



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Public attitudes to new house building:

Findings from the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey

© Crown copyright, 2014

*Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.*

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This document/publication is also available on our website at [www.gov.uk/dclg](http://www.gov.uk/dclg)

If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, email [contactus@communities.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@communities.gov.uk) or write to us at:

Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU  
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

For all our latest news and updates follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CommunitiesUK>

July 2014

ISBN: 978-1-4098-4288-0

# Key findings

- Opposition to new homes fell substantially between 2010 and 2013, with 46 per cent of respondents saying they would oppose new homes being built in their local area in 2010, compared to 31 per cent in 2013. The proportion that was supportive increased from 28 per cent in 2010 to 47 per cent in 2013.
- Net opposition (percentage of those saying they are opposed minus those saying they are supportive) has reduced from 18 per cent in 2010 to -16 per cent. The strength of opposition for new homes has also decreased. The proportion of respondents stating they would strongly oppose new homes being built in their local area almost halved from 15 per cent in 2010 to 8 per cent in 2013. At the same time the proportion of respondents who said they would strongly support new homes more than doubled from 5 per cent to 11 per cent.
- Opposition fell across all age, tenure and income subgroups and among respondents living in different types of areas. However, home owners, those living in small cities and towns and in rural areas were still more likely to be opposed than renters and those living in large cities.
- When respondents who were not supportive of new homes were asked which of the potential benefits from new housing would make them more supportive, they most commonly selected more employment opportunities (17 per cent), more low cost homeownership (11 per cent) and more or improved medical facilities (11 per cent).
- When all respondents were asked if they would be more supportive of new homes if the *“government provided local councils with more money to spend on local services for every new home built”*, almost half (47 per cent) said this would make them more supportive.
- A majority of respondents thought that a more localist planning system would make them more supportive of new homes. Sixty-three per cent of respondents said they would be more supportive if *“local people were given greater control and say over what gets built in their local area”*.
- When asked *“if the government brought in changes so that when people from a local community come together to get involved in planning for new development, that community can receive extra money to be spent locally”*, 57 per cent said this would make them more supportive.
- Thirty-eight per cent of respondents agreed whether they support new homes being built in their local area *“depended on their design”*. Forty-eight per cent agreed that *“properties built in the last decade were better or much better designed, in terms of their external appearance, compared to those built around 20 or 30 years ago”*. Twenty-seven per cent thought design was worse or much worse.

- Eighty-two per cent of respondents agreed “*there is a shortage of homes that are affordable to buy in England*”, with 73 per cent agreeing there is a shortage “*in my local area*”. Eighty-three per cent felt it was more difficult (49 per cent) or much more difficult (33 per cent) to buy their own home today compared to 20 years ago.
- Views were mixed whether building more homes would improve affordability. Forty per cent agreed with the statement “*building more homes would improve the affordability of housing in my local area*” while 55 per cent agreed that homes “*would continue to be unaffordable in my local area even if new homes are built.*”

# 1. Introduction

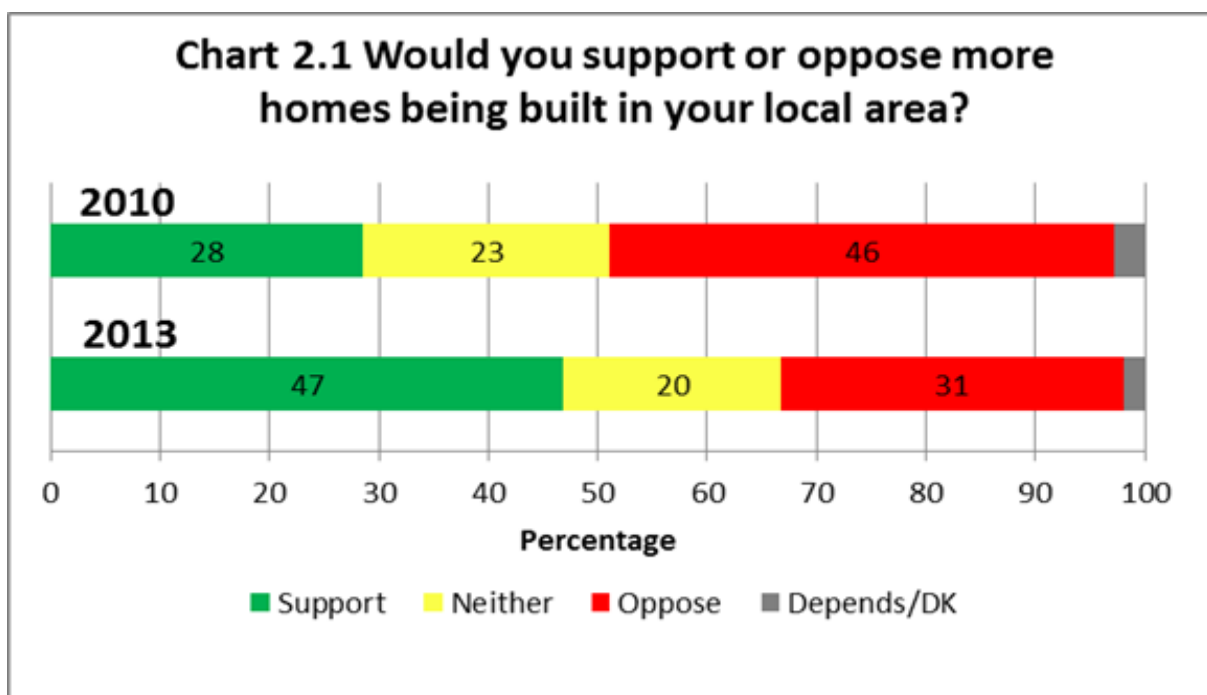
- 1.1. This report provides findings relating to public attitudes to house building as measured in the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey 2013. The findings provide evidence about changing attitudes to new house building before and after the introduction of the coalition government's planning and other housing related reforms. Although it is not possible to directly attribute change in attitudes to government policy due to the many other factors which might shape attitudes, the findings do give some context in terms of changing public attitudes over time.
- 1.2. The BSA survey is a longstanding annual survey in Britain carried out by NatCen Social Research. The survey is representative of all households and uses a robust methodology that is replicated each year, meaning changes in attitudes can be reliably compared between years. The fieldwork for the survey involves computer-assisted interviews carried out face-to-face with respondents aged 18 and over. The fieldwork takes place between June and November each year.
- 1.3. In 2010 and 2013 the Department for Communities and Local Government commissioned NatCen Social Research to undertake housing and planning modules within the survey. Findings from the 2010 module were published by the Department in 2011.<sup>1</sup> In order to measure changes in attitudes to new house building over time, the 2013 module included a question repeated from 2010, "*Would you support or oppose more homes being built in your local area?*", in addition to a number of new questions in relation to planning for housing. The question was worded in exactly the same way in both years.
- 1.4. In 2010, the module was asked of almost 3,000 respondents in England. In 2013, the sample was reduced to around 1,000 respondents. Although the sample was smaller, the methodology was otherwise identical meaning it is still representative and comparisons between the two years are considered reliable. To minimise ordering effects, where responses are influenced by the nature of preceding questions, the questionnaire topics were ordered in a similar way in both years. There was a minor change to the ordering of questions within the housing module in 2013. In 2013 the key question on support or opposition to new homes was the first question asked, whereas in 2010 it was preceded by the question "*Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?*"
- 1.5. Although the methodology allows for reliable comparisons between the two years, it is not possible to say from these two data points when any changes in attitudes occurred, for example whether there has been a gradual change over the years, or over a shorter time period, and whether changes in attitudes between 2010 and 2013 represent a longer-term trend. In order to measure this, the key support or opposition to new homes question will be repeated in the 2014 BSA survey, findings from which will be available in 2015.
- 1.6. Further analysis of the BSA survey data can be undertaken using the BSA Information System at <http://www.britsocat.com/>. The full dataset will also be available to download from the UK Data Archive at <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6362/1936769.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6362/1936769.pdf)

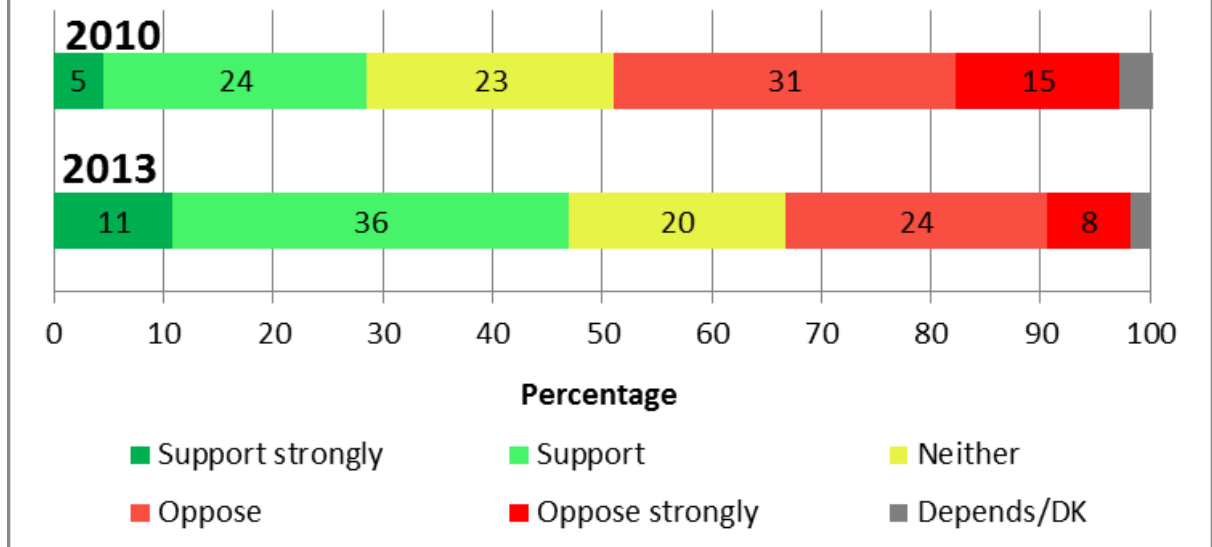
## 2. Survey findings

- 2.1 The findings from the 2013 survey reveal that overall opposition to new homes fell considerably between 2010 and 2013, from 46 to 31 per cent, a change of 15 percentage points. At the same time, support for new homes rose from 28 per cent to 47 per cent.
- 2.2 By 2013, a higher proportion of respondents said they would support more homes being built in their local area than the proportion who said they would oppose (see chart 2.1). In 2010, *net* overall opposition to new homes was 18 per cent (46 per cent opposed minus 28 per cent supportive), compared to 2013 where net opposition was -16 per cent (31 per cent opposed minus 47 per cent supportive).



- 2.3 Breaking down the figures to observe changes in the strength of support or opposition, the proportion of respondents who said they would strongly oppose more new homes being built in their local area almost halved from 15 per cent in 2010 to 8 per cent in 2013 (see Chart 2.2).
- 2.4 At the same time the proportion of respondents who strongly support new homes more than doubled from 5 per cent to 11 per cent. There was also a small decrease in the proportion of respondents who stated they neither supported nor opposed more homes.

**Chart 2.2: Would you support or oppose more homes being built in your local area?**



### Opposition to new homes by housing tenure

2.5 Homeowners were more opposed to new homes than renters. Thirty seven per cent of owners were opposed, compared to 17 per cent of local authority tenants, 20 per cent of private tenants and 21 per cent of housing association tenants. Between 2010 and 2013 opposition fell by a similar proportion for all tenure groups.

### Opposition to new homes by age

2.6 Opposition to new homes was similar across age groups but the group most opposed were aged 35-54, among whom 36 per cent were opposed compared with an average of 31 per cent. Since 2010, the largest reduction in opposition has been among respondents aged 65 and over, where overall opposition fell from 52 per cent in 2010 to 30 per cent in 2013.

### Opposition to new homes by household income

2.7 There were similar levels of opposition between respondents in different income categories. Thirty-three per cent of respondents in the highest income quartile said they would be opposed compared with an average of 31 per cent. Opposition decreased across all income quartiles between 2010 and 2013. The greatest reduction was among the highest income quartile, where overall opposition fell from 49 per cent to 33 per cent.

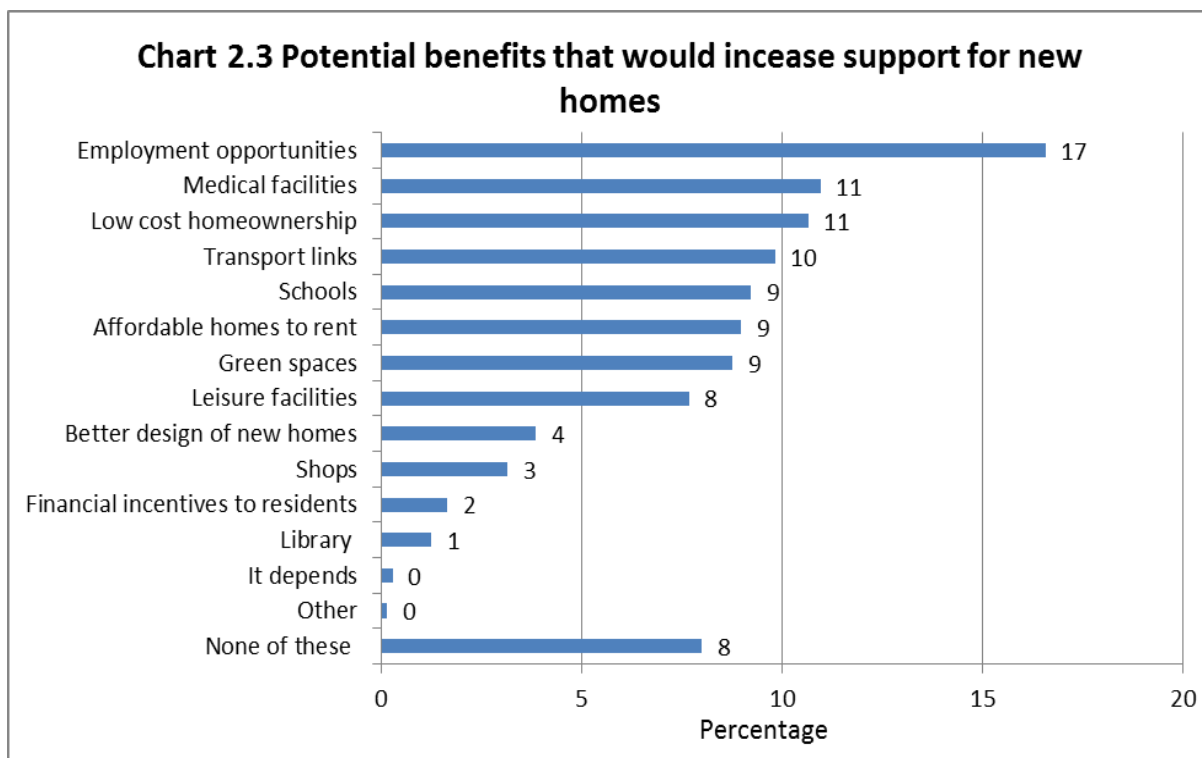
### Opposition to new homes by type of area

2.8 In 2013, opposition to new homes was highest among respondents living in 'a small city or town' (34 per cent), 'a country village' (32 per cent) or 'suburbs' (32 per cent). Opposition was lowest among those living in large cities (17 per cent).

2.9 Opposition fell between 2010 and 2013 among those living in all types of areas. However, between 2010 and 2013 opposition fell most markedly among those living in country villages (51 to 21 per cent), small cities and towns (45 to 34 per cent).

### Factors affecting support for, and opposition to new homes

2.10 Respondents who said they would oppose, or neither support or oppose new homes were also given a list of potential benefits from new housing and asked to choose up to three potential benefits that would make them more supportive of new homes in their area.<sup>2</sup>



2.11 Respondents most frequently selected more employment opportunities (17 per cent), more low cost homeownership (11 per cent), and more or improved medical facilities (11 per cent) as positive features of new development that would make them more supportive of new homes in their local area (see chart 2.3).

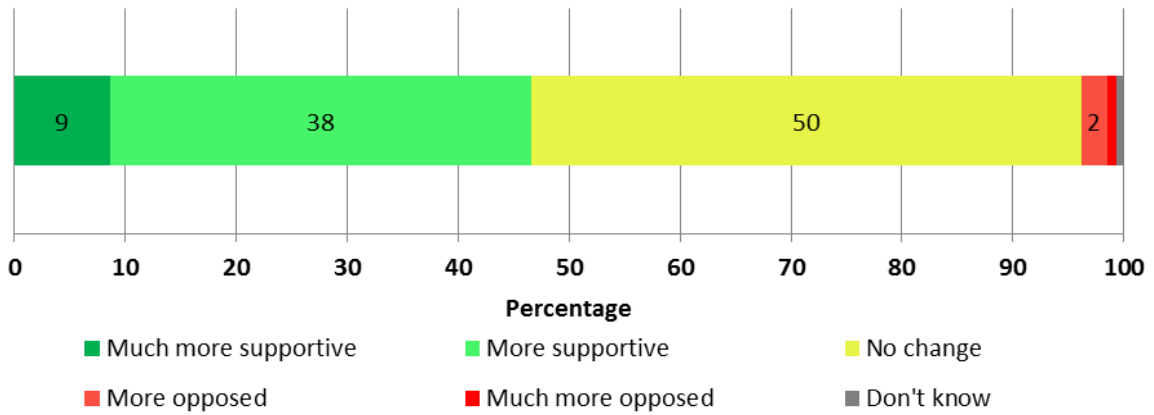
### Funding of local services for new homes

2.12 All respondents were asked whether they would be more supportive or more opposed to new homes if *'the government provided local councils with more money to spend on local services for every new home built in their area'*. In total, 47 per cent said this would make them more supportive, within this, nine per cent said they would be much more supportive (see chart 2.4). Fifty per cent said that more money for local services would have no effect on their opposition to new homes.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked to choose up to three potential benefits from a showcard listing each of the options shown in chart 2.3.



**Chart 2.4: Support if the government provided councils with more money to spend on services for each new home built**

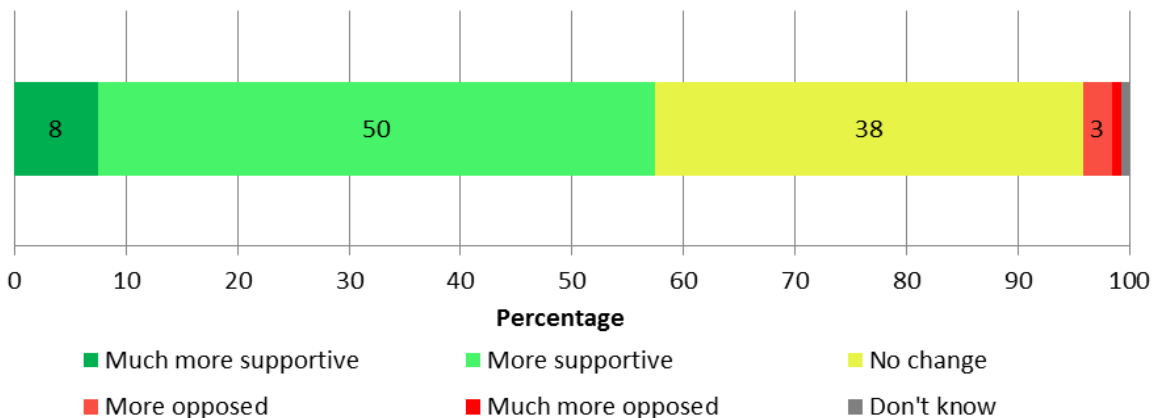


2.13 Of those who had said they would oppose, or neither support or oppose new homes, 31 per cent said giving councils more money for local services would make them more supportive, whilst 63 per cent said there would be no change in their level of opposition.

### Neighbourhood planning

2.14 When respondents were asked if they would be more supportive if *'the government brought in changes so that when people from a local community come together to get involved in planning for new development, that community can receive extra money to be spent locally'*, 58 per cent said this would make them more supportive, including 8 per cent who would be much more supportive. Thirty-eight per cent said there would be no change in their support or opposition (see chart 2.5).

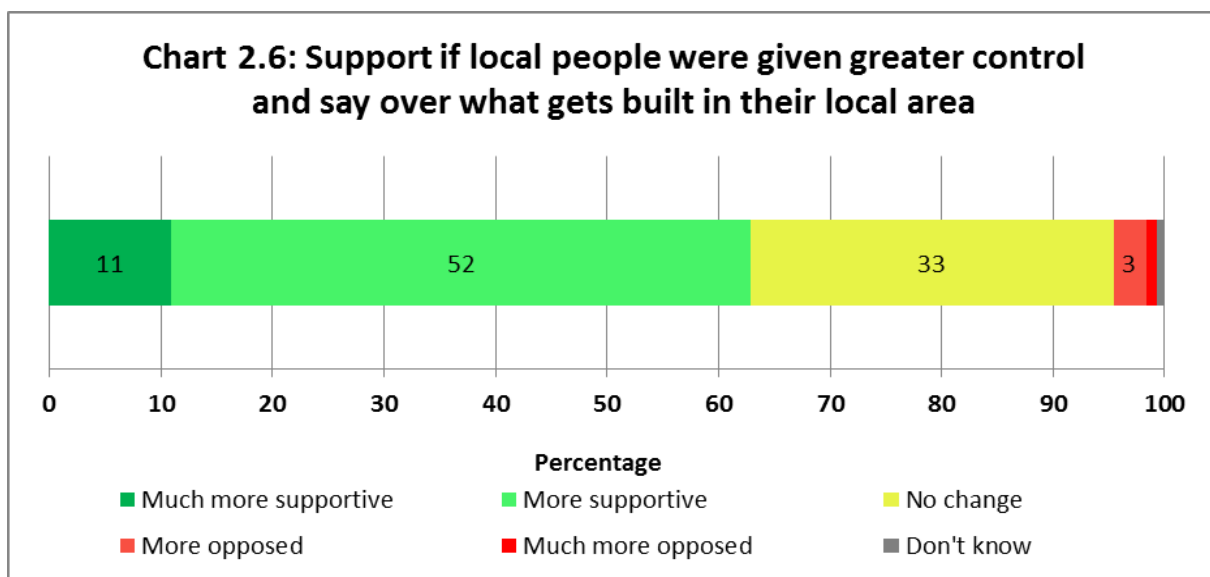
**Chart 2.5: Support if community involved in planning and money to spend locally**



- 2.15 In general, respondents living in large cities were more likely to say that financial incentives and a more localist approach would make them more supportive than those in suburban or more rural areas. Renters were also more likely than home owners to say these reforms would make them more supportive, in particular those renting from a local authority.
- 2.16 Differences between age groups were less marked, although younger age groups were generally more positive than older groups in terms of the impact on their level of support. As outlined above, these groups are those who are least likely to be opposed to new homes being built in their local area.

### A more localist planning system

- 2.17 When respondents were asked if they would be more supportive if they were given *'greater control over what gets built in their local area'*, 63 per cent said this would make them more supportive. Within this, 11 per cent would be much more supportive (see chart 2.6).
- 2.18 Those in rural areas (65 per cent) and small cities and towns (64 per cent) were slightly more likely to say a more localist system would make them more supportive, compared with 60 per cent cent of those living in large cities and 61 per cent in suburbs. Younger people (18-34) were more likely than older people (aged 65+) to say a more localist system would make them more supportive.

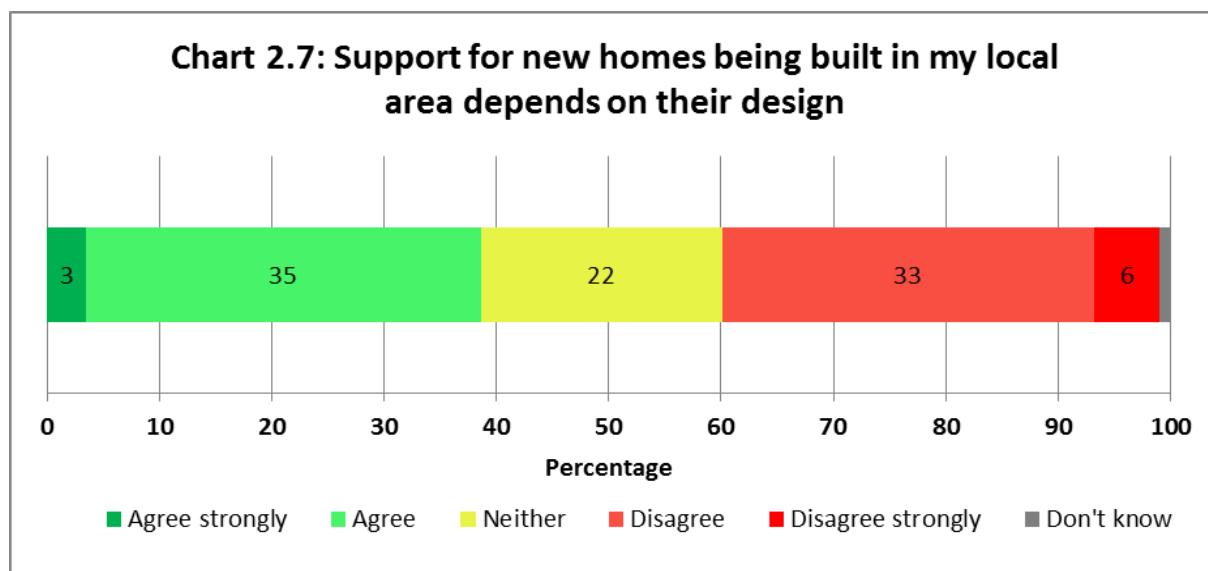


### The role of design

- 2.19 The survey also sought to explore the role of design in the extent to which respondents support or oppose new homes being built.
- 2.20 Thirty-eight per cent of respondents thought their level of support would be influenced by the design of new homes (see chart 2.7). Older respondents were more likely than younger respondents to say design was an important factor (43 per cent of 65 or over compared to 34 per cent of 25-34 age group). Home owners and

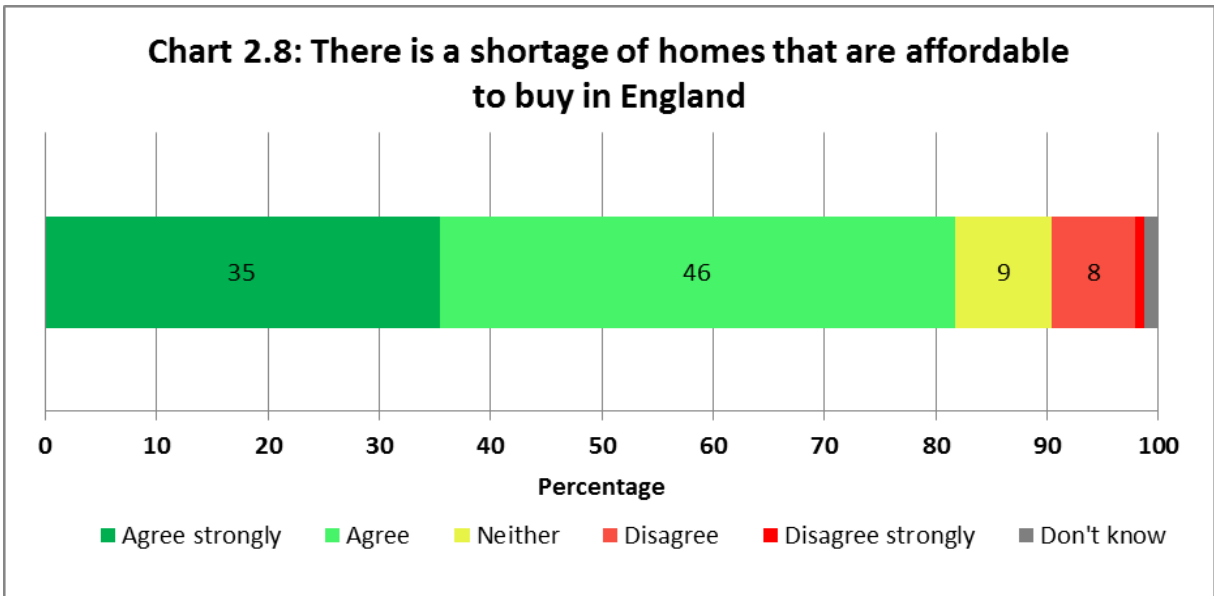
private renters were more likely than social tenants to say design would influence their support.

- 2.21 Almost half (48 per cent) of survey respondents thought that homes built in the last ten years are better designed than those built 20 or 30 years ago. Twenty-seven per cent thought design was worse or much worse. Local authority tenants were more likely than other tenures to agree homes are better designed (56 per cent compared with 50 per cent of home owners, 43 per cent of private rented sector tenants and 38 per cent of housing association tenants).

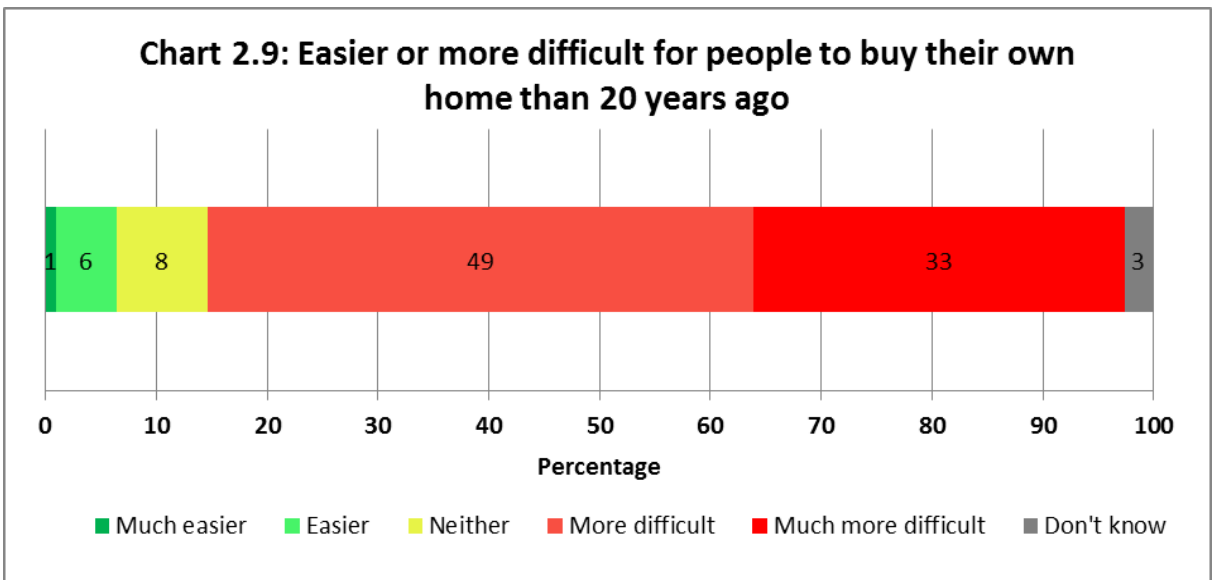


### Perceptions of affordability

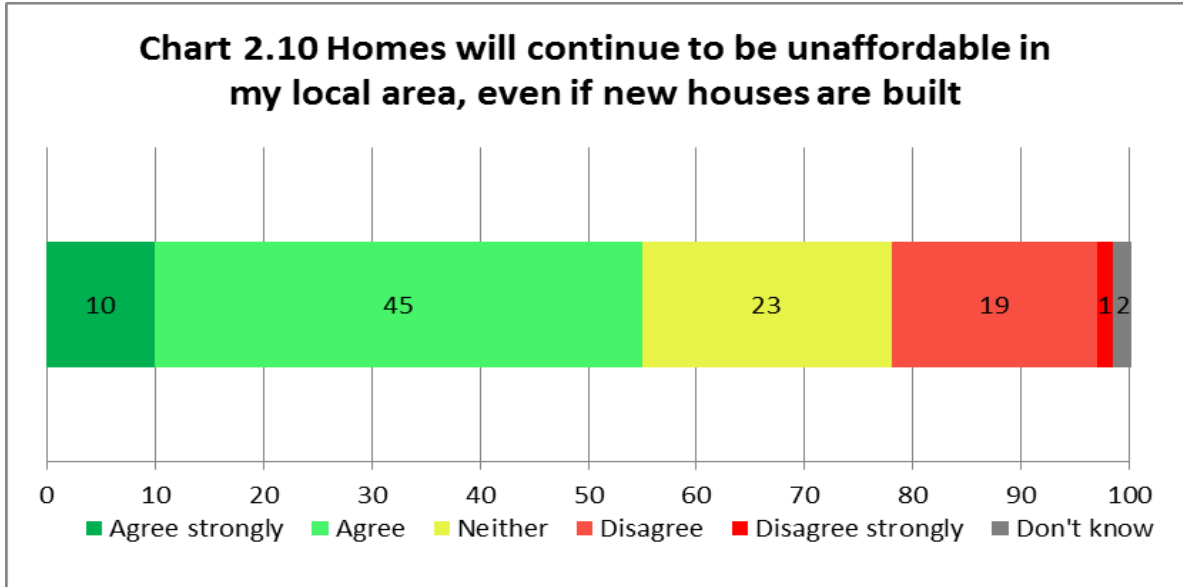
- 2.22 The survey also asked respondents how easy or difficult they thought it was for people to buy their own home. Respondents were also asked the extent to which they thought building new homes would result in housing becoming more affordable.
- 2.23 Eighty-two per cent of respondents agreed there was a shortage of homes that were affordable to buy in England (see chart 2.8), with 35 per cent strongly agreeing. When asked to think about affordability *in their local area*, 73 per cent thought that was a shortage of homes that were affordable to buy.



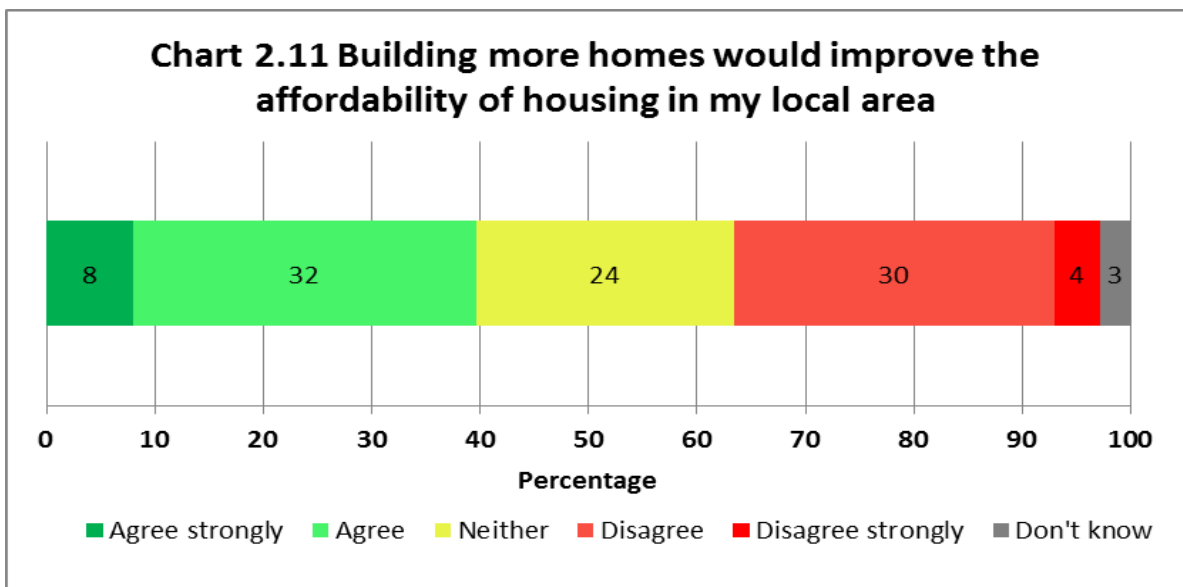
- 2.24 Younger age groups were more likely to think there was a shortage of affordable homes to buy in their local area than older groups. Eighty per cent of respondents aged 25-34 (the age of many first time buyers) agreed with the statement compared to 68 per cent of respondents aged 65 and over.
- 2.25 More private renters agreed with the statement than other tenures (84 per cent compared with 70 per cent of home owners, 72 per cent of local authority tenants and 73 per cent of housing association tenants). Those living in large cities were also more likely to agree there was a shortage of affordable homes than respondents living in small cities and towns, and in rural areas.
- 2.26 The majority of respondents thought that affordability had worsened over the last 20 years and that it was now more difficult (49 per cent) or much more difficult (33 per cent) for people to buy their own home (chart 2.9).



2.27 Despite this, attitudes were more mixed in terms of the extent to which respondents thought building more homes would improve affordability. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement *'homes will continue to be unaffordable in my local area, even if new houses are built'*. Fifty-five per cent agreed with this statement, while 20 per cent disagreed.



2.28 When asked whether they agreed with the statement *'building more homes would improve the affordability of housing in my local area'*, 40 per cent agreed, 24 per cent were unsure and 34 per cent disagreed with the statement.



2.29 Respondents aged 18-34 were more likely than other age groups to agree that building more homes would not improve affordability. Home owners and those living in rural areas were less likely than renters and those living in large cities to agree homes would become more affordable if new homes were built.