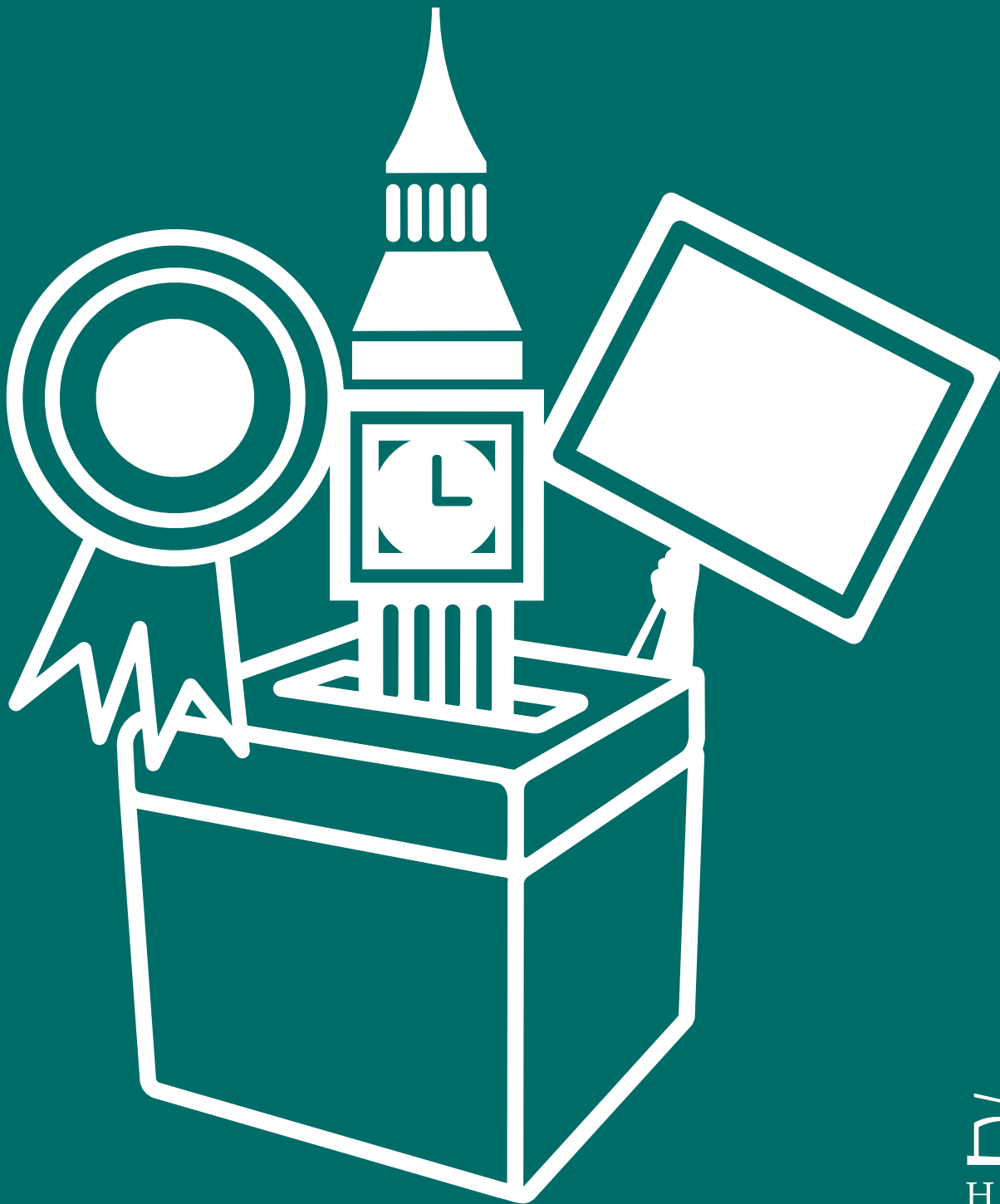


Audit of Political Engagement 12

The 2015 Report



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Published by the Hansard Society
5th Floor, 9 King Street, London EC2V 8EA

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Cover design by Graham Watson-Thomas at www.annexdesign.co.uk
Sub-editing by Virginia Gibbons
Design & layout by Annex Design
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Impress Print Services

Timeline images: BRITISH NEWS JAN-DEC 2014: © Crown Copyright, Flickr; © Editor77, Dreamstime.com; © Works and Pensions Office; © European Union 2014, European Parliament, Flickr; © UK Parliament, Wikipedia; © Ninian Reid, Flickr; © Warofdreams - Own work, Wikipedia; © Mrallen, Dreamstime.com; © Dods Group PLC 2015; © Mark Reckless, Wikimedia; © Crown Copyright, Flickr. WORLD NEWS JAN-DEC 2014: © Christiaan Triebert, NVC Review.com; © Masuti, Dreamstime.com; © Michael Fleshman, Flickr © narendramodofficial, Flickr; © The U.S. Army, Wikimedia; © Agência Brasil, Wikimedia; © European Commission, Flickr; © Herman Verwey, Gallo Images, CityPress; © MOD/Crown Copyright 2014; © Prestong, Dreamstime.com; © Sardaka, Own work, Wikimedia.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was produced by Ruth Fox and Joel Blackwell, with assistance from Virginia Gibbons and Luke Boga Mitchell.

The Hansard Society is grateful to the House of Commons and the Cabinet Office for supporting the Audit project and to the Committee on Standards in Public Life for supporting the inclusion of additional questions on the survey instrument.

As ever we are indebted to our former colleague Matt Korris, now in the House of Lords Committee Office. We are grateful that we can continue to call on his extensive knowledge of the Audit data; his advice and support has been invaluable.

We thank Viktor Valgardsson for providing statistical research support, Professor Gerry Stoker (Professor of Politics and Governance, University of Southampton), and Professor Colin Hay (University of Sheffield and Sciences Po, Paris) for their on-going advice and support.

This work could not have been conducted without the professional support and advice of Rachel Feechan and Nick Moon at GfK.

Finally, our thanks to Ann and Graham Watson-Thomas at Annex Design and everyone at Impress Print Services for the design and print of this publication.

FOREWORD

The Audit of Political Engagement provides an annual health check on our democracy. Now in its 12th year it measures the political pulse of the nation, providing a unique benchmark to gauge public attitudes to politics and the political process across Great Britain.

This year's report is published just weeks ahead of a general election. Are citizens showing signs of being more politically engaged? The results suggest not. Engagement levels remain low. People are no more certain to vote in the election than they were last year and their willingness to get involved in other ways if they feel strongly about an issue has actually declined. Engagement remains low with younger voters. Few 18-24 year olds report being certain to vote.

An early question we asked when looking at the data was whether the Scottish independence referendum had any effect on public attitudes. The results suggest there is a 'referendum effect' – Scottish respondents are more positive about many aspects of politics than people in other parts of Britain.

In the past, parties and politicians have been able to take comfort from the fact that public attitudes to participation at the local level were higher than at the national level. This year, however, that no longer holds true. Fewer people feel they have some influence over local decision-making than at any time in the Audit series and desire to be involved at the local level has declined.

For the first time the report also chronicles public attitudes to standards in public life, and touches on what the public would like to happen in the event of another

hung Parliament. And it explores how the public feel about the vexed question of the repair and restoration of the Parliament building, the bill for which is likely to run to several billion pounds.

The results once again underline the importance of the Hansard Society's founding mission which is to promote democracy and strengthen parliaments.

As ever we are indebted to the Cabinet Office and the House of Commons for funding this research. Their ongoing support is invaluable. This year we also thank the Committee on Standards in Public Life for supporting the incorporation of six questions on standards that they had previously looked at through their own biennial survey.

We appreciate the contribution of the staff at GfK NOP Social Research who undertook the quantitative survey on which the Audit is based and Viktor Valgardsson at Southampton University who undertook some additional analysis of the data.

Finally, we are indebted to Ann and Graham Watson-Thomas at Annex Design who helped us develop this new look for the Audit report. Shorter, sharper, and more visual in the presentation of the key findings, we hope it will appeal to the Audit's growing audience both here in the UK and around the world.

Rt Hon Lord Grocott
Chair, Hansard Society

KEY FINDINGS



CERTAINTY TO VOTE

Just 49% say they are certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election. This has not changed since last year's Audit despite the proximity of a tightly fought general election. The number of people saying they would be prepared to vote in the event of an election if they felt strongly about an issue has declined to 35%. Online voting is the most popular reform (45%) to encourage more people to participate in elections.



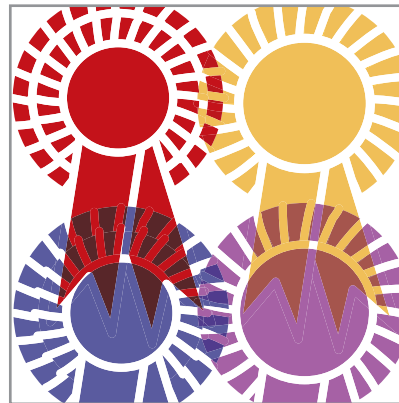
18-24 YEAR OLDS

Just 16% say they are certain to vote in an election and 30% say they are certain not to vote. They are more likely to support online voting than older age groups, but they are less supportive of votes at 16 than those aged 25-54. Only 22% say they have undertaken a political activity in the last year but 58% say they would be prepared to do something if they felt strongly enough about an issue.



SCOTLAND – A REFERENDUM EFFECT?

Scots are much more certain to vote than other parts of the country (72% -vs- 49%). They are more interested in politics (62% -vs- 49%) and more knowledgeable about it (56% -vs- 47%). They are much more likely to say that if they get involved in politics they can change the way the country is run. However, they are also more likely to think our system of governing needs improvement and just 14% feel influential over national decision-making.



PARTY SUPPORT

Just 30% claim to be a strong supporter of a political party and Scots are more likely to say this than respondents in other parts of the UK. But only 76% of those who say they are a strong supporter of a party are certain to vote. Three-quarters of those who say they support the Conservatives (74%) or UKIP (75%) say they are certain to vote compared to just 64% of Lib Dem and 52% of Labour supporters.



ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

The number of people who believe themselves to be registered to vote has declined from 90% in Audit 11 to 82% in this latest study. And almost double the number of respondents say they are not registered to vote (15% compared to 8% in Audit 11). The decline in reported registration is seen most significantly in those aged under 35; 28% claim not to be registered compared to 18% in the last Audit.



LOCAL INFLUENCE

Just 20% say that they feel at least 'some influence' over local decision-making. This indicator has declined six percentage points and now stands at the lowest level ever recorded in the Audit series. This decline in perceived influence is particularly marked among older respondents age 55 and above. Mirroring this decline in perceived influence, fewer people also want to be involved in decision-making in their local area, declining five percentage points to 38%.



SATISFACTION WITH THE SYSTEM

Only 61% say that Parliament is 'essential to our democracy', a decline of six percentage points. Sixty-eight percent think that our system of governing needs improvement and 58% that our democracy does not address their interests or those of their family. Just 18% think that the standards of conduct of public office holders are high. Fifty-nine percent are confident that the media will uncover wrongdoing but only a third are confident that wrongdoing will be uncovered and punished by the authorities.



A HUNG PARLIAMENT?

By a slim margin the public would prefer a second election if there is a hung Parliament after the general election; 32% want this, 27% want a coalition, and 23% a minority government. Nearly two in 10 people (18%) do not know which option they would prefer. This suggests six in 10 people (59%) would prefer a stronger government (through an overall majority or coalition) than a weaker government that might nonetheless stay true to its manifesto commitments (23%).

2014: YEAR IN REVIEW



Britain is hit by high tides, floods and strong winds making it the wettest January on record. The Environment Agency and UK government face criticism for their response to flooding in southern England.

The first Romanians and Bulgarians with unrestricted access to the UK labour market are greeted at Luton Airport on New Year's Day by Conservative MP Mark Reckless and Home Affairs Select Committee chairman Keith Vaz.

The government's controversial lobbying Bill becomes law.

BRITISH NEWS

The first same-sex marriages take place in the UK.

Chancellor George Osborne's penultimate budget before the general election is one for the 'makers, doers and savers' with commentators labelling it the 'grey-vote budget'.



Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and UKIP leader Nigel Farage go head-to-head in the first party leaders' televised showdown over Britain's place in the European Union.

Former Deputy Speaker Nigel Evans is cleared of sex assault offences, and later has the Conservative whip returned to him.



Culture Secretary Maria Miller quits her ministerial role following a row over her expenses.

Newark MP Patrick Mercer resigns his Commons seat in the wake of lobbying allegations.

MPs back the first phase of the controversial HS2 rail link.



UKIP triumph in the European elections, topping the poll and winning 24 seats, the first time a party other than the Conservatives or Labour has won a national election for over 100 years.

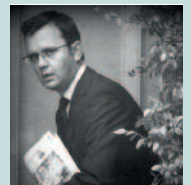
Home Secretary Theresa May accuses Education Secretary Michael Gove of failing to deal with an alleged Islamist plot to take over schools in Birmingham.



A relatively light legislative programme in the Queen's Speech leads to allegations of a government 'running out of steam'.

Prime Minister David Cameron fails in his attempt to derail former Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker's bid to lead the European Commission.

Cameron moves Michael Gove from the Education Department to the Chief Whip's office in his ministerial reshuffle.



The government's former Director of Communications, Andy Coulson, is jailed for 18 months over phone hacking.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

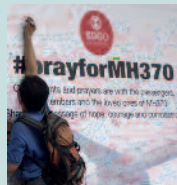
WORLD NEWS

Protests in central Kiev at the government's sudden decision to abandon plans to sign an association agreement with the EU turn violent. President Yanukovich flees to Russia and the opposition takes control.



The lead up to the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi is marred by controversy surrounding Russia's LGBT propaganda legislation.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 disappears over the Indian Ocean around an hour into its flight with 239 people onboard.



The Ukrainian crisis deepens after Crimea's controversial secession referendum on joining Russia is backed by 97% of voters.

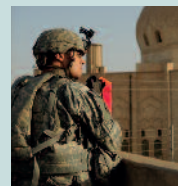
276 female students are kidnapped from a government secondary school in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria. Responsibility for the kidnappings is claimed by Boko Haram, a militant Islamist organisation based in north-east Nigeria.



The BJP, the Hindu nationalist party led by Narendra Modi, wins the Indian general election with a landslide victory over the Congress Party.



Islamist militants seize Iraq's second city of Mosul.



Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 is shot out of the sky above the Ukraine, killing 298 people.

The 20th football World Cup takes place in Brazil, with Germany eventually emerging victorious.



A CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The political scene was transformed by two major upheavals driven by deep public disillusionment with Westminster politics as usual.

UKIP's victory in the European elections in May marked the first time in 106 years that a party other than the Conservatives or Labour had topped a nationwide poll. And the Greens beat the Liberal Democrats into fifth place confirming the backlash against mainstream parties.

Just months later UKIP also secured their first seats at Westminster when the Conservative MPs for Clacton and Rochester defected, fighting and winning the subsequent by-elections.

Although Scotland voted 55% to 45% to remain part of the UK, the SNP was the party that most benefited from the historic independence referendum campaign. A surge in support saw its membership surpass the Liberal Democrats, making it the third largest party in the country, and it made significant inroads into traditional Labour territory.

The shift in allegiance towards the smaller, insurgent parties, heralds an unpredictable period in British politics.



An independent inquiry finds that at least 1,400 children were abused in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013. The report leads to the resignation of senior council leaders and Shaun Wright, the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire.



Scotland votes to remain in the United Kingdom following an historic independence referendum. SNP leader Alex Salmond steps down as First Minister following the defeat.

Chaos surrounds Britain's biggest retailer Tesco when it is revealed that it has overstated its profits by £250m. Eight members of senior management are suspended.



Douglas Carswell becomes the first UKIP MP having defected from the Conservatives and successfully contested a by-election in his Clacton constituency.

The government's child sex abuse inquiry is thrown into crisis after Lord Mayor Fiona Woolf becomes the second senior legal figure to quit as chair over her links to the Westminster political establishment.



Mark Reckless is the second MP to defect from the Conservatives to UKIP and successfully win a by-election. Accused of snobbery, Shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry, is sacked following a controversy over her 'white van man' tweet while out canvassing in Rochester.



Former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown is the latest in a growing list of high-profile politicians to announce they are standing down as an MP at the next election.

AUGUST

Islamic State militants behead American journalist James Foley after he was abducted in Syria.

In the US town of Ferguson, Missouri, unarmed black teenager Michael Brown is fatally shot by a white police officer. The shooting sparks unrest in the town.

The World Health Organisation declares the West African Ebola outbreak an international public health emergency.



SEPTEMBER

South African athlete Oscar Pistorius is jailed for five years after being convicted of manslaughter for shooting dead his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp.



The announcement that Beijing would have the power to screen candidates for Hong Kong's 2017 leadership election leads to large protests in the city.

OCTOBER

After 13 years, the British Army pulls out of Afghanistan.



NOVEMBER

The centenary of the outbreak of the First World War is marked across the world.



Entertainment company Sony Pictures is subject to an enormous cyber attack. United States intelligence officials allege it is sponsored by North Korea in retaliation for the pending release of the film *The Interview*, a comedy about a plot to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un.

DECEMBER

Seventeen people are taken hostage by an armed gunman in a café in Sydney. Two die in the aftermath.



Militants kill 141 people, including at least 132 children, in an attack on an army school in Peshawar, Pakistan.

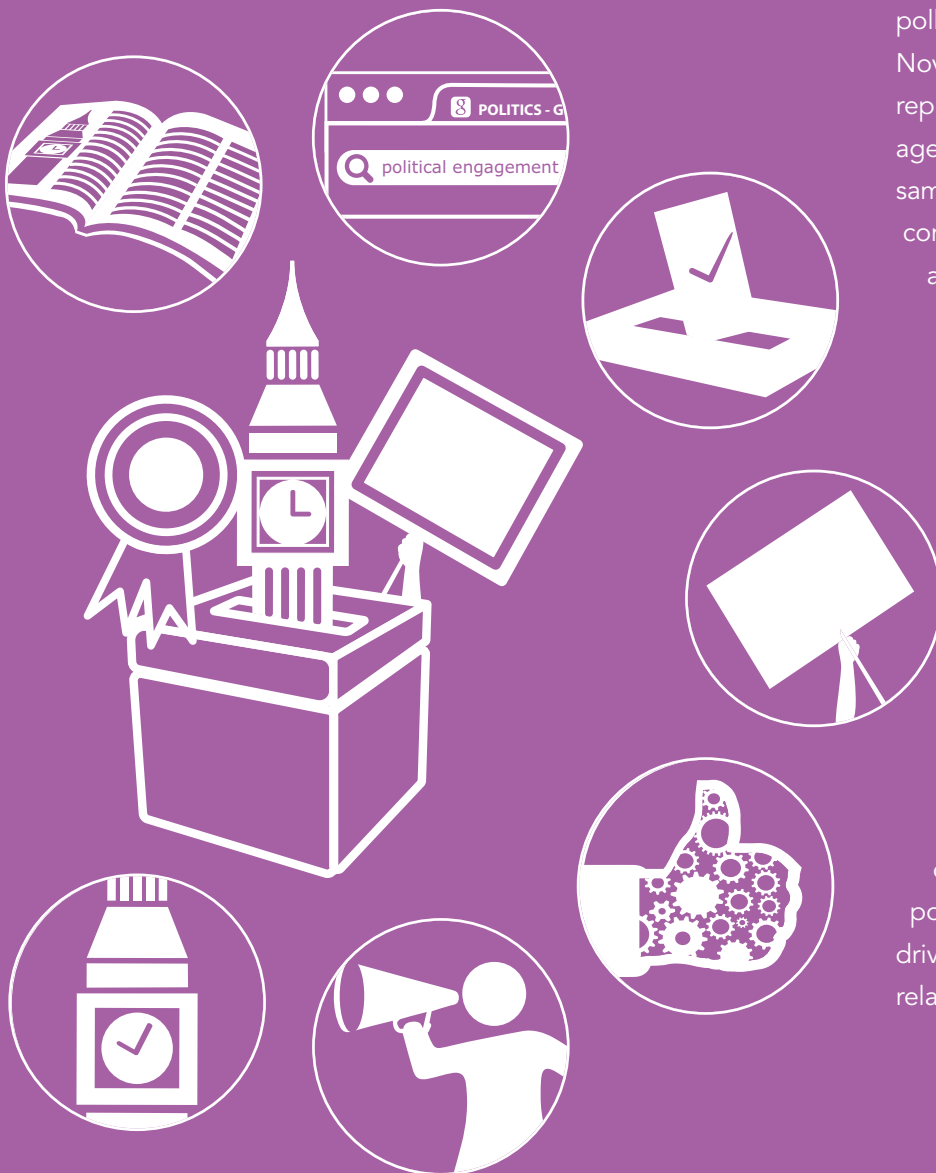
INDICATORS OF ENGAGEMENT

The Audit of Political Engagement series is a longitudinal study providing an annual benchmark to measure political engagement in Great Britain, gauging public opinion about politics and the political system and more broadly the general health of our democracy.

Each Audit report presents the findings from a public opinion poll survey, providing detailed commentary on a range of measures that have been chosen as key measures of political engagement. These indicators enable us to chronicle responses year on year and track the direction and magnitude of change since the Audit was first published in 2004.

The study provides a snapshot of public perceptions of, and engagement with, politics at a particular moment in time. This 12th Audit report is based on an opinion poll conducted by GfK NOP between 20 November and 5 December 2014 with a representative quota sample of adults aged 18+ across Great Britain. Booster samples were included to make comparisons between England, Scotland and Wales, and between the white and BME populations more statistically reliable. The data was then weighted to match the national population profile.

In the Audit we look at core, interlocking areas that we know are vital facets, or 'building blocks' of political engagement. Given its multi-dimensional nature, the indicators we have chosen are not exhaustive. But in capturing aspects of public behaviour, knowledge, opinions, attitudes and values towards politics they help us understand the drivers of political engagement and the relationships between them.



Levels of public knowledge and interest are explored because they are known to be important factors in engagement given the strong correlation between familiarity and favourability. The more people know about an institution, service or process the more positive they tend to be towards it and the more willing they may be to participate and get involved.

Political engagement can be measured in terms of what people think, but also in terms of what they do. We therefore look at levels of public action and participation in the political process, capturing both formal and informal forms of engagement that require varying levels of time and commitment. And we look not just at what people claim to have done in the last year but what activities they say they would be willing to do in the future if they felt strongly enough about an issue, enabling us to chart the gap between actual and potential engagement.

Building on the familiarity indicators, we look at the public's favourability towards aspects of the political system through a series of questions in relation to their sense of efficacy and satisfaction. We explore public satisfaction with the way our system of governing Britain works and the extent to which people believe their involvement in politics would be worthwhile in bringing about change in the way the country is run.

Engagement operates at a number of different levels. We therefore track the public's appetite for both local and national involvement in decision-making, and, as a further facet of their sense of political

efficacy and satisfaction, the extent to which they feel they have any influence over decision-making at each level.

Given the Hansard Society's core mission working to strengthen parliaments we also focus on public perceptions of Parliament as the core institution of our democracy. We look at the public's knowledge of Parliament, their perception of its importance and relevance, its effectiveness in performing its accountability function, and in engaging with and addressing the issues that matter to them.

For the first time in this report we also look at public perceptions of standards in public life, utilising questions previously asked by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in its own biennial public attitudes survey which has now been discontinued. The addition of these questions will, over time, enable us to illuminate the relationship between standards and other aspects of engagement such as knowledge and satisfaction.

The Audit provides a platform for debate about what might be done to enhance engagement in politics in the future. To encourage this and foster further, detailed research by academics and others we publish all the data each year on our website:

www.auditofpoliticalengagement.org

It should be noted that in a few instances the percentage given in the text varies by 1% from that shown in the graphs and tables. This is due to statistical rounding.

1: ROAD TO THE GENERAL ELECTION



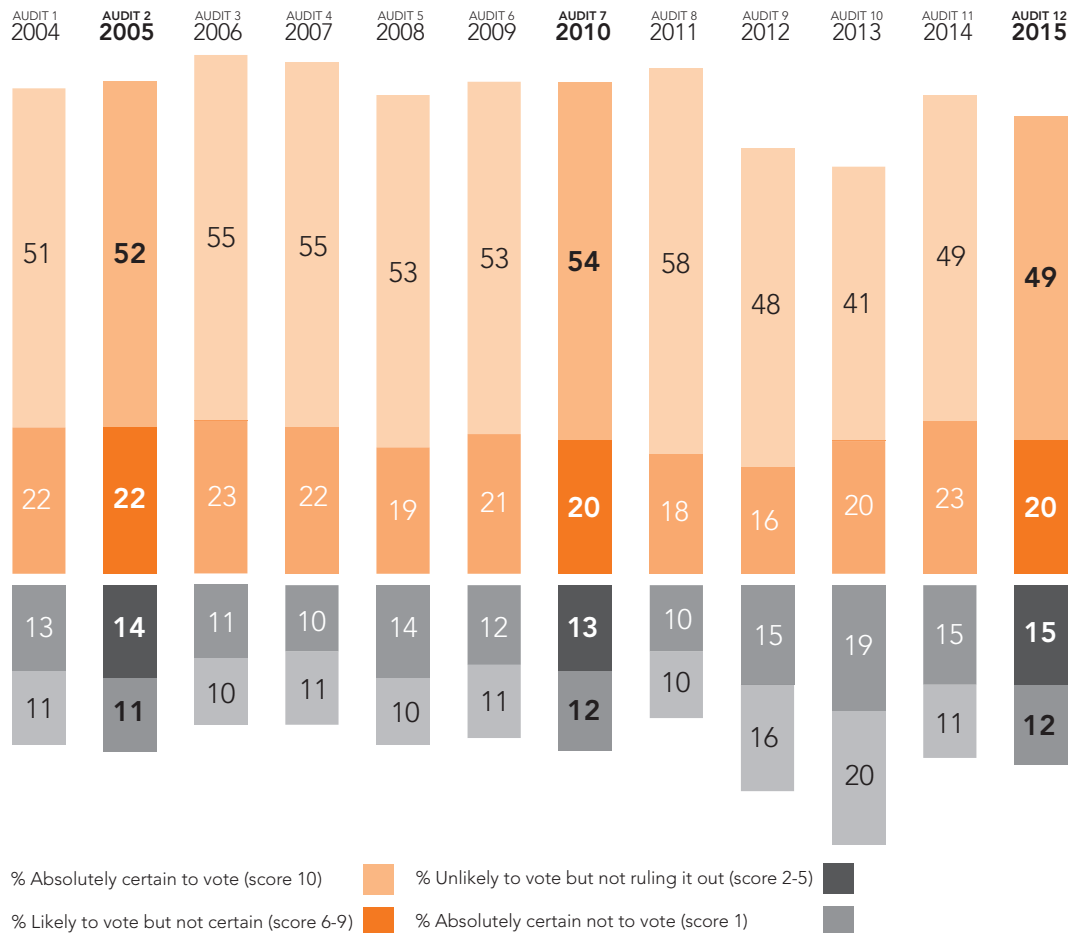
In advance of what is widely tipped to be one of the most closely fought general elections in living memory, one might expect that citizens would be showing signs of being more politically engaged than in recent years.

The fragmentation of the traditional party system – with the strengthening of the SNP in Scotland, the possible implosion of the Liberal Democrats, and the advance of UKIP and the Greens – means there are fewer safe seats which in turn means votes in those constituencies will matter more than usual. Logically this ought to lead to

an increase in electoral turnout and at this stage of the pre-election cycle one would therefore expect to see some rise in the public's 'certainty' to vote.

But in fact the public mood remains becalmed, with just 49% saying they are 'certain' to vote, the same as last year's Audit. Either they have not yet picked up on the fact that the election is so near, or it has not yet percolated through that the result could be so close; or, if they have, they appear to remain indifferent. The final turnout at the general election will of course be higher than 49%. The proportion of people – seven in 10 – who say they are 'likely' or 'certain' to vote remains stable and is consistent with Audits 2 and 7 which were conducted at the same pre-election stage prior to the

FIGURE 1
CERTAINTY TO VOTE



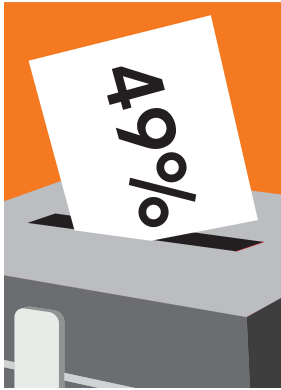


FIGURE 2
CERTAINTY TO VOTE IN THE
EVENT OF AN IMMEDIATE
GENERAL ELECTION

2005 and 2010 elections. How much higher turnout will go is unclear but other engagement indicators point – with the exception of those in Scotland – to a deeply disillusioned citizenry that will be hard to motivate.

It does not bode well that the number of people saying they would be prepared to vote in the event of an immediate general election if they felt strongly enough about an issue has declined to 35% (compared to 46% in Audit 11 and 42% in Audit 10).

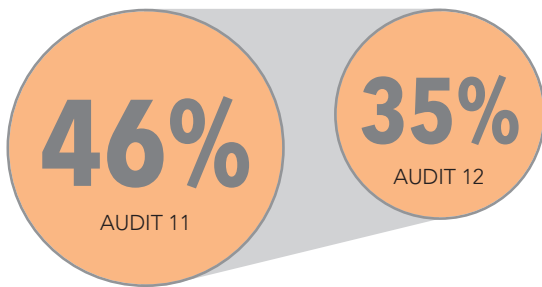


FIGURE 3
WILLINGNESS TO VOTE
IF FELT STRONGLY ABOUT
AN ISSUE

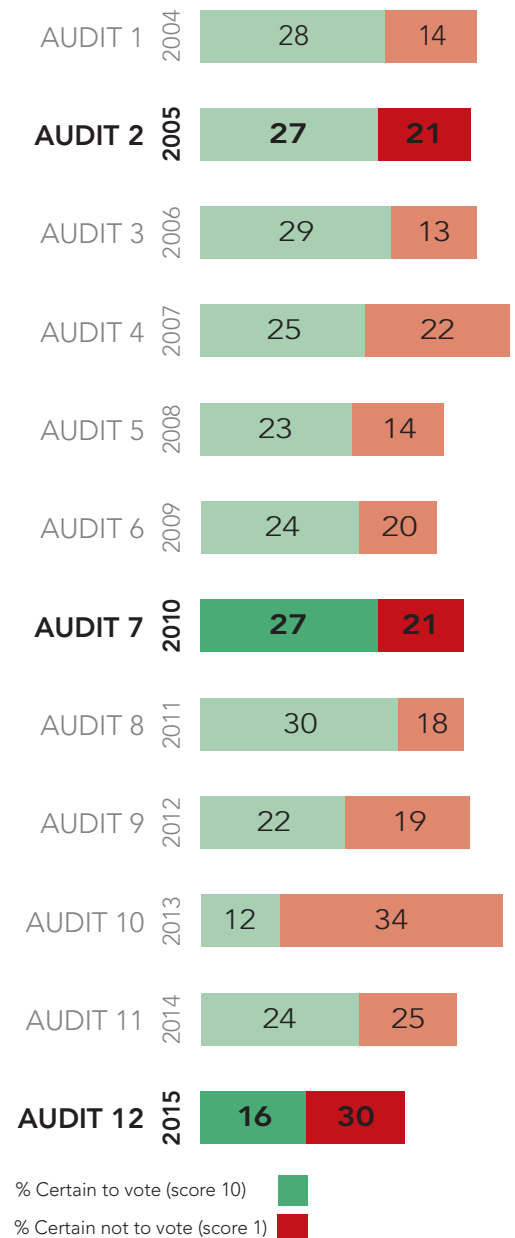
And beyond voting, the proportion of people who are prepared to do something in order to influence decisions, laws and policies if they feel strongly about an issue has declined across a whole range of possible activities: a willingness to contact a local representative has dropped from 51% to 33% this year; to create or sign a paper petition from 43% to 29%; and to boycott products from 25% to 15%.

As in previous Audits, the certainty to vote of young people – those aged 18-24 – remains worrying. Just 16% say they are certain to vote compared to 24% who said the same in Audit 11 and almost a third (30%) say they are absolutely certain not to vote. This indicator has seen some fluctuation in recent years, plummeting as low as 12% in Audit 10. It has never been above

30% in the entire Audit lifecycle but the trendline is downward and it now sits 11 percentage points below what was recorded at the same stage before the 2005 and 2010 general elections (27%).

Youth engagement is not the only thing the political parties have to worry about. Only 76% of those who say they are strong

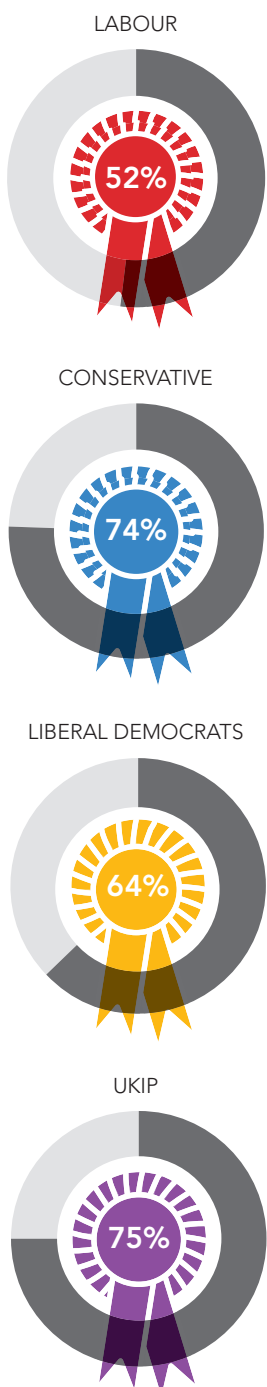
FIGURE 4
CERTAINTY TO VOTE OF 18 - 24 YEAR OLDS



ROAD TO THE GENERAL ELECTION



FIGURE 5
CERTAINTY TO VOTE
(SCORE 10) BY PARTY



supporters of a party also say they are 'certain' to vote; that leaves a quarter of those who claim to be strong party supporters not yet wholly committed to going to the polling station on election day.

And some political parties have more to worry about than others: three quarters of those who say they support the Conservative Party or UKIP also say they are certain to vote, compared to 64% (though the sample is small) of those who support the Liberal Democrats and just 52% of those who support the Labour Party.

The public's sense of partisanship remains at a stable, but low level, with just 30% claiming to be a strong supporter of any political party. The majority of citizens are not party supporters at all. In a post-referendum bounce, respondents in Scotland are the most likely to say they are a strong party supporter: 39% say so compared to just 26% in the last Audit. No other region has seen a comparable increase in support on this measure.

Beyond age differences, other inequalities in likely political engagement in the general election are also clear to see: 58% of people in social classes ABC1 are likely to vote compared to just 40% of C2DEs; 71% of those with incomes of £35,000 or above say they are likely to vote compared to just 48% of those with incomes below this threshold. And white respondents say they are significantly more likely to vote (52%) than do BMEs (33%).

These demographic differences are similarly reflected in relation to partisanship: older age groups, ABC1s and homeowners are more likely than

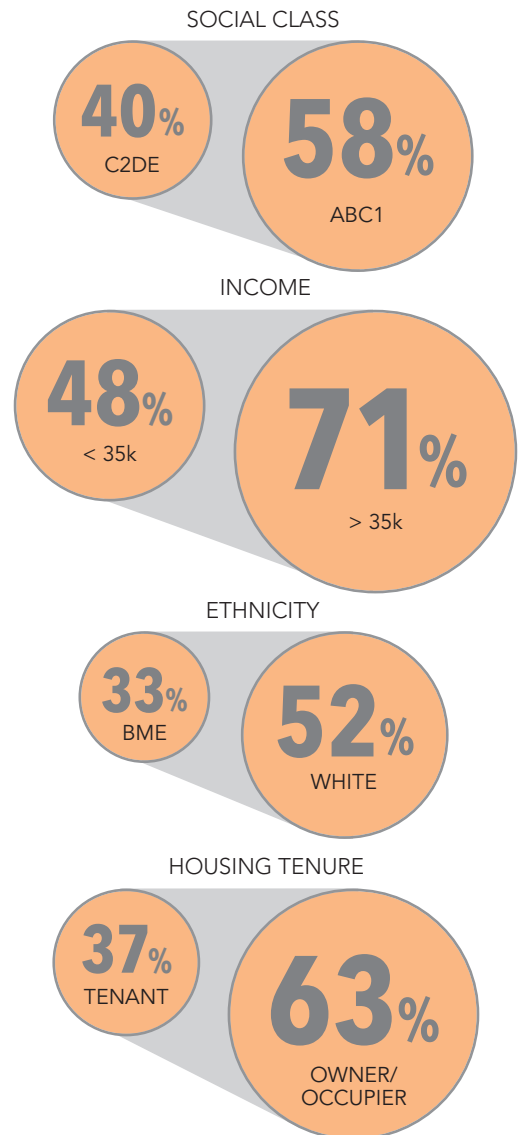


FIGURE 6
CERTAINTY TO VOTE (SCORE 10):
DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS

other groups to claim to be a strong supporter of a party.

Interest in and knowledge of politics remains stable compared to last year, as does the public's desire to be involved in national decision-making and the perception that if they get involved in politics they can change the way the country is run. But it is often local activity around an issue of concern that helps kickstart political engagement more broadly. This year, however, respondents'

desire to be involved in local decision-making has declined five percentage points to 38%, the joint lowest level in the Audit series.

Satisfaction with the present system of governing has also declined to 26%, the second lowest score in the Audit lifecycle. And the majority of respondents believe that our democratic system does not address the interests of themselves or their family. A relatively large proportion (one in five) feel that the current system doesn't address their interests at all well; compared to just 2% at the opposite end of the spectrum who feel the system addresses their interests 'very well' indeed.

Combined, only 36% say that the system addresses their interests at least 'quite well' compared to 58% who say the reverse.

Recurrently low levels of satisfaction with the system of governing and an ingrained view that the system does not support their needs is not a conducive environment in which to foster electoral participation. If voters think the system doesn't work, if they think it doesn't address their needs, and if they have low levels of commitment binding them to a political party, then what incentive is there to bother turning out at all?

Given the potentially close nature of the election result, what would the public prefer to happen if no party wins an overall majority: a coalition, a minority government or another election? By a slim margin, respondents to the survey said they would prefer another election be called (32%), with a coalition preferred (27%) to minority government (23%). But nearly two in 10 people (18%) just

don't know. Given four options, public opinion is surprisingly evenly split but it does suggest that six in 10 (59%) would prefer a stronger government (either through an overall majority or coalition) than a weaker government that might nonetheless stay truer to its manifesto commitments (23%).

That said, the question is a little unfair in that we have recent experience of the first two scenarios, but little memory of the latter in modern times (the exceptions being a brief period of minority government during John Major's premiership and the Lib-Lab Pact of 1977-78). Those who claim to support one of the current coalition parties are more likely to support the coalition government option than are supporters of other parties. And the Audit data on voting – not to mention the lessons of past history – would all suggest that the public would not actually be that keen on a second election. Indeed, regression analysis shows that those who prefer another election in the event of a hung Parliament are actually less certain to vote in the event of an election than others.¹ The results therefore carry heavy caveats: they are suggestive but not conclusive.

FIGURE 7
PREFERENCE IF NO PARTY WINS A MAJORITY OF SEATS AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION

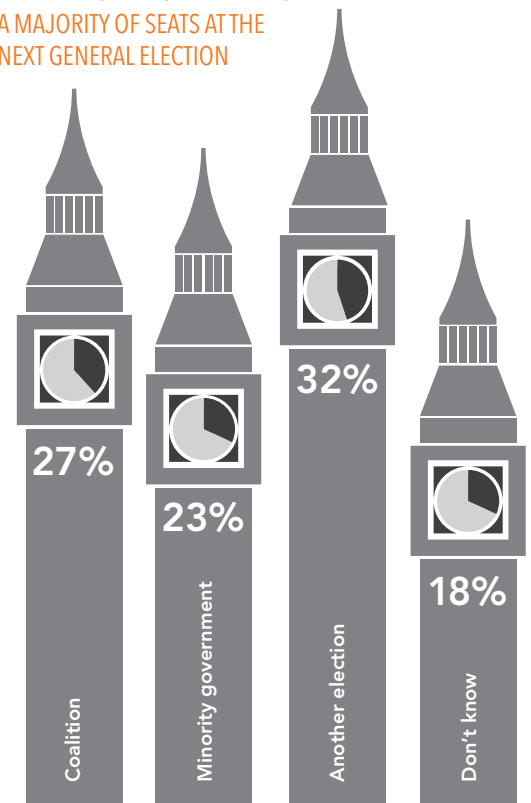


FIGURE 8
'STRONG' PARTY SUPPORTERS YET TO COMMIT TO VOTING ON ELECTION DAY

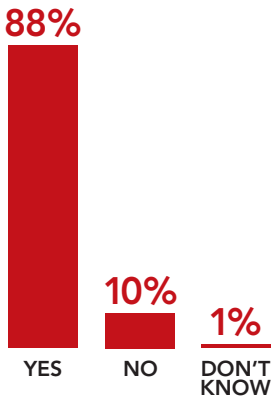


¹ On average those who prefer another election claim they are least likely to vote (mean = 7,34), followed by those who prefer a coalition government (7,87) and those who prefer a single party government (7,97).

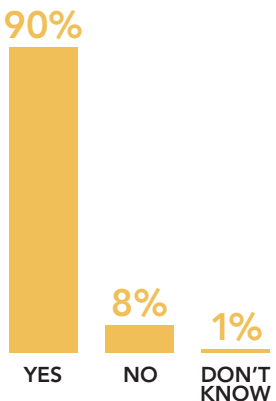
2: WHAT MIGHT ENCOURAGE US TO VOTE?



AUDIT 10 (2013)



AUDIT 11 (2014)



AUDIT 12 (2015)

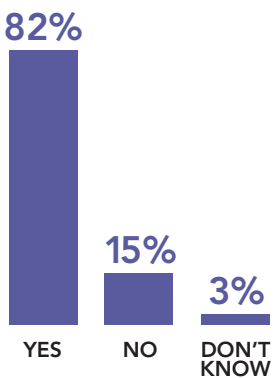
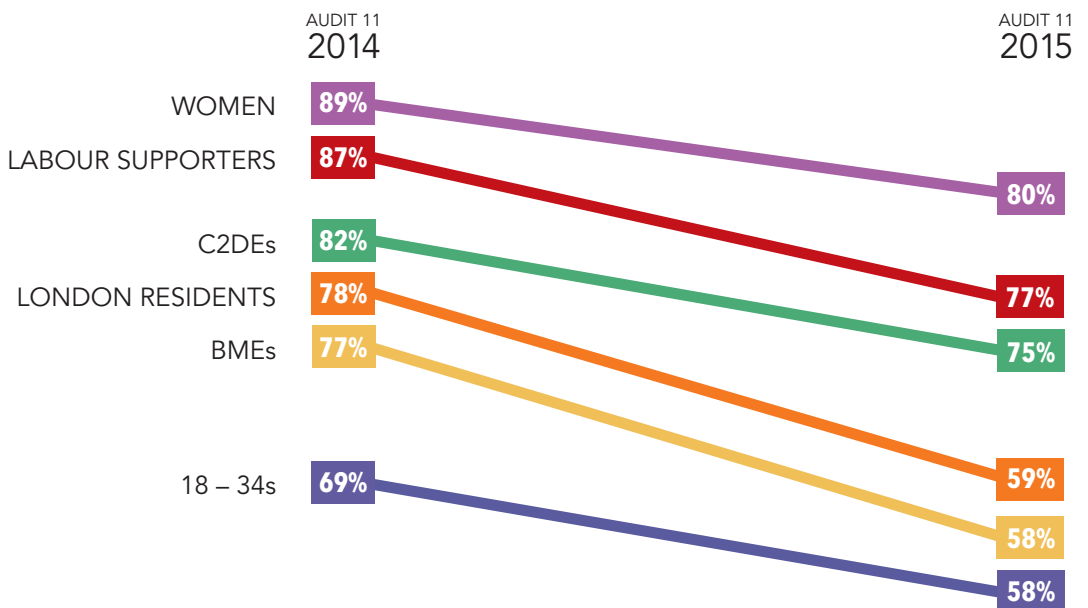


FIGURE 9
AS FAR AS YOU KNOW IS YOUR NAME ON THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

In order to vote we have to be on the electoral register. Since the decision to move to a new system of Individual Electoral Registration, concerns have been expressed that this will lead to a considerable decline in the number of people on the electoral roll, particularly among already disengaged groups and hard to reach communities.

And the Audit results bear this concern out for there has been a decline in the proportion of respondents who believe themselves to be registered to vote: from 90% in Audit 11 to 82% today. Almost double the number of respondents say that they are not registered to vote in this Audit (15%) compared to last year's (8%).

FIGURE 10
DECLINE IN THOSE REGISTERED TO VOTE WHERE THEY ARE CURRENTLY LIVING



The decline in reported registration is seen most significantly in the under 35s, with 28% claiming not to be registered compared to 18% in the last Audit. London remains the region most likely to be registered but this time there has been a significant increase in the proportion of people not registered (from 19% in Audit 11 to 33% in this latest survey).

Those renting from a private landlord were the group most likely to say they don't know if their name is on the electoral register.

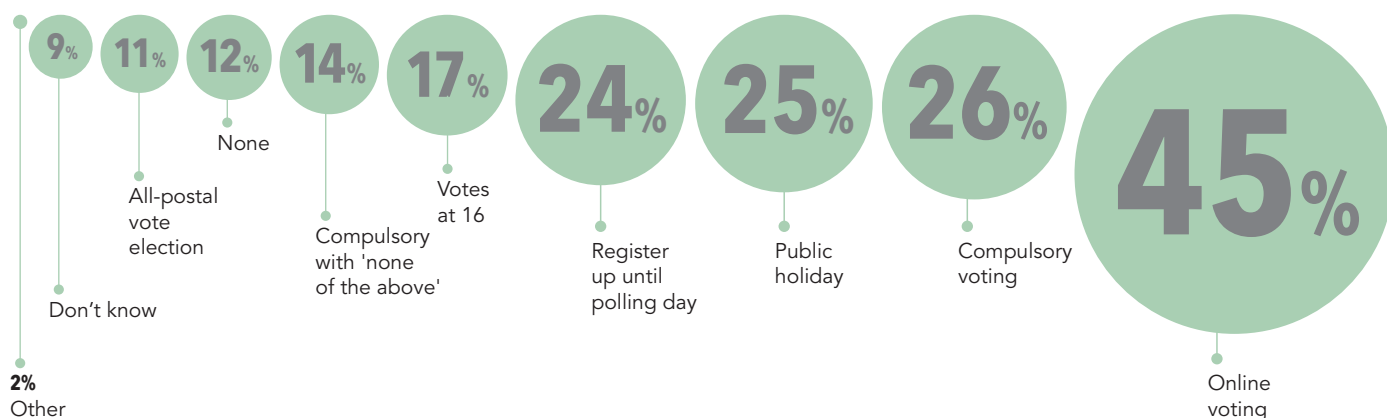
In all the regions, respondents in Scotland were most likely to say they were registered (95%), albeit there is no change compared to registration levels last year (94%) as people prepared for the referendum, and it is only a little higher than two years ago (89% in Audit 10). The decline in those registered to vote where they are currently living is seen almost across the board, but most significantly in the groups highlighted below in figure 10.

But if other changes were made to the election system, would this encourage more people to vote? The House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, following a lengthy inquiry into voter engagement, suggested seven potential reforms for the future. We decided to test these to assess which ideas, if any, might make a difference.

As Figure 11 shows, online voting was, by some distance, the most popular reform with 45% choosing this option as one of their top three changes to encourage more people to participate in future elections.

Around a quarter (26%) supported the introduction of compulsory voting but far fewer supported the idea of adding an abstention or 'none of the above' option to the ballot paper (14%) to accompany it. In contrast, more popular options were making election days a public holiday (25%) and extending the right to register to vote up to, and including, election day itself (24%). The introduction of votes at 16 (17%), and all-postal vote elections (11%) met with even less enthusiasm.

FIGURE 11
SUPPORT FOR CHANGES TO ENCOURAGE MORE PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN FUTURE ELECTIONS



Age is a significant factor in determining views in relation to some of these reforms, but not always in ways one might expect. Unsurprisingly younger voters are more likely to support online voting than are older voters (49% of under 55s compared to 37% of over 55s). However, those aged 18-24 are not the most enthusiastic group favouring the introduction of votes at 16: only 12% of them do so. In contrast, 21% of those aged 25-54 support votes at 16 but only 13% of over 55s. Thus the youngest and oldest voting age groups are somewhat reticent about lowering the voting age, albeit perhaps for very different reasons. In contrast, younger voters are less likely to support compulsory voting (18% of under 35s) compared to 30% of those aged 35+.

Those who express no preference are more likely to be from the C2DE social classes (17% compared to 7% of ABC1s) and have lower education qualifications – 22% of those with no qualifications at all, compared to 13% of those with GCSEs or A Levels versus 3% of those with degree level qualifications or higher.

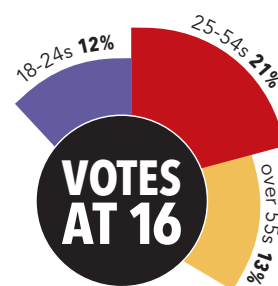


FIGURE 12
SUPPORT FOR INTRODUCTION OF VOTES AT 16 BY AGE GROUP

3: SCOTLAND... A REFERENDUM EFFECT?



The Scottish independence referendum on 18 September 2014 was a remarkable demonstration of political engagement: 97% of the population registered to vote; nearly 85% actually did so; 16 and 17 year olds participated for the first time; and there was a vibrant grassroots civil society campaign on both sides of the debate. But did the referendum have an impact on other forms of political engagement?

The Audit enables us to compare the position of Scottish residents to those in other regions, as well as to compare them to that of Scottish citizens in the previous 11 years of the Audit lifecycle.

There is clearly a 'referendum effect': those living in Scotland are much more certain to vote than those in any other region of Great Britain; their level of interest in politics is greater than in any other

region and their claimed level of knowledge about politics is well above the national average. Respondents in Scotland are also much more likely to say they are a strong supporter of a political party, and most likely to agree that if they get involved in politics they can change the way the country is run.

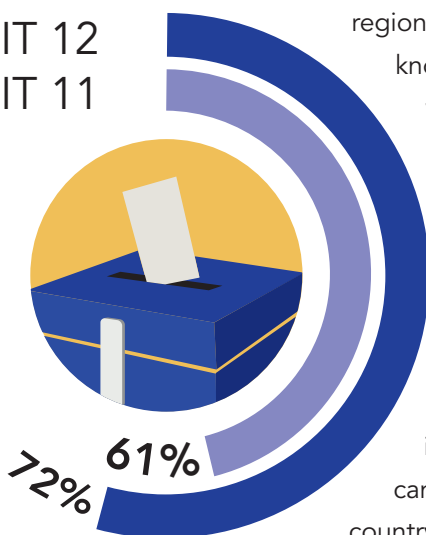
However, this positivity does not extend to perceptions of their actual influence over decision-making; here there has been no change in attitudes. Those in Scotland are also more likely than the national average to believe that the system of government needs improvement and just as likely as respondents in other regions to perceive that our democratic system does not address the interests of themselves or their family.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of Scottish respondents say they are 'certain' to vote in a general election. This is significantly above the national average (49%) and 11 percentage points higher than the number of Scots who reported the same in the previous Audit (11). They are more certain to vote in the general election than residents in any other region. Indeed, propensity to vote has dipped slightly in all other regions. With one exception (Wales at 62%) in no other region of the country do more than 60% of respondents say they are certain to vote and Scots are more than twice as certain to vote as residents in London (34%).

Interest in politics also peaks among respondents in Scotland. Sixty-two percent say they are 'very' or 'fairly' interested, 13 percentage points higher than the national average. By way of comparison, respondents in London are 20 percentage points less interested in politics than those north of the border.

FIGURE 13
CERTAINTY TO VOTE
(SCORE 10) IN SCOTLAND

AUDIT 12
AUDIT 11



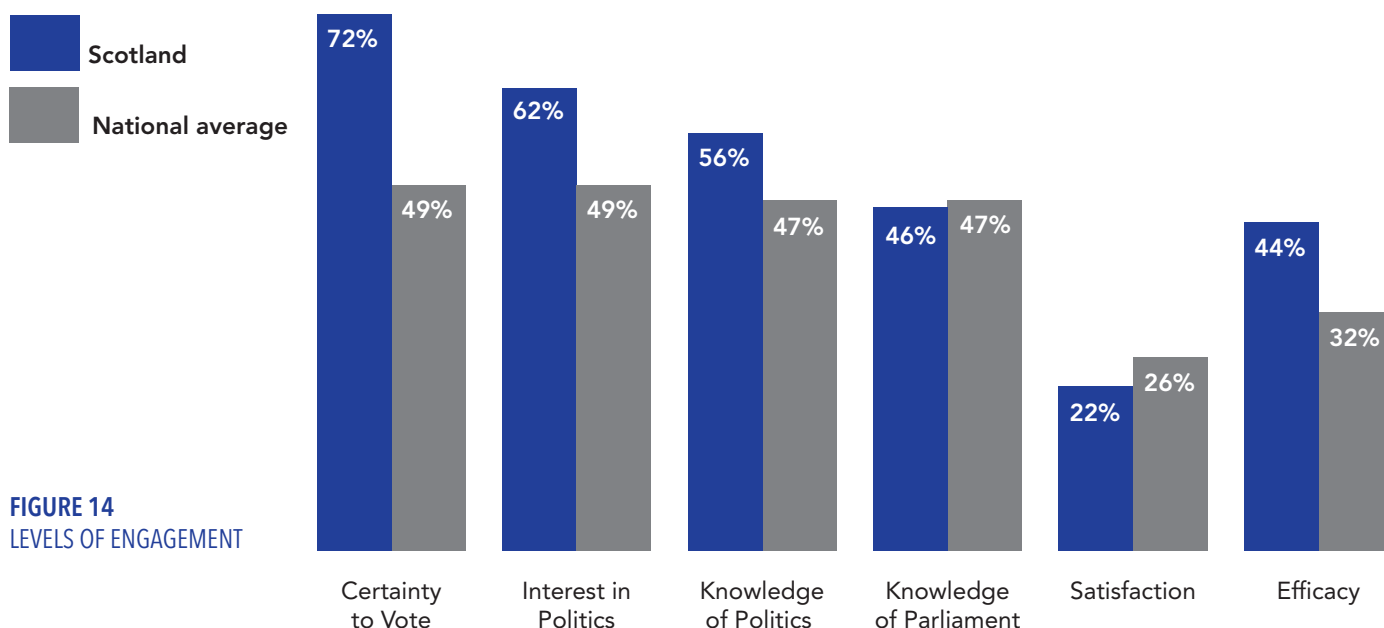


FIGURE 14
LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Scottish respondents are also more likely than those in any other region to say they are a strong supporter of a political party. Thirty-nine percent say so compared to 26% who said the same in Audit 11. No other region has seen a comparable increase in the strength of support for a political party. And among those who claim to be a party supporter, interest in politics is highest among those who claim to support the Scottish National Party (SNP). Seventy-six percent of SNP supporters say they are at least fairly interested in politics; 27 percentage points higher than the national average.

A higher proportion of Scottish respondents also tend to agree with the proposition that if they get involved in politics they can change the way the country is run than do residents in any other part of Great Britain. Forty-four percent of Scots say this; 12 percentage points higher than the national average. This is also seven percentage points higher than the number of Scots who agreed with this proposition (37%) at the

same stage of the election cycle in Audit 7. Again, no other region has seen such a change across the Audit lifecycle.

However, the picture is not universally positive. The referendum does not appear to have had any significant impact on the perceived knowledge levels of Scottish citizens in relation to either politics in general or the Westminster Parliament in particular. Fifty-six percent of Scots say they know at least a 'fair' amount about politics; this is above the national average (47%) but a number of other regions report higher claimed knowledge scores. And as far as the Westminster Parliament is concerned, Scots are no more likely than average to claim to be knowledgeable about it.

Nor, apart from voting, are respondents in Scotland more likely than those in other regions to undertake a political activity if they feel strongly about an issue. Seventy-nine percent of Scots say they would be willing to do something but respondents in three other regions



FIGURE 15
SNP SUPPORTERS WHO SAY
THEY ARE AT LEAST FAIRLY
INTERESTED IN POLITICS

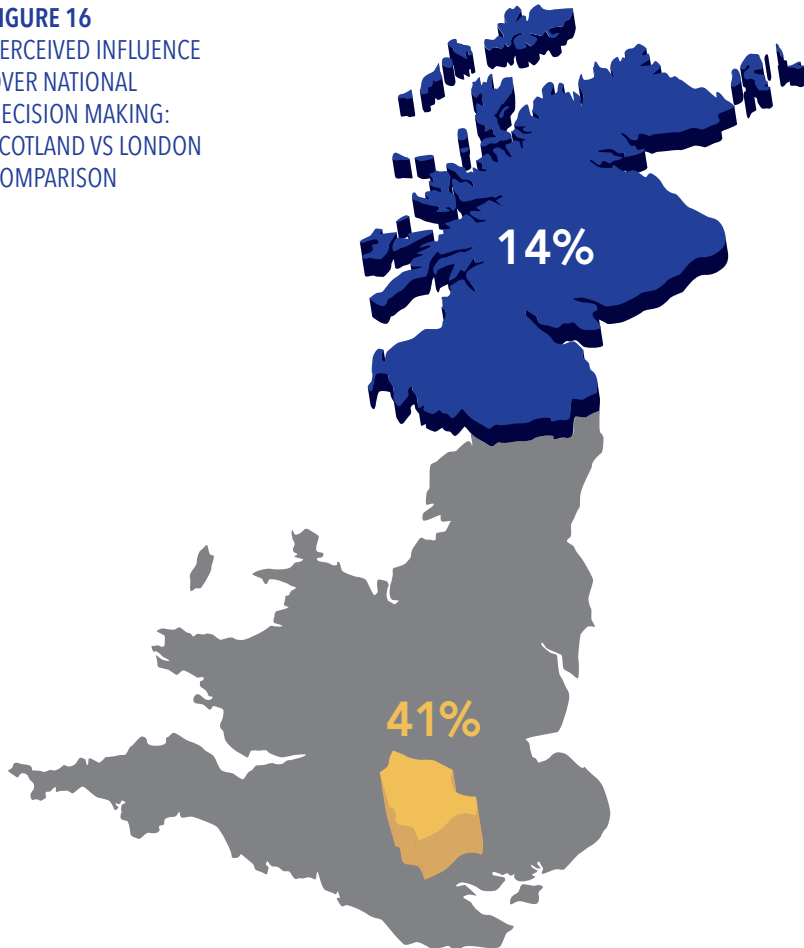
SCOTLAND... A REFERENDUM EFFECT?



(Wales, the Eastern region and South East) all report slightly higher levels of willingness to take action in some form.

And despite more Scots feeling that if they get involved in politics they can change the way the country is run, they don't actually feel very influential over decision-making. Just 14% of Scottish respondents say that they feel they have at least some influence over decision-making in the country as a whole, a rise of only two percentage points since the last Audit. It is not the lowest recorded regional result but it is, for example, significantly lower than the perceived influence over national decision-making of respondents in London (41%) and the West Midlands (22%).

FIGURE 16
PERCEIVED INFLUENCE
OVER NATIONAL
DECISION MAKING:
SCOTLAND VS LONDON
COMPARISON



Similarly, respondents in Scotland are more likely than the national average (37% versus 27%) to think that the system of governing needs 'a great deal of improvement', although four other regions also report similarly above average levels of concern. And they are also no more likely to think that our democratic system addresses the interests of themselves and their family than those in other regions.

Following the referendum and the pledge – made by the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats – to transfer more powers to the Scottish Parliament on a fast-track timetable if the country remained within the Union, the government announced that, on a similarly fast timetable, proposals would be brought forward for English-only votes on English matters at Westminster (EVEL).

To test attitudes to this issue, we split the sample and asked a different question of each. One half was simply asked how important a reform they thought English votes for English laws to be. Sixty percent said it was at least 'fairly' important, and only 30% that it was 'not very' or 'not at all' important. The other half of the sample was asked the same question, but with the addition of more information – that research suggests the voting outcome would have been different in only 21 out of 5000 votes since 1997 (and six since 2010) – to set the EVEL issue in context. Interestingly, however, this made little difference to the response: 56% still said that this was at least a 'fairly' important reform issue and 35% that it was 'not very' or 'not at all' important.

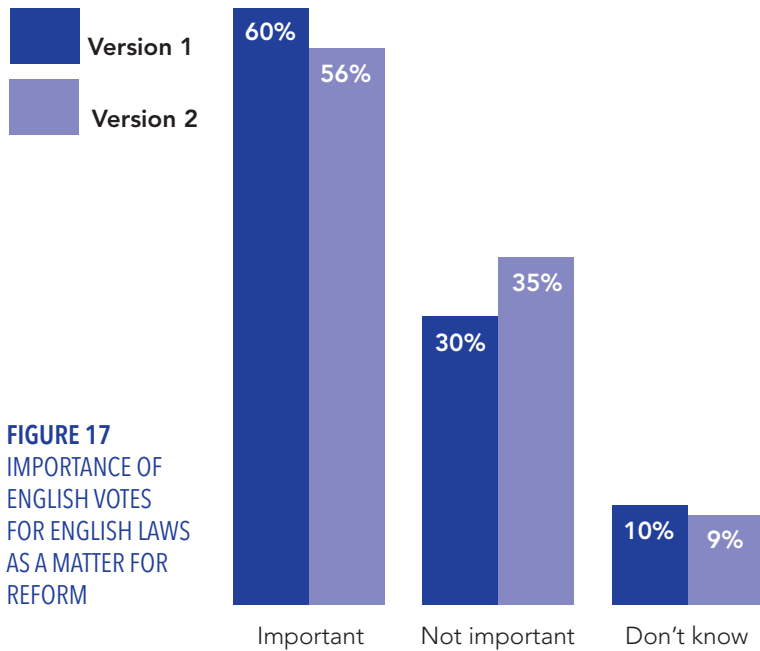


FIGURE 17
IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH VOTES FOR ENGLISH LAWS AS A MATTER FOR REFORM

Those more likely to think it is an important issue for reform were:

Version A (less information)

- White respondents (72%) v BMEs (48%)
- Those interested in politics (79%) v those who say they are not interested (43%)
- Those knowledgeable about politics (76%) v those who feel they are not knowledgeable (47%)

Version B (more information)

- ABC1s (61%) v C2DEs (51%)
- Those interested (68%) and knowledgeable about politics (65%)

There were no significant differences by age, gender, working status, income or newspaper readership.

Unsurprisingly, supporters of the Conservative Party – the chief advocates of the reform – were the most enthusiastic supporters of the proposal (41%), followed by supporters of UKIP (25%). Interestingly, however, respondents in Scotland (26%) and Wales (44%) were more likely to think that this was an important issue than were respondents in many English regions including London (24%). Some caution in interpreting these results must be observed as the sample sizes in the regions are low; but the general group differences are nonetheless significant.

The independence referendum was a rare event in British politics and it has had a marked impact on public attitudes to politics in Scotland in some important areas. We did not, for example, see a similar reaction – in Scotland or any other part of Great Britain – after the alternative vote (AV) referendum in 2011. It is too early to judge whether the improvement in some of these key indicators of political engagement will be sustained. For now, at least, there are some positive signs. But whilst Scots may be more interested and engaged, a continuing sense of disempowerment, a perceived lack of influence, and on-going dissatisfaction with the system by which we are governed may yet corrode the benefits derived from the referendum in the long term.

4: CORE INDICATORS



PERCEPTIONS



KNOWLEDGE



INTEREST



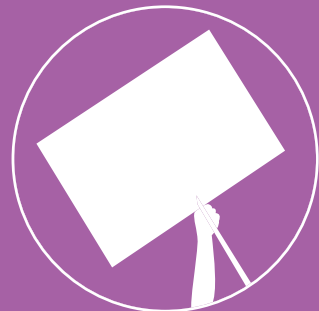
INVOLVEMENT



ACTION



SATISFACTION



EFFICACY

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ACTION AND PARTICIPATION	29 – 32
EFFICACY AND SATISFACTION	33 – 35
POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY	36 – 38
PERCEPTIONS OF PARLIAMENT	39 – 43

KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST



Overall, these key indicators have remained broadly stable over time and there has been little change in this Audit.

Only half the public say that they are 'very' or 'fairly' interested in politics (49%), just one percentage point lower than last year, a decline which, being well within the margin of error, is statistically insignificant.

It is the trend here that matters and this remains downward: 49% is the second lowest score recorded in the Audit lifecycle, and it is four percentage points lower than recorded at the same stage of the election cycle in Audits 2 and 7 (53%).

The groups most likely to say they are interested in politics are men, those over 35 years of age, those in social classes ABC1, white respondents and owner-occupiers.

Scotland recorded the highest level of interest at a regional level with 62% claiming to be at least 'fairly' interested in politics. In contrast, interest levels in London declined from 56% in Audit 11 to just 42% in this latest study.

Supporters of the Scottish National Party are also more interested in politics (76%) than the average citizen. Supporters of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) are also more likely to be interested in politics than the average, and are the

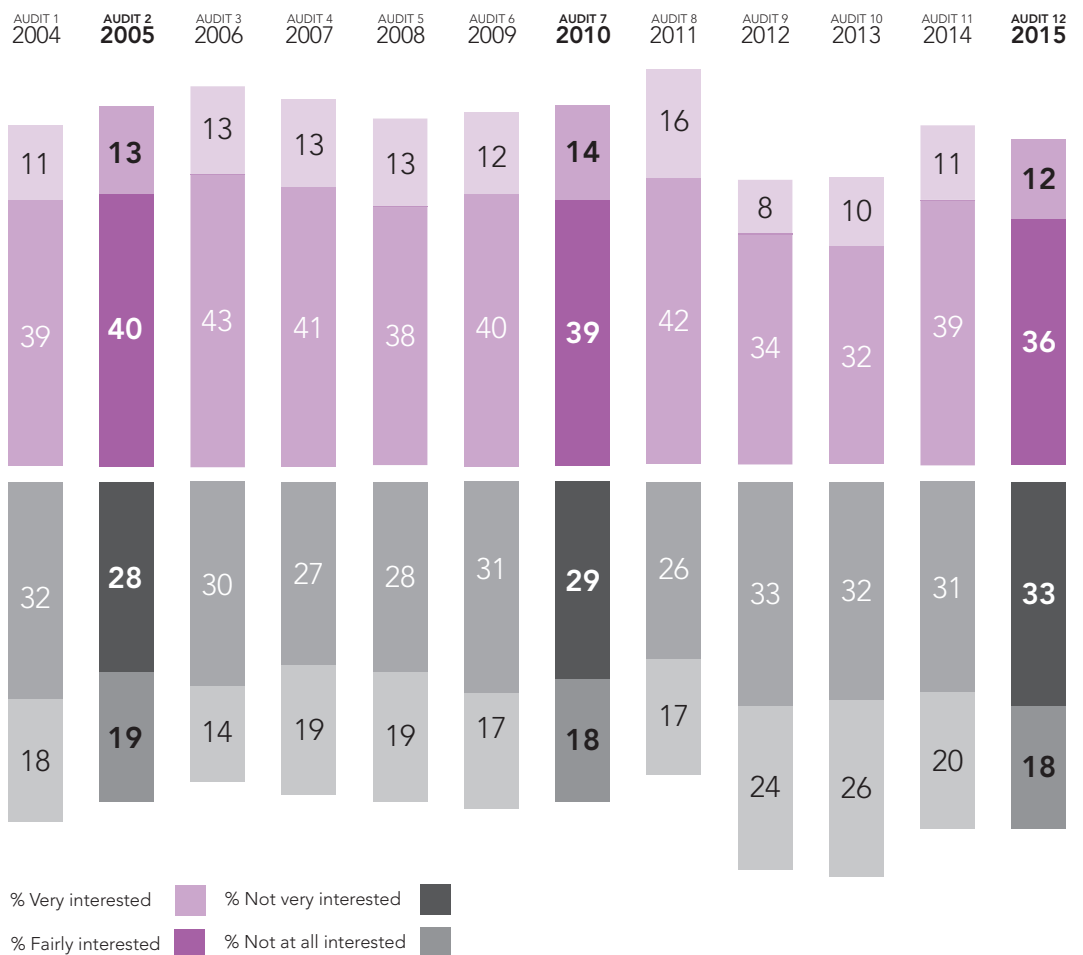
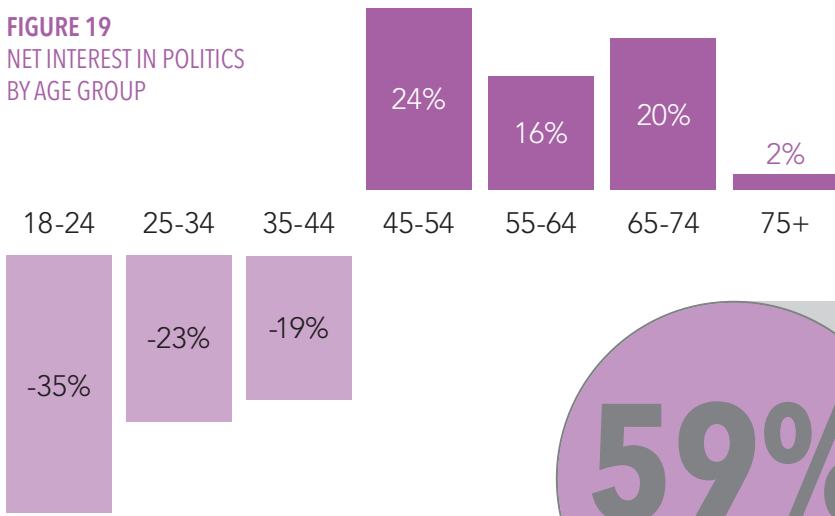


FIGURE 18
INTEREST IN POLITICS

FIGURE 19
NET INTEREST IN POLITICS
BY AGE GROUP



most interested group apart from those who would vote for one of the nationalist parties (SNP or Plaid Cymru).

Respondents who claim to be interested in politics are also more likely to feel they know a great deal about politics and the UK Parliament. Seventy-eight percent of those who claim to be at least 'fairly interested' in politics claim to know at least a 'fair amount' about it, with 10% claiming to know a great deal. However, that means 22% of those who are interested in politics feel they know not very much or nothing at all about it.

Levels of perceived knowledge about politics have fluctuated quite a bit over the Audit lifecycle. The proportion of people saying they know at least a 'fair amount' stands at 47% this time; this is three percentage points lower than in Audit 11 but, within the margin of error, it is not a statistically significant difference. It is marginally higher than at the same stage of the election cycle in Audit 2 (45%) but marginally lower than in Audit 7 (51%).

As with interest in politics, those groups

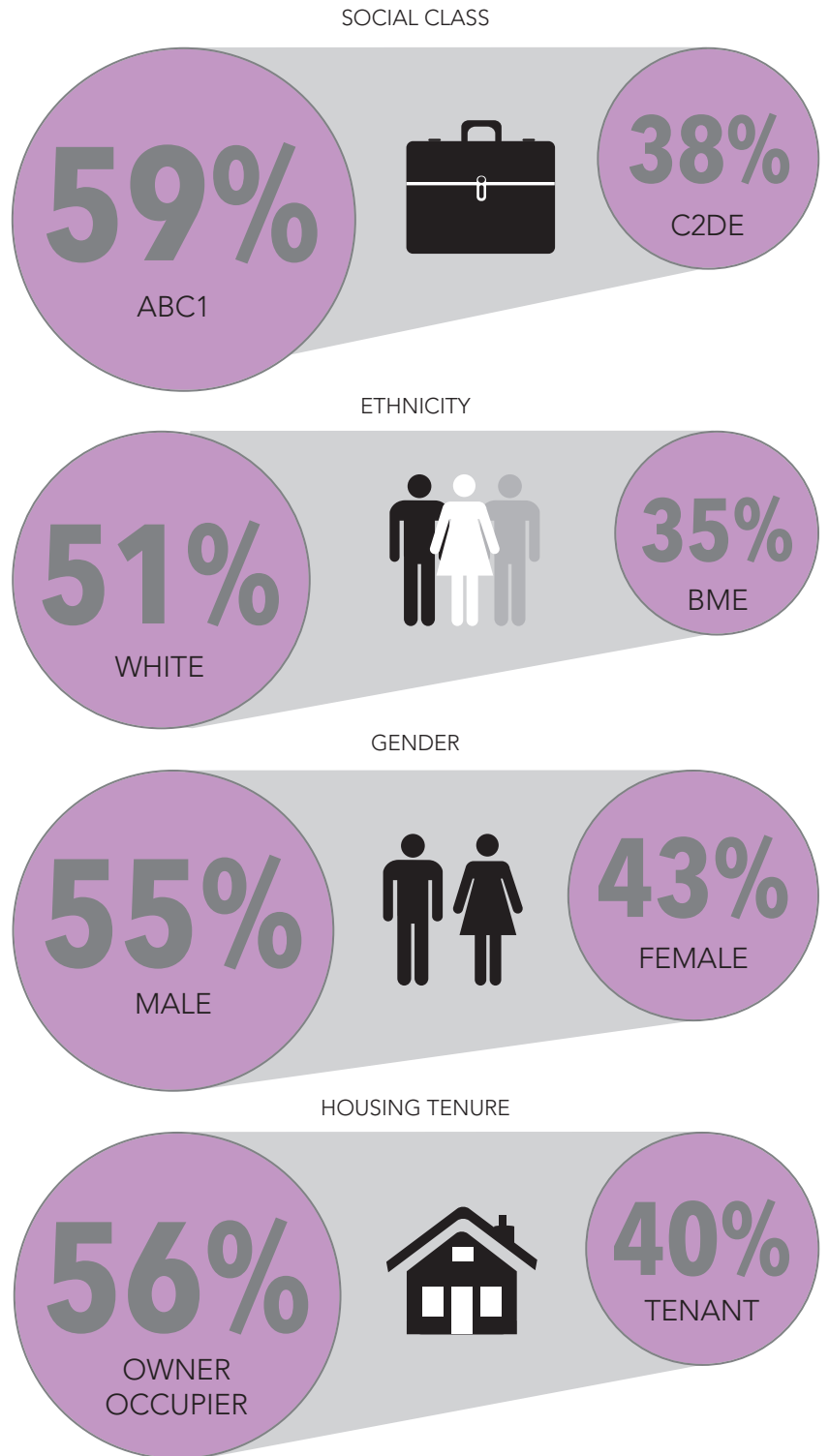
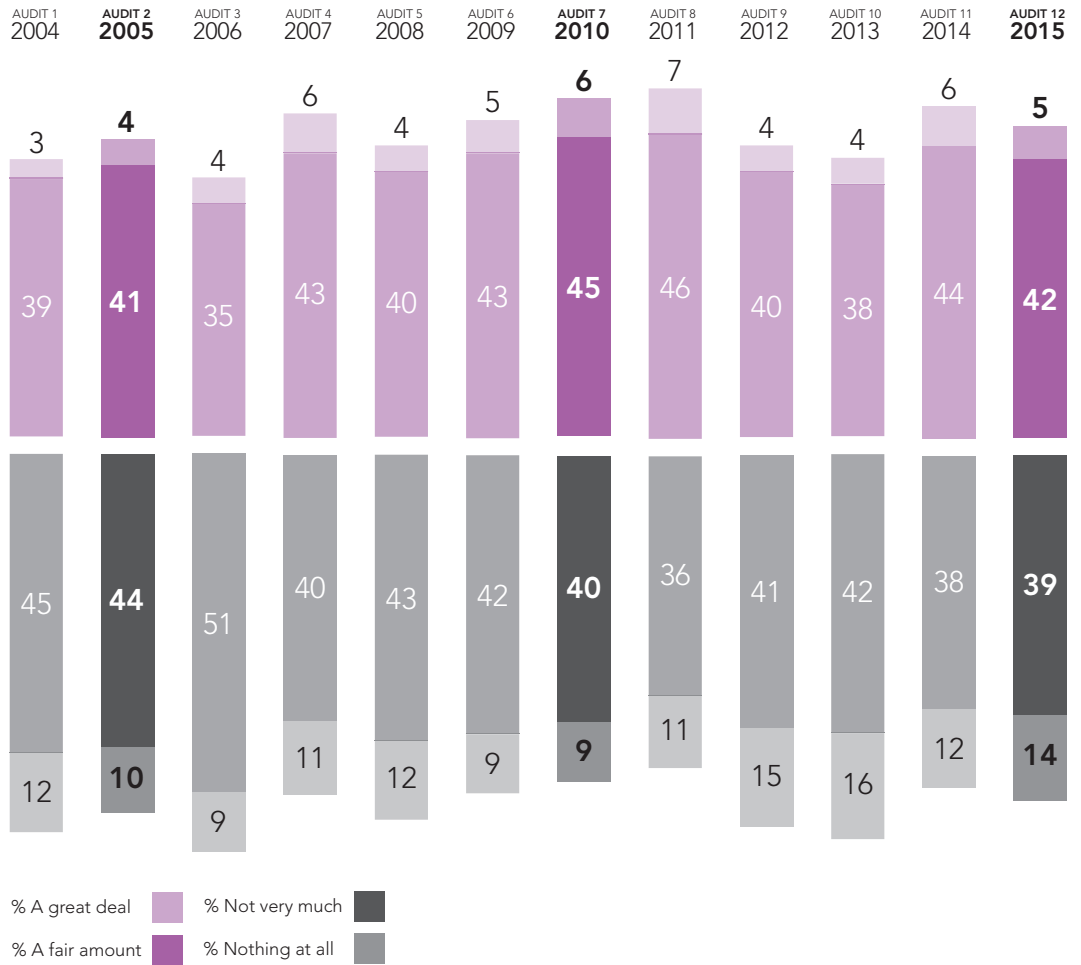


FIGURE 20 INTEREST IN POLITICS: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS

KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST



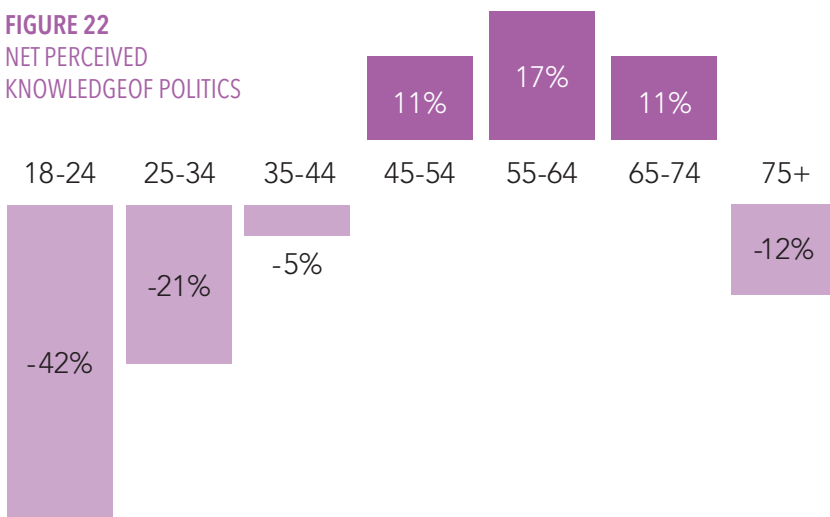
FIGURE 21
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE
OF POLITICS



claiming to be most knowledgeable are male, generally over age 35, in social classes ABC1. Educational attainment is also significant here: only 35% of those with no formal qualifications claim to

know at least a 'fair amount' about politics compared to 41% of those who have GCSEs, A Levels or the equivalent; and 71% of those who have at least an undergraduate degree.

FIGURE 22
NET PERCEIVED
KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICS



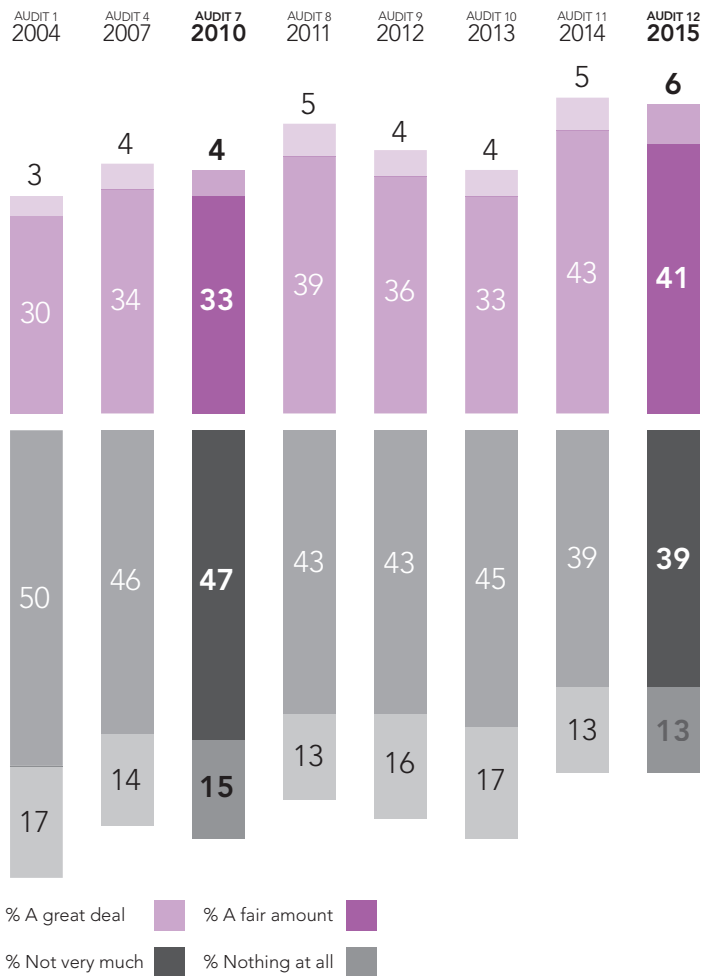
Just months away from a general election, as a test of actual knowledge levels, we asked the public whether they knew which party their constituency MP belonged to. Over a quarter of respondents (28%) did not know, and one in 20 (5%) refused to answer. Two-thirds (67%) thought they knew, or at least were prepared to guess and of these three-quarters (74%) gave the correct answer.



FIGURE 23
THOSE WHO DID NOT
KNOW WHICH PARTY
THEIR CONSTITUENCY MP
BELONGED TO



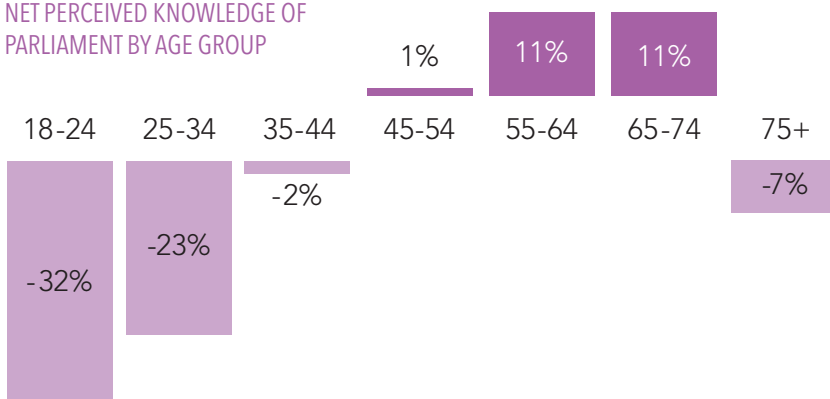
FIGURE 24
PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE
OF PARLIAMENT



As with interest and knowledge of politics, younger respondents, women, those in social classes C2DE, low earners, and those renting property, as well as those who did not support a political

party, were all more likely to say they didn't know the party affiliation of their own MP. Among those who gave a response, however, there were few demographic differences of any significance in the proportion that gave a correct answer.

FIGURE 25
NET PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE OF
PARLIAMENT BY AGE GROUP

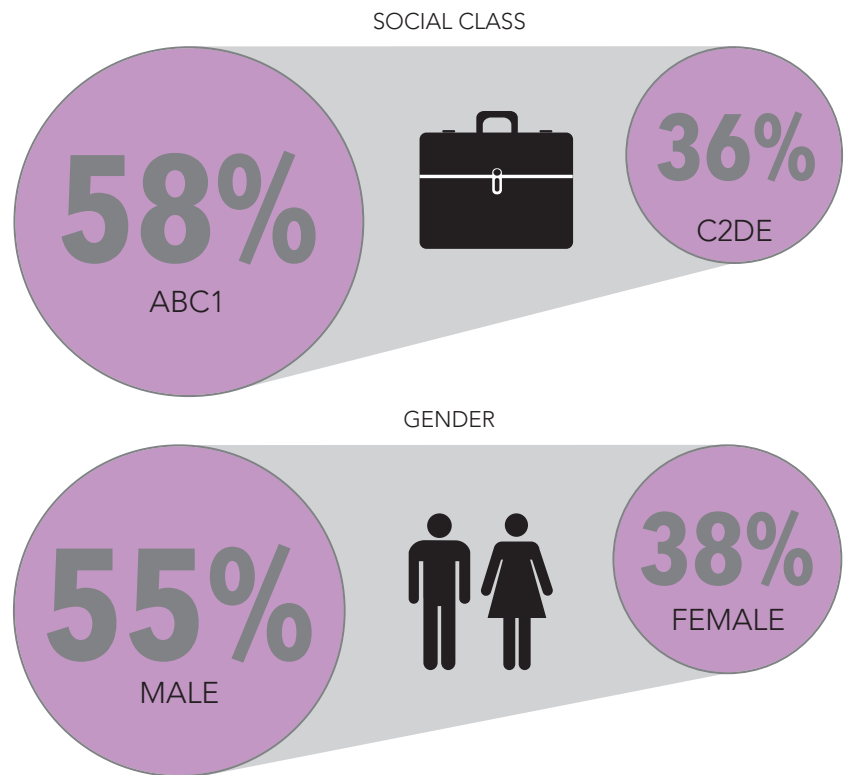


Perceived knowledge of the UK Parliament also remains stable at 47%. Although this is one percentage point lower than Audit 11 (a statistically insignificant difference), it maintains the upward trend of this indicator. Indeed, knowledge of the UK Parliament in advance of the 2015 general election is a full 10 percentage points higher than the

same stage of the pre-election cycle for the previous general election as recorded in Audit 7.

Again, those groups that claim to be most knowledgeable are male, older, in the higher social classes, with higher incomes, and with above average levels of interest in politics.

FIGURE 26
PERCEIVED
KNOWLEDGE OF
PARLIAMENT:
DEMOGRAPHIC
COMPARISONS





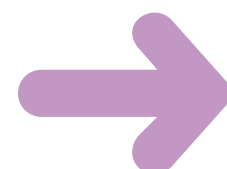
Over the course of recent Audits, the proportion of people reporting having undertaken some form of political activity to influence decisions, laws or policies has remained broadly stable at 50% (Audit 10) and 48% (Audit 11). This remains the case in this latest study, although the net score for activity maintains the gradual downward trend at 44%.

Only one activity – voted in an election – has seen a marked improvement with 27% claiming to have done so in the last 12 months, unsurprising given that there were local and European elections in 2014 as well as the Scottish referendum. Otherwise, levels of political activity have remained stable with the exceptions of ‘created or signed a paper petition’ which, since the last Audit has declined seven percentage points to 9% and ‘donated or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation’ which has similarly declined to 13%.

However, the proportion of people who are prepared to do something if they felt strongly about an issue has declined significantly. Only 69% would be prepared to do so compared to 80% in Audit 11 and 78% in Audit 10. A willingness to act has declined across almost all the options offered. Levels of support for some forms of action, for example ‘take an active part in a campaign’ have returned to levels previously seen in Audit 10 after an apparently temporary improvement in Audit 11. However, others, such as contact a local elected representative, create or sign a paper petition, and vote in an election have declined still further.

This dip in willingness to participate even if people feel strongly about something is a worrying development, particularly when combined with the decline in the level of influence people feel they have over decision-making at the local level (see pages 36-38). Given that people’s first practical experience of politics tends to be at the local rather than national level, disempowerment will likely drive disengagement from a range of political activities beyond just voting.

Interestingly, however, the likelihood of those aged 18-24 doing something if they felt strongly about an issue is much closer to the other age groups than on many other indicators. Just 22% of 18-24s say they have undertaken a political activity in the last 12 months; but 58% say they would be prepared to do something if they felt strongly enough. In contrast, the willingness to act of other age groups ranges between 59% and 78%. The youngest respondents are still the least engaged on this measure, but they are closer to the national average.



ACTION AND PARTICIPATION

FIGURE 27 IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING TO INFLUENCE DECISIONS, LAWS, OR POLICIES?

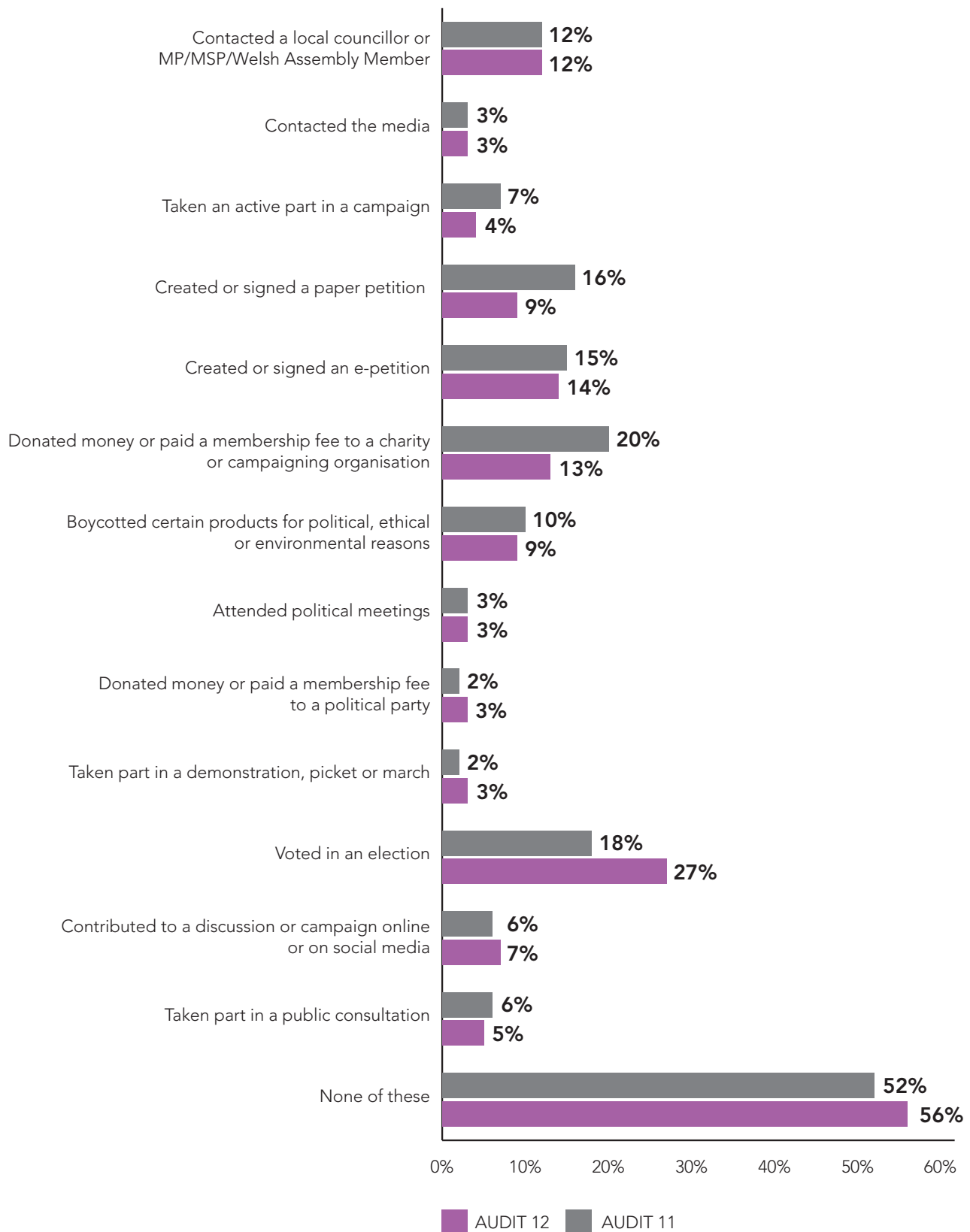
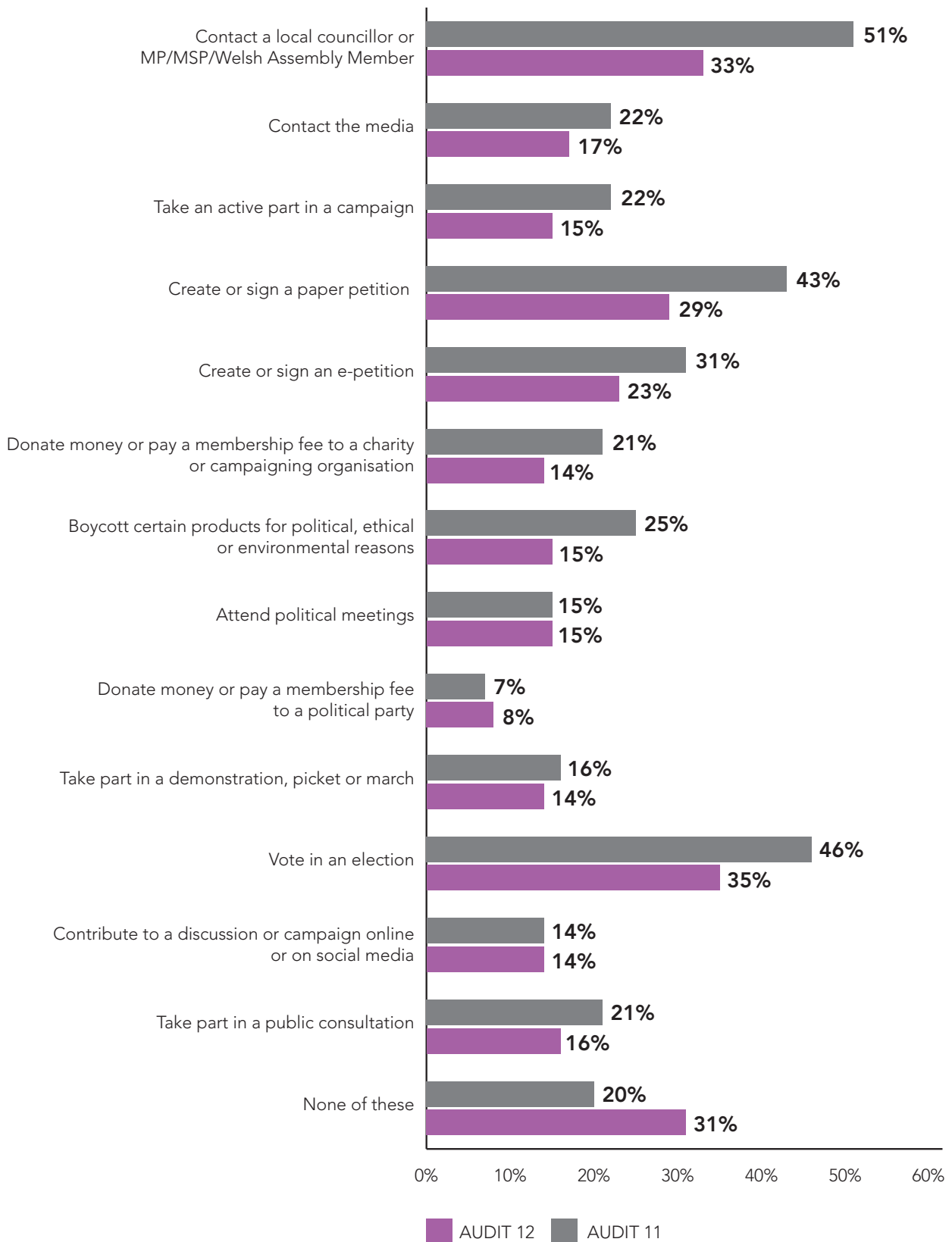
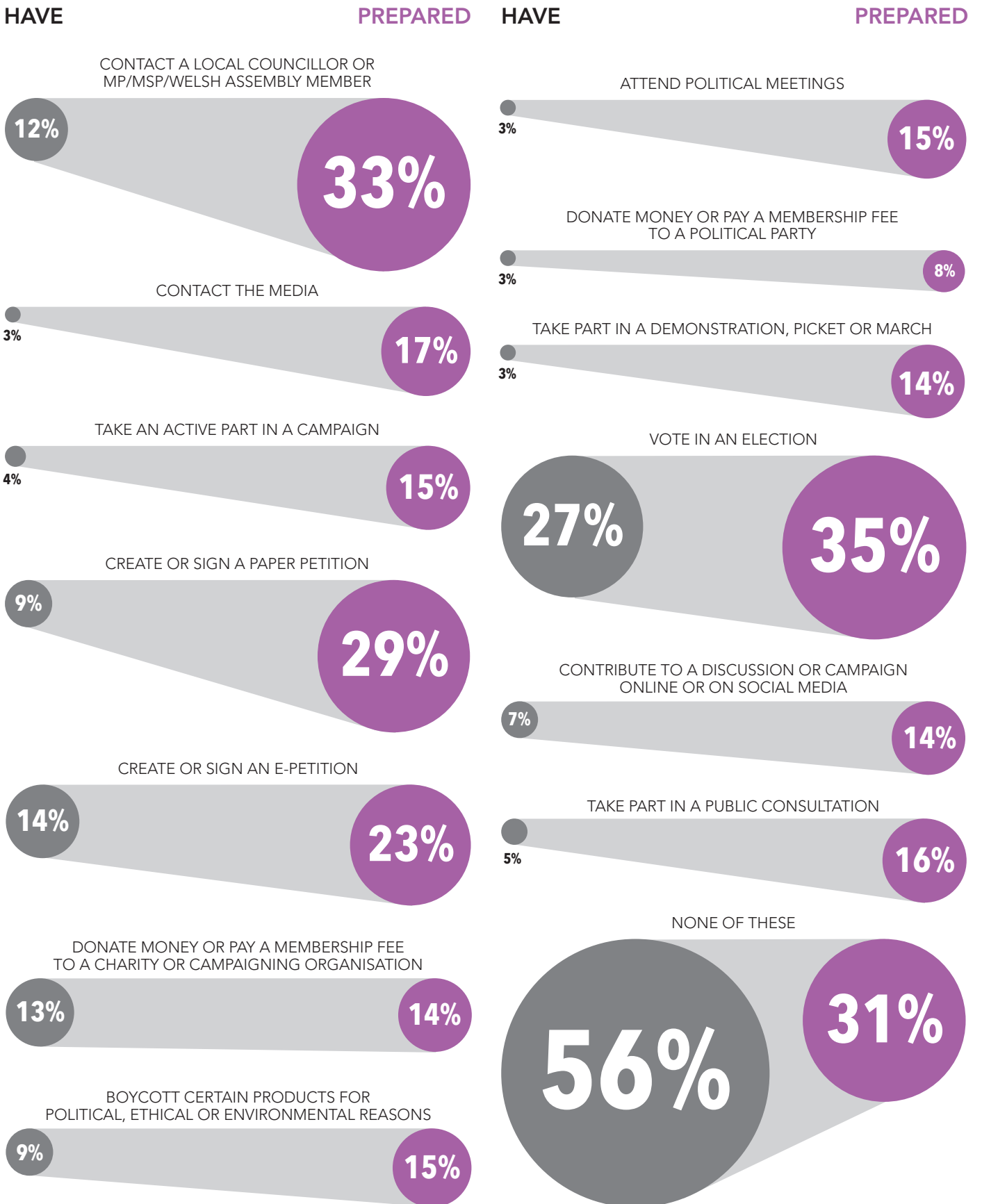


FIGURE 28 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO DO IF YOU FELT STRONGLY ENOUGH ABOUT AN ISSUE?



ACTION AND PARTICIPATION

FIGURE 29 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES: ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL





When asked how well they feel our present system of governing works, the majority of people – seven in 10 – say that it could be improved. The pattern has been broadly consistent over the Audit lifecycle although, since 2010 and the advent of the coalition government, the number of people saying that the system could either ‘be improved quite a lot’ or ‘needs a great deal of improvement’ has increased. Between Audits 1 and 6, the average saying this was 62% rising to 67% between Audits 7 and 12, suggesting a gradual rise in

dissatisfaction borne out by the fact that the bulk of this increase has been driven by a rise in the proportion of respondents stating that the system ‘needs a great deal of improvement’.

With 68% claiming this year that the system needs improving, it is the joint second highest recorded score for this indicator in the Audit lifecycle. It is consistent with the level recorded in Audit 7 (69%) but below that in Audit 2 (63%) at the same stage of the pre-election cycle.



FIGURE 30
SATISFACTION WITH
PRESENT SYSTEM OF
GOVERNING BRITAIN

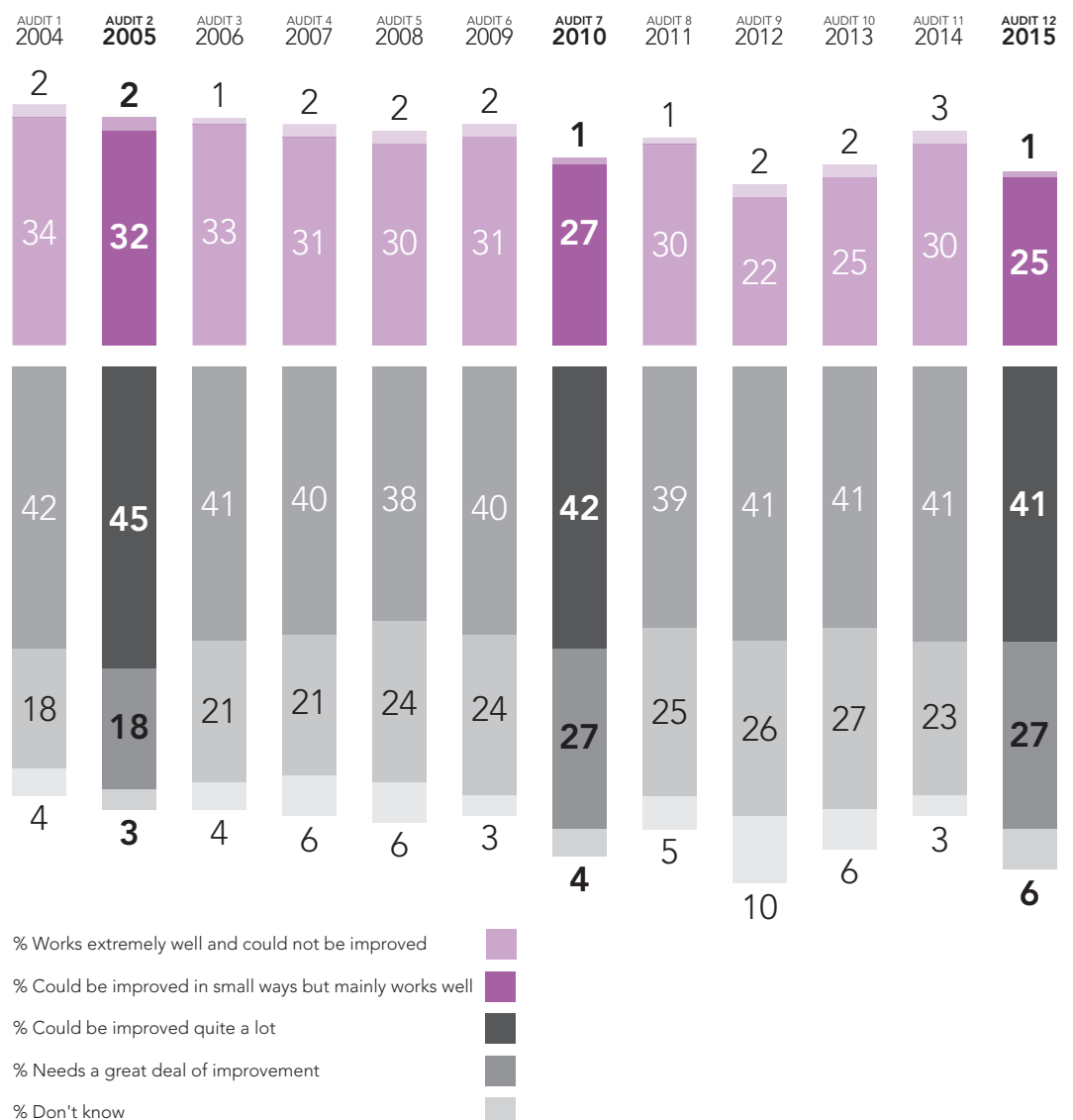
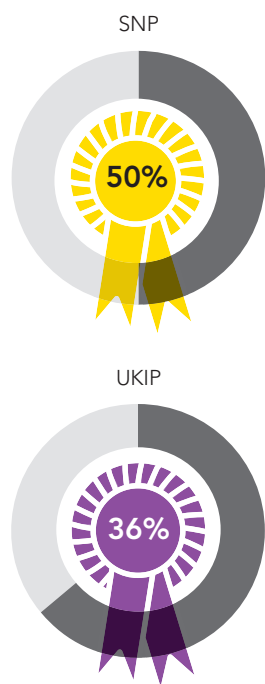


FIGURE 31
PARTY SUPPORTERS MOST LIKELY TO THINK THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNING BRITAIN 'NEEDS A GREAT DEAL OF IMPROVEMENT'



In contrast, the number of people who claim that the system either 'works extremely well and could not be improved' or works mainly well and could be improved only 'in small ways', has declined seven percentage points this year to 26%. This is broadly comparable to the pre-election situation in Audit 7 (28%), but lower than that in Audit 2 (34%). Again, the shift across the years can be explained by an increase in the number of people who feel the system 'needs a great deal of improvement'; 18% in Audit 2 compared to 27% in this Audit.

Interestingly, those supporting parties in the coalition government were much less likely to say that the system needs improving a great deal (9%); they were more inclined to the view that it needs only small improvements (45%). In contrast, supporters of the SNP (50%) and UKIP (36%) were much more likely to agree that the system needs a great deal of improvement.

Those groups most likely to think the system needs a great deal of improvement include:

- Over 35s (30% versus 21% of under 35s)
- C2DEs (34% versus 21% of ABC1s)
- White respondents (30% versus 16% of BMEs)
- Respondents in the Midlands (44%) and Scotland (37%)

The level of dissatisfaction with the system of governing is mirrored in the number of people (58%) who think that our democratic system either does not address the interests of themselves and their family very well or at all. Only just over a third (36%) think that it does address their interests at least 'quite well'. Of these, only 2% think that the system addresses their interests 'very well'; 10 times that number (20%) say quite the opposite, that it does not address their interests well at all.

Those in social classes C2DE are more likely (62%) than ABC1s (53%) to agree that the system does not address their interests; so too are renters (63%) compared to homeowners (54%) and those who say they will vote Labour (57%).

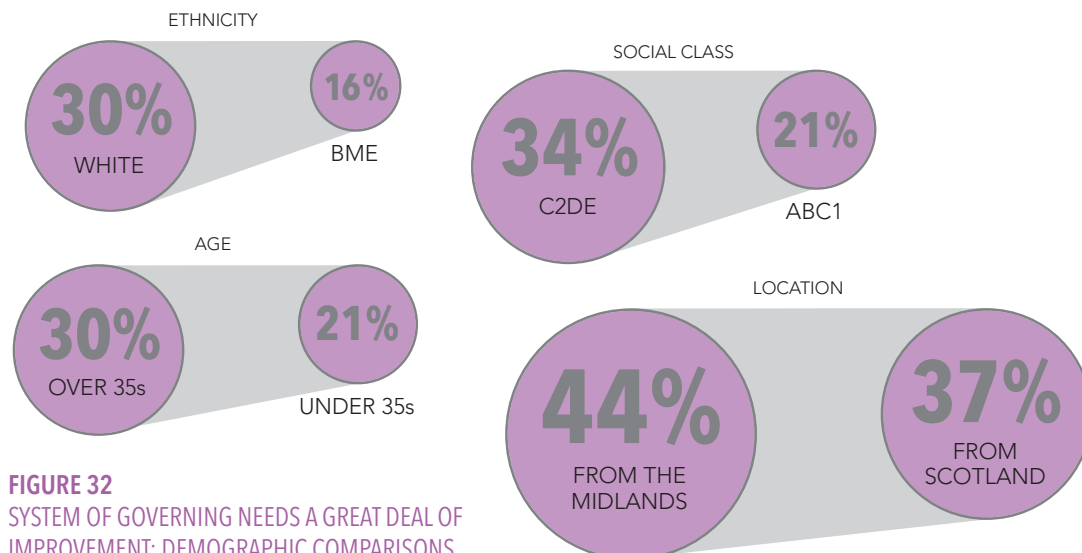
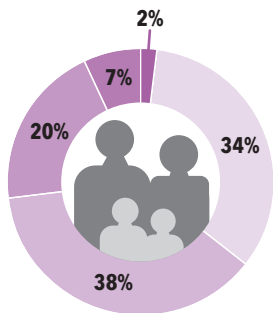


FIGURE 32
SYSTEM OF GOVERNING NEEDS A GREAT DEAL OF IMPROVEMENT: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS

FIGURE 33
UK DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM ADDRESSES THE INTERESTS OF ME AND MY FAMILY



Very well ■
 Quite well ■
 Not very well ■
 Not at all well ■
 Don't know ■

In contrast, 59% of Conservative supporters say that the system does address their interests well. And in an echo of the 'squeezed middle', those aged 45-54 are, with a net score of -39%, more likely than any other age group to think that our democratic system doesn't serve their interests.

Despite a majority of people feeling that the system of governing needs improving, and that our democracy does not address their interests or that of their family, only a minority (32%) feel that they personally can change the way the country is run.

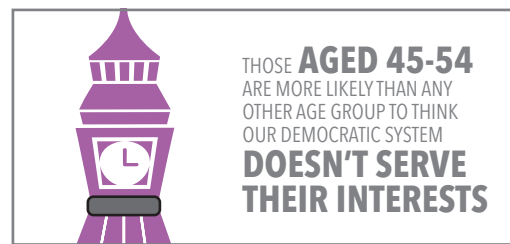
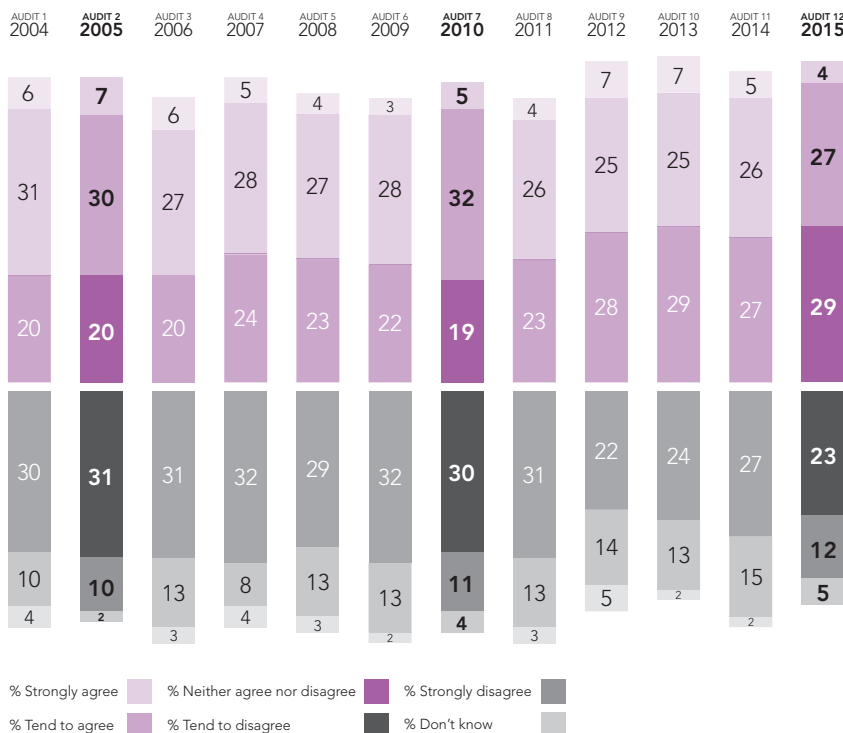


FIGURE 34 THE 'SQUEEZED MIDDLE'



This has not changed since the last Audit, indeed it has been broadly stable for the last six years, but is five percentage points lower than was recorded at the same stage of the pre-election cycle in Audits 2 and 7 (37%).

With the exception of respondents in Scotland, those groups that are most likely to think improvements are needed are also more likely to be the ones that feel they personally can't change anything. Supporters of the Conservative Party (41%) and UKIP (40%) tend not to believe that if they get involved in politics they can change the way the country is run. Similarly, older age groups (39% of over 35s) tend to be more pessimistic about the potential impact of their involvement than do younger age groups (24% of under 35s). Indeed, whilst the attitudes of 18-24 year olds on this question have fluctuated considerably over the years, this Audit records the highest net score on this indicator (net 14%) in the 12-year study and the highest net score of any age group in this latest Audit. This suggests that as an age group they retain a remarkable degree of optimism about the potential efficacy of their involvement in politics whilst more politically active older age groups have, perhaps through dint of experience, become increasingly disillusioned about their power to effect change at the national level.



FIGURE 35 INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS CAN CHANGE THE WAY THE UK IS RUN



Over the course of the Audit series the level of influence people feel they have over decision-making in their local area, and the desire for involvement in such local decision-making has been broadly stable. The results for influence and desired involvement locally have also been higher, over the course of the Audit lifecycle, than the scores for influence and desired involvement at the national level.

This year, however, there has been a marked decline in the indicators at the local level, and the gap between influence and desire for involvement in decision-making at the local and national level has consequently narrowed considerably.

Just one in five respondents (20%) say they feel at least 'some influence' over decision-making in their local area, a decline of six percentage points since Audit 11, and the lowest score ever recorded for this indicator in the Audit series.

This decline is particularly marked among older respondents: 28% of over 55s said they felt they had at least some influence locally in Audit 11, but this has now declined to the national average of 20%.

Whereas perceived influence over local decision-making has waned, the trend in perceived influence over national decision-making has increased a little over the last few years. Seventeen percent currently say they feel they have at least 'some influence' over national decision-making, the highest result recorded for this indicator in the Audit series. Year on year, the changes are not significant, but the trend is nonetheless upwards.

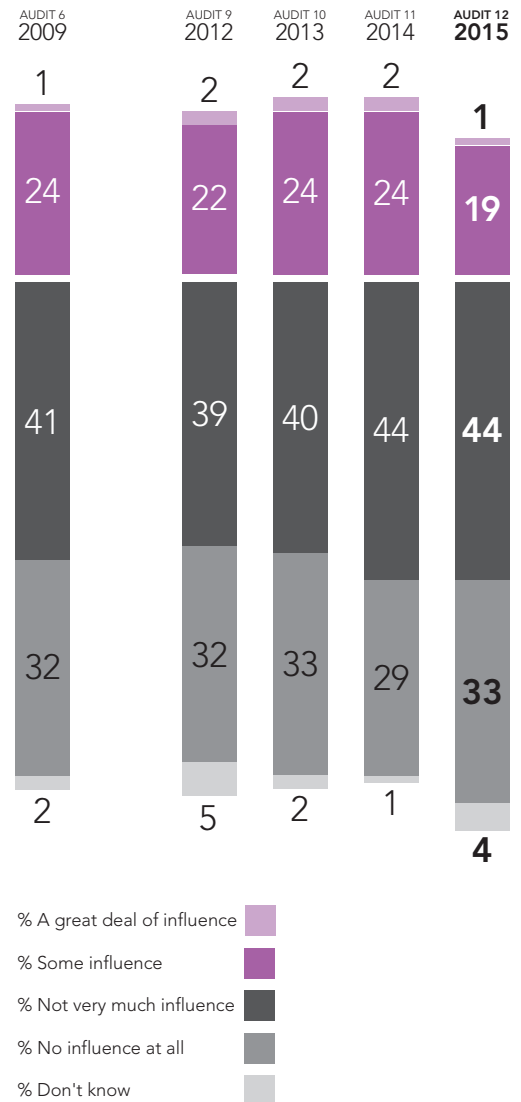


FIGURE 36
PERCEIVED INFLUENCE
OVER LOCAL
DECISION-MAKING



FIGURE 37
FEEL AT LEAST SOME
INFLUENCE OVER LOCAL
DECISION-MAKING

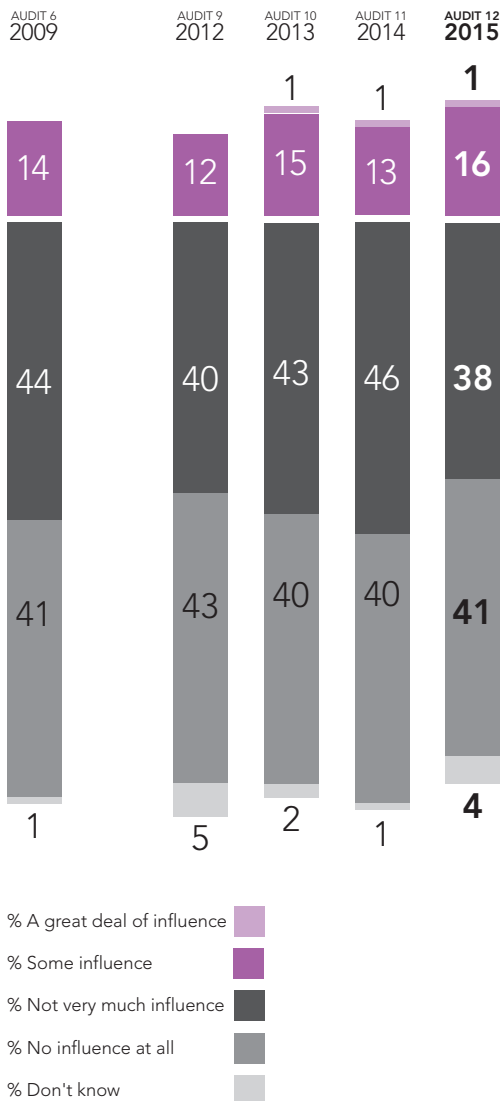
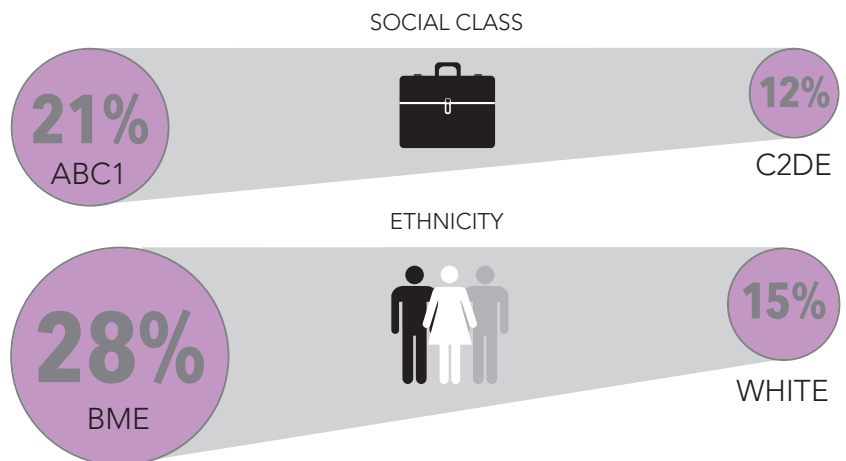


FIGURE 38
PERCEIVED INFLUENCE
OVER NATIONAL
DECISION-MAKING

In the last Audit there was no difference in perceived influence between social grades; however, this time, ABC1s report feeling significantly more influential (21%) than C2DEs (12%). BME respondents are also more likely to feel influential (28%) than are white respondents (15%). There are, however, no demographic differences in relation to age or working status.

Despite the referendum, however, perceived influence over decision-making nationally hasn't increased in Scotland (14% compared to 12% in Audit 11) but, interestingly, it has in London (41% compared to 22% in Audit 11). The latter is the highest recorded result of any region for this indicator; as the capital city, perceived proximity to the centre of power and of decision-making may be the simple explanation for this result.

FIGURE 39
PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OVER NATIONAL
DECISION-MAKING: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS

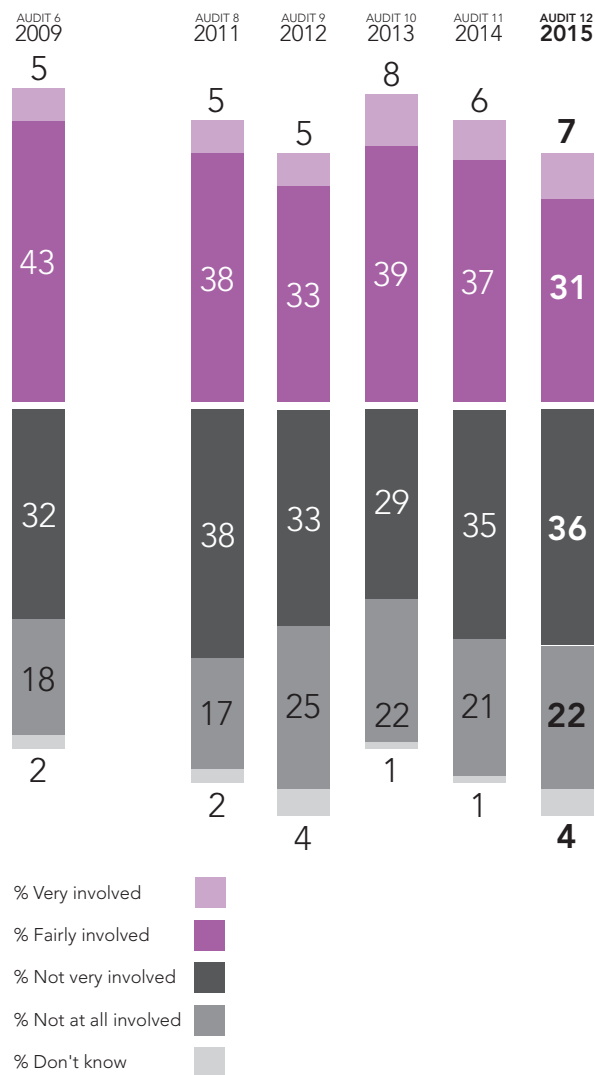


POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY

Mirroring the decline in perceived influence at the local level, fewer people also want to be involved in decision-making in their local area. This indicator has fluctuated over the years but has generally stood at 43% or more. However, this year it has declined five percentage points to 38%, the joint lowest score recorded in the Audit lifecycle. In contrast, desire for involvement in decision-making in the country as a whole has declined by

just one percentage point to 37%. As a consequence, respondents are just as likely to desire involvement nationally as they are locally when the reverse has largely been true (with the single exception of Audit 8 immediately after the last general election) across the Audit lifecycle. It is possible that this shift in desire for involvement and perceived influence nationally is related to the general election but we do not as yet have enough trend data to be sure.

FIGURE 40
DESIRE FOR INVOLVEMENT LOCALLY





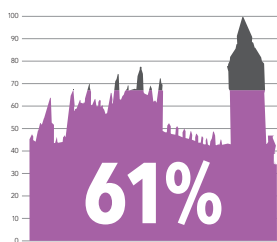
In Audit 11 we reported that whereas public attitudes to the work of Parliament were prone to change, the public's view of the importance of Parliament remained stable seemingly regardless of circumstances, with two-thirds of respondents consistently agreeing that the institution was 'essential to our democracy'.

There has also been a modest decline in the number of people who tend to agree that Parliament 'debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me'; it now stands at 48% compared to 51% in Audit 11.

In contrast, there has been little change in the proportion of the public that believe Parliament holds government to account (35% compared to 34% who said the same in Audit 11), or that it encourages public involvement in politics (25% compared to 23%).

Perceptions of the importance of Parliament are of a piece with declining public perceptions of the system of

FIGURE 41
PARLIAMENT IS ESSENTIAL
TO OUR DEMOCRACY



This year, however, that proposition no longer remains valid as the perceived importance of the institution has dipped markedly. Only 61% now agree that Parliament is 'essential to our democracy', a decline of six percentage points since Audit 11.

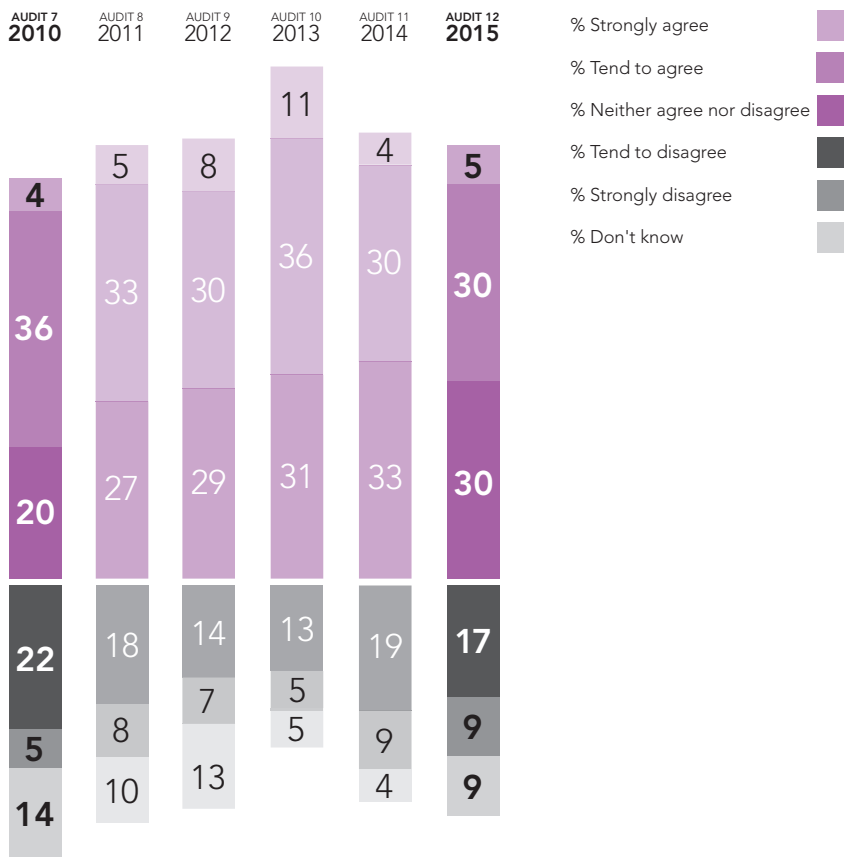


FIGURE 42
THE UK PARLIAMENT ...
HOLDS GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT

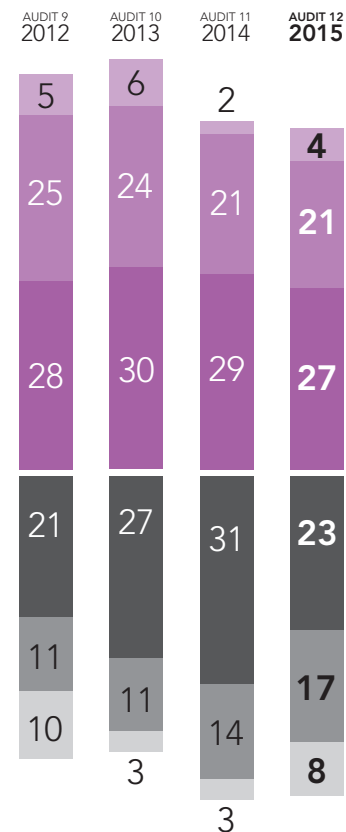


FIGURE 43
THE UK PARLIAMENT ...
ENCOURAGES PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

PERCEPTIONS OF PARLIAMENT

government and the view that the democratic system does not really address the interests of citizens and their families. Those aged 18-24 are least likely to value the importance of Parliament: only 46% agree that it is 'essential to our democracy' compared to 70% of those aged 55-64. Similarly, those in social classes DE are much less likely (46%) to agree that Parliament is 'essential to our democracy' than ABs (81%). Men are also more likely to recognise the importance of Parliament in our democracy (67%) than are women (55%).

Such demographic differences are replicated in perceptions of Parliament's debating and decision-making role. Women are much less likely than men (42% compared to 54%) to agree that Parliament debates and makes decisions that matter to them; as are young people aged 18-24 (36%) compared to older age groups all of whom score 44% or more. And again, those in social classes AB are more likely to agree with this perception (60%) than are DEs (37%).

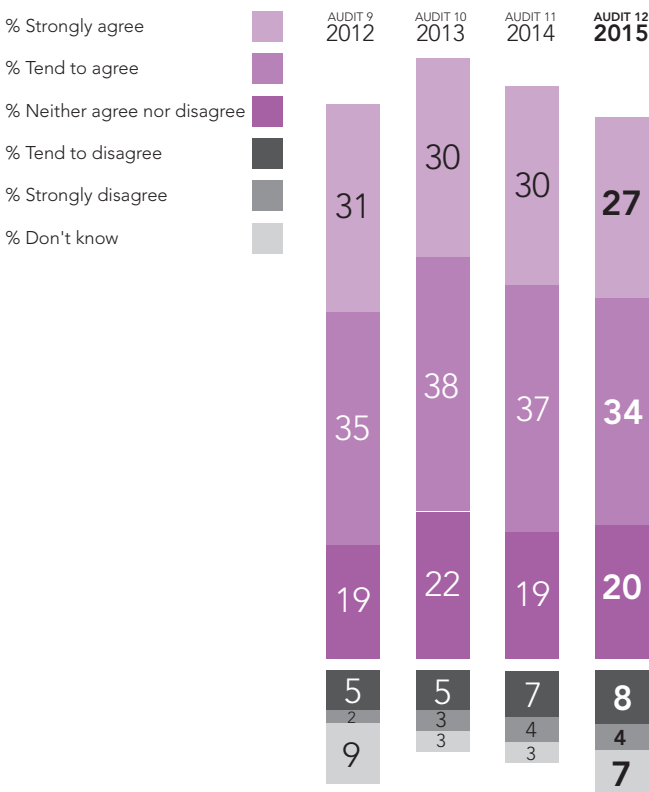


FIGURE 44
THE UK PARLIAMENT ...
IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR DEMOCRACY

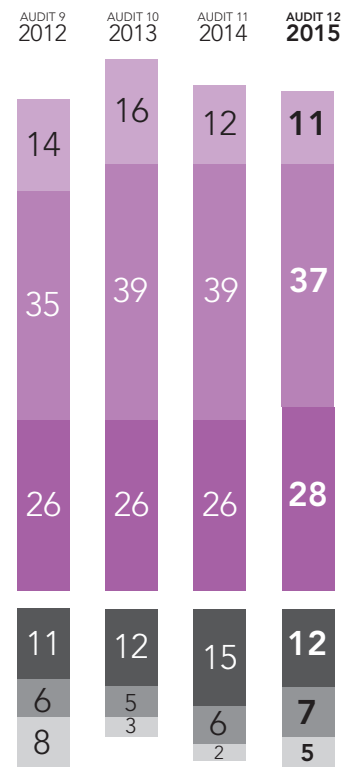


FIGURE 45
THE UK PARLIAMENT ... DEBATES AND MAKES
DECISIONS ABOUT ISSUES THAT MATTER TO ME

The proportion of respondents agreeing that Parliament holds government to account has generally been steady over the last few years, with around four in 10 tending to agree. There was a sharp uplift in Audit 10 (to 47%) but this has not been sustained and the trend remains downward, albeit at a slow rate of deterioration. The indicator now stands five percentage points lower than at the same stage of the last pre-election cycle (35% compared to 40% in Audit 7).

Supporters of the smaller, anti-establishment parties, are more likely to disagree with the proposition that Parliament holds government to account: 38% of UKIP, and nationalist party supporters disagree compared to 21% of Conservative and 22% of Labour supporters who say the same.

Perceptions that Parliament encourages public involvement in politics are more turbulent. Only a quarter (25%) agree that it does so, with 40% disagreeing. There has, since this question was first asked in Audit 9, been a marked increase in the number of people who disagree with the idea that it encourages public involvement (up from 32% to 40% who say the same today).

It is widely recognised that Parliament as an institution is a more effective body than at any point in modern times. On any objective test the House of Commons in particular is a stronger institution than for many years: for example, backbenchers are more independently minded and ready to rebel; the work of select committees has improved scrutiny of government and other key national bodies, both public and private; ministers are regularly forced to

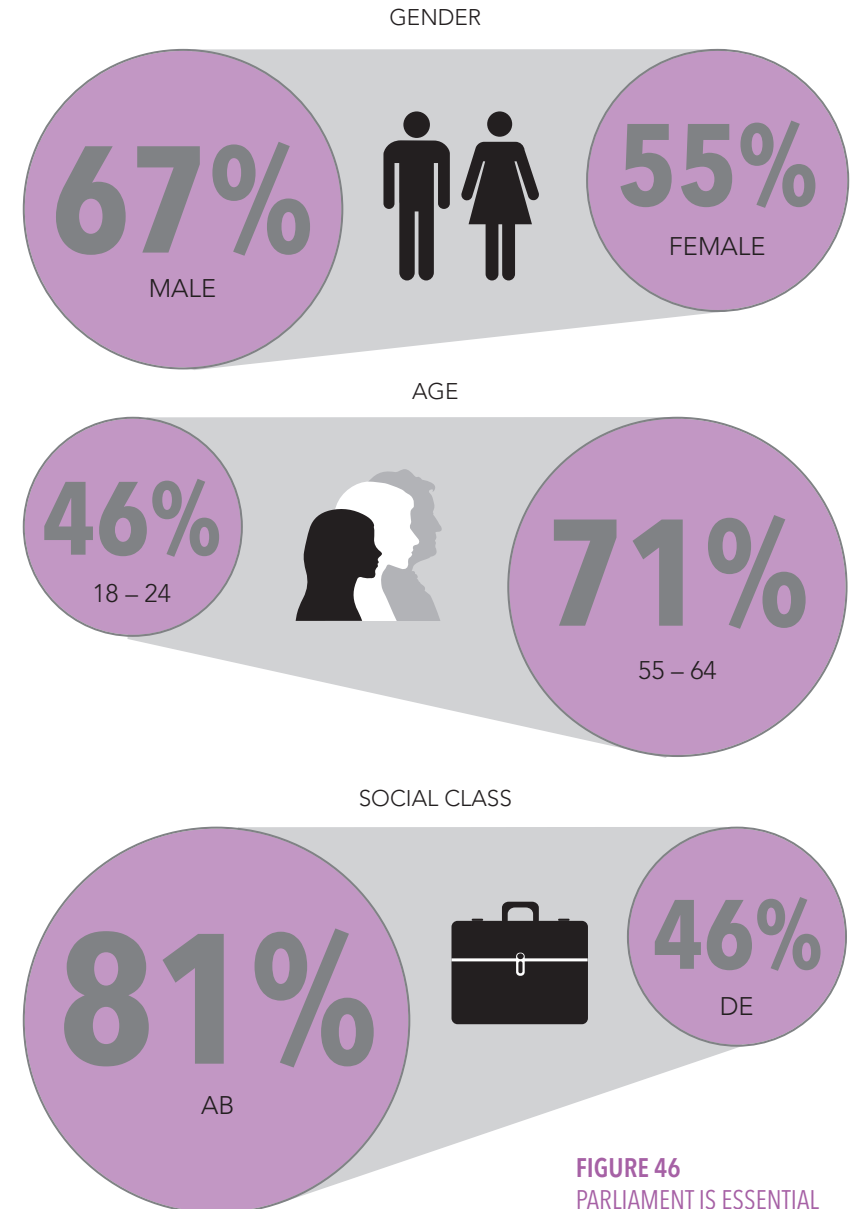


FIGURE 46
PARLIAMENT IS ESSENTIAL
TO OUR DEMOCRACY:
DEMOGRAPHIC
COMPARISONS

appear in the chamber to answer urgent questions on the key issue of the day; and backbench business debates allow discussion of topical issues that the frontbenches might otherwise prefer to avoid. Yet, there is little evidence that these changes are, as yet, having a positive impact on public perceptions. In Audit 10 there was a significant increase in the number of people who agreed that Parliament held government to account

and debated and made decisions about issues that mattered to them. However, this was a temporary change most likely related to the significant increase in mainstream media coverage of select committee activity in the aftermath of the banking and telephone hacking scandals. Beyond this, improvements in public perceptions of the institution remain fragile and potentially volatile.

In this context a vulnerable Parliament cannot afford to be subject to further reputational damage. How the institution deals with the significant range of challenges that it will face following the general election – improving its own governance, tackling the opportunities and problems posed by the digital world, navigating its way through a potential hung Parliament with either a minority or coalition government, perhaps even a second election within a short period – will be critically important. But perhaps the greatest challenge lies in how it will handle the restoration and renewal of its own fabric for the Palace of Westminster, a world heritage site, is in a state of considerable disrepair and in need of repairs that may cost an estimated £3 billion. Authorising this level of expenditure in a period of austerity poses a difficult political and policy challenge, with MPs laying themselves open to the criticism that they are spending vast sums of public money to improve their own quarters. Given the state of disrepair at

Westminster, significant work is needed and the problem can no longer be deferred. Despite the difficulties it will pose, the expenditure will facilitate a major opportunity to change the way Parliament looks, feels and works. This is not a once-in-a-decade or once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change things, but a once-in-a-150-year opportunity for change.

But will public dissatisfaction with and disdain for MPs get in the way of much needed change? Will they be less keen to sanction the investment because they view Parliament as the home of politics, parties and MPs?

To explore this we posed a split sample question with one group of respondents asked about investment in Parliament, and the other about investment in Westminster Abbey. Both lie within the world heritage site, both are iconic buildings to Britain and the world, one central to British history and democracy, the other to British history and religion. One is where political decisions are made, the other where monarchs have been crowned over the centuries. We compared public attitudes to the use of taxpayers' money for the restoration of each building to see how Parliament fared in comparison.



FIGURE 47
SATISFACTION WITH
TAXPAYERS' MONEY
BEING SPENT ON THE
RESTORATION OF
PARLIAMENT

It should be noted that Westminster Abbey, other than via heritage and related grants, is not actually in direct receipt of taxpayers' money to fund restoration nor is it seeking to be so. As a Royal Peculiar church it has to raise money through income generation, primarily through visitors, to support any work that is undertaken. We created the comparison in order to assess public attitudes to a political as opposed to a non-political building in the world heritage site.

Respondents were more likely to say they were at least 'fairly' satisfied with spending taxpayers' money on Westminster Abbey than they were on Parliament (58% versus 47%). And of these, twice as many people said they were 'very satisfied' to do so for the Abbey (18%) than for Parliament (9%). Evidently the public are, at this particular point in time, more willing to sanction public investment for the restoration of one of the leading church institutions than they are its leading political one. It's not

possible to fully explain the difference in view and the figures are not overwhelmingly different – they are certainly bridgeable over time if an effective restoration plan, supported by a comprehensive communications strategy, can be developed. But at a time when fewer people than ever in recent years think that Parliament is 'essential to our democracy' it is an ever more difficult environment in which to face such a challenging decision. Yet, conversely, given the fragile nature of Parliament's reputation, it is perhaps precisely the time to grasp the opportunity of laying out a new vision for our Parliament for the next century and a half.

5: STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE



Overall the public has a fairly bleak view of standards in public life. Few think that the standard of conduct of people in public life is high, there is a belief that standards have got worse in recent years, and there is a lack of confidence in the authorities to uphold standards and uncover and punish wrongdoing.

Just 18% of the public think that the standards of conduct of public office holders are high; twice as many (36%) believe, on the contrary, that standards are low.

Thirty-five percent believe that standards of conduct have declined compared with a few years ago, and just 15% think that they have improved at least 'a little'. Over half the public (56%) are not confident that the authorities are committed to upholding standards in public life; with just under four in 10 people (38%) disagreeing.

FIGURE 48
NUMBER WHO THINK STANDARDS IN PUBLIC OFFICE ARE LOW

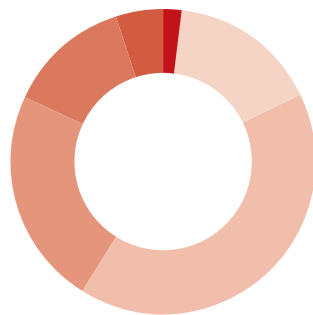


FIGURE 49
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT OF PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDERS OVERALL

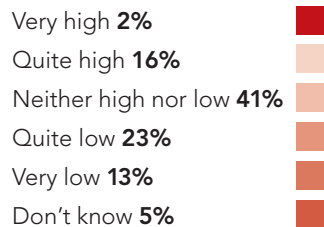


FIGURE 50
HOW STANDARDS COMPARE WITH A FEW YEARS AGO

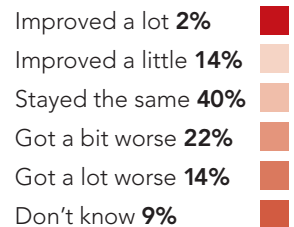
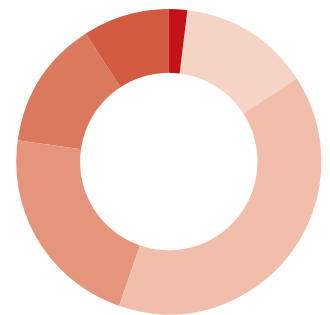


FIGURE 51
CONFIDENT THE AUTHORITIES COMMITTED TO UPHOLDING STANDARDS

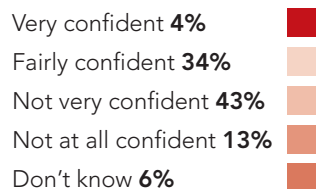
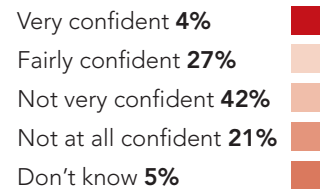


FIGURE 52
CONFIDENT THE AUTHORITIES WILL PUNISH WRONGDOERS



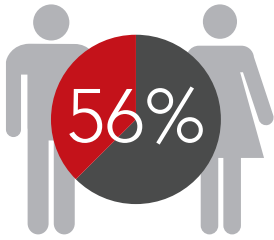


FIGURE 53
NOT CONFIDENT THE
AUTHORITIES ARE
COMMITTED TO
UPHOLDING STANDARDS

Public expectations that wrongdoing will be uncovered are even more negative. Broadly speaking, only one third of respondents are confident that wrongdoing will be uncovered and then punished.

Just 33% say they are at least 'fairly confident' that the authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office. But six in 10 (61%) are not confident that this will be the case.

And if wrongdoing is uncovered, only 31% are confident that the authorities will punish the offenders; and again, six in 10 (63%) have no such confidence. This rises to 75% lacking in confidence among UKIP and Scottish and Welsh nationalist party supporters.

Although confidence in the media has declined considerably, the public nonetheless display more confidence in the media to uncover wrongdoing by people in public office than the authorities. Over half the public (59%) say that they are at least 'fairly confident' that



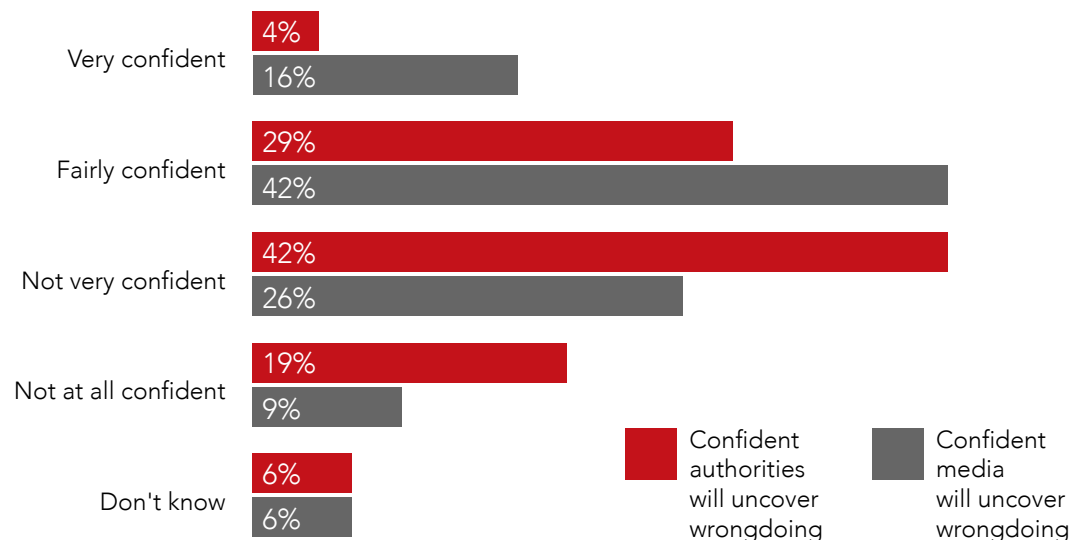
FIGURE 54

the media will do so, with just over a third (35%) lacking such confidence in the fourth estate.

This finding reflects the unavoidable reality that it is the media that reports wrongdoing and brings it to wider public attention so it is credited with uncovering abuse of standards and holding those responsible to account.

Across almost all demographic groups, confidence in the media to uncover wrongdoing was higher than confidence in the role of the authorities, and particularly so among C2DE respondents and UKIP supporters.

FIGURE 55 CONFIDENT THAT
WRONGDOING BY PEOPLE IN
PUBLIC OFFICE WILL BE
UNCOVERED



STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

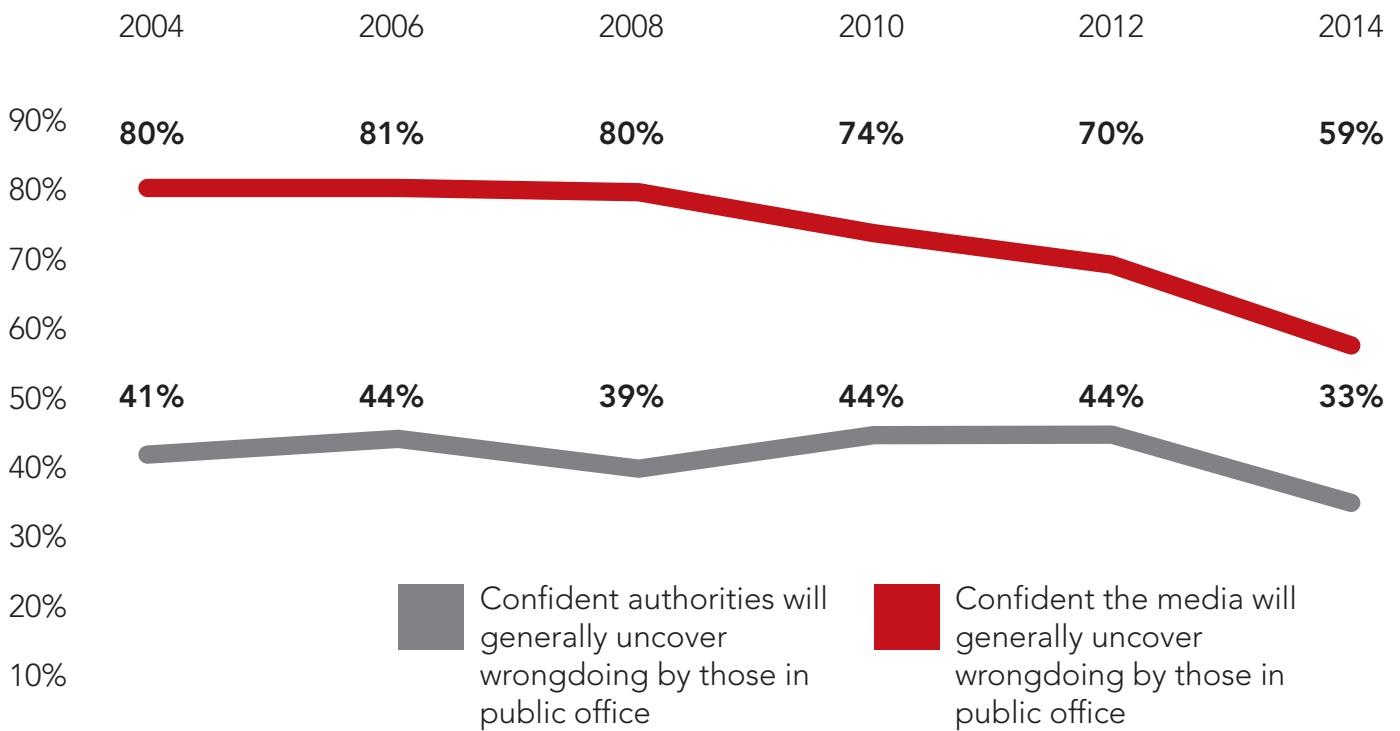


FIGURE 56
CONFIDENT THAT
WRONGDOING BY PEOPLE
IN PUBLIC OFFICE WILL BE
UNCOVERED (2004 - 2014)

C2DEs however have less confidence in the media than ABC1s. Overall any shift in respondents views seemingly are driven more by a lack of confidence in the authorities than confidence in the media.

The six standards questions asked in this Audit mirror those asked in previous biennial surveys of public attitudes conducted by the Committee on Standards in Public Life between 2004

However, the results are nonetheless strongly indicative of public opinion. They reflect the downward trend in public attitudes to standards found in the earlier studies. And while there may be a sampling and method effect at play, the fact that there are few demographic differences in response to these questions either in this Audit or the earlier CSPL reports suggests that the impact of such effects may be minimal.



Source:
 Committee on Standards in Public Life surveys on public attitudes towards conduct in public life (2004 - 2012)

and 2012. The results here are generally more negative than the Committee found in its earlier studies. The survey methodologies are different so direct comparisons cannot be made.

Women are less likely than men to think that standards of conduct are high (14% versus 23%), are more likely to think that standards have deteriorated (40% compared to 31%), and are less likely to have confidence in the commitment of the authorities to uphold standards (32% versus 44%).

Younger respondents are less pessimistic than their older counterparts. Those aged 45 or above are less confident that the authorities are committed to upholding standards than are those aged under 30. And those aged 55 and above are more likely to think that standards of conduct have got worse in recent years of 18-34s.

And ethnic minority respondents are also less pessimistic in their attitudes. They are more likely than white citizens to think that standards are high (26% versus 17%), less likely to believe that standards have deteriorated (16% versus 39%), and more confident that the authorities will uncover wrongdoing (39% compared to 32%).

On only one of the six questions can a difference in attitudes between the social classes be discerned. Those in the lower social groups, C2 (26%) and DE (27%), were less likely than ABs (45%) to have confidence in the authorities to uncover wrongdoing.

These traditional drivers of political engagement – age, gender, social class – do not have a uniform impact on public perceptions of standards and the relationship between them does not appear to be causal.

However, there is a consistent pattern that suggests that negative perceptions of standards may be linked to wider negative perceptions of the political system generally.

Those who are dissatisfied with our system of government are more likely to hold a negative view of standards of conduct in public life. Those who say that our system of government works well are more likely to rate overall standards of conduct highly; 31% compared to 14% of those who say the present system of governing needs improving. These respondents are also more likely to have confidence in the authorities' commitment to upholding standards (61% versus 30%) and more likely to think that the authorities will uncover misdemeanours (52% compared to 27%). They are also more likely to agree that wrongdoers will be punished by the authorities (53% versus 23%).

A similar pattern can also be seen in relation to the question of whether or not our democratic system addresses our interests and those of our family and the political efficacy of respondents in terms of the extent to which they believe they have influence over decision-making. Indeed, those who feel they have little influence on decision-making, locally or nationally, have the lowest perception of standards. There does appear to be at least an association between political efficacy – between a citizen's sense of disempowerment from the political system – and their perception of standards.



FIGURE 57
ATTITUDE TO STANDARDS
BY AGE GROUP

DEMOGRAPHICS – AGE

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Interest in politics (very/fairly interested)	32%	38%	40%	61%	57%	60%	51%
Knowledge of politics (knows at least a fair amount)	29%	39%	47%	55%	59%	55%	43%
Knowledge of Parliament (knows at least a fair amount)	34%	38%	48%	50%	56%	55%	46%
Certainty to vote (absolutely certain, score 10)	16%	41%	38%	54%	61%	70%	68%
Sense of partisanship (very/fairly strong party supporter)	13%	26%	21%	40%	31%	45%	39%
Satisfaction with the present system of governing (satisfied it works well)	29%	33%	28%	19%	24%	23%	28%
Feel getting involved is effective (agree)	39%	37%	23%	31%	29%	31%	33%
Has done any of the activities to influence decisions, laws or policies	22%	39%	44%	54%	55%	46%	41%
Would be prepared to undertake any of the activities if they felt strongly about an issue	58%	62%	70%	78%	76%	72%	59%
Influence in local decision-making (at least some)	15%	23%	21%	20%	17%	24%	17%
Influence in national decision-making (at least some)	14%	23%	16%	19%	16%	15%	11%
Desire for involvement locally (want involvement)	35%	44%	41%	44%	42%	30%	21%
Desire for involvement nationally (want involvement)	31%	43%	37%	46%	39%	30%	21%
Parliament is essential to our democracy (agree)	46%	57%	63%	57%	70%	67%	68%
Standards of conduct in public office overall (at least quite high)	18%	23%	20%	15%	15%	20%	17%

DEMOGRAPHICS – GENDER

	Male	Female
Interest in politics (very/fairly interested)	55%	43%
Knowledge of politics (knows at least a fair amount)	56%	39%
Knowledge of Parliament (knows at least a fair amount)	55%	38%
Certainty to vote (absolutely certain, score 10)	51%	47%
Sense of partisanship (very/fairly strong party supporter)	33%	27%
Satisfaction with the present system of governing (satisfied it works well)	32%	21%
Feel getting involved is effective (agree)	33%	30%
Has done any of the activities to influence decisions, laws or policies	49%	39%
Would be prepared to undertake any of the activities if they felt strongly about an issue	72%	66%
Influence in local decision-making (at least some)	19%	21%
Influence in national decision-making (at least some)	20%	15%
Desire for involvement locally (want involvement)	41%	35%
Desire for involvement nationally (want involvement)	41%	33%
Parliament is essential to our democracy (agree)	67%	55%
Standards of conduct in public office overall (at least quite high)	23%	14%

DEMOGRAPHICS – ETHNICITY

	White	BME
Interest in politics (very/fairly interested)	51%	35%
Knowledge of politics (knows at least a fair amount)	50%	36%
Knowledge of Parliament (knows at least a fair amount)	48%	36%
Certainty to vote (absolutely certain, score 10)	52%	33%
Sense of partisanship (very/fairly strong party supporter)	30%	31%
Satisfaction with the present system of governing (satisfied it works well)	25%	34%
Feel getting involved is effective (agree)	31%	37%
Has done any of the activities to influence decisions, laws or policies	46%	32%
Would be prepared to undertake any of the activities if they felt strongly about an issue	72%	53%
Influence in local decision-making (at least some)	20%	22%
Influence in national decision-making (at least some)	15%	28%
Desire for involvement locally (want involvement)	37%	44%
Desire for involvement nationally (want involvement)	36%	38%
Parliament is essential to our democracy (agree)	62%	57%
Standards of conduct in public office overall (at least quite high)	17%	26%

DEMOGRAPHICS – SOCIAL CLASS

	AB	C1	C2	DE
Interest in politics (very/fairly interested)	67%	53%	43%	34%
Knowledge of politics (knows at least a fair amount)	69%	51%	39%	34%
Knowledge of Parliament (knows at least a fair amount)	68%	49%	38%	34%
Certainty to vote (absolutely certain, score 10)	68%	49%	43%	37%
Sense of partisanship (very/fairly strong party supporter)	40%	32%	23%	27%
Satisfaction with the present system of governing (satisfied it works well)	34%	27%	26%	20%
Feel getting involved is effective (agree)	45%	32%	23%	27%
Has done any of the activities to influence decisions, laws or policies	64%	50%	35%	29%
Would be prepared to undertake any of the activities if they felt strongly about an issue	88%	72%	68%	50%
Influence in local decision-making (at least some)	26%	24%	14%	17%
Influence in national decision-making (at least some)	19%	24%	11%	13%
Desire for involvement locally (want involvement)	47%	47%	31%	28%
Desire for involvement nationally (want involvement)	52%	44%	30%	22%
Parliament is essential to our democracy (agree)	81%	63%	56%	46%
Standards of conduct in public office overall (at least quite high)	23%	18%	14%	18%

Appendix A: METHODOLOGY

GfK NOP interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,123 adults in Great Britain aged 18+, face to face in respondents' homes between 20 November and 5 December 2014.

In order to make comparisons between the white and BME populations and between England, Scotland and Wales, more statistically reliable, booster interviews were conducted, resulting in a total of 206 BME, 188 Scottish and 55 Welsh interviews.

- All data was weighted to match the profile of the population, using the Broadcasters Audience Research Board (BARB) and the National Readership Survey (NRS) as sources.
- The BME, Scotland and Wales interviews are down-weighted in the overall dataset, but as these subgroup sizes are larger, this allows for more robust statistical comparisons between them.
- All results are subject to sampling tolerances. This means that not all differences are statistically significant. However, the report focuses on those findings that are statistically significant.

- The respondents to the questionnaire are only samples of the 'total' population of Great Britain, so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody in Britain had been interviewed (the 'true' values). However, the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values can be predicted from the knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which this prediction can be made is 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range. The Audit sample size has a margin of up to +/-2.8% at the 95% confidence level. So if 50% of respondents give a particular response we can be sure (19 times out of 20) that the actual figure would be between 47.2% and 52.8%.
- Where percentages do not add up to exactly 100% this may be because multiple answers were permitted for a question or due to computer rounding. Data has been analysed to one decimal place and rounded accordingly. As a result there may be a 1% difference between data reported here and that in previous Audit studies.
- Some graphs and tables may also not add up to 100% if 'don't knows' or refused responses have not been included.

Appendix B: POLL TOPLINE FINDINGS

Q1	How likely would you be to vote in an immediate general election, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means you would be absolutely certain to vote, and 1 means that you would be absolutely certain not to vote?											
	APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %	APE11 %	APE12 %
10 = Absolutely certain to vote	51	52	55	55	53	53	54	58	48	41	49	49
9	6	6	7	6	4	5	6	4	4	4	6	4
8	8	8	7	8	7	8	7	7	5	7	8	6
7	5	5	7	5	5	6	4	4	4	4	5	5
6	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	5	4	5
5	7	7	6	5	8	7	7	6	8	9	8	8
4	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	5	3	3
2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	3	3	2
1 = Absolutely certain not to vote	11	11	10	11	10	11	12	10	16	20	11	12
Don't know	2	1	1	-	4	2	2	2	3	*	2	3
Refused	-	-	-	1	*	*	*	*	2	1	-	1

Q2	Thinking about the MP who currently represents your area, which party do they belong to?	
		APE12 %
Conservative		25
Labour		30
Liberal Democrats (Lib Dem)		5
Scottish/Welsh Nationalist		3
Green Party		*
UK Independence Party (UKIP)		3
BNP		-
Respect		*
Independent/Other		*
Undecided/Don't know		28
Refused		5

Q3		Would you call yourself a very strong, fairly strong, not very strong or not a supporter at all of any political party?					
		Very strong	Fairly strong	Not very strong	I am not a supporter of any political party	Don't know	Refused
		%	%	%	%	%	%
APE1							
APE2							
APE3							
APE4		6	31	37	24	1	*
APE5							
APE6							
APE7							
APE8							
APE9							
APE10							
APE11		7	23	36	33	*	*
APE12		8	22	35	32	2	1

Q4		Generally, how well do you think that the UK's current democratic system addresses the interests of you and your family?	
	APE12		
	%		
Very well		2	
Quite well		34	
Not very well		38	
Not at all well		20	
Don't know		7	

Q5

In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies?

	APE10 %	APE11 %	APE12 %
Contacted a local councillor or MP/MSP/Welsh Assembly Member	8	12	12
Contacted the media	2	3	3
Taken an active part in a campaign	2	7	4
Created or signed a paper petition	8	16	9
Created or signed an e-petition	9	15	14
Donated money or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	20	20	13
Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	6	10	9
Attended political meetings	2	3	3
Donated money or paid a membership fee to a political party	1	2	3
Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march	1	2	3
Voted in an election	27	18	27
Contributed to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	3	6	7
Taken part in a public consultation	4	6	5
Don't know	-	*	1
Net (any)	50	48	44

Q6

Which of the following would you be prepared to do if you felt strongly enough about an issue?

	APE10 %	APE11 %	APE12 %
Contact a local councillor or MP/MSP/Welsh Assembly Member	41	51	33
Contact the media	16	22	17
Take an active part in a campaign	14	22	15
Create or sign a paper petition	35	43	29
Create or sign an e-petition	25	31	23
Donate money or pay a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	17	21	14
Boycott certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	14	25	15
Attend political meetings	10	15	15
Donate money or pay a membership fee to a political party	5	7	8
Take part in a demonstration, picket or march	10	16	14
Vote in an election	42	46	35
Contribute to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	8	14	14
Take part in a public consultation	14	21	16
Don't know	-	1	3
<i>Net (any)</i>	78	80	69

Q7

How interested would you say you are in politics?

	Very interested %	Fairly interested %	Not very interested %	Not at all interested %	Don't know %	Very/fairly interested %
APE1	11	39	32	18	*	50
APE2	13	40	28	19	*	53
APE3	13	43	30	14	*	56
APE4	13	41	27	19	*	54
APE5	13	38	28	19	1	51
APE6	12	40	31	17	*	52
APE7	14	39	29	18	1	53
APE8	16	42	26	17	*	58
APE9	8	34	33	24	1	42
APE10	10	32	32	26	*	42
APE11	11	39	31	20	*	50
APE12	12	36	33	18	1	49

Q8a

How much, if anything, do you feel you know about ... politics?

	A great deal %	A fair amount %	Not very much %	Nothing at all %	Don't know %	A great deal /a fair amount %
APE1	3	39	45	12	1	42
APE2	4	41	44	10	*	45
APE3	4	35	51	9	*	39
APE4	6	43	40	11	*	49
APE5	4	40	43	12	*	44
APE6	5	43	42	9	1	48
APE7	6	45	40	9	*	51
APE8	7	46	36	11	*	53
APE9	4	40	41	15	1	44
APE10	4	38	42	16	*	42
APE11	6	44	38	12	*	50
APE12	5	42	39	14	1	47

Q8b

How much, if anything, do you feel you know about ... the UK Parliament?

	A great deal %	A fair amount %	Not very much %	Nothing at all %	Don't know %	A great deal /a fair amount %
APE1	3	30	50	17	1	33
APE2						
APE3						
APE4	4	34	46	14	1	38
APE5						
APE6						
APE7	4	33	47	15	1	37
APE8	5	39	43	13	*	44
APE9	4	36	43	16	1	40
APE10	4	33	45	17	*	37
APE11	5	43	39	13	*	48
APE12	6	41	39	13	1	47

Q9

Which of these statements best describes your opinion on the present system of governing Britain?

	Works extremely well and could not be improved %	Could be improved in small ways but mainly works well %	Could be improved quite a lot %	Needs a great deal of improvement %	Don't know %	Works well (net) %
APE1	2	34	42	18	4	36
APE2	2	32	45	18	3	34
APE3	1	33	41	21	4	34
APE4	2	31	40	21	6	33
APE5	2	30	38	24	6	32
APE6	2	31	40	24	3	33
APE7	1	27	42	27	4	28
APE8	1	30	39	25	5	31
APE9	2	22	41	26	10	24
APE10	2	25	41	27	6	27
APE11	3	30	41	23	3	33
APE12	1	25	41	27	6	26

Q10

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
When people like me get involved in politics, they really can change the way that the UK is run.

	Strongly agree %	Tend to agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Tend to disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Don't know %	Agree (net) %
APE1	6	31	20	30	10	4	37
APE2	7	30	20	31	10	2	37
APE3	6	27	20	31	13	3	33
APE4	5	28	24	32	8	4	33
APE5	4	27	23	29	13	3	31
APE6	3	28	22	32	13	2	31
APE7	5	32	19	30	11	4	37
APE8	4	26	23	31	13	3	30
APE9	7	25	28	22	14	5	32
APE10	7	25	29	24	13	2	32
APE11	5	26	27	27	15	2	31
APE12	4	27	29	23	12	5	32

Q11a

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
The UK Parliament ... holds government to account.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Agree (net)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE7	4	36	20	22	5	14	40
APE8	5	33	27	18	8	10	38
APE9	8	30	29	14	7	13	38
APE10	11	36	31	13	5	5	47
APE11	4	30	33	19	9	4	34
APE12	5	30	30	17	9	9	35

APE 7 wording: 'The Westminster Parliament'.

Q11b

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
The UK Parliament ... encourages public involvement in politics.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Agree (net)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE9	5	25	28	21	11	10	30
APE10	6	24	30	27	11	3	30
APE11	2	21	29	31	14	3	23
APE12	4	21	27	23	17	8	25

Q11c

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
The UK Parliament ... is essential to our democracy.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Agree (net)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE9	31	35	19	5	2	9	66
APE10	30	38	22	5	3	3	68
APE11	30	37	19	7	4	3	67
APE12	27	34	20	8	4	7	61

Q11d

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
The UK Parliament ... debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Agree (net)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE9	14	35	26	11	6	8	49
APE10	16	39	26	12	5	3	55
APE11	12	39	26	15	6	2	51
APE12	11	37	28	12	7	5	48

Q12a

How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in ...
Your local area

	A great deal of influence	Some influence	Not very much influence	No influence at all	Don't know	A great deal/ some influence
	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE6	1	24	41	32	2	25
APE7						
APE8						
APE9	2	22	39	32	5	24
APE10	2	24	40	33	2	26
APE11	2	24	44	29	1	26
APE12	1	19	44	33	4	20

Q12b

How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in ...
The country as a whole

	A great deal of influence	Some influence	Not very much influence	No influence at all	Don't know	A great deal/ some influence
	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE6	*	14	44	41	1	14
APE7						
APE8						
APE9	*	12	40	43	5	12
APE10	1	15	43	40	2	16
APE11	1	13	46	40	1	14
APE12	1	16	38	41	4	17

Q13a

To what extent, if at all, would you like to be involved in decision-making in ...
Your local area?

	Very involved %	Fairly involved %	Not very involved %	Not at all involved %	Don't know %	Very/fairly involved %
APE6	5	43	32	18	2	48
APE7						
APE8	5	38	38	17	2	43
APE9	5	33	33	25	4	38
APE10	8	39	29	22	1	47
APE11	6	37	35	21	1	43
APE12	7	31	36	22	4	38

Q13b

To what extent, if at all, would you like to be involved in decision-making in ...
The country as a whole?

	Very involved %	Fairly involved %	Not very involved %	Not at all involved %	Don't know %	Very/fairly involved %
APE6	5	38	33	22	2	43
APE7						
APE8	8	34	38	19	2	42
APE9	6	27	34	30	3	33
APE10	7	35	32	25	2	42
APE11	6	32	37	25	1	38
APE12	8	28	34	26	4	37

Q14

As far as you know, is your name on the electoral register, that is, the official list of people entitled to vote, either where you are living now or somewhere else?

	Yes – where living now %	Yes – another address %	No %	Don't know %
APE10	83	5	10	1
APE11	86	4	8	1
APE12	79	3	15	3

Q15 v1

(VERSIONS 1 AND 2 ASKED OF SPLIT SAMPLE)

The Westminster Parliament is a centrepiece of British history and democracy. It is where political decisions have been taken over the centuries. It is a designated world heritage site and an important cultural icon in Britain and around the world. It needs substantial restoration work to preserve and protect it for future generations. To what extent would you be satisfied with taxpayers' money being spent on its restoration?

	APE12
	%
Very satisfied	9
Fairly satisfied	38
Not very satisfied	18
Not at all satisfied	23
Neither	5
Don't know	7
All satisfied	47
All not satisfied	41

Q15 v2

(VERSIONS 1 AND 2 ASKED OF SPLIT SAMPLE)

Westminster Abbey is a centrepiece of British history and religion. It is where monarchs have been crowned over the centuries. It is a designated world heritage site and an important cultural icon in Britain and around the world. It needs substantial restoration work to preserve and protect it for future generations. To what extent would you be satisfied with taxpayers' money being spent on its restoration?

	APE12
	%
Very satisfied	18
Fairly satisfied	39
Not very satisfied	21
Not at all satisfied	16
Neither	2
Don't know	4
All satisfied	58
All not satisfied	37

Q16 v1

(VERSIONS 1 AND 2 ASKED OF SPLIT SAMPLE)
 Following the Scottish referendum, the idea of English votes on English laws has been proposed to address the issue of Scottish MPs voting on things like schools and hospitals in England, but English MPs having no say on how those are run in Scotland because the Scottish Parliament is responsible for them. As an issue for reform, do you think this is ...

	APE12
	%
Very important	27
Fairly important	33
Not very important	21
Not at all important	8
Don't know	10
All important	60
All not important	30

Q16 v2

(VERSIONS 1 AND 2 ASKED OF SPLIT SAMPLE)
 Following the Scottish referendum, the idea of English votes on English laws has been proposed to address the issue of Scottish MPs voting on things like schools and hospitals in England, but English MPs having no say on how those are run in Scotland because the Scottish Parliament is responsible for them. But research suggests that if this reform had been implemented previously, the outcome would have been different in 21 out of 5,000 votes since 1997 (and six since 2010). As an issue for reform, do you think this is ...

	APE12
	%
Very important	20
Fairly important	36
Not very important	23
Not at all important	12
Don't know	9
All important	56
All not important	35

Q17

Which of these statements comes closest to your view?
If no party wins a majority of seats in the House of Commons at the next general election, I would prefer ...

	APE12 %
A coalition between two or more parties which may produce a stronger government, but require compromises on some of each party's manifesto commitments	27
The largest party to form a government on its own which may produce a weaker government but require less compromise on their manifesto commitments	23
Another election to be called so that one party might get an overall majority on their own	32
Don't know	18

Q18

Which of the following changes would you support to encourage more people to participate in future elections?
Please select your top three.

	APE12 %
Compulsory voting	26
A right to register to vote up to and including election day	24
Making election day a public holiday	25
Online voting	45
An all-postal vote election	11
Compulsory voting but with abstention / 'none of the above' option on the ballot paper	14
Votes at 16	17
Other	2
None	12
Don't know	9

Q19	Overall, how would you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in the United Kingdom?
	APE12
	%

Very high	2
Quite high	16
Neither high nor low	41
Quite low	23
Very low	13
Don't know	5

Q20	And how do you think standards of public office holders in the United Kingdom today compare with a few years ago?
	APE12
	%

Improved a lot	2
Improved a little	14
Stayed the same	40
Got a bit worse	22
Got a lot worse	14
Don't know	9

Q21	How confident are you that the authorities in the United Kingdom are committed to upholding standards in public life?
	APE12
	%

Very confident	4
Fairly confident	34
Not very confident	43
Not at all confident	13
Don't know	6

Q22	How confident are you that the authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office?
	APE12
	%

Very confident	4
Fairly confident	29
Not very confident	42
Not at all confident	19
Don't know	6

Q23	How confident are you that the media will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office?
	APE12
	%

Very confident	16
Fairly confident	42
Not very confident	26
Not at all confident	9
Don't know	6

Q24	And when people in public office are caught doing wrong, how confident are you that the authorities will punish them?
	APE12
	%

Very confident	4
Fairly confident	27
Not very confident	42
Not at all confident	21
Don't know	5

(Public office holders include government ministers, MPs, local councillors and public officials with jobs in government departments, local councils or other public bodies).

- An asterisk (*) indicates a finding of less than 0.5% but greater than zero.
- A dash (-) indicates that no respondents chose a response.
- Greyed-out columns indicate that a question was not asked in that year's Audit.
- n/a indicates that the question was asked but the particular response option was not included that year.

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The 2015 Report

The Audit of Political Engagement is the only annual health check on our democratic system. Now in its 12th year, each Audit measures the 'political pulse' of the nation, providing a unique benchmark to gauge public opinion across Great Britain with regard to politics and the political process.

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ISBN: 978 0900432 99 6



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