

 the audience agency

Royal Society of Literature

Survey of Members, Fellows and
e-newsletter subscribers

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September 2016

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Background

Introduction: about the RSL and this report

Founded in 1820, the Royal Society of Literature (RSL) is the UK's national charity for "the advancement of literature".

During 2016, the RSL is reviewing its work and making plans for its future development. As part of the review, the Society commissioned the Audience Agency to carry out a survey of the RSL's Members, Fellows and e-newsletter subscribers. These groups of people represent the Society's core supporters, beneficiaries and audience. The survey asked questions both about them and about their views of the RSL's activities. The present report summarises the findings.

The RSL has 520 Fellows - writers in all literary forms who are elected to this honorary role in recognition of their literary achievements. The Fellows elect a Council which governs the Society, acting as board of trustees. The Society's activities include talks and other public events, literary prizes, a biannual magazine, Masterclasses in creative writing, and outreach visits to schools. Members of the public may join the Society as paying Members, giving them free entry to the events and a range of other benefits. The RSL's team of 8 staff is based at Somerset House in central London.

The 2016 organisational review has been led by the RSL Council's newly elected Chair, Lisa Appignanesi, and recently appointed Director, Tim Robertson. The Council has considered and discussed the survey findings in detail. A summary of the Council's initial response is being published on the RSL's website in October 2016, along with this report.

Feedback

The research was an opportunity for Fellows, Members and e-newsletter subscribers to feed back their opinions on the work of the RSL, including:

- personal perceptions of the organisation,
- its positioning and brand as an organisation,
- the impact it has on readers and writers,
- the role and impact of particular activities - e.g. events, educational work and awards.

Understanding the audience

The research also seeks to understand to what extent the current audience represents the breadth of those engaged with literature - in terms of demographics, form of writing, and audience.

Future direction of the RSL

Finally, the survey explores how the current audience (in particular Fellows) would like to be involved with the organisation and what role/s could they take to support its mission, activities and promotion.

Fellows, Members and subscribers

The survey was distributed to a total of 6,835 people, made up of the following groups:

429 Fellows

To be a Fellow of the RSL is a unique literary honour. A writer may be invited to become an RSL Fellow when he or she has published at least two works of outstanding literary merit, has been nominated by two existing Fellows, and has been elected through secret ballot at the RSL Council. Around 15 new Fellows are elected every year for their lifetime, maintaining the total Fellowship at around 500. Fellows are entitled to use the letters FRSL after their name, to stand for election to the RSL Council and to nominate other writers for Fellowship. Many Fellows also engage in the RSL's work by speaking at events, judging for prizes or writing for the *RSL Review* magazine. The survey was sent to the 429 Fellows for whom the RSL has a current email address (out of a current total of 520).

766 Members

Membership of the RSL is open to everyone for £50 a year (or £30 for under 30s, or bespoke packages for groups). Member benefits include a free ticket for every RSL public event, a second guest ticket for £5, and free subscription to *RSL Review* magazine. At the end of June 2016, 58 of the RSL's 766 Members were Young Members aged under 30.

5,977 E-newsletter subscribers

The RSL publishes a monthly e-newsletter, to which anyone can subscribe free of charge via the RSL's website www.rsliterature.org

Methodology

The research was conducted via an e-survey, to which all Fellows, Members and e-newsletter subscribers were invited to respond. In addition letters were sent to all Members not on email inviting them to respond by phone.

Although the survey asked a series of questions to all respondents, most questions were targeted towards those who had for used a particular RSL activity, or were specifically asked of Fellows, Members, or subscribers.

An incentive of entry into a prize draw to win a £100 first prize or £50 runner-up prize book token was used to encourage responses from all those from whom we sought to hear, regardless of level of engagement with the RSL.

The e-survey was open for six weeks, from 13 June to 24 July 2016, with a reminder sent out on 18 July.

Sample size and margins of error

There were 1,001 responses in total, of which 798 were complete responses and 203 partials (i.e. the respondent didn't complete the survey). Of these:

- 288 were from Members, representing 38% of the total Membership of 766;
- 610 were from E-newsletter subscribers, representing 10% of the total;
- 103 were from Fellows, representing 20% of the total Fellowship.

The margin of error differs for each result, based on the number of responses, the size of the population (i.e. how many Fellows, Members and subscribers there are amongst the RSL's current audience), and the extent to which the observed response diverges from 50%, with less equivocal results having a larger margin of error. The maximum margin of error¹ for each constituency, based on number of responses, were:

Group	Sample size (number of responses)				
	25	50	100	250	500
Fellows	±19%	±13%	±9%	-	-
Members	±19%	±13%	±9%	±5%	-
E-newsletter subscribers	±20%	±14%	±10%	±6%	±4%

Sample sizes for each question are given below the relevant chart/graph.

Where possible, comparisons are given with the UK or England and Wales population², based on 2011 census data. As this data describes the entire population, sample sizes are not given for census data.

¹ The margins of error stated in the table are on the basis of seeing a result of 50% (e.g. half say yes, half say no). Where responses are more equivocal (e.g. 10% saying yes, 90% saying no) the margin of error within these results will be smaller. They use the 95% confidence level, i.e. if we ran the survey 100 times, the observed result for that question would be within the margin of error 95 times out of 100.

² Comparisons with the full UK population are given where the data is available. Some Census questions differ between England/Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland. Where this is the case, the England/Wales figure has been given.

Executive summary

1. Understanding the RSL's audience

The self-selecting nature of the sample (those who chose to complete the survey) means that the demographic findings need to be read with caution.

While it is clear that the RSL reaches a diverse range of people, the findings indicate under-representation of some groups compared with the UK population - notably people outside London, people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, and (especially among the Fellows) younger people. The findings indicate strong representation of women, London residents and people from higher socio-economic groups.

Demographics

- In terms of gender, there is an even male/female split of respondents amongst the Fellows (closest to the UK population profile) and a bias towards female respondents among Members and subscribers.
- Subscribers are a wider range of ages (closest to the UK population profile) than either Members or Fellows, with Fellows having the oldest overall age profile.
- Subscribers are more ethnically diverse than Members or Fellows. Overall the profiles are less diverse in terms of Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds compared with the UK population.
- Fellows are more likely to be employed full time, Members more likely to be retired, and subscribers more likely to be full-time students. This is broadly reflective of the adult population of England and Wales.
- Fellows have the highest annual household income, followed by Members and then subscribers.
- In the context of NS-SEC categorisation a higher than average proportion of Fellows, Members and Subscribers fall into categories one and two - higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations.
- Over half of Fellows and Members live in London, and Subscribers represent the highest proportion living in the rest of the UK or overseas. This reflects a Membership database analysis undertaken by the RSL in July 2016.

Motivations for Membership

The main motivations for Membership are:

- to attend RSL events (70%),

- to support the charitable work of the RSL (54%) and
- free subscription to RSL Review magazine (47%).

Engagement with writing

- 35% of Fellows are novelists and 22% biographers.
- Both Members and subscribers are engaged in a range of forms of writing and over 90% read for pleasure. Around one third of Members and subscribers quote that they have published work in newspapers, magazines or journals, around a third are writers published in book form and around a third write for pleasure (unpublished).
- Subscribers are most likely to write short stories, novels or poetry, whereas Members' writing also includes a wider range of non-fiction forms - biography, history, print journalism.
- Most write for adult audiences, but subscribers are slightly more likely than Fellows and Members to write for children or young adults.

2. Feedback on RSL activities

Events

- Across Fellows, Members and subscribers, most have or are engaged with one or other of the RSL activities in line with whether they are a Member, Fellow or Subscriber.
- Overall events are rated highly and particularly valued by Members.
- The content of the events is also highly rated, particularly the quality of speakers, with Q&A with the audience lowest of the ratings.
- In terms of suggestions for events, most of those suggested have attracted interest, but, apart from a good proportion of subscribers asking for more events outside London, a focus on emerging writers attracts the most positive responses.
- To put the respondents in context, Fellows are particularly active across the public literary events scene, although there is also a reasonable level of activity by Members and subscribers.
- Respondents felt that the RSL events were of a similar or higher quality than other public literary events.

Awards and prizes

- Relatively small proportions of Members and Subscribers have entered for RSL prizes or awards.

- The information about the awards and judges supplied in advance seems to rate higher than the experience post-submission.

RSL Review Magazine

- The *RSL Review* magazine is rated highly across the board, but particularly in terms of quality of contributors and quality of writing.
- In terms of the suggestions included in the survey, they are all mostly of interest (except quizzes and games), with the news and information on events rating highest, amongst other key themes.

Website

- The website attracts particularly high ratings, especially for recordings of events, information about RSL events and articles from *RSL Review* magazine.
- Members and Subscribers are the highest users.

Perceptions

- Overall, the most commonly chosen adjectives about RSL were **prestigious** (59% of all respondents chose this word), **informative** (54%), **London-centric** (44%) and **well-organised** (44%).

Fellows are more likely than subscribers to describe the RSL as **prestigious**.

Members are more likely than Fellows or subscribers to describe the RSL as **informative** and **inspiring**, and more likely than subscribers to describe the RSL as **relevant** and **diverse**.

Subscribers are more likely than Fellows or Members to describe the RSL as **elitist**.

Fellows and **Members** are both more likely than subscribers to describe the RSL as **well-organised**, **welcoming**, **inclusive**, **quirky** and **fun**.

Members and **Subscribers** are both more likely than Fellows to describe the RSL as **academic** and **contemporary**.

3. Future priorities

Involvement with RSL

- 53% of Fellows overall do not feel very involved with RSL and 29% quite involved.
- 36% of Fellows feel involved with the organisation and a few would like a greater involvement. Of those who are not very involved or not at all, over 50% say that

they would like to be a little more involved, and a smaller proportion a lot more involved. In terms of the types of involvement suggested, there is a good response across the areas suggested - particularly nominating writers for awards and doing schools visits, amongst others.

RSL's goals

- In terms of current achievements, respondents feel that the RSL is especially successful in meeting its goals of honouring and encouraging first-rate writers and helping existing readers deepen and extend their knowledge of literature.
- In terms of goals for the RSL to consider pursuing, Fellows and Members see the highest priorities as acting as a national voice for the value of literature, and campaigning on literary issues. Most subscribers also endorse these goals, but for them the highest priority is supporting and encouraging emerging writers.
- For Fellows the chief personal benefits of the RSL seems to be about profile and networking; for Members and Subscribers it is about deepening and widening engagement with literature and for Members about meeting others.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall the work of the Royal Society of Literature is highly valued by its main constituent groups.

A large majority of Fellows, Members and subscribers report strong levels of satisfaction with the Society's activities, and their perceptions of the RSL's function are in line with the charity's goals. It appears that the more involved respondents are in the Society, the more they gain from it, with more Fellows than Members reporting that the RSL has made a difference to them, and more Members than subscribers.

Plenty of willingness is stated to be more involved, but the ideas for future directions are very wide-ranging. This suggests that more detailed consultation and careful planning will be needed to ensure that future initiatives succeed in meeting varied expectations and needs.

The following points emerging from the survey may be relevant to the RSL's future planning:

1. There is a clear call for more activity beyond London, but any new ventures in the RSL's events need to be in addition to maintaining the existing highly regarded London programme. Given that the RSL's biggest reach outside London is through its e-newsletter, digital developments may also be key to accessing this wider audience.
2. There is considerable support, especially among Fellows, for the RSL to take on more of a public advocacy or campaigning role, e.g. by acting as a voice for the value of literature.
3. Harnessing the expressed willingness of many Fellows to be more involved in the RSL is likely to have a cascading effect, raising the profile and prestige of the organisation, thereby increasing the engagement of Members and the wider public.
4. Given that Members are generally more satisfied than subscribers, the RSL may wish to enhance the journey that individuals follow through the organisation, especially encouraging subscribers to become Members.
5. Many RSL Members and Fellows are from higher socio-economic groups. Given that the second highest motivation for membership is "to support the charitable work of the RSL", these supporters may be willing to contribute to the Society's growth by increasing their donations.
6. Compared with the UK population, Black and Minority Ethnic people appear to be under-represented especially among the Society's Members and Fellows. This

carries implications for programming, outreach and potentially for the selection of Fellows.

7. While many Members and subscribers asked for more support for emerging writers, most of the small proportion who had attended RSL Masterclasses had also been taught on other creative writing courses, suggesting that the RSL may be, not to develop more direct provision of its own, but to act as a gateway to partner organisations.
8. Some improvements can be made to the existing events programme, e.g. better online booking and better sound systems at venues.
9. The bulk of entrants to the RSL's awards and prizes must not be Fellows, Members or subscribers, suggesting that this area of the Society's work may be an effective channel for reaching new audiences. Improvements could also be made to the post-entry administration of the awards, and by introducing feedback to entrants.

Comment from Tim Robertson, Director, The Royal Society of Literature

All of us in the RSL team are tremendously grateful to the hundreds of people who completed the survey. The time and thought put into the responses, together with the detail and passion of many of the comments and suggestions, are themselves evidence of how deeply the RSL is valued by its Fellows, Members and subscribers. We have read, considered and discussed the findings with great care.

The report provides wealth of factual information and informed opinion to feed into the RSL's future planning. I am particularly excited to find support for developing a national voice for the value of literature, as we have already identified "Literature Matters" as the leading public theme for the RSL's work in the build-up to our bicentenary in 2020.

We will be publishing on the RSL's website a summary of specific responses to the findings - including some more detailed face-to-face consultation with our Members. We hope that this will be part of a continuing dialogue with our supporters and audience as the RSL grows in the coming years.

We hope that the report may also be of help to other organisations in the world of literature and the voluntary sector more broadly.

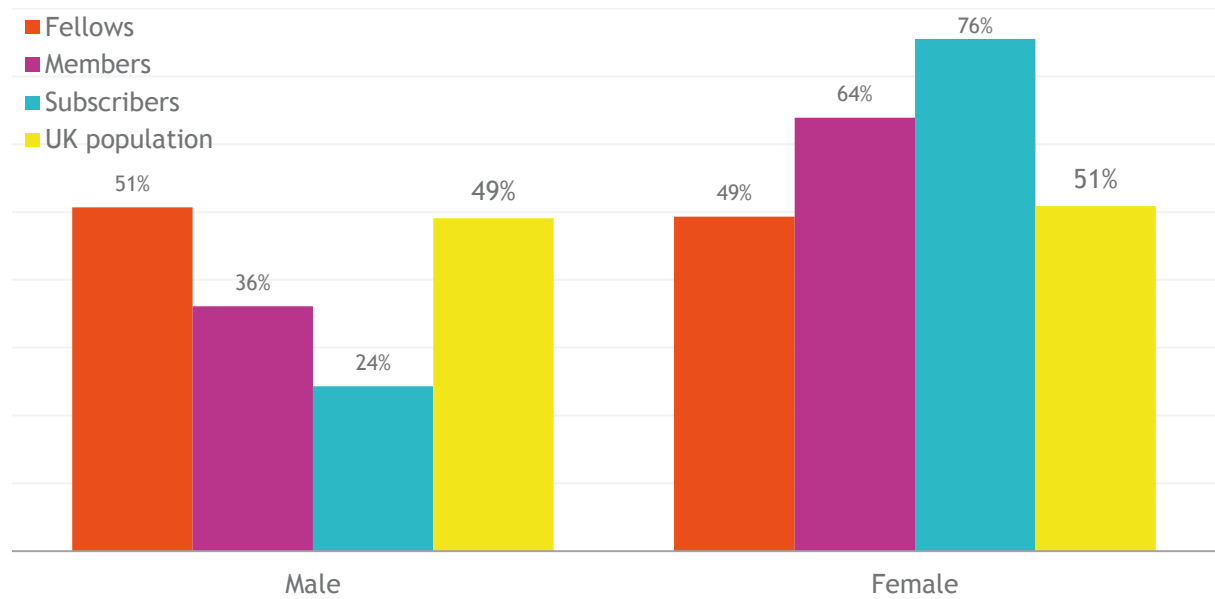
I would also like to express the RSL's thanks to the Audience Agency, for designing, implementing and reporting on the survey so efficiently, and to the RSL's Communications Manager Annette Brook for overseeing the project from our side.

About the audience

Demographics

Overall, 70% of respondents were female, 30% male. Fellows are evenly split female:male, two thirds of Members are female, and around three quarters of subscribers are female.

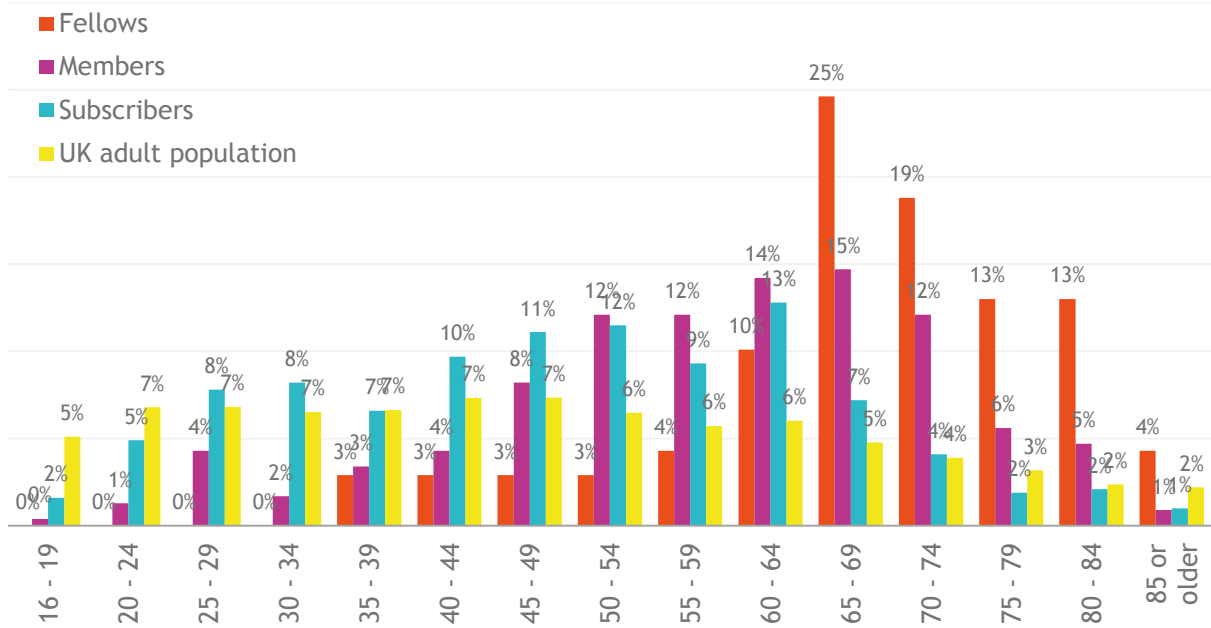
Are you...



Base: All respondents (73 / 238 / 498)

Overall, around a quarter of respondents were aged 16-39, a quarter 40-54, a quarter 55-64, and a quarter 65+. Fellows tend to skew older, with 75% being aged 65 or older, and subscribers tend to be younger (half being aged under 50) and Members sitting in the middle, half being aged 40-64.

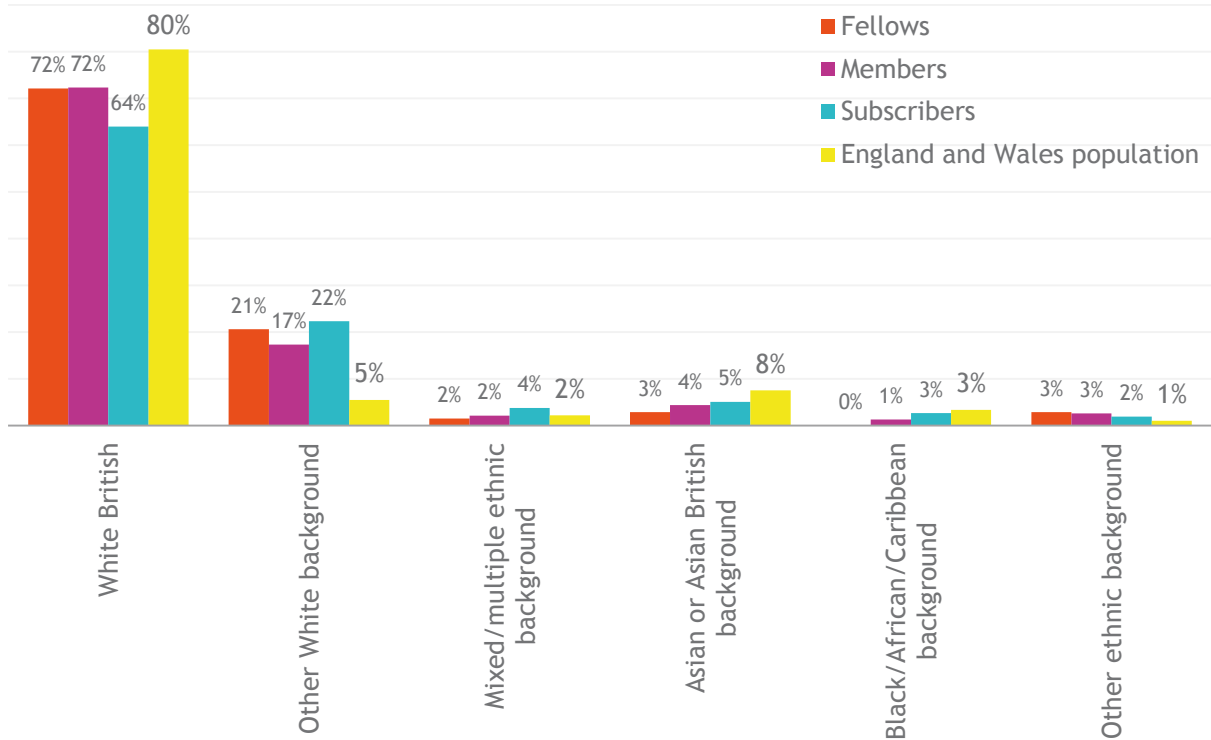
Which of the following age groups do you belong to?



Base: All respondents (69 / 232 / 485)

Two thirds of respondents identified as White British, with White Other and White Irish being the next most commonly chosen categories. Newsletter subscribers are slightly more ethnically diverse than Members, who are in turn slightly more ethnically diverse than Fellows.

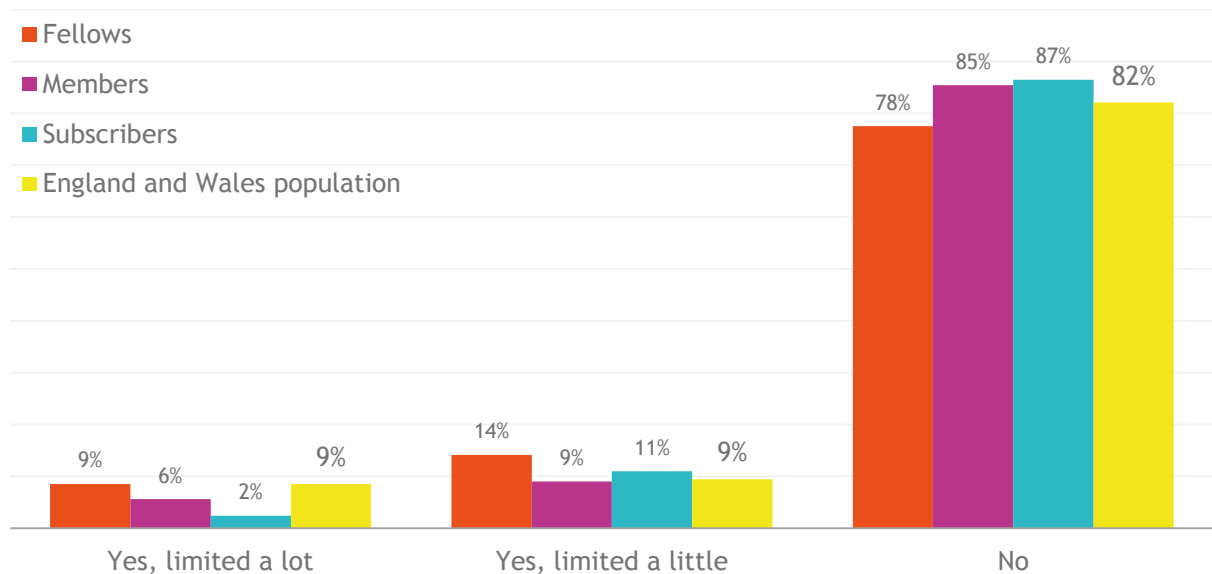
What is your ethnic group?



Base: All respondents (68 / 231 / 478)

15% of respondents identified as having a limiting health problem or disability. 22% of Fellows have a limiting disability or illness, as do 15% of Members and 13% of subscribers.

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?



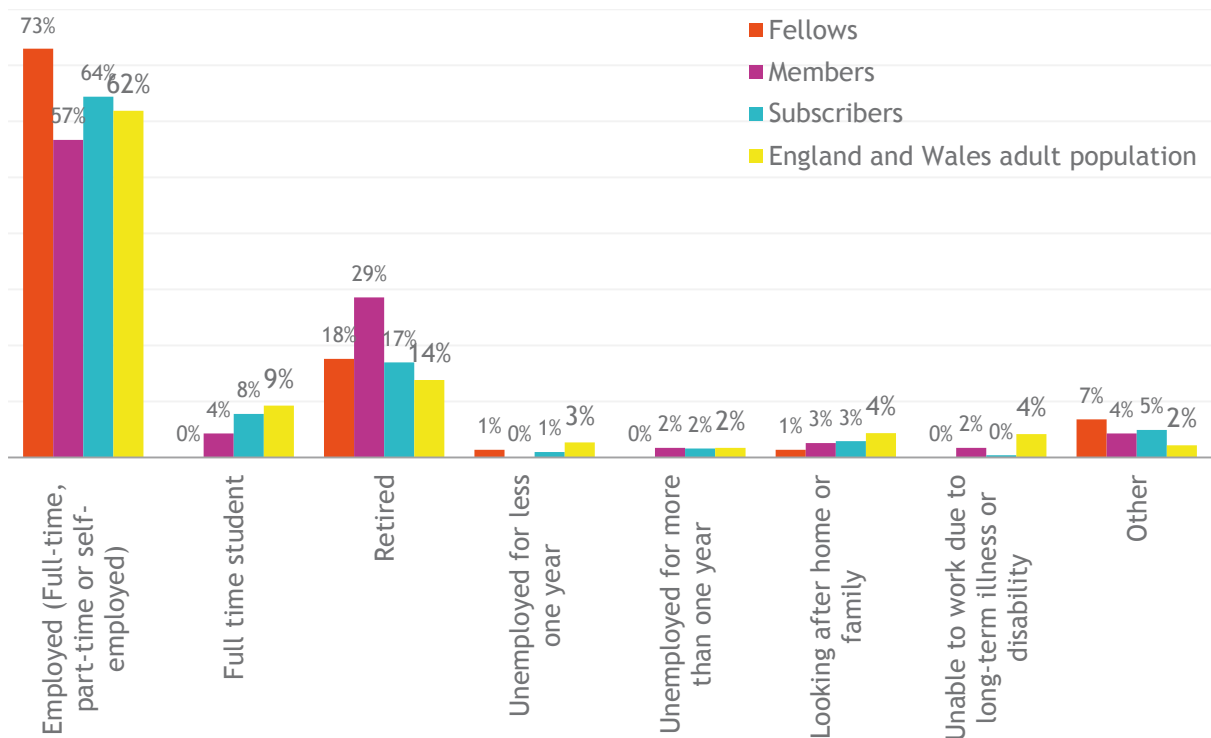
Base: All respondents (71 / 233 / 490)

Employment and income

63% of respondents were in employment, 20% were retired, and 6% studying full time. 3% were unemployed or unable to work, and 3% looking after home and family.

All groups tend to be largely in full time employment or retired; compared with other parts of the RSLs audience Fellows are more likely to be employed full time, Members more likely to be retired, and subscribers more likely to be full-time students.

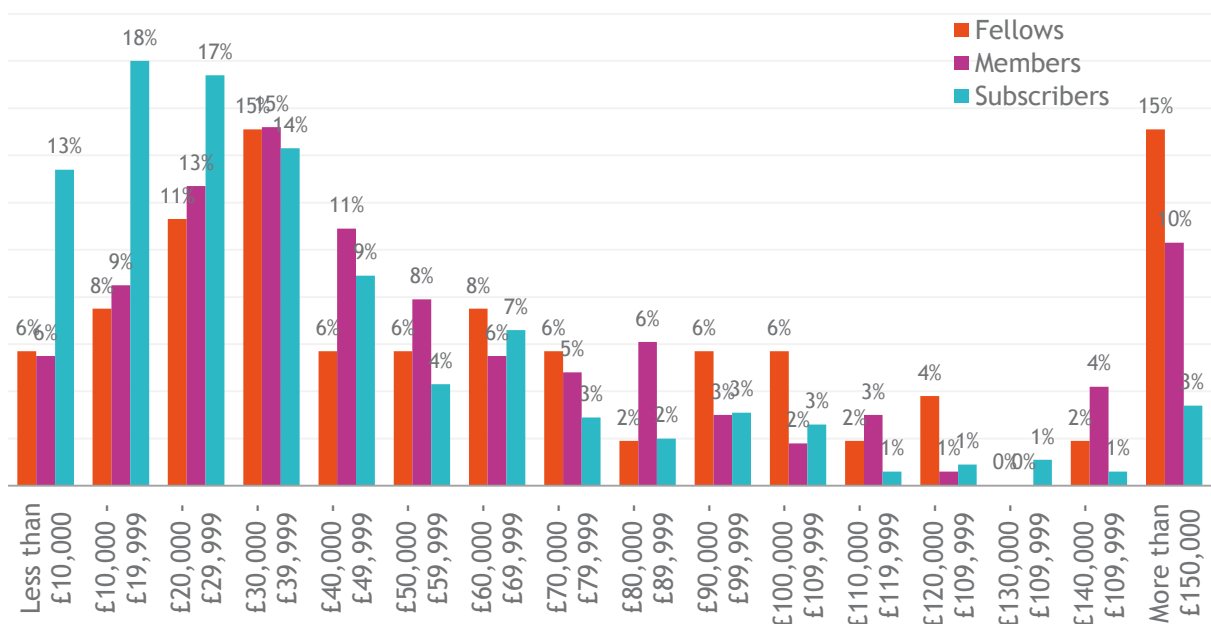
Which of the following best describes your current occupational/employment status?



Base: All respondents (74 / 231 / 489)

Overall, around half of respondents had an annual household income of less than £35,000. Fellows tend to have the highest income (over £60,000 for half of Fellows), followed by Members (at least £50,000 for half of Members) and subscribers (half with a household income of less than £30,000 per year).

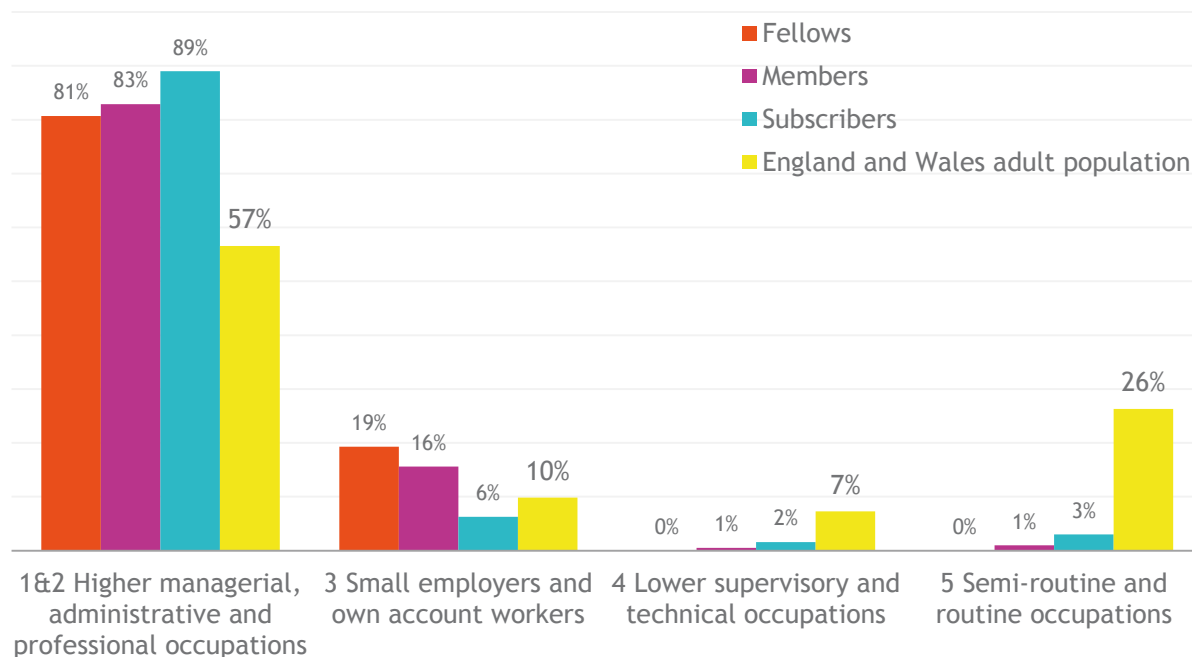
What is your approximate yearly household income before tax?



Base: All respondents (53 / 165 / 350)

NS-SEC categorises the working population into a number of groups based on the type of work they do, or most recently did if they are retired³. Overall, 87% of respondents fell into NS-SEC categories one and two, which cover higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations. 10% fell into category three (small employers and own account workers) and 3% categories four and five (Lower supervisory, technical, semi-routine and routine occupations).

NS-SEC category (of those economically active)



Base: All respondents who are currently employed or have previously been so (57 / 205 / 428)

Place of residence

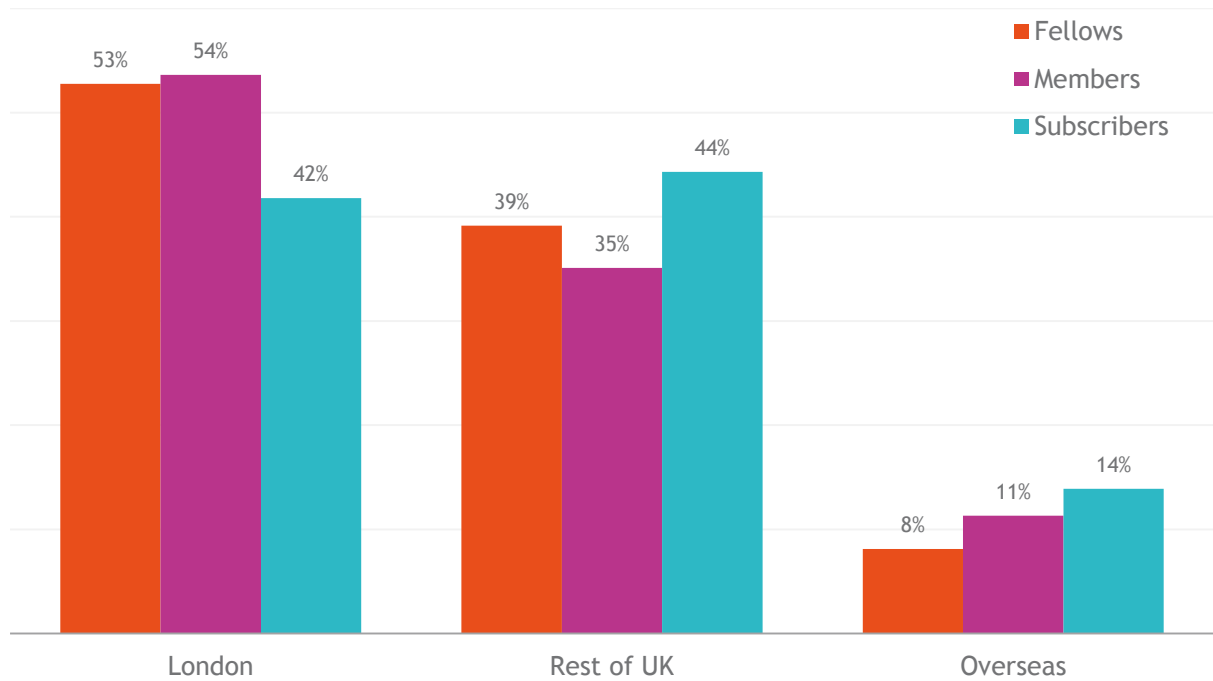
Around half of respondents live in London, four in ten elsewhere in the UK and one in ten overseas. This is in line with an analysis of the membership database carried out by the RSL in July 2016.

Of those who live in the UK, the membership is particularly large in London, with 60% of UK-resident Members living in London. Fellows, Members and subscribers are similarly distributed around the UK, with engagement generally falling as distance from London increases.

Most overseas respondents live in English-speaking countries; sample sizes are not large enough to look into differences between Fellows, Members and subscribers, but the top countries of residence amongst respondents as a whole were the USA, India, Australia, Canada and Ireland, which together accounted for 55% of respondents.

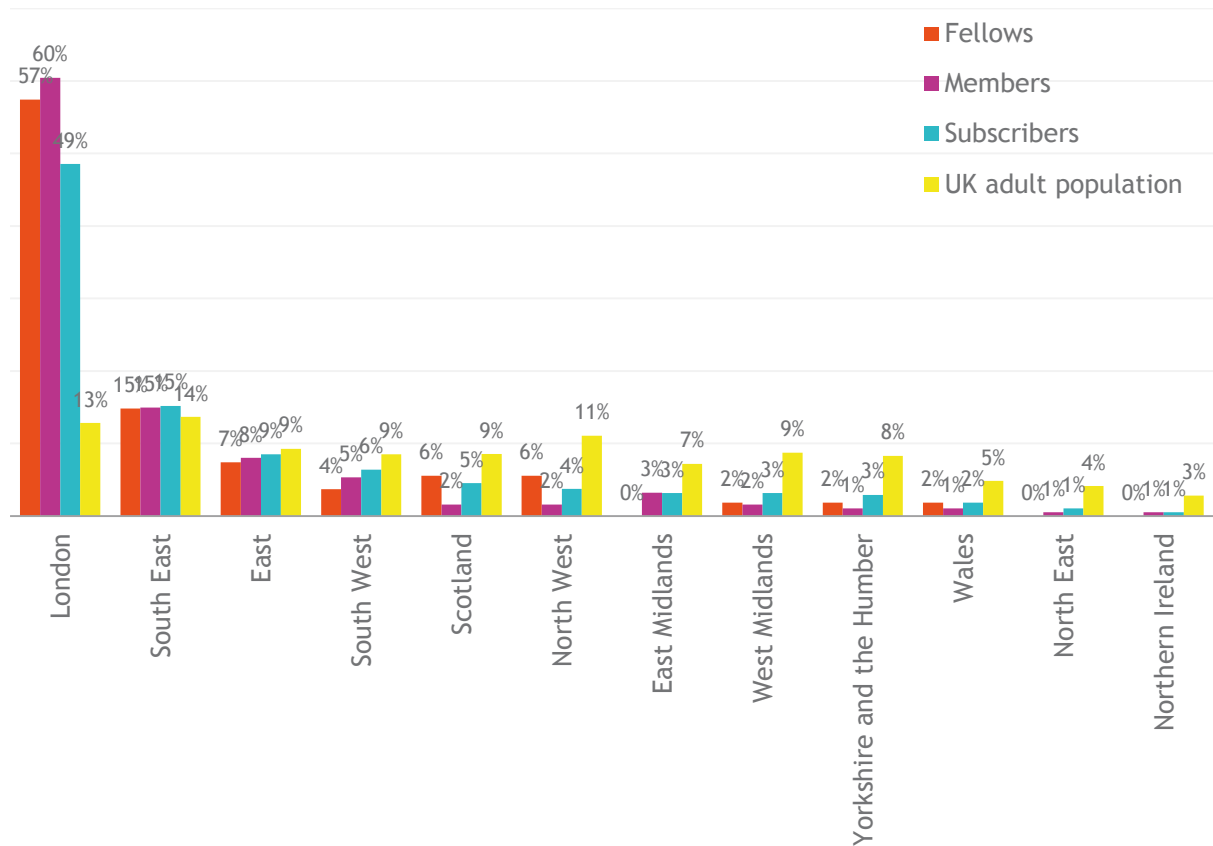
³ NS-SEC does not include those who are currently in full time education, or have never worked

Place of residence



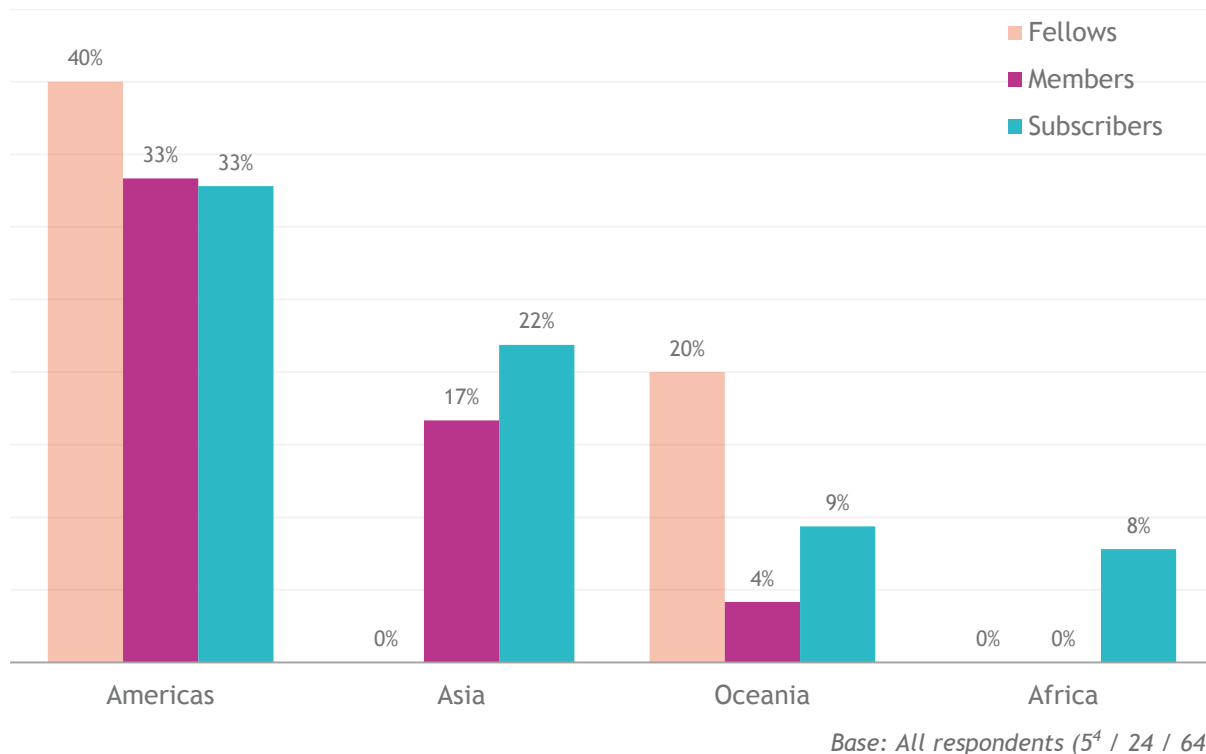
Base: All respondents (74 / 239 / 498)

Region of residence (UK residents only)



Base: All respondents (54 / 187 / 375)

Region of residence (Overseas residents only)



Compared with the UK population

In terms of gender, Fellows are representative of the UK population, but Members and subscribers are significantly more likely to be female. All constituencies are significantly older than the UK population, which is fairly flat, age-wise, up to age 70.

Compared with the population of England and Wales, all constituencies have an under-representation of the “White British” group, offset by an over-representation of those in the ‘White Other’ group. Overall, the RSL audience is fairly similar to the England and Wales population in terms of disability; Fellows are slightly more likely to have a limiting disability, Members and subscribers slightly less likely.

Fellows are more likely than the England and Wales average to be in employment, and Members more likely to be retired. All constituencies have a larger proportion of those in the top two NS-SEC socio-economic categories, with 87% of economically active respondents having higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations, compared with 57% of the England and Wales population. Those in semi-routine and routine occupations are particularly under-represented, accounting for 2% of respondents compared to 26% of the population.

Members, subscribers and Fellows are all much more likely to live in London than anywhere else in the UK. The only regions which have the same proportion of those in the

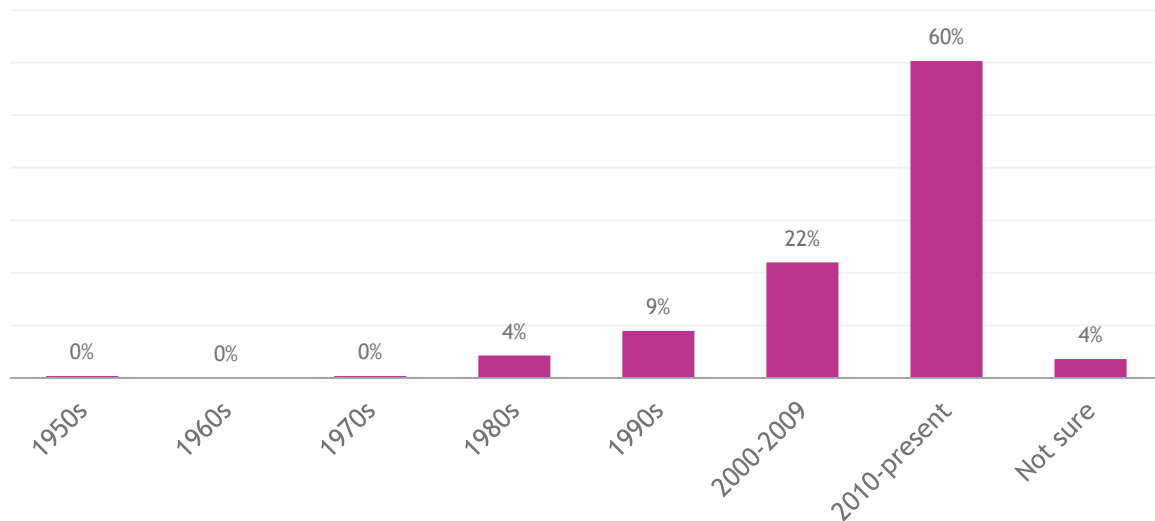
⁴ Very small sample size; unlikely to be representative of all Fellows

RSL audience as they do a proportion of the UK population are the South East and East. The regions which are generally most under-represented amongst the RSL's audience are Northern Ireland, the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the North West.

Membership

Of the 280 Members who responded to the survey, most (89%) had an individual membership. 6% had a young person’s membership, 1% a patron membership and less than 1% a group membership⁵. This is similar to the analysis of the Member database carried out in July 2016.

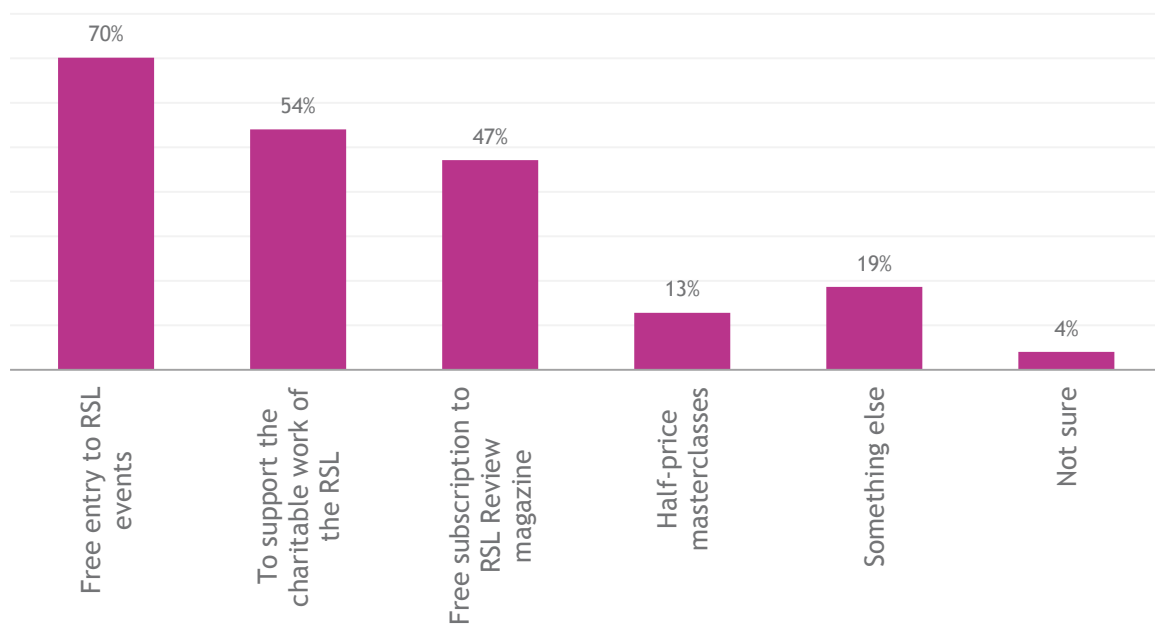
When did your current membership begin?



Base: Members (277)

Motivations

Which of the following most motivate you to be a member of the RSL?



Base: Members (277)

⁵ 4% were unsure what type of membership they held

Those who ticked “Something else” tended to cite a love of literature, supporting the RSL as an institution and belonging to part of a community, attending and getting early notification of events, and networking opportunities as motivations for membership.

Responses included:

Love of English literature and possibility of listening to interesting authors.

I live in Australia and cannot attend RSL events, but I love literature and strongly support what the RSL stands for.

The chance to meet and talk with like-minded people.

To be a part of fellow lovers of literature and scholarship

Getting to know about upcoming events in advance of general publicity. Lifelong love of literature.

I am an author and hoped to meet other authors at events.

Networking within the RSL membership as I'm interested in pursuing a career in Literature.

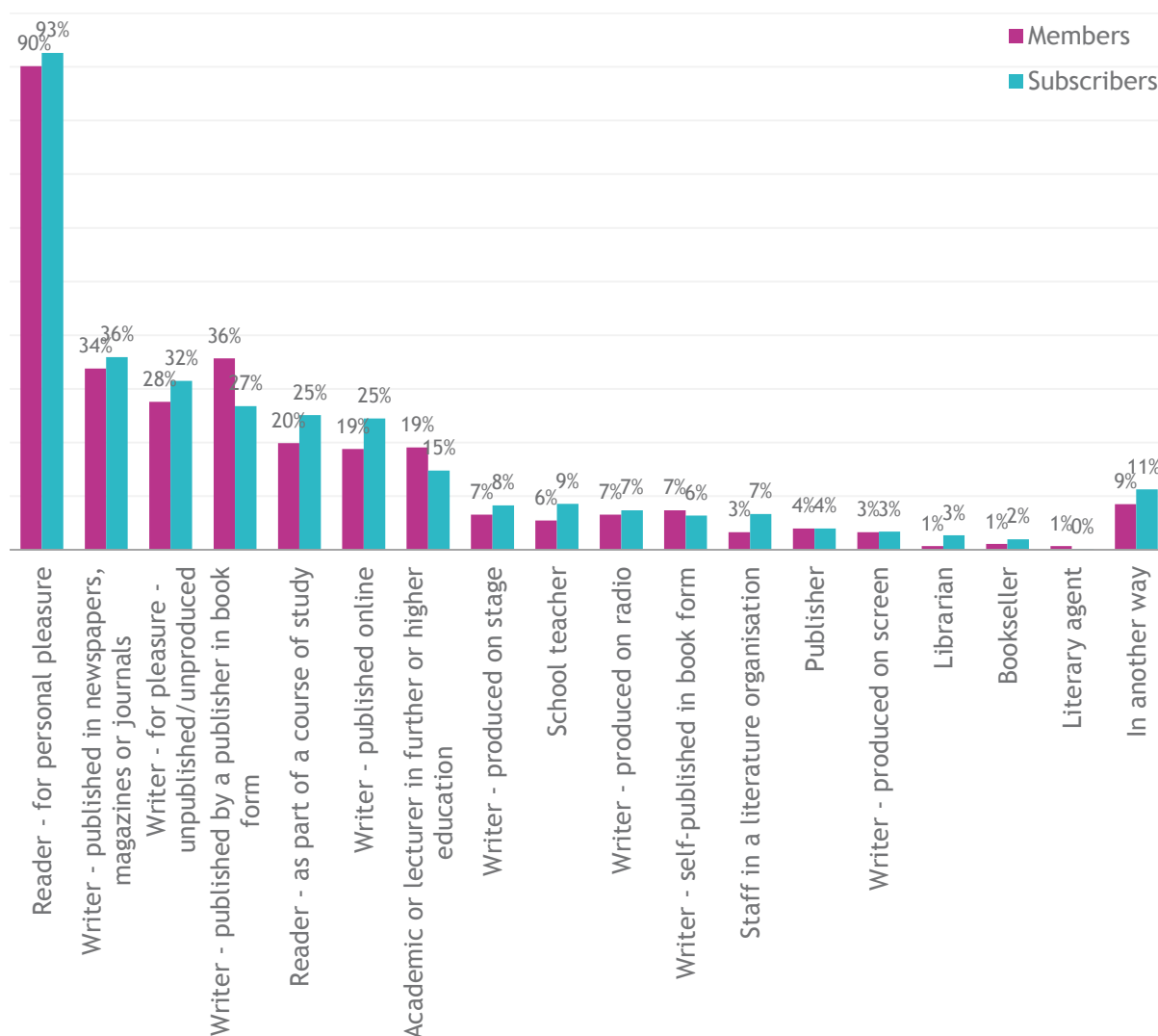
Full responses to this question are available in the appendices.

Engagement with literature

All respondents were asked about their engagement with literature. Members and subscribers were asked about engagement through reading, writing, professional and personal involvement. The Fellows - who are all writers - were asked about the literary forms in which they write. All respondents who write were also asked to identify their main audiences - adults, young adults and/or children.

Members and subscribers

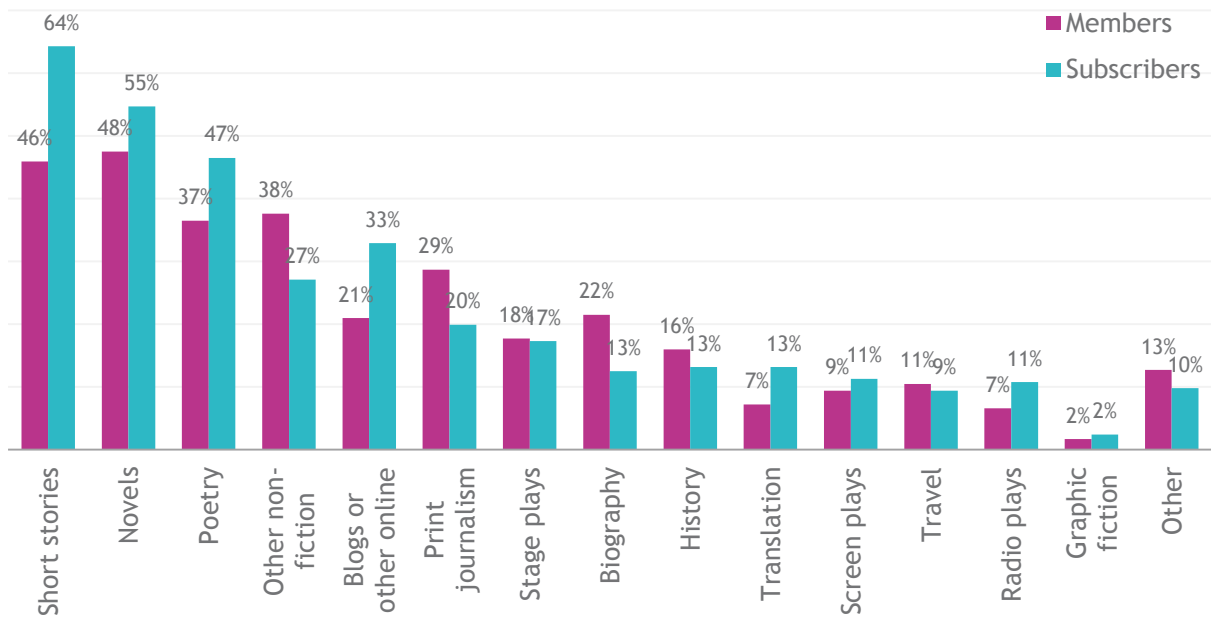
In what ways do you engage with literature, professionally or for pleasure?



Base: Members (272) / Subscribers (593)

Other ways of engaging with literature included as translator, editor, journalist, reviewer, running reading groups, being a professional reader, and through study. Full responses to this question are available in the appendices.

(Of those who engage through writing) Which of the following forms of literature do you write?

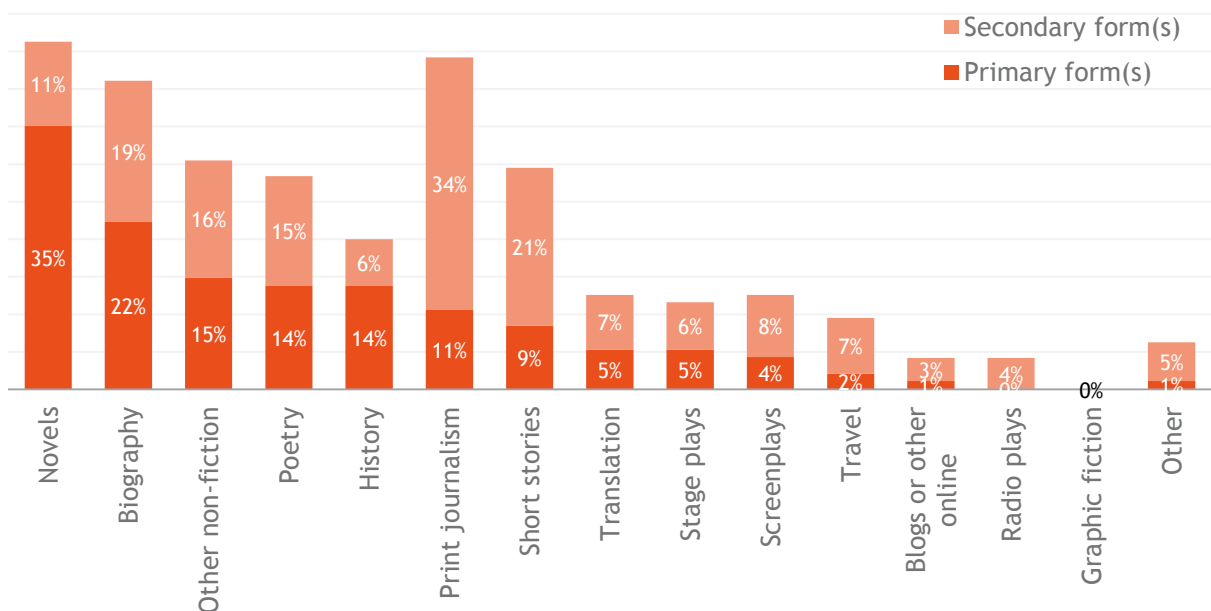


Base: Members (181) / Subscribers (417)

Other forms of literature included children’s books, literary criticism, essays, micro and flash fiction, academic articles and texts, and memoir. Full responses to this question are available in the appendices.

Fellows’ literary forms

Which of the following forms of literature do you write? And of these, which would you say are the primary forms in which you write?



Base: Fellows (95)

Writing for children, young adults and/or adults

Not only do subscribers tend to write in more forms than Members or Fellows, and they tend to write for a wider audience - i.e. they are more likely to write for children/young adults as well as adults.

(Of those who write) Of those forms in which you write, is your main audience...



⁶ Question only asked of Members and e-newsletter subscribers for latter period of survey

Involvement with the RSL

Fellows were asked about their current, and desired, level of involvement with the RSL.

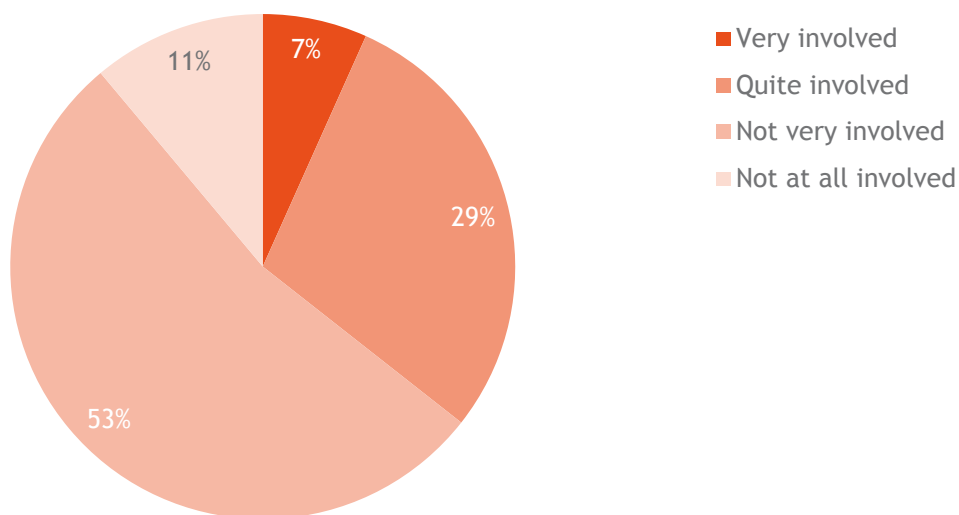
All respondents were asked which of the RSL's activities they had used:

- Events
- Masterclasses
- Prizes and awards
- *RSL Review* magazine
- The RSL website

For each activity used, respondents were then asked additional questions about their experience and views.

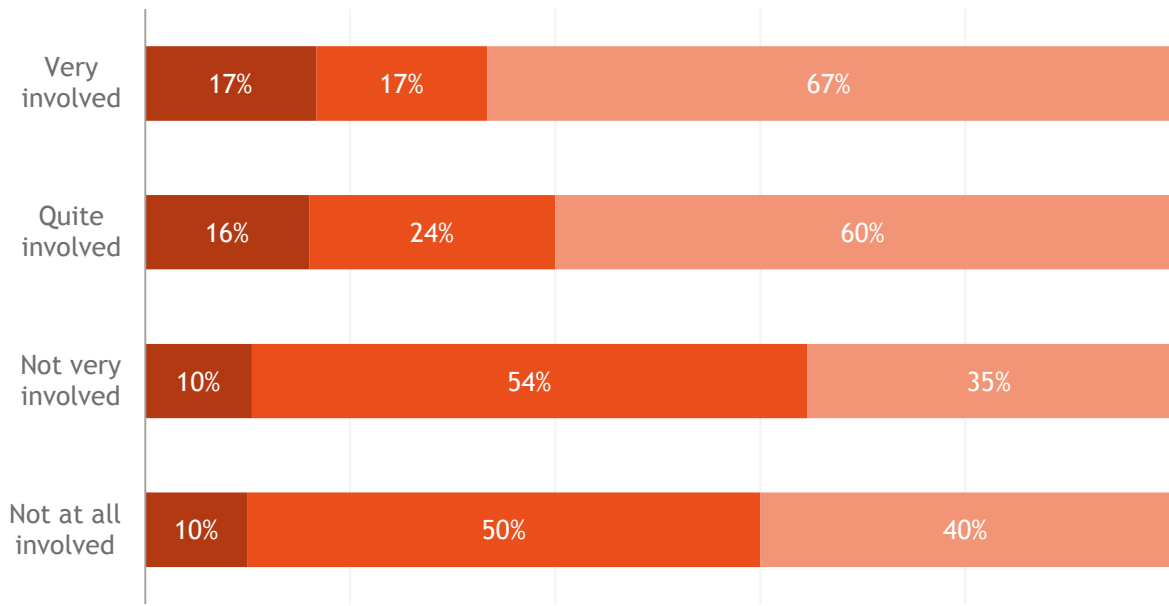
Fellows

As a Fellow, how involved do you feel with the RSL's work?



Base: Fellows (90)

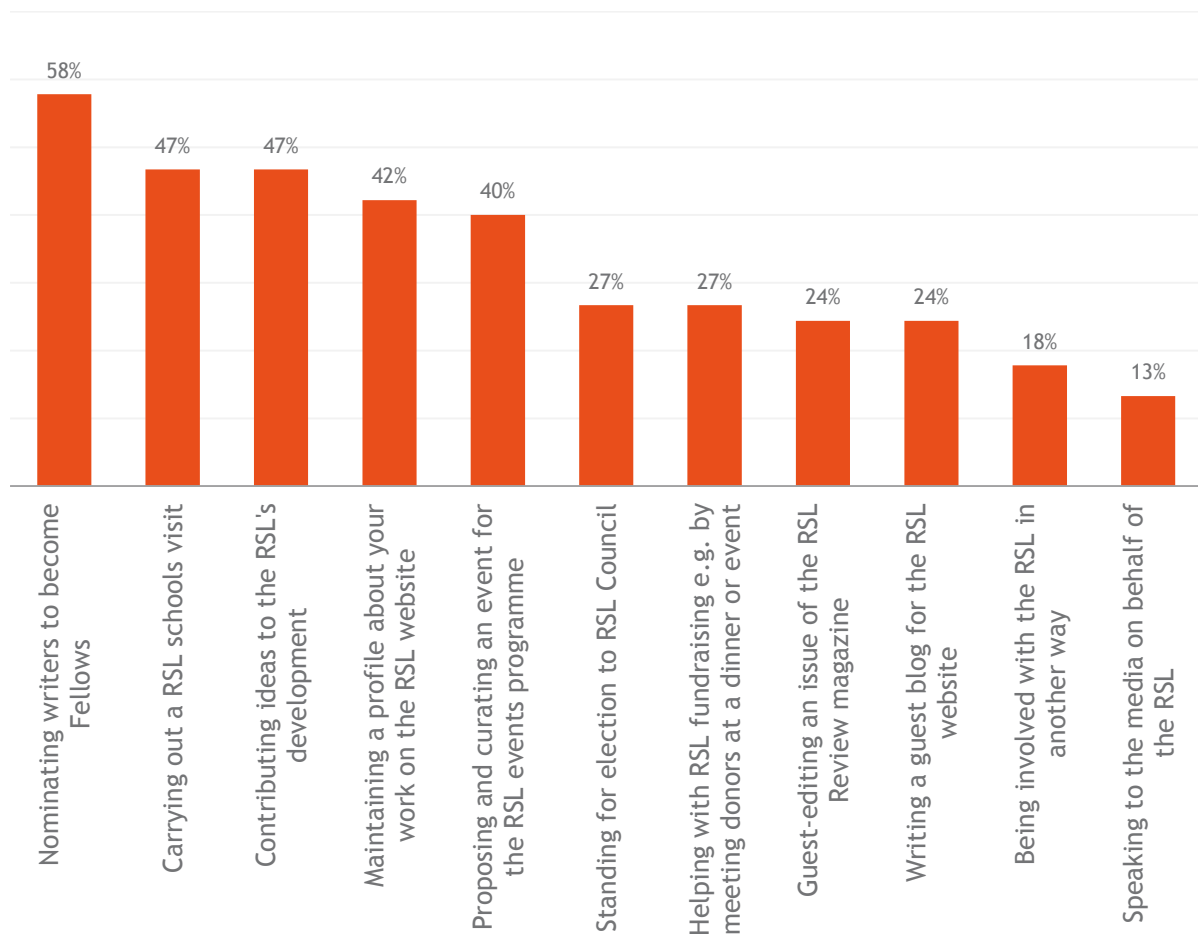
Would you like more or less involvement? by level of involvement



■ Much more
 ■ A little more
 ■ It's about right at the moment
 ■ A little less
 ■ Much less

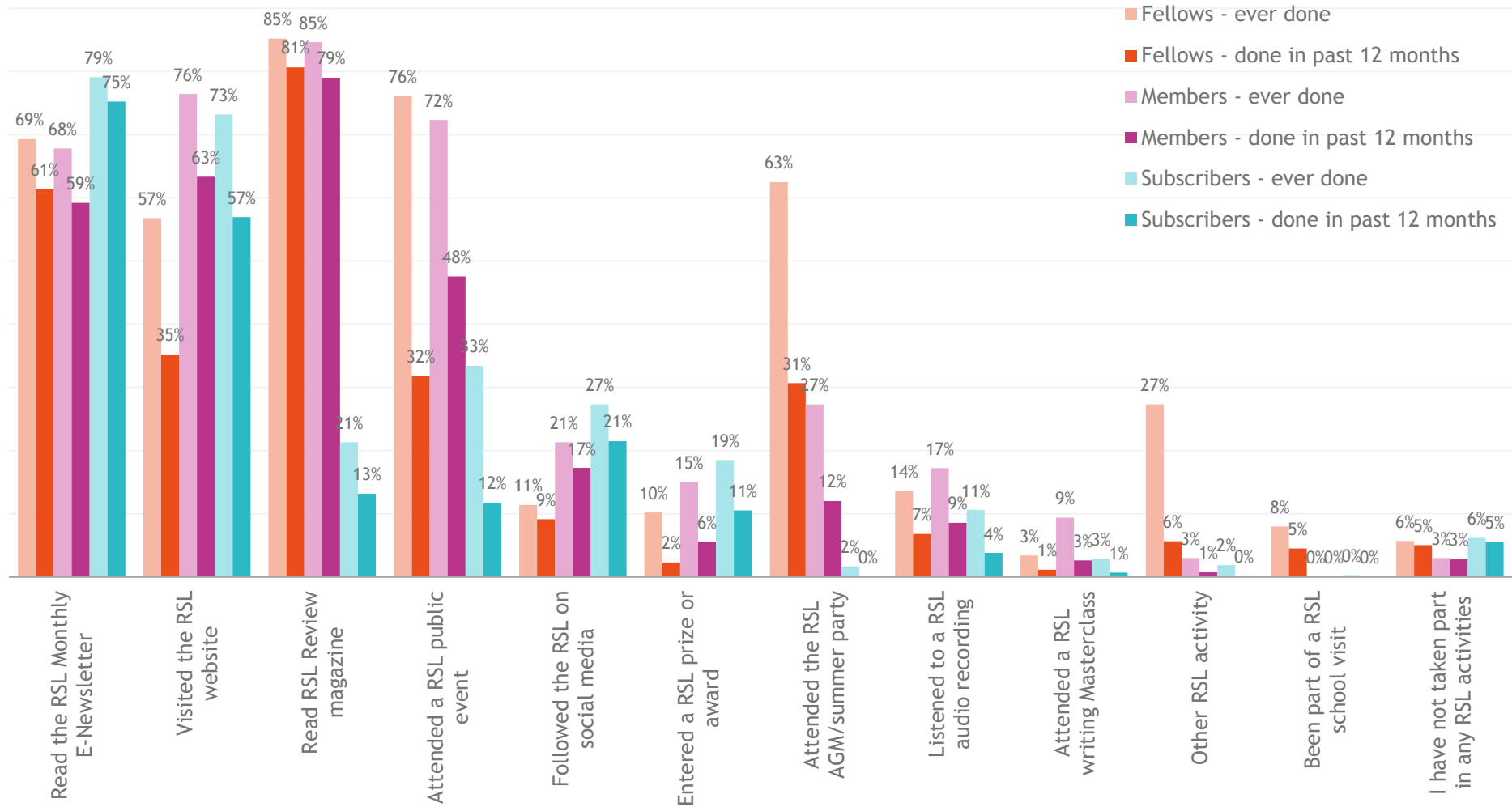
Base: Fellows (6 / 25 / 48 / 10)

In which of the following ways might you like to be more involved?



Base: Fellows who would like to be more involved (45)

Use of RSL services



Base: All respondents (88 / 267 / 578)

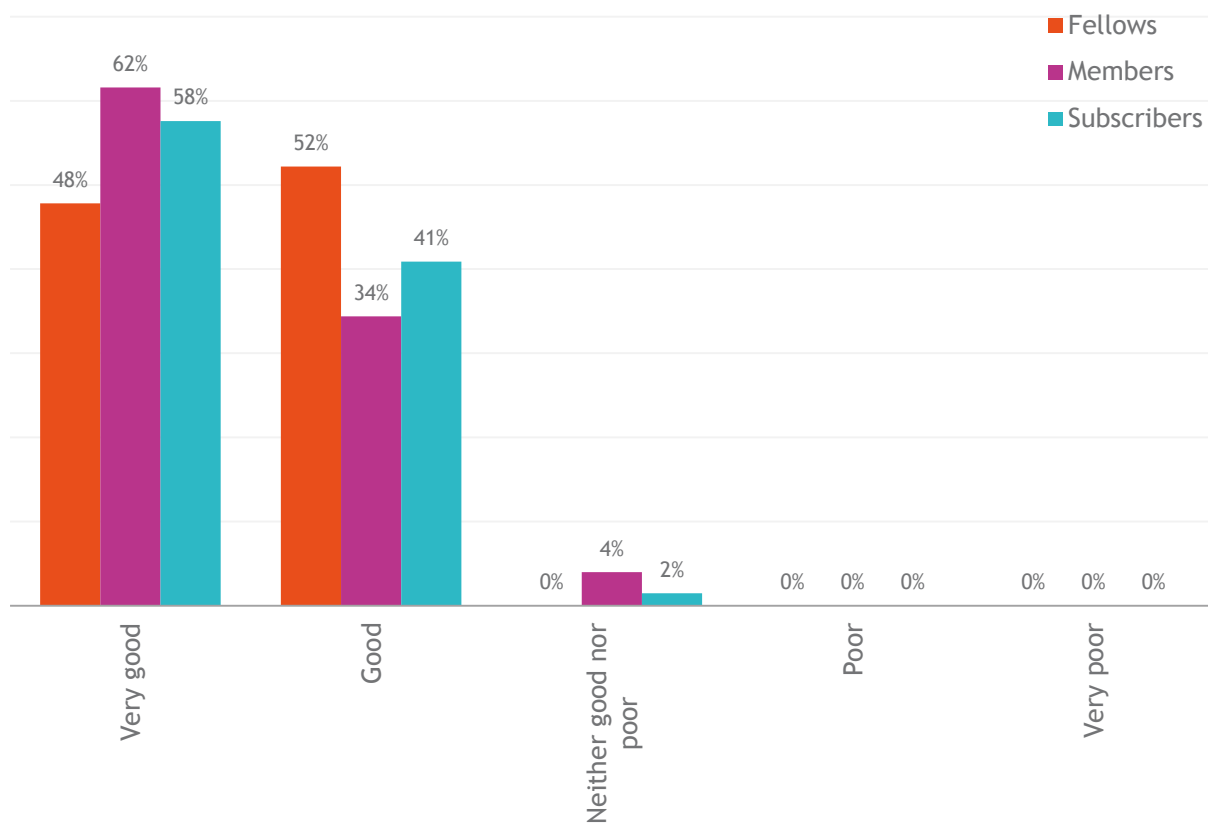
RSL Events

49% of respondents had been to a public RSL event before, and 27% in the last 12 months. Members were the most likely to have been to an event in the last 12 months (51%), followed by Fellows (36%) and subscribers (13%).

Overall rating of RSL events

Events were rated highly across the board, although tend to be most highly rated by Members, followed by subscribers and Fellows.

How would you rate our events overall?

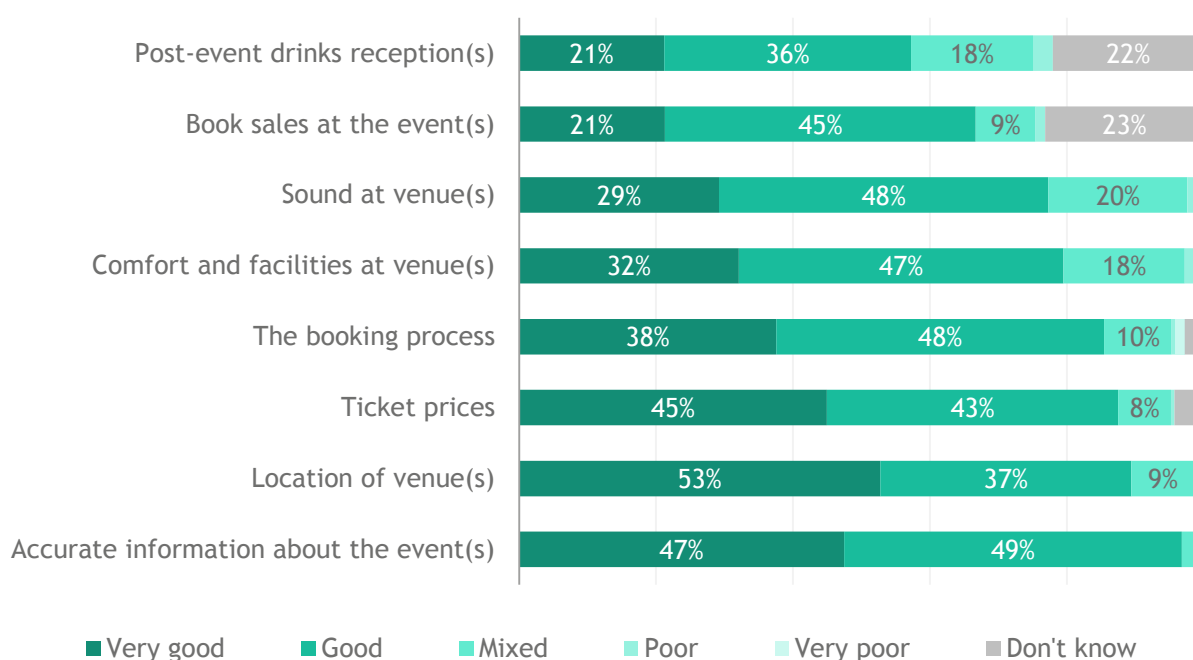


Base: All respondents who have attended an RSL event in the past 12 months (23 / 125 / 66)

Organisation of events

Overall, information about RSL events is rated most highly, followed by location and ticket prices. Although still generally favourably rated, post-event drinks and at-event book sales are the least highly rated elements of events' organisation.

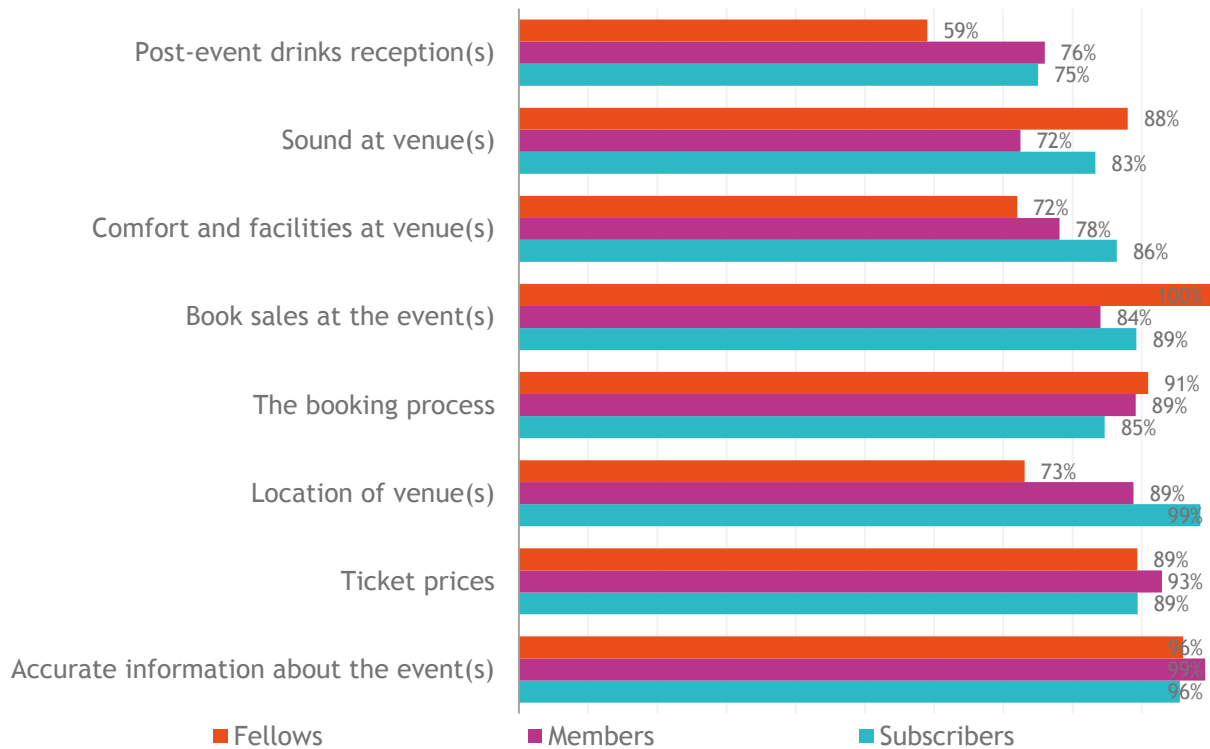
For each of the following areas, how would you rate the overall organisation of our events?



Base: All respondents who have attended an RSL event in the past 12 months (207-218)

Fellows, Members and subscribers who had been to RSL events tended to rate the elements of events organisation fairly similarly. Notable exceptions were that Fellows tended to rate post-event drinks, venue location and comfort and facilities at the venues less favourably than Members or subscribers, and Members tended to rate sound at venues less favourably than Fellows or subscribers. Subscribers tended to rate most elements more favourably than Members or Fellows.

% Good or very good (not including don't know)

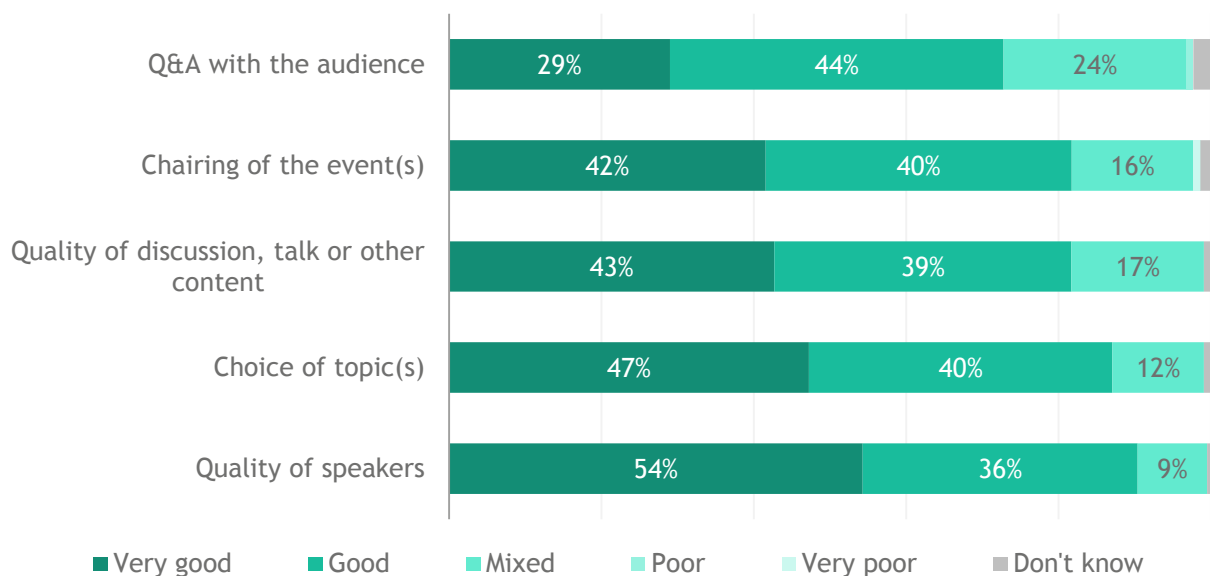


Base: All respondents who have attended an RSL event in the past 12 months, excluding "Don't know" (13-26 / 100-125 / 40-66)

Content of events

Looking at the content of events, the quality of speakers is particularly highly rated, with 90% of respondents rating this element as very good or good. Q&As are less highly rated, although still receive positive ratings from 73% of respondents.

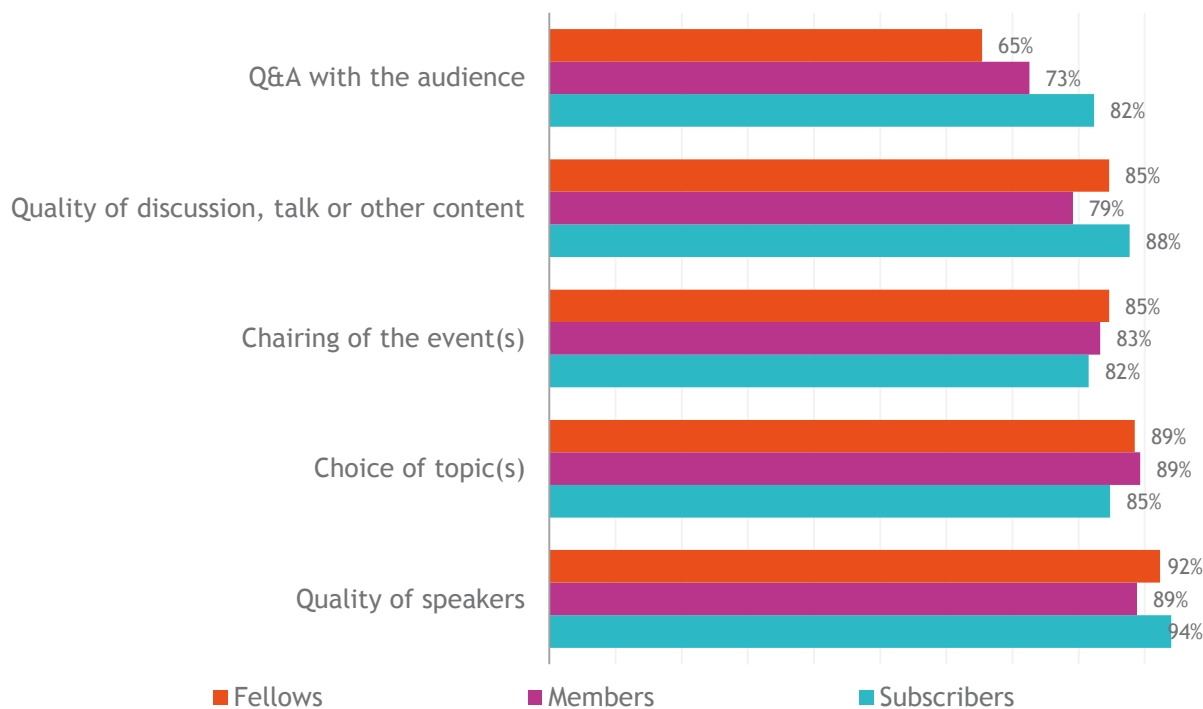
For each of the following areas, how would you rate the overall content of our events?



Base: All respondents who have attended an RSL event in the past 12 months (216-219)

As with the organisation of events, Fellows, Members and subscribers tended to rate the content of events fairly similarly. The main differences amongst the three constituencies were that Fellows tended to rate Q&As less favourably, and Members tended to rate the quality of discussion, talk more other content less favourably. Again, subscribers generally rated most elements more highly than Members or Fellows.

% Good or very good (not including don't know)



Base: All respondents who have attended an RSL event in the past 12 months, excluding "Don't know" (26 / 122-125 / 62-67)

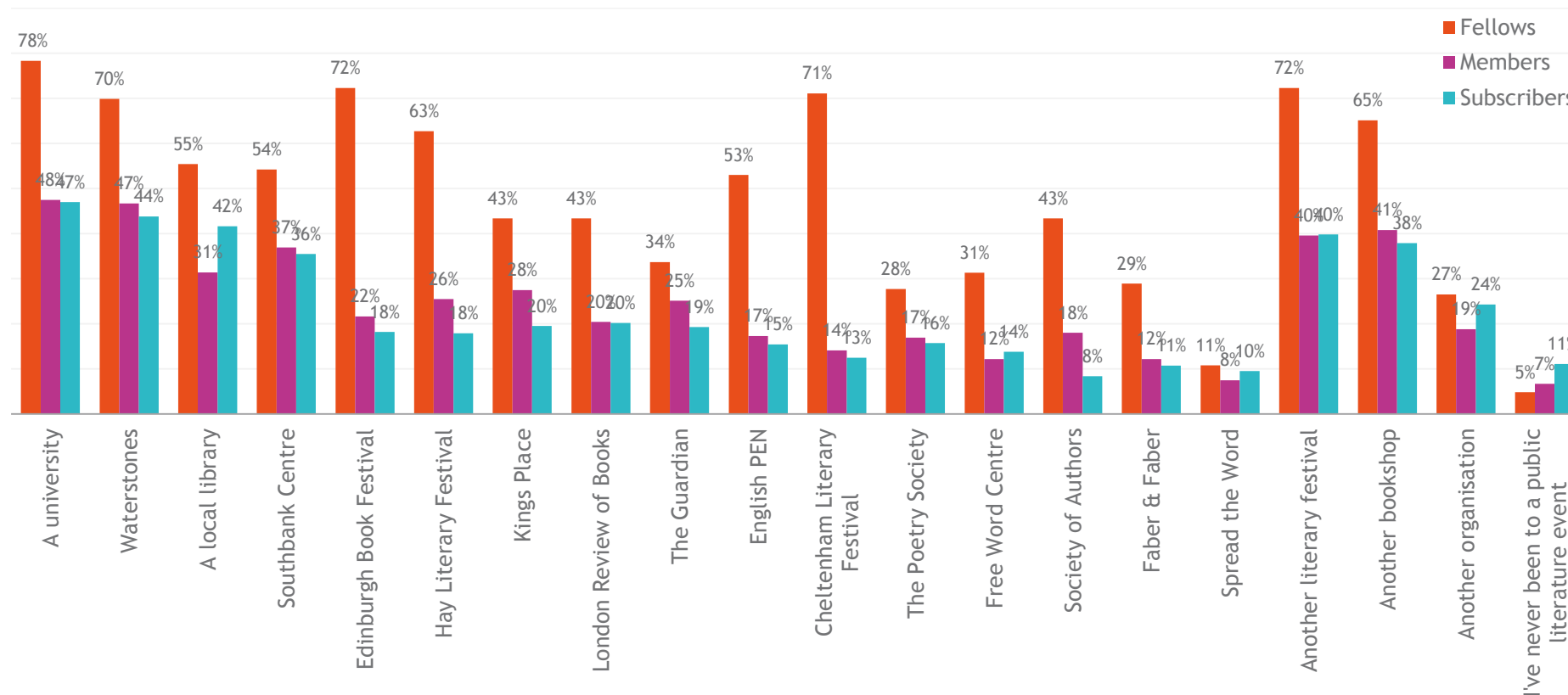
Respondents were asked to suggest possible improvements to the organisation and content of events. As the feedback was quite varied and often specific, responses are not easily categorise able and so would be worth reading in full (see the appendices). However, there were some common themes with regards the topics of future events, including poetry, non-fiction, advice and “how-to” workshops, genre fiction, history and historical fiction.

Other events

Over 90% of respondents had been to a public literary event before - 95% of Fellows, 93% of Members and 89% of subscribers. Events at universities were most commonly attended (50% of all respondents having be to a literary event at a university before), followed by Waterstones (47%), local libraries (40%) and Southbank Centre (38%).

Although Fellows were most likely to have attended all the listed events, some differences were found between subscribers and Members. Members were marginally more likely to have been to events in general, in particular Hay, King’s Place, Society of Authors and Guardian events, whilst subscribers were more likely to have attended events at local libraries.

Have you ever been to a public literary event run by any of the following?

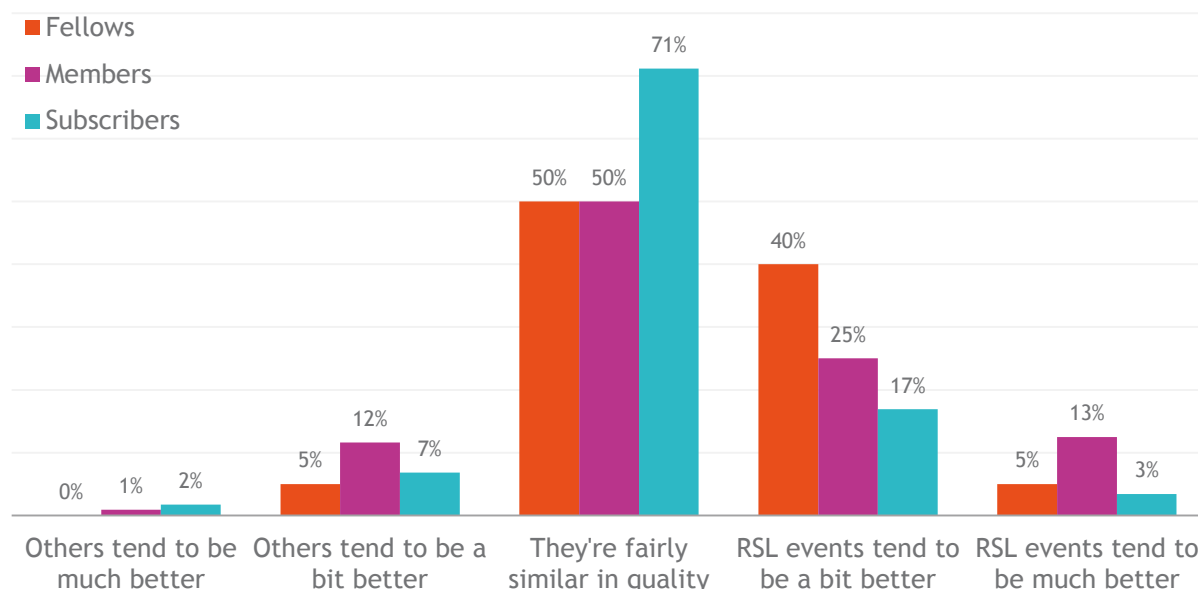


Base: All respondents (83 / 255 / 560)

Other literary festivals often cited by respondents included Oxford, Charleston, Bath, Aldeburgh Poetry Festival, Cambridge, Ilkley, Brighton, Manchester, Ledbury, Stoke Newington and Way With Words.

Respondents generally felt that RSL events were of similar quality or slightly better than other public literary events they had been to. Fellows are most likely to consider RSL events better than others they've attended, followed by Members and subscribers.

Overall, how would you say our events compare to others you've been to?



Base: All respondents who have been to an RSL event in the last 12 months and been to an event organised by someone else (20 / 112 / 59)

Those who said other events tended to be better tended to comment on other events having a stronger social element or being more fun. For example, respondents felt that at other events:

There is more of a sense of occasion and a better ambience in which to mingle
Member

They're varied obviously so some are worse, some better. But those that are better are more surprising 'outside the box', warmer, less sure of their own superiority and trying harder to engage with the audience and have a meaningful communication between speaker and listeners
Subscriber

Whereas by contrast:

To be brutally honest, I find RSL events can be a bit dry and overly cerebral. Let's have more fun!
Member

RSL very sedate and overly civilised!
Member

Of those who said RSL events tended to be better, common themes included the quality of speakers, the quality of discussion, and good organisation:

Well prepared chairs, high quality of conversation

Fellow

Obviously literary events vary in quality, and in general I find they are excellent, but with the RSL I have never had a dud - every single one I've seen has been brilliant - with an interesting combination of speakers who have complementary takes on the topic.

Member

The calibre of subjects and speakers.

Member

Higher quality speakers, more intelligent questions

Subscriber

The quality of the discussion seems to be generally very high, whereas other events can be more inconsistent in their quality.

Subscriber

They seem to run smoothly and are very well curated. The atmosphere is usually pretty good too.

Subscriber

Quality of speakers and organization of events

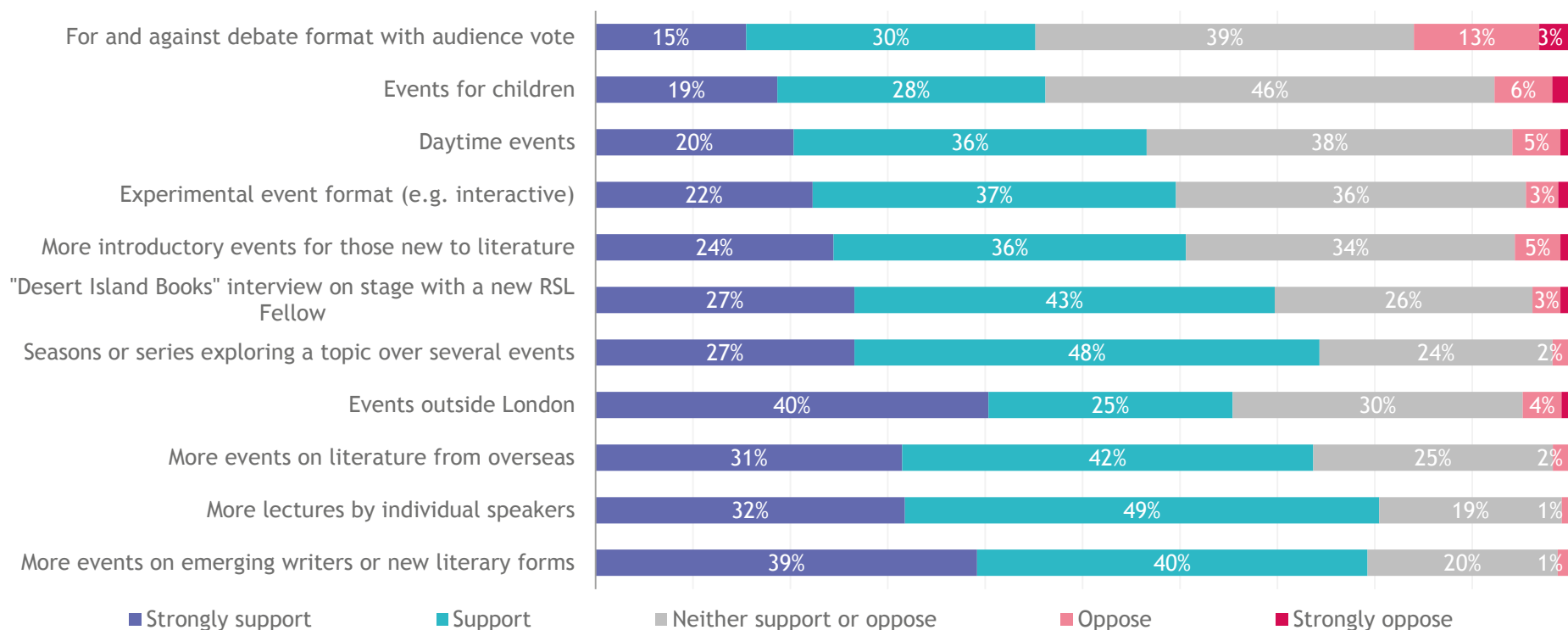
Member

Full responses to these questions are available in the appendices.

Potential changes to RSL events

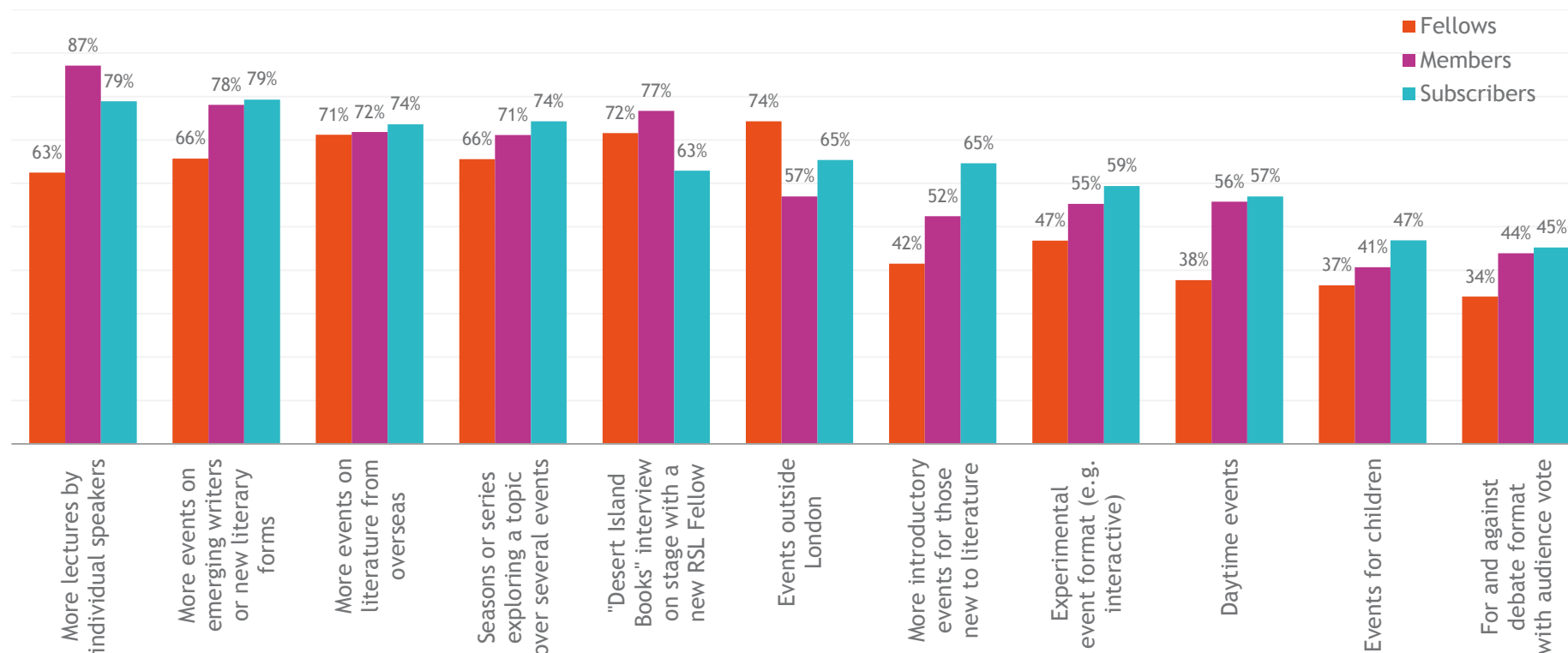
To what extent would you support the following ideas for developing RSL events?

Overall, the most popular potential changes to the RSL events programme are more events on emerging writers or new literary forms, more lectures by individual speakers, and more events on literature from overseas. That being said, all suggestions bar “For and against” debate format with audience vote and events for children gained support from at least half of respondents. This suggests generally support for changes to the programme (at least to the extent this is possible without having a detrimental impact on the current offer).



Base: All respondents (757-822)

% Support or strongly support



Base: All respondents (58-73 / 210-239 / 468-511)

Fellows, Members and subscribers tended to support broadly the same ideas for developing the events programme. The most notable difference between these three groups was, perhaps unsurprisingly given their broader geographical spread, subscribers being most supportive of having more events outside London. Members were notably keener on introductory events for those new to literature, and Fellows particularly supported more lectures by individual speakers.

Respondents were also asked for their own ideas for future RSL events; the results are too wide to summarise in this report, but full responses are available in the appendices.

RSL masterclasses

5% of respondents had been to an RSL writing Masterclass before, and 1% in the last 12 months. Members were the most likely to have been to a Masterclass in the last 12 months (3%), followed by Fellows and subscribers (both 1%).

Ratings

As only 11 respondents answered these questions, the findings should be taken only as indicative. Of the eleven responses:

- 9 rate RSL masterclasses “Very good” overall, 1 “Good” and 1 “Neither good nor poor”
- The elements we explored (location, comfort and facilities, value for money, quality of tutor, usefulness, balance of teaching and participation, length of class) were generally rated favourably
- Quality of tutor most highly rated - all 11 rated this element Very Good (8 people) or Good (3 people)
- Only one negative response, re: location of venue and comfort and facilities at venue.

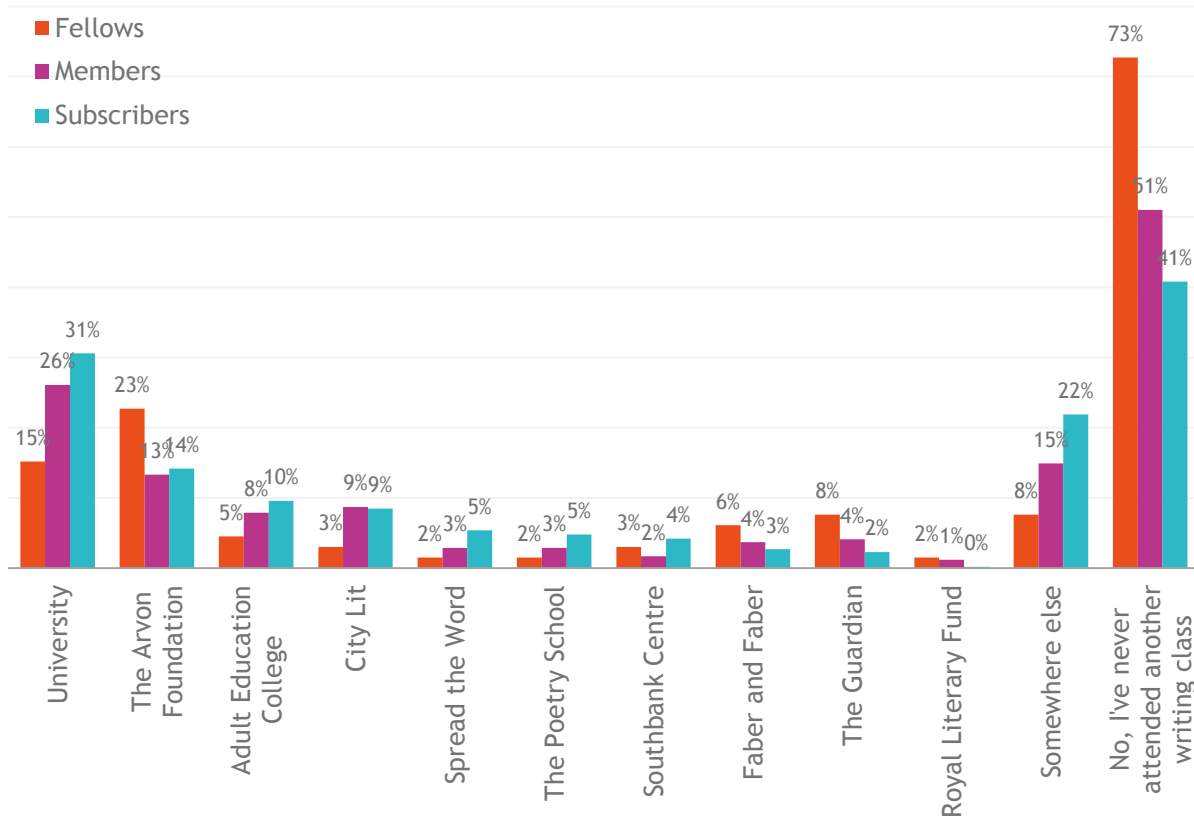
Of the nine respondents who had taken part in an RSL Masterclass and also been taught writing elsewhere, the majority said the experience was fairly similar at each.

Workshops, courses and masterclasses elsewhere

Over half of respondents had been taught writing, most commonly at university (28%). 15% had been taught writing at an Arvon Foundation course and 8% at City Lit.

Fellows are least likely to have been taught writing (27%), and subscribers most likely (59%), although Fellows are the most likely group to have been on an Arvon Foundation course/retreat (23% having done so).

Have you ever been taught writing at any of the following?



Base: All respondents (66 / 241 / 520)

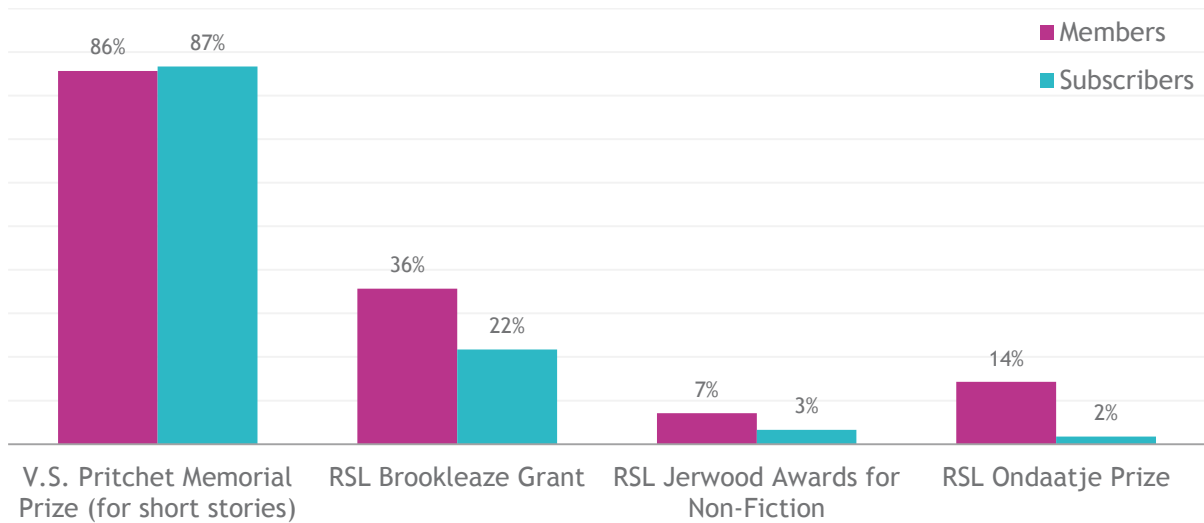
The most oft-cited universities were UEA, Open University, Oxford, Cambridge, UCL, Birkbeck, Manchester, and Goldsmiths. Morley College was the most common adult education college, Full responses to this question are available in the appendices.

RSL prizes and awards

Members and subscribers were asked about their experiences of RSL prizes and awards. 17% of these respondents had entered an RSL prize or award, and 9% in the last 12 months. Subscribers were the most likely to have entered in the last 12 months (12% having done so), followed by Members (6%) and Fellows (3%).

The V.S Pritchett Memorial Prize was the most widely entered, at similar levels amongst Members and subscribers. Members are more likely than subscribers to enter the other three awards/prizes.

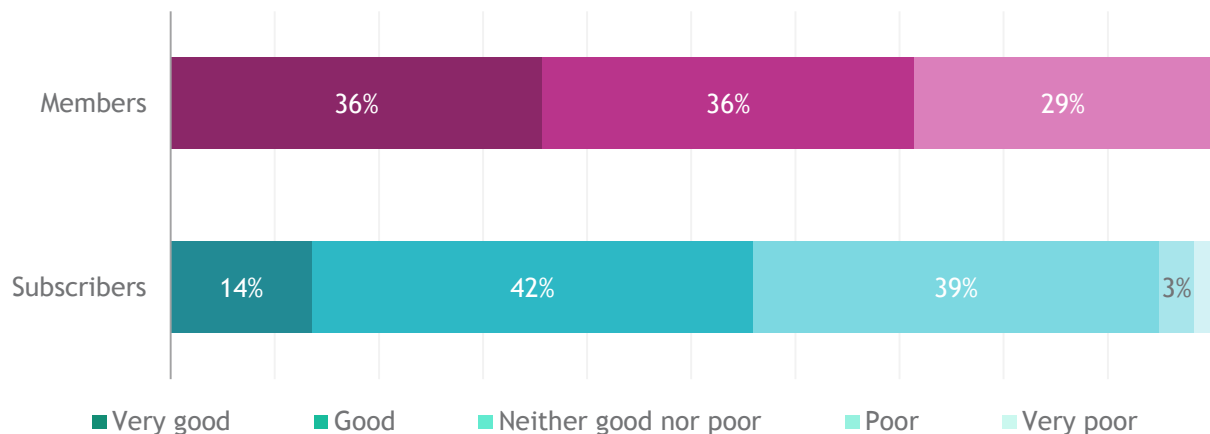
Which RSL prize(s) or award(s) have you entered?



Base: All respondents who have entered an RSL prize or award (14 / 60)

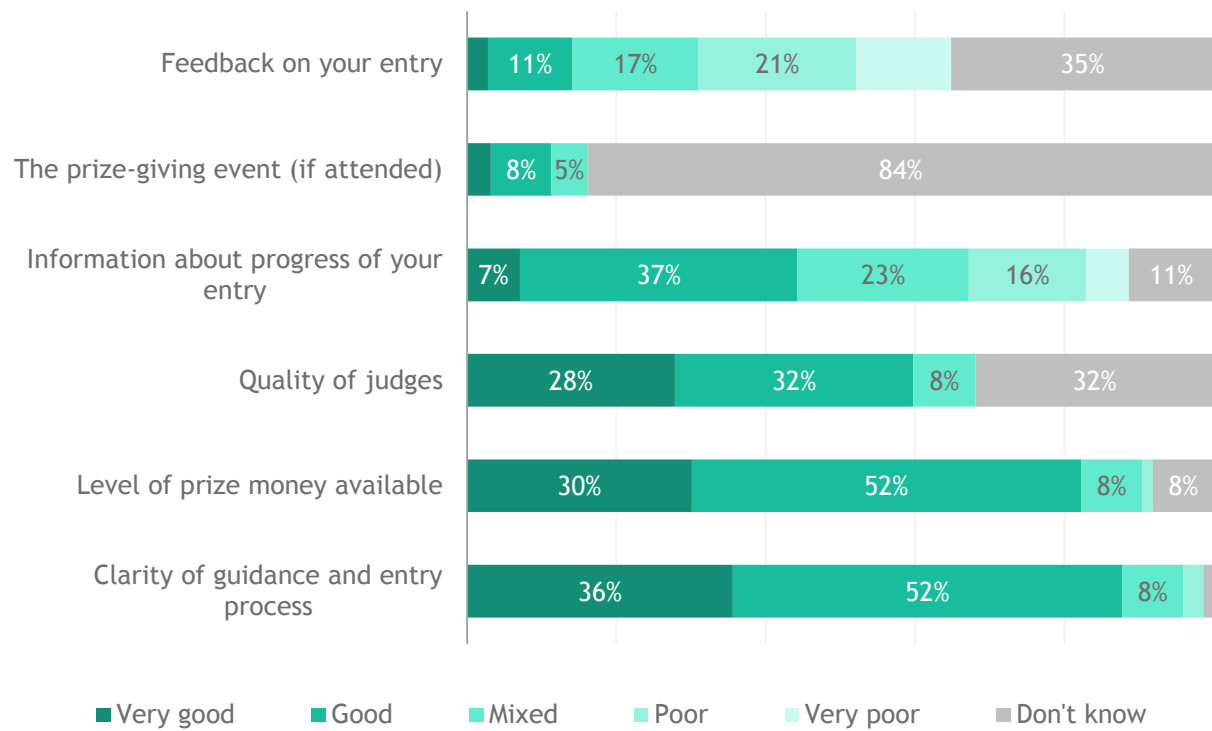
Members tend to have a better experience of RSL prizes and awards than subscribers, with 72% reporting their experience as being good or very good, compared with 56% of subscribers.

Overall, how would you rate your experience of entering an RSL prize or award?



Base: All respondents who have entered an RSL prize or award (14 / 59)

For each of the following areas, how would you rate the RSL prize or award you entered?



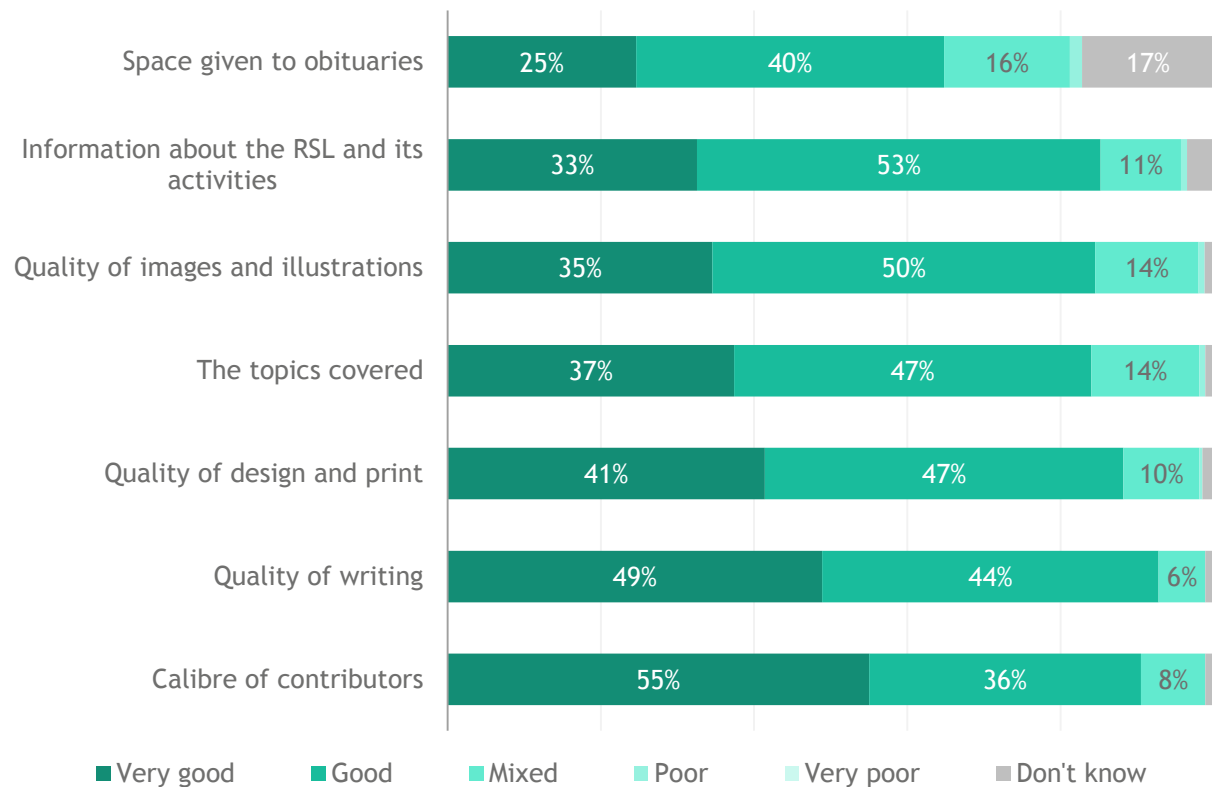
Base: All Members and subscribers who have entered an RSL prize or award (62-73)

RSL Review magazine

45% of respondents have read *RSL Review* before, and 43% in the last 12 months. Fellows were the most likely to have read it in the last 12 months (91% having done so), followed by Members (85%) and subscribers (15%).

Although all elements of *RSL Review* were rated favourably, respondents rate the calibre of contributors and quality of writing particular highly.

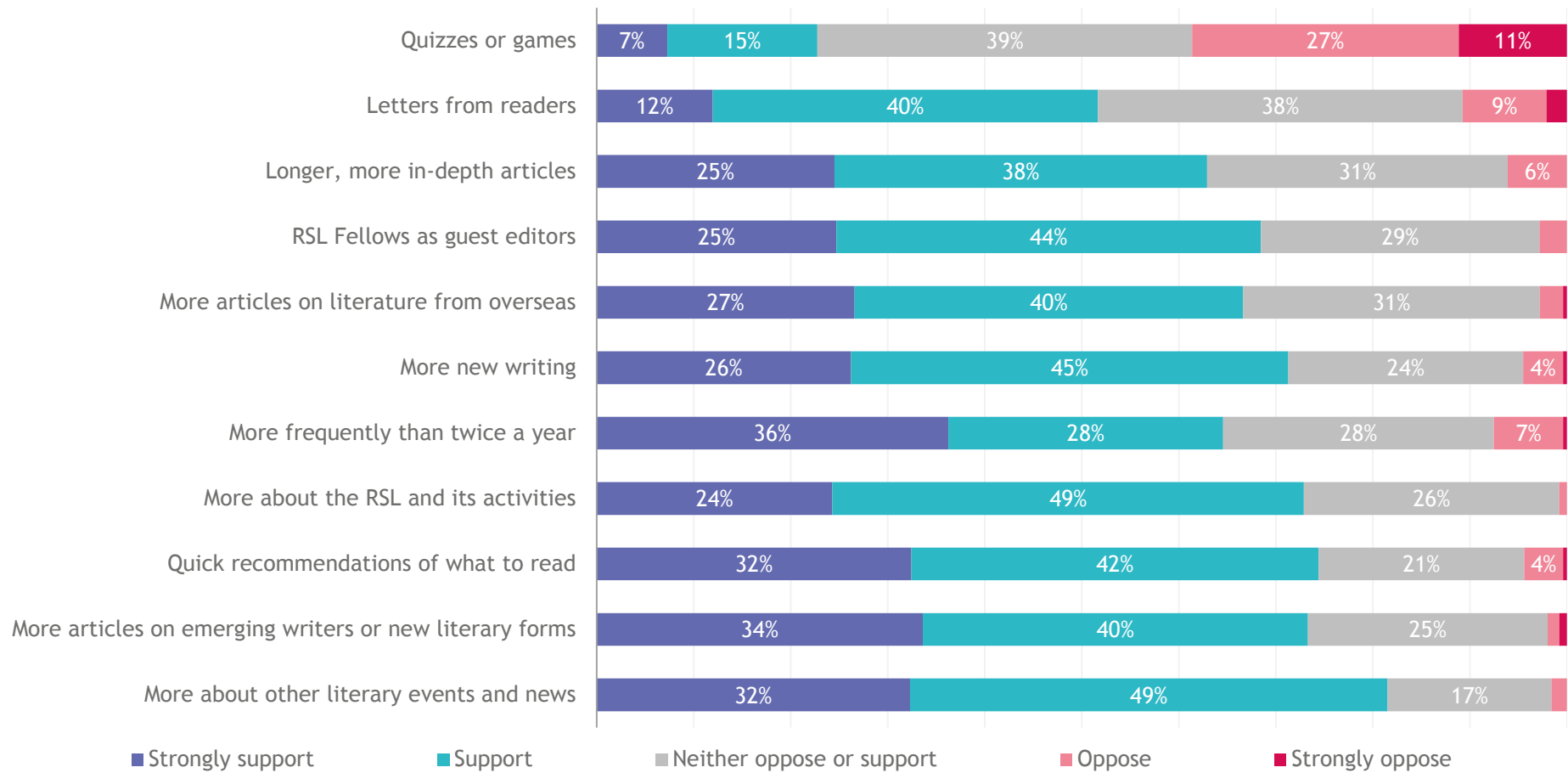
For each of the following areas, how would you rate the *RSL Review* magazine?



Base: All Members and subscribers who have read *RSL Review* in the past 12 months (256-263)

The elements above were rated fairly similarly by Members and subscribers (who read *RSL Review*); the only notable difference was in the calibre of contributors, with 93% of Members rating this element good or very good vs. 82% of subscribers.

To what extent would you support the following ideas for developing the RSL Review magazine?



Base: All Members and subscribers who have read RSL Review in the past 12 months (233-254)

Members and subscribers were also fairly similar in the extent to which they supported the various ideas for developing *RSL Review*. There were four notable areas which subscribers supported more strongly than Members:

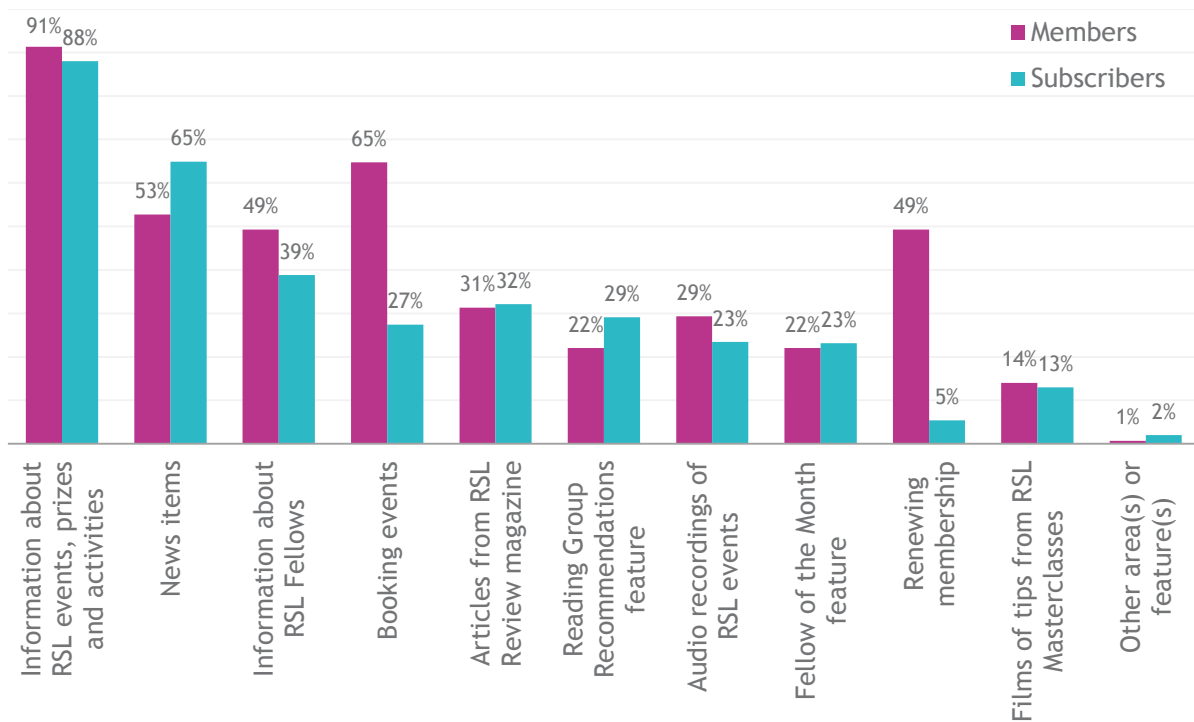
- Quizzes and games (38% of subscribers support this idea, vs. 17% of Members)
- More articles on literature from overseas(78% of subscribers vs. 63% of Members)
- Longer, more in-depth articles(71% of subscribers vs. 60% of Members)
- Letters from readers (49% of subscribers vs. 59% of Members)

The RSL website

73% of respondents had visited the website, and 63% in the last 12 months, with Members being the most likely to have visited in the last 12 months (68% having done so), followed by subscribers (64%) and Fellows (40%).

Members and subscribers were asked further questions about how they use the website. Overall, the most common use was to find information about RSL events, prizes and activities, followed by news items. Members and subscribers tend to use the website in similar ways, although Members are more likely to use it to book events, find out information about Fellows, and listen to audio of RSL events; subscribers are more likely to use it for reading news items.

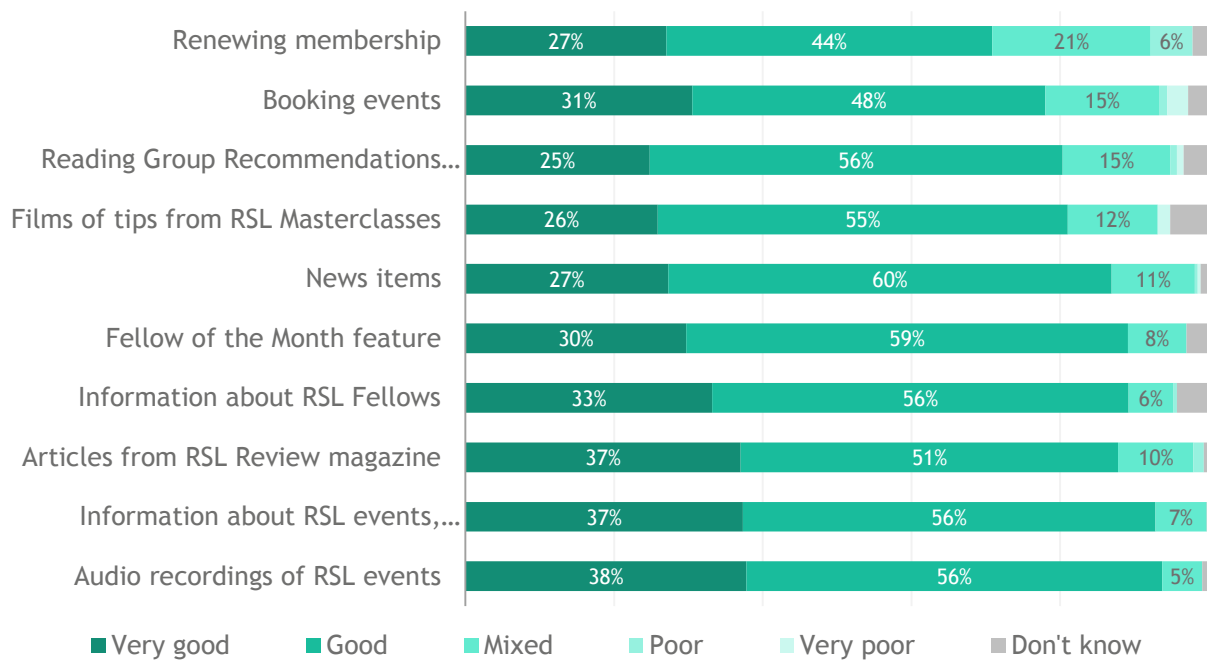
Which areas or features of the website have you read or used?



Base: All Members and subscribers who have used the RSL website in the past 12 months (150 / 299)

Respondents were asked to rate all the elements of the website which they had used in the past 12 months. All elements were rated positively, although the top rated were audio recordings, information about RSL events, prizes and activities, and articles from *RSL Review*.

For each of the following areas, how would you rate the RSL website?



Base: All Members and subscribers who have used that element of the RSL website in the past 12 months (58-391)

Members and subscribers rated all areas of the website similarly. The biggest differences were found around films of tips from RSL masterclasses (86% of Members rated this element good or very good vs. 78% of subscribers) and the Reading Group Recommendations feature, rated positively by 82% of subscribers and 76% of Members.

Perceptions of the RSL

Describing the RSL

All respondents were shown a list of 24 adjectives and asked to choose as many as they felt could be used to describe the RSL.

Overall, the most commonly chosen adjectives were prestigious (59% of all respondents choosing this word), informative (54%), London-centric (44%) and well-organised (44%).

Which of the following words would you use to describe the RSL?



Base: All respondents (825)

There were some marked differences between how Fellows, Members, and subscribers responded to this question, as follows:

Fellows are more likely than subscribers to describe the RSL as **prestigious**

Members are more likely than Fellows or subscribers to describe the RSL as **informative** and **inspiring**, and more likely than subscribers to describe the RSL as **relevant** and **diverse**

Subscribers are more likely than Fellows or Members to describe the RSL as **elitist**

Fellows and **Members** are both more likely than subscribers to describe the RSL as **well-organised**, **welcoming**, **inclusive**, **quirky** and **fun**

Members and **subscribers** are both more likely than Fellows to describe the RSL as **academic** and **contemporary**



Base: Fellows (75)



Base: Members (241)



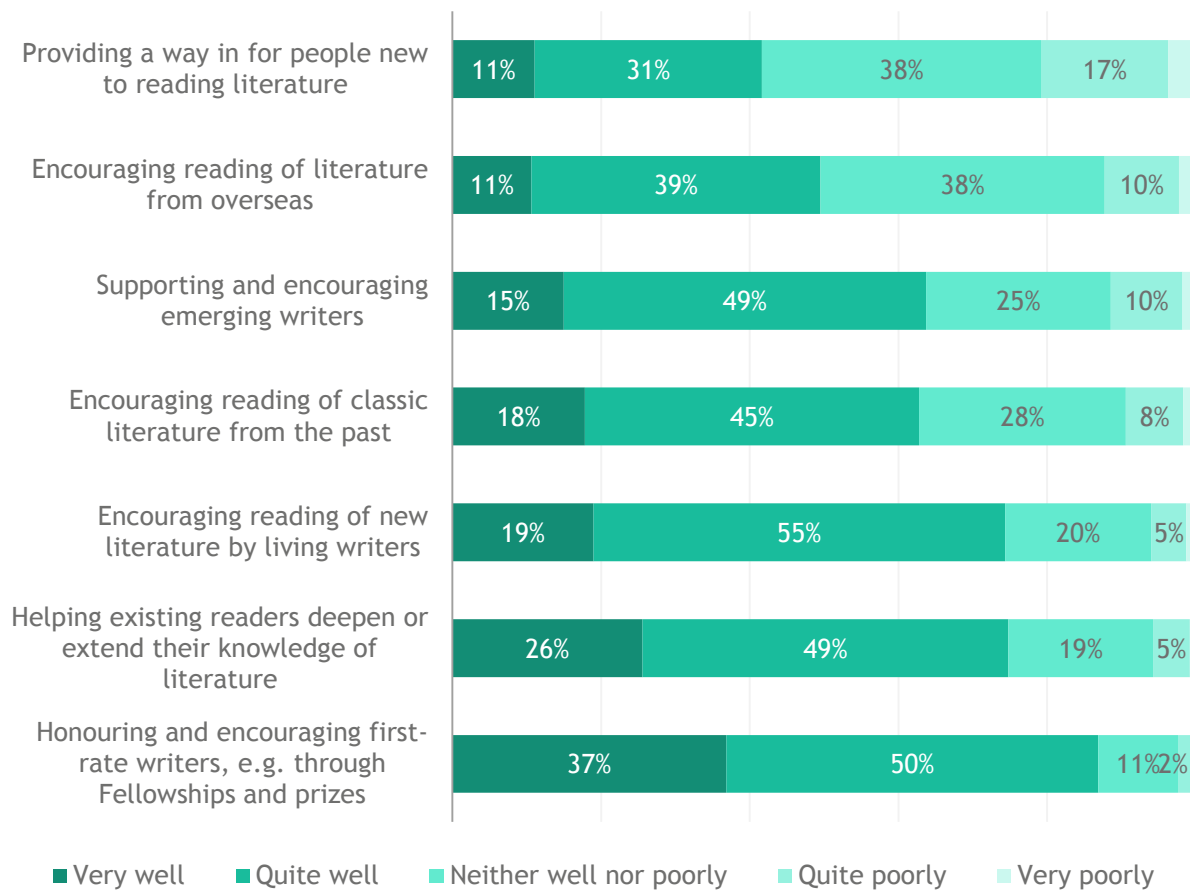
Base: Subscribers (509)

Which of the following words would you use to describe the RSL?	All	Fellows	Members	E-newsletter subscribers
Prestigious	59%	72%	59%	57%
Informative	54%	44%	62%	52%
London-centric	44%	48%	46%	43%
Well-organised	41%	48%	52%	34%
Academic	38%	12%	36%	42%
Welcoming	36%	52%	54%	26%
Authoritative	35%	31%	37%	35%
Inspiring	30%	19%	40%	28%
Relevant	29%	28%	37%	26%
High-profile	27%	33%	23%	28%
Old-fashioned	23%	15%	22%	25%
Elitist	22%	17%	17%	25%
Contemporary	19%	8%	20%	20%
Cliquey	19%	23%	18%	18%
National	19%	24%	18%	18%
Diverse	17%	15%	24%	14%
Exciting	14%	17%	18%	12%
Inclusive	14%	21%	21%	9%
Quirky	10%	17%	15%	6%
Innovative	9%	7%	10%	8%
Fun	9%	19%	11%	6%
Invisible	7%	8%	10%	6%
Amateurish	3%	5%	4%	2%
Disorganised	2%	1%	3%	2%
<i>Base</i>	825	75	241	509

Performance against the RSL's current goals

Respondents generally thought the RSL was achieving its current goals, in particular around honouring and encouraging first-rate writers. Overall, the goals against which respondents felt the RSL was performing least well were providing a way in for people new to reading literature and encouraging reading of literature from overseas.

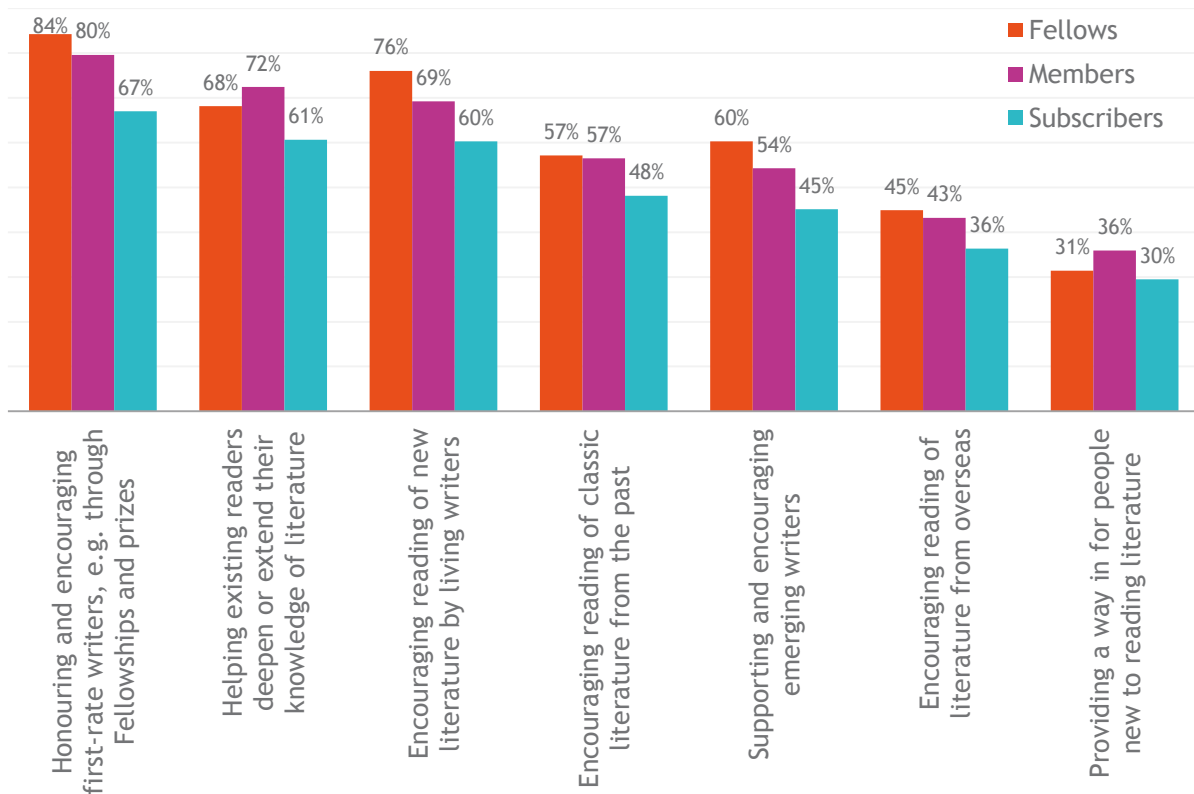
How well do you think the RSL is doing against its goals listed below?



Base: All respondents (606-697)

Although Fellows, Members and subscribers all tended to rank RSL’s progress against their goals similarly, there were some notable difference. Fellows generally rated the organisation’s performance against its goals most highly, followed by Members and subscribers. This patterns is seen most strongly for the goals “Encouraging reading of new literature by living writers”, “Honouring and encouraging first-rate writers, e.g. through Fellowships and prizes” and “Supporting and encouraging emerging writers”.

How well do you think the RSL is doing against its goals listed below? (% very well or quite well)

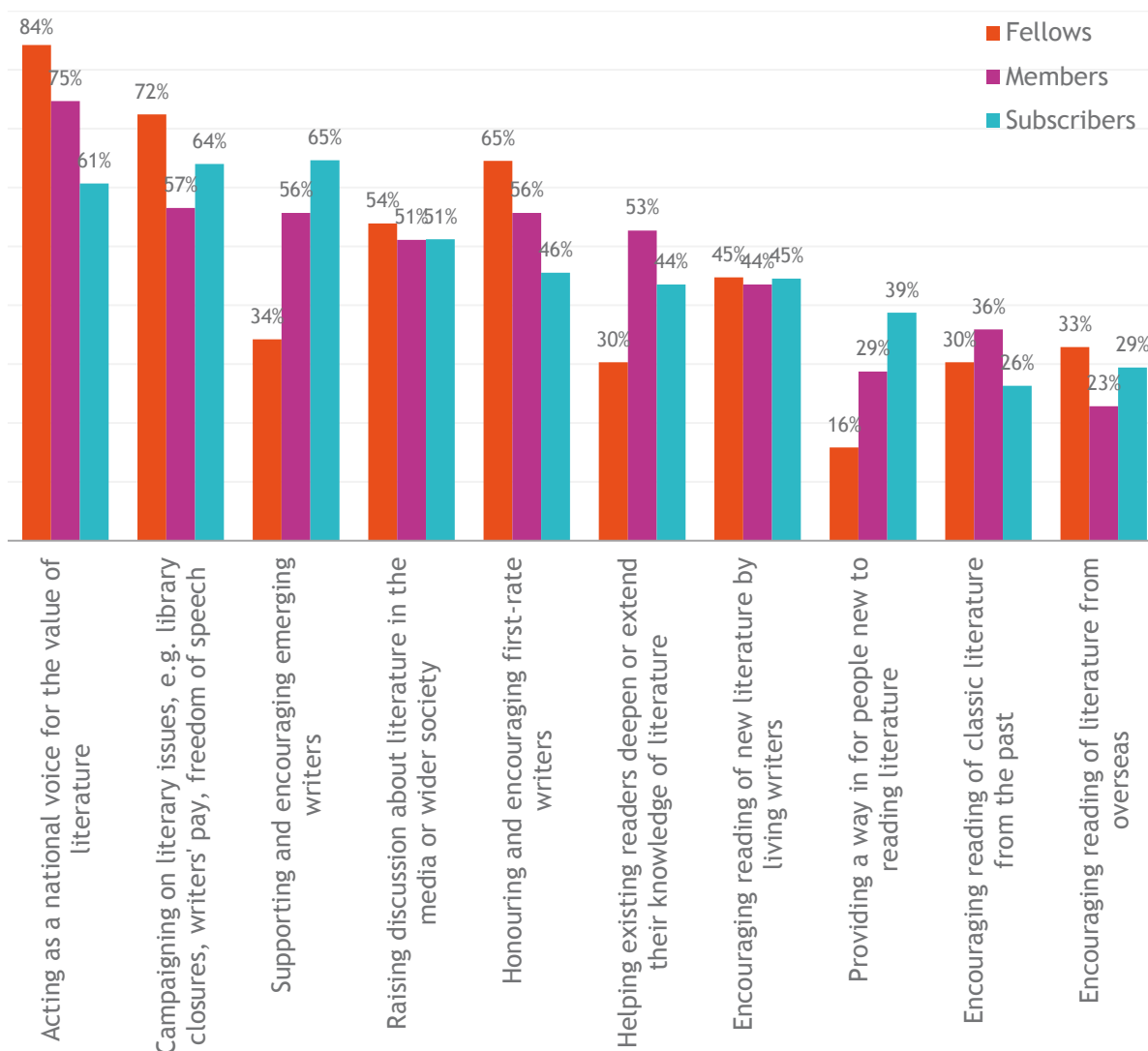


Base: All respondents (68-71 / 232-237 / 495-505)

RSL's potential goals

All respondents were asked about the relative importance of goals for the RSL to pursue in the future. Those considered most important overall were acting as a national voice for the value of literature, campaigning on literary issues, supporting and encouraging emerging writers, and raising discussion about literature in the media or wider society. Each of these goals was selected as among the top five most important goals for the RSL by at least half of respondents.

And which of these do you think are most important for the RSL to pursue?



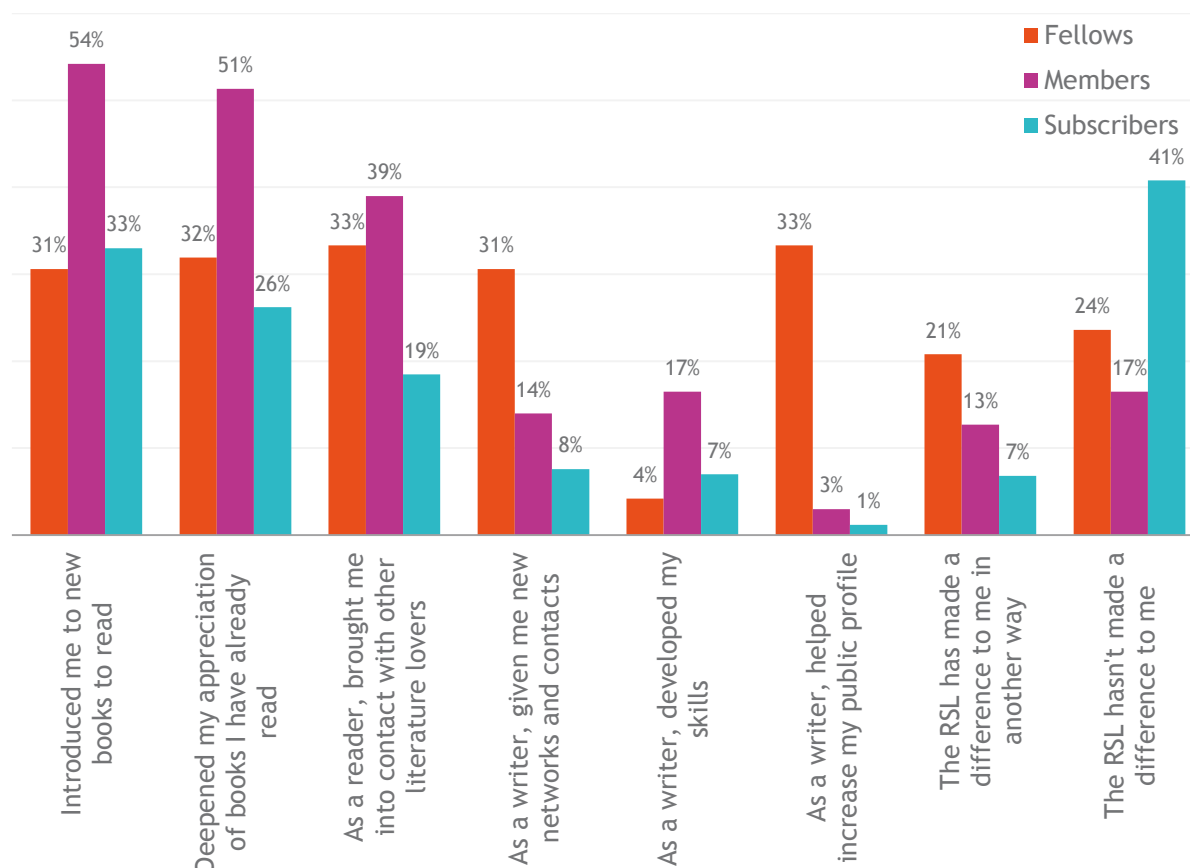
Base: All respondents (76 / 237 / 506)

Fellows were more likely than either subscribers or Members to feel that acting as a national voice for the value of literature, campaigning on literary issues and honouring and encouraging first-rate writers should be amongst the most important goals for the RSL. Subscribers were more likely than Fellows or Members to favour the RSL supporting and encouraging emerging writers and providing a way in for people new to literature. Members tended to sit somewhere between Fellows and subscribers on this topic.

The difference made by the RSL

Respondents were also asked what difference the RSL had made to them personally. Overall, 39% said the RSL had introduced them to new books, and 34% that it had deepened their appreciation for books; 32% said it hadn't made a difference to them.

What difference has the RSL made to you?



Base: All respondents (72 / 236 / 497)

For this question, the differences between Fellows, Members and subscribers were stark. More than half of Members felt the RSL had made a difference by introducing them to new books to read and deepening their appreciation for books they have already read, compared to just under a third of Fellows and between a third and a quarter of subscribers. Members were also more likely than Fellows or subscribers to have found their skills as a writer have developed thanks to the RSL.

Fellows had the broadest range of areas in which the RSL had made a difference, with between a quarter and a third of Members selecting all but two areas. Members were notably more likely to have felt the RSL made a difference to them through giving new networks and contacts and helping increase their public profile.

On almost all counts subscribers were less likely than Fellows or Members to have found that the RSL made a difference to them personally, and 41% felt the RSL had not made a difference to them. Of those for whom the RSL had a made a difference, this was mostly felt in terms of introducing them to new books to read and deepening their appreciation for books they have already read.

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