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# Partnership members survey 2020: Regional differences

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*A version of this paper was published internally by Local Trust in February 2018. This version has been lightly edited to make it accessible for a general audience, with core terms and concepts explained wherever possible. Please refer to [our website](#) for more information about the structure and goals of Local Trust.*

This brief presents findings from the 2020 partnership members<sup>1</sup> survey. The survey was conducted from June to August 2020. It asked partnership members about their experiences as part of the decision-making group in their Big Local area.<sup>2</sup> In total, we received 1,018 responses across 148 Big Local partnerships.

This brief looks at survey responses based on the region of the respondent's Big Local area – North of England, Midlands, South of England or London; and highlights where a region showed differing responses in comparison to the average.

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## Key points

- Respondents from the **North** were more likely to indicate a strong sense of community compared to the average for all regions.
- Respondents from the **Midlands** were less likely to indicate a strong sense of community in their area compared to the average for all regions. They had a smaller proportion of positive responses for questions about resident decision-making than other regions.
- Respondents from **London** showed higher levels of community connection and belonging compared to the average for all regions, but responses also indicated issues with progress and planning and resident engagement. Despite this, respondents from London were most likely to have had a positive experience of Big Local from 2019-2020.

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<sup>1</sup> A Big Local partnership is a group made up of at least eight people that guides the overall direction of the Big Local programme in each area.

<sup>2</sup> Big Local areas are neighbourhoods selected by the National Lottery Community Fund to receive at least £1m. Local Trust is working with 150 Big Local areas.

- Respondents from the **South** showed lower levels for community connection and belonging compared to the average of all regions and were less likely to say their partnership had a positive relationship with local residents. However, they were the most likely to feel they were making good progress as a partnership and to be making plans for when Big Local funding ends.
- Across all survey questions responses from **London** and the **South** showed a great deal of variation from the average for all regions. Generally, responses from the **North** or the **Midlands** were more likely to be closer to the average for all regions.

## Regions

In order to get an appropriate sample size for analysis this paper uses the following regional split for its findings:

- North – covering North East, North West, and Yorkshire and Humber (n=323)
- Midlands – covering East Midlands, West Midlands, and East of England (n=293)
- London (n=131)
- South – covering South East and South West (n=177)

## Findings

### How to interpret the data

The following data highlights the percentage point difference between responses from individual Big Local regions compared to the average response from all regions. The “% **point difference**” highlights how many more or fewer respondents in regions ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with each question, compared to the average ‘agreement’ from all regions. \* All results are statistically significant.

\*Please note – all questions are measured on an ‘agreement’ scale unless otherwise stated.

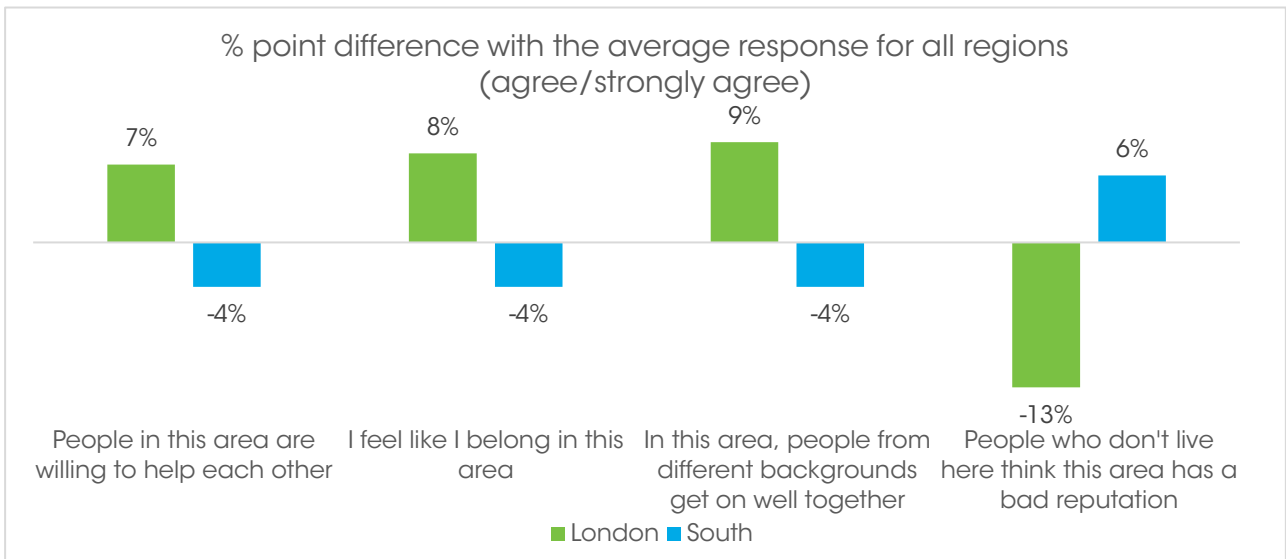
### 1) Feelings of connection and belonging

The survey asked partnership members a range of questions about their Big Local area. We asked questions about their feelings of belonging and connection to their local area, and about the perceptions others may have of their community.

Respondents from London showed higher levels of connection and belonging compared to the average for all regions. They were more likely to think that people in their area from different backgrounds get on well (+9), that people in their area were willing to help each other (+7) and that they personally felt they belonged in their area (+8). They were also less likely to say people outside of the area thought the area had a bad reputation (-13).

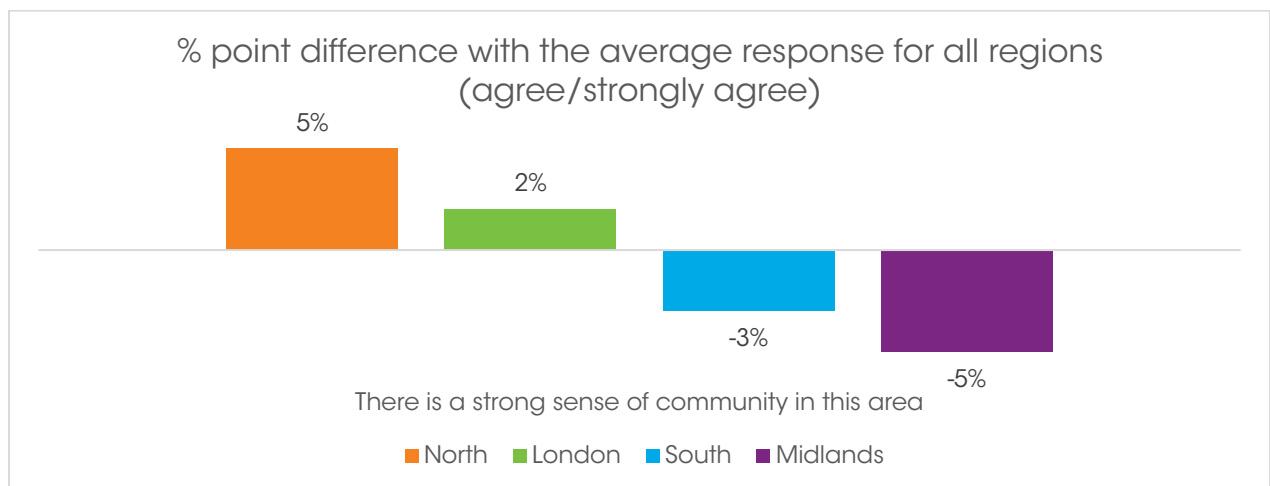
Responses from the South region showed a more negative picture. They were more likely to think that people who don’t live in the area thought it had a bad reputation (+6) and were less likely to feel that they personally belonged in the area (-4). Respondents from the South were also less likely to agree that people in their area were willing to help each other (-4) or that people from different backgrounds got on well together (-4).

**Graph 1.1: Thinking about your Big Local area**



Despite the more positive and negative feelings of connection and belonging from London and the South respectively, their feelings about the sense of community in their area were close to the average. Responses from the North of England showed an above average level of agreement with the statement 'There is a strong sense of community in this area' (+5), while responses from the Midlands were below average (-5).

**Graph 1.2: Thinking about your Big Local area**



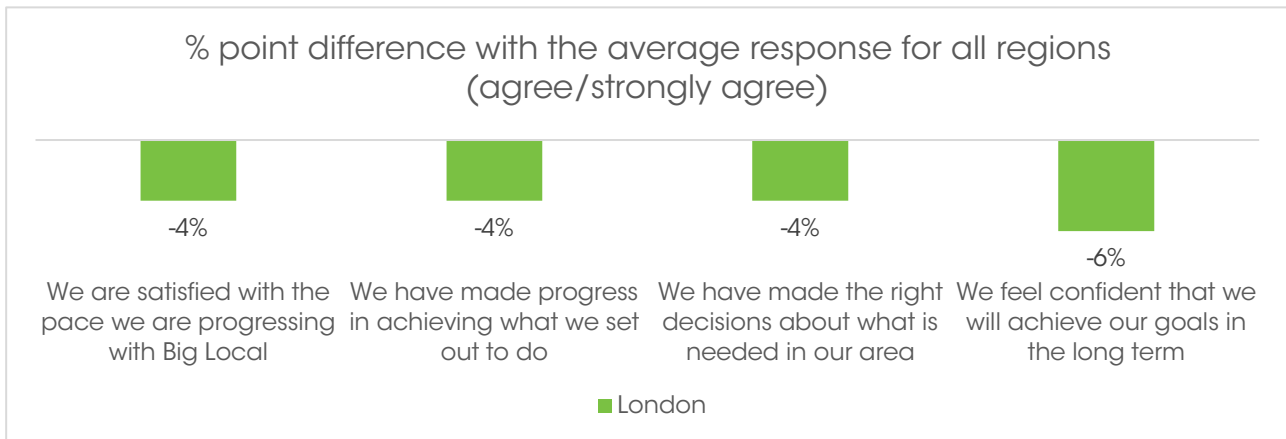
## 2) Progress and planning

The survey also aimed to understand more about partnership members' perspectives on the progress of their Big Local and the decisions that they make about how to spend their £1.15 million.

The survey results showed that respondents from London were more likely to think they were struggling with progress and prioritisation. London respondents had below average levels of agreement when asked if their partnership: had made progress in what they set out to do (-4), was confident that they can prioritise between different local needs (-4) and had a shared understanding of how they were going to achieve their priorities (-4). Additionally,

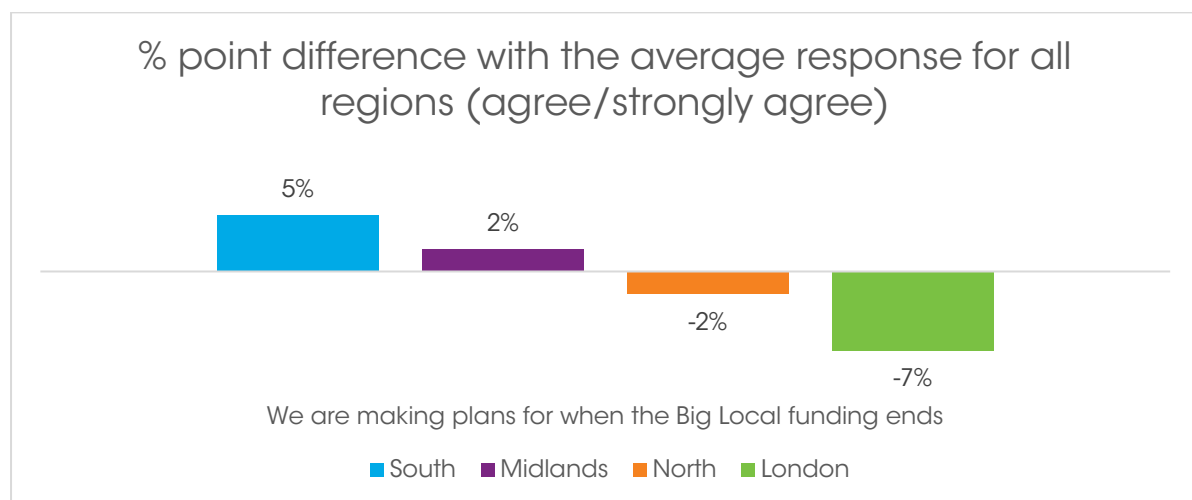
London respondents were less likely to say they were making plans for when the Big Local funding ends (-7) or feel confident that their partnership would achieve their long-term goals (-6).

**Graph 2.1: Thinking about the progress your Big Local area has made in the past year**



Results from other regions were close to or above average, suggesting that issues related to progress are more relevant in London than elsewhere. Respondents from the South were the only group to show above-average scores for questions related to progress and prioritisation and they were more likely to say their partnership is making plans for when the Big Local funding ends (+5).

**Graph 2.2: Thinking about the progress your Big Local area has made in the past year**



### 3) Resident engagement and decision-making

The survey dedicated questions to understanding how Big Local partnerships put residents in the lead through decision-making, as well as how they engage residents more generally in Big Local activities and delivery.

As well as the challenges around progress highlighted above, London respondents also demonstrated challenges with resident engagement. Respondents in the

London region were less likely to keep residents well-informed about Big Local (-4). London-based responses were also much lower than average for the statement 'the majority of

residents outside of the partnership know about Big Local' (-10). This is noteworthy as the average level of respondents agreeing with this statement (for all regions) is only 45%.

However, London respondents were more likely to feel that their partnerships were doing well at getting more residents involved as they go along (+9). This indicates that either Big Locals in London feeling that they are getting better at engaging their communities, or that these partnerships do well with getting residents involved in decision-making, but struggle with engaging the wider community in their activities and delivery.

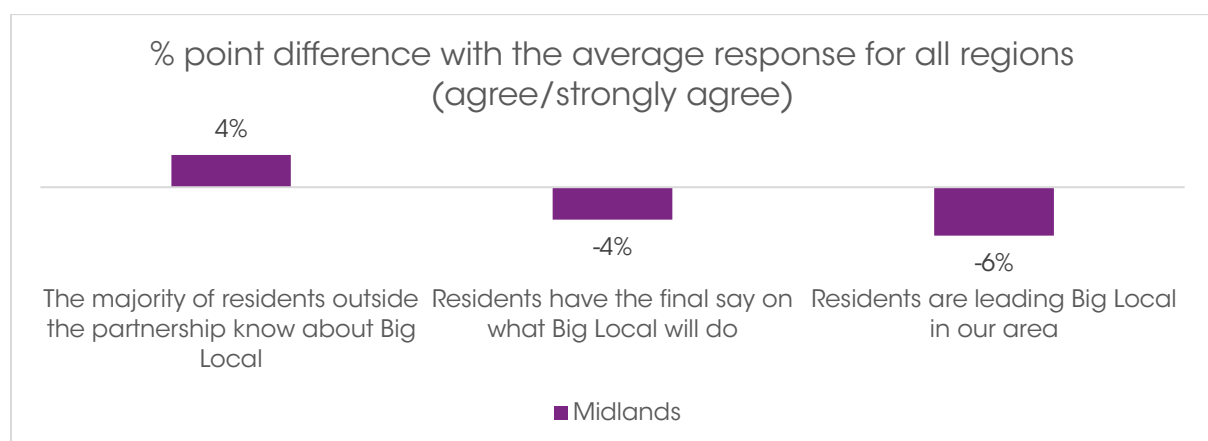
**Graph 3.1: Thinking about residents outside of the partnership in your Big Local area**



\* This question is from the section titled 'Thinking about the progress your Big Local area has made in the last year'.

Respondents in the South of England also reported challenges with engagement, yet these challenges were more varied. Respondents from the South were more likely to agree that their partnership faces pressure from residents to get results more quickly (+6), and that their partnership relies too strongly on a small group of individuals (+9). This suggests that partnerships in the South of England may face an opposite challenge to those in London – a lot of interest in activities and events from residents, but less capacity to deliver this due to a lack of partnership members or lack of engaged partnership members. Data from the Midlands also indicated issues with resident decision-making: 'Residents are leading in our Big Local area' (-6) and 'Residents have the final say on what Big Local will do' (-4). On the other hand, responses to 'the majority of residents outside of the partnership know about Big Local' was above average in this region (+4).

**Graph 3.2: Thinking about residents outside of the partnership in your Big Local area**



## 4) Relationships

In order to understand the relationships Big Local partnerships have with key external stakeholders, partnership members were asked to state the quality of their relationships with different types. This data only looks at where respondents indicated they **had** a relationship with a stakeholder; those who stated they had 'no relationship' were removed from the sample.

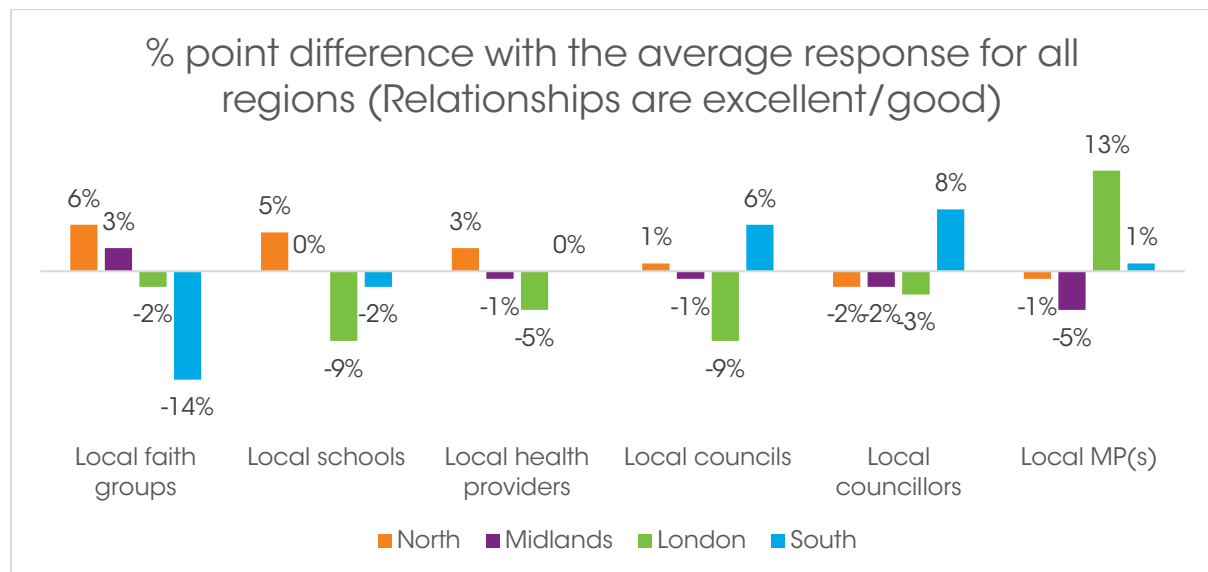
In terms of relationships with external stakeholders, there was a very mixed picture across regions that might hint at some specific disadvantages that affect partnerships' ability to form relationships with groups or key individuals in those regions. Looking at where respondents indicated an 'Excellent' or 'Good' relationship, the graph below shows the stakeholder groups with some of the largest differences between regions and the average for all regions.

Respondents in the North reported relationships that were similar to the average across all regions, although they were more likely to have positive relationships with local faith groups (+6) and local schools (+5). Similarly, partnership members in the Midlands had relationships that were similar to the average across all regions, although relationships with local MPs were less likely to be rated Excellent or Good (-5).

Respondents in London reported fewer positive relationships with multiple stakeholder groups, including local schools (-9), local councils (-9) and local health providers (-5). The reason for this is not clear from the data, but it may fit alongside other findings from London partnerships around progress and resident engagement. However, London partnership members were more likely to report an excellent or good relationship with local MPs (+13), much higher than both the average response and other region's responses.

Finally, responses from the South showed a very mixed picture. Positive relationships were similar to the average for local schools, local health providers and local MPs, but positive relationships with local faith groups were significantly below average (-14). Yet the South region was also more likely to report positive relationships with local government such as local councils (+6) and local councillors (+8).

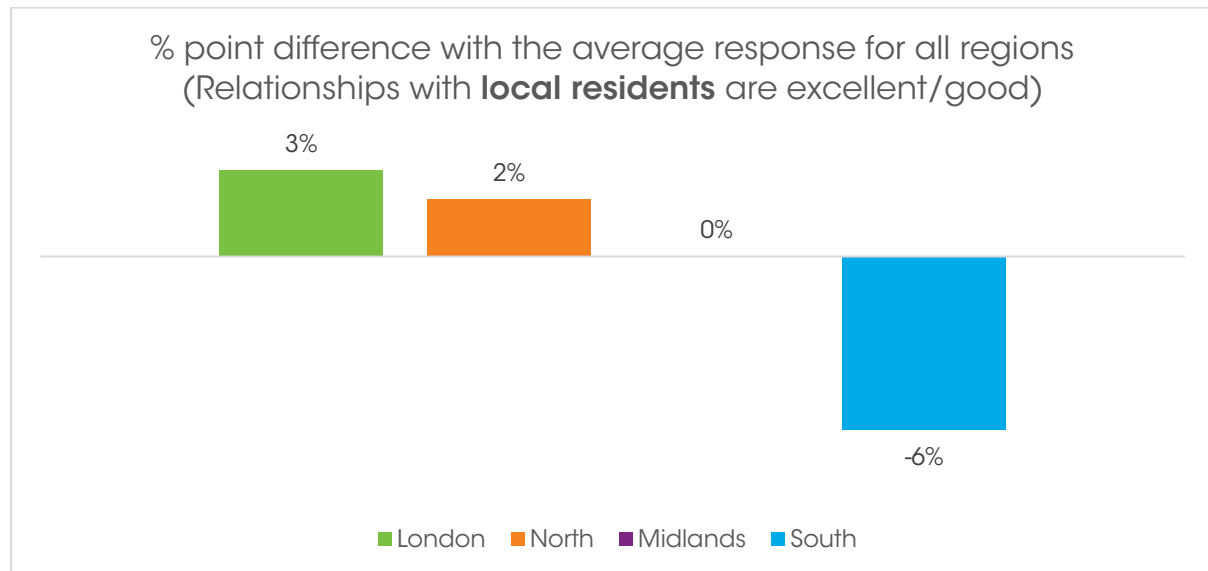
**Graph 4.1: Thinking about your partnership's relationships with others**



Returning to the theme of residents, partnership members were asked to rank their partnership's relationship with local residents. While London respondents previously

indicated challenges in engaging residents, those ranking their relationship with residents as 'Excellent' or 'Good' was close to the average response across all regions. The same applies to the Midlands, despite previous responses suggesting challenges with resident-led decision-making. However, a smaller proportion of partnership member respondents in the South region reported positive relationships with local residents (-6), which fits with that region's higher-than-average score for partnership members agreeing that they face pressure from residents to get results more quickly (+6).

**Graph 4.2: Thinking about your partnership's relationships with others**



## 5) Health and well-being

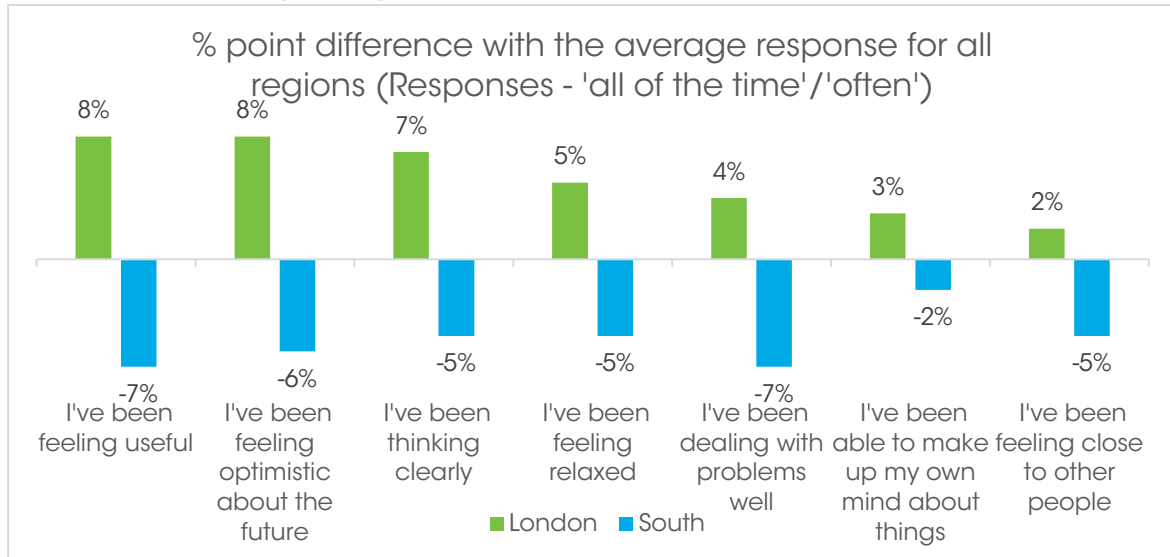
The survey also asked about the physical health and mental well-being of respondents.

While the North and Midlands regions came out close to the overall averages across all questions in this section, the London region reported higher than average physical health and mental well-being compared to other regions. When asked to rate their health in general, respondents from London were much more likely to respond with either 'Very good' or 'Good' (+11). This aligns with national datasets which show London respondents are more likely to report 'very good' or 'good' physical health compared to the whole of England. In terms of mental health, respondents from London partnerships were more likely to report feeling useful (+8), feeling optimistic about the future (+8), feeling relaxed (+5) and thinking clearly (+7), than the average of all regions. This is promising considering previous sections of this paper have highlighted distinct challenges faced by partnerships in this region, and also when compared to national data which shows London respondents rating their mental well-being close to the average for the whole of England.

However, the South of England faces the opposite problem. While respondents from partnerships in this region reporting 'Very good' or 'Good' physical health were close to the average for all regions, the positive responses for statements regarding mental well-being were lower than the average across all regions. Respondents were less likely to report feeling useful (-7), dealing with problems well (-7), feeling optimistic about the future (-6), thinking clearly (-5), feeling close to other people (-5) and feeling relaxed (-5). This goes against national datasets which show respondents from the South reporting slightly better mental well-being than the England average. This paper has highlighted other challenges reported by partnership members in the South region, such as lower feelings of belonging and connection, and poorer relationships with local residents. There is the possibility that

these feelings of lower mental well-being can be linked to the other challenges these partnership members face and it is important that this lower well-being is considered when approaching these areas regarding the challenges they face.

**Graph 5.1: Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last two weeks**



## 6) Experience of Big Local

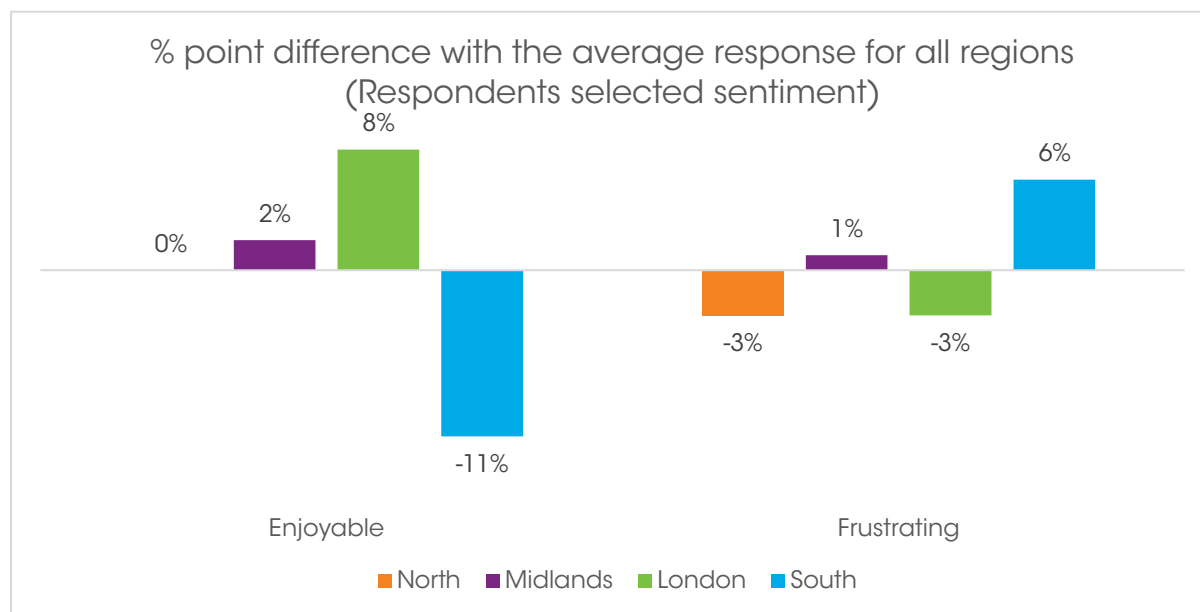
One of the most important questions asked in the partnership members survey is 'what has being involved in Big Local been like for you over the last year?'. Respondents were able to choose multiple options from a list of positive and negative sentiments.

Findings for this question reflected those of the previous section on well-being, with partnership members in London areas more likely to have above average responses for positive sentiments despite challenges highlighted across this paper. Similarly, those from partnerships in the South were more likely to have above-average responses for negative sentiments and below-average responses for positive sentiments, aligning with some of the challenges identified in previous sections. Respondents from London were more likely to say their experience of Big Local has been satisfying (+5) and enjoyable (+8) compared to all regions.

Respondents from the South region were more likely to say their experience of Big Local in the last year has been frustrating (+6) and challenging (+4), and least likely to say it was enjoyable (-11).



**Graph 6.1: What has being involved in Big Local been like for you over the last year**



## Summary

### North

- Responses from the North showed the smallest amount of difference with the average from all regions across many themes including progress and planning, resident engagement and decision-making, health and well-being and respondents' experiences of Big Local.
- Respondents from the North were more likely to report a strong sense of community than other regions or the Big Local average.
- Positive relationships with external stakeholders were mixed, although respondents from the North indicated a greater number of positive relationships with local schools and local faith groups compared to the average for all regions.

### Midlands

- Responses from the Midlands also showed little variation from the average for all regions across many themes including progress and planning, external stakeholder relationships, health and well-being and respondent's experiences of Big Local.
- Respondents from the Midlands were less likely to report a strong sense of community than other regions or the Big Local average.
- Resident-decision making was reported to be lower than the average for all regions, however a greater proportion of respondents from the Midlands indicated that 'the majority of residents know about Big Local' compared to the Big Local average, suggesting resident engagement is less of an issue.

## London

- Responses from London showed a great deal of variation from the average for all regions across the themes identified in this paper.
- While the proportion of respondents from London who reported a strong sense of community was close to the average response from all regions, other questions relating to community connection and belonging saw a greater proportion of positive responses compared to the Big Local average.
- Respondents from London feel their partnerships are struggling with progress and planning. They were less likely to say they felt confident their partnership had a shared understanding of how to achieve their priorities or that they were making plans for when Big Local ends, compared to other regions and the Big Local average.
- Respondents in London suggested their partnerships were experiencing issues around resident engagement. Responses from the London region found that respondents were less likely to feel that residents knew about Big Local compared to the average for all regions. However, responses also showed a higher proportion of London respondents felt they were getting more residents involved as they go along compared to the Big Local average.
- Respondents from London reported fewer positive relationships with local schools, local councils, and local health providers than the average for all regions. Positive relationships with local MP's were more common from London respondents.
- Questions around physical health and mental well-being saw a greater number of positive responses from respondents from London compared to both other regions and the average for all regions.
- Respondents from London were most likely to report a positive experience of Big Local over the last year than other regions and the average for all regions.

## South

- Responses from the South showed a great deal of variation from the average for all regions across the themes identified in this paper.
- While the proportion of respondents from South who reported a strong sense of community was on par with the average response from all regions, other questions relating to community connection and belonging saw a smaller proportion of positive responses compared to the Big Local average.
- Survey results indicated that respondents from the South feel their partnerships are doing well with progress and planning. They were more likely to say that they were making plans for when Big Local ends, compared to other regions and the Big Local average.
- Responses from the South indicated some potentially challenging dynamics between partnerships and residents, with respondents more likely to say they felt 'pressure from local residents to get results quickly' than other regions or the average for all regions. Similarly, respondents from the South were also less likely to say their partnership has a positive relationship with local residents compared to the average for all regions.
- A similar proportion of respondents from the South reported positive external relationships as the average for all regions, however relationships with local government, such as local councils and local councillors, were more likely to be positive compared to the average for all regions.

- Questions related to mental well-being were less likely to receive a positive response from respondents from the South compared to the average for all other regions.
- Respondents from the South were more likely to report their experience of Big Local over the last year as 'frustrating' compared to the average for all regions, and less likely to report their experience as 'enjoyable'.

## About Local Trust

Local Trust is a place-based funder supporting communities to transform and improve their lives and the places where they live. We believe there is a need to put more power, resources and decision-making into the hands of local communities, to enable them to transform and improve their lives and the places in which they live.

We do this by trusting local people. Our aims are to demonstrate the value of long term, unconditional, resident-led funding through our work supporting local communities make their areas better places to live, and to draw on the learning from our work to promote a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and others engage with communities and place

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