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Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust
Creating a better future together



**BUILDING
A BRIGHTER FUTURE
FOR LOCHALSH**

Lochalsh Community Survey Report 2022

Created by

The Lochalsh Collaboration
The Voice of Lochalsh

Led by Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust
supported by SCDC and SLCVO

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A photograph of a rugged mountain range. The foreground shows a steep, grassy slope with some rocky patches. In the middle ground, a dark, rocky mountain peak rises sharply, partially covered in green vegetation. The background is a clear, light blue sky. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

**"The level of agreed
responses between a
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all ages and all areas
that our community
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ties and challenges."



Part 1

About the Lochalsh Community Survey



Part 1

1 Background

The Lochalsh Collaboration was set up in May 2019 to consult the community on its priorities, write a community action plan based on those priorities and then work with partners to take action. Lochalsh Collaboration is made up of representatives of the seven community councils and community trusts in Lochalsh, led by Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust (KLCT). It is open for membership from representatives of any organisations in Lochalsh. It does not have a formal or legal structure but has been meeting regularly since its inception.



Meeting of the Lochalsh Collaboration, Feb 3rd, 2020

In 2020, KLCT secured funding from the Scottish Government's Investing in Communities Fund to appoint a community development officer to lead the

community consultation and action plan process. Susan Walker was recruited and is in post for 2 years and 3 months. The project is also being supported by Mick Doyle of the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) and by Jo-Ann Ford of Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations (SLCVO).

1.1 Impact of Covid

From April – September 2020, led by KLCT, Lochalsh Collaboration took an active role in coordinating the community Covid response. KLCT secured funding to set up a food voucher scheme, three blessing boxes, a phone helpline, a community newsletter, and a series of virtual events to enhance wellbeing. The food voucher scheme has now developed into a community fridge and food share scheme, also tackling waste. The community newsletter 'CommUnity News' has continued as an important tool for keeping the community connected and informed about the project.

While coordinating the community response was a vital response to a global pandemic, the time spent on this delayed the start of the project. In addition, due to restrictions on meeting and gathering, Covid has also had a considerable impact on the delivery of the project. Innovative, virtual methods have had to be devised to replicate the roadshows and village meetings that had been planned, resulting in a further disruption to the project timetable.

2 Consultation methods

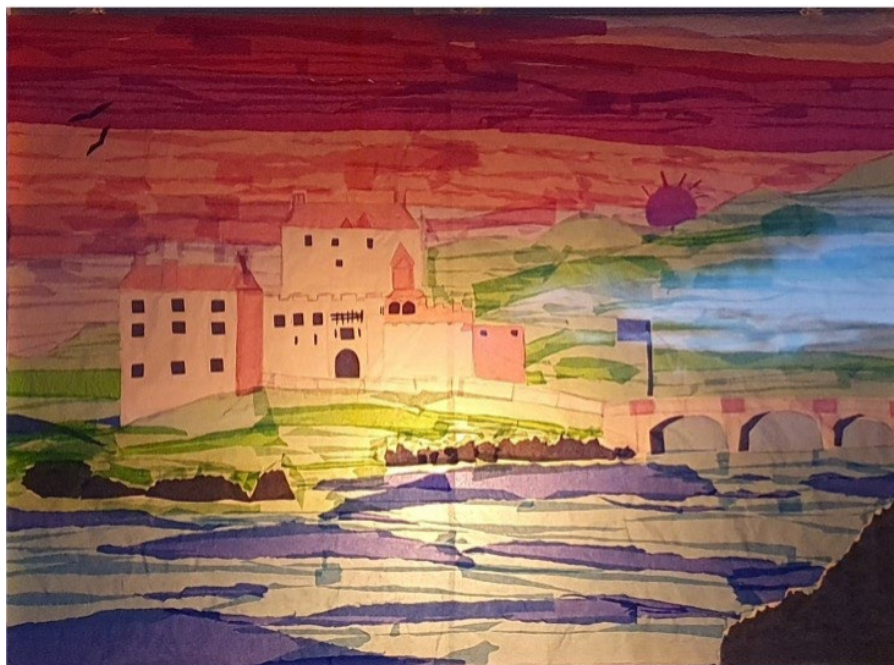
The community consultation has been developed using a combination of methods. These can be broken down into two pieces of work: awareness-raising and group discussions, and direct individual consultation.

2.1 Awareness raising, group discussions + art interventions

Various methods have been used to raise awareness about the community consultation and the main topics:

- Regular meeting of the Lochalsh Collaboration, members of which disseminate information out to their organisations
- Articles in CommUnity News and features in the West Highland Free Press
- Local area profiles – volunteers in each of the seven community council areas collated figures relating to population, housing, employment and local community groups or issues of interest to the community. These were published in CommUnity News over several issues
- Virtual roadshows in each community council area were planned. Five took place between January and June 2021, the last two have been postponed due to the onset of summer and easing of lockdown restrictions making it hard to recruit attendees
- Window Wanderland festival focussing on the main topics from the community survey. This took place on 26-28th February 2021. 100

people registered their window designs and there were a number of additional window designs which were not registered. The event was very well received and every main topic in the community survey was featured in the range of different designs.



Window design- Eilean Donan Castle by Tilly, Dornie

- An art project involving young people, led by local artist Malcolm MacKenzie, took place in Plockton High School during late May and June 2021. The young people decided the issues that mattered to them and what they thought would improve Lochalsh, and produced a 'zine
- Promotional campaign to launch the community survey – this included posters, roadside A-frames, roadside banners, press articles, flyers and adverts

2.2 Direct consultation with individuals

A number of consultation methods were used to ask people what their priorities are to improve Lochalsh:

- A 34-question survey on a range of topics was developed by a sub-group of Lochalsh Collaboration. This was printed and hand delivered to every resident household in Lochalsh, along with a Freepost envelope and information about the project. A link to a digital version of this survey, in English and Gaelic, was also promoted in print, social media and through email contacts and people were encouraged to fill the survey online if possible. A short film with local people explaining about the project formed the introduction to the online survey. 593 responses were received, four of those in Gaelic. All paper responses

were then converted into a digital format for analysis purposes

- A dedicated short survey for young people was launched by SLCVO and promoted on social media, through email contacts and in CommUnity News. 41 young people (under 30) took part in the survey.

3 Methodology for analysis of results

3.1 Quantitative analysis methodology

The project secured the services of a Scottish Government statistician through the Analytical Exchange Programme, which gave a maximum of five days of free analysis. Alistair Inglis was appointed to the project, who, during the five days, was able to produce quantitative analysis of the results from all the questions at a Lochalsh-wide level, and also complete analysis of three out of seven local community council areas' quantitative results.

At the community council level, age and gender were not reported on, to prevent the possibility of identification of respondents. Analysis compared responses by age at a Lochalsh-wide level so that any differential in responses between age groups could be highlighted.

Finding a statistician to analyse the final four community council area results proved much harder than expected. We are very grateful to KLCT trustee David O'Donnell who took on the task of completing this analysis work.

3.2 Qualitative analysis methodology

The analysis of the 3,941 comments made in the free text boxes was undertaken by the Community Development Officer, Susan Walker, who categorised and collated comments under the relevant themes and topics to create a clear picture of people's priorities, concerns and suggestions for improvement.

Comments were analysed at a Lochalsh-wide level to avoid the potential of respondents' personal situations being identified if analysed at a community council level.

4 How will this report be used?

4.1 For writing a Lochalsh Community Action Plan

The key use of the findings will be to help the community to write a Community Action Plan for Lochalsh. The data contained in this report, which shows what the community thinks about a wide range of important topics, will help the community members who write the Plan to prioritise the actions that need to be taken to make Lochalsh a better place to live, work and socialise in.

4.2 For Lochalsh organisations

The report will be sent to community councils as well as partner organisations and other community trusts working in Lochalsh. The information in it will help them to target their actions and will give them invaluable evidence of community need for funding applications or bids for service level agreements or contracts.

4.3 For national and regional public agencies and organisations

The report will also be sent to the Scottish Government, public agencies such as Highland Council, NHS Highland, HIE and regional and national organisations and charities working in the area, or with a remit to work in the area, on any of the topics covered in the survey report.



The People

Expressing our views on the issues that matter

Through many voices of local people

And community organisations who know our towns and villages



The Plan

A careful assessment of local needs

Based on evidence from statistical data and local dialogue

Organised in a systematic plan for local action



The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

The Policy

How government & services should:

- Support independent community action
- Work with us to agree what should be changed
- And in partnership to make this change happen



In Practice

Our plan should:

- Be central to Locality Planning in Lochalsh
- Make services work with us to realise our ambitions for Lochalsh
- Improve the lives of local people

An ongoing dialogue with our communities, services and community planning partners
Leading to local funding bids for projects and services
With joint work with communities and staff to make public services better
Where success is determined by communities themselves

How our plan will influence change

5 Summary of principal findings

Access the summary report with a condensed presentation of the principal findings in this full survey report.

6 Comments on the community survey

Most respondents who commented on the survey itself said how important it was and expressed hope that the process would lead to improvements to community life in Lochalsh. Several respondents praised KLCT for leading the process. Some respondents commented on how seldom they had been asked for an opinion.

A small number questioned whether there was a need for the survey and the cost of it. A small number of comments focussed on whether the process would lead to any meaningful change, or whether it would just result in a report with no results:

“...One is inevitably suspicious that keeping people engaged with surveys is a way of giving the impression that something is going to happen when in fact the same financial constraints will apply as every other time there is an 'initiative'. There appears to be a proliferation of organisations aiming to address local 'issues' but...actually achieving anything is more difficult. I wish you luck in your endeavours.”

7 Quality of comments

The amount of time and thought that respondents put into the completion of the survey, along with detailed comments should be noted, as should the quality of the comments. Many comments were thoughtful, well-articulated and displayed a deep understanding of and care for the local community and landscape.

The other surprising element was the unanimity of opinion on the most important issues. On the big topics such as housing, young people, care for more vulnerable people within the community, transport, the landscape and environment, very clear majority opinions were expressed. This will make writing the Community Action Plan much easier than if there were a lot of disparate or conflicting opinion.

8 Difference in responses based on age

It should be noted that the responses of the under 30 age group were strikingly different to other age groups on a number of key issues. This difference of opinion is highlighted within the analysis of each question. No other age group showed a consistently different or more heightened response to questions. It appears that young people's experiences on some key issues are markedly different in comparison to the rest of the population.



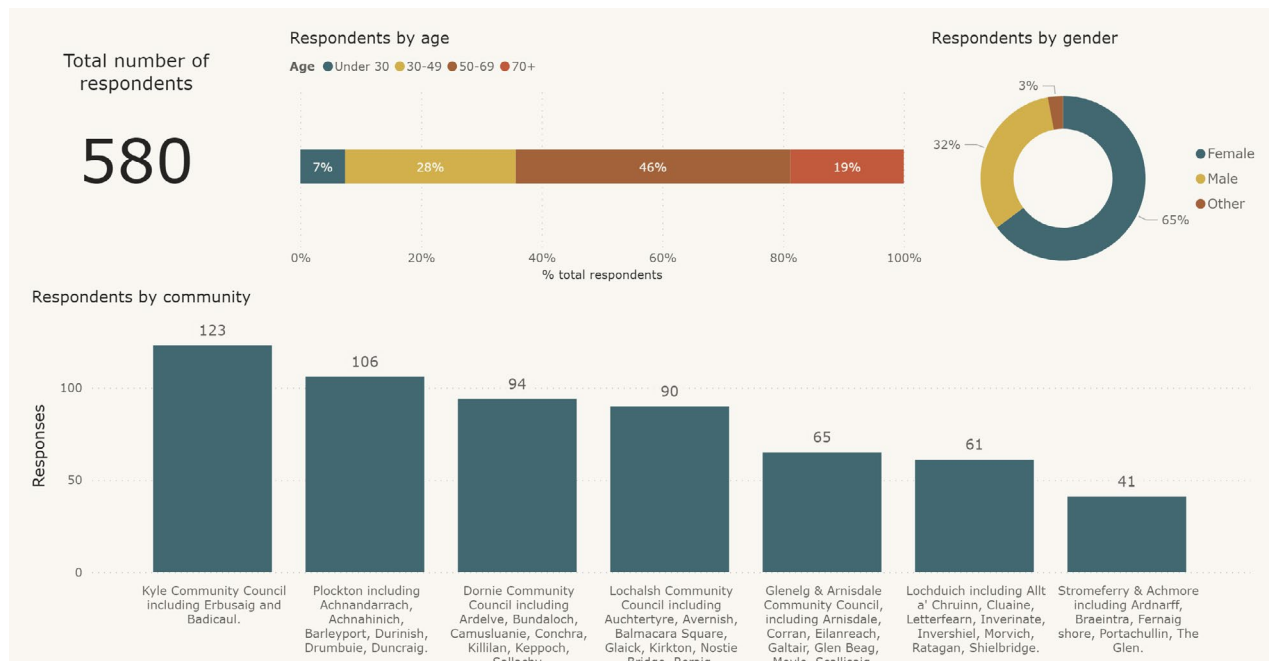
Part 2

Results of the Lochalsh Community Survey



Part 2

1 Qs 1, 2, 3 combined: Age, Community, Gender



Sections 1, 2, 3 combined - Age, community and gender of respondents

This chart shows the breakdown of responses from each community council area. The results are notable for two reasons: 65% of respondents were female, and under 30s only made up 7.42% of responses.

For reference, the populations for each community council area, as worked out by the local area profiles are: Kyle - 750; Plockton & District - approximately 400; Dornie - 367; Lochalsh CC area - 337; Loch Duich - 317; Glenelg & Arnisdale - 249; Stromeferry & Achmore - 144.

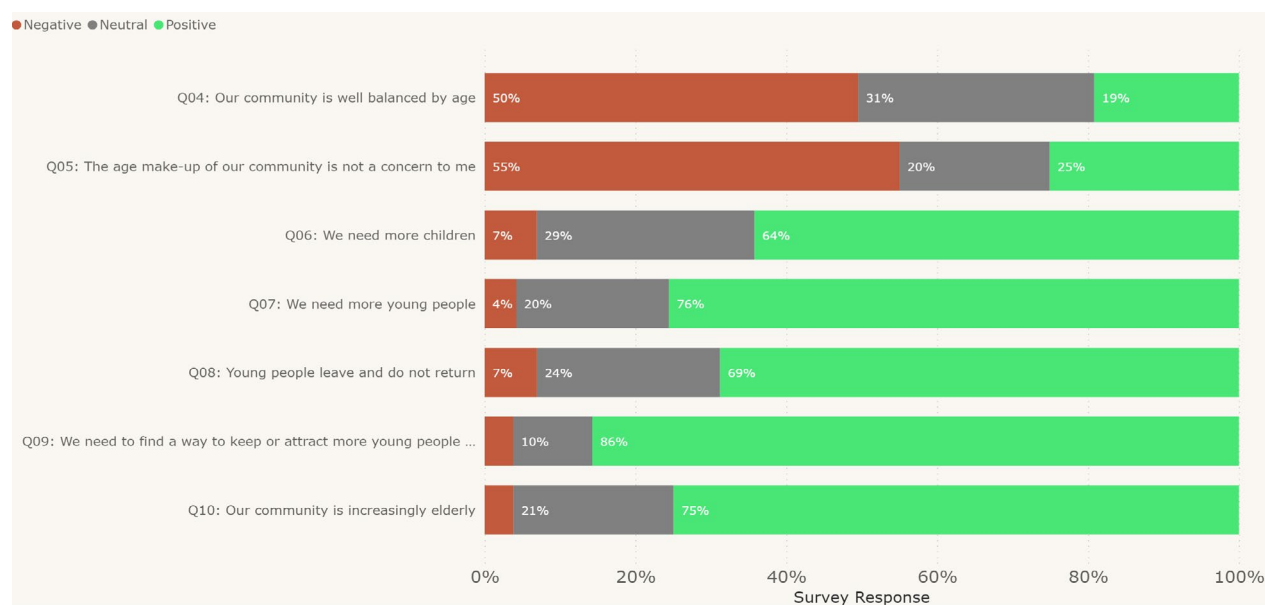
The local area profiles for Glenelg, Dornie, Loch Duich and Stromeferry &

Achmore, which analysed their population by decile, show the 20–29 age group make-up is 9%, 7%, 7% and 5% respectively of those area populations (the other areas did not analyse by decile). If this is representative of the population make-up of the whole of Lochalsh, the community survey response rate for under 30s appears to approximately reflect the proportion of young people – however it is possible that the population of Kyle, for example, is younger – this will be clarified at the next national census.

However, in order to make sure that the voice of young people – and the next generation – is heard, an extra effort was made to run an extra short survey for under-30s. 40 young people took part in this dedicated survey.

2 Qs 4 + 5 Balance of ages + support during Covid

On the question about the balance of ages in the community, a clear majority agreed with the comments that Lochalsh needs more children and young people and that the community is increasingly elderly. The highest level of agreement was with the statement that, “We need to find a way to keep or attract more young people”, which was agreed with by 86% of respondents.

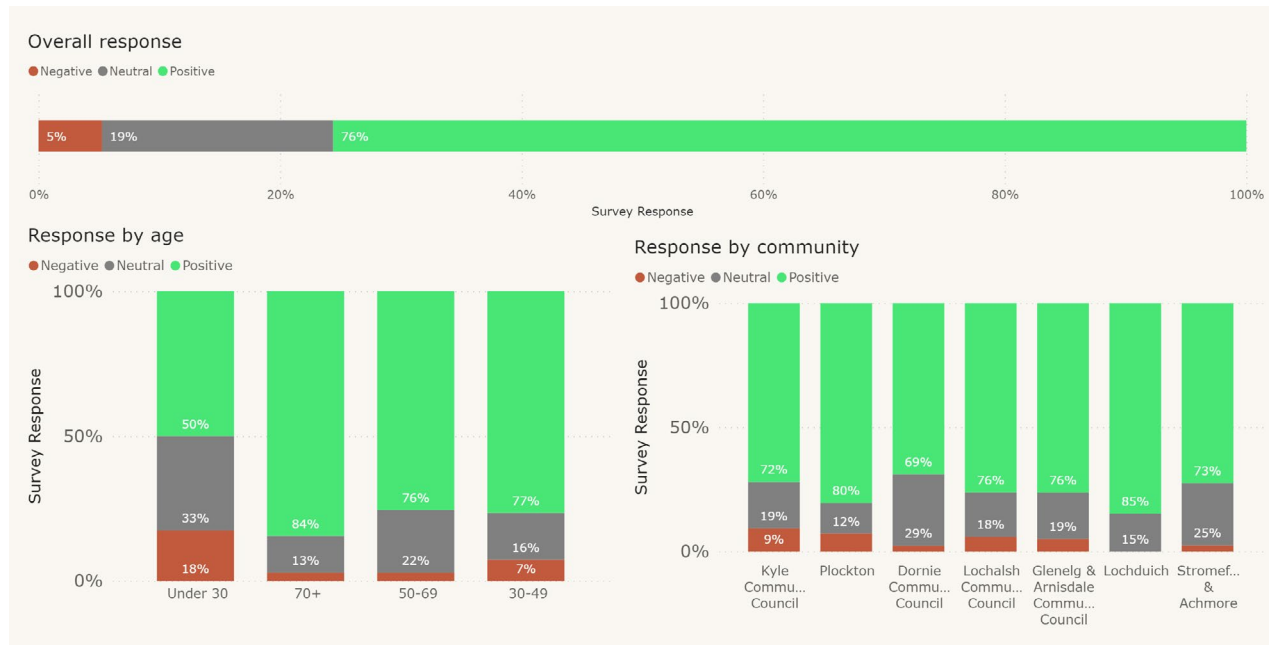


What do you feel about the balance of ages in your community?

On the question of support received during Covid, there was a very high level of satisfaction at 76%. However, it is important to note that under 30s had a different experience—only 50% were positive about the support they had received and 18% were negative. More work would need to be done to understand the different perspective of young people – whether it relates to employment, social life, or another reason.

What is clear is that while most of the public agency and volunteer support during Covid understandably focused on the needs of the elderly, those self-isolating or with disabilities, the needs of the whole demographic should be

considered when thinking about impact on wellbeing, mental health, and support.



How supported have you felt, or do you feel during Covid?

2.1 Analysis of comments related to 'Balance of Ages'

There were 78 comments in total related to Q 4, 5 and 6. Concern about the balance of ages in communities and whether the needs of different age groups were being met was expressed in different ways in comments throughout the survey. Almost all the comments related to two specific groups within the community: young people and elderly people.

"We need some sort of industry and housing for a few young locals to be able to return from the cities to live and work in their homeland. In fact, anyone with children would be welcome because some communities are becoming middle aged/elderly."

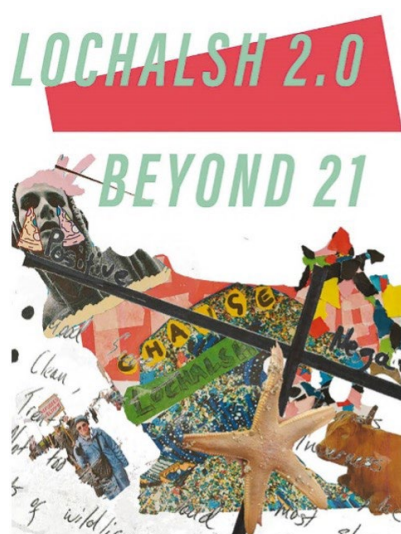
The comments focused on the lack of facilities, activities, support, as well as care, housing and employment available for both young and elderly people. Some comments acknowledged the social impact this is having on the community, resulting in it losing both young people, but also elderly people in the latter years of their life when they have to move to another area for care due to the lack of care locally.

The number of comments suggests that people in every age group are concerned about young people and want more to be done to support them to make lives for themselves in Lochalsh. There were also a range of comments from all age groups indicating concern about the lack of facilities, support and day care or care homes for the elderly.

“There is also a need for a residential unit to provide appropriate care for the elderly to prevent people from having to leave the area in their final years.”

“If we are to have a future we need young folk, and if we don't address this there is little point in having conversations about what needs improved.”

These comments suggest a community that is aware of the needs of different age groups and concerned that those with the most pressing needs should be properly supported to live here if they wish to. There is also recognition that ensuring people of all age groups are properly supported in this way, should be seen as at the core of how to improve community life in Lochalsh.



Lochalsh 2.0 Beyond 21



Plockton High School pupils discussing how life could be improved in Lochalsh and the Zine they produced

2.2 Analysis of comments related to ‘Support during Covid’

“Seeing everyone come together throughout the last year has been amazing.”

Comments highlighted the support people had received during Covid from friends, neighbours and schemes providing meals, food and prescription pick-ups for the elderly or self-isolating and the Blessing Boxes that were set up by groups of volunteers in communities in Lochalsh. Some comments praised specific groups who had provided support, such as Community Councils, KLCT's newsletter and the Community Fridge and support organised by churches. Some recognised that the way the community had pulled together had helped to strengthen community bonds and made them feel more hopeful about the future as a result:

“The communities of Lochalsh have all pulled together and done a fantastic job of looking out for each other and the vulnerable members of the communities throughout the pandemic. Hopefully this will continue and grow to bring about changes to improve the area.”

However, some comments acknowledged that people and needs had not been supported or had insufficient support during Covid. The comments particularly focused on activities for children, support for expectant mothers who had lost ante-natal classes, and for new parents, the needs of young people and on the need for support to reduce loneliness during the pandemic:

“Covid has had a huge impact on provisions for young children. My kids are 2 and 4 and there's almost nothing for them, even pre-Covid, there was very little apart from play groups.”

“Covid has been a very lonely life. Finding it hard going as I live on my own.”

“COVID has had a significant negative impact on learning, socialisation and engagement in activities.” [For children]

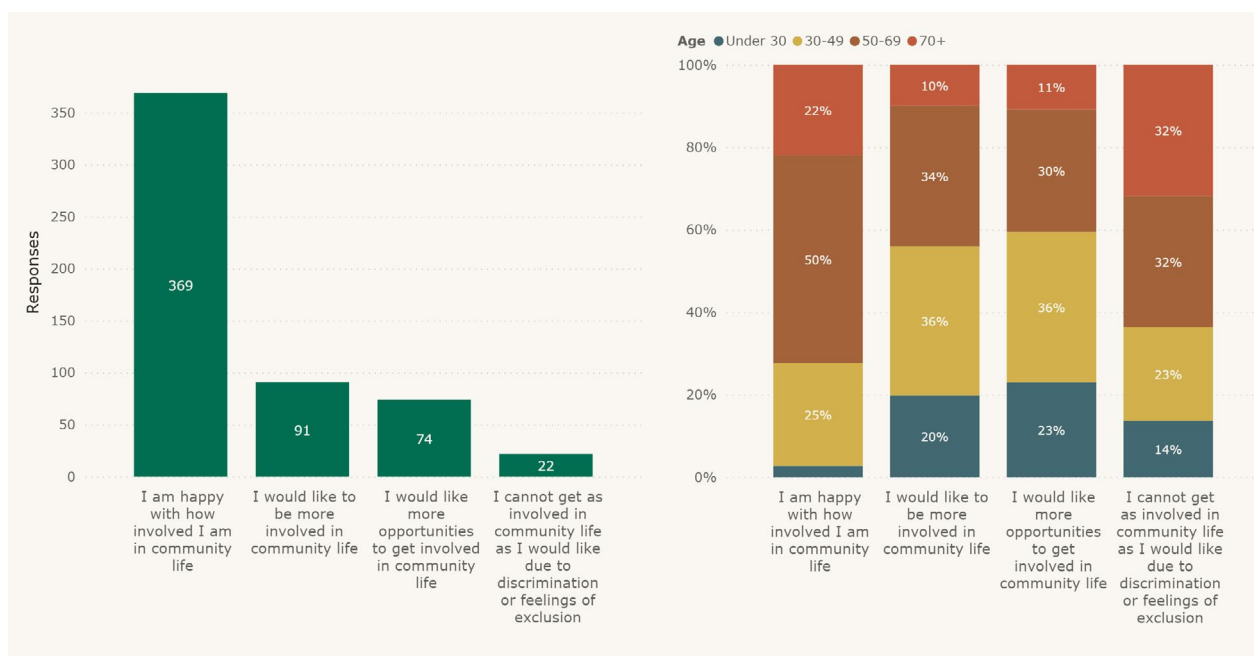
“However, I do feel the Covid experience has affected lots of other people and especially my own children, the quicker restrictions stop the better for young people. They should be out there enjoying themselves and socialising.”

“I've felt supported by my community and neighbours during Covid 19 but have felt very isolated as a new mother as there are no playgroups get together or any new parents in my area. Unfortunately my family lives in so my husband and I have struggled with lockdown.”

One particularly powerful comment articulated the fact that lockdown had exacerbated the existing problems they had with accessing housing and a sense of isolation and loneliness as a young person/couple trying to make their life in Lochalsh:

“I used to like living in this area but having now been here for two and a half years, I find it quite lonely and isolating, although lockdown has of course made this more of an issue. Especially being a young couple unable to have our own home (to buy or rent) is extremely difficult and has a huge impact on my mental health.”

3 Q6 Involvement in community life



Do you feel as involved in community life as you would like to be?

While 66% of respondents were happy with how involved they are in community life, a total of 33% would like to be more involved or feel they cannot get more involved. 17% of these would like to be more involved, 13% would like more opportunities to get involved. 4% feel they cannot get more involved due to discrimination or feelings of exclusion. It should be noted that, of the 22 people who felt this way, 64% were in the age 50-69 or 70+ age groups.

3.1 Comments related to involvement in community life

There were only 45 comments relating to involvement in community life, fewer than other topics, which reflects the statistics shown in the chart above. The majority of respondents explained that they were either already involved in community life, or had been in the past, but were now unable to be involved due to work, ill health or old age. Some expressed frustration that it is always the same people who volunteer, often for multiple organisations or projects in their communities and that it felt unfair that more people do not get involved in helping to improve their community.

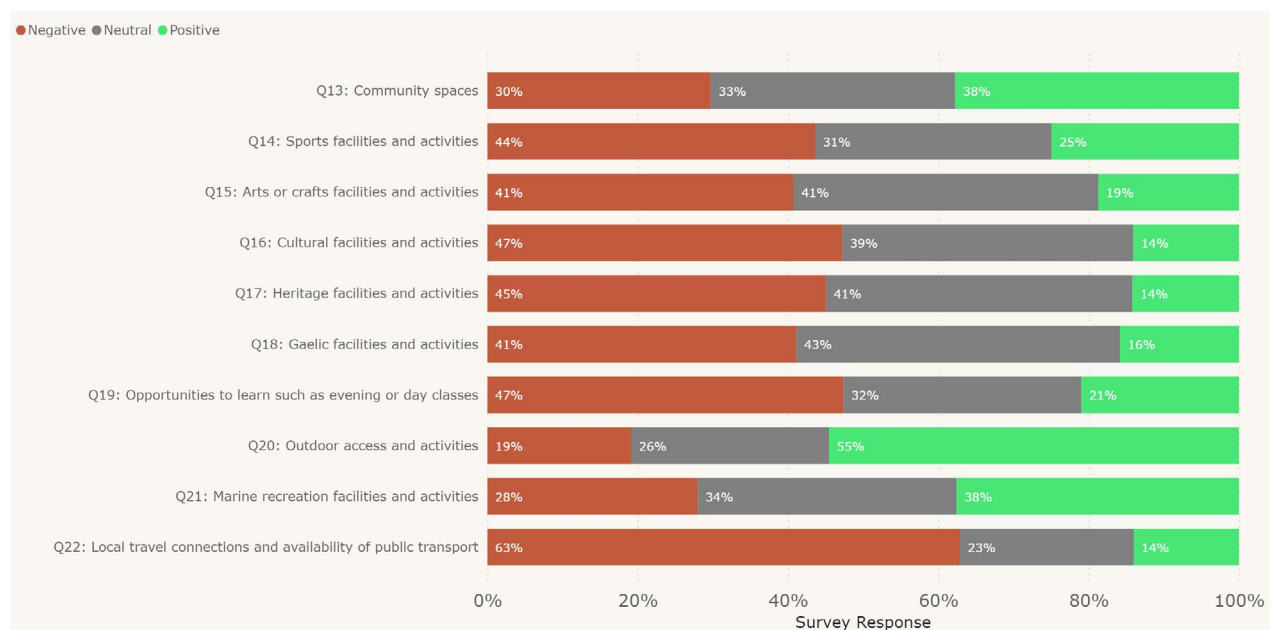
Conversely, a small number said it felt as if there was a 'clique' of volunteers so that others could not get involved. A very small number of people said that they did not get involved because they did not feel welcomed in their community or felt excluded or discriminated against.

A small number said that they had only very recently moved to the area so found it hard to get involved in the community. Some had practical suggestions, such as a welcome pack for new residents, while others welcomed the newsletter as a way of finding out more and feeling involved in the community.

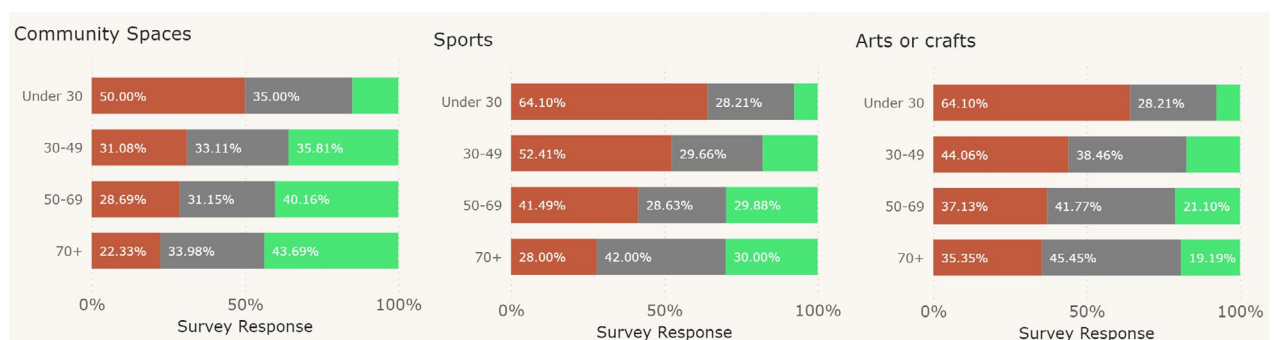
“The community workshops and newsletters have been great as I didn't really know how to get involved in community-related things before then.”

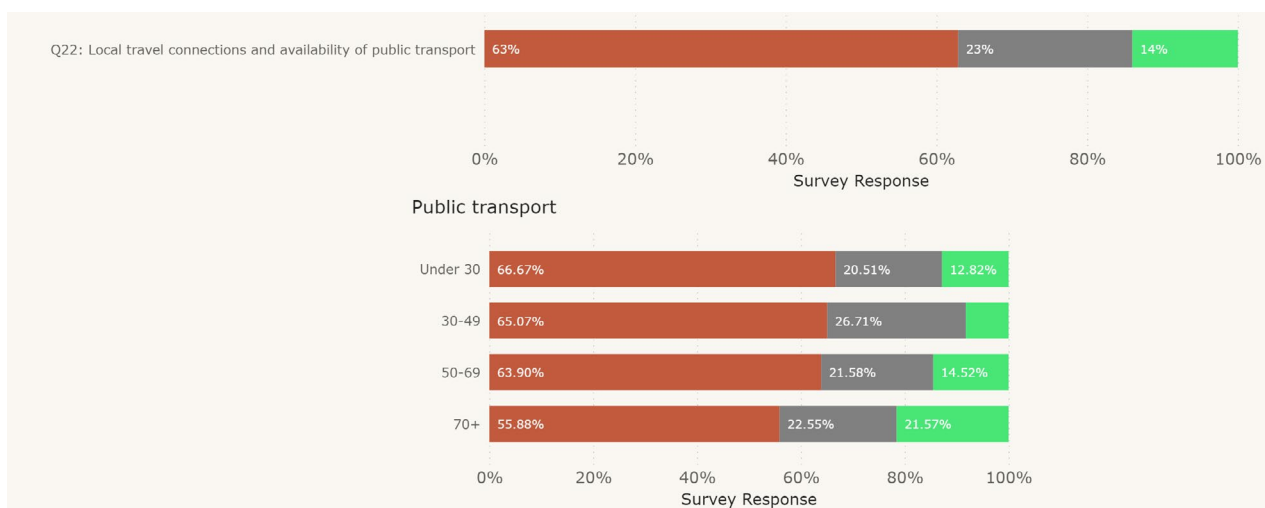
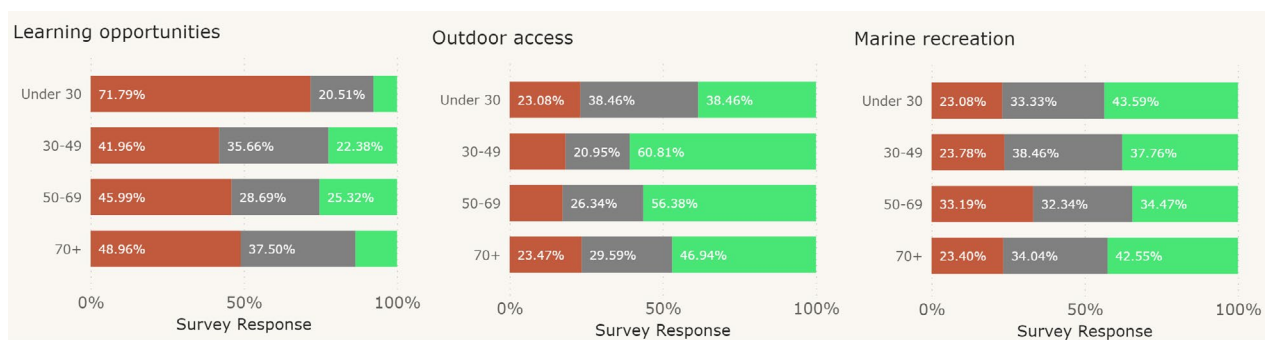
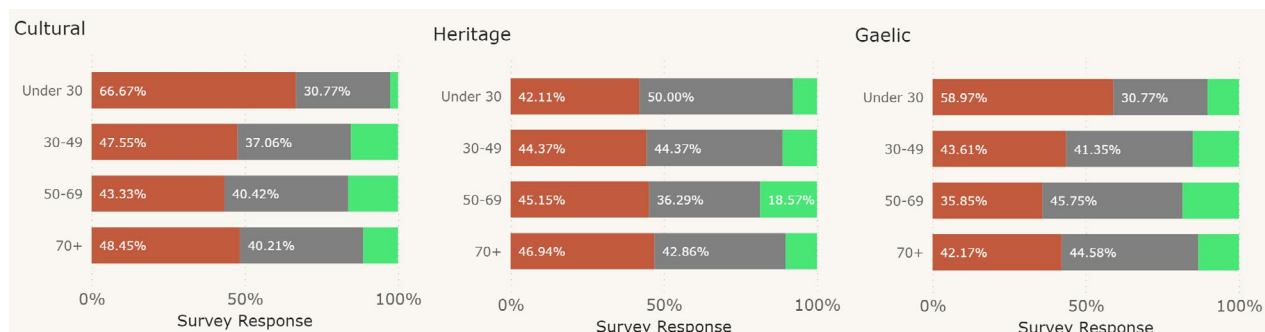
4 Q7 Social and leisure facilities + activities

Analysis of the responses to this question gives interesting results on what the community thinks about social and leisure facilities and activities. People are most happy with outdoor access and activities, with 55% giving it a positive rating, which was the only topic to get an overall positive rating. The next most positive rating was Community Spaces, with 36% positive and 30% negative. Marine facilities also recorded 38% positive to 28% negative. People are least happy with local travel connections and public transport, with 63% giving it a negative rating. All other topics had a larger negative rating than positive with Cultural, Sports, Arts and Crafts, Heritage and Gaelic facilities and activities and Opportunities to learn recording the highest dissatisfaction after public transport.



What do you think about the social and leisure facilities and activities in your area?





What do you think about the social and leisure facilities and activities in your area? (part 4)

It is interesting to note that not all age groups feel the same about these questions. Under 30s recorded significantly higher levels of dissatisfaction than other age groups, with the following facilities and activities: Community spaces, Sports, Arts and Crafts, Cultural, Gaelic and Learning Opportunities. Of all the topics in this question, young people's negative rating on Learning Opportunities was considerably higher than other age groups, at 71%, with the next most negative response being over 70s at 49%. Negative rating for sports facilities and activities decreased by age, from 64% of under 30s giving this topic a negative rating, to 28% of over 70s.

On the other topics, all ages have a similar response apart from marine recreation, where 50–69-year-olds were somewhat more negative and less positive than other age groups. There was also a slightly different response amongst the 70+ age group to the question about public transport where 56% of that age group gave it a negative rating, while the under 30s had the most negative responses of any age group about public transport, at 67%.



Some examples of existing community or council subsidised transport solutions in Lochalsh: Kyle Community E-bikes (above left); The community-owned Skye Ferry (left) and two council-subsidised bus schemes connecting Arnisdale and Glenelg to Kyle – the MacRae service (above right) and the on demand 5 day a week BUG (Bus Users Group) bus, both of which must be pre-booked 24 hours in advance.

4.1 Comments related to social and leisure facilities + activities

There were 154 comments in the text box at the end of this question, and many more comments from other questions throughout the survey related to the need to improve social and leisure facilities and activities. It is important to note that the largest number of comments in this question (41) related to the lack of public transport, particularly at night, making it hard to access social and leisure facilities and events for those without cars, including young people, children and the elderly.

“Need to have radically different public transport to allow for the free flowing of humans about the area to coordinate and collaborate in activities that meet their needs. Everything is stymied by needing to ask for a lift or wait to drive and buy/borrow a car or wait for really poor public transport.”

The next most frequent comment (29) related to sports facilities and activities. Many of the comments wanted improved sport facilities throughout Lochalsh, or an improvement or extension of existing facilities provision, in particular: the swimming pool and gym in Kyle, which some people felt was too small; the need for a club house at the shinty pitch in Reraig, the need for an all-weather pitch and lighting at the sports pitches in Kyle and the difficulty or cost that

community groups experience in accessing the sports pitch in Plockton:

“A much bigger community centre with gym, classes, cafe, decent sized swimming pool. Activities for children, places to go on a rainy day for children of all ages. Play parks updated.”

Some comments advocated a completely new sports centre in Lochalsh offering a wide range of sporting activities. Some comments noted the difficulty and expense of having to hire school halls or village halls for sports classes and activities because of the lack of dedicated sport facilities. A number of people wanted to see a climbing wall in the area:

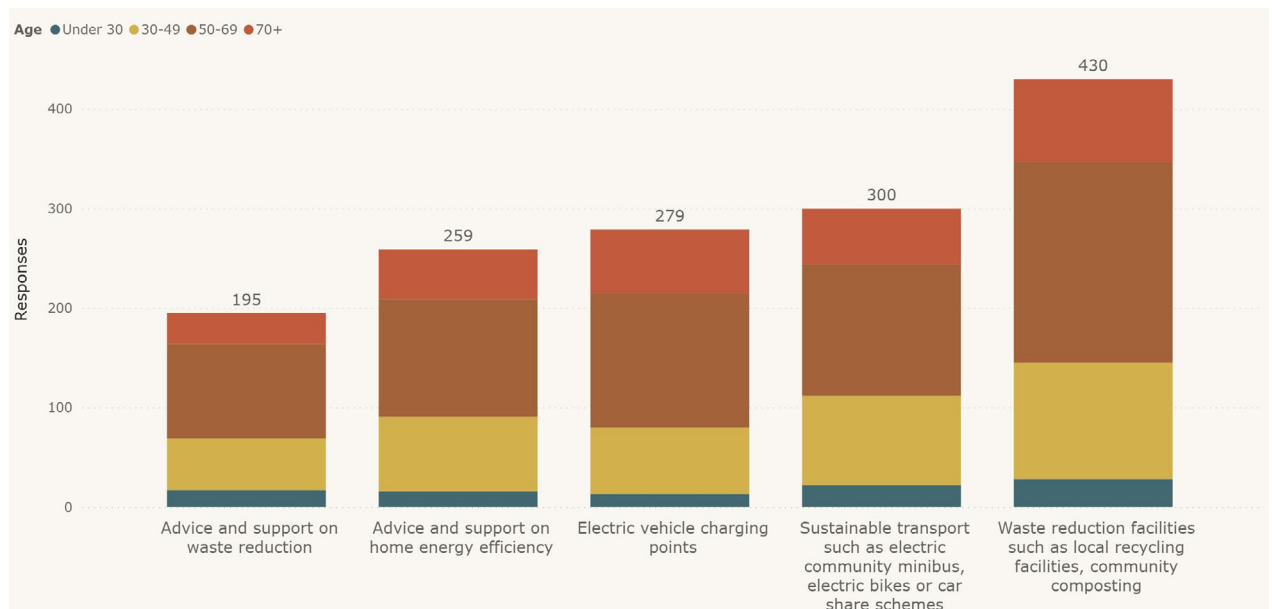
“What does exist in terms of halls/cafes/leisure centre is excellent but there is not enough. I would like to see: A young person’s cafe culture – as an alternative to the creative hub. A dedicated indoor soft play area for young children and families that isn’t just open once a week. Improved facilities at the pool (which is a fantastic resource). An active entertainments (music/dance/theatre/talks) schedule using local halls and venues. Subsidised local transport – too many young people having to rely on parents for lifts and the cost of transport is high which can lead to social isolation – would link in with the point above in getting people to and from events. The shinty pitch to be finished with proper facilities.”

There were also comments on the need for increased availability of, or improvement to community halls and spaces, which was felt would lead to increased availability of cultural and sports activities and an improvement in opportunities to socialise. A number of comments noted the need for improved provision for young people and for children, with comments under this question and throughout the survey on the need for new or improved play parks. The desire for improved access to arts, crafts and Gaelic activities was also made, as well as the need for better facilities for tourists:

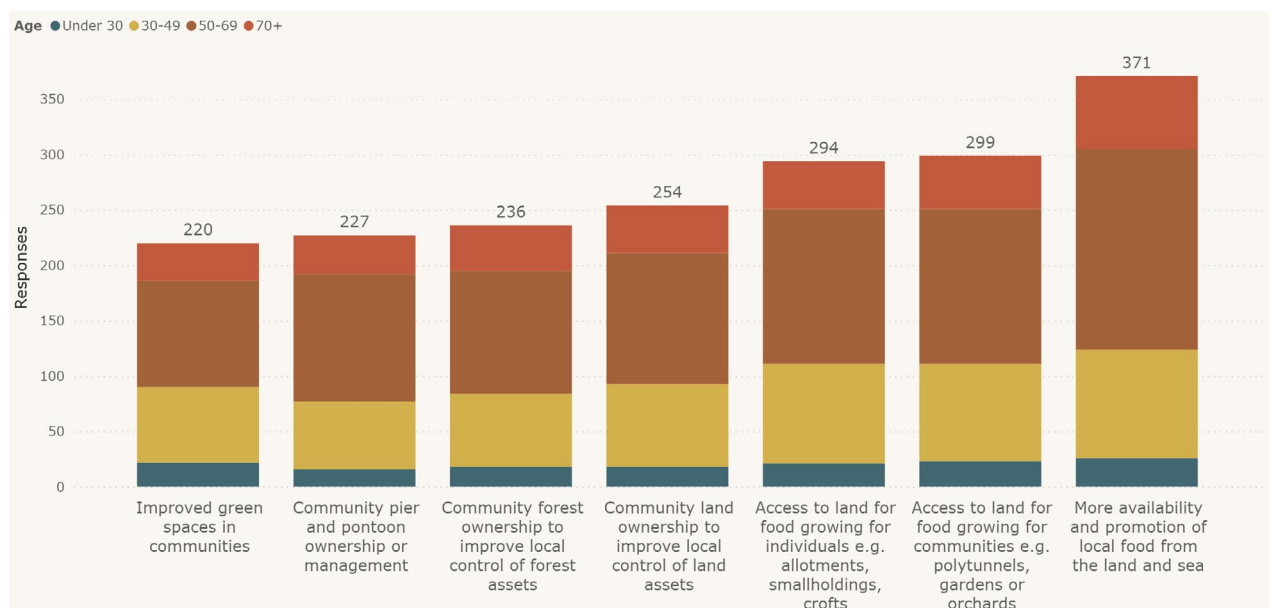
“Tennis and badminton court, better playing fields in Kyle, each community to have up to date accessible notice boards, Kyle hall needs renovated. Balmacara hall brought back into use. Cinema, men’s sheds. Groups for under 30s. Wider range of clubs and activities to learn more. Better advertisements via social media and pages kept up to date by local groups, trusts and community councils.”

5 Q8 & Q9: Land and Sea

(Sustainability and the natural environment; Using and enjoying our land, landscape and sea)



Sustainability and the natural environment- What steps would you like to see developed locally to help minimise our environmental impact



Using and enjoying our land, landscape and sea- What steps would you like to see developed locally to improve access to and enjoyment of our land and sea assets and the natural environment

There is significant support from respondents for a range of measures to help minimise our environmental impact, and to improve access and use of land and sea assets. A total of 430 respondents from almost 600 support the improvement of waste reduction and recycling facilities and community

composting in Lochalsh. There was also significant support for all other measures, with the highest being for sustainable transport schemes, which had support from 300 respondents.

On the question of land, landscape and sea, the categories relating to local food came the highest, with 371 supporting more availability and promotion of local food, 299 wanting access to land for community food growing projects and 294 wanting access to land for food growing for individuals. The need for increased access to land, local food and community growing was expressed strongly in other parts of the survey. There was also support for community land ownership, community forest ownership, and community pier and pontoon ownership.

5.1 Comments related to Land & Sea

“Access to crofts is a huge issue for younger people. A lot of land is not being used. Smaller scale growing projects would be great for families/people who can't take on a whole croft.”

There were fewer comments (56) on this topic than some other questions, but many linked topics together thoughtfully. The majority of comments (32) were focused on, or mentioned access to crofts (particularly for young people), crofting, community growing and/or access to local food. Some comments called on local landowners such as the National Trust for Scotland to do more to create new crofts, including looking at new models, such as forest crofts.

There was also some support for the benefits that community land ownership could bring, as well as two more reserved comments. Concern about marine pollution and the lack of marine facilities was also expressed, with some comments about the negative impact of fish farming on the local environment:

“More focus on marine pollution would be great, looking at the industries in the area and making them clean up their act. Community land ownership would be great to allow more people to grow food and potentially for housing. Alongside this, reducing the power/monopoly of big land-owners, estates and people with second/holiday houses to make way for people who want to live and work here and need security and affordability to do that.”

The largest number of comments on a single topic mentioned the need for new or improved foot and cycle paths to link villages. This comment was repeated in many other places throughout the survey responses:

“There are plenty of paths around but some linkages between them and/or to create circular routes would be beneficial. Cycle paths by the main road would be good as the road is so busy that it is dangerous to cycle on.”

"I think footpaths connecting communities is imperative as many of the roads connecting these places either have fast traffic and no safe pavement alongside or are single track roads which are often extremely difficult to navigate safely on foot. I think not only access to land for growing food is important but I think there needs to be education and encouragement about food as a way to further connect and strengthen communities – learning, growing and sharing the food together."

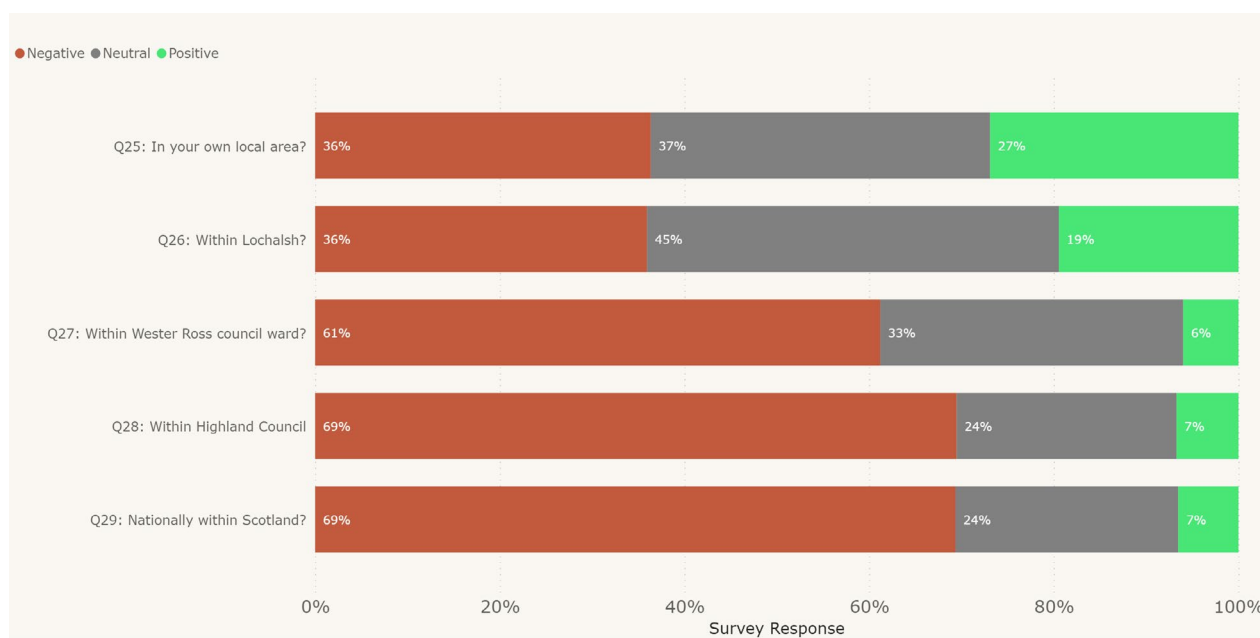
"I would very much like to see more community allotments and growing opportunities locally. And also to have training opportunities and events to learn more about growing food for all age groups would be ideal. If footpaths and cycle tracks could be better developed, then more buses might not be needed if we could travel on foot/bike – also healthier for our local population as we all devote too much time to driving as a means of getting about."

There were also a smaller number of comments about the need for better waste recycling for Lochalsh, and the need to provide infrastructure to reduce the impact of tourist waste – these two topics were raised repeatedly throughout the survey:

"Make it easier for young people to get croft land to work. Community crofting machinery sharing or hire. Local recycling points for electric items, light bulbs, ink cartridges, batteries, carrier bags etc. To make recycling easier and reduce the amount put into general waste bins going to land fill. Or where items can be donated to be reused, recycled or turned into something else."

6 Q 10 Who makes the decisions in your area?

The responses to this question indicate that there is a dissatisfaction with influencing all levels of local, regional and national governance. The highest level of satisfaction was with the ability to take part in or influence decision making within a local area/community council area, however only 27% of respondents felt positive and 36% negative, with 37% feeling neutral. The ease of taking part in or influencing decision-making at a Lochalsh level was similarly negative, but with a smaller percentage feeling positive, at 19%. Over 60% of respondents felt negative about the ability to take part in or influence decision-making within the council ward, with 6% positive, and the negativity rose to 69% both within Highland Council and nationally within Scotland.



Decision-making in your area- How easy do you find it to park part in or influence decision-making?

6.1 Comments related to 'Who makes the decisions in your area?'

There were 85 comments in relation to this question. The largest number of comments (26) expressed dissatisfaction with Highland Council, particularly relating to planning matters, but also in relation to the lack, or the withdrawal of community facilities and services. Common themes were: lack of information; lack of community engagement; the difficulty of being heard; and how decisions are made and who makes them. A few comments praised the survey and the trust for allowing them to engage.

"I feel like we don't know where to go to ask for help. Our communities are suffering and ageing. Who do we turn to for help? Local councils do their best but can only provide what they're given by people higher up."

The next largest group of comments was about the need for more community

control, at all levels, locally, regionally and nationally. A number of comments cited the need for more information from decision-making public agencies, bodies and organisations. There were some negative comments about community councils – both the lack of power, but also the lack of information, communication and engagement – and some positive comments. There were a small number of comments about the need for the Scottish Government to listen, and one about the National Trust for Scotland.

6.1.1 Comments about decision-making at a local level

“My answer stems from the fact I don't like to 'speak up'. In fact, this type of online survey is an excellent way for me to communicate.”

“Local groups do announce AGMs etc, but it somehow doesn't feel inclusive and I don't think this is intentional, it's just that groups don't think they need to reach out to their community or don't know how to. Maybe these groups need training/ideas or help to put information out to the community. I suppose I want people to be better committee members, but then they are doing it when other people don't. In small communities being on a committee feels like a life sentence sometimes.”

“Community Councils, Development Trusts and other organisations should be supported to engage with communities and influence decision making at a regional and national level. The type of workshop being run by SCDC alongside this survey could be replicated in the future to take community views on particular issues such as a major development or on policy development on matters such as housing, short term letting etc. Policy makers need and value community and regional level information and views so there is a chance to make stronger connections between community orgs, Highland Council and Scottish Govt or other national agencies.”

6.1.2 Comments about decision-making at a Lochalsh level

“I would like to see Kyle and Lochalsh designated as a distinct area/sub-region or district by Highland Council...”

“I once attended a community meeting, but I found the structures and hierarchies unclear. I'm also often unsure of which level of government to approach regarding different decisions. I really enjoyed the virtual meeting via Zoom as it was much easier to attend than an in-person

meeting. I also felt less pressure to contribute (which I see as a positive) and for people who cannot commit to a solid amount of time to attend it's much easier to dip in and out. I'd like to see virtual community meetings continue."

6.1.3 Comments about decision-making at a regional level

"We need more local control of decision making. We used to have a district council covering Skye and Lochalsh and this was a good forum for making decisions at a more local level - that tier of government has disappeared, and everything is too centralised."

"It appears to be almost impossible to influence decision making within Highland Council and NHS Highland. Re Highland Council, reporting faults on the website and by email (and sending reminder emails) appear to be ignored and never followed up. Not enough staff are employed to look after the roads. Not enough investment in roads and transportation. Sub-standard hospital facilities (e.g. NHS Highland have no current plan to include a basic CT scanner in the new Broadford Hospital)."

"Little information available about how to access decision making. Planning decision-makers (usually the Councillors, rather than the Officers) take little note of local opinion, or national/international environmental designations, when making their decisions."

6.1.4 Comments about decision-making at a national level

"Don't think the needs of Highland/rural areas are considered by the Scottish parliament."

"Poor experience with Scottish Govt agencies such as Transport Scotland."

7 Q 11: What is good about your community council area and what should change?

This section of the survey consisted of text boxes asking for up to three comments on the questions “What are the 3 best things about your community council area?” and “What 3 changes would improve your community council area?”

7.1 The 3 best things about your community council area

“The people, very strong network of people who support each other.”

“Excellent co-ordination of support during Covid.”

There were 810 comments in total in this section. The largest number of comments were about the closeness and importance of community (209). Many comments focused on the importance of family and neighbours and an informal network of support, and a general friendliness and community spirit. A number of the comments particularly focused on the importance of the closeness of community and community spirit during Covid, and the way in which the community organised to provide support:

“The closeness of my community, this was very apparent during Covid and the amount of willing helpers.”

The next largest group of comments valued the scenery, landscape, environment and access to the outdoors (158). Related to this topic, there were 44 comments which acknowledged the importance of the range of different paths in the area.

“The natural beauty – hills, lochs, rivers.”

“The open space and access to nature.”

“Beautiful area with lots of walking possibilities.”

“Access to the outdoors, paths and signage.”

68 comments valued the location and lifestyle, many answering with the word “Location”. Comments ranged from access to a range of different benefits, some citing transport links out of the area and some valuing the area for bringing up children. 20 people commented on the safety of the area and low crime.

“Unhurried lifestyle.”

“Still the best place to live and bring up children.”

“Location and connectivity with Skye.”

“It feels like a safe place to live.”

“Almost no crime.”

There were 63 comments in total for organisations and support services, facilities and spaces organised by them: 24 people thought that Community Councils were one of the three best things in the area, particularly in Strome ferry & Achmore; 24 people mentioned community development trusts, particularly citing KLCT and the Plock, and also the Fernaig Trust for the footpaths and allotments; and the Kylerhea ferry. There were also 15 comments praising village halls and sporting facilities (Reraig Shinty Pitch and Kyle Swimming Pool) run by community bodies.

There were 17 comments that saw schools as one of the three best things in Lochalsh, and 15 comments that valued the local retail and other facilities. A very small number of comments valued health services, arts and culture, young people and churches.

8 Q 11: What changes would improve your community council area?

There were 742 suggestions for improvements to community council areas in Lochalsh

“Better roads and signage.”

“Better upkeep of roads, footpaths, drainage.”

“Traffic calming around all areas frequented by children.”

“More places, laybys etc for tourists to stop and enjoy the above.”

The majority of comments, by a big margin, were suggestions for improvement to road infrastructure, with 171 comments. These ranged from: the need for improved road maintenance e.g. road resurfacing; better signage; speed limits and enforcement of speed limits; pavements; the challenges for cyclists on the main road; and suggestions for improved or increased parking, particularly in Kyle and at tourist hotspots. There were some specific proposals, for example, suggestions for speed limits from the community council areas all along the A87 and a few suggestions for the need for re-configuration or roundabout at the Auchtertyre junction, as well as specific suggestions for Kyle and Plockton.

The next largest group of comments related to the need for affordable housing (70) and the need for controls on holiday houses and holiday home businesses (22) – total 92. Many of the comments linked the lack of affordable housing with the prevalence of holiday homes. The largest number of comments about holiday homes came from Plockton. Many comments reflected on the need to improve the availability of affordable housing to keep young people and families in the area.

“More affordable houses to buy / rent, gov. should incentivise private renting vs holiday letting.”

“Housing policies to stop businesses buying up homes for holiday homes.”

“Control over housing to balance the holiday homes with local needs.”

“More opportunities for first time local buyers.”

“Affordable housing for young people and young families.”

“Affordable housing/land to allow young people to remain.”

“More affordable housing to reduce de-population of our future generations.”

Some comments linked the need for affordable housing with ensuring

sustainable communities in the future. Some commented on the shortage of affordable housing in some community council areas and the unequal distribution over Lochalsh.

“Safe walk to school.”

“More cycle tracks for children.”

“Cycle lanes for safer commuting.”

“Footpath/cycleway connectivity between villages.”

“More footpaths to open countryside for leisure.”

There was a large group of comments about transport and access, with 77 comments about foot and cycle paths and 58 comments about public transport. The comments about paths related to two main themes: most comments related to foot and cycle paths for travel to work, shops, services, events or for socialising, and a small number to the need for paths for accessing the outdoors and keeping fit. There were some specific proposals, for example for paths to link up villages along the A87, and a path to allow people to walk from Achmore to the Stromeferry station safely:

“Footpath/pavement between Ardelve and Nostie therefore joining up Dornie to Balmacara.”

“Better and more coordinated public transport.”

There were 58 comments about the need to improve public transport or introduce new community transport schemes. The majority of comments just asked for better public transport or improved public transport links. A smaller number had specific suggestions, such as the need to improve the train times to allow people to use them for commuting. Two asked for a new station in Achmore. Some asked for community transport schemes, such as a community bus, car share schemes and bike and electric bike schemes. Some comments recognised the difficulty for those without a car:

“Better transport link to the wider community for the elderly, those who don’t drive.”

The next largest group of comments related to community spaces (53) and community events and activities, including classes (27) – total 80. Some comments wanted existing community spaces to be improved, and some called for new community spaces to be created:

“Better community meeting spaces.” “Improved community facilities (halls etc.).”

“A dedicated community hub for decision-making, wellbeing and great craic.”

“A focal/meeting point.”

“More chance to do shared interests and activities e.g. classes.”

“Outdoor opportunities for folk (especially in light of covid) so people still can feel connected and feel less isolated – music, art, tai chi, walks, hill walks outdoors.”

The fourth largest group of comments related to foot and cycle paths.

Another topic which received a large number of comments (58) was the need for better waste and litter management. Some of these comments related to the waste and litter created by tourism, particularly camper vans and some to the need to improve litter picking in villages and on beaches. Almost half of the comments asked for a waste recycling scheme for Lochalsh, to prevent people having to travel to either Portree or Dingwall to recycle large items.

Tourism received 43 comments, with the majority wanting more done to enable control over tourism, particularly camper vans, but some wanting more done to provide better facilities for tourists. Related to this were 16 comments on the need for better, more sustainable employment, which was less reliant on tourism:

“Reduce over-dependence on tourism related jobs.”

There were 40 suggestions for village improvements, some general, such as the need for more bins or seating or streetlighting. There were also 17 comments on the need for improved or new children’s play parks. The most frequently mentioned play park was the one in Wemyss Place in Kyle. There were also specific requests for play parks in Kintail, Morvich and Dornie:

“Better play areas and equipment which should be funded and not raised by locals.”

Community growing, local food, crofting and the need for composting schemes and support for community land ownership attracted 34 comments.

There were 23 comments on the need for better access to information on public agencies and services. Some areas wanted improved access to minutes from community councils and trusts and information about community events and volunteering opportunities.

The need for better marine infrastructure such as pontoons and piers and the need for better management of the marine environment, particularly in relation to fish farming, attracted 20 comments.

9 Q 12: What is good about Lochalsh and what should change?

9.1 The 3 best things about Lochalsh

“Our natural surroundings, clean air etc.”

“Access to variety of natural habitats.”

“Access to hills and walking routes.”

There were 647 comments in total about what are the three best things about Lochalsh. The largest number of comments by a considerable margin were about the landscape, scenery and environment with 190 comments. People valued the beauty of the landscape, the biodiversity of the natural landscape and the unspoilt nature of it. Some also commented on the importance of access to the sea. On this theme, there were also 34 comments about the availability of footpaths in the area as well as the access to hills, and 13 comments about the ease of outdoor access. The word ‘access’ was used repeatedly in many comments on this topic. Linked to this theme, 40 people valued the pace of life, the quietness and peace, and also the location, with easy access to cities and Skye, while 30 valued the safeness and lack of crime:

“Our surroundings, we live in the most beautiful place.”

“SCENERY IS SPECTACULAR.”

“The countryside and access to the sea.” “The range of walks and access to countryside.”

“Beautiful places to walk which are fairly accessible and quiet, even during peak tourist season.”

The second most valued thing was the friendliness, community spirit and strength of community with 133 comments. A number of people commented on the willingness of people to volunteer and the importance of this community strength during Covid:

“Friendly people and community spirit.”

“Fantastic community spirit – volunteers/help.”

“Communication and help during COVID crisis excellent.”

“Good people and communities looking out for each other.”

“Community, seeing everyone come together throughout the last year has been amazing.”

Some comments saw this sense of community as a valuable foundation for improving things in Lochalsh. One respondent felt that the Lochalsh Collaboration was playing a role in increasing community togetherness:

“Everyone working together. Lochalsh Collaboration is helping us to work as an area.”

“There's lots happening to make the community stronger.”

“Lots of people trying hard to improve the area.”

There were 41 comments which valued the range of retail and hospitality outlets in the area, “All you need within the area: doctors, dentists, shops, etc.” as well as nine comments praising the businesses in the area and the employment opportunities offered by larger businesses:

“Small business owners who go the extra mile with customer service.”

There were 29 comments which valued the quality of health provision in the area. Some specifically mentioned the Kyle surgery, Broadford Hospital and Kyle Pharmacy:

“Fantastic medical facilities and associated support.”

“The health service provided is excellent and waiting times are minimal.”

“Excellent healthcare from Kyle Practice and Broadford Hospital.” “The Pharmacy.”

There were 20 comments which valued the availability of public transport, however every comment related to travel outwith the area rather than within Lochalsh:

“Central position for Skye, Loch Ness, NC500, train and bus connections.”

There were 20 comments which listed the sports facilities in Lochalsh as one of the three best things, with 14 of those comments relating to the Lochalsh Leisure Centre in Kyle.

“Lochalsh Leisure Centre – amazing facility for such a small community, especially the pool.”

“Great local primary education.”

“Very good education including FE/HE at West Highland College.”

There were 18 comments which valued the quality of schools and the possibility to continue study in Lochalsh at West Highland College.

Arts and culture of the area were valued in 16 comments. Some comments valued the intrinsic richness of culture and heritage of the area, while others

mentioned the artistic and cultural activities taking place. One comment valued the National Centre for Excellence in Traditional Music based in Plockton High School.

“Rich culture and history.”

“Interesting history and heritage.”

“The arts & music community.”

Two organisations were cited in 21 comments. Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust and The Plock, which the trust owns and manages were listed in 16 comments:

“Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust trying to improve collaboration between communities.”

The National Trust for Scotland was listed in 5 comments:

“The National Trust estate – it's great to have a landowner with a beneficial remit and a certain degree of accountability.”

Crofting, crofting knowledge and local food were valued in ten comments:

“History – lots of local knowledge about small scale sustainable crofting.”

“Amazing producers of good quality local produce.”

There were very small numbers of comments listing a range of other topics as one of the 3 best things: marine facilities, the lack of over-tourism, road infrastructure and waste refuse collection.

10 What 3 things would improve Lochalsh

There were 757 suggestions for what would improve Lochalsh.

The largest group of suggestions (118) related to road infrastructure, which included: road maintenance; parking, particularly in Kyle and at tourist hotspots; the need for new speed limits and enforcing speed limits; and some specific suggestions for improvements to road layout and design within Lochalsh, as well as a small number about road links outwith Lochalsh.

“Improved transport links to reduce reliability on car, cycle lanes etc.”

“Better paths between villages Kyle – Dornie, Kyle – Plockton.”

“Safer cycling / walking options along the A87 trunk road including speed restrictions at Auchtertyre junction.”

“Regular local transport to encourage people not to use cars.”

Suggestions about how to increase the availability of public and local transport and, improve and make safer travel connections within Lochalsh to allow more sustainable and car-free travel, formed the second largest group of comments, with 93 in total: about public and community transport (60), and about foot and cycle paths and networks linking up the whole of Lochalsh (33). A number of the comments referenced the need for this for the elderly, those without cars, and young people:

“Decentralised and networked, free, responsive to individual need public transport.”

“Local bus service within the area going to all small communities like years ago when there was a post bus.”

“Electric community buses offering affordable and regular service.”

The third largest group of suggestions for improvement related to housing (72 comments) which concentrated on the need for affordable housing (59) and the need to take action on holiday homes (13).

“Affordable housing or land, help to buy schemes for people who actually want to live in the area, not holiday homes.”

Some comments related to the need for rented homes and some to buying a house. A number of comments focused on the need to help young people, young families, first time buyers and those moving into the area for work. A small number of comments linked the need for affordable housing to the sustainability of the population in the future:

“More housing, affordable to buy and tenanted.”

“More affordable housing for locals or those moving to the area for work.”

“Housing for young people/families!”

“More housing for young people (who aren’t married and/or have children).”

“More affordable housing to reduce de-population of our future generations.”

“Affordable housing/land to allow young people to remain.”

Some comments linked the need for affordable housing with the impact of holiday homes. There were a number of practical suggestions for how holiday homes could be controlled, including planning controls, a cap on the number of holiday homes or Airbnb letting, and incentivisation to encourage long-term letting:

“More affordable houses to buy / rent, gov. should incentivise private renting vs holiday letting.”

“Less bnbs, Airbnb's, 2nd homes, more affordable housing for young families and people returning after education.”

The next largest group of comments (67) related to social and leisure facilities and activities. 19 suggestions related to improving existing or creating new community spaces to allow activities and events to take place. There were 18 suggestions for increased community events including outdoor events, village hall events and workshops and evening classes:

“Community cafe and centre.”

“Improved community facilities (halls etc.)”

“More workshops/night classes.”

“More local festivals/gatherings.”

“Outdoor opportunities for folk (especially in light of covid) so people still can feel connected and feel less isolated – music, art, tai chi, walks, hill walks outdoors.”

17 suggestions related to improved or increased sports facilities or activities and 13 related to arts, craft, heritage, cultural and Gaelic events:

“Build an art/cultural gallery/museum in Kyle.”

“Arts and crafts facility.”

“More access on information on local history.”

There were 17 suggestions for improved or new sports facilities. People wanted the Lochalsh Leisure Centre swimming pool and gym to be enlarged and with enhanced facilities. Some wanted there to be new facilities such as tennis courts, a running track and climbing wall. Some wanted more sports facilities to be available outwith Kyle:

“More sports/ recreation facilities for kids not just in Kyle.”

“Improved leisure facilities for winter e.g. larger pool, gym, running track.”

There were 64 comments on what could be improved. There were 53 comments relating to retail outlets in Lochalsh, with the majority of comments focusing on the need for another supermarket chain to compete with the Co-op, the need for improved deliveries from supermarkets or the need for a better shopping choice in the existing supermarket (the Co-op). A small number of suggestions wanted to see more businesses in the empty shops in Kyle and a wider range of independent small businesses selling a range of household goods, rather than tourist items, while others felt that a wider range of shops would encourage tourists to stay:

“Make Kyle a better hub – Main Street.”

“More shops selling items useful for local families not just for tourists.”

“Kyle is not sufficiently resourced in terms of shops – no electrical store, clothing or household stores.”

“Schemes of shops or pop-up shops in Kyle as is severely lacking reasons to visit or stay given the traffic to Skye.”

There were 51 comments on the topic of tourism, 34 were suggestions of how to improve what is on offer for tourists in Lochalsh, including more parking, better campervan facilities and a better range of facilities for tourists. 21 of the comments were negative about the impact of tourism, the majority of which referred to campervans. Six comments related to the need to improve the management of tourism-related waste:

“Kyle is not worth even visiting due to lack of facilities for tourists.”

“Better/improved tourist facilities.”

“A greater emphasis on slow/sustainable tourism.”

“Better facilities for campervans like the air facilities in France.”

“More policing of campers and rubbish dumping.”

“Reduce wild camping.”

Some comments were more nuanced and acknowledged the importance of tourism while also making suggestions for how the impact could be managed.

“Amenities for tourists to prevent the feeling that we are being overwhelmed in the peak of the season.”

“Ensuring a local voice doesn't get lost during valuable tourist season.”

Related to the comments about tourism, there were 50 comments in total relating to the need for better employment options and the need for better business support and opportunities. There were 34 comments on the need for better or more sustainable employment options which are less dependent on seasonal tourist trade:

“More job opportunities other than minimum wage seasonal.”

“More jobs for young people.”

“Improved job opportunities/diversified economy.”

“Expansion of non-tourism related jobs.”

A number of the comments linked the need for better year-round employment to the retention of young people in Lochalsh:

“Look into new and sustainable businesses that could attract or keep young people in the area.”

There were 16 suggestions for better business support for existing businesses and to encourage the set-up of new businesses. The practical suggestions included the need for new retail, workshop and commercial premises at affordable rents, new events or facilities to promote small businesses and business start-up help. One comment felt there should be incentives to bring small or medium industry into the area to reduce dependence on tourism:

“Affordable small spaces to rent for makers and artists.”

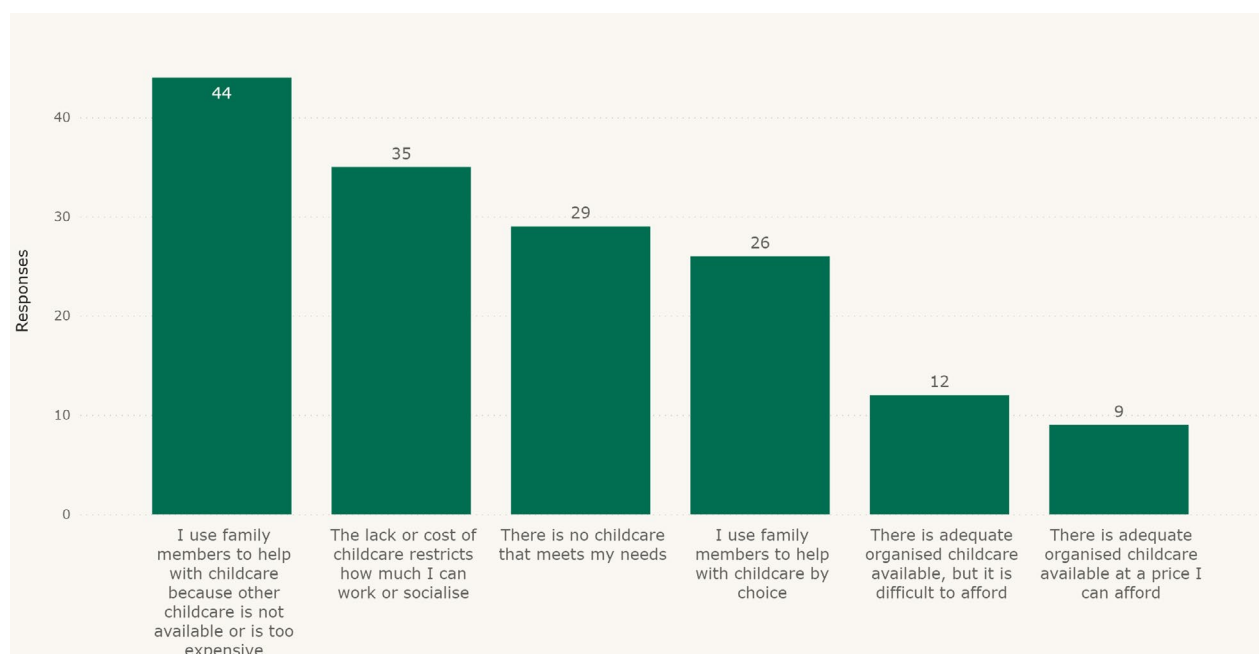
“Local business hub - independent shops/indoor marketplace - need more parking though.”

“Promotion of small, local businesses and events that do this.”

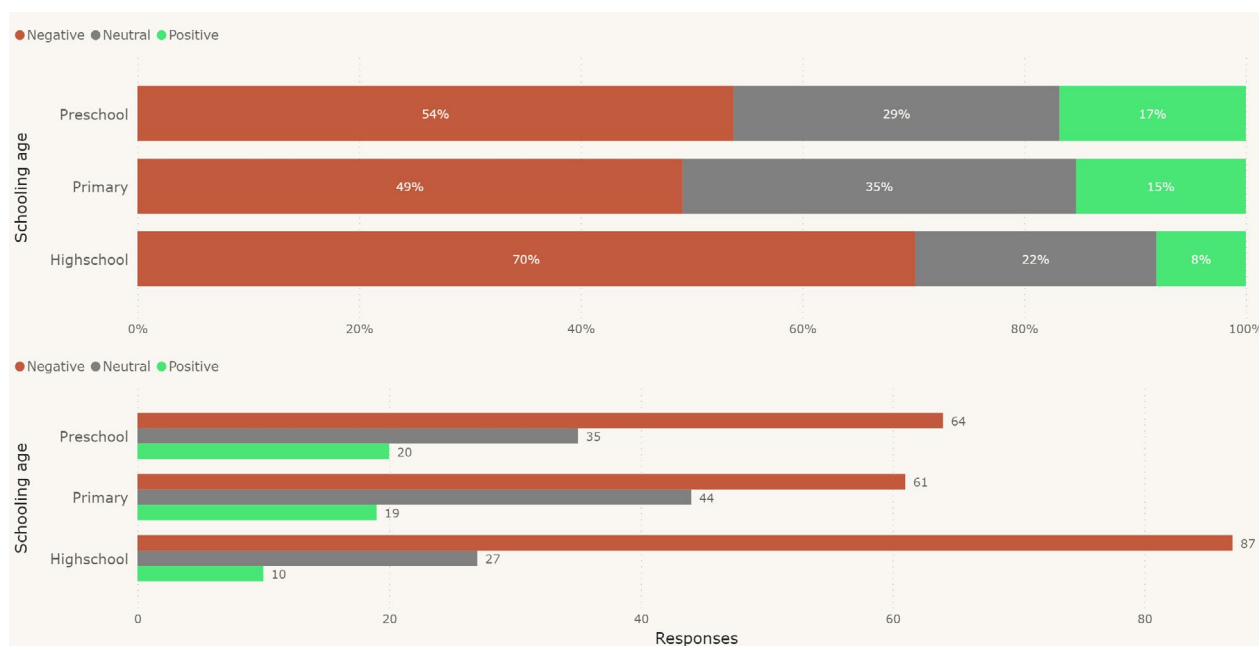
11 Qs 13, 14, 15, 16 Childcare and children's activities

There is clearly significant dissatisfaction with the availability of childcare, and with the facilities or activities available for children. Only nine respondents felt there was adequate organised childcare, and the biggest category, with 44 respondents, said that they use family members to help with childcare because other childcare is not available or is too expensive.

On the question of facilities or activities for children, all respondents were negative about what is on offer, with dissatisfaction particularly high for high school age children at 70% of respondents, followed by for preschool at 54%. The highest positivity rating for any of the three age groups was only 17%.



13. What is your experience of accessing childcare?



14, 15, 16. What do you think about the facilities or activities for children?

11.1 Comments about childcare, activities + facilities for children

There were 81 comments on the question of childcare and children's activities, many of which made powerful statements about the impact the lack of these services has on children and young people, parents, and on working life.

The largest group of comments (46) were about the lack of activities and facilities for primary age children (20), young people (12) and pre-school and nursery provision, including Gaelic provision (11). Three comments raised the need for improved provision for children with disabilities:

"Better youth clubs. Better access to local day and night learning courses, better range of subjects. Disability riding centre and other disability groups for young people."

"It is very difficult for high school children to access activities when transport is so hard to come by. Even the school stopped providing transport for the dances (pre covid) so many children couldn't go. During covid, there has been very little for the kids to engage with. And without decent internet access, pretty much nothing at all."

"Primary school age children are well served if they are keen to undertake sports activities. The popularity of the local Cub group demonstrates that there is a need for other types of activities for all children. Secondary school

pupils are not served well and have suffered from an underfunding in this area for a long time. This is a national issue which is tackled by committed volunteers rather than a planned, national agenda.”

“More Gaelic preschool activities would be appreciated, and more spaces in the Sgoil-Araich as at the moment Plockton is full.”

There were a fairly equal number of comments about four main topics: childcare (9), the impact of Covid (9), playparks (7) and sports activities and facilities (6). Childcare and child minders: some respondents explained the impact that this had on their working hours or on the ability of children to engage with activities:

“I have always struggled with after school childcare which restricts my working hours.”

“The number of childcare providers in my local area are very very few. The cost of childcare is very expensive. I’d have to drive over 35 miles to get a possible childminder which could facilitate my childcare needs. The lack of children’s post school activities is disappointing. Long waiting lists for some activities and then age restrictions on others.”

“Childcare to allow both parents to work is non-existent outside council funded spaces at nursery. Which is also very limited hours. Leaving children with family/friends is almost the only viable option.”

Most of the comments relating to Covid reported it had had a detrimental effect on children’s activities and welfare. One respondent also raised the impact it had on antenatal classes:

“Covid has had a huge impact on provisions for young children. My kids are 2 and 4 and there’s almost nothing for them, even pre-Covid, there was very little apart from play groups.”

“COVID has had a significant negative impact on learning, socialisation and engagement in activities.”

“Antenatal classes for expectant families have been impacted, we don’t know where to start now.”

The lack of, or poor upkeep of, playparks was felt by some to be particularly regrettable during Covid when outdoor play was the only safe option, and there were also comments about the lack of sports facilities or activities. The need

for new or improved playparks in Kyle, Dornie and Kintail were specifically cited:

“Play Park in Wemyss Place is in a bad state of repair. We were told when the new park next to the Leisure Centre was built that the Wemyss Place Play Park would still be looked after. This is not the case. The park in Wemyss is near the school and nursery and even during Covid has been used by children on a daily basis.”

There were five comments on the lack of transport to allow children and young people to attend activities and after school clubs and the impact this had on working parents:

“It is difficult for children of working parents to attend after school activities. Some sort of after school transport or a link of childcare would be good.”

There were a small number of comments on topics which have a large impact on individuals and families: children with disabilities, and children’s mental health:

“There was little to no support before Covid, now I feel Covid is being used as an excuse. More activities for autistic children, people who are trained and enjoy working with children with additional needs, gardens and veg plots that are safe for children. After school clubs to help working parents or breakfast clubs, electric bus to help transport children.”

“Need mental health facilities for kids.”

The lack of intergenerational connections in the community was also raised, and the suggestion that provision for activities should be available for every age.:

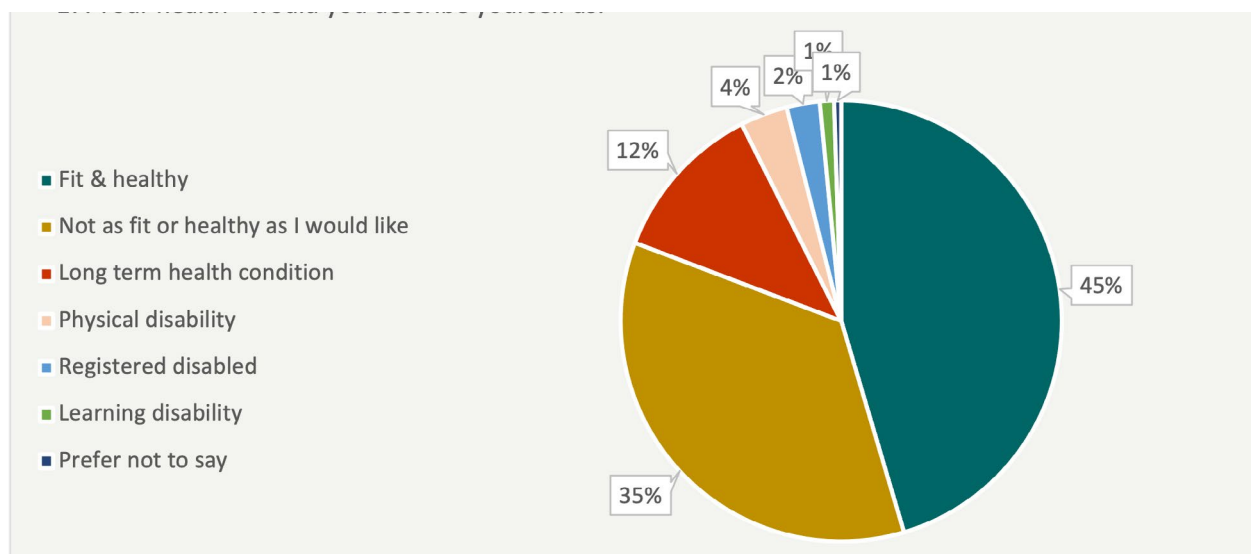
“There is no connection between young families and older members of communities. There should be a lot more interaction encouraged locally.”

“In our far-flung area, provision (and transport to activities) of sports/arts for all ages should always be a key priority for community leaders.”

A small number of comments (4) reported that they were content with what was on offer for children and young people.

12 About Health and Care

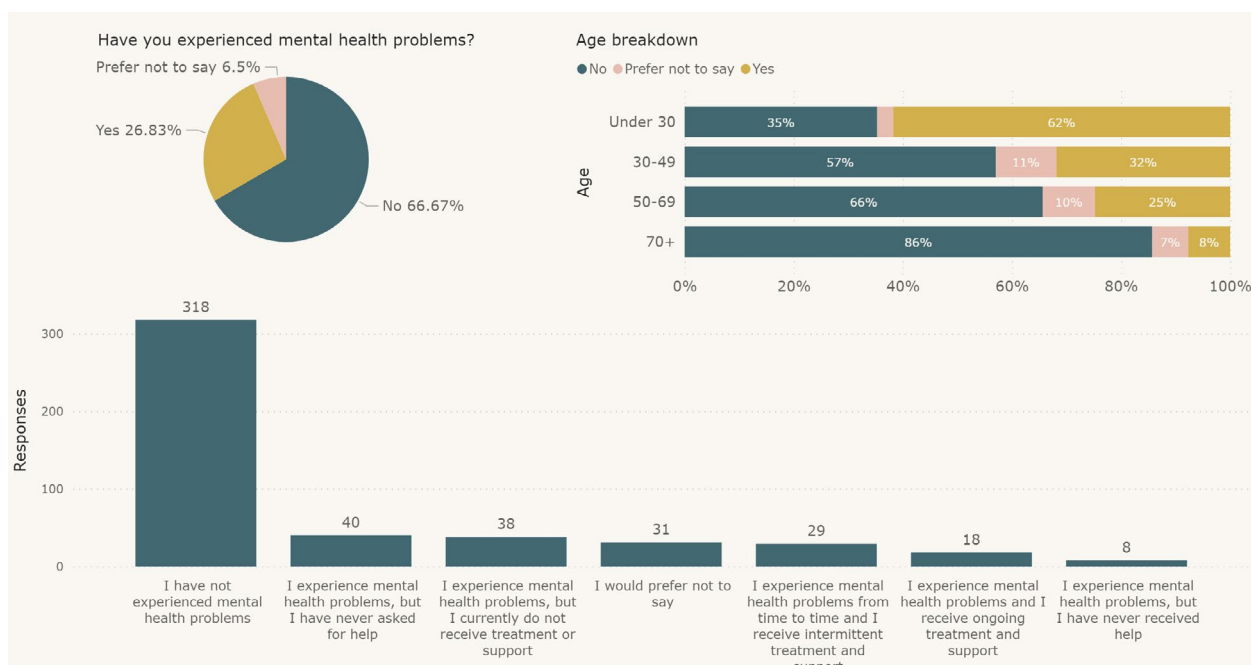
12.1 Q17 Health



17. Your health - would you describe yourself as

The largest percentage of responses reported that they were fit and healthy (45%), or not as fit and healthy as they would like to be (35%). However almost 20% of respondents reported that they were either living with a long-term health condition, a physical disability, were registered disabled, or had a learning disability. A very small number of people preferred not to say.

12.2 Q18 Mental health and wellbeing



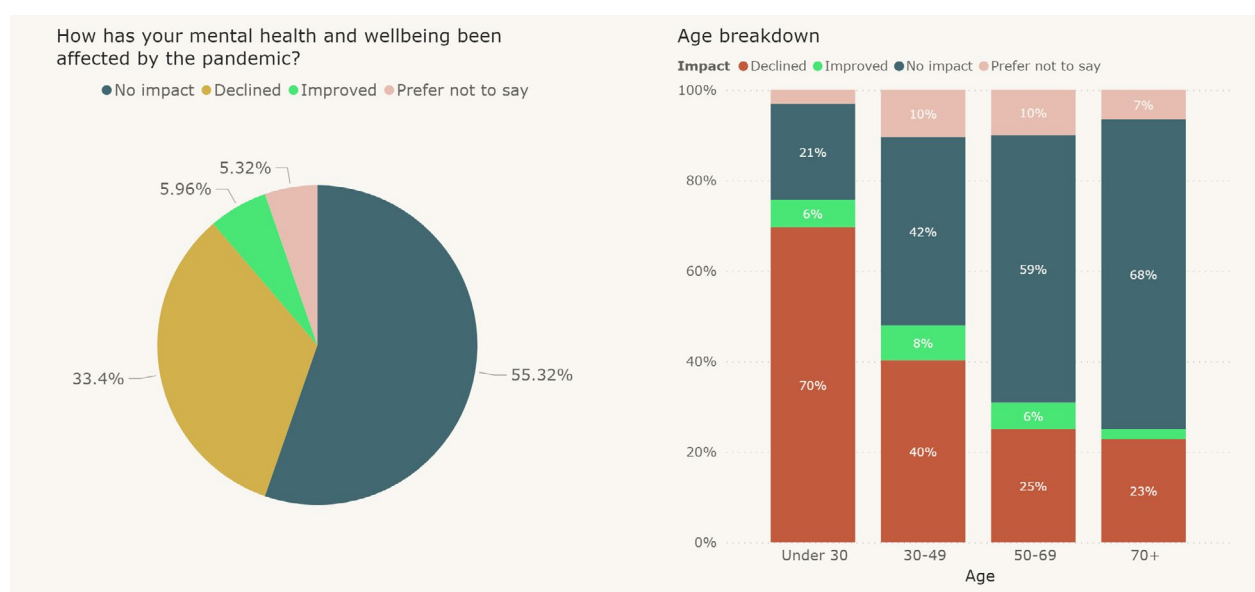
18. How would you describe your mental health and wellbeing?

On the question of mental health and wellbeing, while overall 71% of people reported that they had not experienced mental health problems, there is a stark difference across the age groups. The age of respondents appears to directly correlate with whether they reported they had experienced mental health problems, with only 8% of age 70+ reporting that they had experienced mental health problems, rising to 25% for 50-69, 32% for the 30-49 age group, then jumping to 62% of people under 30. The under 30 age group was under-represented in the survey, in comparison to their percentage makeup in the population, but the very high percentage reporting mental health problems in comparison to the older age groups, suggests that if more under 30s had taken part in the survey, the overall percentage of people in Lochalsh who have experienced mental health problems might be higher than 27%.

Further research would need to be undertaken to understand this disparity between age groups reporting poor mental health. It is also important to note that 40 respondents reported that they have never asked for help with mental health problems, 38 that they do not receive help and 8 that they have never received help.

12.3 Q 19 Impact of Covid-19 on mental health and wellbeing

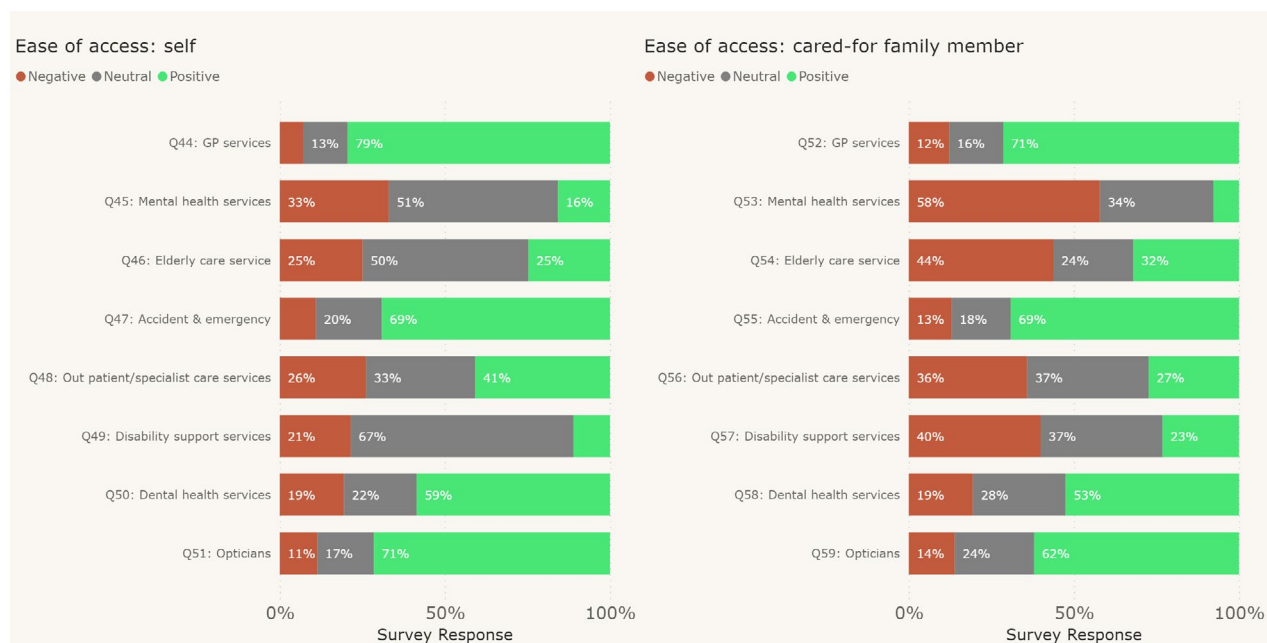
On the impact of Covid on mental health and well-being, just over 55% overall said there had been no impact, but of those who said it had an impact, as with the question on mental health and wellbeing, there was also a disparity between age groups. Under 30s experienced the biggest negative impact of Covid, with 70% reporting that it had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing, with the 30 to 49 age group the next most impacted group, with 40% reporting that Covid had a negative impact. The negative impact of Covid then dropped to 25% for the 50-69 age group and 23% for 70+. Only very small percentages of people reported that their mental health and wellbeing had improved as a result of Covid (8% of respondents in the 30-49 age group being the highest percentage of all age groups).



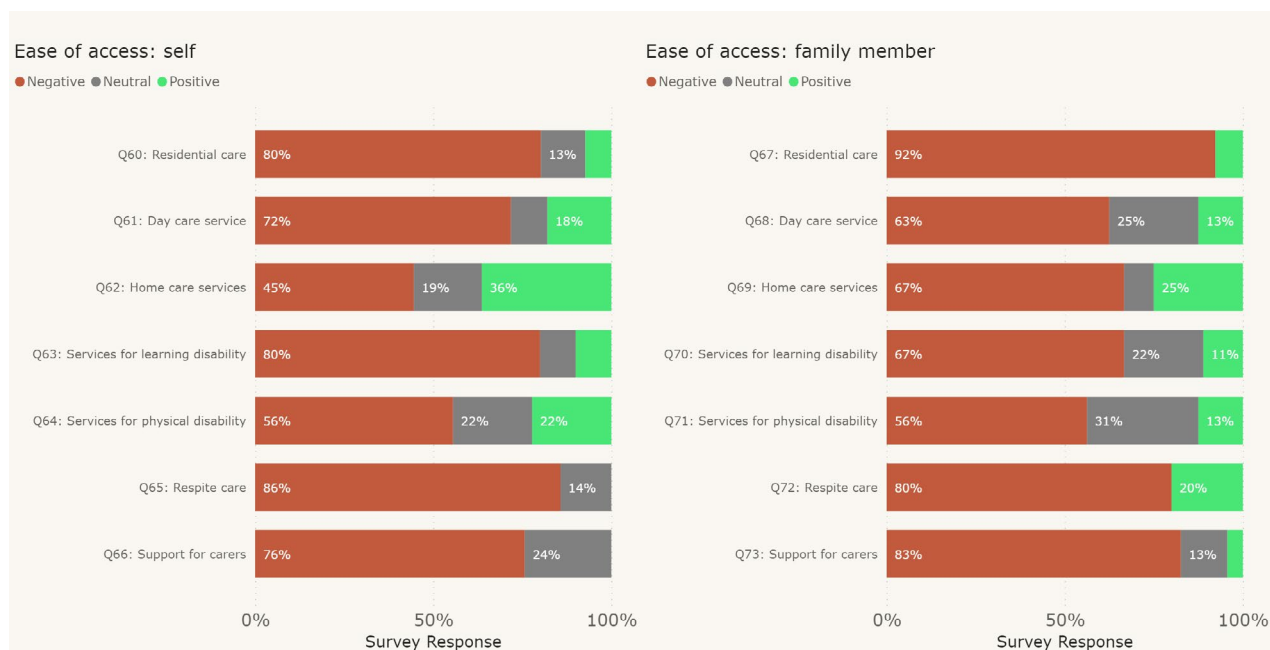
18. Has the pandemic and Covid-19 affected your mental health and wellbeing?

12.4 Qs 20, 21, 22, 23: Accessing health and social care

The responses to the questions on health show that a high majority of respondents are satisfied with the ease of accessing GP services for themselves (79%) and nearly as high for a family member. There was also a high satisfaction rate with accessing opticians and accident and emergency and over 50% with accessing dental care. The most dissatisfaction was shown with accessing mental health services for a family member, at 58%. Satisfaction levels for access to mental health service, elderly care services and disability support services were very low both for themselves, and for a cared-for family member. There were very poor levels of satisfaction with ease of accessing social care services, with ease of access to day care, residential care, services for learning disability, and respite care. Support for carers showed the lowest level of satisfaction, with 76% – 83% negative responses for accessing support.



20 (21). How easy do you find it to access health provision for yourself (a family member)?



22 (23). How easy do you find it to access Social Care services for yourself (a family member)?

12.5 Comments about Health and Care

There were 125 comments in total at the end of the questions about Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing during Covid, and 34 comments at the end of the questions about Social Care for yourself or someone you care for. This is a combined analysis of all 125 comments from both text boxes as many of the responses related to both sections.

The majority of the 125 comments focused on the impact of Covid-19 on people's health, mental health and wellbeing and access to social care. While 25 comments reported that Covid-19 had not had a big impact, some recognised that this had not been the experience of everyone, or worried about the long-term impacts. Some said that the impact of the pandemic had come close to causing them mental or wellbeing problems. Although the number of comments in comparison to some other issues are comparatively small, care has been taken to report fully on the comments, as the impact on people's wellbeing, health and lives is such an important issue:

"I am very lucky, I've got a job, a house and am in good health. It isn't like that for everyone."

"I believe the full impact on our health of the pandemic will be realised after it is over by many."

"I would say its nearer not impacted than having got worse, but was a close one."

The type of employment that people have also had an impact on how they felt as a result of Covid. Some welcomed the closure of work places as it gave them more free time, for some the loss of income created financial concerns that resulted in anxiety, while for some, having to work throughout Covid was

a source of stress:

“Both myself and partner have had our employment directly affected by covid.”

“Being a frontline worker, this has been an exceptionally stressful time for myself and my family. I have been lucky that my colleagues have been a great support.”

Some respondents reported that their health, mental health or wellbeing had improved as a result of the pandemic, with eight comments highlighting how much they valued the ability to go outdoors in a beautiful location, during lockdown:

“We are very lucky to have a beach and beautiful walks and scenery on our doorstep I was out every day and feel very lucky compared to city.”

“I feel very privileged to say that the pandemic has given us a slower pace of life which I have used to get fitter and healthier and build good habits – daily walks etc”

A number of comments reported that Covid had been a mixed bag – with some positive effects and some that were difficult:

“Some aspects have improved – time to exercise and enjoy the outdoors has been great. The stress of not knowing when business can reopen and trying to adjust to not doing things, seeing people is hard.”

A small number of respondents welcomed lockdown because it meant they did not need to socialise, which they normally found stressful.

12.6 Comments about isolation, anxiety and emotional state

It is important to note that a number of important issues were reported, which had not been investigated as part of the survey: feelings of isolation (20 comments), anxiety and emotional state (15). For some, the impact of Covid exacerbated an existing state of isolation, anxiety or emotional concerns. As there were no direct questions about these topics, it is hard to know how widespread these experiences might be.

“I don't consider myself to have mental problems, but I have felt isolated at points during the pandemic. However, I have often felt isolated during the winter months before the pandemic because I can't drive and therefore feel a lack of freedom and access.”

12.7 Comments about health, mental health services and carer support

There were 18 comments about the health service, 13 comments about mental health services and 11 about support for carers. The comments on the health service were a mix of praise for existing services, concern about the availability of dentist services, (particularly during Covid) and about the local availability of hospital services, requiring travel to Raigmore, as well as one comment about the need for an evening surgery in Kyle:

“The medical centre in Kyle is very efficient providing an excellent service. More hospital services could be provided locally as Raigmore is difficult to attend.”

“Requirement for an evening surgery at the health centre.”

The comments on mental health services related to underfunding, poor support for those with mental health problems and long waiting times:

“I feel the time people with mental health problems have to wait to see someone is far too long. A minimum of a 6 week wait is a very worrying prospect for a person suffering and their family.”

There were seven comments about the need for improved services for the elderly – home care, day care and residential services. One comment suggested that Balmacara House would be an ideal site for residential and day care. These comments are echoed elsewhere in the survey responses. This lack of elderly support is of itself causing anxiety.

“Services for the elderly are very poor, we need a care home with a day care centre in this area or sheltered housing or improved care in the home.”

“Currently I am fit and well, able to drive so can get about, but when I am older I know that there are very few services available to make living independent easy without relying heavily on family and friends.”

“The lack of care homes for the elderly is a huge concern. Balmacara House could be a great place for one. There is also a real lack of access to help those with mental health problems- across all ages.”

There were a number of comments about the lack of support for carers and the lack of respite care during Covid, which had placed stresses on carers and families:

“I’m a carer for my partner and have not received any help or advice.”

There were also a small number of comments about the need for a local pain clinic and the need for improved support and services for those with disabilities. A small number of comments highlighted the need for improved information about health and social care services.

Some comments gave a detailed overview of the situation:

“Local Social Care team were good and provided home care when I was caring for my mother. Respite care and support for carers was more difficult to get access to but social worker provided links to charities that work in this sector. Home care was quite short staffed so more posts would likely allow them to provide a better service. Physiotherapy was also hard to access because of demands on the system. I never found a podiatrist or anyone who could service a hearing aid so more provision here would be valuable for the elderly population.”

13 Qs 24–28 on Housing

On the question of housing, perhaps not surprisingly, there is a big differential in access to housing between age groups. Only 1% of under 30s own a house, however of survey respondents who live with parents or friends, nearly 50% (48%) are in the under 30s age group. It is also interesting that no under 30s who responded to the survey are a crofter living in a croft house.

Also on housing, 162 people knew of a family member who would like to live in Lochalsh but cannot, due to housing shortages or the cost of housing. Of those who would like to live in Lochalsh if they could find housing, 73 were age 16–29 and 86 were 30–49, with a very small number in the older age groups. On the question of income, 50% of under 30s reported that their income was not sufficient for their household needs, a significantly higher percentage than other age groups.

13.1 Comments about housing

The 95 testimonies, comments and opinions expressed, related to housing, were so powerful, articulate and well thought through that it was hard to choose which comments to highlight. Of all the questions asked in the survey, this topic appeared to be the one that people had thought about and felt the most deeply, and expressed the most unanimity on. Some respondents had in the past, or were currently, experiencing difficulties accessing housing, however many comments came from people who saw the lack of affordable housing, particularly for young people and first-time buyers as a social ill which impacts on the future of the whole community. There were 35 comments which linked second homes, Airbnb and holiday letting businesses with the unaffordable price of housing and land. Many of those comments also linked to the impact on young people's inability to access affordable housing – both rental and for purchase. Some responses commented on the reliance on tourism as an economic driver, resulting in a lack of affordable housing and a

lack of choice in better employment than seasonal jobs. Some young people and young families commented that the situation was likely to result in them leaving the area or being unable to return:

Some responses made suggestions about how the housing situation could be addressed, including controls on the use of housing for holiday letting/second homes:

“More affordable housing/shared equity. Some sort of control on land prices and how many homes someone can own. Have a requirement to live in the house and not use it as a 2nd home or for holiday rental market.”

A number of the suggestions related to the need for landowners to release land at affordable prices for housing, particularly the National Trust for Scotland. Some comments referenced previous schemes that had allowed them to successfully build their own home in the past, some commented that there needed to be a cap on land prices:

“In the 1970's the Scottish Special Housing Association provided housing for essential local and incoming workers. Seems a model worth revisiting.”

“The housing prices are through the roof which makes it very hard for first time buyers. People are getting greedy when coming to sell land. There should be a cap on how much land is worth and a first refusal to locals.”

There were some comments about the Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association lists which it was felt did not give enough points to young local people, resulting in people from outwith the area being allocated housing in Lochalsh, over local people. One respondent commented on the positive impact of being able to get access to affordable social housing. Some comments highlighted a particular need for affordable housing in Plockton and Glenelg. Some comments reflected on the detrimental impact on people's lives from not having access to affordable housing, some comments particularly highlighted the length of time it took to find housing, with one commenting that they had been looking for decades, unsuccessfully. There were a small number of comments about the cost of improving homes and about the difficulty of getting the council to repair council homes for elderly parents:

“I moved 12 times in 9 years until able to buy a home. Caravans, holiday lets, houses sold. Nightmare.”

“Lack of affordable local housing forces people to rent un-insulated, cold, damp houses from private landlords.”

There were some articulate summaries of the housing situation, the impact on the community and individuals and suggestions for solutions:

“Accessing housing is extremely difficult with many people who are full time employed in good jobs unable to afford house prices in the area due to second / holiday home demand but equally do not meet the strict criteria to access social rented or shared ownership housing. These are arguably exactly the working age people / young families that the area desperately needs but we make it almost impossible for them to move here or return home. With online and homeworking now a reality we could attract people to live here if they can find housing. We shouldn't miss this opportunity. There is an important role for the NTS and other landlords to help identify land that could support small developments through for example the small communities development fund (housing fund?).”

14 Qs 29, 30 Employment and work sectors

A total of 155 respondents reported that they are in permanent secure employment, while the next largest group was those who are retired. 85 people reported that they are self-employed. However, 55 people have work that is seasonal, temporary or insecure, while 37 need more than one job to provide enough income.

It is important to note, in light of the recent Covid lockdowns, that the largest number of respondents work in tourism (72), with the third highest group working in hospitality (57) — a total of 129 respondents. 103 people reported that they work in health or education, however only 12 respondents work for local government

15 Q31 Household income

On the question of whether income was sufficient for household needs, it is important to note the age differential between responses. While overall 19% of respondents replied that their income was not sufficient for their household needs, the percentage of respondents who gave this reply was considerably higher for under 30s than any other age group (50% of respondents) and decreased with age, declining to only 7% of over 70s reporting that their income was insufficient for their household needs.

15.1 Comments about household income

There were a total of 68 comments about household income with the largest number of comments focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on incomes (26 comments) and on the need to have double incomes in order to cover household costs (16), particularly as a result of Covid. Some people said that they were having to re-evaluate how they earn an income as their businesses had been heavily dependent on tourism:

“I run a cafe with a partner which hasn't been able to open since March 2020. We no longer see this as a reliable source of income due to the current situation. We have both been struggling to find replacement work.”

Some people commented on the low salaries of some jobs in the area and some with the need for better employment options. Some comments pointed out that although working, they still needed Universal Credit support to cover household costs. Some commented on problems with accessing Universal Credit:

“My income is only sufficient because I also get universal credit to help. There are not enough jobs or those that are available are too far away and there is no childcare available.”

“My employment is without contract therefore I have no entitlement to holiday/ sick pay. I would call this arrangement slavery. If I were to raise concerns about this with my employer then I would expect to be told there is no further work for me. If there were more job opportunities in the area then I could choose to leave in favour of more reasonable employment. I'm sure my employer plays on the fact that job opportunities are almost non existent during covid.”

Some comments linked the lack of higher income jobs with problems of being able to afford housing – both rental and owned accommodation. A small number of comments linked the lack of childcare with problems of being unable to earn more. A small number of comments also reported that a combination of some of these factors was likely to result in them leaving the area:

“My husband and I found it very difficult to find housing when we moved to the area. Rented poor accommodation for 1 year then bought our house. Houses in Lochalsh are ridiculously expensive and make it very difficult for young people to stay in the area. The local amenities are also very expensive and lacking in variety. Childcare is very poor also which has meant my husband and I living on one wage in a house we now can't afford and have to travel to Inverness to make our food shopping affordable. We will probably leave the area as it is just too expensive.”

“As a young married couple living in the area, we are having to live with family as there are no houses for sale that we can afford and no houses available for rent. There are very few people our age living in the area. Because of this we are trying to get jobs elsewhere, somewhere where we can buy a house or rent somewhere.”

There were nine responses that said that income was sufficient, and three where people said their income had increased due to Covid. There were three comments focusing on the need to rebalance the economy and create better employment opportunities than seasonal tourist-related employment. One respondent felt that the impact of Covid on tourism-related economy should be used as an opportunity to restructure the economy while another commented that improving incomes was the most important priority for those struggling to make ends meet:

“I'm glad COVID has arrested the unsustainable development of transitory, mass, tourism. Yes the local economy needs to restructure. Government can help by both supporting the devolution of more government jobs to rural areas, by purchasing from smaller producers, and from facilitating true circular economies at a micro and local level.”

“Whilst my income is not sufficient for my household needs, my joint income is, but only just. I feel that this is a situation that many people living in this area experience. It is not cheap to live in this area. To access activities and experiences is one thing but to make rent/mortgage payments/heat the home/ fill the car with fuel to get to work is another thing altogether. Whilst making this area a nice place to live adds value, making ends meet for many is the real life situation.”

16 Qs 32, 33, 34 Running a business in Lochalsh

It is interesting to note that while 59% of respondents who currently run a business in Lochalsh are over 50, when you look at the ages of those who aspire to run a business, 65% are under 50, with 16% of those being under 30. There is therefore currently a mismatch in the demographics between those who currently run a business and those who aspire to run a business.

The next survey question gives some indication of what factors are preventing that younger group of aspiring entrepreneurs from setting up a business, as well as what support measures would help existing business owners. The most important measure that would help both groups is financial support. Three further types of business support were valued: business or start-up units, measures to keep tourists longer in the area, and business advice. There was also support for cooperation between businesses on marketing or processing and for a new online selling website for Lochalsh.

17 General comments

There were 126 comments in this section. The largest group of comments was about the survey itself, (24) of which 18 were positive and welcomed the opportunity to express an opinion, or praised the initiative and four comments were negative, questioning the cost or the point of the survey.

This was a very difficult section to analyse as many respondents used the opportunity to pull together their key priorities for improving Lochalsh, some covering a large number of topics and some making a number of practical suggestions for improvement. Of the topics covered, the largest number of comments were on three particular areas: tourism, affordable housing and road infrastructure. There were 18 comments on the impact of tourism, with 15 arguing for better investment in tourism facilities and three wanting a move away from dependency on a tourism economy. There were 17 comments that mentioned the need for affordable housing solutions and the desire to keep young people in the area, and 14 comments about the need for improved road infrastructure. There were also 11 comments that mentioned the need for better day care and residential support for the elderly and nine about the strength of the local community.

There were eight comments about health, including some that expressed hope that the new Broadford Hospital will include new services such as a scanner, to reduce the need to travel to Inverness for appointments. There were also comments about the need for a waste recycling facility in the area, better road infrastructure, repairs and improvements, the need for better information-sharing locally and the need for more resources to be invested in the area. There were a number of suggestions for how to improve cultural and sporting opportunities, and for better learning opportunities including requests for better access to Gaelic learning, and promotion of the Gaelic language. There were a small number of comments about the need to manage the marine and the general environment better, about the need for a local food initiative and the continuation of the food waste project, and two calling for better internet provision. One comment promoted the idea of developing renewable energy projects in the area, in order to generate income, with practical suggestions of how to do it.

Many of the comments were articulate, well thought through and comprehensive. This is a selection of some of them:

“Care for elderly and disabled is inadequate in Lochalsh. A care home is essential as many have to leave the area to get care. Day care is also not good enough. Some provision (maybe using village halls) must be available in each village to avoid ridiculous travel hours. Play facilities are needed in each village. Some provision of small plots of land for community use to grow fruit and vegetables would be helpful. Continuation of local newsletter would be excellent to keep all in touch with developments.”

“Outdoor activities should be given more prominence. Dingy

sailing start a club. Hill walking, mountaineering Local history and genealogy club Highland activities Man shed.”

“The requirement of a club house at Reraig at Balmacara sports facility. Waste disposal for motor homes. Units for lease for businesses. Care home for the elderly. Fast broadband. Electric charge points. More transport connections. More toilets. Men's sheds.”

“More affordable housing for young adults and business opportunities to create jobs for this age group. Better facilities and transport for the elderly. More and better recycling centres throughout the area and recycling of more materials. Establishment of centres/educational courses on how to repair rather than throw away to encourage re-use of furniture equipment etc. More of educational courses, night classes, fitness centres, youth activities etc.”

“The area needs start-up funds and mentoring for skilled small industries including IT. There needs to be opportunities for qualified young people to invest in their degree skills esp renewal energy and IT. Lochalsh is full of brains, why not use them? The balance of investment needs to be shifted from tourism to year-round sustainable businesses Re 17-21 Health and care We need more outpatient physio, geriatric medicine. There is a lack of co-ordinated care for people 75+. Often their complaints are treated as they come up and not in the context of the interrelated factors including medication. This elderly community would benefit from a geriatrician attached to the surgery. Re question 11-12 Recycling centre. Since lockdown and the temporary closure of the Portree recycling centre, local people have increasingly misused the public bins for fly tip, builder's and household clearance rubbish, which can frequently be overflowing. The lids unable to close within a few hours of emptying. For years Highland Council has resisted a recycling centre local to Lochalsh, but with the increase in new builds and rebuilds it is urgent.”

“Lochalsh is an amazing place with so much going for it. I think we can learn from Skye and choose not to market ourselves as a destination just to visit but as a thriving and vibrant place to work and live. Tackling holiday lets and second home is a big part of this. There is plenty housing stock, it is just not available at a price that can

be afforded to most. 500k for a house in Plockton which needs complete renovation. If we are to have a future we need young folk, and if we don't address this there is little point in having conversations about what needs improved. Land is also a major part of the equation and can offer a chance for folk to get on. We are lucky and are having this conversation before it is too late. I would like to see Plockton a control area which can limit the percentage of short term let's before it is too late. There is a chance but we have to act now. Also we should no longer put up with services which are available elsewhere, but not here such as elderly residential care/easy access to mental health services. This isn't just an issue for Lochalsh but for other parts of the Highlands. Also we could attract jobs to the area by encouraging scot gov. Highland Council to look at what Lochalsh has to offer. Move things away from Inverness or consider why there isn't a centre for marine research for example in the area. Given its natural resources. Tourism is important but can't be all we offer as seen in this weeks WHFP Live in, Work in, Thrive in(g) Lochalsh. Good Luck, and I hope the survey goes a long way to being and seeing and hearing the change that will see this area continue to be such an amazing community in the future as it has been in now and in the past."

"I feel we live in a very special part of the world without many of the issues people experience in other parts of the country. I think we need to look inwards for food to make us more sustainable. It's unfortunate that we are priced out of local products as they are really for tourists. I think how we handle tourism is going to shape the future of our community, I have no idea how to sustain the place we live for ourselves and have tourists. We rely on them for money but having them here pushes the price of housing, restaurants, local produce out of reach for people who live here. It's a fine balance and one we need to get right. Care for our elderly is a nonexistent in Lochalsh, with those needing residential care having to go to places 40 miles away. This needs to be addressed, what kind of community are we when we don't look after our elders. Transport, including cycle paths for purpose not just for pleasure, are a top priority too. We are far too reliant on the car here."

"There is no lack of energy or desire to live and work here. I have met so many people who have wanted to stay and

build lives here or come back to their families, but they don't have the opportunities they need to thrive. Housing is a main issue, I have friends who both have fulltime well paid jobs and they still can't find a place of their own that they can afford. They are living with their family here, but they should be able to find accommodation as a young professional couple with good local jobs. I don't think there is any lack of energy for setting up small business - people just need the ability to stay and to get initial start up support and encouragement beyond the tourism sector."

"More affordable housing for young adults and business opportunities to create jobs for this age group. Better facilities and transport for the elderly. More and better recycling centres throughout the area and recycling of more materials. Establishment of centres/ educational courses on how to repair rather than throw away to encourage re-use of furniture equipment etc. More of educational courses, night classes, fitness centres, youth activities etc."

"Rather than free ads and Facebook being filled with people complaining about campervans (they are going to come whether people want them to or not) the community should be more welcoming and find ways to capitalise on them being here. Encouraging people to stop and stay longer, this will benefit shops/takeaways/delis/outdoor activity businesses. Parking and water/waste/rubbish disposal could be provided. Park and ride from sites to main tourist sites would reduce traffic/vans on the road. We should be maximising our beautiful environment and encouraging green tourism and people to stay and take part in walking/kayaking/cycling. If cycle lanes were installed from Dornie to Kyle locals could use them for commuting and getting to school. It could link up with the path being opened Kyleakin to Broadford which would then create a route from Dornie all the way to Armadale (via Sleat old road) and maybe link up with the cycle networks being created on the North of Skye. Similar to the Hebridean Cycle way."

"Asda/Tesco - I would recommend that the effect of the Tesco & Asda vans on the local economy should be investigated and what they might mean for the sustainability of local shops. It would be very interesting if the community knew what the level of money is leaving the community each day and what the local community could

do with that money. I would recommend also that a plan should be developed for strengthening Gaelic. There's a lot of interest in Gaelic in the district and it would be good to take steps to strengthen Gaelic while it is still here."

"Housing crisis is a really important factor that needs addressing NOW. I am a young person that wants to live here but I will likely have to move elsewhere. We need more opportunities for learning Gaelic locally - a variety of evening/weekend classes."

"I used to like living in this area but having now been here for two and a half years, I find it quite lonely and isolating, although lockdown has of course made this more of an issue. Especially being a young couple unable to have our own home (to buy or rent) is extremely difficult and has a huge impact on my mental health."

"Bravo to Lochalsh Collaborates. The future is most definitely local. We need real authority and accountability at the lowest level. And to trust that we have the skills we need within the people living locally, along with their connections, to create a Lochalsh community that works for us all."



Community Survey Report 2022

BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR LOCHALSH



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