

EDITION #10

PREPARING FOR A SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19

We surveyed nearly 100 council leaders, chief executives and council mayors across the UK. On top of regular questions about the economy and public services, this quarter we included questions about preparing for a second wave of Covid-19.

THE MAIN FINDINGS

- **91% are ‘concerned’ or ‘very concerned’ about the impact of a second wave of Covid-19 cases on their local area.**
- **Almost three quarters (74%) say they aren’t receiving enough support from government to deal with a potential second wave.**
- **Top of their requests for additional support are more funding (85%), quicker data sharing (76%) and better quality data sharing (72%).**
- **Council heads are significantly less sure of their ability to deliver key services. Confidence in delivering adult social care dropped by 30%, and in environmental services and children’s services confidence fell by over 25%.**

This survey marks the second time we’ve asked councils about their response to Covid-19.

Back in late March, our findings highlighted a growing concern about the impact of the pandemic on the local economy, but surprising optimism about capacity to deliver key services.

This timing was key – the first survey was conducted at a time when local government had been promised full support by central government to do “whatever it takes” to respond to the crisis locally.

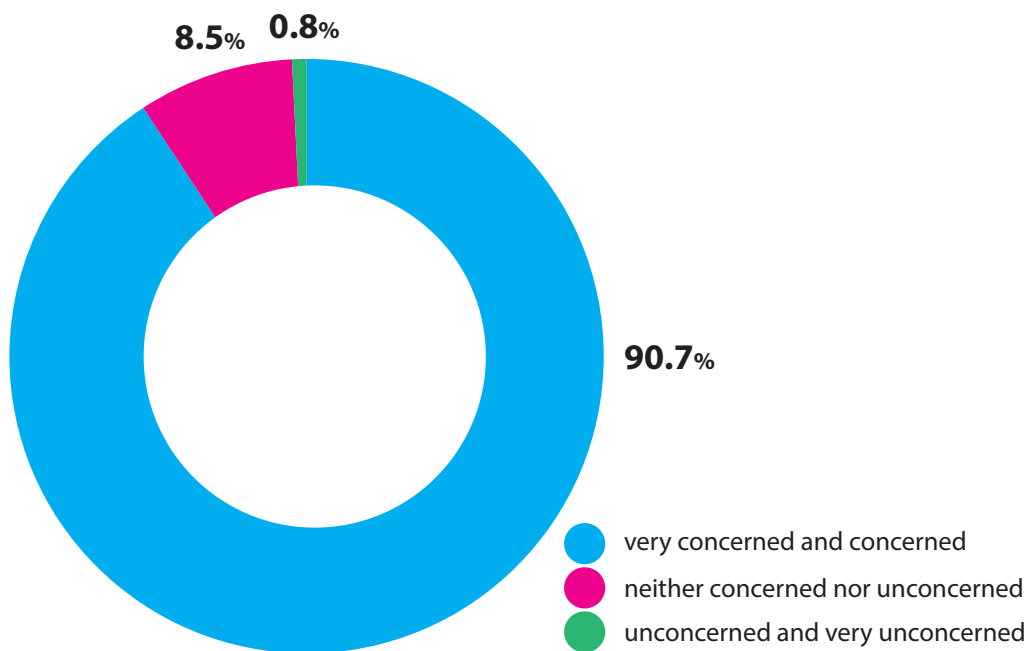
Since then, the government has rowed back on this promise, and recent analysis reveals that the total emergency funding that have been allocated to councils since the start of the crisis only covers about [80 per cent](#) of councils’ reported cost.

In this tenth instalment of the Leadership Index, as councils turn their attention to recovery from Covid-19, our survey asked local government leadership how they are preparing for the potential resurgence of new cases in their local areas. The results from this quarter's survey reveal a bleak picture of declining confidence level in both the local economy and councils' capacity to deliver key services. It also sets out crucial steps that central government should take to help recover this confidence and help councils take crucial action against COVID-19.

Together, the results over the last two quarters send a clear and consistent message to central government to provide adequate funding and support to local government to help tackle the Covid-19 pandemic on their doorsteps.

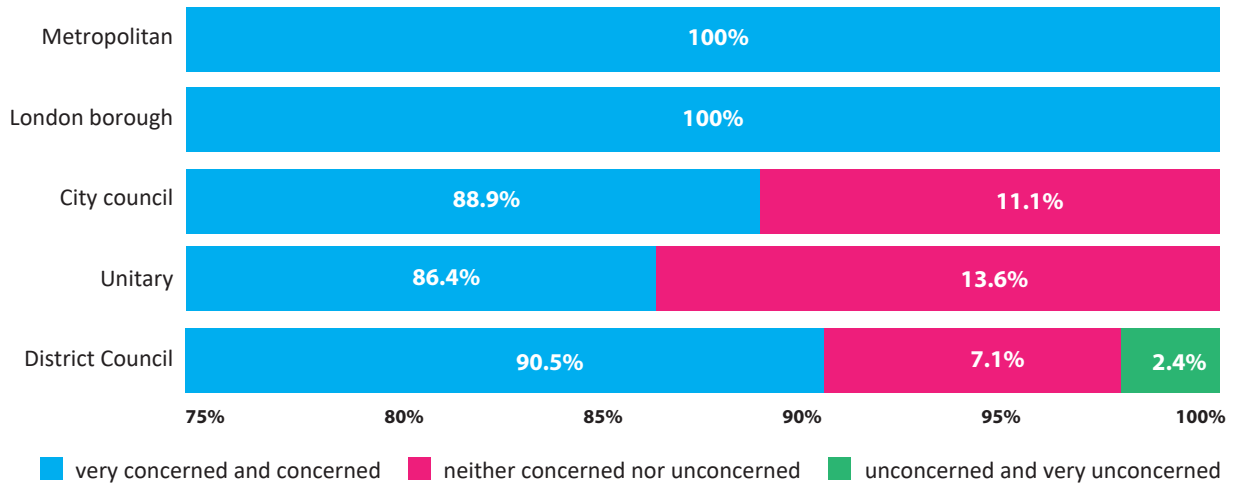
SPECIAL TOPIC: PREPARING FOR THE SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19

COUNCILS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF A POTENTIAL SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19 CASES ON THEIR LOCAL AREA



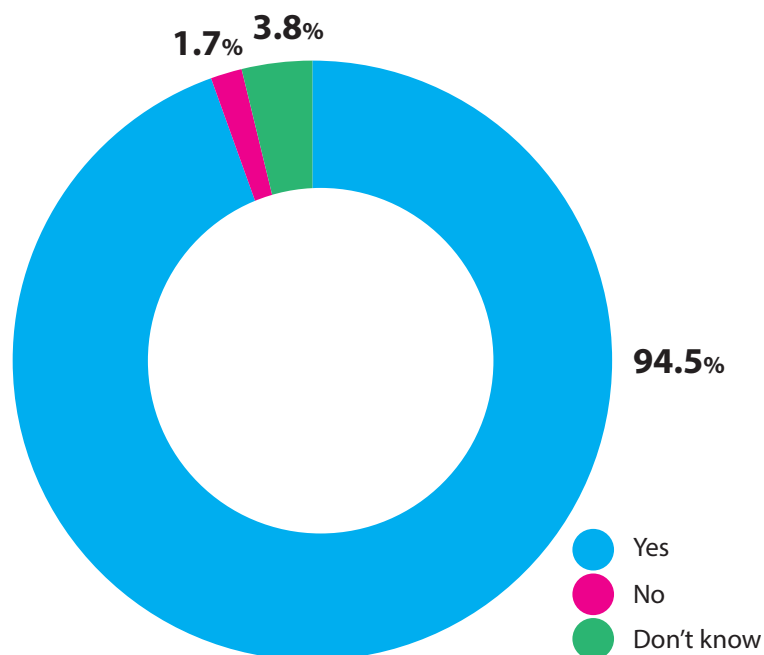
A significant majority of respondents (90.7 per cent) say that they are concerned about the impact of a potential second wave of COVID-19 on their local area. Less than one per cent say that they are not concerned.

LONDON AND METROPOLITAN BOROUGHES ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF A POTENTIAL SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19 CASES



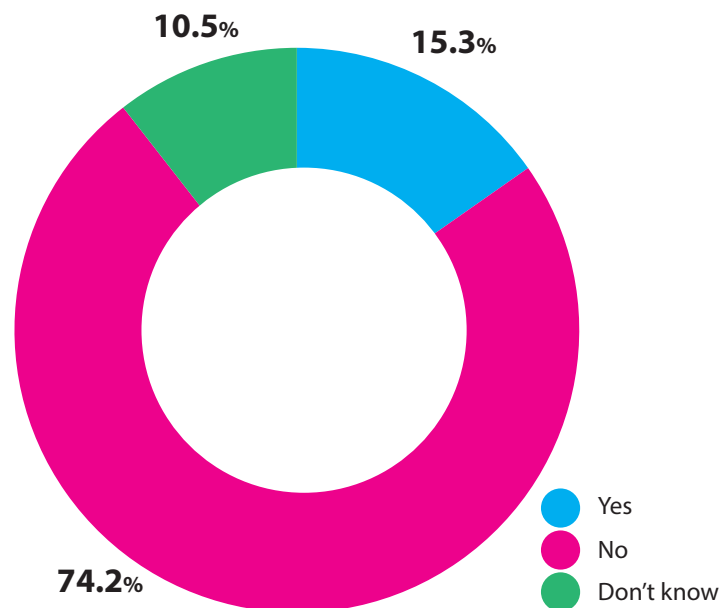
Respondents from London and Metropolitan boroughs appear to be most worried, with 100 per cent saying they are 'concerned' or 'very concerned'. This contrasts with respondents from District Councils; 90 per cent say that they're 'concerned' or 'very concerned', and 2 per cent say that they are 'unconcerned' or 'very unconcerned'.

A MAJORITY OF COUNCILS ARE PUTTING IN PLACE PLANS TO DEAL WITH A POTENTIAL SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19 CASES



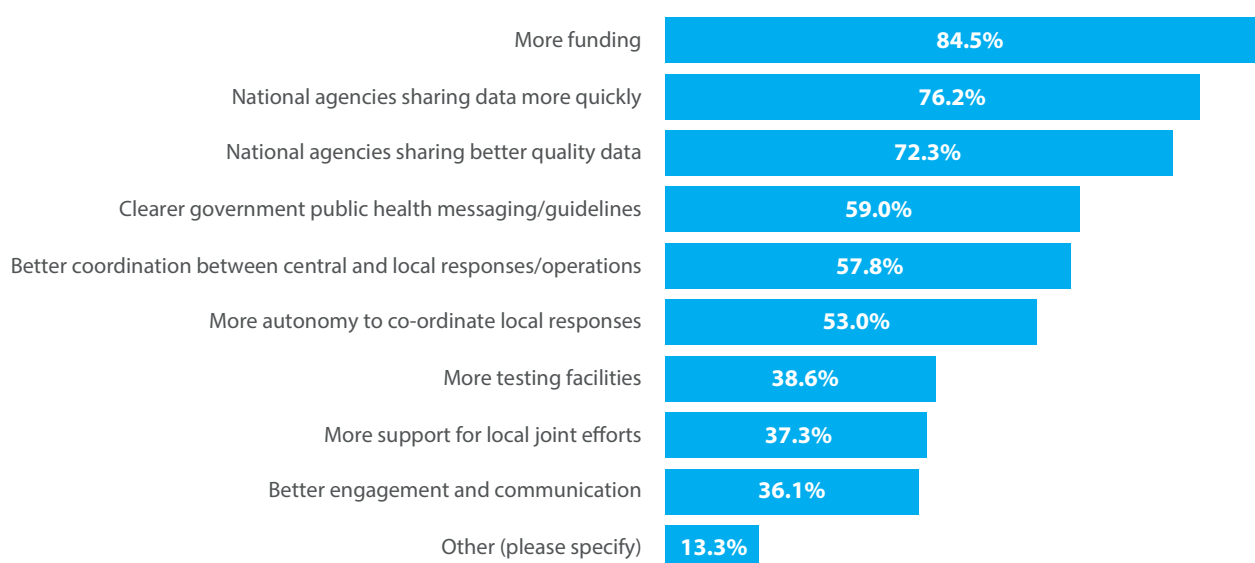
94.5 per cent of respondents say that their council is putting in place plans to deal with a potential second wave of Covid-19 cases in their area. Only 1.7 per cent say that they are not doing so.

BUT ALMOST THREE QUARTERS SAY THEY ARE NOT GETTING ENOUGH SUPPORT FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT



Almost three quarters of respondents say that their council is not getting enough support from central government to help them deal with a potential second wave of Covid-19 cases. Only 15.3 per cent say that they are receiving enough support from central government.

COUNCILS NEED MORE FUNDING AND BETTER DATA SHARING FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT



According to council leaderships, the three priority forms of support they need from central government to help them better prepare for a potential second wave of Covid-19 cases are:

- More funding (84.5 per cent)
- National agencies sharing data more quickly (76.2 per cent)
- National agencies sharing better quality data (72.3 per cent)

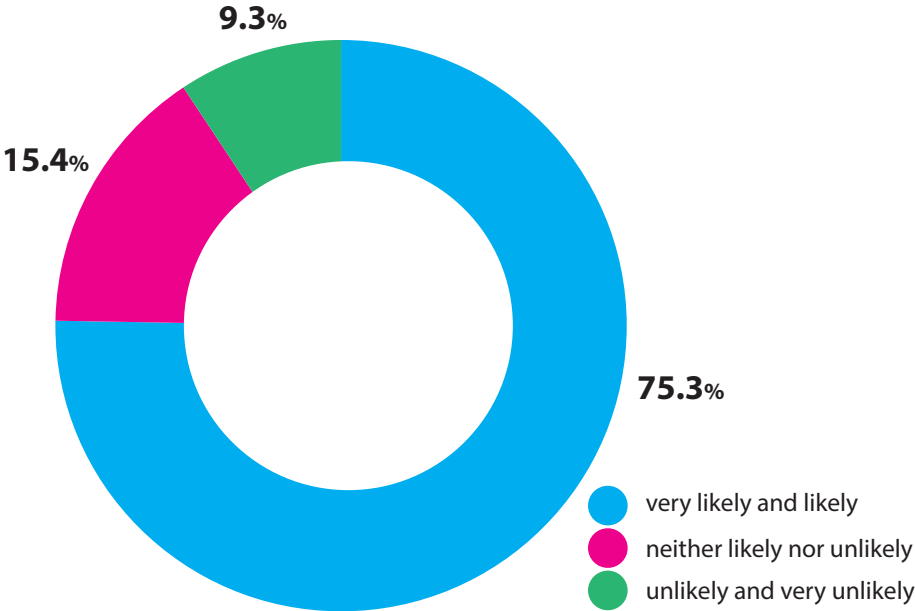
Respondents called for *“clarity on [new] legal powers to act”* and *“greater delegation to get on with it”*.

In addition, concerns were raised about the government's timings of communication:

“When government are issuing guidance they [need to] do so engaging with local authorities before announcing at press briefings.”

“We can't keep learning about things we're supposed to be doing/not doing via national press releases. They can't keep telling people that things are going to happen and then providing us with guidelines which are undeliverable.”

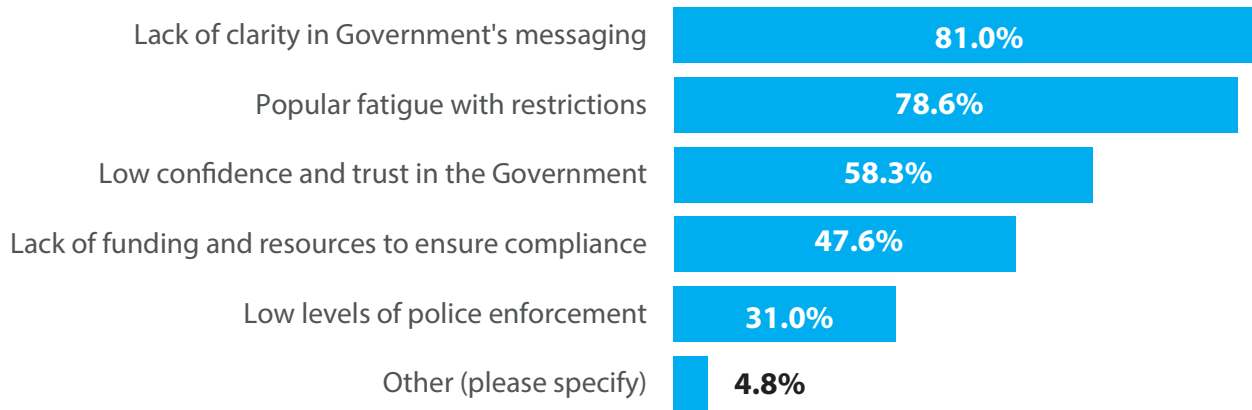
OVER THREE QUARTERS FEEL THAT PEOPLE IN THEIR AREA ARE LIKELY TO COMPLY WITH NEW GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES



Over three quarters of respondents (75.3 per cent) feel that people in their area are likely to comply with new government guidelines/restrictions in response to a potential second wave of Covid-19 cases, while less than 10 per cent feel that this is unlikely.

BUT LACK OF CLARITY IN GOVERNMENT'S MESSAGING AND POPULAR FATIGUE COULD HARM COMPLIANCE

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING, IF ANY, MAY REDUCE PEOPLE'S COMPLIANCE TO NEW GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS IN YOUR AREA?



According to council chiefs, the top three key factors influencing people's compliance to new government regulations are:

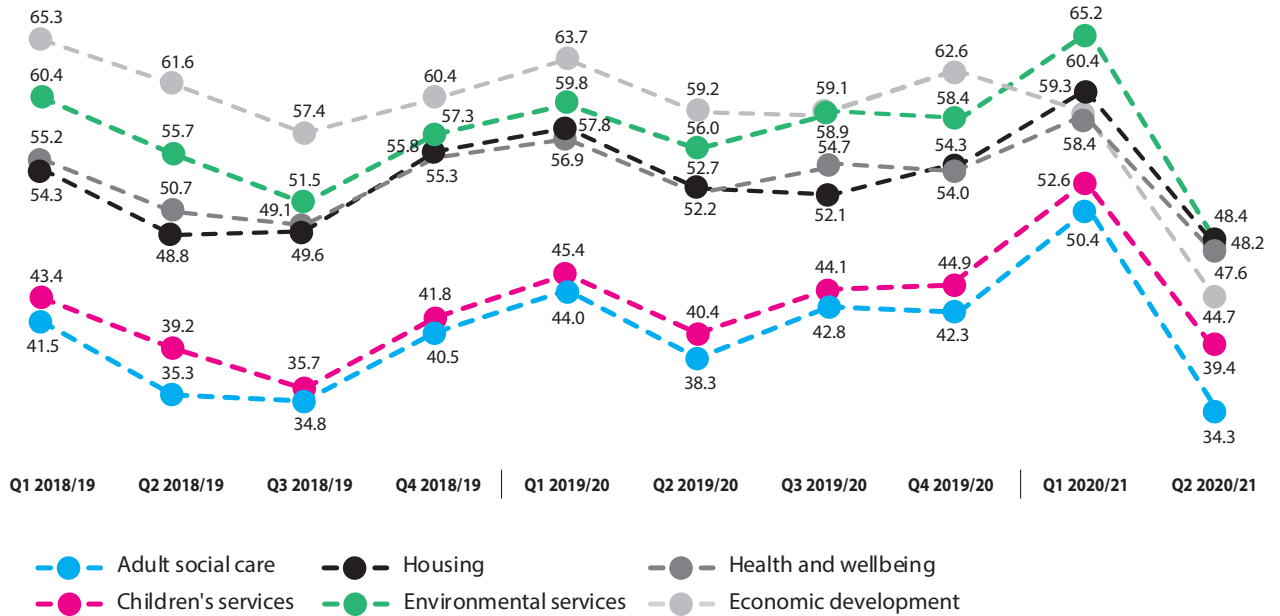
- Lack of clarity in Government's messaging (81 per cent)
- Popular fatigue with restrictions (78.6 per cent)
- Low confidence and trust in the Government (58.3 per cent)

Several respondents referred to high-profile flaunting of previous regulations as a key factor reducing compliance. One respondent wrote:

“Compliance was good until the Cummings affair. Since then the compliant are those in fear and many others can't see why they should obey rules that don't apply to elites.”

CONFIDENCE LEVEL IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CONFIDENCE LEVEL ACROSS ALL KEY SERVICES HAS PLUMMETED

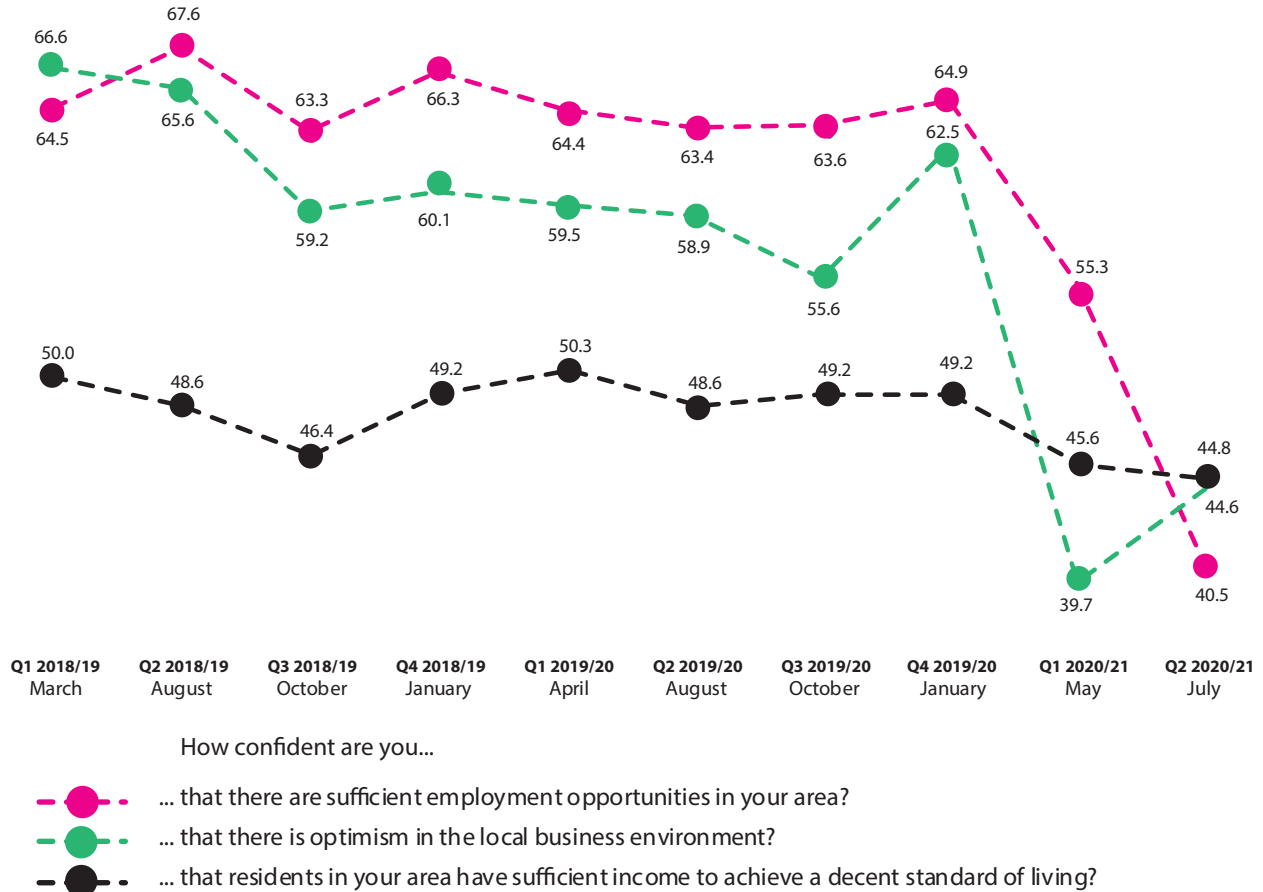


Local government’s confidence in having the powers and resources to deliver services has dropped across all services this quarter. This drop can be seen most dramatically in adult social care, falling by over 30 per cent, followed by in environmental services and children’s social care, both falling by over 25 per cent, since the last quarter.

Confidence levels has also dropped across housing, economic development and health and wellbeing by between 19 and 25 per cent, since the last quarter.

Councils’ confidence in having the powers and resources to deliver services had increased across most services last quarter, following the government’s pledge of full support to local government to respond to Covid-19 locally. However, since conducting last quarter’s survey, the government has backtracked on this pledge and is instead only covering about 80 per cent of the total costs to councils.

CONFIDENCE IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY CONTINUES TO DECLINE



Confidence level in the local economy continues its decline across a range of indicators. Optimism in the local economy was particularly hard-hit, falling by 36.4 per cent.

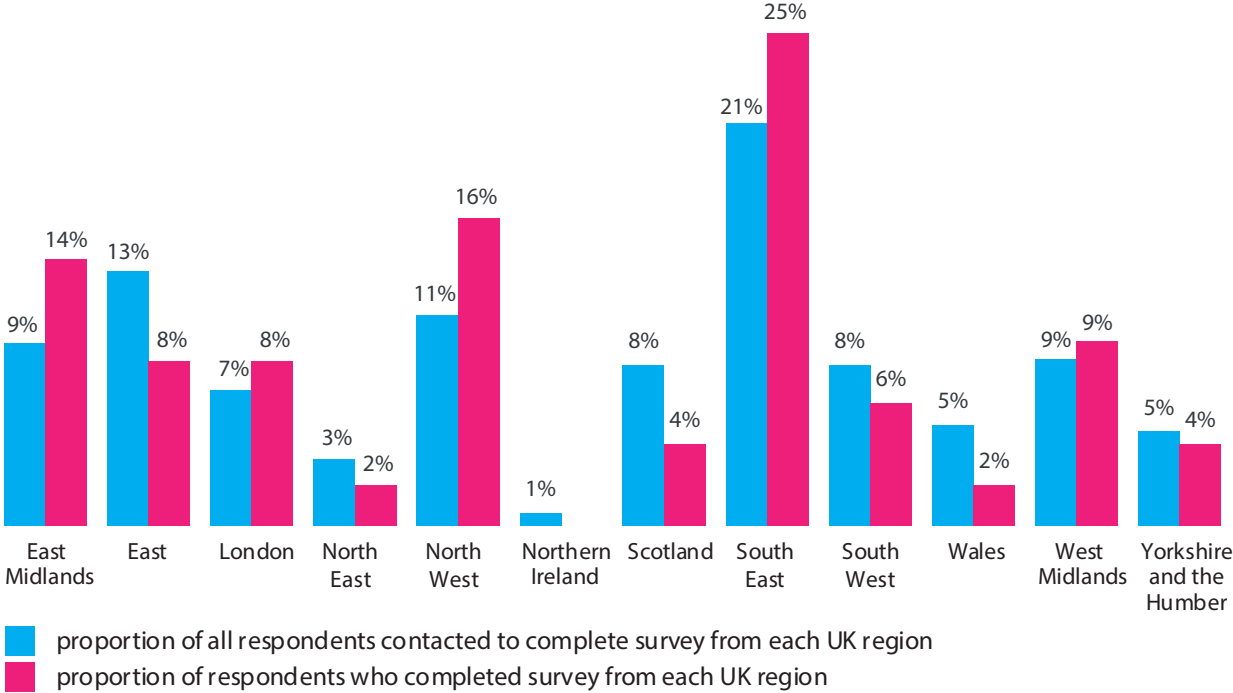
As shops and businesses reopen, optimism in the local business environment has increased by 12 per cent since last quarter, rising from 39.7 to 44.6.

However, council leaderships remain pessimistic about job prospects in the local area, with 27 per cent less confident that there are sufficient employment opportunities compared to the last quarter. This has dropped from 55.3 to 40.5, on a scale of 0-100.

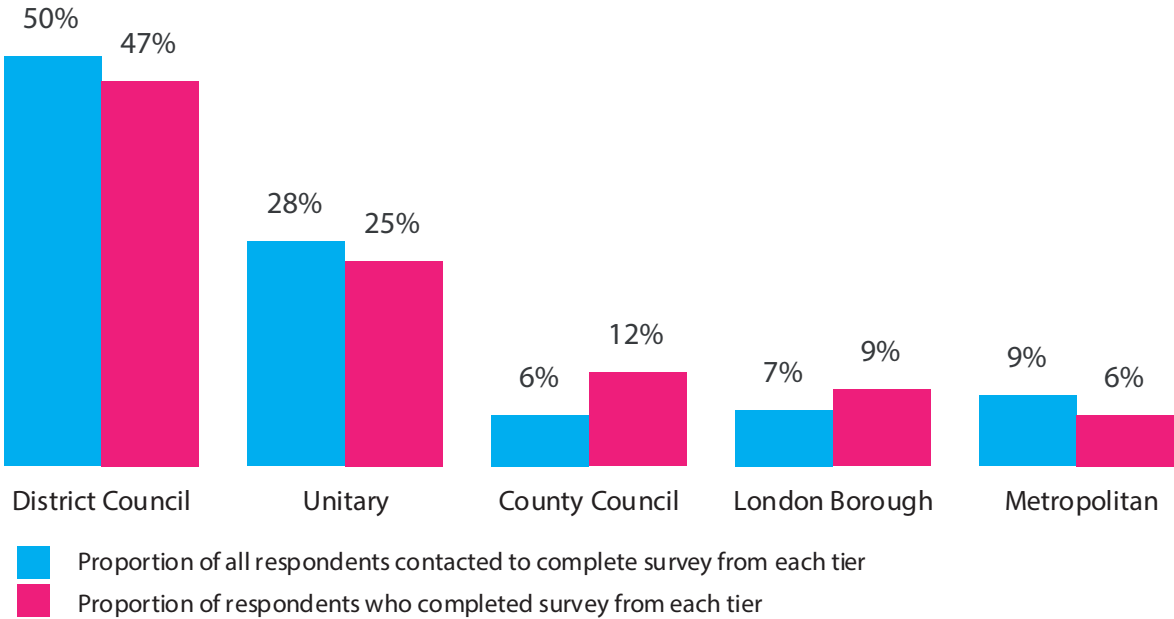
ABOUT THE SURVEY

The NLGN Leadership Index survey was sent to 621 leaders, chief executives and council mayors across all UK regions. It was open from 9-16 July 2020. This survey received a total of 95 responses, which equates to a 15.3 per cent response rate. Survey responses were received from all UK regions except Northern Ireland.

BREAKDOWN BY UK REGION (JULY 2020)



BREAKDOWN BY TIER (JULY 2020)



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