

# Association of Chairs 2016 Survey of Chairs and Vice-Chairs



Supporting charity and non-profit chairs

## Introduction

In Spring 2016 the Association of Chairs conducted its first survey designed to learn more about Chairs and Vice Chairs, where they currently get support and the issues that are of concern to them. The survey shows high levels of commitment by Chairs but significant gaps in support.

## Methodology

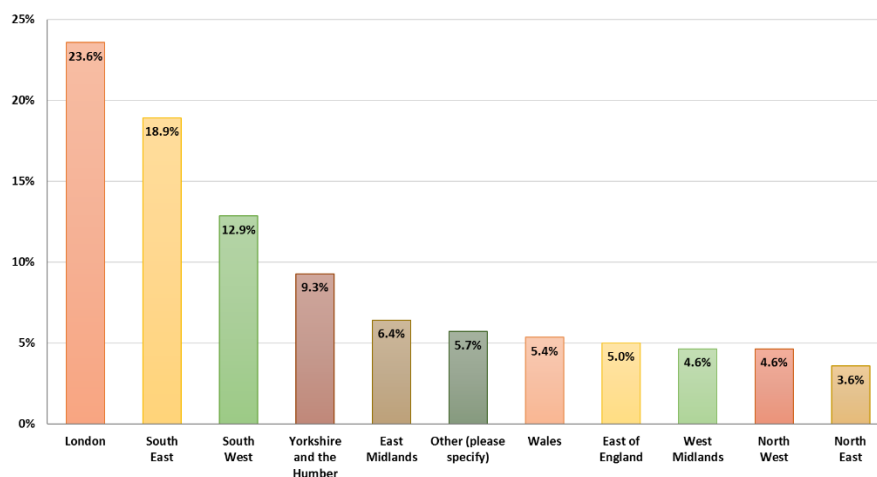
The survey was open for two weeks in February 2016. It was sent to 300 AoC members and 3600 e-newsletter subscribers.

Of the 439 people who responded to the survey, 360 (82%) had a chairing role - 69% were Chairs, 9% Vice Chairs or Deputy Chairs and 5% Prospective Chairs. 140 members completed the survey (47% of the total membership). Non-members (299) represented 8% of the e-newsletter subscribers. In this summary figures refer to the 360 with a chairing role, unless otherwise stated.

It is worth noting that our sample is likely to over-represent Chairs who are engaged in their role and committed to self-development. The survey was designed and undertaken by Linda Laurance Associates and made possible by Big Lottery funding from Big Assist.

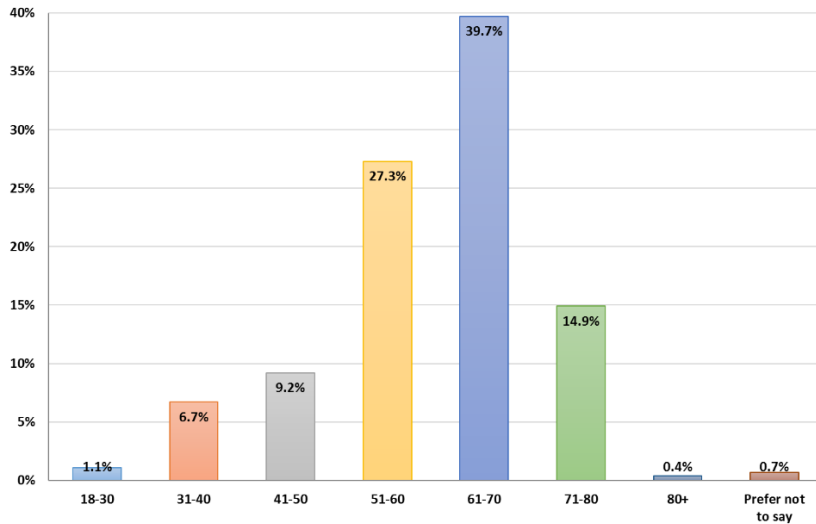
## About Chairs in our sample

### Where do you live?



24% came from London, 19% from the South East, 13% from the South West. The North East had the lowest percentage of respondents, just 3.6% of the sample.

### What is your age?



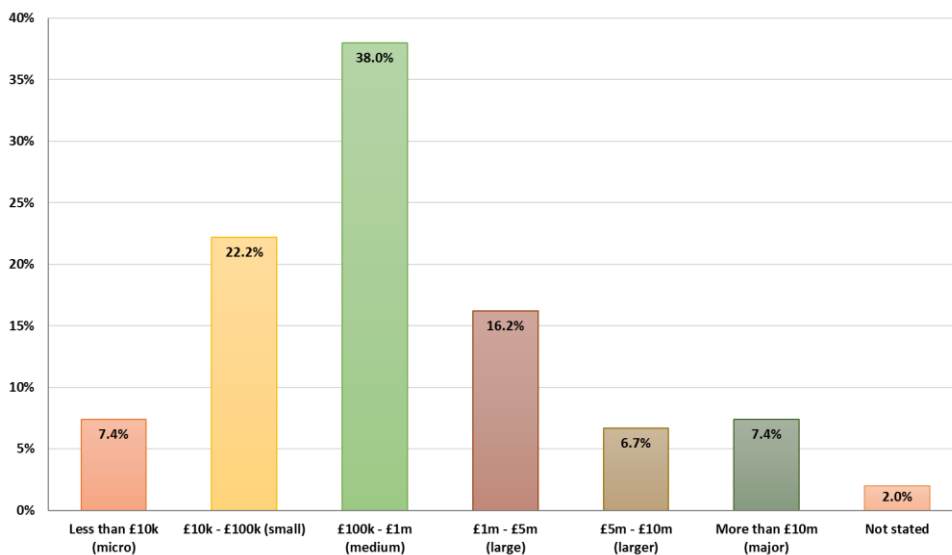
Like other trustees, Chairs in our sample were older; 55% were over 60. There was a reasonably good gender balance with a ratio of 55:44 male to female (1% preferred not to say). The group is not ethnically diverse, with 94% describing themselves as white.

For two thirds it was their first chairing role in a charity or non-profit – and for 44% it was their first chairing role of any sort. 31% brought board level experience from the private sector and 26% board level experience from the public sector.

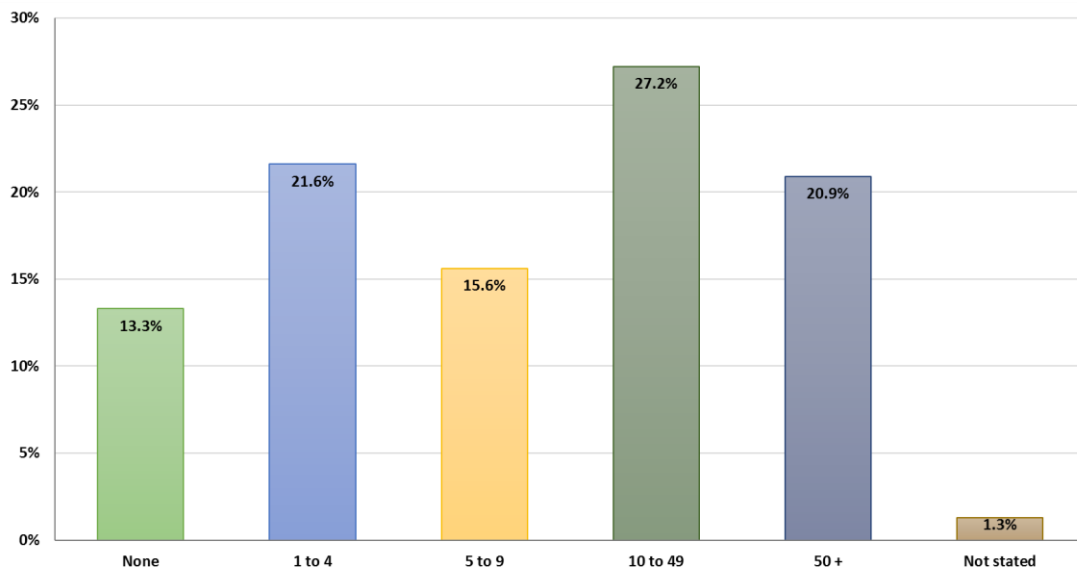
Chairs were asked about their use of social media. LinkedIn proved the most popular with 43% using regularly, with 34% for Facebook and only 26% for Twitter.

Our respondents chaired organisations of varying sizes:

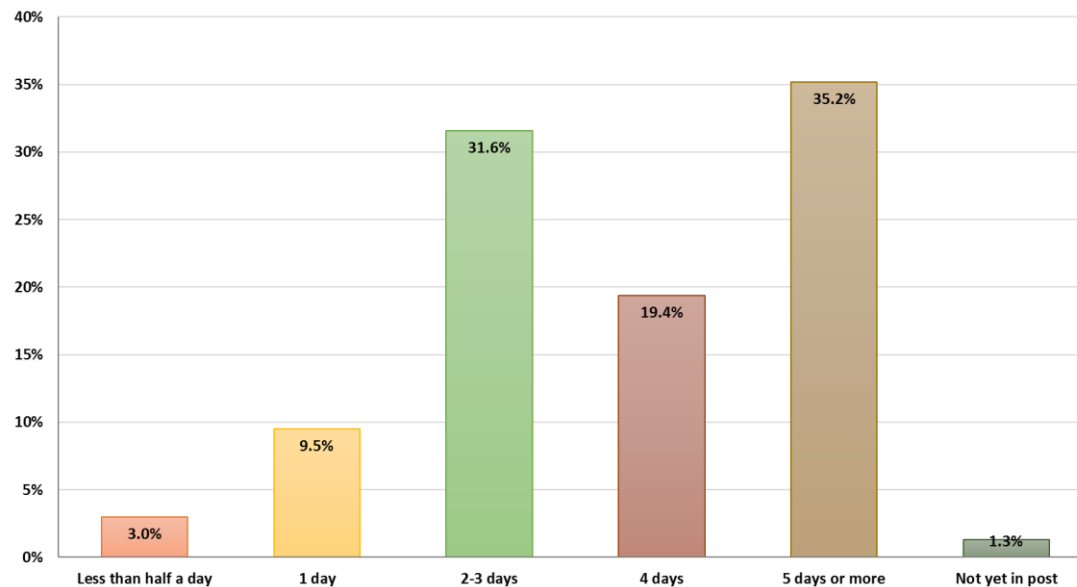
### What is the annual income of the organisation you chair?



### How many paid staff does the organisation you chair have?



### Time spent on chairing role per month



54% of Chairs spend 4 days or more per month on their chairing role. Over a third (35%) of Chairs are spending 5 days or more per month on their chairing role (among AoC members that rises to 43%). Those most likely to spend over 5 days a month are Chairs of the very smallest (Under £10k: 41%) and largest organisations (over £5 million: 55%).

### Support for Chairs

Among our sample 46% report having no budget for board development; only 19% had a formal allocated budget; while the balance address development on a case by case basis. Perhaps more surprisingly only 34% of Chairs had had an induction, arguably the most basic form of support.

The main support Chairs received was access to publications, conferences and events; and admin support. Apart from publications, fewer than 50% had accessed any kind of

development support in the last 12 months. Many restricted themselves to free sources of support. 37% had accessed paid training (two-thirds reported it had been funded by the organisation, a third paid for training themselves). 16% had had mentoring or coaching.

Just 38% of Chairs had their expenses reimbursed; and only 3% had received payment for being a trustee.

The research identified a wide range of additional support wanted by Chairs, with some consistent themes. Over 50% wanted help finding good trustees and ensuring their trustees had necessary knowledge. At least a third also wanted help with

- Improving the effectiveness of board meetings
- Understanding the impact the organisation makes
- Assessing the board's effectiveness
- Managing the demands of chairing in limited time
- Their relationship with the CEO

## **Issues of concern to Chairs**

AoC members identified the biggest challenges for the sector as a whole and these were unsurprisingly topped by funding, fundraising and financial sustainability. Second, after a year of crises and scandals, came concern for the sector's reputation, credibility and trust; and the consequences of the Kids Company closure and media criticism. Third was achieving good governance and in particular finding good trustees.

Among all Chairs, their most pressing issues for their own boards were generating income; long term planning; building profile and safeguarding reputation; and managing increased demand for services.

Chairs' biggest personal priority concerns were expressed differently: they unsurprisingly listed funding as their biggest concern, covering fundraising, cuts, contracts and income diversity. Not far behind was ensuring good governance, in particular, recruiting trustees, generating a competent board and managing it effectively.

## **About Association of Chairs**

AoC members expressed satisfaction with the Association of Chairs. 85% would recommend membership to a Chair they know. 74% said they have new knowledge that helps them be a better Chair or Vice Chair, 64% report they are doing things differently because of the Association of Chairs.

For further information on the Association of Chairs, our events and to join please visit:  
[www.associationofchairs.org.uk](http://www.associationofchairs.org.uk)

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