 17% of both Officers and Frontbench members in 2008).

	Officers		Frontbench members	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
Very or fairly satisfied	75	62	75	66
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	29	17	25
Very or fairly dissatisfied	8	8	9	8

**Table 6: Satisfaction with the work of the LGA on behalf of the local government sector - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research**

## 2.5 LGA capabilities

Overall respondents tended to agree or strongly agree that the LGA were performing the functions outlined in the key statements shown in Figure 7. In particular, over three-quarters (79%) of respondents agreed that the LGA *addresses the issues that are important to councils*; nearly three-quarters of respondents (71%) agreed that *the LGA helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector*; over two-thirds of respondents (69%) agreed that *the LGA effectively represents the views of its members to central government*; and nearly two-thirds (68%) of respondents agreed that the LGA *understands what councils need to help them improve their services and organisational capacity*.

However, less than one-half (43%) of respondents agreed that the LGA *demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives* and less than one-half (47%) agree that the LGA represents the views of all its members.

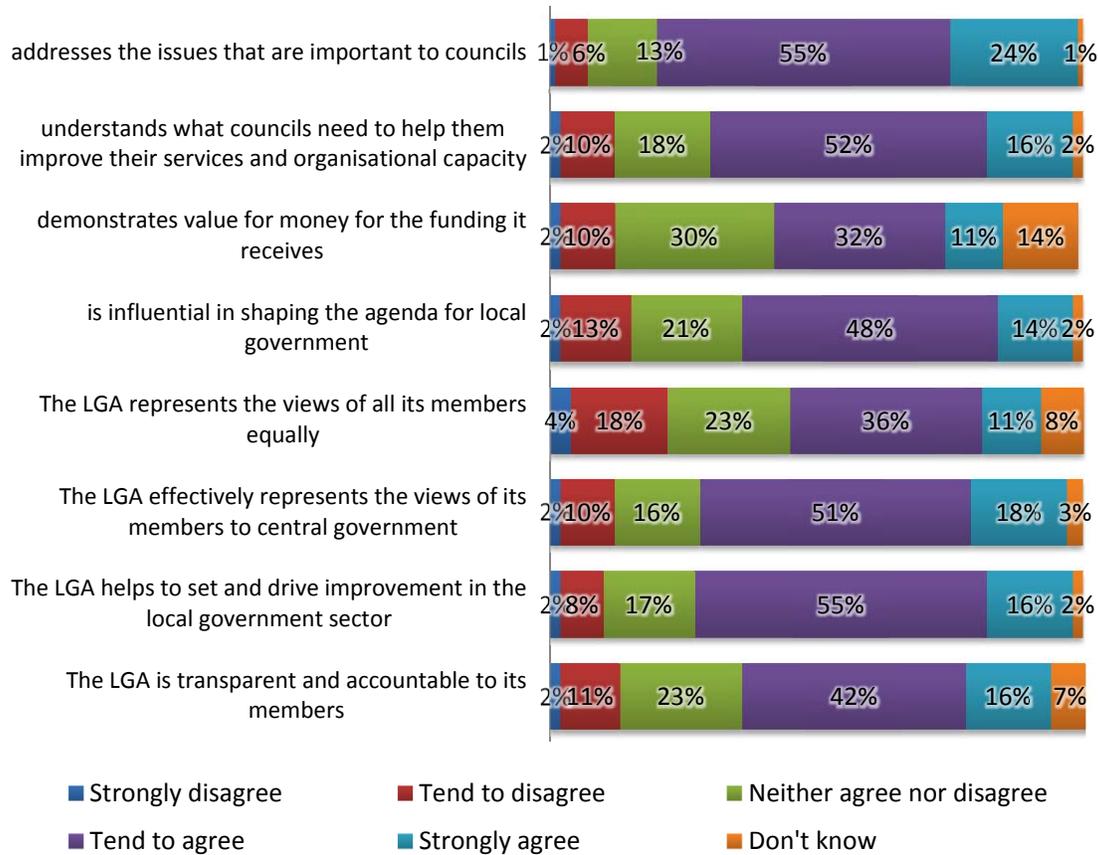


Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows that there is very little difference in respondents' levels of agreement or disagreement by region; however, the North-West was more likely than other areas to disagree that the LGA *understands what councils need to help them improve their services and organisational capacity*.

There were some significant differences by role. These included:

- Officers are significantly more likely to agree that the LGA tackles the issues that are important to councils than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors (84% compared to 77% and 72% respectively).
- Frontbench Councillors are significantly more likely to disagree that the LGA demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives than Officers or Backbenchers (18% compared to 10% and 11% respectively).
- Chief Executives are significantly more likely than Directors to disagree that the LGA is influential in shaping the agenda for local government (21% compared with 12% respectively).
- Frontbench Councillors and backbench Councillor are more likely than Officers to agree that the LGA represents the views of all its members equally (49% and 53% compared with 41% respectively).

- Frontbench Councillors and backbench Councillor are more likely than Officers to agree that the LGA is transparent and accountable to its members (60% and 61% compared with 52% respectively). However, Chief Executives are significantly more likely than Directors to agree that the LGA is transparent and accountable to its members (62% compared with 49% respectively).

### 2.5.1 Comparisons with 2008 report

Comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate that perceptions of the LGA's capabilities as described in the statements provided have remained broadly the same. However, there has been a noticeable decrease in respondent's agreement that *the LGA is influential in shaping the agenda for local government* between 2008 and 2012 (79% of Officers and 76% of Frontbench members agreed with the statement in 2008 compared with 66% and 61% respectively in 2012).

Nearly twice the proportion of Officers in 2012 agrees that *the LGA represents the views of all its members equally* than in 2008 (41% and 22% respectively); and an increased proportion of Officers agree *the LGA effectively represents the views of its members to central government* (73% in 2012 compared with 65% in 2008).

In addition, and an increased proportion of Frontbench members agree *the LGA demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives* (47% in 2012 compared with 35% in 2008); and an increased proportion of Frontbench members agree *the LGA is transparent and accountable to its members* (60 in 2012 compared with 47% in 2012).

	Officers		Frontbench members	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
Agree the LGA address the issues that are important to councils	80	84	74	77
Agree the LGA understands what councils need to help improve their service and organisational capacity	68	71	69	70
Agree the LGA demonstrates value for money for the funding it receives	35	39	35	47
Agree the LGA is influential in shaping the agenda for local government	79	66	76	61
Agree the LGA represents the views of all its members equally	22	41	43	49
Agree the LGA effectively represents the views of its members to central government	65	73	70	67
Agree the LGA helps to set and drive improvement in the local government sector	65	71	71	70
Agree the LGA is transparent and accountable to its members	52	52	47	60

**Table 7: Agreement with the capabilities of the LGA - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research**

## 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' (15%); however nearly one-fifth of respondents (18%) responded 'Not very much' or 'Not at all' (2%).

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type although overall the West Midlands and London provide the highest negative responses to this question.

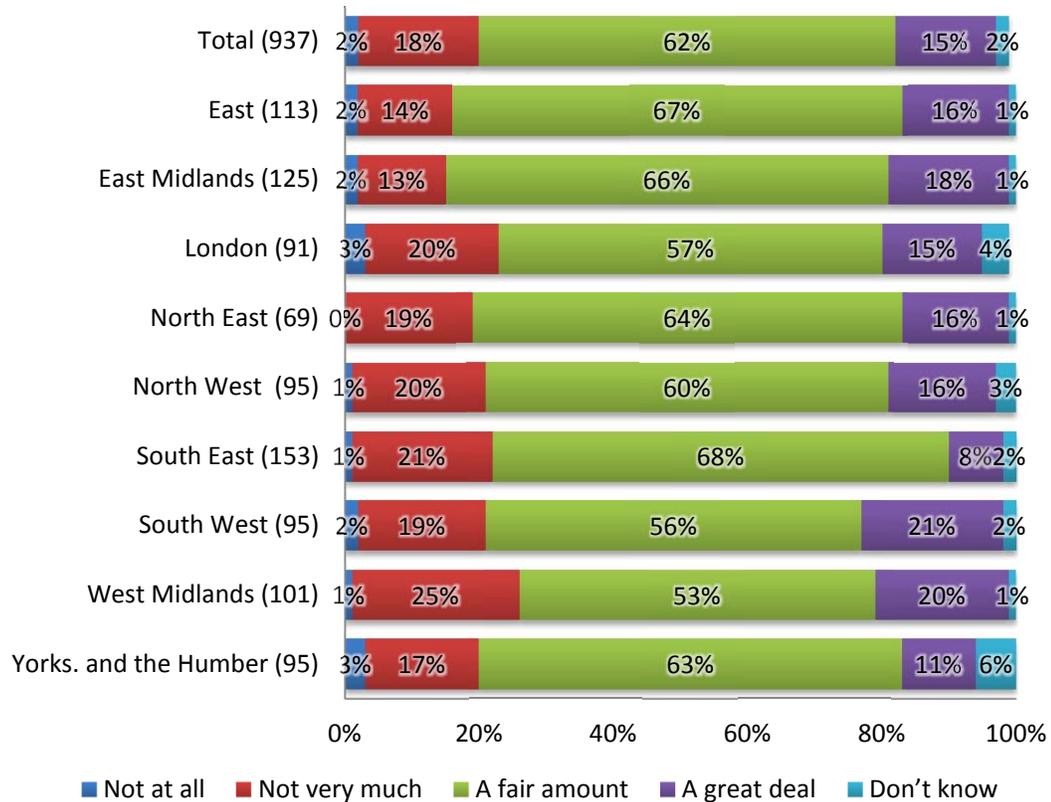


Figure 8: Based on what you know, to what extent, if at all, has the LGA been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

**2.6.1 Comparisons with 2008 report**

Comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate that Frontbench members’ perceptions of the extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector have broadly stayed the same, with approximately three-quarters responding ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’. However, the strength of their view has reduced with only 19% reporting that they believe the extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector as ‘a great deal’ in 2012 compared with 27% in 2008.

Officers’ views have become somewhat more negative since 2008, with 17% reporting that the extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector is ‘not very much’ in 2012 compared with 11% in 2008.

	Officers		Frontbench members	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
A great deal	14	17	27	19
A fair amount	73	65	51	56
Not very much	11	17	20	21
Not at all	0	1	0	2

**Table 8: Extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research**

### 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 nearly one-half of respondents (48%) reported ‘a fair amount’; only 11% responded ‘a great deal’, whilst one-quarter (25%) responded ‘not very much’. Only 2% of respondents reported that they did not believe their local authority benefited from its relationship with the LGA.

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type although overall the West Midlands and London provide the highest negative responses to this question.

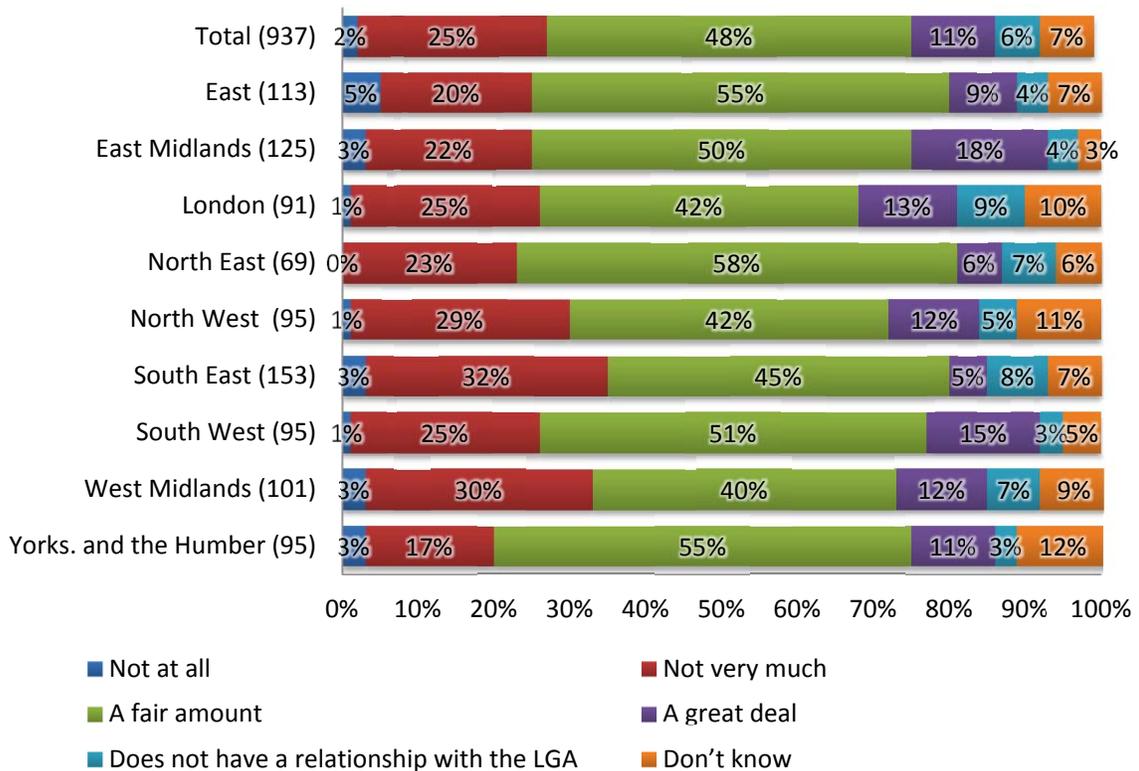


Figure 9: To what extent would you say your authority benefits from its relationship with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Respondents who reported that their authority did not benefit at all or 'not very much' were asked why they believed this was. A range of responses were provided reflecting the different experiences of individuals and authorities as shown in Figure 10; however, nearly one-fifth (17%) reported they believed this to be because the LGA was ineffective in addressing issues or representing their authority, 125 reported that they had only had limited communication or contact with the LGA, and 12% reported that they did not have any evidence of the LGA's impact.

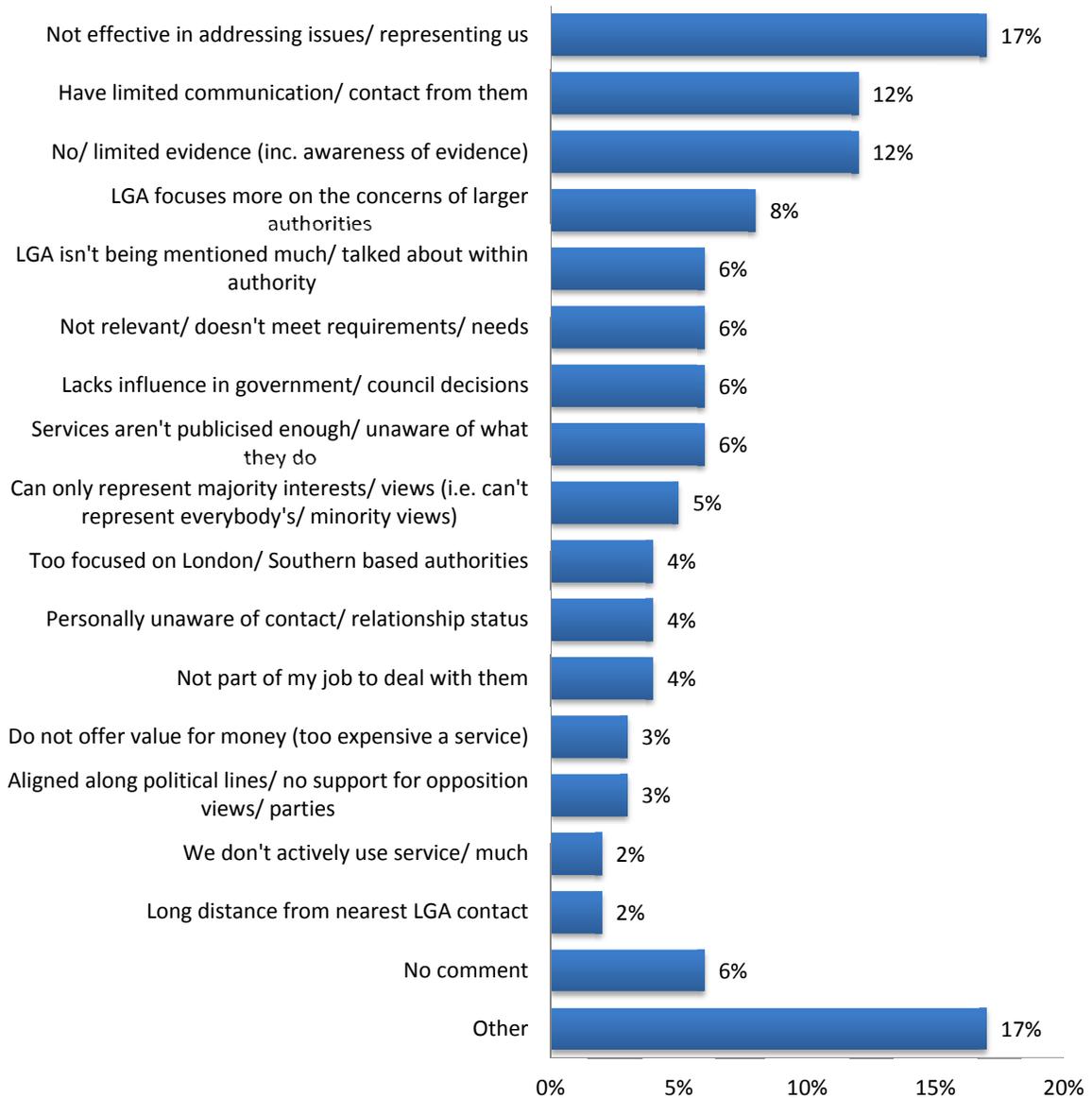


Figure 10: You said your authority benefits 'not very much' or 'not at all' from its relationship with LGA. Why do you say that?  
 Base=260  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### 2.7.1 Comparisons with 2008 report

Comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate that Officers' perceptions of the extent to which their authority has benefited from their relationship with the LGA have broadly stayed the same, with approximately two-thirds responding 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount'. However, the strength of their view has increased with 11% reporting that they believe the extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector as 'a great deal' in 2012 compared with 4% in 2008.

However, the reverse is true for Frontbench members. Whilst Frontbench members' perceptions of the extent to which their authority has benefited from their relationship with the LGA have also broadly stayed the same, with approximately two-thirds responding 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount'; the strength of their view has decreased with 12% reporting that they believe the extent to which the LGA has been an effective advocate for the interests of the local government sector as 'a great deal' in 2012 compared with 18% in 2008.

	Officers		Frontbench members	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
A great deal	4	11	18	12
A fair amount	59	50	57	49
Not very much	31	26	24	26
Not at all	3	1	0	3

**Table 9: Benefit of relationship with the LGA - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research**

## 2.8 Activities conducted by the LGA

Overall, the majority (90%) of respondents believed all the activities conducted by the LGA (shown in Figure 11) 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'.

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type. However, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than other role type to believe that *providing a single voice for local government* was 'very important' (78% compared with 52% of all other role types). In addition, Chief Executives were also significantly more likely than other role type to believe that *managing local government's reputation in the national media* was 'very important' (80% compared with 54% of all other role types).

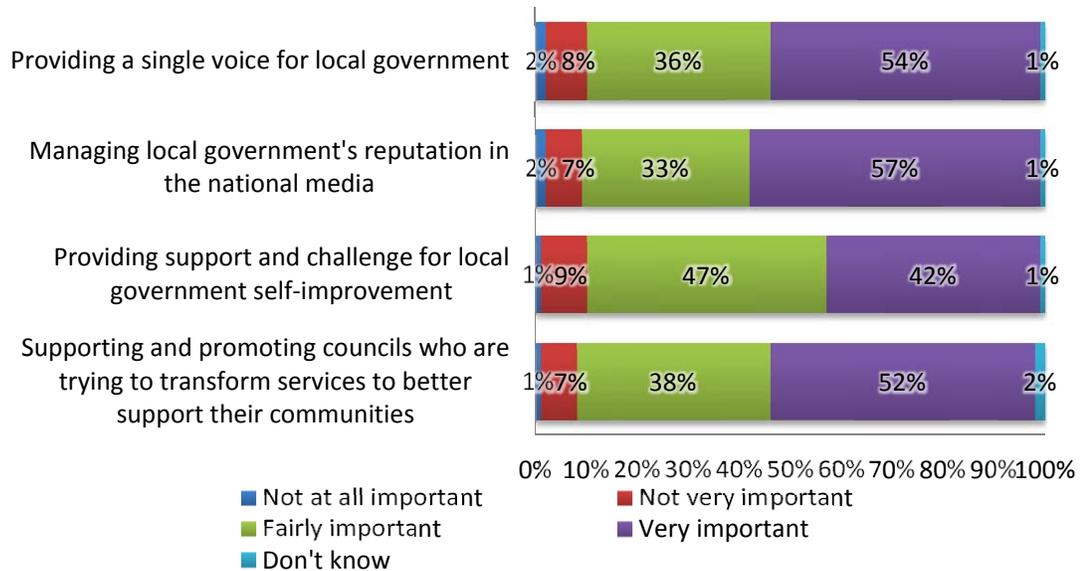


Figure 11: I am going to read out a list of activities conducted by the LGA. For each, I would like you to tell me whether they are important or not to your authority or the sector? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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 12 shows that 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* (25%).

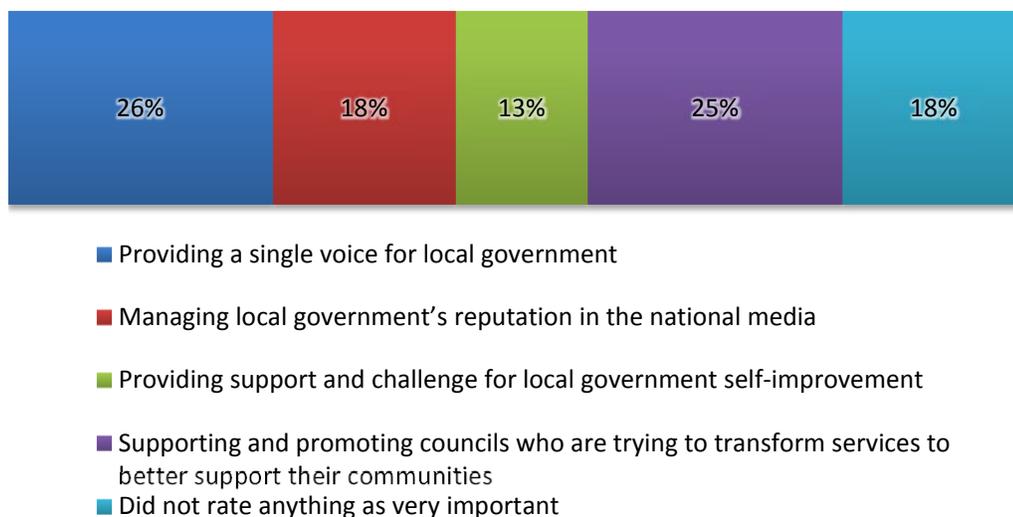


Figure 12: What is the most important activity conducted by the LGA  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

## 2.9 Services provided by the LGA

Overall, the majority of respondents believed all the services provided by the LGA (shown in Figure 13) were either 'fairly important' or 'very important'. Respondents viewed *lobbying on behalf of local government* as a particularly important service with 55% viewing it as 'very important'.

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type. However, some differences were identified including:

- Respondents in the South-West were the most likely to identify that *providing legal advice* as either 'fairly useful' or 'very useful' (81%).
- Respondents in the South-East were the most likely to identify that *negotiating national pay terms and conditions* as 'not at all useful' (12%).
- Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers to believe that *lobbying on behalf of local government* was either 'not at all useful' or 'not very useful' (9% and 10% compared with 4% respectively).
- Officers and Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors to believe that *providing a range of online tools to help self-improvement* was either 'fairly useful' or 'very useful' (72% and 71% compared with 62% respectively).
- Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers to believe that *providing advice and information through the political group offices* was either 'fairly useful' or 'very useful' (78% and 80% compared with 59% respectively). Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to believe that *providing advice and information through the political group offices* was either 'not very useful' or 'not useful at all' (34% compared with 17% respectively).
- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to believe that *providing legal advice* was either 'not very useful' or 'not useful at all' (45% compared with 24% respectively).
- Officers and Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Backbench Councillors to believe that *providing employment advice* was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' (35% and 28% compared with 19% respectively).
- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to believe that *providing employment advice* was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' (48% compared with 30% respectively).

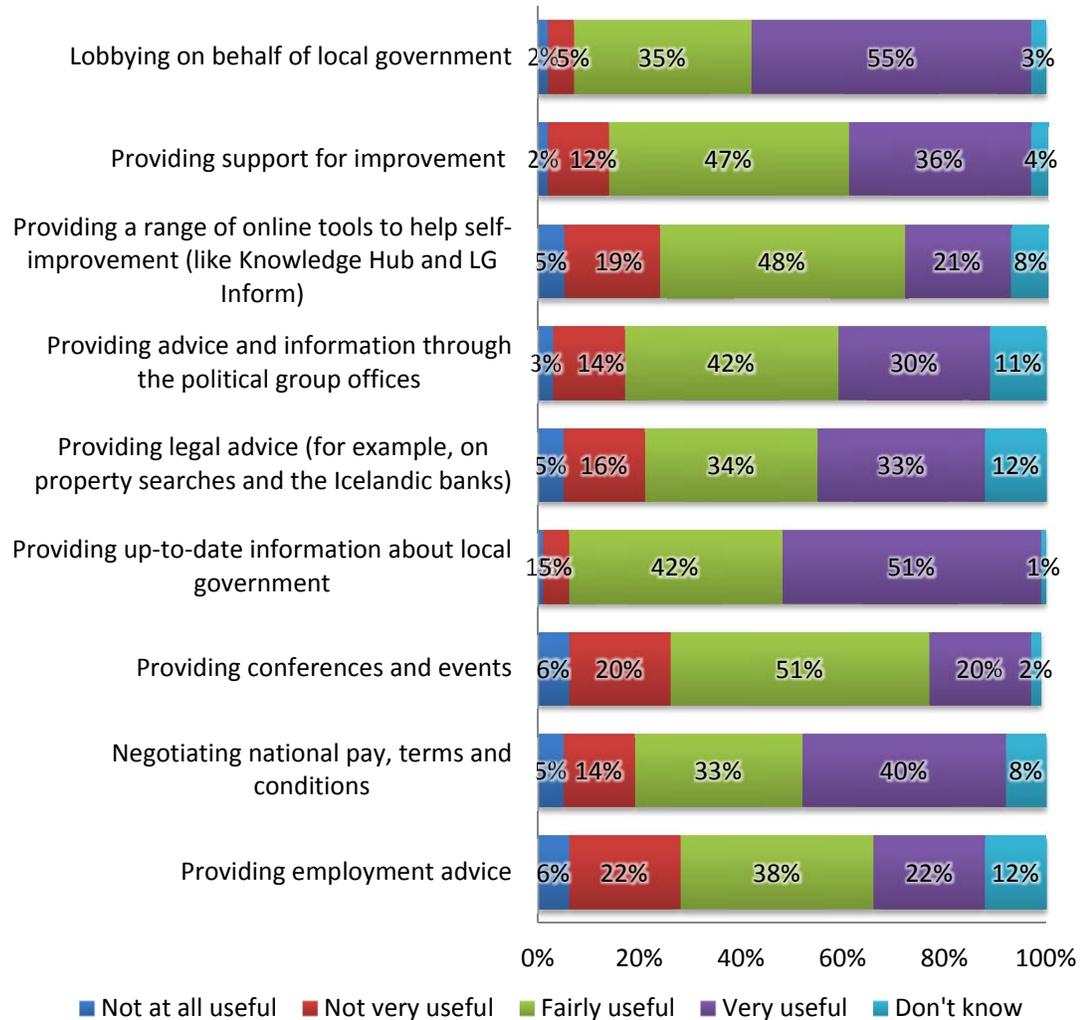


Figure 13: Now I am going to read a list of services provided by the LGA. For each, please could you tell me whether they are useful or not to your authority? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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 14 shows that the activities respondents viewed as most useful were *lobbying on behalf of local government* (32%) and *providing up-to-date information about local government* (12%).



Figure 14: Which of the following services is most useful to your authority?  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### 3 Views on LGA communications

#### 3.1 Attitudes and preferences for LGA communications

Overall, the majority of respondents believed that the LGA kept them either ‘fairly well informed’ (48%) or ‘very well informed’ (21%) about their work. Nearly one-quarter reported that the LGA ‘Gives me only a limited amount of information’ (24%) and less than one-tenth (6%) reported that the LGA ‘doesn’t tell me much at all about what it does’.

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type. However, Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers or Backbench Councillors to report that the LGA kept them either ‘fairly well informed’ or ‘very well informed’ about their work (77% compared with 66% and 65% respectively). Further to this, Leaders were significantly more likely than Chairs of Scrutiny and Portfolio Holders to report that the LGA kept them either ‘fairly well informed’ or ‘very well informed’ about their work (90% compared with 70% and 73% respectively). In addition, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to report that the LGA kept them either ‘fairly well informed’ or ‘very well informed’ about their work (82% compared with 60% respectively).

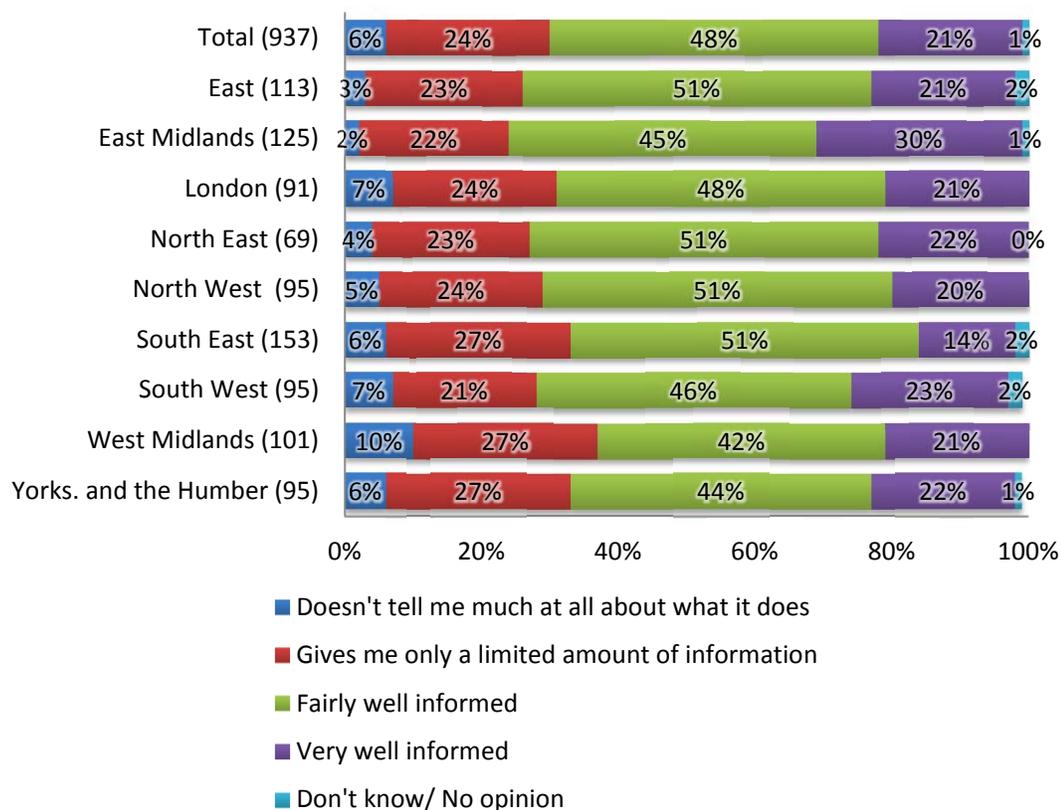


Figure 15: How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its work? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### 3.1.1 Comparisons with 2008 report

Comparisons with the 2008 rapid review indicate that Frontbench members perceptions of the extent to which the LGA keeps them informed about its activities have stayed the same, with over three-quarters (77%) of respondents reporting that they are 'very well informed' or 'fairly well informed' in both 2008 and 2012.

There is a slight increase in the proportion of Officers that report they are 'very well informed' by the LGA (21% in 2012 compared with 18% in 2008); however, there is an increase in the proportion of Officers that report the LGA 'Gives me only a limited amount of information' (27% in 2012 compared with 23% in 2008); and, there is also an increase in the proportion of Officers that report the LGA 'doesn't tell me much about what it does' (6% in 2012 compared with 0% in 2008).

	Officers		Frontbench members	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
Very well informed	18	21	24	24
Fairly well informed	58	45	53	53
Gives me only a limited amount of information	23	27	18	18
Doesn't tell me much about what it does	0	6	6	3

**Table 10: How well informed the respondent is kept by the LGA about its work - Comparison between 2008 and 2012 research**

Respondents reported that they found out about the LGA's work in a range of ways. In particular respondents reported that they found out about the LGA's work through 'first' magazine (67%), direct email and post (58%), publications (53%), and events 49%.

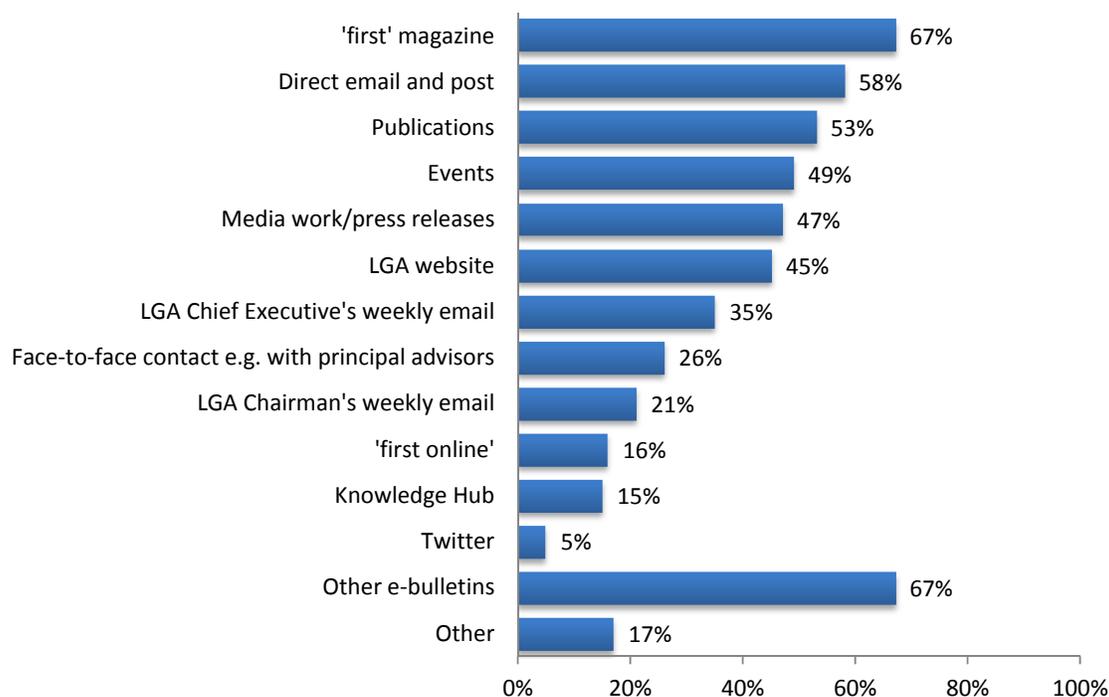


Figure 16: How do you generally find out about the work of the LGA?  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows very little significant difference between how respondents in different regions find out about the LGA's work. However, respondents in the East Midlands are more likely to find out about the LGA's work through the Knowledge Hub (24%).

In addition further analysis shows key differences in how respondents in different roles find out about the LGA's work, including:

- Officers and Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through the LGA Chief Executive's weekly email (41% and 39% compared with 25% respectively).
- Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through the LGA Chairman's weekly email (38% compared with 9% and 19% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through other e-bulletins (77% compared with 66% and 58% respectively).
- Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers to find out about the LGA's work through 'first' magazine (83% and 87% compared with 34% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through the LGA website (64% compared with 40% and 31% respectively).

- Officers and Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through direct email or post (64% and 59% compared with 49% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through the Knowledge Hub (23% compared with 12% and 11% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through media work or press releases (60% compared with 46% and 35% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through publications (65% compared with 47% and 46% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through events (60% compared with 50% and 35% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to find out about the LGA's work through face-to-face contact e.g. through principal advisors (35% compared with 26% and 16% respectively).

When asked how they would *prefer* to find out about the work of the LGA respondents reported a range of preferences; however, the most frequently requested methods were through direct email or post (34%), and 'first' magazine (15%).

Further analysis show that Officers were most likely to want to receive communications from the LGA through direct email and post (32%), other e-bulletins (17%), and the Chief Executive's weekly email (8%). Frontbench Councillors were most likely to want to receive communications from the LGA through direct email and post (39%), 'first' magazine (17%), and other e-bulletins (6%). Finally, Backbench Councillors were most likely to want to receive communications from the LGA through direct email and post (32%), 'first' magazine (27%), and other e-bulletins (6%).

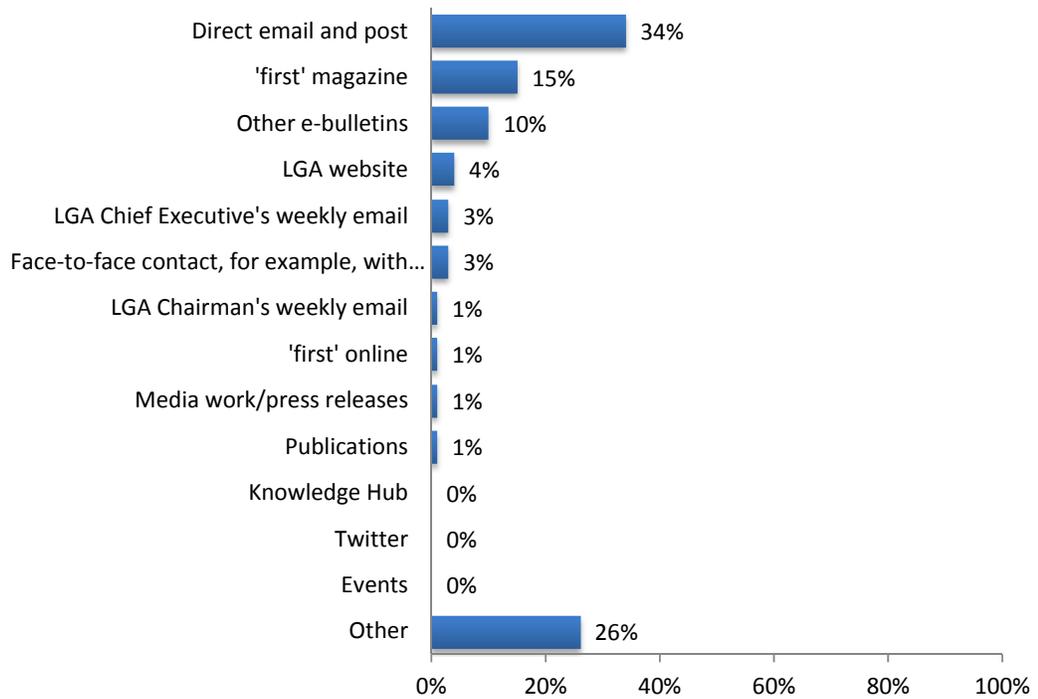


Figure 17: How would you prefer to find out about the work of the LGA?  
Base=937  
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### 3.2 Awareness of 'first' magazine

There was a high level of awareness of 'first' magazine amongst respondents. Over one-half (54%) reported that they always or regularly read 'first magazine'. As shown in Figure 18 further analysis shows there is little significant difference by region in the regularity with which respondents read the magazine.

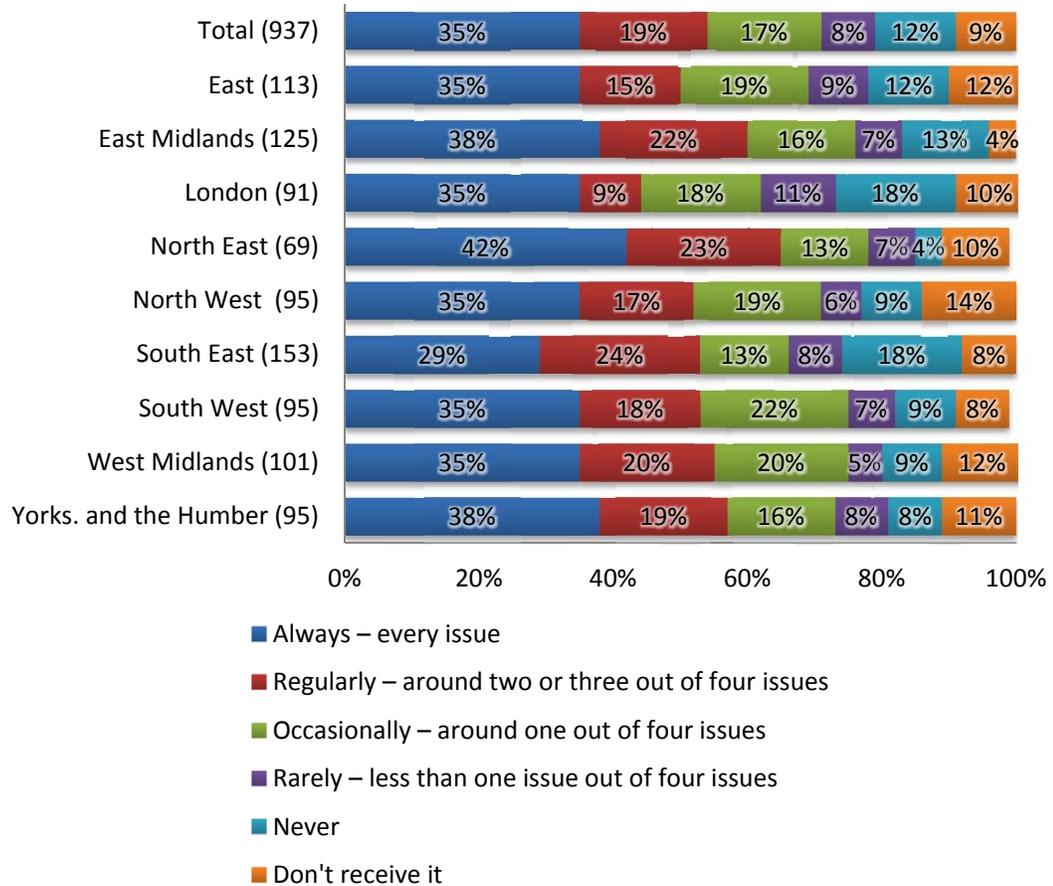


Figure 18: How often, if at all, do you read 'first' magazine, the LGA's fortnightly membership magazine? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Respondents who read 'first' magazine were asked how useful it was in fulfilling various roles. Overall, the majority of respondents found the magazine either 'very useful' or 'fairly useful' in a range of ways including: *informing you about what the LGA does* (78%), *notifying you about key LGA events and publications* (74%), *providing up-to-date coverage of news and issues* (81%), *providing an analysis of policy issues* (72%), and *overall, in your role as a councillor or officer* (72%).

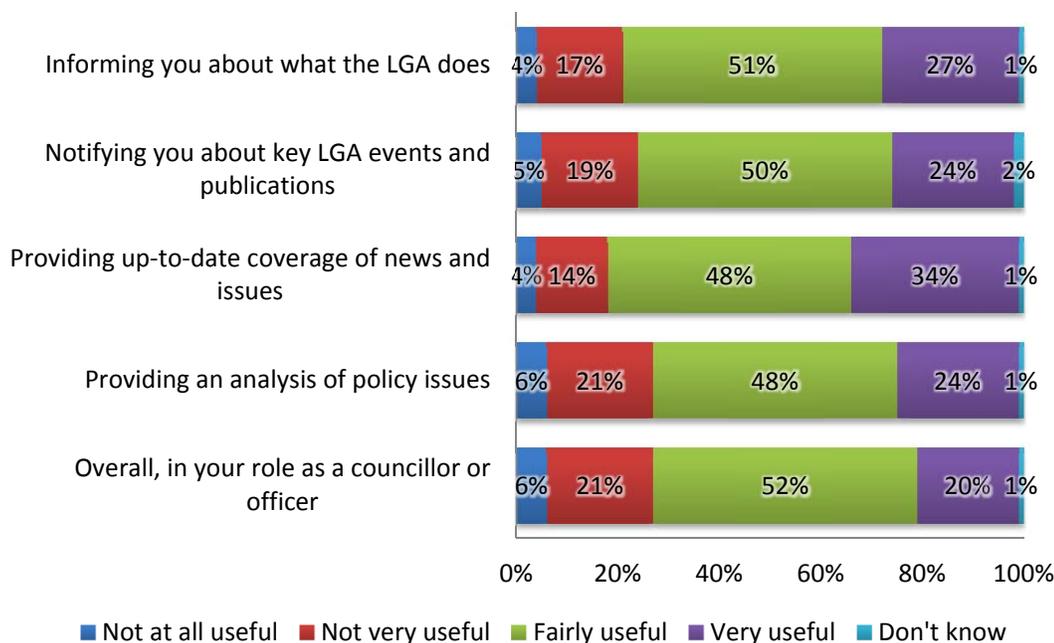


Figure 19: How useful do you think 'first' is in fulfilling the following roles?

Base=738

Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows there is very little statistically significant difference between regions, roles and local authority type. However, Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors or Backbench Councillors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' in *informing you about what the LGA does* (30% compared with 21% and 16% respectively). Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' in *informing you about what the LGA does* (45% compared with 21% respectively).

In addition, Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors or Backbench Councillors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' in *providing up-to-date coverage of news and issues* (29% compared with 17% and 11% respectively). Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' in *providing up-to-date coverage of news and issues* (43% compared with 21% respectively).

Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers and Frontbench Councillors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'very useful' or 'fairly useful' in *providing analysis of policy issues* (79% compared with 62% and 71% respectively). Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' in *providing analysis of policy issues* (58% compared with 21% respectively).

In addition, Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers and Frontbench Councillors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'very useful' or 'fairly useful' *overall, in your role as a councillor or officer* (78% compared with 64% and 71%

respectively). Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to report that 'first' magazine was either 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' *overall, in your role as a councillor or officer* (54% compared with 21% respectively).

### 3.3 Level of contact with the LGA

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (70%) reported that they felt they currently had 'about the right level of contact' from the LGA. However, further quarter (26%) reported that they had 'not enough contact' with the LGA. Further analysis show no significant differences in respondents answers by region. However, analysis by role type shows that Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillor to feel they had 'not enough contact' with the LGA (32% compared with 23% and 22% respectively).

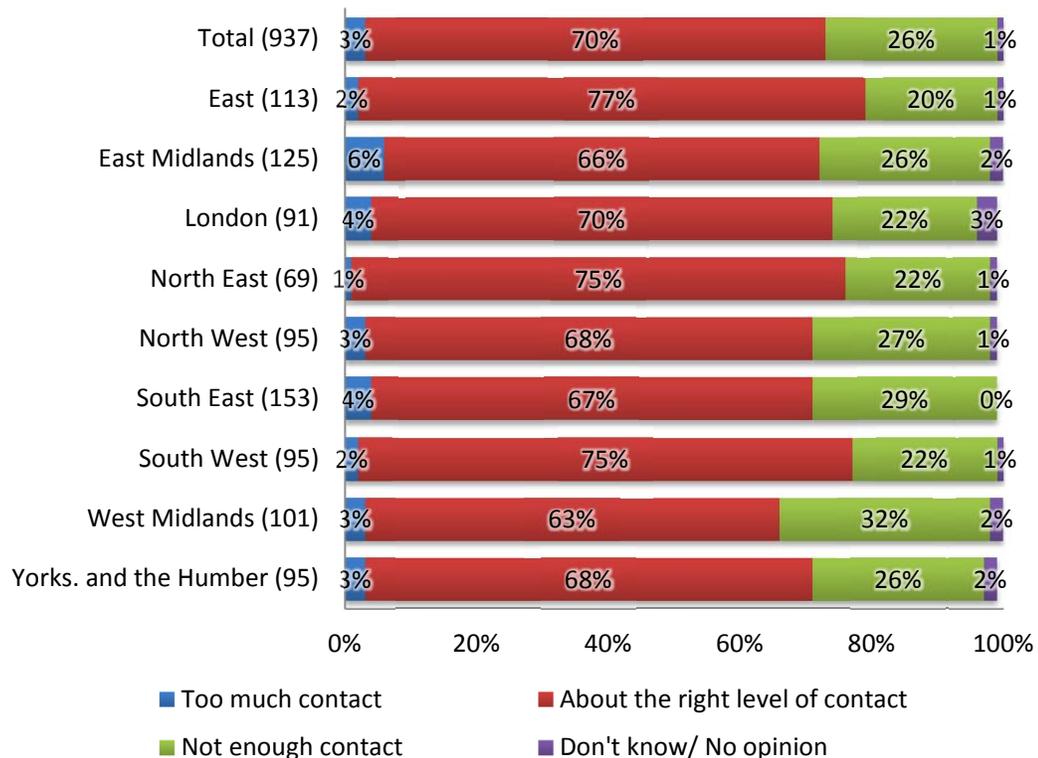


Figure 20: How do you feel about the level of contact that the LGA has with you? (Crosstabulated by region)  
Base=937  
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### 3.4 Level of engagement with the LGA

Overall, more than one-half (56%) of respondents reported that they were either 'not very engaged' or 'not at all engaged' with the LGA. Over one-third (38%) of respondents reported that they were 'fairly engaged' with the LGA. Less than one-tenth (6%) of respondents reported that they were 'very engaged' with the LGA.

Further analysis show no significant differences in respondents answers by region. However, analysis by role type shows that Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers and Frontbench Councillors to report they were 'not at all engaged' or 'not very engaged' (64% compared with 52% and 52% respectively). Further to this Chief Executives

Customer satisfaction survey 2012

were more likely to report that they were ‘fairly engaged’ or ‘very engaged’ than Directors (73% compared with 38% respectively).

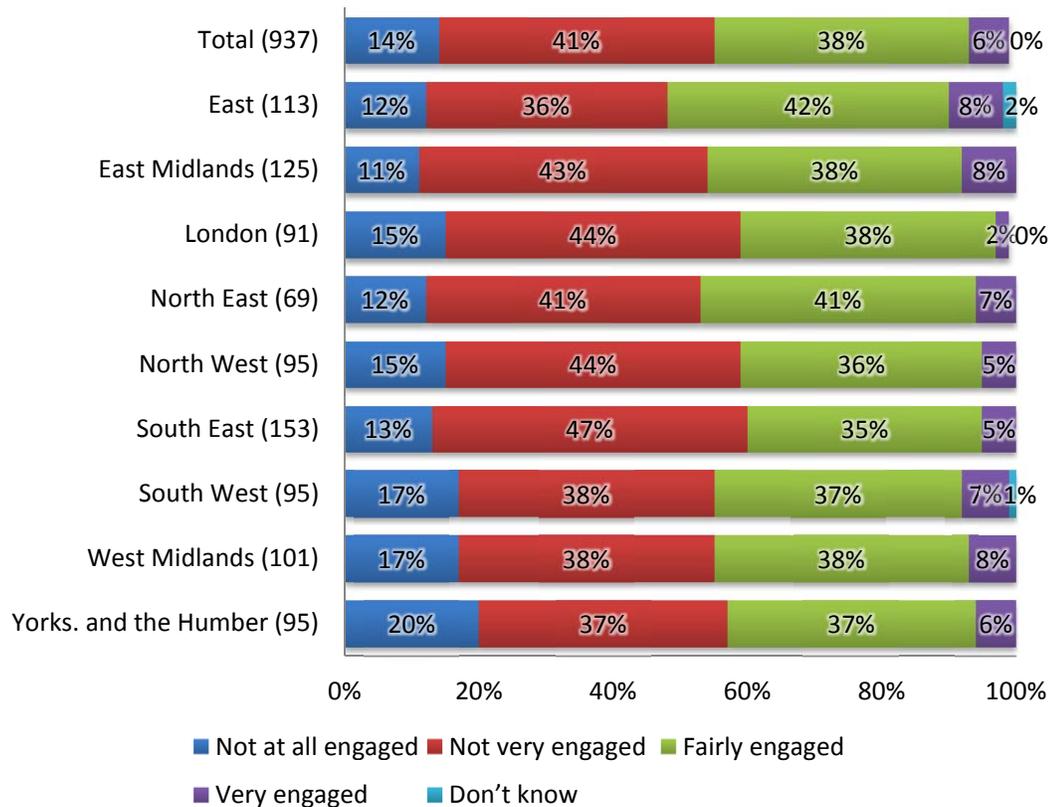


Figure 21: How engaged do you feel you are with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Respondents who reported they were ‘not at all engaged’ or ‘not very engaged’ with the LGA were asked if they would like to be more engaged. Responses were somewhat evenly spilt between ‘no, not more engaged at all’ (44%) and ‘yes, a little more engaged’ (40%). Only 14% of respondents reported that they wanted to be ‘much more engaged’ with the LGA.

Further analysis show no significant differences in respondents answers by region. However, analysis by role type shows that Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to report they would like to be ‘a little more engaged’ (51% compared with 32% and 37% respectively).

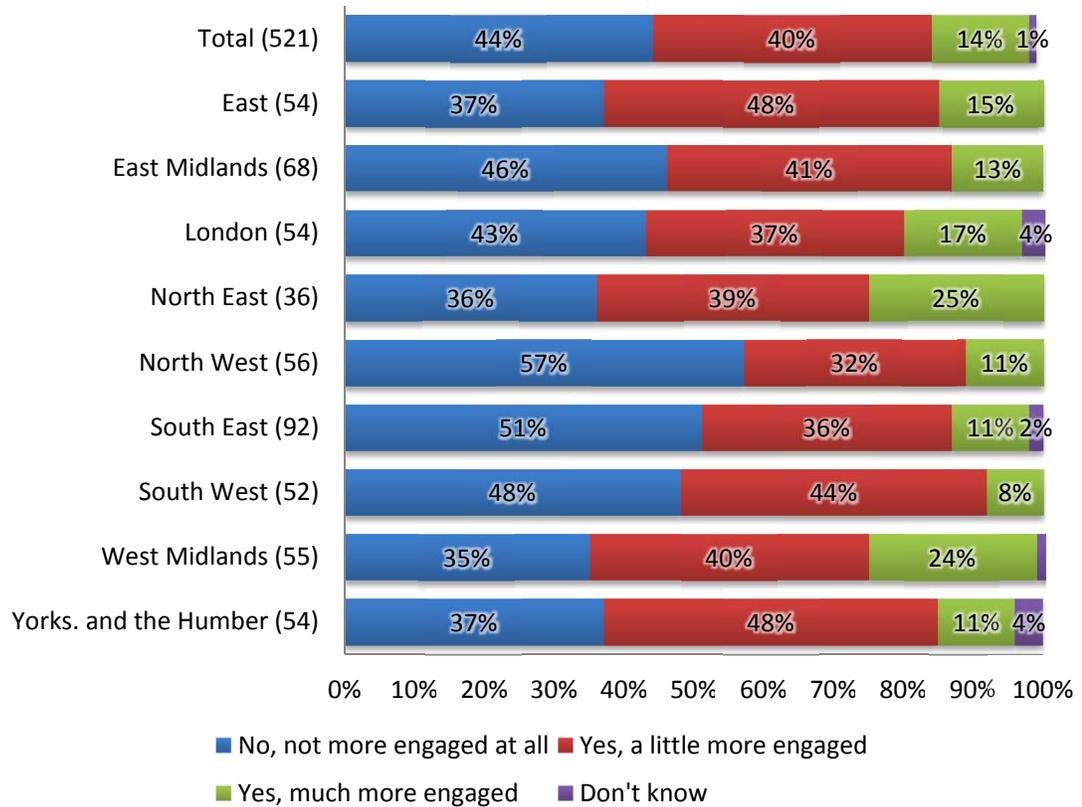


Figure 22: Would you like to be more engaged with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=521  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### 3.5 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 (63%); contacting LGA officers by email or phone (41%); and contributing in LGA meetings and seminars (41%).

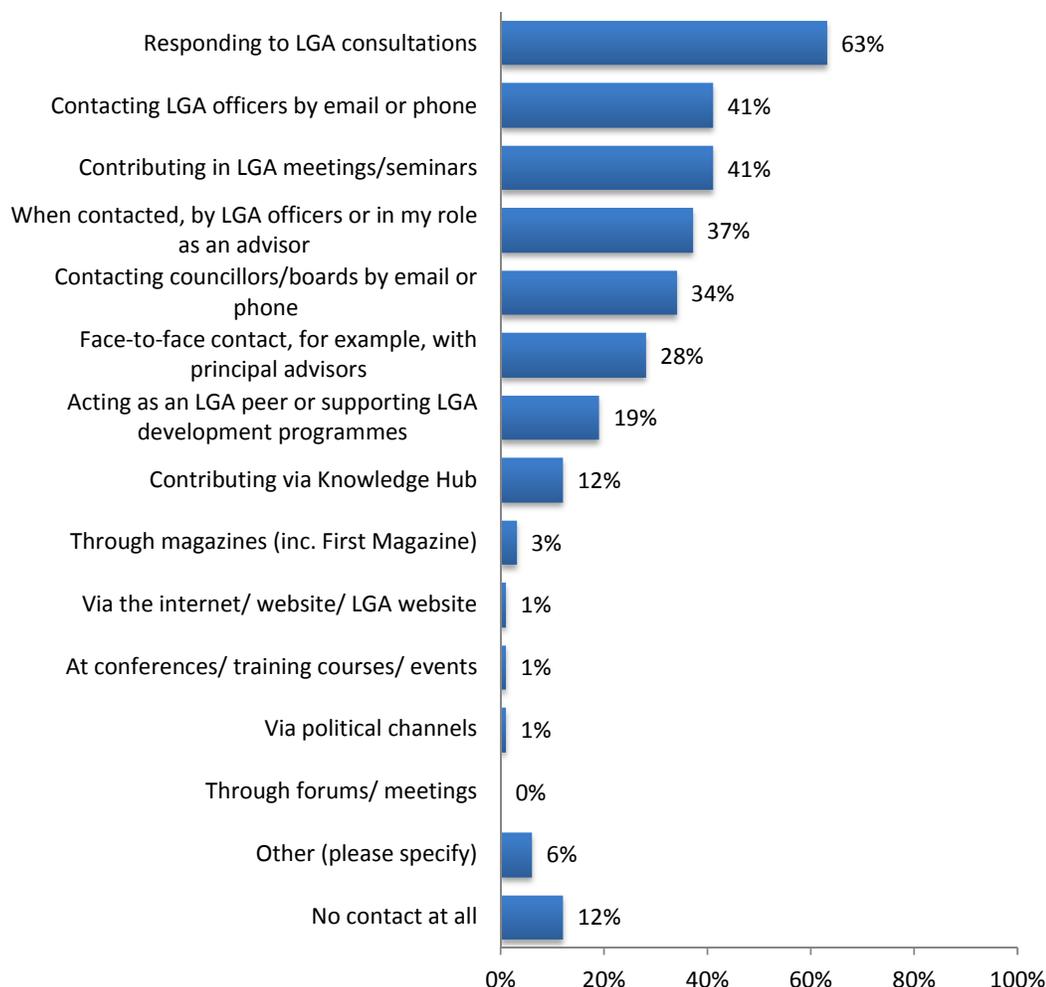


Figure 23: By what means do you engage with the LGA?  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows very little significant difference between how respondents in different regions engage with the LGA. However, further analysis shows key differences in how respondents in different roles engage with the LGA, including:

- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to engage with the LGA by *contacting LGA officers by email or phone* (54% compared with 41% and 26% respectively).
- Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers to engage with the LGA by *contacting councillors/boards by email or telephone* (43% and 41% compared with 19% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to engage with the LGA *when contacted by LGA officers or in my role as an advisor* (49% compared with 37% and 24% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to engage with the LGA by *contributing via Knowledge Hub* (17% compared with 9% and 9% respectively).

- Officers and Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Backbench Councillors to engage with the LGA by *contributing in LGA meetings/seminars* (48% and 49% compared with 26% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to engage with the LGA by *responding to LGA consultations* (80% compared with 62% and 46% respectively).
- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to engage with the LGA through *face-to-face contact e.g. with principle advisers* (37% compared with 28% and 17% respectively).
- Officers and Frontbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Backbench Councillors to engage with the LGA by *acting as an LGA peer or supporting LGA development programmes* (22% and 20% compared with 14% respectively).

When asked how they would *prefer* to engage with the LGA respondents reported a range of preferences; however, the most frequently requested methods were through contacting LGA officers by email or phone (52%), and contacting councillors/boards by email or phone (40%). Further analysis shows that there are no significant differences in respondents' preferences for engagement with the LGA by region, role or local authority type.

## Customer satisfaction survey 2012

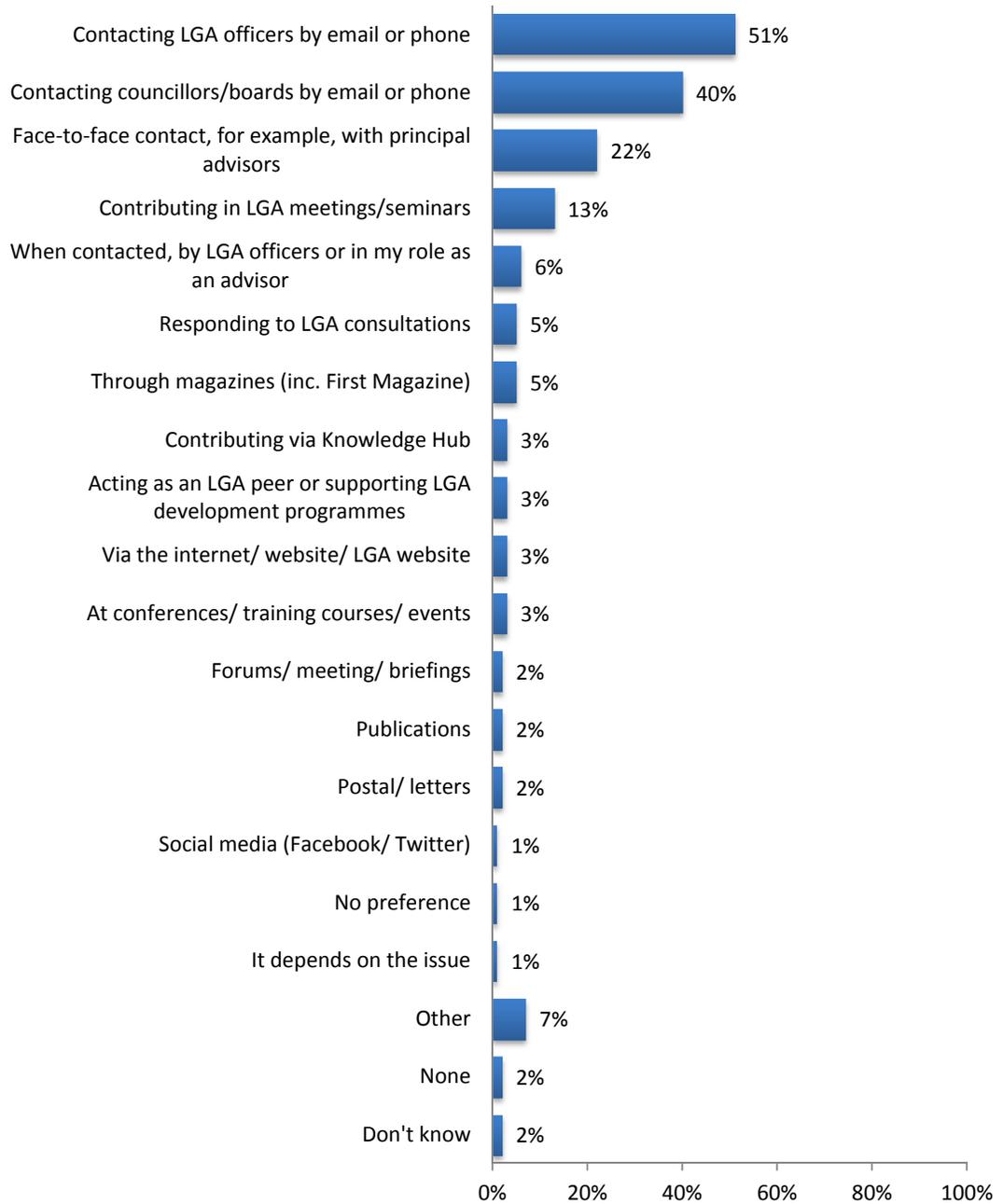


Figure 24: By what means would you prefer to engage with the LGA?

Base=697

Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

## 4 Views on sector-led improvement

### 4.1 Awareness of sector-led improvement

Over one-half (59%) of respondents reported that they have either 'heard a little' or 'heard nothing' about sector-led improvement. Over one-quarter (26%) have 'heard a moderate amount' and less than one-in-seven have 'heard a lot' about sector-led improvement.

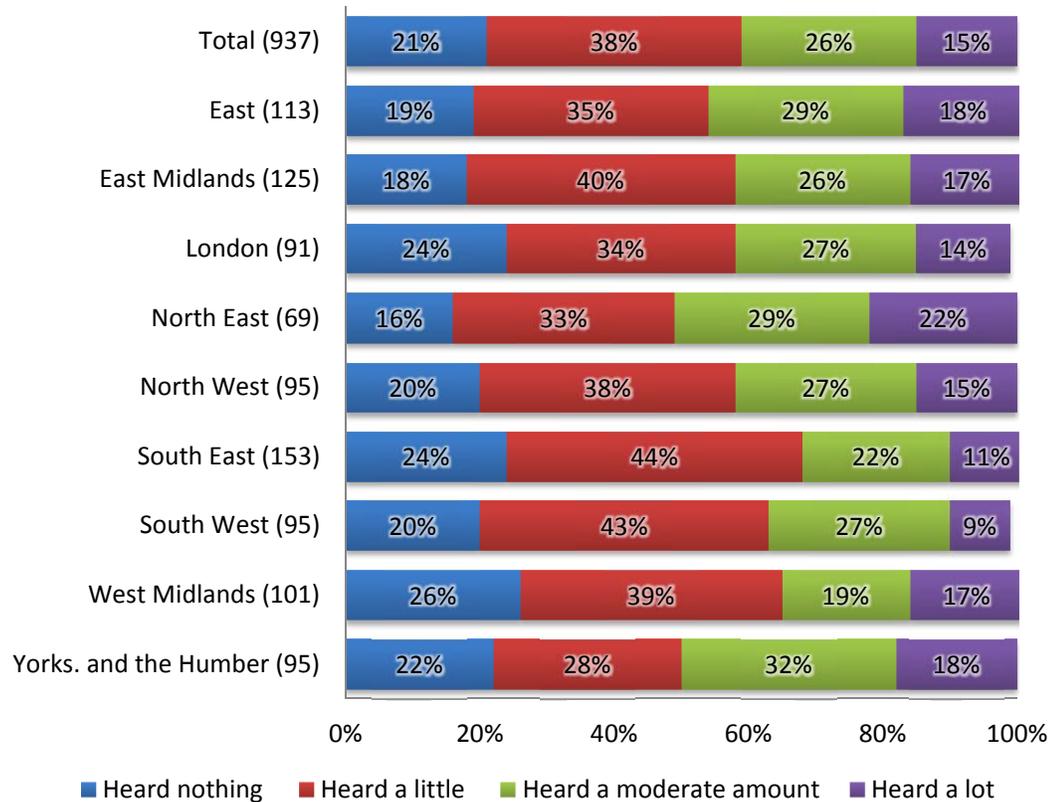


Figure 25: How much, if anything, have you heard about the sector-led improvement approach? (Crosstabulated by region)  
Base=937  
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows very little significant difference by region between respondents' awareness of sector-led improvement. However, further analysis shows that Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to have 'heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about sector-led improvement (58% compared with 40% and 25% respectively). Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than all other roles to have 'heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about sector-led improvement (90% compared with 45% of Directors, 45% of leaders, 35% of Chairs of Scrutiny, 39% of Portfolio Holders, and 25% of Backbenchers).

Figure 26 shows the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements relating to sector-led improvement. Over one-half (58%) of respondents reported

that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context*. Over three-quarters (83%) of respondents reported that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement*. Over three-quarters (83%) of respondents reported that they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that *local accountability is strong in my authority*.

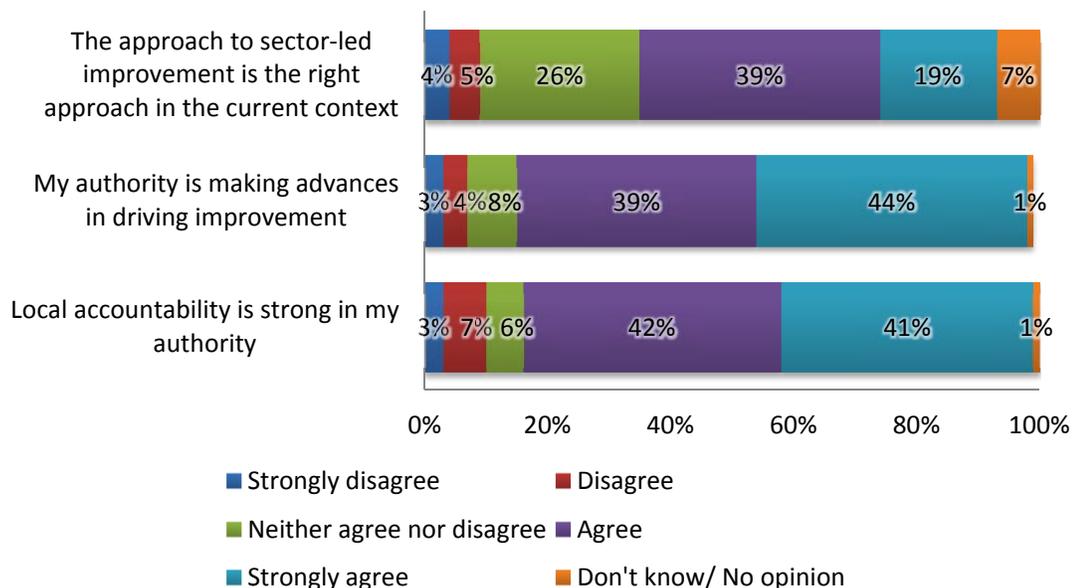


Figure 26: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Further analysis shows very little significant difference by region between respondents' views on these statements. However, further analysis shows several key differences by role, including:

- Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context* (68% compared with 56% and 51% respectively). Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than all other role types to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that *the approach to sector-led improvement is the right approach in the current context* (84% compared with 62% of Directors, 57% of leaders, 54% of Chairs of Scrutiny, 57% of Portfolio Holders, and 51% of Backbenchers).
- Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers and Frontbench Councillors to 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement* (16% compared with 2% and 4% respectively).
- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that *my authority is making advances in driving improvement* (98% compared with 88% respectively).
- Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers and Frontbench Councillors to 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that *local accountability is strong in my authority* (7% compared with 1% and 1% respectively).

- Further to this, Chief Executives were significantly more likely than Directors to ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that *local accountability is strong in my authority* (96% compared with 86% respectively).

## 4.2 Driving local accountability

Where respondents ‘agree’ or ‘agree strongly’ that *local accountability is strong in my authority* they were subsequently asked what the most significant thing their authority was doing to drive local accountability. Figure 27 shows the wide range of activities respondent’s authorities are undertaking to drive local accountability; however, the most frequently cited activities were public and community engagement and consultations (44%), and improving the accessibility of information (13%).

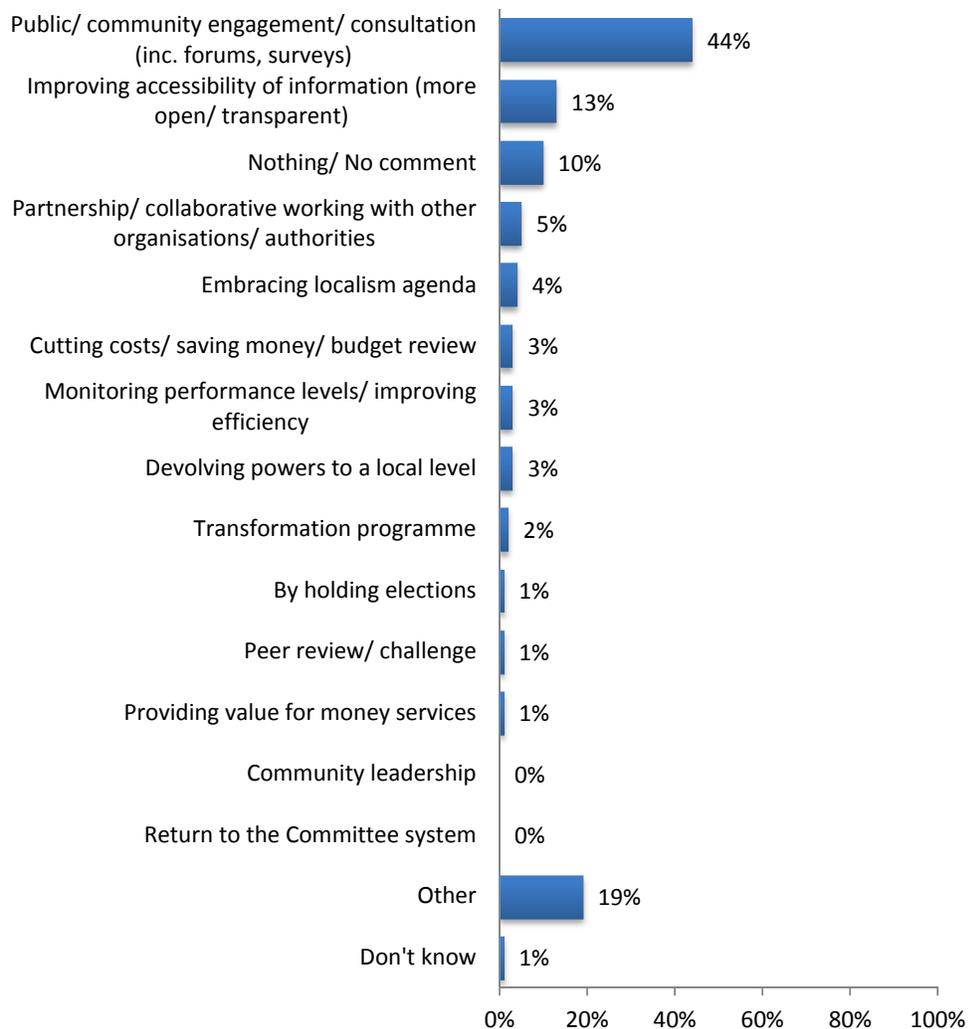


Figure 27: What is the most significant thing your authority is doing to drive local accountability?

Base=781

Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### 4.3 Capacity for continuous improvement

The majority (85%) of respondents were 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'. Further analysis shows very little significant difference in respondents' views about this capacity by region, role or authority type. However, Backbench Councillors were significantly more likely than Officers and Frontbench Councillors to report that their authority did not have the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve (26% reported 'not at all' or 'to a small extent' compared with 8% and 9% respectively).

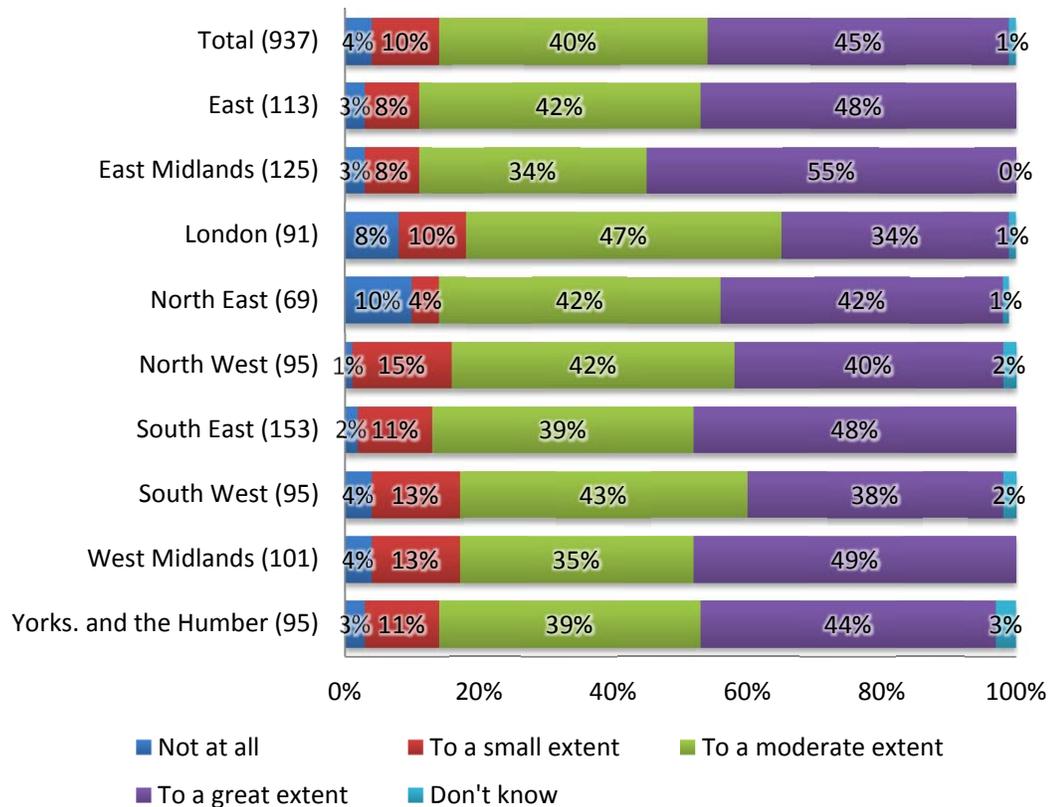


Figure 28: To what extent would you say you are confident that your own authority currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

The majority (79%) of respondents were 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'. Further analysis shows very little significant difference in respondents' views about this capacity by region, role or authority type. However, Officers were significantly more likely than Frontbench Councillors and Backbench Councillors to report that the local authority sector had have the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve (84% reported 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent' compared with 78% and 73% respectively).

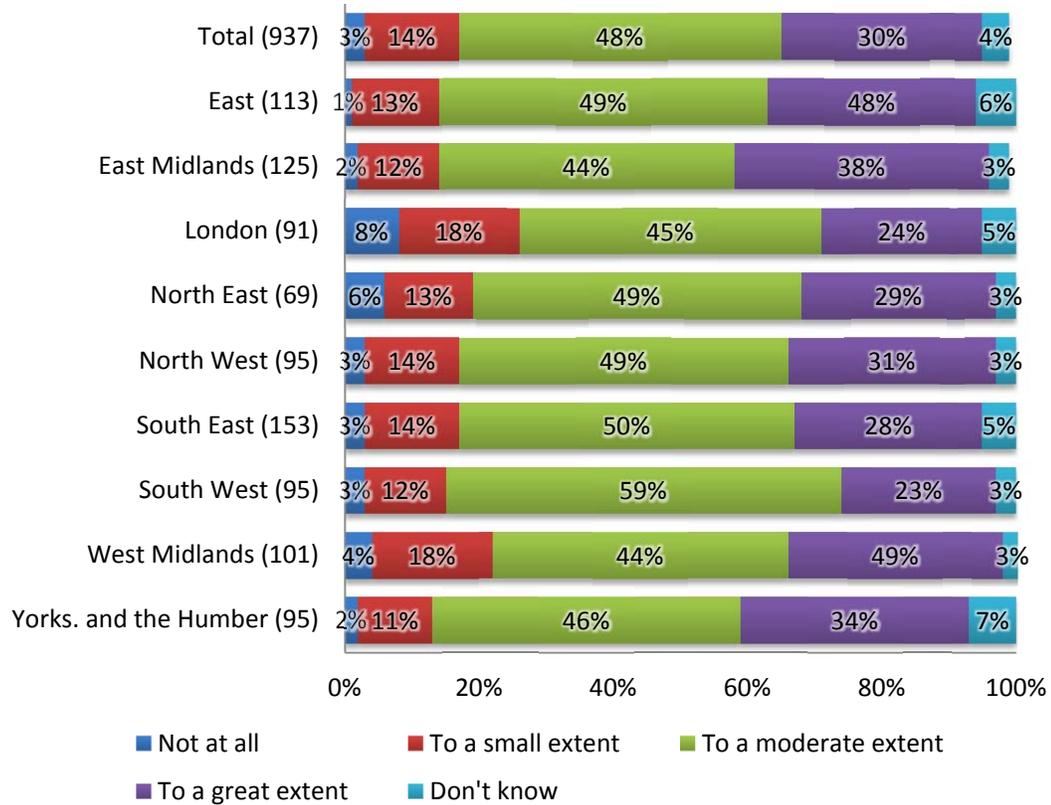


Figure 29: To what extent would you say you are confident that the local government sector currently has the necessary skills and capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)

Base=937

Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

#### 4.4 Awareness of resources to support sector-led improvement

Overall, awareness of the resources offered by the LGA to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement was low. Respondents had the most awareness of: the *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011* (31% of respondents reported that they had 'heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about this resource); the LGA's *commitment to work with local authorities to develop local accountability tools* (40% of respondents reported that they had 'heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about this resource).

Respondents had the least awareness of the resource providing *five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control* (73% of respondents reported that they had 'heard nothing' or 'heard a little' about this resource); and *development of 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* (75% of respondents reported that they had 'heard nothing' or 'heard a little' about this resource).

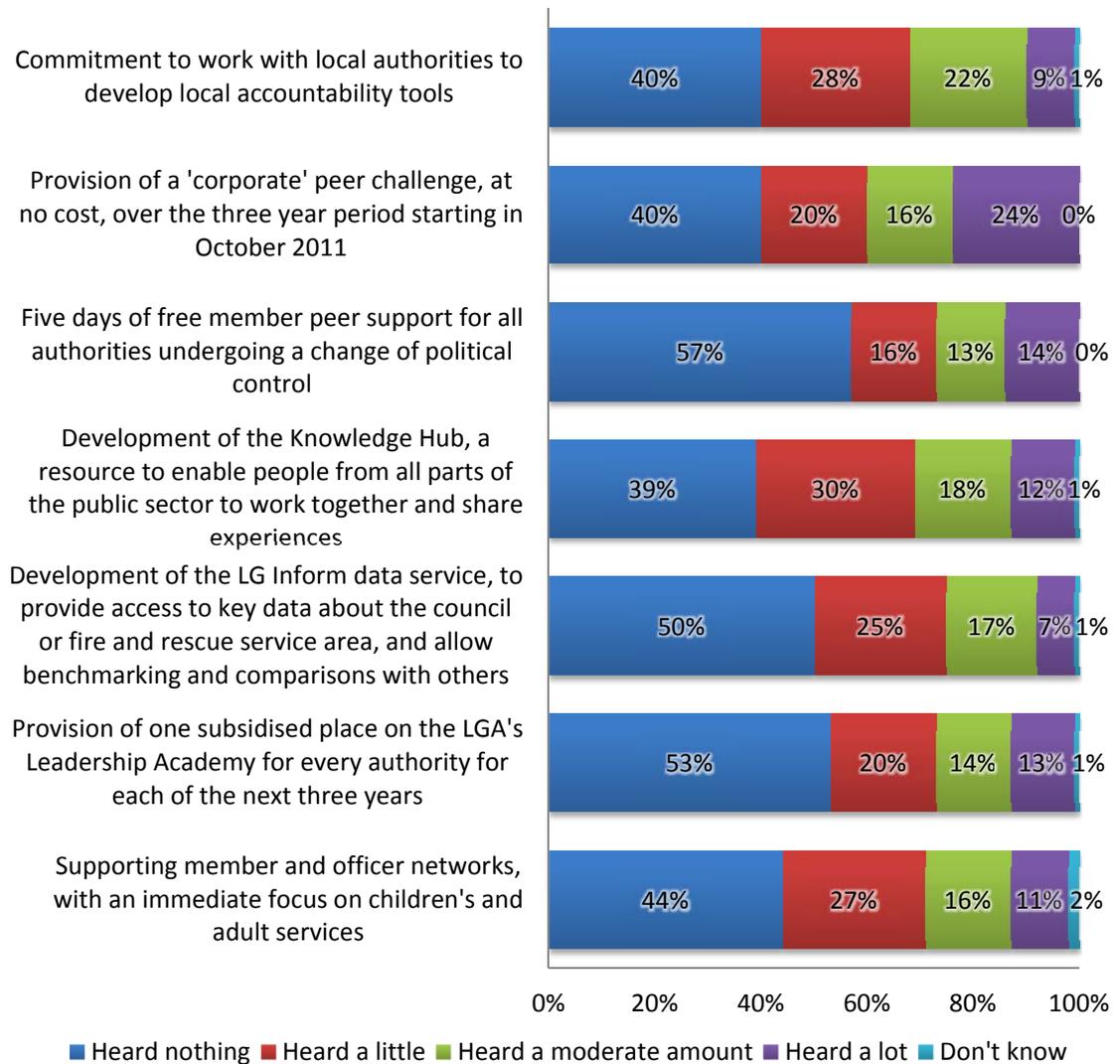


Figure 30: As part of Taking the Lead, the LGA has offered a number of resources, to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement. Which, if any, of the following elements of the LGA's offer have you heard about?

Base=937

Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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

- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than other roles types to have 'Heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011* (90% compared with 52% of Directors, 55% of leaders, 30% of Chairs of Scrutiny, 39% of Portfolio Holders, and 14% of Backbenchers).
- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than other roles types to have 'Heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about *five days of free member peer support for all*

*authorities undergoing a change of political control* (72% compared with 24% of Directors, 54% of leaders, 18% of Chairs of Scrutiny, 25% of Portfolio Holders, and 14% of Backbenchers).

- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than other roles types to have 'Heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about *development of the Knowledge Hub* (58% compared with 36% of Directors, 30% of leaders, 21% of Chairs of Scrutiny, 28% of Portfolio Holders, and 20% of Backbenchers).
- Chief Executives were significantly more likely than other roles types to have 'Heard a moderate amount' or 'heard a lot' about *Supporting member and officer networks, with an immediate focus on children's and adult services* (53% compared with 23% of Directors, 22% of leaders, 22% of Chairs of Scrutiny, 32% of Portfolio Holders, and 23% of Backbenchers).

In addition analysis by region also shows some significant differences in respondents' awareness of the resources to support sector-led improvement, including:

- Respondents in London and the South East were significantly more likely than other regions to have 'heard nothing' or 'a little' about *provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011* (85% and 80% compared to 69% of all other regions).
- Respondents in the South East were significantly more likely than other regions to have 'heard nothing' or 'a little' about *provision of one subsidised place on the LGA's Leadership Academy for every authority for each of the next three years* (86% compared to 70% of all other regions).

Over one-half (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'. A further 25% believe it will impact on their authority 'to a small extent'. Further analysis shows respondents from the South-East are significantly more likely to report that the resources will impact on their authority either 'to a small extent' or not at all'.

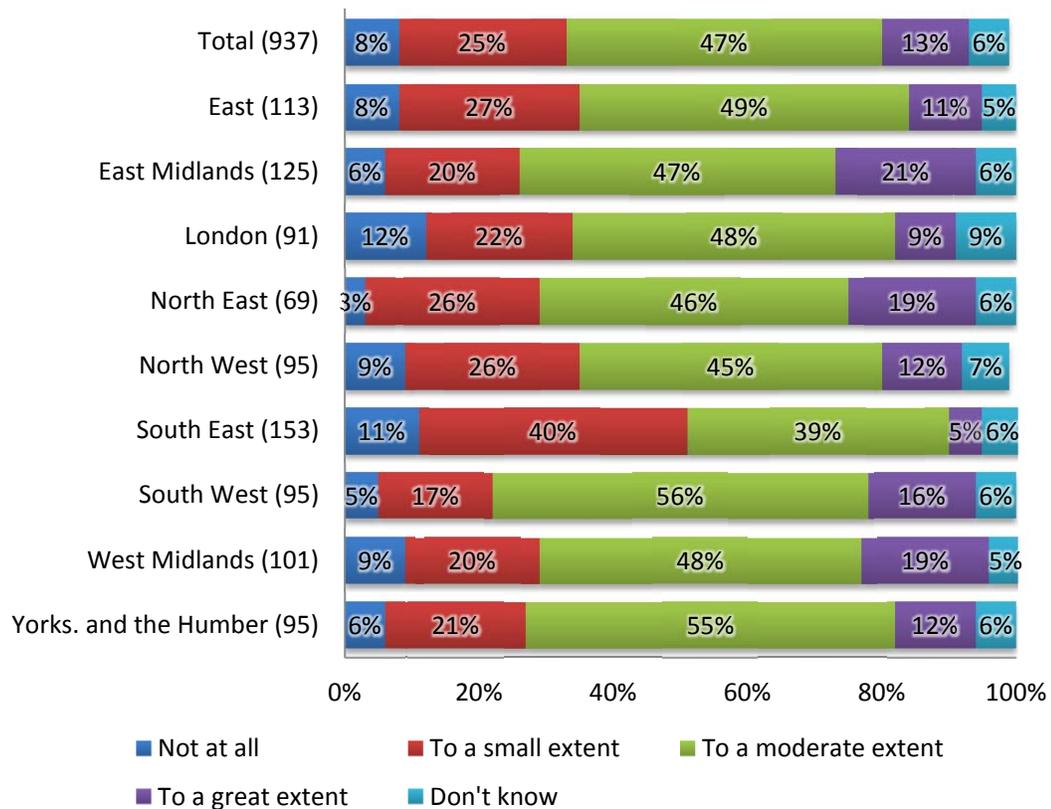


Figure 31: To what extent do you think that this support and these resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvement will have a positive impact on your own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents believe that this support and these resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvement will have a positive impact on the sector's to monitor its own performance and continuously improve either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent'. A further 20% believe it will impact the sector 'to a small extent'. Further analysis shows respondents from the South-East are significantly more likely to report that the resources will impact on their authority either 'to a small extent' or 'not at all'.

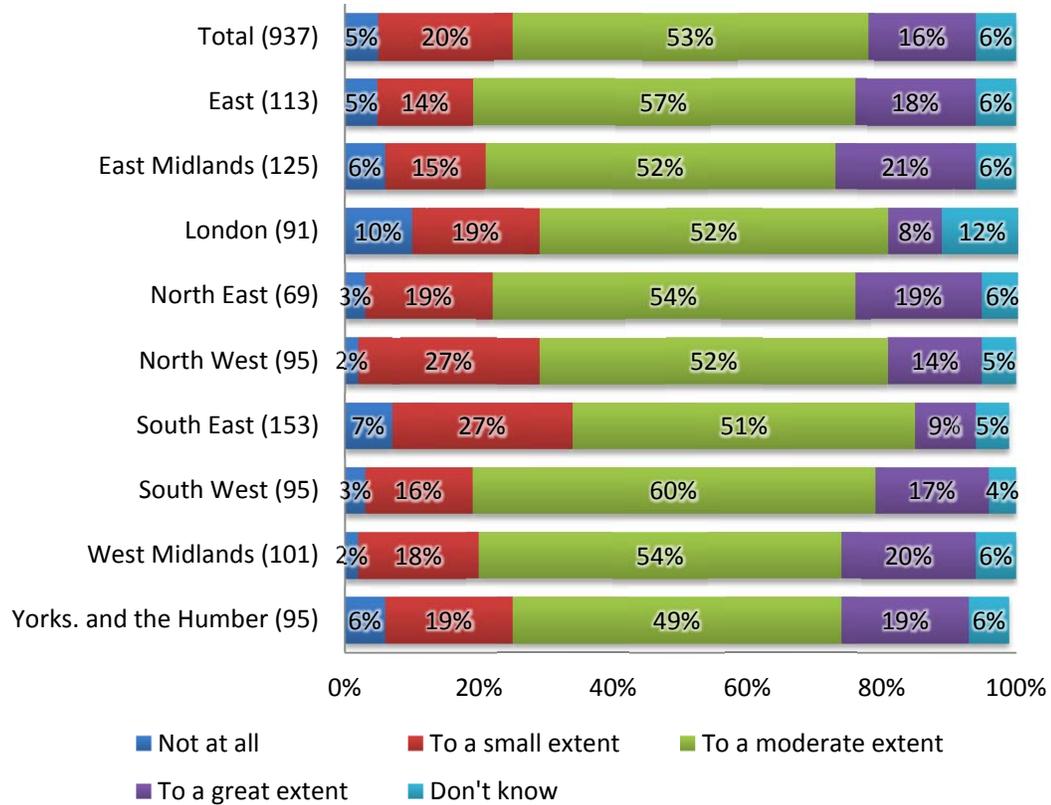


Figure 32: To what extent do you think that this support and these resources offered by the LGA for sector led improvement will have a positive impact on the sector's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve? (Crosstabulated by region)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

#### 4.5 Barriers and challenges to increasing local accountability and driving improvement

Respondents were asked what barriers and challenges they perceived to increasing local accountability and driving improvement. A range of reasons were given; however, the most frequently mentioned barriers included: lack of financial resources (31%), lack of public interest in engagement (14%), lack of human resource support (9%), and a lack of time or capacity (9%).

Further to this, respondents were what the key challenges facing their local authority were in the next two years that they would like LGA's help with. The most frequently mentioned challenge was funding and budget management (52%). Other responses included lobbying central government (5%), maintaining service delivery (5%), and making improvements, savings and efficiencies (5%).

## 5 Conclusions

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

- There is a high level of awareness of the LGA and the work it undertakes; however, understanding of this work varies dependent on specific job role, with Backbenchers having the least understanding overall. This suggests that further work could be undertaken to engage with this group and communicate the LGA's role and services to them.
- 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.
- 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.
- Views and understanding of the role and services of the LGA have broadly remained the same or improved between 2008 and 2012; in particular, Frontbench Councillors views and awareness appear to have improved.
- A high proportion of respondents do not currently feel engaged with the LGA but would like to be. The majority of respondents tended to prefer to receive communications directly via email suggesting digitalisation has become more entrenched in the sector, although use of social media was low. However, respondents still preferred to engage with the LGA directly either responding to LGA consultations or using email or telephone to contact LGA officers.
- Latent class analysis (included in Appendix 1) shows that Respondents in Class I were most likely to feel better informed of the LGA's activities and were also more likely than other groups to have received email communications from the LGA including the 'LGA Chief Executive's weekly email', the 'LGA Chairman's weekly email' and 'Other e-bulletins'. Class I were also more likely to use the 'Knowledge Hub'. This suggests that these methods of communication are the most effective and wider dissemination of messages using these outlets should be considered.
- Currently there is a mixed awareness of the sector-led improvement approach. However, respondents tended to agree this was the correct approach and believed their local authority had made steps to drive improvement and had strong local accountability driven by public engagement, consultation and information sharing.
- Respondents were 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'.
- 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. Respondents were most aware of: *the provision of a 'corporate' peer challenge, at no cost, over the three year period starting in October 2011;* but were least aware of the resource providing *five days of free member peer support for all authorities undergoing a change of political control.* However, respondents tended to believe that such resources would have a positive

impact on their own authority's capacity to monitor its own performance and continuously improve.

## Appendix 1: Latent class analysis

### Approach

Further analysis was undertaken in order to explore what the key messages are that should be given by LGA and how these should be delivered. Based on the questionnaire design and content, the scope of potential message would centre around aspects of service delivery e.g. what general roles or specific functions should the LGA stress in their correspondence with respondents, and should different specifics be stressed to different groups? The questionnaire contains three question clusters that focus on the LGA role and service delivery, namely Q5, Q11 and Q135, and in total, these three questions ask respondents to rate 21 statements. These 21 variables (along with others in the survey) are termed manifest variables (i.e. they have been directly observed). Our interest is in combining these 21 variables and creating a single unobserved (latent) variable that best categorises respondent attitudes, and clusters respondents into attitudinal groups (called classes).

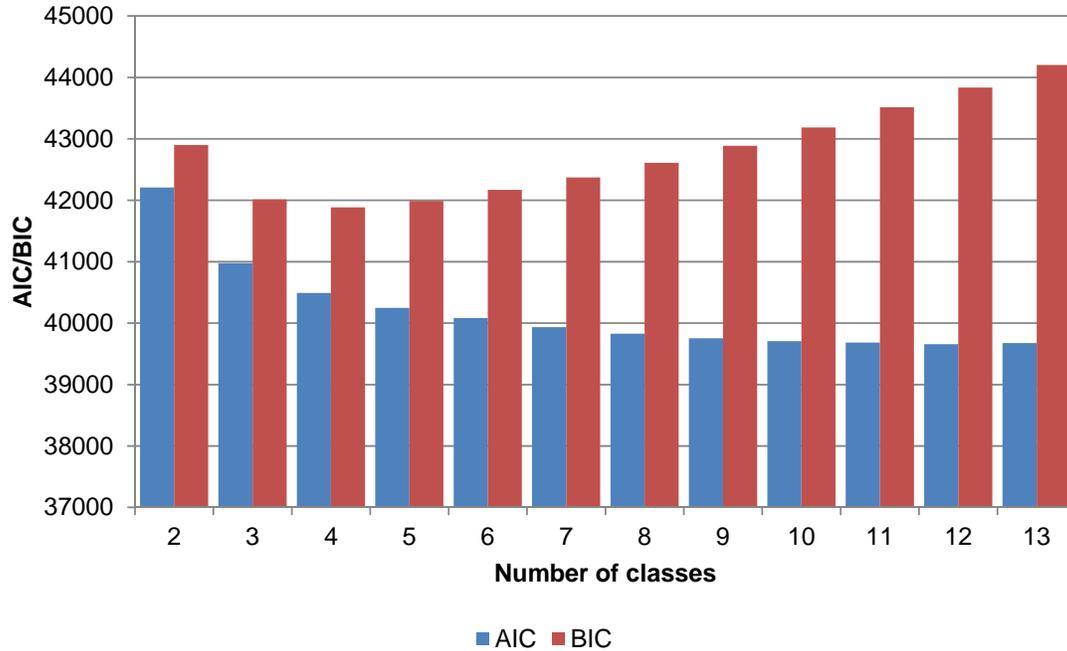
There are numerous approaches to clustering; in this case, all of the manifest variables are discrete ordered categorical variables, so one appropriate method to use here would be LCA (latent class analysis).

The manifest variables all contain missing values (in this case, respondents who say 'don't know'), and the preference is to run the LCA with a full dataset; multiple imputation (with the expectation-maximisation algorithm) has been used to create a dataset which replaces missing values with the most likely estimate of what the respondent would have said if they were not unsure, based on how their answers to all questions compare with all other respondents.

Having obtained a complete dataset, the LCA is run multiple times, in each case increasing the target number of classes by one. Two statistics, the AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) and BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) give an indication of when the statistically desirable number of classes has been achieved. Either statistic can be used: from the following graph, it can be seen that the BIC falls with each class increment up to the solution that contains four respondent classes and then it increases – a four-class solution is the optimum in this case. With the AIC, the optimum is not reached until a twelve-class solution (there is a marginal increase in AIC between the 12 and 13 class solutions).

---

<sup>5</sup> Q5. 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the LGA...?'; Q11. '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'; and Q13. '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?'



Another point to note is that LCA, as with multiple imputation, utilises the expectation-maximisation (EM) algorithm, as initially, the latent variable is one where all values are missing. EM relies on a random initial value being applied to a missing cell, filling the whole dataset, and then replacing these values through multiple iterations until the model converges into a solution that maximises the likelihood of missing values being correct. However, dependant on what the random initial value is, and where it is placed, the estimated values can differ if the model is run multiple times. Therefore, for each instance (a 2-class model, 3-class model etc), the model is run multiple times. With a latent class containing two classes, there are fewer possible permutations, so a solution is reached quickly, with eight or more classes in this instance, running the model 500 times produced 500 different permutations (although most permutations were highly similar). The solution used is that which produces the maximum log-likelihood estimate (MLE), i.e. the solution which has given the statistically most probable result.

### Analysis

It was agreed with the LGA that for the purposes of this research a 4-class analysis would be preferable to ensure sufficient bases for further crosstabulations and any future targeted communications activity with these groups.

The 4-class solution identifies an ordered hierarchy across the four classes. Those in class I have a higher probability of giving a positive response to all manifest variables than those from other classes, followed by Class II, with Class IV being the generally the least probable to give a positive response:

- Class I: Are generally the most positive about the work of the LGA. This class scores highest for all 21 statements (mean index score of 88.5 across all 21 elements). 18.1% of respondents belong to Class I.

- Class II: This class scores second-highest for all 21 statements (mean index score of 76.0 across all 21 elements). 44.7% of respondents belong to class II.
- Class III: This class scores higher than class IV for 15/21 statements (exceptions generally being elements of Q13; mean index score of 60.4 across all 21 elements). 25.4% of respondents belong to class III.
- Class IV: Are generally the least positive about the work of the LGA. This class scores are generally the least positive (mean index score of 48.1 across all 21 elements). 11.7% of respondents belong to class IV.

However, within the four classes, there is less uniformity over which service aspects are perceived most positively or least positively:

- Class I, II and III seem to have a greater focus on how the LGA can promote local government (providing a single voice, lobbying, managing reputation of local government), so these would be areas for the LGA to emphasise when communicating their offering to this type of council. The three classes tend to be distinguished by a) class I being generally more positive across the piece, b) Class II having a weaker focus on LGA 'self-justification' (being transparent, demonstrating value); c) Class III placing relatively less value on specific 'task-oriented' provision (legal advice, online tools, conferences).
- Class IV seems to have a slightly stronger focus on specific areas of where the LGA can help local government to improve, but not when this is couched as 'strategic' high-level thinking, such as 'shaping agendas' or 'driving improvement'.

Also of note is that the standard deviation of the 21 variable scores increases with each class, indicating that Class I as a whole has a more uniform view of all aspects, whereas Class IV tends to achieve far more diverse index scores across the 21 statements. Standard deviation statistics also point to the widest disparity in opinion between classes with regards to elements of Q56, most notably 'shaping agendas', which achieves an index score of 88.9 in class 1, but only 29.2 for class 4, and a standard between-class deviation of 25.08.

Survey findings were crosstabulated by these emerging groups to identify how the LGA might best communicate with the different groups and what messages may best be communicated to them regarding sector-led improvement.

## Findings

### Profile

Broadly the distribution of respondent's region across the four classes is reflective of the full sample; however, respondents in Class I are significantly less likely to be from the South East.

---

<sup>6</sup> Q5. 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the LGA...?'



Figure 33: Region of respondents (crosstabulated by LCA class)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Again, the distribution of respondent's by amalgamated role is broadly reflective of the full sample across the four classes; however, respondents in Class II are significantly less likely to be Frontbench Councillors.

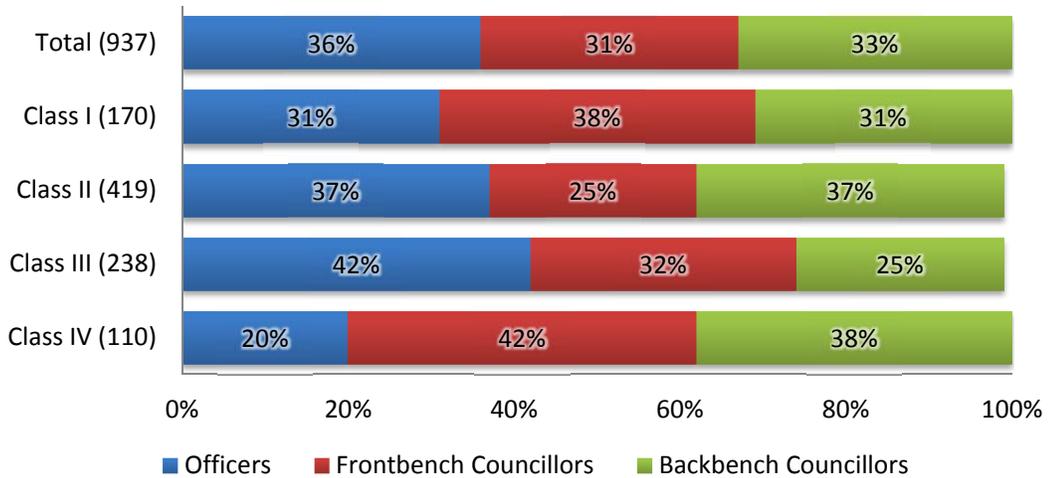


Figure 34: Respondent's amalgamated role (crosstabulated by LCA class)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

### Communication with the LGA

Respondents in Class I were the most likely to be 'Very well informed' by the LGA about its work (51%); this compares with only 19% of respondents in Class II; 12% in Class III, and 5% in Class IV.

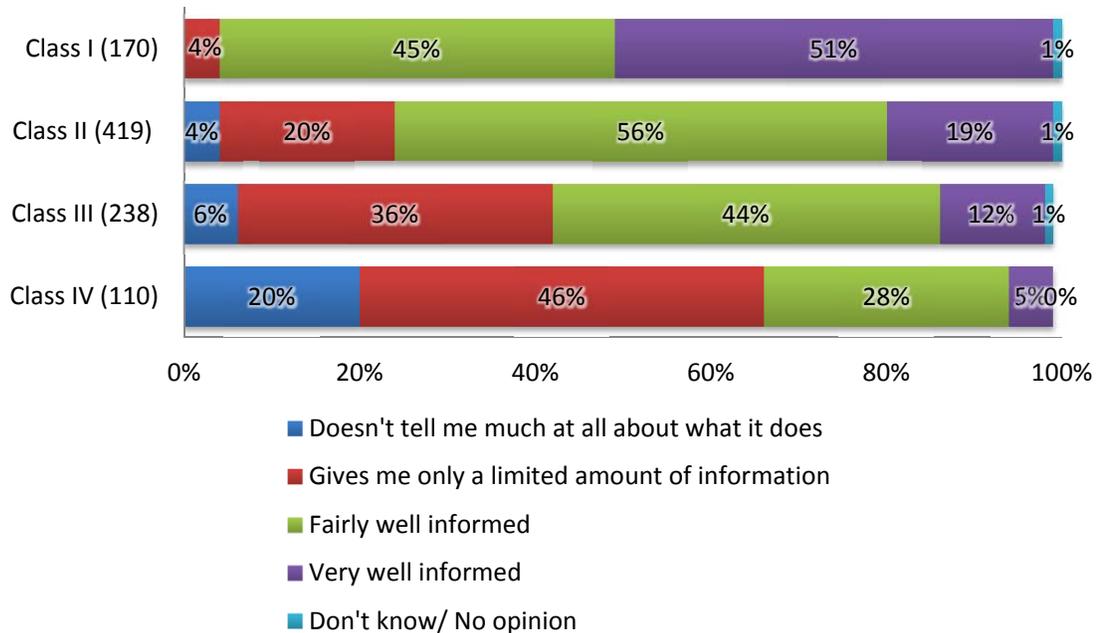


Figure 35: How well informed, if at all, do you think the LGA keeps you about its work? (Crosstabulated by LCA group)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Currently respondents in the different class groups find out about the work of the LGA in a variety of ways; however, respondents in Class I were significantly more likely than the other groups to receive information through the 'LGA Chief Executives weekly email' than Class II, III, and IV (48% compared with 36%, 31% and 20% respectively).

Respondents in Class I were also significantly more likely than the other groups to receive information through: the 'LGA Chairman's weekly email' (31% compared with 22%, 18% and 9% respectively); 'Other e-bulletins' (79% compared with 71%, 62% and 42% respectively); or the 'Knowledge Hub' (25% compared with 15%, 13% and 7% respectively).

Respondents in Class I were also significantly more likely than Classes II, III, and IV to report that they read 'first' magazine 'Always – every issue' (50% compared with 35%, 28% and 29% respectively).

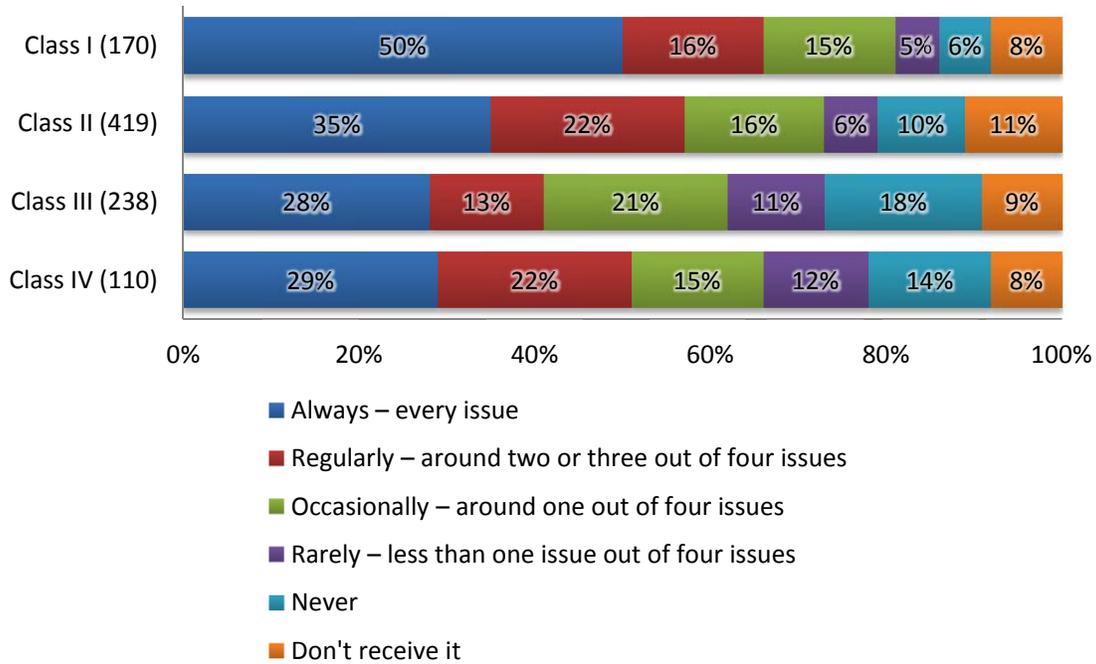


Figure 36: How often, if at all, do you read 'first' magazine, the LGA's fortnightly membership magazine? (Crosstabulated by LCA group)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

Respondents in class groups I, II, III reported most frequently that they would prefer to find out about the work of the LGA through direct email and post (35%, 37% and 32% respectively). However, Class IV reported most frequently that they would prefer to find out about the work of the LGA using 'Other' forms of communication (35%).

Respondents in Class IV were also significantly more likely to report that they have 'Not enough contact' with the LGA than classes I, II, and III (49% compared with 14%, 21%, and 32% respectively). In addition, Respondents in Class IV were also more likely to report that they were 'Not at all engaged' with the LGA than classes I, II, and III (47% compared with 1%, 9%, and 18% respectively). Further to this respondents in Class III were significantly more likely to report that they were 'Not very engaged' with the LGA than classes I, II, and IV (55% compared with 20%, 41%, and 43% respectively).

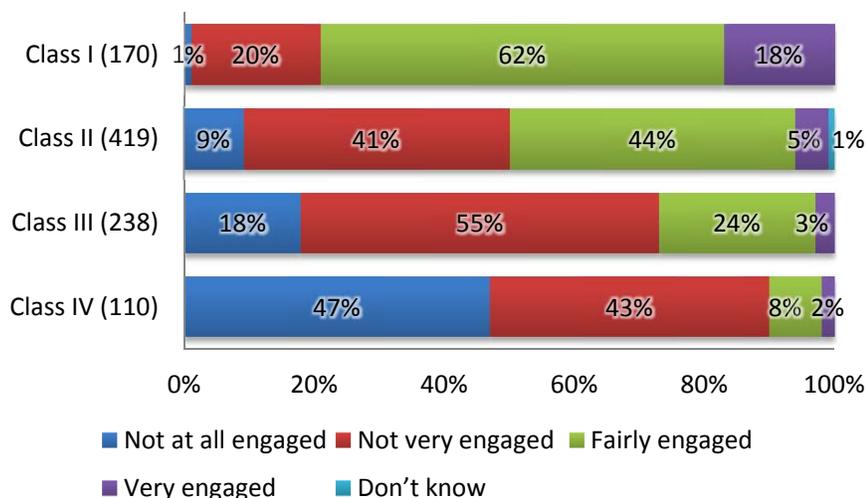


Figure 37: How engaged do you feel you are with the LGA? (Crosstabulated by LCA group)  
 Base=937  
 Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

When asked if they would like to be more engaged with the LGA, respondents in Class IV were more likely than classes I, II, and III to answer ‘Yes, much more engaged’ (25% compared with 14%, 15%, and 7% respectively). However, Class III were less likely than the other groups to report that they would like to be much more engaged with the LGA (7%).

Respondents in the different groups reported a range of ways in which they currently engage with the LGA. However, Class IV was significantly more likely than classes I, II, and III to report that they had no contact with the LGA at all (30% compared with 3%, 9%, and 14% respectively).

Respondents in class groups I, II, III reported most frequently that they would prefer to find out about the work of the LGA by ‘Contacting LGA officers by email and phone (57%, 54% and 47% respectively); however, only 28% of Class IV reported most frequently that they would prefer this option.

**Sector-led improvement**

Overall, Class I reported that they had heard the most about the sector-led improvement approach (66% had ‘Heard a moderate amount’ or ‘Heard a lot’). Class IV reported that they had heard the least about the sector-led improvement approach (27% had ‘Heard a moderate amount’ or ‘Heard a lot’)

Further to this, to date Class I reported that they had heard the most about the LGA’s offer of resources to support the sector in taking the lead in its own improvement, again with Class IV having heard the least.

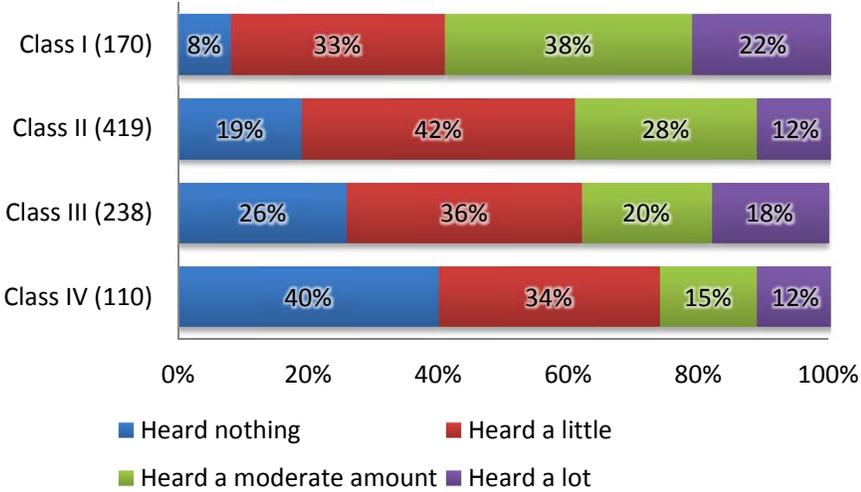


Figure 38: How much, if anything, have you heard about this sector-led improvement approach? (Crosstabulated by LCA group)  
Base=937  
Source: Telephone survey of LGA members

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.

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

**For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio, please contact the Local Government Association (LGA) on 020 7664 3000.**

**We consider requests on an individual basis.**

