

# Standards of Conduct Survey - Feedback on Findings

Standards Committee

13 March 2009

# Reason for Survey

- An ethical governance “health check”
- To identify strengths and weaknesses in the Council’s approach to standards of conduct.
- To inform a programme of work through which Standards Committee can proactively drive forward the standards agenda.

# Survey Format

- Online survey
- Hard copies upon request and to Members not currently using the email system

# Response Rate

- All 79 elected Members, 8 Co-opted Members and 33 senior officers invited to complete the survey.
- Responses received from:
  - 39 elected Members (**49% response rate**)
  - 4 Executive/35 Non-Executive Members
  - 2 Co-opted Members (**25% response rate**)
  - 17 senior officers (**51% response rate**)

# What do people think about the ethical environment at Surrey County Council?

We wanted to find out how the way councillors conducted themselves in their day to day functions was perceived by colleagues.

# Member Conduct

- 94% agreed that the majority of Members in this Council demonstrate an understanding of the importance of high ethical standards.
- 94% agreed that the majority of Members demonstrate high ethical standards in their behaviour towards others.
- 76% agreed that there are some Members whose behaviour does not demonstrate high ethical standards.

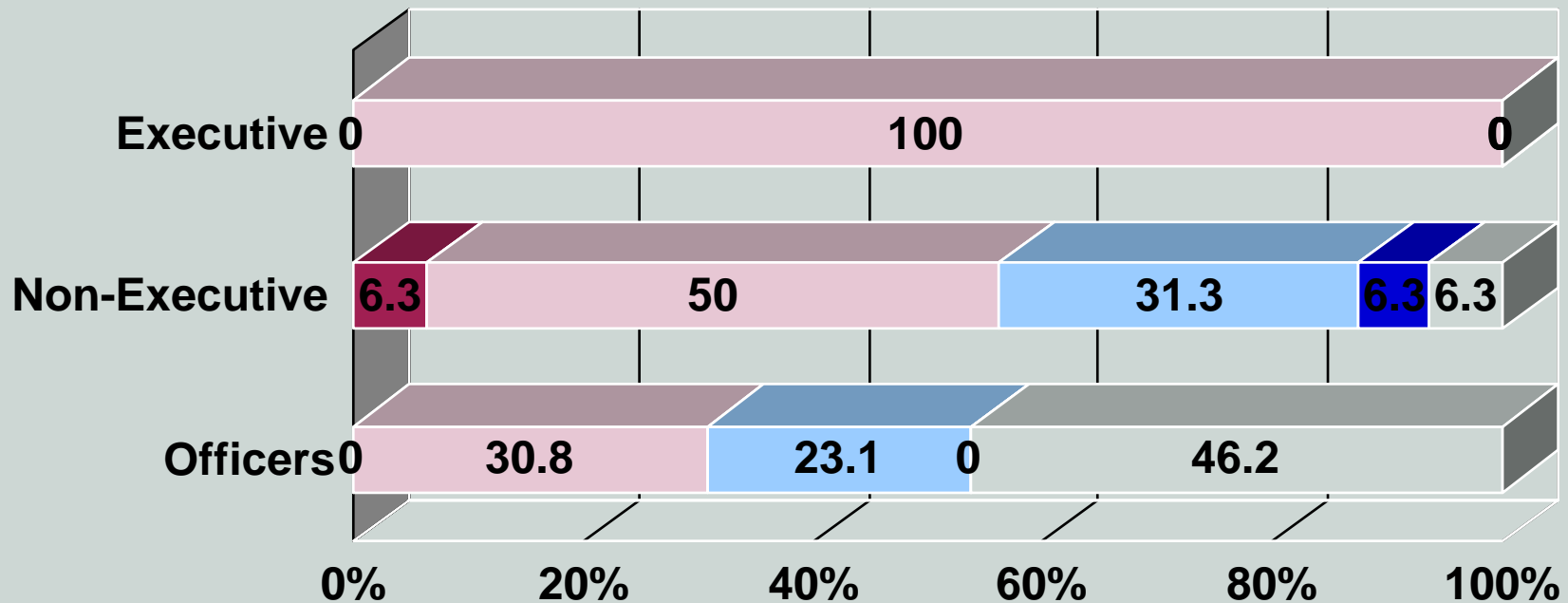
# How do others perceive us?

We wanted to find out how :

- The Executive
- Members and
- Senior Officers

see each other – do they agree that each is behaving well ?

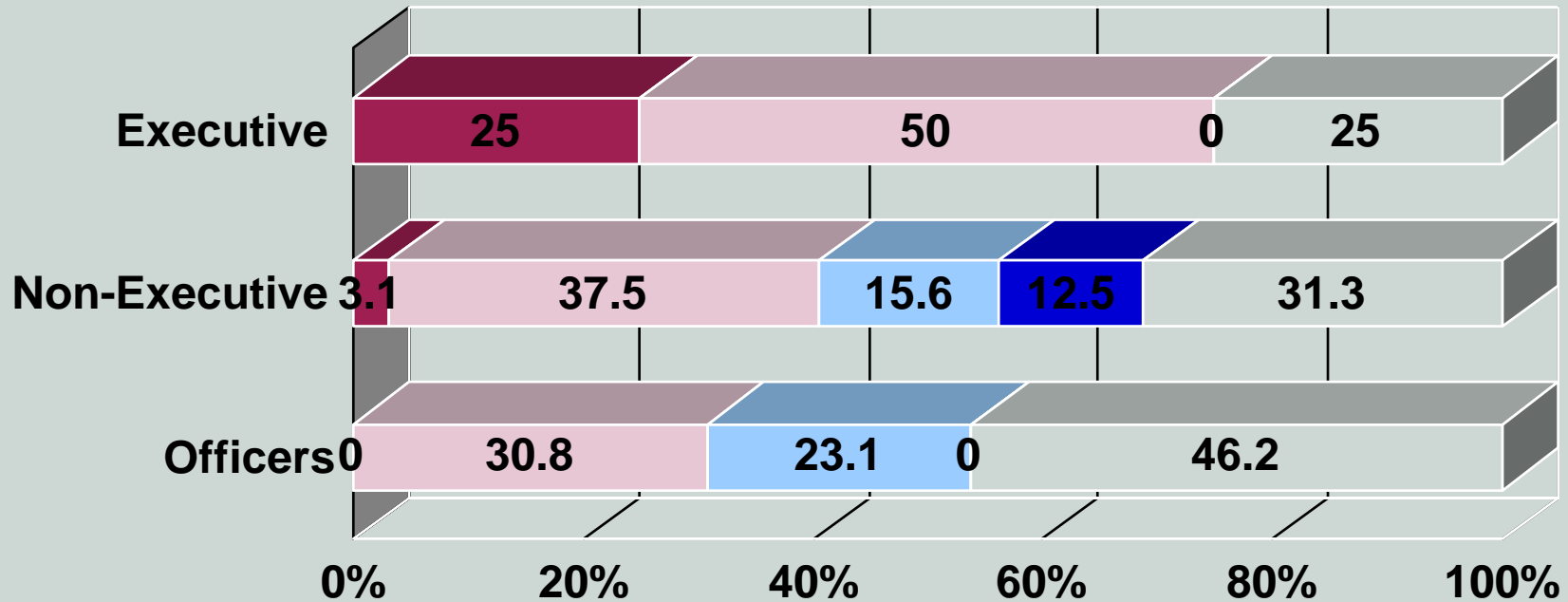
# Executive Members treat all Backbench Members with respect



**Strongly agree** **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree** **Don't know**

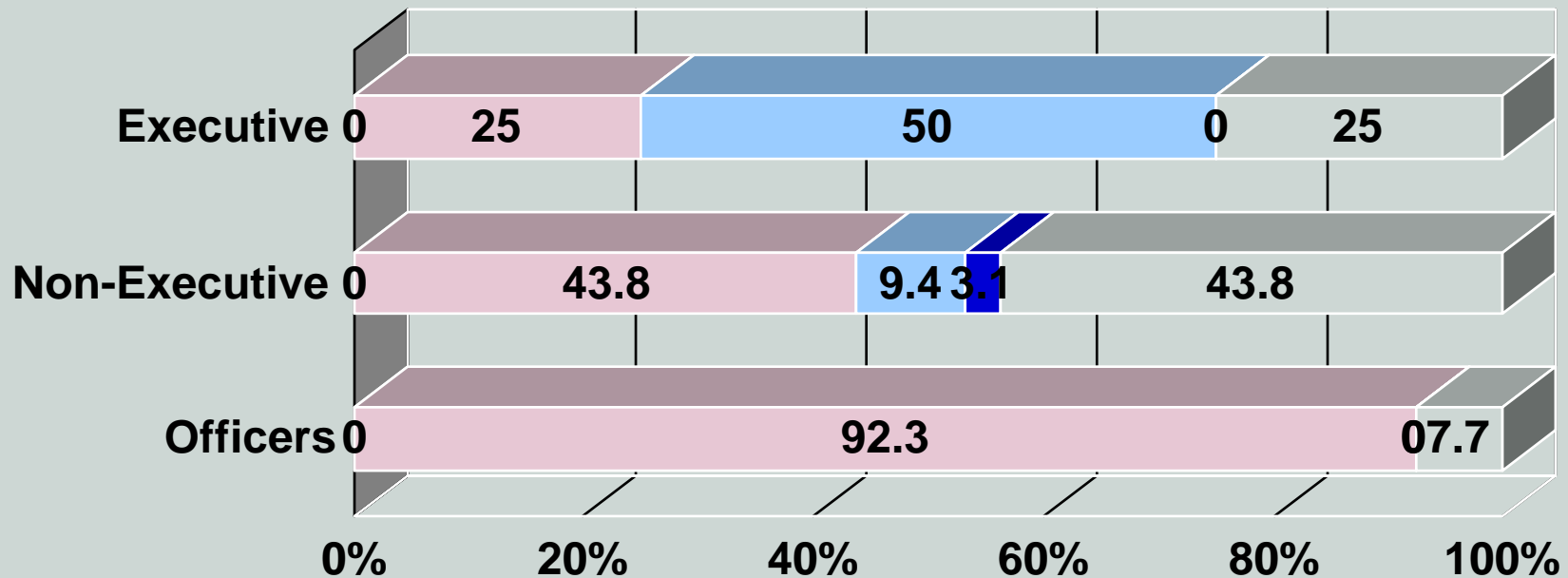


# Executive Members treat all officers with respect



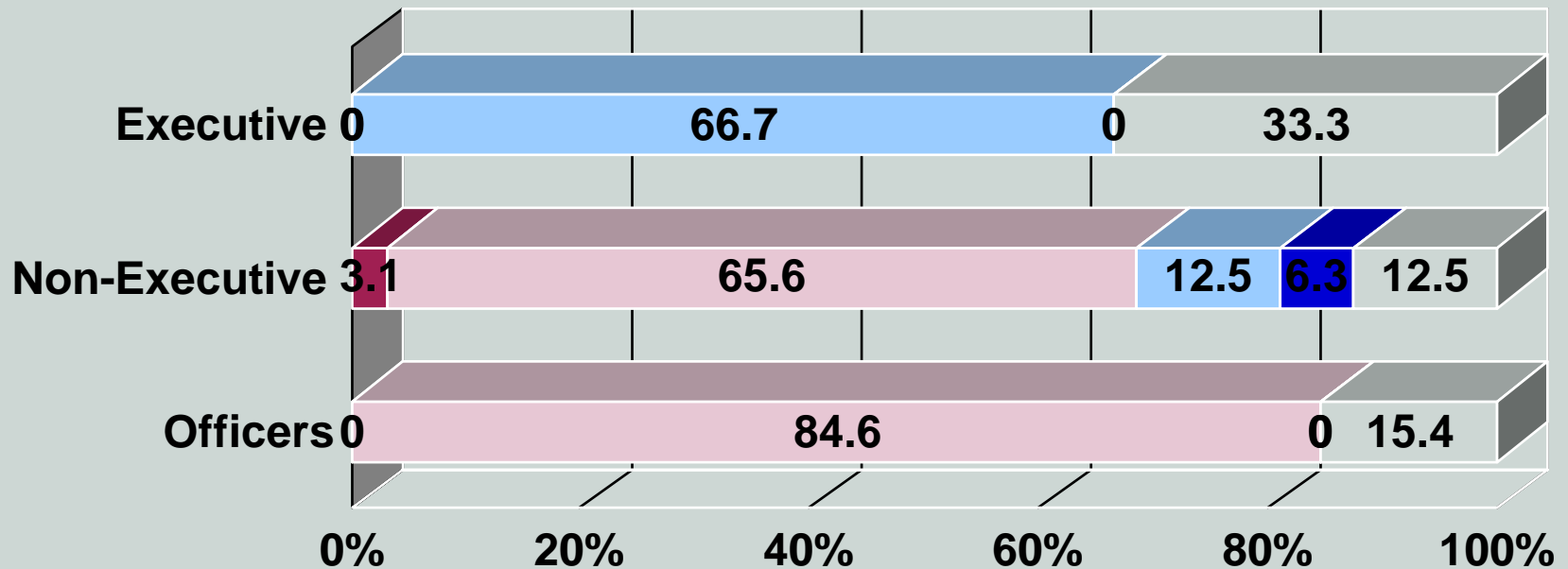
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

# Officers treat all Executive Members with respect



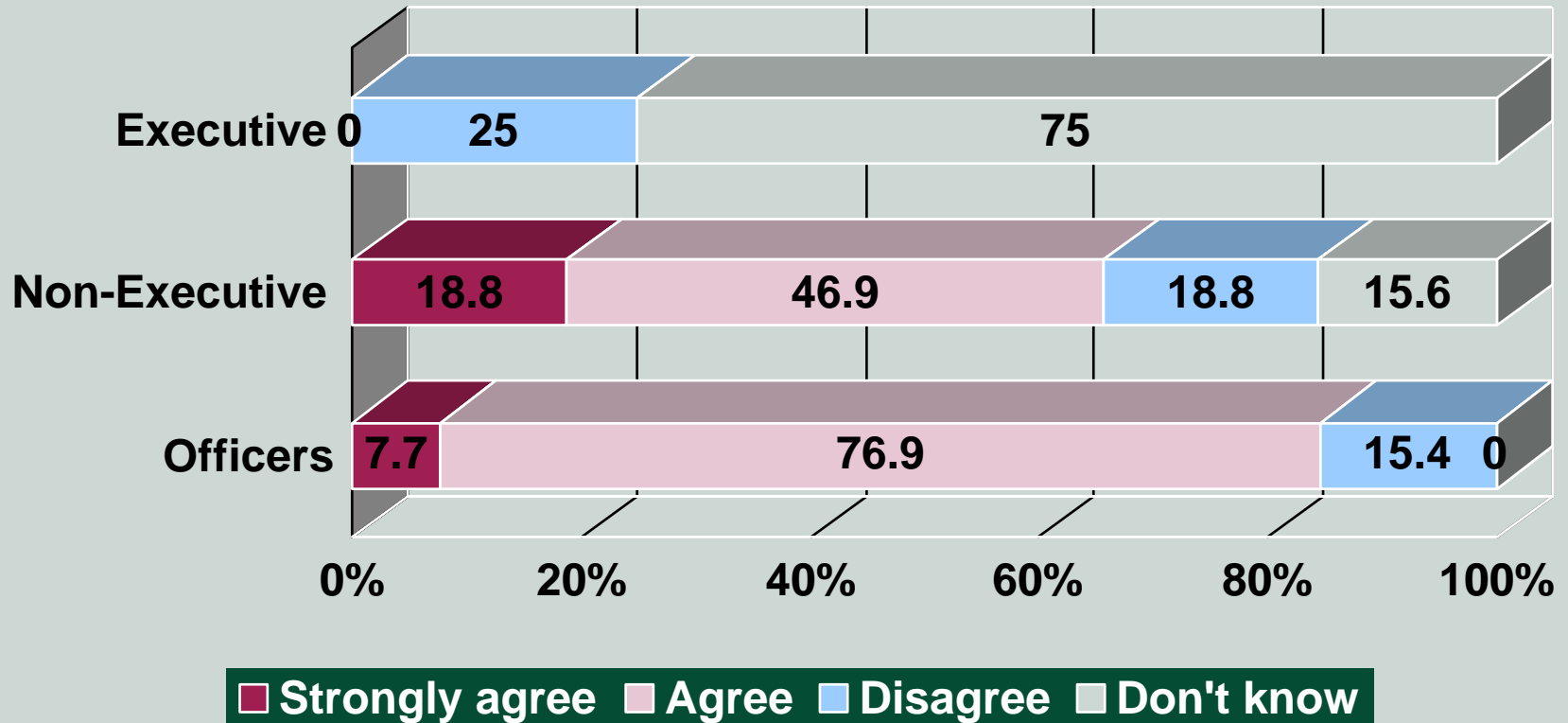
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

# Officers treat all Members with respect



Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

# Officers give preferential treatment to the Members they believe are influential



# How do others perceive us?

## (Conclusions)

- There are significant discrepancies between various groups' perceptions of how they treat each other
- SO why do we all feel we treat others with respect but are less likely to feel respected by others?

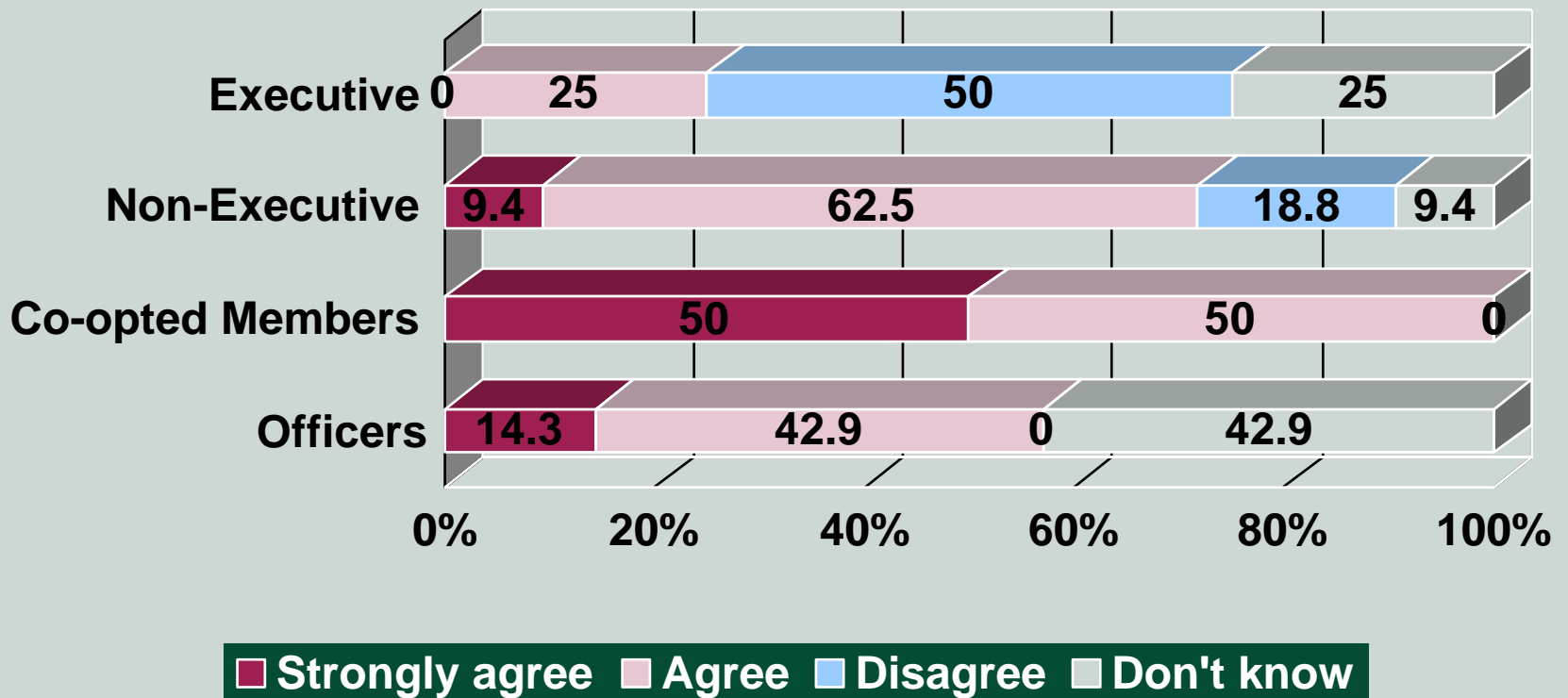
# Understanding the Ethical Standards Agenda

We wanted to find out if people were getting the help they needed to behave ethically.

# Advice and Guidance

- 81% agreed that there is clear advice and guidance on ethical standards issues available to Members.
- 76% agreed that Members know where to get advice on Code of Conduct issues.

# There are areas of the Code of Conduct that Members do not understand

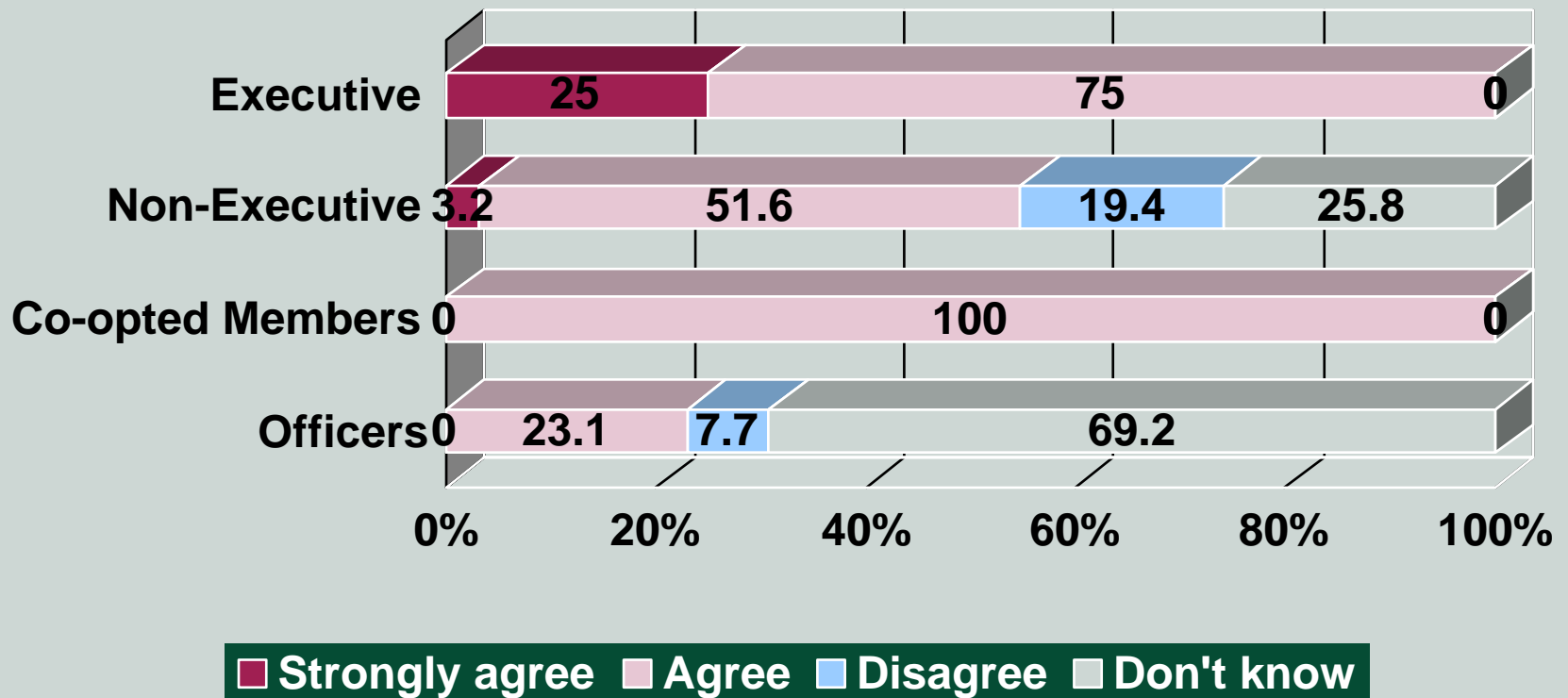




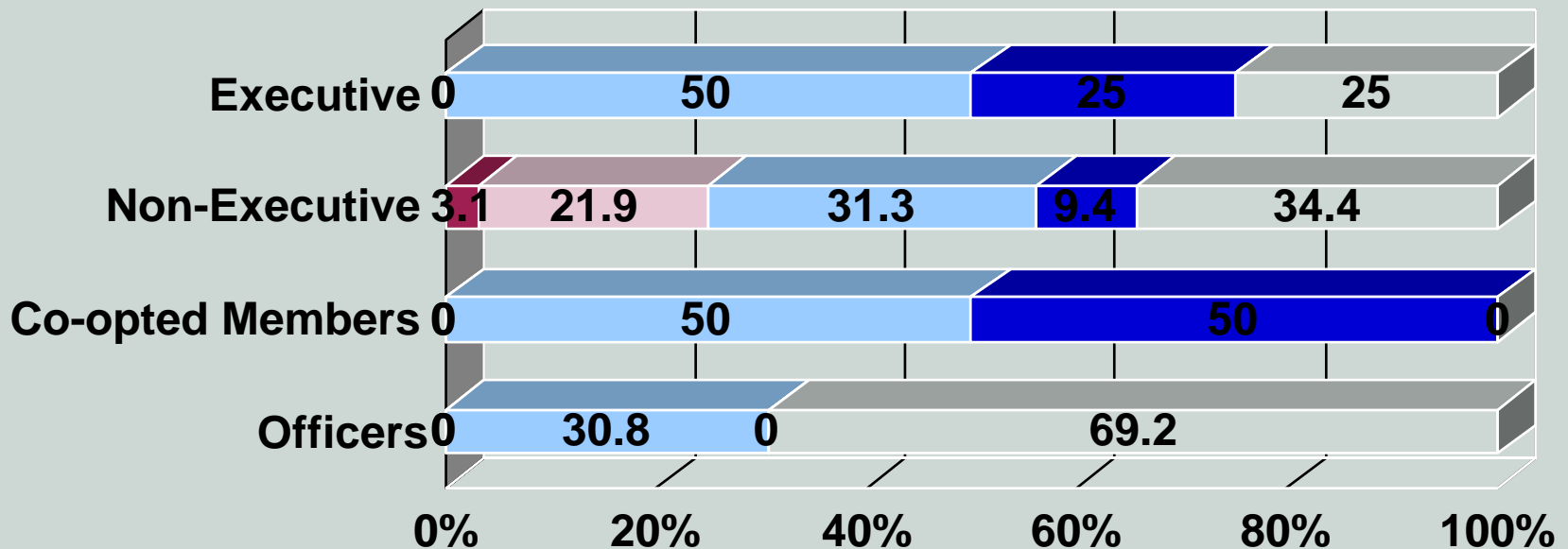
# Register of Interests

- The majority of respondents, particularly Members, agreed that Members understand the need for a Register of Interests (including Gifts and Hospitality)

# Members have differing views about what should be included in the Register of Interests



# Members regularly review their entries on the Register of Interests (including Gifts and Hospitality) to ensure they are kept up to date



**Strongly agree** **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree** **Don't know**

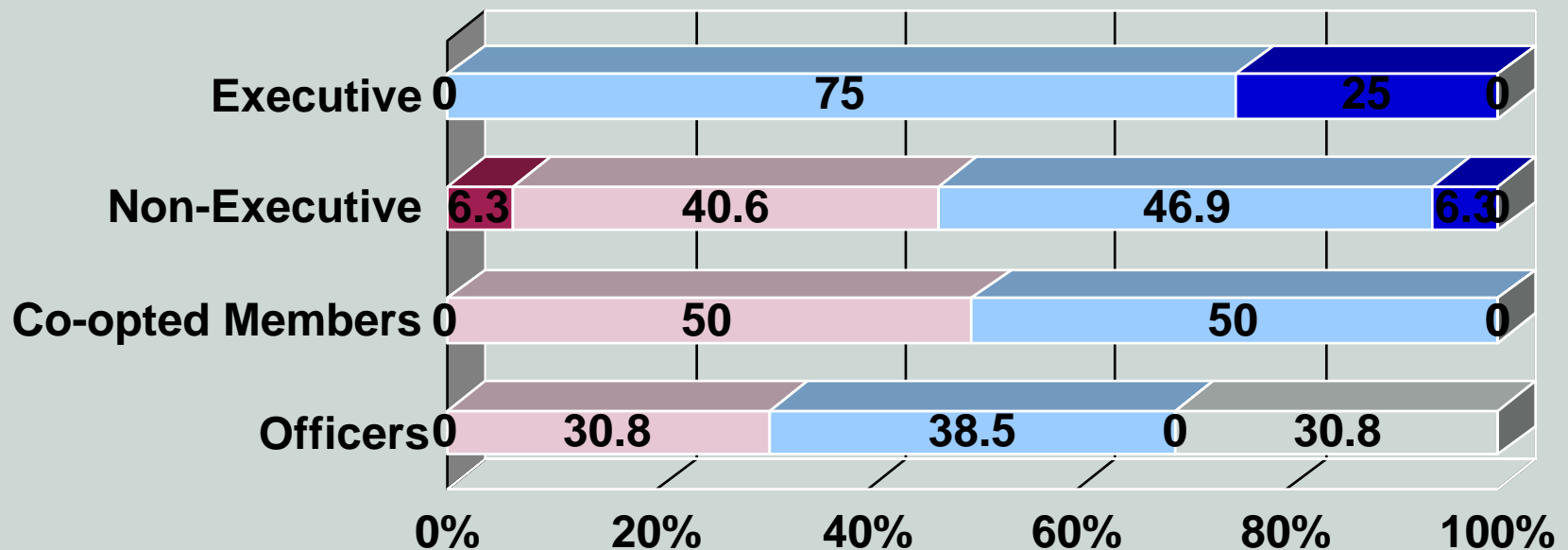
## Understanding the ethical standards agenda (Conclusions)

- Majority agree that clear guidance and advice is available but there are areas of the Code of Conduct that some Members do not understand
- It is believed that Members have differing views about what should be included in the Register of Interests and that they do not regularly review their entries in the Register
- SO what areas of the Code of Conduct do Members not understand and how can we improve knowledge and better signpost guidance?

# Can we act on poor conduct in others?

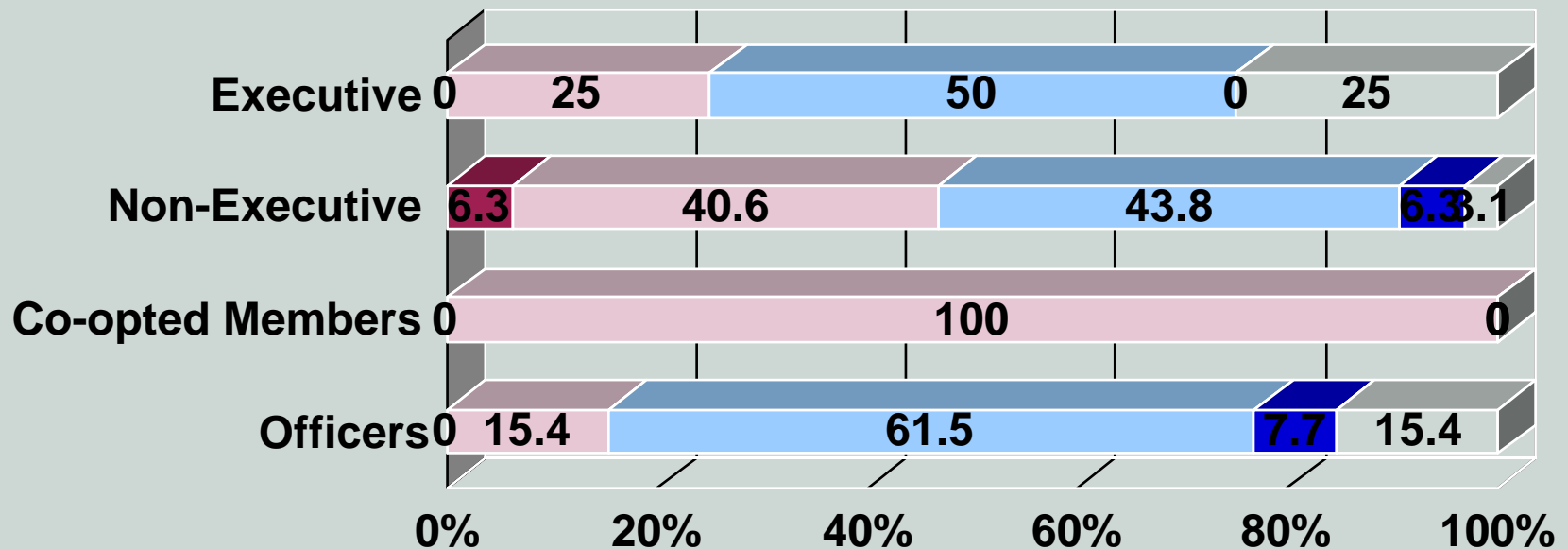
We wanted to know if there is sufficient information about how to raise concerns about poor conduct and whether the environment at SCC enables us to do so.

# Members know how to raise concerns about poor conduct of officers



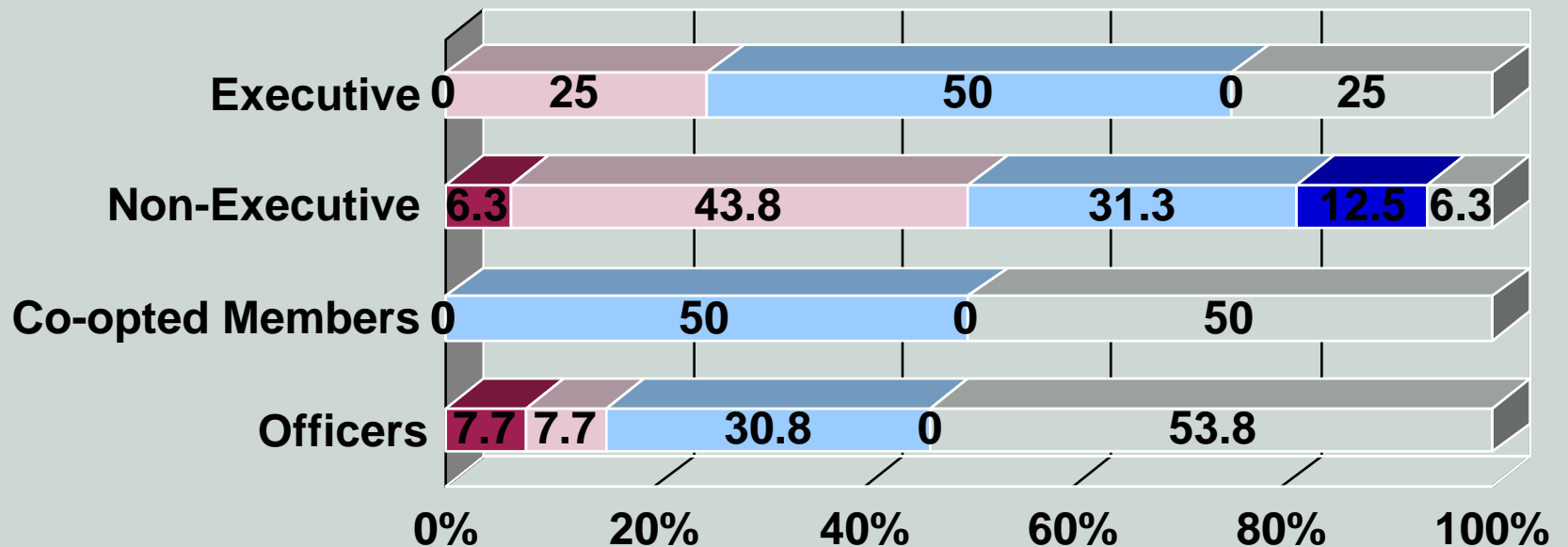
■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

# There is clear information available about how to complain about poor Member conduct



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

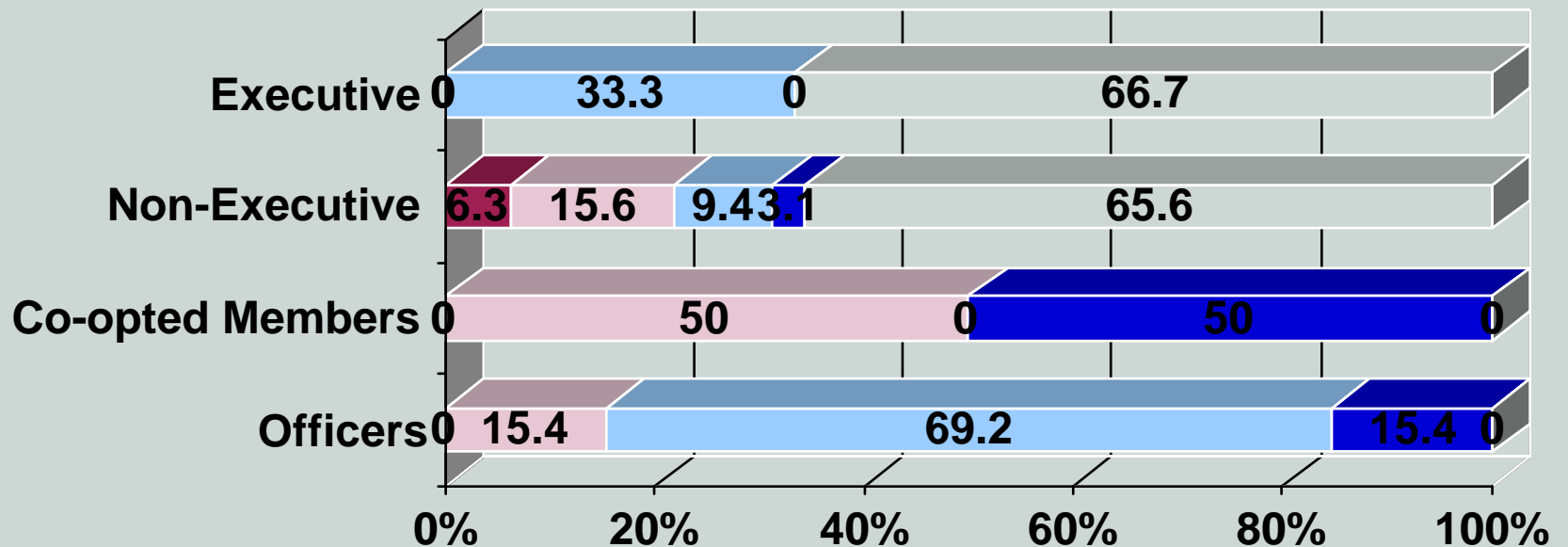
# Members feel free to raise concerns about the poor conduct of other Members



Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

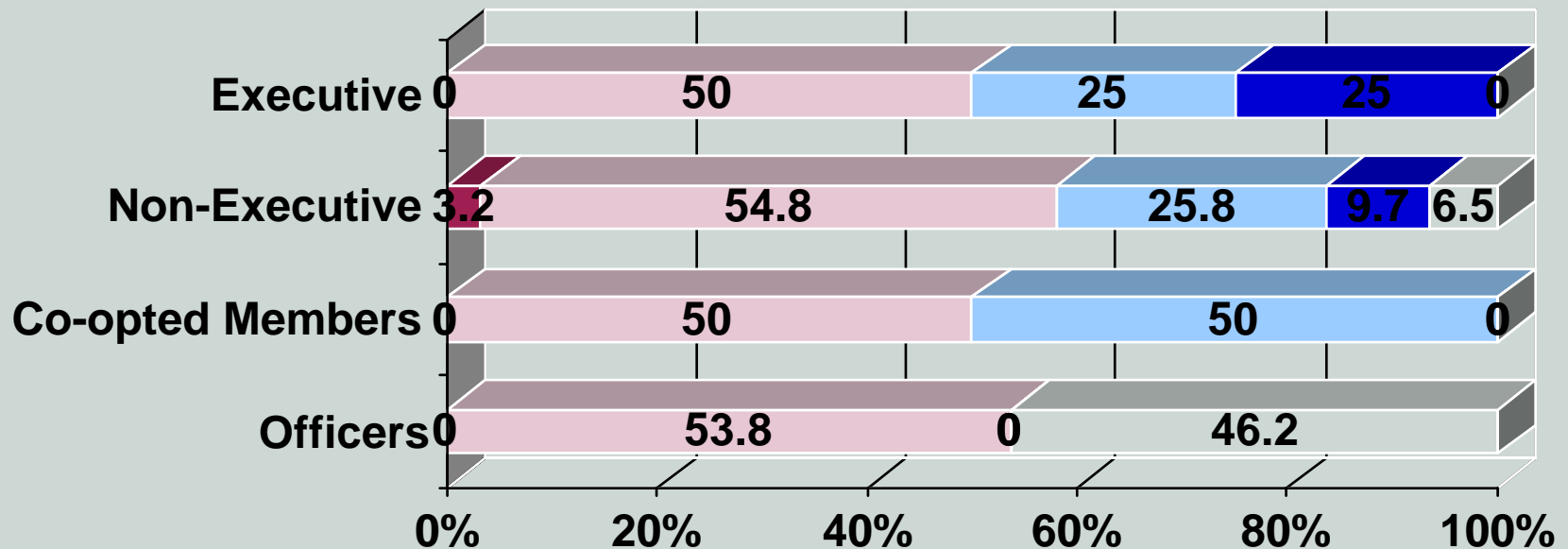


# Officers feel free to raise concerns about the poor conduct of Members



Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

# Members feel free to raise concerns about the poor conduct of officers



Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

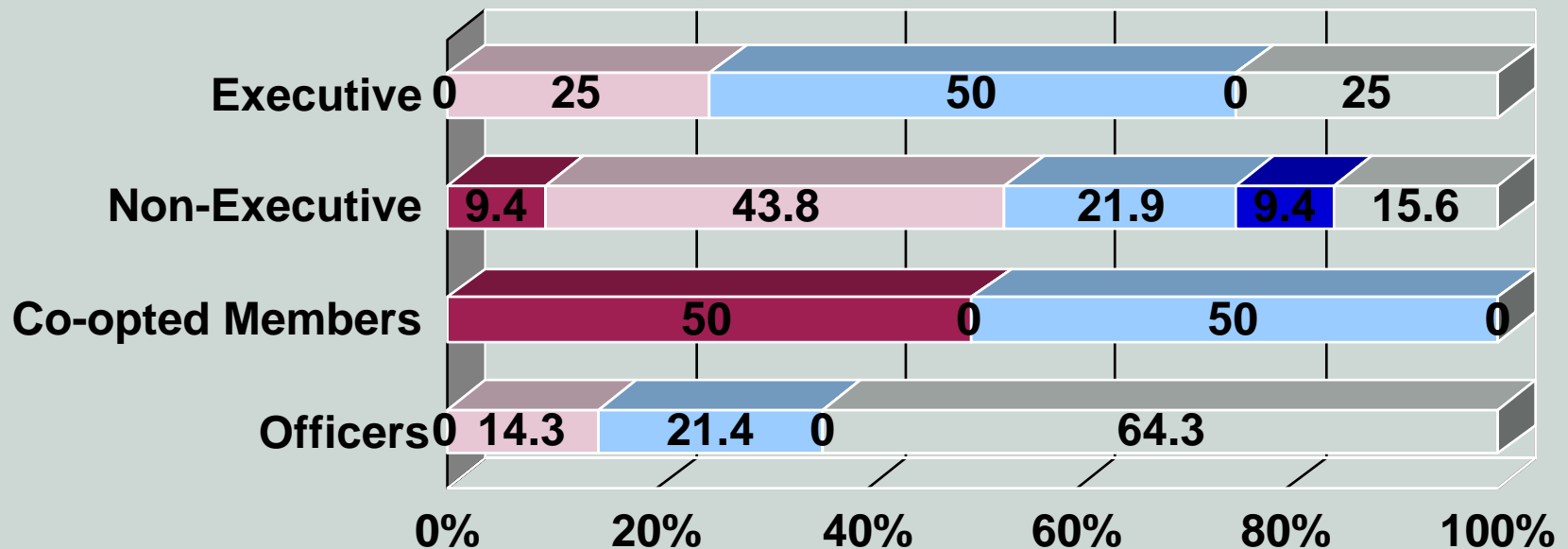
# Can we act on poor conduct in others? (Conclusions)

- Many respondents do not know how to raise concerns about poor Member and officer conduct
- Significant numbers do not feel free to raise concerns about poor conduct in others
- SO what can be done to ensure that everyone feels free to raise concerns about poor conduct?

# The role of Standards Committee

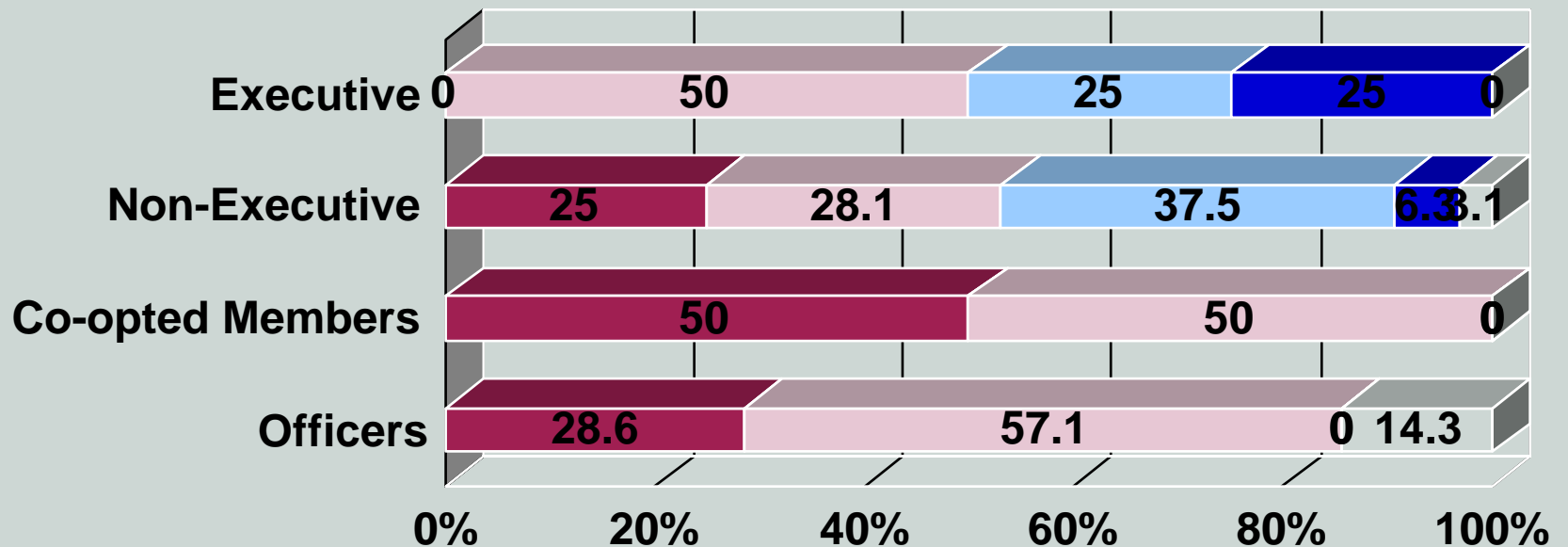
We wanted to know what people think about Standards Committee.

# Members know about the work of Standards Committee



Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree   Don't know

# Standards Committee should be seen to do more to raise standards of behaviour in the Council



Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

# The Role of Standards

## Committee (Conclusions)

- Standards Committee does not have a high profile with Members or officers
- BUT views on the importance of a high profile Standards Committee were mixed.
- SO what is the role of Standards Committee in putting ethical standards at the heart of Surrey's culture?

# Areas for Action

- Improving knowledge and signposting guidance
- The Standards Committee taking the lead
- Improving Officer/Member relationships