Councillors’ Survey 2011

Local democratic engagement research
Executive Summary

About the Councillors’ Survey 2011

The 2011 Councillors’ Survey was an online survey of all Oldham councillors. The survey included questions about:

- Experiences of being a councillor
- Range of work undertaken as a councillor
- Training, development and support needs.

Where appropriate, this report compares findings from the Councillors’ survey findings with:

- newly released regional and national results from the 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors
- findings from surveys of Oldham residents
- information about Oldham’s demographic profile.

The 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors attempts to survey all local authority councillors every two years. The most recent census, carried out from November 2010 to February 2011, had an overall response rate of 33.4% (an achieved sample of 6082 councillors).

Whilst using the LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors as a starting point, the 2011 Councillors’ Survey was tailored specifically to Oldham’s information needs. In many cases this means that comparisons with results from the Councillors survey should be treated as indicative rather than definitive: this is indicated within the report.

This report uses percentages throughout. Where percentages do not add to 100%, this may be due to rounding.

Experience of being a councillor

The three factors that councillors most frequently said influenced their decision to become a councillor were:

- wanting to serve my ward and local community (63%)
- my involvement in a political party (57%)
- wanting to influence decisions affecting my local area (52%).

The factors which influenced Oldham councillors to become councillors are generally similar to those that influenced councillors in the North West and in England.

Councillors were asked what they thought were the most important things for a councillor to do. Almost all councillors (87%) prioritised addressing issues concerning their ward; most (63%) also prioritised addressing issues affecting Oldham as a whole. Helping resolve people’s problems (59%) and representing the views of local residents to the council (51%) were also among the kinds of work frequently identified as ‘most important’ by councillors.

Most respondents (83%) stated that they would speak positively about being a councillor to people outside of the council. Most Oldham respondents (81%) would encourage other people to become councillors if asked, in line with the proportion of councillors in England (83%) and the North West (84%) who said they would recommend becoming a councillor if asked.
Most respondents talk with others about their work as a councillor in a range of social situations. Almost all do so at community meetings and with their family. Work meetings with external clients or business colleagues are the situation where councillors are least likely to talk about their work as councillors, with around half (47%) stating that they never do so. These patterns of communication about work as a councillor are generally similar to those reported by councillors in the North West and in England, although proportionally more Oldham Councillors said that they:

- spoke ‘often’ with their family about their work as councillors (50%, compared with 37% of councillors in the North West and 38% nationally)
- ‘never’ spoke about their work as councillors when in engaged in community socialising (29%, compared with 20% in the North West and 17% nationally)
- ‘never’ spoke about their work as councillors with external contacts at work (47%, compared with 29% for both the North West and England).

Councillors who were employed were asked about whether or not their employer was supportive of their work as a councillor. Almost all (91%) said that their employer was ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ supportive, broadly in line with findings from the 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors.

**Influencing Decisions**

Most councillors felt that they could influence decisions affecting their ward (77%) and District Partnership (88%). Over half (56%) agreed that they could influence decisions affecting Oldham as a whole. Few (22%) agreed that they could influence decisions affecting Greater Manchester and none thought they could influence decisions taken by central government.

Oldham councillors were asked about whether the amount of influence they had since becoming a councillor was more, less, or about the same as what they had expected. Around three in ten (28%) thought they had more influence on ward decisions than they expected and about the same proportion (29%) thought they had less. When asked about decisions affecting Oldham, about one in four (23%) thought they had more influence than expected and around a third (34%) thought they had less. Though not exactly comparable, this suggests that fewer Oldham councillors than their regional and national counterparts feel they have more influence over decisions affecting their area (whether their ward or the borough as a whole) than they expected prior to election.

**About councillors’ wards**

Councillors were asked what they thought most needed improving in their ward. The three most frequently identified issues were job prospects (60% of councillors identified this); activities for teenagers (57%) and affordable decent housing (46%).

Close to half (45%) of respondents thought most or all residents in their ward would help out their neighbours if needed. Around a third (32%) thought most residents were interested in knowing ‘what’s going on locally.’ Most (82%) described their wards as places where ‘some’ residents get involved in their local area.
Working as a councillor

Respondents were asked about their membership of council committees, panels and boards. The most frequently mentioned memberships were the Licensing Committee (28%), the Appeals Committee (26%), a Cabinet Advisory Panel (24%) and the Planning Committee (23%).

The kinds of council-related work that councillors reported spending most time on were:

• Engaging with constituents (32% spent more than 10 hours a week doing this) and;
• Preparing for and attending council meetings, committees and party meetings (29% spent more than 10 hours a week doing so).

Within Oldham, around seven in ten (72%) respondents reported working as a councillor for 21 or more hours a week, higher than the proportion of councillors who do so across the North West (50%) and England (43%). Around one in six Oldham councillors (16%) reported working forty-one or more hours a week.

Councillors were asked about their length of service: around three in ten (31%) had served for up to five years; around a third (35%) had served for between six and fifteen years and; around a third (34%) had served for sixteen or more years.

Oldham has proportionally more councillors (34%) who have served for 16 or more years than has the North West (20%) or England overall (19%). Oldham has fewer councillors (31%) who have served for up to five years than the North West and England (both 42%).

Most Oldham councillors (62%) planned to stand for re-election at the end of their current term, broadly in line with the England-wide proportion of councillors who intend doing so (67%), but lower than the North West proportion (73%).

Wider community and voluntary involvement

A large proportion of respondents were involved in voluntary and community activity in addition to their work as councillors:

• Over half served on a School Governors Board (56%), above the England-wide proportion (42%) and in line with that for the North West (53%).
• The proportion of Oldham councillors serving on a National Parks Authority was higher than that for the North West or England; proportions of those serving on the Police Authority and the Fire Services Authority were in line with regional and national averages.
• In the past 12 months 83% of Oldham councillors had been involved in helping your local community (e.g. helping with community events like clean-ups or festivals, being active in a residents’ association, campaigning to improve services) and 67% had been involved in raising funds for charity.
• Overall, levels of volunteering in the past 12 months were higher for Oldham councillors than for Oldham residents for all of the types of voluntary activity considered.

Training, development and support needs

Councillors were asked about the training and development opportunities they had received in the past twelve months. The development opportunities most frequently mentioned were:
• attending member development programmes (other than the IDeA (LGID) Leadership Academy (64%), in line with the regional (58%) and above the national (55%) proportions.
• attending seminars or conferences (55%), below the regional (68%) and national (69%) proportions.

Around one in eight (13%) had attended the IDeA (LGID) Leadership Academy, above the regional (8%) and national (7%) proportions.

Around three in ten (29%) reported receiving an induction for Members, in line with the regional and national proportion of councillors who had done so.

Councillors were asked which types of training, information and support would be most helpful to their work as councillors:
• for training, demand was strongest for media training (47%) and IT training (43%).
• for information, demand was strongest for signposting information about services (57%); statutory requirements for the council (53%) and; information (i.e. research and statistics) about Oldham and its residents (37%).
• for support, demand was strongest for case-workers (57%) and administrative support (53%).

About the respondents

The 2011 Councillor’s Survey had a response rate of 72%. Some variations in response rate by political party group were observed, and results were therefore weighted to reflect the council’s current political composition. This helps to ensure that the results are representative of Oldham councillors overall. Except for stated otherwise, all results are weighted.

The age and gender profile of survey respondents closely matched that of Oldham councillors overall:
• 24% of respondents were female and 76% were male (compared with 28% and 72% respectively for the Council overall)
• 14% of respondents were aged 44 or under; 57% were aged 45-64; and 29% were aged over 65 (compared with 14%; 59%; and 27% respectively for the Council overall).

As is also the case across England, women are under-represented as councillors. Women account for 52% of Oldham’s voting-age population, but comprise only 28% of Oldham’s councillors. People aged 44 or under are also under-represented as councillors both locally and nationally. Within Oldham, people aged 18-44 account for 46% of the voting age population, but comprise only 14% of councillors.

The ethnic group composition of respondents cannot be matched directly to the council-wide composition as comprehensive information about the ethnicity of councillors is not held. In summary:
• 78% of respondents were White or White British (including 4% from ‘other white backgrounds’)
• 22% of respondents were from non-white (BME) backgrounds (Pakistani 8%; Bangladeshi 4%; Kashmiri 6%).

The ethnic group composition of respondents to the Oldham Councillors’ Survey, however, is broadly reflective of the ethnic group composition of Oldham’s adult population.
Around one in ten (11%) respondents reported having a limiting long-term illness or disability that limited their daily activities or what work they could do; 89% did not. Proportionally fewer councillors reported having a limiting long-term illness or disability than do Oldham residents overall.

Close to one in four (23%) councillors had caring responsibilities for a child or children. About the same proportion (22%) provided help or support to someone because of either long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability or problems related to old age.

Over half (53%) of respondents were in paid employment and around a third (32%) were retired. Around half (51%) worked in the private sector; and half (49%) worked in a public service. Proportionally fewer Oldham councillors work in the private sector than do councillors regionally (60%) and nationally (69%).

More than four in ten (44%) respondents had a degree level qualification or higher. Fewer than one in five (16%) held none of the qualifications asked about. Compared with Oldham-wide findings from the 2010 You and Your Community Survey, councillors were considerably more likely than Oldham residents overall to hold a degree level qualification, and less likely to have none of the qualifications asked about.
Experiences of being a councillor

Why become a councillor?

Councillors were asked about factors that influenced their decision to become a councillor.

- Commitments to the local area and community were influential for many councillors, with 63% citing ‘wanting to serve my ward and local community’ and 52% ‘wanting to influence decisions affecting my local area,’ though a substantial proportion (42%) also reported ‘wanting to serve the wider Oldham area.’

- Prior involvement in a political party was also a key influence or over half of respondents (57%) and around three in ten (28%) said that ‘being asked to stand’ for election influenced their decision to do so;

- Fewer councillors reported that their decision to become a councillor was influenced by a desire to advocate for a particular issue (10%) or resolve a specific problem (8%).

Figure 1: Thinking generally, which of the things below had most influence on your decision to become a councillor? (Please tick up to three options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to serve my ward and local community</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My involvement in a political party</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to influence decisions affecting my local area</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to serve the wider Oldham area</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being asked to consider standing for election by an individual or organisation</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to advocate for a particular issue (e.g., disability rights, environmental concerns)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to resolve a specific problem</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents

The 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors included a similar, though not directly comparable, question about why respondents wanted to become councillors¹:

¹These questions are not directly comparable due to differences in both the question wording and the response options. In addition, Oldham respondents were asked to restrict their answers to three (i.e. to identify the three most important factors influencing their decision to become a councillor), whilst CLAG respondents were asked to select all responses that applied. We restricted the number of responses...
• The leading reason given was wanting ‘to serve the community’ (88% for England and 84% for the North West). The Oldham Councillors’ Survey asked separately about ‘wanting to serve my ward and local community’ and ‘wanting to serve the wider local area’: 82% identified at least one of these as having influenced their decision to become a councillor.

• Around half (52% for England and 54% for the North West) said they wanted to become a councillor ‘to change things’; about the same proportion of Oldham councillors (52%) said that ‘wanting to influence decisions affecting their local area’ was one of the factors that had most influence on their decision to become a councillor.

• Around half (50% for England and 53% for the North West) said their ‘political beliefs and values’ were a factor that made them want to become a councillor; broadly similar to the proportion of Oldham councillors (57%) who said their involvement in a political party had influenced their decision to become a councillor.

• Being asked to do so influenced around three in ten (28% in England and 29% in the North West) to become councillors; again this is similar to Oldham where 28% of respondents said that ‘being asked to consider standing for election by an individual or an organisation’ had influenced their decision to do so.

Taken together, this suggests that the factors which influenced Oldham councillors to become councillors are generally similar to those that influenced councillors in the North West and in England.

What are the important things for councillors to do?

Councillors were asked to identify from a list up to five things that they thought were most important for a councillor to do (see Figure 2).

As would be expected, almost all councillors (87%) prioritised addressing issues concerning their ward; most (63%) also considered addressing issues affecting Oldham as a whole as being among the most important things for a councillor to do.

Many councillors (59%) also prioritised helping to resolve people’s problems (for example, housing problems, and individual concerns about anti-social behaviour). This is consistent with what councillors prioritised as information and support needs:

• 59% wanted information about services provided by the council and its partners (to support signposting residents)
• 63% wanted case workers.

Around half (51%) of councillors prioritised representing the views of local residents to the Council.

that could be given as we wanted respondents to focus on which factors were most influential in their decision to become a councillor (rather than potentially ticking all responses).
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Figure 2: Which of the things below do you think are the most important things for councillors to do? (Please tick up to five)

- Address issues concerning their ward: 87%
- Address issues concerning Oldham as a whole: 63%
- Help resolve people’s problems: 59%
- Represent the views of local residents to the Council: 51%
- Advocate for their ward: 38%
- Be involved in local groups: 34%
- Deal with complaints: 29%
- Attend Council meetings: 28%
- Support the local community: 27%
- Listen to the views of residents: 26%
- Keep residents informed about what the council is doing: 10%
- Plan local services: 5%
- Something else: 4%
- Represent views of local residents to Government: 0%

Base: All respondents

The 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors asked councillors a related, though not directly comparable, question about what they thought were the most important things for a councillor to do (see Figure 3). Whilst direct comparisons between the two questions cannot be made, but there are some indications that compared with councillors overall, Oldham councillors may:

- place relatively more emphasis on addressing issues (at ward-level and Oldham-wide) and less on planning services
- place relatively more emphasis on helping resolve people’s problems (e.g. housing concerns, individual problems with ASB) and relatively less on ‘dealing with complaints.’

Whilst at face value, it appears that that Oldham councillors place far less emphasis on listening to the views of residents and supporting the local community than councillors nationally, this may be due largely to differences between the two surveys.²

²Respondents to the 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors chose from a smaller list of response options and were instructed to ‘tick all relevant’ responses, whilst Oldham councillors had a longer list of response options (tailored to Oldham) and were limited to five responses. Both factors would tend to lead to higher results in the national survey, particularly for options which are likely to be uncontroversial. Please note that results from this question are not directly comparable with the question used in the Oldham Councillors’ Survey.
Figure 3: LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors: Please indicate which of the following, in your opinion, are the most important things for Councillors to do (please tick all relevant)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the views of local people</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the local community</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address issues concerning the whole area</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deal with complaints</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Council meetings</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep the public informed about Councillor activities</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan local services</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represent local residents’ views to Government</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold surgeries for people with problems</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do councillors communicate about the councillor role?
Most respondents (83%) would speak positively about being a councillor to people outside of the council. Of those who would do so, around half (41% of all responding) would do so unprompted and half (42% of all responding) would do so if asked. Few (4%) would speak negatively about being a councillor (see Figure 4).
Figure 4: Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak about being a councillor to people outside of the council?

- I would speak positively about being a councillor without being asked: 41%
- I would speak positively about being a councillor if I were asked: 42%
- I would speak neutrally about being a councillor: 13%
- I would speak negatively about being a councillor if I were asked: 4%
- I would speak negatively about being a councillor without being asked: 0%

**Base: All responding**

Most Oldham councillors (81%) would encourage other people to become councillors if asked.

**Figure 5: Would you encourage other people to become councillors if asked?**

- Yes: 81%
- No: 7%
- Don't know: 12%

**Base: All responding**

The proportion of councillors in England (83%) and the North West (84%) who said they would recommend becoming a councillor if asked was similar to the Oldham-wide proportion (81%).
Figure 6: In which of the following situations would you talk about your work as a councillor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Oldham</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At community groups (e.g. tenants’ associations)</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work with colleagues</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work with external clients and/or business contacts</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With my family</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At community events such as street parties or school fairs</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At social gatherings with friends</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community socialising (e.g. in the local pub)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All responding
Oldham councillors were asked about how often they talked about their work as a councillor in a variety of social and work-based situations:

- Almost all said they ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ talked about their work as a councillor at community groups (96%) or with their family (94%).
- Most ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ talked about their work as councillors at community events (86%), when socialising with friends (87%) or at work with colleagues (80%).
- The settings in which respondents were most likely to say they ‘never’ talked about their work as a councillor were ‘at work with external clients / business contacts’ (47%) and ‘community socialising (e.g. in the local pub)’ (29%).

Whilst these results are broadly similar to those reported by councillors in the North-West and in England overall, compared with their regional and national counterparts proportionally more Oldham councillors:

- spoke ‘often’ with their family about their work as councillors (50%, compared with 37% of councillors in the North West and 38% nationally)
- ‘never’ spoke about their work as councillors when in engaged in community socialising (29%, compared with 20% in the North West and 17% nationally)
- ‘never’ spoke about their work as councillors with external contacts at work (47%, compared with 29% for both the North West and England).

**Employer attitudes towards councillors who are employees**

Councillors who were employees were asked about the extent to which their employer was supportive of their work as a councillor (see Figure 7). Almost all (91%) said that their employer was ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ supportive. Few (8%) said that their employer was not supportive of their work as a councillor.

**Figure 7: To what extent is your employer supportive of your work as a councillor?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Supportiveness</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly supportive</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very supportive</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all supportive</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base:** All employed councillors (excluding self-employed) who answered the question

This local finding – that most councillors who are employees find their employer to be supportive of their work as a councillor – is in line with the national and regional findings from the 2010 LGA Census of Local Authority Councillors:
• Across England, 41% of councillors who were employees said their employer supported their work 'wholeheartedly' and a further 45% said their employer did so 'to a certain extent'; 9% described their employer as 'slightly against it' or 'completely against it.' Around one in twenty (6%) stated that their employer was not aware that they were a councillor.

• Within the North West, 43% of councillors who were employees said their employer supported their work 'wholeheartedly' and 42% did so 'to a certain extent.' 10% were 'slightly against it' or 'completely against it.'
Influencing decisions

Influencing decisions affecting local areas
Councillors were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they could influence decisions at a range of different geographical levels:

- Most councillors agreed that they could influence decisions affecting their ward (77%) and District Partnership (88%)
- Over half (56%) agreed they could influence decisions affecting Oldham as a whole
- Few (22%) agreed that they could influence decisions affecting Greater Manchester and no respondents agreed that they could influence decisions taken by central government.

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that you can . . .

- . . . influence decisions affecting your ward? 20% Strongly agree, 57% Tend to agree, 19% Tend to disagree, 4% Strongly disagree
- . . . influence decisions affecting your District Partnership? 29% Strongly agree, 60% Tend to agree, 12% Tend to disagree, 1% Strongly disagree
- . . . influence decisions affecting Oldham as a whole? 15% Strongly agree, 41% Tend to agree, 33% Tend to disagree, 11% Strongly disagree
- . . . influence decisions affecting Greater Manchester? 22% Strongly agree, 46% Tend to agree, 32% Tend to disagree, 0% Strongly disagree
- . . . influence decisions taken by central government? 35% Strongly agree, 65% Tend to agree, 0% Tend to disagree, 0% Strongly disagree

Base: All responding
Do councillors have as much influence as they expected?

Councillors were asked about whether the amount of influence they had since becoming a councillor was more, less, or about the same as what they had expected (see Figure 9):

- More than four in ten thought they had about as much influence as they expected for both ward decisions (43%) and decisions affecting Oldham (44%)
- Around three in ten (28%) thought they had more influence on ward decisions than they expected, and about the same proportion (29%) thought they had less.
- Around a quarter (23%) thought they had more influence on decisions affecting Oldham than they expected, whilst around a third (34%) thought they had less.

**Figure 9: Perceptions of influence since becoming a councillor**

![Figure 9: Perceptions of influence since becoming a councillor](image)

**Base: All responding**

The LGA Census of Local Authority Councillors included a more general question about whether councillors felt they had more, less, or about the same “influence to change things in my area” than they expected before they were elected:

- 40% felt they had more influence than they expected (43% in the North West)
- 35% felt they had about the same influence on decisions that they expected (32% in the North West)
- 25% felt they had less influence on decisions than they expected (for both England and the North West).

Whilst these questions were not identical, this does suggest that in Oldham councillors feel less able to influence decisions affecting their area (whether their ward, or Oldham as a whole) than their regional and national counterparts.
About councillors’ wards

What most needs improving?
Councillors were asked what they thought most needed improving in their ward. The three most frequently identified issues were:

• job prospects (60% of councillors identified this)
• activities for teenagers (57%) and;
• affordable decent housing (46%).

Figure 10: Thinking about your ward, which of the things below, if any, do you think most need improving? (Select up to five options)

Base: All respondents
Community relations
Councillors were asked about levels of community involvement in their ward:

• close to half (45%) thought most or all residents in their ward would help out their neighbours if needed
• around a third (32%) thought most residents were interested in knowing what’s going on locally
• most councillors (82%) described their wards as places where ‘some’ residents get involved in their local area.

Figure 11: Thinking generally about the ward you represent, about how many residents do you think . . .

- . . . would help out their neighbours if needed?
  - All residents: 43%
  - Most residents: 52%
  - Few residents or none: 4%

- . . . get involved in their local community?
  - All residents: 82%
  - Most residents: 14%
  - Few residents or none: 4%

- . . . are interested in what’s going on locally?
  - All residents: 32%
  - Most residents: 62%
  - Few residents or none: 6%

Base: All responding
Working as a councillor

Committee membership
Respondents were asked about their membership of council committees, panels and boards (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Are you a member of . . .

- . . . the Cabinet? 15%
- . . . a Cabinet Advisory Panel? 24%
- . . . the Standards Committee? 2%
- . . . the Audit Committee? 16%
- . . . the Licensing Committee? 28%
- . . . the Planning Committee? 23%
- . . . the Selection Committee? 4%
- . . . the Appeals Committee? 26%
- . . . the Overview and Scrutiny Board? 20%
- . . . the Performance and Value for Money Select Committee? 16%

Base: All respondents
This question was tailored specifically to Oldham’s committee structure and is therefore not comparable to the 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors.

Time spent on council-related work
Councillors were asked how much time in an average week they spent on a range of different council-related work. The duties most often reported as taking the most time were:

- Engaging with constituents (32% of respondents spent more than 10 hours a week doing so) and;
- Preparing for and attending council meetings, committees and party meetings (29% spent more than 10 hours a week doing so).
Figure 14: In an average week, about how much time would you spend on each of the following kinds of work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Up to three hours</th>
<th>More than three hours but less than six hours</th>
<th>More than six hours but less than ten hours</th>
<th>More than ten hours but less than 20 hours</th>
<th>More than 20 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for and attending council meetings, committees and party meetings? (43)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with constituents (for example holding ward surgeries, responding to enquiries from residents)? (43)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with community and voluntary groups in your capacity as a councillor? (42)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending events in your capacity as a councillor? (41)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with council officers to develop specific policies and initiatives? (40)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else? (19)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All responding

The questions within the LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors that ask about time use are not directly comparable with the Oldham Councillors’ Census, as they asked about a narrower range of council-related work and asked respondents to write in the number of hours spent. They found that nationally:

- councillors spent on around 10 hours and 12 minutes on average a week on "attendance at council meetings, committees, party meetings, etc. incl. prep." Within Oldham 29% of councillors spent more than ten hours a week on this.
- "engaging with constituents, surgeries, constituent enquiries etc. incl. prep" accounted for around eight hours a week on average (7.9 hours). Within Oldham, 58% of councillors spent six or more hours a week engaging with constituents.
- on average councillors spent five and a half hours a week on other responsibilities such as external meetings, training, and seminars.

Within Oldham, around seven in ten (72%) respondents reported working as a councillor for 21 or more hours a week, higher than the proportion of councillors who do so across the North West (50%) and England (43%). Around one in six Oldham councillors (16%) reported working forty-one or more hours a week (see Figure 15).
Figure 15: Overall, about how many hours a week would you spend working as a councillor in an average week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Oldham Council</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 50 hours</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 hours</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 hours</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 hours</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 hours</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10 hours</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents

Correspondingly fewer Oldham councillors report working for up to ten hours a week (5% compared with 20% of councillors in the Northwest and 21% in England), or for between 11-20 hours a week (22% of Oldham councillors, compared with around a third for the Northwest (32%) and England (37%).

Length of service and future plans

Councillors were asked about their length of service (see Figure 16)

- Around three in ten (31%) had served for up to five years
- Around a third (35%) had served for between six and fifteen years
- Around a third (34%) had served for sixteen or more years.
Figure 16: For how long have you been a councillor at Oldham Council?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a year</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 or more years</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All responding to this question (10% of all respondents did not answer this question)

 Compared with the 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors results (see Figure 17), Oldham has proportionally more councillors (34%) who have served for 16 or more years than has the North West (20%) or England overall (19%). Oldham has fewer councillors (31%) who have served for up to five years than the North West and England (both 42%).

Figure 17: Oldham councillor’s length of service compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-5 years</th>
<th>6-15 years</th>
<th>16 or more years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All responding to this question

Most Oldham respondents (62%) planned to stand for re-election at the end of their current term (see Figure 18). Around three in ten (31%) did not know whether or not they would stand again. Few (7%) had decided against standing for re-election.
Figure 18: Do you intend to stand for re-election at the end of your term in office?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base: All responding**

The proportion of Oldham respondents who intend standing for re-election at the end of their term is broadly in line with the England-wide proportion of councillors who intend doing so (67%), but lower than the North West proportion (73%). Oldham has a higher proportion of councillors who do not know whether they will stand for re-election (31%) than either the North West (15%) or England (18%).
Wider community and voluntary involvement

This section asked councillors about their wider community involvement. A large proportion of Oldham respondents were involved in voluntary and community activity in addition to their work as councillors:

- Over half (56%) served on a School Governors Board, higher than the England-wide proportion of councillors who did so (42%) and in line with that for the North West (53%).
- Around half (52%) served with a voluntary / community or faith organisation (52%).
- Around three in ten (29%) served on an External Partnership (within the borough)
- Around one in six (16%) served with a Parish council, in line with the national (16%) and regional (14%) proportions
- Proportionally slightly more Oldham councillors (4%) were served with a National Parks Authority than did councillors across the North West or England (both 1%), reflecting Oldham’s partial positioning within the Peak District National Park.
- The proportions of Oldham councillors serving with the Fire Authority (6%) and Police Authority are in line with those for both England and the North West.

Figure 19: Do you serve on any of the following bodies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Governors Board</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary / Community / Faith org</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Partnership (within the borough)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish council</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGMA body</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Authority</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parks Authority</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Authority</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents

3 Comparisons to the LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors are included where possible, but are not available for all forms of volunteering and community involvement, as these questions were tailored to Oldham.
Councillors were also asked about whether or not they had been involved in various types of voluntary activity over the past twelve months (see Figure 20). The types of volunteering that councillors were most frequently involved are listed below:

- 83% had been involved in helping your local community (e.g. helping with community events like clean-ups or festivals, being active in a residents’ association, campaigning to improve services)
- 67% had been involved in raising funds for charity (e.g. volunteering in a charity shop, sponsored walks) and;
- 60% had been involved in supporting children’s education and activities (e.g. helping with school fairs, class visits or after-school clubs, being involved in parent-teacher associations).

**Figure 20:** Please look at the list of activities below. In the past 12 months have you done any of them unpaid on a voluntary basis?

- **Helping your local community**: 83%
- **Raising funds for charity**: 67%
- **Supporting children’s education and activities**: 60%
- **Supporting faith groups**: 48%
- **Volunteering with organisations that support people**: 44%
- **Hobbies**: 41%
- **Trade union activities**: 26%
- **Coaching or teaching**: 19%
- **Promoting social justice**: 17%

**YYC 2010 (3212 respondents)**  **Oldham Councillors (43 respondents)**

**Base: All respondents**

As might be expected, levels of voluntary activity were generally higher for councillors than for Oldham residents overall, across all of the types of voluntary activity considered.
Training, development and support needs

Oldham councillors were asked about the training and development opportunities they had received in the past twelve months.4

- Close to two-thirds of Oldham councillors responding (64%) reported attending member development programmes (other than the IDeA (LGID) Leadership Academy), broadly in line with the comparable proportion for the North West (58%) and higher than that for England (55%).
- Over half (55%) reported attending seminars or conferences, below the regional (68%) and national (69%) proportions.
- Half (50%) had assessed their training and development needs; about the same proportion of councillors in the North West (51%) had ‘completed a training needs questionnaire’ though fewer had done so nationally (39%).
- Around three in ten (29%) reported receiving an induction for Members (this proportion is higher among those who have served as councillors for less than five years, but base sizes are very small). This is in line with the regional (26%) and national (28%) proportion of councillors receiving an induction.
- Around one in eight (13%) reported attending the IDeA (LGID) Leadership Academy, above the comparable proportions for the North West (8%) or England (7%).

Figure 21: Thinking about your work as a councillor, have you in the past 12 months...

Base: All respondents

---

4 A similar question was included in the LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors and comparisons are included where applicable.
Councillors were asked about the types of training would be most helpful to their work as councillors (see Figure 22):

- Media training (47%) and IT training (43%) were the most frequently identified training needs
- Around one in four (23%) wanted training in using research and statistics
- Around one in five (21%) prioritised community leadership training.

**Figure 22: Thinking about the list below, which types of training, if any, would be most helpful to your work as a councillor**

**Base: All respondents**

Councillors were also asked about what kinds of information would be most helpful to their work as councillors (see Figure 23). The three main kinds of information that councillors said they wanted concerned:

- information about services provided by the council and its partners (57%)
- information about statutory requirements (53%)
- information about Oldham and its residents (37%).

Lastly, councillors were asked about what kinds of support they would find most helpful to their role (see Figure 24):

- Case workers (57%)
- Administrative support (53%).

The high levels of demand for information about services provided by the council and its partners (for signposting purposes), and for case-workers is consistent with the high priority
that many councillors placed on helping people resolve specific problems (when asked earlier in the questionnaire about what are the most important things for a councillor to do).

**Figure 23: Which of the following types of information would be most helpful to your work as a councillor?**

- Information about services provided by the council and its partners (e.g. to support signposting residents): 58%
- Information about statutory requirements relevant to the council: 53%
- Information about Oldham and its residents (i.e. research and statistics): 37%
- Information about community facilities: 25%
- Information on the role of ward councillors (for example, a job description): 17%
- Something else: 2%

*Base: All respondents*

**Figure 24: Which of the following types of support would be most helpful to your work as a councillor?**

- Case worker: 57%
- Administrative support (e.g. PA services): 53%
- IT resources (e.g. computers): 29%
- Something else: 9%

*Base: All respondents*
Respondent profile

Respondents were asked to give some information about their demographic characteristics and household circumstances.

Gender

Figure 23: Gender profile of respondents compared to the 2011 Council composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011 Council composition</th>
<th>Weighted survey responses</th>
<th>Unweighted survey responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All responding

Figure 23 shows that the breakdown of survey respondents by gender reflects the current composition of the council. Weighting the results by the current political composition of the council had little impact on this.

Figure 24 shows that as at 2011, the proportion of Oldham councillors who are women (28%) is slightly lower than the national proportion of councillors who are women (31%) according to the LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors. Within Oldham, women comprise 52% of the voting age population, but comprise only 28% of Oldham’s councillors.

Figure 24: Gender composition of Oldham council with comparators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Age structure**

Figure 25 shows that the broad age composition of survey respondents closely matches the age composition of Oldham councillors. Again, weighting by current political composition had little impact on this.

**Figure 25: Age profile of respondents compared with the 2011 Council composition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>25-44 years</th>
<th>45-64 years</th>
<th>65+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 Council composition</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted 2011 Councillor Survey results</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted 2011 Councillor Survey results</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base: All responding**

Oldham residents aged 18-44 are under-represented as local councillors, comprising 46% of Oldham’s voting age population, but only 14% of Oldham’s councillors. (see Figure 26). This pattern is also seen nationally, with only 12% of respondents to the LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors being aged 18-44.

Oldham residents aged 45-64 or are over-represented within the council, accounting for almost six in ten councillors (59%), but comprising only a third (33%) of Oldham’s voting age population.

**Figure 26: Age composition of Oldham Council with comparators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18-24 years</th>
<th>25-44 years</th>
<th>45-64 years</th>
<th>65+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oldham Council’s current composition</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors (England)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age composition of Oldham’s population aged 18 or over (2010 Mid year population estimates)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethnic group composition

Figure 27 shows that weighting by the current political composition of the council had little impact on profile of respondents by ethnic group.

Figure 27: Ethnic group composition of survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Weighted 2011 Councillor Survey results</th>
<th>Unweighted 2011 Councillor Survey results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other White background</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashmiri</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All responding

Oldham Council does not currently hold ethnic group composition information for all councillors, so it is not possible to match the respondent profile directly against the current ethnic group composition of the council.

The ethnic group composition of the Oldham Councillors’ Survey respondents generally reflects the ethnic composition of Oldham’s population aged 16 and over.\(^5\)

- In 2009, 85.5% of Oldham’s population aged 16 or over were from white backgrounds (including ‘other white backgrounds’). In 2011, 82% of respondents to the Oldham Councillors’ Survey were from white backgrounds.
- In 2009 an estimated 11.4% of Oldham’s population aged 16 or over were from Asian or Asian British backgrounds. In 2011, 18% of respondents to the Oldham Councillors’ Survey were from Asian or Asian British backgrounds (weighted results).

The ethnic group composition of respondents to the Oldham Councillors’ Survey is considerably more diverse than that of councillors regionally or nationally. The 2010 LGA Census of Local Authority Councillors found that 98% of North West councillors and 96% of councillors in England overall were from White or White British backgrounds.

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\(^5\) The 2009 mid year population estimates by ethnic group (2009) are the most recently available estimates of ethnic group composition in Oldham, but cannot be broken down to give estimates for the voting age population.
Limiting long-term illness and disability

Around one in ten (11%) respondents reported having a limiting long-term illness or disability that limited their daily activities or what work they could do; 89% did not.

The proportion of Oldham councillors reporting a limiting long-term illness or disability is considerably lower than both:

- the proportion of Oldham residents reporting this in the 2010 You and Your Community Survey (34%) and;
- the proportion of Oldham residents reporting a limiting long term illness or disability in the 2001 Census (20.3%).

According to the LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors, around 14% of councillors in England and 17% of councillors in the North West reported having a limiting long term illness or disability – slightly higher than the proportion among Oldham councillors.

Caring responsibilities

Close to one in four (23%) councillors had caring responsibilities for a child or children.

About the same proportion (22%) provided help or support to someone because of either long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability or problems related to old age. All of those providing unpaid care spent between 1 -19 hours a week doing so. In most cases (89%) the person being provided with help or support was a family member.

Findings from the 2010 You and Your Community Survey indicate that around a third (32%) of respondents provided unpaid help or support to others. Whilst most (71% of those providing care or 23% of all responding) gave help for 1-19 hours a week, a substantial proportion (29% of those providing care or 9% of all responding) provided help for 20 hours a week or more.

Employment

Over half (53%) of respondents were in paid employment and around a third (32%) were retired.

Figure 28: Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In full time paid employment (30+ hours a week)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In part time employment (less than 30 hours a week)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in paid work - looking after home / family</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working for some other reason</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All responding
Compared with those responding to the 2010 LGA Census of Local Authority Councillors, councillors in Oldham were:

- less likely to be retired (32% compared with 52% of councillors in the North West and 47% of councillors in England)
- more likely to be in part-time employment (20%, compared with 8% of councillors in the North West and 10% in England overall)

Levels of full-time employment and self-employment among Oldham councillors were generally in line with those for the North West and England.

Among councillors in employment or self-employment

- more than a third (36%) were in a managerial position
- more than four in ten (44%) were in a technical or professional occupation
- around one in ten (11%) were lecturers, researchers or teachers
- one in ten (10%) were in administrative, clerical, secretarial or sales occupations (see Figure 27).

Figure 29: Occupation type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial or executive</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional or technical</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer, teacher or researcher</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative, clerical, secretarial or sales</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All employed respondents who answered the question

Compared with respondents to the 2010 LGA National Census of Local Authority Councillors, Oldham has a higher proportion of councillors in professional or technical occupation types (44%, compared with 33% in England), and fewer councillors in manual or craft occupations (none, compared with 9% overall in England).

Around half of Oldham respondents (51%) worked in the private sector; and half (49%) worked in a public service (see Figure 30). Oldham has proportionally fewer councillors employed in the private sector than the North West (60%) or England (69%).
Figure 30: Employment sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public - Local Government</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public - Other public sector</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public - NHS</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public - Central Government</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All employed respondents who answered the question

Educational qualifications

More than four in ten (44%) respondents had a degree level qualification or higher. Fewer than one in five (16%) held none of the qualifications listed in the question.

Figure 31: Educational qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree / Higher degree / Professional qualification / NVQ 4 or 5 / Higher GCE 'A'</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level/Scottish/Irish/Higher Grade / NVQ 3 / Ordinary</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Apprenticeship</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE / GCE O Level / School Certificate / NVQ 2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other qualifications</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all responding

Compared with respondents to the Oldham You and Your Community Survey, councillors were considerably more likely to hold a degree level qualification (44%, compared with 20% of YYC respondents), and were less likely to have none of the educational qualifications listed (16%, compared with 24% of YYC respondents)