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The 2014 Report

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with a focus on the accountability and conduct of MPs

The Audit of Political Engagement is the only annual health check on our democratic system. Now in its 11th 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.

This year's report explores public attitudes to politics and compares them with the Audit results at the same stage before the 2005 and 2010 general elections. It also looks at public attitudes to the forthcoming European parliamentary elections, and examines the complexity of public attitudes to voting.

In addition to the key indicators of political engagement, the report looks in greater detail at the efficacy of Parliament in carrying out some of its core functions, and issues pertaining to the conduct and behaviour of MPs, including at Prime Minister's Questions. The report concludes with an analysis of a range of options for holding politicians more effectively to account between general elections.

The Hansard Society is an independent, non-partisan political research and education organisation, working in the UK and around the world to promote democracy and strengthen parliaments.

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HANSARD SOCIETY

THE 2014 REPORT

HANSARD SOCIETY

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The Hansard Society believes that the health of representative democracy rests on the foundation of a strong Parliament and an informed and engaged citizenry. Founded in 1944, we are a charity working in the UK and around the world to promote democracy and strengthen parliaments. An independent, non-partisan political research and education Society, our work is devoted to:

Exploring the evolution of representative democracy: offering evidence-based ideas for reform of political and parliamentary institutions, processes and culture to help foster democratic renewal.

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Enquiries about membership or the work of the Hansard Society should be addressed to Dr Ruth Fox, Director and Head of Research, Hansard Society, 5th Floor, 9 King Street, London EC2V 8EA, by email to contact@hansardsociety.org.uk, or visit the website at **www.hansardsociety.org.uk**

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HANSARD SOCIETY

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Preface

The Audit of Political Engagement, our flagship publication, has measured the political pulse of the nation for over a decade, providing an annual health check on public attitudes to our democracy. Going beyond the normal vagaries of day-to-day politics, it offers greater depth and insight into public perceptions of our political system by virtue of its long-term perspective and analysis of underlying trends.

This year's report, the 11th in the series, examines the key indicators of political engagement, and compares public attitudes to those recorded in previous Audits at the same stage, 18 months prior to the general elections of 2005 and 2010. With the European Parliament elections taking place later this year a number of questions in this latest Audit poll also explore public attitudes to the European elections and compare and contrast them with attitudes to participation in a general election.

This report also revisits a question last asked in Audit 4 (2007) regarding the public's sense of partisanship. For all those involved in politics, the decline in support for political parties is a worrying cause of concern in terms of the future health of our democracy and the results in this report do nothing to ameliorate such concern.

The special focus of this year's report is on the conduct and accountability of MPs and the results demonstrate how far politicians and political parties still have to go in order to restore public faith and confidence in our system of representative democracy. The report finds that two-thirds of the public believe politicians don't understand the daily lives of people like themselves. There is, however, recognition among the public that things were not necessarily better in the past. Six in 10 agree that 'politicians in the past were no better than today; they just didn't face the same media scrutiny'.

Although perceived knowledge of Parliament has improved, only half the public think that the core institution at the apex of our democracy debates and makes decisions that matter to them, a third that it holds government to account, and just under a quarter think it encourages public involvement in politics.

It's also clear that the public have very mixed views about what they see at Prime Minister's Questions. The findings in this year's Audit as well as the Society's related report, '*Tuned in or Turned off: Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions*', pose some challenging questions for the party leaders and MPs generally, but importantly also for the media in terms of how they choose to cover Parliament's 'shop window' each week.

This year the Hansard Society celebrates its 70th anniversary. The Audit results once again underline the importance of our founding mission: 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 on-going support is invaluable. So too, we appreciate the work and support of the staff at Ipsos MORI who undertook the quantitative survey upon which the Audit is based.

Lord Grocott
Chair, Hansard Society

Executive summary

1. Knowledge and interest

- Exactly 50% claim that they are 'very' or 'fairly' interested in politics. This indicator now mirrors the position at a similar point in the electoral cycle in Audit 1 (50%) and Audit 6 (52%).

- Those claiming either 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' of knowledge about politics has also risen to 50%. It is the third highest level of knowledge recorded in the Audit series, surpassed only marginally in Audit 7 (51%) and Audit 8 (53%).

- Knowledge of Parliament is at the highest level ever recorded in the Audit series with 48% claiming to know at least 'a fair amount'.

2. Action and participation

- Just 49% say they would be certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election, with 11% claiming to be 'absolutely certain not to vote'.

- There has been a recovery in public attitudes compared to Audit 10 when just 41% claimed to be certain to vote but voting propensity remains below average for the Audit series. This is the third lowest voting figure reported in the Audit series, and the third time in succession that less than 50% of the public have said they are certain to vote.

- Nine out of 10 people (90%) report that they are on the electoral register either where they currently live (86%) or at another address (4%).

- Six months before the European election, just 26% say they are absolutely certain to vote and 23% say they are 'absolutely certain not to vote'.

- 67% agree that it is their 'duty to vote in all types of elections' although fewer than half of 18-24 year olds (46%) believe this compared to 79% of those aged 65+.

- 61% believe their general election vote is simply 'more important' than their European one.

- 71% agree that they 'understand more about how general elections work than elections to the European Parliament'.

- 77% agree that 'I know less about the issues in a European Parliament Election than a general election'.

- 30% consider themselves to be at least 'a fairly strong' supporter of a political party compared to 37% who said the same in Audit 4.

- 33% now declare that they are 'not a supporter' of any political party compared to just under a quarter (24%) who said the same in Audit 4.

- Just 23% of 18-24s claim to be at least a 'fairly strong' supporter of a party compared to 44% of those aged 75+ who say the same.

- Nearly half the public report having engaged in at least one of a list of 13 political and civic activities in the last year.

    - 20% claim they have donated money to a charity or campaigning organisation.
    - 18% report voting in an election.
    - 16% claim to have created or signed a paper petition and 15% an e-petition.
    - 12% say they have contacted an elected representative.

3. Efficacy and satisfaction

- 33% think that the system of governing in Britain works 'extremely' or 'mainly' well.

- Those most satisfied with the system of governing are those with an allegiance to the coalition parties.

    - 60% of Conservative supporters think the system works at least 'mainly' well, 42% of Liberal Democrat supporters say the same.
    - 31% of UKIP supporters and 27% of Labour supporters are satisfied with the system of governing.
    - Those with no party affinity at all are much less satisfied with the system of governing: just 17% claim it works at least 'mainly' well.

- 31% of the public agree that 'when people like me get involved in politics, they really can change the way that the UK is run'.

4. Political involvement locally and nationally

- 43% of the public say they would like to be at least 'fairly involved' in decision-making locally.

- 38% say they would like to be at least 'fairly involved' in decision-making nationally.

- Desire for involvement in decision-making both locally and nationally is five percentage points below that in Audit 6 which was also 18 months before a general election.

- 21% have no desire to be involved in decision-making locally and 25% have no desire to be involved in national decision-making.

- 26% say they feel they have at least some influence over local decisions. 14% say the same in terms of their influence over national decisions.

5. Perceptions of Parliament

- 67% agree that Parliament 'is essential to our democracy'.

- 34% agree that Parliament 'holds government to account', the lowest level ever in the five years this question has been asked in the Audit series.

- 51% agree that Parliament 'debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me'.

- Only 23% agree that Parliament 'encourages public involvement in politics' compared to 30% in the previous two Audits.

- Parliament has a net positive score:

    - For being 'essential to our democracy' (+56%).
    - For 'debating and making decisions about issues that matter to me' (+30%).
    - For 'holding government to account' (+6%).
    - However, it has a net negative score (-22%) for encouraging public involvement in politics.

6. Attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions

- 54% of the public have seen or heard PMQs in some form in the last 12 months:

    - 16% report having seen/heard a full session.
    - 38% report having seen clips.
    - 36% claim to have never seen it.
    - 10% said they have seen it before but not in the last year.

- Awareness of PMQs is heavily skewed towards older citizens. 68% of those aged 65+ have seen or heard PMQs in the last year compared to just 35% of those aged 18-24.

- 67% agree that 'there is too much party political point-scoring instead of answering the question' – 5% disagree.

- 47% agree it 'is too noisy and aggressive' – 15% disagree.

- 40% agree it 'deals with the important issues facing the country' – 20% disagree.

- 36% agree it is 'informative' – 22% disagree.

- 33% agree it 'puts me off politics' – 27% disagree.
- 20% agree that 'it's exciting to watch' – 44% disagree.
- 16% agree that 'MPs behave professionally' at PMQs – 48% disagree.
- 12% agree it 'makes me proud of our Parliament' – 45% disagree.
- Those who report having seen PMQs in full in the last year are more engaged by it than those who have seen only clips, but both groups share, almost equally, the negative perception of MPs' behaviour.

7. Accountability of MPs

- Just 21% agree that 'politicians are behaving in a more professional way than they were a few years ago'.
- 67% of the public say politicians 'don't understand the daily lives of people like me'.
- 45% agree that 'most politicians go into politics because they want to make a positive difference in their community'.
- 74% believe 'politicians should be prepared to make personal sacrifices if they want to play a role in running the country'. This view is particularly held by those respondents that say they support a political party.
- 62% agree that 'politicians in the past were no better than today; they just didn't face the same media scrutiny'.
- 86% agree that politicians 'should be expected to act according to a set of guidelines about their behaviour'.
- 77% agree that politicians 'should have to undertake regular ethics and standards training'.
- Biannual open meetings are viewed as the most effective means of holding MPs to account and top the poll in terms of the reform most likely to capture the public's attention, closely followed by recall.
- Making MPs' voting and attendance records easily accessible online then ranks as the next most important change alongside formal annual reports from MPs to constituents.
- Social media is more attractive to the 18-24s than any other age group: 14%, double the national average, said they thought requiring all MPs to be on Facebook or Twitter would be an effective means of holding politicians to account and 22% of them said they personally would be likely to pay attention to it.

1. About this report

The Audit of Political Engagement is an annual health check on our democratic system. Now in its 11th year, the study 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.

Based on the results of an opinion poll conducted by Ipsos MORI in December 2013 amongst a representative sample of adults in Great Britain, it explores public attitudes to a range of political engagement indicators that track knowledge of and interest in the political system; the degree of public action and participation in politics; and the public's sense of efficacy and satisfaction with the democratic process.

A number of 'core' questions are asked in each poll, enabling us to track responses from year to year and so chart the direction and magnitude of change over the course of the Audit lifecycle.

The core survey is then supplemented by a number of additional questions that explore an issue or theme of topical interest. This year's report explores public attitudes to the conduct of politicians generally and the accountability of MPs in particular. It builds on previous nationwide focus group research (2011-12), talking to members of the public about their perceptions of the political system and what they would most like to change in order to improve it.[1]

The reform preferences identified in the focus groups were subsequently tested in Audit 10. The most popular reform improvement, supported by 48% of the public, was to 'make politics more transparent so that it is easier to follow', closely followed by the proposition that politicians should be made 'more accountable for their performance between elections' (39%).[2] However, the focus groups did not clarify exactly what changes would achieve these objectives of greater accountability and transparency. In this latest Audit we have therefore sought to test public attitudes to a range of possible reform options that were raised during the focus groups or that have been the subject of political and media debate in recent years.

Additionally, drawing on the focus group findings, we look at issues pertaining to the conduct and behaviour of MPs. Our qualitative research found that participants often raised,

[1] The focus groups were conducted jointly with Professor Colin Hay (University of Sheffield) and Professor Gerry Stoker (University of Southampton). The work was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-000-22-4441, 'Anti-politics: characterising and accounting for political disaffection').

[2] See Hansard Society (2013), *Audit of Political Engagement 10: The 2013 Report* (London: Hansard Society), pp.47-48.

unprompted, their concerns about the conduct of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). We have therefore tested, for the first time, the hypothesis that PMQs is a 'cue' for the public's wider perceptions of Parliament. Using a series of online focus groups (October 2013) and a subsequent battery of questions on the Audit survey we explore whether Parliament's 'shop window' is now a contributory factor in public disenchantment with the institution. We first published the results of our PMQs research in our report, '*Tuned in or Turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions*'.[3] That report drew on the results of question 14 and questions 15a-h in this Audit.[4] However, this study augments the results in that report by providing more information about public perceptions of PMQs in the context of the wider political engagement indicators.

Structure of the report

The following chapter outlines the events – political, economic, social and international – that shaped and defined the year. It sets out the essential context against which public attitudes should be considered.

A number of key issues that emerge from this year's data are explored in chapter three. It particularly highlights the pattern in the changes in the key indicators of engagement that have occurred this year, and compares them with the results in Audits 1 and 6, each of the three surveys having been undertaken at the same point, 18 months before a general election. In advance of the May 2014 European elections this chapter also highlights the complexity of public attitudes to voting, particularly focusing on the disconnect that exists between a citizen's sense of 'duty' and their willingness to actually participate in an election. Finally, the chapter illuminates the importance to political engagement of partisanship and interest in politics and stresses the sense of powerlessness that underpins public attitudes to politics today.

Chapter four sets out the results of the core survey questions. It explores the engagement indicators related to 'knowledge and interest', 'action and participation', 'efficacy and satisfaction', and the public's desire for involvement in politics locally and nationally. It measures current levels of political engagement and compares and contrasts them with the findings recorded in the Audit in previous years.

As this study explores public attitudes to the European elections, for the first time in the Audit we report in chapter four on the attitudes and perceptions of those members of the public who say they support the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the party that, at the time of writing, is predicted to come first or second in the May 2014 elections. The base number of UKIP supporters in the Audit poll sample is less than 100 so the results have been treated very cautiously. But we have noted a handful of data points where UKIP supporters have a statistically significant difference in view compared to supporters of the other three main parties and those who claim no party allegiance at all.

Public attitudes to Parliament, including its efficacy in carrying out some of its core functions are explored in chapter five. The perception of the conduct of politicians, including at Prime

[3] Hansard Society (2014), *Tuned in or Turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions* (London: Hansard Society).

[4] See Appendix C.

Minister's Questions, is also examined in this chapter, which concludes with an analysis of a range of options for holding politicians more effectively to account between elections.

Finally, the report concludes with a series of appendices that set out the methodology for this study.

Appendix A explores the issues raised by a change in polling contractors. The first eight Audit surveys were conducted by Ipsos MORI, Audits 9 and 10 were conducted by TNS BMRB, and this latest survey once again by Ipsos MORI. Appendix B describes the methodology used to collect the data for the 11th political engagement poll, and provides a note on the statistical reliability of the reported findings. And Appendix C presents the topline results of the poll in tabular format.

Following publication of each Audit the full dataset is made available on the Hansard Society website (www.hansardsociety.org.uk) in order that others may use it for research purposes. It is also lodged at the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex for the same purpose.

Public engagement is a key strand of the Hansard Society's research programme and we will therefore be undertaking further work linked to and derived from the results of this and previous Audits in the future. Reports emanating from this further research will also be published on our website.

2. The political context

Public attitudes and behaviours are not shaped and defined in a vacuum. Any measurement of public engagement must take account of the political context – the actors and forces at work – that may have had an impact on public perceptions over the course of the year.

Economic recovery?

The year began with increased speculation about the prospect of a 'triple dip recession' as data suggested the economy had shrunk by 0.3% in the final quarter of 2012. Several major high-street brand names such as HMV and Jessops all paid the price, going into administration or receivership after a disappointing Christmas sales period. The IMF's Chief Economist called for a 'reassessment of fiscal policy' in January and the following month the country's credit rating was downgraded by Moody's to AA1, causing an immediate drop in the value of sterling. Moody's warned that UK growth would 'remain sluggish' and the government's debt reduction programme faced significant challenges.

In the March budget, Chancellor George Osborne cut the growth forecast in half from 1.2% to 0.6% and the Office for Budget Responsibility indicated that the UK would escape a further recession. But within three months, economists would be forced to revise their earlier claims and acknowledge that the UK had not, in fact, experienced even a double-dip recession; according to the Office for National Statistics growth had merely been flat. The three-year spending review in the summer entrenched the government's deficit reduction strategy still further with a further £11.5 billion of cuts to public sector spending through to 2015/16. He was, said Osborne, putting a 'limit on the nation's credit card'. Second quarter growth subsequently surpassed economic expectations and an upturn in economic confidence was reflected in rising house prices and an increase in retail sales.

The change in economic fortunes sharpened the political dividing line on economic management. The coalition government hailed the success of their 'Plan A' economic strategy whilst Labour's focus shifted to reframing the narrative around the 'cost of living crisis', arguing that while the macroeconomic indicators might be improving, ordinary families did not feel better off. The debate began in earnest with an average increase of 4.2% in rail fares at the start of the year. Attempts by the government to argue that it had capped fare rises at 4% largely fell on deaf ears not least because unregulated fares rose by as much as 10%.

As the year progressed, the debate shifted towards concern with rising energy bills as a particularly cold weather period saw an above average increase in the number of deaths between late January and March. Meanwhile, energy companies continued to raise prices and enjoy substantial profits leading to calls for greater regulation of the industry. At his

party's annual conference the Labour leader, Ed Miliband MP, put the issue at the heart of his cost of living strategy announcing that, if elected in 2015, the party would freeze household gas and electricity bills until 2017.

The proposal provoked strong reaction among consumers and the business sector and pushed the Conservatives to counter with alternative plans to cut green taxes that, they argued, were adding to the cost of energy bills. The green agenda featured as the backdrop to protests against the exploitation of shale gas by 'fracking' throughout the year, and the wider challenges posed by climate change were much debated in the aftermath of major flooding in the south of England.

Tensions in the coalition

As the government approached its third anniversary there was growing public evidence of tensions between the coalition parties. The tone was set in January when the Liberal Democrats voted against proposals to change parliamentary constituency boundaries. Liberal Democrat peers supported Labour opposition peers in securing an amendment to the Electoral Registration and Administration Bill that would delay implementation of the constituency boundary review until 2018. When the Bill returned to the House of Commons the Conservatives opposed the amendment but the Liberal Democrats supported it, voting for the first time against the Conservatives in the Commons since joining the coalition.

The two parties had been in dispute on the issue ever since proposals to reform the House of Lords had been abandoned the previous year due to Conservative opposition. In retaliation the Liberal Democrats said they would oppose implementation of the boundary review that had been agreed by Parliament in 2011. The review was expected to revise the electoral map to equalise the size of constituencies across the country to the benefit of the Conservative Party who hoped to secure an extra 20 seats or more as a result at the next general election, making outright victory a more realistic proposition. The Liberal Democrats argued that the proposals for Lords reform and the review of constituency boundaries were part of a package of coalition reforms that could not be cherry-picked by their coalition partners. As the Conservatives had failed to honour the agreement they felt under no obligation to support implementation of the boundary review. The Conservatives, in contrast, argued vehemently that the two issues were never linked.

The coalition had announced they would publish a mid-term review but when part of the report detailing progress on the government's pledges was eventually published in January it was quickly dismissed for failing to mention any areas of failure or disagreement. The Opposition quickly dubbed it an 'audit of coalition broken promises'.

In February, the Education Secretary Michael Gove, abandoned plans to replace GCSEs in favour of a new English Baccalaureate, describing his original plans as 'a bridge too far'. The policy had been opposed by the Liberal Democrats who believed it would introduce a two-tier system but opposition had also come from the House of Commons Education Select Committee which was concerned at the pace and scale of the proposed changes, as well as the trade unions and the exams regulator, Ofqual. Departmental civil servants also reportedly warned that one facet of the reforms – handing each of the core subjects over

to just one exam board – could breach EU rules on public service contracts and therefore be subject to judicial review.

Tensions were again pronounced three months later when the Liberal Democrats voted in March against the idea of introducing a Mansion Tax on properties worth more than £2 million as proposed by Labour in an Opposition Day debate in the Commons, despite the policy having been in their 2010 election manifesto. Throughout the year Labour would seek to make life uncomfortable for the Liberal Democrats, using debate and votes in the House of Commons to exploit and advertise coalition differences on a range of policy issues, emphasising the notion that the third party was putting its position in government above principle. This strategy was again successful in October when the Liberal Democrats would abstain *en bloc* in an Opposition Day debate on teacher training, but it was unclear to what extent any of this had an impact on the public consciousness.

The Queen's Speech in May, laying out the government's agenda for the following year, included new immigration measures, proposals to cap social care payments, the introduction of a new single tier pension, new crime controls, support for the business sector and legislation to introduce the HS2 high speed rail line. But what was missing from the speech was more revealing in terms of the tensions between the coalition partners: there was no mention of the much-promised referendum on continuing membership of the EU; there were no public health measures for plain cigarette packaging and minimum unit prices for alcohol, nor was there legislation to enshrine the pledge to spend 0.7% of national income on overseas aid.

On other issues, legislative and policy proposals caused inter-party difficulties within one or both of the coalition parties posing serious challenges to each leader's management of their backbenchers. Beyond the on-going divisions over Europe, this was particularly evident for the Conservatives on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill where, on a free vote, a majority of Conservative MPs voted against the bill at second reading while the Prime Minister voted in the other lobby. The bill passed by 400 to 175 votes and, having largely emerged unscathed from the House of Lords, received Royal Assent in July.

By party conference season in the autumn, little or no effort was being made by either coalition partner to even try and cover up the cracks. The discomfort of coalition was particularly evident in Liberal Democrat ranks. Several surveys of party activists made clear that a majority of them would prefer to be in coalition with Labour and leader Nick Clegg faced several calls for his resignation. Business Secretary, Vince Cable MP, had ventured to suggest that the coalition might not last until May 2015 but this view was quickly dismissed by senior colleagues.

Cable's reputation for economic competence took a battering shortly after conference season as he was widely condemned for selling off the Royal Mail too cheaply when it was privatised in October. He was not alone, however, for the Chancellor George Osborne, was similarly criticised when the sale of the 4G mobile phone licence raised just £2.3 billion, significantly less than the £3.5 billion he had promised in the previous autumn statement.

Syria: the House of Commons opposes intervention

Just prior to party conference season the Prime Minster had suffered a serious setback of his own when the House of Commons rejected the government's position on Syria. The escalating civil war in Syria was a cause of concern throughout the year. In March the Foreign Secretary William Hague had announced plans to send armoured vehicles and body armour to opposition forces in Syria in response to what was described as extreme human suffering. By mid-August evidence of suspected chemical weapons usage began to emerge raising the spectre of military retaliation against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. A week later, the Prime Minister recalled the House of Commons to debate the issue and endorse the prospect of military action. But the Whips quickly discovered deep unease among backbenchers and hastily revised their stance. The government's motion deplored the use of chemical weapons and called for a strong humanitarian response to the conflict. But the critical paragraph made clear that following an investigation by UN experts, 'every effort should be made to secure a Security Resolution backing military action before any such action is taken, and notes that before any direct British involvement in such action a further vote of the House of Commons will take place'.[5] Despite this effort to reassure MPs by offering a second vote prior to any military action, following a heated debate, over which hung the long shadow of intervention in Iraq a decade earlier, MPs rejected the government's motion by 285 votes to 272.

In a terse response after the vote the Prime Minister made clear from the despatch box that, as it was clear the House did not favour military action, the government would act accordingly. As commentators noted, it was the first time a Prime Minister had lost a vote on a question of military action since 1782. Much debate and inter-party recrimination followed, with the government accusing Labour leader Ed Miliband of having reneged on his position in his original discussions with the Prime Minister, an assertion rejected by the opposition. Chancellor George Osborne opined that the decision would prompt much national soul searching about Britain's role in the world, while the Defence Secretary, Philip Hammond MP, expressed concern about the impact it would have on the 'special relationship' with the United States of America. The House of Commons had certainly asserted itself in opposition to the judgement of the Prime Minister and government. What impact it would have in the long-term was unclear but in the short-term it appeared to embolden politicians in the US Congress and in the French National Assembly who similarly called for the right to vote on military action, stemming what until that point had felt like a rush to war. Military action would in the end be avoided when a diplomatic settlement with the Syrian regime was brokered by Russia under which the former's chemical weapons stockpiles were removed or destroyed under the supervision of international monitors.

Beyond Syria, events in the Middle East continued to dominate on the international stage. The hopes raised by the Arab Spring continued to decline as the first democratically elected president of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi, was deposed in a military coup following days of protests. But the violence continued and it's estimated that over 1,000 people lost their lives in the inter-party clashes. In September the new military

[5] House of Commons Order of Business, 29 August 2013, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmagenda/ob130829.htm

government cracked down, banning the Muslim Brotherhood and subsequently declaring it a terrorist group. Britain continued to restrict exports to the country in order to prevent British goods being used in unrest that might lead to civilian deaths.

Meanwhile Mohamed Morsi was put on trial, charged with inciting murder and violence. Following his initial arrest he spent two months in secret detention, and the first diplomat given permission to visit him was the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton. Having been pilloried as ineffectual in her early years in office both at home and abroad, she would cap the year by negotiating an historic diplomatic breakthrough in relations with Iran. Chairing the P5+1 multi-party talks in Geneva, she negotiated an interim agreement to address the Iranian nuclear programme in return for a loosening of international sanctions imposed on the country.

Britain's role in Europe

The biggest challenge the Prime Minister faced in managing his backbenchers was over the question of Europe. Throughout the year, the government faced pressure from a resurgent UKIP who were targeting disaffected Conservative supporters particularly over the issue of immigration and the possibility of maintaining restrictions on migrants from Bulgaria and Romania. The government introduced a series of benefit restrictions for European migrants but it was not enough to silence the critics within the party's ranks.

In January, responding to concerns about the UK's continuing role in the EU, the Prime Minister announced he would seek to negotiate a more flexible arrangement with the European Union, including the repatriation of some powers. After which, he promised he would put the results to a nationwide 'in or out' referendum in 2017 if the Conservatives won the next general election

A month after his announcement, the Prime Minister managed to secure a 3% cut in the EU multi-annual budget, delivering what was touted as his first major EU-related diplomatic victory. But progress on his promise to renegotiate the UK-EU relationship still looked difficult given the opposition stance of so many of his EU counterparts. In September both Jose Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, and Herman Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, urged the UK to reconsider its position, stressing the damage any exit would have on the economy.

Domestically, the Prime Minister also encountered problems as he could not statutorily enshrine his promise of a referendum because his Liberal Democrat coalition partners did not support the policy and would not countenance it being introduced as a government bill. In a rare move, Conservative Eurosceptics laid an amendment to the Queen's Speech regretting the absence of a referendum from the government's legislative programme. Although the leadership made clear that they would support a Private Members' Bill to introduce a referendum this was not enough for many backbenchers who pressed ahead with their amendment. Trying to ease the pressure, the government announced a partial free vote with ministers permitted to abstain and backbenchers to vote as they wished: over 100 voted for it and the amendment was only rejected as a result of Labour and Liberal Democrat votes. The Prime Minister would subsequently throw his support and that of the Conservative side of the government behind a Private Members' Bill piloted through the Commons by his

Conservative colleague, James Wharton MP, to bind the government to hold a referendum by the end of 2017. But by year's end, although the bill had progressed through the House of Commons it faced the possibility of being strangled in the House of Lords.

Ethics and standards

Once again parliamentarians struggled to avoid the taint of scandal, financial or otherwise. In February, former Liberal Democrat Cabinet Minister Chris Huhne MP finally admitted to charges that his ex-wife Vicky Pryce had taken speeding points on his behalf a decade ago. He immediately resigned from the House of Commons prompting a by-election in his Eastleigh seat. The following month both were sentenced to eight months in prison for perverting the course of justice although both would be released early, after just eight weeks, on licence and subject to electronic tagging and a curfew.

Later in the year the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Nigel Evans MP, would be arrested and charged with eight sexual offences, including rape, dating back to 2002. He resigned as Deputy Speaker but remained in the House of Commons as an independent Member pending the outcome of his trial which was scheduled to take place in 2014.

Other allegations of a sexual nature were levelled at a number of politicians throughout the year. Towards the end of February Lord Rennard, a Liberal Democrat peer and the party's former chief executive, was accused of inappropriate sexual advances by former party employees, including a former special adviser to Nick Clegg. Following an investigation by Channel 4 News, the party leader admitted that he had been aware of 'indirect and non-specific concerns' about Rennard's behaviour for some time. As the investigation unfolded, other prominent figures in the party also came in for criticism for failing to take the allegations seriously enough.

That same month a Liberal Democrat MP, Mike Hancock, was accused of sexual assault by a constituent, who filed a civil lawsuit against him. The allegations implied a long history of improper behaviour but the police investigation subsequently concluded in the autumn that there was 'insufficient evidence' for a prosecution.

Other parties did not escape the stain of improper behaviour. Labour's Lord Ahmed was suspended by his party in March after claiming that a 'Jewish conspiracy' was at fault for his imprisonment for dangerous driving and crashing his car into a stationary vehicle in 2007.

And the House of Lords was once again subject to a 'cash for access' scandal uncovered by the Sunday Times in June. Three peers – Labour's Jack Cunningham and Brian Mackenzie, and the Ulster Unionists' John Laird – were investigated after appearing to offer to host events, lobby ministers and ask parliamentary questions in exchange for payment from people they believed were lobbyists acting on behalf of companies. Lord Cunningham was cleared after an investigation found 'insufficient evidence' that he had breached the Code of Conduct, but Lord Mackenzie was suspended from the House of Lords for six months and Lord Laird (who resigned from his party) for four months.

In the House of Commons Conservative MP Patrick Mercer was caught in May in a similar media sting by BBC's Panorama. After meeting with lobbyists purporting to have business

interests in Fiji he established an all-party group and tabled questions to ministers on their issues of interest. Having reportedly agreed a contract worth £24,000 with the lobbyists he failed to declare the first £2,000 payment in the time allowed by parliamentary rules and promptly resigned the Conservative whip when the matter came to light. He remained in Parliament as an independent MP but announced he would not stand in his Newark constituency at the next general election.

An undercover investigation also reportedly exposed Tim Yeo MP, chairman of the House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Select Committee, for offering to advise energy companies – including those appearing before his committee – in exchange for cash payments. Yeo denied the allegations, referred his case to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and stepped aside as Chairman of the Committee while the claims were investigated. He was later completely cleared by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards who concluded that the Sunday Times reporters had misrepresented themselves and selectively quoted from their discussions with the MP. The same newspaper was also criticised in the High Court in June when the former Conservative Party Treasurer, Peter Cruddas, won a substantial libel lawsuit against it for what turned out to be a false story alleging he had taken improper donations.

In an effort to stem the lobbying problem and keep its coalition promise, the government introduced new legislation, The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill, in July but the legislation was widely criticised. Transparency campaigners argued it was too restrictive in its interpretation of lobbying and would consequently be ineffectual, letting many lobbyists off the hook. Meanwhile, charities were galvanised into opposition to the non-party campaigning provisions of the bill, fearing that it would amount to a 'gagging' of the third sector during general election campaigns. The bill would progress but was heavily amended during the course of the year.

Further allegations of financial scandal were hardly the best backdrop against which to revisit the issue of MPs' pay and pensions but that was what the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) was required to do in accordance with its statutory remit. Following a public consultation IPSA proposed a 9% pay rise, increasing MPs' pay to £74,000, after the 2015 general election. But at a time when the rest of the public sector continued to experience a salary freeze or very modest increases, the proposal came in for heavy criticism and all three party leaders vowed to stop the increase whilst some MPs made clear they would not accept a salary rise, and a rather smaller proportion, mainly in safe parliamentary seats, said they would take it.

Elections and a referendum

Notable performers in the May local elections were the UK Independence Party who won over 140 seats and secured on average 25% of the vote in those wards where they stood a candidate. Labour made modest gains, winning two councils and adding nearly 300 councillors to their local government base. In contrast the Conservatives lost control of 10 councils and the Liberal Democrats came fourth nationwide. In the subsequent Eastleigh by-election caused by the resignation of Chris Huhne, the Liberal Democrats hung on to the seat with a reduced majority of 2,000. UKIP came second, beating the Conservatives into third place.

In Scotland, First Minister Alex Salmond confirmed that 18 September 2014 – the anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn – would be the date for the much heralded referendum on Scottish independence. Ever the canny campaigner, when Scotsman Andy Murray won at Wimbledon, the first time a British player had won the men's singles title for 77 years, the First Minister unfurled the Saltire in the Royal Box to the evident chagrin of the Prime Minister who was sitting directly in front of him. Later in the year the Scottish government issued a white paper, delineating their vision for the future of an independent Scotland, but serious questions remained, particularly about the economic prospects of Scotland post-independence and whether or not it could continue as a member of the European Union.

Meanwhile, Labour's selection of candidates for the 2015 general election descended into turmoil when Britain's largest trade union, Unite, was accused of hijacking the process in favour of their candidate in the Falkirk constituency. Amid allegations of skulduggery and dirty tricks, the Labour leader, Ed Miliband, announced an inquiry into the events in Falkirk and a wider review of the party's relationship with the trade unions and their involvement in party elections.

A crisis of trust?

It was not just parliamentarians who were the subject of questions about trust and ethics. The year began with a major food standards scandal following the detection of horsemeat in various supermarkets' and suppliers' meat products. As outlets hastily tested their product ranges many were found to contain other undeclared, non-advertised meat, revealing a major breakdown in the food supply chain.

The NHS was also plagued by continuing revelations about standards of care at Stafford Hospital which was put into 'special administration' following publication of the Francis Report which detailed the cause and extent of the failings which led to unusually high mortality rates at the hospital. Ministers blamed the opposition who had been in government when the events took place prior to 2009; and politicians and senior NHS executives were all accused of turning a blind eye to problems.

The BBC also continued to face criticism. Fraud squad detectives were asked to examine the severance pay-offs of senior BBC managers after the government spending watchdog, the National Audit Office, found that the publicly funded broadcaster had breached its redundancy payments policy and senior executives were given a very public dressing down by the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, Margaret Hodge MP.

Allegations about the cover-up of child abuse by the late television personality, Jimmy Savile, continued to impact on the BBC as a number of former radio and television stars and two former BBC producers were arrested during the police inquiries. As the investigation widened, several major figures would be charged and some, including former BBC football commentator Stuart Hall, would be imprisoned for sexual offences involving children. The police service too faced on-going allegations in respect of the Savile inquiry, including an inquiry into the conduct of the West Yorkshire Police Service and the relationship between some of their senior officers and Savile.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police and the Police Federation continued to face serious questions about their behaviour in the 2013 'plebgate scandal' which had forced the

resignation of the Conservative Chief Whip, Andrew Mitchell MP. New evidence came to light suggesting that the police officers involved had fabricated evidence to corroborate their version of events and new video evidence appeared to support Mitchell's protestations of innocence. At year's end the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) announced it would conduct an investigation into the Police Federation representatives' conduct. But these were not the only reputational problems facing the police service. Two decades after the murder of Stephen Lawrence in London, it came to light that the police had kept the teenager's parents under surveillance in the years after his death prompting the Home Secretary to announce an investigation into allegations that the police intended to smear and thereby discredit the family. And a year after the Hillsborough Independent Panel published its devastating indictment of police conduct during the country's worst ever sporting disaster, as preparations for a new inquest were made, it was announced that officers in the South Yorkshire Police could face manslaughter charges in respect of their actions that day.

And the year ended with banks once again in the firing line as an inquiry was launched into the Co-op Group when it was revealed that its banking arm had a £1.5 billion hole in its finances. The organisation, which historically had traded on its reputation as an ethical institution, was engulfed in further scandal when its chair, Paul Flowers, was forced to resign after undercover film footage emerged of him apparently buying cocaine and crystal meth prompting a police investigation.

Press and privacy

The ethics and standards of journalists continued to be placed under the microscope as the fall-out of the phone hacking scandal rumbled on, culminating at year's end with the trial of David Cameron's former head of communications, Andy Coulson, and former Sun editor Rebekah Brooks, at the Old Bailey. Both pleaded not guilty to a range of charges including conspiracy to hack phones, to pervert the course of justice and to commit misconduct in public office.

Throughout the year, politicians grappled with how to implement the recommendations of the 2012 Leveson report into the culture, practices and ethics of the press. In March cross-party talks collapsed, and the Prime Minister announced his intention to publish a Royal Charter on press regulation. Following over 100 hours of talks and after David Cameron agreed to make a number of concessions, the Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders signed up to the proposal to establish a press regulator with the power to fine newspapers up to £1 million and order them to publish apologies. However, the proposals were fiercely opposed by newspaper editors who argued that the proposal would give politicians an unacceptable degree of interference in the media. They announced they would set up an alternative regulatory system. Their proposal was considered by a Privy Council sub-committee but rejected as failing to comply with a number of the Leveson recommendations; the Royal Charter was published and received Royal Assent in October. But by year's end both sides remained in a stand-off with the press refusing to accept Parliament's decision.

On the other hand, the importance of the media's role in holding politicians to account was powerfully demonstrated in the summer when the Guardian published documents leaked by US whistleblower Edward Snowden that revealed that the US National Security

Agency had been engaged in a massive global surveillance operation against millions of people including a number of foreign leaders. The documents showed that Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) had been sharing vast quantities of information with US intelligence officials prompting a debate about the role of national surveillance and privacy. The government rejected allegations that it had acted illegally in using surveillance information gathered by the US eavesdropping programme on British citizens. But the debate about press freedom escalated in August when the partner of the investigative journalist, Glenn Greenwald, who had published the leaked documents, was detained at Heathrow Airport for nine hours under anti-terrorism laws. The Guardian newspaper also claimed that the government had threatened legal action if it did not destroy or hand over classified documents related to the leaks. Partly in response to the severe criticism they faced as a result of the Snowden allegations, the head of the UK's intelligence agencies agreed, for the first time, to be questioned in public by members of Parliament's Joint Intelligence and Security Committee in November.

At that committee appearance the Home Office's head of counter-terrorism called once again for legislation to be introduced requiring communications data from phone and internet companies to be preserved for up to 12 months to help the police and security services in their work. The proposals – known as the 'Snoopers' Charter' – had been ditched earlier in the year due to opposition from the Liberal Democrats. The Home Secretary, Theresa May, reopened the debate in the aftermath of the murder of off-duty soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich, London by two British citizens who had been radicalised and had previously been under surveillance by the intelligence agencies. May declared that the intelligence agencies must have the tools to track down terrorists before they could launch attacks.

On this issue the Home Secretary proved unsuccessful. However, she delivered a major policy victory in July when, after a decade of legal battles the radical Muslim cleric Abu Qatada was finally deported. After numerous appeals a new extradition arrangement between Britain and Jordan removed all further legal obstructions and he was removed to Jordan to face anti-terrorist charges.

Arrivals on and departures from the world stage

In an historic announcement, Pope Benedict XVI resigned in February due to ill health. Following a conclave the Catholic world welcomed a new pope, when the Argentinian cardinal, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected and adopted the name Francis. The first Jesuit pope, the first from the Americas, and the first from the southern hemisphere, the 266th pope's simplicity and message of inclusiveness quickly established him as one of the most popular and talked about people on the planet as he sought to change public perceptions of the church.

A similar global press and public frenzy was caused by the birth of Prince George, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's son and third in line to the throne in July. His christening later in the year marked the first time since 1894 that a reigning monarch had been pictured with three future heirs.

The year was bookended by the passing of two of the most iconic political figures of the century. Former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, died in London on the 8 April following

a stroke at the age of 87. She had won three successive general elections but remained a divisive figure. In recognition of her achievements, and her singular role as the country's first and so far only female Prime Minister, she was accorded a ceremonial funeral with military honours which was attended by the Queen at St Paul's Cathedral. Amidst much concern at the prospect of protests and disruption the ceremony largely passed peacefully.

Then at the end of the year, the world mourned the loss of former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela who died aged 95 on 5 December after a prolonged illness. World leaders flew to South Africa to pay homage to a man widely revered as a secular saint having spent 27 years in prison during the apartheid regime but who emerged to preach a message of forgiveness and reconciliation that almost single-handedly rescued the nation from civil war.

But did any of these events leave a mark on public attitudes to politics? Did they have an impact on public perception of politicians and Parliament?

3. Public attitudes 18 months before a general election

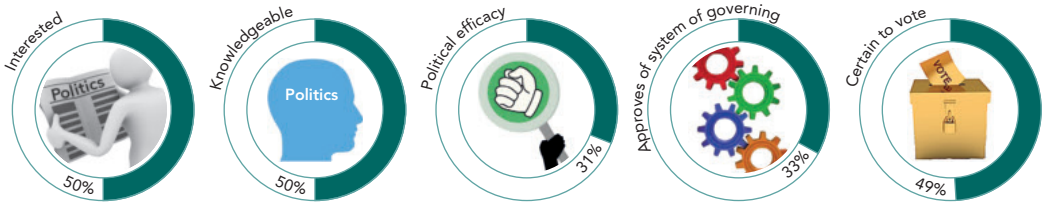
In the last two Audits there was a marked decline in political engagement across the full range of key indicators with many reaching their lowest level in the Audit series. The decline in the public's certainty to vote in the event of an election was particularly stark and worrying.

This year's results suggest a recovery in political engagement in some areas – including propensity to vote – but the pattern is not uniform and in many instances, although there has been a return towards the trend, the results remain low and the trajectory of the trend remains downward.

The fluctuating pattern of engagement

Looking at the key indicators of engagement, three distinct developments are discernible in the results.

Firstly, levels of perceived knowledge – both of politics and Parliament – have increased (although as we know from previous Audits where we have tested it, many people over-estimate their level of actual knowledge). Knowledge of politics now stands at 50%, the third highest level recorded in the Audit series, and higher than the previous 18-month pre-election points in Audits 1 and 6. Similarly, knowledge of Parliament has also increased to 48%, the highest point recorded in the Audit series thus far.



The public's sense of personal political efficacy continues to be stuck in a trough in the low 30s. Just 31% think that if people like themselves get involved in politics 'they really can change the way that the UK is run'. This is the joint lowest score recorded in the Audit series and compared to the position 18 months prior to the two previous general elections it is the same as that in Audit 6 (31%), but somewhat lower than in the first Audit (37%).

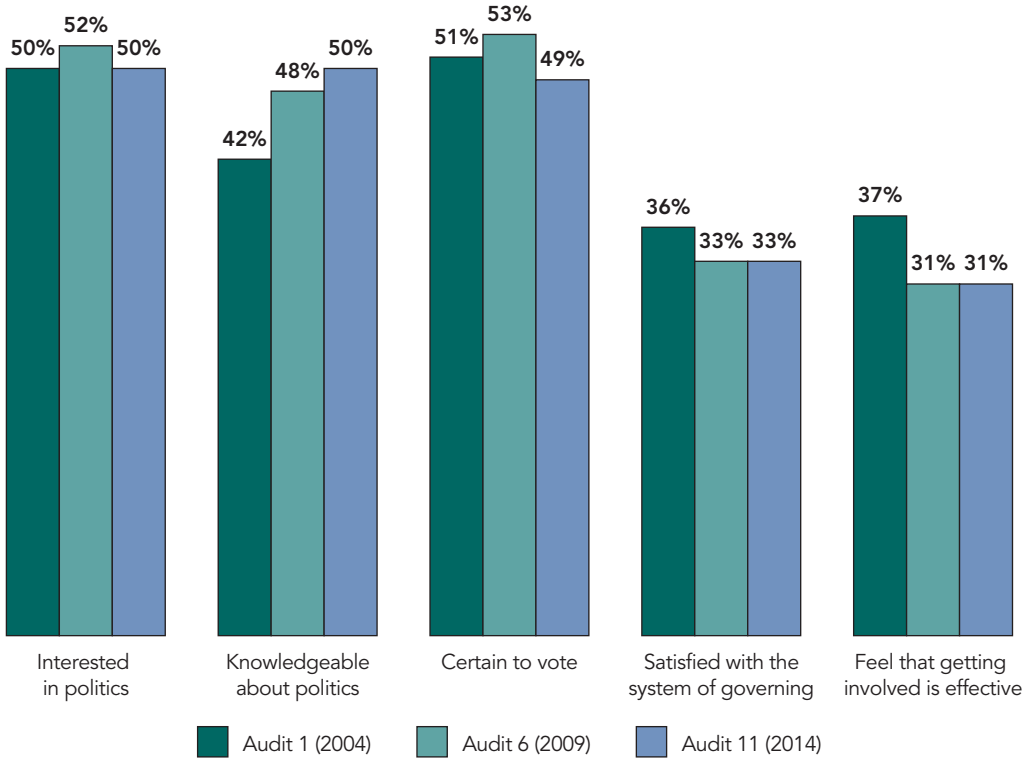
Finally, across the remaining indicators there has been a return to prior engagement trend levels. Interest in politics has returned to 50%, mirroring the interest levels reached at the same 18-month point prior to the 2005 and 2010 general elections. Satisfaction with the system of governing has also returned to trend at 33%, broadly the same as that recorded

at the same pre-election point in Audits 1 and 6. But, although the public's certainty to vote has increased to 49% this is still the third lowest figure recorded in the Audit series, and all three of these low scores have occurred since the 2010 general election.

This increase suggests that the eight percentage point decline in certainty to vote last year was a 'blip'. However the increase this year only restores the level of certainty to that recorded the year before (Audit 9) which itself was 10 percentage points lower than in Audit 8. And the propensity to vote score remains lower than at the same 18-month pre-election points in Audits 1 and 6. So although the public's certainty to vote may not be quite as low as feared last year, it is still low compared to previous years including those at the same point in the pre-election cycle.

It is likely that next year we will see further improvement in this indicator as we get nearer to the general election and actual turnout will of course be higher than the certainty to vote levels recorded in the Audit poll. In advance of the 2005 general election, for example, certainty to vote in Audit 2 stood at 52% and election turnout proved to be 61.3%; and similarly in 2010, certainty to vote in Audit 8 stood at 58% and turnout proved to be 65%. Nonetheless, 18 months away from the election, with voting propensity standing at just 49%, it suggests that turnout may struggle to match 2010 levels next year.

Figure 1: Engagement levels – Audit comparisons at the same point before a general election



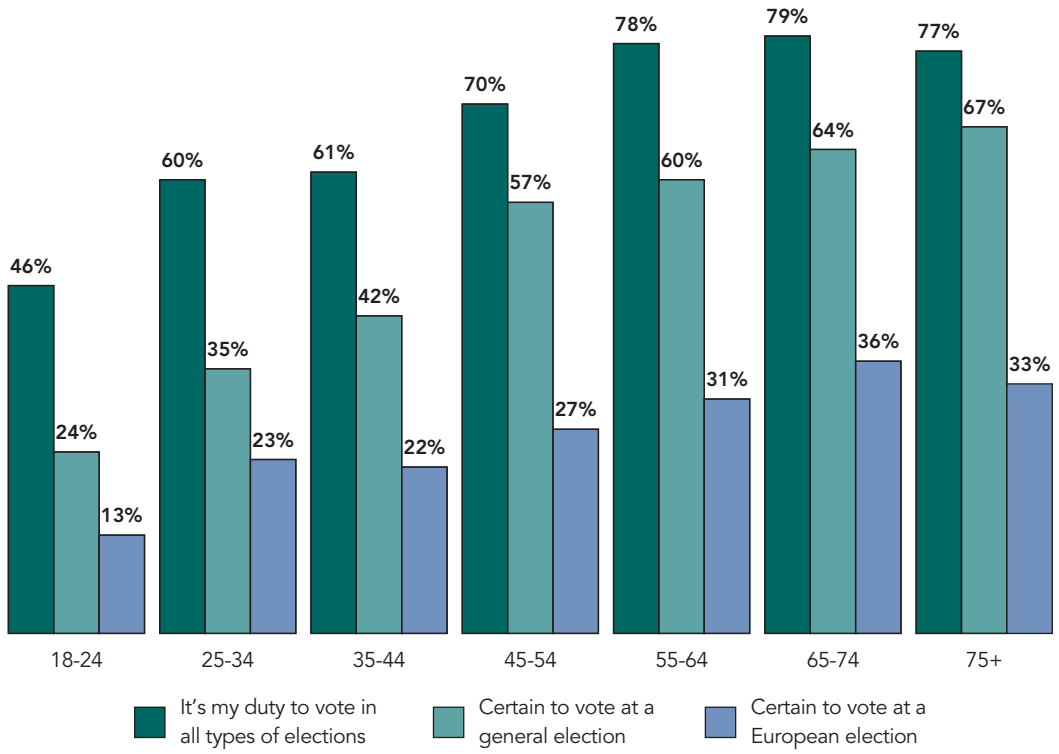
Base: c.1,000-2,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

A 'duty' to vote?

Only half the adult population are certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election (49%), and an even lower proportion, just one quarter (26%), are certain to vote in the forthcoming European elections. When asked what activity they would consider doing to influence decisions, laws or policies if they felt strongly about an issue, just 46% of the public chose 'voting in an election'. And yet, 67% of the public agree that it is their 'duty' to vote in all types of elections.

We have asked about the public's sense of a 'duty' to vote three times previously in the Audit series. Specifically in Audits 1, 4 and 7 we asked to what extent people agreed that 'it is my duty to vote' and around three-quarters of the public responded positively (74%, 78% and 76% respectively). The question was asked in a slightly different way in this latest Audit poll as we were interested in the concept of duty in relation to the full range of elections, including those for the European Parliament. Thus we asked about the extent to which respondents agreed with the statement that 'it's my duty to vote *in all types of elections*'. The results are therefore not directly comparable because of the change in wording.

Figure 2: Duty to vote and certainty to vote at general and European elections



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

Age is an important variable in relation to duty to vote. Seventy-seven percent of over 75s agree that they have a 'duty' to vote in all elections, 67% say they are certain to vote in the event of an immediate election and 33% claim to be certain to vote in the European elections. In contrast, only 46% of 18-24 year olds agree that it is their duty to vote in all types of election, and only 24% of them are certain to vote in the event of an immediate election and 13% in the forthcoming European elections.

In Audit 10 only 12% of 18-24 year olds reported that they were certain to vote. The results in this latest Audit suggests that may have been a temporary blip, with the figure recovering to trend levels this year. However, it is worth noting that certainty to vote levels amongst this age group have otherwise only ever stood at between 22% and 30% in the last decade. So although just one in eight may have been certain to vote in Audit 10, causing considerable consternation and comment among politicians and journalists, the fact that on average across the Audit series only one in four (25%) 18-24 year olds have said they would be certain to vote underlines the need for continuing concern about the health of electoral participation among young people.

Interest is also important. Fifty-two percent of those who express interest in politics strongly agree that it is their 'duty' to vote in all elections, compared to just 19% of those who are not interested in politics that say the same. Unsurprisingly, those who are interested in politics are more likely (38%) to say they are certain to vote in the European election than are those who claim not to be interested (15%). This is despite the fact that two-thirds of those interested in politics (66%) believe that their vote is more important at a general election than a European one compared to just over half of those not interested in politics (55%).

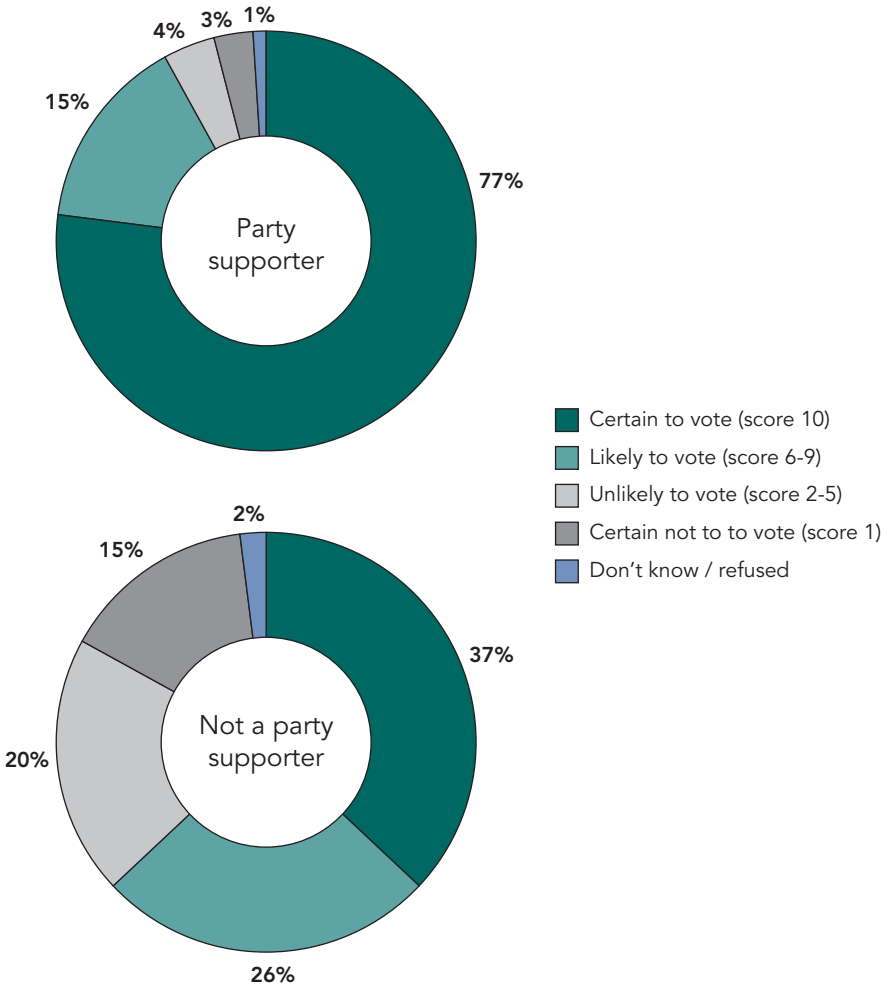
Post-election research by the Electoral Commission regularly finds that a sense of civic duty is the top reason for people's participation in an election.[6] It's therefore possible that focusing on voting as an unambiguously good thing to do, out of a sense of civic duty and responsibility, rather than something that is contingent on an issue or likely to derive a specific benefit might thus be an important component in any effort to promote participation.

The importance of partisanship and interest

Beyond a sense of duty, affinity to a political party is also an important factor in electoral participation levels and political engagement more generally. While 77% of those who say they are a 'very strong' or 'fairly strong' supporter of a political party are certain to vote in an immediate general election, just 37% of those who have only a weak affiliation with a party or none at all say the same. This is also reflected in relation to the European elections where a similar proportion of those who do not support a party say they are certain not to vote.

[6] See, for example, Electoral Commission (2013), 2013 *Local elections, post-polling public opinion research (London: BMG Research).*

Figure 3: Certainty to vote at the general election by party affinity



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

People who say they are a 'very' or 'fairly' strong supporter of a political party are also more likely to feel positive generally about engaging in the political process in some form than are those who do not possess such a partisan affinity. Supporters of a political party are, for example, more likely to feel involved in local (33% compared to 22%) and national decision-making (21% compared to 11%). They are also more likely to want to be involved in making decisions at the local (58% compared to 35%) and national (53% versus 31%) levels.

As one would expect, those who support a political party are much more likely to have actually undertaken a political or civic activity in the last year (62% compared to 42% of non-party supporters) and somewhat more likely to be prepared to undertake such activities in the future if they felt strongly about an issue (86% compared to 77%). They are also much more likely to think that if they get involved in politics they can make a difference; 44% of party supporters think their involvement could be effective, compared to just a quarter of

those who do not identify with a party (24%). Those who express support for a party also have a more positive view of Parliament: 36%, for example, believe it encourages public involvement in politics whereas only 18% of those respondents who do not support a political party say the same.

The hollowing out of political parties is now widely recognised – particularly in terms of their declining memberships – so it is not a surprise that there has been a decline in the number of people who claim a party alignment: just 30% today compared to 37% in Audit 4. And the change is a definitive one away from parties: respondents have shifted to the far end of the spectrum, with one third (33%) declaring themselves 'not a supporter' of a party at all this year, compared to one quarter (24%) in Audit 4. This is particularly evident among 18-24 year olds. Fifty-three percent of them declare that they are not a supporter of any political party, a significantly higher proportion than say the same in any other age group, and more than the 42% who said the same in Audit 4.

If this trend in declining partisanship continues it does not bode well for political engagement generally, and electoral participation levels in particular; and it is likely that the public's sense of powerlessness may similarly continue to decline in tandem.

An on-going sense of powerlessness?

The public's feeling that their own involvement in politics will have little effect on the way the country is run is buttressed by the view that they have very little influence on decision-making: only 26% feel they have at least 'some' influence locally and only 14% nationally.

The desire to actually be involved in decision-making, both locally (43%) and nationally (38%) continues to outpace this personal sense of efficacy and influence although on both measures the results are four percentage points below those seen in the last Audit. And, as in previous years, it is at the local rather than the national scale that people feel they have the greatest potential to make a difference.

Eight in 10 people say they would be prepared to undertake one or more political activities if they felt strongly about an issue and the public's willingness to do so is a little higher this year than previously for most forms of activity, albeit with a continuing preference for those that require the least amount of effort, particularly the dedication of time. Contacting an elected representative is the action that most members of the public (51%) say they would be prepared to do if they felt strongly enough about an issue, even more so than voting (46%). That less than half the public would be motivated to vote despite feeling strongly about something indicates again the potential decline in propensity to vote among the wider public and the increasing extent to which voting is perhaps no longer seen as an efficacious form of political activity.

Despite levels of interest in and knowledge of politics holding up or improving, the public continue to feel relatively powerless in the political process. So too they feel that Parliament, the core institution of our democracy, does not actually encourage their involvement: less than a quarter (23%) agree that it does so, compared to 30% who said the same in previous Audits.

The efficacy and accountability of MPs

An increase in perceived knowledge of Parliament is also not matched by any improvement in its perceived efficacy. Just 34% agree that Parliament holds government to account, and 51% that it debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to the public. If there is greater knowledge and awareness of the work of Parliament, the public appear to be unsure of the impact of this work.

As we have found in successive focus group discussions in recent years, the public by and large see Parliament entirely through the prism of MPs in the House of Commons. The work of Peers in the House of Lords rarely registers on their radar. In our October 2013 focus groups, it was clear that the participants were increasingly aware of the work of select committees but generally believed that what they had seen – the questioning of bankers, Rupert Murdoch, and the BBC – are the exception rather than the norm for Parliament. And whilst they recognised the importance of this work, in the end they believed it had limited impact in terms of bringing about any real change.

So while the public may be more aware of the work of Parliament and generally think it does matter to them, they are yet to be convinced that it makes a real and substantive difference in terms of holding government or others to account. In short, they appear to have doubts about the efficacy of what they see and hear of Parliament.

Where MPs are concerned, the public are also sceptical about their conduct and accountability. After the expenses scandal of 2009, the 2010 general election signalled the winds of change at Westminster with the biggest turnover of new MPs in post-war electoral history. But the public don't appear to have noticed any real difference in the behaviour and conduct of MPs generally as a result. Only 21% think that politicians are behaving in a more professional way than they were a few years ago; two-thirds (67%) of the public think that politicians are out of touch and don't understand the daily lives of people like themselves; and only 45% of the public agree that politicians go into politics because they want to make a positive difference in their community.

Interestingly, those members of the public who express support for a political party have high expectations and are just as likely as those members of the wider public who do not express a partisan preference to think negatively of MPs. Party supporters are just as likely as non-supporters to believe that politicians don't understand their daily lives and to question the motivation of politicians for getting involved in politics. Those who support a political party also feel more strongly than average that politicians should make personal sacrifices if they want to play a role in running the country.

Do the public – including party supporters – expect too much? Recent research by Ipsos MORI suggests the public are at least aware of the high expectations placed on politicians. In a poll conducted in the same week as the Audit in December 2013, four in 10 of the public (41%) agreed that 'we now expect more of politicians than we do of God' and even more, 59%, agreed that we expect more of government than of God.[7]

[7] http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3329/Kings-College-London-Ipsos-MORI-political-leadership-poll.aspx

Current MPs can at least take heart from the fact that 'twas ever thus'. In 1944, at the height of the Second World War, a Gallup poll found that a third (35%) of Britons believed politicians were 'out merely for themselves', another third (36%) that they were seeking 'to do the best for their country', and 22% were in politics merely 'for their party' interest.[8] And the public today do recognise that things are not necessarily worse than they used to be: around six in 10 (62%) agree that politicians in the past were no better than they are today, they just didn't face the same media scrutiny.

Nonetheless, the public's 'anti-politics' mood has been pervasive throughout the Audit series. But this year's results suggest four areas that, if addressed, might help ameliorate, albeit certainly not solve, the problem.

In respect of conduct, an overwhelming majority of the public (86%) believe that MPs should behave in accordance with an agreed set of standards and guidance and three-quarters (75%) think MPs should have to undertake regular ethics and standards training. An ethics and values framework, code of conduct and regular training is a basic requirement in many professional working environments and therefore asking about these issues in the Audit might be construed as a leading question. However, whilst MPs have a Code of Conduct and are supposed to act in accordance with the Seven Principles of Public Life – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership[9] – they are not routinely exposed to ethics and standards training in their workplace. At best, even after the parliamentary expenses scandal, such training is rudimentary and *ad hoc*. In 2010, new MPs were offered a briefing session on 'Parliamentary standards and the registration and declaration of interests', Members were introduced to the Code of Conduct in the Members' Handbook and advice was given about standards issues and procedures. But beyond this there was little guidance on offer and training and development is not made available on an on-going basis. Our research exploring the work of new Members elected for the first time in 2010 shows that at the one-year point only half of them (49%) believed they should be required to undertake some form of continuing professional development (CPD), although of those (56%) who had undertaken CPD in previous jobs, 70% thought that MPs should have access to it.[10] Generally speaking, there is an underlying cultural resistance to such training, including on ethical issues, among MPs, not least for fear that it will leave them open to ridicule by the media for spending public money on training to instil ethical behaviour.

Secondly, it is clear that MPs' conduct at Prime Minister's Questions is a 'cue' for the public's wider perceptions of Parliament and as such Parliament's 'shop window' may be a contributory factor in public disenchantment with the institution. Two-thirds of the public agree that there is too much party political point-scoring, nearly half (47%) agree that it is too noisy and aggressive, and only 16% think that MPs behave professionally at PMQs. A third say it puts them off politics and only 12% agree that it makes them proud of Parliament. Consumption of PMQs may be linked to perceptions: those who report having

[8] George H Gallup (1976), *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain 1937-1975* (New York: Random House), Volume I, p.96.

[9] The Committee on Standards in Public Life is responsible for promoting the Seven Principles of Public Life (often referred to as the Nolan Principles, after Lord Nolan who first set out the principles in 1995), http://www.public-standards.gov.uk.

[10] Hansard Society, *A Year in the Life 2010: From member of public to Member of Parliament*, forthcoming.

seen it in full in the last year are more engaged by it than those who have seen only edited clips, but all share, almost equally, the negative perception of MPs' behaviour. These findings raise challenging questions for both MPs and the media in terms of how PMQs is both conducted and reported in the future.

Finally, the two most popular measures deemed likely to be effective in holding politicians to account and something that the public would be most likely to pay personal attention to are twice yearly Question Time events in each constituency, and enabling the public to recall their MP.

A majority of MPs regularly hold a range of open public meetings on issues of concern, coffee morning style events where they can meet constituents informally, and regular advice surgeries where the public can seek their support and help with problems. However, much of this work goes on below the public's radar. Drawing on the results in this Audit, and the findings of our 2011-12 focus groups across the country, there may be some benefit in introducing a nationwide People's Question Time Day twice a year, at which time all MPs hold a Question Time style event in their constituency on the same day, supported by Parliament. By virtue of all MPs doing it at the same time, under the same branding, it will attract a level of media attention and focus that is simply lacking at the local level when individual MPs undertake such activities on an *ad hoc* basis. London provides a model of what can be done: twice a year, at venues across the city, People's Question Time meetings are held to give Londoners the chance to question the Mayor about his plans and policies for London. These events are popular, widely advertised across the city and are covered by London media.

Finally, the public would like to see the introduction of a right of recall for MPs as promised by all the main political parties following the parliamentary expenses scandal. In 2011 the government published a draft bill and white paper to introduce a right of recall for MPs who have been found guilty of serious wrongdoing but the legislation, despite being included in the coalition's programme for government, has not progressed. It is regularly clear in our focus groups that the public do not feel that they have any means of holding MPs to account effectively between general elections and recall would therefore help address this. Importantly, the right of recall was also a party manifesto promise, and the public set great store in manifesto commitments as a bond of accountability. The continuing failure to make progress with this policy consequently provides further evidence in the public's mind of the extent to which MPs say one thing and do another.

4. The engagement indicators

Two years ago there was a significant drop in the Audit engagement indicators. This was broadly mirrored again in last year's results. Many of the indicators reached the lowest ever point and engagement fell below the median level for all the indicators in the Audit series. The collapse in the public's certainty to vote to just 41% was particularly stark. But, 18 months before a general election, have the mid-term trends of the last two years been confirmed and reinforced, or, the nearer we get to the next election, has there been a recovery in public attitudes?

A. Knowledge and interest

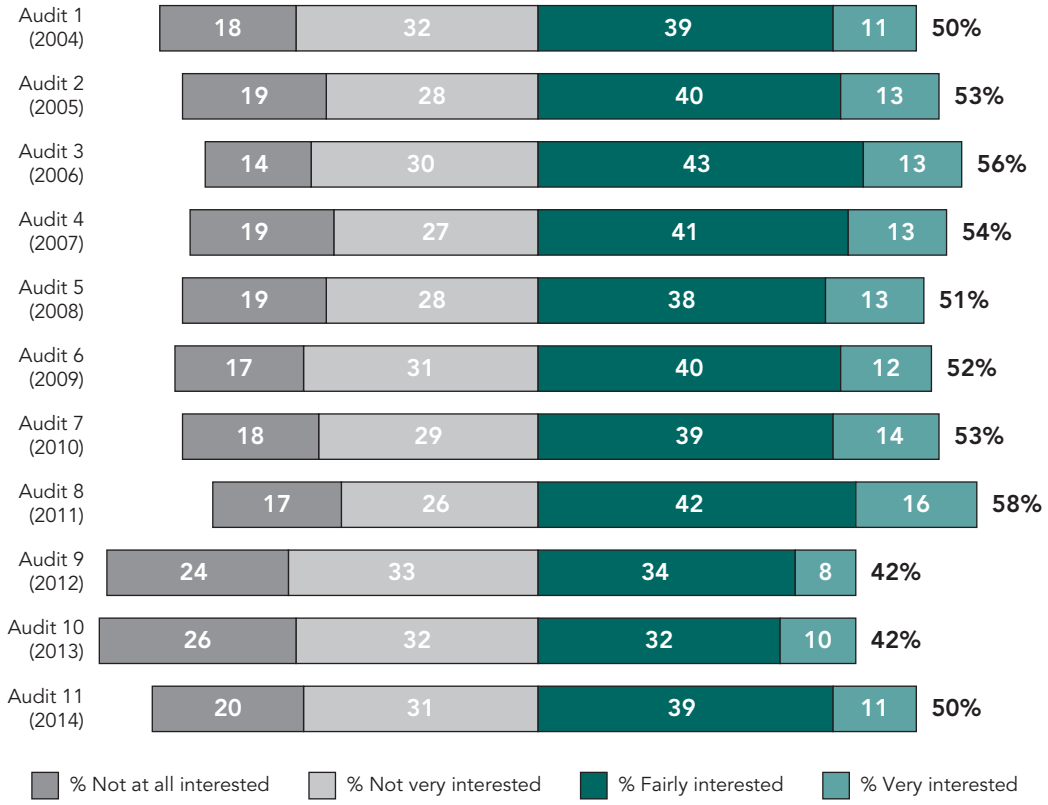
In Audits 9 and 10 the public's reported interest in politics stood at its lowest level in the Audit series with just 42% claiming to be at least 'fairly' interested. Their claimed knowledge of politics had also fallen to the low 40s, reaching a level previously seen at the start of the Audit series. A year on there has been some recovery in the public's attitudes to a point where, at least as far as interest is concerned, it broadly mirrors the 18-month pre-election position in previous Audits.

Interest in politics

The public's reported interest in politics has returned to the 'peace time' average as measured across the decade of the Audit series. Exactly 50% claim that they are 'very' or 'fairly' interested in politics, mirroring the position at a similar point in the electoral cycle in Audit 1 (50%) and Audit 6 (52%). If this pattern continues, we would now expect interest levels to rise in the next two Audits to be published before and after the next election.

Figure 4: Interest in politics

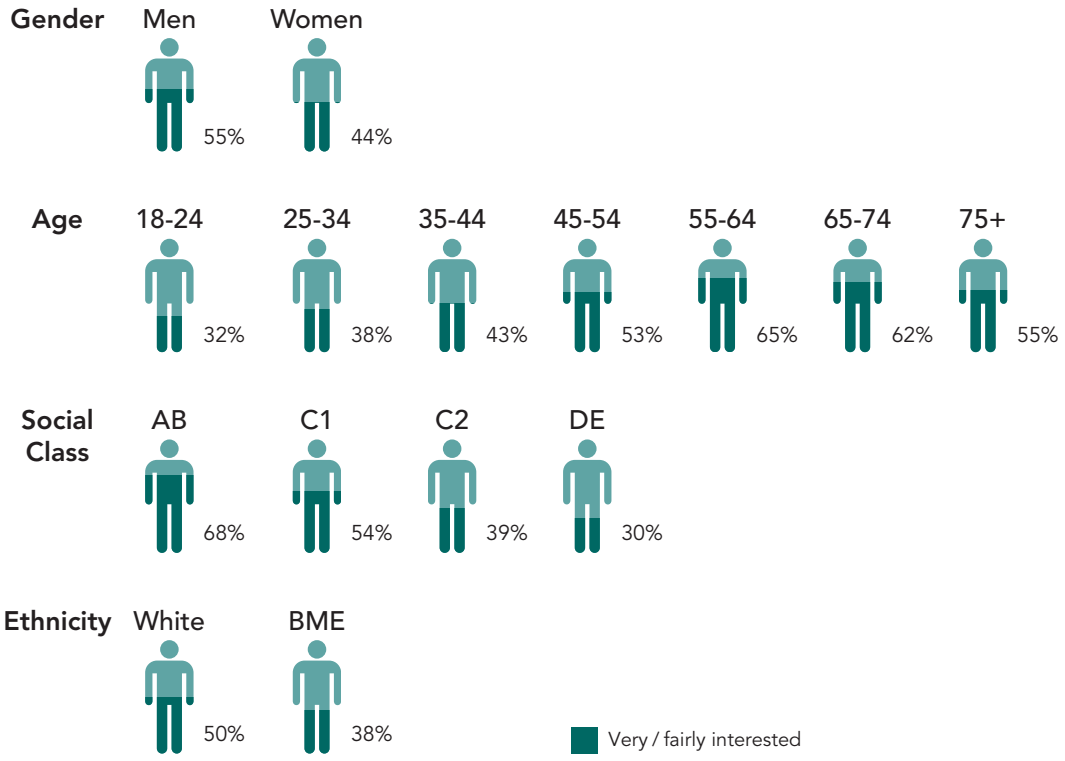
Q How interested would you say you are in politics?



Base: c.1,000-2,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

In the previous two Audits there was a significant decline in interest in politics among 18-24 year olds from 42% in Audit 8 to 36% in Audit 9 and then still further to 24% in Audit 10. Reflecting the national position, interest levels among this age group have increased to 32% but this is still a little below that in Audit 9 and significantly lower than their interest levels in Audit 8.

Figure 5: Interest in politics by demographic group

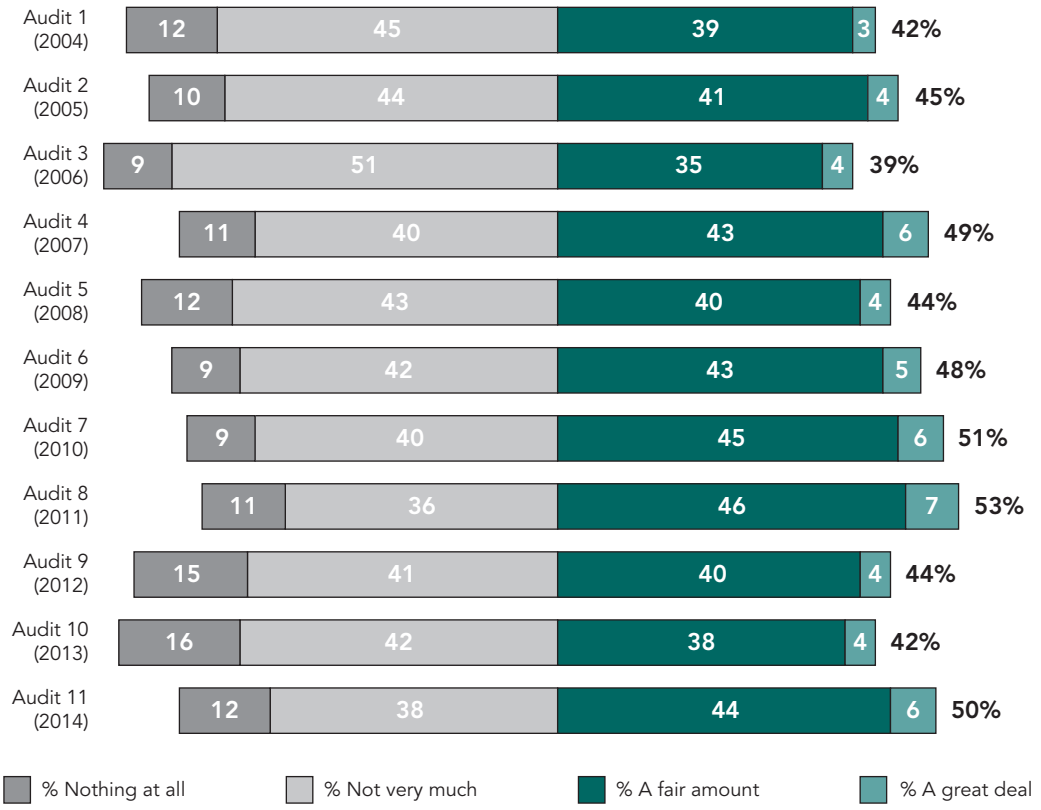


Perceived knowledge of politics

As with interest, the proportion of the public who report knowing either 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' about politics has also risen; from 42% in Audit 10 to 50% in this latest study. It is the third highest level of knowledge recorded in the Audit series, surpassed only marginally in Audit 7 (51%) and Audit 8 (53%). However, whereas interest levels at the point 18 months before a general election have broadly been the same across the Audit lifecycle, this pattern is not reflected in the public's self-reported levels of knowledge. In Audit 1 just 42% of the public claimed to have at least 'a fair amount' of knowledge about politics, and by Audit 6 this had risen to 48%. The overall trend for claimed knowledge across the Audit series is one of gradual improvement.

Figure 6: Perceived knowledge of politics

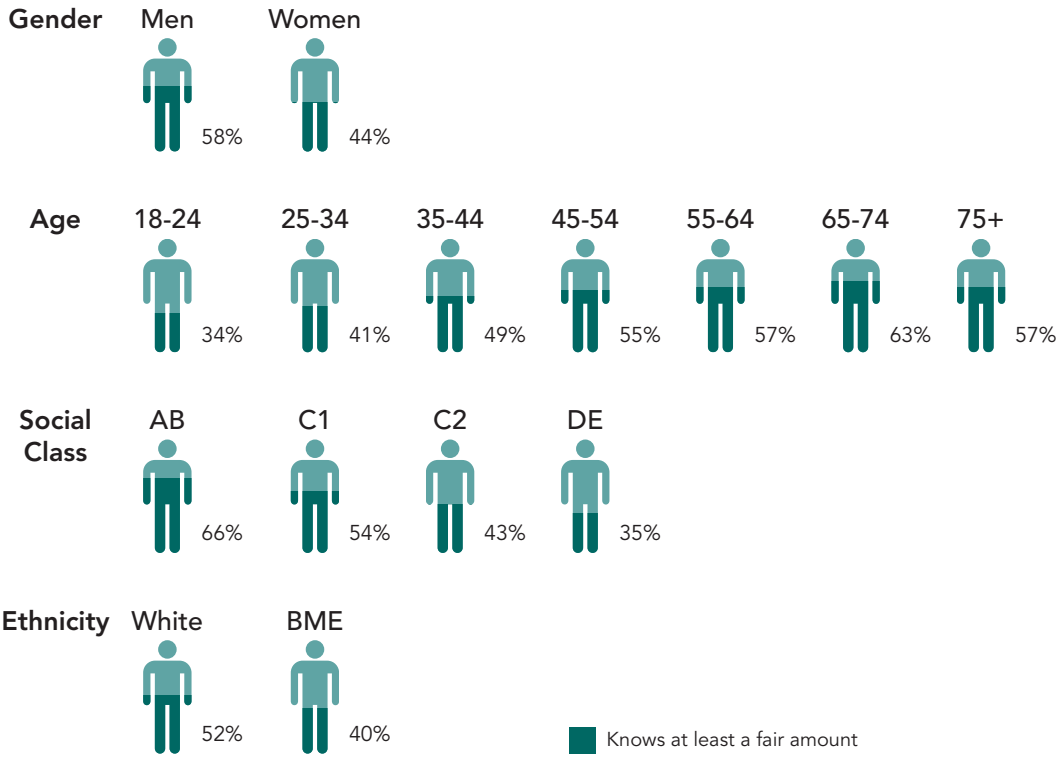
Q How much, if anything, do you feel you know about politics?



Base: c.1,000-2,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

Those aged 18-24 and 25-34 perceive themselves to be more knowledgeable about politics than was the case in the last Audit study, their reported knowledge levels rising by 11 points to 34% and by eight points to 41% respectively. Their knowledge levels now broadly mirror those found between Audits 6 and 9.

Figure 7: Knowledge of politics by demographic group

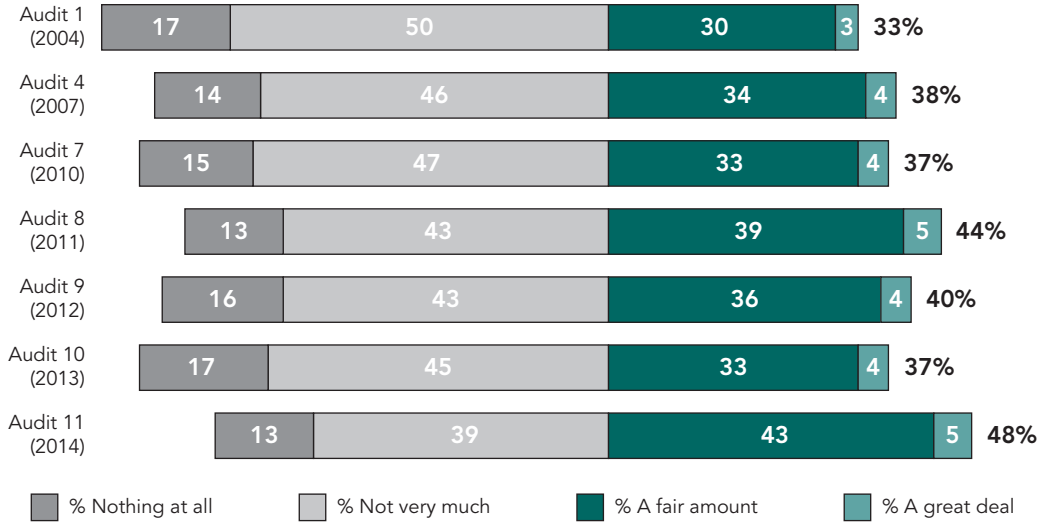


Perceived knowledge of Parliament

Reported knowledge of Parliament is at the highest level ever recorded in the Audit series with 48% claiming to know at least 'a fair amount' about the core institution of our democracy. The public's perceived knowledge of Parliament now stands a full 15 percentage points higher than in Audit 1 and 4 points higher than in Audit 8 which followed the last general election.

Figure 8: Perceived knowledge of Parliament

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

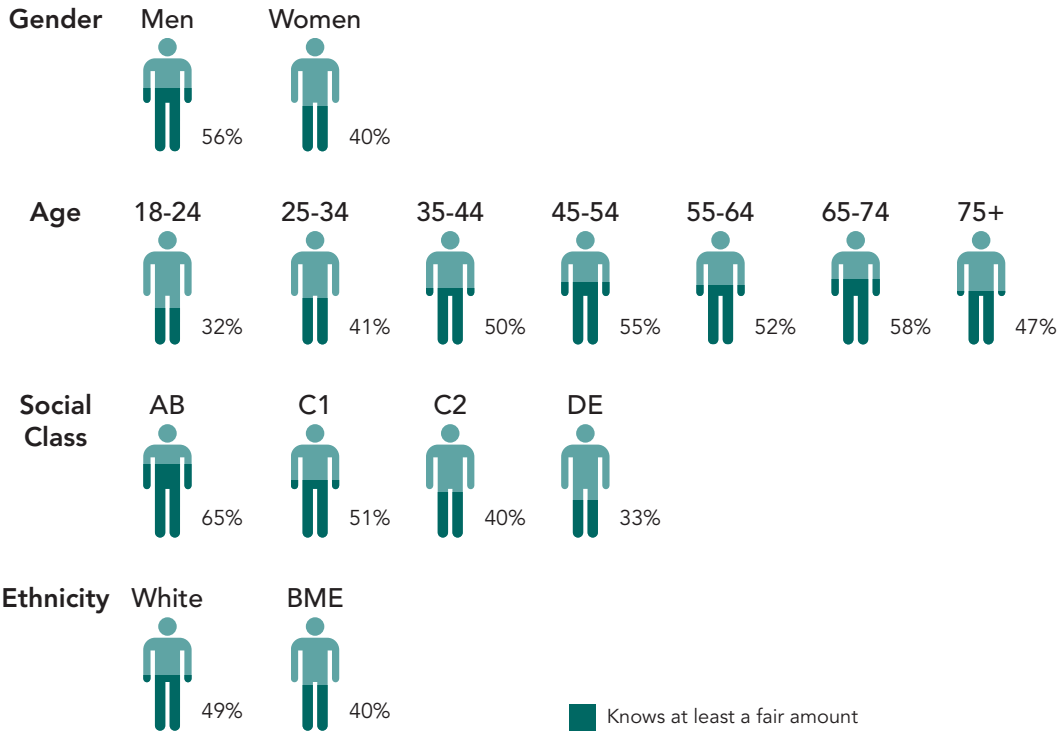


Base: c.1,000-2,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.
** Asked as 'the Westminster Parliament' in Audits 1, 4 and 7. Comparisons with later waves should therefore be seen as indicative.*

This increase in knowledge levels is largely accounted for by an improvement in the perceived knowledge of people in social classes C1 (a rise of 15 percentage points to 51%) and C2 (40% compared to 31% in the last Audit). In contrast, the knowledge levels of ABs (up just one percentage point) and DEs (an increase of five percentage points) have barely changed.

There has also been a recovery in the knowledge levels of the youngest age group (18-24s) from 20% in the last Audit to 32% in this study. This returns their perceived levels of knowledge to the level reported in Audit 9 (31%) and returns to a trend of improvement in knowledge levels from a base of just 17% recorded in Audit 1.

Figure 9: Knowledge of Parliament by demographic group



B. Action and participation

In Audit 10 the public's propensity to vote reached its lowest level in the Audit series with just 41% saying they would be certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election. A year on there has been a modest recovery in public attitudes but certainty to vote levels remain below average for the Audit series. This year's report also looks, for the second year in succession, at the political and civic activities that people claim to have undertaken in the last year, and what, if they felt strongly about an issue, they would be willing to do in the future.

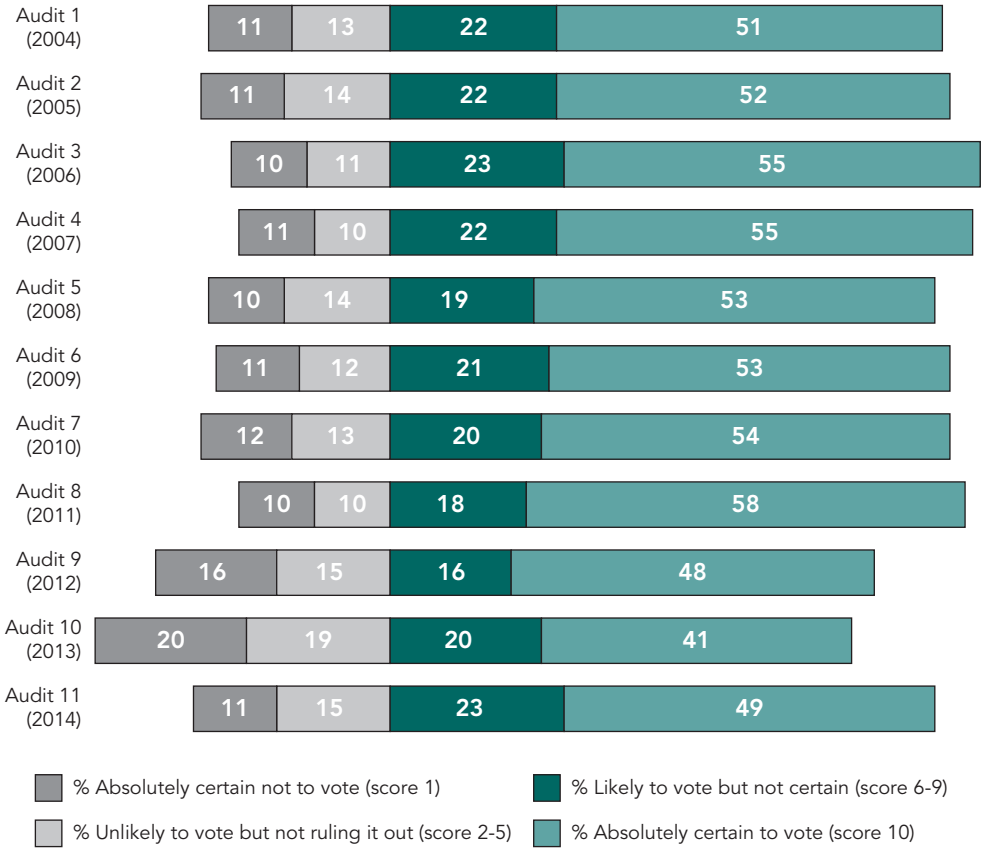
Propensity to vote

Just 49% say they would be certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election, with 11% claiming to be 'absolutely certain not to vote'.

The public's propensity to vote declined significantly in the last two Audit studies. The results in this report recover the ground lost last year but the public remain only as certain to vote as they were in Audit 9 and somewhat less certain to vote than they were in Audits 1-8. This is the third lowest voting figure reported in the Audit series, and the third time in succession that less than 50% of the public have said they are certain to vote. Their voting propensity is two percentage points lower than was the case in Audit 1 and four percentage points lower than in Audit 6 (neither of which is statistically significant), both of which were similarly recorded 18 months before a general election.

Figure 10: Propensity to vote

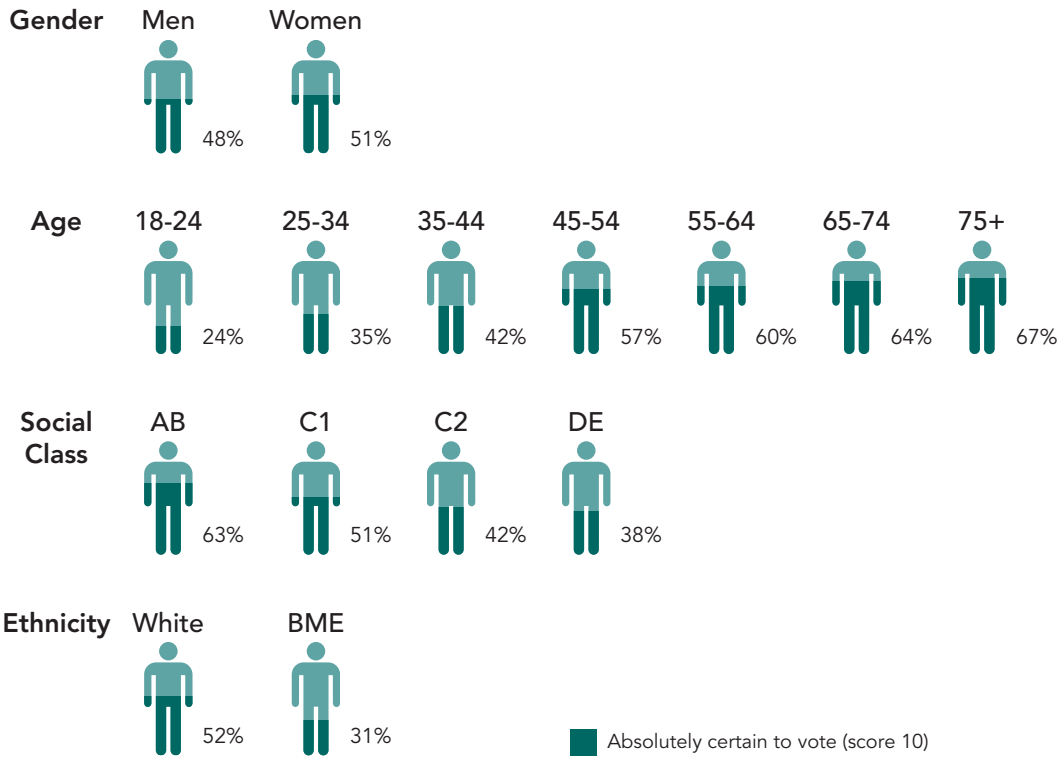
Q How likely would you be to vote in an immediate general election?



Base: c.1,000-2,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

In Audit 10 we reported a worrying decline in the certainty to vote of 18-24 year olds to just 12%. There has been a recovery in their voting propensity to 24% but this still remains below the level recorded in Audit 1 (28%) and puts it just one percentage point above that recorded in Audit 6 (23%) both of which were measured at a similar point in the election cycle.

Figure 11: Certainty to vote by demographic group



Voter registration

Nine out of 10 people (90%) report that they are on the electoral register either where they currently live (86%) or at another address (4%).

BME respondents are less likely (81%) than white respondents (92%) to believe they are on the electoral register. The youngest age groups, particularly 18-24s, are those most likely to say they are not registered or to claim not to know. Only 69% of respondents in this age group say they are registered compared to a national average of 90%. In contrast, respondents aged 45+ all reported registration levels of 96% or above. Tenants in private rental accommodation are less likely to be registered (77%) than those in local authority housing (87%), those in a home with a mortgage (95%) and owner-occupiers (96%). Given that young people (18-34) are those most likely to be in rented accommodation there is a clear association between age, housing tenure and electoral registration levels. Urban status is also relevant: for example, non-registration numbers are higher in London and the West Midlands than elsewhere.

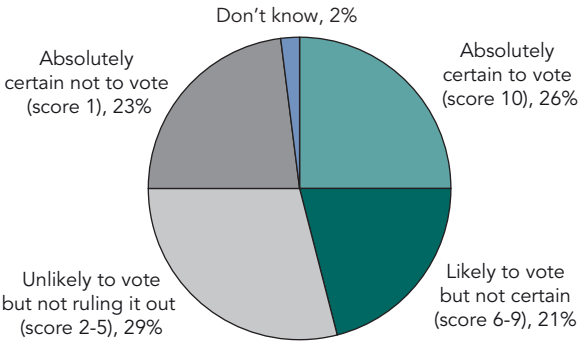
Propensity to vote: the European election

With the European parliamentary election to be held in late May 2014 we examined public attitudes to this important electoral contest. As with the general election we asked about the public's likelihood to vote on the same scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 is certain to vote and 1 is certain not to vote). Six months prior to the European election just 26% said they were

certain to take part; 21% were 'likely to vote'; (6-9 out of 10); 29% were 'likely not to vote' (2-5 out of 10); and 23% were 'absolutely certain not to vote'. The public's certainty to vote in the European elections was almost exactly half that of their certainty to vote in the general election.

Figure 12: Propensity to vote in the European election

Q How likely would you be to vote in an immediate election to the European Parliament?



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

Across all groups, those who are certain to vote in a general election are much less certain to vote in a European election. As Figure 13 illustrates, only 46% of those who are certain to vote in a general election are also certain to vote in the European election; and 12% are absolutely certain they won't vote.

Figure 13: Propensity to vote in a general election vs. certainty to vote in the European election

Q How likely would you be to vote in an immediate general election?

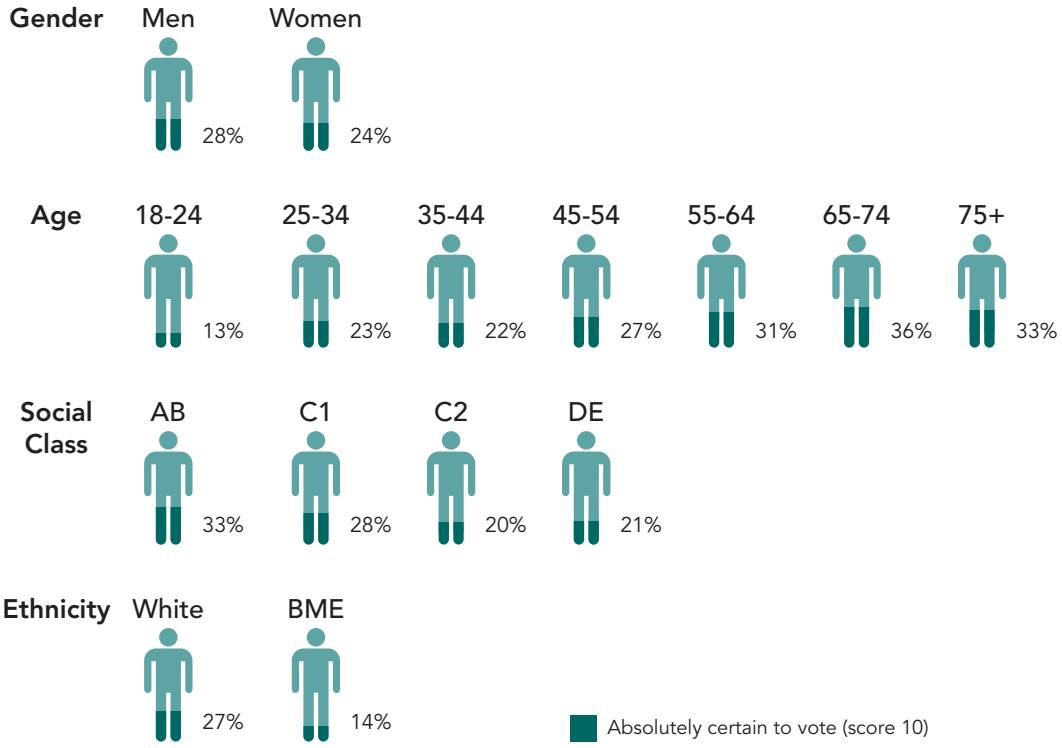
Q How likely would you be to vote in an immediate election to the European Parliament?

		How likely would you be to vote in an immediate general election?			
		Certain (score 10)	Likely (score 6-9)	Not likely (score 2-5)	Certain not to (score 1)
How likely would you be to vote in an immediate election to the European Parliament?	Certain (score 10)	46%	22%	20%	12%
	Likely (score 6-9)	6%	41%	42%	11%
	Not likely (score 2-5)	7%	6%	60%	24%
	Certain not to (score 1)	7%	4%	4%	85%

Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

Those aged 18-24 are much less certain to vote (only 13% say they are certain to do so) than the national average (26%) and markedly less likely to do so than those aged 65-74 (36%) and 75+ (33%). Similarly, those in social classes C2 (20%) and DE (21%) are less certain to vote in the European elections than those in social classes AB (33%). BME voters are also less likely (14%) to take part than white respondents (27%).

Figure 14: Propensity to vote in the European election by demographic group



Differing attitudes to elections

Two-thirds of the public (67%) agree that it is their 'duty to vote in all types of elections' although fewer than half of 18-24 year olds (46%) believe this compared to 79% of those aged 65 and above. Yet only 26% of the public are certain to take part in the European election and 49% in the general election.

Turnout in European elections has always been lower than that for Westminster but what explains this, given that the public have a strong sense of the importance of voting and recognise it as a civic duty?

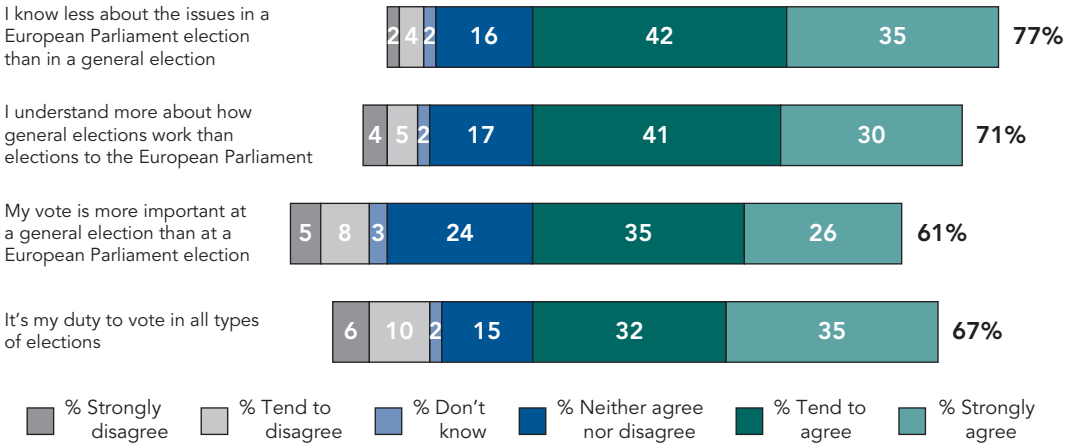
Despite agreeing that it is their 'duty' to vote in all elections, a similar proportion of the electorate (61%) believe their general election vote is simply 'more important' than their European one, although a much higher proportion – 24% – remain undecided and could perhaps be persuaded otherwise. Agreement with this view is particularly strong among older age groups: 73% of over 65s agree compared to 40% of 18-24 year olds.

In previous Audits we have found that Europe is one of the top political issues that people say they have discussed with family and friends.[11] The European Union is also regarded as influential on people's everyday lives, albeit not as influential as much of the political and media debate around the EU might suggest (most people regard it as less influential than the media, local councils, business and the civil service).[12] Despite the prominence of Europe in political discourse, however, most members of the public are, once again, unlikely to vote in the parliamentary elections.

And at the heart of this dichotomy is a serious lack of knowledge and understanding of European election issues and processes, which is particularly pronounced among 18-24 year olds.

Figure 15: Attitudes to different types of election

Q To what extent, if at all, do you disagree with the following statements:



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

In last year's Audit we found that only 56% of the public knew that Britain's MEPs are directly elected every five years. This year, seven in 10 people (71%) agree that they 'understand more about how general elections work than elections to the European Parliament'; a further 17% have no set view either way and only 9% disagree. And just over three-quarters (77%) agree with the statement that 'I know less about the issues in a European Parliament election than a general election', with a further 16% undecided. Only 6% disagree with this reflection on their knowledge levels.

Sense of partisanship

In this Audit we have revisited the public's support for political parties; an issue we last explored in Audit 4.

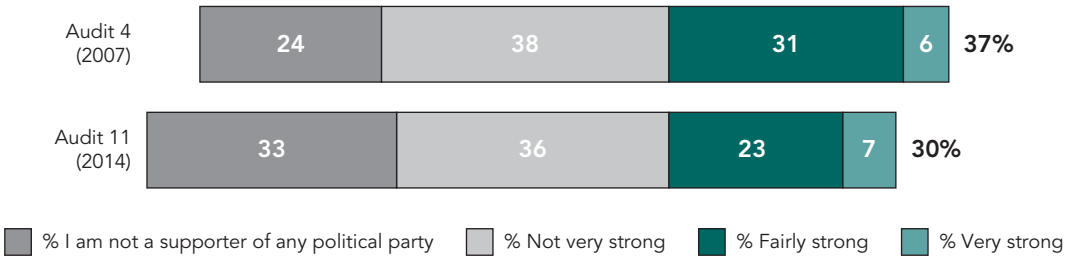
[11] See for example, Hansard Society (2010), *Audit of Political Engagement 7: The 2010 Report* (London: Hansard Society), p.80.

[12] See for example, Hansard Society (2010), *Audit of Political Engagement 7: The 2010 Report* (London: Hansard Society), pp.96-97; and Hansard Society (2011), *Audit of Political Engagement 8: The 2011 Report* (London Hansard Society), pp.89-90.

As Figure 16 illustrates, only three in 10 (30%) consider themselves to be at least 'a fairly strong' supporter of a political party compared to 37% who said the same in Audit 4. The proportion of people saying they are 'very strong' supporters of a political party has barely changed, but a third of people (33%) now declare they are 'not a supporter' of any political party compared to just under a quarter (24%) who said the same in Audit 4.

Figure 16: Sense of partisanship

Q Would you call yourself a very strong, fairly strong, not very strong, or not a supporter at all of any political party?



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

There are few differences by gender, social class and ethnicity on this question. There is, however, evidence of different attitudes by age. Younger respondents are much less likely to claim support for a party than older age groups: just 23% of 18-24s claim to be at least a 'fairly strong' supporter of a party compared to 44% of those aged 75+ who say the same. Conversely, just over half of 18-24 year olds (53%) declare themselves not to be a supporter of any political party but this is a view shared by only 24% of those aged 75+.

As noted earlier, people who say they are either 'very' or 'fairly' strong supporters of a party are much more likely to be certain to vote, more likely to have undertaken any form of political or civic activity and are more positive about and more desiring of involvement in politics, than those who are not supporters of a party.

Of the core indicators, the only area of discernible difference amongst those claiming to support a party today compared to those who said the same in Audit 4 is in relation to perceived knowledge. Seventy-four percent of those who say they support a political party claim to know at least 'a fair amount' about politics today compared to 66% who said the same in Audit 4. There are no statistically significant differences on the other key indicators such as interest in politics, certainty to vote, satisfaction with the system of government and political efficacy between Audit 4 and Audit 11.

Figure 17: Sense of partisanship by demographic group

Demographic	Very/fairly strong %	Not very strong %	Not a supporter %
Men	34%	36%	30%
Women	27%	37%	36%
18-24	23%	24%	53%
25-34	20%	42%	38%
35-44	26%	36%	38%
45-54	28%	42%	29%
55-64	40%	38%	22%
65-74	37%	34%	29%
75+	44%	32%	24%
AB	34%	42%	23%
C1	31%	36%	33%
C2	31%	34%	35%
DE	26%	31%	43%
White	30%	36%	33%
BME	29%	40%	31%

Political activities

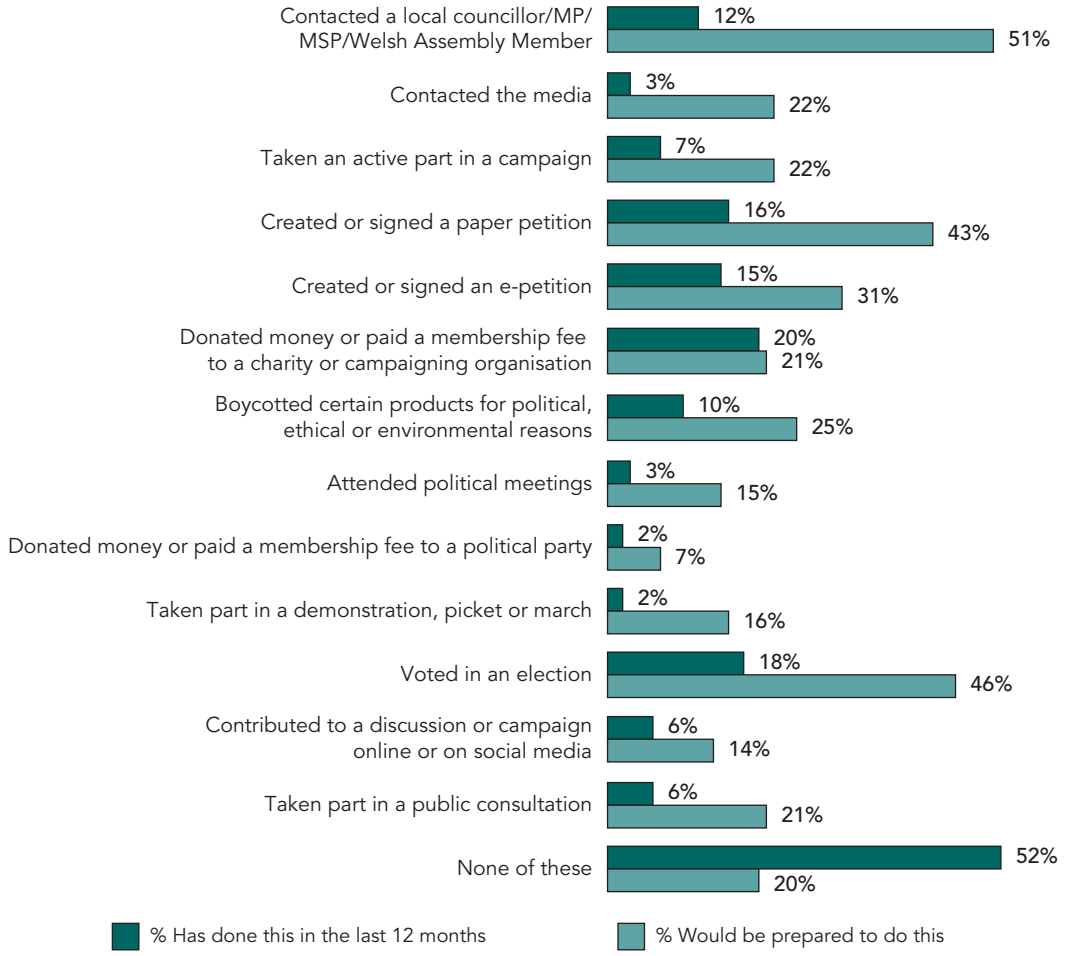
In this study, as last year, we have utilised a range of 13 political and civic activities to test not just what the public have done in the previous 12 months to 'influence decisions, laws or policies', but also what they would be prepared to do in the future if they 'felt strongly enough about an issue'.

Nearly half of the public report having engaged in at least one of the listed activities in the past year. Twenty percent claim they have donated money to a charity or campaigning organisation, while 18% have voted in an election, 16% have created or signed a paper petition, 15% an e-petition, and 12% say they contacted one of their elected representatives. No more than one in 10 have participated in any one of the other eight activities.

Figure 18: Political activities: actual and potential

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

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



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

The public's reported level of voting participation in the previous 12 months is interesting given that we know that more than 18% of the public took part in elections during the course of the year. Either respondents did not recall their vote (not as surprising as it may sound – we found during focus groups in 2012 that many participants who had voted in the referendum on the alternative vote could not actually recall doing so, nor what the issue had been about) or they simply do not equate voting with influencing decisions, laws or policies as implied in the question.

Interestingly, fewer people say they would be prepared to vote if they felt strongly about an issue (46%) than say they are certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election (49%). The public also report being more likely to contact an elected representative (51%) if they felt strongly about an issue than they are likely to vote in an election (46%).

As in Audit 10 the public are more likely to have utilised paper rather than e-petitions, particularly those in social classes C2DE. Petitioning generally is more popular among the middle-aged groups (those aged 45-64) and engages white more so than BME respondents.

Looking at the actions that people have done most often in the last year, three of the top six – paper petitions, e-petitions, and boycotting products – are forms of political protest. Five of the top six involve only a limited time commitment to carry out (the exception being contacting an elected representative). Those forms of action that are likely to require a greater level of engagement – contribute to an online discussion, consultation, or attend a political meeting – all attract a lower level of support.

Figure 19: Political activities: actual and potential by demographic group

Demographic	Has done any of the activities to influence decisions, laws or policies %	Would be prepared to undertake any of the activities if they felt strongly about an issue %
Men	45%	78%
Women	50%	82%
18-24	32%	70%
25-34	38%	69%
35-44	47%	75%
45-54	54%	90%
55-64	56%	89%
65-74	57%	87%
75+	50%	78%
AB	66%	92%
C1	53%	85%
C2	37%	70%
DE	32%	68%
White	49%	81%
BME	39%	69%

C. Efficacy and satisfaction

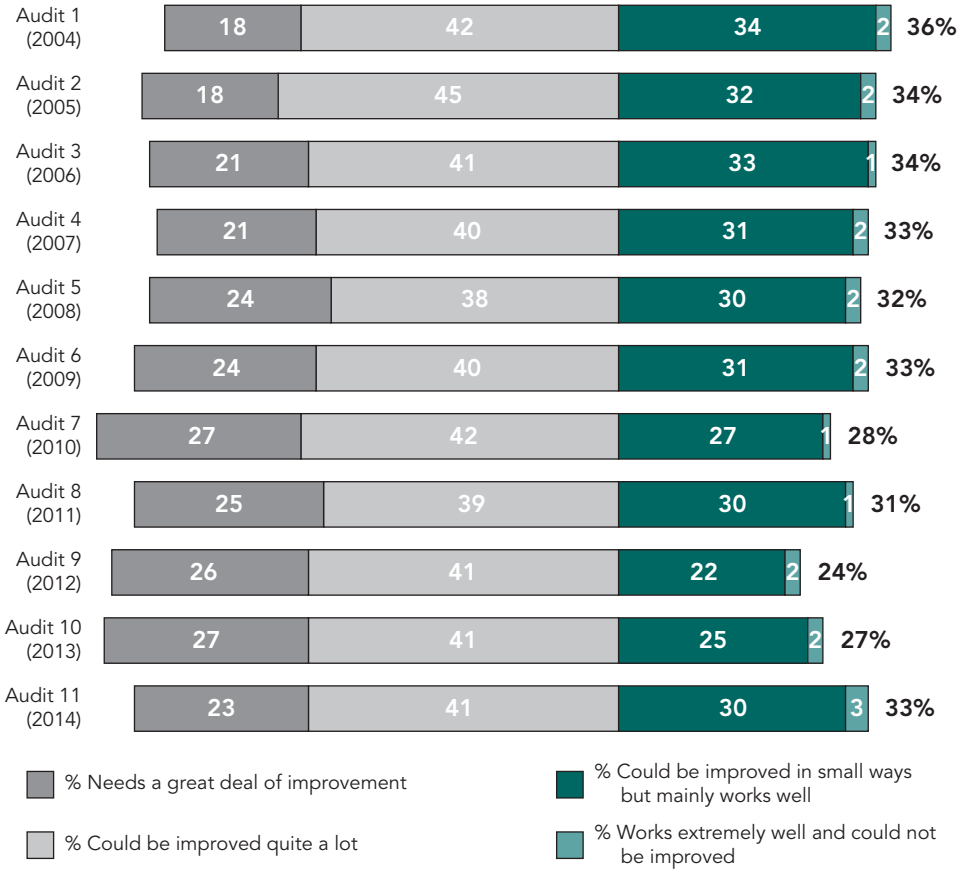
The public are a little more satisfied with the present system of governing this year but marginally fewer people perceive themselves to be able to effect change at the national level. These two indicators are among the most stable across the Audit series and this remains the case this year.

Present system of governing

A third of the public (33%) think that the system of governing in Britain works 'extremely' or 'mainly' well. This is a six-point increase on last year and restores this indicator to its previous trend level in the low 30s. It mirrors the third of the public who were similarly satisfied with the system of government in Audit 6, but is a little lower than the 36% who said the same in Audit 1, both being at the same stage of the pre-election cycle.

Figure 20: Present system of governing

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



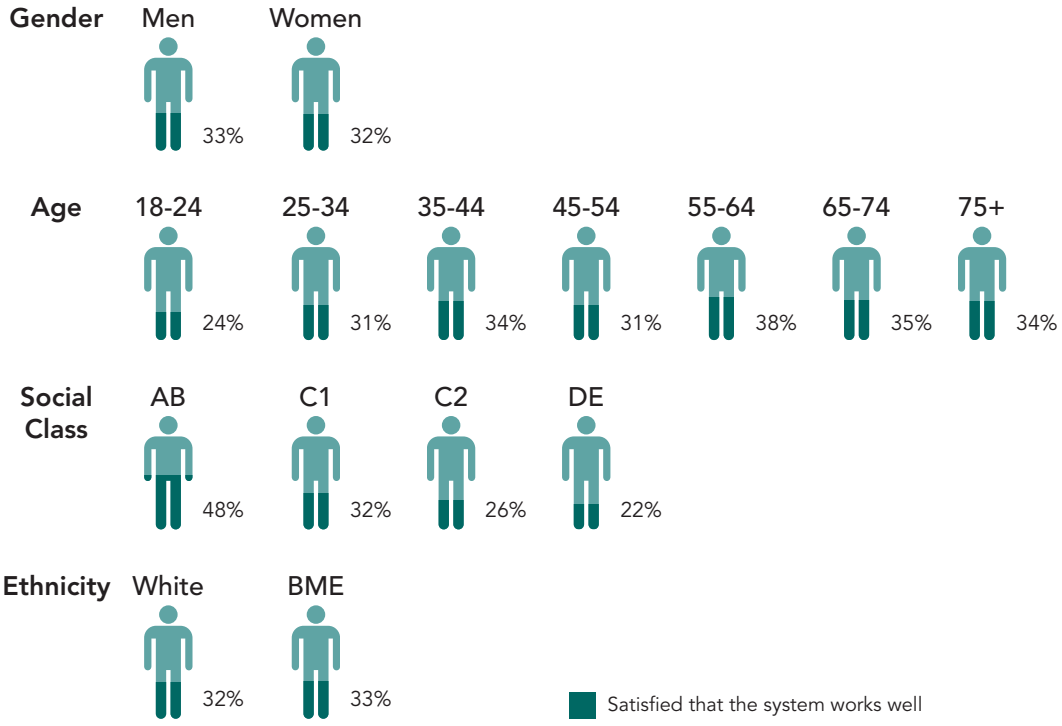
Base: c.1,000-2,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

Unlike previous Audits, the views of men and women about the system of government are almost identical: 33% and 32% respectively think it generally works well, in line with the national average. There has, however, been a notable decline in satisfaction among 18-24 year olds: just 24% report being satisfied compared with 34% in Audit 10. They are, however, more satisfied than they were after the last general election (in Audit 8) when just 18% of this age group agreed with this view.

The differences between the age groups on this question have previously been narrower than those exhibited in relation to other key indicators. This remains the case this year. With the exception of the 18-24s (24%), all the age groups report a satisfaction rate between 31% and 38%.

As one would expect, the higher the social class the more satisfied with the system of governing people are. However, the scale of difference between those in social classes AB and the rest is particularly stark: ABs have a net satisfaction rating of -3%; C1s score -34%; C2s -42%; and DEs have a net satisfaction score of -53%.

Figure 21: Satisfaction with the present system of governing by demographic group



As in previous years, incumbency in government affects the perceptions of those members of the public with a partisan alignment. The base number of Liberal Democrat and UKIP supporters in the Audit poll sample is under 100 so the results should be treated cautiously. But they provide an interesting indicative guide, not least in comparison to those who claim no party allegiance at all.

The most satisfied respondents are those with an allegiance to the coalition parties. Sixty percent of Conservative supporters think the system works at least 'mainly' well, an increase of 16 percentage points since Audit 10. Liberal Democrat supporters are also more satisfied than the national average: 42% of them think the system works at least 'mainly' well compared to 30% who said the same last year. For the first time we are reporting the response of UKIP supporters on this indicator. Thirty-one percent of them say they are satisfied with the governing system. Unlike Conservative and Liberal Democrat supporters, the views of those claiming a Labour allegiance are unchanged since last year (27%). In contrast, those with no party affinity at all are much less satisfied with the system of governing: just 17% claim it works at least 'mainly' well, 73% think it needs improvement and 10% say they do not know.

Perceived political efficacy

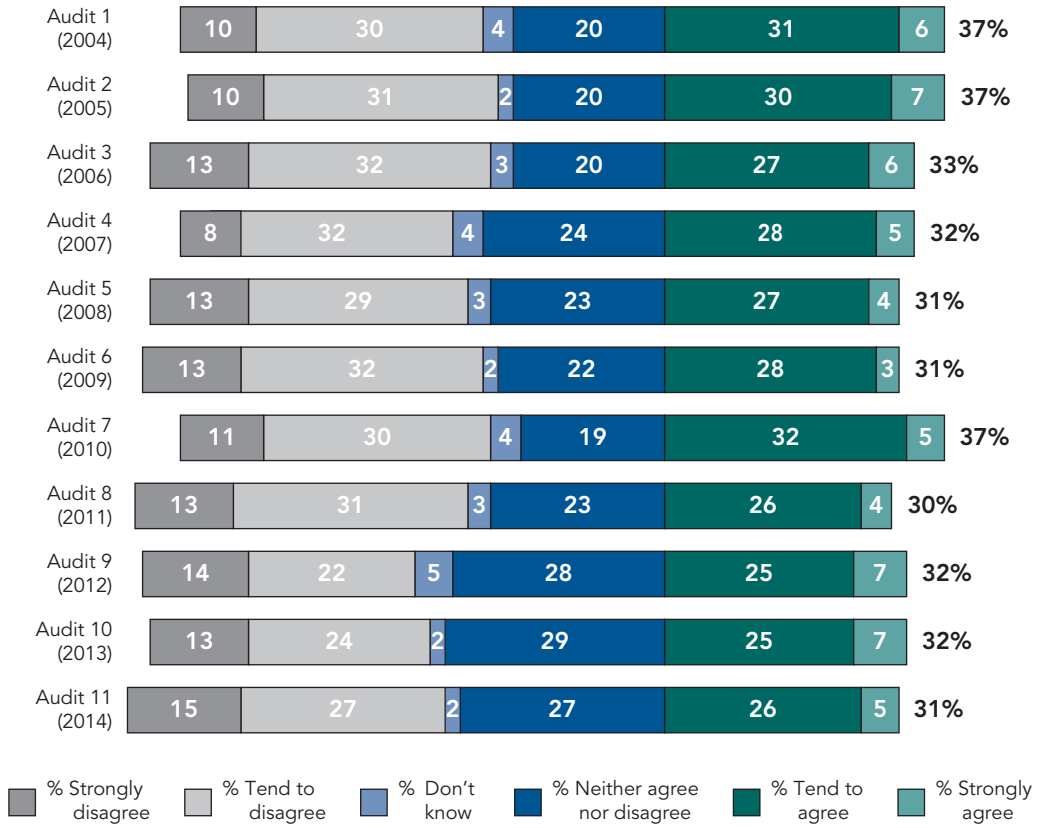
There has been little change in the public's sense of the efficacy of getting involved in politics. Throughout the Audit series this has been the most stable indicator and again, just under a third (31%) of the public agree that 'when people like me get involved in politics, they really can change the way that the UK is run'. This is one point lower than last year. It broadly mirrors the result found in Audit 6 at a similar stage of the election cycle prior to the 2010 general election but is six points lower than in Audit 1 prior to the 2005 election.

This indicator has fluctuated in the low 30s for most of the Audit series, except in the period immediately prior to an election when it has previously reached a high of 37% (Audits 2 and 7). If this trend continues, we would expect this indicator to rise in next year's Audit, immediately prior to the 2015 general election.

Figure 22: Perceived national political efficacy

Q 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.



Base: c.1,000-2,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

As noted in previous years, there are few marked demographic differences in response to this question: age and gender have little impact on attitudes. Those in social classes AB are most likely to feel they can make a difference but only marginally so. In contrast, however, as in previous years, there is a disparity in attitudes between white and BME respondents: 29% of the former agree that getting involved can make a difference in the way the country is run but a higher proportion of BMEs (39%) say the same.

Figure 23: Perceived national political efficacy by demographic group

Demographic	Agree %	Disagree %
Men	31%	43%
Women	30%	39%
18-24	29%	44%
25-34	23%	38%
35-44	29%	38%
45-54	35%	40%
55-64	30%	44%
65-74	30%	45%
75+	36%	43%
AB	35%	37%
C1	30%	42%
C2	27%	44%
DE	30%	43%
White	29%	44%
BME	39%	25%

D. Political involvement locally and nationally

The Audit tracks the public's appetite for involvement in decision-making locally and nationally, and the degree to which they believe that involvement can bring about change. This year, there has been some slippage in the public's desire to actually get involved in decision-making and their sense of influence is either static or slipping depending on the level of involvement that is called upon.

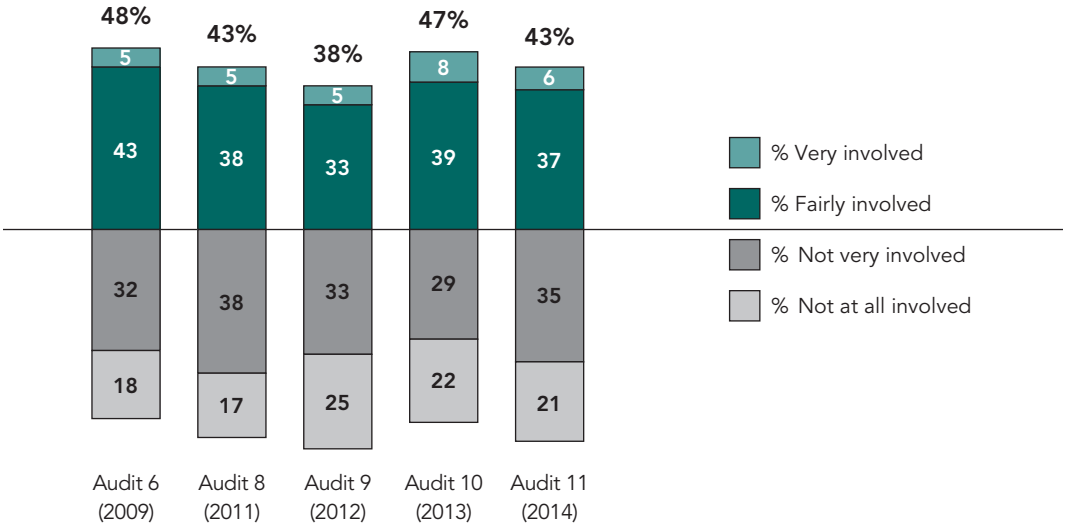
Desire for involvement in local and national decision-making

The public's desire for involvement in decision-making both locally and nationally has dipped a little this year but the decline is not as serious as that seen in Audit 9.

Forty-three percent of the public say they would like to be at least 'fairly involved' in decision-making locally, and 38% say the same about decision-making at the national level. In both cases, the desire for involvement in decision-making is five percentage points below that in Audit 6 at the same stage of the pre-election cycle. And as last year two in 10 people have no desire to be involved in decision-making locally (21%) or nationally (25%) at all.

Figure 24: Desire for involvement locally

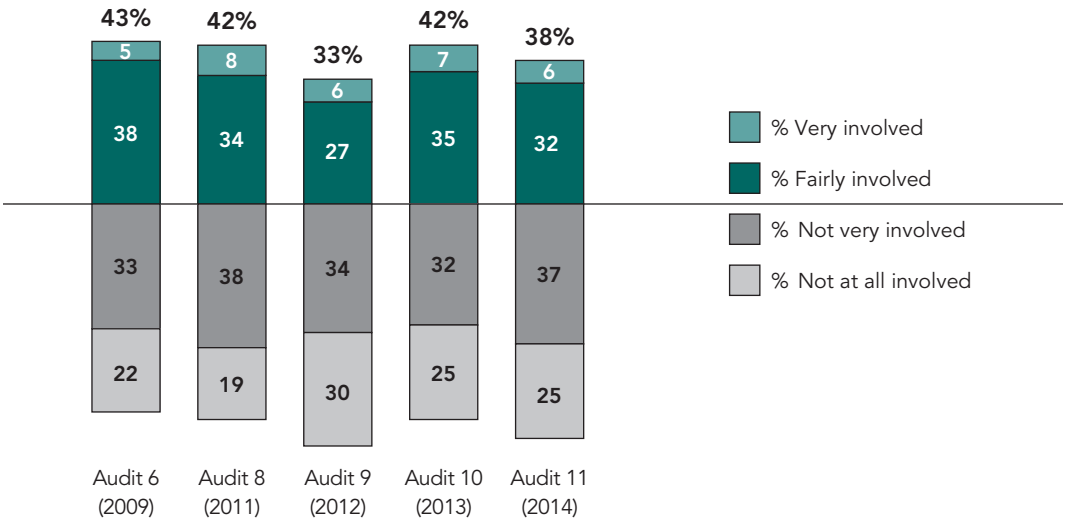
Q To what extent, if at all, would you like to be involved in decision-making in your local area?



Base: c.1,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

Figure 25: Desire for involvement nationally

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



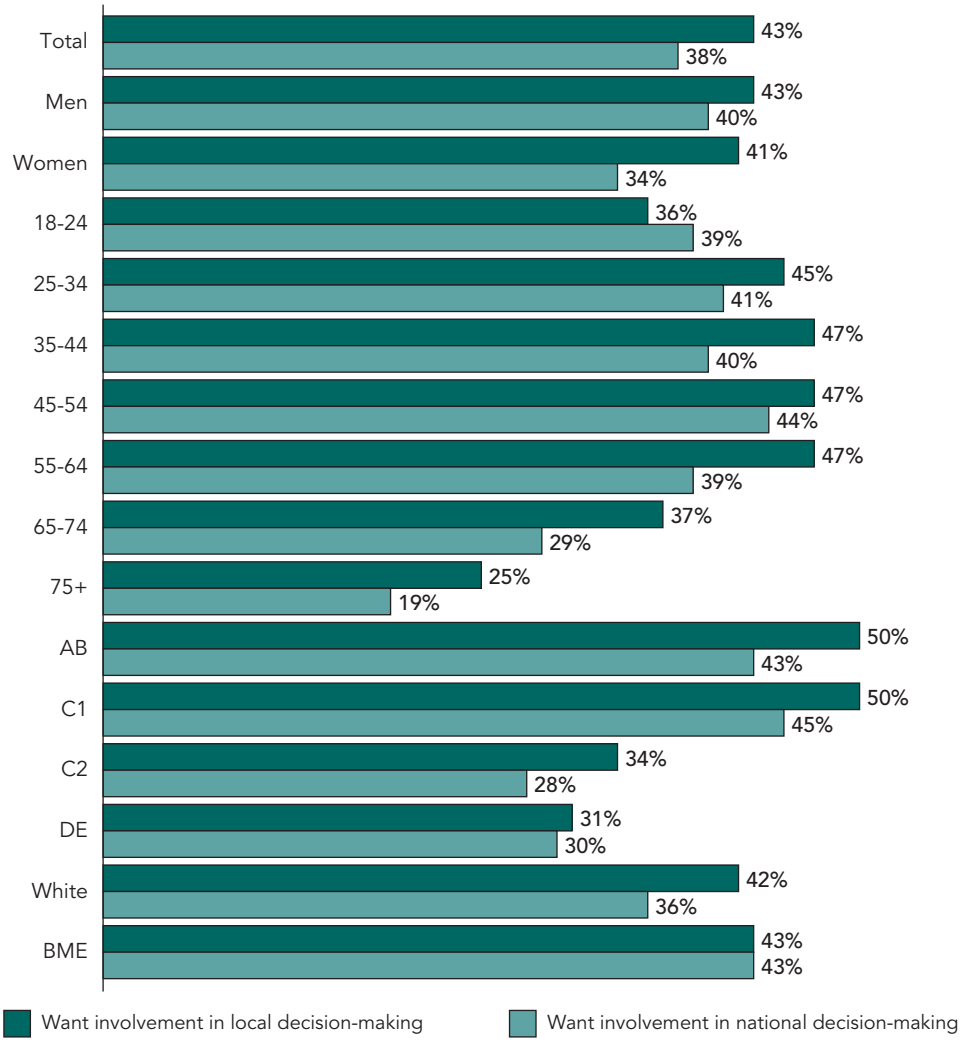
Base: c.1,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

Men are just as likely to desire involvement both locally (43%) and nationally (40%) whereas women have a preference for involvement locally (41%) rather than nationally (34%). As in previous years, those aged between 25 and 64 are more likely to want to be involved in decision-making than the very youngest and oldest age groups.

Those in social classes AB and C1 are much more likely (50%) than C2s (34%) and DEs (31%) to want to be involved in local decision-making, but the gap is less stark when it comes to national decision-making.

There is no difference between white and BME respondents in their attitudes to involvement locally, but there is a seven point gap in their desire to be involved in national decision-making (36% compared to 43% respectively).

Figure 26: Desire for involvement in decision-making locally and nationally by demographic group



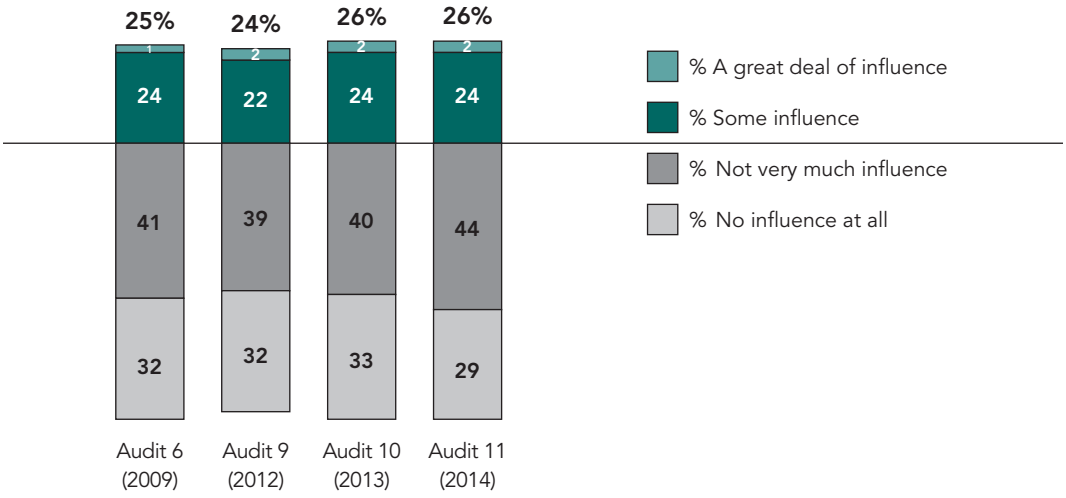
Influence over local and national decision-making

Perceived influence over decision-making, both locally and nationally, has been broadly stable in the last three years and the picture remains the same this year. As last year, a quarter of the public (26%) say they feel they have at least some influence over local decisions. The public's perception of influence over national decision-making has declined but only marginally: 14% of the public now feel influential, compared to 16% who said the same last year. However, as Figures 27 and 28 illustrate, the results are consistent with those recorded in Audit 6 at the same stage of the pre-election cycle.

There are, however, some marked differences at a regional level in terms of people's perceived influence over decision-making in the country as a whole. Those in the south of the country feel significantly more influential than those in the north. Twenty-two percent of Londoners and 19% of those in the South-East feel they have some influence over national decision-making, compared to just 6% of those in both Yorkshire and Humber and the North-East who say the same.

Figure 27: Influence over local decision-making

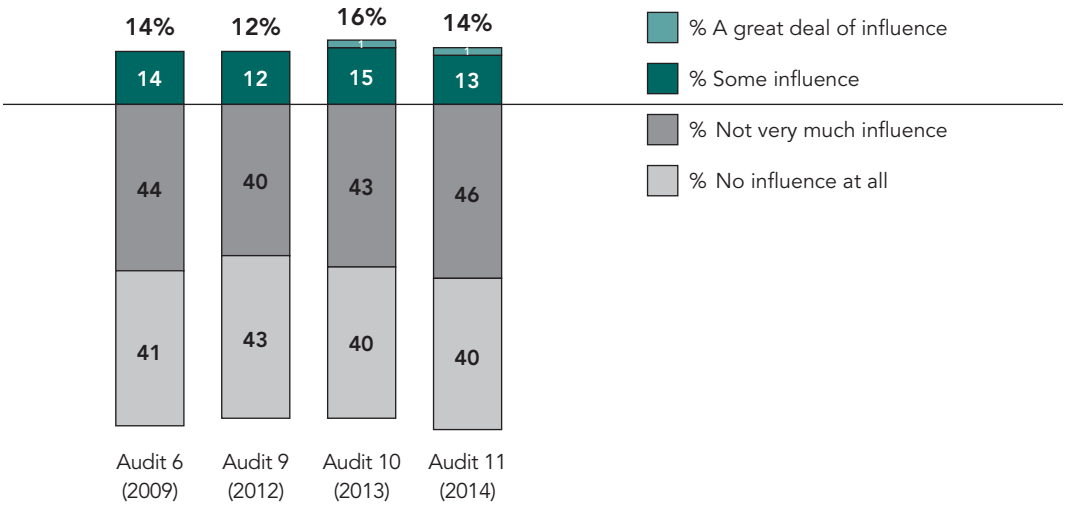
Q How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in your local area?



Base: c.1,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

Figure 28: Influence over national decision-making

Q How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in the country as a whole?

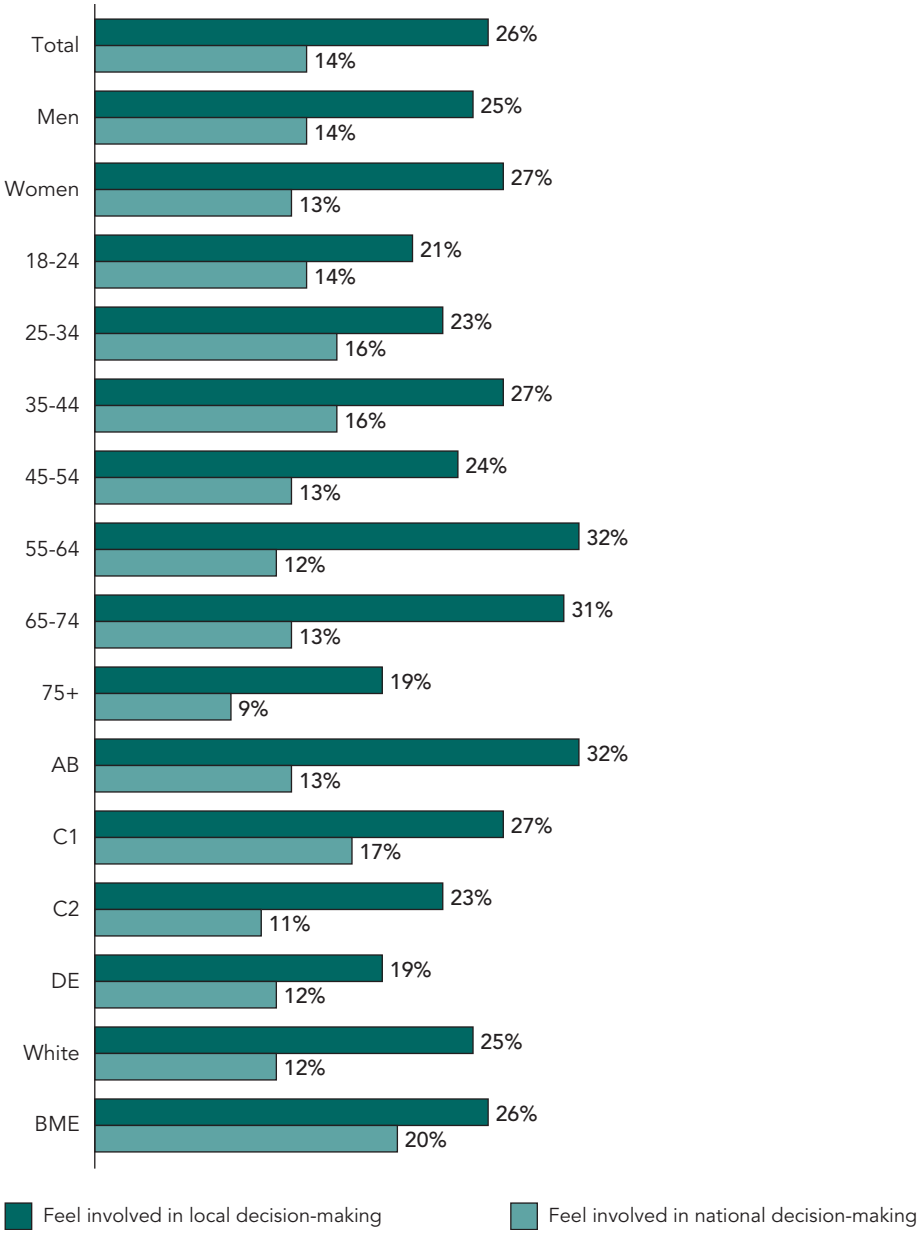


Base: c.1,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

There is very little difference between the age groups in terms of the extent to which they feel influential on national decision-making. However, there is a marked disparity in terms of influence at the local level: those aged 55-74 are much more likely to feel they have some influence on decision-making (31%) than the younger age groups: only 21% of 18-24s and 23% of 25-34s feel influential locally.

White and BME respondents feel equally influential in terms of local decision-making, but BMEs are more likely (20% compared to 12%) to feel involved in national decision-making.

Figure 29: Influence over decision-making locally and nationally by demographic group



5. Perceptions of Parliament

This year's Audit is marked by a modest decline in the perceived effectiveness of Parliament in performing its accountability function and in addressing the issues that matter to the public. And once again, although the public recognise the importance of Parliament in our democracy, they do not perceive it to be a body that engages with the citizens it purports to serve. Our focus group research regularly shows the behaviour and conduct of MPs is treated with considerable disdain and the motivation of MPs is perceived to be questionable. Nonetheless, as these Audit results show, the public have high expectations of MPs individually and as a collective body.

The importance and relevance of Parliament

Two-thirds of the public consistently agree that Parliament 'is essential to our democracy'. The public's view of the importance of Parliament remains stable seemingly regardless of circumstances.[13] However, this year's results suggest that beyond this the public's attitudes to the work of Parliament are much more prone to change.

The biggest fluctuation this year is discerned in the fewer people who agree that Parliament 'holds government to account'. Just 34% agree, the lowest level ever in the five years this question has been asked in the Audit series; that's 13 percentage points lower than Audit 10, four points lower than Audit 9, and six points lower than when the question was first asked in Audit 7.

Just over half (51%) agree that Parliament 'debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me'. As we have found in successive focus group discussions in recent years, the public are increasingly aware of the work of select committees but generally believe what they have seen – the questioning of bankers, Rupert Murdoch, and the BBC – are the exception rather than the norm for Parliament and that important though this work may be, in the end it has limited impact in terms of bringing about any real change. This may therefore explain the responses to these questions: the public are more aware of this kind of work, generally think it does matter to them, but are yet to be convinced that it makes a real and substantive difference in terms of holding government or others to account. As elsewhere in the Audit, the public have doubts about the efficacy of what they see and hear of Parliament.

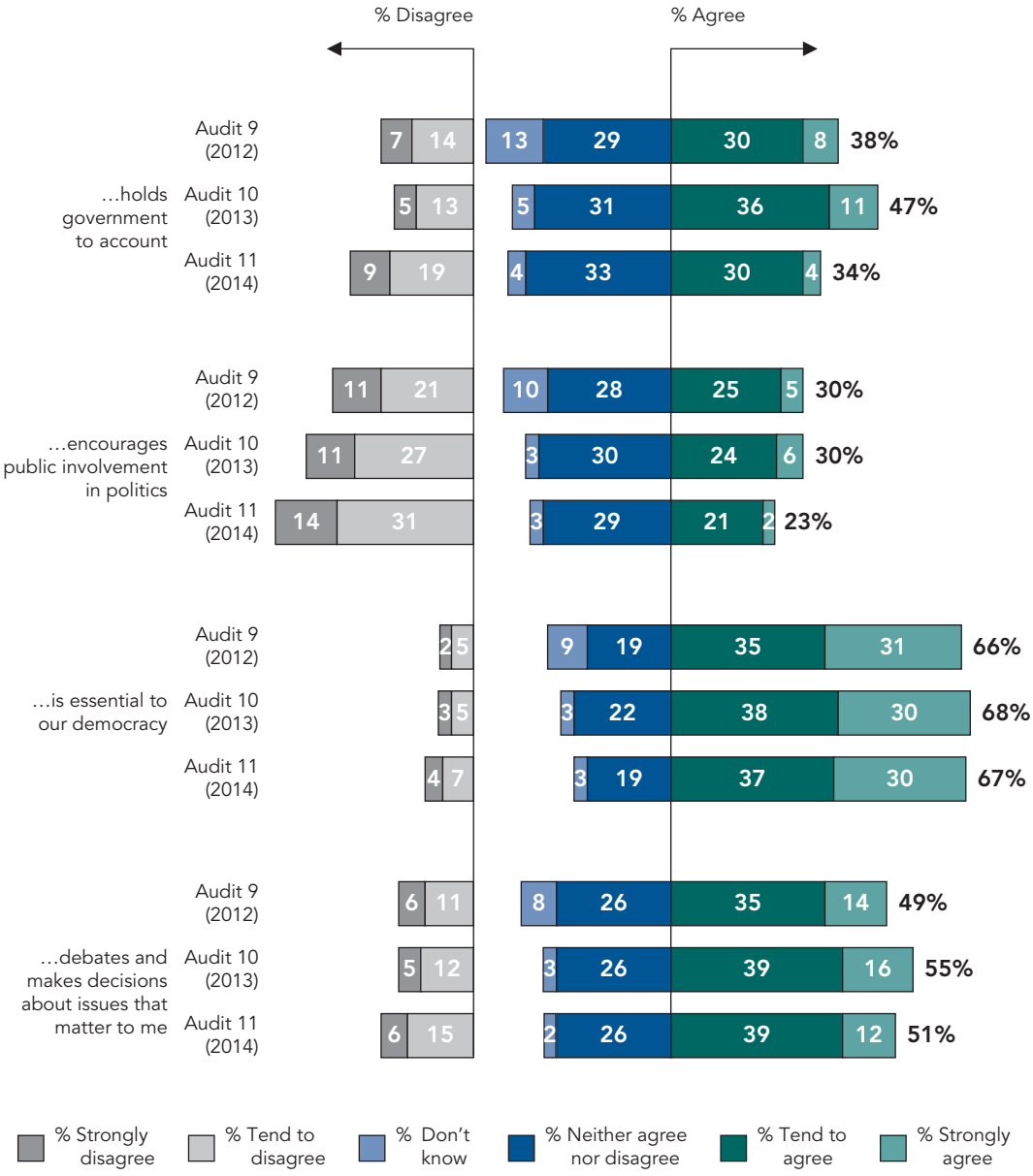
Respondents do not tend to agree that Parliament 'encourages public involvement in politics'. Less than a quarter agree (23%) compared to 30% in the previous two Audits. In

[13] Comparative research has found that across Europe dissatisfaction with political bodies does not translate into wholesale dissatisfaction with democracy. See Committee on Standards in Public Life (2014), *Public perceptions of standards in public life in the UK and Europe* (London: CSPL), p.23.

contrast, the number of people who disagree has increased from 32% in Audit 9 to 38% in Audit 10 to nearly half (45%) in this latest study. The number who 'neither agree nor disagree' has barely changed in the last three years; but there has been a clear shift from those answering 'don't know' into the disagree column.

Figure 30: Perceptions of Parliament

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that the UK Parliament…?



Base: c.1,000 GB adults 18+. See Appendix B.

The demographic differences on these questions lay bare a clear difference of view by age. Younger respondents – those aged 18-24 and to a lesser extent those aged 25-34 – are much less likely to think that Parliament is 'essential to democracy' than older respondents (just 50% and 55% respectively of these age groups agree compared to between 73% and 77% of those in the age groups aged 45 and above). The younger age groups are also less likely to think that Parliament 'holds government to account' and 'debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me' than their older peers. However, they are just as likely as older respondents to disagree that Parliament encourages public involvement in politics.

Similar patterns are mirrored in relation to social class. Respondents in the DE groups are much less likely (49%) to think that Parliament is 'essential to democracy' than those in social classes AB (82%). DEs are also markedly less likely to agree that the work of Parliament – its debates and decisions – matter to them (34%) compared to 69% of ABs who say the same. The margin of difference on the question of whether Parliament holds government to account is much smaller (28% of DEs agree compared to 44% of ABs). However, as with age, so on social class: most people, regardless of their background, do not agree that Parliament 'encourages public involvement in politics'. On this question, C1s are marginally more positive than other groups – 27% agree that it 'encourages public involvement'; and DEs are marginally more positive (23%) than ABs (19%).

Only just over half of BME respondents (53%) agree that Parliament 'is essential to democracy' compared to 69% of white respondents. They are also less likely to think that Parliament 'debates and makes decisions about issues that matter' to them (39%) than are white respondents (53%). Conversely, however, they are more likely (41%) than white respondents (34%) to agree that Parliament 'holds government to account'. And interestingly they are much more likely (36%) than white respondents (21%) to think that Parliament 'encourages public involvement in politics'. This mirrors other findings elsewhere in the Audit – both this year and in previous studies – that BME respondents are likely to feel more positively about the opportunities for engagement and their own sense of personal efficacy with the political process – but are much less likely to actually get involved. This may, in part, be the result of a perceived knowledge gap: only 40% of BMEs claim to be knowledgeable about Parliament compared to 49% of white respondents who claim the same.

Figure 31: Perceptions of Parliament by demographic group

Demographic	To what extent do you agree or disagree that the UK Parliament…			
	…holds government to account	…encourages public involvement in politics	…is essential to our democracy	…debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me
	% agree	% agree	% agree	% agree
Men	39%	24%	70%	54%
Women	30%	22%	64%	47%
18-24	20%	20%	50%	36%
25-34	31%	28%	55%	40%
35-44	45%	21%	67%	54%
45-54	34%	23%	74%	57%
55-64	35%	19%	77%	60%
65-74	38%	28%	75%	53%
75+	35%	20%	73%	53%
AB	44%	19%	82%	69%
C1	36%	27%	72%	55%
C2	27%	22%	61%	40%
DE	28%	23%	49%	34%
White	34%	21%	69%	53%
BME	41%	36%	53%	39%

Overall, Parliament has a net positive score for being 'essential to our democracy' (+56%) and for debating and making decisions about issues that matter to the public (+30%). It also has a net positive rating for 'holding government to account' but at a much lower level (+6%). However, it has a net negative score (-22%) for encouraging public involvement in politics.

Prime Minister's Questions

Prime Minister's Questions is one of, if not *the* most high profile aspect of Parliament's work. It is Westminster's 'shop window' because it is the most televisual of all parliamentary proceedings and is consequently better known than almost any other element of Parliament's work.[14] Yet very little is known about public attitudes towards it.

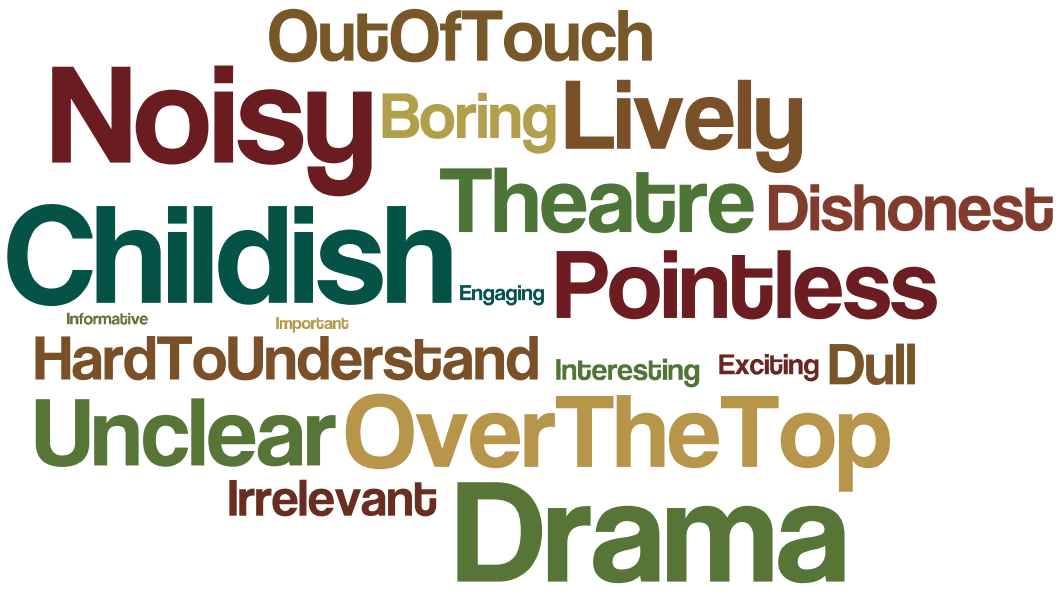
[14] It is widely accepted that PMQs is the most visible aspect of Parliament and that more people see or hear PMQs on TV and radio than they do any other element of parliamentary activity. But accurate viewing and listening figures are hard to come by. PMQs is shown live on BBC 2's Daily Politics show with a reputed audience of 350,000 people, significantly above viewing figures for the show on any other day of the week. It is also broadcast live on BBC Radio 5 Live, shown live on BBC Parliament and the BBC's 24 hour news channel, and clips from the session are often the headline story in the day's news bulletins. Parliament also streams the sessions live on www.parliamentlive.tv and makes them available afterwards via its You Tube channel. But this array of outlets means the total audience is difficult to quantify.

Between November 2011 and March 2013 we conducted 14 focus groups across the country, talking to 153 members of the public about their perceptions of the political system and what they would most like to change in order to improve it. In half of these groups participants raised, unprompted, their concerns about Prime Minister's Questions. Frequently the analogy of the school child or the theatre was raised. MPs were dismissed in scathing terms as behaving immaturely and childishly, as if they were in a 'big noisy classroom' or a 'comedy show'. For many of the participants the 'futile arguments', 'silly debate', 'point-scoring' and 'failure to answer a straight question' was 'unbearable'.

> 'They do argue like children. I mean can you imagine any other sphere of adult life where one would act with so little respect?'

To explore these specific issues in more depth, we conducted four online focus groups in partnership with YouGov in October 2013, particularly focusing on those groups highlighted in the Audit series as more likely to be disengaged: younger citizens aged 18-34, female voters in the lower socio-economic groups (C2DEs) aged 35 plus; and non-voters at the 2010 general election. During the discussions, each of the groups was shown several clips of PMQ sessions. The findings are set out in detail in our report, '*Tuned in or Turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions*', but the word cloud below provides a snapshot of the participants' responses across all four groups.

Figure 32: Words most commonly associated with Prime Minister's Questions

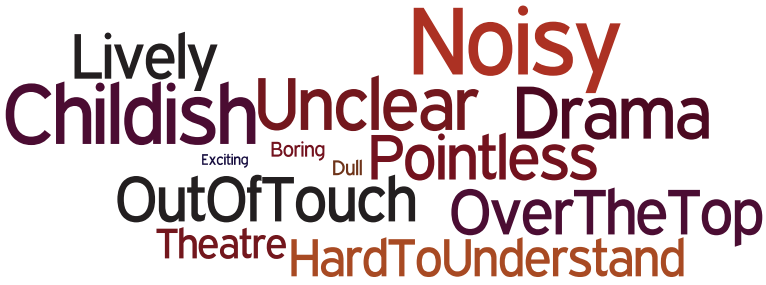


Disaggregating the results by individual group highlights some interesting differences in emphasis.

Figure 33: Words most commonly associated with Prime Minister's Questions by focus group

Group 1 – National cross-section

Group 2 – 18-34 year olds



Group 3 – Women C2DEs aged 35+

Group 4 – Non-voters at 2010 general election

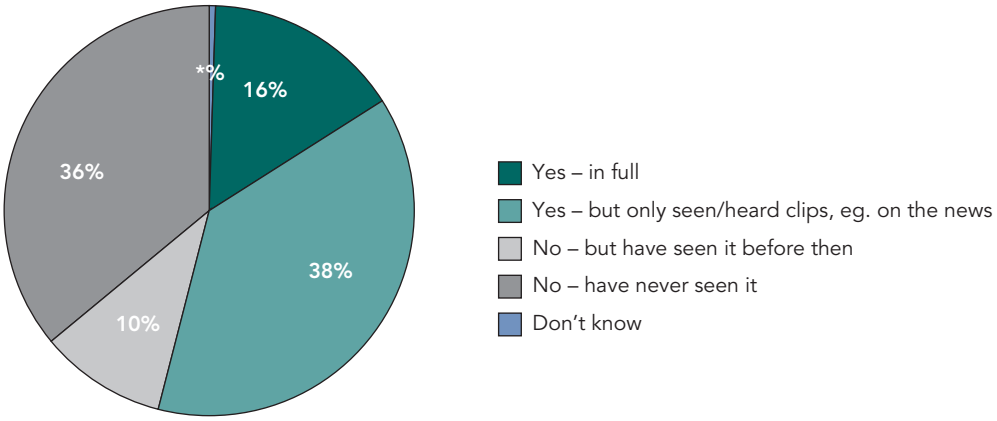
In order to test the key themes and findings that emerged from the focus groups, and to assess the extent to which these attitudes and concerns are held by the wider public, we tested them in the Audit poll.

a) Who watches or listens to PMQs?

We first asked participants whether they had 'ever watched or seen/heard any of Prime Minister's Question Time'. Sixteen percent of the public said they had seen a full session of PMQs in the last year, and 38% said they had seen clips. Thirty-six percent said they had never seen it, and a further 10% said they had seen it before but not in the last year. All told, then, half the population (54%) had seen or heard PMQs in some form in the previous 12 months.

Figure 34: Proportion of the public who have watched/heard PMQs

Q In the past 12 months, have you ever watched or seen/heard any of Prime Minister's Question Time?

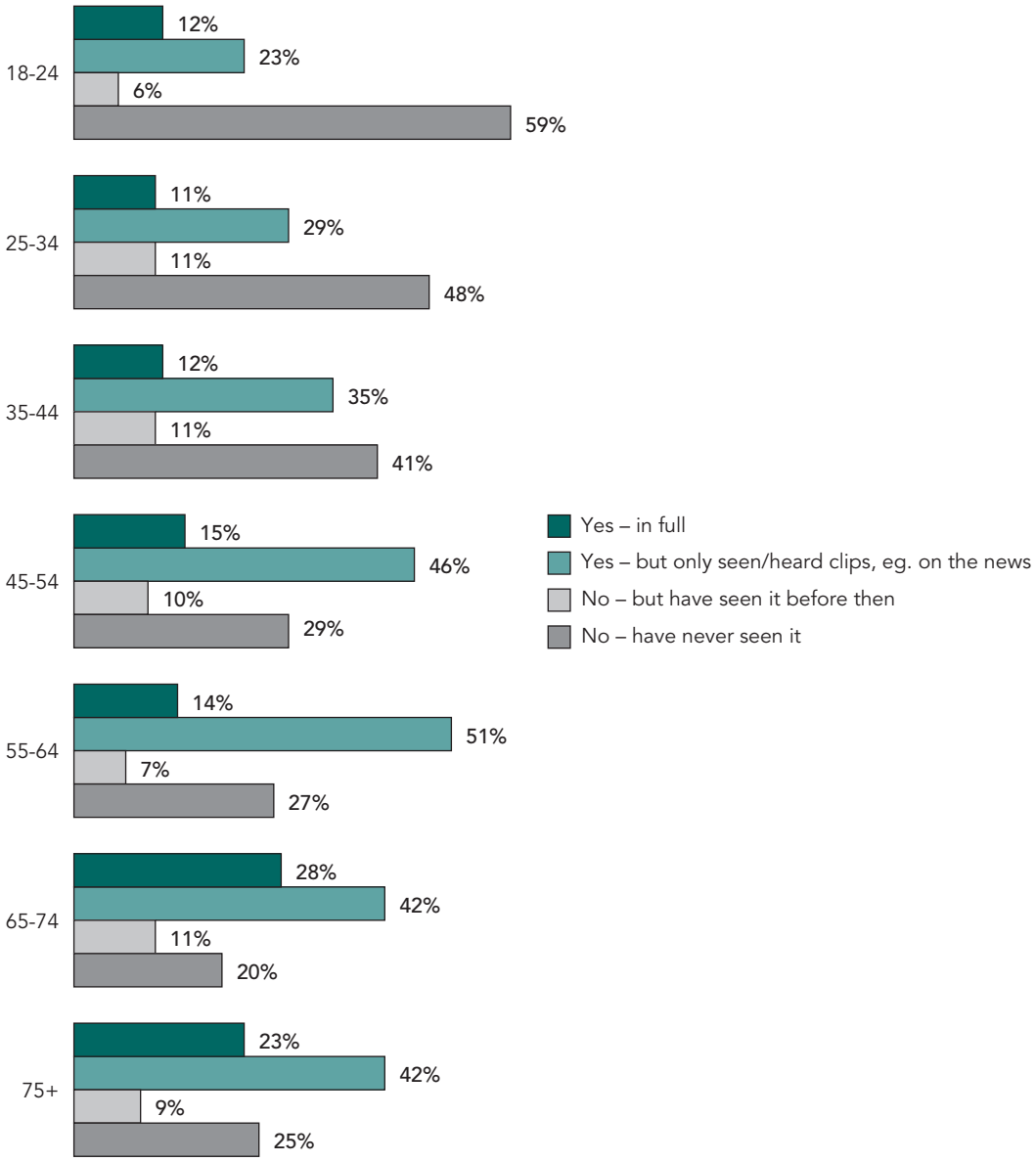


Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

The composition of that 54% of the population is heavily skewed towards older citizens, particularly those of retirement age who are of course more likely to be able to watch it given that PMQs takes place during the day when younger age groups are at work. Sixty-eight percent of those aged 65+ had seen or heard PMQs in some form in the last year compared to just 35% of those aged 18-24, 40% of those aged 25-34, and 47% of those aged 35-44.

Figure 35: Proportion of the public who have watched/heard PMQs by age

Q In the past 12 months, have you ever watched or seen/heard any of Prime Minister's Question Time?



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

PMQs is more likely to be seen by men than women. Just 51% of women had seen PMQs in some form in the last year, compared to 58% of men who said the same. White respondents (56%) were also much more likely to have seen it during the last year than BME citizens (41%).

Unsurprisingly, there is also a distinct association between viewing of PMQs and educational attainment levels. People with a degree were much more likely to have seen PMQs in some form in the last year (67%) than were those with no qualifications at all (41%). Similarly, 44% of those educated to GCSE/O Level claim to have seen/heard PMQs, rising to 57% for those educated to A Level standard.

Figure 36: Consumption of PMQs by demographic group

Demographic	In full in last 12 months %	In clip form in last 12 months %	Not seen it at all %
Men	20%	38%	34%
Women	12%	39%	38%
18-24	12%	23%	59%
25-34	11%	29%	48%
35-44	12%	35%	41%
45-54	15%	46%	29%
55-64	14%	51%	27%
65-74	28%	42%	20%
75+	23%	42%	25%
AB	20%	49%	23%
C1	15%	43%	31%
C2	15%	31%	45%
DE	12%	26%	51%
White	17%	39%	35%
BME	9%	32%	46%

Citizens who say they regularly read a broadsheet newspaper are also much more likely to have seen PMQs in some form. Eighty-one percent of those who read broadsheets have seen it in the last year compared to just 53% of readers of popular newspapers who claim the same.

There are highly divergent differences in viewing and listening at the geographical level. Interestingly, despite devolution, more citizens in Wales claim to have seen/heard PMQs in the last year than in any other region of Great Britain. Sixty- three percent of Welsh people say they have seen at least clips of PMQs, compared to just 40% of Londoners who say the same.

b) What do people think of PMQs?

Using what we learnt from our focus groups in 2012 and 2013 we constructed eight different statements about PMQs and asked respondents to indicate to what extent they agreed with them.

- It deals with the important issues facing the country.
- It makes me proud of our Parliament.
- There is too much party political point-scoring instead of answering the question.
- It's exciting to watch.
- It puts me off politics.
- It's informative.
- It's too noisy and aggressive.
- The MPs behave professionally.

> 'I found that most of the MPs just sat jeering at everyone and not actually listening to what people were saying – just what my image of Parliament is in my head.'

Overwhelmingly, respondents agreed that 'there is too much party political point-scoring instead of answering the question': 67% agreed and just 5% disagreed. Forty-seven percent of the public agreed that PMQs 'is too noisy and aggressive' with just 15% disagreeing. Four in 10 people (40%) agreed that PMQs 'deals with the important issues facing the country' whilst two in 10 people (20%) disagreed. However, a slightly lower proportion (36%) agreed that PMQs is 'informative' whilst two in 10 (22%) disagreed. And just 20% agreed that 'It's exciting to watch' whilst 44% disagreed with this assessment.

But the results that should perhaps most worry MPs relate to perceptions of their own conduct and the impact of PMQs on wider perceptions of Parliament. Just 16% of respondents agreed that 'MPs behave professionally' at PMQs, with almost half the population (48%) disagreeing with this statement.

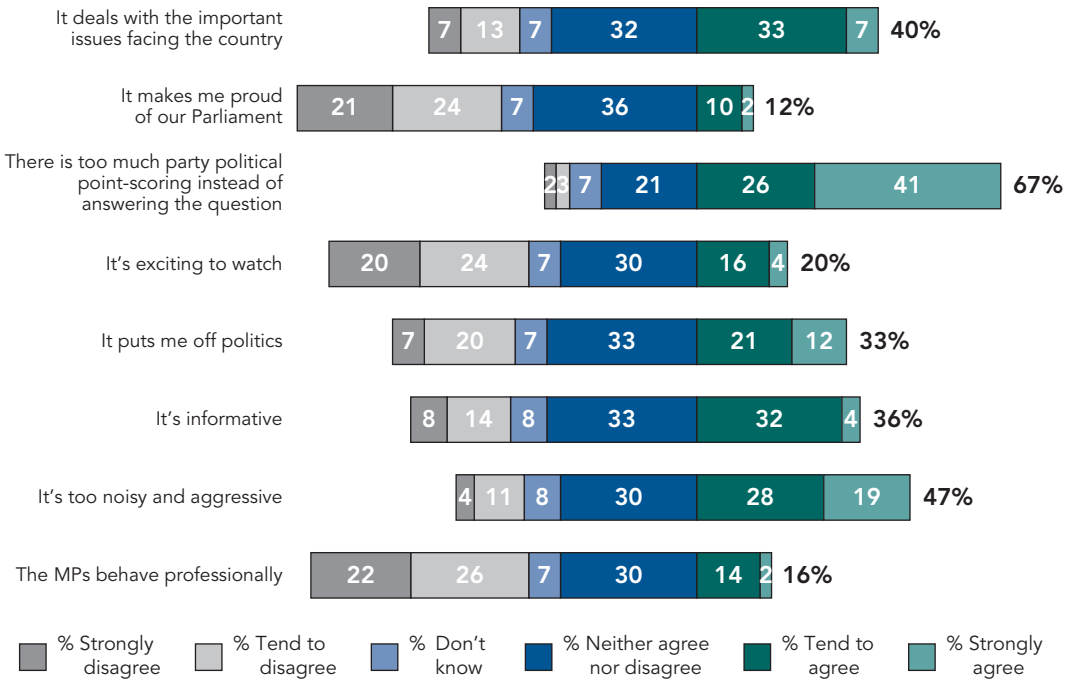
And given that a common defence of PMQs in its current format is that it is a unique parliamentary occasion envied by citizens around the world, it should be a wake up call to MPs that just 12% of the British public say PMQs 'makes me proud of our Parliament', whilst 45% feel quite the opposite.

However, despite this, only a third of the public (33%) agree that PMQs 'puts me off politics', with a third expressing no view either way, and a further 27% disagreeing with this assertion.

> 'I don't think it serves any purpose any more – it is supposed to hold the PM to account but is now just a pantomime.'

Figure 37: Attitudes to PMQs

Q Thinking about what you see and hear of PMQs, to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statement?



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

There are very few demographic differences on these questions suggesting a degree of uniformity in the public's response to PMQs overall. Generally speaking, as elsewhere in the Audit, younger respondents and those in the lower social class groups are less likely to think positively of PMQs than older respondents and those in the higher social groups.

There are a few exceptions. Younger respondents, aged 18-24 and 25-34 are less likely (49% and 50%) to think that there is too much party political point-scoring than older respondents aged 65 plus (81% of 65-74 year olds and 75% of those aged 75+). However, in part this may be linked to the fact that younger respondents are less likely to consume PMQs which is reflected in the higher level of 'don't know' responses among these age groups (13% and 12% of 18-24s and 25-34s respectively responded 'don't know' compared to just 2% of 65-74s and 5% of those aged 75+).

Similarly, ABs (77%) are more likely to think that there is too much party political point-scoring than are those in social classes DE (62%). Again, however, there is a marked difference in the number of DEs who respond 'don't know' to this question (10% compared to 3% of ABs) or simply do not have a view (30% of DEs 'neither agree nor disagree' compared to 15% of ABs).

By and large the gender differences on these questions are small and not statistically significant. The one exception is in response to whether PMQs 'is exciting to watch': more men (23%) than women (16%) agree.

BME respondents are much more likely than average to respond positively to PMQs than are white citizens. They are more likely to say that PMQs 'is informative' (43% compared to 36% of white respondents), and to believe that it 'is exciting to watch' (32% compared to 18%). Conversely, they are less likely (34%) than white respondents (48%) to agree that PMQs is 'too noisy and aggressive', and much less likely (46%) to think that there 'is too much party political point-scoring instead of answering the question', than are white respondents (70%). They are also much more likely (38% compared to 14% of white respondents) to believe that 'MPs behave professionally' at PMQs. It follows then that whereas only 10% of white respondents agree that PMQs makes them 'proud of our Parliament', 29% of BMEs agree with this statement. And although a third (34%) of white respondents say that PMQs 'puts me off politics' just under a quarter of BMEs agree (23%). However, on one question there is consensus: just 40% of white and 41% of BME respondents agree that PMQs 'deals with the important issues facing the country'.

c) The relationship between consumption and attitudes

There are some important differences in perception dependent upon the extent to which citizens have seen or heard PMQs. Those who report having seen it in full in the last year are more engaged by it than those who have seen only edited clips, but both groups share, almost equally, the negative perception of MPs' behaviour.

Those who report having seen PMQs in full are much more likely to consider it to be 'exciting to watch' (46%) than those who have seen only clips (22%). They are also more likely to consider it to be 'informative' (61% versus 51%). However, only watching clips clearly has a deleterious effect on a citizen's wider perception of politics: 43% of those who have seen clips say that PMQs 'puts me off politics' compared to just 28% of those who have seen it in full.

Those who consume only clips are a bit more likely (63%) than those who watch or listen to it in full (57%) to agree that PMQs is 'too noisy and aggressive'. Similarly, those who watch or listen to it in full are six points more likely to agree that MPs behave professionally (26%) than those who just consume clips (20%). However, the extent to which it is viewed or heard has only a marginal impact on whether a person thinks it 'deals with the important issues facing the country': 58% of those who have seen or heard it in full agree, whilst 54% of those who have only accessed clips say the same.

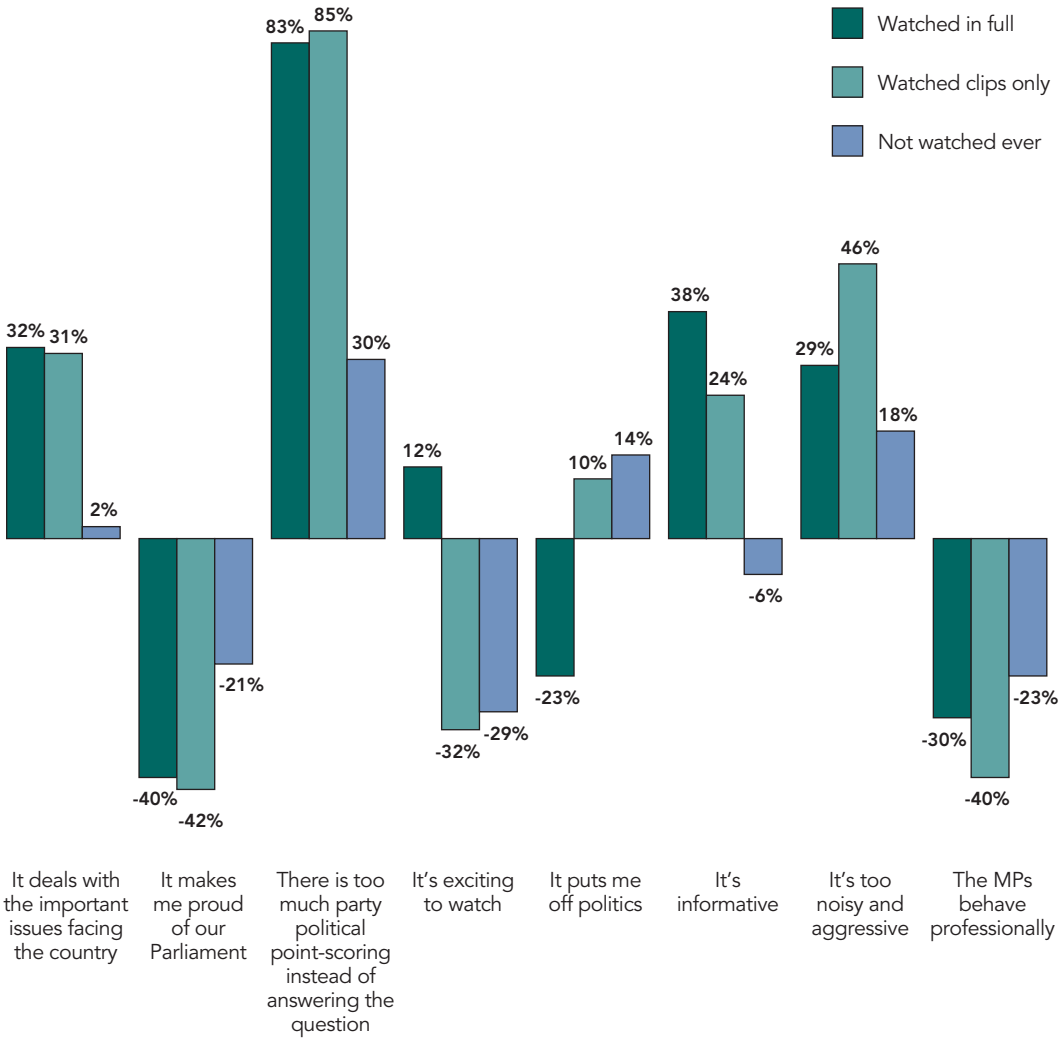
On the two remaining measures there is also very little difference in attitude between those who watch or hear PMQs in full or part. Only 17% of those who have seen it in full agree that it makes them 'proud of our Parliament' whilst 15% of those who have seen only clips say the same. This is only six points higher than those who agree with the statement despite never having seen PMQs.

Finally, on the issue of party political point-scoring, attitudes are almost exactly aligned. Eighty-eight percent of those who have seen clips of PMQs in the last year agree with this statement and 87% of those who have seen it in full say the same. On this score, there is also a much higher level of agreement (43%) among those who report never having seen PMQs than there is on any of the other seven statements.

Figure 38: Attitudes to PMQs: net satisfaction score by level of consumption

Q Thinking about what you see and hear of PMQs, to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Net values: Those who 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' minus those who 'tend to disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

Those who watch PMQs in full are more likely to find it exciting and informative and more likely to think MPs behave professionally. But they also hold very negative perceptions: almost nine in 10 of them think that there is too much party political point-scoring and less than two in 10 say that what they see or hear makes them proud of Parliament.

> 'I find it hard to believe that they truly care about the issues they are discussing and how it affects ordinary people.'

These findings suggest that the way in which PMQs is viewed or listened to in clip form may be linked to perceptions: people who have not watched PMQs are less likely to find it interesting and more likely to say it puts them off politics than are those who have viewed the question sessions in their entirety.

Given that more than twice as many people view PMQs in edited clip form than in full this raises challenging questions for both politicians and the media about how PMQs is both conducted and reported.

d) The relationship between political engagement and PMQs

It is possible to analyse the PMQs results in conjunction with the key indicators – for example, interest in and knowledge of politics, satisfaction with the system of government, and efficacy of involvement – in order to explore whether consuming PMQs affects these elements of political engagement. However, once the PMQ attitudinal questions are broken down in relation to the core questions the sample sizes are not large and the results thus need to be treated with some caution. They provide a useful indicator of the effect of Westminster's 'shop window', but they do not provide a definitive causal link between PMQs and levels of political engagement or disengagement.

Of those people who had seen PMQs only in clip form in the last year around two-thirds claim to be interested in and knowledgeable about politics (63%) and Parliament (60%). But only just over a third said they are satisfied with the system of governing (37%), and believe that if they get involved in politics they can really change the way the country is run (33%).

> 'A rousing speech, and passionate conviction is a good thing. This was noise and bluster and showing off – theatrical, but not good.'

In contrast, those who have viewed PMQs in full are noticeably more interested in and knowledgeable about politics (78%) and Parliament (74%) than those who have watched it in clip form. However, although there is a 14-15 point gap between the two groups in relation to interest and knowledge, the gap between them in terms of satisfaction and personal sense of efficacy is much smaller at one and seven percentage points respectively. Just 38% of those who have watched PMQs in full are satisfied with the system of governing and only 40% believe that their involvement would make a difference in the way the country is run.

Interestingly, nearly a quarter of those who have never watched or heard PMQs claim to be interested in (23%) and knowledgeable about politics (24%) and Parliament (24%). Similarly, a quarter of them are satisfied with the system of governing (24%) and 22% believe that their involvement in politics can make a difference.

Of those people who are interested in politics, nearly three-quarters (74%) have watched PMQs in the last 12 months in some form. But 35% of those who say they are not interested in politics have also watched in the last year. A similar result can be found in respect of knowledge of politics and Parliament: 72% of those who claim at least 'a fair amount' of knowledge about politics and Parliament have watched it as have 36% and 37% respectively of those who do not feel knowledgeable. Of those who feel satisfied with our system of governing just under two-thirds (63%) have watched PMQs, as have 52% of those who are not satisfied with the system. And similarly, of those who feel their involvement in politics would be effective, 62% have watched PMQs in the last 12 months, as have 51% of those who do not feel their involvement to be efficacious.

Compared to those who have not seen or heard PMQs in the last year, consumers of PMQs are more likely to find it informative and agree that it deals with important issues, but at the same time they react more negatively to the party political point-scoring and they declare themselves less proud of Parliament. This is irrespective of whether or not they say they are interested in politics or that they support a party.

For those who say they are not interested in politics, watching PMQs may strengthen negative responses more than positive ones. While they are more likely than non-watchers to agree that PMQs is informative and deals with important issues, they are also more likely to agree there is too much point-scoring at PMQs, that it is too noisy and aggressive, that MPs don't behave professionally and are less proud of Parliament.

In some instances, watching PMQs appears to make little difference to attitudes towards it. For instance, among people who say they are interested in politics , those who have watched PMQs are just as likely to think that it is too noisy and aggressive (net 40%) as those who have not watched it (net 38%). Both groups are equally likely to disagree that MPs behave professionally: net -34% and net -31% respectively. This would perhaps suggest that either watching PMQs makes a person who is interested in politics no more tolerant of the noise or behaviour of MPs than those who don't watch, or that those who are interested in politics are sufficiently aware of PMQs, despite not watching it in the previous year, that they know what to expect from it.

Public expectations of politicians

A strong undercurrent in our focus group research in recent years has been public dissatisfaction with the culture and conduct of politics: that politicians are unrepresentative; that they are out of touch and unable to relate to 'ordinary' citizens; that their behaviour is out of step with that of 'ordinary' people; that they belong to a different world from the rest of the public; and that no matter who is in office, or what they do, in the end nothing really changes.

The role of politicians is complex, their work is little understood, and they operate in an environment of, often, unmanageable public expectations. But how do the public view them? Do they acknowledge positive motivations? Do they think that the current generation of politicians is simply not as good as those in the past? And do they have a clear view of what they want from our politicians in terms of conduct and behaviour?

After the expenses scandal, the 2010 general election signalled the winds of change at Westminster with the biggest turnover of new MPs in post-war electoral history. But the public don't appear to have noticed any real difference in the behaviour and conduct of MPs generally as a result.

Barely two in 10 people (21%) agree that 'politicians are behaving in a more professional way than they were a few years ago'. Forty-five percent disagree whilst a third (32%) say they 'don't know'. This does not suggest the public recognise or believe that MPs have mended their ways. Here, there is a noticeable party split. UKIP supporters are particularly dismissive of politicians on this question: 64% reject the notion that politicians are behaving more professionally compared to between 41% and 44% of supporters of the three main parties who say the same.

Two-thirds of the public believe that the politicians are out of touch: 67% say they 'don't understand the daily lives of people like me' with a further 18% undecided. And on this question, there is very little difference between those who profess to support a political party and those who don't: party supporters are just as likely as other citizens to believe that politicians don't understand their daily lives. But UKIP supporters are particularly critical in their view: 93% agree that politicians don't understand their daily lives compared to 69% of Labour supporters, 60% of Conservative supporters and 58% of Liberal Democrat supporters who say the same.

Worryingly, the results suggest the majority of the public do not think politicians are in politics for the right reasons. Less than half the public (45%) agree that 'most politicians go into politics because they want to make a positive difference in their community' with a further quarter (24%) undecided on the matter. And again, those who express an affinity with a political party are no more likely than non-supporters to hold a positive view on this question: so, despite being more inclined to engage with the political process through the prism of expressed party support, these respondents still see politicians in a negative light and are dubious about their motives for going into politics. But again, UKIP supporters are more critical than others: 44% of them doubt that politicians want to make a positive difference in their community, compared to 16% of Liberal Democrats and 25% of Conservative and Labour supporters who say the same.

This picture fits with previous results in Audit 7, immediately after the 2010 general election, which found that the public were generally sceptical about the motives of Members of Parliament and only one third (33%) felt that helping people in their local area was likely to be their primary motivator for getting involved in politics.[15] Throughout the Audit series it has been evident that the public think that politicians are self-interested and too focused on personal gain. Indeed, in Audit 7, 30% of the public thought that 'for their own personal gain' was the prime motive for political involvement, making it the second most likely reason for getting involved in politics, substantially ahead of helping the country as a whole or their own political party.

Both from the Audit results and our focus group research, a strong sense emerges that the public want their politicians, as public servants, to have a high moral outlook on their work, a sense of vocation rather than careerism. As a calling this should be done for its own sake; income or other material rewards should be peripheral. This is reflected in the finding that three-quarters of the public (74%) believe 'politicians should be prepared to make personal sacrifices if they want to play a role in running the country', with a further 15% undecided and just 2% responding 'don't know'. This view is particularly true of those respondents that say they support a political party.

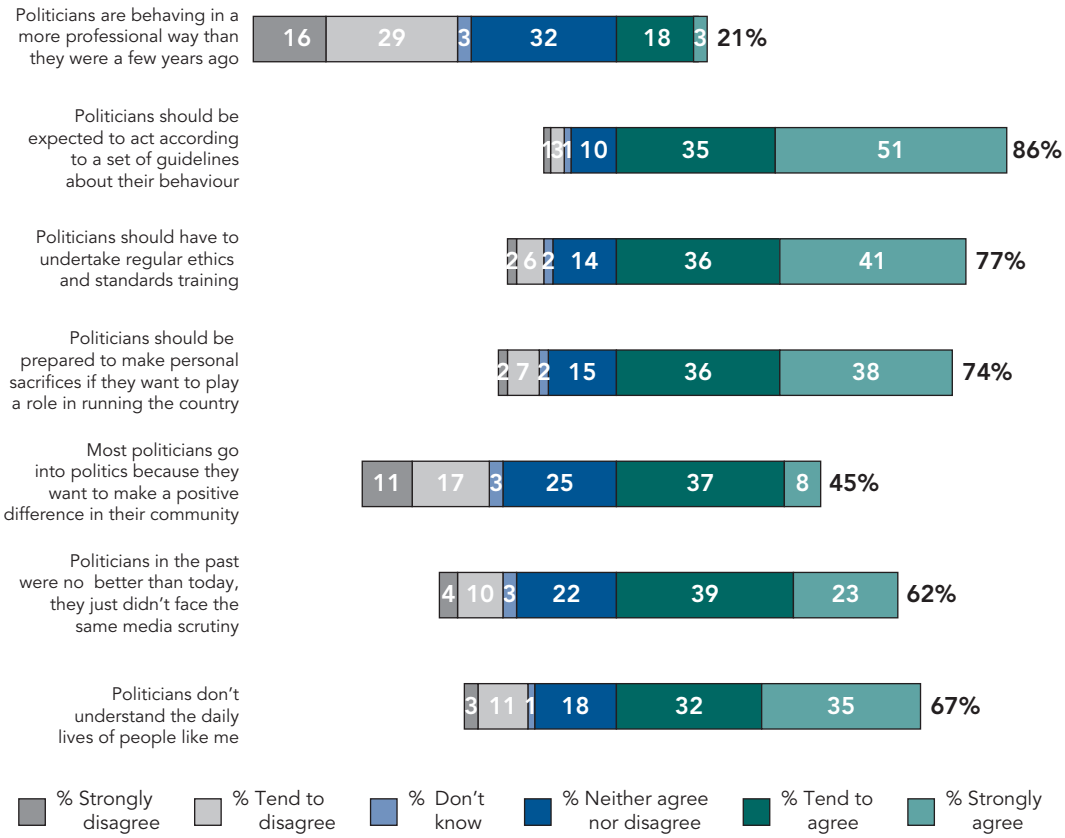
Current MPs can at least take heart from the fact that the public do at least recognise that things are not necessarily worse today than in the past: nearly two-thirds (62%) agree that 'politicians in the past were no better than today; they just didn't face the same media scrutiny' with a further 22% expressing no particular view either way.

In all professional working environments, staff are expected to behave in accordance with an agreed set of standards and guidance. This is also true of MPs. Overwhelmingly, the public think that politicians 'should be expected to act according to a set of guidelines about their behaviour' (86% agree and a further 10% have no view either way) and that they 'should have to undertake regular ethics and standards training' (77% agree and 14% are undecided).

[15] Hansard Society (2010), Audit of Political Engagement 7: The 2010 Report, (London: Hansard Society) pp.90-91.

Figure 39: Expectations of politicians

Q To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

Older respondents are much more demanding of MPs than are younger age groups. Ninety percent of those aged 55+ expect MPs to act according to behavioural guidelines compared to just 75% of 18-24 year olds who say the same. Similarly, older age groups are more likely to think that politicians should make personal sacrifices if they want a role in running the country: between 79% of those aged 65+ say this; but only 63% of 18-24s agree. Unsurprisingly younger respondents are much less likely to think that politicians in the past were no better than today: 48% of 18-34 year olds agree compared to 62% of 35-54 year olds and 72% of those aged over 55. However, the views of the youngest (18-24s) and oldest (75+) age groups are more closely aligned when it comes to judging whether politicians go into politics because they want to make a difference in their community. Thirty-five percent of 18-24s agree as do 39% of over 75s; this compares to 45%+ among all the other age groups.

BME respondents are more positively disposed to politicians than the general population. They are more likely (35%) than average (21%) to believe that politicians are acting in a

more professional way than a few years ago; and less likely (57%) than average (67%) to believe that 'politicians don't understand the daily lives of people like me'. They are less likely (71%) than average (86%) to think politicians should act in accordance with a set of guidelines about their behaviour and to undertake regular ethics and standards training (67% compared to 77%). They are also, however, less inclined to agree that politicians in the past were no better than today (47% compared to the national average of 62%). But in two areas, BME views more closely match the national alignment: they strongly hold the view that politicians should be prepared to make personal sacrifices if they want to play a role in running the country, and they are just as sceptical about whether making a positive difference in their community explains the motivation of politicians in going into politics.

Improving accountability

In the Audit 10 poll we explored the public's priorities for political reform. Building on our focus group research in 2011 and 2012 we developed nine broad categories of reform that we then tested in the Audit survey. The preferences identified in the focus groups also found favour and similar prioritisation in that survey. The most popular reform improvement, supported by 48% of the public was to 'make politics more transparent so that it is easier to follow', closely followed by the proposal that politicians should be made 'more accountable for their performance between elections' (39%). However, as we noted in the Audit 10 report, further research was needed to explore in detail what specific changes might achieve these objectives. The focus groups alone did not, for example, clarify exactly what changes would specifically achieve the public's desire to make politics more transparent. Similarly, although it was clear from the focus groups that some form of performance management framework for MPs would be welcome in order to hold them to account between elections, what form such a framework might take was not clear.

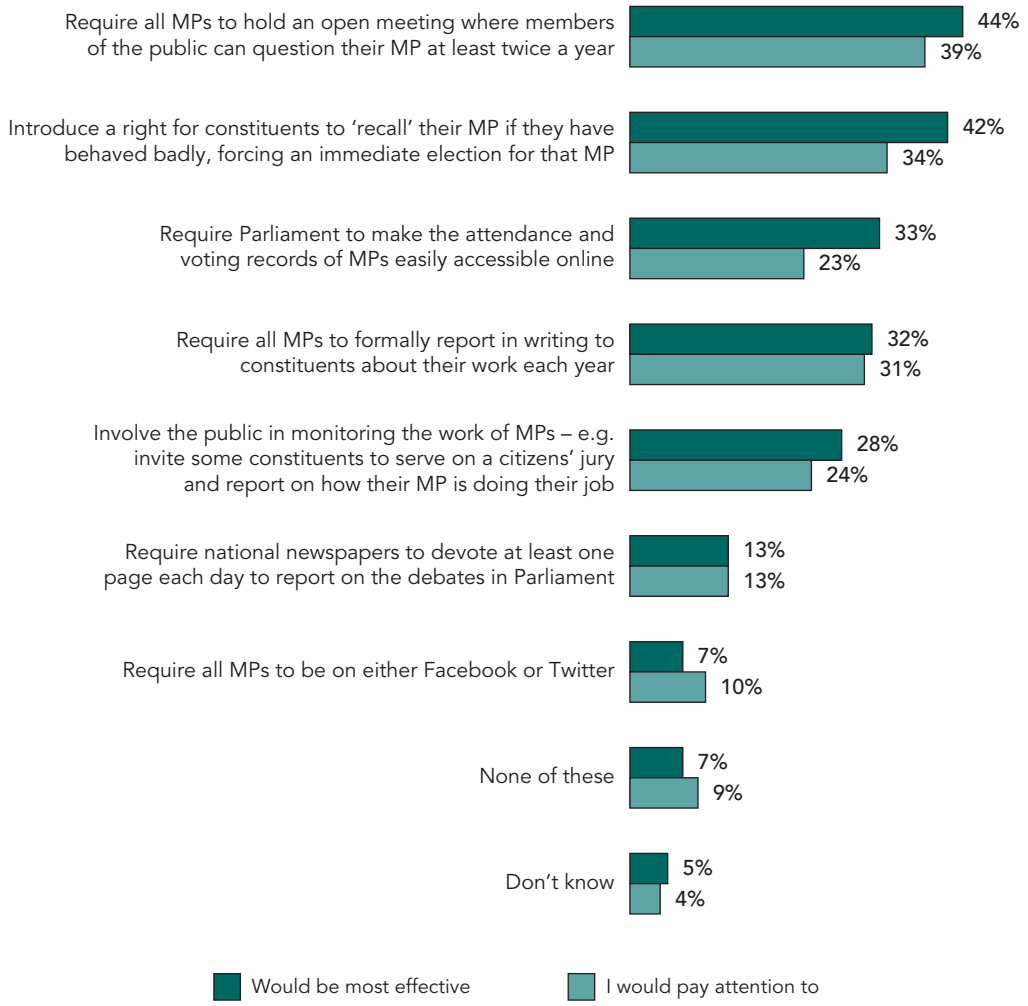
In this latest Audit survey, building on our focus group findings, we have tried to explore some of the suggestions to make politicians more accountable and politics more transparent and accessible to the public. We tested seven different proposals exploring the extent to which the public believed these would be 'most effective' in holding politicians to account, and which ones they themselves were most likely to personally pay attention to. The seven propositions, all rooted in suggestions that emerged during our focus groups, were presented in randomised form to respondents:

- Require all MPs to hold an open meeting where members of the public can question their MP at least twice a year.
- Introduce a right for constituents to 'recall' their MP if they have behaved badly, forcing an immediate election for that MP.
- Require Parliament to make the attendance and voting records of MPs easily accessible online.
- Require all MPs to formally report in writing to constituents about their work each year.
- Involve the public in monitoring the work of MPs – e.g. invite some constituents to serve on a citizens' jury and report on how their MP is doing their job.
- Require national newspapers to devote at least one page each day to report on the debates in Parliament.
- Require all MPs to be on either Facebook or Twitter.

Figure 40: Political reform proposals

Q Which two or three, if any, of the following do you think would be most effective in holding politicians to account?

Q And which two or three, if any, of the following are you personally most likely to pay attention to?



Base: 1,286 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 6-12 December 2013.

The most popular and effective measures are not the most complicated. Biannual open meetings were viewed as the most effective means of holding MPs to account and top the poll in terms of the reform most likely to capture the public's attention, closely followed by recall. Respondents felt making MPs' voting and attendance records easily accessible online then ranked as the next most important change alongside formal annual reports from MPs to constituents.

Unsurprisingly, all four forms of activity were popular with those expressing interest in politics or those who are deemed politically active (those who have done three or more political or civic activities in the last 12 months). Forty-five percent of those interested in politics and 47% of the politically active favoured a biannual open meeting; recall was favoured by 43% of those interested in politics and 44% of activists; and 35% of the former expressed interest in an annual report compared to 37% of the latter. More men (45%) than women (39%) favoured 'recall' and making MPs' voting and attendance records readily available (38% compared to 28% respectively). Those who have seen PMQs in some form in the last 12 months were also more likely (49%) to favour recall than those who have not viewed it (33%). Older age groups were also more likely to favour making MPs' attendance and voting records available (43% of 55-74 year olds compared to just 22% of 18-24s supported this proposition).

The more intensive forms of activity such as a citizens' jury was not nearly as popular and would garner less public interest. Support for a citizens' jury model was fairly uniform across the age groups, although there was slightly more support for it among those aged between 35 and 54 and less support for it among those aged 75+.

Media measures – both traditional and social media options – attracted the least amount of support. However, social media was more attractive to the 18-24s than any other age group: 14%, double the national average, said they thought requiring all MPs to be on Facebook or Twitter would be an effective means of holding politicians to account and 22% of them said they personally would be likely to pay attention to it, somewhat above the national average of 10%. Indeed, in this age group, although requiring MPs to be on social media ranked seventh out of the seven measures deemed likely to be an effective accountability mechanism, it was fourth on their list in terms of measures they personally would pay attention to.

Appendix A: Change in polling contractor

The first eight Audit surveys were conducted by Ipsos MORI, Audits 9 and 10 were conducted by TNS BMRB, and this latest survey once again by Ipsos MORI. Since the 2010 general election there has been more fluctuation in the engagement results than in earlier Audits. This period has been one of considerable political change as a result of both coalition government and economic austerity and this may account for such fluctuations. But there was a marked decline in many areas of political engagement in Audits 9 and 10, raising the question of whether there was a 'contractor effect' on the results.

However, in this year's study, as the previous chapters demonstrate, the pattern of change, following a return to Ipsos MORI as the contractor, is neither uniform nor unidirectional: there has been a recovery in a number of areas, some indicators have remained stable, and some have marginally declined compared to last year. And a number of indicators remain well below the results of the Audit 8 survey, when Ipsos MORI last conducted the poll.

For example, the responses to some questions – such as those about Parliament – were more positive in Audits 9 and 10 than in previous years or subsequently this year. People's propensity to vote was lower in Audit 9 and 10 than it had been previously, but it has not returned to previous trend levels: the 49% of people who are certain to vote this year is no different to the 48% who were certain to vote in Audit 9. And views on the efficacy of getting involved in politics have not changed meaningfully at all across the last four Audit surveys.

The requirements we set out for the polling contractor are the same for each Audit survey: ~1,000 face-to-face in-home interviews with a representative quota sample of GB adults aged 18+ weighted to the national population profile. However, minor differences in the approach to sampling and weighting adopted by each contractor could have an impact on the findings.

Marginal differences could arise because each contractor uses different geographical locations as their sampling points across the country. It is also possible that minor differences could occur as a result of a variable approach to interviewing respondents on the ground arising from the different training models adopted by each contractor.

Throughout the Audit series we have noted the importance of social class in relation to political engagement. In Audits 1-8 and in this latest study, all conducted by Ipsos MORI, the weighting targets for people from different social grades have been based on the National Readership Survey (NRS) proportions of the public in each social class grouping.

For the surveys conducted by TNS BMRB (APE9-10) the weightings were based on the Broadcasters Audience Research Board (BARB) proportions. The responses to some questions may reflect this difference.

While striving to minimise variances in the future we will continue to monitor the impact any differences in contractor methodology may have on subsequent Audits, and will continue to highlight these issues in future reports so that readers and other researchers may reflect on them in the context of political engagement trends across the Audit lifecycle.

Appendix B: Quantitative survey methodology

Ipsos MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,286 adults in Great Britain aged 18+, face-to-face in respondents' homes, between 6 and 12 December 2013. In order to make comparisons between the white and BME populations and between the different countries of Great Britain more statistically reliable, an additional 189 booster interviews were conducted with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) adults, 104 extra in Scotland and 36 in Wales using the same methodology. This gives a total of 264 BME interviews, 202 in Scotland and 91 in Wales.

Statistical reliability

All data have been weighted to the national population profile of Great Britain and all results are subject to sampling tolerances. This means that not all differences 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 usually chosen to be 95% – that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range.

Given that we have weighted our data to be representative of the profile of Great Britain, this reduces the 'effective base size' from 1,286 to 959. In practice this means that the additional interviews conducted in Wales, Scotland and with BMEs have little effect on the statistically reliability of the *overall* dataset, but they do mean that comparisons with the overall data (or other subgroups) which involve Wales, Scotland or BMEs *are* more statistically reliable. All statistical reliability has been calculated using this effective base size.

The following table illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the '95% confidence interval'.

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 interviews	6	9	10
200 interviews	4	6	7
400 interviews	3	4	5
500 interviews	3	4	4
600 interviews	2	3	4
959 interviews	**2**	**3**	**3**
1,000 interviews	2	3	3
1,200 interviews	2	3	3
1,300 interviews	2	3	3
1,400 interviews	2	2	3
1,500 interviews	2	2	3

For example, with an effective base size of 959 where 50% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the 'true' value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of ±3.5 percentage points from the sample result (i.e. between 47% and 53%).

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be 'real', or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is 'statistically significant', we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume '95% confidence interval', the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in the table below. We have listed in bold the common sub-group differences referred to in the report.

Size of samples compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 and 400	6	9	10
200 and 400	5	8	9
300 and 500	4	7	7
300 and 700	4	6	7
400 and 400	4	6	7
400 and 700	4	6	6
400 and 1,000	4	5	6
500 and 500	4	6	6
500 and 1,000	3	5	5
700 and 1,000	3	4	5
800 and 1,000	3	4	5
1,000 and 1,500	2	4	4
264 (BMEs) and 1,014 (Whites)	4	6	7
119 (18-24s) and 234 (65+s)	8	11	11
458 (men) and 502 (women)	5	6	7

Guide to social grade definitions

Listed below is a summary of the social grade definitions on all surveys carried out by Ipsos MORI. These are based on classifications used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

A Professionals such as doctors, surgeons, solicitors or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high ranking grades of the Services.

B People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, hospital matrons, heads of local government departments, middle management in business, qualified scientists, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades of the Services.

C1 All others doing non-manual jobs; nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions, police sergeants/constables, and middle ranks of the Services.

C2 Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprenticeships; foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long distance lorry drivers, security officers, and lower grades of Services.

D Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and people serving apprenticeships; machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, door-to-door and van salesmen.

E Those on lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners, casual workers, and others with minimum levels of income.

Appendix C: Audit of Political Engagement (APE) Poll topline findings

Figures used in the report

The Audit 11 figures used in this report are derived from a face-to-face survey conducted in respondents' homes between 6 and 12 December 2013.

Where applicable, trend data from previous Audits of Political Engagement are shown in the topline figures. Information about this data is summarised in the table below.

Audit of Political Engagement (APE)	Sample size	Sample definition	Fieldwork dates	Notes
APE11	1,286	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	6-12 December 2013	
APE10	1,128	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	14-18 December 2012	
APE9	1,163	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	7–13 December 2011	Reported data for some questions in APE9 is derived from fieldwork with 1,235 adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain, conducted 11–15 January 2012.
APE8	1,197	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	3–9 December 2010	Reported data for Scotland includes an additional 98 interviews conducted 7–13 January 2011, providing a total of 197 adults in Scotland.
APE7	1,156	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	13–19 November 2009	
APE6	1,051	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	11–17 December 2008	

Audit of Political Engagement (APE)	Sample size	Sample definition	Fieldwork dates	Notes
APE5	1,073	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	29 November–7 December 2007	
APE4	1,282	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	23–28 November 2006	Respondents in Northern Ireland who were interviewed in APE1-4 are not included in the reported data
APE3	1,142	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	1–5 December 2005	
APE2	2,003	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	2–6 December 2004	
APE1	1,913	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	11–17 December 2003	

Notes on tables:

- Data are weighted to the profile of the population.
- 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.
- Where percentages do not add up to exactly 100% this may be due to computer rounding, or because multiple answers were permitted for a question.
- Data in this report 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 Audits.

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**
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	**%**
10 (Absolutely certain to vote)	51	52	55	55	53	53	54	58	48	41	**49**
9	6	6	7	6	4	5	6	4	4	4	**6**
8	8	8	7	8	7	8	7	7	5	7	**8**
7	5	5	7	5	5	6	4	4	4	4	**5**
6	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	5	**4**
5	7	7	6	5	8	7	7	6	8	9	**8**
4	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	**2**
3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	5	**3**
2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	3	**3**
1 (Absolutely certain not to vote)	11	11	10	11	10	11	12	10	16	20	**11**
Refused	-	-	-	1	*	*	*	*	2	1	**-**
Don't know	2	1	1	-	4	2	2	2	3	*	**2**

Q2.	How likely would you be to vote in an immediate election to the European Parliament 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?
	APE11
	%
10 (Absolutely certain to vote)	26
9	5
8	6
7	5
6	5
5	13
4	4
3	6
2	6
1 (Absolutely certain not to vote)	23
Refused	*
Don't know	2

Q3.	In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws, or policies?	
	APE10	APE11
	%	%
Contacted a local councillor or MP/MSP/Welsh Assembly Member	8	12
Contacted the media	2	3
Taken an active part in a campaign	2	7
Created or signed a paper petition	8	16
Created or signed an e-petition	9	15
Donated money or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	20	20
Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	6	10
Attended political meetings	2	3
Donated money or paid a membership fee to a political party	1	2
Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march	1	2
Voted in an election	27	18
Contributed to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	3	6
Taken part in a public consultation	4	6
Don't know	n/a	*
Net: Any of the above	*50*	*48*
Net: None of the above	*50*	*52*

Q4.	Which of the following would you be prepared to do if you felt strongly enough about an issue?	
	APE10	APE11
	%	%
Contact a local councillor or MP/MSP/Welsh Assembly Member	41	51
Contact the media	16	22
Take an active part in a campaign	14	22
Create or sign a paper petition	35	43
Create or sign an e-petition	25	31
Donate money or pay a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	17	21
Boycott certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	14	25
Attend political meetings	10	15
Donate money or pay a membership fee to a political party	5	7
Take part in a demonstration, picket or march	10	16
Vote in an election	42	46
Contribute to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	8	14
Take part in a public consultation	14	21
Don't know	n/a	1
Net: Any of the above	*78*	*80*
Net: None of the above	*22*	*20*

Q5.	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*

Q6.a	How much, if anything, do you feel you know about…politics?					
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very nuch	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*

Q6.b	How much, if anything, do you feel you know about…the UK Parliament?†					
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very nuch	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*

† Prior to APE8, asked as 'The Westminster Parliament'. Comparisons with APE8-11 should therefore be seen as indicative.

Q7.	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*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
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*

Q8.	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 agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
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*

Q9.a	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 agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
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*

† APE7 wording: 'The Westminster Parliament'

Q9.b	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 agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE9	5	25	28	21	11	10	*30*
APE10	6	24	30	27	11	3	*30*
APE11	2	21	29	31	14	3	*23*

Q9.c	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 agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE9	31	35	19	5	2	9	*66*
APE10	30	38	22	5	3	3	*68*
APE11	30	37	19	7	4	3	*67*

Q9.d	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 agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE9	14	35	26	11	6	8	*49*
APE10	16	39	26	12	5	3	*55*
APE11	12	39	26	15	6	2	*51*

Q10.a	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*

Q10.b	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*

Q11.a	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*

Q11.b	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*

Q12.	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

Q13.	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
	%	%	%	%	%	%
APE4	6	31	37	24	1	*
APE11	7	23	36	33	*	*

Q14.	In the past 12 months, have you ever watched or seen/heard any of Prime Minister's Question Time?
	APE11
	%
Yes - in full	16
Yes - but only seen/heard clips, eg. on the news	38
No - but have seen it before then	10
No - have never seen it	36
Don't know	*
Seen/heard some PMQs in the last 12 months	*54*

Q15.a-h	Thinking about what you see and hear of PMQs, to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
It deals with the important issues facing the country	7	33	32	13	7	7	*40*
It makes me proud of our Parliament	2	10	36	24	21	7	*12*
There is too much party political point-scoring instead of answering the question	41	26	21	3	2	7	*67*
It's exciting to watch	4	16	30	24	20	7	*20*
It puts me off politics	12	21	33	20	7	7	*33*
It's informative	4	32	33	14	8	8	*36*
It's too noisy and aggressive	19	28	30	11	4	8	*47*
The MPs behave professionally	2	14	30	26	22	7	*16*

Q16.a-g	To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Politicians are behaving in a more professional way than they were a few years ago	3	18	32	29	16	3	*21*
Politicians should be expected to act according to a set of guidelines about their behaviour	51	35	10	3	1	1	*86*
Politicians should have to undertake regular ethics and standards training	41	36	14	6	2	2	*77*
Politicians should be prepared to make personal sacrifices if they want to play a role in running the country	38	36	15	7	2	2	*74*
Most politicians go into politics because they want to make a positive difference in their community	8	37	25	17	11	3	*45*
Politicians in the past were no better than today, they just didn't face the same media scrutiny	23	39	22	10	4	3	*62*
Politicians don't understand the daily lives of people like me	35	32	18	11	3	1	*67*

Q17.a	Which two or three, if any, of the following do you think would be most effective in holding politicians to account?
	APE11
	%
Require all MPs to hold an open meeting where members of the public can question their MP at least twice a year	44
Introduce a right for constituents to 'recall' their MP if they have behaved badly, forcing an immediate election for that MP	42
Require Parliament to make the attendance and voting records of MPs easily accessible online	33
Require all MPs to formally report in writing to constituents about their work each year	32
Involve the public in monitoring the work of MPs – e.g. invite some constituents to serve on a citizens' jury and report on how their MP is doing their job	28
Require national newspapers to devote at least one page each day to report on the debates in Parliament	13
Require all MPs to be on either Facebook or Twitter	7
None of these	7
Don't know	5

Q17.b	**And which two or three, if any, of the following are you personally most likely to pay attention to?**
	APE11
	%
An open meeting where members of the public can question their MP at least twice a year	39
A right for constituents to 'recall' their MP if they have behaved badly	34
An annual report from MPs about their work	31
Public monitoring of the work of MPs, eg. citizens' jury	24
Online records of attendance and voting for each MP	23
One page each day in national newspapers reporting on the debates in Parliament	13
Facebook and Twitter accounts of MPs	10
None of these	9
Don't know	4

Q18.a-d	To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	*Agree*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I know less about the issues in a European Parliament election than a general election	35	42	16	4	2	2	*77*
I understand more about how general elections work than elections to the European Parliament	30	41	17	5	4	2	*71*
My vote is more important at a general election than at a European Parliament election	26	35	24	8	5	3	*61*
It's my duty to vote in all types of elections	35	32	15	10	6	2	*67*