

A photograph of a fountain in front of a stone building. The fountain has a central column with water spraying upwards and several smaller jets at the base. The water is illuminated, creating a bright spray. The background is a dark stone wall.

Councillors Boundary Survey

Full results summary

Data, Intelligence & Insight Team – July 2021



Response rate: 67%

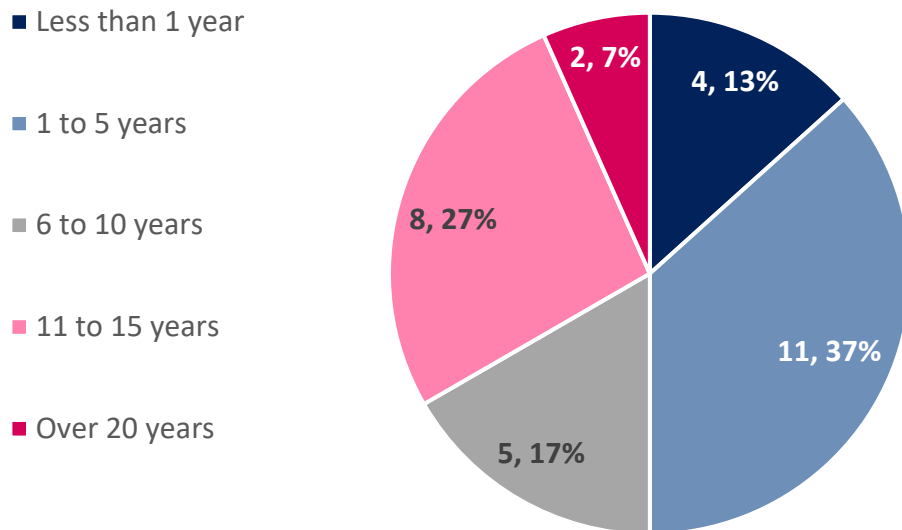
- The survey was live from 28 June 2021 to 12 July 2021.
- Initial questions were asked about the length of time the respondent had been a councillor, if they had been appointed to any external bodies or organisations, and if they hold any other positions.
- Subsequent questions concerned the length of time spent on council duties, such as: what aspect of the job takes the most time and has this changed over the past 12 months?
- There were a total of 32 respondents out of 48 councillors, which is a response rate of 67%.
- Considering the number of responses is important when interpreting findings, particularly when numbers are small. To aid interpretation, counts have been provided alongside percentages.



- Key findings:**
- Half of respondents have been a councillor for under 5 years
 - Over a quarter have been a councillor for 11-15 years
 - Almost half of respondents do not hold any additional positions

Q1 How long have you been a councillor at Southampton City Council?

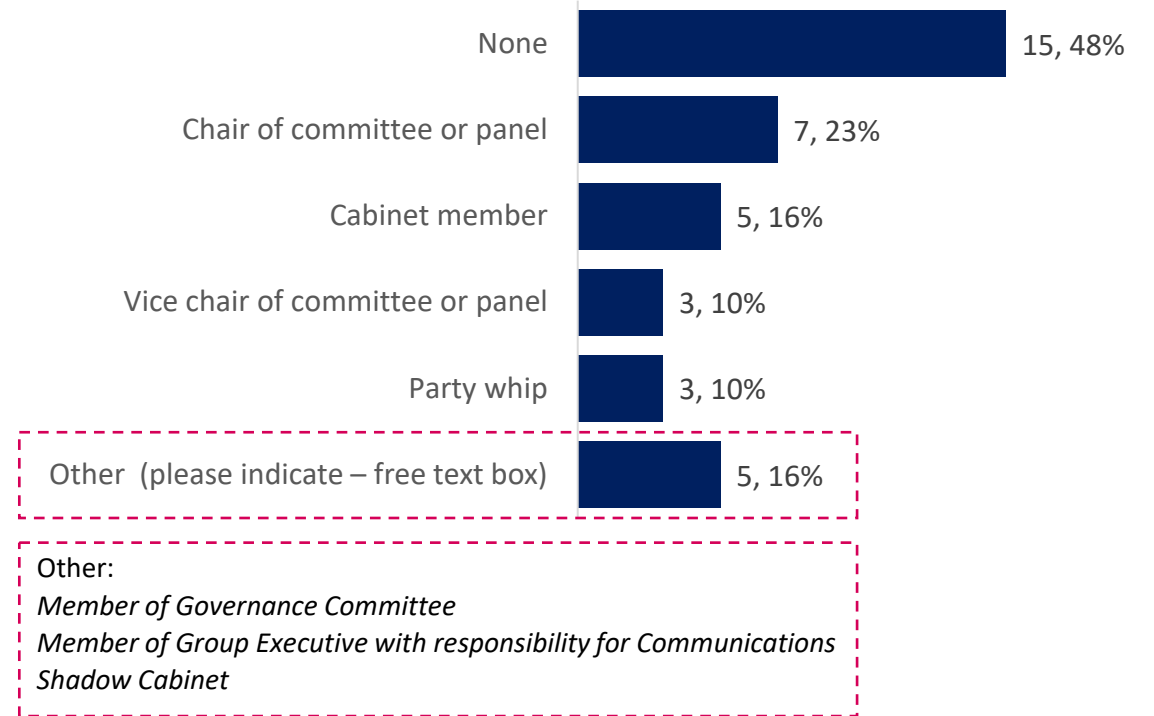
Number of respondents, proportion of respondents (%)



Base: 30

Q2 In addition to your role as ward councillor, do you hold any other positions?

Number of respondents, proportion of respondents (%)



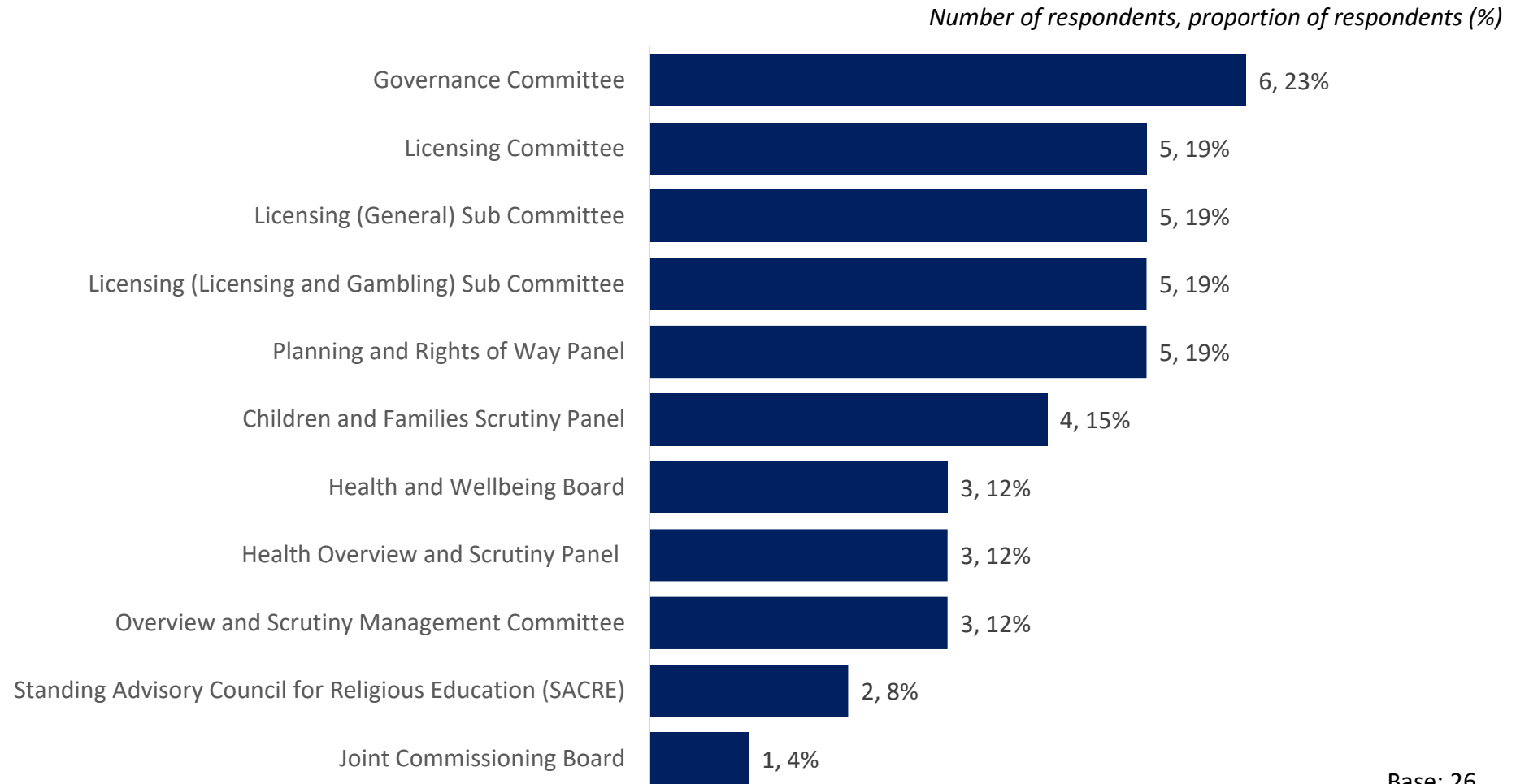
Base: 31



Other positions held

- Key findings:**
- 26 (81%) respondents reported being on a committee, board or panel other than Full Council.
 - Respondents are on a range of committees, boards and panels, particularly the governance committee

Q3 If you a member of any committees, boards or panels other than Full Council, please indicate which ones – tick all that apply

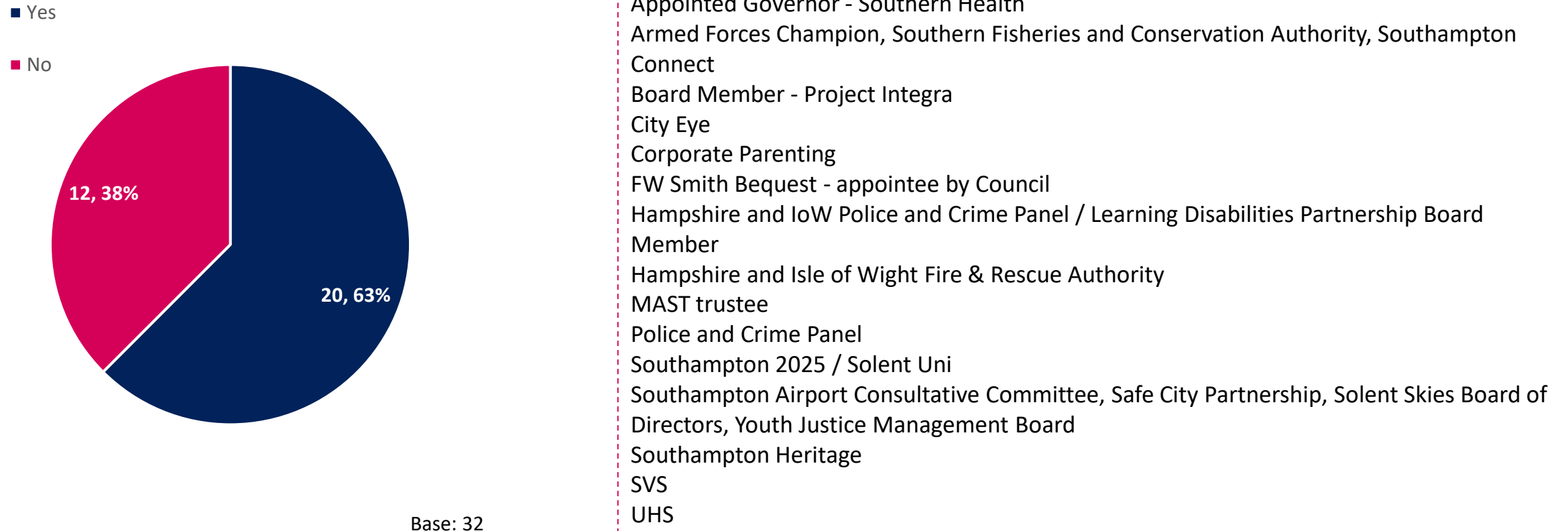




- Key findings:**
- Over half of respondents have been appointed to outside bodies
 - Respondents have been appointed as school governors, for example

Q4 and Q5 Have you been appointed to any outside bodies and if so which ones?

Number of respondents, proportion of respondents (%)



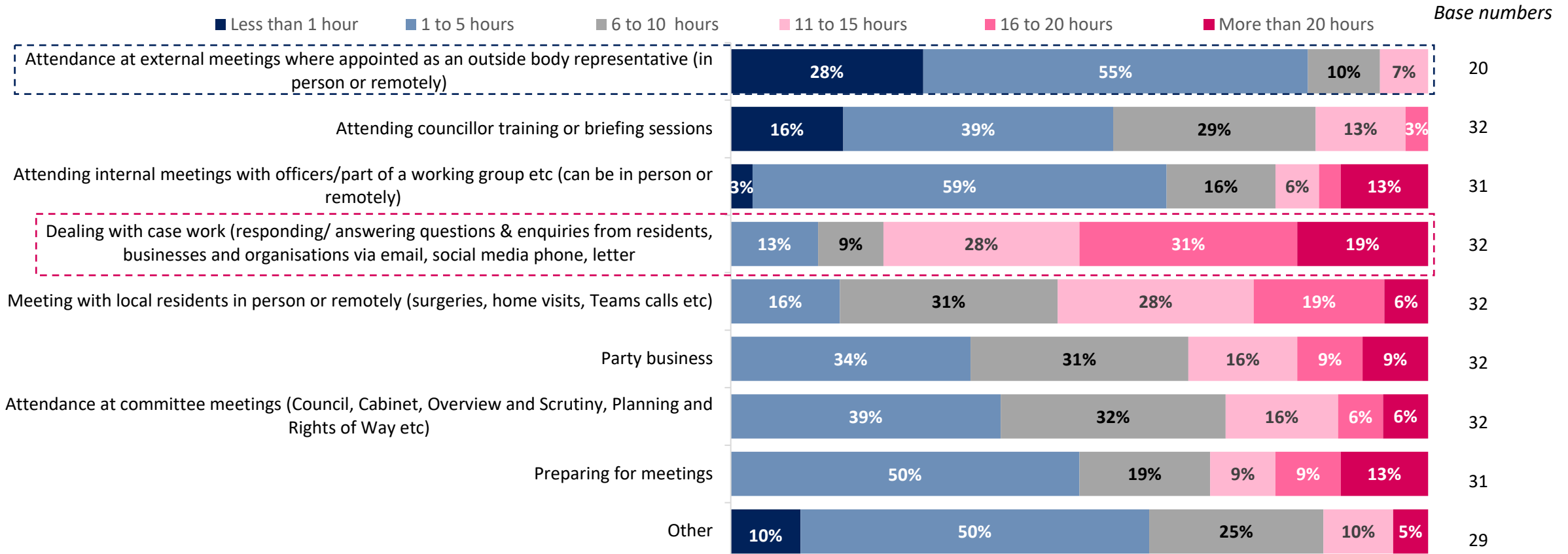


Time spent on specific activities

Key findings:

- Respondents rated the most time-consuming activity (per month) as **dealing with case work**, with half reporting that they spend over 16 hours a month on the activity
- Respondents spend the least time attending external meetings

Q6 On average, how much time do you spend each month on the following activities in your role as councillor?

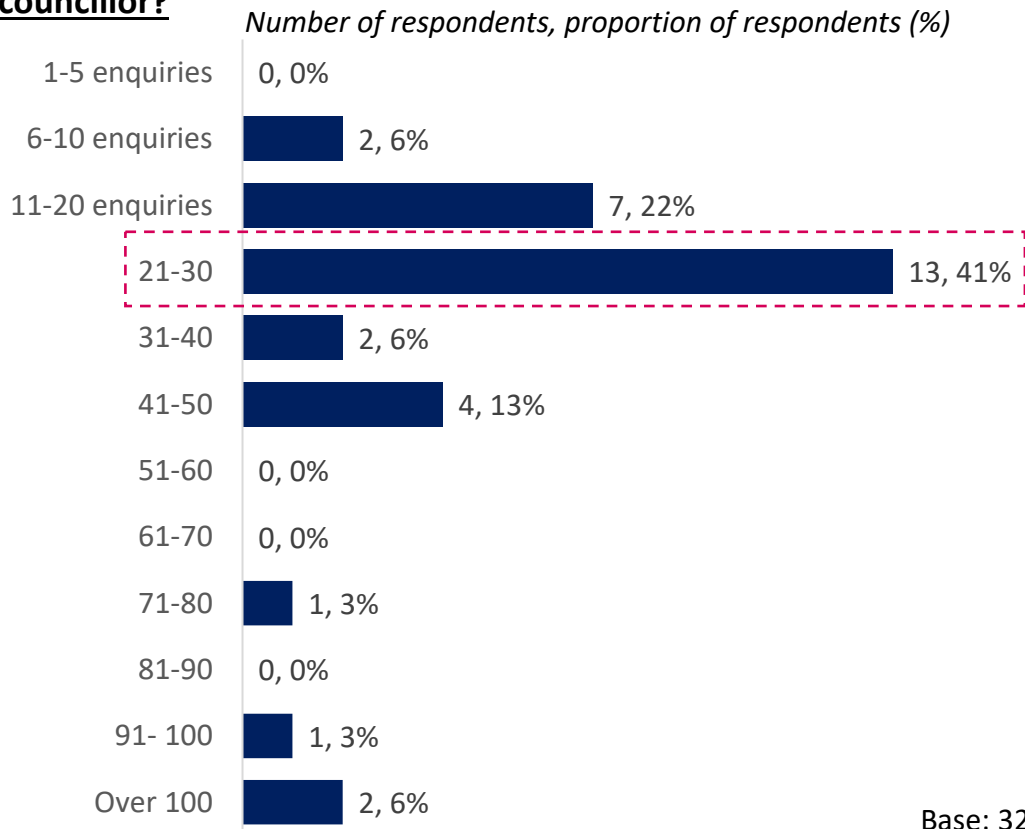




Key findings:

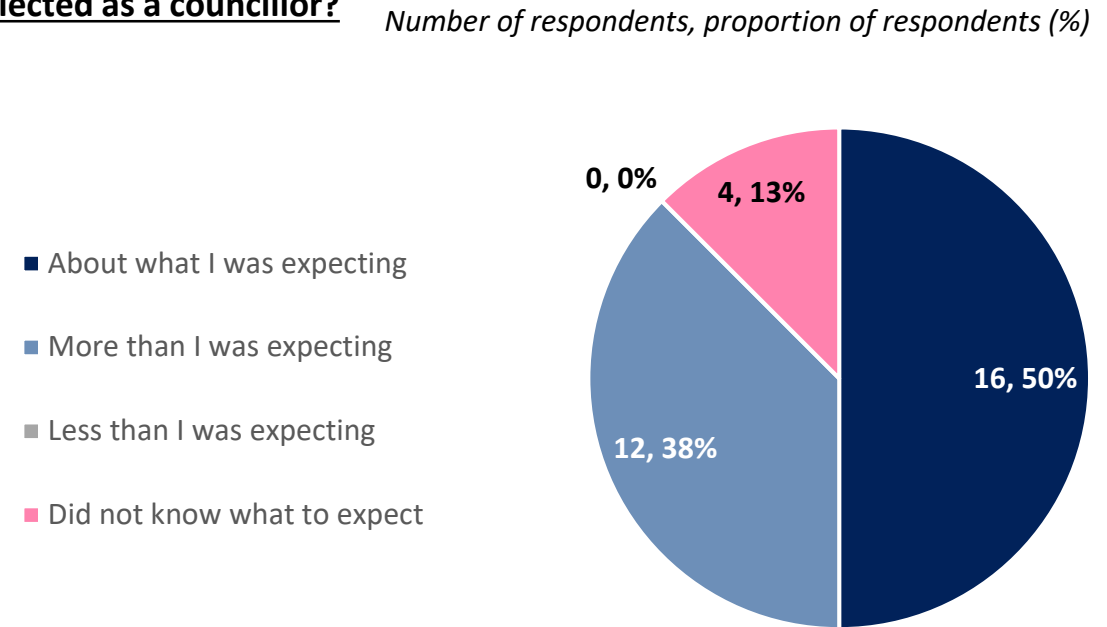
- The highest proportion of respondents deal with **between 21 and 30 casework enquiries** each month (41%)
- Half of respondents reported that they spend about the amount of time they expected on council business
- Over a third report spending **more** time than expected on council business and no respondents reported taking less time than expected.

Q7 On average, how many casework enquiries do you deal with each month as a councillor?



Base: 32

Q9 Is your time spent on council business what you expected when you were elected as a councillor?

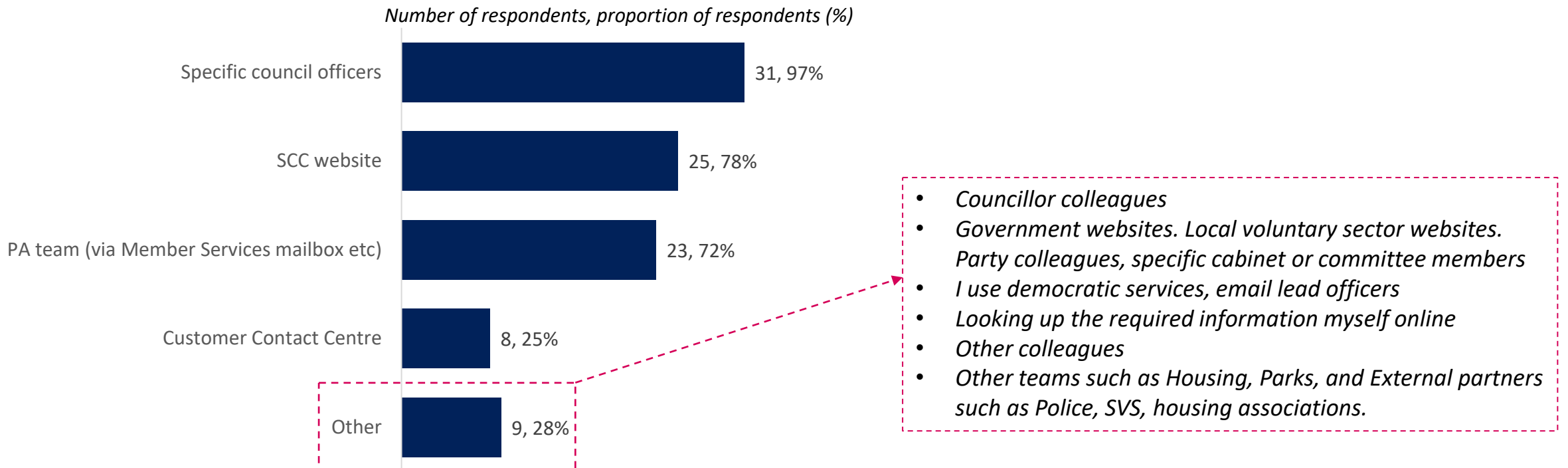


Base: 32



- Key findings:**
- Nearly all respondents report asking specific council officers for support with responding to case work. Large proportions also use the SCC website or the PA team.
 - A quarter use the customer contact centre, and other sources reported include government websites and other councillors

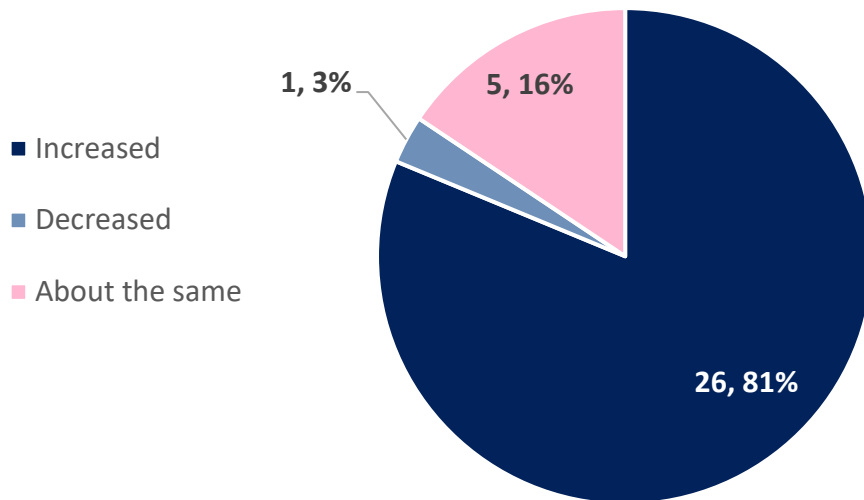
Q8 What support do you use/ ask for in helping you respond to your casework? *Select all that apply*





- Key findings:**
- A large majority of respondents report that the amount of time they spend on council business has increased
 - A variety of reasons were discussed, including that as they have become more well known as councillors, their contact with residents has increased

Q10 Has the time you spend on council business changed throughout your time as a councillor? *Number of respondents, proportion of respondents (%)*



Base: 32

Q11 What do you think is the reason? *(free text question – key themes)*

General comments

- *emails have increased along with phone calls*
- *Increase in the number of people both residents and other contacting me*
- *Increased contacts, responsibilities, opportunity to influence policy etc*
- *Less officers generally due to significant cuts in funding, so less people to do the work. Have to chase quite often to get answers, complex questions are rarely answered initially. Greater responsibilities at local govt level. Greater complexity*
- *my role has changed and also there are less officers around so councillors are picking up more and expected to handle more in the current circumstances*
- *Use of IT, everyone is accessible 24/7 or people think they are. Social Media complaints have increased and no matter how much you say report on line etc people see SM as an instant way to make contact. Use of Wats app makes it hard to switch off both for Officers and Members.*

Base: 27

Comments continued on next slide



Q11 What do you think is the reason? (free text question – key themes) CONTINUED

Getting to know residents / my profile has risen

- *my case work has gradually increased as my profile has risen.*
- *as I get to know more residents I get more queries and case work*
- *As I have become more well known in the ward and more publicity I get more case work. I have learned also how best to answer queries from residents*
- *Become more established as a trusted voice in the local community - residents more likely to approach. Additional responsibilities given*
- *Effective councillor, word of mouth*
- *I have become more active and known to my community and the recent change in political control*
- *I think the pandemic has increased casework, also I think more groups of people are needing help than when I started, I get much more casework now than when I first started. Also people are more likely to get in touch with you on social media now*
- *as residents get to know me I would expect my engagement to increase.*
- *increased name/ face recognition by local residents linked to rising community expectations and deteriorating experiences/ satisfaction with public services due to austerity*
- *People get to know you and gain confidence your ability and reliability. Plus satisfaction in responses. Get invited to more local resident meetings for various reasons*
- *residents getting to know I am here to help*
- *Taken on more responsibility as I became more experienced. This year moving into Opposition there is less officer support on communications. More residents are now contacting me direct, and I spend more time meeting residents. Follow up or second approaches from constituents I have already helped once.*

Work increased due to the pandemic

- *Over the past 16 months during the pandemic, the volume of emails both internal to council business and also from constituents and partners has increased a lot, as there are fewer face to face meetings, and fewer informal conversations in the corridor, or at events, or when arriving at/leaving meetings and events.*
- *I think the pandemic has increased casework, also I think more groups of people are needing help than when I started, I get much more casework now than when I first started.*

Other roles such as Cabinet member

- *Being a Cabinet Member*
- *I was on Cabinet, so some duties increased a lot.*
- *I used to be a cabinet member, which was a full-time role.*
- *I've joined the Planning Panel, which requires a lot of reading and meeting time and constituents have started to use email more.*
- *More responsibilities - Chair of Committee, external appointments etc.*
- *Cabinet: preparation for meetings, internal meetings, regional boards, briefings, visiting partners, etc increased significantly. Generally, email traffic is much more than when I began.*



Q12 What aspect of council business has increased/ decreased the most? *This was a free text question, responses have been provided below. Please note that in some places, a large comment may have been split as it covered different categories.*

Casework increase

- Case work
- case work - particularly with regards to issues with crime, private sector housing (HMOs), parking, highways and planning applications
- case work, community meetings, and responding to emails
- Casework has increased.
- Casework, community meetings and panel meetings/briefings with officers
- Casework, housing issues, planning, crime/ASB
- Engagement and case work from residents
- everything. mainly casework
- Casework has increased the most as changes are made by the new administration and people ask me to raise their concerns

General increase

- Complaints Expectations Party activity
- Increase in the number of briefing
- Increased prep for meetings.
- issues regarding housing, education, anti social behaviour, all these have been on the increase for a number of years.
- now chair of licensing causing an increase
- Preparation for meetings to get the most out of them Also to be more effective
- Problems with services has increased
- resident inquiries increasing

Changes in Southampton

- changes in more houses being built, more families needing more social housing, increase in children needing assessments for challenging behaviour, more vulnerable people in my ward, society changes, increase in anti social behaviour, less police about.
- Complexity of services and less officers
- More residents in the ward

General decrease

- less committee or panel work
- Problems with planning decreased due to introduction and use of Local Development Plan for Ward.
- Time preparing for council meetings has decreased as I've become more familiar with SCC processes etc
- training sessions decrease

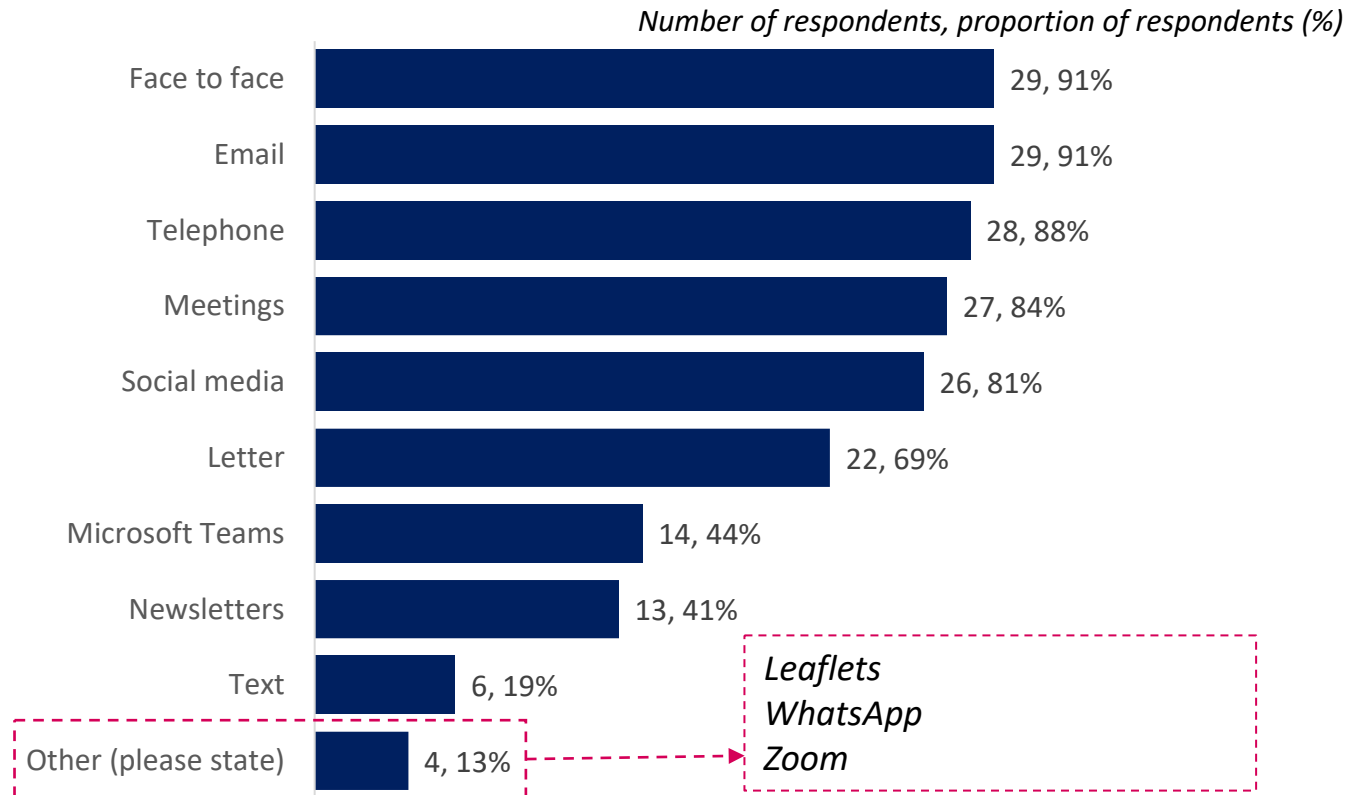
Other

- Customer services
- Green Waste, Highways
- Highway and waste enquiries along with planning
- Going into Opposition and having the numbers of committee places reduced by the new administration has meant that I was only able to sit on one Council committee instead of two or three. Also nomination to outside bodies is no longer an option.
- There is clearly a large gap between customer facing activities and the needs of residents, which leads to councillors being a part of front line communication and case management. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however good councillors can and do carry a fair amount of the load at very little expense to the city.
- We receive fewer letters and much more social media approaches. About half of my casework arrives via Facebook and Nextdoor.



- Key findings:**
- Most respondents regularly use a variety of methods to communicate with residents / businesses / organisations in their ward
 - Nearly all respondents use face to face or email communication

Q13 What methods of communication do you regularly use when communicating with residents/ businesses/ organisations in your ward? Select all that apply



Base: 32

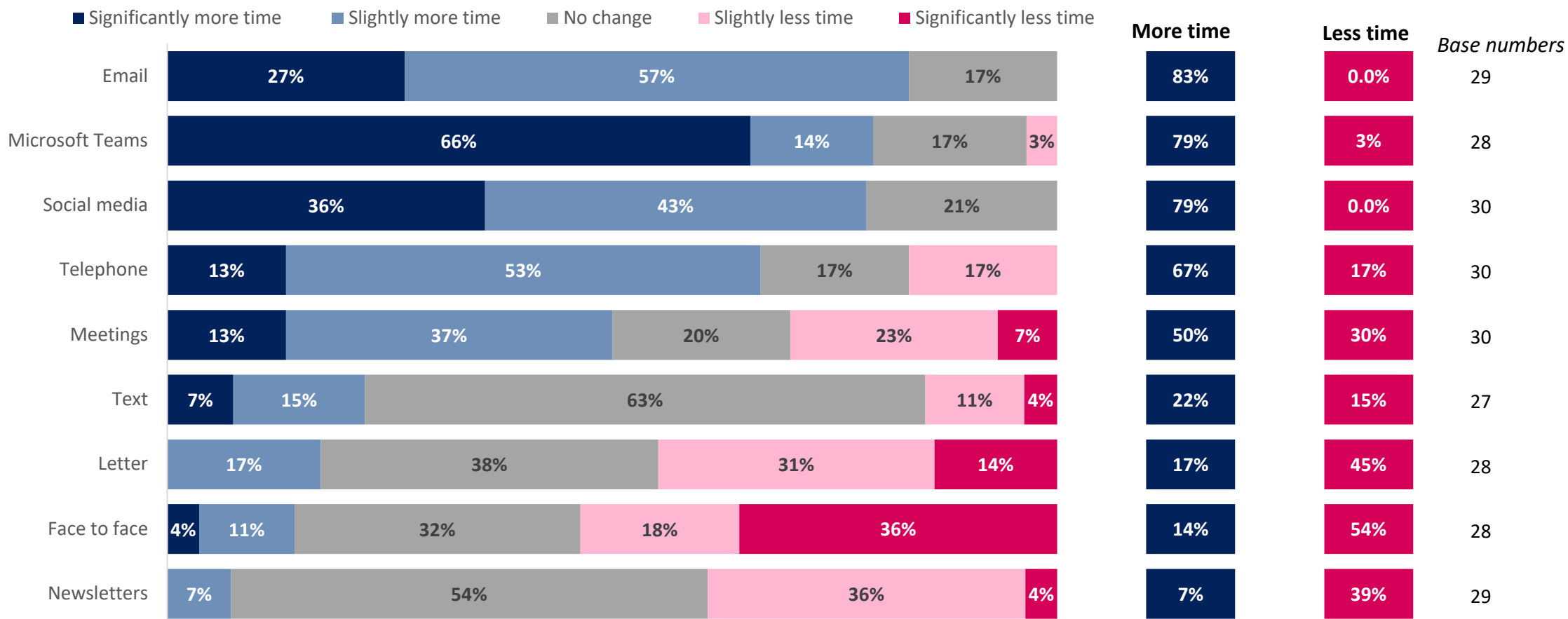


Change in communication methods

Key findings:

- Over three quarters of respondents report spending more time using **email** and **Microsoft Teams** to communicate in the last 12 months
- Respondents generally reported spending significantly less time face to face

Q14 Have you noticed any significant change in the amount of time you spend communicating via each of these methods in the last 12 months?

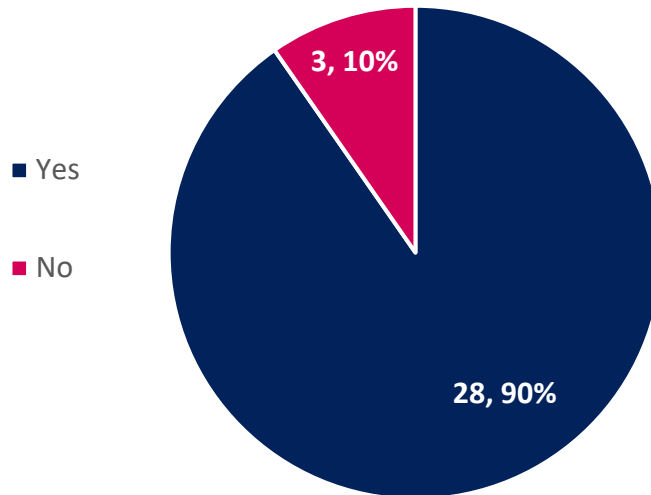




- Key findings:**
- Nearly all respondents agree that they are using the right balance of communication methods to communicate with people in their wards.
 - According to free text comments, this is often due to a range of communications methods being utilised

Q15 Do you feel you are using the right balance of communication methods to communicate effectively with people in your ward?

Number of respondents, proportion of respondents (%)



Base: 31

Q16 Please explain why (free text question)

Comments from respondents who said 'yes' to the previous question:

- *communicating through messaging apps and emails keeping trail of all work. Pus this saves a lot of time. before home visits took up a lot more time.*
- *Covid has stopped a large amount of meetings with residents*
- *Different cohorts use different communication methods*
- *Everyone has a route to access me and I'm proactive on them all*
- *I cover a lot of ways to enable resident to contact me*
- *I feel my residents are aware of what is going on and can contact me if they have any issues. Of course, I would like to be able to do more but time restraints are always an issue.*
- *it will be interesting to how this changes as the Covid lockdown reduces*
- *I use a range of methods to suit the audience*
- *increase in social media, for case work, is a new medium for me and has increased in the past year, it covers more ground than we could ever do door knocking, but that is an ongoing year round event.*
- *It's not for me to decide how I should communicate with residents - it's what suits them best, so you need to be flexible in your communication channels*

Free text comments continue on the following slide



Do you feel you are using the right balance of communication methods to communicate effectively with people in your ward?

Q16 Please explain why (free text question)

- *Mix of both social media, emails, phones and face to face contact allows residents to speak to me at their own time around their own work and lives etc*
- *Most people prefer face to face and going out to talk to residents in a systematic way each week, covering the whole ward in a year allows me to find out what issues concern them. Letters where there is a street or neighbourhood with an issue allow me to report back to groups of people. Social media allows interaction. Answering and sending emails allows speedy responses.*
- *will increase methods as required*
- *On balance yes, but could do more if had the time*
- *Residents and groups do get back to saying they are pleased by the way I have contacted them or they have contacted me, though not always happy with the results.*
- *There is a need to present information in varying formats and within/across varying geographic boundaries and demographic groups, hence the need for Newsletters, Leaflets, Social Media, Ward Surgeries etc. etc.*
- *there isn't one right way to communicate. people are different and expect you to cater to their needs. not everyone has access to a computer so expect you to be willing and available to have different ways of working*
- *Use letters to advise on specific local issues, face to face to meet residents and collect casework/hear issues. Could potentially use email more to proactively get news out. Use lots of email in response to approaches.*
- *We have regular meetings with locals with their residents association and personally, although this year it reduces due to Virus. We also use e-mails regularly for most queries*
- *We use a range of methods in our ward, so residents without access to the internet still receive info. from us.*

Comments from respondents who said 'no' to the previous question:

- *I'd prefer more chance to meet people*
- *SM has no off switch. its instant. Peoples expectations have grown in accessibility Spend a lot of time explaining why the council can't..... Lack of feed back on Council reported complaints raises increased issues with Councillors.*
- *There is scope for making more use of social media platforms which reach an increasing number of residents BUT without overlooking more traditional forms of regular communication favoured by mainly older residents*



Key findings:

- Many respondents discussed the need for additional councillors or backbenchers, or showed concern about the possibility of reductions to the number of councillors
- Others had workload concerns, particularly due to wards being increasingly complex, specific about case work and including other roles and responsibilities

Q16 Is there anything else about your experience as a councillor that might be relevant to the council's submission on council size?



Base: 20

A selection of unique suggestions / comments are presented on the following slides



Q16 Is there anything else about your experience as a councillor that might be relevant to the council's submission on council size?

Unique suggestions / comments

Wards are too complex for one size fits all solutions

- *Streets that look like they have a certain number of homes often have ten separate flats to a converted house so it takes a long time to talk to everyone or to deliver newsletters to all homes.*
- *I'm acutely conscious of how centralised council decision-making and scrutiny processes are - to the detriment of local districts where there are many collective issues (crime, health, schools, high streets, traffic, green spaces etc.) that aren't adequately addressed either at the Civic Centre level or through ward councillor contact.*
- *some wards demand more interaction with community than others. especially wards near to the centre.*

3 Councillors per ward works / is right

- *We need three-member wards.*
- *I believe that 3 Councillors per ward is about right, the ward I represent is very dependent on Cllrs involvement. I would not want us to go all outs and believe 3rds is the right thing.*

Concern about reducing number of councillors / need more councillors to cover workload

- *I would struggle to cover casework and ward work as well as my other council commitments if the no. of cllrs was reduced.*
- *I rely very heavily on my two ward colleagues and the three of us are stretched to as far as we can go with regards to casework.*
- *The time committed to council business by good ward councillors can be significant and I would argue that less of us could not achieve more or better outcomes for our residents, in fact quite the reverse. I would suggest that many of us could do even more with better compensation to be able to give more time.*
- *Data has been gathered in recent years on the workload, level of allowance, and number of councillors we have, and it all shows that the cost per councillor and ratio of residents to councillor offers good value for taxpayers' money.*



Q16 Is there anything else about your experience as a councillor that might be relevant to the council's submission on council size?

Concern about potential reduction in people wanting to become a councillor

- *I worry that any changes to ward councillor numbers would disadvantage younger people wanting to join the council in particular.*
- *A reduction in the number of Cllrs would lead to a higher burden of work being place on those remaining. This may prevent good people from putting themselves forward*

The problem is about coming under Romsey

- *Council size not the problem - Problem is we come under Romsey which is not within Southampton which is our local authority*
- *No real comment on council size, but our problem is we are a Southampton City ward coming under Romsey Rural for our MP. This causes problems as a Group as we have to use Romsey as our HQ and support which sometimes conflicts with City aspirations and campaigning*

Population of ward / city is increasing, need more resource to cover

- *As more houses are converted and new blocks of flats get permission to be constructed, and with permitted development laws allowing empty shops to be converted to small dwellings, the number of people living in each ward has increased dramatically. And the people living in small, cramped and inappropriate homes are more likely to need help and support.*
- *I represent a ward with large resident growth which will continue to grow and the amount of casework and issues to respond to has increased in volume and complexity.*
- *When the city's population has already risen hugely since the last review 20 years ago, as well as when we are projected to keep growing significantly, then reducing the number of councillors is not a realistic option in the face of evidence. To achieve a balance we will need to redistribute the growing population figures among at least the number of councillors we have, and potentially increase the number of councillors.*
- *My ward has increased in population by nearly 50% in the last 20 years*



Q16 Is there anything else about your experience as a councillor that might be relevant to the council's submission on council size?

Need to take into account other working / caring responsibilities

- *I think that's the case for a lot of working age councillors, some weeks it's like having another full time job yet again.*
- *This survey does not capture if councillors are working or have caring responsibilities.*

Some residents have not registered, the actual number of residents per ward is much higher

- *A lot of people rent or are there temporarily (students, people on short contracts etc) so many do not register to vote. Many people are unable to register as due to their citizenship. The numbers on the electoral register underplay the true number of adults in the city particularly in wards which are more diverse, have a lot of renters, students and high turnover.*
- *We can get requests for help from those that may not be on electoral register*

Concern about coverage at different times of the year due to students

- *We can get requests for help from those that may not be on electoral register; HMO's and influx of students in areas that can affect the work load of councillors eg. end of year rubbish, so need to ensure size of wards to reflect actual numbers in residences.*
- *we require more than the minimum amount of councillors to maintain our high standards of support to all residents. To cater for population increase, to provide cover during sickness and residents who are not on electoral register plus the influx of students*

COVID-19 has led to an increased workload

- *when the pandemic first hit and the country and council were trying to figure stuff out, it was ward councillors that went out in their communities and reassured, helped to form volunteer groups and keep the show on the road to ensure people were safe, and no one went without essentials like food or medication.*



Q16 Is there anything else about your experience as a councillor that might be relevant to the council's submission on council size?

Social media / the internet has impacted communication and workload

- *The biggest change I have seen in the last few years is the massive increase in the use of IT and at the other end a massive drop in contact by letter. Bit difficult to say if the increase use of IT is aving time or increasing time I spent on Council work.*
- *Work is increasing because the public expect immediate response, and to be able to use their preferred method of communication. Now so many organisations employ large teams to run social media, many younger residents expect to be able to make their views known on social media.*
- *The internet allows angry people to research their issues before writing to their councillors and so a lot more research is needed to respond to many constituents emails or letters.*

Comment on survey questions

- *This survey does not capture if councillors are working or have caring responsibilities.*
- *Not sure this survey asks or allows for true answers.*

Other

- *And the people living in small, cramped and inappropriate homes are more likely to need help and support. As funding to charities that offer help and support is cut back, vulnerable people increasingly turn to their councillors and cases become more complex and take much longer to resolve.*
- *The answers I gave here reflect my new and changed status as (redacted). I would have given very different answers had I been asked about my workloads as a (redacted).*
- *I have answered this survey based on my experience in 2019*
- *I think the currently number of Councillors is about right for our area.*
- *As (redacted) I am an unable to answer*
- *after a decade of austerity southampton city council is not the same*
- *Data has been gathered in recent years on the workload, level of allowance, and number of councillors we have, and it all shows that the cost per councillor and ratio of residents to councillor offers good value for taxpayers' money. To achieve a balance we will need to redistribute the growing population figures among at least the number of councillors we have*