



How can we make engagement work?



Ben Page

Chairman

**Ipsos MORI Social Research
Institute**

ben.page@mori.com

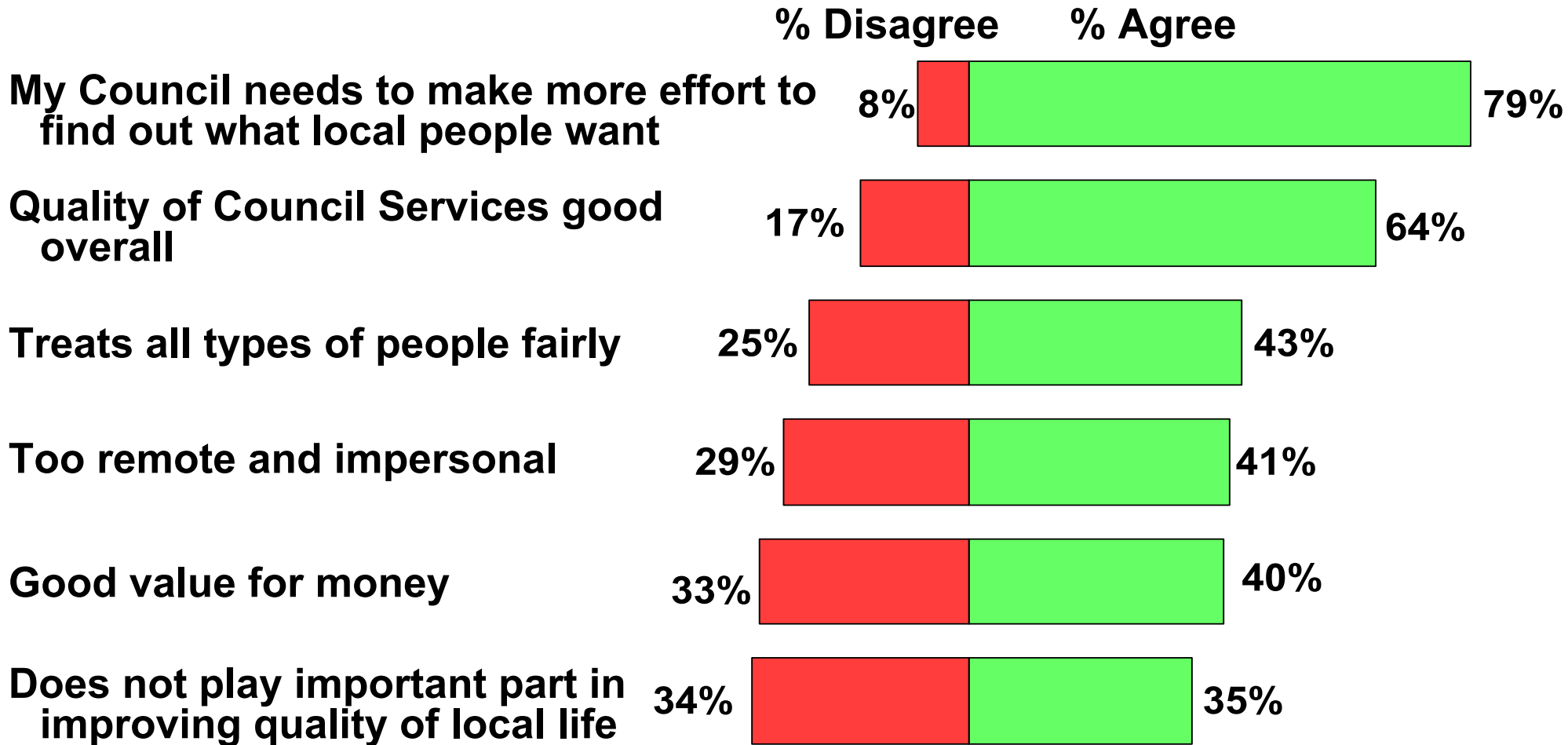
Where are we now?

- **9 years of reform to boost involvement and accountability**
- **Surveys, user engagement, juries, workshops, consultation strategies, local area forums, ward sub-committees etc**
- **Mayors and Cabinets to let us know who is really in charge**
- **Voting in NDC elections**
- **Partnerships**
- **And now elected hospital Boards, elected or local community police boards, library boards etc**
- **The public are crosser than when we began....**

**People don't feel listened
to**

Despite years of surveys.....

Q How strongly do you agree or disagree that your council . . . ?

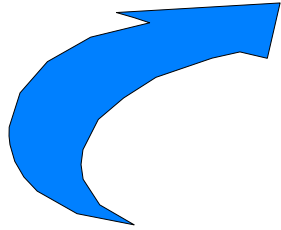


Base: 2,488 residents aged 16+

Most People feel they are not listened to

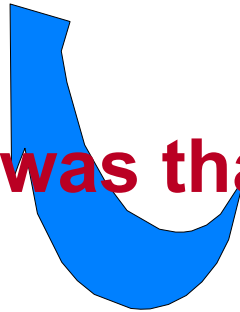
- But may still be difficult to get them to take part in a particular exercise – or take part in existing structures
- Five challenges
 1. Relevance
 - Is the Council doing a good job in implementing its Agenda 21 obligations?*
 2. Credibility/efficacy problem - what's in it for me? What will actually change?
 3. Resources
 4. Political and managerial commitment
 5. Scale – most good examples are only working with a very small proportion of people

Spiral of Silence



*Oh yes, they have those
community forum things at the
church hall every month..but
hardly anyone goes*

*What's the point? Nothing ever
happened. They just always say
they don't have enough money*



What was that like?

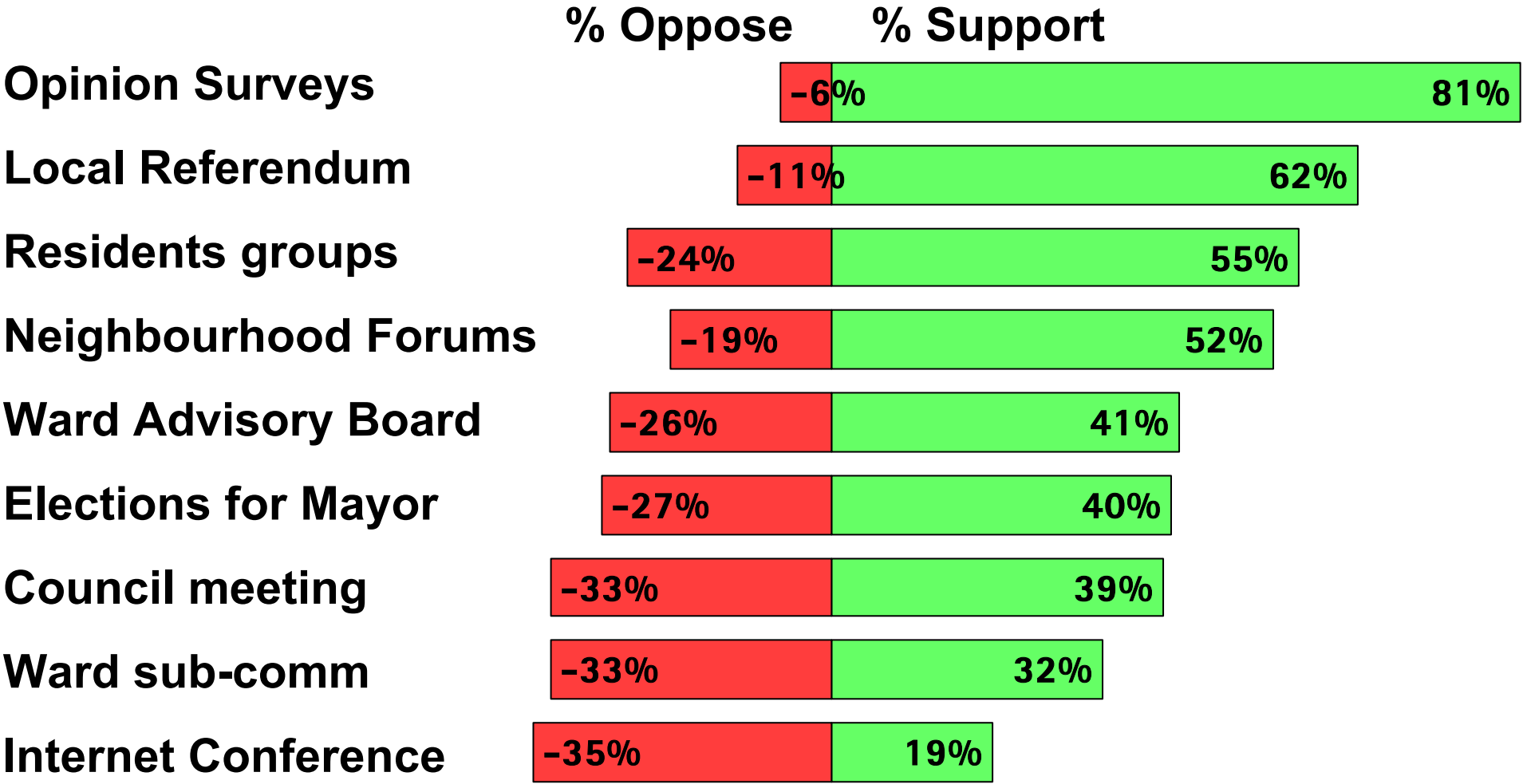
*I went to one the police held five
years ago*



How do you know?

**Getting involved:
what do people say
they find
most attractive?
More lean back than
lean forwards.....**

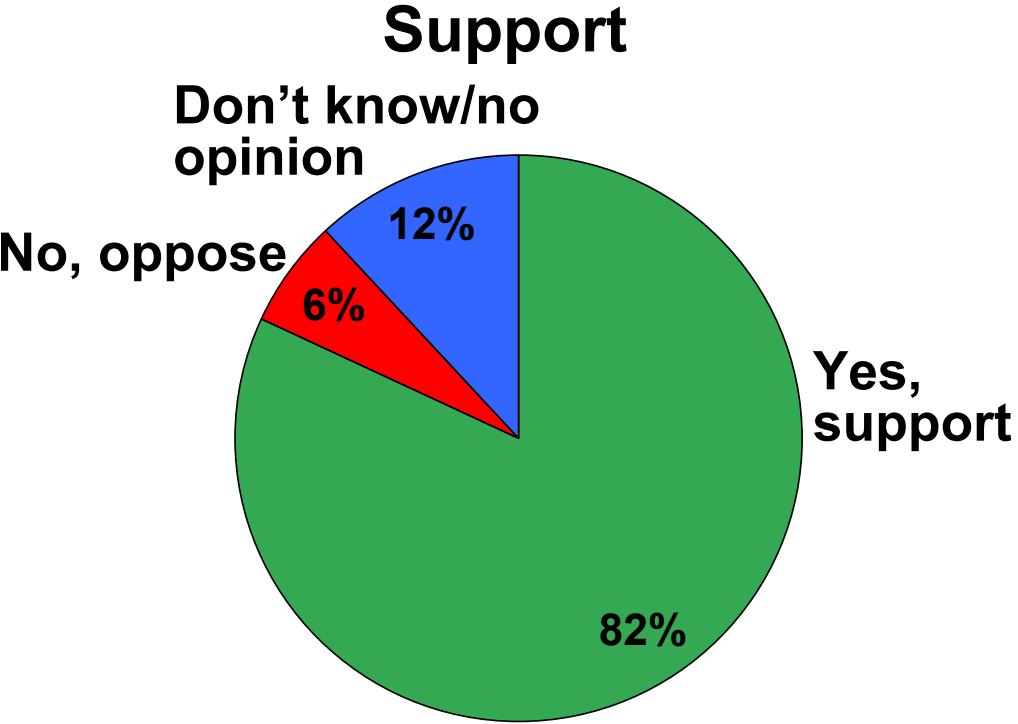
Becoming a Part of Decision-making: what people are in favour of is different to what they actually do



Base: All respondents (1545)

Most people favour local area forums of one kind or another

Q *In principle, would you support or oppose extending Community Partnerships to other parts of the Borough?*



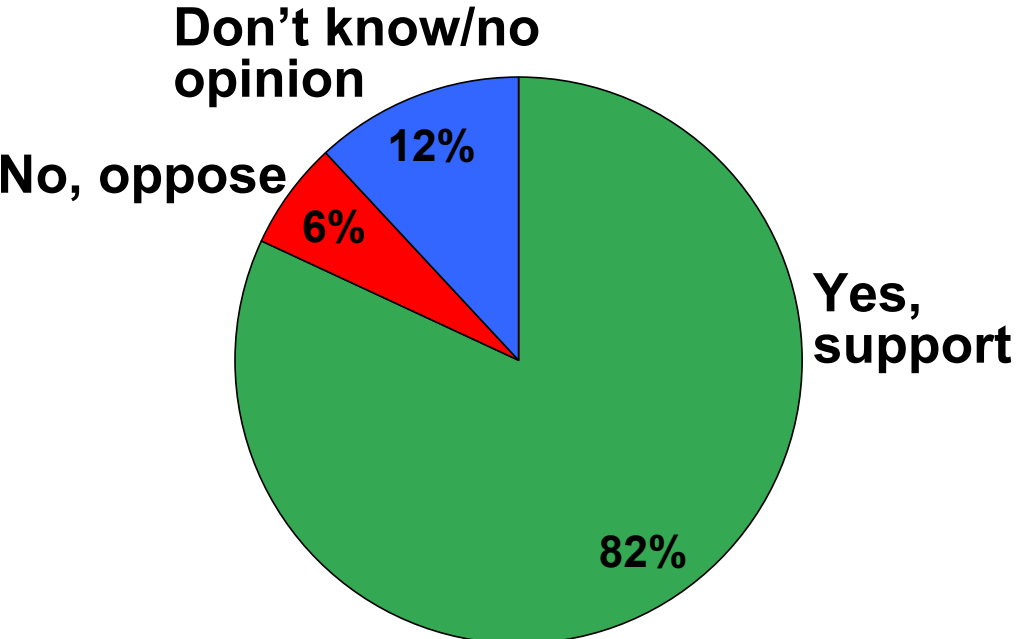
Base: All residents (1,021)

But many fewer SAY they personally want to get involved

Q *In principle, would you support or oppose extending Community Partnerships to other parts of the Borough?*

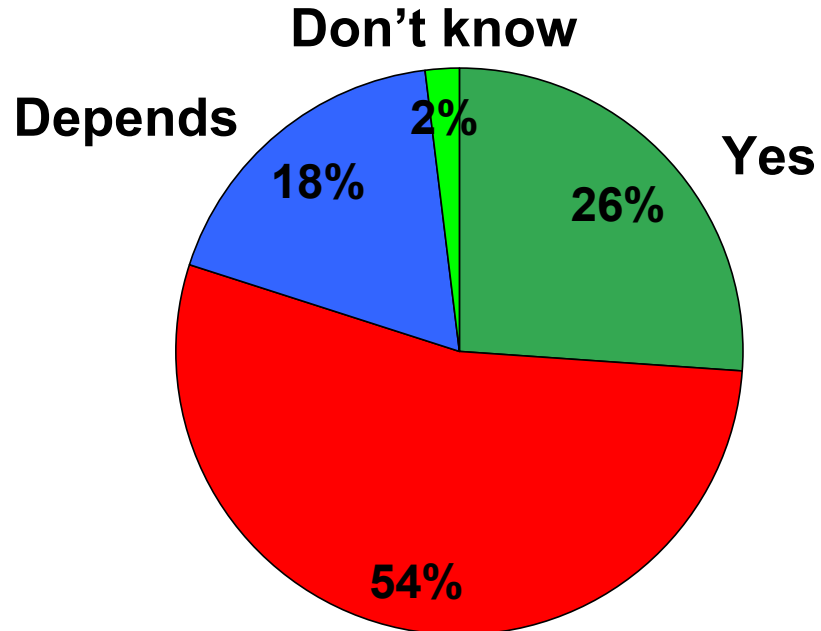
Q *And would you personally be interested in getting involved?*

Support



Base: All residents (1,021)

Involvement



Base: All respondents who support the idea (835)

And in practice only a tiny proportion ever do...

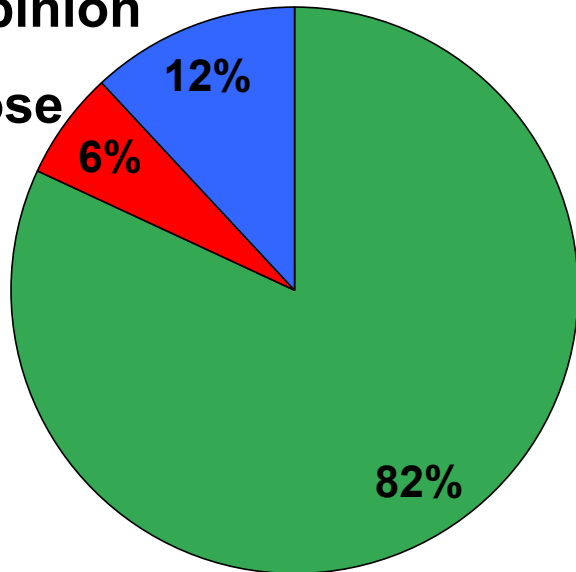
Q *In principle, would you support or oppose extending Community Partnerships to other parts of the Borough?*

Q *And would you personally be interested in getting involved?*

Support

Don't know/no opinion

No, oppose



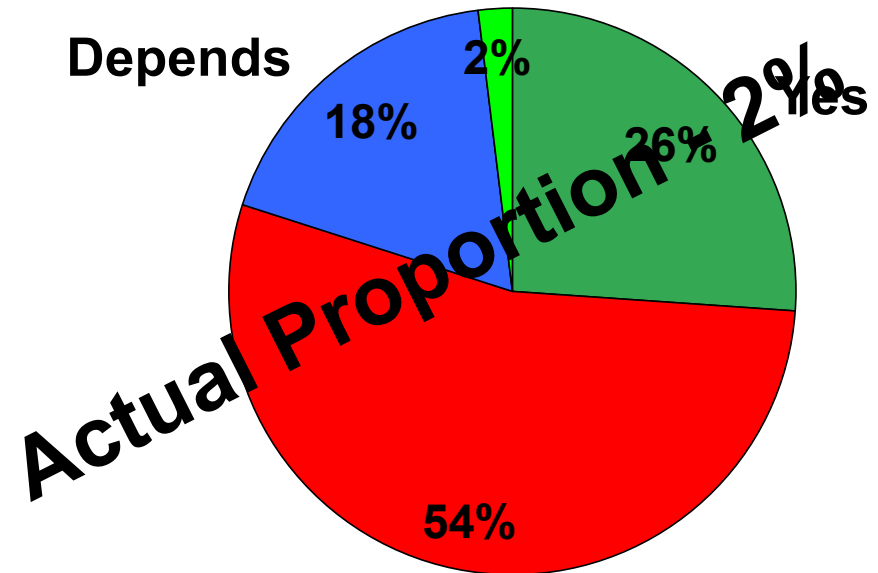
Yes, support

Base: All residents (1,021)

Involvement

Don't know

Depends



No

Base: All respondents who support the idea (835)

New Deal for Communities

- Examples from NDC Evaluation – largest effort to involve community in regeneration programme?
- Focus groups and surveys in every NDC
- People want range of methods – surveys, focus groups, workshops, juries, video projects etc
- But mostly people want someone to come to them:

It would be good to go round to each individual home and ask people what improvements they would like to make

If only they didn't bombard us with so much paper and actually sent people out to talk to us

But need to see action...

■ Consultation fatigue a real problem

Show us something, do something about it, not just consultation

They need to stop talking about things and actually do them. People are sick of seeing these leaflets and being invited here, there and everywhere, they want to see some action

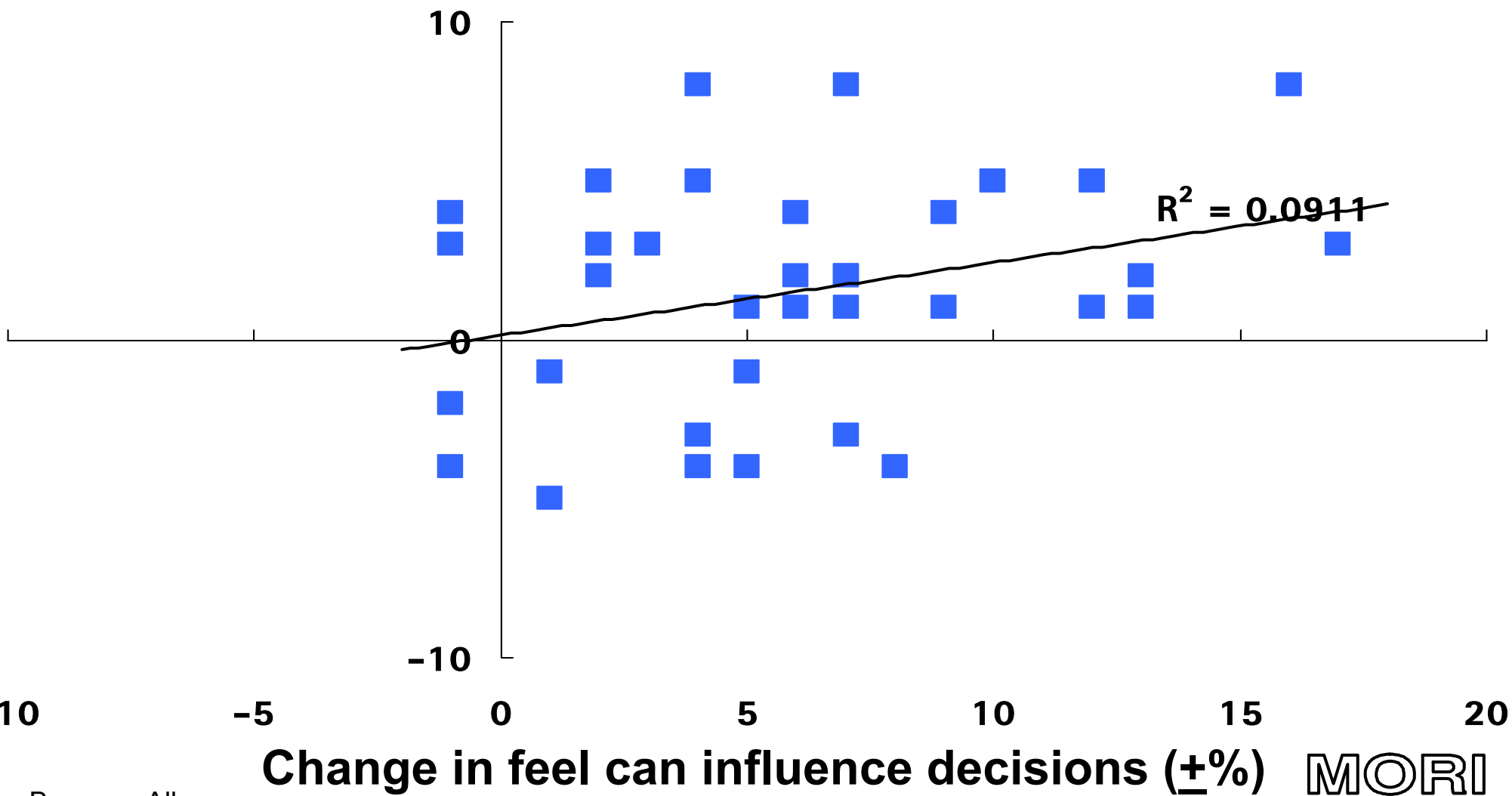
They've given us so much crap over the years promising this, that and the other and delivering us nothing, so everybody's now convinced that these people just want to do everything that suits themselves

Don't just listen to us and that's the end of the story, but take all the information and actually do something about it so we see what's happening and we know we've been heard – don't keep it all behind closed doors

**Impact of
consultation/involvement
hard to identify...**

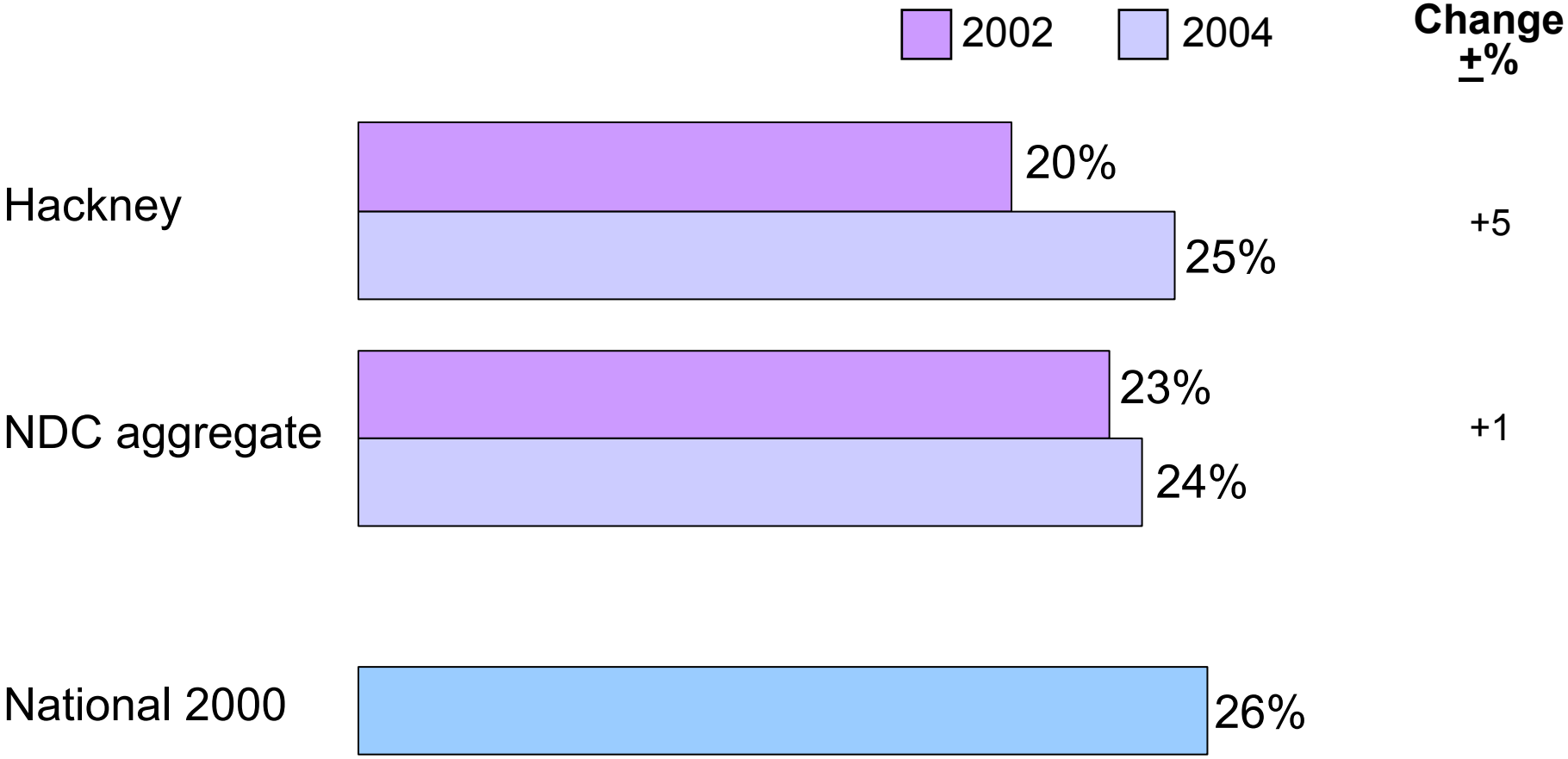
Only a weak relationship between noticing improvement and feeling involved

Change in satisfaction with area ($\pm\%$)



Despite some good local examples, overall NDC made no impact on building local accountability

Q *And do you feel you can influence decisions that affect your area?*



Base: All respondents: Hackney 504 (2002) & 501 (2004); NDC Aggregate 19,574 (2002) & 19,633 (2004)

National: General Household Survey – Social Capital Module

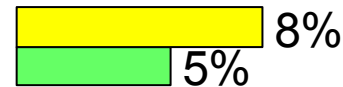


And most involvement is often negative – eg as Hackney improves, interest in being involved has fallen

Q Which of the statements comes closest to your own attitudes towards Hackney Council?

2001 2005

I'm not interested in what the Council does, or whether they do their job



I'm not interested in what the Council does, as long as they do their job



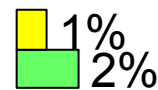
I like to know what the Council is doing, but I'm happy to let them get on with their job



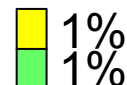
I would like to have more of a say in what the Council does, and the services it provides



I am already involved with the Council and the services it provides



Don't know



**Engagement key
– but difficult...need to
be clear about how much
we expect**

Also need clarity about expectations – do you really mean “engagement” or just listening to people effectively?

*It is not enough to consult people...
they must be fully engaged in the
process from the start and... everybody
must be included*

**Our towns and cities: the future -
ODPM**

And who wants to get involved
anyway?

Do people want to be involved in local decisions?

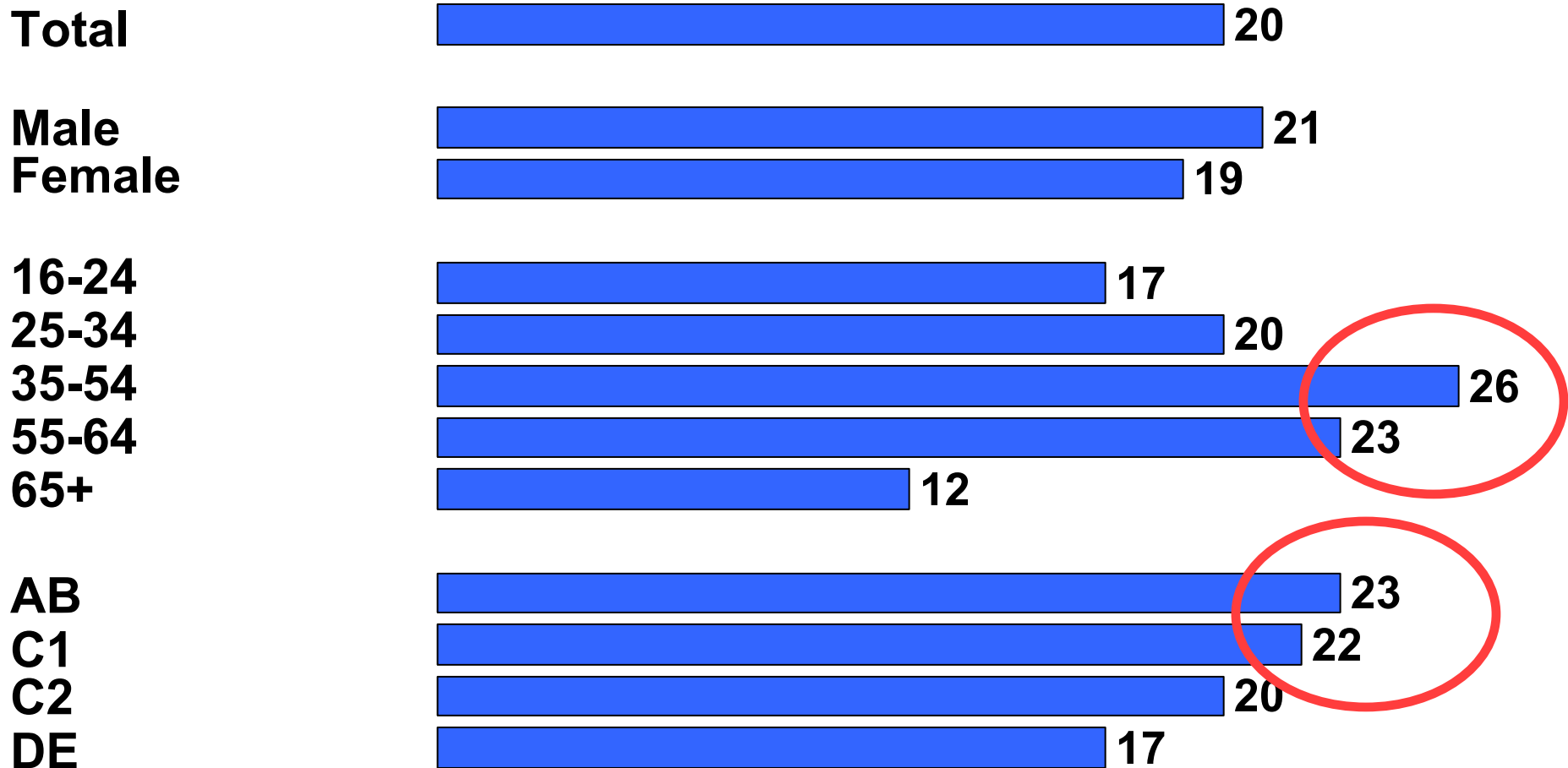
Q Which of these statements come closest to your own attitudes towards XXX Council?



Who are these people?

Yes, but who are they?

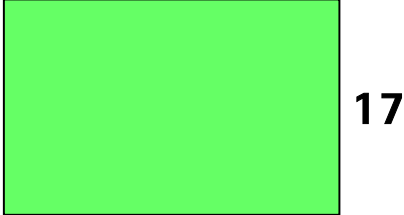
% Wanting more involvement



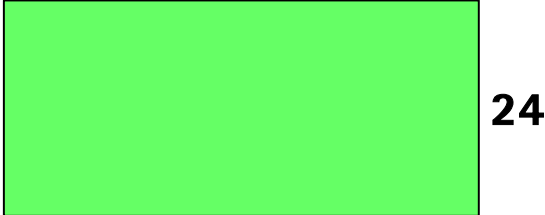
Getting involved: three local authorities

Want to be involved

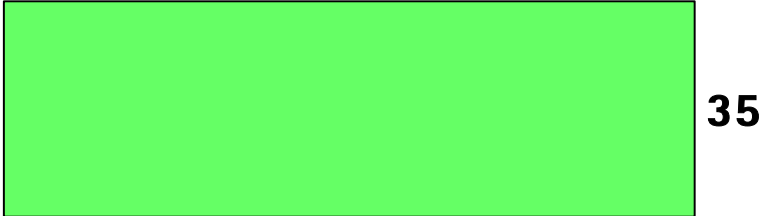
Authority A



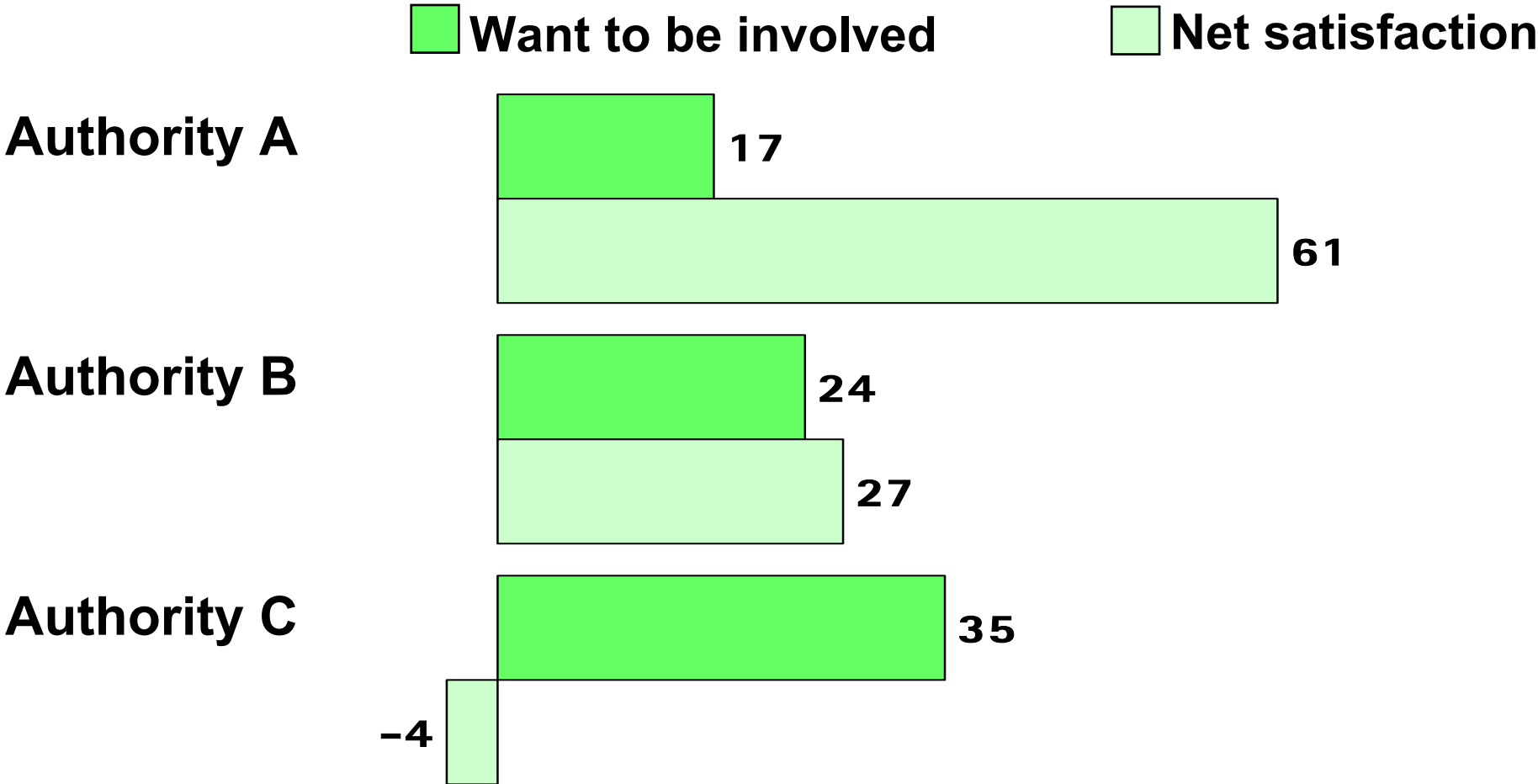
Authority B



Authority C



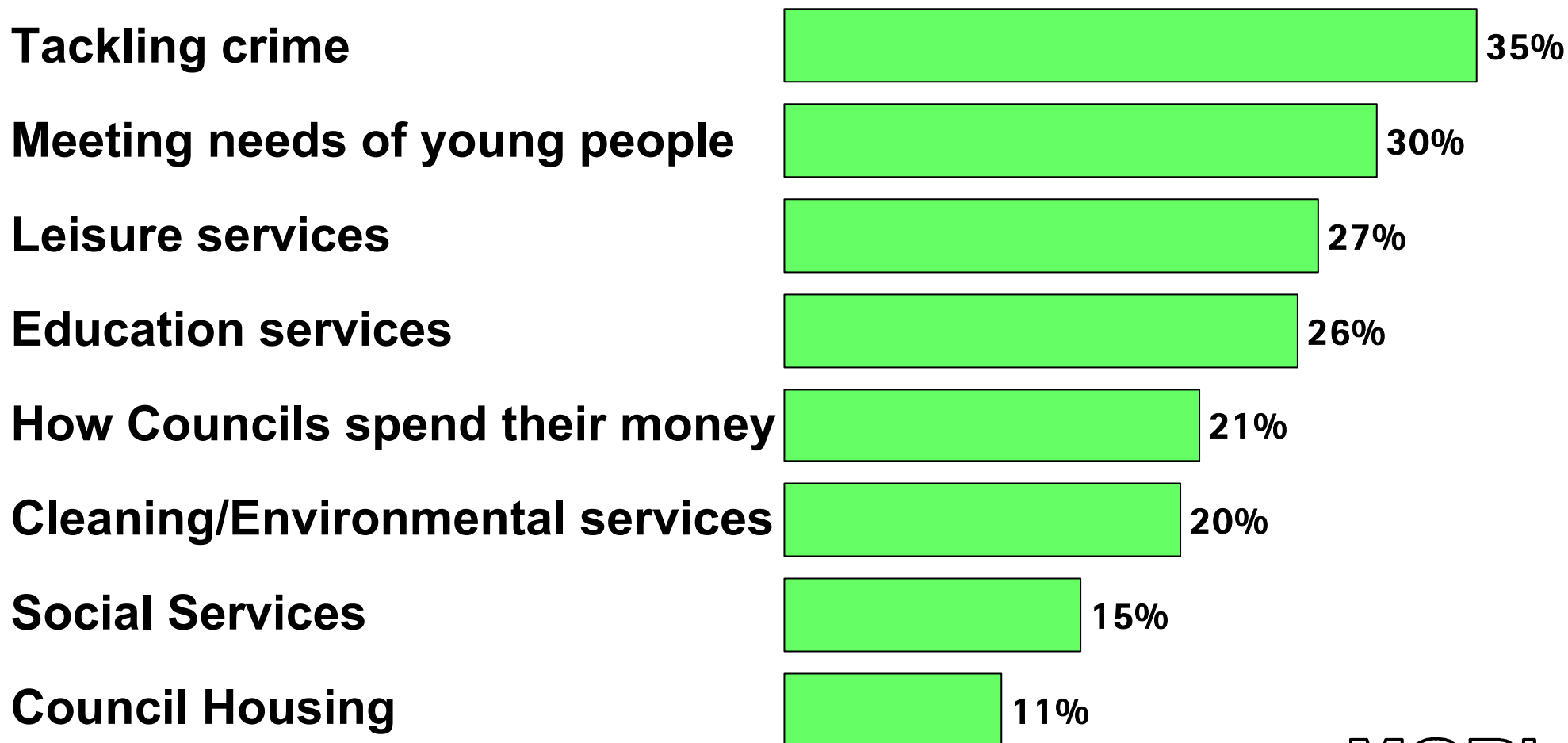
Getting involved: involvement v satisfaction



**But does depend on the
issue – highlights need
to think hard, package,
communicate and
resource properly – a
major challenge**

Issues that interest people...

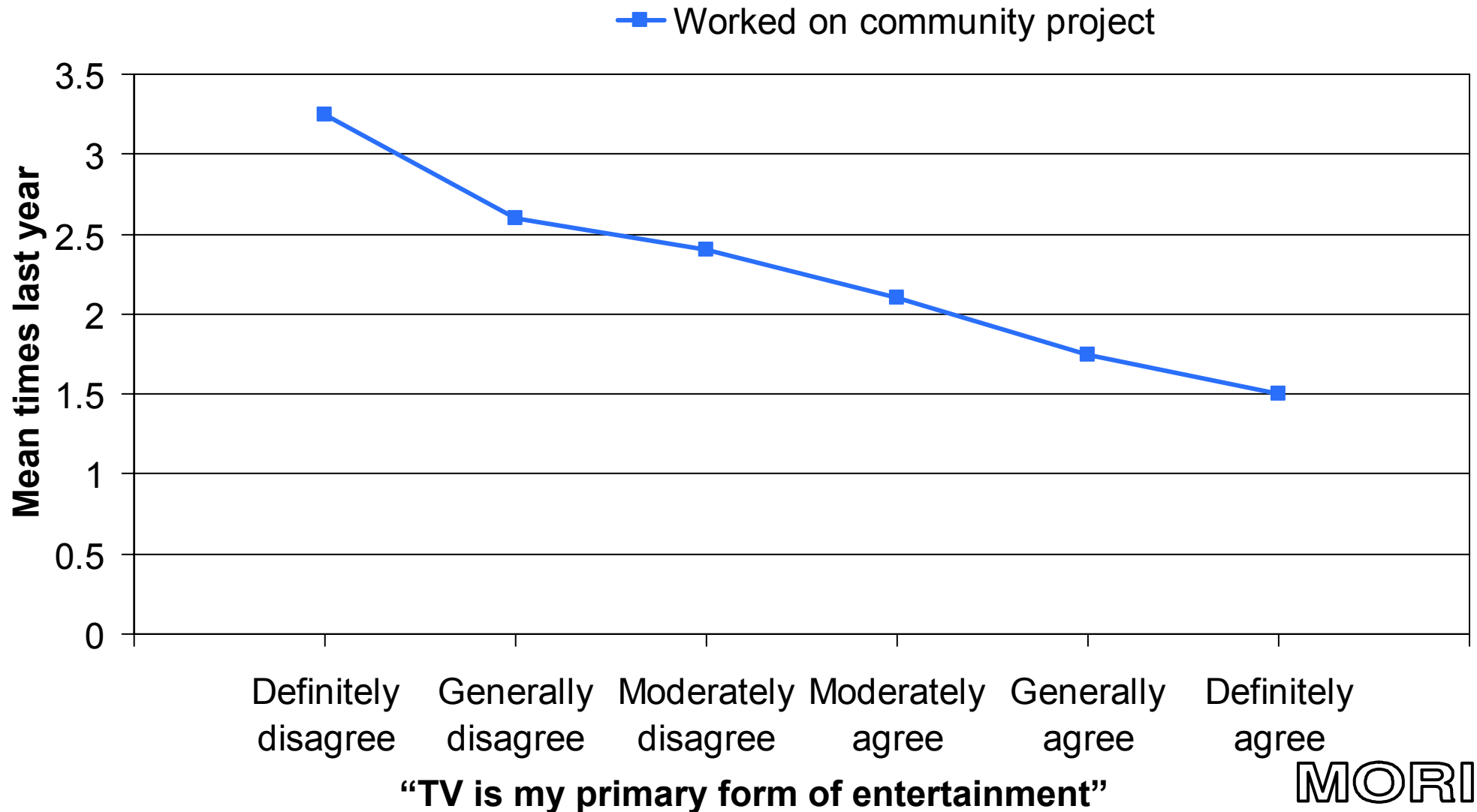
Q *In which, if any, of the following services or issues would you personally like to have greater involvement?*



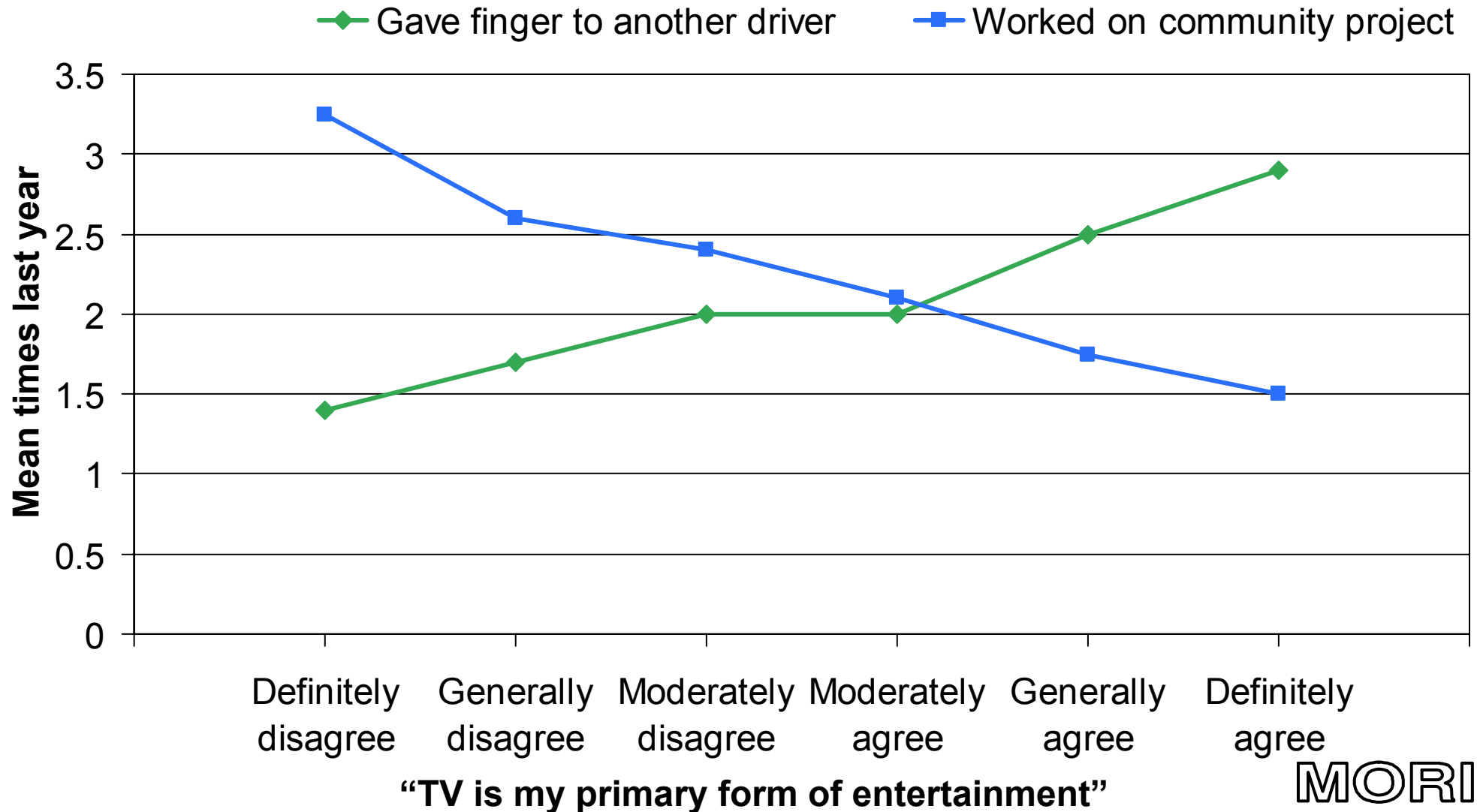
Base: 2,488 residents aged 16+

Fighting big social trends...

Fighting big trends against involvement...



Fighting big trends against involvement...



Key Points

Conclusions

- **Consultation/involvement important to people – if clearly linked to action**
- **Signs that can help achieve positive outcomes and has significant positive side-effects – but issue of scale**
- **Mustn't don't set up to fail – recognise range of methods/levels of involvement needed**
 - **Need to *communicate* as much as *consult* better**
- **Need fitness for purpose – and clarity about methods**
- **Need to offer *influence* as much as involvement**
- **Demand more specific minimum standards rather than more woolly rhetoric**



thank you



ben.page@mori.com

020 7347 3000