

Local Governance Representation

Following the questions exploring citizen's representation in Parliament, the next questions turned to local governance representation. A small percentage of participants reported that their wishes always or generally shape the actions of local government (2,6% on both occasions). Most participants (34,2%) felt that their wishes sometimes shape the actions of local government, with 28,9% of respondents suggesting that their wishes do not usually have that effect. Again, one in five participants answered that their wishes never shape the government's actions. As Table 5 below indicates, one in ten participants either did not want to answer the question or were unsure.

Respondents were then asked to elaborate on their answers. Even though some respondents noted that 'it's easier to find the local government and speak to the person' directly, many noted a problem associated with the 'limited powers of local authorities' and the lack of funds. Some recognise that public consultations could be a good way to have one's voice heard, but they also note that 'this is rather rare'. Moreover, participants mentioned that the pathogenies earlier associated with the Parliament also persist in local government: 'local government.....still suffers from the same nepotistic and corrupt attitude.....while they [i.e. officers in local government] have an understanding of the requirements of the local region, they're still subject to backchannel dealing between powerful stakeholders who don't generally have the best interests of the public at heart'. Another participant noted that their dysfunctional local government 'does not respond to most requests for support in a meaningful way....and fails in basic standards such as running fair elections (evidenced findings from e.g., the Ombudsman).'

Table 5: Wishes shaping local government actions

To what extent do you believe that your wishes shape the actions of local government?	%
My wishes always shape the local government's actions.	2.6%
My wishes generally shape the local government's actions.	2.6%
My wishes sometimes shape the local government's actions.	34.2%
My wishes don't usually shape the local government's actions.	28.9%
My wishes never shape the local government's actions.	21.1%
Don't know/Not sure	5.3%
I do not wish to answer this question	5.3%

Participants were then asked whether they thought it would be likely that they would be able to express their views regarding a local authority's decision (See Table 6). 21,1% of participants responded that it would be 'highly unlikely' that they would be able to express their views, 18,4% believed that it would be 'unlikely', and 10,5% thought it would be 'somewhat unlikely'. 13,2% opted for a neutral response (neither likely, nor unlikely), while 18,4% (somewhat likely), 10,5% (likely) and 7,9% (highly likely) recording positive responses.

Table 6: Expressing views on local authority decisions

If a decision were to be made by your local authority, how likely do you think it would be that you would be able to express your views on it?	%
Highly Unlikely	21.1%
Unlikely	18.4%
Somewhat Unlikely	10.5%
Neither Likely, nor Unlikely	13.2%
Somewhat Likely	18.4%
Likely	10.5%
Highly Likely	7.9%

The following question sought to measure the degree to which participants thought they would be able to influence a decision made by a local authority (See Table 7). Over half of the respondents recorded negative responses, with 28,9% thinking that would be 'highly unlikely', 21,1% answering that it would be 'unlikely', and 15,8% suggesting it would be 'somewhat unlikely'. 15,8% of participants answered that it would be 'neither likely, nor unlikely' that they would be able to influence a decision by their local authority, 13,2% suggested that it would be 'somewhat likely', while only 5,3% thought it would be 'likely'. Prompted to elaborate on their answers, most participants argued that even if they were able to express their views, they would have little power to influence the decision. Most participants noted that they 'would not be taken seriously', that they 'don't have much influence', that it is 'political parties that...influence decisions' and that 'our opinion seems not to count'. Even at the local government level, there is an overall feeling of frustration regarding the inability to speak against a decision, with one participant noting that 'Once a decision is made, there are few ways to directly influence it except as part of a mass disapproval on social media'. A major obstacle to effectively express views regarding a local government authority decision is the lack of relevant information, with one participant noting

that 'If I did have that information, I'm pretty sure, on a local level at least, I would be able to discuss and have my opinion heard'.

Table 7: If a decision were to be made by your local authority, how likely do you think it would be that you would be able to influence that decision?

	%
Highly Unlikely	28.9%
Unlikely	21.1%
Somewhat Unlikely	15.8%
Neither Likely, nor Unlikely	15.8%
Somewhat Likely	13.2%
Likely	5.3%