



Members' Survey 2007

Final Report for Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Date of Issue: 15th May 2007



Opinion Research Services
Spin-out Company of the University of Wales Swansea

Published by

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Executive Summary

Survey

1. Opinion Research Services was commissioned by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) to undertake a survey of Local Authority Councillors and Members in all Local Authorities in the Tyne and Wear area. The key aims of this research were to assess how well TWFRS is meeting the current information needs of Local Authority Councillors and Members, how well informed Members and their constituents are regarding community fire safety and how Members feel regarding TWFRS policy issues.
2. A questionnaire was distributed to 330 Local Authority Councillors and Members in the week commencing 19th February 2007. The cut-off date for returned questionnaires was 16th March 2007. 108 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 33%.

Results

3. 93% of respondents agree that the cost of running TWFRS represents good value for money.
4. 96% of respondents stated that they are satisfied with the way the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority runs things. Only 1% stated that they are dissatisfied.
5. From a list of 30 options, the fire and rescue related issue selected by respondents as most worrying their community is attacks on firefighters (77%). 74% think that fire in the home most worries their community whilst 66% also highlight response times as an area of possible concern.
6. 85% of respondents currently receive information from TWFRS in their capacity as an elected Councillor. Of those who do receive information, the overwhelming majority feel that it is sufficient, useful, timely and easy to understand.
7. 96% of respondents who receive information state that they read it themselves. 40% also pass it onto their constituents whilst a further 31% include the information in ward newsletters.
8. The majority (78%) of respondents are satisfied with the contact they receive from TWFRS, with only 6% stating that they are dissatisfied.
9. Most respondents are satisfied with the contact they have with TWFRS although there does appear to be a desire for further communication. Amongst the suggestions as to how respondents' contact with TWFRS could be improved were: local area visits, open days, briefings at local Stations, visits to ward communities, opportunities to meet officers, area committees, visits to ward surgeries or area forums; meetings, forums (including public information forums), briefings; emails/webpage, newsletters, reports; and presentations.
10. 66% of respondents would like to receive additional information on community fire safety, whilst 52% would like more information on incidents and 42% would like service contact numbers.

11. The most popular communication methods selected by respondents are newsletters (63%) and presentations to the Council (58%). Large proportions also favour email (42%), Station open days (40%) and nominated contact officers (30%).
12. Additional methods for TWFRS to provide information, identified in text comments, are community interface (ward committees), DVD/presentation, information as part of annual training/induction programme, and ward based information via email.
13. Over three quarters of all respondents are aware that TWFRS gives fire safety talks in schools (84%), provides free smoke alarms (84%) and gives free Home Fire Risk Assessments (74%). The majority are also aware that TWFRS gives fire safety talks to vulnerable groups, replaces chip pans with deep fat fryers and that the Service works with other agencies to remove abandoned vehicles. Only 8% are aware that TWFRS provides fire retardant bedding.
14. 45% of respondents feel that their constituents are well informed about TWFRS' community safety work whilst 33% disagree. 57% agree that they believe their constituents are well informed regarding home fire safety messages whilst 43% disagree.
15. The majority of respondents feel that TWFRS should co-operate more with community groups (65% of respondents agreed) and schools/education departments (61%). Only 5% of respondents stated that they feel TWFRS should not co-operate more with the listed services.
16. The other services identified, in text comments, for TWFRS to co-operate more with are: coastal search and rescue (SVLB and coastguard), local councillors, local strategic partnerships and voluntary groups/organisations.
17. Text comments show that respondents feel that TWFRS already co-operates well with other services. Amongst the suggestions as to how TWFRS should increase co-operation were: joint presentations, working groups, seminars, and regular meetings; working with voluntary sector/community groups; visiting local areas, groups and schools; working more closely with Ambulance Service, combining radio links and operations/call centres; training with other services; and integration of plans and increase communication between services.
18. 60% of respondents agree that they are consulted enough about current issues in TWFRS, however, 20% disagree. 38% of respondents agree that they have an influence in running TWFRS but 41% disagree.

1. Project Overview

The Survey

- 1.1 Opinion Research Services was commissioned by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) to undertake a survey of Local Authority Councillors and Members in all Local Authorities in the Tyne and Wear area. The key aims of this research were to assess how well TWFRS is meeting the current information needs of Local Authority Councillors and Members, how well informed Members and their constituents are regarding community fire safety and how Members feel regarding TWFRS policy issues.
- 1.2 A questionnaire was distributed to 330 Local Authority Councillors and Members in the week commencing 19th February 2007. The cut-off date for returned questionnaires was 16th March 2007. 108 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 33%.
- 1.3 The survey contained questions on the following topics:
 - Services Provided
 - Information and Performance Reporting
 - Community Fire Safety
 - Policy Issues
 - About You
- 1.4 The tables that appear without commentary on the following pages show the un-weighted and weighted profiles of the responses to the survey. (Please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to slight rounding errors).

Gender – all respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
Male	70	74%
Female	24	26%
Not known	9	-

Figure 1: Gender, by all respondents

Age – all respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
21-29	0	-
30-39	9	9%
40-49	19	19%
50-59	36	36%
60-74	32	32%
75 or over	5	5%
Not known	2	-

Figure 2: Age, by all respondents

Local Authority area – all respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
Gateshead	23	23%
Newcastle	18	18%
North Tyneside	16	16%
Sunderland	27	27%
South Tyneside	15	15%
Not known	4	-

Figure 3: Local Authority area, by all respondents

Length of Service – all respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
Less than 4 years	25	25%
4 but less than 8 years	18	18%
8 years or more	59	58%
Not known	1	-

Figure 4: Time as an Elected Member, by all respondents

Graphics

1.5 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user-friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of all respondents making relevant responses. Where possible the colours used in the charts have been standardised with a “traffic light” system – in which:

- Green shades represent positive responses (good news)
- Yellow represents neither positive nor negative responses
- Red shades represent negative responses (bad news)
- The brighter shades are used to highlight the responses at the ‘extremes’ – for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied.

2. Services Provided

Value for Money

- 2.1 Respondents were firstly told that in 2006 the cost of running TWFRS was £58.8 million or equivalent to £54.61 per head of the population.
- 2.2 Having been shown this information, 93% of respondents agree that the cost of running TWFRS represents good value for money.

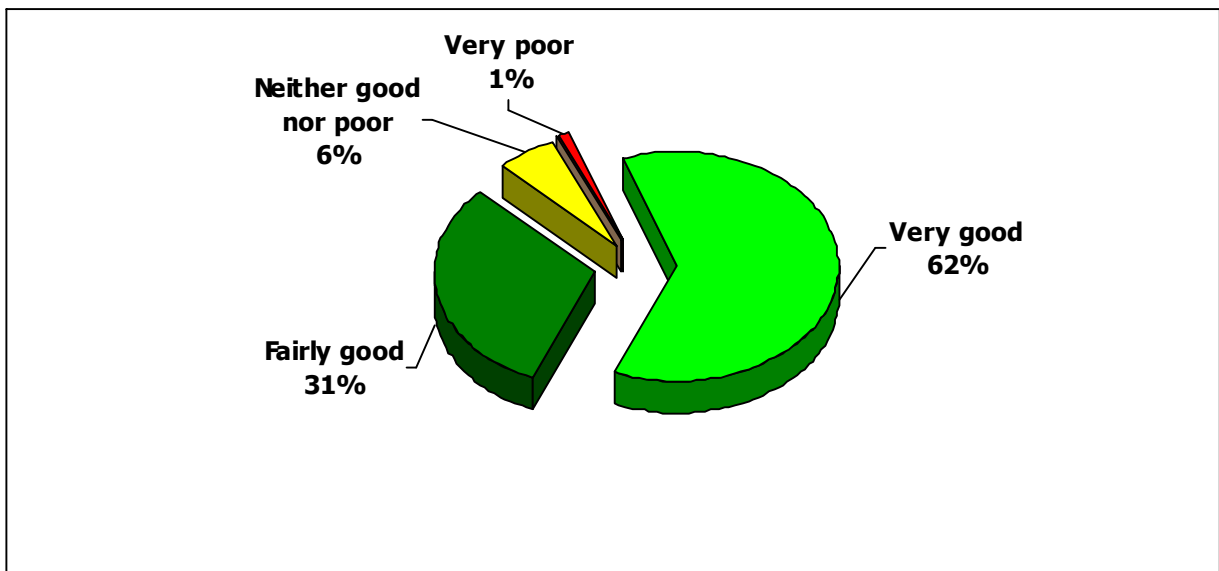


Figure 5: To what extent do you think this cost represents good or poor value for money? By all respondents

Satisfaction

- 2.3 Respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the way Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority runs things. 96% of respondents stated that they are satisfied with the way the Authority runs things.

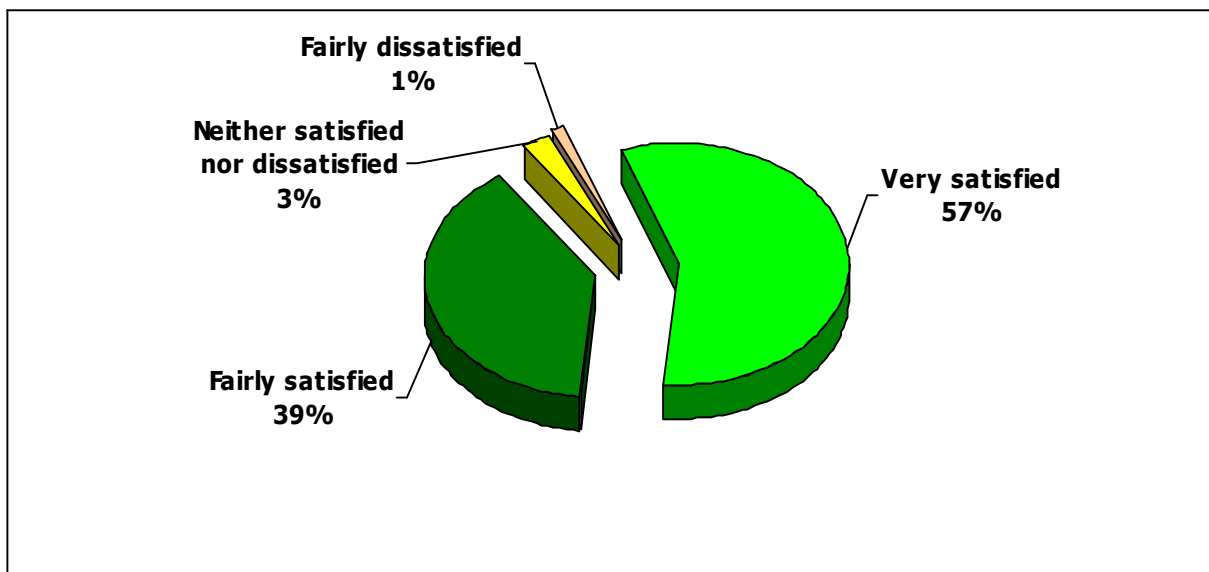


Figure 6: Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority runs things? By all respondents

Concerns to the Community

- 2.4 Respondents were asked to identify fire and rescue related issues which are of most concern to their community from a list of 30 options. Figure 7, overleaf, shows all the options chosen by at least one quarter of respondents.
- 2.5 The fire and rescue related issue selected by respondents as most worrying their community is attacks on firefighters (77%). 74% think that fire in the home most worries their community whilst 66% also highlight response times as an area of possible concern.
- 2.6 Over half of respondents also feel that arson/wilful fire raising, hoax calls and incidents involving fireworks are of concern to their community.

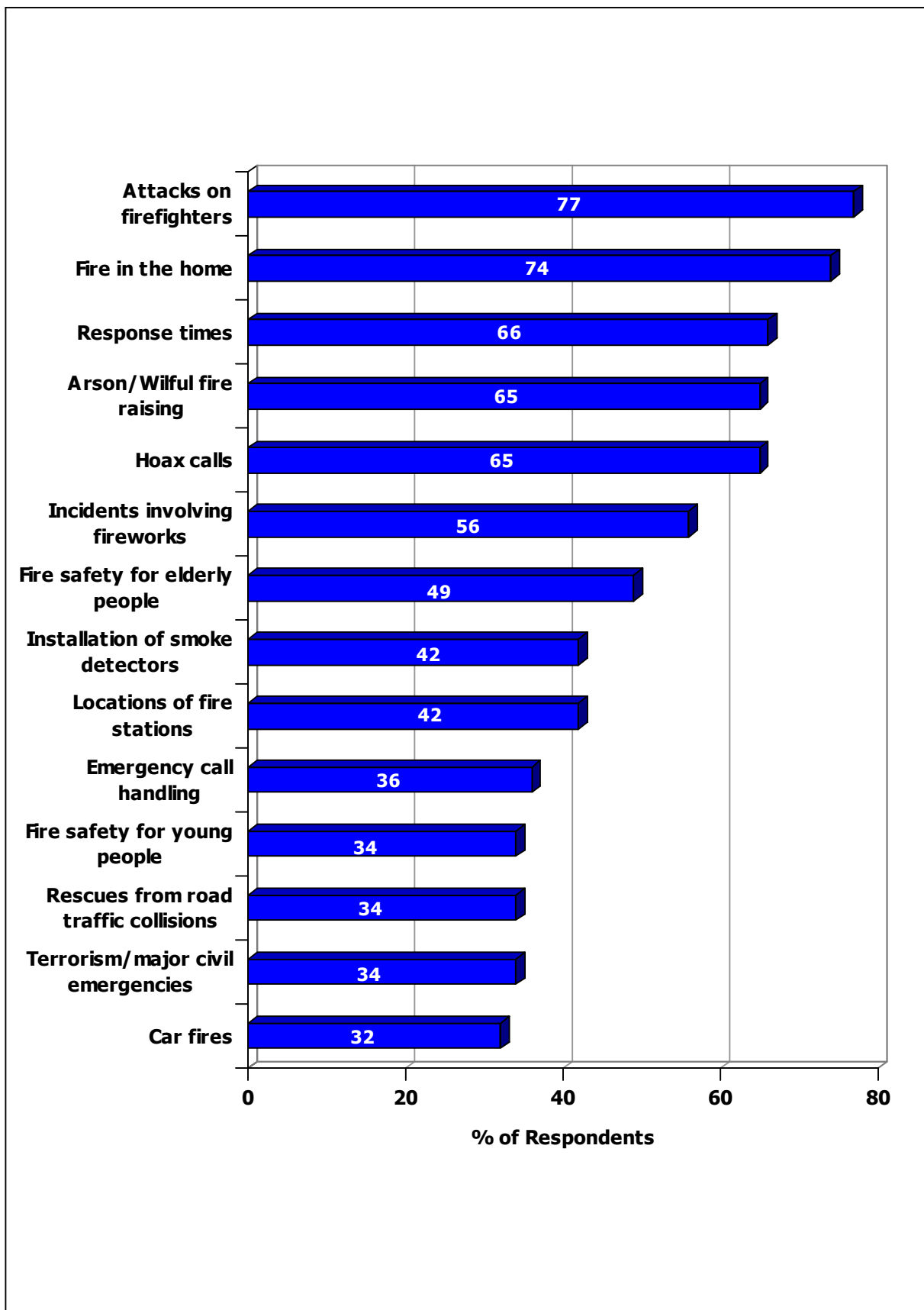


Figure 7: What fire and rescue related issues, if any, do you think most worry your community? All options selected by at least 25% of respondents

- 2.7 Issues which respondents felt concerned their community least, with less than 10% of respondents identifying the area as one of concern, were: access to fire stations; information about TWFRS; rescuing animals; fire safety certification (business premises); driving standards of fire engines; and equality in employment in TWFRS.
- 2.8 Between 10% and 25% of respondents selected the following as fire and rescue related issues that concern their community: grass fires; attendance at chemical incidents; cost of the Service; conduct/professionalism of firefighters; protection of the environment; quality of training of firefighters; responding to floods and river incidents; community fire safety education; vandalism/misuse of water hydrants; and fire in the workplace.

3. Information and Performance Reporting

Current Information

3.1 85% of respondents currently receive information from TWFRS in their capacity as an elected Councillor. Figure 9, overleaf, shows that for those who do receive information, the overwhelming majority feel that it is sufficient, useful, timely and easy to understand.

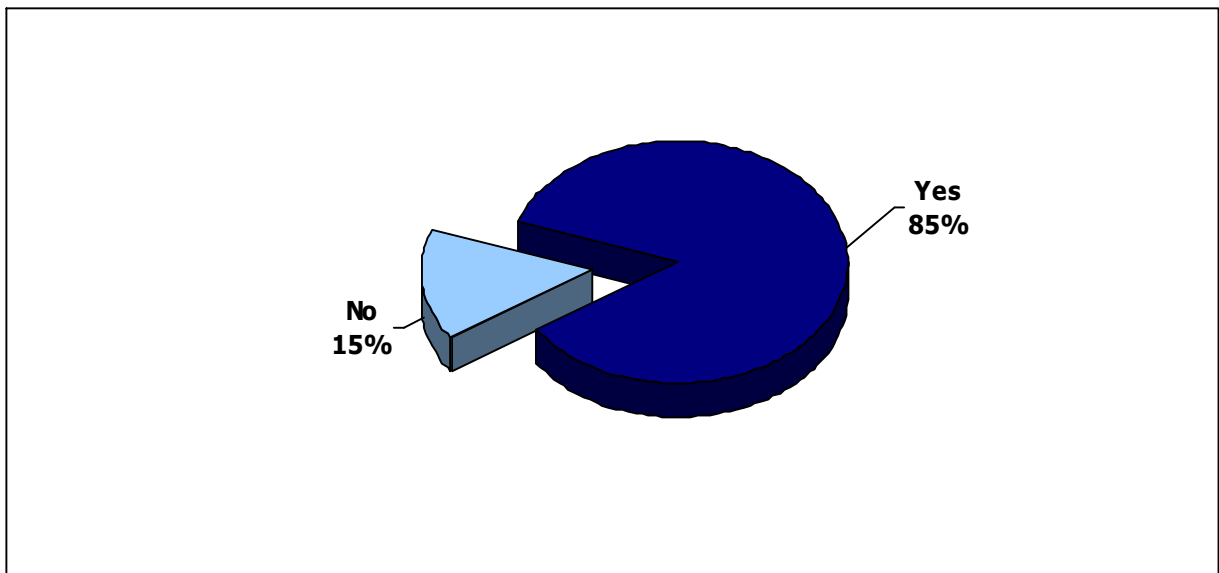


Figure 8: In your capacity as an elected Councillor do you receive any information from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service? By all respondents

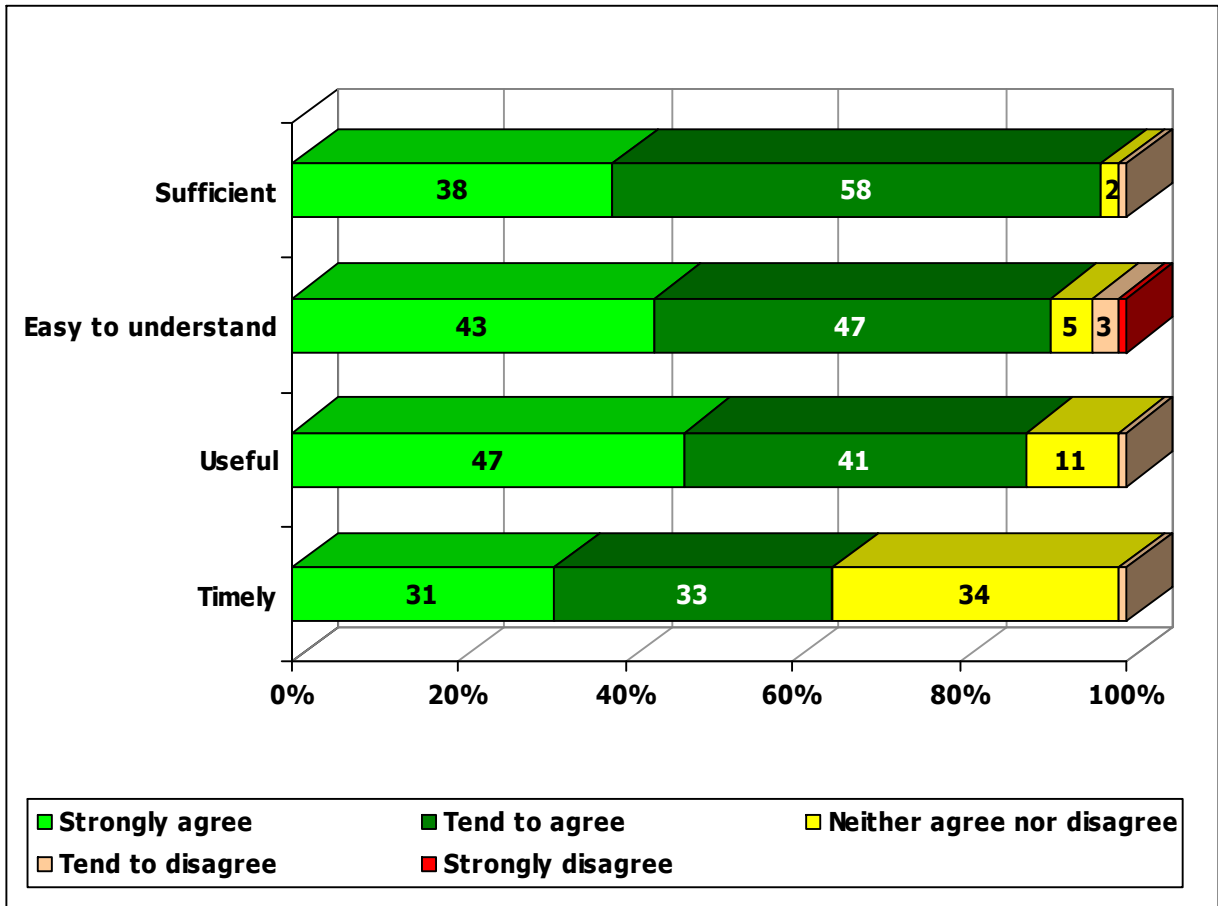


Figure 9: Do you agree or disagree that the information you receive from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service is...? By all respondents who receive information from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Note: Where figures are not displayed, the value ≤ 1

- 3.2 When asked what they do with the information they receive from TWFRS, 96% of respondents who receive information state that they read it themselves. 40% also pass it onto their constituents whilst a further 31% include the information in ward newsletters.
- 3.3 None of the respondents selected that they 'do nothing with the information'.

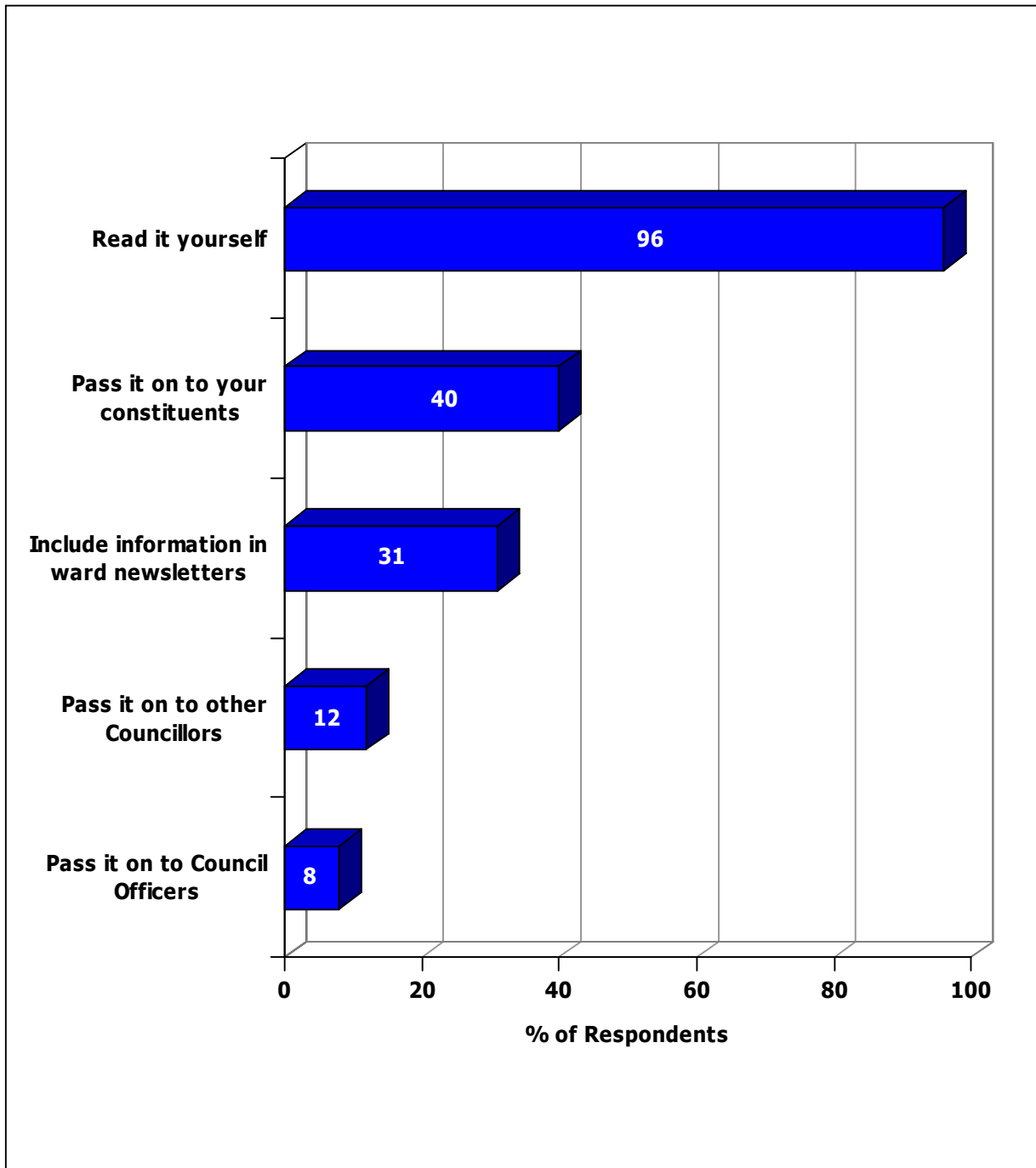


Figure 10: What do you do with the information you receive from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service? By all respondents who receive information from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Satisfaction and Improvement

- 3.4 Respondents were next asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the contact they receive from TWFRS and how they feel their contact with TWFRS could be improved. 78% of respondents are satisfied with the contact they receive, with only 6% stating that they are dissatisfied.

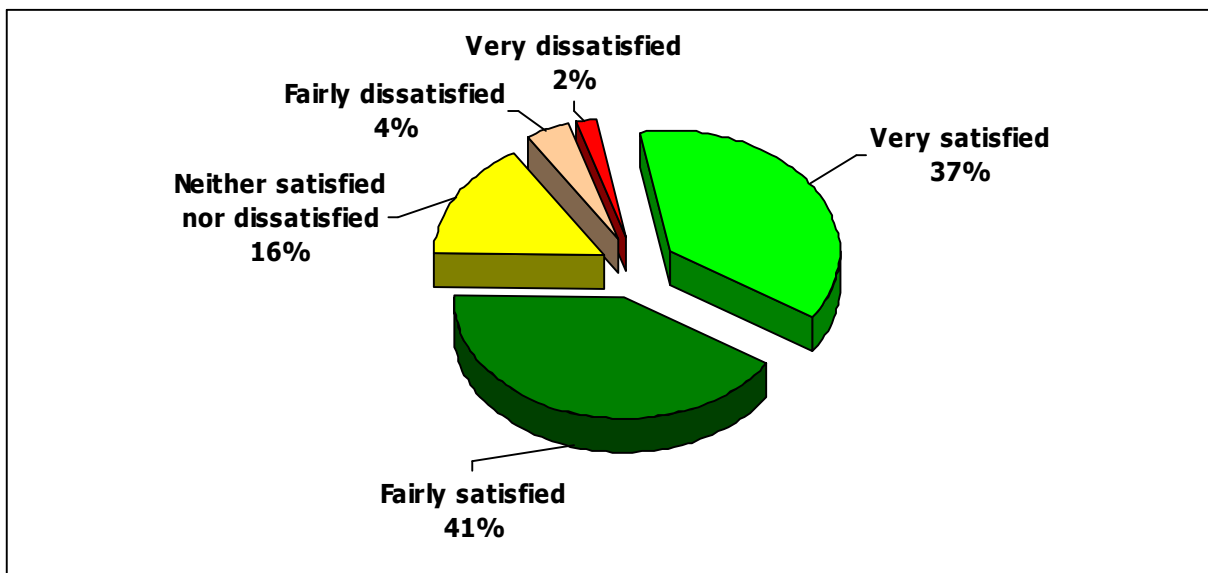


Figure 11: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the contact you have with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service? By all respondents

- 3.5 Suggestions as to how respondents' contact with TWFRS could be improved can be found in respondents' text comments. Amongst the suggestions were:

- Local area visits, open days, briefings at local stations, visits to ward communities, opportunities to meet officers, area committees, visits to ward surgeries or area forums
- Meetings, forums (including public information forums), briefings
- Emails/webpage, newsletters, reports
- Presentations

- 3.6 Most respondents are satisfied with the contact they have with TWFRS although there does appear to be a desire for further communication (e.g. "keep people up to date", "more contact and working together"). Two additional comments also touch upon training of members:

"...do nothing with the info. Is not as damning as it seems as to educate/advise us allows us to give guidance as req."

"Most Councillors have no idea what they would be needed for, should a significant emergency occur, whether local or otherwise..."

Additional Information

- 3.7 As seen in Figure 12, overleaf, 66% of respondents would like to receive additional information on community fire safety, whilst 52% would like more information on incidents and 42% would like service contact numbers.
- 3.8 Between one quarter and one third of respondents would also like to receive additional information on future plans (e.g. IRMP Action Plans) (25%), statistical information (27%), and current trends/policies (33%). 7% of respondents state that they do not want to receive any additional information from TWFRS.
- 3.9 Respondents were also given opportunity to identify any other things that they would like to receive additional information about. Text comments identified education; information for residents to pass on; and work with young offenders/community work. One further comment referred to the need for a mixture of the formal and informal meetings where there is an appropriate reason to do so.

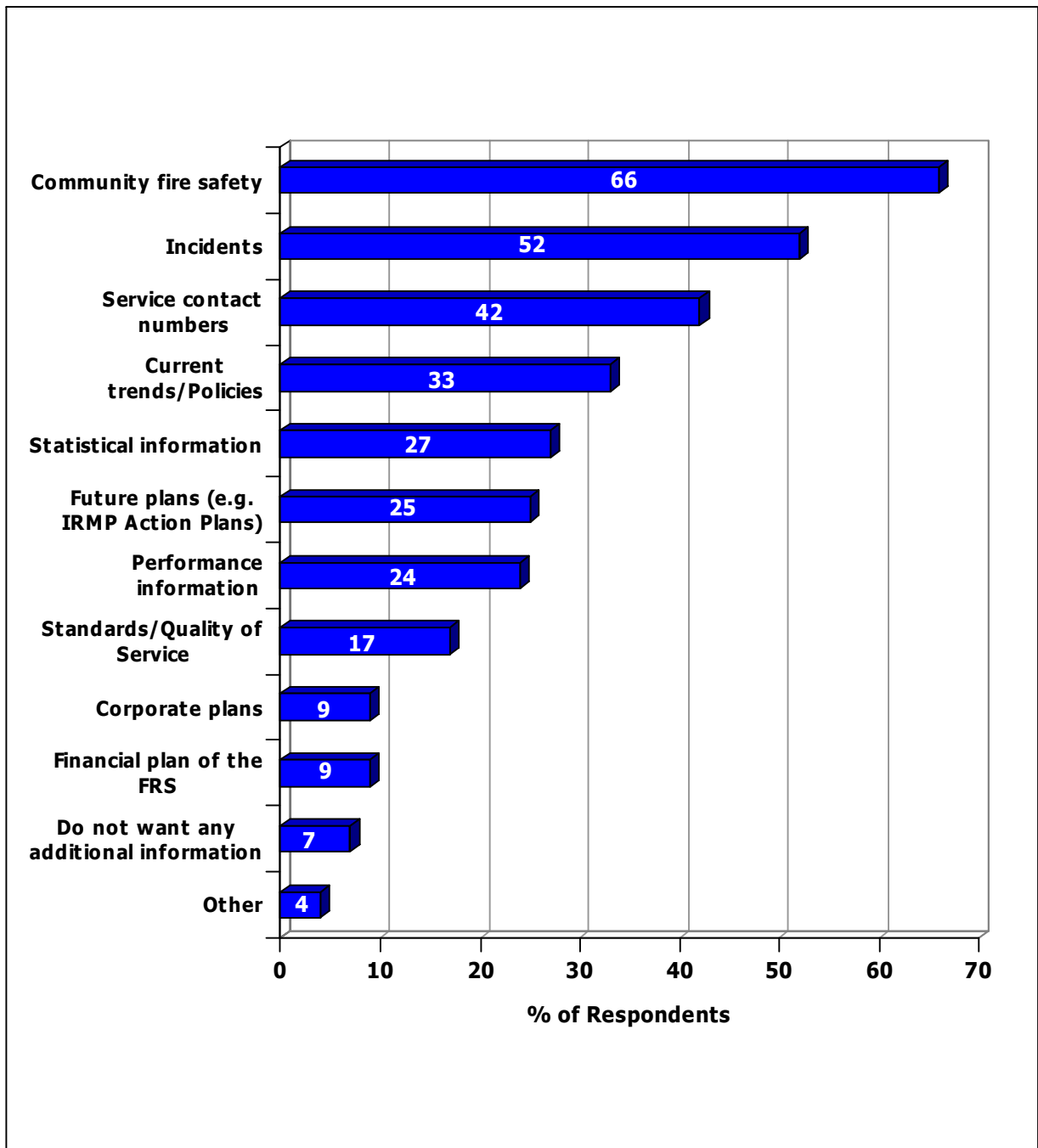


Figure 12: Which of the following, if any, would you like to received additional information about? By all respondents

Communication Methods

- 3.10 As seen in Figure 13, overleaf, the most popular communication methods selected by respondents are newsletters (63%) and presentations to the Council (58%). Large proportions also favour email (42%), Station open days (40%) and nominated contact officers (30%). The least popular communication methods, selected by less than 10% of respondents, are Corporate/Service plans, Fire Authority papers and one-to-one meetings.
- 3.11 Additional methods for TWFRS to provide information, identified in text comments, are community interface (ward committees), DVD/presentation, information as part of annual training/induction programme, and ward based information via email.

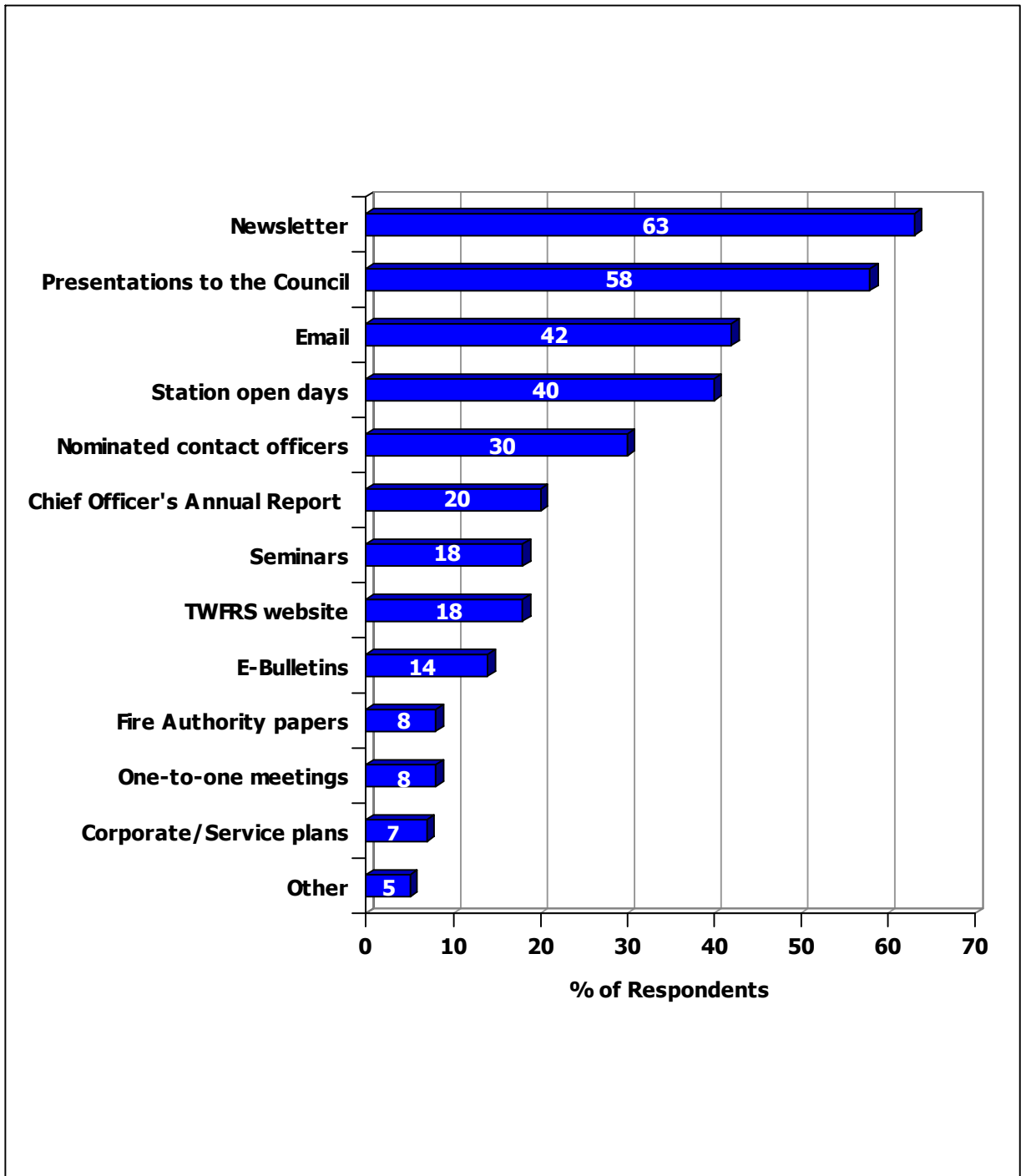


Figure 13: Which of the following methods would you prefer Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) to use when providing you with information? By all respondents

4. Community Fire Safety

Services

- 4.1 Respondents were asked if they were aware of a list of 8 services provided by TWFRS. As seen in Figure 14, overleaf, over three quarters of all respondents are aware that TWFRS gives fire safety talks in schools (84%), provides free smoke alarms (84%) and gives free Home Fire Risk Assessments (74%).
- 4.2 63% of respondents are also aware that TWFRS gives fire safety talks to vulnerable groups, 58% are aware that TWFRS replaces chip pans with deep fat fryers and 52% are aware that the Service works with other agencies to remove abandoned vehicles. Fewer respondents were aware that TWFRS works with other agencies to help reduce anti-social behaviour (43%), whilst only 8% are aware that TWFRS provides fire retardant bedding.
- 4.3 No respondents selected that they were not aware of any of the services provided by TWFRS to improve community safety listed in the survey.

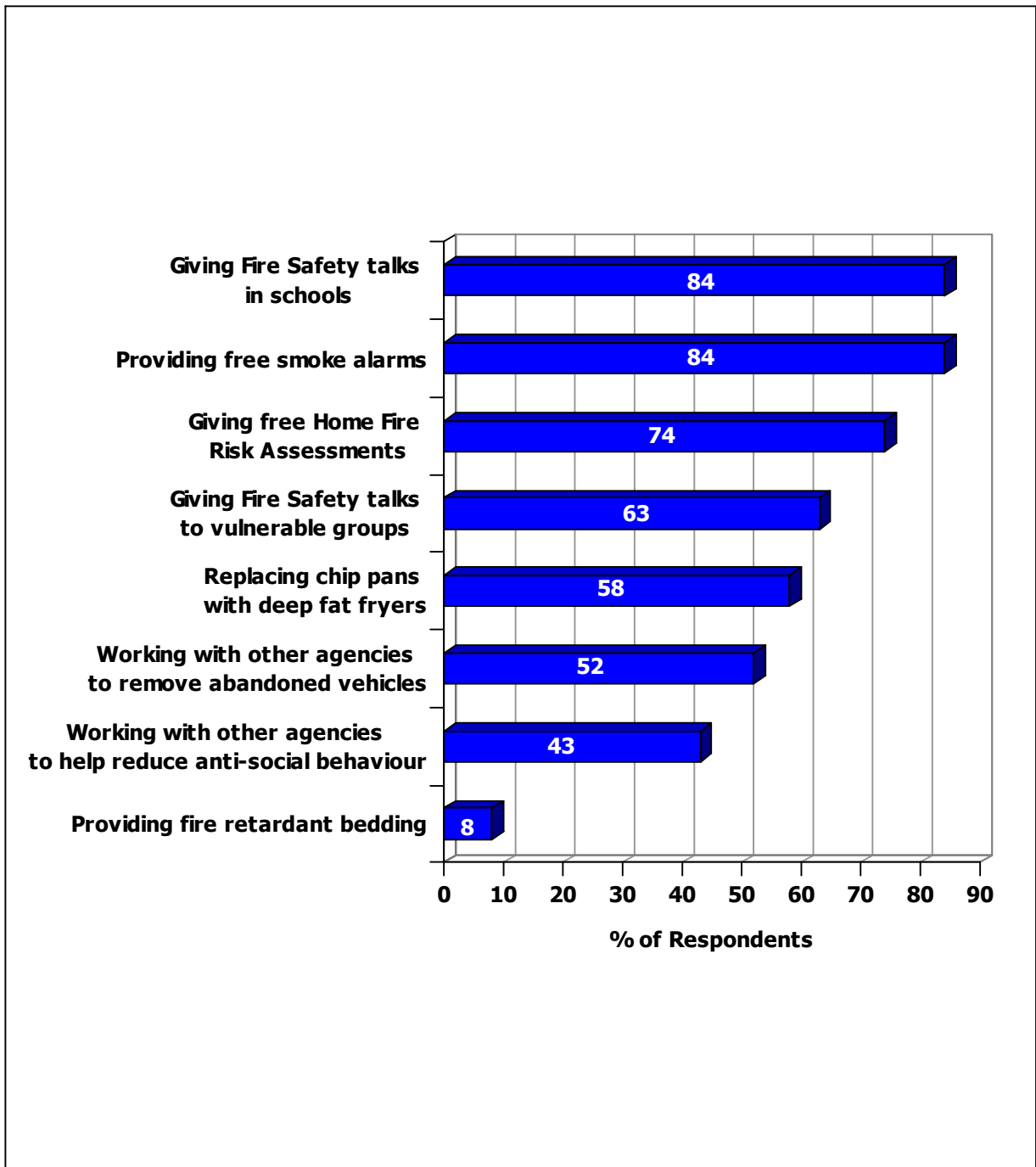


Figure 14: Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service provides a number of services to improve community fire safety. Which of the following are you aware of...? By all respondents

Being Informed

- 4.4 45% of respondents feel that their constituents are well informed about TWFRS' community safety work whilst 33% disagree (Figure 15).
- 4.5 Similarly, 57% agree that they believe their constituents are well informed regarding home fire safety messages whilst 43% feel that their constituents are poorly informed about home fire safety (Figure 16).

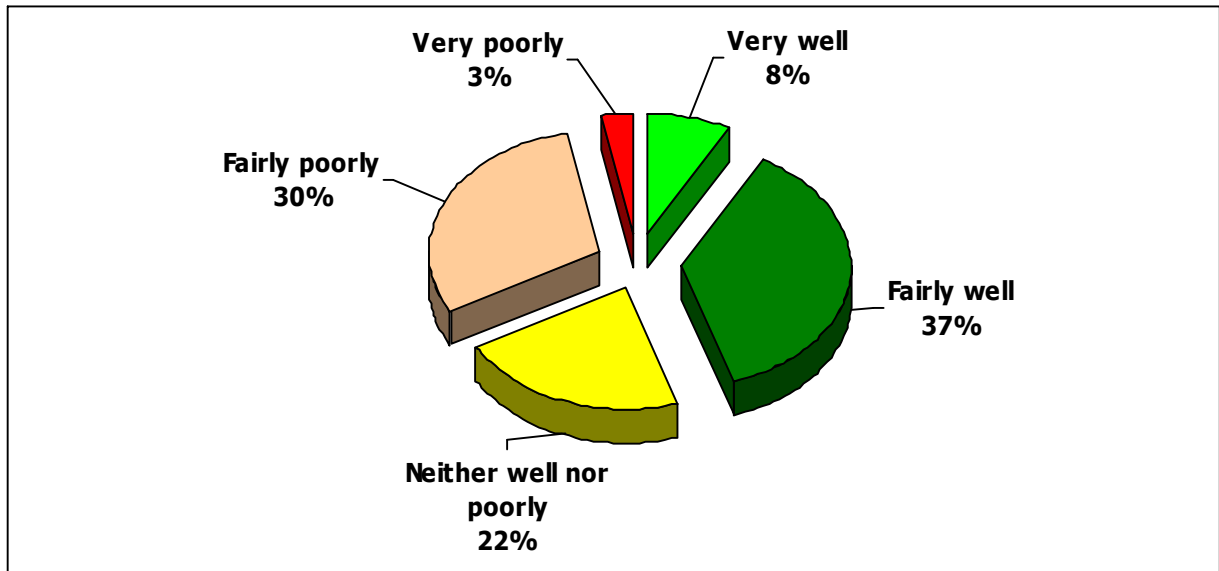


Figure 15: How well or poorly informed do you believe that your constituents are of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Services' community safety work (mentioned in question C1)? By all respondents

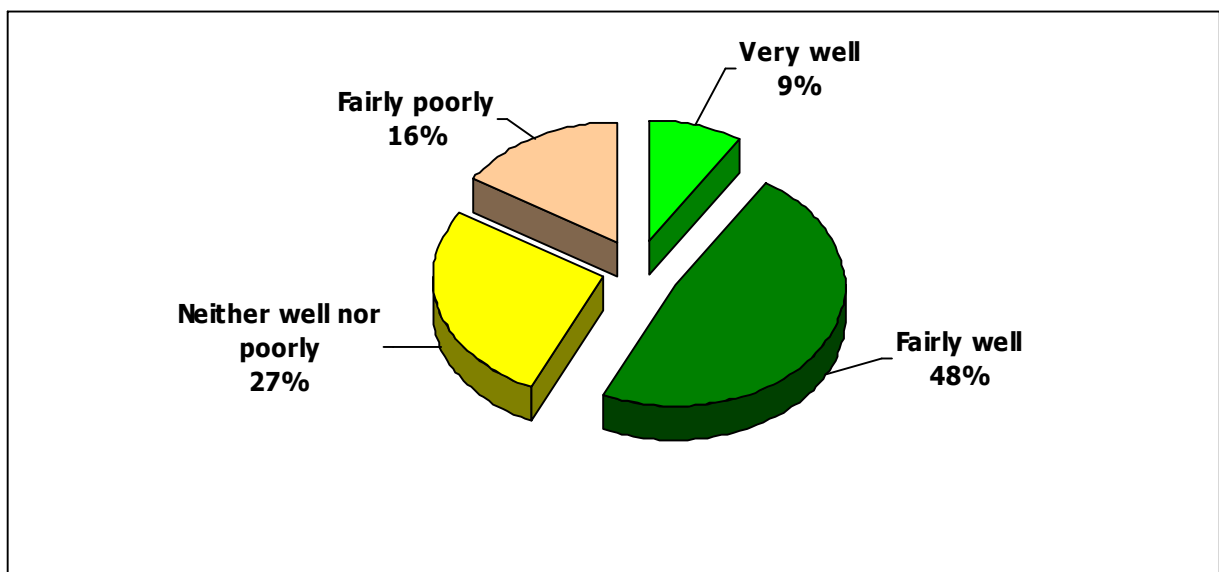


Figure 16: How well or poorly informed do you believe that your constituents are regarding home fire safety messages? By all respondents

5. Policy Issues

Co-operation

- 5.1 Figure 17, overleaf, shows that most respondents feel that TWFRS should co-operate more with other services. In particular, the majority of respondents feel that TWFRS should co-operate more with community groups (65% of respondents agreed) and schools/education departments (61%). This reflects the desire to improve community fire safety work by getting people involved and communicating more closely with other services.
- 5.2 Large proportions of respondents also feel that TWFRS should co-operate more with Local Authorities, the Police Force and Ambulance Service and neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services. 28% of respondents feel that TWFRS should co-operate more with Social Services and 26% with the NHS.
- 5.3 Only 5% of respondents stated that they feel TWFRS should not co-operate more with the listed services.

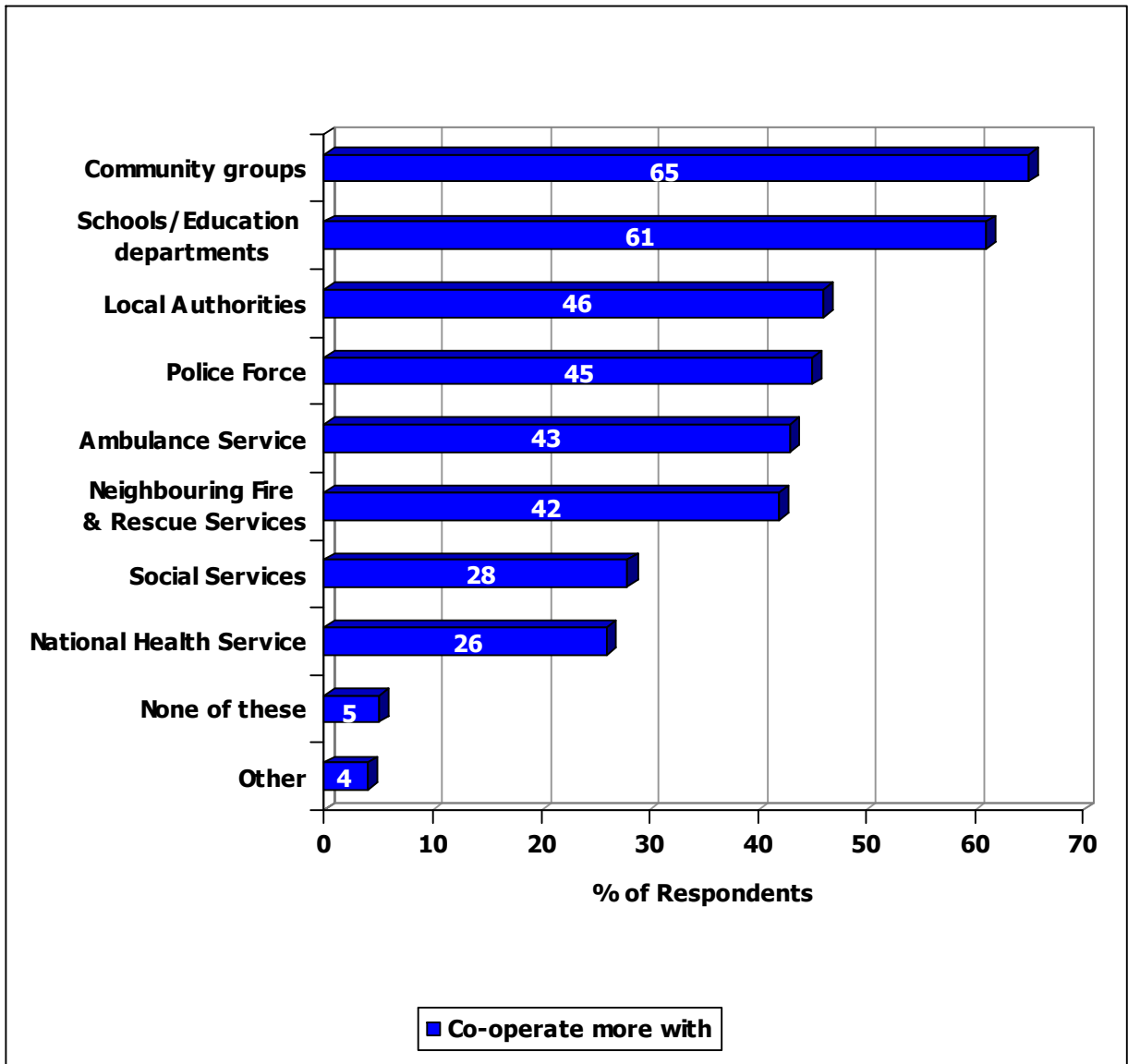


Figure 17: Do you think Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service should co-operate more with any of the following? By all respondents

5.4 The other services identified, in text comments, for TWFRS to co-operate more with are: coastal search and rescue (SVLB and coastguard), local councillors, local strategic partnerships and voluntary groups/organisations.

5.5 Text comments show that respondents feel that TWFRS already co-operates well with other services. An additional explanation given in text comments shows that increased co-operation is positive and perhaps refers more directly to communication and information:

"Any appropriate, acceptable, formal or informal contact between a disciplined service and the rest of us is a good thing."

5.6 Suggestions as to how TWFRS should co-operate further with other services can be found in respondents' text comments. Amongst the suggestions were:

- Joint presentations, working groups, seminars, regular meetings and exchanges of information
- Working with voluntary sector and community groups and, where appropriate, the media
- Visiting local areas, groups and schools
- Working more closely with Ambulance service, combining radio links and operations/call centres
- Training with other services
- Integration of plans and increase communication between services

Running Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

- 5.7 60% of respondents agree that they are consulted enough about current issues in TWFRS, However, 20% disagree. Similarly, 38% of respondents agree that they have an influence in running TWFRS but 41% disagree.

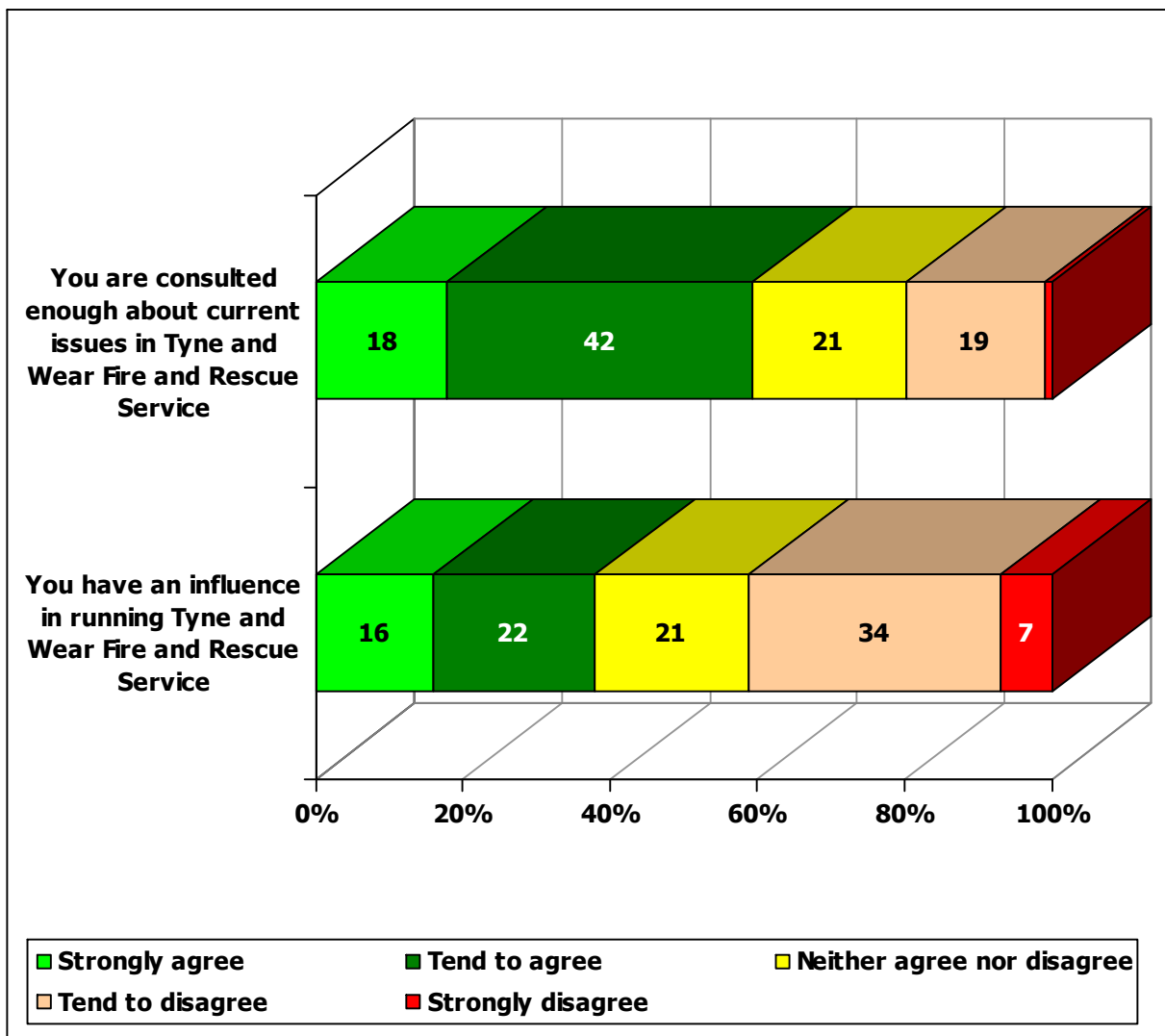


Figure 18: Do you agree or disagree that...? By all respondents

Note: Where figures are not displayed, the value ≤ 1

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