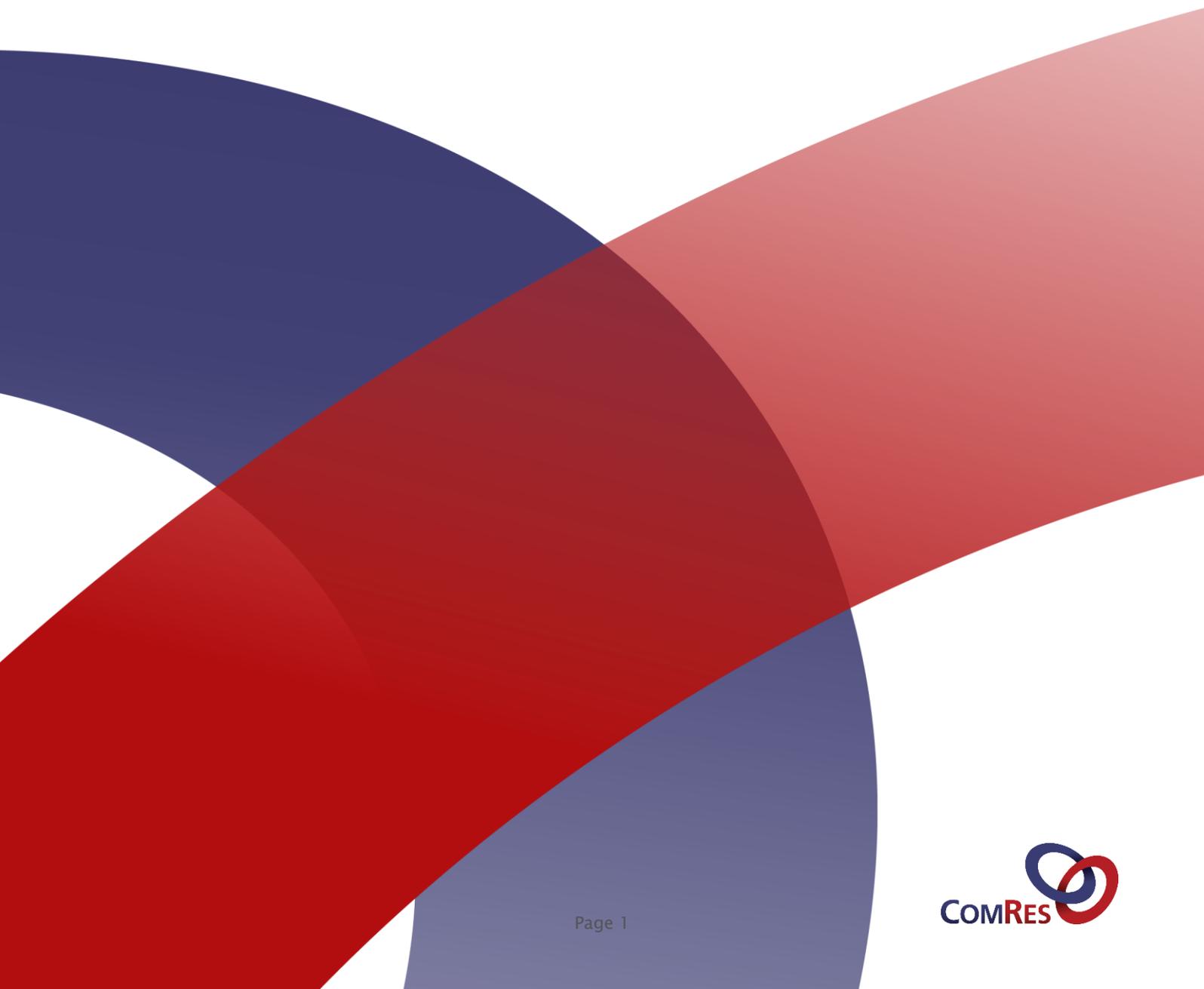




ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND – MPs RESEARCH

January 2018



SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

- To understand how Arts Council England can best communicate with MPs.
- To understand MPs' level of awareness and support for arts funding and the policy context.
- To understand how much MPs understand arts and culture funding and how they value the role of arts and culture for the British economy.

METHODOLOGY

ComRes interviewed 155 British MPs between 14th November and 11th December 2017. Data were weighted to be representative of the House of Commons by party, region and length of service. For this report, all data refers to only MPs in English constituencies (n=119).

With a sample size of 155 MPs, the margin of error on results at a 95% confidence level is ± 6.87 . Differences of less than this should be treated as indicative.

ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Favourability towards the Arts Council is in line with 2016's findings – once again, nearly four times as many MPs hold a favourable opinion as hold an unfavourable one, with over half holding a neutral view. Favourability by party has shifted significantly, however, with a much higher proportion of Labour MPs saying they have a favourable impression of the Arts Council than Conservative MPs than previously.
- The number of MPs saying they have seen the Arts Council's name in media has decreased on last year with one-third of MPs saying this, though this is in line with others in the sector. Three in ten MPs say they have received a briefing from the Arts Council, a similar proportion to that in 2016. More MPs say they have received a letter from the Arts Council than have met with a representative or attended one of their events, and direct contact with the Arts Council through events and briefings is amongst the lowest in the sector. The number of MPs who report having no contact with the Arts Council has dropped slightly to 29%, from 35% in 2016.
- Levels of support for public funding of arts and culture are generally consistent with previous years' results, with around seven in ten MPs saying they support this. The number of MPs saying they strongly support arts and culture is the same as in 2016.
- MPs remain most likely to say that a specialist arms-length body should be responsible for allocating National Lottery funds for arts and culture and allocating arts and culture funds gained from public taxation, though in general there has been a decrease in the proportion of MPs who think that specialist arms-length bodies should be responsible for different areas of arts and culture in comparison to 2016.
- As in 2016, the vast majority of MPs say they have attended an artistic performance, event or exhibition in their constituency in the last 12 months, with two thirds reporting saying they have done so elsewhere. Relatively few MPs say they have attended an artistic performance, event or exhibition following an invitation by the Arts Council.

- Whilst MPs continue to view the central contribution of arts and culture as generating tourism in London and the surrounding region, this year there is a greater focus by MPs on the contribution of arts and culture to the British economy more broadly, with over half saying that they perceive arts and culture to have contributed to the British economy by making Britain's cities, towns and rural areas better and more vibrant places to live, an 11 percentage point increase from 2016.
- MPs currently see ensuring a good cultural education for children and young people as the most important arts and culture policy issue, with ensuring fair access to arts and culture funding across the UK second most important.
- This is reflected by MPs' views on how to change arts and culture policy, where MPs views continue to be in line with Arts Council strategy in pushing for fair regional and community funding for arts and culture, redistributing funding away from London where necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Although support amongst Labour MPs for public funding for arts and culture is at its highest since 2014 the last year has seen a drop in the proportion of Conservative MPs saying they are in favour of this, suggesting that the Arts Council should continue to target Conservative MPs to build support on this issue.
- This year, the views of MPs from the two main parties appear slightly more polarised than previously, suggesting that the Arts Council should continue to consider different party priorities in its communications with Parliament. However, there continues to be consensus over some key areas such as more equitable distribution of funding, or education, which might be useful as a strategic focus to build cross-party support.
- Given that ensuring a good cultural education and fair access to funding across the country are perceived as the most important policy areas within the arts and culture sector for both Labour and Conservative MPs, continuing to highlight the Arts Council's efforts in these areas is likely to have a positive impact on perceptions of the organisation in future.

FULL RESULTS

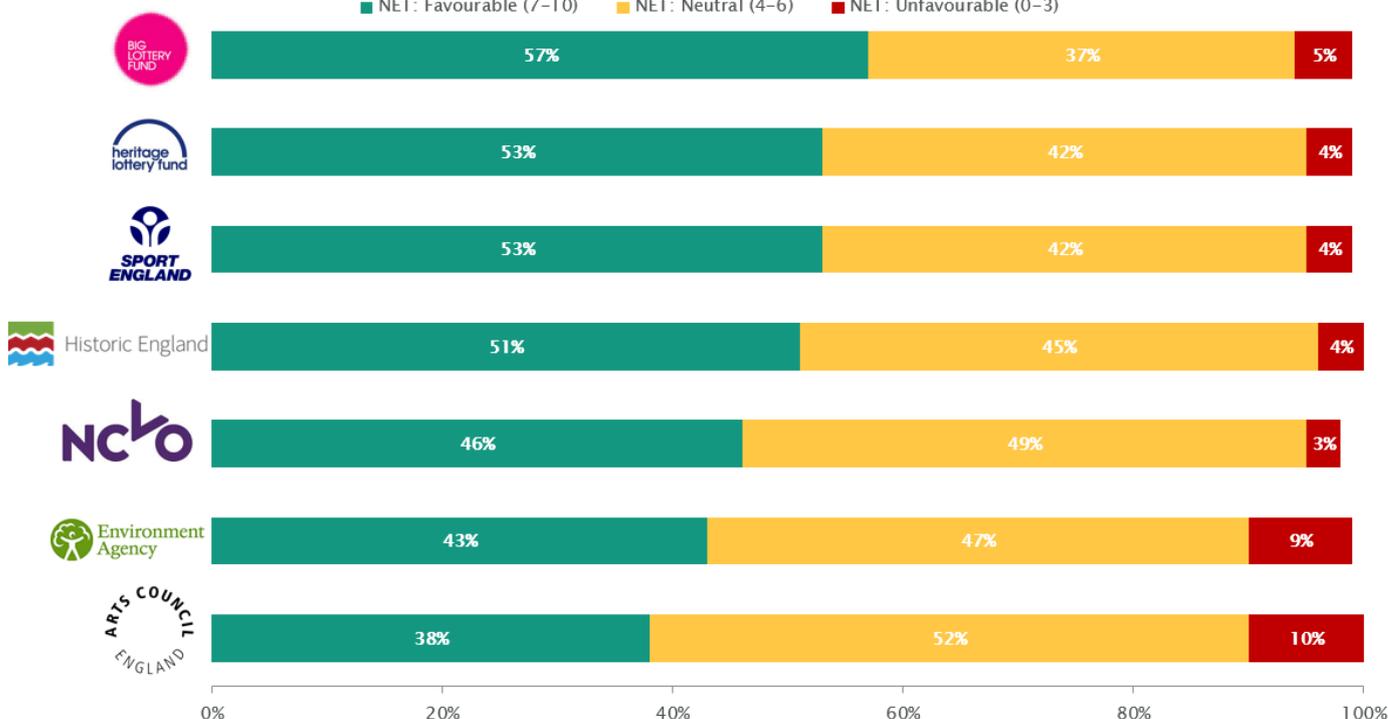
FAVOURABILITY AGAINST COMPARATORS

Of the organisations tested, MPs continue to be most favourable towards the Big Lottery Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund. However, the proportion of MPs that say they have a favourable impression of these organisations has significantly reduced since 2016; three in five MPs report they feel favourable towards the Big Lottery fund (57%), and just over half saying this about the Heritage Lottery Fund (53%), in comparison to around two thirds in 2016 (Big Lottery Fund 65%, Heritage Lottery Fund 64%).

Attitudes towards the Art Council are in line with the 2016 findings. MPs continue to be most likely to hold a neutral view of the Arts Council (52%), and nearly four times as many hold a favourable opinion (38%) as hold an unfavourable one (10%) – exactly the same proportion as in 2016.

Impressions of organisations

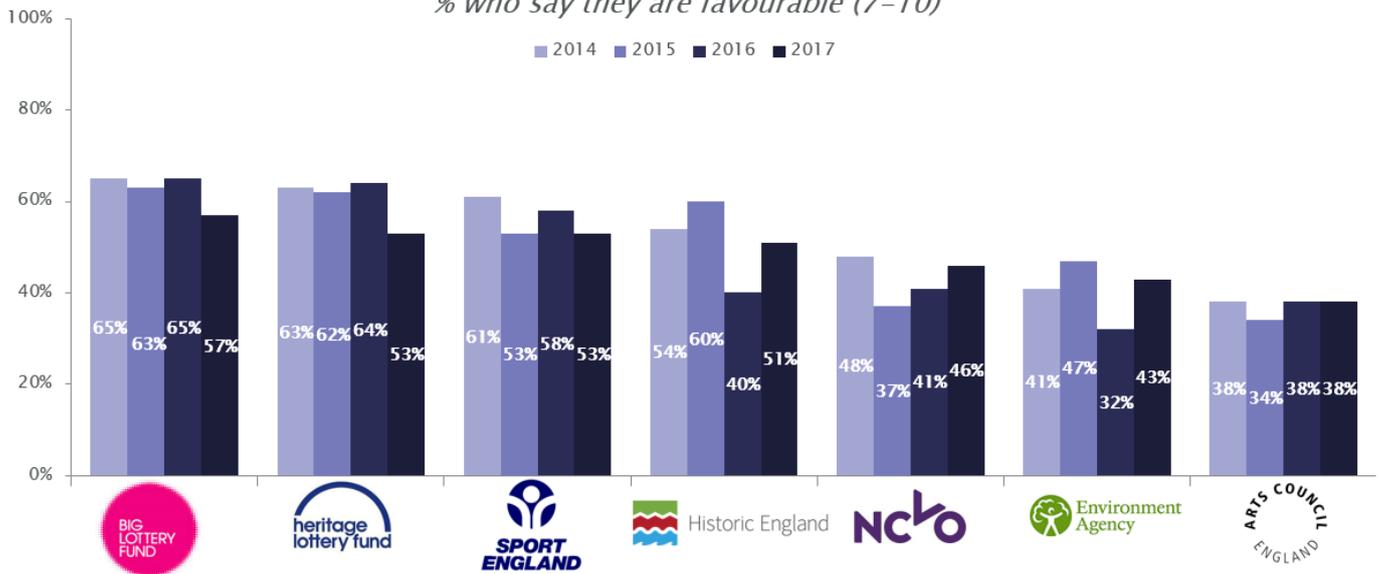
■ NET: Favourable (7–10) ■ NET: Neutral (4–6) ■ NET: Unfavourable (0–3)



Q1. How favourable or unfavourable are your impressions of the following organisations? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 = very unfavourable and 10 = very favourable. Base: English MPs (n=119).

Whilst those organisations previously viewed most favourably such as the Big Lottery Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund have seen a significant fall in favourability, impressions of the Arts Council remain consistent with last year. As a result, the percentage-point difference in favourability between the Big Lottery Fund and Arts Council England has reduced by around ten points since 2016 (from 27 points to 19). Although perceptions of the Arts Council are in line with those in 2016, it has been overtaken by the Environment Agency who have experienced a rise in favourable impressions since 2016 (43% in comparison to 32% in 2016).

Impressions of organisations – over time % who say they are favourable (7–10)



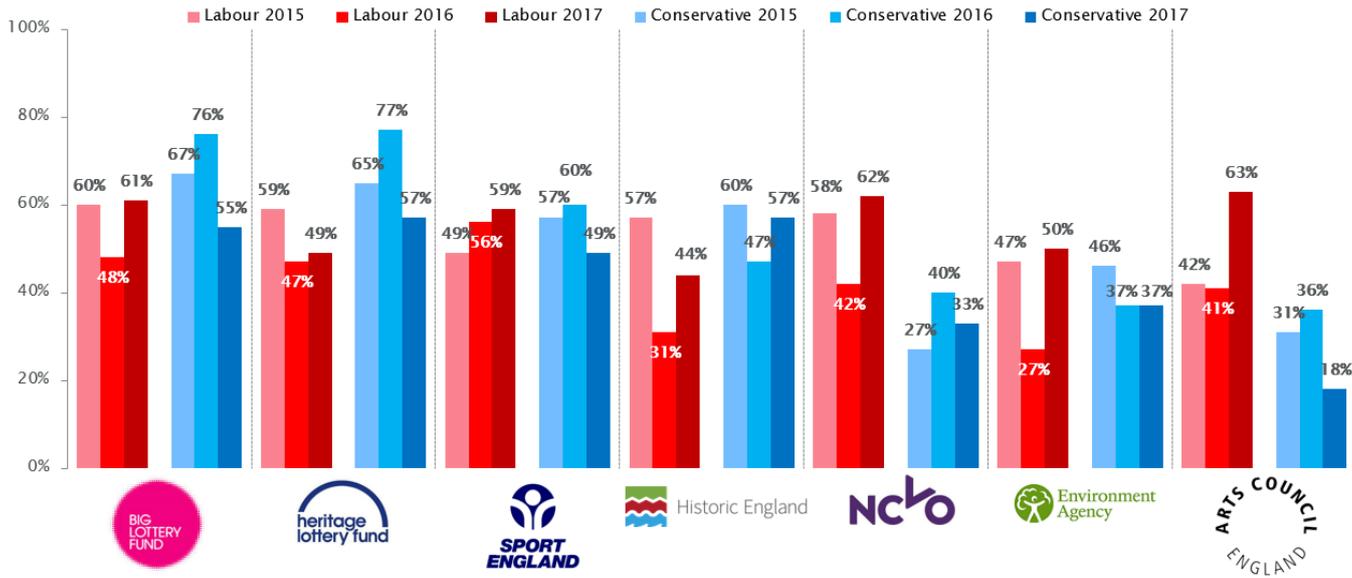
Q1. How favourable or unfavourable are your impressions of the following organisations? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 = very unfavourable and 10 = very favourable. Base: English MPs 2017 (n=119); MPs 2016 (n=107); MPs 2015* (n=110); MPs 2014 (n=150). *2014 and 2015 tested English Heritage; this is the second year testing Historic England.

Whilst perceptions of the Arts Council are unchanged overall since 2016, favourability towards the organisation by party has shifted significantly. Labour MPs are much more likely hold favourable impressions of the organisation than in previous years, with nearly two-thirds (63%) saying this in comparison to around four in ten in previous years (41% in 2016, 42% in 2015). There has been a considerable decrease in favourability amongst Conservative MPs, however, with just under one in five (18%) of Conservative MPs saying that they have a favourable impression of the Arts Council, in comparison to over one in three in 2016 (36%).

This appears to reflect a sector trend, with all organisations seeing an increase in favourability amongst Labour MPs, and a corresponding decrease in favourability amongst Conservative MPs. The Arts Council England has seen among the largest proportional increase in favourability amongst Labour MPs in the sector, second only to the Environment Agency (22 percentage points and 23 percentage points, respectively), and a significantly bigger percentage point increase than the Big Lottery Fund (13 percentage points). However, Arts Council England has seen a considerable decrease in favourability amongst Conservative MPs (18 percentage points), though other organisations such as Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund have seen a larger fall in favourability amongst this group (20 percentage points and 21 percentage points, respectively).

Favourability towards organisations – by party over time

Showing % favourable (7-10)



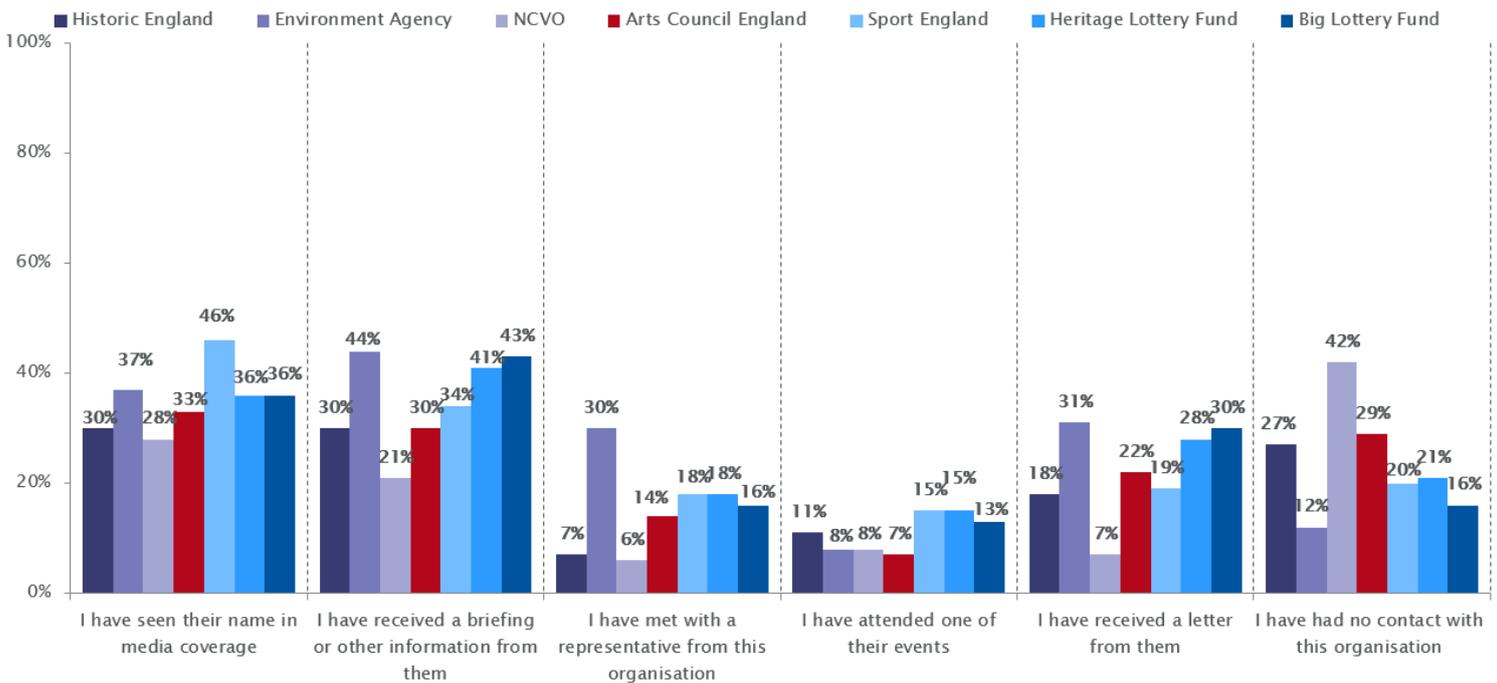
Q1. How favourable or unfavourable are your impressions of the following organisations? Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 = very unfavourable and 10 = very favourable. Base: Conservative MPs 2017 (n=51); Labour MPs 2017 (n=66); Conservative MPs 2016 (n=54), Labour MPs 2016 (n=52), 2015 Base (n=150)

CONTACT WITH ORGANISATIONS

One in three MPs say that they have seen the Arts Council’s name in media coverage (33%). Although this is broadly in line with others in the sector, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (36%) and Big Lottery Fund (36%), it continues a downward trend with 2017 the fourth consecutive year this number has fallen. This decline is not limited to the Arts Council England, however, with organisations such as Sport England and Heritage Lottery Fund also seeing a significant drop in media coverage (Sport England – 61% in 2016 to 46% in 2017, Heritage Lottery Fund – 55% in 2016 to 36% in 2017).

Similarly, the number of MPs who report having received a briefing from the Arts Council is at its lowest level since 2014, with only one in three (30%) of MPs reporting this, in comparison with 34% in 2016 and 40% in 2015. Again, this reflects a broader trend with organisations across the sector seeing a drop in the proportion of MPs who report receiving briefings. Heritage Lottery Fund, for example, has seen an 18 percentage point drop in the proportion of MPs reporting this since last year (59% in 2016 vs 41% in 2017), whilst the Environment Agency has seen a 15 percentage point drop (59% in 2016 vs 44% in 2017). However, as this is among the most common means through which MPs have contact with organisations in the sector, it might represent a useful channel through which to increase awareness and understanding of Arts Council, particularly with the new intake of MPs from the 2017 General Election.

Contact with organisations



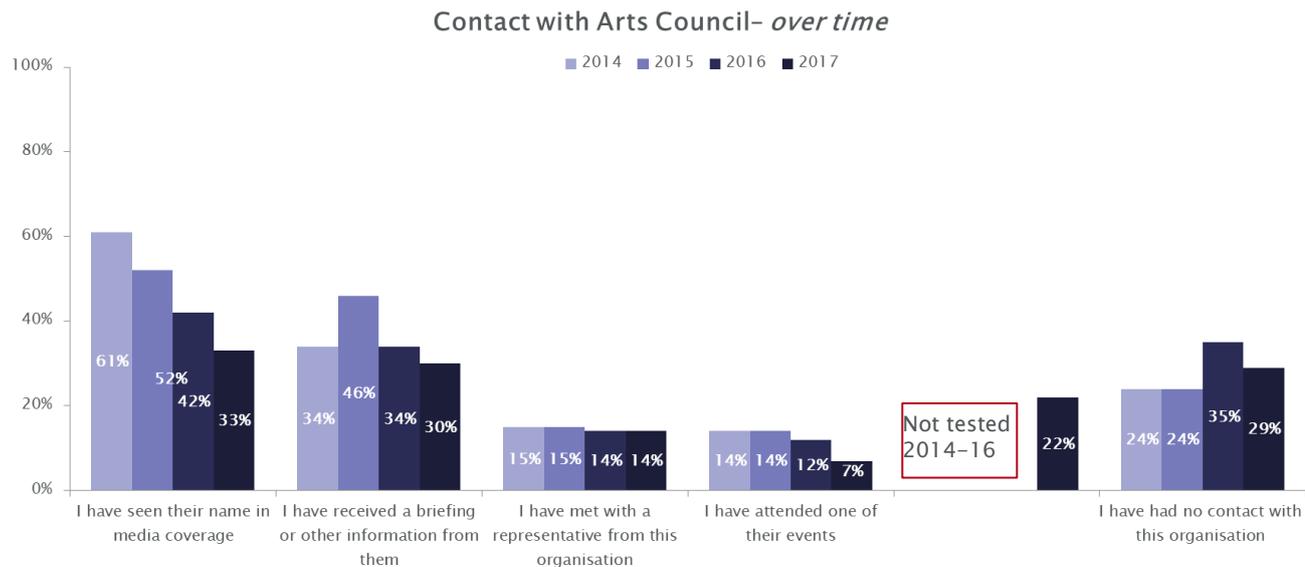
Q2. Please indicate any contact you have had with each of the following organisations in the last 12 months. Base: English MPs (n=119).

The proportion of MPs saying they have met with a representative from the Arts Council remains the same as in 2016 (14%). Although MPs remain most likely to say they have met with a representative from the Environment Agency (30%) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (18%), the number of MPs saying this has reduced since 2016 (Environment Agency – 38% in 2016, Heritage Lottery Fund – 32% in 2016). Although there has been a small decline in the proportion of MPs who say that they have attended an Arts Council event than in 2016 (7% in 2017 in comparison to 12% in 2016), this remains broadly in line with the



other organisations tested for this (ranging from 7% to 15%). MPs are most likely to say that they have attended events organised by Sport England (15%) and Heritage Lottery Fund (15%).

Written contact appears among the most common form of direct contact with the Arts Council, with over one in five MPs saying that they have received a letter from the Arts Council (22%), in comparison to just one in seven who say that they have met with an Arts Council representative (14%). A greater proportion of MPs say that they have received a letter from the Arts Council than from NCVO (7%), Historic England (18%) or Sport England (19%), though as this is the first year that this option has been tested there is no tracking data available to contextualise this further.

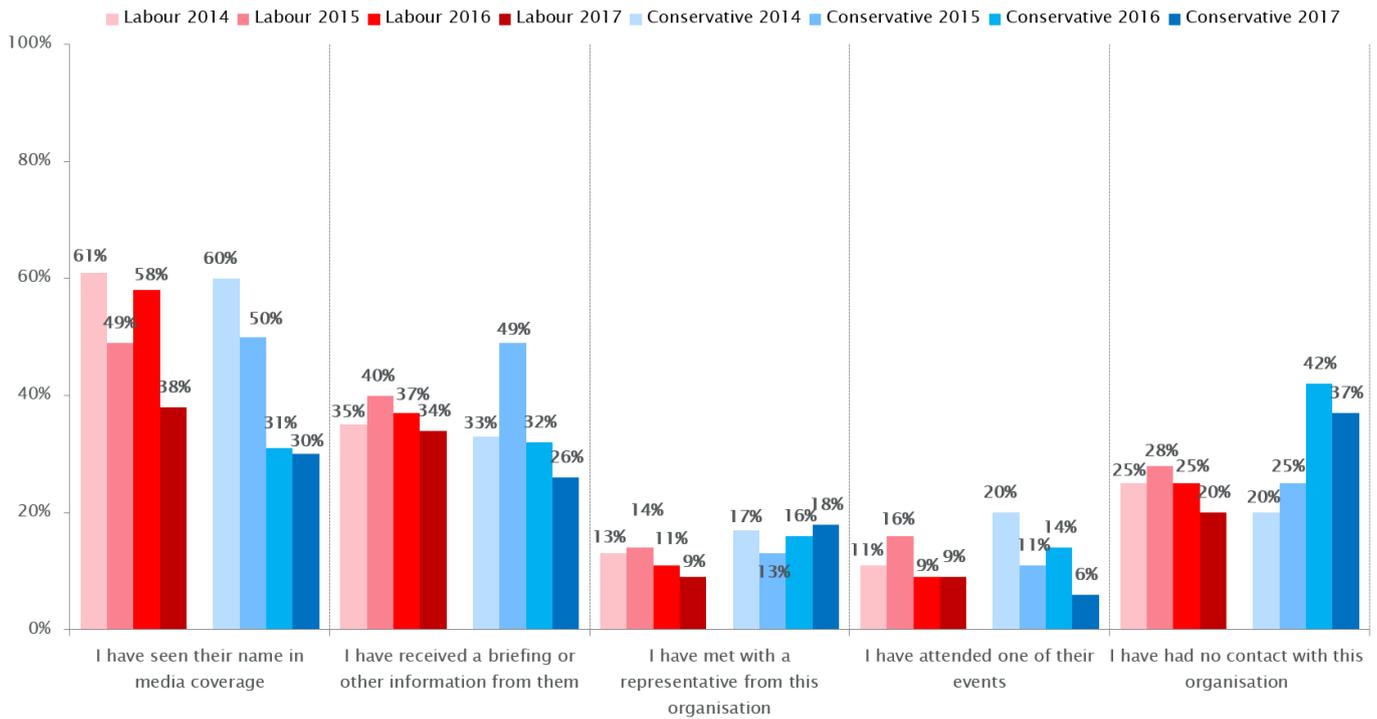


Q2. Please indicate any contact you have had with each of the following organisations in the last 12 months - Arts Council England. Base: English MPs 2017 (n=119); MPs 2016 (n=107); MPs 2015 (n=110); MPs 2014 (n=150).

The proportion of MPs reporting having had no contact with the Arts Council has slightly reduced since last year (29% in comparison to 35% in 2016), and is now closer to the proportion reporting this in 2015 and 2014 (24%). Overall, it is broadly in line with others in the sector (ranging from 12% to 42%).

The proportion of Conservatives saying that they have had no contact with the Arts Council has slightly decreased since 2016, bringing results for this question closer to those in previous years (from 42% in 2016, to 37% in 2017), although Conservative MPs are still more likely to say that they have had no contact with the Arts Council than their Labour counterparts (37% vs 20% respectively). Interestingly, Conservative MPs remain more likely than Labour MPs to say they have met with an Arts Council representative, in line with previous years, with nearly one in five (18%) saying this in comparison to just under one in ten (9%) Labour MPs. Beyond this, there is largely little variation in MPs’ contact with Arts Council by party.

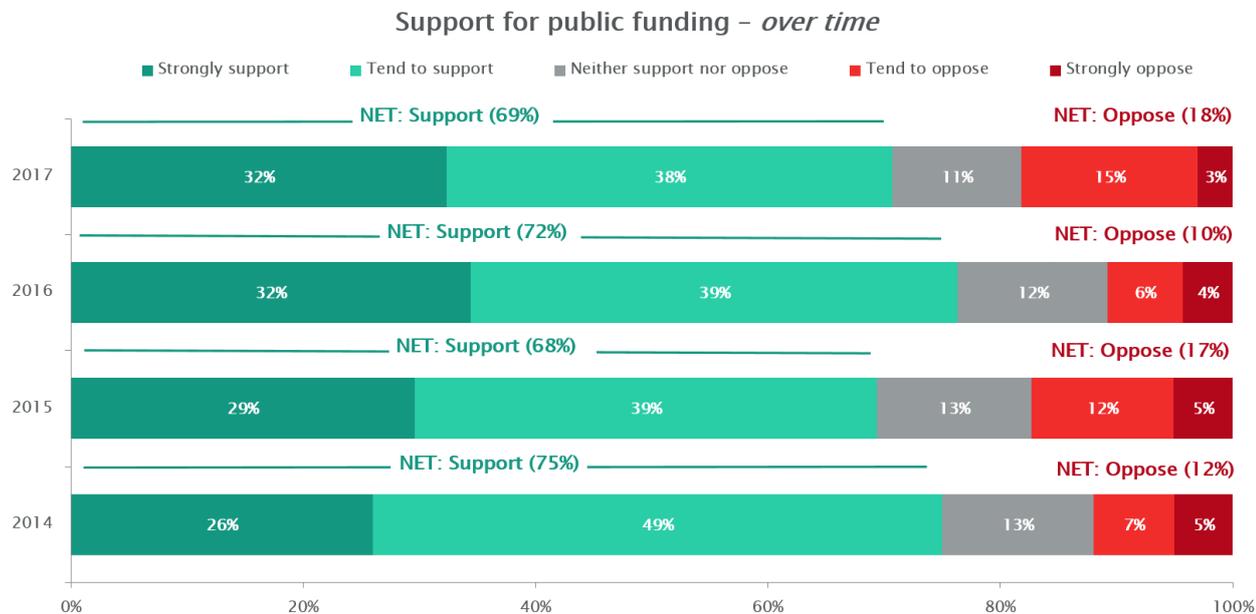
Contact with Arts Council – by party over time



Q2. Please indicate any contact you have had with each of the following organisations in the last 12 months – Arts Council England. Base: Conservative MPs 2017 (n=51); Labour MPs 2017 (n=66); Conservative MPs 2016 (n=54); Labour MPs 2016 (n=52); Conservative MPs 2015 (n=58); Labour MPs 2015 (n=67); Conservatives MPs 2014 (n=51); Labour MPs 2014 (n=78).

SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC FUNDING OF ARTS AND CULTURE

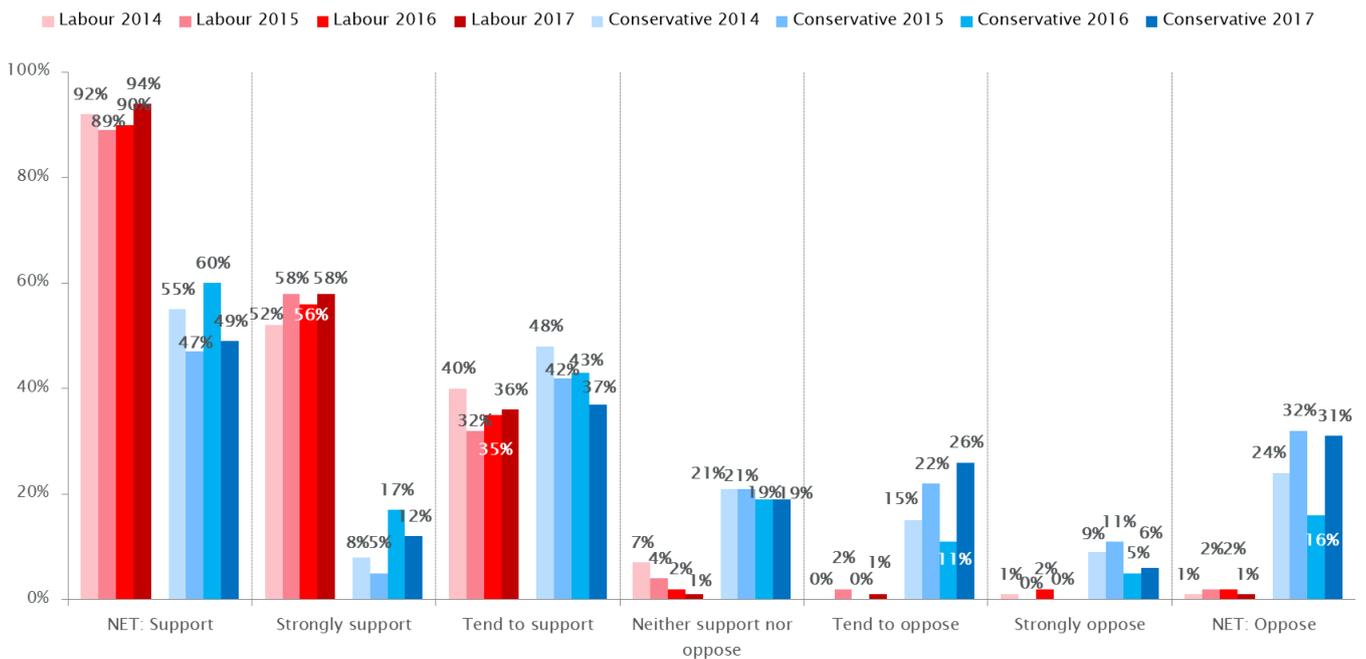
Overall levels of support for public funding of arts and culture remain consistent with the previous three years' results. Just under one third of MPs say they *strongly support* public funding of arts and culture, the same proportion as in 2016 (32%). The proportion who say they *tend to support* arts and culture remains broadly consistent with previous years (38% in 2017 in comparison to 39% in both 2016 and 2015), as does the proportion of MPs saying that they oppose the public funding of arts and culture (2017 – 18%, 2016 – 10% in 2016, 2015 – 17%).



Q3. To what extent do you support or oppose public funding of arts and culture? By this we mean tax-funded investment in arts and cultural organisations and initiatives. Base: English MPs 2017 (n=119); MPs 2016 (n=107); MPs 2015 (n=110); MPs 2014 (n=150).

The proportion of Labour MPs who say that they support public funding of arts and culture is at its highest level, with over nine in ten (94%) saying they support it, and nearly six in ten (58%) *strongly* supporting it. Conversely, just under half of Conservative MPs (49%) say that they support public funding of arts and culture, a decrease on 2016 (60%), though representing a return to 2015 levels (46%). Similarly, whilst almost double the proportion of Conservative MPs say that they oppose public funding of arts and culture than in 2016 (31% in 2017 vs 16% in 2016), this represents a return to levels of opposition in 2015, when 33% of Conservative MPs reported this.

Support for public funding – by party over time



Q3. To what extent do you support or oppose public funding of arts and culture? By this we mean tax-funded investment in arts and cultural organisations and initiatives. Base: Conservative MPs 2017 (n=51); Labour MPs 2017 (n=66); Conservative MPs 2016 (n=54); Labour MPs 2016 (n=52); Conservative MPs 2015 (n=58); Labour MPs 2015 (n=67); Conservatives MPs 2014 (n=51); Labour MPs 2014 (n=78).

As in 2016, MPs are most likely to say that a specialist arms-length body should be responsible for allocating National Lottery funds for arts and culture (75%) and allocating arts and culture funds gained from public taxation (57%), though they are less clear on this than in 2016 when 83% and 65% agreed with this, respectively. The proportion of MPs who say that they think central government should be responsible for allocating arts and culture funds gained from public taxation has reduced from 2016 levels, with three in ten (30%) of MPs saying this, in comparison to four in ten who said this in 2016 (42%). Half of MPs (50%) think that an arms-length body should support artistic work that reflects the social and cultural diversity of England, a decrease in the proportion of those who thought this in 2016 (61%).

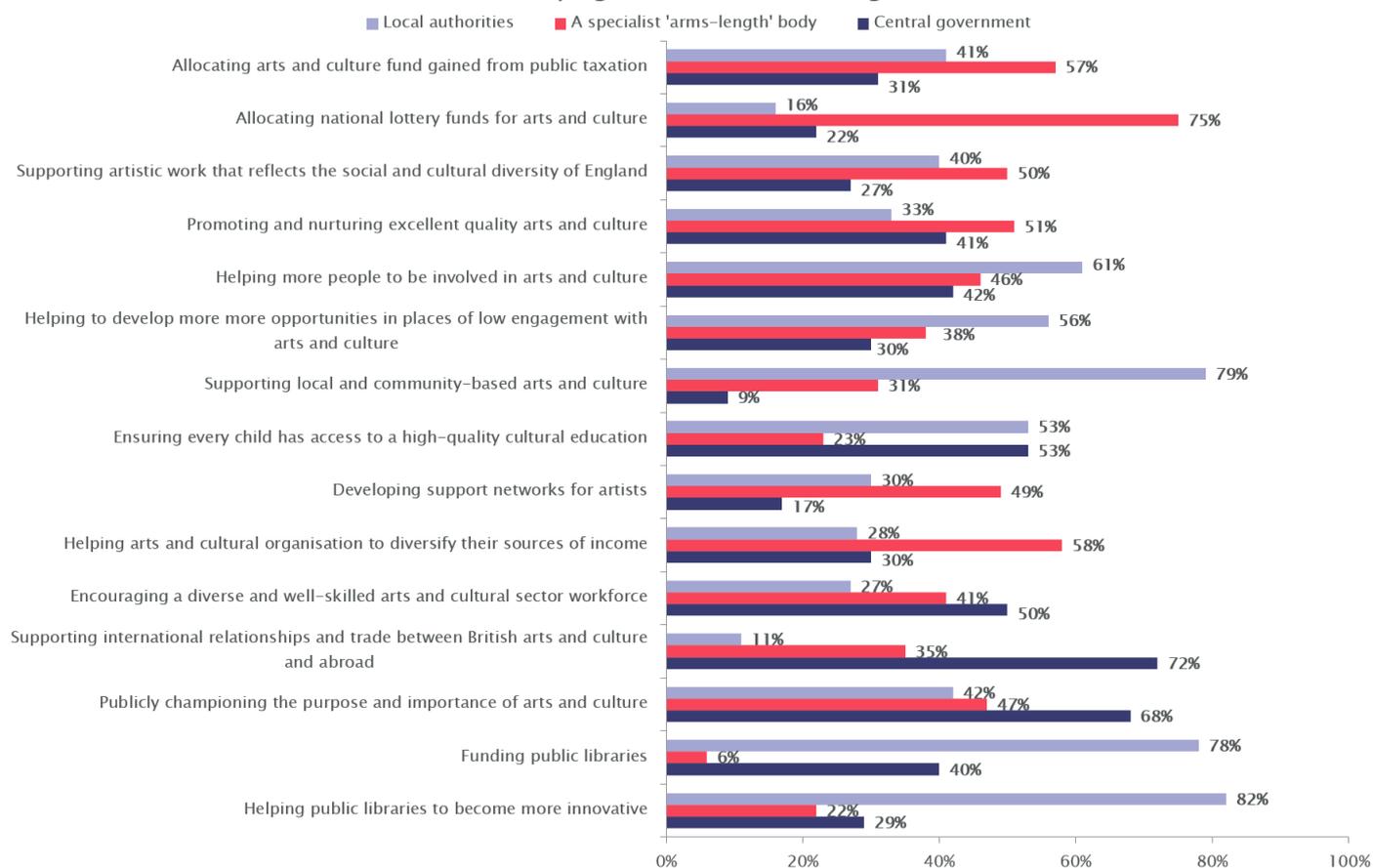
MPs continue to say that local authorities should be responsible for helping to develop more opportunities in places of low engagement with arts and culture (56%), supporting local and community-based arts and culture (79%), funding public libraries (78%) and helping public libraries to become more innovative (82%). This suggests that the Arts Council should continue to illustrate how it works alongside or in partnership with local authorities, particularly in promoting wider access to arts and culture and in improving public libraries.

There remains consensus on the role of central government in some key areas, however – for example, in publicly championing the purpose and importance of arts and culture (68%). Similarly, MPs continue to believe that it is the government’s responsibility to support international relationships and trade between British arts and culture and abroad (72%) rather than an arms-length body (35%) or local authorities (11%).

As in 2016, one area in which there is least consensus amongst MPs is as to whether helping more people to be involved in arts and culture should be the responsibility of local authorities (61%), central government (42%), or specialist arms-length bodies (46%). However, MPs are less divided on this than in 2016, with a greater proportion saying that local authorities should be responsible for this (61% in comparison to 55% in 2016) – reflecting a more general trend towards consensus on responsibility for several different areas of arts and culture.

Responsibility for different areas of arts and culture

% saying each of the following



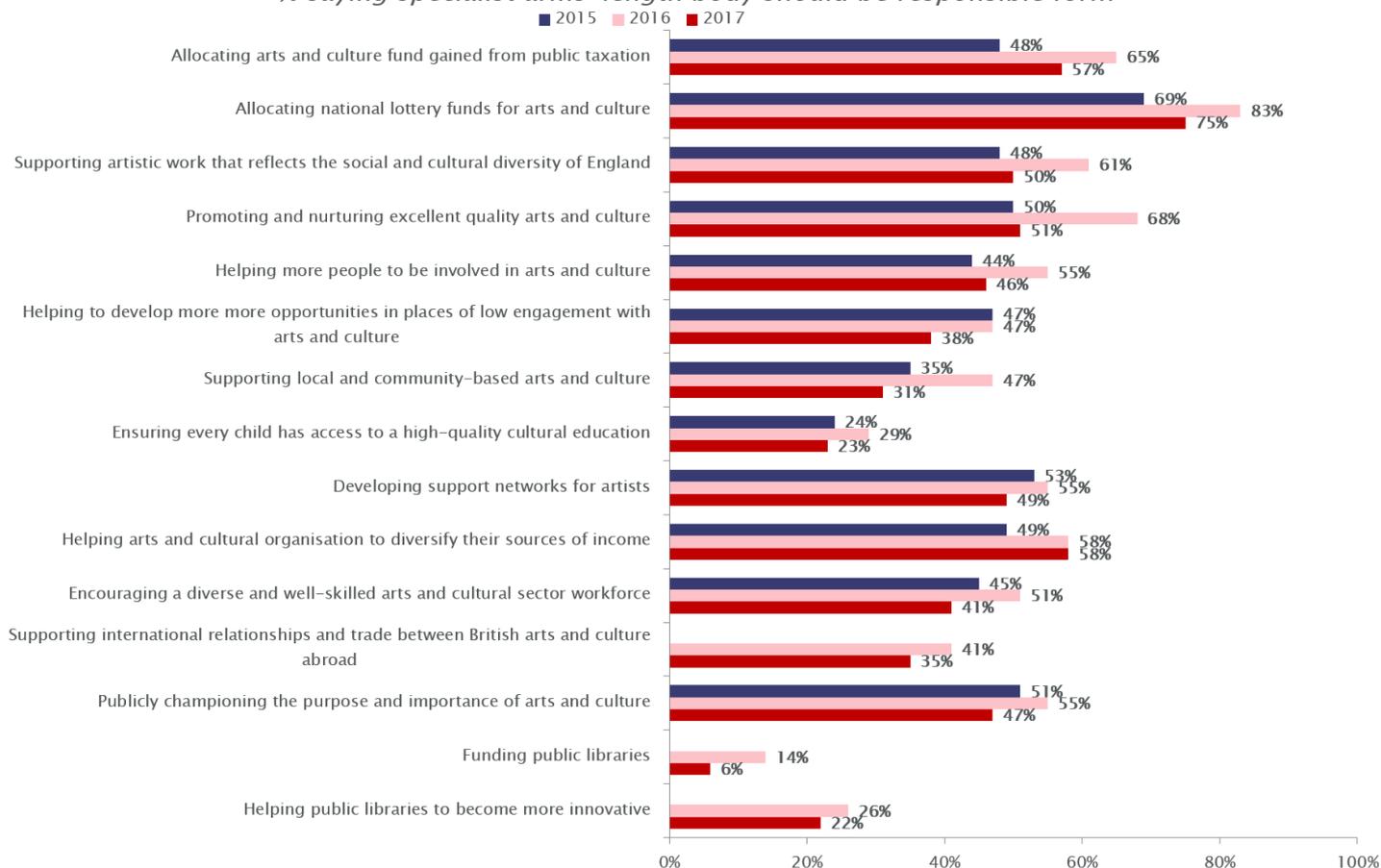
Q4. Which of the following organisations, in your opinion, should be responsible for each of the following? You may select more than one option if you think that a combination of different processes works best. Base: English MPs (n=119)

In general, this year’s results show a general decrease in the proportion of MPs who think that specialist arms-length bodies should be responsible for different areas of arts and culture compared to 2016. The only area of where MPs continue to support the responsibility of an arms-length body is in helping arts and cultural organisations to diversify their sources of income (58%). This should therefore be an area where the Arts Council should continue to encourage MPs to support as the responsibility of arms-length bodies.

Other areas where support has decreased since 2016, but remains higher than in 2015 might also be productive to focus on when encouraging MPs to support as the responsibility of arms-length bodies – in particular around allocating funds, where support for the responsibility of arms-length bodies remains well over 50%. Whilst support for an arms-length body as responsible for allocating national lottery funds for arts and culture has decreased from 83% in 2016 to 75% in 2017, it remains higher than in 2015 (68%). Similarly, although the proportion of MPs saying that an arms-length body should

be responsible for allocating arts and culture funds gained from public taxation has decreased from 65% in 2016 to 57% in 2017, it remains greater than in 2015 (46%).

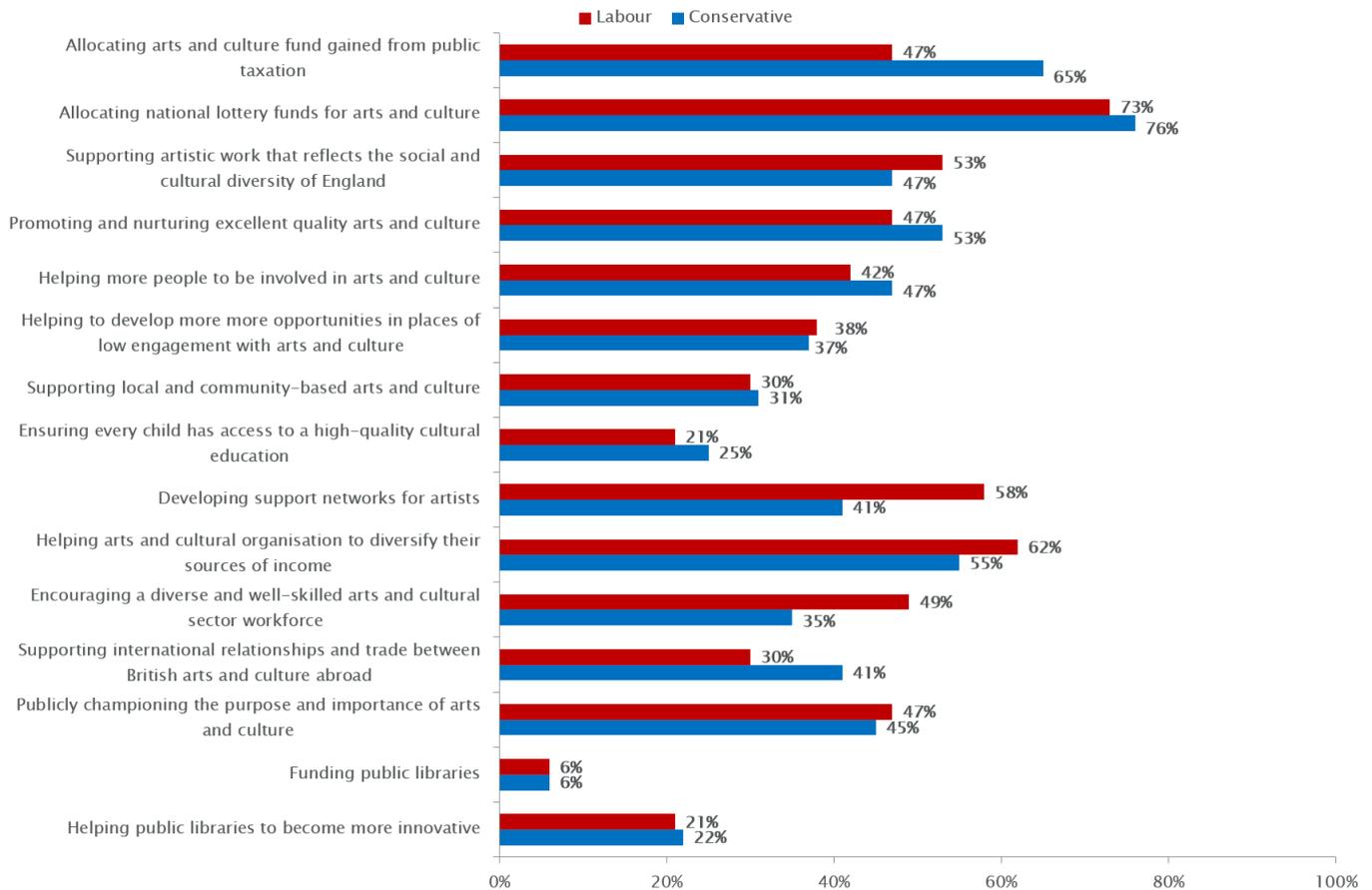
Responsibility for different areas of arts and culture – over time % saying specialist arms-length body should be responsible for...



Q4. Which of the following organisations, in your opinion, should be responsible for each of the following? You may select more than one option if you think that a combination of different processes works best. Base: English MPs 2017 (n=119); MPs 2016 (n=107); MPs 2015 (n=110).

As in 2016, allocating National Lottery funds for arts and culture is the area which Conservative and Labour MPs are most in agreement, with around three-quarters of MPs from both parties saying that should be the responsibility of a specialist arms-length body (Conservatives – 76%, Labour – 73%). However, in other areas there are differences in opinion between the main parties. As in 2016, Conservative MPs are much more likely than their Labour counterparts to say that arms-length bodies should be responsible for allocating arts and culture funds gained from public taxation, with nearly two-thirds saying this (65%) in comparison to just under half of Labour MPs (47%). Labour MPs continue to be more likely to say that developing support networks for artists should be the responsibility of an arms-length body, with nearly three in five saying this (58%), while four in ten Conservative MPs (41%) say this should be the case.

Responsibility for different areas of arts and culture – by party
% saying specialist arms-length body should be responsible for...

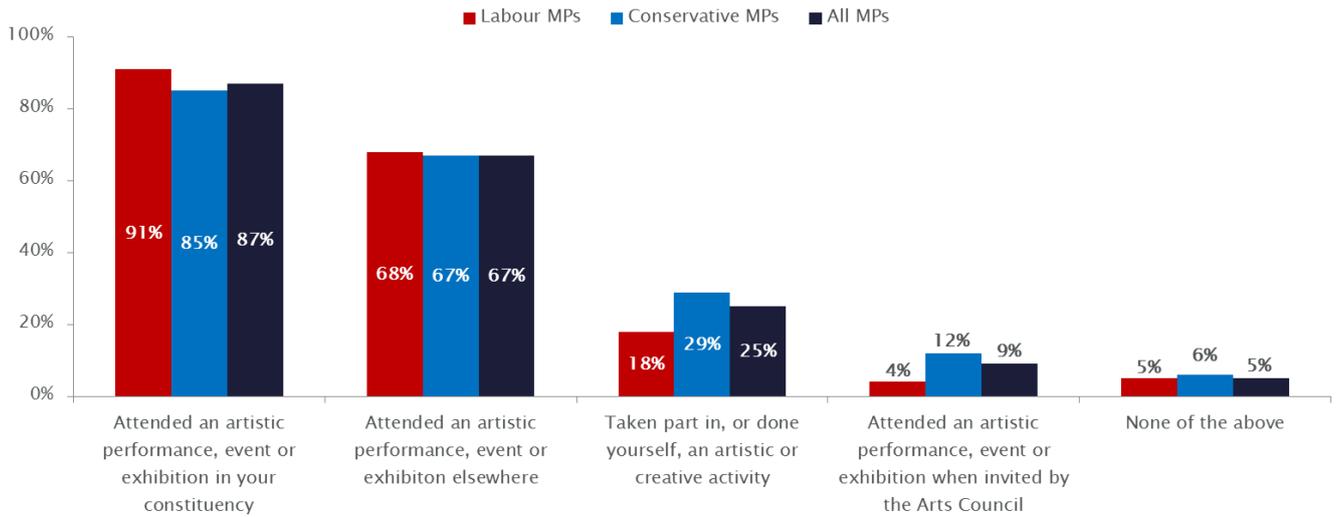


Q4. Which of the following organisations, in your opinion, should be responsible for each of the following? You may select more than one option if you think that a combination of different processes works best. Base: Conservative MPs (n=51); Labour MPs (n=66).

Broadly speaking, both Conservative and Labour MPs report similar levels of engagement in artistic and cultural events in the past 12 months. MPs remain most likely to have attended an artistic performance, event or exhibition within their own constituencies, with just under nine in ten (87%) saying this, in comparison to just over two-thirds who say they have attended an artistic or cultural event elsewhere (67%). Attendance at arts and culture events is slightly less common than in 2016, however, with 5% of MPs saying they have engaged with none of the events listed, in comparison to just 2% in 2016. Relatively few MPs say that they have attended an artistic or cultural event in the last 12 months when invited by the Arts Council (9%), suggesting that there might be an opportunity to boost engagement in this way in future.

Overall, there is very little difference in engagement between the main two political parties, with Labour MPs slightly more likely than their Conservative counterparts to attend artistic or cultural events in their constituencies (91% vs 85% respectively). Interestingly, however, Conservatives are more likely than Labour MPs to say that they have engaged with artistic or cultural events following an invitation by the Arts Council (12% vs 4% respectively).

% of MPs who say they have engaged in an artistic performance / exhibition / event in the past 12 months



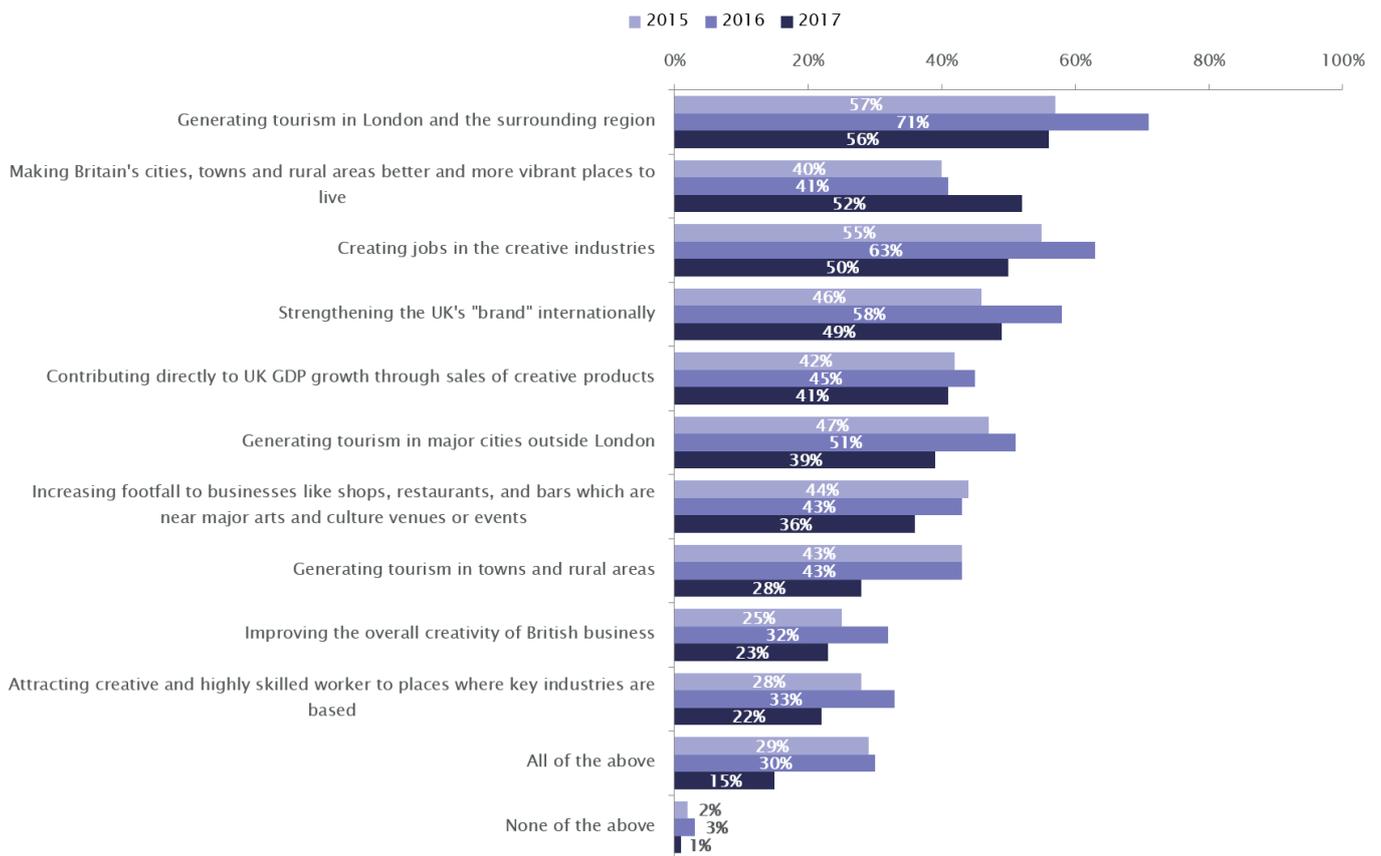
Q6. In the last 12 months have you... Base: English MPs (n=119); Conservative MPs (n=51) Labour MPs (n=66)

PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTION OF ARTS AND CULTURE

Whilst MPs continue to view the generation of tourism in London and the surrounding region as the key contribution of arts and culture to the British economy, with over half agreeing with this (56%), MPs are less likely to say this than in 2016 (71%). This year there is more of a focus by MPs on the contribution of arts and culture across the country, with a significant increase in the proportion of MPs perceiving arts and culture to have contributed to the British economy by making Britain’s cities, towns and rural areas better and more vibrant places to live (52% in 2017 vs 41% in 2016 and 40% in 2015).

Overall, however, MPs are generally less likely to agree with the contribution of arts and culture to the British economy than in 2016, with a smaller proportion saying that it has created jobs in the creative industries (50% in 2017 vs 63% in 2016), and that it has generated tourism in major cities outside London (39% in 2017 vs 51% in 2016). Similarly, only 15% of MPs report that arts and culture contributed to the British economy in all of the areas, half the proportion than did so in 2016 (30%). This year’s findings suggest that the slight uptick in perceptions noted last year was not an indication of an upwards trend, with MPs views on the contribution of arts and culture to the British economy now back in line with 2015 levels- though this will be interesting to track next year.

Perceived contribution of arts and culture to the British economy

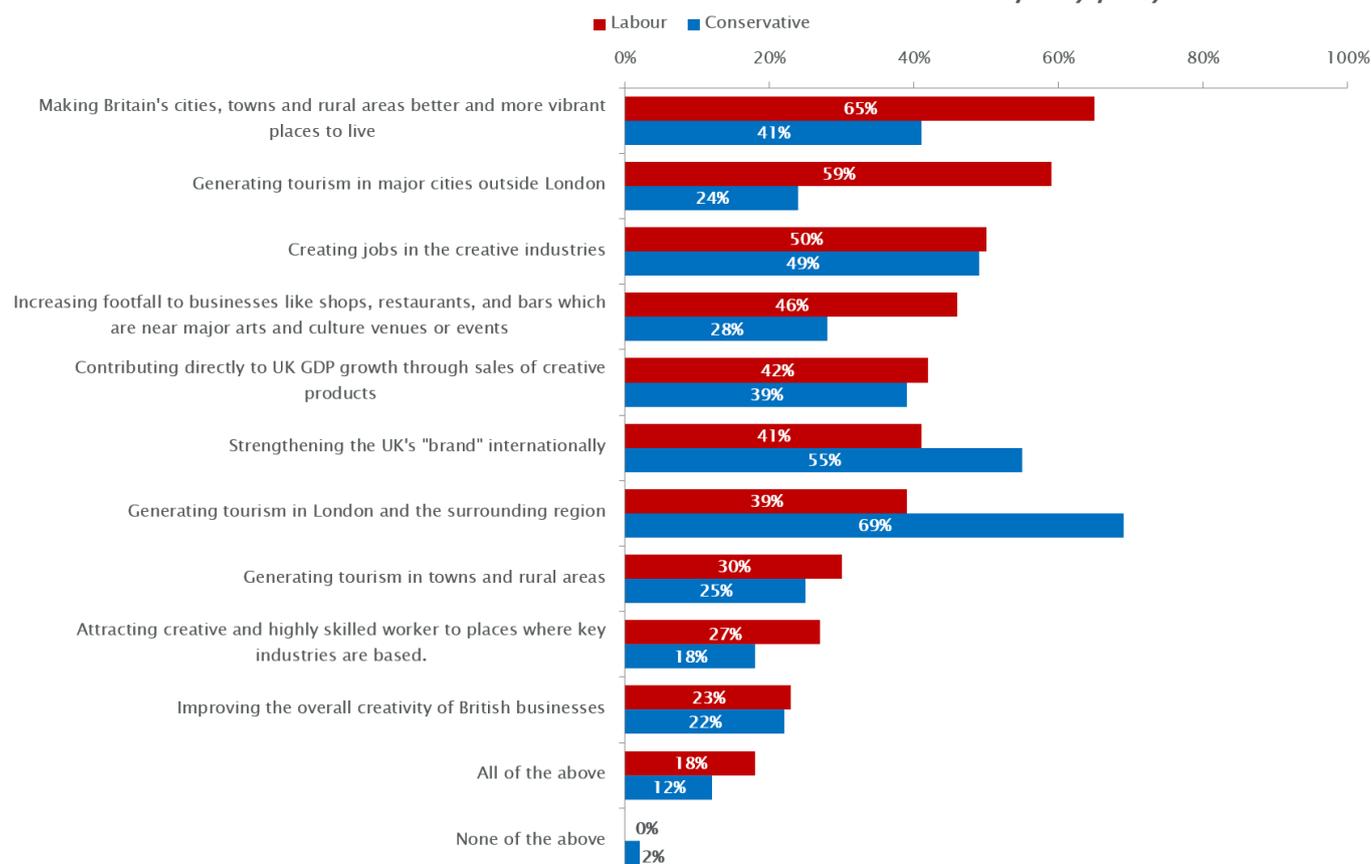


Q7. In which of the following ways, if any, have arts and culture contributed to the British economy? Arts and culture have contributed to the British economy by... Base: English MPs (n=119); MPs 2016 (n=107); MPs 2015 (n=110); MPs 2014 (n=112).

This year's findings suggest less of a consensus among Conservative and Labour MPs as to the contribution of arts and culture to the British economy than previously. Conservative MPs are more likely to view the major contribution of arts and culture as improving external engagement with the British economy than Labour MPs. Whilst seven in ten Conservative MPs think that arts and culture contributed to the economy by generating tourism in London and the surrounding region (69%), only four in ten Labour MPs think this (39%). Similarly whilst over half of Conservative MPs (55%) feel that arts and culture have contributed to the economy by strengthening the UK's international 'brand', only four in ten Labour MPs agree (41%).

Labour MPs are more likely to focus on the regional benefits that arts and culture brings to the British economy, with two-thirds saying that it contributed to making Britain's cities, towns and rural areas better and more vibrant places to live (65%) in comparison to four in ten Conservative MPs (41%). Similarly, three in five Labour MPs feel that arts and culture has contributed by generating tourism in major cities outside London (59%), whilst a quarter of Conservative MPs think this (24%). Further tracking will be useful to explore whether the divergence of Labour and Conservative perceptions of the contribution of arts and culture continues in future.

Perceived contribution of arts and culture to British economy – by party

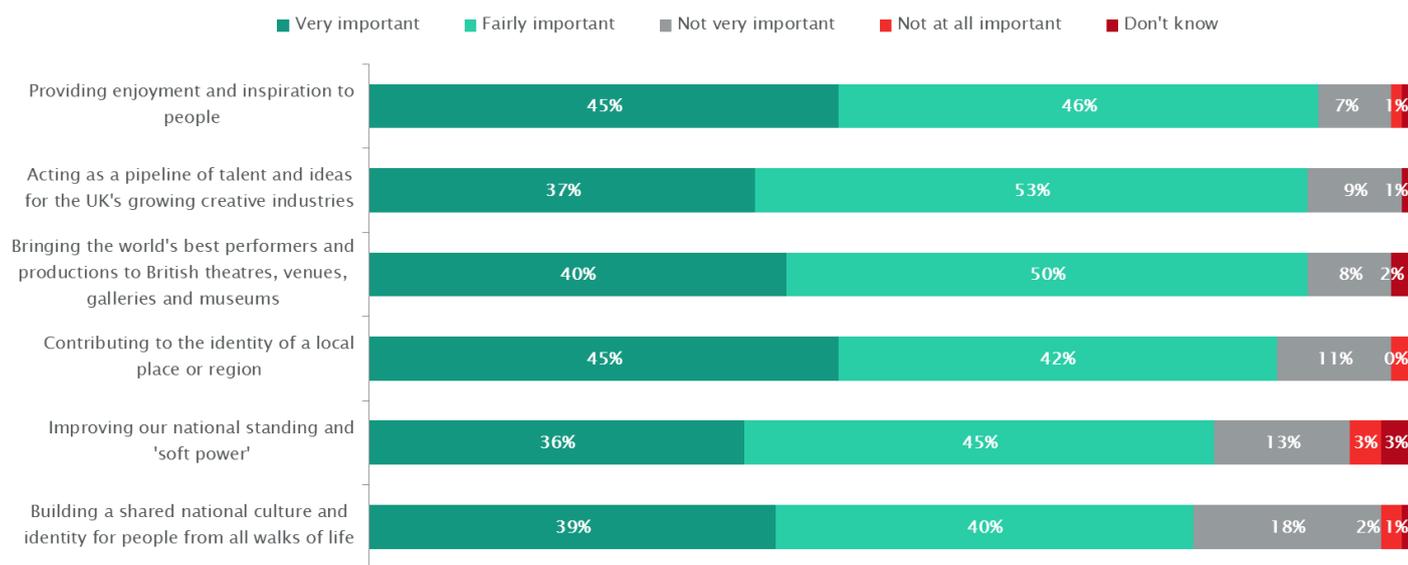


Q7. In which of the following ways, if any, have arts and culture contributed to the British economy? Arts and culture have contributed to the British economy by... Base: Conservative MPs (n=51); Labour MPs (n=66).

ARTS AND CULTURE POLICY

MPs' perceptions of the benefits of arts and museums are consistent with previous years, with generally little variation in opinion across the different options. MPs see the greatest benefit of arts and museums as providing enjoyment and inspiration to people (91%), a similar proportion to those that view their role in building a shared national culture and identity for people from all walks of life as important (79%). This suggests that MPs continue to view arts and museums as having a wide-ranging positive impact.

Benefits of arts and museums



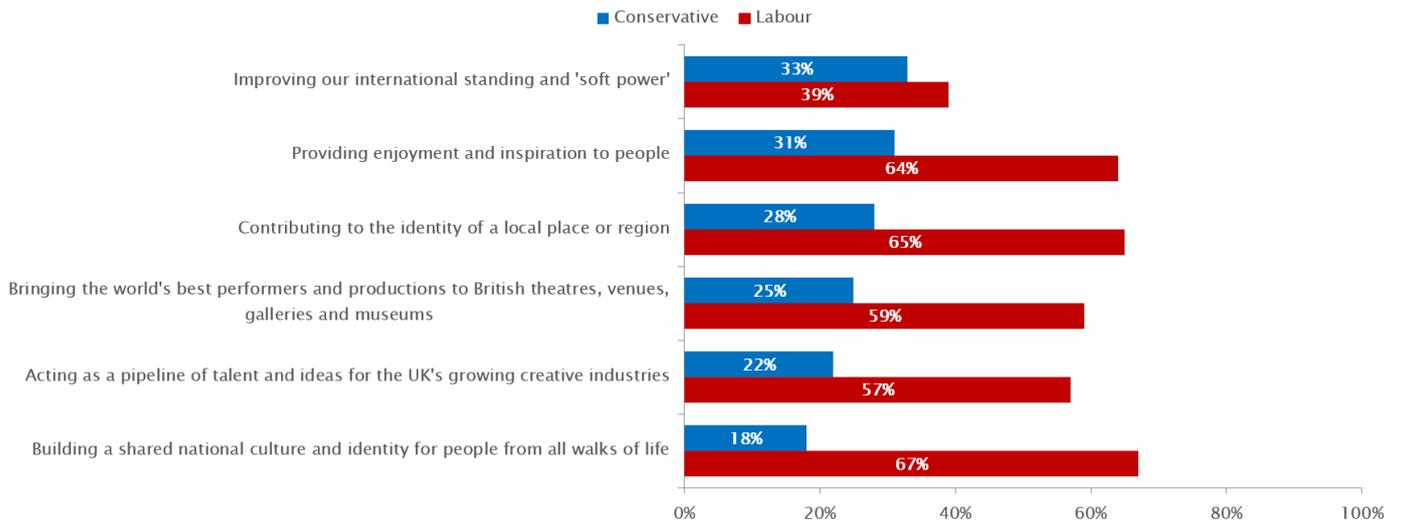
Q8. How important, if at all, do you think each of the following benefits or arts organisations and museums are to the nation? Base: English MPs (n=119)

Much greater variation is evident when the results are compared by party, however; Conservative MPs are much less likely than their Labour counterparts to view the benefits of arts and museums as *very important*, across all options. For example, Labour MPs are over three times as likely to say that arts and museums are *very important* in building a shared national culture and identity for people from all walks of life (Labour – 67%, Conservative – 18%).

Overall, it is notable that in general a smaller proportion of Conservative MPs say that they believe the benefits of arts and museums are *very important* than in previous years. For example, whilst improving our international standing and 'soft power' is still perceived to be the most important benefit amongst this group, just one third of Conservative MPs say that this is *very important* (33%), in comparison to nearly half saying this (48%) in 2016.

Benefits of arts and museums – by party

Showing % selecting very important

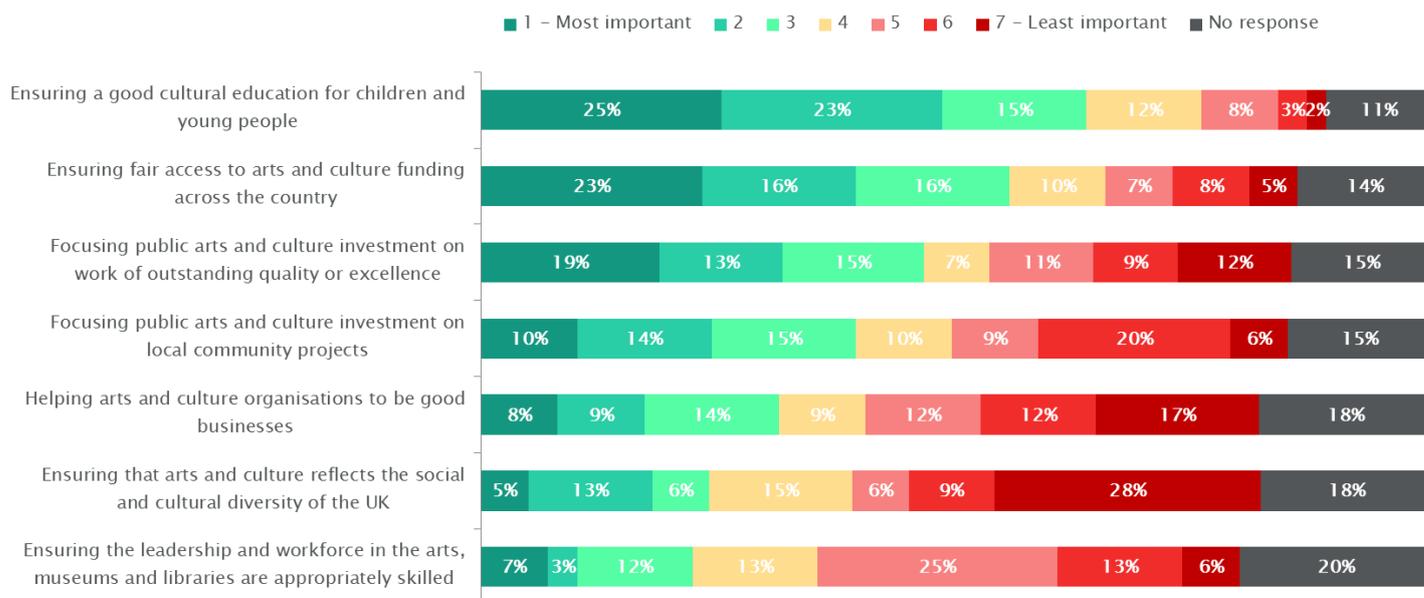


Q8. How important, if at all, do you think each of the following benefits of arts organisations and museums are to the nation? Base: Conservative MPs (n=51); Labour MPs (n=66)

Overall, ensuring a good cultural education and ensuring fair access to funding remain the most important policy areas of those listed for MPs overall, with the greatest proportion of MPs ranking these within their top three choices. However, ensuring a good cultural education for children and young people is most commonly ranked as the *number one* most important issue, suggesting that this is the issue that MPs feel most strongly about of those listed. Education and the importance of arts and culture to young people might therefore be more useful to prioritise than other policy areas included in this question when engaging with MPs in future, especially as this is an issue which appears to cut across the party divide.

MPs generally view the two policy issues introduced in the survey this year as a lower priority than other issues. Only 7% say that ensuring the leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are appropriately skilled is a top priority of those listed, and only 8% view helping arts and culture to be good businesses as most important – although both are slightly higher than the proportion of MPs saying that ensuring arts and culture reflects the social and cultural diversity of the UK (5%). It is interesting too that this year over a quarter (28%) of MPs feel that ensuring arts and culture reflects the social and cultural diversity of the UK is the *least* important priority of those listed, the highest proportion saying this for any option, suggesting that this is a policy of decreasing relative importance in the eyes of MPs.

Importance attributed to arts and culture policy issues

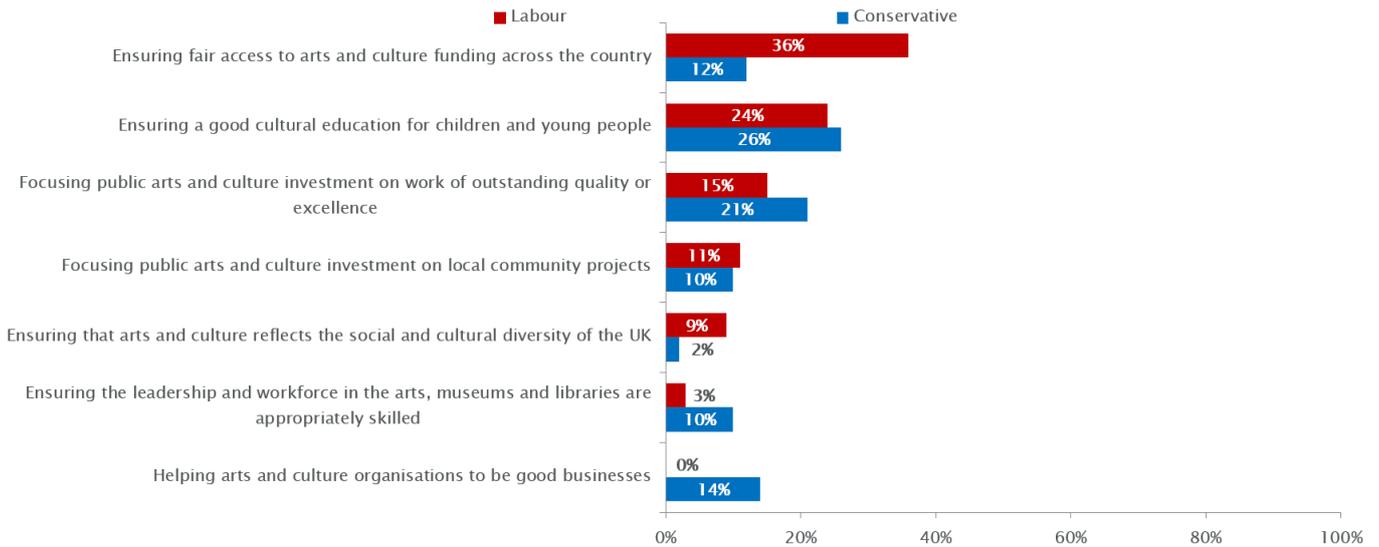


Q9. Which, if any, of the following arts and culture policy issues are most important to you? Please rank them in order from 1 to 7, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important. Base: English MPs (n=119).

As in 2016, Labour and Conservative MPs are broadly united in rating ensuring a good cultural education as one of the most important policy issues of those listed. Around one quarter of both Conservative and Labour MPs rank ensuring a good cultural education first of the policy issues listed (Conservative – 26%, Labour – 24%), suggesting that this might be a fruitful policy area for the Arts Council to focus on in order to engage MPs across the House. However, there are significant divides on other areas – for example, three times as many Labour MPs rank ensuring fair access to arts and culture funding across the country as the most important policy issue of those listed (36%) as Conservatives (12%).

Interestingly, there is a particularly stark party-political divide in the ranking of the two policy areas introduced this year. Whilst one in seven of Conservative MPs rank helping arts and culture organisations to be good businesses is a top priority (14%), no Labour MPs rank this first when considering the relative importance of arts and culture policy issues. Similarly, whilst 10% of Conservative MPs rank ensuring the leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are appropriately skilled as among the most important of arts and culture policy issues listed, only 3% of Labour MPs do so. Further tracking will be useful in highlighting whether this difference in the relative importance of these policy issues is a consistent trend.

Importance attributed to arts and culture policy issues
Showing % ranking each option as most important – by party



Q9. Which, if any, of the following arts and culture policy issues are most important to you? Please rank them in order from 1 to 7, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important. Base: Conservative MPs (n=51); Labour MPs (n=66).

As in 2016, when asked what changes they would make to arts and culture policy in the UK, the most common suggestions by MPs refer to funding. In particular, a significant proportion of MPs would like to see more support for local or community projects, while a similar proportion are interested in more equitable distribution of funding across the country. Labour MPs in particular say that they would like to see better engagement with poorer communities.

A smaller proportion of mostly Conservative MPs say that they would like the burden of funding arts and culture being taken away from the taxpayer, with either a reduction of subsidies or a move towards self-sufficiency when it comes to funding.

Q10. If you were to make one or two key changes to arts and culture policy in the UK, what, if anything, would they be? Base: English MPs (n=119).

“Fair regional funding to protect regional culture and history” – Conservative MP

“Fair regional funding” – Labour MP

“Focus on deprived and low aspiration areas” – Conservative MP

“Self-sufficient – not taxpayer funded” – Conservative MP

“More accessible to those on low incomes” – Labour MP

The greatest area of consensus amongst both Labour and Conservative MPs continues to be over the need for more equitable distribution of funding, in order to support art and culture in the regions and within local communities. Continuing to illustrate the Arts Council’s work in this area to those in both parties will therefore be important in order to increase recognition and continue to build on favourability in future.

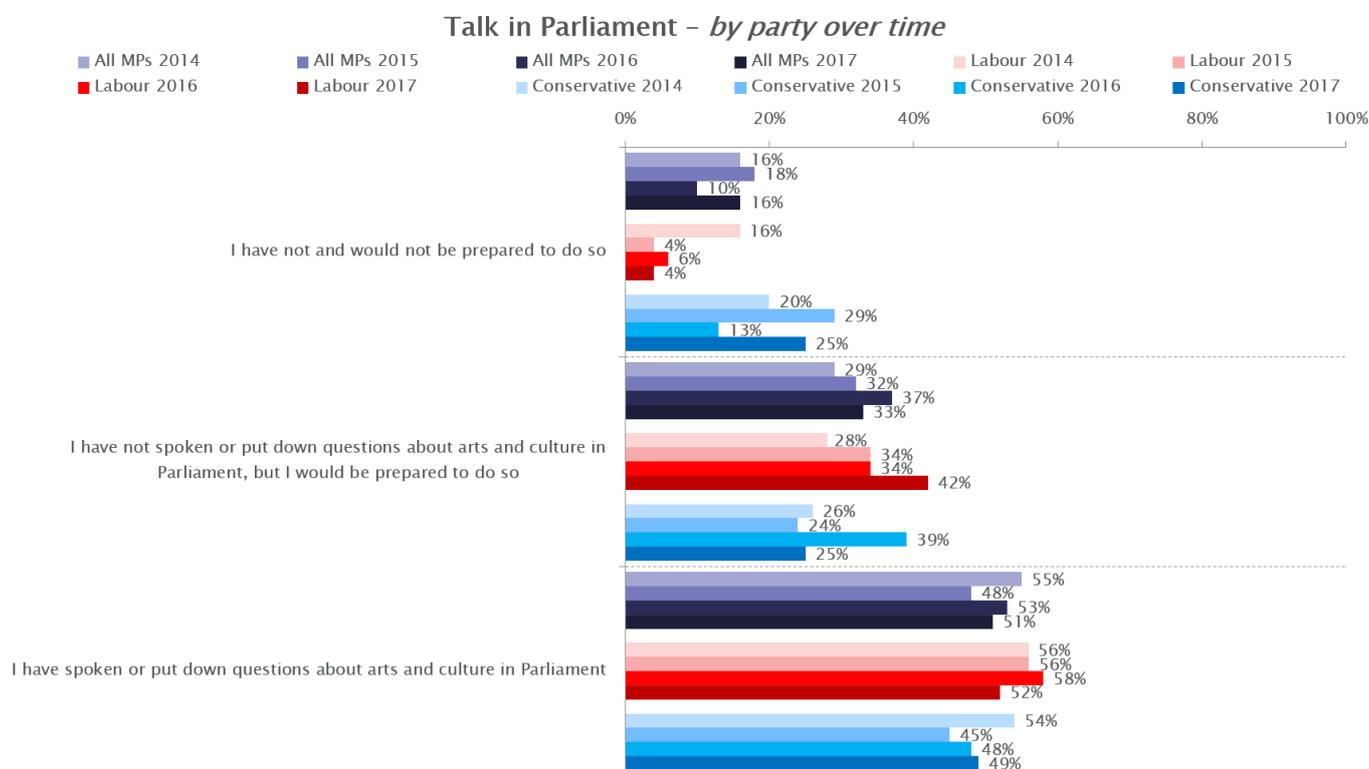
“80% of all arts and culture funding should be outside of London and distributed equally between the regions” – Labour MP

“Divert subsidies to regional museums away from London” – Conservative MP

ADVOCATING FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Half of MPs (51%) say they have spoken or put down questions about arts and culture in Parliament, consistent with 2016's results (53%). There has been a slight decrease in the number of MPs who say they would be prepared to put down questions about arts and culture at 33%, down from 37% in 2016, although this likely reflects the significant decrease in the number of Conservative MPs who would be willing to speak about or put down question in Parliament, from 39% in 2016 to 25% in 2017. However, given that this is consistent with the proportion of Conservative MPs saying this in 2015 and 2014, it appears that 2016 was more of an anomaly in this respect (2015 – 24%, 2014 – 26%).

Four in ten (42%) Labour MPs say that they would be prepared to put down questions about arts and culture, representing a steady increase since 2014, when just 28% of Labour MPs said that they would be prepared to do this. The Arts Council should look to capitalise on this willingness by Labour MPs in particular in the coming months.



Q5. Have you ever spoken about arts and culture in Parliament or put down questions on arts and culture? Please select one answer only. Base: English MPs 2017 (n=119), English MPs 2016 (n=107); MPs 2015 (n=110); MPs 2014 (n=150); Conservative MPs 2017 (n=51); Labour MPs 2017 (n=66); Conservative MPs 2016 (n=54); Labour MPs 2016 (n=52); Conservative MPs 2015 (n=58); Labour MPs 2015 (n=67); Conservatives MPs 2014 (n=51); Labour MPs 2014 (n=78).

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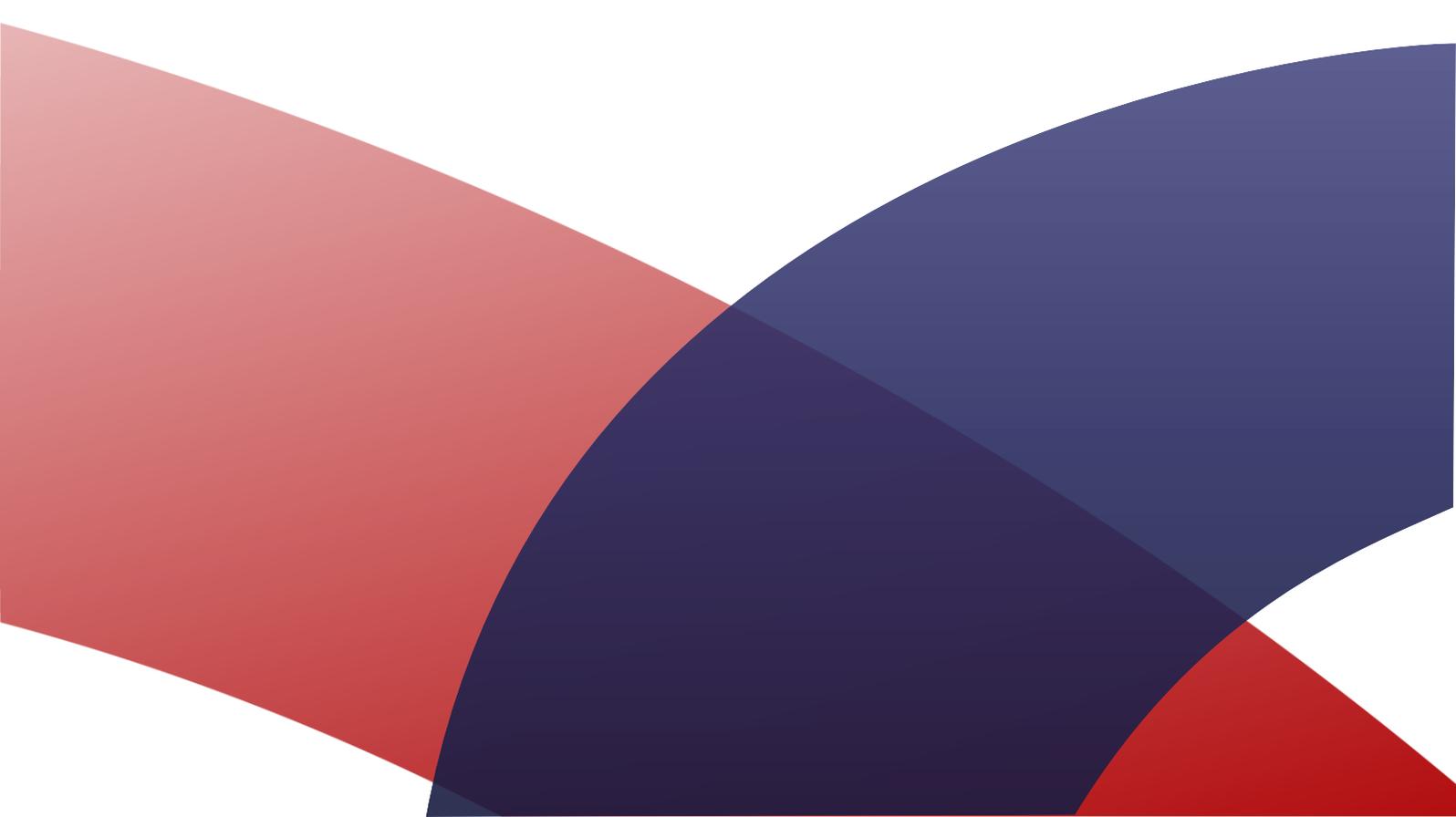
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