

Attitudes of Electoral Agents on the Administration of the 2015 General Election

Final Report

Justin Fisher (Brunel University London), David Cutts (University of Bath), Edward Fieldhouse (University of Manchester) & Bettina Rottweiler (Brunel University London)

Executive Summary

- Levels of satisfaction with administration of the general election among electoral agents were high. Seven in ten (71%) were satisfied, with 12% dissatisfied.
- Agents expressed only very limited levels of concern about electoral fraud. Only 10% perceived there to be *A Little* or *A Lot* at elections in their area.
- Agents expressed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the nominations process. For example, 85% of agents found the nomination forms easy to complete.
- Most agents (87%) said they received sufficient information from the RO/election staff to help them manage their responsibilities.
- Most agents agreed it was clear what was happening during the verification and count (81%), but there was less satisfaction with the efficiency of this process (73%).
- There are improving levels of satisfaction in respect of clarity of the rules on election spending and donations.
- There was a notable improvement in the rating of the Electoral Commission as a useful source of advice and guidance. Around two-thirds (65%) agreed it was a useful source during the campaign; a rise of twelve percentage points compared with 2010.
- Those agents who contacted the Electoral Commission directly were generally satisfied with their experience, though more on matters of electoral administration than on party and election finance.

August 14th 2015

Methodology

A series of questions co-designed by the Electoral Commission and Professor Fisher were included in a larger survey of election agents at the 2015 general election. The survey was distributed immediately after polling day to candidates' electoral agents of the Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, Scottish National Party and UKIP for 629 constituencies in Great Britain – a total of 2,592¹. The data reported here are based on 1116 valid responses - a response rate of 43%. These consist of responses from:

- 229 Conservative agents (36% response rate)
- 326 Labour agents (52% response rate)
- 315 Liberal Democrat agents (50% response rate)
- 20 Plaid Cymru agents (50% response rate)
- 28 SNP agents (47% response rate)
- 198 UKIP agents (33% response rate)

There was some variation by party in terms of agent experience: Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Plaid Cymru and SNP agents were more experienced, with 55%, 61%, 70% and 54% respectively having organised a campaign previously. The same was true of 51% of Labour agents and 35% of those of UKIP.

There were also some demographic variations. Agents were mainly men (79%), though particularly so in respect of Plaid Cymru (90%) and UKIP (87%). The mean age of agents was 59, though again, there was some variation by party. SNP and Conservative agents had the lowest mean ages (50 and 53 respectively), with UKIP the oldest (63). For each of the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats, the mean age of their agents was higher than in a previous study covering the 1992, 1997 and 2001 elections.² All parties except Plaid Cymru had at least one agent aged 80 or over. Agents who had previously organised a campaign were on average older (62) than those who had not (56).

For each survey question, there are three tables: a simple summary and then the findings broken down by party and by agent experience - whether the agent had previously organised a general election campaign or not. In the party and agent experience tables, response categories are combined (i.e. *Agree* and *Tend to Agree*) for ease of interpretation together with a net score (percentage who *Agree* minus percentage who *Disagree*). Percentages will not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

¹ No questionnaires were sent to agents in Buckingham (the Speaker's seat), or to Rochdale and Heywood & Middleton. In the case of the latter two constituencies, the local authority (Rochdale) did not publish details of the agents. No electoral agent address details were available for 18 UKIP agents. This was principally the case where the agents were also Parliamentary candidates.

² Fisher, J., Denver, D. & Hands, G. (2006) 'Unsung Heroes: Constituency Election Agents in British General Elections' *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*. **8**: 569–586

Results

The Administration of the Election

There were good levels of satisfaction with the administration of the general election (**Tables 1a, 1b & 1c**). Some 71% were satisfied overall, with 12% dissatisfied. This represented a drop from 2010, when 83% of agents reported satisfaction.³

The lowest levels of satisfaction were found amongst Liberal Democrat (57%) and UKIP (65%) agents. 15% of Liberal Democrat agents and 17% of UKIP agents were dissatisfied. By way of contrast, Conservative, Plaid Cymru and SNP agents were particularly satisfied.

Agents with previous experience of organising a general election campaign were slightly more satisfied, with a net score (percentage of those satisfied minus the percentage dissatisfied) of +64 compared with +53 for agents with no prior experience. Among the 12% of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction, the most prevalent reason given for dissatisfaction was the organisation of the election count, followed by concerns in respect of postal voting and verification, the nomination process and the organisation of polling stations.

Table 1a. Administration of the election

| <i>How satisfied were you with the administration of the general election in your constituency?</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Very Satisfied | 31 |
| Fairly Satisfied | 40 |
| Neither | 17 |
| Fairy Dissatisfied | 9 |
| Very Dissatisfied | 3 |

Table 1b. Administration of the election by party

| <i>%</i> | <i>Satisfied</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Dissatisfied</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------|
| Conservative | 82 | 10 | 8 | +74 |
| Labour | 79 | 11 | 11 | +68 |
| Liberal Democrat | 57 | 28 | 15 | +42 |
| Plaid Cymru | 80 | 15 | 5 | +75 |
| SNP | 93 | 4 | 4 | +89 |
| UKIP | 65 | 18 | 17 | +48 |

Table 1c. Administration of the election by experience of organising a general election campaign

| <i>%</i> | <i>Satisfied</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Dissatisfied</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------|
| Previous Experience | 74 | 16 | 10 | +64 |
| No Experience | 68 | 17 | 15 | +53 |

³ Fisher, J., Cutts, D. & Fieldhouse, E (2010) *Attitudes of Electoral Agents on the Administration of the 2010 General Election*

Perceptions of Electoral Fraud

Overall, there was a low level of perception of electoral fraud (**Tables 2a, 2b & 2c**). Only 10% perceived there to be *A Little* or *A Lot*. 44% were of the view that there was *None at All*, and if *Don't Knows* are excluded, that figure rises to 61%.

Analysing these data by party shows that UKIP agents were most likely to perceive there to be fraud, with 28% responding *A Little* or *A Lot*. Agents without prior experience of organising a general election campaign were slightly more likely to perceive some electoral fraud than those with previous experience, but 59% still felt that hardly any or no election fraud took place.

Table 2a. Perceptions of electoral fraud

| <i>How much, if at all, do you think that electoral fraud took place at elections in your area?</i> | % |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| A Lot | 3 |
| A Little | 7 |
| Hardly at All | 19 |
| None at All | 44 |
| Don't Know | 28 |

Table 2b. Perceptions of electoral fraud by party

| % | A Lot | A Little | Hardly at All | None at All | Don't Know |
|------------------|-------|----------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| Conservative | 5 | 5 | 18 | 52 | 20 |
| Labour | 0 | 3 | 16 | 56 | 24 |
| Liberal Democrat | 0 | 4 | 20 | 43 | 32 |
| Plaid Cymru | 0 | 0 | 30 | 35 | 35 |
| SNP | 0 | 4 | 39 | 46 | 11 |
| UKIP | 8 | 20 | 19 | 16 | 37 |

Table 2c. Perceptions of electoral fraud by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | A Lot | A Little | Hardly at All | None at All | Don't Know |
|---------------------|-------|----------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| Previous Experience | 2 | 5 | 19 | 48 | 26 |
| No Experience | 4 | 8 | 20 | 39 | 29 |

The Nomination Process

85% of agents found the nomination forms easy to complete. There was minor variation by party, with Labour, Liberal Democrat and UKIP agents least likely to agree. Conservative and agents with prior experience of organising a general election campaign were particularly satisfied with the forms (**Tables 3a, 3b & 3c**).

Agents were also of the view that they received sufficient information on the nomination process (**Tables 4a, 4b & 4c**). Fully 89% felt that they had received sufficient information from the RO/election staff, with little variation by party; SNP and UKIP agents being least likely to agree. Agents with previous experience of organising a general election campaign were more likely to be of the view that they had received sufficient information.

Finally, there were also strong levels of satisfaction (89%) with the running of the nomination process (**Tables 5a, 5b & 5c**) with only minor variation by party or agent experience; UKIP (82%) and agents with no prior experience of organising a general election campaign (86%) being least satisfied. Although the overall satisfaction level with the running of the nomination process was strong, this represented a small decline from the 2010 figure, when 95% of agents reported overall satisfaction.⁴

Table 3a. Ease of completion of nomination forms

| <i>Nomination forms were easy to complete</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|
| Agree | 58 |
| Tend to Agree | 27 |
| Neither | 6 |
| Tend to Disagree | 4 |
| Disagree | 5 |

Table 3b. Ease of completion of nomination forms by party

| <i>%</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Conservative | 92 | 2 | 6 | +86 |
| Labour | 83 | 9 | 8 | +75 |
| Liberal Democrat | 84 | 6 | 11 | +73 |
| Plaid Cymru | 90 | 0 | 10 | +80 |
| SNP | 89 | 0 | 11 | +78 |
| UKIP | 84 | 7 | 10 | +74 |

Table 3c. Ease of completion of nomination forms by experience of organising a general election campaign

| <i>%</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Previous Experience | 92 | 3 | 6 | +86 |
| No Experience | 79 | 10 | 12 | +67 |

⁴ Fisher, J., Cutts, D. & Fieldhouse, E (2010) *Attitudes of Electoral Agents on the Administration of the 2010 General Election*

Table 4a. Receipt of sufficient information on the nomination process

| <i>I received sufficient information from the RO/election staff on the nomination process</i> | % |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 70 |
| Tend to Agree | 19 |
| Neither | 5 |
| Tend to Disagree | 3 |
| Disagree | 3 |

Table 4b. Received sufficient information on the nomination process by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|-----|
| Conservative | 92 | 5 | 4 | +88 |
| Labour | 90 | 4 | 6 | +84 |
| Liberal Democrat | 90 | 3 | 7 | +83 |
| Plaid Cymru | 95 | 5 | 0 | +95 |
| SNP | 86 | 7 | 7 | +79 |
| UKIP | 83 | 10 | 7 | +76 |

Table 4c. Received sufficient information on the nomination process by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 93 | 3 | 4 | +89 |
| No Experience | 86 | 7 | 7 | +79 |

Table 5a. The running of the nomination process

| <i>The nomination process was well run</i> | % |
|--------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 68 |
| Tend to Agree | 21 |
| Neither | 6 |
| Tend to Disagree | 3 |
| Disagree | 3 |

Table 5b. The running of the nomination process by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|------|
| Conservative | 93 | 4 | 3 | +90 |
| Labour | 88 | 6 | 5 | +83 |
| Liberal Democrat | 89 | 5 | 7 | +82 |
| Plaid Cymru | 100 | 0 | 0 | +100 |
| SNP | 96 | 4 | 0 | +96 |
| UKIP | 82 | 9 | 9 | +73 |

Table 5c. The running of the nomination process by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 92 | 4 | 4 | +88 |
| No Experience | 86 | 7 | 7 | +79 |

Understanding of Agents' Responsibilities

Most agents (87%) felt they received sufficient information from the RO/election staff to help them manage their responsibilities as an agent (**Tables 6a, 6b & 6c**). There was some variation by party and experience; UKIP (80%) and agents with no prior experience of organising a general election campaign (82%) being least likely to respond positively.

Table 6a. Sufficiency of information to manage responsibilities

| <i>I received sufficient information from the RO/election staff to help me manage my responsibilities as an agent.</i> | % |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 65 |
| Tend to Agree | 22 |
| Neither | 7 |
| Tend to Disagree | 4 |
| Disagree | 3 |

Table 6b. Sufficiency of information to manage responsibilities by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|------|
| Conservative | 90 | 4 | 6 | +84 |
| Labour | 89 | 5 | 6 | +83 |
| Liberal Democrat | 87 | 7 | 6 | +81 |
| Plaid Cymru | 100 | 0 | 0 | +100 |
| SNP | 93 | 7 | 0 | +93 |
| UKIP | 80 | 13 | 7 | +73 |

Table 6c. Sufficiency of information to manage responsibilities by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 93 | 5 | 2 | +91 |
| No Experience | 82 | 8 | 10 | +72 |

Verification and the Count

Most agents agreed that it was clear what was happening during the verification and count (81%); an improvement of eight percentage points compared with 2010.⁵ There was some variation by party, however. Labour (16%) and UKIP (12%) agents were notably more likely to disagree that it was clear what was happening. The same was true for the agents with no prior experience of organising a general election campaign (12%) (**Tables 7a, 7b & 7c**).

Moreover, while 81% agreed that the verification and ballot counting process was clear, only 73% were satisfied with its efficiency (**Tables 8a, 8b & 8c**), with 18% dissatisfied. Labour (20%), Liberal Democrat (21%), UKIP (16%) and perhaps surprisingly, the agents with previous experience of organising a general election campaign (19%) were most likely to be dissatisfied in respect of efficiency.

⁵ Fisher, J., Cutts, D. & Fieldhouse, E (2010) *Attitudes of Electoral Agents on the Administration of the 2010 General Election*

Table 7a. Clarity during verification and counting of ballot papers

| <i>It was clear what was happening during the verification and counting of ballot papers</i> | <i>%</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Agree | 59 |
| Tend to Agree | 22 |
| Neither | 7 |
| Tend to Disagree | 6 |
| Disagree | 5 |
| Don't Know | 1 |

Table 7b. Clarity during verification and counting of ballot papers by party

| <i>%</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Don't Know</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
| Conservative | 89 | 4 | 6 | 0 | +83 |
| Labour | 77 | 7 | 16 | 0 | +61 |
| Liberal Democrat | 81 | 7 | 9 | 3 | +72 |
| Plaid Cymru | 95 | 5 | 0 | 0 | +95 |
| SNP | 96 | 0 | 4 | 0 | +92 |
| UKIP | 75 | 12 | 12 | 1 | +63 |

Table 7c. Clarity during verification and counting of ballot papers by experience of organising a general election campaign

| <i>%</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Don't Know</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
| Previous Experience | 84 | 6 | 9 | 1 | +75 |
| No Experience | 78 | 8 | 12 | 1 | +66 |

Table 8a. Efficiency of the verification and count process

| <i>Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with how efficiently the verification and count process was run?</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Very Satisfied | 41 |
| Fairly Satisfied | 32 |
| Neither | 9 |
| Fairly Dissatisfied | 13 |
| Very Dissatisfied | 5 |

Table 8b. Efficiency of the verification and count process by party

| <i>%</i> | <i>Satisfied</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Dissatisfied</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------|
| Conservative | 80 | 5 | 15 | +65 |
| Labour | 72 | 8 | 20 | +52 |
| Liberal Democrat | 67 | 12 | 21 | +46 |
| Plaid Cymru | 90 | 0 | 10 | +80 |
| SNP | 93 | 4 | 4 | +89 |
| UKIP | 72 | 12 | 16 | +56 |

Table 8c. Efficiency of the verification and count process by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Satisfied | Neither | Dissatisfied | Net |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|--------------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 73 | 9 | 19 | +54 |
| No Experience | 73 | 10 | 17 | +56 |

Rules on Election Spending and Donations

In respect of election spending and donations, 77% of agents agreed that the rules were clear; an improvement of four percentage points compared with 2010⁶ (Tables 9a, 9b & 9c). Again, there was some variation by party and agent experience. Conservative and Labour agents were most likely to find the rules clear, while SNP and UKIP agents were least likely to do so. 17% of UKIP agents were of the view that the rules were unclear; a view also shared by 17% of agents with no prior experience of organising a general election campaign.

Table 9a. Clarity of rules on election spending and donations

| <i>I found the rules on election spending and donations clear</i> | % |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 48 |
| Tend to Agree | 29 |
| Neither | 11 |
| Tend to Disagree | 8 |
| Disagree | 5 |

Table 9b. Clarity of rules on election spending and donations by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|-----|
| Conservative | 80 | 9 | 11 | +69 |
| Labour | 80 | 10 | 10 | +70 |
| Liberal Democrat | 75 | 13 | 13 | +62 |
| Plaid Cymru | 75 | 15 | 10 | +65 |
| SNP | 71 | 14 | 14 | +57 |
| UKIP | 71 | 12 | 17 | +54 |

Table 9c. Clarity of rules on election spending and donations by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 83 | 9 | 8 | +75 |
| No Experience | 70 | 14 | 17 | +53 |

⁶ Fisher, J., Cutts, D. & Fieldhouse, E (2010) *Attitudes of Electoral Agents on the Administration of the 2010 General Election*

The Usefulness of Electoral Commission Advice, Guidance and Information

Overall, 65% viewed the Electoral Commission as a useful source of advice during the campaign; an improvement of twelve percentage points compared with 2010⁷ (**Table 10a**). 71% thought Electoral Commission written guidance for candidates and agents was clear and easy to use (**Table 11a**) and 61% thought Electoral Commission written information on what to expect at the verification and count was clear and easy to use (**Table 12a**).

There was some variation by party. Liberal Democrat and UKIP agents were least likely to view the Electoral Commission as a useful source of advice (**Table 10b**). Agents from the two national parties (SNP and Plaid Cymru) were most likely to find the Commission to be a useful source of advice. In terms of written guidance, Liberal Democrat and UKIP agents were again less likely to find the Commission's work to be useful (**Table 11b**).

Finally, there was also variation in respect of attitudes towards the Commission's written information on the verification and count (**Table 12b**). Labour, Liberal Democrat and UKIP agents were least likely to find it clear and easy to use.

In terms of agent experience, there was no systematic variation. However, the responses in the *Don't Know/Didn't Use* category suggest that the agents with no prior experience of organising a general election campaign were slightly more likely to seek advice, written guidance and written information from the Electoral Commission (**Tables 10c, 11c & 12c**).

Table 10a. Electoral Commission as a useful source of advice

| <i>Overall, the Electoral Commission was a useful source of advice and guidance during the campaign</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Agree | 32 |
| Tend to Agree | 33 |
| Neither | 19 |
| Tend to Disagree | 5 |
| Disagree | 4 |
| Don't Know/Did Not Use | 9 |

Table 10b. Electoral Commission was a useful source of advice by party

| <i>%</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Don't Know/ Didn't Use</i> | <i>Net</i> |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Conservative | 68 | 16 | 11 | 6 | +57 |
| Labour | 65 | 21 | 7 | 7 | +58 |
| Liberal Democrat | 60 | 17 | 9 | 14 | +51 |
| Plaid Cymru | 79 | 21 | 0 | 0 | +79 |
| SNP | 79 | 14 | 4 | 4 | +75 |
| UKIP | 61 | 22 | 9 | 8 | +53 |

⁷ Fisher, J., Cutts, D. & Fieldhouse, E (2010) *Attitudes of Electoral Agents on the Administration of the 2010 General Election*

Table 10c. Electoral Commission was a useful source of advice by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know/ Didn't Use | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|---------------------------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 63 | 17 | 10 | 10 | +53 |
| No Experience | 65 | 21 | 7 | 7 | +58 |

Table 11a. Electoral Commission written guidance as being clear and easy to use

| <i>Overall, the Electoral Commission's written guidance for candidates and agents was clear and easy to use</i> | % |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 35 |
| Tend to Agree | 36 |
| Neither | 12 |
| Tend to Disagree | 7 |
| Disagree | 4 |
| Don't Know/Did Not Use | 6 |

Table 11b. Electoral Commission written guidance as being clear and easy to use by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know/ Didn't Use | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|---------------------------|-----|
| Conservative | 75 | 7 | 14 | 4 | +61 |
| Labour | 73 | 13 | 11 | 3 | +62 |
| Liberal Democrat | 67 | 12 | 10 | 11 | +57 |
| Plaid Cymru | 75 | 15 | 5 | 5 | +70 |
| SNP | 89 | 7 | 4 | 0 | +85 |
| UKIP | 66 | 18 | 11 | 4 | +55 |

Table 11c. Electoral Commission written guidance as being clear and easy to use by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know/ Didn't Use | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|---------------------------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 71 | 11 | 11 | 7 | +60 |
| No Experience | 71 | 13 | 11 | 5 | +60 |

Table 12a. Electoral Commission written information in respect of the verification and count as being clear and easy to use

| <i>The Electoral Commission's written information on what to expect at the verification and count was clear and easy to use</i> | % |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 30 |
| Tend to Agree | 31 |
| Neither | 17 |
| Tend to Disagree | 3 |
| Disagree | 3 |
| Don't Know/Did Not Use | 16 |

Table 12b. Electoral Commission written information in respect of the verification and count as being clear and easy to use by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know/ Didn't Use | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|------------------------|-----|
| Conservative | 68 | 11 | 8 | 13 | +60 |
| Labour | 55 | 20 | 8 | 17 | +47 |
| Liberal Democrat | 58 | 17 | 3 | 22 | +55 |
| Plaid Cymru | 70 | 15 | 0 | 15 | +70 |
| SNP | 64 | 21 | 4 | 11 | +60 |
| UKIP | 63 | 20 | 8 | 9 | +55 |

Table 12c. Electoral Commission written information in respect of the verification and count as being clear and easy to use by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know/ Didn't Use | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|------------------------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 60 | 15 | 6 | 20 | +54 |
| No Experience | 62 | 20 | 6 | 12 | +56 |

Experience of Contacting the Commission

Around a third of agents had cause to contact the Commission personally by telephone or email. Their experience was largely positive, though more so in respect of electoral administration than on party and election finance matters (**Tables 13a & 14a**).

Surprisingly, over a third of respondents to both questions answered *Don't Know*. If those respondents are removed from the analyses, some 70% were satisfied in respect of the Commission's guidance and advice on electoral administration and some 61% on donations and spending.

When broken down by party (**Tables 13b & 14b**), there are few patterns of note,⁸ except that Liberal Democrat agents were least likely to be satisfied overall. It's also worth noting that in both areas, Liberal Democrats were disproportionately likely to respond *Don't Know*.

⁸ Low numbers of respondents for SNP and Plaid Cymru agents for these questions mean that percentages for these parties need to be treated with caution

In respect of agent experience (**Tables 13c & 14c**), there was variation in respect of advice and guidance on electoral administration, with inexperienced agents responding more positively. However, in respect of advice and guidance on spending and donations, there was no variation.

Table 13a. The clarity of Electoral Commission advice and guidance on electoral administration

| <i>Direct advice or guidance on electoral administration was clear and easy to understand</i> | % |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 27 |
| Tend to Agree | 19 |
| Neither | 14 |
| Tend to Disagree | 3 |
| Disagree | 2 |
| Don't Know | 34 |

Table 13b. The clarity of Electoral Commission advice and guidance on electoral administration by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|------------|-----|
| Conservative | 47 | 14 | 9 | 30 | +38 |
| Labour | 44 | 14 | 4 | 38 | +40 |
| Liberal Democrat | 32 | 13 | 4 | 52 | +28 |
| Plaid Cymru | 50 | 25 | 0 | 25 | +50 |
| SNP | 73 | 9 | 0 | 18 | +73 |
| UKIP | 57 | 15 | 6 | 21 | +51 |

Table 13c. The clarity of Electoral Commission advice and guidance on electoral administration by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|------------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 42 | 13 | 7 | 39 | +35 |
| No Experience | 50 | 15 | 4 | 31 | +46 |

Table 14a. The clarity of Electoral Commission advice and guidance on spending and donations

| <i>Direct advice or guidance on spending and donations was clear and easy to understand</i> | % |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Agree | 23 |
| Tend to Agree | 16 |
| Neither | 15 |
| Tend to Disagree | 5 |
| Disagree | 5 |
| Don't Know | 36 |

Table 14b.

The clarity of Electoral Commission advice and guidance on spending and donations by party

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know | Net |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|------------|-----|
| Conservative | 38 | 15 | 14 | 33 | +24 |
| Labour | 37 | 17 | 8 | 38 | +29 |
| Liberal Democrat | 29 | 11 | 7 | 52 | +22 |
| Plaid Cymru | 56 | 22 | 0 | 22 | +56 |
| SNP | 55 | 9 | 9 | 27 | +46 |
| UKIP | 47 | 17 | 11 | 25 | +36 |

Table 14c.

The clarity of Electoral Commission advice and guidance on spending and donations by experience of organising a general election campaign

| % | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Don't Know | Net |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|------------|-----|
| Previous Experience | 39 | 13 | 8 | 40 | +31 |
| No Experience | 39 | 17 | 11 | 33 | +28 |