
Partnership members survey 2020: Areas at risk of not spending out

A version of this paper was published internally by Local Trust in February 2021. 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 survey.¹ The survey was conducted from June to August 2020. In total, we received 1,018 responses across 148 Big Local partnerships.

This brief looks at responses from Big Local areas² that are at 'risk of not spending out' (RONSO). These are identified by Local Trust as areas that are at risk of not spending their entire £1.15 million by the end of the Big Local programme in 2026.³

Key points

- Areas at risk of not spending out (RONSO) respondents had a less positive experience of the Big Local programme compared to respondents not in RONSO areas. They were more likely than respondents not in RONSO areas to find it frustrating and confusing and less likely to find it friendly or satisfying.
- RONSO area respondents were less likely than respondents not in RONSO areas to feel they used their skills/knowledge for Big Local. However, they were as likely to say they have learned or tried new things.
- RONSO area respondents were less likely to feel included and involved in decision-making. They were also more likely to think the worker⁴, Locally Trusted Organisation

¹ A Big Local partnership is a group made up of at least eight people that guides the overall direction of a Big Local area.

² 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.

³ For more information about 'RONSO' areas, see the 2019 report available [here](#). This report explores the reasons behind areas being at risk of not spending out.

⁴ Many Big Local partnerships fund workers to support the delivery of Big Local. Big Local workers are paid individuals, as opposed to those who volunteer their time.

(LTO)⁵ or dominant individuals on the partnership had too much influence on decision-making.

- RONSΟ area respondents were less likely to think their partnership knew who to work with to get things done, and less likely to think they had good relationships with a range of local stakeholders.
- The challenges for RONSΟ partnership members are broad, meaning there is no single solution to support RONSΟ partnerships. For Local Trust, this means any support that we offer must be varied and specific to each area.

Findings

The findings below are based on comparing the 141 responses from RONSΟ areas to the 877 responses from non-RONSΟ areas.

How to interpret the following graphs and figures

The following graphs highlight the percentage difference between RONSΟ area responses compared to all other responses. The “% difference” highlights the level of difference between other area respondents selecting ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ compared to respondents from RONSΟ areas.

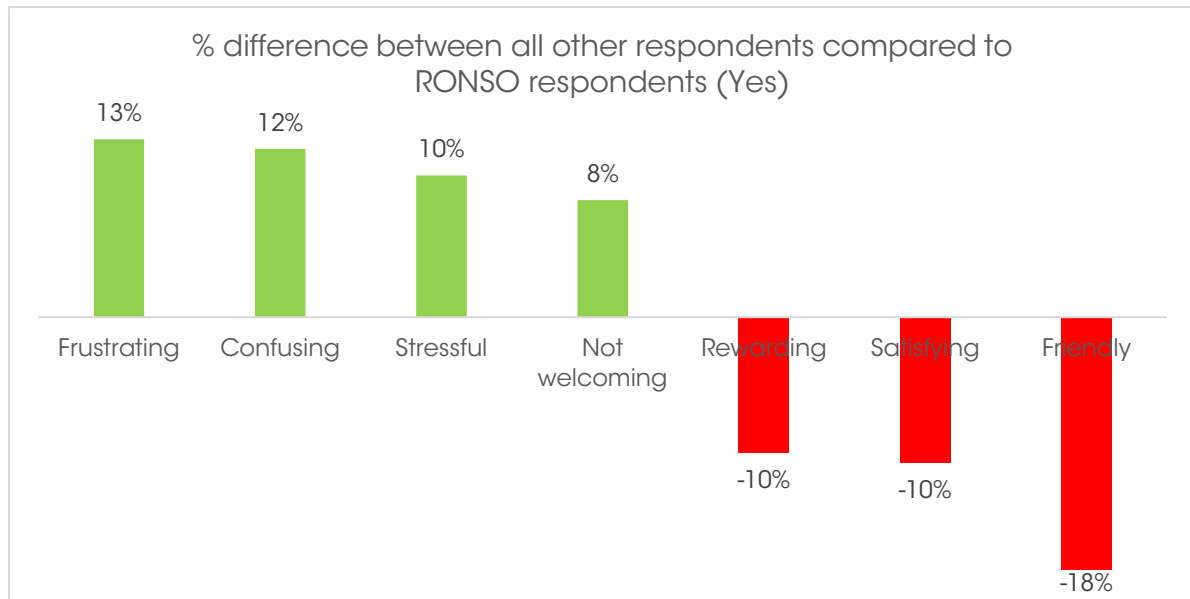
1) Involvement in Big Local

The survey asked partnership members to tell us what being involved in Big Local has been like for them over the last year. They were given a list of potential answers and could check as many of them that applied.

Respondents from RONSΟ areas were more likely to say their experiences of Big local have been negative (frustrating, confusing, stressful, not welcoming) and less likely to think their experience has been rewarding, satisfying or friendly.

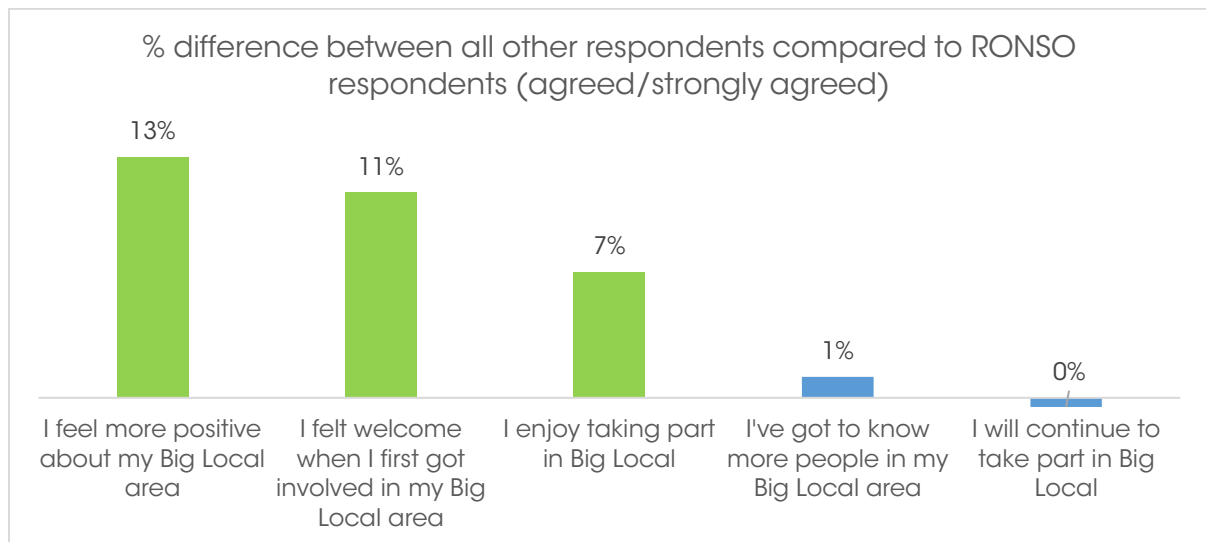
⁵ A locally trusted organisation is the organisation chosen by people in a Big Local area or the partnership to administer and account for funding. In addition, they may deliver activities or services on behalf of a partnership.

Graph 1: What has being involved in Big Local been like for you over the last year?



Non-RONSO area respondents tend to feel more positive about their Big Local area (+13%) and their involvement in the Big Local programme, compared to RONSO area respondents. They are also more likely to have felt welcomed in their Big Local partnership when they first got involved (+11%). However, RONSO area respondents do benefit from their participation in the programme. They are equally as likely to say they have met new people through Big Local (+1%⁶) and that they plan to stay involved (0%) as other respondents.

Graph 2: Thinking about your involvement with Big Local over the last year



The two graphs above highlight how RONSO partnership members do not enjoy their Big Local experience as much as other partnership members. However, while they are less likely to think positively of their Big Local experience, RONSO partnership members are resilient and want to continue to contribute and take part in their Big Local even if their experience of it is less positive.

⁶ Not statistically significant - we cannot be sure that this difference is not due to chance.

2) Learning through Big Local

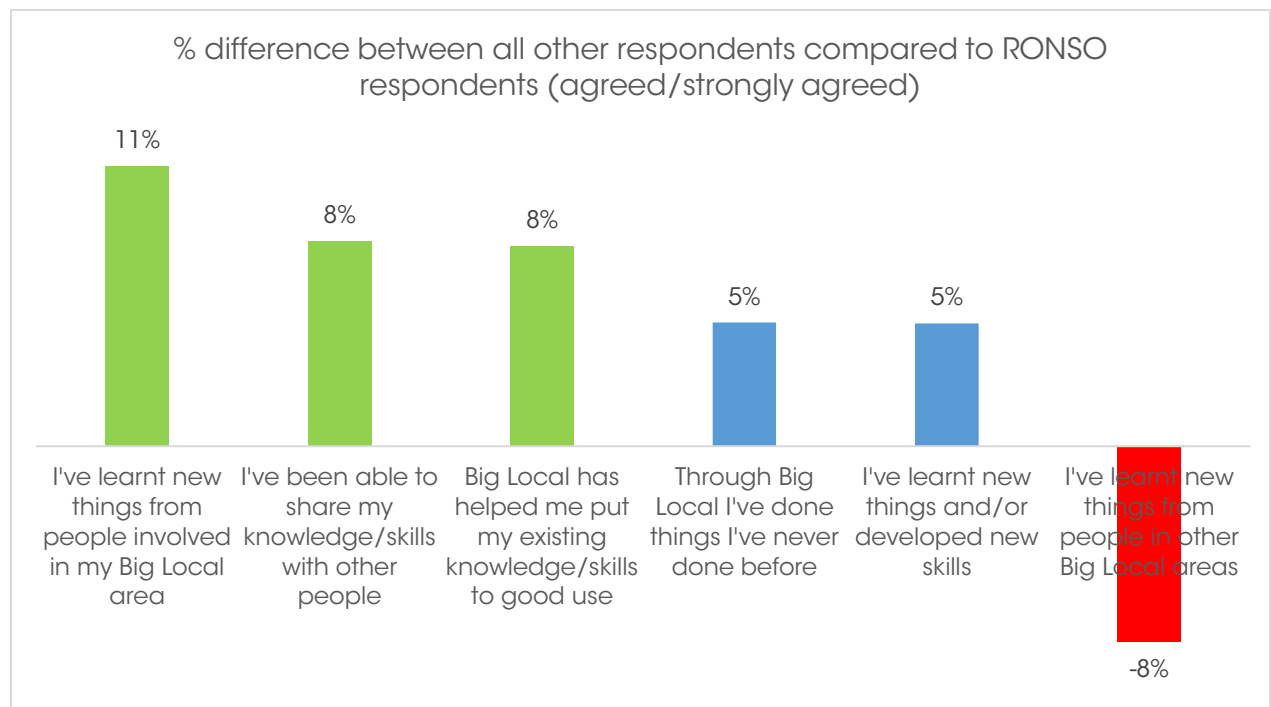
The survey asked partnership members a range of questions about their knowledge and skills. We asked if they felt they had learned new skills and/or tried new things through Big Local. We also wanted to know if they felt they had shared their existing knowledge and skills through Big Local.

Non-RONSO area respondents were more likely to use their existing skills and experiences through their participation in Big Local. They were also more likely to have learnt new things from people in their own Big Local area (+11%). However, when looking at learning outside of the Big local area, RONSO area respondents were equally as likely to have learnt new things from people in other Big Local areas (-1%⁷). Similarly, when it came to learning, RONSO area respondents were as likely to have learnt new things (+5%⁸) or developed new skills (+5%⁹) through Big Local compared to non-RONSO area respondents.

This paints an interesting picture around learning, knowledge, and skills. RONSO area respondents are less likely to think they are contributing their skills and knowledge to their

Big Local. However, through their experience of Big Local they are learning; and when it comes to learning from people outside their Big Local area, even more so than non-RONSO area respondents.

Graph 3: Thinking about your knowledge and skills in relation to Big Local



7 Not statistically significant

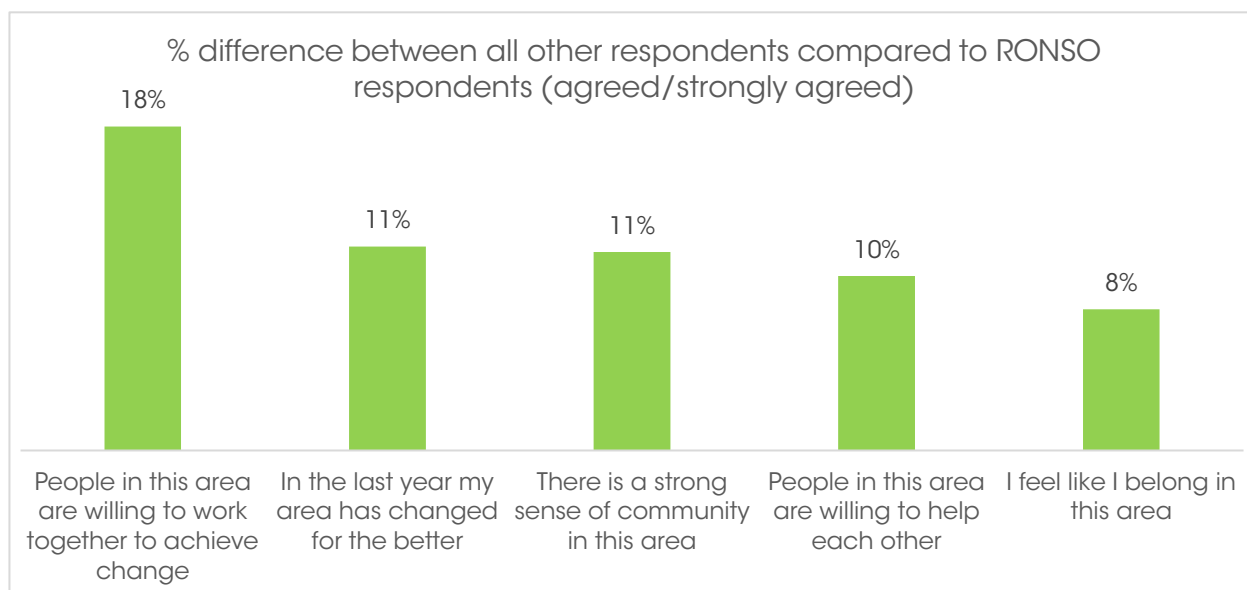
8 Not statistically significant

9 Not statistically significant

3) Your Big Local area

The survey asked respondents to tell us what they broadly thought about their Big Local area. Non-RONSO area respondents were more likely to think positively of their area than RONSO area respondents. They were also more likely to think people in their area were willing to work together to achieve change (+18%), help each other (+10%), and think that their area has changed for the better (+11%). In addition, they were also more likely to feel connected to their area (+8%).

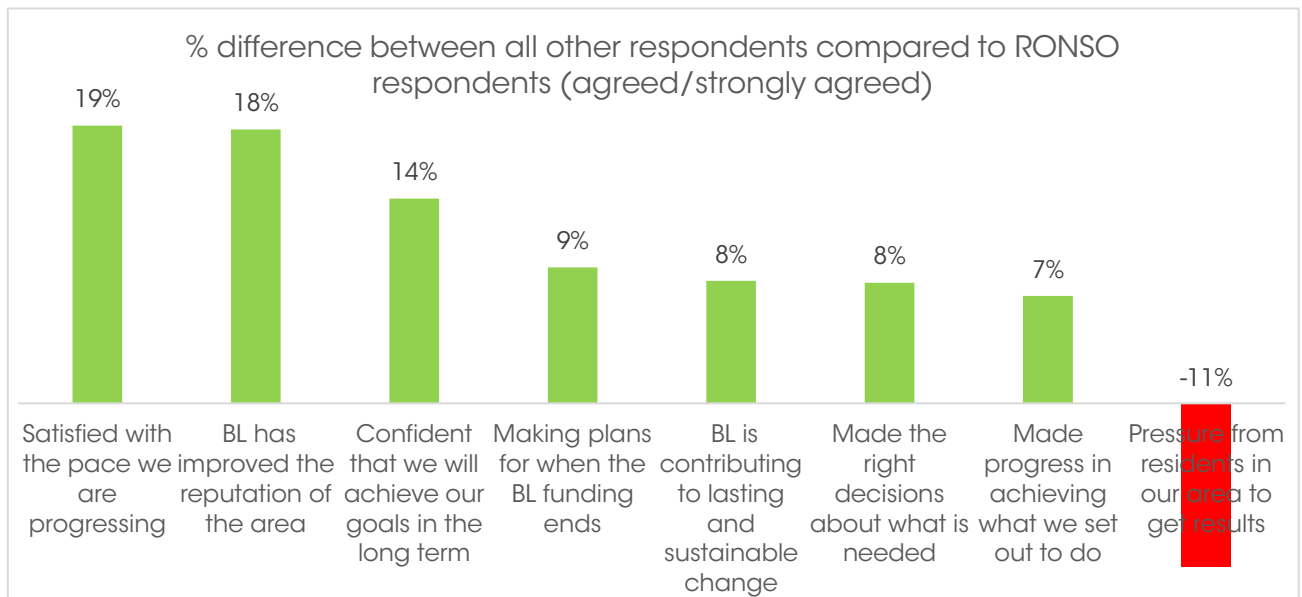
Graph 4: Thinking about your Big Local area



4) Progress of their Big Local area

The survey asked about how partnership members felt about the progress of their Big Local. Non-RONSO area respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree were more likely to be satisfied with the pace of their Big Local (+19%), confident in achieving their long-term goals (+14%) and that their Big Local had improved the reputation of the area (+18%). They were also more likely to think their area is planning for the end of Big Local (+9%) compared to RONSO area respondents.

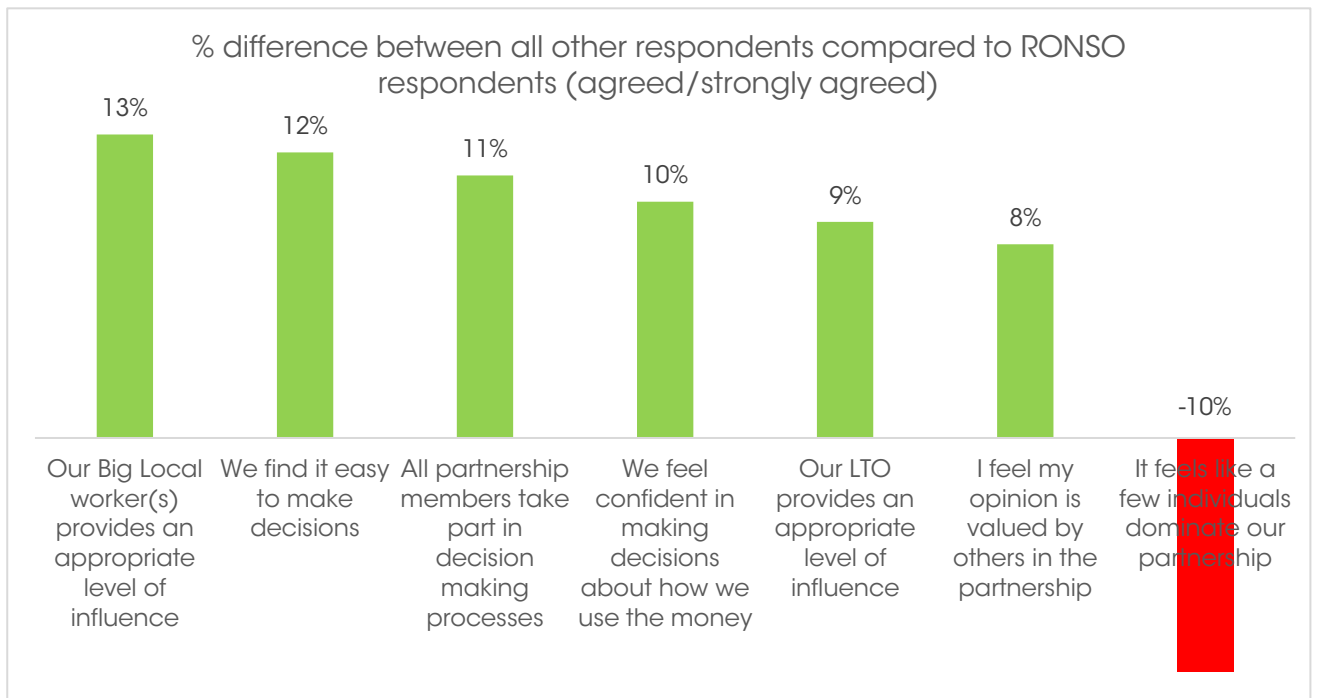
Graph 5: Thinking about the progress your Big Local area has made in the past year



5) Decision-making

The survey asked a set of questions about how partnership members thought about how their partnership made decisions. Non-RONSΟ area respondents were more likely to strongly agree or agree about the confidence of the partnership in decision-making. This included how easy it was to make decisions (+12%), and that all opinions were valued (+8%). What stands out is how differently the two groups think about decision-making in their partnership. Non-RONSΟ area respondents were less likely to think their partnership was dominated by a few individuals (-10%) and more likely to think that all partnership members took part in decision making (+11%). They were also more likely to think their worker (+13%) and LTO (+9%) had an appropriate level of influence on the partnership. This highlights how decision-making in RONSΟ partnerships is a key challenge but also how the realisation of the resident-led and inclusive values of Big Local translates to a real sense of progress and an increase in community spirit and connectedness.

Graph 6: Thinking about how your Big Local partnership makes decisions

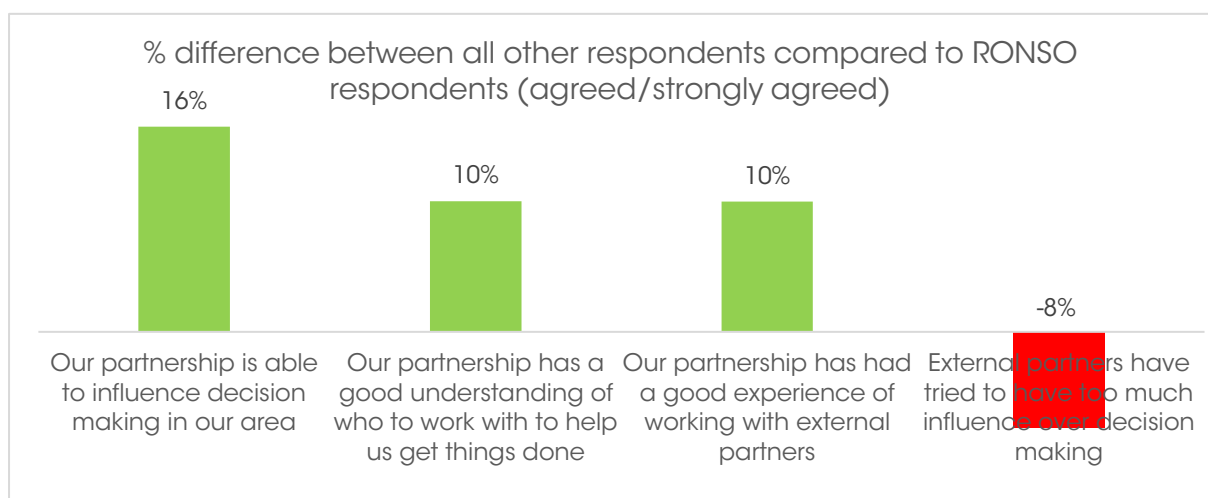


6) Working with other partners

The survey asked two sets of questions about working with others. One question focused on the ability of the partnership to work with other partners while the other asked about the quality of relationships with a range of local and national partners.

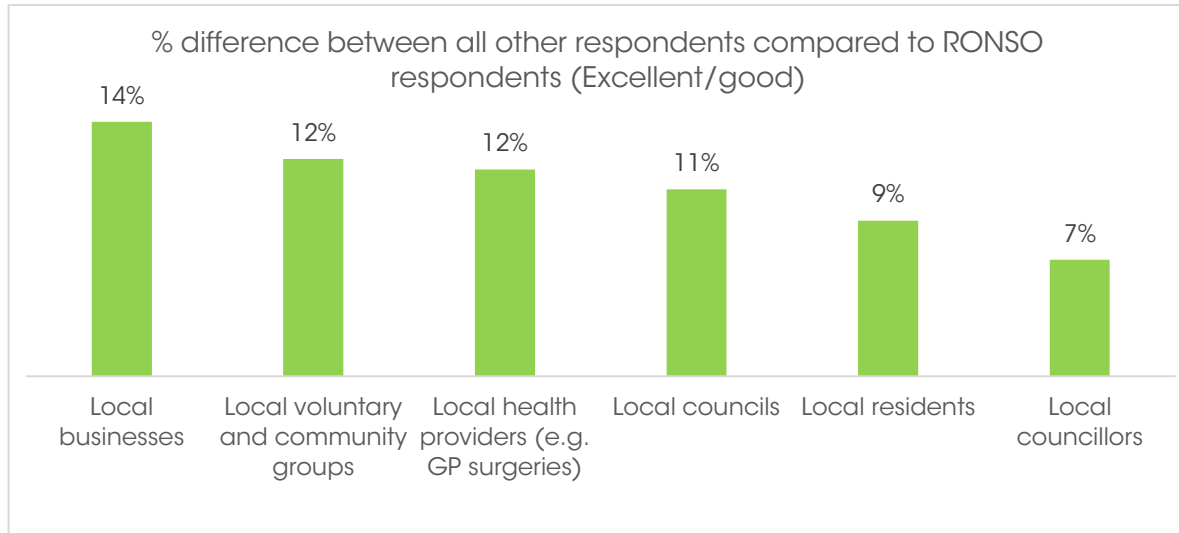
Non-RONSΟ area respondents were more likely to think their partnership can influence decision-making in their area (+16%) compared to RONSΟ area respondents. They were also more likely to think their partnership knows which partners to work with (+10%) and, when working with these partners, to have a positive experience (+10%). In contrast, RONSΟ area respondents were more likely to think that the external partners they work with have too much influence on decision-making (-8%).

Graph 7: Thinking about your partnership’s networks and influence within your area:



When asked about the quality of relationship with specific types of local and national entities, non-RONSO area respondents were more likely to think they had excellent or good relationships with a range of local entities or groups. This included local residents (+9%), voluntary and community groups (+12%), local councils (+11%) and councillors (+7%).

Graph 8: Thinking about your partnership's relationships with others:

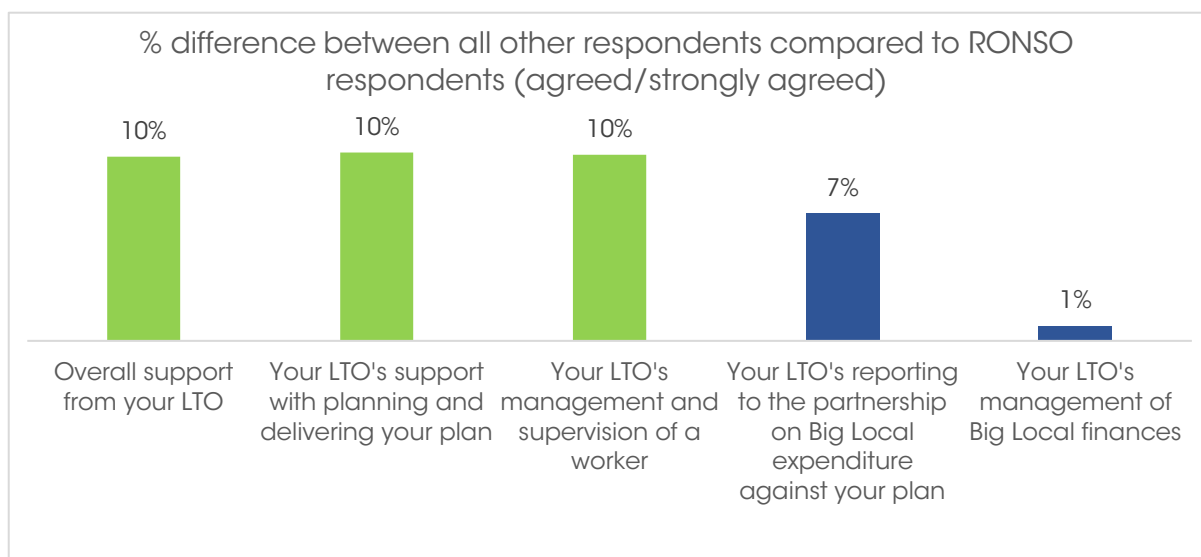


The previous two graphs demonstrate how decision-making, partnerships and relationships are connected. RONSO partnership members are less likely to think they can influence decision making locally, which correlates with a less positive experience working with partners and a less positive relationships with local groups or stakeholders.

7) Working with their LTO

RONSO area respondents were less likely to view their LTO as helpful in the delivery of their plan (+10%) and supervision of a worker (10%). However, they did not find their LTO's management of their Big Local funds to be an issue. This suggests that the challenges with the LTO in RONSO areas is not related to their core function of the management of Big Local funds but the additional responsibilities that an LTO may take on.

Graph 9: Please rate the support you have received from your LTO



Summary

When compared to respondents from other areas, RONSΟ area respondents generally had much more negative experiences and views of their Big Local. This included a less positive view on their progress, decision-making and their neighbourhood. Relationships also appeared to be a challenge both within their partnership and with external partners and local stakeholders. Specifically, RONSΟ area respondents felt others outside of the partnership, like other partners, the worker or the LTO, had too much influence which would appear to challenge the resident-led ethos that is at the heart of the Big Local programme.

However, this does not mean all of their experiences were negative. RONSΟ area respondents appeared to be learning as much as non-RONSΟ area respondents and in fact appear to learn more from other Big locals. They are also equally as likely to have met new people and, importantly, to stay involved in their Big Local.

The results highlight how an issue or challenge experienced by a partnership member, whether that is in decision-making, working with partnerships or delivery, can have ramifications on how a partnership member views their experience of the programme and beyond, including their perceptions of their area and relationships within it. These results also highlight the complexity of the challenges in RONSΟ areas and how there is no single issue or challenge that distinguishes RONSΟ areas. Therefore, there is likely no single solution for these areas either. This has implications for Local Trust as different RONSΟ areas will require different types of support for them to get on track to spend out by 2026.

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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