

NLGN Leadership Index is a quarterly survey of chief executives, leaders and mayors from local authorities across the UK. It asks their level of confidence in key service areas as well as wider indicators of community wellbeing. This quarter, we also asked local government heads about their capacity for improving air quality and reducing winter rough sleeping.

HEADLINE FINDINGS

- A majority of respondents consider taking action on air quality a top priority for their councils, with 23 per cent saying that taking action on air quality is extremely important and a further 42.4 per cent seeing this as very important.
- All respondents from Metropolitan councils and London Boroughs indicated that taking action on air quality is extremely or very important for their councils, compared to only 59 per cent respondents from Unitary and District councils.
- Overall, more than half (51.2 per cent) of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that they have adequate powers and resources to improve air quality in their area. 18.4 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree they have adequate powers and resources, while 30.4 per cent are undecided.
- On the capacity to reduce rough sleeping, respondents from London, East and South West are the most pessimistic, with 55 per cent, 53 per cent and 44 per cent respectively indicating they do not have adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation for winter rough sleepers.
- Optimism in the local business environment has increased by 12.7 per cent since the last quarter to 62.5 (on a scale of 0 to 100) but there has been no change in confidence level that residents have sufficient income to achieve a decent standard of living, which remains at 49.2.

ABOUT THE JANUARY 2020 LEADERSHIP INDEX

NLGN Leadership Index asks recurring questions on confidence levels across: key service areas; the local economy and living standards; and community cohesion and trust. The survey also features topical questions, which this quarter focus on the subjects of rough sleeping and air quality.

SECTION 1: AIR QUALITY

- A) Context
- B) How councils are prioritising taking actions on air quality
- C) Councils' confidence in having adequate powers and resources to improve air quality
- D) The biggest barrier to improving air quality
- E) What councils are doing to improve air quality

SECTION 2: WINTER ROUGH SLEEPING

- A) Context
- B) How councils are preparing to meet this year's demand for temporary accommodation
- C) Councils' confidence in having adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation

SECTION 3: CONFIDENCE TRENDS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY, SERVICE DELIVERY AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

- A) Local economy and living standards
- B) Key services
- C) Community cohesion and trust

SECTION 1: AIR QUALITY

A) CONTEXT

The UK as a whole is currently failing the EU requirements on nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and almost 2,000 locations across England, Wales and Northern Ireland are still in breach of the legal limit.¹ This is having a negative impact on public health. The most polluted areas, with NO₂ far exceeding the legal limit of 40ug/m³: RB Kensington and Chelsea; LB Brent; Leeds; Doncaster; Camden and Westminster.²

While the UK government is currently required to fulfil EU's requirements, local authorities, under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) are in turn required to fulfil the government's national air quality objectives. In practice, councils are required to identify areas which will not meet these objectives as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA): places that require specific intervention to reduce pollutants. Following this, councils in these areas are then expected to prepare and implement an Air Quality Action Plan to fulfil these requirements.

In October 2019, the government announced a further £2 million in funding to help local authorities improve air quality across England. This is in addition to the £275 million Implementation Fund to enable local authorities to take the necessary action to improve air quality, and a £220 million Clean Air Fund to help them minimise the impact of their local plans on individuals and businesses, as part of the Clean Air Strategy 2019.

Local authority bodies have long criticised the government for failing to recognise that there is no such thing as a 'safe' limit for NO₂ or particulates.³ There have been calls for new legislation that adopts World Health Organization (WHO) guideline limits on air pollution because the current standards are not sufficient to protect public health. The Local Government Association (LGA) has called for more devolution, arguing that greater powers to tackle air quality should be handed to local authorities, e.g. through lane rental schemes and traffic regulations, which have been shown to reduce congestion.

Many local authorities are already taking bold steps to go beyond simply meeting the legal requirements. Prominent examples in England include Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London, Clean Air Zones (CAZ) in Birmingham from 2020 and in Greater Manchester from 2021. In Scotland, Low Emission Zones are planned in four areas for 2020, starting in Glasgow. In Wales, CAZs are being consulted on, although it has been ruled out in Cardiff. Instead the city is looking to introduce speed restrictions, increase the number of zero emission buses, and to add Park and Ride and EV infrastructure. In some areas, concerns

1 <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/clean-air/nearly-two-thousand-locations-across-england-wales-and-northern-ireland-breaching-air>

2 <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/clean-air/nearly-two-thousand-locations-across-england-wales-and-northern-ireland-breaching-air>

3 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvfru/433/43309.htm>

about air quality have provided the impetus for greater collaboration between councils and across combined authorities. Some councils have been ahead of the game, working together to move towards 100 per cent clean energy by 2050 years before this was considered and implemented by the EU Commission and the UK government.⁴

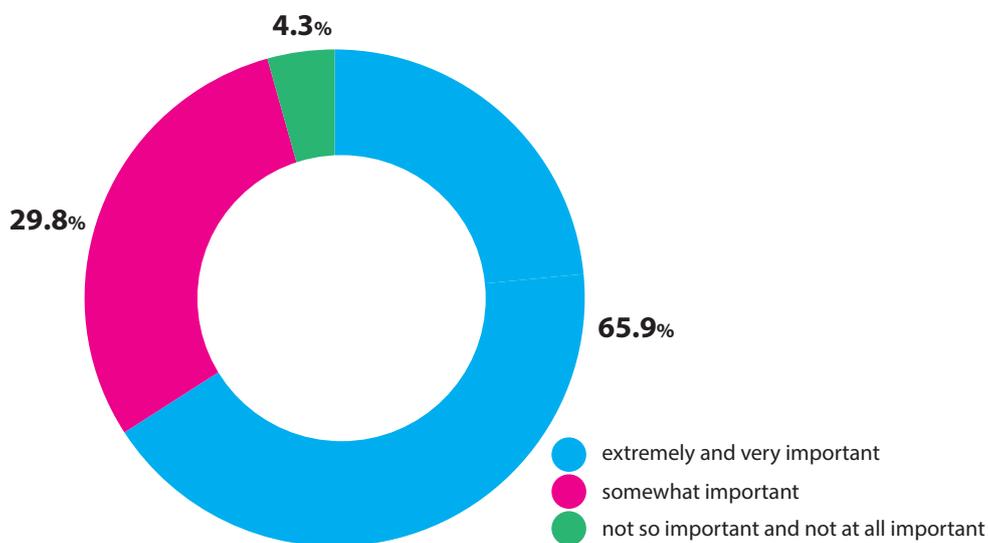
RESULTS

The NLGN Leadership Index October 2019 asked chief executives and council leaders/mayors how their councils are improving air quality.

B) HOW COUNCILS ARE PRIORITISING TAKING ACTIONS ON AIR QUALITY

- A majority of respondents consider taking action on air quality a top priority in their councils. Overall, 23 per cent respondents indicated that taking action on air quality is extremely important for their council, and 42.4 per cent see this as very important.
- Only 4.3 per cent respondents indicated that taking action on air quality is a low priority for their councils.

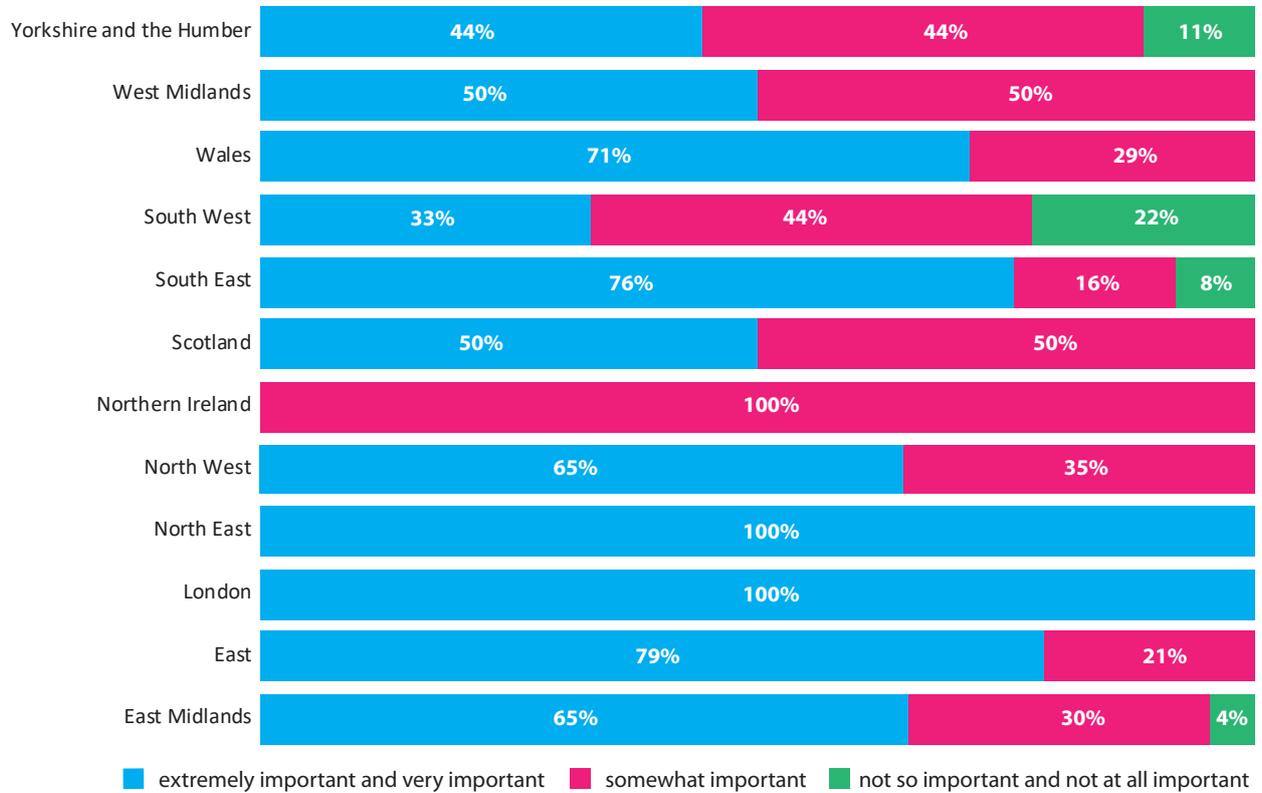
FIGURE 1: WHAT LEVEL OF PRIORITY IS TAKING ACTION ON AIR QUALITY IN YOUR ORGANISATION



- All respondents from the North East and London consider taking action on air quality to be extremely important or very important for their councils. This is followed by the East and South East with 79 per cent and 76 per cent respectively indicating that taking action on air quality is 'extremely important' and 'very important' in their councils.
- 22 per cent and 11 per cent of respondents from the South West and Yorkshire and the Humber respectively considered taking action on air quality as 'not so important' and 'not at all important'.
- 71.4 per cent of respondents from Wales and 50 per cent of respondents from Scotland consider taking action on air quality 'extremely and very important'.

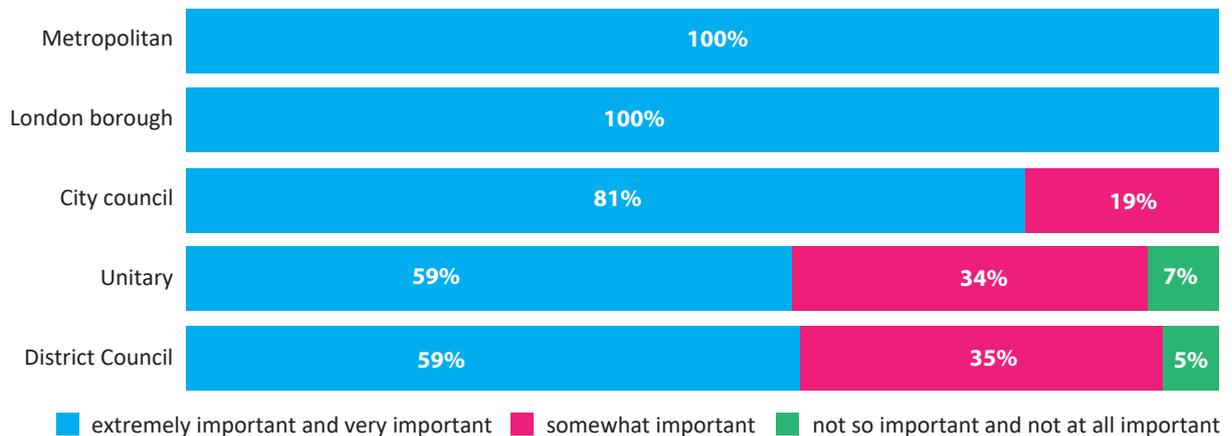
⁴ <https://www.uk100.org/>

FIGURE 2: WHAT LEVEL OF PRIORITY IS TAKING ACTION ON AIR QUALITY IN YOUR ORGANISATION? (BY REGION)



- All respondents from Metropolitan councils and London Boroughs indicated that taking action on air quality is 'extremely or very important' for their councils, compared to only 59 per cent of respondents in Unitary and District councils.
- Five percent and seven per cent of respondents from District and Unitary councils respectively indicated that taking action on air quality is 'not so important' and 'not at all important'.

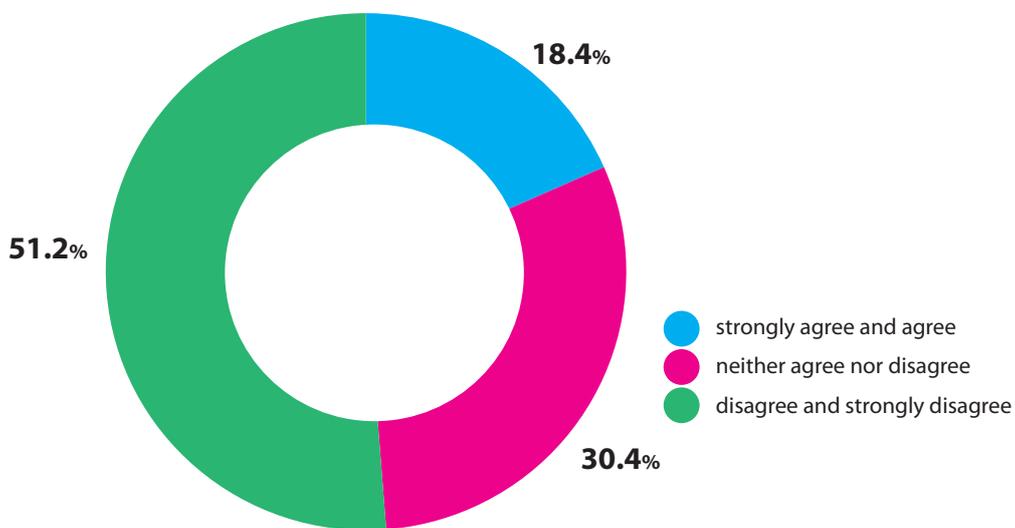
FIGURE 3: WHAT LEVEL OF PRIORITY IS TAKING ACTION ON AIR QUALITY IN YOUR ORGANISATION? (BY TIER)



C) COUNCILS' CONFIDENCE IN HAVING ADEQUATE POWERS AND RESOURCES TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

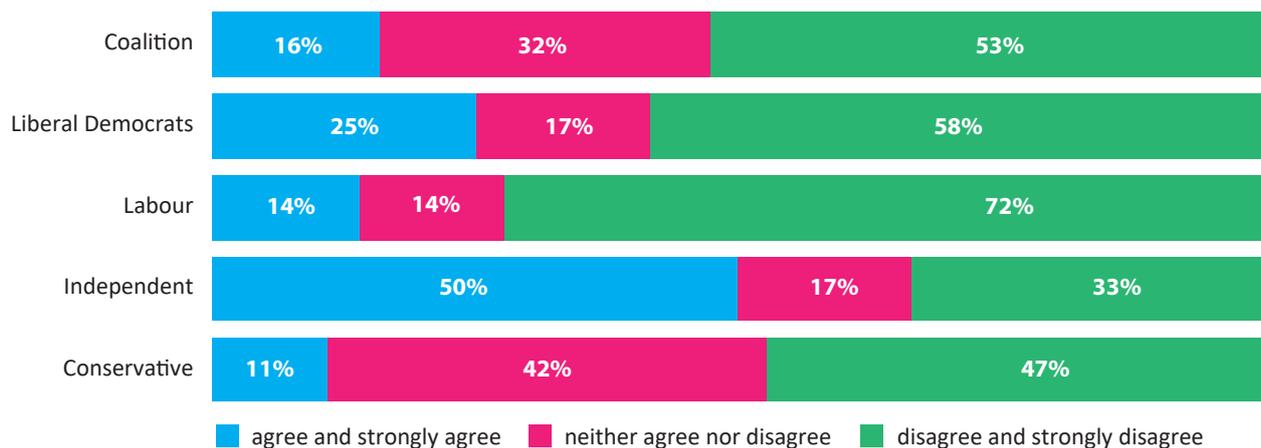
- Overall, more than half (51.2 per cent) respondents disagree or strongly disagree they have adequate powers and resources to improve air quality in their area.
- Only 18.4 per cent respondents agree or strongly agree they have adequate powers and resources to improve air quality in their area.

FIGURE 4: DO YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE ADEQUATE POWERS AND RESOURCES TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY IN YOUR AREA?



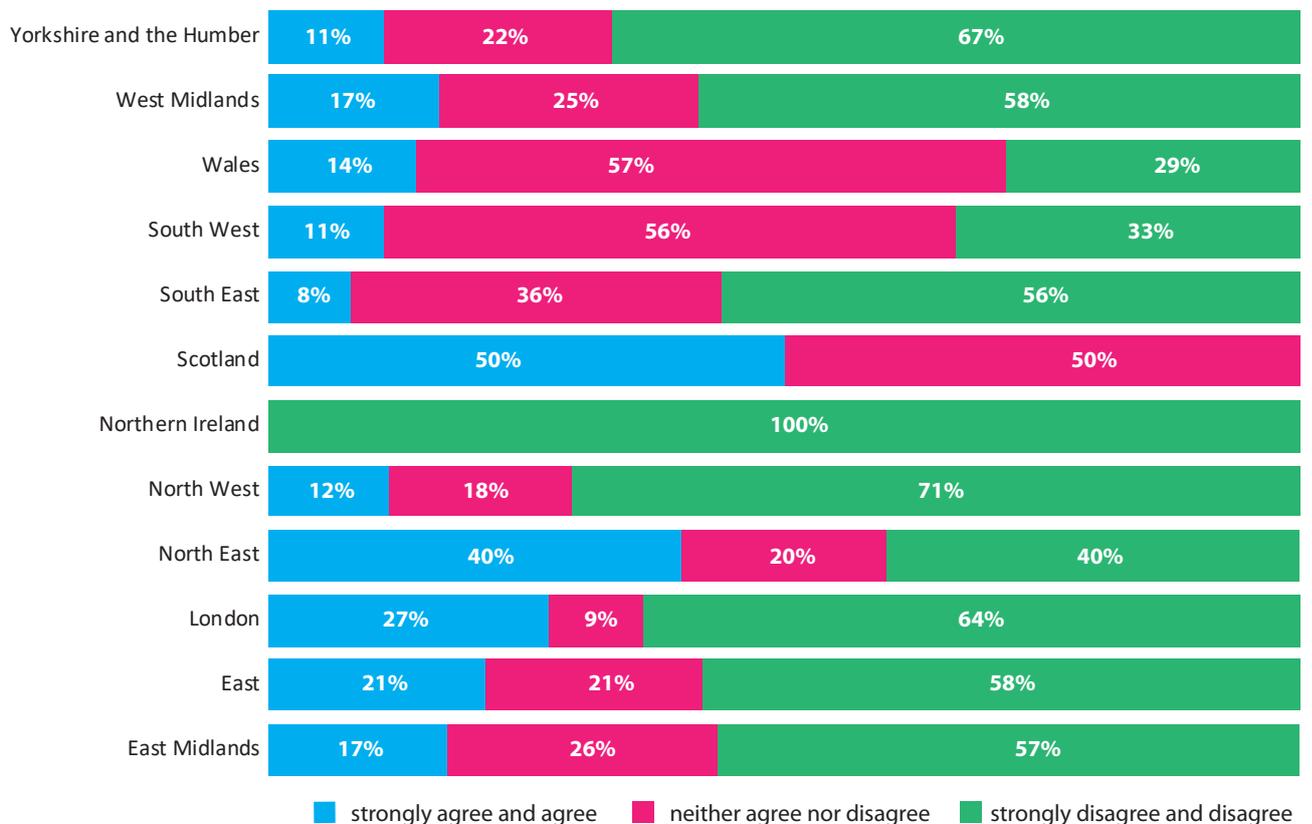
- Respondents from Independent-led councils are most optimistic with 50 per cent agreeing they have adequate powers and resources to improve air quality in their area. This is followed by 25 per cent respondents from Lib Dem-led councils and 16 per cent respondents from coalition-led councils.
- Almost three quarters of respondents from Labour-led councils disagreed or strongly disagreed that they have adequate powers and resources to improve air quality in their area.

FIGURE 5: DO YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE ADEQUATE POWERS AND RESOURCES TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY IN YOUR AREA? (BY POLITICAL LEADERSHIP)



- Seventy one per cent respondents from the North West believe they do not have adequate powers and resources to improve air quality in their area. This is followed by 67 per cent in Yorkshire and the Humber and 64 per cent in London.
- Half of respondents from Scotland and only 29 per cent from Wales believe they do not have adequate powers and resources to improve air quality in their area.

FIGURE 6: DO YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE ADEQUATE POWER AND RESOURCES TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY IN YOUR AREA? (BY REGION)

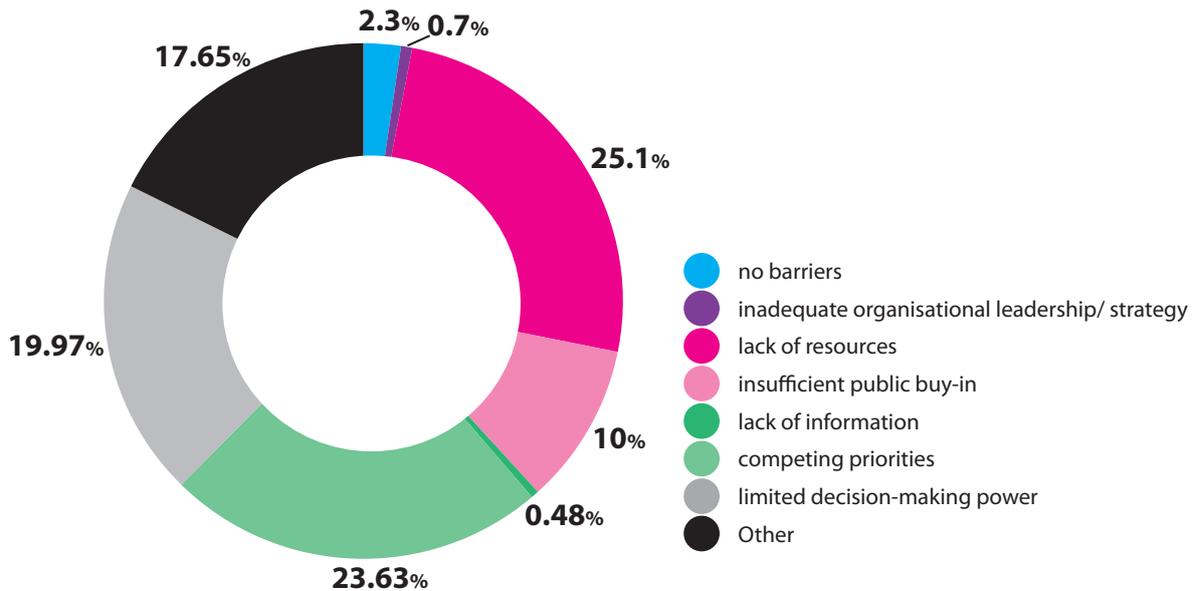


D) KEY BARRIERS TO IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

- Respondents identified the most significant barriers to improving air quality as lack of resources (25.1 per cent); competing priorities (23.6 per cent); and limited decision-making powers (20 per cent).
- Respondents also referred to other key barriers including the 'lack of Government direction as to who is lead and has responsibility'. Others have also raised concerns over poor coordination across tiers and agencies, believing 'two tier authority causes significant issues' as 'air quality is monitored by districts but the key issue is transport related and the districts have no power over the transport authority so the system is set up to fail.' Another respondent believes this fragmented response 'leads to a poor outcome'.

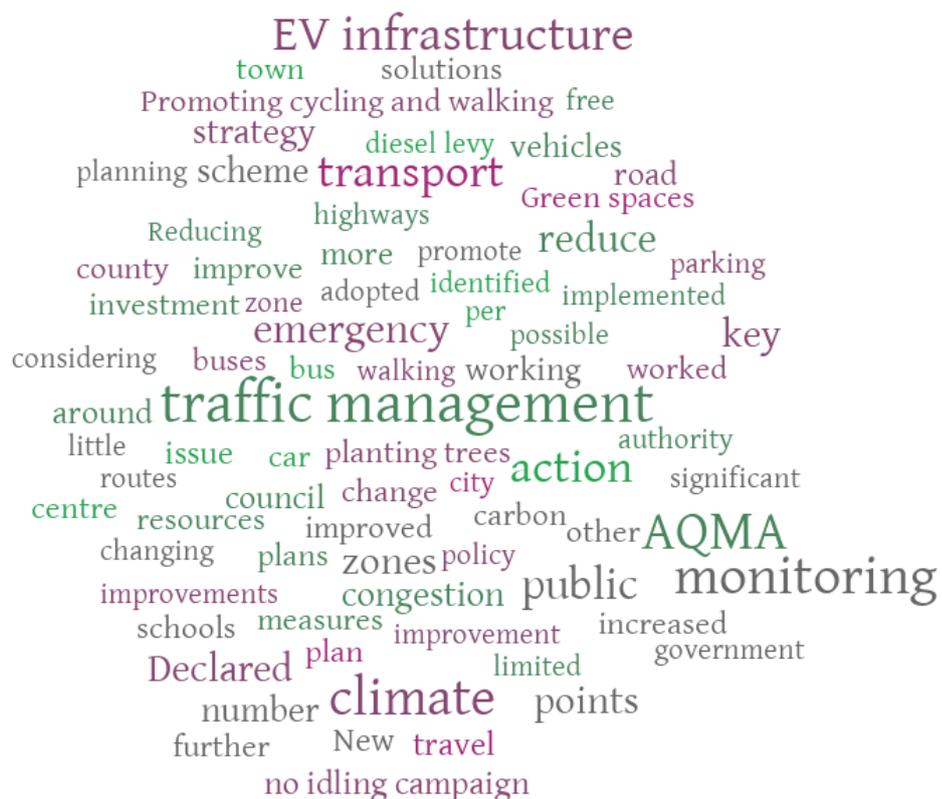
- Poor joint working is also a concern in London, with one respondent calling for greater devolution of power: 'TfL and the GLA have powers along with central government – we don't join up enough – powers should be devolved'.

FIGURE 7: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU SAY FORMS THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO IMPROVING AIR QUALITY?



E) WHAT COUNCILS ARE DOING TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

FIGURE 8: HOW COUNCILS ARE IMPROVING AIR QUALITY



Respondents referred to a wide range of measures in improving air quality in their area, with most people mentioning the following four actions:

1) Monitoring key areas

Respondents mentioned 'monitoring key areas of risk' as one of the main measures in tackling air quality issues in their area, although it appears that councils are in different stages of monitoring, with some just starting to do so while others, having been monitoring for some time, are planning to 'increase monitoring and adopt an Air Quality SPD'.

2) Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

Fourteen respondents also mentioned 'designating Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) where appropriate' or 'progressing Defra AQMA direction' as one of their priorities in improving air quality locally.

3) EV infrastructure

Respondents also highlighted 'developing EV infrastructure (external and in-house fleet)' as a key intervention in encouraging more sustainable transport options, targeting both private vehicles and public buses and taxis. This has been mentioned alongside other disincentives such as imposing 'Diesel Levies' or 'considering a borough-wide Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ)'. Other measures mentioned include 'planting trees' and 'promoting cycling and walking'.

4) Traffic management

'Traffic management' with the aim of reducing congestion, emissions, and improving traffic flow has featured as one of the top interventions by councils, alongside other responses, including 'participating in CAZs' and 'no idling campaigns'.

SECTION 2: WINTER ROUGH SLEEPING

A) CONTEXT

Sleeping rough, especially in the winter months, is something we all hope will never happen to us but it is a reality for nearly 4,700 people in England who sleep in open-air locations or in tents, cars and makeshift shelters.⁵ The local authorities with the largest increase in the number of rough sleepers between 2017 and 2018 were Enfield, Corby and Rugby, and with the largest decrease were in Worthing, Eastbourne, and Southend-on-Sea.⁶ By region, rough sleepers in London made up over a quarter (27 per cent) of the total number of rough sleepers in England, followed by the South East (20 per cent) in 2018.⁷

The Government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2017 which imposes new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness. Under this act, public services are required to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of being homeless.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), launched the following year in March 2018, is targeted at local authorities with high numbers of people sleeping rough, with the aim of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2024.⁸ Almost three quarters of the 83 highest-need RSI areas reported a decrease in rough sleeping and almost a quarter reported an increase between 2017 and 2018. Brighton & Hove saw the largest decrease of 64 per cent while Westminster saw the largest increase of 41 per cent between 2017 and 2018.⁹

In August 2018, the government set out its Rough Sleeping Strategy, supported by £100 million funding, to 'end rough sleeping for good'.¹⁰ As part of a wider strategy to tackle all forms of homelessness, the Government has pledged £76 million for the Rough Sleeping Initiative to help 246 local authorities support rough sleepers in their area by getting off the street and into secure accommodation.¹¹

⁵ Based on 2018 ONS statistics, available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781567/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018_release.pdf

Local authorities use a specific definition to identify people sleeping rough but this includes people sleeping or who are about to bed down in open air locations and other places including tents, cars and makeshift shelters.

⁶ See table 3, p. 5 of Rough Sleeping Statistics, Autumn 2018, England (Revised). Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781567/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018_release.pdf

⁷ See chart 4, p. 9 of Rough Sleeping Statistics, Autumn 2018, England (Revised). Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781567/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018_release.pdf

⁸ The original commitment was to end rough sleeping by the end of 2027 but this was revised following the 2019 election to the end of this Parliament in 2024. See more: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-pledges-new-action-to-eliminate-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping>

⁹ See table 3, p. 5 of Rough Sleeping Statistics, Autumn 2018, England (Revised). Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781567/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018_release.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-secretary-robert-jenrick-spends-christmas-evening-at-birmingham-christmas-shelter>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-secretary-robert-jenrick-spends-christmas-evening-at-birmingham-christmas-shelter>

An additional £13 million has also been provided to English councils for the Cold Weather Fund to boost life-saving support for rough sleepers during the winter months.¹² Wales and Scotland are also implementing their rough sleeping action plans to enhance support for rough sleepers.

In cases of rough weather, local authorities provide Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) which opens for short periods when severe weather is forecast, with beds provided in different temporary accommodation including hostels, B&B and night shelters. Increasingly, local authorities have been implementing a three-night minimum SWEP to allow enough time for them to help people into a more permanent housing arrangements.

RESULTS

The NLGN Leadership Index October 2019 asked chief executives and council leaders/mayors how they are providing temporary accommodation and reducing winter rough sleeping.

B) HOW COUNCILS ARE PREPARING TO MEET THIS YEAR'S DEMAND FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Respondents referred to a broad range of interventions but the most commonly mentioned measures to meet this year's demand for temporary accommodation are:

- 1) Increasing the number of temporary accommodations

Most councils are adding to the existing number of night shelters and temporary accommodation. Some respondents have also emphasised the importance of making sure 'new winter shelter opened with links to other support services'.

- 2) Strong partnerships with VCSE

In addition to buying more houses to meet the increasing demands for temporary accommodation, councils are 'working with voluntary sector and faith groups, winter shelter, ...Fire Station, making food [freely available] every day'. For example, one respondent highlighted their 'partnership arrangement with two neighbouring district councils and seven local churches' to provide winter shelter for potential rough sleepers.

- 3) Dedicated team/worker

Many respondents highlighted creating a local dedicated team to deal with winter rough sleeping in their area. One respondent mentioned 'employing an outreach worker' and another mentioned '[increasing] the staff/team dealing with the problem day to day'.

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-pledges-new-action-to-eliminate-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping>

4) Proactive/preventative contact with rough sleepers

Councils are also trying to proactively get in contact with those who may be at risk of homelessness, including 'care leavers and prison leavers' to meet their needs before they reach a point of crisis during the winter months. These initial contacts are often used to point vulnerable people to 'wider wrap-around services to help [them] with debt and other social issues'.

5) Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

Several councils have developed a new severe weather protocol which 'allocates additional emergency provision'. Others have 'worked with District on a new facility and ensured SWEP is in place'.

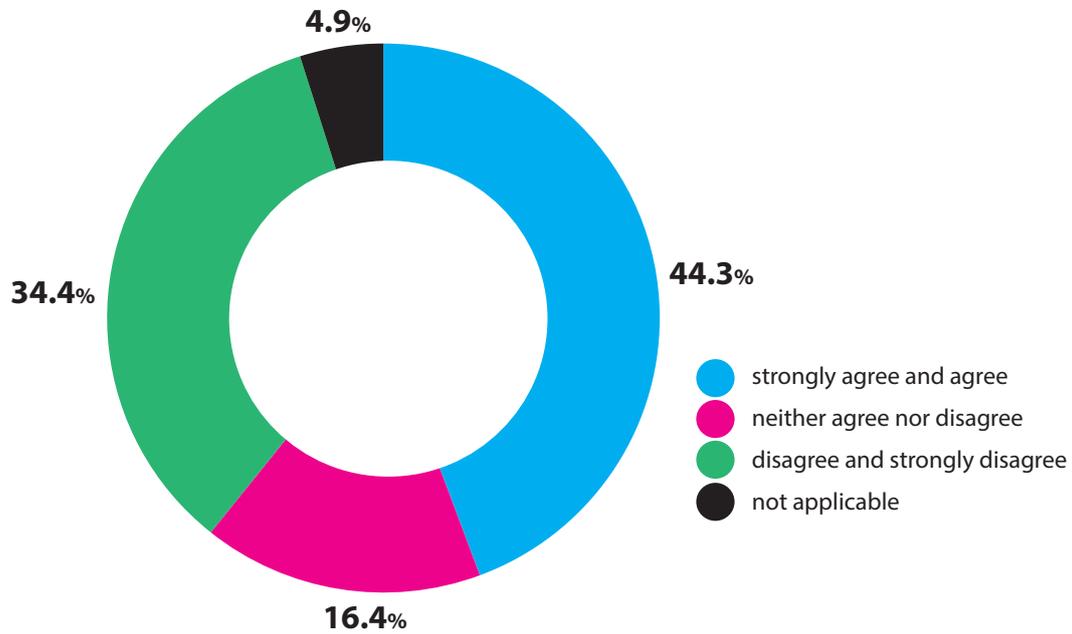
FIGURE 9: HOW COUNCILS ARE PREPARING TO MEET THIS YEAR'S DEMAND FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION



C) COUNCILS' CONFIDENCE IN HAVING ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

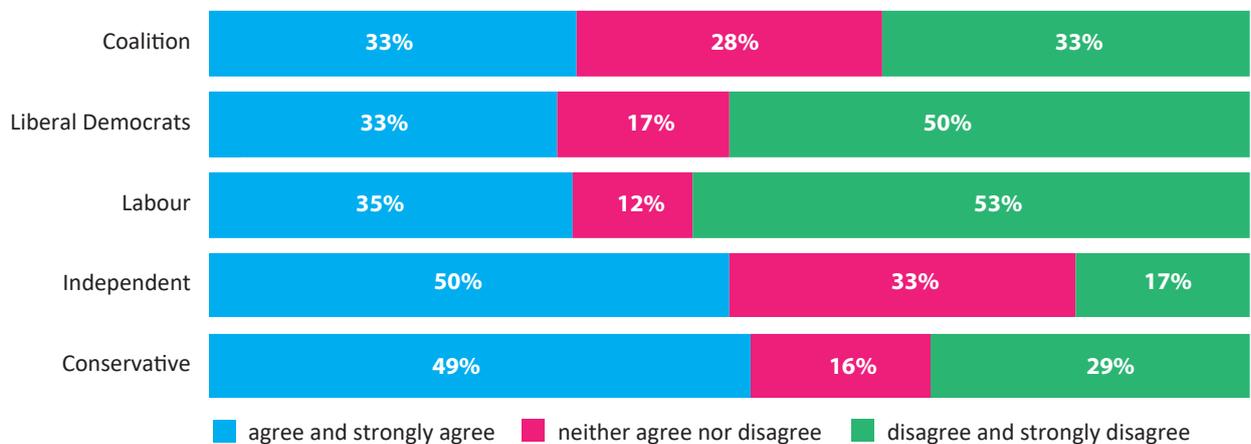
- Overall, 44.3 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation for winter rough sleepers.
- Over one third respondents (34.4 per cent) disagree or strongly disagree that they have adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation for winter rough sleepers.

FIGURE 10: DO YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR WINTER ROUGH SLEEPERS?



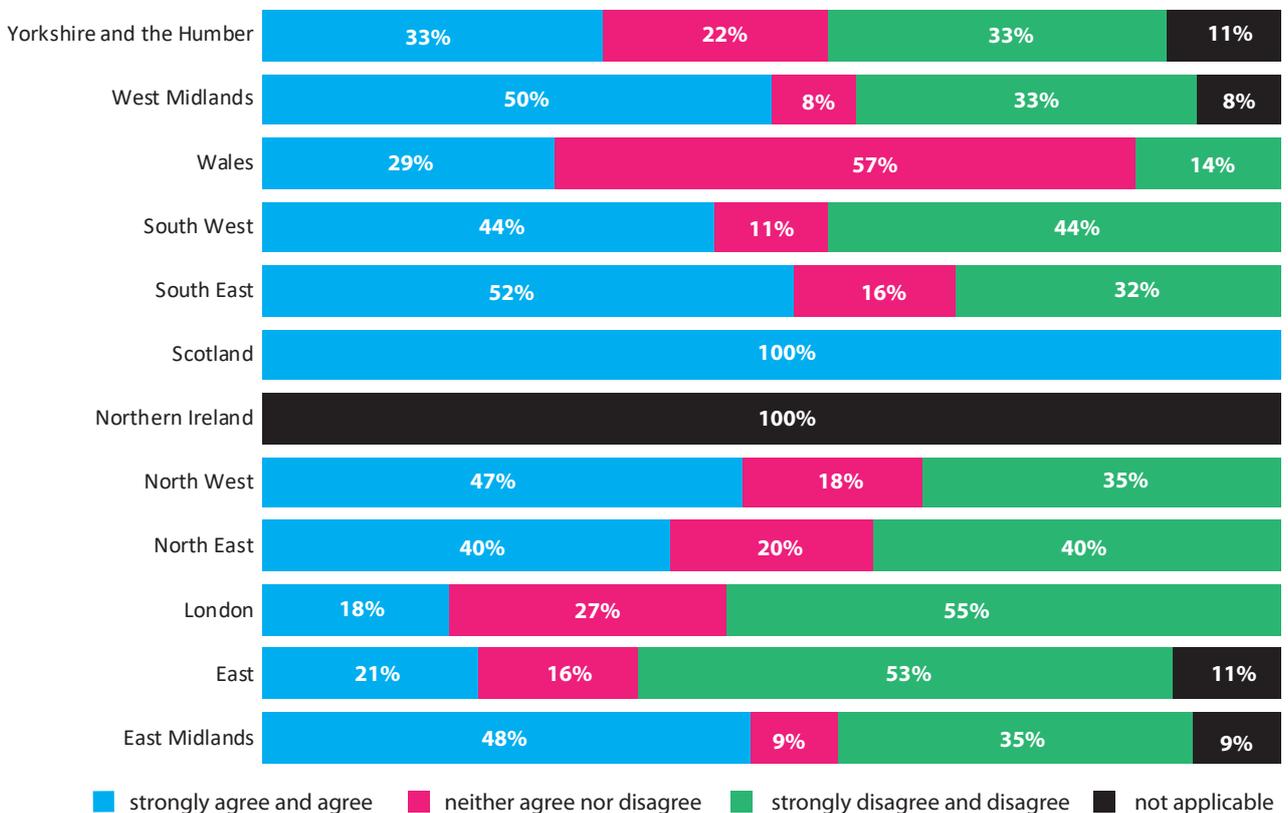
- Respondents from Independent and Conservative-led councils are the most confident, with half indicating that they have adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation for winter rough sleepers.
- Respondents from Labour-led councils are the most pessimistic with 53 per cent stating they do not have adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation for winter rough sleepers. This is followed by 50 per cent from Lib Dem-led councils.

FIGURE 11: DO YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR WINTER ROUGH SLEEPERS? (BY POLITICAL LEADERSHIP)



- Respondents from London, the East and the South West are the most pessimistic with 55 per cent, 53 per cent and 44 per cent respectively indicating they do not have adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation for winter rough sleepers.
- Respondents from Scotland are the most optimistic with all indicating they have adequate resources to support the provision of temporary accommodation for winter rough sleepers. In England, the most optimistic regions are the South East at 52 per cent and the West Midlands at 50 per cent.

FIGURE 12: DO YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR WINTER ROUGH SLEEPERS?



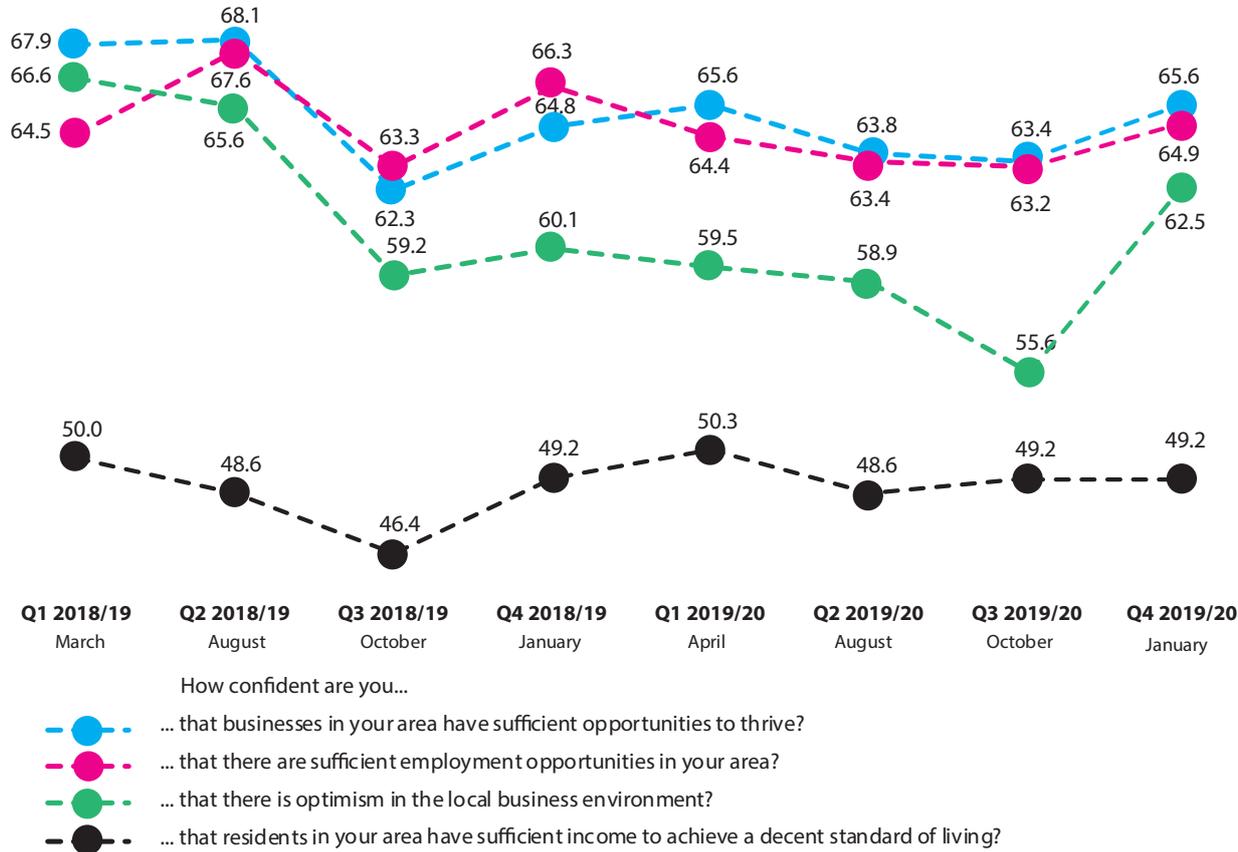
SECTION 3: CONFIDENCE TRENDS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY, SERVICE DELIVERY AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

This is the eighth quarterly release of NLGN’s Leadership Index since its launch in March 2018. Every quarter we asked chief executive and councils leaders/mayors 12 recurring questions about their confidence in the local economy and living standards, key service areas, and community cohesion and trust.

A) LOCAL ECONOMY AND LIVING STANDARDS

- This quarter’s confidence level in the local economy has remained largely similar to the last quarter’s: ranging from 62 to 66 on a scale of 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest).
- Optimism in the local business environment has risen sharply, however, from its lowest level of 55.6 to 62.5, reversing its past trend of decline over the previous three quarters. This translates to an increase of 12.7 per cent.
- There has been no change in confidence in residents having sufficient income to achieve a decent standard of living, remaining at 49.2.

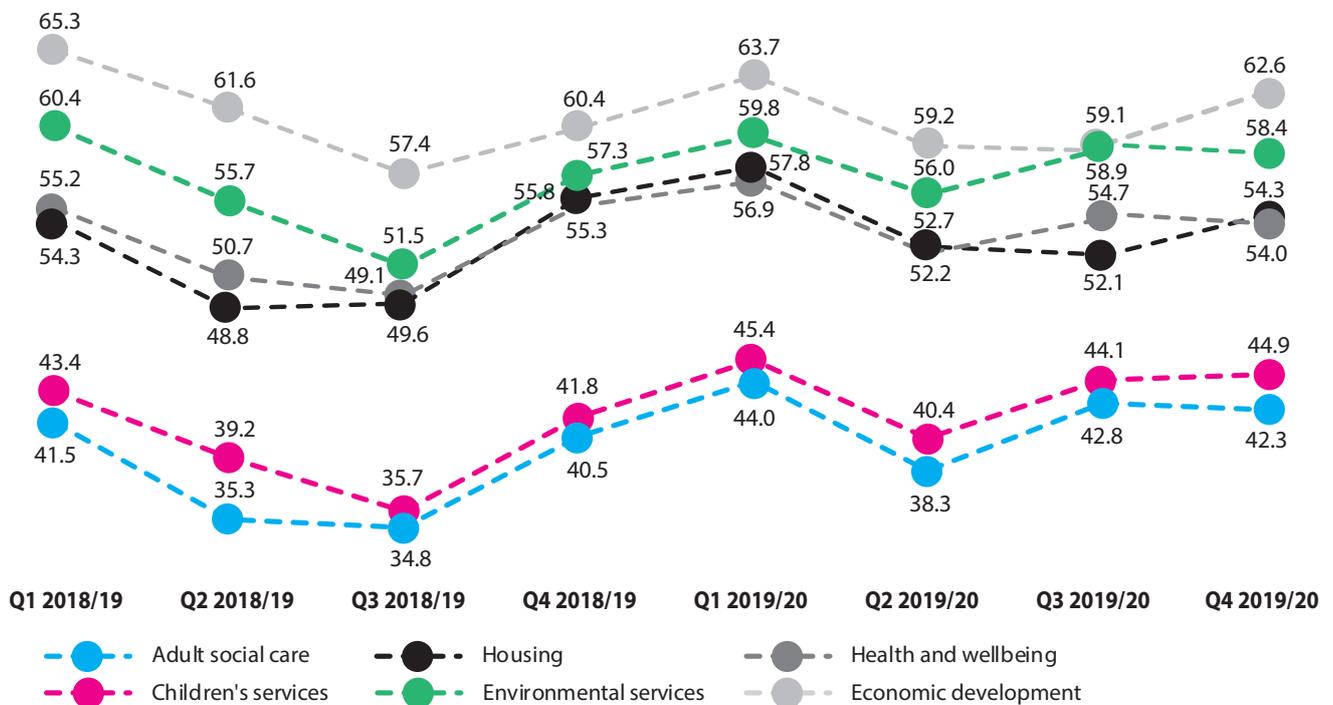
FIGURE 13: QUARTERLY CONFIDENCE LEVELS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND LIVING STANDARDS



B) KEY SERVICES

- Confidence levels have increased since the last quarter for all key service areas except for adult social care (which decreased by 2 per cent), environmental services, and health and wellbeing (which both decreased by 0.9 per cent).
- There has been an increase in confidence in housing and economic development services since the last quarter, reversing the trend of the previous two quarters for both. Confidence levels in housing rose from 52.1 to 54.3 – an increase of 4.2 per cent, while confidence level in economic development rose from 58.5 to 62.6 – an increase of 6.3 per cent since the last quarter.

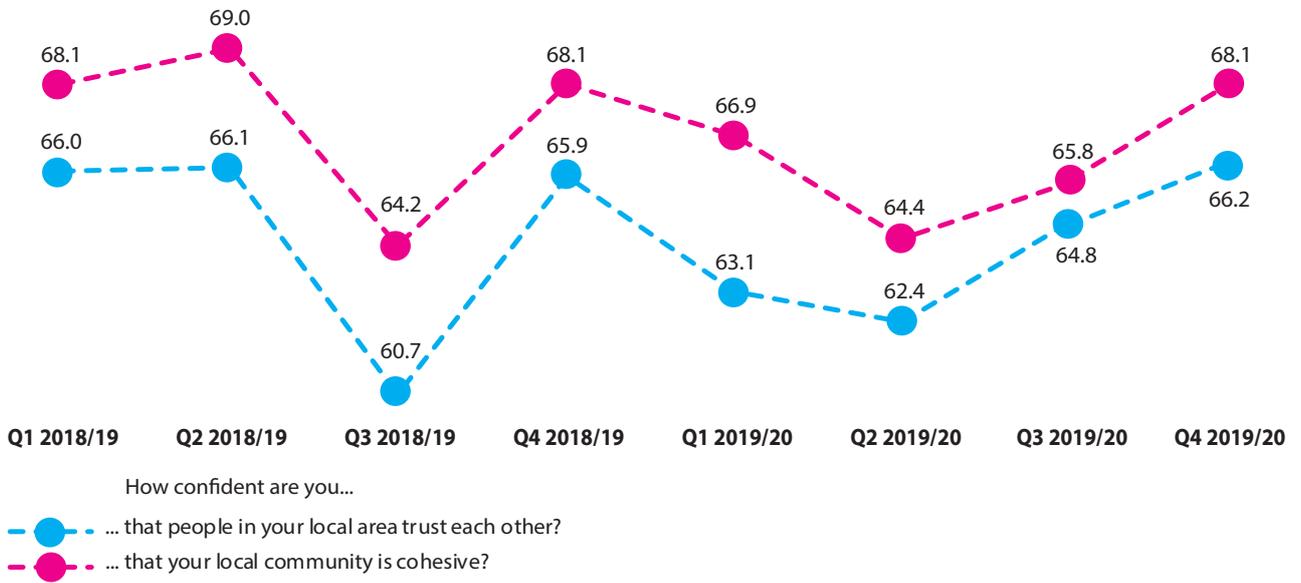
FIGURE 14: QUARTERLY CONFIDENCE LEVELS ACROSS KEY SERVICE AREAS



C) COMMUNITY COHESION AND TRUST

Confidence levels in both community cohesion and local trust have increased for two consecutive quarters. The level of confidence that people in local areas trust each other has increased from 64.8 to 66.2 on a scale of 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest). Similarly, the level of confidence that the local community is cohesive has increased from 65.8 to 68.1, an increase of 3.5 per cent.

FIGURE 15: QUARTERLY CONFIDENCE LEVELS IN LOCAL TRUST AND COMMUNITY COHESION



APPENDIX: ABOUT THE SURVEY

The NLGN Leadership Index survey was sent to 762 leaders, chief executives and council mayors across all UK regions. It was open from 11 December 2019 to 7 January 2020. This latest survey received a total of 140 complete responses, which equates to an 18.4 per cent response rate. Survey responses were received from all UK regions.

FIGURE 16: BREAKDOWN BY UK REGION (JANUARY 2020)

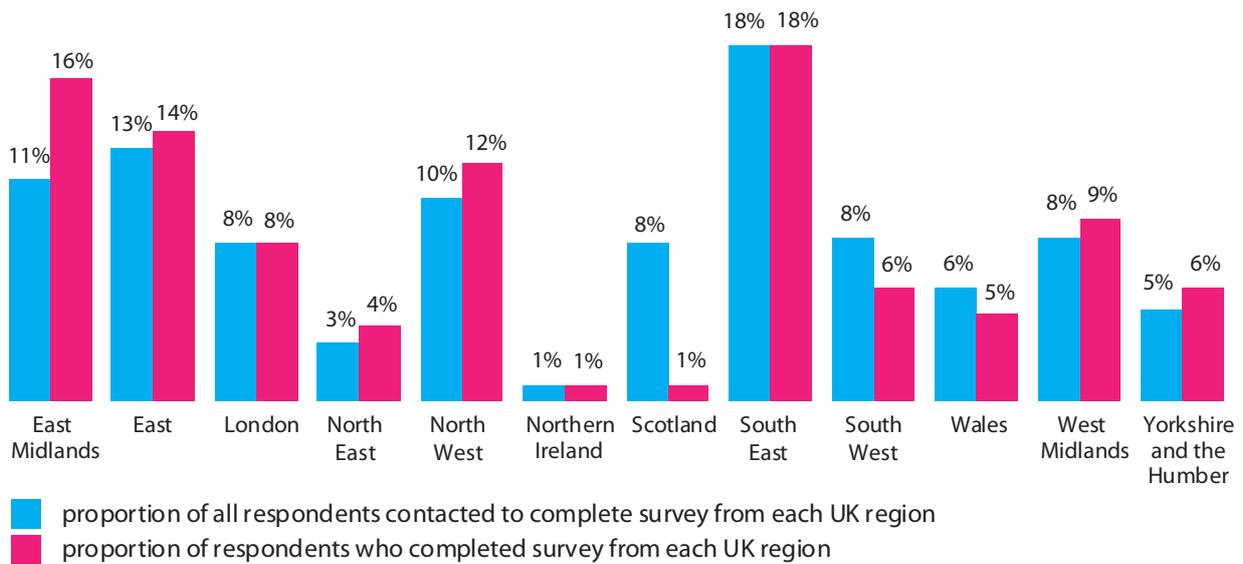
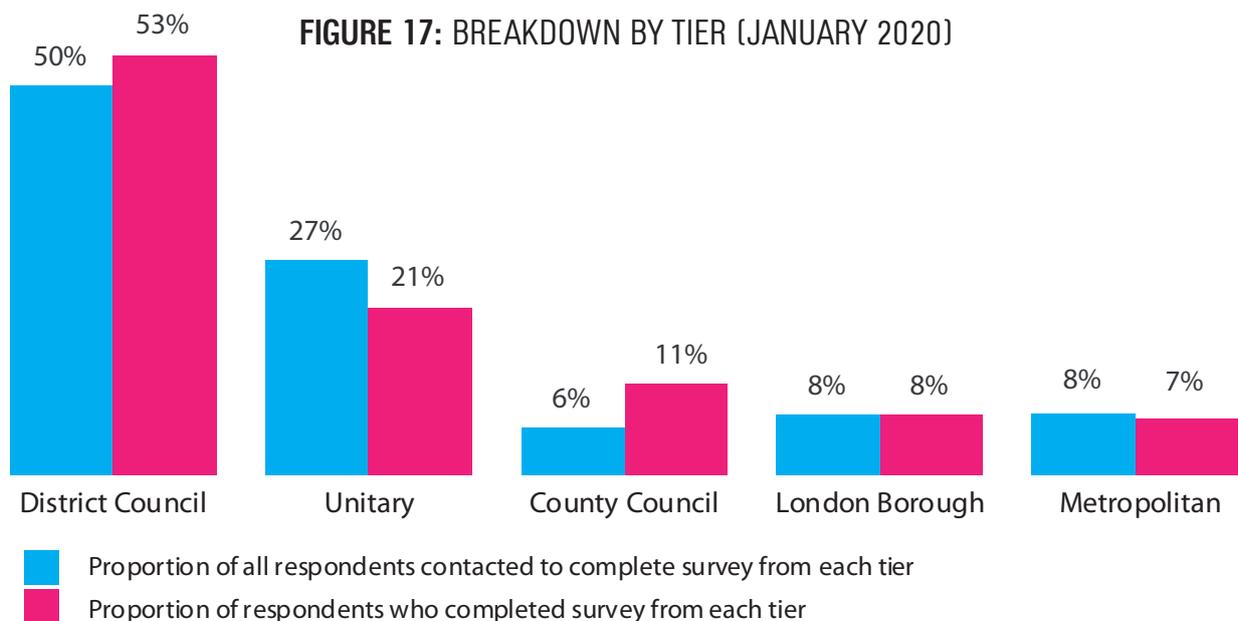


FIGURE 17: BREAKDOWN BY TIER (JANUARY 2020)



For further details about this NLGN Leadership Index report, please contact Senior Policy Researcher, Pawda Tjoa (ptjoa@nlgn.org.uk).