

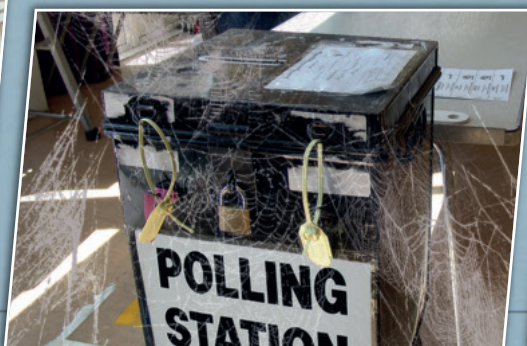
Audit of Political Engagement 10

The 2013 Report



Zero Turnout at Polling Station for PCC Election

Turnout low across the country as voters stay away from polls



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SOCIETY

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Preface

Now in its 10th year, the Audit of Political Engagement is the Hansard Society's most important publication. An annual health check on our democracy, it measures the 'political pulse' of the nation, providing a unique benchmark to gauge public opinion about our political system. One of the reasons it has become such a useful, and widely consulted and quoted, report is because it provides a guide to underlying trends across the decade. Its findings go beyond the normal vicissitudes of the political and electoral cycle and it offers greater depth and insight into the public's attitudes to politics and Parliament than can be found in one-off polls and instant responses to events and news headlines.

Last year's report, Audit 9, found a 'disgruntled, disillusioned and disengaged' public, turning away from politics. Across almost every area of engagement examined by the Audit the trends were downward, in many instances to the lowest levels ever recorded in the Audit series.

Would this downward trend be reinforced this year or prove to be a one-off blip? The answer is that across many indicators – interest, knowledge, efficacy and satisfaction – the results remain largely unchanged. Indeed, many of the results suggest a growth in the public's sense of indifference to politics.

This year's survey shows that just 41% of the public would be certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election. For 18-24 year olds the figure is 12%. Statistics like these will inevitably be part of the debate about extending the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds.

The results present significant challenges to MPs. The public are less able to identify the name of their local MP than at any time in the last decade. And satisfaction with MPs continues to decline, dipping even lower than at the time of the parliamentary expenses crisis. The trends in party campaigning over the last couple of decades have been towards a greater focus on local, constituency-based activity. MPs are more in touch on a day-to-day basis with their electorate than at any time in our history. In this they are greatly assisted by electronic mail and social media. Yet this sustained focus on local activity does not appear to be translating into greater public knowledge of and satisfaction with their representatives.

But the evidence is not all gloomy. Public perceptions of Parliament as an institution have improved. It is deemed more effective than at any time in the Audit series in holding government to account and debating topical issues that matter to the public. These changes may be linked to changes in the role and work of backbenchers in this Parliament. Select committee chairs and members, now elected rather than appointed, have set about

holding government and other powerful institutions – particularly the media and banking sector – to robust account. The Speaker, John Bercow MP, has supported a much greater use of the Urgent Question. And the work of the Backbench Business Committee means that many of the debates in the House are more topical and salient than in the past. MPs can get an issue they care about aired in the Chamber or Westminster Hall, regardless of whether they have the support of either frontbench for their endeavours.

The Audit results once again underline the importance of the Hansard Society's wider research and education work 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 TNS-BMRB who once again undertook the quantitative survey upon which the Audit is based.

Lord Grocott
Chair, Hansard Society

Executive summary

Last year's Audit found a public that was disgruntled, disillusioned and disengaged, with many indicators reaching their lowest ever levels. With the exception of knowledge of Parliament, engagement levels fell below the median for all the indicators across the Audit series. Trends in interest and knowledge declined dramatically, the number of people who had discussed politics or participated in some form also dropped and the number of people certain not to vote increased to its highest ever mark. We noted that these stark changes might prove to be a 'temporary blip', but if not, then they 'could suggest that a more severe form of disengagement than anything previously seen during the Audit lifecycle is now setting in'. This year's results suggest that last year was not a blip.

Key indicators of engagement

There has been no statistically significant change in five of the key indicators. The exception is propensity to vote.

- Interest in politics at 42% remains unchanged.
- Knowledge of politics has declined further but by just two percentage points to 42%.
- Knowledge of Parliament has declined by three percentage points to 37%.
- Satisfaction with our system of governing has improved by three percentage points to 27%.
- At 32% there has been no change in the number of people who believe that if people 'like me' get involved, they can change the way the country is run.

Propensity to vote

- Only 41% now say that in the event of an immediate general election they would be certain to vote compared to 48% who said the same last year.
- The number of people certain to vote has now declined 17 percentage points in just two years and is 10 percentage points lower than it was a decade ago at the start of the Audit series.
- 20% of the population now say they are 'absolutely certain not to vote', four percentage points higher than last year and double the number who said the same in Audit 8.

- 58% are still not prepared to vote even when they feel strongly about something.
- Only 12% of 18-24 year olds say they are absolutely certain to vote, a decline of 10 percentage points in a year, and a decline from the 30% who said the same in Audit 8.
- No more than six in 10 of the supporters of the three main political parties are certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election.

Knowledge

- 55% of the public agree that politics and government seems so complicated that 'a person like me' cannot really understand what is going on.
- Levels of actual knowledge, as tested in a series of political knowledge quiz questions, show that knowledge has declined on every question when compared to results on the same questions in Audit 7 and Audit 4.
- Despite the level of political debate about Europe over the last year, 57% of the public are still unable to correctly identify that British members of the European Parliament are directly elected by British voters.
- After extended debate about the future of the House of Lords throughout 2012 a third of the public (33%) still do not correctly identify that members of the House of Lords are not elected.
- 39% either answer incorrectly or do not know that government and Parliament are not the same thing.
- Nearly three in 10 (29%) think that 16 is the minimum age for voting.
- Almost half the population (47%) wish they had learned more 'about politics and how our democracy works' at school.

MPs and Parliament

- Just 22% of the public can correctly name their own local MP, a decline of 16 percentage points compared to two years ago.
- Only 23% are satisfied with the way that MPs generally are doing their job and only 34% say the same about their own local MP, both figures being lower than at any other time in the Audit series.
- 55% of the public don't think that 'a person like me could do a good job as a local MP', and 49% say the same about being a local councillor.
- Only 6% claim that the political system would be improved by electing 'more people like me as MPs'.

- 27% of the public claim to be satisfied with the way that Parliament works, unchanged from two years ago.
- 47% now say that Parliament 'holds government to account', an increase of nine percentage points since Audit 9.
- 55% now agree that Parliament 'debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me', a six percentage point increase in a year.

Political involvement locally and nationally

- There has been a nine percentage point recovery in the number of people who would like to be involved in local decision-making (47%) and a nine percentage point increase in those who would like to be involved in national decision-making (42%).
- One quarter of the public (26%) say they feel they have at least some influence over local decisions, a two percentage point increase in a year.
- Perceived influence over national decision-making has also risen by four percentage points to 16%.
- 63% of the public say that if they are dissatisfied with political decisions they have a duty to do something about it.
- 60% agree that every citizen should get involved in politics if democracy is to work properly.
- 57% of the public think that the only way to be really informed about politics is to get involved.
- Only half the public (50%) have undertaken at least one of a list of 13 political activities in the last year.
 - 27% report voting in an election.
 - 20% have donated money to a charity or campaign organisation.
 - Fewer than one in 10 people have created or signed either an e-petition (9%) or paper petition (8%) or contacted an elected representative (8%).
- However, 78% of the public claim they would be prepared to do one or more of a list of 13 political activities if they felt strongly about an issue.
- The activities people are most likely to say they would do in the future are vote (42%) and contact an elected representative (41%).
- 54% of the public say they 'don't have enough time to get involved in politics'.

- Half the population (49%) think that 'participating in politics is not much fun'.
- Only 44% of the public say they 'enjoy working with other people on common problems in our community'.
- One in five people (21%) say that politics is 'a waste of time'.
- 39% of the public can be categorised as 'standby' citizens in terms of their political engagement profile. Their attitudes and behaviours closely mirror that of active political participants but they themselves are not politically active. However, on the right issue and with a suitable political stimulus, they could potentially become active in the future.

Improving the political system

- 48% of the public would like to 'make politics more transparent so that it is easier to follow'.
- 39% want politicians to be 'more accountable for their performance between elections'.
- 32% would like to see 'better information and education about politics for all citizens'.
- Only 29% think that giving 'citizens more of a say (e.g. more referendums, more consultation)' would be a reform that would bring about significant improvement in the political system.
- Fewer than one in 10 people (8%) think 'constitutional changes (e.g. an elected House of Lords, different voting system)' should be a priority reform to improve politics.

1. About this report

The Audit of Political Engagement is an annual health check on our democratic system. Now in its 10th 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 TNS-BMRB in December 2012 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 traditionally supplemented by a number of additional questions that explore an issue or theme of topical interest. Audit 5 focused on the constitution, Audit 6 on political participation and citizenship, Audit 7 on MPs and Parliament, Audit 8 on civic engagement, and Audit 9 on politics and the media.

This year marks the 10th Audit study and a report to mark this milestone, exploring a decade of engagement across the Audit lifecycle, will be published later in the year. This report, exploring this year's engagement indicator results, looks in greater depth at aspects of the public's cognitive approach to politics and their participation in it. It explores how they think about politics, how complex they perceive it to be, what impact this has on how they view education about politics and priorities for reform of the culture and processes of politics. The report also explores what types of political action citizens might be prepared to undertake if they felt strongly about an issue, and the degree to which, although not yet actively engaged, many nonetheless possess a range of attitudinal, behavioural and demographic characteristics which suggest a latent potential for participation in the future, in the right circumstances.

The next chapter of this report 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.

Chapter three explores two of the key themes that emerge from this year's data: a serious decline in the public's propensity to vote, particularly among 18-24 year olds, and its implications; and the extent to which the public's cognitive appreciation of the complexity of politics is a barrier to their engagement in the process.

The results of the core survey are set out in chapter four. It explores the engagement indicators related to 'knowledge and interest', 'action and participation', and 'efficacy and satisfaction', measuring current levels of political engagement and comparing and contrasting them with the findings recorded in the Audit over the previous nine years. It also highlights the results of the additional, new questions asked in this year's survey with regard to 'cognition, complexity, education and reform'.

Changes in public perceptions of and attitudes to Parliament are the focus of chapter five. It explores the public's knowledge of MPs, their satisfaction with MPs collectively, as well as their own local MP, and Parliament generally, and their perceptions of the efficacy of Parliament in carrying out some of its core functions. It also examines what connections, if any, the public say they have had with Parliament in the past.

The public's desire for involvement in politics locally and nationally is explored in chapter six. It examines the public's sense of their own influence in decision-making, their reasons for getting involved, the barriers to that involvement and perceptions of their own personal aptitude for political life.

Using segmentation and regression analysis, chapter seven explores the potential to convert latent political interest into manifest forms of conventional political activity through an examination of the attitudes and behaviours of three distinct groups: 'manifest' participants; 'latent' or 'standby' citizens; and non-participants. It outlines the degree to which standby citizens might be willing to participate if the circumstances were right, explores whether they are more or less likely to get involved if the political system either worsens or improves, and identifies what types of reform are most likely to command their support.

A detailed examination of demographic and sub-group differences in political engagement is then set out in chapter eight. The engagement levels of different genders, age groups, social grade categories, and ethnic groups, as well as residents in Scotland and Wales are presented and compared.

Finally, the report concludes with a series of appendices that set out the methodology for this study. Appendix A describes the methodology used to collect the data for the 10th political engagement poll, and provides a note on the statistical reliability of the reported findings. Appendix B presents the topline results of the poll in tabular format. Finally, Appendix C outlines how the typology of participation explored in chapter seven has been developed, setting out how the distribution of citizens in the manifest, standby and non-participant categories was determined.

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.

The banking crisis continues

As they had been since the banking crisis of 2008, the culture and standards of the banking sector were once again a running thread of debate throughout the year. A familiar political and media outcry about bankers' bonuses pushed RBS chief executive, Stephen Hester, to announce on January 30 that he would not accept his bonus entitlement. Just 24 hours later, his predecessor at RBS, Sir Fred Goodwin, was stripped of his knighthood by the government following continuing public condemnation of his record while head of the banking group. The reputation of the banks took a further battering in June when Barclays was fined £290 million in the UK and USA after its derivative traders were found to have illegally manipulated the crucial Libor rate (London inter-bank lending rate) underpinning trillions of pounds in loans and contracts. Although not the only bank involved in the scandal, Barclays was the most high profile miscreant in the UK and its chairman, Marcus Agius, and chief executive, Bob Diamond, both resigned. Diamond appeared before the Treasury Select Committee just a few days later to account for the bank's actions but his evidence was widely criticised and the Committee report later accused him of being 'highly selective' in his responses. The Bank of England Governor, Sir Mervyn King, called for a significant cultural change in the banking sector and the Prime Minister announced the creation of a new parliamentary inquiry. This new joint Committee on Banking Standards was tasked with looking at the professional standards and culture of the banking sector, including issues such as corporate governance, transparency, conflicts of interest and the implications for future regulation.

Towards the end of the year the focus shifted away from the banks and on to major companies like Amazon, Google, and Starbucks, all of whom stood accused by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee of 'immoral', albeit legal, ruses to use offshore operations and tax havens to avoid paying corporation tax to the Treasury. Following a three-hour inquisition before the Committee in November, the public and media condemnation of the companies grew. Facing the threat of a consumer boycott, Starbucks voluntarily offered to pay around £10 million more in tax per year than it was legally required to, but the offer failed to stem the criticism and generated little goodwill.

The public and media backlash against multi-national corporate tax avoidance was particularly acute given the wider state of the economy, which was giving rise to new questions about fairness in the tax and benefits system. As far as the latter was concerned,

the government was heavily criticised for its radical proposals to reform welfare by capping benefit entitlements and its Welfare Reform Bill was defeated on numerous occasions in the House of Lords. Its workfare programme was also tested in the courts after a young woman from Birmingham, Cait Reilly, asked for a judicial review of the government's policy of forcing the unemployed to work for nothing or face losing their benefits. In the media the case was cast as job snobbery vs. slave labour, depending on your point of view. But shops as diverse as Tesco, Burger King, TK Maxx, and Poundland were forced to reconsider their involvement in the scheme as public antipathy to people being forced to work for nothing for large, profit-making companies found greater traction.

The 'omnishambles' Budget

By the end of April the economy was officially in a double-dip recession after shrinking by 0.2% in the first quarter of the year largely due to a sharp fall in construction output. This announcement came hot on the heels of a Budget that was heavily criticised and picked apart. Conservative and Liberal Democrat ministers spent the weeks before the Budget engaged in semi-public negotiations about its substance, the consequence being that many of its measures had been leaked before the Chancellor stood up to make his speech in the House of Commons. But within days, its contents had begun to unravel, undermining George Osborne's reputation as a master political strategist in the process. The one surprise in the Budget – the freezing of age-related tax allowances for pensioners, the so-called 'granny tax' – was subjected to trenchant criticism. Although acknowledging that millions of pensioners would lose money under the plans, the government defended its policy on the grounds that pensioners would not be worse off in overall cash terms due to increases in the state pension, a view largely endorsed by the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies. The proposal to simplify the taxation arrangements for 'hot takeaway food' by imposing VAT on Cornish pasties was revoked after widespread pressure from the baking industry. Then, the proposal to impose a 20% levy on static caravans was reduced to 5% after a vocal campaign from caravanning enthusiasts. Indeed, so numerous were the changes made to the Budget that it was quickly dubbed an 'omnishambles'. It was the politics rather than the economics of the Budget that was most damaging. The decision to abolish the 50 pence top rate of tax and a botched u-turn on child benefit changes raised questions about the government's approach to fairness at a time of austerity whilst proposals like the 'pasty' tax placed a spotlight once again on issues of class and wealth, and the degree to which the Prime Minister and Chancellor were perceived to be out of touch with the lives of working people.

Concern about ill-prepared policies rumbled throughout the year. The coalition's reputation for competence was subjected to further intense scrutiny when, just a few months after the Budget, the government was forced into a further embarrassing u-turn following its decision to let the transport company, FirstGroup, take over the west coast main line train franchise from Virgin Trains. Sir Richard Branson's company launched a legal challenge in the High Court and the day before the case was to be heard the Department for Transport admitted to technical flaws in the evaluation of the tender bids. Its rail franchise policy in chaos, three senior civil servants were suspended, and the government incurred a £40 million bill to reimburse the companies involved for their bids. With significant public support set out in an e-petition backing their bid, Virgin offered to continue running the rail line until the franchise arrangements could be resolved.

European economic torpor

Throughout the year, the crisis engulfing the Eurozone provided the backdrop for discussion of the health of the UK's financial situation and its commitment to a programme of austerity. The precarious economic situation particularly in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain dominated the headlines. After months of uncertainty, a bailout of the Eurozone banks in Italy and Spain was agreed following an EU summit meeting in June where dramatic brinkmanship from the two countries' prime ministers pushed the German Chancellor Angela Merkel to relax her hard line on fiscal discipline. The Eurozone countries agree to set up a supervisory system for their banks that would be the first step on the road to full banking union, and scrapped the requirement that governments have preferential status over private investors in the event of a default. The bailout rules were also changed for the future, to enable direct recapitalisation of banks rather than the money having to go via national governments, thereby adding to national debt levels.

Later in the year negotiations about the EU budget for the next seven years dominated the headlines. The EU Commission requested a 5% increase in its budget for 2014-20, not least to take account of the planned increase in member states. The coalition had indicated it favoured, at a minimum, a real-terms freeze; in contrast, the Labour party, in what the Prime Minister described as an act of 'rank opportunism', demanded a real-terms cut. In a heated House of Commons debate before the EU summit in November, 53 Conservative MPs rebelled, joining Labour ranks to demand a real-terms cut in spending. Although not binding, the vote was an embarrassment to the Prime Minister and reopened internal wounds in the Conservative party on the European issue. But at the EU summit it became clear that there was some support for the UK position, although there was no consensus among the leading nations about the optimal size of the Commission's budget and talks broke down and remained unresolved.

The Leveson Inquiry and the media

After months of hearings and deliberation Lord Justice Leveson published his final report into press standards and ethics at the end of the year, recommending a new independent self-regulatory body for the press, underpinned by legislation. The proposals were immediately supported by the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party, although the Conservatives were more cautious, seeking a regulatory body that avoided the need for statute. Talks were immediately held with newspaper editors and proprietors in a bid to reach a settlement but significant differences over the issue of statutory underpinning remained.

Over the course of the previous 12 months, dozens of hearings had been held, including with each of the party leaders, three previous prime ministers, and the proprietors and editors of each of the national newspaper groups, as well as many celebrities and victims of crime who had found themselves subject to sustained press intrusion. James Murdoch resigned his position on the board at News International in February, before he and his father were called to give evidence to the Inquiry in April. News International emails released by the Inquiry suggested that the Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt had been unduly supportive of their takeover bid for BSkyB (an accusation he would be cleared of in the final report) but, even more damagingly, the tranche of correspondence revealed the frequent contact between Hunt's Special Adviser, Adam Smith and News Corporation's

Director of Public Affairs, Frederic Michel. The Culture Secretary admitted that the volume and tone of the communications was not appropriate during what was a quasi-judicial process, and Smith resigned.

Just days after appearing before the Inquiry, Rupert Murdoch was again subject to criticism when the House of Commons committee investigation into phone hacking published its final report. It raised serious questions about his fitness to manage News Corporation in the future. Days later, his former editor, Rebekah Brooks, was charged with perverting the course of justice and she and seven others, including the Prime Minister's former spokesman, Andy Coulson, were subsequently charged with phone hacking itself, reopening once again a debate about the Prime Minister's judgement in appointing him to such a role.

Parliament, parties and elections

The reputation of MPs continued to suffer throughout 2012 as a result of the conduct of a few of their number. Cabinet Minister Chris Huhne resigned in February after the Crown Prosecution Service announced that they were to charge him and his former wife, Vicky Pryce, with perverting the course of justice in relation to a speeding points allegation dating back 10 years. Just three weeks later, the Labour MP Eric Joyce was arrested at the House of Commons after head-butting a Conservative MP in the Stranger's Bar and attacking other colleagues including a Labour whip. Having been charged with three counts of assault he was immediately suspended from the Labour party and was later sentenced to a 12 month community order, a three-month bar ban and a £3,000 fine. He resigned from the Labour party but remained as an independent MP. The case once again led to calls for the introduction of new legislation to allow the public to recall their MP. However, when the parliamentary expenses scandal claimed another scalp in the form of Denis MacShane MP, who was found guilty by a parliamentary committee of wrongfully submitting 19 false invoices and thereby falsely claiming £7,500, he quit both the Labour party and Parliament in November forcing a by-election in his Rotherham constituency. Meanwhile, the recently appointed Chief Whip, Andrew Mitchell MP, had been forced to resign from the government under intense media pressure following accusations of aggressive behaviour towards police officers after they allegedly refused to allow him to take his bicycle through the main gate at Downing Street. For weeks, Mitchell hung on to office, resolutely denying that he had sworn at the officers or called them 'plebs'. Once again, it raised questions of class and arrogance at the heart of the cabinet; but in the months that followed Mitchell's account of what happened would be vindicated, although too late to rescue his ministerial position.

During the course of the year a lot of parliamentary oxygen was taken up with discussion of the government's proposals for reform of the House of Lords. The joint committee appointed to look at the bill was widely critical of the proposals and by the summer it was clear that there would be a widespread revolt in Conservative ranks against the legislation. Although the bill survived its second reading in the House of Commons, a Conservative rebellion by 91 of its members, the largest rebellion of the Parliament, threatened future progress and the government decided not to timetable the bill's future stages. By September it was clear that the government's entire legislative programme might be held hostage by opponents of Lords reform in both the Commons and Lords and the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, was forced to reluctantly withdraw the bill, creating in the

process a large hole in the government's legislative agenda for the rest of the session. Angered at the loss of this important strand of their constitutional reform agenda, the Liberal Democrats levied a high price; they made clear they would not support proposals to reform the constituency boundaries as set out the year before in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act. Proposals to reduce the size of the House of Commons and equalise constituencies – deemed vital to underpin Conservative prospects at the next general election – were thus also scrapped.

For Clegg the withdrawal of the bill to reform the House of Lords was the latest in a series of difficulties facing the Liberal Democrats in the coalition. Following very public squabbles about the Budget, NHS and welfare reform, the coalition was re-launched by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in July with a mid-term review which summarised the progress that had been made and the priorities for the remainder of the Parliament. The coalition parties had not fared well at the local elections in May but the Liberal Democrats had been particularly punished; they secured just 16% of the vote and their number of councillors in England fell below 3,000 for the first time in their history. In a bid to re-launch his own leadership and reputation amid internal mutterings of discontent, Nick Clegg issued a formal apology to supporters for breaking the party's general election campaign pledge to oppose any future increase in student tuition fees. But the party political broadcast did not have the intended effect; rather than detoxifying the issue and the party's reputation the apology was widely derided. Having been turned into a spoof video by a satirical website, 'The Nick Clegg Apology Song: I'm Sorry (Autotune Remix)' went viral on YouTube and was subsequently issued as a charity record.

Labour did well at the local elections, securing 38% of the vote and gaining more than 800 new councillors. These results, coupled with a successful party conference in which Ed Miliband laid out a new 'one nation' agenda, served to quieten discord within the party, at least temporarily, about his leadership. So, too, in by-elections the party performed well. In seven by-elections held in 2012, the party retained five of its seats, and gained one in Corby from the Conservatives.

But it was the first by-election of the year in Bradford West at the end of March that garnered most attention, when a Labour majority of 5,000 was turned into a 10,000+ majority by George Galloway and the Respect party. Securing 56% of the vote, it was a remarkable result for any candidate outside the three main parties. Labour's vote share was 20% below what it had been at the 2010 general election, the Conservatives polled less than 3,000 votes and the Liberal Democrats lost their deposit. Explanations for the result were rooted in complex local circumstances but it was, in part, a rejection of all three main parties.

Just weeks later, concern about public engagement with conventional politics would resurface in the local elections when just 32% of the eligible electorate in England turned out to vote. On the same day, the public in nine out of 10 cities widely rejected the option of a referendum for a directly elected mayor. At the Manchester by-election in November, just 18.1% of the eligible electorate voted, and in the first ever Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, just 15% cast their vote. Remarkably, in the Bettws ward in Newport in Gwent, not a single elector went to the polling station.

Preaching the mantra of authenticity and seeking to reach out and connect with those very people who didn't bother to vote, Conservative backbencher Nadine Dorries announced that she was to go into the Australian jungle for an appearance on ITV's reality show, 'I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!' in November. The decision was widely derided by MPs across the political spectrum, the Conservative whip was withdrawn, and the public did not seem terribly impressed either, as she became the first celebrity to be kicked out of the jungle.

In marked contrast, the London mayor, Boris Johnson, seemed to be the one politician able to transcend media criticism, overcome public indifference and reach out to a broad constituency. Bucking the national trend against the Conservative party, he retained the mayoralty with a narrow win in May against his arch-rival, Ken Livingstone, securing nearly 52% of the popular vote. The Olympics and Paralympics later in the summer gave him an international stage on which to perform and throughout the year he remained a thorn in the side of the Prime Minister as the press and his party's rank and file openly speculated about his future leadership ambitions.

Devolution and independence

In Scotland, the SNP's Alex Salmond was another politician who dominated the political landscape. Following his party's success in the Scottish Parliament elections in 2011, their commitment to an independence referendum took centre stage in the political debate north of the border. In January, the Prime Minister announced that, with the support of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, the government would grant Holyrood the power to hold a referendum within the next 12-18 months. Shortly after the announcement, the SNP leader revealed that the referendum would be held in the autumn of 2014, opening up questions about who had the constitutional authority to decide the date: Westminster or Holyrood. The government in London had also made clear that the referendum would be held on a straight 'yes' or 'no' question, in an attempt to stop the SNP offering a third option of more devolution of powers but falling short of independence, known as 'devomax'. Months of constitutional negotiations followed before a compromise deal was struck in October when the Prime Minister and First Minister signed the Edinburgh Agreement: the referendum would be held in 2014 on a 'yes/no' question, but the franchise would be extended to 16 and 17 year olds for the first time.

In Wales too, the future of devolution was subject to extended debate. The Silk Commission continued its inquiry into the financial and constitutional arrangements governing the country, publishing its report on fiscal powers in November. The Westminster government meanwhile agreed to grant the Welsh government limited borrowing powers to raise funds for major capital infrastructure projects, subject to agreeing a new source of income through taxation thereby reducing Cardiff's reliance on Whitehall.

A crisis of national institutions: the BBC and the police

The last quarter of the year was dominated by media coverage of the fall-out from an ITV documentary in October which alleged that the late BBC radio and television presenter Jimmy Savile had been accused of sexual abuse of under-age teenage girls. The police investigation that followed uncovered leads suggesting that Savile may have abused hundreds of young people over a 40-year period, exploiting his position as a trusted

television star and charity worker to gain access to victims, including in schools and hospitals. In the months that followed several other prominent radio and television stars from the 1970s and 1980s would be accused of similar abuse.

The BBC became further embroiled in the controversy when it emerged that it had shelved a Newsnight investigation into the story, and that some of the abuse had allegedly taken place at the BBC. Several internal inquiries were set up to investigate the workplace culture at the BBC, the handling of previous sexual harassment claims, current child protection and whistle-blowing policies, and the management decision-making process that led to the dropping of the Newsnight programme. But the new BBC Director General, George Entwistle, seemed unable to stem the tide of criticism and his appearance before the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee exacerbated rather than ameliorated the situation. When another Newsnight investigation implicated retired Conservative politician Lord McAlpine in allegations of paedophilia, only to admit that their source was mistaken and the allegations were without foundation, the broadcaster was engulfed in a tidal wave of criticism and Entwistle was forced to resign after less than two months in post. But the controversy had a corrosive effect on public trust and confidence in the broadcasting organisation.

Public confidence in the police service was also jolted when the long-awaited independent report into the Hillsborough football disaster was released in October. It revealed that 164 police statements had been altered, often to remove potentially damaging comments about policing of the match on the day of the tragedy in 1989. The report also suggested that 41 of the 96 people who died might have been saved. The Attorney General responded by announcing fresh inquests, a long-held demand of the Hillsborough campaigners. But so damning was the evidence against the police that the Independent Police Complaints Commission announced the biggest ever investigation of police wrongdoing, involving current and former officers in South Yorkshire Police and several other police forces, for allegedly perverting the course of justice.

Beyond Westminster

On the international stage the US presidential election dominated events throughout the year, with President Obama defeating the Republican candidate Mitt Romney narrowly in the popular share of the vote, but decisively in the electoral college. The civil war in Syria continued to tax the G8, the European Union and the United Nations as they struggled to co-ordinate a response to the deteriorating situation. The collapse of the regime's control across huge swathes of the country opened up a struggle for power amongst opposition groups whilst creating a vacuum that many feared would be filled by terrorist factions. The wider region was destabilised by a growing refugee crisis and by year's end millions were dependent on foreign aid in the form of food and shelter. Although the UK government ruled out direct intervention to support the opposition, indirect 'non-lethal' support was provided and it continued to press for an effective sanctions regime. But in the face of vetoes from China and Russia, the UN Security Council was unable to agree a resolution requiring the Syrian regime to begin a political transition.

National celebrations: Jubilee, Olympics and Paralympics

At the beginning of June a special bank holiday weekend saw the UK mark the 60th anniversary of the Queen's reign with four days of celebrations. A Thames river pageant saw a flotilla of over 600 boats mark the occasion and enter the Guinness Book of Records as the largest parade of boats ever assembled although the event, watched by millions on television, was somewhat marred by inclement weather and the subsequent illness of the Duke of Edinburgh who had to miss the rest of the celebrations having been hospitalised for an infection. A star-studded concert at Buckingham Palace followed, and the celebrations concluded with a service of thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral. At a time when the public's faith and confidence in almost every other national institution was in decline, the popularity of the Royal Family and the Queen in particular continued to rise with some polls suggesting a 90%+ favourability rating. Her popularity was further cemented when she made an iconic and unexpected entrance at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, appearing as a Bond girl in a spoof James Bond video in which she apparently jumped out of a helicopter and parachuted into the stadium, to the astonishment of everyone watching. The announcement that the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were expecting their first child rounded off an extraordinary year for the Royal Family.

The Olympics began amidst great controversy but would end as a triumph for London and the UK. When the private security firm G4S announced that it did not have enough trained staff to deal with the event just days before the start of the games the army was drafted in by the government to fill the gaps. Visiting Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney got himself into hot water when he suggested that the UK was not ready to host the games and he was widely rebuked for his comments. Despite the pre-event fears, London's transport system worked well, the security was effective and unobtrusive, and even the weather held out for the duration of the Games. The opening ceremony itself was widely praised and, despite early problems with ticketing, the events were largely problem-free and British athletes performed creditably across a range of disciplines, winning 65 medals, 29 of them gold. In the weeks that followed, the Paralympians performed even better, winning 120 medals, including 34 golds, to finish third in the international medal table after the most successful and best attended Paralympic games in history.

Despite the difficulties of the previous months, the mood of the country at year's end was thus more upbeat than the economic and political circumstances might have warranted, largely as a result of the combined success of the Jubilee and London 2012. But what influence, if any, did these events have on political engagement? Did the tumultuous, historic events of the year have any impact on how the public perceived politics and the political process?

3. Disenchanted and disinclined: a gloomy prognosis for future engagement

Last year's Audit found a public that was disgruntled, disillusioned and disengaged, with many indicators reaching their lowest ever levels. With the exception of knowledge of Parliament, engagement levels fell below the median for all the indicators across the Audit series. Trends in interest and knowledge declined dramatically, the number of people who had discussed politics or participated in some form also dropped and the number of people certain not to vote increased to its highest ever mark. We noted that these stark changes might prove to be a 'temporary blip', but if not, then they 'could suggest that a more severe form of disengagement than anything previously seen during the Audit lifecycle is now setting in'.

This year's results suggest that last year was not a blip. Alarming, there has been a further collapse in the public's certainty to vote; only 41% now say that in the event of an immediate general election they would do so. All the other key indicators have remained stable at the lower levels found last year and there has been no statistically significant change. Interest in politics remains at 42%, knowledge of politics has declined further but by just two percentage points to 42%, and knowledge of Parliament has declined by three percentage points to 37%. The number of people who are broadly satisfied with our system of government has marginally improved by three percentage points (27%), and there has been no change in the number of people who believe that if people 'like me' get involved, they can change the way the country is run (32%).

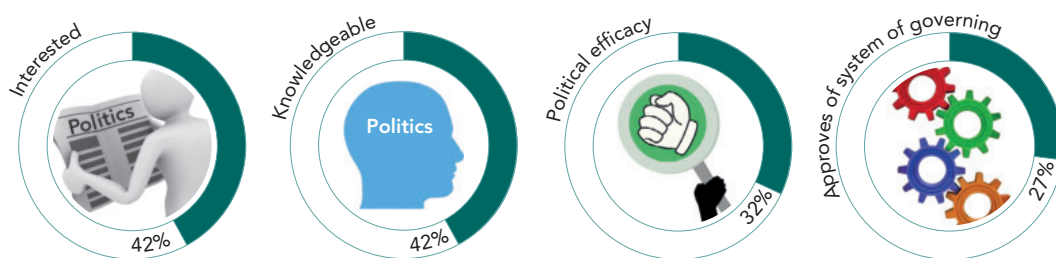
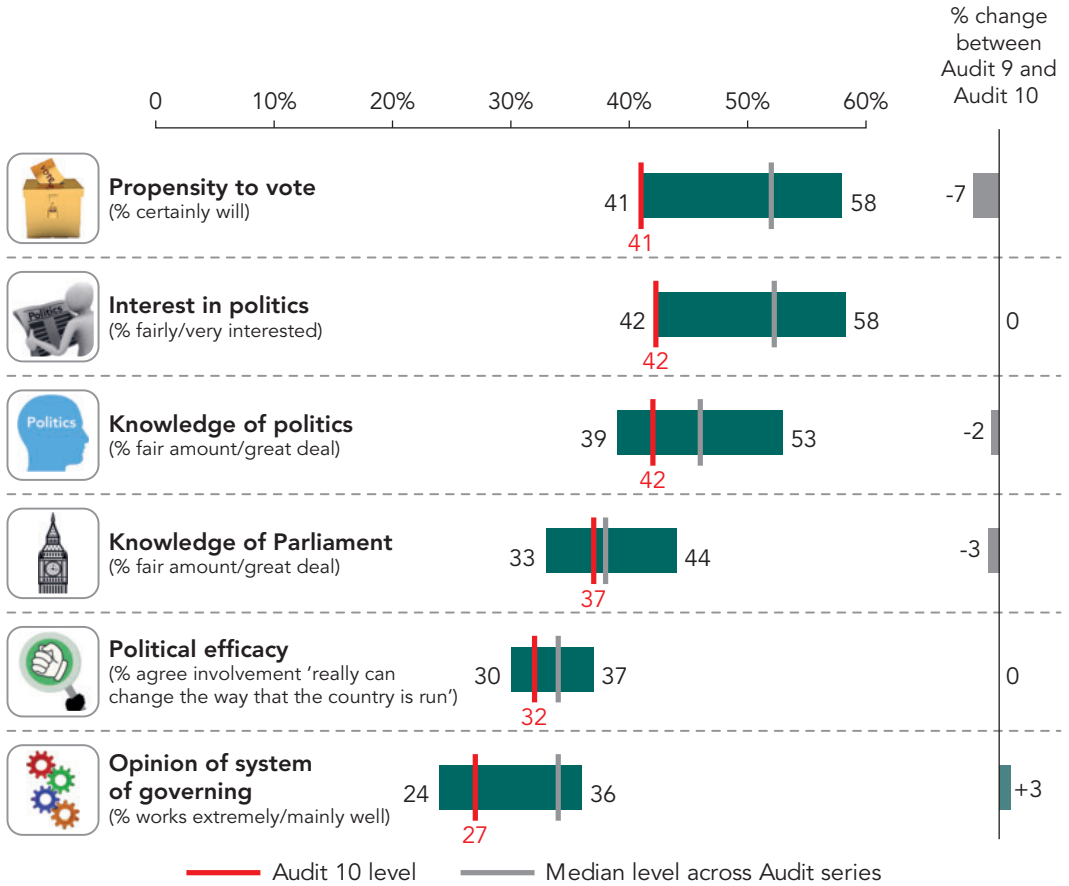


Figure 1, which shows the distribution of values for six key indicator questions over the past decade, as well as the relative position of this year's latest Audit values, demonstrates how last year's trends have been broadly confirmed and reinforced.

There are a few notable and interesting changes beyond the key indicators. Public attitudes towards MPs continue to decline; fewer people can name their own MP and are satisfied with the work of MPs generally than was the case even in the aftermath of the parliamentary expenses scandal. But attitudes to Parliament suggest that the public recognises it is more effective than it has been at any other point in the Audit lifecycle: there has been a

significant improvement in the perceived efficacy of it in holding government to account and debating and making decisions about issues that matter to the public. There has also been an increase in the number of people who say they would like to be involved in local and national decision-making (both up by nine percentage points). These changes are analysed in greater detail in chapters five and six.

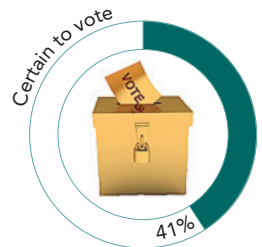
Figure 1: Engagement levels – Audit comparisons



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Where have all the voters gone?

By far the most significant change in this year’s Audit is the decline in the public’s propensity to vote. Last year, the number of people saying they were certain to vote in the event of a general election fell below 50% for the first time in the Audit series. Prior to Audit 9, certainty to vote levels hovered between 51% and 58% year-in-year-out. But this year’s results confirm the dramatic decline in public interest in and commitment to voting that began last year.



The number of people certain to vote has now declined 17 percentage points in just two years to 41% and is 10 percentage points lower than it was a decade ago at the start of the Audit series.

Twenty percent of the population now say they are 'absolutely certain not to vote', four percentage points higher than last year and double the number who said the same in Audit 8. A further 18% are 'unlikely to vote' but do not entirely rule it out, again four percentage points higher than last year. And 20% state that they are 'likely to vote' but are by no means certain to do so.

Twelve months ago the 10 point decline in the public's propensity to vote was a cause for worry; this year, that concern is reinforced by the knowledge of the low electoral turnouts in the recent mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections. When only four in 10 people – and only 12% of 18-24 year olds – say they are absolutely certain to vote it raises serious questions about the long-term future health and credibility of our system of representative democracy.

Little reassurance can be found in the 15 percentage point difference between those who say they have actually voted in an election in the last year (27%) and the 42% who say they would be prepared to vote in an election in the future if they 'felt strongly enough about an issue'. This 42% who would be prepared to vote corresponds with the 41% who say they would be 'absolutely certain to vote'. It would seem that 58% are still not prepared to vote even when they feel strongly about something.

Unsurprisingly, those who are certain to vote are more likely to be interested in politics (65%) than the national average (42%); more likely to feel knowledgeable about politics (62%) than the average (42%); more likely to want to be involved in national decision-making (50%) and in local decision-making (57%) than average (42% and 47% respectively). They are also more likely to be satisfied with the system of governing (34% versus 27%), although the gap is smaller on this measure than others.

Home-owners are more likely to be certain to vote (48%) than those who rent a property (32%). But those who are owner-occupiers are more certain to vote (53%) than those with a mortgage (44%), and those renting property from their local authority are more certain to vote (37%) than those who rent privately (27%). Interestingly, however, despite the 16 percentage point difference in certainty to vote between owners and renters, the actual voting prevalence – those who claim they have voted in an election in the last 12 months – of tenants in social housing (30%), is in fact similar to that of owner-occupiers, both those who own their own home outright (30%), and those with a mortgage (29%). But tenants in privately rented accommodation are much less likely to have voted in the last year (18%). Given the difficulties that young people face in getting on the home-ownership ladder or accessing social housing, access to property may become an important factor in sustaining this downward trend in voting propensity in the years ahead.

There is a clear pattern to this downward trend: it is driven by attitudinal changes among the highest (AB) and lowest (DE) social classes,¹ among the white population, among women, Conservative supporters, and the very youngest and oldest age groups.

The propensity to vote of all the social classes has declined, although only modestly so among those in social classes C1 and C2. But among those at the top and bottom of the socio-economic scale there has been a marked decline. As in previous Audits, certainty to vote remains highest among those in social class AB, but their propensity has dropped by 11 percentage points (from 65% to 54%). Similarly, the likelihood to vote of those in social classes DE has dropped by eight percentage points (from 43% to 35%).

An eight percentage point decline in the propensity of white people to vote (41%), also reinforces the downward trend that began last year. White people are still more likely to vote than BMEs (Black and Minority Ethnic) (34%) but the gap is narrower than it has ever been in the last decade. But whereas BME certainty to vote is lower, it has shown much greater stability in recent years; in contrast, the certainty to vote of white citizens has plummeted 19 percentage points in just two years (41% compared to 60% in Audit 8).

There has been much talk in recent years of a gender-gap in political support, with women turning away from politics generally, and the Conservative party in particular, as a result of the current coalition government's policies and its perceived disproportionate impact on women. Men are less certain to vote than they were last year (51% to 44%), and indeed are less certain to vote than at any point in the last decade. But women have turned away from the act of voting to an even sharper degree. Only 38% of women now report being certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election, down from 45% last year and a peak of 59% two years ago. Even allowing for a likely improvement in these numbers as the next general election approaches, a 21 percentage point decline in just two years should be a cause of concern for all the political parties.

There has also been a significant drop – 19 percentage points – in the propensity to vote of Conservative party supporters. Last year, 72% of its supporters said they were certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election, a higher proportion than Labour (58%) or Liberal Democrat (59%) supporters who said the same. This year the propensity to vote of Labour and Liberal Democrats remains unchanged but among Conservative supporters has dropped to 53%. The likelihood of each party's supporters to vote in the event of a general election is therefore now broadly the same.

This change may reflect broad dissatisfaction within Conservative ranks at the direction of the coalition government and the leadership of David Cameron, both of which have been the subject of increasing public comment and criticism among even the most die-hard party supporters in the last year. Indeed, Conservative supporters are much less likely to hold a positive view of our system of government than they were previously (44% compared to 56% in Audit 9). In contrast, Labour supporters view the system of government more positively (rising to 28% from 17% in last year's Audit), perhaps reflecting the changing tide of each party's political fortunes. The gap in approval of the system of government between

¹ See Appendix A for guide to social grade definitions.

the two parties has thus narrowed to 16 percentage points, while the attitudes of Liberal Democrat supporters remain unchanged.

But the change in voting certainty may also reflect dissatisfaction generally across the political spectrum. That no more than six in 10 of each of the main parties' supporters is certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election hints at a broader rejection of what all of the parties have to offer: it is the 'plague on all their houses' witnessed in the mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections and successive by-elections in the last year.

18-24 year olds: an uncertain future for voting

The number of young people (18-24 year olds) certain to vote has declined 10 percentage points in a year (22% to 12%), although a greater decline (14 percentage points) is evident among all those aged 55+ (from 70% to 56%). In contrast, among those aged 25-54 there has been no statistically significant change.

While older groups remain engaged in respect of other measures, the worrying decline in propensity to vote among 18-24 year olds is buttressed by a decline in their engagement across a broad range of indicators. Only 30% say they would be willing to undertake some form of political action even if they felt strongly about an issue. Levels of interest in politics among this age group have declined to 24%, a decline of 12 percentage points in a year, and a decline from 42% just two years ago. Only 23% of 18-24 year olds claim to be knowledgeable about politics, down 11 percentage points in a year. There has also been an 11 percentage point drop (to 20%) in the number who claim to be knowledgeable about Parliament, a particularly disappointing figure given that last year there were suggestions that this indicator was improving. The interest of this youngest tranche in current affairs (62%) is also considerably below average. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, only 9% of this age group can correctly name their MP, compared to the national average of 22% and the 34% of those aged over 55 who can do so.

It is widely supposed that if a citizen votes at an early age, the more likely they are to continue voting in future elections. If only one in 10 first-time voters participate at the next election, the long-term prospects for the future of voting in this country could be severe.

The debate about reducing the voting age from 18 to 16 has been reignited this year as a result of the decision to give 16 and 17 year olds a vote in the Scottish independence referendum in the autumn of 2014. Worryingly, 23% of the public already think that 16 is the minimum age for voting at a general election, and a further 6% responded 'don't know' when asked. When this same political knowledge question was asked in Audit 7, 83% responded correctly, and 79% got it right in Audit 4. That only 71% now know what the minimum voting age is demonstrates a growing information and education gap on this issue. The revived debate about the matter in advance of the Scottish decision might have sown seeds of confusion in some people's minds, although noticeably not in Scotland itself (75% correct); its population was more likely than people in London (63%), the South East (61%) or the East Midlands (63%) to correctly identify that 16 is not the minimum voting age.

But these results raise broader, more important questions for proponents of a reduction in the voting age. Given the degree to which the current cohort of young people are increasingly turned off by the idea of using their vote, what exactly is going to be different about voting and politics generally that is going to engage their younger 16 and 17 year old brothers and sisters? It is illogical to assume that improvements in turnout will be generated simply by extending the franchise. Each voter – of whatever age – has to want to participate, to feel that by exercising their vote they can make a difference. But as the national Audit trends show, fewer and fewer people are convinced about the value of voting than at any point in the last decade.

Voter registration

Registration is an essential requirement in order to vote. Yet 10% of the public claim not to be registered to vote and a further 1% do not know whether they are registered or not. This 11% of citizens are unsurprisingly less likely to want to be involved in national decision-making (31%) than the national average (42%), less likely to be interested in politics (17%) than the national average (42%), to feel knowledgeable about politics (21% versus 42%), and to feel knowledgeable about Parliament (18% versus 37%). In contrast, however, they are not significantly less likely, statistically, to be satisfied with the system of government (23% versus 27%). More than 90% of those aged over 34 years claim to be registered to vote. However, among younger age groups it is a different picture: only 83% of those aged 25-34 and only two-thirds of 18-24 year olds (67%) claim to be registered. There is a similar split, albeit on less stark lines, in terms of social class: 95% of those in social classes AB claim to be registered, but only 83% of DEs claim the same.

What explains this picture is difficult to pin down but a number of factors suggest themselves. It is clear that there is a lack of knowledge across the board. Testing actual political knowledge through a series of quiz questions revealed that 36% of the public erroneously think 'you are automatically registered to vote if you pay council tax' and 9% 'don't know'. And even among the 88% who claim to be registered to vote, 37% think they are automatically registered if they have paid their council tax. A poll commissioned by the Electoral Commission, which was also conducted by TNS-BMRB in December 2012, explored satisfaction with the electoral registration system. It found that while 76% were satisfied with it, 5% were dissatisfied and, reflecting the theme of public lack of interest and disengagement in the Audit, a further 15% simply had no view one way or the other. Of those who were dissatisfied, 35% claimed to find the registration system difficult or confusing in some way and 30% found it inconvenient. Ten percent, however, indicated that they were dissatisfied specifically because 'there is no point in voting' and 'voting makes no difference'.²

Electoral participation is not the only indicator of a democracy's health, nor perhaps even the best one. But in our parliamentary system it is the foundation that underpins the principles of representation and accountability. We elect politicians locally and nationally

² Electoral Commission 2012 *Winter Research: Mainstage Topline Findings*, by TNS-BMRB, March 2013. Care should be taken in comparing this poll with the Audit results as the two were conducted using different methodologies. The Electoral Commission's study was conducted by telephone with 1,200 adults living in the UK aged 18+ between 7-10 December 2012. The Audit was conducted through an in-house, face-to-face survey with 1,128 adults living in GB aged 18+ the following week. For comparison, the Electoral Commission poll found that 95% of the public claimed to be registered to vote, whereas 88% claimed to be registered in the Audit survey.

for a set period and then have the opportunity to make a judgement at the end of the term about whether to return them or to 'kick the rascals out'. The sheer scale of the decline in certainty to vote in the last two years, coupled with the experience of the mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections, raises challenging issues for the future. If turnout at the next general election is realised along current certainty to vote lines then the credibility and viability of conventional politics as we know it may increasingly be called into question. And although it is hard to imagine that the certainty to vote of 18-24 year olds could get much lower, if the latest decline to 12% were simply to stabilise in the low-teens in the coming years, it would be difficult to argue that our political system is truly representative of, and accountable to, the youngest parts of the electorate.

Cognition and complexity

In previous Audits we have explored a range of core drivers that influence political engagement, particularly age, gender, social class and, in last year's report, the role of the media. This year, we have begun to tentatively explore whether a range of cognitive and psychological factors may play a role in levels of engagement. For example, the culture and process of our politics is partisan and combative and is perceived to be increasingly complex. If people feel conflicted and confused this would naturally lend itself to disengagement and disempowerment. To work, representative democracy requires the resolution of often conflicting views and interests. At its best it can be inspirational; at its worst perplexing and abstruse, but almost always at some point in the process the forging of co-operation and compromise is a prerequisite. Does a citizen's own personal approach to conflict, their willingness to assert their own knowledge and judgement, and their preferences for certain leadership styles thus have any bearing on their attitudes to politics? Or does access to resources – primarily knowledge (education), and time – play a more significant part in their thinking?

This year's results suggest that citizens generally don't seem unduly discomfited by the role that argument, evaluation and judgement necessarily plays in politics. Only 21% agree that 'when people argue about politics, I feel uncomfortable' and just 17% say that if they are in a group they will 'often go along with what the majority decides is best, even if it is not what I want personally'. Sixty-four percent say they do 'not take it personally when someone disagrees with my political views' and 53% claim that they can 'usually find it easy to see political issues from other people's point of view'. Unsurprisingly, then, citizens have a much greater preference for 'leaders who try to seek agreement from all interested groups' (78%), than those leaders who 'follow their instincts rather than consulting widely' (15%). This finding sits somewhat uneasily with the assertion of some political activists that what is missing today from our political system is a sense of certitude and bold, determined leadership.³ It also runs counter to the idea that the public don't like the nature of coalition politics.

³ Last year, two questions were asked alongside the Audit survey that shed further, though somewhat confusing, light on this matter. Seventy-two percent of the public said then that in their opinion politicians would help the country more if they stopped talking and just took action on the important problems we face. However, 76% said that it was important for politicians to discuss and debate things thoroughly before making any major policy changes. Similarly, although 69% agreed that openness to other people's views and a willingness to compromise are important, 56% thought that compromise was simply a selling out of one's principles.

Those people who are most certain to vote are more likely to claim not to take disagreements personally and to find it easy to see issues from another person's point of view than those who are unlikely to vote. In contrast, those who are certain not to vote are more likely to feel uncomfortable when people argue about politics, and to go along with what the majority decides is best, even if it is not what they want personally. They are also more likely to think that politics and government seem so complicated that a person like themselves cannot really understand what is going on.

Fifty-five percent of the public agree that politics and government seem so complicated that 'a person like me' cannot really understand what is going on; 23% are ambivalent on the issue (they 'neither agree nor disagree') and only 23% disagree. When over half the public acknowledge that they lack the proficiency to understand how politics works it should not be surprising that levels of interest, knowledge and participation are consequently in decline.

Women (60%) are much more likely than men (49%) to confirm that they find politics and government too complicated to understand at times. This is in keeping with women claiming lower perceived levels of knowledge about politics and Parliament than do men and being more likely to give 'don't know' answers to a series of political quiz questions. As the Audit has shown in the past, and again this year, when testing actual rather than perceived knowledge levels, women tend to underestimate their knowledge relative to men; but nonetheless perceived issue complexity is a barrier to their engagement.

Those in social classes C2DE are also more likely than average to regard the complexity of politics as a barrier to understanding; only 15% of them object to this notion, compared to 44% of those in the AB social classes. Taking an active interest in current affairs, however, appears to be no guarantee of greater understanding: those with a great deal of interest in current affairs are as likely to agree as disagree (44% each) that they find politics and government too complicated to understand.

This problem of assumed issue complexity should be considered in the context of the public's levels of political knowledge. The public's perceived level of knowledge about politics continues to flounder at 42% (those claiming at least a 'fair amount' of knowledge), and of Parliament at 37%. Levels of actual knowledge, as tested in the series of political knowledge quiz questions, show that knowledge has declined on every question when compared to results on the same questions in Audit 7 and Audit 4. On what are relatively straightforward questions, with a 50-50 chance of choosing the correct answer, knowledge levels are shockingly low.

Eighty-three percent of the public think there are a minimum number of days that MPs have to attend Parliament each year. Sixty-six percent don't recognise that most of the money that local councils spend is not raised locally through council tax. Similarly, 48% of the public don't appear to know that political parties in this country receive some state funding. Despite the level of political debate about Europe over the last year, 57% of the public are still unable to correctly identify that British members of the European Parliament are directly elected by British voters. And again, despite the extended debate about the future of the House of Lords throughout 2012, a third of the public (33%) cannot correctly

identify that members of the House of Lords are not elected. Forty-two percent of the public were unable to correctly identify that cabinet ministers don't stop being MPs when they become a minister and 39% either answered incorrectly or didn't know that government and Parliament are not the same thing. And, as previously mentioned, 45% of the public think they are automatically registered to vote if they pay council tax, and nearly three in 10 (29%) think that 16 is the minimum age for voting.

Given this knowledge deficit it is reassuring that almost half the population (47%) wish they had learned more 'about politics and how our democracy works' at school and that a third (31%) think that 'better information and education about politics for all citizens' would be one of the most important reforms that could be introduced to improve the political system.

Interestingly, what the public are most interested in learning about is national institutions and process: how government works (50%), how laws are made and implemented (45%), and how Parliament works (34%). Only 27% would have liked to learn more about 'how best to have my say about politics'. How the local council works interests just 23%, while fewer are concerned about policy and social issues (21%) or how the EU works (15%).

Fifty-seven percent of the public think that the only way to be really informed about politics is to get involved; a higher proportion than wish they had learned more about politics and democracy at school. More citizens appear to think that the way to address their knowledge deficit and the problem of issue complexity is to actually immerse themselves in the process. This would suggest that teaching and learning about politics will likely be most successful if it focuses on the development and application of practical citizenship and political literacy skills.

After a significant dip last year, the desire to get involved appears to have reasserted itself: this year there has been a nine percentage point recovery in the number of people who would like to be involved in local decision-making (47%) and a nine percentage point increase in those who would like to be involved in national decision-making (42%). Sixty-three percent of the public say that if they are dissatisfied with political decisions they have a duty to do something about it, and 60% agree that every citizen should get involved in politics if democracy is to work properly. However, in practice, only 29% think that giving 'citizens more of a say (e.g. more referendums, more consultation)' would be a reform that would bring about significant improvement in the political system. And even if they felt strongly about an issue, only 41% say they would be willing to contact their elected representative; 35% to sign a paper petition; 14% to take an active part in a campaign or participate in a consultation; and 10% to attend a political meeting.

As found in previous Audits, the resource of time is an important barrier even to low levels of activity: 54% of the public say they 'don't have enough time to get involved in politics'. Half the population think that 'participating in politics is not much fun' although just over a quarter (28%) have no set view (neither agree nor disagree), suggesting that there is scope for people's minds to change one way or another if only they actually got involved sufficiently to find out. Only 44% of the public say they 'enjoy working with other people on common problems in our community', and here more people are simply ambivalent – 34% neither agree nor disagree – than are negatively disposed to working together in this way.

But one way that the public don't appear to want to get involved is by standing for election to be a local or national representative themselves. Only 6% claim that the political system would be improved by electing 'more people like me as MPs'; a proposition that came ninth out of nine possible options offered to all respondents as a route to reform and improve politics. The public are clearly dissatisfied with the job that MPs are doing and to an even greater degree today than they were in the immediate aftermath of the parliamentary expenses scandal. Only 23% are satisfied with the way that MPs generally are doing their job and only 34% say the same about their own local MP, both figures being lower than at any other time in the Audit series. But here – and perhaps quite strongly related to the intertwined knowledge deficit and perceived issue complexity – 55% of the public don't think that 'a person like me could do a good job as a local MP', and 49% say the same about being a local councillor. So whilst being dissatisfied with the job that the current generation of elected representatives is doing, there is perhaps an underlying acceptance that the job is challenging and difficult and not something that 'ordinary' people necessarily have the aptitude for. Alternatively, given the public's perception of politics and MPs generally, perhaps it is simply that elected representatives are seen as somehow different to people 'like me'; a distant and alien political class.

Between November 2011 and March 2012 we conducted 14 focus groups across the country, meeting with 153 voters to talk about their perceptions of the political system and what they would most like to change in order to improve it.⁴ All told we received 459 suggestions for reform that we subsequently categorised into nine broad groups. What was remarkable about this list was that it bore so little resemblance to what the political parties and politicians talk about in terms of a political reform agenda. Constitutional changes were very low down on the public's list of priorities. For them, making politics more transparent so that it is more understandable, making politicians more accountable for their performance between elections, and better information and education about politics for all citizens were much more important and headed their list of preferences. In this year's Audit we tested these preferences and priorities to assess whether the findings of the focus groups were reflected nationwide some months later. The results are compelling: the list of priorities in this Audit largely does reflect the preferences that emerged during the discussion groups. Constitutional changes such as electoral reform or an elected House of Lords, for example, were thought to be a priority by only 8% of the respondents. In contrast, heading the list of reforms, 48% of the public want to 'make politics more transparent so that it is easier to follow', 39% want to 'make politicians more accountable for their performance', and 32% want 'better information and education about politics for all citizens'. Again, this prioritisation reflects and reinforces a concern with complexity and a lack of knowledge that needs to be addressed.

⁴ The focus groups were conducted jointly with Professors Colin Hay (University of Sheffield) and Gerry Stoker (University of Southampton). The work was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-00-22-441, 'Anti-politics: Characterising and accounting for political disaffection'). See Hansard Society (2012), *Audit of Political Engagement 9: The 2012 report; Part one*, Appendix C (London: Hansard Society), pp.97-98, for more details about this qualitative research.

4. The engagement indicators and survey results

This chapter presents the results of the political engagement indicators explored in this year's Audit in relation to knowledge and interest, action and participation, and efficacy and satisfaction. It compares the results with previous years and, where marked or interesting changes have occurred, provides a breakdown of the data in relation to gender, age, social class, ethnicity and party political persuasion. It also presents questions relating to cognition, conflict avoidance, education about politics and the public's priorities for reform.

A. Knowledge and interest

Audit 8, conducted two years ago in the wake of the 2010 general election, saw the public's interest in politics and knowledge of politics reach their highest levels since the start of the Audit series. However, one year later, both measures declined dramatically and these low levels of interest and knowledge have persisted this year.

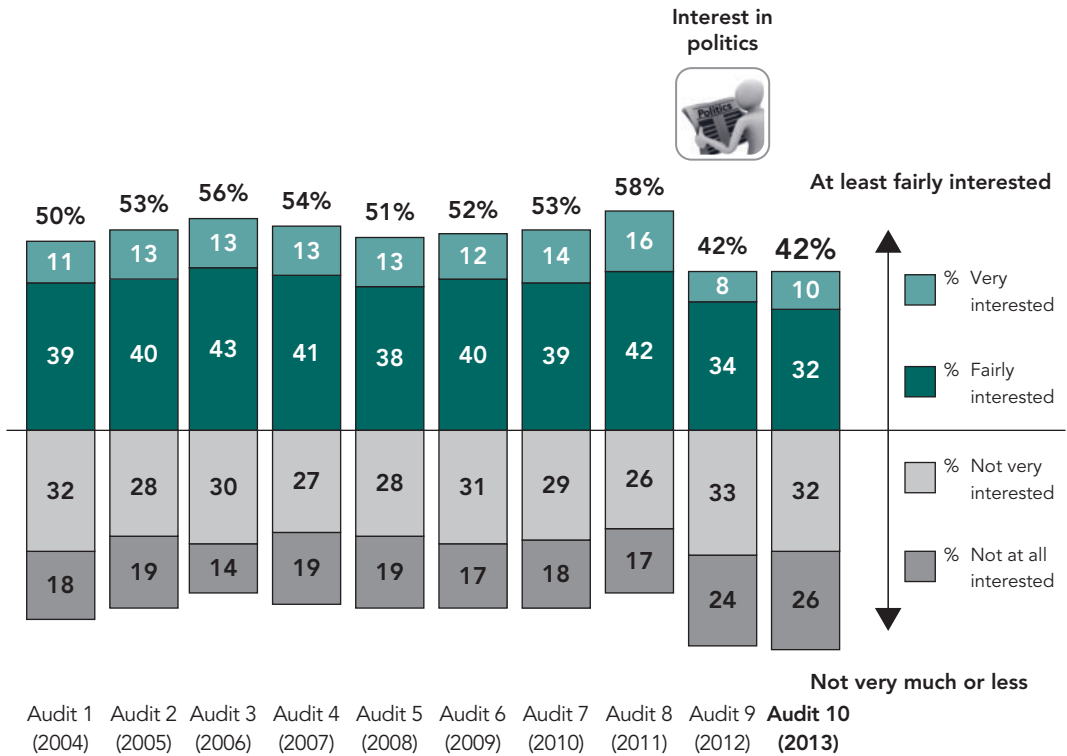
Interest in politics

The public's reported interest in politics remains at its lowest level in the 10 years of the Audit series. There has been no change in the last year – just 42% of the public say that they are 'very' or 'fairly' interested in politics.

Worryingly the levels of interest among young people have dropped markedly over the last two Audits. In Audit 8, 42% of 18-24 year olds said they were interested in politics. A year later this had dropped to 36%, and this year's report finds that only a quarter of 18-24 year olds (24%) now say they are interested in politics – markedly lower than any other age group.

Figure 2: 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.

Interest amongst the AB social classes has recovered since last year's dip (from 62% in Audit 9 to 74% this year), but other social classes continue to report much lower levels of interest: C1s (43%), C2s (36%) and DEs (30%). People who own their own home (either outright or with a mortgage) claim higher levels of interest (50%) compared to renters (29% for those renting social housing and 33% for those in private rental accommodation).

As in previous years, men are more likely to say they are interested in politics (46%) than women (38%). The disparity in interest levels between white citizens and BMEs that has been evident in past Audits closed last year and there is no significant difference again this year.

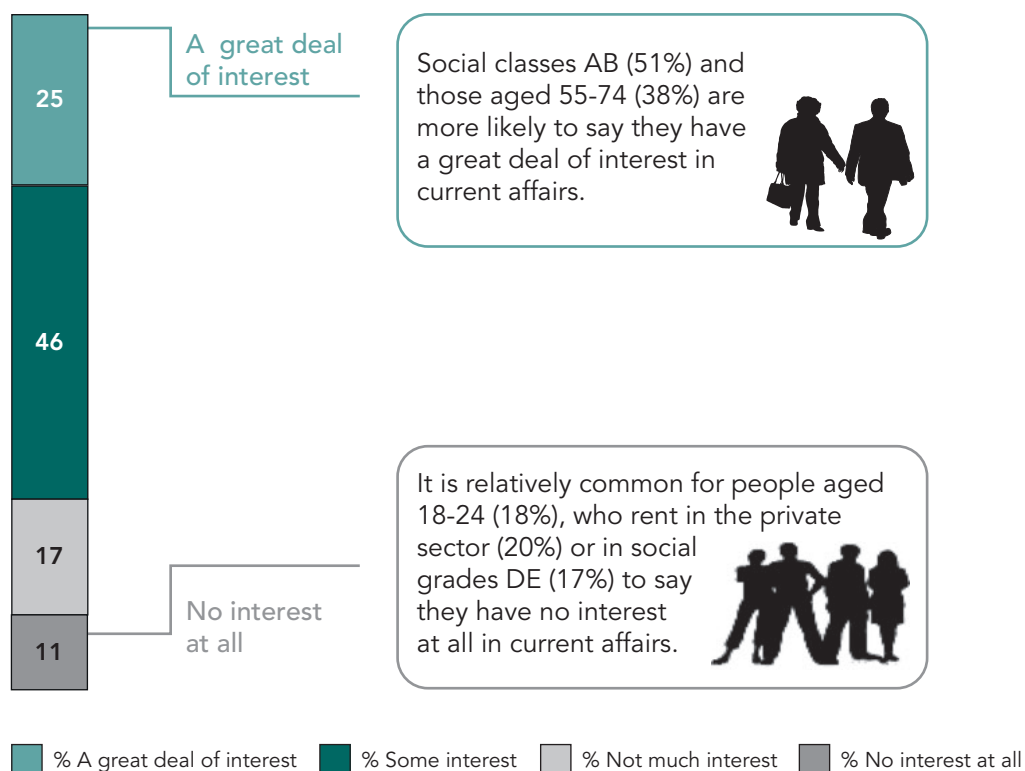
Levels of interest amongst supporters of the three main parties remain unchanged, with Conservative supporters still reporting to be the most interested in politics (68%), followed by Labour (51%) and Liberal Democrat (43%) supporters.

Interest in news and current affairs

Despite the low levels of interest in politics, a majority of the public say they are interested in news and current affairs (71%).

Figure 3: Interest in news and current affairs

Q How much interest do you take in news and current affairs?



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Almost all ABs (92%) say they are interested in news and current affairs, as are more than three-quarters of C1s (79%), compared to 70% of C2s and 60% of DEs.

As with interest in politics, young people express less interest in news and current affairs. Only 62% of 18-34 year olds say they are interested in current affairs compared to 77% of those aged over 35. The gap between men and women's interest in news is smaller than for interest in politics: 74% of men say they are interested in current affairs, compared to 69% of women.

BMEs have a slightly greater interest in news and current affairs (78%) compared to white people (71%), while people who own their own homes are noticeably more likely to say they are interested (80%) than those who rent (61%).

Unsurprisingly, almost everyone who is interested in politics is also interested in news and current affairs (just 8% say they are not). However, almost half (47%) of those who say they are interested in current affairs are 'not very' or 'not at all' interested in politics, and this

group makes up one third (33%) of the public overall. Given that politics permeates news and current affairs to a significant degree, it may be the partisan, 'overtly political' news that this group are turned off by. But if the right messages and tools could be found to positively link politics to their existing news interests, this group might conceivably be open to greater engagement in the future.

As a proportion of the population, this group is composed of more women (36%) than men (31%) and higher proportions of C1s (39%), C2s (37%) and DEs (34%) than ABs (18%). They are less likely to have done any of the political activities identified in the Audit and they express lower levels of willingness to consider doing any of them in the future than do the remaining two-thirds of the public. They are also less likely to be able to name their MP correctly and, on all but one of the knowledge quiz questions, they do worse (or no better) than the remaining two-thirds of the public.

They are slightly more likely to read tabloid newspapers (38%) than average (32%) and less likely to read broadsheets (13%) than average (23%). People in this group are less likely to say they would like to be involved in national decision-making (35%) than average (42%), but their desire for local involvement and existing feelings of influence at local or national levels are about average.

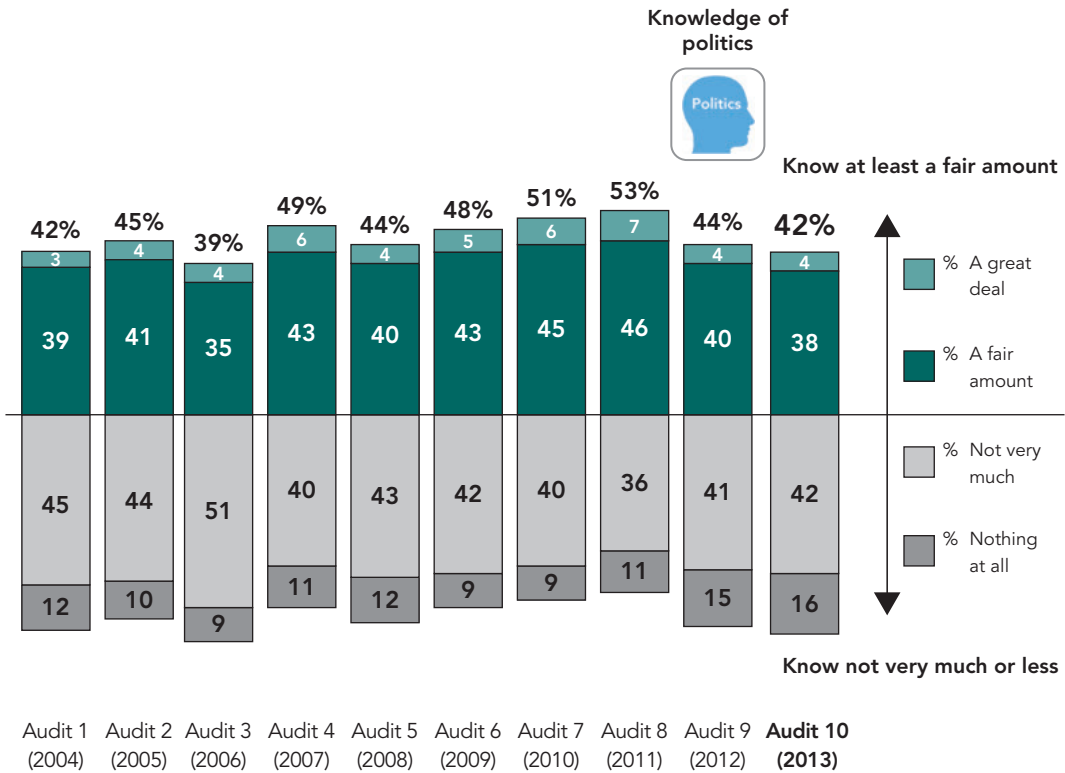
This group is slightly less likely to be satisfied with the way Parliament works (21%) than average (27%), with the way MPs in general do their jobs (18%) than average (23%) and with their own MP (25%) than average (32%).

Perceived knowledge of politics

Around two-fifths of the British public (42%) claim they know at least 'a fair amount' about politics, the second lowest figure for this question in the 10 years of the Audit. In the last two years more people than ever before say they know 'nothing at all' about politics.

Figure 4: 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.

As in previous years, men claim a greater knowledge of politics (52%) than women (35%), and ABs are considerably more likely to feel knowledgeable about politics (71%), compared to C1s (43%) and C2DEs (34%).

Younger age groups remain less knowledgeable about politics, with just a quarter (23%) of 18-24 year olds and a third (33%) of 25-34 year olds saying they know at least 'a fair amount', compared to half (50%) of those aged 35 or above. As with interest in politics, the figure for 18-24 year olds has declined since last year, down 11 percentage points.

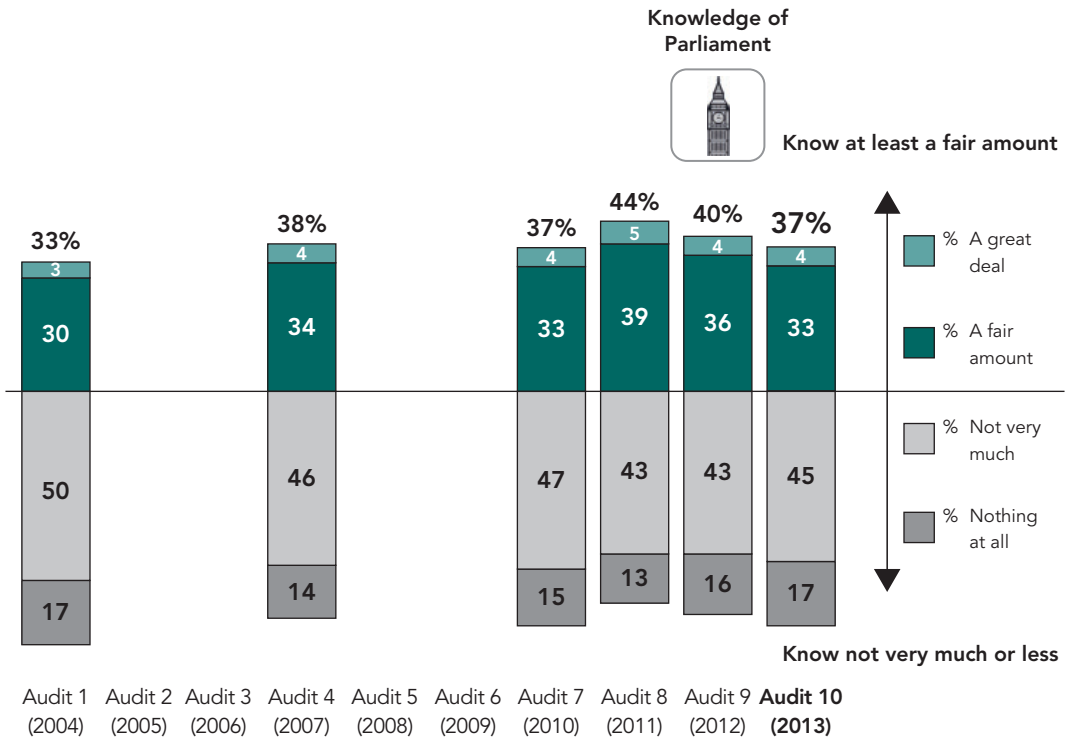
As was the case last year, BMEs are more likely to feel knowledgeable (47%) than white people (42%), as are Conservative party supporters (63%) compared to supporters of both the Labour party (49%) and the Liberal Democrats (35%).

Perceived knowledge of Parliament

Perceived knowledge of Parliament remains broadly steady, with nearly two-fifths (37%) of the public saying they feel they know at least 'a fair amount' about the UK Parliament.

Figure 5: 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.

Men report considerably higher levels of knowledge of Parliament (48%) than women (28%) – a bigger disparity than is evident in claimed knowledge of politics generally – and a greater proportion of BMEs (44%) feel knowledgeable about Parliament than do white people (36%).

Two-thirds of ABs (66%) say they know at least ‘a fair amount’ about Parliament – a recovery from a 10 percentage point decline to 58% last year – and significantly more than the 37% of C1s, 31% of C2s and 28% of DEs who say the same.

After a steady rise since the first Audit in the proportion of 18-24 year olds saying they know at least ‘a fair amount’ about Parliament, this year it has declined to 20% (down 11 percentage points on last year). This is markedly lower than the 30% of 25-34 year olds, and the 40% or more of older age groups, who say the same.

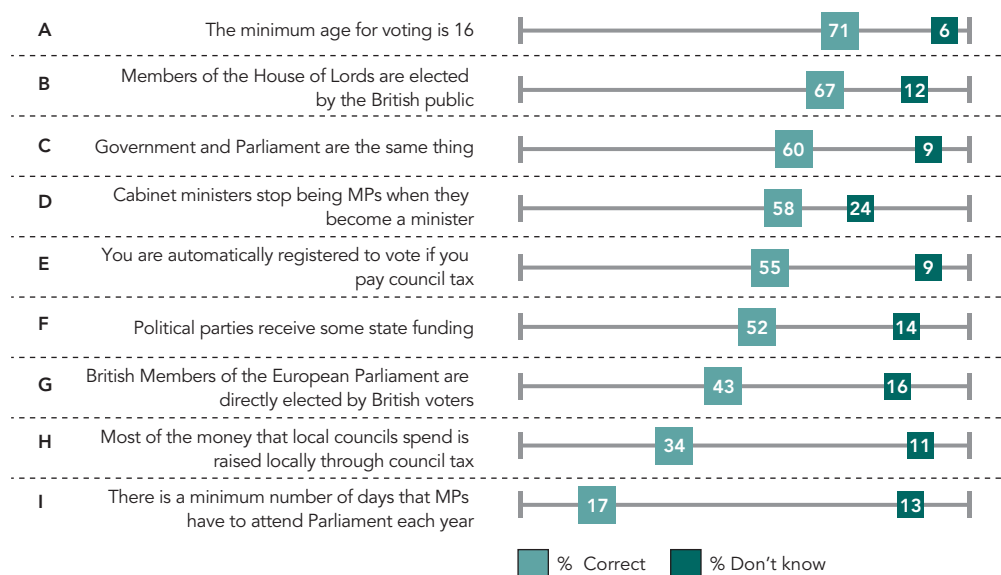
Political knowledge quiz

Respondents’ political knowledge was assessed through a political quiz, similar to quizzes asked previously in Audits 1, 4 and 7. The questions were chosen to cover a wide variety of aspects of the political system at the local, national and European level, and updated

those used previously so issues of particular interest for this Audit could be included. Each consisted of a factual statement that respondents were asked to assess as true or false. Seven of the nine questions used were asked three years ago in Audit 7, including one that has been simplified slightly. Two of these seven were also asked in Audit 4.

Figure 6: Political quiz

Q Please tell me if you think that the following statements are true or false.



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

The question that the public most often get right is identifying that the minimum age for voting is not 16. However, it is less than three-quarters of the public (71%) who accurately reject this statement and this is a decline of 12 percentage points from Audit 7. There is no suggestion in the data that the upcoming referendum in Scotland on independence, in which 16 year olds will be able to vote, has had any effect, as people in Scotland are no more or less likely than average to know the correct answer.

Despite the debate on reform of the House of Lords which rumbled on through most of 2012, only two-thirds (67%) of the public are aware that its members are not elected – a decline from 74% who got this correct three years ago in Audit 7. Just over half the public (55%), know that you are not automatically registered to vote if you pay council tax, a decline from the 62% who were aware of this three years ago.

Forty-three percent of the public know that British Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by British voters. The wording of this question is more straightforward than was used in Audit 7, when people were asked whether British Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by British voters every five years, but despite this

simplification the proportion of the public giving the correct reply has still declined from the 56% who knew the right answer previously.

There has been no significant change in the last three years in the proportion of the public who know that government and Parliament are not the same thing (60%), that Cabinet ministers do not stop being MPs when they become a minister (58%) and that most of the money that local councils spend is not raised locally through council tax (34%). A quarter of the public (24%) admit they 'don't know' in relation to the question about Cabinet ministers, and this too is in line with the 29% who said the same three years ago.

Only half the public (52%) are aware that political parties currently receive some state funding – a finding which suggests that if any future reform of party funding is to receive public backing it will need to be accompanied by greater efforts to inform people about how parties currently operate. It is also interesting to note that there is a misconception amongst ABs and older people (two of the most knowledgeable groups) regarding the state funding of parties. Fewer than half of ABs (47%) and people aged 45-74 (47%) get this question right, compared to the national average of 52%.

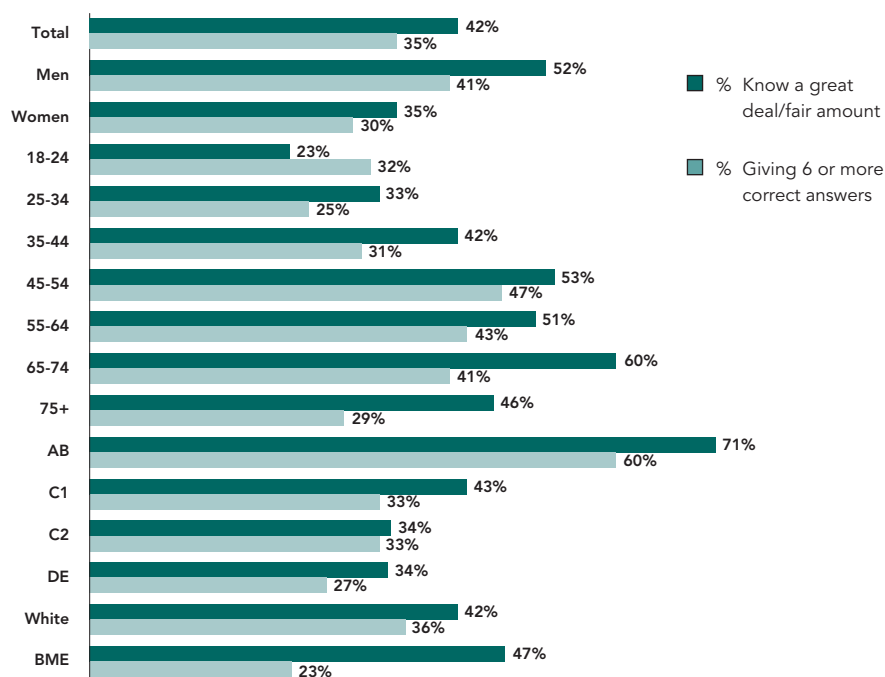
Just 17% of the public are aware that there is not a minimum number of days that MPs have to attend Parliament each year. Reflecting on this result suggests that the wording of this question may not be sufficiently clear. While it is true that there is no requirement for an MP to attend Parliament on any set days, there are considerable expectations of attendance (from party, public and the media) and it may be that this is interpreted by the public as a requirement.

People's assessment of their level of knowledge appears to be only fairly accurate, with just half (52%) of those who say they know 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' about politics scoring six or more correct answers out of nine on the quiz.

Figure 7: Knowledge of politics – claimed vs. actual

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

Q Please tell me if you think that the following statements are true or false.



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Men are more likely to get six or more correct answers to these questions (41%) than women (30%) and are more likely to give the right answers for statements B, D, G and I, while women do not outperform men on any of the questions and were almost always more likely to say 'don't know'. However, even excluding all those who gave 'don't know' responses to any of the questions, men (54%) still outscore women (43%) by 11 percentage points in terms of getting six or more correct answers. This gap is, however, smaller than the 17 percentage point difference in perceived knowledge between men and women identified in the earlier question, and suggests that there is some over-estimation on the part of men or under-estimation by women when assessing their own understanding of politics.

Social class is the most significant factor in relation to the quiz questions. ABs score an average of 5.7 out of 9, compared to 4.6 for C1s, 4.5 for C2s and 4.1 for DEs. Older age groups are more likely to score highly than younger ones, with those aged 45-64 most knowledgeable (5.0), although it is notable that 18-24 year olds (4.3) do better than 25-34 year olds (4.0) and are the only group to underestimate their knowledge in the comparison made in Figure 7. Despite BMEs feeling more knowledgeable about politics than white people, their average score of 4.1 is lower than the 4.6 score recorded by white citizens.

B. Action and participation

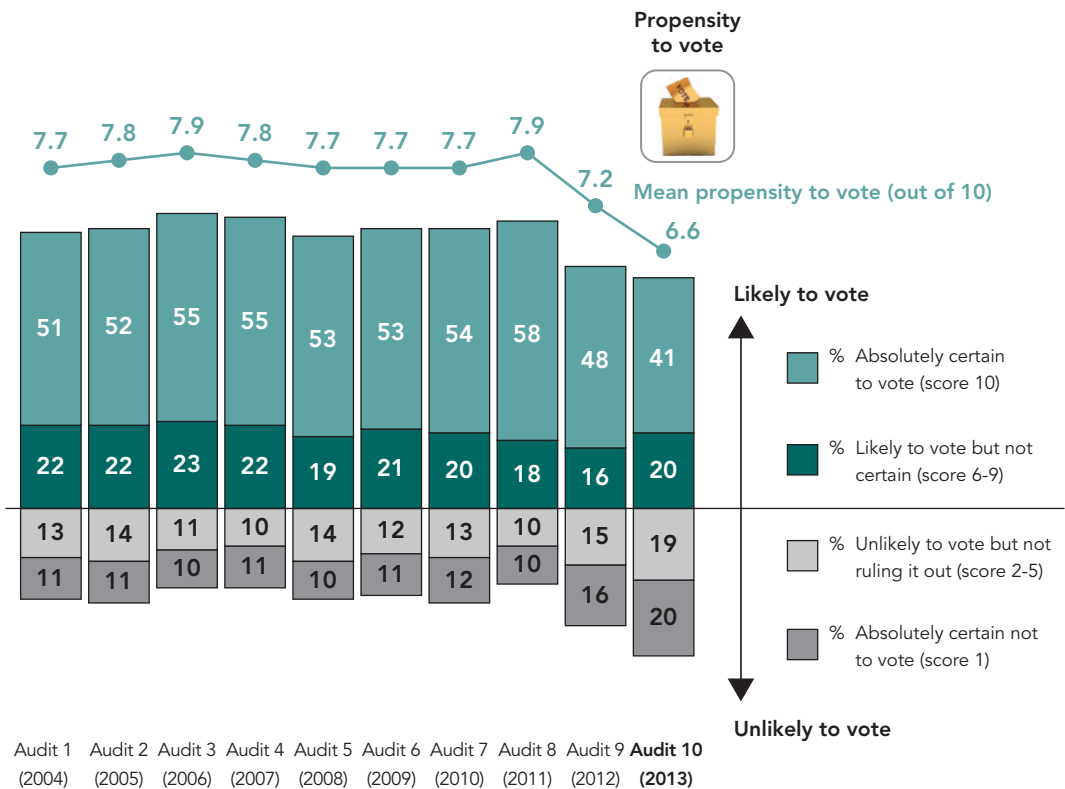
There has been a further decline in people’s propensity to vote, the second significant annual drop in succession. For the first time the Audit also looks not just at what political activities people claim to have done in the last year, but what activities they say they would be willing to do in the future if they felt strongly enough about an issue and charts the interesting differences between actual and potential participation.

Propensity to vote

There has been a significant decline in the proportion of the public who say that they would be certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election. Last year, for the first time in the Audit series, less than half the public (48%) said they were certain to vote; this year that figure is lower still, with just 41% now certain to do so.

Figure 8: 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.

The most concerning aspect of this decline is the finding that just 12% of 18-24 year olds now say they are certain to vote. This is a 10 percentage point fall in the last year, and a decline from the 30% recorded in Audit 8.

While those in older age groups remain more likely to vote, significant decreases in certainty are evident here as well. Just half of 55-64 year olds say they are certain to vote (51%), compared to 70% in Audit 9, and one-fifth of people in this age group (20%) say they are certain not to vote. Over-75s, usually some of the most reliable voters, are not immune – just 59% say they are now certain to vote, down from 68% last year.

The sharp drop in certainty to vote is evident among both men (from 51% in Audit 9 to 44% today) and women (from a peak of 59% in Audit 8, to 45% in Audit 9 and just 38% this year).

The decline is also evident at both ends of the social class spectrum. Certainty to vote amongst ABs has fallen from 65% in Audit 9 to 54% this year, and for DEs from 43% to 35%. The pattern still holds that ABs are more likely to vote (54%) than C1s (43%), C2s (38%) or DEs (35%). One quarter (26%) of DEs now say they are certain not to vote.

Certainty to vote has also declined amongst Conservative supporters, down from 72% last year to 53%. Unlike in previous years, there is now no significant difference between Conservative supporters and Labour supporters (58% of whom are certain to vote), although a smaller percentage of Liberal Democrat supporters now say the same (43%).

There are no significant geographical differences in voting propensity, except for Scotland, which is the only region in which half the public (52%) say they are certain to vote.

Certainty is higher amongst owner-occupiers (53% of those who own their home outright are certain to vote, as are 45% of those with a mortgage) than it is among people in social rented housing (37%) and those in the private rental sector (27%).

Voter registration

The overwhelming majority of the British public say they are registered to vote (88%), either where they are currently living (83%) or at another address (5%).

However, only two-thirds of 18-24 year olds say they are registered to vote (67%), compared to 83% of 25-34 year olds and more than 90% of all other age groups. People in social class DE are also less likely to be registered (83%), compared to more than 90% of those in all other social classes, as are BMEs, only 78% of whom are registered.

People who are not registered to vote are, unsurprisingly, much less politically engaged than average. They are less likely to be interested in politics (17%), to feel knowledgeable about it (21%), and to feel that Parliament is essential to democracy (44%). They are also less likely to want to be involved in either local decision-making (34%) or national decision-making (31%). However, they are more likely than average to say they would have liked to learn more about politics and democracy at school (60%).

Political activities

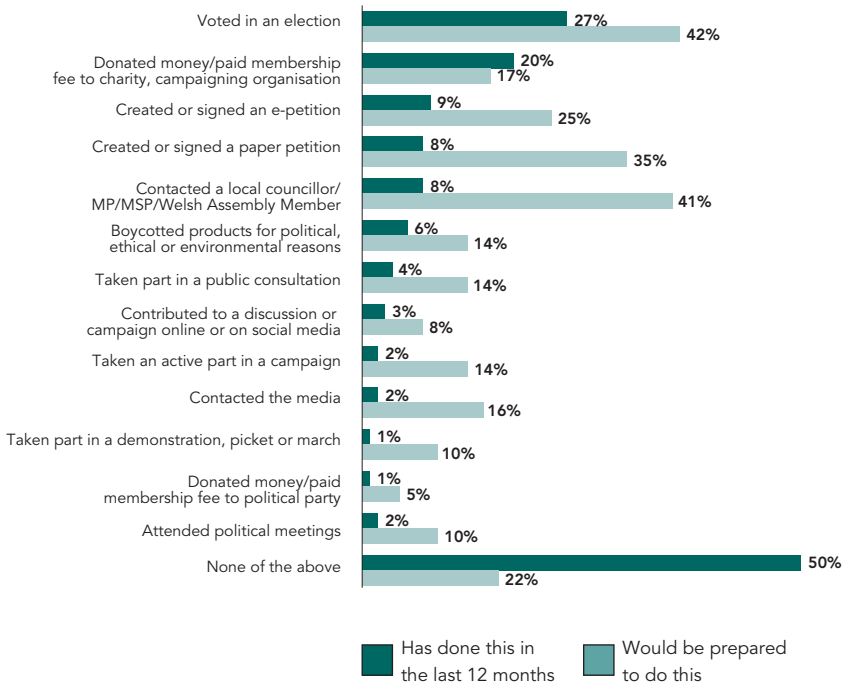
This year, our approach to assessing political activities has changed in order to facilitate a better exploration of what activities people actually have done and what activities they might consider doing in the future. The focus has been placed on forms of political rather

than civic participation, and a number of the questions were newly created, significantly amended, or combined, to build a list containing a broad range of 13 different types of activity. Respondents were asked which of these activities they had actually done in the previous 12 months, not the last two or three years used to define the parameters of this question in previous Audits. The results are therefore not directly comparable with those in Audits 1-9. Of these same activities, respondents were then asked which they would be prepared to do if they felt strongly enough about an issue.

Figure 9: 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: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Half the public (50%) have undertaken at least one of these activities in the last year, with voting in an election (27%) and donating money to a charity or campaign organisation (20%) the most common. Fewer than one in 10 people have created or signed either an e-petition (9%) or paper petition (8%) or contacted an elected representative (8%).

The activities people are most likely to say they would do are vote (42%) and contact an elected representative (41%). There is greater willingness to utilise a paper petition (35%)

than there is an e-petition (25%), despite the relatively high profile of the government/parliamentary e-petitions system during the last year. Donating money to a charity or campaign organisation is the one undertaking where actual activity roughly matches the likely potential to do so in the future.

Young people are more likely to say they have done none of these activities (71% of 18-24 year olds say this) and would not be prepared to do any of them even if they felt strongly about an issue (30%).

Men and women are equally likely to undertake the various activities, although women are more prepared to donate to a charity or campaign organisation in future (21%) and to sign paper petitions on issues they feel strongly about (37%) than men (13% and 31% respectively).

Two-thirds of ABs (67%) have done at least one political activity in the past year, compared to half of C1s (51%) and C2s (49%) and 43% of DEs. ABs also show greater willingness to undertake any of the activities in the future, particularly contacting the media (26%), taking part in a campaign (26%), and attending political meetings (20%) or demonstrations (17%).

BME citizens are less likely to have donated to charity (12%) or boycotted a product (3%) than white people (20% and 7% respectively), and they are less willing to undertake any of the listed activities in the future, despite having a greater professed belief in the efficacy of getting involved in politics than white people.



People in the North East are the most politically active this year. 76% have done at least one of the listed activities and they are the most likely to say they will undertake one of them in the future (88%). People in the East Midlands are the least active. Just 38% say they have done one of the activities. Those in London are the least willing; only 72% say they might do one of the activities in the future.

C. Efficacy and satisfaction

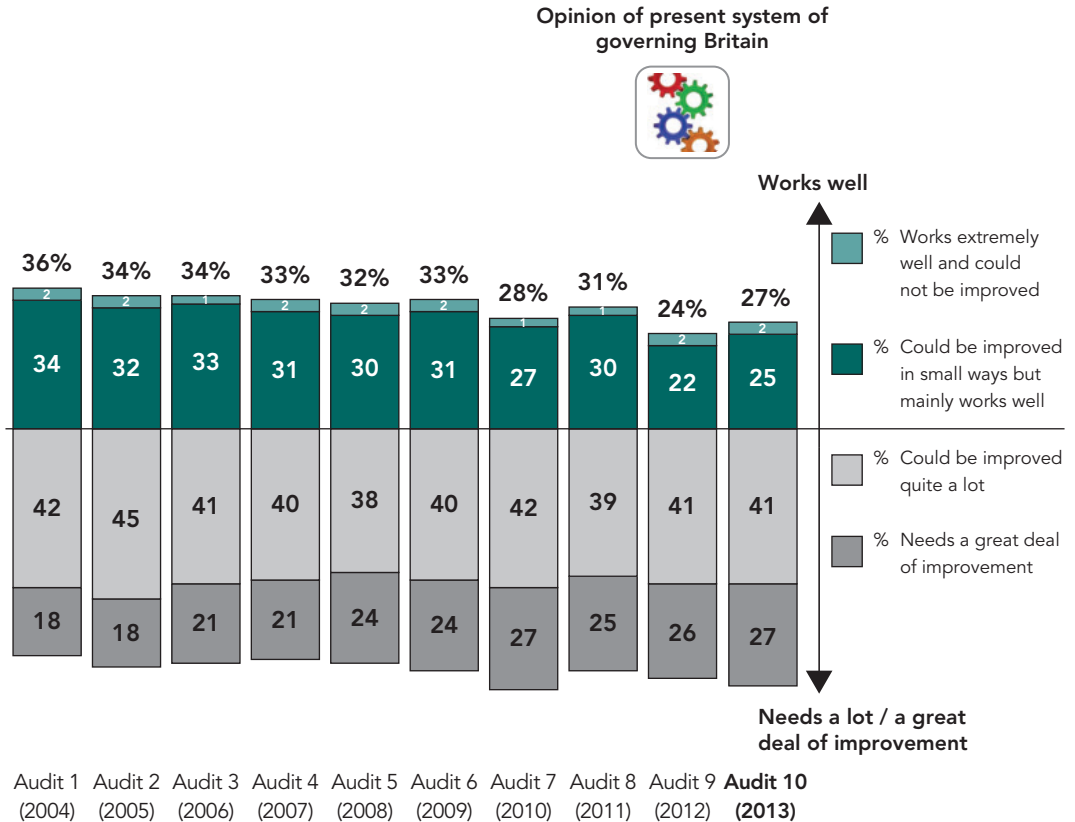
There has been no statistically significant change in the public's satisfaction with the system of governing or their belief in the efficacy of getting involved in politics since last year, although both remain near their lowest ever levels.

Present system of governing

Just over a quarter of the public (27%) think that the system of governing in Britain works 'extremely' or 'mostly' well. The 3% change from last year is not statistically significant, and it remains the second lowest result for this question over the 10 years of the Audit.

Figure 10: 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.

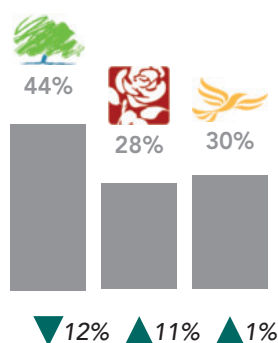
As has been the case in most previous years, men are slightly more likely to say that the system of governing works well (30%) than are women (24%). There has been a noticeable rise in satisfaction amongst 18-24 year olds over the last two years, from the 18% in Audit 8 to the 25% recorded last year to 34% in this latest study, making them the most positive age group on this indicator. There has also been a significant increase in satisfaction amongst BMEs, up to 31% from 21% last year, making them more content with the system of governing than white people (26%).

ABs remain more satisfied with the system of governing (41%) than C1s (34%), C2s (23%) or DEs (17%). People paying back a mortgage are amongst the most positive about the current system of governing (34%), while social tenants have much lower approval rates (17%).

Labour supporters are more positive about the system of governing than last year (rise from 17% to 28%), while the reverse is true for Conservative supporters (down from 56% to 44%). This means the gap in approval between political parties has narrowed to just 16 points, compared to last year's 39 points. The views of Liberal Democrat supporters remain steady, with 30% agreeing that the system works well.

Satisfaction with the system of governing

has declined among Conservative supporters this year, and increased for Labour supporters, although Conservatives are still more satisfied overall than supporters of the other parties. The attitude of Liberal Democrat supporters is unchanged.



% change since Audit 9

Disapproval is most common amongst those living in the North East, of whom half (52%) feel 'a great deal' of improvement is needed. Interestingly, people in the North East are also the most politically active this year. In contrast, people in the South West are the most content (36%).

As in previous years, people who are interested in politics

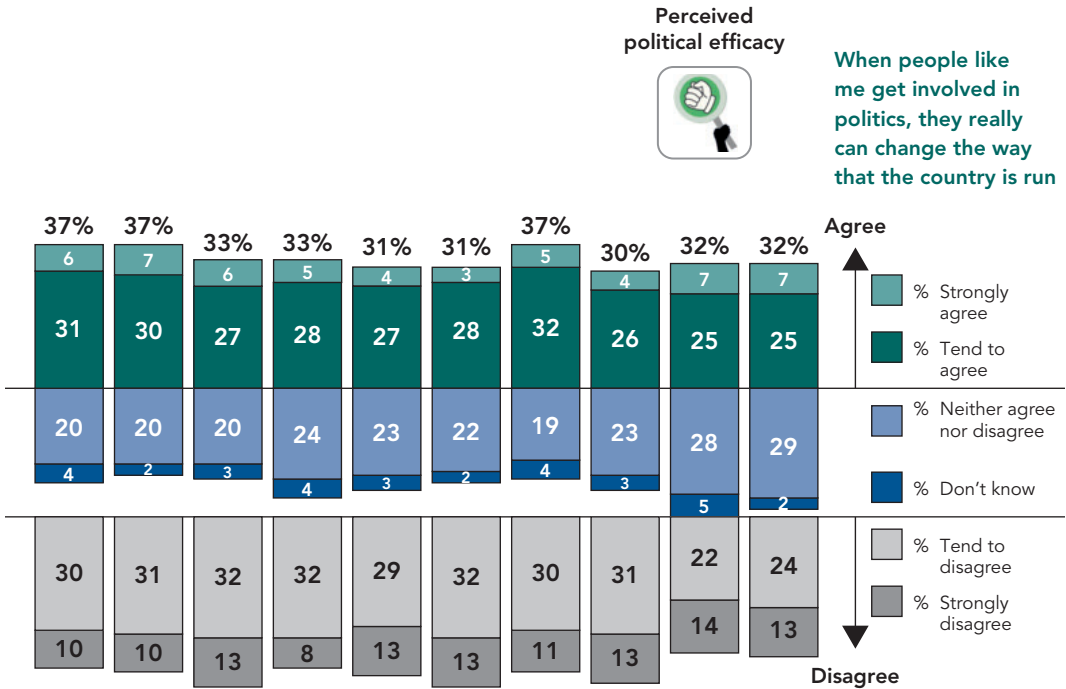
(37%) or feel knowledgeable about politics (35%) are more likely to think the system works well than those who do not (20% and 21% respectively).

Perceived political efficacy

There has been no change in public perceptions of the efficacy of getting involved in politics, with one third (32%) saying that when people like them get involved in politics they really can change the way the country is run. Throughout the Audit series, around a third of the public has agreed with the view that participation in the political arena by themselves or people like them can have a discernible effect on how the country is run, and it remains the most stable indicator over the 10 years.

Figure 11: Perceived national political efficacy

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?



Audit 1 (2004) Audit 2 (2005) Audit 3 (2006) Audit 4 (2007) Audit 5 (2008) Audit 6 (2009) Audit 7 (2010) Audit 8 (2011) Audit 9 (2012) **Audit 10 (2013)**

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

As in previous years, there is very little difference between different groups in their response to this question. The one marked disparity is the continued higher levels of agreement with this statement by BME respondents (43%) than white people (32%).

People who say they are certain to vote are more likely to feel that their involvement can be effective (38%) than average, and much more so than those certain not to vote (24%). Unsurprisingly, people who disagree that politics is a waste of time or who say that the only way to be informed about politics is to get involved are more likely to agree with this statement (41% and 39% respectively).

D. Cognition, complexity, education and reform

This year's Audit explores for the first time whether a range of cognitive and psychological factors may play a role in levels of engagement, exploring issues such as responses to conflict, application of judgement, approaches to leadership and the degree to which perceived issue complexity contributes to disengagement. It then explores the extent to which the public would welcome more in-depth education about politics and democracy and what their preferred agenda of reform might look like.

Cognition and conflict avoidance

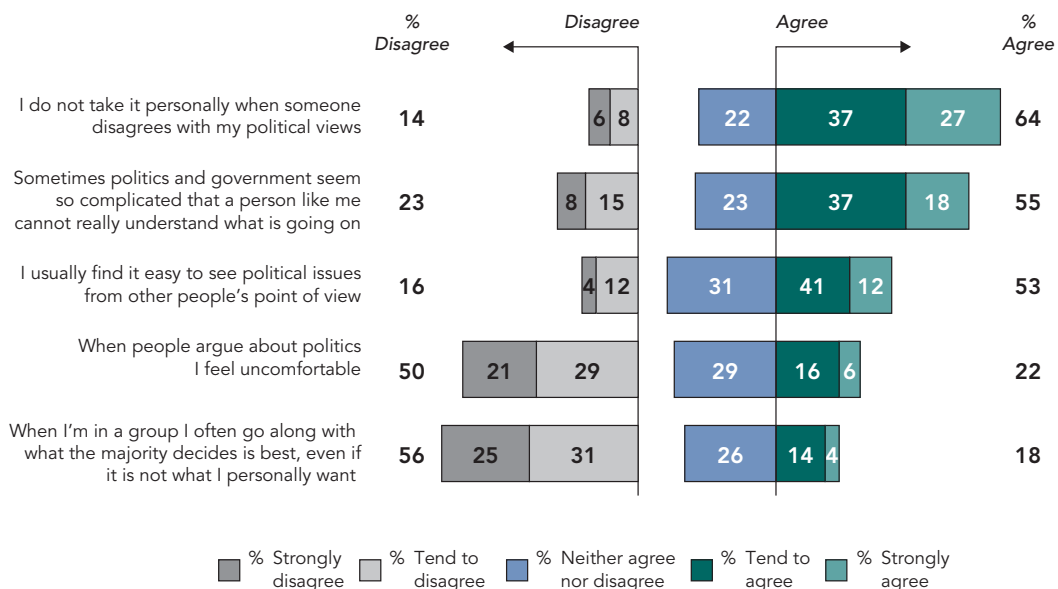
Almost two-thirds of the public (64%) say that they do not take it personally when someone disagrees with their political views and just over half the public (53%) say that they usually find it easy to see political issues from other people's point of view.

Around a fifth of the public (22%) say that people arguing about politics makes them feel uncomfortable, and a similar proportion (18%) say that they will follow the wishes of a group even if it is not what they want.

More than half the public (55%) say they find politics and government complicated.

Figure 12: Cognition and conflict avoidance

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Very few people say that they do take political disagreement personally (14%) and there are no particular groups of people who are more likely to say this. However, people who are

less engaged by other measures are more likely to 'neither agree nor disagree' with this statement, including 37% of those certain not to vote, 39% of those not registered and 39% of those not interested in current affairs.

People in higher social classes are more likely to say that they do not take political disagreement personally. Eighty-two percent of ABs agree with this statement, compared to 71% of C1s, 55% of C2s and 58% of DEs. This again is largely due to more than a quarter of C2s (27%) and DEs (28%) saying they 'neither agree nor disagree'.

When it comes to understanding the political views of others, slightly more men (56%) than women (51%) say they find this easy. Across the social classes more ABs (66%), than C1s (59%), C2s (50%) or DEs (44%) agree with this proposition, as do more white people (54%) compared to BMEs (48%).

People who are engaged according to other measures are more likely to say they find understanding other people's points of view easy. Sixty-six percent of those who are interested in politics, 63% of those who feel knowledgeable about politics and 62% of those who are certain to vote agree with this statement. Those who think that politics is a waste of time (45%) are less likely to agree, as are those who are not registered to vote (27%).

Women are more likely to say that politics is complicated and hard to understand (59%) than men (49%), as are those in the oldest age groups – 61% of 65-74 year olds and 62% of those aged 75 and above agree with this statement. ABs are less likely than average to say they find politics complicated (41%), whereas the other social classes have roughly average responses to this question.

The groups most likely to find politics complicated are those who feel uncomfortable arguing about politics (73%), and those who say that politics is a waste of time (68%) or not much fun (67%). Interestingly, those people who say that the only way to be informed about politics is to be involved, are more likely to agree that they find politics complicated (67%) than those who are not inclined to say this (45%).

A quarter of women say that people arguing about politics makes them uncomfortable (25%) compared to 17% of men who say the same. Older age groups are also more likely to say this, with around a quarter of 65-74 year olds (27%) and those aged 75 or above (25%) agreeing with this statement.

People who are interested in (17%) or who feel knowledgeable about (16%) politics are less likely than average to say that politics makes them uncomfortable. Whereas higher proportions of people who say that participating in politics is not much fun (27%) or who find politics complicated (28%) are likely to agree that it does make them uncomfortable.

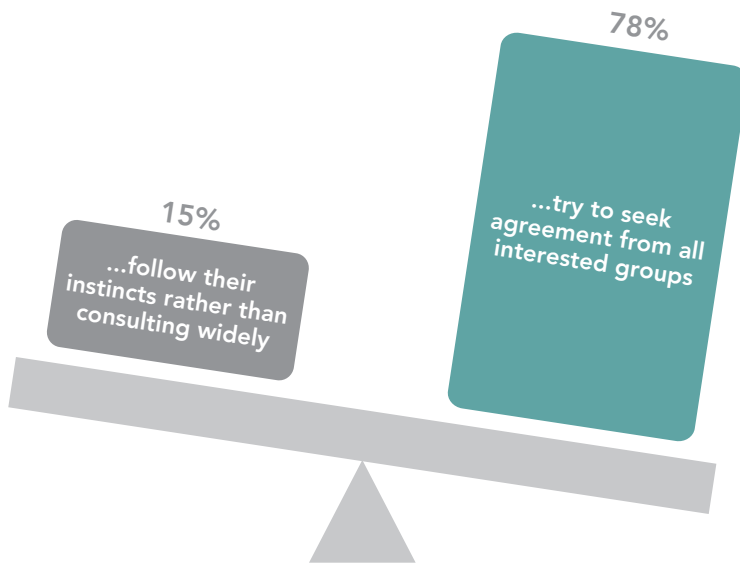
BMEs are much more likely than average to say that they go along with the decision of a group even if it is not what they want personally (29%) as are people who say that political argument makes them feel uncomfortable (27%).

Leadership style

A large majority of the public prefer leadership predicated on widespread consultation and agreement (78%) rather than strong-willed instincts (15%).

Figure 13: Styles of leadership

Q Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? The best decisions are made by leaders who...



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

People in social classes AB are more likely than average to favour consensus-seeking leaders (87%), as are those who feel they have time to get involved in politics (84%). BMEs are slightly more likely to favour strong leaders (21%) than average, as are 18-24 year olds (20%) and those certain not to vote (20%).

People who prefer strong leadership are less likely to say that they do not take political disagreement personally (52%) and that they find it easy to see other people's points of view politically (45%) than those who prefer wide consultation (69% and 57% respectively).

Desire to learn more about how politics and democracy work

The public are fairly evenly split between those who say they wish they had learned more about politics and democracy in school (47%) and those who do not (51%).

Fifty-eight percent of those who claim only 'a fair amount of knowledge' would like to have learned more at school, as would 45% of those who claim to know 'not very much' about politics. So too, 44% of those who claim to be 'not very interested' in politics and 65% of those who claim only 'a fair amount' of interest would also like to have done so. Of those who are 'likely' but not 'certain' to vote, 54% would have been open to learning more about

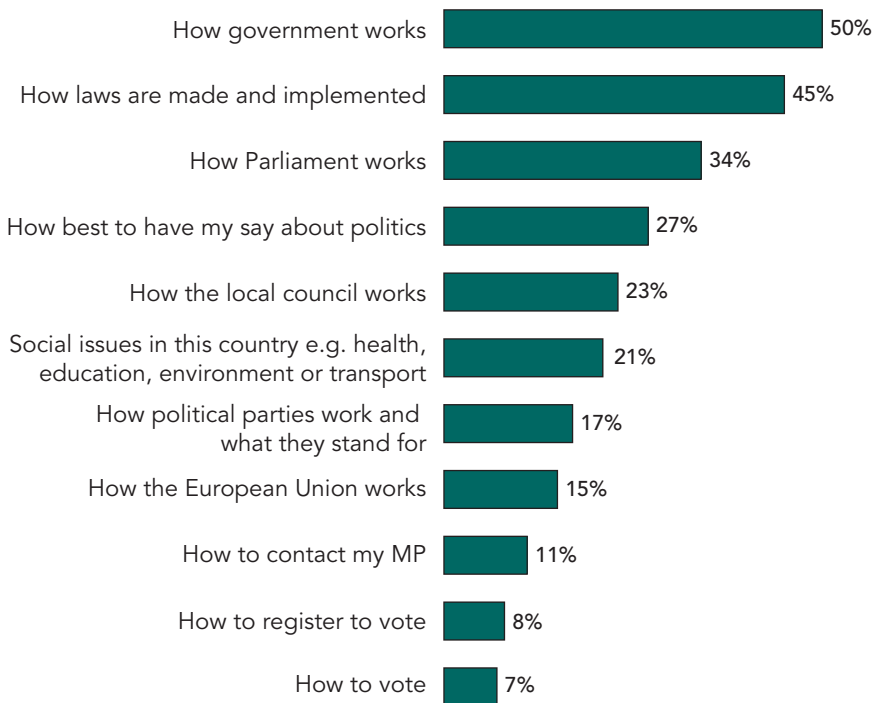
politics in the classroom, but only 35% of those who are either not registered to vote, or don't know whether they are registered say the same.

Women (50%) are more likely than men (44%) to wish they had learned more in school, and across the social grades opinion is evenly divided: 55% each of ABs and C1s would like to have learned more, whilst only 48% and 38% respectively of C2s and DEs agree. Across the age groups those aged over 75 are least likely (35%) to wish they had learned more about politics at school; 45% of those aged 55-74 would like to have learned more, whilst between 47% and 52% of the different age groups under 54 say the same.

Those people who wish they had been taught more about politics and democracy were asked about the topics they would like to have learned about. The most common answers were institutional and process issues such as 'how the government works' (50%), 'how laws are made and implemented' (45%) and 'how Parliament works' (34%).

Figure 14: Desire to learn more about how politics and our democracy work

Q What from this list, if anything, would you like to have learned more about at school?



Base: Those who would like to have learned more about how politics and our democracy work (535)

Among those that want to know 'how best to have my say', two groups stand out: those who say they are 'very interested' in politics (46%), and at other end of scale, social grade DE (35%) who tend to be the least interested in politics.

Women (26%) are more likely than men (15%) to want to know about social policy issues, as are those with children in their household (29%) compared to those without (18%). Supporters of either of the current coalition parties (Conservative and Liberal Democrats) are more likely to want to know about how the European Union works (22%) than average (15%).

A desire to know more about how the local council works appears to increase with age: from 12% of 18-24 year olds to 24% of 45-54 year olds to 37% of those aged 75 or above.

BMEs are more likely than average to want to know about the basics of voting and contacting their MP. Of those BME citizens who would like to have learned about politics, 18% said knowing how to register to vote, 14% how to vote and 17% how to contact their MP was a priority. A greater than average proportion of Londoners who wanted to learn more about politics also wanted to know about how to vote (26%).

An agenda for reform

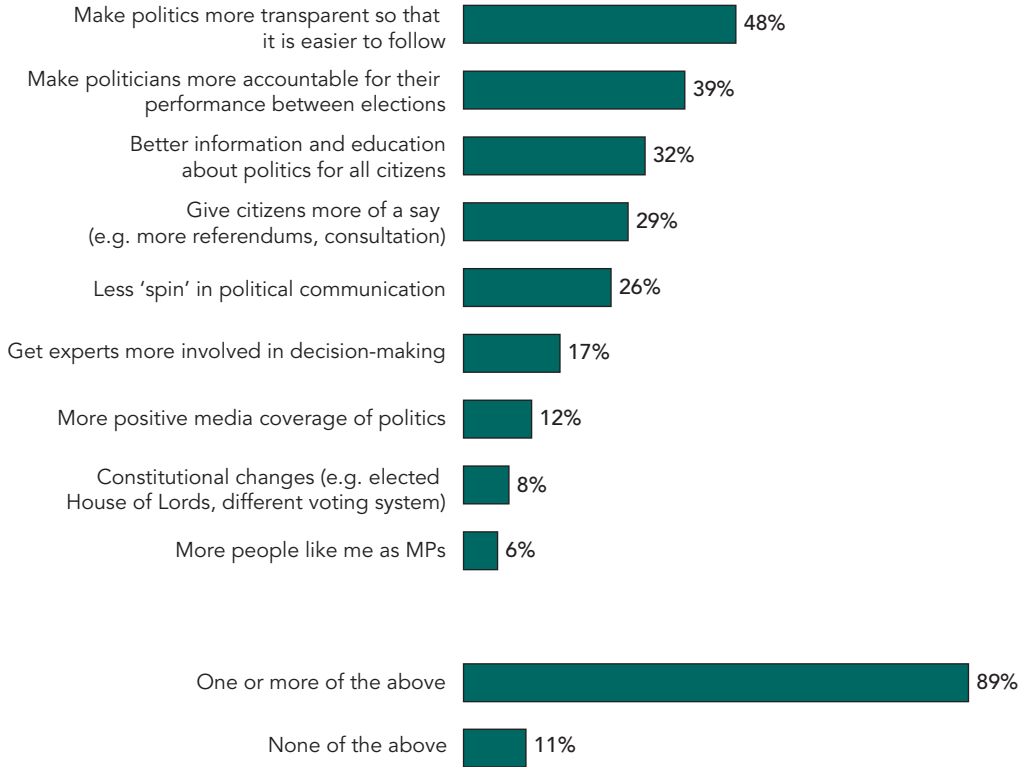
As detailed in Audit 9, between November 2011 and March 2012 we conducted 14 focus groups across the country to find out more about the public's own priorities for political reform. We subsequently categorised the more than 450 suggestions we received into nine broad groups and tested them in this latest Audit survey. Interestingly, the preferences identified in the focus groups also found favour and similar prioritisation in the survey, reinforcing the sense that the reform agenda of the political parties is out of touch with public attitudes.

The most popular reform improvement, supported by 48% of the public, would be to 'make politics more transparent so that it is easier to follow'. This was closely followed by the proposal that politicians should be made 'more accountable for their performance between elections' (39%), 'better information and education about politics for all citizens' (32%) and 'giving citizens more of a say (e.g. more referendums, more consultation)' (29%). Reforms of a constitutional nature are clearly not high priorities for the public, with fewer than one in 10 people choosing this (8%).

The pattern of these preferences closely mirrors the proportions of focus group participants who suggested these reforms. Further research is needed to explore in more 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.

Figure 15: Reforming British politics

Q Which of the following changes do you think would improve the British political system the most? Choose up to three.



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Women are slightly more likely to want the political system to be more transparent and easier to follow (51%) than men (44%). Less engaged groups, such as DEs (39%), those certain not to vote (36%) and those not registered to vote (31%) are less likely to choose greater transparency. People who say they are 'very interested' in politics (36%) and those who say they are 'not at all interested' (39%) are united in being less keen on this reform. A similar pattern is true for those who say they know 'a great deal' about politics (31%) and those who know 'nothing at all' (33%).

Men are slightly more likely (42%) than women (37%) to want politicians to be held to greater account. Far fewer 18-24 year olds are interested in this reform (19%), although it appears particularly appealing to older age groups, including more than half of 55-64 year olds (54%) and 65-74 year olds (57%).

Greater accountability is also more appealing to ABs (54%) than C1s (46%), C2s (39%) or DEs (28%), and those who are interested in politics (52%) compared to those who are not (30%). This is also true for owner-occupiers (49%) compared to those who rent (26%), those

with children in the household (43%) compared to those without (31%) and to Conservative supporters (55%) than Labour (40%) or Liberal Democrats (32%). Fewer people living in London (28%) and fewer BMEs (33%) favour this reform than average.

Women are slightly more likely to favour better information and education about politics (34%) than men (29%), while people over the age of 65 are less likely than average to prioritise this (24%).

Reforms to provide more opportunities to enable the public to have a say, including through referendums, appeal to C2s (32%) and DEs (31%) more than average, while ABs are more likely than average to support constitutional reforms (16%).

ABs (25%) and those interested in politics (23%) are more supportive of the greater use of experts in decision-making, and men are slightly more likely to favour the involvement of experts (20%) than women (14%).

Reducing 'spin' in politics is a higher priority for ABs (37%) than DEs (19%), for white people (28%) than BME citizens (13%) and for those who are already interested in politics (34%) compared to those who are not (20%).

However, there are few discernible differences among those who favour having 'more people like me as MPs', although more people in rented accommodation (9%) prioritise this reform than do owner-occupiers (4%).

5. Perceptions of Parliament

This year's Audit is marked by two distinct changes with regard to Parliament: decreasing levels of identification of and satisfaction with MPs, beyond the levels witnessed even in the aftermath of the parliamentary expenses scandal, and yet an increase in the perceived efficacy of Parliament collectively in holding government to account and debating topical issues that matter to the public. This has not, however, had an impact on perceived satisfaction with Parliament generally, nor, as set out in chapter four, on the public's perceived knowledge of its work.

Knowledge of MPs

Over the first seven years of the Audit series almost half of the public (44%) were able to accurately name their MP. Audit 8, which followed the 2010 general election, identified a small decline to 38%, which could be ascribed to the large turnover of Members at the election. However, two years on, the proportion of the public who can name their MP has slumped by 16 percentage points to just 22%. And 72% of the public either don't know or gave no response to this question, 17 percentage points higher than recorded two years ago.

Figure 16: Name of MP

	Audit 1 (2004) %	Audit 3 (2006) %	Audit 4 (2007) %	Audit 7 (2010) %	Audit 8 (2011) %	Audit 10 (2013) %
Gave correct answer	42	44	44	44	38	22
Gave wrong answer	10	9	6	10	7	6
Don't know / no answer	49	46	50	46	55	72

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

There is no difference in the proportion of men and women who can correctly name their MP, but by contrast there is a significant variation by age. Thirty-four percent of those aged over 55 can name their MP, compared with just 10% of those aged under 35.


ABs are twice as likely to be able to name their MP (40%) than C1s (20%), C2s (15%) or DEs (19%), while white people (23%) are more than twice as likely to be able to name their MP as BMEs (9%).

There is no significant difference between Conservative supporters (25%) and Labour supporters (24%) in their ability to name their MP. Liberal Democrat supporters seem more capable in this regard (33%), as do those who say they support smaller parties (31%). People in London (13%) and the East of England (14%) are least likely to be able to name their MP, while people in the North West (33%) and Scotland (32%) are more likely.

Three times as many owner occupiers (30%) can name their MP as people renting in the private sector (9%). This may reflect the difference between people putting down roots in an area by purchasing a house compared to a more transient population of renters, and is likely also to reflect the high proportion of young people in the private rented sector. By contrast, 15% of those in the social rented sector can name their MP.

In the immediate aftermath of a general election that witnessed a turnover of a third of the Members of the House of Commons, one might reasonably expect the public's ability to name their local MP to have declined, as indeed occurred in Audit 8. It could also be argued that the further away from a general election one gets, the more distant the information and knowledge about an MP is likely to become given the heightened level of campaigning, media coverage and public awareness of political discussion that an election campaign

affords a candidate. However, the role and work of MPs has been characterised in recent decades by an increasing focus on the constituency through attention to dealing with individual constituents' problems and local policy campaigns. Indeed, the Society's research into the life and work of MPs elected for the first time in 2010 shows that on average they devote more than half of their time to



People in the North West (33%) and Scotland (32%) are more likely to be able to name their MP, while people in London (13%) and the East of England (14%) are less likely.

People in AB social grades are much more likely to be able to name their MP (40%) than those in other social classes, especially C2s (15%).

constituency work (casework, meetings and campaigning).⁵ The Audit results suggest, however, that this constituency work is not necessarily having the positive impact on public awareness that MPs and political parties believe it does.

⁵ M. Korris (2011), *A Year in the Life: from member of public to Member of Parliament – interim briefing paper* (London: Hansard Society), p.6.

Satisfaction with MPs

The public's level of satisfaction with MPs generally and their own local MP specifically, reinforces the argument. Indeed, it is one of the great paradoxes of modern politics that MPs live and work in closer connection with their constituents than any generation of representatives before them and yet the public appears less satisfied with them than ever.

Only 23% say they are satisfied 'with the way MPs in general are doing their job', the lowest level ever recorded in the Audit series. Worryingly for MPs, satisfaction levels are now six percentage points lower than they were three years ago following the parliamentary expenses scandal. Interestingly, however, fewer people are dissatisfied with MPs (38% compared to 44% in Audit 7), as an increasing proportion of people are 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (37%, up from 24% three years ago); a rising tide of simple lack of interest appears to be driving public attitudes.

Since Audit 7, an increasing proportion of people are unwilling or unable to give a view on their satisfaction towards MPs in general, saying either that they are 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' or 'don't know'.

Proportion that have no firm opinion about MPs Audit 7 ⇒ Audit 10



- Women (30% ⇒ 42%)
- Under-35s (38% ⇒ 55%)
- C2DEs (29% ⇒ 42%)
- People in the East of England (27% ⇒ 50%)

This picture is also broadly mirrored in the public's attitude to their own local MP. As in previous Audits and other studies, the public feel more positive about their own local representative than they do about MPs as a generic group; there is roughly a 10

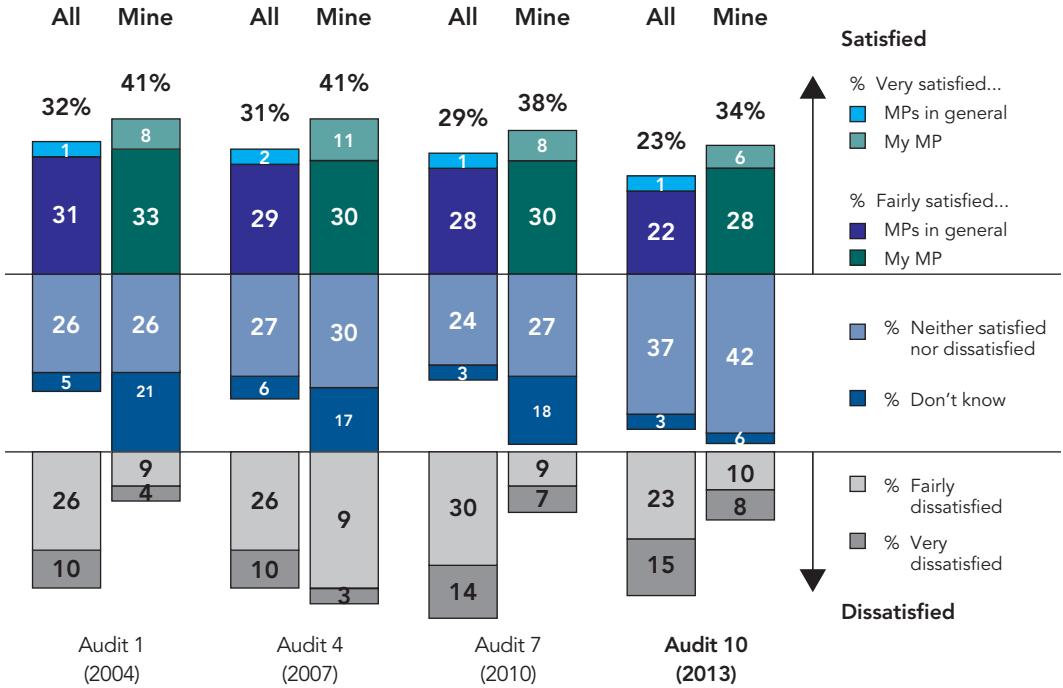
percentage point gap between public satisfaction with MPs in general and satisfaction with their own MP.

Satisfaction with local MPs has declined a little (albeit not to a statistically significant degree), but with only 34% of the public now reporting satisfaction with their own MP, this is the lowest result across the decade of the Audit series. Given the fact that far fewer people actually know who their local representative is, one might expect that those responding 'don't know' would have remained stable or increased. In fact only 6% say they 'don't know' compared to the 18% who said the same in Audit 7, while the number responding 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' has risen to 42% from the 27% recorded in Audit 7. As with MPs generally, it appears that lack of interest is largely driving this change in attitudes.

Figure 17: Satisfaction with MPs

Q Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way MPs in general are doing their job?

Q Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way your MP is doing his/her job?



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

While men are more likely to profess satisfaction with the way Parliament works, there are no significant differences between men and women when it comes to views on MPs in general or their own MP.

Older people are not significantly more likely to be satisfied with MPs in general, but they are more likely to be satisfied with their own MP. Two-fifths of those aged over 45 are satisfied with their MP (41%), compared to a quarter of those aged between 18-44 (26%).

ABs (34%) and C1s (28%) are more likely than C2s (16%) and DEs (19%) to be satisfied with MPs in general. While ABs are also more likely to be satisfied with their own MP (46%), it is DEs (33%) who are the next most likely to be satisfied, followed by 31% of C1s and 26% of C2s.

Unsurprisingly, those people who know the name of their MP are much more satisfied with how their own MP is doing their job (53%) than those who do not (28%). People who can name their MP are also more satisfied with MPs in general (35%) than those who cannot (19%).

Despite fewer BMEs being able to name their MP, they profess themselves to be more satisfied on average (38%) than white people (33%) with their own MP. BMEs are also more likely (31%) to be satisfied with MPs in general than white people (22%).

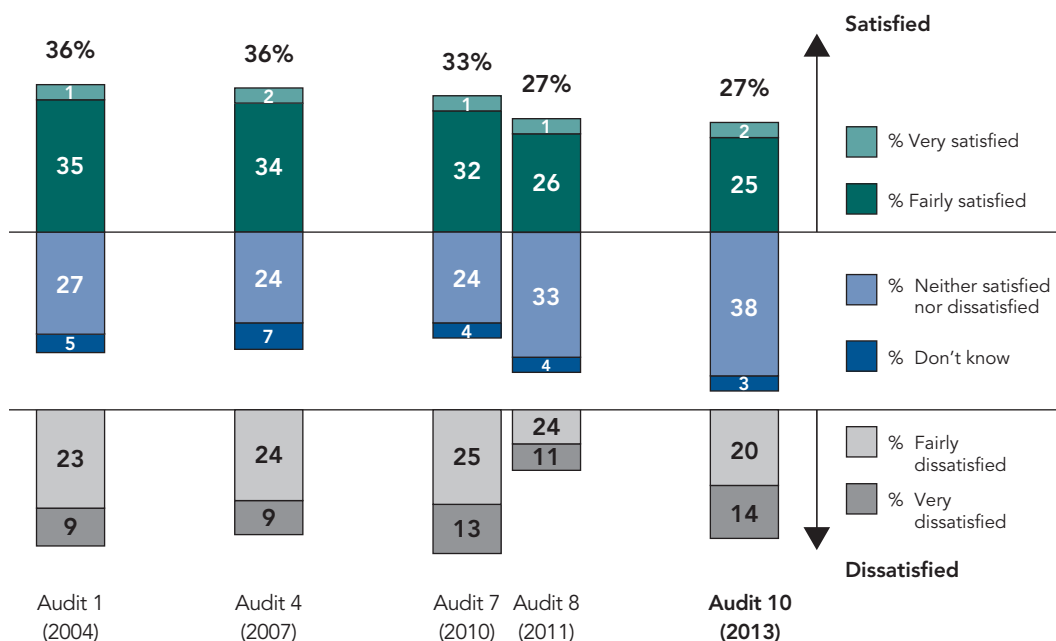
A mere 7% of people in Wales say they are satisfied with MPs in general, however they are not markedly less likely to be satisfied with their own MP. People in the West Midlands (40%) and Scotland (38%) profess themselves to be most satisfied with their own MP.

Satisfaction with Parliament

Levels of satisfaction with Parliament remain largely unchanged from two years ago, when this question was last asked, with roughly one quarter (27%) of the public claiming to be satisfied with the way that Parliament works.

Figure 18: Satisfaction with Parliament

Q How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that Parliament works?



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

Men are more likely to say they are satisfied with the way Parliament works (32%) than are women (21%). However, it is not that women are more dissatisfied with Parliament than men; rather, that they are more likely to simply have no strong view either way. Two-fifths of women (42%) say they are 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with the way the institution works while only one third (32%) of men say the same.

Satisfaction with Parliament is lower among younger age groups, with just a fifth (20%) of those aged 18-44 saying they are satisfied, compared to a third (32%) of those aged 45 or

above. This is largely the result of uncertainty among those in younger age groups, exactly half (50%) of whom claim to be 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'.

Those in higher social classes are much more likely to be satisfied with Parliament. Forty-two percent of ABs say they are satisfied, compared to 30% of C1s, 19% of C2s and 22% of DEs.

Conservative (48%) and Liberal Democrat supporters (39%) are more likely to be satisfied with the way that Parliament works than are Labour supporters (29%). These results appear to be strongly driven by which parties happen to be in government. When this question was last asked in Audit 8 levels of satisfaction were similar, but in previous Audits when the Labour party was in power it was Labour supporters who were the most content. But irrespective of which party or combination of parties are in power, supporters of any of the three main parties are more satisfied with how Parliament works than are those who support smaller parties or who say they would not vote.

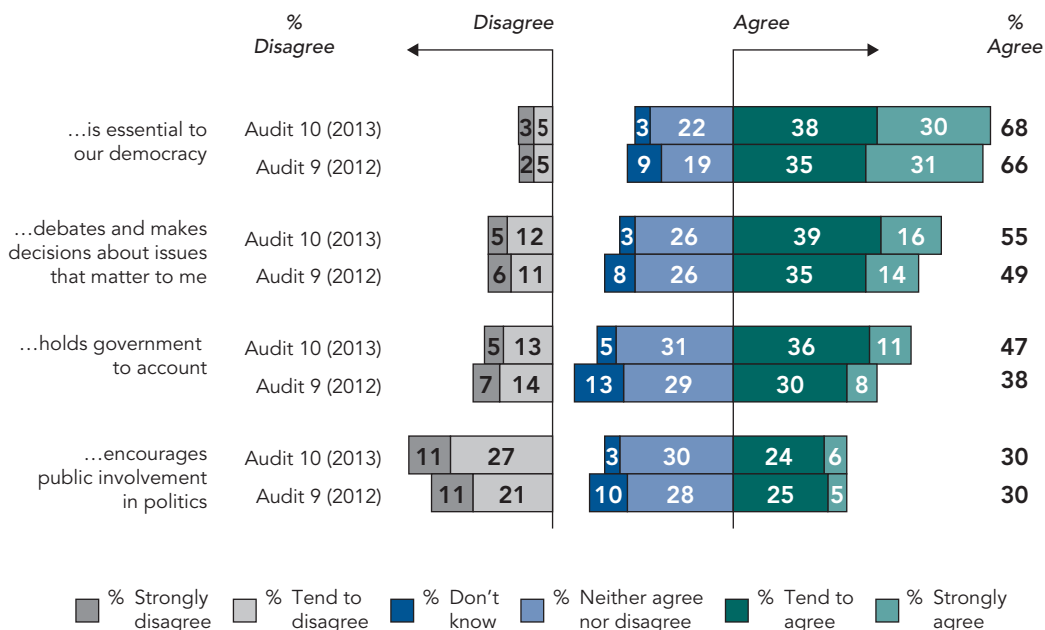
Perceptions of Parliament

Although there has been no change in people's satisfaction with Parliament overall, two facets of Parliament's work are nonetheless viewed much more favourably than previously. A greater proportion of the public believe that Parliament now 'holds government to account', up nine percentage points to 47% from 38% in Audit 9. Similarly, there has been a rise in those agreeing that it 'debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me'; a six percentage point increase to 55% compared to 49% last year. In contrast, there has been no change in the number that agree that Parliament is 'essential to our democracy' (68%) and that it 'encourages public involvement in politics' (30%).

It is difficult to be absolutely sure what accounts for the change in perceived effectiveness but, given that the other two indicators have remained stable, something has caught the public's notice and given them cause to reflect more positively on Parliament's work. Looking back at the year in Parliament in 2012, one can perhaps surmise that the increased profile and topicality of select committees has helped, as, for example, when they have dealt with issues such as phone hacking and taxation of multinational corporations. Similarly, the topicality of backbench business debates, e-petitions, the restoration of the Urgent Question to ministers, and the increasing number of legislative rebellions in the House of Lords, may all have contributed to a growing public perception that Parliament is standing up to government more and that the issues it is addressing chime more with the public interest and mood. Interestingly, however, whilst Parliament may be credited for doing a better job of holding government to account and addressing topical matters of concern, it is clear that the public does not credit MPs individually or collectively for this work.

Figure 19: 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.

Men are more likely to agree that the UK Parliament is essential to our democracy (76%) than women (60%). They are also more likely to agree that Parliament debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me (61% to 48%) and that it holds government to account (52% to 42%). In all three cases this is because around a third of women say they 'neither agree nor disagree' or 'don't know', rather than any greater levels of disagreement with the statements.

Older people are more likely to agree that Parliament is essential to our democracy than younger people, with 80% of 55-64 year olds agreeing, compared to just 56% of 18-24 year olds. Just 35% of 18-24 year olds agree that Parliament holds government to account, although this is also largely explained by the high proportion of people in this age group who 'neither agree nor disagree' (47%).

ABs are more likely to agree that Parliament is essential to our democracy (89%), that Parliament holds government to account (63%) and that it debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me (68%) than people in other social classes. Just 55% of DEs say that Parliament is essential to our democracy, 42% that it holds government to account and 47% that it debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me.

There are no significant demographic disparities in the proportions of people who agree that Parliament encourages public involvement in politics, except that 45% of BMEs agree

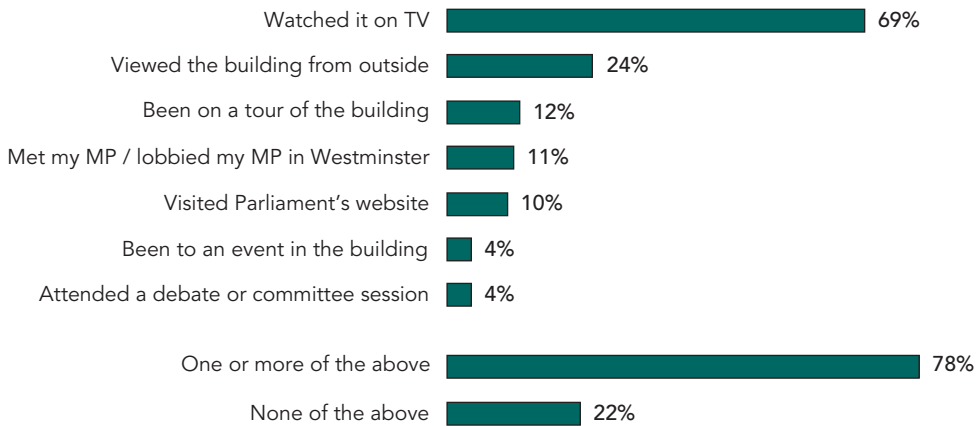
with the statement compared to 27% of white people. BMEs are also more likely to agree that Parliament holds government to account (57%) than white people (46%).

Connecting with Parliament

More than two-thirds of the public have watched Parliament on television or online (69%), and a quarter say they have viewed the building from outside (24%). Overall, around four-fifths of the public (78%) have had some connection with Parliament.

Figure 20: Connecting with Parliament

Q Which of the following have you ever done in relation to Parliament?



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Unsurprisingly, older age groups are more likely to have undertaken all of these activities given that they have had more time in which to do so, except for having visited Parliament's website where there is little discernible difference.

A greater proportion of ABs have done these activities than other social classes. Seventy-eight percent of ABs have watched Parliament, 42% have viewed the building from the outside, 22% have been on a tour, 20% have visited the website and 20% have met their MP. In contrast, just 63% of DEs have seen Parliament on television or online, 14% have viewed the building from the outside, 8% have been on a tour, 4% have visited the website and 7% have met their MP. Three in 10 DEs (30%) have done none of these activities compared to 11% of ABs.

More white people (25%) than BMEs (17%) say they have seen Parliament from the outside and almost twice as many white people say they have been on a tour of the building (13%) and met their MP (11%) than do BMEs (7% and 6% respectively).

A perplexingly small proportion of Londoners say they have viewed Parliament from the outside (19%), compared to 34% of people in the South West and 32% of people in Wales, although Londoners are about average in their likelihood to have been into the building for a tour or event.

6. Political involvement locally and nationally

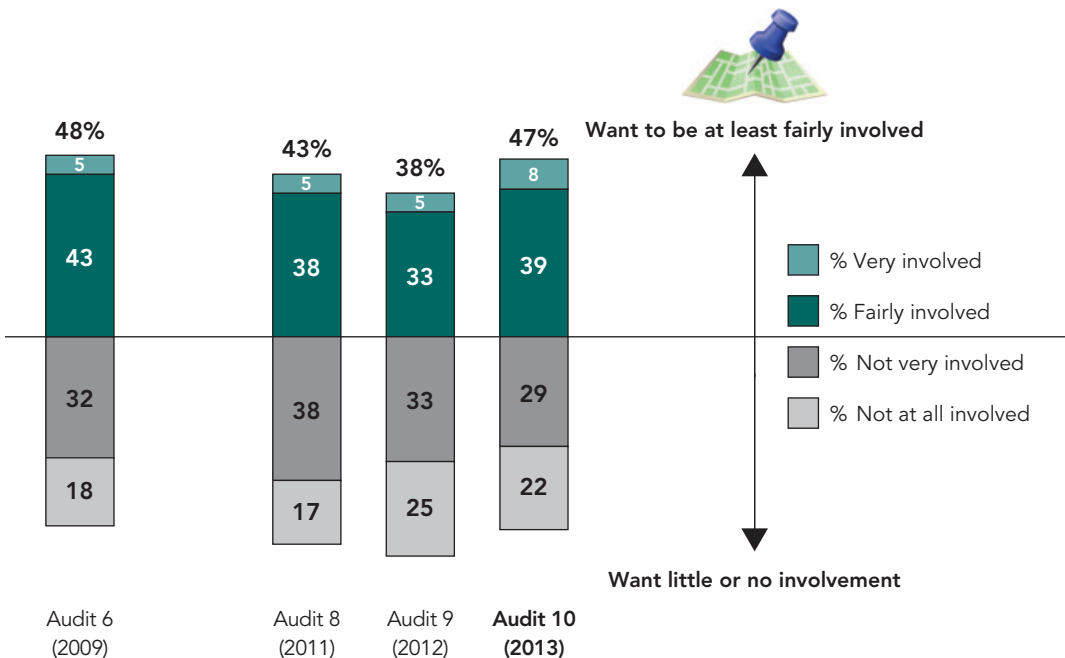
For the last few years, the Audit has tracked the public’s appetite for involvement in decision-making locally and nationally, their sense of the efficacy of this involvement, and the extent to which they believe it can bring about change. This year’s results show a considerable improvement in the desire to get involved but no real change in the degree to which the public believe this involvement will be effective. The study also revisits barriers to involvement such as time, and explores what triggers – positive or negative – might persuade citizens to get more involved.

Desire for involvement in local and national decision-making

The public’s desire for involvement in local and national decision-making has bounced back following dips in both measures last year. Almost half of the public (47%) say they would like to be at least ‘fairly involved’ in local decision-making, and four in 10 (42%) say the same about national decision-making.

Figure 21: 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.

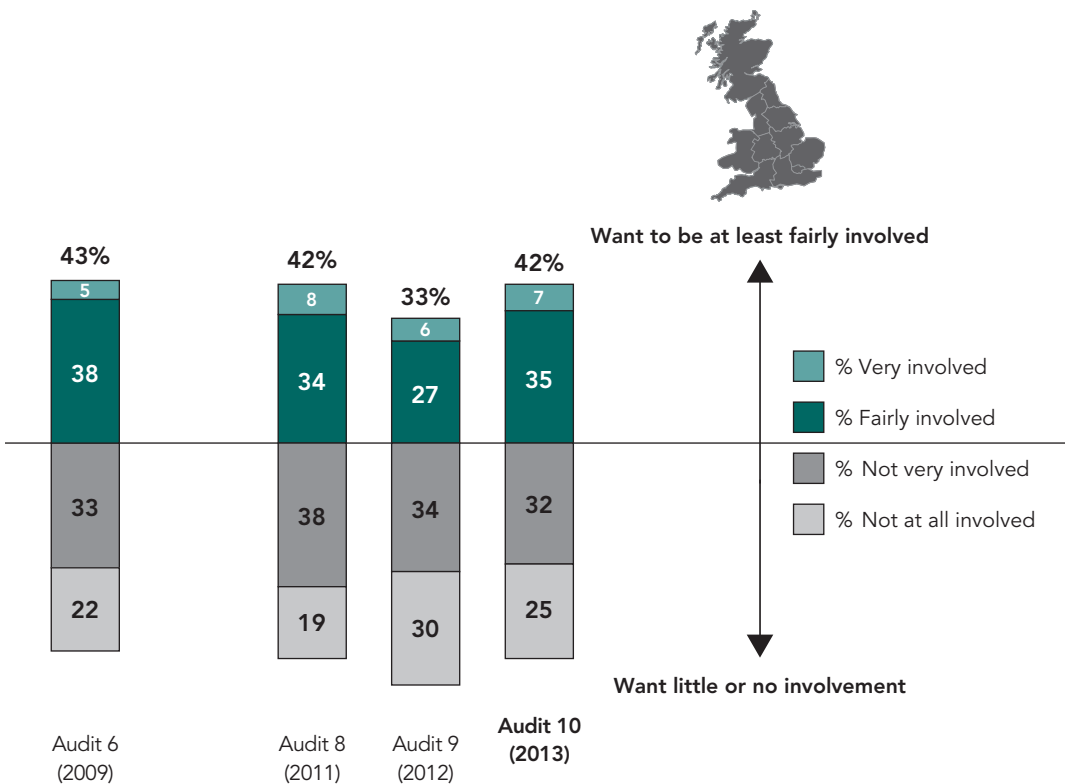
Men are more interested in being involved in local decision-making (51%) than women (45%), as are BMEs (66%) compared to white people (46%) and those living in urban areas (50%) compared to those living in rural areas (39%).

People aged between 25-54 are the most likely to want to be involved in local decision-making (54%), compared to 46% of 18-24 year olds, 45% of 55-74 year olds and just 24% of those aged over 75. Reflecting the age pattern, people who have children in their household (53%) or who are in work (51%) are more likely to want to be involved than those with no children (45%) or those who are out of work (44%).

ABs (66%) and C1s (54%) are noticeably more likely than C2s (45%) or DEs (38%) to want to be involved in local decision-making.

Figure 22: 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.

There has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of ABs who say they would like to be involved in national decision-making, up from 41% last year to 62% today. It means that

ABs are significantly more keen for involvement than C1s (45%), C2s (39%) and DEs (32%) this year. There has also been a significant jump in the proportion of BMEs who want to be involved in national decision-making – 61% this year, up from 36% in Audit 9 – which makes them more likely than white people (40%) to desire involvement at this level.

As with desire for involvement in local decisions, people with children in their household (48%), in work (44%) and living in urban areas (44%) are more likely to want involvement at a national level than those without children in the household (38%), those not in work (37%) or those living in rural areas (32%).

There is less of a distinction between age groups when it comes to desire for involvement at a national level, except for the much smaller proportion of those aged over 75 who want to be involved (24%). There is little distinction between the 43% of men and 39% of women who say they want to be involved at the national level.

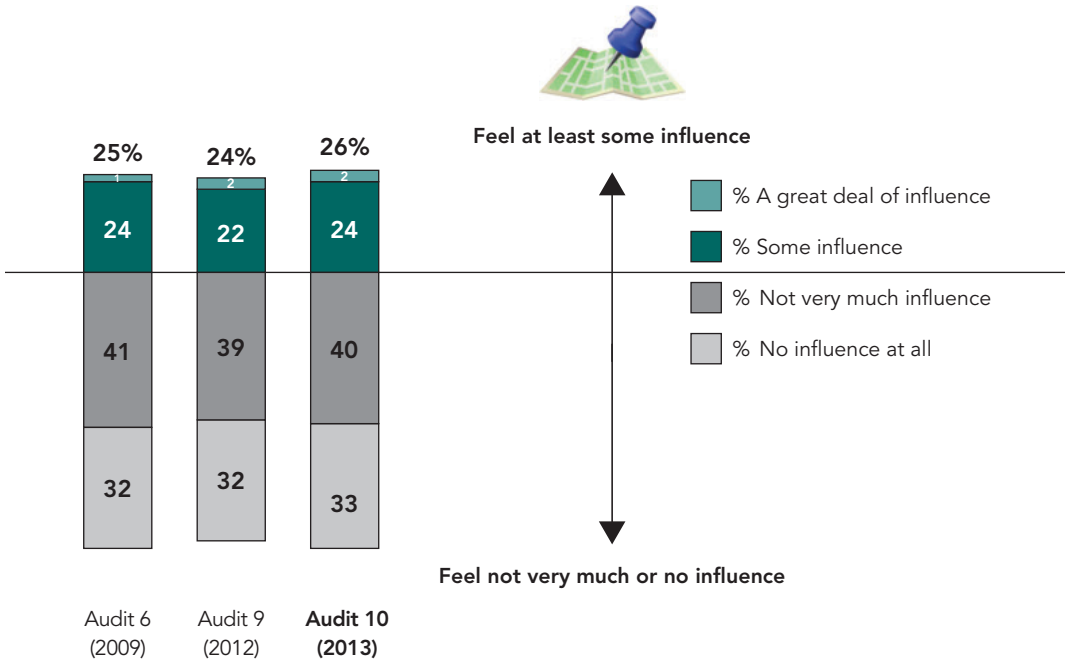
As last year, people in Scotland (32%), and Yorkshire and Humber (33%) are less likely than average to want to be involved in national decision-making; the same is true this year of residents in the East Midlands (33%).

Influence over local and national decision-making

The extent to which people feel influential over local decision-making remains virtually unchanged since last year, with one quarter of the public (26%) saying they feel they have at least some influence over local decisions, a two percentage point increase in a year. Perceived influence over national decision-making has also risen, but only modestly: 16% of the public now feel at least some influence at the national level compared to 12% who said the same last year.

Figure 23: 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.

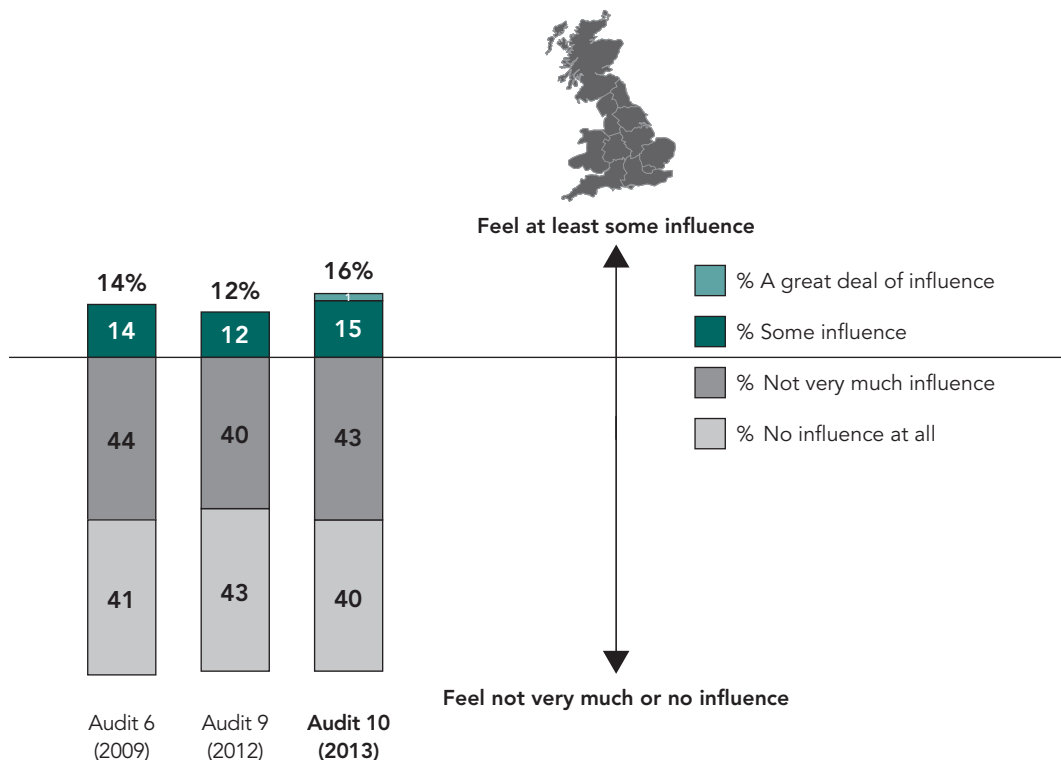
ABs are much more likely to feel influential in their local area (45%) than other social classes. Only a quarter of C1s (26%) and a fifth of C2DEs (20%) feel the same. BME citizens also feel noticeably more influential (37%) than white people (24%).

Men are slightly more likely to feel influential (28%) than women (23%), but there is no clear pattern of feelings of influence across different age groups.

One quarter of those living in urban areas feel that they have influence locally (25%) compared to a fifth of those in rural areas (19%). People living in the West Midlands (34%) and the East of England (33%) are more likely to feel that they have influence over local decision-making, while just 11% of those living in Wales feel the same.

Figure 24: 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.

As with feelings of influence over local decisions, there is only a statistically slim difference between men (19%) and women (14%) in terms of influence over national decision-making and no clear pattern across the various age groups. ABs (21%) are again more likely to feel influential compared to C1s (17%), C2s (12%) and DEs (16%).

One-third of BME citizens (33%) feel they have at least some influence over national decision-making, compared to just 14% of white people.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the centre of UK political power, a greater proportion of Londoners (27%) feel they have influence over national decision-making. In marked contrast, only a tiny 4% of people in Wales say the same, although there is no overall difference between urban dwellers (15%) and those in rural areas (14%) when it comes to feelings of national influence.

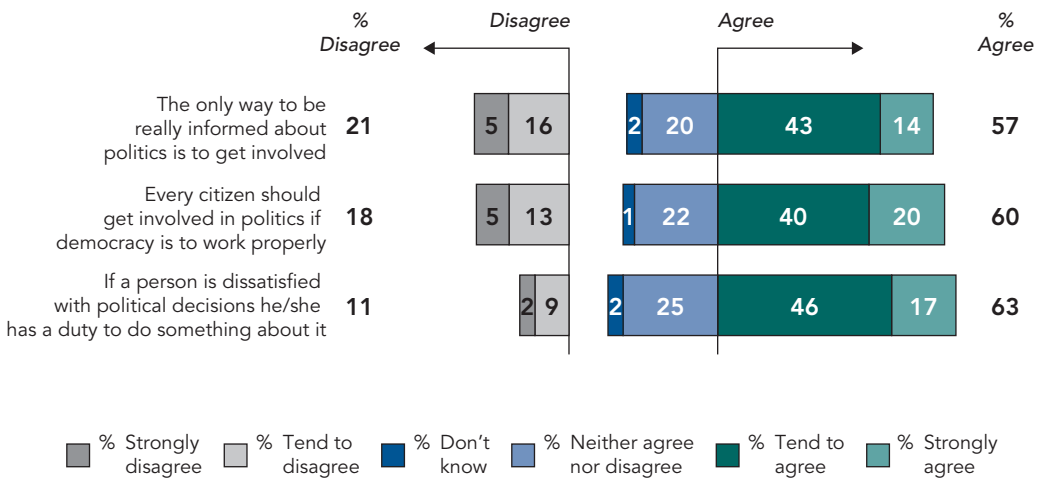
Reasons for getting involved in politics

Despite the low levels of public engagement which have been recorded in this and last year's Audit reports, more than half the public nonetheless recognise circumstances in which they should get more involved in politics.

Three-fifths of the public (60%) agree that every citizen should get involved in politics if democracy is to work properly, and a similar proportion (63%) think that if a person is dissatisfied with a political decision they should do something about it. Fifty-seven percent also say that the only way to be informed about politics is to get involved in it.

Figure 25: Reasons for political involvement

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that...?



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Among the social classes, C1s are the most likely to agree that the only way to be informed about politics is to get involved (67%), with no significant separation between ABs (53%), C2s (57%) and DEs (53%). Two of the younger age groups, 25-34 year olds (62%) and 35-44 year olds (60%), are more likely than average to agree that getting involved is the only way to be more informed about politics, as do those aged 75 and above (61%).

People who are not registered to vote (or don't know if they are) are less likely to agree (43%) that involvement is a prerequisite for being informed, as are those who say they are not interested in current affairs (46%). However, the same is not true of those who say they are not interested in politics; they have an average level of agreement (56%) with this proposition.

People who find politics and government complicated are more likely to agree that getting involved is the only way to be really informed about politics (69%) than are those who do not find politics complicated (46%). Unsurprisingly, people who disagree that politics is a

waste of time are more likely to agree with this statement (64%), however, those who agree that politics is a waste of time are no less likely than average to agree with it (57%).

Young people (18-24 year olds) are least likely to agree that every citizen has a duty to be involved in politics (just 50% agree), while the rest of the age groups have average levels of agreement. The one other outlier is 65-74 year olds, who are more likely to agree (72%) confirming that older citizens tend to see democratic involvement through a prism of duties and responsibilities.

ABs (67%) and C1s (66%) are more likely to agree that citizens have a duty to get involved than C2s (56%) and DEs (54%). Conservative party supporters are also more likely to agree (76%) than Labour (64%) or Liberal Democrat supporters (57%) and BME citizens are more likely to agree (67%) than white people (57%).

People who are interested in politics (75%), who feel knowledgeable about politics (73%) or who are certain to vote (70%) are more likely to agree that citizens have a duty to get involved. In contrast, just 35% of those who are not registered to vote say the same, with half (52%) of this group responding ambivalently that they 'neither agree nor disagree' or simply 'don't know'.

Those people who disagree that politics is not much fun (78%), those who disagree that politics is a waste of time (73%) and those who feel that the only way to be informed is to be involved (72%) are also all more likely to agree that citizens have a duty to get involved in politics.

Three-quarters of ABs agree that if someone is dissatisfied with a political decision they have a duty to do something about it (75%) compared to a little over half of DEs (54%) who feel the same. However, a third of DEs have no set view: 34% neither agree nor disagree or don't know, compared to just 15% of ABs.

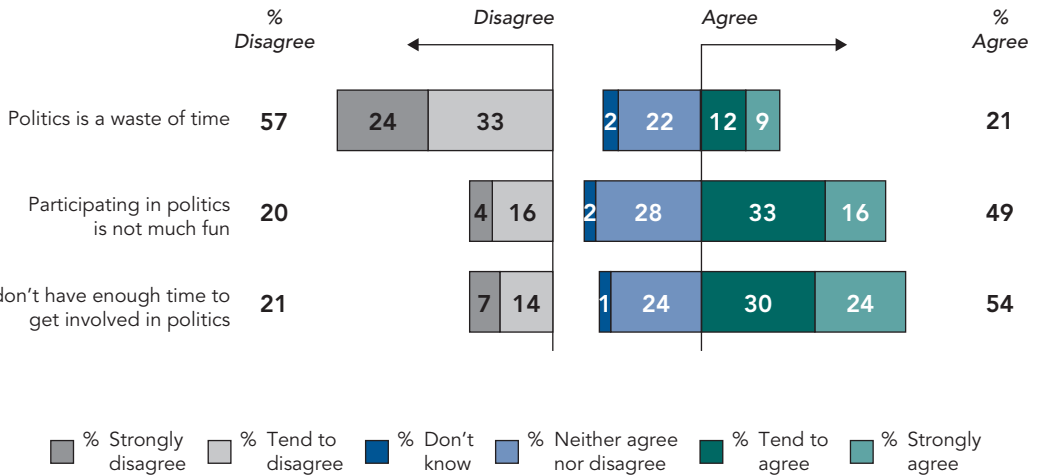
Groups who are more likely to agree that people should do something about political decisions that they are dissatisfied with include BMEs (74%), those who are interested in politics (73%), are certain to vote (72%), those who disagree that politics is a waste of time (73%) and those who say that to be informed you need to be involved (72%).

Barriers to political involvement

Half the public believe that participating in politics is not much fun (49%) and a little over half say that they don't have enough time to get involved (54%). One in five people say that politics is a waste of time (21%), a figure unchanged from Audit 7. Around one in 10 people (9%) agree with all three of these negative statements about politics.

Figure 26: Barriers to political involvement

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that...?



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

People in lower social classes are much more likely to agree that politics is a waste of time, with 29% of DEs agreeing with this statement compared to 22% of C2s, 14% of C1s and just 9% of ABs. Men are slightly more likely to disagree that politics is a waste of time (60%) than women (53%).

Those who are certain not to vote (43%), who are not registered to vote (31%), are not interested in current affairs (35%), and are not interested in politics (30%) are more likely than average to agree that politics is a waste of time, as are people living in Wales (33%).

Young people (18-24 year olds) are more likely than average to agree that participating in politics is not much fun (55%), but there are similar levels of agreement among 45-54 year olds (52%) and 65-74 year olds (53%).

ABs and C2s are less likely to agree that participating in politics is not much fun (42% and 46% respectively) than C1s and DEs (51% and 55%), while a greater proportion of white people agree (50%) than BMEs (43%).

People who say that politics is a waste of time (70%), who do not like arguments about politics (62%), and who find politics complicated (61%) are all more likely than average to agree that participating in politics is not much fun, as again are people living in Wales (63%).

Thirty-five percent of people who are interested in politics still agree that participating in it is not much fun, as do 45% of those who reject the idea that politics is a waste of time.

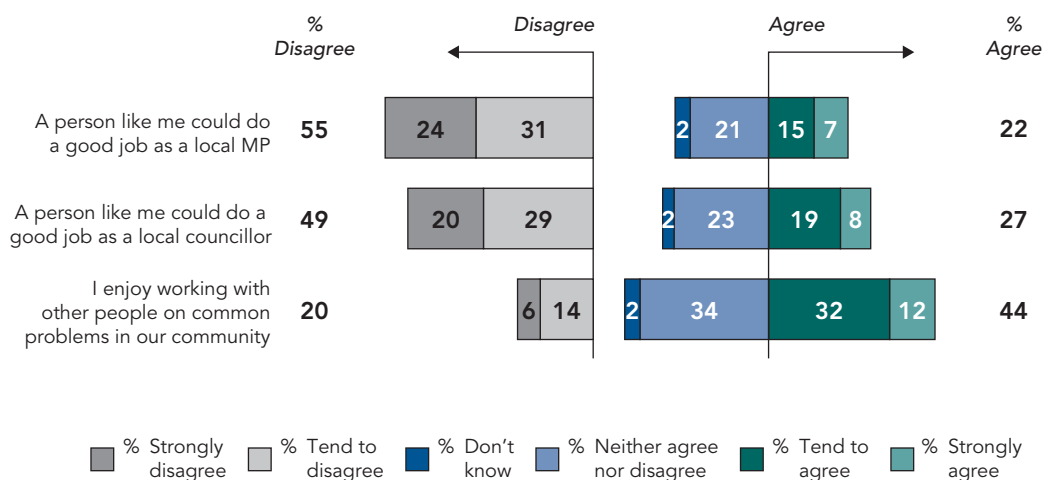
More than half the public (54%) feel that they do not have enough time to get involved in politics. On this question, there are few meaningful demographic or attitudinal differences; the concern is commonly held. Those who are more likely to feel they lack the time to get involved are those in work (59%) and people who have children in the household (61%), compared to those not working (48%) and without children (50%). Unsurprisingly, people who say that participating in politics is not much fun are also more likely than average to agree with this statement (65%).

Aptitude for political involvement

Forty-four percent of the public say that they enjoy working with other people on common problems in their community, however, far fewer believe that a person like them could do a good job as a local councillor (27%) or as an MP (22%).

Figure 27: Aptitude for political involvement

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that...?



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Enjoyment of working with other people in the community is fairly evenly spread among the various demographics, except in the case of BMEs, who are much more likely to agree with the statement (59%) than white people (43%). ABs are somewhat more likely to agree (54%) than average, and C2s less likely to agree (37%).

People who are interested in politics (56%), who feel knowledgeable about politics (55%), who want to be involved in local decision-making (62%) or already feel they have influence in local decision-making (57%) are all more likely to agree that they enjoy getting involved in the local community. So too do people who disagree that politics is not much fun (59%) and who disagree that they do not have enough time to get involved in politics (59%).

BME respondents are much more confident that someone like themselves could do a good job as a local councillor (40%) or as an MP (32%) than average, as are people in social

rented housing (33% agree that someone like themselves could be a local councillor and 27% an MP). People living in urban areas are also more likely to agree that someone like them could be a councillor (29%) or MP (24%) than people in rural areas (20% and 17% respectively).

While people who are interested in politics (34%) or who feel knowledgeable about politics (35%) are more likely than average to say that people like them could do a good job as a local councillor, they are not significantly more likely to say the same about being an MP. A greater proportion of women 'strongly disagree' that someone like them could do a good job as an MP (29%) than men (19%).

Unsurprisingly, a larger proportion of people who say they would like to be involved in national decision-making think that someone like themselves could do a good job as an MP (34%), along with 30% of those who would like to be involved in local decision-making.

Despite the on-going debate about the 'professionalisation' of politics, and claims that there are a lack of 'normal people' in elected office, this evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of the public do not think people like themselves would do a good job of it. It is people who already feel influential and engaged (either locally or nationally) that feel most comfortable with the prospect of being an elected representative.

Positive or negative triggers for involvement in politics

As we have seen, the public has a strong sense of responsibility and obligation where political involvement is concerned: 60% believe that every citizen should get involved if democracy is to work properly and 63% that if you disagree with a political decision then you have a duty to do something about it. However, as found in previous Audits, there is a considerable gap between the rhetoric and action of good citizenship.

Given levels of disengagement from politics, and concern about the degree to which it serves the public, would citizens be more compelled to get involved if they thought that the culture and process of politics was improving or, conversely, that it was deteriorating? To explore this we juxtaposed two questions containing deliberately challenging language about the nature of politics. Previous Audits have found that the public are generally sceptical about the motives of politicians and believe that 'furthering personal and career interests' is actually what most MPs spend their time doing.⁶ Similarly, as we have regularly found in focus groups, the public are suspicious of perceived concentrations of power and interests whether that be their conception of European bureaucrats, the media, business and finance, or lobby groups. Accordingly, we asked respondents whether they would be 'more' or 'less' interested in getting involved in politics if it were 'more' or 'less' influenced by 'self-serving politicians and powerful special interests'.⁷ The assumption behind this question being that citizens might respond more strongly to a negative trigger – the sense

⁶ See Hansard Society (2010), *Audit of Political Engagement 7: The 2010 Report with a focus on MPs and Parliament* (London: Hansard Society), p.93.

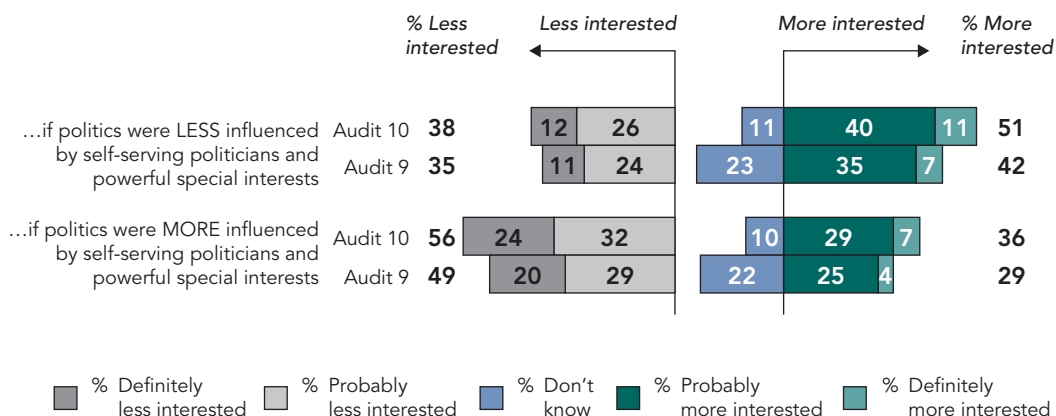
⁷ This question was also adopted because it has previously been used by a team of American researchers, thereby providing a dataset for comparative analysis. See J. Hibbing and E. Theiss-Morse (2002) *Stealth democracy: Americans' beliefs about how government should work* (New York: Cambridge University Press), and M. Neblo, K. Esterling, R. Kennedy, D. Lazer & A. Sohkey (2009), 'Who wants to deliberate and why?', Harvard Kennedy School, Faculty Research Working Paper, RWP09-027, September 2009.

that politics was getting worse and therefore they needed to make some form of intervention, or more strongly to a positive trigger – that politics was improving and therefore provided a better platform for their own involvement. Would reform make a difference to engagement, or does the state of politics need to worsen still further?

The public’s response is quite clear: they are more likely to respond to a positive trigger. Half of the public (51%) say they would be more interested in getting involved in politics if they saw the political system becoming less controlled by self-serving politicians and special interests, while more than a third (36%) would be motivated to get involved if they perceived the system to be getting worse.

Figure 28: Positive and negative triggers for involvement in politics

Q If politics were MORE/LESS influenced by self-serving politicians and powerful special interests do you think that you would be more or less interested in getting involved in politics?



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

A fifth of the public (20%) say they would be more interested in getting involved in politics in either scenario – whether the political system got better or worse. These people are more likely than average to want to be involved in local decision-making (63%) and national decision-making (57%) and to say they enjoy working with others in their community on local issues (57%). They are also slightly less likely than average to say they do not have time to get involved in politics (48%). All of which suggests that there is perhaps potential to involve them to a greater degree in politics if the right motivating factors could be found.

However, almost a quarter of the public (23%) have no interest in getting involved, regardless of whether the political system improves or deteriorates. Unsurprisingly, the disengagement of this group is also registered on lots of other measures. They are less likely than average to be certain to vote (31%), to be registered to vote (75%), to be interested in politics (22%), to feel knowledgeable about politics (24%), and to think that the system of governing works well (20%). They are also more likely to say that politics is a waste of time (32%).

There are very few demographic differences evident in responses to this pair of questions, although ABs are noticeably more likely to say they would get involved if the political system was perceived to be improving (67%) than people in other social classes.

People who are certain not to vote are less likely than average to say they would get more involved if the system got worse (24%) or better (39%), as are people who are not registered to vote (23% if the system got worse, 34% if it improved) and those who think politics is a waste of time (28% if the system got worse, 38% if it improved).

7. Standby citizens? Latent vs. manifest participation

The Audit series has used a traditional framework of political participation predicated on activities that seek to directly influence a political outcome. Although the exact construction of any list of political participation may be subject to debate, it broadly consists of activities that manifest themselves through direct engagement with the formal political process by voting, contacting an elected representative, or by co-operating in collective activities such as joining a political party or funding a campaign. It also includes forms of protest-oriented activity such as taking part in a demonstration or strike as well as consumer participation models such as boycotting certain goods or signing a petition. Increasingly any understanding of political participation must also be cognisant of internet and social media driven activities.

This year's Audit finds that only 50% of respondents have done at least one of 13 types of this kind of political activity in the last year and only two activities – 'voted in an election' and 'donated money or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation' – have been undertaken by more than 10% of the public. Across a wide variety of political actions engagement is low, yet 78% of the public claim that they would be prepared to do one or more of these activities if they felt strongly enough about an issue.

Whereas only 8% claim to have contacted a local elected representative in the last year, 41% say they would be willing to do so in the future if they felt strongly enough; only 8% claim to have signed a paper petition and 9% an e-petition in the last year, but 34% and 25% respectively would be prepared to do so. Only 2% claim to have taken an active part in a campaign in the last year but 14% would be prepared to do so if it concerned an issue about which they felt strongly. So too the number of people who would be prepared to boycott products for political, ethical or environmental reasons rises to 14% compared to the 6% who confirm they have done so within the last 12 months, as does the number of people who would be prepared to take part in a demonstration, picket or march (10% compared to 1% in the last year). That 57% think that getting involved is the only way to be informed about politics, and 42% and 48%, respectively, would like to be involved in national and local decision-making, also suggests an underlying potential for participation that, for whatever reason, is not being realised.

Recent research by Scandinavian scholars suggest that rather than focusing entirely on the framework of manifest conventional participation, such evidence of 'latent forms of political participation' needs to be taken into account: the kind of participation they describe as 'pre-political' or on 'standby'.⁸ In this year's Audit we have therefore sought to investigate

⁸ J. Ekman and E. Amna, 'Political participation and civic engagement: towards a new typology', *Youth and Society Working Paper*, 2009, and J. Ekman and E. Amna 'Political participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology', *Human Affairs*, 22:3, July 2012, pp. 283-300.

the concept of 'standby' citizens and to explore their political attitudes and behaviour. Do they offer through their potential involvement a more positive picture of political engagement in Britain?'

This chapter explores this standby dimension to political engagement: the public's 'potential' to participate, rather than their actual participation levels. The survey results suggest that a sizeable number of citizens may not wish to engage in politics unless an issue of sufficient importance arises. So there may be a tranche of citizens just waiting for an issue to stimulate their involvement. It may also be the case that citizens are waiting for the political situation to get even worse, or alternatively for it to get better, before making their move and getting more directly involved.

The conventional framework of political participation activities assumes a citizenry that is engaged in a sustained way in some form of direct, outcome-oriented participation. But perhaps in reality, given the competing demands on people's time and evident concern about issue complexity and the efficacy of involvement, we can only expect and hope for episodic forms of participation when the circumstances warrant it.

To explore this question, we utilised segmentation and regression analysis to identify three distinct groups of citizens in relation to participation:

- I. those who are '**manifest**' participants, who are currently engaged in some form of conventional political activity;
- II. those who are '**latent**' or '**standby**' participants, who are not currently actively engaged but might be persuaded to become so in the future; and
- III. '**non-participants**' who are not currently active and are unlikely to be so regardless of the circumstances.

Our interest here is, specifically, in the 'latent' participants; citizens whose participation is held in reserve, on 'standby' until such time as their engagement is triggered. What is their engagement profile? What are their social characteristics, political attitudes and behaviour? Do they match active, 'manifest' citizens in their willingness to participate, and do they outperform 'non-participants' in terms of their engagement if the issue that confronts them is important enough? Are they more likely to respond to a worsening of politics by getting involved; is their attitude to the culture and system of modern politics a trigger? Or do they need to feel that the political system is improving in order to come forward and get involved?

A new typology of participation and engagement

Utilising the Audit questions it is possible to develop a new typology of participation to outline the parameters of the 'standby citizen'.⁹

In our categorisation, manifest participants include all those who have undertaken at least one of the 12 Audit political participation activities¹⁰ in the last 12 months in order to

⁹ See Appendix C for further detail about the categorisation of citizens using the Audit questions and qualifiers.

¹⁰ We have excluded 'voted in an election' from the list of political activities because not all respondents will have had an equal chance to vote in an election in the previous 12 months.

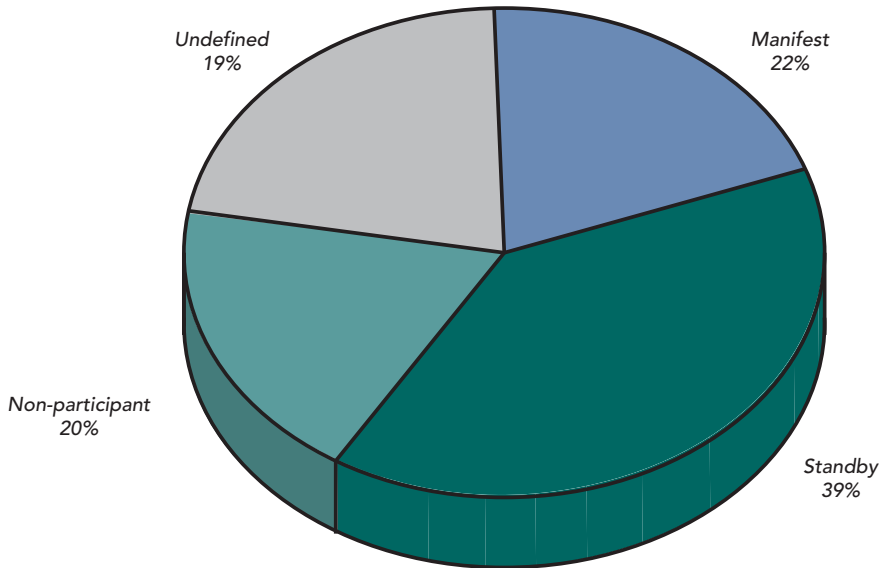
influence decisions, laws or policies, and whose voting propensity score is eight to 10 in the event of an immediate general election (10 being absolutely certain to vote).

Non-participants are those who are determined not to vote or engage in any other political activity; but they are also people who pay no attention to politics, lack interest in and knowledge of it, and generally lack a connection with the political process and politicians. They include all those who have undertaken no political acts in the last 12 months and who responded accordingly to at least two of the following four questions: said they were not very/not at all interested in politics; said they strongly/tended to agree that politics is a waste of time; said they took not much or no interest at all in news and current affairs; and whose voting propensity score was one to three in the event of an immediate general election (one being absolutely certain not to vote).

Latent participants are not committed non-voters; they may be willing to actively consider voting in future elections but they are not actively engaged in other political activities at present. But in contrast to non-participants, they are interested in politics and claim some knowledge of it. They may be active in their community in non-political organisations and will follow current affairs, particularly in newspapers or via other media sources. They may not be actively political at present, but they have the potential to become so in the future; their non-participation may be an indicator of political dissatisfaction but it could perhaps be channelled into political activity in the right circumstances. Latent participants are those who have not undertaken any political acts in the last 12 months but who do not say they are certain not to vote. They responded positively to at least three of the indicator questions in relation to interest in and knowledge of politics; knowledge of Parliament; watching Parliament on TV or online and visiting Parliament's website; and enjoy working with other people on common problems.

This segmentation finds that 22% of the Audit respondents fall into the manifest participation category and 20% into the non-participant group. A similar share (19%) could not be placed definitively into any group given the nature of their responses to some of the questions (reflecting the high proportion of 'don't know's' or 'neither agree nor disagree' responses given to some questions and that some respondents did not fit into any of the patterns of answers needed to designate them as manifest, standby or non-participants). Finally, the remaining 39% then fall into the category of 'latent' or 'standby' citizen.

Figure 29: Political participation categories: manifest, standby and non-participants



Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Unsurprisingly, manifest citizens are significantly more likely to come from older age groups and the AB social classes. Among non-participants, age and gender do not appear to be particularly significant but social class is clearly a driver, with those in social grades AB significantly less likely to be in this group. As Figure 30 illustrates, standby citizens, however, are significantly more likely to be male than female, are less likely to be drawn from among the younger age groups and are less likely to include people from the DE social classes. Across all the categories there are minor variations in regional and geographical distribution but no significant differences. The tests for significance in Figure 30 were to examine whether there are meaningful differences in the makeup of the manifest, standby and non-participant groupings.

Figure 30: Demographic distribution of citizens in manifest, standby and non-participant categories

	Manifest n=248	Standby n=443	Non- participant n=221	Undefined n=215
	%	%	%	%
Gender*				
Male	23.3	45.8	18.2	12.7
Female	20.8	33.4	20.8	25.0
Age*				
18-24	12.6	28.1	22.2	37.1
25-34	14.3	35.5	24.0	26.2
35-44	20.7	40.9	21.2	17.2
45-54	28.1	40.8	17.3	13.8
55-64	27.5	44.2	16.7	11.6
65-74	32.5	52.6	10.5	4.4
75+	25.5	37.8	21.4	15.3
Social grade*				
AB	41.5	51.7	5.7	1.1
C1	23.5	44.7	18.4	13.4
C2	19.6	38.4	24.3	17.7
DE	13.9	30.4	23.5	32.2
Total	22.0	39.3	19.6	19.1

* The difference between men and women in the standby group is statistically significant ($p < 0.005$), but not significant for manifest and non-participants. The differences between age groups are significant ($p < 0.005$) for manifest and standby citizens, and to a lesser degree ($p < 0.05$) for non-participants. For social grade, the differences within all three groups are significant ($p < 0.005$).

Base: 1,128 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Consistent with their social characteristics, broadsheet newspaper readers are overwhelmingly found in the manifest or standby categories. Mid-market and local newspaper readers are also found predominantly in these two groups. Conversely, readers of tabloid newspapers are below average in terms of their presence in the manifest and standby categories, as are those citizens who read no newspaper at all.

Figure 31: Newspaper readership of citizens in manifest, standby and non-participant categories

Newspaper type	Manifest n=248	Standby n=443	Non-participant n=221
	%	%	%
Tabloid	17.7	34.1	20.6
Mid-market	26.3	47.3	15.2
Broadsheet	38.0	59.9	12.0
Local	25.3	43.5	20.4
No readership	12.3	29.1	24.2

Base: 912 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

The political attitudes of standby citizens

Manifest and standby citizens appear to think quite similarly about the political system, as shown in Figures 32 and 33. In contrast, non-participants appear to hold a distinctively different perspective. Nearly two-thirds of all citizens think the political system needs improving but non-participants are less likely than either manifest or standby citizens to agree that the political system works well. Non-participants are also much less likely to agree that Parliament debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to them, are less confident that their involvement in politics can make a difference and are much more likely to agree that politics is a waste of time and that participating in politics is not much fun. In contrast, the closeness of attitude and outlook between manifest and standby citizens suggests that these two groups may be interchangeable in terms of their engagement.

Figure 32: Opinions about the political system and involvement in politics held by citizens in manifest, standby and non-participant categories

	Manifest n=248	Standby n=443	Non-participant n=221
	%	%	%
Opinion on the present system of governing Britain			
Works well	35.9	34.8	19.9
Could be improved	62.9	64.1	68.3
Don't know	1.2	1.1	11.8
The UK Parliament encourages public involvement in politics			
Agree	34.3	37.0	26.7
Neither	18.5	22.3	44.8
Disagree	47.2	40.6	28.5
The UK Parliament debates and makes decisions about issues that matter to me			
Agree	69.0	69.8	38.9
Neither	15.7	15.8	44.8
Disagree	15.3	14.4	16.3
When people like me get involved in politics, they really can change the way that the UK is run			
Agree	41.1	42.4	23.5
Neither	26.2	22.1	40.7
Disagree	32.7	35.4	35.7
Politics is a waste of time			
Agree	8.5	8.1	24
Neither	10.1	14.7	36.7
Disagree	81.5	77.2	39.4
Participating in politics is not much fun			
Agree	41.5	42.7	57.9
Neither	22.6	26.6	37.6
Disagree	35.9	30.7	4.5
If a person is dissatisfied with political decisions, he/she has a duty to do something about it			
Agree	75.8	74.7	53.8
Neither	16.1	16.3	34.8
Disagree	8.1	9.0	11.3

Base: 912 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Further weight is lent to this supposition when exploring the different responses to the cognitive and psychological questions explored in this year's Audit. Again, as Figure 33 shows, the responses of the manifest and standby citizens closely parallel one another; they are closely matched. Non-participants are far more likely to be uncomfortable about politics and feel that it is too complicated to understand compared to their manifest and standby colleagues. However, they are noticeably more likely than the other categories to claim to be able to see other people's point of view, and they are no more likely than either of the other two groups to suspend their own judgement in favour of a group decision or think that to be really informed about politics you have to get involved.

Figure 33: Opinions about politics held by citizens in manifest, standby and non-participant categories

	Manifest n=248	Standby n=443	Non-participant n=221
	%	%	%
When people argue about politics, I feel uncomfortable			
Agree	16.1	17.8	23.5
Neither	16.9	19.4	39.4
Disagree	66.9	62.8	37.1
I usually find it easy to see political issues from other people's point of view			
Agree	47.6	46.3	59.7
Neither	11.7	17.4	29.9
Disagree	40.7	36.3	10.4
When I'm in a group, I often go along with what the majority decides is best, even if it is not what I want personally			
Agree	17.7	18.3	17.6
Neither	13.7	15.6	38.5
Disagree	68.5	66.1	43.9
Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on			
Agree	47.6	46.3	59.7
Neither	11.7	17.4	29.9
Disagree	40.7	36.3	10.4
The only way to be really informed about politics is to get involved			
Agree	64.9	61.2	54.8
Neither	14.5	16.5	32.1
Disagree	20.6	22.3	13.1

Base: 912 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

The political participation potential of standby citizens

So if standby citizens are broadly similar in social characteristics and attitudes to active, manifest participants, what about their potential behaviour? In the event that they felt strongly about an issue would they be prepared to do something about it? Here, as Figure 34 details, different types of political activity attract differing levels of support.

Figure 34: The 'potential' of citizens in manifest, standby and non-participant categories to undertake certain political actions

		Manifest n=248	Standby n=443	Non- participant n=221
		%	%	%
Contact a local councillor	Yes	67.3	52.4	32.6
	No	32.7	43.6	67.4
Contact the media	Yes	31.0	21.3	10.0
	No	69.0	78.8	90.0
Take an active part in a campaign	Yes	30.6	25.3	7.2
	No	69.4	74.7	92.8
Create or sign a paper petition	Yes	52.0	38.3	27.6
	No	48.0	61.7	72.4
Create or sign an e-petition	Yes	44.8	32.3	12.7
	No	55.2	67.7	87.3
Donate money or pay a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	Yes	37.1	21.3	10.4
	No	62.9	78.8	89.6
Boycott certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	Yes	33.9	22.9	3.2
	No	66.1	77.1	96.8
Attend political meetings	Yes	23.4	17.7	4.5
	No	76.6	82.3	95.5
Donate money or pay a membership fee to a political party	Yes	9.7	7.1	2.7
	No	90.3	92.9	97.3
Take part in a demonstration, picket or march	Yes	23.8	15.6	3.6
	No	76.2	84.4	96.4
Vote in an election	Yes	62.9	50.2	31.2
	No	37.1	49.8	68.8
Contribute to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	Yes	21.0	14.9	2.7
	No	79.0	78.1	97.3
Take part in a public consultation	Yes	29.8	21.9	5.0
	No	70.2	78.1	95.0
Would do nothing	Yes	3.2	10.4	28.1
	No	96.8	89.6	71.9

Base: 912 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

Contacting a councillor or signing a petition is something that most citizens would think about doing, including a third of those categorised as non-participants. But donating money to a political party or becoming a member of one is something that very few would do. Unsurprisingly, those citizens who are already manifest participants are consistently more likely to engage in the full range of suggested activities than either standby or non-participants. Equally, standby citizens are more likely to engage in the full range than are non-participants. For the latter group, however, no matter how important the issue, 28% of them would not undertake any of the suggested range of political activities. This unwillingness to do anything drops to 10.4% for standby citizens, and only 3.2% for those already engaged as manifest participants.

So despite having similar views about the system of governing and the nature of politics, and a shared attitudinal approach to the challenges posed by the culture of politics, when pressed to take action, there is a greater reluctance to do so among standby citizens than those in the manifest category. Importantly, however, the views of standby citizens are closer to those in the manifest category than they are to non-participants.

Interestingly, a greater proportion of standby than manifest citizens would respond to positive and negative triggers derived either from improvements to, or further deterioration in, the state of the political system (see page 68), and both groups share an almost statistically identical attitude to reform.

Exploring the potential for engagement, two arguments about the state of politics present themselves. On the one hand, citizens may only get more engaged if the system remains unreformed and therefore continues to deteriorate, prompting the 'silent majority' to rise up and participate. Alternatively, citizens may only get more engaged once the system has been reformed, believing that unless the political system is improved their participation will simply be ineffective and unsatisfactory.

Figure 35 sets out the potential of these positive and negative triggers for participation. It is clear that standby citizens are the most willing to increase their level of interest in involvement in politics but are equally as likely to respond to a positive as a negative trigger. Four in 10 standby citizens would be more interested in being involved if the state of politics deteriorated; and four in 10 would equally be interested in further involvement only if the state of politics improved.

Figure 35: Reaction to 'positive' and 'negative' triggers for engagement by citizens in manifest, standby and non-participant categories

		Manifest n=248	Standby n=443	Non-participants n=221
		%	%	%
Do you think you would be more or less interested in getting involved in politics...				
Positive trigger: ...if politics were LESS influenced by self-serving politicians and powerful special interests	Yes	34.6	39.1	26.2
	No	30.4	39.1	30.4
Negative trigger: ...if politics were MORE influenced by self-serving politicians and powerful special interests*	Yes	29.4	40.0	30.6
	No	39.4	38.0	22.6

* The differences on the negative trigger are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Base: 912 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

In contrast, closer to three in 10 citizens in the manifest participation category would change their interest in involvement in response to either the positive or negative trigger. While non-participants are much more reluctant to get involved compared to standby citizens, their approach broadly mirrors the response of manifest citizens in that, even in this group, close to three in 10 would also respond to either a positive or negative trigger.

If the political system were to change, then the reform preferences and priorities of both manifest and standby citizens are almost identical, as set out in Figure 36. Fifty-two percent of manifest and 53% of standby citizens want politics to be more transparent and easier to follow; 54% of manifest and 49% of standby citizens want to make politicians more accountable for their performance between elections, and 37% of both categories want better information and education about politics for all citizens. The prioritisation of reforms also holds true for non-participants but their desire for reform is lower: only 43% favour making politics more transparent, 30% making politicians more accountable and 28% improving the information and education available about politics to all citizens.

Figure 36: Support for political reforms by citizens in manifest, standby and non-participant categories

Reform option	Manifest n=248	Standby n=443	Non-participants n=221
	%	%	%
Make politics more transparent and easier to follow	52.0	53.6	43.4
Make politicians more accountable for their performance between elections	54.4	49.3	29.4
Better information and education about politics for all citizens	37.1	36.9	27.6

Base: 912 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 14-18 December 2012.

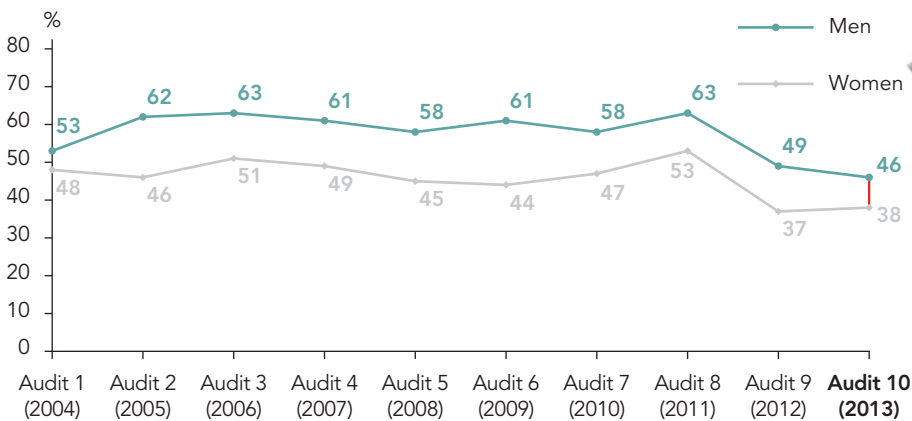
These findings would suggest that standby citizens are an identifiable group with marked attitudes and behaviours that often closely mirror those of active participants. Together, manifest and standby citizens constitute approximately two-thirds of the population who see politics in a broadly similar way, and favour broadly similar reform ideas for the future. On the right issue, and with a suitable political stimulus, around four in 10 standby citizens could potentially be converted from latent to manifest participation in the future. The problem, however, is that although the public is increasingly disgruntled, disillusioned and disengaged, they appear to see the political system as neither sufficiently good nor sufficiently bad to, as yet, justify a significant increase in their focus on it. The tipping point – in either a positive or negative direction – has perhaps not yet been reached.

8. Demographic and sub-group differences

A. Gender

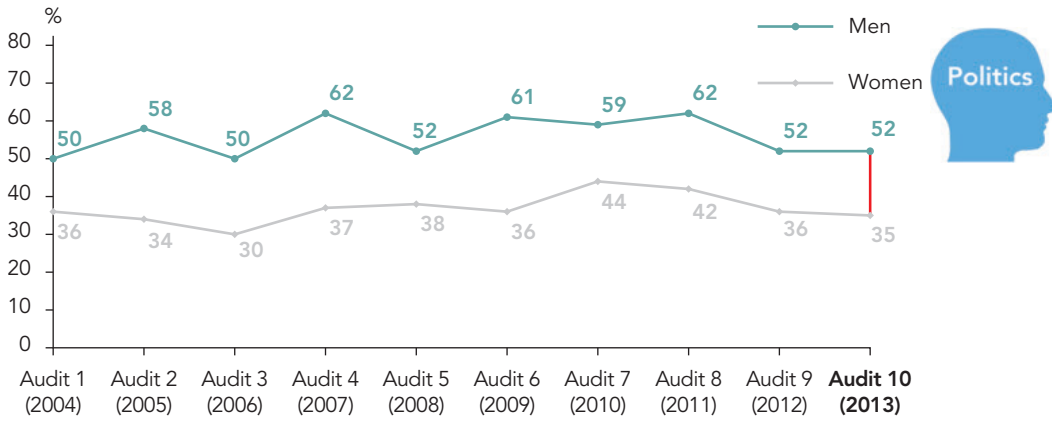
Interested in politics

Men have consistently expressed interest in politics in greater numbers than women. This year there is an eight percentage point difference in levels of interest between the genders, which, as the graph shows, is the second lowest in the Audit series after Audit 1. Since Audit 8, the proportions saying they are at least 'fairly' interested have fallen significantly amongst men (from 63% to 46%) as well as women (from 53% to 38%).



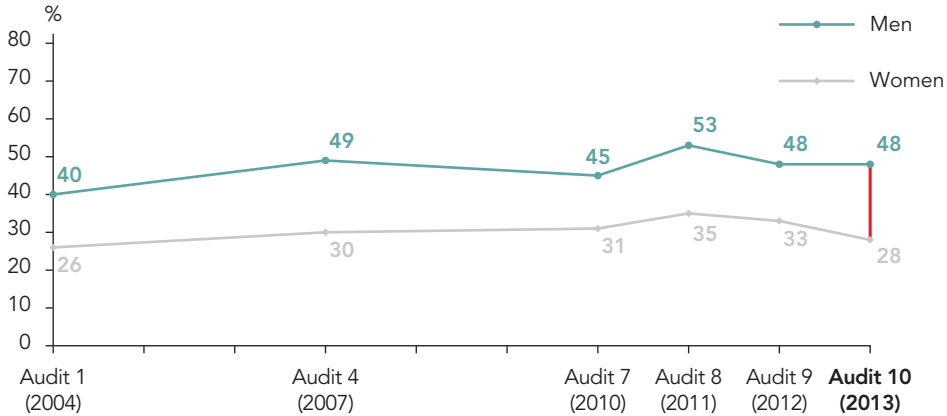
Knowledgeable about politics

Throughout the Audit series, fewer women than men have claimed to know at least 'a fair amount' about politics. This remains the case this year: 35% of women feel they know at least 'a fair amount' about politics, compared with 52% of men. Men and women's knowledge levels have not significantly declined since last year, but they remain within the typical range for each gender. However, as identified in Audit 7, when claimed knowledge is compared to actual knowledge, as measured in a set of true/false political quiz questions, then the gender gap is significantly smaller.



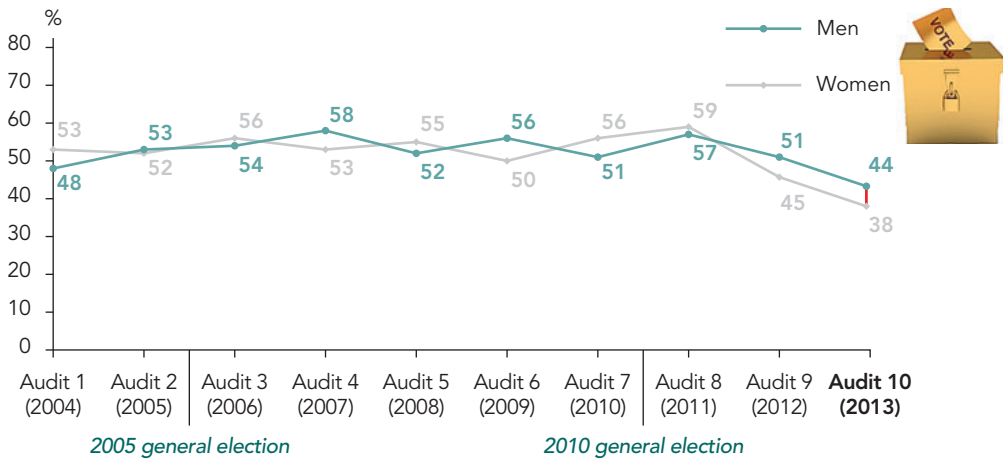
Knowledgeable about Parliament

As with knowledge of politics, knowledge of Parliament is more widespread amongst men (48%) than women (28%), with no significant change in knowledge levels apparent over the past year. The disparity in knowledge levels between the two genders is reflected to some degree in men and women’s differing views about Parliament: women are less likely than men to believe that Parliament holds government to account (42% versus 53%). Fewer women than men consider the issues debated by Parliament to be relevant to them (49% versus 61%) or deem Parliament essential to democracy (60% versus 77%).



Certain to vote

Throughout the Audit series, similar proportions of men and women have said that they would definitely vote in the event of an immediate general election. Last year, there was a marked decline in women’s propensity to vote and the downward trend has continued this year. Thirty-eight percent of women and 44% of men now say they are certain to vote, restoring the roughly six percentage point gender gap in voting propensity witnessed in earlier Audits prior to 2011.



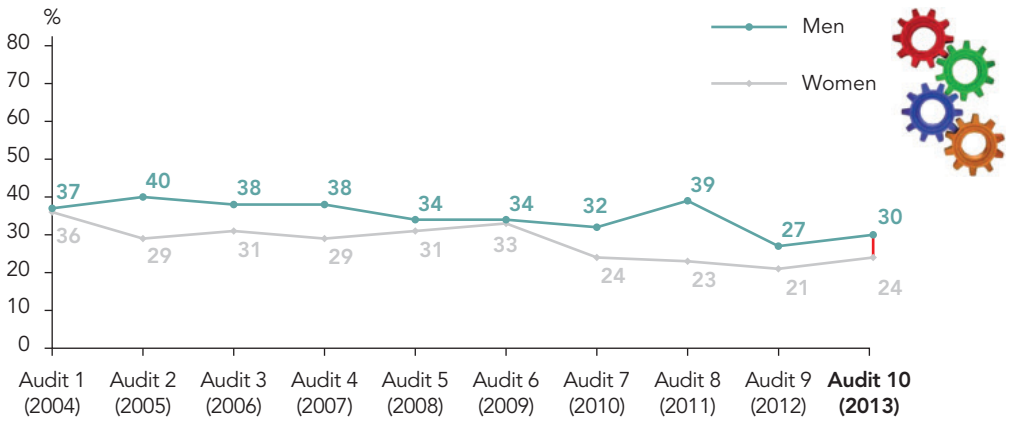
Action and participation

Men and women are equally likely to undertake all of the political activities asked about in the survey, with 49% of men and 51% of women having done at least one of the activities in the last year.

The picture is similar for their potential to get involved in future, with 76% of men and 80% of women saying they would consider doing one of these activities if they felt strongly about an issue. However, on two potential activities there are small differences. Women are more prepared to donate to a charity or campaign organisation in future (21%) than men (13%) and to sign paper petitions on issues they feel strongly about (37% versus 31%).

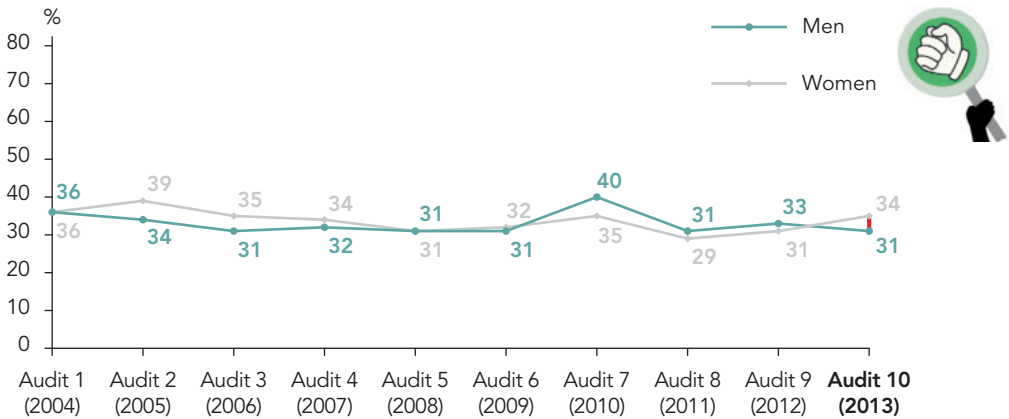
Approves of system of governing

Although the opinions of both genders regarding the current system of governing Britain were almost indistinguishable during Audits 5 and 6, for the rest of the Audit series men have typically been more likely than women to describe the system as working 'extremely' or 'mainly' well. Audit 8 saw the largest divergence of views so far (39% of men approved, compared with 23% of women), but the gap has subsequently diminished. While more of both men and women now view the system favourably compared with last year (30% and 24% compared with 27% and 21% respectively), the men who hold this view still outnumber women by six percentage points.



Feel getting involved is effective

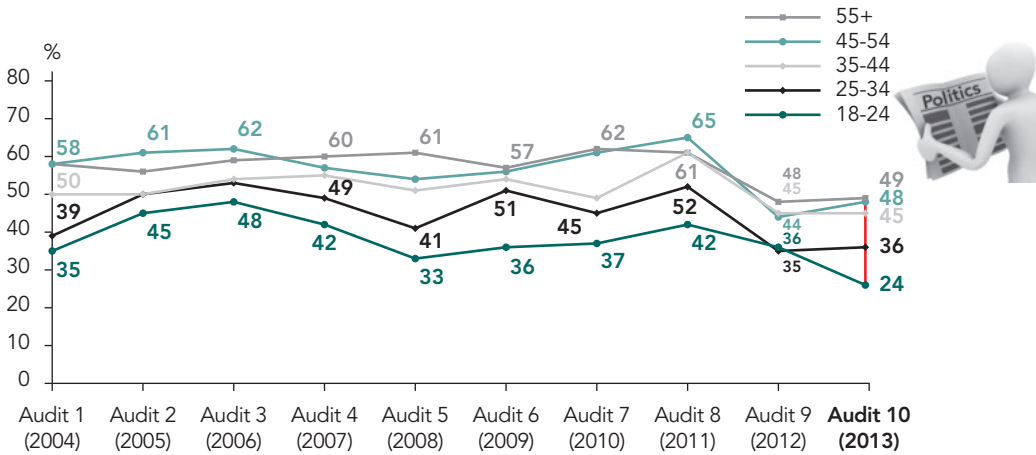
As in previous years, similar proportions of women and men believe that the involvement of people ‘like me’ in politics can bring change to the country (34% and 31%, respectively). This is also true of the proportion of men and women who feel they have influence over decision-making at the local and national level (28% of men and 23% of women, and 19% of men and 14% of women, respectively). However, a higher proportion of men express the desire to be involved in local decision-making (52%, compared with 44% of women).



B. Age

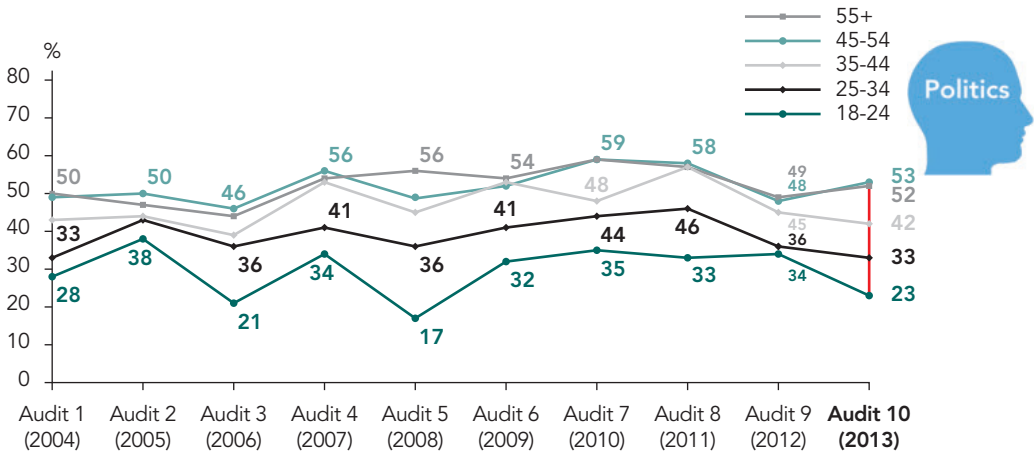
Interested in politics

Generally speaking, the older people are, the more likely they are to express an interest in politics. The level of interest of each age group has fluctuated over the years, but since Audit 8 has fallen sharply. This year all age groups apart from 18-24 year olds have retained a similar level of interest in politics as in Audit 8. However, the level of interest of 18-24 year olds has dropped significantly from last year’s 35% to 24%, meaning they are half as likely now than in the period following the 2005 general election to say they are at least ‘fairly’ interested in politics (24%, compared with 48% in Audit 3).



Knowledgeable about politics

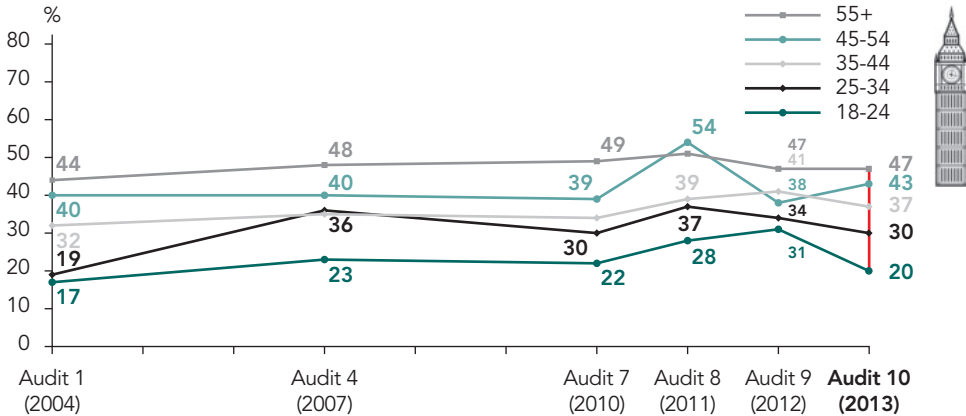
The proportions claiming to have a sound knowledge of politics have typically been highest amongst people aged 35 or above; somewhat lower amongst 25-34 year olds; and lower still amongst the under-25s, whose knowledge levels have fluctuated over the past nine years. This year the knowledge level of 18-24 year olds has dropped from 34% last year to 23%, creating a 30 percentage point gap between the knowledge levels of people in the 55 or above age bracket (53%) and the 18-24 age bracket. The size of the gap has doubled since last year, when it was 15 percentage points (49% for 55 or above and 34% for 18-24 year olds).



Knowledgeable about Parliament

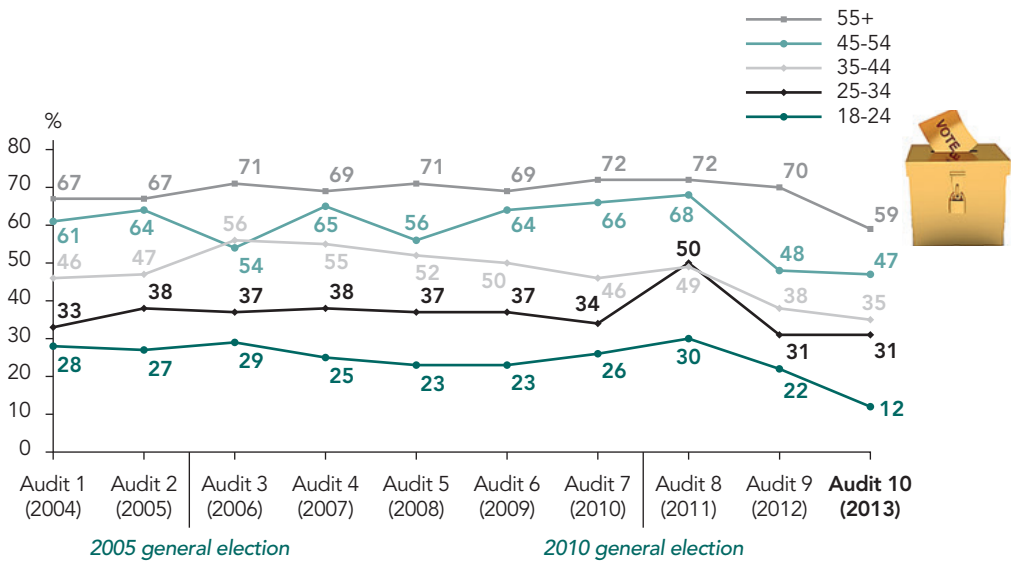
Knowledge of Parliament increases with age, with clear distinctions evident between the oldest and youngest groups. While knowledge levels amongst people aged 55 or above have barely changed over time, those of other groups have been more varied with, until this year, a gradual rise in knowledge evident amongst 18-24 year olds (from 17% in Audit 1 to 31% in Audit 9). This year, however, the knowledge level of 18-24 year olds has dropped to 20%. This group are also less likely to perceive the issues debated by Parliament as relevant to them: only 41% agree that the issues Parliament debates 'matter to me'

compared to the national average of 55%. 18-24 year olds are also less inclined than average to agree that Parliament is essential to democracy (59% compared with 67% overall); or believe that Parliament holds government to account (34% compared to 47% overall).



Certain to vote

The proportions who feel certain to vote in the event of an immediate general election have always been high amongst older members of the public, and lower amongst successively younger age bands. This remains true in Audit 10. However, the differences in propensity to vote between most age groups has narrowed, since the proportion of those aged 55 and above who are certain to vote has fallen significantly (from 70% in Audit 9 to 59% this year). There is also a marked decrease in the proportion of 18-24 year olds who are certain to vote (from 22% in Audit 9 to 12% this year), which accounts for the persistent disparity of voting certainty between the top and bottom age brackets (more than four times as many aged 55 and above are certain to vote than 18-24 year olds). The figure for 18-24 year olds is the lowest in the Audit series. Propensity to vote has remained stable for 25-35 year olds, though certainty seems to be gradually waning amongst 35-44 and 45-54 year olds as the proportion of certain voters in those bands are now at their lowest in the Audit series (35% and 47% respectively).



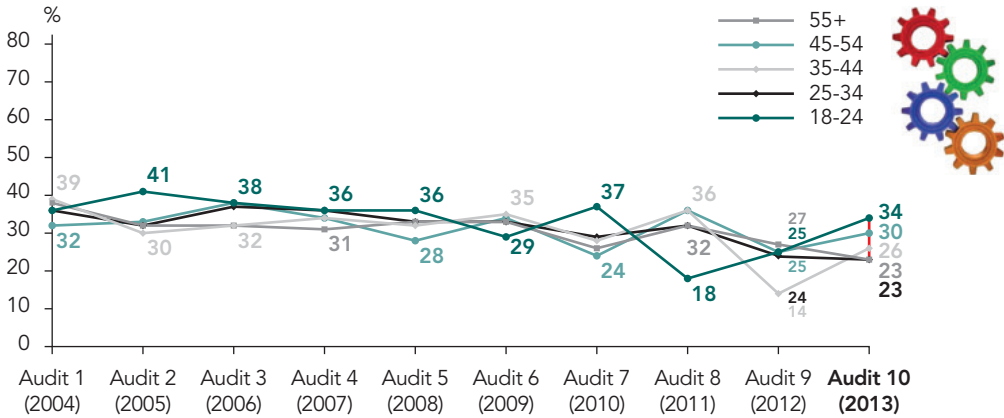
Action and participation

Young people (18-24 year olds) are much more likely (71%) to say they have done none of the political activities. Fifty-six percent of 25-34 year olds say the same, while fewer than half of those aged above 35 have not done any of these activities in the past year.

18-24 year olds are also the most likely to say they would not be prepared to do any of the activities in future even if they felt strongly about an issue (30%), however the differences with other age groups here is not so great. Twenty-eight percent of 25-34 year olds say this, compared to 26% of those aged 75 or over. The most willing potential participants are those aged 45-54 and 65-74, of whom only 14% say they would not be willing to do one of those activities in future.

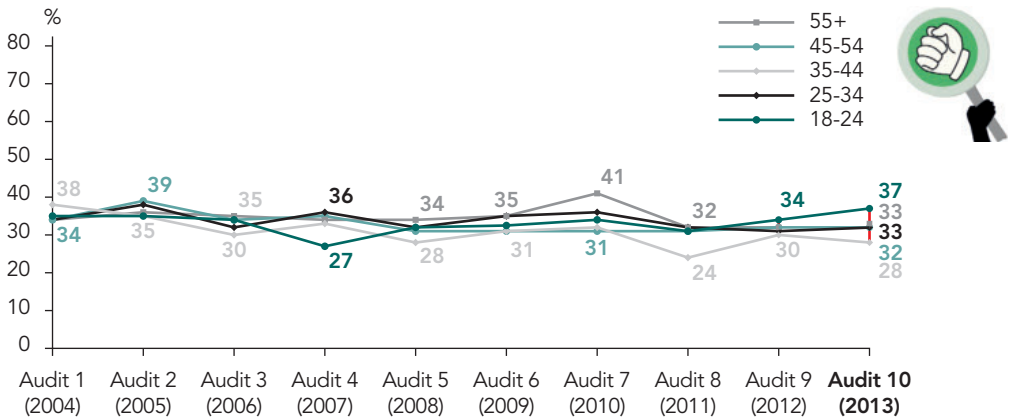
Approves of system of governing

There is no clear pattern of variation between age and approval of the current system of governing Britain. In Audit 8 there was an 18 percentage point gap between the highest and lowest approval rates (36% approval amongst 35-44 year olds, and 18% amongst 18-24 year olds), and last year approval fell starkly amongst 35-44 year olds (from 36% in Audit 8 to 14% in Audit 9). But this year the views of most age groups are alike, with around one in four from each group describing the system as working 'extremely' or 'mainly' well.



Feel getting involved is effective

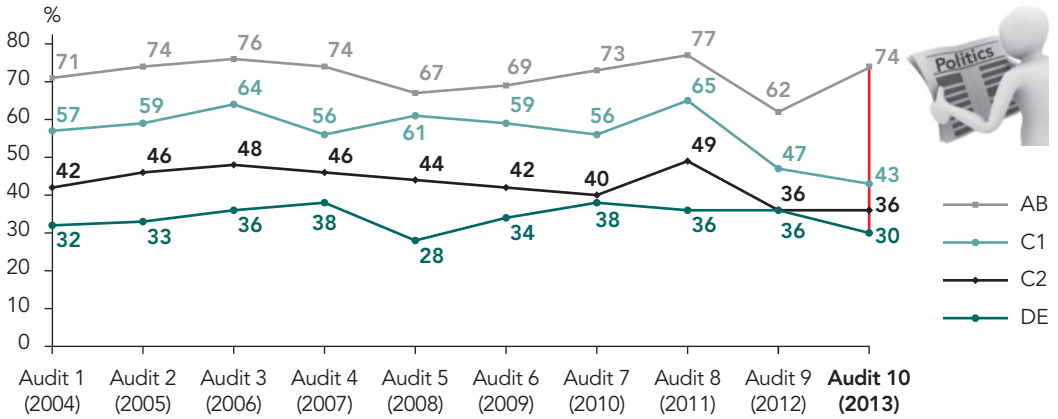
Similar proportions in each age band believe that involvement in politics can help change the way the country is run. Levels of political efficacy declined slightly in every age group following the 2010 general election, but have stabilised from Audit 9 to this year. Meanwhile, people aged 75 or above stand out as being less likely than average to want to become involved in decision-making in their local area (24%, compared with 47% overall) or in the country as a whole (20%, compared with 33% overall).



C. Social class

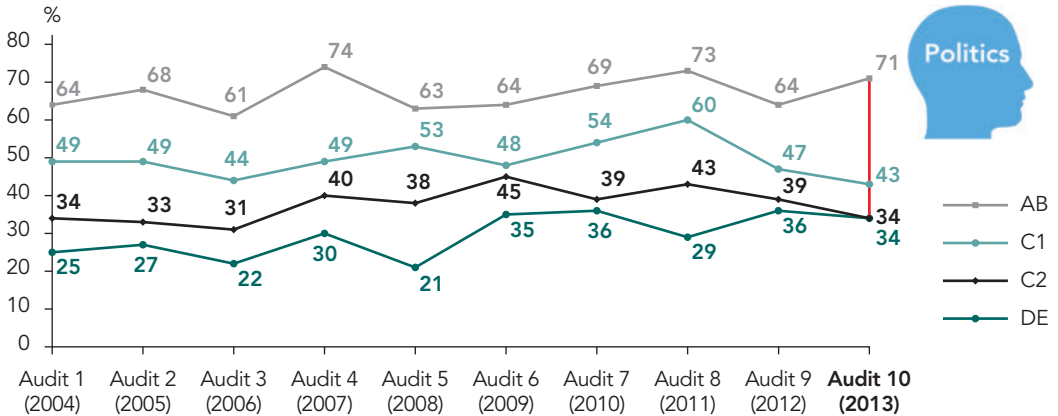
Interested in politics

Social grade is a key differentiator for interest in politics, with ABs the most likely throughout the Audit series to express an interest in the subject (74% in Audit 10). This year, levels of interest have declined across all groups except ABs, whose levels have recovered from a lull of 62% in Audit 9 to 74%, and C2s, whose levels have remained the same as last year (36%) after diminishing almost uninterruptedly since Audit 3. The proportion of DEs who say they are at least 'fairly' interested in politics is, after Audit 5 (28%), at its second lowest level since the Audit series began, and has dropped 8% since the 2010 election (from 38% in Audit 7 to 30% this year).



Knowledgeable about politics

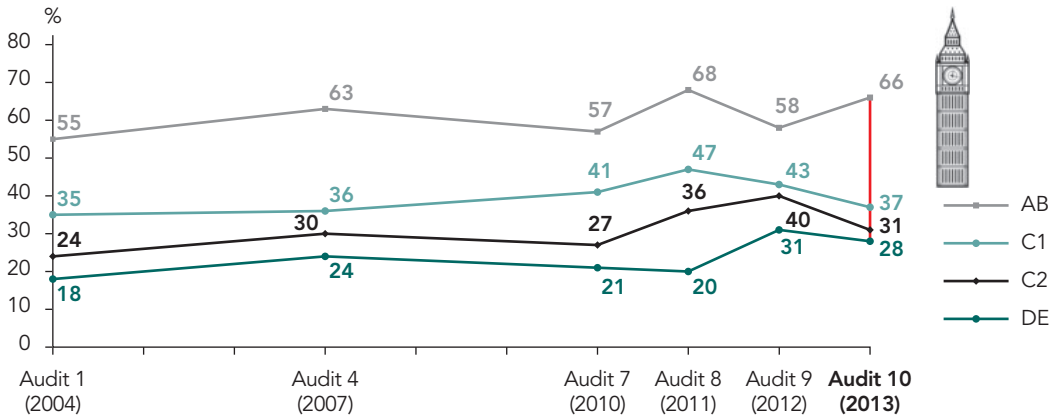
As with interest, knowledge of politics varies by social grade. ABs have consistently felt they are the most knowledgeable group, and the proportion who feel they know 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal' has recovered from last year's dip of 64% to 71%. Two years of rising perceived knowledge levels amongst C1s has been followed by two years of decline (falling from 60% in Audit 8 to 43% this year). The knowledge levels of C2s and DEs are converging: last year 39% of C2s and 36% of DEs claimed to know at least 'a fair amount'; those figures this year are both 34%.



Knowledgeable about Parliament

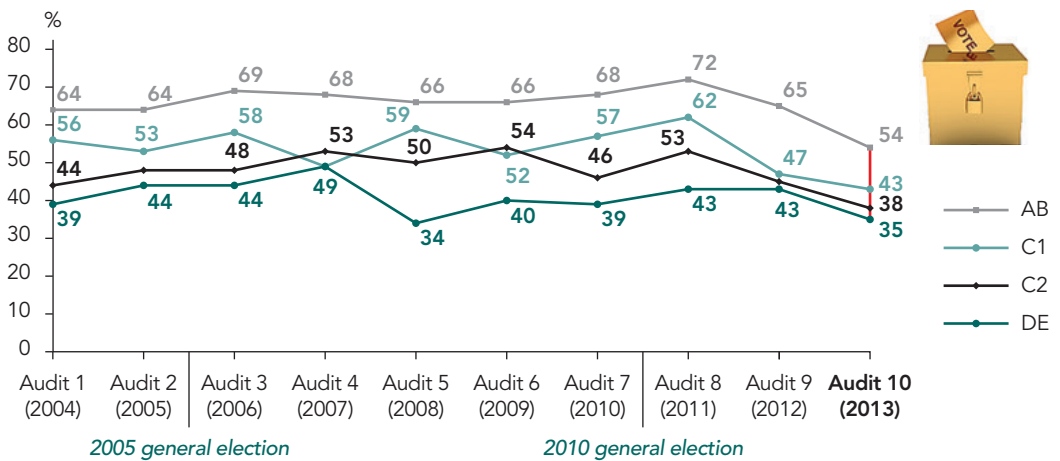
The proportion of ABs who feel knowledgeable about Parliament differs substantially from the proportion of DEs who feel the same (66% and 28%, respectively, in Audit 10), and ABs are the only group whose levels have not declined this year. ABs also stand out from other groups in believing that Parliament holds government to account (62% agree compared to 47% overall), and are almost unanimous in agreeing that Parliament is essential to our democracy (89% agree as opposed to 67% overall). Compared to the population as a whole, DEs are less inclined to feel that Parliament is essential to our democracy (56% agree, compared with 67% overall). In contrast to ABs and C1s, C2s and DEs are almost unified in their being less likely to feel that Parliament debates 'issues that matter to me'

(68% and 61% of the former two bands agree; 49% and 47% of the latter two bands agree, respectively).



Certain to vote

The people most likely to report that they are certain to vote are those belonging to social grades A and B (54%, compared with 41% overall). However, although previously this group's propensity to vote had remained broadly stable over time, this year ABs certainty shows its first significant fall and is at least 10 percentage points lower than at any other time in the Audit series. This counters our suggestion last year that, because the certainty of ABs had not declined significantly after Audit 4 (which was conducted 18 months after a general election) or Audit 8 (which followed the 2010 general election), ABs are more inclined than other groups to sustain their interest in voting between elections. The certainty of other social grades has always been lower and relatively volatile, and that trend continues this year.



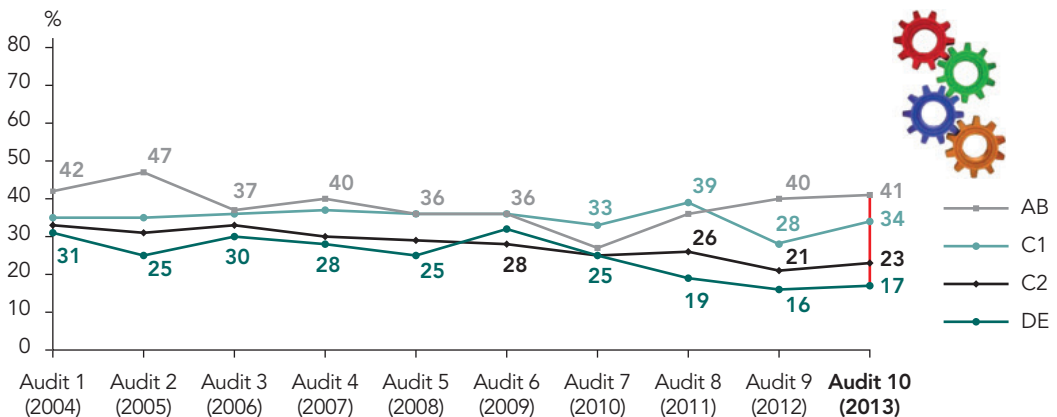
Action and participation

Two-thirds of ABs (67%) have done at least one political activity in the past year, compared to half of C1s (51%) and C2s (49%) and 43% of DEs. They are more likely to have created or signed a paper petition (15%) or e-petition (19%) than average (8% and 9% respectively) and to have donated money to a charity or campaign organisation (34%) or boycotted a product (17%) than average (20% and 6% respectively).

ABs also show greater willingness to undertake any of the activities in the future. Twenty-six percent of ABs say they would consider contacting the media or would take part in a campaign (compared to the averages of 16% and 14% respectively) and 20% would attend a political meeting compared to the average of 9%. Just 7% of ABs say they would not do any of these activities even if they felt strongly about an issue. In contrast, 15% of C1s, 27% of C2s and 31% of DEs say they would not do any of them.

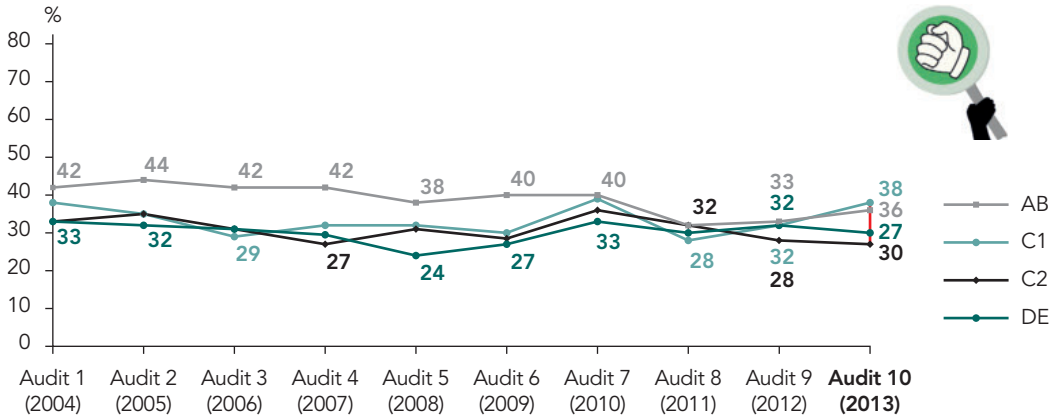
Approves of system of governing

Levels of approval of the present system of governing Britain also vary by social grade. The disparity between the views of different social groups has become more pronounced recently, as the proportion of DEs who feel the system is working 'extremely' or 'mainly' well has fallen – nearly halving between Audit 6 (33%) and Audit 10 (17%) – and the proportion of ABs who feel the same has increased marginally (from 36% in Audit 6 to 41% in Audit 10).



Feel getting involved is effective

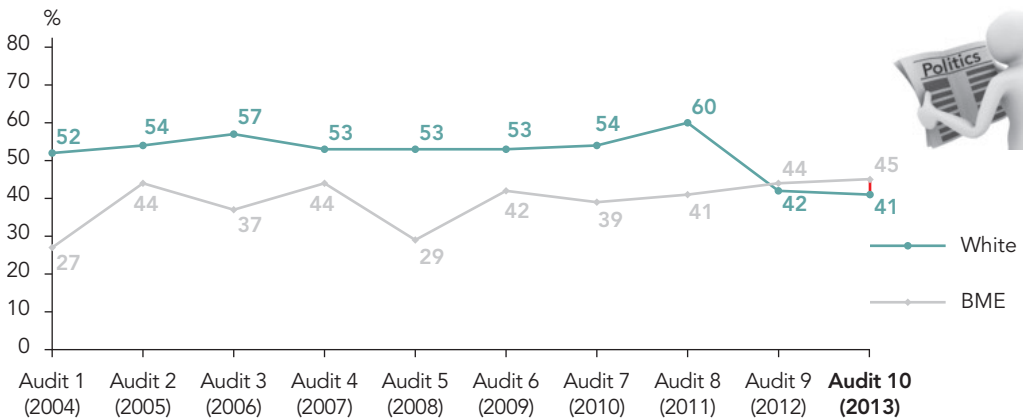
Differences between the social groupings in the perceived efficacy of involvement at the national level has gradually diminished over the Audit lifecycle as a sense of efficacy has grown amongst DEs in recent years and fallen amongst ABs. This year, however, the difference is once again more pronounced, with a nine percentage point difference between C2s (27%) and ABs (36%) and an 11 percentage point difference with C1s (38%). In terms of their perceived efficacy at a local level, those in social grades AB are more than twice as likely (44%) than C2s and DEs (20% each) to feel they have influence over decision-making. ABs also stand out as the group that would most probably like to be involved in decision-making in their local area (66% compared to 44% overall) and in the country as a whole (61% compared to 42% overall).



D. Ethnicity

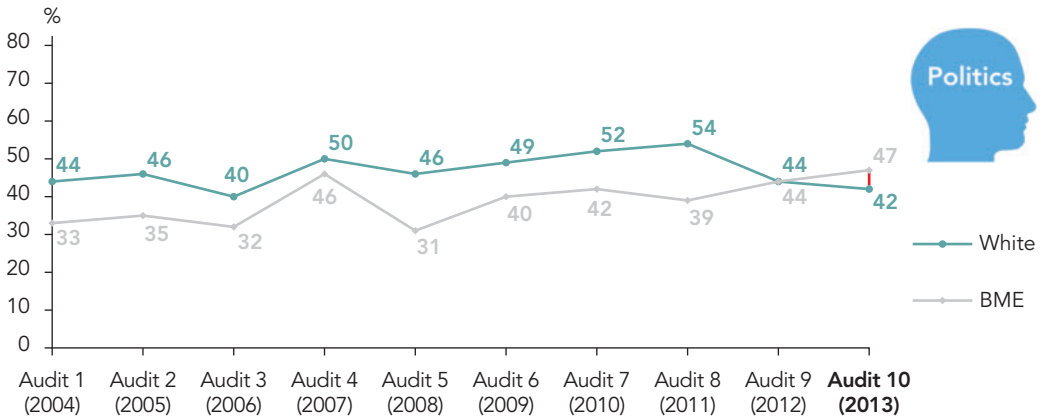
Interested in politics

Until Audit 8 half or more of the white population expressed an interest in politics every year, whereas people from BME backgrounds were less inclined to say they are ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ interested in the subject. Since Audit 9, however, interest amongst the white population has dramatically declined (from 60% in Audit 8 to 41% in Audit 10) while that amongst BMEs has remained stable. As a consequence, the gap in interest levels has closed (41% for the white population and 45% for the BME population).



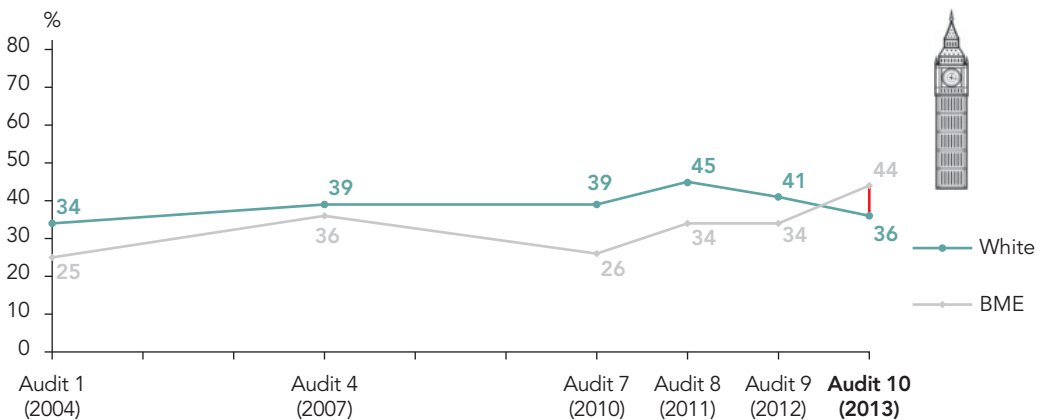
Knowledgeable about politics

As with interest in politics, until Audit 8 the proportion of BMEs who had declared themselves to be knowledgeable about politics had been lower than the proportion of white people who say the same. This year, though, the usual pattern of white and BME knowledge levels has reversed, owing to a sharp decline in the number of white respondents who claim to be at least ‘fairly’ knowledgeable about politics (from 54% in Audit 8 to 42% in Audit 10) and a rise in perceived BME knowledge to its highest level since the series began (from 39% in Audit 8 to 47% this year).



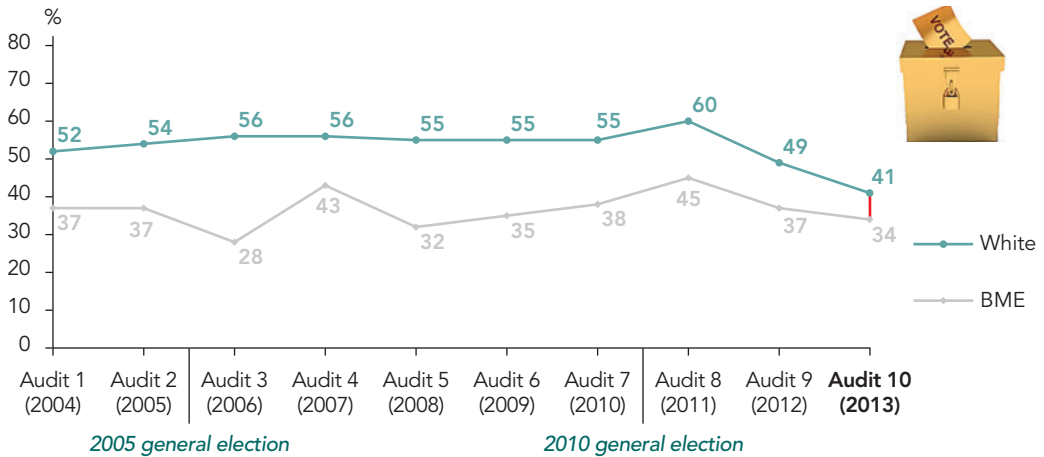
Knowledgeable about Parliament

As with knowledge of politics, knowledge of Parliament tends to be claimed by more white people than BMEs. However, recently, knowledge of Parliament has slipped amongst the white population (dropping from 45% in Audit 8 to 36% in Audit 10), and risen amongst the BME population (from 26% in Audit 7 to 44% in Audit 10), so that currently the group with the higher proportion of perceived knowledge of Parliament are BMEs. Across all the Parliament indicators, the views of BME citizens have improved this year. Last year, BMEs were less likely than white people to believe Parliament debates and decides on issues that ‘matter to me’ (43% versus 49%), whereas this year there is no difference (55% versus 54%). And although last year fewer BMEs agreed that Parliament is essential to democracy (59% versus 67%), this year, again, there is no differentiation (67% of both groups agree). In starker contrast, BMEs are more likely to say that Parliament encourages the public’s involvement (46%, compared with 27% of white respondents) and to say Parliament holds government to account (57% versus 46%).



Certain to vote

Since the first Audit, the white population has always been more likely than the BME population to say they are certain to vote in an immediate general election. Since Audit 9, however, there has been a sharp decline in the proportion of white people making this claim (from 60% in Audit 8 to 41% in Audit 10); hence the narrowing of the gap to just seven percentage points.



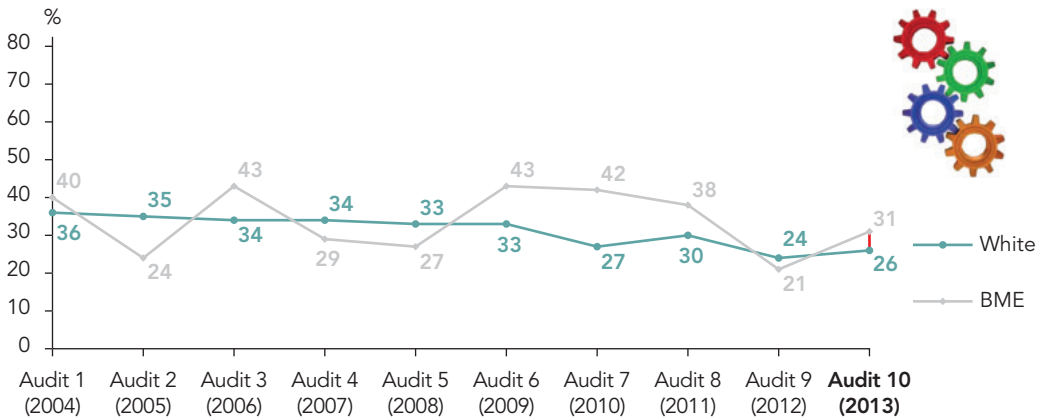
Action and participation

BME citizens are less likely to have donated to charity (12%) or boycotted a product (3%) than white people (7% and 20% respectively), but otherwise there is little to separate them in terms of the activities they have done.

However, BMEs are less willing to undertake any of the listed activities in the future, with 26% saying they would not do any of these activities even if they felt strongly about an issue, compared to 21% of white people. This is despite BMEs professing a greater belief in the efficacy of getting involved in politics and a greater desire to be involved in local and national decision-making than white people (see below).

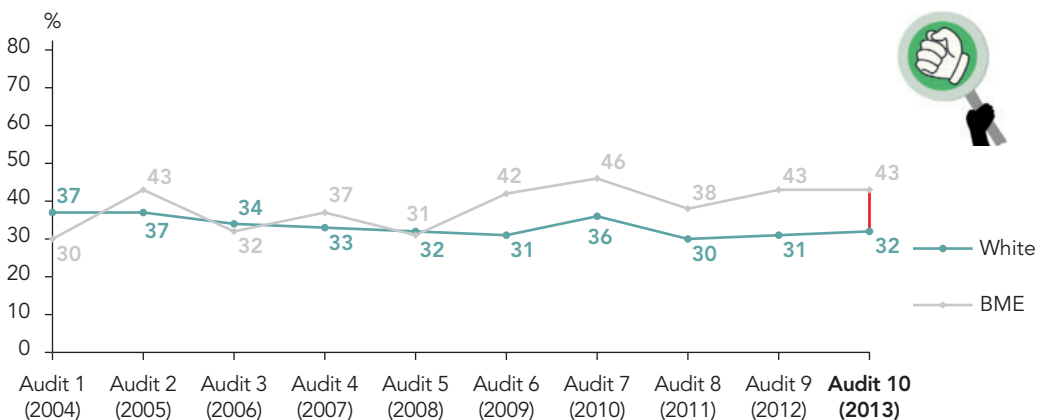
Approves of system of governing

Approval rates amongst BMEs have fluctuated over time and have more recently overtaken approval rates of the white population, whose views on the British system of governing started to deteriorate in Audit 7 (dropping from 36% in Audit 1 to 26% in Audit 10). BMEs' approval rates did slump in Audit 9 (dropping from 38% in Audit 8 to 21%); however they have recovered somewhat this year (rising to 31%).



Feel getting involved is effective

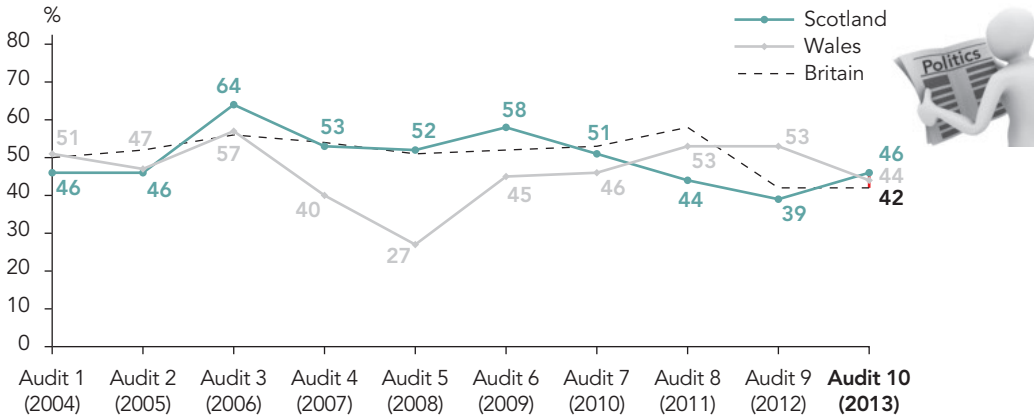
During the first five years of the Audit series, the perceived efficacy of involvement of people from BME backgrounds varied substantially from year to year. Since then, the belief that the country could change through the political participation of ‘people like me’ has become more stable amongst BMEs (fluctuating, on average, five percentage points each year since Audit 6, compared to, on average, 10 percentage points in the preceding five years). Moreover, since Audit 6 BMEs have been around 10 percentage points more likely than white people to feel getting involved is effective and this difference is sustained in Audit 10 (43% of BMEs feel getting involved is effective this year, compared to 32% of white people). BMEs are also more likely to feel they have influence over local decision-making (37% versus 24%); feel they have influence over national decision-making (34% compared to 14%); want to be involved in local decision-making (66% in contrast to 46%); and want to be involved in national decision-making (61% as opposed to 40%).



E. Scotland and Wales

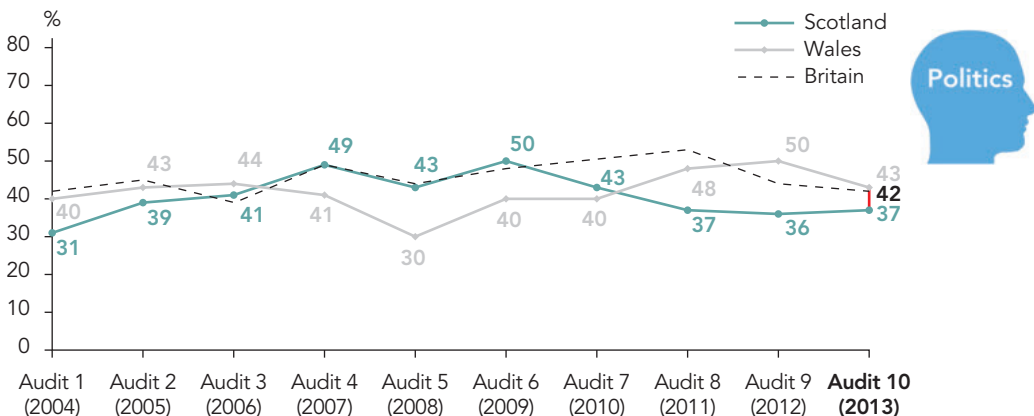
Interested in politics

Interest in politics has typically been more widespread amongst the Scottish population than the Welsh population, though this pattern was reversed from Audit 8, prior to the 2011 Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament elections, and sustained to Audit 9. This year, though, the proportions of people in Scotland and Wales who claim to be at least 'fairly' interested in politics are about even (46% and 44%, respectively), and are in line with the average for Britain as a whole (42%).



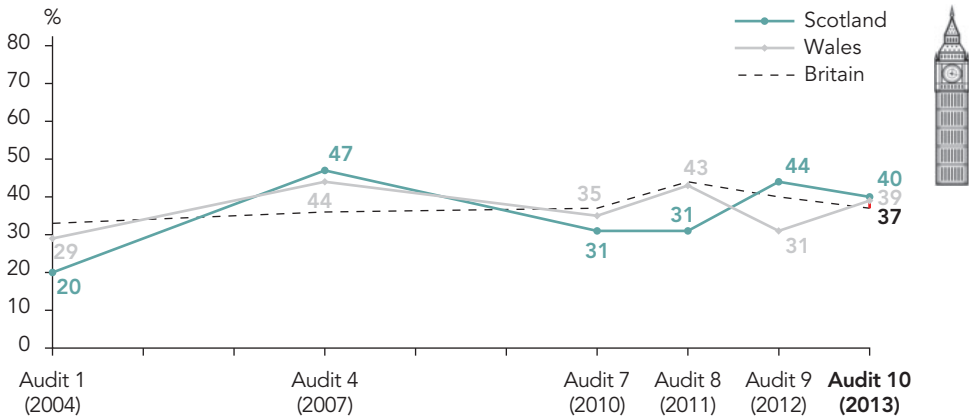
Knowledgeable about politics

After six years of the Scottish population's knowledge levels being broadly in line with those of the rest of Britain, levels fell below the average in Audits 7 and 8. However, the decline in perceived knowledge identified in Audit 9 – and continued this year – means that there is no longer a significant difference between Scotland and Britain as a whole. Knowledge levels in Wales, meanwhile, have typically been lower than average but began steadily rising from Audit 6. This year they have dropped from 50% to 43% of people in Wales saying they know at least a 'fair amount' about politics, though this is in keeping with the British average.



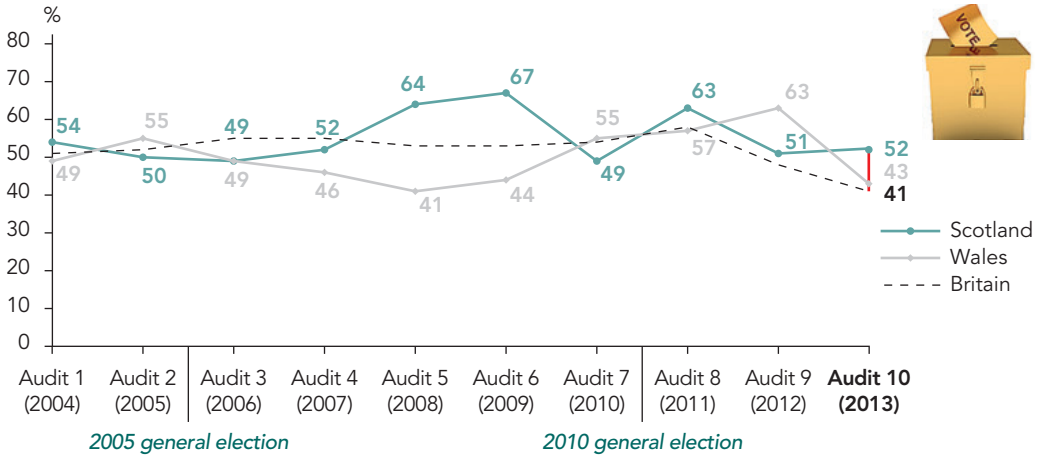
Knowledgeable about Parliament

Reported knowledge of the UK Parliament in Scotland began to decline after Audit 4, but since Audit 8 has somewhat recovered and is now in line with the average (40% and 37%, respectively). Although last year people in Scotland were less likely than people in the rest of Britain to feel that the UK Parliament is essential to democracy, that the issues it deals with are relevant to them, or that it holds the government to account, this year there is no discernable difference. In Wales, knowledge levels have kept pace with those in the rest of Britain (39% compared to 37% this year). On the other fronts mentioned with reference to Scotland, Wales are within five percentage points of the overall British averages. However, when asked whether Parliament encourages involvement in politics the proportion of those in Wales who agree is lower than the British average (19% compared to 30%).



Certain to vote

People living in Scotland and Wales have typically had a similar propensity to vote in a general election as the rest of the British population. The exception to this was in Audits 5 and 6, when people in Scotland were more inclined than average to say they were certain to vote, while people in Wales were less inclined than average to say the same. Certainty to vote amongst people in Wales was above average last year, reaching an all-time high (63%, compared with 48% across all of Britain), though it is back in line with overall British figures this year (43% versus 41%). Certainty to vote in Scotland has lifted above the British average though, reaching 52%.

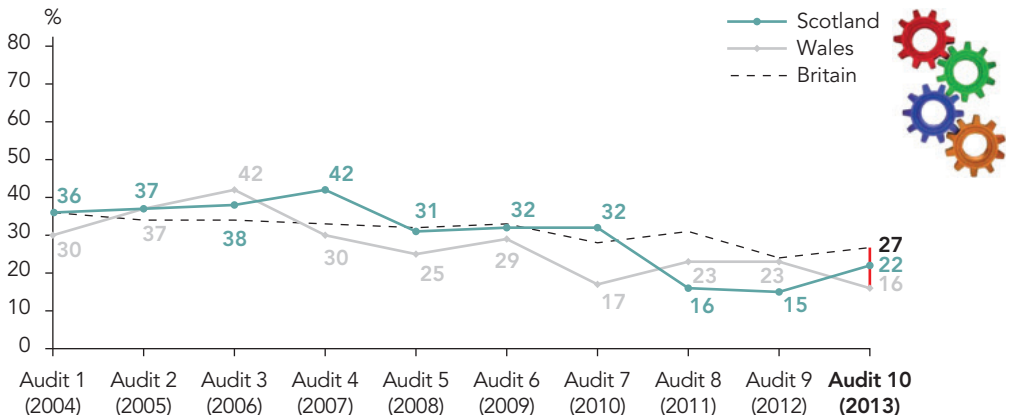


Action and participation

There are no significant differences in the proportion of people living in Scotland or Wales who have done the various political activities asked about in the survey. However, people in Scotland are somewhat more likely to say they would do one of the activities in the future if they felt strongly about an issue (84%) than people in Britain as a whole (78%) and those in Wales (77%).

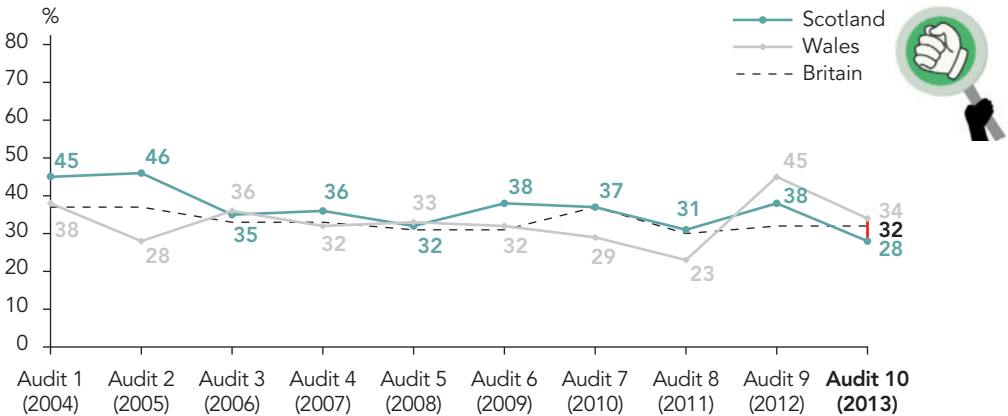
Approves of system of governing

The proportions who view the system of governing Britain favourably have gradually fallen amongst those who live in Scotland and Wales. In Scotland, the sharpest decline took place after the 2010 general election, when the proportion saying that it works ‘extremely’ or ‘mainly’ well more than halved (from 32% in Audit 7 to 16% in Audit 8). This year, however, approval in Scotland is not significantly below the national average (22% compared to 27% overall). In Wales the decline in approval rates which has been evident since Audit 3 has, after a brief period of arrest and partial reverse in Audits 8 and 9, resumed: the proportion who currently look favourably on the system (16%) is markedly below the average for Britain as whole (27%).



Feel getting involved is effective

Historically, perceived political efficacy in both Scotland and Wales has been aligned to perceived political efficacy in the rest of Britain. That said, last year the proportions of those in Scotland and Wales who believed that involvement in politics by 'people like me' can change the way the country is run rose sharply (in Scotland, the proportion rose from 31% in Audit 8 to 38% in Audit 9; in Wales from 23% to 45%, which was well above the national average of 32%). This year, however, the perceived efficacy of those in Scotland and Wales is back in line with the national average (28% and 34%, respectively, compared to 32% overall). People in Scotland are disproportionately less inclined than the rest of the population to want to be involved in national decision-making (32%, compared with 42% overall), but equally as likely as the rest of the population to want to be involved in local decision-making or believe themselves to be influential in local or national decision-making. People in Wales, by contrast, are less likely than the British average to feel they have influence over local or national decision-making (11% and 4%, compared to 26% and 16% overall, respectively), but are equally as likely as the national average to want to be involved in local or national decision-making.



Appendix A: Quantitative survey methodology

TNS-BMRB conducted face-to-face interviews with a representative quota sample of 1,128 adults aged 18 or above living in Great Britain. The interviews took place between 14 and 18 December 2012 and were carried out in respondents' homes. The interview total includes 179 interviews in Scotland, 89 in Wales and 252 with people from BME backgrounds. These three groups were over-represented within the survey population, to ensure sufficient data was available to perform statistically reliable comparisons between different regions and between the white and BME populations.

Statistical reliability

The respondents selected to take part in the survey constitute a sample of the total adult population of Great Britain. Quotas were used to ensure that the number of men and women interviewed, and the number of respondents who worked full-time, part-time or not at all, were representative of the overall population. Nevertheless, as it stands, the sample does not reflect an accurate picture of the demographic profile of Great Britain. This is partly because some categories of respondents – such as young people and full-time workers – are less likely to be at home when interviewers knock on their door or are more reluctant to take part in surveys. Extra interviews were required amongst people living in Wales and Scotland, and amongst people from BME backgrounds, to ensure that the number of respondents in each of these groups was sufficient to perform robust analysis. As a result, the proportion of people belonging to these groups is greater in the sample than in the population.

In order to compensate for these biases, the proportion of respondents in each gender, age band and working status was compared to the true proportions in the population. Any differences were corrected by assigning less weight to the responses given by people who were over-represented in the sample. Hence, the additional interviews conducted in Wales, Scotland and with BMEs were 'down-weighted' to match the distribution of these groups in Great Britain. One consequence of this corrective procedure is that it reduces the size of the sample on which the results are based (the so-called 'effective sample size'). Thus, even though 1,128 adults were interviewed in December 2012, the effective size of the sample is 944.

Despite these corrective measures, we cannot be certain whether the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody in Great Britain had been interviewed. Conventionally, survey findings are considered reliable if we are confident that repeating the survey on multiple occasions would lead to similar results 95% of the time.¹¹

¹¹ The 95% confidence level indicates that, if the survey was repeated 20 times, results would be similar on 19 occasions. Any minor variations between the results on those 19 occasions can be attributed to chance, and are not considered to be statistically significant.

Effective sample sizes are key to determining whether any differences we obtain by running the survey on multiple occasions, or differences in the findings for different groups of respondents, are due to chance alone or whether one set of results genuinely deviates from another set of results. To determine whether a difference constitutes a ‘true’ deviation, and to feel 95% confident that the interpretation of ‘true difference’ is valid, the difference must exceed a certain threshold, as shown below:

		Approximately what proportion gave a specific response?				
What is the effective size of the samples being compared?		If 10% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 30% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 50% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 70% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 90% of respondents gave a specific response...
SAMPLE A	SAMPLE B	the difference in the two samples must be around†:				
100	100 or more	10%	14%	14%	14%	10%
200	200 or more	7%	10%	10%	10%	7%
300	300 or more	6%	8%	8%	8%	6%
400	400 or more	5%	7%	7%	7%	5%
500	500 or more	5%	6%	7%	6%	5%
600	600 or more	4%	6%	6%	6%	4%
700	700 or more	4%	5%	6%	5%	4%
800	800 or more	4%	5%	5%	5%	4%
1,000	1,000 or more	3%	5%	5%	5%	3%
1,200	1,200 or more	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
1,500	1,500 or more	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
		...before it can be considered ‘statistically significant’				

† These figures are conservative and therefore indicative only. Sometimes a smaller difference may be statistically significant, especially if SAMPLE B is much larger than SAMPLE A.

The table above is useful when comparing findings between, for example, Audit 10 (effective size 944) and Audit 9 (effective size 1,043). If approximately 50% of respondents in Audit 9 gave a specific response, a difference of around five percentage points (or more) in Audit 10 would indicate a true change had occurred between surveys; a smaller difference would not be considered ‘statistically significant’ and would conventionally be put down to chance. Similarly, effective sample sizes are important for determining whether differences between the responses given by various sub-groups within the Audit 10 sample are statistically reliable:

		If 10% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 30% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 50% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 70% of respondents gave a specific response...	If 90% of respondents gave a specific response...
SAMPLE A	SAMPLE B	the difference in the two samples must be around:				
Audit 9 (1,043)	Audit 10 (944)	3%	5%	5%	5%	3%
Men (439)	Women (505)	5%	6%	7%	6%	5%
BME (249)	White (789)	5%	8%	8%	8%	5%
		...before it can be considered 'statistically significant'				

Guide to social grade definitions

The social grade definitions used by the TNS Omnibus are those introduced by the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research.¹² For practical purposes, the classification divides individuals into four categories:

Social grade	Label		Definition
AB	Managers and professionals	A	Well-educated top to middle level managers with responsibility for extensive personnel; well- educated independent or self-employed professional people
		B	Well-educated smaller middle-level managers or slightly less well-educated top managers with fewer personnel responsibilities
C1	Well-educated non-manual and skilled workers	C1	Clerical employees (junior managerial, junior administrative, junior professional), supervisors and small business owners
C2	Skilled workers and non-manual employees	C2	Supervisors or skilled manual workers, generally having served an apprenticeship; moderately well-educated non-manual employees
DE	Unskilled manual workers and other less well-educated workers or employees	D	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; poorly-educated managers or small business owners
		E	Poorly-educated manual workers, unskilled workers, and employees working in other non-clerical settings; all others subsisting with minimum levels of income

¹² European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (1997), 'A System of International Socio-economic Classification of Respondents to Survey Research' (Amsterdam: ESOMAR).

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

Figures used in the report

The Audit 10 figures used in this report are derived from a face-to-face survey conducted in respondents' homes between 14 and 18 December 2012.

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
APE 10	1,128	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	14–18 December 2012	
APE 9	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	
APE5	1,073	Adults aged 18 or above in Great Britain	29 November–7 December 2007	

Audit of Political Engagement (APE)	Sample size	Sample definition	Fieldwork dates	Notes
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 %	
10 (Absolutely certain to vote)	51	52	55	55	53	53	54	58	48	41	
9	6	6	7	6	4	5	6	4	4	4	
8	8	8	7	8	7	8	7	7	5	7	
7	5	5	7	5	5	6	4	4	4	4	
6	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	5	
5	7	7	6	5	8	7	7	6	8	9	
4	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	
3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	5	
2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	3	
1 (Absolutely certain not to vote)	11	11	10	11	10	11	12	10	16	20	
Refused	-	-	-	1	*	*	*	*	2	1	
Don't know	2	1	1	-	4	2	2	2	3	*	

Q2.	In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies?	
		APE10 %
	Contacted a local councillor or MP / MSP / Welsh Assembly Member	8
	Contacted the media	2
	Taken an active part in a campaign	2
	Created or signed a paper petition	8
	Created or signed an e-petition	9
	Donated money or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	20
	Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	6
	Attended political meetings	2
	Donated money or paid a membership fee to a political party	1
	Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march	1
	Voted in an election	27
	Contributed to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	3
	Taken part in a public consultation	4
	<i>Net: Any of the above</i>	50
	<i>Net: None of the above</i>	50

Q3.	Which of the following would you be prepared to do if you felt strongly enough about an issue?	
		APE10 %
	Contact a local councillor or MP / MSP / Welsh Assembly Member	41
	Contact the media	16
	Take an active part in a campaign	14
	Create or sign a paper petition	35
	Create or sign an e-petition	25
	Donate money or pay a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	17
	Boycott certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	14
	Attend political meetings	10
	Donate or pay a membership fee to a political party	5
	Take part in a demonstration, picket or march	10
	Vote in an election	42
	Contribute to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	8
	Take part in a public consultation	14
	<i>Net: Any of the above</i>	78
	<i>Net: None of the above</i>	22

Q4.	How interested would you say you are in politics?										
	APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %	
Very interested	11	13	13	13	13	12	14	16	8	10	
Fairly interested	39	40	43	41	38	40	39	42	34	32	
Not very interested	32	28	30	27	28	31	29	26	33	32	
Not at all interested	18	19	14	19	19	17	18	17	24	26	
<i>Don't know</i>	*	*	*	*	1	*	1	*	1	*	
<i>Very/fairly interested</i>	50	53	56	54	51	52	53	58	42	42	

Q5.a	How much, if anything, do you feel you know about...politics?										
		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
	A great deal	3	4	4	6	4	5	6	7	4	4
	A fair amount	39	41	35	43	40	43	45	46	40	38
	Not very much	45	44	51	40	43	42	40	36	41	42
	Nothing at all	12	10	9	11	12	9	9	11	15	16
	Don't know	1	*	*	*	*	1	*	*	1	*
	<i>Great deal/fair amount</i>	42	45	39	49	44	48	51	53	44	42

Q5.b	How much, if anything, do you feel you know about...the UK Parliament?†										
		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
	A great deal	3			4			4	5	4	4
	A fair amount	30			34			33	39	36	33
	Not very much	50			46			47	43	43	45
	Nothing at all	17			14			15	13	16	17
	Don't know	1			1			1	*	1	*
	<i>Great deal/fair amount</i>	33			38			37	44	40	37

† Prior to APE8, asked as 'The Westminster Parliament'. Comparisons with APE8-10 should therefore be seen as indicative.

Q6.	Which of these statements best describes your opinion on the present system of governing Britain?										
		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
	Works extremely well and could not be improved	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2
	Could be improved in small ways but mainly works well	34	32	33	31	30	31	27	30	22	25
	Could be improved quite a lot	42	45	41	40	38	40	42	39	41	41
	Needs a great deal of improvement	18	18	21	21	24	24	27	25	26	27
	Don't know	4	3	4	6	6	3	4	5	10	6
	<i>Works well</i>	36	34	34	33	32	33	28	31	24	27

Q7. What is the name of your local Member of Parliament?		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
Gave correct answer		42		44	44			44	38		22
Gave wrong answer		10		9	6			10	7		6
Don't know / no answer		49		46	50			46	55		72

Q8. Please tell me if you think the following statements are true or false. If you don't know, just say so and we will move on to the next question.		True %	False %	Don't know %
Cabinet ministers stop being MPs when they become a minister (FALSE)		18	58	24
British members of the European Parliament are directly elected by British voters (TRUE)		43	41	16
You are automatically registered to vote if you pay council tax (FALSE)		36	55	9
Members of the House of Lords are elected by the British public (FALSE)		21	67	12
There is a minimum number of days that MPs have to attend Parliament each year (FALSE)		70	17	13
Most of the money that local councils spend is raised locally, through council tax. (FALSE)		55	34	11
Government and Parliament are the same thing (FALSE)		30	60	9
Political parties receive some state funding (TRUE)		52	34	14
The minimum age for voting at a general election is 16 (FALSE)		23	71	6

Q9. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that Parliament works?		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
Very satisfied		1			2			1	1		2
Fairly satisfied		35			34			32	26		25
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		27			24			24	33		38
Fairly dissatisfied		23			24			25	24		20
Very dissatisfied		9			9			13	11		14
Don't know		5			7			4	4		3
Satisfied		36			36			33	27		27

Q10.	Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way MPs in general are doing their job?										
		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
	Very satisfied	1			2			1			1
	Fairly satisfied	31			29			28			22
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	26			27			24			37
	Fairly dissatisfied	26			26			30			23
	Very dissatisfied	10			10			14			15
	Don't know	5			6			3			3
	<i>Satisfied</i>	32			31			29			23

Q11.	Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way your MP is doing his/her job?										
		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
	Very satisfied	8			11			8			6
	Fairly satisfied	33			30			30			28
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	26			30			27			42
	Fairly dissatisfied	9			9			9			10
	Very dissatisfied	4			3			7			8
	Don't know	21			17			18			6
	<i>Satisfied</i>	41			41			38			34

Q12.a	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										
		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
	Strongly agree	6	7	6	5	4	3	5	4	7	7
	Tend to agree	31	30	27	28	27	28	32	26	25	25
	Neither agree nor disagree	20	20	20	24	23	22	19	23	28	29
	Tend to disagree	30	31	31	32	29	32	30	31	22	24
	Strongly disagree	10	10	13	8	13	13	11	13	14	13
	Don't know	4	2	3	4	3	2	4	3	5	2
	<i>Agree</i>	37	37	33	33	31	31	37	30	32	32

Q12.b-e		To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?			
		Politics is a waste of time	The only way to be really informed about politics is to get involved	Participating in politics is not much fun	I enjoy working with other people on common problems in our community
		%	%	%	%
	Strongly agree	9	14	16	12
	Tend to agree	12	43	33	32
	Neither agree nor disagree	22	20	28	34
	Tend to disagree	33	16	16	14
	Strongly disagree	24	5	4	6
	Don't know	2	2	2	2
	Agree	21	57	49	44

Q12.f-i		To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?				
		A person like me could do a good job as a local councillor	A person like me could do a good job as a local MP	Every citizen should get involved in politics if democracy is to work properly	If a person is dissatisfied with political decisions, he/she has a duty to do something about it	I don't have enough time to get involved in politics
		%	%	%	%	%
	Strongly agree	8	7	20	17	24
	Tend to agree	19	15	40	46	30
	Neither agree nor disagree	23	21	22	25	24
	Tend to disagree	29	31	13	9	14
	Strongly disagree	20	24	5	2	7
	Don't know	2	2	1	2	1
	Agree	27	22	60	63	54

Q13.a	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The UK Parliament holds government to account	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7 [†]	APE8	APE9	APE10
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Strongly agree							4	5	8	11
	Tend to agree							36	33	30	36
	Neither agree nor disagree							20	27	29	31
	Tend to disagree							22	18	14	13
	Strongly disagree							5	8	7	5
	Don't know							14	10	13	5
	Agree							40	38	38	47

[†] APE 7 wording: 'The Westminster Parliament'

Q13.b	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The UK Parliament encourages public involvement in politics	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7	APE8	APE9	APE10
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Strongly agree									5	6
	Tend to agree									25	24
	Neither agree nor disagree									28	30
	Tend to disagree									21	27
	Strongly disagree									11	11
	Don't know									10	3
	Agree									30	30

Q13.c	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The UK Parliament is essential to our democracy	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7	APE8	APE9	APE10
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Strongly agree									31	30
	Tend to agree									35	38
	Neither agree nor disagree									19	22
	Tend to disagree									5	5
	Strongly disagree									2	3
	Don't know									9	3
	Agree									66	68

Q13.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	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7	APE8	APE9	APE10
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Strongly agree									14	16
	Tend to agree									35	39
	Neither agree nor disagree									26	26
	Tend to disagree									11	12
	Strongly disagree									6	5
	Don't know									8	3
	Agree									49	55

Q14.	Which of the following have you ever done in relation to Parliament?	APE10 %
	Watched it on TV or online	69
	Viewed the building from outside	24
	Been on a tour of the building	12
	Met my MP / lobbied my MP in Westminster	11
	Visited Parliament's website	10
	Been to an event in the building	4
	Attended a debate or committee session	4
	None of these	22

Q15.	Which of the following changes do you think would improve the British political system the most? Please pick up to three.	APE10 %
	Make politics more transparent so that it is easier to follow	48
	Make politicians more accountable for their performance between elections	39
	Better information and education about politics for all citizens	32
	Less 'spin' in political communication	26
	Give citizens more of a say (e.g. more referendums, more consultation)	29
	Get experts more involved in decision-making	17
	More positive media coverage of politics	12
	Constitutional changes (e.g. an elected House of Lords, a different voting system)	8
	More people like me as MPs	6
	None of these	11

Q16.	Thinking back, at school do you wish you had learned more about politics and how our democracy works?	
		APE10 %
	Yes	47
	No	51
	Don't know	2

Q17.	What from this list, if anything, would you like to have learned more about at school?	
		APE10 %
	How government works	50
	How laws are made and implemented	45
	How Parliament works	34
	How best to have my say about politics	27
	How the local council works	23
	Social policy issues in this country such as health, education, environment or transport	21
	How political parties work and what they stand for	17
	How the European Union works	15
	How to contact my MP	11
	How to register to vote	8
	How to vote	7
	None of these	1

Base: All those who said they wish they had learned more about politics and democracy (535)

Q18.a	How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in your local area?										
		APE1 %	APE2 %	APE3 %	APE4 %	APE5 %	APE6 %	APE7 %	APE8 %	APE9 %	APE10 %
	A great deal of influence						1			2	2
	Some influence						24			22	24
	Not very much influence						41			39	40
	No influence at all						32			32	33
	Don't know						2			5	2
	<i>A great deal/some influence</i>						25			24	26

Q18.b	How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in the country as a whole?	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7	APE8	APE9	APE10
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	A great deal of influence						*			*	1
	Some influence						14			12	15
	Not very much influence						44			40	43
	No influence at all						41			43	40
	Don't know						1			5	2
	<i>A great deal/some influence</i>						14			12	16

Q19.a	To what extent, if at all, would you <u>like</u> to be involved in decision-making in your local area?	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7	APE8	APE9	APE10
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Very involved						5		5	5	8
	Fairly involved						43		38	33	39
	Not very involved						32		38	33	29
	Not at all involved						18		17	25	22
	Don't know						2		2	4	1
	<i>Very/fairly involved</i>						48		43	38	47

Q19.b	To what extent, if at all, would you <u>like</u> to be involved in decision-making in the country as a whole?	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7	APE8	APE9	APE10
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Very involved						5		8	6	7
	Fairly involved						38		34	27	35
	Not very involved						33		38	34	32
	Not at all involved						22		19	30	25
	Don't know						2		2	3	2
	<i>Very/fairly involved</i>						43		42	33	42

Q20.	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?	
		APE10 %
	Yes – where living now	83
	Yes – another address	5
	No	10
	Don't know	1

Q21.	How much interest do you take in news and current affairs?	
		APE10 %
	A great deal of interest	25
	Some interest	46
	Not much interest	17
	No interest at all	11
	Don't know	*

Q22.a-e	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?				
	When people argue about politics, I feel uncomfortable	Sometimes politics & government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on	I usually find it easy to see political issues from other people's point of view	I do not take it personally when someone disagrees with my political views	When I'm in a group, I often go along with what the majority decides is best, even if it is not what I want personally
	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	6	18	12	27	4
Tend to agree	16	37	41	37	14
Neither agree nor disagree	29	23	31	22	26
Tend to disagree	29	15	12	8	31
Strongly disagree	21	8	4	6	25
Agree	22	55	53	64	18

Q23.	Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?	
		APE10 %
	The best decisions are made by leaders who follow their instincts rather than consulting widely	15
	The best decisions are made by leaders who try to seek agreement from all interested groups	78
	Don't know	7

Q24.a	If politics were MORE influenced by self-serving politicians and powerful special interests do you think that you would be more or less interested in getting involved in politics?		
		APE9 %	APE10 %
	Definitely more interested	4	7
	Probably more interested	25	29
	Probably less interested	29	32
	Definitely less interested	20	24
	Don't know	22	10
	<i>More interested</i>	29	36

Q24.b	If politics were LESS influenced by self-serving politicians and powerful special interests do you think that you would be more or less interested in getting involved in politics?		
		APE9 %	APE10 %
	Definitely more interested	7	11
	Probably more interested	35	40
	Probably less interested	24	26
	Definitely less interested	11	12
	Don't know	23	11
	<i>More interested</i>	42	51

Appendix C: Distribution of citizens in manifest, standby and non-participation categories

Category of citizen	Key questions and qualifiers
Manifest	<p>Q1: How likely would you be to vote in the event of an immediate general election? – <i>Near certain to vote – response 8-10</i></p> <p>Q2: In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies? – <i>Has done at least one activity from list, excluding ‘voted in an election’, as not all respondents had an equal chance to do so in the last year</i></p>
Standby	<p>Q1: How likely would you be to vote in the event of an immediate general election? – <i>Exclude people who are certain not to vote – response 1</i></p> <p>Q2: In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies? – <i>Has done none of the activities on the list, excluding ‘voted in an election’, as not all respondents had an equal chance to do so in the last year</i></p> <p>Gave positive responses to at least 3 out of the following 5 questions:</p> <p>Q4: How interested would you say you are in politics? – <i>Very interested or fairly interested</i></p> <p>Q5a: How much, if anything, do you feel you know about politics? – <i>A great deal or a fair amount</i></p> <p>Q5b: How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the UK Parliament? – <i>A great deal or a fair amount</i></p> <p>Q12e: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I enjoy working with other people on common problems in our community. – <i>Strongly agree or tend to agree</i></p> <p>Q14: Which of the following have you ever done in relation to Parliament? – <i>Watched Parliament on TV or online OR visited Parliament’s website</i></p>

Category of citizen	Key questions and qualifiers
<p>Non-participant</p>	<p>Q2: In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies? – <i>Has done none of the activities on the list, excluding ‘voted in an election’, as not all respondents had an equal chance to do so in the last year</i></p> <p>Gave negative responses to at least 2 out of the following 4 questions:</p> <p>Q1: How likely would you be to vote in the event of an immediate general election? – <i>Unlikely to vote – responses 1-3</i></p> <p>Q4: How interested would you say you are in politics? – <i>Not very interested or not at all interested</i></p> <p>Q12b: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Politics is a waste of time. – <i>Strongly agree or tend to agree</i></p> <p>Q21: How much interest do you take in news and current affairs? – <i>Not much interest or no interest at all</i></p>

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The Hansard Society was founded as a charity in 1944. An independent, non-partisan political research and education Society, it works in the UK and around the world to promote democracy and strengthen parliaments, believing that the health of representative democracy rests on the foundation of a strong parliament and an informed and engaged citizenry.

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Audit of Political Engagement 10

The 2013 Report

The Audit of Political Engagement is the only annual health check on our democratic system. Now in its 10th year, each Audit measures the 'political pulse' of the nation, providing a unique benchmark to gauge public opinion across Great Britain with regard to the political system.

This year's report explores a worrying decline in the public's propensity to vote and a continuing decline in public satisfaction with MPs. More positively, it also shows that the public consider Parliament to be more effective than in previous years and there has been an increase in the number of people who say they would like to be involved in local and national decision-making.

In addition to these key indicators of political engagement, this year's report looks in greater detail at how the public think about politics, how complex they perceive it to be, and what impact this has both on how they view education about politics and their priorities for political reform. The report also examines what types of political action citizens might be prepared to undertake if they felt strongly about an issue. It explores the concept of the 'standby' citizen who, although not yet actively engaged, nonetheless possesses a range of attitudinal, behavioural and demographic characteristics which suggest a latent potential for participation in the future.

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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