

Standards committees: a national snapshot

Stephen Clarke, Chair of Standards Committee,
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Kirsty Cole, Assistant Chief Executive, Newark and
Sherwood District Council, and President, ACSeS

Dawn Hands, Research Director, BMG Research

Reverend Paul Lipscomb, Chair of Standards
Committee, Slough Borough Council

Chair: Elizabeth Hall, Board Member,
The Standards Board for England

Standards committees: a national snapshot

Dawn Hands, Research Director, BMG Research

Survey method

- 1,308 completed questionnaires received:
 - 1,127 local councils
 - 181 other authorities
- Survey work was undertaken in July and August 2006

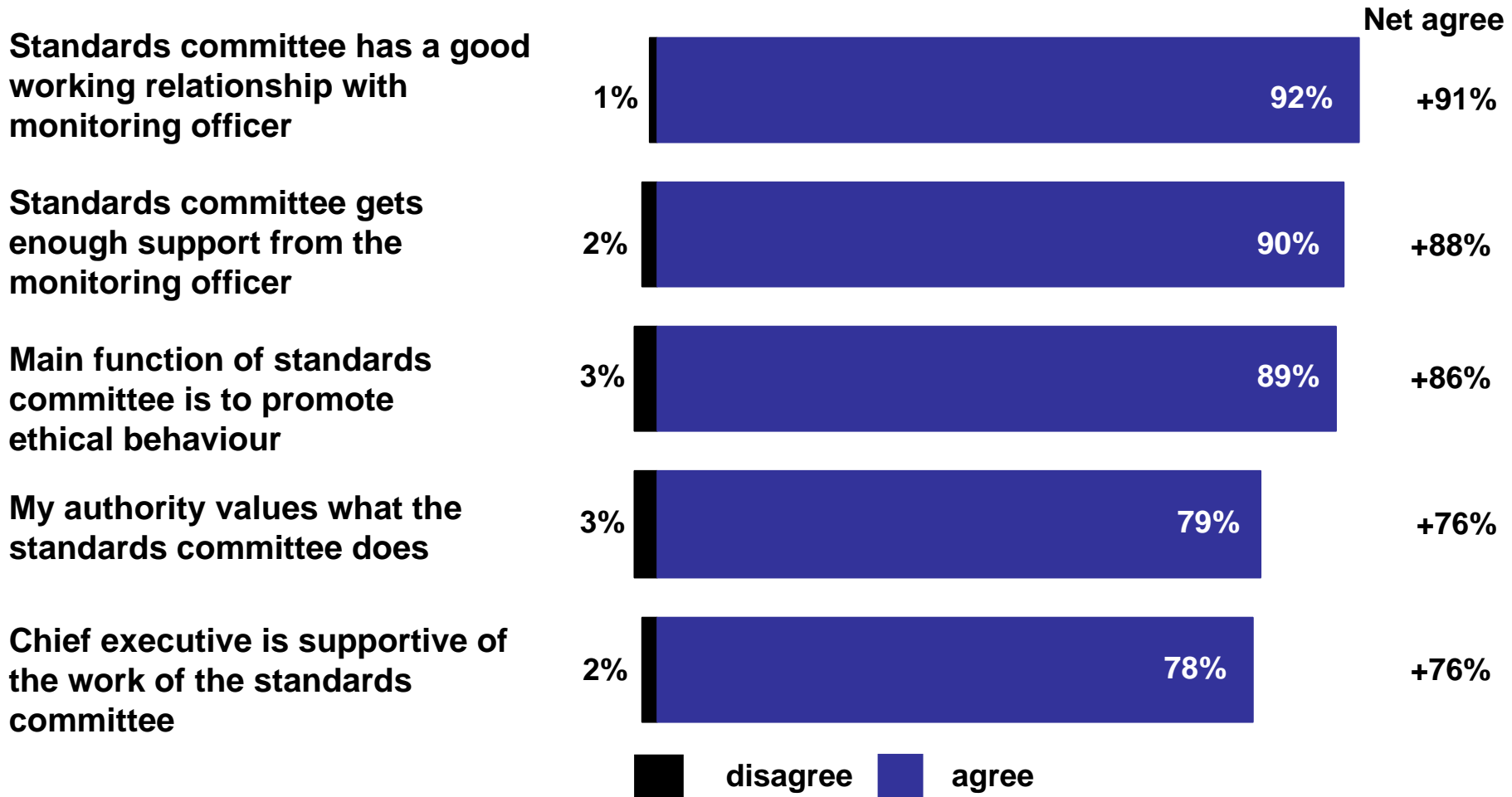
Standards committee member profiles

- 75% male, 25% female
- Mean age of respondents is 62 years:
 - 12% – aged up to 50
 - 27% – aged 51-60
 - 37% – aged 61-70
 - 18% – aged 71+
 - 5% – refused

Length of time on the standards committee

- 12% – less than one year
- 63% – over one year, but less than five years
- 25% – five years or more

Agreement with statements



Agreement with statements

Authority believes that the role of the standards committee is part of wider ethical framework



Net agree

+75%

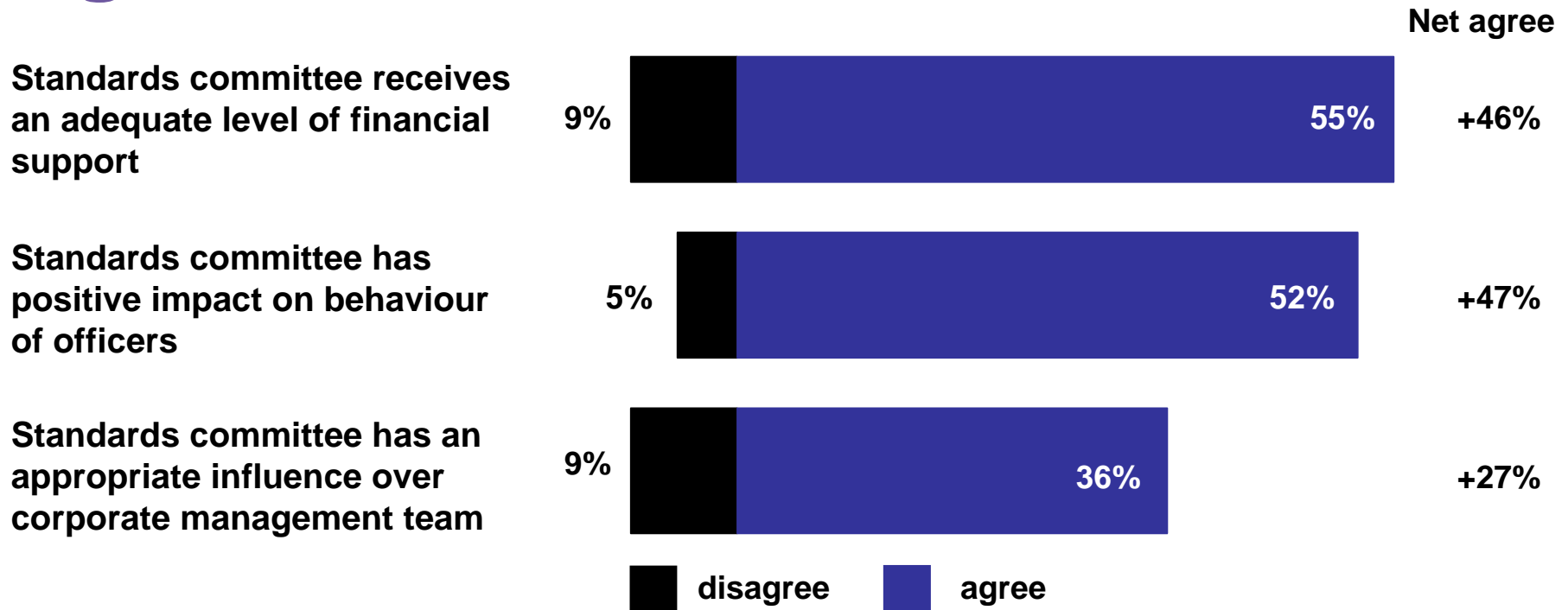
Work of standards committee has positive impact on behaviour of members



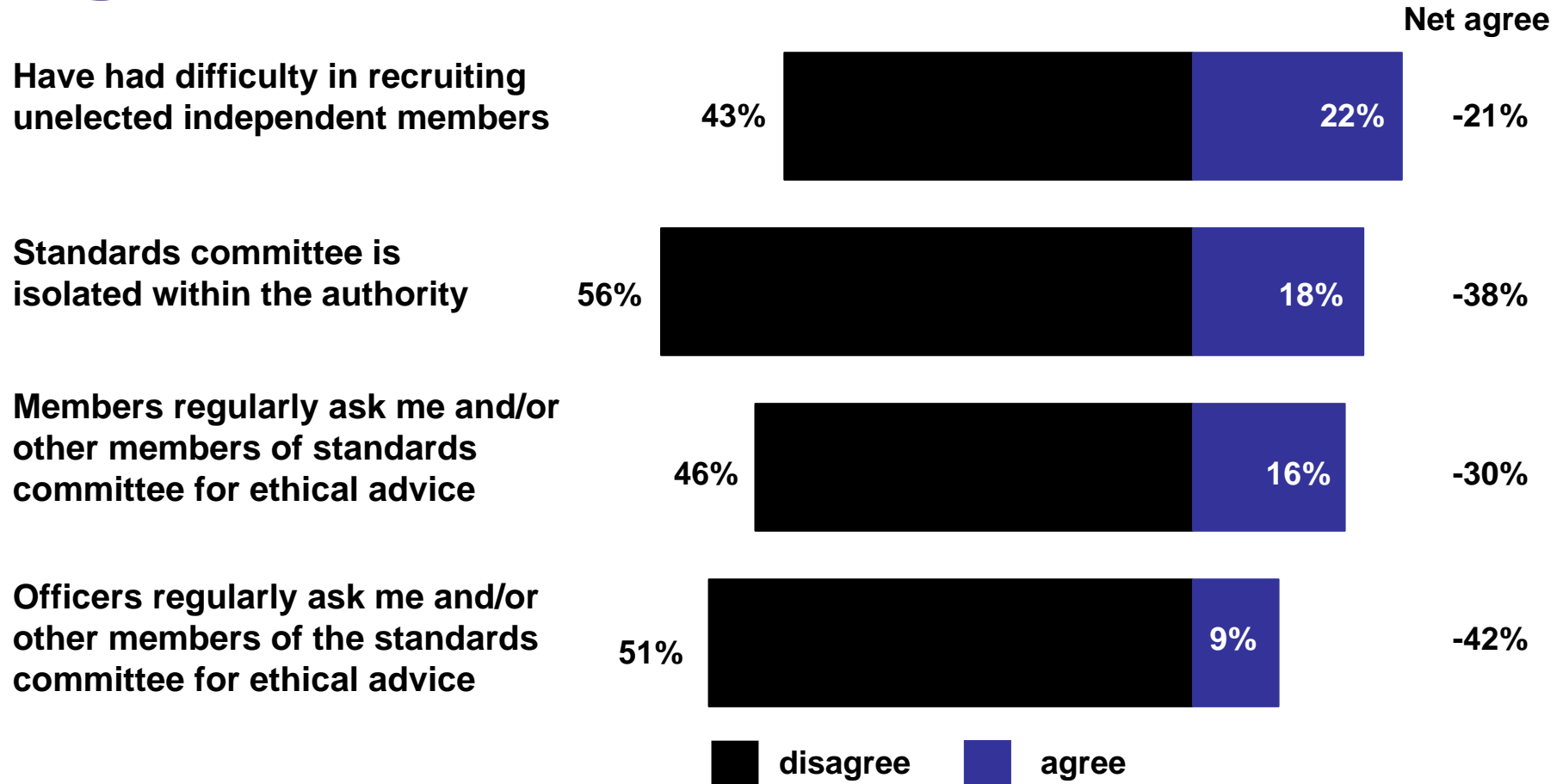
+59%

 disagree  agree

Agreement with statements



Agreement with statements



Role on the committee

How prepared do standards committee members feel in relation to their role?

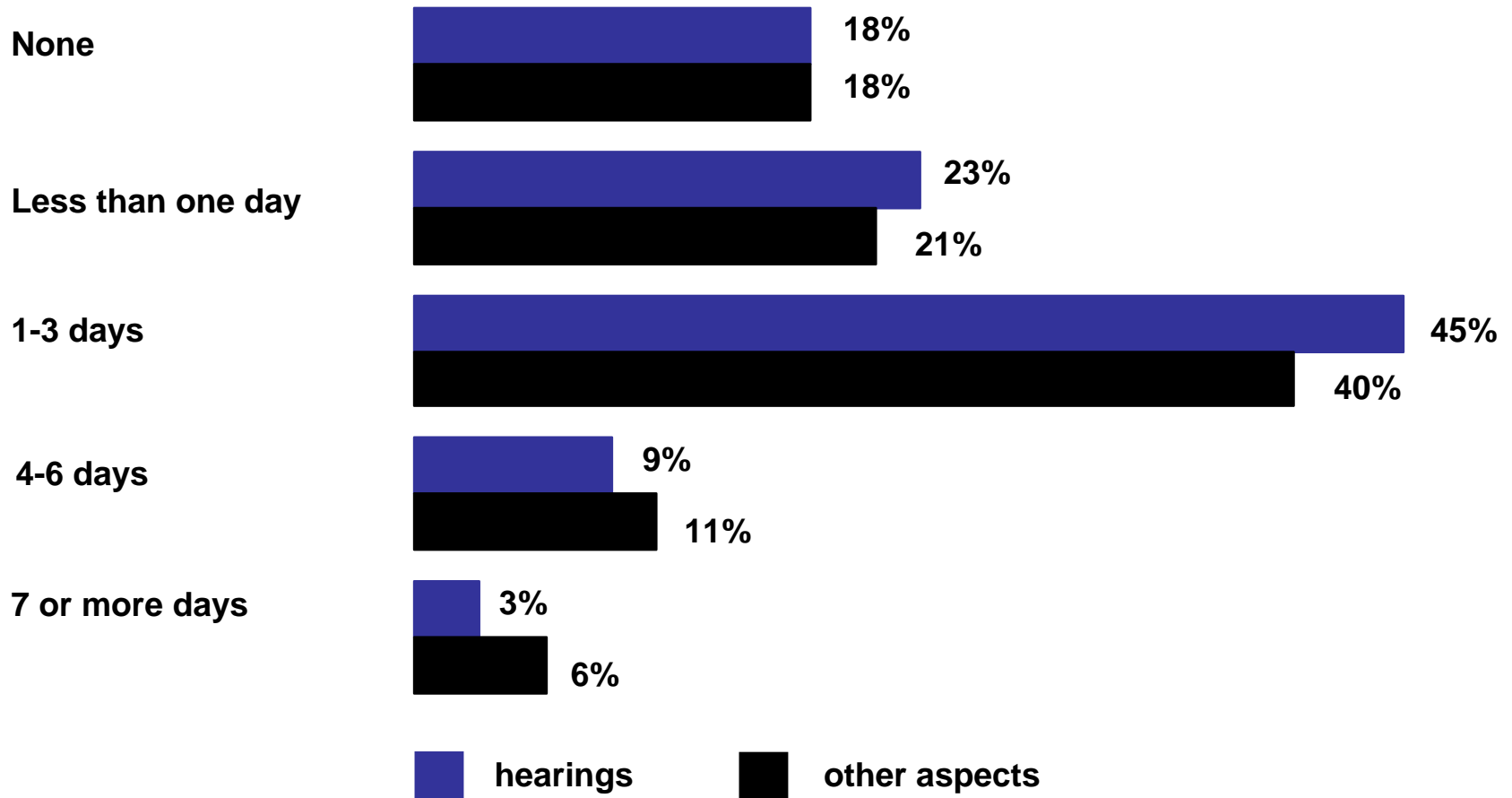
- 86% – well prepared (including 25% very well prepared)
- 8% – neither well prepared nor unprepared
- 4% – unprepared

Hearings

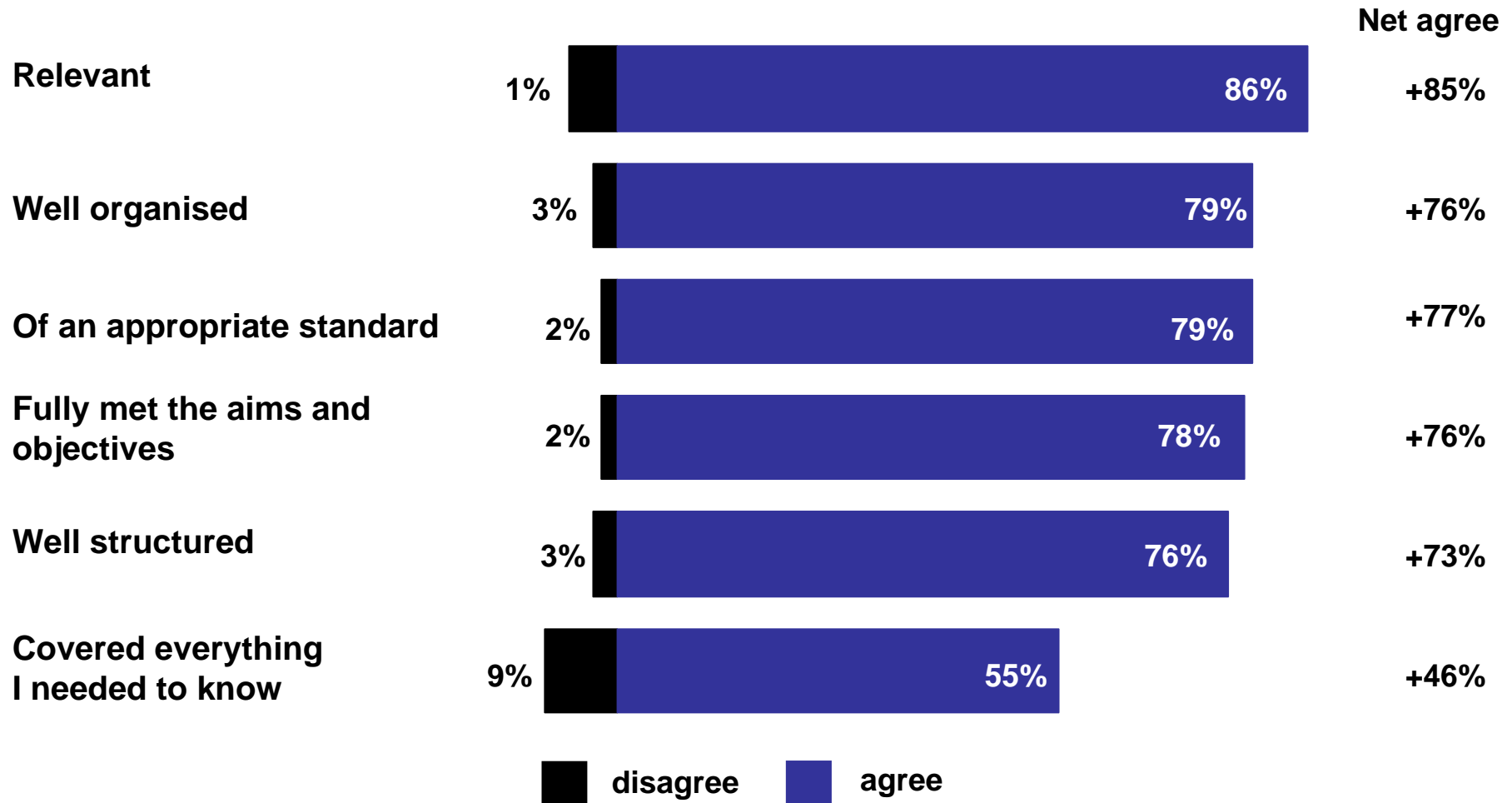
How prepared do standards committee members feel in relation to undertaking hearings?

- 76% – well prepared (including 23% very well prepared)
- 12% – neither well prepared nor unprepared
- 8% – unprepared (including 3% highly unprepared)

Number of training days received



Attitudes towards training received



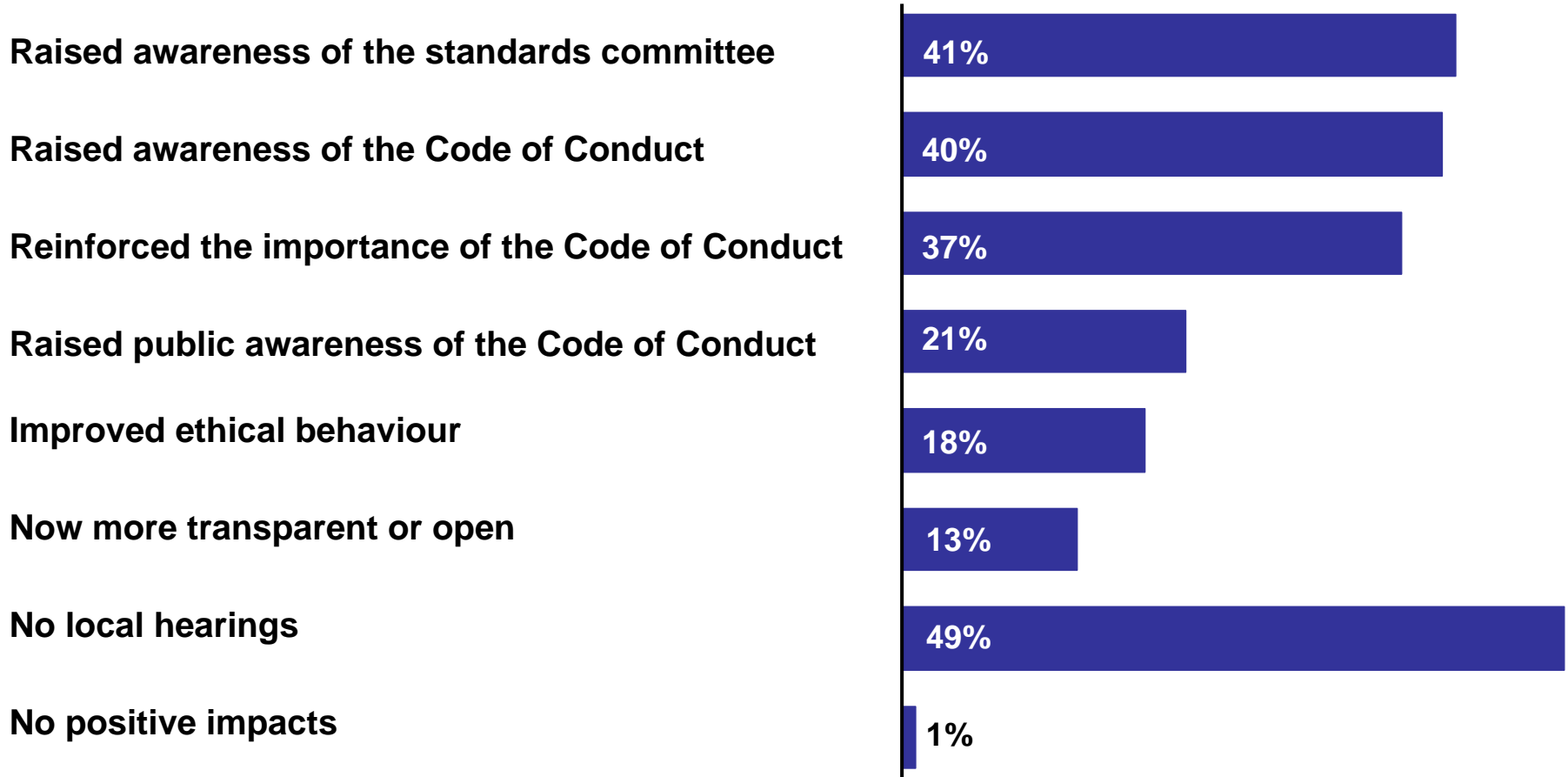
Impact of training

- Of those who do not feel prepared for their role, 52% have undertaken some training, 44% have not.
- Of those who feel prepared for their role, 92% have undertaken some training, 7% have not.

Future training

- 59% would welcome more training:
 - 86% of respondents who felt unprepared for a hearing
 - 77% of those who felt unprepared for their role

Local investigations: positive impacts



Local investigations: negative impacts

Impact on relationship between standards committee and members



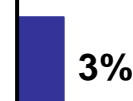
Impact on public image



Impact on image of standards committee



Impact on relationship between standards committee and officers



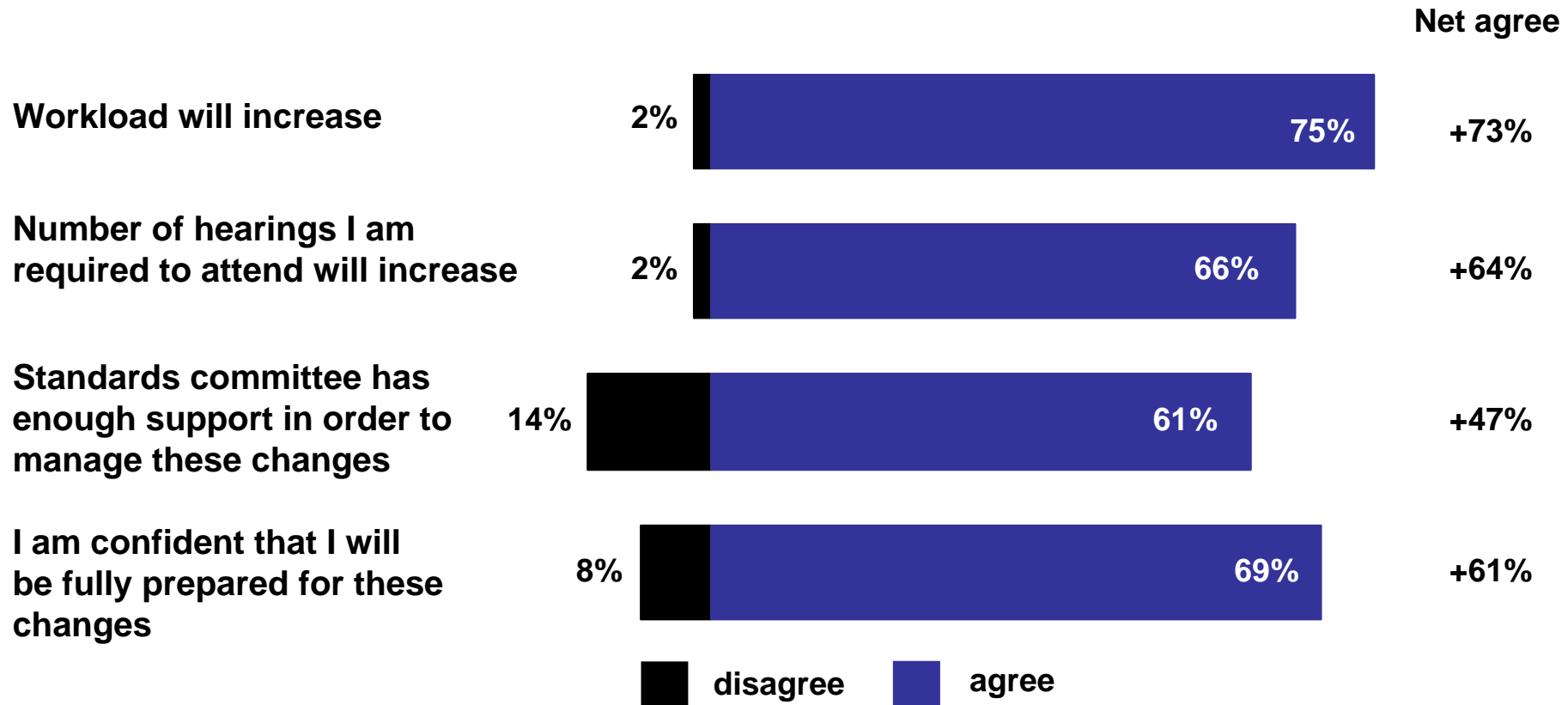
No negative impacts



No local hearings



Future impact of local investigations and hearings



Standards committees: a national snapshot

Stephen Clarke, Chair of Standards Committee,
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Standards committees: a national snapshot

Reverend Paul Lipscomb, Chair of Standards Committee, Slough Borough Council

Standards committees: a national snapshot

Kirsty Cole, Assistant Chief Executive, Newark and Sherwood District Council, and President, ACSeS

Monitoring officers – what do you look like ?

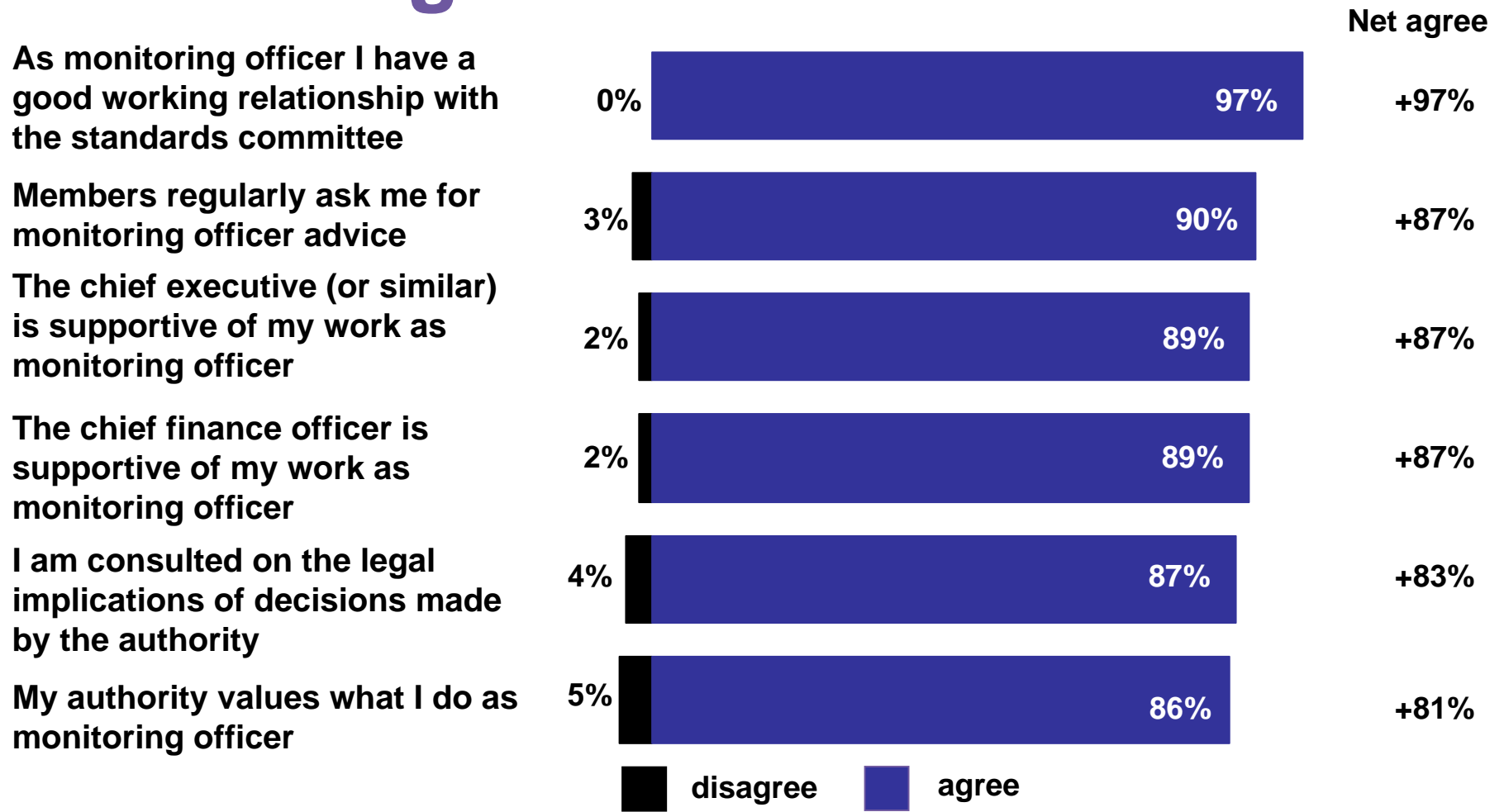
- 60% male, 40% female
- Average age is 50 years:
 - 41% are aged 41-50
 - 41% are aged 51-60
- 92% classified themselves as ‘White British’
- 81% are solicitors
- 11% are not qualified in any legal position

- 62% are members of their authority's corporate management team
- 80% have worked in local government for more than 15 years
- Time as monitoring officer:
 - 37% – 1 year < 5 years
 - 22% – 5 years < 8 years
 - 22% – more than 10 years
- 47% work in authorities with overall Conservative control, 16% Labour, and 10% Liberal Democrats

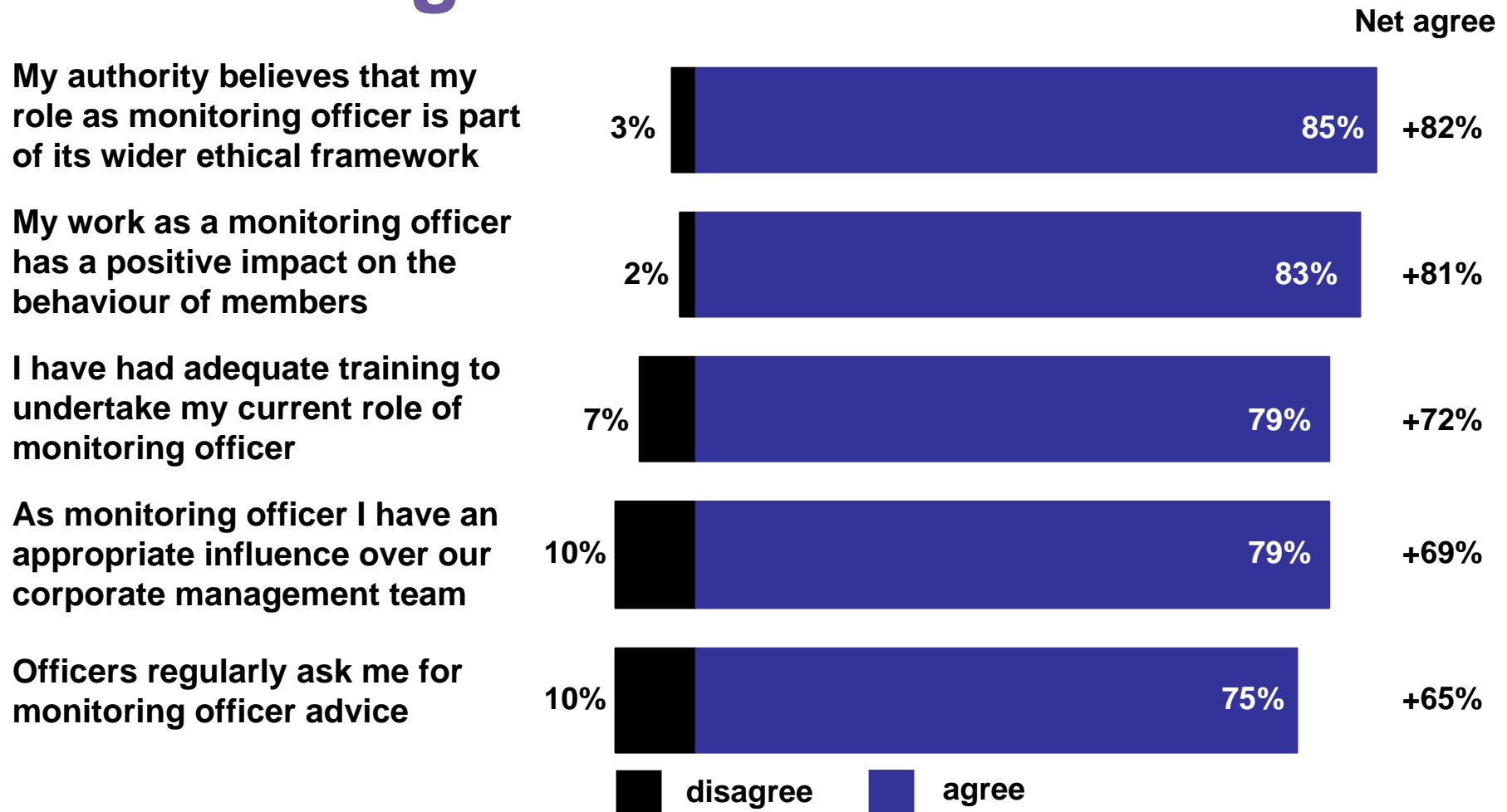
Support and training in the job

- 1% of monitoring officers have no support staff
- However, 5% have one member of staff in support, and 92% have two or more support staff

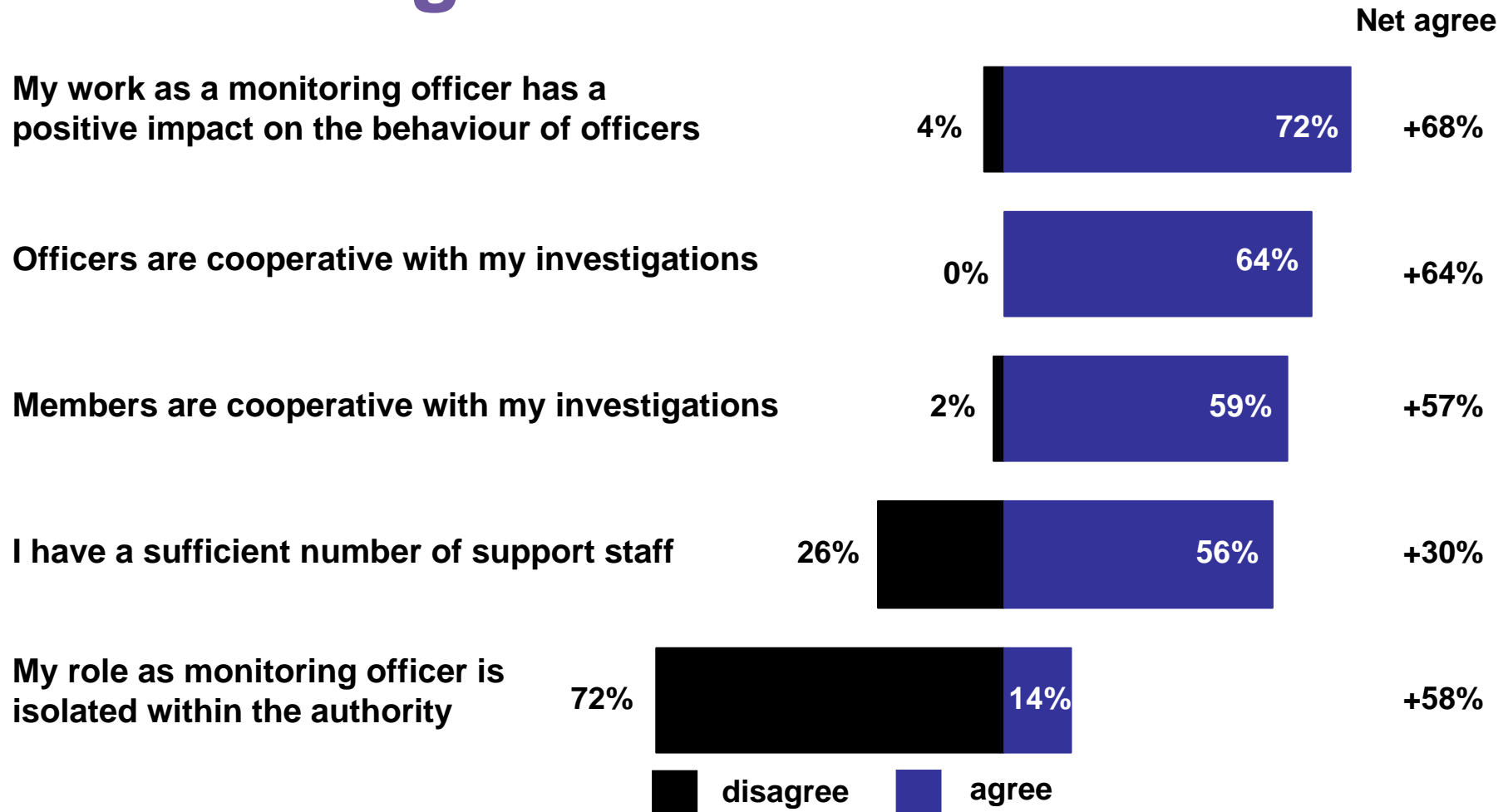
Perceptions and attitudes of monitoring officers



Perceptions and attitudes of monitoring officers



Perceptions and attitudes of monitoring officers



Standards committee activities

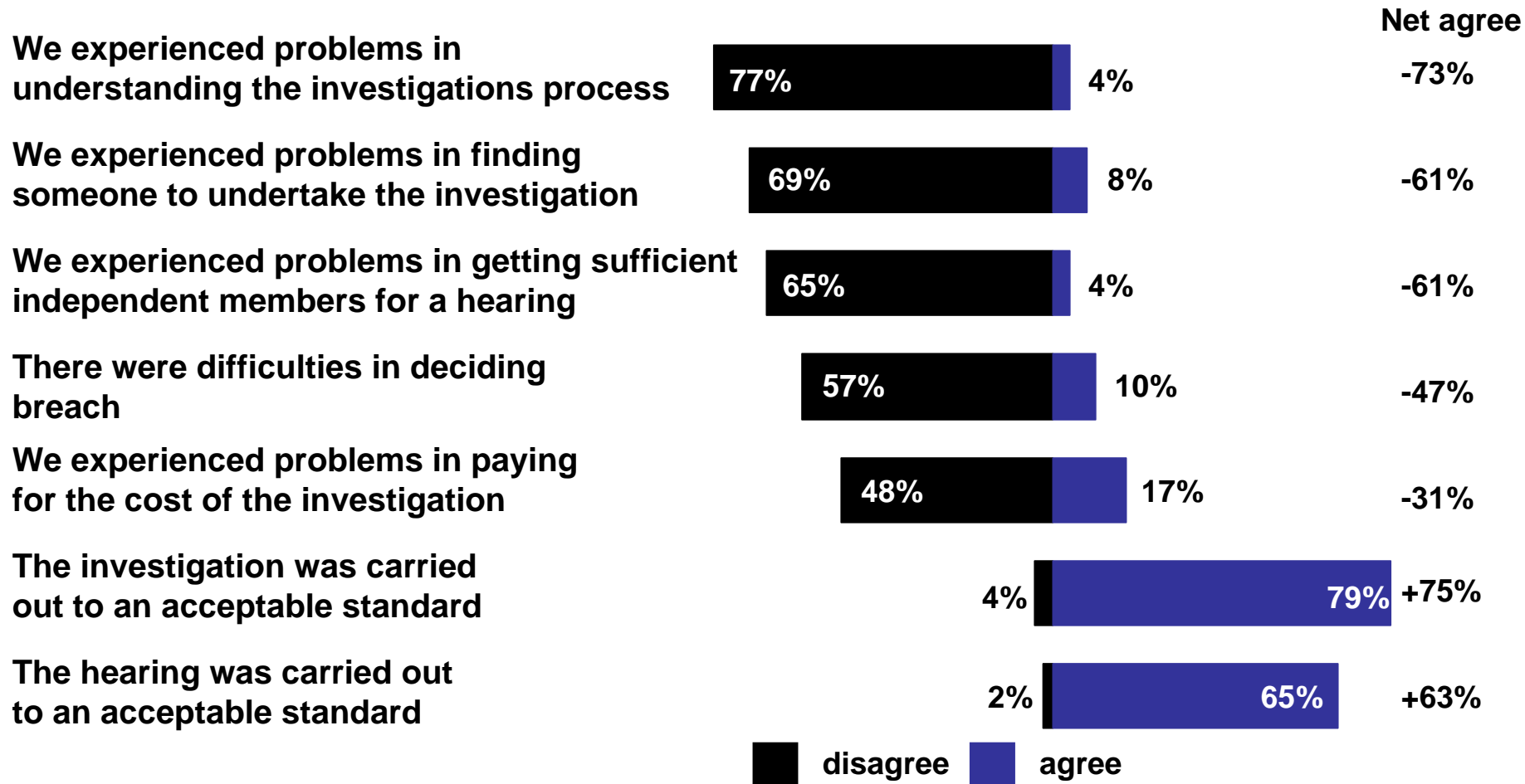
Activity	Within terms of reference (%)	Involved in activity (%)
Monitoring the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct	98	73
Training/arranging training/seminars on the Code of Conduct	97	76
Inclusion of Code/ethics issues in the induction of new members	61	57
Providing advice/assistance to members/officers on the Code/ethics	81	57
Overview of whistleblowing Code	47	30
Overview of constitution or relevant extracts	41	38
Hearings	89	37
Functions relating to authority's complaints procedure	30	24
Responding to/receiving feedback on national or governmental developments regarding ethical governance	69	74

Independent members of standards committees

- 34% of respondents feel it is easy to recruit independent members
- 24% – neither easy nor difficult
- 40% – difficult
- Key measures to recruit independent members: Adverts in local press (97%), website (50%), personal approach (38%). Adverts are considered the most effective approach by 59% (personal approach 19%).

Conduct of local investigations

Agreement with statements about local investigations:



Local investigations: positive impacts

Raised awareness of the monitoring officer

40%

Raised awareness of the standards committee

57%

Raised awareness of the Code of Conduct

49%

Reinforced the importance of the Code of Conduct

51%

Raised public awareness of the Code of Conduct

27%

Improved ethical behaviour within the authority

17%

Authority now more transparent or open

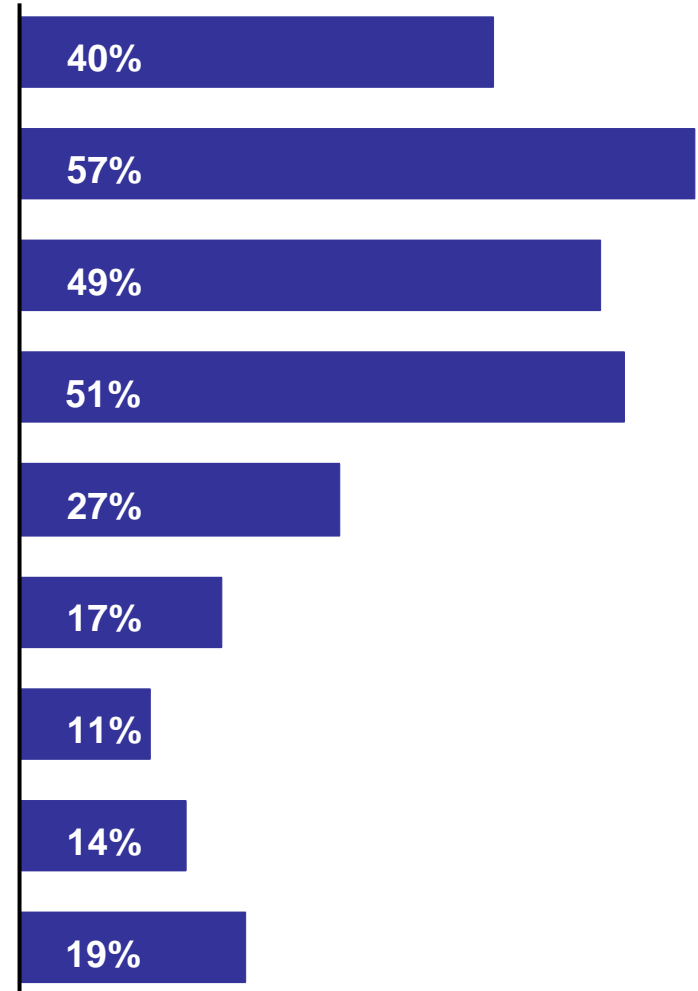
11%

No positive impacts

14%

Unsure/not provided

19%



Local investigations: negative impacts

Impact on relationship between monitoring officer and members

17%

Impact on image of authority to the public

9%

Impact on image of standards committee within the authority

5%

Impact on relationship between monitoring officer and officers

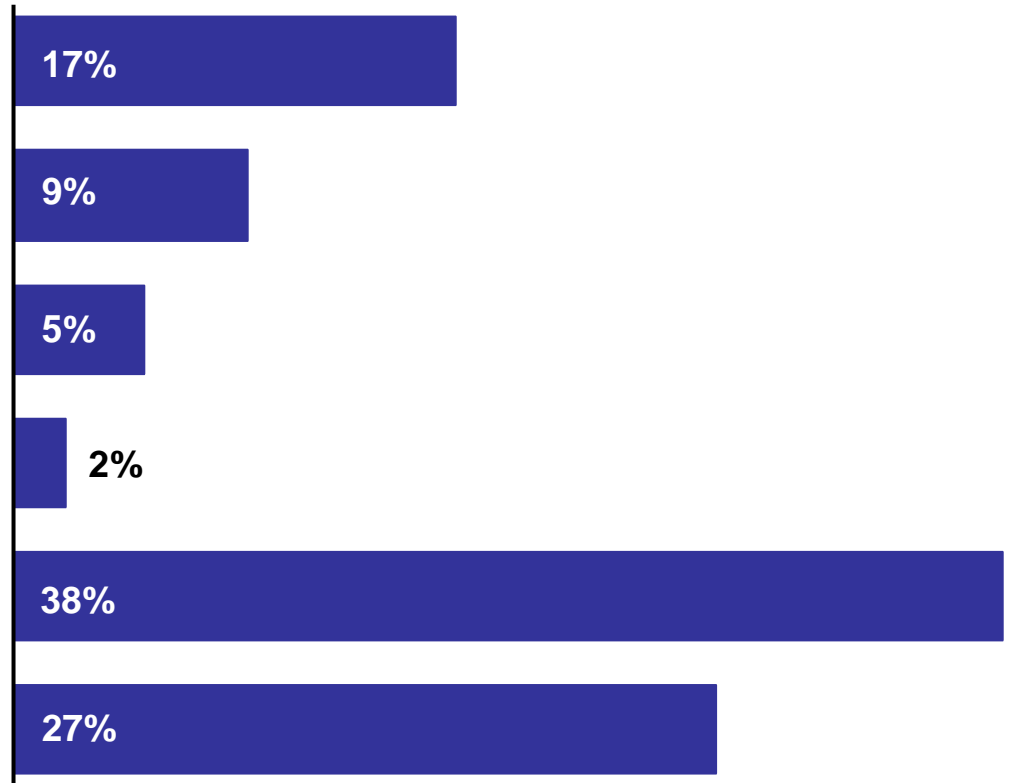
2%

No negative impacts

38%

Unsure/not provided

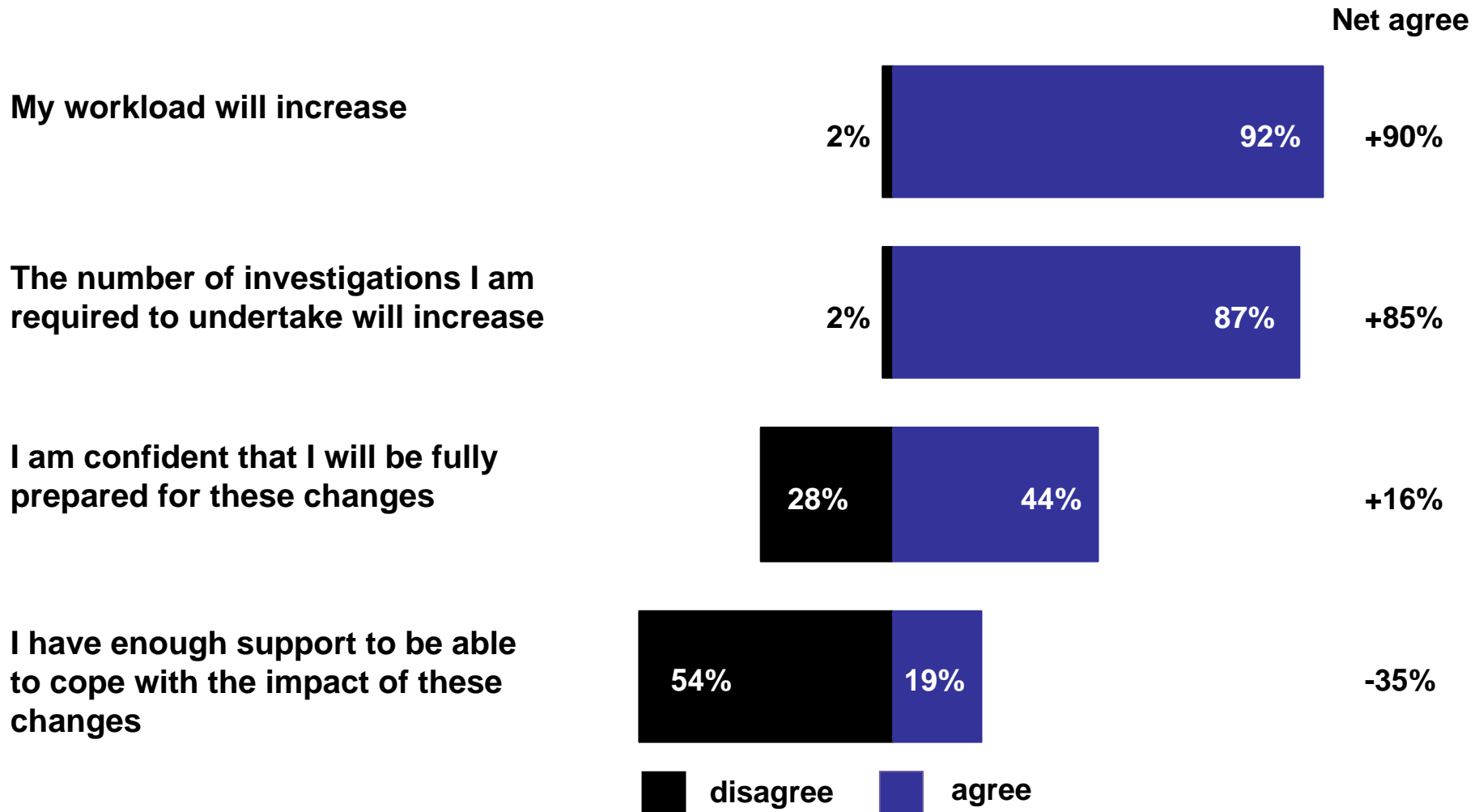
27%



Training on undertaking local investigations

- 74% have received training
- 62% would like more training

Impact of future changes



Standards committees: a national snapshot

Stephen Clarke, Chair of Standards Committee,
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Kirsty Cole, Assistant Chief Executive, Newark and
Sherwood District Council, and President, ACSeS

Dawn Hands, Research Director, BMG Research

Reverend Paul Lipscomb, Chair of Standards
Committee, Slough Borough Council

Chair: Elizabeth Hall, Board Member,
The Standards Board for England